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CALLING OUT TO ISIS: THE ENDURING NUBIAN PRESENCE AT PHILAE

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Berlin-New York.
Berlin Photo	Berliner Photos der Preussischen Expedition 1908-1910 nach Nubien, Wiesbaden, 1975. Republished in Horst Beinlich, <i>Die Photos der Preussischen Expedition 1908-1910 nach Nubien</i> , Dettelbach: J.H. Röhl, 2010, 2013.
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire.
EG	Wolja Erichsen <i>Demotisches Glossar</i> , Copenhagen, 1954.
FHN	Fontes Historiae Nubiorum
IGP I	Andre Bernand, <i>Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae</i> , vol 1, Paris, 1969.
IGP II	Étienne Bernand, <i>Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae</i> , vol 2, Paris, 1969.
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, London.
LdÄ	W. Helck-W. Westendorf, <i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> , Wiesbaden, 1972-1991.
MNL	Meroitic Newsletter, Paris.
Ph.	Philae graffito numbered according to Griffith, <i>Catalogue of the Demotic Graffiti of the Dodecaschoenus</i> , Cairo, 1912.
REM	Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtique, Paris.
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, Chicago.
ZÄS	Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde, Leipzig-Berlin.
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik, Bonn.

Other Abbreviations

Bar.	Pyramid burial in the royal cemetery of Gebel Barkal (see Dunham 1957).
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- Beg. N Pyramid burial in the royal cemetery of Begarawiya North (see Dunham 1957).
- Beg. S Pyramid burial in the royal cemetery of Begarawiya North (see Dunham 1963).
- Ku. Burial in the royal cemetery of el Kurru (see Dunham 1955).
- Nu. Burial in the royal cemetery of Nuri (see Dunham 1955)

GLOSSARY

Demotic and Meroitic Terms Used in the Nubian Inscriptions

Demotic

ꜥwle	“divisible, moveable property” Ph. 55, Kalabsha 4
ꜥmꜥmꜥ	Ph. 55/6
ḥbḥn	MI 88, MI 89, MI 97, MI 99, MI 101, MI 102, MI 122, MI 125, GA 20, Ph. 120, Ph. 403
ḥhnꜥtꜥ	Ph. 55/6, Qasr Ibrim Text #1
ssmste	Ph. 55/4, Ph. 55/21, Kalabsha 4/3
ꜥtny	“glorious” determinative lotus. Ph. 410/10, Ph. 411/4, 6, Ph. 416/19, Ph. 417/9, Dakka 32/7.

Meroitic

<i>apote</i>	“envoy” from Demotic: wpte. Sasan was the Meroitic king’s “great envoy to Rome” in Ph. 416/1.
<i>qoren/qeren</i>	Name of an office formed from the word <i>qore</i> (king), the Demotic transliteration – qꜥny - contained Gardiner’s sign Y3, the scribe’s palette. See Hofmann 1981, 62, Torok 1979, 42ff.
<i>perite</i>	“agent” from Demotic: Pꜥ rt
<i>plsn</i>	“lesonis” from Demotic: Pꜥ mr-šn
<i>ste</i>	“mother” See Inge Hofmann, <i>Material für eine Meroitische Grammatik</i> , 229-230; Nicholas Millett “The Meroitic Inscriptions from Gebel Adda” JJSEA 32 (2005): 12.
<i>shashimete</i>	Ph. 55, Kalabsha 4. This title appears in several inscriptions from Meroitic Nubia and Meroe.
<i>yetmede</i>	“kinship term - member of a clan (sub-tribal unit), perhaps in the maternal line.” See, Hinze, <i>Merotische Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen</i> in Steffen Wenig (ed.) <i>Studien zum antiken Sudan. Akten der 7. Internationalen</i>

*Tagung fuer meroitistische Forschungen 14-19 September 1992 in
Godesburg bei Berlin, Meroitica 15, Wiesbaden, p. 230-238. Claude Rilly, Le
meroitique et sa famille linguistique (2010) 61 n. 66 “« Neveu/niece » au
sens large, c’est-à-dire cadet/cadette dans la lignée maternelle.” Hintze,
“Deskriptionssätze,” 8, #24 “eine besondere Art des
abhängigkeitsverhältnisses zu bezeichnen scheint.”*

There is still considerable debate as to the meaning of this Meroitic term. I interpret *yetmede* as a kinship term that identifies an individual as part of a clan lineage descended from a common ancestor.

ABSTRACT

The expansion of the cult of Isis throughout the Mediterranean world demonstrates the widespread appeal of Egyptian religion in the Greco-Roman period. Often Nubian involvement in the cult of Isis is excluded from studies of this religious phenomenon. When Nubians are acknowledged, they are presented simply as pilgrims. However, inscriptions written in Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek reveal that Nubians served as financial supporters of the temple of Isis of Philae, where they led cult services as prophets and priests, and militarily defended the sanctity of Philae's temple complex.

This dissertation examines the participation of Nubians in the cult of Isis of Philae through their prayer inscriptions and legal agreements engraved on temple walls at Philae, Dendur, Kalabsha, and Dakka during Egypt's Roman and Byzantine period (1st-5th centuries AD). This study explores the political, economic, and social factors that allowed Nubians to become active in the Egyptian temples of Lower Nubia. Detailed analysis of Ptolemaic royal decrees and temple imagery explain the historical reasons for the involvement of Nubians in temple financial administration in the Dodekaschoenos. Comparison of the religious rites described in Nubian prayer inscriptions and the temple relief scenes upon which they were engraved reveals a recurring Nubian cultic focus that exhibits many similarities to Meroitic royal funerary cult practices. This work collects all epigraphic evidence of Nubian worshippers in the temples of the Dodekaschoenos – inscriptions written in Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek - to present a comprehensive description of the enduring presence of Nubians in the cult of Isis of the Dodekaschoenos.

Introduction¹

Inscriptions found on the walls of five temples in Lower Nubia attest to the involvement of Nubian priests, administrators, and diplomats in a region where many ethnicities intermingled during a time of profound religious, cultural, and social change as the ancient world was transformed. Engraved during the first five centuries AD, Nubian inscriptions in the Dodecaschoenos serve as a witness to a time of intense political, cultural, and social change in the region. Christianity was beginning its long ascendancy and Rome was at the height of its powers. With Egypt ruined financially as a colony of Rome and Christianity gaining converts in the Egyptian countryside in the third century AD, Egyptian temples were no longer used to celebrate the traditional pharaonic religion. Roman seizure of temple lands, restrictions placed on entry into the Egyptian priesthood and the benefits derived therefrom, and withdrawal of all state funding for Egyptian temples spelled the end of the practice of Egyptian temple religion. The one notable survival of an active temple cult was at Philae on the southern border of Egypt where diverse groups of Nubians² continued to fund temple cult and practice the ancient

¹ A glossary of all Meroitic terms used in this dissertation and those Demotic words found only in Nubian inscriptions is found on page viii.

² At our current state of knowledge, precisely defining the ethnicity of the diverse populations resident in Nubia from the first to the fifth century AD is difficult. Specific tribal names are not available to us because none of the various populations resident in Nubia practiced writing their indigenous languages. While some Nubians did engage in writing while serving in an Egyptian or Meroitic context, their texts, usually written in an official capacity, did not include biographical information such as tribal affiliation. Vague designations such as A-, C- and X-Group, Pan-Grave, and Kerma culture reveal the imprecise nature of our knowledge concerning the populations that were resident in Nubia over the centuries. It is not yet clear how the Blemmyes, first mentioned in Greek and Demotic documents in the third century BC, relate to their predecessors in Nubia: the A-Group (3500-3000 BC), the C-Group (2500-1500 BC), the Pan Grave culture (1800-1600 BC), and the Kerma peoples (2500-1500 BC). The arrival of the Noubade people from an area west of the Nile, perhaps as early as the third century BC, further

religion well into the sixth century. Nubian worshippers are attested at Philae in three discrete chronological periods in which three distinct Nubian populations journeyed to Philae to worship.³

Temple inscriptions of Nubian priests and administrators provide a wealth of information regarding the civil administration of Lower Nubia during the first five centuries of the Common Era, the political and religious involvement of Meroitic rulers in the region during the third century AD,⁴ and unique Nubian rites that differed from traditional Egyptian religious practices. However, this corpus of Nubian inscriptions is often ignored in the following three areas of study that document the transition from the ancient world into that of Late Antiquity: the expansion of the cult of Isis outside of Egypt, the transition from paganism to Christianity, and the study of military conflicts and political negotiations along the borders of the Roman Empire known as Roman border studies. Each of these areas of research would be rewarded profitably by the study of Nubian temple inscriptions, which are both religious and political in content. These texts offer a rare opportunity to understand Roman border conflicts from the point of view of a Roman opponent, a perspective not often preserved in the written record. The

complicates the picture as attributing sites and inscriptions to the Blemmyes or Noubade during the period in which the Nubian inscriptions were dedicated is still a contentious issue. A discussion of Nubia as a tribal society and the difficulty of securely identifying ethnic and tribal groups can be found beginning on page 24. For identification of three distinct Nubian populations that were responsible for each phase of inscriptions, see pages 15-17.

³ See page 15 for the three phases of Nubian epigraphic presence in the temples of Lower Nubia.

⁴ See page 11 for a discussion of the Kingdom of Meroe and pages 34 for a brief history of Kushite temple building in the Dodecaschoenos. For a discussion of the designation Kushite, see n. 8.

contributions of this study to each of the three areas identified above will be discussed in turn.

While studies of the expansion of the cult of Isis outside of Egypt are numerous, Nubian devotion to the goddess Isis is frequently omitted from those works. This omission is striking given the early appearance and long duration of the cult of Isis in Nubia. Isis and Osiris appeared on monuments of the Kushite kings of the twenty-fifth dynasty.⁵ Incorporation of Isiac and Osirian themes into Kushite royal iconography preserved the Egyptian identification of Isis and Osiris as the father and mother of the ruler. This faithfulness to the Egyptian understanding of the role of Isis and Osiris is unique outside of Egypt.

While Isiac worship spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean world and into Europe, gaining widespread appeal in the Roman period, the iconography of Osiris and Isis was dramatically altered in those areas to appeal to Greek and Roman worshippers. In the hands of Ptolemaic theologians, Osiris was transformed into Serapis, a Greek form of the combined divine names Osiris-Apis. Isis was assimilated to Greek goddesses and acquired their iconography.

Serapis was deliberately created by the Ptolemaic theologians for export abroad. He had powers of assimilation to the leading gods of Greece and in time won international acceptance. Isis, too, became increasingly cosmopolitan. In the Nile valley, however, she remained true to her ancient tradition. Her statues there were of conservative native type and her temple at Alexandria was built in the Egyptian style.⁶

⁵ Jean Leclant, "Isis au pays du Koush" in *Annuaire Résumés des conférences et travaux*, vol. 90 (1981-1982), 41-42.

⁶ R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 55.

In the Greco-Roman world Osiris and Isis were no longer associated with royalty. Throughout the Mediterranean, the cult of Isis appealed primarily to women, slaves, and the dispossessed.⁷ Thus, a bifurcation of the theology of Osiris and Isis emerged in the Ptolemaic period. Serapis and a “cosmopolitan” Isis were created to appeal to an “international” Mediterranean audience, while native Egyptians continued to worship the traditional forms of Isis and Osiris. The kings and queens of Meroe also preserved the traditional Egyptian iconography, theology, and practice of the cult of Osiris and Isis. The long duration and faithful adherence to Egyptian religious beliefs as practiced by the Kushite⁸ kings offers an excellent opportunity to study Egyptian religious practices in a foreign context. The period from the twenty-fifth dynasty in the eighth century BC until the conversion of the Nubians to Christianity in the sixth century AD comprises 1,400 years in which Isis and Osiris were incorporated into Nubian royal iconography. A very different manifestation of piety toward Osiris and Isis as practiced in the Kushite world offers an illuminating contrast to the spread of Isiac worship around the Mediterranean Sea. If only for the sake of completion, publications entitled *Isis in the Ancient World* should include a discussion of the sustained devotion of Nubian peoples to the Egyptian goddess.

⁷ Sharon Kelly Heyob, *The cult of Isis among Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 8-9, 14-19.

⁸ The term Kushite is used to refer to the Napatan and Meroitic kingdoms as a continuous political and cultural entity. Each period of the Kushite kingdom was designated by the name of its capital city, Napata and Meroe. The Napatan kingdom, centered at Gebel Barkal at the Fourth Cataract, endured from the ninth to the fourth century BC and included the Twenty-Fifth dynasty. The Meroitic period began with the relocation of the royal burial grounds from the fourth cataract area (Napata) to Meroe in the fourth century BC. The kingdom of Meroe flourished from 300 BC until circa 300 AD.

During the period of transition from paganism to Christianity, Nubian tenacity in their worship of Isis provides many details regarding the survival of traditional Egyptian religion in the third century AD. It was the religious, financial, and political involvement of Meroitic rulers in the administration of the temples of Lower Nubia (including Philae) that allowed cult services to continue well beyond the time when other Egyptian temples were abandoned or forcibly closed. Nubian priests and administrators from the northernmost Meroitic province of *Akin* traveled to the temples of the Dodecaschoenos during the third century to perform funerary rites for Osiris on behalf of the Meroitic king who donated large quantities of gold to support the temples when the traditional financial support of temples by the Egyptian king was ended under the Roman rulers. As Christianity spread from the urban Greek population into the countryside of Egypt, it became the religion of the majority of Egyptians in the fourth century. The appointment of a bishop on Philae circa AD 330⁹ indicated the establishment of an organized Christian community on the island, however, traditional Egyptian religion survived alongside the new religion. The survival of Isiac rites in the fifth century can be attributed to Blemmye kings who gained control of Lower Nubia after the fall of the Kingdom of Meroe and continued to employ priests who performed rites for the goddess Isis at several temples and sanctuaries in Nubia, including Philae. Blemmye defense of their traditional right of access to Philae and punitive attacks on Christian “encroachment” in the Upper Egypt and Nubia continued until the Byzantine Emperor Justinian ordered the temples at Philae

⁹ The first bishop of Philae was Macedonius. His name appears in the *Coptic Life of Aaron* and in a list composed by Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, to gather the names of ninety-four bishops who subscribed to the Council of Serdica in AD 343. Athanasius, *Apol. Sec. 49.3*; Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 55-56, 255-269.

closed in AD 537.¹⁰ Both the Meroites and the Blemmyes engaged in political negotiations with the Roman authorities in Egypt to maintain access to the temples of the Dodecaschoenos. Meroitic and Blemmye willingness to back up their political negotiations with military attacks protected the temples on Philae from closure long beyond the time when temples elsewhere in Egypt ceased to function.

Most general histories of the Roman Empire, and even scholarly studies of Roman border history, exclude any mention of Rome's battles and negotiations with the Kingdom of Meroe. As a frontier zone, Lower Nubia experienced intense political, military, and religious contact between the Kingdom of Meroe and Roman Egypt during the three and a half centuries in which the two powers shared a common border (30 BC – AD 325).¹¹ The area from Aswan south to Maharraqa (*Hiera Sycaminos*), approximately 120 kilometers, was the portion of Lower Nubia controlled by Roman Egypt. This northern portion of Lower Nubia was known as the Dodecaschoenos, a Greek geographic term meaning the “12 *schoenoi*,” a reference to the distance from Aswan to Maharraqa. The omission of the history of Lower Nubia from Roman border studies is particularly unfortunate because the Nubian inscriptions provide rare written evidence for the Nubian assessment of their interactions with Rome.¹² This information is rarely preserved in

¹⁰ Pierre Nautin, “La conversion du temple de Philae en église chrétienne” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 17 (1967), 6. The precise date is not known, however, the evidence presented by Nautin points to AD 535-537 as the time when the temples of Philae were finally closed.

¹¹ While this is also true of the Ptolemaic period, this study will focus on the Roman period during which the Nubian inscriptions began to be recorded.

¹² Several inscriptions from the third century AD were written by or depict emissaries from the Meroitic king who arrived at Philae to conduct political negotiations (Ph. 416, Ph. 417, IGP 180, IGP 181, and MI 97-111). Those inscriptions will be discussed in chapter 2.

other lands conquered by Rome.¹³ While Burstein¹⁴ suggests that the military interactions in the border zone between Roman Egypt and Meroe were more complex than previously suspected, I suggest that the religious situation in this area was equally as complex. The struggle for control of Lower Nubia was expressed militarily, through small skirmishes and troop placement in forts throughout the region but also through temple building, decoration, and administration. A historical overview of temple building and decoration by kings of the Twenty-Fifth dynasty and by early Meroitic kings, demonstrates that Kushite kings maintained a long-standing proprietary attachment to the worship of gods – Egyptian and Nubian – in Lower Nubia. The Nubian graffiti preserve intricate details of festivals performed by Nubian priests at Philae, which indicate that royal legitimacy of Nubian kings was demonstrated initially by delivering the required tithes to the temple of Philae. At the height of Meroitic royal involvement, royal legitimacy was acquired through the pious enactment of funerary rites – the “Festival of Entry” - for the royal “ancestor” Osiris. In the last phase of Nubian prayer inscriptions, Blemmye kings acquired the prestige of their Meroitic predecessors by maintaining the ritual processions to Philae and bearing the statue of Isis throughout Nubia on a pilgrimage to her shrines. A detailed analysis of the rites, titles, and reports reveals a wealth of information with which we can interpret the political interactions between Roman Egypt and its southern neighbors. The Nubian “pilgrims” who left records of their visits to Philae, Dakka, and the other temples of Lower Nubia were often political representatives of their small

¹³ C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 194. “One of the problems of our sources is that from the fourth century to the sixth they all come from the Roman side.”

¹⁴ Stanley M. Burstein, “Rome and Kush: a New Interpretation” in the *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of Nubian Studies Boston, August 20-26, 1998*, edited by Timothy Kendall (Boston: Northeastern University, 2004), 17-21.

Nubian towns, Nubian administrators who governed the northern province of the Kingdom of Meroe, or priests and prophets in service to a Blemmye king. While Nubians came to Philae to donate tithes and perform sacred rites, their actions were also political, whether they came as conquered people delivering tithes¹⁵ or as emissaries of a potent military power who journeyed to Philae to conduct political negotiations. The knowledge gained from a close analysis of the Nubian prayer inscriptions offers a way to interpret the political, military, and financial relations undertaken at the border of Roman Egypt. This wealth of written information from Roman “enemies” is not often available to the Roman historian. Its presence at the southern border of Egypt is an untapped resource for the field of Roman border studies.

Goals of this Study

This dissertation describes the involvement of local Nubians and those from Meroitic Nubia in the cults of temples of the Dodecaschoenos. It is based primarily on the texts of the Nubian graffiti (agreements and *proskynemata*) inscribed during the first five centuries of the Common Era on the walls of the temples on Philae Island (Kiosk of Nectanebo, on the dromos, Temple of Imhotep, Birth House, First and Second Pylon, “Meroitic Chamber,” Main Temple, and the Gate of Hadrian) and its subsidiary temples in Lower Nubia.¹⁶ Analysis of the areas in which the Nubian inscriptions were engraved

¹⁵ This was the situation in Phase I when local Nubians assumed roles in temple cult associations to collect Nubian tithes for delivery to Philae. This economic situation was instituted during the Ptolemaic period. See chapter 1 for a complete discussion.

¹⁶ The greatest geographic range of Nubian graffiti occurred in Phase I when inscriptions were engraved at Philae, Kalabsha, Dendur, and Dakka. In Phase II, Nubian inscriptions were engraved only at Philae and Dakka, the most important northern and southern temples in the Dodecaschoenos. In the Post-Meroitic period, Phase III, inscriptions were dedicated at Philae, Tafa, and Kalabsha. For the dates of each the three discrete phases of Nubian inscriptions, see page 15.

is integral to this study. Although Nubian inscriptions were found in many temples at Philae, particular areas attracted clusters of Nubian inscriptions. These areas varied over the course of five centuries in which Nubians are attested in the epigraphic record. By observing the deities portrayed in the adjacent reliefs as well as the general themes expressed through image and hieroglyphic texts, common ritual themes emerged that were important to Nubians who arrived at Philae and Dakka to worship. Nubian graffiti were clustered around specific reliefs or areas of the temple, which depicted rites that held significance for the priests, administrators, and royal envoys who journeyed to Philae. Temple areas dedicated to certain gods became focal points for Nubian worship. This analysis will yield an extensive discussion of the festivals that were important to Nubians whose cultic focus shifted over the course of five centuries.

As a counterpart to this study of private piety as expressed through graffiti, Ptolemaic, Meroitic, and Roman sponsorship of particular cults and temples will be analyzed. Building and expanding temples, changing and expanding temple areas, as well as decorating temple walls with hieroglyphic texts and relief images of divinities all expressed a particular royal program to favor and prioritize certain cults within each temple complex. Royal decrees, donation texts, and stelae further clarify royal policy with regard to the administration of temples in Lower Nubia. Ptolemaic and Kushite royal decrees proclaimed that the colonial territory of Lower Nubia was the temple estate of Isis of Philae.¹⁷ With the region administered as a temple estate, religion and finances became intricately intermingled. This mythic depiction of the area resulted in a financial administrative structure that operated through cult associations dedicated to the various

¹⁷ Ptolemy II, Arqamani II, and Ptolemy VI.

gods worshipped in Lower Nubia, most prominently Isis of Philae. This system of administration, in turn, shaped the unique political, economic, and financial context in which Nubians practiced their religion. Historical events in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt and Kush provide a framework in which Nubian involvement in the temple cults of Lower Nubia occurred. When we compare the images chosen by a given king to decorate a temple and the decrees engraved upon the walls (the official decoration) with the content of individual private inscriptions (agreements, legal records, or *proskynemata* – the unofficial decoration), the changing practices of Nubian worshippers at Philae emerge as personal piety shaped by the temple administrative policies of the Ptolemaic, Roman, or Kushite king vis-a-vis Lower Nubia as well as the changing cultic focus of Nubians over the course of five centuries.

This comprehensive analysis of personal piety and official, royal support of temple cult is pertinent to a study of private temple inscriptions. Although the primary intention of temple graffiti was to express personal religious devotion, the men who dedicated Nubian inscriptions were frequently cult association members, temple officials, or priests who were intimately involved in, and often controlled, the financial affairs of the temple. Personal graffiti elucidate the financial structures through which the Lower Nubian temples were administered. Throughout the five centuries of Nubian worship at Philae, Nubians who dedicated inscriptions expressed both an intense piety and a consistent dedication to delivering donations to Philae. The emphasis on donating goods and providing services to the temple is a strong theme that runs throughout the corpus of Nubian temple inscriptions. Accordingly, each chapter will discuss the titles claimed in

the Nubian graffiti in order to describe the temple administrative hierarchy in which Nubian priests and officials functioned.

The dissertation is organized chronologically. Each chapter will address one of the three discrete phases of the Nubian corpus.¹⁸ **Three questions** will be posed and answered in each chapter:

- Who recorded the Nubian graffiti and what titles, if any, did they hold?
- What did the political and religious use of the temples by the Nubians entail?
- Why was Philae important to the Meroitic or Nubian kings?

Terminology

Geographic Terms and Political Designations

The Kingdom of Meroe, located south of Egypt, controlled the Middle Nile Valley from its capital, south of the sixth cataract, to Maharraqa at the southern border of the Dodecaschoenos. The geographical term Nubia refers to the area from the first to the fifth cataract. Lower Nubia is the area between the First Cataract, site of the temple of Philae, and the Second Cataract, while Upper Nubia comprises the area between the Second Cataract and the Fifth Cataract. Political control of the region did not align with the geographical distinction between Lower and Upper Nubia. The northern portion of Lower Nubia, the Dodecaskhoenos, was under the control of Roman Egypt, while southern Lower Nubia and a portion of Upper Nubia were administered as the northernmost Meroitic province, *Akin*, which comprised the area from Korte (near Dakka)¹⁹ to Soleb

¹⁸ For the dates and a discussion of the three phases of Nubian inscriptions, see page 15.

¹⁹ The Meroites seem to have designated Qurta as the southern border of the Dodecaschoenos. Several Nubian inscriptions from Phase I make reference to this

(north of the third cataract). The Meroitic heartland, the area between the Nile and the Atbara River to the east was ruled directly by the Meroitic king and his court, while the northern provinces were governed by provincial administrators originally drawn from the Meroitic royal family. As the Meroitic administrative hierarchy in their northern territories grew and became more complex these posts were assumed by local Nubian elites. Beginning in the late first century BC, local governors from the “princely” families served as *peshtos*, governors, based first at Faras and later at Karanog. By the mid-second century AD, Meroitic administration began to extend into the Dodekaschoenos. The Wayekiye family of priests, warriors, and civil administrators served as the local Nubian representatives for the Meroitic ruler in his dealings with the Egyptian temples of Lower Nubia. Meroitic administrative structures and the Nubians who served in them will be discussed at greater length below.

The term “Nubian” is used in this study to refer to the people resident in Nubia who were defined as “non-Egyptian” by virtue of the non-Egyptian names and titles found in their temple inscriptions. Our knowledge of which tribes and ethnicities were living in Lower Nubia during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods is very limited. The graffiti writers themselves never referred to their ethnic or tribal identity until the Christian period. Therefore, the generic ethnic designation Nubian is preferred.

Graffiti Corpus

relatively minor temple in agreements concluded at Dakka and Dendur. When the Blemmye king Kharamadoye delineated his territory in a Meroitic-language graffito inscribed at Kalabsha (MI 94), Nubia was divided into several sections between the First and the Third Cataracts: from Philae to Qurta, from Philae to Karanog, from Karanog to the Second Cataract, and from the Second Cataract to Soleb. See *FHN III*, #300, 1107; Nicolas B. Millet, “Meroitic Nubia,” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1967), 287.

Official hieroglyphic texts cover the walls of Egyptian temples as an integral part of temple decoration. The texts are decorative and serve to label or describe the figural reliefs that also decorate Egyptian temple walls. The terms “graffiti” and “inscription” are used interchangeably to refer to texts engraved on the temple walls for private individuals,²⁰ which were **not** part of the original temple decoration, but may predate the official decoration.²¹ Thus, graffiti or prayer inscriptions were the unofficial texts interspersed among the official depictions of gods, goddesses, and kings and the hieroglyphic texts that accompany and describe them.

Broadly speaking, the type of private temple inscriptions at Philae changed over time. During the Ptolemaic period, only royal visitors or officials in the service of the king had their inscriptions carved on the temples’ walls in Greek.²² The privileged status of those entitled to dedicate the inscriptions at Philae is reflected in the fact that the earliest inscriptions, all Greek, were dedicated in the name of the king himself, royal relatives, and high-ranking officials, namely *epistrategoi* and *strategoi*. Only one priest is mentioned in those early inscriptions and he was also a royal family member.²³ Those early inscriptions commemorated the dedication of an altar, statue, or statue base in the

²⁰ I assume that the Nubian priests composed their own inscriptions, as I will discuss in chapter 1. If the earliest entrants into the Egyptian temple hierarchy were unable to write, the Nubian priests of Phase II and Phase III were fully trained in Egyptian hieroglyphs and Demotic, also using Greek and Meroitic to compose their inscriptions. Phase III contains several bilingual inscriptions.

²¹ Greek graffiti on the First Pylon at Philae predate the official decoration of that part of the temple by Ptolemy XII. These inscriptions were **not** engraved for Nubians.

²² Bernand, *IGP I*, 51-55. A total of sixty-four Greek inscriptions were engraved during the entire Ptolemaic period. *Ibid.*, 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 53. Ératon was both a prophet of Isis and a royal family member.

king's name.²⁴ In contrast, the very small number of Demotic inscriptions from the Ptolemaic period consisted of inscriptions of workmen from Edfu who worked at Philae under Ptolemy XII.²⁵ Those men commemorated their construction efforts at Philae and offered prayers before Isis. During the early Roman period, agreements pertaining to the distribution of temple income, written in Demotic by Egyptians and Nubians, were the dominant type of inscription. Beginning in the late first century AD, prayer inscriptions began to be inscribed on the temple walls for private individuals (Egyptians, Nubians, and others) in Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek. It was at that time that the right to inscribe prayers at Philae was extended to priests and worshippers and no longer restricted to government officials and royal family members.

Among 450 Demotic graffiti recorded by Griffith at Philae, Burkhardt identified thirty-six "Meroitic" graffiti²⁶ based on the non-Egyptian names and titles used by the writers.²⁷ All of the "Meroitic" graffiti were written in Demotic. This work will examine a larger corpus of Nubian inscriptions, which includes the Nubian inscriptions written in Demotic, as well as thirty-one inscriptions written in the Meroitic language at Philae and others found at Kalabsha, Dendur, and Dakka.²⁸ Omitted from Burkhardt's analysis, the

²⁴ Ibid., 55. See ibid., 56 for the number of inscriptions dedicated under each of the Ptolemaic kings.

²⁵ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 10.

²⁶ Twenty-five inscriptions are at Philae, while the remaining eleven were found in other temples of the Dodekaschoenos, namely Maharraqa (one), Dakka (eight), Dendur (one), and Kalabsha (one).

²⁷ Adelheid Burkhardt, *Ägypter und Meroiten im Dodekaschoinos* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 11.

²⁸ The Kalabsha Meroitic graffito (MI 94) was inscribed for the 5th century King Karamadoye. See Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions II*, 26-32. The Dendur Meroitic inscription (REM 0138) is almost completely illegible. See REM, vol. I. A rock graffito from Gebel Abu Dirwa near Dakka was written in Meroitic (REM 0091C). See Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions II*, 23.

Greek inscriptions are essential to understanding the role of priests who served Blemmye kings in the first half of the fifth century. Two Greek inscriptions engraved for high-level representatives of the Meroitic king during the third century supplement the reports of diplomatic negotiations found in the Demotic inscriptions. This methodology will increase size of the corpus analyzed in this study and will provide a more complete depiction of the Nubian involvement in the temples of Lower Nubia. Furthermore, I argue that additional inscriptions should be included in the corpus. In chapter 1, five inscriptions, considered Egyptian by Burkhardt, should now be designated as Nubian.

The dated Nubian inscriptions in the Dodekaschoenos fall into three discrete periods, which I have designated as follows:²⁹

- Phase I: c. 10 BC – c. AD 57
- Phase II: c. AD 175³⁰ – 273
- Phase III: AD 408-456

Nubian epigraphic presence at Philae was attested first during the early Roman period in the form of legal agreements inscribed on the first Pylon.³¹ The officials who

²⁹ It is gratifying that Edwards has identified several discrete periods of settlement in Nubia, separated by periods in which archaeological evidence of settlement is absent. He noted settlement in portions of Nubia from the second century BC until the early Roman period and another period that began in the late second century AD. This mirrors the evidence found in the Nubian temple inscriptions of Lower Nubia. See David N. Edwards, *The Nubian Past: an Archaeology of Sudan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 158. A similar conclusion was reached in Bruce Williams, “The Descent of Meroe’s Power in Akin” in *A Tribute to Excellence, Studia Aegyptiaca XVII*, ed. Tamás A. Bács (Budapest: Universit  E tv s Lorand de Budapest, 2002), 496-497.

³⁰ This date does not come from a dated inscription, rather it is an educated guess arrived at by subtracting two generations (25 years/generation) from the dated inscription of Wayekiye A (Ph. 421 in AD 227) to the undated inscription of his grandfather, Paese (Ph. 251 assumed to have been written in AD 175).

³¹ Burkhardt, * gypter*, 48, 69-71, 75. Laszlo T r k, “To the History of the Dodekaschoenus between ca. 250 B.C. and 298 A.D.” *Z S 107* (1980): 80-82.

appear in the early agreements were identified as Nubian based on their non-Egyptian names and foreign titles. During Phase I, the term “Nubian” refers to local officials from Lower Nubia who were active in cult associations at the temples of the Dodecaschoenos. During Phase II, Nubian priests served Meroitic rulers, but were members of an elite Nubian family, the Wayekiye family, attested in Meroitic Nubia at Medik (near Sayala, just south of Maharraqa at the southern border of the Dodecaschoenos) and Gebel Adda (farther south, near Abu Simbel). The “Nubians” of Phase II came from south of the Dodecaschoenos and, therefore, were not local. However, the location of their home in close proximity to the Dodecaschoenos allowed these Nubians a greater familiarity with the Egyptian language, culture, and religion than the Meroitic rulers they served. With this knowledge and cultural fluency, Nubian priests could represent the Meroitic ruler by performing rituals in the Egyptian temple setting, while Nubian administrators (often from the same Wayekiye family) journeyed to Philae to serve as political representatives of the rulers in Meroe. Phase III graffiti were inscribed after the fall of Meroe. The Esmet family of priests may have been Blemmyes or Egyptians who served a Blemmye king. Their inscriptions are included in this study because the ritual context in which the inscriptions were engraved was that of priests performing rites the Blemmyes, a tribe from the Eastern Desert that gained control of Lower Nubia (and perhaps further south) from the late fourth century AD until they lost control of the area to the Noubadae in the mid-fifth century. Thus, in each phase of Nubian inscriptions, the term “Nubian” means something slightly different. This general term is used to refer to people who lived south of Egypt in order to analyze the phenomenon of participation in the Egyptian temples of the Dodecaschoenos by Nubian people. While the populations that are attested at the

temples changed from period to period and their religious foci changed over time, there abided among the various peoples of Lower Nubia a desire to have access to the temples of the Dodekaschoenos. This dissertation will describe the unique characteristics of each phase while providing a unified description of a millennium of pilgrimage by southern people to the temples of the Dodekaschoenos.

Each phase of Nubian epigraphic presence at Philae was separated by a period without any dated Nubian inscriptions, which are designated as Interregnum I (c. AD 58 - 175) and Interregnum II (AD 274-408), respectively. Reasons for the absence of Nubian inscriptions between each phase will be presented and explored. It will be suggested that Nubian inscriptions testify to the ebb and flow of Nubian access to temple positions and fluctuating Meroitic control of the region. A lack of Nubian inscriptions in the Dodekaschoenos may simply have resulted from the abandonment of settlements in Meroitic Nubia.³²

Unique Characteristics of Nubian Graffiti

In the Pharaonic period, the wealthy donated statues to a temple to stand perpetually before the god in prayer. This tradition continued in the Ptolemaic period. In the Roman period, most temple devotions took the form of a prayer engraved upon the wall, often referred to by the Greek word *proskynema*. Derived from the Greek verb προσκυνεω “bow down before, worship,” the Egyptian Demotic equivalent was t3 wšte. Burkhardt classified inscriptions that began with this phrase as Type 2, the preferred form used by Nubians. Nubians who were active in the Egyptian temples adopted this tradition

³² See n. 29.

in their Meroitic-language inscriptions, which began with *tewisti*, a Meroitic transcription of the Demotic word t3 wšt.t.

Nubian graffiti took different forms depending on whether they were written in Demotic, Meroitic, or Greek. The Demotic graffiti in the Nubian corpus were often longer and more informative than those authored by Egyptians. Demotic graffiti written by Nubians often contained a *proskynema*, prayer, or report or some combination thereof.³³

This type of adoration (which combined the Egyptian wštē, “obeisance” formula with a prayer) was characteristic of the *proskynemata* texts inscribed by Meroites who made a pilgrimage to Philae... The same type of adoration does not seem to have been adopted by Egyptian worshippers and may therefore be regarded as a *proskynema* form which reflects Meroitic rather than an Egyptian personal religiosity.... Thus it would seem that the adoration+prayer type was developed by non-Egyptian worshippers in the Egyptian sanctuaries of the Dodecaschoenus.³⁴

These elements – *proskynema*, prayer, and report - were present in eighteen of the thirty-six Demotic inscriptions written by Nubians.³⁵ The remaining Nubian inscriptions were agreements, simple name inscriptions, or employed an unusual format. The prayer in Nubian graffiti was often longer and more personal than graffiti left by non-Nubian writers.³⁶ The inclusion of a report is unique to Nubian graffiti.³⁷ Each report related the

³³ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 50.

³⁴ László Török, *FHN III*, #231, 944. This suggestion finds further support in the preferred format in the Meroitic language inscriptions of the Dodecaschoenos. See below for further discussion of inscriptions written in Meroitic.

³⁵ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 67. Those eighteen inscriptions consist of eight prayer inscriptions (Ph. 120, Ph. 255, Ph. 251, Ph. 257, Ph. 411, Ph. 344, Dakka 31 and Dakka 32), four reports (Dakka 29, Dakka 33, Ph. 252 and Ph. 254), and six inscriptions that combined a prayer and a report (Ph. 410, Ph. 416, Ph. 417, Ph. 421, Ph. 449, and Dakka 30).

³⁶ Ibid., 47. “Besondere Beachtung verdienen bei diesem Vergleich die für die Meroiten als typisch anzusehenden persönlichen Gebete, die bei den Ägyptern praktisch fehlen.”

purpose of the visit to Philae such as the type and value of gifts donated, the “services” performed such as gilding a statue, the performance of rites in exchange for the life breath of the king, or a description of the journey undertaken to reach Philae. Reports also described parties and feasts enjoyed by the visiting Nubians together with the people of the town and the honors paid to visiting Nubian dignitaries by the priests at Philae. Sasan,³⁸ the Meroitic ambassador to Rome, included all of the elements above graffito Ph. 416. Burkhardt analyzed Sasan’s report³⁹ as an alternating series of reported commands by the Meroitic king and a record of the completion of those commands by Sasan. All of the inscriptions that contained reports were written during the period when Nubian priests and civil administrators traveled to Philae and Dakka on behalf of the Meroitic king.⁴⁰ Thus, the report served as an official written summation of the activities performed at Philae and Dakka on the Meroitic king’s orders.

Oddly, the Meroitic-language⁴¹ graffiti were more laconic than the Demotic graffiti inscribed by Nubians, generally including only the author’s name and title(s).

³⁷ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 51-53. Reports were included in Ph. 416 (Sasan), Ph. 417, lines 2-8, Ph. 421, lines 10-14, and 449, lines 4-8, Ph. 410, line 8, Ph. 252, lines 2-4, Ph. 254, lines 7-13, Dakka 29, line 2, Dakka 30, lines 5-6, 7-8, and Dakka 33, lines 2-6.

³⁸ I use the name Sasan instead of the earlier interpretation of Pasan as found in Griffith, Burkhardt and FHN. See Jeremy Pope, “The Demotic Proskynema of a Meroïte Envoy to Roman Egypt (Philae 416)” *Enchoria* 31 (2008/9): 74 with reference to the emended reading given by E. Lüddeckens’ *Korrekturen* to the *Demotisches Namenbuch*, published in G. Vittmann, *Demotisches Namenbuch*, Band I, Lieferung 18 (2000), 170 (S. 415).

³⁹ The report comprises lines 2-16 of the graffito. For a revised translation of Sasan’s Philae graffito, see Jeremy Pope, “Demotic Proskynema,” 72-74.

⁴⁰ The one exception is Dakka 29, inscribed by for a Nubian *strategos* during the reign of Augustus.

⁴¹ Two scripts were created to allow the Meroites to record their previously unwritten language. Meroitic hieroglyphs were based on Egyptian hieroglyphs, which were used as alphabetic signs. Except for a few characters, the sound values of the Meroitic hieroglyphs were unrelated to their original Egyptian values. Meroitic hieroglyphic script is first attested on monuments from the reign of Tanyideamani (late second century BC)

Occasionally, a graffito included a list of titles held by family members with the intention to highlight social status such as identifying the writer of the graffito as “the brother of the agent.” The Meroitic word *yetmede*⁴² was used to indicate the author’s familial connection to a person holding a high status title. This important Meroitic term is still imperfectly understood, but it is one of many kinship terms that referred to the author’s extended clan, perhaps that of his mother’s lineage. Elaborate statements of family member’s titles appear regularly in Nubian funerary inscriptions written in Meroitic⁴³ that

and was restricted purely to royal use. Meroitic hieroglyphs never were used in the prayer inscriptions of the Dodecaschoenos, which were written in Meroitic cursive, based on Egyptian Demotic characters. Both the hieroglyphic and cursive scripts were developed as an alphasyllabary in which consonant-vowel sequences were written as a unit. Each Meroitic consonant was implicitly followed by the vowel “a” unless followed by a vocalic modifier to indicate the vowels “e,” “i,” or “o.” Four consonants (ne, se, te, to) had a fixed vocalic value. See Claude Rilly, *La langue du royaume de Méroé* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2007), 231-358, esp. 235, 247-258. Meroitic language prayer inscriptions were written in cursive Meroitic. For the earliest attested Meroitic language inscriptions, dated to the beginning of the second century BC and perhaps earlier, see Claude Rilly, “Les graffiti archaïques de Doukki Gel et l’apparition de l’écriture méroïtique,” MNL 30 (December 2003), 48.

⁴² The Meroitic kinship term is defined in the Glossary on page x. For a discussion of this term see, Nicolas Millett, “Meroitic Nubia”, 69, 71-75; Hinze “Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen,” 235-236 and n. 11; Indem, “Die Struktur der ‘Deskriptionsätze’ in der meroitischen Totentexten” *MIO* 9 (Band IX, Heft 1, 1963): 8-9; Inge Hofmann, *Steine für die Ewigkeit: Meroitische Opfertafeln und Totenstelen* (Vienna-Mödling: László Török, “Economic Offices and Officials in Meroitic Nubia” *Studia Aegyptiaca* V (Budapest, 1979): 197, n. 14; Claude Rilly, *Le méroïtique et sa famille linguistique*, (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2010), 61 n. 66, 147.

⁴³ On stelae MI 88 (Taese, daughter of Hornakhtyotef I) and MI 89 (Wayekiye A) the deceased’s *yetmede* relations are listed along with their titles. See F. Ll. Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions*, vol. II (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1912), 17-19. These funerary monuments from Meroitic Nubia provide an external confirmation of the Wayekiye family tree that is inferred from the Demotic graffiti of seven generations of the family in the Dodecaschoenos. This family will be discussed further in chapter 2. For other Meroitic-language funerary inscriptions found in Nubia, see *Ibid.*, 53-60; Inge Hofmann, *Steine für die Ewigkeit. Meroitische Opfertafeln und Totenstelen*, (Vienna-Mödling: Druckerei St. Gabriel, 1991), 193.

have been found south of the Dodecaschoenos. Edwards sees this characteristic Nubian social consciousness as diagnostic of the culture,

It is perhaps noteworthy that the highly elaborate records of familial relationships recorded in funerary inscriptions seem to be largely a feature of Lower and Middle Nubian contexts.”⁴⁴

Nubian inscriptions in Demotic and Meroitic affirm that tribal and clan affiliation endured as essential markers of social connection and status. These *yetmede* relations were considered so important as a means of self-identification that they could at times appear even at the expense of the graffito author’s own name.⁴⁵ At Philae, this kinship term appears only in Meroitic-language adoration graffiti. The absence of the Meroitic kinship term in the Demotic prayer inscriptions is revealing. Nubians writing in Demotic did not mention their *yetmede*-relatives in their inscriptions because that element of social status and connection was not relevant or important in the Egyptian temple context. Instead, Nubians highlighted the titles they held within the temple administrative hierarchy. However, the fundamental importance of kinship connections is still evident in the Nubian inscriptions. Nubians often traveled to Philae and Dakka in family groups as references in the inscriptions to “my clan” or “my brothers and my people” attest.⁴⁶ One

⁴⁴ David N. Edwards, *The Nubian Past: an Archaeology of the Sudan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 175.

⁴⁵ MI 122 and 123. It is difficult to tell in MI 122 if *qeren* is a title or a name.

⁴⁶ Ph. 411, line 4 “with my brothers and my people” ḥn^c n̄=y sn.w n̄ rm.w mtw=y; Ph. 255, lines 7-9 “with my brothers and my clan, with my wife and my children” ṛrm n̄(=y) sn.w t̄(=y) mhw.t ḥn^c t̄(=y) ḥm.t ṛrm n̄(=y) hrd.w; Ph. 257, line 8 “together with my brothers [...]”. See FHN III, 994 where the author reached a similar conclusion regarding the translation of the Demotic word mhw.t as “my (extended) family.” Additionally, reference to “my elder brothers” in one Nubian inscription may refer to biological brothers, colleagues, or members of the extended clan lineage. See Ph. 421, lines 7-8 “grant me strength to equal(?) that which my elder brothers have done” Perhaps this same reference was made to esteemed relatives in Ph. 344, where the end of

Nubian author whose inscriptions are attested in Demotic and Meroitic, Wayekiye A, provides a good example of this dichotomy. In his Demotic text at Philae (Ph. 421) Wayekiye A included his priestly titles and described the rites he performed at Philae, while his Meroitic-language funerary stela (MI 89), omitted any mention of his priestly titles, instead listing Wayekiye A's *yetmede*-relatives and **their** titles, as did the funerary monument of his wife (MI 88).

The Meroitic-language graffiti of this corpus exhibit a form unique to Lower Nubia that is different from Meroitic-language graffiti found south of the Dodecaschoenos.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, the type of Meroitic-language graffiti that was unique to Lower Nubia was the very type preferred by Nubians for their Demotic inscriptions. Nineteen of the Demotic inscriptions inscribed for Nubians belonged to Burkhardt's Type 2, *proskynemata* which began with the phrase *t3 wšt.t.*⁴⁸ Similarly, those Meroitic-language prayer inscriptions that began with *tewisti* were unique to Lower Nubia, appearing nowhere south of the Dodecaschoenos. Furthermore, this specific type of inscription only appeared during the time of Meroitic royal involvement in the temples of the Dodecaschoenos. Although none of the Meroitic-language graffiti are dated, the preference for this particular inscription type and the appearance of Wayekiye family

the line is lost. Ph. 344, line 8 preserves only "give me strength..." For all of these Philae graffiti, see Griffith, 83-99, 112-122.

⁴⁷ Rilly, *Langue*, 195-204, esp. 201-203; For a full description of all the variant forms of Meroitic prayer inscriptions see Laszlo Török, "Three Contributions in a Positivistic Manner" *Meroitische Forschungen*, Meroitica 7, ed. Fritz Hinze (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1984), 174-181, esp. 178.

⁴⁸ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 48. For Burkhardt's typology of the inscriptions of the Dodecaschoenos, see page 30.

names in the inscriptions allows us to assign most Meroitic-language inscriptions to the second and third centuries AD, Phase II of the Nubian corpus.⁴⁹

Greek began to be used by Nubians in Phase II when only two inscriptions inscribed on the western exterior of the Gate of Hadrian were composed in that language. However, almost forty percent of the Phase III Nubian inscriptions were written in Greek, reflecting the adoption of that language as the *lingua franca* of Nubia after the fall of the Kingdom of Meroe c. AD 330.

Language choice in this corpus is indicative of diachronic change in the populations that journeyed to Philae from Nubia, differences in power among those who dedicated contemporary inscriptions, and, perhaps, it can suggest various spheres (religious or political) in which graffiti writers functioned. The inscriptions of Phase I were composed solely in Demotic. Local Nubians who authored inscriptions during Phase I served as temple financial officials in a purely Egyptian context where Demotic had become the language of religious texts. In contrast, those who wrote the inscriptions of Phase II came from south of the Doedecashoenos and served the Meroitic ruler as priests trained to perform the appropriate rites in an Egyptian temple. Because members of the Wayekiye family were highly acculturated to the Egyptian culture, religion, and language they could serve the Meroitic ruler by performing rites for Osiris on behalf of the king or ruling queen in Meroe. Their inscriptions were written in Demotic. However, they were not the only officials who were active at Philae during Phase II. Meroitic civil administrators traveled to Philae to conduct political negotiations with Roman Egypt and

⁴⁹ The Meroitic-language “feet graffiti” are an exception and were inscribed in the last period of Nubian epigraphic activity at Philae in the fifth century AD. Those inscriptions are discussed in chapter 3.

participate in the rites performed for Meroitic royalty. Those individuals often composed their inscriptions in Meroitic, the language of civil administration in Meroitic Nubia and the Meroitic heartland. Officials who held the titles *strategos* and agent most often wrote their inscriptions in Meroitic during Phase II, demonstrating these temple financial administrators functioned in a Meroitic administration. By contrast, Nubian *strategoi* and agents in Phase I served within a temple hierarchy controlled by Egyptians. Finally, in Phase III Demotic, Meroitic and Greek were used to compose prayer inscriptions. I have interpreted the use of Demotic by one branch of the Esmet family of priests as an indication that those individuals were resident at Philae and chose to maintain the traditional use of Demotic. The dramatic increase in Greek inscriptions in Phase III (40% of Nubian inscriptions were written in Greek) was a result of the adoption of the Greek language as the *lingua franca* of Nubia after the fall of Meroe in the early fourth century. The use of the Meroitic language in prayer inscriptions after the fall of Meroe is more difficult to explain. Only four “feet graffiti” were written in Meroitic during Phase III.⁵⁰ They were all inscribed for one individual who may have seen the Meroitic language as prestigious and archaic.

Who were the “Nubians”?

In the course of conducting research, it became apparent that the people Burkhardt called Meroites were, in fact, local Nubians who belonged to a society organized along tribal lines. Nubians may not have considered themselves as members of an ethnic group, rather their loyalty and self-definition was tied to their tribe. Referring to the difficulty of specifying ethnicity in a multiethnic border region, Edwards noted,

⁵⁰ MI 114, 115 (illegible), 116, and 117 were inscribed on the Birth House roof. See Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions II*, 42-43.

What ‘local’ population there may have been remains unclear. In the mid-second century (BC) we have references to ‘Aethiopians’ within this region...Rather than referring to Meroites, these may refer to groups from the Eastern Desert such as the Blemmyes who will have been in contact with the Ptolemaic outposts.⁵¹

Adams, on the other hand, felt certain that the population of southern Nubia was Noubadae,

It is now quite evident that the great bulk of the Ballana population, including all of it from Qasr Ibrim southward, was ethnic Noubadae. Moreover, they were not recent immigrants to Nubia, as classical sources had suggested; they were descendants of the same Nubian-speaking peasant population that was already in the area under Meroitic and Roman rule.⁵²

Rachel J. Dann maintained that groups of Nubians were too mobile, small, and intermixed to affix with any broad ethnic label,

People were living in small groups scattered across the landscape and perhaps at times moving around in Lower Nubia. In itself, this model may be enough of a basis to question the monolithic ‘Blemmye’ or ‘Nobadae’ identities that are often used unreflexively in the archaeological literature. How could people living at such distances perceive themselves as belonging to the group designated as ‘Blemmyes’ or ‘Nobadae’?⁵³

Dann suggested a more nuanced understanding of ethnicity,

It is much more acceptable to suggest that the ethnic makeup of the Sudan was a complex one: Kin groups may have intercut across ethnic or geographic boundaries, particularly via endogamous and exogamous marriages that moved individuals and their cultural practices among different groups.⁵⁴

This multiethnic mix may explain the emphasis that Nubians placed on stressing the connection to members of their extended family. The Meroitic word *yetmede* was

⁵¹ Edwards, *The Nubian Past*, 162.

⁵² William Y. Adams, *Qasr Ibrim: the Ballana Phase* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2013), 18.

⁵³ Rachel J. Dann, *The Archaeology of Late Antique Sudan: Aesthetics and Identity in the Royal X-Group Tombs at Qustul and Ballana* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), 246.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 253.

used in to indicate the author's familial connection with a person holding a high status title. The priority placed on naming *yetmede*-relatives on Nubian funerary monuments and in Nubian prayer inscriptions speaks to the profound importance of kin groups as the basic organizational structure of Nubian society.⁵⁵ Edwards sees this social consciousness as characteristic of the Nubian culture,

It is perhaps noteworthy that the highly elaborate records of familial relationships recorded in funerary inscriptions seem to be largely a feature of Lower and Middle Nubian contexts.⁵⁶

This important Meroitic term served to indentify the author's place in a web of social connections. It may refer to a person's maternal lineage,⁵⁷ which was almost always given priority in the "filiation" section of the funerary inscription where the mother's name was given before, and sometimes to the exclusion of, the father's name.⁵⁸ References to a person's *yetmede*-relations appear regularly in Meroitic-language funerary inscriptions south of the Dodecaschoenos in Meroitic Nubia. However, the practice of claiming *yetmede*-relations does appear anywhere south of the Third Cataract

⁵⁵ On stelae MI 88 and MI 89, belonging to Taese, daughter of Hornakhtyotef I, and her husband, Wayekiye A, respectively, the deceased yetmede relations are listed along with their titles. These funerary monuments from Meroitic Nubia provide an external confirmation of the Wayekiye family tree that is inferred from the Demotic graffiti of the Dodecaschoenos. This family will be discussed further in chapter 2.

⁵⁶ David N. Edwards, *The Nubian Past: an Archaeology of the Sudan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 175.

⁵⁷ Nicolas Millett, "Meroitic Nubia", 69, 71-75; Hinze "Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen", 235-236; Indem, "Die Struktur der 'Deskriptionsätze' in der meroitischen Totentexten" MIO 9 (Band IX, Heft 1, 1963): 8-9; Laszlo Török, "Economic Offices and Officials in Meroitic Nubia" *Studia Aegyptiaca* V (Budapest, 1979): 197, n. 14; Claude Rilly, *Le méroïtique et sa famille linguistique*, (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2010), 147.

⁵⁸ Inge Hofmann, *Steine für die Ewigkeit: Meroitische Opfertafeln und Totenstelen* (Vienna-Mödling: Druckerei St. Gabriel, 1991), 192. For the structure of Meroitic funerary inscriptions, see Francis Ll. Griffith, *The Meroitic Inscriptions of Shablul and Karanog*, The Eckley B. Coxe Junior Expedition to Nubia, vol. VI (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1911), 32.

nor on funerary monuments in the cemeteries in the Meroitic heartland.⁵⁹ At Philae, this kinship term appears only in Meroitic-language adoration graffiti, which serves to emphasize that the importance of this type of social connection was restricted to the Nubian cultural sphere. These *yetmede*-relations were deemed so important that at times they appear even at the expense of the graffito author's own name.⁶⁰ Those connections across small tribal groups would have provided the "ethnic identity" for Nubians, who conceived of themselves as belonging to a clan lineage, rather than having a larger ethnic group.

Prior Scholarship

Publication of Graffiti

There have been numerous publications of the Philae inscriptions. Only the most important scholarly publications will be highlighted here. The earliest copies of the Demotic graffiti at Philae were those made by the French expedition under Napoleon in February 1799.⁶¹ In the early to mid-19th century many scholars made copies of the inscriptions. Most prominent among them was C.R. Lepsius whose expedition surveyed, copied and made squeezes of all monuments in the Dodecaschoenos during two weeks in the fall of 1843 and again upon returning north almost a year later.⁶² Heinrich Brugsch made copies of graffiti from Philae, Dakka and Dendur during several visits to Nubia beginning in 1853.⁶³ Georges Bénédict in 1887,⁶⁴ J.J. Hess in 1893-4, and W.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 193.

⁶⁰ MI 122 and 123. It is difficult to tell in MI 122 if qeren is a title or a name.

⁶¹ Griffith, *Dodecaschoenos*, 4.

⁶² Carl R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, (Geneva: Éditions de Belle-Lettres, 1973) vol. 11, part 6.

⁶³ Heinrich Karl Brugsch, *Die Geografie der Ägypter nach den Denkmälern aus den Zeiten der Ptolemäer und Römer: nebst einem Nachtrage zur Geographie der Ägypter nach den altägyptischen Denkmälern* (Leipzig: Verlag der J.C. Hinrichs Buchhandlung,

Spiegelberg in 1895-6⁶⁵ each copied inscriptions at Philae. The Nubian expedition of the Prussian Academy under Schäfer and Junker photographed and made squeezes of the scenes and hieroglyphs from Philae to Maharraqa in 1908-1910.⁶⁶ Gaston Maspero's series *Temples immergés de la Nubie* published the inscriptions of the Ptolemaic and Roman temples of the Dodecaschoenos in 1907-1910 and included the two-volume *Catalogue of the Demotic Graffiti of the Dodecaschoenos* by Francis Llewellyn Griffith published in 1912.⁶⁷ Griffith's *Catalogue* remains the seminal work to collate, translate, and discuss 450 Demotic inscriptions from Philae and elsewhere in Nubia. Griffith's work has been supplemented by the more recent publication of the Demotic graffiti of Lower Nubia by Edda Bresciani.⁶⁸ Eugene Cruz-Urbe has copied, transcribed, and translated more than 500 additional inscriptions at Philae. His publication is forthcoming.⁶⁹

1860); Thesaurus inscription ägyptiacarum. Altägyptische inschriften, gesammelt, verglichen, übertragen, erklärt und autographiert (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs Buchhandlung, 1883-91).

⁶⁴ Georges Bénédict, *Description et histoire de l'île de Philae*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chalon-sur-Saone, 1893)

⁶⁵ Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Die demotischen Denkmäler*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1904-1932).

⁶⁶ Hermann Junker and Heinrich Schäfer, *Berliner Photos der Preussischen Expedition 1908-1910 nach Nubien*, (Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz Microfiche Service, 1975), idem, *Bericht über die von der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in den Wintern 1908/1909 und 1909/10 nach Nubien entsendete Expedition, Sitzungsberichte*, 579-90.

⁶⁷ F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue of the Demotic Graffiti of the Dodecaschoenos*, vol. 1, *Les temples immergés de la Nubie*, vol. 20 (Oxford: University Press, 1937). Contains 450 Demotic graffiti from Philae and the temples of Lower Nubia.

⁶⁸ Edda Bresciani, *Graffiti démotiques du Dodécaschoène: Qertassi-Kalabcha-Dendour-Dakka-Maharraqa*, (Cairo: Centre de documentation et d'études sur l'ancienne Egypte, 1969).

⁶⁹ Eugene Cruz-Urbe, *The Demotic Graffiti from the Temple of Isis on Philae Island*, forthcoming.

Griffith's *Meroitic Inscriptions*, published in two volumes, contains 137 Meroitic inscriptions found on funerary monuments, temple walls and rock faces from Meroe to Philae. Griffith supplemented these volumes with a series of articles published in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*.⁷⁰ All currently known Meroitic texts are collected in the four-volume publication *Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtique*, abbreviated as REM.⁷¹

Publication of Temples

Publications of the major temples of the Dodekaschoenos were consulted to study the temple relief scenes and the official hieroglyphic inscriptions around which the Nubian graffiti were inscribed. Study of the surrounding reliefs and texts provided a fuller understanding of the author's motivation for choosing a site in which to engrave his inscription. Clusters of Nubian inscriptions indicate that certain temple areas appealed to those who commemorated their time at Philae with a written record. This study reveals the appeal of a given location for writers of Nubian graffiti.

The Nubian temples of Philae, Biga, Kertassi, Kalabsha, Dendur, Dakka, and Maharraqa were published in Gaston Maspero's series *Les temples immergés de la Nubie*.⁷² Description of the small temple of Maharraqa was included in the publications of several other Nubian temples.⁷³

⁷⁰ F. Ll. Griffith, "Meroitic Studies I," *JEA* 3 (1916): 22-30, "Meroitic Studies II," *JEA* 3, no. 2/3 (Apr.-Jul. 1916): 111-124, "Meroitic Studies III," *JEA* 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1917): 21-27, "Meroitic Studies IV," *JEA* 4, no. 2/3 (Apr.-Jul. 1917): 159-173, "Meroitic Studies V," *JEA* 11, no. 3/4 (Oct. 1925): 218-224, "Meroitic Studies VI," *JEA* XV (May 1929), 69-74.

⁷¹ Jean Leclant, André Heyler, Catherine Berger-El Nagar, et al., *Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtique: Corpus des inscriptions publiées* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 2000)

⁷² Günther Roeder's *Debod bis Bab Kalabsche* published findings for the smaller temples of the northern Dodekaschoenos. Henri Gauthier published the *Temple de Kalabchah*.

The temples at Philae have not been published in their entirety in a comprehensive, scholarly monograph. Therefore, several texts were used to study areas of the temple where Nubian inscriptions were found. Hermann Junker's publications describe discrete parts of the temple and illuminate cultic practices described in temple texts. Most pertinent to this study were the following publications: *Das Götterdekret über das Abaton*, *Der grosse Pylon der Tempels der Isis in Philä*, *Das Geburtshaus des Tempels der Isis in Philä*, and *Die Stundenwachen in den Osirienmysterien nach den Inschriften von Dendera, Edfu und Philae*. Gerhard Haeny provides an excellent description of the historical development of the temples of Philae in a 1985 article.⁷⁴

Nubian Graffiti

Adelheid Burkhardt published dissertation, *Ägypter und Meroiten im Dodekaschoinos*, is central to understanding the Nubian temple inscriptions. Burkhardt completed a linguistic analysis of the Demotic graffiti from the Dodekaschoenos, based on the structure and characteristic phrases. From this research, she developed a typology of the Demotic inscriptions, in which most inscriptions exhibited one of four types:

- Type 1: *Namensinschriften* – inscriptions containing a name and perhaps a title or filiation. “Feet graffiti” are a subset of this type in which the writer's name was accompanied by a drawing of a foot or pair of feet.
- Type 2: Inscriptions begin with the phrase *t3 wšt.t* “the adoration (of).”

A. M. Blackman published the *Temple of Dendur*, as well as *The Temple of Bigeh*. Günther Roeder published *Der Tempel von Dakke*.

⁷³ Griffith, *Dodekaschoenos*, 15-17, Service des Antiquités, *Les temples immergés de la Nubie, Rapports*, I, xvii, 8-10, 99-105, and II, Pls. VII,-X, XCIX-CIX, and D-F; *ibid.*, *Documents*, I, 5-6, and Pls. XVIII and XIX. Günther Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich. Der römische Pharao und seine Tempel II* (Mainz am Rhine: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2004), 147-150.

⁷⁴ Gerhard Haeny, “A Short Architectural History of Philae,” *BIFAO* 85 (1985): 197-233.

- Type 3: Inscriptions begin with the phrase *rn=f mnꜥ ty* “His name remain here,” generally followed by *m-bꜣḥ DN* “before DN.”
- Type 4: *Vereinbarungen* – “contracts.” This type recorded a legal agreement, whereas the other inscriptions types sought to ensure the continual presence of the worshipper before the god by means of the written name.

Burkhardt’s typology cannot be used to distinguish Egyptian and Nubian Demotic inscriptions, because Nubians who wrote in Demotic tended to employ the traditional forms identified by Burkhardt. However, Burkhardt did notice some differences in the structure of Nubian graffiti. In contrast to the Egyptian corpus of inscriptions, which often contained only a name and filiation, those composed by Nubians contained greater structural variety.⁷⁵ In addition to a name and filiation, Nubian writers often included a prayer and a detailed report about the activities undertaken en route the temple or while engaged in rites at the temple. This resulted in longer, more information-rich inscriptions, which included the author’s title(s), family relations, and political and religious affiliations.

Burkhardt mined these rich texts in order to present a history of the Dodecaschoenos during the Greco-Roman period and a brief analysis of the offices held by Nubians during the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. However, the question “What drew Nubians to Philae?” was not discussed. Nubians are attested as participants in the cult of Isis in the Dodecaschoenos for more than one thousand years – from the reign of Taharqa until the final inscriptions were engraved at Philae in the mid-fifth century AD. Such an enduring presence must bear witness to an important function that Philae fulfilled for the local chiefs of Nubia, Meroitic rulers, and the kings of the Blemmyes and Noubadae.

⁷⁵ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 48.

This dissertation seeks to explicate the enduring tradition of Nubian pilgrimage to Philae that was maintained among this disparate group of Nubian rulers.

Temple Inscriptions as Evidence for Religious Use

Rutherford described the temples at Philae as “contested space,” divided among various competing ethnic/language groups.⁷⁶ His primary focus was the Greek inscriptions at Philae, but Rutherford extended his analysis to Demotic, Meroitic, and Post-Meroitic inscriptions in order to highlight the diversity of pilgrims who visited Philae. Rutherford presented the pilgrimage tradition at Philae diachronically as well as across language groups. Using this broad analysis, he contrasted each language group’s use of the temple of Philae. Rutherford veered into complicated territory when he analyzed inscriptions based on the language in which they were composed, correlating certain areas of Philae’s temple complex with particular language groups. General statements such as, “Perhaps Greek-speakers wanted their dedications to be seen by Greek-speaking visitors, whereas the demotic inscriptions are all about personal religion”⁷⁷ overlook the complexity of the language-choice issue at Philae. Greek-language graffiti written by Nubians were not considered in Rutherford’s analysis. The Nubian inscriptions written in Greek were engraved in areas typical for Nubian *prokynemata* at Philae and, therefore, **not** in highly visible locations.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ian Rutherford, “Island of the Extremity: Space, Language and Power in the Pilgrimage Traditions of Philae,” in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 250-253.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁸ Greek began to be used by Nubians in Phase II when only two inscriptions were composed in Greek and inscribed on the western exterior of the Gate of Hadrian. However, almost forty percent of the Phase III Nubian inscriptions were written in Greek, reflecting the adoption of that language as the *lingua franca* of Nubia after the fall of the Kingdom of Meroe c. AD 330.

Rutherford noted the dramatic increase of Demotic graffiti on the Gate of Hadrian during the third century AD and sought to explain the large number of Nubian inscriptions found there. He reasoned that the area appealed to Nubians,

...either because the South Pylon was full, or because the Gate of Hadrian was specially associated with Rome, or because the journey to and from the Abaton was now a more prestigious event than arrival at the sanctuary itself.⁷⁹

The first two reasons do not make sense in the Nubian context; the third reason does, but the question remains to be answered, “Why? Why was this location and the rituals associated with it so important to the Nubians who came to Philae?” Rutherford does not answer the question, but it is an important one that this dissertation answers in chapter 2.

Finally, Rutherford ignored the role played by Nubians as leaders in the Philae temple hierarchy. While he noted that Nubians served as administrators in the Dodecaschoenos during the early Roman period in Egypt,⁸⁰ he mistakenly employed the misnomer “pilgrims” to describe the Nubians who are attested at Philae. Even a quick perusal of their titles makes clear that they served in the cult of Isis at the highest levels; two early Roman period Nubians were *strategoï*. Viewing Nubians at Philae as mere “pilgrims” and “visitors” obscures their intimate involvement in the cult at Philae, who rose to the positions of prophets, priests, *lesoneis* as well as temple financiers during the second and third centuries AD at Philae. When Nubian inscriptions are read simply as a

⁷⁹ Ibid., 252.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 242. Rutherford referred here to first century AD Nubian agreements, Ph. 54 and 55, inscribed on the first pylon, in which Nubian *strategoï* recorded their financial decisions. These agreements and others will be discussed in chapter 1.

record of pilgrims' pious visits to the temple of Isis, the history of the crucial involvement of the Kingdom of Meroe in extending the survival of Philae's cult is lost.

The important involvement of Nubian priests in the temples of the Dodecaschoenos is adamantly denied in the most comprehensive recent work on late period Philae.⁸¹ Dijkstra's focus on the Christianization of Philae presents a skewed view of the end of traditional Egyptian religion. It is the triumph of Christianity, not the last manifestations of traditional Egyptian religion at Philae, that is the book's focus. Dijkstra, therefore, avoids a substantive discussion of the pivotal the 3rd century, which was witness to dramatic religious changes: most Egyptian temples closed, Diocletian withdrew Egypt's southern border to Aswan, ceding Lower Nubia to Meroe, which took control of Philae for about a decade. Ignoring the essential role played by Meroitic rulers in sustaining the cults at Philae, Dijkstra also denies the involvement of Nubian priests and administrators in the temple hierarchy at Philae. Procopius's statement that "barbarian" (Nubian) priests served alongside Egyptian priests at Philae is abundantly supported by the inscriptions of Nubian *lesoneis*, prophets, priests, and cult association members inscribed on the temple walls throughout Nubia.⁸² However, Dijkstra claimed that **only**

⁸¹ Jitse Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies, 2008), 143-146, 201.

⁸² It was during the period of Meroitic control of Philae that the inscriptions of high-ranking Meroitic officials were inscribed at Philae. They are dated to c. AD 250-260. Some examples include: Sasan (Demotic Ph. 416), Tami (Demotic Ph. 417 and Greek IGP 181), Abratoye (Greek IGP 180) and a "procession" of Meroitic-language inscriptions accompanied by images in the Meroitic Chamber. One might argue that the Nubian priests merely traveled to Philae. For the most part, that is true of the priests of Phases I and III. Despite the fact that they were not resident at Philae, those priests did engage in rites during their time at Philae. In Phase II, however, it is undeniable that Nubian priests resided at Philae, and held very high-ranking positions in the temple hierarchy.

Egyptians served as priests at Philae⁸³ and based this claim on a mistaken interpretation of Priscus' statement "...Egyptians having charge of the river boat in which the statue of the goddess is placed..."⁸⁴ Dijkstra interpreted the quote as follows,

Interestingly, Priscus remarks that 'Egyptians', that is, Egyptian priests were in charge at Philae and not that the priesthood was shared, as Procopius claims.⁸⁵

In fact, Priscus' statement referred **only** to those who were in charge of the riverboat that transported the statue of Isis and said **nothing** of the priests at Philae, let alone offering an authoritative statement on the ethnicity of Philae's priests.

Kushite Temple Building in Lower Nubia

As the buffer zone between the kingdoms of Egypt and Kush, Lower Nubia inspired colonial ambitions in both kingdoms. Being the more powerful of the two lands, Egypt enjoyed long periods when it held Kush as a colony; however, in moments of Egyptian weakness Kush was able to occupy Lower Nubia and, once, in the mid-eighth and early-seventh centuries BC, Kushite kings ruled Egypt as the twenty-fifth dynasty.

A diachronic study of temple building, modification, and decoration in Lower Nubia demonstrates alternating control of Lower Nubia by Egypt and Kush. In both

⁸³ Jitse Dijkstra, *End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 2008), 145.

⁸⁴ Dijkstra includes this portion of Priscus' quote in his text, "and, that in accordance with the ancient right (νομος), their crossing to the temple of Isis be unhindered, Egyptians having charge of the river boat in which the statue (ἄγαλμα) of the goddess is placed and ferried across the river. For at a stated time the barbarians bring the wooden statue (ξύανον) to their own country and, after having consulted it, return it safely to the island." Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 145. Dijkstra repeated this mistaken interpretation to refute the claim that the last priests at Philae were Nubian. "Priscus was probably right that the priests were Egyptian, rather than being of mixed ethnic origins, as Procopius says." Ibid., 201.

countries, kings proclaimed their right to control conquered territory by building temples, which were decorated with depictions of divine approval of the king.

The earliest cultic activity at Philae is attested through several Ramesside blocks found during the salvage campaign of the 1960s.⁸⁶ Inscribed blocks, recovered under the northwest corner of the Main Temple⁸⁷ and in the foundation course of the eastern wing of the Gate of Nectanebo⁸⁸ (central door through the First Pylon), reveal that the island's earliest monuments were originally dedicated to two gods: Amun and Horus of Kubban.⁸⁹ Amun, of course, was the state god of the New Kingdom whose cult was centered at Thebes. Horus, Lord of Nubia (T3-Stf) was worshipped as four highly localized manifestations: Lord of B3k1 (Kubban), Lord of M13m (Aniba),⁹⁰ Lord of Bhn (Buhen), and Lord of M-h3 (Abu Simbel), each associated with an Egyptian administrative center in Nubia. Introduced into Nubia in the Middle Kingdom and often associated with fortresses, these local manifestations of Horus were deeply incorporated into local Nubian religious identity.⁹¹ A temple was built for Horus at Kubban under Ramses X and

⁸⁶ Seti, Ramses III. See S. Farag, et al. "Inscribed Blocks of the Ramesside Period and of King Taharqa, Found at Philae" *Oriens Antiquus* 18 (1979): 281-282.

⁸⁷ Block inscribed for Ramses III.

⁸⁸ Block inscribed for Ramses IX.

⁸⁹ A monument built by Rameses XI for Horus of Kubban is attested in a single inscribed block.

⁹⁰ One stela of Amenhotep I indicates that the cult of Horus of Miam was practiced at nearby Qasr Ibrim as well. See Martin J. Plumley, "Pre-Christian Nubia (23 B.C. – 535 A.D.) Evidence from Qasr Ibrim" *Études et Travaux* 5 (1971), 24.

⁹¹ Egyptian gods introduced into Nubia were incorporated into local religion. Janice Yellin describes this process, "For the most part, the Egyptian gods adopted by Nubians underwent a 'Nubianization.' Many were associated with pre-existing Nubian deities and developed new qualities and iconography as a result." Janice Yellin, "Nubian Religion" in *Ancient Nubia: African Kingdoms on the Nile* ed. Marjorie Fisher et al. (Cairo, New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 126. Such an example can be seen in the image of the king offering milk to Horus of Kubban, the focus of Phase II Nubian piety at Philae. For late New Kingdom examples of graffiti left by Nubian priests in the

blocks from the foundation at Dakka show that that temple was originally dedicated to Horus of Kubban.⁹² The temple at Kubban stood at the mouth of the Wadi Allaqi, route to the Nubian gold mines.

Taharqa dedicated the oldest extant religious monument on Philae to Amun of Takompso, a granite bark shrine that stands in the forecourt of the Main Temple.⁹³ Several decorated sandstone blocks, found under the paving of the forecourt of the Main Temple (between the First and Second Pylons), depict Taharqa worshipping Amun-Re came from a dismantled building.

We do not know which kind of building these fragments came from, but it is likely that it formerly stood on Philae, where also the granite altar of Taharqa was found.⁹⁴

The building was usurped by Psammetichus II⁹⁵ and later dismantled.

gold mining areas of the Eastern Desert, see Andrés D. Espinel, “Gods in the Red Land” in *The History of the Peoples of the Eastern Desert*, Hans Barnard and Kim Duistermaat, eds. (Los Angeles, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2012), 99-101. “Falcon divinities, however, seem to have been the main subject of local devotion. Figures of falcons and stele-like graffiti were carved at the basis (sic) and at the highest point of the rock where a falcon’s nest could potentially exist. Few of these carvings identify the *genius loci* again as Horus, Lord of Baki. Others seem to refer to this city as the origin of the authors of the inscriptions.” Ibid., 100. Note especially the association of the New Kingdom falcon images with much earlier images of giraffes and boats. Ibid., 99. Yellin suggests, “[Horus] also had a number of distinct local cults, but no known temple can be associated with them, perhaps because he was worshipped in indigenous, perishable shrines at these sites.” Yellin, “Nubian Religion,” 133. However, a New Kingdom temples were dedicated to Horus at Kubban and at Dakka. See n. 86.

⁹² Walter B. Emery and Laurence Kirwan, *Excavations and Survey between Wadi es-Sebua and Adindan*, (Cairo: Service des Antiquités de l’Egypte, Mission archéologique de Nubie, 1935), 27-28 and C.M. Firth, *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia. Report of 1909-1910* (Cairo, National Print Department, 1915), 38.

⁹³ F. Ll. Griffith, *BIFAO* 30 (1931):128.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 284.

⁹⁵ Ahmed Kadry, “Remains of a Kiosk of Psammetikhos II on Philae Island” *MDAIK* 36 (1980): 297.

Ptolemaic Philae

The temple of Isis on Philae (henceforth referred to as the “Main Temple”) was built in the reign of Ptolemy II, who dedicated the island temple and its subsidiary temples in Lower Nubia to Isis of Philae and the Abaton (nearby Biga Island). The system of administration in the conquered territories of Lower Nubia preserved the archaic structure of the Egyptian temple economy, which was being phased out by the Ptolemies in Egypt. Ptolemy II donated the Dodekaschoenos to Isis of Philae, thereby establishing Lower Nubia as the “temple estate” of Isis of Philae. The tribute required of Nubians was depicted in temple reliefs of personified Nubian nomes bearing the produce of their land to temple of Philae. Ptolemy II included the earliest depiction of this type of scene in Room One of the Main Temple after a successful military campaign in Nubia.⁹⁶ Several stelae of Ptolemy II reiterate the donation of the area to Isis of Philae.⁹⁷

The Theban revolt (206-186 BC), during the reign of Ptolemy IV, successfully ended Ptolemaic rule in Upper Egypt with Meroitic military support and interrupted Ptolemaic control of Lower Nubia.⁹⁸ While native Egyptian kings ruled Upper Egypt for twenty years, Meroites gained control of Lower Nubia⁹⁹ as demonstrated by Meroitic

⁹⁶ Nubian nome figures bearing standards inscribed with their names decorate the base of the south, west, and north walls of Room 1. FHN II, 564-566; P&M VI, 238-239.

⁹⁷ Dietze, 91.

⁹⁸ Meroitic involvement in the Theban Revolt may have come in response to construction undertaken by Ptolemy IV in the southern Dodekaschoenos. He built a small temple at Dakka on the west bank and a fort on the opposite bank at Kubban. See Gertrud Dietze, “Philae und die Dodekaschoinos in Ptolemäischer Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Frage ptolemäischer Präsenz im Grenzland zwischen Ägypten und Afrika an Hand der architektonischen und epigraphischen Quellen,” *AnSoc* 25 (1994): 103-4.

⁹⁹ Dietze, 108. “Ende des 3., Anfang des 2. Jahrhundert v.Chr. fiel Philae in die Hände der nubischen Könige Arqamani und Adihalamani.”

temple construction and decoration in the area. The Meroitic king Arqamani II¹⁰⁰ expanded the Temple of Arensnuphis at Philae¹⁰¹ and built a sanctuary for Thoth Pnubs at Dakka.¹⁰² Arqamani II reiterated the donation of the Dodecaschoenos to Isis of Philae in a hieroglyphic text on the wall of his sanctuary at Dakka.¹⁰³ On the same wall, Thoth Pnubs and Tefnut of the Abaton, in one panel, and Horus of Kubban and Hathor of Philae, on another panel, are depicted above the relief that contains Arqamani's donation text. Those four deities continued to be the focus of Nubian and Meroitic worship in Phase I and Phase II of the Nubian inscriptions. Blocks inscribed with Arqamani's name, found overturned in the flooring of the courtyard, indicate that a structure erected for that king originally stood at Kalabasha.¹⁰⁴

The successor of Arqamani II was also active in Lower Nubia. The Meroitic king Adikhalamani¹⁰⁵ is attested at Philae. A stela, found under the paving stones of the Pronaos, depicted the king before Osiris and Isis and Khnum-Re and Hathor.¹⁰⁶ At

¹⁰⁰ A contemporary of Ptolemy IV, Arqamani II reigned from 218-200 BC. In Greek sources, he was called Ergamenes.

¹⁰¹ Arqamani II's work on the temple of Arensnuphis on the dromos, continued that of Ptolemy IV. Gerhard Haeny, "A Short Architectural History of Philae," *BIFAO* 85 (1985): 220.

¹⁰² Arqamani added a chapel to earlier work at Dakka by Ptolemy IV. Ptolemy VIII later added a Pronaos to this temple. A sanctuary was added behind Arqamani's chapel under Augustus. Ibid., 92; Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 179, fig. 128. Interestingly, a Nubian *strategos* oversaw the construction of the Roman period sanctuary as attested by his graffito Dakk 29.

¹⁰³ The text is on the south wall of Arqamani's sanctuary in the temple of Dakka. See, Roeder, *Der Tempel von Dakke*, vol. II (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1930), 249-251, Tafel 100.

¹⁰⁴ Dietze, 104.

¹⁰⁵ Adikhalamani reigned from c. 200-190 BC and was a contemporary of Ptolemy V.

¹⁰⁶ Adel Farid, "The Stela of Adkhalamani Found at Philae" *MDAIK* 34 (1978): 53. Back to back in the center of the stela stand two additional gods: a hawk-headed god called "the one of the Abaton, noble god, foremost of Dw-q3 (Abaton), hidden of name in 'the

Dabod, Adikhalamani replaced a Ramesside chapel with one of his own dedicated to Isis and Amun of T3-ḥw.t (Dabod).¹⁰⁷

The revolt in Upper Egypt was suppressed late in the reign of Ptolemy V. However, Lower Nubia was not conquered until the reign of Ptolemy VI.¹⁰⁸ Upon securing control of Lower Nubia, Ptolemy VI enacted several measures to pacify the region. Major decorative changes at Philae demonstrate how Ptolemy VI sought to reincorporate Lower Nubia into the Ptolemaic colonial administration of the area by confirming his donation of the Dodecaschoenos as the estate of Isis. To proclaim his dominion over the area, Ptolemy VI decorated the western door of the First Pylon with a Nubian nome list¹⁰⁹ reminiscent of Nubian nome list of Ptolemy II in the Main Temple. In both scenes, those of Ptolemy II and those of Ptolemy VI, the Nubian nomes were depicted as fecundity figures. Hieroglyphic texts described the produce of each nome. The nome figure of Lower Nubia was depicted bearing gold and other precious metals and gems mined in the Eastern Desert and accessed via Wadi Allaqi (140 kilometers south of Philae, on the east bank of the Nile, opposite Dakka). Kubban is situated at the

place of silence” and a ram-headed god who is **not** Khnum, but rather is called “The one of the Abaton, the noble god, foremost of the holy place great of awe beloved of Maat.”

¹⁰⁷ PM VII 4, 16 ff. László Török has suggested that Adikhalamani might have intended to create a nome capital in Lower Nubia, administered by a temple of Amun.

“Considering the traditional relationship between Amun and the Meroitic nome capitals the possibility that the Amun-dedication of the sanctuary at Debod implies that Adikhalamani intended to found a nome capital there cannot be excluded.” László Török “Economy in the Empire of Kush” ZÄS 111 (1984): 58.

¹⁰⁸ Günther Hölbl, *History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, trans. Tina Saavedra (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), 304-306.

¹⁰⁹ FHN II, 614-630.

mouth of the Wadi Allaqi where it meets the Nile.¹¹⁰ The hieroglyphic text that accompanies the Lower Nubian region, Mhyt, reads,

Here comes the son of Re, Ptolemy, may he live for ever, beloved of Ptah (Ptolemy VI), unto you Isis, Lady of Final-Island (Philae), Lady of the southern countries, that he may bring to you the countries of the Nubians, bearing everything that comes forth from *Wawat*-land (Lower Nubia): gold, silver, copper, real lapis-lazuli, real turquoise.¹¹¹

Behind the figure labeled “Napata” (capital of Kush before the move south to Meroe) the text states,

...while the Nubians come to her (Isis), coming humbly, bearing...the...-people taxed with the dues...in gold...they come sailing downstream...causing one to be rich in copper.¹¹²

Thus, each region of Nubia was compelled to bear tribute to the temple of Isis at Philae, an offering of the most valuable produce of that land. The imposition of tribute upon the Nubians emphasized Ptolemy VI’s successful expulsion of the Meroites from Lower Nubia and the reintegration of the area as Egyptian conquered territory.

The visual depiction of Lower Nubia’s subjugation was echoed and expanded upon by a hieroglyphic text that formally announced the renewed imposition of the Ptolemaic financial administration of Lower Nubia. The monumental Dodecaschoenos Stela, originally housed in a shrine, still stands before the eastern pier of the Second Pylon.¹¹³ The provisions of earlier kings (Ptolemy II and Arqamani II) who had donated the Dodecaschoenos to Isis were repeated on the stela; however, Ptolemy VI included an

¹¹⁰ It was the cult center for the god Horus of Kubban to whom monuments were dedicated by Ramesside kings at Philae and to whom the temple of Dakka was originally dedicated. A scene of Horus of Kubban in the Pronaos of the Main Temple attracted the earliest Nubian graffito of Phase II and subsequent cluster of Nubian graffiti.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 627.

¹¹² Ibid., 621.

¹¹³ Burkhardt, *Ägypten*, 14; PM VI, no. 241, 229.

additional financial requirement for Nubia. Henceforth, one-tenth of all the imports from Nubia would be delivered to Philae.¹¹⁴ This stipulation is found in the Famine Stela, inscribed in the reign of Ptolemy V and discovered on Sehel Island, north of Philae. The text of the Famine Stela outlined the revenue to be collected from Nubians by an official called the “agent of the south.” The inscription outlined the products of Nubia and mandated their collection by announcing,

But there shall reside there scribes that belong to you (the god Khnum-Re) and agents of the south (*rdj.w nw rsj*) to be record keepers...announcing everything that is to be given...namely one tenth of all these (goods).¹¹⁵

This stela mandated that the one-tenth levy should be delivered to Khnum-Re, lord of Cool Water (the first cataract region),

Let every man who cultivates the fields and those who revive the slain by irrigating the banks and all new lands that are within the allotted *schoenoi* deliver their harvests to your magazine, / in addition to your share that is in Hermopolis. All fishermen and all hunters who catch fish or trap birds and any sort of game, who trap any lions on the desert - I shall tax them one-tenth of the take of all these, and all the calves born of the herds within the allotted *schoenoi* in [their entirety]...everything that the Nubians of Lower Nubia bring to Egypt, and every man who goes under supervision of those among them.

¹¹⁴ Dietze, 93. “In der Dodekaschoinosstele wird das Gebiet mit den gleichen Worten abegrenzt wie im Text Arqamanis. Es soll Osiris und Isis, d.h. dem Tempel von Philae und Abaton gehören. Ausserdem wird dem Tempel nicht nur das Land geschenkt, sondern auch eine Einnahmequelle eröffnet: der Zehnte auf die Einfuhren aus Nubien.” Ibid. The requirement of local villages to tithe to Isis was reiterated in the decorative program of Ptolemy IX at Philae. In the hieroglyphic texts engraved around the door leading to the stairs on the north side of Pylon One (eastern wing), the king states, « ils sortent de la ville avec leurs tributs dans [...], (...) ceux qui viennent chargé de leurs productions correspondant au dixième de leurs productions qu’ils portent vers le temple dans ... » . Laetitia Martzloff, “Les « trésors » des temples de Philae et d’Edfou” in *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Kutlabildung und Kultrealität*. Hamburg 27 Sept – 1 Oct 2011, ed. Horst Beinlich (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 273.

¹¹⁵ Robert K. Ritner “The Famine Stela” in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, ed. William Kelly Simpson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 390-391; FHN II, no. 135, 609.

No administrative staff are to give orders in these places or to exact anything from among them, for the property is protected with respect to my grant for your sanctuary.¹¹⁶

The text made explicit two principles of the financial administration of Lower Nubia in the Ptolemaic period. First, collection of taxes by “administrative staff” was forbidden; instead all revenue collected (one-tenth of the produce of the land¹¹⁷) went directly to the sanctuary of Khnum-Re of Elephantine.¹¹⁸ Second, tithing was required of Nubians passing the Egyptian frontier into Egypt. Nubians entering into Egypt with goods were obliged to remit one-tenth of the worth of those goods to temple “agents.”¹¹⁹ The revenues collected were to be entirely for temple use and not available to administrators outside of the temple hierarchy. Ptolemaic royal letters preserved on stelae found at Philae corroborated the financial arrangements detailed in the Famine Stela,

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Miriam Lichtheim, “The Naucratis Stela Once Again,” *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes* SAOC 39 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1977), 144. While Lichtheim asserted that the donation to the temple was not 1/10 of the value of goods, but rather 1/10 of the revenue that the king had collected in taxes, the situation in Nubia was different. The Nubian graffiti of Phase I and Phase II recorded the intention to bring “their one-tenth” to Philae. This implies that the amount was one-tenth of an individual’s produce, not one-tenth of the amount collected by the king. This knowledge would not have been available to the average graffito writer.

¹¹⁸ The early Roman period agreements at Philae make clear that taxes were not to be collected in the Dodecaschoenos. See Ph. 58/3-8, Ph. 64/7-12.

¹¹⁹ The badly damaged early Roman graffito, Ph. 57, dated to AD 21, records the donation of tithes to the temple on Philae. Only partially legible after line 9, one can still make out that an agent was mentioned twice in the oath (lines 8 and 18). It is clear that temple income in the form of tithes was being discussed because the fraction 1/10 appeared in many of the partial lines, including in the phrases “1/10 of our wine” (p3y=n ṛp 1/10)(line 16), “1/10 of the land bordering the river” (n p3 t3 1/10 n ḥre n p3 yr) (lines 9 and 12), as well as the phrase “to the district of Isis” (n p3 tš n ṛls.t) (line 14). This graffito may record the receipt of tithes by the Master of Song (p3 ḥry ḥs) and the Superintendents of Singers of Isis of the Abaton and Philae of the five phyles (n3 mr ḥs n ṛls.t Pr-w‘b Pr-ṛw-lq n p3 5 s3.w) from a group of men, one of whom was named Petiarensnuphis, the agent. The donated tithes appear to be claimed by this inscription as payment for the singers employed by the temple at Philae. Temple singers at Philae are also mentioned in Ph. 54.

namely that royal officials were not eligible to receive any of the funds collected from Nubians for the temple.¹²⁰ There is no evidence that the sanctuary of Khum-Re was able to receive the revenue described on the Famine Stela, erected during the reign of Ptolemy V. The Theban Revolt prevented Ptolemaic control of Lower Nubia that would have produced that temple income. Furthermore, after Ptolemy VI re-conquered Lower Nubia, he reaffirmed the primacy of Isis of Philae.

The system of mandatory Nubian donations to the temple of Isis, initiated by Ptolemy VI after he had successfully reestablished Egyptian control in Lower Nubia, can be interpreted as a punitive tax levied on the inhabitants of a rebellious territory. However, the collection and delivery of the Nubian tithe seems to have been performed by local Nubians themselves. During the Ptolemaic period, a local governor ruled the *Aethiopian* population of Lower Nubia.

The integration of a native political structure into the Egyptian administration and/or the office of non-Egyptian dignitaries would remain a characteristic feature of the Ptolemaic as well as the Roman government in Lower Nubia.¹²¹

To ensure reliable administration of Lower Nubia, the Ptolemy VI established an administrative center at Kom Ombo, north of Aswan.¹²² The Nubian governor was

¹²⁰ In royal letter carved on a stela at Philae, Ptolemy VIII commanded the *strategos* Lochos to desist from exacting levies from the priests of Isis of the Abaton and Philae. See IGP 1, #19.

¹²¹ László Török, *Between Two Worlds: the frontier region between ancient Nubia and Egypt 3700 BC to AD 500*, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 408.

¹²² A brief period in the first half of the first century AD saw Nubians serving as *strategoi* of the Dodecaschoenos. Their inscriptions are the focus of chapter 1. By the end of the first century, administration of Lower Nubia would revert to a *strategos* based in Kom Ombo.

subordinate to the *strategos* of the Thebaid whose authority extended into Lower Nubia.¹²³

Temple inscriptions suggest that individual tribes were required to support the cult of a particular temple. A Ptolemaic inscription at Philae preserved a letter from the priests of Mandulis (a small temple of Mandulis is on the dromos at Philae) to Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II requesting that they order a Nubian chief, referred to by name, to deliver wheat, wine, and wool for the cult of Mandulis at Philae.¹²⁴

Structural changes were made to several areas at Philae during the reign of Ptolemy VI to accommodate increased numbers of Nubian worshippers who were drawn to the cults of Arensnuphis, Thoth Pnubs, and Mandulis. During the Theban Revolt, Arqamani II and Adikhalamani had ordered that temple construction or decoration be completed for each of these non-Egyptian deities in Lower Nubia. Meroitic royal support may have promoted the cults of Arensnuphis, Thoth Pnubs, and Mandulis at Philae (where both Meroitic kings are attested), thereby increasing the number of Nubian participants who traveled to Philae. While this in is not certain, changes ordered by Ptolemy VI suggest that his activity at Philae was focused on the cult areas of these Nubian gods.

Westward expansion of the dromos,¹²⁵ in front of the Main Temple at Philae, can be interpreted as an effort to create a “forecourt” for the west-facing Temple of Arensnuphis in order to accommodate the growing numbers of worshippers who

¹²³ *FHN II*, 633-635.

¹²⁴ IGP 12bis. Étienne Bernand, *Inscriptions grecque de Philae*, (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969), 126-137; *FHN II*, 631-635.

¹²⁵ “A project possibly conceived in the time of Ptolemy VI and certainly completed at the end of the reign of Ptolemy VIII. Gerhard Haeny, “A Short History,” 228.

participated in the non-Egyptian cult of Arensnuphis. A cult association of Arensnuphis, first attested during the reign of Ptolemy VI, suggests that this god had become well established at Philae.¹²⁶

The Kiosk of Nectanebo was moved from its previous location (unknown) to its present location at the southern end of the dromos¹²⁷ where Early Roman period inscriptions suggest that it served as a shrine dedicated to Thoth Pnubs.¹²⁸ Ptolemy VI rededicated the temple at Dabod to Isis of Philae, revoking Adikhalamani's dedication of the temple to Amun of Dabod. Ajuala and Kalabsha, both temples dedicated to the Blemmye god, Mandulis, also were renovated during this reign.

Construction at Philae undertaken in the reigns of Ptolemy VI and his successor, Ptolemy VIII, served to fortify the temple complex. The First Pylon (also called the Great Pylon) was erected during the latter part of the reign of Ptolemy V, after suppression of the Theban Revolt; the masonry work was completed under Ptolemy VI.¹²⁹ The Second Pylon and the Pronaos were built in the reign of Ptolemy VI.¹³⁰ Presumably, the stela of Adikhalamani was buried under the pavement stones of the Pronaos during construction

¹²⁶ The cult association undertook the addition of a porch to the temple of Arensnuphis at Philae as recorded in the Greek graffito IGP 11. In one of the early Roman Nubian graffiti, an agent of Arensnuphis was attested.

¹²⁷ Haeny suggests that the structure was moved sometime after Ptolemy VIII, **at the latest** during the reign of Ptolemy XII. See Haeny, "Short History," 224, 228. A Greek text for Ptolemy XII was engraved on the western obelisk and may serve to date the relocation of the Kiosk of Nectanebo. See IGP I, 316-318.

¹²⁸ Eugene Cruz-Urbe, *The Demotic Graffiti from the Temple of Isis on Philae Island*, forthcoming.

¹²⁹ Haeny, "Short History," 212.

¹³⁰ Haeny, "Short History," 208. Haeny suggests that the earlier temple of Amasis, built late in the twenty-sixth dynasty, was still standing in the reign of Ptolemy V. It was dismantled in order to make way for the Second Pylon and the Pronaos. "...the blocks of Amasis were reused together with others of Nectanebo I in the shafts of the columns and in the lower courses of the pylon." Ibid.

of the Second Pylon. Outer enclosure walls connected to the First Pylon and Second Pylon, surrounding the entire Main Temple precinct to fortify the temple complex.¹³¹ The temple enclosure wall, which originally rose to a height of at least eight meters,¹³² separated the inner areas of the temple, dedicated to the worship of Isis and Osiris from the dromos in front of the Main Temple where minor temples dedicated Nubian gods were located.

Building and decoration of temples in Lower Nubia continued under Ptolemy VIII at Philae, Dabod, and Dakka.¹³³ Ptolemy VIII reiterated his predecessor's donation of the Dodecaschoenos to Isis of Philae in a text inscribed on the door of the Second Pylon.¹³⁴ After the reign of the Ptolemy VIII, which ended in 116 BC, Ptolemaic influence in the Dodecaschoenos decreased. From the reign of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (80-58 BC, 55-51 BC), there is no evidence of temple decoration south of Dabod. Inscriptions at Philae also reflect the decreased military and civil presence of the Ptolemaic officials at the temple.¹³⁵ All of Nubia seems to have been lost to the Ptolemies during the reign of Ptolemy XII.

¹³¹ Haeny, "Short History," 212-213.

¹³² Ibid., 213. "Today only its stone-built foundations remain." Ibid.

¹³³ At Philae, Ptolemy VIII was responsible for the decoration of the Pronaos, construction of the Second Eastern Colonnade and an extension of the Birth House. See Haeny, "Short History," 208, 211, 212. At Dakka, Ptolemy VIII built the Pronaos, Pylon (some scholars believe the Pylon was built under Augustus), and the enclosure wall. See Dietze, "Dodekaschoinos," 106; Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 204.

¹³⁴ Dietze, "Dodekaschoinos," 93. The donation of the Dodecaschoenos was explicitly stated in the inscription at Philae, while at Dakka Ptolemy VIII was portrayed presenting the fields to Osiris and Isis.

¹³⁵ Dietze, "Dodekaschoinos," 107. "Während im 3. und vor allem im 2. Jahrhundert v. Chr. die Inschriften offizieller Besucher, die sich offensichtlich in politisch-militärischer Mission auf Philae aufhielten, überwiegen, scheint im 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr. vor allem die Pilgerfahrt im Zentrum zu stehen." Dietze, 108.

Conclusion

This brief political and economic history of the activity of Kushite and Ptolemaic monarchs in Lower Nubia will serve as a background to the analysis of the corpus of Nubian inscriptions in the temples of the Dodekaschoenos. Construction and decoration of the temples in Lower Nubia by Egyptian and Kushite monarchs testifies to the will of both kingdoms to extend their rule into Lower Nubia. Ptolemaic creation of the structures of taxation in the region began as the collection of a border fee from Nubians entering Egypt and developed into a taxation scheme that was presented as tithing to Isis of Philae, which was initiated under Ptolemy VI. The expansion of Nubian financial obligations to the Egyptian temples in the Dodekaschoenos under Ptolemy VI was implemented as a punitive response to Nubian involvement in the Theban Revolt, which had been suppressed under Ptolemy V. The system of tithing to Isis of Philae was maintained during the entire period of Nubian involvement in the administration of the Egyptian temples in the Dodekaschoenos. What began as a punitive measure of taxation in Lower Nubia under Ptolemy VI was maintained by Meroitic rulers, from Arqamani II in the third century BC to Teqorideamani in the third century AD, in accordance with the Kushite tradition of elaborate royal donations to temples in their kingdom.¹³⁶

As Ptolemaic control over Lower Nubia weakened following the reign of Ptolemy VI, Meroitic administrative structures expanded, first in Meroitic Nubia then gradually spread north until Meroitic monarchs appear to have gained control of Dakka at the time

¹³⁶ For Napatan royal donation texts written in Egyptian hieroglyphs, see FHN II, 428-434 (Irike-Amannote), 438-463 (Harsiyotef), 471-501 (Nastasten), 522-532 (Aryamani), 534-535 (Sabrakamani). The earliest royal texts written in Meroitic were donation texts composed for King Tanyideamani (late second century/early first century BC): a stela from the Amun Temple at Gebel Barkal and another stela from the Apedemak Temple at Meroe City, see FHN II, 665-672.

of the Roman conquest of Egypt as attested by to pair of royal Meroitic language inscriptions on the pylon at Dakka. Ptolemaic withdrawal and Meroitic expansion provided local Nubians the opportunity to acquire leading roles in the financial management of the temples of Lower Nubia. Nubian elites gained employment in the temple financial apparatus (cult associations) as a result of the loss of Ptolemaic control in the region and with tacit support of the Meroitic monarchs. This premise underlies the following analysis of the first phase of Nubian inscriptions, which were engraved in the early Roman period.

Chapter 1: Agreements

In the first century of the Roman Empire, from Augustus to Vespasian, the southern approach (to Philae) with its colonnades seems to have been a favourite resort. Below the capitals of the columns, both east and west, are signatures of the artists who decorated them; on the western columns are formal records of local transactions which almost constitute by-laws, and the wall behind was a scribbling ground for the lazy and weary who rested there and seldom troubled to make a legible graffito. The formal records of the first century continue on the central passage of the First Pylon and probably once were seen on that of the Second Pylon.¹

Introduction

The first appearance of inscriptions written by Nubians in the temples of the Dodecaschoenos consisted almost exclusively of agreements concerned with the distribution of temple income. The agreements were inscribed during the early Roman period (10/11 BC – AD 57).² Managing the donations made to each temple, Nubian *strategoï*, agents, priests and pastophori arranged financial agreements with representatives of individual towns in Nubia through the “elders” of those towns. Agreements recorded the division of those revenues among various parties employed at the temple; for example, singers of Isis received temple income in two inscriptions. Other agreements recorded commitments to appear annually at the temple, presumably to perform rites for a god, or commemorated temple construction work. The recorded agreements could be specific to one temple or could refer to financial transactions between temples in Lower Nubia. Some agreements delineated priestly duties and the fees to be paid for those duties, divided property of a man who died intestate, canceled

¹F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue of the Demotic Graffiti of the Dodecaschoenos*, Les temples immergés de la Nubie, vol. 19 (Oxford: University Press, 1937), 10.

² Burkhardt called these agreements *Vereinbarungen* “contracts.” See Burkhardt, *Ägypten und Meroiten*, 29-30, esp. 69-71.

tithe obligations, and shared out “*ṣwle*”³ amongst various temple and civil administrative office holders. *Strategoï*, agents of Isis, Prophets, *wab*-priests and *pastophori*, a *lesonis*,⁴ as well as “singers of Isis” and “elders” of a particular town were named parties to these agreements. The recorded agreements codified the financial obligations of local Nubian towns to their local temples as well as the obligations of the lesser temples (Kalabsha, Dendur, Dakka, and Korte) to the temple at Philae.

This group of agreements is unique in that they are neither legal contracts nor are they temple oaths, but they combine elements of the two genres into a unique, idiosyncratic form.⁵ The early Roman agreements do not record the result of a legal dispute for the most part. Rather they codify agreements reached between members of the temple hierarchy as to the division of temple income or the financial obligation of surrounding communities to the local temple and the local temple’s obligation to Philae. Some of the agreements of Phase I were sworn as oaths between parties suggesting that they were the result of legal proceedings. The use of the phrase *ḥ*⁶ *pṣ* *‘nh* (“copy of the oath”), which was used in eight of the twelve Egyptian agreements suggests that they

³ The Demotic word *ṣwle* (Ph. 55/5, Kalabsha 4/9) is an imprecisely understood term that seems to indicate a quantity of divisible property. Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 105, n. to l. 9, CDD, 3 (02.1): page 10, Griffith, *Catalogue*, p. 134 #11, p. 236 #559. Burkhardt suggested that the meaning was “eher eine aufteilbare Sache wie z.B. “Boden” zu sein. The term, used in Ph.55, referred to property that was divided among so many officials that perhaps it refers to moveable goods (donated to the temple?) rather than land. In Kalabsha 4 property of a man who died intestate was divided into two portions. That which was divided (*pṣe*) was called *ṣwle*.

⁴ Only one *lesonis* was attested in Phase I in Dendur 1. In Phase II several members of the Wayekiye family claimed the title *lesonis* at Philae and Dakka.

⁵ In the introduction to her study of temple oaths (*tempeleide*), Kaplony-Heckel described the corpus of Lower Nubian “vows” (*Gelübde*) as “dises eigenartigen Texten,” which she chose to exclude from her study. Another important distinction between the two corpora is the lack of titles in the Egyptian temple oaths, while titles are ubiquitous in the Egyptian and Nubian agreements considered here.

⁶ The Demotic word *ḥ* was previously written *ḥe.t*.

were regarded as oaths.⁷ While fewer Nubian agreements incorporated the oath formula, it was nonetheless present in three Nubian inscriptions.⁸ These agreements differed from typical Egyptian temple oaths in several respects. Egyptian temple oaths were written almost exclusively on ostraca.⁹ Furthermore, the geographical range of the Egyptian temple oaths was restricted to Upper Egypt in the area of Gebelein and the Thebaid. The Egyptian temple oaths were written between 200 BC and the early Roman period.¹⁰ In contrast, the agreements of Lower Nubia, Nubian and Egyptian, were inscribed during a very brief phase in the early Roman period and exclusively on temple walls in Lower Nubia, either in the temple doorway, on the dromos, or within the Pronaos. These texts deviated from Egyptian tradition, but neither are they found in Nubian or Meroitic tradition. This anomalous form seems to have been the result of a unique temple administrative system at play in Lower Nubia during a period in which the old Ptolemaic systems had fallen into disuse and the new, Roman system had not yet been developed. Left to their own devices, the Egyptian and Nubian administrators and priests chose to record their temple administrative agreements on publicly visible temple walls.

While Kaplony-Heckel explicitly excluded the corpus of Lower Nubian temple inscriptions from her study of temple oaths,¹¹ the use of the standard phrase h p3 'nh

⁷ Three of the Egyptian agreements did not contain the h p3 'nh formula: Ph. 25, 37, 58. See Burkhardt, 30, 4.2.1 and Griffith, *Catalogue*, 46, 48, 54.

⁸ Dendur 1 and Dakka 12 contained the oath formula h p3 'nh. Dakka 15/17 employed the phrase he.t p3 šy, an unusual variation on the oath formula that made reference to “fate” or more likely, “the divinity” (p3 š3y) which was written with the snake determinative. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 208 #437; EG 485-486.

⁹ Temple oaths from family archives were written on papyri.

¹⁰ Kaplony-Heckel, “Eid, demotische,” *LdÄ I*, 1201.

¹¹ Ursula Kaplony-Heckel, *Die demotischen Tempeleide* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1963), 16-30; idem, “Eid, demot.” *LdÄ I*, 1200-1204. The author felt strongly that the contracts of the Dodecaschoenos were not to be included in her study of Egyptian temple

does indicate that these inscriptions were agreements recorded in the form of an oath. The inclusion of other Demotic legal language such as “to be far from”¹² also confirmed the legal nature of the corpus, as did the reference to a judgment made by the “great assembly (*kenbet*)” of Thoth Pnubs at Dakka.¹³

The “Great Assembly” of Thoth Pnubs at Dakka appears to have combined both the function of local governing body and judicial court at Dakka. A legal decision rendered by a “great assembly” is noteworthy because the Demotic phrase *qnb.t ʿ3.t*, the “great *kenbet*,” had not been used to designate a judicial body in Egypt since the New Kingdom.¹⁴ In fact, one of the last judicial documents to refer to legal decisions rendered by “the great *kenbet*” was written during the reign of the twenty-fifth dynasty king Taharqa (685 BC).¹⁵ Allam suggests that the Egyptian judicial system was reformed under Psammetichus I, the first king of the twenty-sixth dynasty, who created specialized law courts, and thereafter the *kenbet* appeared only as an administrative-legal body in

oaths. “In die vorliegende Untersuchung nicht einbezogen sind...de Fide aus der Römerzeit, die sich auf den Wänden der Tempel in Dakke, Dendur und in Philä befinden, sie enthalten Gelübde der dortigen Priesterschaft. Mit den tempeleiden aus dem Niltal, welche auf Papyrus oder Ostraka niedergeschrieben worden sind, stehen sie in keinerlei Zusammenhang, lassen sich durch solche Texte auch nicht näher deuten, ebensowenig bieten sie umgekehrt Aufschluss zur Lösung der Belege aus dem Niltal.” Ursula Kaplony-Heckel, *Die demotischen Tempeleide*, 1 n. 1.

¹² *Tw=y wwy r-r=tetn*. This phrase was used in Ph. 54. It can also be translated as “I release you” from a former obligation or agreement.

¹³ *Qnb.t ʿ3.t* in Dakka 15/17. The term *Kenbet* was attested as early as the end of the Old Kingdom to designate an advisory board for the king and his high-level administrators. In the Middle Kingdom, rural districts were governed by *kenbets* while mayors governed cities. During the New Kingdom, the “Great Assembly” developed out of the king’s advisory board and served as an appellate court under the Vizir. See Wolfgang Helck, “Kenbet” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* III, 386-387.

¹⁴ Shafik Allam, “Egyptian Law Courts in Pharaonic and Hellenistic Times” *JEA* 77 (1991): 110. Allam referred to a scant five occurrences of the phrase in the four centuries after the end of the New Kingdom. *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

religious contexts.¹⁶ The Dakka graffito accords with this assumption as it demonstrates that a decision reached by the great *kenbet* of Dakka held the force of law in Lower Nubia, which was still administered as the temple estate of Isis of Philae. It is also noteworthy that this graffito was dated to the reign of a Meroitic king and may, therefore, indicate the preservation of archaic New Kingdom forms of administration at Dakka while it was under Meroitic control.

Burkhardt's Definition of the Corpus

Burkhardt differentiated between “Meroitic”¹⁷ and “Egyptian” inscriptions based on two criteria: the non-Egyptian names of those who wrote the graffiti¹⁸ and/or the presence of Meroitic titles transliterated in the Demotic script.¹⁹ Names such as Rqe, Abl̥, M̥ni, Swny, and Slw̥,²⁰ all *strategoi* named in the first-century inscriptions,²¹ were clearly **not** Egyptian²² and, thus, provide a secure basis for identifying Nubian

¹⁶ Ibid., 116, n.37.

¹⁷ My terminology differs from that used by Burkhardt. Whereas she used the ethnic designation “Meroitic,” which is only proper for the Phase II graffiti, I prefer the term Nubian. See page 24 for further discussion.

¹⁸ Non-Egyptian men wrote Ph. 54 (*strategos* Rqe), Ph. 55 (*strategos* Abl̥), and Dakka 15/17 (*strategos* M̥ni). Additionally, three inscriptions used the date formula (n) ỉr-ḥr PN followed by a non-Egyptian name. The formula referred to the time in office of a non-Egyptian *strategos* and was translated as “during the time of” (Dendur 1) or “in the presence of” (Kalabsha 4 and Dakka 12).

¹⁹ Ibid., 16. The majority of titles used by Nubians in this corpus of early Roman graffiti were, in fact, titles used in the hierarchy of Egyptian temples: *lesonis*, w^cb, ḥm nṯr, and wn priests (pastophorus), and agent. The title *shashimete*, however, stands out as a purely Meroitic title, used in in Meroitic-language and Demotic inscriptions. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 304.

²⁰ This Nubian *strategos* wrote the graffito Dakka 29. Burkhardt categorized the graffito as a proskynema, therefore, it was not included in her group of contract graffiti. In the inscription Slw̥ honored Thoth Pnubs and commemorated his work on the sanctuary of the temple.

²¹ Swny was named in a date formula in Graffito Dendur 1 that is otherwise undated.

²² The numerous Egyptian names that appear alongside the “Meroitic” names in the Nubian graffiti attest to the culturally and linguistically mixed nature of the population in

graffiti. Nineteen early Roman inscriptions on temple walls in Lower Nubia were referred to as *Vereinbarungen*, “contracts” by Burkhardt.²³ Of those 19 inscriptions, Burkhardt designated seven as “Meroitic”²⁴ and twelve as “Egyptian” based on the criteria given above.²⁵

My terminology will differ from that used by Burkhardt in two significant ways. First, the people whom Burkhardt referred to as “Meroites” I shall call Nubian, referring specifically to the fact that the men who wrote the graffiti were resident in Lower Nubia, as discussed in the Introduction. Secondly, I will substitute the term “agreements” for Burkhardt’s term “contracts” to refer to these early Roman period inscriptions, both Egyptian and Nubian. Two Demotic words are used to describe the agreement recorded in the text: *nꜣ hn.w* was used in Kalabsha 4 and Ph. 25 and *pꜣ bl(ꜣ)* was used in Ph. 55. Both words can be translated as “agreement(s).” Additionally, many inscriptions in this corpus used the Demotic legal phrase *het pꜣ ꜥnh*, a “copy of the (verbally sworn) oath.” Use of this legal phrase was much more prevalent in the Egyptian inscriptions. Eight of the twelve early Roman inscriptions contained the phrase *het pꜣ ꜥnh*, while only one Nubian inscription, Dakka 12, employed the phrase. Since Dakka 12 was an agreement

Lower Nubia. It is entirely possible that we fail to correctly identify inscriptions that were Nubian simply because the author used an Egyptian name. A more comprehensive method of identifying Nubian graffiti is required if we intend to fully describe the Nubian religious presence in the temples of the Dodekaschoenos. This topic will be discussed in greater detail below under the heading Indications of Additional First Century AD Nubian Graffiti at Philae on page 93.

²³ Adelheid Burkhardt, *Ägypter und Meroiten im Dodekaschoinos* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985): 29-30, 48, 69-70, 75.

²⁴ Ph. 54, Ph. 55, Kalabsha 4, Dakka 12, Dakka 15, Dakka 17, and Dendur 1.

²⁵ The twelve Egyptian agreements are located near the Nubian agreements at Philae. They are on the Gate of Nectanebo, which forms the central doorway in the First Pylon, as well as along the western colonnade of the dromos. They are Ph. 24-25, Ph. 37, Ph. 57-58, Ph. 60-65, and Dakka 8, inscribed on the interior of the pylon.

reached between priests and *pastophorai* from Philae whome we assume were Egyptian with a local priest at Dakka, it is not surprising that the formula prevalent in the Egyptian inscriptions was used to ratify the agreement. I choose to refer to all of the early Roman inscriptions, Egyptian and Nubian, as “agreements” because the texts ratified financial and cultic agreements pertinent to the temples of Lower Nubia. These texts were not Egyptian temple oaths because they did not preserve copies of the sworn oath that was typically required of the losing party in an Egyptian judicial dispute.²⁶

Introduce the Corpus

The seven Nubian inscriptions of this period were engraved in four temples in the Dodecaschoenos: Philae, Kalabsha, Dendur, and Dakka.²⁷ The two agreements at Philae were inscribed inside the Gate of Nectanebo, which forms the central entrance through the First Pylon,²⁸ leading into the forecourt of the Main Temple dedicated to Isis. A Nubian agreement, found on a loose block, was determined to have come from Kalabsha based on the contents of the inscription.²⁹ The temple of Dendur contained only one

²⁶ The one exception may be graffito Dendur 1 where the *lesonis* appears to have lost a judicial hearing and must relinquish payments previously received from the temple of Korte.

²⁷ Philae was dedicated to Isis and her deceased consort, Osiris. Kalabsha’s cult served the Blemmye god Mandulis. Dendur’s cult focused on two brothers, Peteisis (P3-dj-ʿls.t) and Pahor (P3-Ḥr), who were presumed to have drowned in the Nile. The primary god worshipped at Dakka was Thoth of the Pnubs tree (P3 nbs is the Egyptian term for the zizyphus or Jujubier tree, in which lived the sacred ape of Dakka, the manifestation of the god Thoth). The temple complex at Philae also had subsidiary temples dedicated to Arensnuphis, Hathor, Hornakhtyotef, Imhotep, and, Mandulis. On the neighboring island of Biga stood a temple associated with the burial place of Osiris; only a pylon remains.

²⁸ Ph. 54 and Ph. 55 published in Griffith, *Catalogue*, 53-54; FHN III, nos. 182 and 183, 732-735.

²⁹ Kalabsha 4. The agreement is ratified before the god Mandulis. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 37 for further justification to place this loose block at Kalabsha. FHN III, no. 184, 735.

Demotic inscription, a Nubian agreement.³⁰ Finally, Dakka had two Nubian agreements.

Please note that Burkhardt counted the two inscriptions separately to reach her total of 7

“Meroitic” inscriptions.³¹

Inscription Number	Location	Year
Ph. 54	Philae-Gate of Nectanebo Southwest jamb	AD 30
Ph. 55	Philae-Gate of Nectanebo Southwest jamb	AD 48
Dendur 1	North wall of Pronaos	undated
Kalabsha 4	Loose block	undated
Dakka 12	Northwest wall of Pronaos	AD 57
Dakka 15/17	South wall of Pronaos	Dated to reign of unknown Meroitic king, Aqragamani, and his mother, Naytal

Table 1: Phase I Inscriptions

³⁰ Dendur 1 was published in Griffith, *Catalogue*, 33-35; FHN II, no. 180, 728-731. A Meroitic-language inscription (REM 0138) was also engraved on the west wall of the pronaos of the temple of Dendur. The inscription is badly damaged; only the Meroitic word *dime* is legible. See László Török, “Three Contributions in a Positivistic Manner” in *Meroitistische Forschungen 1980. Akten der 4. Internationalen Tagung für Meroitistische Forschungen vom 24. bis 29. November 1980 in Berlin*. Meroitica 7. Fritz Hinze, ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984), 177.

³¹ Dakka 12, Dak 15/17 were published in Griffith, *Catalogue*, 21-23; FHN II, no. 185, 736-738. Griffith considered Dakka 15 and Dakka 17 to be a unit; Dakka 17 furnished the date formula for Dakka 15.

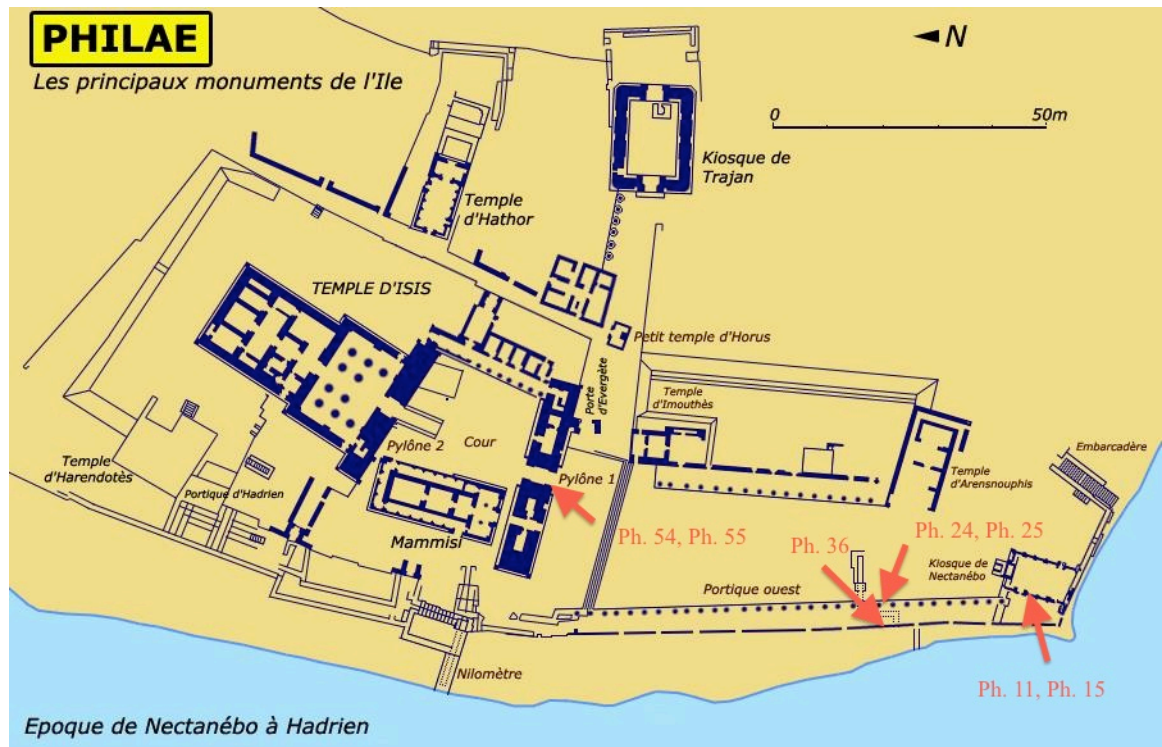


Figure 1: Location of Nubian Inscriptions of Phase I at Philae. (Plan by Canopé académie de Strasbourg, Marie-Georges Brun. Courtesy of Creative Commons. Adapted by author.)

The twelve agreements designated as Egyptian by Burkhardt were all found at Philae, with the exception of one at Dakka.³²

Despite the rich potential for this corpus of inscriptions to augment our knowledge of early Roman administration of Lower Nubia, these inscriptions have been translated and discussed only infrequently.³³ This is with good reason. The inscriptions are very poorly preserved, appearing as they do in the entrances or forecourts of temples, areas that were accessible to the public in antiquity and remained easily accessible to visitors over the millennia. Repeated contact with hands or shoulders that brushed the walls where these graffiti were inscribed have led to the gradual erasure of them over

³² Dakka 8.

³³ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 45-57, esp. 53-54; László Török, "To the History of the Dodekashoenos between ca. 250 B.C. and 298 A.D.," *ZÄS* 107 (1980): 80-82; Adelheid Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 29-31, 48, 69-71, 75-77.

time.³⁴ In addition to numerous lacunae, the inscriptions contain many Demotic words that are otherwise unknown. Some of these words may transcribe Meroitic terms, rendering in Demotic script non-Egyptian titles, as well as legal and ritual terms.

Language Use

Nubian temple administrators functioned in an Egyptian temple context in each of the three phases in which their inscriptions were dedicated. In Phase I, they obtained their temple positions from the new Roman administrators of Nubia **without** backing by the rulers in Meroe. Significantly and not coincidentally, Phase I graffiti was written **exclusively** in Demotic, the language in which Egyptian religious texts were increasingly written in Roman Egypt. Neither Meroitic nor Greek appeared in Phase I Nubian graffiti as they did in the later two phases.³⁵ Because those Nubians attested in the graffiti of Phase I operated in an Egyptian cultural and religious context, the forms of their financial administration reflected Egyptian norms. Conforming to Egyptian linguistic, administrative, and religious norms³⁶ in crafting their inscriptions, Nubian inscriptions were indistinguishable from those left by Egyptians.³⁷ Furthermore, the Demotic used by

³⁴ In addition, intentional erasure of graffiti may well have played a major part in the loss of temple inscriptions as attested to by the frequent inclusion of curse formulae that read, “as for the one who erases this writing.”

³⁵ The Meroitic language was not used because local Nubians were not Meroitic speakers. Nor was Greek used because Greek had not yet become the lingua franca of Nubia as it would in the period after Meroe lost control of its Nubian province and then finally succumbed to Axumite and Noba attacks in the early fourth century AD.

³⁶ One potential religious difference may be seen in the gods to whom prayer inscriptions were dedicated. Although Burkhardt’s group of seven Nubian agreements of this era were written concerning the financial affairs of Isis of Philae, a portion of early Roman inscriptions honored other gods, namely, Arensnuphis, and Thoth Pnubs.

³⁷ This was not the case in later phases of Nubian inscriptions when Nubian administrators served Meroitic rulers in Phase II and Blemmye kings in Phase III. Although Demotic was used to write Nubian inscriptions in every phase, the Meroitic language was also used in Phase II and III. Two Nubians of Phase II wrote their

the Nubians was indistinguishable from that of their Egyptian counterparts, indicating either that the Nubians had been trained in the Egyptian script and could, therefore, compose their own inscriptions or, conversely, that the inscriptions had been composed and carved for them by Egyptian scribes. Whether Nubian priests could read and write Demotic will be discussed further in the section entitled “Nubians in the Priesthood.”

Shrines (*wrk*, *g^c.t*) in Procession

Portable shrines and the processions in which cult association members carried them are attested twice in the inscriptions of this period.³⁸ Both times the minor temple of Korte was associated financially with the care of a shrine or its transport to Philae, presumably in a procession. Each of the shrines was dedicated to the goddess Isis and cared for by the “men of Korte,” perhaps a cult association dedicated to Isis and the care of her shrine at Korte, south of Dakka.

Fees owed by the temple of Korte to the temple of Dendur were remitted by the priesthood of Philae in exchange for the care of a stall (*mty.t*) of Isis by the men of Korte. Likewise, the temple of Korte and its ritual obligations to Philae are discussed in Dakka 12, an agreement regarding the transport of the *wrk* to the gates of Philae by the men of Korte. In the agreement, three named individuals and a “multitude (*‘šš.t*)”³⁹ of *wab*-priests and pastophori” take an oath for “the man from Korte.” The word *wrk* appears only in this inscription, where it is used twice. Each time the Demotic word *wrk*

inscriptions in Greek, while almost 40% of the Phase III inscriptions were written in Greek, which had become the *lingua franca* of Nubia.

³⁸ For discussion of the increased participation of laity in temple processions under the Kushite rulers of the twenty-fifth dynasty, see n. 191.

³⁹ Françoise de Cenival, *Les associations religieuses en Égypte d’après les documents démotiques*, Bibliothèque d’Études 46 (Cairo: L’institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1972), 171-172, §10 “Les ‘pretres ordinaires’ (*‘šš.w*).”

is followed by the divine determinative; in the first writing of the word, a “metal” determinative (as the sign for ḥd) precedes the divine determinative,⁴⁰ in the second example, a partially-erased symbol indicating “stone” (?) precedes the divine determinative.⁴¹ Some type of portable, cultic monument was meant by the Demotic word *wrk*, not a “temple treasury” as translated by Griffith and followed by Erichsen’s *Demotisches Glossar* and the Chicago Demotic Dictionary.⁴² Why would the temple treasury of Korte be carried to Philae? The *wrk* seems rather to have been a portable cult object, whether a shrine or divine statue or a uniquely Nubian cult object made of metal, perhaps gold, or stone for which there was no Egyptian word.⁴³ It was brought regularly to Philae, which is evocative of the Feast of Entry that was such an important rite for the Nubians of Phase II. Once at the gate of Philae, “the men of Korte” either donated or, more likely, received two *lgns* “jugs.” Unfortunately, there is a lacuna in the inscription where one would expect a verb linking the men of Korte and the two jugs.

⁴⁰ Dakka 12, line 9.

⁴¹ Dakka 12, line 10.

⁴² Griffith, *Catalogue*, #73, 142; Erichsen, *Glossar*, 95; CDD, W (09:1), 129.

⁴³ A shrine of stone (?) (‘l) of Thoth Pnubs at Dakka is mentioned in Dakka 30/5 (p3 qwe n ‘l n p3 šy ‘3) “the shrine of stone of the great divinity.” Interestingly, the Demotic word ‘l “stone” has a divine determinative. The stone shrine had been gilded so that its Feast of Entry could be performed; this entailed carrying the shrine in procession much like the *wrk* in Dakka 12. It is not certain if the procession described in Dakka 30 of Phase II travelled to Philae; however, in the same inscription the author described his pilgrimage to Philae in order to take part in a festival on the dromos.

In the heartland of Meroe, the practice of placing “miracle stones,” formations having a very high concentration of iron, in offering place “360” between the temple of Hathor and the Lion Temple at Naqa may have some bearing on this unique cultic object. See *Königstadt Naqa/Naqa Royal City*, ed. Karla Kröper, et al., (Berlin: SMB, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2007), 96-99. Over 140 such sandstone balls as well as chunks of petrified wood were deposited in this cult area as votive offerings before a statue of the Lion god of Naqa. Did the *wrk* mentioned in Dakka 12 include “miracle stones” which would explain the use of both “metal” and “stone” determinatives for the word in Demotic?

The importance of shrines and their use in processions of the gods was not unique to Nubian worshippers in the Dodecaschoenos; rather shrines were an integral part of temple rituals performed by priests and cult association members. De Cenival distinguished between the ordinary meetings of cult associations, centered on drinking, and those meetings scheduled on festival days,

A quelles occasions se réunissaient les membres? Certains indications montrent que les membres devaient assister à des réunions périodiques; parfois les textes précisent: “pour boire”. Ce sont les sessions que l’on peut qualifier d’ordinaires, par opposition à celles qui ont lieu lors des fêtes et des processions auxquelles les membres sont tenus de participer.⁴⁴

The obligation for cult association members to participate in processions greatly increased the number of participants and signaled the important place that processions held in temple cult.

What was the Political/Religious use of the Temples in this Period?

Temple Financial Transactions

During the earliest phase of Nubian temple inscriptions, non-Egyptian officials held positions in the Lower Nubian temple hierarchy, primarily claiming cult association titles. It is perplexing to consider that Nubian officials operated within an Egyptian temple system that was under Roman military control. How did these men gain access to cult association positions that controlled financial transactions within the temples of Lower Nubia? Two titles suggest that Meroitic control had extended into Lower Nubia in a period that preceded Phase I of the Nubian inscriptions. The title *shashimete*, which is clearly not Egyptian, was claimed in inscriptions at Kalabsha and Philae and the cult association title *strategos* of the king used at Dakka seems to have referred to a Meroitic king named in the associated date formula. If the Lower Nubian temples had fallen

⁴⁴ de Cenival, “*Les Associations*,” 176.

outside of Ptolemaic control in the late Ptolemaic period, it is possible that Meroitic rulers had employed local Nubians to act as royal representatives in the temples of Lower Nubia. Financial matters would have been their primary concern as evidenced by the title “agent of the king” used by the Nubian *strategos* M3n1 in Dakka 15. The fact that the inscription was dated to the reign of a Meroitic king only supports this assertion.

Organized in a very different manner than Egypt, political power in the Kingdom of Meroe was maintained through royal control of long-distance trade and exchange of elite gifts.⁴⁵ Unable to dominate Lower Nubia militarily, the Meroitic king or queen sought rather to gain control of trade with Egypt, employing local Nubians as representatives within the Egyptian temple administration. While Lower Nubia was conquered militarily by Roman forces in 29 and 25 BC, the Nubian inscriptions of Phase I indicate that the Romans left local Nubian officials in their cult association positions for several decades until a new Roman Egyptian administrative structure could be put in place.

The early Roman period temple inscriptions in Nubia primarily consisted of temple administrative agreements, which were almost exclusively financial in nature. However, the corpus is very heterogeneous. Temple employees, members of cult associations, and representatives of surrounding Nubian villages were party to these agreements, which directed the donations of the surrounding villages to support a specific cultic function in a particular Lower Nubian temple. The inscriptions seem to indicate that the elders of each town were organized into cult associations dedicated to the god of a temple. In the case of Philae, cult associations were dedicated to each of the minor temples within the larger temple complex. The inscriptions recorded agreements to

⁴⁵ David N. Edwards, *The Nubian Past: an Archaeology of Sudan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 167-169.

regulate priestly duties, allocations of temple supplies and tithes among temple personnel, and the financial obligations of towns in the vicinity to their local temples. In addition, the obligations of the subsidiary temples of Lower Nubia to Philae as the preeminent temple of the region were clarified in several early Roman inscriptions. These agreements expressed business transactions, not piety. The Nubian agreements were not unusual in this. Agreements formed the majority of **all** early Roman inscriptions found in the temples of Lower Nubia. What we see in the corpus of early Roman temple inscriptions is the financial and cultic administration of temples of Lower Nubia as captured in disparate snapshots: legal decisions, cultic agreements, and records of temple construction completed, all of which were acts undertaken by cult associations.

For the period in which the dated Nubian agreements were inscribed (circa AD 30-60), prayer inscriptions in Demotic are generally not attested at Philae. Aside from two dated Demotic *proskynemata* inscribed on the dromos,⁴⁶ the only place where prayer inscriptions **do** appear in the first and early second century AD is on the walls of the stairwell inside the Second Pylon, an area that continued to receive inscriptions in Phase II when this stairwell became the focal point of all the inscriptions of gold workers at Philae.⁴⁷ A brief description of the men who inscribed their prayers in the stairwell of the Second Pylon is in order here. The men who wrote the agreements in the Dodecaschoenos did not appear in any of the early prayer inscriptions found at Philae. In

⁴⁶ Ph. 27 on column 19 of the west colonnade was inscribed in AD 6 by the *lesonis* of Amun of Jeme. Ph. 42, inscribed above the window of the rear wall of the western colonnade, behind column 26 is dated to AD 22.

⁴⁷ For the interior of the Second Pylon as one the temple treasuries at Philae, see Laetitia Martzloff “Les ‘trésors’ des temples de Philae et d’Edfou” *Agyptologische Tempeltagung: Kutlabildung und Kultrealität* (Hamburg 27 Sept – 1 Oct 2011) ed. Horst Beinlich (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 277-278.

fact, the earliest prayer inscription (AD 81) is dated more than 20 years after the last dated agreement (AD 57). However, they represent the earliest prayer inscriptions inscribed for men not associated with the Egyptian rulers in an official capacity.

Ten inscriptions, written by four members of the family of Hatre, span the period AD 81-154.⁴⁸ Thus, the prayer inscriptions inside the Second Pylon were inscribed well after the last Nubian inscription of Phase I and the last inscription in the stairwell might have been contemporary with the earliest Nubian inscription of Phase II (circa mid-second century AD, also inscribed on the Second Pylon). This corpus, then, shows us what was happening at Philae during the Interregnum between Phase I and Phase II.

Hatre, his son, and two grandsons dedicated their inscribed prayers to Osiris, Horus, and Isis. The three deities names were unvariably evoked in that order. Unlike the agreements of Phase I, the prayer inscriptions generally did not include titles. Only Hatre's son indicated that he was a *wꜥb-sꜥm n ꜥls.t* translated by Griffith as "Sekhmi-priest of Isis."⁴⁹ This suggests that these individuals were not part of the temple staff. Several other contemporary inscriptions are interspersed with the early Demotic *proskynemata* of Hatre's family. The dedicants carried names that honored the Blemmye god Mandulis (Mre) and Thoth Pnubs ("the Male" *pꜣ-ḥw.t*): *Pꜣ-tꜣ-Mre*, son of ditto,⁵⁰ *Pꜣ-šr-Mr* son of *Pꜣ-tꜣ-Mr*,⁵¹ and *Pꜣ-tꜣ-Mre* son of *Pꜣ-tꜣ-pꜣ-ḥw.t*.⁵² These prayers to Osiris, Horus, and Isis inscribed between the first two phases of Nubian inscriptions at Philae indicate that pilgrimage to the temple did not cease and, in fact, the dedicators of

⁴⁸ For the family of Hatre, see Adelheid Burkhardt, *Ägypten*, 35-36.

⁴⁹ Ph. 274 dated AD 102.

⁵⁰ Ph. 294.

⁵¹ Ph. 271 dated Khoiak 5 AD 134.

⁵² Ph. 328, inscribed on the east face of the Second Pylon, was dated Khoiak 19 AD 69.

the *proskynemata* must have had a special status to have gained access to the interior of the Second Pylon. Because in later times this area received a cluster of inscriptions written by gold workers, and the suggestion has been made that this area served as a secondary treasury at Philae, it is possible that artisans who worked with gold or precious metals inscribed the early prayer graffiti in the Second Pylon. However, their lack of titles is troubling and work remains to be done with this group of inscriptions.

Cult Associations

Some of the Phase I Nubian agreements commemorated work undertaken on a temple or recorded commitments to perform cultic services for a god. These agreements were inscribed in the name of cult association members, many of whom also served as temple personnel.⁵³ Titles of cult association members appear frequently in the inscriptions of the early Roman period at Philae: *lesonis*, *strategos*, agent, elders, “ordinary priests” (ⲉⲥⲓ.t).⁵⁴

Two Nubian *strategoi* commemorated their work on the temple at Dakka. Although undated, these inscriptions are believed to be early,⁵⁵ which may indicate that Nubians initially joined temple cult associations at Dakka before joining such

⁵³ de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 141.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 153-175. Two cult association titles, “the great one” (wr) and “the second” (Pⲓ mḥ-2) were not attested in the Phase I corpus, but do appear in the inscriptions of Phase II (wr) and Phase III “the second” as *mete* in the Meroitic-language inscriptions. They will be discussed in the relevant chapters.

⁵⁵ Dakka 15/17, dated to the reign of King Aqragamani, may have been inscribed before the Roman conquest of Lower Nubia. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 23; *FHN II*, 687-689. Dakka 29, dated only to “year 40” with no king’s name given, was believed to belong to the reign of Augustus. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 25.

associations at Philae. In the first graffito, Dakka 15/17, M3nĭ performed ““a benefit”⁵⁶ which he has done for Isis...namely, the services of the great goddess Isis” at the temple of Dakka on behalf of a Meroitic king and his mother, while the second graffito, Dakka 29, commemorated the construction of the Roman sanctuary “in the name of the kings (unnamed)” under the command of the Nubian *strategos* Slw3. A Nubian *strategos* commemorated his work to oversee the construction of the Roman sanctuary on behalf of a Roman ruler. This work was done “in exchange for the life breath of the king.”

Did the title *strategos* imply that this official was the “president of a cult association” as the title has been translated?⁵⁷ Attestations of the name of a Nubian *strategos*, 3blĭ, in Philae, Kalabsha, and Dakka,⁵⁸ within this small corpus highlight the far-reaching control exerted by the Nubian *strategoi*. If the Nubian *strategos* was, in fact, the president of a cult association to which deity was that association dedicated? One might assume it to be the cult association of Isis, the preeminent deity worshipped in the Dodecaschoenos. The three attestations of the Nubian *strategos* 3blĭ initially seem to contest this assumption, appearing as they do in temples dedicated to Isis, Mandulis, and Thoth Pnubs. However, the *strategos*, 3blĭ, was only a party to an agreement in one of those inscriptions, recorded at Philae, while the two inscriptions from Kalabsha and Dakka, mention the *strategos* in order to date the inscription. Thus, it seems that 3blĭ was

⁵⁶ T3y md.t nfr. J.D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor*, (Oxford, Egypt Exploration Society, 1976), 157, in which the “benefits” supplied by Isis are sustaining life and providing a burial.

⁵⁷ CDD M (10:1), 248 where the Demotic title mr-mšꜥ is translated as general (in the military); president (of the cult association); de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 159-162.

⁵⁸ Ph. 55 (AD 48), Kalabsha 4 (undated), and Dakka 12 (AD 57).

president of the cult association of Isis of Philae⁵⁹ as suggested by this legal settlement concerning revenue collected at the temple of Philae.⁶⁰ As president of the cult association of Isis of Philae ʒblʾ's financial and judicial control extended to all the temples of Lower Nubia, which were subsidiary to Philae.

The “men of P3-^c.wy-ḥy” with whom the *strategos* divided ʒwle in Ph. 55 were likely members of a cult association. Each of three attestations of the lexeme ḥy in this inscription was written with a place determinative, indicating that the word referred to a toponym, either a town name, holy site, or perhaps a minor temple.⁶¹ Hughes noted that the Demotic phrase P3-^c.wy can refer to a cult association.⁶² This suggestion is corroborated by the phrases “work of the temple” and “work of the elders” seen later in the same inscription. The men of P3-^cwy-ḥy were members of a cult association that undertook work on a portion of the temple at Philae and who received a portion of the ʒwle, which would fund that work, from the cult association president.

Kalabsha 4, an agreement that redistributed the possessions of a man who died intestate, was concluded by several men without titles, who may have been relatives of

⁵⁹ Although it was never explicitly stated that the cult association was dedicated to Isis, one may assume this was so due to the fact that the title “agent of Isis” was always the second title held by a Nubian *strategos*. See “*Strategos*” below.

⁶⁰ Ph. 55. At Philae, the *strategos* reached an agreement with various entities associated with the temple of Isis, including the men of P3-^cwy-ḥy, perhaps a reference to members of another cult association. At Dakka, the agreement concerned cult service owed to Isis of Philae by the subsidiary temples of Dakka and Korte and, therefore, would necessarily allude to the head of the cult association of Isis of Philae. However, at Kalabsha the finalized agreement (a will drawn up for a man who died intestate) was brought before Mandulis, the god of Kalabsha temple. In that graffito, it appears that the name of the *strategos* was simply part of a date formula.

⁶¹ See Griffith, *Catalogue*, vol. 2, plate 16. P3-^cwy-ḥy appears in ll. 4, 5, 22.

⁶² George R. Hughes, “The Sixth Day of the Lunar Month and the Demotic Word for ‘Cult Guild’” *MDAIK 16* (1958): 153. See also de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 21-22.

the deceased man,⁶³ and the elders of Pr-Ḥr, which may refer to the village of Abu Hor south of Kalabsha or to members of a cult association. Cult associations were responsible for collecting the funds to bury their members.⁶⁴ That responsibility may have also extended to disposing of the property of a member who died without a final will and testament.

Nubians in the Egyptian Priesthood

Nubian participation in the Egyptian temples was almost exclusively as financial managers and administrators during Phase I. However, in four of the seven Nubian inscriptions, parties to the agreement claimed the priestly titles prophet (ḥm-nṯr) and priest (wꜥb).⁶⁵ Although it is by no means certain that each of these individuals was Nubian, some of these priests can be identified as Nubian based on their names. Although the name of the prophet in Graffito Kalabsha 4 has been lost,⁶⁶ the full name of the prophet in Dakka 12 was preserved. He was Harsiese, son of Qera, a man of Korte, who held the titles “servant (bꜣk) of Isis of the Abaton and Philae” and “prophet of Korte.” His patronymic may identify him as non-Egyptian. Qera is not an Egyptian name, but rather fits the pattern of the Nubian names of the *strategoi* of this period: two syllables and the absence of an Egyptian theonym.⁶⁷ The *strategos* Mꜣnꜣ, who dated his graffito

⁶³ According to Griffith’s restoration of the deceased man’s patronymic, he was a son of Gale. Gale, son of Pate and Psensnaw, son of Pate, were also parties to the agreement. It seems that they were the father and uncle of the deceased.

⁶⁴ de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 7, lines 17-21.

⁶⁵ Kalabsha 4, Dakka 12, Dakka 15/17, and Dendur 1.

⁶⁶ Kalabsha 4 mentions a temple official with the title Pꜣ ḥry Pr-ꜥnh, Overseer of the House of Life, named Pꜣ-sn-snw, which is also the name of the uncle of the deceased who is called Pꜣ-sn-snw s. Pa-tꜣ. If they were the same person, Kalabsha 4 offers us another person in the temple hierarchy with a non-Egyptian name. (In the graffito Pꜣ-sn-snw, son of Pa-tꜣ had a brother named Gale, which is **not** an Egyptian name.)

⁶⁷ For example, Mꜣnꜣ, Slwꜣ, Rqꜣ, ꜣblꜣ.

(Dakka 15/17) by the reign of a non-Egyptian king, claimed the title *wab*-priest of Isis among others. Because the Nubians Harsiese, son of Qera (Dakka 12) and M3n1 (Dakka 15/17) held priestly titles, we have in these graffiti early attestations for Nubian entry into the Egyptian priesthood. Although Nubians claimed priestly titles, these inscriptions may also attest to the first Nubian priests' **inability** to write Demotic. Both Dakka 12 and Dakka 15/17 have a colophon attributing the inscription to an individual with the title "scribe of the temple of Isis of the Abaton and Philae." While the Dakka 12 recorded a cultic agreement between the temple of Korte and the temple of Philae and, therefore, would have involved priests from Philae, Dakka 15/17 was written for a Nubian *strategos* and dated to the reign of a non-Egyptian king, seemingly composed solely in a Nubian context. However, a scribe from Philae composed the inscription. Furthermore, Graffito Dendur 1 recorded an agreement between a *lesonis* and the prophets, elders, and agents of Dendur. The copy of the oath "to be sworn in the midst of the Abaton" on behalf of the *lesonis* released the clergy of Dendur from any financial obligation "except 1 deben of silver." A colophon to that inscription stated that it was "written by Pakhom, son of Petusire, the *lesonis*, with his own hand."⁶⁸ Was Pakhom, the author of Dendur 1, *lesonis* at Dendur or Philae? His name was a perfectly good Egyptian name and perhaps he was Egyptian, although Burkhardt classified the inscription as "Meroitic" due to its dating formula, which consisted of the phrase "year 20 in the time of Swn1, *strategos* and agent of Isis." Griffith believed Pakhom was from Philae,

In spite of his bad spelling the *lesonis* is probably not a local one but represented the metropolitan temple of Philae, voluntarily ceding some

⁶⁸ Dendur 1/15.

dues from Korte for the benefit of the temple of Tutzis (Dendur), which is here represented by its ‘prophet, elders and agents’...⁶⁹

Thus, it seems that Nubians obtained priestly offices at temples in the southern Dodekaschoenos, most importantly Dakka, before learning the Egyptian scripts. The ability to write with the hieroglyphic and Demotic scripts was not demonstrated by Nubian priests until Phase II.

Who Authored the Early Roman period Nubian Graffiti at Philae?

Strategos (mr mšꜥ)

Five Nubian *strategoi* are attested in the graffiti of the Dodekaschoenos during the first half of the first century AD.⁷⁰ The Nubian *strategoi* invariably carried two titles in the agreements of this era: that of *strategos* (mr mšꜥ) as well as the title “agent of Isis” (rt n ʾls.t). Both of these titles are attested for members of Egyptian cult associations. The inscriptions indicate that the Nubian *strategos* was the head of the cult association of Isis of Philae who also governed Lower Nubia as a civil and judicial administrator. This system of administration, which gave both civil and religious control of the Dodekaschoenos to one official, accords well with the Ptolemaic designation of the area as the estate of Isis of Philae. The multifaceted role of the Nubian *strategos* accorded well with the evolution of the office in Egypt, which evolved over the course of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt from a purely military position to an administrative role held by the senior

⁶⁹ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 35.

⁷⁰ M3ni (Dakka 15/17), Swny (Dendur 1), Slwꜥ (Dakka 29), Rqꜥ (Ph. 54, AD 30), Ablꜥ (Ph. 55, AD 48 and Kalabsha 4, “in the presence of Ablꜥ). FHN II, 730. Only the two inscriptions from Philae contain complete date formulae, which refer to Egyptian kings, allowing them to be precisely dated. Dendur 1 and Kalabsha 4 are dated to the “reign” of a *strategos*. Kalabsha 4 contained an additional date formula, which provides regnal year 10 of an unnamed king as did Dakka 29, dated to regnal year 40 of an unnamed king. Dakka 15/17 used the regnal year of an otherwise unattested Meroitic king Aqrakamani and his mother Naytal.

official in each nome. DeCenival noted the diminution of the military characteristics of the *strategos* and the acquisition of a temple administrative role,

En résumé, on peut conclure de cette tentative d'analyse, que le titre de *mr mšꜥ* désigne bien, à la époque lagide et romain, un personnage appartenant à la hiérarchie militaire, et cumulant des fonctions de prêtres et d'administrateur d'un temple avec des fonctions militaires ou policières.⁷¹

Cruz-Uribe also noted the dual aspects of the title *strategos*, that of military general and that of a “high ranking member of the temple hierarchy.”⁷² Cruz-Uribe observed that the military title “general” was acquired by the high priest of Theban cults in the Late New Kingdom period, thus uniting priestly administrative duties under a “military” title *mr-mšꜥ*. During the Ptolemaic period, the Greek title *strategos* initially had military connotations, but later evolved to coincide with the Egyptian temple position of “president of the cult association” to indicate the highest ranking official at the head of a “staff association” of temple employees.⁷³ The multivalent nature of the title *strategos* can be seen in the very different duties ascribed to the *strategoi* in the Nubian graffiti of Phase I (serving Roman Egyptian rulers) vis-à-vis the *pelamos* of Phase II⁷⁴ (serving Meroitic rulers).

⁷¹de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 161-162.

⁷²Eugene Cruz-Uribe, review of *Quittungen. Demotische Dokumente aus Dime*, Vol. 2, by Sandra L. Lippert, Maren Schentuleit, *JAOS* 128, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 2008): 363-364.

⁷³For discussion of the changing role of the *strategos* in the Ptolemaic period, see John Whitehorne, “The *Strategi* of Roman Egypt (to 1985)” in ANRW, ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini, vol. 2, 10.1 (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988), 599.

⁷⁴A late survival of this office can be seen in a graffito, dated to second century AD, and found at the southern border of the Dodecaschoenos at the temple Maharraqa. In graffito Maharraqa 1, the *strategos* Pa[...] engraved his *proskynema* before Isis of Takompso. See FHN III, 939. Burkhardt considered this graffito to be Nubian, based on the name of the mother of the *strategos*, which was Artreye.

In Phase I, the *strategos* was shown clearly to be a member of the temple hierarchy in the Nubian graffiti where his duties included the division of temple revenue among temple employees. In those inscriptions the Nubian *strategos* had no military function, rather he held the senior position in the administration of the financial affairs of the temples of Lower Nubia.⁷⁵

Török described the role of the *strategos* in the early Roman period saying,

The official activity of the mr mšꜥ as he appears in the texts quoted here is that of a civil servant who is, however, closely connected with the (probably first of all financial) administration of the domain of the Isis temple at Philae. His authority extends ...over the whole of the Dodecashaenus... The administration of the domains of other temples in the region was also under the authority of the mr mšꜥ.⁷⁶

In contrast, the title Meroitic title *pelamos* (*strategos*) as used in the Phase II Meroitic-language graffiti was, indeed, a military position, reflecting the expansion of Meroitic control north into Lower Nubia during the third century AD.⁷⁷ During Phase II, the title *strategos* (mr mšꜥ) was used only rarely in the **Demotic** graffiti.⁷⁸ The title *strategos*, however, appeared frequently in the Meroitic-language graffiti as *pelamoš*.

The Meroitic-language titles differentiated between two separate positions: “strategos of

⁷⁵ In Graffito Ph. 54, the Nubian *strategos* Rqꜥ renounced his claim to any tithe due to the superintendents of singers that was associated with a particular area (of the temple complex?). Ph. 54/10-11 “...the tithe of all expense that come to you in the north[-west(?)] ground of the enclosure (?) in the east...” While in Ph. 55, the *strategos* divides 3wle between the parties to this agreement: the nome of Isis, the men of P3-ꜥy.ḥy, the *strategos*, the ḥḥnꜥte, the ꜥmeme.

⁷⁶ László Török, *FHN II*, 730.

⁷⁷ The *strategos* of Meroitic Nubia had a decidedly martial character in the Meroitic-language graffiti of Phase II. See Nicholas Millett, “Meroitic Nubia,” 181 for a discussion of the *strategoī* of the early Roman period as forerunners of the *strategoī* of Meroitic Nubia who flourished in the third century AD.

⁷⁸ The three examples of the title *strategos* found in the Phase II Demotic graffiti are Ph. 344 “*strategos* in Meroe,” Ph. 411 “*strategos*” and “agent of Isis,” and Ph. 417 “*strategos* of the water,” (mr mšꜥ n p3 mw) which translated the Meroitic title (*pelamoš* ato-lit) into Demotic.

the water” and “*strategos* of the *adb*” (frequently translated as land or desert). The latter was junior to the *strategos* of the water. The Meroitic use of the title *strategos* as a military title and its translation into Demotic explains the bifurcation in the duties of a *strategos* noted by Cruz-Urbe in the third century AD inscriptions at Philae.⁷⁹

While the Nubian *strategoi* who served under Roman Egyptian rule did not fulfill a military role in the Roman administration, they managed the region of Lower Nubia as territory annexed to Egypt. The Nubian *strategoi* continued a long tradition of local Nubian elites who administered the region on behalf of Egyptian rulers.⁸⁰ Because Lower Nubia was administered as a temple estate of Isis of Philae, it was through the apparatus of temple administration that the *strategoi* served as leaders of the local Nubian population. Thus, the *tyrannos* who had served earlier Ptolemaic rulers was for a brief period replaced by the Nubian *strategoi* as the local administrators of Lower Nubia. Török noted the continuity in local rule by Nubian elites during the transition from Ptolemaic to Roman Egypt,

[I]t nevertheless seems that there existed a continuous ‘native’ administration in the Dodekaschoenus. It would also seem that there was no ‘parallel’ Egyptian structure, probably because there was no, or only a very small, Egyptian population. The ‘native’ administration of the Dodekaschoenus was, as a whole, subordinate to the governor of the Thebaid or was, in the periods of Meroitic occupation,

⁷⁹ Cruz-Urbe, review of *Quittungen*, 363. In the second phase of Nubian graffiti, members of the powerful Wayekiye family from Nubia held the Meroitic military title *pelamos* and conducted rites at Philae as priests. The marriage of Wayekiye A and Taese in Generation 3 of the Wayekiye family combined the Meroitic military titles held by Taese’s family with the Egyptian priestly titles held by Wayekiye A’s family. For a detailed discussion of these titles, see chapter 2.

⁸⁰ For a good discussion of the Egyptian tradition of employing Nubian elites to serve as local administrators of Lower Nubia beginning in the New Kingdom, see W. Paul van Pelt, “Revising Egypto-Nubian Relations in New Kingdom Lower Nubia: From Egyptianization to Cultural Entanglement,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 23 (2013): 528-530.

subordinate to the king in Meroe, who, however, appointed as his ‘agent’ an official from the ranks of the local professional bureaucrats.⁸¹

In the tumultuous period between the end of Ptolemaic control of Lower Nubia and the imposition of Roman control in the area, the Dodecaschoenos was ruled on an *ad hoc* basis by local elites. The rare, and temporary, power vacuum in Lower Nubia allowed local elites to attain high-ranking temple administrative roles, such as *strategos*, generally held by Egyptians.

In this interim period, Nubian *strategoi* were referenced in the date formulae of temple inscriptions. Lacking a complete date formula, which referred to the year of the reign of an Egyptian king, the inscriptions provided a regnal year **without** a king’s name, often supplemented with the name of the current Nubian *strategos*⁸² using the Demotic phrase *iir hr PN*, translated as “before PN” or “in the time of PN.” The fluctuating control of Lower Nubia between the Ptolemies, Meroites, and Romans would have encouraged the Nubian residents to date documents by the “regnal year” of the local Nubian *strategoi* while paying homage, tribute or taxes to whichever power was currently in control of the area.⁸³

There is also evidence that the Nubian *strategoi* functioned under rules that differed from those used in Egypt. The Nubian *strategos*, *ḥbl*, was attested in AD 48⁸⁴

⁸¹ *FHN II*, 689.

⁸² Dendur 1 (*Swni*), Dakka 29 (*Slwḥ*), and Kalabsha 4 where the text is broken, but mentioned the *strategos* *ḥbl* perhaps in the date formula *iir hr PN* to indicate “in the time of PN.”

⁸³ This fluctuation of control between Roman Egypt and Meroe may have resulted in the unusual use of the phrase “the kings” in five inscriptions in the Dodecaschoenos: Dakka 15/3, Dakka 29/2, Dendur 1/13, Ph. 411/5, 421/8 – each attributed to a Nubian author. The first three are from Phase I, while the last two inscriptions come from Phase II.

⁸⁴ Ph. 55.

and AD 57,⁸⁵ with the undated inscription at Kalabsha likely to have been dated to AD 50,⁸⁶ yielding a lengthy nine year term in office. In Roman Egypt *strategoi* had a limited term of service, and were required to serve outside of their nome.⁸⁷ The Nubian *strategoi* seem to have operated under a different set of rules than those in effect in Egypt. ʒblʾ's tenure as *strategos* marked the zenith of the power of Nubian *strategoi* and the culmination of their brief appearance in the first century AD.

Agent of Isis (rt n ʾls.t)

The “agent of Isis” received revenues donated to the temples of the Dodecaschoenos. As discussed in the Introduction, the “agents of the south,” referred to on the Famine Stela, were responsible for the collection of Nubian tithes during the Ptolemaic period. The title “agent” frequently appeared in documents relating to the activities of cult associations, either as a title on its own or in conjunction with another title “representative of.”⁸⁸ The title rwḏ (rt in the graffiti of the Dodecaschoenos) was translated variously as “president,” “administrator,” “manager,” or “administrator.” In the early Roman period inscriptions of Lower Nubia, agents were associated with a particular

⁸⁵ Dakka 12.

⁸⁶ Inscription Kalabsha 4 was dated only to regnal year 10 without providing a king's name. As the other inscriptions in which ʒblʾ's name appeared were dated to the consecutive reigns of the Roman Emperors Claudius (AD 41-54) in Ph. 55 and Nero (AD 54-68) in Dakka 12, it is reasonable to assume that the date formula in Kalabsha 4 referred to regnal year 10 of Emperor Claudius. Regnal year 10 of Claudius occurred in AD 50, which falls between Ph. 55, written in AD 48, and Dakka 12, written in AD 57. If we assume the date formula referred to regnal year 10 of Nero, that would result in a date of AD 63 for this graffito. The later date is unlikely as it would result in a 15-year term in office for ʒblʾ. Egyptian *strategoi* were generally limited to a term of three years, which makes the longer term for ʒblʾ unlikely.

⁸⁷ See John Whitehorne, “The *Strategi* of Roman Egypt,” 601 regarding the Edict of July 68, which declared a set period of service for Roman Egyptian nome *strategoi* of three years.

⁸⁸ de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 164-165.

god; most often they were “agents of Isis.” An “agent of Isis” was the official who received offerings at the temple as the financial representative of the goddess.

While the title “agent of Isis” was invariably the second title of the Nubian *strategos*, other variations of the title “agent” were also attested in the graffiti of the Dodecaschoenus. While the titles “agent of Arensnuphis,”⁸⁹ and “agent of the god (Osiris)”⁹⁰ are attested in the inscriptions at Philae, the title “agent of Thoth Pnubs,”⁹¹ appeared only at Dakka. The *strategos* M3ne, who inscribed his text at Dakka in Phase I, held the expected title “agent of Isis,” but also held the unusual title “agent of the king.”⁹² A similar title is found in a Ptolemaic text from *The Archive of Hor* in Saqqara, which features an “agent of the king, who was controller of the temple.”⁹³ This official is assumed to have been the Royal επισατης, the man responsible for monitoring the financial affairs of the temple on behalf of the king.⁹⁴ Our Roman period Nubian inscription echoes the earlier Ptolemaic title; however, because M3ne’s inscription used the regnal year of a Meroitic king. The Nubian *strategos* must have served as the financial representative of the Meroitic king at the temple of Dakka. This may indicate Meroitic royal control of the temple finances at Dakka for a period. Certainly, Meroites

⁸⁹ Ph. 36, inscribed on the wall behind the western colonnade, and Ph. 314, found on the bridge of the second pylon, dated to AD 247, year 4 Phillipus. Both of these graffiti will be discussed further under Indications of Additional First Century AD Nubian Graffiti at Philae.

⁹⁰ Ph. 288 and Ph. 316 were inscribed opposite each other in the interior of the central tower of the Second Pylon. The author(s) of these inscriptions held the same title, “agent of the god.” See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 86, 90, 93. The expression “the god” referred to Osiris as reference was made to t3 mt rnp.t Wsr, “the yearly affair of Osiris” in nearby inscriptions (Ph. 269, Ph. 273, both on the south western wall of the tower and Ph. 289 and Ph. 290, both adjacent to Ph. 288 on the north western wall).

⁹¹ Dakka 29.

⁹² P3 rt n Pr-ε3. Dakka 15/17, line 1. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 22-23; *FHN II*, 687-689.

⁹³ P3 rd (n) Pr-ε3 (i)wn-n3 šn n ht-ntr

⁹⁴ J.D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor*, (Oxford, Egypt Exploration Society, 1976), 74, 79.

controlled Dakka during the period in which a pair of Meroitic royal inscriptions was carved into the pylon at Dakka, presumably engraved during the late first century BC when Meroe and Rome met in battle.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, M₃ne's Dakka inscription is only dated to the reign of this otherwise unattested king, depriving us of a precise date for the inscription. The title "agent of the king" appeared only once more in the graffiti of the Dodecashaenos. During Phase II, high-ranking Nubian civil administrators of Meroitic Nubia⁹⁶ claimed the title "agents of the king of *Aethiopia*" in the third century AD.⁹⁷

In Phase I, the title "agent of Isis" appeared only as the second title of the Nubian *strategos*. Thus, it seems that this lucrative position was reserved for the *strategos* alone in early Roman period Lower Nubia. However, in Phase II the title "agent of Isis" began to be claimed by individuals who were also "*qerens* of Isis," most notably the first member of the Wayekiye family to leave an inscription at Philae in the third quarter of the second century.⁹⁸ This expanded use of the title "agent of Isis" indicated a change in the way the Nubian temples were administered during a period of heightened Meroitic royal involvement in Phase II.

⁹⁵ MI 92, inscribed in the name of King Teriteqas, Queen Amanirenas, and crown prince? Akinidad, and MI 93, inscribed for Akinidad. See FHN II, 715-717, 725-728. Note the inclusion of the title *pelamos/strategos* in line 16 of MI 92, which suggests that the Meroitic military official was operating in southern Lower Nubia during the Meroitic advance against the Romans in 29 and 25 BC. Ibid., 716-717.

⁹⁶ Manitawawi and Hornakhtyotef II held civil administrative titles in addition to their priestly titles. They were "hereditary princes of Takompso" (r-p^ct n ḥ₃s.t n T₃-kme-600) and "chiefs of the Triacontachoenos" (ḥry-tp n p₃ T₃-n-30). These administrative titles will be discussed in chapter 2.

⁹⁷ N₃ rt(.w) n Pr-^c₃ n pa t₃ Nḥs. Ph. 410, line 5. It is impossible to specify which Meroitic king this uncle and nephew served. Meroitic royal chronology possesses very few precise dates for rulers. The one exception for the Meroitic period, Teqorideamani, is securely dated to AD 253 by the Demotic graffito of the king's ambassador to Roman Egypt, Sasan (Ph. 416). Ph. 410 was inscribed before AD 253.

⁹⁸ Paese was the "*qeren* of Isis" and the "agent of Isis" in Ph. 251, the first inscription left by a member of the Wayekiye family. See, FHN III, no. 231, 944-945.

Shashimete (ssmt, ssmst)⁹⁹

The title is attested only twice in the Demotic inscriptions of the Dodecaschoenos in Ph. 55 and Kalabsha 4.¹⁰⁰ Characterized as a “sacerdotal title” by Griffith,¹⁰¹ these two inscriptions indicate rather that a *shashimete* was concerned with temple revenues. In the Philae inscription, the *shashimete* was party to an agreement (blʒ) with the *strategos* regarding the division of ʒwle among several parties. In the Kalabsha graffito, the *shashimete* brought before the god Mandulis the agreements (nʒ hn.w) regarding the division of property for a man who died intestate, ostensibly to receive the god’s consent. Those agreements also concerned the division of ʒwle. In each case, the *shashimete* was party to the agreement with “the elders.”¹⁰² At Philae the *shashimete*, mentioned after the *strategos*, must have been his subordinate, while at Kalabsha the *shashimete*, mentioned first in the inscription, can be assumed to have been the highest-ranking party in that agreement.¹⁰³

In contrast to its scarcity as a title in the Demotic inscriptions, the title *shashimete*¹⁰⁴ appeared in Meroitic-language inscriptions from virtually all of the

⁹⁹ This version of the word will be used because it has become traditional. However, see n. 104 for clarification of the transliteration of the Meroitic letter š.

¹⁰⁰ See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 304. The presence of Meroitic titles in this corpus is very rare.

¹⁰¹ Francis Ll. Griffith, *The Meroitic Inscriptions of Shablul and Karanog*, (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1911), 119.

¹⁰² Those elders, mentioned without further qualification in Ph. 55, therefore, are assumed to be the elders of Philae. In the Kalabsha inscriptions they are called “the elders of Pr-Hr, thought to refer to the nearby town of Abu Hor. “Elders” are discussed below.

¹⁰³ Although the *strategos* ʒblʒ was mentioned in the inscription from Kalabsha, he was not party to the agreement.

¹⁰⁴ The title was spelled various ways in the Meroitic cursive script: ssime and ssimete. The earlier use of “š” in Meroitic is used by Griffith. See F. Ll. Griffith, “Meroitic Studies II” *JEA* 3 (1916): 117. That letter is now transliterated “s.” See Claude Rilly, *La langue de Méroé* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2007), 381-383; idem, *Le méroïtique et sa famille linguistique*, (Louvain-Paris, Peeters Press, 2009), 17.

important administrative centers of Meroitic Nubia as well as in the capital city of Meroe. From Amara, midway between the second and third cataracts, a “*shashimete* of Amun”¹⁰⁵ is attested on his funerary stela, from Faras, north of the second cataract, come three attestations of the title *shashimete*.¹⁰⁶ At the military settlement of Gebel Adda,¹⁰⁷ several funerary inscriptions¹⁰⁸ mentioned a relative of the deceased who held the title *shashimete*,¹⁰⁹ one of whom was a “*shashimete* of the Kandake,”¹¹⁰ perhaps indicating an official who managed the Meroitic queen’s estates in Meroitic Nubia. The title *shashimete* was used in two inscriptions at the Meroitic administrative center Karanog¹¹¹ as well as in nearby Shablul.¹¹² Additionally, several inscriptions from Meroe record the presence of a *shashimete* in the capital city, including a “*shashimete* of the king.”¹¹³ The title may also appear in the earliest Meroitic-language royal inscription (REM 1044) donated by the Meroitic king Tanyidamani at the Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal

¹⁰⁵ MI 85/6.

¹⁰⁶ MI 129/6 funerary stela (ššimete mle-yotwi), Far. 4, and O. Far 18.

¹⁰⁷ Gebel Adda is on the east bank of the Nile, opposite Abu Simbel and north of Ballana and Qustul.

¹⁰⁸ For the three inscriptions, GA 31, GA 53, and GA 54, see Nicholas B. Millett, “The Meroitic Inscriptions from Gebel Adda” *Fs. Millett* in *JSSEA* 32 (2005): 27-28, 37, 54. I thank Eugene Cruz-Uribe for this reference.

¹⁰⁹ GA 54.

¹¹⁰ A title held by the ruling queen of Meroe. For this Meroitic title, see Inge Hoffman, “Zu den Titeln *ktke* und *pqr*” *ZDMG Suppl. III* 2 (1977): 1400-1404.

¹¹¹ Kar. 41 and Kar. 78 (skeskin ššimete).

¹¹² Shablul. 5.

¹¹³ Mer. 6 (ššimete qeswi, one of three titles connected with the untranslated Meroitic word *qeswi*, MI 137 - “shashimete of the king” (ššimete-lo qorise-lo). MI 131/6 - an unprovenanced offering table, having the symbol of the disk and horns of Isis at the top in place of a spout. For all of these attestations of the title, see Fritz Hintze, *Meroitische Stele des Königs Tañidamani aus Napata*, Kush 8 (1960): 147; Fritz Hintze, “Die Struktur der “Deskriptionssätze” in den meroitischen Totentexten” *MIO* 9 (1963): 9.

(Temple B500). The title *ssime* of Amun was used in what appears to be a list of items donated to the temple.¹¹⁴

According to Millett, the *shashimete*, like the *strategos*, held both civil and religious power,

The *ššimete* –s occur frequently connected with gods, and thus it is not purely a civil title, but perhaps means “steward” or the like...If this is not too far from the mark we then have evidence for separate fiscal staffs in Lower Nubia for both the Candace and the King which may reflected (sic) the existence...of estates or of parallel tithing or tax structures or may have to do with trade.¹¹⁵

Millett, who excavated at Gebel Adda, assumed that the duties of the *shashimete* were primarily of a financial nature,

The appearance of the title *ššimete* in some of the Demotic graffiti of the Dodecaschoenus in company with that of the *strategos* in financial or legal situations inclines me to regard him as some sort of steward, financial agent, or man of business.¹¹⁶

Interestingly, three examples of titles otherwise unattested in Egypt, *shashimete*, *hḥnʕtī* and *ʿmīmī*, all appear in Ph. 55. Both *shashimete* and *hḥnʕtī* are attested as titles in Meroitic-language inscriptions south of the Dodecaschoenus, confirming that they are indeed Meroitic titles. Perhaps the appearance of these Meroitic titles in the early Roman period graffiti reflects the presence of previous Meroitic administrative structure in the Dodecaschoenus, established in the first century BC when the Ptolemies were too weak

¹¹⁴ FHN II, 666, line 25, 670.

¹¹⁵ Nicolas Millett, “Social and Political Organization in Meroe,” quoted in László Török, *Economic Offices and Officials in Meroitic Nubia: A Study in Territorial Administration of the Late Meroitic Kingdom*. (Budapest: Les Chaires d’Histoire Ancienne de l’Université Lorand Eötvös de Budapest, 1979), *Studia Aegyptiaca* 5:137. Török questioned the validity of Millett’s assertion that there might exist separate estates for the Meroitic king and queen in Lower Nubia.

¹¹⁶ Idem, “Meroitic Nubia” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), 180.

to hold Lower Nubia. Meroitic conquest of local tribes in the area would have allowed the installation of Meroitic governing structures prior to the arrival of the Romans.

Lesonis (mr šn)¹¹⁷

In Egypt and Lower Nubia, the *lesonis* served as the senior official responsible for the financial administration of each individual temple.¹¹⁸ In Egypt, the office was held for one year, after payment of a fee, but could be renewed. A Nubian graffito from Phase II (Dakka 30) suggests that this was also true in Lower Nubia.¹¹⁹ The *lesonis* was responsible for distributing temple revenue to the priests who served in that temple. A *lesonis* authored the sole Demotic graffito from the temple of Dendur inscribed on the north wall of the Pronaos.¹²⁰ This difficult inscription consists of a Demotic contract between the *lesonis*, on one hand, and the prophet, elders and agents of Dendur, on the other. It seems to record the cancellation of a payment by the priests of Korte¹²¹ to the temple of Dendur in recognition of the care provided by those priests to a shrine of Isis kept at the temple of Korte.

The inscription at Dendur contains the only attestation of the title *lesonis* in the Nubian graffiti of Phase I. However, several members of the Wayekiye family held the

¹¹⁷ Plural: *lesones*.

¹¹⁸ Karl-Theodor Zauzich, “*Lesonis*” *LdÄ III*, 1008-1009; Andrew Monson, “Priests of Soknebtunis and Sokonopis: P. BM EA 10647” *JEA* 92 (2006): 208.

¹¹⁹ See, László Török, *Between Two Worlds: the frontier region between ancient Nubia and Egypt 3700 BC to AD 500* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 463.

¹²⁰ There is also a Meroitic-language inscription on the adjoining west wall (REM 0138), perpendicular to the north wall on which the Demotic inscription is found. The Meroitic inscription is badly damaged and no longer legible. See Leclant, et al., *Répertoire d'épigraphie méroïtique*, vol. 1, (Paris : Diffusion de Boccard, 2000), 310

¹²¹ A Roman temple 5 miles south of Dakka on the west bank, built on the site of an 18th dynasty temple, Korte has now completely disappeared. Other references to this temple can be found in Lepsius L.D. *Text*, V, 76, which mentioned “Isis of Philae, lady of Qrd.t.” Dakka 12/4, Ph. 56/2, Ph. 60/7.

title in Phase II.¹²² The position of *lesonis* seems to have served as the entrée for the Wayekiye family into the Egyptian temple hierarchy. Two titles, *lesonis* and *qeren*, were held by the members of the first three generations of the family who recorded their prayers at Philae.¹²³

The Nubian inscriptions of the Dodecaschoenos attest to a difference in administrative procedure between Roman Egypt and Lower Nubia, which experienced an increased Meroitic royal presence during Phase II. While the Egyptian *lesonis* experienced a “demotion” under Roman control¹²⁴ and control of temple finances was taken over by the state in the form of the Roman *idios logos*, the single inscription by a *lesonis* in Phase I indicates that he was in control of temple finances. In Phase II, the Nubian *lesones* in the Dodecaschoenos, who served at Philae and Dakka, continued to oversee temple finances. While it is unclear whom the two Nubian *lesones* attested at Philae in Phase II¹²⁵ served. Hornakhtyotef II’s graffito, Dakka 30, states unambiguously that he served at the pleasure of the king in Meroe. The position of *lesonis* continued to be an important temple administrative position well into the third century AD in Lower Nubia. This situation was very different from the one in Egypt where Roman officials

¹²² Hornakhtyotef I and his son, Sosen, both held this title in Sosen’s inscription on the roof of the Birth House at Philae, Ph. 223. Sosen later replaced the title *lesonis* with “royal scribe of Kush” in his inscription on the Gate of Hadrian at Philae, Ph. 409. Two grandsons of Hornakhtyotef I also claimed this title at Dakka - Hornakhtyotef II and his brother, Snpte (Dakka 30).

¹²³ Paese was a *qeren* of Isis and agent of Isis. His son, Hornakhtyotef I was *lesonis* at Philae and *qeren*, while the son of Hornakhtyotef I, Sosen, was *lesonis* at Philae and later the royal scribe of Kush.

¹²⁴ Karl-Theodor Zauzich, “*Lesonis*” *LdÄ III*, 1008.

¹²⁵ Sosen (Ph. 223) was *lesonis* in year 31 and named his father Hornakhtyotef I who was also a *lesonis*. Sosen’s second graffito (Ph. 409) in which he used the title “royal scribe of Kush” indicates that this official was also in the employ of the Meroitic king, although not necessarily while he served as *lesonis*. Neither of Sosen’s inscriptions are dated.

assumed financial control of the Egyptian temples.

Elders (n3 hl-ʿ3.w)

Groups of men referred to as the “elders” of a particular town, temple, or cult association were named as parties to the contracts.¹²⁶ “Elders” are named parties in both the Nubian and Egyptian agreements of the early Roman period. Huzar identified the “elders” as a new administrative body in Roman Egypt, “As one of the Roman administrative changes instituted in Egypt, the Ptolemaic-era *komarchs* (chiefs of villages) were replaced by councils of elders (*presbyteroi*).”¹²⁷ This system of local governance at the village-level was used in Lower Nubia also as is well attested by the many contracts in which “elders” served as the representatives of their towns. In these agreements we see local governing bodies at work negotiating financial relationships between the towns of Nubia and the temples to which they were attached.

Councils of elders were involved in temple affairs.¹²⁸ As members of cult associations, they were referred to as “the elders of the house (cult association)” (n3 hl-

¹²⁶ Ph. 55/3 “the men of Peihoi” (n3 rmt.w P3-ʿy-ḥ) in parallel to Ph. 55/21-22 “the elders of Peihoi” (n3 hl-ʿ3 P3-ʿy-ḥ) (P3-ʿy may refer to a cult association.), Ph. 58/3 and Ph. 62/5 “the elders of T(n)ames” (n3 hlye.w T-nʿms), Ph. 65/4-5 “the elders of Talemi” (n3 hl-ʿ3.w n T-ʿlmy), Kalabsha 4/6 “the elders of Pihor” (n3 hl-ʿ3.w n Pr-Ḥr), Ph. 266/4 “the elders of the town of Philae (n3 hl-ʿ3.w n tme n Pr-ḥw-Lq), Dendur 1/2-3 “the elders of Dendur” (n3 hl-ʿ3.w n T-ḥwt-d), Dakka 12/5-6 “the elders of Korte” (n3 hl-ʿ[3].w [n] Qr.t). Graffito Ph. 266, inscribed in AD 140 in the stairwell of the Second Pylon, was written to commemorate the author’s acquisition of the title of elder of the town of Philae on Khoiak, day 20. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 86.

¹²⁷ Eleanor G Huzar, “Augustus, Heir of the Ptolemies” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Wolfgang Haase and Hildegaard Temporini, eds. Vol. 2, Band 10.1, (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988), 356.

¹²⁸ In *The Archive of Hor*, “the elders from among the priests” sat in the forecourt of the temple of Ptah to hear a case during the Ptolemaic period. See S. Allam, “Egyptian Law Courts,” 120 n. 61. “The council of elders seems to have had considerable power with respect to the temple affairs; for it ordered the imprisonment of six men as well as a review of the arrangements regarding sacred birds...it is likely that ‘the elders’ were

‘ṣṣi.w n pṣ ‘.wṣ).¹²⁹ It is difficult to determine if the “elders” who were party to various early Roman period agreements were representatives of their town or of a cult association. This may, in fact, be a false dichotomy. If each Nubian town was responsible to donate goods to a temple, perhaps the village governing body, which consisted of “elders,” was organized as a cult association dedicated to the god of the temple to which their produce was to be donated.

While Roger Bagnall speaks of village life in the third to fifth century Egypt, his comments may provide an apt description of the administration of villages in Lower Nubia if we replace Bagnall’s “metropolis” as the focal point of tax remittance with “the temple of Isis of Philae.”

There was no village council or assembly, not even any collective body of the current liturgical officials. Instead, virtually all governance was oriented toward the relationship with the metropolis, which had responsibility for the collection of the taxes from the village. That accountability was in turn passed on to the village, not in the form of even a limited autonomy – in the sense of self-management – but in the less beneficent form of collective responsibility for the village’s obligations. Where a *koinon*, or “community,” of a village appears it involves a community obligation for taxes on the land; and where the term is used of smaller groups, they inevitably are rooted in profession or office, conferring joint or common responsibility for some function or sum.¹³⁰

The financial responsibility of Nubian villages to deliver tithes to Isis of Philae is reflected in the agreements recorded in Phase I.

conceived of as the temple authorities; general deliberation on the affairs of the temple as well as its administration seems to have lain with them. We may deduce that, unlike the earlier constitution of local councils (which consisted of nobles who served the king), in later periods the priests of a given temple could constitute a council of ‘elders’ who then had to function as its administrative body.” Ibid.

¹²⁹ de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 169-170.

¹³⁰ Roger Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 137.

Why was Lower Nubia Important to Meroitic Kings in this Period?

Initial Roman advancement into Nubia was limited. The Roman emperor Octavian, who later assumed the honorific Augustus gained control of Egypt in 30 BC. In 25 BC, Roman troops clashed with the troops of the Meroitic queen at Dakka and Qasr Ibrim as the two powers fought for control of Lower Nubia. Upon Rome's victory, Lower Nubia became a Roman territory with all rights for temple building and decoration retained by the victorious Romans. Numerous depictions of Augustus in Lower Nubian temples bear witness to the emphasis placed on temple building in the early Roman period.¹³¹ And although Rome had won political control over the region, it seems that initially Roman authorities in Egypt left the administration of the temples and, therefore, civil administration of Lower Nubia to local Nubian elites. Michael Speidel described Rome's reluctance to station heavy forces in the newly conquered territory,

In Nubia...politics may have caused the Romans at first not to station entire army units on the soil of client kingdoms, thereby leaving them a greater nominal independence. The Meroitic kingdom of Kush had retained a measure of sovereignty over all of Nubia, and the stationing, not of whole units but only of outposts, may have been part of the peace negotiated between Augustus and the ambassadors of Queen Kandake at Samos in 20 BC.¹³²

Despite Rome's victory, the treaty of Samos, concluded at the end of those battles, was favorable to Meroe, which retained its sovereignty and was not required to pay tribute. In addition, all Roman forces that had invaded Meroitic territory were

¹³¹ Augustus built at Philae, Kalabsha, and Dakka. Not coincidentally, those temples were also associated with Roman garrisons.

¹³² Michael P. Speidel, "Nubia's Roman Garrison," ANRW, ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini, vol. 2, 10.1 (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988), 774.

withdrawn to the Dodekaschoenos¹³³ and Meroites were allowed access to the temple of Isis at Philae. All of the dated Nubian contract graffiti were inscribed after the battles of 25 BC. Roman military defense of Egypt's southern border consisted of three cohorts of primarily Nubian soldiers, stationed at Syene (Aswan), the traditional southern border of Egypt.

The occupation of Nubia proper at points south of Philae to Hierakonpolis, however, was of no great strategic importance and could long be left to outposted detachments. Aside from collecting intelligence and backing up friendly tribes or rulers, their task seems to have been mainly the policing of the Dodekaschoenos and its temples. Nevertheless, because of our manifold sources, the historian interested in the relations between Rome and the natives finds here a particularly rich tableau of mostly locally recruited soldiers following Roman army routine, yet worshipping, during some three hundred years, the local gods and admitting the natives, even those from far afield, to the rebuilt shrines of the land.¹³⁴

Speidel's assertion that those troops were locally recruited mirrors Rome's use of local Nubian elites as *strategoi* and temple administrators in this border region. Rome's initial "hands-off" policy in administering Lower Nubia can be attributed to the low agricultural productivity and general impoverishment of the region, combined with the fact that Roman forces were still struggling to gain full control of Egypt. For the Romans it was not profitable to engage Meroe in battle for full control of this region. The true wealth of the Dodekaschoenos consisted of the minerals to be extracted from the mines of the Wadi Allaqi and the Eastern Desert and the Romans did ensure their control of the mines located in that area by stationing troops at Dakka. Happy to control the mineral wealth of the impoverished region and leave regional governance to the locals, Rome

¹³³ Romans maintained military units at Qasr Ibrim for a period, but they were ultimately withdrawn as well.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 795.

chose to govern Lower Nubia through local Nubian elites. These favorable conditions for the Nubians did not continue indefinitely. A more aggressive Roman administrative policy toward Lower Nubia was initiated in the second half of the first century AD, which resulted in the territory coming under the control of the *strategos* of Ombos (Kom Ombo). The imposition of tighter Roman control over the area explains the abrupt end of Nubian agreements inscribed on the walls of Lower Nubian temples in the mid-first century AD.

Interregnum I: A Period Devoid of Dated Nubian Graffiti

What happened that caused Nubians to cease inscribing graffiti on the temple walls of Lower Nubia? What cultural, religious, or political conditions precluded Nubians from recording their presence as they had for half a century in many of the temples of the Dodecashaenos during Phase I?

While Roman troops had been stationed at Egypt's southern border ever since Rome had annexed the country, several factors point to an increased Roman military presence in Lower Nubia beginning in the late first century AD. As early as AD 85, Greek graffiti at Kalabsha attest to the presence of Roman troops there. Greek graffiti at Dakka and Maharraqa from the turn of the second century (before AD 105¹³⁵) attest to the placement of troops at those locations. Speidel says of Roman troop placement in Lower Nubia,

Our knowledge of the units stationed at the southern frontier is very uneven, except for the later first and the early second century...The main outline, however, seems clear insofar as from the time of Augustus to at least the mid-second century three cohorts were consistently stationed at Syene and Pselchis, cohorts that provided the garrison for the forts and stations in Nubia.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 787.

Speidel's reference to the unusually strong evidence of Roman military presence in Nubia during the late first and early second century coincides with the period in which Nubian inscriptions ceased to be written in the area. Indications of skirmishes between Roman Egypt and Meroe together with troop placement throughout the Dodekaschoenos suggest an escalation of tension between Rome and Meroe. A papyrus of unknown provenance, dated by its paleography to the late first century AD, recorded a skirmish between the Romans and *Aethiopians* somewhere in the Eastern Desert.¹³⁶ This date may find support in reports recorded around AD 84 of troubles in the area inhabited by Trogodytes who were mentioned in the papyrus as allies of the *Aethiopians*.¹³⁷

More secure evidence of tension in the region is found in the placement of Roman troops throughout Lower Nubia. Troops were stationed at Kalabsha, Dakka, and Maharraqa,¹³⁸ three temple strongholds that guarded access to the gold and minerals of the Eastern Desert. Kalabsha, which later became an administrative center for the Blemmye tribesmen in the late fourth century AD, may have been a trade depot for mineral wealth extracted from the mines located in the Blemmye's Eastern Desert homeland.¹³⁹ Increased military tension in the area may be indicated by the fortification

¹³⁶ E.G. Turner, "Papyrus 40 'della raccolta Milanese'" *JRS* 40 (1950): 58.

¹³⁷ *FHN II*, 932-935. See Jehan Desanges, "Bilan des recherches sur les sources grecques et latines de l'histoire de la Nubie antique dans les trente dernières années," *Études nubiennes. Conférence de Genève. Actes du VIIe Congrès international d'études nubiennes 3-8 septembre 1990. Vol. I. Communications principale*, ed. Charles Bonnet (Geneva: Société d'étude nubiennes, 1992), 363-378, esp. 370 for troubles in the Trogodytica.

¹³⁸ Speidel, 770.

¹³⁹ Copious evidence of the stationing of Roman troops at Kalabsha can be found in the Greek inscriptions. See Henri Gauthier, *Le temple de Kalabchah I*, (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1914), 248-283. For a recent discussion of the use of Late Period temple pylons as "secondary treasuries" in which precious metals were

of the temple of Dakka. Excavations reveal that the temple, located across the Nile from the gold mines of the Wadi Allaqi, was enclosed within a fortress in the second century AD.¹⁴⁰ A large collection of Greek ostraca excavated from a building located 500 meters north of the temple record the receipt of grain rations by soldiers stationed there.¹⁴¹ The ostraca are dated from the mid-second to the early third century AD.¹⁴² Additionally, a birth certificate, naming “Pselchi” as the place of birth, indicated the presence at Dakka of soldiers’ families.¹⁴³

Most scholars of Roman Nubia assume that a period of peace in Nubia lasted from the conclusion of the Treaty of Samos in 21 BC through Diocletian’s withdrawal of troops from the area in AD 298. This peaceful cooperation between Rome and Meroe in Lower Nubia is referred to as a “condominium.” While a peaceful cooperation may have governed the early Roman period when Nubian *strategoi* are attested, changes in Rome’s

stored, see Laetitia Martzloff, “Les ‘trésor’ des temples de Philae et d’Edfou,” 268-278, esp. 269. The temples with hidden storage rooms inside their pylons were Denderah, Edfu, Philae, Kalabsha and Dakka.

¹⁴⁰ O. Bates in C.M. Firth, *Archaeological Survey of Nubia: Report of 1909-1910* (Cairo: National Printing Department, 1915), 30-33. The dates given are very imprecise.

According to Bates, the fort’s date “lay between AD 100 and AD 250, for fragments of an important military inscription of the first century were found in the pavement of the south entrance...” Ibid., 31.

¹⁴¹ Hugh G. Evelyn White, “Graeco-Roman Ostraca from Dakka, Nubia,” *The Classical Review* 33, no.3/4 (May-June, 1919): 49-51; Robert O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, (Case Western Reserve University Press, 1971), 310-331; C. Láda-Rubinstein, “Greek Ostraca from Pselkis” *ZPE* 110 (1996): 135-155.

¹⁴² Fink, *Roman Military Records*, 312 discusses issues that complicate a secure dating of the corpus of ostraca, but suggests that the ostraca span the period from AD 157-220. It is interesting to note that the end of the period of Roman military at Dakka coincides with the beginning of Meroitic royal involvement in Lower Nubia during the early third century AD. The first *royal* titles held by members of the Wayekiye family appear in inscriptions left by members of the Generation 3, including Wayekiye A’s Ph. 421, dated to AD 227/228.

¹⁴³ P. Mich. VII, 436.

policy toward Lower Nubia in the last half of the first century AD made relations between the two powers more combative and less stable.

In tandem with the increased Roman military presence, Roman officials began to assume civil administrative duties formerly performed by the Nubian *strategos*. A rock graffito found south of Dabod, near Abisko, recorded the settlement of a boundary dispute. Notably, the dispute was settled not by a local official, but by the Roman prefect whose orders were enforced by the commander of the Roman cohort *cohors I Lusitanorum*¹⁴⁴ in AD 111.¹⁴⁵ Thus, by the early second century, the commander of a Roman cohort, stationed at Aswan and attested through graffiti at Kalabsha, had replaced the local Nubian *strategos* as the chief administrative authority in the region. Similarly, judicial duties in Lower Nubia were assumed by a *strategos* stationed in Egypt, beginning in the late first century AD, indicating an extension of Roman administrative control into Lower Nubia.¹⁴⁶ Greek graffiti¹⁴⁷ at Dakka recorded the repeated visits of the *strategos* of Ombos (Kom Ombo). Apollonios, *strategos* of Ombos, stated in his graffito that he had come to Dakka to dispense justice to the people.¹⁴⁸ The titles claimed by the Roman-Egyptian *strategoï* attested at Dakka indicate that Dakka and, indeed, all of the

¹⁴⁴ *Cohors I Augusta Praetoria Lusitanorum equitata* came to Egypt from Judea in AD 105 to be stationed at Aswan. After AD 131 the cohort was moved to the Thebaid. Three undated inscriptions from members of this cohort were inscribed at Kalabsha, another has been found 1.5 km upstream near a tower on the west bank of the Nile. Speidel, "Nubia," 787, 790.

¹⁴⁵ Silvo Curto, *Dehmit* (Rome: 1973), 70, lines 11-12, 72, line 8.

¹⁴⁶ The earliest graffito, Gr. 33, is dated to AD 86-88.

¹⁴⁷ Walter Ruppel, *Die griechischen und lateinischen Inschriften von Dakke, nach den Aufnahmen von Oric Bates und Günther Roeder bearbeitet bei Walter Ruppel*, in Günther Roeder, *Der Tempel von Dakke*, vol. 3 (Le Caire: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1930), 79: Gr. 55, cf. Gr. 15, 18bis, 21a, 33, 40, 47a. All were inscribed on the pylon at Dakka.

¹⁴⁸ Gr. 55. Ibid., 44.

Dodekaschoenos, including Philae and Elephantine, were being administered as part of the Ombite nome.¹⁴⁹

The absence of Nubian temple officials in the epigraphic record after AD 57 finds confirmation in the archaeological excavations of Lower Nubia. David Edwards described the fluctuating Nubian population of the Dodekaschoenos saying,

Beginning with a relatively limited presence in the early Ptolemaic period, settlement was becoming more extensive and substantial from the second century BC, with most of the sites established in this period surviving into the first century AD. Moving on a century or so, another major phase of activity can be dated broadly to the third and perhaps fourth centuries. It appears however, that many of the later sites were new foundations, many of the 'early' sites having been abandoned by this time. If the exact dating of these phases remains uncertain, there are certainly indications of a decline in activity, if not a settlement hiatus, perhaps in the second century AD. It is interesting that this is a period in which there is also a virtual absence of dateable Meroitic texts in the Dodekaschoenos...Even in the first century AD, Roman travellers in the time of Nero had reported many of "these places (places named in earlier itineraries) were deserted"¹⁵⁰

It seems very likely that the heightened presence of the Roman military in the Dodekaschoenos, beginning in the late first century, disrupted Nubian administrative systems and perhaps caused changes in the settlement patterns of Lower Nubia. Increased military presence was intended to enforce a change in Roman administrative policy toward Lower Nubia from "hands off" to direct control. That policy change rescinded the authority previously given to Nubian elites who had formerly been active in temple administration. Denied access to temple administrative roles, Nubian elites may have turned their religious focus southward to Qasr Ibrim.¹⁵¹ Coins found on the floor of the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 78-80, Gr. 15, 40. Elephantine and Philae: Gr. 15, 21a, 47a.

¹⁵⁰ David Edwards *The Nubian Past: an archaeology of the Sudan*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 158.

¹⁵¹ Qasr Ibrim, a military settlement with important Meroitic temples, was adjacent to the settlement at Karanog, seat of the local Meroitic governor.

Meroitic temple at Qasr Ibrim indicate a strong pilgrimage presence beginning in the early second century AD.¹⁵² Greek and Meroitic-language graffiti, often contained within the outline of a foot, while difficult to date, attest to pilgrimage activity at the temples of Qasr Ibrim.¹⁵³ Ostraca, many relating to account and record keeping, as well as sealings were common finds at Qasr Ibrim. According to Edwards,

The wide distribution of Meroitic ostraca suggests the existence of a literate element among the population, and also the existence of extensive administrative networks linking them.”¹⁵⁴

The hilltop citadel lay well within Meroitic Nubia in the vicinity of Karanog, an important administrative center on the west bank of the Nile, and was intricately connected to the network of Meroitic administration of the province mentioned in the previous quote. The seat of the Meroitic *peshto* (from Eg. P3-s3-n-n3sw.t, “governor” of Meroitic Nubia), was located in Faras in the mid-first century AD. The governor’s residence returned to Karanog in the mid-second century. Qasr Ibrim is approximately 40 miles south of Maharraqa, the southern border of the Dodecaschonos.

¹⁵² Ibid., 160.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 160. Dating the feet graffiti is very difficult, which results in widely differing dates offered by various scholars. The feet graffiti found in the forecourt of the Meroitic Temple and its associated Podium at Qasr Ibrim were dated to the Imperial Roman period by Castiglione, who suggested that they were inscribed by Petronius’ army due to the abundant use of Greek. Castiglione was unaware of the presence of Meroitic-language inscriptions associated with the feet graffiti. See L. Castiglione “Vestigia” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22 (1970): 117-119. At the time that Castiglione wrote, the Meroitic Temple to which the Podium is attached had not yet been identified. Meroitic-language inscriptions associated with the feet graffiti at Qasr Ibrim were dated to the end of the fourth century AD. See Claude Rilly, *La langue du royaume de Méroé*, 203. Finally, numerous feet graffiti were found on the road leading up to Qasr Ibrim. These were discussed in Pamela J. Rose, *Qasr Ibrim: The Hinterland Survey*, (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1996), 112-113, where she explored possible dates for the many feet graffiti ranging from the reign of Ptolemy VIII through a period after the Roman occupation of Qasr Ibrim by Petronius and concluded, “The overall dating remains frustratingly inconclusive.” Ibid., 113.

¹⁵⁴ David Edwards, *The Nubian Past*, 160-161.

Conclusion

The Nubian agreements were inscribed during a brief, unique period between the dissolution of Ptolemaic control of Lower Nubia and the imposition of Roman military, judicial and financial control of the area. With increased Roman military and administrative control of Lower Nubia, the agreements of the Nubian *stategoï* were no longer inscribed in the temples. However, when Roman military control of Lower Nubia weakened in the first two decades of the third century,¹⁵⁵ Nubians began to re-appear as officials in the Nubian temple administration. Beginning in the third quarter of the second century, Wayekiye family members began to engrave their *proskynemata* at Philae. The next chapter will describe the period of Meroitic royal activity in the Dodecaschoenos that was carried out by their Nubian priests and provincial administrators.

Indications of Additional First Century AD Nubian Graffiti at Philae

The author here argues that five additional inscriptions recorded on the dromos at Philae¹⁵⁶ should be ascribed to Nubians of Phase I. There are indications that Nubians may have composed two *proskynemata* dedicated to Nubian gods: Ph. 11 and Ph. 15 (dedicated to Thoth Pnubs), and three agreements: Ph. 24, Ph. 25 (dedicated to

¹⁵⁵ The last attestation of any Roman cohort in Nubia, that of *cohors I Flavia Cilicum equitata*, recorded in an inscription from Aswan in AD 217 combined with the latest date on Roman military ostraca at Dakka from the same decade, suggests a diminution of Roman military presence in the Dodecaschoenos. For the Aswan inscription, see Speidel, 789 n. 112; *ILS III* 8919; *FHN III*, 958.

¹⁵⁶ These five inscriptions were inscribed upon the structures in the southern area of the dromos of the Main Temple where the reliefs and minor temples are dedicated to Nubian gods such as Arensnuphis, Mandulis, and Thoth Pnubs. See Gerhard Haeny, "A Short Architectural History of Philae" *BIFAO* 85 (1985): 220-223; Sylvie Cauville, *Philae. Itinéraire du visiteur* (Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013), 54-62, 66, 76-78.

Arensnuphis), and Ph. 36 (dedicated to Thoth Pnubs).¹⁵⁷ I contend that the five inscriptions were written by members of two Nubian cult associations, one dedicated to Thoth Pnubs¹⁵⁸ and the other to Arensnuphis,¹⁵⁹ two deities whose worship was restricted almost exclusively to Lower Nubia and Kush.¹⁶⁰ Both cult associations¹⁶¹ were continuations of religious and financial structures extant in the Ptolemaic period at Philae. Ptolemy VI was active in expanding the temple and forecourt of Arensnuphis and reestablishing Nubian donations to the cult of Mandulis at Philae after the suppression of

¹⁵⁷ I have added Ph. 36 to this list of agreements. Burkhardt left the graffito unclassified and described it as “nicht den Typen 1-4 entsprechen.” de Cenival, however, included Ph. 36 in her study of cult associations. See de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 20. Ph. 40, a simple proskynema, may also belong to this group. It states, “May his name remain here before Ar[ensnuphis].” Griffith, *Catalogue*, 49

¹⁵⁸ Serge Sauneron and Jean Yoyotte, “La Campagne nubienne de Psammétique II et sa signification historique, *BIFAO* 50 (1952): 163-167, where Thoth Pnubs was described as a form of Onuris, associated with the Myth of the Sun’s Eye and the return of the Distant Goddess; *ibid.*, 166. The Egyptian name Pnubs (pr nbs, place of the jujubier tree) referred to Doukki Gel, a city founded by the Egyptians in 1500 BC in the vicinity of Kerma, capital of the kingdom of Kerma since 2450 BC. See Claude Rilly, “Les graffiti archaïques de Doukki Gel et l’apparition de l’écriture méroïtique” *Meroitic Newsletter* 30 (December 2003), 41.

¹⁵⁹ Erich Winter, “Arensnuphis” *LdÄ* I, 424-425; Indem, “Arensnuphis: Sein Name und Seine Herkunft” *RdE* 25 (1973): 235-250; Steffen Wenig, *Arensnuphis und Sebiuameker. Bemerkungen zu zwei in Meroe verehrten Göttern*. *ZÄS* 101 (1974): 130-149; P.L. Shinnie, *Meroe. A Civilization of the Sudan* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1967), 143, “Arensnuphis seems to be restricted to Nubia and is familiar from Philae; thus he may be in origin a Meroitic god.”

¹⁶⁰ Arensnuphis is attested at Elephantine as a hypostasis of the youthful Khnum, Khnum-Arensnuphis. See Ewa Laskowska-Kusztal, “Arensnouphis sur une stèle d’Elephantine” *Études et Travaux* XIX (2001): 139; Horst Jaritz, *Elephantine III. Die Terrassen vor den Tempeln des Chnum und der Satet* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1980), 26-27.

¹⁶¹ Several scholars have suggested that these inscriptions refer to a cult association of Arensnuphis. They do not claim, however, that the cult association was Nubian. Julie Cayzac, “Sur le parvis du temple d’Isis” *Egypte, Afrique & Orient* 60 (décembre 2010 – janvier/février 2011): 49; Holger Kockelmann, “Zur Kultpraxis auf Philae: Aussagen der Tempeldekoration und dokumentarischer Befund im Vergleich” in *Königtum, Staat, und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen* (eds.) Rolf Gundlach, Detlev Kreidenbom and Mechthild Schade-Busch (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 107; Bernand, *IGP* II, 120.

the Theben Revolt. Construction of the sanctuary of Thoth Pnubs at Dakka by Meroitic king Arqamani, a contemporary of Ptolemy IV, and the relocation of the Kiosk of Nectanebo under Ptolemy VIII may have been undertaken in order to provide a temples for the worshippers of Thoth Pnubs at Dakka and Philae. These assertions will be discussed more fully later. For now it is important to note that the worship of these Nubian gods at Philae predates the Roman period when the first religious graffiti began to be inscribed.

Several factors in the inscriptions suggest that they record agreements of cult associations. Among the individuals mentioned in this group of inscriptions, none held titles from the temple hierarchy.¹⁶² Members of the laity gathered to offer annual ritual services to Arensnuphis and Thoth Pnubs on a specific date every year; the rituals included a presentation of offerings to temple agents at Philae. These cult associations seemed to have been organized independent of the temple; they were rather cult associations from a particular town.¹⁶³ The promise to gather once every year seems unusual for a cult association, which had the obligation to meet regularly “to drink” and to observe particular festival days. However, the cult associations dedicated to Nubian gods and attested in these additional Nubian inscriptions may have gathered throughout the year in small towns where its members resided, only journeying to Philae once every year as part of a festival procession to the preeminent temple of Lower Nubia. The obligation or commitment to journey to Philae from elsewhere in Nubia is reminiscent of

¹⁶² This is different from the members of cult associations dedicated to Isis. In those associations we have titles such as *strategos*, *lesonis*, and agent as well as priestly titles.

¹⁶³ “...These common factors, however, are not limited to guilds that are primarily religious in character, but appear in associations where the religious element is distinctly subordinate.” A.E.R. Boak “The Organization of Gilds in Greco-Roman Egypt” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68 (1937): 219.

the procession of the *wrk*-shrine from Korte to Philae as recorded in graffito Dakka 12 or the later festival processions from Dakka to Philae recorded in Dakka 30.

While Ph. 11 and 15 are simple *proskynemata* that express the wish for the writer's name to remain before "the Male of the *nubs*-tree," Thoth Pnubs, the other three inscriptions record the promise of a group called "the men of four days"¹⁶⁴ to arrive at Philae yearly on a specific date to honor Arensnuphis (Ph. 24 and Ph. 25) or perform a procession of the cult association of Thoth Pnubs (Ph. 36). The full text of Ph. 36 reads as follows,

Year 6 of Tiberius Claudius Germanicus, the god. On Tybi day 15, the four (?) the procession of the cult association of Thoth Pnubs. P3-tl-!tm having caused property(?) to be written to the agent of Arensnuphis.¹⁶⁵

While in Ph. 36 the phrase "the four" is in apposition to the phrase "a procession of the cult association of Thoth Pnubs," no verb connects the two phrases. Were "the four" members of a cult association dedicated to the worship of Thoth Pnubs who inscribed Ph. 36 to commemorate their performance of the procession of Thoth Pnubs? This suggestion may be contradicted by the fact that "the men of the four days" in Ph. 24 and Ph. 25 were responsible for enacting the cult services of **Arensnuphis**, not Thoth Pnubs. Perhaps the "men of the four days" had ritual responsibilities over a period of four days, which required an annual visit to Philae, the culmination of which occurred in the

¹⁶⁴ In Ph. 24 they are called "the men of the four days" (n3 rmt.w p3 hrw 4). In Ph. 25, reference is made to "the agreements which PN made concerning the four days with PN which they will come to the dromos of Arensnuphis in order to drink(?)" (n3 hn.w iir PN n n3 hrw 4 hn^c PN nty iw.w iy r hft-hr r s[...?]). In Ph. 36 they are called merely "the four" in apposition to "the procession of the cult association of Thoth Pnubs."

¹⁶⁵ Ph. 36. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 48; vol. 2, pl. 12. Hsb.t 6 n Tbryse Glwts Grmnyqs p3 ntr tp pr(.t) sw 15 p3 4 p3 h^c t3 qnbe.t Thwt p3 nbs iw ty P3-tl-!tm(?) sh(?) nk(.t)(?) p3(?) rt lr-hms-nfr

evening¹⁶⁶ of 3 *Peret* 24. It was the four-day period that was of importance and the rites undertaken for four days could be performed before Arensnuphis or Thoth Pnubs, depending on which association was involved. Ph. 25 and 24, dated to 3 *Peret* 20 and 3 *Peret* 24, respectively, although consisting of five days, may supply us with the period in which “the four days” occurred. No Egyptian festivals involving Arensnuphis, Thoth, or even Isis have been associated with the 20th or 24th of the third month of *Peret*. However, rather than seek an Egyptian religious festival performed during that season, perhaps we should look to Nubian or Kushite practices to explain this anomalous phrase.

Donation of goods was mentioned in two of the inscriptions. Oddly, both Thoth Pnubs and Arensnuphis were named in Ph. 36. While Ph. 36 was written to commemorate a procession of Thoth Pnubs, the graffito closed with the remark that property (nk.t) had been written to (registered with, recorded by?) the “agent of Arensnuphis.” This statement may imply that there was no “agent of Thoth Pnubs” at Philae to whom contributions could be remitted. Perhaps such an “agent of Thoth Pnubs” was present only at Dakka,¹⁶⁷ while any temple donations made to Nubian gods such as Arensnuphis and Thoth Pnubs at Philae were to be collected by the “agent of Arensnuphis”¹⁶⁸ who served as the financial representative for those cults.

¹⁶⁶ Ph. 24, line 9 “...on the evening which was written above, every year.” p3 rwhe sh hry hr rnp.t nb. Ph. 24 was dated 3 *Peret* 24.

¹⁶⁷ In Dakka 29, the *strategos* Slw3 was “agent of Thoth Pnubs” in addition to being an “agent of Isis.” The title “agent of Thoth Pnubs” was not otherwise attested.

¹⁶⁸ Only one other example of this title is found at Philae. Ph. 314, dated to AD 247, is in the stairwell of the Second Pylon, an area in which virtually every gold worker’s inscription found at Philae is engraved. The connection of the Nubian inscriptions of Phase II with this corpus of gold workers’ inscriptions found in the Second Pylon will be explored in chapter 2.

A financial component was present in the inscription Ph. 25 as well, which contained the statement, “the man who shall bring his goods (?) to the dromos; the ¼ in silver shall be given to Isis [of Philae(?)].”¹⁶⁹ Donation of a portion of goods to Isis of Philae combined with goods written to the “agent of Arensnuphis” in Ph. 36 seem to refer to the required act of Nubian tithing to the temple of Philae.¹⁷⁰ Donation of a portion of the produce of the Dodecaschoenos to the temples on Philae may have occurred as part of the festivities performed by Nubian cult associations for Thoth Pnubs and Arensnuphis. Thus, the economic requirement of Nubians to support the temples of Lower Nubia would have been connected to the performance of a religious rite. Annual participation in the rites of Arensnuphis, Thoth Pnubs, Mandulis, or Isis of Philae would have included the delivery of “the produce of the Dodecaschoenos” to the particular temple and god to which each Nubian village was dedicated. This system for collection of temple donations was in place already during the Ptolemaic period. Greek inscriptions demonstrate Nubian provisioning of the Temple of Mandulis (IGP 12bis) and temple construction undertaken by a cult association of Arensnuphis (IGP 11). Both inscriptions are dated to the reign of Ptolemy VI, whose predecessor recovered Lower Nubian territories lost during the

¹⁶⁹ Ph. 25/8-11. P3 rmt nty ʾw.f ʾn p3y.f nkt(?) r hft-hr mtw.w [tʾ?] p3 1/4 hd(?) n(?) ʾlst [Pr-ʾy-lq]. The continuative *mtw.w* must lean on the expression “the agreements which were made for those of the four days” as the phrases that follow in ll. 6-8 begin with *hn*^c “and” and add further descriptive qualifications to “the agreements.” While the donation was said to be for Isis, the inscription was carved into a relief depicting Tiberius making an offering to the god Arensnuphis on a column standing before the temple of Arensnuphis. The same inscription had made reference earlier to “the dromos of Arensnuphis,” making clear that the donation was for the temple of Arensnuphis within the temple complex of Isis.

¹⁷⁰ The responsibility of a Nubian tribe to provide in-kind donations to a specific temple within the temple complex at Philae is shown by the Ptolemaic Greek graffito IGP 12bis in which a priest of Mandulis requested the Ptolemaic king to encourage a Nubian chief to resume his donations to support the cult of Mandulis. This graffito has been dated to the reign of Ptolemy VI. See *IGP I*, 127.

Theban Revolt, which ended only six years before Ptolemy VI ascended to the throne. As IGP 11 suggests, the system of Nubian chiefs delivering their goods to the temples at Philae was in operation before the Theban Revolt (206-186 BC). A hieroglyphic text that adorns the eastern door in the north side of the First Pylon (decorated under Ptolemy XII) makes reference to the Nubian villages that carry one-tenth of their produce to the temple of Philae.¹⁷¹ Thus, the practice of Nubian delivery of produce to Philae is attested shortly before the beginning of the Roman period in which these Nubian agreements were inscribed.

This assemblage of cultic actions: gathering on predetermined days in order to carry a divine statue in procession, engage in drinking, and make financial contributions to the association, was mandated for members in the regulations of Ptolemaic-period cult associations. De Cenival described various occasions on which members of cult associations were required to assemble as described in the group's regulations,

A quelles occasions se réunissaient les membres? Certaines indications montrent que les membres devaient assister à des réunions périodiques; parfois les textes précisent: "pour boire". Ce sont les sessions que l'on peut qualifier d'ordinaires, par opposition à celles qui ont lieu lors des fêtes et des processions auxquelles les membres sont tenus de participer. Enfin d'autres occasions pouvaient se produire, qui nécessitaient la réunion de l'ensemble des membres: ...l'enterrement d'un collègue défunt.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ See Laetitia Martzoff, "Les 'trésors' des temples de Philae et d'Edfou," 273. The decoration of the doorway, including a translation of the text on the right jamb, can be found in Hermann Junker, *Der grosse Pylon des Temples der Isis in Philä*, (Vienna: R.M. Rohrer, 1958), figs. 96 and 97.

¹⁷² de Cenival, *Les Associations*, 178. Perhaps the graffito (Kalabsha 4) that recorded the division of property of a deceased man was inscribed by his fellow cult association members on his behalf.

Cult Association of Thoth Pnubs

Three graffiti from the dromos at Philae make reference to Thoth Pnubs: Ph. 11 and 15, inscribed in the Kiosk of Nectanebo, located at the southern end of the dromos, and Ph. 36, on the rear wall of the western colonnade of the dromos. This area contains numerous depictions of Thoth Pnubs, along the wall behind the western colonnade and on the east and west faces of several columns¹⁷³ where Thoth Pnubs was invariably accompanied by Arensnuphis and Tefnut. The two graffiti found in the Kiosk of Nectanebo were simple, undated *proskynemata* of the type “His name remains here” (rn=f mnṯ ty). None of the inscriptions on the Kiosk of Nectanebo are dated, but Griffith believed that they were inscribed in the Ptolemaic or early Roman periods.¹⁷⁴ Haeny suggests that the Kiosk was moved to its current location perhaps as early as the reign of Ptolemy VIII, but not later than the reign of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos.¹⁷⁵ Thus, it is likely that the inscriptions were engraved in the early Roman period, contemporary with Phase I of the Nubin corpus. Both graffiti expressed the wish that the author’s name remain before “the Male of Pnubs,”¹⁷⁶ an abbreviated epithet of Thoth Pnubs, “the Beautiful Male.” In graffito Ph. 36, inscribed in AD 46, a “procession of the cult association of Thoth of the *nubs*-tree”¹⁷⁷ was commemorated, the only such reference to a cult association of that god at Philae.

¹⁷³ Thoth Pnubs is depicted on columns 18, 20 and 28. See Porter & Moss VI, 208-209; Sylvie Cauville, *Philae. Itinéraire du visiteur*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 45; Gerhardt Heany, “Short History,” 226-227.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 228. For the earlier history of the structure, see ibid., 205-206.

¹⁷⁶ P-Ḥwt n p nbs(e)

¹⁷⁷ Ph. 36/4-5 pṣ ḥᶜ tṣ snt (?) Ṭḥwt p nbs. George Hughes, “The Sixth Day of the Lunar Month and the Demotic Word for “Cult Guild,” *MDAIK 16* (1958): 152-153. The same line was translated as the “council of Thoth of the *nubs*-tree” by Griffith who transcribed the word as tṣ qnb.t See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 48.

While Thoth was an Egyptian god, Thoth *Pnubs* was featured in **Egyptian temples** only in Lower Nubia: Dakka, Dabod, Dendur, Kalabsha, and Philae. According to Innconu-Bocquillon, Thoth Pnubs was

pure création des théologiens de Philae...divinité rattachée au sud (lion méridional), il pourrait être considéré comme un lien entre l'Égypte et les pays méridionaux.¹⁷⁸

Speaking of the unusual substitution of Thoth Pnubs and Arensnuphis for Thoth and Shu in the Myth of the Sun's Eye as depicted in the temples of Lower Nubia, she says,

Cependant que Thot du Nébès symboliserait la prise en compte du particularisme des pays méridionaux face à l'Égypte. Ceci justifierait l'intervention des deux dernière divinités dans la version locale du mythe à Philae, puisque nous ne les retrouvons pas dans les autres temples de Basse Époque.¹⁷⁹

While Innconu-Bocquillon suggests that Thoth *Pnubs* was a theological creation of priests at Philae, the presence of a sacred jujubier tree (*nbs* in Egyptian) in the ancient religious precinct of Doukki Gel, suggests that this variant of Thoth had southern origins, as Innconu-Bocquillon herself seems to suggest in the quote above. Doukki Gel, called *pr nbs* "house of the *nebes*-tree," was the name of the New Kingdom town founded by Thutmose I and situated near the ancient Nubian capital city of Kerma, which arose circa 2500 BC. In a recent lecture, Charles Bonnet remarked on the discovery in 2011 of "an extraordinary African town" under the New Kingdom site built by Thutmose I at Doukki Gel. Bonnet described "Palace A," a circular ceremonial building surrounded by 4-meter

¹⁷⁸ Danielle Inconnu-Bocquillon, *La mythe de la Déesse Lointaine à Philae* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2001), 333.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 336.

thick walls and comprising 1,400 internal columns in which stood two thrones, a large offering table in a chapel and an enclosure in which stood the sacred jujubier tree.¹⁸⁰

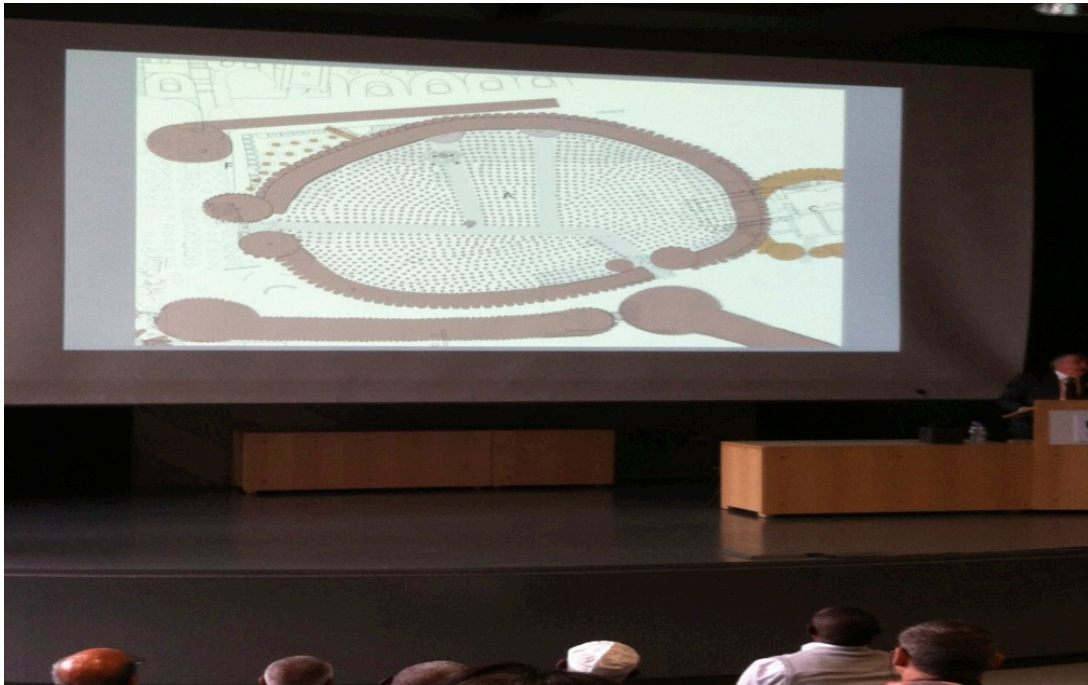


Figure 2: Photo by author. Charles Bonnet lecture at the 13th International Conference for Nubian Studies, 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Bonnet, “The Nubian Ceremonial City of Doukki Gel – Kerma and the Menenou of Thutmosis I” (paper presented at the 13th International Conference for Nubian Studies, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 1-6 September 2014), publication forthcoming.



Figure 3: Aerial photo of Palace A, Doukki Gel. (Photo courtesy of Charles Bonnet.)

The toponym *Pnbs* appeared regularly as an epithet of Amun of Pnubs to whom many Kushite kings dedicated religious monuments.¹⁸¹ While Pnubs was the name given to the New Kingdom town founded at Kerma, the sacred tree for which Pnubs was named had been worshipped in Kerma before the Egyptian conquest. This suggests that the association of a divinity with the toponym *Pnubs* – be it Amun or Thoth – was originally a Kushite concept, later incorporated into the worship of Thoth in Nubia. This assertion may find further support in two facts: Thoth Pnubs is only evident in Egyptian religious

¹⁸¹ Seven monumental black granite statues of Kushite kings buried at Doukki Gel each contain inscriptions to Amun *Pnbs*. See Charles Bonnet and Dominique Valbelle, *The Nubian Pharaohs. Black Kings on the Nile*. (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2006), *passim*, esp. 11. Before discoveries made in the course of excavations at Doukki Gel, the earliest attestations of the name Amon of Pnubs were from the 25th dynasty kings. With two recent discoveries at Doukki Gel, the date has been pushed back six centuries to the mid-eighteenth dynasty. See Dominique Valbelle, “L’Amon de Pnubs” *RdE* 54(2003), 202-204, pl. XII. For a *wab*-priest of Amun Pnubs, see Charles Bonnet and Dominique Valbelle, “Un prêtre de Amon de Pnubs enterré à Kerma” *BIFAO* 80 (1980).

contexts in Lower Nubia and not in Egypt proper and the oldest extant sanctuary dedicated to Thoth Pnubs was built at Dakka by the Meroitic king Arqamani.¹⁸²

Was there a structure dedicated to Thoth Pnubs formerly located in the southern area of the dromos at Philae? Did the frequent appearance of Thoth Pnubs in the reliefs on the wall behind western colonnade echo those of an earlier building or shrine in the area that had since been dismantled?¹⁸³ Griffith was perplexed by the appearance of proskynemata dedicated to Thoth Pnubs in this area, “Nothing remains in the temple to explain his occurrence on Philae, but Ph. 36 may indicate that there was a society or club worshipping Thoth of the *nubs*-tree.”¹⁸⁴ Cruz-Urbe believes that the Kiosk of Nectanebo, relocated to its present location on the southern end of the dromos in antiquity, was used as a shrine dedicated to Thoth Pnubs. For the current location of the Kiosk of Nectanebo, see the plan on 58. The Kiosk of Nectanebo was relocated during the late Ptolemaic period¹⁸⁵ before the colonnades and rear (western) wall of the dromos were decorated.

¹⁸² Arqamani also undertook construction on the temple of Arensnuphis at Philae.

¹⁸³ The scenes depicted on the columns of the western colonnade and the western wall change as one moves from south to north. The reliefs in the southern section of the dromos contain gods associated with Nubia: Thoth Pnubs, Arensnuphis, and Tefnut. A change occurs in the reliefs decorating the rear wall around the doorway numbered 36 in PM VI, 204; it is the doorway north of Ph. 41 on Griffith’s plan found on p. 48. There, gods of the first cataract region and Thebes are depicted: Khnum-Re, Satis, Amun-Re, and Mut. Tefnut is there, but paired with Shu instead of Arensnuphis. North of the doorway, almost to the First Pylon, the gods depicted are as follows: Hathor, Horus of Edfu, and Horus-son-of-Hathor. Osiris, Isis, and Horus appear interspersed among the other gods, all along the wall. See PM VI, 208-209.

¹⁸⁴ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 44.

¹⁸⁵ The Kiosk of Nectanebo was most likely relocated during the reign of Ptolemy XII or shortly before. A Greek graffito bearing the name of Ptolemy XII was inscribed on the western obelisk erected on the south side of the Kiosk after it was relocated to the dromos. Gerhardt Heany, “Short History,” 224. A good synopsis of the building phases of the dromos can be found in Heany, “Short History,” 228.

Describing the graffiti found on the Kiosk, including one newly discovered graffiti (#511), Cruz-Uribe states,

When we examine the graffiti found in this area, it would appear that its most likely function would have been to act as the central focus of those celebrations related to the cult of Thoth-P³-nbs, whose cult was centered in Dakka in Nubia. We find in GPH 11, 15, 36 and 511 prayers before this deity and that most are found on the interior walls of the Portico of Nectanebo is of interest.¹⁸⁶

The Kiosk may have served as a resting place for a shrine such as those discussed earlier,¹⁸⁷ which were carried from the southern Dodecaschoenos to Philae and would have been present at Philae during the festivities. Much like the porches added to temples in the Late Period, the relocated Kiosk of Nectanebo may have served as sacred place to accommodate the visiting Nubian shrines.¹⁸⁸ The celebrations would have included the donation of goods to the god of the temple, explicitly stated to be Arensnuphis in Ph. 24 and 25, by Nubian worshippers, and pilgrimage to worship Thoth Pnubs as stated in Ph. 11 and 15.

When the columns and walls of the southern dromos area were erected and decorated in the reign of Augustus, the reliefs of Thoth Pnubs, Arensnuphis, and Tefnut receiving offerings from Augustus and Tiberius reflected the cultic activity performed in that area during the Ptolemaic period that continued to occur in the early Roman period.

¹⁸⁶ Eugene Cruz-Uribe, *The Demotic Graffiti from the Temple of Isis on Philae Island*, forthcoming. If, in fact, the Kiosk of Nectanebo at Philae was allocated for use by worshippers of Thoth Pnubs during the late Ptolemaic/early Roman period, the designation of the Meroitic Chamber in the Second Eastern Colonnade as a space to be used by the Nubian emissaries of the Meroitic king during the third century would have followed that precedent.

¹⁸⁷ See the section “Shrines in Procession,” discussed above on pages 59.

¹⁸⁸ See n. 191 regarding the increased use of processions and the inclusion of laymen in them during the Kushite 25th dynasty.

Cult Association of Arensnuphis

Based on placement of the inscriptions, their content, and the particular season in which the graffiti were dated, three graffiti from the early Roman period¹⁸⁹ form a cohesive group associated with the Temple of Arensnuphis¹⁹⁰ located on the south east of the dromos at Philae. Festivities celebrated on the “dromos of Arensnuphis” did not begin in the Roman period. There is ample evidence of large crowds gathering for festivals in the mid-Ptolemaic period. Expansion of the area before the temple of Arensnuphis during the reign of Ptolemy VI created a forecourt, which could accommodate the large crowds that gathered for processions held in honor of Arensnuphis.¹⁹¹ The addition of a porch, which is no longer standing, to the temple of Arensnuphis was meant to serve as a rest station for the processions and necessitated a larger area as noted by Haeny,

The respective position of the minor sanctuaries leaves no doubt that the western platform, built earlier than the long embankment, was connected with the Temple of Arensnuphis, though the two structures are not exactly oriented the same way...Probably the space available

¹⁸⁹ Ph. 24, 25, and 36.

¹⁹⁰ According to Haeny, the temple of Arensnuphis, built under Ptolemy IV, is the earliest extant structure on the dromos. See map from Haeny, “Short History,” 221. (page 113 of this chapter) The temple was built on the site of a smaller, earlier temple of uncertain date. That earlier temple may be attested to by a votive stela depicting Ptolemy II standing before Arensnuphis, “Lord of the Abaton,” which was re-erected on Elephantine. Horst Jaritz, *Elephantine III*, 26-27.

In Meroe, Arensnuphis was often paired with Sebiuwerker, both of whom served as temple guardians and were depicted on doorways. A door crest from Musawwarat es-Sufra depicts a ram-headed Amun flanked on the left by Arensnuphis and on the right by Sebiuwerker. See Erich Winter, “Arensnuphis: seine Name und sein Herkunft,” 240-241. The temple of Arensnuphis at Philae stands at the southern entrance to the dromos of the Main temple, which places Arensnuphis in his traditional position in Meroitic religion - to the left guarding the entrance.

¹⁹¹ Holger Kockelmann, “Kultpraxis,” 116 and n. 137. The addition of porches to temples in the Late Period was closely linked to changes in the composition of processions during the Kushite 25th Dynasty, when laymen joined the priests in procession. See Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 282-284.

outside the temple had to be extended, when part of the ground was needed for the erection of the porch.¹⁹²

A Ptolemaic-period cult association of Arensnuphis undertook construction on the temple, which may have been the addition of a porch.¹⁹³

Although the layout of the southern part of the dromos changed dramatically with the addition of the two colonnades in the Roman period, the preservation of a sacred area in front of the Temple of Arensnuphis was maintained. Due to the narrowing of the dromos at its southern end, the Temple of Arensnuphis stands close to the columns of the western colonnade. Columns nine and ten (on which Ph. 24 and 25 were inscribed) form a Pronaos of sorts before the temple. The architrave above those two columns was decorated with a winged sun disc such as typically adorns a doorway. Five postholes above that architrave indicate that some covered area protected the space before the Temple of Arensnuphis.¹⁹⁴ This delineated, sacred area before the temple of Arensnuphis may have been referred to in a broken and difficult passage in Ph. 24 where I believe the phrase P3-šl(l)-ʾlry-ḥms-nfr attempted to write the name of the forecourt of temple of Arensnuphis, the place of ‘the crying out to Arensnuphis.’¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Gerhard Haeny, “Short History,” 223 and Fig. 3.

¹⁹³ A Ptolemaic-period Greek inscription (IGP 11) attests to the presence of a cult association of Arensnuphis at Philae during the reign of Ptolemy VI. See Étienne Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae*, vol. II, (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969), 116-121. The inscription commemorated work on the temple of Arensnuphis undertaken by the cult association that may refer to the addition of the porch, which is no longer standing. See Gerhard Haeny, “Short History,” 220, n. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Sylvie Cauville, *Philae*, 57-58. The five postholes are clearly visible in a photo.

¹⁹⁵ The opening of Ph. 24 reads, “Regnal year 17, Phamenoth day 24 of Tiberius Caesar the god. Copy of the oath which the men of the four days made” The following lines 6-7 are difficult to translate. Griffith proposed the following translation for lines 4-8, “Copy of the oath which the men of the day-4 of the entrance(?) made, to (?) come to the House of the tooth(?) of Arensnuphis...” (ḥt(?) p3 ʿnh ʾlry n3 rm.w p3 sw 4 r3(?) r ʾy r ḥ p3 šl ʾlry-ḥms-nfr). Kockelmann proposed transcribing the phrase at the end of this line as

Ph. 24, Ph. 25, and Ph. 36 were engraved in the area that comprised the “forecourt” of the Temple of Arensnuphis (See plan on p. 58 for location of the proposed additional Nubian inscriptions on the dromos at Philae). The first two graffiti were inscribed on the second (upper) register of columns nine and ten, respectively. Both graffiti were inscribed on the eastern face of these columns, which placed them directly

Pr-šl-ʾlry-ḥms-nfr. See Holger Kockelmann “Kultpraxis,” 107, n. 74. This reading only slightly modifies the translation made by Griffith. Cruz-Urbe’s new reading offers a very different interpretation of lines 6-7, in which the signs at the beginning of line 6 are to be read as wš “holiday” “(...the fourth day of) holiday will come to the gate of the spike(?) of Arensnuphis” wš r iy ryt p3 šl<k> -ʾlry-ḥms-nfr. Rather than understanding the word before the divine name Arensnuphis as “the spike,” I propose that the intended word was šll “pray, cry out.” See Griffith, *Catalogue*, Index #341. This would render a translation of the phrase P3-šl(l)-ʾlry-ḥms-nfr as the name of the forecourt of temple of Arensnuphis, the place of ‘the crying out to Arensnuphis.’ Frequently the verb šll was used to describe the action of “crying out” to Isis in a prayer, which specifically requested that the worshipper be allowed to return to Philae each year to perform services for the goddess. This verb appeared almost exclusively in the prayer inscriptions attributed to Nubian worshippers at Dakka and Philae during Phase II. Griffith assembled fifteen examples of the Demotic word šll (*Catalogue*, Index #341) as used in the graffiti at Philae of which **thirteen** were found in inscriptions securely attributed to Nubians. The two inscriptions that were **not** attributed to Nubians are Ph. 121 (the northern exterior (rear) wall of the Birth House) and Ph. 412 (the western exterior wall of the Gate of Hadrian). However, both Ph. 121 and Ph. 412 were inscribed directly below a Nubian inscription from Phase II. Ph. 121 was in fact inscribed on the same day, Khoiak 11, as Ph. 120, dedicated by Wayekiye B and engraved above it on the enclosure wall around the Birth House. Both inscriptions employed the verb šll in the phrase “crying out to Isis.” Ph. 412 was inscribed in a cluster of Phase II Nubian graffiti, including Ph. 409, Ph. 410, and Ph. 411, inscribed for three members of the Wayekiye family, including the father of Wayekiye B, the author of Ph. 120. This circumstantial evidence seems to imply that the verb šll was used at Philae by a very restricted group of worshippers: Nubians from the southern Dodecaschoenos or the immediately adjacent area of Meroitic Nubia. Interestingly, Ph. 412 was inscribed for the “*lesonis* of the great cult guild” (mr šn sn.t ʿ3.t) following the reading of George Hughes, MDAIK 16, 151. This shows that the cult associations continued to flourish at Philae in the second and third centuries. *Lesonis* was one of the earliest titles held by members of the Wayekiye family of Nubian priests. Although the determinative used for the lexeme šl in Ph. 24 was not the usual “man with hands raised in prayer” determinative, several other Nubian writings of the word šll employ alternate determinatives. See Ph. 410 (Manitawawi), Ph. 416 (Sasan), Ph. 255 (Pathores), and Ph. 344 (Maqaltami).

in line with the entrance to the Temple of Arensnuphis. Ph. 36 was inscribed on a relief panel of the rear wall, behind columns nine and ten, also directly in line with the entrance to the Temple of Arensnuphis. The deliberate placement of this group of graffiti in alignment with this temple is reinforced by the fact that each graffito was carved on a relief scene that depicted either Arensnuphis, his consort Tefnut, or Min, with whom Arensnuphis was closely associated. Graffito Ph. 24 was engraved between Tiberius and ithyphallic Min, to whom the king made the offering of the *Udjat* eye. Graffito Ph. 25 was inscribed between Tiberius and Arensnuphis, who was offered “millions of years” by the king. Graffito Ph. 36, inscribed on a relief depicting Augustus offering wine to Arensnuphis and Tefnut, was engraved above the wine offering. While the location of the graffiti strongly connects them to the worship of Arensnuphis, it is the content of the inscriptions that make this connection explicit.

The promise to come to Philae yearly on a specific date as stated in Ph. 24 strongly connects these inscriptions to Nubian pilgrims of the later phases.¹⁹⁶ We have seen evidence that Nubian chiefs were responsible for the provisioning of a specific

¹⁹⁶ The wish to return annually to Philae was a frequent refrain in Nubian prayer inscriptions from Phase II. That wish implied that the participants did not live in the hamlets in the immediate vicinity of Philae and, therefore, only undertook the journey once every year, perhaps coming from Dakka. Strabo called Dakka (Pselchis) “an *Aethiopian* city” and this was certainly true intermittently. See Strabo, *Geography*, 17.1.54. Two royal Meroitic inscriptions grace the pylon of that temple indicating Meroitic control of the area during the time before the war between Rome and Meroe in 25 and 21 BC. The two-part Nubian graffito, Dakka 15/17, mentioned earlier, was dated to the reign of an otherwise unknown Meroitic king and his mother, and inscribed for M3n1 who was *strategos* and agent of the (Meroitic) king. Dakka remained a stronghold of the Nubian prophets of the Wayekiye family in Phase II. Inscriptions of three powerful brothers, inscribed at Dakka (Dakka 30, 31, and 32), who refer to their appointment by the king in Meroe, attest to Meroitic control of Dakka in the early to mid-third century.

temple in the Ptolemaic period.¹⁹⁷ These additional Nubian graffiti suggest that the practice continued into the Roman period. Donation of a portion of worshippers' goods, as mentioned in two of the five graffiti, may describe the means by which "the produce of the Dodecaschoenos" was remitted to the temple of Philae by the people of Nubia. Cult associations established in Nubian towns could have provided the organizational means by which each town gathered and transported a portion of its produce to Philae in order to support the cult of one of the many temples located in the temple complex.¹⁹⁸ Cult associations founded by towns or villages as opposed to temple personnel would explain the absence of priestly titles in this group of five inscriptions. Finally, the toponym Pnubs, used as an epithet of Thoth connects the manifestation of this Egyptian deity as worshipped at Dakka strongly with the ancient city of Doukki Gel (near Kerma) and its enduring worship of Amun Pnubs. Recalling that the Meroitic king Arqamani II constructed the oldest structure extant at Dakka, we may assume that Arqamani II introduced the cult of Thoth Pnubs into Lower Nubia.¹⁹⁹ As the temple of Dakka is the major temple of the southern Dodecaschoenos, it served as a stronghold for Nubian

¹⁹⁷ See n. 170 and n. 193 in the Introduction for discussion of Greek inscriptions that record the donation of goods to the temples of Mandulis and Arensnuphis during the Ptolemaic period.

¹⁹⁸ This practice is documented in other contemporary graffiti that record agreements between local towns and the priests and military commanders at Philae.

¹⁹⁹ On the south wall of his sanctuary at Dakka, Arqamani depicted the gods important to Nubians as confirmed by the reliefs and images at Philae that received Nubian prayer inscriptions. In three vertical panels, Arqamani is depicted offering to Thoth Pnubs and his consort Tefnut of the Abaton, Horus of Kubban and his consort Hathor of Philae, and Isis to whom the Meroitic king donated the 12 *schoenoi* in the accompanying hieroglyphic text. On the adjacent East wall, Arensnuphis and his consort Tefnut were depicted, along with Osiris, before whom the king pours a milk offering. Each of these gods was the focus of epigraphic attention from Nubian worshippers at Philae. Their presence in the sanctuary of Arqamani II testifies to the enduring faithfulness of Nubian worshippers to a very specific group of local gods from the vicinity of Dakka: Thoth Pnubs, Arensnuphis, and Horus of Kubban, along with Isis and Osiris.

priests from Meroitic Nubia in Phase II and may have been the temple from which Nubian worshippers came to Philae in Phase I. The strong presence of Arensnuphis (paired with Sebiameker) in Meroitic temples, too, points to a southern origin of this god. While scholars still argue about whether Arensnuphis²⁰⁰ and Thoth Pnubs are Egyptian or Meroitic, we may find that they are neither. Rather, they may be local Nubian gods with a strong assimilation of the regalia of the deities of Egypt and Meroe.²⁰¹ If this is so, we see in these five *proskynemata* dedicated to Arensnuphis and Thoth Pnubs a focus on local Nubian gods during a brief respite in which Lower Nubia enjoyed a small dose of autonomy from Egypt and Meroe.

²⁰⁰ Winter (1973), Onasch (1973), and Wenig (1974) maintain that Arensnuphis was a Meroitic god, while Žabkar (1975) and de Meulenaere (1977) assert that he was originally an Egyptian god.

²⁰¹ Hofmann (1976) argued that Arensnuphis was originally a Blemmye god.

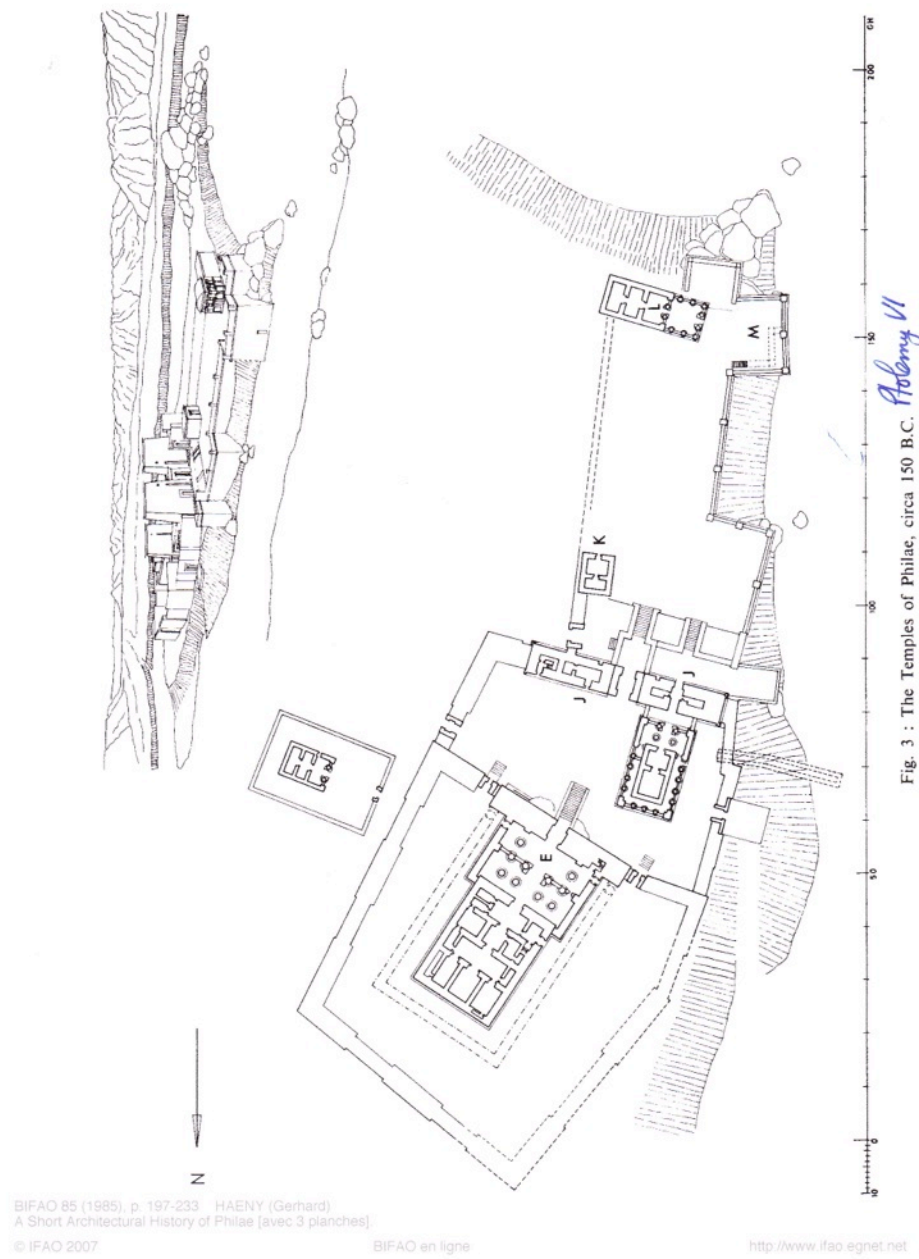


Figure 4: Reprinted from Gerhard Haeny, "A Short History Architectural History of Philae" BIFAO 85 (1985): 221.

Chapter 2: Extension of the Kingdom of Meroe into Lower Nubia

Introduction

The political presence of the Kingdom of Meroe was at its strongest in Lower Nubia during Phase II, which began in the second century and culminated in the third century AD when Meroe itself began to fall into decline. Of the three periods of Nubian inscriptions in the temples of Lower Nubia, Phase II (c. 175-273 AD) was bigger in every way: the range of languages used, the number of graffiti, the status of the titles held, and the involvement of Meroitic royalty. Egyptian temples, no longer funded by the Roman rulers and increasingly abandoned by Egyptian worshippers, fell into disuse and disrepair. Meroitic rulers sought to expand their control of Meroitic Nubia by gaining ritual control over the temples of Lower Nubia. They accomplished this through financial support of temple cult with donations of gold directly to the temple treasury and by giving gifts of gold fashioned into cultic implements. The religious and political emphasis during Phase II was the annual arrival of Nubian priests in the employ of the Meroitic king to conduct rites at Philae.

One family of Nubian priests dominated the epigraphic record in the second and third centuries AD. Designated by a name used frequently by its members, the Wayekiye family of priests and civil administrators left extensive written records during the eight generations¹ in which they are attested in the Dodekaschoenos and in the Meroitic province of *Akin*.² Members of the Wayekiye family recorded inscriptions in Demotic, Greek, and Meroitic. The family's multilingualism reflected their bicultural ways.

¹ See Figure 4 on page 117 for a family tree.

² This was the Meroitic name for the northern province of Meroe, which stretched from Maharraqa at the southern border of the Dodekaschoenos to the 3rd cataract.

Traditions such as listing the mother's name before the father's on funerary monuments as well as the extensive lists of family members included on those monuments were more prevalent in Nubian society,³ while the traditional Egyptian formulae⁴ used in Nubian proskynemata in Lower Nubia reflected their assimilation of the Egyptian culture of the temples in Lower Nubia.

Crisis of the Third Century

A dramatic change occurred between Phase I of the Nubian graffiti and Phase II. Roman power in Egypt, which had been strong after the initial conquest of the country in 30 BC and well into the first century AD, began to weaken in the second century. Several factors contributed to the creation of a power vacuum in Lower Nubia, which allowed Nubians in the employ of the Kingdom of Meroe an expanded civil and religious role in the temples of Nubia.

The third century was a period of tremendous instability in the Roman Empire, which negatively affected political and economic stability in Egypt and Lower Nubia. Internecine fighting to claim the title of Roman emperor led to the political "Crisis of the Third Century," attacks by Blemmye tribesmen of the Eastern Desert on Egypt and the northern province of Meroe, and a series of virulent plagues, some originating in Nubia, combined to create a power vacuum in Lower Nubia that called for a Meroitic political response in order to protect the northern province. The so-called "Crisis of the Third Century" (AD 235-284) began with the assassination of Roman Emperor Alexander

³ Fritz Hintze, "Meroitische Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen" *Studien zum antiken Sudan (Meroitica 15)*, ed. Steffen Wenig, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 230-231. Hintze notes that the few cases where the father was named first can be attributed to Egyptian influence. Ibid., 231.

⁴ These formulae included the phrases t3 wšt.t n PN "the *proskynema* of PN" and, to a lesser extent, rn nfr mn ti m-b3ḥ DN "His name remains here before DN."

Severus by his troops. As generals fought each other to claim the title of Emperor, Rome suffered a period of chaos when more than twenty emperors ruled in a fifty-year period. During this period, protection of the Roman frontiers lapsed allowing numerous invasions along the northern, eastern, and southern borders of the empire.

Blemmye incursions into Egypt were part of this wave of attacks. The earliest attacks on Egypt by these tribesmen occurred during the reign of Emperor Decius in AD 249-251.⁵ By AD 280, the Romans were contending with the Blemmyes for control of Upper Egyptian towns like Coptos and Ptolemais.⁶ Political instability was also heightened by a series of plagues that hit the empire during the third century. Pestilence was reported in *Aethiopia*, as the Greeks and Romans called Kush, in AD 200⁷ and again in AD 253.⁸ The Plague of Cyprian broke out in AD 251 causing so many deaths that it may have undermined the empire's ability to defend itself. The Kingdom of Meroe exploited this confluence of events, which led to a dramatically weakened Roman control of Egypt, in order to expand Meroitic administrative control into the Dodechaschoenos.

However, this expansion did not begin simply as a result of Roman weakness in Egypt. The Kingdom of Meroe had been steadily increasing its administrative structures in its northern provinces. The northward extension of Meroitic control and the concomitant development of a civil administrative structure through which the territory was governed will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁵ Robert T. Updegraff, *The Blemmyes I*, ANRW II 10.1, 69 refers to the Chronicon Paxchale, CSHB I, 1832, 504f.

⁶ Ibid, 71.

⁷ Cassius Dio *Roman History* 76.13.1 from FHN III, 960-961.

⁸ John Zonaras, *Epitome historiarum* 12.21B, an early 12th century book, which contains lost books of Cassius Dio from FHN III, 258.

Wayekiye Family

The expanded civil administration of the Meroitic province of *Akin* and the increased presence of Nubian representatives of the Meroitic king in the local temple hierarchies (both north and south of the Dodecaschoenos' border) are attested in the corpus of Nubian graffiti of this period. Among the Nubian authors attested in this phase, one family's epigraphic presence at Dakka and Philae is exceptional in its volume and duration. The Wayekiye family⁹ of priests and civil administrators worked along with Egyptian priests in the administrative structures of the major Egyptian temples of Lower Nubia, Dakka and Philae, while simultaneously serving as political representatives of the Meroitic rulers in Lower Nubia.¹⁰ The combination of religious and civil titles held by the Wayekiye family in both the Egyptian and Meroitic areas of Lower Nubia resulted from their ability to function in the Egyptian temples as priests while controlling the northernmost Meroitic province as civil administrators for the Meroitic king. Evidence of the Wayekiye family found south of the Dodecaschoenos in Mediq and Gebel Adda, as well as at Dakka and Philae, indicates that their sphere of influence extended from a base in Meroitic Nubia¹¹ into the Dodecaschoenos. Over the course of eight generations the Wayekiye family steadily accumulated titles. The intermarriage of two powerful local Nubian families, one of which held priestly titles, while the other was dominant in the Meroitic military/civil administration of northern *Akin* aided in the dominance of the Wayekiye family. Their patterns of inheritance reflected both the Egyptian father-to-son

⁹ Adelheid Burkhardt, *Ägypter und Meroiten im Dodekaschoenos* 1985, 89-96; Nicholas Byram Millett, "Meroitic Nubia (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), 77-97.

¹⁰ They also held priestly titles in the temples south of the Dodecaschoenos in towns such as Karanog, Faras, Gebel Adda.

¹¹ Burial stelae of Wayekiye A (MI 89) and his wife, Taese (MI 88), were found in Mediq, located just south of Maharraqa and the southern border of the Dodechaschoenos and north of Wadi Sebua.

manner of inheriting offices and the Nubian form of inheritance from a man to his sister's son. The blending of both cultures into something uniquely Nubian was a persistent feature of the epigraphic, religious, and societal character of the Wayekiye family.

Stammbaum der Wayekiye-Familie:

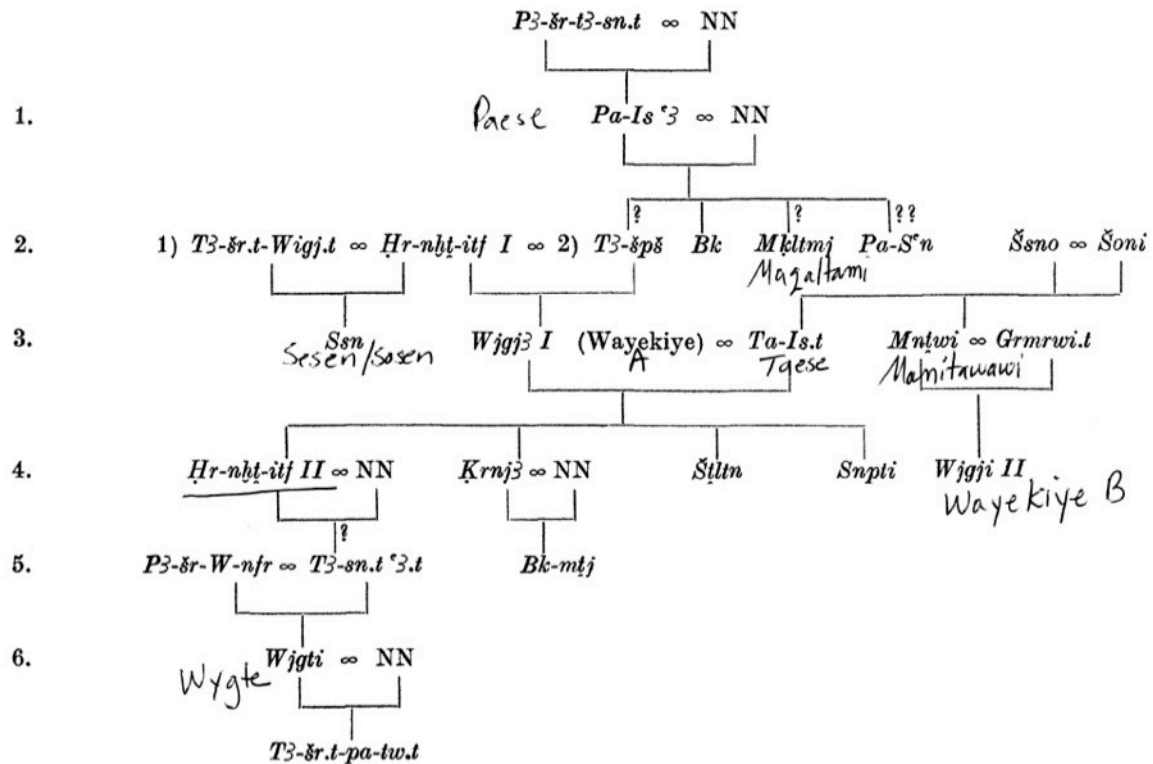


Figure 5: Wayekiye Family Tree. (Reprinted from Burkhardt, *Ägypter und Meroiten*, 96.)

Expanded Corpus of Graffiti

Whereas the Nubian corpus of Phase I consisted of a total of only seven graffiti¹² written in Demotic, the Nubian corpus in Phase II was dramatically larger, comprising inscriptions written in three languages: Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek graffiti. Nubian priests and administrators used Demotic, the language of Egyptian temple texts; Meroitic,

¹² Two graffiti are at Philae, three at Dakka, and two at minor temples. Five additional inscriptions have been proposed to be additional Nubian graffiti belonging to Phase I.

the language of their Meroitic royal sponsors; and Greek, the language of diplomacy between Meroe and Egypt.

Although graffiti inscribed by Nubians are found throughout the temple complex at Philae, those inscriptions are clustered in certain areas where cultic rituals that were important to the Nubian pilgrims were depicted. The Meroitic Chamber, the Gate of Hadrian, and the southwest side of the Pronaos of the Main Temple were the three primary areas of ritual focus that drew Nubian epigraphic attention. While the Meroitic Chamber contained purely Meroitic-language inscriptions and the inscriptions of Nubian engraved in the Pronaos were written solely in Demotic, the Gate of Hadrian has Nubian inscriptions written in Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek. It will be helpful at this point to describe in greater detail the three areas of importance to the Nubians.

The majority of the Meroitic-language inscriptions were found in the Meroitic Chamber, so named because it contained only Meroitic-language inscriptions and reliefs.¹³ (For the location of the Phase II Nubian inscriptions at Philae, see the plan on 121.) This chamber, the third room from the south in a row of rooms opposite the Birth House and behind the Second Eastern Colonnade, was formerly a purification chamber.¹⁴ Fifteen inscriptions, each of which was paired with a depiction of a Nubian priest or royal emissary, listed his titles. Although the texts cannot be fully translated, one inscription

¹³ Unfortunately all traces of inscriptions and reliefs have disappeared from the walls of the Meroitic Chamber.

¹⁴ PM VI, 221; Sylvie Cauville, *Philae. Itinéraire du visiteur*, (Leuven, Peeters, 2013): 166, 168-169.

seemed to contain a list of offerings to be made at Philae¹⁵ and two sections record prayers made to Isis.¹⁶

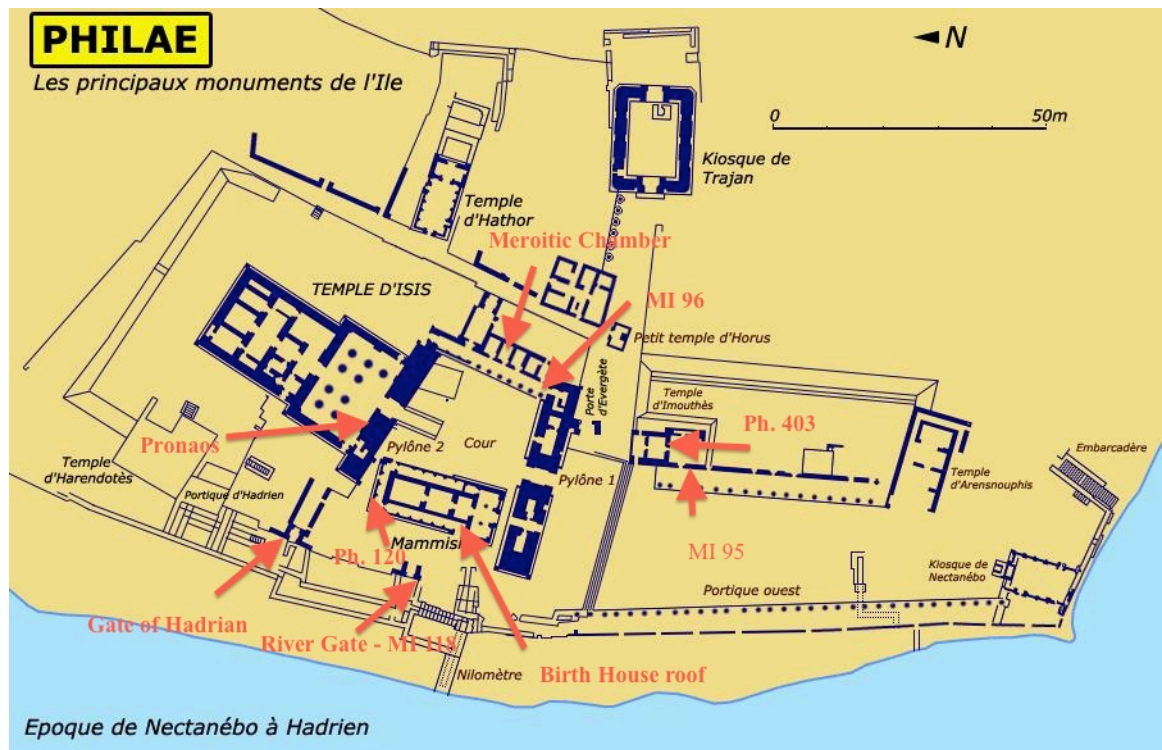


Figure 6: Location of Phase II Nubian Graffiti. (Plan by Canopé académie de Strasbourg, Marie-Georges Brun. Courtesy of Creative Commons. Adapted by author.)

Five of the remaining twelve Meroitic-language graffiti¹⁷ were inscribed on the west face of the Gate of Hadrian, located west of the Second Pylon. That Gate led to a

¹⁵ MI 101.

¹⁶ MI 102, 103. Several words contain the Meroitic prefix p-, pš, bš. These prefixes have been identified as optative prefixes used in the benediction of the offering formulae wherein the recipient requests to receive bread water or other offerings. See Fritz Hintze, "Die sprachliche Stellung des Meroitischen" *Afrikanistische Studien* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1955) 362-365; Bruce G Trigger, *The Meroitic Funerary Inscriptions from Arminna West* (New Haven, CT: The Yale University Press, 1970) 51; Claude Rilly, *The Meroitic Language and Writing System*, transl. Aex de Voogt, (New York: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 2010) 168-169; Indem., *La lange du royaume de Méroé*. (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2007), 560-567.

¹⁷ Locations of Meroitic-language graffiti at Philae: MI 95 western wall outside the Temple of Imhotep, MI 96 on the northeast side (back) of the First Pylon, MI 97-111 in the Meroitic Chamber, MI 118 on the West River Gate, west of the Birth House. MI 119-

pier from which boats departed to nearby Biga Island, regarded as the sacred burial place of Osiris. The island was also believed to contain a grotto from which the source of the Nile River flowed.

The Demotic graffiti written by Nubians of Phase II were only inscribed at Philae and Dakka, whereas the geographical extent of Nubian inscriptions in Phase I was larger, encompassing the minor temples of Dendur, Kalabsha, and Maharraqa. Within the temples at Philae and Dakka, graffiti left by Nubians were clustered together. At Philae, there was some overlap between the distribution of Meroitic-language graffiti and Demotic graffiti inscribed by Nubians in various areas of the temple complex.¹⁸ However, the largest concentration of Nubian inscriptions at Philae is found on the Gate of Hadrian. Eight Demotic inscriptions, almost one-third of the Demotic corpus of Nubian inscriptions from Phase II, join the five Meroitic-language inscriptions on the Gate of Hadrian. The two Greek graffiti¹⁹ inscribed during Phase II by Nubians were also found on the west face of the Gate of Hadrian, resulting in a total of fifteen Nubian inscriptions found on that gate, which attests to the importance of this location for visiting Nubians.

The south western wall of the Pronaos (back of Second Pylon) with its contiguous reliefs of the king pouring milk before Osiris Wennefer and offering milk to Horus of Kubban attracted Nubian prayers over the course of almost four hundred years. Six

123 on Hadrian's Gate, MI 124 on west side of the Gate of Diocletian, MI 125 on a loose block.

¹⁸ One Demotic inscription shares the Temple of Imhotep with the single Meroitic-language inscription found there; four Demotic inscriptions on the Birth House, including one, Ph. 223, on the roof are contemporary with two Meroitic-language "feet graffiti" and predate the later Nubian inscriptions found on the Birth House roof. If we accept Ph. 68, dated to the reign of a king named B3-n-Q^cš, as Nubian, its placement on the northeast side (back) of the First Pylon mirrors that of the lone Meroitic-language inscription, MI 96, there.

¹⁹ IGP 180 and IGP 181.

inscriptions by members of three non-consecutive generations of the Wayekiye family along with three Demotic graffiti dedicated by other Nubians attest to the powerful and long lasting appeal of this area for southern priests and dignitaries.²⁰ An additional graffito²¹ above the doorway that leads west from the Pronaos to the Gate of Hadrian connects these two prominent foci of Nubian piety at Philae.

None of the Meroitic-language graffiti are dated. Therefore, they must be dated in relation to the other Nubian inscriptions. Members of the Wayekiye family, who are present in dated Demotic graffiti, are also named in the Meroitic-language graffiti of the Meroitic Chamber, which places those Meroitic-language inscriptions securely in Phase II. The titles “general of the river” and “general of the land” that appear in the Meroitic-language graffiti are translated into Demotic in the Demotic graffiti of Phase II and do not appear in the Nubian agreements of Phase I or the Nubian *proskynemata* of Phase III. Finally, a pair of Meroitic-language graffiti²² on Hadrian’s Gate in the name of the Meroitic King Yesbokheamani will be considered with the Nubian inscriptions of Phase II. His reign has been dated to circa AD 283-300²³ and, therefore, strictly speaking postdates the last dated graffito of Phase II which was written in AD 273. Two Meroitic-language “feet graffiti” on the roof of the Birth House may belong to Phase II. While all other “feet graffiti” are associated with the last phase of Nubian presence at Philae, MI 112 and MI 113 must be considered part of Phase II because they include titles that

²⁰ This area continued to be important to Nubian Christians who left prayer inscriptions at Philae. The only four graffiti to explicitly identify their authors as Nubian (IGP 205, 208, 210, 213) were inscribed on a relief panel immediately to the left on this wall, PM 268-269; Berlin Photo 671. Étienne Bernand, IGP II, 268-276.

²¹ A member of the Wayekiye family, Maqaltami, wrote the graffito Ph. 344.

²² MI 119 and MI 120.

²³ FHN III, 1049.

incorporate the Meroitic word *qore* “king” and a reference to a *yetmede*-relative. Each of these indicators is otherwise only attested in the Phase II Nubian graffiti at Philae.²⁴

Change in Focus of the Nubian Graffiti

During Phase II Nubian priests served Meroitic rulers as chief ritualists adept at performing Egyptian rites for Osiris that were integral to the funerary rites as practiced at Meroe. Meroitic royal patronage of the Nubian priests who served at Philae and Dakka changed the focus of the *proskynemata* that were engraved during Phase II. The Meroitic language began to be used to compose the inscriptions written by officials who served in the Meroitic administration of *Akin*, the northernmost Meroitic province. That Meroitic officials had acquired the right to inscribe *proskynemata* at Philae and Dakka attests to a shift in control of the Dodekaschoenos. While a strong Meroitic presence in the Egyptian temples of Lower Nubia was probably limited to a ten-year period in the mid-third century AD, the fact that high-ranking Meroitic officials spoke of crowning prophets, collecting taxes, and leading official royal delegations to Philae to negotiate political settlements speaks to the power of Meroe vis-à-vis Rome during this period.

The expansion in languages used to write the Nubian graffiti and the larger area in which those graffiti were inscribed in the temples at Philae were discussed above. The content of the Nubian *proskynemata* of Phase II also became more complex. Whereas, the graffiti of Phase I consisted primarily of agreements that specified priestly rights, duties, and compensation; the graffiti of Phase II exhibited a stronger focus on performing rituals and attending to the cultic requirements of Meroitic royalty. The object of adoration in the graffiti was almost exclusively the goddess Isis to whom Philae’s

²⁴ Four Meroitic-language “feet graffiti” (MI 114-117) from the roof of the Birth House are from Phase III and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Main Temple was dedicated. Those who wrote Nubian graffiti described their “daily” prayers to Isis “without a day of intermission,”²⁵ often using the Demotic word šll “to cry out” which may indicate that their prayers were performed audibly in the place where their graffiti was inscribed.

The visit to Philae was often a communal affair.²⁶ Worshippers describe the people who were at Philae with them, “my brethren”²⁷ and “my brethren and my people”²⁸ or “with my brethren and my clan” (mhw.t) with “my wife and my children.”²⁹ One Nubian worshipper described performing rites at Philae before his daughter.³⁰ Many graffiti expressed the wish of the writer to be allowed to return to Philae yearly in order to perform rites there, often in exchange for the life breath of the Meroitic ruler. Two particular rites were the focus of Nubian piety at Philae and Dakka: the Feast of Entry³¹ and the celebration of funeral rites for Osiris during the month of Khoiak. Of the two, the

²⁵ Ph. 411, line 3.

²⁶ See n. 42 in the Introduction for the importance of extended family relationships in Lower and Middle Nubian communities.

²⁷ Ph. 257, line 8.

²⁸ Ph. 411, line 4 (ḥnꜥ nꜣ sn.w nꜣ rmt.w mtw=y)

²⁹ Ph. 255, lines 7-9. In Dak. 33/6 it was simply “his wife and his children.”

³⁰ Ph. 254, lines 7-13. In a corpus of graffiti profoundly devoid of women authors a daughter, mentioned by name, is noteworthy. Wygte referred to his daughter in Ph. 254, line 6. Dd Hr, a gold smith like Wygte, also recorded his daughter’s presence in graffiti Ph. 289, line 5. Noteworthy in relation to these two graffiti, is the fact that Sasan made his donations from the Meroitic king for the prophets, priests, and the **female** children of the priests in Ph. 416, line 4. The absence of women in the corpus of graffiti at Philae is not restricted to Nubian graffiti. Of the 450 graffiti recorded by Griffith at Philae, only two were written by women, both of which were inscribed in the Temple of Hathor. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 11. “In the filiations of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries the mother is often named, in a few cases a daughter (?), but the wife is never named though occasionally included in the obeisance.” Ibid.

³¹ Dijkstra, *The End of Egyptian Religion*, 208-209 n. 87; Jeremy Pope, “Meroitic Diplomacy and the Festival of Entry,” in *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, Julie R. Anderson and Derek A. Welsby, eds. (Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014), 577-582.

Feast of Entry was mentioned more frequently. Performing this rite seems to have been the prerogative of the Wayekiye family of priests.

Festivals Performed by Nubians at Philae

The “Feast of Entry” was Griffith’s translation of the Demotic word ³²ꜥyq/ꜥq, which appeared in the Demotic graffiti of Egyptians and Nubians at Dakka³³ and Philae.³⁴ Of the nine attestations of the Feast of Entry in the graffiti of the Dodecaschoenos, five are securely attributed to Nubians of Phase II. The remaining four inscriptions, Ph. 28 and Ph. 29 from the early Roman period³⁵ and Ph. 207 and Ph. 436 have not been attributed to Nubians.³⁶ Nubian worshipers used the Demotic word to refer to their performance of specific funerary rites for the god Osiris. Inscriptions dated to the month of Khoiak,³⁷ references to the journey to the burial site of Osiris on Biga, and the prominence of the rite of pouring libation indicate that the ꜥq –procession was a funerary procession. The Demotic tale of Setne Khaemwas offers a contemporary example of the

³²The word ꜥq (no. 7 “festival” “inauguration” and no. 35 “dedication festival” “feast of entry” in Griffith’s vocabulary, see Griffith *Catalogue*, vol. 1) is listed in Erichsen’s *Glossar*, 56 with the meaning, “Fest, Einweihung” and Ibid., 72 “eintreten” with the example ꜥq r pr(j)-nfr “eintreten in das ‘gute Haus’” as a euphemism for burial taken from the first tale of Setne Khaemwas, page 4, line 25 where the phrase t̃i ꜥq refers to the funerary procession for Setne.

³³ Dakka 30 and Dakka 33.

³⁴ Ph. 28, 29, 207. 363, 411, 421, and 436.

³⁵ Ph. 28 celebrated the goddess Hathor (“entry to the shrine of Hathor). Ph. 29 has a lacuna after the Demotic word ꜥq “entry,” which deprives us of the name of the deity for whom the procession was performed. However, Ph. 29 was inscribed for the First Prophet of Isis, which allows us to assume that the procession was performed for the shrine of Isis. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 47. Both inscriptions are dated AD 34 and inscribed on column 26 on the dromos. There is nothing to indicate that the inscriptions are not Egyptian so they have not been included in the corpus of Nubian inscriptions.

³⁶ Ph. 207 was inscribed in Room 1 of the Birth House; it is undated. Ph. 436 contains the last attested use of hieroglyphic writing; it was associated with a relief of Mandulis and dedicated on the Feast of Entry of Osiris in the Gate of Hadrian in AD 394.

³⁷ Khoiak is the fourth month of the season of Inundation (3ḥ.t).

Demotic word ʕq used to speak of the entrance of the corpse into the pr-nfr to be embalmed (column 4/16, 25), procession onto a ship (column 6/16), and the funeral procession which carried the deceased into the tomb (column 6/19), all of which are relevant to the procession as it was performed at Philae. However, there was an additional connotation associated with the procession as celebrated by Nubians at Philae. The fact that Nubians priests came to Philae on behalf of the ruler in Meroe to perform this rite yearly, while asking for the life breath of the ruler, emphasized another definition of the word ʕq, “der feierliche einzug des Königs.”³⁸ As representatives of the Meroitic king or queen, Nubian priests symbolically brought the royal presence to Philae to pay homage and to perform funerary rites annually for the Meroitic king’s divine father Osiris, while simultaneously performing rites for the Meroitic king’s predecessor.

Although the word ʕq might simply have been translated as “procession” or “dedication (of a divine statue),” Griffith’s translation implied the existence of a particular festival with a fixed date. Although the graffiti mention specific actions that occurred as part of the ʕyq/ʕq, there was no consistency in the dates associated with occurrences of this word.³⁹ This implies that the term would be better translated simply as “ʕq-procession” and not as a “Feast of Entry” or “Festival of Entry.”⁴⁰ Performing the ʕq

³⁸WB I, 232/10.

³⁹ Ph. 28 ʕbd 4 pr.t sw 10, Ph. 207 p h(r)w 29 , Dakka 33 ʕbd 3 pr.t sw 20, Dakka 30 ʕbd 3 šm sw 22, Ph. 436 dated only to sw ms Wsr “the Birth of Osiris.” In graffito Dakka 30, the author mentioned a trip made to Philae **after** the ʕq-procession was celebrated in Dakka. The journey to Philae was made to celebrate a festival on the dromos on tp ʕht sw 4 (Thoth 4) “the Birth of Isis.” For the inscriptions referred to above, see Griffith, *Catalogue*, 47 (Ph. 28), 75 (Ph. 207), 32 (Dakk 33), 26-31 (Dakk 30), 126 (Ph. 436).

⁴⁰ Support for this assertion is found in the fact that Wayekiye A neglected to write the word ʕyq in hieratic in his inscription Ph. 421, while other instances of a divine name, act of worship, or priestly title were written in hieratic to set those words apart from the rest

–procession for a shrine or figure was most often recorded in the graffiti as the work of a few pious individuals. Communal celebrations on the dromos were held after the sacred procession had been performed. Those celebrations were funded by the Meroitic king and included local revelers.⁴¹

The specific actions associated with the term include work performed on a shrine⁴² (qwe⁴³) to make it “new” by gilding as evidenced by the phrase “he had gilded the above-named shrine in 200 places”⁴⁴ or “overlaying it with gold on 500 places.”⁴⁵ Two graffiti refer to the “ferrying of Isis (to the Abaton)”⁴⁶ as part of the procession.

of the inscription which was written in Demotic. This omission is especially noticeable because the word ʿq (in Demotic) follows directly after the priest’s title, the *qeren* of Isis, written in hieratic. By not writing ʿq in hieratic, Wayekiye A treated the word ʿq “entry” as simply a term denoting a procession and not as a term referring to a specific sacred festival. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 121 for Ph. 421, line 12.

⁴¹ In his Demotic graffito, Sasan, the Meroitic royal ambassador to Roman Egypt who served King Teqorideamani, written Tqrrmn in Demotic in lines 8 and 9 of Ph. 416, boasted, “He (the Meroitic king) had ordered me to make the whole [district] enjoy itself and we did it in his good name. It was a beautiful p[arty] he made for the nome.” See FHN III, 1002; Ph. 416, line 5. Again, in lines 12-13, “We made a festival in the temple complex of Isis with our brethren, the *qerens* of Isis, the prophets and the serving (i.e., on duty) priests among the *wab*-priests of Isis. We spent eight days dining on the dromos of Isis on wine, beer, and meat, while the populace of the whole town was celebrating and making obeisance to the King, their overlord and our own banquets too, which we had humbly held in the name of the King, our lord, as well.” Ibid., 1004.

⁴² In Dakka 30 the shrine belonged to Isis, in Dakka 33 the shrine was Thoth’s. Ph. 28 mentioned the shrine of Hathor, while Ph. 29 had a lacuna immediately after the word ʿq where the word shrine might have appeared. The Nubian graffito Ph. 421 provided the fullest description, “We made the Entry of the shrine of Isis of the Abaton in new work.” Ph. 436 referred to work done on the figure of Mandulis, which was carved next to the graffito on the wall. It was performed at the ʿq-procession of Osiris.

⁴³ WB V, 150, 2. This is a late, Demotic variant of the term k3r “shrine,” especially a portable shrine to be carried in procession. See also WB V, 153, 7 for the word g3w.t (written with a different determinative) meaning “Abgaben, Tribute, Erzeugnissen eines Landes...besonders aus Fremdländern (Asien, Libyen, Nubien, Weihrauchländer). For the Nubian devotees who came to Philae, a large part of their participation in the festivities of the ʿq-procession consisted of delivering donations, often of gold, to the temple.

⁴⁴ Dakka 33/6-7.

In the Nubian inscriptions of Phase II, the word ʕq referred to the cultic practice of carrying a newly gilded shrine in procession. The ʕq-procession consisted of a weekly journey of the statue of Isis from her temple at Philae by boat across the Nile to the neighboring island of Biga (called the Abaton in Greek).⁴⁷ Priests performed the procession every decade (10-day week) according to the texts known as the Abaton decrees,⁴⁸ carved on the north and south walls of the Gate of Hadrian. Mention is made of this weekly procession in various locations throughout the temple complex at Philae. These Abaton texts stipulate that the statue of Isis must be present on Biga Island each week to witness the presentation of offerings and the pouring of milk libations for her deceased spouse, Osiris. The rite of pouring a libation at Osiris' grave site emphasized the funerary aspect of the procession, while both the application of gold to divine statues and the offering of milk announced the intention to reanimate the soul of Osiris to facilitate his transformation into Osiris Wennefer, a manifestation of Osiris revived through the ministrations of his wife Isis.

The funerary and revivification aspects of the ʕq-procession share many similarities with the rites of Khoiak.⁴⁹ Those rites became increasingly important in the Late Period for both Egyptians and Meroites as reflected in the many graffiti at Philae

⁴⁵ Dak. 30/6.

⁴⁶ Dak. 30 p3 t yʕr n ʕls.t where the date of the “ferrying of Isis” is specified as month 3 of Shemu, day 22, Ph. 421 ir=n t yʕre n-im=s r p3 iw wʕb.

⁴⁷ Pope, “Meroitic Diplomacy,” 581.

⁴⁸ See Hermann Junker, *Das Götterdekret über das Abaton* (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1913), passim, esp. 55.

⁴⁹ François Daumas, “Choiakfeste” *LdÄ I*, 958-960; Emile Chassinat, *Le Mystère d'Osiris au Mois de Khoiak*, 2 vol. Cairo 1966-68.

dated to the month of Khoiak.⁵⁰ The rites of Khoiak were deeply associated with the fertilizing of the land by the flooded Nile and the crops that were planted immediately after the floodwaters receded. The first day of the first month of Akhet,⁵¹ 1 Thoth, was meant to coincide with the beginning of the annual inundation of the Nile. It was the bodily fluids of the deceased Osiris, extracted through the process of mummification, that the Egyptians imagined were flooding the land and bringing fertility to the soil of Egypt. The fourth month of Akhet, Khoiak (k3-ḥr-k3), was the time for sowing crops in the newly enriched soil, which had received a fertile topcoat, washed down from the East African highlands and deposited by the receding river. Osiris' mummification, burial, and revivification were reenacted on days 12-30 of Khoiak to coincide with this time of agricultural fertility.

A central rite of Khoiak involved the creation of a mummified Osiris in the form of a corn mummy, which was watered from 12-20 Khoiak, in order to make the grain within it sprout. Perhaps because the Meroites ceased practicing mummification early in the Meroitic period,⁵² graffiti inscribed on behalf of Meroitic royalty show that the

⁵⁰ Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 204; Griffith, *Catalogue*, 196. According to Dijkstra, 17.1% of the Philae graffiti are dated. By including the undated inscriptions of men who also wrote or were mentioned in dated graffiti, this percentage increases to 31.3%. Dijkstra, *Philae*, 181.

⁵¹ The Egyptian calendar was divided into three seasons: Akhet "growing," Peret "harvest," and Shemu "summer". Each season was divided into four months and each month into three 10-day weeks.

⁵² The highly Egyptianized Napatan kings (715-350 BC), precursors of the Meroitic rulers, continued the practice of mummification, which they adopted from the Egyptians during the period when Egypt colonized Kush in the New Kingdom. Because mummification was not a native Kushite practice, Meroites ceased the practice of mummification soon after moving their royal burials to Meroe. Instead they asserted more native traditions such as burial on a bed, Meroitic writing, worship of native gods

primary ritual that their Nubian priests engaged in during the visit to Philae was that act of pouring libations at Osiris' grave. The large number of Nubian graffiti on the western face of the Gate of Hadrian point to Nubian involvement in the weekly procession of the golden statue of Isis to the Abaton and the "Great Procession," (*hr.t ʿṣ.t*),⁵³ which occurred annually, and is referred to in the hieroglyphic texts that decorate the architraves in the Pronaos. Those hieroglyphic texts describe the twelve hours of the day and twelve hours of the night, which comprise the Osirian rites of the *Studenwachen*. Among the rites of the *Studenwachen* is the performance of the "Great Procession" by all the gods from Philae to the grave of Osiris on the Abaton. Although the texts do not indicate precise dates for the "Great Procession," dated Nubian inscriptions suggest that the annual procession occurred during the month of Khoiak. In fact, the Nubians never used the phrase "Great Procession," but rather their frequent requests to return to Philae annually to perform the "services of Isis" suggest that it was the "Great Procession" in which they participated.⁵⁴

A clear distinction appears between the Nubians who mentioned the ʿq-procession and those who mentioned the Khoiak festival in their graffiti. The ʿq-procession was mentioned in *proskynemata* written by Wayekiye family members, while **other** Nubians focused on Khoiak, as shown in the table below. Within the corpus of Wayekiye family inscriptions, the term Khoiak appeared only in two graffiti by

(Apedemak and his consort, Amesemi, foremost among them), and the development of a unique blend of Egyptian, Meroitic and Greek iconography in tomb and temple reliefs.

⁵³ This annual event was referred to as "die grosse Begräbnisfahrt" by Junker. Junker, *Dekreten*, 57.

⁵⁴ Placement of many generations of Nubian *proskynemata* in the Pronaos, under the architraves on which the twelve hours of the night are described (specifically Hour 8 in which Nephthys arrives to guard Osiris), suggests an enduring desire among Nubian worshippers to participate in the burial rites for Osiris.

Wayekiye B, which were simply dated to the month of Khoiak and do not mention festival activities associated with Khoiak. The exclusivity of the Wayekiye family's references to the ʿq-procession suggest that it was a prerogative of that family.

An integral part of Nubian visits to Philae was the donation of gold to be made into cultic items or used to gild divine statues. References to gold smiths, gilding, or making an offering of gold appear in relation to the ʿq-procession in the Nubian graffiti as demonstrated in the tables below. The graffiti left by Wayekiye family members is separated from those of other Nubians to underscore the connection of the Wayekiye family with the ʿq-procession (Feast of Entry).

(Each graffito that mentions gilding, gold smith title, or the donation of golden cult items is written in bold.)

Table 2a: Phase II Nubian Festivals

Table 2b: Phase II Nubian Festivals

⁵⁸ Does the fact that Atenkitnri (Griffith's rendering of the Demotic: 3ṅgytrnye) participated in the Feast of Entry and left his graffito on the western exterior of the Gate of Hadrian make it more likely that he, too, was a Wayekiye family member? We are not able to include him in the Wayekiye family tree because he did not name of any family in his Demotic graffito. However, in the Meroitic-language graffito MI 132, a man named Wayeteye (not attested at Philae) claimed the title "ntke of the *strategos*, Tani." Millett interpreted the name Tani as a nickname for Atankitanideye (Meroitic: Atnkitnide with the suffix -ye that is frequently found on Meroitic names) and believed he was the author of Ph. 411. See Millett, "Meroitic Nubia," 109. Griffith saw the same name in Meroitic Tenkitnide who appeared in REM 0504 (Faras 4). See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 113. This connection is strengthened by the fact that Atankitanideye was the only non-Wayekiye Nubian on my table who mentioned the Feast of Entry and held the title *strategos*. Atenkitnri's use of the title *strategos* paired with the title agent, which was so prevalent in Phase I, suggests that his graffito was engraved early in Phase II.

As the table above demonstrates, Nubian worshippers performed the ʕq-procession (Feast of Entry) at Philae and Dakka before they began to participate in the rites of Khoiak.⁵⁹ The first reference to the ʕq-procession in the Nubian graffiti occurred as early as the second generation of the Wayekiye family. Paese's son, Bek, wrote of performing the ʕq-procession at Dakka (Dakka 33). A mention of the festival appeared in a graffito by Paese's grandson at Philae (Ph. 421, Wayekiye A). Paese's great grandson performed the ʕq-procession at Dakka (Dakka 30, Hornakhtyotef II), and, again two generations later, Wygte performed the ʕq-procession at Philae in the seventh (penultimate) generation of the Wayekiye family. Celebrating the ʕq-procession appears to have been the obligation or right of the Wayekiye family of priests in Lower Nubia, both at Philae and at Dakka.

I propose that the route of the ʕq⁶⁰-procession would have involved the movement of shrine of Isis from the inner sanctuary of the Main Temple to the Pronaos where it would have been gilded, perhaps within the stairwell of the Second Pylon.⁶¹ Nubian

⁵⁹ This may also be true of the Egyptian worshippers. The earliest attestation of the ʕq-procession being performed at Philae is found in Ph. 28 (performed for the shrine of Hathor in AD 28) and Ph. 29 (may have been performed for Isis as the graffito was dedicated for the first prophet of Isis and *wab* priests of the five orders in the same year as Ph. 28). Dated to the early Roman period, both graffiti were inscribed on a column on the dromos, near Nubian Phase I inscriptions.

⁶⁰ Ph. 134/1, which includes the phrase ʕq ʕ.wy m s.t qbhe "procession into the house of the place of coolness/libation," employed the Demotic word translated as the "Feast of Entry" (called simply ʕq in the graffiti). This graffito, however, was inscribed in Room 1 of the Birth House. This implies that there were numerous processional routes and places where libation was poured in the sanctuaries at Philae. For the Nubians, the two primary foci remained the southwest corner of the Pronaos and the Gate of Hadrian. Graffito Ph. 134 was not inscribed by a Nubian. For Ph. 134, see Griffith, *Catalogue*, 67.

⁶¹ In the section concerned with Nubian titles, I will discuss the concentration of gold smith graffiti in the tower of the Second Pylon. Laetitia Martzloff, "Les "trésors" des temples de Philae et d'Edfou" in *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Kultabbildung und*

worshippers may have passed by the south side of the Pronaos to offer prayers before the gilded statue of Osiris located there.

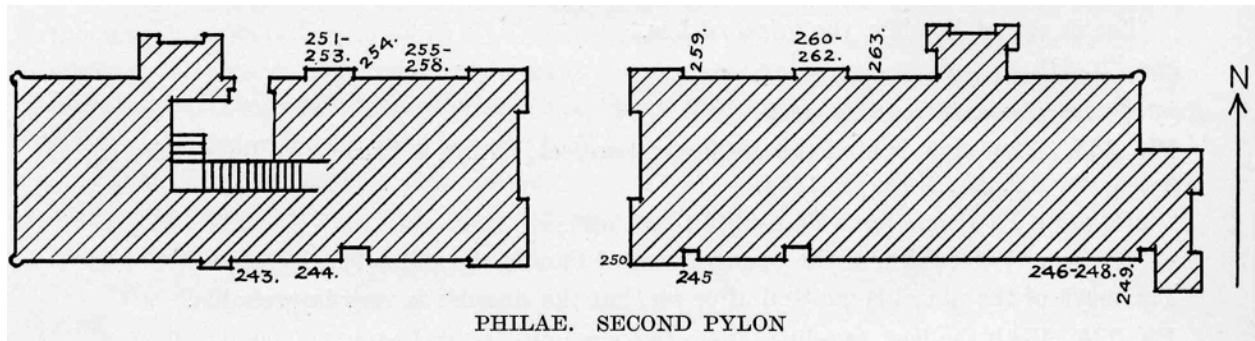


Figure 7: Location of Inscriptions on Second Pylon. (Reprinted from F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 80.)

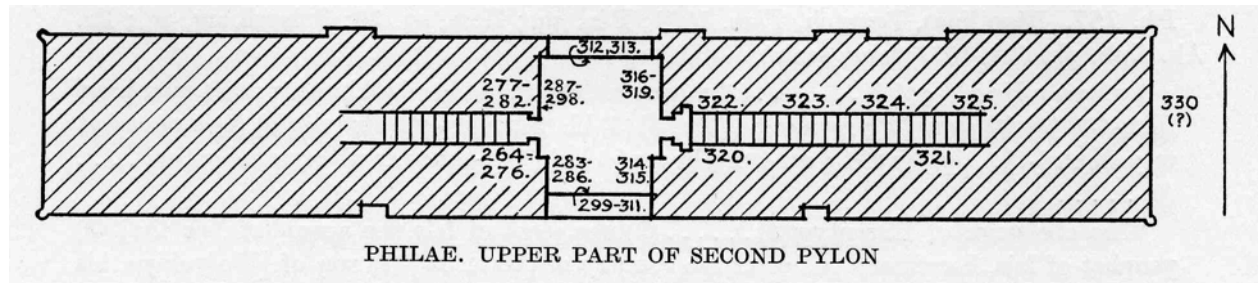


Figure 8: Location of Inscriptions in Stairwell of Second Pylon. (Reprinted from F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 86.)

Kultrealität Hamburg, 27 September – 1 October 2011, ed. Horst Beinlich (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 268 ff has suggested that the pylons at Philae may have served as “secondary treasuries” in addition to the primary temple treasury located in the Main Temple. Martzloff suggests the sixteen rooms within the First Pylon served as a “secondary treasury” where raw materials such as foodstuff and precious minerals, as well as cultic implements, may have been stored. Martzloff was unsure what purpose the interior stairs and crypt in the Second Pylon may have served. The Demotic inscriptions engraved within the stairwell suggest that gold, in the form of raw bullion and worked implements, were stored in this pylon. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that almost every inscription dedicated by a gold smith at Philae was inscribed on or in the Second Pylon.

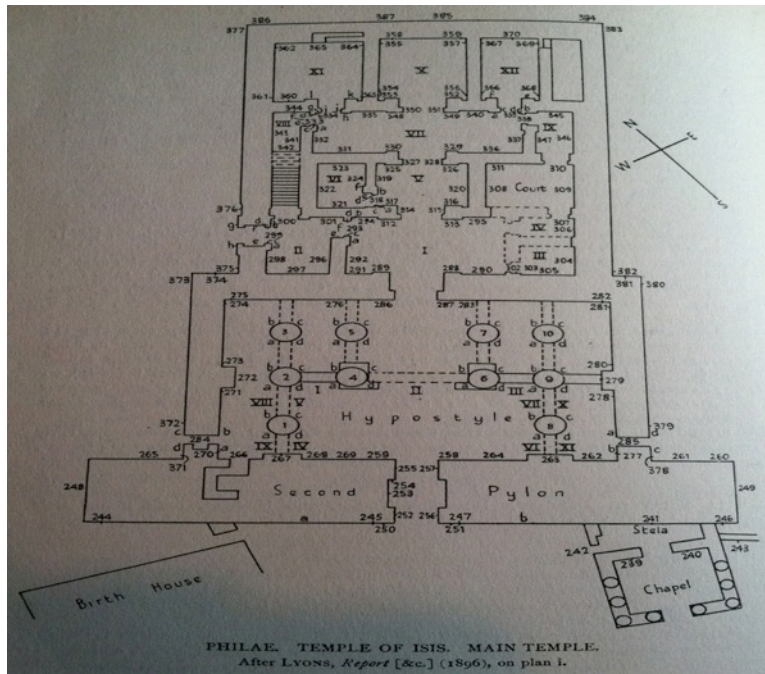


Figure 9: Plan of the Main Temple. (Reprinted from PM VI, 230.)

Waygate made reference to the gilded statue of Osiris in his Demotic graffito on the southwest wall of the Pronaos (PM 267 is located on the pilaster, south of column one in the plan above.), which is also the northwest face of the Second Pylon and is located immediately east of the set of stairs leading up into the pylon. His graffito was inscribed on the narrow eastern face of the pilaster on which Ptolemy VIII offers milk to Horus of Kubban and immediately west of the relief in which the same king pours milk over an altar containing offerings set before Osiris Wennefer and Isis. Wygte highlighted his pious actions at Philae,

I doing the work of a statue of Isis and the statue of Osiris out of my piety; I doing them that thou bring us each year and give us much length of life, I having gilded them with gold together with the statue of Osiris which is in this House of Coolness.⁶²

⁶² Ph. 254, line 7-13. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 84. $\dot{\imath}w=y \dot{\imath}r n t\dot{3} wp.t n twt n \dot{\imath}ls.t \dot{h}n^c p\dot{3} twt n Wsr \dot{h}n t\dot{3} md.t rmt n ntr \dot{\imath}w=y \dot{\imath}ry.w \ddot{d}d r \dot{\imath}r=t \dot{\imath}n.t=n \dot{h}r rnp.t nb(t) mtw=t \dot{t}\dot{\imath} n=n \dot{h}\dot{h} n \epsilon nh \dot{\imath}w w\dot{3}h=y \dot{h}\dot{d}=w n nb \dot{h}n^c p\dot{3} twt n Wsr nt \dot{h}n n py \epsilon wy qb\dot{h}$

The quote makes clear that the annual “work of a statue of Isis and a statue of Osiris” is equated with the action of gilding the statues. The numerous references to gold, gilding and gold workers in the corpus of Phase II Nubian inscriptions make evident that Nubians arrived at Philae bearing gifts of gold sent by the king in Meroe with the intention of using those donations to create cultic items for the temple, support local priests who served at Philae, and gild statues of Isis and Osiris in the temples of Philae and Dakka. It was the gilding of statues that was an integral annual act in the Nubian performance of the ʿq-procession. A Demotic word, unique to the Nubian inscriptions of Phase II, also highlights the centrality of the dazzling gold in the Nubian worship of Isis and Osiris.

The Demotic word ʾtny occurs six times in five inscriptions of Phase II; it is used twice in Ph. 411.⁶³ In a new translation of the lengthy Demotic graffito of the Meroitic royal ambassador to Rome (Ph. 416), Pope has greatly improved Griffith’s original translation of this text.⁶⁴ Pope noted the appearance of the Demotic word ʾtny in Sasan’s text and the limited geographical range in which the word appeared in ancient texts,

“This sequence of graphemes occurs several times throughout the Dodecaschoenus graffiti, with very consistent orthography, yet the word they form remains wholly obscure, because it is not attested with any such writing outside of Griffith’s corpus. This combination of frequency and obscurity would strongly suggest an unusual, perhaps regional orthography of a more common Demotic word.”⁶⁵

While Pope noted the circumscribed usage of this term, he did not mention that the lexeme only appeared in Nubian prayer inscriptions. Furthermore, the term appeared solely in inscriptions engraved during Phase II. The cultural context in which the term

⁶³ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 137, #32. (Ph. 410, Ph. 411, Ph. 416, Ph. 417, Dakka 32)

⁶⁴ Jeremy Pope, “The Demotic Proskynema of a Meroïte Envoy to Roman Egypt (Philae 416)” *Enchoria* 31 (2008/9): 68-103.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

was used can provide important clues to the meaning of this Demotic word. In four of the five inscriptions in which this term was used in Phase II, the word *ḥnty* is associated with the presentation of Meroitic royal donations (gold) at the temple of Philae: used in the performance of the rites of the “Feast of Entry” (Ph. 410, Ph. 411, Ph. 416) or mentioned in conjunction with the successful return from Meroe with royal donations for the temples of the Dodecaschoenos (Dakka 32). While the fifth inscription (Ph. 417, written by Tami the “tax collector” at Philae who served a Meroitic king) does not make an explicit connection between the donation of gold by Meroitic royalty and the term *ḥnty*, Tami does use the term in association with the phrase “your bidding (?) (*smn?*) which is *ḥnty*” in his address to Isis. This phrase follows a report of the financial and cultic activities performed by Tami at Philae while he served at the behest of the Meroitic king. Thus, this unique Demotic term appears to have been solely associated with the activity of Nubian priests at the temples of Philae and Dakka in rites that they performed at the behest of the Meroitic ruler. Those rites were organized around the donation of gold to the temples, which was applied to the divine statues to prepare them for the annual procession to the grave of Osiris on Biga.

The word *ḥnty* is correctly understood as a qualitative form because it frequently followed the relative adjective *nty* and often was written with a pestle-t, the standard grammatical ending of the qualitative form. Five of the six occurrences of *ḥnty* occur in a phrase headed by the relative adjective *nty*. The qualitative form served an adverbial function, describing the state that occurred as a result of a prior action.⁶⁶ Thus, in Dakka

⁶⁶Ibid, 237-238, §309; James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 207, “...the stative of an adjectival verb has the additional nuance of a prior action that produced the quality.”

32 it was “your temple which is ʔtny,” in Ph. 411, “your service which is ʔtny,” and “your temple which is ʔtny.” In Ph. 416, Sasan spoke of “the way which is ʔtny,” while in Ph. 417, Tami prayed to Isis to do “your bidding (?) which is ʔtny.” In Ph. 410, the lexeme was nominalized and modified by the adjective nb, “...so that we may worship you in all ʔtny.”

While Pope proposed the Egyptian verb *tn* “to exalt” as the verb from which the qualitative form ʔtny.t was derived, I suggest that the term derived from the infrequently attested Egyptian verb ʔtn “to shine.”⁶⁷ This verbal source would produce the translation “resplendent” or “bright,” as used by Erichsen⁶⁸ and Burkhardt.⁶⁹ Although this proposed translation does not differ from earlier translations, it provides additional support by explicating the cultural context in which the unusual lexeme was used, specifically and uniquely in the presentation of Meroitic gold donations at the temples in Lower Nubia during the third century AD. This interpretation of the lexeme ʔtny yields translations in the semantic range: “brilliant,” “shining,” or “resplendent” to describe the temple, the service, the “way,” and the worship performed by the visiting Nubian priests and prophets who came to Philae bearing donations of gold in order to gild divine statues and shrines, create cult items, and perform the ʕq-procession for Osiris.

Libation offerings were another central element of the ʕq-procession. The reference to “**this** House of Coolness” in Wayegete’s inscription Ph. 254, quoted above, provides us with the Egyptian name for the Pronaos of the temple. Isis in her role as

⁶⁷ Wb. I, 145 #12.

⁶⁸ Erichsen, *Glossar*, 47 “Glanz, Freude.”

⁶⁹ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 117, line 19: “[G]ib uns den Weg, welcher glänzend ist.”

libationer was often called the “Lady of the House of Coolness” in the inscriptions.⁷⁰

Wygte distinguished clearly between the statues of Isis and Osiris that came from elsewhere and the statue of Osiris, which was also gilded, that stood in the Pronaos “this House of Coolness.” As the focal point of Nubian worship, it is likely that the statue stood in the southwest corner of the Pronaos, the area where Nubian inscriptions are clustered.

Another interpretation of the Demotic phrase ʿ.wy qbḥe is “House of Libation,” makes reference to the central rite performed by Nubian priests at Philae as well as within their own native funerary complexes in Kush. This alternate interpretation accords well with Pope’s new translation of the epithet of Isis as found in the Demotic graffito of Sasan (Ph. 416), t3 qbhe.t nfr.t m s.t w3ḥ-ḥy “the beautiful libationer in the place of offering.”⁷¹ Jochen Hallof interpreted the epithet as an allusion to the goddess’ magical ability to conceive Horus with her deceased spouse and her control over the annual inundation of the Nile believed to originate from the vicinity of Philae,

Isis trägt oft das Epitheton “die Lebensspenderin.” Dieses Epitheton ist sicher aus ihrer mythologischen Rolle als Frau des Osiris entstanden, die nach der Ermordung ihres Gemahls mit ihm quasi post-mortal den gemeinsamen Sohn Hours zeugt, aus Tod sozusagen Leben schafft. Dieses Ereignis hat sich auf ägyptischen Boden zugetragen (das Grab des Osiris liegt in Abydos). **Trotzdem findet sich dieses Epitheton der Isis nur bei Darstellungen dieser Göttin in Philae und den nubischen Tempeln.** Und genau dieses Epitheton

⁷⁰ **Ph. 254**, lines 12-13, Ph. 258, line 2-3, Ph. 350, line 1, **Ph. 408**, line 5, **Ph. 420**, line 6, and Ph. 433, line 2. Nubian references are in **bold**. Holger Kockelmann, “Zur Kultpraxis auf Philae” in *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Kultabbildung und Kultrealität* (Hamburg, 27 September – 1 October 2011), ed. Horst Beinlich (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 102-105.

⁷¹ Pope, “Demotic Proskynema,” 70 (transliteration of Ph. 416, lines 1-2), 72 (translation), 74-75 (commentary). This new translation is a great improvement on Griffith’s translation, “the good refreshment of this year” (t3 qbhe.t nfr.t ty rnp.t). Griffith, *Catalogue*, 114-115.

wurde auch in ihren Beischriften am Löwentempel von Musawwarat es Sufra verwendet. Warum dieses Beiwort der Isis auf den nubischen Bereich beschränkt ist, obwohl das Ereignis, auf das es anspielt, Ägypten stattfand, ist nicht ganz klar.⁷² (emphasis added)

Isis dī ʿnh, who gives life, may also allude to the rejuvenating powers not only of the libations that she poured weekly for Osiris, but also to the divine milk that she offered to the living king to grant him divinity and to her deceased husband as grave offerings to restore him to life as Osiris Wennefer. It is noteworthy that this particular epithet for Isis appears exclusively in Lower Nubian temples and in a Kushite temple in the Meroitic heartland, seemingly indicating a unique Nubian desire to worship Isis in the role of a powerful, regenerative funerary deity who “gives life” through the ritual act of pouring libations. The amazing prominence of depictions of Isis and Osiris revived as Wennefer at Philae is unique and distinctive among the standard depictions of the divine couple elsewhere in Egypt.⁷³ The extraordinary prevalence of Isis, of course, can be attributed to the preeminence of her temple in Lower Nubia. However, the heightened presence of Osiris Wennefer, Osiris revived, in the temples of Nubia (Osiris Wennefer was depicted in 150 scenes in the temples of Nubia as opposed to 166 times in the temples of Egypt) demonstrates a strong emphasis on funerary rites to ensure the rejuvenation of Osiris as practiced by Nubians.

⁷² Jochen Hallof, “Philae in Musawwarat es Sufra,” *Der Antike Sudan*, Heft 16 (2005), 42.

⁷³ Ibid., 44. See there the chart in which Isis is shown to appear in 1059 reliefs throughout Egypt and 639 times in the Lower Nubian temples and Philae; Osiris Wennefer appears 166 reliefs throughout Egypt and 150 in Nubia and Philae.. “Da insgesamt etwa 8000 Ritualszenen in ägyptischen Tempeln und 2000 Ritualszenen in den Tempeln Nubiens und Philaes überliefert sind, sollte die Verteilung der Häufigkeiten Gottheiten ungefähr 4:1 betragen.” (Würzburger Datenbank der Ritualszenen, see 38, n. 15).

Who came to Philae?

This section will contain a discussion of the various titles held by Nubians who left inscriptions at Dakka and Philae. A general analysis of the changes in titles used in Nubian inscriptions between Phase I (AD 30-57) and Phase II (c. AD 175-273) will be followed by a more detailed discussion of the civil administrative and priestly titles found in the inscriptions of Phase II.

Study of the titles claimed by writers of Nubian inscriptions of Phase II shows both continuity and change from the preceding period. The titles “*strategos*” (Demotic: mr mšꜥ, Meroitic: *pelamos*) and “agent” (Egyptian: rt, Meroitic: *perite*) claimed in earlier, Phase I graffiti continued to be used during Phase II. Whereas those two titles were the most prominently used titles in Phase I, Phase II graffiti included a more varied group of titles of high rank. Continuation of earlier civil administrative titles (*strategos*, agent) in the graffiti of Phase II **without** the presence of Egyptian agreements such as were found in Phase I confirm that the Nubians no longer functioned as administrators within an Egyptian system, but rather came to Philae as representatives of the king or queen in Meroe.⁷⁴ Indeed, titles such as the royal envoy to Rome, *qeren Akrere*, and Viceroy of Nubia (Meroitic: *pesheto*) identified in the Nubian graffiti at Philae were part of the Meroitic administrative hierarchy that governed Meroitic Nubia south of the

⁷⁴ Involvement of Kushite royalty in the affairs of the Egyptian temples of Nubia was not a new phenomenon. Evidence of Kushite royal activity at Philae is attested as early as the 25th dynasty, **before** the construction of the earliest Isis Temple by Amasis during the 26th dynasty. Both a granite bark stand dedicated to Amun now standing in the forecourt of the Main Temple and building blocks buried under the forecourt are attributed to Taharqa (690-664 BC). Meroitic construction at Philae consists of work by Arqamani II on the Temple of Arensnuphis (late 3rd to early 2nd century BC). Adikhalamani (2nd century BC, successor of Arqamani) dedicated a stela that was found re-used as fill in the Second Pylon.

Dodecaschoenos. Meroitic administrators in Nubia acted as intermediaries between the ruler in Meroe and the temples in Nubia. In two inscriptions at Dakka, Wayekiye family members prayed to be summoned to the capital city of Meroe in order to return bearing Meroitic royal gifts for the Egyptian temples of Lower Nubia. Qeren, brother of Hornakhatyotef II, wrote “Send us safe to Meroe, give favor before the king that we may have our 1/10 brought yearly.”⁷⁵ His brother, Shetelten (Štlt̃n) prayed, “Take me with my mother and brothers to Meroe so that I can furnish your glorious temple.”⁷⁶

Meroitic royal emissaries to Philae served a dual role. As civil administrators in Meroitic Nubia, they collected the revenues necessary to provide the “one-tenth”⁷⁷ of the produce that was due to the temple. As priests they were commanded to perform the proper rites for Osiris, whom the Meroites considered to be the divine father of their king. Prestigious priestly titles showed the increasing Nubian involvement in the hierarchy of the most important temples of Lower Nubia, Dakka and Philae, in order to perform cultic services there on behalf of the Meroitic royalty. The graffiti indicate that Nubians entered into the priesthood at Dakka, initially, and later at Philae. Whereas Nubians had served as

⁷⁵ Qeren in Dakka 31. A Demotic graffito by Qeren, son of Wayekiye and Taese, was found in the Lion Temple at Naqa. See Karola Zibelius, *Die Inscriften*, Volume 4 of *Die Löwentempel von Naqa in der Butana*, eds. Ingrid Wallert-Gamer and Karola Zibelius, (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1983), 38-40.

⁷⁶ Dakka 32.

⁷⁷ Robert Ritner, trans. “The Famine Stela” in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: an Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, ed. William Kelly Simpson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 390-391. The Famine Stela on Sehel Island listed the donations required of the Nubians for the temple at Philae. See André Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques de Philae, t.1. Époque ptolémaïque* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969), 126-127 in which a letter (12bis) to Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II from the priests of Mandoulis at Philae asked the monarchs to order the chief of the Nubians to deliver 30 artabas of wheat, X jars of wine, and 2 talents of wool monthly for the cult of Mandoulis at Philae (149/8? BCE).

wab-priests in minor temples during Phase I, they attained in Phase II the higher status of prophets (*ḥm nṯr*) of Isis, *lesonis* of Dakka, and garnered titles that identified them as royal ritualists of the Meroitic king. The Wayekiye family held the highest-ranking priestly titles for several generations during the height of Meroitic involvement at Philae and Dakka. The apex of Wayekiye family power occurred in Generations 3 and 4 when that prominent Nubian family held civil and priestly titles. The acquisition of both civil and temple administrative titles by Wayekiye family members occurred in Generation 3 when Wayekiye A, whose family had previously held only priestly titles,⁷⁸ married Taese, whose family held civil administrative offices such as *strategos* of the water⁷⁹ or *strategos* of the land⁸⁰ and the as-yet-undefined Meroitic title *ḥbḥn*.⁸¹ The joining of two

⁷⁸ The title *lesonis* was held by Hornakhatyotef I (Gen. 2) and his son, Sosen (Gen. 3) in Ph. 223. The titles *qeren* and agent of Isis were held by Paese (Gen. 1)(Ph. 251, Dak. 33), Paese's son-in-law, Hornakhatyotef I (Ph. 421) Paese's son, Bek (Dak. 33), and Paese's grandson, Hornakhtyotef II (Dak. 30, Ph. 257 and 410).

⁷⁹ Payesi, *mde* (probably a *yetmede* relation) to Taese (Gen. 3)(MI 89), Manitawawi, her brother (MI 105), Manitawawi's son, Wayekiye B (Gen. 4) (Ph. 416), and her grandson, Bekemete (Gen. 5)(Ph. 417) all claimed this title. *Dd ḥr* (Ph. 252 written in AD 273) claimed the title *p3 tsye n p3 mw*, "the lord of the water". Is this a different rendering of "*strategos* (*mr mš'*) of the water"?

⁸⁰ Manitawawi, Taese's brother (MI 88 where he is listed as *yetmede* of Wayekiye A (MI 89) and Bekemete (Gen. 5)(MI 107), Apamalo (MI 104) and Qeren(?) (MI 122) (The last three graffiti are from the Meroitic Chamber.)

⁸¹ The title was held by Payesi (MI 89), Manitawawi (MI 97), Manitawawi's daughter Ame-ye (funerary stela in Gebel Adda, GA 20) and Manitawawi's son, Wayekiye B (Ph. 120, Ph. 403) as well as *Maštaraqye*, who was depicted with Manitawawi in the Meroitic Chamber (97, 99, 101 *ḥbḥn* of the king, MI 102 *ḥbḥn qer* of Isis). Outside of the Wayekiye family this title is attested in MI 122 (*ḥbḥn* of the king. It is unclear whether *qeren* as it appears in this inscription was a name or a title. See n. 99 below.), MI 125; *Phope*, *ḥbḥn* of Dr; MI 88 (Paese the *ḥbḥn*). Inge Hofmann, *Materiel für eine Meroitische Grammatik* Beiträge zur Afrikanistik 13 (Vienna: Afro-Pub, 1981), 103 #117, 111 #141. The toponym Dr may be the Nubian town of Derr, located between Karanog and Shablul, north of Qasr Ibrim. See Bruce G. Trigger, *The Meroitic Funerary Inscriptions from Arminna West* (New Haven and Philadelphia: Peabody Museum of Natural History of Yale University and The University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1970), 29, 60.

powerful Nubian families allowed Wayekiye family members to dominate Lower Nubian and Meroitic Nubia for generations.

Civil Administrative Titles

Although the title *strategos*, so prominent in Phase I, continued to be used in Phase II, it appeared in only three Demotic inscriptions.⁸² During Phase II, this title appeared almost exclusively in the Meroitic-language inscriptions as *pelamoš* (from the Egyptian, *p3 mr mšꜥ*, *strategos*). The Nubian *strategos* presided over two domains: *pelamoš ato-lit* (general of the river) or *pelamoš adb-lit* (general of the land). Wayekiye family members held both of these titles.⁸³ The title “*strategos* of the water” first appeared in a graffito by Manitawawi who may have been the first family member to hold the title. However, Manitawawi’s sister, Taese, claimed a *mde*-relative,⁸⁴ Payesi, who was *strategos* of the water and may have predated Manitawawi in the position.⁸⁵

⁸² Maqaltami (Gen. 2) was *strategos* in Meroe in MI 88. Atengeytenrie was *strategos* and agent of Isis in Ph. 411 In Mah. 1 Pa[...] was a *strategos* who left his prayer inscription before Isis of Takompso in the temple at Maharraqa. The use of the title *strategos* may indicate that Ph. 411 was inscribed early in Phase II, before the title disappeared from Demotic inscriptions.

⁸³ *Strategos* – Maqaltami (*strategos* of Meroe), Haleme (*mde*-relative of Wayekiye A), Atengeytenrie. *Strategos* of the water – Payesi (*mde*-relative of Taese), Manitawawi, and Wayekiye B. *Strategos* of the land – Manitawawi, Bekemete, Apamalo.

⁸⁴ There are many variants of the kinship term *yetmede*, which are used to denote Nubian familial relationships that still elude us. The names and title of *yetmede* relations figured prominently in the “description” section of Nubian temple and funerary inscriptions. See Hintze, “Deskriptionssätze”, 8, #24.

⁸⁵ Haleme was the first general of the river according to Nicholas Millet, “Meroitic Nubia” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1969), 43; Wayekiye A claimed Haleme as *yetmede* in MI 89. “No person calling himself “general of the river” can be dated any earlier than these persons, and one is at present justified in concluding that the offices of general of the river and general of the desert (?) originated at this time, that is, at the beginning of the third century, having developed out of the single older office of *strategos* of the Dodecaschoenus.” Ibid., 43.

Manitawawi's son, Wayekiye B, and his sister's son, Wayekiye A, also held the title.⁸⁶

Several members of the family served as both “*strategos* of the water” and “*strategos* of the land” although each individual held only one of these titles at a time. The two titles were never claimed in the same graffito. Furthermore, the Nubian Dd Ḥor ʿ3 used the title tsye n p3 mw “ruler of the water” in his Demotic graffito, Ph. 252. Was he attempting to render the Meroitic title *pelamos ato-lit* in Demotic? If so, this would have been the one example of the Meroitic-language title written in Demotic in Lower Nubia.

New titles in the Demotic corpus of Phase II refer to the administration of a specific territory. Titles such as prince of the land of Takompso⁸⁷ (rpy n t3 ḥ3se.t n Takme-600⁸⁸), or chief of the Triacontaschoenos (ḥ-tp (<ḥ3ty-ʿ) n p t-n-30) appeared initially in Generation 3 of the Wayekiye family.⁸⁹

- Takompso⁹⁰ was Maharraqa⁹¹ (called *Hiera Sykaminos* in Greek).

⁸⁶ This manner of inheritance may reflect both Egyptian (father-son) and Nubian (maternal uncle-nephew) inheritance patterns.

⁸⁷ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 313 #922, #926; Wolfgang Helck, “Takompso” LdÄ VI, 186; Henri F. Gauthier, *Dictionnaire géographique VI*, 36-37; Josef Locher, *Topographie und Geschichte der Region am ersten Nilkatarakt im griechisch-römischen Zeit* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1999), 259-265. For the interpretation of Takompso as Nubian t3 kamsu, meaning “the four,” see Heinrich Schäfer, “Miscellen” ZÄS 41 (1904), 147. See F. Ll. Griffith *BIFAO* 30 (1930): 127 regarding Taharqa’s granite bark stand dedicated to Amun of Takompso at Philae.

⁸⁸ The plural form was used in Ph. 410 for Hornakhtyotef II and his maternal uncle, Manitawawi, both of whom held the title. The singular title was used in Ph. 254, 256, 257.

⁸⁹ In graffito Ph. 410, Hornakhtyotef II and his maternal uncle, Manitawawi, held the titles jointly. This important civil administrative title was held in Dakka 30 (Hornakhtyotef II), Ph. 255 and Ph. 256 (Pathores), and Ph. 254 (Wygte).

⁹⁰ The Demotic phrase T3-km-sw was attested in the following Demotic graffiti in Lower Nubia: Maharraqa 1, line 5 (?), Maharraqa 4, line 2, Dakka 30, line 3, Ph. 254, lines 5-6, Ph. 256 line 1, and Ph. 410, line 6.

⁹¹ The temples of Dakka and Qurta, immediately north of Maharraqa, both prominent in the Phase I contract graffiti, are on the west bank of the Nile. On the east bank of the river, the temple of Horus of Baki/Kubban and the mouth of the Wadi Allaqi, which led

Takompso was mentioned in the Famine Stela from Sehel as the southern border of the Dodekaschoenos. A bark shrine engraved with the cartouches of Taharqa and dedicated to Amun of Takompso still stands in the Forecourt of the Main Temple at Philae. The title “prince (Demotic: *rp* from *ṛṛ-p̣.t*) of the land of Takompso” as used in Nubian Demotic graffiti was held by the local Nubian elites who served in the civil administration of northern Meroitic Nubia.

- The title “chief of the Triacontaschoenos” appeared only in Ph. 410 where Hornakhtyotef II claimed the position. The Triacontaschoenos referred to the area between Maharraqa and the 2nd cataract, south of the New Kingdom fort of Buhen,⁹² which comprised the southern part of Lower Nubia.
- Takompso and the Triacontaschoenos were two overlapping areas that comprised the northern portion of the Meroitic province of *Akin*, administered by the Wayekiye family. The southern portion of *Akin*, administered by the princely families who were based at Karanog and later at Faras, was the seat of the Viceroy of Nubia.

These two high-ranking titles, prince of Takompso and chief of the Triacontaschoenos, remained in the Wayekiye family for three generations.⁹³ Pathores,

to the goldmines in the Eastern Desert, served as powerful symbols of their home territory to the Wayekiye family. For Baki/Kubban, see n. 177 below. The hamlet of Mediq, home to the Wayekiye family, lay a short distance away just across the southern border of the Dodekaschoenos.

⁹² Laszlo Török, *FHN III*, 980.

⁹³ Two generations after Hornakhtyotef II held the title, his grandson, Wygte served as “prince of the land of Takompso.” There are no surviving inscriptions for the intervening

whom we are unable to place in the Wayekiye family, also held this combination of titles. Because both of his inscriptions were carved onto the southwest wall of the Pronaos,⁹⁴ the locus of so many Wayekiye family inscriptions and he held titles typical of that family, he may have been a member of the Wayekiye family.

Tami, a Nubian, was the “tax collector of Isis” (p3 3rbtg^cye/3rbtng^cy n ’ls.t⁹⁵) for 10 years.⁹⁶ According to László Török,

The Meroitic title *arbetke/arbtk*e occurs in mortuary inscriptions of priests associated with economic duties...It would thus seem that Tami was responsible for the collection of the taxes in grain for the temple of Isis on Philae, or, if the title is not to be taken literally, for the collection of taxes in general.⁹⁷

This is an isolated example of a Nubian holding the title tax collector in this corpus. However, the reader will recall that Nubian elites were responsible for delivering donations to the temples of Philae during the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods. It is likely that Tami served as an administrator who received Nubian and Meroitic “tithes” offered to the temple; instead of working in an Egyptian administration, he served the Meroites. Tami may have held this position while Meroe briefly seized control of Philae during the mid-third century.

Whereas in Phase I the most prominently paired titles were *strategos* and agent of Isis, in the Phase II Demotic inscriptions written by Nubians, the Meroitic title “*qeren* of Isis” was most frequently paired with the title “agent of Isis” (rt n ’ls.t). Did the *qeren*

generation, Generation 5. It seems likely that a member of that generation may have held the position as well.

⁹⁴ Ph. 255 and Ph. 256 were inscribed for Pathores. Porter & Moss VI, 233 #267-269.

⁹⁵ Griffith regarded the title as the Demotic transcription of the Meroitic title *arbetke* (var. *arbtk*e) See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 120. See also F. Ll. Griffith “Meroitic Studies I” *JEA* 3 (1916), 23.

⁹⁶ Ph. 417.

⁹⁷ *FHN* III, 1014. See also, Török, *Economic Offices*, 3.

replace the *strategos* as the senior temple administrative office held by Nubians? In Griffith's vocabulary the title *qeren* is attested only in Nubian graffiti of Phase II,⁹⁸ suggesting that the office was associated with the Meroitic royal involvement at Philae. The alternate title *qrnye n Pr ʿ3*⁹⁹ supports that suggestion. In the Demotic writing of *qeren*, Gardiner's sign V12 is the determinative. As this sign also determines the word *sh*, "writing," and refers to the binding of a document, it may indicate an administrative position that required scribal training. Sasan, in his graffito Ph. 416, said of the Meroitic king, "He commanded the king's son and the *qerens* of Isis to come to Egypt with me until we performed the festivals and the banquets which were held in the temple of Isis." That the *qerens* took part in the performance of festivals indicates a priestly role consistent with the suggestion of scribal training alluded to in the word's Demotic determinative.¹⁰⁰

The earliest member of the Wayekiye family to inscribe a graffito at Philae, Paese, held only the titles "*qeren* of Isis, agent of Isis." This pair of titles was consistently held through six generations of the Wayekiye family.¹⁰¹ Oddly, although the title *qeren* was a title transliterated from the Meroitic language, it appeared much more frequently in

⁹⁸ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 304-305.

⁹⁹ Ph. 416, line 1 *qrnye 3krre n Pr ʿ3*, Ph. 416, line 18 *qrny 3krr*, and Ph. 403, line 2 *qrnye Pr ʿ3*.

¹⁰⁰ Like many titles in Meroitic, *qeren* could also serve as a name, for example, Qeren of Dakka 31 and MI 122, where *qeren* might be a title or a name.

¹⁰¹ In Generation 4 the titles were held not by the grandson of Paese (Wayekiye A), but by Wayekiye A's brother-in-law, Manitawawi. (See Figure 5: Wayekiye Family Tree. (Reprinted from Burkhardt, *Ägypten und Meroiten*, 96.)) No inscriptions remain from Generation 5. The names of members of Generation 5 are only known to us from a graffito written by Wygte of Generation 6 in which he declared his family line through his mother to connect him to Hornakhtyotef II his grandfather. Wygte was the last *qeren* attested in the Phase II Nubian graffiti.

the Demotic graffiti at Philae than in the Meroitic-language graffiti.¹⁰² Whereas “*qeren* of Isis, agent of Isis” were always paired titles in the Demotic corpus, the two titles were never combined in the Meroitic-language corpus. Of the two titles, the sole title “agent,” without the qualifier “of Isis” was the more frequently used title of the two in Meroitic-language graffiti, hinting at the strong financial component to Nubian/Meroitic involvement at Philae.¹⁰³ The title *qeren*, as it is often written in Meroitic, has been traditionally translated as “royal scribe,”¹⁰⁴ perhaps unjustifiably according to Rilly. While the graffiti at Philae do not elucidate the meaning of the title *qeren*,¹⁰⁵ it clearly was distinct from the title “royal scribe of Kush.” Although many Nubians claimed the title *qoren/qeren* in both the Demotic and Meroitic-language graffiti, only four claimed the title “royal scribe of Kush” in the Demotic graffiti, Wayekiye A, Manitawawi, Sosen, and Hornakhtyotef II. While three of these four Nubians who claimed the title “royal scribe of Kush” were also “*qerens* of Isis, agents of Isis,” Sosen was not. Six other Nubians claimed the title “*qeren* of Isis” in their Demotic graffiti **without** claiming the title “royal scribe of Kush.” That seems to indicate that there was a distinction between

¹⁰² The title “*qeren*” was used twice in the Meroitic-language graffiti in MI 100 and 122. In the latter graffito, the author claimed to be the *yetmede*-relative of an “agent and *qeren* of Isis.”

¹⁰³ The title “agent” was used five times in the Meroitic-language graffiti: MI 95, 96, 99, 121, and 123. Four times “agent” was the sole title claimed (It may have been a name in MI 96). Only in MI 99 in the Meroitic Chamber did the graffito author claim more than one title and qualify his title of agent by adding that he was an agent of Isis and a ḥbḥn.

¹⁰⁴ Millet 1974: 53; Rilly 2007, 142-143.

¹⁰⁵ Brugsch proposed that the Meroitic title *qeren* was derived from the Greek word κλίνη (*kline*, *klinarchos*), the “cult association president” was responsible for collecting membership dues and providing the sacred meal in honor of the deity to whom the association was dedicated. See Heinrich Karl Brugsch, *Thesaurus inscription aegyptiacarum. Altägyptische inschriften, gesammelt, verglichen, übertragen, erklärt und autographiert*, vol. 5, (Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs, 1891), 10 and 12; Ulrich Wilcken, *AFP I* (1901): 418.

the two titles; the title *qeren* being held by many, while the title “royal scribe of Kush” was the more exalted title held by a restricted group of men.

The four Nubians who held the title of royal scribe of Kush were closely related members of the Wayekiye family.¹⁰⁶ This title confirms that Nubian priests of Phase II had scribal training and were capable of composing their own inscriptions. Hornakhtyotef II flaunted his scribal training by writing the first four lines of his Dakka inscription in hieroglyphs.¹⁰⁷ His father, Wayekiye A, highlighted the divine names and his priestly titles in his graffito at Philae (Ph. 421) by writing them in hieratic while the remainder of the graffito was written in Demotic. Interestingly, he wrote his father’s title *qrny n ’ls.t* in hieratic and did **not** use hieratic to write *‘q* for “the Festival of Entry.”¹⁰⁸

The Wayekiye family attained the apex of its power in Generation 3. Through the marriage of Wayekiye A and Taese, two powerful Nubian families joined in the service of the Meroitic king. As administrators for the ruler in Meroe they held titles that reflected their administrative control of the northern portion of the Meroitic province of *Akin*. These titles were supplemented by priestly titles that reflected the entrance by Nubian families into the Egyptian priesthood as discussed below.

¹⁰⁶ Ph. 421-Wayekiye A, Ph. 409-Sosen, Ph. 410-Hornakhtyotef II and Mantiwawi. Sosen and Hornakhtyotef II were sons of Wayekiye A, Manitawawi was his brother-in-law.

¹⁰⁷ Dak. 30.

¹⁰⁸ I have asserted earlier that the Demotic word *‘q* referred to a procession of a very particular type, but did not comprise a festival enacted on a specific date. By not writing *‘q* in hieratic, Wayekiye A treated the term *‘q* “entry” as simply a word denoting a ritual procession and not as a reference to a particular sacred festival.

Temple Administrative and Priestly Titles

Nubians had served as *wab* priests at the lesser sanctuaries of the southern Dodekaschoenos during Phase I, perhaps attaining the position of *lesonis*¹⁰⁹ at Dendur.¹¹⁰ The Meroitic title *shashimete* that appeared in two inscriptions¹¹¹ in Phase I was not attested in Phase II graffiti in the Dodekaschoenos, although the title continued to be used in Meroitic-language inscriptions in Meroitic Nubia.¹¹² Rather, the Nubians began to attain higher priestly titles in the temple administration at Dakka and Philae, the only two temples in Lower Nubia to receive Nubian inscriptions during Phase II.

The change in temple administrative and priestly titles used by members of the Wayekiye family may be illustrative of the gradual incorporation of Nubians into the hierarchies of the Lower Nubian temples. The Wayekiye family used the title *lesonis*¹¹³ at Philae (Hornakhtyotef I and his son, Sosen) and at Dakka (the grandsons of Hornakhtyotef I: Hornakhtyotef II and his brother Sanapetete). The titles held in their *proskynemata* demonstrate that Nubians attained the financial office of *lesonis* in the temple administration (in Phase I and Generations 2 and 3 of Wayekiye family in Phase II) before they attained the priestly office of prophet, which was first claimed as a title by

¹⁰⁹ The *lesonis* was the chief financial administrator of a temple.

¹¹⁰ Although Burkhardt designated graffito Dendur 1 as “Meroitic,” neither the author’s name nor any titles included in the graffito are explicitly Nubian.

¹¹¹ Ph. 55, Kal. 4.

¹¹² In Phase II the title *shashimete* was used only in the Meroitic inscriptions south of Maharraqa, examples include Shablul 5, GA 31, GA 53, GA 54 (Millett, 180), MI 85, 131, Far. 4, Kar. 41, Mer. 6, REM 0278. The title *shashimete* was most often associated with the name of a god, for example, Amanap (Amen of Napata) or Mash (the Sun God) whose priests were buried at Karanog. This indicated that the office of *shashimete* served as a functionary within the temple of a particular god. One example of a *shashimete* of the *kandake* may refer to a functionary of the queen mother’s estate in Lower Nubia.

¹¹³ A man with the title *lesonis*, (Meroitic: *plsn*) is mentioned in the Meroitic-language funerary stela of Wayekiye A. See Griffith, *MI II*, 18 l. 10: plšn k(?)uban-li “the *Lesonis* Kubban(?)”

Wayekiye A of Generation 3.¹¹⁴ This shift in titles would seem to indicate the entrance into temple scribal schools by Nubians early in Phase II of the graffiti.

A group of graffiti left by two Nubians will serve to demonstrate the accumulation of titles. Following a set *cursus honorum*, Nubian officials ascended to increasingly high-ranking offices in the Meroitic administration of Nubia.¹¹⁵ Presumably the lower ranking titles were claimed in the earlier graffiti, while higher status titles were added in the subsequent graffiti.

- Pathores left two graffiti on the southwest wall of the Pronaos at Philae both of them were inscribed on the large relief panel in which the king poured milk on an altar before Osiris and Isis. Many *proskynemata* from Phase II and one from Phase III surround this relief panel. In Ph. 255, Pathores claimed the titles *qeren* of Isis and agent of Isis. In Ph. 256, Pathores listed first the titles he held in Ph. 255. To those titles, he added prophet of Isis and prince of Takompso. Thus it seems that the title of prophet may have been attained later in the career of a *qeren* and agent of Isis.

¹¹⁴ A graffito written by Wayekiye A's maternal uncle Bek supports this assumption. In his graffito, Bek stated that he sent to Philae for the prophet and priests in order to have the 'q-procession performed for the shrine of Thoth at Dakka. His nephew, Wayekiye A, however, was able to perform the 'q-procession himself at Philae as was Wayekiye A's son, Hornakhtyotef II who performed the rite at Dakka.

¹¹⁵ The phrase *cursus honorum* refers to the successive, ascending offices that a man could obtain over the course of his career. For a brief discussion of the *cursus honorum* in the Meroitic context, see Millett, "Meroitic Nubia", 76-77; László Török, *Image of the Ordered World in Ancient Nubian Art: the Construction of the Kushite Mind 800 BC – 300 AD* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2002), 459-462.

- Hornakhtyotef II also held different titles in the three inscriptions in his name.¹¹⁶ In each graffito he listed the following four titles: *qeren* of Isis, agent of Isis, prophet of Isis (He was prophet of Sothis at Dakka.), and prince of Takompso, each time in that order.¹¹⁷ Ph. 257 had only those four titles, while Dak. 30 added *hry-tp* (chief ritualist/magician) of the king, *wab* priest of the five living stars¹¹⁸ and *lesonis* of Thoth. Ph. 410, written at the height of his career and authored with his maternal uncle, Manitawawi, contained two titles in addition to the four listed above: chief of the Triacontaschoenos and royal scribe of Kush. This group of graffiti shows again that the titles attained at the peak of Hornakhtyotef II's career associated him with the king of Meroe in the capacity of a ritual specialist and a royal scribe. The "hour watcher" titles such as *wab* priest of the five living stars and prophet of Sothis indicated the important astronomical element associated with his ritual duties in service of the Meroitic king. These skills were necessary to determine the proper timing for the performance of rituals according to temple calendars.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ph. 257, Dakka 30, and Ph. 410.

¹¹⁷ In Dakka 30, Hornakhtyotef II listed his title of "prophet of Sothis" after "prince of Takompso," otherwise the four titles were listed in the same order in each of the three graffiti.

¹¹⁸ P3 sb3 'nh.w Translated as "five Living Stars" in the text, Griffith translated the same phrase as "the five living planets" in his comments on line 4. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 28. The "five living stars" referred to five visible planets whose movements were tracked by the Ancient Egyptians and Meroites: Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn, all of which are visible to the naked eye. These planets are still tracked by modern stargazers. See <http://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/visible-planets-tonight-mars-jupiter-venus-saturn-mercury>

¹¹⁹ "Der Nexus zwischen die Tierkreisdarstellungen steht in Zusammenhang mit den Möglichkeiten der Zeiteinteilung und -messung. Eine möglichst exakte Einteilung der

Hornakhtyotef II inherited these “astronomical” titles from his father Wayekiye A, who was also prophet (ḥm-ntr) of Sothis, *wab* priest of the five living stars, and chief ritualist/magician (ḥry-tp) of the king of Kush.¹²⁰ This trio of titles indicated that members of the Wayekiye family had been trained as hourly priests.¹²¹ Within the Meroitic context those skills would enable Nubian priests serving Meroitic rulers to ascertain the proper timing of the performance of the funerary rites during the month of Khoiak. An important part of those rites was the *Stundenwachen* “hourly watch,” observed over the twenty-four hour period before the night of Osiris’ burial reenactment. The *Stundenwachen* were usually depicted in a chamber on the temple roof.¹²² Every hour of the day and night was depicted with reliefs and the rites performed during that hour

Nachtstunden war für die korrekte Durchführung der in Stunden gegliederten Nachtwache und Klage für Osiris beziehungsweise den Verstorbenen unerlässlich...Die Darstellung solcher Sterntabellen oder Himmelsbilder erfolgt sinnvollerweise an den Decken von Räumen, sowohl innerhalb osirianischer Komplexe in Tempeln und Gräbern als auch im Hypostyl eines Tempels, wo sie in Zusammenhang mit dem Stundenritual aus dem Sonnenkult stehen,” Andreas H. Pries, *Die Stundenwachen im Osiriskult: eine Studie zur Tradition und späten Rezeption von Ritualen im alten Ägypten*, Part 1, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011), 29.

¹²⁰ Ph. 421.

¹²¹ Hourly priests were called *wnwty/ḥmy wnw.t* in Egyptian. These priests received astrological training that allowed them to use the stars, planets, and an instrument called the *clepsydra*, a water clock, to keep track of the passage of time. In so doing, the hourly priests could ensure that rites were performed at the precise hour designated by the texts. See Jürgen Osing, “Stundeneinteilung, -beobachter” *LdÄ* VI, 100-101; Sir Alan Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, Volume 1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 61*-62*. Stars were important in funerary traditions as Kákosy pointed out in his study of the Decans in Late Period Egyptian religion, “Both passages (from the Ritual of Embalming) testify to the belief that life in the netherworld would be connected with the decans, and these divine celestial beings were hoped to aid the ascension of the *ba*.” Laszlo Kákosy, “Dekans in Late Egyptian Religion” *Oikumene* 3 (1982): 183. Because Nubian priests journeyed to Philae to undertake funerary rites for Osiris as part of their Kushite royal ancestor worship on behalf of the Meroitic king, it is not surprising that titles related to astronomy are claimed by the first Nubian priest to enter into Meroitic royal service, Wayekiye A.

¹²² See n. 119.

were described in the accompanying text. Twelve hours of the day and twelve hours of the night each had a protective deity who guarded Osiris as well as other deities who performed a particular action during that hour. At Philae the twenty-four¹²³ hours of the *Stundenwachen* were depicted on the architraves of the Pronaos and, thus, particular hours were spatially related to the areas where Nubian graffiti were inscribed (to be described later in this chapter). Hornakhtyotef II and Maniawawi explicitly linked their title royal scribe of Kush to astronomical knowledge by describing their titles thus, “royal scribes of Kush, who know the risings of the five planets and find the time of obscuration of the sun and moon, coming from Ethiopia yearly and performing the services of Isis.”¹²⁴ Hornakhtyotef II’s father, Wayekiye A, made a similar assertion in his graffiti where he was the Prophet of Sothis “who knows the going and coming of the moon” (m mšꜥ ʾy n ʾꜥḥ).¹²⁵ Linking the titles that claim astronomical knowledge with the annual pilgrimage to Philae to perform “services of Isis” highlighted the fact that these Nubian priests were journeying to Philae to take part in the *Stundenwachen* rites of Khoiak whose hours were calculated according to the position of stars called the decans.

¹²³ Although there are Sokar-Osiris rooms on the roof of the Main Temple at Philae (called the Osiris Chamber), there was insufficient room in the Osiris Chamber to accommodate the full 24 hours of the *Stundenwachen*. Those reliefs and texts decorate the architraves of the Pronaos, which is different than Edfu and Denderah. “Zwei orte in einem ägyptischen Tempel der Spätzeit sind für den Vollzug der Osiris-mysterien von Bedeutung: die Sokar-Osiris-Räume im Inneren eines Tempels sowie die Kapelleanlagen auf dem Dach der Gotteshauses. An einem dieser beiden Orte sind die Texte und Darstellungen des Stundenwachenrituals grundsätzlich zu lokalisieren. Sie stehen mit den in ihrem Umfeld angebrachten Ritualdarstellungen in engem Zusammenhang. Eine Ausnahme davon bildet die Überlieferungssituation in Philae.” Andreas H. Pries, *Die Stundenwachen im Osiriskult*, Part 1, 28.

¹²⁴ Ph. 410. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 112.

¹²⁵ Ph. 421/14. The translation is taken from *FHN III* #245, 971-972 where the phrase is transliterated. Griffith translated the phrase m-mšꜥ-šꜥ ii n ʾꜥḥ, “in (?) the risings (?) of the moon.” See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 122.

Disambiguating the Nubian performance of the ʿq-procession from the rites of Khoiak in which Nubians also participated is difficult. As the table on page 133 demonstrates, the earlier Nubian priests performed the ʿq-procession at Philae, while Nubian priests whose dated inscriptions appear later in Phase II and whom we have not been able to incorporate into the Wayekiye family tree took part in the rites of Khoiak. Were the two rites identical? Decoration of the funerary chapels in royal burials at Meroe make it clear that Osirian rites were an essential element of the Meroitic ruler's funeral as early as the third century BC.¹²⁶ Scenes that explicitly evoked the rites of Khoiak became dominant in the decoration of Meroitic royal funerary chapels during the first century AD.¹²⁷ Yellin suggests that funerary processions were performed for the deceased Meroitic ruler¹²⁸ who was directly equated with Osiris. Noting a departure from the standard Egyptian funerary relief scenes, Yellin argues that for the Meroites their deceased king **became** Osiris,

The tomb owners carved on the far ends of the longer, north and south walls face this domain of Osiris. However, the offerants (mostly gods) depicted on them, in a rare departure from Egyptian practice, have their backs to these western walls with their figures of Osiris. The rituals are performed, not before Osiris, but for the tomb owner. It appears that the

¹²⁶ Janice Yellin, "Decorated Pyramid Chapels" *Meroitica* 12 (1990): 362. This was also the case with earlier Napatan royal burials, which will not be discussed here.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 365. Type C1 funerary chapels adorned the burials of the co-rulers King Natakamani (Beg. N 22) and Queen Amanitore (Beg. N 1) as well as that of their son, Prince Arkankhoror (Beg. N 5).

¹²⁸ Ibid., 364. In place of the standard depiction of the procession of the Sokar bark on the south wall of the funerary chapel, Beg N 6 depicts the queen's funerary procession. Other scenes in the chapels may depict actual elements of the Meroitic royal funeral: dancing women and drum players, palm bearers, and female royal family members who pour libations for the deceased ruler. For the prominence of the depiction of the Sokar procession in Type B funerary chapels and its probable derivation from Ramesside prototypes, especially at Medinet Habu, see Janice Yellin, "A Suggested Interpretation of the Relief Decoration in the Type B Chapels at Begrawiyah North" *Meroitica* 5 (1979): 159.

Meroitic rulers declined to follow the quid pro quo underlying Egyptian ritual offerings. This suggests a direct equation between the deceased and Osiris with which Egyptian theology flirted in the Graeco-Roman period but never expressed with such directness.¹²⁹

Phase II Nubian inscriptions at Philae that make reference to the ‘q-procession may commemorate individual visits by Nubian priests to the temple on the occasion of the death of a Meroitic ruler in order to pour libations for Osiris with whom the deceased Meroitic king had become synonymous. Libations poured at the grave on Biga were seen as libations offered to the deceased Meroitic king. The specific use of the term ‘q, as opposed to Khoiak, may have made reference to a memorial procession performed at Philae in honor of a deceased Meroitic ruler. Performance of this rite at Philae in addition to its performance in the royal burial ground at Meroe would have been considered essential because the temple at Philae provided access to the burial of Osiris on the adjacent Biga Island. If this unproven assumption is correct, the Nubian priests of the Wayekiye family can be understood as Meroitic royal funerary priests.

Goldsmiths

Despite the numerous references to gold and the act of gilding divine statues related to the performance of the ‘q-procession in the Demotic graffiti very few dedicants of Nubian inscriptions carried the title goldsmith. The two exceptions were inscribed late in Phase II by Nubians on the southwest wall of the Pronaos.¹³⁰ A search of Griffith’s

¹²⁹ Ibid., 362.

¹³⁰ Ph. 252 is on the same panel as Ph. 251 (the earliest Wayekiye family inscription at Philae) that depicts the King offering milk to Horus of Kubban. The graffito was written by Dd Hr ‘3 and contained a postscript by Abaryte. Burkhardt believed that Dd Hr ‘3, the author, was an Egyptian, while Abaryte, who wrote the postscript was Dd Hr ‘3’s Nubian scribe. There is nothing in the text of the inscription to support this assumption. Abaryte’s title, goldsmith, is followed by the claim that he was “son of a goldsmith for many generations.” Another Nubian inscription in this area contained the title “gold

index for additional Demotic graffiti at Philae that included the title ḥm nb “goldsmith,” revealed two groups of goldsmiths: one from the Ptolemaic period¹³¹ and another from the third century AD.¹³² The fact that all of the goldsmiths of the third century inscribed their graffiti on the Second Pylon, either in one of the two interior stairwells or on the bridge that connects them,¹³³ linked the goldsmiths to the Nubian graffiti of Phase II in two ways. The goldsmiths’ graffiti within the stairwell of the Second Pylon, entered through a doorway on the western side of the southwest wall of the Pronaos, were in close proximity to the concentration of Nubian graffiti on that very wall. Moreover, most of the goldsmiths’ graffiti inscribed in the western stairwell made mention of celebrating an annual festival for Osiris, referred to by various names:

- m.t rnp.t n Wsr “the annual affair of Osiris,”
- p3 hb n Wsr Wnnfr/p ntr ʿ3 “the festival of Osiris Wennefer/the great god,”
- p3 m.t wʿb “the cleansing festival,”
- or simply “doing the work of Osiris.”

This festival took place during the month of Khoiak, as attested by the dating of the goldsmiths’ graffiti. The goldsmiths state that they were “anointed” before gilding the

smith”: Ph. 254 by Wyte from Generation 6 of the Wayekiye family. It was inscribed on the narrow east face of the same pilaster on which Ph. 252 adorned the north face.

¹³¹ A group of artisans (title ḥry nb) from Edfu worked at Philae under Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (80-52 BC) and left their inscriptions on the First Pylon (Ph. 48-51, and Ph. 81. Ph. 81 is on the second eastern colonnade.). Burkhardt, *Ägypten*, 43.

¹³² Griffith, *Catalogue*, 296.

¹³³ For an excellent depiction of the internal stairwells of the pylons at Philae, see Laetitia Martzloff, “Les «trésors» des temples de Philae et d’Edfou” in *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Kultabbildung und Kultrealität*, Hamburg 27 Sept - 1 Oct 2011, ed. Horst Beinlich (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 271 (First Pylon), 278 (Second Pylon).

divine statues on 21 Khoiak.¹³⁴ Additionally, one of the two families that were prominent among the goldsmiths¹³⁵ might have been Nubian. P3-ti-p3-ḥwt, son of Wrš, dated his graffito Ph. 68 by the regnal year of an unknown Meroitic king¹³⁶ whose name, B3.w n Qʿš, contained the toponym Kush (Qʿš). P3-ti-p3-ḥwt's great-grandmother was Ta-p3-Mrwe.t¹³⁷ whose name signaled her Meroitic heritage.

Many of these gold workers also claimed the title “agent,” a financial official responsible for the collection of income for the cult of a particular deity. Goldsmiths who were claimed the title agent either served the cult of Isis or that of Arensnuphis, a Nubian god. An “agent of Arensnuphis” was mentioned in the Nubian graffiti of Phase I. Could the profession of goldsmith of Isis or Arensnuphis have combined several functions: the levying of gold subventions from Nubia, perhaps from the Wadi Allaqi, its transport to Philae, and the working of that gold into cultic implements for the temple? Goldsmith graffiti clustered on or near the depiction of Horus of Kubban whose cult center stood at the mouth of the Wadi Allaqi, near the gold mines of the Eastern Desert suggest such an interpretation. Furthermore, the combination of titles among this group of inscriptions appears to indicate just such an arrangement.

¹³⁴ The tradition of gilding statues after being anointed and calling it the “work of Osiris” continued into the fourth century, after the fall of Meroe in approximately AD 330. Four late graffiti attest to the survival of this rite well into the fourth century. The inscriptions date to AD 373 and are located on the roof of the Main Temple under the stairs leading to the Osiris Chamber.

¹³⁵ All but three of these inscriptions, dated from AD 230-268, belong to members of two families of craftsmen, the family of Asklepiades and of Wrš. See Burkhardt, *Ägypten*, 32-34.

¹³⁶ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 58; Burkhardt, *Ägypten*, 33.

¹³⁷ Ph. 247.

Different Titles Used with Different Languages

The range of titles claimed in graffiti left by Nubians at Philae and Dakka differed depending on the language in which the graffiti was written. Although there was considerable overlap in the titles used in the graffiti written by Nubians in each of the three languages: Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek; there were subtle differences in the way titles were used that corresponded to the author's language choice. For example, the title "agent" appeared regularly in both Demotic and Meroitic-language inscriptions, but not in the two Greek graffiti. The title "agent" tended to appear as the sole title in the Meroitic-language inscriptions as did the title *qeren*, whereas in the Demotic inscriptions those two titles were claimed jointly along with several other titles. This gives the impression that those with a greater accumulation of titles and, therefore, a higher status composed their graffiti in Demotic, while graffiti inscribed in the Meroitic-language were those of lower ranking individuals. Obvious exceptions to this generalization are the graffiti of the Meroitic Chamber, which recorded the gifts of a royal embassy to Philae, and the two inscriptions left by the Meroitic king Yesbokheamani inside the Gate of Hadrian.

The two Greek graffiti left by Nubians in Phase II were early outliers heralding the shift to Greek as the prestigious language in which to write graffiti. This shift became evident in the graffiti of Phase III.¹³⁸ The two Greek inscriptions attributed to Nubians during this phase contained the highest-ranking diplomatic titles, indicating that Greek had already become the language of diplomatic negotiation and prestige for the Nubians

¹³⁸ See chapter 3.

in the third century.¹³⁹ Abratoye (Greek: Abratoeis) was the Meroitic viceroy of the Nubian province of *Akin* (Meroitic Nubia), the senior official of the northernmost Meroitic province. In his Greek graffito,¹⁴⁰ the title “viceroy” was given as Ψεντης (Egyptian: P3 s3 n nysw.t, Meroitic: Pesheto).¹⁴¹ Associated with the inscription of Abratoye, was that of Tami, who had dedicated a Demotic graffito seven years before on the Gate of Hadrian, discussed above.¹⁴² Tami’s Greek inscription was inscribed immediately below Abratoye’s, suggesting that the two men visited Philae together.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ The paucity of Greek inscriptions attributed to Nubians was not unique. Only eight other dated Greek graffiti are attested at Philae during the third century AD. Étienne Bernand *IGP II*, 398-399.

¹⁴⁰ IGP 180. *FHN III*, 1020-1023.

¹⁴¹ Abratoye appeared as 3brty in Ph. 416, the Demotic inscription of Sasan, the Meroitic royal ambassador to Rome. There he also held the title viceroy (p3-s3-nysw.t “king’s son”). *FHN III*, #270, 1035-1038. In Abratoye’s funerary inscription found on a stela from Karanog, this high-ranking Meroite listed additional titles, both priestly and civil administrative. Starting off as a temple official in the vicinity of Sedeinga (between second and third cataracts), Abratoye became a *strategos* of the land and a tax collector in Sedeinga. After attaining the office of prophet of Amun in Qasr Ibrim, Abratoye was promoted to the office of *pesheto*, Viceroy of Nubia. Claude Carrier, ‘La stèle méroïtique d'Abratoye (Caire, J.E. n° 90008);’ *Meroitic Newsletter* 28 (2001): 21-53, pl. X-XVIII.

¹⁴² Ph. 417.

¹⁴³ Ph. 417, IGP 180 and IGP 181 were all inscribed on the south side of the western external wall of the Gate of Hadrian. Both Greek texts were inscribed on the same date, Tybi 1 (1 month of *Peret*, day 1), the first day of the month after Khoiak, was symbolic. During the Ramesside period, Tybi 1 was a day on which kingship ideology was celebrated. Hartwig Altenmüller, “Feste,” *LdÄ II*, 176. The Feast of Nekhebkau “uniting Kas” (nhb k3.w), a celebration of kingship associated with the Festival of Sokar, took place on Tybi 1. See G.A. Gaballa and K.A. Kitchen “The Festival of Sokar” *Orientalia* 38 (1969): 27. In the Greco-Roman period, the coronation of the sacred falcon of Edfu occurred on this date. Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, “Horus on His Throne: The Holy Falcon of Philae in His Demonic Cage,” *GM* 189 (2002): 7. Recognition and renewal of divine approbation for the Meroitic ruler would have comprised an important element in the rites performed by Nubian priests at Philae. The rites of New Year Festival were prominent in the kingship ideology of the Kingdom of Meroe. “The association of the royal predecessors with the Nile inundation and the New Year festival was determined by a Nubian tradition of royal cult.” László Török, *Between two worlds: the frontier region between ancient Nubia and Egypt, 3700 BC – AD 500*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 510. Numerous votive *sistra* and ʿnh-w3s symbols from the early Amun Temple in

Tami, who had been “tax collector” when he inscribed his Demotic graffito, carried the title “ambassador” (αξιολογοτατος) in his Greek graffito.¹⁴⁴ It is likely that both of these Greek inscriptions were inscribed during a diplomatic mission¹⁴⁵ that occurred eight years after Sasan, the Meroitic “great envoy to Rome,” came to Philae in AD 253. The fact that Abratoye was mentioned in Sasan’s graffito links the two Meroitic diplomatic visits to Philae. Personal observation of the location of the three inscriptions (Sasan’s Demotic Ph. 416, Abratoye’s Greek IGP 180, and Tami’s Greek IGP 181) reveal that their position on the western exterior of the Gate of Hadrian physically unites the group of inscriptions; all were inscribed on the same course of stone. The two Greek inscriptions on the north side of the Gate of Hadrian’s western doorway were inscribed on the same course of stone on which the lengthy Demotic inscription of Sasan (Ph. 416) appears on the south side of that doorway.

Strategos or Pelamos?

Sometimes a title had very different connotations depending on whether it was used in an Egyptian context or a Meroitic context, for example, the Greco-Roman *strategos* vs. Meroitic *pelamos*, both derived from Egyptian p3 mr-mšꜥ. In his study of Demotic graffiti at Philae, Cruz-Uribe noticed two categories of duties undertaken by *strategoi*,

Meroe city, some of which were adorned with inscriptions, were royal donations to the temple during the New Year festival. See László Török, *Meroe: An Ancient African Capitol: John Garstang’s Excavations in the Sudan* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1997), 25- 28. “The *sistra* and ʿnh-w3s symbols with their texts from Meroe are associated with renewal of royal power on New Year’s Day.” Ibid., 28

¹⁴⁴ IGP 181. *FHN III*, 1023-1024.

¹⁴⁵ Abratoye journeyed to Philae in his position of Viceroy of Meroitic Nubia ostensibly to worship Isis although such a high-ranking official would have likely conducted state business while at the temple. Tami, the “ambassador” states that he “crowned a prophet” while at the temple.

In fact the Philae material strongly suggests that we may have two separate meanings for the title, one related to the military title ‘general’ (surviving in Coptic as Ⲭⲉⲙⲙⲏⲱⲉ, Crum, CD 143b) having military overtones (though related to the Isis temple), and the other being ‘president, rector’ (surviving in Coptic as Ⲭⲁⲙⲁⲱⲉ).¹⁴⁶

While the title *strategos* appeared only twice in the Demotic graffiti of Phase II, it frequently was found in the Meroitic-language graffiti of the same period as “strategos of the water” (*pelmoš ato-lit*) and strategos of the land (*pelmoš adb-lis*). In the Meroitic context, the *strategos* **was** a warrior. The multivalent associations found for the title *strategos* at Philae reflect the change in duties from role of a Nubian *strategos* operating in an Egyptian context (Phase I) to the expectations of a *strategos* (*pelamos*) operating in a Meroitic context (Phase II). Within the Egyptian temple administrative context of the Phase I *strategos*, his position could rightly be called “president, rector.” As we saw in chapter 1, the Nubian *strategoi* disappeared from the epigraphic record in the mid-first century. When Nubian *strategoi* resumed inscribing their prayers at Philae in Phase II, they were serving Meroitic rulers. Members of the Wayekiye family served as “generals of the river” and “generals of the water.”¹⁴⁷ In addition to performing temple rites for the Meroitic ruler, Wayekiye family members subdued rebellious tribes in Meroitic Nubia that resisted Meroitic domination of the territory. The funerary stela of the Viceroy Abratoye, found in Karanog, boasted of the slaughter of Noba warrior and chiefs, duties he may have carried out while he served as *strategos* of the land. The difference in titles listed on Abratoye’s Meroitic-language funerary inscription and his Greek graffito at

¹⁴⁶ Eugene Cruz-Uribe, review of *Quittungen*. Demotische Dokumente aus Dime, vol. 2, by Sandra L. Lippert and Maren Schentuleit *JAOS* 128.2 (2008): 363.

¹⁴⁷ Gebel Adda, one of several locations where the Wayekiye family was attested, was a military settlement that was burned to the ground and later rebuilt during the Meroitic period. Nicholas Millett, “Meroitic Nubia”, 46-50, esp. 47.

Philae is striking. The long list of administrative titles included by Abratoye on his funerary stela would only have been comprehensible to those familiar with Meroitic administration and therefore weren't relevant in a pious graffito at Philae. At Philae, it was his title "viceroys" that was pertinent because Abratoye visited Philae in the capacity of a diplomatic representative of the Meroitic king.

The title ḥbḥn was attested frequently at Philae and there it appeared most commonly in the Meroitic-language graffiti of the Meroitic chamber. The Meroitic-language title was also used twice in the Demotic graffiti.¹⁴⁸

Why was Lower Nubia Important to the Meroitic Kings in this Period?

Meroitic trade with Roman Egypt is assumed to have been an important component in the interactions of the two lands due to the variety of imported luxury goods found in elite burials in Meroe and in Meroitic Nubia. Meroites served as intermediaries who supplied Egypt with exotic trade goods from the African interior. The imported goods received by the Meroitic ruler consisted of Roman wine, Egyptian wheat, and luxury items such as ceramics, jewelry, and other objects of art that the Meroitic ruler distributed to his loyal elites.

Meroitic rulers were interested in controlling Lower Nubia as a province in order to maintain control of the lucrative trade with Roman Egypt. To hold Lower Nubia, Meroe maintained control over tribes found in that area. The Blemmyes of the Eastern

¹⁴⁸ Ph. 120 was inscribed by Wayekiye B on the Birth House in it he claimed the title ḥbḥn. The only other time the title ḥbḥn was used in a Demotic graffito was in graffito Ph. 403, which Griffith attributed to Wygte, a 7th generation member of the Wayekiye family. Because of a discrepancy in the titles claimed between Ph. 403 and Ph. 254, written by Wygte, I believe Ph. 403, inscribed on the Temple of Imhotep, should rather be attributed to Wayekiye B, from Generation 4. The title ḥbḥn appeared most prominently in Manitawawi's branch of the family, even being claimed by his daughter Ame-ye on her burial stele in Gebel Adda, GA 20.

desert and the Noubadae from the mountains west of the Nile River and south of Nubia were depicted as enemies and subject people of Meroe in Meroitic texts and on artifacts. Both the Blemmyes and Noubadae sought to claim land along the Nile River. Attestations of battles fought to suppress these tribes can be found in the burned and rebuilt archaeological levels at Gebel Adda, originally a military settlement in Lower Nubia. Wayekiye family members who held the Meroitic military title *pelamos* “*strategos*” are attested at Gebel Adda.

Finally, Meroitic rulers desired to maintain access to the temples of Lower Nubia in order to perform the rituals that were an essential component of Egyptian kingship. Providing financial support to the temples in the Meroitic heartland and the temples of Lower Nubia allowed the Meroitic rulers to present themselves as kings according to the Pharaonic model. Meroitic financial support became especially important to the Egyptian temples in Lower Nubia when the Roman Emperors seized temple land and restricted the traditional rights of the Egyptian priesthood. Providing Egyptian temples with resources, frequently gold, and sending Nubian priests to perform cult services and temple administrators to collect revenue in the form of taxes allowed Meroitic kings to claim ritual control over the areas in which the temples were located. This type of political control exerted by means of ritual activity is known as “ritual suzerainty.”¹⁴⁹ Marking the temples in Lower Nubia as Meroitic ritual spaces was achieved through the placement of

¹⁴⁹ David Edwards, “Meroe and the Sudanic Kingdoms” *JAH* 39 no. 2 (1998): 177; Eugene Cruz-Uribe, “Death of Demotic at Philae, a Study in Pilgrimage and Politics” *Tribute to Excellence*, *Studia Aegyptiaca* XVII, (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, 2002) 170-171.

graffiti in areas of special cultic importance to the Meroites.¹⁵⁰ In several cases, two *proskynemata* were inscribed for one Nubian official in separate areas of the temple complex. Such paired inscriptions seem to delineate a particular space to be claimed through the ritual act of dedicating written prayers. Paired graffiti may replicate the concept of “grammaire du temple,”¹⁵¹ in which complementary relief scenes were placed in spatial relationship with one another in order to designate a temple area as dedicated to a deity or rite. The paired images of Ptolemy III and Ptolemy VIII on either side of the entry into Room 1 of the Main Temple from the Pronaos are an example of “grammaire du temple.” In each relief the Ptolemaic king presented Isis with the sekhet fields, which commemorated the royal donation of the Dodekaschoenos to Isis. Likewise, reliefs of northern deities paired with southern deities on north and south walls respectively were used to align space within the temple with the cardinal points through geographic imagery.

A similar concept is manifest in the corpus of Nubian graffiti at Philae. The most obvious example is the Meroitic Chamber in which a series of reliefs and inscriptions claim an entire room as Meroitic space by means of a monumental inscription. Nubian officials claimed other areas by dedicating nearly identical *proskynemata* in two different areas of the temple. An agent left his Meroitic-language graffiti on the outer wall of the Temple of Imhotep on the dromos, the site of public festivities, and a matching graffito on the north thickness of the western doorway of the Gate of Hadrian, thereby linking the

¹⁵⁰ In earlier, more prosperous times Meroitic kings marked the temples of Lower Nubia as Meroitic ritual space through temple building, erection of bark stands, and carving of reliefs in existing temples. In the late Meroitic period, pilgrims had to be content with donating cultic items, gilding divine statues, and inscribing their *proskynemata* on the walls of the temples.

¹⁵¹ Eleni Vassilika, *Ptolemaic Philae* (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 5, esp. n. 32.

dromos, where the Meroitic king sponsored parties for the entire district, and the ritually potent Gate of Hadrian, where high-ranking priests performed funerary rites for Osiris as a manifestation of the deceased Meroitic king.¹⁵² Two sets of paired graffiti were inscribed on the Gate of Hadrian. In each case, one inscription was engraved on the north side of the gate while the other was on the south side. The first pair was inscribed by a Nubian named Mere who left two nearly identical graffiti¹⁵³ on both sides of the doorway on the western face of Hadrian's Gate. The second pair, Meroitic-language graffiti in the name of the Meroitic King Yesbokheamni, was engraved inside the Gate of Hadrian.¹⁵⁴ Both were inscribed above a relief of a king presenting the hieroglyph *sekhet*. This image replicated the images of Ptolemy VI and VII in reliefs on the facade of the Main Temple and an image of the Meroitic king Arqamani engaged in the same rite at Dakka. The association of the Meroitic king's name with the presentation of fields referred to the traditional donation of the Dodecaschoenos to Isis by the king. Whether the Meroitic king was in a position to affect such a donation in AD 300 is not certain. Finally, Tami's paired inscriptions on the Western face of the Gate of Hadrian¹⁵⁵ are associated with the inscriptions of the Meroitic royal envoys to Roman Egypt (Sasan and Abratoye). The fact that two inscription dedicated by Meroitic ambassadors are paired north and south of the Gate cannot be coincidental. These four pairs of graffiti serve to highlight the focus of ritual attention on Philae's Gate of Hadrian at the highest level of

¹⁵² MI 95 and 121.

¹⁵³ Ph. 408 and 420.

¹⁵⁴ MI 119 (south) and 120 (north). Yesbokheamni ruled ca. AD 300. Perhaps the Meroitic king visited Philae shortly after Diocletian's decision to withdraw the border of Egypt to Elephantine. Yesbokheamani is attested at Qasr Ibrim where a lion statue inscribed with his name was found. FHN III, #276, 1049-1050.

¹⁵⁵ Ph. 417 (south, Demotic) and IGP 181 (north, Greek).

Meroitic administrative offices. The rites associated with this area of the temple will be explored in the following section.

What Was the Political and Religious Use of the Temples by Meroitic Rulers?

As is so often the case in the study of Ancient Egypt, separating religious actions from political motivations is difficult. Frequently the two spheres were joined and ritual activity made a powerful statement in the political arena. Traditionally, the Egyptian king enacted rites for the benefit of a deity who would reciprocate by granting that king terrestrial dominion. Divine approval for his reign came as a result of the king's attention to temple cult. Thus, it is challenging to differentiate between the political use of Egyptian temples by Meroites and the ritual activity that they performed therein. Any Meroitic ritual activity in a temple controlled by Egyptians constituted a political statement. Ritual suzerainty, i.e. the right to perform religious rituals in a temple, attested to the tacitly held right of access to the temples of Lower Nubia by Meroe, and, thus, to some measure of control over that ritual space. Whether this was due to a political "condominium" that allowed Meroe and Egypt shared access to the temples of Nubia or because the Romans did not care to defend the sanctity of the Lower Nubian temples against use by outsiders is difficult to say. What is clear from the corpus of Nubian graffiti is that the Nubian priests and political ambassadors from Meroe worked together with Egyptian priests at Dakka and Philae and were, in fact, warmly welcomed by their Egyptian colleagues.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Ph. 416/7-8 in which the Meroitic ambassador to Rome, Sasan, described his welcome at Philae, "Fine were the honors which the prophets and the priests and the people of the city did to me until [we] were [taken] to the temple of Isis." See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 115.

Political Use

By performing rituals in the temples of Lower Nubia, primarily at Philae and Dakka, during Phase II, the Nubian priests presented their ruler as a king in the Egyptian tradition. Through the dual actions of performing traditional rites, specifically the funerary rites for Osiris at Khoiak, and through financial support of these Nubian temples the Meroitic ruler assumed the cultic role of Egyptian Pharaoh at precisely the time when Roman Emperors neglected to support Egyptian religious institutions and, in fact, sought to curb their power. Financial support came in the form of gold donated directly to the priests at Philae, as Sasan explicitly stated in his Demotic graffito at Philae.¹⁵⁷ Because Meroitic rulers sent priests to Dakka and Philae to conduct rites as well as providing funding for the feasts that marked the conclusion of those rites, traditional Egyptian religion survived at Philae during a time when Christianity, originally an urban phenomenon in Egypt, was gaining converts even in the countryside.

Meroitic rulers used Egyptian symbolism to present themselves as traditional pharaohs. The annual arrival, during the month of Khoiak, of the Nubian priests as representatives of the Meroitic ruler was meant to reinforce the notion that Kushite kings arrived with the Inundation,¹⁵⁸ making clear their association with the life-giving forces of the flood as well as with Osiris whose bodily efflux the flood was thought to contain. The rites of Nḥb-k3.w traditionally marked the conclusion of the Sokar festival, which

¹⁵⁷ Ph. 416, line 4.

¹⁵⁸ “The Victory Stela of Piye” in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: an anthology of stories, instructions, stelae, autobiographies, and poetry*, ed. William Kelly Simpson, trans. by Robert K. Ritner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 374. The Kushite king Piye (Piankhy) sailed from Kush to rectify matters in Egypt in the “First month of Inundation season, day 9. His Majesty then came sailing northward to Thebes...”

became subsumed in the Khoiak rites after the New Kingdom. Celebrated on Tybi 1, immediately after the end of the month of Khoiak, Nekhebkau became a celebration of Egyptian kingship during the Rameside period. In his analysis of the rites described by Sasan, Török says,

It is tempting to fit the eight days' "dining" into the context of the seven days between 24-30 Choiak that precede the elevation of the *djed* pillar and the subsequent "opening of the year" on Tybi 1, earlier a royal festival which could well have been an appropriate opportunity for offering prayers for the king.¹⁵⁹

Both Greek inscriptions left by Meroitic royal emissaries to Roman Egypt are dated to Tybi 1. The symbolism of a day dedicated to the celebration of enduring pharaonic kingship would have been an appropriate occasion on which to dedicate inscriptions of two royally-appointed Meroitic ambassadors to Egypt. It seems the Meroites were aware of the significance of the festival and ensured that the Meroitic king was lavishly celebrated at Philae by his representatives on that day.

Because the Dodekaschoenos served as a buffer zone between the Kingdom of Meroe and Roman Egypt and because Philae was the preeminent temple of that area, the temple complex served as an appropriate meeting place for the representatives of Roman Egypt and Meroe whenever negotiations between the two powers were required.¹⁶⁰ Three delegations from Meroe to Roman Egypt were represented in the Nubian graffiti of Phase II: Sasan (AD 253), Manitawawi and Bekemete in the Meroitic Chamber (circa AD

¹⁵⁹ László Török, *FHN III*, 1009. The quote refers to Ph. 416, line 13, "We spent 8 days dining in the dromos of Isis on wine, beer, and meat, while the populace of the whole town was celebrating..."

¹⁶⁰ Philae continued to serve this purpose in the fifth century AD when Roman officials concluded treaties with the Blemmye and Noubadae tribes in Nubia.

260),¹⁶¹ and Abratoye and Tami (circa AD 261). In each of the three diplomatic missions from Meroe we see “religion as politics” at play. Rich with pious statements, descriptions of religious ritual, and donations of gold, the inscriptions barely mention political negotiations. It is the titles carried by the principal actors in the inscriptions that hint at the negotiations that were undertaken at the highest level of royal administration: royal envoy to Rome, ambassador, Viceroy of Kush, *strategoi* of the water, and, possibly, *qerens* of Isis. Only Tami’s two graffiti inscribed on the Gate of Hadrian hint at the diplomatic nature of the Meroitic missions to Philae. In his Demotic graffito, Tami spoke of defending Meroitic (sole?) access to the Abaton by involving the Roman Dux, a Roman military commander, in order to expel “the men of Elephantine” from the Abaton.¹⁶² Eight years later in his Greek graffito, Tami spoke of “making the peace” (εἰρήνην πεποίηκε) and crowning a prophet during his stay at Philae.

As the southernmost temple on Egyptian soil, Philae was a border post where representatives of the two kingdoms could meet in territory ostensibly ruled by the goddess Isis as her estate and, therefore, was considered neither Egyptian nor Meroitic. After Diocletian withdrew the Egyptian border to Elephantine in 298 AD, Philae was, indeed, neutral territory, beyond the southern border of Egypt.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Török attempted to date the inscriptions in the Meroitic Chamber based on two Meroitic royal names included there. See László Török, “Two Meroitic Studies: the Meroitic Chamber in Philae and the Administration of Nubia in the 1st to the 3rd centuries A.D.” *Oikumene* 2 (1978): 217-222. His findings were not convincing. All that can be said with certainty is that Bekemete and Maniawawi, who are depicted in the Meroitic Chamber, are also attested in Demotic graffiti dated to AD 253 and AD 261.

¹⁶² Ph. 417, lines 3-5.

¹⁶³ Philae continued to be a place of negotiation in the post-Meroitic period. When the Blemmyes negotiated a treaty with Maximinus in AD 452, it was at Philae that their meeting occurred.

Religious Use

Osiris and his transformation into Osiris Wennefer “perfect being” are depicted throughout the sanctuaries at Philae. However, certain areas were specifically dedicated to the theme of Osiris’ revivification. Due to the Meroites’ concern to perform proper rites for the revivification of their deceased king, it is no surprise to learn that two areas dedicated to this theme were the primary foci for graffiti of Phase II written by their Nubian priests and administrators: the southwest corner of the Pronaos and the Gate of Hadrian. The reliefs of the Pronaos feature many gods of Nubian origin or gods explicitly related to Nubia by their associated labels (See the plan of the south wall of the Pronaos below).¹⁶⁴ Note the four Nubian Horuses (Ibrim, Mehy, Buhen, and Baki/Kubban), two depicted on either side of the central doorway.

¹⁶⁴ Labels such as “Pnubs-Re, master of Nubia and Master of Thebes who presides over Nubia” emphasize the deity’s dominion in Nubia. Manifestations of Horus associated with New Kingdom forts in Nubia are depicted on the four pilasters in the Pronaos: PM 263 (southeast): wine offered to Horus of Qasr Ibrim and incense to Horus of Mehy (location unknown), PM 267 (southwest): wine to Horus of Buhen, milk to Horus of Baki, PM 272 (west pilaster): Arsenuphis, ram-headed Amun, Tutu, lion-headed god (Nubia), PM 279 (east pilaster): Arsenuphis, Thoth Pnubs, Imhotep who brings forth the waters of the flood. Sylvie Cauville, *Philae: itineraire du visiteur* (Leuven: Peeter 2013), 199; P&M VI, 233-235.

*La paroi sud du Pronaos :
programme de la décoration.*

	PNUBS HORUS <i>onguent</i>	THÈBES <i>maât</i>		OSIRIS <i>libations</i>	NUBIE AMON <i>encens</i>	
AMON MOUT <i>pectoral</i>	PETEG KHNOUM <i>étoffes</i>	RÊ-HORAKHTY <i>vin</i>		OSIRIS <i>hymne</i>	NUBIE ONOURIS <i>myrrhe</i>	OSIRIS <i>dattes</i>
CHOU TEFNOUT <i>collier large</i>	IBRIM HORUS <i>vin</i>	TEFNOUT <i>viandes</i>		ISIS <i>bière</i>	BOUHEN HORUS <i>vin</i>	OSIRIS <i>symboles</i>
HARENDOTÈS HATHOR <i>œil</i>	MEHY HORUS <i>encens</i>	ISIS <i>brasero</i>		OSIRIS <i>lait</i>	BAKI HORUS <i>lait</i>	OSIRIS <i>éternité hymne</i>

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Figure 10: Plan of the South wall of the Pronaos. (Reprinted from Sylvie Cauville, *Philae: itinéraire du visiteur*, 198.)

However, Nubian graffiti are found **only** in the southwest corner of the Pronaos. I suggest that is precisely because it is “un espace ferial pour Osiris.”¹⁶⁵ The size of the green dots on the plan below indicates the density of reliefs depicting Osiris that decorate this section of the Pronaos. As both plans reveal this section of the Pronaos was explicitly devoted to depicting the offerings made to Osiris Wennefer in association with the revivification rites performed in the moth of Khoiak.

¹⁶⁵ Cauville, *Philae*, 201.

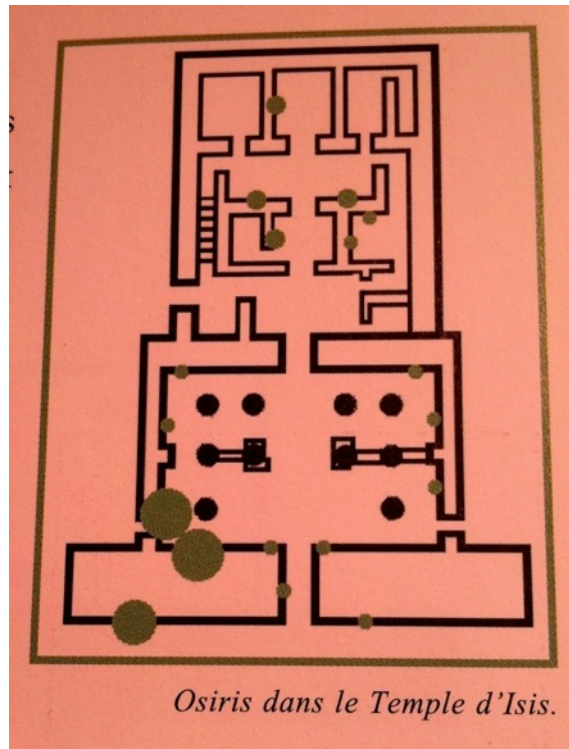


Figure 11: Location of Osirian themes in the Main Temple. (Reprinted from Sylvie Cauville, *Philae: itineraire du visiteur*, 201.)

It was the wellbeing of the deceased **Meroitic king** assimilated to the god Osiris that his emissaries sought to ensure through their pious actions at Philae. The repeated statements that offerings had been made in exchange for the “life breath of the king”¹⁶⁶ support this interpretation. This intention is corroborated by the relief decoration of the areas in which Nubian graffiti are clustered at Philae.

Meroitic rulers regarded Osiris as their divine father; Isis was their divine mother. With that familial connection came the responsibility to provide the appropriate funerary rites for Osiris during the pilgrimage to Philae. In the Meroitic homeland, Osiris and Isis were regarded chiefly as funerary deities. Therefore, most representations of Isis and Osiris were found in a funerary context in the Kingdom of Meroe. In the royal chapels,

¹⁶⁶ Ph. 411/5, Ph. 416/8, Dak. 30/10. The same phrase appeared in graffiti of Phase I such as Dak. 15/2, Dendur 1/12.

Isis protected and poured libations for the deceased ruler, while Osiris waited to receive the deceased king or queen at the western portal of the funerary chapel.

Through the areas chosen by Nubians for their prayer inscriptions, we are able to ascertain the specific rituals that appealed to these priests and diplomats. It was the yearly reenactment and performance of the essential funerary rites for Osiris by “Isis the Libationer” that drew their pious attention and motivated their journey to Philae.

The southwest corner of the Pronaos¹⁶⁷ contains reliefs depicting rites that transfigure the dead god Osiris into Osiris Wennefer, including the texts and reliefs of the *Stundenwachen* on the architraves, hymns to Osiris Wennefer written in hieroglyphs on the walls, and scenes of pouring libations of milk.

The hours of the night are depicted on the eastern half of the Pronaos, while those of the day are depicted on the western half of this space. Above the southwest corner of the room the fifth through the twelfth hours of the day are depicted. Hours five through twelve of the day describe the slaughter of an animal for offering, the appearance of Isis, Nephthys, Horus and his children to protect the bier of Osiris, as well as the arrival of all the gods to adore Osiris. Hour five contains the first invocation of the transfiguration texts spoken over Osiris in order to revivify his corpse.¹⁶⁸ The seventh and eighth hours of the day are directly above the wall with Nubian graffiti. Those hours refer to Isis and Nephthys, respectively, protecting the bier of Osiris.

¹⁶⁷ PM 267 is the pilaster and PM 268-269 refers to the portion of the southwest wall with scenes concerning the revivification of Osiris.

¹⁶⁸ Andreas H. Pries, *Die Stundenwachen im Osiriskult*, Part 1, 404.

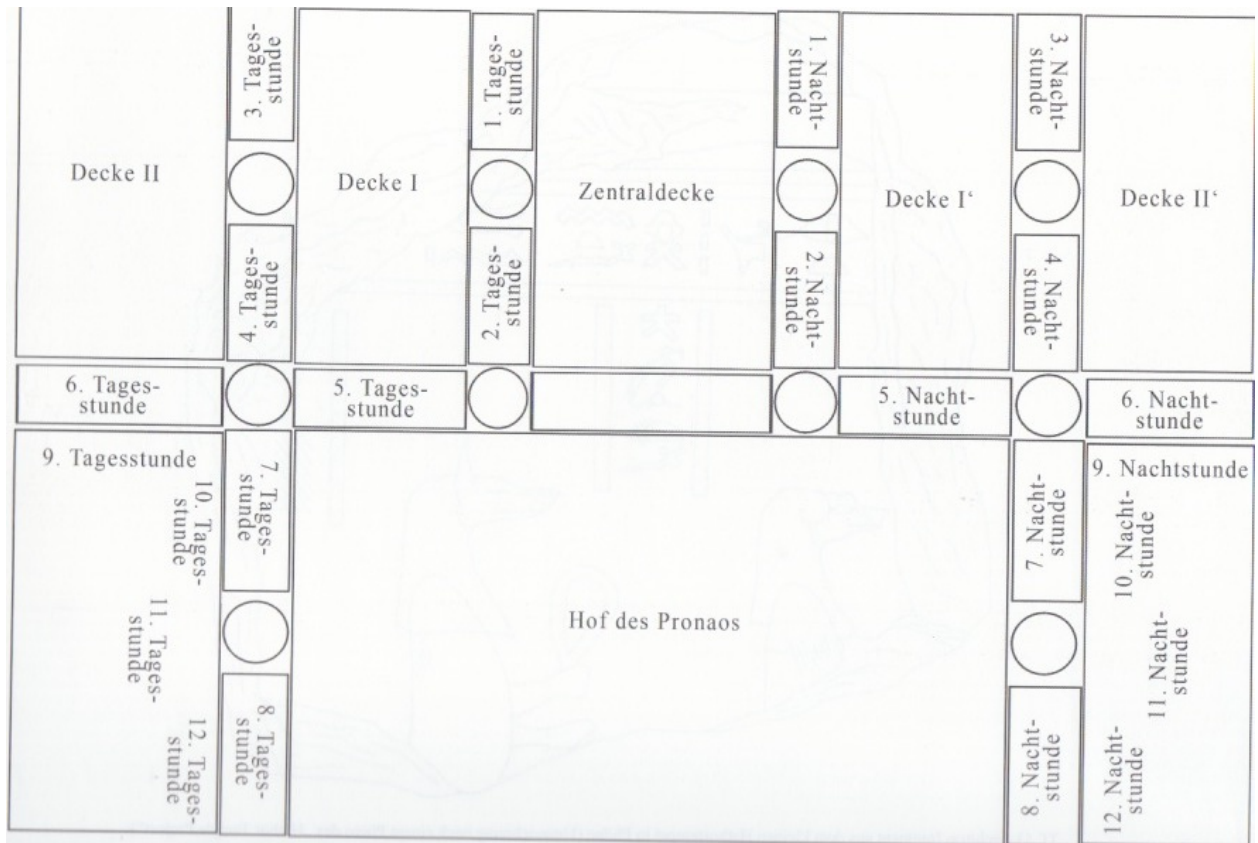


Figure 12: Decoration of the Architraves in the Pronaos of the Main Temple. (Reprinted from Andreas Pries, *Die Stundenwachen im Osiriskult*, Part 2, 157.)

Both Egyptian goddesses, Isis and Nephthys, have an important role in the iconography of the Meroitic royal funerary chapels. Isis consistently is depicted standing behind the king with her wings spread protectively as she pours a libation from a loop-handled jug. Nephthys, too, is an important libationer in the funerary chapels. Together with Anubis, she performs the “Abaton style milk libation” to be described later in this chapter.

Three hymns to Osiris are found on the walls in this corner of the Pronaos. One hymn is located high on the western half of the southern wall of the Pronaos, another is found above the door into the stairs inside the Second Pylon (the location of the

goldsmiths' inscriptions). The third hymn surrounds the door in the adjacent western wall of the Pronaos that leads out to the Gate of Hadrian.



Figure 13: Western door from the Pronaos to the Gate of Hadrian. Milk hymns decorate both doorjambs. Photo by the author.

In the third hymn the king recites the text of a funerary offering for Osiris-Sokar that mentions “the opening of the mouth” ritual intended to restore life to the god’s corpse. Alongside the third hymn, a Nubian graffito, composed as a hymn to Osiris Wennefer, was painted between the hands of the king and the shoulder of Osiris shown in the relief on the right above the door.¹⁶⁹

A vital part of the funerary offerings made to Osiris was the milk of the Hesat cow poured as a libation. This celestial cow goddess was the mother of Re and nourished him with her milk in his infancy. The power of milk to transform an infant into a thriving child was incorporated into the symbolisms of funerary rites as a potent ingredient

¹⁶⁹ Ph. 344. This graffito, once painted in red, has since disappeared.

allowing the transformation of the deceased into a reanimated soul. Thus, Osiris was offered divine milk to aid in his transformation into a living and effective Ba, depicted as a human-headed bird.¹⁷⁰ The king is shown presenting milk to Osiris Wennefer in several places in the Philae temple complex.¹⁷¹ A subset of the milk offering scenes is a scene in which the milk is poured over offerings in order to purify¹⁷² them.¹⁷³ In the southwest corner of the Pronaos, Ptolemy VIII is shown pouring milk as a libation over the offerings on an altar before mummified Osiris with Isis standing protectively behind him. The king pours the milk from a loop handled situla using a hand gesture that Junker recognized as typical of the action of pouring milk over offerings so as to consecrate

¹⁷⁰ An image of Osiris as a human headed Ba is part of the relief decoration of the Gate of Hadrian, which will be considered later in this chapter.

¹⁷¹ PM VI, p. 218 (105-107) on the back of the First Pylon, eastern side; PM VI, p. 226 (199) on western exterior of the Birth House; PM VI, p. 245 (371-373) on western exterior of Main Temple. The last scene is captioned with the words, “Nimm dir, was in dem Brüsten deiner Mutter Nu.t ist. Versich dich mit deiner Süßigkeit. Halte deine Hände daran (=an die Brüste der Nu.t) und führe sie an deinen Mund und genieße davon nach Herzenlust, dass du damit überflutet wirst und dich darüber freuest, das dein Leib gedeihe...” Junker, *Abaton*, 10.

¹⁷² Miriam Lichtheim, “Situla 11395 and Some Remarks on Egyptian Situlae” *JNES* 6 no. 3 (July 1947): 173; Waltraud Gulglielmi “Milchopfer” *LdÄ* IV, 127-128. Cf. Sylvie Cauville, *Offrande aux dieux dans le temple égyptien*, (Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2001), 39. “Le *Veau*, cest-à-dire le jeune soleil, tête sa mère dès sa naissance, sa bouche est pure grâce au liquid divin; la formule est adoptée lors des cérémonies de purifications royales effectuées par Horus et Thot, on trouve dans les salles appropriées (purgatorium) de Philae et d’Edfou.” The “purgatorium” at Philae was the room used for the Meroitic Chamber.

¹⁷³ Berlin Photo 336, eastern exterior wall of the Main Temple, PM VI, p. 246 (382-383), Berlin Photo 349 rear exterior wall of the Main Temple, PM VI, p. 347 (386-387), and the scene in the southwest corner of the Pronaos Berlin Photo 672, PM VI, p. 233 (267). Two similar scenes come from the Temple of Kalabsha, Kalabsha Photos 1771 and 1765 were cited by Junker, *Abaton*, 16.

them.¹⁷⁴ A detailed discussion of the central importance of libation in Meroitic funerary chapel reliefs is found below beginning on page 188.

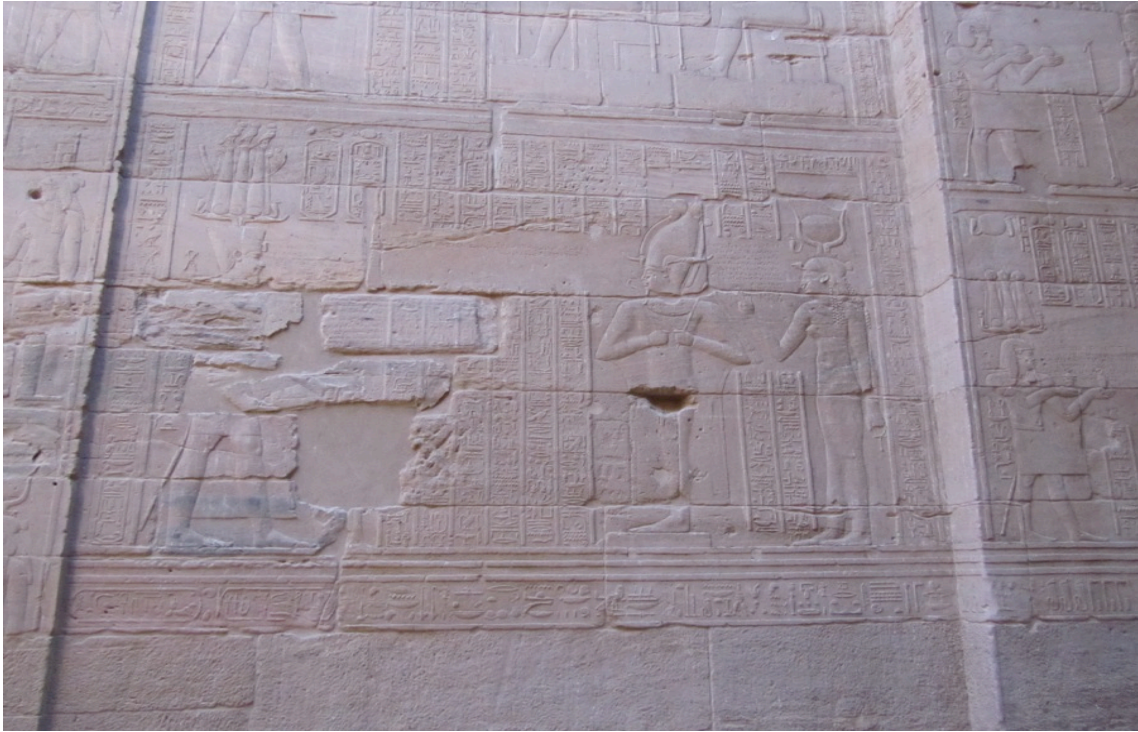


Figure 14: Ptolemy VIII pours milk over an offering table before Osiris Wennefer and Isis. Before the face of Osiris and Isis, two *proskynemata* of the Nubian Pathores are engraved (Ph. 255 and Ph. 256). Photo by the author.

This very wide relief panel located on the first register at eye-level, received the graffiti of three Nubians.¹⁷⁵ Located between the main portal through the Second Pylon and the doorway leading to the stairs in the Second Pylon, **and** near the doorway to the Gate of Hadrian, this relief panel would have been passed by any Nubian in procession to the Gate of Hadrian or working with goldsmiths to gild divine statues. As the largest relief panel in the southwest corner of the Pronaos, which the depicted theme of pouring

¹⁷⁴ Junker, *Abaton*, 10. Junker designated this type of ritual scene “typ 1β: Ausgiessen der Milch über dem Opfer” and claimed it was unique to Philae and the temples of Nubia. The database of ritual scenes of the Universität Würzburg

(<http://www.serat.aegyptologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/cgi-bin/serat>) contains only five scenes of milk offering, all of them in Nubia: two at Philae, two at Dendur, and two at Kalabsha.

¹⁷⁵ For a description, see PM VI, p. 233 (268-269) (first register), Berlin Photo 672.

milk libations before Osiris Wennefer, the scene was an important one for the Nubians who inscribed their adoration graffiti there. Immediately to the west (right when facing the relief) of this large panel were several smaller panels that covered the pilaster in the middle of the southwest wall of the Pronaos.

The photo below shows the pilaster designated as PM 267. To the left is Isis from the photo shown above (PM 268-269).

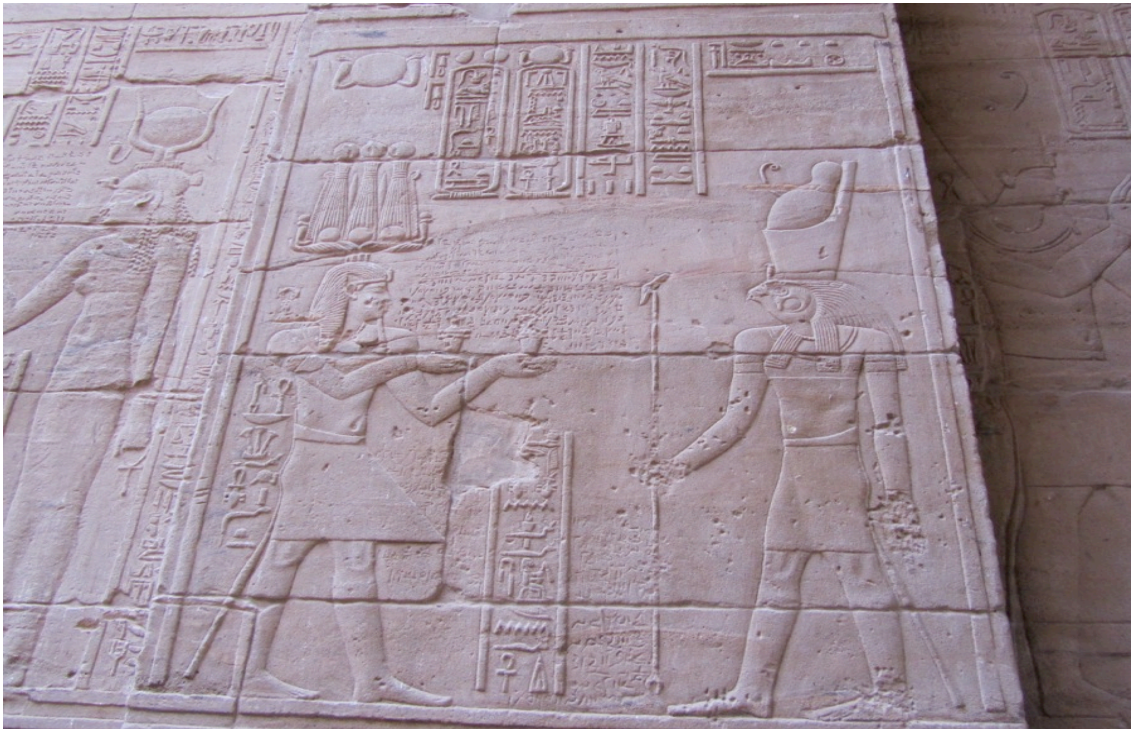


Figure 15: Ptolemy VIII offers milk to Horus of Kubban. Graffiti Ph. 251 and Ph. 252 are inscribed above the milk offering. Photo by the author.

In this relief (first register)¹⁷⁶ Ptolemy VIII offers milk to Horus of Baki/Kubban,¹⁷⁷ a deity with enduring appeal to the local Nubian population. Two Nubian worshippers

¹⁷⁶ See plan of the south wall of the Pronaos on page 169. For a description, see PM VI, 233 (267) (first register), Berlin Photos 1270-1 and 674.

¹⁷⁷ B3k.t/B3k1 were the Egyptian names for a village on the east bank of the Nile, opposite Dakka and located at the mouth of the Wadi Allaqi, which led to the gold mines of the Eastern desert. A Middle Kingdom fort and associated temple dedicated to Horus of Baki stood near the modern village called Kubban. Zibelius-Chen, *Afrikanische Orts*

inscribed their prayers before the face of the king and directly on top of the two jars of milk offered to Horus: Ph. 251, Paese, first member of the Wayekiye family to inscribe a prayer at Philae, and Ph. 252, Dd-Hr 𓂏𓂐 who came to celebrate Khoiak at Philae. His graffito included a postscript by Abyrte, a goldsmith.

The unifying theme in this corner of the Pronaos is the revivification of Osiris as a living spirit. Central to that rite was the offering of divine milk that would rejuvenate him. Although the king was shown making the milk offering on the walls of the temple, he performed the rite on behalf of Isis who offered milk libations to Osiris every 10 days according to hieroglyphic texts located throughout the temple complex. For the Nubian pilgrims to Philae, Isis was the primary focus of their piety. They came yearly to “perform the services of Isis,” which consisted of pouring libations for Osiris. Junker described the importance of the milk libations in the Abaton Decrees whose hieroglyphic texts are carved on the north and south sides the Gate of Hadrian. Isis’ duty to pour a libation of milk for Osiris was paramount in those texts. This rite was not depicted in Egyptian temples outside of Nubia.

Von Bedeutung ist ferner, dass gerade Isis die Libation ausführt und dass sie überhaupt im Totenkult auftritt, den nur von Isis (als Spenderin gedacht) und nur bei den Opfern des Osiris und bei seinen

und Volkernamen (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1972): 43, 44, 112. The earliest religious monument found at Philae is a fragment that contains the name of Ramses IX. The fragment was later reused in the foundation course of the eastern wing of the Gate of Nectanebo, which had been incorporated into the First Pylon as the central doorway. The text reads, “[h]e built this monument [to] Horus of Kubban.” Sami Farag, “Inscribed blocks of Ramesside Period and of King Taharqa, Found at Philae,” *OA 18* (1979): 282. In the Nubian nome list of Ptolemy II in Room 1 of the Main Temple, the fourth nome was B3kt translated as “taxer.” See FHN II 564. Foundation blocks found at Dakka confirm that the earliest temple of Dakka was dedicated to Horus of Baki. See Cecil Mallaby Firth, *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia. Report of 1909-1910* (Cairo: National Print. Department, 1915), 38; Griffith, *Catalogue*, 1-2, n.1

Totenfeierlichkeiten kommt in Philae und Nubie diese Milchlibation vor.¹⁷⁸

Ph. 253, which was not a Nubian inscription, was inscribed on the relief panel depicting Horus of Baki receiving the milk offering from Ptolemy VIII. Its author stated that he “wrote an obeisance (adoration graffito) before the divinity of the Great Cool Place of Isis today...” This epithet highlighted the goddess’ weekly service to Osiris through the act of pouring libation, emerging as she did from the cool interior of the temple to perform this rite every ten days.

The Gate of Hadrian was built shortly before Nubians of Phase II began to inscribe their prayers at Philae. Begun under Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138), the last Roman emperor to be depicted on the Gate was Commodus (AD 180-192). Paese, the first member of the Wayekiye family attested at Philae, dedicated his undated inscription in the Pronaos sometime in the third quarter of the second century AD. Paese’s grandson, Wayekiye A, inscribed his prayer in AD 227 on the Gate of Hadrian not long after the last official relief decoration had been added to the structure. The ability of Nubians to inscribe prayers on this structure so soon after its completion is an indication of their influence at the temple of Isis in the early- to mid-third century AD.

The relief and textual decoration of the Gate of Hadrian reiterates many of the themes presented in the southwest corner of the Pronaos, especially the death and resurrection of Osiris and the funerary rites necessary to achieve the god’s transformation into a living Ba. Of primary importance to our discussion was the stipulation that milk libations be poured at Osiris’ grave on Biga daily.¹⁷⁹ Further, the

¹⁷⁸ Junker, *Abaton*, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Junker, *Abaton*, 9.

Abaton decrees state that only the higher-ranking priests were permitted access to this most sacred site.¹⁸⁰ The decrees make reference to the occasions on which Isis was required to go to the island. Isis journeyed by boat to Biga every ten days in order to make funerary offerings to her husband. The goddess also participated in the great procession (*hr.t ʿ3.t*). This was an annual celebration in which Isis was accompanied by all the other gods as depicted in the reliefs on the architraves of the Pronaos.¹⁸¹ An inscription on the Second Eastern Colonnade, located between the First and Second Pylons, declared that the island of Philae **itself** became the boat used to transport all the gods to the Abaton.¹⁸²

Originally, a kiosk stood on the west side of Hadrian's Gate.¹⁸³ Stairs led from the kiosk to a quay from which priests could depart by boat to Biga.¹⁸⁴ Worshippers waiting to accompany the divine statue of Isis recorded their graffiti on the walls of this kiosk. Unfortunately, only the inscriptions on the western face of the Gate of Hadrian have survived as the kiosk no longer exists.

Interspersed amongst the many textual graffiti on that external western wall of the Gate of Hadrian are figural graffiti. These images depict the rites described in the *proskynemata* and provide us with images of the journey. Several inscriptions depict boats, either with a cow¹⁸⁵ on board or Isis standing before the boat. Both types of images

¹⁸⁰ Junker, *Abaton*, 22. Verbot das Abaton zu betreten: "Und es darf kein Mensch sie jemals betreten und auch kein [Hoher? oder] Niederer soll sie betreten."

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁸² Ibid., 57-58.

¹⁸³ Gerhardt Heany, "A Short Architectural History of Philae" *BIFAO* 85 (1985): 215-216.

¹⁸⁴ See plan of Philae in P&M VI, 202.

¹⁸⁵ The cow and the vessel depicted make a visual reference to a pun on the word *wšb*, which referred to the *wšb* vessel used in the rites of 12 Khoiak to reconstitute and

relay the primary importance of Isis in the form of a cow goddess delivering life-bringing milk to her deceased spouse at his gravesite.

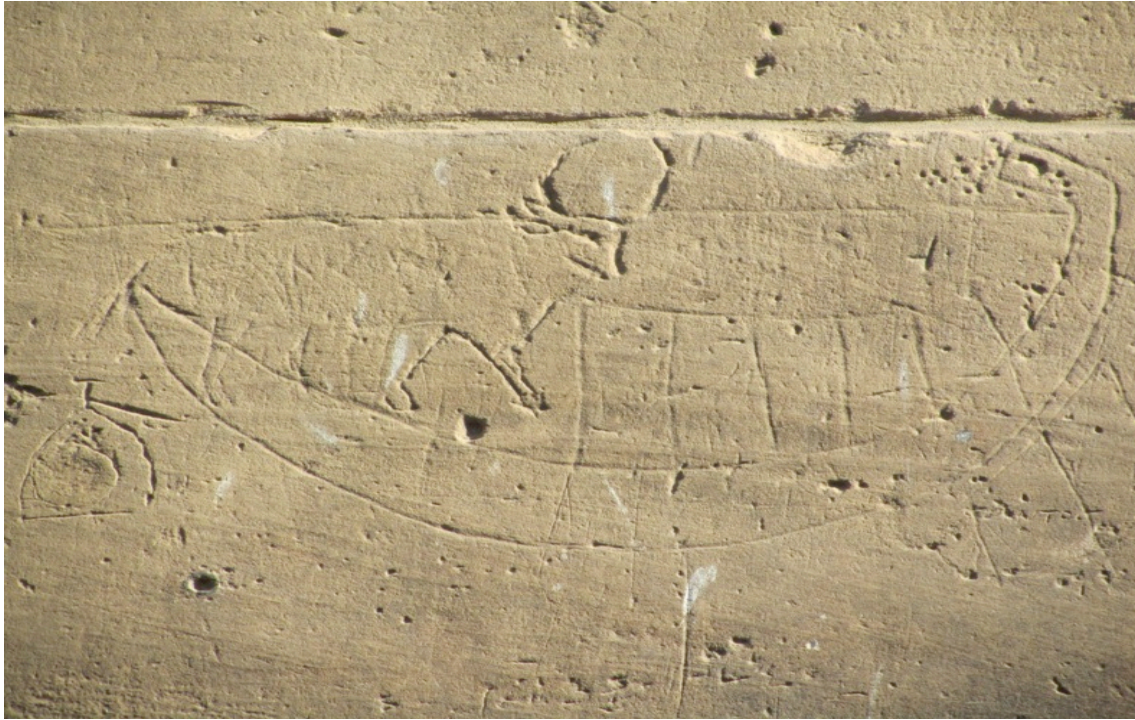


Figure 16: Figural graffito from western exterior of Gate of Hadrian. Note libation flask to the left of boat transporting Isis as the divine cow. Photo by the author.

revivify the body of Osiris and to Isis and her Late Period epithet **wšb.t**, which indicated that Isis was Osiris' "mourning widow," often depicted as a cow. Cf. Èmile Chassinat, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak* 1 (Cairo: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1966), 212-213; Mark Smith, "Demotic Mortuary Papyrus Louvre E3452" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1979), 51-59. "The epithet **Ta-wšb** then, as used in this papyrus proclaims Isis to be the one who mourns, protects, and revivifies her husband Osiris, and, by extension, the deceased." Ibid., 55. Abratoye, the Viceroy, brought a **wšb** vessel of gold to Philae on behalf of the Meroitic king in Ph. 416, line 15-16.



Figure 17: Figural graffito of Isis. Note prow of boat before the goddess. Photo by the author.

While many Nubian inscriptions remain vague concerning the ritual actions the dedicants performed, claiming only to be “doing the services of Isis,” Sasan explicitly described the creation of a vessel to be used in this ritual. He stated, “we made it (1 libra of gold) into a ḥes vase for libation to Osiris Onnophris the great god.”¹⁸⁶ This vessel would have been carried to Biga in order to pour the libations for Osiris as ordered by Re and recorded by Thoth in the Abaton Decrees.

Another theme depicted in the Gate of Hadrian was of paramount importance to the visiting Nubians: the transmission of power from the deceased king Osiris to his legitimate successor Horus. The south wall of the Gate of Hadrian contains a scene of Isis and Nephthys crowning Horus, while Shu and Tefnut present Horus with the “breath of life.” Below this scene, in the first register, a king with a blank cartouche is shown at the

¹⁸⁶ Ph. 416, line 12.

end of a line of gods presenting offerings to Isis. The king presents the hieroglyph for fields to symbolize bequeathing the produce of the Dodecaschoenos to the domain of Isis.



Figure 18: Meroitic-language graffito (MI 119) of Meroitic king Yesbokheamani on south wall of Gate of Hadrian. Photo by the author.

The Meroitic king Yesbokheamani (circa AD 300) usurped this image of an Egyptian king when his Meroitic-language *proskynema* was engraved above it. A nearly identical inscription was engraved above a similar depiction on the north wall of the Gate of Hadrian. Through this act, the space and the ritual that bequeathed legitimacy upon the ruling king was appropriated on behalf of the Meroitic king.

On the north wall, a relief depicts Osiris as a living Ba resting upon the sacred grove watered by a cow-headed Isis and worshipped by a human-headed Isis. This motif was imbued with powerful symbolism that was incorporated into Meroitic royal and non-royal burials where Ba statues became standard *accoutrements* of Meroitic burials. In the aforementioned relief, behind the cow-headed Isis is a mythical depiction of the source of

the Nile depicted as the god Hapy encircled by a giant serpent buried deep under the boulders of Biga Island. As mentioned above, the Meroitic kings timed their arrival in Egypt to coincide with the Inundation whose floodwaters had symbolic links to the regeneration of Osiris. The theme of the regeneration of Osiris as portrayed in the Pronaos and the Gate of Hadrian not only drew Nubian representatives to leave their prayer inscriptions in the vicinity of such scenes but also was an inspiration for the decoration of burials in the Meroitic heartland. The next section will explore themes of Osiris' regeneration as they were employed in Meroitic royal tombs.

Meroitic Royal Tombs and their Decorated Chapels

A brief introduction to the topic of Meroitic royal burials may be necessary before a deeper analysis of their decoration can be completed. The early Kushite kings (ca. 900-300 BC) were buried in el-Kurru¹⁸⁷ and Nuri¹⁸⁸ near the temples of Gebel Barkal, just downstream from the Fourth Cataract. With the burial of Arqamani I (270-260 BC), the royal burial ground was moved south to a cemetery near Meroe called Begrawiyah South. This cemetery had formerly been the place of burial for queens and royal family members, while the kings were buried at the Fourth Cataract. Three kings were buried at

¹⁸⁷ Kashta, Piankhy, Shabako, Shebitqo, and Tanwetamani. Piankhy has replaced "Piye" as the accepted version of this king's name. See Claude Rilly, "Une nouvelle interpretation du nom royal Piankhy" *BIFAO 101* (2001): 351-368. Although Taharqa ruled after Shebitqo, he was not buried at el-Kurru. Instead, Taharqa inaugurated a new Kushite royal cemetery at Nuri where his burial is Nuri 1. His successor, Tanwetamani, erected his funerary monument at the traditional Kushite cemetery at el-Kurru.

¹⁸⁸ After Tanwetamani's burial at el-Kurru, his successor, Atlanersa, chose to be buried at Nuri, in this he was followed by all Kushite kings through Nastasten (19 kings, their queens, and family) until the royal burial ground at Meroe came into use in the third century BC. The one exception to this preference for burial at Nuri was one royal burial in el-Kurru (Ku. 1) of an unknown king in the middle of the 4th century BC. Geoff Emberling of the University of Michigan is currently excavating that pyramid. It now appears that Ku. 1 was left unused, perhaps after the discovery of large cracks in the ceiling of the burial chamber.

Begrawiyah South¹⁸⁹ before the burial ground was shifted again, this time to Begrawiyah North, which remained in use until the fall of Meroe.¹⁹⁰

The early Meroitic pyramids, tombs, and chapels maintained a strong decorative consistency with those burials that preceded them in the north.¹⁹¹ A steep brick pyramid fronted by a funerary chapel facing east stood above a two-room underground burial chamber reached by stairs. A Ba statue was often associated with each burial and was thought to have perched in a niche above the chapel's door.¹⁹² An offering table stood before the chapel inscribed with offering formulae written in Meroitic. Two offering formulae were available for use by all, regardless of social status, designated as Formula A and B, while the offering Formula L was restricted to the rulers and members of the royal family.¹⁹³ Decoration of the funerary chapel walls had been minimal in the early Kushite burials at el-Kurru and Nuri. Beginning with the earliest burials in Begrawiyah South¹⁹⁴ decoration of both sidewalls (north and south) of the chapel became the norm.

¹⁸⁹ George A. Reisner, "The Meroitic Kingdom of Ethiopia: a Chronological Outline" *JEA* 9 (Apr. 1923): 35.

¹⁹⁰ Thirty kings and six queens were buried at Begrawiyah North (abbreviated Beg. N). Including two other burials at Beg. N, Reisner based his Meroitic chronology in part on sixty-eight royal burials from Begrawiyah North.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁹² C. Leonard Woolley and D. Randall-Maciver, *Karanog. The Romano-Nubian Cemetery*, Volume III, Eckley B. Coxe Junior Expedition to Nubia, (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1910). 11. Some Ba statues have been found associated with royal burials at Meroe. It is assumed that they formed part of the royal burial equipment, although the tombs at Meroe have been more thoroughly looted than those at Karanog, which makes it difficult to be definitive.

¹⁹³ Claude Rilly, *The Meroitic Language and Writing System: a Linguistic and Philological Introduction*, trans. Alex de Voogt (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29.

¹⁹⁴ Begrawiyah South (abbreviated Beg. S) was the first cemetery used to bury kings and queens after the royal burials were moved to Meroe. Begrawiyah North (abbreviated Beg. N) was used from the mid-third century BC until the fall of Meroe in the fourth century

Generally, the ruler was shown seated on a lion throne with the protective figure of Isis behind him, often accompanied by royal family members.¹⁹⁵ Beginning with the tomb of King Arqamani II (Ergamenes) more complicated decorative themes appeared, including the transport of the dead in funerary barks, the Osirian Judgment Scene, and the driving of the calves, an agrarian ritual whereby four calves trampled the grave of Osiris in order to hide it.¹⁹⁶ Two generations later an unnamed king began the tradition of including a procession of small figures carrying palm branches.¹⁹⁷ A female, at times the queen, at times Isis, standing behind the king to pour a libation, was an evolving decorative element included in the earliest funerary chapels of Begrawiyah South, which continued throughout the Meroitic period.¹⁹⁸ Over the next several centuries the individual pouring the libation behind the king changed from the initial depiction of the Meroitic queen, to Isis, and, finally, to Anubis and Nephthys pouring the Abaton-Style Milk Libation.

AD. Begrawiyah West (abbreviated Beg. W) contained the burials of royal family members who had not sat upon the throne and elites.

¹⁹⁵ Suzanne E. Chapman and Dows Dunham, *Decorated Chapels of the Meroitic Pyramids at Meroe and Barkal*, Royal Cemeteries of Kush, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Printing Office, 1952), 5.

¹⁹⁶ A.M. Blackman and H.W. Fairman, "The Significance of the Ceremony Ḥwt Bḥsw in the Temple of Horus at Edfu" *JEA* 35 (December 1949): 98-112; Ibid. *JEA* 36 (December 1950): 63-81; A. Egberts, *In Quest of Meaning: a study of the ancient Egyptian rites of consecration the meret-chests and driving the calves*, (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1995), Appendix 2: The Meroitic Representations of Driving the Calves.

¹⁹⁷ According to a personal communication from Janice Yellin (Director of The Royal Necropolises of Kush Project, begun with Friedrich W. Hinkel) these are actually stalks of durum, the primary grain consumed in the Sudan. According to the Abaton decree, palm branches should be laid on the 365 offering tables of Osiris. Junker, *Abaton*, v. Palm branches continue to deposited on modern graves in Aswan.

¹⁹⁸ The earliest tomb in Begrawiyah South (Beg. S 5) contains a relief of woman (upper register) and Anubis (lower register) pouring a libation. For the evolution of this funerary scene, see Table 5 on page 194.

Before exploring the particulars of Meroitic royal tomb decoration, it is important to note that the earliest tombs that incorporate the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scenes date to the mid-first century AD.¹⁹⁹ Therefore the libation scenes at Meroe **predate** the period of heightened Meroitic royal involvement in Lower Nubia in the early third century AD. Furthermore, the introduction of the themes of Khoiak into the decoration of royal burials at Meroe by the co-rulers, Queen Amanitore and King Natakamani (circa mid-first century AD), occurred before the construction of the Gate of Hadrian with its strong emphasis on the rites of Khoiak. While the texts and reliefs that portray the revivification of Osiris were an integral part of the decoration of the Pronaos, which was completed during the reign of Ptolemy VIII (170-116 BC),²⁰⁰ the elaboration and incorporation of these themes in the decoration of the Gate of Hadrian at a time after the full development of these scenes in the funerary chapels of Meroitic royalty is noteworthy. The iconography of these Osirian funerary rites, which included the milk libation scene otherwise only attested in temples in Lower Nubia, had been well elaborated and incorporated into Meroitic royal tombs for almost two centuries before Nubian priests inscribed their *proskynemata* on depictions of those rites and described the performance of those rites at Philae.

Iconography found in the decoration of Meroitic royal tombs reveals a keen grasp of the Egyptian rites associated with the revivification of the deceased king as Osiris. Scenes such as milk libation, the driving of the calves, and the use of the Atef crown

¹⁹⁹ The earliest example of this type of milk libation scene depicted on an offering table was found in Beg. N 16 in which king Amanitaraqide was buried.

²⁰⁰ Those texts and reliefs had been included in the *Stundenwachen* at Edfu (Ptolemy VI), the Pronaos (Ptolemy VIII), and on the exterior of the Main Temple (Tiberius AD 14-37) at Philae before Gate of Hadrian was built.

evoke the worship of Osiris and the rites performed to enable his transformation into a living Ba. The introduction of changes in the iconography of Meroitic funerary monuments can be connected to periods of heightened Meroitic contact with Roman Egypt. For example, the intensive involvement of Meroitic King Arqamani II in the Theban Revolt of 206-186 BC resulted in the introduction of Osirian themes into the standard Meroitic royal funerary iconography. Steffen Wenig indicated this change in funerary iconography by designating all funerary chapels before Arqamani II as Type A, while those after and including Arqamani II were Type B funerary chapels. The most elaborate chapel reliefs date to the period from the reign of Arqamani II through the first quarter of the first century AD. Scholars consider this period “the flowering of Meroitic culture.”²⁰¹ However, it was after this period that Meroitic royal funerary chapels began to include depictions of the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scenes in which Anubis and Nephthys pour milk over bread loaves piled on an offering table. The innovative adaptation of a traditional Egyptian libation scene suggests that Meroitic artisans had thoroughly digested the Osirian themes of Egyptian religion and then modified them into a hybrid rite that incorporated indigenous practices along with the traditional Egyptian burial rites. Junker first described the “anomalous” libation rites. He noted the libation scene on two second-century Meroitic offering tables,²⁰² which were similar to scenes at Philae in which the king poured milk over an offering table set before Osiris. The same

²⁰¹ Dunham, RCK III, 5.

²⁰² Both offering tables are in the Berlin Museum and have museum acquisition numbers 2254 and 2255. F. Ll. Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions, Part I* (London: The Egypt Exploration Fund, 1911), 81-83. The texts of the offering tables appear as MI 59 and MI 60, respectively.

type of scene is depicted twice on the walls of the Temple of Kalabsha.²⁰³ Yellin coined the term “Abaton-Style Milk Libation scenes” to denote and describe this type of scene. She expanded Junker’s corpus of four such scenes with an additional sixteen scenes found in Meroitic funerary chapels and on Meroitic offering tables.²⁰⁴ This standardized Meroitic funerary scene was depicted on the walls of five royal funerary chapels,²⁰⁵ which date from the mid-first to the early third century AD.²⁰⁶

Because the Nubian prayer inscriptions at Philae often clustered around reliefs that depicted the king pouring a milk libation, my investigation of Meroitic funerary iconography was focused on scenes of libation in the royal funerary chapels. To understand the evolution of such scenes in the Meroitic royal burials, I created a table that records the evolution of libation offering scenes in the royal funerary chapels at Meroe.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Junker, *Abaton*, 17. Kalabsha temple was built and decorated under the Roman emperor Augustus.

²⁰⁴ Janice Yellin, “Abaton-Style Milk Libation at Meroe” *Meroitica* 6 (1982): 151-152.

²⁰⁵ Beg. N 17, Beg. N 19, Beg. N 32, Beg. N 36, and Beg. N 51.

²⁰⁶ The chronology of the Meroitic kings is still imperfectly understood. Reisner established the first chronology based on the typological features of the royal pyramid construction that he observed during his excavations at Meroe between 1919-1922. The 68 generations of kings he established have generally stood the test of time with minor modifications by Hintze (1959), Wenig (1967), Hofmann (1978), and Karola Zibelius-Chen, “The Chronology Of Nubian Kingdoms From Dyn. 25 To The End Of The Kingdom Of Meroe” in *Ancient Egyptian Chronology* ed. David Warburton, Rolf Kraus, and Eric Hornung, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006). While the assignment of a king or queen to each royal burial is not yet firmly established, the tombs have been placed in roughly chronological order based on various criteria such as cemetery location and design elements (Reisner), chapel decoration (Wenig, Yellin), or dating of imported luxury goods (Hofmann). Zibelius-Chen’s work, cited above, contains a good synopsis of the various scholarly opinions and issues related to Meroitic royal chronology. Lacking ancient king lists such as are attested for Ancient Egypt, Meroiticists have created a king list derived from the chronological order of royal pyramids. “The relative chronology of the royal tombs, epigraphic sources, and other monuments furnish the foundations for establishing the sequence of the kings of Kush.” Zibelius-Chen, “The Chronology,” 287.

²⁰⁷ My primary reference for such scenes was Dows Dunham’s *Royal Cemeteries of Kush*, Vol. 3.

These scenes decorated the wall of virtually every Meroitic royal funerary chapel and many non-royal chapels through the almost 600 years of Meroitic royal burials at Meroe. The table below reveals two major points: a female was always shown pouring a libation behind the king and Anubis was present as a libationer in the very first Meroitic royal tomb chapel.²⁰⁸

I contend that the traditional Meroitic funerary libation scenes, which began as depictions of an unidentified female, probably the Meroitic queen, performing an indigenous funerary rite evolved over time to produce the so-called “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scenes. While this scene disappeared from **tomb chapel walls** in the early third century AD, the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” continued to be depicted on royal, as well as non-royal, **offering tables** until the end of Meroitic culture, both in the heartland of Meroe as well as in Lower Nubia.

Tomb numbers in **bold** indicate the burial of a queen.

²⁰⁸ In fact, a female and Anubis were present as libationers for the deceased king in three of the four tombs of Begrawiyah South, the earliest royal burial ground at Meroe. The (unidentified) female and Anubis also poured libations in the chapel of the first king buried in Begrawiyah North, Amanitekha, buried in Beg. N 4.

Tomb	Who libates?	Which wall?	RCK III plate #	Comments
Beg. S 6				
Beg. S 5 Amanislo	Female + Anubis		3FG, 24B	Unidentified female pours with Anubis while Isis stands behind the king.
Beg. S 4	Isis + Anubis		3AB	“Isis great of breasts [she] gives cool water”
Beg. S 10			4B	Male pouring libation from qbhw vessel
Beg. N 4	Female + Anubis	South	4D	Female is missing from waist up
Beg. N 53				Destroyed
Beg. N 7 Arqamani	Queen	North	4E, 30A	Two stocky women with Meroitic headdresses pour libation behind the king
Beg. N 9				Blank chapel
Beg. N 8	Queen	North	5C	
Beg. N 11 Shanadakhete?	Isis Prince stands behind her		7AB	First ruling queen Isis and Nephthys pour, wear their names in hieroglyphs on their heads
Beg. N 12	Isis		10ABC	
Beg. N 13	Queen	North	11A	
Beg. N 20				North wall missing
Bar. 4	Isis	North	13C	
Bar. 5	Isis	North	6A	
Bar. 6	Isis	North	13A	
Beg. N 14				
Beg. N 21				
Beg. N 6			16AB	No libation
Beg. N 2			15BC	
Beg. N 22 Natakamai				Poorly preserved
Beg. N 1 Amanitore	Isis pours for Osiris Nephthys pours for queen	West	18F	
Beg. N 5*				Prince
Beg. N 15				Prince
Beg. N 16 Amanitaraqide	Anubis & Nephthys	West		Anubis & Nephthys offering table
Beg. N 17 Amanitenamomide	Anubis & Nephthys	West	21C	
Beg. N 18 Amanikhatahan				Anubis & Nephthys offering table
Beg. N 19 Tarekeniwala	Anubis & Nephthys	South	22A	
Beg. N 32	Nephthys – north Anubis – south		23ABC-west	

Table 3: Meroitic Funerary Chapels - Libation Scenes.

*Although not securely dated, the last seven tombs in this chart are securely positioned in the chronology between Natakamani and Amanitore in the 1st century AD and Teqorideamani who is attested in Ph. 416 dated to AD 253. Among those tombs, the pyramid chapels of two kings contained an “Abaton-Style Milk Libation scene” as did the chapel of the wife of one of those kings. Two associated offering tables also contained the milk libation scene.

The introduction evolution toward the “Abaton Style Milk Libation” scene began with the introduction of Nephthys as libationer in Meroitic funerary art, which occurred during the reign of an extraordinary queen, Amanitore. She ruled jointly with her husband Natakamani in the middle of the first century AD. Under Amanitore and Natakamani, Meroe experienced a renaissance at the end of “the flowering of Meroitic culture.” These dynamic co-rulers were prolific builders.²⁰⁹ They were also responsible for major changes in the decoration of Meroitic tomb chapels. Traditional Meroitic elements such as palm bearers and cattle processions were eliminated, while themes evocative of the Khoiak festival dominated the south wall of the tomb chapel. The re-appearance of proper Egyptian hieroglyphs (after several centuries of unintelligible hieroglyphs or their utter absence) and the reintroduction of Osirian themes not seen since Arqamani II led to a “Re-Egyptianization”²¹⁰ of the chapel décor. These changes caused Wenig to place the tomb chapels of Natakamani, Amanitore and their son Arikhankhare into a class unto themselves.²¹¹ As part of this funerary redesign, the libation scene was moved from its traditional location on the north wall and incorporated into the scenes of the west wall, which had previously depicted Osiris flanked by Isis and Nephthys since the time of Arqamani II. While Natakamani’s pyramid was poorly preserved, Amanitore’s tomb chapel provided evidence of the dramatic changes in the decorative program. On the west wall Isis was depicted pouring a libation for Osiris,

²⁰⁹ Their construction projects include the Amun Temple and the Lion Temple at Naqa, the Great Temple, Temple B500 and B1100 at Napata, an altar at Wad ben-Naqa, and a temple at Amara.

²¹⁰ Zibelius-Chen, 300.

²¹¹ Beg. N 22 of Natakamani, Beg. N 1 of Amanitore, and Beg. N 5 of Prince Arikhakhare, their son. Their pyramid chapels, classified as C1 tomb chapels by Wenig, formed a special subset of the succeeding tomb chapels of the Meroitic period, which were classified as type C.

while Nephthys poured a libation for the queen. This was clearly stated in the Egyptian hieroglyphic labels that accompanied the scenes, the first use of Egyptian hieroglyphs in a tomb chapel since the mid-second century BC when the use of Egyptian hieroglyphs reached their nadir in the tomb decoration of Beg. N 11.

Amanitore's introduction of Nephthys as the goddess who poured libation on the west wall initiated the trend to identify the female libationer as Nephthys. This became the template followed by later tomb chapel artists who introduced the "Abaton-Style Milk Libation" scene into the traditional relief program of the west wall. In this new scene, which developed from an older Meroitic tradition, Anubis and Nephthys poured libations over an offering table before the king.²¹² The goddess Nephthys assumed the traditional role of the Meroitic queen. Following Amanitore's decorative innovation, the tomb chapel of her son, Sorakarora²¹³ contained a milk libation scene on the west wall, as did the three pyramids built after his: two kings (Amanitaraqide, Beg. N 16, and Amanitenamomide, Beg. N 17) had the scene on their chapel wall and a queen (Amanikhatashan, Beg. N 18) had the scene on her offering table. These pyramids are some of the few Meroitic pyramids that are securely connected to a ruler **and** situated in secure chronological position. Zibelius-Chen's discussion of Meroitic royal chronology confirmed the dating of these three royal tombs to approximately AD 50-150, precisely the period between Phase I and Phase II of the Nubian inscriptions,

Links with the Roman Empire are lacking for the following epoch, and there are only a few kings attested in inscriptions and by offering tables. The small number of names which belong to known rulers, and those which have been proposed as names of rulers, are

²¹² The king as recipient of the offering was indicated by the presence of a cartouche in the spout of the offering table.

²¹³ Beg. N 15.

mere compilations in list form. Only the pyramids Beg. N 17, 18 and 19 and the late pyramid Beg. N 28 (of Teqorideamani) can be associated by inscriptions with owners and their sequence established beyond doubt, following Beg. N 16. **Beg. N 17, 18, and 19 date to the period from somewhat after the mid-1st century AD to the mid-2nd century.**²¹⁴ (Emphasis added.)

The three pyramids that include the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scene (Beg. N 17, Beg. N 18, and Beg. N 19) are dated precisely to the period that I have called “Interregnum I,” in which no dated Nubian graffiti are attested in Lower Nubia. This epigraphic vacuum occurred after the end of the Phase I agreements (c.10 BC-AD 55) in which Nubian *strategoï* featured prominently and before the first appearance of Nubian *proskynemata* in Phase II (c. AD 175-273). The fact that the first appearance of the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” occurred immediately after the seeming withdrawal of a Nubian ritual presence in the temples of Lower Nubia is important. It substantiates Yellin’s hypothesis that these scenes began to appear in Meroitic royal tomb chapels as a result of Meroitic exposure to reliefs and texts at Philae.

The duration and consistency of these vignettes (milk libation scenes) tend to support the view that the southern half of the country, as well as the northern half, was in direct contact with and influenced by Hellenistic Egypt.²¹⁵

However, this cultural acquisition was not simply unidirectional. The earliest depiction of a king pouring milk over an offering table before Osiris Wennefer is a relief of Arqamani II found in his sanctuary at Dakka.²¹⁶ From this earliest “Abaton Style Milk Libation” scene, the other “anomalous” milk libation scenes, unknown elsewhere in Egyptian temples, developed.

²¹⁴ Zibelius-Chen, “Chronology” 300.

²¹⁵ Yellin, “Abaton-Style Milk Libation,” 154.

²¹⁶ Günther Roeder, *Der Tempel von Dakke*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français, 1930), 262, Taf. 105; PM VII, 47 (42)-(43).



Figure 19: Arqamani II at Dakka on the East wall, first register. (Reprinted from Güther Roeder, *Der Tempel von Dakke*, vol. 2 [l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1930], 262, pl. 105.)

Meroitic priests took the iconography of Egyptian religious beliefs (the gods Isis and Osiris, Nephthy and Anubis) and superimposed them on a traditional rite that was central to the Meroitic funerary cult: a female (woman, queen, or goddess) pouring libations for the deceased. When Nubian priests in the service of the Meroitic ruler returned to Philae in the mid-second century AD, it was the numerous images of milk libation offerings on the walls of the temple that drew their pious attention precisely because this was the central rite in the funerary practices of Meroitic royalty.

Conclusion

Phase II of the Nubian graffiti was by far the most complex period of Nubian epigraphic presence in Lower Nubia. The number of Nubian inscriptions was six times greater than the number engraved in Phase I and approximately twice as many as those of Phase III. The range of languages increased dramatically as well. While Phase I graffiti were written only in Demotic, those of Phase II were written in Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek. Additionally, the areas of the temple complex at Philae “colonized” by Nubian prayer inscriptions expanded from the dromos and gateway of the First Pylon where the agreements of Phase I were inscribed to the Meroitic Chamber, Pronaos, and the Gate of Hadrian as well as several isolated inscriptions on the Temple of Imhotep, the Birth House, and the Gate of Diocletian. Phase II prayer inscriptions were concerned with the performance of religious rites on behalf of the Meroitic ruler and, therefore, those graffiti were found in areas of the temple where such rites were taken place or where reliefs depicted the performance of such rites. The expansion of “Nubian space” at Philae is a clear attestation of the increased Meroitic royal influence at the temple during this period. While never reaching the inner sanctum of the temple, Nubian inscriptions do appear in the Pronaos, which attests to a working relationship between visiting Nubian priests and resident Egyptian priests. Without such cooperation, engraving inscriptions within the Main Temple would not have been possible. Meroitic funding of temple cult at Philae would also have helped to ensure access to the inner walls of the Main Temple and the Gate of Hadrian for the prayer inscriptions of the Nubian priests.

The variety of titles claimed during this period shows a dramatic expansion from the titles claimed by authors in Phase I. The plethora of titles, both traditional Egyptian

priestly titles and several enigmatic Meroitic titles, reflect the desire of Meroitic rulers to have rites performed for them at Dakka and Philae and to maintain political influence in Lower Nubia by sending emissaries to conduct negotiations with officials of Roman Egypt at Philae. In both these spheres, religious and political, the Wayekiye family was instrumental to the execution of the Meroitic ruler's will in Lower Nubia. As priests trained to read and write the Egyptian scripts (Hieroglyphs, Hieratic, and Demotic) who were also hour watcher priests, Wayekiye family members ensured that the proper rites were performed on behalf of the deceased Meroitic king in accordance with the Osirian *Stundenwachen* and the Abaton Decrees depicted at Philae. The knowledge handed down through eight generations of the Wayekiye family of priests gave the Meroitic ruler access to the Egyptian funerary rites designed to guarantee a successful afterlife. Having Nubian priests active in the cult at Philae also allowed the ruler in Meroe to assert himself as a legitimate pharaonic ruler, as Horus seated upon his father Osiris' throne. Because the orderly transfer of power from Osiris to Horus was an integral part of the performance of funerary rites for Osiris at Philae, the Meroitic ruler sought to display divine approval of his rule through Meroitic involvement in the temple cult at Philae. In the civil administrative sphere, the titles held by Wayekiye family members and other Nubians offered a glimpse into the hierarchical organization of the province of *Akin* and into Meroitic attempts to extend their territory northward whenever Roman military might weakened.

The depiction of the libation scene in Meroitic royal tomb chapels offers an interesting motivation for the predilection of the Nubians to inscribe their *proskynemata* near milk libation scenes at Philae. My research into the chronological appearance of

such scenes in the Meroitic royal funerary chapels sought insight into the development of the rite of milk libation as depicted on the chapel walls of Meroitic rulers and on offering tables. The libation scene was present in the earliest Meroitic royal funerary chapels dating to the mid-third century BC. Of interest in the earlier funerary chapels is the presence of the Meroitic queen as the libationer for the deceased king. In several chapels, Isis stands protectively behind the king while the queen pours libation behind the goddess. In the chapel of King Arqamani II, two women stand behind the king in the typical libation scene on the north wall. In the earliest funerary chapel decoration at the royal cemeteries at Meroe we detect two separate traditions: a Meroitic tradition wherein the queen or a Meroitic goddess poured libation for the deceased king and the Egyptian tradition in which Isis poured libation for the king, assimilated to Osiris. Later the original Meroitic tradition was eclipsed by a Meroitic variation of the libation scene that incorporated Egyptian iconography: Anubis and Nephthys poured libations for the deceased ruler in the “Abaton Style Milk Libation.”

The consistent association of an offering table with the Meroitic royal burials of the late period coincided with the advent of the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scene in those burials. The offering table, inscribed with the elite Meroitic-language offering formula, Formula L, requesting that milk be poured as a libation, confirms that the libation was milk and not water. The development of milk libation as a rite reserved for the elite in Meroitic burials links Meroitic royalty closely with the rites developed and performed in the temples of Lower Nubia. The simultaneous appearance and development of this rite at Meroe and in the temples of Lower Nubia leaves open the question of the place of origin of this rite.

Interregnum II: A Period Devoid of Dated Nubian Graffiti

Because Phase II was characterized by Meroitic royal involvement in Lower Nubia, the phase ended with the waning of the power of Meroe. The period of Meroitic royal sponsorship of Nubian priests who functioned at Philae lasted approximately fifty years according to the epigraphic record. The earliest dated inscription in which a Nubian priest claimed titles associated with the king of Meroe was engraved for Wayekiye A in AD 227. Unfortunately, the only other dated Nubian inscription from Phase II is that of Sasan, dated to AD 253. However, two inscriptions in the name of the Meroitic King Yesbokheamani were inscribed on the walls of the Gate of Hadrian circa AD 300. In all likelihood, organized visits by Nubian priests had ended several decades before. The Greek inscriptions of the Meroitic Viceroy Abratoye and the Ambassador Tami are estimated to have been inscribed circa AD 260. Griffith dated inscription Ph. 252 of Dd Hor and Abaryte to AD 273 based on a questionable reading of ???? as Aurelian (ruled AD 270-275).

, just a few decades later the kingdom had succumbed to multiple enemies. King Ezana of the Ethiopian kingdom of Axum attacked Meroe²¹⁷ as did the Noba tribes descending from the mountains of Western Sudan.²¹⁸ In the third century, Blemmye raids impoverished the kingdom of Meroe and ended the pilgrimages to Philae undertaken by Nubian priests in the service of the Meroitic kings.

²¹⁷ FHN III, 1094-1103; Thomas Hägg, "A New Axumite Inscription in Greek from Meroe" *Meroitische Forschungen 1980* Meroitica 7, 439; Stanley M. Burstein, *idem*, 220-221. Inscriptions by Ezana's predecessors are found in FHN III, 1066-1072.

²¹⁸ Claude Rilly, "The Last Traces of Meroitic, A tentative scenario for the disappearance of the Meroitic Script" (paper presented at the Disappearance of Writing Systems Conference, Keble College, Oxford, 25-28 March 2004), 5.

No evidence of the once powerful Wayekiye family is found after the end of Phase II. The Blemmyes had gained control of Lower Nubia by the late fourth century.

Chapter 3: Last Priests at Philae

Thus, down to the end, after the latest dated hieroglyphic and even demotic inscription (394 and 452 respectively, both at Philae), this temple, no doubt together with its surrounding complex, was the leading participant in, and protagonist of, the ancient civilization, attracting visitors from far away in Nubia as well as from the surrounding area. Native Egyptian civilization had by then been pushed to the margins of the country and to support from the kingdoms of the post-Meroitic Ballana Culture in Lower Nubia.¹

During the first half of the fifth century AD, priests versed in traditional Egyptian religion enacted rites in the Egyptian temples of Philae and Kalabsha and in shrines at Tafa and Qasr Ibrim. Inscriptions of the last priests at Philae were written in Demotic (fourteen inscriptions),² Greek (twelve inscriptions: ten at Philae,³ one at Kalabsha,⁴ one at Tafa⁵), and Meroitic (three inscriptions).⁶ The dated inscriptions fall in the period AD

¹ John Baines, "Temples as symbols, guarantors, and participants in Egyptian civilization" in *The Temple in Ancient Egypt: New discoveries and recent research*, ed. Stephen Quirke (London: British Museum Press, 1997), 234.

² Ph. 375, Ph. 194, Ph. 343, Bij. 6, Ph. 240, Ph. 366, Ph. 332, Ph. 365, Ph. 376 (bilingual Demotic-Greek with IGP 188), Ph. 258, Ph. 355, Ph. 450, Ph. 96, an additional Demotic graffito discovered by Cruz-Urbe by Horpaese, son of Horpaese, son of Esmet ʕ3.

³ IGP 189, IGP 198, IGP 188 (bilingual, paired with Ph. 376), IGP 193, IGP 197, IGP 196, IGP 190, IGP 191, IGP 192, and IGP 199.

⁴ FHN III #313, 1134-1138. The graffito records the division of funds among several cult association presidents. Of note is the eponymous dating, in which Phoinon held the title *phylarch*. Phoinon was in all likelihood the same man who was the author of the Greek letter found in Qasr Ibrim, called Phonen.

⁵ FHN III, #312, 1132-1134. The graffito records the addition of a columned hall to the temple of Tafa that was funded by the president (*klinarchos*) of the cult association of an otherwise unattested deity, Amati, and the construction of the hall by an agent (*pret*) of the cult association.

⁶ MI 114, MI 116, and MI 117. An additional three Meroitic-language graffiti were found on the Birth House roof. MI 115 was inscribed next to the image of a pair of feet, but it is illegible. MI 112 and MI 113 appear to belong to Phase II based on titles used.

408-456. A total of twenty-nine inscriptions from Phase III amounts to a forty-five percent reduction in the number of inscriptions from Phase II (53) to Phase III (29).

Although the reduction in numbers of inscriptions speaks eloquently to the reduced state of cultic practice at Philae, the numbers only provide part of the story. The few inscriptions at Philae are augmented by the epistolary and epigraphic evidence of Lower Nubian kings and their prophets, which suggests a shift from the earlier predominance of Philae to a more equitable connection between the temples of Philae, Kalabsha, Qasr Ibrim, and the shrine at Tafa, all of which bear evidence of ongoing cult practices in the final period of Nubian worship. This change may have occurred as a result of the increasing Christianization of Philae, which marginalized the local priests, or it may reflect the contraction of the cult at Philae to such an extent that the only surviving rite performed there in the mid-fifth century was the annual journey of Isis south into Nubia. Thus, the center of the cult of Isis shifted southward. The continued vitality of the worship of Isis in Nubia is found in the iconography of the Blemmye and Noubade kings. Isiac iconography, specifically horned altars⁷ that evoked Isis as a cow-headed goddess,

⁷ Two horned altars were found in the Isis Shrine/Temple 6 at Qasr Ibrim. See Boyce N. Driskell, Nettie K. Adams, Peter G. French, "A Newly Discovered Temple at Qasr Ibrim: Preliminary Report" *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 3 (1989): 39, Pl. I-III. A horned altar was found in the Taharqa Temple at Kawa; M.F.L. Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, vol. II (London: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), Pl. II, Pl. XLIV b & c, 58. Horned altars appear as a decorative element on pottery from Karanog. See C. Leonard Wooley and D. Randall-MacIver, *Karanog: the Romano-Nubian Cemetery*, vol. III (Philadelphia: University Museum Press, 1910), 56; *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pl. 45, #8156 and #8157 (currently on display at the Penn Museum); pl. 56, #8182. Horned altars were inscribed as figural graffiti on temple walls at Musawwarat es-Sufra, Qasr Ibrim, near the Talkapelle at Tafa, and on the Gate of Hadrian at Philae. This symbol served as a pot mark at Ballana and Qustul, see Walter B. Emery, *The Royal Tombs of Ballana and Qustul, Mission Archéologique de Nubie 1929-1934*. (Cairo: Government Press, Boulâq, 1938), pl. 115 #7. A horned altar was depicted in a wall painting of an Isiac rite depicted in Herculaneum, which was preserved as a result of the

palm branch motifs⁸ as signs of life and rejuvenation,⁹ the use of the “Isis emblem”(a sun disk surmounted by cow horns),¹⁰ and the rite of pouring libation¹¹ alluded to through images and actual implements¹² found in cultic and burial sites such as Qustul and

eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 BC. See R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Greco-Roman World* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), pl. 26. Seven horned altars were inscribed among the rock inscriptions designated “Blemyan” by Winkler. Those altars were engraved at Winkler’s “Site 38” on the Wadi Abu Wasil in the Eastern Desert, south of the Quš-Quseir Road. See Hans A. Winkler, *Rock-Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt, vol. 1* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1938), 16-17, 9 (for description of Site 38), pl. IV, 1-3. But are they horned altars? The shape is very reminiscent of the “signs of the Graeco-Roman period” that Winkler attributed to the Blemmyes. *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸ Palm branches as a decorative element were prevalent in ancient Nubia and Kush. Examples were found on a Hathor-headed stela and offering table in the Blemmye “*Bergheiligtum*” at Bab Kalabsha, Herbert Ricke, et al. *Ausgrabungen von Khor Dehmit bis Bet El-Wali, OINE 2* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 20, Pl. 10 (currently on display at the Oriental Institute Museum); on a lintel in Ballana tomb 95, Emery and Kirwan, *The Royal Tombs of Ballana and Qustul, vol. 2* (Cairo: Government Press, Boulaq, 1938), plate 27D; and on offering tables and one of the horned altars in the post-Meroitic Isis shrine/Temple 6 at Qasr Ibrim. The hieracocephalous deity depicted on the exterior wall of the Second Eastern Colonnade at Philae held a palm branch, which was characteristic of this deity in a Nubian or Kushite context, Louis V. Žabkar, “A Hieracocephalous Deity from Naqa, Qustul and Philae” *ZÄS 102* (1975): 148. Of the palm branch motif Žabkar states, “That it did not originate either at Philae or in the Nubian temples of the late period, but rather that it is of a southern or Sudanese origin is clear from the fact that it was used already at Kerma.” *Ibid.*, 149.

⁹ To this day palm branches continue to be placed over Nubian graves, which were observed by the author in modern cemeteries at both at Aswan and at El-Kurru.

¹⁰ Herbert Tomandl, “Tradierung und Bedeutung eines religiösen Motivs von der meroitischen bis zur christlichen Periode” *Beiträge zur Sudanforschung 2* (Wien-Mödling: Druckerei St. Gabriel, 1987), 106-126.

¹¹ Drikell et al., “Newly Discovered Temple,” 18-19. Twenty-four wooden votive plaques were found buried in the “outer hall” of the “Isis Temple.” They were decorated with animals, libation cups from which hung ladles; some were inscribed with Meroitic texts. Of these wooden plaques Adams says, “...nothing comparable is known from any other site...They are also the clearest evidence that Ibrim was a locus of the Isis mystery cult.” William Y. Adams, *Qasr Ibrim. The Ballana Phase* (London: Egypt Exploration Society: 2013), 130.

¹² Drikell et al., “Newly Discovered Temple,” 20-21, pl. VIII b. Ankh-shaped basins found in “Isis Temple” in Qasr Ibrim and at Naqa. Numerous offering tables were found

Ballana, Qasr Ibrim, Bab Kalabsha, and Philae reflect an ongoing devotion to the cult of Isis in Nubia. The Blemmyes and Noubades utilized Isiac iconography, intentionally chosen from the various symbols of Osirian religion, in very different ways. While the Blemmyes were keen to add the worship of Nile Valley gods such as Isis and Osiris to their pantheon of gods, including Mandulis, the Noubade appear to have rejected the practice of Meroitic religion, including the worship of Isis and Osiris, while retaining many of the symbols of Egyptian religion as part of their kingship ideology.¹³ Although the Ballana kings used Isiac symbolism in their kingship iconography, they did not ascribe to the related cult.¹⁴ This repudiation of their Meroitic predecessor's adherence to the cult of Isis is evident in the destruction and desecration of Meroitic holy sites in

at the *Bergheiligtum* in Tafa. See Herbert Rieke, *Ausgrabungen, passim*, especially 13-14.

¹³ Some examples from the tombs at Ballana and Qustul include: a winged sun disc carved on a lintel. (Ballana tomb 95, pl. 27B), depictions on Ballana crowns of the Egyptian *Atef* crown, used so prevalently by Meroitic royalty, associated with the ram of Amun (Ballana tomb 95, pl. 32B, and BT114, pl. 34A), queen's crown with bust of Isis (Ballana tomb 47, pl. 35a), silver pommel of a saddle with figure of Isis with outstretched wings and two hawks wearing the double crown (Qustul tomb 36, pl. 63A), an iron knife with ivory handle carved in the form of Bes (Qustul tomb 3, pl. 84A), and a silver pommel on which two falcons were depicted wearing the double crown of Egypt (Qustul tomb 31, pl. 63G). It is interesting to note the appearance of Christian symbolism in the royal tombs at Ballana as well. In BT118 a toilet flask was topped with a cross, pl. 92G. A silver reliquary that depicts some of the apostles was found with a female burial in Tomb B3, pl. 68. For all of the plates listed above, see Walter B. Emery and Laurence P. Kirwan, *The Royal Tombs of Ballana and Qustul*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Government Press, 1938).

¹⁴ William Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 415. "[I]t would appear that the rulers of Ballana times retained the kingly traditions of ancient Kush while abandoning or suppressing everything associated with priestly traditions." With its overt rejection of Meroitic religion, writing, and priestly traditions, the Ballana Culture of the Noubadae people was ripe for conversion to Christianity. As early as the fifth century, individual Noubadae kings converted. This monumental religious change organized, revitalized, and gave purpose to the Nubian Christian kingdoms, which emerged in the sixth century AD as Nobadia, Makuria, and Alwa.

southern Lower Nubia (controlled by the Noubade).¹⁵ It appears that the Blemmyes, as opposed to the Noubades, were the Nubian supporters of traditional Egyptian cult at Qasr Ibrim, Kalabsha, Tafa, and Philae. Holding power in northern Lower Nubia (394-453AD), the Blemmye kings adopted Meroitic royal iconography: the use of the Meroitic language for royal inscriptions,¹⁶ and adherence to the cult of Isis, which included sending priests to perform rites at the sanctuary on Philae.

Introduction to the Corpus

The Nubian inscriptions of Phase III are attributed to two groups of priests. The first group consisted of several generations of a priestly family called Esmet, a name that was found four times within three generations of the family.¹⁷ The family is attested over

¹⁵ William Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa*, 415; Rachel Dann, *Late Antique Nubia*, 41. For destruction of Meroitic temple at Gebel Adda, see Nicolas Millett, *Meroitic Nubia* 193-5; for destruction of the Meroitic Temple at Meinarti, see William Y. Adams, "Sudan Antiquities Service Excavation at Meinarti 1963-1964" *Kush XIII* (1965), 162, 174; the Old Napatan and Meroitic temple at Qasr Ibrim were abandoned and partly filled with rubble while the Temple 6 an "Isis Shrine" was thoroughly destroyed later during the sixth to the seventh century. See Boyce N. Diskell, et al, "A Newly Discovered Temple at Qasr Ibrim" *Archeologie du Nil Moyen* 3 (1989): 28-29.

¹⁶ MI 94 was written by Blemmye king Kharamadoye and inscribed on the façade of the Pronaos at Kalabsha.

¹⁷ Esmet ḥm I, and his grandsons: Esmet, Esmet ʿ3, and, Esmet ḥm II. Written Ns-P3-mtr in Demotic, the name means "the one to whom the (holy) staff belongs" See Hermann Ranke, *Die ägyptische Personennamen, vol. I*, (Hamburg, Selbstverlag des verfassers, 1932) 175; Erich Lüddeckens, *Demotisches Namenbuch, Band I, Lieferung 9* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1989), 664-666, 677-679. For recent discussions of the meaning of the name Esmet, see Eugene Cruz-Urbe, "The Death of Demotic Redux" in H. Knuf, et al, eds., *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen* (Fs Heinz-Josef Thissen)(Leuven; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010), 5 n. 40; Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion*, (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2008): 175 n. 1. It is worth noting that every example (but two) of the Demotic name Esmet that was written with the numerical sign for "10" to represent the phonogram met for mtr "staff" was found at Philae. See *Demot. Nb.*, 665 nos. 46, 48, 52-60. For a discussion of the holy staff in ancient Egypt, see Helmut Satzinger, "Der heilige Stab als Kraftquelle des Königs" *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in*

five,¹⁸ possibly six, generations.¹⁹ Hornakhtyotef and his son, Esmet ḥn I, members of the first two generations of the Esmet family attested in the graffiti, served as Second Prophets of Isis.²⁰ By the third generation, Pakhom, who married into the family, had attained the rank of First Prophet of Isis. His sons, Esmet, Esmet ʿ3, and Esmet ḥm II, succeeded in acquiring the primary priestly positions in the cult of Isis at Philae: Prophet, *Pterophorus*, and *Protostoliste*.

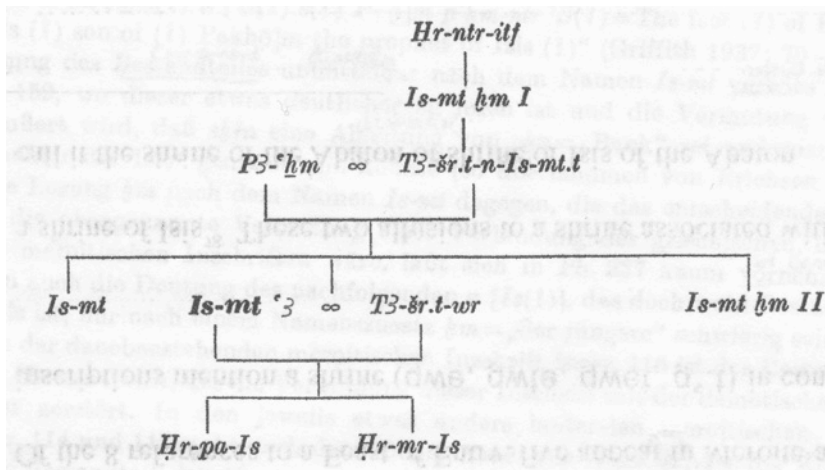


Figure 20: Esmet family of priests. (Reprinted from Burkhardt, *Ägypter und Meroiten*, 37.)

The second group of priests who were active at Philae in the fifth century was the Prophets of Ptiris, a little known divinity.²¹ Three Greek inscriptions attributed to this

Wien 77 (1981): 26-28.

¹⁸ Dijkstra accepts only three generations of this family. See Dijkstra, *End of Egyptian Religion*, 199-201.

¹⁹ Cruz-Urbe has identified another generation of this family in a graffito found on the exterior of the Second Eastern Colonnade (site of the graffiti of the prophets of Ptiris): Hor(paese), son of Horpaese, son of Esmet ʿ3. See Eugene Cruz-Urbe, “The Death of Demotic Redux: Pilgrimage, Nubia and the Preservation of Egyptian Culture” in *Fs Heinz-Josef Thissen*, 5.

²⁰ Hr-nḥt-ḫt=f (Generation 1 - attested in Ph. 365, Ph. 375) and Esmet ḥm I (Generation 2 – wrote Ph. 375).

²¹ The divinity Ptiris will be discussed further on pages 226. Most scholars assume that the falcon-headed crocodile depicted several times among the inscriptions of the “Prophets of Ptiris” (IGP 190 and IGP 191) was a divinity and must have been the divinity Ptiris whom the authors of IGP 190 and IGP 191 served. This assumption is by

group, IGP 190-192, were inscribed on the outer wall of the Second Eastern Colonnade. Pasnous, son of Pachoumious inscribed his prayer, IGP 190, in AD 434. Pamet, son of Bereos, held the title Prophet of Ptiris in his undated inscription, IGP 191. Panouchem, son of Tabolbolos, did not record a title, but his undated inscription, IGP 192, is to the left of IGP 191 and is believed to have been inscribed at the same time as those of the two Prophets of Ptiris. Pasnous, inscribed a second proskynema, IGP 199, dated AD 456/457, more than twenty years after IGP190, on the exterior of the Main Temple where he claimed the title *Protoklinarchos*.²²

no means certain as nothing in the inscriptions identifies the hybrid creature as Ptiris nor are the figural graffiti labeled. Furthermore, the wall contains several other depictions both royal and religious. See a drawing of the wall on page 228. For more on the hybrid deity, see Heinz J. Thissen, “Varia Onomastica” *Göttinger Miszellen* 141 (1994): 93-94; Inge Hofmann, “Ein weiteres Beispiel eines falkenköpfigen Krokodils aus dem spätmeroitischen Reich” *Göttinger Miszellen* 22 (1976): 29; indem, “Miszellen zu einigen meroitischen Götterdarstellungen” *Göttinger Miszellen* 24 (1977): 41-43.

²² IGP 199.

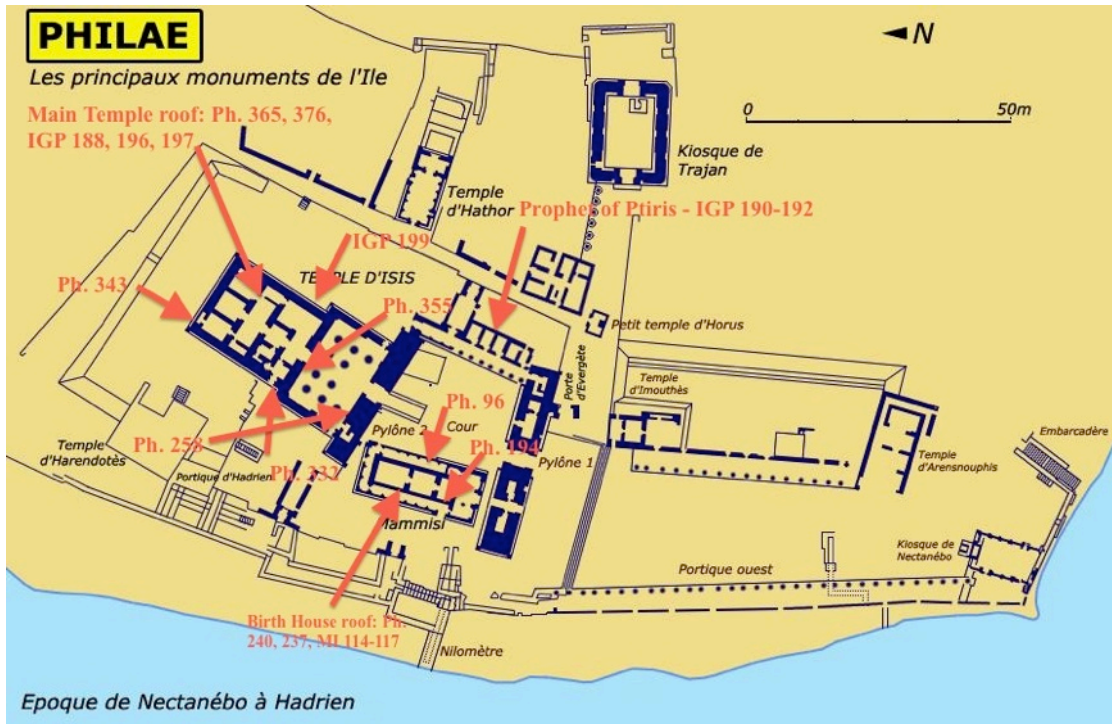


Figure 21: Plan of Philae showing location of Phase III graffiti. (Plan by Canopé académie de Strasbourg, Marie-Georges Brun. Courtesy of Creative Commons. Adapted by author.)

As with the prior phases of Nubian presence at Philae, inscriptions were clustered in particular areas of the temple complex. With only a few exceptions,²³ prayers were inscribed in one of three locations: on the roof of the Main Temple (primarily associated with the Osiris Chamber), on the roof of the Birth House, and on the exterior eastern wall of the Second Eastern Colonnade that connects the First Pylon to the Second Pylon of the Main Temple along the east side of the Forecourt.²⁴

²³ The following inscriptions were **not** inscribed in an area with a cluster of late Nubian inscriptions: Ph. 194 (Room 1, Birth House), Ph. 343 (exterior rear wall of Main Temple), Bij. 6 (Pronaos façade of the temple on Biga), Ph. 332 (south of the western entrance into Naos), IGP 199 (eastern exterior of Naos), IGP 189, IGP 193 (loose blocks). Even within this group of “exceptions,” the majority of inscriptions are associated with the Birth House and the Main Temple, enduring loci of Nubian religious activity.

²⁴ Inscriptions IGP 190, 191, and 192 were engraved on the wall that forms the eastern, exterior side of four rooms east of the second eastern colonnade. The third room from the south was the Meroitic Chamber, formerly the purification chamber, discussed in chapter 2. For a plan of the Second East Colonnade, see P&M VI, 212 or Figure 23 on page 247.

The isolated and peripheral areas to which the late Nubian priests had access suggest that they no longer were permitted to enter or worship on the dromos, in the Meroitic Chamber, or even in the Gate of Hadrian, sites which had received considerable Nubian attention during Phases I and II.²⁵ It is likely that this was due to the growing strength and expanding presence of the Christian community on Philae. Recall Bishop Appion's letter, written in AD 425-450, that referred to churches on Philae and the garrison of Philae that served the churches there.²⁶ Isiac priests and Christians shared the island of Philae for over a century,²⁷ a transitional period in which the traditional priests who served the Egyptian gods gradually lost their position of dominance on the island. Early references to a bishop on Philae date to the mid-fourth century,²⁸ well before the closure of the temple of Isis circa AD 535-537. While it remains difficult to identify with precision the moment of Christian victory on the island, it is clear that the transition from a holy island of Isis to a Christian bishopric occurred incrementally.

²⁵ There only other inscriptions dated to the fifth century AD that did not belong to Esmet family members, were the four Greek inscriptions of the Prophets of Ptiris and two Demotic inscriptions: Ph. 259 (AD 404-5) and Ph. 364 (AD 407-8). The former was inscribed on the south wall of the Pronaos, while the latter adorned the west side of the doorway to the Osiris Chamber.

²⁶ *FHN III*, 1138.

²⁷ Étienne Bernand, *IGP II*, 245.

²⁸ The first bishop of Philae was Macedonius. His name appears in the *Coptic Life of Aaron* and in a list composed by Athanasius who named the ninety-four bishops who subscribed to the Council of Serdica in AD 343. Athanasius, *Apol. Sec. 49.3*; Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 55-56, 255-269. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, composed a synodal letter to the church in Antioch written in AD 362. The letter closes with the signatures of several bishops, including Markos of Philae, the second bishop and son of the High Priest of Philae. See Jitse H. F. Dijkstra *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 255-260. Pierre Nautin, "La conversion du temple de Philae en église chrétienne" *Cahiers Archéologiques* 17 (1967): 20 n. 74.

Demotic and Greek inscriptions captured the reactions of local residents to the religious change that took place in the fifth century. One Demotic graffito, inscribed on the western exterior wall of the Main Temple's Naos in AD 439, referred to "an abominable command against the Abaton"²⁹ may have alluded to the Edict of Theodosius II issued in AD 435, which called for the destruction of all pagan temples and the erection of a cross on the site. While the Main Temple on Philae was not destroyed, its Pronaos was converted into a Christian church after the temple was officially closed. A Greek graffito inscribed on the eastern jamb of the doorway from the Pronaos into the Naos of the Main Temple proclaimed, "The cross has won; it always wins!"³⁰

When the Noubade king Silko defeated his Blemmye adversaries and claimed northern Lower Nubia in the mid-fifth century, the practice of inscribing proskynemata for Isis and Osiris at Philae ceased. With the victory of the Christian Noubade over the traditionalist Blemmyes, the priests who performed the rites of Khoiak and the journey of Isis into Nubia lost the right to inscribe prayers on the walls at Philae. In all likelihood, enactment of the traditional rites also ceased at that time.

Language Use

An interesting bifurcation is noted between the priests who wrote in Demotic and those who wrote in Greek. Esmet and his brother, Esmet ʿ3, exhibit the conservatism of priests serving in an Egyptian temple. Both priests wrote **only** in Demotic.

Furthermore, the sons of Esmet ʿ3, Horpaese and Hormaese, as well as Esmet ʿ3's grandsons, Esmet and Horpaese, **all** wrote their inscriptions exclusively in Demotic. It

²⁹ Ph. 332/2-3 w3ḥ-sḥn dwe r(?) Pr-wʿb

³⁰ IGP 201. Ibid, 256-259. By coincidence, this Christian graffito is opposite Ph. 355 of Horpaese. See plan on page 206. Although Ph. 355 was undated, another graffito of Horpaese (Ph. 450) bore the date AD 438 indicating that he was active at Philae during the time of the Edict of Theodosius II.

seems likely that this branch of the family was based at Philae because Esmet ʿ3's descendants constituted the majority of the family members attested in inscriptions of the following generations: two, possibly three sons,³¹ and one possible grandson of Esmet ʿ3 are attested in graffiti at Philae.³² Esmet ʿ3's inscriptions portray him as the family historian and committed proponent of the traditional cult. In AD 439, Esmet ʿ3 noted "an abominable command against the Abaton."³³ Perhaps fearing the cumulative Christian and military assaults against the traditional religious community on Philae, Esmet ʿ3 felt compelled to record his family's priestly lineage in the last dated Demotic graffito written in AD 452.³⁴ Esmet ʿ3 listed three generations of his family: his mother, her father, and her grandfather, Esmet ʿ3's great grandfather.

The titles, language use, and statements made in the inscriptions of Esmet ḥm II, suggest that he was not resident at Philae,³⁵ but rather he traveled to the temple complex to perform rites for the goddess Isis, which most likely entailed transporting her divine image to temples in Nubia annually. Both Wilcken and Otto maintained that Esmet ḥm II (Smetchem) were **not** resident at Philae, while Otto believed that Esmet ʿ3 (Smeto) resided and worked at Philae,

³¹ Smetachates was also a son of Smeto/ Esmet ʿ3. Smetachates' mother was Tsaoel in his Greek graffito IGP 198. See *IGP II*, 247-248.

³² Hor(paese), son of Horpaese, son of Esmet ʿ3 wrote his Demotic graffito on the exterior of the Second Eastern Colonnade.

³³ Ph. 332/3. Shn dwe r Pr-wʿb. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 97.

³⁴ Ph. 365. Ibid., 102-103.

³⁵ A son, φηογ, may be attested for Esmet ḥm II in an undated, Greek inscription inscribed above three pairs of feet on the rocks of Salib Island, located immediately north of Biga Island. See *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Egypte antique*. Première série, Haute Egypte, ouvrage publié sous les auspices de S.A. Abbas II Helmi, khédive d'Egypte par la Direction générale du Service des Antiquités. (Vienna: A. Holzhausen, 1894), 68.

Mit Recht hat Wilcken...darauf hingewiesen, dass Smetchem nicht in Philä selbst sein priesterliches Amt bekleidet hat, sondern als ein in blemyschen Diensten stehender Priester anzusehen ist. Dies zeigt uns, dass die Mitglieder derselben Familie durchaus nicht alle an demselben Tempel tätig zu sein brauchten, sondern auch an andere Heiligtümer übertreten konnten, ein deutlicher Beweis für die Einheit der Priesterschaft der ägyptischen Götter...Wilckens Zweifel daran, dass die anderen Glieder dieser Priesterfamilie in Philä selbst tätig gewesen sind, scheinen mir nämlich unberechtigt...Bezüglich des Smeto sei noch bemerkt, dass wohl von ihm, wenn er zusammen mit seinem Bruder, der eine niedere Priester würde als er selbst bekleidet, von auswärts nach Philä gekommen wäre, das προσκύνημα gesetzt worden wäre und dass dann anstatt ἦλθα wohl ἦλθαμεν dastehen würde; Zudem wird er ja als διάδοχος des sicher in Philä amtierenden Smeto bezeichnet.³⁶

Esmet ḥm II is conspicuous as the one family member who used Greek and Meroitic in addition to Demotic to compose his prayer inscriptions. His language choices suggest that he was a priest in Nubia where the Meroitic language continued to be a language of prestige³⁷ and where Greek was the common language used by Blemmye and Noubade tribes to communicate.³⁸ Although Egyptian priests and scribes might have found it useful to acquire fluency in the Meroitic language in earlier periods when the Meroitic kingdom was a power in Nubia, after the fall of Meroe circa AD 300 there would have been no prestige associated with the Meroitic language. Any priest who chose to record his inscription at Philae in Meroitic almost certainly would have been in

³⁶ Walter G. Otto, *Priester und Tempel im hellenistischen Ägypten: ein Beitrag zur kultgeschichte des hellenismus*, vol. 1 (Leipzig; Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1905), 210 n. 8 quoted in *IGP II*, 243. I disagree with Otto's assertion in the quote above that Esmet ʿ3 held a higher title than his brother.

³⁷ Meroitic continued to be used in fifth century AD Nubia in political and religious contexts. Two examples from the fifth century AD include King Kharamadoye's lengthy royal inscription at Kalabsha (MI 94) and the painted, wooden plaques buried in the forecourt of the "Isis shrine" at Qasr Ibrim, which included texts written in Meroitic.

³⁸ Correspondence between warring Blemmye and Noubade kings was written in Greek as were the late *proskynemata* at Kalabsha and Tafa.

the service of a Blemmye king, who saw himself as a successor to the kings of Meroe and, thus, still considered the Meroitic language to be prestigious.

The priests of *Ptiris* wrote exclusively in Greek, which had become the *lingua franca* of Nubia after the kingdom of Meroe fell in the early fourth century AD. Their use of Greek and the cult association title, *Protoklinarchos*, claimed by one Prophet of Ptiris connect these late inscriptions at Philae to the Greek inscriptions found at Kalabsha and Tafa as well as to the royal inscriptions at Kalabsha³⁹ and the corpus of letters written by Blemmye⁴⁰ and Noubade⁴¹ kings found at Qasr Ibrim.

Were the Last Priests at Philae Nubian?

The question of the ethnicity of Esmet ḥm II and his family has been an important part of the discussion of the religious, cultural, and political context in which the last priests at Philae functioned. Because they were the last practitioners of traditional Egyptian religion to leave prayer inscriptions and the last priests capable of writing the traditional Egyptian scripts (hieroglyphic and Demotic), the Esmet family's ethnicity has been seen as essential component in understanding the end of ancient Egyptian religion.

³⁹ Three Greek inscriptions, dated to the late third to the early fourth century AD, were engraved at Kalabsha for the Blemmye king Tamal. In them, the king set boundaries or granted land. See *FHN III*, #310, 1128-1131. A Greek graffito of Blemmye king Isemene recorded the king's distribution of land. See *FHN III*, #311, 1131-1132.

⁴⁰ The Blemmye king Phonen was the author of a Greek letter found at Qasr Ibrim. In the letter, Phonen complained to the Noubade king, Aburni about the Noubade seizure of Kalabsha. See *FHN III*, #319, 1158-1165.

⁴¹ Three Coptic letters addressed to the Noubade king Tantani were found at Qasr Ibrim. See *FHN III*, #320-322, 1165-1175. They suggest that the Noubade had successfully ousted the Blemmyes and controlled Qasr Ibrim and Kalabsha by the mid-fifth century. In the first letter Viventius sought to conclude a peace treaty with the Noubadian king. The third letter, from a man named Mouses, addressed Tantani as a fellow Christian and sought the safety of captives held by Tantani as well as the exchange of prestige gifts. The Noubade king Silko had his triumphant inscription inscribed in Greek on the facade of the Procella at Kalabsha. See *FHN III*, #317, 1147-1153.

Were they Egyptian priests who served a Blemmye king or were they ethnically Nubian?

Zauzich believed it was impossible to determine the ethnicity of these priests.

Waren sie Ägypter oder doch eher Blemmyer oder Meroiten? Ich sehe keine Möglichkeit, diese Frage im Augenblick gültig zu beantworten, nur eines steht fest: nicht alle Schreiber der Graffiti des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts waren auf Philae ansässig. Von einem lässt sich beweisen – was auch für andere gelten mag –, dass er nur besuchsweise dorthin gekommen ist. Es ist daher gut möglich, dass die letzten Träger ägyptischer Kultur keine Ägypter waren.⁴²

Nowhere in their temple inscriptions do the priests of the Esmet family or the Prophets of Ptiris make reference to their ethnicity. However, the issue of their ethnicity becomes irrelevant when we remember that the Dodekaschoenos had been ceded to local Nubian control by the Roman emperor Diocletian who withdrew Egypt's southern border to Aswan circa AD 298, more than one hundred years⁴³ before the inscriptions of Phase III were inscribed. Any Egyptians remaining in the Lower Nubia during that period would have lived as residents in a very ethnically mixed society, controlled by local Nubian kings.

In the context of this dissertation, the cultural and religious milieu in which those last priests functioned is more important than their ethnic background. The late rites at Philae were performed, at least partially, for the benefit of Blemmye worshippers who traveled annually to Philae to consult with the divine statue of Isis, which they carried back to Nubia for a period of time. Whether there existed a local population of Egyptian worshippers who also participated in the late rites and were served by the two Esmet

⁴² Karl-Theodor Zauzich, "Demotische Texte," in *Das römisch-byzantinische Ägypten: Akten des internationalen Symposions 26. – 30. September 1978 in Trier*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1983): 77.

⁴³ From AD 298 until AD 408 (the beginning of Phase III) or AD 456 when the last dated graffito of Phase III was recorded.

brothers who were resident at Philae is uncertain. However, analysis of the dated Phase III inscriptions seems to suggest just that. Eleven of the fifth century inscriptions contained a date.⁴⁴ All but three of the dates included the year, specified as a regnal year of the Roman emperor Diocletian.⁴⁵ All of the date formulae included the month, season, and day. Khoiak, of course, was the fourth month of Akhet, the season of growing.

Year	Inscription	Month/Day	Writer
No year	IGP 191	3 Peret 12	Pamet, Prophet of Ptiris
No year	Ph. 375	Khoiak 10	Esmet ḥm I, grandfather of Esmet ʿ3 and Esmet ḥm II
AD 434	IGP 190	3 Akhet 9	Pasnous, Prophet of Ptiris
AD 435	Ph. 240	Khoiak 1	Esmet ʿ3
AD 435	Ph. 366	Khoiak 1	Esmet ʿ3
AD 438	Ph. 450	4 Peret 9	Horpaese, son of Esmet ʿ3
AD 452	Ph. 365	Khoiak 6	Esmet ʿ3
AD 452	IGP 196	Khoiak 15	Esmet ḥm II
AD 452	IGP 197	Khoiak 23	Esmet ḥm II
No year	Ph. 258	2 Akhet 22	Horpaese, son of Esmet ʿ3

Table 4: Phase III Inscriptions with Date Formula

It is immediately evident that six of the eleven dated inscriptions were engraved in the month of Khoiak. Further observation reveals that the first *proskynemata* dated to Khoiak were engraved by Esmet ḥm I, in one inscription with no year, and Esmet ʿ3, who wrote two inscriptions in AD 435. We know that Esmet ḥm II became a

⁴⁴ I have not included Ph. 259 or Ph. 364, which were also inscribed in the early fifth century, because they do not belong to members of the Esmet family or among the inscriptions of the Prophets of Ptiris. Those two inscriptions only include a year; they do not provide the season, month, or day and, thus, are not relevant to this analysis.

⁴⁵ Many non-Christians who wrote inscriptions at Philae dated their documents from the beginning of the reign of Diocletian, which began AD 283.

Protostoliste in AD 448.⁴⁶ Since Esmet ḥm I (grandfather) and Esmet ʿ3 were the only priests of the fifth century who inscribed graffiti dated to the month of Khoiak in the period before AD 448, it may be likely that they performed the rites for a local community, although nothing in the inscriptions excludes the possibility that Nubians were among the worshippers. However, Esmet ḥm II's claim that he journeyed to Philae to perform rites with his brother in IGP 197, inscribed in AD 452, suggests that Blemmye worshippers may have journeyed to Philae with him to participate in the rites, especially if the journey of Isis to Nubia was one part of the rites celebrated during the month of Khoiak. Letronne suggested the month of Khoiak was the time that priests gathered at Philae and enacted processions for the gods,

Il est vraisemblable que ce mois était celui où se célébraient annuellement certains ceremonies religieuses, et où se réunissaient à Philae les diverses membres du grand college pour les processions et autres ceremonies, par exemple l'habillement (στολισμοι) d'Isis et Osiris.⁴⁷

Both of the inscriptions in which Esmet ḥm II claimed the title *Protostoliste* were dated in the month of Khoiak. This suggests that the procession to Nubia took place either before or after the celebration of the funerary rites of Osiris in the month of Khoiak. Unfortunately, none of the Nubian temple inscriptions make reference to the procession of Isis to Nubia,⁴⁸ although it is safe to imagine the arrival of Sasan, the royal ambassador to Rome, and Abratoye, the Viceroy of Nubia (Ph. 416) during Phase II as very spectacular processions of Meroitic dignitaries to Philae. The two processions of

⁴⁶ In IGP 197, Esmet ḥm II stated, "I became *protostoliste* in year 165 (of Diocletian)" which is equivalent to AD 448.

⁴⁷ J.A. Letronne, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latine d'Égypte*, vol. 2 (Paris: L'Imprimerie royal, 1842), 205 quoted in Étienne Bernand, *IGP*, vol. 2, 246, n. 6.

⁴⁸ However, Phase I (Dakka 12) and Phase II (Dakka 30) Nubian inscriptions mentioned processions **from** Nubian temples such as Dakka and Korte to Philae.

Meroitic officials and Nubian priests depicted in the Meroitic Chamber also depicted official processions at Philae.

The assumption that some of the last priests were not resident at Philae, but traveled there to perform and participate in rites, is not uniformly accepted, however. While many scholars accept that one or all of the last priests at Philae served Blemmye kings (Krall, Wilcken, Otto, Burkhardt, Zauzich, and Cruz-Uribe), some believe that the last priests, including Esmet ḥm II, were Egyptians who were resident at Philae (Letronne, Maspero, and, most recently, Dijkstra⁴⁹). However, the foreign names of the Prophets of Ptiris,⁵⁰ and statements made by Esmet ḥm II that he “came here” in two inscriptions at Philae⁵¹ indicate that at least one of the late priests traveled to Philae from elsewhere.

Three factors support the contention that the last priests at Philae performed rites on behalf of Nubian kings.

- Confirmation of an ongoing devotion to the cult of Isis is found in the joint

Blemmye-Noubade demand in a treaty concluded ca. AD 451-453 to have

⁴⁹ Dijkstra argued from a misinterpretation of a statement by Priscus. Dijkstra supported his argument by stating, “Moreover, priestly offices were hereditary and it can therefore be expected that the priests of Philae were Egyptian, as they had been for centuries.” Dijkstra, *The End of Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 201. This, of course, ignores the well-established history of Nubian priests who were active at Philae in the third century AD. For a full discussion of those Nubian priests who traveled to Philae on behalf of Meroitic monarchs, see chapter 2 of this work.

⁵⁰ Pamet, son of Bereos IGP 191 and Panouchem Tabolbolu of IGP 192. Of these foreign names, Bernand, *IGP II*, 225, says “Il semble plus raisonnable de penser à des noms barbares plutôt qu’egyptiens. Panouchèm, comme Pamèt et Pasnous, faisait peut-être partie des delegations envoyées par les Blemmyes auprès de la déesse de Philae.”

⁵¹ Esmet ḥm II stated that he “came here and performed my work at the same time as my brother” in his Greek graffito IGP 197, lines 9-15. See Étienne Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae*, vol. 2 (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969), 237-246. In another very damaged Greek graffito IGP 193, Esmet ḥm II recorded a journey (?) to Egypt in AD 448 when he attained the rank of *Protostoliste*.

continued access to the temples on Philae and the right to take the divine statue of Isis to Nubia each year.⁵²

- The prevalence of figural graffiti depicting feet paired with proskynemata tie this corpus to a tradition widespread in Nubia. Although so-called “feet graffiti” are known from around the Mediterranean during the Greco-Roman period,⁵³ the phenomenon was very common in late period pagan worship in the Nubian and Kushite world.⁵⁴ Anepigraphic “feet graffiti” also occurred at Philae.⁵⁵ While the

⁵² FHN III, 1155. The treaty was concluded with Maximinus, an Egyptian official who may have been the governor of the Thebaid. In a surviving fragment of writing by Priscus, fifth century AD historian from Thrace, reference was made to a prior agreement “in accordance with the ancient law, their crossing to the temple of Isis be unhindered, Egyptians having charge of the river boat in which the statue (*agalma*) of the goddess is placed and ferried across the river. For at a stated time the barbarians bring the wooden statue (*xoanon*) to their own country and, after having consulted it, return it safely to the island.” The arrangement referred to by Priscus described the southward “pilgrimage of the gods.” A Greek graffito at Philae recorded the arrival of ships from Nubia five centuries earlier. In poetic Greek, the writer referred to the arrival of “fast-sailing ships which carried the *Aithiopians*’ shrines, worthy of the gods, to our land”. IGP II, #158; FHN II, 711-713.

⁵³ Étienne Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae*, volume II, 218-219. See also, L. Castiglione, “Vestigia” *Acta Archaeologica Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22 (1970): 93-132; Katherine M. D. Dunbabin “*Ipsa deae vestigia*...Footprints divine and human on Graeco-Roman monuments” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3 (1990): 85-109. For examples of feet graffiti at Karnak and Deir el-Medina in Upper Egypt, see Helen Jacquet-Gordon, *The Graffiti on the Khonsu Temple Roof at Karnak: a Manifestation of Personal Piety. The Temple of Khonsu*, vol. 3. *Oriental Institute Publications* 123. (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2003), 6, 13-16; Chantal Heurtel, *Les inscriptions coptes et grecques du temple d’Hathor à Deir al-Médina* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2004), 70-79. Both groups of feet graffiti were found on the temple’s roof much like the feet graffiti at Philae.

⁵⁴ Although the practice of leaving images of feet in a cultic site did not originate in Nubia, it was widespread during the Kushite period. Two sandstone slabs with incised images of feet were found in Temple M720 at Meroe. See Claudia Näser, “The Small Finds” in *The Capital of Kush*, vol. 2, eds. Peter L. Shinnie and Julie Anderson (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag. 2004), 288; at Kawa three sets of votive feet carved into a block, two of which were set before a statue of Taharqa with the ram of Amun in the First court of Temple T. See M.F.L. Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, vol. 2 (London: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), Text: 26, 56, 71,

- “feet graffiti” at Philae accompanied by Demotic and Greek inscriptions are not exclusively Nubian, the four **Meroitic-language** “feet graffiti,” written by a member of the Esmet family suggest that the last priests at Philae served Nubian worshippers.
- Finally, Isiac iconography found in X-Group⁵⁶ sites indicates the continued importance of the cult of Isis in Nubia even after the fall of Meroe. The use of Isiac symbolism stressed the continuity of rule from the Meroitic royalty to that of the newly dominant Blemmye and Noubade rulers who controlled Lower Nubia

139; Plates: pl. L, b; in Doukki Gel a block with an *ex voto* foot was found at the bottom of the “southern well” (the town of *Pnubs*, near Kerma). See Charles Bonnet, Matthieu Honneger, Dominique Valbelle, “Kerma: rapport préliminaire sur les campagnes de 2001-2002 et 2002-2003” *Genava* 51 (2003), 274-275. Feet graffiti, which form the majority of graffiti at Qasr Ibrim, have been found on the mainland around the site as well as on the Podium outside the Meroitic Temple. See Pamela Rose, *Qasr Ibrim: the Hinterland Survey* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1996), 102-117; Idem, *Meroitic Temple Complex at Qasr Ibrim* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007), 118-120, 132-142; and the “Isis Shrine” at Qasr Ibrim, see William B. Adams, *Qasr Ibrim: the Ballana Phase* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2013), 119, 131, pl. 47a, 53b, 68c; Miroslav Werner, *Some Nubian Petroglyphs on Czechoslovak Concession* (Prague: Universita Karlova, 1973), 21-53. “The largest set of foot and sandal prints coming from a single location in Nubia and published to date is Qasr Ibrim.” *Ibid.*, 26. Feet graffiti from the hinterland of Qasr Ibrim are suggested to range in date from the late Ptolemaic to early Roman period, although they are notoriously difficult to date. For feet graffiti dedicated to Isis, see Sarolta A. Takács, “Divine and Human Feet: Records of Pilgrims Honouring Isis” in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 360-368.

⁵⁵ Anepigraphic feet graffiti at Philae were carved into the pavement of the western colonnade of the dromos, the entrance ramps of the Main Temple (*IGP* II, 219) and the Harendotes temple, as well as on the roof of the Birth House.

⁵⁶ I follow Rachel Dann’s lead in referring to the post-Meroitic Lower Nubian culture as “X-Group” using Reisner’s original designation. Dann rightly asserts that many late sites are not firmly attributed to either the Blemmye or Noubade including the Qustul and Ballana tombs themselves. The use of “Ballana period” privileges that site over the many other post-Meroitic sites attested in Lower Nubia. See, Rachel J. Dann, *The archaeology of late antique Sudan: aesthetics and identity in the royal X-Group tombs at Qustul and Ballana* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), 8.

after the fall of Meroe, conferring legitimacy on the minor kings who were the successors to Meroitic power in the region.

Feet Graffiti

After 374 we find graffiti in the corridor of the Hadrian gate, and on the roofs both of the Birth House and of the Isis temple, generally accompanying outlines of feet. The pagan worship at Philae seems to have continued down to the middle of the next century, the Blemmyes being specially permitted by the treaty with the Byzantine general in 451 to visit the temple once a year; but its existence must have been feeble and the frequenters of the temple barbaric, for only two dated records of this time are seen upon the walls (Ph. 365, 377, AD 452).⁵⁷

So-called “feet graffiti” are proskynemata accompanied by the image of feet, meant to evoke the eternal presence of the worshipper before the god. Nubians did not write all of the “feet graffiti” at Philae and those at Philae are part of a larger corpus of “feet graffiti” found in Egypt, throughout the eastern Mediterranean, and south into Kush.⁵⁸ At Philae there were also numerous examples of feet graffiti without (surviving?) text. Such graffiti were inscribed on the ramp leading up to the First and Second Pylons, but are no longer extant.⁵⁹

At Philae there are seven (possibly nine⁶⁰) Nubian “feet graffiti.” The corpus of Nubian “feet graffiti” comprises three Meroitic inscriptions,⁶¹ one Demotic inscription,⁶² and three Greek inscriptions.⁶³ Esmet ḥm II dedicated five of the seven “feet graffiti.”

⁵⁷ Griffith, *Catalogue*, 10-11. Griffith was mistaken in saying that only two dated (Demotic) graffiti were inscribed during this period at Philae. Ph. 366 (AD 435), Ph. 332 (AD 439), Ph. 376 (AD 408-409), Ph. 450 (AD 438) each included a date. Ph. 377 does not include a date as stated by Griffith in the quote above. Its date is inferred from the Greek graffiti of Esmet ḥm II, IGP 196, inscribed in front and to the left of Ph. 377. See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 106.

⁵⁸ See n. 53 and 54.

⁵⁹ IGP II, 219.

⁶⁰ Two of the three possible Nubian “feet graffiti” were not included in this corpus because the connection to the Esmet family was too tenuous. A man named Pachomious wrote Ph. 444 and IGP 189, but it is not clear that he was “our” Pachomious. The Greek

Table 5: Feet Inscriptions at Philae⁶⁴

Inscription	Author	Year	Father	Title	Location	Berlin Ph.
MI 112 Two pairs feet Palm branch	N...keteye		Yetmede of strategus of the water		Roof – BH South side	
MI 113 To right of same feet	Adade				Roof – BH South side	
MI 114	Semeti shl (Esmet hm II)				Roof – BH South side	
MI 115	Illegible				Roof – BH South side	
Ph. 237 In front of image of two feet	Esmet shne(?) (Griffith) or Esmet hm (Cruz-Uribe)		Pakhom	Prophet of Isis	Roof – BH West side, south	724-5 Near MI 116, 114, 117
Ph. 235 Behind 2 feet w/in frame	Pakhnum hm		P-n- nh̄t- tw̄t-ꜥ3 Panekhate senior	No title	Roof – BH W colonnade, north	1384
MI 116	Semeti shl				Roof – BH West side	

graffito, IGP 198, was included in the Phase III Nubian corpus. Smetachates, the author, stated that he was the son of Smeto (Esmet ꜥ3). He must have been a half brother to the three brothers named Esmet; Smetachates' mother's name was Tsaouel, while Tsenwer was mother of Horpaese and Hormaese. It is possible that Tsaouel and Tsenwer were simply variant spellings of the same Egyptian name in the Greek script.

⁶¹ I assume that Nubians (Blemmye, Noubadae, or other) dedicated each of the six Meroitic-language inscriptions. Three of the “feet graffiti” belonged to Esmet hm II who called himself Semeti shl in Meroitic (MI 114, MI 116, and MI 117). MI 112 and 113 were deemed to be part of the Phase II corpus. MI 115 was not included in the corpus because it is illegible.

⁶² Ph. 376 is part of a bilingual Demotic-Greek inscription written by Esmet hm II.

⁶³ Two of these graffiti (IGP 188 and IGP 196) belong to Esmet hm II. Smetachates wrote IGP 198.

⁶⁴ Cruz-Uribe has identified four additional Demotic feet inscriptions on the roof of the Birth House: GPH 890, GPH 891 GPH 892, and GPH 887, personal communication.

	(Esmet ḥm II)					
Ph. 242	Esmet ḥm		P-ti- ^c r-nfr	Prophet of Isis	Roof – BH N colonnade	
MI 117	Semeti shl (Esmet ḥm II)			Prophet of Philae	Roof – BH North side	
IGP 188	Smetchem (Esmet ḥm II)				E border of hypaethrum-roof of Pronaos	
Ph. 376 bilingual-IGP188 4 lines Dem in front of pair of feet; behind feet 3 lines in Greek	Esmet ḥm II	AD 408	Pakhom	1 st prophet of Isis	E border of hypaethrum-roof of Pronaos	
IGP 196	Smetchem (Esmet ḥm II)	AD 452		Protostoliste		
Ph. 377 Greek text to left IGP 196	P3-ne-nḥtt-ḥm				Just south of Ph. 376	L.D. VI, Bl. 90
Ph. 444 Text with three pairs feet	Pakhom				Building B-reused block built into N wall	
Ph. 445 Two pairs feet, <i>tabula ansata</i> w/stylized branch, curse formula	Bek		Tetow	No title	Building B-reused block	
IGP 189	Pachomios	AD 411	None	No title	Stone facing from W. church	
IGP 198	Smetachates	AD 454	Smeto	No title	West church tile pavement	

Table 5: continued

The corpus of “feet graffiti” at Philae as identified in this dissertation differs in several ways from the corpus as described by Burkhardt who included “feet graffiti” in *Typ I “Namensinschriften”* and designated them as subset 1.3 “*Sonderform zusammen mit Fussabdrücken*,” with or without the addition of nꜣ ptꜣ.w n (“the feet of”) or a curse formula.⁶⁵ Burkhardt noted only five Demotic “feet graffiti”⁶⁶ and did not consider Esmet ḥm II’s bilingual Greek-Demotic “feet graffito,” Ph. 376, to be “Meroitic.” Ph. 237, an undated graffito inscribed on the Birth House roof, was the one Demotic “feet graffito” assumed to be “Meroitic.” Burkhardt sought to prove that the author of Ph. 237 (Esmet šḥne) also wrote the Meroitic-language “feet graffiti” inscribed nearby.⁶⁷ She was unable to establish a definitive connection between Ph. 237 and the other inscriptions of Esmet ḥm II. Cruz-Uribe has suggested that Ph. 237 be read, “The feet of Nesmetykhem (Esmet ḥm), son of Peti[iry]nefer, the prophet of Isis.” That man is attested in another feet graffito, Ph. 242, on the north side of the Birth House roof. As Cruz-Uribe’s copy of the graffito differs significantly from Griffith’s and I have not had access to inspect Ph. 237 for myself, I cannot offer an opinion as to who wrote the inscription and, therefore, cannot attribute Ph. 237 to Esmet ḥm II at this time.

⁶⁵ Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 22.

⁶⁶ Ph. 235, Ph. 237, Ph. 242, Ph. 376, and Ph. 377. Oddly, Burkhardt did not categorize Ph. 444 (written by Pakhom) as a “feet graffito” although Griffith described it as “sculptured neatly with three pairs of feet.” See Griffith, *Catalogue*, 128; Idem, vol. II, pl. LXX.

⁶⁷ Adelheid Burkhardt, “Zu späten heidnischen Priestern in Philae” in *Graeco-Coptica: Griechen und Kopten im byzantinischen Ägypten*, ed. Peter Nagel (Halle (Saale): Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 1984), 81. Burkhardt credits Fritz Hintze with suggesting this avenue of research. See, Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 38 where she also discussed this issue.

Who Came to Philae?

Priestly Titles

Prophet (ḥm-ntr)

The Esmet family of late Nubian priests held titles in the cult of Isis, primarily as Prophets of Isis. The first two generations of the family, Ḥr-nd-ḥt=f and his son, Esmet ḥm l, were both second prophets of Isis. Pakhom (P3-ḥm, Pachomious), son-in-law of Esmet ḥm l, attained the office of first prophet of Isis. Pakhom's son, Esmet only dedicated one proskynema, which supplied his patronymic but did not include a title.⁶⁸ The fact that Esmet succeeded his father in office is deduced from the eponymous dating formula in the Greek graffito of a prophet of Ptiris.⁶⁹ According to the text of the graffito, Esmet followed his father as First Prophet of Isis.

Pterophorus (sh md(3.t)ntr)

Esmet ʿ3 consistently held the title *Pterophorus* of Isis (sh md(3.t)-ntr n ʿls.t) in five of his six proskynemata. Distinguished by two ostrich feathers worn atop the head, the *Pterophorus* (lector priest) was the “scribe of the divine books” and, therefore, responsible for correct knowledge and performance of the temple rites.⁷⁰ Dieleman described the combined effort of the *pterophorus*/lector priest and the *stoliste* “clothing priests,”

⁶⁸ Ph. 194 was inscribed in Room 1 of the Birth House. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 74.

⁶⁹ IGP 199, dated to AD 456/7 (year 173 of Diocletian), asserted that it was written “while Smet was *archiprophetes*”. Pasnous, author of two graffiti at Philae, was *protoklinarchos* in IGP 199 (eastern exterior of Main Temple), however, he was a prophet of Ptiris in IGP 190 (exterior Second Eastern Colonnade).

⁷⁰ The *pterophorus*, also known as lector priest, formed the fourth tier of temple employees: 1) *lesonis*, 2) prophets, 3) *stolistai*, and 4) lector priests (formerly called ḥry-hb, “he who is in charge of the festival roll”), 5) temple scribes, and 6) *wab*-priests. See Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites: the London-Leiden magical manuscripts and translation in Egyptian ritual (100-300 CE)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), 207.

The lector priest (scribes of the divine books and feather bearers) assisted these clothing priests in the performance of the ritual as those responsible for the ritual texts and guardians of a correct performance of rites and a faultless recitation of hymns and invocations.⁷¹

In several inscriptions Esmet ʿ3 stated vaguely, “I acted as *Pterophorus*.”

However, in a proskynema inscribed on a relief depicting the king offering milk before Osiris, he was more explicit, “I perform the service of water in the temple of Isis.”⁷² The location of his other five inscriptions, on the Osiris Chamber on the roof of the Main Temple⁷³ and on the façade of the temple on Bija,⁷⁴ suggests that Esmet ʿ3 performed rites for Osiris. Half of Esmet ʿ3’s prayer inscriptions were dated to the month of Khoiak in which Osiris received funerary rites and was ritually revived.

Protostoliste (ʿry sḃtḫ, ʿry mnḫ.t)⁷⁵

Esmet ḥm ll inscribed a total of eight graffiti, however, only three of them included his title. He was *Protostoliste* in two Greek inscriptions⁷⁶ and “prophet of Philae”⁷⁷ in one Meroitic inscription. In IGP 197, inscribed on the entrance of the Osiris

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ph. 343 is the westernmost graffito on the exterior rear wall of the Main Temple. PM VI, 386-387.

⁷³ Ph. 365 and Ph. 366 on the entrance to the Osiris Chamber on the roof of the Main Temple, Ph. 332 was near the stairs leading up to the Main Temple’s roof. Ph. 240, in which Esmet ʿ3 said “I acted a *Pterophorus*,” was engraved on the Birth House roof near his brother’s (Esmet ḥm ll) Meroitic inscription, MI 117.

⁷⁴ Biga 6 was inscribed on the temple associated with the burial of Osiris on Biga Island.

⁷⁵ The title in Egyptian was ḥry sḃtḫ “overseer of secrets”, ḥry mnḫ.t “overseer of clothing.” See Günther Vittman, “Stolist,” LdÄ VI, 63-65; Étienne Bernand, *IGP*, vol. 2, 235-236. The hieroglyphic text of the Memphis Decree described the priests of this category as follows, “The overseers of secrets, the purified ones of the god, who enter into the sanctuary to dress the gods with their clothing.” Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 206.

⁷⁶ IGP 197, IGP 196.

⁷⁷ MI 117. His title was interpreted as “prophet of him (or her) that is in Philae” (Meroitic: ant (<ḥm-ntr) Piqe-teli-t (<lw+se)). Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions*, vol. 2,

Chamber, Esmet ḥm II said that he became *Protostoliste* in AD 448, the same year he inscribed another Greek graffito, IGP 193. As *Protostoliste* he was responsible for dressing, anointing, and purifying the divine statues. As *Protostoliste*, Esmet ḥm II held a higher priestly position than his brother, Esmet ʿ3, the *Pterophorus*.⁷⁸

Scribe of the House of Record (sh pr-sh)⁷⁹

The next generation of the Esmet family appears to have lost some priestly stature, although there is no indication that other priests assumed the positions of Prophet, *Pterophorus*, and *Protostoliste*. No longer were those titles held by Esmet family members. Esmet ʿ3, who was a *Pterophorus*, had two sons, Horpaese, who was “scribe of the house of record” and Hormaese, a *wab*-priest. Let us consider first the scribal title. Of the three inscriptions of Horpaese, only one contained a title.⁸⁰ Found on a loose block on the nearby island of Shellal, Hormaese’s graffito, Ph. 450, contained his title “scribe of the house of record,” which was one of three attestations of this title at Philae (I assume that the loose block had been moved to Shellal from Philae). Interestingly, another occupant of this office, the author of Ph. 357, inscribed his graffito opposite Ph. 355 of Horpaese on the doorway of the Naos of the Main Temple.⁸¹ That author also provided his patronymic and his father’s title was *Pterophorus*, the same title held by the

43; Claude Rilly, *La langue du royaume de Méroé* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2007), 114.

⁷⁸ See n. 70 where the priestly hierarchy of the Egyptian temple is described.

⁷⁹ Griffith translated this title with a question mark in each of the three inscriptions - “Scribe of the house of record (?) of Isis” - to indicate his uncertainty about this title as it deviated from the more common title “scribe of the house of life.”

⁸⁰ Ph. 258 was inscribed on the southwest wall of the Pronaos on the same milk libation scene before Osiris, which had attracted so many Nubian inscriptions in Phase II. Ph. 355 was inscribed on the east face of the west jamb of the door leading into the Naos of the Main Temple. Neither of these inscriptions included a title for Horpaese, but both of them provided his patronymic and the title of his father Esmet ʿ3.

⁸¹ Ph. 357 is located on the west face of the east jamb of the doorway into the Naos.

father of Hormaese. This suggests that “scribe of the house of record of Isis” was part of the *corsus honorem* of priests of Isis whereby sons held the lower ranking office of “scribe” and aspired to achieve the rank of *Pterophorus* held by their fathers.

Wab-Priest

Hormaese, son of Esmet ʿ3, held the title *wab*-priest in his one surviving graffito inscribed on a screen between two columns on the east side of the Birth House.⁸²

Hormaese was the only *wab*-priest attested in the Esmet family.

Prophets of Ptiris

Two Prophets of Ptiris are attested at Philae.⁸³ IGP 191⁸⁴ of Pamet was inscribed to the right on the second register, while IGP 190⁸⁵ of Pasnous was inscribed in the upper register to the left. Panouchem engraved his inscription, IGP 192, a simple name inscription lacking any title, on the second register between the two upper images of the hybrid deity.⁸⁶ (For a sketch of the texts and images on this wall, see page 233.) Their Greek inscriptions on the exterior of the Second Eastern Colonnade are inscribed near figural graffiti that depict a composite or hybrid deity with a hawk head, crocodile body, and tail from which sprouts a lotus flower that ends in a cobra wearing a solar disk.

⁸² Ph. 96.

⁸³ IGP 190 – Pasnous, son of Pachoumious, prophet of Ptiris and IGP 191 – Pamet, son of Bereos, prophet of Ptiris.

⁸⁴ IGP 191 reads, “The *proskynema* of Pamet, whose father is Bereo, Prophet of Ptiris. I performed it before the gods, for the good, on 12 Phamenoth (3 Peret). If anyone effaces these letters, (the gods) will efface their posterity.”

⁸⁵ IGP 190 reads, “The *proskynema* of Pasnous, whose father is Pachomious, Prophet of Ptiris. I performed before the gods for piety, for the good, on 9 Hathor (III Akhet), year 151 of (the era of) Diocletian. If anyone effaces these letters, (the gods) will efface their posterity.” Year 151 of Diocletian equals AD 434.

⁸⁶ In IGP 192, Panouchem was identified as son of Tabolbolos, which was clearly his mother’s name as indicated by the Egyptian lexeme *ta-* “She of” that forms the first part of a theophoric name. This was suggested already by F. Preisigke, *Namenbuch*, s.v. Tabolbolos. Inclusion of the mother’s name, often listed before that of the father, is typical of Nubian tradition. Panouchem’s use of a matronymic may be suggestive of Nubian ancestry.

Earlier scholars have assumed that the deity Ptiris, mentioned in two of the three Greek inscriptions, was the name of the hybrid deity depicted on the same wall.⁸⁷ This has not been proved and is merely an assumption. None of the images of this deity or similar deities depicted in the Eastern Desert or the Meroitic temples of Musawwarat es-Sufra or Naqa were labeled, depriving us of name for this deity. While Žabkar believed the deity depicted at Philae was the Egyptian god Ḥr-ỉmy-Šnw.t, he also noted the similarity of the Meroitic divine name *Ptrot* to the name *Ptiris*,⁸⁸ and the typical Meroitic features of the deity as depicted at Philae.⁸⁹ Griffith identified the divine name “*Patret*,” followed by the Meroitic vocative “*i*” in MI 101-103, inscribed in the Meroitic Chamber at Philae, which is on the other side of the wall on which these images of the composite deity were engraved.⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that the divine name *Patret* appeared in the inscriptions associated with Mashtaraqe, a Meroitic official who held the Meroitic titles *qeren*, *hbhn*, *qer* of Isis. It is the last title, which explicitly associated Mashtaraqe with the cult of Isis that provides the most interesting possible link between the worship of *Patret* and the

⁸⁷ Louis V. Žabkar, “A Hieracocephalous Deity from Naqa, Qustul, and Philae” *ZÄS* 102 (1975).

⁸⁸ Žabkar, *Apedemak*, 113.

⁸⁹ Žabkar, “Hieracocephalous deity” 152-153. While Žabkar contends that the hawk-crocodile deity is of Egyptian origin, he concedes that the depictions of the hieracocephalous deity that appeared in late figural graffiti at Philae “display characteristically Meroitic features, and that they were probably derived from the Meroitic model at Naqa.” *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions*, vol. 2, 40. The Meroitic word *Patret* was found in MI 101/2, MI 102/4, MI 103/4, inscribed among the images in the Meroitic chamber and associated each time with the Meroitic priest *Maštaraqe*, who delivered royal gifts and recited texts in praise of Isis. Griffith interpreted *Patret* as “a divine name or title in invocations.” Griffith found two attestations of the divine name from Karanog and Shablul, Kar. 68 and Shablul 14, respectively, noting the appearance of a shortened form *Trot* and *Tros*. See Griffith, *Karanog and Shablul*, 34.

worship of Isis. Millett suggested that *p-tros* must be an epithet of Isis.⁹¹ While the similarity of the Meroitic lexeme Patret/Ptrot/p-tros to the divine name Ptiris found in the Greek *proskynemata* at Philae is enticing, it does not confirm the name of the hieracocephalous deity.



Figure 22: Line drawing of Textual and Figural Graffiti from Exterior of the Second Eastern Colonnade at Philae. (Courtesy of Eugene Cruz-Urbe)

The scant surviving epigraphic testimony suggests that Blemmye priests held various priestly titles in addition to the title “prophet” attested at Philae. The Kalabsha cult association graffito,⁹² also written in Greek, concluded with a list of witnesses: Pades Bok, Menr[ou] Kalau ουεεπ, and Atrek Atero. Zyhlarz suggested that the second name of the first individual (Bok) might be the title Bꜣk “temple servant.” The Egyptian word *wꜥb* was transliterated as ουεεπ in Greek after the second name. Thus, the first man may

⁹¹ Nicolas B. Millett, “The Meroitic Texts from the Qasr Ibrim Cemeteries,” in Anthony J. Mills, *The Cemeteries of Qasr Ibrim: a report of the excavations conducted by W. B. Emery in 1961* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1982), 75.

⁹² FHN III, #313.

have been a “temple servant,” the second a “priest,” and the third may have held an unknown title “atero.” Olympiodorus referred to the “priests of the barbarians” twice, each time using the Greek word *prophetes* (προφητες).⁹³

By the fifth century AD, when these inscriptions were engraved, the priesthood at Philae had shrunk dramatically. It is likely that the Nubian priests whose inscriptions are discussed in this chapter were the only priests still active at Philae. While it is possible that other undated inscriptions were engraved during this period, there is no compelling epigraphic evidence to indicate that other priests were serving at Philae in the fifth century. Considering their severely depleted ranks, it is not surprising that the Nubian priests of Phase III interacted. The eponymous date formula, “while Smet was *archiprophetes*,” used in the second inscription of Pasnous (IGP 199) to refer to Esmet, the First Prophet of Isis, suggests that the two groups of priests were aware of each other.⁹⁴ Acknowledgement of the First Prophet of Isis in Pasnous’ date formula confirms the esteemed position of the First Prophet of Isis in the hierarchy of the last priests at Philae.

Cult Association Titles (κλινάρχος συνόδου)

Pasnous, who was a Prophet of Ptiris in his graffito IGP 190, held the title *Protoklinarchos*, a cult association title, in his second inscription (IGP 199),⁹⁵ engraved

⁹³ *FHN III*, 1127.

⁹⁴ See n. 97 for the text of the graffito. In fact, an Esmet family offspring inscribed his graffito on the same wall as the Prophets of Ptiris. Hor(paese), son of Horpaese, son of Esmet 𓆎 wrote his Demotic graffito on the exterior of the Second Eastern Colonnade.

⁹⁵ IGP 199 reads, “While Smet was First Prophet, Pasnous, son of Pachomious, in the year 173 of (the era of) Diocletian. As for me, I am the *protoklinarchos*...” The inscription continues for nine more lines, which were illegible. Year 173 of Diocletian equals AD 456/457, making this the last dated pagan Greek inscription at Philae.

on the eastern outer wall of the Main Temple at Philae.⁹⁶ The fact that Pasnous was attested once as a Prophet of Ptiris and again with a cult association title suggests that a cult association provided a ritual feast as part of the rites conducted at Philae by the Prophets of Ptiris. Use of the title *protoklinarchos* at Philae is reminiscent of titles found in two Blemmye cult association inscriptions at Kalabsha and Tafa. The *klinarchos* was the cult association president,⁹⁷ the man responsible for collecting association dues and provisioning the sacred meal which occurred during the visit to Philae. Pasnous was “first *klinarchos*” which suggests that he was the senior member of a group of cult association presidents. Such a cultic hierarchy is attested in the graffito from Kalabsha where the *demoklinarchos* “city cult president” received a larger share of funds relative to the three men who bore the subordinate title *klinarchos*. According to the Kalabsha graffito, the division of funds recorded therein was decreed in a letter sent to Kalabsha, presumably from Egypt, by an unnamed *Comes*. According to Török, the aforementioned *Comes* “was in all probability none other than the commander of the Roman frontier forces who maintained official contact with the allied barbarians.”⁹⁸ The fact that a Roman official dictated the terms of financial matters at the Blemmye-held temple of Kalabsha indicates that Blemmye tribes had entered into a federate status with the Roman Empire. In fact the graffito probably records the division of the stipend with which the Romans “bought” peace with their Blemmye neighbors.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Étienne Bernand, *IGP II*, 221-223, 248-251.

⁹⁷ Ulrich Wilcken, *APF I (1901)*: 413-414; W.L. Westermann, “Entertainment in the Villages of Greco-Roman Egypt” *JEA* 18 (1932): 24.

⁹⁸ *FHN III*, 1137.

⁹⁹ The Blemmyes received an annual payment from Roman Egyptian authorities, which was meant to deter them from attacking Egyptian settlements, villages, and churches.

A graffito from the North Sanctuary at Tafa records the pious donation of funds by a Blemmye president of the cult society of Amati for the construction of a columned hall, which was added to the sanctuary.¹⁰⁰ The second part of the graffito named the man responsible for constructing the hall. He was the agent of the cult association. The Egyptian title *p3 rt* “agent,” transliterated in Greek as *πηρτ*, is interesting in this context.¹⁰¹ In the Demotic inscriptions of Nubian cult associations of Phase I, the title “agent” appeared frequently. The same Egyptian title, *p3 rt*, was transliterated as *perite* in the Meroitic-language inscriptions of Phase II. This lone example of the Egyptian title in the corpus of Phase III Nubian graffiti creates a satisfying attestation of the continuity of the financial management of Lower Nubia and its temples through the organizational means of cult associations. Epigraphic attestations of the title “agent” in each of the three languages of the Nubian corpus (Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek) and in each of the phases of Nubian presence in the temples attest to the profound importance of the role played by a cult association agent in the financial, social, and cultic aspects of the administration of Lower Nubia.

A Meroitic-language graffito of Esmet ḥm II (MI 116), on the roof of the Birth House at Philae, may also attest to a cult association title: the “second” (Demotic, *mḥ-2*; Meroitic, *met*).¹⁰² De Cenival cited *le «second»* as a title attested in three cult association

¹⁰⁰ *FHN III*, #312, 1132-1134; M. Friedrich Zucker, *Debod bis Kalabsha*, vol. 3 (1912), 155-165. The text of the inscription is on page 156.

¹⁰¹ László Török, *ibid*, 1134 attempted to translate the phrase *πηρτ Σεβατατ Αματι* as “agent of the cult association of Amati,” interpreting *Σεβατατ* as a transliteration of the Egyptian word for cult association. This is unlikely as Hughes has shown that the Egyptian word for cult association was *sn.t*. See George R. Hughes, “The Sixth Day of the Lunar Month and the Demotic Word for ‘Cult Guild,’” 149.

¹⁰² MI 116. Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions*, vol. 2, 43. This Meroitic graffito is associated with the image of two feet above which was inscribed Ph. 237.

documents. Unfortunately those documents do not provide any information about the role of such an official.¹⁰³ The Meroitic inscription likewise failed to provide any additional information regarding the duties of “the second” as the graffito becomes illegible immediately after the word for “second,” which occurs at the end of the second line of text.¹⁰⁴ A cult association reference for the Meroitic word *met* is doubtful. Instead, MI 116 may record a title similar to the “second prophet of the one who is in Philae,” found in MI 117, which is a better-preserved inscription written by the same author.¹⁰⁵

Finally, the Kalabsha graffito¹⁰⁶ that records the division of funds between cult association members informs us that it was the Blemmye king (*basileus*) who appointed the cult presidents and their “chairmen” (*epistates*). This statement affirms the connection between Blemmye rulers and the Blemmye cult associations that were active at Philae, Tafa, Kalabsha and Qasr Ibrim.

What was the Political and Religious Use of the Temples by the Blemmye Kings?

Religious Use

Priests of Isis would have been primarily involved in performing funerary rites, singing hymns, and reciting invocations for the revivification of Osiris. Aside from his burial site on Biga Island, the Osiris Chamber on the roof of the Main Temple at Philae was the most important site where such revivification rites were enacted. The walls of the

¹⁰³ Françoise DeCenival, *Les associations religieuses en Égypte* (Cairo: L’Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Cairo, 1972), 168.

¹⁰⁴ The translation of the Meroitic text reads, “The foot Semeti made, the second (?) of ...tiya.” (*štqo Semeti yešo met ...tīy-lit*) Does the last lexeme with the Meroitic postpositive possessive element -lit write the name of the cult association or the deity to whom it was dedicated?

¹⁰⁵ MI 117. See Griffith, *Ibid.* The Meroitic text reads *štqo Semeti shī ye met ant Pilqeteli-t*.

¹⁰⁶ *FHN III*, #313.

inner room of the Osiris Chamber were decorated with funerary scenes such as the secret rites performed for Osiris by Anubis, accompanied by Isis and Nephthys, and the sacred tree that adorned the grave of Osiris, a symbol of the deceased god's return to life.¹⁰⁷ The hiatus in Nubian inscriptions between Phase II and Phase III (circa AD 273-408) does not mean that the rites for Osiris and Isis were not performed. An interesting set of inscriptions attests to rites performed for Osiris toward the end of the fourth century, before Phase III of the Nubian inscriptions began.

Three inscriptions from AD 373 on the stairs leading to the roof of the Osiris Chamber attest to the continued performance of libation rites for Osiris 100 years after the last dated graffito of Phase II and forty-five years before the first dated graffito of Phase III. They are the only dated inscriptions from this period. A First Prophet in Ph. 369 and two *Pterophorai* in Ph. 370 and Ph. 371 held titles similar to those held by the Esmet family in Phase III. While I am not suggesting that the priests who wrote Ph. 369-371 were Nubian, their service to Osiris is strikingly similar to the cultic actions described by Nubians of Phase II and Phase III. The priests participated in a ceremony referred to as “the cleansing ceremony of/for Osiris” (md.t w^cb n Wsir), which took place in the month of Khoiak for which the priests were anointed (purified) in preparation. The claim to overlay a statue with gold by the author of Ph. 370 is very reminiscent of the work of Nubian priests during Phase II.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Georges Bénédict, *Le Temple de Philae, MMAF, vols. 1-2* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892-1895), pls. XXXV-XLI

¹⁰⁸ In Ph. 370 lines 7-8, the graffito author wrote of gilding a statue of Cleopatra. Donation of gold, gold working, and gilding of divine statues was closely related to the Wayekiye family's celebration of the Feast of Entry performed by priests of Isis as part of the funerary rites for Osiris.

As *Protostoliste* (Esmet ḥm II) and lector priest/*Pterophorus* (Esmet ʿ3), the two brothers performed rites for Isis and Osiris. The *Stoliste* entered the sanctuary to clothe the divine statue in preparation for procession, while the *Pterophorus*, who was “scribe of the divine book,” ensured the correct recitation of rites, hymns, and invocations. Senior to both the *Stoliste* and the *Pterophorus*, the prophet conducted the cult. Brother to Esmet ʿ3 and Esmet ḥm II, Esmet succeeded their father, Pakhom, as Prophet of Isis. The dearth of inscriptions dedicated by Esmet is puzzling; only one inscription survives.¹⁰⁹ Esmet ʿ3 is said to have succeeded his brother Esmet as Prophet.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ph. 194, inscribed in Room 1 of the Birth House on the northern side of the west interior wall.

¹¹⁰ Esmet ḥm II stated in his Greek graffito IGP 197, “I came here (Philae) and completed my duties at the same time as my brother Smeto (Esmet ʿ3), successor of the prophet Smet (Esmet). Because the graffito was dated to AD 452, that leaves us to wonder who was Smet, *archiprophetes* mentioned in the eponymous dating in IGP 199 (AD 456)? If Esmet ʿ3 had succeeded Esmet as Prophet in AD 452, did the author of IGP 199 mistakenly write Smet instead of Smeto (Esmet ʿ3) who should have been prophet at that time? Or was Esmet/Smet promoted to First Prophet while Esmet ʿ3 became Prophet? As we have seen Esmet ʿ3 never claimed the title Prophet, but was always the *Pterophorus* of Isis. For IGP 199, see E. Bernand, *IGP II*, 251.

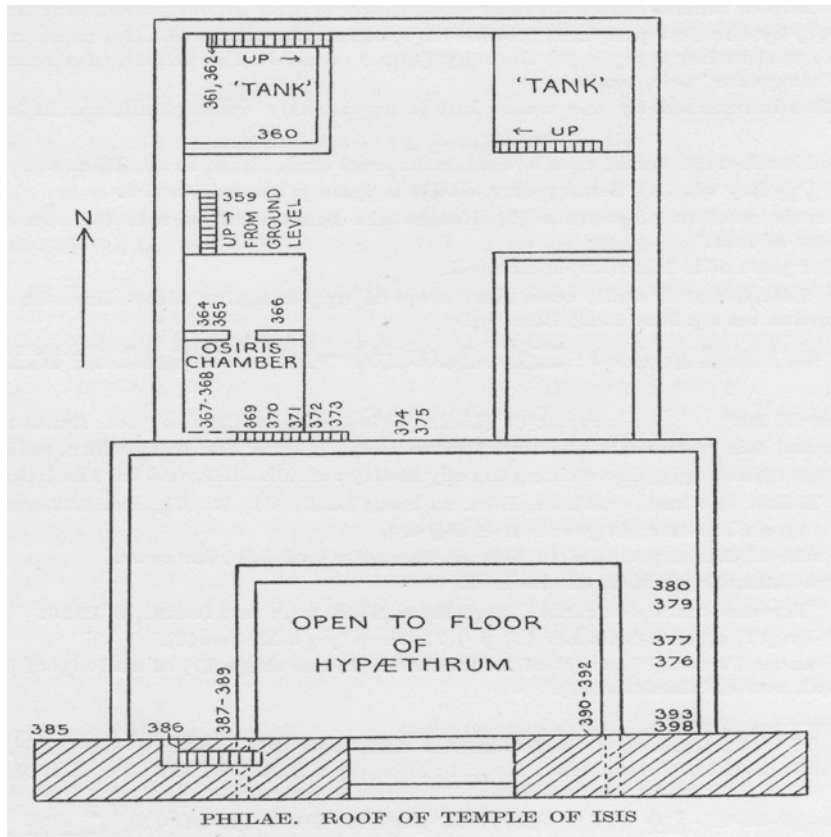


Figure 23: Plan of the graffiti on the Main Temple roof (Reprinted from Griffith, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 101)

In his graffito inscribed to the left (east) of the door of the Osiris Chamber, Ph. 366, Esmet 𐩧𐩢𐩨 stated simply, “I acted as *Pterophorus*,” reporting his participation in the rites enacted inside the Osiris Chamber. On the right side of the same door is the graffito (Ph. 364) of a man who served as *Stoliste* in AD 407 (before the Esmet family acquired these positions), which suggests that this was the site where *pterophorai* and *stolistai* performed their ritual acts.¹¹¹

The proximity of two Esmet brothers’ inscriptions on the facade of the Osiris Chamber on the Main Temple roof and on the Birth House roof attest to their collaboration to perform rites at Philae. Textual references also attest to jointly performed

¹¹¹ In Ph. 364 the author was a *stoliste* (𐩧𐩢𐩨 *sšt*); his father was a *pterophorus*. Members of a single family often held the two positions in the inscriptions at Philae.

rites. Demotic graffito Ph. 366,¹¹² written by Esmet ʿ3, and Greek IGP 197 by Esmet ḥm II were inscribed one above the other on the east side of the entry door of the Osiris Chamber. In IGP 197 Esmet ḥm II noted that he performed rites with his brother Esmet ʿ3. Another graffito inscribed by Esmet ʿ3, Ph. 365, written 17 days before IGP 197, was inscribed on the opposite (west) side of the same door. The two graffiti, Esmet ʿ3's Ph. 365 dated 6 Khoiak AD 452 and Esmet ḥm II's IGP 197 dated 23 Khoiak of the same year, suggest that the brothers collaborated to perform the traditional funerary rites for Osiris undertaken during the month of Khoiak and that the rites were performed in the Osiris Chamber on the roof of the Main Temple. Inscriptions by the two brothers are also in close proximity on the north side of the Birth House roof. In the Demotic graffito, Ph. 240 (Esmet ʿ3), and the Meroitic-language graffito, MI 117 (Esmet ḥm II), both claimed priestly titles and duties: the former “acted as *Pterophorus*”¹¹³ while the latter was “Second Prophet of (the one who is in) Philae.” The proximity of the brothers’ inscriptions on the Birth House roof again suggests collaboration between the two priests, although only Esmet ʿ3’s inscription implies that rites were performed on the Birth House roof. It is also possible that Esmet ʿ3’s graffito Ph. 240 merely commemorated the performance of a rite elsewhere in the temple complex as there is nothing in the decoration or structure of the Birth House roof to suggest that rites were performed there.

While Esmet ʿ3’s title, *Pterephorus* of Isis, identified him as a priest of Isis, the location of his inscriptions and their wording suggest that his duties involved the performance of funerary rites for Osiris in the month of Khoiak. The fact that he carried a

¹¹² A pair of inscriptions by Esmet ʿ3 were engraved on either side of the door leading into the Osiris Chamber: Ph. 365 (AD 452), Ph. 366 (AD 435).

¹¹³ Ph. 240, see Griffith, *Catalogue*, 80.

title in the priesthood of Isis, yet performed rites for Osiris makes sense in the context of Osirian religion. At Philae, the primary role of Isis was to enact funerary rites for Osiris, while serving as the deceased god's chief mourner and protector. If we accept that Esmet ḥm II came to Philae in service of the Blemmyes to coordinate the annual procession of Isis to Nubia, we may assume that, as *Protostoliste*, he was tasked with the proper ritual care of her divine statue during the time it was in Nubia.

What was the destination of the annual journey of Isis to Nubia?

Archaeological evidence of the worship of Isis in Nubia suggests that the procession of the goddess may have visited several sites on its journey south. Qasr Ibrim, Kalabsha, and Tafa each had a functioning Isis shrine during the post-Meroitic period. Those shrines shared certain elements such as the predominance of offering tables, horned altars, "feet graffiti" and stone or wooden models of feet, falcon imagery, depictions of the god Bes, and depictions of the *Atef*- and *hmhm*-crowns.¹¹⁴ Each of these iconographic elements played a role in the Nubian worship at Philae throughout the three phases of Nubian epigraphic presence on the sacred island. I suggest that the annual journey of Isis from Philae into Nubia stopped at each of these sites during the goddess' procession. A brief description of each shrine is in order.

¹¹⁴ The *atef*-crown was closely associated with Osiris and his role as a funerary deity. The *hemhem*-crown resembled three *atef*-crowns joined together. *Hmhm* means "bellow," "war cry," or "scream." See Sandra A. Collier, "The Crowns of Pharaoh: their Development and Significance in Ancient Egyptian Kingship" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1996), 37-53. Kushite kings and queens were frequently depicted wearing the *atef*-crown or the *hemhem*-crown, which was most closely associated with the Meroitic lion god Apedemak. See László Török, *The Royal Crowns of Kush: a study in Middle Nile Valley regalia and iconography in the 1st millennia B.C. and A.D.* (Oxford: BAR International Series 338, 1987), 15-16. At the temple of Naqa, the hieracocephalous deity wore the *hemhem*-crown as did the image of Mandulis inscribed in the Gate of Hadrien and associated with the last hieroglyphic graffito Ph. 436, inscribed in AD 394.

Qasr Ibrim

Excavation at Qasr Ibrim revealed a previously unknown temple in 1986. An article published shortly after the discovery chronicled the “long life and sudden death of [the] Nubian temple.”¹¹⁵ In light of the discovery at Qasr Ibrim of a cache of Greek letters written to the Blemmye king (Phoinen) and the Noubade king (Tantani), we can assume that this mountaintop fortress, located not far south of the Korosko Road, which runs from Lower Nubia to the region of the 4th cataract, was an important stronghold, first for the Blemmyes, and later ruled by the Noubade. Evidence suggests that the “Isis shrine” was built during the 25th dynasty of the Kushite kings, remaining in use for more than a millennium before meeting its violent end sometime in the sixth century AD,¹¹⁶

The architectural remnants of the temple, as described above, reflect the devastation caused by the ransacking and dismantling, as well as later depredations from intrusive pitting...Lying within the fill and on the uppermost floors of the temple were fragments, of statues, offering stands, offering tables and trays, and statuettes, in piles and scattered across the area of the sanctuary, inner hall, and outer hall...Textiles were obviously torn apart and scattered.¹¹⁷

The strongest attestations of the worship of Isis in this shrine were the two horned altars made of stone,¹¹⁸ eight offering basins,¹¹⁹ and twenty-four beautifully painted

¹¹⁵ Driskell et al., “Newly Discovered Temple,” 11. The “Isis shrine” is shown as “Temple 6” in Pamela J. Rose, *Meroitic Temple Complex*, fig. 1.2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹¹⁸ The larger of the horned altars was decorated with a stylized palm branch along one side of its base. See Ibid., pl. I b. In the photo, the altar stands near a carved image of an unshod foot atop a block. See Ibid., pl. II.

¹¹⁹ One offering basin contains the image of a winged offering table surmounted by the “Isis emblem” (solar disc flanked by cow horns). Ibid., pl. VI b, 20-21. See also Ibid., pl. VIII b for another example of an offering basin topped with the “Isis emblem.” “This motif makes an association of both basins with Isis highly probable and may lead to the conclusion that the snakes on the basins, and therefore the snakes on the plaques as well, are to be associated with the goddess.” Ibid., 21.

wooden plaques that depicted libation stands and ladles.¹²⁰ Six of these plaques bear Meroitic text.¹²¹ These objects were found in the shrine's outer hall where the wooden plaques had been buried in crypts, perhaps to hide them in advance of the building's destruction. Other small statues of Osiris, Isis, and Bes, among others, indicate the cultic focus of this shrine.

A large sandstone statue of a hawk, identified as Horus of Miam (the Nubian town of Aniba, but may refer loosely to the entire Karanog/Aniba/Qasr Ibrim area), one of the four Nubian Horuses,¹²² is dated to the Ramesside period.¹²³ A life-sized statue of Isis bears a hieroglyphic inscription that mentions Horus of Miam, testimony to the practice of worshipping Isis and Horus as mother-son deities in Nubia.

Kalabsha

While Kalabsha was dedicated to the Blemmye god Mandulis, evidence from the temple indicates that several Blemmye gods had cult associations connected to this sacred site. The fifth century Greek graffito at Kalabsha was inscribed on the rear wall of the temple among reliefs that depict scenes with similar iconography to those found at Qasr Ibrim: Isis, Horus, and palm branches.¹²⁴ The reader will recall that the inscription recorded the division of a gift of funds between the city cult president and three cult

¹²⁰ A libation stand is depicted before a snake on one plaque and a falcon wearing the double crown of Egypt on another. Ibid., pl. VI a and VII a.

¹²¹ Ibid., 20.

¹²² Recall the two Phase II Nubian inscriptions at Philae that was inscribed on a relief of the king presenting milk to Horus of Kubban on the southwest wall of the Pronaos. See chapter 2, Figure 14, pages 176-177 with photo of the relief panel.

¹²³ This statue may have been brought from elsewhere as there is currently no evidence for settlement at Qasr Ibrim before the twenty-fifth dynasty. Ibid., 19.

¹²⁴ While the palm branch is featured in the reliefs on the temple's rear exterior wall, it was also used as a mason's mark at Kalabasha. See Henri Gauthier, *Le Temple de Kalabchah*, vol. 2, (Cairo: Imprimerie de L'institut Français D'archéologie Orientale, 1911), 348.

association presidents. It was engraved on the far left hand (north) side of the lower register of the rear wall of the temple. Immediately to the right of the text is an image of Isis extending an ankh-sign to Mandulis who takes the form of a human-headed bird wearing the *atef*-crown, his characteristic headgear. Behind Mandulis is depicted a rearing snake with a human head, crowned with the “Isis emblem,” a solar disc surrounded by cow horns.¹²⁵ Directly above the graffito, a relief depicts the king wearing the four-feathered crown of Onuris (?),¹²⁶ facing right, to offer incense to Isis, Horus, and Mandulis (?).¹²⁷ To the right of this relief and covering the remainder of the rear wall is a relief of the king wearing the *hmhm*-crown pouring a libation over a table of offerings before Osiris in the *atef*-crown, Isis, and Horus wearing the *pshent*-crown.¹²⁸ The imagery on this wall incorporates Mandulis into the worship of Isis and Osiris as does much of the decoration at Kalabsha where Mandulis is identified as the son of Horus. Here, however, the emphasis is on the role that Isis plays in the resurrection of Osiris (a *Ba*-bird with the *atef*-crown, a crown primarily associated with Osiris as Osiris Wennefer)¹²⁹ and the role that Horus plays as the legitimate heir and defender of his father (as symbolized by his *pshent*-crown). Additionally, the pouring of libation by the king for Osiris recalls the essential rite of the Osirian funerary cult. This imagery, evocative of the funerary cult celebrated at Philae, suggests that the three cult association presidents mentioned in the

¹²⁵ Gauthier, *Kalabchah*, vol. 2, 437, pl. 103b. See n. 121 regarding the depiction of the snake as a representation of Isis at Qasr Ibrim.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 315, fig. 18.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 441, pl. 105a. A description of the scene is on Ibid., 315.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 441, pl. 105 B; 443, pl. 106 A. A description of the scene is on Ibid., 316.

¹²⁹ The importance of the falcon as a symbol of the revived *Ba*-soul of Osiris is apparent in the three depictions of a crowned, human-headed bird along the rear wall, both of which are on the same (lower) register to the right of the Greek graffito. Ibid., 437, pl. 103 B (*Ba*-soul receiving life from Isis); 439, pl. 104 B (two *Ba* birds wearing the *hmhm*-crown, typical of Mandulis at Kalabsha).

graffito inscribed on this wall, incorporated the worship of their Blemmye gods, who were mentioned in the graffito engraved on this wall, into the larger cultic cycle of the Osirian religion as practiced at Philae.

Finally, mention should be made of the three deities to whom the Blemmye cult associations at Kalabsha were dedicated. While *Mander* likely was the divine name Mandulis, transcribed into Greek, the other two divinities, *Abene* and *Khopan*, are not attested elsewhere. Can we see those deities in the two male gods depicted behind Mandulis in an image in the center of the lower register on the rear wall of the temple?¹³⁰ The lack of hieroglyphic labels on the relief makes it impossible to be certain.

Tafa/Bab Kalabsha

A Blemmye religious complex was excavated in 1960-61 on a raised, rocky stretch of the west bank of the Nile, just a few kilometers north of Kalabsha. Three structures, designated the *Nordbau* (North temple),¹³¹ *Mittelbau* (Hill Sanctuary), and *Sudbau* (South Temple),¹³² stood in very close proximity, just south of the Roman military settlement at Taphis, which was associated with the Roman fort at Contra Taphis; both were located about 30 kilometers south of Philae.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 439, pl. 104 A. The scene is described on p. 314. In the scene the king, wearing the Lower Egyptian crown, presents the hieroglyphic sign for “fields” to three male deities. The first identified by his crown is Mandulis. The other two deities are not identified, but both of them wear the same crown. This scene is the second relief to the right of the Greek graffito that mentions the cult association presidents of Abene, Khopan, and Mander.

¹³¹ The North Temple was relocated to the National Museum of Antiquities (*Rijksmuseum van Oudheden*) in Leiden. Günther Roeder, *Debod bis Bab Kalabsche*, vol. 1, 194-196.

¹³² This temple was destroyed between 1860 and 1880. See PM VII, 9; Ibid., 193-194.

The Hill Sanctuary, the oldest of the three structures,¹³³ and the North Temple exhibit evidence of ritual activity for Isis, as does the *Talkapelle* (Valley Chapel), which stands a short distance to the north of the Hill Sanctuary. Fragments of a large (180 cm) statue of the goddess Isis were discovered in the rubble outside of the Hill Sanctuary.¹³⁴ Many offering tables were found in the Hill Sanctuary, attesting to its use as a sacred space. The excavator imagined that the structure could accommodate the requisite 365 offering tables decreed for the funerary cult of Osiris at Philae, which suggests that a parallel funerary cult for Osiris was performed at this small shrine in Tafa.¹³⁵ The decoration of the offering tables employed similar symbolism to that seen in the Isis Shrine at Qasr Ibrim: the palm branch motif was found on many of the offering tables¹³⁶ as well as on a stela found in the rubble on the east side of the North Temple. On the eastern column of the North Temple's façade a graffito in the form of a palm branch was inscribed.¹³⁷ In the associated quarry, many images of horned altars decorated the walls.¹³⁸ A fragmented horned altar was found in the rubble of the Valley Chapel (*Talkapelle*),

¹³³ Herbert Ricke, *Ausgrabungen*, 20.

¹³⁴ Ibid. Ricke later found a sculpted hand holding a lamp that he believed belonged to the statue; the feet of a second statue were found also.

¹³⁵ Ibid. "Die grosse Anzahl dieser Tafeln, die sich aus den Resten erschliessen lässt, erinnert an Bestimmungen im 'Götterdekret über das Abaton' auf dem Hadrianstor auf Philä: "Man soll ihm (d.h. Osiris) 365 Ofertafeln machen rund um diese Stätte, und es sollen Palmblätter auf ihnen liegen...Man könnte im Mittelbau 365 Opfertafeln unterbringen. Im Gesimse des Banketts können rund 100 Opfertafeln eingearbeitet gewesen sein, dahinter können die einzelnen Opfertafeln und Gruppen nach der in Abbildung 25 vorgeschlagenen Weise in mehreren Reihen hintereinander aufgestellt gewesen sein."

¹³⁶ Ibid., Abb. 30, 13, Abb. 24.

¹³⁷ Idem, vol. 2, Taf. 126 i.

¹³⁸ Ibid, Taf. 126 a-c.

located north of the Hill Sanctuary.¹³⁹ Falcon imagery in the form of a fragment of a small falcon figurine was found in the rubble of the quarry.¹⁴⁰

The confluence of religious iconography found at the site verifies that it was dedicated to the goddess Isis. However, the Greek graffito at Tafa was inscribed to commemorate the pious donation of funds by the president of the cult association of the Blemmye goddess Amati, not Isis.¹⁴¹ The divine name Amati appeared in Blemmye personal names and once was combined with that of Isis.¹⁴² Perhaps the deity worshipped at Tafa was the Blemmye goddess Amati, assimilated to Isis. Another possibility is that the site had been dedicated to the worship of Isis and during the period of Blemmye occupation a cult association of Amati was active at the shrine dedicated to Isis.

¹³⁹ Ibid., Taf. 2, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 31, Abb. 46.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 32. “Es ist möglich, dass die Talkapelle in der Inschrift gemeint ist, die im 4. Jahrhundert durch einen Kultverein der Isis an der Decke des Nordtempels von Taifa angebracht worden ist.”

¹⁴² Helmut Satzinger, “The ‘Barbarian’ Names on the Third Century Ostraca from Xeron” in *Inside and Out: Interactions between Rome and the peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian frontiers in Late Antiquity*, edited by Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, 199-214. Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014. (Talmis 13, 14). In FHN III, #313, 1136, the inscription employed an eponymous dating “when Gamatifant Psentaesis was Prophet.” The first name may have consisted of a title (Amati + φαντ (<ḥm-nṯr)=”Prophet of Amati”). For the derivation of the Blemmye Greek word *Fant* from the Egyptian title “Prophet,” see Helmut Satzinger, *Ägyptische Urkunden aus den königlichen Museen zu Berlin, Koptische Urkunden (BKU)*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Verlag Bruno Hessling, Berlin, 1968), 61. This use of titles as names occurred regularly in the Phase II Nubian inscriptions, for example, the title *qoren* also appeared as the personal name Qeren. For φαντ used in proper names, see Helmut Satzinger, *Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Staatlichen Museen Berlin, Koptische Urkunden*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1967), 61, 72-74; Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia Christiana* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1938), 32. A collection of Greek and Coptic texts from the sixth century AD, written on leather, recorded transactions of members of a Blemmye community from Gebelein (ancient Pathyris). See FHN III, #331-343. The name of a witness in two of those documents incorporated the divine name Amat: ΔΜΑΤΕΠΩΟΙ (*Amate* + p3 š3y “the divinity”). See Ibid., #341 and #342, 1215-1216 n. 899; Jaroslav Černý *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 234-235.

The Procession of Isis through Lower Nubia

In the fifth century AD, the Thracian historian Priscus of Panion was present in Egypt, serving under Maximinus who was probably the *dux* of the Thebaid in AD 452-453; thus, Priscus was a contemporary of the writers of the late Phase III Nubian inscriptions. As an eyewitness, he provided a valuable account of the continuing pilgrimage of Nubians to the temple of Isis of Philae. Protection of this tradition was a condition of the Nubians' treaty with Maximinus, which was ratified at Philae,

[I]n accordance with the ancient law, their crossing to the temple of Isis be unhindered, Egyptians having charge of the riverboat in which the statue (*agalma*) of the goddess is placed and ferried across the river. For a stated time the barbarians bring the wooden statue (*xoanon*) to their own country and, after having consulted it, return it safely to the island.¹⁴³

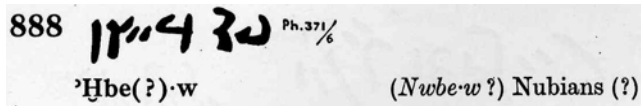
A Philae graffito dated to AD 373 recorded the disruption of the journey of the “bark of Isis” (w n ʾls.t), which was caused by the battling of two Nubian tribes that Griffith translated as Blemmyes and Noubade.¹⁴⁴ The text of graffito Ph. 371 reads as follows,

The *proskynema* of Petsinamre (P3-di-st-ʿmre) (son of) Pge (P3-g), the great pharmacist of the workshop, the name of his mother (being) Tshenhelkho (T3-šr.t-hlk-ḥr), is here in the presence of Osiris, the great god. When I was anointed concerning the matter in the third month of Inundation, I performed services for the King of the whole land, Osiris Wennefer. Today, the 15th day of the third month of Inundation, written by Petesenufe (P3-dī-ʾls.t-nfr.t) (son of) Harendotes, *Pterophorus* of Isis (sh md(3t) n ʾls.t), by his (own) hand. In the year in question the Blemmyes (Ble.w) had gone against the Annouba (3nbe). (They) had handed over hostages in regnal year 90 of (the Era of) Diocletian. In the year in question the bark of Isis having been away for two years, it had gone to the Abaton.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Priscus, Fragment 21. The translation is from *FHN III*, #318, 1153-1156.

¹⁴⁴ Ph. 371 was inscribed on the roof of the Main Temple, under the stairs that lead to the roof of the Osiris Chamber. Griffith, *Catalogue*, 104-105.

¹⁴⁵ Translation is based on *FHN III*, #302, 1110. Diacritics were inserted to clarify the translation chosen.



Griffith, *Catalogue*, 307

The Demotic word which Griffith read as Ḥbe(?)·w (toward the end of line six) and translated as “Nubians(?)” may have been a sloppy writing of ʒnbe “Annouba” with the second character being a Demotic “n” rotated to the left, instead of the third “h” as transcribed by Griffith. Griffith himself saw the initial aleph in the writing of the ethnonym, “We seem here to have two peoples named with the foreign det(minative) [throw stick]. It is tempting to read *Blhm.w* and *Nwbe.w*, ‘Blemmyes’ and ‘Nubians’, but the first sign in the latter is rather [aleph bird]...”¹⁴⁶ Annouba was one of several variants of the ethnic name used for the Noubade. This interpretation provides the basis for the new reading given above. Thus, graffito Ph. 371 described a two-year interruption to the annual pilgrimage of Isis to Nubia due to fighting between two tribal groups, the Blemmyes and Noubades, in AD 373.

Plumley, who excavated at Qasr Ibrim, believed that the mountaintop citadel of Qasr Ibrim was the destination of the yearly journey of Isis to Nubia. He described its long history as a sacred site, the destination of processions and pilgrimages,

During the Meroitic tenure of the fortress, and probably during the period of the succeeding Blemmyan occupation, the lion god Apedemak and the goddess Isis were worshipped on Ibrim, and it is possible that Ibrim may have been one of the places – perhaps the chief place – to which the statue of Isis was carried during its annual journey from the Temple of Philae into Nubia to bless the crops.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Griffith, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 105, 307, and idem, vol. 2, pl. LVI.

¹⁴⁷ Martin J. Plumley “Pre-Christian Nubia (23 B.C. – 535 A.D.): Evidence from Qasr Ibrim” *Études et Travaux* 5 (1971): 24.

While the prevalence of Isis ritual symbols led the excavator at Tafa to believe that a procession of Isis occurred at the site,

Gehören der Nortempel von Taifa und die Talkapelle in der durch die Inshrift gegebenen Weise zusammen, so kann das Prozessionsbild, das zwischen beiden hin- und hergetragen wurde, nur eine Statue der Isis gewesen sein.¹⁴⁸

There is no reason, however, to limit the journey of Isis in Nubia to only one temple. As the finds at Qasr Ibrim and Tafa show, there were active Isis shrines at each location during the early fifth century AD. Additionally, the Greek graffito on the rear wall of the Temple of Kalabsha attests to contemporaneous cult association activity at that temple. While Isis was not mentioned in the Kalabsha graffito, her image and visual references to her cult dominated the wall upon which the inscription was carved. Additionally, Kalabsha was a political center of some sort for the region as numerous royal inscriptions engraved on the temple façade by Blemmye and Noubade kings demonstrate. I argue that the annual journey of the goddess Isis visited many shrines along the Nile, including but not necessarily limited to Tafa, Kalabsha, and Qasr Ibrim.

Blemmye Figural Graffiti¹⁴⁹

The Second Eastern Colonnade forms the back wall of four rooms that border the “festival court” between the First and Second Pylons, opposite the Birth House. IGP 190 and 191 were inscribed immediately behind the Meroitic Chamber, which is Room III on

¹⁴⁸ Ricke, *Ausgrabungen*, 32.

¹⁴⁹ See page 29 for a sketch of the exterior wall of the Second Eastern Colonnade at Philae. For a photo showing the three Greek proskynemata, the figural graffiti, and the line of five deities led by Isis, see Tafel II in Louis Žabkar, “A Hieracocephalous Deity,” *ZÄS* 102 (1975): 146; Berlin Photo 657. The Berlin Photos have recently been republished in Horst Beinlich, *Die Photos der Preussischen Expedition 1908-1910 nach Nubien*, vol. 4 (Dettelbach: J.H. Röhl, 2010, 2013), B0657.

the plan below.¹⁵⁰ While this may be simply a coincidence, the iconography of the figural graffiti as well as the use of the divine name *Ptiris* found on the exterior wall and in the Meroitic Chamber strongly connect the two ritual spheres.

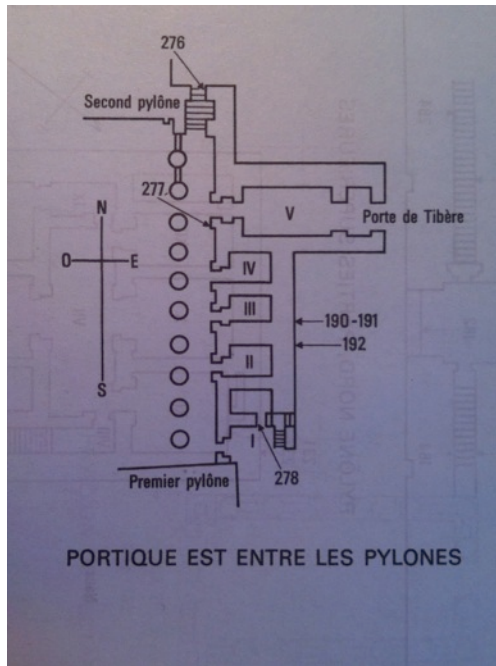


Figure 24: IGP 190-192 on exterior wall of the rooms behind the Second Eastern Colonnade at Philae. (Reprinted from Étienne Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecque et latines de Philae*, vol. 2, pl. 109).

The texts of the inscriptions do not provide a great deal of information about the activities of the “Prophets of Ptiris.” However, figural graffiti surround the inscriptions and can be used to situate this religious art in a Nubian cultural milieu. The fact that the hybrid deity holds in its¹⁵¹ hands a palm branch evokes the numerous images of palm branches held by mourners in Meroitic royal funerary chapels, and more immediately, the high-ranking officials depicted in procession on the walls of the Meroitic Chamber. The image of a head (perhaps three) wearing the double crown of Egypt evokes the figural graffiti found on the western exterior of the Gate of Hadrian and the façade of the Temple

¹⁵⁰ *IGP II*, pl. 109.

¹⁵¹ A gender-neutral pronoun was used intentionally. It is not certain whether the deity Ptiris was a god or goddess.

of Kalabsha where several Nubian royal inscriptions (Tamal, Kharamadoye, and Silko) were engraved. The depiction of three falcons, one of which wears the double crown of Egypt, interspersed among and written over by the inscriptions of the Prophets of Ptiris suggests Blemmye adoption of pharaonic symbolism and royal support of these prophets.

An assortment of figural graffiti below the three Greek texts (IGP 190-192) may offer some insight into the cultic focus of this group of Nubian prophets. On the course below the figural and textual graffiti are a group of images. From left to right they are: a man wearing a short kilt and holding a *was*-scepter (?) facing right toward the group of inscriptions, two vulvae, the upper body of a falcon, and a depiction of the hybrid deity holding a lotus scepter. In the register below, a man wearing a highly stylized clothing holds a staff.



Figure 25: Close-up of the hybrid deity with a falcon head, lion body, and a human arm holding a palm branch. Its tail is a rearing cobra. A lotus grows from its back. Photo by author.

More enigmatic are two figural graffiti inscribed on the block to the right of the hybrid figure shown above. They depict blossoming flowers or offering stands upon which rest large flowers, shown in Fig. 7 below.



Figure 26: "Flower" figural graffiti. Photo by author.



Figure 27: Flower/altar among other figural graffiti with Demotic text of the sixth generation of the Esmet family, Horpaese, grandson of Esmet 𐩧𐩢. Photo by author.

In figure 8 another, more schematic, flower stands in the middle of other figural graffiti. The common element in these symbols is a three-petal “flower” set atop an altar. Similar images are found on funerary implements included in Meroitic royal burials near Meroe City.¹⁵² The images from Meroe are more formal than the images among the figural graffiti at Philae, yet they depict the same three-petal flower resting upon an altar. Two “flower/altar” images came from a second century AD Meroitic royal burial, designated Beg N 29. The first example, found in the burial chamber of a king, decorated a beautiful bronze lamp, which also carried a Meroitic-language inscription.¹⁵³ The

¹⁵² Dows Dunham, “A Collection of ‘Pot-Marks’ from Kush and Nubia” *Kush XII, part 2* (1964): 139, #30, 31, 32, 43; László Török, “A Special Group of Meroitic Property Marks from the 1st to 2nd Centuries A.D.” *MNL 10* (1972): passim; Claudia Näser, “Decorated Meroitic Bells and Their Significance for Royal Burials” *CRIPEL 17* (1998): 159.

¹⁵³ Object number #21-3-160 is published in RCK IV, fig. 109. A Meroitic inscription adorns the back of the lamp’s “flame guard,” which took the form of an ornate leaf and shielded the circular handle with which the lamp was carried in order to protect the hand. The inscription reads as follows, “It is the great man, Ho...” (abri lh lw Ho[...]). Unfortunately the rest of the name is missing. The inscription may have referred to the person who donated the item to the king’s burial.

“flower” on the bronze lamp was flanked by *was*-scepters. The three-petal flower image was repeated around the top of a bronze bell found in the same burial.¹⁵⁴ Also depicted on the bell was a series of bound enemies of various tribal groups.¹⁵⁵ According to Näser, the bound enemies marked the bells and the sacrificed animals (cattle and horses) that wore them as royal. Beg. N 29 contained no inscriptions by which to identify the ruler. Zibelius-Chen assigned Beg. N 29 “probably” to Takideamani,¹⁵⁶ whose burial was placed tentatively after three burials (Beg. N 17, Beg. N 18, and Beg. N 19)¹⁵⁷ each of which contained explicit “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scenes depicting Anubis and Nephthys adopted from Philae. This connection is explicitly demonstrated in the funerary chapel of the royal burial Beg. N 17 belonging to the Meroitic king Amanitenmemide. While the interior west wall of his funerary chapel was adorned with a beautiful milk libation scene performed by Anubis and Nephthys, the exterior of the funerary chapel walls were engraved with numerous figural graffiti including at least seven depictions of the “three-petal flower upon the altar” symbol.¹⁵⁸ Beg. N 18, which is attributed to Queen Amanikhatashan, was provisioned with an offering table decorated with the “Abaton-Style Milk Libation” scene, depicting Anubis and Nephthys pouring milk for the

¹⁵⁴ RCK IV, 170, figure 110. Object # 21-3-329b.

¹⁵⁵ For the motif of bound enemies on Meroitic bells and elsewhere in Meroitic art, see Claudia Näser, “Decorated Meroitic Bells and their Significance for Royal Burials,” *CRIPPEL* 17 (1994): 158-160; Alfred Hermann, “Magische Glocken aus Meroë,” *ZÄS* 93 (1966), 82-85, image from the bell # 21-3-329 (Beg. N 29) is on 81.

¹⁵⁶ Karola Zibelius-Chen, “The Chronology of Nubian Kingdoms from Dyn. 25 to the End of the Kingdom of Meroe,” in *Ancient Egyptian Chronology* eds. Erik Hornung, David A. Warburton and Rolf Krauss (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 300 n. 101.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁵⁸ Dunham, “Pot-Marks,” pl. 33 facing p. 144.

deceased ruler. The tombs burials goods included a silver bowl. On the bowl's base was inscribed the three-petal flower upon an altar.¹⁵⁹

Zibelius-Chen and Näser date these burials to the first and second centuries AD, a period in which Meroitic culture and religion was undergoing broad changes.¹⁶⁰ The appearance of the three-petal flower in royal Meroitic burials during the first and second centuries AD is contemporary with the earliest depictions of the milk libation rites performed for the ruler. The appearance of the symbol in the figural graffiti of the Post-Meroitic Blemmyan priests attested at Philae suggests that the symbol was related to the worship of Isis and the milk libations that she performed in the funerary cult of Osiris. Examples of the three-petal flower image found in the West cemetery may confirm the proposed connection between the image and Isiac milk libation rites.

Two similar images were found on funerary monuments from Begrawiyah West, the cemetery where Meroitic royal family members were buried in close proximity to Begrawiyah North. A three-petal flower image decorated fragments of a jar¹⁶¹ (Beg. W354), while another was engraved on a shallow silver bowl¹⁶² (Beg. W 106). This silver bowl, found in a very late burial, dated to the fourth century AD, is especially interesting because it was found under an overturned wooden box, decorated with nails in the shape of rosettes. The border of the box consisted of “10 decorative silver panels sheathed in bronze with leaf design in relief,” and twelve Meroitic S3 signs for “protection.”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Dows Dunham, *Royal Cemeteries of Kush*, vol. 4 (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1957), 150, fig. 97, excavation number 21-3-696.

¹⁶⁰ Claudia Näser, “Decorated Bells,” 158, 160.

¹⁶¹ RCK V, fig. 171, 3. A simple depiction of a three-petal “flower,” repeated three times, adorned fragments of a Brown Ware jar.

¹⁶² Ibid., fig. 140e.

¹⁶³ See, Ibid., fig. 141, object #22-1-618.

Lenoble has interpreted archaeological finds consisting of a tray with goblets in Meroitic funerary contexts as the implements used to perform the Meroitic milk libation funerary rites. He identified two examples from the West cemetery: Beg W109 and W118.¹⁶⁴

Lenoble saw origins of this funerary libation equipment in earlier burials at Begrawiyah West (Méroitique Classique -Beg. W284, W306, W308, and W316) and traced the continuity of this rite into the post-Meroitic period in the burials at Ballana (B6, B9, B2, B49, B84, B121, B95 and B114).¹⁶⁵

The “three-petal flower” symbol is attested in an X-Group context where it was inscribed on vessels found at Firka, between the Second and Third Cataract on the east bank.¹⁶⁶ Those examples depict the “flower” or a schematic depiction of the “flower” atop a simplified altar and more closely resemble the “flower” graffiti at Philae.¹⁶⁷ A variant of this image was also found in the Blemmye rock art of the Eastern Desert. Some of the horned altars from Winkler’s Site 38 have small tripartite figures resting in the center of the two “horns” of the altar, which look like simplified, small versions of the images

¹⁶⁴ Patrice Lenoble, “Plateaux de gobelets dans les sepultures de Mérée: un équipement liturgique de la libation isiaque “éthiopienne” in *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam*, W.V. Davies, ed. (London: British Museum Press in association with the Egypt Exploration Society, 1991), 247-249. Most of Lenoble’s examples of burial equipment (a tray with seven cups and a black bottle), associated with the Isiac libation rite came from the Meroitic cemetery at Kadada, which contained burials of commoners, located near Khartoum. The site of Kadada, between Meroe and Khartoum, contains Neolithic burials as well as burials ranging from the Napata to the Post-Meroitic periods. The appearance of this “milk libation” rite in non-royal Meroitic burials may point to its origins in the local culture. Imported Egyptian cultural traditions were generally limited to the burials of the elite.

¹⁶⁵ See Ibid., 248-249. For a more thorough exploration of the “plateaux de gobelets” attested in several other late Meroitic cemeteries, see also Patrice Lenoble, “La petite bouteille noire: un récipient méroïte de la libation funéraire” *Archeologie de Nil Moyen* (1995): 146-148, 153-154.

¹⁶⁶ Dunham, “Pot-Marks,” 143.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 143, #7. See also #1 and 4, which are variants of the “flower” symbol.

found at Philae.¹⁶⁸ Horned altars in the Nubian context are strongly associated with Isiac worship and thus the “flower” image continued to be associated with the cult of Isis in Blemmyan rock art.

Figural graffiti, called “pot-marks” or “heraldic signs,” have been found in diverse contexts ranging from Meroitic royal burials, to rock art in the Eastern and Western deserts or as decoration on ritual vessels made of clay, bronze or silver. These signs abound on the temple walls at Philae as well. While an entire dissertation could be written on the study of these signs, I wish to point out their regular appearance in areas frequented by writers of Nubian *proskynemata*: the Gate of Hadrian (Phase II) and the columns and walls of the dromos (Phase I), and the Second Eastern Colonnade (Phase III) contain numerous, subtle signs. I argue that these signs served as graffiti for illiterate worshippers who visited Philae to participate in or witness rites performed for Isis and Osiris. The signs can be divided into three categories: a personal sign that served as a writing of the “name” of an individual,¹⁶⁹ a religious symbol meant to evoke dedication to a particular cult, such as the three-petal flower described above, and signs used by members of a tribal group or a clan lineage within that tribe.

Winkler, who called the figural graffiti that he encountered in the Eastern and Western Deserts of southern Upper Egypt “Blemmye signs,” described them as follows:

¹⁶⁸ Hans A. Winkler, *Rock-Drawings*, vol. 1, pl. IV, 2

¹⁶⁹ Such a symbol seems to be employed within the Demotic writing of the name Esmet ʿḥm and Esmet-Pa-nṣ-nḥ.t-twt (father and son, respectively). A long vertical line with forked ends on the top and bottom is interjected as the antepenultimate character in each name. See Erich Lüddeckens, *Demotisches Namenbuch*, 678.

The differentiation of single signs in complicated families, the taste shown in selecting the form of a sign, and the care often applied to their drawing proves that tribal and subtribal self-consciousness was developed.¹⁷⁰

Dunham concurred that these signs were neither “pot-marks,” nor indication of individual ownership, but rather were used over a long period of time,

These can hardly be maker’s marks since they occur on the products of both potters and metal workers. Neither do they appear to be indications of individual ownership, for certain elements in some of the more complex marks are found over a considerable time range and combined with other elements of various kinds. That they have a very definite meaning seems apparent to the writer, who is tempted to suggest that they may perhaps indicate that the objects bearing them were produced by craftsmen in the service of the royal funerary endowments at Meroe over an extended period. This suggestion is put forward with reserve and is no more than a hypothesis, yet it seems to be made plausible by the provenance of those found in the Meroe cemeteries.¹⁷¹

The occurrence of the signs in Nubia, both in settlement and temple contexts, challenges Dunham’s hypothesis that these may have been signs associated with Meroitic royal funerary endowments. More plausible is Winkler’s assumption that these signs were representative of tribal groups, or more likely still, clan lineages within those tribal groups (called “sub-tribal” in Winkler’s quote above). I believe that specific clan lineages were indicated by the numerous references to *yetmede*-relatives in the Meroitic-language inscriptions in Phase II. The practice of listing *yetmede*-relatives in graffiti and on

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 13. A Blemmye king and two witnesses used their personal signs in order to endorse a sixth century document from Gebelein. See, Hans A. Winkler, *Rock-Drawings*, vol. I, (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1938), 13. A variant on the sign of the second witness to the document can be seen on the exterior of the Second Eastern Colonnade at Philae in Figure 25 on page 248 to the left of the upper “flower.”

¹⁷¹ Dows Dunham, “Pot-Marks,” 131. Dunham concluded his brief article with the following quote, “The writer submits this collection of marks to readers of KUSH in the hope that their significance may be clearer to others than they are to him, and that future researchers in Sudanese archaeology may find parallels to or variants from them.” Ibid., 146. A scholar of late period Nubian religion would be richly rewarded by the results of such a study conducted in the temples of Lower Nubia.

Meroitic funerary monuments indicated the supreme importance of the individual's social connection to his extended family, the clan lineage, which was traced through the mother's line.¹⁷² In a tribal society such as Nubia, sub-tribal groupings such as a clan lineage based on descent from one common ancestor would have formed an important component of individual identity. The positions (priestly or civil administrative) obtained by an individual's *yetmede* relatives confirmed the social status of that individual. Thus, identification with the clan lineage was paramount in Nubian tribal society. A sign that represented the clan lineage would have served to mark territorial boundaries, grazing animals owned by members of the clan lineage, as well as marking an individual's presence at a shrine (much like the feet graffiti), whether that be a cave in the eastern desert, the wall of a Meroitic rulers funerary chapel, or a place of worship within the temple complex of Philae.

Political Use

No prayer inscription referred to rulers of any sort in the corpus of Phase III.¹⁷³ Nor were civil administrative titles found in the inscriptions of Phase III. This absence is in stark contrast to the inscriptions from Phase II where priests also held titles from the hierarchy of Meroitic administration of Nubia. It is telling that no Roman Egyptian administrative titles were claimed by the last priests either for Egypt had relinquished its control of Nubia in the late third century.

The absence of overtly royal involvement in the cult at Philae, Tafa, and Qasr Ibrim makes a regional analysis of Nubian political use of the temples difficult. Certainly,

¹⁷² The importance of the maternal lineage is demonstrated by the Nubian custom of listing the mother's name first, sometimes omitted the father's name completely.

¹⁷³ The exception is the royal inscriptions of Nubian kings (Blemmye and Noubade) at Kalabsha, referenced on page 211, n. 39-41.

the tribal nature of Blemmye and Noubade societies, which resulted in many minor kings controlling small territories, was the primary factor behind the absence of a unified royal policy toward the temples of Lower Nubia. The fragmented, tribal nature of social organization in the late fourth and first half of the fifth century was contrasted by the emergence of a unified state in the early to mid-sixth century AD when the Noubadae converted to Christianity and established three Christian kingdoms (Noubadia, Makuria, and Alwa).¹⁷⁴ Prior to the establishment of the Christian kingdoms, it seems that minor kings engaged in battle frequently with territory changing hands regularly.

Why was Lower Nubia Important to the Blemmye and Noubade Kings?

The temples of Lower Nubia were important sites for the declarations of territorial control made by the tribal kings (*basileus*) and chiefs (phylarchs) of the Blemmyes and Noubade. Royal inscriptions on the façade of the Temple of Kalabsha specified land boundaries that were set by royal order¹⁷⁵ as well declarations of military victory by kings such as Kharamadoye and Silko.

When the Noubadae tribes pushed north into Lower Nubia from their homelands to the south, they came into conflict with local Blemmye leaders as attested by the

¹⁷⁴ C.J. Gardberg, *Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia, vol. 7. Late Nubian Sites: Churches and Settlements* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard; Stockholm: Läromedelsförlagen/Svenska Bokförlaget, 1970) 14-16. "Thus the conversion to Christianity was presumably a long process, and the decisive moment from the political point of view was the victory of the Christian king of the Nobades over the pagan Blemmyes rather than the arrival of the missionaries of Queen Theodora." The author suggests that the date of conversion was earlier than the AD 542 when the first missionaries sent by the Byzantine queen Theodora succeeded in converting the Noubade king. Ibid., 14.

¹⁷⁵ The texts at Kalabsha designated the person who would have control over a specified area. The right to grant land control remained with the king. A century later, Blemmye kings granted the right to administer specific tracts of land (*curatoria*) in Greek and Coptic documents found at Gebelein. See *FHN III*, #334, 1207-1208; #336, 1209-1210; #339, 1213-1214.

correspondence found at Qasr Ibrim. Silko's victory in the mid-fifth century ended the brief half century of Blemmye domination of Lower Nubia. While the conflicts between these ethnic groups can be viewed as territorial, the conflicts would also determine the dominant religion to be practiced in Lower Nubia: traditional pharaonic religion as practiced by the Blemmyes or the emergent Nubian Christianity practiced by the Noubade.¹⁷⁶ Initial Blemmye control of Lower Nubia (AD 394-453) resulted in Blemmye kings appointing cult association presidents at Kalabsha. A Greek graffito states, "the king named these presidents (*klinarchos*) and chairmen (*epistates*)."¹⁷⁷ At Philae, the image of a disembodied head wearing the double crown, along with a large falcon wearing the double crown suggest royal patronage of the Prophets of Ptiris who inscribed their proskynemata on the exterior wall of the Second Eastern Colonnade.

During a period of increasingly strident Byzantine enforcement of the primacy of Christianity, the Blemmye kings and their prophets militarily defended their traditional access to the temple at Philae. The development of a Christian community on the holy island of the goddess Isis brought the two groups of worshippers into an escalating series of clashes over their shared sacred space. While the Blemmye kings and their prophets probably understood their conflict to be solely with the Christian authorities in residence on Philae, Egyptian military backing of the church on Philae caused the Blemmye aggression against the church to be interpreted as attacks on Byzantine Egyptian

¹⁷⁶ Pierre Nautin, "La conversion du temple de Philae en église chrétienne" *Cahiers Archéologiques* 17 (1967): 8. Several explicitly Christian artifacts were found in Ballana burials. One silver reliquary was brought to Nubia, perhaps from Philae, in the early fifth century. See László Török, "An Early Christian Silver Reliquary from Nubia" in *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst*, Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, et al., eds. (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GMBH, 1986), 64.

¹⁷⁷ *FHN III*, #313, 1136.

authority. However, the Blemmyes would not relinquish their right to access to the temple at Philae and to the divine statue of Isis, for the image of the goddess was an important element of Blemmye worship in Lower Nubia. The annual journey of the goddess from Philae to Blemmye-controlled temples must have formed an organizing principle around which Blemmye tribal rule in Lower Nubia was organized. Allocation of land, appointing prophets and cult association presidents would have provided the means through which tribal kings administered their territory and integrated minor kings into a larger network of Blemmye control. To lose access to Philae would have destroyed the symbolic connection between the Blemmye strongholds of Qasr Ibrim, Kalabsha, and Tafa.

With the military defeat of the Blemmyes and Noubadae by the Roman Egyptian officials Florus¹⁷⁸ and Maximinus,¹⁷⁹ prayers to Isis at Philae were no longer engraved upon her temple walls. Although the Blemmyes negotiated the right to maintain access to the temple at Philae in their treaty of AD 452 or early AD 453, the last polytheistic inscriptions were recorded shortly thereafter.

- AD 452 last dated Demotic inscription (Ph. 365)¹⁸⁰
- AD 456 last dated pagan Greek inscription (IGP 199)¹⁸¹

Emperor Justinian ordered that the temples of Philae be closed. The Roman military carried out his order sometime between AD 535-537, seizing the divine statues

¹⁷⁸ *FHN III*, #329, 1193. Jordanes, *Romana* 333, summarizes events in the career of Emperor Marcianus (AD 450-457).

¹⁷⁹ *FHN III*, #318, 1155.

¹⁸⁰ In which Esmet ʿ3 recorded the names of five generations of his priestly family.

¹⁸¹ In which Pasnous, *Protoklinarchos*, recorded his second graffito, 22 years after his earlier graffito written as a Prophet of Ptiris.

and arresting the last priests.¹⁸² While Blemmyes continued to be attested in administrative papyri¹⁸³ and in religious contexts¹⁸⁴ from the sixth century, they never regained control of Lower Nubia. The next Nubian inscriptions were those inscribed by Nubian Christians at Philae¹⁸⁵ and Dendur,¹⁸⁶ which provide epigraphic evidence of the

¹⁸² The exact date of the temples' closure is not known. It is inferred from the dates at which Narses "the Eunuch," the royal Byzantine chamberlain in charge of the treasury, was present in Alexandria to install Theodosius as Archbishop of Alexandria. His protégé of the same name, Narses the Persarmenian, surnamed Kamsarakan, was in put in charge of the troops in Egypt. See Pierre Nautin, "La conversion du temple de Philae en église chrétienne" *Cahiers Archéologiques* 17 (1967): 5-6. *Contra* Dijkstra who argues that the closure of Philae was not a military operation. See Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, "A Cult of Isis at Philae after Justinian? Reconsidering 'P. Cair. Masp.' I 67004 *ZPE* 146 (2004): 144-145, 152. Dijkstra quotes Procopius' description of the closure of Philae, but ignores Procopius' statement, "Narses, a Persarmenian by birth, whom I mentioned before as having deserted to the Romans, and who was in command of the troops there (Philae)..." that clearly described Narses Kamsarakan as a military commander at the time that the temple of Philae was closed. See Bernard, *IGP II*, #195, 231 for the collaboration of church officials with Egyptian military officials to build a wall for the defense of the island of Philae, "L'aide de l'évêque n'a pas été symbolique. C'est lui qui a recueilli, sans doute parmi le clergé et les habitants de l'île, et procuré les fonds destinés au financement des travaux. Le pouvoir administrative et l'autorité religieuse ont donc collaboré à la défense de l'île."

¹⁸³ For the Gebelein documents, see *FHN III*, #331-343, 1196-1216.

¹⁸⁴ Jitse Dijkstra, "A Cult of Isis at Philae after Justinian? Reconsidering 'P. Cair. Masp.' I 67004" *ZPE* 146 (2004): 148, ll. 8-9, 149. Dijkstra argues that Blemmyes were still worshipping in the temple of Isis in AD 567, thirty years after the purported closing of the temples there by Narses, the Perse-Armenian general. *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁸⁵ All of the graffiti in which the author stated explicitly that he was Nubian were inscribed on one relief on the western interior jamb of the central door of the Second Pylon: IGP 205, 208, 209, 210, and 213. The relief panel is located in the same south west corner of the Pronaos that drew Nubian worshippers in Phase II and the inscription of Horpaese in Phase III (Ph. 258).

¹⁸⁶ *FHN III*, #330, 1194-1195; Aylward M. Blackman, *The Temple of Dendur*, (Cairo: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1911), 36ff. The Coptic inscription, dated to AD 559 or 574, recorded the decree of the Noubade king Eirpanome to establish a church at Dendur. The continued role of Kalabsha as an administrative center is attested by the inclusion of "Joseph, the *exarch* of Talmis" as the second author of the decree. *Talmis/Kalabsha* was the seat of the *exarch*, the governor of Noubadia. See C.J. Gardberg, *Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia (SJE 7)*, 17.

larger phenomenon of converting Egyptian temples to churches throughout Nubia.¹⁸⁷

Such conversions occurred at Tafa, Kalabsha, Dendur, Dakka, Qasr Ibrim, and Faras.

Conclusion

The ritual importance of holy staves was emphasized in Phase III. Members of the late priestly family at Philae repeatedly used the name Esmet, which means “the possessor of the Holy Staff.” In addition, four depictions of a man holding a staff before him accompanied the *proskynemata* of the Prophets of Ptiris. The hieracocephalous deity itself held a palm branch scepter. Pasnous, the cult association president and Prophet of Ptiris, inscribed his second Greek proskynema on a scene that showed the king exiting his palace with three divine standards of a jackal, an Ibis, and a falcon.¹⁸⁸ As that temple relief attests, holy staves were an integral component of traditional Egyptian religion and kingship iconography. What is noteworthy in this late period is the importance placed upon these staves as ritual implements, which were carried in procession.¹⁸⁹

Every phase of Nubian presence at Philae contains inscriptions in which titles associated with religious cult associations were held by Nubians. Some titles remained unchanged: the Phase I Demotic title $\text{p}^3 \text{rt}$ “agent” was transliterated into Greek in Phase III as $\pi\alpha\eta\tau$. This title was used frequently in the Phase II Nubian inscriptions, appearing

¹⁸⁷ At Qasr Ibrim the Taharqa temple was reused as a church circa the first half of the sixth century. See, William Y. Adams, *Qasr Ibrim. Late Medieval Period*, (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1996) 69. For a recent survey of texts from Christian Nubia, see *Nubian Voices: Studies in Christian Nubian Culture*, eds. Adam Łajtar and Jacques van der Vliet (Warsaw: Drukarnia Duo Studio, 2011); *Christianity and Monasticism in Aswan and Nubia*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012, 2014).

¹⁸⁸ IGP 199 was inscribed on the eastern exterior of the Main Temple. PM VI 382-383, p. 246; Berlin Photo 331.

¹⁸⁹ Recall that each official portrayed in the Meroitic Chamber carried a palm branch scepter. See Horst Beinlich, *Die Photos, Teil 4*, Berlin Ph. 0721-0721; Griffith, *Meroitic Inscriptions*, vol. 2, pls. xviii-xxvii.

in Demotic and Meroitic, where the Meroitic title *perite* was derived from the Demotic p3 rt. Other titles changed: the Phase I title *strategos* “cult association president” was replaced by the Phase III title *klinarchos*. The change in terminology reflected both the ascendancy of Greek in Nubia and the disconnection of the “cult association president” from the Egyptian civil administrative sphere. Whereas the Phase I *strategoi* had held office at the pleasure of the Roman authorities in Egypt, by the fifth century Blemmye kings appointed Nubian cult association presidents.¹⁹⁰ Despite the altered terminology, the organizing principle of temple administration, and by extension administration of the region of Lower Nubia, continued to occur by means of a variety of cult associations dedicated to various gods, Egyptian and Nubian.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Two inscriptions link cult association members to royal patronage: the Phase I title “*strategos*, agent of the king” at Dakka (Dakka 15) and the Phase II title “agents of the king of *Aethiopia*” (Ph. 410) (p3 rt n n3sw.t n p3 t3 nḥs). Egyptian agreements in the Ptolemaic period and Egyptian and Nubian agreements in the early Roman period at Philae delineate the financial obligations of local communities to the temples at Philae and seek protection from financial depredations of Roman Egyptian military officials stationed at the border. Cf. Ph. 58 lines 3-8: “The elders of T(n)ames went before Niger the hipparch and Sulpicius the curator of Philae. He commanded that they make an oath to him that no person of T(n)ames and my districts(?) send anything to a centurion of Philae.” Griffith, *Catalogue*, 54.

¹⁹¹ Artur Obłuski, “Dodekaschoinos in Late Antiquity: Ethnic Blemmyes vs. Political Blemmyes and the Arrival of Nobades” *MittSAG* 24 (2013): 144 makes the interesting point that the Blemmyes did not become resident in the Dodekaschoinos in great numbers. Obłuski suggests that the Blemmyes sought political control of the area while leaving the autochthonous population in control of the local temples.

Conclusion: Original Contributions to Scholarship

This study is the first to analyze Nubian temple inscriptions written in Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek as a unified corpus. While other studies have delved deeply into Nubian inscriptions written in one of the three languages, this is the first work to collate, analyze, and synthesize the information recorded in the Nubian temple inscriptions in the Dodekaschoenos. This approach has yielded a comprehensive description of the varied populations designated as “Nubian” in this work.

Placing Nubians at the center of this study has revealed several important components of the history of Nubians in the temple hierarchy: an historical timeline of Nubian participation in temple cult, diachronic changes in the roles assumed by Nubians in temple hierarchy, and shifts in cultic practices over almost five hundred years of Nubian pilgrimage to the Egyptian temples in the Dodekaschoenos.

Analysis of the dated Nubian inscriptions revealed three discrete phases of Nubian epigraphic presence in the temples of the Dodekaschoenos. While this finding mirrors periods of settlement and abandonment found by Nubian archaeologists Bruce Williams and David Edwards,¹ this phenomenon, as manifested in the epigraphic corpus, is recognized and fully described in this study for the first time. Understanding the corpus as consisting of three discrete phases, written by very different groups of Nubians working in sharply different contexts, informed the decision to organize this work chronologically.

Rejecting Burkhardt’s generic term “Meroites” to refer to non-Egyptian writers of temple inscriptions in the Dodekaschoenos, this work presents three discrete groups of

¹ See n. 29 in the Introduction.

Nubian temple administrators in their full complexity. Phase I Nubians served as financial administrators in Lower Nubian temples and functioned in a temple hierarchy controlled by Egyptians. Their religious devotion was reserved for local Nubian gods: Arensnuphis and Thoth Pnubs. Very few Nubians had joined the Egyptian priesthood; they served instead as cult association officials who received, collected, and managed the required Nubian temple donations, a practice established during the Ptolemaic period. The writers of Phase II *proskynemata* bore Meroitic titles indicative of their role in the administration of Meroe's northernmost province of *Akin*. Having learned the Egyptian sacred scripts; hieroglyphic, hieratic, and Demotic, Nubian priests attained the highest positions in the temple administration of the Dodekaschoenos in the service of Meroitic kings and queens, who employed Nubian priests to perform the funerary rites of Osiris on behalf of the Meroitic ruler. No longer operating in an Egyptian-dominated context, Nubians of Phase II incorporated the Meroitic language and Meroitic titles transliterated in Demotic into their prayer inscriptions, as they assumed a dominant role in the temples of Philae and Dakka, the principle temples of northern and southern Dodekaschoenos. In the final phase of Nubian worship, two distinct groups of priests inscribed prayers at Philae. Their inscriptions comprise all but two of the twenty-five dated inscriptions of the fifth century AD. Thus, Nubian and Nubian-sponsored priests were the last practitioners of traditional Egyptian religion, which survived into the sixth century at Philae.

Furthermore, this study reveals and describes the primarily economic function of Nubians in the temples of the Dodekaschoenos. Based upon the Ptolemaic designation of the conquered territory of Nubia as the estate of Isis of Philae, Nubian nomes owed tribute to the temple of Isis at Philae. While Nubian tithing to Egyptian temples began as

a punitive measure instituted after suppression of the Theban Revolt (206-186 BC), four centuries later the Meroitic king assumed the traditional mantle of the Egyptian pharaoh as the primary temple financial sponsor. Gaining control of Philae for a period in the mid-third century, Meroitic kings sent Nubian priests and Meroitic administrators to Philae and Dakka bearing abundant gifts of gold. Having an initial interest in the Nubian celebration of Khoiak, I followed the linguistic references to annual celebrations for Osiris in the corpus of graffiti at Philae. Identifying inscriptions that contained the Demotic phrases ḥm nb “gold worker,” m.t rnp.t n Wsr “annual affair of Osiris,” and tḥb “anointed,” which revealed families of gold workers, rites performed by them for Osiris, and the fact that virtually all inscriptions by goldsmiths at Philae were inscribed in the stairwell of the Second Pylon at Philae. The physical proximity between inscriptions by goldsmiths that refer to an annual celebration for Osiris in the stairwell of the Second Pylon and the cluster of Nubian inscriptions of Phase II near the relief of Horus of Kubban on the north face of the Second Pylon suggests a possible connection between the goldsmiths and the Wayekiye family of priests whose home was near Kubban and the mouth of the Wadi Allaqi, site of numerous gold mines.

Investigation of the titles claimed in Nubian inscriptions shows that the apparatus employed to collect and allocate temple donations in Phase I and Phase III was the cult association. While cult associations remained active during Phase II, it seems that outright donations of gold by Meroitic rulers and their high officials became the primary source of funding during that period. During the first and third epigraphic phases, associations dedicated to particular gods, which changed over time, collected Nubian

tithes and delivered them as part of the religious processions that arrived at Philae from the other Nubian temples annually.

As a result of creating and describing this framework of Nubian religious activity in the Dodecaschoenos, additional Nubian inscriptions were identified. For Phase I, five inscriptions have been added to the corpus of Phase I Nubian inscriptions based on three criteria:

- The inscriptions were dedicated to the Nubian gods, Arensnuphis and Thoth Pnubs, associated with the temple of Arensnuphis and the shrine of Thoth Pnubs (Kiosk of Nectanebo) at Philae.
- Inclusion of the cult association title “agent” and references to the collection by the “agent of Arensnuphis” of a percentage of goods brought to Philae reflect the patterns of Greco-Roman administration of Lower Nubia as a temple estate wherein Nubian cult associations delivered one-tenth of the produce of their land to Isis of Philae.
- Reference to the procession of the cult association of Thoth Pnubs. Procession of shrines from the subsidiary temples of the Dodecaschoenos to the temple of Philae is a recurring theme in the corpus.

For Phase II, I have identified and described the cultic focus of the Meroitic rulers. The placement of Phase II Nubian inscriptions on milk libation scenes is connected with the Meroitic royal funerary rite of offering milk libations. While this work is based on the studies of Junker and Yellin, my analysis of the Nubian graffiti and their clustering near milk libation scenes expands upon the previous scholarship related to the unique Nubian religious rite of pouring milk over an offering table to purify the

offerings placed upon it. Milk libations were one part of an annual rite known as “Feast of Entry.” Griffith briefly described the enigmatic rite. Chapter 2 of this dissertation presents an expanded description of the ʿq-procession (Feast of Entry) in the context of the Nubian inscriptions. This rite was central in Phase II for two reasons: the presentation of gold offerings from the Meroitic king and the performance of funerary rites for Osiris. Gold and its radiance had a central role in the Nubian performance of the rites which included gilding divine statues of Isis and Osiris, creating golden cultic items to be used in the rites (ḥs.t and wšb.t vessels for libations), and the procession to Biga to pour milk libations at the gravesite of Osiris.

Although the Phase II Nubian priests journeyed to Philae to conduct rites on behalf of the Meroitic king and queen, another earlier, local Nubian religious devotion was indicated by the placement of the *proskynemata* of five generations of Wayekiye family members. While the principal scene around which the graffiti cluster depicted Ptolemy VIII pouring milk over a table of offerings set before Osiris Wennefer and Isis, the earliest Phase II inscription at Philae was engraved on the adjacent relief of the king offering milk to Horus of Kubban. One hundred years later, the last dated inscription of Phase II was inscribed on the same panel, demonstrating the attachment of the Nubian priests to a local manifestation of a Nubian Horus associated with Kubban at the Wadi Allaqi. Fragments of Ramesside monuments at Philae and blocks reused in the foundation of the temple of Dakka indicate that Horus of Kubban had temples of his own in Lower Nubia during the New Kingdom. While at Philae, Nubian worshippers not only acknowledged the milk libation rite that they performed for the Meroitic king, but also the older, **local** rites performed for their traditional Nubian god, Horus of Kubban.

Finally, I have discussed the numerous Blemmye figural graffiti, which were engraved near the Phase III *proskynemata*, to demonstrate conceptual and artistic links with the figural graffiti of the Eastern Desert and inscribed on the walls of the chapels of royal burials at Meroe. I have suggested that the figural graffiti may represent clan lineages, the primary form of social organization in Nubia. If this suggestion is correct, the many figural graffiti found on the walls of the temples at Philae represent inscriptions of non-literate pilgrims to the temple. An in depth study of the shapes and symbolism of the figural graffiti at Philae may complement this study of Nubian inscriptions in the Dodecaschoenos and connect the non-literate pilgrims with the rock inscriptions found in the Eastern and Western Deserts and in Nubian “high places.”

This chronological presentation of five centuries of Nubian worship in the temples of the Dodecaschoenos provides a wealth of information, which I hope will be incorporated into scholarly work in three related fields:

1. Expansion of the cult of Isis beyond the borders of Egypt,
2. Transition from pharaonic religion to Christianity, and
3. Roman border studies.

This dissertation offers a description of a transitional period when the ancient world gave way to Late Antiquity, traditional polytheistic religion succumbed to Christianity, and the lands of NE Africa encountered the colonial ambitions and military might of Rome. Nubia played a roll in this important period, but the land and its people are often omitted from general discussions of the cult of Isis, the transition to Christianity, and Roman border conflicts. I hope that the information presented in this

dissertation will help to incorporate the Nubian story into historical, religious, military, and political narratives of this period.

Appendix A: Phase I Nubian Inscriptions

Inscription type is according to Burkhardt, *Ägypter*, 48. For a description of the four inscription types, see page 30 of this dissertation.

Inscription	Date	Location	Actors	Comments
Ph. 54 Type 4	3 Aug AD 30	SW Jamb of Nectanebo's doorway of First Pylon	'Rqe strategos, agent of Isis	Agreement Scene: Nectanebo offering <i>wtb</i> (clepsydra) to Mut. Between forward leg of king and staff of goddess.
Ph. 55 Type 4	AD 48 4 Peret 21	SW Jamb of Nectanebo's doorway of First Pylon	Abla, stratagos, agent of Isis	Agreement Scene: Nectanebo offering wine to Horus; graffito in front of face of the king and below his hand Ber. Ph. 825
Kal. 4 Type 4		Loose block	Pakhnum <i>Shashimete</i> and others	Agreement Division of property
Dakka 12 Type 4	AD 57	Pronaos	Pakhnum, Hor, and Petearhensnuf w ^c b-priests of Isis of the Abaton and Philae and wn-priests of Isis the Abaton and Philae	Agreement Ritual obligations to Philae
Dakka 15/17		Pronaos	Mn3i strategos, agent of king, agent of Isis, w TM b-priest of Isis, with unnamed 3 rd Prophet	Records service rendered for Isis in exchange for "life breath of the (Meroitic) king"
Dendur 1		Pronaos	Pakhom Lesonis	Releases obligations of Korte temple to

Type 4				Dendur
Ph. 11 Type 3		Kiosk of Nectanebo	P-t-Hr-p3- hrd	Rn=f mne ty Proskynema for Thoth Pnubs
Ph. 15 Type 3		Kiosk of Nectanebo	Name missing	Rn=f mne ty Proskynema for Thoth Pnubs
Ph. 24 Type 4	AD 31 3 Peret 24	Main Temple dromos West Colonnade	Men of day 4	Agreement to travel to Philae to worship Arensnuphis yearly.
Ph. 25 Type 4	3 Peret 20	Main Temple dromos West Colonnade	“those of day 4”	Scene: Tiberius offering “millions of years” to Arensnuphis Reference to donation of ¼ of goods to Isis of Philae
Ph. 36	AD 46 1 Peret 15	Main Temple dromos West Colonnade back wall	P-t-’ltm Agent of Arensnuphis	Scene: Augustus offering wine to Arensnuphis & Tefnut Reference to procession of cult association of Thoth Pnubs

Appendix B: Phase II Nubian Inscriptions

Inscription	Date	Location	Actors	Comments
Ph. 68		E side of First Pylon- on the stair well wall Hieroglyphic/ Hieratic (1-10) & demotic (lines 11-14)	P-ti-p-ḥwt s3 n Wrš master of masters of Isis, Goldsmith, bearer of the epiphany of the god	Khoiak Dated to yr. 20 of Biunqash, an otherwise unattested king “anointed tḥb in the year named”
Ph. 111 Type 2		Inside west enclosure wall Birth House Door at N. end west jamb south face	Wayekiye (Gen 7) Doubtful and ugly writing of name	
Ph. 120 Type 2		Inside enclosure wall birth house NE corner	Wayekiye B (Gen. 5) hbhn, <i>qeren</i> , agent Written by Qyrne/Byrne	Khoiak, Day 11 FHN III, 989 Father: Maniawī, mother: Grmrwe (Meroitic: kdi- mrwe)
Ph. 223 Type 1		Roof of Birth House	Sesen (Gen. 4) Lesonis son of Hornakhtyotef I, lesonis	Author of Ph. 409 FHN III, 945
Ph. 225 Type 2		Roof of Birth House	Qeren, son of Tenreq (Tarkonnange Ph. 389?)	
Ph. 251 Type 2	Earliest Wayekiye family inscription	NW face 2 nd Pylon	Paese (Gen. 2) <i>qeren</i> of Isis, agent of Isis	Scene: Ptolemy IX offering milk to Horus of Baki FHN III, 944 Berlin Ph. 1287
Ph. 252 Type 2 & 3		NW face 2 nd Pylon	<u>Dd</u> Ḥor Abaryte, Gold smith	Khoiak, day 17 and 24 Directly below Ph. 251, separated by engraved FHN III, 1041

Ph. 254 Type 2 & 3		NW face 2 nd Pylon On narrow E face of same pilaster as Ph. 251 and Ph. 252	Wygte (Gen. 7) <i>qeren</i> , agent, prophet, prince of Takompso Performs actions of a gold smith: gilds statues of Isis and Osiris	Gives mother's name to connect him to Hornakhtyotef II, Wayekiye family. FHN III, 1016
Ph. 255 Type 2		NW face 2 nd Pylon	Pathores (Pa-t3-ḥwt-rsỉ) <i>qeren</i> and agent of Isis	Scene: Ptolemy VIII pours milk on table of offerings before Osiris Wennefer. Graffito inscribed before face of Isis, behind Osiris. FHN III, 994 Berlin Photo 672, 1576
Ph. 256 Type 2		NW face 2 nd Pylon	Pathores <i>qeren</i> of Isis, agent and ḥm-nṯr priest, Prince of Takompso.	Scene: same as Ph. 255. Engraved between face of king and Osiris Berlin Photo 672 FHN III, 995
Ph. 257 Type 2		NW face of 2 nd pylon	Hornakhtyotef II (Gen. 5) <i>qeren</i> , agent, ḥm-nṯr priest, prince of Takompso	FHN III, 981
Ph. 344 Type 2 & 3		Pronaos of Main Temple above doorway to Gate of Hadrian	Makaltami (Gen. 3) strategos in Meroe	Scene: king makes offering before Isis and Osiris This inscription, originally in red paint has disappeared. FHN III, 965 Berlin Ph. 1332 Berlin Ph. 1685-Ph. 344

Ph. 389 Type 3		Isis Temple roof	Tarkonnanga prophet of Hathor	
Ph. 403 Type 2		Temple of Imhotep	Wygte (Gen. 7) Great ḥbḥn, <i>qeren</i> of king, <i>huite</i> of Isis?	Khoiak 11 FHN III, 1018
Ph. 408 Type 2		Gate of Hadrian Exterior of doorway, south sixth course	Mere (short for Mandulis?)	
Ph. 409 Type 2		Gate of Hadrian	Sesen (Gen. 4) royal scribe of Kush	Author of Ph. 223
Ph. 410 Type 3		Gate of Hadrian South exterior wall	Manitawawi (Gen. 4) ḥm-nṯr priest, <i>qeren</i> , agent of Isis, agent of the king of Kush, prince of Takompso and the Triacontaschoe nus, royal scribe of Kush, astronomer.	FHN III, 978
Ph. 411 Type 2		Gate of Hadrian South exterior	Atengeytenrie strategos and agent of Isis	Feast of Entry FHN III, 990
Ph. 416 Type 2	AD 253	Gate of Hadrian South exterior	Sasan <i>qeren akrere</i> , great envoy (wpte) to Rome,	FHN 260, see FHN 259 Khoiak, Day 1 Longest graffito known in Demotic- 26 lines
Ph. 417 Type 2	AD 253	Gate of Hadrian South exterior	Tami Arebetanki or Arbetegaye of Isis (Meroitic: <i>arbetke</i>) “tax collector”	FHN III, 1014 Directly under Ph. 416
Ph. 420		Gate of Hadrian	Mere	Almost identical to

Type 2		North exterior		Ph. 408
Ph. 421 Type 2	AD 227/8	Gate of Hadrian	Wayekiye A (Gen. 4) ḥm ntr of Sothis, w ^c b- priest of the 5 living stars, ḥry-tp (“ritualist”) of the king of Kush.	Feast of Entry
Ph. 449 Type 2		Loose block	Pakhom, son of Lucius	Khoiak 9
Dak. 30 Type 3		Western entrance to Proanos of Temple of Dakka. Location of all Dakka inscriptions in this table	Hornakhtyotef II (Gen. 5) Lesonis of Thoth of Pnubs	Feast of Entry Gilded shrine of Thoth with gold Birth of Isis FHN III, 982
Dak. 31 Type 2			Qeren (Gen. 5) No titles	FHN III, 992
Dak. 32 Typ 2			Shetelten (Gen. 5) No titles	FHN III, 993
Dak. 33 Type 2 & 3	.		Bek (Gen. 3) and Pqrnye s3 P-ti-n3-ntr.w	Feast of Entry gilds the shrine of [the great god, Thoth Pnubs] tree. FHN III, 966
IGP180	Year 8 1 Tybi	Gate of Hadrian north exterior	Abratoeis/ Abratoye <i>Pesheto</i> of the king of Ethiopia	Written in red ink FHN III, 1020 Karanog121 – Abratoye’s funerary inscription. FHN III, 1035

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Appendix C: Phase II Meroitic-Language Nubian Inscriptions

Inscript ion	Location	Actors	Comments
MI 95	E. Colonnade s. of Temple of Imhotep	“Agent” apote Only title given, no name	Nearly identical to MI 121
MI 96	1st Pylon-North face of East Tower	Tanayi, <i>wide Apote</i>	
MI 97	Meroitic Chamber	Manitawawi <i>sete</i> ² of the strategos of the water, great prophet of Amun in Philae (<i>womense-lh Pilqeteli</i>), royal prophet, ḥbḥn sqote-lh, ššl	FHN III, 1024 Rilly 2007, 144-148
MI 98	Meroitic Chamber	Bekemete kroro, mte of Amun, peseto, strategos of the land	MI 122 “mde in Faras”
MI 99	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrqye ḥbḥn agent of Isis	
MI 100	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq <i>qeren</i> of Ponnili-se-lo	MI 122 royal ḥnḥn <i>mey mebaras</i> in Pennay?
MI 101	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq ḥbḥn qoriseš Offerings to Isis of Philae and the Abaton, mention of Osiris of Philae and the Abaton and Isis of Philae and the Abaton	
MI 102	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq- ḥbḥn, Woš qer	
MI 103	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq	Mentions Woš bedewi Isis of Meroe?
MI 104	Meroitic Chamber	Apmlo strategos of the land (pelmoš ad(b)lit)	Title only

² Sete – Tutor, hence “mother” See, Claude Rilly 2010, 63. “...il semble indiquer un rôle particulier dans l’éducation des enfants par la transmission de la fonction.”

MI 105	Meroitic Chamber	Manitawawi Strategos of the land	Title only
MI 106	Meroitic Chamber	Bekemete kroro, peseto	Title only
MI 107	Meroitic Chamber	Bekemete kroro, strategos of the land	Title only
MI 108	Meroitic Chamber	Snnli-li mseqeto (<mesqeselo)	Title only
MI 109	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq-ye Woš qer	Title only
MI 110	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq-ye ḥbḥn-lḥ	Title only
MI 111	Meroitic Chamber	Mštrq-ye qoren of Isis, agent of Isis, Woš qer, kšbn Woš-se	Title only
MI 112	Roof of Birthhouse- S		Two pair of votive feet below a large rectangle containing text.
MI 113	Roof of Birthhouse- S		Votive feet-below large rectangle of MI 112
MI 118	West River Gate (just west of Birth House)		
MI 119	Gate of Hadrian South wall	Yesbokḥemani king (qore), mret metet Wosselo	FHN III, 1049 Berlin Photo 479
MI 120	Gate of Hadrian North wall	Yesbokḥemani king (qore), mret metey Wos-se-lo	Berlin Photo 478
MI 121	Gate of Hadrian West doorway North thickness	<i>Yebaye?</i>	Berlin Photos 476, 477
MI 122	Gate of Hadrian Exterior wall south	Qeren? ḥbḥn of the king Medk in Philae? Made (?) in Faras kšbn Woš sb.t	
MI 123	Gate of Hadrian Slightly north of MI 122	Agent Yetmede of the strategos (pelamos)	MI 95, 122? And 123 – no name is given, only titles and yetmede relations. Berlin Photo 472

MI 124	Gate of Diocletian West end of passage of central arch	agent	Northernmost Meroitic- language inscription Berlin Photos 480, 481
MI 125	Loose block	ḥbḥn in Daq aḥr	In honor of Harendotes in the Abaton (Aretete Tebawe-teli)

Appendix D: Phase III Nubian Inscriptions

Inscription	Date	Location	Actors	Comments
Ph. 375		Roof of Main Temple, middle of N Pronaos wall	Esmet ḥm I 2 nd Prophet of Isis	Khoiak 10
IGP 189	AD 411	Stone facing from W. Church	P3 ʿḥm 1st Prophet of Isis	Name inscribed near image of two feet
Ph. 194		Birth House, Room 1 NW wall	Esmet	
Ph. 343		Isis Temple, exterior rear wall	Esmet ʿ3 Sh md ntr n ʿls.t Pterophorus of Isis	“I performing the service of water in the temple of Isis”
Biga 6		Pronaos façade, north jamb, east face	Esmet ʿ3 Sh md ntr n ʿls.t Pterophorus of Isis	
Ph. 240	AD 435	Birth House roof NW side near MI 117	Esmet ʿ3 Sh md ntr n ʿls.t Pterophorus of Isis	Khoiak 1
Ph. 366	AD 435	Osiris Chamber, left of entrance	Esmet ʿ3 Sh md ntr n ʿls.t Pterophorus of Isis	Khoiak 1
Ph. 332	AD 439	Main Temple Naos south of west door	Esmet ʿ3 Sh md ntr n ʿls.t Pterophorus of Isis	3 Peret
Ph. 365	AD 452	Osiris Chamber, right of entrance (Opposite Ph. 366, but written 17 years later)	Esmet ʿ3 no title	Khoiak 6 Last dated Demotic inscription
IGP 198	AD 454/5	Tile found in the pavement of a church north and west of MT, thought to come from roof of MT.	Smetachates son of Esmet ʿ3	Votive feet.
Ph. 376	AD 408/9	MT roof, east side, above Pronaos	Esmet ḥm II	Votive feet. Behind feet is IGP 188.
IGP 188		Below Ph. 376	Esmet ḥm II	

IGP 193	AD 448/449	On a stone “south of the island”	Esmet ḥm ll	
IGP 197	AD 452	Osiris chamber, east of entrance Ph. 366 above it.	Esmet ḥm ll	23 Khoiak Scene: Horus holding a harpoon
IGP 196	AD 452	East side of MT roof above Pronaos. Just below IGP 188	Esmet ḥm ll <i>Protostoliste</i>	15 Khoiak Votive feet.
Ph. 237		Roof of Birth House, W colonnade, south, near MI 116	Esmet ḥm ll	Votive feet.
Ph. 258		Southwest corner of the Pronaos	Horpaese (Ḥr-pa-ʿls.t), son of Esmet ʿ3	2 Akhet 22 Before king’s face in milk libation scene favored by Phase II Nubians. Berlin Photo 672
Ph. 355		Door to Room 1 of MT, west jamb, east face at foot	Horpaese	
Ph. 450	AD 438	Loose block found in Shellal	Horpaese Sh pr sh n ʿls.t Scribe of the house of record of Isis	4 Peret 9
Ph. 138		West wall of Room 1 – Birth House	Esmet, son of Horpaese Wab-priest of Isis of the Abaton and Philae	
Recorded by Cruz-Uribe		Exterior Second Eastern Colonnade	Hor(paese), son of Horpaese, son of Esmet ʿ3	
Ph. 96		Birth House- east side	Hormaese (Ḥr-mr-ʿls.t), son of Esmet ʿ3 Wab-priest of Isis	Many figural graffiti – udjat-eye, boat, falcon wearing double crown
IGP 190	AD 434		Pasnous, son of Pachoumious Prophet of Ptiris	9 Hathor FHN III, 1141-1144; Bernand IGP II, 221-225, Pl. 39-40

IGP 199	AD 456/7	Exterior of MT east side, bottom register, first scene from south	Pasnous, son of Pachumious <i>Protoklinarchos</i>	Last pagan Greek text
IGP 191		Exterior of Second Eastern Colonnade	Pamet, son of Bereos Prophet of Ptiris	
IGP 192		Exterior of Second Eastern Colonnade	Panouchem, son of Tabolbolos	
FHN III Text #312		Tafa, northern sanctuary, inner wall	Kola Tasemaikhem <i>Klinarchos</i>	
FHN III Text #313		Kalabsha, exterior rear wall of the “cella”/Naos	Altik Pison Pisai Plou Psentase Loukani <i>Klinarchoi</i>	
MI 114		Roof of Birth House, south side	Semeti šḥl	Votive feet.
MI 116		Roof of Birth House, west side	Semeti šḥl <i>Met</i> – “the second(?)”	Votive feet.
MI 117		Roof of Birth House, north side	Semeti šḥl Prophet of Philae	Votive feet.
		On west side of the island of Salib	φηου, Son of Esmet ḥm II	“φηου, son of Smet χΗΜΩ mother ΤΣΕΝΧΝΟC”

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