The Egyptian "Re-conquest of Nubia" in the New Kingdom – Some Thoughts on the Legitimization of Pharaonic Power in the South

Julia Budka

1. Introduction

Much has been written about the so-called "re-conquest of Nubia" during the early New Kingdom.[1] Thanks to current fieldwork in both Egypt and Nubia, our state of knowledge has markedly improved in the last years, but nevertheless the details of this period of Egyptian campaigns against the South are still not well-known. Recent work on Sai Island has produced new evidence for the establishment of Pharaonic administration in Upper Nubia. Taking Sai Island and the evolution of its fortified town with a small sandstone temple as a case study, this paper re-examines the evidence for Egyptian authority in Upper Nubia during the Eighteenth Dynasty. The viceregal administration, gods, temples and royal cult are the focal points of the article. Considerable limits in assessing real dynamics in Upper Nubia during the early New Kingdom are highlighted and the potential of an approach which includes both archaeological and textual sources is stressed. Work on the evolution of the Pharaonic settlement at Sai Island is still in progress; the purpose of this paper is to present preliminary results highlighting the potential contribution of settlement archaeology to understand power structures during the New Kingdom.

2. Upper Nubia during the late Second Intermediate Period and early New Kingdom

The Kerma kingdom of Kush is known as a significant opponent of the Theban Seventeenth Dynasty. Among others, this is stressed by the Kamose stelae[2] and by recent findings at Elkab.[3] The exact limits of Kerma influence towards the North within modern Sudan are still

---

1   See, e.g., St. T. Smith, Wretched Kush. Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire, London – New York 2003, 83–96; W. V. Davies, Egypt and Nubia. Conflict with the kingdom of Kush, in: C. H. Roehrig (ed.), Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharao, New York 2005, 49–56; A. Spalinger, Covetous eyes South: the background to Egypt's domination over Nubia by the reign of Thutmose III, in: E. H. Cline/D. O'Connor (eds.), Thutmose III: A New Biography, Ann Arbor 2006, 344–369; L. Török, Between Two Worlds: The Frontier Region between Ancient Nubia and Egypt 3700 BC – 500 AD, PdÄ 29, Leiden 2009, 157–169; R. Morkot, From conquered to conqueror: the organization of Nubia in the New Kingdom and the Kushite administration of Egypt, in: J. C. Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, HdO 104, Leiden 2013, 913; I. Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens im Neuen Reich, Meroitica 18, Wiesbaden 2013, 6–7.

2   D. O'Connor, The Hyksos Period in Egypt, in: E. D. Oren (ed.), The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives, University Museum Monographs 96, Symposium Series 8, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 45–67.

3   W. V. Davies, Reneseneb and Sobeknakht of Elkab: the genealogical data, in: M. Marée (ed.), The Second Intermediate Period (Thirteenth-Seventeenth Dynasties). Current Research, Future Prospects, OLA 192, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2010, 223–240. Lately also D. Valbelle, Comment les

partly unclear, but Wawat (Lower Nubia) seems to have been under control of several local rulers.[4] Other than Kush (Upper Nubia), ruled by the Kerma king and his vasalls, Wawat was soon overthrown and under Egyptian control at the end of the Second Intermediate Period.[5] King Kamose of the Theban Seventeenth Dynasty managed to extend his sphere of influence into Lower Nubia – at least to parts of this region as epigraphical sources from Buhen and other finds suggest.[6]

At Sai Island, one of the major sites of the New Kingdom in Upper Nubia, a large community of Kerma Nubians is attested prior to the Eighteenth Dynasty. Sai, Egyptian $\check{S}\Im^c.t$, and its local princes appear among the execration texts of the Twelfth Dynasty[7] and the huge Kerma tumuli on the island illustrate the importance of the site throughout the ages, from Ancient Kerma to Classical Kerma.[8] Besides Kerma city itself, Sai Island was the major settlement site of Kerma culture in Upper Nubia. As northern stronghold of the Kerma kingdom in a very significant and strategical location just south of the Batn el-Hagar it is likely that Sai may have prevented the unchecked Egyptian expansion towards the South. Several Nubian campaigns are attested by king Ahmose and although the precise setting of his battles is unknown,[9] it can be assumed that he was concerned with the northernmost outpost of the rival Kingdom of Kush on Sai Island.[10] A number of textual sources from Sai Island refer to Ahmose, including a sandstone statue of the king, presumably set up in the small local temple.[11] Already Vercoutter assumed therefore that it was Ahmose who founded the Egyptian town on Sai, enabling with this installation the following kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, especially Thutmose I, to go further South.[12] However, until recently, archaeological evidence for this very likely interpretation was lacking.[13]

It is a well-established fact that Thutmose I succeeded in striking further south up to Kurgus and to conquer Kerma itself, but only on a temporary basis.[14] Thutmose I has left a number of texts referring to his activities in Upper Nubia, among others royal stelae at Tombos and Kurgus.[15] A text by his son Thutmose II at Aswan mentions fortresses, mnn.w,

Égyptiens du début de la XVIIIᵉ dynastie désignaient les Kouchites et leurs alliés, in: BIFAO 112, 2012, 447–464.

4   See the recent summary by MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 924.

5   TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 158–159.

6   See SMITH, Wretched Kush, 80; TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 103–118; MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 5.

7   For a recent summary and discussion of the toponym $\check{S}\Im^c.t$ see D. DEVAUCHELLE/F. DOYEN, Retour à l'Île de Saï (Soudan, 2006–2009), in: BSFÉ 175, 2009, 33–37.

8   For Kerma cemeteries on Sai Island see: B. GRATIEN, Saï I. La nécropole Kerma, Paris 1986.

9   For a recent summary of Ahmose's activities see: D. KAHN, The history of Kush – an outline, in: F. JESSE/C. VOGEL (eds.), The Power of Walls – Fortifications in Ancient Northeastern Africa. Proceedings of the International Workshop Held at the University of Cologne, 4ᵗʰ–7ᵗʰ August 2011, Colloquium Africanum 5, Cologne 2013, 17–18 with references.

10 DAVIES, in ROEHRIG (ed.), Hatshepsut, 51; see also TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 183.

11 See L. GABOLDE, Réexamen des jalons de la présence de la XVIIIᵉ dynastie naissante à Saï, in: CRIPEL 29, 2011–2012, 118–120.

12 J. VERCOUTTER, La XVIIIᵉ dynastie à Saï et en Haute-Nubie, in: CRIPEL 1, 1973, 7–38; see also, e.g., DAVIES, in ROEHRIG (ed.), Hatshepsut, 51; TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 158–159 and MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 913.

13 Cf. F. DOYEN, The New Kingdom Town on Sai Island (Northern Sudan), in: Sudan & Nubia 13, 2009, 17–20.

14 Cf. TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 160–161.

15 TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 160–161.

of Thutmose I.[16] The location of these fortresses is disputed: there are no archaeological remains at Tombos or at Gebel Barkal and new finds at Dukki Gel have opened another perspective.[17]

Fieldwork is currently ongoing at the major sites of the Eighteenth Dynasty in Upper Nubia – at Sai Island, Sesebi, Tombos, and Dukki Gel at Kerma.[18] At all of these sites, structures and finds dating to the early Eighteenth Dynasty, especially to Thutmose I, have been documented recently – the archaeological work therefore nicely supports and complements our textual evidence. By the time of Thutmose I, we have to consider an increased presence of Egyptians in the area which went hand in hand with a rapid Egyptianisation.[19] It also becomes more and more evident that the location of the sites in the Abri-Delgo-reach as rich gold ore region was important for their function during the New Kingdom.[20]

The conquest of Upper Nubia came to an end with the victory of Thutmose III against the kingdom of Kerma – the realm of Egyptian domination reached now as far as to the area of the Fourth cataract.[21] The reign of Thutmose III also saw the installation of a new administrative system for Nubia of which the most important aspects will be highlighted throughout this paper.

3. The New Kingdom town of Sai Island

The New Kingdom town of Sai Island (Fig. 1) has the typical shape of an Egyptian fortified settlement, featuring domestic and administrative buildings, large magazines, a sandstone temple and an enclosure wall surrounding the site.[22] Its eastern part is more or less unknown; former researchers have assumed that this area has been lost because the cliff towards the

---

16 Török, Between Two Worlds, 161 with note 32; see also Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 136 with note 77.

17 See Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 135–136; cf. also Valbelle, BIFAO 112, 447–464.

18 See J. Budka, Neue Arbeiten in der Siedlung des Neuen Reiches auf Sai Island (Nordsudan), in: Sokar 24, 2012, 54–63; J. Budka, Die 18. Dynastie auf Sai Island (Nordsudan) – neue Puzzlesteine als Ergebnisse der Feldkampagne 2013, in: Sokar 26, 2013, 78–87; K. Spence/P. Rose et al., Sesebi 2011, in: Sudan & Nubia 15, 2011, 34–38; C. Bonnet, Les grands monuments égyptiens et nubiens du début de la XVIIIᵉ dynastie sur le site de Doukki Gel (Kerma), in: BIFAO 112, 2012, 57–75; recent work by St. T. Smith at Tombos is not yet published, but I would like to thank the excavator for sharing relevant information beforehand. Cf. also Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 918–919 for the importance of this new archaeological field work to assess the administrative system of Nubia.

19 Cf. Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 947.

20 Cf. K. Spence/P. Rose et al., Fieldwork at Sesebi, 2009, in: Sudan & Nubia 13, 2009, 38–46. See most recently R. Klemm/D. Klemm, Gold and Gold Mining in Ancient Egypt and Nubia. Geoarchaeology of the Ancient Gold Mining Sites in the Egyptian and Sudanese Eastern Deserts, Natural Science in Archaeology, Heidelberg – New York – Dordrecht – London 2013; J. C. Darnell, A bureaucratic challenge? Archaeology and administration in a desert environment (second millennium B.C.E.), in: J. C. Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, HdO 104, Leiden 2013, 824–829.

21 St. T. Smith, Askut in Nubia. The Economics and Ideology of Egyptian Imperialism in the Second Millennium B.C., Studies in Egyptology, London – New York 1995, fig. 6.1; Török, Between Two Worlds, 165. For a slightly different view, concerning both the end of the conquest (as Thutmose II) and the area of influence (Third Cataract) see Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 913.

22 Cf. B. J. Kemp, Fortified towns in Nubia, in: P. J. Ucko/R. Tringham et al. (eds.), Man, Settlement and Urbanism. Proceedings of a Meeting of the Research Seminar in Archaeology and Related Subjects Held at the Institute of Archaeology, London University, Gloucester 1972, 651–656.

Fig. 1 View of the Southern part of Sai Island, New Kingdom town with Temple A
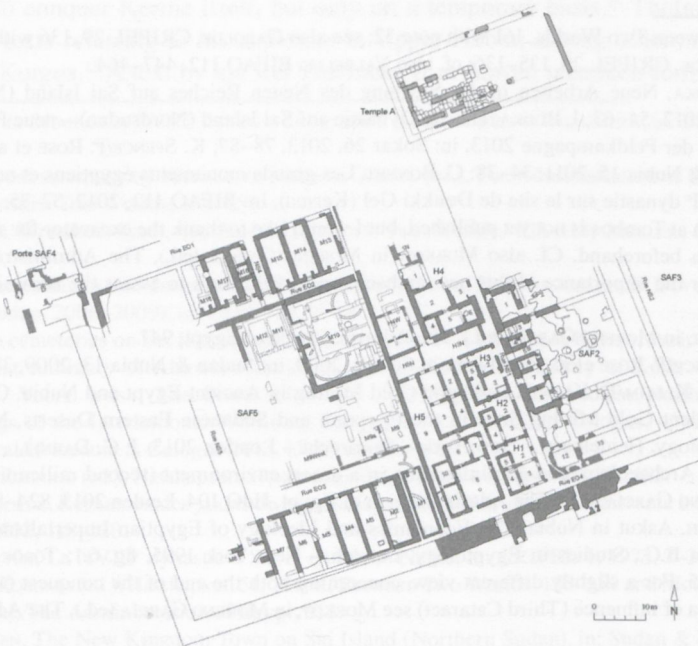and the Ottoman fortress, Qalat Sai (looking southeast). Photo: B.-N. Chagny

Fig. 2 Plan of the Southern part of Sai Island, New Kingdom town, SAV1
with Temple A. Plan by I. Adenstedt, June 2013, based on M. Azim 1975

Nile had collapsed since antiquity.[23] However, recent archaeological fieldwork suggests that this was not the case, even if the state of preservation of the Eighteenth Dynasty remains close to the river is very poor.[24]

The general outline of the fortified town of Sai is still not understood as until now only selected areas have been excavated. Its southern part with a temple and a residential quarter was investigated by a French Mission in the 1950s and 1970s (labelled as SAV1, Fig. 2).[25] The sandstone temple, called Temple A, was built in the reign of Thutmose III and dedicated to Amun(-Re) as its main deity.[26] New fieldwork by the Sai Island Archaeological Mission of Lille 3, directed by D. Devauchelle, was conducted along the northern enclosure from 2008–2012 (area labelled as SAV1 North).[27] Since 2013 the new ERC project AcrossBorders has started work at Sai. A new excavation area just north of the Amun temple was opened and named SAV1 East. A large mud brick building, labelled Building A, was partly exposed in 2013.[28]

The archaeological evidence at all areas investigated so far, SAV1, SAV1 North and SAV1 East, attest major building activities during the reign of Thutmose III. Prior to recent research, uncontextualised objects and sources were taken into account for reconstructing the earliest history of the New Kingdom site. The two key finds are royal statues of the first rulers of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Ahmose and Amenhotep I, discovered not during scientific excavations, but in a fragmented state during cleaning work in the debris around the Ottoman fortress Qalat Sai, and the temple.[29] The sandstone statue of Ahmose is often regarded as the confirmation that he founded the town at the site.[30] However, others have argued that it could also be a post-humous monument erected by his son Amenhotep I, who has set up a very similar seated statue in the *heb-sed*-cloak.[31] Another glimpse of early Egyptian presence on Sai is a rock inscription of Thutmose I, year 2. This inscription, recorded by Breasted, is unfortunately lost today.[32] Without proper archaeological contextualization, these epigraphical sources have to be treated with caution as they do not recall the nature of the Egyptian foundation, be it a proper *mnn.w* or something else during the early phase of the

23 See the plan of the town site illustrated by GEUS, in WELSBY/ANDERSON (eds.), Sudan, 115, fig. 89.

24 This is also supported by geoarchaeological observations conducted within the framework of AcrossBorders by Erich Draganits in January 2014. Draganits could confirm that the present outline of both Nile and Nubian sandstone cliff are comparable to the New Kingdom outline.

25 Cf. M. AZIM, Quatre campagnes de fouilles sur la Forteresse de Saï, 1970–1973. 1ère partie: l'installation pharaonique, in: CRIPEL 3, 1975, 91–125.

26 Cf. M. AZIM/J.-F. CARLOTTI, Le temple A de l'île de Saï et ses abords, in: CRIPEL 29, 2011–2012, 11–65.

27 DEVAUCHELLE/DOYEN, BSFÉ 175, 2009, 29–48; DOYEN, Sudan & Nubia 13, 2009, 17–20; J. BUDKA/ F. DOYEN, Living in New Kingdom towns in Upper Nubia – New evidence from recent excavations on Sai Island, in: Ä&L 22/23, 2012/13, 167–208.

28 See BUDKA, Sokar 26, 2013, 78–87. Excavation of this building complex was continued in 2014; a detailed report about Building A will be published somewhere else.

29 W. V. DAVIES, 76. Statue of Amenhotep I, in: D. A. WELSBY/J. R. ANDERSON (eds.), Sudan. Ancient Treasures. An Exhibition of Recent Discoveries from the Sudan National Museum, London 2004, 102– 103; GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 118.

30 See above, notes 11 and 12.

31 GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 118 and 126; against a post-humous dedication see DAVIES, in WELSBY/ANDERSON (eds.), Sudan, 102–103.

32 See GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 131 with note 61. A stela found in the Ottoman fortress, S. 63, and formerly attributed to Thutmose I was convincingly re-dated by Gabolde to the reign of Amenhotep II; see GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 131–133.

Eighteenth Dynasty.[33] Even as there are now archaeological remains and especially pottery datable to the very beginning of the New Kingdom, the identification of one of the *mnn.ws* of Thutmose I at Sai, as proposed by Gabolde, remains very hypothetical.[34] The archaeology shows a slightly diverse picture as will be highlighted in the following.

3.1 Temple A on Sai Island

Thutmose III is responsible for the final defeat of the kingdom of Kerma and he erected several temples in both Upper and Lower Nubia, also the so-called Temple A at Sai, dedicated to Amun-Re. In general, temples for Amun(-Re) are key factors in the new fortified Egyptian towns in Upper Nubia and constitute together with rock inscriptions and stelae our primary sources for royal activity in the area.[35] This also holds true for Sai – the small stone temple along the eastern edge of the fortified town is the highlight of Pharaonic building activity on the island.[36] Luckily, royal decrees and foundation deposits allow a very precise dating of the building: its main building phase was supervised by viceroy Nehy in year 25 of Thutmose III;[37] some additions were undertaken by viceroy Usersatet during the reign of Amenhotep II.[38] These kings, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, respectively the corresponding viceroys Nehy and Usersatet, are the best documented rulers at Sai. Others are also known and it was Amenhotep III who was responsible for a final construction and decoration phase of Temple A.[39]

It has to be stressed that as yet, no temple or sacred building predating Thutmose III is attested, although the building inscription of Nehy claims to have restored and enlarged a collapsed brick structure with the new stone building.[40] Nature, size and character of the installations where the cult for Ahmose and Amenhotep I was conducted are still not well understood.[41] Only small aspects of the layout of the town during the Pre-Thutmose III era are known – its entire layout and size remain unclear. At present it can only be excluded that there was an immediate predecessor of the Thutmoside temple at the same location as Temple A.[42]

---

33 GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 137.

34 See GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 135–137.

35 Cf. M. SCHADE-BUSCH, Bemerkungen zum Königsbild Thutmosis III. in Nubien, in: R. GUNDLACH (ed.), Selbstverständnis und Realität. Akten des Symposiums zur Ägyptischen Königsideologie in Mainz 15.–17. 6. 1995, ÄAT 36, 1, Wiesbaden 1997, 211–223. For the importance of Amun for the Nubian temple towns see also E. F. MORRIS, The architecture of imperialism. Military bases and the evolution of foreign policy in Egypt's New Kingdom, PdÄ 22, Leiden – Boston 2005, 198.

36 Cf. AZIM/CARLOTTI, CRIPEL 29, 36–48, with the outline of the main building phases (Thutmose III, Amenhotep II and Amenhotep III).

37 For a minimum of three building phases under Thutmose III see AZIM/CARLOTTI, CRIPEL 29, 44–46; GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 136.

38 AZIM/CARLOTTI, CRIPEL 29, 46–47; GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 137.

39 AZIM/CARLOTTI, CRIPEL 29, 47, pl. XVI-b.

40 GEUS, in WELSBY/ANDERSON (eds.), Sudan, 115; AZIM/CARLOTTI, CRIPEL 29, 2011–2012, 46 with note 84.

41 It is generally assumed, due to the discovery of the royal statue, that already Ahmose built the temple at Sai; see above and e.g., MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 5. Temple A was definitely built by Thutmose III; Gabolde recently argued for a posthumous cult for Ahmose on Sai, established by Amenhotep I (see above; GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 126).

42 Cf. GEUS, in WELSBY/ANDERSON (eds.), Sudan, 115.

However, there seems to be continuity as far as the cult is concerned – being first introduced by Ahmose and/or Amenhotep I. Like it is illustrated with the *heb-sed*-statues of these early kings, the divine aspects of the ruling pharao seem to have been strongly considered on Sai – also in Thutmoside time, when the main deity of the stone temple built by Thutmose III is Amun-Re and the specific form "Amun-Re-Horus-Bull-of-Tasety".[43] The latter seems to relate to a distinct aspect of Thutmose III himself.[44] Godlike features of the king are well attested in Nubia, this especially holds true for Thutmose III.[45] Because of this I would like to suggest that other than a full-sized temple, a *ḥwt-k3* for royal statues, comparable to findings in the Middle Kingdom fortresses, can be assumed for Sai in its earliest building phase. Such a sanctuary could have held the *heb-sed* statues of Ahmose and Amenhotep I and can be viewed as the predecessor of Temple A.

In general, Thutmose III was the first to build up a complex system of temples in Nubia – the relevant gods are mainly Amun and some variants, especially local Horus forms and there are also references to the divine Senwosret III.[46] The cultic installations and relations between sites are better understood and explored in Lower Nubia than in Upper Nubia where the early history of the key sites like Sesebi, Tombos and Sai Island are still not completely implicit. Nevertheless, a number of Lower Nubian temples by Thutmose III provide good parallels for Temple A at Sai – especially comparable are the temples of Semna and Kumma, but also Amada and others.[47] All in all, Sai and Temple A seem to fall into the category of a royal (Amun-)cult of the Eighteenth Dynasty expressing Egyptian authority in Nubia, embedded into the Egyptian administration of Kush.

4. Individuals behind the "re-conquest" and personal dynamics

The major patterns of the Egyptian conquest of Nubia are reflected in the temples for royal and divine cult – much of the Egyptian administration of this area was connected with sanctuaries and the respective cultic and ritual installations. As was already said for Temple A at Sai, the highest official of the Nubian administration, the viceroy, was responsible for Pharaonic building activities.

The basic outline of the Egyptian Administration in Nubia is well understood and has been discussed by several scholars.[48] The most important person at the top of this administrative

---

43 Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 49. This specific deity will be discussed in a forthcoming article: F. Thill, Saï et Aniba: deux centres administratifs du vice-roi Nehy sous Thoutmosis III, in: CRIPEL 30, forthcoming.

44 Thill, CRIPEL 30, forthcoming.

45 Cf. J. Budka, Der König an der Haustür. Die Rolle des ägyptischen Herrschers an dekorierten Türgewänden von Beamten im Neuen Reich, Beiträge zur Ägyptologie 19, Veröffentlichungen der Institute für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie der Universität Wien 94, Vienna 2001, 53–54 and Schade-Busch, in Gundlach (ed.), Selbstverständnis und Realität, 211–223.

46 Schade-Busch, in Gundlach (ed.), Selbstverständnis und Realität, 211–223.

47 See the detailed assessment by J.-F. Carlotti: Azim/Carlotti, CRIPEL 29, 44, 64 and pl. XVI.

48 See as seminal work I. Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens im Neuen Reich, Ph.D. dissertation, Berlin 1979 (now published as Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, see note 1 – all of the citations in this paper refer to the 2013 edition); see also Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 911–963 and K. Zibelius-Chen, Nubien wird ägyptische Kolonie, in: St. Wenig/K. Zibelius-Chen (eds.), Die Kulturen Nubiens – ein afrikanisches Vermächtnis, Dettelbach 2013, 135–155.

system was without doubt the viceroy of Kush (King's son of Kush, *s3-nswt n K3š*). The title King's son seems to go back to earlier models in the Second Intermediate Period, when it was used for military commanders of the troops. A direct relationship as expressed in the term "son" seems to be a reference to a special position regarding the king, maybe used in contrast to local mayors. The title in the New Kingdom is King's son of the southern foreign lands/King's son and overseer of the southern lands and from Thutmose IV onwards King's son of Kush.[49]

An extension of the viceregal realm during the reign of Thutmose III is evident – prior to this king, the viceroy was engaged with the supervision of Lower Nubia, but with Thutmose III plenty of relevant evidence comes from several places in Upper Nubia. This is most probably connected with the defeat of Kerma and a corresponding shifting of powers.[50]

From the mid/late Eighteenth Dynasty onwards, the viceroy had two deputies: one *jdnw n W3w3.t* and one *jdnw n K3š*.[51] Other than these highest representatives after the viceroy, the local administration on the regional level is still poorly understood, but we know of mayors at Sai, Buhen, Elephantine and other Egyptian sites.[52] As Müller has proposed, there seems to have been a development concerning the mayors in Nubia[53] – at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, mayors as the local chiefs of the towns can be identified as Egyptians who returned to Egypt after their mission in Nubia.[54] By the mid Eighteenth Dynasty, holders of the title mayor are known to have been buried in Lower and Upper Nubia[55] – thus these persons may be either Egyptians who decided to stay away from home, or, and this seems to be more likely, they are Egyptianised Nubians who were working as "Egyptian" officials in the Egyptian sites (see below).[56] All in all, even within a strict administrative framework, we should always keep personal dynamics, individual choices based on intermarriage and private issues as well as coincidences in mind: such patterns are rarely attested in archaeological remains, but have been for sure an influential factor in real lives of the past.

4. 1 The viceroy of Kush – a short note on his position, office and tasks

It is beyond the scope of this article to give a full assessment of the office of the viceroy.[57] However, for the facets discussed below, some major aspects of this administrative position

---

49   Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 925 with note 39.

50   Cf. Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 912–915.

51   Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 925–926 (system established during the time of Amenhotep II to Thutmose IV). Cf. also Budka, Der König an der Haustür, 72 for sources of *jdnw n K3š* from Nubian temple towns.

52   Cf. Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 48.

53   Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 47–48, 209.

54   A good example is Jahmes, mayor of *Š3ʿ. t* (Sai) whose statue was found at Karnak (now Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, 1823, see S. Pernigotti, La statuaria egiziana nel Museo civico archeologico di Bologna, Bologna 1980, 37–39, no. 8, pls. VII, XLI–XLIII and PM VIII², 559–560, no. 801-631-050); see below and Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 48, Tab. 2.5.2 Nr. 16.

55   Especially at Aniba and Soleb; see also the recent assessment by F. Thill for Sai: A. Minault-Gout/ F. Thill, Saï II. Le cimetière des tombes hypogées du Nouvel Empire (SAC5), FIFAO 69, Cairo 2012, 413–418.

56   Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 48.

57   For recent studies of the office of the viceroy of Kush see, e.g., Müller, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 18–30; Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 926–929.

will be outlined. First of all, the viceroy of Kush had a very special relationship to the king:[58] He was not only directly appointed, but also received straight orders from the king, being in personal exchange with the current ruler of Egypt. The viceroy was primarily responsible for collecting and transporting gold and other goods from Nubia to Egypt, for the building activities in the name of the king and for the general supervision of activities in the area. Most of our sources for viceroys are tombs, rock inscriptions, stelae and statues[59] – these are all elite objects and provide therefore clear evidence for royal favours expressed to the officials and their extraordinary loyalty in return.[60]

The intimate relationship between the viceroy of Kush and pharaoh is well illustrated by royal decrees and orders. As one example, the phrase "placing in the face" obviously refers to personal, face-to-face orders from the king.[61] Such royal commands are for example texts by viceroy Nehy at Semna and Sai: the viceroy explains that he was ordered to bring stone for the temple at Semna respectively to build the temple at Sai (restored texts with *lacunae*).[62] An interesting personal letter from king Amenhotep II was published as a stela by viceroy Usersatet (MFA Boston No. 25.632, from Semna) – it includes personal "warnings" of the king about the Nubians. This text and its complex meaning has been already discussed several times;[63] it seems worth to stress that Amenhotep II warns his viceroy to investigate in detail who to raise to the status of a chief/*wr*.[64] This might be significant for understanding the power structures on a local level during the mid Eighteenth Dynasty (see below).

It is well known that the supervision of building activities was one of the major tasks of the viceroy of Kush as the highest official of the Nubian administration.[65] What is still unclear and debated is whether (and if for how long) the viceroys actually stayed in Nubia. There seems to have been a development and structural difference between the early and later Eighteenth Dynasty. For example, from the mid Eighteenth Dynasty onwards, the office of a deputy of the viceroy is attested.[66] This new position was soon being divided according to Lower and Upper Nubia, thus there was the *jdnw n K3š* for the southern area and the *jdnw n W3w3.t* for the northern region. The fact that two deputies of the viceroy were thus responsible for Lower and Upper Nubia might indicate that their superior himself was mainly residing in Egypt proper and could rely on loyal representatives in Nubia whom he visited on inspection tours and other occasions.[67] It also illustrates the increased administrative

---

58 BUDKA, Der König an der Haustür, 78; TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 179; MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 18–31.

59 Cf. C. RAEDLER, Zur Repräsentation und Verwirklichung pharaonischer Macht in Nubien: Der Vizekönig Setau, in: R. GUNDLACH/U. RÖSSLER-KÖHLER, Das Königtum der Ramessidenzeit. Voraussetzungen – Verwirklichung – Vermächtnis. Akten des 3. Symposiums zur Ägyptischen Königsideologie in Bonn 7.–9. 6. 2001, Wiesbaden 2003, 129–137.

60 See H. GUKSCH, Königsdienst: zur Selbstdarstellung der Beamten in der 18. Dynastie, SAGA 11, Heidelberg 1994; BUDKA, König an der Haustür, passim; G. J. SHAW, Royal Authority in Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, BAR International Series 1822, Oxford 2008.

61 See SHAW, Royal Authority, 53.

62 MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 292–293 (Anh. 2.3.2.1+2).

63 Cf. most recently SHAW, Royal Authority, 59.

64 SHAW, Royal Authority, 59; in German now MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 282–283 (Anh. 2.1.3).

65 MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 18–22; ZIBELIUS-CHEN, in WENIG/ZIBELIUS-CHEN (eds.), Die Kulturen Nubiens, 140–146.

66 Cf. TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 180.

67 Who might have been appointed within the indigenous elite and in Nubia only, as MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 936–937 has suggested.

efforts connected with Nubia and especially the gold of Kush and the so-called tributes during the second half of the Eighteenth Dynasty.[68]

4.2 Selected viceroys of the early Eighteenth Dynasty

The first well documented viceroy is Turi who is known from Lower Nubia only.[69] As former commander of Buhen he was appointed as viceroy under Ahmose/Amenhotep I, being still in office during the reign of Thutmose I. Turi was responsible for building the Dedun temple at Uronarti; one of his statues has survived and is nowadays at the British Museum London.[70]

Senny is one of the Thutmoside viceroys.[71] He was probably already in office during Thutmose I/II,[72] but he continued to be in charge until the early years of Hatshepsut/ Thutmose III (year 1–7?). He left some texts at Semna and Kumma which are very similar to the inscriptions by one of his better-known successors, Nehy.[73]

4.3 Viceroys on Sai Island

Nehy is the first viceroy who is well attested on Sai Island. Thanks to all his monuments left in Egypt and Nubia his long lasting career during the reign of Thutmose III is traceable.[74] Usersatet, viceroy under Amenhotep II, has also left some statues, stelae and architectural pieces.[75] Of both viceroys, statues are attested from the Pharaonic town of Sai, for example a cuboid statue of Nehy and a fragmented stelophorus statue of Usersatet.[76] Such statue types are known from a broad variety of contexts – mostly from temples, but also from funerary assemblages.[77] For the Sai statues attributable to the mid Eighteenth Dynasty viceroys, an interpretation as temple statue seems most likely as these officials have been all buried at

---

68   Importance of gold and other products for Egypt: MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 74–79 and passim. See lately DARNELL, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 824–829.

69   Cf. G. A. REISNER, The viceroys of Ethiopia, in: JEA 6, 1920, 29; TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 171.

70   EA 1279, see the collection database: http://www.britishmuseum.org/collectionimages/AN00399/ AN00399556_001_m.jpg?maxwidth=144&maxheight=144. Accessed on 15.02.2014.

71   REISNER, JEA 6, 1920, 29; TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 171–172; GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 134.

72   According to his inscription from Semna, Senny received another gold of honor under Thutmose II; see MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 284–285, Anh. 2.1.2.

73   Cf. MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 447.

74   See C. LEBLANC, Nehy, prince et premiere rapporteur du roi, in: I. REGEN/F. SERVAJEAN (eds.), Verba manent, Recueil d'etudes dédiées à Dimitri Meeks par ses collègues et amis, Montpellier 2009, 241–251. Florence Thill is currently investigating all evidence for Nehy on Sai Island; see her forthcoming paper in CRIPEL 30. For already published sources and comments for Nehy at the island see BUDKA, Der König an der Haustür, 114–115; TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 172; MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 928.

75   Publication forthcoming by W. V. Davies (lecture in London, July 2014); for a stela by Usersatet found at Amara West see SHAW, Royal Authority, 59. Well known is a rock stela which Usersatet left at Tombos, see W. V. DAVIES, The British Museum epigraphic survey at Tombos: the stela of Usersatet and Hekaemsasen, in: BMSAES 14, 2009, 25–50.

76   Cf. F. THILL, Statuaire privée égyptienne de Saï, in: CRIPEL 29, 2011–2012, 285, 288 and 295, pl. VII.

77   For a detailed study see E. BERNHAUER, Innovationen in der Privatplastik, Philippika 27, Wiesbaden 2010.

Thebes in Egypt. Maybe their statues were set up in a chapel within the surroundings of the main temple, Temple A.[78]

Ramesside viceroys have left some traces at Sai Island, but the exact context remains vague: by then, the major administrative centre of the area was Amara West.[79] Individuals attested by finds both in the town and in the cemetery are among others the *jdnw*s Hornakht (Ramesses II)[80] and Usermaatrenakht (Ramesses IX)[81] as well as the viceroy Ramsesnakht (Ramesses IX).[82]

5. Administrative centres

In general, there is no clarity about the place of residence of the viceroy and this holds especially true for the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Several sites have been named in this respect: Buhen,[83] Napata[84] and Wadi es-Sebua.[85] However, it is most likely that the viceroy stayed primarily in Egypt/Thebes, but details are far from being understood.[86] As Morkot has stated recently: "Whether Viceroys were mostly resident in Egypt, as some have suggested, or in Nubia, is unclear and doubtless changed over time".[87] From the late Eighteenth Dynasty onwards there are two headquarters for the *jdnw n K3š/W3w3.t* attested: at Soleb (followed in Ramesside times by Amara West) and Aniba.[88] One might assume that the early Eighteenth Dynasty of pre-Thutmose III date was mostly restricted to Lower Nubia where Aniba is known as important administrative centre already at the beginning of the New Kingdom. Nevertheless, there is evidence for Egyptian presence at Sai, Sesebi and other sites in Upper Nubia, raising various questions about the nature of Egyptian authority at this time.

Similar as in fortresses of the Middle Kingdom, there are representative buildings of large size in the newly built fortified towns of the Eighteenth Dynasty.[89] One could assume that the viceroy stayed here on a temporary basis, being on inspection tour or for some building supervision. In addition, it is also possible that such a building served as residence for the local representative of the viceroy, possible the mayor (see below).

78 Another possible placement for the statues is the Amun-temple itself, see DAVIES, BMSAES 14, 31.
79 For recent work at Amara West see N. SPENCER, Cemeteries and late Ramesside suburb at Amara West, in: Sudan & Nubia 13, 2009, 47–61 and the project's homepage: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/sudan /amara_west_research_project.aspx. Accessed on 15.02.2014.
80 BUDKA, Der König an der Haustür, 211–212.
81 BUDKA, Der König an der Haustür, 212.
82 MINAULT-GOUT/THILL, Saï II, 413–414.
83 Suggested by H. S. Smith, see MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 928–929.
84 See most recently strongly against such an interpretation: MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 917.
85 R. GUNDLACH, Hof – Hofgesellschaft – Hofkultur im pharaonischen Ägypten, in: R. GUNDLACH/A. KLUG (eds.), Der ägyptische Hof des Neuen Reiches. Seine Gesellschaft und Kultur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Innen- und Außenpolitik, KSGH 2, Wiesbaden 2006, 1–38.
86 See TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 178.
87 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 928.
88 Cf. TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 180.
89 Cf. C. VOGEL, Master architects of Ancient Nubia: Space-saving solutions in Middle Kingdom fortresses, in: W. GODLEWSKI/A. LAJTAR (eds.), Between the Cataracts, Proceedings of the 11th International Conference for Nubian Studies; Warsaw University, 27 August – 2 September 2006, Part 2, fascicule 2, Session Papers, Warsaw 2010, 421–430.

The important island of Sai, as strategic bridgehead into the realm of the Kerma ruler and favourable occupation site throughout the ages, is one of the possible administrative centres of Kush. In general, Sai gained importance during the mid Eighteenth Dynasty, especially in Thutmoside times.[90] All in all, because of the rich evidence of the viceroys Nehy and Usersatet from Sai, both Florence Thill and Luc Gabolde have proposed a possible residence of the viceroys at the island.[91] This is indeed a quite likely assumption – the large governor's residence, SAF2, in SAV1, would be a possible candidate for housing the highest official of the Egyptian administration on a temporary basis.[92] However, since *in situ* evidence is still missing it has to be regarded as tentative interpretation. The new excavation at SAV1 East, unearthing another large administrative building, Building A, further challenges the character of SAF2 as unique building unit within the New Kingdom town. In any case, the recent finds at SAV1 East support the importance of Sai as administrative centre during the Thutmoside era.[93]

Missing data concerning the settlement patterns in Upper Nubia are to be considered. For example, one of the key sites of Kush, Gebel Barkal/Napata, is still perfectly unclear as far as the Egyptian presence in the Eighteenth Dynasty is concerned. Thutmose III built a temple there and the major function of the site might have been connected with trade and cult. Morkot recently argued that this site was "more directly controlled by the Kushite elite"[94] – a likely interpretation which cannot be confirmed at present due to missing evidence.

5.1 Mayors and local governors

For the question of local representatives in Upper Nubia the title *ḥ3tj-ꜥ* of a town[95] is significant: different from honorary titles like *jrj-pꜥt* and *ḥ3tj-ꜥ* often carried by viceroys, this title refers to mayors of town. Mayors as representatives of towns are also attested for Egyptian sites in Nubia, especially from Sai, Buhen and Faras. The prime sources are again stelae and statues and texts respectively representations from funerary contexts. Especially well known is the scene of Nubian officials in the tomb of viceroy Huy, including a number of *ḥꜥtj-ꜥs* from different sites.[96] The title "Overseer of the towns of Kush"[97] suggests a specific hierarchy for these officials, which still remains uncertain.

The statue of the mayor of Sai during the time of Thutmose III, Jahmes, was found at Thebes and is now kept at Bologna.[98] At present, there is no *in situ* evidence for a mayor within the temple town of Sai. But in the major New Kingdom cemetery of Sai, SAC 5, recently published by Minault-Gout and Thill, two objects attest officials with the title *ḥ3tj-ꜥ*. They are coming from tomb 5, which is datable to the mid to late Eighteenth Dynasty and

90 MINAULT-GOUT/THILL, Saï II, 413–418 and passim; BUDKA, Sokar 26, 78–87.
91 MINAULT-GOUT/THILL, Saï II, 418; GABOLDE, CRIPEL 29, 137.
92 Cf. the *in situ* Ramesside evidence from Amara West. See also the general assessment of the "governor's palace" in Nubian temple towns: KEMP, in UCKO/TRINGHAM et al. (eds.), Man, Settlement and Urbanism, 651–656.
93 BUDKA, Sokar 26, 78–87.
94 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 917.
95 MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 46–49.
96 D. O'CONNOR, New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, in: B. G. TRIGGER/B. J. KEMP/ D. O'CONNOR/A. B. LLOYD (eds.), Ancient Egypt. A Social History, Cambridge 1983, 183–278.
97 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 925.
98 Cf. DEVAUCHELLE/DOYEN, BSFÉ 175, 2009, 34, no. 4, note 10 and above, note 54.

held a number of high quality items. Both objects giving the title *ḥȝtj-ꜥ*, a shabti and a heart scarab, are perfectly Egyptian in style,[99] but the individuals behind the Egyptian names and titles might still be of Nubian descendent.[100]

A number of documents from Egyptian sites in Nubia show lower ranking officials behind viceroys in adoration of the king, aimed to illustrate not only a hierarchy but also that the lower ranks profited from the direct link of their superior to the royal sphere and the king. Therefore these lintels and stelae illustrate both the authority of the viceroy in Lower and Upper Nubia and the loyalty of the local potentates.[101]

The authority on a local level at Egyptian towns is closely connected with the so-called *wr.w* – Nubian chieftains, holding this Egyptian title and integrated in the Egyptian administration.[102] The famous scene in the tomb of Huy at Thebes shows both *wr.w* of Wawat and *wr.w* of Kush on the occasion of the *inw*-presentation of the viceroy.[103] Hekanefer is the best-attested of all *wr.w*, having left an Egyptian-style tomb, funerary equipment and various graffiti.[104] Morkot has recently argued that these Kushite princes held a major influence in Nubia, especially in the area between the Third and Fourth cataract.[105] That they have been an integral part of the Egyptian administration system is beyond doubt – and documents like the royal letter addressed to viceroy Usersatet illustrate the important role they had for securing this system.[106]

6. Power structure and administration at Egyptian sites in Nubia

Some of the most relevant aspects of Egyptian authority in Nubia can be summarized as follows: The power structure and the corresponding administration in Nubia saw several changes and a distinct development during the Middle Kingdom, Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom. Within the latter, a clear distinction between the administration of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the Ramesside period is possible. In addition, I tried to illustrate a significant change in Thutmoside times as it was already highlighted by several scholars.[107]

In general, the system of the Egyptian administration of Nubia with the viceroy and his deputies mirrors an adaption of the system for Egypt proper. It seems natural that such a complex administrative system took time to establish and needed a safe political situation with secured power structures and defined hierarchies.[108] An initial state with shifting

99 MINAULT-GOUT/THILL, Saï II, 180–183, 408, 414.
100 MINAULT-GOUT/THILL, Saï II, 413–414. Compare especially important results on the biological and ethnic identity of people buried in the cemetery at Tombos attesting a complex mixture of Egyptians and Nubians; see, e.g., M. R. BUZON, A bioarchaeological perspective on Egyptian colonialism in the New Kingdom, in: JEA 94, 2008, 165–182.
101 BUDKA, Der König an der Haustür, 187 with further literature.
102 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 944–950.
103 O'CONNOR, in TRIGGER/KEMP/O'CONNOR/LLOYD (eds.), Ancient Egypt, fig. 3.20. See also MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 947.
104 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 947.
105 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 944–950.
106 See above, note 63.
107 Cf. TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 182–194; MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 911–963.
108 Cf. MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 925.

authorities as the early phase of the "re-conquest" of Nubia represents, is unlikely to fulfil the necessary needs for an intricate administration to be set up. Initial attempts to install the new power structure are traceable under early kings like Amenhotep I and Thutmose I, but it lasted until the reign of Thutmose III that the Egyptian administration for Nubia was really set up and running. The earlier, very scattered and fragmented evidence is from my perspective not due to the limited state of research and preservation, but it really seems to reflect authentic circumstances: first outlines of a still developing system.

The major power factor in Nubia was of course the Egyptian king, represented by the viceroy of Kush. Equally important were various gods, especially certain Amun forms and deities with close connections to royalty and kingship. There is a common framework of viceregal building activities and cultic installations, but local variants and regional aspects have to be taken into account. Local potentates and consequently Egyptianised Nubians (wr.w and ḥ3tj-ʿ) played an important role in both Upper and Lower Nubia. Especially at the beginning of the New Kingdom it is likely to assume that the local elite still had considerable influence.[109] The impact of the Kerma vassals at Sai Island was for sure not ended with the campaigns of the first kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the situation might have been similar at other sites. A final aftermath of the power system set up by the kingdom of Kerma in Kush on the regional level might explain why "Egyptian" textual sources of Pharaonic authority other than royal inscriptions are missing from the very early Eighteenth Dynasty. Outside of the core Kerma realm things did develop differently; in Lower Nubia, the Egyptian system was soon adapted and the local elite appeared as Egyptianised officials, making a Nubian origin hard to detect. Although it is hard to prove, personal dynamics and individual decisions, not only on the elite level, had obviously an impact concealed in the preserved material remains.[110] After all, the entire system builds up on individuals who decided on many levels how to act, to operate and to represent; there might be a bias between real actions and idealised outlines traceable in textual sources.[111]

7. Sai Island as a case study: Egyptian presence in early Eighteenth Dynasty Kush

Coming back to Sai Island as a case study, there is some new information on the history and development of the town thanks to stratigraphical information of recent excavations. All in all, the general assumption that the temple town of Sai Island was founded by Ahmose who also built up a temple, housing royal statues, can be re-assessed and modified in some respects.

---

109 Cf. Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 923–924.

110 Cf. similar assessments for a different period (the Old Kingdom): J. C. Moreno García, The territorial administration of the kingdom in the 3ʳᵈ millennium, in: J. C. Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, HdO 104, Leiden 2013, 85–151.

111 Cf. J. C. Moreno García, Limits of pharaonic administration: patronage, informal authorities, 'invisible' elites and mobile populations, in: M. Bárta/H. Küllmer (eds.), Diachronic Trends in Ancient Egyptian History. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Eva Pardey, Prague 2013, 99–100: "Peasants, merchants, mobile populations (nomads, herders, seasonal workers, etc.), rural elites and heads of patronage networks, among others, formed the social basis upon which the state was built, whose interests and spheres of influence should be taken into account, and whose leaders were to be integrated (formally or informally) into the administration and into procedures of decision-taking if royal authority was to be asserted with some success". See similarly also Morkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, esp. 919–920.

At the site SAV1 North the earliest occupation level within the known town area can be dated to the reigns of Ahmose/Amenhotep I.[112] These earliest structures are, however, simple workshop-like buildings, storage installations and scattered remains.[113] The major building phase at SAV1 North, which also comprises the enclosure wall of the fortified town, can be attributed to Thutmose III.[114] These findings and their dating are mirrored by new work at SAV1 East. The earliest remains from the beginning of the New Kingdom are in both cases just simple storage installations whereas the major phase, at SAV1 East comprising an administrative structure, Building A, can be attributed to the mid Eighteenth Dynasty, precisely to the reigns of Thutmose III/Amenhotep II. All in all, the archaeological finds seem therefore to correspond to the epigraphical evidence, especially to the royal and private statues and stelae. At present, the archaeology does not allow to contextualise the *heb-sed*-statues of Ahmose and Amenhotep I in detail – it can just be stressed that although there is evidence for Egyptian presence during the reigns of these kings, the exact nature of the site remains vague.

Attested	Missing, not yet confirmed
Architecture: simple workshop-like structures	Fortification/enclosure wall
Royal evidence: Royal statues (Ahmose, Amenhotep I); rock inscription (Thutmose I)	Temple (brick or stone)
Material culture: typical Egyptian in character, but Nubian component, especially for ceramics	Viceroyal administration; titles of officials or mayors

Table 1 Main characteristics of the New Kingdom town of Sai Island, early Eighteenth Dynasty

Summing up, the evidence for power structures on Sai for the early Eighteenth Dynasty pre-dating Thutmose III, comprises the following (Table 1): simple workshop-like structures; uncontextualised royal statues and rock inscriptions as well as ceramics and finds which are very Egyptian in character but still also reflect a Nubian component.[115] For the earliest phase at Sai Island the following features are missing: a fortification/enclosure wall, a temple (in brick or stone) and Egyptian officials carrying names like viceroy or mayor. Given the lack of any proper temple building and taking the Semna statue and stela of Senwosret III as a possible parallel, one might speculate whether the Sai statues of Ahmose and Amenhotep I were set up in a *Ka*-house. Such a *Ka*-house connected with the royal cult might have been set outside a possible fortification.[116]

---

112 BUDKA, Sudan & Nubia 15, 23–33; BUDKA/DOYEN, Ä&L 22/23, 171–173, 201.

113 BUDKA/DOYEN, Ä&L 22/23.

114 A date of the enclosure wall as mid Eighteenth Dynasty was also confirmed by a new excavation in 2014 at a site called SAV1 West.

115 Cf. BUDKA, Sudan & Nubia 15, 23–33.

116 See S. J. SEIDLMAYER, Zu Fundort und Aufstellungskontext der großen Semna-Stele Sesostris' III., in: SAK 28, 2000, 233–242.

By the time of the mid Eighteenth Dynasty, especially during the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, things have markedly developed on Sai and the following observations are possible (Table 2): The site now falls into the category of a fortified temple town comprising an enclosure wall, a stone temple for Amun, large magazines, a residence/administrative buildings and typical Egyptian houses (Fig. 3). An orthogonal layout is traceable for these features which are well attested at other sites like for example Sesebi and Amara West. Royal decrees and the installation of a cult barque support the reconstruction of Sai as one of the important centres of Upper Nubia. Private statuary and tombs attest to the presence of Egyptian officials. These are members of the highest level of the Nubian administration like the viceroys Nehy and Usersatet, but also mayors of $Š3^c.t$ (Sai) and others. Gold production and sandstone quarrying is traceable and compares well to other Egyptian sites like Sesebi.

Attested	Missing, not yet confirmed
Fortified temple town (with enclosure, stone temple for Amun, magazines, residence, orthogonal layout)	Layout of town, especially eastern side; inner structure
Royal decrees, cult barque	
Private statuary, private tombs	Chapels/placement of private statues in town/temple(s)
Administrative officials like viceroys Nehy and Usersatet and mayor of $Š3^c.t$	*in situ* evidence for mayor in town
Gold production, sandstone quarry	

Table 2 Main characteristics of the New Kingdom town of Sai Island,
mid Eighteenth Dynasty (Thutmose III/Amenhotep II)

Certain features are still missing from Sai in the mid Eighteenth Dynasty: two *ḥ3tj-*ʿs have been buried at Sai, but as yet no *in situ* evidence for the mayor of Sai was found in the walled town. It is only viceroy Nehy, responsible for all the building work in the name of Thutmose III, who is well attested there, especially in the storage areas connected with the temple and the *inw*. As yet the precise orthogonal layout of the town in its middle part and on the eastern side is also unknown.

In conclusion, Sai and its archaeology provide us with some important caveats which can be taken as exemplary for the reconstruction of the situation in Upper Nubia: Royal statues like the ones of Ahmose and Amenhotep I do not necessarily attest a large-sized stone temple – they are more likely associated with installations comparable to Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period structures at Egyptian sites like *Ka*-houses. Even if we do have inscriptional evidence for *mnn.ws* thanks to royal inscriptions by Thutmose I, we are still far from being able to project the character of a *mnn.w* to archaeological remains. At Sai, to our present understanding there is no fortified town prior to Thutmose III. The simple domestic architecture with evidence of a co-existence of Nubians and Egyptians from the early Eighteenth Dynasty contradicts partly the negative image deriving from the Egyptian

Fig. 3 Overview of Pharaonic remains in the southern part of the New Kingdom town, SAV1, with Ottoman remains in the background (looking east). Photo: J. Budka.

texts concerning the Kushites, but still remains elusive after all. As far as Egyptian officials and the Egyptian administration in Kush are concerned, we only encounter scattered traces before the time of Thutmose III. Viceroys of Kush are traceable in Kush proper not before the reign of this king, coinciding with the major building activities in the area regarding temple structures. To sum up, more nuances and a complex picture emerge if both archaeology and texts are considered – but also more unanswered questions come up. The case study of Sai seems to be highly significant: The changing character of this major Egyptian site from the reign of Ahmose to the time of Thutmose III seems to reflect real life changes, the details of which are still uncertain. The archaeological investigation of Sai supports the assumption that the missing evidence for an administrative system in Upper Nubia prior to the reign of Thutmose III is not accidental, but that only from the time that the Egyptian presence was firmly established and was longer-lasting, also more than scatters have survived in the record.[117] The earlier remains and traces are still not completely understood, but they seem to point rather to periodical phases of Egyptian presence and a constant power shift between Kerma Nubians and Egyptians, taking into consideration a considerable influence by the local elite and princes of Nubian chiefdoms.

Consequently, this reconstruction would suggest that the main New Kingdom "fortifications" and temples like Sai, Sesebi, Soleb and Amara West originate from a phase when there was no real opponent in Kush challenging the Egyptian dominance: Rather these sites and monuments illustrate the well-established Egyptian system of ruling and exploiting

117 Cf. Török, Between Two Worlds, 184.

Nubia.[118] Other than previous believed, this also seems to hold true for the New Kingdom temple town built on Sai Island – possibly a "bridgehead into Kush proper and a secure launching pad for further campaigns"[119] very early in the Eighteenth Dynasty, helping Ahmose and especially Thutmose I to get troops and supplies towards the South, it only became an administrative centre and *mnn.w* during the time of Thutmose III.

8. Conclusion

The "re-conquest" of Nubia and the establishing of Egyptian authority in Upper Nubia is a long process with considerable changes and short-lived features – the socio-political circumstances and the precise relations between Egyptians and Nubians, especially the indigenous elite, are still elusive.[120] The new administrative system and the divine kingship under Thutmose III reflect political changes and altered power structures. I understand these time-specific features as the successful asserting of Pharaonic authority, differing from what is traceable in the early Eighteenth Dynasty. It is the materialisation of the "re-conquest" of Nubia which will continue for the remaining time of the New Kingdom, getting continuously modified.[121]

In Upper Nubia, large scale Pharaonic building activity is not attested before Thutmose III. Beginning with the reign of this king, there is abundant evidence for fortified towns/ *mn(n).w*, temples for gods and the corresponding officials, especially viceroys, mayors and priests. The modification of the system with an *jdnw n W3w3.t* and *K3š* was established soon after. This supports the assumption that the Egyptian authority is based on loyal local officials, with a growing contribution of the Kushite elite and the local population.[122] In most inscribed sources, the officials of the Nubian administration appear as Egyptians, but such an identity might be changing and a Nubian origin for elite people seems probable.[123] From a chronological perspective, these officials are of at least the second generation after the initial campaigns by Ahmose and Amenhotep I – and they were legitimized, appointed and respectively approved by the viceroy, thus by pharaoh himself. The visible output of this system, of which Sai Island as a case study has been presented, are temples, residences, statues and stelae.

There are considerable limits in assessing real dynamics in Upper Nubia during the early New Kingdom. The main problem is the still limited understanding of settlement structures, and here especially the relation of Egyptians and Nubians – both on specific local and also regional levels. Future fieldwork at sites mentioned in this paper will hopefully improve our current state of knowledge. At present, it is essential to consider the lack of evidence for Egyptian authority in Kush at the beginning of the New Kingdom, but to carefully distinguish it from confirmed lack of presence.

---

118 This is also why Pharaonic temple building in Lower Nubia started a bit earlier than in Upper Nubia; cf. B. B. WILLIAMS, The adoption and rejection of Egyptian symbolic culture in Nubia, in: CRIPEL 26, 2006, 405.

119 DAVIES, in ROEHRIG (ed.), Hatshepsut, 51.

120 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 924.

121 Cf. TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 184–186.

122 See also MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 924.

123 Cf. R. MORKOT, Nubia in the New Kingdom: The limits of Egyptian control, in: W. V. DAVIES (ed.), Egypt and Africa. Nubia from Prehistory to Islam, London 1991, 294–301; MORKOT, in MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 911–963.

Acknowledgments

Postscript

Vivian Davies presented in the Kirwan Memorial Lecture in London, Sept. 9 2013, an important new interpretation of the building inscription by Nehy from year 25 of Thutmose III; his study, currently in press in Sudan & Nubia 2014 ("The Egyptians in Kush: the discoveries of F W Green"), highlights a number of open questions connected with the dating, building phases and character of Temple A.