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

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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 stelae² and by recent findings at Elkab.³ The exact limits of Kerma influence towards the North within modern Sudan are still


partly unclear, but Wawat (Lower Nubia) seems to have been under control of several local rulers. 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. 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.

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 Ṣr.t., and its local princes appear among the execration texts of the Twelfth Dynasty and the huge Kerma tumuli on the island illustrate the importance of the site throughout the ages, from Ancient Kerma to Classical Kerma. 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, it can be assumed that he was concerned with the northernmost outpost of the rival Kingdom of Kush on Sai Island. 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. 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. However, until recently, archaeological evidence for this very likely interpretation was lacking.

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. Thutmose I has left a number of texts referring to his activities in Upper Nubia, among others royal stelae at Tombos and Kurgus. A text by his son Thutmose II at Aswan mentions fortresses, mnn.w, Egyptians du début de la XVIIIe dynastie désignaient les Kouchites et leurs alliés, in: BIFAO 112, 2012, 447–464.

4 See the recent summary by Mørkot, 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 Ṣr.t. see D. Devauchelle/F. Doyen, Retour à l’Île de Sai (Soudan, 2006–2009), in: BSFÉ 175, 2009, 33–37.
10 Davies, in Rohrig (ed.), Hatshepsut, 51; see also Török, Between Two Worlds, 183.
12 J. Vercoutter, La XVIIIe dynastie à Sai et en Haute-Nubie, in: CRIPEL 1, 1973, 7–38; see also, e.g., Davies, in Rohrig (ed.), Hatshepsut, 51; Török, Between Two Worlds, 158–159 and Mørkot, in Moreno García (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 913.
15 Török, Between Two Worlds, 160–161.
of Thutmose I.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{22} Its eastern part is more or less unknown; former researchers have assumed that this area has been lost because the cliff towards the

\textsuperscript{16} \textsc{Torok}, Between Two Worlds, 161 with note 32; see also \textsc{Gabolde}, CRIPEL 29, 136 with note 77.

\textsuperscript{17} See \textsc{Gabolde}, CRIPEL 29, 135–136; cf. also \textsc{Valbelle}, BIFAO 112, 447–464.

\textsuperscript{18} See J. \textsc{Budka}, Neue Arbeiten in der Siedlung des Neuen Reiches auf Sai Island (Nordsudan), in: Sokar 24, 2012, 54–63; J. \textsc{Budka}, Die 18. Dynastie auf Sai Island (Nordsudan) – neue Puzzlesteine als Ergebnisse der Feldkampagne 2013, in: Sokar 26, 2013, 78–87; K. \textsc{Spence}/P. \textsc{Rose} et al., Sesebi 2011, in: Sudan \& Nubia 15, 2011, 34–38; C. \textsc{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. \textsc{Smith} at Tombos is not yet published, but I would like to thank the excavator for sharing relevant information beforehand. Cf. also \textsc{Morok}, in \textsc{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.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. \textsc{Morok}, in \textsc{Moreno García} (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 947.


\textsuperscript{21} St. T. \textsc{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; \textsc{Torok}, 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 \textsc{Morok}, in \textsc{Moreno García} (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 913.

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. B. J. \textsc{Kemp}, Fortified towns in Nubia, in: P. J. \textsc{Ucko}/R. \textsc{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. 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.

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). The sandstone temple, called Temple A, was built in the reign of Thutmose III and dedicated to Amun(-Re) as its main deity. 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). 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.

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. The sandstone statue of Ahmose is often regarded as the confirmation that he founded the town at the site. 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. 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. 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

See the plan of the town site illustrated by Geus, in Welsby/Anderson (eds.), Sudan, 115, fig. 89.

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.


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.


See above, notes 11 and 12.

See Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 118 and 126; against a post-humous dedication see Davies, in Welsby/Anderson (eds.), Sudan, 102–103.

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.\(^{42}\)

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33 Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 137.
34 See Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 135–137.
36 Cf. Azimi/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 Azimi/Carlotti, CRIPEL 29, 44–46; Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 136.
38 Azimi/Carlotti, CRIPEL 29, 46–47; Gabolde, CRIPEL 29, 137.
39 Azimi/Carlotti, CRIPEL 29, 47, pl. XVI-b.
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., Möller, 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).
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 pharaoh seem to have been strongly considered on Sai — also in Thutmoseid 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”. The latter seems to relate to a distinct aspect of Thutmose III himself. Godlike features of the king are well attested in Nubia, this especially holds true for Thutmose III. Because of this I would like to suggest that other than a full-sized temple, a hwt-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. 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.

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. The most important person at the top of this administrative

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43 MÜLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 49. This specific deity will be discussed in a forthcoming article: F. THILL, Sai et Aniba: deux centres administratifs du vice-roi Neby sous Thoutmosis III, in: CRIPEL 30, forthcoming.
44 THILL, CRIPEL 30, forthcoming.
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.
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 W3wšt 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 Nubia53 – 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 Nubia55 – 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.
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 Š3š. 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, XI–XIII and PM VIII, 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, Sai II. Le cimetière des tombes hypogées du Nouvel Empire (SAC5), CIFAO 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: 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 — these are all elite objects and provide therefore clear evidence for royal favours expressed to the officials and their extraordinary loyalty in return.

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. 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). An interesting personal letter from king Amenhotep II was published as a stela by viceroy Useraset (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; 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.

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. 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. This new position was soon being divided according to Lower and Upper Nubia, thus there was the jdnw n Kš for the southern area and the jdnw n Wš 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. 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.
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.  

4.2 Selected viceroys of the early Eighteenth Dynasty

The first well documented viceroy is Turi who is known from Lower Nubia only. 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.

Senny is one of the Thutmoside viceroys. He was probably already in office during Thutmose I/II, 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.

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. Usersatet, viceroy under Amenhotep II, has also left some statues, stelae and architectural pieces. 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. Such statue types are known from a broad variety of contexts – mostly from temples, but also from funerary assemblages. 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

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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.


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 Hekaemnasen, in: BMSAES 14, 2009, 25–50.


77 For a detailed study see E. BERNHAUER, Innovationen in der Privatplastik, Philippika 27, Wiesbaden 2010.
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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 jdnws 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 Napata84 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 Kis/Wiwi.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.
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.
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.
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. 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. 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. 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.

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” – 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 h3tfj-c of a town is significant: different from honorary titles like jrr-p&t and h3tfj-c 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 h3tfj-cs from different sites. The title “Overseer of the towns of Kush” 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. 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 h3tfj-c. 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, CRIPÉL 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/TRINHAM 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 MÖLLER, Die Verwaltung Nubiens, 46–49.
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 h3fy-², a shabti and a heart scarab, are perfectly Egyptian in style, but the individuals behind the Egyptian names and titles might still be of Nubian descendant.

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.

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. 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. Hekanefer is the best-attested of all wr.w, having left an Egyptian-style tomb, funerary equipment and various graffiti. Morkot has recently argued that these Kushite princes held a major influence in Nubia, especially in the area between the Third and Fourth cataract. 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.

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.

In general, the system of the Egyptian administration of Nubia with the viceroy and his deputies mirrors an adaptation 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. An initial state with shifting

101 BUDKA, Der König an der Haustür, 187 with further literature.
103 O’CONNOR, in TRIGGER/KEMP/O’CONNOR/LLOYD (eds.), Ancient Egypt, fig. 3.20. See also MORKOT, in MORENO GARCIA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 947.
104 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCIA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 947.
106 See above, note 63.
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 h$tj-r) 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. 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. 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.

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.

111 Cf. J. C. MORENO GARCÍA, Limits of pharaonic administration: patronage, informal authorities, 'invisible' elites and mobile populations, in: M. BÄRTA/H. KÜLMBER (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. These earliest structures are, however, simple workshop-like buildings, storage installations and scattered remains. The major building phase at SAV1 North, which also comprises the enclosure wall of the fortified town, can be attributed to Thutmose III. 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.

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

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. 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.

113 BUDKA/DONEY, 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.
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 Ṣsar.t (Sai) and others. Gold production and sandstone quarrying is traceable and compares well to other Egyptian sites like Sesebi.

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

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 ḫ3ḥj-Š-s 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 inv. 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
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. Viceroy 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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{117} Cf. Török, Between Two Worlds, 184.
Nubia. 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” 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. 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.

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 W3wšt 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. 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. 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 ROEHRI (ed.), Hatshepsut, 51.
120 MORKOT, in MORENO GARCIA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 924.
121 Cf. TÖRÖK, Between Two Worlds, 184–186.
122 See also MORKOT, in MORENO GARCIA (ed.), The Administration of Egypt, 924.
Acknowledgments

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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.