Survey of Languages and Literacy in the Ancient Sudan (the Kingdom of Kush): (1) Ancient Egyptian and Meroitic

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Abstract. *The paper is on literacy in the ancient Sudan, known as Kush in ancient Egyptian, Sudanese, Assyrian and Hebrew sources, as well as Ethiopia in Classical sources. The paper starts with a prelude which introduces the first appearance of the kingdom of Kush, and its political and literacy periods. Next, both of the Egyptian and Kushite, best-known as Meroitic, writing systems are presented. In presenting the latter, the author insists that it is alphabetic despite the fact that it has a few signs in it that are syllabic. After the prelude, the author surveys the periods and extent of literacy in the ancient Sudan. In the conclusion, he distinguishes three phases thereof; namely,*

1. Exclusive use of Ancient Egyptian as the written language;

2. Alternate use of Ancient Egyptian and Meroitic as written languages;

3. Predominance of Meroitic as the written language.

I. Prelude

It is no easy task for any one to make an adequate survey of languages and literacy in the Ancient Sudan, the land that used to be known as "Kush" and "Ethiopia" in antiquity (on names of land see (Abdalla, and El-Amin 2001 (in Arabic)) .

The Greeks used the term AOioy, -πos (ethiopian) "burnt face", (Liddell and Scott, abridged, 1963 edn. : 19) i.e. "black", to designate black-skinned peoples of the area from India in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. AOioπia (Ethiopia), in that sense, is "land of the black(s)". When they, as well as Roman historians and geographers afterwards, spoke specifically of "Ethiopia" and "Ethiopians" to the south of Egypt, they meant the land, and ancient inhabitants, of the present Sudan. They also knew, as early as Herodotus in the middle of the 5th century B.C., that its capital at the time was Meroë (Herodotus II. 29. In Woolley & MacIver 1910: 55 n. *). That land was Kush of ancient Egyptian and Sudanese records. Its inhabi-

tants were Kushites (II i below). Neither "Ethiopia" nor "Ethiopian", of the Classical writers, Old Testament and Christian works, has any thing to do with present Ethiopia and Ethiopians. Present Ethiopia adopted this name, much later on and early in the Christian era, so as to attribute to itself the land of this name, and personnages and events associated therewith in the Old Testament and Christian works.

Adopting the same Greek and Roman concepts, Muslim and Arab geographers rendered "Ethiopians" with sudan "blacks", which is the plural of the plural sud "blacks (too)", and "Ethiopia" with Bilad as-Sudan "Land of the Blacks". Also, when used specifically, the latter meant "Sudan" of the Nile Valley, of which inhabitants, in consequence, would be "Sudanese".

Thus, one has the two ancient Egypto-Sudanese/Greek "Kush/Ethiopia" and "Kushite(s)/Ethiopian(s)" equivalences, on the one hand, and the two Greek/Muslim-Arab "Ethiopia/Bilad as-Sudan" and "Ethiopian(s)/ Sudanese" equivalences, on the other.

Consequently, justifiably and logically, one obtains the following two ancient Egypto-Sudanese/Muslim-Arab "Kush/ Bilad as-Sudan" and "Kushite(s)/Sudanese" equivalences. As a result, it will be quite poper to use the term "Sudan(ese)" as a substitute for "Kush(ite)" in this paper, wherever that was unobtrusive. In a recent joint-paper by the author and Yusuf Mukhtar El-Amin (Abdalla, and El-Amin, 2001 (in Arabic)), it is concluded how erroneous it is to use the words "Nubia" and "Nubians" as substitutes for "Kush" and "Kushites", and in consequence "Sudan" and "Sudanese". That is because of the late appearance of Nubians in the Sudanese historical scene, and of Nubia (Sudanese Nubia for that matter) being part of the Sudan, that cannot stand on a par with the whole area of the Sudan known as Kush in antiquity. This suffices for the land.

As regards literacy, what has been written on the subject is very little and tentative indeed (e.g. Millet 1974; Al-Hakem 1990). Here is the first of two new tentative attempts to do so, in which two ancient languages shall be Egyptian and Meroitic. This survey shall be chronological, from the beginnings of the Kingdom of Kush and the indications of languages and literacy therein, down to the 4th century A.D., the time at which intelligible ancient sources went silent about Kush. The next attempt shall deal with Proto-Bidawi, Old Nubian and Arabic, and literacy in them, from the the 6th century A.D. onwards.

Section II of the present study falls into three main sub-sections. Of these, II i is introductory, dealing with the Kingdom of Kush, II ii briefly introduces the two languages in question, and II iii contains the chronological survey of the two languages, spoken, written, or both. Section III is the Conclusion.

Before going much further, I am informed of an objection to my dating the silence of ancient sources about Kush from the 5th century A.D. onwards, and of the advice that it must be replaced by the 5th century A.D. That was thought to be done, because, as was said, "Török has recently produced evidence that Kharamadoye's inscription at Kalabsha must be dated from the first half of the 5th century"; meaning 5th century A.D. First, it must be pointed out that by such sources one means convincingly datable and intelligible ones in which is definite information about Kush. Secondly, much as I would have been pleased to learn of any possibility of information on Kush after the date I gave, I cannot accept the reason given for changing it. My reasoning is as follows.

As a Meroitic language specialist and too familiar with the said inscription and its archaeological and historical contexts, I find it too hard to envisage how Török, with due respect to him, or any other Meroiticist, myself included, can produce conclusive evidence as to its date. Besides, even if the dating proves to be incontrovertible, what information does the inscription have on Kush? Who knows convincedly, and convincingly, what the inscription is about? This is an inscription, like any of the few other non-funerary and long inscriptions, that has proved to be too difficult to render with scientific satisfaction. All of us Meroitic language specialists, the relatively few in the field, have failed to make any advance over those cautious renderings of those few phrases in this long inscription (34 lines), ably made by Griffith more than 90 years ago (1912: 27-32). Millet's full rendering of the inscription presented at the Paris Table Ronde in 1972, was no sooner presented than detracted by him at the very time and place of presentation. He, at the time, never wished it to be used in citations, nor did he even have it properly published, so far as I know. Sadly, it is quoted here and there profusely, as decipherment. Thus any conclusions, not necessarily by Török, based on

Millet's text of Kharamadoye, in my opinion, are unjustifiable and must be untenable. I have cited Millet's attempt as a case in point, with no intention of detracting from his unquestionable scholarly abilities. I will still wait to see how the inscription is convincingly dated to the 5th century A.D., and what information, if any, it has on Kush that would make me change my statement above, which I have modified with the word "intelligible".

Thus, so far as information on Kush is concerned, the inscription of Kharamadoye, irrespective of its date, is as silent as dead. The reason is that it is as yet unintelligible, and no one is sure of its content. It cannot be proven that is has any specific information on any thing of Kush. Thus, the fact will remain that since the 4th century A.D., intelligible sources are still silent about Kush,

II. Kingdom of Kush, Ancient Egyptian and Meroitic and Literacy

II i. Kingdom of Kush

"Kush" is the indigenous name of the land that lay to the south of Egypt in antiquity. Its earliest appearance in historical records was in royal inscriptions of the 12th Dynasty (1991-1785 B.C.) of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom. One of such inscriptions described an Egyptian invasion of Kush that claimed to have reached its southern boundary, capturing all its towns, and bringing all its inhabitants and cattle. Factual in describing the land as having towns and a southern boundary, the inscription is an exaggeration in saying that all the inhabitants and cattle were brought (to Egypt, naturally). The existence of towns, such as are mentioned in the inscription, and villages in Kush dates to long before that invasison. The Middle Kerma period (Kerma Moyen, c. 2000 B.C., Bonnet 1990: 43), partaking of both of the Egyptian First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom (Tableau chronologique,

Bonnet 1990: 8), for instance, witnessed not only the growth of the town of Kerma to important proportions, but also the rise of cities and villages elsewhere in the North of the Sudan. Even before that, Yam, contemporary with the Egyptian Old Kingdom, is proposed to have probably had its capital at Kerma (Bonnet 1990: 11, citing Säve-Söderbergh 1941). Farther south, evidence for villages and large settlements is reported to have been found in the Butana (Marks et al. 1986; 47-49), dating to the middle of the 5th Millenium at least.

Back to the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, it is too well-known a fact that inscriptions of the Egyptian 12th Dynasty acknowledge the existence of "vile Kush (sic!)", as a hostile land beyond the Egyptian southern border. But they neither name any one as being specifically "king" thereof nor refer to the land as a kingdom. My attention has been drawn to intentionally broken statuettes from the 12th Dynasty, yielding the names of two "princes of Kush", a certain 3w33 (or 3w3w) and his son Wttrrss (Posener 1940). This does not negate my statement, for these are "princes", with unspecific capacities, and not "kings". It is only in the Egyptian Second Intermediate Period (1674-1553 B.C.), that there appears the first mention of a "ruler (i.e. king) of Kush". This, naturally, implied the existence of a "kingdom of Kush".

The Second Intermediate Period inscriptions of such Egyptian officials as I'ahwosre (Khartoum 18, from Buhen) and Sopdhor (Philadelphia 10984. both in Säve-Söderbergh 1949: 50-58) and of 17th Dynasty King Kamose (Smith & Smith 1976: 66-69,) collectively inform of the existence of a kingdom of Kush then, of which king was referred to, in all of them, as *hk3 n K3s* "Ruler of Kush (i.e. King of Kush)" (see Abdalla 1989: 876. In Egyptological convention, 3 = *a*, dotted *h* and *k* = Semitic *h* and *q*, i.e. *ha'* and *qaf,* respec-

tively). The first of the three inscriptions (Khartoum 18) named the king at the time as being Ndh (read Njh). He is the first Kushite king (*hk3 or nsw*) ever known by name. That *hk3*, in these particular inscriptions, stood for "king" and not a mere ruler, is proven by the fact that this was the same word found on the stela of Egyptian 17th Dynasty King Kamose, in which it was referred to him as *hk3 n Kmt* "Ruler (i.e. King) of Egypt", to his Hyksos adversary Apophis II, as *hk3 n Hwt-w'rt* "Ruler (i.e. King) of Awaris (Avaris)", and to the newly arisen Kushite as *hk3 n K3s* , who will be "Ruler (i.e. King) of Kush" on their analogy (Smith & Smith, op. cit.: 68-69). But both of Kamose and Apophis II are aknowledged kings of their respective parts of Egypt, sharing the land together; the former as the last king of the 17th Dynasty, in Upper Egypt, and the latter as the last king of the Hyksos 16th Dynasty, in Lower Egypt. Thus whatever was meant by *hk3*, "ruler", "king" or both here, the Kushite was, de facto, of the same status (i.e. king) as that of both of the Hyksos and Egyptian well-known kings, his contemporaries.

Moreover, it is clear from Kamose's stela, that the king of Kush at the time had just acceded to the Kushite throne after his deceased father, who had been a good friend and potential ally of the Hyksos king. Thus, that king was one of a series of Kushite kings.

That more than one Egyptian official was in the service of one *hk3 n K3s* "King of Kush" or other of the same period (Khartoum 18, Philadelphia 10984) proves (1) that the presence of an independent kingdom of Kush was accepted as being normal in the opinions of Egyptians, and (2) that Egyptian notables not only served in it, but also felt so proud of having done so to the satisfaction of the king of Kush (Philadelphia 10984: 9), their employer, that they had this fact documented in their annals.

The occupation of Northern Kush by Egypt in the 18th Dynasty of its New Kingdom ended the threat to Egypt by "vile Kush". But Egypt did not control all Kush, nor was the part of it under occupation completely docile. It was frequently rebellious.

The decline of Egypt during the Late Ramesside Period, particularly from Ramesses V in the 20th Dynasty, paved the way for Kushite independence and eventual conquest of Egypt and formation of the 25th Dynasty. This dynasty was described by Manetho as being "Ethiopian", meaning "Kushite/Sudanese", with nothing to do with present Ethiopia. It is significant, and as will be pointed out later on, that the first Kushite king documented as "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" (Leclant 1963: 74-81) is named Kushto (widely written Kashta), which means "The Kushite" in the ancient Sudanese language, now best known as "Meroitic". By their formation of the 25th Dynasy of Egypt (747-664 B.C.), the kings of Kush, became kings of both of Egypt of and the Sudan; that is, of the Nile Valley, in the true sense of the word. This is attested in Assyrian *shar Musri wa Qusi* "King of Egypt and Kush" used by Essarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, in reference to their contemporaries Tarqo (widely read, Taharqa) and his nephew and successor Tanwiteamani, of the 25th Dynasty (Luckenbill 1924, 1926: 293-297, King 1901: 153-168). Noteworthy is the writing of the name of Kush with *q (qaf)* instead of the familiar *k*, and *s* instead of *s* . The former is always used in Kushite (Meroitic) for writing the same place-name as qes "Kush".

The Old Testament too, when narrating events of the same period in the Near East, in which Egypt of the Sudanese 25th Dynasty is involved, speaks of "Kush" and "Tirhakah, King of Kush", in its Aramaic, Hebrew (2 Kings 19: 8-10, Isiah 37: 8-9), and Arabic (الملوك الثاني ١٩: ٨-١٠، إشعيا ٣٧: ٨-٩) versions. These, unfortunately, are rendered with "Ethio-

pia" and "Tarcos, King of Ethiopia" in its Greek and modern European language versions. Both of "Tirhakah" and "Tarcos" here are renderings of Sudanese "Tarqo". Other supporting instances of "Kush/Ethiopia" and "Kushites/Ethiopians", in different contexts, occur in Isiah 18: 1-2, 7, 20: 3-5 and 2 Chronicles 16: 7-8, "Kush" persisted as the name of the land of the Sudan after Kushite loss of Egypt (c. 664 B.C.), during the main subsequent periods of ancient Sudanese history known as the Second Napatan Period (660 - 481 B.C.) and Meroitic Period (481 B.C. - 350 A.D.). It is partiuclarly evident in ancient Sudanese records of the period, written in Ancient Egyptian. To this period belongs the explicit mention in ancient Sudanese inscriptions of *nswt n K3s* "king(s) of Kush" and *nsyt n K3s* "kingship of Kush" (Abdalla 1989: 878-879). Evidence for the former is in the Election Stela (El. St.: 12, 22. Budge 1912: 89-104) of King Asoilto in Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Sudanese graffiti (Ph. 409, 410: 7, 421: 15. Griffith 1935-37) in Demotic from the Dodecaschoenus. Evidence for the latter is on the same Election Stela (El. St.: 13) cited.

National filiation to the land is evident in personal names borne by indigenes, royal and non-royal. But for one, all such instances are in Ancient Egyptian. These are masculine *P3-k3sy* and feminine *T3-k3syt* "The Kushite", borne by males and females respectively, and *P3y-n-k3s* "The One of Kush", borne by males (Lüddeckens 1977 also). The exceptional instance is K3sto "Kushto" (widely read, Kashta). In fact, it is most significant of them all, on two counts. One is its being in the ancient Sudanese (Kushite) language, now known as Meroitic, and meaning "One of Kush", that is "The Kushite". The second is that it was borne by an ancient Sudanese (Kushite), who was also the first ancient Sudanese ever known to conquer part of Egypt and bear the well- known Egyptian (later on, also Suda-

nese) title of "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" (see Leclant 1963).

So that one may follow the periodization of the literary history of the Sudan made below, it is perhaps essential to introduce the main periods of the political history of the Sudan, beginning with the first mention of *hk3 n K3s* "Ruler of Kush (i.e. King of Kush)" in ancient intelligible records and ending with the silence of such records about Kush. These periods, as I see them, are:

1. Independent Kush of the Egyptian Second Intermediate Period (c. 1675- 1555 B.C.);
2. Northern Kush under Egyptian occupation of the Egyptian New Kingdom (c. 1550-1110 B.C.);
3. First Napatan Period. This includes the reigns of Kushto (Kashta in older reading) and Piye and before. This witnessed the conquest of Upper Egypt under the former and most of Egypt under the latter, with the Kushite king residing in Napata; hence its designation with the First Napatan Period, as being distinct from the Second Napatan Period (5 below), that was after the 25th Dynasty;
4. 25th Dynasty, during which Kushite kings beginning with Shabako resided in Egypt, from which they ruled both Egypt and Kush (the Sudan). It practically ended with King Tanwiteamani, the fourth king of the 25th Dynasty;
5. Second Napatan Period. Right after King Tanwiteamani down to the reign of Aspilto (Aspelta in older reading), when the capital is believed to have been transferred to Meroe (c. 591 B.C.);
6. Meroitic Period, from c. 591 B.C. to the silence of intelligible ancient sources about Kush (c. 4th century A.D.).

It is seen that I have dated the beginning of the Meroitic Period at c. 591 B.C. This is not a new idea. One of its earliest publications is Arkell's (1973 repr.: 145-146, to cite one early source). The association of the event with

Saite-Kushite hostilities and Saite threat of Napata, proven true by Psammetik II's attack of Napata in 591 B.C. (Sauneron and Yoyotte 1952), is most plausible and needs to be more justly examined and adopted. Before such an attack, in the last year of King Analamani, Kushite troops led by Aspilto had already set out for Egypt before they were recalled at the Holy Mountain (Jabal Barkal) by the sudden death of Analamani, as reported on Aspilto's Election (better Selection) Stela (text in Budge 1912: 89-104). Then, this aborted move was followed by Psammetik II's attack on Napata in 591 B.C. Such an atmosphere of mutual hostilities perhaps made royal residence in Napata precarious, and its presence in Meroe, farther south, safer. It is then that the capital was transferred to Meroe. I am aware of the convention among Sudanologists, adopted in Berlin 1971 (of which I was party), that the transference of the royal burial to Meroe in c. 300 B.C. be taken as the beginning of the Meroitic period. This was a convention, not fact, that runs contrary to historical truths and reason.

It is a well-known historical fact that Herodotus, when he was in Egypt c. 450 B.C., spoke of Meroe as being the capital city of all other Ethiopians (II.29). By "other Ethiopians" was meant those dark-skinned people farther south, and not adjoining the Egyptian frontier. This explicit evidence is implicitly corroborated by passage IX: 5 in the inscription Kawa IX of Amaninoteyerike, who describes how his predecessor King Talakhamani had died "in his palace in Meroe" (Macadam 1949a Inscriptions, Texts: 51, Plates: Pl. 22). Talakhamani's regnal years are c. 423-418 B.C. according to Reisner (1923: 75), c. 439-435 B.C. according to Dunham (1957: 6) and 435-431 B.C. according to Hintze (1959: 23). Irrespective of their disagreements, these dates are all after the middle of the 4th century B.C. and not much later than Herodotus' time in Egypt.

These two historical truths prove that Meroe was capital and royal residence in the 5th century B.C. On the basis of Herodotus' statement, it should have come to be capital much earlier than his time in Egypt, so as to be established as such by his time. The disparity between convention and the historical truths would make Meroe the capital of Kush and royal residence in c. 450-418 B.C. (at latest), according to the evidence presented, but about 150-118 years outside and before the Meroitic period had begun c. 300 B.C. according to convention. This sort of thing is contradiction, not only in terms, but also in logic. Therefore, irrespctive of convention, I maintain the view that the Meroitic period began c. 591 B.C., while the royal burial continued in Nuri, until such a time, and for reasons unknown to us, as it was thought fit to transfer it to Meroe.

After the political periodization given, there will be periodization of the literary history of the ancient Sudan, correponding not to political events but to the kind of written material available and possible extent of literacy. It begins with the first mention of *hk3 n K3s* "King of Kush" in ancient intelligible records and ends with the silence of such records about Kush. So that this literary periodization be well understood, it is perhaps necessary to familiarize the reader with the political and historical periodization itself. This, in brief, is as follows:

1. Independent Kush of the time corresponding to the Egyptian Second Intermediate Period (c. 1675-1555 B.C.);
2. Northern Kush under Egyptian occupation of the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1110 B.C.) ;
3. First Napatan, 25th Dynasty and Second Napatan Periods, from King Kushto to King Anlamani (c. 770-593 B.C.);
4. Second Napatan and Meroitic Periods from King Aspilto to King Sabrakamani (c. 593 to early 3rd. century B.C.);
5. Meroitic Period from King Arikakamani to

the owner of pyramid N9   (King Tabirqo/ Adikhlamani; from early 3rd century B.C. to beginning of the 2nd century B.C.);

6. Meroitic period from husband of Shanak-dakhete to King Shorkaror (from early 2nd century B.C. to early 1st century A.D.);

7. Meroitic Period after King Shorkaror to si-lence of records (from early 1st century A.D. to middle of 4th century A.D.)

II ii. Ancient Egyptian and Meroitic

Below shall be a brief introduction of each one of Ancient Egyptian and Meroitic, the two languages of the survey.

II ii 1. Ancient Egyptian

Ancient Egyptian is the name of the lan-guage used by the Egyptians in ancient times, down to the Coptic Period. But in the latter it was more or less a Graeco-Egyptian language, known as Coptic. It was Ancient Egyptian with a large number of Greek loan-words, written in a different, fully alphabetical, script of 32 letters. Twenty-four of them were Greek and seven Egyptian, in their Demotic forms (Steindorff 1951: 8, 20-21, ff.) for detailed derivation).

Before the Coptic stage, Ancient Egyptian passed through three main periods of develop-ment, corresponding to the periods of Egyp-tian political history. In theory these are Old Egyptian, of the Old Kingdom; Middle Egyp-tian of the Middle Kingdom; and Late Egyp-tian of the New Kingdom. In practice, these stages did not begin and end with their respec-tive ploitical periods. Thus, Middle Egyptian, for instance, exceeded the Middle Kingdom, and survived into the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom.

The earliest specimens of Ancient Egyptian documented from ancient Sudanese annals are of a form of 18th Dynasty Middle Egyptian (see Macadam 1949a: xiii). That was at the time when any form of Middle Egyptian had

long ceased to be used in Egypt itself. As is clear in an important study by Priese (1972), even two styles of it could be distinguished; what he called "Kawa style" and "Napatan style", named after two important ancient Su-danese centres. The former is a famous site, a religious centre, with massive temples, while the latter was the capital of the ancient Sudan immediately before and after the Sudanese conquest of Egypt and establishment of its 25th Dynasty, that lay in a very important ar-chaeological region.

Ancient Egyptian was the language of the inscriptions of the earliest Kushite rulers and personnages. It remained in use in the Sudan down to the 4th centrury A.D., even during the times when Meroitic came into use, as a writ-ten language, in the 2nd century B.C. The Egyptian writing system was complex (see, for instance, Gardiner, 1957: 6-10 and   (Abdalla 1995). It consisted of ideograms (word-signs), phonograms and determinatives, all used at the same time, whether the script was hieroglyphic or cursive (hieratic or demotic). Ideograms were word-signs, of which each sign was a word with one, or more than one, meaning. Phonograms were mere sound signs, of three categories; alphabetic, mono-syllabic and mul-ti-syllabic. Determinatives were ideograms originally, added to words to explain their meanings.

II ii 2. Meroitic

The Kushite language, best-known as Me-roitic, was the language of the ancient Suda-nese. Sporadic evidence of it is found in Kushite personal names in Egyptian inscrip-tions from the Egyptian New Kingdom and Late Period. The most expressive evidence is the name of ancient Sudanese King Kushto, which meant "The Kushite" and is Kushite (Meroitic), in both of content and construction.

The earliest written instance of Meroitic dates to the 2nd century B.C., to the reign of Queen Shanakdakhete, whose short inscription
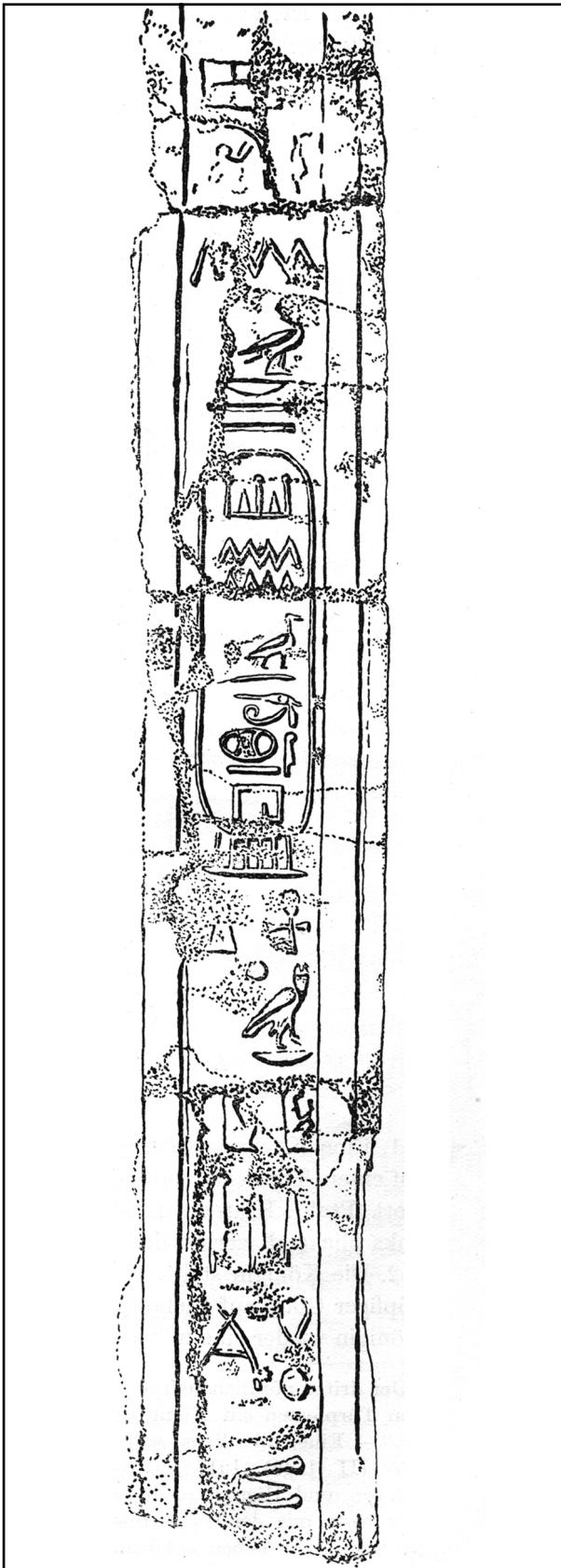
Fig. 1: The inscription Ins 39, of Queen Shanakdak-hete, Temple F, Meroë, Hintze 1959: 37, Abb. 6.

had her name written in Meroitic hieroglyphic in the middle of an otherwise Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription (Fig. 1; also Griffith 1911b: 66, Hintze 1959: 36-37). Subsequent evidence showed that the language was alphabetically written in two scripts, one hieroglyphic and the other cursive (Fig. 2, and Griffith 1911a: 3-31 & Abdalla 1986: 87-110). Both scripts availed themselves of their Egyptian counterparts; the hieroglyphic from the hieroglyphic and the cursive from Demotic. It was Griffith (1909, 1911a, 1916) who convincingly deciphered the Meroitic scrips (Fig. 2) and a large number of words and phrases.

My description of the Meroitic writing system as being alphabetic is contrary to my previous, and long-held view (Abdalla 1986A.D./ 1406 A.H., in Arabic), that it was "incompletely alphabetic" or "semi-alphabetic". New lines of thought on my part made me believe that the Meroitic writing system was genuinely alphabetic, and on the Semitic pattern (Abdalla 1421 A.H./1992). Thus, short vowels are not expressed in the Meroitic alphabet, while the signs previously held for *e, i* and *o*, were proposed in this work to be for long vowels *a, i* and *u*, consecutively. On second thoughts, I wish to replace *a* with *e*. Thereby, Griffith's *e, ê* and *i* would be my *e, u* and *i* consecutively (Fig. 3.2-4). In consequence, his syllabic tê and tu would be my *tu* and *te* respectively (Fig. 3.5-6). Thus, as seen by me and proposed here, vowel *a*, short or long as *a*, and on the Semitic pattern too, is not delineated. Nor, on the same pattern too, is the sign for *a* (aleph) ever used as a vowel. It is always a consonant and at the beginning of a word. It does not begin a final or medial syllable in a word at all, unless such a syllable is preceded by the word-divider extraordinarily falling in the middle of the word involved. Thus, as I see the Meroitic writing system, any consonant of it, and on the Semitic analogy, is also potentially a short open syllable, or consonant and short vowel.

Such a vowel, as Griffith himself already observed, need not necessarily be short vowel *a*. It does not express short vowels. Where vowels are expressed, these are long vowels *e, u* and *i*. Vowel *a,* short or long, is unexpressed.The argument for Semitic influence on the Meroitic writing system is clearly evident in certain features that are un-Egyptian, at the time when Egyptian influence was to be expected and taken as a fact, as was done by Schäfer (1895) and Erman (1897), and were led astray. Such Semitic features are: (1) the direction of most of the hieroglyphic signs to the end of the line, in the Old Canaanite fashion, rather than the beginning of the line, as was in Egyptian, (2) the use of a word-divider and (3) non-use of the sign of consonantal *a* (aleph) as a vowel.

Here four points made by Griffith about Meroitic and its alphabet need to be made, for their usefulness (see also Fig. 3 at the same time).

The first point, as stated by Griffith (1916: 121), is that there was "cogent evidence for an o/u value" for his *ê* (Fig. 3.4). Further evidence for this was given by him shortly after (1916: 122).

The second point is that he (1911a: 16) stated how in his transcriptions (sic!) he frequently supplied *a* where no vowel was marked. He, at the same time, admitted that "it was impossible to decide in most cases where a vowel is to be inserted, and some other vowel than a may often be required". Thus, there is no justification for Hintze's statement (1973:

TABLE OF THE MEROITIC ALPHABETS

𓆓	52	initial aleph or *a*				*l*
		e				*ḥ (kh)*
		ê				*ḫ (kh)*
		i				*s*
		y				*š (sh)*
		w				*k*
		b	Δ, ⊿			*q*
		p				*t*
		m				*te*
		n				*tê*
		ñ				*z*
		r			:	stop to separate words.

Fig. 2: The Meroitic hieroglyphic and cursive alphabet and standard values according to Griffith (1911b: 49).

Griffith's standard Values	Modifications			
	Griffith	Macadam	Hintze	Abdalla
1. *z*			*d*	
2. *e*				*ē*
3. *i*				*ī*
4. *ê*	*o/u* (possibly)	*ē*	*o*	*ū*
5. *tê*	*to/tu* (accordingly)	*tē*	*to*	*tū*
6. *te*				*tē*
7. *ñ*	*ne*		*ne*	
8. *š*	*se*		*s*	
9. *s*			*se*	

Fig. 3: Griffith's standard values of certain signs and proposed or adopted modifications thereof.

322.2, 197: 74.2) that "Every consonant, which is written without a vowel sign, signifies Cononant + vowel *a*".

The third point is that in his authoritative and convincing discussion of Meroitic signs, Griffith (1916: 117) concluded that (a) *n* = *n* followed by *e* (Fig. 3.7) and that (b) it was probable however that *s* = *s* followed by *e* (Fig. 3.9).

According to the last point, with Griffith's two already known open syllables te and *tê* (two last but two of the alphabet above), one would have four open syllables; namely *tê* , *te, ne* and *se* (Fig. 3.5-7, 9).

The fourth point is that the writing in Griffith's opinion (1911a: 22) "indicates that the language consisted mainly of open syllables commencing with a consonant", and that "there were closed syllables, as is shown by the Greek transcriptions Epyauevns and kavoakn".

Macadam (1949a: 94), on the other hand, adopted d and e for Griffith's z and ê respectively (Fig. 3.1,2).

In a study that was published twice (1973, 1974), Hintze pointed out a number of things, of which three shall be presented and dis-

cussed here.

The first thing is how "the additional observations and considerations, which Griffith published in his Meroitic Studies 1916", of which are the above, " have not been used systematically", and thus set out to reconsider these and propose modifications. Of Griffith's points above, (1) of *o/u* for *ê* (first point), he adopted *o*, (2) accepted *ne* for *n* third point, a) and (3) diverged by making *s* = *se* and *s* = *s* (third point, b). His divergence is his only new thing.

The second thing (1973: 322.12, 1974: 74.1), already pointed out, is his statement that "Every consonant which is written without *a* vowel sign signifies Consonant + Vowel a". This echoes Griffith's second point, but emphatically and conclusively. At the same time, it has its refutation in Griffith's second point itself, where he stated how impossible it was "to decide in most cases where a vowel is to be inserted, and some other vowel than a may often be required".

The third point is his statement (1973: 322.2, 1974.74.2) that all Meroitic letters denote syllables. This, too, runs against Griffith's correct point 2, in which he stated clearly how impossible it was to decide in most cases

where a vowel was to be inserted.

On my part, and as explained above, I have propsed the substitution of Griffith's *e*, *i* and *ê*, with long vowels *e*, *i* and *u*, consecutively (Fig. 3.2-4), and his tê and te with tu and *te* (Fig. 3.5-6).

Figure 3 (below) summarizes Griffith, Macadam, Hintze's and my modifications of Griffith's standard values of *z, e, i, ê, tê, te, n s* and *s*.

In the light of the above I wish to argue that the presence of the signs proposed collectively by Hintze and Griffith to be for tê/to, te, ne and, se, though being (short open) syllables, cannot exclude the Meroitic writing system from being alphabetic. The presence of a handful of syllabic, or potentially syllablic, signs does not necessarily exclude any, otherwise fully alphabetic, writing system from being so. The Greek writing system, with its bi-literal ?? (ks) and ?? (ps) for instance, is still alphabetic.

Even if all the consonantal signs of a script are also potentially syllables, the system will still remain fully alphabetic. The old Semitic writing system in all its versions is a case in point (Phoenician, Aramaic, Old Hebrew, Moabite, North and South Arabian, Ethiopic before Aezana, Nabataean and unvowelized early Classical Arabic). Since neither short nor long vowels were expressed by the Semitic writing system in its early stages, then all its consonants functioned as both consonants and syllables. Short and long vowels, though undelineated, were pronounced according to the convention of pronouncing the written word or words in question. Despite the dual function of consonants, the system is alphabetic. With time, long vowels came gradually into being, for *i* and *u* only. Long vowel *a*, remained unexpressed. The sign for a remained as a consonont, and was never used as a vowel. Such, I believe, is the case of the Meroitic script, which followed the Semitic pattern at its latter stage.

As I see it, the Meroitic script is alphabetic, with few signs (5) capable of being syllables. It does not express short vowels. Of the long vowels it has signs for *e, i* and *u* Griffith's standard *e, i* and *ê* are my *e, i* and *u*, consecutively. Thereby, his te and tê will be my *te* and *tu*, respectively.

II iii. Chronological Survey Ancient Egyptian and Meroitic in the ancient Sudan

Next is the survey of language and literacy in the ancient Sudan during the periods listed in section II i above.

It shall be noticed below, that I have occasionally departed from the usual convention of writing Kushite personal names. This departure was deliberate, whenever found justifiable. Owing to the fact that the names of Kushite kings and queens from Aror (Alara, in older reading) downwards, with the exception of Harsiotef, were definitely in the Kushite language now known as Meroitic, I have transcribed such names as "Meroitic", whenever that was justifiable meroitically. This view is demonstrated in various of my papers (e.g. 1974b, 1977, 1999). Thus, *t3-n-w3-ti* in Tanwiteamani is a variant with *-t-* instead of *-d-* of proper Meroitic *tn-ye-wi-de* Ins 96 1-2, which is increased over it with medial -ye- (More in Abdalla 1977: 27). Perhaps *-n-* of the former is pronounced *-n-ye-,* of the latter. In the light of the above, in my use of *-wite-*, in which *-i-* is to be understood as being long, instead of *-wet-* in writing Tanwiteamani, I have departed from conventional Tanwetamani.

The name Piye (Pi'ankhy, in older reading) is unique. I still believe that Priese's analysis of it (1968) is correct and sound, and that the name is written in such a way as to be read and understood in both languages, Egyptian and Kushite (Meroitic); Pi'ankhy in the for-

mer and Piye in the latter. For me, it is only Piye. Its first component is found written in Kushite (Meroitic) as *ap/p/pe /pi-* (conventional *ap/p/pe/pi-*). In its meaning of "life, living", or the like, this component has proved to be very useful for me in deciphering a number of Meroitic words and personal names that gave suitable senses relating to the meaning given to the component. These shall see the light shortly.

II iii 1. Indepndent Kush of the time corresponding to the Egyptian Second Intermediate Period (c. 1675-1555 B.C.)

It is virtually impossible to say definitively what indigenous language the ancient Sudanese spoke during this period, or the extent to which any of them were literate in Egyptian, the only language of the Nile Valley written at the time. All that one can do, perhaps, is to assume, and within reason, that in the ancient Sudan of the time, the only, or main, indigenous language spoken was the one later known as "Meroitic". One would also assume Egyptian to have been spoken by certain Sudanese in the northernmost regions of the Sudan that were in contact with Egypt and familiar with individual Egyptians.

When it comes to literacy, the question becomes even more complex and hypothetical. However, one would find it too difficult to accept the notion that no ancient Sudanese would have been literate in Egyptian, the only written language of the Nile Valley at the time.

It would be expected that certain ancient Sudanese would have been literate in Egyptian, if not at certain times during the period in the ancient Sudan corresponding to the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, at least during the Egyptian Second Intedmediate Period.

The presence of such Egyptian notables as Ka, the uncle, on the mother's side, of I'ahwosre (Khartoum 18) and as Sopdhor (Philadel-phia 10984) in the service of the kings of Kush (II I above) during the period in Kush corresponding to the latter part of the Second Intermediate Period (16th and 17th Dynasties), would suggest the presence of some Sudanese both versant and literate in Egyptian, with whom such notable employees communicated.

Since the kingdom in which such expatriates worked would have had some of its affairs involving them conducted orally, then Egyptian, to a limited extent at least, could have been used orally for the execution of such affairs. One should not overlook the possibility that certain affairs could have been conducted in written Egyptian.

Kamose's inscription proves the existence of close and friendly contacts between the Hyksos King Apophis (16th Dynasty) and the father and predecessor of the new Kushite king of the said inscription, in which exchanges were made in Egyptian; as was the case of the Hyksos letter claimed to have been captured and quoted by Kamose in the said inscription. Thus, there must have been some individual, or individuals, in the Sudanese courts who were able to read and reply to correspondance in Egyptian.

II iii 2. Northern Kush under Egyptian occupation of the New Kingdom   (c. 1550-1110 B.C.)

During the 18th Dynasty, Egyptian occupation of northern Kush would have increased familiarity with Egyptian in Kush. It was the mother-tongue of the "King's Son of Kush", the non-royal Egyptian personnage administering the territories under Egyptian control. Many of such personnages had their own inscriptions, conducted local affairs and communicated with the Egyptian court in Egyptian. At the same time, Egyptian acculturated Sudanese would have used Egyptian, at least as a spoken, if not written, language too. They would also have had Egyptian inscriptions

written for them on their monuments. Such have been the cases of Djehuty-hotpe and his brother Amenemhe of Debeira, who bore Egyptian names, whereas their parents had indigenous names (see Säve-Söderbergh 1963: 171 on family).

Thus, it is perhaps safe to assume that, both Ancient Egyptian and the ancient Sudanese language, now known as "Meroitic", were spoken at one and the same time, and that only the former of them was written.

II iii 3. First Napatan, 25th Dynasty and Second Napatan Periods from King Kushto to King Anlamani (c. 770-623 B.C.)

From this period onwards, one can speak with lesser difficulty than before about languages and literacy in the ancient Sudan. At the start, one can say authoritatively that the native language of the period was definitely the one now known as "Meroitic"(see Macadam 1949b: 140, Leclant 1969-1970: 199, Priese 1968: 165, Abdalla 1969: 20-21, 1977: 18-20). It was spoken, but not written. Obviously, and as a result of the circumstances of the earlier periods, a larger number of Sudanese, than previously, would have spoken, written and read Egyptian. The kind of Egyptian used in the Sudan then, and as described in II ii 1 above, was a form of 18th Dynasty Egyptian. This, itself, was a continuation of Middle Egyptian, and, therefore, finer in quality than Late Egyptian used in Egypt of the time itself (see, too, Macadam 1949a: xiii).

The best existing specimens are the inscriptions on the monuments, stelae, offering-tables, ushahbtis, ornaments, etc. of Kushto, Piye (Pi'ankhy in older reading), Tarqo (Taharqa in older reading), Tanwiteamani (Tanwetamani in older reading), Analamani Schäfer 1901, 1905, Budge 1912, Breasted 1906, Dunham 1955, 1970, Macadam 1949a, Leclant 1970, Grimal 1981).

II iii 4. Second Napatan and Meroitic Periods from King Aspilto to King Sabrakamani (c. 593 to early 3rd. century B.C.)

This period may be devided into two. One, from King Asoilto (widely read Aspelta), full-brother and successor of Analamani, to King Amaninoteyarike (c. 481-405 B.C.). The other, thereafter to King Sabrakamani (c. 280-270 B.C. ?). During all this period, Meroitic was the spoken, but not written, native language. Ancient Egyptian was still spoken, though not universally, and also written by elite Sudanese.

From the Dedication Stela (Ded. St.: 19. Schäfer 1895, Budge 1912: 105-112) of King Asoilto, one learns of the existence of a scribe of the Egyptian language, in *ss mdw-ntr* "Scribe of Egyptian (lit. Sacred Utterance)", who was an official of high rank, fourth in the list of fifteen high-ranking witnesses to the Dedication in question. Unfortunately, the scribe's name is now damaged. So, one is not sure whether he was Sudanese or Egyptian, by name at least. Besides him, and among the same witnesses, were two scribes, with Sudanese names, of whom one was *hry ss n K3s* "Chief Scribe of Kush", Mlowibeamani (Ded. St. 7), and the other was *ss nsw snwt* "King's/ Royal (i.e. Government) Scribe of the Granary" Tokelto (Ded. St. 7-8). A third was *ss nsw 'imy-r snwt* "King's/Royal (i.e. Government) Scribe, Overseer of the Granary" Khonsirdis (Ded. St. 7). The last could have been Sudanese with an Egyptian name. If not all, at least definitely two, of these four scribes are Sudanese by names; namely the second (Mlowibeamani) and third (Tokelto). The existence of, at least, the two definitely Sudanese scribes is clear evidence of the existence of high-ranking Sudanese literate in Ancient Egyptian.

Moreover, in *ss mdw-ntr* "Scribe of Egyptian", it is suggested that there could have been a special department of Egyptian composition, responsible for documentation, in which all these

and probably other scribes were appointed.

From the reign of King Asoilto to that of King Sabrakamani, the evidence at our disposal for Egyptian decreases progressively, while the quality of Egyptian written itself is not uniform or consistent. Such progressive meagreness is not to be explained as being the result of increasing decline in proficiency in the language in question only, for one has to take into account three important factors. One is the universal and exhaustive plundering of ancient Sudanese burials at Nuri, Sanam, Meroë (South, West and North) and Barkal, not in modern, but in ancient, times. The second is the deterioration of chapel walls, bearing scenes and texts, of these burials. The third is that certain tombs of important rulers were in too bad a state for excavation, and still remain unexcavated. This explanation is applicable to the tombs not only of this period, but also of the following periods.

Nonetheless, and on the basis of the material available, the reign of King Amaninoteyarike (1st half of the 5th century B.C.) appears, somehow, to have been the water-shed in literacy in Egyptian of the period. The quality of Egyptian inscriptions of the same king, or around his age, varied from one inscription to another. To this latter period, of insconsistent quality of Egyptian, belong the famous inscriptions of Harsiyotef and Nastasen (Schäfer 1901, 1905), of which authors are generally accepted to have been Sudanese, with knowledge of Egyptian (see Schäfer 1901: 61-71 on the language of Nastasen's stela).

By the time of King Aryamani and King Sabrakamani, ability to compose intelligible Egyptian in the Kingdom of Kush had obviously been lost. This is clear in the inscriptions Kawa XIV and XV, of the former king, and Kawa XIII of the latter, early in the 3rd century B.C. (Macadam 1949a, text: 68). Their authors were presumably Sudanese, with inade-quate knowledge of Egyptian. But soon afterwards, followed a period of Egyptian revival, which is the next.

III iii 5. Meroitic Period from King Arikakamani to the owner of pyramid N9 (King Tabirqo/Adikhlamani; from early 3rd century B.C. to beginning of 2nd century B.C.).

The period from the time of King Arikakamani, early in the 3rd century B.C. to that of the owner of pyramid N9, proposed to be either King Tabirqo or King Adikhlamani, of the beginning of the second century B.C., spans the century preceding the inception of Meroitic writing. It comprises the reigns of Kings Arikakamani (pyr. S6) and Amanislo (pyr. S5). Queens Bartare (pyr. S10) and Amniìtekha (pyr. N4), Kings Arnekhamani (pyr. N.5 ?), Arqomani (Ergamenes ; pyr. N7) and Tabirqo/ Adikhlamani (? pyr. N9). It was characterised mainly by detailed decoration of the walls of their chapels and, sometimes, burial chambers with good quality Egyptian scenes and well-written Egyptian texts (Reisner 1923b: 40-43, Dunham 1957). To these may be added various other inscribed objects. Additionally, one has the Lion Temple of King Arnekhamani (Hintze 1962, 1971, 1993). It was a period of regeneration of Egyptian styles and language. The Egyptian language used was of the Ptolemaic period.

Owing to the evident association of the period with Egyptian regeneration, I wish to dissociate King Arqomani's (Ergamenes') age from the invention of Meroitic writing. This is against the old, now abandoned, view, pioneered by Lepsius (18 : cxxiv) and sustained by Griffith (1912: 24), that it was probably during the reign of this king that "the Meroitic alphabet was invented and the native language employed in writng instead of the barbarous Egyptian of the priests, which, however, continued in use for religious purposes till long

later". Had this been the case, his monuments would have testified to such a praiseworthy achievement, by being inscribed in Meroitic, and not to Egyptian regeneration (Abdalla 1986: 154-155). Use of Meroitic would not have waited for the next period (II iii 6).

II iii 6. Meroitic period from husband of Shanakdakhete to King Shorkaror (from early 2nd century B.C. to early 1st century)

The relative meagreness of the inscribed material of this period retrieved does not discourage one from claiming this period to have been one of relatively high literacy and possibly multilingualism in the Sudan. Moreovere, it is the period of the inception and consequential universal adoption of the Meroitic script, of which the earliest evidence found, in Meroitic hieroglyphic, was the name of Queen Shanakdakhete (pyr. N11 ?. Fig. 1. Griffith 1911a: 66 Ins. 39, Hintze 1959: 36-37, Abb. 6). From then onwards, Meroitic became the second language that was both spoken and written in the ancient Sudan. Naturally, as the indigenous language, it would have been more widely spoken than Ancient Egyptian. Where the latter was written, it was a second language that was either only written, or both spoken and written, restrictedly at the time.

This period itself comprises the reigns of the owner of pyr. N8 (husband and predecessor of Queen Shanakdakhete ?), Queen Shanakdakhete herself (pyr. N11 ?), King Tảyideamani (pyr. N20), Queen Nawidemak (pyr. Bar 6) and her son King Amanikhabale (pyr. N5), King Teriteqas with his wife Queen Amanirenas, King Natakamani (pyr. N22) with his wife Queen Amanitore (pyr. N1) and their son King Shorkaror (pyr. N10). King Natakamani and his wife Queen Amanitore outstandingly used Egyptian and Meroitic hieroglyphic alternately on their temples as befitting the deity involved; Egyptian or Meroitic when it was the jointly Egypto-Sudanese

Amun, and Meroitic only when it was the exclusively Sudanese Apedemak.

The period produced the longest Meroitic inscriptions ever, and in Meroitic cursive, of King Tanyidemani (Fig 4; also Monneret de Villard & Hintze 1960, Dunham 1970: 34, pls. XXXIX-XLII also) ranking first, and that of King Akinidad (Griffith 1917: 159-173) ranking second. It also witnessed the alternating exclusive use of either Meroitic or Egyptian hieroglyphic on monuments or objects of the ages of King Natakamani and his family (see Reisner 1923b: 67-68). While King Natakamani and his wife Queen Amanitore had Meroitic-inscribed monuments at Nag'a (Lion and Amun Temples), Amara and Meroë, they also had Egyptian-inscribed monuments at Nag'a (altar) and Meroë (Amun Temple). The chapels of the pyramids of both Queen Amanitore (pyr. N1) and (their son) Prince Arikakharor (pyr. N5) were extensively and exclusively inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Most of the Meroitic-written material of this period found was historical and religious, with fewer funerary inscriptions. This is the reverse of what shall be seen in the following period.

II iii 7. Meroitic Period after King Shorkaror to silence of records (from early 1st century A.D. to middle of 4th century A.D.)

As before (II iii 6), Meroitic was still the language of the Sudan, that was both spoken and writtten. By the 2nd century A.D., most of Lower Nubia (i.e. present Egyptian Nubia) had become a densely populated Meroitic province, in which Meroitic was both spoken and written. Thus the dominion of the ancient Sudan covered the area from anywhere near Sennar and Kosti (450 kms. South of Khartoum), at least, in the south, to Maharraqa (in the middle of present Egyptian Nubia), and sometimes to Philae/Aswan, in the north. The inscribed material consisted of temple and chap-
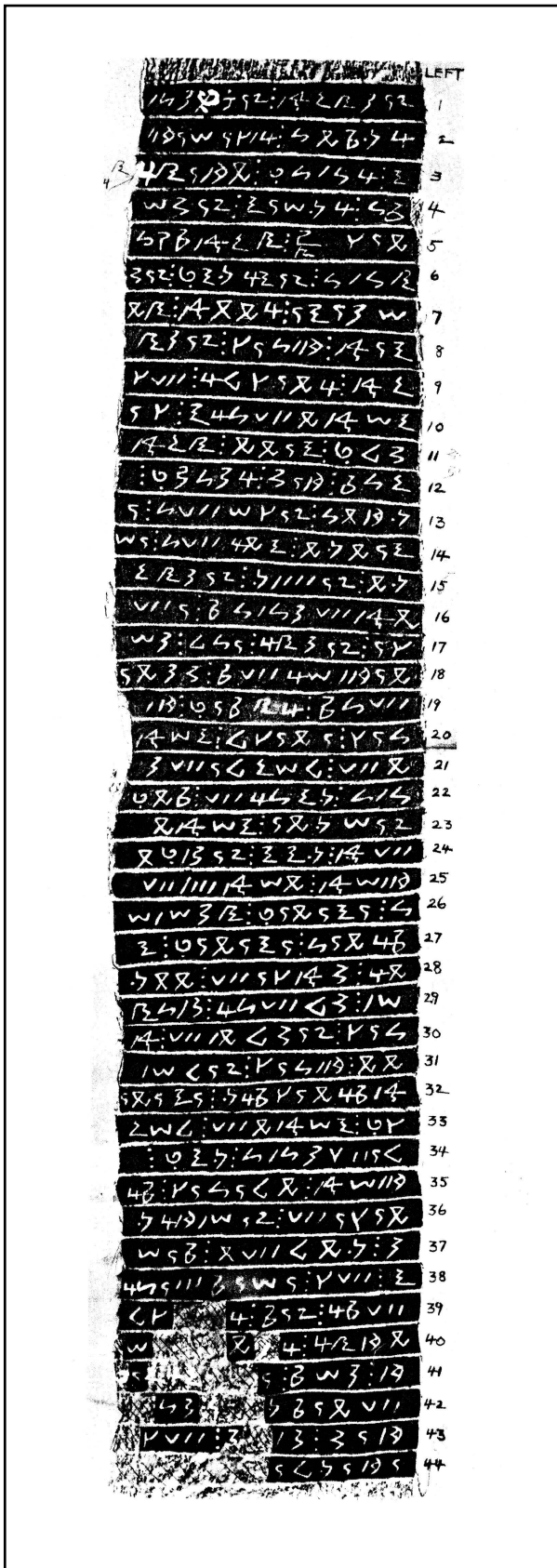
Fig. 4: The inscription of Tanyideamani, Boston MFA 23.736, from Jabal Barkal, Dunham 1977, 16, pl. XLI, C.

el walls, offering-tables, stelae and stone blocks, papyri, ostraca and diverse other objects.

Of great importance are the Meroitic graffiti of the so-called "Meroitic Chamber" in Philae (Griffith 1912: 34-42), as well as the Sudanese Demotic graffiti of the Dodecaschoenus (Griffith 1935-37).

The period is acknowledged to have been of relatively wide-spread literacy in Meroitic in the Sudan (for instance, Millet 1974). This can be attributed to the alphabetic nature of the Meroitic script, which was much easier to master than was the complex Egyptian writing system. Classical writers of the age stated that "the hieroglyphic script was more widely known to the vulgar in Ethiopia than in Egypt" (Crowfoot 1911: 32). But they were not specific, whether they meant the Egyptian or Meroitic hieroglyphic script. It is not improbable that they could have mistaken literacy in Meroitic hieroglyphics for the Egyptian, and thereby judged the *vulgar* (that is common and ordinary) Sudanese to be more literate in it than was any Egyptian. At any rate, testimony for relatively widespread literacy is in the high quality of both language and script of the texts found, the diversity of hand-styles, even in one and the same site (e.g. Meroë and Karang, in Griffith 1911b, 1911c). The excessive lengths of tails in the cursive script indicate that Meroitic cursive was extensively used in daily-life and on soft material, ostraca (Fig. 5) and papyri in particular, as proven from Qasr Ibrim, for instance. Long tails became so much a feature of the cursive script that they were maintained even in inscriptions on stone in Late Meroitic inscriptions (Fig. 6; and see Griffith 1911b: 143ff. too).

As previously (II iii 4), in this period too were "royal (i.e. government) scribes", such as *sh(w) n nsw n K3s* "King's/Royal (i.e. Government) Scribe(s) of Kush" (Ph. 409, 410: 10) of Sudanese Demotic graffiti from the Dodec-

ashoenus (Abdalla 1989: 879-880).

But this situation is not contradicted by the relatively disproportionate meagreness of the inscribed material so-far recovered. As explanation thereof, one gives two phenomena. One is the excessive plundering to which main cemeteries, royal or private and of all periods, had been subjected since antqiuity; namely, the cemeteries of Meroë, Jabal Barkal, Sanam, Faras, Qasr Ibrim, Karanog, Shablûl and Gebel Adda. The other is that during the period in question, papyri inscribed in Meroitic cursive were used for daily-life purposes. As was the case with Ancient Egypt, so here too, papyri were highly vulnerable and short-lived.

The disproportionately infinitesimal amount of texts on papyri fragments from Qasr Ibrim is no consolation. It is nothing, when contrast-
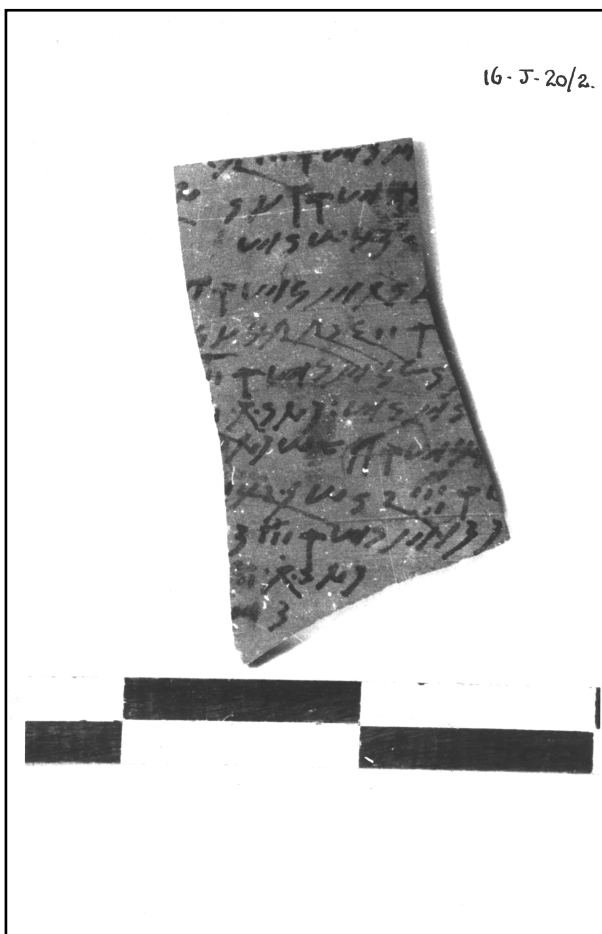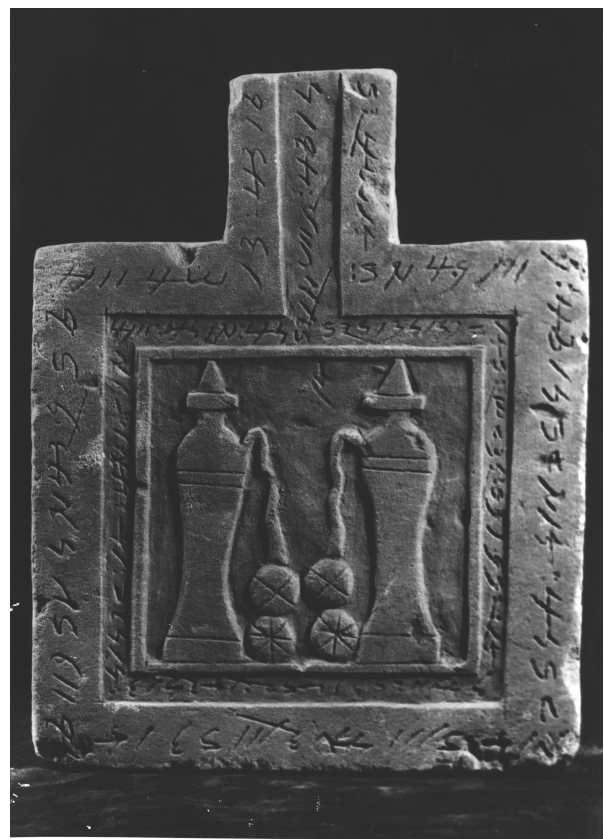

Fig. 6: Offering-table Kar 18, of Wetkidlbe, Cairo 40178, from Karang, Griffith 1911a: 57, pl. 18. New photograph. Courtesy of late Prof. G. Mokhtar.

ed with what vast amounts of texts on papyri that should have once existed, and now lost, in Qasr Ibrim itself, Sedeinga, Faras, Gebel Adda, Arminna West, Naga' Gamus, Karang, Shablul, Dakka, Kawa, Napata, Meroe, Soba, etc. texts written on papyri were lost with the deterioration and eventual vanishing of the fragile material.

Virtually all of the material we now have is on stone. Of this, the vast majority is funerary, stereotyped and repetitous. The efforts of Leclant and his colleagues over long years to collect a repertory of Merotic inscriptions come to a happy conclusion with the appearance of the *Répertoire d'Epigraphie Méroïtique* (2000).

Fig. 5: Ostracon 16.J.20/2, unpublished, Attiri, Sudan National Museum no. 20150. Courtesy of A. J. Mills.

III. Conclusion

In spite of the difficulties involved when

dealing with such a complex subject as languages and literacy in the ancient Sudan during the period specified above, which spans more than a millennium, one may present the following main stages thereof in conclusion.

1. Exclusive use of Ancient Egyptian as written language

The first stage was the exclusive use of ancient Egyptian as the written language, and of the ancient Sudanese language, now known as Meroitic, as the main spoken language. This was during periods II iii 1-5 above.

2. Alternate use of ancient Egyptian and Meroitic as written languages

The second stage was the alternate use of ancient Egyptian and Meroitic as written languages, and Meroitic as the main spoken language. This was during period II iii 6 above.

3. Predominance of Meroitic as the written language

The third stage was when Meroitic became the main spoken and written language, during period II iii 7.

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ملخّص: البحث عن القراءة والكتابة في السودان القديم، الذي كان اسمه كوش في المصادر القديمة، المصرية والسودانية والأشورية، والعبرية، وإثيوبيا في المصادر اليونانية والرومانية. يبدأ البحث بتمهيد فيه حديث عن أول ظهور مملكة كوش، فعصور التاريخ السياسي، ثم عصور الكتابة والقراءة. يلي ذلك تعريف بالكتابتين المصرية القديمة والكوشية، التي اشتهرت باسم "المروية". في قسم الكتابة المروية يتحدث الباحث عن أول ظهور لها، مبيناً إيمانه بأن الكتابة المروية أبجدية وإن شملت بضعة رموز ذوات صفات مقطعية. بعد التمهيد، وفي صلب الموضوع، يستعرض الباحث مراحل استخدام الكتابتين المصرية القديمة والمروية في السودان، ومدى انتشارهما، ليخلص في نهاية الأمر بأن هناك ثلاث مراحل للكتابة والقراءة في السودان، هي الآتية:

١ . انفراد الكتابة المصرية القديمة.

٢ . التبادل بين الكتابتين المصرية القديمة والمروية.

٣ . غلبة الكتابة المروية.

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