

ANGELIKA LOHWASSER

# 13<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR MEROITIC STUDIES

9-13 SEPTEMBER 2024 IN MÜNSTER, GERMANY

Meroitic Studies is the research on the Kingdom of Kush/Meroe from its emergence in the 9<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century BC to its decline in the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century BC. It includes archaeological, philological and pictorial sources from the Middle Nile Valley as well as reports and representations from outside (Egyptian sources, classical authors). The common research goal is to gain insights into social structure, way of life, kingship, religion, writing and language, chronology, art, architecture and material culture.

In 1971, the „1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Meroitic Research“ was held in Berlin/GDR. It was a modest gathering of the then still young discipline to discuss current research. In the following

decades, eleven more ‚Meroitic Conferences‘ took place at irregular intervals and in different locations. The organisation is not affiliated to any formal association or professional society, but individual representatives of the field have expressed their willingness to do so.

After the 2016 conference in Prague, the next venue was to be Khartoum in 2020. Initially postponed due to the covid pandemic, it was eventually cancelled altogether. The 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the conference was hosted by the Institute of Egyptology and Coptic Studies at the University of Münster from 9 to 13 September 2024. Due to the military conflicts in Sudan, the entire conference was held in a hybrid for-



Fig. 1a: Karima Hub (photo: M. El Toum).



Fig. 1b: Karima Hub in action (photo: M. Ahmed Abbas).



Fig. 2: Cairo Hub on Monday 9. September in the Institut français d'archéologie orientale (photo: S. Marchi).



Fig. 3: Cairo Hub on Friday 13. September in the German Archaeological Institute (photo: R. Mahmoud).



Fig. 4: The Participants in person in Münster (photo: C. Geiger).

mat, so that Sudanese colleagues could not only listen passively in their respective locations – whether in Sudan or, having fled, in another country – but also actively give presentations and participate in discussions. We were also able to set up a conference hub at the Jebel Barkal Museum, as the Karima region is not directly affected by the war. This brought together not only our colleagues but also interested members of the public. The opening event on the first day and the panel ‘Cultural Heritage in Crisis’ on the last day were also broadcast to Cairo: on Monday, the Institut français d’archéologie orientale invited colleagues from Cairo to its premises, and on Friday, the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo.

In Münster, 120 international guests took part, giving a total of 87 lectures on the three main themes and further research. A new feature was the Poster Slam, which introduced a poster exhibition – the short presentations in plenary were an opportunity to explain the posters exhibited in the foyer, even if the speakers were not present in person.

The following topics were discussed in full-day panels:

*Kush and the outside world:* Surveys and excavations in recent decades have established links not only with Egypt and the Mediterranean world, but also with other regions as far away as India.

*History and Chronology:* An intensive round table discussion during the 2022 Nubian Studies Conference in Warsaw revealed that there are significant problems in reconstructing history, even in the sequence of rulers.

*Religion in Kush:* Recent discoveries at several sites in the Middle Nile Valley have transformed our knowledge of sacred architecture, worship and

mortuary rituals. In this area in particular, research has shifted from an Egyptian to an indigenous perspective.

The parallel sessions presented the latest findings on other aspects of Meroitic research. The wide range of topics demonstrated the diversity of questions, source groups and methodologies.

The current situation in Sudan has prompted us to add an additional theme and to discuss it in the plenary session on the last day, rather than in parallel sessions: *Cultural heritage in crisis*. In particular, colleagues from Jebel Barkal and Cairo were given the opportunity to speak, giving us an insight into the sometimes alarming state of antiquities. The opening lecture by Dr. Salaheldin Mohamed Ahmed was likewise devoted to this current topic, but the speaker also referred to earlier threats – such as the construction of dams – and presented proposals for preventive measures and short-term responses.

We are delighted that the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference for Meroitic Studies will be held in Italy in 2028!