

JULIA BUDKA

CATTLE MOTIFS IN NUBIAN ROCK ART OF THE BRONZE AGE – A PRELIMINARY UPDATE FROM KOSHA, MOGRAKKA AND FERKA

INTRODUCTION: THE AREA

The Munich University Attab to Ferka Survey (MUAFS) concession between Attab and Ferka in northern Sudan was previously surveyed by the Sudan Antiquities Service together with the French Archaeological Research Unit under the direction of André Vila in the 1970s.¹ A range of sites including settlement and funerary, as well as rock art, fortresses and churches from Palaeolithic to Post-Medieval periods were documented.² The ERC DiverseNile project's current focus is on the Bronze Age sites.³ The MUAFS concession area is both a geological boundary zone and a cultural frontier zone with a long history as a contact zone between cultural groups. For example, Kerma Nubians, C-Group communities and nomads associated with the Pan-Grave horizon.

The DiverseNile project aims to understand the economic role of the Attab-Ferka region as a production area and as land for pastoralism and agriculture. Following Edwards, this region illustrates that “conventional place-centred approaches to landscapes are likely to be less useful for understanding mobile pastoralists, for whom concepts of paths rather than places may be more appropriate in their understanding of space.”⁴ Accordingly, our research includes pastoral areas and the corresponding routes from the Nile to the desert. In this respect, rock art and its distribution are of great interest.

Within the MUAFS concession, the distribution of rock art is indeed significant and mirrors the topography and environment (Fig. 1). Rock art is restricted to certain areas with suitable geology and large boulders, especially in the districts of Ferka, Mograkka and Kosha. Vila already noted that in the region south of the Batn el-Haggar surveyed in the 1970s, the Dal cataract and the districts of Mograkka and Kosha are most significant for rock engravings.

1 Vila 1976a, b; 1977a, b

2 See Budka 2019; 2020

3 Budka 2022; Budka et al. 2023

4 Edwards 2021, 1077

Vila and his team documented a total of 28 sites with rock engravings and one with painted rock art.⁵

The following is an update on rock art in the Attab to Ferka region in light of recent findings in this area. In particular, this concerns aspects of cultural diversity and contact spaces during the Bronze Age when Kerma Nubians intermingled with Pan-Grave Nubians and possible other nomads and diverse groups. Given that agropastoralism was likely one of the key subsistence strategies in the region, the following will focus on domesticated cattle and their appearance in rock art. This is a preliminary assessment.

CATTLE MOTIFS IN NUBIAN ROCK ART

Depictions of cattle in rock art are widespread in Sudan, suggesting that these animals were depicted over several millennia, from the Neolithic to the Medieval period.⁶ Cattle motifs are particularly prevalent in rock art in the so-called Bronze Age,⁷ here the Kerma (2500-1500 BCE) and C-Group (2500-1700 BCE) periods.⁸ This emphasis has been linked by David Edwards with the development of a ‘bovine aesthetic’.⁹ The numerous Bronze Age rock engravings have been understood, following ethnographic studies of pastoralists in Sudan such as the

5 Vila 1979, 58. This includes sites outside of the MUAFS concession; notable are bovine images in the district of Amara West that Vila associated with the Kerma period, see Vila 1977c, 39, site 2-R-13

6 Säve-Söderbergh 1967-1968; Červíček 1974, 181; Otto and Buschendorf-Otto 1993, 15; Edwards 2006; Kleinitz 2012; Paner 2021; Polkowski 2021

7 Cf. de Souza 2023

8 Červíček 1974, 181; Edwards 2006; Williams 2014-2015. See Kleinitz 2007, 216 for a description of the typical cattle image of these periods: “Older cattle representations usually show long horn cattle with elegantly curved horns and highly consistent body shapes characterised by a straight back, curved or angular lines depicting legs and lower body, and a pronounced head. While the bodies are depicted in profile, the horns are usually rendered as if seen from the front.”

9 Edwards 2006, 3 applying a concept of Coote 1992

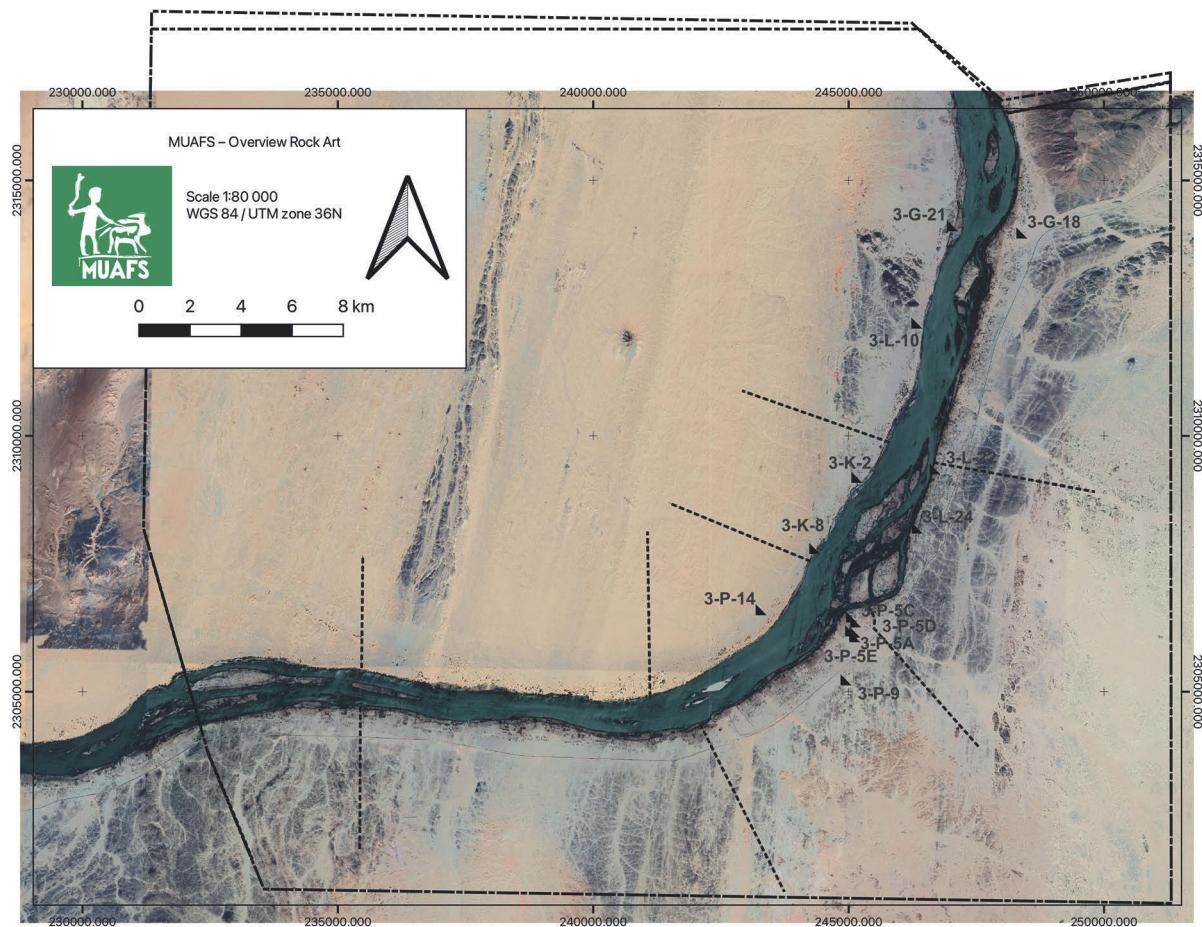


Fig. 1: Map showing the rock art sites in the MUAFS concession area. Map: C. Geiger, © DiverseNile project. Edited by J. Budka.

Nuer, as the creation of 'shrines' for communities, with the images of cattle representing fixed, eternal shrines, while the living animals are more ephemeral manifestations of the divine.¹⁰

Although it is often difficult to date rock art precisely, differently coloured patinas and different styles of livestock depictions can provide clues for dating. Thanks to recent studies, information about specifically Kerman rock pictures of cattle is available. In the area of the Fourth Cataract, stylistically and morphologically different cattle types could be recognised, which show a great variety of representations of body treatments.¹¹ In this respect, a remark by Polkowski is very important: "After all, the colour of an animal's hide has always been of prime importance and relevance in nearly all elements of life for many East African pastoral groups (e.g., Coote 1992; Dubosson 2014; Evans-Pritchard 1940)." ¹² Dubosson has therefore argued that particular features in Bronze Age cattle images show

something like a 'favourite animal' for which, based on pastoral ideas, the concept of belonging rather than ownership is illustrated.¹³

Despite difficulties with dating, it is important to note that rock art panels depicting cattle in close proximity to Kerma burial sites were recorded in the Fourth Cataract region¹⁴ and can also be observed in the Attab-Ferka region of northern Sudan.¹⁵ Generally, indirect dating evidence through association or a comparison with other media like clay figurines and decoration on pottery vessels is often the only way to date Nubian rock art.

CASE STUDIES FROM THE MUAFS CONCESSION

Surveys in the districts of Kosha, Mograkka and Ferka yielded some rock art sites which are likely to be Kerma in date and will be discussed in the following (Fig. 1). In particular, the sites NF-36-M/3-

10 Edwards 2006; see also Polkowski 2021

11 Osypińska 2009; Polkowski 2021, 74, Table 4.2

12 Polkowski 2021, 75.

13 Dubosson 2014; Polkowski 2021, 77

14 Kleinitz 2007; Polowski 2021

15 Budka 2020



P-5, 3-P-9, 3-K-2 and 3-G-18 can be associated with Bronze Age activities (see below). However, as mentioned above, it is often impossible to precisely attribute and date cattle depictions in rock art¹⁶ and most MUAFS rock art sites are likely to be multi-period, having been used over centuries. Interestingly, on the east bank of Mograkka most of the rock art seems to be of Medieval date.¹⁷ The same hold true for the site 3-G-21 on the west bank of Ferka.

Kosha

In this district, the large rock art site on the border between Mograkka and Kosha, 3-P-5, is remarkable. There are more than 400 individual rock carvings, making the site the most significant rock art cluster within the MUAFS concession.¹⁸ Cattle are the most common motif and the majority of these engravings appear to belong to the Kerma period (Fig. 2). Motifs in 3-P-5 also include antelopes, human depictions, birds, dogs, giraffes, camels, ostriches as well as sandals and boats.¹⁹

In regards to the cattle motifs, isolated drawings are attested, as are panels with several images, partly arranged into scenes. Different horn shapes can be identified, including long horned cattle, various types of short horned cattle and cattle with artificially deformed horns (Fig. 2).²⁰ Adult animals are sometimes accompanied by calves. Some engravings allow a clear sex attribution – notable is the appearance of udders (Fig. 3) and of penises.²¹ The body can be depicted in outline only, or in fully pecked variants. So-called divided bodies, marked by a line, as well as patterns within the body are also attested.

The layout of the engravings at the site 3-P-5 is comparable to what Polkowski wrote for El-Gamamiya 67 at the Forth Cataract: “The distribu-



Fig. 2: Various cattle drawings from 3-P-5A, note a cattle with deformed horns in the foreground and typical “Middle Nubian” bovids in the background (photo: J. Budka).



Fig. 3: A long horned cow with an udder from 3-P-5 (photo: J. Budka).

tion of panels across the site is uneven: they are found in smaller and larger clusters, both on top of the hill and on its slopes, with some on loose boulders, but the vast majority of the images can be found carved into solid outcrops. The hill offers a wide view of the surroundings, including the valley and the river. It also stands out in the landscape, being the largest granite outcrop in the area.”²² For 3-P-5, it should be stressed that Vila *et al.* recorded the site in five main clusters, labelled as 3-P-5A, B, C, D and E, all located at the North end of the Kosha plain, 100-350m from the present-day Nile.²³ Some Kerma-style and Medieval sherds were found scattered in the area during Vila’s survey.

3-P-5A comprises c. 150 rock engravings on various panels and isolated blocks, including bovine images (see Fig. 2) but also barques of different types and cruciform symbols. 3-P-5B is located 50m west of 3-P-5A on the highest and largest hill of the site. Approximately 100 pictures of human figures, giraffes, antelopes and bovids were documented.

16 See Karberg 2019; Polkowski 2021

17 For Mograkka and the Christian church close by the rock art see Budka *et al.* 2021. For Medieval rock art see, e.g. Kleinitz and Olsson 2005

18 Vila 1976b, 79-87. The other rock art sites in the MUAFS concession comprise a few dozen of individual carvings.

19 See Vila 1976b, 79-87; Budka 2020, pls. 1-2

20 Osypińska 2009 has distinguished between images of long horned cows with lyre-shaped horns and bulls, which have crescent-shaped horns. Polkowski 2021 has made an updated summary on the various horns attested at El-Gamamiya 67. In general, the long horned *Bos primigenius* is the most common and earliest type; followed by the long horned *Bos taurus*. Already Červíček 1974, 1981 noted that short horned cattle are attested since the Kerma period. For horn deformations see Dubosson 2018

21 For general aspects of sex implications of bovine rock art see Polkowski 2021, 76

22 Polkowski 2021, 81

23 Vila 1976, 80, fig. 32



Fig. 4: Large boulder at 3-P-5A with different representations of cattle, some of them clearly bulls (photo: J. Budka).



Fig. 5: Boulder with “bull fight” from 3-P-5 (photo: J. Budka).

200m north to northeast of sites 3-P-5A and B is a small hill, 3-P-5C, which has 40 engravings, mostly of human figures, antelopes and bovids. Another 100m to the northeast, a concentration of 25 engravings, labelled by Vila as 3-P-5D can be found. The main motifs are humans with animals, bovids and birds. 3-P-5E, with 65 images, including one sandal, is located 50m south of the other hills.

One large boulder at site 3-P-5A shows not only the differences in size of individual cattle images, but also the various techniques (outline, pecked interior



Fig. 6: Herdsman behind cattle showing the use of two sides of the rock, 3-P-5 (photo: J. Budka).



Fig. 7: Boulder with human-cattle interaction, 3-P-5 (photo: J. Budka).

or pattern within the body) and different horn shapes used (Fig. 4).²⁴

An interesting scene is illustrated in Fig. 5 – two large bulls face each other, almost comparable to the well-attested bull fighting scene in Egyptian tombs.²⁵ This panel also highlights the co-existence of short-horn and long-horn cattle within the same piece of rock art.

²⁴ Part of this is illustrated in Vila 1976b, 83, fig. 34.3

²⁵ See also a parallel from Lower Nubia: Červíček 1974, fig. 410



A recurring association at site 3-P-5 is that between cattle and human figures.²⁶ The latter appear on several panels, most of which also contain depictions of cattle.²⁷ One particularly representative example is shown in Fig. 6. Here, the natural shape of the rock was used to separate the herdsman, walking behind the cattle and grasping its tail.²⁸ The bovid's rear is exactly at the edge of the rock; its tail and the herder are on the neighbouring side of the boulder at a different angle. Above the herdsman is a simple cattle image and above this another anthropomorphic figure. Depending on the viewer's perspective, either the side of the rock with the human figures or the other with the large cattle can be seen.

The human representations can differ at 3-P-5 – Fig. 7 shows another scene with humans behind cattle, but in a different style. Noteworthy is also the body shape of the bulls and their tails ending with an oval tuft.²⁹

The most prominent boulder with human-animal interaction featuring cattle shows what could be interpreted as a 'pastoral scene' (Fig. 8 and Cover picture).³⁰ In various lines, with different styles and shapes of horns, not only cattle, but also birds (probably geese) as well as a goat, a possible calf (or another goat?) and a dog are depicted. Such scenes find plenty of parallels – in Lower Nubia,³¹ the Dal Cataract³² as well as in the Third³³ and Fourth Cataracts.³⁴ Like the 'pastoral scene' in Panel III/13 at site El-Gamamiya 67, this panel seems to depict the daily life of pastoralists, but this interpretation may of course be wrong.³⁵ Nevertheless, the important role cattle played for people in the Kosha area becomes very evident at site 3-P-5 (see also the discussion below).

One notable detail from many of the cattle images from 3-P-5, also visible in Figs. 7 and 8, is the shape of the tail. Other than just a simple stroke on the rock, these tails end in an oval tuft. Such a pronounced end of bovine tails is rarely found in Upper Egyptian and Lower Nubian rock art.³⁶ Just north of Ferka,

26 Also noted at the Forth Cataract, see Polkowski 2021, 81

27 See Vila 1976b, 87, fig. 38.4 for a scene with humans only

28 A common motif, in Lower Nubia, see Červíček 1974, 154, figs. 167, 171, 194, 197, 346, 347, and 352; but also in the Eastern Desert and in the Fourth Cataract region, see Polkowski 2021, 83. For a similar scene in the Dal Cataract see Vila 1975, 105, fig. 110

29 Similar is a panel in the Third Cataract region: Hamdeen and Polkowski 2018, fig. 17

30 Vila 1976b, 86, fig. 37.3

31 Otto and Buschendorf-Otto 1993, 211, fig. 452

32 Vila 1975, 99-105, figs. 106-110

33 Osman and Edwards 2011, pl. 44; Hamdeen and Polkowski 2018, 33, fig. 17; Polkowski 2021, figs. 4.6 and 4.13

34 Polkowski 2021, 83

35 See Polkowski 2021, 84

36 See Otto and Buschendorf-Otto 1993, 103, fig. 178;



Fig. 8: Pastoral scene, 3-P-5 (photo: J. Budka).



Fig. 9: "Middle Nubian" style isolated cattle, 3-P-9 (photo: J. Budka).

at Sarkamatto in the Dal Cataract (site 3-G-4), Vila documented cattle with very similar tails.³⁷ It seems also significant, that there are a number of parallels from the Third and Fourth Cataracts (see below).³⁸

Not far from 3-P-5 is a small rock art site, 3-P-9, situated on top of a hill, near site 3-P-8³⁹, with an estimated size of 25 x 25m and 750m from the present-day Nile. 40 rock engravings were recorded by Vila, among them human figures, bovids, antelopes and cat-like animals.⁴⁰ When the site was recorded in 2023 by the DiverseNile project, isolated cattle images in the typical Middle Nubian style of a simple outline (Fig. 9), as well as several ostriches could be added to Vila *et al.*'s description. The most striking scene documented by Vila *et al.* at the site is 3-P-9D which was described as a chariot with two wheels, drawn by two horses and accompanied

Červíček 1974, fig. 380

37 Vila 1975, 99-105, fig. 110

38 Osman and Edwards 2011, pl. 44; Hamdeen and Polkowski 2018, 33, fig. 17; Polkowski 2021, figs. 4.6 and 4.13

39 For this site associated with Bronze Age gold working see Budka 2024a, 86

40 Vila 1976a, 97-100

Vila 1976



Status 2023

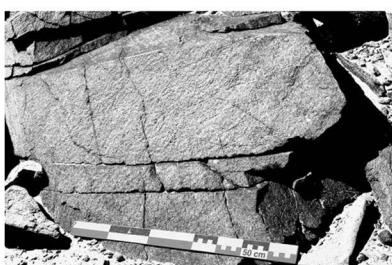


Fig. 10: Panel 3-P-9D – Vila (from: Vila 1976b) and current state (photo: J. Budka).

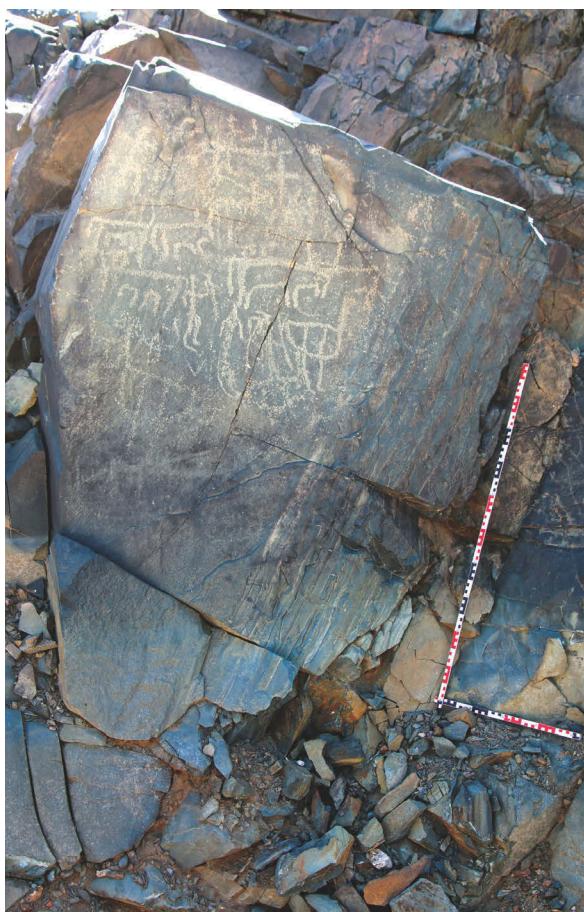


Fig. 11: Boulder with cattle pastoral scene, 3-K-2 (photo: J. Budka).

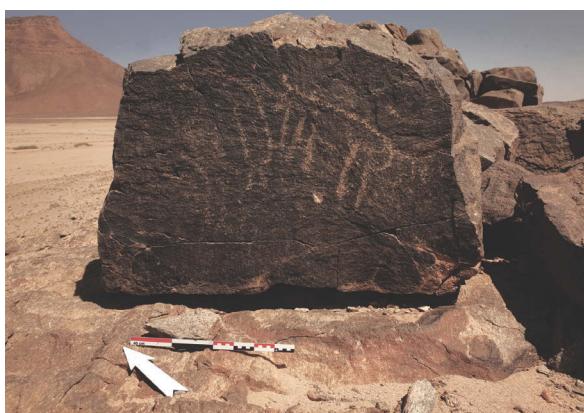


Fig. 12: Cattle image from site 3-G-18 (photo: J. Budka).

by four people.⁴¹ The chariot would be the only such example from Nubia and Vila mentions New Kingdom rock pictures with this motif in the Nile Valley as parallels. However, Vila's reconstruction could not be firmly verified – as shown in Fig. 10, the current state of the boulder shows the human figure on the left, one circular

mark which might be a wheel and the backs of two animals moving to the right. What I find unlikely about the interpretation of the draught animals as horses is their shape, especially the lack of a clearly defined neck. The straight back and head are more reminiscent of depictions of cattle. Even if the depiction of the chariot in 3-P-9 must remain unclear for the time being,⁴² it seems worth mentioning that, if cattle rather than horses are indeed depicted, it would represent a highly interesting parallel to the famous ox-drawn chariot in Theban Tomb 40. There, a pair of dehorned/polled cattle are shown pulling a chariot transporting an Egyptian-style chariot driver and a Nubian princess.⁴³ It is possible that panel 3-P-9D also shows dehorned cattle – which led Vila *et al.* to interpret them as horses, despite the unusual shape of the animals' necks and backs. Despite all the unanswered questions, 3-P-9 demonstrates the rich potential of rock art in the region.

Mograkka

The rock art sites on the east bank of the district of Mograkka are predominantly Medieval,⁴⁴ while the sites on the west bank are clearly multi-period. Of particular note is 3-K-2 which has approximately 200 rock drawings on the schist and granite outcrops as well as along a wadi, 125–800m from the present-day Nile.⁴⁵ Vila noted traces of houses and early Nubian sherds nearby. The dimensions of the carvings vary

⁴¹ Vila 1976b, figs. 49.1 and 2

⁴² New photos from a different day time would be needed; the post-processing of the photos from March 2023, including the analysis with the plugin DStretch, did not give convincing results, most likely due to the direct sunlight on the boulder in question.

⁴³ Davies and Gardiner 1926, pl. 28; Burmeister 2013; Pemler 2018, 36–37, pls. 4–5

⁴⁴ Site 3-L-24 (see Fig. 1) is clearly of multi-period date and might also include Bronze Age bovine images; since this remains for now tentative, the site is not discussed in the following.

⁴⁵ Vila 1976b, 29–35



Fig. 13: Map showing the small distance between 3-G-18 and Kerma cemetery 3-G-16 to the north of the site. Map: C. Geiger, © DiverseNile project. Inset: Vila 1976a.

from 10 to 55cm and six main clusters of rock art were documented by Vila, comprising early motifs such as hippopotami, elephants, giraffes, as well as ostriches, felines, bovids, dogs and anthropomorphs.

The bovine images on the site vary regarding their shape, size, technique and horn shape; they include a rare depiction of a zebu-cattle.⁴⁶ They appear both isolated and in groups. One large boulder, not mentioned by Vila, shows a pastoral scene, similar to the panel from 3-P-5 (Fig. 11). Here, however, the birds are clearly identifiable as ostriches and more human figures are depicted. Differences in the patina suggest a multi-period date for this boulder. Similar scenes, including ostriches, are known from Lower Nubia to the north.⁴⁷

Ferka

The rock art sites in the district of Ferka on the west bank seem to be Medieval, comprising predominantly camels and crosses, but also some bovine images.

On the east bank, site 3-G-18 is noteworthy and seems to include Bronze Age engravings.

The carvings are located on isolated blocks on the upper part of a rocky barrier 150m in length, orientated east-west, in the middle of the Wadi Sibée, 450m from the Nile (see also below, Fig. 13).⁴⁸

Twenty-some rock carvings with different subjects were documented by Vila and his team and the current project in 2020, the largest of which is 25cm. Cattle is the dominating motif, and these images most likely are from different periods, most being simple outlines and short horned cattle (Fig. 12).

CONTEXTUALISING THE MUAFS CASE STUDIES

The rock art sites with presumed Kerma period cattle images in the district of Kosha are all situated in the neighbourhood of other sites attributable to the Kerma horizon. For 3-P-5 this is in particular the cemetery 3-P-7.⁴⁹ This cemetery, already noted by the Oxford Expedition to Ferka,⁵⁰ is in Kosha's

46 Vila 1976b, 34, fig. 9.2

47 Otto and Buschendorf-Otto 1993, fig. 55

48 Vila 1876a, 37, fig. 14

49 Vila 1976b, 89

50 Kirwan 1939, 27

alluvial plain and at the foot of the hills to the east, 500m from the present-day Nile. The grave types and especially the surface ceramics date the site to the Classic Kerma period. Rock art site 3-P-9 is on the hill above 3-P-7, but even closer to site 3-P-8 which was identified as gold working site, probably already in use during the Middle Kerma period.⁵¹

A similar situation can be seen for rock art site, 3-G-18, in the district of Ferka. 3-G-18 is just above Kerma cemetery 3-G-16 (Fig. 13) and another cemetery, 3-G-19, is close by on the left bank of the Wadi Sibée. Both, 3-G-16 and 3-G-19, are presumably of Classic Kerma date based on ceramics on the surface. It is likely to assume that the Wadi Sibée with its wide plain was not only an important traffic route, but also a perfect place for performing funerary rites.⁵²

In the district of Mograkka, the situation is a bit different. The nearest sites to 3-K-2, 3-K-5 and 3-K-7, date to the Post-Meroitic and Medieval period respectively. However, 3-K-2 seems to fit into the category of sites mentioned above, for which the concept of path and trail is more crucial than that of place. 3-K-2 is located on the southern edge of the outcrops of Gebel Kitfoggo – it is possible that the site served as a starting or end point for pastoralists and their herds travelling north, skirting the rocky landscape along the Nile, which was not suitable for grazing. There are several Kerma sites at Gebel Kitfoggo (Ferka West) and north of it, in particular cemeteries. The fact that the near-by rock art at Ferka West dates to late periods may support that 3-G-21 was probably located on an island during the Bronze Age⁵³ – making the site of little interest for pastoralists.

DISCUSSION: THE KERMA CULTURE, CATTLE AND ROCK ART

“We are still far from grasping the meaning and significance of ancient Nubian rock art, but with gradual attempts at incorporating it into narratives about the social realms of past societies — along with a better con-textualization of petroglyphs and more in-depth comparative studies — we can take another step in our comprehension of rock art.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ See Budka 2024a, 86

⁵² Note also the monumental tumuli of Post-Meroitic times, site 3-G-1, which are located south of 3-G-19. See Kirwan 1939

⁵³ For the considerable changes in the riverscape of the region see Budka et al. 2023 with references

⁵⁴ Polkowski 2021, 88

As stressed above, there is indirect evidence in the MUAFS concession through associated Kerma sites that a large proportion of the cattle images from the rock art sites discussed here date to the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE. Although we still know little about the internal structure of the Kerma state, Emberling introduced the term ‘pastoral state’ for the kingdom of Kerma.⁵⁵ Cattle are a key aspect of the urban civilisation that developed in the city of Kerma⁵⁶ and we have material evidence to suggest that herd animals were considered as “a source of wealth and symbolic capital.”⁵⁷

Furthermore, the ritual use of cattle in burial practices in ancient Sudan reached a new level during the Middle Kerma period (2000-1750 BCE). In particular in the practice of bucronia, where the number of skulls increased greatly compared to earlier periods and up to 5000 skulls were placed around elite tombs.⁵⁸ Chaix has interpreted the placement of bucronia in the southern part of the Kerma tumuli as highly significant arrangements of ‘symbolic herds’ that were intended to accompany the deceased.⁵⁹ It was proposed that these bucronia were sent as a gift to the deceased from various herds spread throughout the area,⁶⁰ maybe as “levies from subordinate chiefs of pastoral groups.”⁶¹ This could reflect complex social hierarchies and explain why this burial practice is primarily known in the large centres of the Kerma empire, namely in Kerma itself and at Sai.⁶² In cemeteries located in peripheral zones of the Kerma kingdom, which are likely the burial grounds of marginal communities, bucronia are rare. This is the case for the Kerma cemeteries mentioned here in relation to rock art sites, 3-G-16, 3-G-19 and 3-P-7 as well as for their closest parallels, the cemeteries of Ukma and Akasha in the Batn El-Haggar.⁶³

While the practice of bucronia, therefore, helps distinguish Kerman ‘centres’ from ‘peripheries’ to some extent, rock art seems to be more uniform across different regions. This includes marginal areas, such as the Batn El-Haggar, where similar patterns are found across different parts of Nubia. However, a close look at the rock art in the Attab to Ferka region provide a deeper understanding of these types of archaeological sites and how they may

⁵⁵ Emberling 2014

⁵⁶ Chaix 2017

⁵⁷ Walsh 2022

⁵⁸ Dubosson and Honegger 2023, 218

⁵⁹ Chaix 1988. See most recently Dubosson and Honegger 2023, 218

⁶⁰ Emberling 2014, 134

⁶¹ Hafsaas-Tsakos 2009, 66

⁶² Dubosson 2021

⁶³ See Budka 2022 with references



reflect past social practices. The best parallels for the cattle images come, apart from the neighbouring site 3-G-4 in the Dal cataract, from the Third Cataract and the Fourth Cataract, especially for details such as the tails and the shapes of bodies and horns.

In general, cultural diversity in the Middle Nile is identifiable during the Middle and Classic Kerma age through architecture, site location, burial types and grave goods.⁶⁴ The Fourth Cataract is a particular good case study for regional variations of what we think of as Kerma culture.⁶⁵ In the MUAFS concession, the excavation of cemetery GiE 003 proved to be exceptionally interesting in this respect. Based on initial findings, especially the ceramics but also other material culture as well as burial practices, we can strongly suggest that people associated with the Pan-Grave horizon were part of the social structure of the Attab to Ferka region between c. 1800-1700 BCE.⁶⁶ Prior to discoveries from GiE 003, Pan-Grave style material in the Nile Valley south of the Second Cataract was only known from the Fourth Cataract.⁶⁷ Importantly, there, like at GiE 003, the Pan-Grave cultural markers appeared intermingled with those of the Kerma tradition.

I would argue that the rock art in the MUAFS concession reflects similar patterns as cemetery GiE 003: various groups of people were meeting in the region. Some of them may have come from the south and especially from the east. One of the common cultural markers was clearly the importance of cattle; however, and here a detailed comparison is meaningful, there were regional preferences, local strategies and individual choices.

To summarise, more and closer parallels for MUAFS rock art can be found in the Third and Fourth Cataracts than in Lower Nubia north of the Dal Cataract. Given the very well documented and published state of rock art from Lower Nubia, it is unlikely that this is the result of limited or biased sources. Rather, it can be argued that rock art reflects social practices and that the MUAFS region and the Dal Cataract is indeed a borderscape between Lower and Upper Nubia, with a strong affinity to the Kerma culture, but also to the nomads of the Eastern Desert. As such, the regional diversity of Bronze Age rock art may reflect the ‘pastoral state’ of the Kerma empire.

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⁶⁴ See, e.g. Raue 2019; Budka 2022 with references; Budka 2024b

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Walsh 2022

⁶⁶ Cf. de Souza 2022, 189

⁶⁷ See de Souza 2019, 82-89

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel kontextualisiert Felskunst aus der Bronzezeit südlich des Dal-Katarakes zwischen Attab und Ferka mit einem Fokus auf Rinderdarstellungen. Fallbeispiele aus Ferka, Mograkka und Kosha werden vorgestellt. Die vorläufige Analyse hat innerhalb des ERC DiverseNile Projekts im Rahmen des MUAFS Projekts stattgefunden. Parallelen, v.a. aus dem Gebiet des Dritten und Vierten Kataraktes, aber auch dem Batn el-Haggar werden genannt. Insgesamt erscheint das Gebiet von Attab bis Ferka hinsichtlich der Felskunst kulturell näher an diesen südlichen Gebieten als an Unternubien, was durchaus zu anderen Befunden in Bereich von Friedhöfen passt und vermutlich soziale Praktiken widerspiegelt. Es wird diskutiert, inwieweit die Rinderdarstellungen als Zeugnis von pastoraler oder agropastoraler Lebensweise gewertet werden können.



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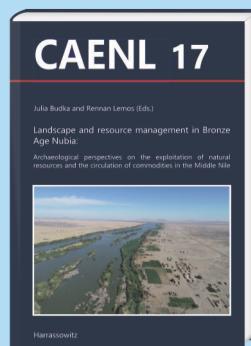
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