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PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD: TWO VOTIVE OFFERINGS OF FEET AT TEMPLE T AT KAWA

INTRODUCTION

During the Oxford excavations at Kawa in the 1930's, a number of foot-shaped votive offerings were discovered in Taharqa's Temple T.¹ For example, two sets² of these sandstone feet (designated 0489³ and 0490⁴ by Macadam)⁵ were discovered in front of the northernmost of a pair of granite ram statues placed on either side of the entrance to the Hypostyle Hall.⁶ Macadam indicates that the excavators

immediately interpreted these feet as votive offerings.⁷ The positioning of the feet as indicated in the photograph taken by the Oxford excavators would seem to suggest that the feet were found at the level of the "original court floor."⁸ Thus, they had probably been placed there during the time in which the temple had been in use: approximately the late Napatan to early Meroitic period.⁹ This paper addresses two of these votive feet¹⁰ found at Kawa,¹¹ now held at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.¹²

1 Macadam (1955a), 71 and 139. In addition to these discussed by Macadam, there are a number of very small foot votive offerings held in, among others, the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford that I was unable to examine in person, but that have been alluded to in the Kawa excavation notes. I intend to follow up on these items and publish further papers regarding them in the future. I do not currently know the exact number of these items, since Macadam only discusses the four large feet, and none of the smaller feet. Once I am able to do more comprehensive research at the Griffith Institute, with access to the full excavation reports, I will be able to provide a more accurate estimate of the number of feet found at Kawa.

2 A wonderful example of a carved stone base with both the right and left feet carved in raised relief into it, is currently held at the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum (Khartoum accession number: 2691). This votive item's dimensions are 450 mm wide and approximately 330 mm high. My sincerest thanks go to Dr. Shadia Abdu at the Khartoum Museum for assisting me in sending me the dimensions and a photograph of this item. In his reference to "sets" of votive feet, Macadam implied that there may not only have been right feet, but that the feet may have been deposited in pairs of one right foot and one left foot. However, the two items that I have examined at the Ashmolean museum are only right feet. It is unclear at this point what may have happened to their erstwhile left compatriots.

3 This item is now held at the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum (accession number: Khartoum 2691). See Macadam (1955a), 139. Presumably this is the left foot of the pair.

4 This item was given to the Pitt-Rivers museum in Oxford and allocated the Accession number Pitt-Rivers B IV 168. Macadam (1955a), 139. There would appear to be some confusion about whether this foot was the same item as the one recorded as having been unearthed near the Western Kiosk at Kawa (see below). However, *ibid.*, note 1, seems confident that these were two separate artefacts.

5 Macadam (1955a), 71.

6 *Ibid.*

Votive Foot 1: Ashmolean Museum Accession Number AN 1932.868 (Fig. 1)¹³

- Weight: four stone/25 kilograms¹⁴
- Height: approximately 250 mm
- Length: 510 mm

7 *Ibid.* Macadam (1955b), plate L (b) indicates the position of these votive feet in front of the ram. This photograph is not especially clear, but seems to have been the only one taken of these votive items at the time of their excavation.

8 Török (2002), 266, note 18, and Macadam (1955b), plate L (b).

9 See Macadam (1955a), 71, and *idem* (1955b), plate L (b). Török reached a similar conclusion, suggesting approximately the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty or an "early Napatan date". Török (2002), 266, note 18. Macadam's opinion in Macadam (1955a), 56 was that they should be dated to the Meroitic Period. Another votive foot carved from sandstone and designated 0755 by the excavators, was found outside the western door of the Western Kiosk at Kawa. Macadam states that it was located "a considerable distance above the floor-level and about 1.3 m. below the surface of the surrounding sand..." *Ibid.* Macadam definitively dated this foot to the Meroitic Period. *Ibid.*

10 Ashmolean Museum Accession numbers: AN 1932.868 and AN 1936.279.

11 In 1932 and 1936, respectively.

12 I examined both of the votive feet that I discuss here in person at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, on 28/04/2016. Neither item is currently on display. My thanks to the staff at The Griffith Institute and the Ashmolean Museum Antiquities Department for their kind assistance with my research.

13 Hereafter referred to as AN 1932.868.

14 My sincere thanks for the exact weight of this item goes to Claire Burton, Museum Assistant, Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 1: Ashmolean Museum, Accession Number AN 1932.868. Photo: The Ashmolean Museum Photographic Studio.

- Width: 190 mm
- Right foot (i.e., not left)
- Painted Sandstone
- Dated by Griffiths and Macadam to Meroitic Period
- Located in Temple T, built by Taharqa at Kawa (location: First court (E14), in front of ram (0497))
- Oxford Excavations in Nubia, 1932

This would appear to be the foot that Macadam indicated as being located at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford (0490/ Pitt-Rivers B IV 168), as it has almost identical dimensions to those Macadam provided for the Pitt-Rivers foot.¹⁵ This suggests that the item that Macadam discussed as being in Khartoum should be the left partner of this one.¹⁶ It seems to have been broken in half vertically a long time ago¹⁷ and “repaired” by being glued together.

The foot is represented as standing on a plinth or platform of some kind.¹⁸ It does not appear to be a broken part of a larger statue, but seems to be a purposefully made, stand-alone representation of a foot. The foot itself is centred onto the ‘platform’.

It is not part of a striding statue, for example, since this would mean that the foot would be off to one side of the ‘platform’. The underside of the ‘platform’ is rough and unfinished. Probably, the foot was intended to lie flat on the ground, as it was when discovered, and the underneath was not meant to be seen. The foot itself and the ‘platform’ on which it is carved are well finished. The tooling seems very fine. The edges on the foot, especially around the toes, are nicely rounded, and the spaces between the toes are clearly made and defined. The toenails are slight indentations, not defined deeply. The foot is worn everywhere except on the toes. The heel and middle section of the foot is the most worn area; the toes are barely touched. There is a narrow, slightly raised area between the foot itself and the ‘platform’ on which it stands. There seem to be remnants of a yellowish colour on the outside of the stone ‘platform’. The toes appear have remnants of blackish colouring on them.

Votive Foot 2: Ashmolean Museum Accession Number AN 1936.279 (Fig. 2)¹⁹

- Weight: approximately 200 grams
- Height: 48 mm
- Length: 98 mm

¹⁵ Macadam (1955a), 139.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Perhaps broken in antiquity and glued together by modern excavators?

¹⁸ Refer to Figure 1 to view the characteristics discussed below.

¹⁹ Hereafter referred to as AN 1936.279.



Fig. 2: Ashmolean Museum, Accession Number AN 1936.279. Photo: The Ashmolean Museum Photographic Studio.

- Width: 21 mm wide
- Material: simply given as “stone” on object card. Seems to be sandstone, similar to AN 1932.868
- Right foot (i.e., not left)
- This item does not seem to be recorded by Macadam, as its dimensions do not match any of the three votive feet that Macadam addressed²⁰
- Kirwan dated this to the Meroitic period
- Location: Kawa, Site II, Block 3, room 5
- Oxford Excavations in Nubia, 1936

This votive foot is much smaller in all dimensions than AN 1932.868.²¹ It is also far simpler in design, being rounded and smooth. These two feet are very different items, in size, workmanship, et cetera. This foot is also represented as a free-standing foot, clearly not part of a broken statue. This foot is less worn and more complete than the larger, previous item, and it is easier to see that there never was any kind of ankle, or any place where it could have ever have been attached to a larger statue or image. It was obviously made as a stand-alone, purpose made foot. The toes are rounded, neatly rendered, but simply defined. The separations between the toes are not simply indicated by indentations, but are distinct and

purposeful separating spaces. There does not appear to be any colour residue on this votive item.

DISCUSSION

The heel and middle sections of AN 1932.868 are most worn down; the toes are barely touched. It is unclear whether this is as a result of natural wearing or sand blasting by sandstorms in the Kawa region over the centuries. However, if the wear was due to weathering, it seems strange that the wear was not consistent all over the surface of the foot. Alternatively, this specific type of wear on this item that avoids the toes may be as a result of being touched by pilgrims to the temple at Kawa in antiquity.²² Seeing as it is larger than other votive feet found here, it is possible that there may have been a local belief that it was good luck to rub this foot as an act of devotion by people who had journeyed to the temple at Kawa to pray, but who were too poor to leave their own votive item. Perhaps if the foot was rubbed for luck by pilgrims, it was the mid-to rear section of the foot

²⁰ Macadam (1955a), 139.

²¹ Refer to Figure 2 to view the physical aspects discussed below.

²² Pilgrims touching holy items at pilgrimage sites is an ancient practice still observed today. For discussions regarding this practice, see among many others Dent (2014), especially 3-8; Bailey (2014), *passim*, and Frankfurter (1998), (ed.), *passim*.



that was of most importance, or, maybe touching the toes was considered taboo.

As noted above, there seems to be a narrow, slightly raised area between the foot itself and the ‘platform’ on which it stands.²³ This might be evidence of the remains of a carved sandal that the foot would have worn – perhaps a Meroitic-type sandal – that has worn away over time.²⁴ There are remnants of a yellowish colour on the outside of the stone ‘platform’. Although this is probably simply the colour that natural weathering has left on the stone surface, considering the large size and fine workmanship on this item, it is tempting to suggest that the ‘platform’ may originally have been painted yellow. Possibly this colouring was intended to resemble gold. In close examination, the toes appear to have remnants of blackish colouring on them. Perhaps the foot was originally painted completely black and the ‘platform’ painted to resemble gold, perhaps imitating the colour palettes encountered in statues and statuettes of the Kushite rulers. This may have been in order to increase the prestige of the item, and hence, the prestige of its donor.²⁵ Alternatively, if this item was painted to resemble a Meroitic ruler, this may indicate that it was a royal personage who donated the votive foot.²⁶

23 Just visible beneath the toes in Figure 1.

24 As is clear in the photograph send to me by Dr. Shadia Abdu, the votive feet in the Sudan national Museum (Khartoum accession number 2691) are rendered as wearing sandals. The sandal straps across the top of the foot and between the first and second toes are very clearly indicated.

25 There is no remaining inscription. This may seem unusual, as it is a large item with plenty of space to inscribe, and probably quite an important cult item. In Egypt, some votive items had formulaic texts or prayers inscribed or painted onto them that referenced the person who had “donated” them to the deity and reinforced the donor’s prayer. See Pinch and Waraksa (2009), 6. If my hypothesis that the votive foot was originally painted is correct, and if this may have been an offering by a ruler, perhaps this votive foot once had a painted text on it, possibly announcing the donor’s name. If this were a royal gift, an inscription or a ‘caption’ on the offering would make sense. It is, unfortunately, now impossible to tell if there ever was an inscription. However, being painted does not imply the presence of a text, and votive items can be presented with or without texts/donor texts.

26 If my hypothesis that the votive foot was originally painted is somewhat correct, and if this may have been an offering by a ruler, one might suggest that perhaps this votive foot once had a painted text on it, possibly announcing the donor’s name. If this were a royal gift, an inscription or a ‘caption’ on the offering would make sense. It is, unfortunately, now impossible to tell if there ever was an inscription. However, this seems unlikely.

AN 1936.279, as mentioned above, is far smaller and rougher in design than AN 1932.868. It does not exhibit evidence of having had a ‘platform’ or significant, elevating section to its original design, as did AN 1932.868. Any depth or elevation that is present in this item is same shape as the foot itself, and not rectangular. It appears simply to be a part of the modelling of the foot. It does not appear to retain any remnants of colour on it, and was therefore probably never painted. It does not appear to have had a sandal strap incised on its surface as AN 1932.868 may have had. There is no evidence of inscriptions on its surface either. There is no aperture or apparent method of hanging this foot up. It seems that it was not an amulet or a hanging decoration, but just a simple, foot-shaped votive offering.

VOTIVE ITEMS AND PIETY

The religious practice of “donating” votive items within a sacred space in an ancient Egyptian context is a topic that has been widely addressed by scholars of the ancient world, and therefore will not be discussed in detail here.²⁷ As a brief introduction to the matter here, suffice it to say that the ancient Egyptian practice of donating votive items at a temple is attested at every stage of its history, and was an integral part of the process of piety and prayer.²⁸ An individual would visit a temple, shrine, royal cemetery,²⁹ or sanctuary to pray to the “resident deity” and to make sacrifices.³⁰ This practice sometimes included the supplicant giving a small item as a token or gift either to appease the deity or to ensure the fulfilment of the prayer.³¹ Certain items or figures were favoured over others, and are found at most Egyptian sites where votive items have been found.³² Other objects appear to be specific to certain sites and therefore could have a particular, local significance.³³ It would appear that in most cases, the votive items did not resemble or bear any physical similarity to the deity in whose compound the item was found, nor any of its attrib-

27 For a discussion regarding votive items in general in the ancient Egyptian context, see among others Jaquet-Gordon (2003), *passim*; Keller (1995); Morgan (2004); Pinch (1993); Pinch and Waraksa (2009), and Wuttmann, Coulon, and Gombert (2007).

28 Pinch and Waraksa (2009), 2.

29 Especially during the Middle and New Kingdoms. *Ibid.*, 2-4.

30 *Ibid.*, 2.

31 *Ibid.*, 2.

32 *Ibid.* Such as baboons or child-figures. *Ibid.*

33 Such as the scorpion votives at Hierakonpolis and the so-called hedgehog plaques at Elephantine. See *ibid.*



utes, indicating that the votive instead represented a local custom or belief that was attributed to the deity's purview, rather than being directly associated with the divinity.³⁴ Alternatively, the item could also have been considered as a cult object, as part of the processes of enacting the supplication to the deity. Considering that so many of the religious practices and traditions of the ancient Egyptians were shared by the ancient Nubians, it seems reasonable to assert that the practice of depositing votive items and the above-mentioned attributions by the faithful regarding these votive offerings could be similar within the Napatan/Meroitic/Nubian context in Nubia itself. In later periods, specialised votive practices arose in certain areas, including the Third Intermediate (Libyan) Period and Graeco-Roman period practice attested at the temple of Khonsu at Karnak in Egypt in particular,³⁵ and during the Meroitic period in Nubia³⁶ at the sites of Tabo³⁷ and at Qasr Ibrim, among others.³⁸ This practice is of particular relevance to this work. At these sites, so-called "votive footprints"³⁹ were carved into the roof blocks and the pavements of temples, "presumably to keep the donor perpetually standing in the presence of the deity..."⁴⁰ The majority of these footprints appear to have been carved by the priests of the temple itself – at least at Karnak.

FEET AS CULT OBJECTS?

First, the significance of feet as votive items should be examined. Votive offerings in the shape of one eye or two eyes have been suggested to be intended for "watching over people,"⁴¹ and ear-shaped votives (including ear stelae) are considered to be intended for "hearing prayers."⁴² However, one wonders

what purpose feet might have, if scrutinised in a similar fashion.⁴³

The definitive work on artistic representations of feet and foot outlines as religious objects in the ancient Egyptian context is arguably that of Castiglione.⁴⁴ The practice of engraving "footprints" into the rocks within the ancient Egyptian geographic region seems to be accepted as a Ptolemaic period tradition that was associated with widespread ancient beliefs.⁴⁵ Moreover, it seems that the practice of engraving footprints onto rocks with religious intent was a tradition that may have begun relatively late in Egyptian history,⁴⁶ but was then observed for hundreds of years, throughout antiquity and beyond.⁴⁷ This was a very common practice during the Christian period.⁴⁸ The most noteworthy (and numerous) occurrences of footprint graffiti in Egypt are located at the temple of Khonsu at Karnak.⁴⁹ These significant foot graffiti at Karnak are chiefly on the roof blocks and on the pavement.⁵⁰ This type of graffiti as found at Karnak is comprised "ordinarily of a short text including the names and titles of the persons who wrote them accompanied by the outlines of a pair of feet..."⁵¹ Other graffiti of a very similar type can apparently be found in a variety of sites throughout Egypt.⁵² Interestingly, at the Isis temple at Philae in particular, the style of the rendering of the foot graffiti was not only limited to etchings of footprints or the outline of the under-

34 Pinch and Waraksa (2009), 2.

35 Pinch and Waraksa (2009), 4. See also Jacquet-Gordon (2003), *passim*. Other sites in Egypt where this practice is attested include Abydos, Deir el Bahari, Medinet Habu, and Dendera. See Castiglione (1970), 102-117.

36 Corresponding to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods in Egypt.

37 Jacquet-Gordon, Bonnet, and Jacquet (1969), *passim*.

38 See especially Rose (1996), 102-117, and *idem* (2007), 116-119. See also Castiglione (1970), 117-118. These inscribed footprints have been dated to the Meroitic Period in Nubia, perhaps around the time of the Roman occupation. *Ibid.*, 117-118. Yet another engraved footprint attributed to the Meroitic Period is extant at Faras. *Ibid.*, 118.

39 Also the foot outlines found as rock graffiti. See, for example, Verner (1973), especially 13-14.

40 Pinch and Waraksa (2009), 4.

41 *Ibid.*, 5.

42 *Ibid.*, 5.

43 Additionally, this seems strange to me since in our modern world, many cultures including those in Islamic and Asian regions often consider feet as taboo body parts.

44 Castiglione (1970) is enhanced by the works on graffiti of foot outlines as presented in Jacquet-Gordon, Bonnet, and Jacquet (1969); Jacquet-Gordon (1979), and Jacquet-Gordon (2003). See also, among others, Delange and Jaritz (2013) and Verner (1973) for further information.

45 Castiglione (1970), 95-96. Other engraved footprints of similar types have been found in ancient Palestinian, Arabian, and Greek territories. See *ibid.*, especially 97-99.

46 I. e. from circa the Third Intermediate and Ptolemaic periods in Egypt.

47 Castiglione (1970), 95-97.

48 *Ibid.*

49 See Jacquet-Gordon (2003), *passim*, and Jacquet-Gordon (1979). Instead of being three-dimensional, purpose made feet as the examples from Kawa are, though, these are outlines, presumably of sandaled feet (Jacquet-Gordon (1979), plate XXVIII, Graffito number 10), and of bare feet with the toes individually and clearly demarcated (Jacquet-Gordon (1979), plate XXVIII, Graffito number 11, and Plate XXIX, B: Graffito number 19). These primarily seem to be the undersides of feet, though, as no toenails are indicated.

50 Jacquet-Gordon (2003), *passim*.

51 *Ibid.*, 3.

52 *Ibid.*, 3.



side of a naked foot.⁵³ These depictions showed the human foot from above, with the toes and toenails represented clearly.

These outlines of feet have sometimes been considered by modern scholars to be mementos carved by travellers visiting the site.⁵⁴ However, there is no definitive evidence of this, and the contexts of the majority of foot graffiti would appear to suggest a religious connotation rather than one that implies walking or pilgrimage.⁵⁵ The graffiti of feet at Karnak, furthermore, are considered as part of the religious framework of Karnak Temple by Jacquet-Gordon.⁵⁶ The graffiti at the temple of Khonsu at Karnak were inscribed by generations of temple personnel.⁵⁷ Within a Nubian context, a number of inscribed footprints have been found at the site of Dibger that Castiglione dated as contemporary to the Byzantine period.⁵⁸ The religious significance of these engraved footprints in both Egypt and Nubia is magnified by the fact that these images were executed specifically within the confines of sanctuaries and other sacred spaces.⁵⁹

THE KAWA FEET: THE SAME, ONLY DIFFERENT?

While there are clearly an abundance of footprint engravings, apart from the votive feet found at Kawa, there do not appear to be any other three-dimensional foot votive items extant in either Egypt or Nubia. We seem to be dealing with an completely different cultic practice being enacted at Kawa. Additionally, considering that the three-dimensional votive feet thus far attested⁶⁰ all appear to be carved from local Kawa sandstone, it seems that these items would have been local products, made and utilised within the Kawa region.⁶¹

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT OF THE VOTIVE FEET AT KAWA

As noted above, votive feet were discovered in front of one of the statues of couchant rams protecting Taharqa,⁶² on either side of the entrance to the Hypostyle Hall of Temple T.⁶³ The entrance to the Hypostyle Hall is essentially a doorway and as such, is a liminal space. Spatial liminality is most relevant here. This theory relates to physical, in-between spaces, for example architectural borders such as thresholds or doorways.⁶⁴ It is possibly most significant here, since temples are ritual zones by nature.⁶⁵

The physical transition from the outside, public areas of a temple (the forecourt, in the case of Temple T at Kawa) to the private, inner sanctum of the Hypostyle Hall through the liminal zone of the doorway also allows anyone stepping over that border to transition from one state into another.⁶⁶ This area represents the transitional space between the holy and the unholy.⁶⁷ This transforms the identity of the individual who moves through the liminal zone. If they step across this border area legitimately, they can become holy by association. Furthermore, kings appear to have held the power to ‘rescue’ others from the dangers inherent in these in-between spaces, either by guiding them through the space or by overcoming any danger through their prowess.⁶⁸ Moreover, criosphinxes of Amun (and by extension, images of Amun as a ram) are known to be associated with doorways.⁶⁹ Criosphinxes were an impor-

62 Also noted in Török (2002), 266.

63 Macadam (1955b), plate L (b), and idem (1955a), 71.

64 Thomassen (2014), 91, and Griffin (2015), *passim*, especially 1115. Among others, too, such as borders between countries. It is the concept of the doorway as a liminal space that is important here. This concept is a complex one that I cannot address fully here. I will make some small notes and generalisations to situate this argument, but further reading is recommended. The bibliographic references at the end of this article would be good places to start.

65 The study of liminality in an ancient Egyptian context has recently become widespread. See, among others, the discussions in Griffin (2015), and Hays (2013). I argue that we can apply these considerations to Kushite evidence, given the similarities of beliefs in the Egyptian and Kushite systems.

66 Thomassen (2014), *passim*, especially 91, and Griffin (2015), *passim*.

67 Thomassen (2014), 91, and Griffin (2015), *passim*, especially 1115.

68 Thomassen (2014), 103-104.

69 See, for example, Guglielmi (1994), *passim*, and Török (2002), 266. The full importance of criosphinxes is in connection to processional routes or streets, not only in fixed points such as doorways. However, for the purposes of this paper, their association with doorways (à la Guglielmi

53 Castiglione (1970), 113-117.

54 Jacquet-Gordon (2003), 3.

55 As also argued by Castiglione (1970), 120.

56 Jacquet-Gordon (2003), 3.

57 Ibid, 3-5.

58 Castiglione (1970), 96-97, note 16.

59 Ibid, 102-119, mentioned specifically on 102. Other Egyptian sacred spaces where graffiti footprints occur include within Horemheb’s tomb at Saqqara (these I have seen in person) and in certain sixth Dynasty tombs. This would appear to fit with the practices surrounding votive items in Egypt, as discussed above. Ibid.

60 By Macadam.

61 This also hints at the types and skill-levels of the craft-people employed at the temple complex at Kawa during this period.



tant part of both the ancient Egyptian and Kushite royal iconographic programmes for millennia.⁷⁰ The criosphinx (whether in two-dimensional relief or in three-dimensional statuary) was believed to protect the king.⁷¹ The criosphinx/ram also embodied the relationship between the king and Amun,⁷² as a significant component of royal programmes of ideology and propaganda.⁷³ For example, Amun of Kawa was often represented as a couchant criosphinx, or ram, in Tutankhamun's Nubian reliefs, especially at Kawa.⁷⁴ In light of this, and considering their findspot, the votive feet may have been incorporated into these beliefs regarding Amun, doorways, and liminal spaces.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE VOTIVE FEET AT KAWA:
A PETITIONING RULER OR A CULT OF TAHARQA?

Considering all of the above-mentioned factors, some final hypotheses may be posited here. First, since the feet were found in the presence of a ram at Kawa, these could simply indicate the expression of the donor's wish to be standing in the presence of Amun in perpetuity.⁷⁵ On the other hand, if AN 1932.868 was painted gold, and originally had sported a sandal strap,⁷⁶ perhaps it did represent a royal Meroitic foot. This could then imply that it was a Meroitic ruler who had deposited this votive item. Perhaps this suggests some intricacies of royal cultic practice specific to Temple T at Kawa. If it were a ruler who presented the larger than life-sized foot AN 1932.868⁷⁷ as a votive offering, could this function as a symbol of Amun's becoming active and "moving" on behalf of the royal supplicant? This may be a tradition of giving the deity feet by which means he might become effective on the ruler's behalf.

Conversely, since the feet were discovered in front of the cult image of Taharqa standing in the protec-

tion of Amun-Rē in his incarnation of a ram,⁷⁸ this might be especially relevant if there was a liminal association of doorways as places of metaphysical instability, with the king and with Amun-Rē as a ram or a criosphinx. If this were accurate, the late Napatan/early Meroitic period donations of votive feet presented before Taharqa being protected by Amun-Rē might indicate an aspect of the enactment of his royal cult, even centuries after his death.⁷⁹ This might support the original excavators' suggested dates for these items as late Napatan/early Meroitic. Donations of large votive feet such as AN 1932.868 and Khartoum 2691 could represent a hitherto unknown part of a kingship cult focussed on Kawa as both the important seat of Amun-Rē and as the seat of Taharqa's power.⁸⁰ It is possible that the votive feet at Kawa are thus cultic objects donated by Kushite kings subsequent to Taharqa,⁸¹ potentially including Amannote-erike, Harsiotef, Nastasen, and even later Meroitic rulers. These rulers may have placed these votive feet in this sacred space in supplication to Amun-Rē, petitioning him to give to them as great a reign as Taharqa's, and by extension, Alara's, had been.⁸²

Alternatively, one could theorise that, by the ruler's placement of such a large and heavy foot votive flat on the ground, it could represent in a very literal, concrete fashion the physical manifestation of having all the lands (as embodied by the sacred and politically important site of Kawa) permanently located beneath that ruler's feet. By establishing physical feet in the presence of the state god, the ruler literally situated the sacred space below the votive offerings beneath their⁸³ feet in the overarching metaphorical

78 Török (2002), 266.

79 Considering the craftsmanship and accompanying cost of these items, it seems appropriate that they could have been donated by a ruler. Alternatively, the donor could have been a wealthy high official, who was not only depositing a votive item as a tribute to Amun-Re of Kawa, but if the votive was styled on a sandaled, royal foot, this could have been an attempt to curry favour with the ruler at the time. However, this seems less likely than the suggestions made above.

80 The religio-political and possibly personal importance of Kawa to Taharqa and his family line, as well as to successive kings after Taharqa's reign, is discussed in Pope (2014), *passim*.

81 Among many others, Pope (2014), *passim*; Jansen-Winkel (2003), *passim*, and Török (1997), *passim*, especially 33.

82 Alara being their ultimate and apocryphal ancestor. Among many others, Török (1997), 61, 88-90, 112, 123-126, 144, 234-235, and 255-260, *passim*. See also Vinogradov (2012), 156.

83 I hesitate to use his/her pronouns, since we are of course unsure of the gender of the donor.

(1994), *passim*) is of concern.

70 Among others, Bell (1985), *passim* and Török (2002), 266.

71 Török (2002), 266-267, among others. Also represented by Taharqa's criosphinxes found at Kawa, for example, British Museum EA1779.

72 Among others, Bell (1985), 33.

73 Among others, Guglielmi (1994), *passim*, and Török (2002), 266-267.

74 Bell (1985), 31. On the doorway to the pronaos of Temple A at Kawa. Kawa II, Plates, plate IV.

75 Again, since their findspot was in front of a couchant ram protecting Taharqa. Török (2002), 266.

76 As I suggested, above.

77 The suggestions below could hold true for Khartoum 2691 as well, considering its equally large size and excellent workmanship.



and metaphysical sense. This idea would make sense if, as many votive items were, the feet were deposited during an important ceremony. We may especially consider the possibility that a newly crowned ruler may have deposited these items, perhaps as part of the Kawa-specific coronation ceremonies and the coronation journey, enacting their claim on the Kushite territories.

CONCLUSION

Since three-dimensional votive feet have, to date, only been found at Kawa, it seems that this votive practice had a particular importance in that area. This indicates that there may have been special cultic practices occurring here during the late Napatan and early Meroitic periods that had associated with them beliefs centred on feet, liminal spaces, and rams. Nevertheless, the difference in size and workmanship between AN 1932.868 and AN 1936.279 could indicate at least two different types of votive donors that worshipped at the site of Kawa. AN 1932.868's large size and upmarket crafting would suggest that its donor would have had to have been someone of considerable means, perhaps even a royal personage. AN 1936.279 could have been deposited by virtually anyone – anyone who had sufficient funds to purchase a small, rough and mass-produced votive item⁸⁴ similar to those found in so many temples in Egypt.⁸⁵ Whether or not all of these votive foot offerings found at Kawa (large and small alike) were connected to a cult of Amun-Rē or a cult of Taharqa as a king is unknown. However, what their presence does suggest is that that this area of the temple at Kawa would have been important to the cultic practices and the piety of a broad spectrum of people in the late Napatan and early Meroitic periods.⁸⁶

84 Human body parts as votive items had an extensive presence in the ancient Mediterranean, especially during the Roman period throughout the Mediterranean and North Africa. See the examinations, among many others, in Hughes (2017) and Kiernan (2009). The votive items from the Roman period correspond neatly with the Meroitic dating of the Kawa votive feet.

85 Pinch (1993), *passim*, for example.

86 Presuming, of course, that Macadam and Kirwan are correct in their dating of these votive feet.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In Taharqos Tempel T von Kawa wurden in den 1930ern während der oxfordener Ausgrabungen fußgestaltige Votivgaben gefunden. Diese sind nicht fußgestaltige Konturen wie diejenigen, die man aus dem Tempel des Chons in Karnak oder aus Qasr Ibrim und Tabo kennt, sondern gut ausgeformte dreidimensionale Objekte. Da bisher solche dreidimensionale Votivfüße nur aus Kawa bekannt sind, kann diese Praxis eine besondere Bedeutung in dieser Region gehabt haben. Dieser Artikel untersucht zwei fußgestaltige Votivgaben, die sich derzeit im Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (AN 1932.868 and AN 1936.279) befinden und stellt einige Hypothesen bezüglich ihres Kontextes und ihrer Funktion in Kawa vor.