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THE GEMATEN “MONUMENT OF ASPELTA”: A DESTROYED OBJECT REVISITED¹

1.

Among the most intriguing sources for the history of ancient Sudan are fragments of an anciently destroyed inscribed granite object, with a partly surviving cartouche of king Aspelta, which was found in Temple T of the Gematen sanctuary (at Kawa) during the Oxford University excavations, directed by Francis Ll. Griffith, in the season of 1930/31 (Macadam 1949, p. 89). Griffith himself did not have a chance to fully consider the rich material from these excavations, having only prepared some sections for the introductory part of the planned publication before his death in 1934. Subsequently his widow and colleague, Nora Griffith, invited Miles F. Lamington Macadam, a promising young Egyptologist from Oxford University, to complete the task.

Macadam, not having participated in Griffith's excavations, examined the finds and the field records carefully and critically, seeking to make up his own mind about the material now at his disposal, not all of which was in a state satisfactory for publication. Some questions he was able to clarify in the course of a new expedition to Kawa in the season of 1935/36 (Macadam 1955, pp. V-VI) when he collated the tracings of the temple inscriptions and reliefs left *in situ*, while the excavations themselves were directed by Laurence P. Kirwan. Some of the new finds made by this expedition later turned out to be of relevance to this study.

As the publication was in preparation, the set of fragments under discussion did not initially attract much attention from Macadam. Badly damaged, the fragments were not considered worth a detailed discussion among the fifteen important historical texts that had been recovered. Labeled “Kawa XLI”, the object from which the fragments derived was only briefly described by the author. Macadam, however, did prepare a (conventional) reconstruction of the text (Fig. 1) from the surviving thirteen small pieces, only six of which he was able to place with some certainty, positioning the other seven hesitantly (Macadam 1949, p. 89, entry [XLI], pl. 40). Assuming that the object was a destroyed *stela* of Aspelta, Macadam

seems never to have attempted to restore any text from the surviving bits of the inscription.

At a certain point Macadam concluded that the thickness of the inscribed granite slab (“at least 0.175 m”, as he remarks)² was somewhat excessive for a *stela* incised with rather small hieroglyphic signs and with rather short figures in the scene in the lunette, as can be seen from the one surviving on the fragment 7. Judging by the concise remark “Perhaps the back of a statue?”, he came to doubt whether the fragments of Kawa XLI were really parts of a *stela* and not pieces of an inscription from the back of a statue, the parallels of which can be seen on some statues from Gematen³ and elsewhere.⁴ This conclusion was most likely reached as a second-thought, for it was published in a brief footnote and not in the main text of the much delayed Volume I of *The Temples of Kawa*, which – though prepared by 1940 – appeared only in 1949.⁵

The same hesitations are seen in Volume II, published six years later. The object in question is

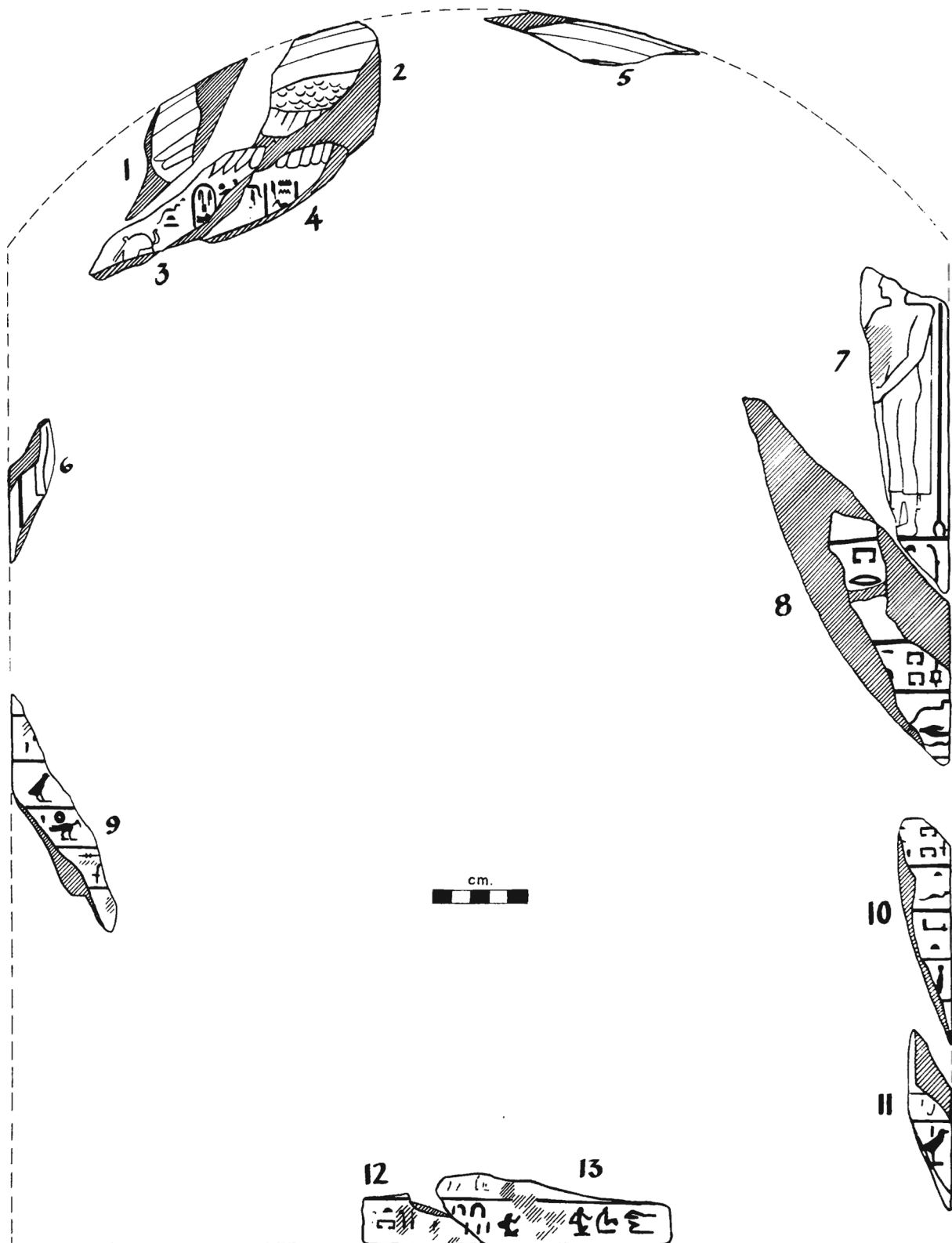
1 This study could never have appeared without the friendly help from Dr Liam McNamara, the Lisa and Bernard Selz Curator for Ancient Egypt and Sudan in the Antiquities Department at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, to whom I am particularly thankful for providing me with the photographs of the granite statue head (accession number AN1936.325), published below, with his permission, for the first time. As always, I am most grateful to Dr Timothy Kendall for stylistic emendations in my paper (at first as my report at the 14th International Conference for Nubian Studies, Paris, 10-15 September 2018, and later as the text of the present article), sometimes at the expense of his own work.

2 Macadam 1949, p. 89, note “a”; cf. Macadam 1955, p. 134 [0476]: “Greatest preserved T.<thickness> 0 17 <m>”. My own measurement of the relevant fragment (no. 8) was still less: 0.158 m.

3 Macadam 1955, p. 138, statues: nos. [0895] (“inscribed pilaster of square section at back”), [0956] (“funerary prayer in form of round-topped *stela* incised on back”); cf. p. 140, statuettes: nos. [0180], [0756].

4 Such are, for instance, all of the seven royal statues from the Doukki Gel cache, bearing inscription on the back pillar (Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, pp. 84-118).

5 Macadam 1949, pp. 89, note a; 132 (Post Scriptum, dated 1946).



No. XLI. Fragments of Stela (?) of Aspelta [0476]

Fig. 1: M.F.L.Macadam's tentative reconstruction of the text Kawa XLI (after M.F.L. Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, Vol. I, London, 1949, pl. 40).



referred to as “Inscribed frags. of grey granite stela (?) of Aspelta” (Macadam 1955, p. 134) in the Object-Register 1929-31, which repeated the label given in Volume I. However in the Post Scriptum Macadam seems to have returned to his earlier doubts (raised by the strange dimensions of the hypothetical stela) suggesting that the inscribed fragments found in Temple T in 1931 may have belonged to the smashed granite statue (whose destruction he dated at first to the reign of king Nastasen, C4th BCE),⁶ several pieces of which were discovered on Site II, south of Temple T, during the season of 1935/36 (Macadam 1955, pp. 217, 221, 224).

A brief description of this statue is given in the report by Kirwan, who directed these excavations: “Parts of almost life-size grey <...> statue. The largest piece was male head, badly defaced, wearing pair of ram’s horns, each curving downwards behind ear. Head had once been entirely gilded and traces of gilt adhered in places to surface. Another large frag. [ment] was forearm with hand missing, and another lower part of one leg. <...> These remains appeared to have been purposely destroyed.”⁷

Unlike Macadam, Kirwan draws a parallel between this damaged object from Kawa and the group of monuments intentionally injured or destroyed in the course of political clashes in Kush during the reign of Aspelta’s successor, Amtalqa, as postulated in a hypothesis set forth by George Reisner in 1920 on the basis of his analysis of the series of damaged stelae and statues of Aspelta and his predecessors which he found at Jebel Barkal.⁸

Because Kirwan himself says nothing about any connection between the broken statue and the fragments of the inscribed object of Aspelta, it may be inferred that the hypothesis about their cohesion, put forward in the Post Scriptum, was totally a result of

Macadam’s considerations in his capacity of the chief editor of *The Temples of Kawa*.

2.

Judging by his argumentation, Macadam’s rendering appeared under the strongest influence of the epoch-making series of articles by Serge Sauneron and Jean Yoyotte,⁹ arguing that the damaging of the royal stelae and statues in Kush may have been a result of the punitive expedition organised by the Egyptian pharaoh Psammetichus II in his 3rd regnal year (in the recent literature mostly dated to the year 593 BCE).¹⁰ Macadam seems to have very enthusiastically accepted this hypothesis as soon as the mentioned studies reached Oxford.

Taking the last chance to set to press an updated version of the text of his publication, Macadam very briefly formulated his view, suggesting in the Post Scriptum that the inscribed fragments of the object from Temple T, which he had earlier interpreted as “stela” Kawa XLI ([0476]), were probably to be associated with the smashed granite statue [2140]. Taking the two finds together as a damaged “monument of Aspelta”¹¹ Macadam reinterpreted these remains (together with several pieces of a broken statue of Taharqa) as evidence of Psammetichus’ expedition having “visited” the Gematen temples as well (Macadam 1955, p. 242).

Bearing in mind that the circumstances of the latter campaign, a most dramatic event of the Ancient Sudanese history, until now raise much controversy in the research literature (particularly on the question about the depth of Egyptian penetration into the territory of Kush),¹² the Gematen “monument of Aspelta” becomes an important piece of historical evidence. It is only to be regretted that Macadam’s considerations in this regard were presented – somewhat hastily and in the “telegraphic style” – in the postscript to his study, and without a proper consideration of the arguments pro and con.

Still more serious is that, despite his repeated references to the broken statue [2140], in which he

6 Analysing the damaged object, Macadam recalled some relations in the accounts of several “mid-Napatan” kings about the “invasions of nomad peoples from the desert”. A passage in the Barkal stela of Nastasen stating that “in his time the Medja went so far as to raid Kawa, ransacking the temple and throwing into confusion the properties of the god Amun <...>” made the editor assume that “the smashed fragments of a granite statue [2140] of mid-Napatan style found in 1935-6 <...> were the product of this incursion <...>” (Macadam 1949, pp. 18, 241). For the historical background see Nastasen stela, lines 61-63 (Peust 1999, S. 43 (hieroglyphic text), 60 (transliteration), 65 (translation).

7 Kirwan in: Macadam 1955, p. 224, entry [2140]; see also p. 233: “The statue can hardly have been broken up in such a way by other than human agency”.

8 Kirwan in: Macadam 1955, p. 233, note 2; cf. Macadam 1955, p. 241. On *damnatio memoriae* in Kush see e.g., Reisner 1917, pp. 216-17, Reisner 1920, pp. 263-64; for a discussion of the problem cf. Vinogradov 2017, S. 91-92.

9 Yoyotte & Sauneron 1949, Yoyotte 1951, Sauneron & Yoyotte 1952.

10 Török 1994 a, pp. 230-31, Török 1994 b, p. 282; Peden 2001, p. 287; Zibelius-Chen 2006, p. 293.

11 Macadam 1955, p. 242: “at Kawa were found <...> scant fragments of a monument of Aspelta [0476], the dimensions of which suggest that it was not a stela <...> but a statue; and the other statue [2140] <...> It seems very probable <...> that [2140] was a statue of Aspelta, possibly even part of the same monument as [0476] (Inscr. XLI), though this last I am unable at the moment to verify”.

12 Note Török 1994 a, pp. 230-31, Török 1994 b, pp. 282-86. See the discussion in Vinogradov 2017, S. 91-92.



eventually recognised Aspelta himself, and besides in a very unusual iconography, with ram's horns (that is, probably, in the shape of the god Amun?),¹³ no photograph or drawing of this important object was ever published. It still remains obscure whether this failure was due to haste at the time when the much delayed study was sent to press, or to the rather unfavourable conditions after the Second World War, when, as is clear from some archival documentation, Macadam was asked by the publishers to cut down the number of illustrations.¹⁴

Whatever the explanation, Macadam's rendering, scattered through the two volumes of *The Temples of Kawa* without a consistent and clearly articulated presentation, seems to have fallen out of sight of later scholars.¹⁵ The fundamental *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*, for example, do not even mention this monument, though even the lamentable condition attested at its discovery does not prevent it from being a significant piece of evidence from Aspelta's reign, a watershed period in the history of Kush.

In late 1990s, intuitively feeling the potential importance of the object in question, and having received the privilege of a rather prolonged stay at Oxford, I applied to Dr Helen Whitehouse – who was in charge of the Egyptian collection in the Ashmolean Museum at that time – asking for permission to acquaint myself with the fragments of Aspelta's monument, which had passed over to that collection, according to Macadam's references (Macadam 1955, p. 134, entry [0476]). From her reply, however, it could only be assumed that no traces of this object could be found in the museum storerooms or in the relevant documentation.

3.

Rather unexpectedly, interest in the Gematen fragments was revived in the recent decade, after the discovery of a cache with seven smashed royal statues

(similar to the one found at Jebel Barkal) and the subsequent finding of the remains of another, and also a badly damaged, stela from Aspelta's reign during the excavations at Doukki Gel (Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, Bonnet 2011; Valbelle 2012).

Most remarkably, the surviving part of the text on the latter stela's fragments, including the date and the list of the participants of some social event, revealed a striking resemblance with the beginning of the well known inscription on the Louvre stela C 257 (also known as the Adoption stela, or the Dedication stela, etc.), which records the ceremony of induction of the "King's sister (and) King's daughter" Henuttakhbit into the office of the sistrum-player (allegedly one of the highest in the hierarchy) and the transfer of some endowments to the Amun-Re temple at Sanam.¹⁶

Domenique Valbelle, the author of the recent parallel study of these two monuments, noticed that the ceremonies recorded in these two accounts took place within a short span (of about 80 days) in winter of the 3rd regnal year of Aspelta, and pointed out that a similar date (more properly the designation of the same season: *pr.t* "winter") might be recognised in the group of signs at the beginning of the record on the Gematen "monument of Aspelta" (treated by her as "stela" in contrast to Macadam's conclusion), the main concern in the present discussion. Under such circumstances it would seem both tempting and natural to assume that the three monuments commemorate three acts of one and the same public event or process, etc. (Valbelle 2012, pp. 5-6, with note 13; 51).

Bearing in mind that the Gematen stela of Anlamani, Aspelta's predecessor, mentions that at the beginning of his reign four of his sisters were made sistrum-players in the four major temples of the kingdom, Valbelle concluded that something similar may have been recorded in the texts of the 3rd regnal year of Aspelta (Valbelle 2012, p. 46). However, the presence of the highest officials (and the very fact of erecting commemorative stelae), might indicate that the events of a much greater importance were meant in the latter cases.

Trying to set this assumption in the historical context, Valbelle suggests that the accounts of the 3rd year of Aspelta record the religious revival after the political calamity inflicted by the Egyptian invasion, when certain important measures aimed at the restoration of the cult of Amun, the supreme god of Kush, were taken in the major temples of the kingdom.

13 Macadam 1955, pp. (241-)42: "it is precisely Aspelta who represents himself at Kawa wearing the downward-curving horns of Amun". Cf., note 11 above.

14 The three-page working hand-written list of re-numbered plates of Volume II, kept in the Kawa dossier in the Griffith Institute's Archive, ends with two pencil remarks: "77 plates" and "Plates volume reduced by 42 plates".

15 For instance, in a recent study it was stated that the broken statue of Anlamani recovered in the Doukki Gel cache "is the only example of a royal statue with the horns of Amun, although these appear in painted portraits of the heads of Egyptian monarchs on the walls of Theban tombs starting with the reign of Thutmose III" (Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, p. 110). The picture would be more precise if the still more relevant examples from Gematen (Macadam 1955, pp. 89-90, 224 (entry [2140]), 242; pl. XVIII b (Aspelta's Wall) were also mentioned.

16 For a detailed discussion see Vinogradov 2017, cf. Vinogradov 2012.



According to this interpretation, two out of the three monuments of Aspelta's 3rd year (the one from Gematen included) must have been severely smashed during some later internal clashes in Kush, rather than during the Egyptian invasion (*cf.* Valbelle 2012, p. 51), as it was long ago suggested by the hypothesis of Sauneron and Yoyotte.

Analysing the circumstances, places and the technique of the *damnatio memoriae* practices as seen on a large number of the intentionally damaged objects found on the territory of Ancient Sudan, Valbelle revises the Sauneron-and-Yoyotte view, concluding that the aim of the troops of Psammetichus were *statues* of Aspelta and his predecessors, the remains of which were afterwards ritually buried by the Kushites in special caches (found at Jebel Barkal, Doukki Gel and supposedly in Dangeil). The destruction or damaging the royal *stelae* (among which she counts the Gematen "monument of Aspelta") was, in her logic, the result of some later clashes in Kush (Valbelle 2012, pp. 50-51), from the dating of which she refrains.

The innovative considerations of the new rendering, most relevant for the subject of the present paper ones have only been touched on above, are very impressive. Many of them look convincing and quite acceptable, but some also raise doubts, as it has been shown in some detail in a recent review by the present writer (Vinogradov 2017).

For instance, one can point out that linking the object from Gematen with two securely dated stelae of Aspelta's year 3 (the Sanam and the Doukki Gel ones) is rather unsafe, because the reconstruction of the word *pr.t* "winter" (which is thought to refer to the season of Aspelta's year 3, when the alleged revival is believed to have started) in the supposed date at the beginning of the surviving text of Kawa XLI (Valbelle 2012, p. 6, note 13) is debatable. As we see in Macadam's reconstruction (Fig. 1) the group of signs in question is written on two different fragments, of which only no. 7 may be positioned with some certainty, as the editor pointed out. It may be noticed however, that the base line on which the female figure in fragment 7 stands does not match the corresponding part in fragment 8 neither in thickness nor in direction, for the two segments seem to form an obtuse angle (Vinogradov 2017, S. 93-94). Thus, the restoration of the date may hardly be regarded as quite reliable and consequently the relevance of the allusions to the Gematen "monument of Aspelta" in the discussion of the mentioned two stelae of year 3 might seem disputable.

Also questionable is the picture of this years' events, presented by Valbelle on the basis of these accounts.

The text of the Sanam version (the only one that has come down to us complete) is tempting to use as the core of the historical reconstruction, but, in fact, it has not a single hint at anything like a religious reform or revival of temple activities, etc., allegedly began by Aspelta.

Taking the text in a straightforward manner, we see a record of a ceremony in which the "king's sister (and) king's daughter" Henuttakhbit – a princess of tender years, judging by her representation in the relief scene in the lunette of the stela – is ordained a "sistrum player" in the Sanam sanctuary of Amun, a temple musician of somewhat uncertain status but often believed by scholars to be high in the hierarchy. Accepting this position, the princess receives – for herself and for her future "posterity" (to be acquired by *adoption*, according to the generally accepted view) – a very modest endowment, the amount of which was established by Anlamani, Aspelta's predecessor, for their sister Madiqen, whom Henuttakhbit probably replaced (Vinogradov 2012, S. 113).

The record could be taken as a description of a fairly *routine* procedure, if there was not a rather detailed enumeration of the group of important (perhaps, the highest) officials, who arrive in the Sanam temple, to authorize, on behalf of Aspelta, the installation of Henuttakhbit in the presence of the highest clergy of this sanctuary. It is the very fact of Aspelta's *absence* from (or avoidance of?) the ceremony that possibly gives us the clue to the better understanding of the account (Vinogradov 2017, S. 95-98).

If the revival of religious life, interrupted by the disastrous Egyptian invasion, was under way, the king of Kush, worshiped himself as son of Amun, would doubtless have headed the process of the spiritual renaissance in his kingdom. He would hardly have refrained from personal attendance at the ceremony of the induction of his relative into a powerful office (which, incidentally, was one of the royal prerogatives) in one of the major temples of the kingdom, if this procedure was certainly festive this time. Aspelta's absence at the ceremony may indicate that the act described was much more complex in the essence, and that in the end it was *political*, and *restrictive*, with all appropriate decorum (like confining to a golden cage), rather than simply celebratory.

A possible explanation could be that the obscure account of the Sanam/Dedication stela does not record a re-ordering of the local clergy (recently recognized as a sign of the religious "renaissance" in

Kush), but a possible compulsory (?) consecration of one of the king's relatives into the priesthood, in order to prevent – by way of imposing priestly celibacy – the appearance of potential new claimants to the throne (Vinogradov 2012, S. 113-15, Vinogradov 2017, S. 98-99). The subsequent reaction of the “repressed” part of the royal family (perhaps, after Aspelta's death) ended in the destruction of two of the three known accounts of the 3rd year (one of which, according to Valbelle, may have been Kawa XLI) would in this case have been quite understandable.

4.

Realizing the potential importance of the Gematen monument after the publication of the thought stimulating study by Valbelle, I made another attempt to find the remains of the artifacts in question in the depositories of the Ashmolean museum at Oxford. This time, with the most friendly help from the present curator of the Egyptian collection, Dr Liam McNamara, my search was much more successful than twenty years ago. In the autumn of 2017 I was granted access to the inscribed “frag[ment]s. of stela” 1932.1295 (~ Kawa XLI, [0476]) and in the spring 2018, while going through an old card catalogue, I was able to spot and then examine *de visu* the head of the granite statue 1936.325 (~ [2140]) (Figs. 2a-d, cover picture & colour figs. IVa-d), the most important of the pieces mentioned in the museum documentation.¹⁷

The re(dis)covery of the long forgotten artifacts has brought about some new puzzles, however.

The statue, despite all damages, seems to have once been of a pretty good workmanship, evidently being well in line with the best examples of Kushite art. Regrettably, there is too little left for the definite portrait identification, but the very peculiar iconographic detail – the ram's horn, encircling the king's ear – is remarkable (Fig. 2c & colour figs. IVc). This feature once prompted Macadam to recognize Aspelta in this sculpture “who represents himself at Kawa wearing the downward-curving horns of Amun” (Macadam 1955, p. 242), as it may also be seen on his relief on the so-called Aspelta Wall in Temple T at Gematen (Fig. 3) (Macadam 1955, pl. XVIII b).

Today Macadam's statement requires some alteration in the light of the material collected by now, however.

a) The head of a broken statue of Aspelta discovered in the Doukki Gel cache (and reliably identifiable thanks to the cartouche in the inscription on the back) shows a *round face with unusually wide-spaced eyes* (Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, pp. 114(-17), 133; Bonnet 2011, p. 32, fig. 18), which features can also be seen in the head of the statue, supposedly also of Aspelta, from the pseudo-cache in Dangeil (Anderson & Salah 2009, p. 83, pl. 8; Anderson & Salah 2014, p. 617, pl. 13),¹⁸ and, to some extent, in the Barkal “colossus” of Aspelta (Haynes 2011, p. 36, figs. 8-9). The Gematen statue's face, as far as it can be assessed, looks more oval in shape with a shorter space between the eyes. The possibility that one and the same person is portrayed in all these cases might be questioned, although the stylistic difference of the artists' “hands” should also be taken into consideration.

b) Thanks to the Doukki Gel finds we now know that the ram's horns (as an element of the head gear?) *was not an attribute of Aspelta's iconography exclusively*. Among the broken statues from the aforementioned cache was one of Anlamani (also with a cartouche), the predecessor and – evidently elder – brother of Aspelta, depicted with the same decoration on his double crown (Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, pp. 110-13, 124, see also 132-135). It would seem that Anlamani's facial features somewhat better match those of the Gematen head.

c) The representation of Anlamani with a pair of ram's (*i.e.* Amun's?) horns being the earliest example attested in Kush, the possibility that the fashion itself was still more ancient here perhaps should not be excluded. Comparing the Gematen head with those of the Doukki Gel statues one can notice that, judging by the quality of work, in particular by the meticulously carved eyebrow(s), the former appears to be rather closer to the 25th Dynasty sample (head of Taharqa, – Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, pp. 88-90, 118-22, 141) than to the mid-Napatan ones (statues of Senkamanisken, Anlamani, Aspelta, – Bonnet & Valbelle 2005, pp. 102-17). Thus, the pre-Anlamani/Aspelta dating of the Gematen head is perhaps not altogether ruled out.

As the fineness of work of the head is in such a contrast to the quality of the inscribed fragments, the question arises whether we are dealing with parts of

17 The statement on the museum catalogue card says: “Parts of almost life-size statue. The head, male, badly defaced, wears a pair of ram's horns, traces of gilt remain. Large fragments of one arm with hand missing, and lower part of leg. <...>”. The exact number of the latter pieces, and their present whereabouts remain uncertain.

18 Cf. Valbelle 2012, p. 49, n. 37: “Seule la tête a été retrouvée; le nom n'est pas conservé, mais la similitude des portraits de Dangeil et de Doukki Gel est frappante.”



Fig. 2a: The head of the statue AN1936.325: Frontal view; (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).



Fig. 2b: The head of the statue AN1936.325: Half-face view; (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).



Fig. 2c: The head of the statue AN1936.325: right view showing the ram's horn; (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).



Fig. 2d: The head of the statue AN1936.325: with a fragment of the stela Kawa XLI, AN1932.1295 juxtaposed; (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).

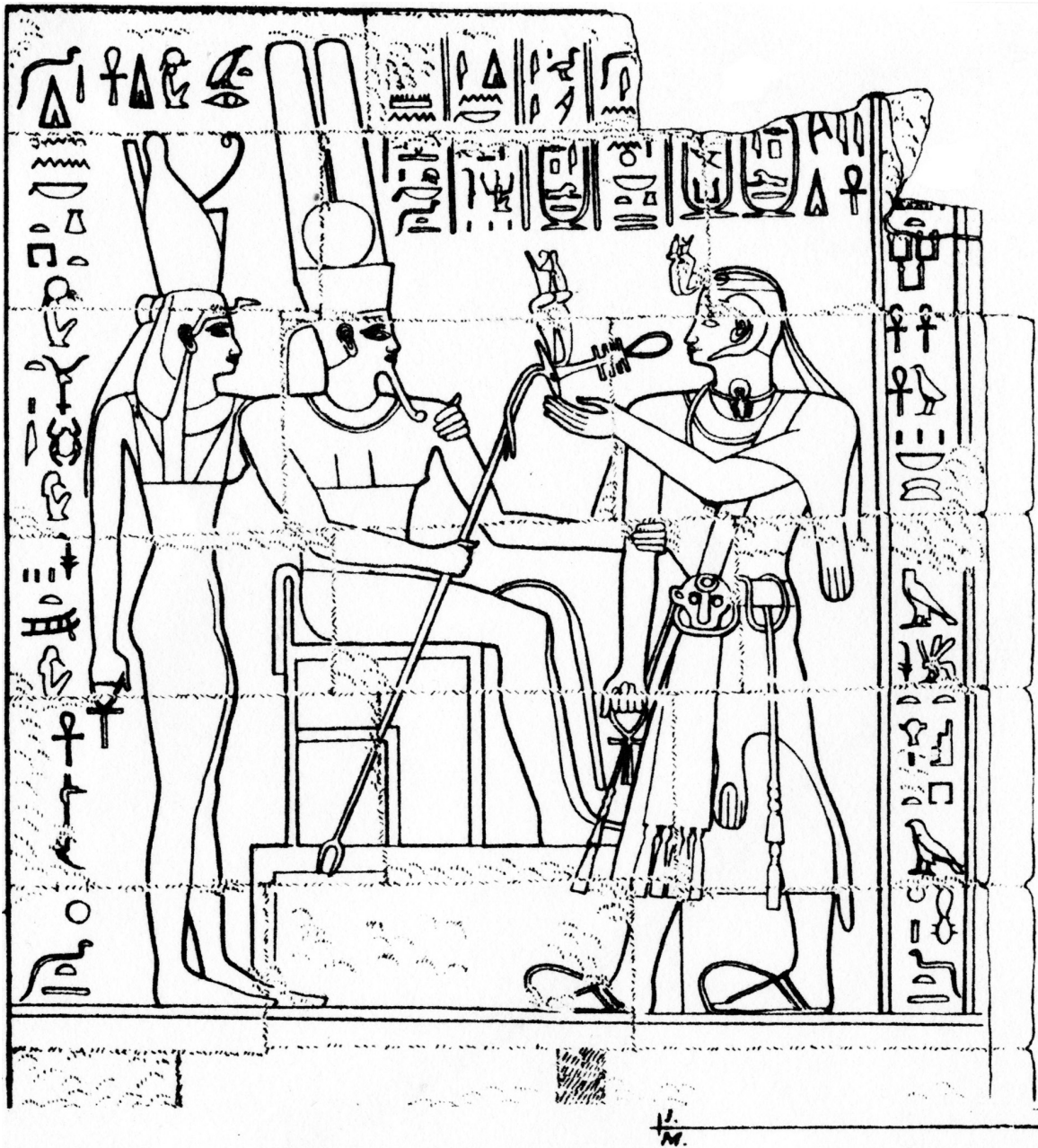


Fig. 3: Aspelta communing with the god Amun. Scene on the Apelta Wall in Temple T at Gematen (after M.F.L. Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, Vol. II, London, 1955, pl. XVIII b).

one and the same object as Macadam once opted to conclude.¹⁹ Whereas the head of the statue seems to be quite skillfully made²⁰ (and incidentally was

19 Note, however, Macadam's description of the broken statue [0895]: "Small pinkish granite statue of male figure with pleated apron. <...> Probably N[ew].K[ingdom]. *Good workmanship, inscription badly cut* (my italics, - A.V.)" (1955, p. 138).

20 It is difficult for me to agree with Kirwan's opinion about "the rather poor quality of the work" of the statue which "shows a coarseness and lack of skill which becomes apparent in Napatan sculpture from about the end of the six century B.C." (Macadam 1955, pp. 217, 233 respectively).

"entirely gilded" originally),²¹ the carving of the text is very poor, the characters in the last lines (according to Macadam's reconstruction, see above) reminding one of cursive rather than hieroglyphic signs. However, it is not only the style but also the material that looks different (Fig. 2d & colour figs. IVd). The head is made of a dark, almost black, granite whereas the colour of the inscribed fragments is greyish (or even pinkish?), and we are to guess whether this difference may not have been due to the difference in natural

21 Macadam 1955, p. 244. I was unable to notice any traces of gold when examining the head *de visu*, however.



conditions (e.g. to the influence of fire, chemical composition of the soil, etc.) in which the two fragments' groups survived.

It should further be recalled that the starting point for Macadam's hesitation was, as he thought, the thickness of the granite slab being too great for a stela, as far as he could reconstruct it from the largest fragment. Meanwhile, a comparison of the measurements indicated by him,²² with the recently published sizes of the Sanam and the Doukki Gel stelae (Valbelle 2012, pp. 10, 21), reveals an interesting similarity of the parameters, considerably differing from those of the other Kushite kings' stelae (cf. Vinogradov 2017, S. 95, Anm. 30), which might suggest that some special "standard" may have been in use in Aspelta's reign:

MONUMENT	HEIGHT	WIDTH	THICKNESS
Sanam/Dedication Stela	0.70 m	0.45 m	0.19 m
Doukki Gel Stela	--	0.45 m	0.20 m
Kawa XLI	--	0.50 m	0.175 m

It will be noticed that the thickness of the first two artifacts is even greater than that of the Gematen one, so that Macadam's doubts as to the "normal" parameters of stelae prove to be unwarranted *practically*.

5.

To sum up, in light of the present research it would seem rather doubtful that Macadam's supposed "monument of Aspelta" did really exist. It is rather more likely that we are dealing here with at least two different objects, a stela and a statue, the more so since they were found in different, even if relatively close, places of the Gematen sanctuary.

More certainty might, probably, be gained from a mineralogical analysis of the granite fragments of the supposed stela and the statue (including the – currently missing? – fragments of the latter), which might help discover whether all of them belong to the same granite block. Such an analysis perhaps would also help to verify the hypothetical restoration of the date "... (month of) winter, [year 3]" on the basis of Macadam's early reconstruction, by ascertaining whether the relevant inscribed fragments (nos. 7 and 8) were really adjacent. These tests, however, are already beyond the scope of the present report.

How much effect might such analyses have on the historical interpretation of the pieces of evidence under discussion, is a separate issue.

If the mineralogical study could confirm that the Gematen "monument of Aspelta" is actually a phantom and instead that we are dealing with two different artifacts (in which the statue fragments belong to a statue and the inscribed fragments belong to a stela, Kawa XLI [2140] dated to Aspelta's 3rd regnal year), this would remove the doubts (expressed by me) as to whether the latter fragments could be paralleled with the stelae from Sanam and Doukki Gel (Vinogradov 2017, S. 93-94).

In accordance with Valbelle's binary classification of the damaged monuments on the territory of ancient Sudan (in which she suggests that the destroyed statues are traces of the Egyptian invasion and the smashed or defaced stelae are the result of the clashes between the Kushites themselves) it would be logical to assume that the destruction of stela Kawa XLI (and the difficult to date Kawa LI [Macadam 1949, pp. 91-92, pl. 41]) was *in no way connected* with the Psammetichus invasion.

The traces of this Egyptian expedition in Gematen, following the same logic, *might* be recognized in two Kushite royal monuments: a headless statue of Taharqa and the Ashmolean granite head of Aspelta or one of his predecessors, which we have been discussing. But it should be pointed out that three headless New Kingdom statues of Egyptians have also been found at Gematen, and thus any association of these finds with the dramatic events of 593 BCE, would be disputable and inconclusive. The binary classification of the damaged monuments would seem hardly applicable to the material from this site.

It will be remembered that neither a cache with broken statues (like those at Barkal, Doukki Gel and Dangeil), nor traces of any other intentional damaging of the Kushite royal stelae or obliteration of cartouches in the wall inscriptions have so far been attested in Gematen.²³ This "sterility" might suggest that the punitive expedition of Psammetichus II,

²³ The relevant Egyptian examples of the *damnatio memoriae* in Gematen are mainly confined to the usurped cartouches of Tutankhamun (Macadam 1955, pp. 4, 10, 14, 32-33, figs. 5-8) and of Ramesses VI (Macadam 1955, p. 10). Whether the statue of a Deputy of Kush [0895] (Macadam 1955, pl. LXXII b) and the double-seated statue of the King's Fan-bearer Khaemwese and the Lady Tamwadjsi [0956] (Macadam 1955, p. 138, pl. LXII c), currently headless, were damaged deliberately, is disputable. The same holds true to the Kushite period examples: the headless statue of Taharqa (Macadam 1955, p. 137, entry [0730]; pl. LXXIII a-d) and the defaced stela Kawa LI [0011], supposedly late according to Macadam (1949, pp. 91-92, pl. 41). As a matter of fact, only the remains of the stela AN1932.1295 and the granite statue AN1936.325, discussed in the present paper, seem to bear visible traces of intentional destruction.

²² Macadam 1949, p. 89, note "a"; Macadam 1955, p. 134, entry [0476]. Cf. note 2 above.



which tends to be considered as responsible for the majority of the royal monuments' damages on the territory of ancient Sudan, *never reached this place*. The question of who, when and why left here the few marks of *damnatio memoriae* remains open.

The small number of objects with *obvious* traces of *intentional* damage (in fact, one stela and one statue under discussion) suggests that the vandal's attack was very selective, and either it was quickly put down or simply needed no continuation after hitting the target(s) rapidly and accurately. And since, despite the destruction in Temple T of the *small* stela Kawa XLI of Aspelta's time and the unidentifiable today statue, three *large* reliefs of the king have survived on the so-called Aspelta Wall in the same temple (*cf.* Fig. 3), one may come to hesitate whether he certainly was the main aim of the iconoclast.

Strange as this question would seem to be at first sight, it might be recalled that something similar had already been noted with regard to the Barkal Election Stela of Aspelta. All cartouches (including the names of the king, his parents and his maternal ancestors to the seventh generation) had been erased throughout the text, and one of the figures in the lunette had been damaged. The paradox was that it was *not the representation of the king* that had suffered but that of his mother. In explanation of this curious detail I offered the suggestion that the aim of the avenger probably was not so much to harm Aspelta as to attack the validity of his stated maternal ancestry. Consequently, the damaging of the Election Stela may have been the manifestation of a genealogical dispute, or a (posthumous?) attempt of someone to erase the memory of this king and his matrilineal lineage (Vinogradov 1996; Vinogradov 2017, S. 98).

Could such an explanation be applicable to the two series of fragments from Gematen, discussed in the present study?

As stated above, the head of the granite statue AN1936.325 [2140] does not quite match the other known portraits of Aspelta and thus may represent some other ruler of Kush – perhaps one of his predecessors. As for the fragments of the stela (?) AN1932.1295 (~ Kawa XLI [0476]), its contents may only be surmised today. If, following the recent suggestion, we consider it as a parallel to the Sanam and the Doukki Gel stelae, and use the nearly intact Sanam version as the basis for historical interpretation, we can notice that, although the allegoric scene in the lunette shows the king with his family before the gods, Aspelta is not presented in the text as the main character, but merely as an *eponym*. His role is in fact *technical*, his name being used for the dating

of some public action, performed on his behalf (but without his personal presence, as we remember) in his 3rd regnal year.

The person, on whom the account is concentrated, is the “king's daughter (and) king's sister” Henuttakhbit, who has been installed as a “sistrum player” in the Sanam temple of Amun. Thus, logically, in case of deliberate destruction of such a record (which fixed certain endowments with reference to important witnesses), this would have most likely meant to cause harm not so much to the king as to the princess herself.

Linking this hypothetical situation to the – supposedly parallel – case from the Gematen temple, one could equally infer that the destroyer of Kawa XLI may not have been aiming exclusively at Aspelta (whose cartouche has survived on one of the fragments). Could the target of the vandal have been the person, unknown today, who was the focus of the Gematen record just as Henuttakhbit was the focus of the Sanam stela, and who may somehow have been involved in political clashes in Kush? Alternatively, if the “decree” in question implied Aspelta's restrictive measures towards some of his relatives (*cf.* Vinogradov 2012, Vinogradov 2017), the destruction of such a document may have meant its (posthumous?) unilateral annulment.²⁴

As for Aspelta, the Gematen sanctuary seems to have remained much more loyal towards him than others, such as Jebel Barkal. The memories about his donations to local temples turned out to be surprisingly firm, judging by the record in the Barkal stela of Nastasen (who ruled Kush almost 250 years later), about his compensation to the Gematen Amun temple after certain “treasures” of Aspelta had been plundered from it by nomadic invaders.²⁵ This means that for well over two centuries the former king's gifts had been kept there without particular prejudices, the hatred towards him having vanished in the course of time.

24 The fact that two out of the three supposedly similar but obviously not identical documents might have been “annulled” by their destruction might have been due to the presence of the protective magical formula at the end of the text, which was apparently lacking on the other two (see Vinogradov 2017, S. 98).

25 See note 6 above.



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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zu den faszinierendsten Quellen für die Geschichte von Kush gehören 13 mit Inschrift versehene Granitfragmente mit Kartusche des Königs Aspelta, die 1931 bei den Ausgrabungen von F.Ll. Griffith in Gematen (Kawa) gefunden wurden. Die Interpretation des Objekts von M.F.L. Macadam, der das Material der Ausgrabungen von Kawa 1949/55 publizierte, durchlief eine beachtliche Entwicklung, und letztendlich schlussfolgerte er, dass die von ihm zunächst als Überreste der Stele Kawa XLI interpretierten beschrifteten Fragmente tatsächlich Teile der Inschrift auf dem Rückenpfeiler einer Granitstatue waren, die 1935 in Gematen gefunden wurde. Der König ist mit Widderhörnern (des Amun?) gezeit, und das „Monument des Aspelta“ wurde nach Macadam im Zuge der militärischen Expedition des ägyptischen Pharaos Psammetich II. nach Kusch 593 v. Chr. zerstört. Macadam's Sicht blieb aufgrund technischer Gründe in seiner zweibändigen Veröffentlichung an verschiedenen Stellen nur verstreut erwähnt und ohne klares Ergebnis. Es wurde nie ein Foto der Fragmente der Statue veröffentlicht, weshalb dieses Artefakt von der Fachwelt lange ignoriert oder übersehen wurde. In den letzten zehn Jahren wurden in der Litera-



tur die noch immer als Überreste der Stele Kawa XLI bezeichneten Inschriftenfragmente zusammen mit mehreren Teilen einer anderen zerstörten Stele von Aspelta, die bei Doukki Gel gefunden wurde, erwähnt. Die beiden Konvolute von Fragmenten wurden parallel zu der gut erhaltenen „Adoptionsstele“ von Sanam gesetzt und als Beweis für die bemerkenswerte Wiederbelebung (nach der ägyptischen Invasion unter Psammetich) des religiösen Lebens der Kuschiten im dritten Jahr von Aspeltas Regierungszeit gewertet. Diese Interpretation wirft jedoch einige Probleme beim Verständnis der Geschichte dieser Zeit auf. Um eine Lösung zu finden, hat der Autor des Artikels kürzlich eine Untersuchung im Ashmolean-Museum in Oxford durchgeführt, wo sich einiges Material der Griffith-Ausgrabungen befindet und die Überreste des längst vergessenen „Aspelta-Denkmal“ lokalisiert und untersucht werden konnten. Eine genaue Untersuchung des neu gefundenen Materials führte dazu, dass Macadams finale Darstellung anzuzweifeln ist, da es sich tatsächlich um zwei

Objekte – einer Stele und einer Statue – handelt, die sich sogar in ihrem Material unterscheiden. Die stark beschädigte Statue (deren Fotos jetzt zum ersten Mal veröffentlicht werden) war wohl keine Darstellung von Aspelta, sondern wahrscheinlich eines früheren Königs. In Anbetracht der Seltenheit der absichtlich beschädigten Objekte im Gematen-Heiligtum kann der Schluss gezogen werden, dass die Stele und die betreffende Statue nicht von den Soldaten Psammetichs zerstört wurden, sondern im Zuge von inneren Konflikten in Kusch oder während anderer ausländischer Invasionen, wie zum Beispiel diejenige, die in der Barkal-Stele von König Nastasen erwähnt wird, der mehr als zwei Jahrhunderte später regierte. Was die Wiedergabe der Inschrift auf der zerstörten Stele angeht, könnten einige moderne technische Untersuchungsverfahren in Zukunft wahrscheinlich helfen, die hypothetische Datierung des Textes in das 3. Regierungsjahr von Aspelta genauer zu überprüfen, was möglicherweise neue Perspektiven in der Diskussion um eine der dramatischsten Epochen in der Geschichte des alten Sudan eröffnet.

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