

***The Relationship Between Egypt and Nubia
during old and middle kingdom***

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EGOTH



Since the time of the first dynasty in Egypt, the corporate state was having borders with its neighbours in all the directions. The Egyptians called neighbours many namings as the followings: the Temehu (the ancestors of The Libyans at the west), the Nehsu (the Nubians at the south), The Amou (the desert Bedouin as the east). All of this peoples were just uncivilized tribes in the opinion of the Egyptians, in the same time they were the traditional enemies for the Egyptian people, which must be fight to avoid their dangers. According to all of this facts, both of the Egyptian people and the Nehsu tribes represented two different genders, there is geographical borders between them, as the rocks of the first cataract in the Nile river which was the main avenue traffic between this two cultures⁽¹⁾.

The Nehsu countries which stretched along the Nile south of Aswan to infinite distance towards the south were producing many products which needed by Egypt, this products mentioned in the texts of the Egyptian officials "Weni" and "Herkhuf". The pastures and forests of this

⁽¹⁾G. A. Reisner, *Excavation at Kerma, HAS 5, Cambridge 1923, p 536.*

countries included many kinds of animals and birds which are not living in the Egyptian environment, as the elephants, leopards, ostriches and monkeys. the Egyptian was imported the leopard leathers, elephants tusks (the ivory) and the ostriches feathers⁽¹⁾.

In the countries of Nehsu there was the gold, many kinds of stones and the buildings stones as the granite, nubian sand stone, deiorit and bazelt. also, this environment included the human power, the Nehsu population characterized by the strength which the Egyptians used it in digging the canals, cutting the rocks, employing them in the military works of the army and police and in the discovery of the roods.

On the other hand, The Nehsu countries was a very important market for the Egyptian trading as the potterial and rock vessels, some metal tools as the axes and knives and some food as cheese and honey.

It seems that when the Egyptian kings decided to keep this distinctions, the kings of the fourth and the fifth dynasties decided to build some Egyptian settlements on the

⁽¹⁾*T. Kendall, Kerma and The Kingdom of Kush , The Archaeological discovery of an Ancient Nubian Empire, Washington 1997, p 7-8.*

strategic points in Nubia. they choosed the site of Buhen⁽¹⁾, but this is not meaning that their activites concerned only on this southern part in Lower Nubia, but they maked this location a starting point for the discovering and exploiting the new regions in Upper Nubia .

W.B. Emery discovered in this site an archaeological remains related to the time of the third and fourth dynasties, as a piece of pottery inscribed on it the name of king Nefer-er-ka-ra (the third king of the fifth dynaste). also, many seals found inscribed on them the names of many kings of the fourth and fifth dynasties as Chephren and Menkaure (from the fourth dynaste), Weserkaf, Sahure, Nefer-er-ka-re, Ged-ka-re and Ne-weser-re (from the fifth dynaste)⁽²⁾. he most important discoveries of the excavations of W. Emery were three ovens using in melting the copper⁽³⁾.

The Relationship Between Nubia and Egypt in The Time of The Sixth Dynaste :

The excavation works which done by G. Reisner in Kerma, specially in the western part of El Defofa El

⁽¹⁾PM VII , p. 129

⁽²⁾W. B. Emery, *Egypt in Nubia*, London 1965, p. 111-115.

⁽³⁾*Ibid.*, p. 111 .

gharbeya, discovered a remains of walls seems to be older than the walls of El Defofa. In this archaeological layer a remains of vessels and marbles found there⁽¹⁾. a twenty five vessels of marbles found, the name of king " Pepi I " (the second king of the sixth dyanste) was inscribed on this vessels, also there were some vessels holding the name of king "Pepi II" .

Depending on the old walls and the vessels which held the names of "Pepi I" and " Pepi II ", G. Reisner assumed the presence of a commercial relationship between Kerma culture and the sixth dyanste, he added that the site was an important Egyptian commercial station⁽²⁾. many scholars didn't agree with this theory as Säve-Söderbergh, Erkel and J. Vercoutter, they thought that the vessels which ascribed to the sixth dyanste were old vessels reached to Kerma in the time of the twelfth dyanste⁽³⁾. Kemp objected this imagination and he announced that he agree with G. Reisner, he said that the number of vessels which found in Kerma is so much. so we can not compare the case of Kerma with the case of Mirgissa which mentioned by J.

(1) G. A. Reisner , *op cit* , p 30 – 31. .

(2)*Ibid.*, 6 , p. 510. .

(3)*Loc. Cit.*

Vercoutter⁽¹⁾, this was the opinion which said by B. Trigger too⁽²⁾.

The excavations of the swiss expedition assured that the beginning of Kerma culture related to the old kingdom, after the conclusion of C14, In the last seasons some discovered texts gave us precious information about the relationships between Egypt and Kerma in the old kingdom, between the habitations layers in the middle of the city near El-Defofa el gharbeya, in the constructions of one of the rooms which related to Middle Kerma period, an obelisk made of sandstone have been discovered, the word "Emy – erty" written in heitritic on one of its faces, this expression may be a name or a title of navy was found in the time of the old kingdom⁽³⁾.

Therefore, the two sentences which held the text of an Egyptian official was a member in an expedition to the region of Kerma, he erected this palette as an Egyptian custom in erecting obelisks and palettes as an offerings to the local deities, We cant deporting that some local

⁽¹⁾J. Vercoutter, "Excavtions at Mirgissa", *Kush* 7 (1964), p. 59, pl. 18.

⁽²⁾B. Trigger .B, *Nubia under the Pharaohs*, London 1976, p. 57.

⁽³⁾Ch. Bonnet, *Le Temple principal de la Ville de Kerma et son quartier religieux*, Paris 2004, p. 143, fig. 109 ; D. Valbelle, "L'Egyptien á kerma sous l'Ancien Empire", in : Ch. Bonnet *Kerma : Royaume de Nubie*, Geneva 1990, p. 46.

persons were knowing the Egyptian hieratic calligraphy, it was the official correspondences calligraphy, may be one of them wrote this palette, the biographies of the Egyptian governor of Elaphntine as "Herkhuf" and "Pepi – nakht" informed us the presence of relationships between the rulers of Nubia and "Yam" countries The swiss expedition discovered a tomb related to old Kerma, this tomb was containing two bodies, one for a man and the other for a woman, a mirror was discovered inscribed on it by the hieroglyphic calligraphy a text written as the following: "The honorable lady, the royal daughter, the unquie jewel of queen". the name of this lady, her titles and the way of the inscribing are related to the period of the end of the Old Kingdom⁽¹⁾.

The Relationship Between Egypt and Nubia in The time of The Middle kingdom :

The culture of C Group lived in Lower Nubia between Sarra shark and Kobanya at the north of Aswan in Middle Kerma period, the owners of this culture was under the military influence of the kings of The Middle kingdom, the

⁽¹⁾Ch. Bonnet, "Les fouilles Archéologiques de Kerma (Sudan), rapport préliminaire sur les campagnes de 1984 - 1985 et 1985 – 1986", Geneva 34 (1986), p. 6.

characterized monuments of the Egyptian settlement and influence of this period were the fortresses which were erected at the land of the population of C Group between Aswan and Semna at the south⁽¹⁾.

In Semna, King "Sesostris III" erected a palette, he recorded on it that the southern borders of Egypt ending at Semna, the texts of this palette included a royal decree to organize the relationship with the population at the south of the borders, the ships which were coming from the south at the north of Semna forbidden to cross, also the crossing of the people which came from the south along the region of the borders northly were forbidden except two cases only, which are the commercial purposes and the official missions (as the messengers of the rulers)⁽²⁾.

This Egyptian policy may lead to the insulating the Egyptians and Nubians of each other due to the uncrossing of the Nubians southly across the borders. but this idea didn't have any proof except the texts of Semna letters, which proved the presence of organized system by the

⁽¹⁾W. Y. Adams, *Nubia Corridor to Africa*, London 1997, p. 184 ; B. Trigger , *op. cit.*, p. 74 ; J. Taylor , *Egypt and Nubia*, London 1991, p. 18; D. Welsby , "Nubia", in: *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo 2001 , p. 553

⁽²⁾Z. R. Abdelmegid, *The Religious influence of Egypt in Nubia at the New Kingdom*, M. A. Degree, unpublished, Alexandria 2002, p. 30.

Egyptians to observe the movings of the Nubian population, this documents were sent by the Egyptian commandors in Upper Nubia to the officials of the central administration⁽¹⁾.

\Kerma flourished by the beginning of the Middle kingdom, it became an attractive region for the population, its borders stretched from its original place to Sai island, and to Berkel mountain at the south⁽²⁾. However, the texts which related to the times of Sesostris I and Sesostris III refer to the hostile relationship between Egypt and Kerma, but except the region of this two kings, the scholars found just texts refer to Kush .

\There is just two sources from the time of king Sesostris I , the first one known as Buhen palette or Florence no. 2540, this palette is a huge palette made of granite, represented on it the god Monthu the deity of Ermant during his presenting ten of captives to king Sesostris I, beside every captive the name of the city or the region which he belonged, the deity speak to the king saying: " I fetched to you all the countries which found in Ta-Khenty⁽³⁾" . In the beginning of the captives we find the

⁽¹⁾P. C. Smither, *The Semnah Dispatches*, *JEA* 31 (1945), p. 4 – 10 .

⁽²⁾D. Welsby, *op. cit.*, p. 553 .

⁽³⁾G. A. Reisner , *op. cit.*, *H. A. S* , 6 (1923), p. 543 .

ruler of Kush, just one letter remained from the second geographical name, the third one read as "Broo", the fourth read as "Yam", just one letter remained from the fifth , the sixth "Wast", the seventh "Akherken", the eighth "Shaata", the ninth "Khast" and the tenth "Ashmeek".

This palette erected in Nubia by the officer "Mentumhat" in the 18th years of king Sesotris I reign, it is consider as the most ancient document containing the name of Kush and Buhen (which the palette discovered in it), Buhen is one of the most important sites in the land of C Group population, a big fortress built in it as one of the fortresses which found by the kings of the middle kingdom. G. Reisner assumed that Sesotris I commanded a military campaign against Nubia, resulted in the reconquest of all this countries which mentioned in this inscription, in his opinion this campaign was the same campaign which mentioned by Ameny the governor of Beni-Hassan nome in his biography which he left in his tomb⁽¹⁾. In spite of the mentioning text chronolized by the 43 year of Sesostris I, and the text of Florence palette chronolized by the 18th year of the same reign, the text of Beni-Hassan consider as a source for second campaign in the reign of King Sesostris I,

⁽¹⁾G. A. Reisner , *op. cit.*, p. 543 .

this text mentioned that Ameny sailed southly with his lord in a campaign to repressing the enemy of the king, also he mentioned that he reached Kush and pass it to the end of the world, he brought with him every kinds of spoil, he king backed in peace after he defeated his enemies in Kush⁽¹⁾.

Säve-Söderbergh believe that a great military campaign sent to Nubia, may be this campaign reached to Arko at the south of Kerma, where there a palette discovered inscribed on it the name of king Sesostris I⁽²⁾. W. B. Emery belived that this campaign held in the regions which located south of Wawat, also he belived that this campaign leads to the controlling of Sesotris I over thre third cataract region⁽³⁾. B. Trigger was sure of this campaign, but he didn't think that this campaign leads to the enduring Egyptian control over Kush, may be Sesostris I was thinking in conquering Kush, but he didn't that⁽⁴⁾.

I think that there was a great military campaign against Nubia, but the aim of Sesostris I was not the conquering of Kush, but to open the roads and making it

⁽¹⁾J. H. Breasted , *Ancient Records of Egypt , I* , New York 1906 , p. 246 .

⁽²⁾T. Säve-Söderbergh , *Ägypten and Nubien* , Lund 1941 , p. 72 .

⁽³⁾W. B. Emery , *op. cit.* , p. 142 – 143 .

⁽⁴⁾B. Trigger , *op. cit.* , p. 65 – 66 .

safe for tradings, also he aimed to the project of building a group of fortresses to protect the southern borders of Egypt.

After this campaign, more than 80 years passed where the egyptian texts didn't mention anything about Kush, the explanation of that may related to the carrying out the fortresses of Lower Nubia by the Egyptian kings after the reign of Sesostris I, the Egyptians aimed to the protection against the increscent power of the kingdom of Kush⁽¹⁾.

Kerma was going on in developing, the monuments of Kerma show that the phenomena of the fortifying the city started at Middle Kerma period⁽²⁾, at the same period of the hostile relations with Egypt, so I think that Kerma was trying to be ready for any attack may come from the kings of the middle kingdom. but this hostile relationships between Kush and Egypt didn't mean that there was no any kind of dealing between the two peoples, or between the two governments, Egypt was having behalves in Nubia, this behalves were economical as tradings, specially the products of Middle Africa such as ivory, ebony and gold, Egypt interested so much in its commercial behalves in this regions, this products were manufactured and exported to

⁽¹⁾W. B. Emery , *Egypt in Nubia*, London 1965, p. 152 .

⁽²⁾Ch. Bonnet, *Geneva* 47, p. 58 .

many countries at the Mediterranean and the ancient near east⁽¹⁾.

The tradings was a very important economical source for the Egyptian government, Egypt taked a very important influence due to its owning this rare merchandises which all the countries needed it. may be dur to all this considerations there was a period of peace at thh times of kings Amenophis II and Sesostris II, no campaigns sent by them against Kush.

Sesostris III back to the hostile policy against Kush , his first military campaigns against Kush was in the 8th year of his reign, he recorded it in one of his palettes at the first cataract, the text mentioned that the king passed by this canal when he sailed towards the south to reconquest Kush⁽²⁾. The reason of this campaign is unknown, A. Saleh believe that the reason may be the desiring of the king to facilitate the transffering of his navy and his army⁽³⁾. However, it seems that this campaign didn't reached its aims, because the king commanded another campaigns against Kush in the 12th , 16th and 19th years of his reign .

⁽¹⁾T. Kendall, *op. cit.*, p. 7 .

⁽²⁾T. Säve-Söderbegh , *op. cit.*, p. 89 .

⁽³⁾A. Saleh , *The Ancient Near East : Egypt and Iraq, Cairo 1981, p. 188*

The reasons of this campaign are unknown , may be the reason was the impetrating of the spoils, may be there is another reasons as the press from the side of Kush on Egypt as thought by Emery⁽¹⁾. Anyway, after the returning of the 8th year campaign and in the same year, the royal commands ordered to erect the southern borders of Egypt at Semna, a memorial palette erected in the site, this palette known as the first palette of Semna, it is found now in Berlin museum no 1157, the following text written in it: "The southern edged at the 8th year of the reign of the king of upper and lower Egypt Kha-kaw-re, Sesostris III, to prevent the Nehsu from the crossing by land or by water, except the Nehsu which came for trading in Aiken (Mirgissa) or which came in official mission, those must be handling in a good way, but it is completely forbidden the allowing of any ship came from The Nehsu countries to cross Semna towards the south⁽²⁾.

The policy of bounding the southern borders of Egypt at Semna, which located at 60 km at the south of Wadi Helfa, was clear and firm, this happened at the most powerful era of the 12th dynaste, which is the era of king

⁽¹⁾W. B. Emery , *op. cit.*, p. 158 .

⁽²⁾Z. E. Abdelmegeid , *op. cit.*, pp. 29 – 30 .

Sesostris III, after the returning of the campaign from Kush, may be this campaign didn't aim to conquering Kush, but to recognize the power of Kush. Semna were chosen to be the southern end due to its natural defending characters, there was not a suitable place more than this region to be the end of the Egyptian borders, the narrowness of the river flume there facilitating the controlling by the erecting of the fortresses⁽¹⁾.

After that Sesostris III completed the project of erecting the fortresses which started by Sesostris I, he erected two castles at the river side in Semna, the archaeologists used to call them Semna east and Semna west, this didn't come suddenly, but after the knowing of the Egyptians to the power of Kush. As it is known, the military campaigns were sent every four years, the second campaign sent in the 12th year, the third campaign sent in the 16th year, in this last year the king announced for the second time the completing of the two fortresses building that the southern borders of Egypt erected at Semna⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ R. A. Caminos, *Semna, Kumma I, The Temple of Semna, EES, London 1998, p. 3.*

⁽²⁾ A. H. Gardiner, *Excavation of Semna and Urnarty, SNR 12, Khartoum 1927, p. 147.*

Inspite of the hostile which we found at the texts of Semna palette, the Egyptians were trading with the Nubians, the discovered monuments assured the arrival of the Egyptian merchandises to Kerma. a large amount of the Egyptian pottery related to the middle kingdom discovered in Kerma cemeteries, this kind represented the Egyptian kind which was found in this time in both of Upper and Lower Egypt⁽¹⁾.

The commercial relationship between Egypt and Kush continued in the same merchandises which known by Egypt since the time of The Old kingdom as the ivory, ebony, gold, ostrich feathers and others.

The Relationship between Kerma classic and Lower Nubia :

In this period, Kerma reached to its most power in the policy and the military affairs, this developing reflected on its expansion to Lower Nubia, until it reached Elaphntine at the south of Egypt , the excavations in Lower Nubia revealed many sites of Kerma characterized by the presence of Kerma classic pottery in Shalfak, Buhen, Dapera, Faras,

⁽¹⁾J. Borriou , *Relations between Egypt and Kerma during The Middle and New Kingdoms* , in : W. V. Davies , *Egypt and Africa , Nubia from Prehistory to Islam* , London 1991, p. 130 .

Tomas and Sarra shark⁽¹⁾. most of this sites were cemeteries, its areas were small if it is compared to the Kerma cemeteries which found in Kerma and Sai island, also, it is observed that most of them located near the Egyptian fortresses, traces of fire and damaging found in some of them, beside some remains of Kernal population

There is some evidences in Buhen fortress refer to the occupation of the kernal soldiers, H.S.Smith throughout his study to the site of Buhen reached to the falling of Buhen fortress by the Kushians about 1680 – 1640 B.C.⁽²⁾. In Mirgissa fortress, J.Vercoutter discovered some kernal monuments similar to which found in Buhen , he concluded that this fortress falled by the Kermals about 1650 – 1580 B.C. ⁽³⁾.

The expansion of Kerma northly was logical after the falling of The Middle kingdom in Egypt , after that some of the local rulers in Egypt were holding the royal titles , which lead to the weakness of the central governemt during the time of the 13th dynaste, the names of some fortresses

⁽¹⁾D. O'Conner, *Ancient Nubia Egypts Rival in Africa*, Pennsylvania 1993, p. 41 .

⁽²⁾H. S. Smith , *The Fortress of Buhen : The Inscriptions* , I , EES , London 1976 , p. 77 , 81 .

⁽³⁾ J. Vercoutter , *Mirgissa* , I , Paris 1970 , p. 183 – 184 .

appeared in Lower Nubia, this may refer to some of their influence there ⁽¹⁾ .

The occupation of Kush to Lower Nubia :

There is no evidence refer to the transferring of the king of Kush or any one of his family to live in Lower Nubia, after the conquer of this nome, the king backed to Kerma, the garrisons of Kush and some officials which represented the king lefted there, may be he was visiting this nome from a time to another, throughout some discovered palettes in Buhen and Egypt, it is clear that some groups of the Egyptian officials were inhabited in Buhen at that time, as the official "Sebed-Hor" which said that he was a brave officer in Buhen, he erected a temple for Horus, admired by the king of Kush⁽²⁾ . It seems that this official and some Egyptian officials were working at the court of the king of Kush , there is another one of them called "Ka", he is the owner of the palette (Khartoum 18), he mentioned that: he was a brave servant at the king of Kush, he worked honestly at the service of king "Ned-Geh", after that be back safely to his family in Buhen⁽³⁾. this means that this

⁽¹⁾ B. Kemp , in : B. Trigger, *Ancient Egypt, Social History*, Cambridge 1983,p. 160 .

⁽²⁾ D. Valbelle, *Histoire de L'Etat phronique*, Paris 1997, p. 19 ;T. Säve-Söderbergh, *A Buhen Stela from the Second Intermediate Period*, JEA 35 (1949), p. 55.

³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 53 .(

official was inhabiting in Kerma which was the residence of the king of Kush, it seems that he was a member in a family lived longely in Buhen, where a similar palettes of his father "Sobek-Em-Heb" were discovered ⁽¹⁾ . There is a funeral palette of a soldier called " Ha-ankh-ef " which wrote that he worked in Kush for 6 years, then he back to his town Edfu ⁽²⁾ .

It seems that the king of Kush depended on the experience of the egyptians which were living in Lower Nubia , may be their ancestors were living in Lower Nubia since the egyptian presence there in the time of The Middle kingdom , the text of the soldier "Ha-ankh-ef " refer to the great salaries which taked by this officials from the government of Kush. On the other hand, nothing proved that the original owners of this nome (The C Group) suffered of the repressing due to the expansion of Kush in their country, on the contrary, the monuments proved that this nomes flourished so much atv this period ⁽³⁾ . B. Trigger and others explained the muchness of the tombs of this period as a result for the increasing of the population numbers , also they explained the filling of the tombs by the

⁽¹⁾ *H. S. Smith , op. cit., p. 84*

⁽²⁾ *B. Kemp , op. cit., p. 162 .*

⁽³⁾ *W. B. Emery , op. cit., p. 162 .*

numerous kinds of the imported merchandises by the increasing of the economical standards in this period ⁽¹⁾ .

The jar tombs which spreadingly out in Lower Nubia in this period refer to the various kinds of population in this region, may be that a true indicator for the peace and the flourishing of the nome. The owners of the jar tombs known along the history by their cleverness in some works as the police, the military affairs and the traveling in the desert ⁽²⁾ . It seems that the king of Kush used them in this kinds of works and allowed them to stay in his lands, because the works of mining in the eastern desert need them .

⁽¹⁾ B. Trigger , *Nubia under The Pharaohs* , London 1976 , p. 98 .

⁽²⁾ W. Y. Adams , *op. cit.*, p. 215 .

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