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## **Kerma people in Egypt (Middle and Classic Kerma)**

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Downstream from the first cataract, Nubian Classic Kerma remains are few, even if they are often well identified: they mostly consist of isolated pots, found inside of Egyptian tombs, or in settlements. Sometimes they are also found in burials of small groups or isolated Kerma individuals. As in Nubia, they are well dated to the Second Intermediate Period and the first half of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. They can represent remains of Egyptians or egyptianized Nubians as well as ancient travellers; or they might represent traces of a commercial exchange of goods (Bourriau 1981: 25f.; Bourriau 1991: 129ff.). While Egyptian texts and archaeological remains prove that goods are moving in two directions – for example the exchanges taking place in the Egyptian fortresses on the second cataract – no one has ever mentioned finds from the most ancient Kerma cultural periods, i.e. Ancient Kerma and Middle Kerma (from the end of the V<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to the end of the Middle Kingdom). One reason could be a mistaken identification of remains especially as the ancient phases of the Kerma culture have only been known since the 1970's. Kerma pottery was often misidentified as C-Group or Pan-Grave production. The fine Middle Nubia pottery is easily recognizable but this is not the case with the utilitarian pottery, such as storage jars and cooking pots. It is often difficult to determine affiliation to one or the other group. Here I shall try to research the very scarce documentation available to see if proof exists that Nubians from Middle Nubia arrived in Egypt before the Second Intermediate Period.

This question was the focus of a communiqué which was presented in Poznań, invited by Lech Krzyżaniak (Gratien 2000: 1f.). I would like to dedicate paper to him whom we miss so much.

### Egyptian chronology and Kerma dates

Ancient Kerma	KA	End of Vth Dynasty until beginning of Middle Kingdom
Middle Kerma	KM	Middle Kingdom
Classic Kerma	KC	Second Intermediate Period until beginning of XVIII <sup>th</sup> Dynasty
Late Kerma	KR	End of Kerma culture, and phase of acculturation during the first half of the XVIII <sup>th</sup> Dynasty

These dates are corroborated by Egyptian pottery discovered in the same contexts as Kerma pottery (Bourriau 2004: 3-13). Pan-Graves are dated by Bourriau to the XII<sup>th</sup> - XIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty i.e. contemporary to Middle Kerma; she confirms that no Classic Kerma pottery was ever found on a Pan-Grave site (Bourriau 1981: 25).

Ancient Kerma ceramic is easily recognizable. To my knowledge no single piece was found in Egypt nor north of Aniba with the exception of finds at Qurta. Some well known bowls very frequent on Kerma sites are also present on C-Group sites such as Aniba and Qurta, where the original location is not recorded (Steindorff 1935: pl. 51. 5-7; Firth 1927: pl. 25a). The Ancient Kerma sphere hardly reached the Batn el-Haggar as Lower Nubia then was occupied by the C-Group (Bietak's phases Ia and Ib), but we still have to understand the links between these two cultures (Honegger 2005: 240). This region was then a "zone-tampon", an intermediary between Iam and Egypt, as we understand it from Herkhouf's autobiography and his contemporaries. In Egypt itself, we hardly know of any material left by "pacified Nubians" from Middle Nubia.

From the XI<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards, the pharaoh's army intensified control over Lower Nubia which led to a direct link with the Middle Kerma population in the Second Cataract fortresses. Lower Nubia, i.e. Wawat, became a province, but seems to have maintained a separate commercial activity.

The difficulties in trying to attribute pottery to one or the other of these Nubian groups are many. The typical features of each needs to be known in order to identify the possible Kerma pots abroad, such as table pottery, cooking pots and containers. Fabric identification is no help to classification because the vessels are made from alluvial Nile silt (which is mostly the same all along the Nile valley) to which organic or mineral temper, mostly sand, is added. Our



ignorance of workshops does not allow us to recognize different production centres (De Paepe et al. 1992: 68ff.). Excavated Kerma settlements are scarce, therefore the work done at Gism el-Arba (between Kerma and Dongola) on settlements 1 and 2 is very informative because the domestic pottery in Gism el-Arba is different from pottery produced for burials.

Among the vessels easily identified and useful as chronological markers for their period are Middle Kerma table pottery, the short and cylindrical beakers with an everted concave profile (type M VIIb, d-g). During the Classic Kerma Period they become higher and narrower and are decorated with a white band between the red bottom and the black rim (type CIII; Gratien 1986: 421, 4d32, fig. 314, 321).

The most numerous bowls found are typical red black-topped pots, with rounded bottom and an everted rim, which were made during the entire Kerma period and during C-Group time. A single fine pottery sherd found in Egypt is often impossible to attribute to Middle Kerma, Classic Kerma or C-Group. It is the context, which determines the identification.

During Classic Kerma, the beakers with a white band (simply called beakers below) are a well known category easy to identify. But these vases could also have been purchased as luxurious goods like Cypriote or Palestinian ceramics. Similarly the red or black, entirely incised/impressed bowls, of which the area of production is as yet unknown, could either be C-Group or Kerma production.

Kerma storage jars are usually hand-made in a coarse fabric; with an ovoid or spherical body, a narrow neck and an everted, more or less thickened, lip. Some are decorated on the shoulder, neck or lip but the most voluminous ones are simply smoothed. They seem not to have changed from Ancient Kerma, to Middle and Classic Kerma. If only represented by sherds it is likely they may escape notice when present at an Egyptian settlement site.

The cooking pots vary to a very great extent. The bottom of these hemispherical, large bowls is often crudely incised or reinforced with a layer of silt with finger impressions or scratches, maybe to increase the stability of the pots. They are polished or burnished inside and outside, partly smoked or oxidized, with a black external, more or less prominent, rim. The Gism el-Arba excavations allow a reconstruction of their evolution. During Middle Kerma and the beginning of Classic Kerma, they often carry a geometrical, incised or incised/impressed pattern below the rim. Different stylistic patterns alone allow us to distinguish the workshops and the periods. The most frequent motifs are: peas in relief (“boutons repoussés”) during Ancient Kerma and incised radiated, hatched or squared triangles or chevrons during Middle Kerma. At that time

hatched triangles directly incised below the rim or below a horizontal line, seem to be the most popular and the most frequent pattern. I myself selected this pattern as characteristic for Middle Kerma as found in the excavations in Sai necropolis. In fact at the Gism el-Arba settlement excavations, where it was possible to obtain a clear stratigraphy of occupation levels, a longer use for this pattern was determined. The pattern is very frequent during Middle Kerma, is still in use at the beginning of Classic Kerma and then became scarce in contrast to the occurrence of mat-impressed cooking pots. Nevertheless the production of incised cooking pots seems to continue some time during Classic Kerma and C-Group of the Second Intermediate Period, with vases incised with herring-bones or horizontal strokes, produced by comb, on all or a part of the vases' surface. But, from Classic Kerma onwards, the most frequent cooking pots are those produced on rounded matting; during Late Kerma the mat became rectangular.

In the Second Cataract forts and northwards, we often find pots covered with long transverse incised hatchings. In the town of Buhen, pottery, probably later than the Old Kingdom, includes many cooking pots incised with chevrons or triangles (Gratien 1995: 43ff.).

If the fabrication of fine pottery needs a 'savoir-faire' and great skills, besides a well-controlled operating process, it must have been made in Nubian workshops and brought abroad. Cooking pots on the other hand are family productions, for which advanced technology is not necessary. This pottery was probably fired inside open kilns, away from the dwellings. The decoration applied indicate local tradition and preferences. So they could have been made locally as well as outside of Nubia by a Nubian or Egyptian or better, made by one and purchased by another as for example inside the fortresses. Why import/export fragile pottery when fabrication is so easy?

We have to remember that this pottery is still badly known. It is settlement ceramic of which not more than one piece was placed inside a tomb during Middle Kerma according to the evidence of Sai cemetery. Few settlements have been excavated in Nubia, maybe because work is long and fastidious. Settlements in Lower Nubia and south of Wadi Halfa are only summarily published. The Kerma settlement of Sai was washed away by successive floods. In Kerma town, stratigraphical study of the ceramic is still under progress. Surveys have provided little datable pottery because patterns of decoration are numerous and various (following the potters' imagination), even if the forms of the vessels are stable.

Keeping all these remarks in mind, we are going to re-examine the Nubian pottery found in Egypt.

Since Herkhouf's times expeditions could choose between two roads to travel from the Kerma-Dongola region to Egypt, if we accept the assumption that



Iam = Kush = Kerma, Kerma being the only site along the Nile in the western desert or in the Wadi el-Khowi important enough to correspond to Herkhouf's description (Edel 1955: 62-63; Vallogia 1981: 188; Grimal 1985: 120; Vercoutter 1979: 19 ff.; Bonnet 1990). The routes taken were the Nile road via the Lower Nubian forts or the desert road through the oases from Selima, Toschka to Kurkur and Dunkul. We also have to consider the still badly known tracks of the eastern desert (Kuper 2003: 12ff.). Kerma people could have left traces along the two first mentioned routes. During the Old Kingdom the expeditions could have travelled through Dakhleh; during the Middle Kingdom this path was in use and even more so during the Second Intermediate Period. One might suggest that the wealth of Dakhleh Oasis, and of Balat in particular, was based on trade with Nubia (Baud 1997: 19ff.; Baud et al. 1999: 1ff.; Marchand & Tallet 1999: 326, 333, fig. 45).

Dakhleh then Kharga, are often known as stop-over places on the road from Egypt to Sudan, in part known as Darb el-Arbain (Churcher & Mills 1999: 178). Several representations of Nubians, for example at the Nephthys Hill, were thought to be related to the Pan-Grave culture of the Second Intermediate period however they are presumably older because the pottery found there is dated to the Old Kingdom. This place could have been an observation post on the way to the oases (Kaper & Willems 2002: 82ff.). Two other main routes exist, the Darb el-Tawil (Manfalout-Ayn Asil) and the Girga-Khargeh/Dakhleh road (Leprohon 1986: 50ff.; Giddy 1987: 7ff.) going from the Nile to Dakhleh,

The net of roads to the West and to the South is a complex one. Further West, no single Nubian sherd has been discovered on the Abu Ballas road until now. According to R. Kuper, Herkhouf possibly travelled this way to Iam, which some authors, including myself, place in the region of Dongola. In Wadi Shaw a Meidum bowl was discovered (Kuper 2002: 1ff.; 2003: 12ff.). An inscription states that the steward *jmy-r pr Mrj* came to drive back the Oasiens, and is dated to the VI<sup>th</sup> or the XII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. On the road to Jebel Uweinat or to Abu Ballas (350 km long) the mission of R. Kuper has discovered about thirty stop over places used from the Old Kingdom until Ptolemaic times.

According to P. Kuhlmann, this newly discovered track should probably be more connected to Nubia, than to Libya, the Toschka quarries included. Balat could have been the starting point for expeditions going to the desert and to Subsaharan Africa, a road more difficult than the road via Elephantine, but maybe leading through the pasture estates of the Nubian cattle-breeders and through Iam. Dakhleh's function, similar to the evolution of function which the Nubian fortresses experienced, would have changed from the search for minerals during the IV<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to trade from the VI<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards. Rock drawings of bovines, hunting scenes with dogs and archers could have been inspired by C-

Group- or by Kerma-people, as we can suppose from recently discovered models at Gism el-Arba and Tabo (Kuhlmann 2002: 125, 133, 152).

The change and development of the second Cataract forts from military posts to trading posts during the XIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty maybe resulting from the increased importance of trade and the increase of the relations with Kush/Middle Kerma. This may be concluded from for example the abundant Egyptian and Kerma sealings recently discovered on Kerma sites such as at Beit es-Shetan, Kerma and Gism el-Arba (Gratien 2006: 115f.). Dating the Egyptian pottery found inside Kerma burials J. Bourriau showed the importance of Egyptian imports during Middle Kerma: the majority of pottery came from Upper Egypt until the mid-XII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, thereafter equally from Upper and Middle Egypt; during Classic Kerma we observe the same scheme (Bourriau 2004). As a result we interpret the Kerma productions on the extremity of the roads mentioned, as evidence of trade, if not of the real presence of Nubians, as well C-Group or Kerma people.

### **The Delta**

Well identified Kerma finds, are scarce; all are dated to the Second Intermediate Period. At Tell Heboua in the Eastern Delta, a Second Intermediate Period site excavated by M. Abdel Maksoud, a sherd of a beaker was found by myself (fine fabric with everted rim, black-topped and burnished, Classical Kerma; Gratien 1990: 99 n. 9).

In Avaris / Tell el-Daba' at 'Ezmet Helmi palace, many Nubian sherds were discovered in sectors H/1, H/2, H/III, H/IV and H/VI, and published (Fuscaldo 2002: 167 ff; 2004: 111ff.; Hein 2003: 199ff.). From sectors H/1 and H/IV mostly beakers and cups with thickened lip are known, dated to Classic Kerma. In sector H/V the sherd of a mat-impressed cooking pot and one from the same period was decorated with "croisillons". In H/III and H/VI, about 80 sherds were found, some deriving from beakers (one coming from an offering-pit with a funeral meal and pottery from the beginning of Thutmosis III' reign), some from cups with a thickened lip characteristic of the Classic Kerma period (n° 5 = N° C III, 2 at Saï: Gratien 1985a: fig. 321). A-typical red and black-topped bowls, and cooking pots were also found as well as other ceramics: two undecorated cups, incised pots, nine round mat-impressed vases. These seem not to have been impressed with a rocker-stamp but instead they are examples of the well-known traditional technique of mat-impressed pottery, the surface being partially erased by polishing or smoothing (Type C I, 1 at Saï: Gratien 1985a: 430). Fabrics and surface treatments are similar to Sudanese productions: black rim, surfaces varying from red-brown to brown and dark grey, smooth, brushed or polished inside. The last example, n° 15, is a pot completely covered with incised squares,



and another one with incised hatchings similar to models known in Nubia in C-Group as well as in the Egyptian Second Cataract Forts during the Second Intermediate Period (for example Wadi es-Sebua' Gratien 1985b: 39ff. or Mirgissa, cemetery MFe Vercoutter 1975: 330, type 7).

The finds from Tell el-Daba' were usually not located in situ; they are dated by context into the Second Intermediate Period or the beginning of the New Kingdom which corresponds to the timespan in Nubia itself. Skeletons, presumably of Nubians, were discovered at Avaris, as well as two skulls inside of execration deposits, dated to the beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Fuscaldo 2004: 113). It may be concluded that the presence of natives from the Kerma Kingdom is likely at Avaris and in the Eastern Delta at the end of the Classic Kerma period.

### The Valley

Most of the Kerma ceramic material discovered in Egypt, is Classic Kerma. According to my experience at Mirgissa, Saï and Gism el-Arba it does not seem possible to establish a fine typology for beakers with a white band. Every attempt to do so was negative because curve and thickness of the body, total or partial burnishing are not significant and the differences are dependant on different workshops. J. Bourriau listed the finds all dated to the Second Intermediate period or the beginning of the New Kingdom, following this non exhaustive list.

- Memphis, Kom Rabi'a, six mat-impressed or incised sherds, from Classic Kerma cooking pots; according to D. Jeffreys a small foreign community could have lived there at the beginning of XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Bourriau 1991: 135ff., fig. 3.1-3; 1997: 159ff.; Jeffreys 1989: 2).
- Saqqara, T. 10, mastaba 3507: 2 beakers found with Egyptian furniture, beginning of XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, tomb of an egyptianized Nubian in Amenhotep I's reign (Bourriau 1991: 138-139, fig. 5-6 and pl. 6.2 and 7.1-3; 1981: 31).
- Dahshur, small cemetery excavated by Sami Farag and Ahmed Moussa, a salvage excavation, with the discovery of "Pan-Grave" burials, south-west of Senusret III's pyramid, with non-identified pottery (Leclant 1974: 185).
- Kahun: the well-known sherd BM 55289 (Kemp 1977: 289ff.; Kemp & Merrillees 1980: 91), coming from a cooking pot incised with vertical and crossed hatchings, probably Second Intermediate Period if we compare it with Nubian pottery found inside the Second Cataract forts.
- Lisht, cemetery north of northern pyramid (Bourriau 1981: 27).
- Qau, cemeteries 7000 and 4500: in T. 7101, sherds of a beaker, mid-to end of the Second Intermediate Period (Bourriau 1981: 32).

- Abydos, Mace's cemetery D (D 80, 82, 93, 94); all the sherds are coming from beakers, and so-called "pan-graves", but are in fact Classic Kerma, end of the Second Intermediate Period and beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.
- Abydos, Garstang's cemetery E, sherds from a Classic Kerma beaker (Bourriau 1981: 33).
- Abydos, Peet's cemetery O; pieces of 11 Classic Kerma beakers (end of the Second Intermediate Period to New Kingdom; Bourriau 1981: 33).
- Abydos, Peet's cemetery C; in C 91, a Kerma vase, Second Intermediate Period to beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Bourriau 1981: 33).
- Abydos, Garstang's excavations in 1908, n° 694 (11 beakers and a Classic Kerma tea-pot, in a pit with two skeletons in crouched positions; also n° 524 (one vase, four beakers and Kerma sherds with undatable Egyptian equipment (Bourriau 1981: 33).
- Ballas: Classic Kerma beakers were found on the site, beakers, jars with an impressed lip, cooking pots (their bottoms being reinforced with fingers' marks and incised with squares under the rim); fine pottery as well as coarse items, table vases, containers, cooking pots, indicate the stay of Nubians, different from the Pan-Grave-people (Bourriau 1990: 15ff.; Bourriau 1991: 132). The Egyptian pottery is dated from the end of the XVII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to the beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The Nubian pottery comes nearly totally from the settlement; cooking pots are abundant, they are the only ceramic for cooking on the site. The Nubian ceramics belong to the Classic Kerma pottery, which can be dated to the end of the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period: jars (of Saï type C IX), rounded mat-impressed cooking-pots or large squared incised cooking pots, as inside the forts, and beakers. So, J. Bourriau suggests, it is likely that Kerma Nubians were living together with Medjayou/Pan-Grave people.
- Abadiya, T. E2, and cemetery X: five beakers and a Nubian vase, besides Egyptian ceramic from the first part of the Second Intermediate Period (Bourriau 1981: 34; Petrie 1901: 13ff., pl. 38; 45; pl. 40 cem. X).
- Karnak, Treasury of Thutmosis I: some sherds, dated to the Second Intermediate Period, with one beaker piece with white band (personal communication H. Jacquet-Gordon).
- Thebes, Dra 'Abou el-Naga: six beakers found with Egyptian pottery inside the tomb of a woman and a child, end of the Second Intermediate Period (Bourriau 1991: 132).



- Hierakonpolis : squared incised cooking pots, rims incised with squares or triangles (Kemp 1977: 291ff.; Adams 1974a: n° 291 et 293; Adams 1974b: 34/125, 39/186, 57/88, 58/123, 76/211).
- Edfu : cooking pots in the town of the beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, dated not after the reign of Ahmose; some are decorated with hatchings and crossing lines (Bourriau 1981: 34); others, published by Weigall (1907: Pl. 77; Michalowski 1938: Pl. 30), are decorated with crossed hatching and chevrons, as we can see from the drawings; so we can compare them to the Second Intermediate Period production of the Second Cataract region.
- Gurob: Brunton excavated two poor tombs, T. 77 and T. 86, containing two beakers, dated to the end of the Second Intermediate Period or beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty by J. Bourriau; possibly tombs of egyptianized Nubians (Bourriau 1981: 32).

### The Western Desert and the Oases

Among finds from Wadi Shaw no Nubian remains appeared, even if similarities were striking. In 1983, W. Schuck discovered at the base of tumulus 83/110-9 the sherds of a hemispherical cooking pot, with restricted opening and incised hatched triangles, similar to Middle Kerma and C-Group productions. The offering is dated to the Kerma period. Among the neighbouring tumuli, positions and orientations of the corpses vary considerably. C14 dating spanned the 4th to the 2nd millennium BC (Schuck 2002: 242-243). The bowl mentioned above, similar to a Middle Kerma one, is an isolated witness of relations between the Wadi and the Nile valley.

The Nubian objects discovered in the Oases could have come from the Middle Nile or have been left by Medjayou in case of their having stayed there (Redford 1970: 2). Relations with the Kerma kingdom are well attested, in particular at Balat and Ayn 'Asil. The site was still occupied during the Middle Kingdom under the authority of a governor whose duty was – among others – the surveillance of the roads. The Second Intermediate Period level is well known, as well as the existence of a large dwelling and a XIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty cemetery. The ceramic found include a dozen of Classic Kerma sherds and others, called “pan-grave” or Kerma. From the town derive several sherds of cooking pots, which could belong to Nubians of the valley. We probably can identify pottery of Middle Kerma or the beginning of Classic Kerma, notably usual settlement ceramic. All of them are hemispherical bowls with a restricted opening; one was impressed on a rounded mat and incised with triangles, and shows a reinforced bottom, dated Classic Kerma (G 20-7-1, n° 6/5); others could equally be dated to Middle or Classic Kerma (Baud et al. 1999: 1ff.; Baud 1997: 19ff.); n° 1347-141 (fig. 6/1) is a pot decorated with squared triangles (?) under a horizontal line; n°

1470-41 (fig. 6/2) is incised with squared triangles; n° G 20-10-74 (fig. 6/3) is incised with merging triangles; two bottoms are reinforced with fingers (G 25-2 and 74, fig. 6/6 and 7); and, at the end, a small fine pottery bowl, red and black-topped, with a small convex and thickened lip, occurring during Middle and Classic Kerma.

Other sherds, coming from excavations of the town, are similar to Kerma tradition. They are cooking pots, numerous in the south sector, decorated with incised patterns, reinforced bottom. They are dated to the beginning of the New Kingdom, but are well known since Middle Kerma. Two sherds of fine pottery of red and black-topped beakers were also recovered (Marchand & Tallet 1999: 326, 333, fig. 45).

The Canadian team in Dakhleh Oasis, discovered some sherds which can be linked to Kerma, for instance, in settlement 32/390-I 5-1, two so-called "pan-grave" sherds, associated with Second Intermediate Period pottery: bowls with black tempered fabric, light brown surfaces, one incised with hatched triangles below a horizontal line, the second incised with hatchings (Hope 1980: 287; Mills 1999: 225, 259). They probably come from Middle Kerma or beginning of Classic Kerma cooking pots. Another (not illustrated) Nubian sherd was found in the Old Kingdom cemetery 32/390-K 2/1: a restricted vase, with burnished interior and covered with a red slip. We are not able to attribute it to a precise culture, as well as other sherds like pots with fingers' prints under the lip, or with an internal finely incised lip, either A-Group or C-Group (Mills 1979: 172; Hope 1980: 237).

Nubians also visited Khargeh Oasis during the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, but finds are scarce. At Garn el-Gina, a "Libyan" settlement was discovered, a camp with artefacts and ashes. Sherds are of a dark grey to brown fabric and incised, very similar to the Nubian cooking pots with their hemispherical restricted forms; the lip is simple, the decoration incised, usually a net of squaring covering the upper part of the bodies. They are identified as Nubians by Caton-Thompson (1952: 40ff., fig., pl. 123), but could be Second Intermediate period C-Group.

There we also find mat-impressed pottery, made of a black or grey fabric, with red-brown surfaces, numerous in Yeba Pass; another ceramic is decorated also with incised patterns, both are not dated. According to Arkell mentioned by Caton-Thompson, these categories could be linked with medieval and post-medieval pottery, well known in Kordofan, Darfur and Wadi el-Milk (Caton-Thompson 1952: 42, pl. 123/1; J.C. Darnell 2002: 132ff; D. Darnell 2002: 165f.). Similar pottery has just been discovered during the survey of Southern Wadi el-Milk, done by the French Archaeological Mission around Zankor and Abu Sofyan.



Pottery from Bir Nakheila and Kurkur seems to belong to the Second Intermediate Period, in particular a horizontally comb-streaked bowl with an incised lip could be C-Group as this type is well known in Wadi es-Sebua but also, not so rarely, in Kerma settlements (D. Darnell 2002: fig. 6).

At Kurkur, Nubian (C-Group or Kerma) pottery was found inside huts: mat-impressed sherds are mentioned (D. Darnell 2002: 172). This sector could be a part of C-Group or Kerma territories during the Second Intermediate Period but the road between Khargeh and the Valley remained under Egyptian control.

At Alamt Tal and in Gebel Tjauti many Nubian sherds have been discovered; the excavators associate them with the desert police: Nubian sherds with a black fabric and burnished dark red surfaces from bowls and jars were found with Kerma beakers and mat-impressed sherds to be dated to the Classic Kerma (Darnell & Darnell 1996: 36ff.).

### Mines and quarries

In Wadi el-Hudi, inside the XII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty fortress, few Pan-Grave sherds have been found besides Middle Kingdom pottery (Shaw 2002: 247).

The Toschka/Gebel el-Asr quarries as well as in Khufu's quarries in the western desert (Kuhlmann 2002: 143; Kuper & Forster 2003: 25 ff.) did not, as far as I know, provide any Nubian sherd.

As shown by these earlier studies, Nubians from Kerma lived in Egypt at the end of the Second Intermediate Period and the beginning of the New Kingdom (end of Classic Kerma). They brought with them ceramics for their own use such as table ware and cooking pottery. Drawing the attention of the excavators to these will certainly lead to more being recorded.

During Middle Kerma, Nubians travelled through the western desert as far as the Oases. On the other hand, no Middle Kerma production is documented in the Nile valley, no table ware or storage jars. The dating of the cooking pots is still imprecise because they could have been produced and fired anywhere in primitive kilns without great skills of fabrication. Datable cooking pots seem to be similar to the Second Intermediate Period ones. Therefore trading roads could have been under Egyptian control. The Nile road in Lower Nubia is blocked by Egyptian forts and towns under the control of the army and of the vizir's administration. Goods from Egypt arrived at Kush, as well as at Kerma town and at smaller villages farther away, for instance Gism el-Arba. The transport of the, probably state run, trade was under Egyptian control. Middle Kerma people therefore used the routes via the oases and Wadi Shaw. Some arrived at Ayn 'Asil, but do not seem to intervene in quarry activities, where, if there was need of local labour, the workers must be related to C-Group culture.

It was during Classic Kerma times that the second cataract barrier (held before by the Egyptians) fell, when Kerma took control of Lower Nubia, and of the roads to Thebes and Avaris via the desert tracks and Dakhleh and also via the Nile road. The presence of Classic and Late Kerma people is evident in Upper Egypt and in the Delta.

This observation is in accordance with the Semna Dispatches, as well as with seals and sealings found in Nubia. At Mirgissa, Uronarti, Askut and Semna South other sealings (XII<sup>th</sup> and XIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) are proof of Theban domination and of the army involved in the administrative management of the fortresses. The Egyptian imports into Lower Nubia were of a restricted kind: some vases and their contents, perfume vases, amulets. Little by little, trade progressed into some southern trading-posts such as Beit es-Shetan in Kerma, or settlement 2 at Gism el-Arba (Gratien 2004: 74ff.). Classic Kerma Nubians adopted their own registration system with seals carrying geometrical designs or heraldic signs. In January 2006 a nice Kerma seal was discovered at Gism el-Arba settlement 2; It was incised with spirals and modelled in form of a ram's head; the design is Kerma without any doubt. Imports increased and became more diverse; they came from as far as the Mediterranean sea. Since the Middle Kerma period, Nubians took control over the traffic of precious goods coming from Subsaharan Africa. They exercised control of the Lower Nubian forts during the Second Intermediate Period. Possibly the cooking pots decorated with incised chevrons, large hatches or large squares found inside the fortresses, dated to the Middle Kingdom or Second Intermediate Period can be associated with these people (Gratien in press). Some of the Nubians reached the Egyptian capitals at the ends of the trading roads before becoming prisoners of the Thutmosids and before Kerma was sacked.

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