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Historical Observations on the Military Role of Three Ramesside Viceroys of Kush

Mohamed Raafat Abbas

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THE VICEROY OF KUSH (King's son of Kush) was a very important administrative post established in the New Kingdom, under either Kamose or Ahmose I, and ending at the close of the Twentieth Dynasty. This high official governed the whole of Nubia, then known as Wawat and Kush, each of which was administered by a 'deputy' (*idnw*). The land ruled over by this official changed during the New Kingdom, but at its largest could encompass land from El-Kab right up to Kurgus. He was responsible for building work within Nubia and also directing military or economic missions.¹ This paper surveys and discusses the significant military role of three Ramesside Viceroys that supported the political, economic and military authority of the Ramesside Empire in Nubia extremely during the Nineteenth Dynasty, in order to shed some light on a new aspect of the Egyptian imperialism in Ramesside Nubia.²

The Military Role of the Viceroy Amenemopet in the Nubian War of Sety I

The military campaign of Sety I in Nubia survives in two copies originated from Amarah West³ and Sai⁴, two of the most important centers in the Egyptian administration of Kush during the New Kingdom. The text on the two stelae stated that Sety I recounted a successful military campaign in his eighth year to crush a Nubian revolt in Irem⁵, which was located in

¹ G.A. REISNER, "The Viceroys of Kush", *JEA* 6, 1920, p. 28-55, 73-88; T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *Ägypten und Nubien*, Lund, 1941, p. 177-184.

² For a general overview of Ramesside Nubia, see: K.A. KITCHEN, "Historical Observations on Ramesside Nubia", in E. Endesfelder *et al.* (eds.), *Ägypten und Kusch*, Berlin, 1977, p. 213-225; A.J. SPALINGER, "Historical Observations on the Military Reliefs of Abu Simbel and Other Ramesside Temples in Nubia", *JEA* 66, 1980, p. 83-99; I. HEIN, *Die ramessidische Bautätigkeit in Nubien*, Wiesbaden, 1991, p. 97-99; R.G. MORKOT, "Nubia in the New Kingdom: The Limits of Egyptian Control", in W.V. Davies (ed.), *Egypt and Africa. Nubia from Prehistory to Islam*, London, 1991, p. 294-301.

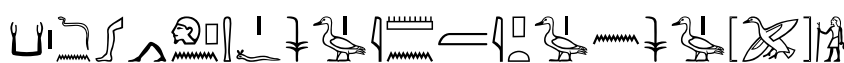
³ Amarah Stela, now Brooklyn Museum No. 39.424: PM VII, 159 (13-14); *KRI* I, 102-104; K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 214-219.

⁴ Stela S. 579: J. VERCOUTTER, "Une campagne militaire de Sétî I en Haute Nubie. Stèle de Sai S. 579", *RdE* 24, 1972, p. 201-208; *KRI* I, 102-104.

⁵ A Kushite kingdom, perhaps located in the Dongola Reach of the Nile around Kerma, or, as more recently advocated, much farther south, in the Bayuda Desert or the Berber-Shendi Reach of the river. Irem is documented in the Egyptian sources from the 18th to the 20th Dynasties as a significant power and potential threat to the security of southern Nubia. See B.G. TRIGGER, *Nubia under the Pharaohs*, London, 1976, p. 112; K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 216-220; D.B. O'CONNOR, "The Location of Irem", *JEA* 73, 1987, p. 99-136; R.G. MORKOT, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

Kush. Sety I was informed of the revolt in Irem while he was in Thebes, where the king received news of a disturbance by the “enemies of the land of Irem”, far to the south. Such depictions, whilst not uncommon, threatened the security of the main Egyptian trade routes south into Nubia as well as their exploitation of the desert mineral resources in this area. However, Sety I ordered further intelligence reports to expose the extent of his enemy’s plans before allowing his forces to head south. The Egyptian army set up base at the fortress, “Pacifier of the Two Lands”, in the fourth month of Peret, day 21. In the course of the next seven days the troubles were successfully extinguished, five wells fell to the Egyptians and more than four hundred captives were taken. This modest campaign, probably the last conducted by Sety I, occurred several years after his series of wars which are recorded on the northern walls of the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak temple.⁶

The Viceroy Amenemopet had been depicted in four graffiti carved on the Shellal Road at Aswan in the company of Sety I [fig. 1-3]. The first two graffiti are along the East side of the ancient road from Aswan South to Shellal, and the second pair along its West side. The king is shown smiting or about to smite a prisoner while viceroy kneels adoring.⁷ L. Habachi argued that these road graffiti are commemorating the victories of kings over their enemies. He had also stated that viceroys chose this road along which to carve their graffiti, when they took part in campaigns to the South.⁸ Accordingly, these graffiti indicate that the Viceroy Amenemopet had participated in the only known military Nubian campaign in the reign of Sety I, which was against Irem. This could be more supported by the third graffiti that shows Sety I who has stepped down from his war chariot, and is holding an enemy by the hair, while the Viceroy Amenemopet kneels and lifts his hands in adoration [fig. 2]. The latter is described as:



Kḏn tpy n ḥm.f s3-nsw Ḥmn-m-ipt s3 n s3-nsw [P3]sr.

The First Charioteer of His Majesty, the Viceroy Amenemopet, son of the Viceroy [Pas]er.⁹

Additionally, in the fourth graffiti, which consists of two registers [fig. 3], Sety I had been depicted in the upper register smiting an enemy, while in the lower register the Viceroy Amenemopet stands with up lifted arms and described as:



Kḏn tpy n ḥm.f s3-nsw n Kš Ḥmn-m-ipt.

The First Charioteer of His Majesty, the Viceroy of Kush, Amenemopet.¹⁰

⁶ KRI I, 102-104; KRITA I, 85-87; KRITANC I, 81-90; J. VERCOUTTER, *op. cit.*, p. 201-208; K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 216-217.

⁷ PM V, 245-247; W.M.F. PETRIE, *A Season in Egypt 1887*, London, 1888, pls. V-VI; J. DE MORGAN *et al.*, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte Antique. Première Série: Haute Égypte. Tome Premier: De la frontière de Nubie à Kom Ombos*, Vienne, 1894, p. 20, nos. 123-124, p. 28, no. 5, p. 29, no. 12; G.A. REISNER, *op. cit.*, p. 38; L. HABACHI, “The Graffiti and Work of the Viceroys of Kush in the Region of Aswan”, *Kush* 5, 1957, p. 26-27, nos. 20-23; KRI I, 302-303; KRITA I, 246-247; KRITANC I, 199-200.

⁸ L. HABACHI, *op. cit.*, p. 26-27, nos. 20-23.

⁹ PM V, 247; W.M.F. PETRIE, *op. cit.*, pl. V; J. DE MORGAN *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 20, no. 123; G.A. REISNER, *op. cit.*, p. 38, no. 10a; L. HABACHI, *op. cit.*, p. 26, no. 20; KRI I, 302; KRITA I, 247.

¹⁰ PM V, 247; W.M.F. PETRIE, *op. cit.*, pl. V; J. DE MORGAN *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 20, no. 124; G.A. REISNER, *op. cit.*, p. 38, no. 10b; L. HABACHI, *op. cit.*, p. 27, no. 21; KRI I, 303; KRITA I, 247.

A.R. Schulman suggested that the first charioteer was leading a troop of ten chariots.¹¹ I think that the mention of the military title of the Viceroy Amenemopet as “the First Charioteer of His Majesty” in this graffiti emphasize his military participation in the campaign of Sety I against Irem.

Furthermore, it is possible that a badly weathered rock stela of Sety I with Viceroy of Kush Amenemopet at Qasr Ibrim alludes to this Nubian campaign of Sety I. This well-known rock stela is one of several carved in the name of Sety I by the Viceroy of Kush Amenemopet [fig. 4].¹² This monument was carved high on a rocky bluff rising from the Nile on its east bank, just south of Qasr Ibrim. The upper part of the scene is worn off; alone remain the horses (minus heads) and chariot at right, the lower parts of the king and deity (centre and left) and most of the smitten foe between them. The main text below these is virtually complete, as is the kneeling figure of the viceroy to its left. It is noticeable that this text is highly rhetorical and lacks a date.¹³

K.A. Kitchen stated that the war-scenes that top these graffiti of Sety I and Amenemopet at Aswan and their rock-scene at Qasr Ibrim might reflect the viceroy’s part in facilitating the transit through Nubia of the pharaoh’s strike-force that crushed a rebellion in Irem in his 8th year.¹⁴ There is, however, one further relief that may showcase Sety’s year eight battle against Irem. Ramesses II, while still heir apparent, constructed a temple at Beit el-Wali upon which he depicted himself and two of his sons charging into a group of Nubians as they fled pell-mell to their village in panic. The associated text provides practically no historically pertinent information whatsoever. Oddly enough, however, the relief itself is almost anecdotal in its detail, even down to the identification of Sety’s Viceroy, Amenemopet, as one of the participants. Given that this campaign must have occurred during Sety’s reign – a period for which no other Nubian wars are attested – it is quite possible that Ramesses had participated in the raid on Irem and chose to memorialize his own role in the conflict on the walls of Beit el-Wali.¹⁵

The Military Role of the Viceroy Setau in the Reign of Ramesses II

During the reign of Ramesses II, from years 15 to 20, there was a renewed confrontation with Irem, where many Nubian captives were taken as recorded in the West Gate of Amarah West.¹⁶ Furthermore, another campaign against Irem dated to year 44 was launched by the Viceroy Setau.¹⁷ In his stela (Cairo JE 41395), the Viceroy Setau mentioned:



|^a H3q p3 hpš tnr n pr-‘3 p3y nb nfr p3 t3 n Irm hsy [...]

¹¹ A.R. SCHULMAN, “The Egyptian Chariotry: A Reexamination”, *JARCE* 2, 1963, p. 90.

¹² PM VII, 94; F. HINTZE, “Die Felsenstele Sethos I. bei Qasr Ibrim”, *ZÄS* 87, 1962, p. 31-40, pl. 3; R.A. CAMINOS, *Shrines and Rock Inscriptions of Ibrim*, London, 1968, p. 83-90, pls. 39-40; *KRI* I, 98-99; *KRITA* I, 82-83; *KRITANC* I, 78-79.

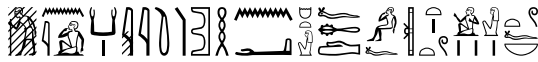
¹³ R.A. CAMINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 83-90, pls. 39-40; *KRITANC* I, 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁵ A.J. SPALINGER, “Traces of the Early Career of Ramesses II”, *JNES* 38, 1979, p. 280, n. 53; K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

¹⁶ *KRI* II, 222; *KRITA* II, 77.

¹⁷ K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 221.



|^b wr n ĩk3yt3 ħn' ħmt.f ħrd(w).f šnwt.f nb.



|^c ĩw.ĩ m ts-pdwt m sšm w3t ħr ħ3ty mš'f



|^c ĩw bw dg(s) [...] (t3 n) Kš (ħsy) [...] dgs dgs.ĩ ħ3q r drw ħr r-' ĩnĩ m bw w'.

|^a The strong arm of Pharaoh, my good lord, plundered the land of miserable Irem, |^b and [?captured the] chief of Akuyata, with his wife, his children, and all his entourage. |^c I was a troop-commander, as one who led the way at the head of his army, |^d this land of the [miserable] Kush, not (being able to) hi[de] - (where they) trod, I trod, all the plunder complete, being brought together in one place.¹⁸

In Egyptian inscriptions, Akuyata refers to the land and population located in the general vicinity of Wadi Allaqi, the mining district in Lower Nubia. The fact that these people should have joined forces with the Iremites, who occupied the fringes of Upper Nubia, suggests a quite substantial rebellion of non-Nilotic Nubians.¹⁹

An inscription of Ramose from es-Sebua reports that in year 44 of Ramesses II, the Viceroy Setau was ordered to raid the Tjemehu²⁰ land for people to be used as construction workers.²¹ Setau campaigned to the west of Lower Nubia, perhaps to Dunqul or Kurkur oases, and captured Libyans who were then employed in the building of es-Sebua temple.²² The accounts of Ramesses II stated the use of the Libyan captives in the building of the Nubian temples of the king in year 44 of his reign by the Viceroy Setau as follows:²³



|^a H3t-sp 44 wd ħm.f rd.t(w) m ħr n mħ-ib s3-nsu St3w [m3'-] ħrw ħn' rmt-mš' s3w (R' msw-mry-Imn) ĩmn mk(w) s3(=f)



|^b ħ3q.f(m) t3 ĩmhwr qd m ħwt-ntr (R' msw-mry-Imn) m Pr-Imn.

|^a Year 44 – His Majesty decreed that the confidant (?) and Viceroy Setau, [justi]fied, be given charge, along with the soldiers of the Company of Ramesses II, 'Amun is protector of (his)

¹⁸ KRI III, 93, 9-12; KRITA III, 64-65.

¹⁹ E.F. MORRIS, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt's New Kingdom*, Leiden, 2004, p. 653.

²⁰ The term Tjemehu refers to any nomadic Libyan group inhabiting the Western Desert. See: J. OSING, "Libyen, Libyer", *LÄ* III, 1980, 1015; A.J. SPALINGER, "Some Notes on the Libyans of the Old Kingdom and Later Historical Reflexes", *JSSEA* 9, 1979, p. 137-138; D.B. O'CONNOR, "The Nature of Tjemhu (Libyan) Society in the Later New Kingdom", in A. Leahy (ed.), *Libya and Egypt, c. 1300-750 B.C.*, London, 1990, p. 33-37.

²¹ J. YOYOTTE, "Un document relatif aux rapports de la Libye et de la Nubie", *BSFE* 6, 1951, p. 9-14.

²² J. Yoyotte locates the Tjemehu mentioned in the Harkhuf texts (from the Old Kingdom) near the small southern oases of Kurkur and Dunqul, an observation that he persuasively supports with the stela of Ramose from Wadi es-Sebua, describing the activities of Setau. See: J. YOYOTTE, *loc. cit.*

²³ Cairo Stela JE 41403: K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 221; KRI III, 95, 12-14; KRITA III, 65-66.

son', |^b that he should take captives (in) the land of Libya (Tjemehu), to build in the Temple of Ramesses II in the House of Amun.

It has been noted that the Viceroy Setau had never held any military title in his career before being appointed as Viceroy of Kush. He was educated within the palace, and his first position was in the office of the Vizier, from which (according to his auto-biographical text) he was appointed to be the Steward of Amun at Thebes, and the Leader of the Festival, and then to be Viceroy.²⁴ Nevertheless, Setau succeeded in commanding these military campaigns in Nubia against Irem and Tjemehu to support the political, economic and military authority of Egypt in this region during the reign of Ramesses II. Since he was a civil official, it is possible that Setau had depended on the Troop-Commander of Kush (*hry pḏt n Kš*) in these military operations as assistance.²⁵

The Military Role of the Viceroy Messuy in the Nubian War of Merenptah

The four stelae of Merenptah at Amada,²⁶ Amarah West,²⁷ Wadi es-Sebua²⁸ and Aksha,²⁹ were set up ostensibly to commemorate Merenptah's crushing victory over the rebellious peoples of Wawat. Unfortunately, three of these inscriptions are almost completely lost; however, the Amada text is exceptionally well preserved.

The main course of the action is set in "year 5, the third month of summer, the first day". This date marks the assembly of Merenptah's forces in the western Delta in response to the threat of a Libyan incursion into the Egyptian territory. An inscription celebrating this military engagement records that Merenptah's forces defeated the Libyan enemy in a six-hour battle two days later. Just as these events were unfolding in the north of the country, news of a revolt deep in the south in Nubia (Wawat) reached Merenptah. The synchronism of the Libyan and Nubian attacks is more than mere coincidence. There is strong suspicion that these peoples had strategically planned the timing of their assaults on Egypt's borders, principally to divide and hence weaken Egyptian resistance. Lines of communication between the lands of Libya and Nubia were, at this time, well established along the routes of the Western Desert. However, Merenptah responded to the news of the attack by attacking in turn the land of Wawat: "(...) the blast of his mouth was against the land of Wawat. They were devastated at one blow without heirs and brought together to Egypt. Fire was being thrown at their great ones in the presence of their companions; the survivors had their hands cut off because of their crimes, others had their ears and eyes removed, and were taken to Kush.

²⁴ *KRI* III, 80-111; *KRITA* III, 55-77.

²⁵ The Viceroy of Kush was assisted in his post by a large staff of officials, as the Deputy of Wawat who governed from Aniba as representative for Lower Nubia, and the Deputy of Kush who governed from Amara West as representative for Upper Nubia. The Troop-Commander of Kush was amongst this staff of officials, he was the chief military officer in Nubia, and served under the authority of the Viceroy of Kush in the structure of the Egyptian imperial administration in Nubia. See: T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *op. cit.*, p. 182; L. HABACHI, "Viceroys of Kush during the New Kingdom", in: *Sixteen Studies on Lower Nubia*, *CASAE* 23, Cairo, 1981, p. 155; C.R. HIGGINBOTHAM, "The Administrative Structure under Ramesses III", in E.H. Cline, D. O'Connor (eds.), *Ramesses III: The Life and Times of Egypt's Last Hero*, Michigan, 2012, p. 92-93.

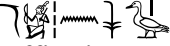
²⁶ PM VII, 67 (5).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 159 (6).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 57 (15).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 127 (2).

They were made into heaps in their towns”.³⁰

In a graffito located at Aswan road to Philae, the Viceroy Messuy had been depicted with King Merenptah who stands in his war chariot [fig. 5].³¹ Moreover Messuy held the military title  *imy-r mš' n sz nsw* “Overseer of the Army of the Viceroy”.³² I think that this graffito is very significant because it indicates that Messuy had participated personally in the military operations against Nubia, under the command of his king. According to T. Säve-Söderbergh, it would seem strange for Messuy to show himself in the graffito he carved in Aswan, on the road with military scenes before his sovereign in a war chariot without having taken part in a war in the South.³³ A.J. Spalinger suggested that Merenptah did not participate personally in his Nubian military campaign,³⁴ hence I think that the depiction of the king in this graffito may be a symbolic representation, and that Messuy was the commander of the military activities that leads to the defeat of the Nubian rebellion by Merenptah’s army as mentioned in the Nubian stelae of the king. This may provide an explanation for the reason that makes Messuy held the military title “Overseer of the Army of the Viceroy” as noted above. Furthermore, the Amada text and its parallels do not provide any specific details concerning the date or the locality in which the Nubian conflict took place, though the campaign was probably entrusted to the command of the Viceroy of Kush Messuy.

³⁰ KRI IV, 1-2, 33-37; KRITA IV, 1-2, 29; A.A. YOUSSEF, “Merenptah’s Fourth Year Text at Amada”, *ASAE* 58, 1964, p. 273-280, pl. 1; K.A. KITCHEN, *op. cit.*, p. 221-224; C. MANASSA, *The Great Karnak Inscription of Merneptah. Grand Strategy in the 13th Century BC*, *YES* 5, Yale, 2003, p. 96-97, 99-100.

³¹ PM V, 247; W.M.F. PETRIE, *op. cit.*, pl. II, no. 70; J. DE MORGAN *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 18, no. 87; G.A. REISNER, *op. cit.*, p. 47, no. 15a; L. HABACHI, “The Graffiti and Work of the Viceroys of Kush in the Region of Aswan”, *Kush* 5, 1957, p. 33, no. 34; KRI IV, 94; KRITA IV, 74.

³² This military title of Messuy is registered on a jamb from Aniba, now in Pennsylvania University Museum (E.11362). See: PM VII, 80; G. STEINDORFF, *Aniba* II, New York, 1937, p. 58, pl. 34, no. 6; S. ISKANDER, *The Reign of Merenptah*, PhD Thesis, New York, 2002, p. 360; KRI IV, 96; KRITA IV, 76.

³³ T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *op. cit.*, p. 172-173; cf. L. HABACHI, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34.

³⁴ A.J. SPALINGER, *Aspects of the Military Documents of Ancient Egyptians*, New Haven, London, 1982, p. 13-14.



Fig. 1. The first graffito of Viceroy Amenemopet (Shellal Road at Aswan; J. de Morgan *et al.*, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte Antique. Première Série: Haute Égypte I. De la frontière de Nubie à Kom Ombos*, Vienne, 1894, p. 28, no. 5).

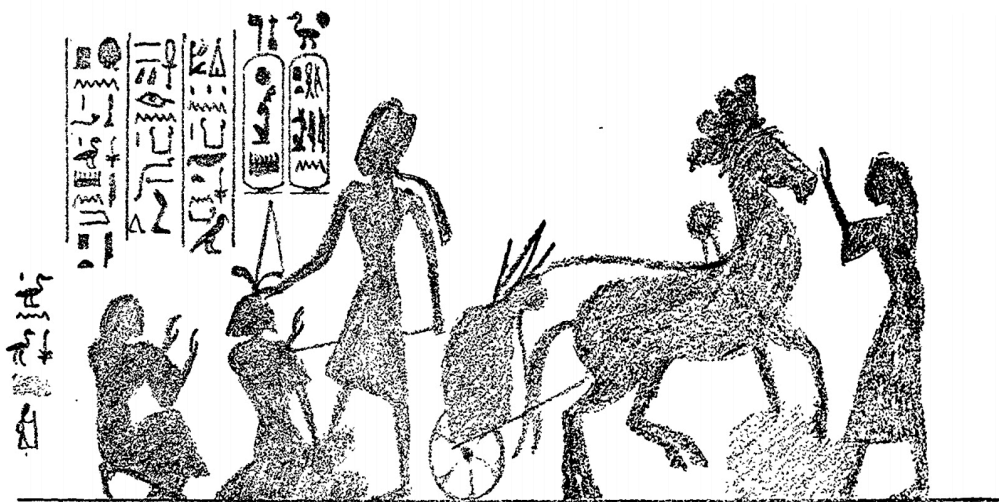


Fig. 2. The third graffito of Viceroy Amenemopet (Shellal Road at Aswan; *ibid.*, p. 20, no. 123).

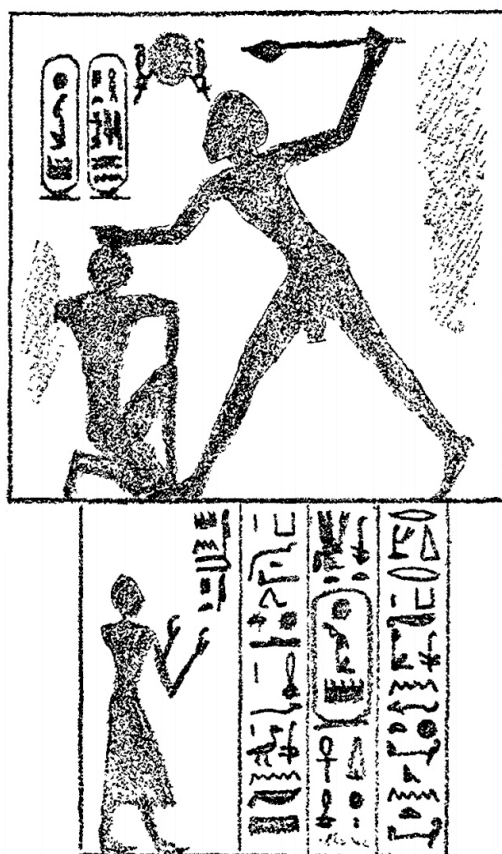


Fig. 3. The fourth graffito of Viceroy Amenemopet (Shellal Road at Aswan; *ibid.*, p. 20, no. 124).



Fig. 4. The rock stela of Sety I with Viceroy of Kush Amenemopet (Qasr Ibrim; © Mohamed Raafat Abbas).



Fig. 5. The graffito of Viceroy Messuy (Aswan road to Philae; J. de Morgan *et al.*, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte Antique. Première Série: Haute Égypte I. De la frontière de Nubie à Kom Ombos*, Vienne, 1894, p. 18, no. 87).

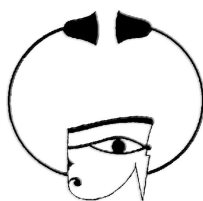
Résumé :

Le Vice-roi de Koush (Fils royal de Koush) était un haut fonctionnaire de l'administration impériale égyptienne durant le Nouvel Empire. Les sources textuelles et archéologiques de la période ramesside indiquent que certains vice-rois ramessides ont joué un rôle militaire important durant les règnes de Séthi I^{er}, Ramsès II et Mérenptah, en maintenant l'autorité politique, économique et militaire de l'Empire ramesside dans ses territoires méridionaux. Ils participèrent aux grandes campagnes militaires ramessides contre la Nubie sous le commandement de leurs rois guerriers afin d'anéantir les révoltes nubiennes dans les régions d'Irem ou de Ouauat. Ils menèrent également d'autres campagnes par eux-mêmes dans le même but ainsi qu'à des fins politiques ou économiques. Cet article examine et discute ce point afin de mettre en lumière un nouvel aspect de l'impérialisme égyptien en Nubie ramesside.

Abstract:

The Viceroy of Kush (King's son of Kush) was a high official in the structure of the Egyptian imperial administration during the New Kingdom. The textual and archaeological evidence of the Ramesside Period indicate that some Ramesside viceroys had played a significant military role during the reigns of Sety I, Ramesses II and Merenptah, to support the political, economic and military authority of the Ramesside Empire in its southern territories. They had participated in the major Ramesside military campaigns against Nubia under the command of their warrior kings that aimed to crush any Nubian revolts in the regions of Irem or Wawat. They had also led other campaigns by themselves for the same purpose and for any other political or economic purposes. This paper surveys and discusses this point, in order to shed some light on a new aspect of the Egyptian imperialism in Ramesside Nubia.

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