

The Decorated Faience Puteals from Meroe

KRZYSZTOF GRZYMSKI

The discussion of the hollow faience cylinders found at Meroe M 200 identified as puteals, i.e. drain or shaft heads. The practical and cultic importance of water at Meroe is also discussed.

This is an exceedingly modest contribution to honour a scholar of such international standing as Professor Steffen Wenig, but the subject of this paper seems particularly fitting as it concerns the class of objects which he published many years in the catalogue of the “Africa in Antiquity” exhibition.¹ In that publication Wenig called attention to large, thin-walled, glazed faience cylinders from Garstang’s excavations at Meroe which until that time received little attention. The illustrated example is the largest of these cylinders which is in the Nubian collection of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM 921.4.1; Fig. 1a-d, col. fig. 12a-d). The faience cylinders were found by the University of Liverpool expedition on the east side of M 200, an area which was only cursorily explored and whose function remains uncertain. Garstang only mentioned briefly the discovery there of “a series of glazed columns”.² Additional information about finds from M 200 was provided by Pythian-Adams³ who mentioned that on and about the east wall of M 200 “(...) were found green glaze pedestals ornamented with goddesses, Amon-rams, and dancing figures showing a Hellenistic influence (...)”. He also suggested that M 200 might have been a garden attached either to the Royal Palace or to the Temple of Amun. The two excavators dated the cylinders to circa 100 BC.⁴ In his exhibition catalogue Wenig suggested that these hollow cylinders from Meroe were perhaps used as column caps for wooden posts and he dated the Toronto cylinder to the 2nd – 3rd century AD.

Some ten years after Wenig’s pioneering work, Inge Hofmann returned to the subject publishing an in-depth study of the faience cylinders from Meroe providing a detailed description and iconographic analysis of the scenes depicted on the three known cylinders.⁵ She thought the cylinders likely served as bases for wooden columns or posts supporting

either a baldachin or a tent-like structure of the type known in Ptolemaic Egypt. In analysing the Toronto specimen Hofmann suggested that the four panels were arranged symmetrically depicting two rams and two lions.⁶ In fact, there can be little doubt the animal in the third panel, facing the lion is definitely a ram and not a lion, as can be seen in the photograph fig. 1a, col. fig. 12a and drawing fig. 2. Hofmann’s dating of the cylinders was based on the analysis of the fleece pattern on the Toronto ram. She observed that the fleece on the rams from the Natakamani’s reign usually had a spiral pattern (“Sechserlocken”), while the fleece on the Toronto cylinder ram has fish-scale pattern (“Rautenmuster” i.e. “diamond” pattern).⁷ According to Hofmann the latter design was introduced after Natakamani and so Hofmann dated the cylinders to the second half of the 1st century AD. Recently, Hofmann’s conclusions regarding the dating of the fleece pattern were confirmed by Vincent Rondot.⁸

The existence of other cylinders was known from Garstang’s preliminary reports and from Török’s publications⁹ but their present whereabouts were revealed only with the publication of the fragments from the Redpath Museum in Montreal¹⁰ and the Louvre.¹¹ In his article, Bruce Trigger refrained from dating the cylinders and merely listed the dates given by other scholars, namely Garstang (100 BC), Wenig (2nd – 3rd century AD), Török (1st century AD) and Hofmann (late 1st century AD). As to the function of the cylinders Trigger followed Hofmann suggesting that they might have been used for cladding the wooden post, except for a fragment of another, previously unknown faience cylinder from the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM 921.4.27) decorated with lotus petals, which may have been part of a column capital (fig. 3). Alternatively, the decorated cylinders

1 Wenig 1978, 91; 94, fig. 76.

2 Garstang, Pythian-Adams, Sayce 1914-16, 6.

3 Garstang, Pythian-Adams, Sayce 1914-16, 13.

4 Garstang and Pythian-Adams 1914, 3.

5 Hofmann 1989.

6 Hofmann 1989, 110-111, Abb. 1-4.

7 Hofmann 1989, 128.

8 See Anderson and Ahmed 2013, 70-72.

9 Török 1989, 133-134; 1997, 99-102.

10 Trigger 1994.

11 Pierrat-Bonnefois 2010.



Fig. 1a-d: Faience cylinder ROM 921.4.1, © Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

might have been Meroitic imitations of cylindrical “well” altars known from the Hellenistic world.¹²

It was a visit to Pompeii in 2011 that revived my interest in these objects. In one of the open-air storage rooms I noticed an object bearing a remarkable similarity to the Meroitic cylinders and took a photograph of it for my records (fig. 4). The scene of a dancing maenad was reminiscent of the Louvre piece.¹³ This similarity became even more apparent when I saw the same object displayed at the Pompeii exhibition organized at the British Museum in 2013. It was identified as a puteal, a cylindrical head of pipe or shaft used for drawing water in the garden.¹⁴

Remarkably, Pythian-Adams has already suggested in the above-mentioned excavation report that M 200 at Meroe might have been a garden. If the faience cylinders found there were indeed *puteals* we would have a striking parallel to the Pompeii find, both in terms of function and chronology. The probability that the cylinders should be associated with the water supply at Meroe is very high. Certainly wells must have existed at the site providing good drinking water, and the existence of a drainage system supplying the Nile water to the Royal Baths has been known since Garstang’s excavations. Recently, Hans-Ulrich Onasch provided a detailed description of such a water drain on the east side of the Royal Baths.¹⁵

12 Trigger 1994, 396-397; Hofmann 1989, 126.

13 Pierrat-Bonnefois 2010, 123.

14 Roberts 2013, 153.

15 Wolf et al. 2009, 229-231.

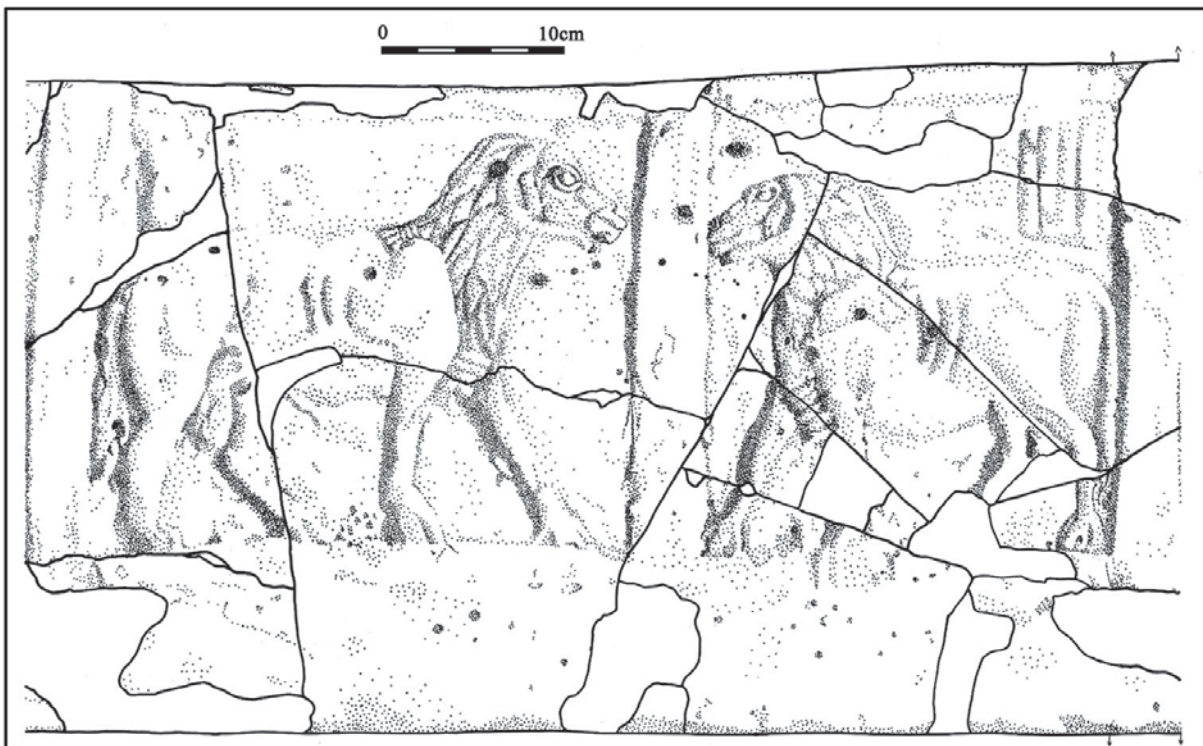
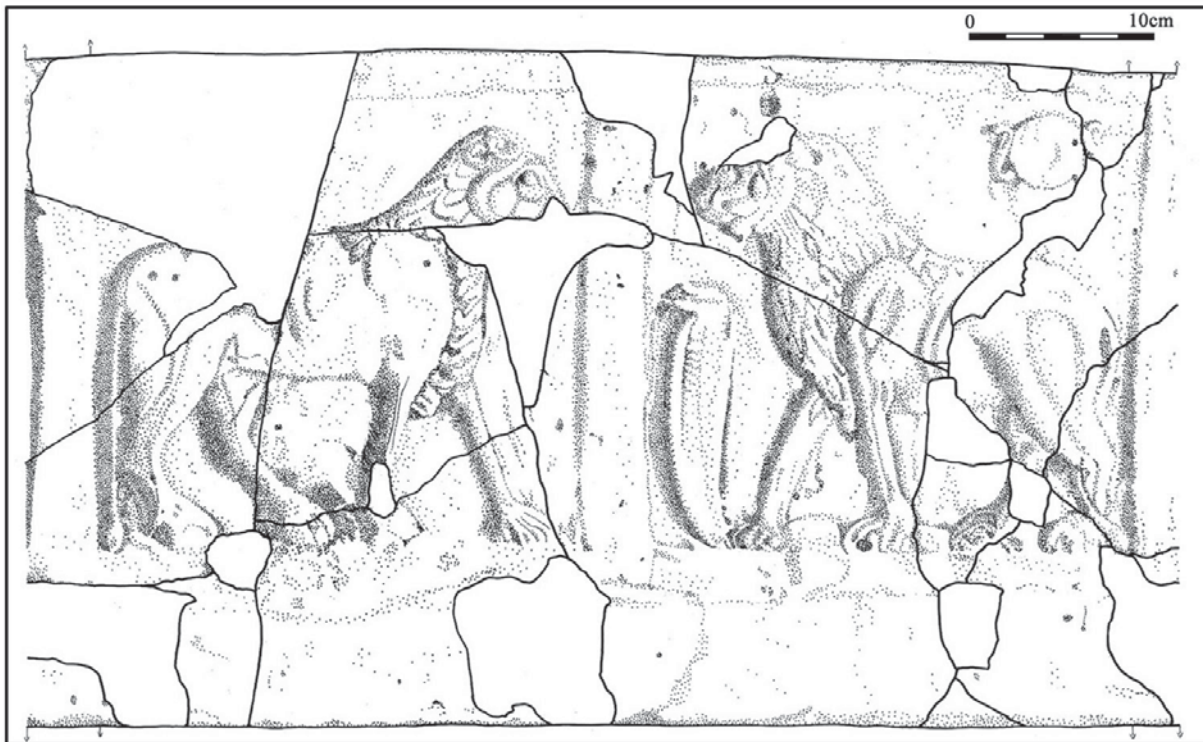


Fig. 2: Faience cylinder ROM 921.4.1 (drawing by J. Phillips and I. Grzyska), © Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

Another interesting aspect is the relationship between the profane and the sacred. While water was needed for the most practical purposes such as drinking, bathing, gardening and agriculture, it always possessed a spiritual aspect, being the life-giving

element. This helps explaining the iconography of the Meroe cylinders, especially the Louvre specimen with its Dionysian motifs. Assmann has called attention to the cultic importance of water in ancient Egypt and its association with Osiris (i.e. Dionysius

for the Greeks) related to the concept of renewal and rejuvenation.¹⁶ This readily brings to mind Herodotus' account of the "fountain of youth" at Meroe and makes one wonder whether the ornately decorated Royal Baths should not be interpreted as representing the later, Hellenistic version of such a life-giving font. The proposed identification of the decorated faience cylinders as puteals, rather than column cladding or base, would further signify both the practical and spiritual importance of water for the Meroites.

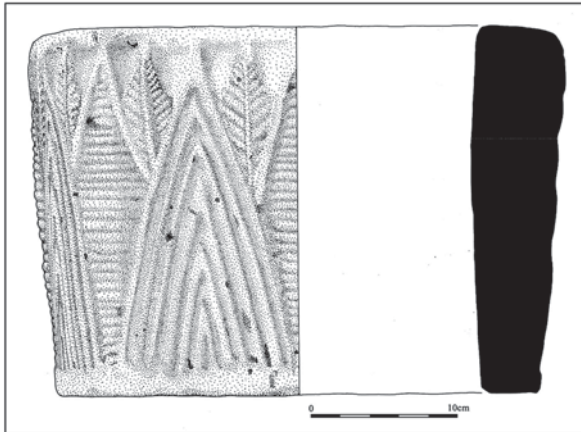


Fig. 3: Section of faience cylinder ROM 921.4.27 (drawing by J. Phillips and I. Grzymska), © Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto



Fig. 4: Terracotta *puteal* in Pompeii open-air magazine (photo K. Grzymski), © Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

Literature

- Anderson, J. and Ahmed, S.M., 2013, "Dangeil 2012: Sacred Ram – Avatar of the God Amun", *Sudan & Nubia* 17, 70-77
- Assmann, J., 2003, "Das Leichensekret des Osiris: Zur kultischen Bedeutung des Wassers im alten Ägypten", in N.-C. Grimal et al. (ed.) *Hommages à Faiza Haikal*, Cairo, 5-16
- Garstang, J. and Phythian-Adams, W.J., 1914, *Excavations at Meroe, Sudan, 1914. Fifth Season. Guide to the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition of Antiquities Discovered*, London
- Garstang, J., Phythian-Adams, W.J., Sayce, A.H., 1914-1916, "Fifth Interim Report on the Excavations at Meroe in Ethiopia", *LAAA* 7, 1-24
- Hofmann, I., 1989, "Die glasierten Säulenfragmente von M 200 (Meroe-Stadt), Beiträge zur Sudanforschung 4, 107-132
- Pierrat-Bonnefois, G., 2010, "Tambour ornamental à scènes bachique", in M. Baud (ed.) *Méroë un empire sur le Nil*, Paris, 122-123
- Roberts, P., 2013, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, Oxford
- Török, L., 1989, "Kush and the external world", *Meroitica* 10, 49-215
- Török, L., 1997, *Meroe. An Ancient African Capital*, London
- Trigger, B.G., 1994, "The John Garstang Cylinders from Meroe in the Redpath Museum at McGill University", in C. Berger, G. Clerc, N. Grimal (ed.), *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, vol.2, 389-397
- Wolf, S., et al. 2009, "Meroë und Hamadab – Stadtstrukturen und Lebensformen im afrikanischen Reich von Kusch", *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 2009/2, 215-262
- Wenig, S., 1978, *Africa in Antiquity II. The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan. The Catalogue*, Brooklyn

¹⁶ Assmann 2003.

EIN FORSCHERLEBEN ZWISCHEN DEN WELTEN

ZUM 80. GEBURTSTAG VON STEFFEN WENIG

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON

ANGELIKA LOHWASSER & PAWEL WOLF



MITTEILUNGEN DER SUDANARCHÄOLOGISCHEN
GESELLSCHAFT ZU BERLIN E.V.

SONDERHEFT • 2014

Impressum:

ISSN 0945-9502

Der antike Sudan. Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin e.V.
Sonderheft • 2014

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON: Angelika Lohwasser & Pawel Wolf

ERSCHEINUNGSORT: Berlin

INTERNETPRÄSENZ: www.sag-online.de

LAYOUT & SATZ: www.frank-joachim.de

DRUCK: www.dbusiness.de

TITELBILD: Säulenbasis mit Löwe, Große Anlage von Musawwarat es Sufra, Raum 108
(Foto: Claudia Näser)

FRONTISPIZ: Der Jubilar im Garten seines Hauses in Berlin-Karow
(Foto: Jane Humphris, Bildbearbeitung: Frank Joachim)

© Das Copyright liegt bei den jeweiligen Autorinnen und Autoren

DANK

Dass diese Festschrift zustande gekommen ist, verdanken wir vielen Mitwirkenden. An erster Stelle stehen die Autorinnen und Autoren, die mit ihren vielseitigen und fundierten Artikeln das eigentliche Geschenkpaket geschnürt haben. Julia Petereit hat die redaktionelle Arbeit übernommen – Korrekturen gemacht, Literatureinträge kontrolliert und vieles mehr. Sollte doch noch ein Fehler zu finden sein, ist das der Fülle der Beiträge und der gegen Ende deutlich knappen Zeit geschuldet! Frank Joachim hat das Layout hergestellt und unermüdlich auf Bitten um Veränderungen reagiert. Die Sudanarchäologische Gesellschaft zu Berlin e.V. stellt ihre Mitgliederzeitschrift „Der antike Sudan“ für die Aufnahme dieses Sonderheftes zur Verfügung und ehrt damit den Gründungsvater von Verein und Zeitschrift. Darüber hinaus hat sie den Druck zwischenfinanziert und damit die Herstellung erleichtert. Der Lehrbereich Ägyptologie und Archäologie Nordostafrikas der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin übernimmt in bewährter Weise den Vertrieb, um die Erkenntnisse auch an die wissenschaftliche Gemeinschaft weiterzugeben. Instituts-, Grabungs- und Familienangehörigen haben mit Rat und Tat, vor allem aber Geduld und moralischer Unterstützung zum Gelingen beigetragen!

Ihnen allen und weiteren ungenannten Helfern gebührt unser aufrichtiger Dank!

INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

| | |
|---|-----|
| GRUSSWORT | 7 |
| TABULA GRATULATORIA | 9 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHIE | 11 |
| FRANCIS BREYER Kipkipi, ein soldatensprachlicher Somatismus oder: Wohin floh der letzte kuschitische Pharao vor den Assyrern? | 21 |
| Ueli BRUNNER Die sabäische Dammanlage Mabnā al-Ḥašrağ in Ma'rib, Jemen | 25 |
| KLAUS DORNISCH Ketzerisches zum „Thron von Hawelti“ | 37 |
| DAVID N. EDWARDS Early Meroitic Pottery and the creation of an early imperial culture? | 51 |
| EUGENIO FANTUSATI, ELEONORA KORMYSHEVA & SVETLANA MALYKH Abu Erteila – An Archaeological Site in the Butana Region | 65 |
| RODOLFO FATTOVICH The Architecture of Power in Tigray (Northern Ethiopia) and Eritrea in the 1st millennium BCE – 1st millennium CE | 95 |
| MARTIN FITZENREITER Taharqo und Osiris Fragmente einer Kapelle im Ägyptischen Museum der Universität Bonn | 111 |
| BALDUR GABRIEL Kulturhistorische Landschaftselemente am 5. Nilkatarakt/Nordsudan nach Google-Earth-Bildanalysen mit Anmerkungen nach Groundcheck (GC) | 129 |
| WŁODZIMIERZ GODLEWSKI Dongola Capital of early Makuria: Citadel – Rock Tombs – First Churches | 153 |
| KRZYSZTOF GRZYMSKI The Decorated Faience Puteals from Meroe | 165 |
| JANA HELMBOLD-DOYÉ Rundstäbe, Leisten und Lisenen | 169 |
| JANE HUMPHRIS & THILO REHREN Iron production and the Kingdom of Kush: an introduction to UCL Qatar's research in Sudan | 177 |
| FRANK JOACHIM Der Nordfriedhof (IF) von Musawwarat es Sufra | 191 |
| TIM KARBERG Rinder in Musawwarat es Sufra | 215 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| ADAM ŁAJTAR Epitaph of Staurosaña († 1057), granddaughter (?) of a king Zakharias, found in Dongola | 221 |
| ANGELIKA LOHWASSER Neujahr in Nubien | 229 |
| ANDREA MANZO New Eastern Desert Ware Finds from Sudan and Ethiopia | 237 |
| JACKE PHILLIPS The Foreign Contacts of Ancient Aksum: New finds and some random thoughts | 253 |
| WALTER RAUNIG Frühes Eisen in Nordostafrika | 269 |
| ALESSANDRO ROCCATI B2400: A New Page in Meroitic Architecture | 293 |
| THOMAS SCHEIBNER Entstehung, Ursprung und Nutzung – Die Hafire in Musawwarat es-Sufra und in der Keraba als Wirtschaftsbauten | 299 |
| GUNNAR SPERVESLAGE Ausgegraben: Der Wörterbuchentwurf von Samuel Birch Ein Werkstattbericht | 323 |
| PETRA WESCHENFELDER Who gets the lion's share? Thoughts on Meroitic water management and its role in royal legitimization | 335 |
| PAWEL WOLF Essay über den meroitischen Eklektizismus in Musawwarat es Sufra, oder: woher stammt der meroitische Einraumtempel? | 351 |
| JANICE YELLIN The Kushite Nature of Early Meroitic Mortuary Religion: A Pragmatic Approach to Osirian Beliefs | 395 |
| MICHAEL H. ZACH Die frühesten Fotografien meroitischer Altertümer | 405 |
| FARBTAFELN | 415 |