The Locations of Yam and Kush and Their Historical Implications*

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I. Yam

The location of the early African "kingdom" of Yam is not only of considerable interest itself, Prieß has also suggested that Yam and Irem are respectively the Old and New Kingdom variants of the same name. This suggestion has been tentatively accepted by others, although Vercoutter has pointed out that the proposed equivalence of Yam with Irem has not yet been "justifié avec rigueur."3 However, although the equivalence, if proved, will be of considerable historical interest so far as the locations of Yam and Irem are concerned, it is methodologically better to analyze the locational data relevant to one region separately from that relevant to the other. (For the place names referred to below see fig. 1, prepared like the other figures, by Sarah Iams).

Yam is referred to in a number of Old Kingdom texts and almost never thereafter.2 These Old Kingdom sources make it clear that Yam was a "southern" region, linked in a variety of ways to other well-known southern regions such as Wawat, Iritjet and Medja-land; but only one source—the famous autobiography of Harkhuf—offers more precise locational data.

However, these data are sufficiently ambiguous to permit continuing controversy about the location of Yam. Edel argued that Yam lay in Upper Nubia and probably included the site of Kerma, and his suggestion has received considerable acceptance.3 Veyotte however located Yam at Dunkul Oasis,4 southwest of Aswan; and Dixon, while noting that Yam may have lain in the Nile Valley or in a desert region, suggested that in either case Yam "was probably not south of the 22nd north parallel";5 this would of course exclude an Upper Nubian location. More recently, Vercoutter has located Yam in the desert west of Upper Nubia, while Goedicke argued that Yam was "a

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2 K. Zibelius, Afrikanische Orts- und Vökelnamen in hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Texten (Wiesbaden, 1972), 78-81; add A. M. Bakr and J. Oting, "Ächtungstexte aus dem Alten Reich," MDAIK 29 (1973), 98-133; and J. Oting, "Ächtungstexte aus dem Alten Reich (II)," MDAIK 32 (1976), 133-85. G. Posener suggested that two regional names in the Middle Kingdom Execration Texts might be "deux parties du même pays Iam" (Princes et Pays d'Azie et de Nubie (Bruxelles, 1940), 59-60; moreover, the name Yam itself has been identified on a stela dated to Year 18 of Senusret I (H. S. Smith, The Fortress of Buhen. The Inscriptions [London, 1976], 39-40).


4 J. Veyotte, "Pour une localisation du pays de Iam," BIFAO 52 (1953), 173-78.

Fig. 1. Places referred to in the text.
term for the western desert and the oases located there," including Khargeh, Kurkur, and Dunkul oases.6

There are reasons, discussed below, why some of these suggestions are more likely than others; but it is important to note that the available locational data on Yam can be, with equal validity, used to support yet another location. This was one favored by an earlier generation of scholars and placed Yam well south of the latitudes of Upper Nubia, perhaps—as Erman suggested—along or close to the Sherudi reach of the Nile.7

According to his autobiography, Harkhuf made four journeys to Yam. Certainly for three of these journeys and presumably for all four, the outward trip and much of the return trip was made with a donkey caravan,8 although in at least two (and presumably all four) instances the last stage of the journey consisted of sailing downstream on the Nile to the royal residence at Memphis.9 Scholarly disagreement about the location of Yam arises mainly from two important points raised by the autobiography: What was the distance covered by the round trip between Egypt and Yam, and what were the routes followed by Harkhuf on the outward and return trips?

On the question of distance Edel made an important suggestion, namely that the periods covered by the first and second journeys (seven and eight months respectively)10 could be translated into close approximations of the distance covered by each. Assuming a ten day stay in Yam and an average daily rate of progress of 15 kilometers, Edel calculated the distances between Harkhuf’s point of departure from Egypt and Yam were 1500 (first journey) and 1725 (second journey) kilometers.11 Dixon and Goedicke emphatically reject this hypothesis, arguing that we do not know the length of the expedition’s stay in Yam, the lengths of stays for other business en route to or returning from Yam, or the rate of movement of the expeditions. Dixon also points out that if the routes of advance and return were not identical “one of them will almost certainly have been longer than the other.”12

However, while it is proper to be cautious about Edel’s suggestion, there is no good reason to reject it completely. The narrative of Harkhuf’s expeditions indicates that their normal, indeed only, stated purpose was to reach Yam, acquire the desired products, and return to Egypt. There are usually no indications of long halts en route or while returning, and no evident reason why the stay in Yam would be any longer than was needed to acquire the products. Only during the third journey13 did a more complex set of events occur. First, Harkhuf while en route to Yam visited Khargeh or perhaps Dakleh Oasis; since Yam was normally reached from Elephantine (see below) this suggests that Harkhuf had a second commission to carry out as well as his primary one of reaching Yam. Second, upon reaching Yam, or perhaps some place en route to there, Harkhuf discovered that the ruler of Yam had left on a punitive campaign against the land of the Tjenuch-people to the west. Harkhuf pursued and caught up with the ruler, prevented the outbreak of hostilities, and then continued on (or returned) to Yam to conclude his trading activities. It is noteworthy that Harkhuf goes to great pains to inform the Egyptian royal court of this unexpected delay in the course of the expedition, and that the time-length of the expedition (a matter of evident pride for the first and second journeys) is not given for the third. All these data suggest that the third journey took an unexpected-

6 Vercoutter, op. cit., 167 (fig. 2) and 171-74; H. Goedicke, “Harkhuf’s Travels,” JNES 40 (1981), 1-20.
7 References to this earlier theory are conveniently collected by Edel in Fitchow, op. cit., 69.
8 Three hundred donkeys were used on the return trip of the third journey (Urk. I, 126.17); and the use of donkeys is to be inferred also from the facts that the first journey involved “opening the road” to Yam (Urk. I, 124.12), the second began on “the 5th road” (Urk. I, 125.1), and the third journey on “the oasis road” (Urk. I, 125.14). The return trip of the third journey also used “the roads of the ridges of Itjet” (Urk. I, 127.9).
10 Urk. I, 124.13, 125.4.
11 Edel in Fitchow, op. cit., 65-68.
12 Dixon, op. cit., 42-45; Goedicke, op. cit., 2.
13 Compare, by contrast, the case with Pami, where sailing conditions may have enforced comparatively long stays upon visiting expeditions; cf. K. Kitchen, “Punt and How to Get There,” Orientalia 40 (1971), 202-3.
14 Urk. I, 125.13-127.15. The fourth journey is not relevant here because it is not described; rather, a royal letter to Harkhuf, provoked by the fourth journey, is quoted (Urk. I, 128.1-131.7).
edly long time, precisely because it involved more than the simpler sequence of events indicated for the first and second journeys. As to the rate of progress, Edel has plausibly argued for its reasonableness. Even if one allowed for a slower rate, a longer stay in Yam and differing distances (or rates of progress) for the outward and return trips, a distance between Egypt and Yam of between 1000 and 1500 kilometers and a round trip distance of 2000–3000 kilometers seem quite reasonable inferences from Harkhuf’s narrative.

What is not reasonable about Edel’s suggestion is that he assumes that the distance in question is that between Memphis and Yam via Elephantine. Edel believed that Memphis was always the starting point for Harkhuf’s caravan, i.e., that most of the round trip between Memphis and Yam for certainly the second and third and presumably the first journey was by land. This conclusion was derived through inference for the most part, although he and Dixon argued more specifically that “the 3bd (Elephantine) road” upon which the second journey began must—on the analogy of “the oasis (Khargeh [and Dakhleh?]) road” of the third journey be understood as “the road which leads to (or via) Elephantine.” Therefore, they conclude, Elephantine cannot be the starting point of the road being used by Harkhuf; rather, the starting point is some place further north (assumed to be Memphis), so that Harkhuf’s caravan moves along the Nile Valley from Memphis to Elephatnine, and from thence strikes out for Yam.

As it stands, the argument does not seem to me to be very convincing; and in any case, as Goedicke rightly emphasizes, “there is nothing in the text indicating Memphis as the starting point of Harkhuf’s expeditions.” In fact, as I have suggested briefly elsewhere, the argument of Edel and Dixon is rendered most improbable by logistical considerations. It would make little sense to have a donkey caravan travel by road along the Nile Valley from Memphis to Elephantine or any other departure point in Middle or Upper Egypt. Goods and personnel for the caravan might be shipped from Memphis to Elephantine or elsewhere, but the donkey caravan itself would be assembled at and begin the land-bound part of the journey from the point of departure from the valley. It may also be assumed that once the donkey caravan returned to Elephantine or, at least safely navigable waters, the goods from Yam would be transferred to boats and rapidly shipped to Memphis. This was apparently the case for the third and fourth journeys and presumably was so for the first and second. Therefore, we should conclude that virtually all the time period occupied by the first and second journeys represents the distance covered during the land-bound phases of the expedition; and that there is no reason to assume that Memphis was the departure point or terminus of the land-bound phases. Insofar as the expeditions involved movement between Memphis and the place in Egypt from which the donkey caravan left and to which it returned, this movement would be a matter of only a few days.

This conclusion brings us to the second major point about Harkhuf’s autobiography and the location of Yam; can we reconstruct the routes which the expeditions took for the land-bound sections of outward and return journeys? (For the following discussion, see fig. 2.)

No information on these is available for the first or fourth journeys. However, on the third journey the donkey caravan left the Nile Valley from the Eighth Upper Egyptian province and traveled along “the Oasis road,” i.e., westward toward Khargeh and Dakhleh; and for the second journey Elephantine seems the likely point of

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15 Dixon himself, while agreeing with Edel that Memphis was the starting point for the donkey caravan, notes that it is “puzzling” that Harkhuf chose “to travel from Memphis along the bank of the Nile when it would have been so much quicker and more convenient to have traveled by boat to Elephantine” (Dixon, op. cit., 42 n. 2).

16 Cf. above, n. 9.

17 Urk. I, 125.13–14; the most significant commentary on these lines is by Edel in Fichow, op. cit., 62, 63, 73–75. For the suggestion that Dakhleh as well as Khargeh was involved in the third journey, see Vercouter, op. cit., 174; Goedicke, op. cit., 18–19.


19 Edel in Fichow, op. cit., 68–69; Dixon, op. cit., 40–43.

20 Goedicke, op. cit., 3; cf. also 2.

Fig. 2. Reconstructions of the itineraries of Harhul, and suggested locations for Yam, Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju.
departure, since travel was along "the 3bw (Elephantine) road." 22 This road is best interpreted as the desert route running southwest from Elephantine through Kurkur and Dunkul to Scilima oasis, because there is no route running cast from Elephantine into the desert and there are good reasons for arguing against a road running from Elephantine along the Lower Nubian Valley. 23

Insofar as our evidence goes, therefore, the outward journey to Yam was made via routes in the western desert and, according to the narratives of the first and second journeys, no significant activity other than straightforward travel normally occurred between Elephantine and Yam. The third journey was atypical in that the journey to Yam was delayed by specific events.

The return route from Yam to Egypt is described only for the second and third journeys, and it is essentially the same for both. The expedition leaves Yam and travels by land to the area of the "house of the ruler of Irtjet and Setju" (second journey) and to a place on the south of Irtjet and to the north of Setju, i.e., on the border between Irtjet and Setju (third journey). These two points may in fact be the same, although this is not certain. 24 Harkhuf then continues his return journey through sub-regions of Irtjet (second journey) or along "the roads of the ridges of Irtjet" (third journey), in each case continuing to travel by land. The sub-regions and the "roads of the ridges" are not necessarily identical, but they are both in Irtjet. 25 The transition to Egypt itself is not described, although we know that the third journey concluded with Harkhuf sailing downstream to the residence at Memphis; at some point after Irtjet, therefore (and this presumably holds good for the first and second journeys also), the products from Yam were transferred from the donkey caravan to Nile ships.

The narrative of the second and third return journeys, therefore, seems to indicate that no significant place was encountered between Yam and Irtjet, or between Irtjet and the place (unknown) where the goods were transferred from donkeys to ships. Where, however, is Irtjet to be located? It is generally agreed that it was in the Nile Valley, the one reasonably good indication of this being the fact that at one point Irtjet and Setju combined with Wawat under a single ruler. Since

22 Urk. I, 125.1. So concluded by Yoyotte, op. cit., 174; Goedicke, op. cit., 2-4. As Harkhuf’s residence and base of operations, Elephantine would be the logical starting point for administrative reasons; while logistically it is also the logical starting place for a caravan moving to a region south of Egypt. It should be noted that "the 3bw road" can also be translated as "the ivory road" (cf. Dixon, op. cit., 54-55; Goedicke, op. cit., 2-3), in which case the term might apply to almost any part of the great caravan route running through the western desert from the latitude of Memphis down into Darfur or to its offshoots. However, this translation seems less likely; it is true that "3bw" in the text lacks a town determinative, but it is my understanding that in the Harkhuf autobiography and generally elsewhere the Egyptians named roads after places along their way, and not after the products that traveled along them.

23 The Elephantine–Kurkur–Dunkul interpretation is made by Yoyotte and Goedicke (cf. n 22). Edel favored a road running through Lower Nubia (Firchow, op. cit., 69), a possibility also noted by Dixon, who, however, thought the western desert was equally possible (op. cit., 51). A continuous route, however, could not be maintained through the rugged terrain of Lower Nubia, which could easily be traversed by ship from Elephantine—two perceptive points made by Goedicke (op. cit., 4). Moreover, the narrative indicates that Harkhuf’s return trip on the second journey was at least in part along the Nile valley, through a riverine region called Irtjet. Edel actually places Irtjet in Lower Nubia (Firchow, op. cit., 70; Orientalia 36 [1967], 140-41); but if Irtjet was in the Nile valley, why does the text make a distinction between "the Elephantine road" (outward journey) and a valley land route involving Irtjet (return journey) unless to indicate that the outward journey did not use the valley, and the return one, at least in part, did?

24 Urk. I, 125.8, 126.13-14. On the possibility that the same place is involved in both instances, cf. Edel, Orientalia 36 (1967), 135.

25 Urk. I, 125.2-3, 127.7-9. I interpret Urk. I, 125.2-9 as follows: Harkhuf returned to Egypt via the countries of Mekher, Terers and Irtjet which were in Irtjet [Urk. I, 125.2-3; cf. Edel in Firchow, op. cit., 70]. He returned with abundant goods from "this foreign land" (Yam, already referred to in the description of the first journey, Urk. I, 124.9-11) the like of which had never before been brought back to "this land," i.e., Egypt (Urk. I, 125.5-7). Harkhuf returned through the vicinity of the residence of the ruler of Setju and Irtjet, and he "opened up or explored these foreign lands," i.e., Mekher, Terers, and Irtjet, referred to earlier (Urk. I, 125.8-9). Goedicke, it should be noted, prefers to translate Urk. I, 195.9-8 as follows: Harkhuf "descended at Irtjet, from (his) excursion to the desert region of Terers and Irtjet;" and he suggests that Terers and Irtjet are to be identified as Kurkur and Dunkul Oases (op. cit., 2-4-8). This translation has not yet been tested by other philologists, and in any case does not affect the main point, namely that Harkhuf returned via Irtjet.
Wawat is definitely a riverine region, it seems likely (although not certain) that Irtjet and Setju were also. It can also, because of the circumstance of the unification of the three, be reasonably assumed that Irtjet was contiguous with Wawat on its north, as it certainly was with Setju on its south.\(^6\) What is less likely, however, is the belief that Irtjet (and Setju) were located in Lower Nubia. Most interested scholars support this suggestion but, as I shall show below, an equally valid case can be made for locating Irtjet and Setju in Upper Nubia.

How do these circumstances about the distances covered by the expeditions and the routes they used affect the various suggestions made about the location of Yam? Those of Yoyotte (Dunkul), Dixon (north of the 22nd north parallel), and Goedicke (Kurkur and Dunkul) are most unlikely because of the time periods given; seven to eight months seems much too long a period for expeditions that would travel only a comparatively short distance\(^7\) (i.e., from Elephantine to the places named or indicated and back) and carry out a fairly simple and uncomplicated operation. Goedicke's other suggestion that Khargeh could also be considered Yam cannot be faulted on the grounds of time, for no time period is given for the third journey; but it is improbable for other reasons. First, it seems unlikely that a major geographical feature like Khargeh could carry simultaneously two entirely different names, i.e., "the Oasis" and "Yam." Second, Harkhuf's journey to Khargeh/Yam makes little logistical sense, for he returns from Yam via Irtjet. Since Irtjet is located either in Upper or Lower Nubia (Goedicke believes the latter), this circumstance requires Harkhuf to return to Egypt by an extremely circuitous route instead of simply directly back to the Nile Valley from Khargeh.\(^8\)

We are left then with the more distant locations which have been suggested for Yam; west of Upper Nubia (Vercoutter), in Upper Nubia (Edel), or in the vicinity of the Shendi reach (Erman). Before discussing these in detail, several general points should be made. First, as I have indicated above, some (and probably all) of Harkhuf's outward journeys to Yam were at least partly and perhaps entirely along western desert routes, and Elephantine was the normal point of departure from and return to Egyptian territory. Second, I believe that in general the expeditions to Yam would avoid traveling along the Nile Valley as far as possible, both on the outward and return journeys. This belief is based on two considerations: travel along the winding valley with its sometimes rugged topography would be significantly slower than travel along the desert routes, and equally important, much of the Nubian valley was heavily populated with native peoples who would levy tolls and perhaps even threaten to plunder a caravan en route to Yam or returning from there.\(^9\) Third, we must assume that the geographically significant points of contact and all particular events are all recorded in the narrative and are in the appropriate topographical and chronological sequence. Reconstruction of the routes should adhere as closely as possible to what the narrative contains.

Keeping these points in mind, let us consider the locations for Yam suggested by Vercoutter and Edel. In terms of round trip distance both the suggested locations for Yam easily fall within the assumed figures of 2000-3000 kilometers, and indeed seem perhaps suspiciously "short" of even the conservative end of these. Edel's location requires a round trip of 1400-1600 kilometers, Vercoutter's one of 1600-1700. There are also problems encountered in reconstructing the routes followed. The narrative provides nothing to contradict the idea that the entire outward journey was along the desert routes, which means the expeditions would travel from Elephantine (or Khargeh, in the case of the third journey) to

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\(^{6}\) On both of these important points about Irtjet see Edel in J. de Finet, op. cit., 90-91, and in Orienteens 36 (1967), 154-35.

\(^{7}\) Dixon aptly makes this point against Yoyotte's suggestion (Dixon, op. cit., 50); but once it is realized that the landbound part of the journey begins at Elephantine, the same objection is valid against Dixon's suggestions about Yam's location.

\(^{8}\) Goedicke discusses his hypothesis about Khargeh in op. cit., 9-10, 14, and the return through Lower Nubia during the third journey in op. cit., 14, 15-17.

\(^{9}\) The threat of interference is most evident in Urk. 1, 126.15-127.9. Edel, it should be noted, appears to believe that both outward and return journeys to and from Yam were exclusively along the Nile valley, cf. Edel in J. de Finet, op. cit., 65.
Selima. From Selima the expedition would continue south to Yam (Vercoutter) or move south-east and into Upper Nubia (Edel). All or most of the return journey could theoretically be made via the Nile Valley, but there were certain inherent disadvantages to this procedure (noted above); and in any case, if the entire return trip was made via the valley, why should the traversing of Irtjet be singled out for special mention and no other riverine region, e.g., Wawat, be mentioned? This question appears even more forceful if Irtjet was located in Lower Nubia, far from the beginning of the return journey in Upper Nubia or west of that region.

It would seem much more likely then that the return journey would for the most part follow the western desert routes, the expedition either traveling from a desert-located Yam (Vercoutter) or moving back to Selima from Upper Nubia (Edel). In these circumstances, an Upper Nubian location for Irtjet appears unlikely, for it involves an inexplicable deviation on the part of either expedition; that postulated by Vercoutter had no evident reason to descend into Upper Nubia, and then return to the desert route, while the expedition postulated by Edel would be virtually returning to its starting place. However, the more favored Lower Nubian location for Irtjet (including Tomas) also presents difficulties, for it implies that when Dunkul was reached, the expedition moved sharply south-southeast to Tomas and concluded the return along the valley to Elephantine. Why should an expedition that had successfully traversed over 600 kilometers of desert route between Yam and Dunkul now leave that route, with Elephantine only about 160 kilometers away, and instead cover a greater distance of nearly 350 kilometers (Dunkul-Tomas-Elephantine), encountering by this act potentially hostile natives?

Parenthetically, one should note the possibility that Yam lay much further to the southwest than Vercoutter envisaged. This would take care of the problem of a round trip distance that seems too short; but the return trip deviation into Upper or Lower Nubia (depending on the location of Irtjet) still seems inexplicable.

Let us then consider the implications of Yam being located in the vicinity of the Shendi reach. In this case Harkhuf’s expedition would travel from Elephantine (or Khargeh) to Selima, and then continue south, through the desert, making use perhaps of the wells and forage of the Wadi el-Qa'ab, until Upper Nubia had been entirely skirted. The expedition would then move cast until the Shendi reach was encountered. The return journey involved, as we know, the traversing of the apparently riverine region of Irtjet. To place this in Lower Nubia implies that for most of the return trip the expedition retraced its route along the western desert tracks and finally descended into Lower Nubia from Dunkul; but the same objections to a Lower Nubian location for Irtjet that we raised above apply also here. If however we place Irtjet in Upper Nubia it forms a logical part of a return journey. The expedition would move from the Shendi reach across the Bayuda Desert in the region of later Napata, along a route that was quite well known later; from thence it could traverse the Upper Nubian Valley as far as the region of Kerma or Sai, or strike out from the Napata region along the desert route now called the Meheila road, which would also bring the expedition to the Kawa-Kerma region. From Kerma or Sai the expedition could return to the desert, travel to Selima and then conclude its journey to Elephantine. The rationale for such a routing would appear to be to avoid the long desert route from the Shendi reach back to Selima (via the Wadi el-Qa'ab?), perhaps because the caravan was more heavily laden and slower moving on the return journey. The shorter hops of Shendi reach to Napata and (perhaps) Napata via Meheila road to Kerma may have ensured more predictable water supplies, which apparently were not expected to be a problem along the Kerma/Sai-Selima-Elephantine route.

The routing suggested here for Harkhuf’s expeditions is in fact the one that fits most closely with the assumed round trip distance of 2000-
3000 kilometers, for it involves an outward journey of about 1300 kilometers, a return trip of between 1200 to 1300 kilometers, and a total round trip of 2500-2600 kilometers.

This suggested itinerary provides two alternative interpretations for Irtjet’s role during the return trip. If the first point of contact with the Nile valley (the Napata region) was not considered worth mentioning and the Melchila road was used rather than the valley route, then Irtjet would be located in the Kerma region, the second point of contact with the valley. According to this hypothesis, during the second journey the expedition would appear to have traversed part of the valley in Irtjet (a section identified by the sub-regions of Mekh, Terers, and Irtjet).²² perhaps going from Kerma as far north as Sai before striking out into the desert towards Selima. During the third journey, a route called the “roads of the ridges of Irtjet” was taken, presumably one that avoided much of the winding valley route but also led from Kerma to the Sai region, the point of departure for Selima. Alternatively, however, the entry point into the valley specifically mentioned in the narrative may be the Napata region, which would then be included in Irtjet. In this case, the traversing of Mekh, Terers, and Irtjet mentioned during the second journey might mean that on this journey the expedition traveled along the Dongola reach from Napata to Kerma or Sai, while on the third journey it chose the faster desert route of the Melchila road, identified in Harkhuf’s autobiography as “the roads of the ridges of Irtjet.”

Of the two alternative locations for an Upper Nubian Irtjet, the first—approximating to the Kerma-Sai region—is preferable; but the reasons for this are best discussed in the next section. To conclude the discussion of Yam proper however we may summarily suggest:

i) any location for Yam north of the latitudes of Upper Nubia is most unlikely.

ii) locating Yam in Upper Nubia or west of it fits the available data better than i) but still leaves significant problems.

iii) locating Yam in the region of the Shendi reach provides the best fit with the contents and with the logical implications of the narrative of Harkhuf’s journeys.

²² See n. 25 above.

II. Wawat, Irtjet and Setju

As the preceding discussion indicates, any consideration of the location of Yam is inextricably bound up with the locations of these three regions. All three are referred to with some frequency in the late Old Kingdom; Irtjet and Setju also occur in very early Middle Kingdom texts, but never thereafter.²³ while Wawat continues to be used into Ptolemaic times.²⁴ From the beginning of Dynasty XII Wawat is the name for all of Lower Nubia, a significance it retains until it finally drops out of use; but most scholarly opinion at the moment holds that in the late Old Kingdom Lower Nubia was divided up into three regions. The northernmost, Wawat, ran from Elephantine to the Dakka region; it was succeeded by Irtjet, running roughly from Dakka to Ioshka; and south of Irtjet was Setju, running from Ioshka into the Second Cataract region.²⁵

Two points need to be made about the suggested locations of Irtjet and Setju. First, the available data by no means compel Lower Nubian locations; second, the data can, with equal validity, be used to support an Upper Nubian location for Irtjet and Setju.

It is reasonably certain that Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju ran in a north to south order along the Nile valley; that Irtjet and Setju shared a common border, and that Wawat and Irtjet probably did. It is also clear that Wawat occupied at least part of Lower Nubia.²⁶ Beyond this point however the question of the actual location of these regions becomes much more debatable. The focus of debate on this question has been a rock graffito from Tomas left by an expedition sent by Pepi I in order to “open up or explore” Irtjet.²⁷ Edel


²³ On Wawat, see Zibelius, op. cit., 101-4; Zaba, op. cit., 31-35, 39-43, 73-74, 98-109; Smith, op. cit., 58 59, 61. The datum discussed by Smith provides particularly clear evidence that by Year 5 of Senwosret I all of Lower Nubia was called Wawat.


²⁵ Edel, Orientalia 30 (1967), 134-38.

²⁶ Urk. I, 208;16-17.
correctly pointed out the logical implications of this text, namely “dass Tomas entweder eine Station auf dem Wege nach einem weiter südlich gelegenen Irtjet war oder im anderen Extremfall bereits die Südgrenze von Irtjet bildete.” Like Säve-Söderbergh and others before him, Edel rejected the first alternative and concluded that Tomas indeed lay in Irtjet, more specifically, Edel argued, Tomas was in the southern part of Irtjet which extended northward from Toshka to approximately Dakka.

Virtually all subsequent commentators have followed Edel on this point. But did he really have good reason for rejecting the first alternative, namely that Tomas lay on a route to Irtjet and might in fact be quite distant from Irtjet itself? Edel cites two data to support his conclusion. First, Säve-Söderbergh had identified the “roads of the ridges of Irtjet” traversed by Harkhuf with a well-known land route running from Tomas to Medik, and thus eliminating the somewhat tor­tuous river route between these two places. However, this reasoning is quite circular, for it assumes (because of the graffito) that Tomas is in Irtjet and hence that the identification with the route can be made; but there must be other parts of the Nubian Nile valley where similar routes also exist and could as easily be called the “roads of the ridges of Irtjet.” In particular, the region from the Second to the Third Cataracts is especially rugged and winding, and would encourage the use of shortcuts by land. The second datum quoted by Edel is a late Old Kingdom graffito from Toshka which, although incomplete, undoubtedly refers to “every . . . who has reached Setju” and to the bringing away of the products of Setju. From this Edel concluded that Toshka lay within Setju, and that Irtjet certainly therefore lay somewhere north of Toshka. However, this conclusion does not follow; even if one assumes that the text was originally in situ at Toshka, the surviving passages only indicate that it referred to some official who had been to Setju, not one who was necessarily in Setju when the graffito was carved at Toshka. In other words, Toshka could as easily be “eine Station auf dem Wege” to Setju as Tomas could be one on the way to Irtjet.

Edel noted, but has never dealt with, another rock inscription published when his article was virtually in press. This inscription, found in situ a little south of Tomas, creates particular difficulties for the thesis that Tomas lay in Irtjet; for it records that a late Old Kingdom official “came” to “hack up Wawat,” i.e., to fight a military campaign in that country. By analogy with the Tomas inscription referring to Irtjet, one might argue that this text—describing the attack on Wawat—was located in Wawat; but this then places Wawat south of Irtjet (if Tomas is to be included in Irtjet), which is most unlikely, or indicates that Wawat and Irtjet shared some of the same territory, an equally unlikely possibility.

In fact, the inscription in question no more helps to fix Wawat’s location than the Tomas inscription helps to fix the location of Irtjet. Like the expedition sent to “open up or explore Irtjet” or the expedition (recorded at Toshka) sent to collect goods in Setju, the expedition sent to “hack up Wawat” could easily have recorded its purpose while en route to or returning from that country. It could even have passed right through Wawat and have left the record to the south of Wawat. The essential point is however that we have no way of choosing between the various

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42 López has noted that the Toshka datum is not conclusive for the location of Setju, cf. J. López, “Inscriptions de l’ancien empire a Khor el-Aqiba,” Revue d’Égyptologie 19 (1967), 65.
43 López, Las inscripciones rupestres tauromicas entre Korsko y Kasy Ibini (Madrid, 1966), 27–28 (Insc. 27); López, Revue d’Égyptologie 19 (1967), 52, 55–66. Edel noted this text, Orientalia 36 (1961), 130 (map). Helck has argued that the text dates to Dynasty IV (“Die Bedeutung der Felsinschriften J. López, Inscriptions rupestres Nr. 27 und 28,” SRA 1 [1974], 213–28); but since Wawat was virtually uninhabited from early Dynasty I until the end of Dynasty V or the beginning of Dynasty VI (Kemp in Trigger et al., op. cit., 124–26), this suggestion seems most unlikely.
44 López argues that the text shows that “qua la VI dynastic ci a la hauteur de Tomus,” part of Wawat lay on the east bank facing part of Irtjet on the west bank (Revue d’Égyptologie 19 [1967], 61); but this seems an over­ingenious solution, while Vandersleyen’s suggestion (Les guerres d’Amos­sis [Brussels, 1971], 50, n. 6; independently suggested also in Zahi, op. cit., 105) that Irtjet lay inland from the river does not accord well with the data on Irtjet summarized above, pp. 35–36.
alternatives that all the inscriptions in question (at Tombs, south of Tomas, and at Toshka) logically present.

Irtjet and Setju are referred to in other inscriptions found in situ in Lower Nubia, but never in such a way as to compel us to locate either land in Lower Nubia. For example, there were also commemorated at Tombs two Dynasty VI officials: Mekhwy, an “overseer of [foreign countries] of his lord (the king) in Yam, Irtjet and Wawat” and Khuyuheru, an “overseer of Egyptianized Nehasyu of Setju.”

Neither text implies that Irtjet or Setju included Tomas, any more than the Dahshur decree, in addressing itself in part to officials in charge of “Egyptianized Nehasyu” of Medja. Yam and Irtjet. shows that Dahshur lay in one of these three countries. Mekhwy is also called “an overseer of the army in Setju,” a more specific reference that might hint that Tomas was in Setju. This however would contradict the thesis that Tomas was in Irtjet; and in any case good parallels from elsewhere show that an official can be described as holding a position “in” a specific country or place in an inscription set up in a quite different country or place.

Two early Middle Kingdom texts (at Gebel el Girgawi near Korosko) are equally ambiguous as locational data for Irtjet and Setju, for reasons very similar to those already discussed. Like most others from the same region, the two texts are a crudely incised mixture of hieroglyphic and hieratic signs and extremely difficult to read. However, has shown that one refers to a Sobekheto, to whose name is attached the qualifying phrase, hr mht 12 n[sic] nt Irtf Setzt,

which is to be compared with similar ones in other Girgawi texts referring to individuals as, hr nt rsy(?), hr mht 12 n rsy, and hr mht nt dwm n nb. As demonstrates, various translations are possible, none being entirely satisfactory. For example, might translate: “at or in the 12 ‘military posts’ of Irtjet and Setju,” “at or in the 12 (or 7) ‘military posts’ of the south,” and “in the ‘military post’ of the troops of the king.” Quite apart from individual difficulties, however, the suggested meaning of “military post” is not otherwise attested for mht, and it is difficult to see how a single individual can be said to be “at” or “in” 12 or 7 places apparently simultaneously.

Another suggested translation refers rather to the time of the individual’s arrival at el Girgawi, namely “on the occasion of (hr) the 12 conscriptions of Irtjet and Setju,” “the 12 (or 7) conscriptions of the south” and “the conscription of the troops of the king.” Again, however, this meaning for mht is otherwise unattested; and how a single occasion (the arrival of an individual) is to be equated with 12 or 7 “conscriptions” is problematic.

A third solution is perhaps the most tempting, namely: “in the 12th battalion of Irtjet and Setju,” “in the 12th or 7th battalion of the south” and “in the battalion of the troops of the king.” This translation also has its problems; but it is at least based upon a demonstrably parallel usage elsewhere, and it fits the historical situation. Amenemhe I and his co-regent Scwosret I—

48 Zaba, op. cit., 84–86 (Insc. 58). has suggested that Ijemeh may occur after Setju, but this is most uncertain.

49 Ibid., 82 (Insc. 24), 81–84 (Insc. 57), 86–87 (Insc. 59), 87–88 (Insc. 56 A and B).

50 Zaba, op. cit., 85 discusses the translation of mht as “post.” Insc. 61 A and B offer the least support because neither has a number following mht; in all other cases the presence of a number after mht means it can be read as the participle helping to form the ordinal (A. Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, 3rd ed. [Oxford, 1957], paragraph 263.8), except in the case of Insc. 24 which lacks both mht and the -nu ending to be expected in an ordinal lower than 10 (Gardiner, op. cit., paragraph 263.2). One might suggest, however, that in 61 A and B the ordinal after mht was omitted by error, or as being self-evident.

51 Zaba, op. cit., 83.

52 Zaba, op. cit., 85–84 discusses this possible translation of mht citing a very striking, related usage from the Kahun papyri. On the possibility of mht as part of an ordinal see also n. 50 above.
to whose co reigns virtually all the el Girgawi texts are probably to be dated—were involved in a massive, long drawn out strategy of completely subjugating Lower Nubia. Naturally, this strategy involved the presence of many military units in Lower Nubia and particularly at el Girgawi, which seems to have been a major military assembly point.55

However, none of the possible translations of the phrase, hr mh 12 n[sic] I rtjt Sjtw, provide unambiguous evidence on the location of Irtjet or Setju; certainly, none of them compel us to locate el Girgawi (or any part of Lower Nubia) in Irtjet or Setju. Indeed, the same place could not be located in Irtjet and Setju, for they were separate countries, Setju lying immediately south of Irtjet;54 and in any case, el Girgawi, at the time these texts were written, clearly lay within Wawat.50 The text might of course refer to the status of Sobekhotep in a past or present military unit that was not located at el Girgawi or anywhere else in Lower Nubia. If however there were "military posts," conscripts or battalions of "Irtjet and Setju," located at el Girgawi, the use of these two country's names must indicate that Irtjet and Setju were amongst the (distant?) targets of military operations or that people from Irtjet and Setju had been recruited or compelled to serve in the Egyptian forces.

Another el Girgawi text refers to a certain Amu, who was perhaps a 5 3 imy r hbst Sjtwyw [ . . . ]yw.56 Whatever the meaning of 5 3 might be in this context, the remaining words can be translated as "overseer of a foreign country of (i.e., in charge of?) Setju-people and . . . -people" or "the overseer of the foreign country of the inhabitants of Setju and . . . ."57 As we have seen in connection with Old Kingdom graffiti from Lower Nubia, however, a reference to an official of this type does not mean that the relevant inscription is actually located in the country in question.

In summary then, in situ rock inscriptions in Lower Nubia do not provide any secure basis for the locating of Irtjet and Setju; and it is valid—given the known data about the two countries—to pose two alternatives.

1) Irtjet and Setju might occupy the southern part of Lower Nubia, as suggested by Edel and other commentators.

2) Lower Nubia in its entirety was called Wawat in the Old Kingdom (as it was later), and Irtjet and Setju lay south of Lower Nubia. Irtjet appears to have immediately succeeded Wawat (as Setju certainly did Irtjet); but since both Irtjet and Setju appear to be important countries, neither is likely to have been based on the resourceless, sparsely inhabited Batn el Hajar between the Second and the Dal cataracts. One might therefore suggest that Irtjet corresponded to the better populated Abri-Delgo reach, while Setju occupied part (perhaps a great part) of the Dongola reach; Kerma then would be a significant center close to the frontier between Irtjet and Setju, and perhaps the location of the "house of the ruler of Irtjet and Setju" mentioned in Harkhuf.58

55 The scope of this strategy is indicated by the facts that by years 25/5 of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I the Egyptians had secured and heavily fortified several strongpoints as far south as Buhenn (Smith, op. cit., 61); yet in years 99-9 they were still engaged in suppressing the Nehasyu population of Lower Nubia (Zaba, op. cit., 99-109, Insc. 73). On the role of the el Girgawi region at this time, see Zaba, op. cit., 105.

56 See above, p. 53. Zaba suggests that by the early Middle Kingdom Wawat may have "already encompassed Irtjet and Setju, which were at that time considered only as a part of Wowet" (Zaba, op. cit., 105); but there is no independent proof for a change from the late Old Kingdom situation in which Irtjet and Setju were two different countries, clearly separate from Wawat (cf. Harkhuf).

50 That el Girgawi fell within Wawat is indicated indirectly by the fact that Buhenn, much farther south, was already under the protection of the "gods of Wawat" (Smith, op. cit., 58-59) and directly by Insc. 73 at el Girgawi itself, which refers to a "stronghold" there that was used as a base of operations against the Nehasyu of Wawat (Zaba, op. cit., 90-100).

54 Ibid., 91-97 (Insc. 64)

57 On 5 3, see ibid., 90; on the remaining words, see ibid., 91-97.

50 Urk. I, 125.8; perhaps referred to again, Urk. I, 125.12-11. Kerma has of course sometimes been identified as a major center of Yam (following Edel's thesis that Yam lay in Upper Nubia). E.g., Kemp (in Trigger et al., op. cit., 129) states 'the Sixth Dynasty vasals from Kerma, which have their exact counterparts at Byblos, as well as the later patterns of contact and political growth give priority to the Kerma area as the site of Yam." However, Nehasyu rulers other than the rulers of Yam must also have received "gifts" (as tolls and bribes) from the Egyptians. In Dynasty VI Suhni went to "Wrtjet in Wawat" (not Yam) in order to recover the body of his father (Urk. I, 136.11-12) and took with him presents to facilitate his work in "these countries of the Nehasyu" (Urk. I, 136.4-7); and the "ruler of Irtjet, Setju and Wawat" who apparently hurried to interfere with Harkhuf's return but became conciliatory because of Harkhuf's strong escort, surely also received presents from the Egyptians. Is it purely coincidental
There are some indications (although no direct proof) that the second of these alternatives is the more preferable. As noted above, an Upper Nubian location for Irtjet and Setju fits better than does a Lower Nubian one with Harkhuf's return trip itineraries. It was also pointed out above that the same data indicate that Irtjet and Setju might meet approximately in the Napata region or approximately in the Kerna region, and that the second of these possibilities was the more likely. The reason for preferring the second possibility is that in the Napata region Setju would be north not south of Irtjet, whereas Urk. I, 126, 15-14 indicates that the reverse is the case. 59

III. Yam and Kush

The preceding discussion inevitably raises the question: What was the relationship of Yam, so important in the Old Kingdom, to Kush, the main area of interest upstream of Lower Nubia in the Middle Kingdom? For that matter, if Irtjet and Setju are to be (on one locational theory) placed in Upper Nubia, what then would be their relationship to Kush, which is clearly to be located in this region?

Before taking up these questions, we must glance briefly at the location of Kush itself in the Middle Kingdom. Basically, the available data allow for two hypotheses. First, one could follow Posener who argues that Kush in this period had two co-existing meanings. Depending on context, it could refer in a generalized sense to much (or all of) Upper Nubia or to a smaller territory located between Lower Nubia/Wawat and Sai/ancient Shaat. 60 The conclusion that Kush, used in its more specific meaning, lay north of Sai has important implications. One is that Kush made such an impression on the Egyptians that they extended the usage of the toponym over a much larger territory than Kush proper. 61 Another is that if Shaat is confined to Sai Island and possibly some contiguous territory, this leaves plenty of room in the rest of Upper Nubia, so that many, or perhaps nearly all, of the toponyms that occur in the same lists as Kush and Shaat could be located within this region. 62

But a second hypothesis is possible. Posener's basic reasons for locating Kush north of Shaat/Sai are that in the lists in question—three sets of Execution Texts—Kush always preceded Sai in what Posener believes is a north to south ordering of the Nehasy toponyms; 63 moreover, in one case, we have thesequence Wawat Kush—Shaat, suggesting the equivalence Lower Nubia—intervening area—Sai Island and region64 (cf. fig. 3A). However, one could argue that the location of Kush in these lists is not geographically exact, as Kemp points out, Kush's appearance "at the head or near the head of lists of conquered and hostile places in Nubia" may be "a sign probably of its importance rather than its geographical proximity to Egypt." 65 In this case, Kush need not be located north of Sai and indeed hypothetically could be placed almost anywhere in Upper Nubia.

Decisive evidence for either hypothesis does not exist; but a location for Kush south of Sai seems the more likely because so far the recently delineated archaeology of the Kerna moyen—the Upper Nubian cultural phase coeval with the Middle Kingdom—has revealed only two major central places. 66 One is Sai, identified with the

59 Another slight indication that Irtjet occupied the Abri-Delgo reach (rather than lying near Napata) is the existence of a Middle Kingdom country called Muger, placed next to Shaat in the Execution 1 texts (Posener, Princes et Pays d'Asie et de Nubie, 55) and therefore perhaps located in the same region as Shaat (= Sai, in the Abri-Delgo reach; cf. Zibelius, op. cit., 154-55). Could Mugur (mugur) be a later writing of the name Mecher (m'gy), which was a sub-region of Irtjet according to Harkhuf's autobiography (Urk I, 125.2-3)?

61 Ibid., 60-62.
62 Cf. the southern toponyms listed in the Middle Kingdom Execution Texts, discussed further below.
63 Posener, Kush 6 (1958), 59-60.
64 Ibid., 60.
65 Kemp in Trigger et al., op. cit., 134; Posener considered this idea, but rejected it; cf. Kush 6 (1958), 59-60.
Fig. 3. Alternative interpretations of the locational significance of the Execution Texts.
toponym Shaat; the other is Kerma. And since Kush was evidently considered by the Middle Kingdom Egyptians a powerful and important state, Kerma is likely to be its central place. Posener thought it unlikely that Kerma was the capital of Kush because, he argued, Kerma enjoyed close and amicable relations with Egypt in the Middle Kingdom, and this was incompatible with the hostile Egyptian attitude to Kush.67 But the data from Kerma he is referring to all belong to the later Second Intermediate Period and are not relevant to the Middle Kingdom period.68

North of Sai, on the other hand, there is no archaeologically attested central place equal in importance to Sai and Kerma,69 nor is there much of a resource base for a large and powerful entity likely to impress the Egyptians. The Batn el Hajar, between Lower and Upper Nubia, is a rugged, agriculturally poor region never densely settled except in times of great emergency; and between its southern end and Sai there are only some fifty kilometers of better but not highly productive territory.70

If Kush did include Kerma and lay south of Sai, how large was its territory? No exact answer can of course be given; but Kush’s importance to the Egyptians suggests its territory was extensive, and this impression is reinforced by the fact that the Excavation Texts of mid- and late-Middle Kingdom times identify only two “rulers” (hkÆ) in Upper Nubia. Of the five rulers named in both sets of texts, three are of Aushek and a (divided) Webetsepet; and both these regions are inhabited by Medjayu and therefore to be located in the eastern desert, not the Upper Nubian valley.71

The riverine rulers72 are those of Shaat/Sai, the territory of which (according to the hypothesis followed here) could not extend further south than Kerma, and of Kush, which was presumably more extensive than Shaat (since it is Kush, not Shaat/Sai, that is identified in all texts other than the Excavation Texts as Egypt’s chief opponent). In view of the absence of any other identified “ruler,” Kush may have covered much, if not all, of the Dongola reach. If so, Kush would then not have a double meaning in the Middle Kingdom, except insofar as it was extended to include the more northerly Shaat/Sai.

The location of the other Nubian toponyms which follow Kush and Shaat/Sai in the mid- and later-Middle Kingdom Excavation texts brings us back to the problem of Yam’s location; for these toponyms may include that country. First, it should be noted that not all the toponyms in question were riverine in location; the eastern desert regions of Aushek and Webesepet occur in the seventeenth and eighteenth, or twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth places, respectively, in the two lists; and one might suggest that all the following toponyms (four in both lists) were located in the eastern desert also.73 This leaves twelve or twenty toponyms placed between Shaat and Aushek, that potentially at least are riverine in location, and of these three have been (very tentatively) identified with Yam. Bio of the later list may read Yam or an entirely different name;74 and two other toponyms, found lower down in both lists, have been identified as possibly representing Yam divided into two parts.75

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49 The next largest sites, after Sai and Kerma, are Ukma and Akasha, where the cemeteries are of a distinctly smaller order of magnitude; cf. Gratien, op. cit., 73–76 and 277, fig. 68.
50 On the characteristics of the Batn el Hagar and of the territory between it and Sai, see Adams, op. cit., 26–29; Barbour, The Republic of the Sudan, A Regional Geography (London, 1961), 140.
51 The rulers of Aushek and Webetsepet; K. Seete, Die Achtung feindlichen Füchsen, Vögel und Dinge auf altägyptischen Papyri (Berlin, 1936), 161–62.
52 The riverine rulers are those of Shaat/Sai, the territory of which (according to the hypothesis followed here) could not extend further south than Kerma, and of Kush, which was presumably more extensive than Shaat (since it is Kush, not Shaat/Sai, that is identified in all texts other than the Excavation Texts as Egypt’s chief opponent). In view of the absence of any other identified “ruler,” Kush may have covered much, if not all, of the Dongola reach. If so, Kush would then not have a double meaning in the Middle Kingdom, except insofar as it was extended to include the more northerly Shaat/Sai.
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In either case, it must be noted that none of the three toponyms in question need to be located in Upper Nubia. Logically, it can be said of the toponyms placed between Shaat and Aushck that they might all be located in Upper Nubia; or they might be distributed between Upper Nubia and regions further upstream; or they might all be upstream of Upper Nubia, enabling us to assign the entire Dongola reach to Kush quite specifically (cf. fig. 3B). The first possibility would place the three toponyms in question in Upper Nubia; the next two, however, could be compatible with a location further upstream for some or all of the three, possibly (but not necessarily) as far south as the Shendi reach/northern Butana region. I here is at the moment no way to choose between the three alternatives, so they can contribute nothing decisive or even reasonably suggestive to the problem of Yam’s location in the Middle Kingdom.

Another datum provides our only certain Middle Kingdom example of the toponym Yam, but offers no clear evidence as to its location. A stela of year 18 of Senosret I lists ten “conquered” Nubian toponyms; Kush is in first place, Shaat/Sai in sixth, and Yam in the tenth and last position.76 If Kush in this instance is being used as a general name for Upper Nubia, with all the other toponyms in this list subsumed under Kush, then Yam like Shaat/Sai would be in Upper Nubia. However, if Kush in this list referred to a specific territory, then Yam would appear to be considered territorially independent of Kush and is not necessarily to be placed in Upper Nubia. Conceivably, Yam could lie further upstream. However, once again, we have no decisive or reasonably certain way of choosing between the possibilities raised by this datum.

The Middle Kingdom data therefore are of little use in establishing a location for Yam, unless one adopts the possibility outlined above, namely that Shaat/Sai and Kush/Dongola reach effectively occupy all of Upper Nubia, in which case Yam, insofar as it is identifiable amongst the other toponyms, would have to be located upstream of Upper Nubia.

As to Irtjet and Setju, it was noted above that the only known Middle Kingdom references to them—the el Gingawi texts and graffiti—do not provide any decisive data on whether the two toponyms were located in Lower or Upper Nubia. They are certainly not identifiable in the Execution Texts (at least, the published examples) or in any other Middle Kingdom source. If one favors a Lower Nubian location, one must conclude that they were subsumed into an expanded version of the toponym Wawat, if an Upper Nubian, into Kush, or Kush and some of the other toponyms actually (Shaat/Sai) or possibly assignable to Upper Nubia. If Irtjet and Setju were Upper Nubian, their disappearance might be explicable in terms of ethnic and linguistic changes hinted at by significant discontinuities in material culture between Kerma ancien and Kerma moyen in that region, but the suggestion is a highly tentative one.77

IV. Historical Implications

The alternative possibilities on the locations of Yam, Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju, and of Kush discussed above have very important implications for the history of Egyptian-Sudanese relations, and of the northern Sudan itself during the Old and Middle Kingdoms. These implications cannot be explored in depth here, but their relevance to two major historical problems can be briefly discussed. Of the locational theories already outlined, I personally prefer the equation Old Kingdom Wawat/Lower Nubia, Irtjet and Setju/Upper Nubia and Yam/Shendi reach/northern Butana region; but since, in the present state of the evidence the equations Old Kingdom Wawat, Irtjet, Setju/Lower Nubia and Yam/Upper Nubia

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76 For the most recent version of this list, incorporating a hitherto unpublished early copy, see Smith, op. cit., 39-41 and plate LXIX, 1. Note that Smith reads the last seven toponyms in the reverse order to that followed by me, presumably because “captive cords” stretch from a god to the toponyms Kush, ḫa₂w, . . ., yḫ, and Yam, suggesting that Yam heads the next six toponyms. But the direction in which the last seven toponyms face favors the sequence I adopt here, which is also used by Posener, Kush 6 (1958), 60.

77 D. O’Connor, review of Trigger, Les cultures Kerma, Bibliotheca Orientalis XXXVII, No. 5/6 (1980), 327-28, 329. Note that Trigger for reasons different from mine, also suggested that an entity of new origins arose in the Kerma basin at this time (“The Reasons for the Construction of the Second Cataract Forts,” JSSEA 12 [1982], 3).
can also reasonably be argued, both theories need to be given equal weight in any discussion.

A. Were the Nehasy entities chiefdoms or kingdoms?

Although we will never be able to define very precisely the political nature of the more important of the Nehasy entities encountered by the Egyptians during the Old and Middle Kingdom, locational theory at least might help to clarify a certain ambiguity evident in the scholarly literature. Where along the political spectrum extending from a “chiefdom” to a “kingdom” are toponyms such as Yam, Wawat, Irtjet, Setju and, for that matter, Kush and Shaat to be placed? Three variables significant in this regard, especially when taken in combination, are centrality, military strength, and territorial size, the last being especially affected by different locational theories.

A significant degree of political centrality existed for several of the toponyms of interest here. In the Old Kingdom, Yam, Wawat, and Irtjet at least were each under a single $hkh$ or ruler, not divided among several; and the same appears to be true for Shaat and Kush in the Middle Kingdom. To the Egyptians, each of these rulers embodied the corporate personality of the entity in question, in both hostile and friendly contexts. The “rulers” are referred to as potential or actual rebels in the Excavation Texts of the Old and Middle Kingdom, in the Old Kingdom they are explicitly responsible for offering formal submission to the Egyptian king (except Yam), and providing labor- and probably military-levies to meet Egyptian needs, and in the Middle Kingdom it is presumably the rulers of Kush and Shaat who were responsible for both military conflicts and more peaceable contacts between these toponyms and Egypt documented by the sources.

It is true that these “rulers” have left surprisingly little trace in the archaeological record, especially as compared with the grandiose tombs and other imposing structures associated with the “rulers of Kush” in the later Second Intermediate Period. For the Old Kingdom period (archaeologically the early C-group and Kerma ancien in Lower and Upper Nubia respectively), it may simply be that the political power and military strength of the rulers did not automatically translate into a gross and hence easily visible ostentation in their funerary structures. In the Middle Kingdom Lower Nubia was firmly under direct Egyptian control; it is doubtful that any indigenous rulers existed; and this, or a continuing lack of ostentation may explain the failure to identify chief’s or king’s tombs within the C-group of this period.

Upper Nubia, in its contemporary Kerma moyen phase, does exhibit a significant degree of socio-economic differentiation in its cemetery archaeology, so future excavations in the as yet

74 I am omitting the theories of Yoyotte and Goedicke about the location of Yam from this discussion because, as I have argued above, they are not very plausible.
75 Some examples of this ambiguity: Säve-Söderbergh consistently describes the Old and Middle Kingdom rulers as “Häuptlinge” (Ägypten und Nubien [Lund, 1941], 29 and 62; Trigger identifies these rulers as “chiefs” (op. cit., 56–57, 65); to Adams the Old Kingdom rulers are “village headmen or chiefs” (op. cit., 195); Kemp, however, calls Yam a “kingdom” (Trigger et al., op. cit., 129) and identifies the ruler of a united Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju at least as “a veritable king of Lower Nubia” (ibid., 126).
76 Cf. Urk. I, 125.15, 126.10–11 (Yam); Urk. I, 134.6 for the “two rulers of these countries,” earlier—in Urk. I, 133.10—identified as “Wawat and Irtjet.” For the rulers of Kush and Shaat, see n. 72 above. On the meaning of the word $hkh$, as applied to a foreign ruler in these periods, see D. Lorton, The Judicial Terminology of International Relations in Egyptian Texts through Dynasty XVIII (Baltimore and London, 1974), 21–27.
81 See the preambles to the Old Kingdom Excavation Texts as reconstructed by Osing, MDAIK 32 (1976), 133–54, and the Middle Kingdom data cited in nn. 71 and 72 above.
82 Urk. I, 110–11 (Wawat, Irtjet, and Medja); Urk. I, 134.6 (Wawat and Irtjet).
83 Labor levies of Wawat, Irtjet, Yam, and Medja implied in Urk. I, 198.13–109.2; military levies, presumably supplied by the rulers, from Irtjet, Medja, Yam, Wawat, and Kaau, Urk. I, 101.13–16; see also the military escort supplied to Harkhuf by the ruler of Yam (Urk. I, 127.1–5).
84 For recent descriptions, see Kemp in Trigger et al., op. cit., 103–66; S. Wenig, Africa in Antiquity II (Brooklyn, 1976), 30–40. See also O’Connor, JARCE 21 (1984), 65–108.
85 For the funerary archaeology of the C-group at all periods. M. Betak, Studien zur Chronologie der mittelalten C-Gruppe (Wien, 1986); of the Kerma ancien, Graeber, op. cit., 135–56, 162–79. On the possibility of a restrained archaeological expression of political power, see Adams’ interesting observations, op. cit., 160.
86 Graeber, op. cit., 256.
largely unexplored sites of the period may yet reveal graves of sufficient ostentation to be identified as those of rulers, although probably not a degree comparable to that generated by the unusual circumstances of the later Second Intermediate Period.

As noted above, royal “gifts” from Egypt at Kerma mark it as a “capital” of some kind in the late Old and Early Middle Kingdoms; but it is debatable whether this datum means that Kerma was the capital of Yam or of the “ruler of Irtjet and Setju.”

As well as political centrality the chief Nehasy entities of interest here also displayed considerable military strength. The military capabilities of the Second Intermediate Period “kingdom of Kush” have long been recognized; but those of earlier periods, in both Lower and Upper Nubia, should also be emphasized. Soldiers from Wawat, Irtjet, Setju and Yam (a list that covers at least both Upper and Lower Nubia, on any locational theory) were recruited into the Old Kingdom armies; the iršīw, who typically performed military and police duties in Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period Egypt, have been shown to be almost entirely “Egyptianized Nubians” from these same southern lands; and at least one of the Egyptian armies dispatched against Wawat in Dynasty VI was extremely large, indicating that strong resistance was anticipated from the Nehasyu.

For the Middle Kingdom, it can be shown that both Lower and Upper Nubians were considered militarily significant. Although the reconquest of Wawat/Lower Nubia began in the reign of Nebhepetre Montuhotep (see below), its pacification was still not complete some sixty years later, when Amenemhet I and Senwosret I had to launch a major and sustained effort to bring its Nehasyu population fully under Egyptian control. Although a major chain of fortresses throughout Wawat had been begun, and perhaps even completed by years 25/52 of their co-rule, the Egyptians still were fighting a major campaign in the center of Lower Nubia some four years later.72 The Lower Nubian fortresses themselves vividly attest the military prowess of the Nehasyu of Wawat. Strategically located so as to dominate the principal zones of C-group settlement,73 the fortresses were large and elaborately defended against attacks involving the use of assault towers or ladders and sapping and mining. Although it has been suggested that these defenses were actually much stronger than were really required, it is preferable to see in them a rational and realistic anticipation on the part of the Egyptians. The Lower Nubians did not themselves live in fortified towns, but for generations many of them had served in Egyptian armies and learned how to attack fortified cities, knowledge that had evidently become pervasive in Lower Nubia itself.

71 Ibid., p. 38, n. 58.
72 Significant data: numerous warrior burials of Kenna classique, the relevant archaeological phase (Götzen, op. cit., 196–200, 216); capture by the Kushites of Egyptian fortresses in Lower Nubia (the probable fall of Buhen fortress to the Kushites, discussed in Smith, op. cit., 80–82 and the extension of Kushite power as far north as Elephantine, implied in Carnarvon Table I, lines 3–6, indicates that all the fortresses fall or surrendered to the Kushites; the Hyksos king’s invitation to the Kushites to invade Upper Egypt (L. Habachi, The Second Stela of Kamose [Gluckstadt, 1972], 39, hg. 25, lines 22–24).
73 See n. 85 above.
74 See, op. cit., 51ff.
75 20,000 men; see Lopez, Las inscripciones rupestres faraónicas entre Korosko y Kasr Ibrim, 27–28 (Inc. 27). Such figures may of course be dismissed as “hyperbole”; but since we have very little data on population size, sizes of armies, etc., in the Old Kingdom, we must recognize that it is equally possible that the figure is correct. Cf. the quarrying expedition of about 18,000 men under Senwosret I attested in G. Guyon, Nouvelles inscriptions du Wadi Hammamat (Paris, 1957), 17–20, 81–85 (no. 61) and plates 25–26.
As to the Kushites of the Middle Kingdom, their military capability is documented by the periodic campaigns the Egyptians had to fight against them (see below), and more dramatically by the strongly defended fortresses built by Senwosret III to control the Second Cataract region. The principal danger thus guarded against was Kushite attack, clearly expected to be formidable.  

Political centrality implies a degree of military centralization within the relevant entities, a probability that might find clarification in the Old Kingdom, although the evidence is unfortunately ambiguous. During this period the only titles assigned to Nehasyu within their own territories are those of the rulers and their relatives, and that of “overseer of snw.” Snw in the relevant examples can tentatively be translated as “military forces,” in which case these overseers emerge as “generals” of high rank commanding large forces. In one instance, in fact, it can be argued that Irtjet and Wawat each had not only a single ruler, but also a single “overseer of military forces,” in effect a kind of generalissimo for each toponym; but the passage in question is susceptible to another interpretation, which would deprive it of the meaning suggested.  

As one tries to place the various southern toponyms ruled by hksw along the spectrum between “chiefdom” and “kingship,” the variables of political centrality and military strength gain greater significance when combined with the question of the territorial size of each entity; and here locational theories become particularly important. If we follow the theory that Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju were all located in Lower Nubia, then the hksw of the first two would be controlling a territory of only about 115 linear kilometers each. If however we argue that Old Kingdom Wawat occupied all Lower Nubia, then its ruler held some 350 kilometers of the Nile valley, a threefold increase of the territory envisaged in the first theory. The second theory requires us to place Irtjet and Setju in Upper Nubia; and if Yam be excluded from this region, then these two entities do not appear to “share” it with any other toponym. One might suggest...

“overseers of snw” are identified by title in the Old Kingdom Excavation Texts (see Abū Bakr and Osing, MDAIK 29 [1973], 116).

The passage in question (Urk. I, 134.10) reads literally, “The children of rulers and the two overseers of snw,” implicitly of Wawat and Irtjet, the two regions affected by the activity involved (Urk. I, 133.10). The plurality of “children” is indicated by -w and a single determinative (see R. O. Faulkner, The Plural and Dual in Old Egyptian [Brussels, 1929], 27) and the duality of “overseers” by two determinatives (ibid., 7). However, both Faulkner and Gunn (the latter with a specific explanation, cf. R. Gunn, review of R. O. Faulkner, The Plural and the Dual in Old Egyptian, JEA 19 [1933], 106) believed the passage should be read as consisting of two plurals, i.e., “children of rulers and overseers of snw,” the latter title already occurring in undoubtedly plural form earlier in the text (Urk. I, 133.13). It should be noted, however, that an accepted dual (“the two rulers”) of Wawat and Irtjet, Urk. I, 134.6; cf. Faulkner, op. cit., 7) occurs in the same passage, so it remains possible that, in the particular context, “two overseers” is the actual as well as the apparent meaning.
then—obviously very tentatively—that Irtjet, the more northerly, corresponded to the Abri-Delgo reach and that Setju covered much, perhaps most of the Dongola reach. Irtjet (assuming it did not include the barren Batn el Hajar) would then have a length of 175 kilometers, Setju perhaps as much as 200 or 300; both regions could certainly be much larger than would be the case if they were confined to Lower Nubia.

A capacity for territorial expansion on a large scale could be taken as yet another indication of “kindly” rather than “chiefly” status on the part of a ruler. The unification of Irtjet and Setju, and soon after of these two with Wawat, under a single ruler has always attracted scholarly attention. If all three are in Lower Nubia the feat is impressive enough, but its implications for Nehasy strength and the Egyptian reaction to it are much expanded if in fact a union of Lower and Upper Nubia is involved. This would involve a politically and militarily united (in some fashion) riverine territory perhaps almost 1000 kilometers long. Stretching from Elephantine to some point well within the Dongola reach, this “kingdom,” as it could justly be called, would, in terms of territorial size, approximate that of the later and much better known “kingdom of Kush” in the Second Intermediate Period.

Whether we place Yam in Upper Nubia or far upstream along the Shendi reach or in the northern Butana, its size is always going to be hard to estimate. If it was the sole “great power” in Upper Nubia, Yam may have been able to hold a very substantial amount of territory. If Yam was further upstream from Upper Nubia, we cannot know with what other entities it may have had to compete for territory; but Yam’s evident importance to the Egyptians, and its capability for armed forays far into the western desert and for overawing the forces of even the ruler of the combined “kingdom” of Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju, imply a very considerable population and hence a large territorial expanse, wherever it might be located.

While discussing possible territorial size, we might glance quickly at that of the relevant toponyms of the Middle Kingdom. Here again locational theory is significant. If we follow the idea that Kush and Shaat shared Upper Nubia with a number of other toponyms, and that Kush was located north of Shaat and the latter occupied only the Sai region, defined in a fairly narrow sense, then Upper Nubia can be envisaged as divided up amongst a number of fairly small entities, perhaps varying in length between 30 and 50 kilometers. But, if we argue that Shaat occupies the Sai region, and that Kush proper was a major power occupying much of the Dongola reach (and this theory fits better with the fact that the only riverine territories with “rulers” in mid-and-later Middle Kingdom times are Shaat and Kush), then we are dealing with a very different territorial situation. Shaat, covering the Abri-Delgo reach, and Kush might occupy 175 and 200/300 kilometers respectively.

In summary, therefore, the locational theories that confine Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju to Lower Nubia, and envisage Middle Kingdom Upper Nubia as heavily fragmented territorially, would tend to reduce the various Nehasy entities to “chieftoms,” albeit sometimes quite substantial ones. But locational theories identifying Wawat as all Lower Nubia at all periods, assigning Irtjet and Setju to Upper Nubia, and envisaging the latter region as essentially shared between only two Nehasy powers in the Middle Kingdom, inevitably suggest much larger territories for the toponyms in question. This, in combination with the variables of political centrality and military power already discussed, tends to raise these toponyms to the status of “kingdoms.”

B. Egyptian policies in the northern Sudan

This is the second historical question for which locational theories about northern Sudanese toponyms have important implications. Specifically, these theories can expand or contract the sheer geographical range and scope of Egyptian activity at different periods. Moreover, such theories can greatly influence our judgments about the degree to which Nehasy “chieftoms” or “kingdoms” were not merely the passive recipients of Egyptian
aggression or exploitation, but rather dynamic participants in a continuously evolving interactive process between themselves and the Egyptian state. The larger in size (and implicitly power) that we can show certain southern toponyms to have been, then the greater is the likelihood that they could promote their own interests against those of the Egyptians, provoke reactions from the latter, and even perhaps adversely affect Egypt itself.

The basic data upon Egyptian activity have often been reviewed and need only brief mention here. The primary motivations on the Egyptian side were to maintain a secure southern frontier, develop as much control as possible over trade corridors linking Egypt to the products of the northern semi-arid and savannah regions of the Sudan, and to exploit vigorously those Sudanese natural and human resources closest to Egypt. Perhaps of increasing importance for this last factor was the desire to use Nehasy soldiers, whether abroad (in Palestine, Sinai, Libya, and the Sudan itself) or during conflicts internal to Egypt, as in the First Intermediate Period.

The policies prompted by these motivations are first discernible during Dynasty I, when Lower Nubia was reduced to an empty buffer zone and corridor securely under Egyptian domination, enhanced through Dynasties IV and V by the development of several small, but strategically located Egyptian centers throughout the region. Upper Nubia must have been well populated and was seen as both a resource open to trading and raiding, and perhaps as a threat, the most likely source for a resettlement of Lower Nubia by indigenous peoples. Egypt probably campaigned in Upper Nubia in Dynasties II, IV, and V, a significant background to the better documented situation found in Dynasty VI, when our different locational theories became historically important.

Indigenous peoples (archaeologically the C-group) settled Lower Nubia soon before or early in Dynasty VI, a development presumably unwelcome to Egypt and probably originating in Upper Nubia. The Egyptian centers were abandoned; but into at least the early years of Merenre Egypt's potential capacity for large-scale campaigning seems to have kept the Egyptians dominant. Wawat, Irtjet, and Medja formally acknowledged Egyptian overlordship; they and Yam supplied troops and labor-levies; and it is perhaps to this period we can assign an Egyptian "overseer of foreign lands in Yam, Irtjet and Wawat" and "overseer of the army" "in Setju." The locational theory restricting Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju to Lower Nubia, and Yam to Upper Nubia, would mean that Egyptian overlordship was claimed only for Lower Nubia and its contiguous deserts, while contact beyond these extended only as far south as Upper Nubia. But, if Irtjet and Setju were in Upper Nubia, and Yam on or near the Shendi reach, then overlordship included much of Upper Nubia and contact extended down to the very fringes of the semi-arid and savannah zones that produced much of the materials desired by Egypt.

Later in Dynasty VI Egyptian dominance deteriorated, perhaps in part because of growing strength, political and military cohesion, and expansionism amongst the Nehasyu, exemplified in particular by the union of Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju under a single ruler. Egyptian trading expeditions appear reluctant to traverse Lower, and maybe Upper, Nubia unless absolutely the defeated enemy of Nubian appearance attested under Khasekhem of Dynasty II (W. B. Emery, Archaic Egypt [Harmondsworth, 1961], 100, fig. 61); Snetru's substantial campaign against "the land of the Nehasu(yu)," a heavily populated area yielding 7000 prisoners (Urk. I, 236; cf. Kemp in Trigger et al., op. cit., 120); and Dynasty IV royal reliefs depicting, amongst other ethnic groups, crushed, submissive, or captured individuals who are probably Nehasu(yu) (see Sivre-Soderberg, The Navy of the Eighteenth Dynasty [Uppsala and Leipzig, 1946], 10, n. 3; R. Drenkhahn, Darstellungen von Negern in Agypten [Hamburg, 1967], 4-8).

Note Kemp's perceptive comment in Trigger et al., op. cit., 123; "since the imbalance in population between Egypt and her African neighbors must have been much less great in antiquity than in modern times such political developments" as the appearance of "ambitious leaders" amongst the Nehas(yu) "must have been viewed with equivalently greater urgency."

Save-Soderberg, op. cit., 5-116 remains fundamental. Other useful surveys include Adams, op. cit., 118-216; Trigger, op. cit., 102; Kemp in Trigger et al., op. cit., 116-57.

See especially Kemp in Trigger et al., op. cit., 194-95.

Since Lower Nubia was empty of indigenous population from mid-Dynasty I for about six centuries, the following data are most likely to refer to campaigns in Upper Nubia: 105

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necessary\textsuperscript{111} and may have deliberately developed a western desert route\textsuperscript{112} so as to minimize contact with the riverine Nehasy. In particular, the ruler of Wawat, Irjet, and Setju seems to have been seen as threatening to Egyptian interests,\textsuperscript{113} a threat all the more powerful if this union covered both Lower and Upper Nubia. Such a union was not only very large, it also affected Egyptian relations with Yam. Yam appears as an Egyptian ally; if located in Upper Nubia, it could certainly lend effective support to the Egyptian position in Lower Nubia. But if it lay much further south, Yam's capacity to assist Egypt would be more limited and the threat be perceived by the Egyptians as all the greater. 

The Egyptians certainly reacted aggressively. Under Pepi II, Pepinakhte Heklab led a successful campaign against what appears to have been a united kingdom of Wawat and Irjet,\textsuperscript{114} part of Lower Nubia on one theory, or more impressively, of all Lower Nubia and a substantial part of Upper Nubia according to the other. Perhaps assignable to this general period of aggression is the army of 20,000 men sent to "hack up Wawat" and the taking of 17,000 Nehasy prisoners.\textsuperscript{115} The threatening political and military unity of the Nubian Nile seems to have been broken, since on a subsequent occasion Pepinakhte compelled the "two rulers of Wawat and Irjet" respectively to travel to Memphis and pay homage to Pharaoh.\textsuperscript{116} Distracted by internal troubles (to which the insecurity developing in the northern Sudan may have contributed), Egypt soon after left the Nubian Nile valley an independent region until, as reunification approached, a new aggressive policy was initiated by Nebhepetre Montuhotep. This ruler may have claimed the annexation of "Wawat and the Oasis"\textsuperscript{117} to Egypt; he is certainly described elsewhere as "[binding together] the two provinces, the northern and the southern (of Egypt), Medjay-land, Wawat-land, the Tjehenu-people, and the phauw",\textsuperscript{118} and he recruited Nehasy from Wawat to fight in Asiatic campaigns.\textsuperscript{119} However, as noted above, the final

\textsuperscript{111} See the itineraries of Harkhuf discussed above
\textsuperscript{112} Yoyotte, BIFA 52 (1993), 174, suggests that Harkhuf was the first to develop a western desert route to Yam.
\textsuperscript{113} Urk. I, 126 15–127, 10.
\textsuperscript{114} The relevant passages refer to an attack upon Wawat and Irjet (Urk. I, 133.10) and, shortly after (Urk. I, 133.12–13) to the slaying of the children of "the ruler"—the apparent meaning and the one taken, for example, by Gardiner (Egypt of the Pharaohs, 99). Others, however, have taken the meaning to be plural, i.e., "rulers' children"; e.g., J. H. Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt (Chicago, 1906), 163, Sect. 358; Gunn, JEA 7 (1935), 106.
\textsuperscript{115} Lopez, Las inscripciones taprestes funerarias entre Korosko y Kasr Hassan, 25–28 (Insc. 27) and 28–30 (Insc. 28). On the dates of these, see n. 43 above.
\textsuperscript{116} Urk. I, 134.3–7.
pacification of Wawat was not achieved until the co-rule of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I (and then with considerable difficulty). Therefore, with Wawat/Lower Nubia secure, Egypt concentrated on securing some kind of domination over Upper Nubia, partly for economic gain, partly perhaps because it was feared the region could bring significant pressure against the Egyptians in Lower Nubia. This possibility would be the more likely if (as one locational theory suggests) only two large political military entities (Shaat and Kush) occupied most of Upper Nubia. The first known attack was launched in Year 18 of Senwosret I, and it is quite likely that the Egyptian war fleet broke through into the Dongola reach and traversed much if not all of it (i.e., to the Fourth Cataract), inflicting considerable damage on the riverine communities.

In the short run, this Egyptian aggression seems a success, for no reference to hostilities with Kush has survived from the next 80 years. However, as a working hypothesis, I would suggest that during this period the Upper Nubians consolidated internally, their rulers benefiting from considerable trade with Egypt, and ultimately became a formidable threat to Egyptian security in Wawat. In particular, the Upper Nubians may have developed significant naval power, thus inhibiting an Egyptian strategy of basing the effectiveness of campaigning in Kush upon a temporary domination of river movement throughout the Dongola reach during the campaign. These admittedly hypothetical suggestions form a likely background to the aggressive, and yet perhaps also defensive, Kushite policy of Senwosret III. The Second Cataract was heavily fortified, specifically to prevent any large movement by land or river of Upper Nubians toward the north except for clearly defined and closely controlled purposes; and several campaigns were fought in Kush. Again, locational theory is relevant. Was all this activity directed against a politically and territorially fragmented region, which eventually coalesced in response to Egyptian pressure to finally emerge, much later, as the centralized and extensive “kingdom of Kush”? Or were the Egyptians dealing already with two very considerable powers, Shaat and Kush, controlling most of Upper Nubia and forming, in essence, that “kingdom of Kush” that was to emerge more clearly later?

As to Yam, the only unambiguous Middle Kingdom reference is in connection with the Year 18 campaign of Senwosret I, and even this need not imply that Yam was directly affected by this campaign. Even if Yam is identified in the Execration Texts, it is clear that “Kush,” not Yam, dominated Egyptian interest upstream of Lower Nubia. Again, locational theory offers

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121 Trigger, op. cit., 75, has already suggested that the Egyptians feared that “the Kushite fleet that brought trade goods north to Iken might some day bring a Kushite army.” I would go further and suggest that the Kushites realized that the effectiveness of Egyptian campaigning in Kush—carried out by river both under Senwosret I and Senwosret III—depended largely upon unchallenged control of the river throughout the Dongola reach for the duration of each campaign. In response, the Kushites built ships capable of, to some degree, challenging this Egyptian superiority, the “ships” being those of the Nehasu referred to on the Semneb boundary stela of Year 8 of Senwosret III.

122 Semneb stela of Year 8, Säte, Ägyptische Leistungen (Leipzig, 1928), 84.

123 For the date on the campaigns of Senwosret III, see Säte-Söderbergh, Ägypten und Nubien, 79-79, and for a more recent discussion, see R. Delia, A Study of the Reign of Senwosret III. University Microfilms International (Ann Arbor, 1980), 24-88, 95-107.
two possible explanations for this. If Yam was an Upper Nubian entity, then it must have shrunk to merely one of a large number of Upper Nubian entities of which another, Kush, became increasingly important. However, if Yam were upstream of Upper Nubia, and the latter dominated by two large and expansive powers, Shaat and Kush, then it may be that Egyptian contact with this more remote Yam was much less than had been the case in the Old Kingdom. In other words, in the Middle Kingdom we might have to envisage Egypt as dominant over only Lower Nubia and its contiguous eastern and western deserts but effectively cut off from significant contact with the Shendi reach and Butana regions by independent and powerful kingdoms controlling not only Upper Nubia (Shaat and Kush) but also the eastern desert at the same latitudes (Aushek and Webetsepet). This hypothesis would also explain the “fading away” of Yam in the historical record; and perhaps its resurgence in New Kingdom Egyptian records as Irem, after the Egyptians had finally destroyed the kingdom of Kush and re-established themselves on the fringes of the Sudanic heartlands.\footnote{As noted above in n. 1, Priese has suggested the equivalence Yam/Irem (not yet proved conclusively) and has argued that Irem was located in Upper Nubia (op. cit., 7-20). However, as I have argued elsewhere (O’Connor, “The Location of Irem,” \textit{JEA}, 73 [1987]), a Shendi reach/northern Butana location for Irem is equally possible, and perhaps more likely, on the basis of the available evidence.}

Postscript

In preparing my study of Yam, I inadvertently overlooked G. Fecht’s discussion of the Harkhuf text (M. Görg and E. Pusch [eds.] \textit{Festschrift Elmar Edel}, 1979 Bamberg 105-34) as Dr. David Silverman kindly pointed out to me. However, while Fecht makes some significant observations (e.g., about the topographical relationships between Irtjet, Mekher, Teters and Irtjet (op. cit., n. 10) and notes the difficulty of locating the frontier between Irtjet and Wawat, because of the ambiguities created by the content and the location of various graffiti (op. cit., 117-19, 126-27), he nevertheless accepts the basic thesis of Priese that Wawat, Irtjet, and Setju are to be located in Lower Nubia, and Irem in Upper Nubia (op. cit., 118 and 126-27). Note also that Bonnet has very recently stressed a cultural continuity, rather than a discontinuity between \textit{Kerma ancien} and \textit{Kerma moyen}; and states, on the basis of field work, that the pit containing the fragments of Old and Middle Kingdom inscribed (royal names) stone vases at Kerma was dug in \textit{Kerma classique} times.

This would place the deposition of these fragments in the pit at a date much later than the date (late Old Kingdom, early Middle Kingdom) postulated above for the arrival of the vases at Kerma. Bonnet however leaves it open, as a possibility, that the vases were derived from somewhere else in Kerma, i.e., did not necessarily reach the site as late as \textit{Kerma classique} (Second Intermediate Period). These remarks were made at the Sixth International Congress for Nubian Studies in 1986; publication forthcoming.

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