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Abstract Booklet



- The second section includes lines 38-43, which require that these parts shall be given to the *Labyadai* in the ritual contexts related to the oracular consultations.

Lines 38-43, due to their particular syntax, have been the subject of the most varied interpretations throughout the history of the studies. The contribution will refer to Rougemont (1977), but will proceed to a close comparison with the literary and epigraphical documentation, in some cases not yet related to the *cippus*. The objective will be to trace new interpretative paths related to the mechanisms of consultation of the Oracle of Apollo, through the study of the oracular prebends. An attempt will also be made to generate new perspectives on Delphic ritual geography.

References

- J. K. Davies, *Strutture e suddivisioni delle poleis arcaiche. Le ripartizioni minori*, in S. Settis (a cura di), *I Greci. Storia Cultura Arte Società*, II.1, *Una storia greca*, Torino 1996, pp. 599-652.
- G. Rougemont, *Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes, Tome I: Lois sacrées et règlements religieux*, Paris 1977.
- D. Rousset, J. Camp, S. Minon, *The phokian city of Panopeus/Phanoteus, three new rupestral inscriptions, and the cippus of the Labyadai of Delpfhi*, in *AJA* 119, pp. 441-463.

Session 3, Panel 6: Meroe and Nubia in the Classical and Post-classical World

Organisers: Mai Musié (Freelance Public Engagement Specialist) and Adam Simmons (Nottingham Trent University)

Chair: Mai Musié

In the ancient world several terms were used interchangeably, for example 'Nubian' and 'Ethiopian' both appear to describe black people in the Nile valley, as well as 'Kushites'. Nubia—present day Sudan and Upper Egypt—was located upstream of the First Cataract of the Nile to beyond modern Khartoum. Its people have lived in ancient Nubia from at least 300,000 BCE and the region has been home to the earliest sub-Saharan urban culture in the African continent. The adoption of the toponym 'Ethiopia' in classical and medieval scholarship as a result of Solomonic Ethiopian appropriation has at times caused the anachronistic erasure and reduction of the histories of Meroe and Nubia. This panel seeks to readdress the balance by offering four different perspectives in viewing ancient Nubia. Derbew traces the way that 'Aithiopians' (and blackness), the Greek term for Nubians, appear in literature and art spanning over 900-years of Greco-Roman civilisation. Ashby explores the popularity of the cult of Isis beyond Egypt, particularly in the kingdom of Meroe, and the rites of Nubian priests. Simmons offers a discussion on how Meroitic/Nubian and Aksumite material reflect the localisation of 'Ethiopia' in modern Sudan and addresses how much later historical narratives have contributed to the anachronistic association between 'Ethiopia' and Ethiopia. Drzewiecki offers a different take on 'classical' urbanisation in his discussion on the medieval kingdom of Alwa—a thriving Nubian capital city—and its Meroitic influences with a nod to the city of Aksum and other cluster cities of Western Africa.

Sarah Derbew (Stanford University)

Blackness and Nubia

Derbew will examine the relationship between blackness and Nubia in ancient Greek sources. She will trace the ways that Aithiopians, the Greek term for Nubians, appear in literature and art spanning nine hundred years (fifth century BCE – fourth century CE). An ancient literary example puts this discussion into context. Namely, Herodotus weaves black skin colour in and out of his description of Aithiopians, thus offering broader methods of defining people that incorporates visual and non-visual clues.

Solange Ashby (UCLA)

Isis, Mistress of the Southern Lands: From Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* to Meroe, an ancient kingdom on the Nile

Worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis spread throughout the Mediterranean world during more than seven centuries of Greco-Roman rule in Egypt (332 BCE – 395 CE). During this period temples of Isis were constructed in Greece and Rome and into northern Europe. Less well known are the adherents of Isis from the lands south of Egypt in the kingdom of Meroe (300 BCE – 330 CE) and the Nubian priests whom they employed to conduct rites for Osiris and Isis at the temple of Philae.

This talk will use Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, a Greek romance of the third or fourth century CE, as an entry point to discover the 'other' great civilization of the Greco-Roman world, Meroe. Heliodorus' protagonist, a young priestess of Artemis from Delphi in Greece, journeys to the 'cataracts of Egypt' and the temple of Isis before arriving in Meroe to discover that she is a Meroitic princess. This talk will discuss what Heliodorus got right—and wrong!—about the actual Meroitic priests and worshippers of the goddess Isis, contemporaries of Heliodorus, as described through their prayer inscriptions written in Egyptian Demotic, Meroitic, and Greek on the walls at the temple of Philae and the decorated funerary chapels of the royal pyramids at Meroe.

The prominence of powerful goddesses (Hathor, Mut, and Isis), the reverence awarded to the queen mothers of Kush, and a series of sole-ruling queens who led their armies in battle against the invading Romans in the period just prior to Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, highlight the unusually high status of women in this ancient African society.

Adam Simmons (Nottingham Trent University)

What did Meroe/Nubia and Aksum think about the toponym 'Ethiopia'?

The toponyms Aithiopia (Greek) and Aethiopia (Latin) are often perceived to have encompassed generalised lands. Despite the nuances of their pre-Christian and Christian definitions, the perspectives of Meroe/Nubia and Aksum, the lands most commonly associated with the toponym in North-East Africa, are commonly overlooked. This paper

will discuss how Meroitic/Nubian and Aksumite material reflect the localisation of 'Ethiopia' in modern Sudan and addresses how much later historical narratives have contributed to the anachronistic association between 'Ethiopia' and Ethiopia. Despite claims to the contrary, Aksumite material never claims Aksum to be 'Ethiopia', whether in a secular or biblical form, whilst both Meroitic/Nubian and Aksumite material localise the region of Sudan as 'Kush', and by extension, 'Ethiopia'. Recentring African material in the debate over the definition of 'Ethiopia' challenges the historiographical narrative which portrays Aksum as the dominant power of North-East Africa, whilst minimising Meroe's/Nubia's role via the influence of multiple layered historical mischaracterisations.

Mariusz Drzewiecki (University of Warsaw)

The beginnings of Soba, the capital of the medieval kingdom of Alwa: From Meroitic influences to clustered cities of Western Africa

Most researchers date the beginnings of Soba to the 5th – 6th centuries AD. Already in the 6th century, the city on the east bank of the Blue Nile covered an area of approx. 200 ha, twice the size of Meroe. Despite the consensus on the date, the question of how the city looked like in the initial period, who build it, who was living there, and how it developed are still matters under discussion. Derek Welsby identified Meroitic influences in the 6th-century architecture in Soba and suggested that the city might have started as a small temple complex.

Excavations carried out in 2019–2020 and the results of radiocarbon dating have brought new insights into the issue. Based on the data, a hypothesis is put forward according to which the early Soba could have been a polycentric city. The metropolis in its first centuries had several areas characterized by permanent buildings (made of stone and/or brick) and vast areas where light (wooden) buildings dominated. The city was much different from other Nubian capitals since it did not have fortifications and one clearly defined centre. In this regard, it was more similar to the city of Axum and the so-called clustered cities of Western Africa.

Session 3, Panel 7: KYKNOS: Research on the Ancient Novels (§2)

Convenor/Chair: Ian Repath (Swansea University)

Leonardo Constantini (University of Bristol)

Re-framing the Festival of Laughter (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2.32-3.12)

The episode of the so-called Festival of Laughter (Apul. *Met.* 2.32-3.12) describes the trial of the protagonist Lucius, which surprisingly turns out to be a practical joke for the yearly celebration of the god Laughter (*Risus*) in the city of Hypata. This episode finds no parallel in Greek or Latin literature and is generally regarded as an Apuleian addition to the original plot of the "ass-story", which both Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and (Pseudo-)Lucian's *Onos* independently refashion.