

Words in the Landscape: The Mechanics of Egyptian Royal Living-Rock Stelae

by
Jen Thum

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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This dissertation by Jen Thum is accepted in its present form
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	xxi
List of Illustrations	xxii
Abbreviations	xxx
Reign Dates of Kings Mentioned in this Dissertation	xxxii
Abstract	xxxiii
CHAPTER 1	1
Interest and Implications	4
Research Question	6
Key Terms and Parameters	6
Stelae	7
Living-Rock	8
Royal	10
Precursors	12
Previous Scholarship	17
Patterns and Structure	20
Outline	26
CHAPTER 2	29

An Archaeology of Inscribed Natural Places.....	33
Perceptions of the Landscape.....	36
Actions in the Landscape	42
Actions of the Landscape.....	44
Actions on the Landscape	46
Key Concepts	51
Nature and Culture	52
Experience.....	55
Reception	62
Comparanda, Far and Near	66
Studies of Text in Context	66
Stone, Alterity, and the Ordered World	71
Landscape Monuments in the Ancient Near East	74
Methodology	80
CHAPTER 3	89
Geography and Geology	90
Egyptian Views of the World	96
Ordering, Orientating, and Imagining the World.....	101
Sacred Landscapes	109
Conceptions of Living Rock	116

<i>inr</i> , ‘stone’	123
<i>ḏw</i> , ‘mountain’	125
<i>ḏw wꜥb</i> , ‘pure mountain’	128
(<i>t3</i>) <i>dhnt</i> , ‘cultically activated rock face’	132
Time, Place, and Permanence	134
CHAPTER 4	140
Miracles in the Wadi Hammamat	141
A City Couched in Stone: Living-Rock Boundary Stelae at Amarna	156
Pure Water, Fine Stone: The Sacred Landscape(s) at Gebel Silsila	175
‘Of Rocks and Water’	195
CHAPTER 5	199
Shouting from the Hilltops: the Nauri Decree	201
Living-Rock Stelae at the First Cataract	218
Victory Stelae and Military Reports	221
Konosso Island	225
The Aswan Group	246
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Pi-Ramesses: Ramesside Stelae on the Lebanese Coast	257
Nahr el-Kalb	259
Adloun	287

The Road Most Traveled	296
CHAPTER 6	298
Boundaries and Imperial Boundary Stelae	302
Royal Inscriptions at Tombos: Territory vs. Hegemony	316
Billboards for Tuthmosis I.....	330
Indelible Threats at Kurgus.....	344
Two Horns Protrude from the Desert.....	357
“Dug into the Mountain”: The Lost Tuthmosid Stelae on the Euphrates	366
Marking the Edges of Empire and Cosmos	378
CHAPTER 7	383
Summary	384
Theoretical Framework.....	384
Conceptions of Living Rock	385
Stelae in Sacred Landscapes	386
Stelae on Expedition Routes	389
Stelae at Egypt’s Imperial Boundaries.....	392
Discussion	395
Future Directions	402
Onward.....	406
Bibliography	408

Appendix 1: Sites visited on fieldwork or otherwise relevant to this dissertation.....	468
Appendix 2: Royal Living-Rock Stelae	474

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Specific sites designated as <i>ḏww wꜥbw</i> , by reign, according to Thiem.
Table 4.1	Royal stelae and inscriptions at Gebel Silsila.
Table 5.1	Royal Living-Rock Stelae at the First Cataract.
Table 5.2	Levantine Stelae of Ramesses II.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1.1 Archival photograph of two Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian stelae at Nahr el-Kalb, Lebanon.
- Figure 1.2 Cartouches of Ramesses III on either side of a relief scene at Khazindariya.
- Figure 1.3 Reliefs of Den with smiting scenes in the Wadi El-Humur.
- Figure 1.4 The relief from Gebel Sheikh Suleiman.
- Figure 1.5 Map showing the temporal and spatial patterns in the group of royal living-rock stelae.
- Figure 1.6 Sites of the eleven case studies in this dissertation.
- Figure 2.1 Screenshot from the *Languages and Landscapes* digital interface.
- Figure 2.2 Map of the locations visited on fieldwork for this dissertation.
- Figure 3.1 Map of *Kmt* and surrounding areas.
- Figure 3.2 Map showing the stone types of the stelae in this dissertation.
- Figure 3.3 Maspero's illustration of the Egyptian universe.
- Figure 3.4 Map of the Wadi Hammamat from the Turin Papyrus (left side).
- Figure 3.5 The left side of the Aegean List.
- Figure 3.6 Julien Cooper's map of the places called by the term *t3-nṯr*.
- Figure 3.7 Hathor emerging from the Theban mountain.
- Figure 3.8 Relief depicting Amun inside the Gebel Barkal, from the south wall of the Temple of Mut at Gebel Barkal.

- Figure 3.9 Post-pharaonic graffito from the exterior of the Gebel Barkal, depicting Amun inside the mountain.
- Figure 3.10 The pinnacle of the Gebel Barkal.
- Figure 3.11 The Eleventh Dynasty phase of the Satet Temple at Elephantine, with the original rock structure present.
- Figure 3.12 Map showing the locations and periods of major rock-cut temples and royal living-rock stelae.
- Figure 3.13 Map of *ḏw wꜥb* sites in Table 3.1.
- Figure 4.1 Map showing the location of the Wadi Hammamat.
- Figure 4.2 The Turin Papyrus map with the Shrine of Amun of the *ḏw wꜥb* indicated.
- Figure 4.3 The Official Record.
- Figure 4.4 The First Wonder.
- Figure 4.5 The Second Wonder.
- Figure 4.6 The Commander's Record.
- Figure 4.7 The locations of the Middle Kingdom stelae within the wadi.
- Figure 4.8 The locations of the Commander's Record and First Wonder Stela.
- Figure 4.9 The locations of the Official Record and Second Wonder Stela.
- Figure 4.10 Map of the city of Akhetaten.
- Figure 4.11 Map of the Amarna boundary stelae.
- Figure 4.12 Stela M (left) and Stela L (right).
- Figure 4.13 Stela U.
- Figure 4.14 Lunette of Stela A with the royal family adoring the Aten.
- Figure 4.15 Map showing the original and expanded boundaries of Akhetaten.

- Figure 4.16 Map showing the location of Gebel Silsila.
- Figure 4.17 Satellite image of Gebel Silsila.
- Figure 4.18 The locations of the monuments in Table 4.1, with those of Seti I highlighted.
- Figure 4.19 Panorama of the Nile Stelae.
- Figure 4.20 The Nile Stela of Seti I.
- Figure 4.21 View east across the Nile from in front of the Nile Stelae, with the platform in the center.
- Figure 4.22 The Rhetorical Stela of Seti I.
- Figure 4.23 Philippe Martinez photographing the Rhetorical Stela.
- Figure 4.24 The Quarry Stela of Seti I.
- Figure 4.25 The Quarry Stela of Seti I in context.
- Figure 5.1 The Nauri Decree of Seti I.
- Figure 5.2 Map showing the location of Nauri.
- Figure 5.3 Line drawing of the lunette of the Nauri Decree stela.
- Figure 5.4 The two sandstone hills at Nauri.
- Figure 5.5 Drone photograph showing the location of the stela on the hill.
- Figure 5.6 Katie Simon photographing the Nauri Decree stela.
- Figure 5.7 Line drawing of the Nauri Decree stela, with the lines of the text outlined and numbered.
- Figure 5.8 The stone below the Nauri Decree stela.
- Figure 5.9 Two large holes, possibly from Egyptian scaffolding, below the stela.
- Figure 5.10 The Nauri Decree stela as seen from the bottom of the hill.

- Figure 5.11 The Nauri Decree stela as seen from the river.
- Figure 5.12 Routes in the area of Nauri.
- Figure 5.13 The location of the hills with respect to the Nile.
- Figure 5.14 Salience map for Nauri.
- Figure 5.15 Salience map for Nauri.
- Figure 5.16 Location of the First Cataract.
- Figure 5.17 Map of the First Cataract, with places mentioned in this section.
- Figure 5.18 Map of the First Cataract area, showing the location of Konosso Island.
- Figure 5.19 Konosso Island as seen from a motorboat, looking northwest.
- Figure 5.20 Konosso, or *Sawaba*, viewed from the north.
- Figure 5.21 Drawing of Konosso from the first quarter of the 19th century.
- Figure 5.22 Photograph of Konosso by Frank Mason Good, ca. 1857-1870s.
- Figure 5.23 Photograph of Konosso by J.P. Sebah, second half of the 19th century.
- Figure 5.24 View of Konosso from the south, as it appears in the *Denkmäler*.
- Figure 5.25 Lepsius' plan of Konosso.
- Figure 5.26 Konosso Island as seen by Petrie, with annotations.
- Figure 5.27 Satellite image of Konosso with its 'sides' indicated.
- Figure 5.28 What remains of the Year 7 Stela of Tuthmosis IV.
- Figure 5.29 The scene from the Year 8 Stela of Tuthmosis IV.
- Figure 5.30 The scene from Amenhotep III's stela at Konosso.
- Figure 5.31 The Aswan Group, looking roughly west, with annotations.
- Figure 5.32 The Southern Stela of Amenhotep III.
- Figure 5.33 The Northern Stela of Amenhotep III.

- Figure 5.34 The Aswan Group Stela of Tuthmosis II.
- Figure 5.35 The location of the Aswan Group in the context of modern Aswan, with the modern road visible.
- Figure 5.36 The Near East in the Late Bronze Age.
- Figure 5.37 The locations of Nahr el-Kalb and Adloun.
- Figure 5.38 Satellite image of Nahr el-Kalb with the locations of the Ramesside stelae and the river.
- Figure 5.39 RTI still of Ramesses' Year 4 Stela.
- Figure 5.40 Laser scan still of the Year 4 Stela.
- Figure 5.41 The locations of the three Ramesside stelae on the promontory (view from the northwest).
- Figure 5.42 The Year 4 Stela (R), beside a later Assyrian stela.
- Figure 5.43 Drawing of the Year 8 Stela.
- Figure 5.44 The Year 10 Stela.
- Figure 5.45 Map showing some of the routes and locations of other monuments (indicated by their DGA numerical designations) at Nahr el-Kalb.
- Figure 5.46 The Tyre Stela.
- Figure 5.47 The right side of the Tyre Stela.
- Figure 5.48 Lagarce's map of Egyptian stelae from the Levant.
- Figure 5.49 Vertical cavities on the upper corners of the Year 4 Stela.
- Figure 5.50 'Divots' on the bottom of the Year 4 Stela.
- Figure 5.51 Fractures in the rock immediately beneath the Year 4 Stela and its Assyrian counterpart.

- Figure 5.52 Fractures immediately to the right of the Year 10 Stela.
- Figure 5.53 Orientation of the Year 10 Stela.
- Figure 5.54 Archival photo of the dramatic landscape at Nahr el-Kalb.
- Figure 5.55 Photograph of the Adloun Stela.
- Figure 5.56 A glimpse of the rocks at Adloun.
- Figure 5.57 View of the Mediterranean from atop the cliffs at Adloun.
- Figure 5.58 Drawing of the Adloun Stela.
- Figure 5.59 Drawing of the Adloun Stela.
- Figure 5.60 Map showing the location of Adloun in its local landscape.
- Figure 5.61 One of the prehistoric caves at Adloun.
- Figure 6.1 The Hagr el-Merwa as seen from the east.
- Figure 6.2 Map of the sites discussed in this chapter.
- Figure 6.3 Drawing of the First Semna Stela.
- Figure 6.4 Map showing the locations of Middle Kingdom fortresses at Egypt's
boundary with Nubia.
- Figure 6.5 The Second Semna Stela.
- Figure 6.6 The Uronarti Stela.
- Figure 6.7 Map of Nubia with cultural and geographic boundaries.
- Figure 6.8 The cluster of rocks bearing the Tombos Stela (on the boulder at left).
- Figure 6.9 Archival photo of the University of Chicago's work on the Tombos Stela
of Tuthmosis I.
- Figure 6.10 Detail of the Tombos Stela inscription showing the small figure of the
king at the bottom of the monument.

- Figure 6.11 Map of the area pertinent to the Tombos Stela, with the direction of the Nile.
- Figure 6.12 The recently discovered stela on the east side of the Gebel Barkal (with location inset, indicated in red).
- Figure 6.13 The locations of the Tombos Stela and its accompanying monuments.
- Figure 6.14 The southernmost supplementary monument of Tuthmosis I at Tombos.
- Figure 6.15 Still from a drone video showing the position of the southernmost supplementary monument at Tombos (in the middle-ground of the image) in relation to the other supplementary monuments (behind it).
- Figure 6.16 Budka's chart of the distribution and layout of the supplementary royal inscriptions at Tombos.
- Figure 6.17 The three northernmost supplementary monuments.
- Figure 6.18 The second and third supplementary monuments at Tombos.
- Figure 6.19 Lepsius' drawings of tableaux b and d, placed side by side as they appear in the landscape.
- Figure 6.20 Diagram showing the directions of the texts in the Tombos monuments in reference to the site's geography.
- Figure 6.21 The northernmost supplementary monument at Tombos.
- Figure 6.22 Kurgus in the surrounding region.
- Figure 6.23 Kurgus and nearby routes.
- Figure 6.24 Petroglyphs obscured by pharaonic inscriptions on the Hagr el-Merwa.

- Figure 6.25 Satellite photograph of the Hagr el-Merwa with the area of the stelae indicated in red. Note the curvature of the rock, which gives part of its east side a northeast face.
- Figure 6.26 Epigraphic drawing of the Tuthmosid tableaux.
- Figure 6.27 Epigraphic drawings of the stelae of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III.
- Figure 6.28 The west side of the Hagr el-Merwa.
- Figure 6.29 The Philadelphia Fragment.
- Figure 6.30 Mizrachy's route for the eighth campaign of Tuthmosis III.
- Figure 6.31 Satellite image showing the area around the 'Big Bend' and Lake Assad.

ABBREVIATIONS

- GDG** Gauthier, Henri. 1925–1931. *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*. 7 vols. Cairo: Société Royale de Géographie d'Égypte.
- KRI** Kitchen, Kenneth A. 1969–1990. *Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical*. 7 vols. Oxford: Blackwell.
- LÄ** Helck, Wolfgang, Eberhard Otto, and Wolfhart Westendorf (eds.). 1972–1990. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. 7 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- LD** Lepsius, Karl R. 1849–1859. *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*. 12 vols. Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung.
- RITA** Kitchen, Kenneth A. 1993–2014. *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated & Annotated: Translations*. 7 vols. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- RITANC** Kitchen, Kenneth A., and Benedict G. Davies. 1993–2014. *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Notes and Comments*. 4 vols. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Urk** Sethe, Kurt, Wolfgang Helck, 1905–1958. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums IV*. 4 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Wb** Erman, Adolf, and Hermann Grapow. 1926–1931. *Wörterbuch der ägyptische Sprache im Auftrage der Deutschen Akademien*. 5 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

REIGN DATES OF KINGS MENTIONED IN THIS DISSERTATION

These and all following reign dates are based on those in the *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (2000; edited by John Baines and Jaromír Málek, New York: Checkmark Books), with adjustments for more recent discoveries (James P. Allen, *pers. comm.*).

Narmer – before ca. 3200 BCE

Iry-Hor – ca. 3170 BCE

Den – ca. 3013–2999 BCE

Mentuhotep II – ca. 2051–2000 BCE

Mentuhotep IV – ca. 1988–1981 BCE

Senwosret I – ca. 1961–1917 BCE

Senwosret III – ca. 1878–1840 BCE

Neferhotep I – ca. 1741–1730 BCE

Tuthmosis I – ca. 1502–1492 BCE

Tuthmosis II – ca. 1492–1479 BCE

Tuthmosis III – ca. 1479–1425 BCE

Hatshepsut – ca. 1473–1458 BCE

Tuthmosis IV – ca. 1399–1389 BCE

Amenhotep III – ca. 1389–1349 BCE

Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten – ca. 1349–1346 (Amenhotep IV)/1346–1332 BCE

(Akhenaten)

Tutankhamun – ca. 1330–1320 BCE

Ay – ca. 1320–1316 BCE

Horemhab – ca. 1316–1302 BCE

Seti I – ca. 1301–1290 BCE

Ramesses II – ca. 1290–1224 BCE

Merenptah – ca. 1224–1214 BCE

Ramesses III – ca. 1193–1161 BCE

Ramesses IV – ca. 1161–1156 BCE

Ramesses V – ca. 1156–1152 BCE

Shoshenq I – ca. 962–941 BCE

Taharqa – 690–664 BCE

Psamtik II – 595–589 BCE

Apries – 589–570 BCE

ABSTRACT

This is a study of formal, royal Egyptian stelae that were carved into living-rock outcrops. The driving research question is twofold: under what circumstances did Egypt's kings choose to commission their stelae in living rock, and what role did this medium play in their creation and reception? This dissertation brings Egyptian texts into broader dialogues about human-environment interactions using a theoretical framework for an archaeology of inscribed natural places.

The stelae cluster mainly in areas of strategic importance and those where one or more natural features were ritually significant. I divide the case study sites into three groups: sacred landscapes, expedition routes, and the sites of Egypt's imperial boundaries. All three of these inscribed landscape types have clear parallels elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Despite differences in the motivations that lie behind the creation of individual stelae, I argue that in all of the situations where kings commissioned these monuments, the medium of living rock was an essential part of whatever message they wished to convey.

As a group, the stelae were carved in liminal landscapes, especially at boundaries or in boundary zones, and were made mainly during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. These monuments were usually carved into features that represented or were immediately adjacent to points of alterity in the local landscape: features that would have already seemed 'monumental' before they were carved. Some of their outcrops were conceived as points in the cosmic geography that had been transposed onto the

landscapes of the living. Their texts relate directly to their spatial contexts or to broader geographic networks of which they were a part.

Using the stelae as a proxy, this study demonstrates that there was a clear conceptual difference between living rock and cut stone in the Egyptian world: in-situ rock formations carried a sense of permanence and timelessness; were inherently linked with the deep time into which momentous events were entered; were associated with the primordial; and were conceived as points in the cosmic geography, poking through into the world of the living.

CHAPTER 1

Words in the Landscape

There's one undisputable fact about a rock-cut inscription that can rarely be said of an inscription on a quarried piece of stone. And that is: a rock-cut inscription is *in situ*. It's in the place, today, that it was when it was cut thousands of years ago. And you can't say that about very many inscriptions on moveable pieces of stone. This has implications...and it certainly makes separating out rock-cut inscriptions worth the effort.

– Merle Langdon, ASCSA Open Meeting 2014

Merle Langdon is not an Egyptologist, but he would need no introduction to the subject of this dissertation. In his address at the 2014 Open Meeting of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Langdon made the above case to a room full of Classicists: rock inscriptions deserve to be studied separately from those on cut blocks of stone, even when the subject matter is the same.¹ “Why am I even doing this exercise?” he begins, asking rhetorically as if he needs to convince his audience. But apparently, they needed convincing—and until recently, many Egyptologists would have as well. Egyptology has historically suffered from a similar problem to Classics, namely the privileging of content over context, sometimes to the complete detriment of the non-textual aspects of an item under study. Only in the past decade or so, as archaeology has embraced the concept of materiality with increasing momentum, have we recognized that this problem is easily solved.

¹ I am grateful to my colleague in Ancient History at Brown, Mahmoud Samori, for bringing this lecture to my attention. It can be viewed online at <http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/news/newsDetails/videocast-open-meeting-work-of-the-school-during-2013andrupestral-inscripti>.

This is a project at the intersection of text and space. The content is Egyptian, but the point is universal: words in the landscape are different from words written anywhere else. What follows is a study of formal, royal Egyptian stelae that were carved into cliffs, rock outcrops, and boulders to suit the aims of the kingship. This dissertation brings Egyptian texts out of the world of philology and into broader dialogues about the interactions between people and places. I analyze epigraphic, archaeological, and geospatial evidence from the sites of living-rock stelae in Sudan, Lebanon, and Egypt using a theoretical framework rooted primarily in landscape archaeology. This framework for *an archaeology of inscribed natural places* gives a form of agency to the natural world,² following the ancient Egyptian view, and allows us to consider the materiality of monumental sources in new ways. This study sheds new light on sometimes well-known linguistic and art historical material through the use of technological tools such as aerial photography and mapping with a Geographic Information System (GIS). It explores the circumstances that led Egyptian kings to occasionally inscribe their messages on living rock, and what those messages can tell us about how this medium was understood.

² See Chapter 2 for my comments on the nature/culture divide and my use of the phrase ‘natural world.’



Figure 1.1 Archival photograph of two Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian stelae at Nahr el-Kalb, Lebanon (Breasted 1912, Fig. 159).

Interest and Implications

Conventional wisdom holds that ancient Egypt was a culture of ‘big building.’ Throughout the Pharaonic period,³ both sides of the Nile were peppered with structures meant to showcase the power of their patrons, especially the king; building was simply *what kings did* to demonstrate their command over people and places. I subscribed to this notion myself, until I took a seminar with rock relief specialist Ömür Harmanşah, which turned it on its head. Professor Harmanşah asked me to present on the site of Nahr el-Kalb in Lebanon, where Ramesses II had commissioned three living-rock stelae on a promontory overlooking the Mediterranean Sea (Figure 1.1; Chapter 5). Two aspects of this assignment were jarring to me: first, I had no idea that there were Egyptian stelae in Lebanon. And second, I was unaware that Egypt’s kings sometimes carved their stelae into natural features. The medium seemed too casual for a formal message, or too rudimentary for the Egypt I thought I knew. The term ‘living rock’ was completely unfamiliar to me, as it had no history of use in Egyptology.⁴

If one of the most prolific builders in Egyptian history made not one but *three* living-rock stelae at Nahr el-Kalb, then additional monuments of this kind had to have existed elsewhere in the Egyptian world. Catalogues of royal inscriptions revealed that they had been published piecemeal, in volumes organized by site, king, or dynasty: dozens of stelae, some bearing well-known texts, executed in living rock. Their contents were almost always presented in transcription, such that the reader might not even know what the monument looked like. They had always been there, but no one had considered

³ This refers to the period after the tradition of kingship was established (ca. 3100 BCE) until the beginning of Ptolemaic rule in 332 BCE.

⁴ I did find one use of this term in reference to the stelae of Tuthmosis I (Berg 1987, 3), but it is not otherwise in common use in Egyptology.

them to be different enough from freestanding stelae to warrant a discrete study. But as Langdon notes, their embeddedness in the landscape is certainly enough to justify doing so.

Scholarship on Egyptian monuments of this type is long overdue. State-sponsored rock reliefs have been the subject of many successful studies focused elsewhere in the ancient world, including China (Harrist 2008), the Andes (Dean 2010), Assyria (Shafer 2007; Harmanşah 2014a), Babylonia (Da Riva 2015), Persia (Canepa 2010), and Anatolia (Glatz 2014; L. Z. Ullmann 2010; Glatz and Plourde 2011). These efforts have helped archaeologists understand ancient strategies for harnessing the economic and political influence of places and their resources; the roles of viewership and literacy (or their irrelevance) in cultivating rhetorics of power; and the importance of ‘place’ in the maintenance of cultural memory,⁵ among other things. The study of such reliefs also challenges any assumption that monumentality was a characteristic of built works alone: that the royal establishment would choose to harness a natural feature to suit its aims, when its message would inherently be constrained by the feature’s form and location, implies that certain other characteristics of living rock were eminently desirable. At once both formal and informal, manmade and natural, living-rock monuments shed light on the relationships between patrons, audiences, and the landscapes they shaped, which shaped them in turn.

The Egyptian view of the natural world is well understood: the landscape, whose elements were deified and personified, was regarded as an active and influential force on

⁵ Cultural memory is the fusion of memory, culture, and group cognition, particularly as it relates to the distant past. A society shares memories because of its cohesion, and becomes more cohesive because of its shared memories. See Assmann and Czaplicka 1995.

daily life. Yet this view has never been reconciled with the possibility that Egyptian stelae carved directly *into* that landscape might have served a special purpose on account of their physical connection to its features. This is the first study of the king's own rock reliefs, and an important step towards filling a surprising void in the study of Egyptian monumental culture. It is an opportunity to speculate on the place of living-rock stelae within the wider Egyptian monumental repertoire, and to visualize them together on a map, revealing their spatial and temporal patterns. It is also a chance to explore the social dimensions of inscribed space: how these monuments mediated relationships between Egyptians, foreigners, and the animate natural world.

Research Question

The driving research question for this study is twofold: under what circumstances did Egypt's kings choose to commission their stelae in living rock, and what role, active or passive, did this medium play in their creation and reception? This question treats what I call their 'mechanics.' I have borrowed this term and its usage from Robert Ritner's *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (2008). Ritner examines the situations that led Egyptians to use magic, how it was employed (practically speaking), and what they thought it was capable of doing—essentially, how it 'worked.' Here I wonder the same about the king's living-rock stelae, examining when, how, and why this type of monument was considered an effective medium for royal expression—regardless of whether it ever served its intended objectives on the ground.

Key Terms and Parameters

The monuments in this dissertation share three main features that together encompass the designation 'royal living-rock stelae.' Note that the categories I outline

here do sometimes straddle boundaries that were less clear in the Egyptian view, and I have acknowledged this below when applicable.

Stelae

The first feature shared among this group is that all are what Egyptologists would conventionally refer to as stelae. Egyptian stelae are round-topped or rectangular monuments that usually bear registers of text; many also have a lunette bearing epithets and/or images, including figural scenes.⁶ They were commissioned by both royal and non-royal patrons and were set up in a variety of contexts (for example, votive stelae in temples, and funerary stelae—by far the most common type—in tombs; *LÄ* IV 1). This monumental form arose during the First Dynasty in front of the royal tombs at Abydos, in the form of upright pillars with the names and titles of the deceased (Klug 2002, 4). The usual Egyptian term for a stela is *wḏ* (determined with sign O26, ) , which originally meant ‘command’ and stems from the term *wḏ-nsw*, meaning ‘royal decree’ (Spalinger 1983, 230–31). This term applied whether they were freestanding or not—an analogous situation to the use of the same word for both freestanding and rock-cut temples, which did have clear conceptual differences nonetheless (Chapter 3). The parameters of *wḏ* thus appear to have been defined by the content of a monument, rather than by its formal characteristics: stelae generally served to commemorate some event, action, or person (*LÄ* IV 1). Various qualifiers could be used to further classify *wḏ*, such as *wḏ ḥr t3š*, ‘boundary stela,’ or *wḏ r ḥn*, ‘regulation/ordinance stela’ (Redford 1986, 128, fn. 3).

⁶ The division between lunette content and the bodies of stelae began in the Sixth Dynasty under Pepi I; later, in the reign of Senwosret III, the contents of the lunette began to be divided symmetrically (Klug 2002, 5).

After the reign of Amenhotep III, the word *ḥꜥw* (from *ḥꜥ*, ‘to stand’) was also used for freestanding stelae, eventually replacing it in most cases (Klug 2002, 9–10).⁷

Living-Rock

Second, each of the stelae in this dissertation was inscribed directly into living rock—stone that is still *in situ*—without any associated building, in an outside space. Theoretically that means that their audience was unrestricted, although some caveats apply in cases where movement in or through the landscape was limited (whether naturally or by human action). In describing stelae, I make a clear distinction between the qualifiers ‘living-rock’ and ‘rock-cut.’ Living-rock stelae were carved only into outcrops that were otherwise unaltered, retaining the natural form of the bedrock, whereas the latter expression can be used to describe monuments that were carved inside, or onto the façades of, rock-cut temples and related architectural forms.⁸ I do not include rock-cut stelae here: this is an important distinction that allows me to specifically examine cases where otherwise unadulterated features were mobilized for the aims of the state.

The distinction between freestanding and living-rock stelae is mirrored in Rolf Gundlach’s division of temples into those comprising “natural” and “artificial” architecture (2001; Chapter 3).⁹ Although executed in a different medium, the stelae in this dissertation share many of the same formalities and themes as their freestanding counterparts. This includes their shape, which seems to have varied by the overall taste of

⁷ Two less common terms, *ḥꜥ* (Wb I 177.8) and *srḥ* (Wb IV 200.15) were only used for non-royal monuments (Klug 2002, 2).

⁸ Such as, for example, a stela of Aye at Achmim (Kuhlmann 2007) or those carved into the Speos of Horemhab at Gebel Silsila (Thiem 2000).

⁹ However, this distinction has not traditionally been observed: in the *Lexikon*, for example, the entry for *Felsstele* (LÄ II 161) sends readers to *Felsinschriften* (LÄ II 159-161), which presents readers with a mixed bag of all items that might possibly fall into this category (graffiti, and so on). See Mairs 2010 for one possible way to distinguish between ‘graffiti’ and ‘inscriptions.’

the period, with round-topped stelae comprising the earlier examples and rectangular stelae the later. The verb *sḥꜥ*, ‘to erect’ (the lexical causative of *ḥꜥ*, and related to the word *ḥꜥw*) was sometimes used to describe the creation of living-rock stelae, although only rarely;¹⁰ this was probably force of habit due to the way freestanding stelae were described. The usual term was *smn*, ‘to establish,’ which was used for various other kinds of monument as well.¹¹

The craft process for producing living-rock stelae was undoubtedly faster than for freestanding stelae, because it eliminated the cumbersome steps of selecting the stone, quarrying it, finishing the shape of the piece, and transporting it to where it would eventually be set up. We may assume that once the living-rock surface was chosen for inscription, the process was similar to the way other stone reliefs were made: any modeling of the stone, such as for a cavetto cornice (common in New Kingdom royal stelae), would be done first; in most cases where the stela had no modeling, a ‘stela-shaped’ outline, usually with a rounded top, would be carved to contain the king’s message. Then the text and images would be laid out as a sketch using a painted grid and outlines; copper or (later) bronze tools, or hard stone tools for harder stone supports, would be used to carve the contents in relief, with the outlines being carved before the interiors of the figures. If the monument were made from limestone or sandstone, it would usually be finished with painting on top of a plaster ground (generally speaking, Egyptian reliefs made in hard stones, such as granite, were not painted). It is difficult to estimate how much time such a process would have taken; what is clear, however, is that the relevant craftspeople (usually a team consisting of a master and assistants) had to

¹⁰ For an example, see Chapter 4 (Wadi Hammamat, the ‘Official Record’).

¹¹ One could also ‘make’ a stela (*iri*), as they could many other things.

have been present at the site of the carving, and therefore probably on the royal expedition that preceded their creation. Whether these artisans were left behind to complete a given monument may be deduced on a case-by-case basis—for example, the boundary stelae at Kurgus in Sudan appear to have been finished while the royal entourage was still present (Chapter 6), whereas the stelae at the First Cataract (Chapter 5) may have been completed at any time in relation to their expeditions, as this place was located securely within Egyptian territory, such that no journey home was required.

Royal

Finally, each of the stelae profiled in this study are royal monuments: they express the sanctioned messages of the royal establishment and relate expressly to the duties of the kingship. This distinguishes them from non-royal (or, in Egyptological terms, ‘private’) works. Each adheres to the well-established linguistic and artistic decora for royal projects,¹² including high-register language written in hieroglyphic—a script reserved almost exclusively for “monumental carriers and important, limited communicational spaces” (Assmann 1994, 26)—as well as images of the king, gods, and relevant enemies of Egypt. In most cases they are also surmounted by the image of the winged sun disk (*bḥdty*), meant to represent the heavenly vault; the contents of the stela are therefore presented ‘under the banner of heaven,’ such that they may be considered to have inherent support from the divine (*LÄ* IV 1).

¹² I use John Baines’s definition of decorum (1990, 20): “a set of rules and practices defining what may be represented pictorially with captions, displayed, and possibly written down, in which context and in what form.”

For the purposes of this dissertation, I only consider stelae to be ‘royal’ when they neither mention nor depict a third-party agent (such as a prince or official).¹³ Certainly these monuments were *executed* by third parties—Overseers of Works and anonymous designers, scribes, and stonemasons—but they were commissioned by or in the name of the king and therefore ultimately express, or rather project (Brown 2015), *his* agency. As Jan Assmann explains,

It is not the self of an artist or writer which is revealed by a statue or speaking in an inscription, but the self of the patron, who had the portrait sculptured or the inscription carved. What matters is the “self” that gives the order, not the one that executes it.¹⁴

Monuments that describe the king’s actions or wishes but are clearly attributed to someone else—such as the canal inscriptions of Tuthmosis I on Sehel Island (Gasse and Rondot 2007, 128–30),¹⁵ or the stela at Gebel Dosha that is often referred to as belonging to Seti I, but was in fact commissioned by the viceroy Amenemipet (W. V. Davies 2004; Green 2013)—are therefore excluded from my case studies. My aim here is not to discourage others from using the term ‘royal’ more liberally than I do; rather, for the purposes of this study I simply find it most compelling to consider cases that underscore the *intention* behind the choice of living rock as a medium. A king’s intentions are,

¹³ Similar distinctions have been made before in studies of royal stelae (Klug 2002; Beylage 2002; see below for more on these studies). One example worth noting here concerns the Overseer of Works Minmose, who claimed in his Tura quarry stela to have been responsible for setting up stelae of Tuthmosis III in Nubia and on the Euphrates (Beylage 2002, No. 6.2.3.2; Shirley 2011, 308–11). The king was present on the expeditions when these stelae were commissioned (Chapter 6), and the surviving one in Nubia bears no mention of this official. The agency is therefore Tuthmosis’, and the monuments royal.

¹⁴ Assmann 1996, 55. He continues, describing the “order-giving self” behind almost every Egyptian monument: “...Egyptian art is always functional and never decorative, it is this notion of self which seems to determine its functional contexts to the greatest extent” (Assmann 1996, 56).

¹⁵ Note that although the inscriptions of Tuthmosis I at Sehel were made on the way back from royal campaigns, in Hans Goedicke’s opinion they are only “indirectly” related to the king’s campaign in Nubia, since their dates suggest that he was probably long gone from the area by the time they were inscribed (1996, 175). These inscriptions were signed by the vizier Turoi. Tuthmosis III has his own monuments at Sehel (Gasse and Rondot 2007, 137–40); they were commissioned by third parties and/or formed part of the architecture of a rock-cut chapel.

broadly speaking, far clearer than those of non-royal monument-makers, and his monuments have farther-reaching consequences. He could theoretically commission any kind of monument he wanted, wherever he wanted, so the choice of living rock is assumed to be calculated and deliberate.

Each of the stelae in my case studies bears official speech composed ‘by’ the king: they are either written in his voice, or communicate messages that were clearly commissioned by him, such as decrees, foundations, or decisions to launch an expedition. Several were made in places where we know he himself had been, with the order to carve presumably being given on the royal progress. Egyptology is often criticized for its disproportionate focus on royal material, but choices made by the royal establishment undoubtedly reflect broader views and social norms. I do not wish to divorce the royal material from the rest of the Egyptian epigraphic corpus, especially from the private stelae and graffiti that occur in some of the same landscapes. Rather, my intention is for the royal material to serve as a *lens* for the use of the landscape in Egyptian message-making strategies more broadly.¹⁶

Precursors

During the Old Kingdom, the deeds of the royal establishment were usually entered into archives, rather than being displayed (“published”) for others to see (Redford 1986, 127–28). This custom changed during the Eleventh Dynasty with the advent of what Egyptologists sometimes call ‘historical stelae’ (ibid.). These royal stelae memorialized actions and events for posterity, often in places where they could be

¹⁶ Egyptologists have been interested in private rock reliefs and graffiti for some time, and many of these are published in their own studies (e.g. Peden 2001).

viewed (if not read) by members of the populace. Many of the stelae in this dissertation fall into this category, but even those that cannot be described as such still date to the Eleventh Dynasty and later. This is also in keeping with diachronic changes in the duties of Egyptian kingship: there is no evidence that kings were present on the expeditions they dispatched during the Old Kingdom, and even if they did, they did not commemorate those journeys in any medium, let alone in living rock.¹⁷ Royal living-rock stelae appear to have been dreamt up as a monumental form on the advent of the Middle Kingdom, which the period when Egypt first expanded its boundaries into foreign territory, and also the period when the first rock-cut temples appeared. However, both the temples and the stelae are part of a long tradition of using living rock to create monuments attesting to the activities of the kingship.¹⁸

Royal living-rock stelae have their roots in two main monumental forms. The first is the relief cartouche, which came into use as early as the First Dynasty. Marina Brown has suggested that when carved in frontier zones, these cartouches were used to “annex” those areas to Egypt (2015, 182–83). The royal name, acting like a stamp, marked the place: in Brown’s view it placed a symbolic ‘hold’ on the landscape and stamped Egyptian order onto chaotic places. Relief cartouches continued to be in use throughout the Pharaonic period. They were especially popular as a peripheral marking strategy for the kings of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (Blöbaum 2013; Habachi 1974a), whose names adorn some of the same outcrops and landscapes as earlier living-rock stelae (e.g. at Gebel Silsila and Konosso Island, Chapters 4 and 5). On Sehel Island at the First Cataract, Middle and New Kingdom cartouches marked an important entry point into

¹⁷ I thank Laurel Bestock for this observation.

¹⁸ For the origins of Egyptian rock-cut temples, see Williams 2006.

Egypt (Gasse and Rondot 2007, 81–82, 89–91, 138). Beyond this, relief cartouches appear in quarries (e.g. those of Ramesses III at Khazindariya, on either side of a relief scene; Figure 1.2),¹⁹ where they designate stone as royal property, and on trade routes (e.g. the cartouches of the same king all along an incense route through the Sinai Peninsula and into modern Saudi Arabia; Sperveslage 2013; Sperveslage and Eichmann 2012; Somaglino and Tallet 2013), presumably to commemorate or provide signage for expeditions in foreign lands.



Figure 1.2 Monumental cartouches of Ramesses III on either side of a relief scene at Khazindariya.

¹⁹ For this and other quarry reliefs of Ramesses III, see Habachi 1974.

The second precursor to royal living-rock stelae is the tradition of carving figural reliefs with representations of the king in the mining areas of the Sinai (Tallet 2012). The earliest of these depict boats and ‘smiting’ *serekhs* of the Dynasty 0 kings Narmer and Iry-Hor in the Wadi Ameyra (Tallet and Laisney 2012); slightly later, during the First Dynasty, a series of smiting scenes (Figure 1.3) were carved in the Wadi El-Humur during the reign of Den (Ibrahim and Tallet 2008; Ibrahim and Tallet 2009). The practice continued throughout the Old Kingdom, when reliefs asserting Egyptian presence and power over the Bedouin were carved into the cliffs of the Wadi Maghara (Petrie 1906, 41 ff.; Givon 1974; Bestock 2017, 172–200). The later of these reliefs have rectangular frames with stars along the top to symbolize the sky, and are thus clear forerunners of royal stelae with their heavenly vaults. Their scenes were ostensibly meant as a warning to the local population and a claim on the landscape and its resources. A relief with scenes of a naval battle, once carved at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman in the area of the Second Cataract and now at the National Museum in Khartoum (Figure 1.4), is probably also from the First Dynasty (Somaglino and Tallet 2014; Somaglino and Tallet 2015); its location where Nubian groups vied for the same territory as Egypt’s early rulers suggests that it had a similar function to the Sinai reliefs.²⁰

²⁰ For another related tradition, see Lauren Lippiello’s dissertation on the role of early rock art as a marker of formal ritual spaces at the dawn of the Egyptian state (2012). Note also the latest discovery of monumental reliefs by the Yale University team at El Kab (<https://news.yale.edu/2017/06/20/yale-archaeologists-discover-earliest-monumental-egyptian-hieroglyphs>).



Figure 1.3 Reliefs of Den with smiting scenes in the Wadi El-Humur (Ibrahim and Tallet 2008, Pl. 16).



Figure 1.4 The relief from Gebel Sheikh Suleiman (Somaglino and Tallet 2015, 125 Fig. 5).

Previous Scholarship

Although this is the first discrete study of Egyptian royal stelae executed in living rock, it builds on several related studies in Egyptology. In terms of methodology, there is the work of Stephan Seidlmayer at the First Cataract, which I view as a ‘call to arms’ for the consideration of landscape and materiality in the study of textual material. In 2003 Seidlmayer pressed Egyptologists working with rock inscriptions to develop “a truly archaeologically-oriented type of epigraphy” that would move beyond simply recording texts to achieve a fuller “contextual analysis” (2003, 445). A decade later, he had already advanced the cause of landscape archaeology with an analytical framework that took aspects such as visual impact and topography into consideration alongside transcription and prosopography (Seidlmayer 2013). Seidlmayer has transformed the way the inscriptions at the First Cataract are being studied; this is evident in the work of Linda Borrmann (2016a; 2016b), also at the First Cataract, which has revealed spatial patterns among private rock inscriptions relating to visibility, memory-making, and the protection of border areas. Responding to Seidlmayer’s urging, Julia Budka (2005) initiated a chapter-length landscape-archaeological study of the royal monuments at Tombos. This brief survey of the Tombos material foregrounds the monuments’ physical contexts, and is the closest study to my own in terms of its topic and interpretive framework (see Chapter 6).

In terms of subject matter, this project can be said to continue the work of three studies in particular. Chief among these is Andrea Klug’s dissertation on early Eighteenth Dynasty royal stelae, which centers on the “development, function and significance” of this monument type (2002, 1). Klug moved decisively away from the traditional use of royal texts to reconstruct Egyptian history, towards an approach that considers context

(including the “topographical aspect”; 2002, 3–4), which for her is primarily a way of determining the target audience for a monument.²¹ She also took the important step of distinguishing between freestanding stelae (which make up the vast majority of her corpus) and those that were carved into “natural architecture” (cf. Gundlach 2001, above). Although she recognized the importance of noting this difference in medium, Klug did not speculate on the conceptual differences between living rock and cut stone, or on what sort of benefit or strategy might have come with the use of the former. Nor should we expect her to have done; after all, her dissertation was not about living-rock stelae in particular. For her part, of the thirteen living-rock stelae in her corpus, Klug already observed the trend that many were located on “important paths” with the primary functions of safeguarding borders and threatening enemies (2002, 476).²² (The rest were carved in quarries, which she separates into their own category, as do I—see below.) In many ways, the present study picks up where Klug might have gone had she had the chance to explore questions of landscape and materiality with her subset of living-rock monuments.

The second study whose subject matter relates to mine is Brown’s dissertation, cited above. Her study looks at royal and private rock inscriptions and stelae that “materialize” the “hegemonic agency” of the king (Brown 2015, 207, 209–10), symbolically asserting the state’s power and mediating relationships in the borderland between Egypt and Nubia. It is heavily influenced by Alfred Gell’s work on agency

²¹ “The location of the stela is crucial for [determining] the intention of its erection, as it can give information about the target persons to whom the monument is addressed” (Klug 2002, 476, my translation). This view assumes that there was always a human audience for such monuments. Note that a second dissertation on early Eighteenth Dynasty royal stelae, published in the same year (Beylage 2002), centered almost entirely on textual genres.

²² In her view the audience of these monuments was usually foreign but perhaps also included members of the Egyptian military, who would see them as they passed and recognize their rulers’ achievements therein.

(1998) and the mechanics of modern gang graffiti. Brown's corpus is much broader than mine, comprising some eight hundred monuments, due to her inclusion of "records of non-royal individuals acting as royal proxy" (2015, 11—although she excludes the royal stelae at Aswan, 2015, 14; see Chapter 5).²³ At the same time, it is more limited in its chronological and geographical spread, and although Brown used GIS to map the locations of her rock inscriptions,²⁴ she did not have the chance to visit most of them in person. Her analysis of spatial patterning therefore takes a bird's-eye, network-level view of the material, rather than a more nuanced look at individual cases as they appear on the ground in each monument's particular setting. Like mine, Brown's focus is also on "the inextricability of the rock inscription from the landscape" (2015, 14); but my study is more local in scale, and more concerned with the physical attributes of living-rock monuments.

The third related study in terms of content is Carola Vogel's chapter on the ideology and functions of Egyptian boundary stelae (2011). Vogel stressed that "place and function belong together" and cautioned against interpretations of text alone (2011, 338). She reviews and categorizes the various types of Egyptian boundary stelae, including those in living rock, and in the end questions whether supporting architecture was always necessary for the smooth operation of a boundary stela. (She leaves this question unanswered, but I attempt to answer it in Chapter 6.)

The present project builds on all of these studies to consider the local, material aspects of the monuments that conform to the parameters I laid out above. What was it

²³ She "views rock art, rock inscriptions, and graffiti as elements of single functionally unified epigraphic tradition" (Brown 2015, 11).

²⁴ I am indebted to Marina for her fabulous GIS maps, from which the desert routes of my own GIS maps were drawn.

about *these* places, politically, symbolically, or practically, that led to their material mobilization by the royal establishment, their transformation into sites of royal expression? What did each of their outcrops offer to their patrons—what were their *affordances* (Knappett 2004)? And—since living-rock monuments do not move—how might an inscription have influenced, articulated, or augmented its own position in the landscape?

Patterns and Structure

Royal stelae in general are quite rare (*LÄ* IV 1-6), and those made in living rock were therefore even less common. They appear to have been commissioned only under certain sociopolitical circumstances, and only in particular types of landscape. At the outset it is essential to note that the choice of living rock as a medium for these stelae was not based strictly on the presence of suitable outcrops, or on the availability or mobility of a certain craft apparatus. Certainly living-rock stelae could not be carved in areas without rock outcrops, and this necessarily rendered some parts of the Egyptian world more or less likely to possess them. But there were many rocky landscapes in the Egyptian world, and not all of them were carved with stelae (or with other rock monuments, for that matter); likewise, some of them were carved with particular intensity. Moreover, in some cases both freestanding and living-rock stelae exist in the same vicinity, even from the very same year (Chapter 5)—a clear indication that a deliberate choice was made to use this medium, and that such a choice was not limited by an absence of craftspeople or materials.

My analysis of this material reveals two provocative temporal and spatial patterns for royal living-rock stelae (Figure 1.5). First, although the dates of rock reliefs that

served the royal establishment in some way span from the Predynastic era through the Late Period (see above), the majority of royal living-rock stelae were made during the New Kingdom, specifically during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. This trend is also in step with the situation in ancient Near East in general, which did not witness an abundance of living-rock monuments until the Late Bronze Age (Glatz 2014, 128). And second, all of the locations of royal living-rock stelae can be considered to be ‘on the edge’ in one sense or another. They were made mainly in the borderlands of the Egyptian world: either at the location of a local or imperial boundary, in an area outside of the traditional borders of Egypt (i.e. the Egyptian homeland, *Kmt*—see Chapter 3), or in a quarry landscape.²⁵ Both of these patterns—the proliferation during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties and the clustering of monuments outside of the Nile Valley—are shared in common with rock-cut temples, producing a confluence that is significant in and of itself (Chapter 3). I further explore these patterns, and the others that arose during the course of my study, in Chapter 7.

²⁵ Although numerous quarry stelae appear in my appendices, I have only chosen to profile those with ‘richer contexts’ in my case studies (Chapter 4). Most other quarry stelae served the rather obvious practical purpose of inaugurating quarries that would be used to procure stone for royal monuments, and I do not believe that the choice to use living rock as their medium should be scrutinized in the same manner as with the other stelae in this dissertation—after all, the quarries were made of living rock. Beyond this, quarry landscapes are liable to change far faster and more deeply than most other places, as their very function is to hemorrhage the fabric they are made from. It is therefore much more difficult to interrogate the ancient character of quarry landscapes than it is for most of the other places where living-rock stelae were carved. Recall that Klug also categorized quarry stelae differently from the other living-rock stelae in her corpus (2002, 476–77). Note that she sees a sub-trend in her group of quarry stelae, which all belong to Amenhotep III: she categorizes quarry and mining inscriptions from before this reign as “half-royal/half-private,” and suggests that “a change in meaning” must have occurred under Amenhotep III (Klug 2002, 477).



Figure 1.5 Map showing the temporal and spatial patterns in the group of royal living-rock stelae.

The mechanics of royal living-rock stelae depended on a great variety of patrons, places, outcrops, and sociopolitical contexts within this group of monuments. It is clear that there was no single, overarching reason that led to the use of living rock as a medium for Egyptian royal stelae, despite overarching patterns in the data. The creation of each monument was influenced by its own unique situation—geographic, sociopolitical, aesthetic, or otherwise—and its reception over time was as well. That diversity is what led me to adopt a case study model for the structure of this dissertation. There are, however, cohesive divisions within the various types of (culturally constructed) landscape context where these stelae were carved: they cluster mainly in areas of strategic importance and those where one or more natural features carried some cultic significance. I have therefore divided the eleven case studies in this dissertation (Figure 1.6) into three groups, which are reflected in the themes of Chapters 4, 5, and 6: stelae in sacred landscapes (Chapter 4), on expedition routes (Chapter 5), and at the sites of Egypt's imperial boundaries (Chapter 6).²⁶ These categories of landscape type are mirrored, more or less, by the text types that occur in their monuments: texts that foreground the sacred, those that commemorate or regulate the actions of expeditions, and those that establish imperial boundaries, respectively. All three of these inscribed landscape types have clear parallels elsewhere in the ancient Near East (Da Riva 2015; Kreppner 2002; L. Z. Ullmann 2014; Canepa 2014, 65; Shafer 2007; Harmanşah 2014a; Glatz and Plourde 2011).

²⁶ Some overlap exists between these categories, such as with the site of Gebel Silsila; that case, to use an example, appears in Chapter 4 because my discussion centers primarily on the monuments that speak to the site's sacred character.

These case study chapters are neither arranged nor limited chronologically or geographically, especially considering the robust spatial and temporal distribution of the data; rather, they are each meant to showcase a broad range of context-dependent catalysts for the use of living rock as a monumental medium under similar conditions. The stelae profiled in them date from the Eleventh through the Twentieth Dynasties, but a chronological organization of this material would be unproductive, as it would reveal no distinct diachronic changes in the deployment of such monuments. Likewise, a geographic organization of the case studies would unnecessarily separate pairs or groups of stelae that belong to the same monumental program. In contrast, the thematic divisions I have chosen for these chapters foreground *the place* in this study of texts in context: each case is grouped with others that share a similar social, cultural, and/or political significance couched in the landscape. Despite differences in the motivations that lie behind the creation individual stelae, one overarching theme unites them: in all of the situations where kings commissioned these monuments, the living rock was an essential part of whatever message they wished to convey. In each of my case studies, I argue that the landscapes and outcrops where these stelae were carved played an important and active role in their creation and reception. The choice to use living rock was not only deliberate, but meaningful.

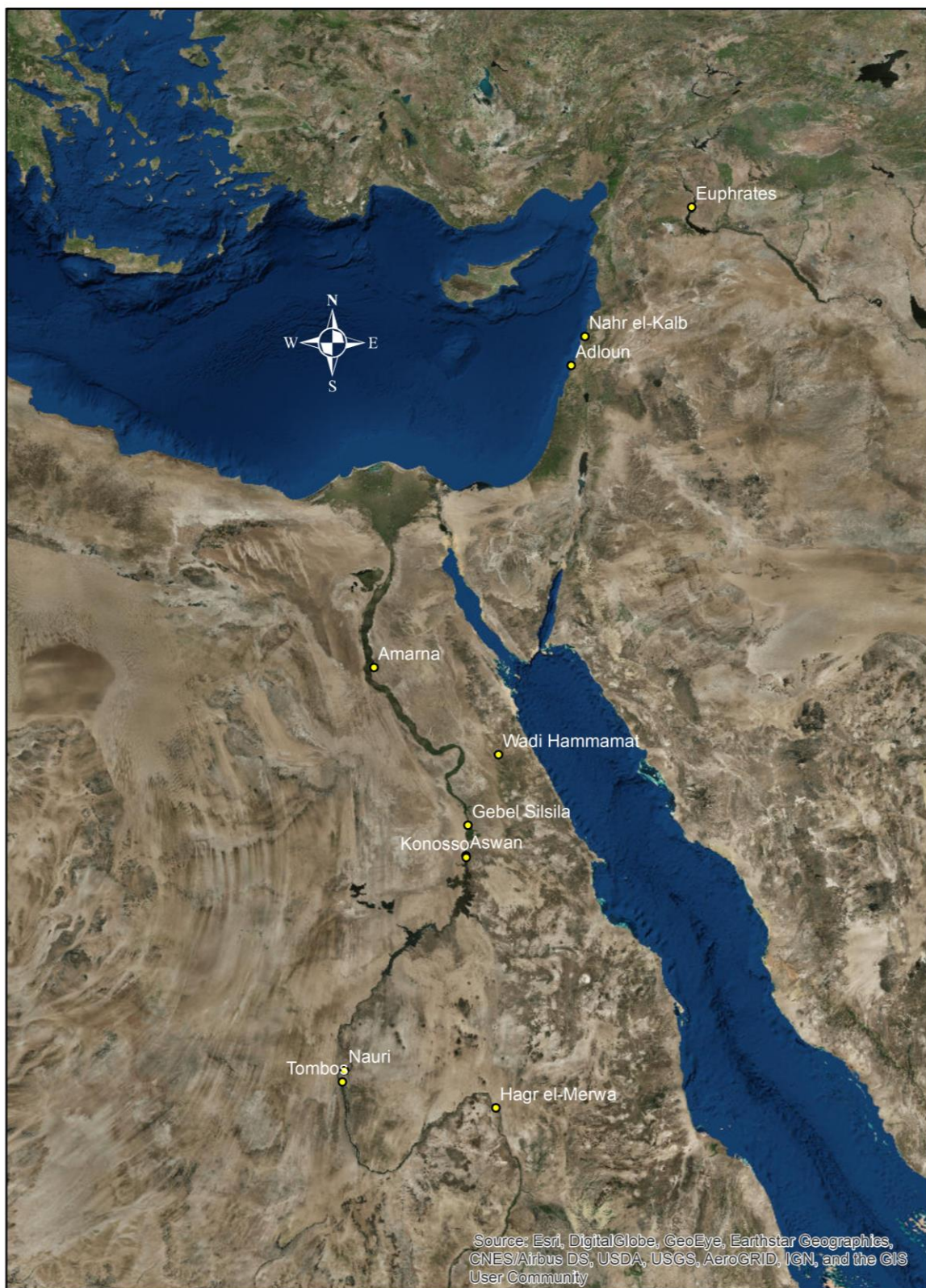


Figure 1.6 Sites of the eleven case studies in this dissertation.

Outline

I begin with two chapters that lay the foundation for this study. In Chapter 2 I lay the theoretical groundwork for studying Egyptian royal living-rock stelae and the landscapes where they were sited. I first present the framework for an ‘archaeology of inscribed natural places,’ following Richard Bradley’s *An Archaeology of Natural Places* (2000), which considers four aspects of a stela and its setting: perceptions of the landscape, actions in the landscape, actions of the landscape, and actions on the landscape. I then review (and also problematize) three key concepts—nature and culture, experience, and reception—that stem from this approach. Following this, I explore comparanda from elsewhere in the ancient world, with studies ranging from research on Hittite borderland monuments (L. Z. Ullmann 2014; L. Z. Ullmann 2010; Glatz 2009) to an investigation of deictic words in Latin graffiti (‘Aufidius was Here,’ 2014). The successes of these comparative studies help me justify this project. I conclude Chapter 2 with a section outlining my methodology.

Chapter 3 explores Egyptian conceptions of living rock. I discuss the Egyptian view of the world, including the propensity towards ordering and orientating its elements. I also introduce the concept of ‘sacred landscapes,’ which comprise the case studies in the following chapter. The second half of the chapter serves as an overview of Egyptian concepts relevant to our understanding of their view of, and interactions with, living-rock features. First, I explore the terms *inr*, *ḏw*, *ḏw wꜥb*, and *(tꜣ) dhnt*. I then discuss the connections between time, place, and permanence as they relate to the topic at hand, laying the foundation for the case studies that follow.

Together, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present eleven case studies, comprising dozens of monuments, that attest to the mechanics of royal living-rock stelae in the Egyptian world,

from the banks of the Euphrates River to the cliffs of Amarna in Middle Egypt. Chapter 4 encompasses three case studies on stelae carved in sacred landscapes—places that privilege ‘the sacred.’ I argue that these stelae derive significance *from* the natural world—its outcrops, water sources, and the cultural memories accumulated and vested in them—rather than giving social meaning to it. This is because each of the landscapes in this chapter possessed an integral sacred character, which I refer to as ‘cultic capital.’ The stelae in Chapter 4 are located in the Wadi Hammamat; in a ring around the ancient city of Akhetaten; and at Gebel Silsila, the narrowest point of the Nile.

Chapter 5 looks at five cases of living-rock stelae that were carved on expedition routes as a matter of military, political, or legal strategy. These stelae are located downstream of the Third Cataract at Nauri in Sudan; at Egypt’s original southern boundary, the First Cataract, in two groups on Konosso Island and the main road in Aswan; and at two coastal sites in Lebanon, Nahr el-Kalb and Adloun. The stela at Nauri is a legal text, while the others relate to Egypt’s relationships with, and campaigns against, its enemy-neighbors on both ends of its territory. A number of those at the First Cataract represent a public-facing genre of military text known as the *iw.tw* report; they, and the others, suggest that prominent rock outcrops were employed as highly visible canvases for royal victory monuments.

In Chapter 6, I build on the links between living rock, permanence, and prominence as I evaluate its role in the establishment of Egypt’s Eighteenth Dynasty imperial boundaries in Nubia and Naharin. I discuss the concept of ‘boundaries’ (*t3šw*) in the Egyptian world, and set the scene with a brief review of what we know about freestanding boundary stelae from the Middle Kingdom. I then outline three case studies

that are all related to each other, as part of the same monumental program: the stela and associated reliefs of Tuthmosis I at Tombos, near the Third Cataract; the imperial boundary stelae of Tuthmosis I and his grandson Tuthmosis III at Kurgus, between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts; and the now-lost imperial boundary stelae that were once paired with the previous two on the banks of the Euphrates. I argue that the Tuthmosids drew on the timelessness and immobility of living rock as a monumental medium in order to effectively mark the edges of their empire, and of the world.

In Chapter 7, I conclude this dissertation with a summary and discussion that paint a demonstrative picture of the circumstances that led Egyptian kings to employ living rock as a medium for formal messages. I elaborate on the patterns I observed among royal living-rock stelae, and discuss what they indicate about the use of this monumental strategy. I also discuss some of the challenges encountered during the course of this study, and suggest how this material can be further investigated going forward. Most importantly, I reaffirm the need to treat these monuments as works that exist *in a specific place*—a place that people lived in and moved through, but one where they could also intervene in human action—if we really want to understand how and why they ‘worked.’ From the Eleventh Dynasty through the Twentieth, more than a dozen rulers of Egypt engraved landscapes as far afield as the Fifth Cataract in the south and Syria in the north with official messages. Their stelae make a number of interesting points that have been unexplored in Egyptology until now.

CHAPTER 2

An Archaeology of Inscribed Natural Places: Theory, Comparanda, Methods

Landscape is never simply scenic or purely natural...it is a socio-cultural construct, always changing in response to human action and, in turn, actively impacting human experience.

– Betsey A. Robinson B. A. Robinson 2014, 135.

During my first research trip to Egypt for this project, I had an enlightening conversation about landscape with the French Egyptologist Anne-Claire Salmas. She explained that there is only one definition of ‘landscape’ for many scholars in the French tradition, and it is an aesthetic one. They would say that the word is inappropriate for use in archaeology, and favor its replacement by something more ‘scientific,’ such as ‘environment.’ Salmas was speaking mainly of the work of the philosopher Alain Roger (1978; 1997), who declared that nature itself is dead, and that landscapes (*paysages*) only transpire when we ‘artialize’ the world through an aesthetic lens. As an archaeologist, I found Roger’s view problematic: not only have we developed an entire subdiscipline called landscape archaeology, but we have also recognized through it that the interactions between people and the places they occupy are reciprocal. Moreover, while a dichotomy between aesthetics and science has lain at the heart of European modernity for some time, it is increasingly seen as unproductive for understanding *paysage* because it privileges the human and treats the rest of the world as if it were merely an object to behold (Girot 1999, 66). As Betsey Robinson noted in the essay I have quoted above, the landscapes of

landscape archaeology, and of humanistic geography, are *neither* “simply scenic” *nor* “purely natural” (2014, 134–35). Interpreting landscape is not a question of aesthetics versus science, but a question of culture whose answer draws from both (Walsh 2008). Therefore I am not willing to abandon the word landscape—but my conversation with Salmas did make me think critically about what I mean by it, and how to approach it, in this study of Egyptian material.

Although landscape and *paysage* may be translated interchangeably, they do not mean the same thing. The French term is more restrictive, explicitly connoting “an aesthetic and experiential dimension” (Giot 1999, 66, fn. 1). When Anglophone archaeologists talk of landscape they can indeed choose to do so from a more ‘scientific’ standpoint; some argue for a wholesale reconciliation of environmental studies and landscape archaeology, noting—rightly—that humans are as much a part of the natural world as everything else that surrounds them (Walsh 2013). But they might also lean more towards the sense of *paysage*: phenomenology in particular, which I discuss below, has allowed many scholars working on landscape to explore that experiential dimension (Tilley 1994; Bender et al. 2007; Tilley 2004). From my discussion with Salmas I realized that although we could continue to debate the differences between landscapes and *paysages*, and between landscapes and environments, the appropriate research terminology should primarily reflect the view of the culture under study. There is no word for either landscape or environment in ancient Egyptian, but we can access the Egyptian perspective on this issue from texts and images that reveal their understanding of the physical world.

Like everyone else, the Egyptians saw the world through a subjective lens (Allen 1988, ix). Natural features and phenomena were viewed as part of an observable reality, but interpreted through the ideology of the state religion, which they also reinforced (Warburton and Ikram 2013). Elements of the earth and cosmos were deified, personified, and ascribed with agency. One example of this perspective has been treated in a recent piece on the Theban rock landscape (which uses the term *Landschaft*): private funerary stelae reflect an understanding of the western mountains as an incarnation of the embrace of the goddess Hathor-Imentet (Rummel 2016), regardless of any knowledge the people of Thebes might have possessed about geology. Other examples include the casting of offerings into the Nile to thank the god Hapy, who personified the inundation, for the flood that would surely come anyway (*LÄ* IV 498–500), and the words of the Great Hymn to the Aten (Lichtheim 2006, II 96–100), which betray an understanding of solar cycles that is steeped in aesthetics and myth. Although recurrent observation forms the basis of these interpretations, they do not reflect an objectively constructed ‘environment’ in the sense described above. In the words of Jan Assmann, “to them, nature was ‘super-natural’ in a way that fundamentally prevented a concept of nature” (2001, 63).

Landscape is a holistic term (Grzymski 2004, 12), and it has countless definitions. The dominant theme in all of them, though, is subjectivity (Bender 2006, 303): that is what “makes the difference between raw matter and landscape” (Schama 1995, 10). Throughout this dissertation I use the word landscape to refer to the physical spaces the Egyptians envisioned, occupied, and moved through. Sometimes these landscapes are local, and sometimes they are regional. Usually they are real—places we can still visit

today, although usually transformed long since—but occasionally they are imagined, parts of the unknown or unseen world of cult and narrative. They encompass both natural features and those that are manmade (Holtorf and Williams 2006, 235), those that were numinous and those that were more mundane. Some arose organically, while others were created as part of structured state programs (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 9–11). All were influenced by human activities, and influenced those activities in turn.

In this chapter I lay the theoretical and methodological groundwork for studying Egyptian royal living-rock stelae and the landscapes where they were sited. I begin with a section on the approach I have crafted for an archaeology of inscribed natural places. Although I establish the basic shape of my theoretical framework in this section, I use the case studies in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 to elaborate further on the concepts that best suit each case. The second section of this chapter reviews some key concepts and problems that stem from this approach. Following this, I review the comparative studies from the Near East and elsewhere that have helped me justify and navigate through this study of living-rock monuments. Much of the material in this chapter comes from outside of Egyptian archaeology, as the most relevant research has been conducted in other parts of the world; I reserve more detailed comments on the Egyptian perception of landscape for Chapter 3. In the final section of this chapter, I review my research methodology. Over all, I endeavor to consider the stelae from both sides of some traditional dichotomies: as material *and* text, manmade *and* natural, active *and* passive, and Egyptian *yet also* part of a wider pattern of human behavior.

An Archaeology of Inscribed Natural Places

The discrete study of formal, royal stelae made in living rock is new territory for scholars of ancient Egypt. That might sound surprising, since private rock inscriptions have been treated as a cohesive category of Egyptian material culture, separate from (albeit related to) private inscriptions in other media. I suggest two reasons why this might be. The first is that Egyptology has tended to privilege written information over material information (S. T. Smith 2003, 168), when it is clearly quite productive for us to combine the two (Wendrich 2010; J. E. Richards 2010). Royal texts have been published mainly in transcription and translation, with little regard for the material characteristics of the monument they belong to. When the content of one of these stelae is presented merely as ink on a page, a student of Middle Egyptian might not even realize that he or she is reading the text of a rock relief.

Despite the hieroglyphic script's predisposition to questions of materiality (Assmann 1994; Baines 2007), this concept has only recently been explored in studies of Egyptian artifacts more broadly (e.g. Kjølby 2009; Dieleman 2015).²⁷ Materiality is, broadly speaking, what allows the material world—manmade things as much as natural ones—to interact with society (Kjølby 2009, 31; cf. Miller 2005; Meskell 2008). Materialist theory is often applied in abstract ways, such as to assess the relationship between mind and matter (Godelier 1986). Apropos of living-rock stelae, I use the term with comparatively more emphasis on the concrete physical characteristics of objects, because my research question is about the mechanics of living rock as a medium. As a

²⁷ Dieleman's recent work on the materiality of textual amulets is an excellent contribution to Egyptology, but nowhere does he define the term 'materiality' as he wishes to use it. The only clue we get is in his statement that his study looks at the connection between material choice and the amulet's "format and handling" (Dieleman 2015, 23). Scholars should feel a sense of duty to explain how and why they wish to use a 'new' term, lest it appear unjustified.

frustrated Tim Ingold once noted, it is quite an “academic perversion” for us to muse on the materiality of objects without talking about the materials themselves (2007, 3).

The second reason why I believe these monuments have not been studied as a group before is that Egyptian royal texts have been examined primarily for their historical content (Bleiberg 1985, 5; Wendrich 2010, 1), because they are conventionally viewed as fully authoritative accounts. If the research question is, *What information can help us reconstruct this historical event?*—a problematic question, since royal texts are never fully truthful and there is no single ‘truth’ to recover from the past—then the resulting study is far more likely to examine matters of content rather than matters of context. Lately this, too, has begun to change, as Egyptological studies apply mapping technologies and regional-level research strategies to royal monuments.²⁸ Context, both in terms of geographic location and wider programmatic setting, has long been considered an essential element in rock art studies (Hyder 2004). It is especially important in the case of living-rock stelae, given that the monument usually remains *in situ*, and that the medium is a natural feature whose characteristics somehow made it ‘inscribable.’

In sum, not only have we typically sought information mainly from the texts of Egyptian monuments, but we have also been inclined to mine specific types of information from them. This is a perennial problem in the study of rock reliefs the world over: disproportionate focus on content—texts for philologists and historians, and images for art historians—has meant that such monuments are seldom studied “as *archaeological places* in and of themselves” (Harmanşah 2014c, 3). Following Laurent Olivier (2011),

²⁸ See, for example, Digital Karnak (<http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Karnak/>), which offers detailed contextual information for some of the best-known temple reliefs.

Ömür Harmanşah reminds us that archaeology is not a discipline of history but one of *memory*; it can therefore be used to answer diachronic and timeless questions about human experience, not only to study the “fossilized” remnants of a single moment in the canonical past (2014c, 3). A research question about the mechanics of living-rock stelae—*How do they ‘work’?*—cannot be answered from their texts alone. In some cases we literally cannot answer this question from the texts, because they are now lost, but that is only a minor hindrance if we consider all of the other elements that constitute this type of monument. Materiality- and context-based approaches bring the non-textual aspects of Egyptian culture to the foreground, including elements of the very texts with which we have been so preoccupied.

The stelae in this dissertation share some particular, and sometimes paradoxical, characteristics. As rock reliefs they are part natural and part manmade, challenging us to reflect on the relationship between medium and content. As ‘un-built’ works in outside spaces, they encourage us to view the natural world as an arena of performance and meaning, much like we would architecture (Robin and Rothschild 2002). And as formal, royal commissions they press us to reconsider our notion of decorum: to Western sensibilities, rock outcrops, like trees and walls, are usually imagined as the bearers of ‘informal’ inscriptions. What these stelae need, then, is an archaeology targeted specifically towards inscribed natural places.

Fortunately, numerous studies of related material have raised various possibilities for how to accomplish this. Chief among them is Richard Bradley’s *An Archaeology of Natural Places* (2000), whose title I have coopted for this section. Using Bradley’s work as a jumping point, I propose that there are four things to consider as we embark on this

endeavor: perceptions of the landscape, actions *in* the landscape, actions *of* the landscape, and actions *on* the landscape. Taken together, they can help us give more balanced attention to the regional and local landscapes, outcrops, patrons, audiences, and content implicated in the mechanics of royal living-rock stelae.

Perceptions of the Landscape

For Bradley even unaltered landscapes have an archaeology, because they were significant in the *minds* of past people (2000, 35).²⁹ This might seem counterintuitive, because the entire discipline of archaeology is predicated on human activity and its traces. But consider the moments before a stela was inscribed: there was something about that place, or that outcrop, that made it a suitable site. Through a phenomenon known as *topophilia*, individuals and groups routinely form emotional bonds with places (Tuan 1974, 4). Memories of all kinds—personal and collective, event-based and mythological—are “inherited, inhabited, invented and imagined through the landscape” (Holtorf and Williams 2006, 236–37).³⁰ Cultural memories, which are developed through social practices, maintained by group cognition, and relate especially to the distant past (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995), often become attached to landscapes, emphasizing a

²⁹ This is quite close to A. Bernard Knapp and Wendy Ashmore’s notion of ‘conceptualized landscapes,’ which are unaltered and defined mainly by natural features (1999, 11).

³⁰ Any discussion of memory must also mention the issue of forgetting. I would argue that so-called ‘landscapes of forgetting’ were exceedingly rare in the Egyptian world. When a monument was ‘usurped’ by a king, it was not done to erase the memory of his predecessor, but to fill the role of kingship using a preexisting vessel. Respect for the monuments of previous rulers is well known in Egypt. At Gebel Silsila (Chapter 4), for example, there is evidence that ‘blank’ stelae were carved into the rock faces where previous monuments had been, as if to indicate that they once stood there; moreover, inside the Speos of Horemheb there are what appear to be intentional ‘clues’ of a previous *building phase*, left as an homage. The royal living-rock stelae at this site were also left almost entirely intact during later quarrying activities, such that some of them bear quarry marks on the back of the relief face, which has been shaved down but remains thick enough to stand erect. Even in cases where the Egyptians usurped a feature or a territory from foreign enemies, such as at Kurgus (Chapter 6), they intentionally left traces of previous indigenous rock art as a way of indicating from whom the site had been taken. At Amarna, the one landscape in Egypt that we would expect the Egyptians to want to forget entirely, the boundary stelae have been left in place so as to permanently mark the landscape as an undesirable space (see Chapter 4).

society's continuity within them (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 14). Such memories can be generated in a space by either material or performative means ('inscribing practices' vs. 'incorporating practices'; Connerton 1989). But in addition to long-term cultural significance, our encounters with landscapes can also generate perceptions resulting from, or in preparation for, political action. Authority is frequently situated and expressed in the landscape by hegemonic entities (A. T. Smith 2003), and this is sometimes considered a better tool for ideological control than actual force (Vogt 2014, 43). Power relations can be negotiated through structures (J. E. Richards 2010, 347ff.; A. T. Smith 1999) or the shaping of natural features (Dean 2010; Glatz 2014; Vogt 2014; Bestock 2017), such that people moving through or living in a landscape become influenced by their surroundings.

Bradley argues that natural features are not monuments themselves,³¹ but they can act like monuments, and many do come to "attract" them over time (2000, 35). I contend that this is precisely what happened with the stelae: they were carved into features that already had some monumental quality,³² either physically, politically (Alcock 2002; A. T. Smith 2003), or as part of a mental map of culturally significant places (Basso 1996).

³¹ A monument commemorates an event or idea for posterity. Monuments are active reminders of the things they memorialize, almost embodying these events or ideas. With every interaction they renegotiate their relationships with the people who encounter them (Osborne 2014, 3), augmenting the memories that are attached to them.

³² 'Monumental' works are those whose impact is great in terms of audience, stature, reputation, or innovation. Egyptology has traditionally associated 'the monumental' with large architectural projects. But more recent scholarship takes a different view: John Baines uses this term to describe any Egyptian text written in the hieroglyphic script (2007, 118), because it was designed to transmit more important and more widespread Egyptian messages than hieratic, and Miriam Lichtheim uses it to refer to inscriptions from the private tombs of famous figures (2006), presumably because of their reputations. Things are monumental when they represent something out of the ordinary. A text can be described as monumental because of its content or size (E. V. Thomas 2014), as can ephemeral acts ('monumental efforts'). I attach this adjective to prominent rock outcrops that 'act like' monuments (Bradley 2000, 35) because they made an impression on people. Monumentality (C. Richards 1996; Osborne 2014; G. Parker 2003), then, is the quality that allows a work to uphold its impact.

Considering their prior state through Bradley's lens can help us hypothesize why one place, but not another, was chosen for inscription. That requires asking how an outcrop and its surroundings might have been understood and experienced before a stela was commissioned there, and what sort of intangible cultural significance they might have possessed (Tilley 2004). These questions might seem difficult to treat for some sites, and I do not pretend that we will arrive at a definitive answer for either of them. Nevertheless, we can model and assess various possible explanations—a worthwhile exercise because it pushes us to stop thinking about the monument as the only archaeological 'moment' that matters.

The locations of Egypt's royal living-rock stelae were not chosen randomly. As with any royal commission, they were pre-planned and purposefully placed.³³ Bradley would say that the very presence of a stela is a sign that some cultural meaning was attached to a site (2000, 36), but at the very least it is an indicator of Egyptian presence there. In my overview of patterns in the data (Chapter 1), I noted that the stelae cluster mainly in areas of strategic importance and those where one or more natural features carried some cultic significance. Most of these places were also located in Egypt's borderlands. At sites such as the new sacred city of Akhetaten (Chapter 4) and the locations of Egypt's imperial boundaries (Chapter 6), it is easy to understand why the landscape was important in these ways. But it is not always immediately obvious why certain other outcrops were attractive places to carve without an on-the-ground assessment of how those features are situated within their local landscapes. Quantitative methods can help us fill in the blanks, or at least test for some of the proposed

³³ Cf. Lee Ullmann's comments on Hittite monumental rock reliefs, which he characterizes as "deliberate interventions in the landscape that were purposefully placed within the natural environment" (2014, 107).

motivations behind rock relief locations in other cultures. For example, did visual prominence—in general or from a particular origin point—factor into this decision? What about the ability for a monument to ‘see’ sites of local importance, or other monuments, from its location? Are the stelae more likely to be located at points of topographical prominence, or of hiddenness? Do they fit into broader architectural programs or networks of state performance? What role might orientation, stone type and quality, the shape of the outcrop, or proximity to roads play in site choice? Mapping technologies, coupled with archival and fieldwork photography, allow us to paint a picture of what a landscape might have been like when ancient populations encountered it.

Spatial patterning studies using GIS have become fashionable in archaeology in recent years, especially for investigations of human-environment relationships (cf. Kosiba and Bauer 2013, 61). However, these methods have also been criticized for their superficial use, positivism, and lack of theoretical grounding (Haciguzeller 2012; Harrower 2016; Llobera 2012). To offer some balance to these approaches there is a second way of looking at the issue of perception, which is usually considered to lie on the opposite end of the spectrum from GIS (McEwan and Millican 2012; Gillings 2012), and that is through a phenomenological lens. Phenomenology explores how people understand and experience the world (Tilley 1994, 11). At the core of Christopher Tilley’s *Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994) is the notion that the ‘logic’ behind site choice need not be logical at all: modern ideas about function and rational decision-making are not applicable to the past in every case (Tilley 1994, 1–2). Sites may be significant because they possess social symbolism that cannot be accessed through quantitative data, so Tilley wants us to stop looking *at* these places, and get *into* them.

That gives us good reason to supplement questions about visibility and proximity with ones about cultural memory and social semiotics (Vogt 2014). This is not hard for Egyptologists to do, because we have a rich body of texts that reveal the canonical history and mythology of various places in the Egyptian world. Additionally, personal visits to the sites where the stelae were made can allow us to “feel with immediacy something of the resonance that the place could have had” for its patron and its audience—a sense that one simply cannot acquire from a map (Parkinson 2015, 14).

However, even Tilley lets it slip that the Neolithic and Mesolithic sites in his research were located in “distinctive natural landscapes” (1994, 2)—a statement that assumes some universal understanding of what ‘distinctive’ means (Bradley, who noticed a pattern like this in several of his own examples, calls them “striking features”; 2000, 36). While I agree that the significance of landscapes is culturally contingent—one Inka case study has even shown that social strata within a single culture can affect members’ spatial impressions (Kosiba and Bauer 2013)—I contend that there are some elements of human perception that are arguably more objective. That some natural features are dominant, or at least conspicuous, when seen from certain points in their local landscapes is not something we need to debate;³⁴ it is the cultural meaning attached to these features that is subjective and open to interpretation. This is a good illustration of why it is most useful to pair phenomenological inquiries with those expressed in GIS—or, even better, to make GIS more capable of expressing qualitative data (McEwan 2012). In the past few years such approaches have been called for (Harrower 2016; Rennell 2012; McEwan and

³⁴ I say “from certain points” because local visual prominence varies based on distance, angles of view, and obstacles between the viewer and the feature in question (Bernardini et al. 2013; Moore 1996). Prominence will of course change based on where the viewer is in relation to the feature, but that does not change the fact that the feature ‘sticks out’ in one way or another.

Millican 2012) and subsequently tested (Kosiba and Bauer 2013; Wheatley and Gillings 2000), even resulting in an ‘embodied GIS’ combined with augmented reality (Eve 2014). Any effort to marry digital and phenomenological approaches can only deepen our understanding of how outcrops and the landscapes around them might have been perceived in their unaltered states. Furthermore, the approaches described in this section are equally applicable to understanding how the stelae, once finished, might have altered those perceptions.

For this study, with the help of the Center from Advanced Spatial Technologies (CAST) at the University of Arkansas, two digital modeling methods were tested to elucidate the appeal of some of the outcrops where royal living-rock stelae were carved (see the Methodology section below). The first is a python script run in ArcGIS, created by Christopher Angel at CAST and based on the work of Tadahiko Higuchi (1983) and Jerry D. Moore (1996), which measures the ‘monumentality’ of a feature by modeling its isovists—the spaces from which a specific point can be viewed, taking into account the angle at which a person must alter their line of sight as they move (Angel 2017, 137). Because the normal line of sight when standing is roughly 10° below the horizontal, looking up—from whence the euphemisms about respect probably originate—“involves a certain amount of stress,” producing imbalance and a bodily sense of awe (Higuchi 1983, 46). The higher the ‘view angle’ at an outcrop, the more ‘monumental’ it, and its effects on the viewer, can be said to be. Unfortunately, after some testing this method was not successful for the case studies where it was employed (see Chapters 5 and 6) due to the low resolution of publicly available Digital Elevation Models (DEMs) and the artifacts contained therein. Future work with these case studies using higher resolution data can be

expected to produce legible results. The second method employed here is the Saliency Toolbox,³⁵ a C++ framework implemented in Matlab (Geisler et al. 2017), which maps the visual stimulus raised from a certain region in a still image—in this case, stills taken from drone videos or from DEMs that mimicked movement past a stela. This method was used successfully at the site of Nauri (Chapter 5).

Actions in the Landscape

As discussed above, landscapes do not exist on their own: they are created by people through their engagement with the world around them (Bender 1993, 1). In addition to thinking about how an outcrop and its surroundings might have been perceived, we also need to look for evidence of actions in the landscape around a stela, both before and after it was carved. This is the theoretical crux of *An Archaeology of Natural Places*: that physical traces of human activity ‘inside’ such places are indicators of their cultural significance. The present project benefits from exploring the ‘life histories’ of landscapes where living-rock stelae were inscribed (Ashmore 2002, 1177–78) by examining excavation data and primary sources that attest to what the Egyptians and their neighbors did, or did not do, in these areas. Those activities, and the meanings attached to them, may also have changed once a stela was carved there.

Actions in the landscape are not limited to activities at a single location. More often than not, the stelae in this dissertation were part of networks that can be best explored through the movement of people from place to place. Survey data in particular allows us to “follow” motion through the archaeological record: “the traces of work, travel, connections, water and soils, all moving in different ways together,” which in all

³⁵ Available for download at <http://saliencytoolbox.net>.

form what Michael Given calls ‘commotion’ (2013, 8). Commotion in the form of performances, pilgrimages, expeditions, and other activities can help us uncover route links between sites and geographical networks of which we may not already be aware (Harmanşah 2014c, 3). Rock reliefs in the ancient world, including in Egypt, are frequently associated with travelers’ paths (Felle and Rocco 2016; Darnell 2002), where they collect to form layers of memories on the landscape (Gates-Foster 2012). The stelae in this dissertation were often made at locations that lay directly on land or water routes, and some appear to have been chosen at least in part for their visibility from those routes (Chapter 5).

In many cases perceptions and actions in a landscape seem to go hand-in-hand, such as at the First Cataract (Chapter 5), long considered to be *Kmt*’s southern boundary and marked with numerous royal and private accounts of journeys and battles to the south. In others the situation is less clear, such as on the Lebanese coast at Adloun (Chapter 5), where we have only hundred-year-old photographs of a lost monument to go by. It is important to acknowledge that no matter how closely we examine the archaeological data, some elements of human actions in the landscape, most notably those that do not leave material traces, are bound to be absent. In those cases we might look to comparanda and ethnographic information to help us make inferences. In any study of human activity it is also critical to avoid treating people as if they are entirely separate from the landscape: to paraphrase from Ingold, the earth is not a surface the Egyptians occupied, but a world that they inhabited (2000, 155). Space is not an empty, uniform backdrop against which human activities occur, but a socially constructed and

dynamic medium for those activities (Relph 1976; Tilley 1994, 9–10). That is how we turn ‘spaces’ into ‘places’ (Bender 2006).

Actions of the Landscape

The concept of dynamic space ties in nicely with the idea of an agentive landscape. Keith Basso uses the term ‘interanimation’ to describe the relationship between people and places: the latter can “animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them,” just as those ideas and feelings can enliven the place (Basso 1996, 55). But natural features can stimulate more than just our emotions—they can also shape human activities. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that all things are alive and active in the same manner as people, such that it is not hard to imagine them exerting forces on any system of which we are a part (e.g. the ‘vital materiality’ of Bennett 2010). I do not think that we should fully equate non-human agency with human agency, but I do want to attribute a more active role to the world the Egyptians and their neighbors moved through, because that is how the Egyptians themselves would have understood it:

The mountains lead to what is in them; they reveal the secret that is in them. The mountains and the deserts bear their offerings; father Geb places them on every arm, and Tatenen is filled with what is in him.³⁶

The Egyptians had a propensity “for encountering their environment in personal form” and “seeing the face of a deity in a salient or even an insignificant feature of the landscape” (Hornung 1971, 74). As one might gather from my earlier examples of Egypt’s animate natural features, they did not simply *see* the gods in these elements of their world, but also *connected* and *interacted* with them. And while the Egyptian case may seem straightforward—the sun disk *is* the god, for example, and so it fights its way

³⁶ My translation, following the transcription in Tallet (2012, I 136-137), of the living-rock stela of Sobekherheb from the reign of Amenemhat III at Serabit el-Khadim.

through the Duat in order to continue to light the earth—not all agency is so explicitly ascribed. In fact, my argument regarding several of the sites in this dissertation is that features of the landscape that were *not* specifically identified with Egyptian deities were at least partly responsible for ‘coaxing’ the patron to inscribe there. For example, I contend that the visual prominence of outcrops on expedition routes (Chapter 5) are what made them attractive places to make stelae. When Ramesses II first encountered the promontory at Nahr el-Kalb, he spontaneously responded to the opportunity *it presented* for symbolic transmission of his message. We cannot know whether he was always planning to commission a living-rock stela in the Levant during this campaign, but seeing as no known battle occurred at this site and no center of local opposition existed there, the landscape itself is a good contender for a catalyst. Likewise, the immense sandstone buttes at Nauri and the pylon-shaped outcrop that forms Konosso Island *beckoned* for their monuments.

In thinking about the agency of landscapes I have been most influenced by the work of the environmental historian Linda Nash. Nash (2005) questions whether we really understand what we mean when we talk about human agency: natural features, she says, influence and constrain human *intentions*, not only human actions. People “develop their plans” as a result of practical, on-the-ground engagement with the world around them (Nash 2005, 68).³⁷ In Nash’s view the stelae would not exist if the Egyptians had never encountered outcrops that prompted them to imagine such a monumental strategy.

³⁷ Nash is quick to note that she is not advocating for some form of environmental determinism. Martin Rössler (2009) has argued that studies of African landscapes, with their distinctive climatic and topographic features (aridity in particular), cannot comprise a fruitful anthropology of landscape all on their own. In order to get a fuller picture of the range of possible human engagements with the world, at least from an anthropological perspective, we need to understand how things work in other parts of the world.

She encourages us to “put the human back in the world,” because our intentions “do not emerge in a vacuum” (Nash 2005, 69). They arise from the inextricable, entangled relationship between people and things—their ‘collaboration’ (Given 2013). Would the Egyptians avoid, or be attracted to, a certain place because it looked or felt a certain way? Would they be more likely to carve a stela when confronted with an outcrop of a symbolic shape, color, or orientation? We can look back to the qualitative and (where possible) quantitative evidence for how landscapes were perceived in order to think about the role they themselves might have played in restricting, eliciting, or supporting the epigraphic habit. Considering actions of the landscape and potential influences of non-human agents on people also helps us avoid falling into one of the major ‘traps’ of phenomenology, which is to completely prioritize the human experience above all else (Walsh 2008, 547–48).

Actions on the Landscape

Finally we turn to the stelae themselves, which do not merely occupy their landscapes, but seem to truly become part of them over time. In her dissertation on ‘ascribed material agency,’ which I summarized in Chapter 1, Marina Brown lays out a theoretical framework for studying Egyptian rock inscriptions based on Alfred Gell’s agency of art objects (1998) and Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (2005). Two of the points in her framework are especially pertinent to the present study, and I wish to apply them here. The first is that rock inscriptions could ‘act’ on people as proxies for their patrons, influencing their behavior (Brown 2015, 102). I consider this an extension of the manner by which I attributed agency to natural features, especially those that would eventually be inscribed, in the previous section. But this is not simply a case of,

the message I write is meant to affect you. On the contrary, the Egyptians viewed certain forms of material culture as animate and agentive—in the sense that the “mimetic and iterative processes” of image-making created a ‘double’ for the person, a material representation that was inseparable from his or her existence (Meskell 2005, 59–60; cf. Kjølbj 2009). For example, cult statues “provided places where deities could manifest themselves” (Robins 2008, 12), and a written name encompassed the essence of a person (Assmann 2001, 83). Mario Liverani described royal boundary stelae as “substitutes” for the king and his authority (2001, 34), but it may be more accurate to describe them as more than substitutes—they *were* him, because they represented him by name, and representations amounted to reality in the Egyptian world. The king’s living-rock stelae stood for him in more than just a metaphorical sense. They were not merely *symbols* of his authority (Bard 1992, 5); rather, it was as if they, and the places where they were carved, were *ordained with* his authority (A. T. Smith 2003). Seeing as the Egyptians believed in the agency of objects, and acted as though this was true, we have grounds to justify studying them that way ourselves (Weismantel 2014, 23; cf. Mitchell 2004).

The second point of Brown’s that I wish to apply here is that the semiotics of a rock inscription are “culturally contextualized tools” that represent concepts delivered by the patron to an audience—but that even if the message is never received by anyone, this has no bearing on the *intention* the patron had for the message (Brown 2015, 103). This idea is evocative of the work of the Andeanist Jerry Moore, who wrote that monuments, as public works, are “designed to convey culturally recognized meaning”—but also that ‘meaning’ unfortunately varies and is hard to pinpoint, because it is subjective. The solution, Moore says, is to concern ourselves not with meaning itself, but with *how*

meaning is conveyed (1996, 101). Thus the ‘mechanics’ of living-rock stelae pursued in this dissertation reveal more about how the royal establishment *projected* them to work, than about how they may actually have worked.

The contents of the stelae add another layer of meaning to their landscapes, and in the past that has usually been the only element under study. In the service of going beyond text and image as historical and thematic documents, an archaeology of inscribed natural places should seek material and contextual information from within the stelae themselves. Acute spatial relationships, especially parallelisms, have already been demonstrated between series of monuments within local landscapes (Mallinson 1999; Oppenheim 2007, 163) and in the relief programs of individual structures (Labrique 1992; Fitzenreiter 2011). Beyond this, David O’Connor (2001b) has shown that spatial references in stelae from the reign of Amenhotep III could be arranged in a geographical-hierarchical order transposed onto their layouts, and Peter Robinson has noted the potential of ‘landscape texts’ such as the *Book of Two Ways* to elucidate the “spatial and temporal geographies” of Egyptians during the Middle Kingdom (2003, 145).

Language shapes the way we view the world, and vice-versa (Keesing 1979). Since living-rock stelae have a spatial anchor, deictic references in their texts—‘pointing’ language such as place-names and demonstratives—should to some degree reflect the way their patrons conceptualized the landscapes around them. Such references might help explain their orientations, or the relationship of one monument to another. To my knowledge, there has never been an investigation of deixis in rock reliefs at all, let alone in Egypt. Deixis in the usual, grammatical sense has been discussed in some detail for the Egyptian language (Loprieno 1995, 68–71; Gregersen 2003; Werning 2014; Werning

2012; Matthias Müller 2012), but we have not yet had a work in this field that looks at the literary view of this concept, which is much broader, and takes into account the social dimensions of space. To borrow from Peter Kruschwitz's study of Latin graffiti at Pompeii (2014), when someone tells us that he was 'here,' how far does 'here' actually go? And what are the geographic boundaries of 'this place,' wherever it may be?

My model for deixis comes from literary critic Peter Stockwell's *Cognitive Poetics* (2002, 43–46).³⁸ For Stockwell, there are six categories of deixis. These are perceptual (the classic case, where the frame of reference is centered on an individual); spatial (expressions that locate the deictic center in a place, such as 'here,' and 'in Kush'); temporal ('long ago,' 'Year 2'); relational (expressions encoding the social or cultural viewpoint of the writer or reader); textual ('signposting' such as titularies and headings); and compositional (stylistic choices that encode a deictic relationship between writer and reader). A broader consideration of deictic language allows us to consider, with a very wide lens, many more of the topographic, geographic, and otherwise directional nuances of the stelae in this study. Not all of these monuments are suitable for such an analysis, but the contents of those that are should help us locate each monument within a 'web' of spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts, which may augment our understanding of its bare location on a map. We can read the images on the stelae in a similar way, since the semiotics of Egyptian art were highly calculated and are well understood (Schäfer 1986; Maya Müller 2014; Lurson 2001; Lurson 2007).

An analysis of the texts and images in the stelae also means that we need to consider the relationship between content and medium. As I noted earlier, there appears

³⁸ But for something similar in the Egyptological literature, see Allen 2002, 88–91.

to be a cross-cultural propensity for human activity at the sites of visually prominent landscape features (Bernardini et al. 2013). This is one possible answer to the question of why only certain sites were inscribed with stelae, and it is the likely answer for the case studies in Chapter 5. However, whereas a given landscape might have been viewed as particularly ‘inscribable,’ some *messages* are bound to have been better suited for transmission on the living rock, and might themselves have been a deciding factor in site choice. A good example of this is the group of boundary stelae at Amarna, which clearly assert the permanence of the city in their texts. In Chapter 4 I propose that the king supported his conviction not to move this radical new capital—reflected in an oath that appears on each of the monuments—by inscribing his stelae into the fixed medium that surrounded it.

Investigating the relationship between content and medium raises yet another issue regarding materiality, and that is practicality. Some of the stelae in this dissertation were carved on rock surfaces whose most appealing characteristic might not have been their shape or their cultural symbolism, but the ease with which they could be carved. John Ward, Assistant Director of the excavations at Gebel Silsila and an experienced desert traveler, suggests that this was the driving force behind the locations of many of Egypt’s private rock inscriptions: many of them only exist today because they were made in places with more shelter and less wind than others, where their makers could sit comfortably to carve (*pers. comm.*). Of course, there is quite a difference between private rock inscriptions and royal stelae, namely that the latter are part of a calculated program of state projects whose practical limitations were rather few. But although royal monuments were commissioned with a degree of premeditation that likely surpassed

those of non-royal people, there are some concerns that could have applied to them as well, if only to ensure that they would endure and be seen (if they were indeed meant to be seen). Hence, we also need to think about characteristics such as height above ground level and the physical integrity of the rock surface. This might seem to come up against Tilley's distinction between modern ideas about 'function' and ancient sensibilities, but it also plays nicely into Nash's ideas about on-the-ground engagement with the landscape. Considering the practical concerns attached to the medium of living rock forces us to step back a bit from some of the 'deeper' theoretical concepts in landscape studies, and to contemplate the everyday experience of people moving through the world.

Key Concepts

When integrated, the four topics I have described above allow us to conduct a well-rounded archaeology of inscribed natural places. Together they push us to grapple with the multitemporality, materiality, and cultural meaning of the landscapes where living-rock stelae were carved. Furthermore, they challenge the conventional understanding of monuments as solitary, unidimensional 'events' of purely historical significance: rock relief sites are not created instantaneously when the monument is completed, but are instead made through long-term cultural engagements with the landscape, of which carving is only a single part (Harmanşah 2018). To augment this theoretical framework, in this section I outline key concepts in three areas of scholarship that I consider most relevant to this study. These are the nature/culture divide; experience; and reception. In the case study chapters that follow, I further expand on these concepts using the material at hand. For the sake of space and coherence, I reserve

my comments on the concepts of ‘boundary’ and ‘frontier’ for Chapter 6, where I discuss Egypt’s living-rock imperial boundary stelae.

Nature and Culture

‘Nature’ is essentially a Western concept. It is often contrasted with ‘culture,’ but there is no universal understanding of either of these ideas (Bradley 2000, 34). The nature/culture divide, a relic of Cartesian dualism (Harmanşah 2014c, 4),³⁹ has been criticized in recent years because it perpetuates the notion that humans are not also part of the natural world (Walsh 2013; Given 2013). According to Ingold (2000, 191), this divide is the reason why the words landscape and nature cannot be used interchangeably in archaeological studies: when nature is set in opposition to culture, we incorrectly assume the existence of some objective environmental ‘reality’ that merely serves as a backdrop for our actions. That, as I have shown above, is not what landscape is. Talk of ‘cultural landscapes’ equally has its issues; according to the geographer Peirce Lewis, these landscapes comprise “everything that humans do to the natural earth for whatever purpose but most commonly for material profit, aesthetic pleasure, spiritual fulfillment, personal comfort, or communal safety” (1993, 116). In Lewis’s definition it is easy to see how this concept also turns the world into a *thing* to be used for our benefit, without resistance.⁴⁰

³⁹ For additional comments on the applicability of an ‘anti-Cartesian’ view to Egyptian culture, see Meskell and Joyce (2003, 67ff.).

⁴⁰ Elsewhere in this dissertation, I use the phrase ‘edited landscapes’ to describe places where some ‘functional’ action has been performed on a rock surface, such as in the shaping of quarries and canals. I admit that the term ‘edited’ might seem to privilege the human in much the same way I have argued against. However, what I mean by it is that these landscapes were unaltered, or were not dramatically altered, by human actions before they were ‘edited.’ The phrase is a comment on the physical state of the landscape, not necessarily the projection of human desire or agency onto it.

The solution is not only to stress that landscapes can be both cultural and natural—temple complexes as much as open deserts—but to move beyond this and assert that everything in them cannot truly be divided along natural and cultural lines. The composite landscape, a landscape that encompasses all possible inquiry into the archaeological record, is a network of cultural ecology made up of “values, modes of perception and representation, experiences, artifacts, histories, natural histories, dreams, identities, narratives, [and] memories” (Shanks 2001, 293). No matter how much some scholars may wish to separate nature from culture, ‘natural’ landscapes are also cultural and historical in even the smallest of ways, because they are “‘read’ by people as the result of the actions of past generations, ancestors, ancient peoples or supernatural forces” (Holtorf and Williams 2006, 235). In this vein Ingold rejects both plainly natural and plainly cultural views of landscape in favor of a ‘dwelling perspective,’ where the landscape is conceived as a *record* of the activities of generations past who have engaged with the same space (2000, 189). This perspective works rather well for the landscapes of Egypt’s living-rock stelae, as they almost always bear the vestiges of multiple inscribing events over the *longue durée*. They are ‘accumulative landscapes,’ to use a phrase from Cornelius Holtorf and Howard Williams: landscapes “composed of the traces of human action and natural features that form the focus of retrospective memories” (2006, 236).

Despite the complications of using the word nature in landscape archaeology, I still do so occasionally in this dissertation. However, I avoid using the word on its own when it is not in a context that seems to require it (such as in my introduction to this chapter), preferring instead phrases such as ‘natural features’ and ‘natural world.’ These, to me, mean something different—they have less Western baggage. In his review of

landscape archaeology in Nubia, Krzysztof Grzymski (2004) uses the phrase ‘natural landscapes’ in precisely the way I intend: to describe raw physical features. When I use variants of the word nature, I refer to the outcrops, mountains, escarpments, and water sources that exist because of geological and other environmental processes. They are natural in the sense that they have not been made by people, even though they were seen and experienced by them in many ways.

There is an additional issue to clear up about the nature/culture divide that is specific to Egyptology. Earlier I quoted Assmann, who wrote that the Egyptians did not have a concept of nature in the Western sense because the elements of their world were “super-natural” (2001, 63). This is excellent justification for framing landscape as a composite of nature and culture. However, it may at first appear that uniting the two does not jive entirely with the Egyptian point of view. The Egyptians possessed a detailed knowledge of the natural world, which we know from lists of associated terms that were memorized by scribes for generations (Wente 1990, 99). They also paid great attention to detail when representing non-human entities such as animals, as reflected in the hieroglyphic system. But this knowledge was aimed entirely at what concerned *them*, as if the elements of the earth and cosmos were made exclusively for humans to behold and to use (Assmann 2001, 54–55). As a result, this seems to force a separation of people from the natural world.

Assmann characterizes Egyptian interest in the natural world as “narrow,” writing that, for example, they did not care to investigate the actual source of the Nile, but were instead happy to accept the mythological explanations they had created. This is why the Greeks described them as a ‘utilitarian,’ rather than ‘scientific,’ culture (Assmann 2001,

54–55). However, this does not preclude us from understanding Egyptian landscapes in the manner I outlined above. For one, Assmann writes that it is unfair to think of the Egyptians as utilitarian in their approach, because some of the knowledge they expressed goes “beyond the realm of experience” and into the realm of imagination, such as in the construction of an elaborate netherworld geography (I call this an ‘imagined landscape’; see Chapter 3). Further to this, he concludes that the attention they paid to natural phenomena can be best categorized as *religious*, just as I argued in the opening section of this chapter (2001, 55). So although their point of view placed humans in a position that might make them seem like observers of ‘the rest’ of the natural world, their observations were grounded in a subjective, ideologically focused understanding of it—and they were very much a part of their own religious ideology. We need only look to the artificial *benben*-stone mounds heaped up beneath temples, the orientation of architecture and cities to solar axes, and the Nile’s fundamental division of *Kmt* into eastern and western realms (all discussed in Chapter 3) in order to appreciate just how much Egypt’s ‘cultural’ sphere was intertwined with its ‘natural’ one. This becomes even more apparent in the study of monuments carved directly into living rock.

Experience

I have already discussed a few of the ways by which phenomenology—with some discretion—can contribute to an archaeology of inscribed natural places by helping us investigate human experiences with the world. However, it is worth mentioning a handful of sidenotes and caveats about the concept of experience. The first is that phenomenology, with its emphasis on cultural dependency, essentially denies the merits of cross-cultural comparison (for which it has been roundly criticized; Barrett and Ko

2009, 276). This is quite problematic in the context of this dissertation, because the justification for this project is based heavily on the successes of comparative work from outside of Egyptian archaeology (see below). I maintain that comparanda from the Near East and elsewhere make my arguments stronger: while it is true that the Egyptian manner of ‘being in the world’ was different from the manner of any other culture, so long as we approach our material from the Egyptian perspective (as I attempt in Chapter 3), studies from outside our discipline can expose us to the range of what is possible to do and to question archaeologically. I would not have recognized the theoretical potential of studying living-rock monuments at all had it not been for the chance encounter with Near Eastern rock reliefs that I described in Chapter 1. Likewise, I have only been able to conceive of the digital methods for this project (whether successful or not) because I saw how scholars of the Hittites and Andeans were treating similar questions (e.g. L. Z. Ullmann 2010; L. Z. Ullmann 2014; Moore 1996). It is possible to employ comparative material and still profess to reveal a uniquely Egyptian experience with the landscape if such material is used as a *scholarly stimulus*. I would never claim, for example, that the mechanics of Chinese *moya* rock reliefs show us exactly how the Egyptian stelae worked, because I recognize that each was made and intended to be received within its particular cultural context. I do, however, use sinologists’ interpretations of how people experienced *moya* as a window onto the Egyptian case. ‘Purely’ phenomenological studies that put the human experience above all else—thereby rejecting the notion of a scientific archaeology with testable hypotheses and standardized methods (Barrett and Ko 2009, 277–78)—have no way to scrutinize their observations for the sake of accountability or cross-disciplinary dialogue, and arguably no motivation for doing so.

The second point of note is that although we possess a wealth of archaeological material that speaks to Egyptian canonical history and mythology, which can therefore help us understand how the world is likely to have been interpreted in the ‘collective’ Egyptian mindset (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Halbwachs 1980), phenomenological studies are ostensibly about the lived experience of the *individual* (Hodder 2000, 25). Any attempt to access an individual’s encounters with the Egyptian landscape would seem to require more speculation than may be comfortable for some scholars, myself included. At the outset of this project I would have said that I am not in the business of chasing down the impressions of specific people; that, to me, seemed too theoretical an exercise and unlikely to produce any meaningful results. But my research question about mechanics does in fact hinge on the lived experience of at least one individual in every case: the person who perceived the landscape in such a way that he decided a living-rock monument belonged there. As I stated in Chapter 1, my main argument is that each of the stelae must have been commissioned as the result of a deliberate decision to use living rock as a monumental medium, despite there being many alternative ways to broadcast or record a royal message. These are presumed to have been choices made by the king, whom we know was present at the sites of most these monuments, although it is likely that they were made in consultation with others in the royal establishment.⁴¹

Fortunately, we can ask about these individual encounters with the landscape in a meaningful way by viewing them as a reflection of collective experiences (Brown 2015, 103). After all, every Egyptian, including the king, shared the same *habitus* (Bourdieu

⁴¹ As I mentioned in Chapter 1, these were certainly not the decisions of the artisans, and should always be understood as stemming from an order by the patron. “It is not the self of an artist or writer which is revealed by a statue or speaking in an inscription, but the self of the patron, who had the portrait sculptured or the inscription carved” (Assmann 1996, 55).

1990) and would presumably have interpreted the world in a similar way. The king saw and did things ‘like an Egyptian,’ with the expectation that the semiotics of his monuments would be received by others ‘like an Egyptian.’⁴² It is exactly this kind of group mentality that Julian Thomas characterizes as the *real* point of phenomenological studies, writing that they allow us “to document experiential worlds and forms of subjectification that are remote from our own, rather than to attempt to recover ‘individuals’ who are comparable with those of the modern West” (2006, 56; cf. Barrett and Ko 2009, 276). The royal encounter with the landscape, and the resulting choice to commission a stela in a particular spot, are reflections of how the king expected the monument to be experienced by others, not just how he experienced it himself. It is methodologically sound to ask how a king saw and felt about a place, so long as we frame this question within the collective Egyptian mindset. For instance, while I do not think it is suitable for an archaeologist to speculate on Seti I’s personal feelings about Gebel Silsila or how the wind felt on his face when he stood on its banks, I do think it is reasonable to ask how his experience with this sacred site was a decidedly *Egyptian* one, how he might therefore have expected others with the same worldview to ‘get the message,’ and how both of these things affected his choice to make his stelae there.⁴³

A third note about experience is that landscapes are made and sensed in many ways that go beyond the visual. Although I have heretofore prioritized sight in my discussion of how people perceive the world, I do not mean to relegate ways of smelling,

⁴² Although see Chapter 6 for my discussion of the ways in which local communities in Nubia might have received such monuments differently—as well as how the Egyptians might have planned for this, knowing that they could not read Egyptian.

⁴³ All the more reason to treat this study as a *lens* for Egyptian views and use of living rock in message-making strategies more broadly, in private stelae, graffiti, and so on (Chapter 1).

feeling, and hearing to the side. The problem is that archaeological studies have been sight-centered for so long that much of the case study literature does not take the full range of sensoria into account. Catherine Frieman and Mark Gillings (2007) have argued that the prevalence of sight-centered studies of the landscape is the result of advances in mapping technologies outpacing critical theory about the senses. Luckily, the past decade has seen the emergence of several works that aim to correct this by seeking out multisensorial experiences (Hamilakis 2013; Skeates 2010; Day 2010), as well as some provocative studies of soundscapes in particular (Kleinitz 2013; Kleinitz 2010; Kleinitz 2008; Mlekuz 2004; Hultman 2014).

Robin Skeates (2010) sketches a five-part methodology for an archaeology of the senses, which comprises coming to terms with our own sensorial biases; taking stock of the ‘sensory profile’ of the culture under study; experimentation; “thick,” multisensory description of the spaces sensed; and creative writing. While I do not subscribe entirely to his guidelines—for example, nowhere in this dissertation have I chosen to employ creative writing, because I do not think it can reveal much to us about the past—I do think that it is imperative for researchers to visit and describe the landscapes they study, as I have done myself whenever possible, so long as we keep our own predispositions in mind. We must also recognize that not every culture senses primarily with their eyes (Frieman and Gillings 2007, 9): there may be another primary sense apart from sight, or a synesthetic relationship between two or more senses. People dwelling in a particular landscape for a long time are also apt to interpreting the world through ‘sentient ecology’—knowledge of the environment “based in feeling” honed over an extended period (Ingold 2000, 25)—which is neither measurable nor readily transmissible for those

living outside of that experience, because it is intuitive. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is useful here as above, because sensing is wrapped up in collective cognitive experiences within a given culture (Thomason 2016, 245). To combat Western biases about sensing, Frieman and Gillings want scholars to focus on how space is *perceived*, not "seen"; I agree, and have already incorporated this language into my theoretical framework.

A final point worth noting about experience is that the landscapes we visit, describe, and investigate today might not be anything like what existed in antiquity. Mark Jackson and Sophie Moore (2018) refer to the processes of certain change as 'taphonomies of landscape.' John Baines has gone so far as to suggest that Egyptologists cannot really *do* proper landscape archaeology, owing to how much things have changed; instead, he uses high-cultural sources to access Egyptian commentary on the world they lived in (2013, 22). Others, however, have suggested that archaeologists conduct 'landscape biographies'—focusing on the history of environmental change—as a way of grappling with this issue (Marsh and Jones 2014). Landscape transformation has been particularly apparent in my study of the stelae on the First Cataract island of Konosso (Chapter 5), which is now almost fully submerged by flooding from the Aswan Dams and may once have been only an intermittent island, during times of high water. Modern encounters with this landscape cannot be used to infer ancient experiences in the same way as some other case studies, although archival photographs offer some insights. In Egypt there is also the matter of the now-defunct Nile inundation, whose regularly scheduled appearance would have changed the landscape from season to season in antiquity, and whose absence today makes it difficult to imagine how the fluctuating water line might have affected the physical characteristics of other features, as well as

human encounters with them. The presence of water, combined with other atmospheric conditions, would presumably have impacted things like air moisture and quantities of flora and fauna.

At certain points in Egyptian history, or for certain groups in the Egyptian world, people's impressions of a landscape may have changed not only based on its physical characteristics, but also because of its association with cultural memories of a particular type. Bradley, for instance, notes that England's Lake District was viewed as "threatening and incoherent" until the 18th century, after which time a new population, with a different outlook, discovered it to be rather charming (2000, 33). In Bradley's example we can see differences in landscape perception not just over time, but also between groups. In Chapter 6 I argue that the creation of living-rock imperial boundary stelae in Egypt's borderlands transformed previously chaotic-seeming landscapes into ordered, 'Egyptianized' spaces, affecting similar landscape transformations. This is supported by Brown's idea that Egyptian *doxa* could "annex" foreign territories to the Egyptian universe (2015, 104, 182–83).

As John Barrett and Ilhong Ko observe, phenomenology's 'subjective epistemology'—"the belief that our own embodied experiences of landscapes and monuments *must* reveal to us something of the experiences of the people who once inhabited those same places in the past"—is highly problematic (2009, 279, emphasis mine). The places they lived in and moved through may be nothing like what we encounter today, even if we do try our best to put ourselves in the mindset of the culture we are studying. I am indeed generalizing and simplifying, by necessity, when I attempt to access the experiences that Egyptians and their neighbors had in the landscapes of

living-rock stelae. All studies of experience should be taken with a grain of salt, because they are only *exercises* in getting ‘into’ ancient encounters with the natural world.

Reception

As a form of communication, rock reliefs can be “decidedly unilateral”: the person who makes the message and the person who receives it do not have to be present in the inscribed space at the same time (Bradley 2000, 39). Usually they are not, given how long many of these reliefs last, transmitting their messages well beyond the lifetimes of their makers (Brown 2015, 103–4). Despite this, we seem to assume two things about rock reliefs that I would like to problematize: the first is that the message was always received in the way it was intended to be by its patron, and the second is that it was always directed at a human audience.⁴⁴

Monuments are usually “designed to be recognized,” even if they cannot be understood by all members of a society (Moore 1996, 92). As I see it, reception, or intended reception, relies on three elements: literacy, intelligibility, and visibility. At any given time in Egypt’s pharaonic history, the literacy rate is expected to have been no greater than one percent (Baines 2007, 49). There are, of course, many levels of literacy: for example, reading well and also being able to write; reading without writing; or carving signs (‘writing’) without really knowing what they mean, as was probably the case for some craftspeople (Baines 2007, 50). There is a difference between reading and understanding, too. Although inscribed messages were culturally coded (Brown 2015, 103; Moore 1996, 101), the pictorial properties of the hieroglyphic script might have made some of them partly intelligible to people who did not know Egyptian, such as

⁴⁴ In this section I use the term ‘recipient’ to refer to any person who interacts with a stela, and the term ‘audience’ to refer to the those to whom the stela was directed.

foreigners. It has been suggested that the First Semna Stela of Senwosret III (Chapter 6) marked Egypt's southern boundary with images of bound captives, in addition to its hieroglyphic text, for just this purpose (Loeben 2001, 281, fig. 3). Furthermore, intelligibility is also different from impact: James Osborne has written that "we can only consider an object's monumentality in the context of its relationship to the community of which it forms a part" (2014, 4), since the meanings ascribed to these works are liable to change as they are absorbed into the lives of new people over time. But at Nahr el-Kalb (Chapter 5), the collection of later material responses—more living-rock stelae in six languages—allude to their patrons' reception of *something* from Ramesses II's messages in the landscape. There is no question that their impact has been upheld throughout the ages, although most (or perhaps all) of the later stela patrons were unable to read Egyptian.

In thinking about literacy and intelligibility we must also consider the fact that the contents of royal monuments might have been read aloud (Assmann 1994, 25–26), either as part of an 'officializing' performance (such as during the foundation rites for a building or after the creation of a boundary stela), or to announce the text of a decree or so-called 'propaganda' (Bleiberg 1985; Klug 2002, 3; see Chapter 5). In that case those within earshot need not have been literate at all in order to receive a message, although they would not have been able to verify its information for themselves. There is at least one example where we can deduce that living rock was not the original medium of composition for a stela text: the case of the Nauri Decree of Seti I, where the artisans ran out of room and made up for it in a most bizarre fashion (Chapter 5). This could simply mean that the decree text was copied for practical reasons from a papyrus (which is likely

anyway) and then carved only at Nauri, or it might instead suggest that the decree was dispersed, and perhaps proclaimed, in other media and at other locations aside from the site of the stela. Official messages with a broad audience would presumably have been copied in one way or another to ensure wide geographic dispersal, and we do know of duplicates of some royal monumental texts, such as the Kadesh poem. That text was never carved in living rock, however. In fact, I am not aware of any duplicates of living-rock stelae, apart from those that were commissioned at the same time at Amarna. This bodes well for my hypothesis that messages were carefully selected for this medium, and it also means that their recipients would have been restricted to those who were living or traveling in the immediate area of a stela (although some monuments, namely those at Egypt's imperial boundaries, would have been *known* to wider populations from their descriptions in other sources).

Visibility is another matter, and it relates to both of the assumptions I identified above. I have already discussed archaeology's tendency to privilege sight over the other senses; however, whereas hearing the contents of a royal monument might have been effective for relaying information, experiencing it *in situ* would have made a different, conceivably greater, impact on the recipient. Practically speaking, it is not possible for someone to interact with a living-rock monument unless he or she knows where it is. That does not mean that the contents of a stela or even its shape need to be visible, but it does require the recipient to be aware how it is situated in its physical context—to know that it is 'there.' For example, Ullmann has demonstrated that Hittite rock reliefs were "almost entirely hidden or meshed into the natural landscape" (2014, 102). They were located on

known routes but were not visible from the ground, which implies that one had to know where a relief was ahead of time in order to see it.

Visibility may be intentionally restricted because the audience is restricted, as in the Hittite example, where the reliefs were sites of ritual performance by a specific subset of society. But it might also *appear* to be restricted because the audience is not human: in that case no one needs to know where the monument is or what it looks like. For instance, Mary Weismantel (2014) has observed that people could not easily view the monoliths in the early second-millennium Andean temple at Chavín de Huantar, and could not see the whole span of their decorative programs all at once—presumably because they were not meant to. A similar example is the Gebel Barkal pinnacle inscription of Taharqa (whose outcrop figures in Chapter 6), which can barely be seen with the naked eye from the ground. From our perspective it is so well ‘hidden’ that it was not discovered until the late 1980s (Kendall 2004). This has no bearing on the intention attached to it, however, because its intended audience was almost certainly divine. People on the ground probably did know that it was there, since it was gilded and would have shone in the sun at all hours of the day (thanks to the shape of the pinnacle, it is never fully in the shade), but the very act of assessing visibility based on light and darkness assumes a human audience anyway. Many Egyptian monuments were directed towards the gods; consider, for example, the inner sancta of temples. In an archaeology of inscribed natural places there is quite a balance to strike between people, places, and the things we cannot see for ourselves.

Comparanda, Far and Near

Although Egyptologists generally like to think of our discipline and the culture we study as especially unique, the handful of comparative studies to come out of our field in recent years show just how valuable the experiences, hypotheses, and data of researchers from other fields can be for us (Meskell and Joyce 2003; Trigger 2003; Werning 2014).⁴⁵ Comparanda can be helpful for framing our research questions, especially since Egyptologists have traditionally been neither conscientious nor explicit about applying methodological and theoretical programs to their work (Wendrich 2010, 1). I have drawn much inspiration and enthusiasm for this project from rock relief studies throughout the ancient world—and, as I noted above, I use this material as a stimulus rather than a blueprint for how we should understand the material from Egypt. In this section I review some of the key works that influenced my decision to study living-rock stelae as a discreet monumental strategy, and those that, by analogy, suggest some possible ways to examine and interpret them.

Studies of Text in Context

The most influential work for the present study on the intersection of text and place is Robert Harrist's *The Landscape of Words* (2008). For the past two thousand years in China, people did not simply climb mountains: they *read* them.⁴⁶ Monumental rock inscriptions called *moya* ('polished-cliff carving'), carved into outcrops at sites of cultural importance or unusual topography, contain language that is meant to be

⁴⁵ In addition, a conference entitled *Egyptian and Maya Writing: Comparing Hieroglyphic Domains* was recently held in Basel, from June 9-11, 2017. A publication of the proceedings from this conference is likely; at present the program can be accessed at https://eikones.ch/fileadmin/documents/ext/event/2017/writing/program_w.pdf.

⁴⁶ Here I have paraphrased from Harrist's publishers at the University of Washington Press: <http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/HARLAC.html>.

understood and experienced specifically in the context of the landscapes in which they were sited. Scholars had been reading the texts of these inscriptions mainly from ink rubbings on paper before it was discovered that a whole layer of meaning was missing once they were divorced (or, as Harrist writes, ‘peeled away’) from their original contexts.

Harrist’s work raises two points that are relevant to this dissertation. The first is that reading the text of a monument, as opposed to reading the monument itself, makes quite a difference. This is the main reason why I feel it is imperative to visit Egyptian living-rock stelae in the field whenever possible: for one, a stela may reference places or things around it, either in word or in image, which can only be recovered when we read it in its proper place. In addition, studying them in their landscapes helps to steer us away from the usual consideration of royal monuments solely as sources of historical content. The second pertinent point made by Harrist’s study is that rock reliefs are not only capable of marking or claiming sites that were already laden with cultural meaning, but that they themselves can transform previously ordinary places “into landscapes imbued with literary, ideological, and religious significance” (2008, 18). Harrist’s case studies—structured as ‘journeys’ to the sites of four different types of text—represent various genres and possible functions for the medium of living rock. Following Harrist I have arranged my own case studies in much the same way, in order to emphasize the diversity of the material and the potential conclusions that may be drawn from it.

A second important comparative study for this dissertation, which I have already briefly mentioned, is Kruschwitz’s Pompeii Research Seminar paper on Latin graffiti (2014). The transcript of “‘Aufidius was here.’ (Really? And where exactly?),” was the

first piece on text and context that I read in preparation for this project. I began my theoretical research with comparanda from the Classical world because I was aware of its long tradition of studying the social aspects of epigraphy (e.g. MacMullen 1982; Woolf 1996). Although my own methods do not involve epigraphic work—mainly because the stela texts have already been recorded in detail, but also because it is not always permitted in Egypt—I recognized that such studies were likely to provide relevant frameworks for processing written information that remains *in situ*.⁴⁷

In his paper, Kruschwitz questions how far the spatial index *hic* ‘goes’ when it appears on the wall of a room or on any other spatial anchor. He uses Pompeiian graffiti to demonstrate that *hic* could indicate either a specific location or a more general area:

Aufidius hic fuit. ua(le).
Aufidius was here. Greetings.⁴⁸

Pacatus hic cum suis ma(n)sit Pompeis.
Pacatus had a stopover here with his family at Pompeii.⁴⁹

Once again, there are two main points to be derived here. The first is that inscriptions written on immobile surfaces are the most appropriate avenues for exploring spatial language, but the second, broader aim of Kruschwitz’s work is to evaluate the monumentality of such inscriptions. If we want to know why someone chose to write their message in such a way as to be considered ‘monumental,’ then “we must look not for the occasion chosen...but at the decision itself to give those facts some marble commemoration” (MacMullen 1982, 233). At Pompeii there was no such decision; the graffiti are accidental monuments. They did at first arise from their writers’ desire to be

⁴⁷ If I had been able to conduct my own epigraphic study of this material, I would have attempted to follow the digital-epigraphic methodology recently outlined by the Yale University team at El-Kab (Urcia et al. 2018).

⁴⁸ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV 6702 (Kruschwitz 2014, 4).

⁴⁹ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV 8660 (Kruschwitz 2014, 6).

remembered, but their writers could never have expected them to take on the eternal quality that they now bear as the result of the “freak accident” that gave them a place in collections of important Latin texts (Kruschwitz 2014, 11). On the one hand, this means that the deictic realities of the quotidian experience are indeed preserved in the graffiti (perhaps, for example, higher register language made use of different deictic frames, such that we would not ordinarily know how things worked in colloquial speech). But on the other hand, these writers did not necessarily have the chance to think critically about the meaning they ascribed to the spaces they invoked; in the case of royal monuments, including those at the focus of this dissertation, Egyptologists usually assume that word choice was calculated and laden with meaning. Kruschwitz’s work provides a model for the investigation of spatial language in living-rock texts, while also highlighting the crucial role of the *intention* behind formal monument-making, which is a central theme in this dissertation.

In addition to the work of Harrist and Kruschwitz, I have drawn scholarly inspiration from several comparative projects that pair mapping and language. Two of these warrant mentioning here. The first is Nicholas Carter’s recent study of the landscapes of Maya place names (2014). Carter observes that the Classic Maya textual corpus very often relates to named places—both those that were built and those that are part of the natural world. In particular these texts are linked to landscapes of politics and ritual, which can be mapped geographically using this information. Carter’s piece reminds me of studies of Egyptian toponyms, for both real and imagined places, of which there are almost too many to count (e.g. Goelet 1999; Gauthier 1925; Dhennin and Somaglino 2016; Simons 1937). What his work can add to our discipline, however, is the

idea that the theoretical breadth of landscape should be critically evaluated in conjunction with our efforts to ‘place’ places on a map. In Egyptology it seems that we have often been concerned with mapping a ‘complete’ picture of the Egyptian world—finding out where some of the more elusive sites were located, and transposing the historical record onto modern geography—when we would also benefit from a consideration of landscapes on a different scale, such as those that comprised networks of ritually important places, or those that existed only during particular periods. Notably, recent work on Egyptian literary and cultic landscapes has already moved productively in this direction (Bunbury and Jeffreys 2011; Parkinson 2015; Rummel 2013).

The second influential project on mapping and language is the Abbe Museum’s *Languages and Landscapes* map journal of indigenous Wabanaki place names in New England at southeastern Canada.⁵⁰ Using Esri’s StoryMap interface,⁵¹ Maine’s Abbe Museum has created an interactive online map of significant Native American sites. *Languages and Landscapes* allows users to explore indigenous place names in four languages, and visualize how they relate to the geography and topography of the region (Figure 2.1). The majority of these place names are related to natural features or interactions with the local environment. Zooming in on each location, visitors to the website can better understand how the Native American populations in this area experienced, remembered, and navigated through the world. The project is a good example of how data that combines space and language can be presented to lay audiences with great effect. One of the goals of my own project is to make information about

⁵⁰ At the time of writing, this map can be accessed at <http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=96f758a4708b4fd1999d6b1ddba62a46>.

⁵¹ The StoryMap interface can be accessed at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/>.

Egypt's royal living-rock stelae—most of which are located off the beaten path for potential tourists to Egypt, or outside of Egypt entirely—easily accessible to the public. The Abbe Museum's map journal has provided me with a model for the public data accessibility portion of my study, and inspired me to create my own StoryMap for the data on royal living-rock stelae (see below).

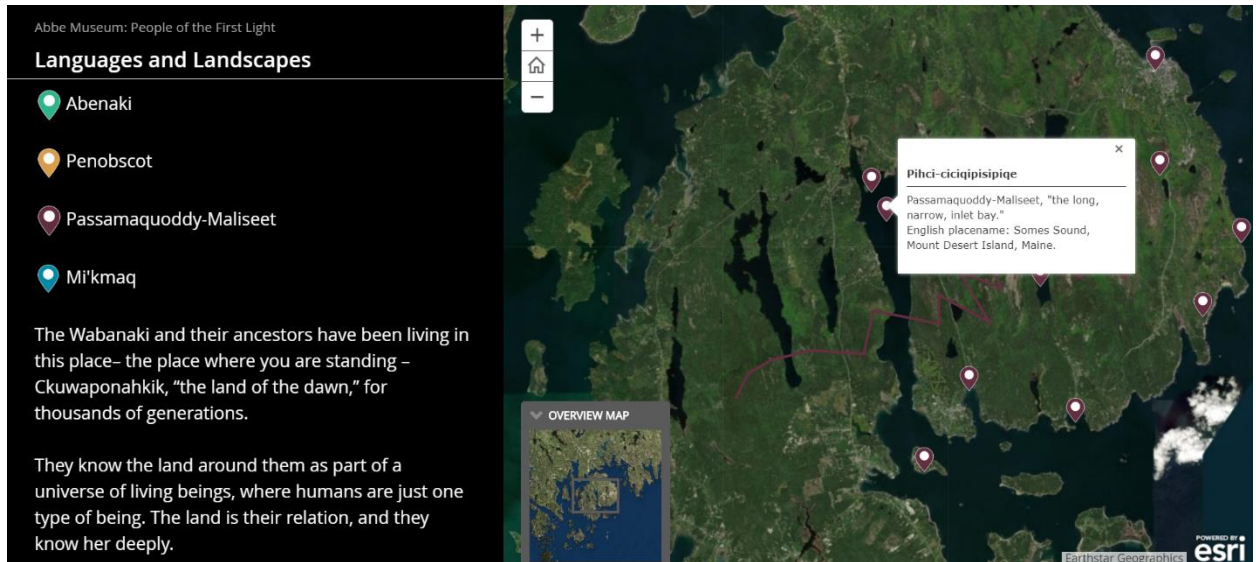


Figure 2.1 Screenshot from the *Languages and Landscapes* digital interface.

Stone, Alterity, and the Ordered World

This dissertation also echoes the work of several Andeanist scholars. Foremost of these is Carolyn Dean, whose study of the mechanics of Inka rock monuments, *A Culture of Stone* (2010), asserts that this material played an active role in Inka daily life and ritual. Rock outcrops were alive and agential in the Inka view, and Dean makes a point of trying to understand them in this way, as opposed to through a Western lens.

“Prominent rocks” in the Inka landscape became “logical landmarks to invest with historical significance,” and loci of collective memory (Dean 2010, 197, fn. 52). Dean refers to these open-air centers of ritual activity as “natural temples” (2010, 3). The stones themselves were *wak’a*—sacred—and were shaped or inscribed not only to

enhance their meanings, but also as a way of recognizing meanings that they already bore. Dean asserts that their reliefs, which comprised linear and geometric motifs rather than texts or figural images, were aimed primarily at ordering (or domesticating) the world. Accordingly these landmarks served Inka political aims, because carving the living rock was a way of demonstrating that the earth itself “supported, justified, and encouraged the extension of their empire” (Dean 2010, 103). In Chapter 6 I argue that there are Egyptian parallels for the use of rock reliefs as an explicit expression of imperial aims, ‘stamping’ the framework of empire onto natural features. Dean’s study has been especially helpful in this regard.

In the Egyptian world, as in the Inka, stone was more than just a functional building material (Bianchi 2007, 133). Certain types possessed an emblematic or ritual value that was tied to their physical properties, such as hardness and color; stone type could enhance or extend the meaning of an object (Bianchi 2007, 131). Further to this, there was a deeply rooted symbolism of stone in general, as the world was thought to have arisen from the primordial mound known as the *benben*-stone (Chapter 3). Many analogies can be made between the Inka and Egyptian relationships with the natural world, but one of the most compelling for this study concerns what Martin van de Guchte describes as the *alterity* of natural features—what makes them stand out from others around them—in which the Inka had a “pronounced interest” (1999, 149). Even stones that were uncarved could be *wak’a*; what made them so were the unusual physical characteristics they possessed in comparison with others. Landscape features that were considered worthy of Inka ritual attention often came in extraordinary sizes, shapes, and colors, and it is not difficult to understand why: since they had a distinctive look, they

were already recognizable landmarks, and cultural memories could attach more easily to them. Following van de Guchte, I place a consideration of the practical and symbolic value of alterity at the forefront of my observations about Egyptian rock outcrops. The potential appeal of alterity may be jarring at first to some Egyptologists, because the Egyptians had a keen interest in order and symmetry that, according to some scholars, bordered on obsession (Chapter 3). But a close examination of the local landscapes in this study does indeed suggest that striking outcrops were favored for living-rock stelae.⁵²

A third Andean study that has influenced my own also bears mentioning here. Zachary Chase's (2015) work on *wak'as*—not just rock outcrops, but other types as well—centers on the notion that these sacred objects have a temporal dimension to them that has been largely untapped by modern scholarship. The Inka case is quite complex, and its particulars do not have any obvious parallels in the Egyptian world, but Chase's consideration of the relationship between time and the lives of things (or places) does have some relevance to the present project. Chase questions when a *wak'a* is, or becomes, a *wak'a*. Was it always one, or is there some transitional moment? Does it always remain a *wak'a*? We can ask some related questions: when is an outcrop meaningful or ritually important, and when does it become so? How does that relate to the choice to make a stela there, and how might the stela transform it?

⁵² Beyond this, it is clear that sacred places in the Egyptian world could be viewed as singularities while also being part of pairs or other 'balancing' relationships at the same time. For example, during the New Kingdom, the sacred mountain of Gebel Barkal was paired with Karnak Temple, and even referred to by the same name (*ipt-sw*; Kendall forthcoming). Likewise, the Second Cataract site of Semna was known as 'the southern Elephantine' (Klotz and Brown 2016, 278). A similar connection probably existed between the group of sites identified as sources of the Nile (*LÄ* IV 506–507). Locating singular sites in sets allowed a broader sense of order and symmetry to be established, while preserving their individual alterity. (The Inka case is a bit different, because they appear to have been preoccupied with intermittent chaos, not order.)

Egypt's living-rock stelae have an inherent temporal dimension, because many of them are precisely dated, and all of them bear datable information of some kind (such as the name of the king in whose reign they were made). Moreover, they often cluster together in the same space, producing layers of memories from multiple events, which can be 'read' and traced in relation to each other. Yet the outcrops on which they were carved are also timeless, because bedrock is associated with 'geological time,' rather than the artificial human imagining of time (Harmanşah 2018, 490). As I argue in Chapter 3 and elsewhere (Thum and Salmas 2019), there is a close link between the medium of living rock and the deep, sacred time of origins. This link is especially palpable in the stelae carved in sacred landscapes, where language relating to the time of the creation was employed as a way to emphasize this connection and the time-honored sanctity of the place in turn. Although living-rock stelae do temporally locate the events they commemorate, the living rock seems to expand, or even supersede, the human-scale temporal dimension of their messages.

Landscape Monuments in the Ancient Near East

Closer to home, there are many studies of formal rock reliefs in the ancient Near East that have provided not only theoretical and methodological inspiration for this dissertation, but also direct connections to some of my analyses, particularly those of the stelae in the Levant. I only mention a few of these studies here, but others are referenced throughout this dissertation (see also Glatz and Plourde 2011, 43 ff. for a brief summary of rock relief traditions in this region).

First, however, I want to draw attention to a handful of references in the Near Eastern scholarly literature to the supposedly widespread and well-known use of

Egyptian royal rock reliefs for political and military-strategic purposes. Matthew Canepa has stated that the Egyptians, along with the Assyrians, “deployed rock reliefs in their imperial holdings to mark and claim space, activities that likely challenged the first Achaemenid king also to do so” (2014, 77). This statement has been made as if this Egyptian practice were common knowledge, and employed throughout their empire. However, I suspect that Canepa has drawn this conclusion solely from the monuments at Nahr el-Kalb, which is one of only two verified sites of *in-situ* Egyptian living-rock stelae in the Levant (the other being Adloun), and also the location of Neo-Assyrian stelae. Marian Feldman takes this assumption one step further, writing that the Adloun Stela is one example of “several” rock reliefs of Ramesses II outside of Nahr el-Kalb that may have provided a model for the Assyrian tradition (2004, 148). Feldman cites the *Topographical Bibliography* as her reference, but the list therein does little to back up her claim.⁵³ Ullmann, for his part, states matter-of-factly that Egyptian monumental reliefs from this period were employed as “propaganda to validate their wars” (2014, 116); although he makes this statement in a discussion about the functions of Hittite rock monuments, I prefer to assume that he was referencing the broader category of Egyptian reliefs (such as those at Luxor Temple depicting the Battle of Kadesh), as opposed to generalizing about those that were carved into living rock, for which he would have no basis. It would be convenient (or perhaps unfortunate!) for me if the above claims had

⁵³ The list (PM VII 383) includes a stela of Seti I—not Ramesses II—at Tell es-Shihab, which is now built into a house and cannot be verified as having been carved into living rock; the stela fragment now built into a mosque at Sheikh Sa’ad, which has the same contextual problems as the previous, although it does belong to Ramesses II (Wimmer 2002); and the living-rock stela at Wadi el-Ashur, whose content is only known from a drawing (Eisenlohr 1892), on the basis of which I do not believe the stela to be Egyptian at all.

already been proven, but I believe them to be at least partly unsubstantiated.⁵⁴ One of the goals of this dissertation, however, is to change that. Another is to present the Egyptian material in a way that allows it to be more responsibly utilized by scholars of the ancient Near East for their own comparanda.

While some scholars of the Near East have used what they understand about Egyptian living-rock practices to explain how other empires in the region were using this medium, I have been doing much the opposite. The creation of ‘landscape monuments’—rock reliefs and other edited natural features located in rural yet strategic locations (Glatz 2009, 136)—has a long history in this part of the world, and I am especially interested in comparative cases from the Hittite and Assyrian traditions, which I describe in due detail below. However, recent research on Neo-Babylonian and Persian rock reliefs, which I can only gloss over here for lack of space, is also relevant to the present project. There are only a handful of Neo-Babylonian royal rock reliefs, but they follow a strikingly similar pattern to those of other cultures in the Near East: namely, they were all made during the course of military campaigns, and cluster in “symbolically charged or ritually laden landscapes of peripheral geographies” (Da Riva 2015, 603). The Persian reliefs, which have already been compared with some of the earlier Egyptian material (Bestock 2017), appear to have arisen as an emulative response to the other Near Eastern monuments (Canepa 2014, 53). They served their patrons by materially associating them with previous rulers and sacred, often extraordinary natural features that possessed a certain “intrinsic holiness” as a result of their alterity and the sanctity of water, fire, air

⁵⁴ Claudia Glatz and Aimée Plourde agree, writing that “the only LBA effort to mark imperial territory in a manner comparable to the Anatolian practice comes from the gorge of Nahr el-Kalb north of Beirut” (2011, 43).

and earth in Iranian religions (Canepa 2014, 63). For their human audiences, they “manipulated” the experience of time and memory (Canepa 2010), which was easy to accomplish in an empire already chiefly mediated by, and experienced through, objects (Khatchadourian 2016).

As far as the Hittite material goes, the work of Glatz (2009; 2014; Glatz and Plourde 2011) and Ullmann (2010; 2014) has provided much food for thought about the Egyptian stelae. Hittite rock reliefs are a natural comparative case for the present study, not only because they are roughly contemporary with some of the Egyptian living-rock stelae, but also because some of the Egyptian monuments were directed towards a Hittite enemy (Loffet 2009; Chapter 5). Glatz and Plourde have shown that Hittite reliefs could be used to *negotiate* power-play—particularly in frontier zones where, in the absence of a fixed or linear border, a large area of the landscape became a medium for expression—rather than to mark spaces that were already under stable control, which is what most people would assume. In addition, they raise the issue of the ‘cost’ of commissioning such monuments away from urban centers where they could more readily be seen and consumed by the public. Egyptian living-rock stelae were often carved in boundary zones, *in addition* to being made at the boundaries themselves. And so the question arises: if these zones were indeed stable as their texts claim, why would monuments that reference Egyptian hegemony be required *within* them? At least some of the Egyptian stelae were probably also used to mediate political competition in their borderlands, even if their patrons give no hint of an ongoing struggle (such claims can often be misleading anyway; Morrison and Lycett 1994). More recently, Glatz (2014) has advocated for an analytically diverse approach to landscape monuments, which investigates them through

a combination of phenomenological, textual, and GIS-based methods, and considers them as part of wider networks of material culture and practice. These methods are paralleled to some degree in the present study.

Ullmann takes a different view of the same monuments: one that stems primarily from the Hittite understanding of the natural world, and the central role of landscape in everyday life. In the style of Carter, he uses texts from a variety of genres to get a feel for how the Hittites understood their environment, and then pairs this information with maps (in this case, using GIS) in order to investigate the location of, and Hittite relationships with, culturally important places. Ullmann observes that Hittite rock reliefs are sited mostly in hidden places, but that these were positioned on predetermined routes, such that they were only ‘hidden’ to those who did not know of their existence (2014, 102, 120). Many of them were also strategically important, located near water sources and approximately one day’s march from each other. In addition, they exhibited a certain degree of alterity, being “marked by a distinct change in the topography and/or the landscape”—even while other, more visible outcrops were left uncarved (L. Z. Ullmann 2014, 120–21). Ullmann argues that the reliefs were used as markers or waypoints for military expeditions in the Hittite borderlands, but that they had a ritual function as well as a practical one. Together with other types of landscape monument, they merged human order and imperial aims with the divinely mediated natural world (L. Z. Ullmann 2010).

Like the Hittite monuments, Assyrian rock reliefs had both political and ritual dimensions to them (Shafer 2007). I have already cited Harmanşah’s work throughout this chapter, and his research on Assyrian rock reliefs and related monuments remains my primary source of comparative material from this culture. Assyrian rock monuments,

which were usually made at the edges of their empire, were situated in “symbolically charged and politically contested places” (Harmanşah 2013, 98). These places were typically “geologically wondrous” (Harmanşah 2013, 191), following the pattern of human carving at sites of marked alterity that I have discussed above: they were the locations of sacred rocks, water sources, or related phenomena, such as caves and sinkholes, which bore a particular connection to the underworld (Harmanşah 2014a, 152, 158). For the most part, these sites were already loci of local cult practices or political contestation, and the reliefs served to appropriate them for the state (Harmanşah 2014a, 151–52). The narrative of *terra nullius* is often put forward for this material, where these monuments are understood to have occupied previously ‘barren’ places because there was no *Assyrian* material there; however, Harmanşah reminds us that no landscape is truly barren—this, he says, is what makes the act of carving akin to an act of colonization, like the founding of a city (2013, 48).

When Assyrian rulers participated in this exercise, it was partly to present themselves—to the gods and to their subjects—as the rightful rulers of an empire, whose words, images, and power were embedded in the natural world itself (Feldman 2004). Accordingly, commemorative and ritual events were performed at rock relief sites, and depictions of these events were showcased on monuments set up in the center of the empire, so as to symbolically link the peripheries back to it (Harmanşah 2014a, 149–51). Owing to the importance of bodily practices at these sites, Harmanşah refers to them as ‘event-places,’ and stresses that we must think of them from the local perspective as well as the imperial one (Harmanşah 2007; 2014a). Like the Hittite landscape monuments, they are best understood as existing in ‘public’ spaces, in the sense that they were

intentionally created out in the open, although their audiences would certainly have been limited (Kreppner 2002; Bahrani 2014, 109–10).⁵⁵ Many of the Egyptian living-rock stelae fit a similar pattern to the Assyrian reliefs, namely those that mark imperial boundaries or areas close to them with the emblems of kingship;⁵⁶ those that are attached to sacred mountains; and those at Nahr el-Kalb, to which a series of Neo-Assyrian living-rock stelae directly respond.

Methodology⁵⁷

In the above sections I outlined a four-part theoretical framework for an archaeology of inscribed natural places, to be applied to the royal living-rock stelae in this dissertation. This archaeology considers people's perceptions of the landscape where a stela was carved, their actions there, the ability of the landscape itself to shape those perceptions and actions, and the message and historical context(s) of the stela together, holistically. It strives to strike a balance between content and context; the innate characteristics of natural features and the edits made to those features; agency; experience; and reception. But how, practically speaking, does one *conduct* an

⁵⁵ We should consider for a moment whether or not the Egyptians actually distinguished between 'public' and 'private' spaces. Some of the institutions we might be tempted to consider 'public,' such as temples, were still highly restricted. In the sense that 'public' works and spaces are constructed for the benefit of the general population, some Egyptian institutions do fit the bill (granaries, local shrines), although their administration and access patterns set them apart from modern western notions of public space. All of the stelae in this dissertation were made out in the open and were thus theoretically available for anyone to see; they were usually set up in locations that maximized their display, but their use of writing still made full access to them a privilege.

⁵⁶ An interesting point of note about living rock and the assertion of imperial boundaries, raised by Bradley Parker, is that Roaf's *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* actually uses the locations of rock reliefs and stelae (found or recorded in texts) to indicate the extent of the Neo-Assyrian empire in the late 8th century BCE (2013, 128). From the perspective of the modern cartographer, then, such monuments really do function as 'permanent' boundary markers.

⁵⁷ I am grateful for the assistance and financial support of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, the American Research Center in Egypt, the Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies at the University of Arkansas, the Factum Foundation, and the Brown University Center for Digital Scholarship, without whom I could not have completed my dissertation fieldwork.

archaeology of inscribed natural places on the ground, to craft a well-rounded study of royal living-rock stelae that can help elucidate their mechanics? Here I conclude this chapter with a summary of the methods I employed to answer the questions posed above. These methods encompassed multiple scales of data collection and analysis, from investigations of the positions and contents of the stelae to broader inquiries concerning the relationships they shared with other landmarks in the Egyptian world. Together they help situate the words of the monuments in their local, regional, and conceptual contexts.⁵⁸

I. *Perceptions of the Landscape*

How were the outcrop where a stela was carved and the surrounding area perceived, both before and after the monument was made?

Cultural perceptions

- a. I laid the groundwork for answering the above question by **assessing Egyptian conceptions of living rock** as a material and a monumental medium (as well as their conceptions of the natural world in general). Taking inspiration from Ullmann's work discussed above (2010), my assessment partly comprises **a review of Egyptian terms that relate to living rock** and particular types of living-rock features. This assessment forms the bulk of Chapter 3.
- b. I read a variety of **Egyptian primary sources on a given landscape**, as well as **scholarship on relevant toponyms**, in order to consider its

⁵⁸ For each stela I endeavored to complete as many of the below steps as possible, although this was not possible in most cases due to fieldwork permissions and the fact that some of the monuments are no longer extant.

cultural significance and the collective memories embedded in it. These sources helped me develop a sense of how the place was described and understood, especially when it was treated independently of its living-rock stela(e), as in primary sources that predate the monument(s) or discuss their links to the deep past.

Phenomenological perceptions

- c. When I was able to acquire the appropriate elevation information and it befitted my questions about a particular landscape, CAST **attempted to model the isovists of an outcrop** to determine how one would see it as they approached from various points in the landscape, including the angle at which they would have to crane their head (view angle). The aim of this type of model was to assess the ‘monumentality’ of a feature in its surroundings. These models relied on the creation of a DEM, which was produced using publicly available ASTER or SRTM elevation data (only available at 30-meter resolution for the areas where my research sites were located). If this method had been successful, the result would have been a heat map showing areas from which an outcrop can be viewed, and the view angle for each area (executed with a python script in ArcGIS; Angel 2017).
- d. Since many of the stelae landscapes have changed over time, but especially so with the advent of 20th-century technologies such as dams, I looked at **archival photographs** to better understand how certain outcrops might have appeared in the ancient past.

- e. Whenever possible, **I visited a stela in person**, or the area where it was purported to have once been.⁵⁹ In reading previous publications of some of these monuments, I found that there were mistakes and misconceptions that could easily be remedied by encountering the stelae up close. Some scholars have never seen a stela they are researching, despite writing in detail about its text, and I find that counterproductive for the reasons laid out above.
- f. **I documented each of my visits with photographs and videos** that attest to the modern experience, and my own experience, with the stela and its landscape. Beyond the opportunity to correct errors, personal visits can provide a sense of the “resonance” of that place in the past (Parkinson 2015, 14).

II. *Actions in the Landscape*

What did the Egyptians and their neighbors do, or not do, at a given place before, during, and after the period when a stela was commissioned there?

- a. To assess the ‘life histories’ of these landscapes, I looked at **primary source texts** and **survey and excavation reports** from previous archaeological work.
- b. When possible, **I spoke with the archaeological team working at the site** about their view of the stela’s meaning and context within the local landscape or archaeological phase.

⁵⁹ Owing to restrictions on my fieldwork in some areas, I was not able to visit all of the stela sites. I did, however, have the opportunity to visit many more sites than those that feature in my case studies—including the sites of related monuments, such as relief cartouches and rock shrines (see section V below and the appendices). Note that I did not use this methodology for monuments related to the stelae.

- c. As these stelae are often part of networks of monuments that attest to movement through the Egyptian world, **I looked at the relationships an outcrop shared, or did not share, with expedition routes, roads, waterways.**

III. *Actions of the Landscape*

What role might the agency (Nash 2005) of the outcrop or the surrounding landscape have played in the decision to carve a stela there?

- a. For each outcrop I noted **stone type (including whether the stone type was practically or symbolically appealing), shape (including whether the shape was symbolic or unusual in the surrounding area), accessibility, and general orientation** to better understand why it may have seemed appealing to a stela's patron and intended audience.
- b. Using **my own photographs and video footage and archival photographs**, I assessed the monumentality of the outcrops where the stelae were carved.⁶⁰
- c. In one case where I was able and it befitted my questions, **I assessed the salience of an outcrop by running a Matlab script for salience** (described above; Geisler et al. 2017). The resulting maps highlighted areas of single-frame views from a drone video where a viewer's eyes are most likely to be drawn. The goal of these maps is to demonstrate how

⁶⁰ In one case (at Nauri), where I knew the monument would have been viewed by those sailing on the Nile, I was able to take video footage that mirrored this journey and the view of the stela from the water (Chapter 5).

visually attractive an outcrop, or a particular point on an outcrop, would have been to those moving past it.

IV. *Actions on the Landscape*

How is the stela designed, what (textual and pictographic) message does it contain, and what do its contents reveal about its relationship to the landscape in which it is embedded?

Materiality of the stelae

- a. I used **GPS points (entered into ArcGIS), photography (up-close, in-context, and panoramas), video (from the viewer's perspective and the monument's perspective, i.e. an 'actualized' viewshed), and, when possible, aerial imaging via drone** in order to document what the stelae look like, their placement on their outcrops, and where they are situated in the surrounding landscape.
- b. **I looked at maps of nearby routes and other significant places, including other stelae**, to assess a stela's proximity to them.
- c. When possible, **I took the orientation of a stela with a compass** to assess any potential spatial relationships between the carved surface of an outcrop and roads or other significant places in the Egyptian world.

Contents of the stelae

- a. **I reviewed epigraphic drawings and/or transcriptions of the stelae's texts and images, read linguistic studies of their texts, consulted other scholars' translations, and then read each text myself.** I crafted new

translations for any portions of a text that I used to answer my questions about the mechanics of a given monument.

- b. In one case where the monuments were especially eroded (Nahr el-Kalb), I attempted to document their contents by additional means, namely **laser scanning (conducted by the Factum Foundation) and Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI)**.
- c. **I reviewed each text for deictic or spatial language** (Stockwell 2002; Kruschwitz 2014; Harrist 2008) to determine whether the contents of a stela may have influenced or articulated its position in the landscape, or the very decision to carve it into living rock.
- d. **I read the scholarship on any prior inscriptions, successive inscriptions, and related monuments** in the area of a stela as a way of thinking about the ‘lives’ of these monuments outside of the periods when they were commissioned (Thum and Salmas 2019).

V. *Data plan and accessibility*

- a. **A list of the sites I visited on fieldwork**, including those that contain related monuments, is provided in Appendix 1. Figure 2.2 is a map of these locations.
- b. **An image and basic information for each of the royal living-rock stelae**, including those that did not feature in my case studies, is provided in Appendix 2.

- c. The photographs, videos, and aerial images taken during the course of my fieldwork will be made available via **the Brown Digital Repository (BDR)**. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26300/tmwb-j612>.
- d. When possible, I took photographs for photogrammetry (run in PhotoScan) at the site of a stela, with the goal of making these monuments available for the public to experience in three dimensions. These **photogrammetry models** will be made accessible via the BDR.
- e. I have maintained **an online newsletter** on Brown's web domain, *The Interactive Dissertation*,⁶¹ as a means of making information about the stelae, my fieldwork, and the results of my research accessible to a broad audience.
- f. A **StoryMap** detailing some of the more interesting conclusions from this research will be made available for public and scholarly consumption after the final copy of the dissertation is submitted. The link to this resource will be attached to the BDR DOI linked above.

⁶¹ This newsletter can be accessed at <http://brown.edu/go/egyptolojen>.



Figure 2.2 Map of the locations visited on fieldwork for this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3

Place, Permanence, Sanctity: Egyptian Conceptions of Living Rock

Atum, the Becoming One:
You have risen on the Tall Mound.
You have risen from the *benben*-stone in the domain
of the *benben* in Heliopolis.

– Pyramid Texts Utterance 600

The world came into being on a lump of rock, the *benben*-stone, where the creator god stood amid the primordial waters (Quirke 1992, 27).⁶² This is according to the Heliopolitan cosmogony, the best-known and perhaps the most important of several Egyptian creation stories (Lesko 1991, 91; Assmann 2001, 119–20).⁶³ The emergence of this primeval mound signified the start of the First Time, when the gods reigned upon the earth—a state to which the Egyptians continuously endeavored to return the world (Vernus 1995, 36–42, and below). Echoes of this myth permeated many areas of Egyptian life, from the design of temples, whose elevated inner sancta recalled the *benben*-stone (Assmann 2001, 38), to the ebb of the Nile inundation, which repeated the moment of creation, when fields emerged from the flood with a fresh layer of fertile silt

⁶² See the entry for “Urhügel” in the *Lexikon* (LÄ VI 873–875). The word *benben* is connected to the verb *whn*, ‘to shine.’ Attempts were rarely made to locate the original *benben*-stone, but when they were it was usually at Heliopolis, the center of the solar cult and the purported origin of this particular creation story (Quirke 2015, 143). The sanctuary at Heliopolis housed an object alleged to be the stone in a shrine called the ‘house of the *benben*’; there was another shrine of this sort at Amarna (Quirke 1992, 27). For the evolution of representations of the *benben*-stone over time and in various locations, see Kemp 2006, 137–40 and Fig. 48.

⁶³ For this and other myths, see Lesko 1991.

(Quirke 1992, 26).⁶⁴ The *benben*-stone is just one example of several mythically or symbolically infused rock features in the Egyptian world. Numerous rocky landscapes and individual outcrops were imbued with social significance: as seats of the gods, organic barriers to movement, and geographical markers.

In this chapter I discuss Egyptian conceptions of living rock, with the aim of setting the scene for the case study chapters that follow. I begin with a cursory overview of the geography and geology of Egypt, as a means of orienting the reader. Next, I outline the Egyptian understanding of the natural world, which I alluded to in Chapter 2. Specifically, I touch on how the world was ordered and imagined, and the designation of certain ‘sacred landscapes.’ I then assess Egyptian relationships with living rock in both the ideational and practical sense, with a discussion of rock-cut temples and a focus on four Egyptian terms that are associated with this medium. I devote the final portion of this chapter to exploring the position of living rock in the broader Egyptian worldview, by treating its relationships to time and place.

Geography and Geology

The land where the ancient Egyptians lived was known to them as *Kmt* (the ‘Black Land’), the area of cultivable soil in the Nile Valley and Delta (Figure 3.1). *Kmt* was conceived in opposition to *dšrt* (the ‘Red Land’), the uninhabitable desert that surrounded it on both sides.⁶⁵ The traditional boundaries of the Egyptian homeland were the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Sinai to the east, the First Cataract in the south, and

⁶⁴ It is possible that the origin of the myth lies in repeated observation of the inundation (Leclant 1969, 228).

⁶⁵ Note that although the desert was considered to be harsh terrain and the opposite of *Kmt*, people did still move through it and use it for various purposes, and thus had to ‘inhabit’ it from time to time (Köpp 2013; Gates 2005; Adams 2007; Sperveslage and Eichmann 2012). The idea of the desert as a landscape entirely devoid of human activity is a fallacy.

the Libyan desert to the west. Even when the margins of Egypt's political authority changed, as they did periodically from the start of the second millennium BCE, *Kmt* remained as it was: new territories consolidated under Egyptian influence served as 'buffer zones' to protect it, rather than as extensions of it (S. T. Smith 2003, 61).⁶⁶ Egypt lay at the center of the world, but its main enemy-neighbors (Nubians, Asiatics, and Libyans) coupled with it to form a functioning whole. The existence of foreigners was therefore essential to an operational universe (O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 15–16).

⁶⁶ One example of the distinction between Egyptian-influenced (or occupied) territory and *Kmt* itself appears in the *Tale of Sinuhe*, which tells the story of an Egyptian official 'gone rogue' in the Levant (Parkinson 1997). Towards the end of the tale the king forgives Sinuhe for fleeing *Kmt*, and welcomes him back so that he may be buried at home in accordance with Egyptian custom: "You will never die in a foreign land, and Asiatics will not bury you!" A reference to the importance of dying in one's own town also occurs in the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (Simpson 2003, 50). For a detailed discussion on the Egyptian concept of border (*t3š*), see Chapter 6.



Figure 3.1 Map of *Kmt* and surrounding areas.

The geography of *Kmt* was conceptualized as a series of complementary pairs of landscape features (Leclant 1969, 222). Chief among these were the Nile Valley (Upper Egypt) and Delta (Lower Egypt), the Two Lands (*t3wy*) over which the king claimed

dominion.⁶⁷ Others included the two banks of the Nile (*idbwy*) and the eastern and western mountains on either side of it (*bꜣḥw* and *mꜣnw*, respectively). This balanced organization also extended outside of *Kmt*, for example to the presence of a “god’s land” (*tꜣ-nṯr*, see below) on both its northern and southern ends (Hornung 1992, 76; Kilani 2015, 75–77). Over all, the geographical arrangement of the Egyptian world was governed by the motions of the Nile and the sun, whose axes made *Kmt*’s inhabitants carefully attuned to the cardinal points (Leclant 1969, 219-220). During times of imperial expansion, Egypt’s enemy neighbors were also divided into two broad groups of ‘northerners’ and ‘southerners’—an opposing pair so common in royal texts that these categories became literary *topoi* (Loprieno 1988).⁶⁸ Egypt’s official forays into the Levant and Nubia led to many royal monuments being made outside of *Kmt*, including numerous living-rock stelae. Each of those sites has its own geology that will be discussed in the corresponding case studies; for the purposes of this chapter, I now offer a brief overview of the geology of Egypt itself.

The territory that was once encompassed by *Kmt* comprises three main geological layers.⁶⁹ The lowermost is the Precambrian ‘basement complex,’ made of igneous and metamorphic rock. Outcrops of granite (*mꜣt*) from this layer form the First Nile Cataract (as well as the other five cataracts, which punctuate the river from Aswan down into northern Sudan). Above this is a layer of Cretaceous period sandstone (*inr n rwḏt* or *inr*

⁶⁷ This is reflected in the common royal epithet *nb nswt tꜣwy*, ‘Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands.’

⁶⁸ The theme of ‘northerners and southerners’ appears several times in the texts of the stelae in this dissertation.

⁶⁹ For geological terminology and chronology, see Table 1 in Harrell and Storemyr 2009. For more detailed commentary on the makeup and evolution of Egypt’s geology, see Said 1990. For an extensive overview of the Egyptian use of building stones, including quarry methods, see Klemm and Klemm 2008. For the geology of the Nile River, see Said 1981.

ḥd nfr n rwdt and variations thereof), which makes up the bedrock of the southern portion of Upper Egypt and the ‘walls’ of the Nile Valley in these areas. The uppermost layer consists of Cenozoic limestone (*inr ḥd*), with the youngest deposits located along the Mediterranean coast at the mouth of the Nile Delta (Harrell and Storemyr 2009, 8–9). Organized extraction endeavors at more than one hundred quarry sites exploited each of these stone types for monumental building projects (Klemm and Klemm 2001; Arnold 2003; Harrell and Storemyr 2009; Harris 1961, 69ff).

The stelae in this dissertation were carved into outcrops of all three of the aforementioned layers, as well as others present outside of *Kmt*. If one zooms out to see all of these outcrops on a map at the same time (Figure 3.2), it becomes apparent that there is no overall pattern in their geological composition. We may therefore conclude that, when taken as a group, stone type was not a deciding factor in the decision to carve a royal stela into living rock. However, this does not mean that geology *on a local scale* was excluded from consideration. Indeed, the composition of the stone at some stela sites may have given rise to the cultural importance of these places, and hence to the inception of a stela. This explanation may be applied to the monumental white quartz outcrop at Kurgus, as this stone type carried deep symbolism for the local population invoked in the texts that were inscribed there (Chapter 6).



Figure 3.2 Map showing the stone types of the stelae in this dissertation.

Likewise the Wadi Hammamat, which was the only known source of metagreywacke—‘*bekhen* stone,’ coveted by elites for its grey-green color, which was symbolic of health and regeneration (Harrell and Storemyr 2009, 30)—was imagined as the seat of the god Min (see Chapter 4). Over time, the whole region around the Wadi Hammamat quarries came to be known as the Mountain of *Bekhen*, a testimony to just how much geology had shaped the cultural significance of this stela site (González-Tablas Nieto 2014, 36). At other locations the geology of an outcrop would have rendered it conspicuous in the surrounding landscape, and this may have made it an attractive place to carve; see, for example, the striking sandstone butte where the Nauri Decree was inscribed (Chapter 5). But regardless of stone type, the choice of living rock as a medium was a meaningful one. To understand why, we must first consider how the Egyptians viewed and engaged with the world around them.

Egyptian Views of the World

Egyptian interest in the natural world, according to Jan Assmann, was “narrow”: it primarily concerned things that were important to humans and for human activities. More specifically, their interest was religious (Assmann 2001, 54–55). As I noted in Chapter 2, aspects of the natural world were deified, personified, and interpreted through the ideology of the state religion. The Egyptians did not distinguish between the cosmos and what we would call ‘nature’; they viewed the two together “as an active network of beneficent, malevolent, and ambivalent forces in which deities were at work” (Assmann 2001, 68). There is little evidence to suggest a desire to obtain any “real” or “precise” information about these features and phenomena; rather, people seem to have been content, generally speaking, with the mythological explanations the Egyptian system had

constructed around such themes (Assmann 2001, 54–55). The same goes for what lay “beyond the realm of experience”—such as the netherworld and the farthest reaches of the cosmos, which could not be observed in the first place (Assmann 2001, 55). Things and places outside the practice of ordinary life were not supposed to be known by anyone apart from the divine king: they were *šštꜣw*, ‘mysteries’ (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 1–2).⁷⁰

In his volume on the history of ancient Egypt and Chaldea, 19th-century Egyptologist Gaston Maspero presented a visual reconstruction of the Egyptian universe (Figure 3.3). This illustration shows the surface of the earth lying at the bottom of what looks like a basin, with tall mountains rising on all sides. The peaks of these mountains touch the bottom of a celestial canopy with dangling stars, which is anchored at the ‘corners’ of the world. In the foreground, the cross-section of the mountains and the basin between them forms the hieroglyph for ‘mountain’ (*dw*, ) , while that of the canopy forms the hieroglyph for ‘sky’ (*pt*, ). Although this reconstruction is too literal on the whole, it does embody several fundamental Egyptian ideas about the form of the earth and cosmos.⁷¹

⁷⁰ A distinction was made between things that were *šštꜣ*, ‘secret’/‘mysterious,’ and those that were merely *štꜣ*, ‘difficult.’ Earthly places, especially foreign ones, were classed as the latter and were therefore open to exploration, whereas the former comprised what was essentially forbidden knowledge (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 2).

⁷¹ Note, however, that these ideas are known to us from texts that were written and read by elites. They may not have been known to those who did not have access to these sources.

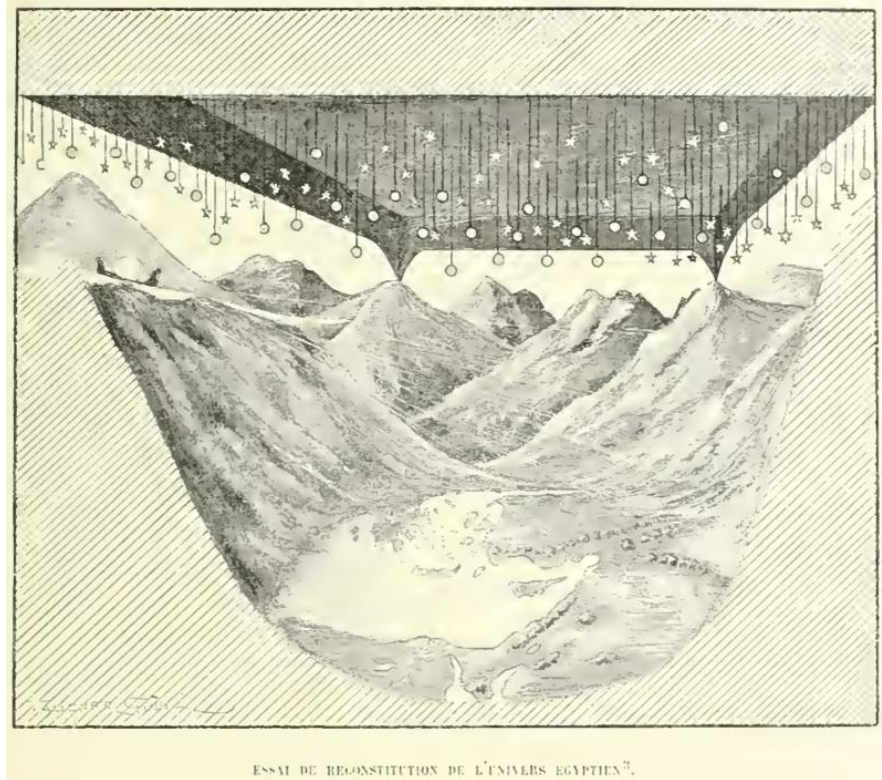


Figure 3.3 Maspero's illustration of the Egyptian universe (1895, 17).

The Egyptian world comprised three main elements: the earth, where humans lived; the skies above it; and the underworld (O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 20–21). The underworld was a “mirror image” of what one could see ‘in real life,’ with parallel landscape features, such as a Nile River and deserts (Hornung 1992, 76). In the realm of the living, the sky and earth (*t3*) were both conceptualized as flat surfaces,⁷² with projections (sometimes described as pillars or scepters) stretching down from the corners of the former to meet the latter.⁷³ In addition to this, the earth and sky were personified as the gods Geb and Nut, respectively, separated by air or atmosphere in the form of the god

⁷² The hieroglyph for land (*t3*, ) like the one for sky, shows a flat feature. Note that *t3* is translated variously in English as ‘earth,’ ‘land,’ and ‘world.’ It possessed the same duality as the word ‘earth’ does in English, meaning both the whole planet and its tangible surface (Allen 2003, 23).

⁷³ These were also a complementary pair, in the manner described above. They were identified as female and male, respectively.

Shu (Allen 2003, 23–24). Nut gave birth to the sun each day; it then passed over the earth by boat through a watery expanse (on the left side of Maspero’s illustration, the sun disk is shown inside its boat, ready to set in the west). The Duat—a space below the earth that touched the eastern sky⁷⁴—received the sun and stars during the night. The interfaces between the sky and the Duat, where the celestial bodies came to rest before being reborn at dawn, were called by the term *ꜥḥt*, usually translated as ‘horizon’ (𓏏). The universe as a whole existed in a “bubble” within an infinite ocean, personified as the god Nun. Nun was both the primeval water in which the *benben*-stone arose, and the source of all the world’s water, including the inundation (Allen 2003, 25–27). This ocean was a place of nothingness—no person, thing, or force of nature existed there, and its extent was not known (Hornung 1971, 168).

In the text that accompanies his illustration, Maspero described the world as being surrounded by a “chain of uninterrupted mountains” (1895, 17). The Egyptians held that the earth was indeed bounded by such features, but only on the east and west (the *bꜣḥw* and *mꜣnw*). These mountains marked the progress of the sun’s daily journey between the horizons, where it was greeted each day by the ‘eastern *bas*,’ who appeared in the form of baboons, and the ‘western *bas*,’ who appeared as jackals. These were “otherworldly creatures” who took on their mammalian forms when the sun approached the areas they inhabited, at the intersections of the sky and the netherworld (Assmann 2001, 62–63). The idea that the earth itself possessed rocky boundaries was probably influenced by the presence of cliffs and hills at the desert’s edge on either side of the Nile Valley. These landscape features were called by the term *ḥꜣst*, written with sign N25 (𓏏), which

⁷⁴ The Duat was also sometimes depicted as the interior of Nut’s body. See Allen 2003, 26–27.

depicts a desert ridge fronted by a telltale strip of green (O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 11). *h3st* was not only the term for 'upland' or 'desert'—the “polar opposite” of *t3*⁷⁵—but also the general word for 'foreign land' (Baines 2013, 46). Much has been written about the dichotomy of 'order and chaos' symbolized in the separation of Egypt from the surrounding deserts; the latter were exploited for their resources, but the Egyptians did not consider them to be “fully within their territory”—instead, they indicated the starting point of foreign terrain (Baines 2013, 38–39). The visual symbolism of the hieroglyph for *h3st* speaks to the “alien nature” of non-Egyptian people and places (O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 11), and further explains the dual use of the term:

[The manner in which *h3st* was written] indicates that foreigners lay beyond the ideal environmental and human order, i.e. the Egyptian Nile Valley and its inhabitants, and hence were on the frontier between order and chaos; and they lay behind the mountains defining the horizon, in a region wherein the sun god prepared himself for his renewal and re-ascent every day...⁷⁶

In the Egyptian view, there was an ideological hierarchy of Egyptians – Foreigners – Natural World, which placed non-Egyptian people “on the frontier between human (the Egyptians) and non-human” (O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 11).⁷⁷ People from outside *Kmt* were extensions of their disorderly environments, and could thus be equally unpredictable and troublesome (Kilani 2015, 75). Egypt was the universe in microcosm (Baines 2013, 38); what its people confronted daily in the visible world—a fertile, habitable space bounded by rock and the enigmatic desert—was allegorized in the broader shape of things, wherein another series of mountains partitioned and protected the ordered world

⁷⁵ Baines writes that “all foreign countries could be seen as uplands, in contrast with the flat Egyptian floodplain and delta, which provide the primary association of *t3*” (2013, 46).

⁷⁶ O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 11.

⁷⁷ The status of foreigners was due to their dispossession of “the normative human characteristics of orderly society—i.e. Egyptian ethnicity, language and culture” (O'Connor and Quirke 2003, 17).

from the unknown and the unpredictable. As for what lay between those mountains, structure and symmetry reigned.

Ordering, Orientating, and Imagining the World

Spatial awareness is especially pertinent to this study, and there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that people speaking and writing the Egyptian language were finely attuned to the spatial realities around them (Posener 1965). Everyday experiences revolved around the axes of the Nile and the sun, and the lexicon generally reflects this. The Egyptian view the world was oriented from the south, where the Nile originates; thus the term for the southernmost point of the earth during the New Kingdom was *wpt-t3*, the ‘Horns of the Earth’ (Chapter 6), and the northernmost *phwy*, the ‘Hindparts of the Earth’ (Posener 1965, 70–71). The word for east (*i3bt*) was also the word for ‘left,’ while west (*imnt*) was also ‘right.’⁷⁸ The Egyptian language contained many common words with directional nuances, such as two different verbs to designate whether a person sailed upstream (*hnti*) or downstream (*hdi*), and many prepositions that betray a hyperawareness of space around the human body (Werning 2012; Werning 2014). Deictic language is a common feature in the written evidence from Egypt (Loprieno 1995, 68–71; Matthias Müller 2012; Gregersen 2003; Grossman, Polis, and Winand 2012), as are phrases concerning the cardinal points and the geographical ‘realms’ of various deities.⁷⁹ In Egyptian, designating a place with a toponym constituted an “active process of transformation”: naming a location ushered it into a “historical, social, or religious field of experience” and “charged” it with meaning (Rummel 2016, 44).

⁷⁸ For a study on the Egyptian referential frame for left and right, see Müller 2012.

⁷⁹ For example, the distinction between Amun of Karnak and Amun of Gebel Barkal (Kendall et al. 2017). See also the term *t3-ntr* (Cooper 2011; Saleh 1981), discussed briefly below.

This spatial mindfulness is also apparent in the construction and orientation of Egyptian architecture, such as the consistent placement of tombs in the west and the arrangement of temples on precise, ritually important axes (primarily east-west; Magli 2013; Gundlach 2001). Because the landscapes where architectural forms were sited did not always allow for strict adherence to such considerations, a practical distinction was made between ‘geographical’ and ‘cultic’ orientation. Decorative elements could serve as visual cues to help ‘re-orient’ the space:

...for example, on both sides of a passageway there are depictions of the king entering to perform the cult; on the cultic (though not geographical) northern side he wears the Red Crown, which represents Lower Egypt and thus the north, while on the cultic southern side he wears the White Crown of Upper Egypt. The symbols of the two crown goddesses, Wadjet for the north and Nekhbet for the south, can also be used. Thus, it is insignificant from a cultic standpoint whether the geographical cardinal directions are taken into account. Even tombs and other funerary cult structures, which according to the common conception belong on the western side of the Nile, could be placed on the eastern side, given appropriate defining decoration.⁸⁰

Beyond temples and tombs, David O’Connor has argued for an underlying cosmological structure of Egyptian cities and towns, which is perhaps most obvious at Amarna, the solar city with a north-south axis. Both Amarna and Thebes, he contends, were cosmograms (O’Connor 2005); each of these New Kingdom royal cities was designed primarily as an *axis mundi*, meant to “mimic the form of the cosmos...and thus compel major aspects of city life to replicate the essential processes of the cosmos” (O’Connor 1989, 82).⁸¹ However, Barry Kemp—answering the question, “Were cities built as images?”—holds the opposite opinion. He points to “the almost total subordination of cosmic ideas to pragmatic considerations in city creation”: the city did, after all, have to be lived in (Kemp 2000, 345). At least in the case of Amarna, the primary function of the

⁸⁰ Gundlach 2001.

⁸¹ The idea of an *axis mundi* seems to require a plan-view understanding of the world, which seems rather archaeological—and something we should keep in mind (Laurel Bestock, *pers. comm.*).

city was clearly religious; from the outset its axes and the layout of its foundations were crafted as such, even though it housed people as well as a god (see Chapter 4).

A propensity for spatial observation and organization is also evident in Egyptian plans and maps (Shore 1987). These depict both real and imagined geographies, which are equally valid venues for human inquiry:

A map is more than just a pictorial record of a landscape, or a mirror of reality. It can portray visible (and invisible) features of the world or equally fantasy-lands and products of one's imagination...Maps do not even have to be spatially to scale, or on a hard, printed medium such as paper, to be an effective tool.⁸²

One example that concerns a terrestrial landscape and is relevant to the present study is the world's oldest surviving geological map (Fig. 3.4), present on the 20th Dynasty Turin Papyrus. This map illustrates the Eastern Desert mining region of the Wadi Hammamat (Harrell and Brown 1992a; Harrell and Brown 1992b), which is also the site of several royal living-rock stelae (Chapter 4). Although not a 'true' map by modern standards of scale and detail—O'Connor prefers to call it a "quasi map" (2014, 47–48)⁸³—its colors appear to reflect geological reality, and its scale is more consistent than one would expect, even implementing an apparent key for distance (O'Connor 2014, 64–65; Harrell and Brown 1992b, 95).

⁸² Robinson 2003, 145.

⁸³ O'Connor laments the absence of maps that approach modern standards, but also notes that they may yet exist: "the examples of Egyptian maps and plans closest to modern concepts have come from settlement sites rather than temples or tombs, and settlement site archaeology is rarely carried out in Egypt."



Figure 3.4 Map of the Wadi Hammamat from the Turin Papyrus (left side) (Harrell and Brown 1992b, 6, Fig. 3).

In addition to maps of real geographies, there are many examples where Egyptians drew or described places that they could never actually observe. It is important to consider accounts of otherworldly places as seriously as we do those of real ones; ignoring the former “would destroy the unity of the universe portrayed by the Egyptians” (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 20). A great number of these accounts concern the undertaking of a journey, and therefore necessitate some consideration of spatial relationships (P. Robinson 2003, 145).⁸⁴ Among the imagined landscapes drawn and described by the Egyptians are that of the Amduat, whose geography was transposed onto the architecture of early 18th Dynasty royal tombs (Richter 2008); the “mythologized cartographies” of *The Book of the Fayum* (O’Connor 2014, 67–76), *The Book of Two*

⁸⁴ Movement is a common theme in elite material culture because it demonstrates one’s knowledge of the world and the importance of their position to a broad swath of communities. It can “appropriate the landscape to a person’s experience” and “create a domain of experience” (Baines 2013, 250).

Ways (P. Robinson 2003), and other netherworld books;⁸⁵ and the fictional topography described in the literary work known as *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* (Simpson 2003, 91–103). In the case of *Horus and Seth* it is important to acknowledge that ‘landscape texts’ that describe real and imagined geographies are also a type of map, as Robinson notes in the above quotation (2003, 145). Remarkably, a recent study by Judith Bunbury and David Jeffreys (2011) shows that although the topography of Egypt has changed a great deal during the last five thousand years, some of the landscapes discussed in both historical and fictional texts can be correlated with real places in the Egyptian world.⁸⁶ Some literary texts, such as the *Tale of Sinuhe* (Simpson 2003, 54–66; Parkinson 1997), partner imagined landscapes with real ones, perhaps as a means of ‘grounding’ the story in reality (Parkinson 2015, 3). However, Richard Parkinson asserts that an absence of references to real places would probably not have prevented anyone from understanding or appreciating a story (2015, 13).⁸⁷ This point may be understood as a testament to the Egyptians’ heightened spatial mindfulness: imagined landscapes could be just as coherent to them as the ones they experienced in real life.

Topographical lists (e.g. Simons 1937; Kitchen 1965) may also be considered a form of map, and testify to close observation, or at least knowledge, of the world outside of Egypt. The earliest of these appears on the stela of the general Mentuhotep, who

⁸⁵ Baines notes that underworld books from the late New Kingdom (such as *The Book of Gates* and *The Book of Caverns*) are particularly concerned with transposing topography onto cosmological ideas, at least more so than the ritual texts that preceded them (2013, 146).

⁸⁶ However, O’Connor and Quirke caution that certain maps should not be read with the immediate assumption of a connection to archaeological or historical reality: these include those that were made for temple and ritual/funerary contexts, and contexts concerning elite power relations (2003, 14–15).

⁸⁷ Still, Parkinson encourages modern scholars to explore the places referenced in Egyptian texts whenever possible: “Direct experience of a physical environment can bring us a little closer to the experiential reality of even a distant, fictional poem” (2015, 16).

served under Senwosret I, but the record then falls silent—as far as we know—until the New Kingdom (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 6). The composition of such lists was probably part of a longer tradition of amassing geographical knowledge that originated during the Old Kingdom (Spalinger 2005, 124, 137).⁸⁸ The “publication” of topographical lists on royal monuments, which began during the reign of Tuthmosis III (Spalinger 2005, 124), testified to the “world dominion” given to the king by the gods (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 6).⁸⁹ The lists are generally considered to be accurate accounts of real people and places, although some may have been augmented “to fill up space” and create balance between lists (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 8). Some of the lists may represent actual itineraries for campaigns into foreign lands, as was the custom in Mesopotamia (Spalinger 2005, 124), rather than mere records of the range of places visited or conquered (Redford 1982; Cline and Stannish 2011; O’Connor 1987, 99, fn. 2). Such an argument has been made, for example, for the so-called Aegean List on a statue base of Tuthmosis III at Kom el-Hetan (Fig. 3.5), which contains toponyms from the Greek world shown in the form of bound captives (Cline and Stannish 2011). However, others have noted that the order of places in some lists makes it difficult to accept this ‘progression approach,’ and have also pointed to the absence of explicit links between them and the campaigns they apparently describe (Mizrachy 2012, 26–27).

⁸⁸ Note also that execration figurines inscribed with the names of foreign rulers and their territories are known from the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, when they were used to curse the enemies of the king (Ritner 2008, 136–42).

⁸⁹ These lists were “structured to express totality by emphasizing the cardinal points” (O’Connor 2014, 58).



Figure 3.5 The left side of the Aegean List (Cline and Stannish 2011, Fig. 3).

Anthony Spalinger writes that, without linking foreign place names (and perhaps the names of their rulers) to actual routes, navigating Asia in particular would have been extremely difficult for the Egyptian military (2005, 137). As it happens, the lists of Asiatic places betray detailed knowledge not only of the names of cities and towns—divided, even, into smaller areas within the broader region—but also of notable natural features, such as rivers and mountains, which would have aided both navigation and strategy (Spalinger 2005, 268–69). It is entirely possible that annotated lists with distances and other details, as well as pictorial maps, were also made for this purpose (O’Connor 2014, 55–56). Scribal education had long emphasized the rote memorization of place names and terms for natural features (among other things; Gardiner 1947), but by the Ramesside period—when four living-rock stelae were carved on the Lebanese coast (Chapter 5)—this was no longer sufficient. At that point, given the reach of the Egyptian empire, scribes needed to possess intimate knowledge of topography and routes (Wente 1990, 99). A master scribe writing a satirical letter to his pupil during the first

half of the 19th Dynasty shows that it was far better to *know* these places than to simply know *about* them:

I will recount to you another remote city which is called Byblos. What is it like? And its goddess? Once again, [you] have not set foot in it.⁹⁰

Knowledge about the world outside of Egypt thus appears to have been a source of pride as much as a source of useful information.⁹¹

According to John Baines, encyclopedic lists were actually the basis for streamlined artistic motifs concerning the natural world (Baines 2013, 144). Baines argues that places in Egyptian art were generally depicted in reference to their practical or economic value (2013, 45).⁹² I do not believe that Egyptian interest in the natural world was only concerned with what was ‘useful’ to humans, but rather with what was *important* to them, especially in terms of ‘religion,’ following Assmann (2001, 54–55; see the below section on sacred landscapes). In elite visual culture, there was a prevailing emphasis on curating and compartmentalizing the “unstable and potentially threatening” environment (Baines 2013, 23). Images of unaltered landscapes are therefore rare, and “domesticated space” was a common artistic theme (J. E. Richards 1999, 87–88). The ‘settings’ of reliefs and paintings were usually conveyed using emblematic forms that served as a backdrop for a given action, but which did not specify a particular location

⁹⁰ Excerpt from P. Anastasi I, translated by Edward Wente (1990, 107). For more on this papyrus, see Fischer-Elfert 1986.

⁹¹ This seems good time to mention that archaeologists are sometimes guilty of ‘investigating’ places whose names we know without grounding those places in archaeological reality, if there is in fact corroborating evidence for their existence. This is a particular problem in the archaeology of the Levant, where biblical locations are often sought.

⁹² Baines cites the example of the absence of trees in Old Kingdom agricultural scenes: they did not matter for the agriculture, so they were left out of the picture.

(Baines 2013, 44–46).⁹³ Representing places was a way of asserting power over them; the addition of any unique details that would more precisely identify a location would consequently signify “a less absolute order” to the spaces that Egypt controlled, which was undesirable to say the least (Baines 2013, 45, 60).⁹⁴ Elite visual decorum is probably partly to blame for the apparent absence of topographically accurate maps, in the modern sense, from Egypt (O’Connor 2014, 49).

Sacred Landscapes

The agency and divinity of natural features has already been mentioned, and while this was a prevailing aspect of Egyptian ideology, certain landscapes were bestowed with sanctity in a way that goes beyond their ordinary view of the world. ‘Sacred landscapes’ (or ‘ritual landscapes’; or, perhaps, ‘ideational landscapes’⁹⁵) are those “where the sacred comes to the fore” (Dorman and Bryan 2007, xiv).⁹⁶ This designation is not meant to imply that the sacred and secular aspects of life are separate from each other, but instead to suggest that they are interwoven at all times, with these

⁹³ A notable exception to this is the series of reliefs depicting the foreign land of Punt at Deir el-Bahari: “a highly unusual rendering of a landscape, schematically organized into horizontal registers but incredibly rich in detail” (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 19). Also note that, regardless of any additional details about a given setting, nearly all scenes in Egyptian art were bounded by the emblems of the sky and earth, which evoked cosmic order (Baines 2013, 44). Baines writes that places were often given more individual “value” in *texts* than in *images* (2013, 135); see, for example, texts ‘In Praise of the City,’ which are often highly descriptive (Ragazzoli 2008).

⁹⁴ Compare this with Assyrian elite images of natural features, which can today lead to precise identification of the locations they depict (Winter 1999). Compare also Urartian descriptions of the built environment: in Urartian texts, building on empty ‘wilderness’ is presented as the king’s heroic act of subduing wild forces—but in *images* of such acts, the king is absent, making way for “the manifestation of the gods and their blessing” in a hallowed space (A. T. Smith 2000, 131–32).

⁹⁵ ‘Ideational landscapes,’ as defined by A. Bernard Knapp and Wendy Ashmore, are not exactly the same as sacred or symbolic landscapes. Ideational landscapes take an “insider’s perspective” as well as an ideological—that is, grand, overarching, state-sponsored—one (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 12–13).

⁹⁶ Dorman and Bryan are quoting here from Gabriel Cooney (1994), “Sacred and Secular Neolithic Landscapes in Ireland.” In *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, edited by David L. Carmichael, Jane Hubert, Brian Reeves, and Audhild Schanche, 32–43. *One World Archaeology* 23. London: Routledge, 33.

places serving as points of particular salience for the sacred (ibid.). Egyptology, which has only recently begun grappling with this term, has tended to emphasize the presence and use of cultic monuments in such spaces:

Generally, [the term] designates a landscape, the physiognomy and function of which are determined by religiously motivated activities, a phenomenon that becomes manifest especially in accumulations of cult sites. With regard to ancient Egypt, particular stress may be laid upon the linking up of monuments into a kind of ritual network.⁹⁷

Thebes and Abydos have been readily sorted into this category, due to their long history as centers of ritual life for the Egyptian state (M. Ullmann 2007; Rummel 2013; J. E. Richards 1999); Amarna was no doubt another such landscape, albeit only briefly (O'Connor 2005; see Chapter 4). But networks of monuments do not constitute the only kind of sacred landscape in the Egyptian world. As in the above discussion, cosmic geographies, particularly those that appear in religious texts, also constitute a form of sacred landscapes (O'Connor 2014, 70–71). There are still others that rely primarily on the imagined or the natural world, and two of these are especially relevant to this study.

The first type of sacred landscape that pertains to this dissertation is somewhat abstract: it is the “god’s land” (*t3-nṯr*). This term refers generally to “liminal easterly lands” (Fig. 3.6)—domains of theophany, “which witness the cosmic appearance of the sun-god” (Cooper 2011, 61). *t3-nṯr* both encompasses foreign lands (*ḥ3swt*) and designates the spaces beyond them, right up to the edge of the world (Cooper 2011, 52; Kilani 2015, 76).⁹⁸ The elusive land of Punt falls into this category, as does Byblos; these homes of “friendly foreigners” are the “archetypes” of the ideal *t3-nṯr* (Kilani 2015, 75). Other regions called by this term include the Wadi Hammamat and Sinai, places “at the

⁹⁷ Ullmann 2007, 3.

⁹⁸ Note that “the distinction between ‘foreign lands’ and ‘God’s Land’ does not seem to be marked by any defined border” (Kilani 2015, 75).

margin of Egyptian knowledge” that might require “superhuman effort” to reach, but which were ultimately accessible (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 1). Over all, the “god’s lands” were places of physical and metaphysical wonders (*biꜥw*): rare and precious goods that were unavailable in Egypt, but also immaterial miracles, including those that are described in the royal stelae carved into the Wadi Hammamat (ibid.; see Chapter 4).

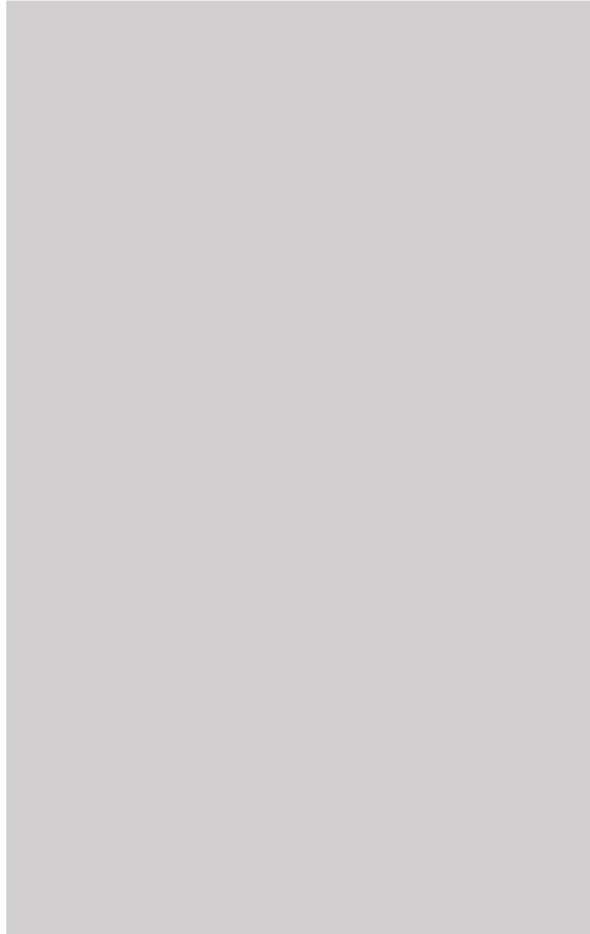


Figure 3.6 Julien Cooper’s map of the places called by the term *tꜥ-nꜥr* (2011, 55, Fig. 1).

The second type of sacred landscape that relates to this dissertation—in fact, that is intrinsically linked to it—are what Knapp and Ashmore refer to as ‘conceptualized landscapes’: those whose meanings are “invested in natural features rather than in material culture or monuments” (1999, 11). The mythicization of natural topographies and phenomena is an “impressive product” of Egyptian landscape perception (Rummel

2016, 43); monuments, including living-rock stelae, *are* present at these sites, but they derive significance from the landscape, not the other way around. These places possess an integral sacred character, or what I call ‘cultic capital’ (Chapter 4). Water features may constitute such landscapes—for example, the Nile in the region of Aswan, which was one of the mythical sources of the inundation (Yoyotte 2011b).⁹⁹ Gebel Silsila, the narrowest point of the Nile, was undoubtedly another of these landscapes—it was referred to as ‘the Pure Water’ (*pꜣ mw wꜣb*) and is the site of numerous monuments containing hymns to the river (Chapter 4). Water was a “primordial element,” existing before the emergence of the *benben*-stone, and remained a regenerative but also mysterious element in its role as the annual flood and the unknowable Nun (Bickel 2005).

This group of landscapes also encompasses locations where deities were thought to inhabit or embody particular rock formations. One of these was mentioned briefly in Chapter 2: the western mountains of the Thebaid, which were viewed as an incarnation of the embrace of the goddess Hathor-Imentet (Rummel 2016; Bruyère 1929). This goddess and others who were ‘seen’ in the rock face (e.g. Isis, Meretseger, and Weret-Hekau; Rummel 2013, 209) were depicted as emerging from the mountain or seated inside of it (Figure 3.7). Its summit, which was referred to as “Mistress of the West,” was never even depicted as an ordinary peak (J. E. Richards 1999, 88). Another such rock feature that constitutes a conceptualized landscape is the Gebel Barkal, a sandstone plateau near the Fourth Cataract. Much like the Theban goddesses, Amun-Re was shown inhabiting this sacred Nubian mountain in both royal reliefs and graffiti (Figures 3.8 and 3.9; similar

⁹⁹ There were thought to be multiple contributing sources of the Nile at several sacred sites. These were usually marked by whirlpools or Nilometers, and were places where offerings were cast into the Nile in order to encourage and strengthen the inundation. They included the First Cataract between Aswan and Elephantine, Gebel Silsila, Babylon, and Roda (Yoyotte 2011; *LÄ* IV 506–507).

imagery appears at Abu Simbel, see Török 2009, 249). The spindly pinnacle of the Gebel Barkal (Figure 3.10) was imagined variously as the form of Osiris or the royal uraeus, further underscoring the place of this feature in the mythology of Egyptian kingship; it was decorated with an enigmatic inscription of Taharqa, which was apparently also gilded (Kendall 2004; Kendall et al. 2017).¹⁰⁰ Three conceptualized landscapes similar to these are treated in greater detail in Chapter 4.



Figure 3.7 Hathor emerging from the Theban mountain (Feucht 1985, Taf. XVIII).

¹⁰⁰ On our visit to Gebel Barkal, my colleague Katie Simon pointed out that due to the shape and orientation of the pinnacle, during daylight hours it is never fully in the shade. Thus it would have shone throughout the day when oblique light reflected off of the gold, presumably drawing much attention.



Figure 3.8 Relief depicting Amun inside the Gebel Barkal, from the south wall of the Temple of Mut at Gebel Barkal.



Figure 3.9 Post-pharaonic graffito from the exterior of the Gebel Barkal, depicting Amun inside the mountain.



Figure 3.10 The pinnacle of the Gebel Barkal.

Both of the above-mentioned rock features were imbued with sanctity because they were thought to be seats of the gods. But the relationship between rock features and numina was not developed solely at sites of this type. Indeed, the connection between living rock and the realm of the sacred requires further exploration if we are to understand why Egypt's kings commissioned certain monuments in this medium.

Conceptions of Living Rock

There was no word for 'living rock' in Egyptian.¹⁰¹ Yet in the study of Egyptian temples, a fundamental distinction between those that are freestanding and those that are

¹⁰¹ There is, however, a descriptive phrase that appears to refer to this medium: *m š(z)d m qw*, "dug into the mountain," attested on the Gebel Barkal Stela (*Urk* IV 1232, li. 11-12, in reference to the lost stela of

rock-cut is widely acknowledged, despite there being no terminological division between the two. Egyptian *speioi* and *hemispeioi* share a series of traits that may aid in our understanding of the use of living-rock stelae.¹⁰² First, in general, Egyptian rock-cut temples were constructed at places that already had some cultic significance, including—intriguingly—prehistoric cave shrines (Gundlach 2001; Williams 2006). The first ‘true’ rock-cut temple was the Twelfth Dynasty sanctuary dedicated to Hathor at the mining site of Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai (followed by further such temples only during the New Kingdom, centuries later),¹⁰³ but its architectural precedent might be the Early Dynastic Satet Temple at Elephantine (LÄ II 165). That temple—possibly the oldest in Egypt—originated as a shrine formed by three large boulders (Kemp 2006, 116–21; Fig. 3.11). Kemp writes that it “must have looked like a small cave,” and that “the qualities of enclosed spaces that emulate cavities within the earth—the term chthonic is quite useful here—exert a powerful attraction in the search for sacred presences” (2006, 117–18). As a natural sanctuary whose “position in the mountain extends into the world beyond, into the dark and mysterious realm of the hereafter,” a cave shrine would have been an ideal place for a union of the sacred and the profane (LÄ II 1231–1232).¹⁰⁴

Tuthmosis III on the Euphrates) and at the rock-cut temple of Seti I at Kanais (KRI I 67, li. 2-3). See my discussion of the Euphrates stelae in Chapter 6 for more on this phrase.

¹⁰² *Speioi* are single hollow structures that create sacred space in the negative; *hemispeioi* contain additional freestanding elements at the front of the temple (Arnold 2003, 200). The traits I describe here are common to both.

¹⁰³ See Arnold 2003, 201 for a list of major rock-cut temples.

¹⁰⁴ See Wildung’s entry for “Höhlenheiligtum” (cave sanctuary) in the *Lexikon* (LÄ II 1231–1232). According to Wildung, caves (*stz*, *krrt*, *tpht*) are mentioned frequently in Egyptian place names (e.g. *r3-stz-w* [Rosetau] and *r3-n-krrt* [Deir Rifeh]) and texts such as the Book of Caverns, where the underworld is divided into caves (this is a modern title based on the subject matter; no original title exists). The inner sanctuaries of temples are also sometimes referred to as the “Cave of God N” (*Wb* V 366.1). Cave shrines were frequently replaced by rock-cut shrines and temples, including those at Deir el-Bahari, Gebel Silsila, Kasr Ibrim, and several in Nubia (see Williams 2006 for Nubian examples). Bruce Beyer Williams emphasizes the significance of rock shelters and caves in *Nubian* religious practice, which then influenced Egyptian practice, especially at Abu Simbel and Gebel Barkal (2006; 2007). “Rock-shelter and cave-

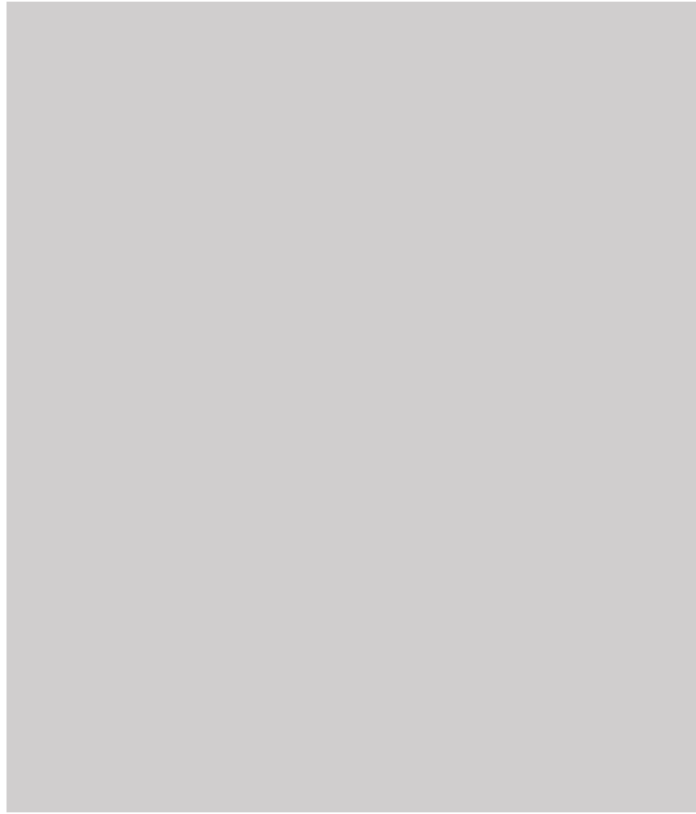


Figure 3.11 The Eleventh Dynasty phase of the Satet Temple at Elephantine, with the original rock structure present (Bussmann 2013, 22, Fig. 2).

Second, many rock-cut temples were located at bottlenecks of the Nile, which, according to Dieter Wildung, evoke the mythical sources of the river and its inundation (LÄ II 165).¹⁰⁵ The location of the Elephantine temple may have been chosen due to the sound of rushing water from the cataract at the time of the flood (Quirke 2015, 65–66; recall that the floodwaters were derived from Nun, the sacred primeval water).¹⁰⁶ The

shrines were not just prehistoric or early phenomena; they occur in all phases of ancient Nubia. Other ritualized subterranean spaces, which exist from various periods, can be considered part of a long-lasting tradition of using caves for worship” (Williams 2006, 151).

¹⁰⁵ Dieter Arnold notes that this is especially the case for the rock-cut temples in Nubia (2003, 201). Note, however, that Irmgard Hein has proposed a practical purpose behind the arrangement of Ramesses II’s rock temples in Nubia, which is that they were made at convenient stopping points for journeys on the Nile (but her analysis is not meant to discount others’ cultic and mythological explanations for their locations).

¹⁰⁶ For more on the evolution of this temple from rock shrine to monumental building, see Dreyer 1986, Bussmann 2013, and Kaiser et al. 1977. Bussmann contends that the location of the Satet Temple is a consequence of the role of the First Cataract as a frontier between Egypt and Nubia.

connection between rocks and water is widely cited with regard to the ancient Near East (e.g. Harmanşah 2014b; Harmanşah 2007; Kreppner 2002), and may indeed hold true for Egypt. For example, Gebel Silsila was a favorite site for royal rock monuments (see above and Chapter 4), and the inundation in Upper Egypt was thought to have flowed from a “Cave of Hapy” in the region of the First Cataract (Yoyotte 2011b).¹⁰⁷

Beyond their common association with early cave shrines and water sources, rock-cut temples share architectural similarities including Hathor capitals and statue groups with the arrangement god-king-god, because they were dedicated mainly to the goddess Hathor and deified versions of the reigning king. Their Hathoric association is possibly due to a connection between these temples and the myth of the ‘Wandering Goddess,’¹⁰⁸ wherein Hathor was (reluctantly) pacified and brought back to Egypt from foreign lands, thus restoring the world’s order; she would settle down in each of these temples on her journey home (*LÄ* II 166).¹⁰⁹ The rock-cut temples also share temporal and spatial patterns: they flourished during the high 18th Dynasty and Ramesside period, and were concentrated in areas outside of the Nile Valley, including Nubia, Sinai, and the Eastern Desert (*LÄ* II 164–165). As I noted in Chapter 1, both of these patterns are held in common with the stelae in this dissertation (Figure 3.12). The temples’ geographical distribution is despite the fact that ‘appropriate’ cliffs also exist inside the Nile Valley, and the fact that freestanding temples were sometimes erected in rocky landscapes

¹⁰⁷ A parallel location, the “House of Hapy,” somewhere upstream of modern Cairo, served the same function for Lower Egypt.

¹⁰⁸ See Darnell 1995.

¹⁰⁹ Wildung holds that images of Hathor coming out of a mountainside, such as in Figure 3.7, helped to create the tradition of temples emanating from the mountainsides (*LÄ* II 166). In a similar vein, Arnold writes that “A noticeable number of rock temples are dedicated to Hathor, possibly connected with the concept of the Hathor cow emerging from the desert hills” (2003, 201). Sydney Aufrère (2001, 160) suggests that *mining* and ritual processions where minerals were brought back to the Nile Valley were also expressions of this myth.

(Gundlach 2001). The overarching conclusion to be drawn from all of this, writes Wildung, is that the choice to make a rock-cut temple cannot have been based solely on geography (for example, as a means of stamping Egyptian cult presence onto frontier landscapes in order to intimidate foreigners). The form and locations of rock-cut temples must therefore have had a *religious* function: the expression of a “specific divinity” of the reigning king, and the expansion of the accessible space of the earth into the realm of the otherworldly (*LÄ* II 165). By building into the cliffs on either side of the Nile, the deified king could traverse the morning and evening horizons (the *b3ḥw* and *m3nw*) that were so central to Egyptian religion. The floruit of rock-cut temples was also the period when the dogma of the divinity of the reigning king was in full swing (*ibid.*).



Figure 3.12 Map showing the locations and periods of major rock-cut temples and royal living-rock stelae.

All Egyptian temples were intended to serve as microcosms of the universe, with images and architectural forms that represented the flora, fauna, minerals, and cosmological features of the natural world. In the universe of the temple, the god “found himself in an environment which he reckoned to be that of Creation” (Aufrère 2001, 161). Freestanding temples had floors that inclined as one moved towards the inner sanctum, as a means of channeling the *benben*-stone (Quirke 2015, 81ff). Several, including the Old Kingdom temple at Medamud, were even built on top of faux ‘primeval mounds’ that evoked bedrock (Robichon and Varille 1940; Kemp 2006, 131–33 and Fig. 46). These mounds symbolized the renewal and re-creation occurring perpetually in their sanctuaries—they were foundational structures that rock-cut temples could not have, but also, arguably, did not need. As Rolf Gundlach explains, the difference between freestanding and rock-cut temples goes well beyond the former’s use of ‘artificial architecture’ (Chapter 1) *vis-à-vis* the latter’s creation of sacred space in nature:

If one begins with the concept that the wall of living rock is a boundary between this world and the otherworld, then cutting a temple into the rock extends the realm of this world into the otherworld: the temple is thereby enclosed by the otherworld and in a certain sense belongs to it. In this way the Egyptians gave shape to a part of the otherworld and granted it a kind of order.¹¹⁰

The rock wall into which a temple was carved was an interface between this world and the world of the divine, which connected it to the natural world in a manner far different from freestanding temples. The entire mountain or rock face was an inseparable part of its sacred space—they were linked, bodily (Gundlach 2001).

The choice of living rock as a medium for certain Egyptian temples was not functional, but *conceptual* (Gundlach 2001). What, then, of living-rock stelae? In the

¹¹⁰ Gundlach 2001.

following chapters, I demonstrate that the situation was much the same. At this point, however, it is necessary to review some key terms in the Egyptian language that are related to living rock—all of which appear in, or are used to describe, one or more of the stelae.

inr, ‘stone’¹¹¹

The word *inr*, ‘stone,’ refers to the material at large (Harris 1961, 19–20).¹¹² *inr* can denote loose stone, such as the pebbles that blocked up the canal at Sehel Island, whose removal features in the canal inscriptions there (Gasse and Rondot 2007).¹¹³ It also frequently refers to cut, quarried, or removable stone, such as the kind used in building projects.¹¹⁴ For example, when Ramesses II boasted about constructing his great pylons in the Kadesh Poem, he specified that they were made of stone (*bḥn ʿzy m inr*).¹¹⁵

Graffiti from the reign of Pepi II at the quarry site of Hatnub use *inr* to designate raw material that has been broken away from a larger outcrop, but which has not yet been used:

iw sh3.n[=i] bit inr 300 n hrw 1

I brought down 300 alabaster stones within a single day.¹¹⁶

iw wh3.n[=i] bit inr 2000

I quarried 2000 alabaster stones.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ For general terms for stone and other minerals, see Harris 1961, 19–31. For the connection between certain types of stone and numina, see Bianchi 2007.

¹¹² This is a much more specific term than *ʿzt*, ‘mineral,’ which encompasses metals and semi-precious stones, as well as other materials on occasion (Harris 1961, 21, 24–25). The Egyptians made a clear distinction between these materials and those that were of animal or vegetal origin (*šmw*; *Wb* IV 481.1; Harris 1961, 24).

¹¹³ In Late Egyptian, the word *ʿr*, which may have a foreign origin, was used for ‘small stone’ or ‘pebble’ (Harris 1961, 26).

¹¹⁴ For the role of stone in temple building and ritual, see Aufrère 2001 and Aufrère 1997. Aufrère views every temple, not just those hewn in living rock, as a substitute for the mineral world.

¹¹⁵ *KRI* II §104.

¹¹⁶ Hatnub graffito 6, K5, reign of Pepi II (Anthes 1928, 21–22, Taf. 11).

¹¹⁷ Hatnub graffito 7, K6-7, reign of Pepi II (Anthes 1928, 22–23, Taf. 12).

These inscriptions demonstrate that *inr* can be deployed in conjunction with a second term in order to specify a given type of stone; the expression *inr rwd*, ‘hard stone,’ is another common compound (Harris 1961, 20–21). This holds in literature as well as in colloquial language, as is apparent from the mention of granite (*inr n m3t*) in the *Dialogue of a Man and His Ba*, where it is used as an archetype of enduring material. Allen 2011, 146. *inr* can also be paired with a source location as another method of description (ibid.):

hrp.n-i k3t m hwt-ntr hws.tw m inr n 3nw

I led work in the temple, constructed from the stone of Tura.¹¹⁸

Tura was famed for its high-quality limestone, which is probably why it is mentioned by name in the above example.

Although it was regularly chipped away with purported ease by boastful quarrymen, the written record suggests that, in general, *inr* carried a certain sense of strength and stasis:

kbh m3 mw s3k m3 inr

Cool like water, compacted like stone.¹¹⁹

[*iw*] *3h3=s m3 t3 dns=s m3 inr 3hm=s m3 bw it h3pi m hrw w3d*

May it (= a poison) stand still as the earth, be immobile like stone, be extinguished like a place that Hapy floods in the days of fertility.¹²⁰

However, stone architecture was not viewed as entirely indestructible. Threat formulae from the Old Kingdom warn visitors to officials’ tombs not to destroy their physical

¹¹⁸ Stele of Mentuhotep (Cairo CG 20539), II.b.6 (Simpson 1991, 332–333 and Taf. 45a).

¹¹⁹ Snake-magic spell, pBM EA 9997, li. 6.12 (verse 5), 19th Dynasty (Fischer-Elfert 2005, 54ff, 140ff, no. 24).

¹²⁰ Formula to expel poison, Deir el-Medina, oDeM 1603, li 6-7, 20th Dynasty (*TLA*, Magische Ostraka Neues Reich, <http://aaew2.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/GetTextDetails?u=guest&f=0&l=0&tc=22784&db=0>).

structure, and hence the memory of their occupants, by specifying that the *inr* must be left intact:

ir rmt -nb iit.fy inr m is -pn n hr-ntr

As for any person who will remove stone from this tomb of the necropolis...¹²¹

ir s -nb iit=f sšnt.fy inr dbt m [is] -pn

As for any man who will take possession of (or) destroy the stone (or) brick in this tomb...¹²²

The grouping of *inr* with brick (*dbt*) in the above example further emphasizes its designation as a building material (Harris 1961, 19).

inr can also mean ‘block,’ ‘slab,’ or ‘piece’ when used to qualify a specific type of stone, or in the context of building and quarrying activities. J.R. Harris noted that the expression *m inr w*—‘of one block’—can be used to refer to boulders and other monoliths that have broken away from a larger outcrop on their own, besides those that have been divorced from it with human help (1961, 20). A cuboid block is referred to as *ifd*, from *fdw*, ‘four’ (Harris 1961, 25).

dw, ‘mountain’

Stone itself was *inr*, but the outcrop where it originated was *dw*, a ‘mountain,’ regardless of size or shape. This relationship is exemplified in portions of the Later Proclamation in the Amarna boundary stelae (Chapter 4):

p3 wd rsy nty hr p3 dw izbty n zht-itn ntf p3 wd n zht-itn p3y

The southern stela which is on the eastern mountain of Akhetaten, it is the stela of Akhetaten...¹²³

¹²¹ Mastaba of Ankhwedja, Giza, 6th Dynasty (PM III 167; Junker 1947, 134–135, Fig. 62, Pl. XXIIIb; Hölzl 1999, 110–13).

¹²² Mastaba of Tjetu I, Giza (G 2001, portico façade), 6th Dynasty (Simpson 1980, 4:8, 13, XV, XVI–XVII, Figs. 12–15).

¹²³ Stela A, li. 8 (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 101).

bn wsf=i pzy ʿnh irw=i n p3 itn pzy=i it r hḥ dṯ hrw iw=f mn hr wḏ n inr m p3 t3š rsy i3bty
 I will not break this oath that I have made for the Aten, my father, forever and ever. It is now established on a stela of stone on the southeastern boundary...¹²⁴

The same word was used for the quarries and mines where the raw material was acquired:

*iw rḏi.n ḥm[=i] pr ʾry-pʿt imy-r niwt t3ty imy-r k3t mḥ-ib n nsw imnmḥ3t ḥnʿ mšʿ n s ḏbʿ
 m sp3wt šmʿwt šmʿw ḥntyw w3bwt r int -n[=i] inr šps ʿ3t wʿbt imyt ḏw -pn*

My majesty sent the member of the *pat*, overseer of the city, vizier, overseer of works and royal confidant Amenemhat, together with an expedition of ten thousand men from the southern provinces of Upper Egypt, and from the south of Wabut, to bring me a special stone, a pure gem that is in this mountain...¹²⁵

Accordingly, *ḏw* appears at the head of several toponyms for such locations, such as *ḏw n bḥn*/Wadi Hammamat and *ḏw n mfk3t*/Wadi Maghara (GDG VI 119-120), both of which derive their names from the principal stone mined there. Even in a mythological context, *inr* was seen as the tangible constituent of *ḏw*. This is apparent in funerary texts describing the deceased's interaction with the Theban mountain:

sd=k ḏw wb3=k inr

May you fracture the mountain and expose the stone.¹²⁶

Some of the mountainous landscapes that were imbued with cultural significance were given names centered on the word *ḏw*, such as *ḏw n nb-ʿnh*, the Mountain of the Lord of Life, which referred to the southern part of the Theban necropolis (or perhaps to Medinet Habu in particular; GDG VI 120; Wb V 542.8). In a stela of Ramesses II from Heliopolis, the king discusses his discovery of a series of quarries that were destined to produce his royal image in stone, and were therefore described as being ‘perfect mountains’:

tw=i šm.kw r 3bw gmḥ.n=i hr m ḏw-nfr dī=i smdt=f -n=tn

¹²⁴ Stela A, li. 16-17 (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 102).

¹²⁵ Couyat and Montet 1912, 98–100 and Pl. 37 (No. 192).

¹²⁶ Rummel 2016: 51 (after Assmann 2005, 291.20-22).

I went to Elephantine and saw my face in the perfect mountain, and I gave its mining area to you.¹²⁷

Deities who were connected to such landscapes were also frequently related to rock features in word and image, a process that further mythologized certain mountains. Hathor, who was worshipped in the rock-cut temple at Serabit el-Khadim, was referred to as ‘Mistress of the Turquoise’ that was obtained there (Valbelle and Bonnet 1996). Anubis was commonly bestowed with the epithet *tpy ḏw=f*, ‘He Who is On His Mountain,’ because of the connection between the western mountains and the necropolis; it has been suggested that the supposedly jackal-shaped profile of the cliffs at Abydos (Wegner 2007, 22 and Fig. 8) may have inspired the local toponym *ḏw inpw*, Mountain of Anubis (Wegner 2007, 18, 185).

Whereas *inr* was detached or detachable despite its strength, *ḏw* carried a sense of storied mass and immobility, much like the word ‘mountain’ does in English today; we might say, for example, that someone who works hard is capable of moving mountains. In his volume on Egyptian figurative expressions, Hermann Grapow (1924) outlined both of these allegorical uses of *ḏw*. First, the word signified great size: grain heaps were piled up “like mountains,” and monuments were made as big (ꜥ) as them. Builders bragged that they had created “mountains of stone,” and ocean waves were said to be as high as mountains (Grapow 1924, 52). Heavy or oppressive things were also compared to *ḏww*, such as stress or subjugation (Grapow 1924, 53), as in English: the ‘weight’ on our shoulders. Ramesses III fell upon his enemies like a mountain of granite (ibid.).

¹²⁷ Stela of Ramses II from Heliopolis, Year 8-9 (Cairo CG 34504) (KRI II 360-36, li. 18ff). Note the similarities between this passage and the appearance of the goddesses in the Theban mountain (above).

Second, *ḏw* connoted permanence and stability, as is evident from the following fantastic contents of a magical ostrakon from Deir el-Medina:

inr ḥr mdṯ ḏw ḥr swtwt

The stone is talking, the mountains are walking about!¹²⁸

Kings were sometimes granted the epithet ‘Mountain of Gold’ (Grapow 1924, 57), and the royal name and titulary were desired to endure like mountains (*Urk* IV 391). Temple walls were equated with *ḏww*, because they were imagined to be everlasting; Medinet Habu was meant to persist like the mountains of the eastern and western horizons (Grapow 1924, 52). In the context of private cult, some individuals professed that their god was “like a mountain” for them (Grapow 1924, 52–53). In the tomb of Ahmose at Amarna, the deceased declared his hope to remain in his place of rest until the mountains get up and move (de G. Davies 1905b, 32). In reference to the previous statement, Grapow specifically recognized the *ḏww* at Amarna—which really comprise cliffs and an escarpment—as those whose permanence and duration were of particular gravity (1924, 52). Here and at other sites of living-rock stelae, these monuments may have been seen to acquire the fortitude of the *ḏww* where they were carved because of their physical connection to this medium. The stela remained *in situ* as the mountain did (see Chapter 4).

ḏw wḥb, ‘pure mountain’

The term *ḏw wḥb* (*Wb* V 542.15-17), which is usually translated as ‘pure mountain,’ ‘holy mountain,’ or ‘primeval mountain,’ applies to a specific category of

¹²⁸ Magical ostrakon, Deir el-Medina, oDeM 1066, li. 3 (Posener 1952).

ḏww in the Egyptian world.¹²⁹ Numerous attempts have been made to assign the place-name *pꜣ ḏw wꜥb* (with the definite article, but not usually written with the city determinative, sign O49) to a single location. However, the name *ḏw wꜥb* is clearly attested for a number of different mountains in Nubia (Schiaparelli 1916, 43). Moreover, it has also been linked in one way or another to the region of the Wadi Hammamat, the area between Elephantine and Edfu, and gold-mining areas in the Eastern Desert (Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz 1968, 203–5). *ḏw wꜥb*, then, is not actually a toponym; from the available evidence compiled by Andrea-Christina Thiem (2000, 23–24, fn. 78), it appears that this was instead a general term that originated in the New Kingdom to describe a mountain where a god lives. The divine epithet *ḥry-ib pꜣ ḏw wꜥb*, ‘Who Resides (at present) in the Pure Mountain,’ stresses this, and connects such places to the concept of itinerant ‘guest cult’ (Budde 2011, 3). A *ḏw wꜥb* could be a divine seat in a local landscape or a regional one, which helps to explain why several of them are known. Amun-Re (in his *criocephalic* form) and the Cataract Triad (Khnum, Satet, and Anukis) are the deities chiefly associated with *ḏww wꜥbw*.

Despite its apparently abstract character, this term seems to have been grounded by its specific application to one or two new locations in each reign during which it is attested. Notably, all of these sites were the locations of rock-cut temples or chapels:

¹²⁹ This term is discussed at length by Thiem. Her overview appears in an extensive footnote in the first of her volumes on the speos at Gebel Silsila (Thiem 2000, 23–24, fn. 78), and should be consulted for textual references to *ḏww wꜥbw* at each of the sites called by this name. Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section comes from Thiem’s detailed work on the subject.

King	<i>ḏw(w) wꜥb(w)</i>
Tuthmosis III	Gebel Barkal
Horemhab	Abu Hoda ¹³⁰
Seti I	Gebel Barkal/Gebel Dosha ¹³¹
Ramesses II	Abu Simbel
Taharqa	Gebel Barkal

Table 3.1 Specific sites designated as *ḏww wꜥbw*, by reign, according to Thiem.

As Thiem observes, these locations share two features. First, they were all politically important for the assertion of Egyptian royal power in Nubia (indeed, all were located in Nubia; Fig. 3.13). And second, each is connected in the textual record with oracular or miraculous events. In the (freestanding) Gebel Barkal Stela of Tuthmosis III, for example, we learn that:

nty m pꜣ ḏw wꜥb ḏdw rf nswt-tꜣwy m rmt n rh.tw=f iḥ rh=tn tꜣ biꜣyt nt [...] ḥft-ḥr n tꜣwy-tmw...iit sbꜣ m iy n rs=sn n ḥpr mūt

It was at the Pure Mountain, which was called the Thrones of the Two Lands among the people when it was not yet known...A star fell, falling to their south. The like had not happened before.¹³²

Gebel Barkal was the birthplace of Amun-Re (Kendall 2008, 124). Here and at other *ḏww wꜥbw* where this god resided, the textual record alludes to the king's appearance on the throne, with particular emphasis on the great antiquity of his charge:

...ntr ꜥꜣ n sp tpy pꜣwty kmꜣ nfrw=k rdī.n=f n=k tꜣ nb ḥrp n=f sw rhw ntt pr.n=k ḥnt=f

¹³⁰ As well as, apparently, the nearby area of Gebel el-Shams. Gebel el-Shams is the location of private living-rock stelae from the reigns of Ay and Horemhab, which were dedicated to a variety of deities including Ptah, Horus, Satet, Anukis, and the deified Senwosret III (Török 2009, 242).

¹³¹ Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz disagree with Thiem about Gebel Dosha's identification as a *ḏw wꜥb*. They write that the reference to a *ḏw wꜥb* in the stela of Amenemipet, the Viceroy of Kush under Seti I, likely refers to Abu Hoda or Abu Simbel (Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz 1968, 204). It is perhaps relevant that the rock chapel at Gebel Dosha dates to the reign of Tuthmosis III, *not* Seti I (W. V. Davies 2016). W. Vivian Davies, for his part, disagrees and states plainly that Gebel Dosha was a *ḏw wꜥb*; he also classes the stela of Amenemipet as 'royal' (2016, 18).

¹³² After de Buck 1948, 56–63, li. 33–34.

...the great god of the primordial time, the primeval god who created your beauty. He has given you every land. Lead it for him who knows that you have come forth from him.¹³³

Here it is helpful to recall the connection between rock-cut temples and the deified king.

Some scholars' preferred translations of the term as 'primeval mountain' further underscore its association with coronation rites and apotheosis (e.g. Adrom 2004, 13; see also the case study on the stelae from the Wadi Hammamat in Chapter 4).

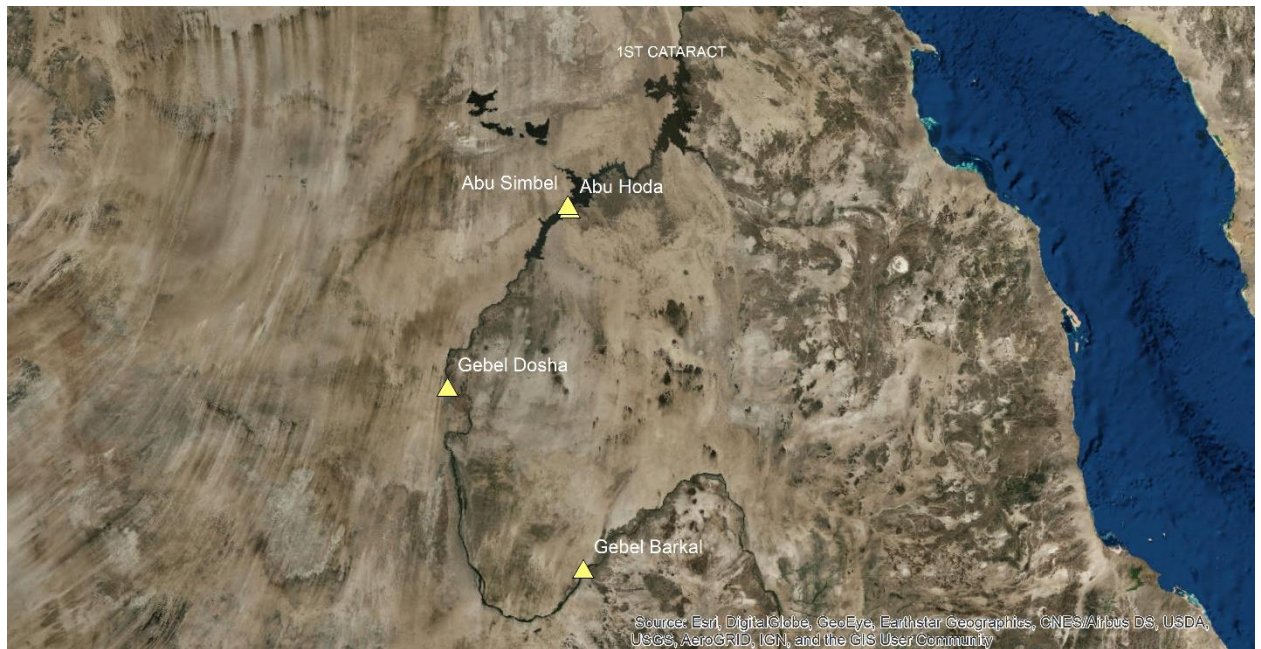


Figure 3.13 Map of *ḡw wʿb* sites in Table 3.1.

Thiem writes that *ḡw wʿb* carried a sense of the mountain as a “sacred, untouched, virgin” place—hence the adjective *wʿb*, ‘pure,’ in this compound. By designating what was pure, *wʿb* therefore also meant “forbidden to the profane”; it presumably served the same function in the terms *iw wʿb* (Bigeḥ Island), *pʒ mw wʿb* (Gebel Silsila), and others (Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz 1968, 203–5). In their publication of the small rock-cut temple at Abu Simbel, Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt and Charles Kuentz assert

¹³³ After de Buck 1948, 56–63, li. 43.

that the extraordinary height of the mountains where Ramesses II carved his temples is what made Abu Simbel a *ḏw wꜥb*, a “high place” raised up from the human realm of the profane, “inviolable and inviolate because it is reserved for the gods and their worship” (Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz 1968, 203).

(*t3*) *dhnt*, ‘cultically activated rock face’

The New Kingdom term *dhnt* (or *t3 dhnt* with the definite article) was long thought to mean ‘summit’ or ‘peak.’¹³⁴ Yet a recent study by Faried Adrom (2004) demonstrates that this is no longer an acceptable translation. Consider, for example, the following passage from a Late Ramesside Letter:

tw=i ḏd n imn-rꜥ nswt-ntr n nsty t3wy hnty-ipt-swt p3 rꜥ-hrw3hnty m wbn=f m htp=f n itmwnb-t3[wy] iwnw [n] hnmw iri hnm n3 psḏty ʿ3y špsy r-nty htp m t3 thnt [sic] hft-hr-nb=s ʿ.w.s. iri -n=w ḏww r-nty tw=k m-hnw=w...

I pray daily to Amun-Re, king of the gods, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, the first of Karnak, Pa-Ra-Horakhty, when he rises and when he sets; to Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan; to Khnum, who has united the great and august Ennead who rest in the rock face of Khefethernebes (the goddess of the western mountains at Thebes), LPH, who created for them the mountains in which they are situated...¹³⁵

According to Adrom, there are two related meanings of this term (2004, 15–16):

- (1) A rock face with no cultic connotation. Places referred to as *t3 dhnt* in this sense are steep walls of living rock that usually enjoy some visual prominence in the wider landscape (not exclusively ‘summits’ by any means—but one can see how this term used to be conflated with ‘summit’ or ‘peak’).
- (2) A rock face with the same physical characteristics as above, but which serves as an “area of appearance and transition” on a mountain with primeval associations—especially a *ḏw wꜥb*. These living-rock walls are “cultically

¹³⁴ The term is attested during the New Kingdom and Late Period (*Wb* V 478).

¹³⁵ LRL 15, Thebes, pPhillipps li. 2-6, reign of Ramesses XI (Wente 1990, 196 ff).

active,” in that, like the *ḏww wꜥbw* in Table 3.1, each of them is located at a site with an official, state-run cult establishment (private cult is not implicated in the designation *tꜣ dhnt*). A site designated as *tꜣ dhnt* in this sense “functions as a manifestation on the primeval mountain (*ḏw wꜥb*) in the supraregional, royal renewal event (*Erneuerungsgeschehen*) and as a transitory boundary zone between the hidden (primeval) and the visible (earthly) planes confined to a concrete space” (Adrom 2004, 16).

That second definition should recall Gundlach’s and Wildung’s understandings of the rock faces that allowed rock-cut temples to penetrate from the earthly realm into the world of the sacred. A *dhnt*’s close association with, or location on, a *ḏw wꜥb* also connected it with rebirth, regeneration, and the myth of the Wandering Goddess (among other legends; Adrom 2004, 13–15). Adrom writes that the *ḏww wꜥbw* were thought of as primeval seats of Amun-Re, Min, and Hathor as ‘Masters of Nubia,’ and that the solar god was believed to appear in their *dhnwt* in conjunction with the rites of the New Year and Sed festivals—each a “tremendous cosmic process of renewal,” a creation event set on a primordial stage (Adrom 2004, 13–14).

Of the stela sites in this dissertation, three are positively identified as the location of *dhnwt*: Gebel Barkal, the Wadi Hammamat, and Amarna. The first two sites were long known to be seats of gods, and Amarna—as the new home of the Aten—was, arguably, as well. Of the group of sixteen boundary stelae at Amarna, only those that mark the original northern and southern borders of the site were referred to as being located on its *dhnwt* (Adrom 2004, 5–6); this alludes to the establishment of sacred space in the setting of formal boundaries (Chapter 4). It is possible that further stela sites bear some

association with this term, but that this was not expressed in the extant texts. For example, the Brooklyn Magical Papyrus references a group of thirty rock features in Nubia with the designation *t3 dhnt* (potentially related to the Wandering Goddess myth), but their locations—if grounded in an earthly geography and not just a mythological one—cannot be identified (Adrom 2004, 11). At Gebel Silsila (Chapter 4) the divine resided in the water rather than in the rock, so this may explain why the term is not attested there.

Time, Place, and Permanence¹³⁶

The preceding review of Egyptian conceptions of living rock, with its many connections to the primordial, has naturally brought us to the topic of time. In this section I summarize the Egyptian view of time, and then integrate that view with the foregoing assessment of rock landscapes in a discussion designed to guide the case studies in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. At the outset, it is important to note that the Egyptians never made a clear distinction between time and space: there was no word for the latter, strictly speaking, and terms relating to the former were often written with spatial determinatives. Words that describe space in the Western sense are sometimes determined by the solar disk (☉), which in turn relates them to time (Leclant 1969, 218–19). Baines writes that the Egyptian landscape inevitably “had a straightforward temporal dimension” because of the inundation, which repeatedly returned it to the flooded state of creation (2013, 24). Time and space in Egypt therefore seem to have been more integrated, in some fashion, than in the Western sense.

¹³⁶ Parts of this section, especially those that summarize the Egyptian concept of time, derive from a recent publication I have co-written with Anne-Claire Salmas on the temporal dimension of living-rock stelae (Thum and Salmas 2019).

Assmann, who has recently conducted a thorough Egyptological study of time (2003a), divides the temporal experience in ancient Egypt in two: a *temps petit*, encompassing the daily experience of time on the earthly level, and a *temps grand*, a cosmological (and divine) time. This is similar to the way Lin Foxhall (1995) divides ancient Greek time into ‘human time’ and ‘monumental time’: the former is “local,” concerning events that are usually remembered for only a few generations and within families or small communities. Monumental time is permanent, the only domain through which posterity is accessible. In the Egyptian world as in the Greek, important events that occurred in the *temps petit* could be enshrined in the *temps grand* through the mechanisms of memory, monumentality, and performance.

There are two terms relating to cosmological time in the Egyptian language: *dt* and *nhh*—two parts that form a whole, which reflect the Egyptian tendency to split concepts into pairs in order to achieve balance (Assmann 2001, 74). Together, they represent “the whole of reality” (ibid.). Assmann has used linguistics to explain them (2001, 74–78): whereas the Western notion of time is based on past, present, and future as expressed in the tenses of our languages, Egyptian, like other Afroasiatic languages, has two *aspects*, the perfective and the imperfective. The unfinished (or imperfective) actions that move and change in cycles in *nhh* time—not just daily cycles, but also yearly cycles, cycles of rulership by series of kings, and so on—join the domain of the completed (perfective) *dt* time once they are achieved, and continue in this state forever. This is why *nhh* has often been described as ‘cyclical time,’ with *dt* being classed as ‘linear time’;¹³⁷ *nhh* describes time in perpetual motion, which is related to

¹³⁷ Although this is a bit of an oversimplification (Winand 2003).

transformation and regeneration following the divine model of the solar course, whereas *dt* describes permanent and enduring time, which is related to identity and stasis following the (linear) destiny of Osiris (Thum and Salmas 2019).¹³⁸ This necessarily means that there was no concept of linear ‘history’ in ancient Egypt.¹³⁹

All time was intrinsically linked to the creation of the universe (Bickel 2003), the First Time (*zp tpy*) mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The First Time was entered into a canon in Egyptian cosmological time: everything was understood as stemming from this moment, when the creator god stood on the *benben*-stone in order to form the world. Egyptians viewed this primordial state as a model of perfection, because it represented the world as it was originally designed by their creator; it therefore served as a pattern for all actions going forward, especially royal ones. Individual human actions, particularly those of kings, were supposed to follow a predetermined model of prior events, and were geared towards returning to and suspending the world in a state most like the First Time. Singularities were permitted to occur, ‘officially,’ but effectively only by two means: either by improving on the deeds of one’s forefathers (e.g. extending the borders of Egypt, *swsh t3šw*, Chapter 6), or through revelations and wonders (*bi3w*, e.g. the discovery of a natural resource), because the gods had always known about them (Vernus 1995).¹⁴⁰ Ideally, events concerning the king would be entered into a deep, sacred time of origins where they would be repeated forever.

¹³⁸ James P. Allen compares *dt* to the script of a play, and *nhh* with each performance of that play’s script. *dt* is the eternal pattern of existence, and *nhh* the continual repetition of that pattern.

¹³⁹ Of course, the Egyptians still had a strong sense of the past, because it was all around them (Meskell 2003, 39). They simply thought about it differently than we do.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. the notions of productivity and reproductivity (Winand 2017).

A crucial link was made between this ‘frozen’ time and the use of stone, a perennial material, which was intended to suspend a monument (*mnw*) in the ideal state it had achieved (Vernus 2017, 478; Thum and Salmas 2019). As Pascal Vernus explains, ‘sacralized texts’—those whose contents were relevant to cosmological time—were designed to enter events from the rule of human kings into the perfect cosmological time, turning them into “accretions to the creation” (Vernus 2017, 475–78). Vernus argues that a sacralized text

...should be fixed on ‘a monument’ in the Egyptian meaning of *mnw*, that is to say a hopefully perennial support, most often in stone, to which significant shape has been given (stelae, wall, etc., with possible apparent exceptions such as rock graffiti). The support is deemed the achieved and ultimate realization of the text; it is tightly bound to the place where it is set up (or left) and its very location has to do with its full significance.¹⁴¹

The stone supports of such texts, alongside their hieroglyphic script and associated cosmically oriented images (e.g. the winged sun disk or *bḥdty*), were agents—“editorial marks”—of the sacralization process (Vernus 2017, 476). These elements transformed them into monuments in the fullest sense of the word (Vernus 2017, 477–79). Assmann writes that “stone structures and inscription—building and language—achieve a unique connection, constituting a ‘monumental discourse’ that reflects an unprecedented attempt to construct sacred time” (2003b, 63). Monumental discourse was the medium for constructing “sacred permanence” in ancient Egypt, with these works essentially serving as the concretized form of *dt* (Assmann 2003b, 73).

As I have demonstrated elsewhere in this chapter, living rock had a divine and timeless quality in the Egyptian view. Cliffs, mountains, and outcrops, owing to their

¹⁴¹ Vernus 2017, 478. Presumably, Vernus tentatively excludes rock graffiti because they are ‘informal’ in comparison with monumental culture—relegated to the *temps petit*—as far as Egyptologists are concerned.

physical appearance and the many sacred connotations developed in Egyptian terms such as *ḏw*, *ḏw wꜥb*, and *tꜥ dhnt*, shared a close association with the primordial mound. This, I argue, lent them a unique air of immutability, undoubtedly bolstered by popular conceptions of mountains as permanent and immobile. Stelae carved into living rock therefore gave kings the opportunity to materially infiltrate the cosmological time with events from their lives: to go beyond the establishment of an ordinary ‘accretion to the creation’ on a built stone support, which would only be a substitute for the natural world anyway (Aufrère 2001),¹⁴² and make a monument on the very interface between the realm of human experience and the realm of immortality.

Despite the many sacred connotations of living rock, the contents of a stela need not have been explicitly religious in nature in order for this medium to ‘work’ (insofar as we may say that any royal monument is ‘not religious’). Many of them, especially those in Chapter 5, clearly served functions that can be described as ‘practical’ in addition to being ‘ideological.’ To carve a stela into the landscape was to physically and mentally canonize the event that it commemorated, regardless of the nature of that event. The living-rock stelae analyzed in the following chapters marked these events onto the *ḏt*, the ‘geological time’ with which living rock is associated (Harmanşah 2018, 490). Simultaneously, however, they also ushered a portion of the primordial bedrock into the world (and the time) of human experience. This process created (or concretized) a ‘place’ laden with social meaning, and was therefore both spatial and temporal in nature.

When an Egyptian king commissioned a monument, he had a choice. There was more control—over materials, physical form, and so on—when building a freestanding

¹⁴² Recall the above discussion of temples as microcosms of the universe.

monument, and yet some circumstances called for a stela in living rock. This demonstrates that it was sometimes worth the ‘cost’ to make one (Glatz and Plourde 2011): there must have been something advantageous about the way the landscape already was, or something about the place that the message would be forever tied to, that was essential to their message. In the following chapters, insights from my investigations of these stelae may augment our view of the Egyptian use of living rock as we currently understand it.

CHAPTER 4

“This August Mountain”: Living-Rock Stelae in Sacred Landscapes

The mountains lead to what is in them;
they reveal the secret that is in them.

– Rock stela of Sobekherheb¹⁴³

Egyptian stelae executed in living rock, like rock-cut temples, illustrate and mobilize a conceptual distinction between bedrock and cut stone as monumental media. As I explained in the previous chapter, such works ushered the events they commemorated into the *dt* time, the ‘geological time’ of permanence and immortality, while simultaneously bringing a piece of the primordial bedrock into the world, and the time, of human experience. Following on Chapter 3’s insights into Egyptian conceptions of living rock, in this chapter I offer three selected examples of the placement of living-rock stelae in sacred landscapes—places of particular salience for the sacred (Dorman and Bryan 2007, xiv). These may also be termed ‘conceptualized landscapes,’ because their meanings were, at least initially, “invested in natural features rather than in material culture or monuments” (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 11). Each of these places represented a point in Egypt’s cosmic geography: the sacred mountain of the god Min in the god’s land of the Wadi Hammamat; the rocky horizons of the city-*cum*-microcosm, Akhetaten (modern-day Amarna); and a mythical source of the Nile, Gebel Silsila, which is also its narrowest point. All are closely linked to the deep time of the cosmos, as their texts attest.

¹⁴³ Reign of Amenemhat III, from Serabit el-Khadim (Tallet 2012, 136–37).

In the Egyptian view, each of the landscapes in this chapter possessed an integral sacred character, or what I call ‘cultic capital.’ It is this cultic capital, developed through the creation of mythologies and local histories, that allowed the Egyptians to find meaning in these places before they were ever carved. The messages in their stelae drew heavily on that capital, reinforcing and then further developing the lore of their landscapes.

Miracles in the Wadi Hammamat

The Middle Kingdom stelae carved in the Wadi Hammamat comprise the earliest of my case studies that illustrate the relationship between living-rock monuments and cultic capital vested in their stone supports. This Eastern Desert mining and quarrying site was in use from the Predynastic period (Bloxam et al. 2014) and was the only known source of metagraywacke (*‘bekhen stone’*), which was coveted for its grey-green color and association with rebirth (Harrell and Storemyr 2009, 30). As I noted in the previous chapter, the connection between this stone and the wadi was so integral that the name Mountain of Bekhen (*ḏw n bḥn*) was eventually given to the area (González-Tablas Nieto 2014, 36). The Wadi Hammamat was not only a foreign land (*ḥꜣst*), being located physically outside of *Kmt* (Figure 4.1), but also a god’s land (*tꜣ-nṯr*), lying “at the margin of Egyptian knowledge” (O’Connor and Quirke 2003, 1). The liminality of the god’s lands led to their portrayal as domains of mystery and wonder. Wonders (*bꜣꜣw*) experienced in these lands could come in the form of precious raw materials, such as metagraywacke, but they could also manifest as miracles.

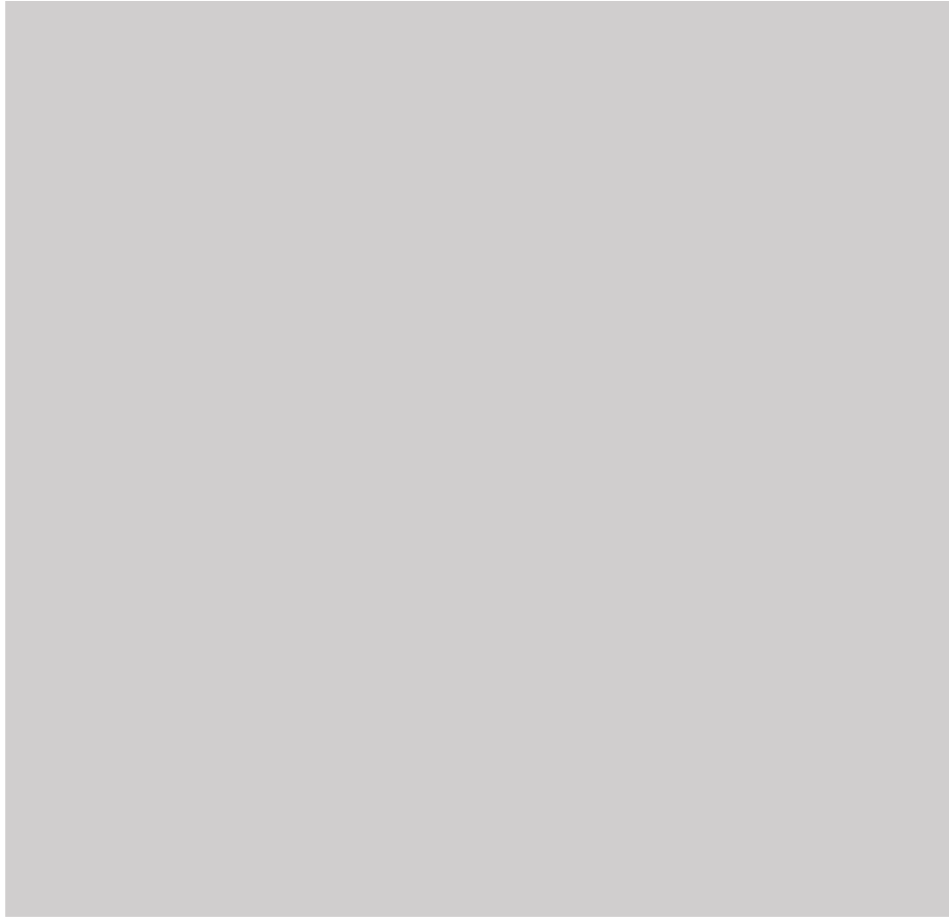


Figure 4.1 Map showing the location of the Wadi Hammamat (Harrell and Brown 1992b, 4, Fig. 1).

Beyond the area's characterization as a god's land, by the New Kingdom at least one location inside the wadi was referred to as a *ḏw wꜥb* (Thiem 2000, 23–24, fn. 78; Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz 1968, 204), and seems also to have been conceptualized as a *dhnt* (Adrom 2004, 11). We are aware of these designations because the wadi was the subject of the world's oldest geological map, illustrated on the so-called Turin Papyrus in the mid-12th century BCE in order to aid a quarrying expedition of Ramesses IV (Harrell and Brown 1992a; Harrell and Brown 1992b; Chapter 3). One of the areas of this map (Figure 4.2) shows a mountain whose bottom portion, painted white over the pink-painted stone, is labeled as 'the Shrine of Amun of the *ḏw wꜥb*' (*pꜣ ḥnw n*

imn pꜣ ḏw wꜥb);¹⁴⁴ the top of this mountain and the area above it are labeled as ‘the Mountain of Amun’ and ‘the Mountain where Amun Rests.’ Faried Adrom classed this as a *dhnt* because it is a distinctive rock feature where the god, in this case Amun, could be expected to appear (2004, 11). This source far post-dates the Middle Kingdom inscriptions, but the earlier material contains ample signs of how such connotations developed, and reveals that the cultic capital of this place was longstanding in Egyptian collective memory.



Figure 4.2 The Turin Papyrus map with the Shrine of Amun of the *ḏw wꜥb* indicated (after Harrell and Brown 1992b, 6, Fig. 3).

¹⁴⁴ At present, no archaeological remains of such a structure have been recovered.

In the Middle Kingdom the *ḏw* of the Wadi Hammamat (probably the central wall of the main portion of the wadi; Gundlach 1980, 112)¹⁴⁵ was thought to be the seat of the god Min, Lord of the Eastern Desert and one of the oldest Egyptian deities. Min was assimilated into the Horus myth during this period, both as the son of Isis and the enemy of Seth, and as such he became linked to the institution of kingship (Romanosky 2005). During the reign of Mentuhotep IV at the end of the 11th Dynasty, the south side of the wadi opposite the *bekhen*-stone quarry was inscribed with (*inter alia*, Couyat and Montet 1912; Goyon 1957) three texts executed at the king's behest by the vizier Amenemhat (the future Amenemhat I), who headed a royal expedition to the area, and a fourth text that he may have commissioned independently. The three royal texts are known as the Official Record (which recounts the expedition's purpose, to procure stone for a sarcophagus for the king),¹⁴⁶ the First Wonder (that a gazelle gave birth on the stone that was destined for the sarcophagus lid),¹⁴⁷ and the Second Wonder (wherein a miraculous flood occurred in the wadi).¹⁴⁸ The fourth text is the Commander's Record, which records Amenemhat's charge (a 'royal commission,' *wpwt nsw*) in the first person.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ It is possible that the *ḏw* referenced in these texts refers to the whole area composed of *bekhen*-stone. Note that the Shrine of Amun of the *ḏw wꜥb* that was drawn on the Turin Papyrus was probably located some distance to the east of the Middle Kingdom inscriptions, in or near a gold-mining area called Bir Umm Fawakhir (O'Connor 2014, 62–64).

¹⁴⁶ Couyat and Montet 1912, 98–100 and Pl. 37 (No. 192). This text is often split in two in scholarly discussions (192a and 192b), because it contains an addendum written once the stone for the sarcophagus was procured.

¹⁴⁷ Couyat and Montet 1912, 77–78 and Pl. 29 (No. 110).

¹⁴⁸ Couyat and Montet 1912, 97–98 and Pl. 36 (No. 191).

¹⁴⁹ Couyat and Montet 1912, 79–81 and Pl. 29 (No. 113). Whether we should categorize this text as 'royal' is debatable, but I include it in this chapter in order to give a more complete picture of this expedition and its purpose. I do not, however, include it in the list of royal living-rock stelae in the appendices.



Figure 4.3 The Official Record.



Figure 4.4 The First Wonder.



Figure 4.5 The Second Wonder.



Figure 4.6 The Commander's Record.

All four—and indeed, most of the pharaonic inscriptions in the wadi—are on the south side of the main valley, in a comparatively narrow section (Figure 4.7). This is a “shadowy zone” opposite the main quarry areas, which were on the side that received more sun (González-Tablas Nieto 2014, 36). It is tempting to attribute this to the ease of composing an inscription in the shade, and the higher contrast produced between the areas that have been carved, which appear almost white, and the dark stone. It is also possible that “aspects of visibility” were considered when choosing this location (Bloxam 2015, 804): the inscriptions are located above ground level, but not so high up that they are illegible to those walking by (other inscriptions *are* located quite high above the ground, such that I was unable to read them when I visited). In fact, the royal stelae stand out quite well to passers-by, even today. These were not the first inscriptions to be carved in this area (those date to the Old Kingdom), but they do occupy what appear to be prime

surfaces (and very flat ones). Taking a phenomenological approach, Elizabeth Bloxam explains that

Prior to inscribing, when this rock-face was viewed/approached from the main route through the wadi, it would have presented a highly visible arena-like aspect of widely fractured blocks of greywacke, rising in a series of steps up to a height of more than 20 m into the hills opposite the *bekhen*-mountain region of quarries.¹⁵⁰

However, as Javier González-Tablas Nieto points out, we cannot discount the possibility that there were once inscriptions on the opposite side of the valley, which have since been destroyed by quarrying activities (2014, 36). It seems that what was most important to the patrons of these monuments was that they were carved *somewhere* in the vicinity of the Mountain of Bekhen, the sacred seat of Min.

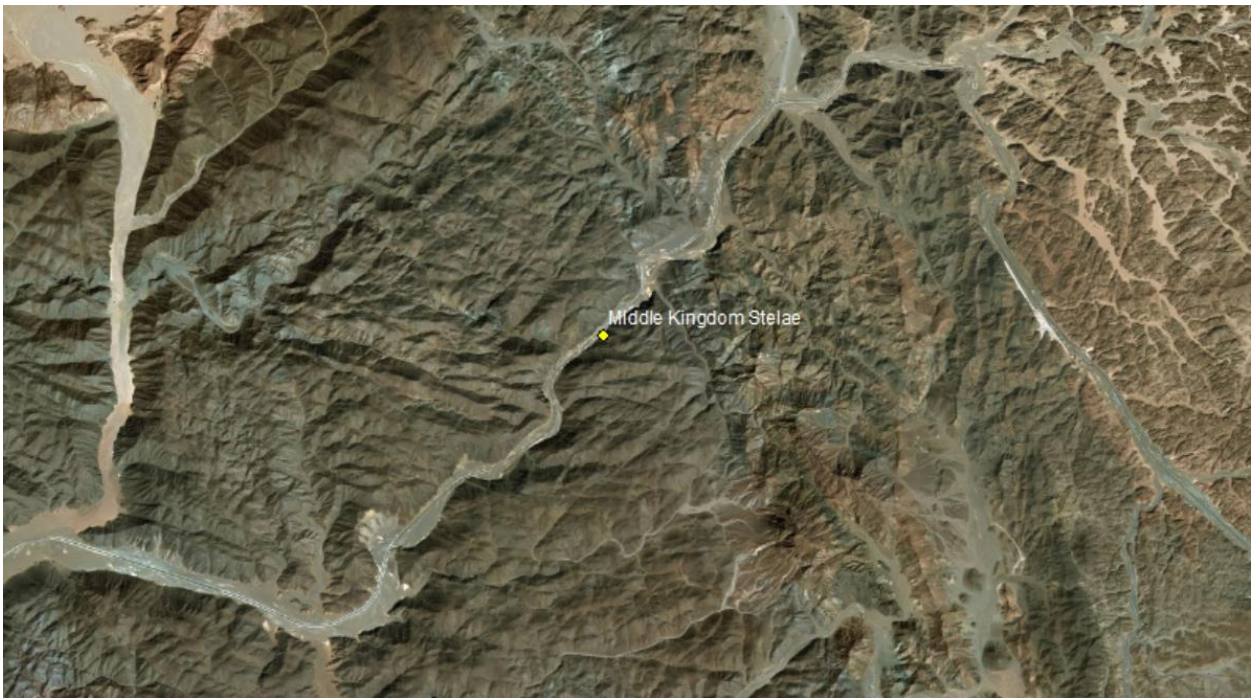


Figure 4.7 The locations of the Middle Kingdom stelae within the wadi.

As for the spatial relationships between them, they occur in pairs: the Commander's Record and First Wonder Stela together (Figure 4.8), and the Official

¹⁵⁰ Bloxam 2015, 804.

Record and Second Wonder Stela together (Figure 4.9). Each pair contains a record and the report of a wonder, so it is possible that, if they needed to be split up due to space constrictions or because there were two distinct rock surfaces that were deemed suitable, this pairing was thought to achieve the greatest degree of balance in content. Unfortunately, their dates do not do much to clarify the situation: the Second Wonder Stela is dated to Year 2, II Akhet, day 23, whereas the Official Record and the Commander's Record are dated to day 15 of the same month, and the First Wonder Stela is undated.



Figure 4.8 The locations of the Commander's Record and First Wonder Stela.



Figure 4.9 The locations of the Official Record and Second Wonder Stela.

Although these inscriptions are not stelamorphic in shape (Figures 4.3–4.6),¹⁵¹ the Official Record refers to itself as a stela (*wḏ*) that was set up (*ṣḥꜥ*; see Chapter 1) at the king’s command (see below). Since all four are part of the same program, we may assume that the others were also classed as *wḏw*. Although these monuments were executed by Amenemhat and recount the activities of the quarry workforce, they nevertheless record a royal commission.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Rather, their texts are written in rows or columns. Javier González-Tablas Nieto refers to this as a “papyrus shape” (2014, 38).

¹⁵² A passage from the Official Record, excerpted in Chapter 3, is indeed written in the voice of the king. In the Commander’s Record (Hamm. 113), Amenemhat also says as much: “I was sent by my lord, LPH, the Dual King Nebtawyre (may he live forever), as a god sends a limb of his, to establish (*smnt*) his monument (*mnw*) in this land” (li. 9-10).

In the Official Record, the mountain is described as a life-giving place where the god Min rested and became rejuvenated:

wḏ ḥm=f sḥḥ wḏ -pn n (i)t=f mnw nb ḥzswt m ḏw -pn šps pꜣwty ḥnty st m tꜣ ꜣḥtyw ḥ-ntr ḥnk m ḥnh ḥr šš ntry wꜣḥw ntr -pn im=f st=f wḥbt nt šmḥ-ib ḥrt-tp ḥzswt tꜣ-ntr n-mrwt ḥtp kꜣ=f wꜣš ntr m st-ib=f

Command of his majesty to establish this stela for his father Min, lord of the foreign lands, on this august and primordial mountain, foremost place in the land of the horizon-dwellers, divine palace endowed with life, divine nest of Horus in which this god flourishes, his pure (*wḥbt*) place of enjoyment, at the head of (*ḥrt-tp*) the foreign lands of the god's land, for the sake of his *ka* becoming happy, and the god being extolled in the place of his desire...¹⁵³

It is both august (*šps*)¹⁵⁴ and primordial (*pꜣwty*), and appears to have been viewed as the most, or one of the most, important places at the margins (*tꜣ ꜣḥtyw*, *tꜣ-ntr*) of Egypt.

Owing to its origin in this holy place, the stone that was quarried for Mentuhotep, and hence the royal sarcophagus that was made from it, were thought to retain the same eternal, revitalizing properties as the mountain itself (Gundlach 1980, 113).¹⁵⁵ This explains why the stone for the sarcophagus was sought in this quarry, as opposed to somewhere else. In the course of this expedition, the king performed what was effectively a votive action: he removed stone from the wadi for his own needs, but gave something to Min in return by dedicating his activities to the god (Gundlach 1980, 110, 113):

ir.n=f m mnw=f n (i)t=f mnw gbty nb ḥzswt ḥry-tp iwntyw ir=f ḏi ḥnh [rnpwt] ḥšꜣ wrt ḥnh mi rḥ ḏt

He did it as his monument for his father Min of Koptos, lord of the foreign lands, foremost of the bowmen, so that he may achieve very many years alive like Re forever.¹⁵⁶

Rolf Gundlach observes that the removal of the stone is described in such a way as to parallel the creation of the stela (1980, 105): both are done “for his father Min.” But he

¹⁵³ Official Record (Hamm. 192), li. 3-6.

¹⁵⁴ Note that the same word is used to describe Min in the First Wonder Stela (Hamm. 110B, li. 7-8): *in ḥm n ntr -pn šps nb ḥzswt rḏi mꜣḥ n sꜣ=f nbtꜣwyꜣ ḥnh ḏt*, “It was the incarnation of this august god, lord of the foreign lands, who made the delivery [of the gazelle] for his son Nebtawyre, alive forever.”

¹⁵⁵ As Rolf Gundlach points out (1980, 110), they are described using the same words (*wḥb* and *šps*) across this series of texts.

¹⁵⁶ Official Record, li.17-19.

brilliantly comments that this is also an exchange that goes beyond the usual mechanics of *ex voto*: whereas the former action takes something away from the place, the latter effectively gives something back to it, which makes the extraction of stone and the alteration of the landscape acceptable to the god (Gundlach 1980, 110). All other quarry expedition inscriptions made in living rock, where the text is addressed to a god, may therefore be considered to work in this way (*ibid.*).¹⁵⁷

In the Official Record, the description of the mountain as a “divine nest of Horus” is a reference to Khemmis, the papyrus thicket in which Isis concealed the birth of her son (Shirun-Grumach 1993, 35–36). According to Gundlach, the *dw* of the Wadi Hammamat was therefore considered to be the mythical birthplace of Mentuhotep IV as Horus, where he underwent some form of apotheosis (1980, 112–13). This theme of rebirth fits well with the king’s apparent expectation for his sarcophagus to be a rejuvenating vessel. Khemmis temples, which were connected to this legendary place by their decorative programs, were often built into rock walls; these include the Hathor shrine at Deir el-Bahari and the Small Temple at Abu Simbel (Gundlach 2001; Assmann 2001, 133). It is possible that the association between Khemmis and the living rock of the Wadi Hammamat was a forerunner of this practice, as the first rock-cut temples originated soon afterwards, at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty.

In Gundlach’s linguistic study of the time relationships in these texts, he observes that both the Official Record and the Second Wonder Stela deal quite extensively with the past—both the First Time and the historical past, as well as the connection of both of

¹⁵⁷ Presumably we may apply this to the quarry stelae I mentioned in Chapter 1, which I have not included as case studies. Note that the Wadi Hammamat inscriptions differ greatly from those, as their messages are largely spiritual in nature—they do not record the inauguration of quarries, as the others do.

these to present events taking place under the reigning king (1980, 112). Their shared theme may help to explain why they were paired together. This focus is apparent in the following passage from the Second Wonder Stela:

irt ḥw m33 ḥprw nw nṯr -pn dit b3w=f n rhyt irt ḥ3st m nwy bst mw ḥr nh3 n inr gmt ḥnmt m ḥry-ib int mḥ 10 r mḥ 10 ḥr=s -nb mḥt m mw r nprt=s sw^cb.t stwr.ti r ghsw sšt3.ti r iwntyw ḥ3styw prt ḥ3st ḥr gs=sy in mš^c n tp-^cwy nsww ḥprw ḥr-ḥ^ct n m3.n -s irt -nb n ḥr ḥr n rmt ḥr=s wb3=s n ḥm=f ds=f ist -grt sdḥ.n=f -s rh.n=f mtt hrw -pn ḥmt.n=f ḥnty sp -pn n-mrwt m33 b3w=f rh.tw mnḥ ḥm=f ir=f m3wt ḥr ḥ3swt=f n s3=f nbt3wyr^c nh dt

Making rain, seeing the events of this god, the showing of his impressiveness to the subjects, the making of the desert (*ḥ3st*) into waves, the introduction of water abnormally to stone, the finding of a well in the middle of the wadi, its entire surface 10 cubits by 10 cubits, filled with water to its edge, purified and cleansed from gazelles, hidden from the bowmen and desert-dwellers, which prior expeditions and kings who existed previously had skirted. No eye had seen it, the sight of people had not fallen upon it, but to his majesty himself it was revealed. For he [the god Min] had concealed it, knowing the exact moment of this day. He planned the timing of this occurrence so that his impressiveness might be seen, and one might know the excellence of his majesty, doing a new thing in his deserts (*ḥ3swt*) for his son Nebtawyre, alive forever.¹⁵⁸

Based on the connections between the deep past, royal deeds, and miraculous events detailed in this group of monuments, Gundlach contends that the mountain of the Wadi Hammamat was believed to belong to both the celestial and earthly realms (1980, 112–13). It was an interface between the world of the gods and the world of humanity, as the walls of rock-cut temples have been described; a point in the cosmic geography.

The explanation of the deluge in the wadi as a miraculous event that was revealed to the king by an omnipotent god is, as one will recall from my discussion of time in the previous chapter, one of only two venues through which historical singularities were permitted to occur (Vernus 1995). Inscribing such events (*m3wt*, “a new thing”!) into a timeless support—living rock—would guarantee that they were entered into a deep, sacred time of origins where they would be repeated forever. In his Commander’s

¹⁵⁸ Second Wonder Stela (Hamm. 191), li. 2-8.

Record, Amenemhat describes the success of the expedition as “the destiny that Min created” for his lord (*hpr.n n hm n nb(=i) m b3w ir -n=f mnw*),¹⁵⁹ further underscoring the prophetic nature of this event. In the same text, the vizier calls the sarcophagus “an eternal memorial that endures forever” (*sh3 nhḥ w3h ib n dt*);¹⁶⁰ this is a reference to a passage in the Official Record, where his charge is described as bringing the king “a special stone, a pure gem that is in this mountain, whose function Min made, for a sarcophagus, a memorial more eternal than the monuments in the temples of Upper Egypt” (*inr šps ʿ3t wʿbt imt dw -pn irt mnw mnḥ=s r nb-ʿnh sh3 nhḥ r mnw m ḥwwt-ntr nt šmʿw*).¹⁶¹ Amenemhat’s use of *nhḥ* as a qualifier for the sarcophagus (the “memorial”), but *dt* to describe its perpetuity, is an interesting play on the connection between these two aspects of Egyptian time as they are mediated through the material of (once living, now quarried) sacred rock: the stone from the wadi is everlasting and unchanging (*dt*), and the sarcophagus is but one iteration of that material (*nhḥ*).¹⁶²

Gundlach believes that it is likely that the contents of these inscriptions were composed ahead of time, and their wonders carefully imagined, as a means of legitimizing the king’s reign and situating him within the timeless institution of kingship (1980, 113–14). After all, the mountain had been designated as the place where the king would obtain his sarcophagus since the time of Min, and its stone was already celebrated

¹⁵⁹ Commander’s Record, li. 14-15.

¹⁶⁰ Commander’s Record, li. 13.

¹⁶¹ Official Record, li. 13-16. This (roughly) follows Gundlach’s understanding of the passage (1980, 92–93), although one could also translate it as “for a sarcophagus, an eternal memorial, *and for* the monuments in the temples of Upper Egypt”—that would depend on whether or not one believes that the procurement of stone for additional monuments was another end goal of this expedition.

¹⁶² Recall James P. Allen’s example of the script of a play and one performance as being like *dt* and *nhḥ* respectively (Chapter 3).

for its association with longevity and the deep past. Royal expeditions had long been dispatched to the wadi, for generations, precisely because of the sanctity of its landscape (Shirun-Grumach 1993, 33).¹⁶³ It is also possible that the vizier—who later took the throne as Amenemhat I—initiated the expedition “as a political act” (Gundlach 1980, 114). It is not difficult to see how he might have later benefitted from his explicit involvement in the sacred act of quarrying stone from the mountain of Min for the royal sarcophagus; in the Commander’s Record, Amenemhat states that he was sent to the wadi “as a god sends a limb of his.”¹⁶⁴ Gae Callender believes that the miracles reported by Amenemhat were actually performed for him, and not for Mentuhotep: “his contemporaries must have understood that this man had been favoured by the gods” (2003, 146). It certainly appears that he was setting up his own divine right to the kingship, which he did not inherit as a hereditary prince. The focus of the Wadi Hammamat stelae is of a very different character from even other Middle Kingdom corpora from state-sponsored quarrying expeditions (González-Tablas Nieto 2014)—that is, these stelae are overtly religious and are not chiefly concerned with the practicalities of the expedition. Amenemhat’s motives may help to explain why.

In their depiction of the Wadi Hammamat as a place of apotheosis and a seat of the divine, the Middle Kingdom royal stelae foreshadow the New Kingdom characterization of “this august mountain” as a *ḏw wꜥb* (Thiem 2000, 24, fn. 78). That the

¹⁶³ During the reign of Pepi I, the king’s Sed festival was commemorated with inscriptions in the Wadi Hammamat (Shirun-Grumach 1993, 33). This is unsurprising, as a ceremony honoring Min was one component of this festival (Romanosky 2005). In the First Wonder Stela, the gazelle sacrifice that Min made for his son, the king, was done in part to ensure his longevity and the celebration of “millions of Sed festivals” to come (li. 9).

¹⁶⁴ Commander’s Record, li. 9.

ḏw of the Wadi Hammamat was thought to be the seat of Amun in the New Kingdom, rather than Min, is not surprising.¹⁶⁵ Already in the Middle Kingdom Min had become closely associated with Amun; by the New Kingdom the two were equated, “especially with the primordial creative aspect of the latter deity” (Romanosky 2005). Min-Amun-Re became Amun-Re-Kamutef (“bull of his mother,” one who reproduces himself with his own mother), who was depicted exactly like ithyphallic Min (Shirun-Grumach 1993, 34; Romanosky 2005). In the Official Record, Isis is painted as both the mother of Min *and* the consort with whom he produced Mentuhotep—a relationship that alludes to the Kamutef mythology (Gundlach 1980, 105, with references). Recall that Amun-Re was one of the deities most closely associated with the other *ḏww wḥbw* as well; Amun-Re-Kamutef, who was Lord of Nubia and Ruler of Punt (a *t3-nṯr*) (Shirun-Grumach 1993, 34), is also connected to sacred rock outcrops, in that he appears in the cosmic Tuthmosid imperial boundary monuments at Kurgus in Sudan (Chapter 6). Later, in the time when the map on the Turin Papyrus was made, Ramesses IV drew on the same themes of discovery, destiny, and eternity in the texts of two royal living-rock stelae commemorating his own expeditions to the Wadi Hammamat (Christophe 1949; Hikade 2006; *KRI* VI 9-11, 12-14). The continuation of these themes into the New Kingdom is a testimony to the pervasiveness of the cultic capital of this sacred place.

A City Couched in Stone: Living-Rock Boundary Stelae at Amarna

In the ancient city of Akhetaten, located within the modern archaeological site of Amarna, sanctity was tied tightly to the landscape just as the miracles of the Wadi

¹⁶⁵ This does not mean that Min ceased to be worshipped in the area; in the late first millennium a foundation known as the ‘Shrine to Min’ was established in one of the walled quarries in the central portion of the wadi (Bloxam 2015, 800).

Hammamat were bound to the mountain of Min. But whereas the latter had long been considered the seat of the god, Akhetaten presents a case of comparatively hasty ascription of cultic capital. The city was founded by the unconventional king Akhenaten (formerly Amenhotep IV) on account of a revelation from his principal god, the Aten.¹⁶⁶ Suddenly this parcel of land in Middle Egypt had become a sacred place, and living-rock boundary stelae were employed to reinforce both the physical and metaphysical components of that status.

¹⁶⁶ Or, more precisely, the *light* of the Aten. When the god is called Aten, it is either because the sun disk was viewed as the god's incarnation, or because the word *itn* is a grammatical nisbe—*itn(i)*, "the one of the sun disk" (James P. Allen, *pers. comm.*).

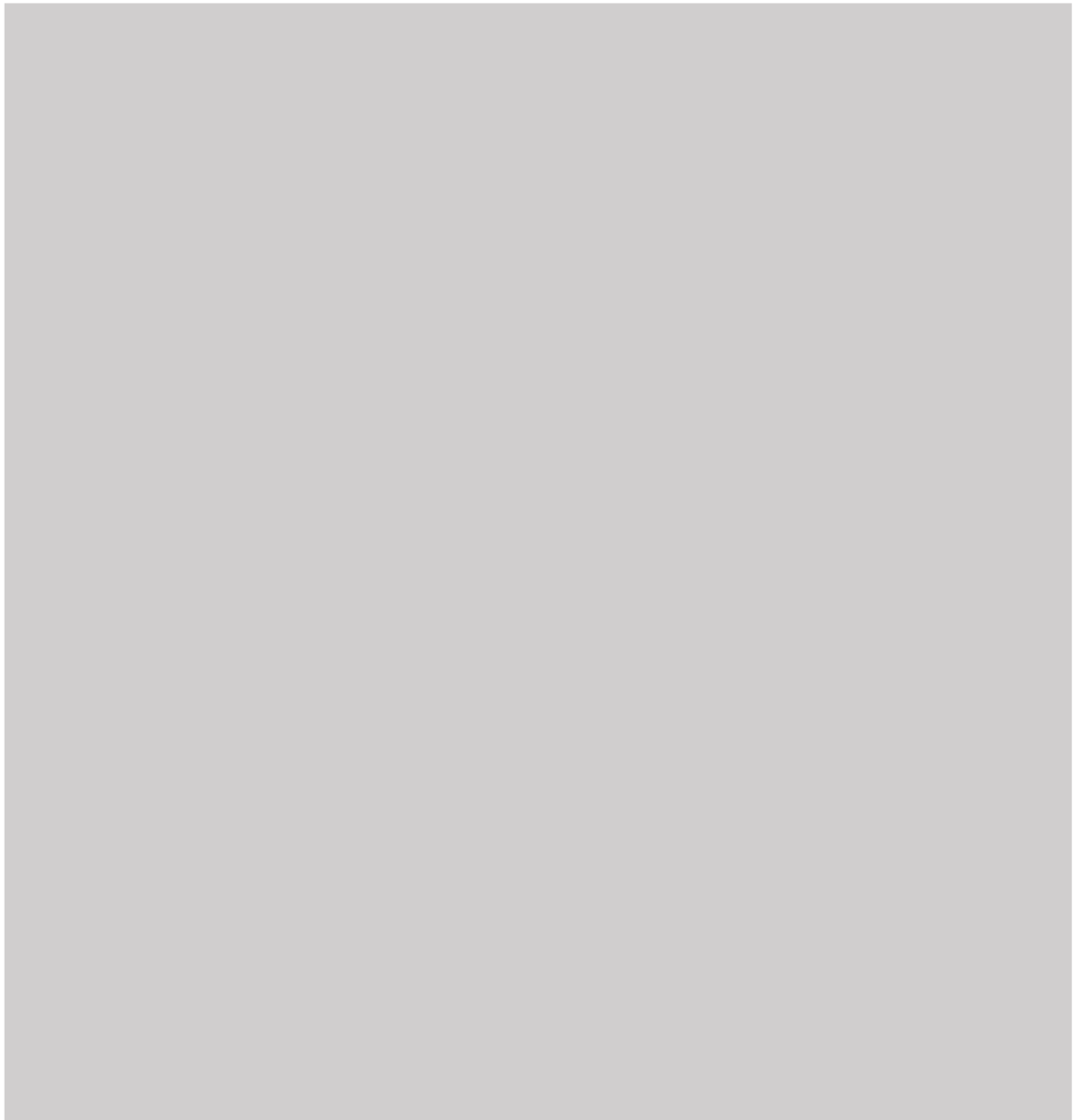


Figure 4.10 Map of the city of Akhetaten (Stevens 2015, 78, Fig. 1).

Akhetaten (literally ‘Horizon of the Aten’) was, in many ways, the *anti-Thebes*.¹⁶⁷

In Chapter 1 I wrote that Egyptian royal living-rock stelae were usually made in liminal landscapes, and although Akhetaten lay within *Kmt*, I contend that it was no exception to

¹⁶⁷ Miriam Müller has helpfully pointed out that the city’s layout and processional routes may have been modeled partly on Thebes’ (*pers. comm.*). However, Akhetaten was indeed conceptualized as a replacement for Thebes, and there were important differences between the two, whether by design or as a consequence of its short life (see below). I therefore stand by the designation ‘anti-Thebes.’

this rule. First and foremost, the king himself described the site as a “distant place” (*st hr*).¹⁶⁸ But regardless of its location, Akhetaten was also not within the boundaries of Egyptian tradition concerning capital cities: it was hastily founded in response to the desires of the Aten,¹⁶⁹ in whose name the traditional cults of many other gods would be disrupted; it was designed as the site of a new and eccentric royal project (both civic and religious); and it was lived in only slightly longer than the duration of its founder’s reign (less than twenty years). Moreover, the landscape of Akhetaten was a place dissociated from Egyptian tradition. Other capitals, such as Thebes and Memphis,¹⁷⁰ retained and continually accumulated a sense of cultural importance because of their long history of ritual performances (J. E. Richards 1999, 83).¹⁷¹ By contrast, Amarna was effectively a clean slate, having never housed a city, let alone familiar ceremonies, before (Kemp 2012, 45).¹⁷² In all of these ways, Akhetaten can be considered a liminal place.

Akhenaten is often classed as a heretic (e.g. Redford 1984) due to his belief in the primacy of the Aten over Egypt’s other gods.¹⁷³ As Barry Kemp explains, the king’s alternative theology and his new capital city were integrally linked: “the full expression of [his] beliefs demanded the creation of [a] physical sacred landscape” (2012, 32). The

¹⁶⁸ Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 37.

¹⁶⁹ “No official had ever advised me concerning it [...] it was the Aten, my father, who advised me concerning it” (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 37). Note that most of the quotations I have taken from the boundary stelae for this chapter are not accompanied by transliterations; this is due to slight differences between the stela texts, as well as their fragmentary nature. My translations often differ from those of William Murnane and Charles Van Siclen, but I cite the page numbers for their translations here; the accompanying transcriptions are also available in their book, which is the main publication of the stelae (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993).

¹⁷⁰ Akhenaten had previously ruled from both of these cities (Mallinson 1999, 72).

¹⁷¹ Janet Richards uses the term “persistent place” to describe such places (1999, 85).

¹⁷² Recall, from Chapter 2, Ömür Harmanşah’s (2015, 93) assertion that carving living rock is a colonial act associated with the discourse of *terra nullius* (“the rock was untouched”).

¹⁷³ Or, technically, his belief in the primacy of the light of the sun disk in its phenomenological form.

place he chose was appealing because it had not been the seat of any other gods (J. E. Richards 1999, 96);¹⁷⁴ it had no previous layers of cultural memory or meaning—no cultic capital—attached to it before his revelation (Kemp 2012, 35). In this respect Akhenaten easily surpassed his forefathers, fulfilling a major goal of any king’s tenure (Chapter 3). But as Rocío Da Riva notes, no landscape is *completely* devoid of social and cultural significance (2015, 604). Perhaps in order to provide the Aten with a suitable home, but perhaps also in order to make the transition palatable to his subjects, the king established his city on what Janet Richards describes as a “naturally prefabricated stage” (1999, 97): an area on the east bank of the Nile with the potential to acquire sociocultural significance, comprising a series of natural features that already had deep cosmic symbolism in the Egyptian worldview.¹⁷⁵

Beyond Richards’ characterization of this landscape, there may be phenomenological reasons behind the choice of this place for the Aten’s new home. A number of visitors to the site have noticed that the eastern cliffs that open up into the Royal Wadi mimic the shape of the horizon hieroglyph (𐀓, *ꜥḥt*), thus producing a silhouette of this sign (Hoffmeier 2015, 149–50). As the sun rises between the cliffs, just as in the hieroglyph, it illuminates the plain as if the land were embraced by the god. This may explain why this landscape was chosen by the king—or why it was clear to him that *the god* had chosen it—and may even provide a clue to the origin of the city’s name. Taking this a step further, and incorporating the layout of the stelae in question (see below), Michael Mallinson finds meaning in the distances and orientations between

¹⁷⁴ The texts of the stelae are also clear about this; see Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 37–38.

¹⁷⁵ These include cliffs, the low desert, and a wadi. Richards also quotes from the boundary stelae, which list various other natural features with which Akhetaten was endowed (1999, 97). As I noted in Chapter 3, David O’Connor contends that Akhetaten was conceived as a cosmogram (1989, 82; 2005).

structures in the royal city by means of “projective geometry” (1999, 77–78). His was, I think, an admirable early attempt to better incorporate the landscape into Egyptologists’ understandings of Akhetaten’s architecture. By Mallinson’s logic, the city plan gives the impression of rays from the rising sun in the east “fanning out in a triangular (pyramid) shaped pattern in the plain where the city was built, just like the iconic artistic representations of the Aten with its rays shining downward” (Hoffmeier 2015, 148–49).¹⁷⁶

Regardless of the particular logic behind the choice of this site, if we consider the foundation of Akhetaten as a reiteration of the First Time—another (phase of the) creation of the world—then this act seems less ‘heretical’ than the way in which it is often characterized (Thum and Salmas 2019).¹⁷⁷ By choosing a *terra nullius* (and a microcosm to boot) on which to build his capital, Akhenaten positioned himself as a demiurge. The establishment of Akhetaten can therefore be reduced to a cultural norm, the First Time. The king even says so himself, describing Akhetaten as “his place of the First Time” (*st=f nt zp tpy*);¹⁷⁸ like Heliopolis, Amarna even had a ‘Mansion of the Benben’ (*ḥwt-bnbn*), a place to house a new primeval mound (probably in the form of a freestanding stela; *LÄ IV 4*).¹⁷⁹ In the end the king’s actions were not so different from

¹⁷⁶ Due to the Principle of Frontality in Egyptian art (Schäfer 1986), this is how one would expect such an event to be depicted in two-dimensional renderings. Although they did not have satellite images, visualizing the city in plan view was not entirely out of the question for Egyptian architects: they did indeed produce top-down sketches for construction projects.

¹⁷⁷ The ideas that follow in this paragraph also appear in Thum and Salmas 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 36. The same phrase had been used to describe Karnak which, as a temple, was also a site of creation (Hoffmeier 2015, 147). Note that, in poetry, Thebes was compared to the primeval mound (Assmann 2001, 24–25).

¹⁷⁹ In the texts concerning this type of monument, both at Amarna and elsewhere, the *benben*-stone is sometimes determined by a stela hieroglyph. In scenes from the tomb of Meryre, High Priest of the Aten, we see what appears to be a round-topped stela on a plinth in the court of the Great Temple (de G. Davies 1903, Pl. XI), as well as the king seated on a throne before such a stela (de G. Davies 1903, Pl. XXXIII).

those of his royal predecessors, who, by surpassing their own forefathers, also reenacted and expanded on this ideal model. Akhenaten's historical singularity was the result of the acceptable avenue of divine intervention (Chapter 3): the moment when the Aten revealed to the king where his city should be built. Akhetaten was, therefore, not really "a place divorced from history," as Richards has described it (1999, 96). Rather, it was intrinsically bound to the very beginning of time (and thus to the structure of the cosmos).

How better to create a new First Time than with a sacralized text (Vernus 2017; Chapter 3) executed in the medium of the *dt* time? No fewer than sixteen stelae¹⁸⁰—known collectively as the Amarna boundary stelae—were carved into the limestone cliffs on the east, and the low desert escarpment on the west, of the city (Figure 4.11).

The plinth is probably evocative of the incline inside temple sanctuaries (Quirke 2015, 81–82). Norman de Garis Davies believed that he found Amarna's *benben*-stone stela ("a great stela set on a high pedestal and reached by a flight of steps or a ramp") (1905a, 24).

¹⁸⁰ When I visited Amarna for the second time in April 2018, I was shown a seventeenth, eroded stela between Stela J and Stela K. To my knowledge this has not yet been published.



Figure 4.11 Map of the Amarna boundary stelae (Courtesy of Barry Kemp).

Today they are known by letter designations given to them by William M.F. Petrie in the 1890s. The first group of three (Stelae K, M, and X) was made in Year 5, and the second, comprising twelve monuments (Stelae A, B, F, J, N, P, Q, R, S, U, V, and probably H), in Year 6, with additions made in Year 8. The sixteenth known stela, Stela L, is much smaller than the rest (Figures 4.12 and 4.13), and may have served as either a temporary marker before the creation of the first group, or to commemorate one of the king's visits to the southeastern area of the city (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 193–94; see below).¹⁸¹ Each stela faces the general interior of the site, following the curve of the cliffs

¹⁸¹ Stela L does not appear in the above map; it is located about 7 meters south of Stela M and is visible in Figure 4.12.

to form a ring around Akhetaten. All except for Stela L (which is roughly square) are round-topped stelae whose measurements range from 2.7 meters high and 1.5 meters wide (Stela S) to a gargantuan 8.37 meters high and 3.9 meters wide (Stela U).¹⁸² Their lunettes show the royal family adoring the Aten (Figure 4.14), and some are accompanied by engaged statues of the royal family.¹⁸³

There do not appear to have been any hard rules governing the distribution of stela and statue types across the boundary, although most of those in the ‘middle’ of the western and eastern sides of the site have statue groups on both sides of the stela. It is possible that those with statue groups on only *one* side of the stela have been arranged so that their figures are inside the city, with their ‘backs’ to the border, while the stela itself marked the city limit. Thus they may embody “the separation between the city and the world outside” (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 158–61). All of the stelae were apparently intended to be visited via roads leading up to them (although no archaeological evidence of such cult exists), but also to be visible from afar: many could be easily seen from various locations inside the city, and travelers could see them from the Nile or the surrounding wadis (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 181).¹⁸⁴ Kemp

¹⁸² Measurements from Murnane and Van Siclen 1993. Note that Stela Q may be slightly smaller than Stela S, with a height of 2.5 meters and a width that I estimate, from Murnane and Van Siclen’s sketch plan (1993, 132), to be about 1.5 meters. Stela U may be the largest because of its proximity to the Royal Wadi, where the tombs of the royal family were constructed (Murnane 1987, 246).

¹⁸³ These stelae and their accompanying statues are housed in “emplacements” dug back into the face of the rock (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 111–46). The arrangement and design of some of these architectural elements were edited during the course of city planning (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 150–51).

¹⁸⁴ All of the stelae look inward at the city center rather than outward at approaching travelers (or enemies). This is presumably because their primary function was to define the area sacred to the Aten rather than to repel people from the outside, and because it would have been difficult to carve vertical rock-cut monuments into the ‘exterior’ of the surrounding rock faces when they do not really possess an ‘exterior.’ Although they did not face outward, due to their positions in the surrounding cliffs and escarpment at least *some* of them could be seen from a given point by those who were not inside the city. I would have liked to have modeled this in GIS, but the publicly available Digital Elevation Models do not appear to have a high enough resolution for such a simulation.

suggests that their limestone supports would have been “a dazzling white” in their original state, and traces of colorful paint also remain (2012, 33).



Figure 4.12 Stela M (left) and Stela L (right).



Figure 4.13 Stela U.



Figure 4.14 Lunette of Stela A with the royal family adoring the Aten.

The first group (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 35–48) marked the northern and southern boundaries of the city on the east bank of the river: Stela X in the north, and Stelae K and M in the south—the former probably a replacement for the latter in better quality limestone after the original monument became weathered (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 159, 194).¹⁸⁵ Their text, known as the Earlier Proclamation, is dated to Year 5, IV Peret, day 13, and contains the first known attestation of the king's new name, Akhenaten (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 156). It tells of the preliminary rites and dedication of the city (performed on that day) and the king's earlier personal discovery, at the Aten's behest, of the location where it should be built. It then follows with the king's

¹⁸⁵ Stela K is about 0.5 km south of Stela M.

oath, likely made facing the center of the city's eastern mountains (Murnane 1987, 246), never to change the location of Akhetaten, no matter what anyone else might suggest:

I shall make Akhetaten for the Aten, my father, in this place. I shall not make Akhetaten for him in the south of it, in the north of it, in the west of it or in the east of it. I shall not (let my city border) go farther south than the southern stela of Akhetaten, nor shall I go farther north than the northern stela of Akhetaten, in order to make Akhetaten for him there. Nor shall I make (the city center?) for him on the western side of Akhetaten, but I shall make Akhetaten for the Aten, my father, on the sunrise side (*rit wbn*) of Akhetaten, the place which he himself made to be enclosed (*inh*) for him by the mountain (*dw*). [...] This is it! [...] I shall not say, "I will abandon Akhetaten," that I may go off and make Akhetaten in (some) other nice place.¹⁸⁶

Following this highly deictic passage, the Earlier Proclamation offers a vague account of what sounds like opposition to the king's building program, which purportedly shows that others had challenged his project:

It was worse than what I heard in Year 4. It was worse than what I heard in Year 3. It was worse than what I heard in Year 2. It was worse than what I heard in Year 1. [...] It was worse than that which any of the kings who had ever assumed the White Crown heard.¹⁸⁷

The text then closes by detailing, at length, the various foundations, burials, offerings, and festival celebrations to be made at Akhetaten.

The second group of stelae (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 99–104; Lichtheim 2006, II, 48–51) contains a text known as the Later Proclamation, dated to Year 6, IV Peret, day 13—exactly one year after the date on the Earlier Proclamation. This text centers on another oath, this time taken from the location of “the southeastern mountain of Akhetaten” (the location of Stela L?; Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 159, 164).¹⁸⁸ In it, Akhenaten declares that the boundaries of his city will now be delimited by six principal stelae: two groups of three monuments, spanning both sides of the river,

¹⁸⁶ Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 39–40.

¹⁸⁷ Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 41.

¹⁸⁸ This cannot be the location of Stela K or Stela M, as those earlier monuments are not on *dw* but on *dhnwt* (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 157); see below.

occupying positions at the north, south, and center of Akhetaten. The designation of these six monuments from the rest is highlighted by the fact that they are the only ones referred to using the term *wḏ m/n/r t3š*, “stela in/of/at the boundary,” or simply “boundary stela”;¹⁸⁹ this implies that the rest of the stelae containing the Later Proclamation were used mainly to commemorate the king’s oath and actions (Galán 1995, 136). The principal stelae on the western side of the city were certainly A, B, and F; however, it is unclear which ones on the eastern side belonged to this group.¹⁹⁰ Probably X and J marked the northeastern and southeastern corners of the city (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 164), but it appears as though any of the others in the ‘middle’ of the eastern side could have served as the central eastern stela. More than likely, due to the entrance of desert roads into the area from the southeast, a *group* of these stelae was needed to mark this portion of the boundary as a practical matter (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 160).¹⁹¹ The following comments are given concerning each of the principal stelae (with variations for direction):

As for the southern stela that is on the eastern mountain of Akhetaten, it is the stela of Akhetaten, which I have made to stand in its position. I will not (let my city border) go past it southwards forever and ever, the southwest stela being made facing it, on the southern mountain of Akhetaten exactly.¹⁹²

In the below map (Figure 4.15) one can see how, with the aid of these monuments, the boundaries of Akhetaten were altered to encompass the floodplain to the west of the city center, rather than only the eastern desert bay. Still, the east bank of the river was the

¹⁸⁹ This phrase does not occur on the stelae themselves (otherwise we would be certain which ones they were; see below), but in the colophon from Year 8 that was recorded on Stela A and Stela B.

¹⁹⁰ The king gives precise measurements for the distances between pairs of the stelae (see below), and none of the possible pairs on the eastern side of the site appear to correspond to them (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 162–63).

¹⁹¹ This may be why Stelae P, Q, R, S, and H were made together in a line at the southeastern end of the city (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 157).

¹⁹² Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 101; Lichtheim 2006, II, 50.

clear focus of Akhenaten's plans, and as the text of the Later Proclamation states, the stelae on the west bank were made mainly in order to "balance" their eastern counterparts (Galán 1995, 144).



Figure 4.15 Map showing the original and expanded boundaries of Akhetaten (Kemp 2012, 32, Fig. 1.6).

Following these statements, the Later Proclamation gives the precise dimensions measured between the principal stelae, and states that four of them—presumably those at the city's four corners—enclose Akhetaten "in its entirety." None of the city's boundary stelae were to be edited in any way:

It (= the inscription) shall not be obliterated. It shall not be washed away. It shall not be hacked out. It shall not be covered with plaster. It shall not go missing.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 103. Akhenaten *does* offer a provision for what would happen if a stela were to be destroyed: he would simply replace it with another one. This was in fact done with Stela M.

These stelae were edited in Year 8 to state that the oath was repeated on I Peret, day 8. In a colophon, Stela A and Stela B record another oath, made one week earlier (on the last day of IV Akhet),¹⁹⁴ stating that the six principal stelae—which had now been completed—would indeed outline the boundaries of the city as the king had directed. This final addendum reinforces the role of *ḏww* in crafting and defining this cityscape:

Now, as for the breadth of Akhetaten, mountain to mountain (*ḏw r ḏw*), starting from the eastern horizon of the sky to the western horizon of the [sky], it shall belong to my father, the Aten...¹⁹⁵

Akhetaten was different from other Egyptian cities in that it did not possess enclosure walls (Kemp 2012, 155). The king made it clear that the *ḏww* enclosed the city, so one could easily see them as a replacement for walls. However, the stelae probably also did some of the ‘work’ that walls would normally do, magically, apotropaically, or with the aid of guards, especially in the southeastern part of the site where the desert roads enter into Akhetaten. As a civic project, the central urban area on the eastern bank was also somewhat different from other cities. This was primarily a sacred landscape, and secondarily urban; it was “cut off and holy” (Hoffmeier 2015, 148).¹⁹⁶ The Amarna boundary stelae do not actually use the word for city (*niwt*) at all—possibly because Thebes had for some time been known as “the city” (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 171), and this was the anti-Thebes.

It is clear from the geographic specificity of both the Earlier and the Later Proclamations that Akhenaten’s capital, divinely inspired, was carefully planned and intended to be permanent. Moreover, the texts reveal that the king was personally

¹⁹⁴ Although it is possible that these dates are misleading; see Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 154–55.

¹⁹⁵ Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 104.

¹⁹⁶ Refer to my comments on David O’Connor and Barry Kemp’s opinions about the practicality of Amarna’s design in Chapter 3.

involved in crafting its physical layout. It follows that he himself must have chosen to have these monuments carved into the living rock that rings the site, rejecting the option of freestanding stelae. The Amarna boundary stelae are unique among other such monuments made inside *Kmt*.¹⁹⁷ According to William Murnane and Charles Van Siclen (1993, 147–48), they differ from the boundary stelae of fields, estates, and other cities in that they were not made in “a conspicuously public place” such as a temple forecourt (although one could argue that their visibility was sufficient in this particular context to be considered ‘publicly visible’). In addition, Murnane and Van Siclen comment that the texts tell us more than just the size and location of the territory they enclose, which was standard practice for other internal boundary stelae. Furthermore, and of greatest importance here, they are not freestanding—a characteristic that makes them inherently less mobile or changeable than their counterparts. Of course, one cannot look at the map of Akhetaten without noticing that its boundaries were indeed altered in various ways. However, as Murnane and Van Siclen note, even when Stela M was ‘replaced’ by Stela K, the position of *the city* did not move, just as Akhenaten had promised (1993, 170); the former stela, I might add, was left in its original position and was not erased.

With regard to changes in the boundary of Akhetaten, Stelae X and M (and later K)—those that mark the northern and southern extremities of the city and bear the Earlier Proclamation—are the only ones that contain the term *t3 dhnt* (Adrom 2004, 5–6).¹⁹⁸ This term refers to the very features on which they stand: the two “crag,” as Murnane and

¹⁹⁷ Egypt’s internal boundaries (*t3šw*; Chapter 6) were established by royal command and were thus theoretically (although not always practically) meant to last forever. They were usually marked with stelae that testified to that effect. For boundaries and stelae outside of *Kmt*, see Chapter 6.

¹⁹⁸ It appears in the phrase *t3 dhnt n p3 wḏ*, “the cultically activated rock face of the stela.”

Van Siclen put it, that protrude from the eastern cliffs and hug the bay that housed the city center (see above, Figure 4.11).¹⁹⁹ This “auspicious configuration” (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 157) of the landscape thus offered two points, one in the north and one in the south, that were used to define the first formal boundaries and the central architectural axis of Akhetaten. Moreover, they flank a center point that became the location of the king’s tomb in the Royal Wadi (Mallinson 1999, 76). One can imagine that these prominent natural features, “visible from any point of the city’s territory,” would have been readily apparent to the king when he first ‘discovered’ the site— “providentially” signaling to him a convenient outline into which he could insert his city (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 164). Although Murnane and Van Siclen picked up on the topographic significance of the “craggs” in defining the city’s central axis, they were not privy to the nuances of the term *tꜣ dhnt* that further explain its use at Akhetaten. Knowing what we now do about the meaning of this term (Adrom 2004), it is not surprising to find it used in this context: Akhetaten was not only the seat of a god, but a god who made daily *appearances* as he rose over the eastern cliffs, and a god who was thought to rejuvenate everything in his path as he passed above. It is possible that sacrifices or other rituals for the Aten were carried out in front of these features (Adrom 2004, 5–6). The use of such a specific term at only the sites of the first two stelae suggests that the cultic capital of Akhetaten was identified as being concentrated within these two points. The *dhnwt* of Akhetaten were the original delineations of the sacred landscape at Amarna, and their identification as such underlines the city’s position as a primarily religious project. Even as further stelae and wider boundaries were added to the

¹⁹⁹ All of the other rocky places at Amarna are *ḏww*.

king's plan, the significance of these sacred and conspicuous natural features was steadfast. The city grew around and within them, but never past them to the north or to the south, as the Earlier Proclamation asserted. Its location "in this place" was forever fixed.

Herrmann Grapow, writing on the symbolism of mountains in the Egyptian world, identified the *dww* at Amarna as ones whose permanence and longevity were of particular gravity in the Egyptian view (1924, 52). It follows that monuments carved into them, especially those reinforcing the role of the mountains as 'enclosures' for the city, would be seen to acquire the fortitude of these natural features. The decrees and promises concerning the foundation of Akhetaten were enacted in a medium that stemmed directly from the time of creation, like the city, and which was bound to last for the rest of the *dt*-time, also like the city. I suggest that the motives behind Akhenaten's decision to make his boundary stelae in living rock are made clear in the stela texts: the location of his city was not to be altered, and the king held himself to his oaths by marking its boundaries in a way that made it immune to any potential changes of address.²⁰⁰ The medium of living rock offered Egyptian kings a sense of place and permanence that went well beyond that of other monumental supports: once these stelae were carved into living rock, the city could not be moved. This decision demonstrates that living-rock stelae could be used as a means of permanently and materially expressing a king's wish to tie his actions to a particular landscape. It may also explain why only *this* city, a contested and nontraditional space, employed living rock as the medium for its boundary markers. Akhetaten was an explicit challenge to Egyptian norms, and the stelae disobeyed these

²⁰⁰ See Vogel 2011 for the concept of 'address changes' for freestanding stelae taken out of their original contexts.

norms by being physically engrained in a nontraditional cityscape, where they materially resisted any opposition to the king's building program.

This connotation of place and permanence endured long after Akhetaten was abandoned: the land between the stelae, consecrated to the Aten, was never reoccupied in the pharaonic period. Remains dated to the Coptic period are the only attestations to the time after Amarna's main occupation (Kemp 1993).²⁰¹ The fact that this place remained untouched for the rest of pharaonic history is meaningful to say the least: the stelae seem to have become an intrinsic (if mysterious; Thum and Salmas 2019) part of the landscape, permanently designating the area between them as Akhetaten. These monuments had once helped to endow the landscape with its cultic capital, and in the post-Amarna era they stubbornly held onto it—a fact that made further occupation of this place undesirable to an Egypt that had returned to traditional forms of worship.²⁰² The empty Akhetaten was taboo for the Egyptians, its boundary stelae forming a line that marked a space that no one crossed.

Pure Water, Fine Stone: The Sacred Landscape(s) at Gebel Silsila

Gebel (el-)Silsila, situated 65 kilometers north of Aswan (Figure 4.16), was the location of celebrated sandstone quarries popularized in the New Kingdom for temple construction, including that of Medinet Habu and the Ramesseum, as sandstone became the building material of choice (Klemm and Klemm 2008, 180–201; Nilsson and Ward

²⁰¹ These include small villages, shrines, rock-cut chapels in the same cliffs as some of the living-rock stelae, and a church established inside the tomb of the ancient Egyptian official Panehesy.

²⁰² The stelae were the subjects of post-Amarna-period erasures of their “more accessible texts and figures,” but apart from that they remained largely intact (Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 182, 222, fn. 136). This suggests a desire to retain the off-limits designation of this place.

2014; Ward 2015; Doherty 2015; *LÄ* II 441–447).²⁰³ Apart from its quarries, Silsila is perhaps best known for the rock-cut temple termed the Speos of Horemheb (Thiem 2000) and its dozens of funerary rock shrines belonging to Eighteenth Dynasty officials (Caminos and James 1963).²⁰⁴ However, it is also the site of numerous living-rock stelae, relief scenes, and monumental cartouches, many of which were royal commissions (Table 4.1).²⁰⁵ In the interest of brevity and cohesion, in this case study I focus my discussion on the three living-rock stelae of Seti I, one on the east bank of the Nile and two on the west.²⁰⁶ As a group these monuments illustrate a broader pattern that has already been observed by the archaeological mission currently working at Silsila: whereas the east bank of the Nile is characterized primarily by quarry inscriptions, the west bank is dominated by monuments that speak to Silsila's designation as a sacred landscape. The interplay between the two is not only spatial, but symbolic.

²⁰³ Their use began in the Middle Kingdom and continued into the Roman period. These were the largest sandstone quarries in Egypt (Nilsson and Ward 2014, 36).

²⁰⁴ According to the Swedish mission currently working at Silsila, the Speos of Horemheb is now thought to have originally been the Speos of Hatshepsut.

²⁰⁵ I am very grateful to Director Maria Nilsson and her team for allowing me to spend a week with them in January 2017, during which time I was able to see all but one of the monuments in Table 4.1 (the stela of an unidentified ruler). I was also fortunate to be able to speak and brainstorm with Assistant Director John Ward, epigrapher Philippe Martinez, and Egyptologist Moamen Saad (who studied the Nile Stelae for his Ph.D. dissertation) during my stay.

²⁰⁶ These monuments and others are currently being studied by the Gebel Silsila Project team. New epigraphic drawings and translations are forthcoming; here I rely mainly on Kenneth Kitchen's transcriptions for my translations.



Figure 4.16 Map showing the location of Gebel Silsila.



Figure 4.17 Satellite image of Gebel Silsila.

KING	MONUMENT	LOCATION
Amenhotep III	Royal Eulogy Stela ²⁰⁷	East Bank
Amenhotep IV	Quarry Stela ²⁰⁸	East Bank
Akhenaten	Quarry Stela	East Bank
Seti I	Quarry Stela ²⁰⁹	East Bank
Ramesses II	Quarry Stela ²¹⁰	East Bank
Unidentified king ²¹¹	Stela with offering scene ²¹²	East Bank
Apries	Cartouches	East Bank
Seti I	Rhetorical Stela ²¹³	West Bank
Seti I	Nile Stela ²¹⁴	West Bank
Ramesses II	Nile Stela ²¹⁵	West Bank
Merenptah	Nile Stela ²¹⁶	West Bank
Ramesses III	Nile Stela ²¹⁷	West Bank
Ramesses III	Relief scene ²¹⁸	West Bank
Ramesses V	Royal Eulogy Stela ²¹⁹	West Bank

Table 4.1 Royal stelae and inscriptions at Gebel Silsila.

²⁰⁷ This stela stands immediately next to one that was clearly commissioned by an official of Amenhotep III (Klug 2002, 414–17). As Andrea Klug notes, it is unclear whether the text is written from the point of view of the King, an anonymous narrator, or the private person who would have been responsible for the stela's construction. See also Caminos 1987. The quarries of Amenhotep III were also located on the east bank.

²⁰⁸ See Bommas 2003, 25–26 and Legrain 1902.

²⁰⁹ *KRI* I 59–61.

²¹⁰ See Martinez 2009.

²¹¹ Likely a Third Intermediate Period ruler. See “Gebel el Silsila in the news.” Gebel el Silsila Project blog, 13 January 2015. <http://gebelelsilsilaepigraphicsurveyproject.blogspot.com/2015/01/gebel-el-silsila-in-news.html>.

²¹² This monument may be a non-royal commission.

²¹³ *KRI* I 80–81.

²¹⁴ *KRI* I 81–96. This type of monument was made for a cult purpose related to the inundation; see below.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *KRI* I 81–96.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Immediately to the right of this scene, between it and the stela of Ramesses V, is a private stela from the reign of Shoshenq I that recounts the king's opening of a quarry at Silsila (Caminos 1952).

²¹⁹ See Peden 1991. For some reason, Alexander Peden calls this monument a “quarrying” stela. Judging by its text, it is rather obvious that it is a eulogy and has no direct link to quarrying activities.



Figure 4.18 The locations of the monuments in Table 4.1, with those of Seti I highlighted.

Gebel Silsila is the location of the narrowest point of the Nile in Egypt (350–400 meters wide), where the sandstone cliffs come right up to the water’s edge on both banks (Caminos 1955, 51). In the Pharaonic period this place was known as Kheny (*hny*), ‘the Rowing Place,’ a reference to the fact that Silsila was only accessible to boats during the Nile’s ebb—the midpoint between the rise and fall of the river, when the waters were slow enough to allow boats to reach the shore, as well as the ideal time for loading blocks of stone from the quarry (John Ward, *pers. comm.*).²²⁰ The modern Arabic name means ‘Mountain of the Chain,’ and apparently stems from the myth that a chain was once placed under the water in order to make navigation more difficult, underscoring the designation of this place as one of restricted movement (*LÄ* II 441–447).²²¹ To some minds Silsila served as a natural boundary between Egypt and Nubia, since the first Upper Egyptian nome, *tꜣ-sty*, began south of here.²²²

As I noted in the previous chapter, this was one of several sites thought to have been sacred sources of the Nile (Yoyotte 2011; *LÄ* IV 506–507). Offerings were cast into the river at Silsila in order to encourage and give thanks to the inundation in its personified form as the god Hapy (*LÄ* IV 498–500; see below).²²³ The Nile here was referred to as *pꜣmw wꜥb*, ‘the Pure Water.’ The use of this term is by no coincidence reminiscent of *ḏw*

²²⁰ Ward notes that although roads could be traveled east to the Red Sea and west to Kharga Oasis from Silsila, people could not simply ‘pass by’ here on the river.

²²¹ Arthur Weigall reported that the two names—Kheny and Silsila—were linked by way of a Roman misunderstanding of an Egyptian term meaning ‘barrier’ (1910, 360). The term, “Khol-khol,” cannot exist phonetically in Coptic (Christian Casey, *pers. comm.*), and bears no relationship to any known ancient Egyptian words for ‘barrier’ or ‘border.’

²²² Paul Barguet (1950, 7) held that this was “really a Nubian nome,” and described a sort of cataract at Silsila. Kitchen maintains that this was the site of “a rocky defile where the Nile flowed more treacherously” (*RITANC* I 70).

²²³ However, note that Hapy was not the chief deity of Silsila as a whole: that was Sobek, who was given the epithet Lord of Kheny, worshipped at Silsila (perhaps in more domestic cult settings?) from at least the Twelfth Dynasty (Kucharek 2012, 4). Nevertheless, the monuments I discuss here, and the cultic capital of Silsila as it relates to the Nile, explicitly concern Hapy.

wꜥb, ‘pure/primeval mountain’; from the application of the adjective *wꜥb* and the texts at Silsila we may assume that, like *ḏww wꜥbw*, the *mw wꜥb* was not only sacred but “forbidden to the profane” (Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz 1968, 203). Whereas great height or another unique, visually prominent characteristic could be drawn on to distinguish a mountain “reserved for the gods” from an ordinary mountain (ibid.), it seems to me that the outstanding constriction of the river at Silsila is what led to its designation as the *mw wꜥb* (and probably also its designation as a source of the Nile). Due to the sandstone cliffs’ close proximity to the river, the water level would always have appeared higher here than anywhere else, even at times of low water (Kucharek 2012, 10)—a sure sign of abundance and, no doubt, the looming presence of Hapy.

The New Kingdom was the undisputed height of religious importance at this place (Kucharek 2012, 4), and it seems that the very narrowest portion of the Nile at Silsila was where its cultic capital was most highly concentrated. This spot is marked on the west bank by four monuments known as the Nile Stelae or Nile Shrines (Barguet 1950; Figure 4.19),²²⁴ which are the only monuments at Silsila to contain the designation *pꜣ mw wꜥb*. Thus the term probably applied only to this spot; living-rock stelae were employed here to further distinguish it from the rest of the landscape. From south to north the stelae belong to Seti I, Ramesses II, Merenptah, and Ramesses III. The earlier three face east across the river, set back and framed by a cavetto cornice, papyrus columns, and side panels with scenes; a fourth monument of this type once stood to their right. The stela of Ramesses III is an ordinary rectangular monument that faces south, and may have been a substitute for the lost monument behind it, if the latter did indeed belong to this king

²²⁴ See also the forthcoming dissertation of Moamen Saad.

(Kucharek 2012, 10). The stela of Seti I has sunk down towards the water, presumably due to an earthquake or similar landscape-altering phenomenon—the same force that tilted the stela of Ramesses III toward the west, and which probably lowered all of the monuments in this portion of the site. These are not the only alterations to the landscape that prevent us from obtaining a fuller picture of what Silsila looked like in antiquity: since this is a quarry landscape, stone has since been removed on both sides of the river, and we cannot be sure what we are missing.



Figure 4.19 Panorama of the Nile Stelae.

The scenes from Seti’s Nile Stela do not survive, but the lunettes of the stelae of Ramesses II and Merenptah contain double scenes of their respective kings offering to the Theban Triad (on the left) and Re-Horakhty, Ptah, and Hapy (on the right).²²⁵ In these scenes Amun-Re is given the divine epithet *ḥry-ib pꜣ mw wꜥb*, ‘Who Resides (at present) in the Pure Water’—a direct parallel with *ḥry-ib pꜣ ḏw wꜥb*, ‘Who Resides (at present) in the Pure Mountain’ (Chapter 3). Both epithets stress the designation of these natural features as divine seats for gods ‘visiting’ their locations, and offer a deictic link to their physical contexts. Furthermore, they underscore the connection between rocks and water

²²⁵ Since these are made in the same architectural style as Seti’s monument, unlike the stela of Ramesses III, they offer the closest parallels for figural decoration.

in Egypt's sacred landscapes, demonstrating that deities could be present in and communicated with through both types of features. Presumably the side panels of Seti's Nile Stela, behind the papyrus columns, would have followed a similar theme as those of his successors. They contain scenes that include duplicate figures of Hapy (on the bottom register, closest in height to the river); members of the ancient and foundational Ennead; the goddess Taweret (known elsewhere as Mistress of the Pure Water; Kucharek 2012, 4); and Amun-Re-Kamutef (PM V 217–18).



Figure 4.20 The Nile Stela of Seti I.

Seti's stela contained the fullest text, although not the most complete in our day: the missing portions have been reconstructed through collation with the other Nile Stelae. All four monuments bore what was essentially the same message, although some changes were made to the monuments of Ramesses II and Merenptah, and the stela of Ramesses

III does not contain the usual closing portion (in Kenneth Kitchen’s words, it is the “economy” edition; *RITANC* I 70). The text of Seti’s Nile Stela no longer bears its date, but it was probably commissioned very early in his reign, likely in Year 1 (*RITANC* I 70). The stelae of Ramesses II and Merenptah were made in Year 1 of each of their reigns; the stela of Ramesses III is dated to Year 6, but this may simply have been the year when he replaced his damaged monument from Year 1. There was clearly some association, established by Seti I, between a king’s ascension to the throne and the commemoration of his gratitude for the inundation through living-rock monuments at the place where Hapy resided.²²⁶ The mark of a successful king is the guarantee of sustenance for his subjects, so one need not struggle to find a connection.

After the king’s titulary (where he is described as “beloved of Hapy”), Seti’s Nile Stela offers an invocation to “Nun-Hapy,” a conflation of the personified inundation with the infinite primeval ocean, where the waters of the flood originated (Chapter 3). This portion of the text describes the god as Egypt’s provider, “who confers benefits throughout Egypt by the creativity of his own mind” (*ir ʒḥw m-ḥt tʒ-mry m kṃʒ ib=f ḏs=f*).²²⁷ The king then relays the importance of offering to Hapy, justifying his establishment of festivals and oblations for the god at Silsila:

iw=i rh.k(w) ḥnty ḥʒ n shʒw nty mn m pr-mḏʒt prt ḥpy m ḳrty r sḏf(ʒ) pʒwt nṯrw iw mw wʿb m-hʒw ḥny smwn -r=f ist=f -tn ḏsr ḳ(ʒ)b -n=f ʿ(ʒ)bw im

I know the foremost thing of the writings office, which is preserved in the archive: the emergence of Hapy from the twin caves to provide the gods’ offering bread. The Pure Water is in the vicinity of Silsila. Surely this place of his is holy (*ist=f -tn ḏsr*), and the oblation has been doubled for him there.²²⁸

²²⁶ This does not mean that the *text* carved on these stelae originated with Seti; in all likelihood it did not (*RITANC* I 70).

²²⁷ After *KRI* I 87.

²²⁸ After *KRI* I 88–89.

Here the connection between Hapy, the Pure Water, and the location of the Nile Stelae is incredibly clear. The mention of caves (*krty*) as the source of the inundation recalls the division of the underworld into caves in the Book of Caverns (*LÄ* II 1231–1232). Caves have a long history, especially in Upper Egypt and Nubia, of use as places of worship (Williams 2006, 151; Chapter 3); the foundation of the speos at Silsila may well have been due to the presence of an earlier cave sanctuary, a place where the otherworldly could be accessed in the lived world. As for the reason why *two* caves of Hapy are mentioned in the text, this is probably because the Nile was thought to possess sources in both Lower and Upper Egypt.²²⁹ In the ‘Hymn to the Nile’ (Helck 1972), a related text with Middle Kingdom origins, the flood is also said to spring from a cave.

Following this portion of the stela, Seti goes on to state that he is the first king of Egypt since primeval times (*p3wt*) to consider and provide for Hapy in this way—doubtless an exaggeration, but an attempt to claim a historical singularity, just as was done in the Wadi Hammamat and at Amarna. At its end, the monument contains a royal decree establishing two annual festivals to honor Hapy and a suite of other gods at Silsila with offerings. Their purpose was to guarantee a flood so fruitful that it would seal the watery membrane between the Duat and the world of the living, which was apparently thought to become exposed at this very spot:²³⁰

wḏ ḥm=f w3ḥ ʿ(3)bwt n (i)t=f imn-rʿ nsw-ntrw ḥpy it ntrw ḏ3ḏ3t rst tpt nwy t3 sp 2 n rnpt m-h3w p3 mw wʿb n ḥny ist ḏsrt n wšr.n nt ḥr-s r ḥ3p ḏsrw dw3t

His majesty’s decree: the establishment of oblations for his father Amun-Re, king of the gods, for Hapy, father of the gods, and for the southern tribunal upon the [Nun-]flood and

²²⁹ In one of my conversations with Moamen Saad, however, he suggested that the two caves mentioned in the Nile Stelae were located at Elephantine and Silsila.

²³⁰ Andrea Kucharek believes that the reference to the holy places of the Duat points to “the protection of the corpse of Osiris in the Underworld” (2012, 10).

land (*nwy t3*), twice a year, in the vicinity of the Pure Water of Silsila, the holy place, (so that) the water does not dry up on it, to conceal the sacredness of the Duat...²³¹

The dates of these festivals (III Shemu, day 15 and I Akhet, day 15) correspond, fittingly, to the time of low water and the time just before the onset of the flood (*RITANC* I 70).

The decree is followed by a list of offerings to be made to the gods. In front of the stelae of Ramesses II and Merenptah, a sandstone ‘platform’ of sorts hangs over the water (Figure 4.21); it seems likely that this was the place where offerings (or a scroll merely listing them!²³²) were given to Hapy (Kucharek 2012, 4).²³³



Figure 4.21 View east across the Nile from in front of the Nile Stelae, with the platform in the center.

Approximately 225 meters southwest of the Nile Stelae, also on the west bank of the Nile facing east, is another monument of Seti I: the so-called Rhetorical Stela (Figure

²³¹ After *KRI* I 89–90. The “flood,” *nwy*, here refers to Nun.

²³² Ricardo Caminos explains in the *Lexikon* that the Book of Hapy may have been cast into the Nile instead of the actual offerings. This would have been far less wasteful, with priests and others likely consuming them instead (*LÄ* IV 498–500). According to Papyrus Harris I from the reign of Ramesses III, this practice was also carried out at Memphis and Heliopolis (one of which was perhaps thought to be the location of the other cave mentioned in this text).

²³³ Below this platform are what appear to be two further relief scenes. I regret that I was unable to adequately photograph them. From the edge of the platform they appear rectangular and standing perpendicular to the water, but I cannot describe them further.

4.22). This monument, whose scene, date (if there was one²³⁴), and final textual portion are now lost, contains a eulogy that speaks of Seti's virtues. The king's titulary references the creator deity Re-Horakhty-Atum—also stating that “he is Nun”—as well as the Ennead (the same “southern tribunal upon the [Nun-]flood and land,” *d3d3t rst tpt nwy t3*, invoked in his Nile Stela). The text mentions both Silsila and the inundation, but those portions of the stela are too fragmentary to analyze with any certainty. The overall impressions one gets from this message are that it is specific to Silsila, and that it highlights Seti's divinely supported role as a provider for his subjects, echoing the description of Nun-Hapy (vis-à-vis the people of Egypt) in his Nile Stela. Although the Rhetorical Stela is not located at the epicenter of the Pure Water as the Nile Stelae are, its placement is nonetheless meaningful: it looks symbolically across the water at the quarries on the east bank where stone for the king's building projects was extracted, and where another of his stelae was carved (John Ward, *pers. comm.*).

²³⁴ Kitchen read a possible “Year 2” before the king's titulary, but was not convinced (*RITANC* I 69). I think it is likely that this stela was undated, as it does not appear (in its incomplete form, at least) to commemorate any particular event.



Figure 4.22 The Rhetorical Stela of Seti I.



Figure 4.23 Philippe Martinez photographing the Rhetorical Stela.

On the east bank of the Nile, Seti's Quarry Stela (Figure 4.24) served a different purpose. This monument lies almost exactly opposite the Nile Stelae, along the east-west road between the Ramesside sandstone quarry and the river, where blocks of stone were slid onto barges in the water for transportation to their respective construction sites (Ward 2015, 67 ff.).²³⁵ The stela looks south and gazes over the road; it would certainly have been a constant presence in the minds of those moving stone towards the Nile (Figure 4.25).

²³⁵ A rock-cut basin, discovered some distance north of this road, appears to have been used to load stone slabs onto barges during times of high water (R. Klemm and Klemm 2008, 186).



Figure 4.24 The Quarry Stela of Seti I.



Figure 4.25 The Quarry Stela of Seti I in context.

This rectangular monument is dated to Year 6, IV Akhet, day 1, and its lunette once showed the king offering wine to Amun-Re, Ptah, and a goddess whose identifying features are now lost. The main portion of the text opens with a description of the king in Thebes, “lying awake devising benefactions for all the gods of Egypt” (*sḏr rs-tp ḥr ḥḥi ʒḥw n nṯrw -nbw tʒ-mry*).²³⁶ It then recounts how Seti was moved to initiate a thousand-man quarrying expedition to Silsila, “in order to convey (*ḥn*) monuments of fine hard sandstone for his father Amun-Re, and for Osiris and his Ennead” (*r ḥn mnw n (i)t=f imn-rʿ wsir ḥnʿ psḏt=f m inr nfr rwd*).²³⁷ The text then describes just how generous the king was to his quarry workforce, paying them with large quantities of fine provisions. This

²³⁶ After KRI I 60.

²³⁷ Ibid. As Benedict Davies observes, the mention of these gods suggests that the monuments built from Silsila sandstone would be erected at Thebes and Abydos (1997, 199).

“ostentatious display of benevolence” (B. G. Davies 1997, 199) further underscores the king’s role as a provider for his subjects, and thus serves as an allegory for Hapy’s relationship with them, as described in Seti’s Nile Stela.

Although connections between the textual themes of Seti’s stelae can be made rather easily, the two on the west bank served different aims than the one on the east. This is apparently due to a broader physical division in the function of this landscape during the Ramesside period, marked by the north-south course of the Nile: although there were quarries on both banks, the east bank bears monuments that are concerned chiefly with matters of quarrying, while the west bank, particularly at the narrowest point of the river, bears monuments that paint it primarily as a nexus of numina.²³⁸ Such a dichotomy need not imply that quarrying was a strictly ‘profane’ activity: as I noted above in my discussion of the monuments in the Wadi Hammamat, taking away the stone, especially so that it could become part of a temple or other monument for the gods, can be seen as a votive action (Gundlach 1980, 110). Private inscriptions from the Roman period indicate that the quarries at Silsila even had their own individual divine patrons (M. Smith 2005, 333; Nilsson and Ward 2014, 37). Although the west bank was the spot where monuments evoking the Pure Water were clustered, the east bank of Silsila is not necessarily ‘less sacred’ than the west; its connection to the sanctity of this landscape is simply expressed in a different (and less explicit) manner.

How were Seti’s monuments intended to be seen and experienced on Silsila’s two banks? Silsila’s unique topography undoubtedly had a direct influence on its

²³⁸ This is, of course, assuming that whatever we are missing on either bank due to later quarrying activities has not altered the balance of the material. Seeing as great pains were taken to preserve stelae even when they were located inside active quarries (see below), I suggest that our current picture is more or less accurate with regard to the division I observe between the banks, at least during the Ramesside period.

development into a sacred landscape and a point in the cosmic geography, and appears also to have created room for the apparent functional dichotomy that arose there. From the above images of the Quarry Stela, one can see how the monument would have literally and symbolically overseen the work for the king's temples. It is also obvious that great pains were taken by quarry workmen at Silsila not to disrupt the monument, while still maximizing their output: stone was removed right up to the very back of the stela, so that it now appears freestanding. It is not clear whether this activity took place during the New Kingdom; the chisel and quarry marks around and beneath the stela have been dated to the Ramesside period (R. Klemm and Klemm 2008, 195), so this might be a contemporary indicator of the importance of retaining the king's decree (perhaps as a means of motivation) along the road used daily by the workmen. In any case, it is a sign of respect for the monument and its patron, which speaks to the long-term embeddedness of such works in the rock landscape at Silsila.

As for the monuments on the west bank, Ricardo Caminos observed that “Between the foot of the barren hills and the water's edge there is, for nearly a mile, barely room for a path; indeed there is no room at all on a good stretch of the west bank where the sandstone cliffs drop vertically into the river” (1955, 51). The logical assumption is, then, that the Nile Stelae and the Rhetorical Stela—as well as the other monuments on the west bank—were not intended to be approached on foot (apart from during festival times, presumably via the platform), or even seen up close. Although ordinary people could not have accessed the monuments on the west bank, the gods could interact with them at any time, and the gods were surely their target audience. John Ward views these stelae primarily as stand-ins for the king (an idea with which Mario Liverani

would agree; Liverani 2001, 34; see Chapter 2), and suggests that they were not meant to be viewed by ordinary people at all: it was the king who was meant to symbolically view *the people*, through his stela, as they quarried across the river. I find the idea that these were stand-ins for the king quite plausible considering the capacity of a person's name or image to represent their presence as much as their likeness, but I venture that they were meant to oversee the rites performed on the west bank at Silsila, rather than (or in addition to) the quarrying activities, since the Quarry Stela would easily have served such a purpose on the east bank. Of all the landscapes with living-rock stelae, their use to assert the omnipresence of the king seems especially fitting at Silsila: the rowing place, frequently impassible, but always inhabited by Seti I through an almost supernatural mechanics.

'Of Rocks and Water'²³⁹

The case studies in this chapter offer a glimpse into the mechanics of living-rock stelae in sacred landscapes. In the Wadi Hammamat, early living-rock stelae demonstrate the intimate relationship between the mountain where a god lives and a king is reborn and the stone from which that mountain is made. At Amarna, stelae marked the nodes and boundary lines that defined a new sacred space for a nontraditional form of worship; the immobility afforded to them by their medium held their patron to his oaths, and designated the landscape as the location of infamous Akhetaten long after the city was abandoned. At Gebel Silsila, cultic capital was concentrated not in the site's fine stone, but in its pure water: a place then marked by a series of shrine-like stelae that spoke of the divine grace and ritual responsibility that kept Egypt thriving. Myth-making and

²³⁹ See Harmanşah 2014.

collective memory were essential in cultivating the sacred landscapes where these monuments were sited, as they were in any place in the Egyptian world where monuments were made. But here, in these ‘conceptualized landscapes’ (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 11), cultural meaning was at first vested in their natural features—quite the opposite of what usually happens with built monuments, which tend to give initial social meaning *to* the places where they are erected. The stelae served to enact, sustain, or amplify that meaning.

There are two significant patterns in the use of living-rock stelae in the landscapes described above. One concerns appearance, and the other time. In all of the above cases, the landscapes were places where the god revealed himself: in the Wadi Hammamat, Min was manifest through the miracles he caused and in the *dhnt*; at Amarna, the king received his revelation and the Aten visited daily as he rose over the eastern mountains; and at Gebel Silsila, Hapy came as the inundation. Ordinarily the gods would manifest in their temples, where they had cult statues, but here the timeless rock landscape was deemed suitable for them to make themselves known—and their appearances in turn perpetuated the sanctity of these places. At Amarna, the king was also physically present; he not only chose the locations of his stelae, but inhabited the city himself. But we may actually say something similar with regard to the Wadi Hammamat and Gebel Silsila. The *ḏw* of the Wadi Hammamat was understood to be the mythical birthplace of Mentuhotep IV as Horus, where he underwent an apotheosis—literally an appearance as a divine being.²⁴⁰ And at Silsila, Seti I was able to oversee the rites for Hapy and his quarry work through his stelae because they were not *symbols* of his authority, but *ordained* with it

²⁴⁰ Recall also that this place was a *ḏw wꜥb* in the New Kingdom, a site of itinerant appearance by the god Amun, ‘Who Resides (at present) in the Pure Mountain.’

(Chapter 2). The Egyptian idea that representation (in both text and image) *was* reality blurs the (modern, Western) line between likeness and presence.

The second pattern involves the close connection between living rock and time, which I explored at the end of Chapter 3. All ‘sacralized texts’ are relevant to the cosmological time, in that they transformed events from a king’s reign into “accretions to the creation” (Vernus 2017, 475–78), but the above texts seem to accomplish this with particular potency because their stone supports are still physically tied to the eternal and primordial bedrock. In these examples, the landscapes are all places where cosmic geography and cosmic time are brought together, as in a temple. The events mentioned in the texts constitute both historical singularities (the pivotal moment of a miracle, a revelation, or an appearance) and cycles of time (the rebirth of a king, the recurrence of the first time, the inundation), *dt* and *nḥḥ*, both aspects of time’s duality. All are framed in reference to the primordial world, and all occur(ed) in the same places where they were carved. The texts are geographically specific, centering on the august mountain of Min, the bounded city at Amarna, and the *mw wꜥb*—locations which, as I noted above, already possessed cultic capital before the stelae were carved there. I have already discussed the fact that the Egyptians made no clear distinction between time and space (Chapter 3); places of cosmic geography were also places of cosmic time. Events that occur at points in the structure of the cosmos also occur in the time of the cosmos, and should be recorded in both. The medium of living rock is thus ideal.

Although the above examples demonstrate a rich concentration of meaning in living-rock stelae sited in sacred landscapes, there are other contexts where this medium was deemed an appropriate or effective choice. In the following chapter, stelae with more

‘practical’ functions than those here, whose (primary) intended audiences were probably human, mobilize extraordinary outcrops to deliver messages about military, political, and legal aims. Although their landscapes were not initially imbued with cultic capital, carving a record of *any* event into the living rock was a way of canonizing it, and a way to perpetually anchor that event to its location.

CHAPTER 5

Paths, Claims, Victories: Living-Rock Stelae as Military, Political, and Legal Strategy

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert... Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

– Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"

Percy Shelley's poem describes a ruined Egyptian monument that speaks to the ephemerality of grand building achievements. The name of the king of whom he wrote was not really Ozymandias—that is a misnomer attributed to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (*Hist.* 1.47)—but Ramesses II,²⁴¹ one of the most prolific builders in Egyptian history. While "Ozymandias" cautions readers that nothing lasts forever, no matter how powerful its patron, the intention behind all Egyptian monuments was that they should endure. This was a culture that possessed "a deep desire for eternity"

²⁴¹ See "The real Ozymandias King of Kings: The enthusiasms, rivalries, fads and fashions that lie behind Shelley's best-known poem." *The Economist*. 18 December 2013. Accessed 30 May 2018. <https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2013/12/18/king-of-kings>.

(Assmann 1996, 56), although we know that they were aware of the possibility of ruin.²⁴²

Indeed, the exceptional persistence of Egyptian monuments into the modern age should give us pause: three thousand years later Shelley still knew about this king (despite his name being mangled), and amplified his celebrity by writing about him in a medium that achieved greater proliferation than any of Ramesses' own works.

Monuments whose audiences extend beyond their patrons can be assigned to the public sphere, even if the culture in question does not have a strict concept of 'public' in the modern sense (Moore 1996, 92). By the New Kingdom, events and deeds that had once been preserved in archival form were routinely 'announced' in public view (Redford 1986, 129), with stelae serving as "visible reminders" of the king's accomplishments (Spalinger 1983, 230). As I noted in Chapter 1, the living-rock stelae in this dissertation were carved in open spaces and were therefore theoretically accessible to anyone. But I argue that the monuments in this chapter, which served military, political, and legal aims, were set up in locations that especially maximized the extent of their reach. They were meant to be seen, although not always read, and I assert below that their patrons made calculated use of conspicuous natural features in order to draw further attention to them. In the following three case studies of the stelae at Nauri, in the First Cataract area, and on the Lebanese coast, I explore how the medium of living rock factored into their mechanics, serving not only as a stone support but a magnifier of their messages.

²⁴² See, for example, "The Song of the Harper" (Simpson 2003, 332–33); the so-called 'appeals to the living' in private tombs that curse those who would destroy them; and Tuthmosis IV's refurbishment of the Great Sphinx, by apparent request from the monument itself (*Urk* IV 1539a-1544).

Shouting from the Hilltops: the Nauri Decree

The Nauri Decree of Seti I, also known as the Abydos Decree, is inscribed on a living-rock stela located 35 kilometers north of the Third Cataract in Sudan (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The text dates to Year 4 of Seti's reign and is legal in nature: it concerns the implications for goods and personnel involved in the provisioning of the king's temple for Osiris at Abydos. In all likelihood, the king issued his decree purely to protect his economic interests in Nubia as they related to temple property (Gardiner 1952; Lorton 1977, 25–27). However, it has also been characterized as a commentary on the exact powers of Egyptian administrators, adjudicating their privileges with “lawyer-like precision” (Gardiner 1952, 52; cf. Edgerton 1947).



Figure 5.2 The Nauri Decree of Seti I.

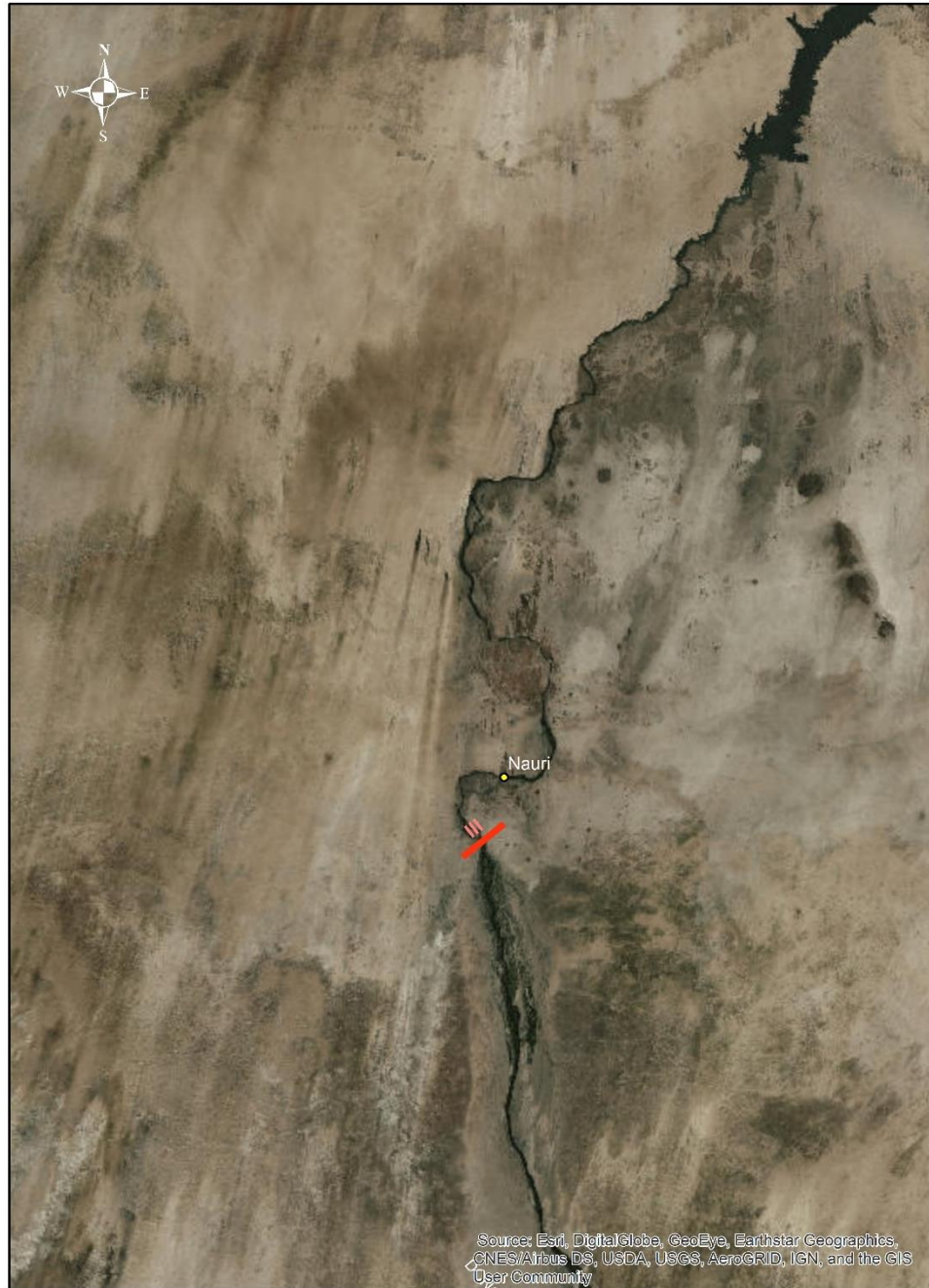


Figure 5.2 Map showing the location of Nauri.

The text has been translated numerous times (Griffith 1927; Edgerton 1947; Gardiner 1952; Davies 1997, 277–308; *RITA* I 38-50), so I will not offer a full translation here. For the purposes of this chapter we need not be as concerned with the particulars of the stela's text as with its relationship to the landscape at Nauri. It is therefore sufficient to

give a general description of its content: the decree bestows protected status on temple land, personnel, gold miners, animals, and boats traveling back to Egypt with the tribute of Kush for Seti's foundation, and outlines harsh punishments for those who would tamper with or steal temple property. The stela is round-topped, and its lunette contains a scene of Seti I offering *maat* to Amun-Re, Re-Horakhty, and Ptah (Figure 5.3). Notably, Osiris—the principle deity of the temple at Abydos—does not appear in the lunette (Griffith 1927, 195).

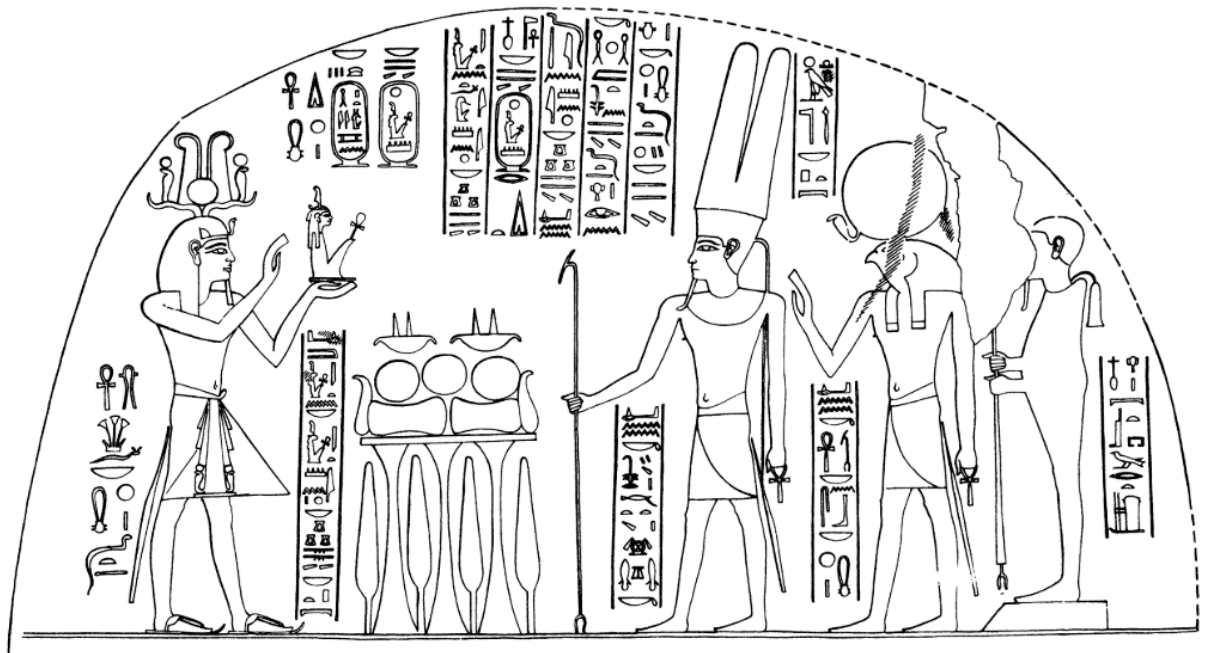


Figure 5.3 Line drawing of the lunette of the Nauri Decree stela (Griffith 1927, Pl. 39).

A royal decree—*wḏ-nsw*, from which the term *wḏ* originated—was a manifestation of the king's *auctoritas*: his applied authority, but also his influence (Vernus 1990). Pascal Vernus explains that in pronouncing a decree to his subjects, the king was replicating his own receipt of *auctoritas* from the gods. Since the king was the mediator between the gods and the people, every decree he made was sanctioned and effectively “put into order” by the gods (Vernus 1990, 246). Most decrees were not

destined for display on public monuments, and would simply be filed away once recorded (Hsu 2012, 273). Their original versions were inscribed on papyrus in a manner that conformed to certain standards of writing, form, and performance, such as the placement of a royal seal (Vernus 1990, 244).

However, a decree might be monumentalized if it “involved the general populace”: putting it on a stela was a form of “publication” that made its contents more widely “accessible” (Hsu 2012, 273–74), although that accessibility was somewhat tied to literacy. Monumentalized decrees enjoyed an “eternal validity” due to their stone supports (*LÄ* IV 4), and they could be edited in order to better serve as royal ‘propaganda’ (Hsu 2012, 273).²⁴³ Many such monuments “insert the decree into an ideological apparatus meant to justify it within a totalizing vision of the world” stretching back in a chain of events to the time of creation (Vernus 1990, 243; see Chapter 3 for the Egyptian view of time). The Nauri Decree belongs to this type, because it contains both a lunette with an offering scene and a contextualization of the king’s actions in the style of

²⁴³ If we are to talk of ‘propaganda,’ as many Egyptologists do when discussing royal monuments, then we need to be careful to use the term without forcing modern connotations onto it. William Kelly Simpson defined ‘propaganda’ elegantly in the Egyptian context: “I use the term to refer to a message, communication, or statement addressed by its author on behalf of an individual or group (a god, king, official, class) or ideology (cult, kingship, personal ambition, special interest group) to a specific or general audience. The message generally carries an overt or implied attempt to persuade the audience to follow the author's desire, to promote or publicize a cause, or to influence its attitude” (Simpson 1982, 266). For the use of New Kingdom historical texts as political propaganda, see Bleiberg 1985. For the vocabulary of Egyptian propaganda, see Grimal 1986. It is also crucial to allow for the possibility of a divine audience for royal monuments, and to acknowledge that most people who encountered them could not read.

a *Königsnovelle*.²⁴⁴ This is despite the fact that it also retains the practical consequences stipulated in the original text, probably in their original form (Vernus 1990, 243).²⁴⁵

The stela states that the decree was conceived at the capital, Memphis, and subsequently declared to a host of high officials in the palace there:

rnpt-sp 4 tpy prt sw 1 ḥst nhḥ [...] ist ḥm=f m dmi n ḥwt-k3-ptḥ ḥr irt ḥss it=f imn-r nb nswt t3wy [...] wḏ 3wy.tw m ḥm n stp-s3 ʿ.w.s. m rʿ -pn n t3ty srw smrw knbt sdmyw s3-nsw n k3š ḥry-pḏt imyw-r nbw ḥ3tyw-ʿ tsw whyt nw šmʿw mḥw kḏnw ḥryw iḥw tʿw sryt rwḏ -nb n pr-nsw rmt -nb h3b m wpwt r k3š

Year 4, first month of Peret, day 1. The beginning of eternity [...] Now his majesty was in the town of Memphis, doing what pleases his father Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the two lands [...] A decree announced in the majesty of the palace, l.p.h., on this day to the vizier, the noblemen, the companions, the courts of judges, the viceroy of Kush, the troop commanders, the overseers of gold, the nomarchs, the village heads of Upper and Lower Egypt, the charioteers, those in charge of the stables, the standard-bearers, and every agent of the palace and every person who is sent on a mission to Kush...²⁴⁶

The original document may have been reproduced numerous times, although the monument at Nauri is the only extant copy. Presumably its content would have been read aloud in the presence of those who needed to know the penalties it laid out, at places where it made sense to do so (Klug 2002, 3; Bleiberg 1985, 9–10)²⁴⁷—perhaps the places in Nubia where temple goods were extracted or where tribute was assembled, and also at Nauri once the stela was completed. This monument is the only royal living-rock stela whose content was definitely present at more than one location (at Nauri, and in the royal archives), but one cannot say whether additional copies were commissioned in stone. The

²⁴⁴ This is from my own reading of the text. I describe it as being in the *style* of a *Königsnovelle* because it contains only a brief portion where the king is described, in a narrative manner, as being in a setting where he is about to perform a heroic deed (endowing the temple and pronouncing the decree); see the below quotation. For the genre of *Königsnovelle*, see Hermann 1938, Jansen-Winkel 1993, and Loprieno 1996, 277–95. Shih-Wei Hsu also provides a breakdown of the elements of this text type (2012, 274–76).

²⁴⁵ Gardiner, however, noted that he felt “sure that the clauses were drafted with the carelessness characteristic of Pharaonic scribes,” and that “useless repetitions and important omissions” had been made in the monumental version (1952, 24).

²⁴⁶ Nauri Decree, li. 1-2, 29-30.

²⁴⁷ The phrase *rdi m ḥr*, “to put in [one’s] face,” although not present in this text, was common in royal decrees and expressed the direct nature of such messages.

duplication of this decree should not be seen as detracting from its relationship with the landscape at Nauri; rather, it means that we should question what Nauri, of all places, had to offer Seti I in this regard. Why was *this* location chosen to display an important message about Abydos, which was crafted with much ceremony at Memphis? And why was that message made in living rock?

The landscape at Nauri is dominated by two sandstone hills.²⁴⁸ These are not gently sloping features, but narrow buttes with nearly cylindrical forms (Figure 5.4)—features of a sort that does not occur anywhere else in the area, as a scan of satellite images and a visit to the site have shown (see also Figures 5.4 and 5.5). The hills are located approximately 500 meters apart from each other and stand about 90 and 120 meters high. The stela is carved into the shorter of them, which is also the one farther downstream. It is located approximately 50 meters above the present ground level (Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.4 The two sandstone hills at Nauri.

²⁴⁸ These hills were known by early researchers as “the Two Virgins,” although this was not the local name (Osman and Edwards 2011, 350).

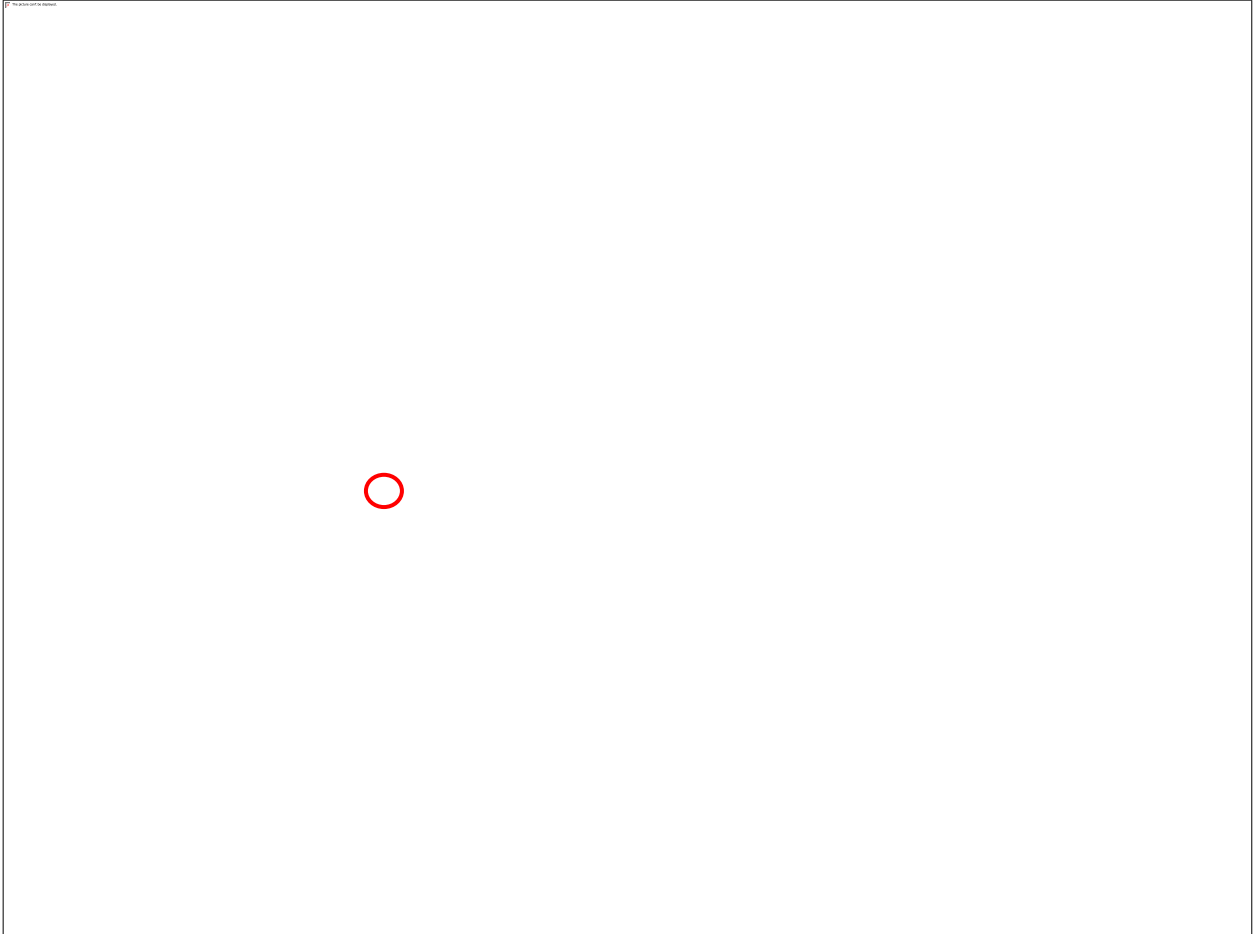


Figure 5.5 Drone photograph showing the location of the stela on the hill.

The stela's existence was first brought to the attention of researchers in the early 20th century. In 1924, archaeologist Terence Gray attempted to make the first squeeze of it. He brought with him “a moderate supply of squeeze-paper,” but was daunted by what he found once he climbed up the side of the hill to confront it in person:

For a stela of ordinary size the supply would have been more than ample, but Mr. Gray found himself faced with an inscribed surface of five square metres, much of it very difficult to reach.²⁴⁹

The stela was 2.8 meters high, but more than 1.5 meters wide—much wider than expected, such that a full squeeze of the monument could not be made. What Gray could

²⁴⁹ Griffith 1927, 193.

manage caused him “great discomfort” according to Francis Llewellyn Griffith (1927, 193). A complete squeeze was later made by Frank Addison, Inspector of Antiquities, although not without issue:

There is no difficulty in scrambling up to the stela and taking squeezes of the lower portion, but the sill or platform at the bottom is broken away and affords only a precarious foothold. Even from this sill it is impossible to reach the top of the inscription effectively, so I had to get a *dôm*-log and make a sort of stage on which to stand. The squeezes of the offering scene were made by a tall native as I myself could not reach the top.²⁵⁰

Griffith noted that, in his time, close-range photography would have been “useless” because the stela does not receive raking light, and there was nowhere suitable to place the camera below it (1927, 194). When I took photographs of it myself, I was only able to get straight-on views of the monument when using a drone. Detail shots were taken by Katie Simon, who balanced herself on the rock jutting out to the right (Figure 5.6). All of this is to say that it is difficult to view the entire monument up close at once, let alone to read its contents.

²⁵⁰ Griffith 1927, 194.



Figure 5.6 Katie Simon photographing the Nauri Decree stela.

The stela's unusual proportions are due to the layout of its text. The lunette and the beginning of the decree follow a standard round-topped stela format, but the text continues from the bottom to an addition on its left, which is also rounded at the top, conforming to the curve of the stela's outline (Figure 5.7). Deemed the “supplementary inscription” by Griffith, this addition is actually a continuation of the decree text. The transition from the bottom of the original stela form to the top of the addition occurs in the middle of a sentence.

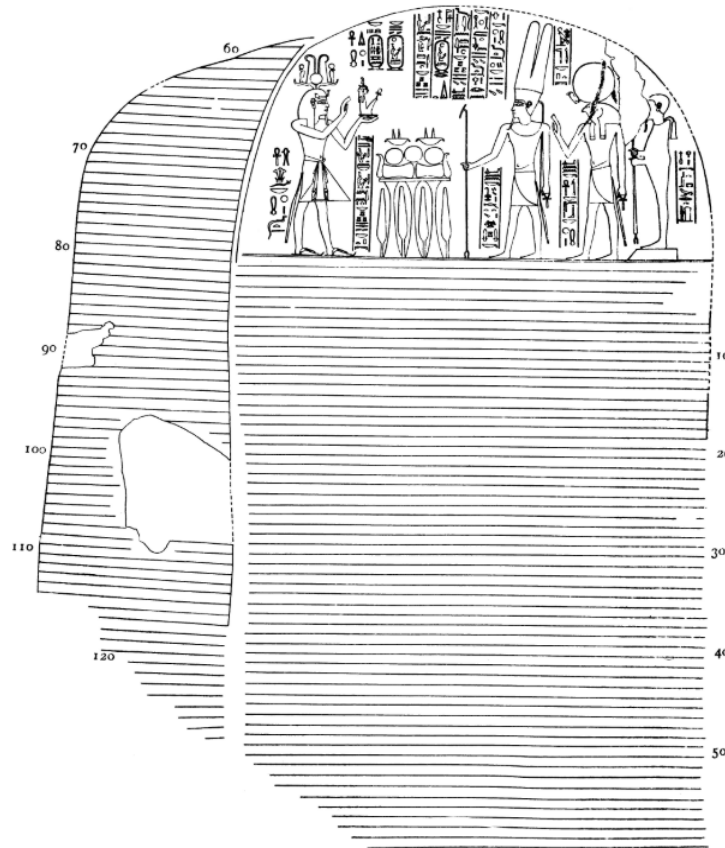


Figure 5.7 Line drawing of the Nauri Decree stela, with the lines of the text outlined and numbered (Griffith 1927, Pl. 38).

What happened here? To put it plainly, the stonemasons seem not to have drafted the monument's layout ahead of time, and they ran out of room (Griffith 1927, 194). The stone at the bottom of the stela was either undesirable to work with or was already being used as a ledge to stand on before it was broken (Figure 5.8). Beyond this, even if they had wanted to continue working with the stone below, two holes in the rock suggest that they had already erected a scaffolding into that part of it (Figure 5.9), rendering it unable to be carved. This was an 'ideologized' copy of the original decree, but the directive was apparently that its legal clauses should be reproduced here in full; they could not just stop where the stone became unusable. But in the stonemasons' haphazard solution, we are inadvertently offered a clue to the stela's purpose at Nauri.



Figure 5.8 The stone below the Nauri Decree stela.

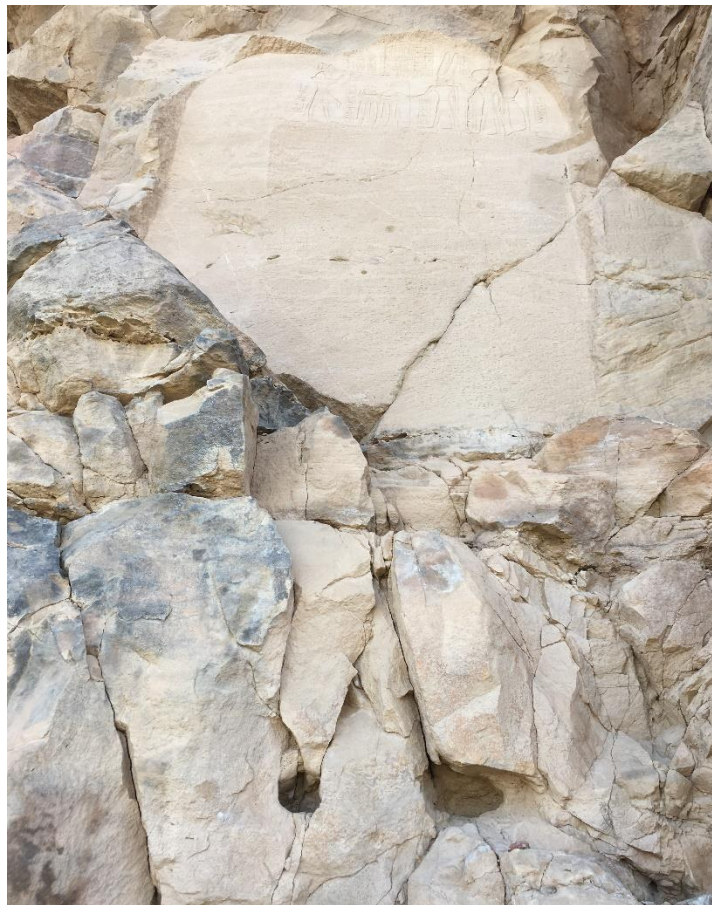


Figure 5.9 Two large holes, possibly from Egyptian scaffolding, below the stela.

The above reports of early researchers confirm that the monument's audience was not expected to see it up close; Gray was unprepared to make his squeeze because when he saw the stela from the bottom of the hill, it appeared to be of normal proportions. This explains why the addition on the left side takes the peculiar shape it does: the stonemasons knew that it was meant to be seen from far away, and that it would appear as though nothing was amiss (perhaps even to the king himself!) if they executed the rest of the text in this manner. In my photographs from the bottom of the hill, it indeed appears unremarkable (Figure 5.10). So, too, from the river: the stela faces the Nile, approximately 295° northwest, which is in the upstream direction—the direction facing those who would be returning to Egypt with the tribute of Kush for the king's temple at Abydos (Figure 5.11). The prepared surface of the monument, which was sunk into the otherwise jagged face of the hill, has caused the stone to appear lighter in color, such that it is readily visible on the hill from some distance away.



Figure 5.10 The Nauri Decree stela as seen from the bottom of the hill.



Figure 5.11 The Nauri Decree stela as seen from the river, in a still from an aerial video.

But why Nauri, and why its eastern hill? There are no known pharaonic architectural remains at this site, and no archaeological evidence to suggest an Egyptian foundation or colonial outpost.²⁵¹ There is a unique reference in the stela to a “fortress of Seti, beloved of Ptah, which is in Sekhmet,”²⁵² which Kenneth Kitchen identified as the decree’s only “precise geographical allusion” apart from Memphis and Abydos. Since this place is not mentioned in any other Egyptian text, Kitchen felt it was possible that “the fort and district were located somewhere at or close to Nauri, hence the presence of the stela if the fort were a Nile shipping control-point” (*RITANC* I 48-49). This seems a reasonable conclusion from the information we are left with, but it would only make sense if the stela at Nauri were the only monumental copy made of the decree text. Nauri

²⁵¹ Griffith mentioned that Gray saw “the remains of an ancient settlement” at Nauri (1927, 206), but Ali Osman and David Edwards do not mention anything of the sort in the publication of their survey results (2011, 350–53).

²⁵² *p3 ḥtm n stḥy mry n ptḥ nty m shmt*, li. 84.

must have been an important location in order to receive such a monument, but in reality, we do not know how many copies of the text were made. Since the decree was conceived and delivered at Memphis, the fortress “in Sekhmet” could be anywhere.

Nauri does lie in some proximity to Tombos and thus to the route leading from that site to the eastern desert, where gold—a material that factors heavily in the decree—was mined. The king’s rock-cut temple at Kanais in the eastern desert also contains an inscription from Year 9 with some decree-type elements, which lays out the proper treatment of this resource and specifies Abydos as its destination (Haring 2007, 167–68; Morales 2010, 399). The temple economy appears to have been invested in the procurement of gold, so the connection to the mining region may not be tenuous. Nauri is also reasonably close to the route that linked the Third Cataract to the Kajbar district, although that route can be used to bypass it. It is possible that there was a goods-collection or control point in the area, although there is at present no further evidence to support such a hypothesis.

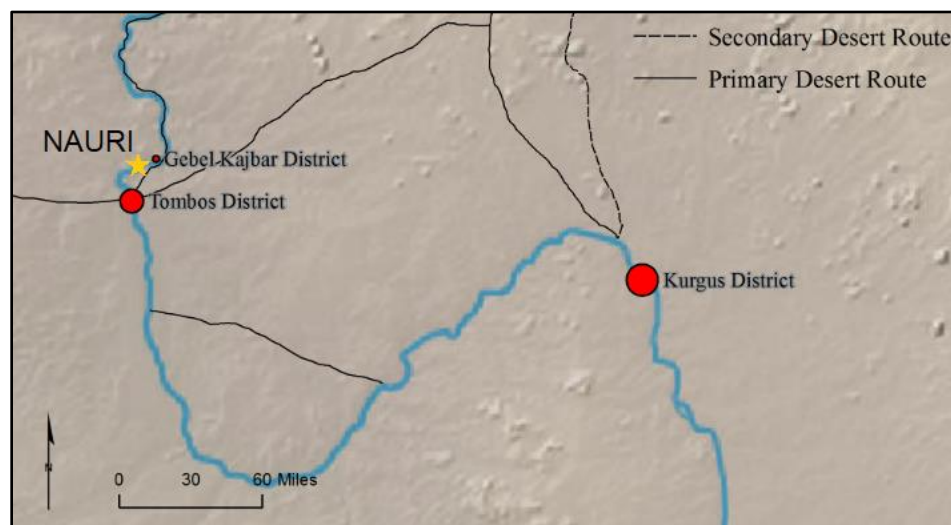


Figure 5.12 Routes in the area of Nauri (after Brown 2015, 240, Map 4.1).

There are also three private living-rock stelae on the same hill as the decree, and they may offer some clue as to the importance of this place. One definitely preceded the creation of Seti's monument: that stela, which is located close to the bottom of the hill, dates to the reign of Tuthmosis III and appears to depict a divinized Senwosret III, worshipped as a god of Nubia (Rondot 2008). There may therefore have been a ritual dimension to this natural feature, although probably a local one. The other two stelae are illegible; they are located immediately to the right of the Tuthmosid-era stela and the Nauri Decree respectively (see above, Figure 5.1, for the private stela next to Seti's monument). In my opinion their positions indicate that they post-date each of these monuments, and I feel it is likely that they were part of the same private devotional event.

In the ancient Near East, rock reliefs were often made at “geologically wondrous” places (Harmanşah 2013, 191). The extraordinary character of an outcrop—high up, at a sacred location, or otherwise unique—made the message seem all the more extraordinary. The dearth of archaeological evidence for pharaonic activity at Nauri leads me to believe that it was primarily the physical character of the surrounding landscape that prompted Seti I to make his stela there. Here we need to ‘zoom out’ and take a wider view on the site's topography. Approximately 15 kilometers west of Nauri, the Nile suddenly juts east—at a near ninety-degree angle—and hugs Arduan Island, the second largest island on the Nile (Edwards and Osman 2000).²⁵³ The hills are located on the southern bank of the river, which flows west-east past it, at the extreme eastern edge of the island (Figure 5.13).

²⁵³ Cédric Gobeil, who recently received a permit to work in this area, tells me that the course of the channel on the south side of Aduan Island may have moved since antiquity, such that Nauri may have once been located on the other side of it.



Figure 5.13 The location of the hills with respect to the Nile.

There are two context clues in the landscape that make the eastern hill an ideal place for a royal monument meant to be seen from the Nile. First, there is the river's dramatic right-hand turn. For people who were used to sailing north as they journeyed downstream, a change in course would surely have caught their attention. Then, the first hill: so very different in shape and size than anything else in the Third Cataract area, it would have cued those on the river to keep looking. Something similar occurred in the monumental program at Tombos, where one of the royal inscriptions was ostensibly meant to signal what was to come (see Chapter 6). To some, the two hills at Nauri may have seemed a wondrous formation, the likes of which they had never seen. But even for those who had made this journey before, they would have been an unmistakable landmark. Salience maps for the eastern hill at Nauri confirm not only that its upper portion is the most attention-grabbing feature when seen from just above the water, as it might have

appeared from a boat (Figure 5.14), but also that the area of the stela is, even now, the most salient area of that upper portion (Figure 5.15).²⁵⁴

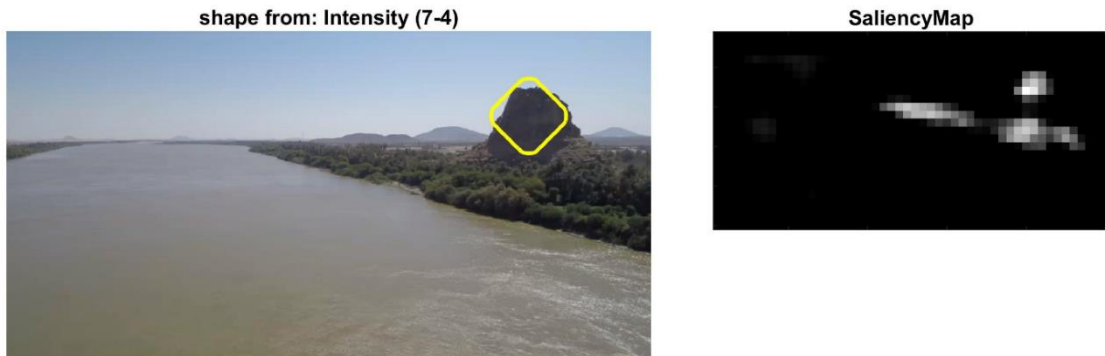


Figure 5.14 Saliency map for Nauri. The area highlighted in yellow in the drone still was singled out by the computer as the most salient feature in this view from the river, which mimicked the way a boat might have sailed.

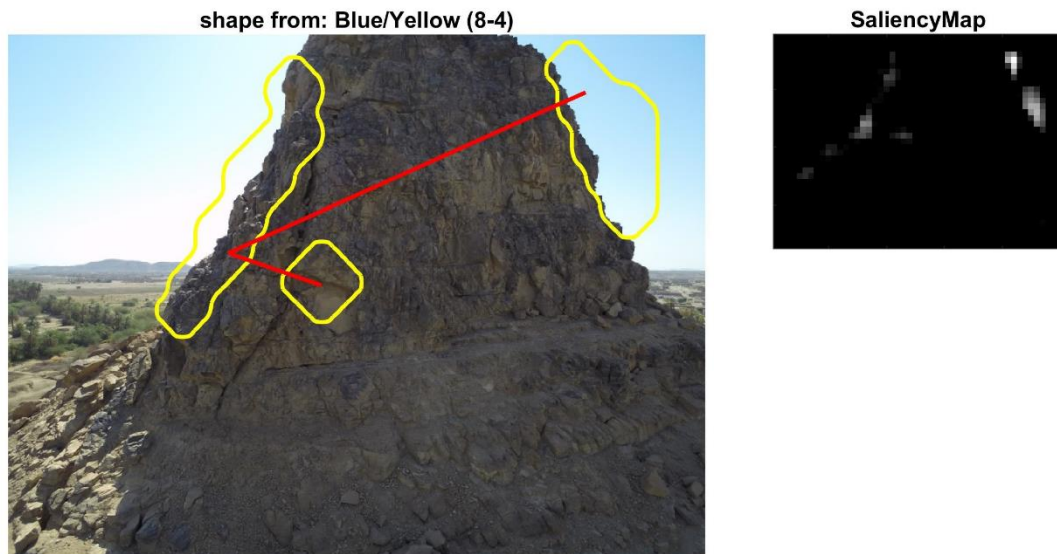


Figure 5.15 Saliency map for Nauri. The areas highlighted in yellow were found to be the most salient within the area singled out in the top figure, in the order moving counter-clockwise.

Seti I's decree was carved into the upstream side of the eastern hill at Nauri as a symbol of the king's *auctoritas* in relation to products and personnel acquired in Nubia, a message meant to be received from the river as his subjects sailed back to Egypt with the

²⁵⁴ The computer detected the sides of the butte as the most salient areas of this image, because of their contrast with the sky. The most salient area on the outcrop itself is the area of the stela, as the saliency map shows.

goods regulated in its text. If the decree had been duplicated in further monumental copies, I am confident that they would also have been carved into “striking” landforms (Bradley 2000, 36) that attracted attention on their own. Recall that there is a cross-cultural propensity for human activity at the sites of visually prominent natural features (Bernardini et al. 2013). From the available evidence, we cannot speak of Nauri’s cultural or economic importance for the Ramesside royal establishment beyond the presence of the stela. But the topography there presented an opportunity for symbolic transmission of the king’s decree, an ever-present mark in the sandstone fabric of the landscape that would look on perpetually, and portentously, as his divinely supported orders were carried out.

Living-Rock Stelae at the First Cataract

The First Cataract (Figure 5.16), the original southern boundary of the Egyptian world, was strategically positioned not only between Egypt and Nubia, but also at the nexus of routes to the Eastern Desert, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean (Raue, Seidlmayer, and Speiser 2013, ix). It is also an “inscribed landscape” (Borrmann 2016b). This area is known for its rock inscriptions, which number in the thousands (PM V 245 ff., Delia 1993; Gasse and Rondot 2007; Seidlmayer 2013; de Morgan et al. 1894; Petrie 1888, *inter alia*). The Cataract’s granite boulders attracted mostly non-royal carvings, often made by stripping away the surface patina of the stone to reveal a lighter color beneath, thus eliminating the need for ink or paint. As a general rule, rock inscriptions at the First Cataract were designed to be “prominently visible,” although they may not appear that way today (Seidlmayer 2013, 208). In studying the royal material at this

location, one must therefore ask which places were the *most* visible out of all the others—because that was undoubtedly the goal in placing royal monuments in such a landscape.



Figure 5.16 Location of the First Cataract.

While numerous inscriptions in this area contain the royal image or mention the royal name, only two living-rock outcrops were carved with groups of royal stelae as defined in Chapter 1.²⁵⁵ The first is Konosso Island, a place known to many in name only

²⁵⁵ I exclude the quarry stelae of Seti I (Habachi 1973; Delia 1993) from this statement, as I explained in Chapter 1 that I consider quarry inauguration stelae to be functionally different from other living-rock stelae. I also exclude those on Sehel Island (Gasse and Rondot 2007): the canal inscriptions of Tuthmosis I were made by his vizier, Turoi; the canal inscription of Tuthmosis III, a copy of his grandfather's, was likely also made in a high official's name; the stela of Tuthmosis III near the chapel of Anukis was part of

due to a combination of the island's relative inaccessibility and Egyptology's traditional emphasis on textual content.²⁵⁶ The second is a cluster of boulders that I call the Aswan Group, situated on the east bank of the Nile south of the modern city of Aswan.²⁵⁷ As I noted in Chapter 1, Andrea Klug suggested that the living-rock monuments in her corpus were used mainly to safeguard Egypt's borders and to demonstrate the suppression of its enemies, either to foreigners or to members of the Egyptian military (2002, 476). The stelae at Konosso and Aswan, which date to the Eighteenth Dynasty, are the best examples of the mechanics Klug proposes. The choice of these two outcrops for such monuments suggests that the royal establishment deliberately utilized landmark natural features located on key land and water routes—"important paths" (Klug 2002, 476)—in order to disseminate messages concerning Egypt's military and political actions vis-à-vis its Nubian neighbors.²⁵⁸

the chapel's forecourt or other architecture (Gasse and Rondot 2007, 140); and the inscription from Year 50 of Tuthmosis III, which does not survive in most parts, appears not to have been a stela proper.

²⁵⁶ Arthur Weigall described the monuments there as "unlikely to be visited" (1907, 465).

²⁵⁷ Monuments from this group are sometimes called the 'Aswan-Philae Stela' of such-and-such king, because these boulders sit along the ancient road between Aswan and Philae (see below).

²⁵⁸ Klug also noted the high frequency with which the living-rock stelae in her corpus were located in the Aswan area and related to Nubian campaigns (2002, 476).

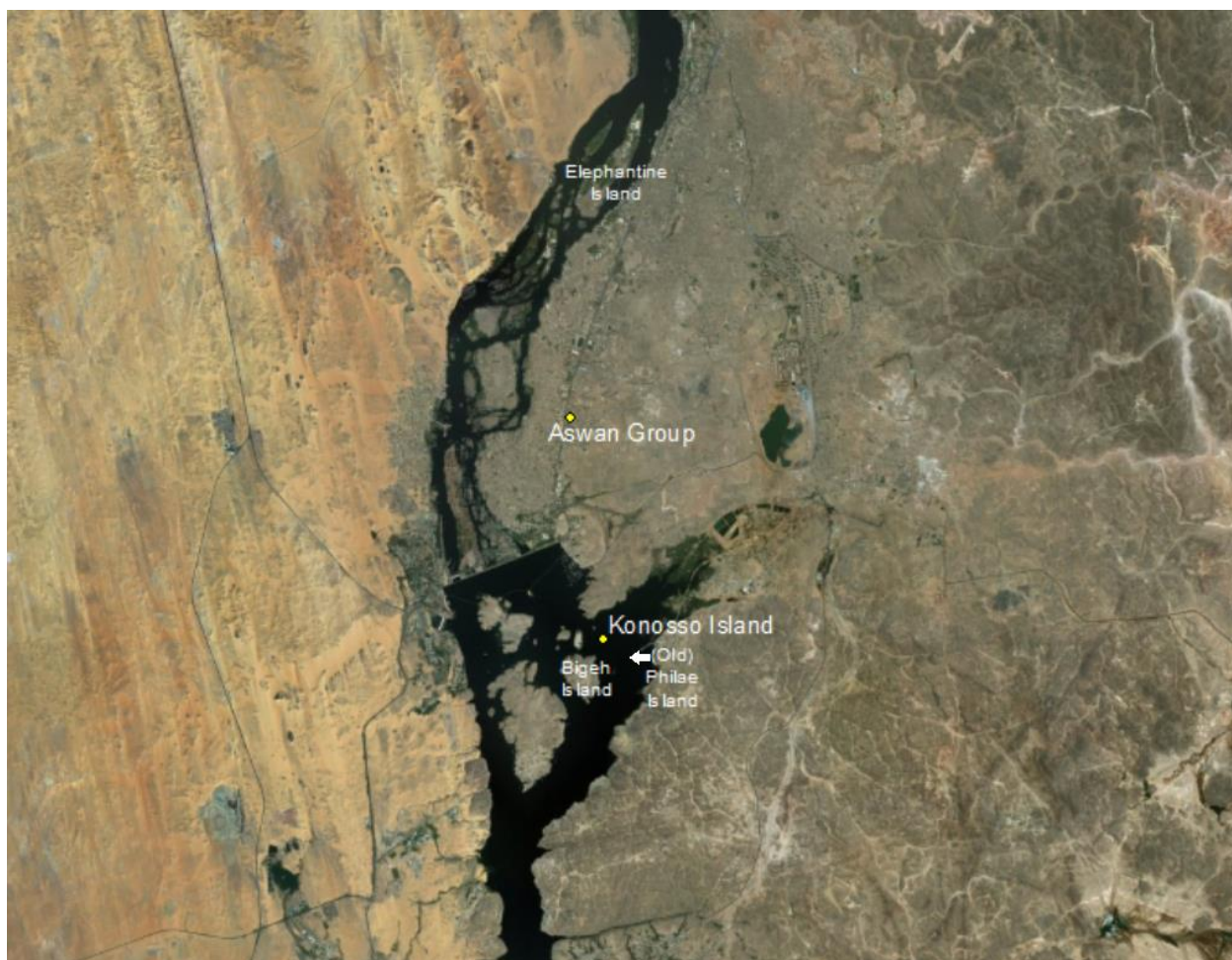


Figure 5.17 Map of the First Cataract, with places mentioned in this section.

Victory Stelae and Military Reports

Before discussing the monuments at Konosso and Aswan, it is first necessary to briefly review two key monument and text types: the *wḏ n nḥtw* and the *iw.tw* report. The term *wḏ n nḥtw* is commonly translated as ‘victory stela’ (Trigger 1976; Spalinger 1978; Klug 2002).²⁵⁹ Such monuments constituted “the bombastic, and often partly poetic, record of a king’s military victory or his mighty acts” (Redford 1986, 128, fn. 3). The

²⁵⁹ Donald Redford prefers ‘triumph inscription’ (1986, 128, fn. 3), which I find equally appropriate. Christopher Eyre (1990) translates the term as ‘literary stela’ because of the contents of these monuments, but I prefer the usual translation because the function of such texts appears to have been the demonstration of the king’s victories (see below).

root of the term is *nḥt*, ‘strength’ or ‘victory,’ an aspect of the king’s power present in the royal arm (as opposed to the mouth or the heart) (Galán 1995, 69; Wb II 317). The plural *nḥtw* is a collective noun that refers to the king’s military power or ability, a Sethian aspect (to balance out his Horus-like attributes; Galán 1995, 68) given to him directly by Amun (Spalinger 1983, 228–29).²⁶⁰ The king’s *nḥt* was only ever directed toward foreigners, and it was expressed in various ways, both violent and non-violent (Galán 1995, 68). The central aspect of this *nḥt* was that it was always used to produce a *positive outcome* (in the form of submission or tribute) from the king’s contact with foreign lands, including from ‘expeditions of *nḥt*’²⁶¹ (Galán 1995, 68, 94). As José Galán observed, Egyptian military expeditions were usually recorded in royal monuments “when the king played a significant role in them” (1995, 94); *wḏw nw nḥtw* are stelae that celebrated the king’s achievements regarding foreign entities when he was both present and personally involved in them.²⁶² In Klug’s study of royal stelae, the only ones that were called by this term were made in living rock.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ For a detailed analysis of the uses and meanings of *nḥt* and *nḥtw* during the Eighteenth Dynasty, see Galán 1995, 41–100.

²⁶¹ *wḏyt nt nḥt*, an expression originating in the reign of Tuthmosis III. This term replaced *sp nḥt*, ‘occurrence of *nḥt*,’ which was used from the reign of Tuthmosis II, first appearing in his stela in the Aswan Group (Spalinger 1983, 227–28).

²⁶² Otherwise they would use the term *ḥpš*, instead of *nḥt*, to subtly indicate that the king was not present (Galán 1995, 97). Galán notes that comparatively few Eighteenth Dynasty expeditions of *nḥt* are said to have taken place after the reign of Tuthmosis III, according to the extant sources; we can assume that this is because subsequent kings were rarely present on the expeditions that took place during their reigns (1995, 95).

²⁶³ According to Klug, those that were explicitly called by this term are the Konosso Stela of Amenhotep III (covered in this chapter, below, although I argue that it is *not* self-referential) and the Euphrates stela of Tuthmosis III (Chapter 6). However, Klug notes that three further living-rock monuments—the Euphrates stela of Tuthmosis I and the Kurgus stelae of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III—can also be assigned to this text type, as they are part of the same program as the Euphrates stela of Tuthmosis III (Chapter 6) (2002, 10).

The genre that Spalinger identified as the *iw.tw* report is another text type that testified to the king's military prowess, albeit in a different way.²⁶⁴ These short reports hinge on the phrase *iw.tw r dd n hm=f*, “one came to say to his majesty”—a formula that was first introduced in the reign of Tuthmosis II, in his Aswan Group stela (Spalinger 1983, 1–4). The formula gives a standardized report of the basic information about a military campaign, with few specific details (Spalinger 1983, 20). It appears to have been employed mainly to describe minor campaigns where the king did not personally lead his troops: the structure of *iw.tw* texts presents the king “as a figure of permanent stability and omnipotence, in the role of leader of his land, rather than as commander-in-chief of the army” (Spalinger 1983, 20–21). (Despite this, in some of the *iw.tw* texts in this chapter it is stated that the king was present at the site of the monument once the campaign had ended, making an appearance as part of a victory celebration.) Such texts begin with a full date, epithets, and a description of a setting wherein the king is in the palace fulfilling his duties—the date and time of the event were thereby “fixed” (Spalinger 1983, 31). Then the report itself begins: someone notifies the king that his enemies have done something worthy of military action (*causus belli*), he reacts (for example, by being enraged or by praying to the gods), and he justifiably dispatches his army (ibid.). The impetus for the *iw.tw* genre, according to Spalinger, was the rise of

²⁶⁴ It is necessary to note that this genre was not explicitly named by the Egyptians. However, Spalinger made a valid point about the problem of categorizing Egyptian text forms that the Egyptians did not label themselves: they did not label their building inscriptions ‘building inscription,’ but they did not need to, because it was obvious that this is what they were (1983, 232). According to Spalinger, *all* royal military inscriptions were texts “texts of *nhtw*,” because they reported on the king's victories; the word *nhtw* does not appear as often as we would think in the titles of royal texts simply because their genre was assumed by the reader (1983, 230). The *iw.tw* reports are a subcategory of Egyptian military inscriptions, for which there was no catch-all title (Spalinger 1983, 222–23).

Egypt as an empire: its format allowed for the transmission of brief narratives summarizing and publicizing the operations that accompanied imperial endeavors (1983, 47).

The below table summarizes the locations and contents of the six²⁶⁵ royal living-rock stelae present on Konosso Island and in the Aswan Group. In the following two sections, I analyze the interplay between these monuments and the outcrops where they were carved.

KING	LOCATION	STELA	TEXT TYPE
Tuthmosis II			
	Aswan Group	Aswan Group Stela	<i>iw.tw</i> report
Tuthmosis IV			
	Konosso Island	Year 7 Stela	<i>iw.tw</i> report ? ²⁶⁶
	Konosso Island	Year 8 Stela	<i>iw.tw</i> report
Amenhotep III			
	Aswan Group	Northern Stela	<i>iw.tw</i> report
	Aswan Group	Southern Stela	Speech of Amun
	Konosso Island	Konosso Stela	<i>wḏ n nḥtw</i> ? ²⁶⁷

Table 5.1 Royal Living-Rock Stelae at the First Cataract.

²⁶⁵ There was at least one additional royal stela carved on Konosso; today only its scene remains. It was once misattributed to Tuthmosis IV, but we have no way of knowing to whom it belonged (see Bryan 1991, 264). A stela in the name of Ramesses II (KRI II 344-345) was carved by a “subordinate” (*hry-ʿ*) on the north face of a boulder just north of the Aswan Group (visible on the right in Figure 5.31); although the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI) team includes this stela in their study of the group (Borrmann 2014), understanding the subordinate’s inscription to be separate from the stela, I instead take the view of Kenneth Kitchen, who understood it as a colophon. Therefore I do not include an analysis of this monument here, given the parameters of my study.

²⁶⁶ The text of this monument is mostly lost, but see below.

²⁶⁷ See my comments below; Klug and others believe that this is a *wḏ n nḥtw* because the text mentions one, but I do not believe it is self-referential.

Konosso Island

Konosso Island²⁶⁸ is formed primarily by two tall, rounded peaks of granite²⁶⁹ northeast of Bigeh Island, in the reservoir between the two Aswan Dams (Figure 5.18). The dams have flooded the landscape such that today only the upper portions of Konosso's peaks protrude from the water, rendering the island accessible solely by boat (Figure 5.19).²⁷⁰ The modern local name for the island is *Sawaba*, 'fingers,' because it now looks like an upturned fist when viewed from the north (Figure 5.20).

²⁶⁸ The ancient name for this place is not known for certain, although *knst* is a possible candidate (*LÄ* III 684).

²⁶⁹ According to the 1907 Cairo Survey Department's *Geological Map of the First or Aswan Cataract* (accessed via ExLibris DigiTool). Note that Arielle Kozloff states more specifically that the island comprises black granodiorite (2012, 44); I have been unable to find another source for this distinction.

²⁷⁰ The Aswan Low Dam was completed in 1902, and the Aswan High Dam in 1970. Two photographs in Gaston Maspero's *History of Egypt, Chaldea, Syria, Babylonia, and Assyria* show the landscape changes induced by the first dam (1906, figs. 452 and 454).



Figure 5.18 Map of the First Cataract area, showing the location of Konosso Island.



Figure 5.19 Konosso Island as seen from a motorboat, looking northwest.



Figure 5.20 Konosso, or *Sawaba*, viewed from the north.

Little more than a century ago, things looked very different. For much of the 19th century Konosso was an intermittent island, separated from the mainland only during periods of high water (and, after the first dam was built, only when the reservoir was filled; Ball 1907, 51). In antiquity it may have been an island year-round—the connection with the mainland observed by William M. Flinders Petrie (1888, 10) and Jacques de Morgan (1894, 1:65) was supposedly caused by a buildup of rocks and silt during the early 19th century (*idem.*)—but if so, the water level in the pharaonic period would have been far lower, surely below the bottom of the lowermost rock inscriptions present on the island (except perhaps during the inundation).

Drawings and photographs from the 19th century reveal that Konosso's peaks once figured prominently in the Cataract landscape (Figures 5.21-5.24). When viewed from the south or southeast, they assume the shape of a pylon—a (temple) gateway. This shape is rather appropriate for the landscape of the First Cataract, seeing as this area was Egypt's original boundary with Nubia, and the southern boundary of *Kmt*. Bigeh Island, just southwest of Konosso, was considered to be the northern boundary of Wawat (Lower Nubia) during much of the pharaonic period (Zibelius-Chen 1972, 102–4), making Konosso's position especially significant.²⁷¹ Upon entering Egypt from Nubia by boat, the twin peaks of Konosso would greet travelers, traders, and armies as an entranceway—although large boats could not navigate through the Cataract, forcing their crews onto land routes in order to bypass it (Borrmann 2016b). This is what made the Cataract an excellent natural boundary.²⁷² The island was apparently a popular landing place for expedition members leaving or entering *Kmt*, as numerous private inscriptions attest (Bryan 1980, 264; see below).²⁷³

²⁷¹ This was the case at least during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and it was probably conceptualized that way even as the interface between Egypt and Nubia changed over time. Betsy Bryan implies that Bigeh was also the northern boundary of Wawat during the New Kingdom (1980, 420), although Karola Zibelius-Chen suggests that the boundary may have moved southward to the Second Cataract by that time, in order for natural and administrative lines to coincide (1972, 104).

²⁷² For the connection between living rock and boundaries in the Egyptian world, see Chapters 3 and 6.

²⁷³ Note that I have usually cited Bryan's dissertation in this chapter, rather than her book of the same name (1991). I have consulted both and found the quotations from her dissertation to be more helpful due to the level of detail.



Figure 5.21 Drawing of Konosso from the first quarter of the 19th century (Denon 1829, Pl. 72.3).

While conducting my research I was surprised to discover that, to the best of my knowledge, no one had thought deeply about the conspicuous shape and position of Konosso from a scholarly perspective before.²⁷⁴ This is presumably because of the degree of change the First Cataract area has witnessed since antiquity—something that I, too, cannot reconstruct. However, I cannot adequately stress the importance of seeing the landscapes of living-rock monuments, even those that have changed, in person. Those who have written about these monuments without paying close attention to their settings have, for example, published mislabeled photographs of other monuments in their stead.²⁷⁵ As I argue throughout this dissertation, the landscape is an integral part of each monument’s message and should be considered with equal weight to it.

²⁷⁴ In fact, no one had written much about it at all, save for some work on the stela texts. One need only look at the shockingly brief entry in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (LÄ III 684) to get a sense of just how little the island has been studied.

²⁷⁵ Kozloff mislabeled (and mirrored) an archival photograph of the Aswan Group as the stelae on Konosso (2012, 45), and erroneously stated that a stela of Amenhotep III in the Aswan Group is “now mostly submerged under Lake Nasser” (2012, 75). Having been there myself, I can confirm that it is still on dry land.



Figure 5.22 Photograph of Konosso by Frank Mason Good, ca. 1857-1870s (Canadian Centre for Architecture).



Figure 5.23 Photograph of Konosso by J.P. Sebah, second half of the 19th century (Jafet Library, American University of Beirut).



Figure 5.24 View of Konosso from the south, as it appears in the *Denkmäler* (LD I 103).

Karl Richard Lepsius visited Konosso twice as part of the Prussian Expedition, once in November 1843 and again in September 1844 (LD Text IV 127-130).²⁷⁶ He observed the following about the island, much of which is reflected in his hand-drawn plan (Figure 5.25):

On the south side of the island is a very big granite boulder about 8 feet in height, 30 feet in length and 10 feet in width, in the shape of a large sarcophagus lid. It is worked on top and long border lines are still visible. Next to it are a lot of smaller granite boulders. Perhaps the tomb of Osiris was believed to be here, there are still some old sherds around it. The rock seems to have been overbuilt; a building-block is still in place on the north side. A staircase leads up along the south side of the landing place.²⁷⁷

The staircase and “sarcophagus”-shaped boulder are clearly visible in front of the island’s peaks in a photograph taken by Petrie (Figure 5.26). In present times it is not possible to corroborate the other archaeological evidence noted by Lepsius, as it would now be submerged. It is certainly possible that this was a site of formal cult activity; the First

²⁷⁶ He encountered Konosso as an island on both visits; the period of low water was between December or January and August (de Morgan et al. 1894, 1:65; Petrie 1888, 10).

²⁷⁷ LD Text IV 128-129, translated from the original German. Sincere thanks to Miriam Müller for checking my translation.

Cataract had its own triad of gods, Khnum, Satet, and Anukis, all of whom are invoked in local inscriptions, including those at Konosso. There are sixty-five inscriptions on the island, the majority of which mention Khnum, Lord of Kebhu (the ‘cool waters,’ meaning the First Cataract²⁷⁸) (de Morgan et al. 1894, 1:65); some of these are offering formulae (LD Text IV 129). De Morgan hypothesized that Kebhu was not only a general name for the Cataract but the name of Konosso itself, and suggested that Khnum must have had a small chapel on the island (1894, 1:65). The remains that Lepsius observed obviously come to mind, although any potential connection is now lost. The pylon-like shape of the island may have attracted such a foundation, not to mention the long history of living-rock sacred sites at the First Cataract, including the Temple of Satet and the mythical ‘Cave of Hapy’ (Chapter 3).²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ The ‘cool waters’ were understood to be the waters of the underworld, associated with Osiris, which rose up at the mythical sources of the Nile. The First Cataract was one such source (Chapter 3), hence this epithet of Khnum, a major deity of the Cataract area.

²⁷⁹ The former was associated with the role of the First Cataract as a frontier between Egypt and Nubia (Bussmann 2013).

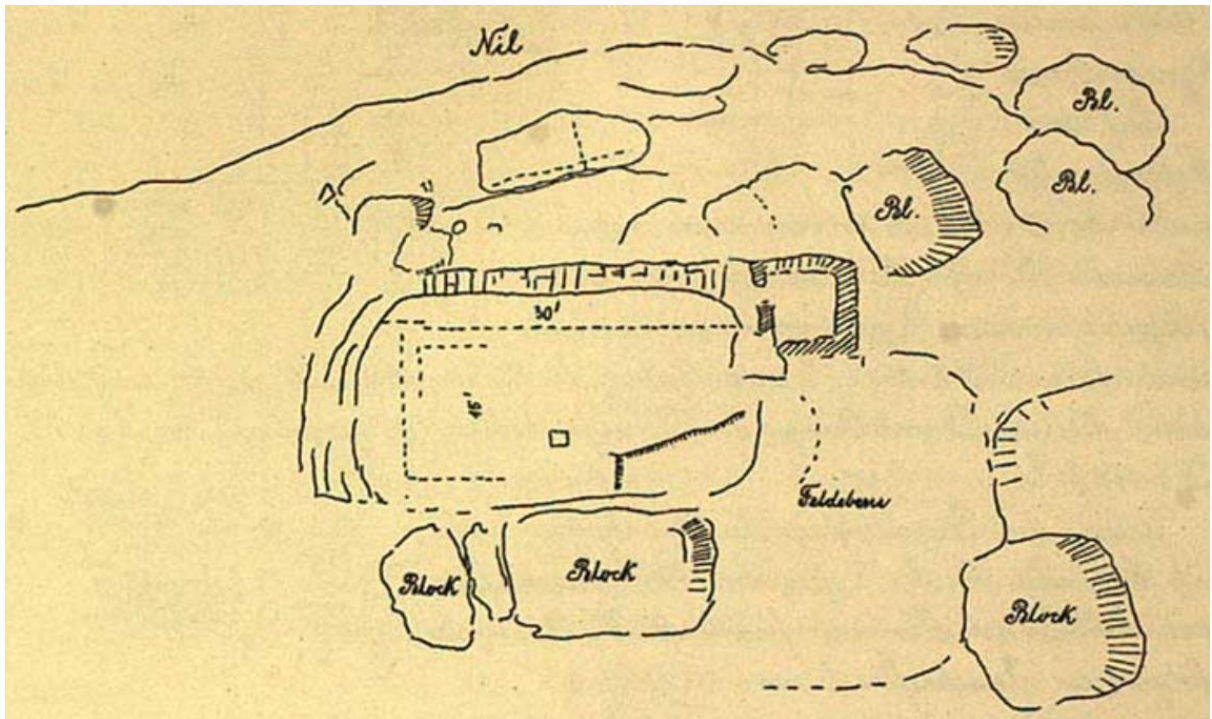


Figure 5.25 Lepsius' plan of Konosso (LD Text IV 129; note that south is at the top of the plan).

During the Middle Kingdom, two relief scenes in the name of Mentuhotep II and two of Neferhotep I were carved at Konosso. The former king's reliefs depict him as an ithyphallic god alongside Satet and Khnum (LD II 150b) and Neith and Montu (LD II 150c); the latter's a scene with his ithyphallic god alongside Khnum (LD II 151f) and one with Satet and Montu (LD II 151h).²⁸⁰ These scenes were located on the northern and western sides of the island—the sides that faced inward, towards Egypt. They are clearly cultic in nature, appealing to the divinities of the Cataract and two of Egypt's more prominent gods. But in the New Kingdom, there was a distinct change in the use of this outcrop: royal stelae carved on the rocks at Konosso (as well as the names of officials and

²⁸⁰ On these unusual representations of the king(s), see Habachi 1963. Neferhotep I was fond of copying the monuments of his predecessors, as is evidenced by his inscription at Sehel, which nearly mirrors Senwosret III's (Habachi 1950, 4).

members of the royal family, and even personal messages memorializing the dead²⁸¹) were orientated deliberately south and east, outward towards Nubia. The stelae of Tuthmosis IV and Amenhotep III, visible in the below photograph (Figure 5.26),²⁸² are military monuments carved in ‘public’ view. I contend that their patrons took advantage of the unusual shape and prominent position of the island, incorporating these aspects as an integral part of the messages articulated in their stelae.

²⁸¹ As a prince, Amenhotep III left two memorial inscriptions for people he knew, including a beloved teacher, at Konosso (Kozloff 2012, 44).

²⁸² No part of the Year 7 Stela of Tuthmosis IV can be seen above the water line today. However, I have labeled it in Figure 5.26 in the position that I believe to be correct: according to Lepsius, “on the west side of the island, on the left of the first two stelae of Amenhotep III and Tuthmosis IV” (LD Text IV 128). Klug confused the two stelae of Tuthmosis IV, writing that the Year 8 Stela was also located on the west side of the island (2002, 345); that stela is actually on the east side, as I observed myself when I checked the contextual details provided by Lepsius. Both stelae “look east” (2002, 345, 353)—but on a rock outcrop, an inscribed monument located on the outcrop’s west side cannot look directly east, as it would then be carved inside-out, facing the interior of the boulder. The boulders that form Konosso are oriented in such a way as to allow for loose distinctions between an “east side” and a “west side,” and this is the situation I have outlined in Figure 5.27. *All three* of the royal stelae on Konosso actually face more or less southeast, rather than directly east.



Figure 5.26 Konosso Island as seen by Petrie, with annotations (MSS. 5.8.113, Griffith Institute Petrie Photo No. 732).



Figure 5.27 Satellite image of Konosso with its ‘sides’ indicated.

The Year 7 Stela of Tuthmosis IV is now entirely submerged, but a record of its scene and the little that remained of its text in Lepsius' time is preserved in the *Denkmäler* (Figure 5.28). The scene shows the king smiting an enemy before Ha (Lord of the Western Desert) and the Nubian god Dedwen (Foremost of Ta-Sety/Nubia). The inclusion of these deities suggests that the stela's contents detailed military action to the south and possibly also the west of Egypt.²⁸³ Behind the king is his queen and consort Iaret, with her complete titles, holding a mace—this is a rare attribute for queens, and thus a clear sign of her influence (Bryan 1980, 145–46). Betsy Bryan suggests that Iaret's appearance on the stela connotes her protection of Tuthmosis IV, and perhaps a degree of political significance (ibid.). She notes that Iaret's name also appears on an inscription at Serabit el-Khadim (in Sinai) from the same year, and that both locations “may have represented far points for inspection tours” (Bryan 1980, 263–64).

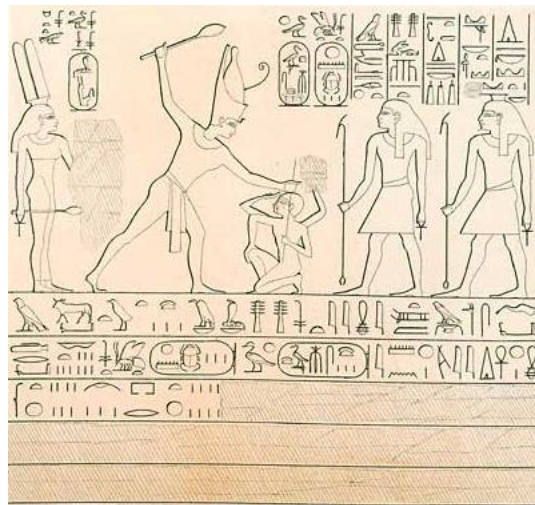


Figure 5.28 What remains of the Year 7 Stela of Tuthmosis IV (LD III 69e).

²⁸³ It may be significant that the final legible line of the text includes the phrase *dr ḥꜣst -nbt*, “who (?) subdues every foreign land” (Klug 2002, 354).

The text was probably an *iw.tw* report, because its main portion begins with the proclitic *ist* (“now...”), indicating the beginning of a setting (Klug 2002, 355; Bryan 1980, 6). It is dated to Year 7, III Peret, day 8—a date that appears to be significant in the context of two other stelae of Tuthmosis IV (Klug 2002, 354): one (freestanding) at Elephantine (III Peret, day 6 of an unknown year), and the king’s Year 8 Stela at Konosso (III Peret, day 2). It is not wholly apparent *why* the beginning of III Peret should be so noteworthy as to appear in three stelae of Tuthmosis IV at the First Cataract, especially as this would have been the middle of the growing season, when the waters of the inundation had long since receded and sailing through the Cataract would have been more difficult than during the season of Akhet.²⁸⁴ One possibility is that it coincided with a pre-arranged royal progress and yearly festival, which are alluded to in the Year 8 Stela (see below).

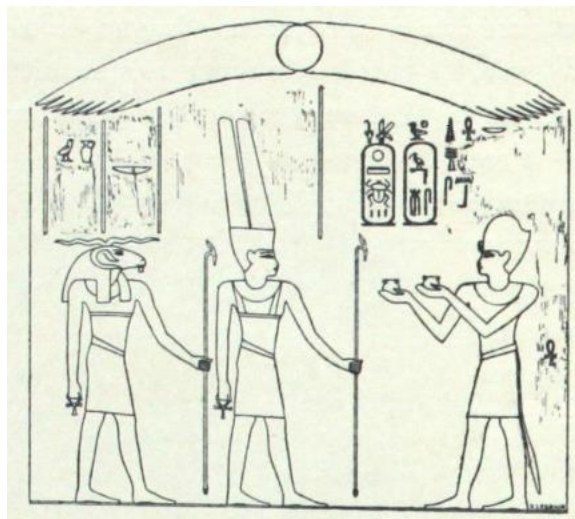


Figure 5.29 The scene from the Year 8 Stela of Tuthmosis IV (de Morgan et al. 1894, 1:66).

²⁸⁴ Note also that “the most effective time to plan a rebellion in Nubia was flood season...when fields were under water and farmers out of work” (Kozloff 2012, 70).

Tuthmosis' Year 8 Stela depicts the king offering wine to Amun and Khnum (Figure 5.29). It preserves most of an *iw.tw* report chronicling a patrol on the routes in the desert east of Edfu to protect Egypt's gold mining operation—the king's only known military action concerning Nubians (but, as Bryan points out, not *Nubia* itself; 1991, 417-422).²⁸⁵ The report states that a group of Nubians was planning a rebellion against Egypt (an exaggeration) and was on its way from Wawat; Tuthmosis IV then petitioned Amun for an oracle (which explains why this god appears in the scene), and was shown “the way upon the good road.”²⁸⁶ The king subsequently sent his army off (*sb.n=f -sw*)—probably on its own, as this is an *iw.tw* report, although the rest of the text describes him actively in the midst of his troops, with details about the color of his ship's sails and the physical arrangement of his forces. But on closer scrutiny these descriptions appear gratuitous, exactly the stuff of the *iw.tw* genre as defined by Spalinger: formulaic additions meant to bolster an otherwise simple account.²⁸⁷ The text reports that the king celebrated the *tît-i'* ('image-cleansing') festival at Edfu on his way south from Thebes before the enemy was thwarted, which he probably did do. Bryan therefore suggests that the whole event may have been staged as part of a pre-planned royal tour of Upper Egypt (1980, 422). In that case the procession south and the creation of the Year 8 stela were *performances* in the truest sense, meant to be seen by the public,²⁸⁸ culminating on an island whose importance as a symbolic gateway to Egypt was amplified by the inscribed signatures of “numerous of his palace favorites” (ibid.) including the future Amenhotep

²⁸⁵ For a full translation of this text, see Bryan 1991, 417–19. For a summary of some of the alternative interpretations of this military action, see Klug 2002, 350.

²⁸⁶ *ssm.n=f hr wzt nfrt*, li. 7.

²⁸⁷ Note also Klug's observation that the army is described as being with the king (*mšw=f hn=f*, li. 11-12), and not the king with his army (2002, 349).

²⁸⁸ Even the oracle may have been made in public (although see Klug 2002, 350–51).

III (Kozloff 2012, 44). The date of this monument, III Peret, day 2, must refer to the celebration at the end of the hostilities—real or imagined—that were described in the text (cf. Murnane 1990, 83–84).

On the choice of Konosso for Tuthmosis IV’s military monuments—his only known *iw.tw* reports—Bryan, in her connection between the island and Serabit el-Khadim, implies that Konosso was inscribed because it was a launching point for Egyptian expeditions (1980, 263–64). It was presumably also the point where these expeditions ended, since entering the First Cataract area would signal a return to Egypt. Klug, on the other hand, states that the choice of this outcrop for the monuments of Tuthmosis IV “probably has to do with the suppression of the rebellion” (2002, 352). She describes how the stelae are oriented eastward, overlooking the Aswan-Philae road on the east bank of the Nile (which runs southward)²⁸⁹ and also facing the direction of the rising sun (in the text, the king’s ship is equated with the day bark of Re) (ibid.). I find both of these ideas compelling to a certain extent, although I would like to add two further observations. The first is that, as I mentioned above (fn. 283) and showed in Figure 5.27, the stelae do not really face east, but southeast. If the orientation of these monuments is indeed meaningful, then it should be noted that the east-facing boulders of the Aswan Group—which already bore an *iw.tw* report of Tuthmosis II (see below)—were ignored in favor of Konosso. The island’s surface could not easily offer a strictly east-facing orientation, but perhaps that was not as desirable as one directed outwards (in the general direction away from Egypt, especially by water) and also in the direction of both Nubia

²⁸⁹ However, according to Kozloff, the road taken (“opened”) by Tuthmosis IV was probably the Kubban Road—the main New Kingdom route from the First Cataract to the gold mines of the Eastern Desert (2012, 46). He may have returned via the Wadi el-Hudi (Bryan 1980, 421).

and the Eastern Desert. Or, more likely, it was not the island's orientation that made it an attractive place to carve, but its prominent and symbolic shape. My second observation concerns the reliefs in the names of two of the king's predecessors on the island, which are religious in nature. Spalinger noted that the Year 8 Stela is more religious than military, with "cultic overtones" unlike the other *iw.tw* reports (1983, 5, 108). As the texts concern military action against foreigners and paint the king as a "way-opener,"²⁹⁰ their placement at the gateway between Egypt and Nubia makes good contextual sense. Konosso, as opposed to other First Cataract locations, offered a conspicuous, outward-facing stone support that *also* had an established cultic aspect (and perhaps, as de Morgan suggested, a chapel to Khnum).

Each of the stelae of Tuthmosis IV adorned the outer face of one of Konosso's peaks. These massive upright boulders can be seen as more than simply stone supports for their messages: they are also physical extensions of the stelae, which make the monuments seem larger than life. This is probably why, centuries after the New Kingdom had ended, the Saite kings Apries and Psamtik II had their monumental cartouches carved on the 'front' of the island on a massive scale (see above, Figure 5.19) (Blöbaum 2013; Habachi 1974a).²⁹¹ When the king's son Amenhotep III commissioned his own monument at Konosso in his fifth regnal year, the remaining space relegated his stela to the smaller center boulder (Figure 5.26)—the peaks obviously had more visual and symbolic appeal than the center of the outcrop, otherwise Tuthmosis IV would have

²⁹⁰ "He opened the road like the Upper Egyptian jackal" (*wꜣ=f mꜥnw mꜥ szb šmꜥw*, Year 8 Stela, li. 20-21). See also Klug 2002, 430.

²⁹¹ Recall, from Chapter 1, Marina Brown's assertion that cartouches were used since the First Dynasty as a way of "annexing" territories to Egypt (2015, 182–83). The cartouches of Tuthmosis IV were also carved on Konosso.

carved at least one of his stelae in the center. Amenhotep III's monument is one of three living-rock stelae of his at the First Cataract, which should be regarded as part of the same monumental program. The other two are part of the Aswan Group; thus the king chose two locations that had already been carved by his predecessors, and which he had visited as a prince with his father, when commissioning living-rock monuments in the area.²⁹²

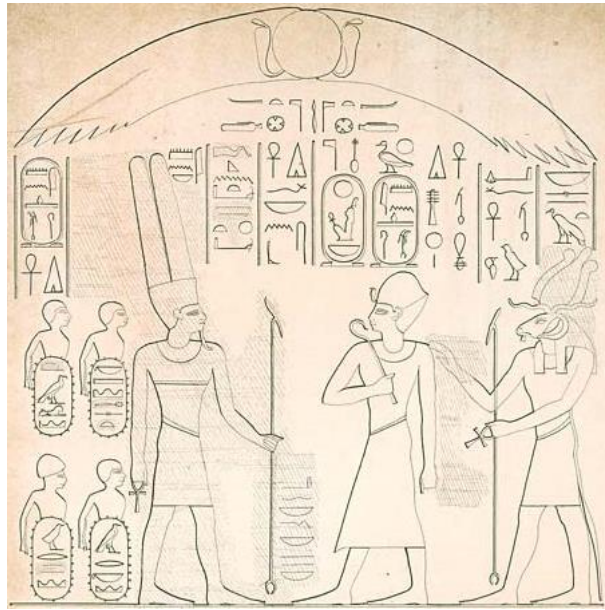


Figure 5.30 The scene from Amenhotep III's stela at Konosso (after LD III 82a).

Amenhotep III's Konosso Stela concerns the suppression of a Nubian rebellion. Its scene depicts the king wearing the blue crown, supported by Khnum, Lord of Bigeh and facing Amun-Re, behind whom are the bound personifications of four Nubian groups: Kush, Irem, Tarek, and Weresh (Figure 5.30).²⁹³ This monument is widely

²⁹² For the material Amenhotep III lifted from the stela of Tuthmosis II in the Aswan Group, see Klug 2002, 430.

²⁹³ See O'Connor 2001, 266 ff. for an analysis of the meaning of these personifications in the context of a campaign against a single Nubian enemy.

regarded as a *wḏ n nḥtw*, and there are two reasons for this. Both are referenced in the opening section of the main text, after the king's titulary:

rnpt sp 5 iit ḥm=f ḥb.n=f wḏyt=f tpt nt nḥt ḥr ḥzst nt kš ḥst iri.n=f t3š=f r mrr=f r [4] shnwt wṯswt ḥr pt smn=f wḏ n nḥtw r-mn ḳbḥw ḥr nn nsw n Kmt iri mitt wp ḥm=f ḳn.w hr ḥr nḥtw

Year 5. The coming of his majesty after he had celebrated his first expedition of *nḥt* against the foreign land of miserable Kush, and after having made his boundary (*t3š*) as far as he wishes, up to the four posts that hold up the sky. He established a *wḏ n nḥtw* as far as (*r-mn*) *ḳbḥw ḥr*. No king of Egypt had done the like thereof except for his majesty, brave and satisfied with *nḥtw*.²⁹⁴

The first reason is that the king characterizes the event that preceded the creation of this stela as an expedition of *nḥt* (*wḏyt nt nḥt*). More to the point, the section that follows describes Amenhotep III as being “at the head of his army” (*ḥzt mšꜥ=f*) when he did harm to Nubia, as well as one who “opens (Egypt’s) ways in *nḥt*” (*wp mṯn=s m nḥt*).²⁹⁵ I see no reason to doubt that the military action that prompted this account was led by the king himself,²⁹⁶ since he could easily have followed the model of his father Tuthmosis IV if it were instead a minor campaign—his father’s neighboring monuments were equally worthy of being inscribed on this prominent outcrop. The second reason why this is regarded as a *wḏ n nḥtw*, and really the main reason, is that the king claims to have established a *wḏ n nḥtw* on this campaign, at a place called *ḳbḥw ḥr* (‘Cool Waters of Horus’²⁹⁷). Many scholars assume that the stela is self-referential, and thus conclude both that this stela is a *wḏ n nḥtw*, and that Konosso should be equated with *ḳbḥw ḥr*.

I take issue with this interpretation for several reasons. First, although it is tempting to make a connection between the *ḳbḥw* of the First Cataract and *ḳbḥw ḥr*,

²⁹⁴ Li, 5-8.

²⁹⁵ This is similar to the description of the king in Tuthmosis IV’s Year 8 Stela and was no doubt influenced by it (Klug 2002, 430), but note that here the phrase is qualified by “in *nḥt*.”

²⁹⁶ See also O’Connor 2001, 264 and Topozada 1988.

²⁹⁷ Sometimes also translated as ‘Pool of Horus.’

Khnum is the Lord of the Cataract, and no monuments invoking Horus are present at Konosso. Second, if we recall that the only other Eighteenth Dynasty monuments termed *wḏw nw nḥtw* by the Egyptians themselves were their imperial boundary stelae (see above and Chapter 6), and that *wḏw nw nḥtw* specifically concern the king's actions towards foreigners, it seems suspect that such a stela should be made in Egyptian territory, rather than abroad.²⁹⁸ Third, the term *ḳbḥw ḥr* more than likely described a northerly location (despite the fact that others assign it to the south; Galán 1995, 150).²⁹⁹ In an inscription of Tuthmosis III at Wadi Halfa, *ḳbḥw ḥr* is painted in opposition to *ḳbḥw stḥ* ('Cool Waters of Seth'), with the former being in the north and the latter in the south:

it.n=f t3 -pn ḥr ḥnt=f ḳbḥw stḥ ḥr st-ḥr=f ḥtm.n=f -sw ḥr mḥty=f r-mn m ḳbḥw ḥr

He has seized this land on its south (*ḥnt*), the Cool Waters of Seth being under his supervision; he has sealed it on its north as far as (*r-mn*) the Cool Waters of Horus.³⁰⁰

A limestone fragment with a map of the cosmos, now at Yale, places *ḳbḥw ḥr* squarely in the northwest;³⁰¹ J.J. Clère concluded that the term could apply specifically to Lower Egypt, but also to the mythical, "gradually receding" northern limit of the Egyptian world (1958, 46).

²⁹⁸ One could perhaps argue that Konosso, as the interface between *Kmt* and Egypt's broader sphere of influence, could be a suitable place for such a stela; however, the stela at *ḳbḥw ḥr* did not mark a boundary. In fact, the text itself states that it was set up not at the 'boundary' of *ḳbḥw ḥr* (*t3ḥ*; see Chapter 6), but 'as far as' it (*r-mn*). One would expect an explicit statement about the stela's location at a *t3ḥ* if it were indeed a boundary stela, especially as this word appears in the preceding sentence. The Cataract itself functioned as a natural boundary, without a stela, for more than a millennium before the New Kingdom.

²⁹⁹ James P. Allen (*pers. comm.*) pointed out to me in jest that if one goes north, the waters are indeed cooler—and that if one goes far enough, they are ice!

³⁰⁰ *Urak* IV 807.17-808.2. Note that the same preposition, *r-mn*, is used here as in the Konosso monument.

³⁰¹ For a photograph and description of this object, see <https://echoesofegypt.peabody.yale.edu/overview/map-cosmos> ("Map of the Cosmos"). Accessed 17 July 2018.

Clère read the sentence in Amenhotep III's Konosso Stela about making "his boundary...up to the four posts that hold up the sky" in parallel with the sentence about the creation of the stela, and thus assigned *ḳbhꜣw ḥr* to a region of the cosmos that was inaccessible to humans. The "four posts of the sky," meaning the corners of the world (Chapter 3), is a well-known figurative expression for the farthest reaches of a king's authority. Such expressions were common during the Eighteenth Dynasty and "belong to an idealized realm that often extended the sphere of Egyptian control to abstract, mythical boundaries" (S. T. Smith 2003, 170; cf. Hornung 1992, 88–89). In the autobiography of the official Ineni, the boundaries of Tuthmosis I are said to have been established at *wpt-tꜣ* in the south (modern-day Kurgus; see Chapter 6) and at *ḳbhꜣw ḥr* in the north.³⁰² Tuthmosis I, incidentally, has no monument at Konosso; this further suggests that *ḳbhꜣw ḥr* is therefore not Konosso. The use of diametric pairs, often of figurative locations, to characterize Egypt's northern and southern boundaries was common in the Eighteenth Dynasty (Hornung 1957, 124; Spalinger 1978, 37), and the pair consisting of *wpt-tꜣ* and the "northern ends" (*phꜣww*) also occurs in the Aswan Group Stela of Tuthmosis II, which was of course familiar to Amenhotep III. It therefore seems more than likely that Amenhotep III copied some of his content from the Aswan Group Stela of Tuthmosis II, and that the place known as *ḳbhꜣw ḥr* was a mythical reference, even though the campaign was certainly real.³⁰³ In fact, the king may not have set up a *wꜣ n nḥtw* after all—that is the opinion of Rolf Gundlach, who believes that all three of the living-rock stelae of

³⁰² *phꜣww m ḳbhꜣ n [ḥr]*; Autobiography of Ineni, li. 5.

³⁰³ The monuments at the First Cataract are not the only ones to speak of this Nubian campaign; a stela at Sai does, as well (Topozada 1988; Kozloff 2012, 75 ff., 264). There is, however, no evidence for a northern (i.e. Levantine) campaign of Amenhotep III.

Amenhotep III at the First Cataract contain fabricated accounts of victories that never were (2004, 215).

The Aswan Group

The other two stelae of Amenhotep III at the First Cataract, which also concern his Year 5 campaign, are part of the Aswan Group (Figure 5.31).³⁰⁴



Figure 5.31 The Aswan Group, looking roughly west, with annotations.

The Southern Stela (Figure 5.32, LD III 81h), which faces east, is written as a speech of the god Amun to the king. It does not mention a specific campaign, and its text falls into neither the *iw.tw* nor the *wꜥ n nḥtw* genre. Nevertheless, it can be assigned to the same

³⁰⁴ The stela made in the name of Ramesses II (fn. 266), which the DAI includes in their study (Borrmann 2014), is carved on the north side of the large boulder to the right of the Aswan Group in Figure 5.31. It is worth noting that the text of this stela involves the king's triumph over various enemies, in a general sense, and does not single out Nubia in particular.

occasion as the other two stelae (Klug 2002, 428; Borrmann 2014, 16, and see below).

The scene at the top shows the king in the Double Crown smiting two enemies before Amun-Re, with Anukis behind him. After the king's titulary, Amun beckons to his son to "come, come," addressing him personally. This perhaps refers to a ritual wherein the king seeks advice from the god (Klug 2002, 428), although one would expect explicit mention of an oracle in one of Amenhotep's stelae, as in Tuthmosis IV's Year 8 Stela, if this were the case. In the body of the text, Amun affirms that he is the king's father and states that he is pleased when he sees his son exercising his strength (*ḥpš* and *pḥty*, but not *nḥt*) against Egypt's enemies—all of his enemies, not just Nubia. The speech makes it clear that Amenhotep's kingship over the Two Lands is the result of divine will, although it curiously reveals that the god makes the king's boundaries according to the desires of the *king*, rather than the other way around:

ir.n=i t3šw=k r mrr=k r [4] šḥnwt wṯswt ḥr pt

I have made your boundaries as you desire, up to the four posts that hold up the sky.³⁰⁵

Klug points out that that such a phrase is without parallel in the Egyptian textual record (2002, 420). Note, however, how closely related this portion of the text is to the message in the king's Konosso Stela: abstract talk of the king's boundaries, and how they extend to the four posts of the sky. Amun is the one who made them that way, and the account given in the Konosso Stela is thus supported by the actions of Amun chronicled here.

³⁰⁵ Li. 8-9.



Figure 5.32 The Southern Stela of Amenhotep III (L) (photograph by Linda Borrmann/DAI).

Figure 5.33 The Northern Stela of Amenhotep III (R) (photograph by Linda Borrmann/DAI).

The Northern Stela of Amenhotep III (Figure 5.33, LD III 81g) is located on the south face of a boulder perpendicular to the one that bears the other two Aswan Group Stelae. The scene depicts the king in the *Anedjty* crown smiting two (Asiatic?) enemies, and standing on top of another (Nubian?) enemy.³⁰⁶ He does this before Amun-Re and Khnum, while Ptah (South of His Wall) stands behind him in a shrine.³⁰⁷ The stela contains a precise date: Year 5, III Akhet, day 2.³⁰⁸ This is most likely the date of a victory celebration following the campaign, during which the king made an “appearance” (*hꜥt*); the Year 5 date on the king’s Konosso Stela can be assumed to coincide with this

³⁰⁶ The designations of the ethnicity of these enemies are from Klug (2002, 423).

³⁰⁷ Ptah’s appearance here, according to Zakéya Topozada, may be a reference to the king having been at Memphis when he was told of the rebellion (1988, 157–58).

³⁰⁸ An appropriate time for sailing; see above.

celebration as well (Murnane 1990, 83–84). The text of the Northern Stela is, again, an *iw.tw* report. The king, whose titulary in part mimics that of Tuthmosis II in his neighboring stela (Klug 2002, 424), is told only that a Nubian enemy “plotted a rebellion in his heart” (*kzi.n=f bšt m ib=f*).³⁰⁹ The text then recounts straightaway how Amenhotep III responded by engaging in his first expedition of *nht*—the one referenced in the Konosso Stela. He took 30,000 prisoners, reportedly, but decided to let them go so as not to extinguish the Kushites altogether (*r tm fdk prt kš hst*).³¹⁰ This benevolent side of the king is quite interesting in the context of military monuments intended to publicly demonstrate the king’s suppression of his enemies.

Taken together, the three stelae of Amenhotep III at Konosso and in the Aswan Group present complementary content and images. As Klug explains, the Northern Stela is the actual campaign report (which we know due to its *iw.tw* format), describing the impetus for military action; the Konosso Stela deals with the king’s subsequent victory and his campaign’s return to Egypt; and the Southern Stela, which is religious in nature, shows divine support for the king’s triumph (2002, 428). The king wears different, but complementary, dress and crowns in each stela (2002, 430).³¹¹ In the Aswan group, in Klug’s opinion, the Southern Stela *supplements* the Northern Stela in its inclusion of (and clear focus on) the god Amun, who is not otherwise mentioned in the latter monument (although he does appear in its scene and titulary); this is necessary because, as we are told, it is Amun who is responsible for the king’s victories (2002, 428). Linda Borrmann

³⁰⁹ Li. 4.

³¹⁰ Li. 7-8. However, the text implies that he did cut off their hands. In an interesting twist, there is fleeting mention of a named enemy, one “Ikheny” (Spalinger 1983, 56), although it is also possible that this is a place name written with the wrong determinative (Klug 2002, 424, fn. 3314).

³¹¹ Also see Klug 2002, 429 for a detailed analysis of the gods depicted in the scenes of the Amenhotep III stelae.

agrees that the two stelae of Amenhotep III in the Aswan Group form a “unit,” stating that one must read them together in order to get a fuller picture of the aims of these monuments: the Southern Stela provides the intellectual background and justification for the on-the-ground activities recounted in the Northern Stela (2014, 16).

Among other reasons to believe that all three of the stelae were made in Year 5, the Southern Stela takes pride of place next to the stela of Tuthmosis II, whereas the Northern Stela, which is actually dated to Year 5, was relegated to a separate boulder.³¹² Beyond this, Amenhotep III is only known to have made two Nubian campaigns (Topozada 1988), and it is unlikely that he would have left a space next to the stela of Tuthmosis II to use at a later date. And so these stelae are surely complementary, but as a group they seem to contradict each other on the subject of the king’s presence on his Year 5 campaign. How can one of the stelae be an *iw.tw* report (defined as recounting military action in which the ruler did not personally participate) if another is a *wd n nḥtw* (recounting events where he was a central actor)? The answer for me, as I hope to have shown above, is that the Konosso Stela of Amenhotep III is not a *wd n nḥtw*. Bryan does not believe that Amenhotep III was personally involved this campaign (1991, 359, fn. 26), but that is not the only possible solution to the king’s use of the *iw.tw* genre in one of his stelae. As I wrote above, Gundlach believes that the king’s victories were altogether fabricated (2004, 215). If none of it ever happened, then perhaps a trio of ‘appropriate’-seeming monuments, at two ‘appropriate’ places carved by the king’s predecessors, were commissioned in order to make it seem as though it had.

³¹² This is why it faces south; presumably this orientation was beneficial anyway, as the campaign of Amenhotep III was directed towards the south. Klug’s assertion that an eastern orientation was of primary importance may be questioned here.

Finally, I turn to the initial royal monument to be carved on the boulders at Aswan: the stela of Tuthmosis II. The text of Tuthmosis II's Aswan Group Stela (Figure 5.34, LD III 16a) is the origin of the *iw.tw* genre.³¹³ It recounts a situation that occurred just after the ascension of Tuthmosis II, wherein “wretched Kush [was] preparing to rebel...plotting a plan of rebellion, preparing to smite the people of Egypt, to steal the cattle behind these fortresses that your father (Tuthmosis I) built during his victories.”³¹⁴ The rebellion was apparently led by “a ruler in the north of wretched Kush” and “two Nubian bowmen among the children of the ruler of wretched Kush” who had fled from Tuthmosis I after he had divided Kush into three parts.³¹⁵ Tuthmosis II, raging “like a panther,” made an oath to the gods to put the rebels to death, and subsequently dispatched his army. Although this is described as “his first occasion of *nht*” (*sp=f tpy nht*), the king did not accompany his forces to Nubia (Klug 2002, 87; Spalinger 1983, 3–4): the text describes all of the activities as being done by “this army of his majesty” (*mšz -pn n ḥm=f*), the clear subject of the action, while “the might of his majesty guided them and his terror protected their march.”³¹⁶ The enemies were overthrown (by the army), and captives were taken before the king; the whole episode is said to have happened because of “the great love his father Amun has for him” (*n-ʿzt-n mrr -sw it=f imn*). The date—Year 1, II Akhet, day 8—is followed directly by the phrase “appearance by the majesty of Horus...” (*ḥʿt ḥr ḥm n ḥr*), and so probably refers to the royal victory celebration after

³¹³ For detailed analyses of this text, see Lorton 1990 and Gabolde 2003. Luc Gabolde understands the stela of Tuthmosis II not strictly as the first of a new genre, but as the culmination of Egyptian military texts.

³¹⁴ *kš ḥst w3.ti r bšt [...] ḥmt.w n k3t sbīt w3.w r ḥwt rmt Kmt r ḥnp mnmt ḥr-s3 nn mnww qd.n it=k m nhtw=f*, li. 5-7. The reference to the fortresses of Tuthmosis I, the father of Tuthmosis II, has broader implications for the earlier conquest of Nubia; see Chapter 6.

³¹⁵ Li. 7-9.

³¹⁶ Li. 11-12.

the rebellion had been quelled, as in the other dated stelae at the First Cataract (Murnane 1990, 80–81, 83). The scene at the top of the stela shows the king before Amun and Satet, with Khnum and Anukis behind him; this is clearly an appeal to both the Cataract Triad, given the monument’s location, and the king’s divine father.

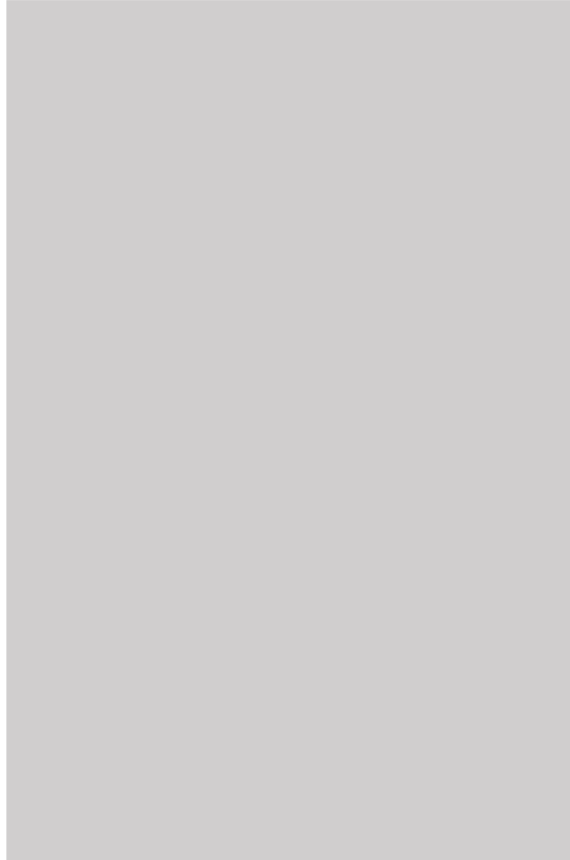


Figure 5.34 The Aswan Group Stela of Tuthmosis II (photograph by Linda Borrmann/DAI).

As this is the first *iw.tw* report in Egyptian history, we should ask why it was relayed here at the First Cataract, and on the boulders of the Aswan Group. As in the above case at Konosso, the area’s position as the original southern boundary between Egypt and Nubia made it a suitable place to disseminate the monument’s message about Egyptian suppression of Nubian hostilities. However, it is interesting that Tuthmosis II chose not to carve the prominent peaks of Konosso, as his successors did. We must therefore ask: was he aware of them? This was, after all, the king’s first regnal year, and a

campaign that he did not take part in himself. It is possible that he never visited the First Cataract at all (and since there was no Eighteenth Dynasty precedent for carving this outcrop, his officials may not have thought to do so). Tuthmosis II is suspected to have had a “nearly ephemeral” reign (Bryan 2000, 226), possibly as brief as three years (Gabolde 1987; although cf. the reign dates given by Allen). Whereas his half-sister and wife Hatshepsut, as well as two other sons of Tuthmosis I, Amenmose and Uadjmose, are known to have accompanied their father on his Nubian campaign to Kurgus (W. V. Davies 2017, 75, 80; see Chapter 6), there is no evidence that Tuthmosis II was there as a prince. The implication here is that he had not yet been born—and was, therefore, still in his minority when he ascended the throne. This explains why such emphasis is placed on defending the successes of the king’s father: that is, as a means of legitimating his own reign (Lorton 1990, 677). It also explains why he sent his army into Nubia on its own in Year 1, and it may, in my opinion, have even been cause for the creation of the *iw.tw* genre: “one came to say to his majesty,” his majesty responds, but his majesty does not (have to) personally take part. After having read about Konosso for a number of years, I only realized how much of a physical statement the outcrop made in its surrounding landscape after I finally saw it in person. Perhaps the same was true of Tuthmosis IV when he visited the area on his royal progress, and saw it for himself.

There are, of course, material merits to the boulders of the Aswan Group; otherwise they would not have been inscribed with royal stelae. The monuments in this group (plus the aforementioned stela in the name of Ramesses II and several private inscriptions) are currently being studied by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI);

as their work is both in-depth and ongoing, I will offer only selected comments here.³¹⁷

The red granite boulders of the Aswan Group are located along the east side of the ancient road that ran between Aswan and Philae. The surface carved by Tuthmosis II faces east, about two meters above ground level, thereby facing (and looking slightly downward at) those who would travel on the road (Delia 1993, 82).³¹⁸ The ancient road lies somewhat east of the modern one (Delia 1993, 78), which explains why the Aswan Group is offset from modern traffic; it now sits in a sort of courtyard formed by several modern apartment buildings (Figure 5.35). In antiquity, there were probably more inscribed boulders in the area, which have since been moved or lost (Borrmann 2013). A number of private inscriptions also line the road on both sides (de Morgan et al. 1894; Delia 1993), and the work of the DAI has shown that private inscriptions throughout the First Cataract area cluster along high-traffic areas.

³¹⁷ I am grateful to Linda Borrmann not only for sharing her data and preliminary/conference papers with me (some of which are cited here), but also her images of the stelae. I was able to visit the Aswan Group in person on two occasions, but was barred by the Ministry of Antiquities from entering the gated enclosure so that I could see the stelae up close, despite Linda's kind attempts to grant me access.

³¹⁸ Reference is often made to the position of these boulders with respect to the 2-meter-thick ancient wall that ran between Aswan and Philae (Ball 1907, 38); today, parts of this wall stand up to 5 meters high (Borrmann 2016a). The wall is probably of Roman date (Jaritz 1987), so this relationship is of no consequence for the positioning of the stelae. The location of the wall is visible in Jaritz 1987, 68, Fig. 1.



Figure 5.35 The location of the Aswan Group in the context of modern Aswan, with the modern road visible.

When the stela of Tuthmosis II was carved at this location, it was set up so that it would be seen by passers-by. It was, in essence, propaganda for the new king's *hꜣw*—his fame or reputation (Lorton 1990, 678). However, the audience for this monument and the two stelae of Amenhotep III may have been somewhat restricted: Stephan Seidlmayer believes that, despite this road being “the most direct link” between Aswan and the area to its south, it was too narrow for the transport of goods or troops (2013, 209). He suggests that this was therefore a processional route, or one traveled by “small parties of leading functionaries” (ibid.). The content of the stelae in the group, in Seidlmayer’s view, is clearly reflected in their location. If this were true, then in my opinion it could be the reason why the Saite cartouches were stamped onto Konosso, whereas none exist at the site of the Aswan Group: perhaps the former location was for truly public view, a sort of billboard for the king, while the audience for the latter was necessarily restricted.

Borrmann, for her part, seems to disagree about the size of the road. In a colloquium paper, she stated that the road “played an important role as a transportation route both in trade and in the context of military operations into Nubia and the northern present-day Sudan” (Borrmann 2013). This does not, however, mean that the ritual significance of the Aswan Group should be diminished: in fact, Borrmann’s own research has revealed that a small shrine to Amun may have existed somewhere near the location of the Aswan Group, serving as “a ritual framework within which the propagandistic inscriptions were set” and thus explaining why the royal stelae were made at *this* point along the Aswan-Philae road, and not somewhere else (Borrmann 2013).³¹⁹ Here it is helpful to recall that rock niches like the one formed by the boulders of the Aswan Group were themselves popular places for shrines (Williams 2006; Chapter 3).

From their content and material characteristics, it is clear that the royal stelae at both Aswan and Konosso served a symbolic, and even apotropaic (Borrmann 2013), function with regard to *Kmt*’s southern boundary. The First Cataract is the site of many quarries where stone for a freestanding monument could easily have been procured (Kelany et al. 2009; D. D. Klemm and Klemm 2001; Storemyr et al. 2013), yet the medium of living rock was exploited instead for six New Kingdom military monuments. What is more, three of the first four monuments of an entirely new genre—the *iw.tw* report—were carved into the rock outcrops of the First Cataract. The connection between living rock and design for public view is undeniable once one looks beyond the content of the stelae to the material characteristics of their stone supports. New Kingdom military

³¹⁹ Borrmann cites both modern archaeological evidence for this—in the form of a short comment by Lepsius—and ancient evidence from a festival calendar fragment found at Elephantine. The fragment contains the phrase *itr t imn nt hr bzt isbt zbw*, “the shrine of Amun, which is in the eastern quarries of Elephantine.”

monuments coalesce at Egypt's interface with Nubia in part because the interface itself, formed by prominent and even "wondrous" outcrops, amplified and extended their messages.

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Pi-Ramesses: Ramesside Stelae on the Lebanese Coast

In the first decade of his reign, Ramesses II—the king of "Ozymandias" fame—was engaged in a decades-old territorial struggle against the Hittites. In Year 5 he recovered the allegiance of Amurru (a coastal territory between the Mediterranean and the Orontes, from north of Byblos to Arwad, south of Ugarit; Figure 5.36), which he had subdued during the previous year, but found himself in a stalemate with king Muwatalli II at the Battle of Kadesh (Murnane 1990; Bryce 2005, 234 ff.; Goelet and Levine 1997). After a series of campaigns, he concluded a treaty in Year 21 with Hattusili III that made no reference to a formal boundary between the two powers, but effectively left Amurru as the (Hittite-controlled) buffer between them (Bryce 2003; Goelet and Levine 1997; Bryce 2005, 277). On a limestone promontory above the mouth of the Nahr el-Kalb, a river that runs into the Mediterranean south of Byblos, three stelae of Ramesses II shed some light on the conflicts leading up to this treaty. Together with another (now lost) monument of the same king at the site of Adloun, they demonstrate that living-rock stelae were an intentional and powerful military-political tool, and that the landscape itself could play a role in their conception.

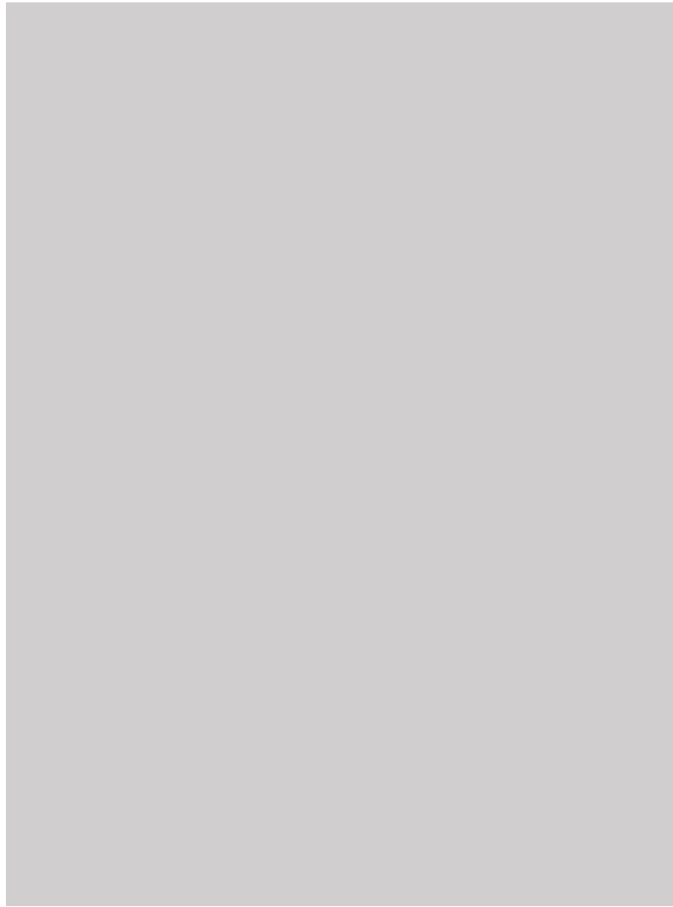


Figure 5.36 The Near East in the Late Bronze Age (Murnane 1990, xvi, Map 1).



Figure 5.37 The locations of Nahr el-Kalb and Adloun.

Nahr el-Kalb

The Ramesside stelae at Nahr el-Kalb are spaced out along the curve of the Ras el-Kalb promontory on the southern bank of the river (Figure 5.38). Cars coming off the northbound highway exit for the site pass right by the northernmost one without warning, but it is now somewhat below ground level and covered by a later monument of Napoleon III, so their occupants might not be aware of it. The other two stelae are located farther up the promontory, accessible via a series of staircases. One has the advantage of a large walkway in front of it, while seeing the other requires that visitors squeeze between the rock face and a safety railing. Today they appear bright white against a graying façade, having been cleaned—and once protected by glass—as part of a

restoration project led by the Lebanese Direction Générale des Antiquités (DGA) (Da Riva 2017, 22–23). We may assume that in antiquity all three monuments were readily visible at ground level on the promontory as well as on the coast below: all were carved just above³²⁰ the base heights of wave-cut geological terraces (at 5.5, 36, and 46 meters above sea level) that are visible as snaking lines when seen from the coastal road, and were also used as paths to traverse the promontory (Leanderson 2009a, 93–96).³²¹

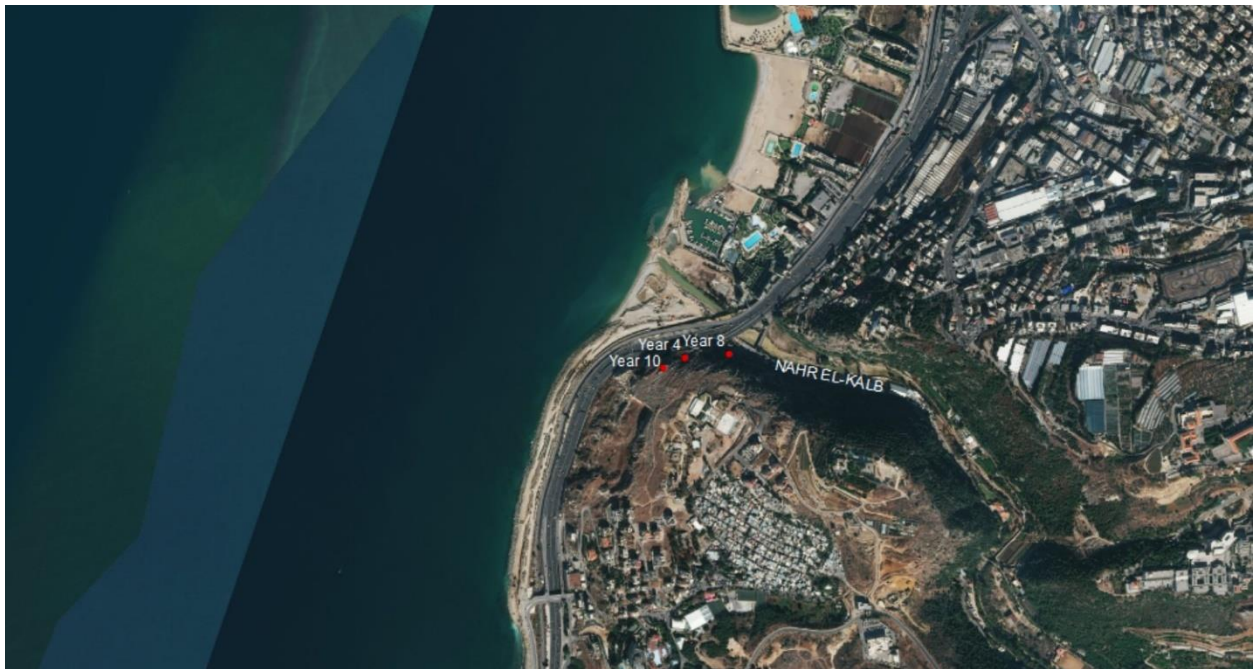


Figure 5.38 Satellite image of Nahr el-Kalb with the locations of the Ramesside stela and the river.

The texts of these stela have eroded to a state of nearly complete illegibility, despite my own attempts to correct this with Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) and the laser-scanning efforts of Factum Arte (Figures 5.39 and 5.40). However, their scenes and side panels either survive in part or were recorded in 19th-century drawings. Through the

³²⁰ Refer to Chapter 1, Figure 1.1, for an image illustrating their original height above the ground, with people for scale.

³²¹ There are a total of 18 such terraces at Nahr el-Kalb (Leanderson 2009a, 91). The 5.5-meter terrace is at the level of the coastal road, while the 36- and 46-meter terraces follow what was probably part of the Mar Yousef Debayé Path (Leanderson 2009b, 113–15).

work of Henri-Charles Loffett for the DGA's Nahr el-Kalb volume (2009), it has therefore been possible to infer their purpose from their pictorial content and positions in the landscape.



Figure 5.39 RTI still of Ramesses' Year 4 Stela.



Figure 5.40 Laser scan still of the Year 4 Stela.³²²

Loffet has shown that this zone between Egypt and Hatti was used as an arena where political messages were broadcasted by Egypt in advance of the Year 21 treaty, always on the way back to the capital, Pi-Ramesses. He concludes that the first stela, which dates to Year 4 and whose lunette features the king receiving the *ḥpš*-sword from the god Re-Horakhty in exchange for Asiatic captives (Figure 5.42), was inscribed after the king had successfully reclaimed Amurru to the north on his first expedition of *nḥt*

³²² See the Factum Arte Viewer for an interactive model: http://www.highres.factum-arte.org/Rameses_II/NeK_Rameses_II/index.html.

(Loffet 2009, 202, 209). That stela faces the sea, and its purpose, in the lead-up to the Battle of Kadesh, was to discourage anyone on the coastal road or sailing by from harboring anti-Egyptian ambitions. Its position high above the coast also allowed “its full and deep symbolic meaning” to be transmitted to the wider Mediterranean world (Loffet 2009, 202–3). It was, however, a message lacking in overt aggression: its scene carries a (comparative) sense of “calm and serenity” (Loffet 2009, 208), perhaps because the reconquest of Amurru was a major step towards reconquering Kadesh (*RITANC* II 2). The other two stelae, which date to Years 8 and 10—so, after the Battle of Kadesh—bear smiting scenes, and were made during the course of campaigns that were aimed at establishing the northernmost extent of Egyptian political influence in the region (Loffet 2009, 209). Loffet concludes that the second stela, which shows Ramesses smiting Asiatic princes (not ordinary captives) before the god Ptah (Figure 5.43), was carved on the northern side of the promontory as a symbolic gesture in the wake of several northern rebellions that were quelled by his Year 8 campaign, when he also succeeded in isolating Kadesh from the Hittites (2009, 205, 208–9). The Year 10 Stela, showing a victorious Ramesses smiting Asiatic captives before the god Amun-Re (Figure 5.44), coincided with the end of major hostilities against the Hittites, foreshadowing the peace of the following decade (Loffet 2009, 206, 208). It again faces the sea, and thus declared its message to the Mediterranean world and those walking (or marching) past. Together, the stelae appeal to three of the most powerful Egyptian gods—the very same gods who appear in the Nauri Decree of Seti I, Ramesses’ father—and thus show divine support for the relatively new reign (Loffet 2009, 202–9).



Figure 5.41 The locations of the three Ramesside stelae on the promontory (view from the northwest).



Figure 5.42 The Year 4 Stela (R), beside a later Assyrian stela.

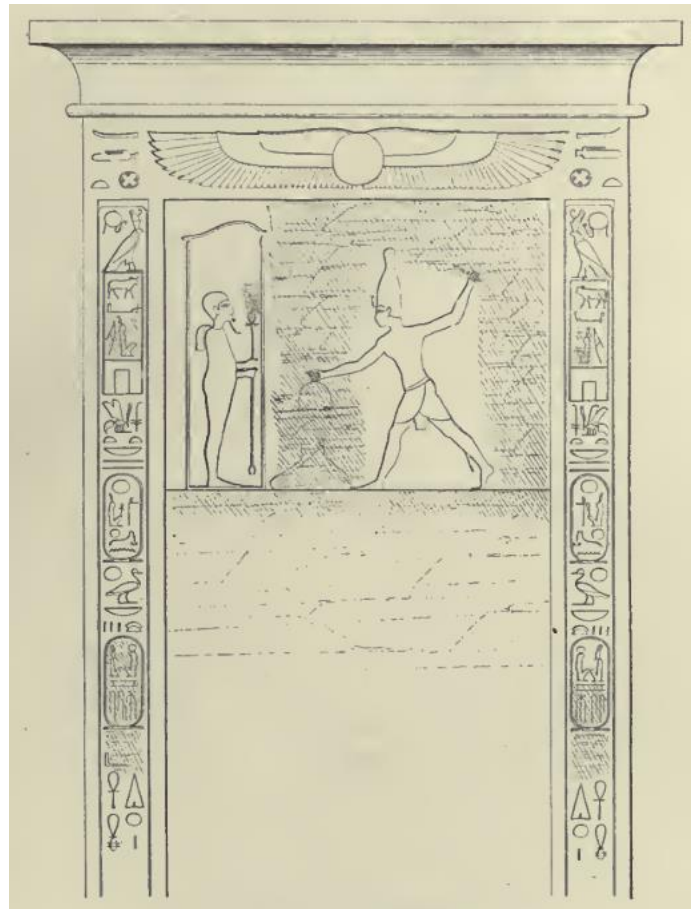


Figure 5.43 Drawing of the Year 8 Stela (Weissbach 1922, 17, Fig. 4).



Figure 5.44 The Year 10 Stela.

Loffet’s analysis is exemplary, demonstrating that the loss of text need not be an impediment to study. What I wish to add to his work is a discussion of the use of *living rock specifically* as the medium for these stelae.

First, however, it is necessary to address the most celebrated thing about Nahr el-Kalb: its collection of twenty-two living-rock stelae in seven languages, a veritable “open-air museum” (Maïla-Afeiche 2009b; Da Riva 2017). The coastal road that hugs the west side of the promontory (Figure 5.45) was a convenient way to avoid Syria-Palestine’s mountainous inland terrain, and the Mediterranean coast was once much

farther from the promontory than it is today, providing a wide walkway past the site (Loffet 2009, 206; Hakim 1977; Tuglaman 1975; Pasha 1961; Leanderson 2009a; Leanderson 2009b); thus Ramesses was far from the last head of an army to travel by this route (Maïla-Afeiche 2009a). As a result, his messages were guaranteed to reach a broad spectrum of audiences for generations to come. For the next 3,200 years, leaders from Nebuchadnezzar to Napoleon III populated Nahr el-Kalb with their own living-rock monuments (Maïla-Afeiche 2009b), turning the site into “a living and breathing historical place of state performance and landscape memory” (Harmanşah 2015, 96). A key point that the Ramesside stelae at Nahr el-Kalb make about the utility of Egyptian rock reliefs is that they were certainly considered ‘monumental’ in the same sense as the built works Egyptologists usually describe with this term, a quality that they retained through the ages. This was surely the king’s aim: “Look on my Works, ye Mighty...!” Ramesses’ messages were never read, in the literal sense, by the Assyrian, Roman, Ottoman, French, and Lebanese people who later carved their own stelae at the site,³²³ but it is clear from their own monumental responses that these later rulers acknowledged and absorbed them in much the same way as Ramesses had intended.³²⁴

³²³ Recall that Egyptian literacy rates were incredibly low (Baines 2007, 49), and that was among native speakers of Egyptian. These stelae were located in a place where Egyptian was not the usual spoken language, and most of them post-date its use. If they were read by any of the other stela patrons, the Assyrians would be the most plausible candidates.

³²⁴ See the work of Jennifer Gates-Foster for a similar situation along Egyptian desert roads: Ptolemaic and Roman travelers were unlikely to have been able to read older inscriptions, but “they grasped the meaningfulness imparted to the place by the continued presence of these images” (2012, 215–16).



Figure 5.45 Map showing some of the routes and locations of other monuments (indicated by their DGA numerical designations) at Nahr el-Kalb (Leanderson 2009b, 107, Fig. 4).

Later reliefs at Nahr el-Kalb highlight the importance of memory and performance in the re-inscription of landscapes, and demonstrate that the Egyptian stelae were viewed as official communications capable of producing enviable monumental impact. Some of the responses to Ramesses' messages were direct: three of the Assyrian reliefs at the site were carved immediately next to the Egyptian stelae, so that they could more visibly appropriate the power the Egyptians once held over the area (Feldman 2004, 141–43; Kreppner 2002, 373–78).³²⁵ (It has even been suggested that the Ramesside monuments at Nahr el-Kalb were the model for Assyrian royal rock reliefs, which began to be made at the end of the 12th century BCE; Feldman 2004, 148.) By another method that underscores the difference between ancient Near Eastern and modern ideas about how one usurps a monument, Napoleon III blatantly covered the Year 8 Stela with his

³²⁵ For the Assyrians, the Mediterranean was known as the “Great Sea of Amurru”: Amurru was what separated Assyria from the coast. Ashurnasirpal II declared that he “placed (his) great name on a monumental inscription in the country of Lebanon on the shore of the Great Sea” (Roche 2009, 242).

own inscription. One thing that many scholars seem to have taken for granted, however, is that it was Ramesses II who first made Nahr el-Kalb a site of memory. He was the first person to re-inscribe this place: not once, but twice. In visiting Nahr el-Kalb repeatedly, Ramesses imparted the importance of this landscape onto his audience(s) (and his army). Whether that importance was derived primarily from the presence of the monuments, or if something intrinsic to this landscape made it significant, is debatable—and both may be true.

So why did Ramesses return again and again to inscribe *this* place? From the perspective of political geography, Loffet's answer is persuasive: Ramesses took the coastal road to avoid difficult terrain farther inland, and knew that other armies also preferred this route; Nahr el-Kalb was located in the buffer zone between Egypt and Hatti, and was therefore a suitable platform for monuments concerning the conflict at hand (Loffet 2009, 206). It was also south of Amurru, which would eventually be left to the Hittites, whereas Egypt would keep the territory to the south in Palestine (Loffet 2009, 207). None of this is explicitly laid out in the treaty, but Loffet believes it is alluded to by the position of the Year 4 Stela, which in his view could have borne a decree stating that Nahr el-Kalb was the location of Egypt's northern, or northwestern, boundary (2009, 209). Although based mainly in geography, Loffet's answer lacks much of a consideration of the topography and materiality of the landscape at Nahr el-Kalb. I believe that the question at hand should be split in two: Why did Ramesses *inscribe*, and then why did he choose to do so at this place?

To treat the first facet of this question, we must start with the premise that the stelae at Nahr el-Kalb demonstrate that living rock could do 'something' for the king that

a cut block of stone could not. The choice of living rock for these monuments was not a purely practical decision based on the available craft apparatus: we know this because Ramesses also erected freestanding stelae while campaigning in the Levant (Wimmer 2002; Millard 2011; Levy 2017). At least two of these stelae were made in the very same year as the first monument he commissioned at Nahr el-Kalb; they were set up in the cities of Byblos and Tyre (above, Figure 5.37), two Egyptian strongholds, on his way *to* the various destinations of his Year 4 campaign (*RITANC* II 136; Loffet 2009, 202–3). Tyre was the location of a permanent Egyptian garrison from the Eighteenth Dynasty onward, and likely the place where Ramesses officially launched his campaign (Loffet 2009, 201–2). Byblos had long been a port of great use for Egypt, and although its importance waned during the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty, it was clearly a strategic location during the wars against the Hittites (Kilani 2015, 84–85); this, according to Loffet, is where Ramesses likely took up arms on his journey north (2009, 202).

The Byblos Stela³²⁶ was probably originally set up in the main temple at Byblos (*RITANC* II 136). I was unable to see it in person, but comments by Pierre Montet concerning the concordance of its fragments (1921, 166) confirm that it is made from local limestone.³²⁷ Thus we have not only a freestanding stela from Year 4, but a stela of *quarried local limestone*. This is the same material used to make the Nahr el-Kalb stelae, and so it is additional evidence that the craft apparatus, or some characteristic particular to the stone, was not a factor in the decision to carve at Nahr el-Kalb. The Tyre Stela³²⁸ (Figure 5.46), made of local basalt (Lagarce 2010, 61), survives only in its lunette and the

³²⁶ Beirut Museum/DGA 2042 and 2047.

³²⁷ This was misreported by Bérénice Lagarce, who wrote that it was basalt (2010, 61).

³²⁸ Beirut Museum/DGA 2030.

last three lines of its inscription (*KRI* II 228; Loffet 1999). Kitchen believes that it may have originally been set up in the temple of a local deity at Tyre (*RITANC* II 261), which would make its location parallel with that of the Byblos Stela. I examined it in person, and found that its back is unfinished. But although it is unfinished, it is deliberately shaped: it angles downwards as if it were designed to fit into or hold onto something. In this way its shape reminds me of the unfinished back of the Uronarti Stela from the Middle Kingdom fortress in Nubia (Chapter 6), which is shaped at an upward angle. That ‘freestanding’ stela was not really freestanding, but was instead set into the wall of the fortress (Vogel 2011, 331). The Tyre Stela, therefore, could also have been set into the mudbrick wall of a structure. At the very least, it would have leant against a wall and would only have ‘worked’ in conjunction with an architectural feature, probably a similar one to the location of the Byblos Stela.



Figure 5.46 The Tyre Stela.



Figure 5.47 The right side of the Tyre Stela.

If Ramesses II, one of the most prolific builders in Egyptian history, made a deliberate choice to commission a series of living-rock stelae in order to memorialize the campaigns that defined his career, then monuments of this type must have served a special purpose. The below map of Egyptian stelae in the Levant by Bérénice Lagarce (Figure 5.48) reveals that the only living-rock stelae in the region that were made by Ramesses II were made at Nahr el-Kalb and Adloun. The difference between these two sites and the others where his stelae were set up is that they are extraurban and on military routes: in the cases where we know or can assume their original location, every other site with a freestanding stela of Ramesses II—and, for that matter, every site with a

freestanding stela of Seti I—was a settlement (Table 5.2).³²⁹ Furthermore, the living-rock stelae were always set up on the way back to Egypt. We may assume that, on the other hand, the stelae that were set up in Levantine settlements before the Year 21 treaty³³⁰ were made during the active northbound course of the king’s campaign, just after he had subdued (etc.) the place in question.³³¹ As Eythan Levy explains, these stelae “do not depict long-term occupation, but rather short-term military incursions, crowned by the rapid erection of these stelae as markers of passage, followed by a rapid disengagement of the Egyptian troops, who soon returned towards garrisons situated more southward” (2017, 16). This haste is underscored by the fact that all of the known Ramesside stelae in the area were made of local stone, most commonly basalt—a material that the Egyptians were not used to carving, but with which they made do (Lagarce 2010, 61). Levy’s study of the geographic distributions of New Kingdom material from the Levant demonstrates a clear north-south divide around the site of Beth Shean in northern Palestine (where the ‘Ways of Horus’ met a north-south inland trade route; Higginbotham 2000), indicating permanent Egyptian control to its south and a zone of territorial negotiation to its north. All of the Ramesside stelae were set up at Beth Shean or farther north; in this region of uncertainty, the same type of “signaling” observed by Glatz and Plourde (2011; Chapter

³²⁹ In fact, this was also true during earlier periods, including the Eighteenth Dynasty: “The majority of the Egyptian free standing stelae found in the Levant have been unearthed in urban settlements and Egyptian outposts” (Mizrachy 2012, 40).

³³⁰ Only stelae made before the treaty can be properly considered ‘military monuments.’ The language of the stela from al-Kiswa (dated to Year 56) bears no evidence of a military purpose (Kitchen 1999). Furthermore, Stefan Wimmer believes that even the stela from Beth Shean, with a date of Year 18, “cannot possibly refer to any military campaign,” noting that “there is no safe evidence for any campaigns after year 10” (2002, 5). (Note that Wimmer’s paper, currently available as an online PDF, is still expected to be published as part of the much-delayed ICAANE volume, *Proceedings of the 3rd International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (3ICAANE)*, Paris 2002, edited by J.C. Margueron, P. de Miroschedji, and J.P. Thalmann.)

³³¹ Byblos and Tyre were obviously not subjected to aggressive military action: they were already allies of Egypt, so they were used as launching points for the campaign.

2) must have been at play. Getting the job done quickly and then retreating to securely Egyptian territory would have been wise, if not desirable. Aṭ-Ṭurra, Tell es-Shihab, Sheikh Sa’ad, and al-Kiswa all lie along the same route that the Egyptians probably took north, leaving stelae in their wake (Wimmer 2002, Fig. 4). The coast was probably under Egyptian control or influence northward through Byblos, as the southern boundary of Amurru was just to the north of that city.

STELA LOCATION	YEAR	LOCATION TYPE
Tyre	4	settlement
Byblos	4	settlement
Nahr el-Kalb	4	extraurban
Adloun	4?	extraurban
Nahr el-Kalb	8	extraurban
aṭ-Ṭurra – but probably from Tell es-Shihab ³³²	8?	Tell es-Shihab = settlement
Nahr el-Kalb	10	extraurban
Beth Shean	18	settlement
Beth Shean (2 frags.)	undated	settlement
Sheikh Sa’ad ³³³	undated	?
al-Kiswa – but probably from Damascus ³³⁴	56	Damascus = settlement

Table 5.2 Levantine Stelae of Ramesses II.

³³² See Wimmer 2002, 5-6. Tell es-Shihab was the location of a freestanding stela of Seti I, although it is possible that aṭ-Ṭurra was also an ancient site in the 13th century BCE. This stela is now part of a wall pillar inside a local mosque; Wimmer believes that it dates to the Year 8 campaign.

³³³ See Wimmer 2002, 1. This stela is now part of a central column inside a local mosque. Its original location is not known. It could also be from Year 8, since it is located on the same route as aṭ-Ṭurra and Tell es-Shihab.

³³⁴ See Kitchen 1999, 134 and Yoyotte 1999. This stela was reused as a roof slab for a Roman tomb about 25km south of Damascus. Lagarce believes that it may not be royal (2010, 64).



Figure 5.48 Lagarce's map of Egyptian stelae from the Levant (2010, Fig. 6).

Why, then, did Ramesses inscribe at Nahr el-Kalb, rather than erecting freestanding stelae as he had in the settlements he dealt with on his way north? One answer is that there were no appropriate buildings that could house such monuments outside of settlements; a freestanding stela could not ‘work’ on its own without the support of a foundation such as a temple, especially in a foreign territory (see Chapter 6), and especially when the monument required the support of the gods. Where no such architectural support was available, ‘natural architecture’ (Klug 2002, 476), with its connection to the sacred and divine natural world, was put into use. Living rock offered a sense of place and permanence that could leave a patron at ease, knowing that their monument would endure—which is perhaps truer at Nahr el-Kalb, the “open-air museum,” than at any other site. As for the fact that all of Ramesses II’s living-rock stelae were made only on his return journeys, we may look to the use of other such stelae as parallels. In general, Egyptian military stelae served in some way to mark the route traveled by a king and his victorious army (Spalinger 1983, 230), “displaying Egypt’s power where he marched” (Millard 2011, 305). Ramesses’ stela at Byblos even boasts of how the king “traversed the roads which are among the mountain-ridges of Khurru (Palestine)” (*RITANC* II 78). The creation of these monuments was a culminating event, ‘crowning’ (to use Levy’s term) the achievements at a given place. However, the settlement contexts in which freestanding stelae were made, although technically also *en route*, were primary points of military action. In the above cases at the First Cataract, living-rock stelae were inscribed only once the campaign had *ended*. They were probably inaugurated with some degree of ceremony, perhaps in lieu of that which would already occur in an appropriate architectural setting. This would have taken some time to

complete, time that is more likely to have been taken on the return trip—when the king felt secure in his actions—than during the active course of a campaign. As it happens, there may be evidence of ceremonial or otherwise ritual activity concerning the Egyptian stelae at Nahr el-Kalb.

One of the lingering questions about Nahr el-Kalb, pointed out by Anne-Marie Maïla-Afeiche in the DGA volume, concerns the presence of vertical cavities found in the upper corners inside the frames of the Egyptian monuments (Figure 5.49)—*only* the Egyptian ones, and all three of them (2009b, 137). It has been suggested, especially by early scholars, that these cavities were drilled by the Assyrians (who, one will recall, ‘usurped’ the Egyptian stelae) in order to support some kind of mechanism to obscure the Egyptian content (*ibid.*). Maïla-Afeiche has pointed out, however, that the Assyrians could just as easily have erased the Egyptian content if they wanted to obscure it in favor of their own monuments. Perhaps this sensibility is related to the differences between ancient and modern ideas about usurpation. But what if it were instead the Egyptians who made the cavities at the top of their own monuments? During my visits to Nahr el-Kalb, I noticed that the Egyptian stelae, particularly the one from Year 4, have what might be described as divots in their bottom corners (Figure 5.50). This, combined with the cavities in the upper corners, would be consistent with two long objects, such as wooden poles, being inserted upward and held up inside the frame of the stela.³³⁵

³³⁵ In P. Anastasi V (24.3-4) there is a reference to wooden accoutrements for (freestanding) stelae, although these may be related to their transport rather than cult: 3 ḥꜣw ḥnꜥ nꜣy=sn iꜣpw nꜣy=sn inꜣ-smꜣw, “...three stelae, as well as their wooden frames (*iꜣpw*) and their stone plinths.”



Figure 5.49 Vertical cavities on the upper corners of the Year 4 Stela.

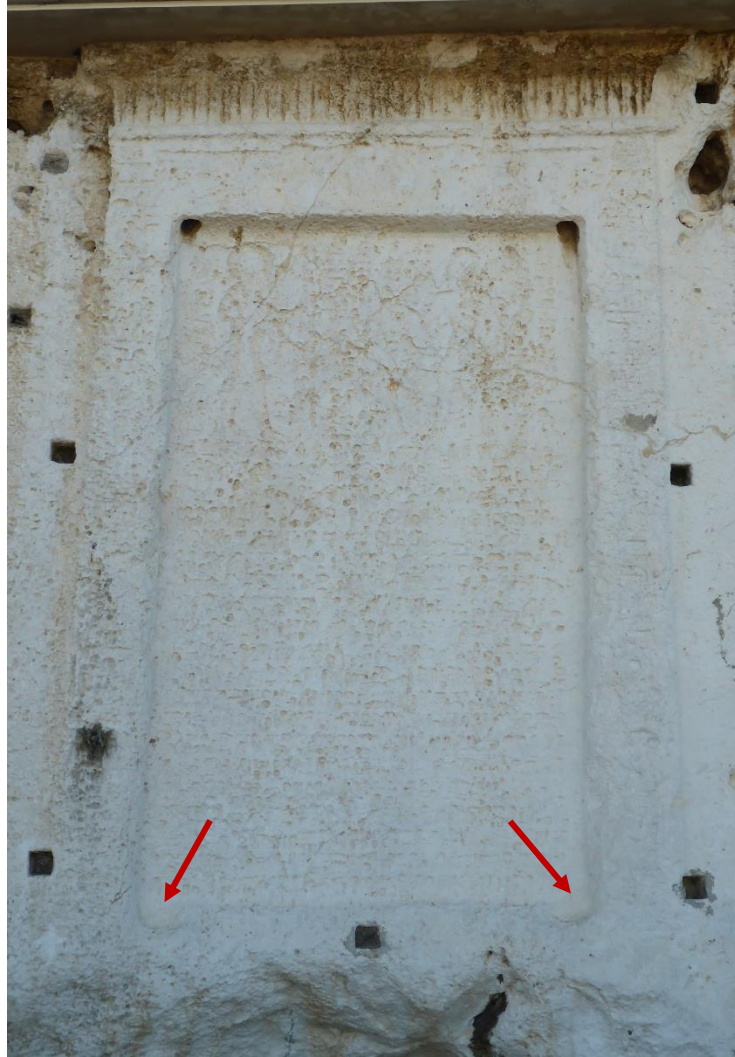


Figure 5.50 'Divots' on the bottom of the Year 4 Stela.

This brings to mind a parallel wherein the content of an Egyptian monument was covered out of veneration rather than suppression. During the Ramesside era, a change took hold in Egyptian temples: their outer walls and other publicly visible spaces began to be decorated with large relief scenes (Brand 2007). Some of the figures in these reliefs, mainly gods but also kings, are surrounded by peg holes that suggest the presence of a screen or veil, perhaps supported by a wooden frame, used to cover the images out of respect (Brand 2007, 61). The majority of the covered images occur on exterior walls or other places that were clearly accessible, and it is possible that they were chosen for such

treatment by members of the general population (Brand 2007, 62). Just because something is hidden does not prohibit it from enjoying a function as a ‘public’ image or monument—in fact, partial covering, which we would have at Nahr el-Kalb, where only the interior of the stela frames would have been obscured, was also practiced with cult images in temple processions (Brand 2007, 63). Veiled images could also indicate that the “‘shadow of the god’ rested on the icon,” where the image itself was worshipped (ibid.). As such scenes were a Ramesside invention, we may also be able to explain the presence of cavities at Nahr el-Kalb, but not before or at the other sites in this dissertation, as a development of this period. Recall that it was Ramesses II who made this a site of memory—he and his army returned to this place, so they could have implemented such a practice on any of their trips. Since they would have been on their way home, campaign complete and south of contested territory, they would have had time to conduct any ritual acts that may have accompanied the creation of the stelae.³³⁶ Nahr el-Kalb was almost exactly the distance from Byblos (where the Egyptians stopped on their way north, and therefore probably also stopped on their way south) that one would expect for a day’s march before rest under normal conditions (about 15 miles; Murnane 1990, 95–96).

The medium of living rock also enabled several valuable features to accompany the stelae at Nahr el-Kalb. One of these is evident in the placement of the deities in the Ramesside scenes: each of the divine figures faces right, towards the king, and carving them into the promontory therefore means that they also face south. It is as if they are bestowing the northern territories onto Ramesses, who approaches them from the

³³⁶ Inaugural rituals are thought to have accompanied the creation of the Assyrian reliefs as well (Maïla-Afeiche 2009b, 41; Da Riva 2017, 25).

direction of Egypt. Another feature of the promontory is increased visual attention drawn to individual stelae by its geology. Nahr el-Kalb is the site of a number of grottos on the lower terraces where the Year 8 Stela is located, as well as higher up on the promontory (Leanderson 2009a, 91–95).³³⁷ The terrace where the Year 4 Stela is located bears a number of “notches” in the rock immediately below the reliefs (Leanderson 2009a, 96), as well as wide fractures that abut the bottom edge of the stela (Figure 5.51). Similarly, the Year 10 Stela and its Assyrian counterpart were carved just above one fracture, and just to the left of another (Figure 5.52); the west side of those reliefs is “dominated” by a large grotto that extends several meters back into the cliff (ibid.). I suggest that some of the motivation for carving these stelae where they are was due to the fact that these fissures in the rock serve to highlight their locations. Finally, a third feature is the relationship between the rocks and water at Nahr el-Kalb—a relationship that is widely acknowledged throughout the Near East (and was demonstrated for Egyptian stelae in Chapter 4), which a settlement context could not have offered. Rocío Da Riva presses us to consider not only the visual and ritual associations that would have made this an attractive site to carve, but also the sensoria and phenomenological experience of the place: “at Nahr el-Kalb the sea and the river create distinctive sound effects which are crucial for the embodied, sensorial experience and reception of the monuments” (2017, 25). Today, visitors can see water running through the cracks next to many of the stelae. In antiquity, its sound was undoubtedly louder, without competition from highway traffic.

³³⁷ Some of these grottos are known to have been occupied or otherwise in use during the Chalcolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age (Yazbeck 2009, 191); however, there is no evidence to support the *use* of these grottos by other groups being related to the Egyptian decision to carve at the site.



Figure 5.51 Fractures in the rock immediately beneath the Year 4 Stela and its Assyrian counterpart.

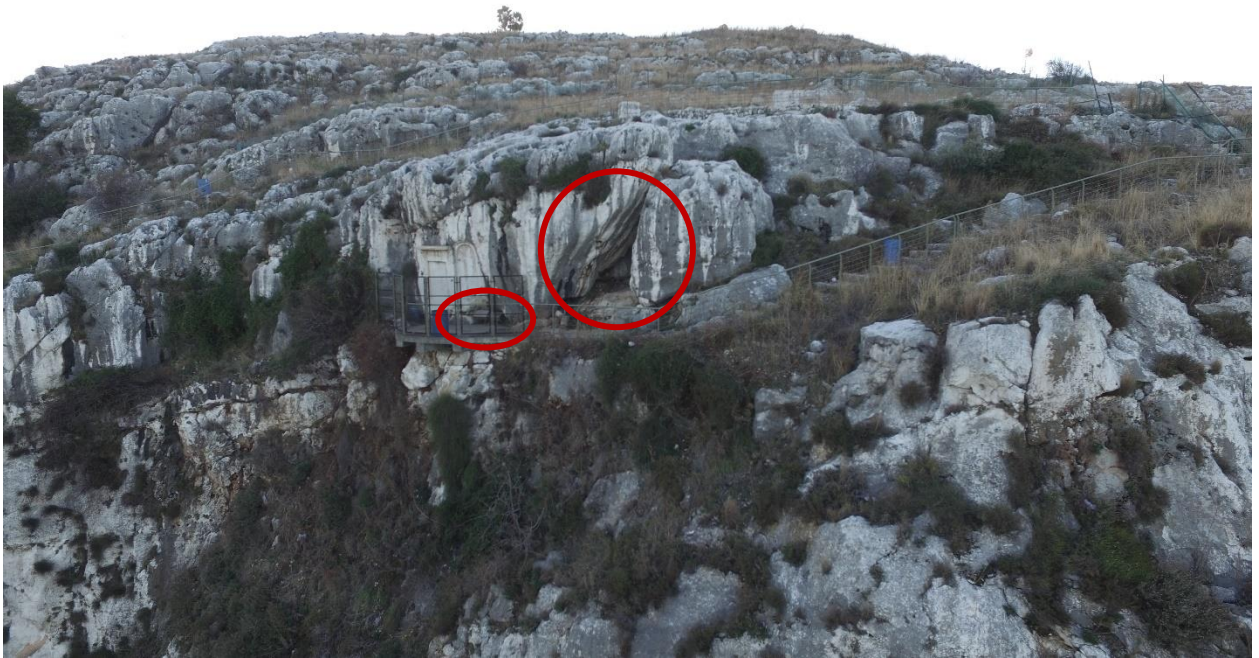


Figure 5.52 Fractures immediately to the right of the Year 10 Stela.

Beyond the above motives for the choice to carve stelae in living rock at Nahr el-Kalb, there is still something to be said for the capacity of this landscape to prompt human activity. As early as the mid-19th century, scholars asserted that the Egyptian stelae at Nahr el-Kalb occupied the dominant positions on the promontory, which were noticeably geared at intimidation and symbolic transmission (Maïla-Afeiche 2009b, 41). But as far as we know, no battle or other significant event took place at Nahr el-Kalb. This part of the coast was south of Amurru yet still in a buffer zone between Egypt and Hatti, but many other places were, too. The Egyptians rested here on their way back from Byblos, but they also stopped at other locations where there are no such stelae. There had to be a reason to carve *here*. What was most advantageous about Nahr el-Kalb was, I argue, its optics.

Natural features, as Linda Nash explains, can influence and constrain human intentions as well as their actions (2005, 68; Chapter 2). The landscape of Nahr el-Kalb looks quite unlike anything nearby: two steep limestone hills dive sharply into an east-west-flowing river, the northernmost of the main rivers running into the Mediterranean within firmly Egyptian territory, which is itself a natural north-south boundary. I suggest that in Year 4, on his way back to Egypt, Ramesses carved his first stela here not because he engaged in any active military engagement at this site—in that case he might have erected a freestanding monument—but because he acknowledged the imposing presence of the promontory. He was responding to the exceptional opportunity presented by the local topography: the promise of broad transmission, symbolically speaking, to northern dissidents and the entire Mediterranean. He may have recognized the potential of the deep east-west riverbed to serve as a natural boundary of (securely) Egyptian territory in the Levant if he could not advance farther north; if so, then in Years 8 and 10 the king stopped to mark and even *protect* this riverine division between his territory and the Hittites' with stelae whose scenes were more overt in their hostility (Loffet 2009, 208–9).³³⁸ The Year 10 Stela gives a sense that the king was looking back at the situation in the north as it would come to stand in the following years, being solidified by the Year 21 treaty: contrary to Loffet's assertion that the stela faces the sea, it appears to do something more nuanced. As a map of its orientation line shows (Figure 5.53; 2.5° west of north), that stela faces more towards the direction of Byblos—the northernmost point

³³⁸ Loffet remarks that the northern and southern stelae “frame” the Year 4 Stela, as if it were “under the protection” of these later monuments (2009, 208). He believes that the king inscribed this site three times because the number three was an Egyptian symbol of unity and completeness (see, e.g., triads of gods) (Loffet 2009, 206–7). I do not think that this was the main reason, if it were a reason at all; the two campaigns in Years 8 and 10 were able to take Ramesses past the site, and the campaign in Year 10 is the last one that we have definitive evidence for (Wimmer 2002, 5).

of Egyptian influence on the coast, immediately south of Amurru—than it does the open sea (like the Year 4 Stela does).

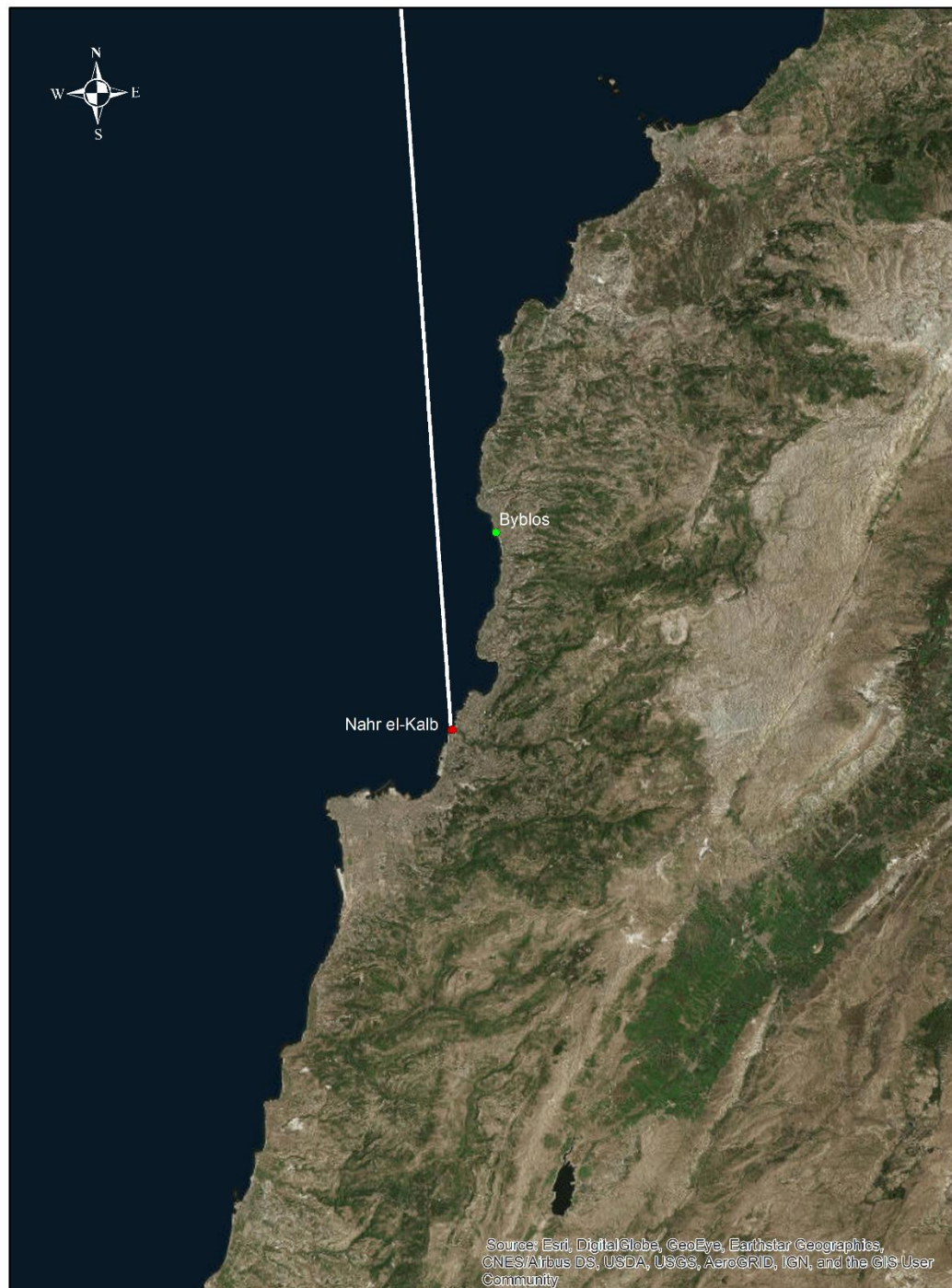


Figure 5.53 Orientation of the Year 10 Stela.

As I have already explained, a major benefit of living rock from the Egyptian perspective was that it allowed an inscribed message to become physically bonded to the place where it was carved, so that it could not be moved or dismantled (though it could, of course, be erased or re-carved). At Nahr el-Kalb, the promontory offered not only this sense of place and permanence, but also the chance to create a billboard for the king's actions in the Levant. This place was unlike the others Ramesses had seen on his Year 4 campaign, and he mobilized its topography as an integral part of his messages. Instead of adding a freestanding stela to this commanding landscape, the king used a the medium of living rock to turn the landscape into a stela. The visual drama of Nahr el-Kalb meant that this place served as a natural boundary between the lands of Egypt and Hatti as these powers struggled to gain control farther north. The agency I have attributed to Nahr el-Kalb implies that Adloun, too, would have to have possessed a defining, striking natural feature that would have captured the attention of the homebound army. In fact, it does.



Figure 5.54 Archival photo of the dramatic landscape at Nahr el-Kalb (Manoug Photo Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Jafet Library Photo Collection, American University of Beirut).

Adloun

As at Nahr el-Kalb, in the grand scheme of Ramesses II's Levantine campaigns, nothing of note ever happened at Adloun. There was no battle, and no record of this coastal site was made in the extant Egyptian military documents. Yet there was—at least until the early 20th century—an Egyptian living-rock stela there. The last photograph taken of this monument (Figure 5.55) reveals that it was round-topped and approximately the size of the stelae at Nahr el-Kalb (and also separating from the rock face, which probably explains why it is no longer extant). It appears to have been carved just above a path on which the other subject in the photograph stands. Having poked around the

landscape at Adloun myself, I am comfortable suggesting that this path was above ground level: set back from the coast, similar bluffs, dotted with holes and fissures, are accessible by a short climb (Figure 5.56).



Figure 5.55 Photograph of the Adloun Stela (Ronzevalle 1909, Pl. XI).



Figure 5.56 A glimpse of the rocks at Adloun.



Figure 5.57 View of the Mediterranean from atop the cliffs at Adloun.

Early drawings of the stela (Figures 5.58 and 5.59) reveal that the lunette contained a smiting scene, with the god on the left as at Nahr el-Kalb. Kitchen suggested that this monument dated to Ramesses' Year 4 campaign (*RITANC* II 135), but it is worth noting that the smiting scene (which was only employed at Nahr el-Kalb *after* the Battle of Kadesh) and the stela's round-topped shape (not used at Nahr el-Kalb in any year) call this assumption somewhat into question. In 1843 Jules de Bertou identified the god as Ptah (1843, 85), although de Bertou was not an Egyptologist, and he also believed (erroneously) that he could read the cartouches of Herodotus' "Sesostris" at Nahr el-Kalb

(1843, 85–86).³³⁹ The below drawings suggest to me that it was more likely to have been Amun-Re, which is what Kitchen also suggests (*RITANC* II 135). Loffet commented that it was significant that the southernmost stela at Nahr el-Kalb contained an image of the Theban deity (2009, 208)—since it was closest to Egypt—so this could make sense, as Adloun is farther south; on the other hand, another stela with an image of Ptah might suggest some relationship with the northernmost stela at Nahr el-Kalb, perhaps that the two mark the northern and southern ends of some portion of the king’s journey.

³³⁹ In Herodotus, Book II: 102, 106, the writer tells of a fantastic king who conquered the world, leaving monuments humiliating his enemies in his wake, which were marked in part with female genitalia to connote a sense of cowardice. The king is called Sesostris, and although there really were several Egyptian kings with this name (Senwosret), Herodotus’ version appears to be an exemplar for idealized Egyptian kingship. These monuments have been equated with those at Nahr el-Kalb and Karabel (a Hittite relief in modern Turkey; Ullmann 2014, 101). Note that Pierre Tallet (2015, 48) believes that Herodotus really did see Egyptian stelae—the ones at Semna (Chapter 6). Claude Obsomer believes that the vulva determinative (which really is used to spell the Egyptian word for ‘coward,’ *ḥm*, but notably along with the penis determinative!) was responsible for some of the confusion (Obsomer 1989, 68 ff.).

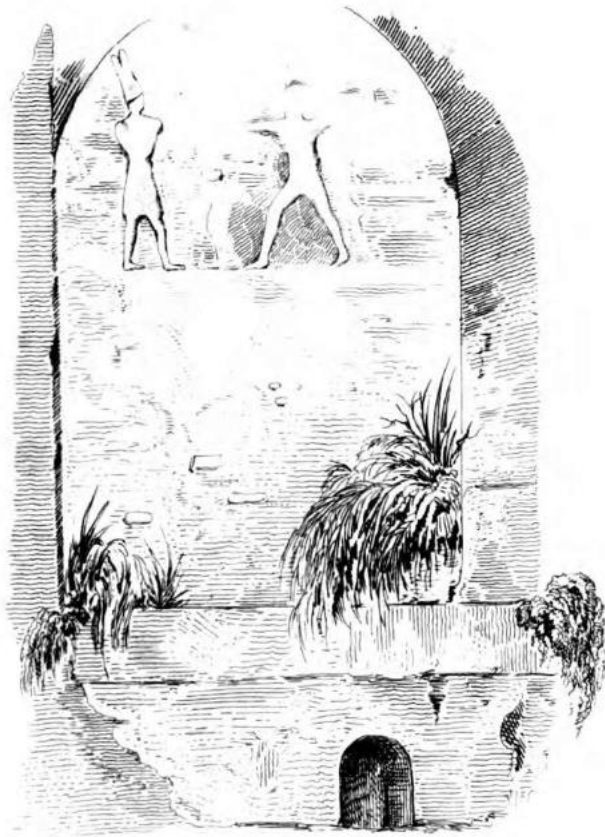


Figure 5.58 Drawing of the Adloun Stela (De Bertou 1854, Pl. 2, Fig. 3).

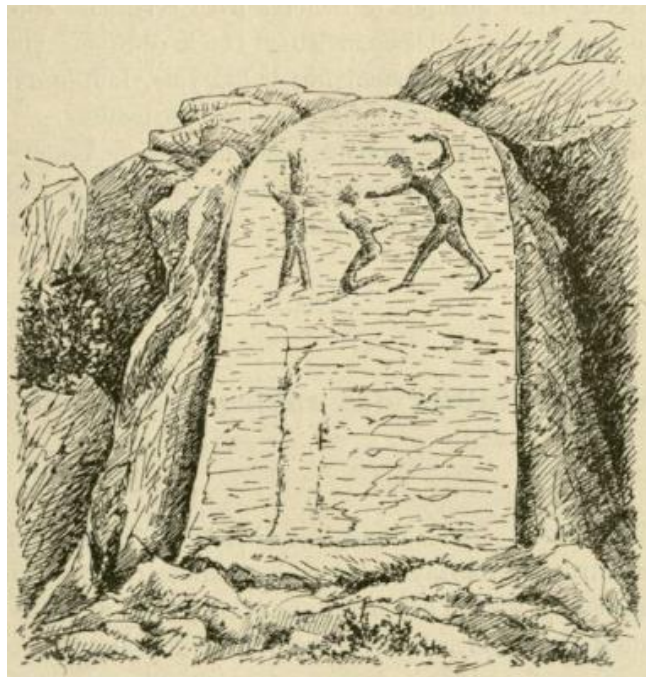


Figure 5.59 Drawing of the Adloun Stela (Ronzevalle 1909, 100, Fig. 9).

Adloun is located about 70 kilometers south of Nahr el-Kalb, also on the coastal road (Figure 5.60). An Egyptian king—let us assume that it was Ramesses, as no living-rock stelae on the Levantine coast are known from any other ruler—chose to commission this monument at this site, presumably because there was something *about this site* that prompted such a statement.

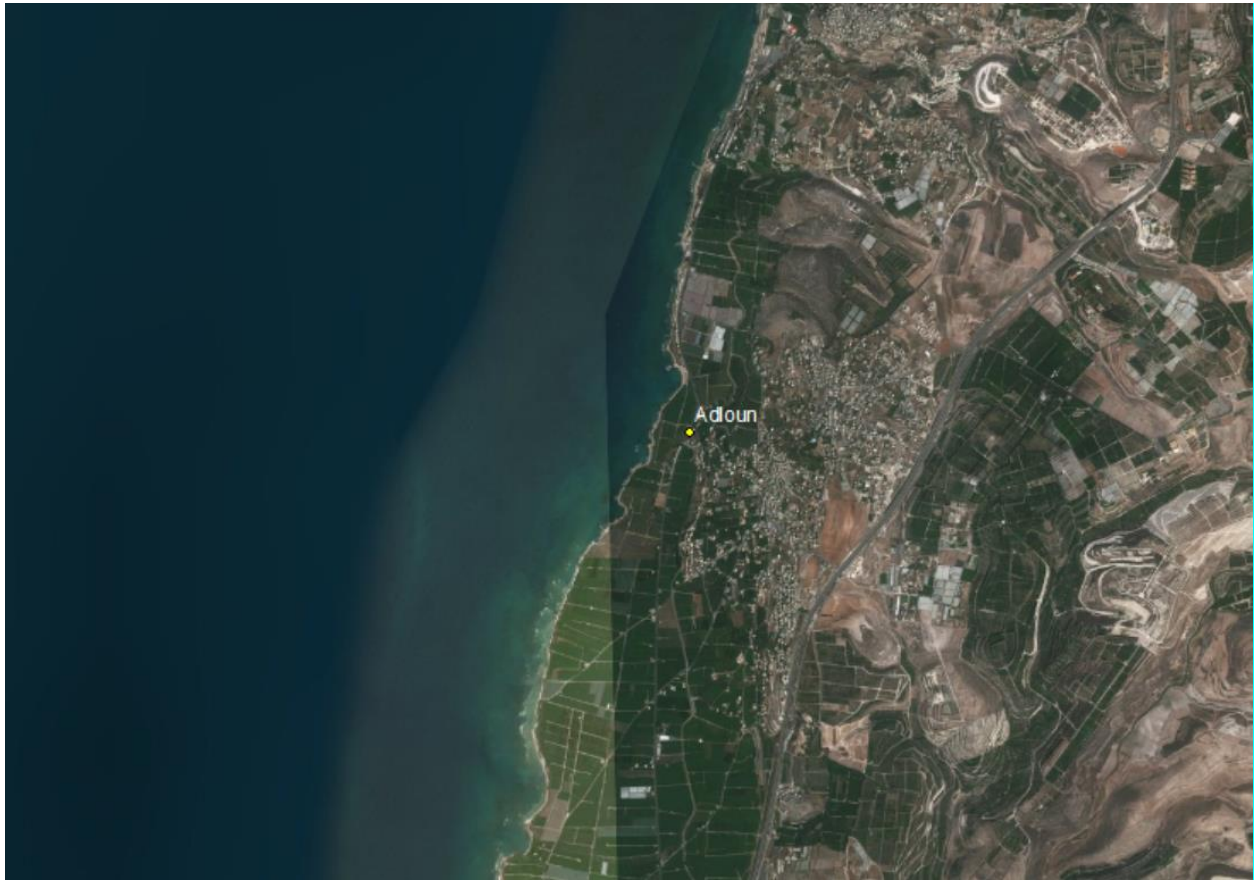


Figure 5.60 Map showing the location of Adloun in its local landscape.

The landscape at Adloun is characterized by a line of north-south-running limestone cliffs, approximately 25 meters high, at the intersection of the mountains and the coast; from the bottom of the cliffs, the ground slopes down gently towards the shore (Copeland 1978, 33). What is different about this place in comparison with the rest of the coast is

that it is the site of four caves that were inhabited in prehistory (these were investigated in part by Dorothy Garrod; Garrod and Kirkbride 1961) (Figure 5.61).



Figure 5.61 One of the prehistoric caves at Adloun.

Knowing what we do about the alterity of the landscape at Nahr el-Kalb, as well as at all of the other sites of living-rock stelae discussed in this chapter, I suggest that it was these striking ‘blips’ on the coastal plain that caught the attention of the Egyptian king, prompting the creation of another stela. In the above photograph, it appears as though the rock onto which the stela was inscribed already had a stelamorphic shape; this is perhaps why the monument was made with a rounded top, and perhaps why it was made precisely at this spot: one may imagine that the form of the rock, visible from the road below, was

an enticing canvas. As all of the stelae at Nahr el-Kalb were made on journeys back to Egypt, we may venture to guess that this stela was also made at such a time, perhaps after Ramesses' departure from Nahr el-Kalb in Year 4. However, the proximity of Adloun to the Egyptian stronghold of Tyre, a mere 18 kilometers to the south, may also be significant; in Roman times Adloun was known as *mutatio ad nonum*, marking the site of the ninth mile proceeding from Tyre (Rey 1883, 510; Kenrick 1855).³⁴⁰

In the choice of Adloun as a carving site, the relative strategic importance of the landscape *Nahr el-Kalb* becomes abundantly clear. Why did Adloun not make the same impression on later armies, whose leaders were moved to carve their own rock monuments at Nahr el-Kalb? And, for that matter, why did Ramesses himself not return to carve at Adloun, when he did so twice at Nahr el-Kalb? This must be due in part to the strategic character of the latter's landscape: Adloun lacks the steep cliffs, the east-west riverbed, and the view from a high point. Even today, a Lebanese military base exists at Nahr el-Kalb (I was thus required to obtain permission from the Lebanese Department of Defense in order to fly a drone there); this and the monuments of post-pharaonic rulers are clear indications of the promontory's tactical significance. Nahr el-Kalb was probably some sort of placeholder for Egyptian supremacy in the Levant, but what, then, was Adloun? It was not located in disputed territory, and it almost certainly did not mark a boundary. Its text may have told of some miraculous occurrence at this site (Chapter 4), and at present that seems to me to be the most likely case, although not the most satisfying answer.

³⁴⁰ See also *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*, <http://dare.ht.lu.se/places/43767.html>, ID 43767.

Ramesses II was the man who built the rock-cut temples at Abu Simbel and five other *speioi*, in addition to commissioning multiple living-rock stelae at Gebel Silsila (Chapter 4). He knew well how and when to use this medium effectively, and we must therefore assume that a good deal of calculation went into the choice to carve some of his Levantine monuments in this medium. As Ramesses, like his father Seti I, was aiming from the outset to match and perhaps surpass the deeds of the Tuthmosids (Bryce 2005, 228, 234; Bryce 2003, 2), who famously carved their boundary stelae on the Euphrates in living rock (see Chapter 6), he may have commissioned these monuments as a way of emulating their deeds (whereas he did not succeed in any other vein). Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, Ramesses may have been aware of the Hittites' own practice of carving rock reliefs in contested spaces (Glatz and Plourde 2011; Glatz 2014; Glatz 2009), and decided to 'talk to them in their own language,' so to speak. But since the Egyptian monuments in living rock were always made on roads rather than in settlements, in regions that were firmly inside the Egyptian fold, and only on the journey home, this was always a broadcast rather than a conversation.

The Road *Most* Traveled³⁴¹

In the above case studies of the living-rock stelae at Nauri, Konosso, Aswan, Nahr el-Kalb, and Adloun, a clear pattern emerges. These places, the sites of natural features whose shape, size, and/or orientation were exceptional in their surrounding landscapes, were exploited for such characteristics when they lay on high-traffic routes. In each case, the monument's patron capitalized on the strategic position of its outcrop, which was already readily visible to passers-by. This is not to imply that the intended audience for

³⁴¹ See Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken."

each stela was only or always human—as is obvious from the monuments at Nauri and Nahr el-Kalb especially, it could be a symbolic communication, or even a message meant for the gods. But regardless of whether these monuments were really read by other people (when those people could read), it is their placement on publicly accessible routes, in “open nature” (Kreppner 2002, 367), that speaks to the function they performed for their patrons. How did they ‘work’? By calling attention to themselves through visual alterity, or by offering the possibility that they could do so. By coming into view as one moved through the landscape. Their outcrops bear clusters of stelae, both royal and private, both Egyptian and post-pharaonic, and this is a testament to how effective their ocular prowess was expected, or hoped, to be. Although such tools of the royal establishment were carved in already public spaces, their presence would undoubtedly have bolstered the sense of those places as public in nature (Kreppner 2002, 369)—and public, in nature.

In the following chapter, I explore three case studies whose mechanics encompass elements from both this chapter and the previous case studies on stelae in sacred landscapes. Some of the monuments in Chapter 6 were undoubtedly placed in ‘public’ view—but they were also part of a larger program to establish new boundaries of the cosmos at opposite ends of Egypt’s New Kingdom empire.

CHAPTER 6

Inscribing the Edges of the World: Living-Rock Boundary Stelae in Nubia and Naharin

He is a brave bull whose southern boundaries reach to
the Horns of the Earth, to the [southern] ends of this
land, and his northern [ones] to the ends of Asia, to the
supports of heaven.

– The Gebel Barkal Stela of Tuthmosis III

Between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts of the Nile at the modern village of Kurgus in Sudan, two peaks protrude from the desert. They form the top of an immense quartz outcrop, forty meters long and fifteen meters high, which today is called the Hagr el-Merwa, ‘Rock of Quartz’ (Figure 6.1; Zibelius-Chen 2013, 137–38; W. V. Davies 2017).³⁴² The Hagr el-Merwa is the farthest south any king of Egypt would reach, and as such two boundary stelae of the Eighteenth Dynasty rulers Tuthmosis I and his grandson Tuthmosis III are inscribed there. Tuthmosis I was responsible for bringing Egypt’s empire to its fullest extent: after he commissioned his stela at Kurgus, he had another one made to mark his northern boundary at the Euphrates River—a deed that Tuthmosis III later repeated, such that both ends of the Egyptian world were carved twice with living-rock stelae. At the site of Tombos near the Third Cataract, a third stela and associated inscriptions of the royal name graced the internal boundary between zones of Egyptian

³⁴² The epigraphic information on this outcrop has been studied in detail for over two decades by a British Museum expedition to the site under the direction of W. Vivian Davies. The most recent publication of the epigraphic activity at the Hagr el-Merwa is Davies 2017; I have preferred to cite this publication in most places, as it presents the most complete picture of this evidence to date.

territorial and hegemonic control in Upper Nubia (S. T. Smith 2003, 94–96, 136–37, 194–95). A recently discovered eroded stela on the east side of the Gebel Barkal—another “strategic point of control” located at the opposite end of the Dongola Reach from Tombos (S. T. Smith 2003, 96)—may have been part of the same program, although little can be said about it at this stage (Bushara Mohamed et al. 2014); a fifth monument upstream from Gebel Barkal on the sandstone hill known as Gebel Belal might also be related (W. V. Davies 2014, 16–17, pls. 26–27).³⁴³ In the words of Stuart Tyson Smith, Egypt was “preoccupied with borders,” especially during the New Kingdom (2003, 4, 170). It was a significant feat to extend and establish them, and it is therefore also significant that the monuments mentioned above were made in living rock.



Figure 6.1 The Hagr el-Merwa as seen from the east.

³⁴³ Davies suggests that this might be a “victory stela, perhaps marking a southern boundary” (2014, 17). It is not yet clear to me what kind of boundary Gebel Belal might have been in the grand scheme of the Egyptian imperial project, as it is reportedly only a few kilometers upstream of Gebel Barkal. The stela is round-topped, 1 meter wide and at least 1.7 meters tall, facing the upstream direction. It probably dates to the Eighteenth Dynasty and its text describes “military action against enemies” (W. V. Davies 2014, 16). As the shape and size of the hill are not known to me, I cannot offer further speculation until this monument is published more fully.

In the previous two chapters I demonstrated that the use of living rock as a medium for royal expression was the outcome of a deliberate, meaningful choice at each of the sites I examined. In my case studies on stelae in sacred landscapes (Chapter 4), I argued that such monuments could be used to permanently and materially express a king's wish to tie his actions not only to a particular landscape, but also to the deep time of the cosmos. In my investigations of the stelae in Lebanon, at Nauri, and at the First Cataract (Chapter 5), I demonstrated that living-rock stelae were carved into highly visible rock surfaces on military routes and at important political nexuses. In this chapter I build on these ideas of timelessness, permanence, and prominence as I evaluate the role of living rock in the establishment of Egypt's imperial boundaries. I contend that, in the context of New Kingdom territorial expansion and new ideas about the role of Egypt's boundaries in establishing world dominance, living rock was considered an ideal medium for imperial boundary markers in faraway places—including the edges of the cosmos—where no other Egyptian foundations existed.

I begin with an overview of the Egyptian conception of boundaries and boundary stelae, which employs comparative evidence from the freestanding Middle Kingdom boundary stelae and associated fortresses near the Second Cataract. I then move on to the case studies at Tombos (in two parts, treating content and context), Kurgus (also in two parts), and on the Euphrates River.



Figure 6.2 Map of the sites discussed in this chapter.

Boundaries and Imperial Boundary Stelae

In order to understand why living rock was employed as a medium for stelae at Egypt's imperial boundaries, we must first consider the Egyptian concepts of *t3š* and *ḏr*, which have been studied at length (most notably by Galán 1995, but also Liverani 2001; Galán 1999; Quirke 1989; Török 2008; Török 2012; Schott-Schwab 1969; Kootz 2013; Hornung 1992, 73–92, and others). José Galán has already provided a helpful summary of several scholars' readings of these terms in his book on Eighteenth Dynasty imperialism (1995, 102–3), so I address them only briefly here.

The term *t3š* is usually translated as “border” or “boundary” in English, but these words are not necessarily interchangeable. For example, Stephen Quirke (1989) uses the word “border” to refer to a fixed line, and “boundary” to indicate only a separation between two spaces, either fixed or loose. It is for this reason that I have chosen to use the word “boundary” whenever possible, except for the sake of avoiding repetition: the nature of Egypt's edges is open to debate, and this word is more versatile. Some Egyptologists use the word “frontier” as a translation of the term *t3š*.³⁴⁴ For geographers, the concept of a frontier is modern and therefore not appropriate for discussions of the ancient world (Anne-Claire Salmas, *pers. comm.*). A frontier is generally characterized as unstructured, or more loosely structured than a boundary; it is “an indefinite zone where the polity comes to an end” (Quirke 1989, 261). As I demonstrate below, the language in imperial boundary stelae seems to associate them with specific locations—which we

³⁴⁴ László Török has suggested that *any* territory located outside of Egypt's original boundaries should be considered a frontier (2009, 14). Four years after his major work on the subject of Egypt's boundaries, where the word appears only sparingly, Galán (1999) began translating *t3š* exclusively as “frontier”—even when it came to the boundaries of fields and towns. He does not offer a reason for this change in terminology.

should expect from a culture “preoccupied” with borders—and so the equation of *t3š* with “frontier” is problematic. It is possible, however, that some of the monuments I discuss here may have designated a boundary while their surrounding area operated more like a frontier.

t3š designated the limit of any earthly territory over which someone held authority, regardless of the size of the territory, both inside and outside of *Kmt* (Galán 1995, 101). Egypt’s internal *t3šw* (such as city and estate boundaries) were established by royal command, and so were meant to last forever, but its *t3šw* with *foreign* lands were dependent on constant military and diplomatic upkeep, and subject to change based on the actions of future kings (Galán 1995, 113, 118, 152).³⁴⁵ The rulers of Egypt generally aimed to surpass the deeds of their forefathers, since this was one of the ways that historical singularities were permitted to occur (Chapter 3). Thus the phrase “to widen the boundaries” (*swsh t3šw*) appears in many of their narratives, for example:

*i.nd hr=k hr-k3w-r hr=n ntr hprw mk t3 swsh t3šw=f dzir h3swt m wrwt=f ink t3wy m r-
wy=fy*

Hail Khakaure, our Horus, divine of forms; protector of the land, who widens its boundaries; who defeats foreign lands by his Great Crown; who embraces the two lands with his arms.³⁴⁶

iw=f m hntyt r k3š r swsh t3šw kmt wn.in hm=f hr skr iwnty-sty -pf m hry-ib mšc=f

...he (Amenhotep I) sailed south to Kush in order to widen the boundaries of Egypt. Then his majesty smote that Nubian bowman in the midst of his army...³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ As they shifted from period to period, so did popular conceptions: “the Egyptians often changed their views concerning the extent of their land” (Goelet 1999, 24).

³⁴⁶ Hymn to Senwosret III. Papyrus UC 32157, recto, columns 2-3.

³⁴⁷ Autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ibana, li. 24-25.

Only the plural of *t3š*, *t3šw*, is used with the verb *swsh*; it is therefore taken to mean the extension of the area between the borders, not just of the borders themselves (Galán 1995, 118–19).³⁴⁸

The extension of Egypt's *t3šw* resulted from the king's *nh* (discussed in Chapter 5): his strength, power, and/or victory,³⁴⁹ given to him by Amun and expressed in various ways, from advancing into foreign lands to overthrowing his enemies (Galán 1995, 68, 118; Spalinger 1983, 228–29). His boundaries were “sacrosanct”; on the eve of a military campaign it was common for the king to announce that they had been violated by his enemies (Hornung 1992, 75). *swsh t3šw* has been called “the only Egyptian expression which comes close to the modern word ‘imperialism’” (Bleiberg 1984a, 3).³⁵⁰ It is clear that this was a major ideological goal, although it was not actual policy at all times and places in the Egyptian world (S. T. Smith 2003, 170–71). The area within Egypt's *t3šw* was guarded by the king both practically and metaphorically, but it could encompass non-Egyptian territories whose rulers were somehow aligned with him, as vassals or even trading partners (Galán 1995, 123). Marwan Kilani has scrutinized the ideological consequences of *swsh t3šw* before and after the Eighteenth Dynasty, when Egypt was forced to confront the existence of other empires. He concludes that, from the Eighteenth Dynasty onward, the goal of *swsh t3šw* shifted from simply ‘widening the boundaries of Egypt’ to ‘widening the boundaries up to the ends of the world’—part of a broader Eighteenth Dynasty trend, where kings sought to “perform incomparable feats” and

³⁴⁸ The phrase does usually reference the widening of the boundaries of *Kmt* (Galán 1995, 118). This can be neatly explained by Galán's assertion that it is the *area between the boundaries* that is widening: *Kmt*'s ‘buffer zone’ is thus extended.

³⁴⁹ The root meaning of this word is ‘force.’

³⁵⁰ For a new work on the subject of Egyptian imperialism, see Morris 2018.

surpass the deeds of their forefathers with “a heretofore unknown intensity” (Hornung 1992, 88). Most of the foreign entities in between were not actually annexed by Egypt, so in order for the king to claim control of them and of the rest of the world, he only needed to demonstrate to his own people that he could reach them if he wished (Kilani 2015, 78ff.). Mario Liverani explained this idea in similar terms: “It is not so important truly to control the world as to persuade the inner population that we do so” (2001, 25). Here I am reminded of Glatz and Plourde’s question about the ‘cost’ of monuments in boundary zones (2011, 33): perhaps the most effective proof of the king’s claim on a territory was in his and his military personnel’s accounts of reaching it, verbally and on other monuments inside Egypt, where they would have had a larger audience.

In contrast to *t3š*, the term *ḏr* is usually translated as “end” or “limit.” In general it can be used to describe the extent of anything, such as property: *nn ḏrw mnmnt -nbt*, “there was no limit to any cattle.”³⁵¹ In the context of Egyptian territorial ambitions, it has been understood by most scholars to mean one of two things. Either it refers to something as-yet unattainable—territory (or political control of a territory) that has not yet been obtained by Egypt (Galán 1995; Lorton 1974)—or it designates a fixed, cosmic boundary that is part of the structure of the universe (Hornung 1992; Liverani 2001; Kilani 2015). See Kootz 2013 for a very different interpretation, for comparison. These are obviously very different meanings, but no clear consensus has been reached on the issue. In the imperial context, this word is found most often in the phrase *ini ḏrw*, “to

³⁵¹ From the *Tale of Sinuhe*, li. 84-85 (Parkinson 1997). See Hornung 1980 for the use of *ḏr* in counting and measuring.

bring in the *ḏrw*” or “to get to/acquire the *ḏrw*.” Like *swšh t3šw*, *ini ḏrw* was also the result of the king’s *nḥt*:

nsw nḥt ir rn=f ḥr ḥ3swt rṯnw wr b3w šm pḥty ḥw ḥ3swt bšt -r=f in ḏrw tkk t3šw=f

The *nḥt*-king who makes his name in the foreign lands of Retenu, great of might, strong of authority, who strikes the foreign lands that are rebellious against him, who brings in the *ḏrw* of the one who attacks his *t3šw*.³⁵²

As is evident from the above example, these two concepts may be connected in some way. For example, Galán believes that *ḏrw* were the “negative or passive counterpart” of *t3šw*: “what is not *t3š*,” just out of reach (1995, 128–31). Kilani suggests that *ḏrw* referred to what lay on the other side of the foreign lands (and god’s lands, Chapter 3) that surrounded Egypt (2015, especially figs. 6.1 and 6.2), an idea that I find far more persuasive, and which does not rely on such an intrinsic relationship between these terms. This idea also leaves room for speculation about whether *ḏrw* belonged to the earthly realm and were possible to obtain in a practical sense, or part of the very fabric of the cosmos and evoked only figuratively in the textual record.

Returning to *t3š*, most scholars have taken this word to designate a physical, albeit changeable, boundary between Egypt and its neighbors.³⁵³ Liverani defines *t3š* as a “real (political), flexible, moveable border” (2001, 29). It is, paradoxically, both “static”—“fixed in its optimal position, as an ideal and cosmic border unaffected by historical accidents”—and “dynamic,” moving “only and always forward” towards its *real* optimal position, concurrent with the cosmic boundary of the world (Liverani 1990, 51, 56). Quirke notes that *t3šw* can be loosened (*fh*) and tightened (*ts*) like a string, which implies

³⁵² Inscription from Tutankhamun’s chest (Beinlich and Saleh 1989, 183).

³⁵³ But not of the type outlined on modern maps, which are “highly artificial and developed at the drawing-board” (Vogel 2011, 322–23, fn. 4).

that they possess some physical component. He compares Egypt's Middle Kingdom boundaries to Roman *limes* and the Great Wall of China: something visible that kept the enemies out, which “belongs to the defences of the state, rather than embodying any concept of an integral sovereign territory” (Quirke 1989, 263–65). Carola Vogel, who appropriately titled her paper on this subject “This Far and Not a Step Further!,” states that stelae placed at Egypt's external *t3šw* “were thought to define a concrete border line between foreign and Egyptian territory, regardless of whether this assumed border was corresponding to reality or fiction” (2011, 322). But for Galán, who used an ‘immediate-context’ approach to the meaning of *t3š*,³⁵⁴ this word represents an abstract concept, rather than a concrete object (1995, 6). Galán has argued against the very idea of ‘imperial boundary stelae’ (although he does believe in boundary stelae *within* Egypt), writing that stelae could not have fixed the actual location of an international boundary because Egypt's imperial *t3šw* were subject to continual change as part of their ideological conception (this is the dual static/dynamic conception explained by Liverani). Rather, Galán contends that such monuments only *commemorated* “the furthest region reached by a royal expedition of *nḥt*, i.e., the maximum extension of Egypt's influential presence or area of authority, of Egypt's *t3š* at one particular moment” (1995, 153). Such stelae were, in his opinion, not ‘boundary stelae’ at all, but ordinary *wḏw nw nḥtw* (Galán 1995, 153). Recall, however, that the only stelae conclusively termed *wḏw nw nḥtw* by the Egyptians *were* its imperial boundary stelae (Chapter 5).

³⁵⁴ An ‘immediate-context’ approach considers the words used in the vicinity of a term to be “the most appropriate indicator of its meaning,” rather than looking to the word's “smallest syntactical constructions,” as in a traditional lexicographical study (Galán 1995, 6).

While I agree with Galán that *t3š* probably referred to the extent of Egypt's reach *at a given point*, like most other scholars I do not believe that the changeable nature of *t3šw* would have prevented them from being marked with royal monuments that were intended to fix real (if approximate and perhaps violable) boundaries. For example, at Kurgus we find next to each other, and in dialogue, two stelae that explicitly reference Egypt's imperial boundaries under two different kings (see below). Their coexistence alone is enough to suggest that new monuments could be added to the repertoire as *t3šw* were moved, threatened, or reaffirmed. Beyond this, two references to the Euphrates Stela of Tuthmosis III (also discussed below) describe it as both a stela meant "to widen the boundaries of Egypt" *and* a *wḏ n nḥtw*:

smn.n=f wḏ=f m nhrn ḥr swšḥ t3šw kmt

He established his stela in Naharin in order to widen the boundaries of Egypt.³⁵⁵

smn=f wḏ n nḥtw ḥr gs=f [...]

He established a victory stela on its (the Euphrates') [...] side.³⁵⁶

Andrea Klug (2002, 213) argues—and I agree—that because this monument was clearly applied to the extension of Egypt's boundaries, it must therefore be regarded as a boundary stela, even if it is not explicitly called a *wḏ n p3 t3š* or *wḏ r t3š* (the terms used to describe some of the Amarna boundary stelae, Chapter 4; Galán 1995, 145) in the extant sources. For comparison, the Kurgus stelae call themselves simply *wḏ*, not *wḏ n nḥtw*.

The New Kingdom imperial boundary stelae have predecessors from Egypt's Middle Kingdom *t3š* with Nubia at the Second Cataract. This boundary was marked by

³⁵⁵ Annals of Tuthmosis III, *Urk* IV 698, li. 17-699, li. 1.

³⁵⁶ Armant Stela of Tuthmosis III, li. 8. For the debate about which side of the river this stela was made on, see below.

freestanding stelae, all of which were made by the Twelfth Dynasty king Senwosret III. They are the First Semna Stela,³⁵⁷ Second Semna Stela,³⁵⁸ and Uronarti Stela³⁵⁹ (Loeben 2001; Eyre 1990; Seidlmayer 2000; Van Siclen 1982; Janssen 1953).

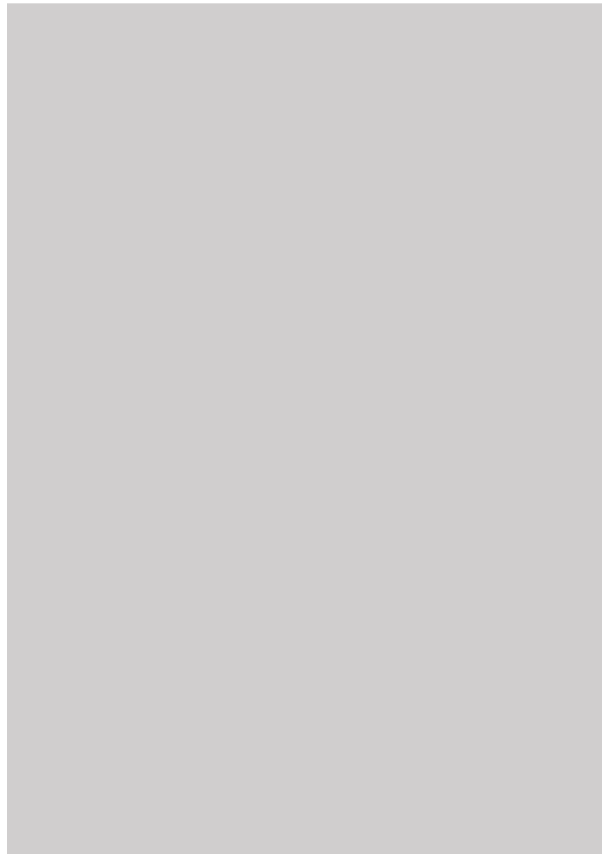


Figure 6.3 Drawing of the First Semna Stela (Loeben 2001, 281, Fig. 3).

The First Semna Stela (Figure 6.3) was made in Year 8 somewhere at the site of Semna West. Most scholars assume that temples or chapels were the appropriate settings for such monuments, because they were probably meant to receive cult, but that would mean that they and their messages would be more or less invisible to most people (Vogel 2011, 320). Regardless, it is generally agreed that in the Middle Kingdom they at least required the protection of enclosure walls—which means that the fortress or other building that

³⁵⁷ Berlin Museum 14753.

³⁵⁸ Berlin Museum 1157.

³⁵⁹ Khartoum National Museum 3.

housed them had to have been constructed already (Vogel 2011, 327). The First Semna Stela's original location is unknown, but it undoubtedly had an architectural relationship with the fortress that was built at Semna by the same king (Vogel 2011, 326–27), part of a chain of strongholds that monitored the area between Elephantine and the Second Cataract (Figure 6.4). The monument itself declares that it actually *is* the southern boundary of Egypt:

t3š rs iry m rnpt-sp 8 hr hm n nsw-bity h'k3wr di 'nh dt r nh r tm rd sn -sw nhs -nb

Southern boundary made in Year 8 under the majesty of the Dual King Khakaure, given life forever until eternity, in order to prevent any Nubian from crossing it...³⁶⁰

It also bears the hieroglyph for 'west' at the top of its lunette, perhaps to denote its position as part of a pair of markers at fortresses on either side of the Nile (Semna and Kumma), which might have created a linear border across the river (Vogel 2011, 327). It has been suggested that this monument also bore images of bound captives in its lower portion, so that those who could not read it—if it was indeed placed at a location where foreigners would actually have seen it—would have gotten the gist (Loeben 2001, 281, fig. 3; Vogel 2011, 327).

³⁶⁰ Opening lines of the First Semna Stela of Senwosret III.

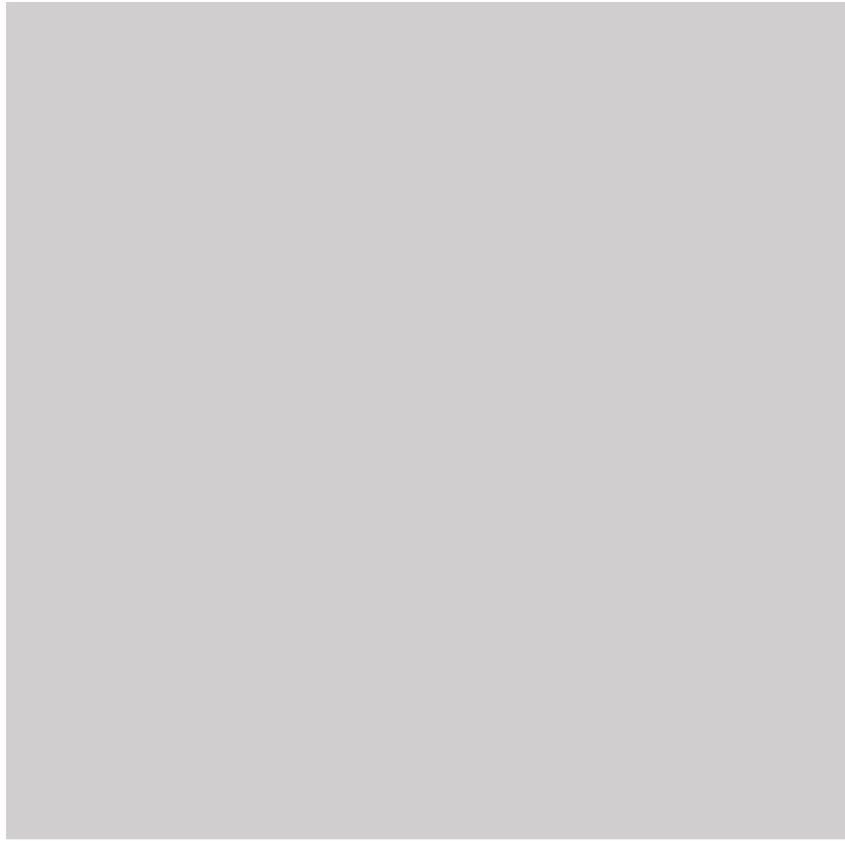


Figure 6.4 Map showing the locations of Middle Kingdom fortresses at Egypt's boundary with Nubia (courtesy of Laurel Bestock).

As for the Second Semna Stela and the Uronarti Stela (Figure 6.5 and 6.6), Vogel has argued convincingly that both were originally pressed into the mudbrick walls at the entrances of their respective fortresses, and not inside the temples that existed at those sites (2011, 328ff.).³⁶¹ The two stelae bear almost the same text, which references their place in the rhetoric of *swsh tšw*. They begin differently, however, which Vogel also noticed; the monument at Semna references the imperial boundary (also at Semna), whereas the monument at Uronarti places it in the context of the construction of its fortress:

rnpt-sp 16 3bd 3 prt irt hm=f tšš rs r hh iw ir.n=i tšš=i hnt=i [sic] itw=i

³⁶¹ Vogel also draws our attention to the Ramesside stelae that were probably pressed into the front of the gate at Tell el-Borg (Hoffmeier 2011).

Year 16, third month of Peret. His majesty made the southern boundary at Heh (Semna). I made my boundary farther south than my (fore)fathers.³⁶²

wḏ irt m rnpt-sp 16 3bd 3 prt hft kḏ mnnw ḥsf-iwntyw iw ir.n=i t3š=i hnt=i [sic] itw=i

Stela made in Year 16, third month of Peret, when the fortress “Repelling the Iwentyw” (Uronarti) was built. I made my boundary farther south than my (fore)fathers.³⁶³

Later in their texts, both stelae call on the king’s descendants to defend “this boundary,” which implies that they were part of the same system:

*ir -grt s3=i -nb srwḏ.ty=fy t3š -pn ir.n ḥm=i s3=i -pw ms.tw=f n ḥm=i twt s3 nḏty it=f srwḏ
t3š n wtt -sw ir -grt fh.ty=fy -sw tm.ty=fy ḥ3 ḥr=f n s3=i is n ms.tw=f is -n=i*

As for any son of mine who shall make firm (*srwḏ*) this boundary that my majesty made, he is my son, born to my majesty. It befits a son that he be his father’s champion and keep firm the boundary of his begetter. As for him who shall lose it and who shall not fight for it, he is not my son, and was not born to me.³⁶⁴

A statue³⁶⁵ of Senwosret III also stood at the boundary, the king’s image serving as a reminder of this responsibility, as we learn from the very end of these texts:

*ist -grt rḏi.n ḥm=i ir.tw twt n ḥm=i ḥr t3š -pn ir.n ḥm=i n-mrwr rwd=tn ḥr=f n-mrwr
ḥ3=tn ḥr=f*

Now, my majesty had a statue (*twt*) of my majesty made at this boundary that my majesty made, for the sake of your being firm (*rwd*) on it and for the sake of your fighting for it.³⁶⁶

Vogel suggests that the contents of these stelae might have been read aloud on the occasion of each fortress’ inauguration, if not at other times (2011, 332), and Christopher Eyre points out that their “literary” nature does not preclude them from serving as boundary markers,

³⁶² Second Semna Stela, li. 3-4.

³⁶³ Uronarti Stela, li. 1.

³⁶⁴ Second Semna Stela, li. 17-20; Uronarti Stela, li. 13-17.

³⁶⁵ There has been some debate about whether the word *twt* in the Second Semna and Uronarti Stelae, which may also be translated as ‘image,’ refers to a statue or to the Second Semna Stela itself. Winfried Barta (1974) and Claude Obsomer (1989, 67) suggested that the *twt* was the stela, and James Allen (2015, 167) agrees, stating that the titulary at the top of the stela stood for the king’s image, and the image maintained the boundary. Pierre Tallet (2015, 48) writes that it is generally assumed that the *twt* was a statue (perhaps a now-headless statue that was discovered inside the chapel at Uronarti, Van Siclen 1982, 38), especially since a statue would have amplified the cult of the king in the Semna fortress. Unfortunately (and predictably, if one knows the ‘luck’ of archaeologists!), line 18 of the Uronarti Stela breaks off exactly before the assumed appearance of the word *-pn*, “this”—present in the phrase “this boundary” on the Second Semna Stela, quoted below—which would help to clarify the situation. If the Uronarti Stela had instead spoken of “that boundary,” we might be having an entirely different conversation.

³⁶⁶ Second Semna Stela, li. 20-21; Uronarti Stela, li. 17-19.

“a physical manifestation of declared policy” (1990, 138). Together, the three stelae at Semna and Uronarti were announcements of the king’s on-the-ground border control policies, which also proclaimed him to be the divinely selected administrator of order for the whole of Egypt (Eyre 1990, 137; Goelet 1999, 27; Allen 2015, 167).

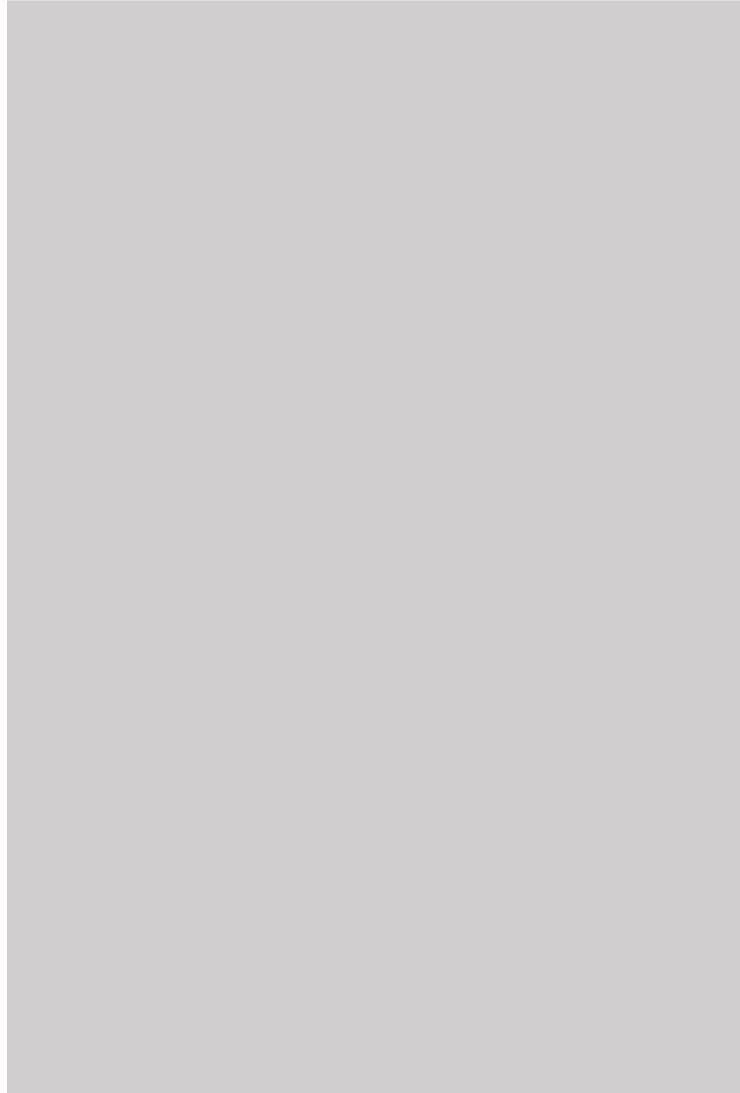


Figure 6.5 The Second Semna Stela (Wikimedia Commons, photo by user Magnus Manske).

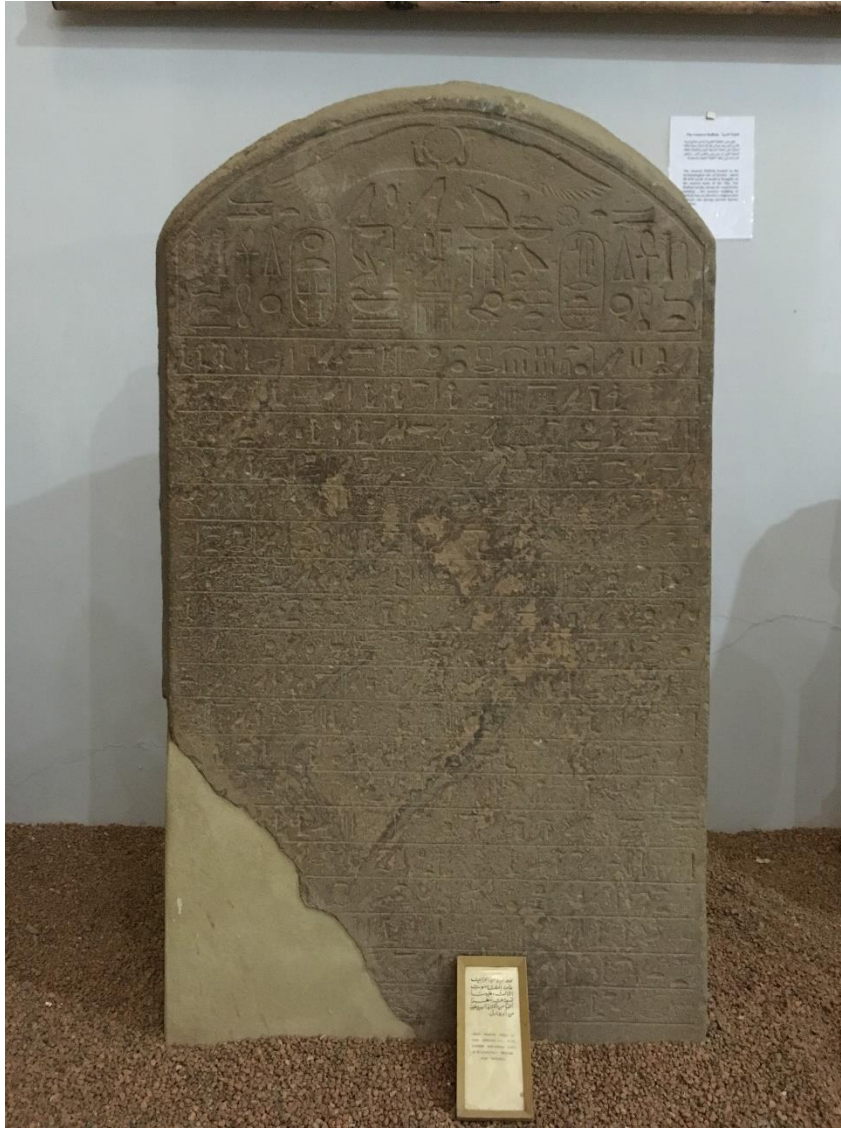


Figure 6.6 The Uronarti Stela.

The stelae from Year 16 were probably made to reaffirm the boundary established in Year 8, rather than to explicitly ‘fix’ it again, but they clearly functioned as part of a network of monuments that secured—perhaps magically³⁶⁷—Egypt’s real southern interface with Nubia (Vogel 2011, 229, 331ff.). Each of their fortresses and the larger

³⁶⁷ Vogel suggests a magical function of these monuments (2011, 331), as does Tallet (2015, 48); the latter believes that stelae would have been put “at all the strategic points of the frontier,” guaranteeing its permanence “almost magically.” Tallet holds that this boundary was not just a physical one, but a “moral” one as well, between the Egyptians and ‘others.’

architectural system of which they were a part would have produced a functional boundary that was supported by a military presence.³⁶⁸ Architecture and other physical forms of deterrence were put to use throughout Egypt's history to maintain its territorial extent, supporting the claims of such monuments (Morris 2005; Morris 2017; Vogel 2013). They could, for example, be reinforced through the regulation of access to the Nile, both as a water source and a means of transportation (Vogel 2011, 322–23, fn. 4). And so we need not imagine a 'nodal' stela (Gates-Foster 2012, 210), standing by itself in the desert, doing this work for the royal establishment.

But could a single stela fix and maintain an imperial boundary if it were left by itself at the edge of a foreign territory? Vogel raised a similar question: "did Egyptian royal ideology really demand the erection of such items within temple walls?" (2011, 337). Did it demand that imperial boundary stelae be set up in 'appropriate' architectural contexts in order for them to work? It is worth asking these questions on the heels of my review of the Middle Kingdom stelae, as they are pertinent to the New Kingdom examples from Kurgus and the Euphrates, discussed below, which do not appear to have had any associated architecture or military presence. Surely individual stelae could have marked *t3šw* in a way that at least *seemed* geographically absolute: they were a form of defensive architecture themselves, warning foreigners not to go past them in both word and image. And, as with all of the stelae in this dissertation, the *intention* behind each monument is my central point of concern. It is worth quoting Liverani at length on this issue:

³⁶⁸ For example, Quirke cites Middle Kingdom evidence of patrols that monitored Egypt's *t3šw* (1989, 263–64). A statue of Amenhotep son of Hapu from Karnak describes how Egyptian troops deterred foreigners through the strategic placement of troops at the heads of roads and on the banks of the Nile (Yoyotte 2011a, 144). Jean Yoyotte equates the situation at Semna with modern-day Customs authorities (ibid.), and Donald Redford (2004, 12–13) reminds us that Egypt's boundaries also had an overtly economic aspect: they were the membranes through which suitable goods and people entered Egyptian territory.

...if we view the border as an elastic perimeter that follows the outward movements of the king, the stela, which has his name and image inscribed upon it, acts as a substitute for his presence. This keeps the perimeter fixed at the farthest point, even when the king returns to a more central position. The border remains ‘anchored’ to the stela, thus leaving the king free to move in other directions without sacrificing the gains of his earlier advance. And concerning time, the stela keeps fresh the memory of this achievement (and therefore its effectiveness in terms of knowledge), so long as the ‘name’ of the king and preferably his image as well remain visible.³⁶⁹

From an ideological perspective, a stela left at the farthest reaches of Egypt’s empire was assumed to ‘work’ primarily because it was activated by the name and image of the king (a similar situation probably applied to the statue or stela ‘image’ of Senwosret III that guarded the boundary at Semna; see fn. 366). These emblems were proof of the ‘public’ claim he needed to make about reaching the area (Kilani 2015, 78; see also Liverani 2001, 25), regardless of what happened thereafter. Whether such monuments actually deterred foreigners from traveling past them may not have mattered, especially if they were left at the sites of hegemonic boundaries (S. T. Smith 2003) that were seldom (if ever) visited again by agents of the royal establishment. This was the case for the stelae made at the ends of the Egyptian world during the New Kingdom, as I demonstrate in the following sections. The Middle Kingdom monuments enjoyed supplementary support from an architectural network that did not exist at Egypt’s New Kingdom *t3šw*, but living rock, sacred and permanent, was apparently considered a suitable medium for the job.

Royal Inscriptions at Tombos: Territory vs. Hegemony

The well-known stela of Tuthmosis I just upstream of the Third Cataract at Tombos did not mark one of Egypt’s external *t3šw*, and thus should not be considered an imperial boundary stela (Bradbury 1985, 16; Budka 2005, 109). However, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it was nonetheless made at an important geographical

³⁶⁹ Liverani 2001, 34–35.

and political nexus. Situated at the northern end of the fertile and easily navigable Dongola Reach, Tombos also lies at the intersection of the Nilotic termini of three desert routes: the Oasis Highway, a route to the Geddi and Kajbar districts downstream, and a route that intersects with the Korosko-Abu Hamed road to the east (Brown 2015, 208 with Fig. 4.6). In the second year of his reign, Tuthmosis I arrived in Upper Nubia, sacked the Kushite capital of Kerma, sailed upstream to Kurgus where he made his boundary stela, and returned via Tombos, where he commissioned the abovementioned monument (Bradbury 1992; S. T. Smith 2003, 84; Redford 2004, 36; Brown 2015, 205–6, 227–29).³⁷⁰ Tombos was located a mere 10 kilometers north of Kerma, and it soon developed into an Egyptian colonial settlement that came to serve as a “custom point” where annual tributes from the south were assembled (Budka 2005, 115; S. T. Smith 2003, 137). Tombos marked the internal, symbolic boundary between Egyptian direct and hegemonic control in Upper Nubia (S. T. Smith 2003, 94–96, 136–37, 194–95; S. T. Smith and Buzon 2014, 2). Archaeological surveys conducted in the 1980s and 1990s revealed that only a small number of Egyptian colonial settlements were established south of the Third Cataract, at Tombos, Gebel Barkal, and Kawa; as Smith explains, this paucity indicates that the “massive intervention and acculturation” seen in Lower Nubia was not at play in Upper Nubia (2003, 94). Rather, the survey data supports a model of hegemonic domination for this area (*ibid.*). The imperial *tꜣš*—the boundary of Egyptian hegemony—was located more than 500 kilometers upstream of Tombos, at Kurgus. In

³⁷⁰ A colorful but brief account of these events is retold in the autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ibana, li. 29–36. For a map of the king’s probable campaign route to Kurgus, see Davies 2017, 96, Fig. 36.

order to talk about the monuments at Kurgus and at Egypt's northern imperial boundary in Naharin, one must first talk about Tombos and the Tombos Stela.³⁷¹

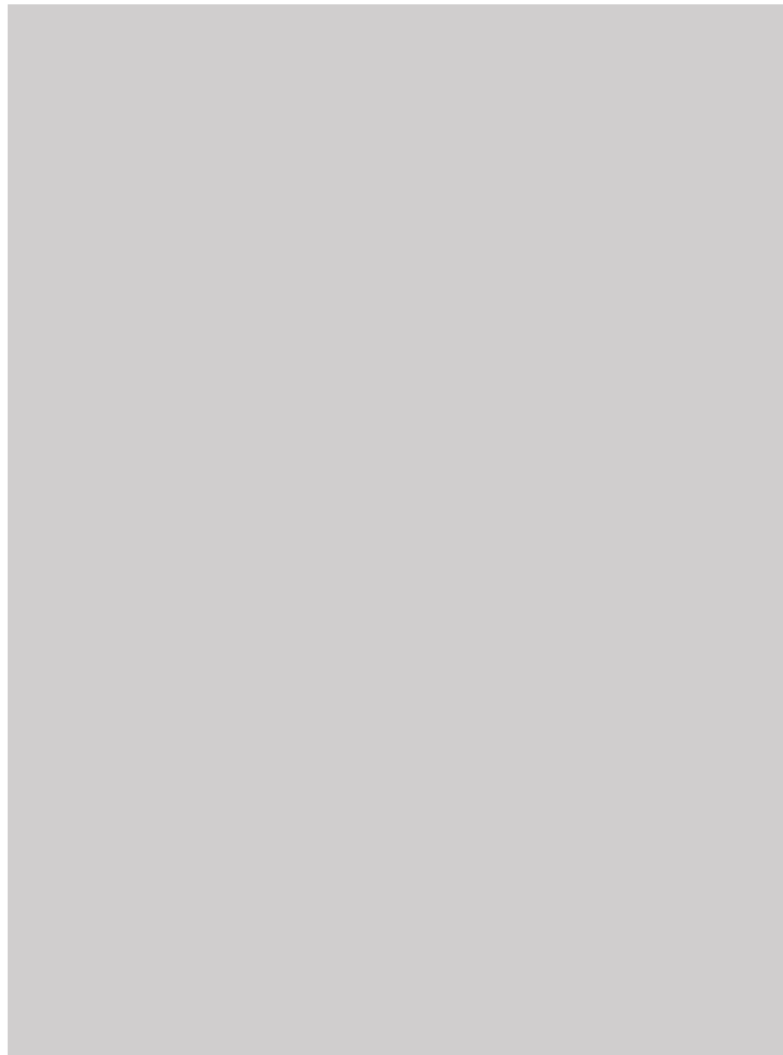


Figure 6.7 Map of Nubia with cultural and geographic boundaries (S. T. Smith 2003, 3, Fig. 1.1).

³⁷¹ Tombos is also the site of numerous private inscriptions, which have been published by Davies (2008; 2009) and are currently being recorded and studied in further detail by the British Museum Epigraphic Survey. Some of these are located on the same cluster of boulders (or even on the very same boulder) as the Tombos Stela. Tombos is also the location of Kerma rock drawings (Williams 2007, 405–8), although these do not share any spatial relationship with the royal monuments.



Figure 6.8 The cluster of rocks bearing the Tombos Stela (on the boulder at left).



Figure 6.9 Archival photo of the University of Chicago's work on the Tombos Stela of Tuthmosis I (Oriental Institute).

The Tombos Stela is carved into a granite boulder in a cluster of rocks on the east bank of the Nile (Figure 6.8 and see below, Figure 6.13, for context). The boulder is tilted dramatically to the north (Figure 6.9), but the stela's orientation in line with its vertical axis suggests that it was probably not tilted when the monument was carved. The lunette is decorated only with the winged sun disk and an axisymmetric writing of its name, *bḥdty*. Below the stela is a small figure of the king (Klug 2002, 78) wearing the *Anedjty* crown and holding an *ankh* and flail, seated on a throne (Figure 6.10).



Figure 6.10 Detail of the Tombos Stela inscription showing the small figure of the king at the bottom of the monument.

This monument has been the subject of numerous textual studies (e.g. Goedicke 1974; Nibbi 1976; Bradbury 1985; Spalinger 1995; Goedicke 1996; Klug 2002; Beylage 2002), in part because it presents a challenging commentary on the imperial geography of the early Eighteenth Dynasty. The text is dated to Year 2, II Akhet, day 15, on the king's return from his expedition to Kurgus and the establishment of his imperial boundary there (Budka 2005, 108; Bradbury 1985, 4; Goedicke 1996, 174). It takes the form of a eulogy, with a short report of a Nubian campaign in the middle: the events that preceded his journey to Kurgus, when he sacked Kerma (S. T. Smith 2003, 84; Bradbury 1992). The main message of the stela concerns the king's power over the world and his enemies. At its close, the text refers not to any local gods, but instead to the king's relationships with Amun-Re and the Ennead of Karnak (Budka 2005, 108; Klug 2002, 77). Here I focus on three passages relevant to the establishment of Egypt's imperial boundaries.

The first passage, which follows the opening titulary, begins by explaining that it is now Year 2 of the king's reign, and that his mission is to secure Egypt's supremacy over the rest of the world:

*snnwt rnpt n bs.tw=f h't=f m hry-tp t3wy r h'k3 šnnt itn rsw mh'w m-r3-^c psšwt hr sth sm3t
t3wy sndm=f hr nswt gbb wts.tw h'w shmti ti hm=f it.n=f iw't=f htp.n=f tnt3t hr r swsh t3šw
w3st hnbwt hft-hr-nb=s r b3k -n=s hryw-š^c h3styw bwityw ntr h'w-nbwt rthw-k3bt*

Second year of his being introduced and his appearance as head of the Two Lands, in order to rule what the sun revolves around, the southern and the northern lands as well, the shares of Horus and Seth, the union of the Two Lands, as he sat on the thrones of Geb and the double crown was raised. As his majesty took up his inheritance, he sat on the dais of Horus in order to widen the boundaries of Thebes and the fields of Khefethernebes, and to enslave to her the Bedouin, the hill-dwellers, those abominated by god, the Aegeans, and the *rthw-k3bt*.³⁷²

It contains the phrase *swsh t3šw*, which one should expect, but not in its ordinary application, which is to refer to the boundaries of *Kmt* (Galán 1995, 118). Rather, it is the boundaries of *Thebes* that the king sets out to widen, as well as the fields of Khefethernebes, its western mountains (Chapter 3). The lines that follow name a series of specific foreign groups who seem to represent, on the whole, the great variety of non-Egyptianness that existed in the world around Egypt. This is especially interesting when we consider that the final lines of the stela declare that the king is beloved of the gods who reside in Karnak: this monument in a foreign land, whose main message concerns the king's world dominance, is bookended by references to his duties at home (Spalinger 1995, 276). Those portions of the text do not appear to be context-dependent, which is quite the opposite of what we have seen in most of the other royal living-rock stelae. Further to this, as Klug points out, the monument has direct implications for the landscape of Thebes, which is rather far away (2002, 77).

³⁷² Tombos Stela, li. 1-4. Goedicke (1996, 161) read *rthw-k3bt* as the people "restrained of locks." It is unclear what group of people this refers to, but the name is perhaps related to a hairstyle.

If we recall that the stela is dated very early in the king's reign, only in Year 2, it might help to explain these peculiarities. At the outset of his reign, Tuthmosis—who was not the son of the previous ruler, Amenhotep I, and also not of royal blood (Baligh 2003)³⁷³—perhaps felt that he needed to justify, or at least solidify, his kingship:³⁷⁴ the narrative portion of the stela begins with an account of how he assumed the throne that was rightfully his, placing the whole monument in the context of a new beginning. Indeed, in his study of the calendrical importance of this monument, Tony Spalinger noted that the theme of this part of the text is the king's coronation (1995, 276–77); II Akhet, day 15 was the date of the Opet Festival, which shared an intimate connection with the royal succession (Spalinger 1995, 279). Thebes was the main Egyptian religious center and a center of royal power—not to mention, the place where kings were usually crowned—and the subservience of foreigners to Egypt would result in tribute that could guarantee the care of the city and its religious institutions (Klug 2002, 77). Framing his first campaign as a religious enterprise that began at home and then widened in scope explicitly for the good of *Kmt* would benefit a ruler who had clearly aspired to hold political authority from Nubia through the Levant very early on (Goedicke 1996, 174), and who would set off on that mission, away from Thebes and away from Egypt, almost straightaway. The overarching ideological message of the text served a purpose beyond the scope of Tuthmosis' Nubian campaign, although as I demonstrate below, portions of the text are indeed directly relevant to it.

³⁷³ Ron Leprohon (2010, 14 fn. 52) provides a helpful list of sources on this topic.

³⁷⁴ Leprohon suggests a similar motive for the invocation of Maat in the king's Horus name, *kꜣ nḥt mry mꜣꜥt* (2010, 15).

The second passage I have excerpted contains a brief reference to the king's conquest of Kush:

šhr.n=f wr styw nḥsy wšr [ḥnr n] šsp=f šḥwy.n=f t3šw gswy=fy n ḥpr nhw m nbḏw-ḳd

He overthrew the chief of the Nubians. The Nubian withered [and suffocated in] his grip after he joined together the boundaries of his two sides, with no loss occurring on account of the evil ones.³⁷⁵

I have introduced this passage because the phrase *šḥwy.n=f t3šw gswy=fy*, “after he joined together the boundaries of his two sides,” has been the subject of some debate. Hans Goedicke made the assertion that because *šḥwy* can be used to refer to the gathering of allies as well as of objects, it must mean that “the Nubian chief was recognized on both sides of the Nile Valley” (1996, 168). Louise Bradbury suggested that the phrase “might denote that the Nile trade corridor of the cataracts was now linked with the interior desert caravan routes heading north from the Abu Hamed – Kurgus region”—in other words, that the Egyptians had secured control of land and sea routes on both sides of the enemy's territory (1985, 4). Spalinger concluded that this line is “poetic,” but that “the sense conveyed is that the rebel has collected together all of the people of his land in order to oppose the Egyptian might” (1983, 64). To me, however, the meaning is much simpler and abundantly clear: if *swšḥ t3šw* referred also to the extension of the *area between* one's boundaries, then joining the enemy's boundaries together (the opposite of *swšḥ t3šw*) means that one has collapsed what lay between them, so that there is no longer anything left for the enemy to rule.

The final passage I reproduce here has been much discussed:

³⁷⁵ Tombos Stela, li. 6-7. I have restored *ḥnr n* following Klug (2002, 73). The possessive *=fy* may in fact refer to the Nubian territory, i.e. “its two sides,” but the sense remains the same (see below).

in ḏrw t3 ḥr ndbwt=f ḥnd phwy=fy m ḥpš=f nḥt ḥr ḥḥy ḥ3 n gm.n=f ḥs.ty=fy ḥr im=f sd inwt ḥm=n imyw-b3ḥ n m33 -st wṯsw nbty t3š=f rsy r ḥntyw t3 -pn mḥty r mw -pf ḳdw ḥdd m ḥnty n ḥpr mūt n kywy bityw rn=f spr.w r dbnw n pt ph.n t3wy rḥtt

...[he] who acquires the limits (*in ḏrw*) of the entire earth, who treads its ends (*phwy*) with his victorious strength (*nḥt*) seeking battle, not finding one who would defy him. He opens valleys not known to the ancestors, and not seen by the bearers of the double diadem. His southern boundary reaches to the [southern] ends (*ḥntyw*) of this land and his northern one to that reversed water that goes downstream in going upstream (*mw -pf ḳdw ḥdd m ḥnty*). The like has not happened to other kings. His name has arrived at the circumference of heaven, and it has reached the ends (*rḥtt*) of the Two Lands.³⁷⁶

There are several elements of interest here, including the king's desire to demonstrate his knowledge of the unknown. But the most provocative one is the reference to the king's new boundaries: what, and where, is *mw -pf ḳdw*? Eighteenth Dynasty kings "liked to name concrete, geographically precise boundaries" in their monuments (Hornung 1992, 88), so we should expect this place to be anchored in geographical reality.³⁷⁷ The verb *ḳdi* ordinarily means 'to go around,' 'to surround,' or 'to return' (*Wb* V 78). Donald Redford explains that when describing a body of water, it is a technical term that indicates a reversed current (1979, 68). Following an early translation of the Tombos Stela by James Henry Breasted (*ARE* II 28 §68), many scholars assumed that this line referred to the Euphrates River (Goedicke 1974, 13): Breasted translated *mw -pf ḳdw* as "that inverted water" because the Euphrates flows in the opposite direction to the Nile (*ARE* II 31 §73). Tuthmosis did indeed reach the Euphrates, as we know from many other sources, but he certainly had not done so before his journey to Kurgus.

Bradbury provides a thorough summary of how a number of Egyptologists, forced to explain how the Tombos Stela could discuss the king's boundary on the Euphrates a mere two years into his reign when we know he was in Nubia, suggested either that a

³⁷⁶ Tombos Stela, li. 11-14.

³⁷⁷ Although recall the "formulaic" and "idealized" expressions describing mythical boundaries (S. T. Smith 2003, 170) as discussed in Chapter 5.

previous king had already made it to the Euphrates (with Tuthmosis inheriting his boundary there), or that the Tombos Stela had been backdated (1985, 5). It was Goedicke (1974) who first noted that *mw -pf ḳdw* was not a toponym, but a *description* of a body of water that had already been applied to more than one location.³⁷⁸ It would be curious for the Egyptians to have applied it to the Euphrates, however, because that river already had a name in Egyptian: *phr-wr (n nhrn)*.³⁷⁹ Goedicke thought that the phrase in the Tombos Stela described the choppy waters of the Second Cataract, north of “this land” and thus suitable for a northern boundary, “which turned the one who was trying to sail north into one sailing south”: *ḳdw ḥdd m ḥnty* (1974, 15). Others, such as Alessandra Nibbi, sought alternative bodies of water to the north of Tombos that were closer to home and could be described in this way (1976, 92):

To the people of Tombos, the Euphrates could not have had the slightest significance, whereas *mw pf ḳdw* must have been quite intelligible for it to have been mentioned without further explanation as it is here. For such a reference to be meaningful to the Egyptians, it had to refer to their *own* water.

Bradbury also felt that this stela was a public announcement, which therefore needed to be intelligible in its local context. She suggested that if this account had been duplicated in monuments at other locations, “minor alterations” would have been made in order to make the geography more understandable (1985, 16–17; 1992, 59). It is reasonable to assume that the contents of the Tombos Stela were read aloud once it was finished, as the Semna and Uronarti Stelae probably had been, and the general idea that it was an

³⁷⁸ In Papyrus Harris I, 77.8 we hear of *p3 ym 3 n mw ḳd*, which the Egyptians sailed on the way to Punt (Goedicke 1974, 13–14; additional sources in Spalinger 1978, 37, note b).

³⁷⁹ See Spalinger 1978, 37. I must note, however, that in royal texts this term seems only to have been employed by Tuthmosis III (Baligh 1997, 268). Bradbury dryly observed that “There is not a single word about Mitanni, Hurrians, the *Phr wr*, the Marshes of Asia, Hittites, Naharin, any Syrian city-state, Byblos, God’s Land, *Ḳdm-Ḳdn*, the Fenkhu-lands, Asiatic people, Upper and Lower Retenu, or any Palestine city-state or peoples” in the Tombos Stela—and thus it is highly unlikely that it references anything in the Levant at all (1985, 6).

important communication from the king would continue to be conveyed to those who could not read through its decorum. Given the deictic nature of this passage of the stela (“this land,” “that water”), Nibbi—who settled on the Wadi Tumilat as the best candidate for *mw -pf kdw*—was correct to look for a body of water more relevant to the king’s Nubian campaign. She was wrong, however, to look north of Tombos.

In a piece that Spalinger described as a “bombshell” (1995, 274),³⁸⁰ Bradbury concluded that, given the impossibility of Tuthmosis reaching the Euphrates before he went to Kurgus, the Tombos Stela must therefore describe the boundaries of the land newly subjugated by the king.³⁸¹ One of these was an imperial boundary—the boundary at Kurgus, carved into the Hagr el-Merwa—but in a different sense than one might think from the text. Bradbury re-translated the passage as follows (1985, 17):

Its southern frontier is on the southside of this land (Dongola Reach), and its northern frontier is where the inverted stream flows downstream in a southerly direction.

“This land” is the Dongola Reach, and the southern boundary referred to in the Tombos Stela is therefore the region of Gebel Barkal/Napata, near the Fourth Cataract, where the Dongola Reach ends. Paradoxically, the “northern boundary” of the region *just conquered* by Egypt is in fact in the Abu Hamed area, marked at Kurgus—where the Nile, which is normally oriented roughly north-south and flows from south to north,

³⁸⁰ Her ideas may have constituted a bombshell, but I found close-reading her article to be incredibly frustrating. Many of her footnotes—in particular, those related to the term *wpt-t3* (see below and her fn. 109-111)—contained inaccurate references. In some cases it was not possible for me to track down the source that Bradbury was quoting, and I have noted this when using such information in this chapter.

³⁸¹ Bradbury used the dates from other monuments to piece together Tuthmosis I’s itinerary. However, it is important to note that one of the dates she used, Year 2, I Akhet, was misread. As Davies notes, there is no evidence for this date at the Hagr el-Merwa (2017, 72, fn. 13). Because of the absence of a date, Davies favors the hypothesis that *mw -pf kdw* was the Euphrates, and that the Tombos Stela was backdated (2017, 93, fn. 72). I see no reason to automatically revert to that hypothesis just because there is no date at Kurgus; it is still very likely that the king made the Tombos Stela on his way downstream from the Hagr el-Merwa, and the date of his visit there may indeed have been during I Akhet in his second regnal year.

begins to flow from north to south, the water going downstream but in the usual upstream orientation of the river.³⁸² Kurgus is indeed geographically north of the Fourth Cataract, although it is much farther upstream (*r hntyw*) (Figure 6.11).³⁸³



Figure 6.11 Map of the area pertinent to the Tombos Stela, with the direction of the Nile.

Reflecting on the importance of the Fourth Cataract in Tuthmosis' subjugation of Upper Nubia, Bradbury once predicted that "at the south side of the Dongola Reach, near the bottom of the Fourth Cataract, or even at Gebel Barkal, Thutmose I may have ordered a boundary marker like that at Hagar el Merwa" (1992, 58). At the time, no one knew

³⁸² The S-curve of the Nile was striking enough to be reported by the Greek geographer Strabo (*Strab.* 17.1.2).

³⁸³ This revelation had many implications for the study of Eighteenth Dynasty campaigns, which Bradbury listed in detail (1985, 18–20).

about the eroded stela facing the Nile on the east side of the Gebel Barkal (Figure 6.12), which was discovered only a few years ago (Bushara Mohamed et al. 2014). Although the patron has not yet been identified, I would wager that this living-rock stela belonged to Tuthmosis I, and served to mark Egypt's new "extreme [geographical] southern post of authority" (Bradbury 1985, 18). This was a second internal, symbolic interface, at the opposite end of the Dongola Reach to Tombos, which was also the location of an Egyptian colonial settlement (S. T. Smith 2003, 95–96, 136). Kurgus, on the other hand, was the farthest upstream point of Egyptian penetration into Nubia, and a "gateway" into Egypt from both the river and the northern desert road to Korosko (ibid.); it received an imperial boundary stela for these reasons, among others (see below). I suggest that the "two sides" metaphorically "joined together" in the Tombos Stela might therefore be Kurgus and Gebel Barkal, the two ends of the region just incorporated by Tuthmosis and marked accordingly. In the Tombos Stela they are discussed as a pair at the northern and southern ends of the region relevant to the king's campaign. Only later was Kurgus evoked in royal and officials' texts as an imperial boundary in a pair with the Euphrates, after the king had campaigned in Naharin and carved his boundary stela there.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁴ Armant Stela, li. 8-9; Tura Stela of Minmose (*Urk* IV 1448.13); Philadelphia Fragment (potentially; Klug 2002, 211).



Figure 6.12 The recently discovered stela on the east side of the Gebel Barkal (with location inset, indicated in red).

Billboards for Tuthmosis I

Now that we have explored some of the pertinent points in the text of the Tombos Stela, I turn to its integration with the landscape at Tombos. As I mentioned in my review of previous scholarship (Chapter 1), Julia Budka's brief commentary on the royal inscriptions at Tombos is the closest study to my own in terms of its theoretical framework. Budka was motivated by Stefan Seidlmayer's call for Egyptologists to pay greater attention to the contexts of rock inscriptions (Seidlmayer 2003, 445), and was the first scholar to fully consider the Tombos Stela's physical role in a larger local monumental program. As Budka observed, the stela should be understood in conjunction with four additional royal monuments that were carved approximately 500 meters to its

north, also on the east bank, on another group of boulders. They were probably made around the same time as the Tombos Stela and should be interpreted as delivering a single message along with it (Budka 2005, 110).³⁸⁵



Figure 6.13 The locations of the Tombos Stela and its accompanying monuments (labeled by their letter designations from the *Denkmäler*).³⁸⁶

Journeying north on the Nile towards Egypt from the location of the Tombos Stela, one first encounters the largest of these supplementary monuments (Figure 6.14),

³⁸⁵ Note, however, that Marina Brown entertains the possibility that the supplementary monuments may have been carved on the way to Kurgus, as a sort of ‘placeholder’: “In this way they would function as agents of consolidation at the southernmost point of strategic significance acquired by Amenhotep I [the predecessor of Tuthmosis I], securing that territory in advance of new expansion” (2015, 209).

³⁸⁶ The letter codes on the map correspond to the designations given by Lepsius (e.g. LD III 5b = “b”). See below for the *Denkmäler* references for each supplementary inscription.

facing southeast, which is centered on a figure of the Horus falcon wearing the double crown, sitting atop a *serekh* with part of the king's Horus name inside (such as one would find in an Early Dynastic royal emblem). The contrast between the inscribed and untouched areas of the rock is high, given the physical properties of the granite; in the evening light, the carved portion appears yellow or pink against a grey background. It reads:

Horus, beloved of Amun-Re; strong bull; the young god Aakheperkare, given life, who has overthrown Kush.³⁸⁷

In my view, this standalone monument was designed to catch viewers' eyes and ready them for the other inscriptions to come to its north (Figure 6.15).



Figure 6.14 The southernmost supplementary monument of Tuthmosis I at Tombos.

³⁸⁷ LD III 5e; *Urk* IV 87.



Figure 6.15 Still from a drone video showing the position of the southernmost supplementary monument at Tombos (in the middle-ground of the image) in relation to the other supplementary monuments (behind it).

The remaining three supplementary monuments are in the form of square tableaux with four vertical registers and similar coloration. Continuing in geographical order from south to north from the above inscription, they read:

Golden Horus, perfect of years, who enlivens hearts; son of Re of his body, Tuthmosis, who appeared like Re, given life; Lord of Nubia on the island (?), in every place; beloved of Amun, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands.³⁸⁸

Horus, strong bull, beloved of Maat; the Dual King, Lord of the Two Lands, Aakheperkare, given life; victorious ruler who destroys the Nubians; beloved of Amun, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands.³⁸⁹

Nebty who has appeared by means of the serpent goddess, great of might; the young god, Lord of the Two Lands, Aakheperkare, given life; who has taken the land (?) and the Horns of the Earth (?); beloved of Montu, the Lord of Thebes.³⁹⁰

Although Lepsius was quite clear in his description of these monuments when he visited the site in 1844,³⁹¹ Budka claimed that they were arranged in a different order. She wrote that the northernmost inscription, beginning with the king's Nebty name, was instead

³⁸⁸ LD III 5d; *Urk* IV 88. "The island" may refer to Tombos Island, just across the river.

³⁸⁹ LD III 5b; *Urk* IV 87.

³⁹⁰ LD III 5c; *Urk* IV 87. For my comments on the possible appearance of *wpt-t3*, 'Horns of the Earth,' in this monument, see the below section on Kurgus.

³⁹¹ LD Text V 244.

second in the series, located between the largest inscription with the Horus falcon and the other two. This led her to conclude that the king's names were presented to those sailing north in the order in which they would normally appear in his fivefold titulary: Horus, Nebty, Golden Horus, and *nsw-bity* (Budka 2005, 110; Leprohon 2013; Leprohon 2010, 14–18;). She drew up the below chart to further illustrate this (Figure 6.16).

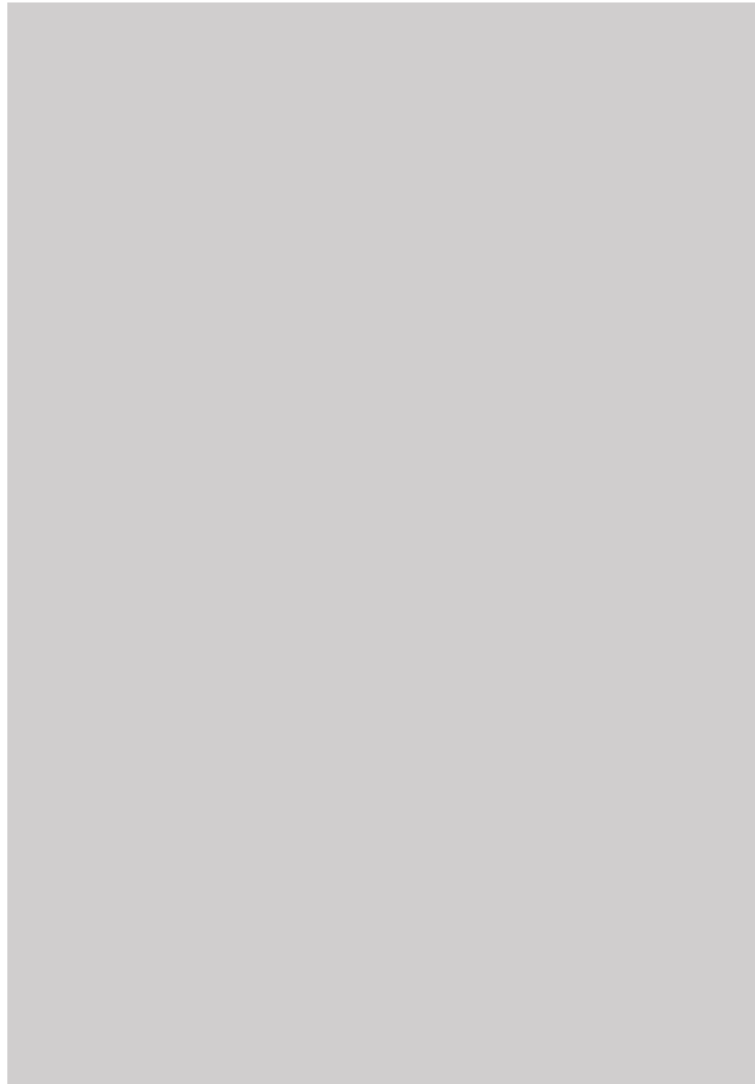


Figure 6.16 Budka's chart of the distribution and layout of the supplementary royal inscriptions at Tombos (2005, fig. 1).

A visit to the site reveals that Budka's order is incorrect (Figure 6.17), and one should wonder how she arrived at such a conclusion. The key may be in her statement that "they were set up in what I *assume* is a geographical order" (Budka 2005, 110, emphasis mine):

it would seem that Budka was unable to confirm their positions in the landscape for herself.



Figure 6.17 The three northernmost supplementary monuments.

There are, however, several meanings to be derived from the arrangement of these five monuments of Tuthmosis I in their genuine order. The first point worth mentioning is that, regardless of their positions with respect to each other, all five are oriented towards the river and would have been readily visible to those passing by on the water (as I confirmed by visiting them myself). The conspicuous nature of their yellow-pink color observable in the evening light is underscored by the colloquial English name for the

boulder on which the Tombos Stela was carved: “Golden Rock”³⁹² (see above, Figure 6.8). The defeated inhabitants of Kerma, only a few kilometers to the south, would have been forced to reckon with them as they sailed past (Berg 1987, 2).³⁹³ Together, these five monuments “materialize” the “hegemonic agency,” power, and presence of the king (Brown 2015, 207, 209–10).³⁹⁴

Further important points concern the general direction of writing in each of the five texts. The Tombos Stela is read from left to right, which is the opposite of the usual direction of Egyptian writing, but the four supplementary inscriptions are read from right to left (one functions in a pair—see below). I suggest that the Tombos Stela, whose text faces the direction of Egypt (or the direction of someone coming upstream to Tombos from Egypt), was symbolically directed toward an Egyptian audience—the only people who could read it (Brown, 2015, 210, noticed this as well). The four supplementary inscriptions, in contrast, face the direction of Nubia (or those coming downstream to Tombos); they are largely pictographic and can reasonably be assumed to have been made ‘for’ a Nubian audience (Brown 2015, 209–10; see below, Figure 6.20).³⁹⁵

In each of the square tableaux, the last line (which contains the phrase “beloved of [god’s name]”) faces the other three. Budka called attention to the fact that the gods’ and king’s names face each other in these inscriptions, but did not elaborate further (2005,

³⁹² I have not been able to recover the origin of this name, but it appears in the captions of the photographs taken by the Oriental Institute in 1906-1907, as well as in Porter and Moss (VII 174).

³⁹³ David Berg notes that, unlike the stela at Kurgus, the Tombos Stela does not contain a proscription against travel past its location (1987, 2). In fact, as he also notes, the word *inw* in the phrase *h3swt -nbt dmdy hr inw=sn*, “all foreign lands together carrying their goods,” may mean the king’s privy purse and thus reference a diplomatic relationship exercised at Tombos (Berg 1987, 10, fn. 28; see Bleiberg 1984b, 157 for more on this term).

³⁹⁴ See Brown’s dissertation (2015, 207 ff.) for her analysis of the “ascribed material agencies” of the Tombos Cluster.

³⁹⁵ I am grateful to Prof. Allen for discussing this issue with me, and for raising the suggestion of varying intended readership which, as it happens, was also explored briefly by Brown.

109). This orthography is a form of graphic transposition that, on the whole, was probably meant to afford parity to the most important information in each monument: the royal name and the name of the god. We can see this in the Horus-name inscription as well, where the large figure of the Horus falcon not only faces the name of Amun-Re, but is also fed the *ankh* sign by it. But beyond this, if one views the middle two of the four supplementary monuments (LD III 5b and 5d) next to each other, as they were undoubtedly meant to be read, the reasoning behind their orthography becomes much clearer than it is when they are read separately and in translation (Figures 6.18 and 6.19).



Figure 6.18 The second and third supplementary monuments at Tombos (LD III 5b and 5d).

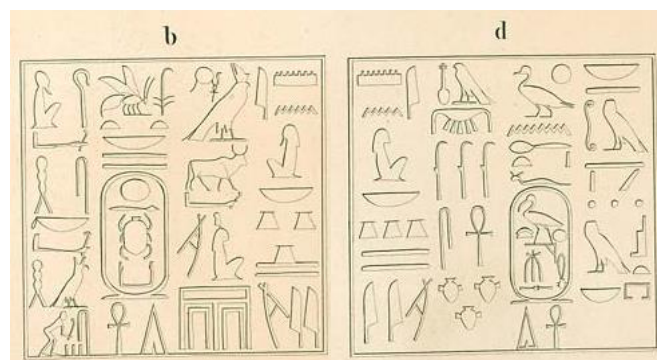


Figure 6.19 Lepsius' drawings of tableaux b and d, placed side by side as they appear in the landscape (after LD III 5).

Here two adjacent boulders have been marshalled for the creation of monuments that are meant to be read as two halves of a whole. The angle from which one would view them from the river probably made this point more obvious. This is why the two ‘inside’ lines, which both say “beloved of Amun, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands,” are facing outward at the rest: just as with the *bḥdty* in the lunette of the Tombos Stela, and in countless other Egyptian royal monuments, the figures at the center of a symmetrical inscription are depicted back-to-back to indicate the monument’s central axis. This axisymmetry does not end with the final lines of these tableaux: it also extends to the cartouches of the king, which appear in the second lines of each text (the third lines from the ‘inside’ of the tableaux, visually speaking). Budka found it curious that the king’s birth (*s3-r*) name, Tuthmosis, appeared in only one of the four supplementary inscriptions (LD III 5d), but said nothing further on the matter (2005, 110). By viewing these monuments as two halves of an axisymmetric pair, however, we can see that together they present both of the king’s cartouches in their usual couplet: Aakheperkare and Tuthmosis (“who appeared like Re”). And, when viewed alongside the northernmost inscription, the three square tableaux together in this group represent all of the names of the king’s fivefold titulary.

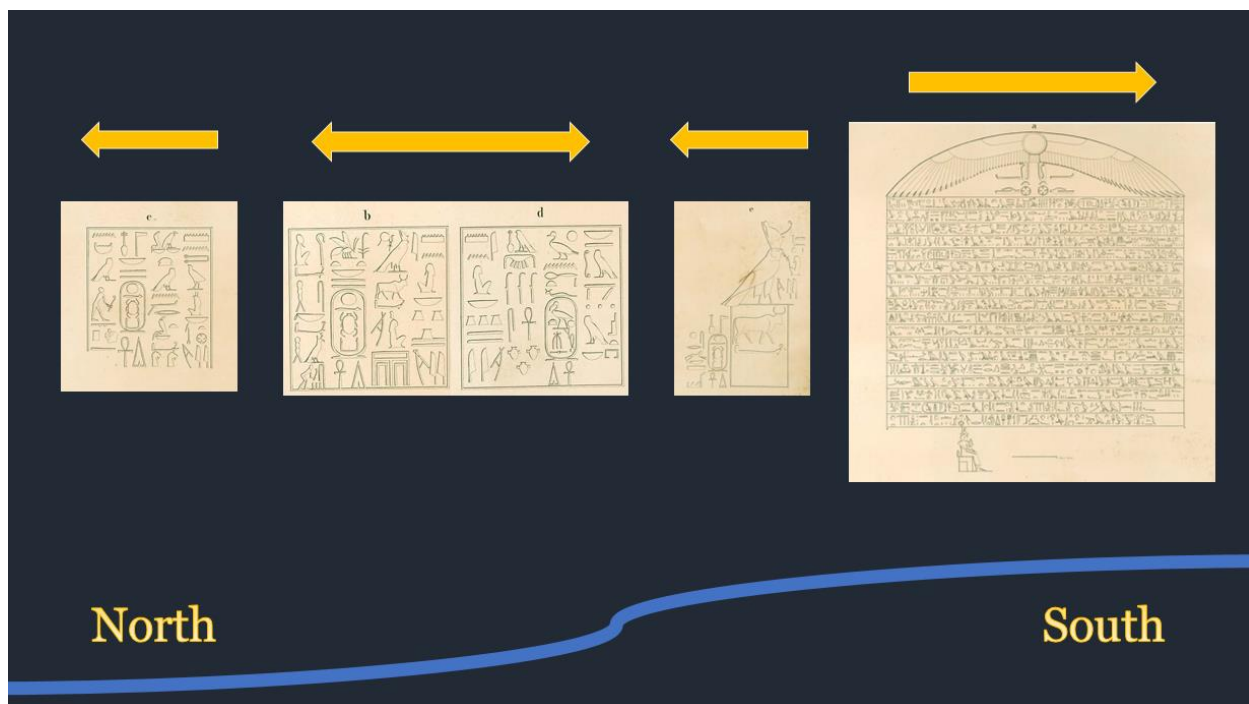


Figure 6.20 Diagram showing the directions of the texts in the Tombos monuments in reference to the site's geography.



Figure 6.21 The northernmost supplementary monument at Tombos.

Another significant piece of information that may be gleaned from reading these texts in their landscape is that their geographic arrangement is indeed meaningful. Although the king's names are not presented in the order of his fivefold titulary as Budka thought, the placement of the Nebty-name inscription (Figure 6.21) at the northernmost location in the group was likely done for two reasons. First, the Nebty name specifically concerns the rule of Egypt itself: dominion of the Two Lands, Upper and Lower Egypt, represented in the name by the Two Ladies, the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet. The Nebty name is integral to the kingship; its placement closest to Egypt in this group of monuments makes a good deal of sense. Second, the final line of the Nebty-name inscription declares that the king is “beloved of Montu, Lord of Thebes”—the reference to Thebes being farthest north and therefore closest to Thebes itself, where it belonged. Because Budka believed that the northernmost monument in this group was LD III 5b, she attributed a good deal of meaning to the fact that the epithet “the Dual King, Lord of the Two Lands” was carved ‘closest’ to Egypt (2005, 110). She was not entirely wrong, in my opinion: I believe that this phrase appears *closer* to Egypt than all but one of the other inscriptions because of the connotation this line has for the kingship of Egypt itself. But what is closer to Egypt than ‘Egypt’ is what is inside and at its core: Thebes, which is indeed mentioned in the actual northernmost inscription, and was an essential part of the king's overarching message in the Tombos Stela.

Budka noted that all three of the gods invoked in the final lines of the supplementary Tombos monuments—Amun, Amun-Re, and Montu³⁹⁶—were gods of the

³⁹⁶ Note that there are only three gods mentioned across the four supplementary inscriptions. This must be because the two middle inscriptions are a parallel pair that forms a whole: thus, they both contain the phrase “beloved of Amun.”

Thebaid, and that these references to Thebes echo the final lines of the Tombos Stela (2005, 110). They also echo the beginning of that stela, I might add, where the king discusses the widening of the boundaries of Thebes. The king's usual Horus name was *kꜣ nḥt mry mꜣt*, which is how it appears in the Tombos Stela, but in the southern supplementary inscription, Maat has been replaced by Amun-Re. As Ron Leprohon suggests, the inclusion of Maat in the king's usual Horus name may have resulted from a need to justify his ascension (2010, 15), which would explain why he included it in the Tombos Stela, whose theme concerned his coronation and whose intended audience was Egyptian. But in the supplementary inscriptions, which were likely addressed to the Nubian population, the king had no such need, especially after the foregoing campaign: what he needed instead was a show of might. A local form of Amun-Re also appears on the king's stela at Kurgus, where the god guarded the imperial boundary. Perhaps Tuthmosis chose to be "beloved of Amun-Re" in the supplementary inscriptions at Tombos in order to publicly reinforce this divine support for his expansion into Upper Nubia.

In the years after Tuthmosis I's triumphant return to Egypt, Tombos became a vibrant, culturally mixed colonial settlement (S. T. Smith and Buzon 2014; S. T. Smith 2003; Carrano et al. 2009). The Egyptians took a different tack in their southward expansion than they had during the Middle Kingdom: for example, when compared with evidence from the Middle Kingdom cemetery at Kerma, skeletal remains in the New Kingdom cemetery at Tombos show a marked decrease in traumatic injuries, suggestive of a move towards non-violent colonial strategy (Buzon and Richman 2007). Although Tuthmosis sacked the city of Kerma, archaeological evidence also demonstrates that its

political and economic importance did not dissolve completely (S. T. Smith 2003, 95; Bonnet 1990). Its persistence is why Tuthmosis expected a northbound Nubian audience for his monuments, and why Tombos became a center for the collection of tribute. Smith suggests that local customs were allowed to continue on the condition that trade and tribute continued to come from Upper Nubia; based on evidence from their burials, both the inhabitants of Kerma and the Nubian women living at Tombos appear to have maintained their cultural traditions in the face of Egyptian dominance (S. T. Smith 2003, 95, 197; S. T. Smith and Buzon 2014; Carrano et al. 2009). Beyond this, Tuthmosis is known to have solicited fealty oaths from local Nubian rulers during his reign, who would oversee their territories on behalf of Egypt—an act that would have regulated their authority as much as it would have validated it (Morris 2005, 93).

These shifts in colonial policy likely reflect broader shifts in imperial strategy. As I noted above, the Eighteenth Dynasty witnessed a new conception of Egypt's role in the world outside of *Kmt*, and a change in the goal of *swsh t3šw*. It was also a time when fortresses, such as the one founded at Sai by Ahmose or Amenhotep I, were less elaborate in their defenses and appear to have taken on more of a symbolic role than a practical one (Morris 2005, 81–82). Fortress towns, too, were different: they were now viewed as civil projects (Morris 2005, 78–79). Scholars have long predicted the existence of a fortress at Tombos from the reign of Tuthmosis I (Morris 2005, 73, 82, 109),³⁹⁷ but did he need one there? Recent excavations at the site have finally revealed the remains of a fortress, but

³⁹⁷ Scholars frequently cite the Aswan Group stela of Tuthmosis II (Chapter 5) as proof that Tuthmosis I commissioned a series of fortresses in Nubia, including, perhaps, at Tombos: *nn mnnww kd.n it-k m nhtw=f nsw-bity ʿ3hprk3r ʿnh dt r hsf h3swt bštt iwntyw-sty nw hnt-hn-nfr*, “these fortresses that your father built during his victories, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Aakheperkare (may he live forever), to repel the rebellious lands and the Nubian bowmen from Khent-hen-nefer” (li. 6-7).

the earliest ceramics associated with that structure date to the reign of Tuthmosis III, not Tuthmosis I (Stuart Tyson Smith, *pers. comm.*).³⁹⁸ Moreover, a passage in the Tombos Stela that has frequently been cited as evidence that such a structure existed at this time—*mnw n mšꜥf tm*, “a fortress for his entire army”—has been shown to be metaphorical: the king himself was the “fortress” it describes (Berg 1987, 2; Goedicke 1974, 14; see Morris 2005, 108, fn. 292 for a summary of this debate). Tuthmosis III, who campaigned only once in Upper Nubia as a means of quelling a rebellion and reinforcing the extent of Egypt’s imperial boundaries (see below) would surely have benefitted from the construction of a fortress at Tombos (as well as at Gebel Barkal; Török 2009, 165), but the project of Tuthmosis I, also his only Nubian campaign, was different. It was about *swšh tšw*, rather than a response to any immediate threat to Egyptian sovereignty. Tuthmosis I was establishing Egypt’s new boundaries, whereas Tuthmosis III was actively defending them. There are multiple granite quarries at Tombos that could have easily provided stone for a freestanding stela inside a fortress (S. T. Smith 2003, 137, Fig. 6.1), but when Tuthmosis I commissioned his monuments at Tombos, he decided to do so by harnessing the living-rock landscape without any supporting architecture. If a fortress was indeed completed sometime during the reign of Tuthmosis I, the use of living rock as a medium for these monuments suggests that such a structure would have been erected after they were carved—or that the use of living rock was important in its own right, independent of the fortress. The boulders at Tombos were sufficient for disseminating the

³⁹⁸ Ellen Morris expected that such a fortress would have been located on Tombos Island (2005, 109). However, the remains of the fortress of Tuthmosis III lie on the east bank of the Nile. As Smith explained in his talk at the 2018 ARCE Annual Meeting, this is exactly what we should expect: while the Egyptians would encounter the northern ends of the islands of Tombos, Kabodi, and Dabaki first on their way to Tombos, the *Nubians* coming from the south would sail downstream on the east side of the Nile, where Tuthmosis I’s monuments are located.

king's message, at least at first, and they were not the only natural features to have been used in this way during the new imperial era of the New Kingdom.

Indelible Threats at Kurgus

The quartz outcrop known as the Hagr el-Merwa is located about 1200 meters from the east bank of the Nile at Kurgus, on the edge of the Nubian Desert between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts, in the Nile zone known as *kry* and the region of *miw* (Figure 6.22).³⁹⁹ From the reign of Tuthmosis I and probably through the end of the New Kingdom, it was the southern boundary of Egyptian hegemonic control. Given the new paradigm of world dominance developed during the Eighteenth Dynasty (Kilani 2015), it was also conceived as a cosmic boundary, “a frontier between the worlds of order and chaos” (W. V. Davies 2001, 57).



Figure 6.22 Kurgus in the surrounding region.

³⁹⁹ Karoy (*kry*) was the name for the zone between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts, the southernmost area of Egyptian authority (Török 2009, 166). For comments on the location of Miu (*miw*), deduced from numerous inscriptions, see Davies 2017, 72.

This location was important not only for the ideological aims of imperial conquest, but also because it placed Egypt at the center of major overland trade routes, from which it could exploit the gold-mining areas of the Eastern Desert (Bradbury 1985, 2; Török 1997, 94; Budka 2005, 109; Berg 1987, 1) (Figure 6.23). One of these routes was the northern road to Korosko, an alternative access point into Egypt for Egyptians and Nubians alike (Berg 1987, 1). Although Kurgus would have been considered a remote place in the grand scheme of Egypt's regional geography—it is the farthest any Egyptian king would reach with his army—in its local landscape it would technically have been well-connected and somewhat accessible.



Figure 6.23 Kurgus and nearby routes.



Figure 6.24 Petroglyphs obscured by pharaonic inscriptions on the Hagr el-Merwa (Davies 2017, 73, Fig. 8).

The earliest epigraphic material on the outcrop is a series of undated indigenous petroglyphs, mainly on its east side, depicting cattle and at least one human figure.⁴⁰⁰ The east side of the outcrop may have been more ‘inviting’ for a variety of reasons, including the comparatively smooth surface of the rock and the shade it provides in the afternoon.⁴⁰¹ These petroglyphs are evidence that this was a place of some (probably cultic) significance for the local population long before the Egyptians arrived there. Later, they were intentionally obscured by the royal stelae and other inscriptions made during the Tuthmosid visits (W. V. Davies 2017, 69)—but not entirely, so that what came before would still be partly visible (Figure 6.24). The Egyptian use of rock drawings to “appropriate” locally “significant places” is a type of epigraphic response known from

⁴⁰⁰ See Edwards 2006 for a summary of Nubian rock art traditions.

⁴⁰¹ My CAST collaborator, Katie Simon, had a lot to say about this outcrop. She grew up camping in the deserts of the United States, and remarked that the east side of the Hagr el-Merwa seemed more “architectural” to her, “like a living space.” She told me that when setting up camp, she usually looks for a place that mimics a built living space. When someone encounters an inviting space that also happens to have a nice surface for carving, the “recipe” is right, in her opinion, for rock art.

multiple sites in Nubia (Edwards 2006, 58).⁴⁰² This outcrop was clearly a “traditional territorial marker” of some kind (Manzo 2011, 218), but there is no archaeological evidence to suggest an indigenous settlement at Kurgus. However, the cattle imagery on the Hagr el-Merwa alludes to a possible connection with Kerma-period funerary practice (W. V. Davies 2017, 94, fn. 81).⁴⁰³ In the layering of successive inscriptions at Kurgus we see, in the words of Marina Brown, “the mechanisms of the practical and symbolic efficacy of Egyptian inscriptions and their connection to the pre- and protodynastic rock art traditions” (2015, 210–11).



Figure 6.25 Satellite photograph of the Hagr el-Merwa with the area of the stelae indicated in red. Note the curvature of the rock, which gives part of its east side a northeast face.

⁴⁰² Recall also, from Chapter 3, the appropriation of locally sacred places with rock shrines in Nubia for new, often rock-cut sanctuaries in the New Kingdom (Manzo 2011, 219; Williams 2006; Williams 2007, 399, 405; Török 2009, 129).

⁴⁰³ Davies cites the pattern noticed by Cornelia Kleinitz (2013, 350): rock drawings of cattle share a spatial connection with Kerma period burials in the area of the Fourth Cataract.



Figure 6.26 Epigraphic drawing of the Tuthmosid tableaux (W. V. Davies 2017, 70, Fig. 5).

As both practical and ideological statements, the monuments of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III were “designed to impress and intimidate on both a secular and cosmic level” (W. V. Davies 2017, 67). Each comprises a tableau that consists of a boundary stela surmounted by the image of a local, ram-headed version of the god Amun-Re, facing left; the king’s *serekh*, facing the god; and the figures of a bull identified as Amun-Re-Kamutef (“bull of his mother”) and a lion representing a deified version of the king. These elements were first executed in red paint and then inscribed, with more painted details added after carving was completed. Davies’ description of their significance is worth quoting in full (2001, 57):

The enthroned, ram-headed Amun-Ra, the supreme god, is the giver of life and universal dominion, both terrestrial and cosmic, to the king; as Bull-of-his-mother, the primeval creator god, he stands as re-creator and guarantor of the cosmos in this dangerous liminal zone. The human image of the king is avoided. The king, receiving life and dominion, is represented by his Horus-name, stressing his divine nature, while the lion, an image of the king much invoked in contexts of conquest and slaughter of enemies, embodies his qualities of superhuman strength and ferocity – further emphasised here by the animal’s size, the largest figure in the tableau. The secular and cosmic aspects of the boundary are

fully integrated in the central inscription, threatening royal and divine retribution upon a ‘real’ native population, but of a type – foreign, Nubian, desert-dwelling – traditionally counted among the ‘mythic’ forces of chaos.

These tableaux are located at the southern end of the outcrop’s east side, which faces northeast, a few meters above the modern ground level (Figure 6.25 and 6.26). Davies contends that these inscriptions were placed where they are because those were the easiest surfaces of the rock to work with, which would explain why the tableaux are asymmetrical (2017, 69).⁴⁰⁴ However, he also alludes to a phenomenological consequence of their placement: the figure of Amun-Re faces left, although gods usually face right, and this left-facing orientation would allow the god to face the direction of the rising sun. “As the sun is reborn, so is his image revived, in turn passing on renewed life to the king” (W. V. Davies 2001, 47).

The main text of both stelae is a contextually dependent warning to any Nubian or other foreigner who would deface or go beyond them:

*ir nhsy -nb h3sty -nb th.ty=fy wd -pn d.n -n=i it=i imn dn wrw=f mn r'-itm nn hw -n=f pt
nn ms mnmnt=f nn wn iw'w=f tp t3*

As for any Nubian or any foreigner who violates⁴⁰⁵ this stela⁴⁰⁶ that my father Amun has given to me: his chiefs shall be beheaded, Ra-Atum shall endure and the sky shall not rain for him, his cattle shall not calve, and there shall be no heirs of his upon the earth.

According to Davies, the reference to the impending absence of rain is a specific threat that appears to betray an Egyptian understanding of local subsistence patterns: local

⁴⁰⁴ A.J. Arkell (1950, 38) remarked similarly that “The reduplication of the inscription by Tuthmosis III has spoilt the symmetry of the original, for owing to faults in the rock the subsequent scribe had to put the second version wherever the rock was good enough for inscribing.”

⁴⁰⁵ I interpret the sense of the verb *thi* as “to violate” by material means as much as by trespassing into Egyptian territory. See *Wb* 5: 319.3-320.23, “schädigen”; “angreifen” – “damage”; “attack.” Certainly the Egyptians were familiar with violation by material means, as they did so themselves by carving these stelae over the indigenous petroglyphs.

⁴⁰⁶ Note that although no outline in the shape of an ordinary royal stela—round-topped or rectangular—is present here, the Egyptians definitely considered each of these monuments to be a stela (*wd*).

populations were cattle herders who could not afford to experience a drought (2017, 72, fn. 12; cf. Drzewiecki and Stępnik 2014, 97; Manzo 2011, 218). This warning even gives the sense that it responds directly to the cattle imagery that previously adorned the outcrop. Although these texts would have been illegible to the local population, the animal iconography in the tableaux would have been familiar to Nubian groups, as the same motifs were in use by local elites as symbols of power (Manzo 2011, 218–19).⁴⁰⁷ The images alone—and the fact that they were used to obliterate indigenous petroglyphs—would have conveyed a powerful message about the Egyptian desire to control this landscape and the people moving through it (Vogel 2011, 327). As Brown points out, the pairing of visual cues and a more formal text at Kurgus is rather similar to the composition of the five royal monuments at Tombos (2015, 210).⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Andrea Manzo connects the Egyptian “bull of his mother” figure to the local importance of cattle. She also states that the lion imagery may be related to New Kingdom military lion pendants, and suggests that perhaps the whole iconographic program at Kurgus may actually have been adapted from the local population at the very time of the conquest of Upper Nubia, and then employed in the stelae. The Egyptian use of these motifs would then have reinforced their local meanings because of their new association with Egyptian dominance.

⁴⁰⁸ I would also like to point out that the use of a very large image of a falcon (as part of the king’s *serekh*) in the southernmost supplementary inscription at Tombos is analogous to the use of large animal imagery at Kurgus.



Figure 6.27 Epigraphic drawings of the stelae of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III (after W. V. Davies 2017, 71, Figs. 6 and 7).

In the Hagr el-Merwa tableau of Tuthmosis I, an additional text was carved to the left of the king's *serekh*:

n pḥt nsw st -ṯn ḏr rk ḥr wpw-ḥr ḥm=i

No king has reached this place since the time of Horus, except for my majesty.

Although claims of historic 'firsts' are common in Egyptian royal texts (Chapter 3), it is apparently true that no king preceded Tuthmosis I in visiting this place: he staked Egypt's initial claim on this landscape at the end of his momentous journey upstream, which he then recounted in the Tombos Stela. However, this is not presented as the very first occasion of this event. It is instead described as the first time a king had reached the Hagr el-Merwa *since the time of Horus*. This phrasing implies that this place was known during the ideal era when the gods ruled the earth, following the First Time, but that it was not revealed or given meaning until the arrival of Tuthmosis I (Thum and Salmas 2019). Here the king takes both avenues through which historical singularities were

permitted to occur in the Egyptian view of the world: he surpasses his human predecessors, while receiving information long known by the gods. All the while he follows a divine model set out at the time of creation (Vernus 1995). In the medium of living rock, this message materially tied the achievements of Tuthmosis I, of reaching and formally establishing Egypt's southern boundary, to the First Time. The mention of the "time of Horus" further underscores the connection between this event and the *dt* time, and the cosmological symbolism in the tableau's design speaks to a highly conscious act of creating a genuine 'monument' that could serve as a model for future generations of kings (Thum and Salmas 2019). It is potentially significant that both stelae are undated; this may be read as an effort to perpetually present these monuments as intrinsic landscape features that transcend the *nḥt* time entirely.⁴⁰⁹

In the tableau of Tuthmosis III, two additional lines of text that echo those of his grandfather have been added in front of his lion:

n pḥt nsw st -tṇ ḏr rk ḥr wpw-ḥr it=i n ḥpr mūt ḏr pꜣwtyw r-ntt ʿnn.n ḥm=i r tꜣš n mḥty n rsy r mīw n nḥt

No king had reached this place since the time of Horus, except for my (grand)father. The like has not occurred since the (time of) the primeval ones (*pꜣwtyw*), in that my majesty returned (*ʿnn*) to the boundary of the north and (the boundary) of the south, to Miu, in victory (*nḥt*).

This additional text reads like a footnote to explain why the establishment of a second, ostensibly permanent boundary stela at the end of the world was a momentous and necessary occasion, when the king's grandfather had already achieved the very same feat. At Kurgus, Tuthmosis III fulfilled the filial duty expressed generations earlier at Semna

⁴⁰⁹ Jean Leclant once observed that, given the absence of a continuous chronology in ancient Egypt, the Egyptians seem to have had a "disdain" for "the inescapable course of years" (1969, 234, my translation). In choosing not to assign a date to a royal monument, we get the sense that the events therein were meant to be timeless.

and Uronarti: “It befits a son that he be his father’s champion and keep firm the boundary of his begetter.” The king initially came to Kurgus in order to capture a rebellious enemy,⁴¹⁰ but by reinscribing the Hagr el-Merwa on the occasion of his visit he was also performing the important duty of maintaining the boundaries of his forefathers, and of repeating the pattern of a preexisting model set out by Tuthmosis I. However, he actually surpassed most of his predecessors by equaling his grandfather’s singular accomplishment, which he calls out quite plainly in his own text: “No king had reached this place since the time of Horus, except for my (grand)father.” Tuthmosis III did not *widen* the boundaries of the north and south: he was, proudly, the first person to *return* to them. This was a feat that he could not have accomplished without his grandfather establishing the model for him first, but one that he could claim as his own singular achievement (apart from whatever happened during the time of the *pꜣwtyw*, another reference to the deep and hallowed past). In the tableau of Tuthmosis III, creativity and tradition—or “dynamic productivity and static reproductivity” (Gillen 2017, 7)—combine in the face of contemporary concerns (Thum and Salmas 2019). Both of these kings have parallel canal inscriptions on Sehel Island, which they left on their journeys back to Egypt from Upper Nubia (Gasse and Rondot 2007, 129–30, 137); for Tuthmosis III, reinscription and repetition were important forms of reverence, but also methods for celebrating his own accomplishments.

The royal tableaux are not alone at Kurgus. The names and titles of dozens of officials from both of the Eighteenth Dynasty campaigns cluster around the middle of the

⁴¹⁰ *m-ḥt wḏꜣ=f r mīw r ḥḥy bṯn sw m tꜣ -pꜣf*, “...after he had gone to Miu to seek out him who had rebelled against him in that land,” Armant Stela, li. 9. Davies estimates that this visit occurred in Year 49 or 50 of the king’s reign (2017, 73). Note that László Török dates the Kurgus stela of Tuthmosis III to sometime after Year 33, perhaps Year 35 (2009, 163).

east side of the Hagr el-Merwa, with the exception of those attributed to royal women, which are located in a separate group on the southern end of the west side, in the only area where earlier petroglyphs had been carved (W. V. Davies 2017, 77). The delimitation of a “sacred area” for the royal stelae, separate from most of the officials’ inscriptions, speaks to the pervasiveness of Egyptian *doxa* and the consecrated nature of the kings’ boundary (Brown 2015, 213; Davies 2017, 75). A number of priests were among the signatories, as well as members of the royal family (including, in all likelihood, Hatshepsut; Davies 2017, 87), members of the military, scribes, and administrators. As a group, their inscriptions speak to two performative acts of *witnessing* by people of high rank as the Tuthmosid kings inscribed their monuments at the end of the world, perhaps sealing the creation (or reaffirmation) of the boundary.⁴¹¹ Davies suggests that “associated ceremonial activities” may also have occurred at the time of carving (2017, 94, fn. 83); the local chiefs may have participated, probably unwillingly, and it is tempting to imagine some connection between these activities and the threat of beheading from the main stela texts.

In addition to the Tuthmosid material, the cartouches of Ramesses II and another, largely illegible inscription dated to “Year 44” that is probably also from his reign are inscribed on the northeast face of the outcrop. The cartouches were carved directly underneath the stela of Tuthmosis I, and the dated inscription directly under his lion.

Although Ramesses II did not visit the Hagr el-Merwa himself as far as we know, one of

⁴¹¹ It is important to note that none of the other monuments discussed in this chapter were accompanied by such ceremony, as far as the extant evidence shows. The absence of such ‘witnessing’ signatures suggests that the nature of the Hagr el-Merwa stelae was somehow different from the other living-rock stelae made by the Tuthmosids in Nubia (including the stela at Gebel Belal, which Davies believes may have marked a boundary of some kind). If the stelae at Kurgus were two of only four *true* Eighteenth Dynasty *imperial* boundary stelae, then we should expect them to be different, and to have been made with some pomp and circumstance. And we should expect the same of the stelae on the Euphrates, if they are ever recovered.

his officials—the viceroy Setau—did, probably via the Korosko road (Török 2009, 17–18). His name is carved on the other side of the outcrop, and we know that he participated in a military expedition against Irem and Iktyt, neighboring regions of Nubia, in Year 44 of Ramesses II (W. V. Davies 2017, 67, 73–75, 86, 97; *KRI* III 93, li. 9–10). As I noted in Chapter 1, Brown has demonstrated that inscribed cartouches helped to “annex” frontier zones to Egypt (2015, 182–83). We might therefore conclude that Setau carved the formal names of his king into the rock at Kurgus as a way of symbolically reasserting the possession of this landscape under Ramesses II. Regardless of his intentions, Setau’s inscriptions attest to the continued symbolic importance of the Hagr el-Merwa in his time, centuries after the Tuthmosid kings marked Egypt’s imperial boundary there. The placement of Setau’s inscriptions also betrays a desire to forge a connection between the actions of Ramesses II and the achievements of his famed predecessor, Tuthmosis I.

Sometime after the Egyptian visits to the Hagr el-Merwa, members of a local population hammered the figures of people on the backs of animals into and on top of the body of the Tuthmosis I lion.⁴¹² This is the royal material that is closest to the ground, which is probably one reason why it was chosen for defacement: it was the most accessible figural decoration that could receive a physical response. Another aim may have been related to the iconography of the Tuthmosid figure, as lions were a potent symbol in Kushite culture (Manzo 2011, 212), and the carving may have been done in order to neutralize or harness the lion’s power. This action demonstrates that, after a certain point, the local population no longer felt the weight of the threats made by the

⁴¹² This inscription cannot be dated, but it has been identified as post-pharaonic (W. V. Davies 2017, 69).

Egyptian monuments.⁴¹³ In the location of these petroglyphs over the pharaonic material, we see what was perhaps an attempt to reclaim the outcrop and the landscape around it, which had once been usurped from the local population by the Egyptians through their own defacement of earlier epigraphic material. Other post-pharaonic remains at Kurgus include a cemetery approximately 200 meters northwest of the Hagr el-Merwa, which contains Nubian burials from the Christian period but also from preceding periods beginning in the Neolithic (Haddow 2014), and a Christian-era fortress southwest of the outcrop on the east bank of the Nile (Welsby Sjöström 2001, 59–60).

Before it was securely dated to the Christian period, the Kurgus fortress was thought to have possibly been Egyptian (e.g. Morris 2005, 109 ff.): another supposed Tuthmosid foundation established to secure and monitor a boundary. In fact, there are no pharaonic architectural remains at Kurgus at all. The only Egyptian object recovered from the area is a single fragment of a painted Marl A vessel, possibly dating to the early Eighteenth Dynasty, found in a later context in the Kurgus cemetery (Ginns and Weschenfelder 2015, 140–142, Fig. 3b; W. V. Davies 2017, 94, fn. 82). As Davies notes, the absence of archaeological evidence from the period of pharaonic epigraphic activity suggests that the Hagr el-Merwa was visited infrequently by Egyptians and only for short periods of time. Members of the Tuthmosid expeditions must have stayed for however long it took to carve the stela and for the witnesses to sign their names, in addition to any ceremonial activities, and turned right back around (W. V. Davies 2017, 94).⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ Davies points out that there is no reason to assume that the Egyptians could ever reach or control Kurgus again after the New Kingdom (2017, 97).

⁴¹⁴ Redford suggested a maximum time of one week to carve the stela of Tuthmosis I (Redford 2003, 226, fn. 30), although Davies believes that this estimate is too low, especially given any performances that would have taken place once the monuments were finished (2017, 94, fn. 83). The entire expedition of Tuthmosis I is thought to have taken approximately 14 months (Baligh 1997, 219).

Two Horns Protrude from the Desert

The Hagr el-Merwa is yet another feature that Ömür Harmanşah would call “geologically wondrous” (2013, 191), “striking” in the words of Richard Bradley (2000, 36). First, it is made of white quartz, brilliant against the color of the desert. The people of Kerma are thought to have been “fascinated” and “preoccupied” by quartz, believing that it had magical properties (Markowitz and Doxey 2014, 99). Populations in northeastern Africa apparently thought that the bones of the gods were made from it (Williams 2006, 156). These beliefs could explain the presence of the petroglyphs at the site. The outcrop also has an unusual shape: when seen from the west, the direction from which one would approach it if coming from the Nile, it gives the impression of a pair of horns rising from the sand (Figure 6.28).⁴¹⁵ Beyond this, anyone who has visited Kurgus would agree that the outcrop can be seen from quite some distance away due to its size and height. Here we should reflect once again on the ability of the landscape to influence human action: for the local population that first marked the Hagr el-Merwa, and subsequently for the Tuthmosids, the visual and geological distinction of the outcrop made it a “logical landmark to invest with historical significance” (Dean 2010, 197, fn. 52).

⁴¹⁵ In the local view, since the bones of the gods were made of quartz (Williams 2006, 156), I assume that they thought the horns of the gods were, too. Bruce Beyer Williams calls the Hagr el-Merwa out as an explicit example of the quartz bones of the gods.



Figure 6.28 The west side of the Hagr el-Merwa.

Opinions differ about Egyptian familiarity with this feature before the arrival of Tuthmosis I. Did they know where they were headed when they set out from Tombos? Goedicke suggests that the campaign only stopped at the Hagr el-Merwa because the king's point about southward expansion had already been proven: it "lost momentum," and "any further progress was considered futile" (1996, 175). James Allen believes that Tuthmosis I was simply trying to go as far as he could, with no specific destination in mind (*pers. comm.*). In the case that the Egyptians had no prior knowledge about this site, we must assign their success in stumbling upon a locally meaningful landmark to the outcrop's visual prominence. This is not impossible to believe, because someone in the local population had to encounter and ascribe meaning to it in just the same way in order to make the first petroglyphs there. Stone had magical properties in the Egyptian view, too (Bianchi 2007), so the appeal of a monumental geological feature may have been similar for them. Davies, however, believes that the Egyptians knew exactly where they

were going when they set out from Tombos: to appropriate a “significant place” from the Nubians, which, as I noted above, they were already known to do. He contends that the local importance of this place would have been known to the Egyptians through oral traditions spread during earlier expeditions into Upper Nubia, and from their use of topographical lists, guides, and other pre-departure campaign preparations (W. V. Davies 2017, 94).⁴¹⁶ Taking Davies’ view—which better explains why the expedition of Tuthmosis I went out of its way to make the arduous journey upstream through the Fourth Cataract—the goal of the first Tuthmosid campaign was to “own” the Hagr el-Merwa, a regional landmark that “must have been a strategic target from the outset of the Year 2 campaign” (ibid.).

The proximity of Kurgus to the Korosko road is another possible motive for—or, more likely, a happy side-effect of—the Egyptian usurpation of this natural feature. László Török remarks that the intersection of this road and the Abu Hamed bend, approximately 40 kilometers north of Kurgus, might have made this area a good candidate for a boundary “that was meant to be protected practically and/or magically from intruders” (2009, 17; 2008, 228). Since there was no fortress or other permanent Egyptian fixture in the vicinity, Török suggests that the primary purpose of this boundary may have been to protect the trade routes nearby. This could explain the threats to the local population, perhaps approaching from the eastern desert, made in the stela texts on the east side of the outcrop (Török 2009, 17); as we learn from the biography of expedition member Ahmose, son of Ibana, one of the explicit goals of the campaign of Tuthmosis I was *r dr bs n ꜥ h3st*, “to repel intrusion from the desert region.”⁴¹⁷ This

⁴¹⁶ See Chapter 3 for my comments on the military use of topographical lists.

⁴¹⁷ Autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ibana, li. 30.

suggestion is not convincing for me, however, because one would expect an Egyptian garrison if this were a practical landmark. Rather, it was the magically supported (and magically protected) boundary of the cosmos.

At this juncture it is necessary to return to the unusual shape of the Hagr el-Merwa, because it may also offer a clue as to Egyptian knowledge of this landmark before the campaign of Tuthmosis I (above, Figure 6.28). To the Egyptians this place, and perhaps the area around it, was known as *wpt-t3*, ‘Horns of the Earth’ (Hannig 1995, 190).⁴¹⁸ This term originated in the New Kingdom (*Wb* I 298.3), and the earliest definite attestation dates to the reign of Tuthmosis II, in his Aswan Group stela (Chapter 5):

t3š=f rs r wpt-t3 mḥty r pḥww

His southern boundary reaches to *wpt-t3*, the northern (one) to the [northern] ends.⁴¹⁹

Another key reference may point to an earlier use of the term, during the reign of Tuthmosis I. It occurs in the autobiography of the architect and government official Ineni, who served under Amenhotep I, Tuthmosis I, Tuthmosis II, and the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III:

ir.n=f t3š=f r wpt-t3 pḥww m ḳbh n [ḥr]

He [Tuthmosis I] established his boundary at *wpt-t3* and the [northernmost] ends at the Cool Waters of [Horus].⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Note that *wpt* on its own can mean “brow” or “zenith”; it can also refer to the top of a mountain (Faulkner 1972, 59). Alan Gardiner (1947, I 177) translated *wpt-t3* it as ‘Beginning of Earth,’ where “the southern limit of Nubia is meant,” but most scholars use the term ‘horn’ or ‘horns.’ Davies takes a more cautious view on the identification of the outcrop by this toponym (2017, 72, fn. 20), stating only that this is “perhaps” the case.

⁴¹⁹ Li. 6-7. Tuthmosis II did not commission a monument at Kurgus; he would have ‘inherited’ this boundary from Tuthmosis I.

⁴²⁰ Autobiography of Ineni, li. 5. For the location of the ‘Cool Waters of Horus’ in the north, see Chapter 5.

Further evidence for a close relationship between the Hagr el-Merwa and this toponym comes from references to the southern boundary of Tuthmosis III, which was clearly marked on the outcrop, in three of his monuments:

k3 -pw wsr-ib t3šw=f rs r wpt-t3 r hntyw nw t3 -pn mhty r phww nw stt r shnwt nwt

He is a brave bull whose southern boundaries reach to *wpt-t3*, to the [southern] ends of this land, and his northern [ones] to the ends of Asia, to the supports of heaven.⁴²¹

nsw-bity mnhprrꜥ pꜣty n mntw iry t3š=f r wpt-t3 hr h3st mīw

The Dual King Menkheperre, bowman of Montu, who makes his [southern] boundary at *wpt-t3* in the foreign land of Miu...⁴²²

mnhprrꜥ tit-rꜥ nb nht wꜥf t3 -nb ir t3š=f r wpt-t3 phww r nhrn

Menkheperre-tit-re, lord of *nht*, subduer of every land, who makes his boundary as far as *wpt-t3* and the [northern] ends in Naharin.⁴²³

It also appears on the 8th pylon at Karnak, in an inscription of Hatshepsut—who was probably part of Tuthmosis I’s entourage at Kurgus—which discusses the deeds of her father:⁴²⁴

wd snd=f m phww t3 spr r=f nht=f r wpt-t3

He sent forth his fear to the ends of the earth and his *nht* reached *wpt-t3*.⁴²⁵

Recall that the Egyptian view the world was oriented from the south, such that its ‘horns’ would be at its southernmost point, and its ‘hindparts’ (*phwy*) at its northernmost

⁴²¹ Gebel Barkal Stela, li. 8. Two further mentions of *wpt-t3* occur in this stela: *b3k=sn -n=i mi wꜥ htrw m b3kw n hhw m ihwt ʿš3 nw wpt-t3*, “they are subservient to me as one, charged with tributes of millions of many things from *wpt-t3*” (li. 27-28), and *hmhmt=k phr.n=s wpt-t3*, your battle cry has pervaded *wpt-t3*” (li. 49).

⁴²² Buto Stela, li. 7-8.

⁴²³ Theodosian Obelisk, east side (LD III 60). Spalinger (1978, 37) mistakenly wrote that this text belonged to Tuthmosis I, which would place the use of *wpt-t3* a generation earlier.

⁴²⁴ Hatshepsut revered and emulated her father as a means of legitimating herself (Baligh 1997, 139). It is strange, then, that she never returned to Kurgus. The fact that Tuthmosis III *did* when there was a rebellion lends credence to the idea that Tuthmosis I’s stela was enough to keep the boundary ‘permanent’ until it suddenly needed reinforcement. Had it not been for the rebellion, perhaps Tuthmosis III would not have returned to Kurgus either.

⁴²⁵ *Urk* IV 270, li. 8-9.

(Posener 1965, 70–71).⁴²⁶ However, this is not necessarily why the Egyptians referred to their southern imperial boundary in this way.

Given the landscape-archaeological basis for this dissertation, I am left to wonder whether the shape of the Hagr el-Merwa might have influenced or reinforced the use of this toponym. There are two possibilities here. On the one hand, given the Egyptian orientation of the world from the south, the hypothetical ‘end of the world’ may have been called by the name *wpt-t3* for some time before it was reached; then, upon arriving at the outcrop and noting its coincidental shape—or upon hearing in advance from their scouts that the local landmark they were aiming to appropriate would be recognizable by the fact that it took the shape of a pair of horns—the Egyptians’ imagining of the southern end of the world as ‘Horns of the Earth’ would have been reinforced. The outcrop would have been a “material metaphor” for what they already knew (Rummel 2016, 54). On the other hand, it is also conceivable that the Egyptians first adopted this term to describe the southern end of the world only *after* observing the shape of the outcrop: it would have made sense, given the world’s orientation from the south, and the apparent connection between quartz and the bones of the gods (Williams 2006, 156). Both scenarios are equally plausible, because the earliest possible use of the toponym was during the reign of Tuthmosis I, the first king to reach it (Ineni’s autobiography was written after the death of this king, so one cannot say whether the term was in use when Tuthmosis I was alive). I am not the first person to suggest that some element of the

⁴²⁶ Note that *hnty* is also an antonym for *pḥwy* (Posener 1965, 70).

Upper Nubian landscape inspired this toponym, although to my knowledge no one has suggested such a literal connection.⁴²⁷

Even if the Egyptian use of the term *wpt-t3* had nothing to do with the shape of the Hagr el-Merwa at all, we may assume that it only came into use in writing sometime after the boundary at Kurgus had been established: in all of the Tuthmosid inscriptions where this term occurs, it refers specifically to the southern *t3š*, which suggests that it was developed to describe this boundary. It is possible that the northernmost supplementary inscription at Tombos also references *wpt-t3*, although the signs are now obscured and this translation is debatable.⁴²⁸

nbty ḥꜥ m nsrt di pḥty nṯr nfr nb t3wy ʿ3ḥprk3rꜥ di ʿnh nḥm t3 (?) wpt-t3 (?) mry mnṯw nb w3st

Nebty who has appeared by means of the serpent goddess, giver of might; the young god, Lord of the Two Lands, Aakheperkare, given life; who has taken the land (?) and *wpt-t3* (?); beloved of Montu, the Lord of Thebes.⁴²⁹

If this reading is indeed correct, then it provides us with the earliest attestation of the term *wpt-t3*: Year 2 of Tuthmosis I, just after the king had journeyed to the place that was known by this name during his reign. Note, though, that ‘Horns of the Earth’ is *not* referenced in the Tombos Stela itself, which one would expect to see in such a triumphant text if the toponym was already in use before the king’s arrival at Kurgus. If, however,

⁴²⁷ For comparison, Morris once suggested a different phenomenological explanation for the origin of this term: “...it is possible that the toponym held a double meaning. The ‘Horns-of-the-land’ would appear to admirably describe the Butana region at which the Nile split into two major branches” (2005, 208). David Lorton apparently proposed that “the name might result from some natural feature, such as the junction of the Nile and the Atbara or Blue and White Niles,” assuming that the term referred to the area south of the Fourth Cataract; this was quoted in Bradbury (1985, 18), but I could not verify the original source. Claude Vandersleyen thought that *wpt-t3* was the Gebel Barkal, another prominent and unusually shaped landscape feature (1995, 268; Chapter 3).

⁴²⁸ Bradbury supports this reading (1985, 17–18), and translated the phrase as “seizer of the Horns of the Earth” (1992, 58). Randa Baligh also read the text in this way, translating it as “taker of the end till its [horns or ends?]” (1997, 234).

⁴²⁹ LD III 5c; Urk IV 87.

the above reading of the supplementary inscription at Tombos is incorrect, then the absence of this term in all of the Tombos monuments suggests that it only came into use in the years after Tuthmosis I's visit to the Hagr el-Merwa, perhaps influenced by the shape of this landscape feature.⁴³⁰ It may also be significant that the Tuthmosid tableaux contain the earliest known depictions of Amun-Re with a ram's head (W. V. Davies 2017, 69, fn. 6); this horned representation might be connected to the toponym.⁴³¹

Although it is the west side of the Hagr el-Merwa that appears most like a pair of horns, the royal stelae were carved on the east side—specifically, on the portion of the outcrop that faces northeast. I have already noted several suggestions from other scholars as to why this might be, and here I propose another. After his foray into Nubia, the next stop for Tuthmosis I was Naharin. The north and south formed a common binary in royal texts, where they helped to affirm the ordered duality of a king's dominance not only of those territories, but also of the northern and southern peoples who inhabited them. Liverani describes the significance of reaching and exerting power over both the northern and southern boundaries thusly:

In the geopolitical expression 'from Naharin to Karoy' and its cosmological equivalent 'from the marshes of Asia to the Horn of the Earth,' the extreme points are only two and are opposite to each other. As a result, they mark a full diameter, not simply a radius. Furthermore, they follow the main axis of Egypt's orientation and so mark the diameter par excellence, the longest as well as the most meaningful.⁴³²

⁴³⁰ Generations later, during the Ramesside period, a fortress on Egypt's westernmost boundary with Libya, apparently located on a mountain (*Wb* I 298.4), was called either *wpt-t3* (perhaps 'Opening of the Land') or *wpt-t3*. It is possible that the name was borrowed from the southernmost boundary, since this location in Libya was also the edge of Egyptian control. O'Connor contends that "The expression *wpt-t3* was habitually applied to the furthestmost limits of Egyptian dominion" (1982, 921). See Morris 2005, 620, 631, 781 and O'Connor 1982, 921–922, with 12.26.

⁴³¹ This representation—like those of the cattle and bulls (see above; Manzo 2011, 219)—may also be a response to local iconography, as rams were of religious significance for Nubian groups.

⁴³² Liverani 2001, 35–36. It is worth noting that claims on this pair of boundaries persisted in royal texts into the Nineteenth Dynasty, as the battle reliefs of Seti I in the hypostyle hall Karnak reveal: *iri t3š ʔf r wpt-t3 r phww nhrn*, "[he] who makes his boundary at *wpt-t3* and the ends of Naharin" (The Epigraphic Survey 1986, 48 ff.). By this point these have become the archetypal boundaries of the world.

Together, the Nubian and Levantine campaigns of Tuthmosis I constituted an ambitious endeavor for the new king, executed in quick succession and conceived as a single project, to widen both boundaries of Egypt ‘up to the ends of the world’ and thereby encircle it. Tuthmosis III later followed suit, venturing first to Naharin and then later into Nubia.⁴³³ I suggest that the orientation of the face of the outcrop that Tuthmosis I chose to inscribe gave this king the opportunity to symbolically broadcast his message of world dominance toward the other boundary he would soon make. In facing northeast, the monuments of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III looked squarely in the direction of Naharin. It should come as no surprise that the royal stelae on the Hagr el-Merwa had counterparts at the side of the Euphrates River: “Two stelae set up at opposite ends of the world affirm universal control even more completely” (Liverani 2001, 35).⁴³⁴ Minmose, the Overseer of Works under Tuthmosis III, makes it clear in his Tura stela that the imperial boundary stelae at Kurgus and on the Euphrates were conceived as a pair, both constructed under his direction:

smn wḏ ḥr ḥ3st nhrn ḥr ḥ3st k3ry

...who established his (= the king’s) stelae in the country of Naharin and the country of and Karoy.⁴³⁵

⁴³³ The king’s Levantine campaign took place during Year 33, according to numerous inscriptions including the royal Annals, and his Nubian campaign likely took place in Years 49-50, as his monuments on Sehel Island from Year 50 attest (W. V. Davies 2017, 94–95; Gasse and Rondot 2007, 137–38).

⁴³⁴ This practice has several parallels in Mesopotamia and Anatolia. See Liverani 2001, 36.

⁴³⁵ *Urk* IV 1448, li. 13. In this period, according to Raymond Faulkner, Naharin “was either identical with, or formed the western province of, the kingdom of Mitanni” (1946, 39); William Albright and Alan Rowe were certain that *nhrn* and *mtn* were synonymous (1928, 283). Minmose’s signature appears on the Hagr el-Merwa (W. V. Davies 2017, 80–81); although he appears to take credit for establishing the royal stelae, they were clearly made in the name of the king (see, for example, the wording in the Gebel Barkal Stela, li. 13, below: *smn.n ḥm=i wḏ=i ḥr ḏw -pf n nhrn*, “my majesty established my stela on that mountain of Naharin”). Klug refers to Minmose’s Tura stela as a “half-royal, half-private inscription” (2002, 364).

Given the Egyptian tendency toward establishing symmetry across space (Hornung 1992, 76–77),⁴³⁶ it is possible that the orientation of the Euphrates stelae, if they are ever found, would reveal that the boundary markers at both ends of the empire faced *each other* across the vast expanse that Egypt controlled, bookending it with powerful messages couched in the landscape.

“Dug into the Mountain”: The Lost Tuthmosid Stelae on the Euphrates

In Year 33 of his reign, Tuthmosis III engaged in a campaign against Mitanni that reportedly saw him sack numerous towns and villages, wreak havoc on their economic resources, and leave a boundary stela on the bank of the Euphrates.⁴³⁷ He was following in the footsteps of his grandfather Tuthmosis I, who had confronted a Mitannian force in battle after his successful campaign in Nubia, establishing Egypt’s northern imperial boundary.⁴³⁸ Although they have never been recovered, it is a near certainty that the Euphrates stelae of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III were executed in living rock, just as their Nubian counterparts had been. The most telling evidence comes from a section of the Gebel Barkal Stela of Tuthmosis III, where the king reflects on his actions in the Levant:

ḥꜥ.n smn.n ḥm=i wḏ=i ḥr ḏw -pf n nhrn m šd m ḏw ḥr gs imnty phr-wr

Then my majesty established my stela on that mountain of Naharin, dug into the mountain on the west side of the Euphrates.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ Including with stelae, as perhaps at Semna; see above.

⁴³⁷ For the classic study of the campaign of Tuthmosis III, see Faulkner 1946. For a recent summary of this campaign and its sources, as well as a new interpretation of it as a “symbolic display of power,” see Mizrachy 2012.

⁴³⁸ We have little evidence for the specifics of Tuthmosis I’s campaign (Baligh 1997, 256–57); it is essentially limited to the autobiographies of two members of the army, Ahmose, son of Ibana (*Urk* IV 9-10) and Ahmose Pennekhbet (*Urk* IV 36).

⁴³⁹ Gebel Barkal Stela, li. 13. The stela was probably on the *east* side of the river; see below.

The phrase *m šd m ḏw*, “dug into the mountain,” implies that these stelae were not freestanding. This is the only description of a stela that uses this turn of phrase, but similar wording was employed during the reign of Seti I to describe his rock-cut temple at Kanais:

in.tw m šd m ḏw -pn ḥwt-ntr nn n ntrw

And so there was dug into this mountain a temple of these gods.⁴⁴⁰

As I noted in Chapter 3, there is no unique Egyptian word for ‘rock-cut temple’ that would distinguish one from a freestanding temple, despite the conceptual difference between the two. So, too, with stelae: they were all *wḏw*. Instead, the difference could be articulated in how the word was qualified. The establishment of Egypt’s imperial boundary stelae was an impressive achievement recorded in numerous other royal monuments, including the official Annals at Karnak, and we must therefore assume that the words used to recount this accomplishment were carefully chosen. Tuthmosis III apparently felt that it was important to include the phrase *m šd m ḏw* in the above description of his Euphrates stela, in a text that was itself located at a key imperial rock interface, at Gebel Barkal, inside a fortress founded by this king. His Euphrates stela was not made of stone (*inr*), as many other royal monuments are described, but made *in* the mountain. Since living-rock stelae were relatively uncommon, making one would have been worthy of note, and the monument’s description apparently warranted greater detail.

Additional sources for the existence of the Euphrates stelae include two references in the Annals of Tuthmosis III, which describe the king’s eighth military campaign in Year 33:

⁴⁴⁰ KRI 67, li. 2-3. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, *šdi* was interchangeable with *šd* (Wb IV 414, 563).

*d3t phr-wr n nhrn in hm=f r-h3t mš=f r izbty mw -pn smn.n=f ky r gs wđ n it=f nsw-bity
 ʕ3hprk3r*

Crossing the Euphrates of Naharin by his majesty at the head of his army to the east of this water. He established another (stela) beside the stela of his father, the Dual King Aakheperkare.⁴⁴¹

smn.n=f wđ=f m nhrn hr swsh t3šw kmt

(...after he had) established his stela in Naharin in order to widen the boundaries of Egypt.⁴⁴²

Here we learn that the two Tuthmosid stelae were made next to each other, probably as they had been at Kurgus. At first glance, the first reference from the Annals appears to contradict the above quotation from the Gebel Barkal Stela: it declares that Tuthmosis III's Euphrates stela was located on the east bank of the river, alongside his grandfather's, whereas the Gebel Barkal Stela states that it was dug into a mountain on the west bank. The word *izbty* ('east') was actually restored in the *Urkunden* by Kurt Sethe (*Urk IV* 697, li. 4); it does appear partly preserved in the Annals, but not fully. As Klug notes, Sethe's restoration has led many scholars to make yet another substitution in the ill-placed lacuna of a royal inscription concerning the Euphrates, the Armant Stela of Tuthmosis III:

*d3.n=f itrw phr-wr ptpt.n=f dmyw nw gs=fy sswn.w m ht r nhh smn=f wđ n nhtw hr gs=f
 [izbty] in.n=f škb m stt hr h3st rst t3-sty m-ht wđ3=f r mšw r hhi btn -sw m t3 -pf smn.n=f
 wđ=f im mš irt.n=f m phwy [n p3 t3]*

He crossed the river Euphrates, and trampled the towns on both its banks, which were destroyed by fire forever. He erected a stela of victory on its [east] side. He got a rhinoceros by shooting in the southern land of Ta-sety, after he had gone to Miu to seek out him who had rebelled against him in that land. He established his stela there as he had done at the (northern) ends (*phwy*) [of the earth].⁴⁴³

The word *izbty* was restored in the Armant Stela by Wolfgang Helck in the *Urkunden* (*Urk IV* 1246, li. 2), although some scholars prefer instead to substitute *imnty*, 'west,' because of the information given in the Gebel Barkal Stela (e.g. Spalinger 1978, 41;

⁴⁴¹ *Urk IV* 697, li. 3-5.

⁴⁴² *Urk IV* 698, li. 17-699, li. 1. This line appears in the king's description of his arrival at a place called Nyy, on his way back from the Euphrates.

⁴⁴³ Armant Stela, li. 8-9.

Gardiner 1947, I 175, fn. 1). Clearly, which word one chooses to restore in these texts has great implications for the probable location of the Euphrates stelae.

On principle we should expect some programmatic and stylistic balance between the monuments at both imperial boundaries, but a handful of scholars have suggested that Tuthmosis III made *two* stelae on the Euphrates.⁴⁴⁴ This theory is not plausible, to my mind, because one would expect Tuthmosis III to have mentioned making two stelae on his campaign—a greater feat, greater than his forefather’s, than making just one.⁴⁴⁵ In the Annals passage, the word *ky*, ‘another,’ must therefore refer to the stela of Tuthmosis I—another stela made after the stela of Tuthmosis III’s grandfather—rather than another stela made after a previous stela of his own. Helck (1981) made a different argument, which I also find unconvincing: that *m šd m dw* actually refers to a quarry (*šd*) on the west side of the river, from which a freestanding stela was carved and then erected on the east side. But what would be the point of quarrying a stela from one side of the river in order to erect it on the other, when the latter already had a suitable rock outcrop (“that mountain of Naharin”)? Moreover, why would the king specify directionally where the stela came from, but not where it would presumably stand for eternity?

Shmuel Yeivin (1934) pointed out that the ‘west side’ of the Euphrates, *gs imnty*, is really the right-hand side of the river, and thus could indeed refer to the *east* side of the Euphrates, because that river flows in the opposite direction to the Nile (since, as I noted

⁴⁴⁴ Either one on each bank, serving perhaps as Vogel imagined the two stelae across the river at Semna might have done (e.g. Baligh 1997, 266), or in two different locations, one farther into Mitanni than the other so as to *swšh tššw* (e.g. Mizrachy 2012, who leaves Davies, 2017, 95, fn. 85, unconvinced). I agree with most of Mizrachy’s theory (see below), but not with this point, partly because we should then expect a second *Nubian* stela of Tuthmosis III; at Kurgus we have Tuthmosis III’s statement that his accomplishment was to return to both boundaries, not to make new ones.

⁴⁴⁵ For another rejection of this theory, see Yeivin 1934, 197, fn. 20.

in Chapter 3, ‘right’ and ‘west’ were indicated by the same word). This interpretation would conveniently allow the text of the Gebel Barkal Stela to jive with the Annals (Klug 2002, 213), which specify *r ỉꜣbty* but not *gs ỉꜣbty*, and the fact that the army of Tuthmosis III likely sailed downstream (*hdi*) on the Euphrates during their campaign (*Urk* IV 697, li. 6-8; Mizrachy 2012, 31). I think that this is the best explanation available, but regardless of Yeivin’s observation, we should ask ourselves what the utility of a stela on the west side of this river would have been for the ideological goals of Tuthmosis III. As Liverani and Yosef Mizrachy both point out, the king placed a great deal of emphasis on the fact that he *crossed* the Euphrates: it was the “highlight” of his campaign (Mizrachy 2012, 26, 31–32). The Euphrates was a fluid dividing line that was, for the Egyptians, akin to the cosmic ocean that surrounded the world (Liverani 2001, 35). Crossing from the ‘Egyptian side’ would of course be from west to east, as the Euphrates is to the east of Egypt. Tuthmosis III talks about this crossing in both the Annals and the Armant Stela,⁴⁴⁶ and in the latter he also states that he “trampled the towns on both [of the river’s] banks,” which implies that he had reached the east side. Moreover, in the Annals his stela is described as being located *in* Naharin (*m nhrn*). The Euphrates was the boundary between Syria and Naharin (Spalinger 1978, 37), as we are told in an earlier passage from the Gebel Barkal Stela:

*iw rdi.n=i mdh.tw hꜥw šꜥ nw šꜥ hr dww nw tꜥ-nꜥr m hꜥw tꜥ nbt kpny rdi hr wrrywt ihw
hr stꜥ skd=sn hr-[hꜥt] hm=i r dꜥt itrw -pf ꜥꜥ ir r imytw hꜥst -tn r nhrn*

I had many ships of cedar be constructed on the mountains of the god's land in the vicinity of the mistress of Byblos, and had them put on carts pulled by oxen. They went before my majesty to cross that great river that is between this foreign land and Naharin.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ For further sources, see Redford 2003, 221–22, fn. 3.

⁴⁴⁷ Gebel Barkal Stela, li. 11-12.

“*This* foreign land” is Syria, the place where the king had his ships prepared for the mission,⁴⁴⁸ the deictic center of this passage. “*That* mountain of Naharin,” described in the next line of the text with the demonstrative *-pf*, is therefore on the east side of the river (Helck 1981, 242). It does not make sense that Tuthmosis would cross the river from Syria into Naharin and then cross *back* to make his monument on the side closer to Egypt. Reaching Naharin, however briefly and however shallow that reach, would have been a feat deserving of commemoration. Mizrachy summarizes the significance of this event as follows:

Crossing to the other bank of the Euphrates could have been conceived as an act of transgression, a challenging declaration against the sovereignty of Mitanni, the theoretical embodiment of evil, no matter how far Thutmose III was actually from the core of the Mitannian state. Metaphorically, Thutmose III’s landing on the east bank of the Euphrates may be alluded to as no less than a symbolic touchdown on the remotest tract of land trodden by any Egyptian ruler in the Levant.⁴⁴⁹

Alan Gardiner made a similar analogy: “The erection of such stelae was the equivalent of our hoisting of the Union Jack” (1947, I 175, fn. 1).⁴⁵⁰ People who are curious about my project often ask me if Egyptian royal living-rock stelae were like “the flag on the moon,” and in this case, I would have to say yes.

One final piece of evidence supports the theory that the Euphrates stelae were located on the east bank of the river.⁴⁵¹ In 1978, Spalinger published a fragment of an Eighteenth Dynasty limestone stela in the University of Pennsylvania Museum (Figure 6.29), almost certainly Tuthmosid and probably royal, with the following text:

⁴⁴⁸ The boats would not have been fully assembled there, but only once the contingent arrived at the Euphrates (Faulkner 1946, 40; Mizrachy 2012, 27–28). By this point Tuthmosis III had already “established an independent infrastructure for cedar production and supply in Lebanon, around Byblos” (Mizrachy 2012, 27).

⁴⁴⁹ Mizrachy 2012, 32.

⁴⁵⁰ See also Liverani’s and Galán’s comments above about the placement of royal images and monuments at the points of farthest reach.

⁴⁵¹ See Albright and Rowe 1928 for another stela fragment mentioning the Euphrates campaign, but which does not have any bearing on the location of the boundary stelae.

[...] *wḏ ḥr mḥty=f ḥr i3bt i3t in* [...]
 [...] *im n ḥm=f ḥr spt phr-wr i3t n p3.tw i3t mitt* [...]
 [...] *in wḏ=f m ph t3 smn.w ḥr imntt nt niwt m-ḥnw* [...]
 ...a stela on its north upon the east. Now, (one) brought...
 ...there for his majesty upon the shore of the Euphrates. Never had the like been done...
 ...his stela was brought back from the end of the earth, being set up upon the west of Thebes inside of...

This is Spalinger's translation of what is now known as the Philadelphia Fragment. The exact provenience of this fragment is not known, although Otto Ranke noted that it probably came from Thebes (Spalinger 1978, 35). Other scholars have since taken a more ambitious stance and tried to reconstruct a much larger passage from the text, such as Helck (1981, 242; 1983, 145) and Klug (2002, 212–13, based mainly on the text of the Armant Stela), but because their translations are speculative, I will not deal with them here.



Figure 6.29 The Philadelphia Fragment (Spalinger 1978, Fig. 2).

The Philadelphia Fragment reveals several pieces of information about events that occurred on a royal campaign, probably of Tuthmosis III, in Naharin. First, a stela was made on the north and east of something—a masculine something in the Egyptian language, because of the possessive =*f*. This =*f* could refer either to the Euphrates (Spalinger's preference) or to a stela (Klug's preference), presumably the Euphrates stela

of Tuthmosis I, which would likely make this a monument of Tuthmosis III. If it refers to the river, then the stela mentioned in the first line of the fragment was probably located farther north of the stela of Tuthmosis I and on the east *bank*. If the *ꜥf* instead refers to the Euphrates stela of Tuthmosis I, then as Klug observes, making a new monument to its northeast would mean that Tuthmosis III widened his boundary, however slightly, beyond that of his grandfather, farther north and farther east (2002, 215).⁴⁵² At Kurgus the king could not do this, because the isolation of the Hagr el-Merwa offered no such opportunity. That is probably why Tuthmosis III later invented the great accomplishment of *returning* to the southern boundary, carved into the Nubian outcrop: he could not physically surpass his grandfather's monument there.

Second, we learn from the Philadelphia Fragment that some action described in the missing portion of the text took place on the shore of the Euphrates, and whatever it was, it was the sort of event that a king would claim to be a historical singularity ("never had the like been done," as in the Kurgus monuments). I assume that this momentous occasion refers to the creation of Tuthmosis III's boundary stela. What is 'new and improved' could be, as Klug suggests, the creation of a new boundary stela farther north and east of his predecessor's. If the two stelae were on the east bank of the Euphrates, and in such positions that one could be located farther north from the other, then a general southwest orientation is implied. In that case, these monuments would symbolically face the other end of Egypt's empire, the boundary at Kurgus, where the

⁴⁵² Helck thought the *ꜥf* referred to Carchemish, but see below for my comments on why the crossing did not occur at this city. Technically the *ꜥf* could also refer to a *ꜥw*, although one should question the practical value of putting a monument on the far side of a cliff or mountain in this context; Spalinger states clearly that both stelae "on that mountain of Naharin" would have been "in full view" (1978, 40). There is yet another possibility, which is that the first line references the Hagr el-Merwa, and describes the stelae on the northeast face of that outcrop before moving on to discuss the northern campaign.

other pair of Tuthmosid stelae face northeast back at Naharin. Presumably the Euphrates stelae discussed the boundary at Kurgus, just as Tuthmosis III's stela there mentioned his journey to the northern boundary.

Last, we learn that a stela belonging to an unidentified male person—surely not the same one mentioned in the first line of the text—was brought back from Egypt's northern imperial boundary and set up inside a city. I reject the suggestion that Tuthmosis III might have brought the stela of Tuthmosis I back from the Euphrates as a “pious deed” (cf. Spalinger 1978, 38): first, it was almost certainly a living-rock stela, and therefore not easily made portable, and second, the fact that both stelae at Kurgus persist next to each other strongly suggests that Tuthmosis III would not do such a thing to the boundary marker of his predecessor, which he specifies as being next to his in the Annals.⁴⁵³ The stela was in all likelihood not Egyptian, but the monument of a local ruler, or even of the king of Mitanni as Spalinger suggests (1978, 41). He argues convincingly that this is the first known example of the Egyptians taking away a foreign monument as booty, which was “common practice” elsewhere in the Near East (Spalinger 1978, 38–39). Klug noted that the use of the verb *ini* in the final line of this fragment is reminiscent of the phrase *ini ḏrw*, and suggested that the foreign stela must therefore have been a boundary marker (2002, 216);⁴⁵⁴ at the boundary with Mitanni, taking away a freestanding monument may have been akin to the defacement of the local rock drawings on the Hagr el-Merwa. As for the city where this stolen monument was set up, it need not

⁴⁵³ Baligh (1997) suggested that Tuthmosis III would have used his grandfather's stela, taken back to Egypt, to prove that he had made it to the Euphrates. I am not at all convinced that this would have been necessary, or ideologically sound.

⁴⁵⁴ Although she seems to believe that the *southern* boundary is being discussed in this portion of the text, a notion with which I do not agree. See also Klug 2002, 7.

have been Thebes as Spalinger proposed, although Thebes was usually referred to as simply *nīwt*, ‘the city,’ in the New Kingdom. Setting up a stela on the west side of Thebes would mean that it was placed in a funerary context, perhaps Tuthmosis III’s mortuary temple (Spalinger 1978, 39), rather than in a temple context, such as at Karnak, which we might expect.⁴⁵⁵ It is possible that the city was not an Egyptian one; perhaps it was placed in a city in Syria, on the side closest to Egypt (west), as a warning.

The crucial question is, where on the Euphrates were these stelae carved?

Raymond Faulkner (1946, 40) and Helck (1981, 243) explained that the Euphrates crossing occurred at Carchemish, citing the topographical lists of Tuthmosis III and the autobiography of a man named Amenemhab who served on his campaign.⁴⁵⁶

ḥr ḥ3st nt k3r3k3miš3 [...] d3.n=i p3 mw n nhrn

In the foreign land of Carchemish...I crossed the water of Naharin.⁴⁵⁷

But the problem with identifying Carchemish as the crossing point is that, as Mizrachy points out, Amenemhab’s autobiography specifies that the crossing took place in the *land* of Carchemish, not at the city of Carchemish (2012, 29).⁴⁵⁸ Mizrachy therefore proposes an alternative location, based on his detailed assessment of the textual evidence for the eighth campaign, Egyptian military strategy, and the archaeological record at key sites in the region during the Late Bronze Age. He demonstrates persuasively that the Egyptian army arrived on the Lebanese coast by both land and sea, picked up their ships near Ullaza (which had submitted to Egypt on Tuthmosis III’s seventh campaign), continued

⁴⁵⁵ Spalinger (1978, 39) notes that a similar line occurs in the Kamose stela, which was set up in Karnak.

⁴⁵⁶ Recall that topographical lists present a difficult situation (Chapter 3); we should not necessarily consider them to be itineraries (Mizrachy 2012, 26), and therefore we should not assume that Carchemish, although the northernmost city listed, was where the crossing occurred.

⁴⁵⁷ *Urk* IV 891, li. 9-11.

⁴⁵⁸ Mizrachy submits that Carchemish was a well-known crossing point, but that others existed in the vicinity—thus making the entire area “one of the most strategically crucial sections of northern Mesopotamia, connecting East and West.” See also Comfort, Abadie-Reynal, and Ergeç 2000.

south of Aleppo and eastward via Umm el-Marra (the shortest route to the river with no large settlement to contend with along the way), and then crossed the Euphrates somewhere along the northern part of the river's 'Big Bend'—a relatively remote region of Mitanni from Carchemish down to Emar—in the area of Tell Munbaqa, roughly 100 kilometers to the south of Carchemish itself (Figure 6.30). This is close to the location that Margaret Drower proposed several decades ago: the cliffs near Maskanah (1973, 432). This area is located where Lake Assad is today, and the landscape has changed in such a way that it may not be possible to recover the stelae if they still exist (Figure 6.31).



Figure 6.30 Mizrachy's route for the eighth campaign of Tuthmosis III (2012, Map 1).



Figure 6.31 Satellite image showing the area around the ‘Big Bend’ and Lake Assad.

This area of the Euphrates Valley is bounded by steep escarpments that Mizrachy identifies as good candidates for “that mountain of Naharin” (2012, 40). Given the general characteristics of the rock features chosen for inscription by Egypt’s royal establishment, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, at Tombos, and at Kurgus, it is reasonable to assume that the *dw* in question is equally likely to have been a standalone outcrop as it is to have been a cliff. If I were to survey the area of the ‘Big Bend,’ I would look first for a feature with outstanding perceptual metrics in its local landscape, “an easily accessible coincidental rock formation” like the Hagr el-Merwa (Mizrachy 2012, 39). Liverani, commenting on the characteristics of ancient Near Eastern stelae set up ‘at the ends of the world,’ remarked that “Prominent forms along the coast, whether high mountains or small but conspicuous elevations, [were considered] the best location for a

world boundary marker, bringing together ‘Ocean shore’ and ‘mountain’ features” (2001, 36). The ‘Big Bend’ was “a kind of no-man’s-land” (Mizrachy 2012, 33), where I believe an Egyptian boundary stela could be expected to remain unchallenged—and also, I think, where one might find a Mitannian boundary stela, as Klug surmised from the Philadelphia Fragment. Although I do not agree with Mizrachy’s suggestion for the placement of the Tuthmosid stelae within this landscape,⁴⁵⁹ I do agree with his characterization of the event that defined the northern campaign of Tuthmosis III, and presumably also that of Tuthmosis I: the prime objective was not a clash with the ruler of Mitanni, but to cross the river, just to say that they did.

Marking the Edges of Empire and Cosmos

The living-rock imperial boundary stelae at Kurgus and in Naharin share a very important feature in common aside from their medium. At both of these sites, no Egyptian fortress or other ‘appropriate’ architectural feature, with any personnel, accompanied the stelae.⁴⁶⁰ For Klug, this was good enough reason to identify living rock as the medium of the Euphrates stelae: in a foreign land with no ritual foundation in which to house such a monument, where it could be protected and receive cult, the Egyptians are not likely to have made them freestanding (Klug 2002, 213). The idea that any isolated royal stela would be expected to remain undisturbed in a foreign land is impractical—unless, I think, it was carved into a *ḏw*: timeless, immobile, and divinely supported. As I noted in the opening of this chapter, it is significant that a series of royal

⁴⁵⁹ He believes that the stela of Tuthmosis I was on the west bank and that there were two stelae of Tuthmosis III, one on each bank.

⁴⁶⁰ It is also worth reiterating that at Tombos, Gebel Barkal, and Gebel Belal, no architectural foundation from the time of Tuthmosis I is known.

stelae that defined the very boundaries of the Egyptian world, arguably the most ideologically important monuments of the Eighteenth Dynasty, were executed in living rock. Owing to the capabilities of the Egyptian craft apparatus in foreign lands (Chapter 5), which signals a deliberate choice of medium, we know that living rock was not a meager substitute for cut stone. And for the monuments that marked Egypt's imperial boundaries, I argue that it was considered ideal.

Lest we forget, the boundaries of *Kmt* were all “obvious” natural features (Hornung 1992, 74), or what Janet Richards would call “natural signifiers” (1999, 84–85): the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the “granite barrier” of the First Cataract in the south (Hornung 1992, 74), and the deserts to the east and west of the Nile Valley. According to Redford, these “well-defined natural frontiers...enhance[d] the meaning of boundary in the consciousness of anyone resident in the land” (2004, 11). The boundaries of *Kmt* were considered to be permanent and timeless fixtures of the ordered world, as was implied by their physical form. And so when Egypt began to expand its territory and its sphere of influence, Egyptian kings looked specifically for other “strategic natural boundaries” to which they could attach their new political margins (S. T. Smith 2003, 4). Accordingly, the Tuthmosids considered the immense quartz outcrop in the peripheral yet well-connected landscape of Kurgus, and the enigmatic Euphrates River that separated Mitanni from Syria, as suitable landmarks on their imperialist campaigns. Living rock, which was associated with “the longevity of geological time” rather than the artificial human imagining of time (Harmanşah 2013, 94), gave a greater impression of permanence than a cut block of stone. Moreover, it offered an opportunity to cement messages concerning the shape of the cosmos directly into those cosmic boundaries. As a

medium for imperial boundary stelae, it was clearly the best option for imitating the form of original edges of *Kmt*.

The aim of boundary stelae was not only to regulate the movement of people (insofar as it was possible), but also to police the land in which they moved. People were viewed as extensions of their environments, which could be equally unpredictable and troublesome. Although the agentive natural world had the power to actively oppose and disrupt human activities, the Egyptians could also mobilize it to do just the opposite. Brown demonstrates quite clearly that rock inscriptions played an important role “in the consolidation and maintenance of boundaries” (2015, 208). As she observed, Egyptian *doxa* could “annex” foreign territories to the ordered world (Brown 2015, 104, 182–83), and from at least the First Dynasty the Egyptians were already carving the royal name into peripheral landscapes in order to pacify and lay claim to them (2015, 5; Chapter 1). Rock reliefs constitute a longstanding monumental tradition in ancient Egypt: the earliest reliefs in the Egyptian world, some of the first forms of the expression of royal power, were made in living rock (Somaglino and Tallet 2015; Wilkinson 1995; Hendrickx, Darnell, and Gatto 2012; Hikade 2007; Ibrahim and Tallet 2009). By making their living-rock boundary stelae at Kurgus and Naharin (as well as the monuments at Tombos, Gebel Barkal, and Gebel Belal), the Tuthmosids were following the model their forefathers had established long ago, of carving into the landscape in order to *activate* the inscribed features as hegemonic devices.⁴⁶¹ The Tuthmosid stelae are an example of how the marked landscape could be used to exercise state-led dominance, controlling access to a

⁴⁶¹ The notion of ‘activation’ comes from Jennifer Gates-Foster (2012, 209), who used it to describe the effect of cultic activity on previously neutral desert features during the late Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. See Brown 2015, 210 for her characterization of the Tombos and Kurgus monuments as “purely hegemonic.”

space and making it work for the royal establishment (Tilley 1994, 27; A. T. Smith 2003).

The earliest Egyptian royal reliefs did not require military or ritual foundations to safeguard or support them. Likewise, in the peripheral landscapes penetrated by Egyptian forces during the New Kingdom, no such structures were founded to accompany their monuments. However, territorial boundaries with real socioeconomic consequences for human activity—Semna in the Middle Kingdom, and Tombos in the New Kingdom—did have fortresses, at least eventually; at the former, “freestanding” stelae were pressed directly into the walls of the structure. When I first realized that the stelae at Kurgus and Naharin had no supporting architecture, I began trying to explain how their connection to living rock would have made such structures obsolete. I assumed that, at the hegemonic boundaries at the ends of the cosmos, where the new idea of ‘widening the boundaries up to the ends of the world’ had taken off, built architecture had been *removed* from the equation because the living-rock stelae did not need to be protected by it. All of this was based on the idea that in the Middle Kingdom examples, it was the fortress (and its chapel) that protected the stela, as Klug had implied. But Vogel, who puts a great deal of emphasis on the contexts of Egyptian boundary monuments, made an interesting point in her discussion of the Semna and Uronarti Stelae:

I assume that the Egyptians considered their Nubian fortresses as a kind of microcosm within a foreign territory. Unfortunately, a microcosm corresponding to the ideas of *maat* but within a world devoted to the chaotic elements of *isfet*. A situation that urgently needed magical support. And stelae, like the ones introduced, offered such a support.⁴⁶²

The relationship between Egyptian stelae and the buildings in which they were housed during the Middle Kingdom has broader ideological implications for what was happening

⁴⁶² Vogel 2011, 331–32.

in the New Kingdom. The fortress did not protect the stela: it was the stela that protected the fortress, and that changes everything.

The boundaries at Kurgus and Naharin denoted the ends of the universe, the culmination of the new concept of *swsḥ t3šw*. They were a different kind of *t3š* from Semna or Tombos, which operated on the human plane and therefore required supporting structures and personnel. The absence of fortresses at Kurgus and Naharin was due to the nature of New Kingdom imperial boundaries, which were cosmic boundaries—*t3šw* that approached *ḏrw* (in either sense of the word *ḏr*). These boundaries required neither architectural support nor a continuous military presence. The living-rock stelae created to establish them were “substitutes” for the king (Liverani 2001, 34) that were powerful and persistent on their own, so much so that neither of the Tuthmosids ever returned to the boundary that he made. Like the earliest royal reliefs, these living-rock stelae ‘worked’ without additional support because they were embedded in, and had therefore become a part of, the divinely supported and timeless natural world.

CHAPTER 7

The Mechanics of Egyptian Royal Living-Rock Stelae

The medium is the message.

— Marshall McLuhan

This dissertation comes on the heels of numerous studies that explored how living rock was employed as a monumental medium across the Near East, and across the ancient world. Their authors argued that monuments carved into natural features are somehow different from those that are constructed from cut stone. For one, their contents have inherent spatial anchors: they are not just words, but words in a landscape. Like the patrons at the center of those studies, the kings of Egypt also commissioned some of their official messages in living rock. For rulers of a culture of ‘big building,’ there was a calculated choice behind the use of this medium for formal state messages. The present project questioned what circumstances—sociopolitical, geographic, aesthetic, or otherwise—might have led to such a choice, and what role the living rock itself might have played in the creation and reception of the royal stelae that were carved into it. This was a question about their *mechanics*: when, how, and why living rock was considered an effective medium for royal expression. Each case study had its own, context-dependent answer to this question, but what unites them all is that in every case this medium was an essential part of the message that was carved into it.

Summary

Theoretical Framework

How did Egypt's royal living-rock stelae *work*? In the preceding chapters, I tackled this question by studying these monuments “as *archaeological places* in and of themselves” (Harmanşah 2014c, 3). I crafted a theoretical framework for *an archaeology of inscribed natural places*, after Richard Bradley (2000), aiming to strike a balance between the textual and material components of the stelae. Four aspects guided my investigation of each case study:

- I. Perceptions of the landscape — How were the outcrop where a stela was carved and the surrounding area perceived, culturally and phenomenologically?
- II. Actions in the landscape — What did the Egyptians and their neighbors do, or not do, in the place where a stela was carved?
- III. Actions of the landscape — What role might the outcrop or the surrounding landscape, in their capacity as ‘agentive’ features that could shape human actions and intentions (Nash 2005), have played in the decision to carve a stela there?
- IV. Actions on the landscape — What do the stela's design and contents reveal about its relationship to the landscape in which it is embedded?

Considering these aspects together allowed for a holistic treatment of the regional and local landscapes, outcrops, patrons, audiences, and contents implicated in the mechanics of royal living-rock stelae.

Conceptions of Living Rock

Before looking at individual cases, it was first necessary to consider Egyptian conceptions of living rock as a material and a monumental medium. It is clear that there was a conceptual difference between living rock and cut stone; in general, *in-situ* rock formations carried a sense of permanence and timelessness, and an association with the primordial. This was no doubt due in part to the Heliopolitan myth of the *benben*-stone and the bounding of the observable universe by the eastern and western mountains, the *bꜣḥw* and *mꜣnw*. There was a clear distinction between rock-cut temples and those that were freestanding: the former were seen as inseparable from the mountains into which they were hewn, their rock façades functioning as (penetrable) membranes between this world and the world of the divine. The temples shared locations in common with early cave shrines and bottlenecks of the Nile, as well as Hathoric associations probably stemming from their designations as points on the mythical journey of the ‘Wandering Goddess’ (Darnell 1995; *LÄ* II 166), which transposed a mythical geography onto the landscapes of Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia. Numerous other rock features in the Egyptian world were imbued with social significance: some mountains were designated as *ḏww wꜣbw* (‘pure mountains’), which were inhabited intermittently by the gods, and some cliff faces as *ḏhnwt* (‘cultically activated rock faces,’ Adrom 2004), areas of divine appearance on mountains with primordial associations. In my assessment of conceptions of living rock, I argued not only that outcrops could be symbolically charged, but also that there was an inherent link between living rock and the *ḏt* time, the deep time of origins into which momentous events were entered, concretized, and thus monumentalized.

The case studies that followed were arranged thematically in order to account for the diversity of the material and to foreground *the landscape* rather than chronology or large-scale geography. Each case was grouped with others that shared a similar (culturally constructed) landscape type: sacred landscapes, expedition routes, and the locations of Egypt's imperial boundaries.

Stelae in Sacred Landscapes

The first group of three case studies comprised three inscribed landscapes that possessed an integral sacred character—'cultic capital'—vested in natural features that were identified as points in Egypt's cosmic geography: the Wadi Hammamat, Akhetaten (modern Amarna), and Gebel Silsila.

The Wadi Hammamat was a 'god's land,' a domain of mystery and wonders, and the stelae there of Mentuhotep IV were carved into a visible area of the sacred mountain of the god Min. This "august mountain" was an interface between the realm of the gods and the realm of humanity, much like the walls of the rock-cut temples (in the New Kingdom it became both a *ḏw wꜥb* and a *dhnt*). In this period Min was closely linked with the institution of kingship, and his mountain was consequently perceived as the birthplace of Mentuhotep as Horus—a site of apotheosis. The stelae pertain to an expedition to acquire stone for the king's sarcophagus, which was thought to retain the rejuvenating properties of the mountain from which it was quarried. Removing the stone was a form of *ex voto*, wherein the act of quarrying was dedicated to the god and the stone used for a hallowed purpose. The texts relay divine support for this act, in the form of two miracles caused by Min in the wadi: the birth of a gazelle on the stone that was destined to become the sarcophagus lid, and a monumental deluge. Both are framed as

historical singularities, in that they were (at last) revealed to the king by an omnipotent god, and both are also described in connection with the deep, primordial past. The miraculous events of the expedition are thus worthy of entry into the *dt* time, which I argued was accomplished by inscribing accounts of them into the very landscape where they occurred.

The capital city of Akhetaten, Akhenaten's eccentric civic and religious project, was conceived not as a true departure from the traditional Egyptian past (as it has often been characterized), but as a new First Time (*zp tpy*): yet another iteration of the creation of the world, staged in a microcosmic landscape that was miraculously revealed to the king by his principal god, the Aten. Since the area between the cliffs and escarpment at Amarna was divinely ordained to become Akhetaten, Akhenaten swore an oath never to move the location of his city and, later, a second oath reinforcing its delineation in exactly the manner he had designed. I argued that he held himself to his oaths never to move the city by inscribing them in the timeless and immobile medium of living rock: no fewer than sixteen stelae embedded in the limestone horizons on both sides of the Nile defined the city's boundary line, and the oaths were a key part of their messages. The initial pair of boundary stelae, which defined the central axis of the city and contain both the first oath and the account of the king's revelation, was carved at two sharply protuberant rock faces that were identified as *dhnwt*: places at the intersection of this world and the other world, part of the cosmic geography, grounding the city's foundation in the cosmic time. When Akhetaten was abandoned less than two decades after its founding, the boundary stelae persisted; in the post-Amarna era they stubbornly held onto the city's cultic capital, even as the empty Akhetaten became taboo for the Egyptians.

Engrained in the stone of the landscape, they formed a line that marked a space that no one crossed.

Gebel Silsila, known for its sandstone quarries, is also the site of numerous royal and private reliefs, stelae, and rock-cut religious structures. More importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, it was conceived as one of the mythical sources of the Nile, probably because it is located at the river's narrowest point, which is a visually striking feature and a barrier to movement. Taking the three living-rock stelae of Seti I as examples for this case study, I described how the cultic capital of Silsila was concentrated at a place on the west bank that was known as *pꜣ mw wꜥb*, 'the Pure Water.' This was conceived as a penetrable membrane of the Duat—the place where Hapy, the personification of the inundation, was thought to emerge from his 'cave' at the time of the flood. It may be understood as the watery equivalent to *pꜣ ḏw wꜥb*, the mountain where a god lives: both were places of divine appearance anchored in natural features. The Pure Water was marked by Seti's Nile Stela and those of three of his successors, which could not be accessed on foot and seem rather to have functioned as watchful representations of their patrons. Offerings to Hapy were cast into the river at this place, in a ritual that was established and described in the Nile Stelae. Another west-bank monument of Seti I, his Rhetorical Stela, paints the king as a provider for his subjects in the manner that Nun-Hapy provides sustenance to Egypt. Across the river on the east bank, the landscape was used primarily as a quarry, and Seti's Quarry Stela watched over the road where blocks of stone were transported to the river for his temples. The juxtaposition of the monuments and activities on the two banks at Silsila demonstrates the specificity with which cultic capital could be located in sacred landscapes.

The sacred landscapes in this dissertation were all places of divine appearance. In different ways, they were also places where the king's own presence could be felt in connection with the divine, owing to the Egyptian equation of representation with reality. Beyond this, they were all places where cosmic geography and cosmic time were brought together. The events recounted in the stelae occurred at points that protruded into the human world from the very structure of the cosmos; the medium of living rock was used to materially tie those events both physically and temporally to that structure, and to the deep time it represented.

Stelae on Expedition Routes

The next group of case studies comprised five sites where living-rock stelae were employed as components of military, political, or legal strategy on expedition routes. These were centered in the landscapes at Nauri, Konosso Island and Aswan in the area of the First Cataract, and Nahr el-Kalb and Adloun on the Lebanese coast.

The Nauri Decree Stela of Seti I has long been studied for the legal aspects of its text, which concern the protection of property and personnel being transported from Nubia to Abydos. But a close study of both the material elements of the monument and its landscape context presents a compelling case for the calculated choice of Nauri, a seemingly random point on the riverine route back to Egypt with virtually no pharaonic archaeological remains, as the location for this decree. Nauri is the site of two striking, nearly cylindrical sandstone buttes that are clearly the most conspicuous points in the surrounding region, especially when viewed from the Nile, as I demonstrated with aerial imagery and computer metrics for salience. Sailing downstream to Egypt, the Nile makes a dramatic right-hand turn north of the Third Cataract and flows west-east for about 25

kilometers. Nauri is situated at the approximate midpoint of this stretch of river, and I argued that the Nile's change in direction, coupled with the appearance of the first butte, were used as attention cues for the stela. The Nauri Decree was carved on the second (easternmost) butte, facing precisely the direction of river traffic with the goods and personnel regulated in its text. This was, however, a symbolic communication: the craftspeople who carved the stela ran out of room and covered up for their mistake by continuing the text down the side of the monument, thus retaining what appeared to be the usual stelamorphic shape from far away. The message of Seti's *auctoritas* was only meant to be received from the river, prompted by visual cues in the landscape.

Konosso Island is another example of a place carved with well-known texts, which has not been closely examined in its own right. The island—known today as *Sawaba*, 'fingers,' due to its fist-like shape when viewed from the north—is the site of numerous reliefs, graffiti, and three royal stelae of Tuthmosis IV and Amenhotep III. The texts of the royal stelae concern their patrons' campaigns against Nubia, and were therefore carved on the 'front' of the island, its southeastern face, facing their enemies. When viewed from this direction, the island as a whole took the shape of a pylon, as revealed in archival photographs. I argued that it was not only conceived as a gateway to Egypt by virtue of its location at the southern boundary of *Kmt*, but also because of its culturally meaningful (and visually prominent) natural form.

North of Konosso, a cluster of boulders lining the ancient route between Aswan and Philae also bears a group of three royal living-rock stelae. These belong to Amenhotep III and Tuthmosis II, the latter of which represents the first example of a new textual genre: the *iw.tw* report (Spalinger 1983), a simplified, 'public' announcement of

the king's justification for expeditions against his enemies and the successes they brought. Two of the monuments at Konosso also belong to this genre, and the two locations together contain three of the first four examples of *iw.tw* texts. Between these texts, the alterity of their outcrops, and their locations along major land and water routes, there appears to have been a meaningful connection between public-facing state monuments in the Eighteenth Dynasty and the medium of living rock.

At the mouth of the Nahr el-Kalb, a river that runs east-west into the Mediterranean Sea south of Byblos, two steep limestone promontories hug the riverbed, forming a natural boundary perpendicular to the coastal road. Ramesses II, vying for control of the northern Levant against the Hittites, marched past this site with his army on at least three separate occasions. On his way home in Years 4, 8, and 10, he commissioned a living-rock stela on the 'Egyptian' (southern) side of this topographic divide—even though he had the craft apparatus to make freestanding stelae, which he erected in the cities of Byblos and Tyre. The contents of the Nahr el-Kalb stelae are now lost, but their orientations hint at their relationships to Ramesses' campaigns (Loffet 2009). No battle or other significant historical event is known to have taken place at Nahr el-Kalb, and I argued that it was therefore the exceptional opportunity presented by the site's topography—that it could send a symbolic message about Egyptian hegemony to the wider Mediterranean world (Year 4), to Egypt's northern enemies (Year 8), and in the direction of the Egyptian stronghold of Byblos (Year 10)—that prompted Ramesses to commission his stelae. The landscape at Nahr el-Kalb exercised a form of agency, in that it shaped the king's intentions to carve.

At the site of Adloun, between Sidon and Tyre, we also know of no significant historical event that would have led to the creation of a stela—and yet there was one there, although it is now lost. The lessons of the Nahr el-Kalb case suggest that this monument was also made on the way back from one of Ramesses’ campaigns, and that it, too, would have had a catalyst embedded in the character of the landscape. Upon visiting Adloun, it became apparent that the site’s prehistoric caves—‘blips’ in an otherwise flat, coastal landscape—may have provided this impetus to carve on the campaign’s journey back to Egypt.

The monuments in this group of case studies, whose contents served military, political, and legal aims, were set up in locations that especially maximized the extent of their transmission. They were meant to send symbolic messages, and to be seen doing so by participants in networks of state-driven movement. In the ancient Near East, rock reliefs were often made at “geologically wondrous” places (Harmanşah 2013, 191). The patrons of the stelae at Nauri, the First Cataract, and on the Lebanese coast made calculated use of conspicuous and sometimes symbolically shaped natural features in order to draw further attention to them.

Stelae at Egypt’s Imperial Boundaries

The final group of case studies focused on three sites that were part of two interconnected monumental programs to establish and reaffirm Egypt’s new imperial boundaries: Tombos, Kurgus, and the banks of the Euphrates River. Tuthmosis I’s project was about *swšḥ t3šw* (“to widen the boundaries”), the expansion of the buffer zone around *Kmt* as a sign of Egypt’s world dominance. From the Eighteenth Dynasty onward, the paradigm of *swšḥ t3šw* shifted from simply ‘widening the boundaries of Egypt’ to

‘widening the boundaries up to the ends of the world’ (Kilani 2015). The project of his grandson, Tuthmosis III, was conducted in response to a rebellion that threatened the stability of Egyptian control in Nubia, but also to fulfill the royal aim of emulating and surpassing one’s forefathers and thus achieve a historical singularity.

Together, the five living-rock monuments of Tuthmosis I at Tombos graced the internal boundary between the zones of Egyptian territorial and hegemonic control in Upper Nubia. I contend that they were addressed jointly to the Kushite population—whose capital, Kerma, recently sacked by the king, was located 10 kilometers to the south—and to the Egyptians in their colonial settlement. Four of these monuments are pictographic, and I argued that they were meant to be read in succession from the river as one sailed downstream to Egypt—signaling their design for a Nubian audience. I argued that the Tombos Stela itself, whose text presents a challenging commentary on the imperial geography of the early Eighteenth Dynasty, reads (uncharacteristically) from left to right because it was meant to be read by those sailing south into Nubia—in other words, an Egyptian audience. All of these monuments were carved into boulders whose orientations and proximity to the river would have facilitated their use as ‘billboards’ for Egyptian colonial power.

The Tombos Stela was made on the way back from the establishment of Tuthmosis I’s southern hegemonic boundary at Kurgus between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts—specifically on the Hagr el-Merwa, a monumental white quartz outcrop that was already significant to the local population, whose petroglyphs were obliterated by the Egyptian material. When viewed from the west, this outcrop is clearly shaped like a pair of horns rising from the sand; I therefore argued that the toponym *wpt-t3*, ‘Horns of the

Earth,’ may have originated from the shape of this natural feature. The Stela of Tuthmosis I contains a magically supported threat to the local population, and makes use of animal imagery that had strong meanings for Nubian groups who would not have been able to read the text of the stela. Its creation was witnessed by the expedition participants, and the outcrop was signed by many of them as part of the performance of creating the boundary. The Hagr el-Merwa was conceived not only as a new boundary of Egypt’s empire, but—given the paradigm shift in the Eighteenth Dynasty—also as a new boundary of the cosmos (W. V. Davies 2017). When Tuthmosis III arrived at the Hagr el-Merwa, he followed suit with his own stela that mirrored, but in other ways surpassed, his grandfather’s monument. Both stelae made reference to the deep time of the universe, which should come as no surprise given their siting at a node in the very structure of the cosmos.

Both kings report establishing the northern counterparts of their southern imperial boundary stelae somewhere on the Euphrates River, which was probably in the area known as the Big Bend in modern-day Syria (Mizrachy 2012). The stelae at Kurgus were carved into the northeast face of the Hagr el-Merwa and may therefore even have faced symbolically in the direction of their partner monuments. I demonstrated that the Euphrates Stelae were almost certainly also executed in living rock—not only because they were meant to balance the monuments at Kurgus in complementary pairs, or because the Gebel Barkal Stela reports the monument of Tuthmosis III as being *m šd m ḏw*, “dug into the mountain.” Rather, I argued that we should expect these stelae to have been carved into a rock feature precisely because they were employed to establish new boundaries of the cosmos. They did not require an ‘appropriate’ architectural setting or a

military presence in order to mark and perpetuate these boundaries; living-rock stelae were powerful and persistent on their own, so much so that neither of the Tuthmosids ever returned to the boundary that he made.

The boundaries at Kurgus and on the Euphrates were points in the cosmic geography and thus the cosmic time, much like the inscribed features in the sacred landscapes of my first case study chapter. They were a different kind of boundary from Tombos (or its Middle Kingdom predecessor, Semna), which operated primarily on the human plane, much like the stelae on expedition routes. Like the earliest royal reliefs in boundary zones (Chapter 1), the stelae at Kurgus and on the Euphrates ‘worked’ without additional infrastructure because they were embedded in, and had therefore become a part of, the divinely supported and timeless natural world. The establishment of imperial boundaries in living rock was, I argued, an attempt to mimic the form of the original boundaries of *Kmt*, which were all primordial and immobile natural features—rocks and water.

Discussion

From the case studies described above, we can say the following about the circumstances under which royal living-rock stelae were employed as a monumental strategy:

- I. They were made mainly during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties.
- II. They were carved in liminal landscapes in the Egyptian world, especially at boundaries or in boundary zones.
- III. Some of the features into which they were carved were conceived as points in the cosmic geography that had been transposed onto the landscapes of the

living, including *ḏww wꜥbw*, *ḏhnwt*, the *mw wꜥb*, and new boundaries of the cosmos.

- IV. They were most often carved into features that represented or were immediately adjacent to points of alterity in the local landscape: features that were eye-catching and would have already seemed ‘monumental’ in their surroundings. To paraphrase from Bradley, these features would have *acted* like monuments, and then came to attract them over time (2000, 35).
- V. They were most often carved at points that were visible and even accessible (if not legible) to passers-by; this applies especially to the monuments on expedition routes and those in the *iw.tw* genre, which was apparently designed for public consumption.
- VI. Their texts often assert a connection to the primeval time.
- VII. Their texts were selected for transmission in this medium and relate directly to their spatial contexts or to broader networks of which they were a part. (All but the Nauri Decree are bespoke, although I believe the stela at Nauri to have been the only monumental copy of that text.)

To begin with points I and II, the New Kingdom was the period when Egypt reached its maximum geographic size by maintaining an imperial presence in both Nubia and the Levant. Therefore it should not come as a surprise that monuments made mainly on the outskirts of the Egyptian world were commissioned in greater numbers as its kings moved increasingly and more intensively into foreign territory. We may conclude that there are at least two things living rock could do for a king that a cut block of stone could not. First, living rock gave a greater impression of permanence: such monuments,

embedded in the bedrock, were associated with the “longevity of geological time,” rather than the human construction of time (Harmanşah 2013, 94). All Egyptian monuments were built to last, but it was well understood that most did not; threat formulae to ward off their desecration and literary sources that discuss their inevitable ruin speak plainly to this. An inscribed message might be erased or re-carved, but it could never be moved, and that may be what made living-rock stelae attractive as a monumental strategy—especially in the cases of the imperial boundary stelae in Chapter 6, whose patrons never felt the need to return to their locations, nor to reinforce them with an architectural feature or military presence. The second benefit of living rock was that it allowed the monument to form a real physical connection with the particular location where it was sited. From at least the First Dynasty, Egypt’s kings were already carving cartouches into the rocks in frontier zones as a way of “annexing” those areas to Egypt (Brown 2015); directly inscribing the bedrock, the very foundation of a place, with the words and images of the king would have clearly marked both his intentions and his *presence* onto that exact location.

Both of these benefits have repercussions for imperial boundary stelae in particular. As I noted above, the original edges of the Egyptian world—the boundaries of *Kmt*—were all monumental and immobile natural features. By inscribing their Kurgus and Euphrates stelae onto a similar set of conspicuous fixed points in the landscape, Egypt’s kings could demonstrate that their new boundaries were likewise part of the divinely inspired, predestined structure of the cosmos. It was as if the natural world itself supported the extension of their empire (Thum 2016, 71–72). In light of this and my discussion in Chapter 6, I even wonder if we might view the mudbrick walls of the

Second Cataract fortresses, into which ‘freestanding’ boundary stelae were pressed, as alternatives to the ideal ‘walls’ of living rock that would have mimicked the long-standing boundaries of *Kmt*. After all, the rocky boundaries of Akhetaten do seem to have served as a replacement for city walls.

The connotations of place and permanence inherent in the medium of living rock also have consequences for the cultivation of social memory around the stelae. At Amarna, the living-rock boundary markers designated Akhetaten as a taboo space for the remainder of the pharaonic period: they were physically engrained in the landscape and soon came to be viewed as inseparable from it, conveniently outlining a space that was anathema to traditional forms of Egyptian religion. Most of the sites of living-rock stelae contain clusters of monuments, a fact that testifies to the layering of collective memories in a single space (especially in generational clusters of stelae, as at Konosso and Gebel Silsila). At Nahr el-Kalb, the memories embedded in the promontory extended well beyond the Egyptian consciousness to more than a dozen additional patrons, who recognized the strategy Ramesses II had employed and capitalized on it. More than three millennia later, modern tourists play their own part in remembering the events the Nahr el-Kalb reliefs memorialize. The Hagr el-Merwa is the only outcrop that bears evidence of an attempt to disrupt the connection between permanence and place, in the form of petroglyphs carved on top of the Egyptian material (Chapter 6). But it is also the only outcrop, so far as we know, where the Egyptian material itself served to divorce a place from its previous social memories.

As to the spatial and temporal distributions of the stelae in points I and II above, I have already noted that both are shared in common with rock-cut temples. But did they

also share a function? Perhaps not coincidentally, the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties comprise the period when the dogma of the divinity of the reigning king was flourishing, although the connection between the king and the divine through the medium of living rock is already apparent in the early examples in the Wadi Hammamat, the “divine nest of Horus.” The examples of stelae carved into *ḏww wꜥbw* and *ḏhnwt* do suggest that the façades of outcrops inscribed with royal messages could operate in much the same manner as those that were hewn to form rock-cut temples: that is, as interfaces between this world and the other world (Gundlach 2001). Like temples, many of the outcrops where stelae were carved were seen as places where cosmic geography and cosmic time were explicitly brought together. It is tempting to imagine a living-rock stela as a sort of ‘portal’ into the outcrop—and thus into the other world—which is in fact how they appear (recall the first image in this dissertation, Figure 1.1; it evokes false doors and the access they provided to the deceased). Those with a shrine shape in particular create the impression of a larger architectural framework for their contents, but one that has been left ‘unfinished’ around the stela in comparison to the entrance of a rock-cut temple. In fact, in all of the case studies in this dissertation the outcrop was never edited beyond the frame of the stela; the stela shape is always simply stamped onto the rock, without any attempt at playing with the feature’s curves or its overall shape (‘geoaesthetics’⁴⁶³). To me this makes it seem as though the bare rock around the monument had been transformed into an extension of it, as if the king had turned the entire outcrop into a stela.

⁴⁶³ I thank Laurel Bestock for bringing the concept of geoaesthetics, which is currently being explored by the art historian Jeffrey Moser, to my attention.

As to points III, IV, and V above, I am first reminded of the watery membrane at Gebel Silsila through which the Duat was at risk of becoming exposed (Chapter 4). Silsila was a point in the sacred geography of the cosmos that had been transposed onto the observable geography of the living: the narrowest part of the Nile was identified as a source of the river, and thus as a juncture with the Duat. This is surely how it became the *mw wꜥb*. What is striking about this example is the idea that parts of the cosmic geography can ‘break through’ or ‘stick out’ into the world of the living at designated points—because this seems to be precisely what many of the above living-rock features are doing, especially those in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 3 I wrote that while the stelae ushered the events they commemorated into the *ḏt* time, they also simultaneously ushered a piece of the primordial bedrock into the world, and the time, of human experience. I suggest that, like the *bꜣhw* and *mꜣnw*, those pieces of bedrock were conceived as points from the underlying structure of the universe that had projected into the world of the living. They could therefore easily serve as interfaces through which the otherworldly could be accessed—as in rock-cut temples—or as divinely supported foundations for the symbolic communication of messages for the living. In either case, the features were activated or mobilized through inscription; in some examples, the stelae function as ‘stone speech acts’ that not only serve to commemorate an event, but also to *enact* it going forward (e.g. at Kurgus and Amarna).

In every case, the outcrops chosen as supports for living-rock stelae were already visually prominent in their local landscapes; more often than not they were the most conspicuous features they contained. If we consider the ‘pre-lives’ of the stelae (Thum and Salmas 2019), we may say that their outcrops were already *acting* like monuments

before they were ever carved (Bradley 2000, 35). Their alterity lent them a form of agency, such that they seemed to beckon for a monument. But if we view them as protrusions from the structure of the cosmos, they become doubly significant: not just salient features in the landscapes of the living that could serve as convenient billboards for the king, but also divinely ordained supports for the most concentrated ‘accretions to the creation’ (Vernus 2017).

Points VI and VII center on the texts of these stelae, and while I have already addressed the many instances of language relating to time in these monuments, it is again important to note that any spatial references within the texts of *in-situ* monuments should be read with an eye to potential links to geographical reality. When the stela texts are read in consultation with their material aspects, there is a clear connection between their contents and contexts. In some cases these messages were crafted specifically for the rock features into which they were inscribed (e.g. the landscapes in Chapters 4 and 6); in others it seems the message was conceived first, and the location then chosen to suit it based on the opportunities the outcrop provided for visual impact and transmission (e.g. at Nauri and in the *iw.tw* reports). Carving a message into living rock was viewed as a way of canonizing it, of subverting the tendency for monuments to eventually deteriorate. Recall “Ozymandias” (Chapter 5): that these monuments still survive in their original locations after thousands of years is a testament to the accuracy of that belief.

Jan Assmann writes that the Egyptians undertook a “stubborn quest for permanence” (Paul Éluard’s “le dur desir de durer”), a desire for eternity which they attempted to fulfil through the “sheer persistence and massiveness” of monumental works. Through their monumental culture, “the Egyptians created, alongside the

everyday, a world of stone in which impermanent existence was made permanent” (Assmann 1994, 26). Living rock was no ordinary stone, however. As I have demonstrated, it carried a sense of timelessness and fortitude that went well beyond the abilities of its cut counterpart. The above case studies and discussion show that it was intrinsically linked to the concretized time and framework of the universe. Even in the cases where the monument served a ‘practical’ purpose, the sheer mass and wonder of the rock feature meant that the medium was (an essential part of) the message.

Future Directions

Ömür Harmanşah writes that although studying living-rock monuments shifts the focus of archaeological inquiry away from ‘normal’ sites (temples and tombs in Egyptology, for example), it can also lead to the perception of rock reliefs as “marginal or epiphenomenal” (2014c, 3). Although Egyptian royal stelae were rarely made in living rock, the monuments analyzed here constitute some of the most historically significant messages commissioned by the royal establishment. We should not forget this; the use of living rock in royal projects may come to affect the way we understand Egyptian monumental programs overall. These monuments may have been located in the peripheries of Egypt, but their positions were strategic: they were chosen by a royal establishment that theoretically had unlimited options in its monumental repertoire, and one that both reflected and reaffirmed broader cultural understandings of what living rock symbolized and what it could do as a medium. As Claudia Glatz and Aimee Plourde said of Hittite landscape monuments (2011; Chapter 2), the fact that some state-sponsored reliefs were carved where few people would ever see them was *by design*. It

demonstrated that the ‘cost’ of commissioning those works was worth it, and in the Egyptian case, it showed that the king controlled the universe and was destined to do so.

On completing this study, the sheer number of parallels between the Egyptian stelae and their counterparts in the ancient Near East is striking. Hittite rock reliefs had a ritual aspect, but they were also used to negotiate territorial control in their borderlands (Glatz 2009; Glatz and Plourde 2011), or as waypoints for military expeditions in those areas (L. Z. Ullmann 2010). The outcrops into which they were carved were, like those in the Egyptian examples, sites of alterity (L. Z. Ullmann 2014, 120–21). Assyrian rock reliefs, too, had both ritual and political dimensions (Shafer 2007). They were also made at the edges of their empire, in “symbolically charged and politically contested places” (Harmanşah 2013, 98): these were the sites of sacred rocks, water sources, caves, and sinkholes, which were believed to be connected to the underworld (Harmanşah 2014a, 152, 158). Carving a living-rock relief allowed Assyrian rulers to ‘publicly’ present their power as duly embedded in the very structure of the world (Feldman 2004; Kreppner 2002), much as it seems to have done for the rulers of Egypt. Neo-Babylonian royal rock reliefs were made during the course of military campaigns and cluster in “symbolically charged or ritually laden landscapes of peripheral geographies” (Da Riva 2015, 603). And Persian reliefs served their patrons by “manipulating” the experience of time and memory for those who saw them (Canepa 2010); they forged links with previous rulers and sacred, prominent natural features that possessed an “intrinsic holiness” (Canepa 2014, 63). This dissertation presents an opportunity for Egyptian royal living-rock stelae to join the suite of state-sponsored living-rock monuments from the ancient Near East, and the data and analysis presented here may now be used as comparanda for Near Eastern

studies, just as that material served as comparanda here. There is a great deal of room for interdisciplinary discussions to include the Egyptian material from this dissertation, and to usher Egypt's royal living-rock stelae into broader dialogues in rock relief studies.

There are several additional possibilities for an extension of this research going forward. One is the potential for future use of the above theoretical framework for *an archaeology of inscribed natural places* and the holistic combination of methods used to implement it. As I noted in Chapter 1, this dissertation builds on several related studies in Egyptology that had dealt in some way with texts in spatial contexts or with the acknowledgment of rock reliefs as a distinct monumental category. The theory and methods presented here can be used to study other *in-situ* Egyptological material, such as relief cartouches, and may also be employed by scholars working with rock reliefs from other cultures. It is the sort of framework that can be implemented rather easily by students working on their own, so long as they are able to visit the places where their material is located, as the methods are non-invasive and most are low-cost.

Beyond this, there are future directions for the individual case studies analyzed here. This dissertation has reevaluated some texts that Egyptologists might describe as 'old favorites': those that are well known to the Egyptological community, but which had not been studied much (or at all) beyond their contents. Revisiting the texts of these stelae in context, foregrounding the landscape, has led to some exciting discoveries that require further research. New archaeological work in the area around Nauri is imminent thanks to a team at the Egypt Exploration Society, and that little-published landscape in particular would make an excellent test case for future methodologies, including the creation of salience maps using *series* of stills from drone videos, rather than single images (this is

already being discussed at CAST). Ideally, at Nauri and elsewhere, this project will continue with further visits and additional digital recording—and, in the cases where isovist models failed due to low-resolution DEMs, with higher-resolution data. There are also many more archival photographs to take into consideration for almost every case study in this dissertation.

Related to this is the examination and documentation of some little-known inscribed landscapes. Some of the stelae in this study are located in places that are known to many Egyptologists by name only (e.g. Konosso and Nauri), and others that are barely known as sites of Egyptian material culture at all (e.g. Adloun and, for some of the Egyptological community, Nahr el-Kalb). New documentation of their locations can offer students and scholars who might not visit them in person a sense of what they look like through photography, videography, and digital models. Furthermore, owing to the patterns in the data presented here (especially concerning salience and visual alterity), it may also be possible to predict the locations of other royal living-rock stelae in the Egyptian world. Advances in predictive digital modeling may be able to suggest the locations of lost stelae whose existence is known (see my discussion on the possible locations of the Euphrates Stelae in Chapter 6), or areas where other, unknown stelae are likely to have clustered. Such modeling has already been implemented for Ashokan edicts carved in stone (M. L. Smith et al. 2016).

Finally, although gathering digital data was a major component of this project at its inception, those data will have more use going forward than they did in my analysis of the above case studies. Simply being in the landscape shaped the bulk of my ideas; the digital work I was able to complete did not change my conclusions—it reinforced them.

Most people will never visit the monuments in this study, but there is much that can be learned from the documentation generated for this project. Digital interfaces for my data, such as ArcGIS StoryMaps, photographs, videos, and photogrammetry models (housed in the Brown Digital Repository), will offer the chance for anyone to explore these remarkable examples of Egyptian material culture—and to do so ‘in’ the places where they were carved. Interactive digital tools allow students and the public to actively engage with archaeological material on their own terms, and to come to their own conclusions, thereby making the past not only physically accessible, but intellectually accessible as well.

Onward

This dissertation makes clear that is important for scholars to visit the sites of *in-situ* texts themselves whenever possible, or at least to consider context and materiality as important dimensions of their inception and reception. Like the Chinese *moya* inscriptions that directly reference their surroundings (Chapter 2), the messages of Egyptian living-rock stelae share close relationships with the landscapes into which they were carved—that is, as I have argued, precisely why each of them was made in living rock, and made at their chosen location. Context is a crucial component for the reader of any ancient text or image program: we are frequently misled by photographs and transcriptions of monuments, which isolate their subjects as if in a frame. So, too, with some of the early drawings of rock reliefs from the ancient Near East, which present them in an “Orientalist romanticized manner,” highlighted in the very center of a picture, although in the ancient world they would have been experienced as part of an expansive

place (L. Z. Ullmann 2014, 102). Living-rock monuments, in fact *any* monument, cannot be studied effectively in isolation (Bradley 2000, 41).

The case studies in this dissertation were not intended to prove, or even to suggest, that there was a single function or motive behind the creation of all of Egypt's royal living-rock stelae. Rather, my goal was to explore how and why the landscape *could* be used as a medium for such works, however many ways that turned out to be. It was an exercise in considering the use living rock in a culture otherwise known for its monumental architecture—but also a place where the natural world was divine and animate, and the un-built world was the hallowed landscape of the First Time. This may seem a different view of the world from our own, but it is important to recognize the connections that speak to the human condition. People have a tendency to leave markings of their presence and their memories on the material world. We *all* create intersections between text and space; most of us have carved our initials into tree bark, written our names in the sand, or breathed on a cold window to draw shapes in the condensation. The study of rock reliefs is one forum for exploring how interactions between people and their surroundings turn 'spaces' into 'places' and embed those places with meaning. For millennia before and after the Egyptians we have inscribed words and images into rock outcrops as a way of socializing landscapes: claiming territories, commemorating events, and asserting that "I was here."

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Appendix 1: Sites visited on fieldwork or otherwise relevant to this dissertation



EGY-AMR - Amarna: Case study (Chapter 4); Visited; Photos, videos, some photogrammetry

Ancient city of Akhetaten, whose 16+ boundary stelae were carved into the surrounding cliffs and escarpment on both sides of the Nile as part of the city's founding by Akhenaten.

EGY-ASW - Aswan: Case study (Chapter 5); Visited; Photos

Three stelae of Tuthmosis II and Amenhotep III on a cluster of boulders that was once alongside a major ancient road.

EGY-ASQ – Aswan Quarry:

Two stelae of Seti I in one of the granite quarries on the east bank of the Nile at Aswan.

EGY-BAB - El Babein: Visited; Photos, some photogrammetry

Quarry relief of Ramesses III. Same king and purpose as EGY-KHZ and EGY-TIH.

EGY-BER - Deir el-Bersha: Visited; Photos, photogrammetry

Quarry stela of Amenhotep III. Same king and purpose as EGY-TUR.

EGY-DEM - Deir el-Medina: Visited; Photos, photogrammetry

A series of Ramesside rock-cut chapels near the sacred Theban mountain, thought to be inhabited by and/or personified as the goddess Khefethernebes.

EGY-ELE - Temple of Satet at Elephantine: Visited; Photos

One of the earliest rock-cut temples in Egypt.

EGY-GSL - Gebel Silsila: Case study (Chapter 4); Visited; Photos (photogrammetry models done by the Gebel Silsila team are available online)

Numerous living-rock stelae and related monuments on both sides of the Nile at the river's narrowest point, also one of the mythical sources of the Nile.

EGY-HAM - Wadi Hammamat: Case study (Chapter 4); Visited; Photos, videos, photogrammetry

Quarry site for sacred *bekhen* stone. Dozens of royal and non-royal inscriptions, including four of Mentuhotep IV, which discuss the relationship between the quarry and miracles.

EGY-HUM - Wadi el-Humur:

First Dynasty reliefs, now destroyed.

EGY-KHZ - Khazindariya: Visited; Photos

Quarry relief of Ramesses III. Same king and purpose as EGY-BAB and EGY-TIH.

EGY-KON - Konosso Island: Case study (Chapter 5); Visited; Photos, videos

Three royal stelae of Tuthmosis IV and Amenhotep III, carved into an island at the southern boundary of *Kmt*, which comprises two rock peaks that naturally form the shape of a pylon.

EGY-MAG - Wadi Maghara:

Numerous Old Kingdom reliefs in a quarry context.

EGY-SEH - Sehel Island: Visited; Photos

A stopping-point at the First Cataract for many travelers between Egypt and Nubia. A chapel for one of the Cataract goddesses is located on the island. There are hundreds of non-royal inscriptions and several of the inscriptions here refer to the clearing of a channel so that boats could pass through into Egypt.

EGY-TIH - Tihna el-Gebel:

Quarry relief of Ramesses III. Same king and purpose as EGY-KHZ and EGY-BAB.

EGY-TUR - Tura:

Two quarry stelae of Amenhotep III. Same king and purpose as EGY-BER.

LEB-ADL - Adloun: Case study (Chapter 5); Visited (stela not found); Photos of the area

Now-lost stela of Ramesses II on the Lebanese coast, probably made on the way back to Egypt from a campaign farther north. Same king and purpose as LEB-NEK.

LEB-NEK - Nahr el-Kalb: Case study (Chapter 5); Visited; Photos, videos, photogrammetry, drone imagery, RTI, laser scans by Factum Arte

Three stelae of Ramesses II, facing out at the Mediterranean from a high limestone promontory on the coastal road, made on the way back from a campaign farther north. Same king and purpose as LEB-ADL. Nineteen stelae of post-pharaonic rulers were made at this site following the Egyptian stelae.

SAU-TAB – Tabuk Wadi: Visited; Photos, photogrammetry

Cartouches of Ramesses III in a wadi in Saudi Arabia, likely on an incense route. Similar cartouches exist in the Sinai.

SUD-BEL - Gebel Belal: Supplement to a case study (Chapter 6)

One stela, possibly of Tuthmosis I, on a small hill close to SUD-GEB.

SUD-GEB - Gebel Barkal: Supplement to a case study (Chapter 6); Visited; Photos, videos, photogrammetry, drone imagery

Major cult site centered on a small mountain. One eroded stela, possibly of Tuthmosis I, on the east side of the mountain (the case study), and a relief of another king at the very top of the mountain's rock pinnacle. The pinnacle looks variously like a serpent, one of the Egyptian gods, and/or the White Crown.

SUD-GSS - Gebel Sheikh Suleiman: Visited (monument not *in situ*); Photos

Early relief of a naval battle, removed from its original location due to flooding from the Aswan High Dam.

SUD-HEM - Hagr el-Merwa: Case study (Chapter 6); Visited; Photos, videos, photogrammetry

Two imperial boundary stelae of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III, beside each other on a white quartz outcrop that is naturally shaped like a pair of horns. Once paired with those at SYR-EUP.

SUD-NAU - Nauri: Case study (Chapter 5); Visited; Photos, videos, photogrammetry, drone imagery

Stela of Seti I with a legal text regarding the transport of goods from Nubia to the temple of Osiris at Abydos. It is carved into one of a pair of prominent sandstone hills on the Nile's edge.

SUD-TOM - Tombos: Case study (Chapter 6); Visited; Photos, videos, photogrammetry, drone imagery

Five royal reliefs from the same program of Tuthmosis I, which discuss Egypt's recent domination of Nubia. All face the river and are very close to the water on its east bank. Tombos served as a territorial boundary between Egypt and Nubia.

SYR-EUP - Euphrates: Case study (Chapter 6)

Two now-lost stelae of Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III at Egypt's northern imperial boundary. Once paired with those at SUD-HEM.

Appendix 2: Royal Living-Rock Stelae⁴⁶⁴

EGY-AMR 1 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela L

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 11, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Roughly square
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series, especially EGY-AMR 2-4
Description	Served as either a preliminary boundary marker or to commemorate one of the king's visits to the southeastern area of the city.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



⁴⁶⁴ Note that, for the sake of brevity and ease of use, in this appendix I have used photographs of the stelae that necessarily isolate them from their surroundings. For visualizations of their contexts, consult the relevant case study chapter or the supplementary data deposited in the Brown Digital Repository.

EGY-AMR 2 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela K

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 11, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	-
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series, especially EGY-AMR 1, 3-4
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Earlier Proclamation. Defined as a <i>dhnt</i> on the city's southern end.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 3 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela M

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 11, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series, especially EGY-AMR 1-2, 4
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Earlier Proclamation. Defined as a <i>dhnt</i> on the city's southern end.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 4 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela X

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 4, 2017
Subsequent Visits	April 11, 2018
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series, especially EGY-AMR 1-3
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Earlier Proclamation. Defined as a <i>dhnt</i> on the city's northern end.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 5 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela J

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 11, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 6 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela N

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 11, 2018 (not up close)
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 7 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela P

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.

EGY-AMR 8 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela O

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.

EGY-AMR 9 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela R

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 3, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 10 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela H

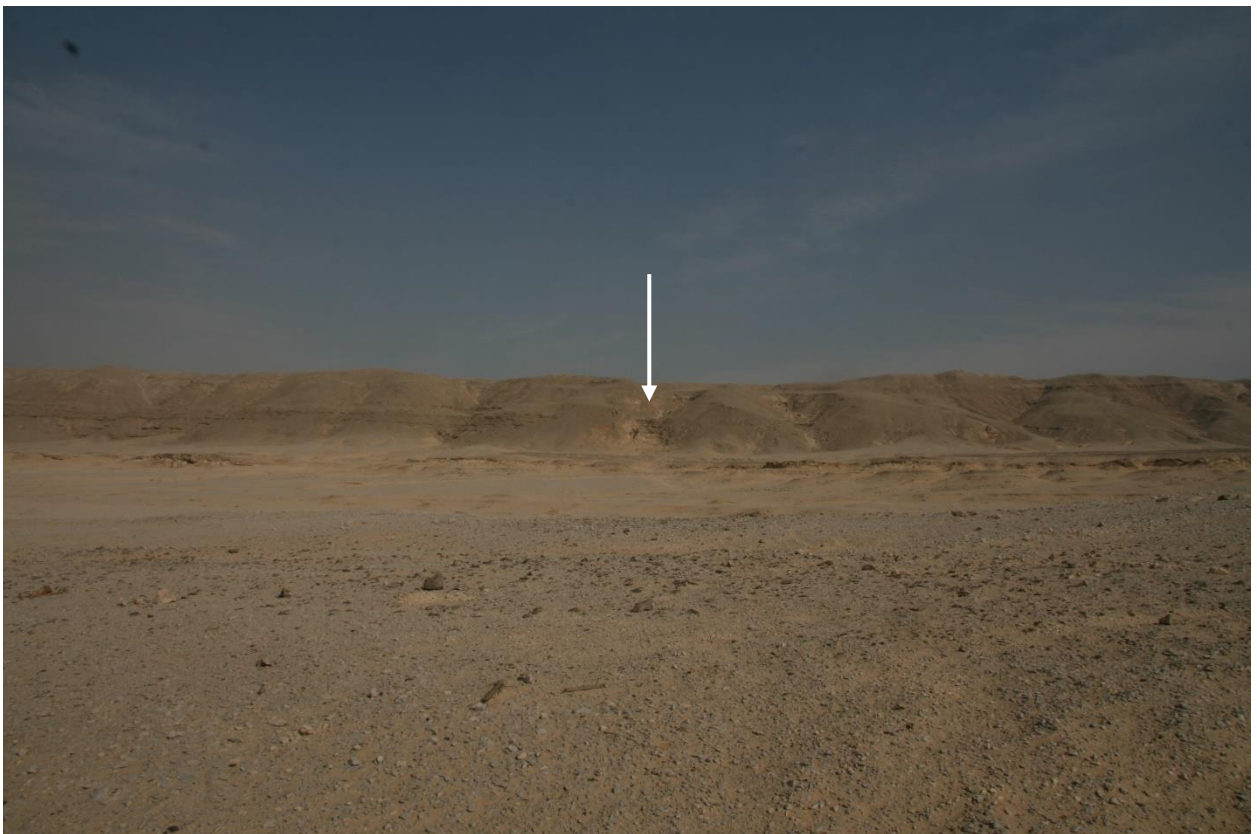
King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 3, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped (presumably)
Figures	No longer visible
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, now eroded, but which probably bore the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 11 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela S

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 3, 2017 (not up close)
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 12 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela U

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 4, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 13 – Amarna, East Bank

Stela V

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the cliffs that border the city on the east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.

EGY-AMR 14 – Amarna, West Bank

Stela F

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the escarpment that borders the city on the west
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.

EGY-AMR 15 – Amarna, West Bank

Stela B

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 5, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the escarpment that borders the city on the west
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-AMR 16 – Amarna, West Bank

Stela A

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 5, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Royal family, Aten
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Face of the escarpment that borders the city on the west
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-AMR series
Description	Boundary stela for the city of Akhetaten, containing the Later Proclamation.
Principal Bibliography	Murnane and Van Siclen 1993.



EGY-ASW 1 – Aswan

Aswan Group Stela of Tuthmosis II

King	Tuthmosis II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 28, 2017
Subsequent Visits	February 20, 2018
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Tuthmosis II, Amun, Cataract Triad
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Cluster of boulders east of the ancient road that ran between Aswan and Philae
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-ASW 2-3
Description	The first monument of the <i>iw.tw</i> genre, describing actions against Nubian enemies.
Principal Bibliography	Lorton 1990; Gabolde 2003; Spalinger 1983.

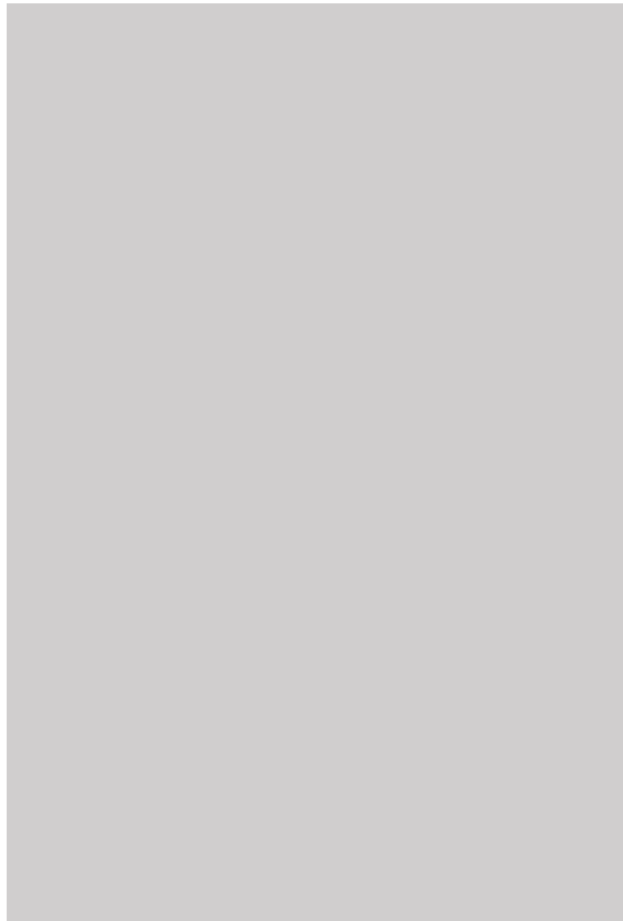


Photo by Linda Borrmann.

EGY-ASW 2 – Aswan

Northern Stela of Amenhotep III

King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 28, 2017
Subsequent Visits	February 20, 2018
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Amenhotep III smiting enemies, Amun-Re, Khnum, Ptah
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Cluster of boulders east of the ancient road that ran between Aswan and Philae
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-ASW 1, 3; EGY-KON 3
Description	<i>iw.tw</i> report, describing actions against Nubian enemies.
Principal Bibliography	Klug 2002; Borrmann 2014; Spalinger 1983.

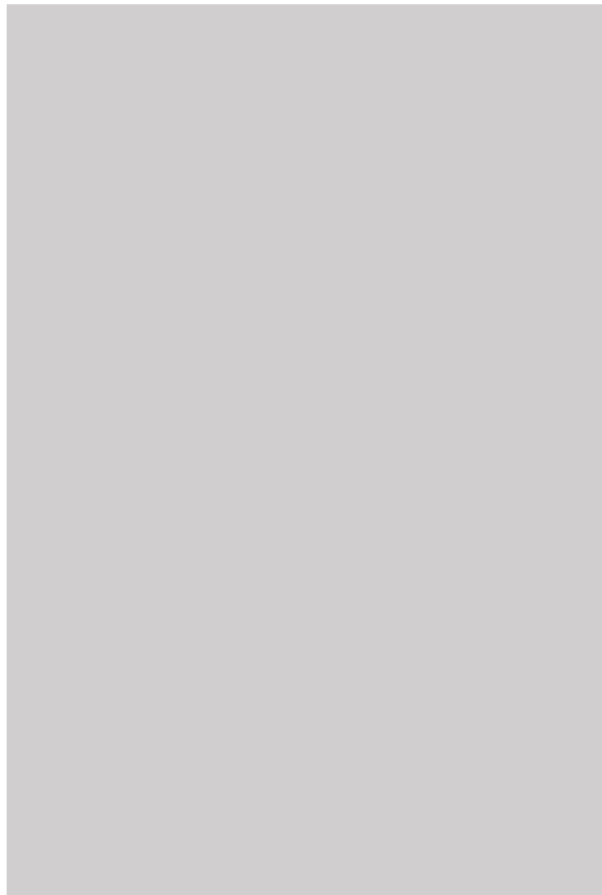


Photo by Linda Borrmann.

EGY-ASW 3 – Aswan

Southern Stela of Amenhotep III

King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 28, 2017
Subsequent Visits	February 20, 2018
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Amenhotep III smiting enemies, Amun-Re, Anukis
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Cluster of boulders east of the ancient road that ran between Aswan and Philae
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-ASW 1-2; EGY-KON 3
Description	Speech of Amun.
Principal Bibliography	Klug 2002; Borrmann 2014.

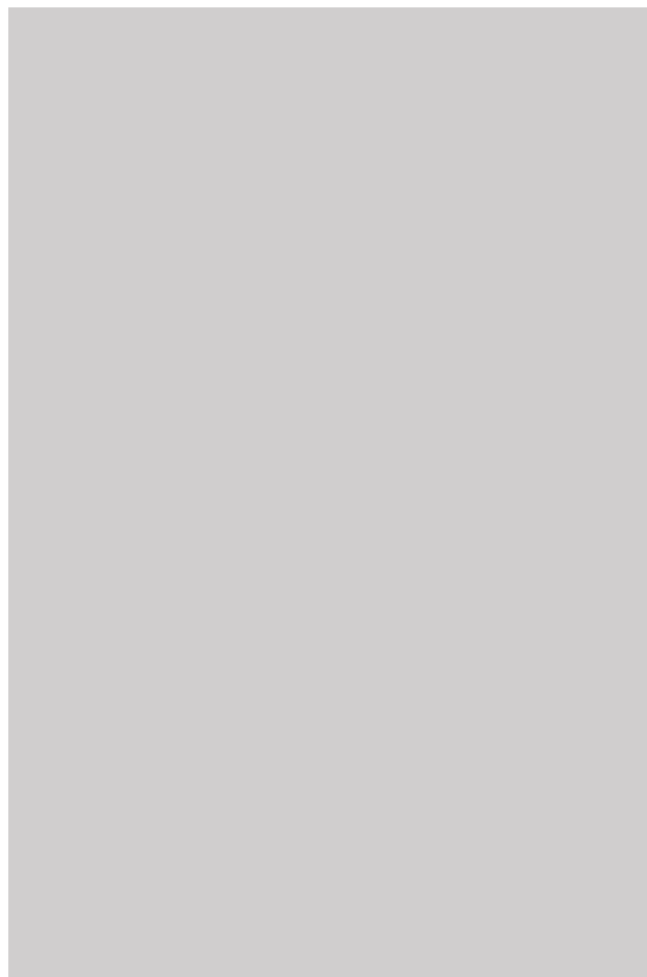


Photo by Linda Borrmann.

EGY-ASQ 1 – Aswan Quarry

Smaller Aswan Stela of Seti I

King	Seti I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Seti I, Amun-Re
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Cliffs ca. 150 meters west of the Unfinished Obelisk
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-ASQ 2
Description	Discovery (by the king himself) and inauguration of the quarry, for the purpose of making royal statues of black granite.
Principal Bibliography	Habachi 1973.

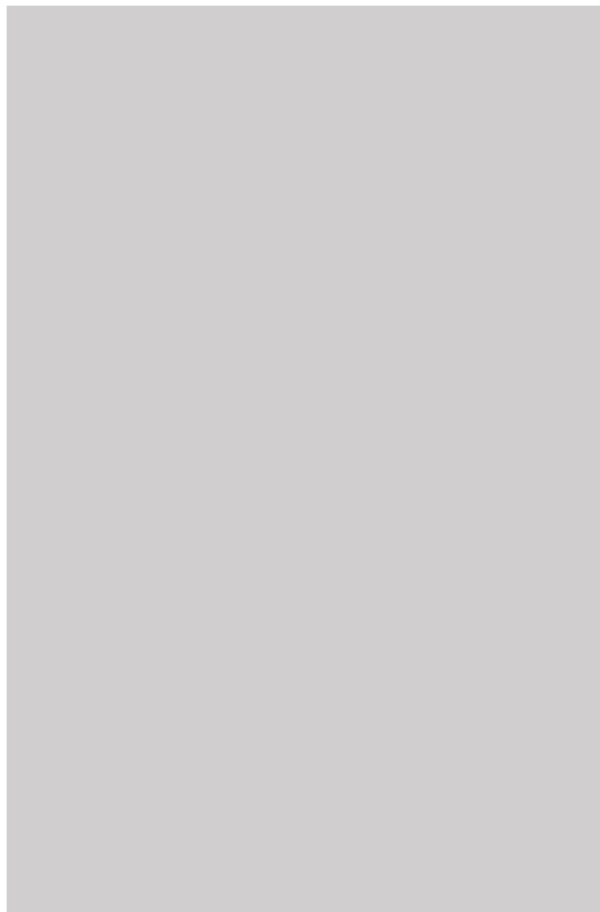


Photo from Habachi 1973.

EGY-ASQ 2 – Aswan Quarry

Smaller Aswan Stela of Seti I

King	Seti I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Seti I, Cataract Triad
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Boulder ca. 100 meters east of the Unfinished Obelisk
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-ASQ 1
Description	Records the king's charge to his workmen to make great obelisks and statues.
Principal Bibliography	Habachi 1973.

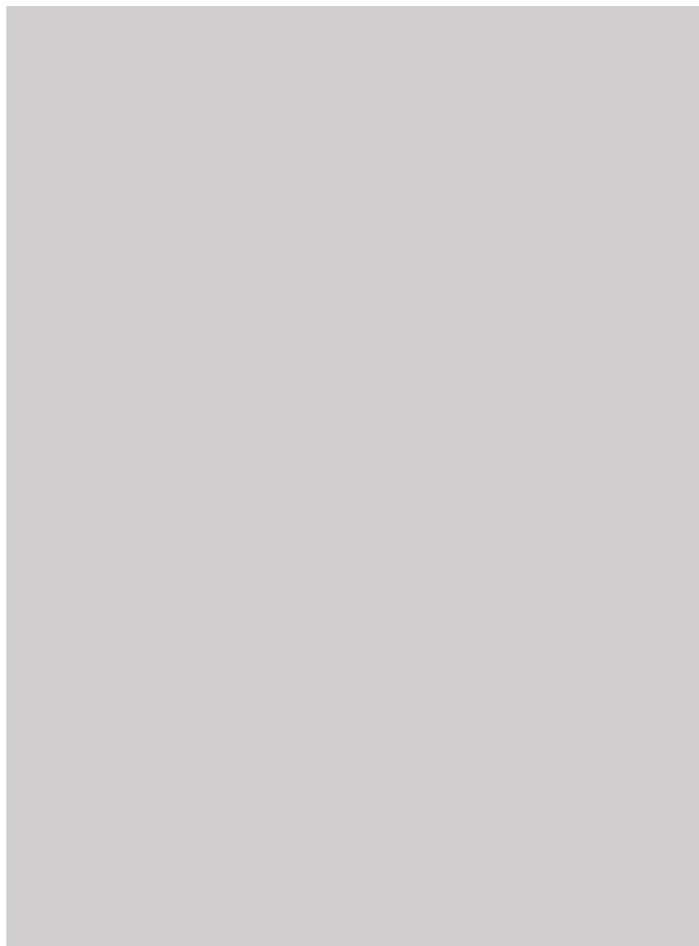


Photo from Habachi 1973.

EGY-BER 1 – Deir el-Bersha

Quarry Stela of Amenhotep III

King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 10, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Amenhotep III, two unidentifiable gods
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Cliff at the entrance to the quarry
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Quarry inauguration.
Principal Bibliography	Klug 2002, Beylage 2002.



EGY-GSL 1 – Gebel el-Silsila, East Bank

Royal Eulogy Stela of Amenhotep III

King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 24, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Amenhotep III, Amun-Re (double scene)
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face immediately west of the quarry of Amenhotep III, facing west
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Eulogy of the king, with emphasis on his position as the son of Re.
Principal Bibliography	Klug 2002, Beylage 2002.

EGY-GSL 2 – Gebel el-Silsila, East Bank

Quarry Stela of Amenhotep IV

King	Amenhotep IV
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 24, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped in rectangular frame
Figures	Amenhotep IV, Amun
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	North of the east bank quarries, facing exactly 0° north
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Report on the quarrying of stone for an obelisk at Karnak.
Principal Bibliography	Bommas 2003; Legrain 1902.

EGY-GSL 3 – Gebel el-Silsila, East Bank

Quarry Stela of Akhenaten

King	Akhenaten
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 24, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Square
Figures	Sun disk, ?
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Entrance to the gallery quarries, facing west
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Erased.
Principal Bibliography	-



EGY-GSL 4 – Gebel el-Silsila, East Bank

Quarry Stela of Seti I

King	Seti I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 24, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Seti I, Amun-Re, Ptah, unidentifiable goddess
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face along the road from the Ramesside quarry to the river, facing south
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Recounts a 1000-man quarrying expedition to Silsila for monuments at Thebes and Abydos.
Principal Bibliography	Davies 1997; <i>KRI</i> .

EGY-GSL 5 – Gebel el-Silsila, East Bank

Quarry Stela of Ramesses II

King	Ramesses II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 24, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped in rectangular frame
Figures	Ramesses II, Theban Triad, Nut, Sobek?
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Now-fallen remnant of a rock face southwest of the Eighteenth Dynasty and Ramesside quarries, facing east
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Command to quarry stone for the Ramesseum.
Principal Bibliography	Martinez 2009.

EGY-GSL 6 – Gebel el-Silsila, East Bank

Stela of an unidentified king

King	?
Period	Third Intermediate Period?
Dynasty	?
Date First Visited	Not visited
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	King, Amun-Re, Thoth
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face south of Eighteenth Dynasty quarries, facing west
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Offering scene.
Principal Bibliography	Gebel el Silsila Project blog, 13 January 2015.

EGY-GSL 7 – Gebel el-Silsila, West Bank

Rhetorical Stela of Seti I

King	Seti I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 25, 2017
Subsequent Visits	January 26, 2017
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Lost
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face south of the Nile Stelae, facing east
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Eulogy of the king.
Principal Bibliography	Brand 2000; KRI.



EGY-GSL 8 – Gebel el-Silsila, West Bank

Nile Stela of Seti I

King	Seti I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 23, 2017
Subsequent Visits	January 25, 2017
Shape	Rectangular (or round-topped in rectangular frame?) with portico
Figures	Lost (probably Seti I, Theban Triad, Re-Horakhty, Ptah, and Hapy in a double scene; Hapy, Ennead, Taweret, and Amun-Re-Kamutef in the side panels)
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face at the narrowest point of the Nile, facing east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-GSL 9-11
Description	Invocation to Nun-Hapy and establishment of festivals and oblations for him, with offering list.
Principal Bibliography	Brand 2000; <i>KRI</i> .



EGY-GSL 9 – Gebel el-Silsila, West Bank

Nile Stela of Ramesses II

King	Ramesses II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 23, 2017
Subsequent Visits	January 25, 2017
Shape	Round-topped in rectangular frame with portico
Figures	Ramesses II, Theban Triad, Re-Horakhty, Ptah, Hapy (double scene); Hapy, Ennead, Taweret, and Amun-Re-Kamutef (side panels)
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face at the narrowest point of the Nile, facing east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-GSL 8, 10-11
Description	Invocation to Nun-Hapy and establishment of festivals and oblations for him, with offering list.
Principal Bibliography	<i>KRI</i> .



EGY-GSL 10 – Gebel el-Silsila, West Bank

Nile Stela of Merenptah

King	Merenptah
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 23, 2017
Subsequent Visits	January 25, 2017
Shape	Round-topped in rectangular frame with portico
Figures	Merenptah, Theban Triad, Re-Horakhty, Ptah, Hapy (double scene); Hapy, Ennead, Taweret, and Amun-Re-Kamutef (side panels)
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face at the narrowest point of the Nile, facing east
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-GSL 8-9, 11
Description	Invocation to Nun-Hapy and establishment of festivals and oblations for him, with offering list.
Principal Bibliography	<i>KRI</i> .



EGY-GSL 11 – Gebel el-Silsila, West Bank

Nile Stela of Ramesses III

King	Ramesses III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	20 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 23, 2017
Subsequent Visits	January 25, 2017
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Ramesses III, Hapy, Re-Horakhty, Amun
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face at the narrowest point of the Nile, facing south in front of the likely remains of a Nile Stela of the same king in the style of EGY-GSL 8-10
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-GSL 8-10
Description	Invocation to Nun-Hapy and establishment of festivals and oblations for him.
Principal Bibliography	<i>KRI</i> .



EGY-GSL 12 – Gebel el-Silsila, West Bank

Royal Eulogy Stela of Ramesses V

King	Ramesses V
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	20 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 23, 2017
Subsequent Visits	January 26, 2017
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Ramesses V, Theban Triad, Sobek-Re
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Remnant of a rock face south of the Speos of Horemheb, facing east
Associated Inscriptions	Immediately to the left, a relief scene of Ramesses III and a private stela from the reign of Shoshenq I
Description	Eulogy of the king.
Principal Bibliography	Peden 1991.



EGY-HAM 1 – Wadi Hammamat

Official Record Stela

King	Mentuhotep IV
Period	Middle Kingdom
Dynasty	11 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 14, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	‘Papyrus shape’
Figures	-
Stone Type	Greywacke
Outcrop Description	South wall of a narrow section of the wadi, opposite the quarried area
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-HAM 2-3
Description	Records the expedition’s purpose, to procure stone for the royal sarcophagus.
Principal Bibliography	Couyat and Montet 1912; Goyon 1957; Gundlach 1980.



EGY-HAM 2 – Wadi Hammamat

First Wonder Stela

King	Mentuhotep IV
Period	Middle Kingdom
Dynasty	11 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 14, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	‘Papyrus shape’
Figures	Mentuhotep IV, Min
Stone Type	Greywacke
Outcrop Description	South wall of a narrow section of the wadi, opposite the quarried area
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-HAM 1, 3
Description	A miracle occurred, wherein a gazelle gave birth on the stone that was destined for the lid of the royal sarcophagus.
Principal Bibliography	Couyat and Montet 1912; Goyon 1957; Gundlach 1980.



EGY-HAM 3 – Wadi Hammamat

Second Wonder Stela

King	Mentuhotep IV
Period	Middle Kingdom
Dynasty	11 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 14, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	‘Papyrus shape’
Figures	-
Stone Type	Greywacke
Outcrop Description	South wall of a narrow section of the wadi, opposite the quarried area
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-HAM 1-2
Description	A second miracle occurred, in the form of a deluge in the wadi.
Principal Bibliography	Couyat and Montet 1912; Goyon 1957; Gundlach 1980.



EGY-HAM 4 – Wadi Hammamat

Expedition Stela of Ramesses IV

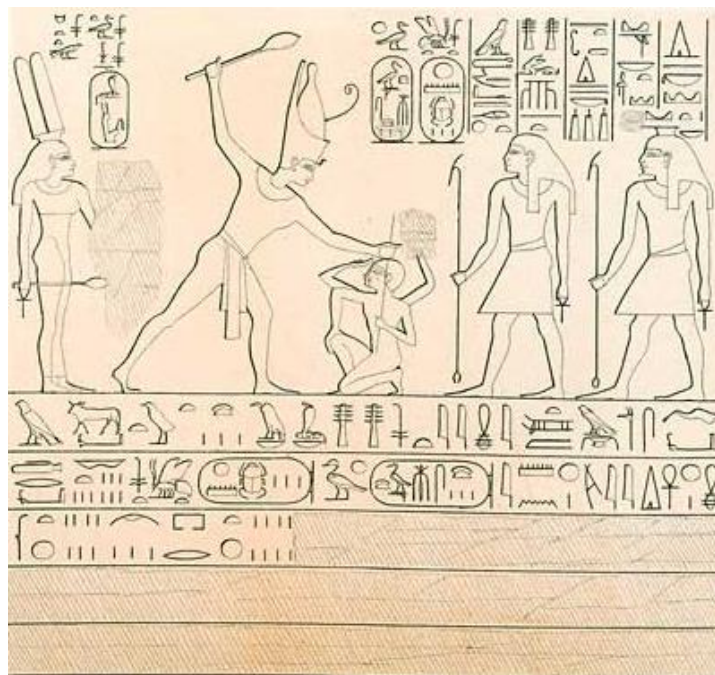
King	Ramesses IV
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	20 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	April 14, 2018
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Ramesses IV, Min, Harsiese, Isis, Maat, Theban Triad
Stone Type	Greywacke
Outcrop Description	South wall of the wadi
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Quarrying expedition; describes Ramesses IV's visit to the <i>t3-ntr</i> , the location of the sacred mountain where the stela was carved.
Principal Bibliography	Couyat and Montet 1912; Christophe 1949; Goyon 1957; Hikade 2006.



EGY-KON 1 – Konosso Island

Year 7 Stela of Tuthmosis IV

King	Tuthmosis IV
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 29, 2017 (site visit only; stela is under water)
Subsequent Visits	February 20, 2018
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Tuthmosis IV smiting an enemy Ha, Dedwen, Iaret
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Southeast face of Konosso Island, west boulder
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-KON 2-3
Description	<i>iw.tw</i> report (probably concerning action against Nubia; text is lost)
Principal Bibliography	LD.



Drawing from LD III 69e.

EGY-KON 2 – Konosso Island

Year 8 Stela of Tuthmosis IV

King	Tuthmosis IV
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 29, 2017
Subsequent Visits	February 20, 2018 (was submerged on this date)
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Tuthmosis IV, Amun, Khnum
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Southeast face of Konosso Island, east boulder
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-KON 1, 3
Description	<i>iw.tw</i> report describing a patrol on the routes in the desert east of Edfu to protect Egypt's gold mining operation.
Principal Bibliography	LD.



EGY-KON 3 – Konosso Island

Konosso Stela of Amenhotep III

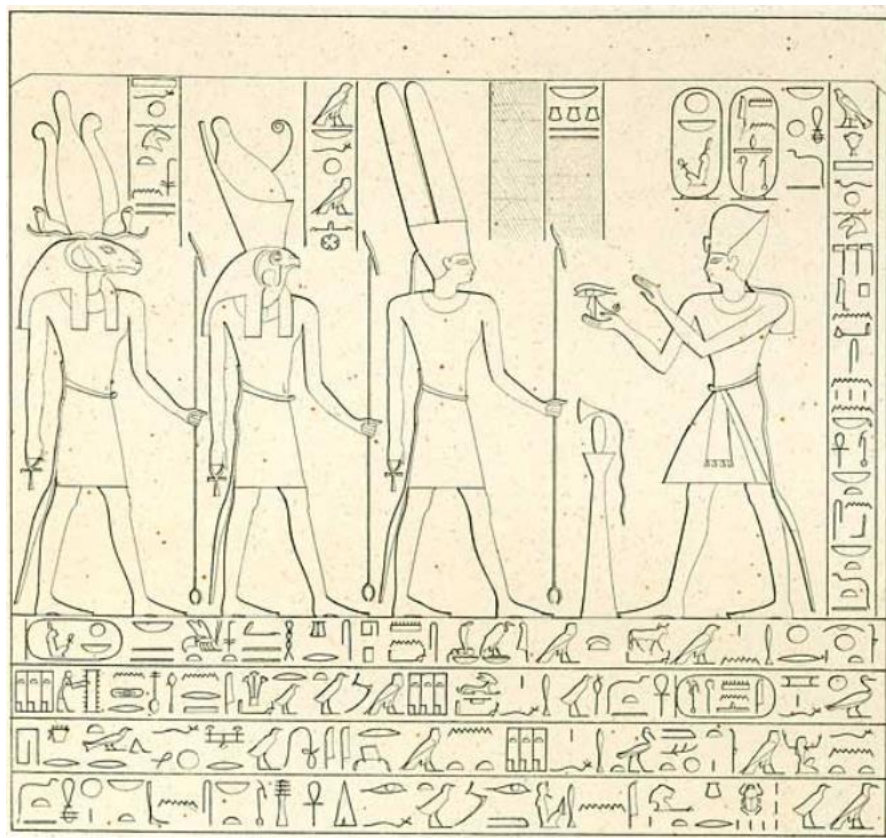
King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	January 29, 2017
Subsequent Visits	February 20, 2018
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Amenhotep III, Khnum, Amun-Re, bound personifications of Kush, Irem, Tarek, and Weresh
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Southeast face of Konosso Island, central boulder
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-KON 1-2; EGY-ASW 2-3
Description	Suppression of a Nubian rebellion; establishment of a <i>wꜥt n nḥtw</i> at a place called <i>ḳbḥw ḥr</i> ('Cool Waters of Horus').
Principal Bibliography	LD.



EGY-TUR 1 – Tura

Year 1 Quarry Stela of Amenhotep III

King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	-
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Amenhotep III, Heryshef, Horus, Amun-Re
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Rock wall at quarry entrance, facing south
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-TUR 2
Description	Quarry inauguration.
Principal Bibliography	Vyse 1850; Beylage 2002; Klug 2002

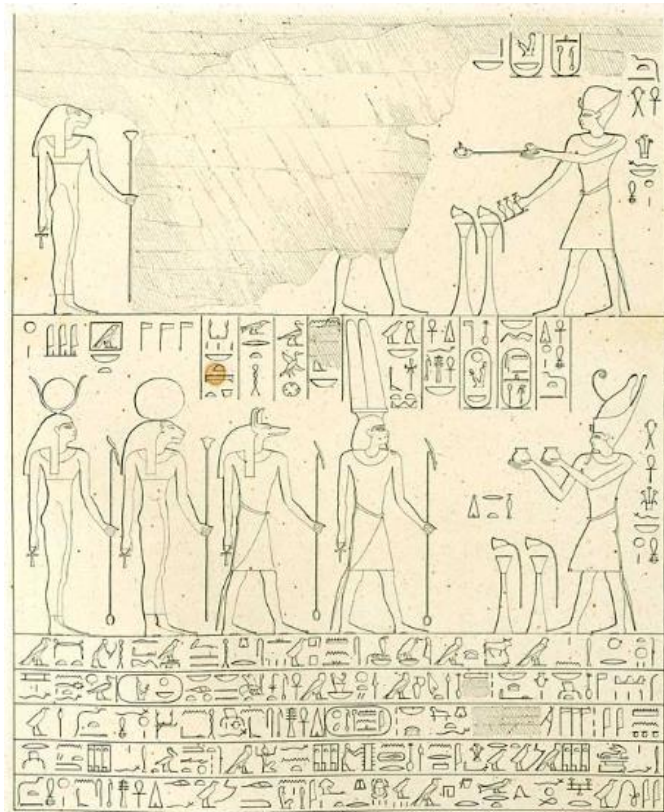


Drawing from LD III 71a.

EGY-TUR 2 – Tura

Year 2 Quarry Stela of Amenhotep III

King	Amenhotep III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	-
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Amenhotep III, unidentifiable god, unidentifiable goddess, Amun-Re? (upper register); Amenhotep III, Hathor, Weret-Hekau, Anubis, Soped (lower register)
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Rock wall at quarry entrance, facing south
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-TUR 1
Description	Quarry inauguration.
Principal Bibliography	Vyse 1850; Beylage 2002; Klug 2002

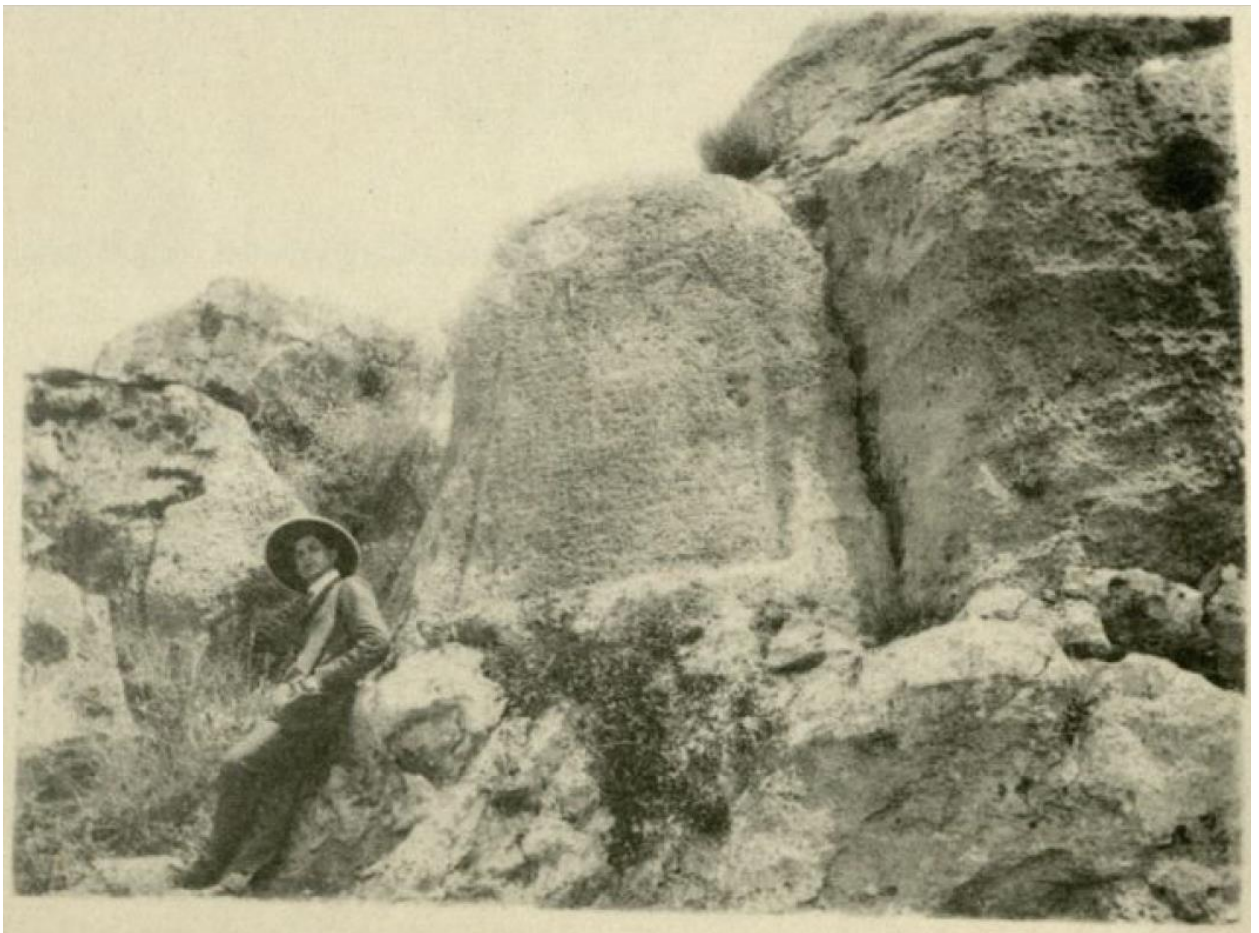


Drawing from LD III 71b.

LEB-ADL 1 – Adloun

Adloun Stela of Ramesses II

King	Ramesses II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	December 18, 2016
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Ramesses II smiting enemies, Amun-Re or Ptah?
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Coastal cliff face, probably facing west at the Mediterranean
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-NEK 1-3
Description	Contents lost.
Principal Bibliography	Ronzevalle 1909; De Bertou 1843; De Bertou 1854



Photograph from Ronzevalle 1909.

LEB-NEK 1 – Nahr el-Kalb

Year 4 Stela of Ramesses II

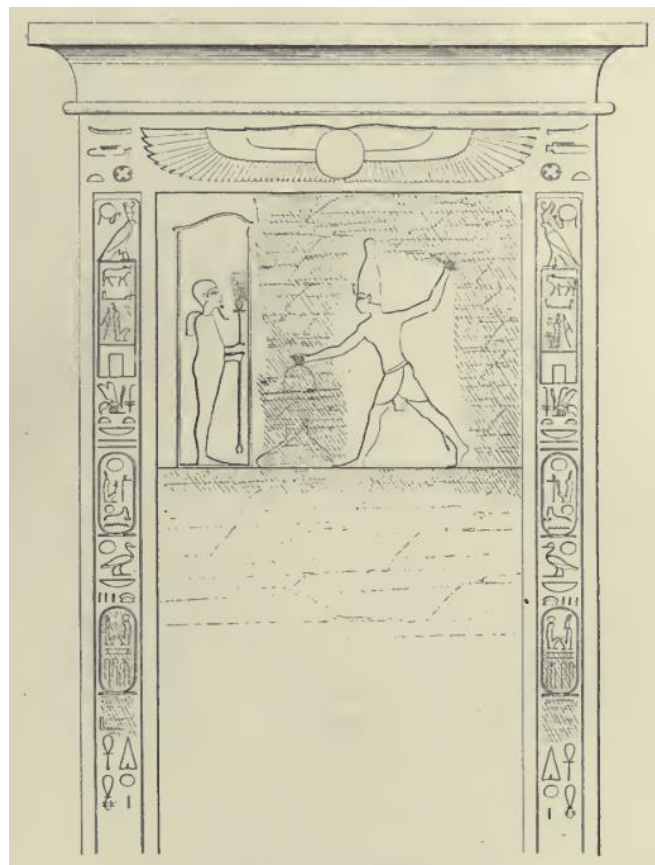
King	Ramesses II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	August 30, 2016
Subsequent Visits	December 15, 17, & 20, 2016
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Ramesses II smiting enemies, Re-Horakhty
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Coastal promontory, facing west at the Mediterranean
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-NEK 2-3; EGY-ADL 1
Description	Contents lost; likely concerned Egyptian actions against the Hittites in the wake of the recapture of Amurru.
Principal Bibliography	Loffet 2009



LEB-NEK 2 – Nahr el-Kalb

Year 8 Stela of Ramesses II

King	Ramesses II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	August 30, 2016
Subsequent Visits	December 15, 17, & 20, 2016
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Ramesses II smiting enemies, Ptah
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Coastal promontory, south of the river at Nahr el-Kalb, facing north
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-NEK 1, 3; EGY-ADL 1
Description	Contents lost and now covered by a later stela; likely concerned Egyptian actions against the Hittites in the wake of rebellions to the north.
Principal Bibliography	Loffet 2009



Drawing from Weissbach 1922.

LEB-NEK 3 – Nahr el-Kalb

Year 10 Stela of Ramesses II

King	Ramesses II
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	August 30, 2016
Subsequent Visits	December 15, 17, & 20, 2016
Shape	Rectangular
Figures	Ramesses II smiting enemies, Amun-Re
Stone Type	Limestone
Outcrop Description	Coastal promontory, facing northwest at Byblos
Associated Inscriptions	EGY-NEK 1-2; EGY-ADL 1
Description	Contents lost; likely concerned Egyptian actions against the Hittites after the end of major hostilities between the two powers.
Principal Bibliography	Loffet 2009



SUD-BEL 1 – Gebel Belal

Gebel Belal Stela

King	Tuthmosis I?
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	-
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Lost?
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Small hill a few kilometers upstream of Gebel Barkal
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-GEB 1?; SUD-HEM 1?; SUD-TOM 1-5?
Description	Military action against (presumably Nubian) enemies.
Principal Bibliography	Davies 2014

SUD-GEB 1 – Gebel Barkal

Gebel Barkal Living-Rock Stela

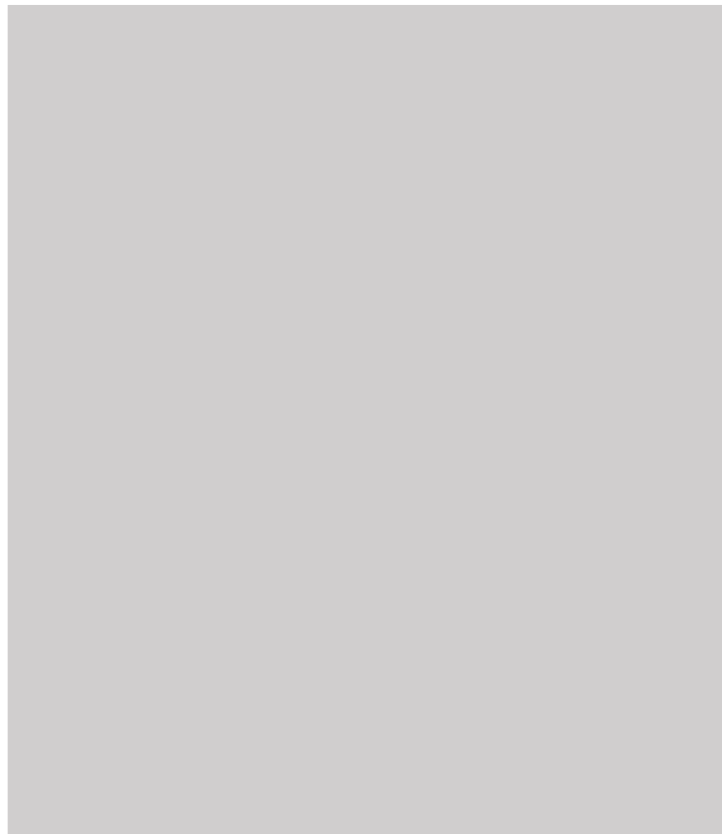
King	Tuthmosis I?
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	March 1, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	Lost
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	East side of the Gebel Barkal
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-HEM 1?; SUD-TOM 1-5?; SUD-BEL 1?
Description	Text lost.
Principal Bibliography	Bushara Mohamed et al. 2014



SUD-HEM 1 – Hagr el-Merwa

Boundary Stela of Tuthmosis I

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	March 3, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Horizontal registers with figure above and accompanying reliefs
Figures	<i>Serekh</i> of Tuthmosis I, Amun-Re-Kamutef, bull, lion
Stone Type	Quartz
Outcrop Description	Northeast face of a quartz boulder that is shaped like a pair of horns
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-HEM 2; SUD-TOM 1-5; SYR-EUP 1-2; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Establishment of southern imperial boundary and threat to the local population.
Principal Bibliography	Davies 2017

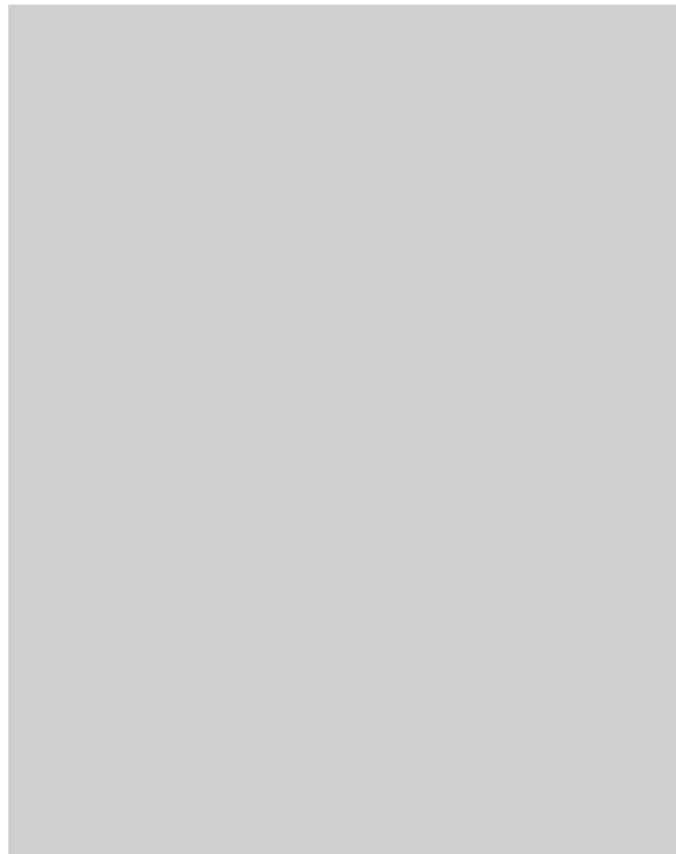


Drawing from Davies 2017.

SUD-HEM 2 – Hagr el-Merwa

Boundary Stela of Tuthmosis III

King	Tuthmosis III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	March 3, 2017
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Horizontal registers with figure above and accompanying reliefs
Figures	<i>Serekh</i> of Tuthmosis III, Amun-Re-Kamutef, bull, lion
Stone Type	Quartz
Outcrop Description	Northeast face of a quartz boulder that is shaped like a pair of horns
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-HEM 1; SYR-EUP 1-2
Description	Reaffirmation of southern imperial boundary and threat to the local population.
Principal Bibliography	Davies 2017



Drawing from Davies 2017.

SUD-NAU 1 – Nauri

Nauri Decree Stela

King	Seti I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	19 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	October 20, 2017
Subsequent Visits	October 21, 2017
Shape	Round-topped with addition curving down the left side
Figures	Seti I, Amun-Re, Re-Horakhty, Ptah
Stone Type	Sandstone
Outcrop Description	Easternmost of two sandstone buttes on the southern bank of the Nile, facing northwest
Associated Inscriptions	-
Description	Legal text regulating the transport of goods and personnel from Nubia to the temple at Abydos.
Principal Bibliography	Griffith 1927; Edgerton 1947; Gardiner 1952; Osman and Edwards 2011



SUD-TOM 1 – Tombos

The Tombos Stela

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	October 20, 2017
Subsequent Visits	October 21-22, 2017
Shape	Round-topped
Figures	-
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Boulder on the east bank of the Nile, facing roughly south
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-TOM 2-5; SUD-HEM 1; SYR-EUP 1; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Royal eulogy with a report of the preceding campaign farther upstream.
Principal Bibliography	Goedicke 1974; Bradbury 1985; Spalinger 1995; Goedicke 1996; Budka 2005; Osman and Edwards 2011



SUD-TOM 2 – Tombos

First (Southernmost) Supplementary Inscription

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	October 21, 2017
Subsequent Visits	October 22, 2017
Shape	<i>Serekh</i>
Figures	<i>Serekh</i> of Tuthmosis I
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Boulder on the east bank of the Nile, facing roughly south
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-TOM 1, 3-5; SUD-HEM 1; SYR-EUP 1; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Epithets of the king.
Principal Bibliography	Budka 2005; Osman and Edwards 2011; <i>LD</i>



SUD-TOM 3 – Tombos

Second Supplementary Inscription

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	October 21, 2017
Subsequent Visits	October 22, 2017
Shape	Roughly square
Figures	-
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Boulder on the east bank of the Nile, facing the river
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-TOM 1-2, 4-5; SUD-HEM 1; SYR-EUP 1; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Epithets of the king.
Principal Bibliography	Budka 2005; Osman and Edwards 2011; <i>LD</i>



SUD-TOM 4 – Tombos

Third Supplementary Inscription

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	October 21, 2017
Subsequent Visits	October 22, 2017
Shape	Roughly square
Figures	-
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Boulder on the east bank of the Nile, facing the river
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-TOM 1-3, 5; SUD-HEM 1; SYR-EUP 1; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Epithets of the king.
Principal Bibliography	Budka 2005; Osman and Edwards 2011; <i>LD</i>



SUD-TOM 5 – Tombos

Fourth (Northernmost) Supplementary Inscription

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	October 21, 2017
Subsequent Visits	October 22, 2017
Shape	Roughly square
Figures	-
Stone Type	Granite
Outcrop Description	Boulder on the east bank of the Nile, facing the river
Associated Inscriptions	SUD-TOM 1-4; SUD-HEM 1; SYR-EUP 1; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Epithets of the king.
Principal Bibliography	Budka 2005; Osman and Edwards 2011; <i>LD</i>



SYR-EUP 1 – Euphrates

Boundary Stela of Tuthmosis I

King	Tuthmosis I
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	-
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Unknown
Figures	Unknown
Stone Type	Limestone?
Outcrop Description	Cliff on the east bank of the Euphrates?
Associated Inscriptions	SYR-EUP 2; SUD-HEM 1-2; SUD-TOM 1-5; SUD-BEL 1?; SUD-GEB 1?
Description	Presumably, establishment of northern imperial boundary.
Principal Bibliography	Faulkner 1946; Helck 1981; Spalinger 1978; Mizrachy 2012

SYR-EUP 2 – Euphrates

Boundary Stela of Tuthmosis III

King	Tuthmosis III
Period	New Kingdom
Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
Date First Visited	-
Subsequent Visits	-
Shape	Unknown
Figures	Unknown
Stone Type	Limestone?
Outcrop Description	Cliff on the east bank of the Euphrates?
Associated Inscriptions	SYR-EUP 1; SUD-HEM 1-2
Description	Presumably, establishment of northern imperial boundary.
Principal Bibliography	Faulkner 1946; Helck 1981; Spalinger 1978; Mizrachy 2012