

Abgadiyat

Issue No. 6 - 2011

Issue N° 6– 2011

Scientific refereed annual journal issued by the
Bibliotheca Alexandrina Calligraphy Center



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The Maritime Expeditions of Wadi Gawasis in the Twelfth Dynasty

البعثات البحرية لوادي جواسيس خلال عصر الأسرة الثانية عشرة

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ملخص:

موقع وادي جواسيس يُعتبر واحداً من أهم مواقع الآثار المصرية ذات الطبيعة الأثرية المختلفة نوعاً عن الشائع في مواقع الآثار في وادي النيل والتي يغلب عليها الطابع الديني أو الجنائزي؛ حيث إنه يمثل واحداً من أقدم المراسي والموانئ البحرية في تاريخ الإنسانية؛ إذ استمر استغلاله على وجه متواصل طوال عصر الأسرة الثانية عشرة في الدولة الوسطى الفرعونية (تقريباً طوال القرنين التاسع عشر والثامن عشر قبل الميلاد وهو العصر الذهبي للحضارة المصرية). فقد كان هذا الموقع يمثل خلال هذا العصر نقطة الصلة والاتصال بين حضارة وادي النيل وبين مناطق إنتاج وتجارة البخور (السلعة الإستراتيجية خلال العصور القديمة) في البحر الأحمر وقد عرفت النصوص المصرية باسم "بلاد بونت"، تلك التسمية الجغرافية التي أثارَت وما زالت تثير كثيراً من الجدل والتي أترك الحديث فيها لمناسبة أخرى.

أتاحت حفائر البعثة الإيطالية - الأمريكية بإشراف "رودلفو فاتوفيتش" و"كاترين بارد" خلال العقد الأول من هذا القرن، الكشف عن مجموعة من الدلائل الأثرية، والنقوش المسجلة بالهيريوغليفية، والهيراظيقية من بقايا ألواح خشب الأرز المستخدمة في بناء السفن المبحرة في البحر الأحمر، والمرساوات الحجرية الضخمة، والصناديق الخشبية التي كانت تُشحن فيها البضائع المتميزة لبلاد 'بونت'، والشقاف الفخارية، وقطع البردي التي تحمل نصوفاً هيراظيقية مقتضبة، ولكنها هامة، ولوحات نذرية تحمل في كثير منها معلومات تاريخية. والواقع أن هذه البعثة التي استمرت من ٢٠٠٢ حتى ٢٠١٠، هي استمرار لبعثة جامعة الإسكندرية برئاسة الدكتور عبد المنعم عبد الحليم سيد التي كشفت عن المواقع خلال حفائر عامي ١٩٧٦ - ١٩٧٧.

ومن خلال الشواهد النصية التي كُشف عنها في الموقع أو على مقربة منه طوال القرون الثلاثة الماضية وخصوصاً التي كُشف عنها مؤخرًا خلال السنوات الماضية، وتولى كاتب المقال مسؤولية دراستها ونشرها في عديد من الدوريات العلمية المتخصصة، ومن خلال هذه الرسوم يمكن ترسُم الخط التاريخي للميناء، واستنباط وجود عدد من البعثات البحرية التي تأكد وجودها عبر النصوص المكتشفة في الموقع.

In this article, the author will try to trace the presence of the Egyptians in the site of Wadi Gawasis depending on the epigraphic evidences. Our results are the fruits of archaeologists' efforts along two centuries from Sir Wilkinson Gardiner and Ritchard Burton passing by Professor Abdel Monem Sayed to Rodolfo Fattovich and Kathryn Bard. So the objective of this article is to deal with all the epigraphic data discovered in the maritime site until now. Therefore, a form of consecutive expeditions, dated essentially from the Middle Kingdom is the better method to present the history of the site.

The Expedition of the Year 22 of the Reign of Senusert I

Evidences

1. An inscribed fragment of limestone

This limestone fragment was certainly a section of an ancient stela. We can see the remaining of three lines to be read from right to left where we can recognize the crown and birth names of King Senusert I followed by an attribute and three representations of boats. It is about basilophores names of vessels having navigated the Red Sea.¹

2. The Sanctuary of Ankhu²

The monument was discovered approximately 250 m off the west coast, and is exhibited in the Faculty of Arts Museum, University of Alexandria. Sanctuary in limestone constituted of three anchors from which the round top was removed. It exists on a podium composed of four anchors on two rows.

The hieroglyphic texts are freehand registered complicating the reading. While two columns of a text occupy the top, mentioning the Royal

protocol, the lower part carried the titles of the dignitary Ankhu.

The much damaged south face carries a similar text in three lines:



1. *rh nsw m3^c mry.f hsy.f m hrt*
2. *hrw nt r^c-nb imy-r3 ^c-hnwty n pr-^c3*
3. *^cnhw m3^c hrw [nb im3h]*

1. *The veritable royal known, his beloved, his favorite during*
2. *the day of every day, director of the inner chamber of the palace*
3. *Ankhu, the justified, [owner of veneration]*

The internal face of the bottom block: (14 lines of text were written from right to left)



1. *[rnpt-sp] 24 3bd 1 prt...[imy-r3]*
2. *h^cw hrp ^cprw imy-r3 ^c-[hnwty...]*
3. *pw] nt hnt r ph [...]*
4. *hn^c d3mw n nfrw [...]*
5. *s3b ^cd mr nwn imy-r3 [...]*

- 6. *s3b sšw šnwt sšw* [...]
- 7. *imy-r ʿ3w imy-r nbwiw* [...]
- 8. *nfrw 400 dmd 400* [+x...]
- 9. [...] 10. [...] 11. [...] 12. [...]
- 13. [...] 14. [...]

- 1. [Year] 24, the first month of the Peret season [...the director of]
- 2. the fleet, controller of the crew, director of the inner [chamber] [...]
- 3. Pw]nt ; sail southward to the borders of [...]
- 4. with the recruit regiments [...]
- 5. territorial administrator of Noun for the director [...]²,
- 6. scribes of granaries of vizier (?) scribes [...]
- 7. general of auxiliaries, directors of the goldsmiths [...]
- 8. recruits : 400. Total 400[+x]
- 9. [...] 10. [...] 11. [...] 12. [...]
- 13. [...] 14. [...]

The internal face of the block contains ten columns of hieroglyphic text (the first line is inscribed from right to left, and nine others from left to right).

- 1. *mry hr-wr-R^c nsw bity hpr-k3-R^c mry hnty-hty s3 R^c s-ny-wsrt mry hwt-hr nbt Pwnt*
 - 2. [...] *m htp n nb ʿ3wy s-ny-wsrt ʿnh mi R^c sk wd.n hm.f n smr.f imy-r3 st nbt nt pr-nsw imy-r3 ʿ-hnwt*
 - 3. [...iy]t *m htp sk grt mnh sw m ib n hm.f r smr.f nb irw ht m šn-wr* [...]
 - 4. [...] *kn hr st ʿwy.f s n m-ht hr rh ht*
 - 5. [...] *dpwt* [...] *dmi n š3ww (?) sp3t Gbtyw r ph*
 - 6. [...] *h^cw pn mi* [...] *nb* [...] *irt* [...]
- 1. Beloved of Haroeris, King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkare, beloved of Khentykhety, the son of Re, Senusert, beloved of Hathor, lady of Pwnt.
 - 2. [...] in peace for the lord of the Double lands, Senusert, given life like Re. Therefore, his majesty commanded his companion, the director of all the places in the Royal palace, the director of the inner chamber
 - 3. [...co]me in peace. Therefore, then, it was excellent in the heart of His Majesty more than any other companion who accomplished activities in the sea [...]
 - 4. [...] courage ones on the place of his arms (?) man of future who knows the things (?)
 - 5. [...] boats [...] the port of Saouou⁴ (?) (of?) name of Coptos to reach
 - 6. [...] this fleet like (?) [...] make [...]



Face internal of the Western block (the text consists of eleven lines, run from right to left)



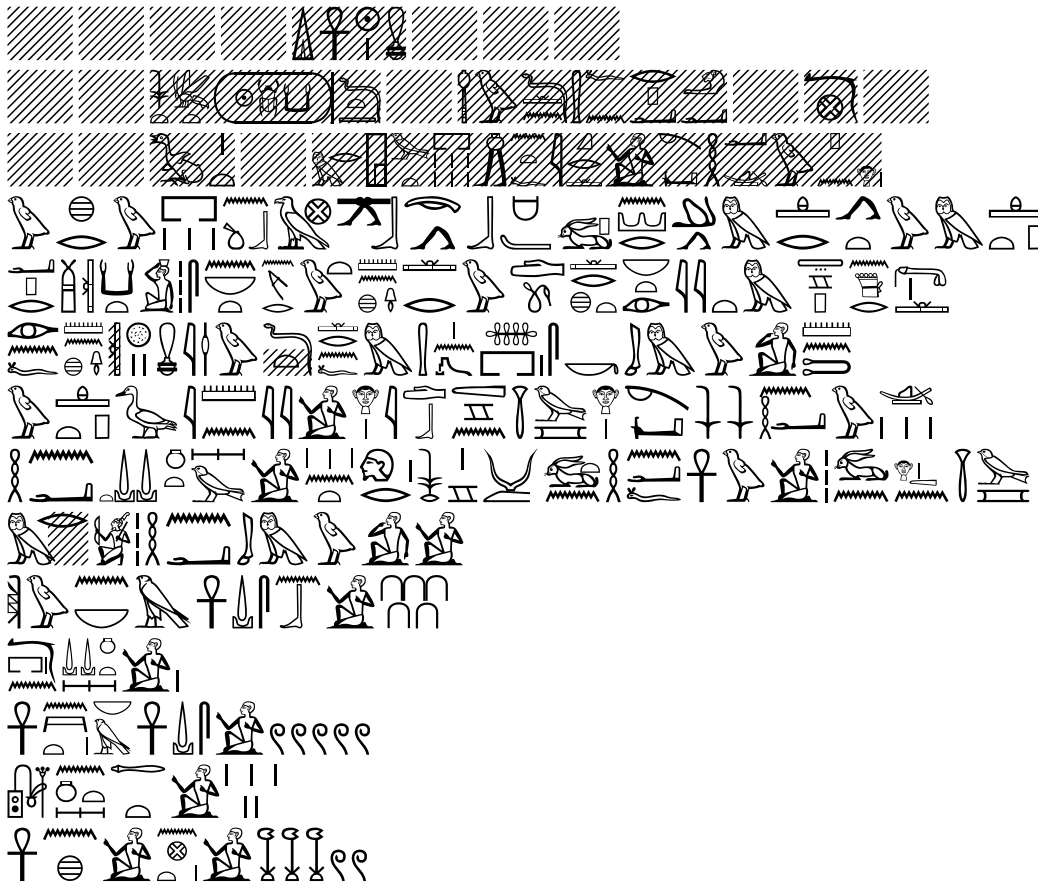
1. [...] *imy-r3 h^cw h^rp ^cprw imy-r3 nfrww*
 2. [...] *m3^c r bi3-Pwnt*
 3. [...] *ii.n.(i) in.n.(i) m m3^c(t)*
 4. [...] *n hm n nb [t3wy] nsw bity hpr-k3-R^c nb ^cnh w3s dt*
 5. [...] *iw h^cw[...] nt [...]3 skw*
 6. [...] *t3w h3swt sn [...] t3-sn inw t3-ntr m gs t3w*
 7. [...] *km3w [...]nb t3-tnn m ht nbt nt t3 pn sdmt*
 8. [...] *km3]w.sn t3 mw s^cy hr idbw ntt iwtt*
 9. [...] *dd (?) st [...]*
 10. [...] *inw pn i^c(bw)-n.sn r b3kt [...] m [...]*
 11. [...] *nb im in [imy-r3 ^c-hnwty] n pr-^c3 ^cnhw*
1. [...] the director of the fleet, controller of the crews, general of recruits
 2. [...] sent to Bia-Pwnt
 3. [...] I went to bring [...] that I returned
 4. [...] the majesty of the lord [of the Double lands], King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkarê, lord of life and power for ever.
 5. [...] fleet [...] of [...] water Sekou (?)
 6. [...] lands and foreign countries (?) their land, products of the land-of-god
 7. [...] all the creation of Tatenen consisting of all kinds of products of this country (?), heard of
 8. [...] their creation : the land of water, the sands on the rives, which exist and which do not exist
 9. [...] speak (?) [...]
 10. [...] this tribute which they reassembled to work (?) [...] lord (?) by [the director of the inner chamber] of the palace Ankhu.

3. The stela of Antefoker-Ameny⁵

A limestone stela discovered approximately 450 m off west of current coast, and in 200 m off west of the sanctuary of Ankhu, fixed on a

base formed of an anchor and framed by two irregular blocks. This stela, which measured 45 cm high, and 1.50 cm large, is actually exhibited in the Museum of the Faculty of Arts, University of Alexandria. The top was destroyed due to erosion. Its surface was covered by a hieroglyphic text registered from right to left. It seems that the first line of the text was the legend for the god Min scene before the Royal image or his protocol. The text following the first line consists of nine lines and ends in four small columns.

5. *ꜥpr k3wt.sn nbwt n mrwt mnḥ rwd r ḥt nbt iryt m t3 pn dr b3ḥ*
6. *ir.n.f mnḥ sp 2 mi wdṯ n.f m ḥm n stp-s3 sk wḥmw s3 Mnṯw*
7. *-ḥtp Imny ḥr idb n W3d-wr ḥr mdḥ nn n ḥꜥww*
8. *ḥnꜥ d3d3t wrt nt tp-rsy t3-wr wnwt ḥnꜥ.f ꜥnhw wn(ww) ḥr idb n W3d-wr*
9. *imy-r3 mšꜥ ḥnꜥ wḥmw*
10. *šmsw n nb ꜥnh wd3 snb 50*
11. *imy-r3 pr n d3d3t 1*



1. [...] di ꜥnh mi Rꜥ [...]
2. [...] nsw-bity ḥpr-k3-Rꜥ ꜥnh dt [...] wd.n ḥm.f n iry-pꜥt ḥ3ty-ꜥ [...] imy-r3 niwt
3. [...] t3ty [...] imy-r3 ḥwt wrt 6 Ini-it.f-ikr mdḥ ḥꜥw pn nwꜥ
4. whrwt n Gbtyw sbt bi3-Pwnt r ph m ḥtp r iwt m ḥtp

12. *ꜥnh n tt n nb ꜥnh wd3 snb 500*
13. *sš n d3d3t ꜥ3t 5*
14. *ꜥnh n niwt 3200*
1. [...] given life like Re [...]
2. [...] The King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkarê, that he may live forever. His

- Majesty commanded the hereditary prince, governor [...] director of the Town
3. [...] vizier [...] Director of six great domains, Antefoker, to build this fleet of
 4. the arsenals of Coptos to be sent to Pia-Pwnt to reach (it) and return in peace,
 5. of power to all their works so as to be effective and better than all what had been realized in this country previously
 6. and this is the perfection, according to what was ordered to him by the Majesty of the palace, that he made it. Therefore, the herald Ameny son of Montou-
 7. hotep was on the coast of the Red Sea to rebuild these ships
 8. with the great court of the name Thinite of "The head of the South", which was with him. The soldiers who were on the coast of the Red Sea
 9. The general of the army was with the herald.
 10. agents of the lords L.P.H. 50
 11. director of the tribunal domain 1
 12. soldiers of the Lord's Table, L.P.H 500
 13. scribes of the great tribunal 5
 14. citizens 3200

Conclusion

These evidences confirmed the existence of an expedition sent to the land of Punt in the Year 22 of the reign of Senusert I. We suggest that this one was divided into three stages. According to the stela of *Antefoker/Ameny* found in Wadi Gawasis (about 400 m from the Seashore), divided into two parts and was separated by the enclitic particle *sk*, the sovereign ordered his vizier Antefoker to build a fleet in the

arsenal of Coptos after a Royal Order to his vizier.

The second stage, indicated in the second part of the same stela, concerns the operation led on the shore of the Red Sea by the herald *Ameny*. The work was actually reassembling the ships after being dismantled and carried in sections from Coptos to the Port to facilitate their transport through the Eastern Desert.⁷ The composition of the herald Ameny's teamwork shows that there was a military section commanded by the General of the Army, and consisting of fifty Royal followers of the Master; apparently each one led ten soldiers and a civil section organized by the board steward of the Thinite name, 'The head of the South', who supervised, in their turn, 3200 citizens. Five scribes of the great board participated in the works to assure the recording, the accounting and probably the decoding of reassembling marks registered on the pieces of the detached ships.⁸

The third stage of the expedition, which was directed by the overseer of the cabinet *Ankhu*, was the maritime journey to the land of Punt. The shrine which he left at Wadi Gawasis (about 200 m from the Seashore) consisted of four anchors in limestone for the base, and four others⁹ for the shrine itself, commemorated this event. The dignitary Ankhu who carried the titles of *imy-r3 ḥꜥw ḥrp ꜥprw imy-r3 nfrww imy-r3 ꜥ-hnwty* Admiral of the fleet, controller of the crews, director of the recruits, overseer of the cabinet was accompanied by:

s3b ꜥd mr nwn 'administrator major of Noun',
ꜥnd s3b sꜥw šnwt 'administrator of granaries scribes'

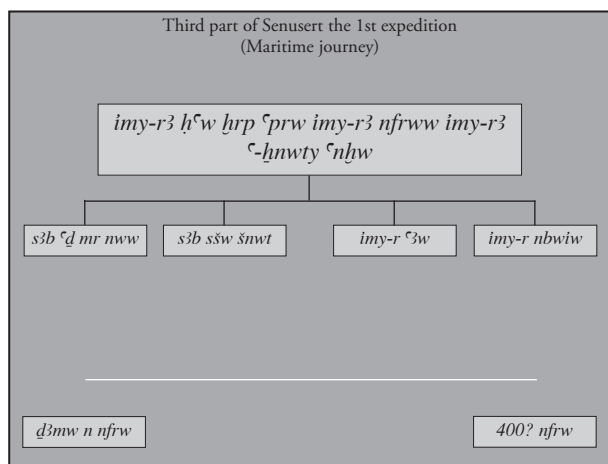
imy-r ꜥ3w 'overseer of auxiliaries',

imy-r nbwiw 'overseer of goldsmiths'

d3mw n nfrw 'regiments of recruits'

nfrw 400 [+x...] 'recruits : 400'

dmd 400 [+x] 'total of 400[+x]'¹⁰



The scene legend¹²

*nsw bity nb t3wy Nbw-k3w-Rꜥ di ꜥnh mi Rꜥ
3w-ib.f ḥr st ḥr mry Mnw Gbtyw di ꜥnh*

King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Neboukaoure, may he live like Rê and rise to Horus Throne. The one who worships Min from Coptos, may he be given life.

The line separating the two registers:



dw3 ntr rdit i3w n ḥr-wr-Rꜥ n Mnw Gbtyw

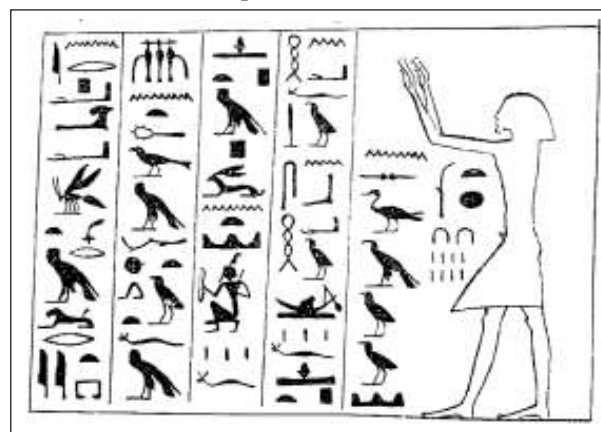
Pray God, make adoration to Haroërisrê and to Min from Coptos

The expedition of Year 28 of Amenemhat II

Evidences

The stela of *Khentykhetyur*¹¹

Round-top stela of basalt measuring 52×30 cm, was discovered by J. Burton in the Roman station of Wadi Gasus, 7 km off the Red Sea coast. First, it appeared in the catalog Sotheby of July 1836, then Alnwick Castle, residence of Duke of Northumberland preserved it. The stela actually exists in The Oriental Gulbenkian Museum of Art, University of Durham. In the upper register, King Amenemhat II offers jars *nw* to the god Min of Coptos, and a text of six vertical columns, and a representation of a dignitary in position of worship occupy the lower register.



1. *in iry-pꜥt ḥ3ty-ꜥ ḥtmty-bity imy-r3 rwy*
2. *ḥnty-ḥty-wr m-ḥt iwt.f m*
3. *ḥtp m Pwnt mšꜥ f*
4. *ḥnꜥ.f (w)d3 snbw ḥꜥww*
5. *n š3ww rnpt-sp 28*

1. by the hereditary prince, governor, chancellor of King of Lower Egypt, director of the justice court.
2. Khentykhetyour after his return in
3. peace from Pwnt, the army who
4. was with him was safe and in good health, the fleet accosted
5. in Saww (in) the Year 28

Conclusion

This stela proves evidence of an expedition sent to Punt and anchored on its way back in the Port of *Saww* in the Year 28 of Amenmehat II. The leader of this operation was a high-ranking official from the central administration. In the text of the stela, his titles confirm his importance in the Royal palace, namely, *iry-p^t h³ty-^c htmty-bity imy-r³ rwyt* ‘hereditary prince, governor, chancellor of king of Lower Egypt, overseer of the justice court’. The text mentions the return of the mission safely from Punt. So, we have expedition’s return date which is the Year 28 of Amenemhat II, its chief, the overseer of the justice court *Khentykhetyur*, its destination which is Punt, and finally the port in which the fleet landed on the way back, attested by the toponym *š3ww* ‘Saw’. It seems worthy to notice that this indication is the only name of a maritime port in the Egyptian textual evidences.

The monument of Senusert II, Year 1 in the god’s land

Evidences

Stela Durham N 1935¹³

This stela was discovered by Sir John Gardner Wilkinson in the small sanctuary of Wadi Gasus (Gawasis), it was preserved in Alnwick Castle, but the Oriental Gulbenkian Museum of Art, University of Durham, actually conserves it. The round-top stela in basalt measures 66 × 35 cm.

The stela is divided into two registers. An official scene represents the king in front of the god Soped with legends occupying the upper register, a horizontal line separating the two registers and text of eight graded hieroglyphic columns beside a representation of A standing dignitary, with another cursive hieroglyphic column behind him inscribed in the lower register.¹⁴



King’s legend

nsw-bity h^c-hpr-R^c tm³-^c nb irt ht hr ššmw-t³wy di ^cnh mi R^c dt mry špdw nb t³-šsmt nb i³btt

King of Upper and Lower Egypt Khakheperre, with the strong arm, Lord of rites the Horus Sechemw-Tawy, may he be given life like Re

for ever, who loves Soped, Lord of Ta-Shesemet, Lord of the Orient.

God’s legend

*dd-mdw di.n.(i) n.k 3wt-ib nb
dd-mdw di.n.(i) n.k snb nb hr.(i) ^cnh dd w³s
nb r šrt.k ntr nfr*

Speech said : ‘(I) gave you all joy’

Speech said : ‘(I) gave you all the health near me, all life, (every) stability and (every) owner for your sake, oh perfect god’.

The line separating the two registers:



rnprt-sp I smnh mnw.f m t3-ntr

Year 1, erect his monument in the Land-of-god

The text of the lower register:



1. *htmty-ntr*
 2. *rh-nsw m3^c mry.f n st-ib.f imy-ib n nb.f*
 3. *rh hpw šs3w m irt mdd*
 4. *w3t nt smnh sw tm*
 5. *thiw tp-rd n ʿh tpt-r nt stp-s3*
 6. *w^c n bity hpr m ʿh sb3w n*
 7. *hr nb-t3wy s^cr šnyt n nsw*
 8. *mty mi dhwti imy-r3 ʿh-nwty hnmw-htp*
1. Chancellor of the god,
 2. The real Royal known, his beloved, the favorite of his lord,
 3. The one who knows the laws, the effective expert who follows
 4. The road of the excellent one who does not
 5. break the instructions of the palace,
 6. the unique for the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, the one who grew on the palace, the pupil
 7. of Horus, lord of the Two Lands, the one presents courtiers to the king
 8. the precise like Thot, director of the inner chamber, Khnumhotep.

The cursive line behind the dignitary:

hry-pr Nfr-htp iry-ʿt Nb-š3bt

The domestic Néferhotep. The herdsman Nebchabet

Conclusion

The second stela discovered in the Roman station of Wadi Gasus attests that there was an expedition led in Year 1 of Senusert II by the overseer of the cabinet *Khnumhotep*. The text of the stela did not mention any expedition, except a monument erected in the ambiguous toponym *t3-ntr* ‘God’s Land’ under the supervision of the high courtier *Khnumhotep*. This official was accompanied by two of his assistants, their names were engraved behind him: *hry-pr Nfr-htp iry-ʿt Nb-š3bt* ‘the domestic *Néferhotep* and the herdsman *Nebchabet*’.

In a recent study on the career of *Khnumhotep*, D. Franke proved that he was not the famous nomarch of the XIVth nome of Upper Egypt (Beni Hassan), but one of his sons connected to the Royal Court and observed in the bas-relief of the nomarch *Khnumhotep II*, in his tomb at Beni Hassan, while presenting 37 Asiatics introduced to the nomarch by his scribe *Néferhotep*.

We cannot deny the possibilities of having a relation between this stela and Wadi Gawasis, we question if it had any relation with Punt!!! Anyway, the information on this stela is different from the other stelae such as the stela of *Khentykhetywr* clearly mentioning an expedition to Punt and the arrival at Saww and also the stela of *Nebtu*, the texts of the shrine of *Ankhu*, the ostraca with the mention of Punt. Its differences between the other stelae from Wadi Gawasis is in contents and iconography, namely the mentioning of *Soped*, lord of *Ta-sachemt* allows us to propose that this stela commemorates an exceptional expedition sent to another destination which could be the mines of South Sinai¹⁵.

The Expedition of Year 5 of the Reign of Senusert III

Evidences

1. The hieratic ostraca

In 1977, a set of sherds were discovered; it comprises storage jars registered. Forty one photos of sherds are studied: 23 sherds with hieratic texts, 15 jar marks, 2 photos of sherds show account signs only illegible. The hieratic texts are the most interesting material, containing between one and four lines including important information about Year 5, led by Count Neboukaoure who had been attested in the documentation of El-Lahoun. The expedition was financed by the administrative centre of El-Lahoun *sim-s-n-wsrt*, the justification prepared in Wadi Gawasis, the departure point to the land of Pwnt. Texts mention numerous civil agents involved in this affair, the necessary supplies for the life in Wadi Gawasis and in the maritime journey as well as the mentioning of several place-names.¹⁶

2. The stela WG 14

A rectangular stela measuring 31.5 × 23 × 7.5 cm, made of limestone, was found in the radim of WG 32 (SU 1). The rectangular form of this stela with a cornice and gorge at the top belong to the early style of Middle Kingdom stelae. The stela is broken into two pieces. The right one is about 31.5 × 7 cm, and the left one about 31.5 × 14 cm. The surface with inscription is severely damaged and a lot of its is actually lost specially in the lower-left part. Its bas-relief inscription is severely divided into an official scene on the upper part, and a private scene in the lower part.

In the upper part, the ithyphallic form of the god Min above his garden facing the royal protocol of Senusert III is represented. A column



of hieroglyphic signs show the royal epithet relating the king to Min: *Mry Mnw Gbtyw nb* ... 'Beloved Min of Coptos, Lord of ...'. Three of the names of Senusert III can hardly be seen [*hr*] *ntr hprw* 'Horus Neter-Kheprou', *ntr nfr* ... *h^c-k3w-R^c* 'Kind god ...Khakaoure' ...*s-ny-wsrt* 'Senusert'. The lower part comprises a dedicated text, of at least seven columns, with two standing officials face to face.

Conclusion

The hieratic ostraca confirm the administrative relation between the town of *Sekhem-Senusert* at El-Lahun and the port of Wadi Gawasis.

Several civil agents are attested in these documents, among them:

- a) *h3ty-^c Nbw-k3w-R^c* 'governor *Nebukaurâ*' mentioned in the texts as responsible for

importing food sent by *Sekhem-Senuseret*. It is very possible that he is the person in charge of the activities exercised in the port of Wadi Gawasis, as ships reassembling operation. His role could resemble that of Ameny of the mission of Senusert I. The other possibility, he was the director of the maritime expedition to Punt as *Ankhu* of Senusert I.

- b) Another *wḥmw* the first part of the name *wæī*. He could be *wḥ* carrying the title of *wḥmw* indicated on a stela from Qaw el-Kebir and actually in the Berlin Museum under n° 21822, dated from the end of the Twelfth and the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty.¹⁷
- c) a *imy-r ḥnwty n dd-b3w* ‘overseer of the cabinet of the firm-of power’¹⁸ anonymous, is attested.
- d) a *imy-r pr n ḥr sš n wḥmw* ‘steward of the Horus temple, scribe of the herald’ appeared in this documentation.
- e) a *wdpw* ‘cupbearer *Hornakht*’, a *imy-r ḥnwty* ‘overseer of the cabinet’ *Nub* [...], and an anonymous *ḥty* ‘brewer’ also participated.

Furthermore, a stela discovered in 2007, is divided into two registers: the first one concerns the protocol of Senusert III consisting essentially of the five royal names before the representation of Min of Coptos and the lower register which is severely damaged shows a representation of two persons and an illegible text in columns above them. This stela confirms the existence of activities on the site during his reign¹⁹.

The expeditions of Amenemhat III²⁰

Evidences

1. Stela WG 16 [serial number 174 in Qift store]

A small circular-top stela of limestone, measuring 16 cm high, 14 cm in width and 5 cm in thickness. Its inscribed face is covered with a hieroglyphic text consisting of six horizontal lines separated by lines. The date is registered in big characters in the lunette.

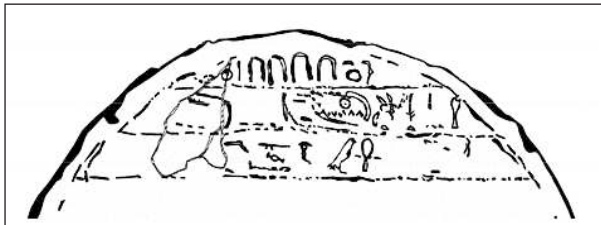


1. *rnpt-sp 23*
2. *ḥr ḥm n nsw-bity Ny-m3ḥt-rḥ*
3. *ḥtp di nsw (n) Mnw nb Gbtyw*
4. *di f t ḥnkt iḥ 3pd šs mnḥt snḥr*
5. *n k3 n iry-ḥt (n) Pr-ḥ3 Imny*
..ḥr ...
6. ...

1. Year 23
2. Under the Majesty of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nymaatre.
3. The offerings that the king gives (to) Min, Lord of Coptos,
4. he gives bread, beer, cattle, birds, (vases) of alabster, (pieces of) cloth and incense
5. for the ka responsible for the storerooms of the Great House Ameny
6. ...under ...

2. Stela WG 23 [serial number 178 in Qift store]

A circular-top stela in limestone measuring 35 cm high, 26.4 cm width and 9 cm in thickness. This one is severely damaged with the exception of the first three lines where signs are observed registered in light bas-relief.

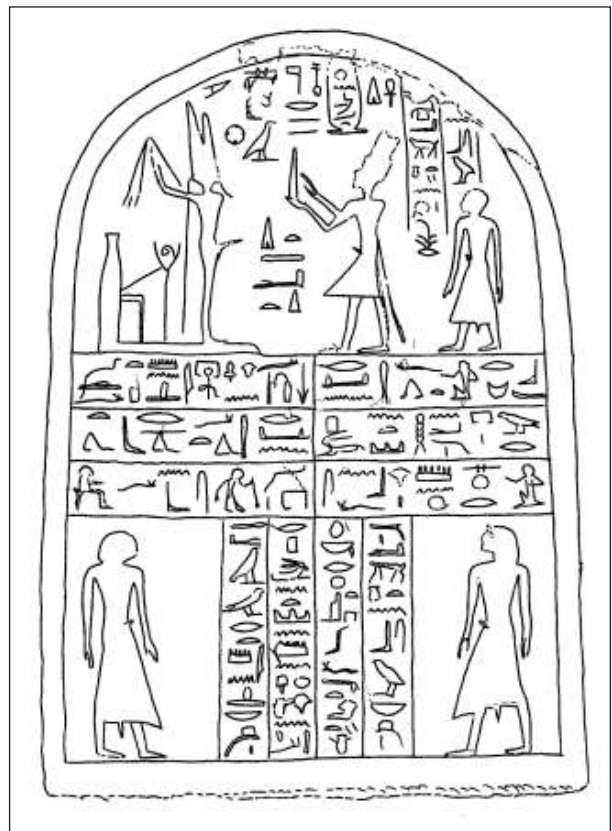


1. *rnpt-sp 41 [hr]*
2. *hm n nsw-bity Ny-m3t-r...*
3. *[hr] 3-[b3w] ...hr-nbw W3h-eh-iti-iw-t-[t3wy] ...*

1. Year 41 [under]
2. the Majesty of King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nymaatre ...
3. [Horus] Aa-[baw] ... the Golden Horus Ankhwah itiwa[tawy]...

3. Stela WG 05 (serial number 144 in Qift store)²¹

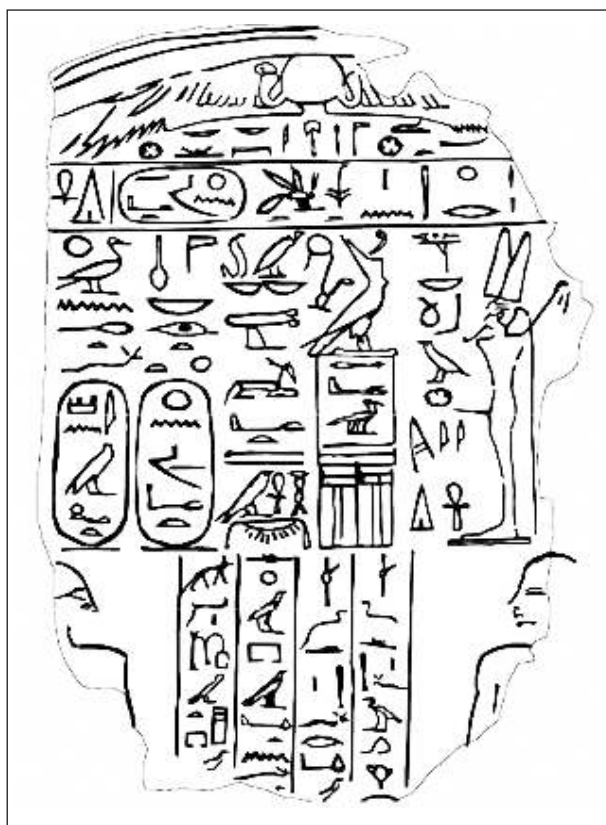
A circular-top stela, in limestone measuring 38.0 cm high, 26.0 cm wide, and 10.5-11.0 cm thick. The stela is very well preserved. The decoration is divided into three sections: a) at the top, a carved offering scene to the god Min; b) a central section with two symmetrical horizontal texts, in three lines; c) a lower section with the final part of the two texts, each inscribed in two vertical columns, flanked by the figures of two men.



4. Stela WG 06 [serial number 155 in Qift store]

A rectangular stela in limestone measuring 36.5 cm high, 22.5 cm width and 5 cm in thickness. The stela, which is surmounted by the red color winged sun, is divided into two registers. A scene of the god Min above the

complete protocol of King Amenemhat III carved in the upper part, and a private scene where two dignitaries were represented with their legends.



Conclusion

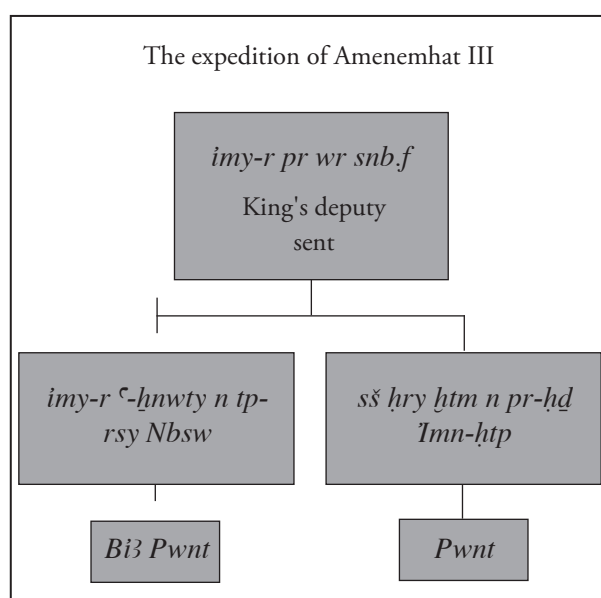
R. Fattovich and K. Bard discovered three stelae in the coral terrace above the galleries entrances dating to the reign of Amenemhat III. While the first one (WG 16) dated to Year 23 of Amenemhat III provides information about the responsible of the sealing halls in the Great House Ameny; the second stela (WG 23) which is severely damaged, conserve only the Year 41 with the protocol of Amenemhat III. The beginning of the dateline in a third stela (WG 06) is apart from two vertical strokes indicating a 2-year. It commemorates, without doubt, a third occasion of presence in the site during Amenemhat III's reign because the two other mentions of date are damaged years (Year 23 and Year 41).

The Italian-American archaeological mission discovered during 2004/2005 a stela (WG 05) dated

to Amenemhat III. This Abydian stela is divided into two parts: an official superior register representing King Amenemhat III offering to the god Min and behind him a certain overseer of the cabinet of the Head of the South *Nebtu*. The lower register is divided into two parts, each consisting of three horizontal lines at the top and the representation of a standing civil agent with a text in two opposite columns.

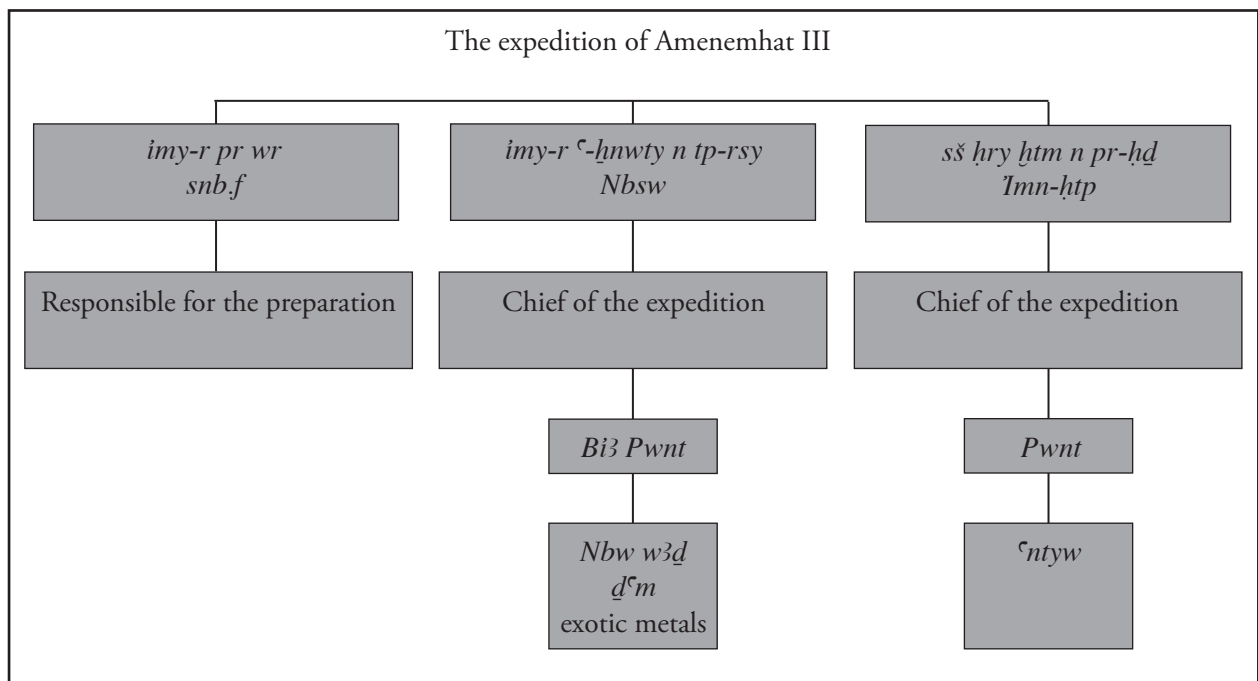
The organization of the expedition or the two expeditions quoted on the stela is not clear. Three civil officials are mentioned: the *imy-r pr wr snb.f* 'the High steward *Senbef*' considered as the highest dignitary appeared in the text; the *imy-r c-hnwtj n tp-rsy Nebtu* 'overseer of the cabinet of the Head of the South *Nebtu*' and his brother *sš hry htm n pr-hd Imn-htp* 'the Scribe responsible for the seal of the Treasury, Amenhotep'. Two destinations are mentioned, namely, Punt and Bia-Punt.

Several hypotheses could be detected in this case: two missions effectuated under the supervision of the High steward *Senbef*; the one supervised by *Nebtu* to Bia-Punt., and the other one to Punt led by his brother *Amenhotep*.



The other suggestion is a single mission sent under the auspice of the high steward towards the vast country Punt where two officials divided its responsibilities in two, The one towards the main destination Punt led by *Amenhotep*, and the other in the Desert near the mines region called Bia-Punt led by *Nbsu*; the third hypothesis is that we have only one expedition led by *Senbef* and at its arrival or its destination, this one diverts in two: one to Punt and the other to Bia-Punt.

By comparing this text with the stela of *Antefoker-Ameny* and generally with the mission of Senusert I, we sense a single expedition divided into three episodes: first one happened in the Nile Valley to prepare the expedition and its logistics, where *Senbef* was the person in charge; the second one the journey to Punt led by Amenhotep and searched for Punt and its main products; the other one headed to the mines of Punt to bring these exotic metals as the green gold and electrum²².



Furthermore, I would like to join an ostracon mentioning the reception of ships, some of them carried the name of Amenemhat III.

The expedition of Year 8 of Amenemhat IV

Evidence

1. Boxes WG 02 and WG 21

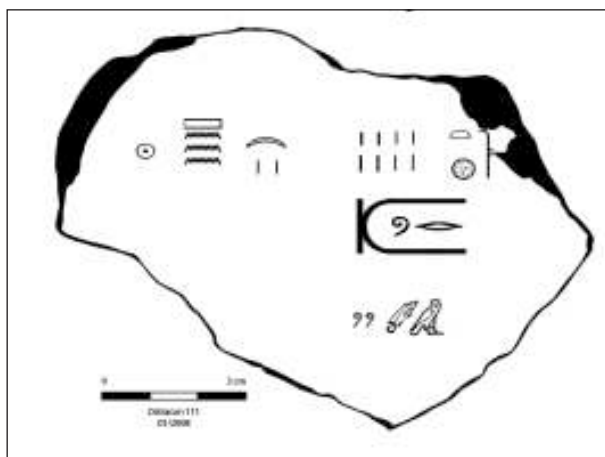
The similar text was written on the small side of two wooden boxes. Their actual state of conservation is critical. The damaged text consists of four horizontal lines occupying the center of the middle part.



1. *rnpt-sp 8 hr hm n*
 2. *[nsw-bity] M3^c-hrw[R^c] di ʿnh d[t]*
 3. *inw...Pwnt*
 4. *... shd nfrw sš nsw ddi*
1. Year 8 under the Majesty of
 2. [King Upper and Lower Egypt] Maa-Kheru-[Re], given life etern[ally]
 3. *The tribute ... Punt*
 4. *... controller of recruits, royal scribe Djed*

2. Ostrakon [WG O111]

A small ostrakon of 11 cm long, 7 cm large and 1 cm thick, was discovered on the site. The yellow color sherd carries a hieratic text of three lines.



1. *[rnpt]-sp 8 3pd 2 smw*
 2. *...[M3^ct-h]rw-[r^c]*
 3. *...[r]mw 200*
1. [Year] 8, second month of shemu
 2. *...[Maatkhe]ru[re]*
 3. *...fish rem 200*

Conclusion¹

The Italian-American mission in Wadi Gawasis realized an incredible discovery during the seasons of excavations 2005/2006 and 2006/2007²³. It is about wooden boxes, piled up in front of the entrance of the caves where the workers, craftsmen and sailors sheltered and stored their materials. Two among these carried hieroglyphic texts on its side. This text consists of four horizontal lines informing us about an expedition sent during the Year 8 of Amenemhat IV to bring the marvels of Punt (*bj3wt Pwnt*). The inspector of recruits, royal scribe Djedy led this expedition. Apparently, this operation was confirmed by other epigraphic evidences such as an ostrakon mentioning the Year 8 (Ostrakon WG 105) and another one with the name of Amenemhat IV (Ostrakon WG 111).

In conclusion, the epigraphic data shed light on a series of expeditions starting from the port of Mersa Gawasis towards the land of Punt, from the reign of Senusert I till the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, with probably the last affair known for the reign of Amenemhat IV passing through the reign of Amenemhat II, Senusert II, Senusert III and Amenemhat III. We are looking forward to the Italo-American mission to find other epigraphic evidences attesting Amenemhat I, first king of the Dynasty, and Sobek-nofru the last queen, to have a series of expeditions without intervals, sent almost to the same destination, searching for the same product, during all the reigns of kings of the Twelfth Dynasty.

Notes

- 1 I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the efforts of Professor Abdel Monem Sayed, discoverer of the Wadi Gawasis as a pioneer and founder of the Red Sea studies. Prof. Sayed passed away last year, May Allah forgive and have mercy on him

A.M. Sayed, 'Discovery of the Site of 12th Dynasty Port at Wadi Gawasis on the Red Sea Shore', *RdÉ* 29 (1977), 150, pl. 12 (b); C. Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne* (Bruxelles, 1995), doc. 174, p. 714; D. Farout, 'Des expéditions dans la mer Rouge au début de la XIIIe dynastie', *Égypte Afrique & Orient* 41 (2006), 48.
- 2 G.H. Fischer, *Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy: A Beginner's Guide to Hieroglyphic Writing Hieroglyphes*, (New-York, 1997), p.25, n° 1267a, who translated the title ce-mr as 'official of the ocean'.
- 3 Le d derrière we semble une erreur de copie.
- 4 This toponym which apparently design Mersa Gawasis had already appeared on the text of Khentykhetyour's stela but with other orthography.
- 5 Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, pp.169-173, pl. 15 d-f et 16 a-b; Sayed, *JEA* 64, pp.70-71; J. Leclant, 'L'exploration des côtes de la mer Rouge. A la quête de Pount et des secrets de la mer Erythrée', *Annales d'Ethiopie* 11 (1978), 399; Nibbi, *ASAE* 64, pp.69- 74; A. M. Sayed, 'New Light on the Recently Discovered Port on the Red Sea Shore', *CdE* 58 (1983), pp. 29-30; L. Bradbury, 'Reflections on Traveling to God's Land and Punt in the Middle Kingdom', *JARCE* 25 (1988), p. 134; D. Farout, 'La carrière du whmw Ameny et l'organisation des expéditions au Ouadi Hammamat au Moyen Empire', *BIFAO* 94 (Le Caire, 1994), pp.143-4, 151-5, pl. I, p. 169; Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, 380-82, doc.172, p. 711-712; C. Vandersleyen, *Ouadj our, wæe wr, Un autre aspect de la vallée du Nil* (Bruxelles, 1999), doc. 136, 51, 58, 132-5, 245; D. Fabre 2004/2005, 41, 82-84, 147; Farout, *Égypte Afrique & Orient*, 41, 43-45.
- 6 Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, 712 propose Ìr in the place of nw.
- 7 Sayed, *CdE* 58, pp. 29-30.
- 8 Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, 169-173, pl. 15 d-f et 16 a-b; Sayed, *JEA* 64, pp.70-71 (in Arabic); Nibbi, *ASAE* 64, 69- 74; Sayed, *CdE* 58, 29-30; Bradbury, *JARCE* 25, 127-156, fig. 7-11; Farout, *BIFAO* 94, 143-4, 151-5, pl. I, p.169; Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, 380-82, doc.172, 711-712; Vandersleyen, *Ouadj our, wæd wr, Un autre aspect de la vallée du Nil*, doc. 136, 51, 58, 132-5, 245; Fabre, *Le destin maritime de l'Égypte ancienne*, 41, 82-84, 147; Farout, *Égypte Afrique and Orient*, 41, 43-52, 43-45.
- 9 Professor Abdel Monem Sayed had showed, in several occasions, the nature of these anchors, their functions, and their reuse as a commemorative monument after the return of the expedition.
- 10 Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, 1977, 150, 157-169, Fig. 2-6, pl. 13 (d-e) et 14; A. M. Sayed, *The Discovery*, *JEA* 64, 69-71, pl. XI; Sayed, *JEA* 66, pp.154-155; Nibbi, *ASAE* 64, 69-72; Aufrère, et al., *L'Égypte restituée, 2, sites et temples des déserts*, 202-203; Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, 380-85, doc.173, 713-715; Fabre, *Le destin maritime de l'Égypte ancienne*, 41, 194; Farout, *Égypte Afrique & Orient*, 41, 45-48.
- 11 Stèle Dunham N 1934: Discovered by J. Burton in the la Roman station of Wadi Gasus about 7 km of the Red Sea shore. It was published in catalogue Sotheby on July 1836, and then transported to Alnwick Castle, residence of Northumberland Duc. Now, it is conserved in Gulbenkian museum of Oriental Art, university of Durham. Anyway, it is an abydien stela in basalt of 52 × 30 cm. In the top, the king Amenemhat II presents nw vases to Min de Coptos. The line which showed the rite is graved in vertical signs separated the upper official part of lower private one concerning the dignitary is inscribed in six vertical lines and a representation of a man in adoring position. J. Burton, *Sotheby Catalogue, juillet 1836* (1836), pp.33-4; C. Leemans, *Monumens Égyptiens portant des légendes royales* (Paris, 1838), pl. V (n°46); S. Birch, *Catalogue of the collection of Egyptian Antiquities at Alnwick Castle* (London, 1970), 157, n. 1 (n°34); A. Nibbi, 'Remarks on the Two Stelae from the Wadi Gasus', *JEA* 62 (1976), 46 et 50; Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, p.141; Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, doc. 170, 709-710.
- 12 Burton, *Sotheby Catalogue*, 33-4; C. Leemans, *Monumens Égyptiens portant des légendes royales*, pl. V (n°46); Birch, *Catalogue of the collection of Egyptian Antiquities at Alnwick Castle*, 267, pl. 3; A. Erman, 'Stelen aus Wadi Gasus bei Qoser', *ZÄS* 20 (1882), 203-4; P. Vernus, 1970, p. 157, n. 1 (n°34); Nibbi, *JEA* 62, 46 et 50; Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, p.141; Obsomer, *Sésostris I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, doc. 170, 709-10.

- 13 J.G. Wilkinson, *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society* 29, (1830); Burton, *Sotheby Catalogue, juillet 1836*, 33-34; Birch, *Catalogue of the collection of Egyptian Antiquities at Alnwick Castle*, 267, pl. 4; Erman, *ZÄS* 20, 203-204; Nibbi, *JEA* 62, pp. 47, 50; Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, p. 141; D. Franke 'The Career of Khnumhotep III of Beni Hasan and the so-called Decline of the nomarchs', in S. Quirke (ed.), *Middle Kingdom Studies* (Londres, 1991), 59-60; J.M.A.A. Janssen, 1946; Sayed, *CdE* 58, 31-32.
- 14 Stèle Durham N 1935: Discovered by Sir John Gardiner Wilkinson in a sanctuary (he called it the temple) of Wadi Gasus and it is conserved actually in Alnwick Castle. An abydien stela in basalt of 66 × 35 cm. A scene represented the king before the god Soped. A horizontal line and eight vertical lines run the lower register with a representation of a man and another vertical line behind him. J.G. Wilkinson, *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society* 29 nov. (1830); Burton, *Sotheby Catalogue, juillet 1836*, pp. 33-34; Birch, *Catalogue of the collection of Egyptian Antiquities at Alnwick Castle*, 267, pl. 4; Erman, *ZÄS* 20, 203-204; Nibbi, *JEA* 62, pp. 47, 50; Sayed, *RdÉ* 29, 141; Franke, in Quirke (ed.), *Middle Kingdom Studies*, 59-60; J.M.A.A. Janssen, 1946; Sayed, *CdE* 58, 31-32; Obsomer, *Sésostri I, Etude chronologique et historique du règne*, doc. 171, 710-711.
- 15 We discussed the stela of Khnumhotep from Wadi Gasus in details in another paper presented in honor to Charles Bonnet on July 2008 and published in *Abgadiat* 3.
- 16 E. Mahfouz and R. Pirelli, 'Epigraphy', in R. Fattovich and K. Bard (eds.), *Mersa/Wadi Gawasis 2006-2007 Report* (2007), 31-34; Mahfouz, in Fattovich and Bard (eds.), *Mersa/Wadi Gawasis 2006-2007 Report*, 431-438; E. Mahfouz, 'Les ostraca hiératiques du Ouadi Gaouasis', *RdE* 59 (2008a), 275-322.
- 17 Franke, in Quirke (ed.), *Middle Kingdom Studies*, 151, dossier 202; voir aussi H. Steckeweh, *Die Fürstengräber von Qaw* (Leipzig, 1936), 9, n° 1, 53, pl. 18: he thought that Wæĭ-kæ is a short form for Wæĭ-kæ-snb.
- 18 Quirke, *RdE* 37, 111.
- 19 Mahfouz, Pirelli, in Fattovich, Bard (eds.), *Mersa/Wadi Gawasis 2006-2007 Report*, www.archaeogate.
- 20 E. Mahfouz, 'Amenemhat III au ouadi Gaouasis', *BIFAO* 108 (2008b), 253-279.
- 21 R. Pirelli, 'Stela 5', in K. Bard and R. Fattovich (eds.), *Harbor of the Pharaohs to the Land of Punt, Archaeological Investigations at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis – Egypt* (Napoli, 2007), 219-224, fig. 90-91; Mahfouz, in Fattovich, Bard (eds.), *Mersa/Wadi Gawasis 2006-2007 Report*, 88-99.
- 22 The bas-relief of Hatshepsout: E. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari*, III (Londres, 1898), 74; *Urk* IV, 328-9, H.
- 23 E. Mahfouz, 'Inscribed Box', in K. Bard and R. Fattovich, *Harbor of the Pharaohs to the Land of Punt, Archaeological Investigations at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis – Egypt*, 2001-2005 (Napoli, 2007), 238, fig. 99-100.