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AN OMPHALOS FROM NAPATA

By F. LL. GRIFFITH, M.A.

WITH Dr REISNER's kind permission a sketch, made from a photograph, is here given of a remarkable Meroitic monument which he discovered last year at Gebel Barkal, towards the inner end of the great temple of Ammon. It is of sandstone and evidently of moderate size. Its conical shape is precisely that of the omphalos at the oracle of Delphi¹. In a previous note² I ventured to identify it with the umbilicus-like figure of the god of the Oasis of Ammon which is recorded only by Quintus Curtius in the following description:—"The thing which is worshipped as a god has not the shape that artificers have usually applied to the gods; its appearance is most like an umbilicus, and it is made of an (?) emerald and gems cemented together³." But M. DARESSY had already discovered a strange sack-like form of Ammon of Karnak with which he quite appropriately compared this description of the Ammon in the Oasis⁴.

Anyhow the present omphalos is unique from Nubia and is probably to be connected with an oracle of Ammon. Perhaps the imitative Nubians took the idea from Delphi. The curved top is decorated as if with strings of beads or pendants, the sides are sculptured with figures of deities and two royal cartouches, and a band of upright lotus buds and flowers encircles the base. The cartouches contain an Egyptian prenomen

Nibmeref, copied from that of Amenhotp III, and a Meroitic nomen

?????

Mnhnêwêl (?) i.e. Amani-khanêwêl (?). This makes a second

Meroitic Nibmeref, there being already known an Amani-tenmêimize with that prenomen in the shrine of Pyramid A 38 at Meroe⁵. The date of the monument would seem to be round about A.D. 1.

¹ DAREMBERG ET SAGLIO, *Dict. des Antiq.*, s.v. Omphalos.

² *Journal* III, p. 221.

³ CURTIUS IV, 7.

⁴ *Annales du Service des Antiquités* IX, 64.

⁵ *Mer. Inscr.* I, nos. 66, 67.