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**Response**: Bourriau. “Relations between Egpt and Kerma during the Middle and New Kingdoms” in *Egypt and Africa* AND “Nubians in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period…” in *SaK*

In “Relations between…” Bourriau examines the evidence for Kerma peoples in Egypt, during the Middle-New Kingdoms (Middle Kerma, Classic Kerma and Post-Classsic Kerma cultures in Nubia). Similarly, in her article “Nubians in Egypt…” Bourriau investigates the ceramic evidence for Nubian-Egyptian relations primarily in the Second Intermediate Period. Inspired by Reisner’s work which looked at Egyptian pottery found in graves with Kerma ware in Egypt, Bourriau expands this analysis to include Egyptian pottery found in pan graves in Egypt. Chronologically, Bourriau’s articles pick up where Trigger’s section leaves off.

Her article “Relations between…” organizes the evidence into Egyptian chronological periods – looking first at the Middle Kingdom evidence, then the SIP and finally the New Kingdom sources. In this article she engages with ceramics, settlement and funerary evidence, Egyptian forts in Nubia , while noticeably silent about the textual sources. She does make a few references to textual source material in “Nubians in Egypt” but even in this article, it is only used adjacently to other lines of evidence. Bourriau begins “Relations between…” with a short discussion of Middle Kingdom evidence for Nubians in Egypt. She asserts that there was developed trade networks and that the MK forts were central to its success. She suggests that the decreasing royal power in Itj-tawy was the primary cause of increasing supplies originating in Upper Egypt. As a corollary, there is at this time a distinct relationship between Upper Egypt and Nubia, with “almost no evidence of direct contact between Lower Egypt and Kerma or any part of Nubia” (130) from the late Thirteenth Dynasty until the Eighteenth Dynasty. I wonder what ‘almost no evidence’ means here? This weakening power in the north, and growing relationship between Nubia and Upper Egypt, allows for a more permeable frontier to develop. This is evidenced by the settlement site of Ballas, near Thebes. Here a late Twelfth or early Thirteenth Dynasty, single period settlement was excavated and found to have been occupied by peoples of Kerma based on used cooking vessels produced in an uniquely Kerma form. By the mid Seventeenth Dynasty she suggests Nubians had taken over the Egyptian forts in Nubia. In Egypt, Bourriau believes the continuation of Kerma ware suggests the presence of Kerma people into the Eighteenth Dynasty (135). After the reunification of Egypt, she proposes that “Kerma Nubians moved northwards…perhaps…as a contingent within the army” (136). She then concludes with an analysis of a wealthy Saqqara burial possessing two Kerma beakers. She writes, “assuming the Saqqara burial is of an Egyptianized Kerma Nubian,” (why should we assume this?!) “ it preserves the latest traces in Egypt of a culture about to be overwhelmed, first by the military and then by the colonizing force of the Egyptians. The identity of that culture as Post-Classic Kerma seems clear” (140). I am not totally convinced that this is so clear!

In “Nubians in Egypt” Bourriau investigates Nubian peoples in Egypt by focusing on the ceramic evidence. She argues that “the development of a form or ware was a response, conscious or unconscious, by the potters to factors such as function, the market, raw materials, as well as the mere passage of time” (27). Her desire is to understand the environment which motivated these conscious or unconscious responses. She quickly jumps into a discussion of the scholarly confusion/misunderstanding of what she sees as two distinct Nubian groups who interact with Egypt during the SIP: Pan grave people, people associated with Classic Kerma ware. This developed, she proposes, before Reisner’s landmark studies because people misinterpreted Kerma ware, often categorizing it as predynastic, or lumping Kerma ware culture with Pan grave culture (referring to both as Pan grave). According to her descriptions, the Pan grave peoples were semi-nomadic cattle breeders from Lower Nubia who served as mercenaries in the Egyptian army and were referred to as *Medjay* in ancient Egyptian texts. On the contrary, the cultural group associated with Classic Kerma ware can be categorized into two subgroups based on burial types: semicontracted, shallow rectangular pit burials (like those found by Garstang at Abydos) and ‘Egyptian’ burials with Classic Kerma ware burial goods. A big problem I have, is that she assumes that these people are invariably Nubian without any explanation. Why can’t these burials (at least in part) be of Egyptians with imported Kerma ceramics vessels? She then identifies 15 grave groups from Egypt in which the presence of Kerma ware has been confirmed. This number she suggests is lower than it should be due to the above misidentifications of Kerma ware and its subsequent mislabeling in excavation reports. Even so, this number seems rather low for many of the conclusions she draws about Nubians in Egypt more generally.

This is a reoccurring concern I have with the two articles I read by Bourriau this week. She seems to make very large assumptions, based on – from my understanding – very little material evidence. In “Relations between…” she describes a burial at Saqqara with two Kerma beakers as being “both in contents and in the deposition of the body, thoroughly Egyptian” (140). She then comments only a few lines later: “assuming the Saqqara burial is of an Egyptianized Kerma Nubia it preserves the latest traces in Egypt of a culture about to be overwhelmed...” (140). Why is this assumption to be made? On what basis? This is a HUGE assumption to be making which makes a HUGE impact on the validity and strength of her argument. While I appreciate her being honest and clear that this is indeed an assumption, the ease by which she makes these assumptions and then develops conclusions without serious discussion about the implications of these assumptions makes me uneasy.