



## Glass bead trade in Northeast Africa. The evidence from Meroitic and post-Meroitic Nubia

Joanna Then-Obłuska

Strings of colorful glass beads were a popular commodity traded throughout ancient Nubia in the earlier half of the first millennium AD. Combining macroscopic examination with laboratory analyses, the author breaks new ground in Nubian studies, establishing diagnostic markers for a study of trading markets and broader economic trends in Meroitic and post-Meroitic Nubia.

Archaeometric results, lucidly presented and discussed, identify the origins of the glass from which the beads under investigation were made. The demonstrated South Indian/Sri Lankan provenance of some of the ready-made beads from Nubian burial contexts and a reconstruction of their distribution patterns in Northeast Africa is the first undisputed proof of contacts between Nubia and the Red Sea coast. Reaching beyond that, it shows Nubia's involvement in the Asian

maritime trade, whether directly or indirectly, during a period of intensive interchanges between the 4th and 6th centuries AD.

The study was funded from the National Science Centre grant DEC-2013/09/D/HS3/0450 for the project „A reconstruction of trade contacts in Northeast Africa: an interdisciplinary analysis of Nubian personal adornment” directed by Dr. Then-Obłuska and affiliated at the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw .

**Joanna Then-Obłuska** is a researcher at the University of Warsaw and an Associate of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, specializing in the archaeology of Northeast Africa. She received her PhD in Archaeology from the Jagiellonian University (2008). Since then her projects have focused primarily on issues of society and trade, looking at ancient Sudanese and Egyptian beads and jewelry in terms of both material and bead-making techniques. She uses archaeometric results to understand the economic role of bead imports during the time of an intensive Indian Ocean trade. Recently, her research has branched off into Ethiopia.

**Joanna Then-Obłuska with Barbara Wagner**

**Glass bead trade in Northeast Africa. The evidence from Meroitic and post-Meroitic Nubia** [=PAM Monograph Series 10], Warsaw: PCMA, University of Warsaw Press, 2019

Warsaw 2019

ISBN 978-83-235-3899-8

<https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.9788323539070>

316 pages

Soft cover with flaps

library exchange:  
pcma@uw.edu.pl  
(attn: Agnieszka Pieńkowska)

For other PCMA publications go to:  
[www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/publications/](http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/publications/)

Postal address:

Nowy Świat 4, PL 00-497 Warszawa  
fax (+48 22) 628 45 23  
phone (+48 22) 826 52 16