**Catherine Bishop**

The Kerman Bucrania tradition

The practice of placing bovine skulls in and around burials transcended the barriers of time

and space, lasting for over 5,000 years at hundreds of sites. Kerma, one of the largest sites

in Nubia, expanded on this tradition, increasing numbers of bucrania to the furthest extent

allowed by the environment. Comparative sites, such as Adindan and Deberia, saw and

average of 5 bucrania placed around graves, relative to the 38 of Kerma. This statistic

ignores Kerman burial CE25 – 253, which is said to have over 4,000 bucrania placed in herd

formation, another aspect of this tradition that is unique to Kerma. The structure of their

placement will be analysed, presenting reflecting societal organisation within the Kerman

culture. The sheer amount of bucrania placed at the site has led to studies of their origins,

with Honegger (2012) undertaking C-14 analysis, suggesting the bovines, or their remains,

travelled hundreds of miles before reaching Kerma. Therefore, I theorise participants in

funerary ceremonies brought bucrania for this specific practice. I also aim to illustrate the

importance of horn deformation in bovine skulls, and the meanings of each type. This paper

focusses on the exponential growth in the bucrania tradition from Early Kerma (2500 – 2050

BCE) to Middle Kerma (2050 – 1750 BCE), demonstrating how a specific culmination of

environmental and cultural factors were necessary for the tradition to arise.