

# SUDAN & NUBIA 26





# SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Volume 26

2022

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Front cover. Stone slab A3 used as a paving slab in Temple 4, Qasr Ibrim, showing Taharqa and Amun (photograph courtesy of F. Aldsworth).

Above. Frontal scan of lion head, Naga (Kroeper and Perzlmeier 2022, fig. 21, © Naga Project, 3-D scans by TrigonArt BauerPraus GbR).

DOI: 10.32028/9781803274096

## Book Review.

**Budka, J., with contributions by J. Auenmüller, A. M. Hansen, F. Heinrich, V. Hinterhuber, P. Paxinos, N. Pöllath, H. Sattmann, S. Schnedl and M. Ullmann. *Across Borders 2. Living in New Kingdom Sai. Archaeology of Egypt, Sudan and the Levant 1. Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.***

**ISBN 978-3-7001-8402-7**

**561 pages, 5 plans, 40 tables, 139 figures, 145 colour plates**

Loretta Kilroe

Publication of the Across Borders excavations at the important site of Sai island, ancient *šꜣꜥ.t*, has been eagerly awaited as an important contribution to understanding the Middle Nile Region under Egyptian control during the New Kingdom. This volume, the second in a new monographic series dedicated to the interconnections between Egypt, Sudan, and the Levant (see Budka 2017 for the first volume on SAV1 North), details the research conducted by the Across Borders Project on two sectors at Sai – SAV1 East and SAV1 West, run by Julia Budka from 2013–2017. The author is well known from her significant fieldwork in both Sudan and Egypt, which gives her a vast body of experience to tackle such a large project, and she has gathered numerous specialists to contribute effectively to the volume. This hefty book does not disappoint – it is a detailed, thorough discussion comprised of eight detailed and highly illustrated chapters. Importantly, it is also available for free via Open Access, making it particularly accessible for research. Discussing archaeological, scientific and epigraphic sources, it fulfils its aim of providing new insights into life on Sai Island during the New Kingdom, by exploring six differing ‘work tasks’ to direct research via different methodological approaches.

Chapter 1 provides a good introduction to the site, with a highly useful summary of previous research given going as far back as Çelebi in 1672/3, helpfully also depicted in table form. It notes that the main aim of the research was to assess whether Sai can be considered as a microcosm of a contemporary Egyptian town within a colonial sphere, using the cultural material found during excavations to assess how we can understand cultural identity at this key site. This question is of course vital to understanding this and other Egyptian settlements across New Kingdom Nubia.

Chapter 2 discusses the geology of the area. Sai in this respect acts as both a model for the geological motivations behind settlements of strategic areas, but also provides an important insight into early human histories across North Africa. It is clear that, in common with many sites along the Nile, the landscape surrounding Sai has constantly shifted since antiquity, a feature that can be observed even from the descriptions gleaned from early travellers up the Nile. The discussions of multiple scientific analyses and sample taking acts as an important example for other excavations to follow. In particular, the soil analysis conducted provided an innovative method for understanding the relationship between the construction of a site and its local topography, and was discussed in detail. Budka details the team’s exploration of stone and clay sources around the site, which adds to our understanding of the intricacies of *chaînes opératoires* across the Middle Nile region during the New Kingdom. This is particularly useful with the exploration of local and non-local sandstones, which has a significant impact on our knowledge of how stone was exploited and transported across Nubia at this time.

Chapter 3 deals with the main focus of the excavations – the town and its evolution. Prior to this

work, almost two-thirds of the New Kingdom settlement was unexcavated, and so this publication adds much to our comprehension both of the site itself and as a comparative for other contemporary Egyptian sites across the Middle Nile Region. The excavations at SAV1 East and West are described in detail with meticulous plans included, which helps to illustrate for the reader the complex rebuilding phases across the site. The confirmation of no earlier Kerma remains in this area of the town's founding, and its establishment in the early 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty is important new information for our understanding of how the Egyptians moved into the area, as is the evidence for ongoing use in the Ramesside period despite the disappearance of contemporary architecture in many places. The evident urban planning and its subsequent natural development is particularly intriguing, making important comparisons with sites such as Amara West (Spencer 2014).

In Chapter 4 we move onto the material remains from the site, which as expected contained much mixed material from the site's long history, with items from the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty right through to the modern period – of course a major challenge for the team. This volume only deals with the New Kingdom material, which was slightly disappointing, and I do hope there are plans to publish the later material at a future date. However, this remains a valuable contribution for interpreting both macro and micro activities across the site, with accurate, detailed drawings and numerous photographs, and a valuable list of finds. 4182 objects were recorded up to 2017, following the categorisation process established for the site of Memphis, and the repertoire shows many familiarities with that found at sites such as Amara West, Elephantine, and Buhen. The addition of 20 female figurines to the known corpus is of particular interest in the broader context of these objects across Nubia. Although the pottery is only cursorily discussed as this will be fully presented in a later volume, this first look has much of interest and the repertoire is clearly comparable to that found at other contemporary Nubian New Kingdom sites as well as those in Egypt. In particular it highlights the increasingly evident presence of site-specific and Egypto-Nubian hybrid material across these New Kingdom sites.

Chapter 5 deals with the environmental remains, discussing a diverse selection of studies including mud brick analysis, archaeobotanical, faunal and mollusc material as well as the human remains found in the town. The implications of mudbrick analysis for modelling the agricultural economy of a site are telling and provide another way of understanding the living situation on the ground. In particular, the presence of pigs as part of an Egyptian rather than Nubian lifestyle is an important concept.

The inclusion of the prosopographical assessment of the people that made up the Sai community in Chapter 6 provides a summary of the textual sources relating to the site, and uses this to attempt a partial reconstruction of its social fabric. It is refreshing to see a focus on whether people were permanent members of the Sai community rather than the typical focus on ethnic groups, which is often highly anachronistic. That such a study is inevitably limited to the upper echelons of a literate part of society is noted, as is its male bias, but regardless this is still an important approach and it is helpful to see the material gathered together. The potential of Deputies of Kush being sourced locally has some interesting implications for our understanding of the contemporary political situation.

Chapter 7 is a highly useful summary of how this research allows us to fit Sai within the broader macrocosm of New Kingdom Nubia. With now solid evidence that the town was founded by Ahmose at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, the site's development reflects political shifts as Egypt absorbs Nubia into its administration, and is an important contribution to the broader understanding of settlement patterns across Upper Nubia.

Finally, Chapter 8 summarises how we should understand Sai as a microcosm. Budka highlights the fact that this, like any other temple town, should be understood as multi-faceted rather than as a mirror of contemporary Egypt. Importantly, Budka deals with the cultural entanglement metaphor here, providing

a good summary of this now oft-cited model, before discussing how the vast amount of information provided in the book can allow us to infer much about both the Sai community and Egyptian occupation in general.

To conclude, this body of work adds an important piece to the puzzle when understanding life in New Kingdom Nubia and its political, economic, and practical considerations. Despite a few editing issues, particularly the hyphenation of words across lines which can make it difficult to read, the book is a welcome contribution to the study of New Kingdom Nubia and should act as a model for future excavations with its highly diverse and detailed project aspects. I look forward to the future accompanying publications.

## References

- Budka, J. 2017. *Across Borders I. The New Kingdom Town of Sai Island, Sector SAV1 North*. Contributions to the Archaeology of Egypt, Nubia and the Levant 4.
- Spencer, N. 2014. Amara West: considerations on Urban Life in Colonial Kush', in J. R. Anderson and D. A. Welsby (eds), *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*. Leuven. 457-486.

## Membership details

We heartily welcome new members. Members receive *Sudan & Nubia* each year and details of the Society's events. Discounts are available to members on publications produced by the Society. Membership forms can be downloaded from the Society's website and should be completed and sent to the Honorary Secretary. Payment can be made by sterling cheque drawn on a UK bank payable to SARS, by standing order or by credit/debit card through Worldpay accessed from the membership page on the website: <http://www.sudarchrs.org.uk/membership/>.

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Items for possible inclusion in future issues of *Sudan & Nubia* should be sent to the Honorary Secretary. Articles submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> June will be considered for inclusion in the issue to be published towards the end of that year. Prior to submission, please contact the Honorary Secretary for details relating to the formatting of your article. Please note that *Sudan & Nubia* is a blind peer-reviewed publication.

## Sudan & Nubia

Back-issues of the journal are available to members at a cost of £10 per copy, plus postage and packing (Issue 24 and following issues are available for £15 per copy +p&p). All are available, apart from numbers 1, 2 and 4. Articles from back-issues are available as free downloads from the Society's website shortly after publication- please follow the link: <http://sudarchrs2.dns-systems.net/resources/publications/bulletin-sudan-nubia/>. Copyright of all articles published in *Sudan & Nubia* and the illustrations contained within them, unless otherwise stated, rests with the authors. Where photographs are not acknowledged in the captions, they were taken by the authors of the article within which they appear.

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The Society is actively seeking to increase the holdings of the Archive and members who may have relevant material that they would like to donate, or allow to be copied and housed in the Archive, are urged to contact the Honorary Secretary at [SARS@britishmuseum.org](mailto:SARS@britishmuseum.org). The Archive is available for consultation by prior appointment.

## The Society's William Y. Adams Library

The Society is extremely grateful to its late Honorary President, Professor William Y. Adams, for the very generous donation of his extensive personal library of books and offprints relating to the archaeology of Sudan and Nubia and related subjects. This donation elevates the Society's library to amongst the best libraries of its kind in the UK. The pre-existing library, consisting of books from Sir Laurence Kirwan, along with donations from a number of individuals including Harry James, onetime Keeper of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, are being integrated into the new library and the catalogue will be available shortly online. The Library sits alongside the Society's archive, which together form a valuable research facility principally for the Middle Nile Valley but increasingly for areas further afield to the east, west and south.

## Grants from the Society

Unfortunately small grants from the Society will not be available in 2023.

## Support for the Society

The Society is heavily involved in fieldwork and in the publication of recent, and not so recent, excavations and surveys. These activities are only made possible by the generous support of a number of organisations and individuals. Particular thanks for support over the last year go to the Institute for Bioarchaeology, the British Museum and the Society's own individual Patrons. As always we receive unstinting cooperation from our colleagues in the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums. The Society is enormously grateful to all who have given it their time and resources.

## Gifts to Charity during your lifetime or in your Will

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society ('SARS') was established as a charity to advance public education, particularly through research, in the archaeology, the ancient and medieval history and traditional cultures of Sudan and Nubia, and related studies. We welcome any financial support which you may be prepared to give in order to enable SARS to promote the charitable objects for which it was established. There are a number of ways in which you can support SARS during your lifetime and in your Will:

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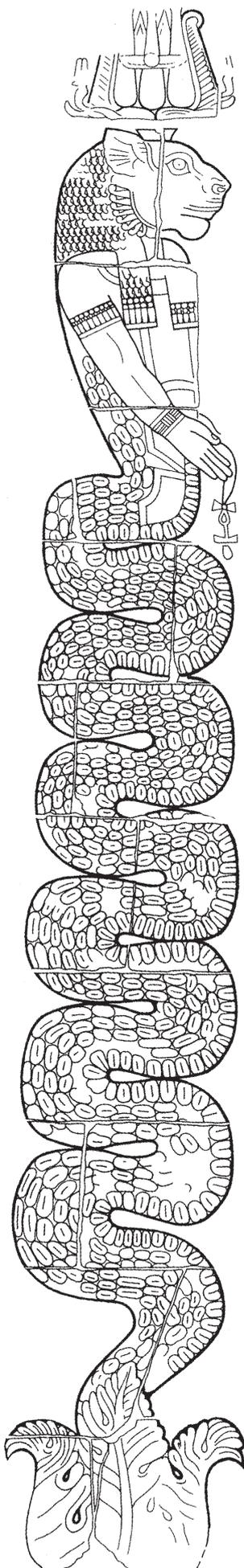
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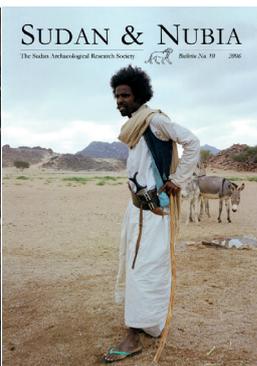
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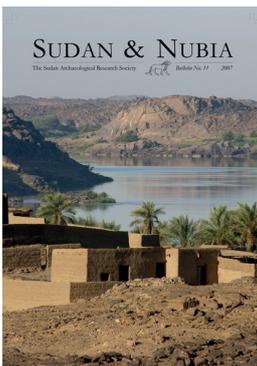
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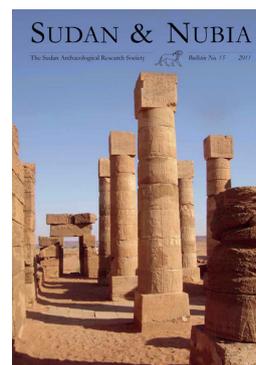
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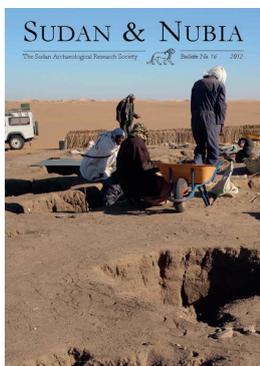
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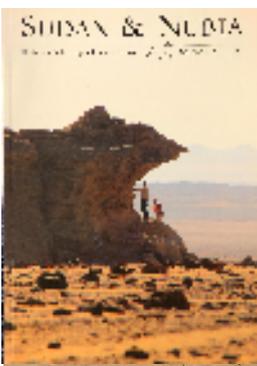
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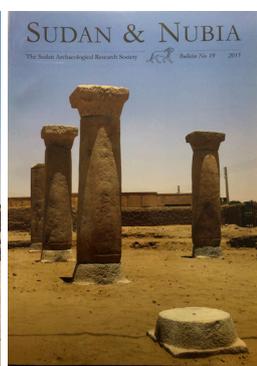
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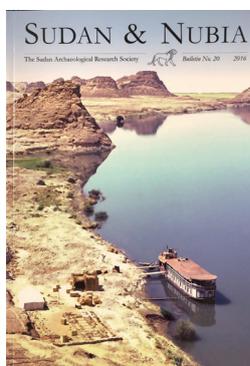
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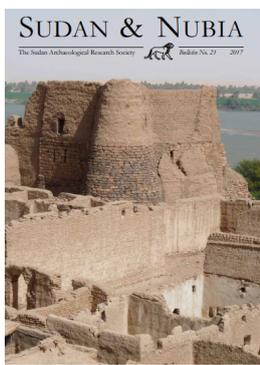
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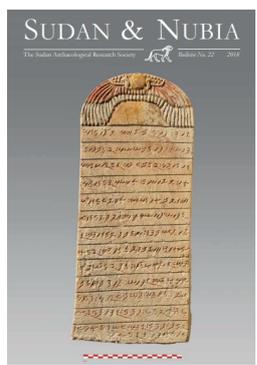
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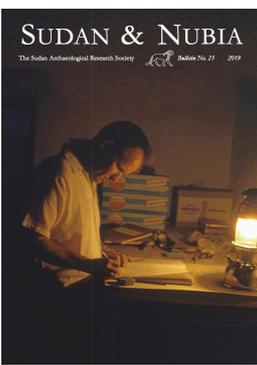
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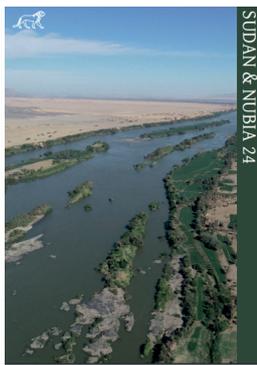
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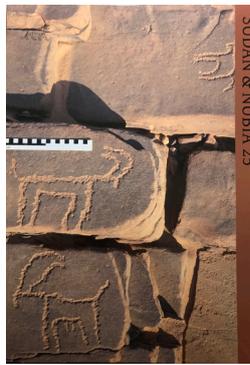
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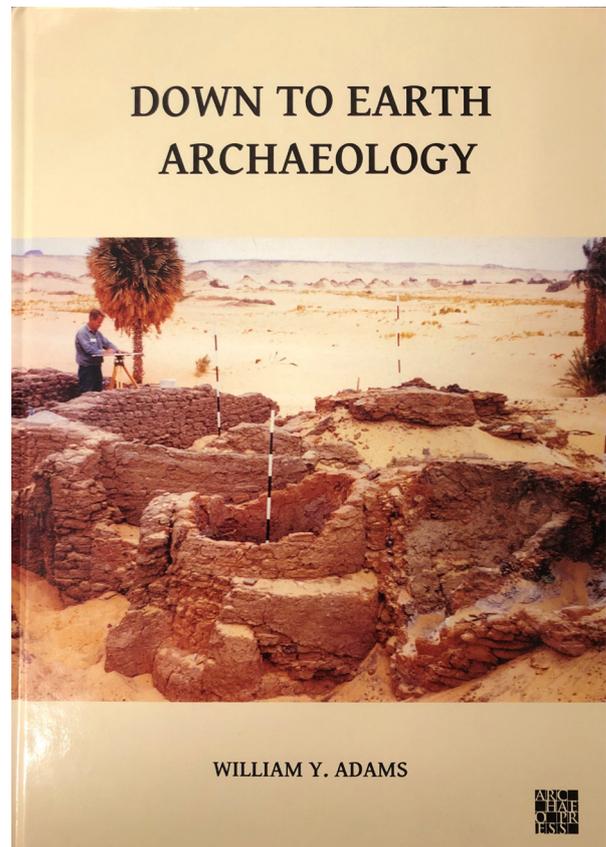
## Down to Earth Archaeology

W. Y. Adams, 2022

244 pages; 29 figures, 23 plates, 1 map (colour throughout).  
ISBN 9781803272290.

This volume collects 16 archaeological papers by Professor William Y. Adams, written at various times during his lengthy and productive academic career for different purposes and for different audiences. They range from reflections upon the successes, failures and lessons learned from the UNESCO International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia in the 1960s, to discussions and criticisms of the theoretical framework of 'New' or 'Processual Archaeology', as well as his work at sites such as Meinarti, Kulubnarti, Qasr Ibrim and Faras. This volume makes them available to a wider readership and was described by the author as his 'dernières pensées'.

Retail Price £59. Available to members for £49+P&P.



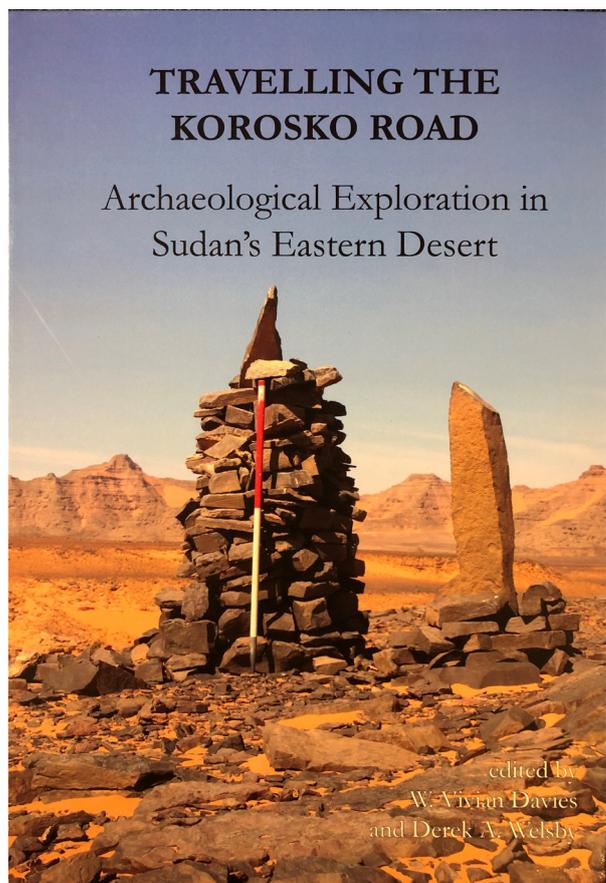
## Travelling the Korosko Road. Archaeological Exploration in Sudan's Eastern Desert.

Edited by W. Vivian Davies and Derek A. Welsby, 2020.

252 pages; 493 plates, 74 figures (colour throughout).  
ISBN 9781789698039.

This volume publishes the results of archaeological exploration carried out during the last 30 years in the Sudanese Eastern Desert. It is divided into two parts; the first detailing the work by the Centro Ricerche sul Deserto Orientale (CeRDO) along the Korosko road between 1989-2006; and the second outlining a short season of documentation by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society in 2013.

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Paintings on the west wall, Room B, in the tomb of Tanwetamani at el-Kurru, including the vignette of Book of the Dead Chapter 26 (photograph J. Anderson).



Debeira West excavations, 1963 (SARS Alexander Archive ALE S003A.09).