

SUDAN & NUBIA

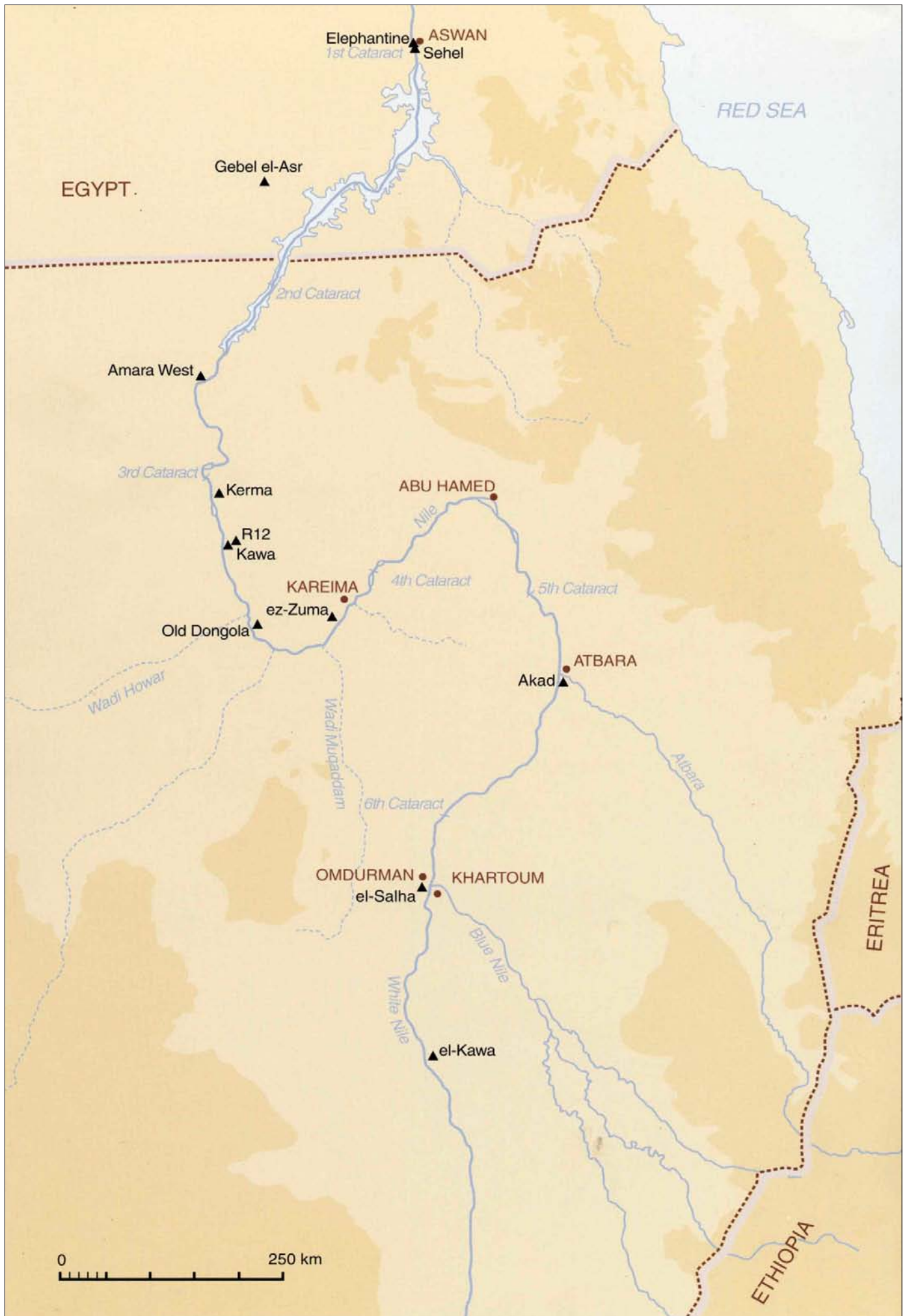
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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Contents

Introduction

Vivian Davies 1

Reports

The Second Excavation Season at R12, a Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach 2
Sandro Salvatori and Donatella Usai

Ceramic Traditions and Cultural Territories: the "Nubian Group" in Prehistory 8
Maria Carmela Gatto

Nubians on Elephantine Island 20
Dietrich Raue

Survey at Chephren's Quarry, Gebel el-Asr, Lower Nubia: 2002 25
Per Storemyr, Elizabeth Bloxam, Tom Heldal and Abdou Salem

The 2001-2002 Season of Excavation at Kerma: a summary 30
Charles Bonnet

Publishing Amara West: a progress report 31
Patricia Spencer

The Kushite Town and Cemetery at Kawa, the 2001-2002 season 32
Survey and excavations
Derek A. Welsby

Stabilisation and Investigation of the Wall Paintings 38
Claire Heywood

Does Aten Live On in Kawa (Kówwa)? 42
Herman Bell and Muhammad Jalal Hashim

Preliminary Report on Rescue Excavations at Akad 47
Mohamed Faroug A. Ali

Eastern Desert Ware, a first introduction 53
Hans Barnard

Old Nubian Houses of Sehel Island 58
Ossama A. W. Abdel Meguid

Archaeological Discoveries along the East Bank of the White Nile, 1997-2000 64
Khider Adam Eisa

The Is.I.A.O. el-Salha Archaeological Project 67
Donatella Usai and Sandro Salvatori

Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and ez-Zuma 73

Bogdan Żurawski

Miscellaneous

86

Front Cover: An apostle from the mural in the chapel at Baganarti containing the king's portrait.

Introduction

Vivian Davies

At the time of writing (mid-September 2002), the 10th International Conference for Nubian Studies has just finished, generously hosted by colleagues in the Università di Roma "La Sapienza". The large number of papers delivered shows how rapidly the subject of Middle Nile studies is growing, with significant advances in knowledge achieved since the last conference held in Boston four years ago, an encouraging state of affairs, to which the content of this present volume bears further witness. There was, however, one hugely important issue which overshadowed the event: the looming crisis of the new dam at the Fourth Cataract.

As reported by the Sudanese delegation, preparatory work for the dam has now begun and actual building will start in two years. It is expected to take a further seven years to complete. In an unwelcome echo of the Aswan High Dam scheme, the reservoir created will flood over 170km of the Nile Valley between the Fourth Cataract and Abu Hamed, enveloping, as we now know from preliminary surveys, thousands of archaeological sites - artefact scatters, settlements, cemeteries and rock-drawings dating from the Palaeolithic to the Islamic Periods. Very little is known about these sites; for the most part only that they exist. Our Sudanese colleagues are urgently appealing for assistance, so that as much as possible of the record may be investigated and documented before the area is lost to knowledge for ever. In response, SARS is this winter launching a campaign of rescue excavation in a region which we recently surveyed (see *Sudan & Nubia* 4 [2000], 51-7), but an extensive international effort will be required if any serious impact is to be made. Our next international colloquium, to be held at the British Museum on 8 May 2003, will focus on the dam emergency. All colleagues with an interest in helping are invited to attend.

Publishing Amara West: a progress report

Patricia Spencer

In the first issue of *Sudan & Nubia* I gave a brief account of the excavations of the Egypt Exploration Society at Amara West between 1938 and 1950 (Spencer 1997a, 34-9). Although well-recorded for excavations of the period, this work had, for various reasons, remained largely unpublished. Fortunately most of the excavation records have survived and are now in the EES archives in London. The *Sudan & Nubia* I article coincided with the appearance of the first volume containing the long-overdue publication of the excavations in the town and temple (Spencer 1997b). The second volume (Spencer 2002) is now in the press and will have been published by the time this bulletin is in the hands of SARS members.

Amara West II, The cemetery and the pottery corpus, includes a description of the excavation in the 1938-9 season of a number of tombs and burials in a cemetery north-east of the main town. The superstructures of the tombs were not preserved but many of the interments were found to be virtually intact and a number can be dated, on the forms of burial objects and accompanying ceramics, to the Napatan Period. The second part of the volume contains a publication of the pottery corpus devised and used during the 1938-9 and 1947-8 seasons at the site. Most of the pottery drawings come from the 1938-9 season when excavation concentrated on the temple and its reuse. Unfortunately little of the pottery from the 1947-8 season (when excavation concentrated on areas of the town) was drawn and the ceramic material from the 1948-9 and 1949-50 seasons was not recorded at all. This material is presumably somewhere in the stores of the Khartoum Museum and will hopefully one day be identified, recorded and published.

Apart from this pottery, there are two main aspects of the EES work at Amara which remain unpublished: the epigraphic drawings of the scenes and inscriptions in the Ramesside temple, and the thousands of objects found during the excavations.

The EES team recorded the temple scenes and texts by copying them onto plastic sheets at a one-to-one scale. The drawings were traced off and inked soon after they had been transported to England and some 'dummy' plates were prepared (Figure 1) but publication plans did not proceed further. The original drawings, because of their large dimensions, were stored in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum. In the mid 1980s, concern for their state of preservation led to the Society engaging Mr Harry Stewart to retrace and re-ink the drawings which he did with his customary skill. When major building works commenced at the Museum, the drawings were removed for

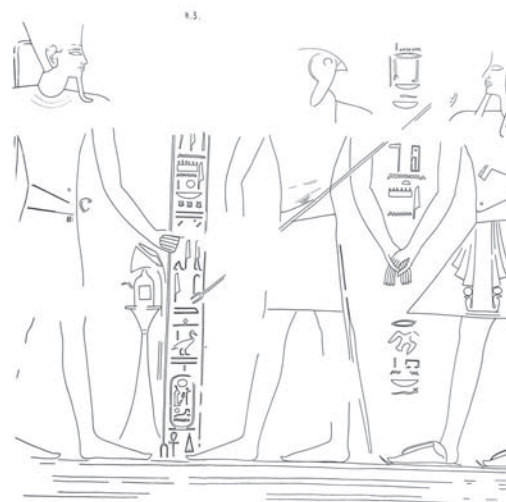


Figure 1. Amara West temple, vestibule, north wall, west end (see Spencer 1997b, pl. 44a).

safe-keeping to the Griffith Institute in Oxford. A recent (June 2002) examination of the drawings by the writer and Dr Robert Morkot has shown that the Stewart drawings are in excellent condition and the Society intends to have them returned to London where they can be photographically reduced and plates can be prepared for eventual publication. It is hoped that a publication of the temple reliefs, with a minimal commentary, will be achieved in the near future.

The thousands of objects found during the excavations were recorded with varying degrees of accuracy and supplementary information. Those objects assigned individual 'excavation numbers' were drawn and described on index cards. Other categories of objects, of which many examples were found (such as mud seals, net sinkers, etc.), were simply collected together and not described or catalogued individually. A Filemaker Pro database has been devised and entry of data on the objects has begun but this will be a long, slow process and rapid publication would be an unreasonable expectation. It is possible that conventional publication in book-form may not be thought appropriate for this material and consideration is being given to making the information available 'on-line' or on CD. Completion of the database is, however, many years in the future and, at present and given the rapid technological changes in data storage, it would seem sensible to leave all options open. In the meantime those objects from the 1938-9 season at Amara West which were divided to the Khartoum Museum are scheduled to be published shortly by Professor Hinkel and Abdelrahman Ali Mohammed (Hinkel and Mohammed 2002, forth.).

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