

SUDAN & NUBIA

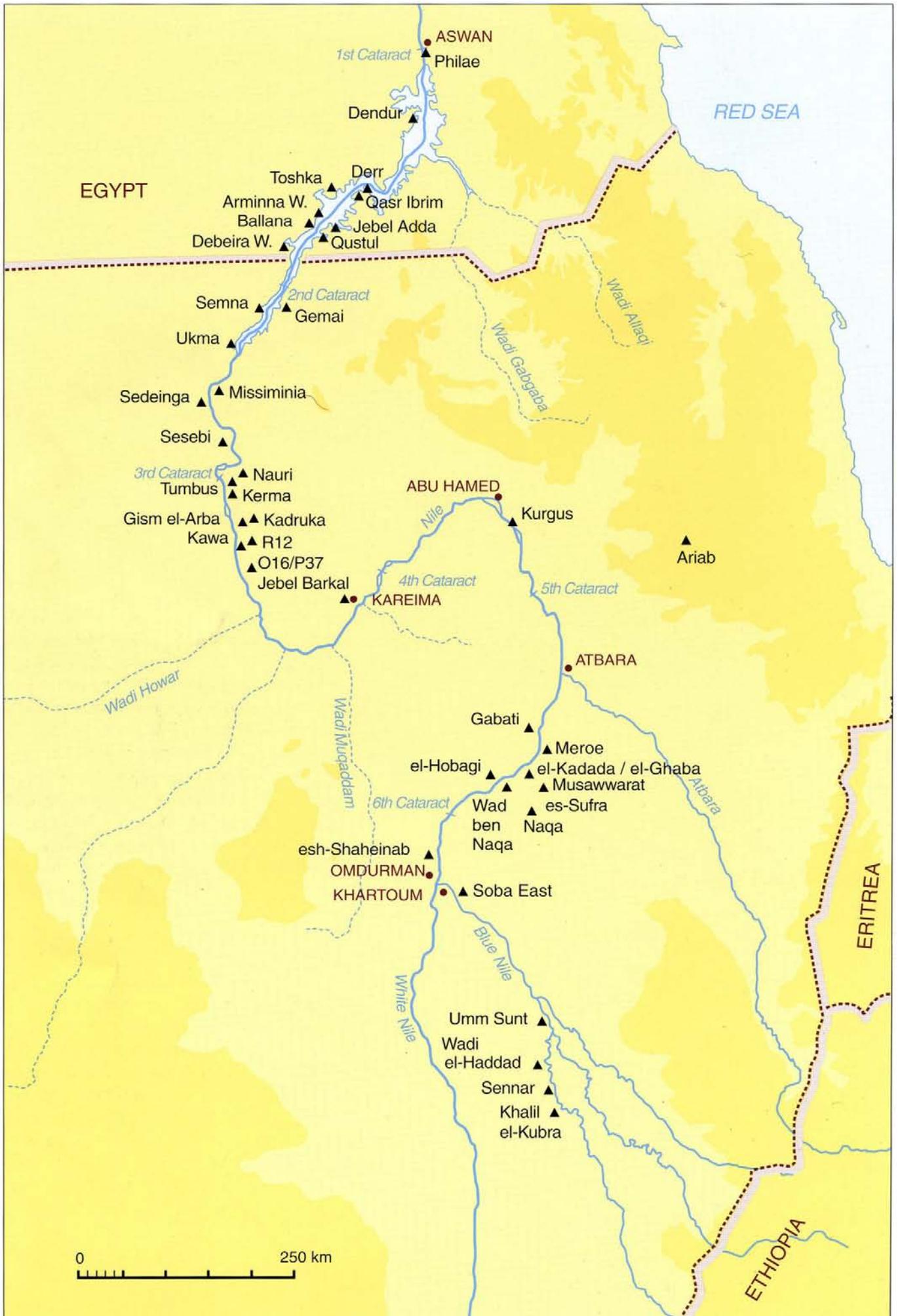
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 5

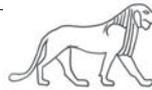
2001





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Front Cover: Beaker for funerary libation from el-Kadada, chalice shape, with incised geometric decoration, fired clay. Excavation n° KDD 76/3/59.

Introduction

Vivian Davies

The appearance of this, the fifth, issue of the Bulletin coincides with the tenth anniversary of our Society's founding. It has been an extraordinary first decade, remarkably productive in terms both of fieldwork and publication - one in which we have worked closely with our colleagues in the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of the Sudan to fill gaps in the archaeological record and meet, wherever possible, the threats posed to archaeological sites by modern development. We have organized and supported eight major field-projects (in Soba East, the Northern Dongola Reach, Kawa, the Shendi-Atbara Reach, Gabati, the Bayuda Desert, the Fourth Cataract, and Kurgus) and published five memoirs (two others are in press at the time of writing), as well as *Sudan & Nubia*, an annual bulletin of reports 'fresh from the field'. Furthermore, we have held each year an international colloquium on current fieldwork and research, and we now additionally host the annual 'Kirwan Memorial Lecture', in memory of our distinguished first President.

The considerable funds needed to carry out this extensive programme have been forthcoming most substantially from the Bioanthropology Foundation and the British Museum, upon whose generosity we continue to rely, as we do also on that of the Society's individual Patrons. We intend to mark the Society's achievements with a special publication to be issued in the coming year. As to the future, the reports in this volume, on sites ranging in date from the Neolithic to the Mediaeval Period, amply demonstrate the huge potential for important new discoveries and scholarly progress in our area of interest, both in Sudan and Egypt, promising a second decade as exciting and rewarding as the first.



Excavations within the Pharaonic and Kushite site at Kawa and in its hinterland, 2000-2001

Derek A. Welsby

This was the third season of excavation in the current campaign which has hitherto focussed on the town of Kawa and its associated cemetery (see Khider 2001; Welsby 1993; 1998; 2000; 2001, 148-150). This year the project was broadened with the participation of an Italian group who began excavations at the Neolithic cemetery R12, lying a few kilometres to the east of Kawa across the Seleim Basin. This latter work is reported upon elsewhere in this volume by Donatella Usai and Sandro Salvatori. The international team working at Kawa, consisting of ten archaeologists,¹ was in the field from early December 2000 until mid February 2001 and was assisted by a local workforce of over 30 men from the village of Kasura.

Site Q3, Kawa townsite

Topographic survey

Following the discovery during the second season of a substantial building, assumed to be of Kushite date, well to the north of Temple T the topographic survey was extended to cover that area right up to the boundary posts which mark the edge of the Antiquities zone. The survey of much of this area was completed with a grid of points at 2m intervals and a 1:500 contour plan generated using the digital terrain modeller in Minicad7. The survey along the river bank is also being continued.

Planning of buildings

The planning of buildings visible on the surface of the town was continued. Detailed plans are being produced at a scale of 1:50 with individual bricks being drawn where visible. To minimise damage to the underlying stratigraphy only the wall tops are revealed by brushing the ground surface. An extensive building complex towards the south-eastern edge of the town was planned which consists of a large, possibly open, courtyard some 40m square abutting which to the west are two further multi-roomed buildings of substantial size (Fig. 1). Work is also taking place in what may be an indus-

¹ The team consisted of Isabella Welsby Sjöström (assistant director, pottery specialist), Margaret Judd (archaeologist, physical anthropologist), Nassreen Sedek Yahya (archaeologist, antiquities officer), Philippa Pearce (conservator), John Payne, James Beckwith and Lauren Bruning (archaeologists), Paulina Terendy (site planner, illustrator), Kim Burrows (archaeozoologist), Derek Welsby (director).

trial area where there are certainly two large rectangular kilns, abundant pottery sherds and animal bone. A little to the south was what may be a multi-period building (H1) (Fig. 2) with thin walls and small rooms extending over a considerable area.

Excavations

Area A – Three buildings are known in this area from surface indications and the walls of an earlier building were located during excavation. Little of the earliest building has been observed. The lowermost course of two walls meeting at a 90° angle was visible in part in the primary floor surface of room I in Building A3. They are constructed of a single row of headers. Like the later buildings in this area the alignments of these early walls broadly conform to the cardinal points. Nothing can be said of the building's form or function and no dating material was found associated with it.

Building A3 is the next in the sequence. The walls, which are standing in excess of 1m in height, are truncated towards the west and appear to have been partly demolished on the construction of Buildings A1 and A2 (Plate 1).

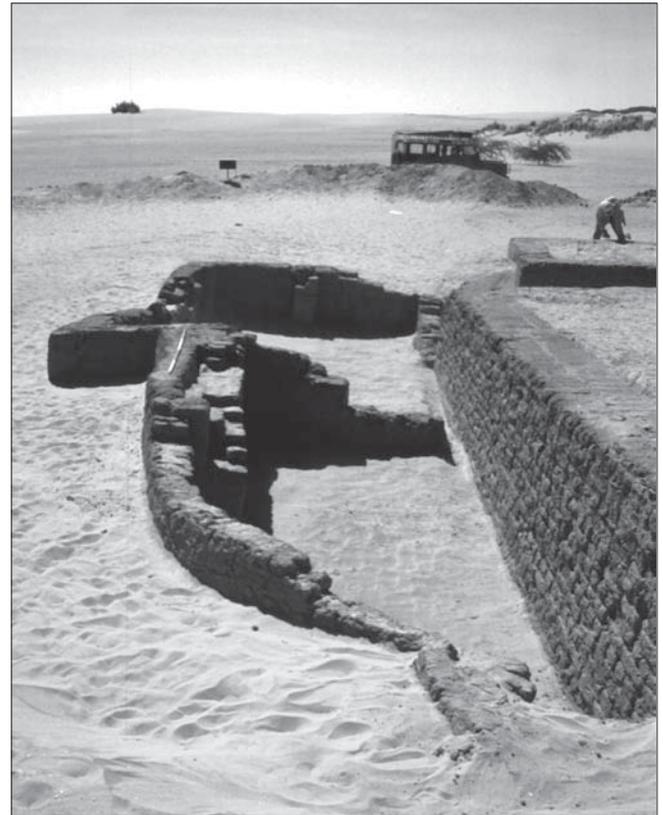


Plate 1. General view of Building A3 looking south.

Only the eastern and south-eastern parts of the building have been investigated to date. The rooms are of small size and one room or courtyard has a curved outer wall. The eastern range of the building consists of a square room in the south east and a 'D'-shaped room to the north with a wide door-



Figure 1. Plan of the building complex, F4, F5 and F10 (scale 1:500).

way allowing communication between the two. All the walls are thin, with courses laid as two rows of stretchers or one of headers. Strengthening is provided in the internal corners by small square buttresses and similar buttresses are found midway along the line of the walls within the rooms and around the inside of the curved wall (Plate 2). The surfaces of the walls are liberally coated in a mud render with

the impressions of the fingers used to apply it well preserved. Added onto the south-west corner of room I is a wall extending to the west which is cut by the construction trench for Building A1. No return to this wall has been traced at its western end but there is a hint that it may be associated with a wall running north-south which was glimpsed under the south wall of room I in Building A1. There was very little trace of occupation associated with the building although a

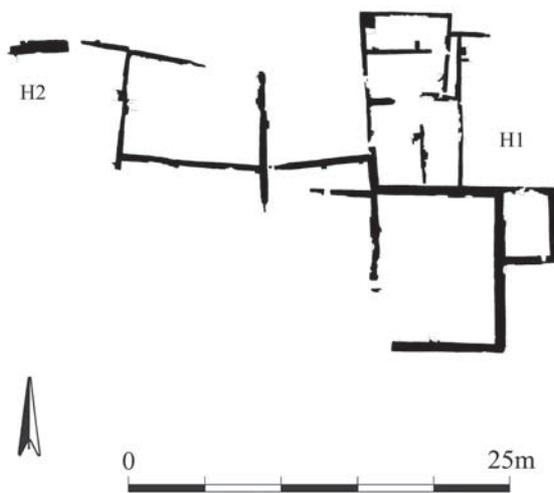


Figure 2. Plan of Buildings H1 and H2 (scale 1:500).



Plate 2. Building A3, detail of buttresses around the inner face of the curved north wall of room II.



few small patches of burning were noted up against the walls in rooms I and II. Floors appear to be of sand and were not readily distinguishable from the deposits immediately above and below them.

Later modifications to the building include the closing of the doorway between rooms I and II by a wall of *jalous* and another wall of this type closed or reduced the doorway between room I and the secondary room III. In room II a substantial buttress had been constructed along the east wall, perhaps an attempt to strengthen that wall after the collapse of the east wall of room I immediately to the south.

Although, both in plan and in construction technique, this building appears to conform to the domestic architectural traditions of the Kerma period well known from the nearby sites at Kerma and Gism el-Arba (Bonnet 1990, fig. 30; Gratien 1994, figs 23, 24), none of the pottery appears to be anything other than of earlier Kushite date. Following a build-up of rubble within the building, its remains were cut by the construction trenches of Buildings A1 and A2, although occupation was continued in the truncated room II as a sand floor sealed the rubble and extended right across the space from the east wall of A2 to the east wall of A3. A thick deposit of sand accumulated over the northern part of that area before it was sealed by a mass of rubble from the gradual collapse of the walls of the building.

As already noted, Building A3 appears to have been partly collapsed at the time of the construction of Buildings A1 and A2 which may be broadly contemporary. The east wall of Building A2 was revealed in the course of the excavation of Building A3 as was its south wall earlier this year during the excavation of the street between it and Building A1. The stratigraphic relationship between Buildings A1 and A2 has yet to be determined but they are of a similar style of construction although of very different plan. Building A2 is very similar to some of the buildings in Area B which appear to be of a domestic character.

Building A1 has a complex history. In its first phase it consisted of a range of three rooms aligned west to east (rooms III – I) entered by a centrally-placed doorway in the western wall of each room (Colour plate XLII). In Phase II an additional room (room IV) was added onto the south side and a doorway cut through the south wall of room II gave access to it. A further room (room V) was then added onto the west side of room IV. Rooms IV and V were totally excavated in the early 2000 season, while at that time the excavation of the rest of the building was curtailed on finding extensive remains of wall paintings both *in situ* and lying within the rubble fill of room I. Excavations were resumed this season in the presence of Philippa Pearce of the Department of Conservation at the British Museum. She consolidated the painting remaining *in situ* in the three primary rooms to a depth of approximately 400mm below the surface and lifted the large amounts of fallen fragments from within the rubble in room I (Plate 3).

The easternmost room in Building A1 was fully



Plate 3. Cleaning fallen wall plaster fragments in room I prior to consolidation and lifting.

excavated. The walls stood to a maximum height of about 1m and were set on sand. Within the room the primary floor was of stone, large reused blocks with prominent tool marks being carefully laid, although the floor did slope a little from south-east to north-west. Along the central axis of the room east-west larger blocks formed a clear feature with smaller more irregular blocks forming the rest of the floor (Colour plate XLIII). Immediately on top of the floor was a thin layer of sand in which were large numbers of faience beads. The floor had been partly destroyed in the north-east and south-east corners by pits dug down through the rubble which filled the room. Set on the sand towards the centre of the room was the top of a white sandstone altar or barque stand (Colour plate XLIV), the lower two blocks of which had been found earlier tossed in among the rubble at a higher level along with the broken corner of the altar top.

Whether the altar (Colour plate XLV) had originally stood in the room is unclear. If it had, it is difficult to explain how the top of the altar appeared to be *in situ* while the blocks on which it must have originally stood were above it in the rubble. Also the three blocks forming the altar may have been reused as they each bore traces of a pink mortar adhering to their surfaces, of a type not used in the construction of Building A1. The date of the altar, provided by the painted cartouches of the Kushite King Taharqo (690-664 BC), therefore may give no more than a *terminus post quem* for one phase of the use of the building in which it was found.

The mud-mortar rendering on which the wall paintings were applied was clearly associated with the stone floor. Large amounts of painted plaster were found in the rubble and on the floor, laid both face up and face down; the services of the conservator were essential to recover this material as the excavation progressed. Following the conservator's return to UK, further excavation within the building had to be abandoned for this season, so rooms II and III remain to be investigated.

There is little to add to the description of the painted scenes remaining *in situ* on the walls in room I to that which was published in *SUDAN & NUBIA* no. 4 (Welsby 2000, 6-

7, Col. pls V and VI). The lower part of the wall was painted white with a dado above consisting of a broad blue, red and blue band, separated by narrow white bands. The uppermost blue band formed the baseline for the main painted scene. Among the many large fragments of painted plaster recovered from among the rubble, were some from the upper parts of human figures (Colour plate XLVI). No plaster was noted which might have come from a frieze at the top of the main register nor from the ceiling. Only the upper parts of the paintings in the other two rooms have been glimpsed during their conservation. In room II the paintings are very well preserved in places. The main register of decoration begins further down the walls (the floor level in the room is probably lower) than in room I and the figures are preserved from the waist downwards. Flanking the doorway leading into room I may be a symmetrical scene of a human figure striding towards the doorway, the jambs of which are decorated with a broad vertical band of yellow bearing large hieroglyphic inscriptions (Colour plate XLVII). On the north wall are gods, including Amun, and a human figure. In room III little of the original decorative scheme was visible as the walls had been roughly re-plastered and whitewashed. This later layer

does not appear to bear any painted decoration but traces of the earlier decorative program are visible towards the eastern end of the south wall. The main register seems to be set even lower down the walls than in room II with one figure preserved from the torso downwards.

Three metres to the west of the building, on its main east-west axis, was an altar made of mud brick, 980mm square and standing to its full height of 960mm. It was rendered in mud plaster which had been whitewashed on a number of occasions as the sand gradually built up around its base. After the accumulation of 400mm of sand it had received a new thick coat of render and was again whitewashed. Remains of charcoal and ash from the last ritual use of the altar remained on its top. To its north was a very roughly dressed cylindrical block 450mm in diameter. After a build-up of 1.1m of sand a flight of steps was provided to give access down into the building. West of room V were extensive deposits of rubbish, with abundant large pottery sherds, mud bungs and seals bearing a range of impressions.

Area B - The excavation of the domestic buildings in this area led to a reinterpretation of the phasing of the structures found in the earlier excavation seasons (Fig. 3). Building B12



Figure 3. Plan of Buildings B5 and B12-14.



was the earliest. Abutting onto this from the south was another building designated B14 and Building B5 was the latest in the sequence, added onto the eastern side of B12. The southern limits of B5 and B12 were defined and part of Building B14 was excavated. The walls of this latter building approach very close to the ground surface as one moves to the south and are finally totally removed by erosion, making the location of its southern wall impossible to ascertain. There was evidence for a series of modifications in the buildings with the replacement of some walls and reflooring in some rooms, associated in one case with two phases of hearth, the lower a rectangular structure 800 x 650mm in size divided into four sections. Occupation material associated with these buildings was scarce.

As had been noted in previous seasons at Kawa there had been considerable destruction caused by the digging of often massive pits into the walls and within the rooms of the buildings. This was again the case in Building B14 where virtually the whole of the area of room XXV was removed by these pits. Although they are very destructive to the archaeology they do offer a window down into the earlier layers. In the sides of the pits in room XXV was abundant

evidence for occupation. A large part of the room was excavated below the primary level associated with Building B14. At a depth of over 1m towards the northern end of the building was a thick occupation deposit containing much red-brick rubble. The structure from which this material came was not located. In this area all the stratigraphy slopes upwards from north to south. At the southern end of the room a sondage was excavated to a depth of a little over 2m below the present ground surface (Plate 4), that is stratigraphically speaking approximately 2m below the red-brick deposit further north. Although the sondage was dug through clean sand there were still small amounts of bone and pottery among the layers and, at the furthest point reached, a complete pottery vessel. A preliminary assessment of the ceramic material suggests that all the pottery is broadly of the same early Kushite date but much further study is required to confirm this.

Site R18, the eastern cemetery at Kawa

An area approximately 10 x 11m was excavated in a low-lying part of the cemetery where all traces of superstructures have been removed by erosion as has some of the original ground surface into which the graves were dug. Four of the graves have stepped descendaries giving access from the east down into the tomb chamber cut into the alluvium. The character of the descendaries varies. The northernmost grave (1083) has a very wide descendery, rectangular and regular in plan, with very shallow well-cut steps (Plate 5). Grave (1075) has a long, very narrow but deep descendery



Plate 4. The sondage in Building B14, room XXV, looking north.



Plate 5. The descendery of grave (1083) in the eastern cemetery.

with irregular steps, the lowest step having a particularly long tread. Graves (1084) and (1096) are small with a sloping descendary giving access to a tomb chamber only cut back a short distance into the alluvium. Both graves, which are of infants, have been badly disturbed. Evidence for mud-brick walls blocking the entrance into the tomb chambers have been located in all these graves.

In many of the burials excavated to date in cemetery R18 at Kawa grave goods have been extremely sparse, consisting mostly of beads, mainly of faience. This season however, the excavated graves yielded many more objects. From one of the infant burials came a complete spouted feeding cup and an iron earring was recovered from the other. The primary burial in tomb (1083) was associated with a copper-alloy bowl which had been repaired, a new flat bottom being affixed with solder. The primary burial in (1075) was laid in an extended position on her back with the head to the west on a wooden bed or bier, the short legs of which were set into shallow holes. She wore six copper-alloy toe rings, some of which remained *in situ*, and a scarab was found at the waist. Traces in the earth suggest that she may have been enclosed within a wooden coffin. Along the north side of the body were four pottery jars of 'Classic Meroitic' type, a copper-



Plate 6. The primary burial in grave (1075) looking west.

alloy bowl and a cylindrical copper-alloy tube containing fragments of what appears to be wood which may be the handle of an object (Plate 6).

The burial at (1097) is of a very different type, a small rectangular pit lined with mud bricks forming a chamber in which was the extended burial of a young child, laid on its back with the head to the west and the arms alongside the body (Plate 7). No grave goods were noted. Bricks laid across the grave formed a cover over the body.

Secondary burials have been recovered from within the



Plate 7. The burial at (1097).

descendaries of tombs (1083) and (1075). In the uppermost fill of (1083), and visible on the surface prior to excavation, was a partly articulated skeleton of an adult, possibly a female, resting above the steps against the south side of the descendary. Cutting through the lower steps of the descendary on its north side is a roughly oval grave cut which contained in its fill a carefully placed pile of bones from an adult female. All the bones appear to be present apart from those of the hands and feet. Removal of the lower fill in this grave failed to reveal the burial for which it had originally been dug. In the fill of (1075) are bones of two adults, one of which is a female, and of a child.



Excavations were also begun over 100m to the south, of two tumuli (45 and 46), both of which are covered in black-stone fragments (Colour Plate XLVIII). They each have a robber pit in the centre. Of particular interest was the evidence for substantial tree roots on and beside the tumuli, suggesting that for some time subsequent to their construction there was a relatively dense stand of shrubs or trees here in an area which today supports no vegetation whatsoever. Excavation will continue in this area in the winter of 2001-2002.

Site R12, the Neolithic cemetery

This work is reported on elsewhere in this volume by Sandro Salvatori and Donatella Usai.

Protection of sites Q3 and R18

Although the town site, and to some extent the cemetery, are clearly demarcated by concrete posts, vehicles continue to cause extensive damage to the archaeological remains in those areas. It is clear that only a physical barrier around the whole site will deter further damage. This will require the placing of concrete posts or stones at intervals not exceeding 2m. Over 200 additional posts were erected this season.

Acknowledgements

The project would like to express its appreciation for all the help given by the staff of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums in Khartoum and also by the British Council. The project was funded largely by SARS along with a small grant from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

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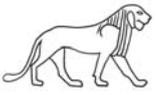


Plate XLII. Kawa; Building A1, general view looking west.



Plate XLIII. Kawa; stone floor in Building A1, room I looking west.



Plate XLIV. Kawa; the alter top and stone floor in Building A1, room I.



Plate XLV. Kawa; the altar bearing cartouches of the Kushite ruler Taharqo from Building A1.



Plate XLVI. Kawa; painted plaster fragment from Building A1, room I.



Plate XLVII. Kawa; hieroglyphic inscription on the east wall in Building A1, room II.

Plate XLVIII. Kawa; Tumuli (45) and (46) in the eastern cemetery, site R18, after removal of the surface sand, looking south-west towards the town.

