

# SUDAN & NUBIA

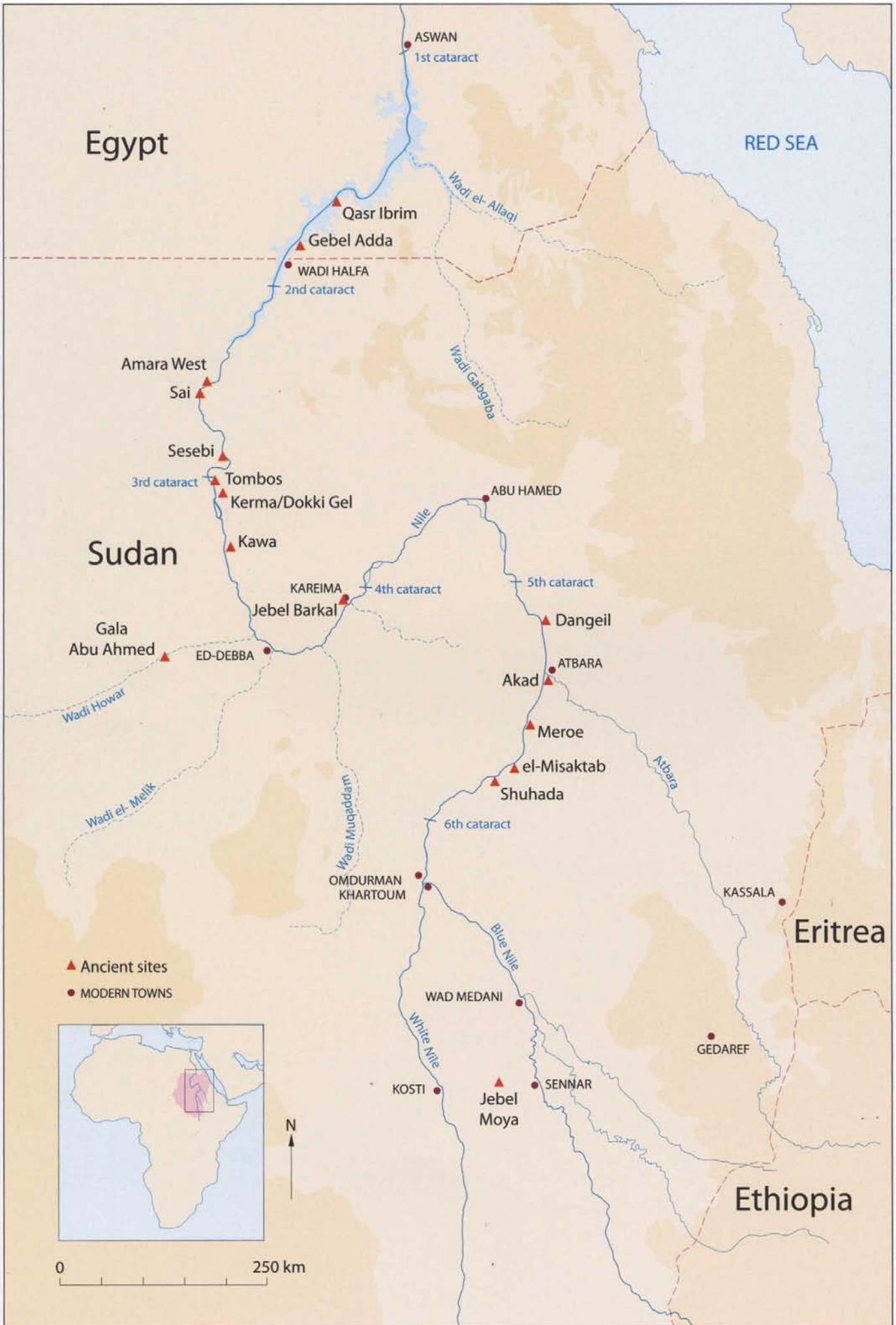
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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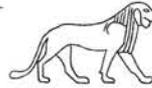
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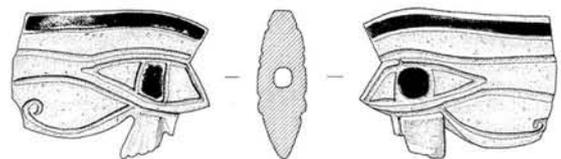
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Front cover: The head of a Kushite king, excavated in 2008, from the Amun temple at Dangeil. It has been tentatively identified as Aspelta (593-568 BC) based upon comparisons with statues of this king discovered at Jebel Barkal and Dokki Gel-Kerma. (Photo © J. R. Anderson, Berber-Abidiya Archaeological Project).

# Akad Rescue Project Season 2008

Mohamed Faroug Abdelrahman

Akad cemetery was discovered and its details added to the archaeological records of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) in 1999. The archaeological activity at Akad village has been continuing regularly since that time (Mohamed Faroug 2002). Since 2006, the work has been funded largely by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS) with logistical support from NCAM and the Director of the General Administration of Tourism in River Nile State, Abdelbagi Ageeb. I would like to express my gratitude to all of them and to the team.

During the second season in 2008 the team was in the field between 26<sup>th</sup> July and 7<sup>th</sup> August and was assisted by 12 workmen.<sup>1</sup> As planned, activities mainly were concentrated in the area along the storm drain (Figure 1, Plate 1), where

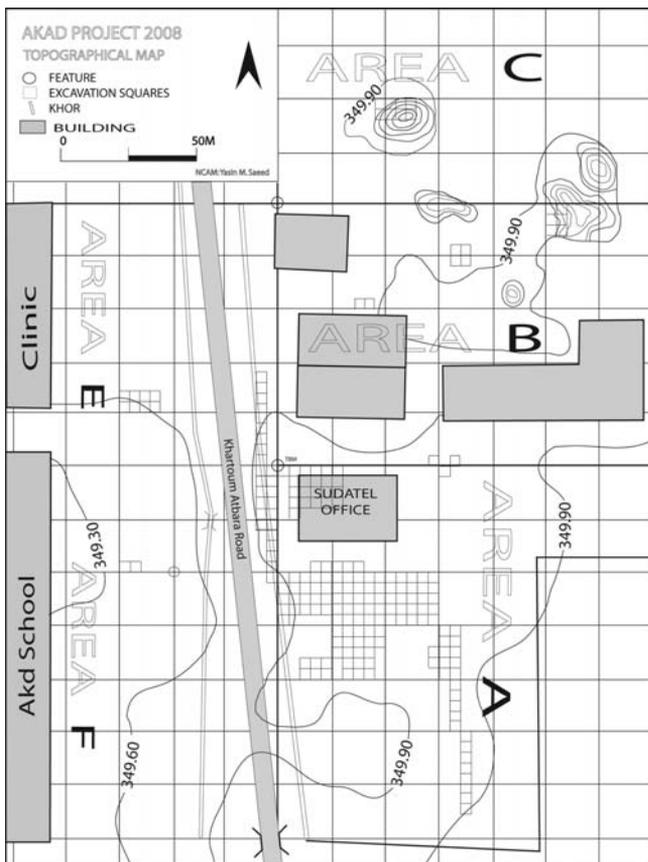


Figure 1. Map of Akad showing the excavation areas.

seven graves had been recorded last season to which five more graves have now been added. The 12 graves have been fully excavated revealing considerable archaeological

<sup>1</sup> The team members this season consisted of the following: Mohamed Faroug (Director of the project), Ahmed Elsokari (Director of the River Nile State Antiquities Office), Musa Elfadul Abdallah (archaeologist), and Saief Eldin Ahmed (archaeologist – Atbara Tourism Office).



Plate 1. The excavation along the storm drain at Akad.

evidence. Due to the percolation of water and the collapse of a number of the burial chambers, the fill of some graves was very compacted and wet, slowing our work in places. We also cleaned two squares in area E where three more graves were excavated.

The excavated graves can be described as follows:

### AKD. 44

An east-west rectangular shaft measured 2 × 1.3m. The burial chamber was dug at the northern end of the shaft and contained two east-west extended burials with their heads to the west (Plate 2). From the stratigraphical point of view, it seems that the grave was reopened to insert the northern burial. No grave goods were found *in situ*; the grave may have been unfurnished although post-Meroitic pottery sherds were found at the bottom of the shaft, in the burial chamber. The same grave type has been found elsewhere in the Akad cemetery but in graves associated with rectangular shafts aligned east-west or square shafts with one and sometimes two deceased (Mohamed Faroug *et al.* 2007).

### AKD. 43, 45, 49, 51, 54 and 55

All these graves have a rectangular shaft with side niche to-



Plate 2. Double burials in T. 44 from Akad cemetery.



wards the north; as usual, the burials are extended west-east, head to the west (Mohamed Faroug and Tsakos 2005, 66). The depth of these graves is relatively consistent (1.2-1.4m) (Plate 3) except for AKD. 43, an elongated east-west rec-



Plate 3. Mud-brick blocking wall and the shaft in T.45 in Akad cemetery.

tangular shaft measuring  $2.2 \times 0.7$ m, which was 1.7m deep and had a side-niche chamber, now collapsed, cut towards the northern side (Plate 4). A few bones in a very fragile condition were noted and documented. These suggest that the body was oriented west-east, head to the west. Within the shaft were some post-Meroitic pottery sherds. This type of grave is considered to be an early Christian type in the Akad cemetery and is so far unique to this site. The available information from this type of grave contributes little to the investigation and reconstruction of the social stratification.

#### AKD. 46

For the second time, a rectangular shaft with a burial chamber towards the south has been excavated, located about 25m south west of AKD. 32. The grave consists of a rectangular shaft and a side niche cut at the base of the shaft on its south side. A ledge, about 100-200mm in width, was left in the southern part to support the roof of the chamber; traces of wood were found indicating that this was probably of wood. A young adult female was found laid in an extended position, with her head to the west looking slightly to the south and with both hands placed on the pelvis (Figure 2). This grave and AKD. 32 are dated to the medieval Christian period based

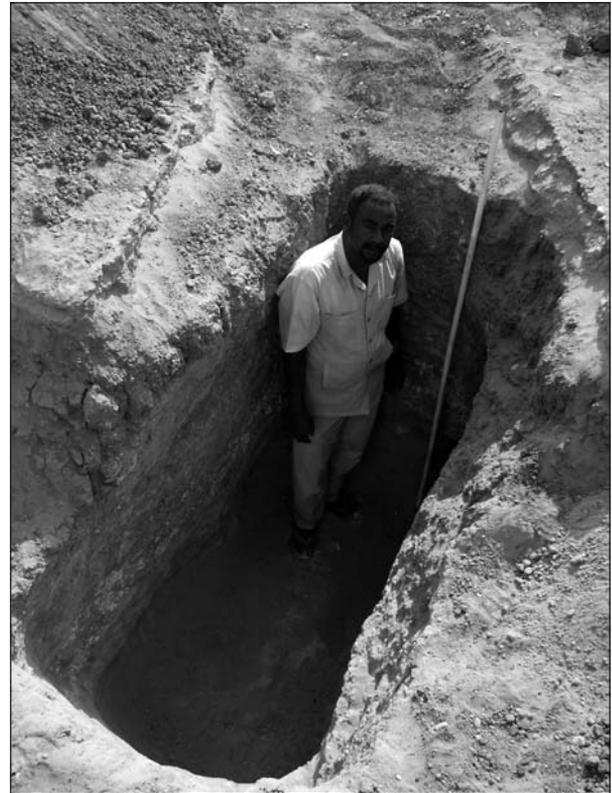


Plate 4. Grave T.43 showing the depth of the shaft and Ahmed Sokary.

on a comparative study of the shafts and burial positions with those of the adjacent Christian burials.

#### AKD. 50 and 56

The vertical trapezoid east-west shaft had an elongated, narrow, east-west trench dug centrally in the bottom. It contained a west-east extended male burial, his head located towards the west and facing north, with the hands on the pelvis.

The pottery sherds from a large vessel came from the shaft filling. The nature of the substructure and the grave's location in this area of the cemetery provided some indications about the development of the cemetery. We can assume that the first Christian graves were dug in areas A and E together with the post-Meroitic graves. Subsequently, Christian burial activity moved to areas C and B (Figure 1).

AKD. 56 is basically the same form as AKD. 50 but has a more regular trench cut in the middle, containing an extended burial deposited in the same way (Plate 5). It is worth noting that this type of grave with slight variations was found at Gabati (GBT. 20) and dated to the medieval Christian period (Edwards 1998, 74). The same form was found at the Fourth Cataract and assigned to early Meroitic period type I (Mahmoud el-Tayeb and Kolosowska 2007, 12-17) demonstrating the existence of the grave form over a substantial tract of the Nile Valley. However, some post-Meroitic sherds from shafts of the same type at Akad suggest a later date in that cemetery and document the gradual transformation of the mortuary practices from mostly east-west descendaries dur-

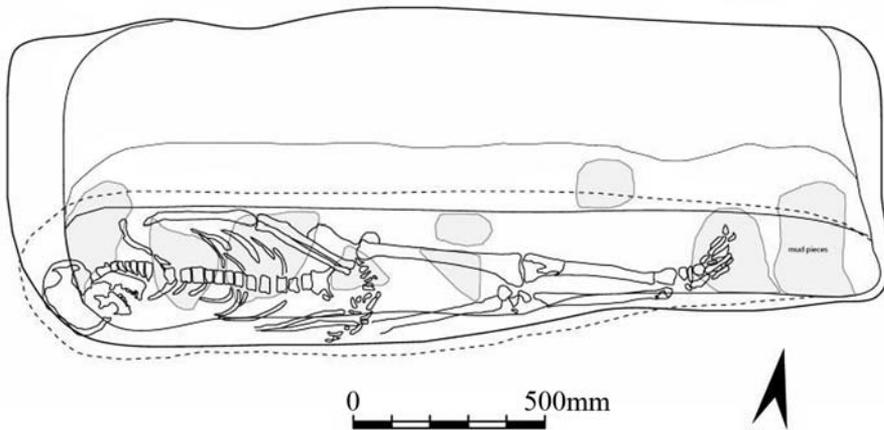


Figure 2. Top plan of grave T.46 (scale 1:20).

ing the post-Meroitic period to east-west vertical shafts with a side niche to the north.

#### *AKD. 52 and 53*

Graves AKD. 52 and 53 have similar substructures with rectangular shafts and a side niche towards the north. The chamber in grave AKD. 52 was blocked with a mud-brick wall, while the chamber in grave AKD. 53 was blocked by a wall made from a combination of mud and red bricks. Grave AKD. 52 contained a very badly preserved extended burial in the middle of the chamber; the head located towards the west and the hands placed alongside the body. A few fragile



Plate 5. Medieval Christian Grave T.56 from Akad cemetery.

glass beads were noted scattered near the body. The roof and wall blocking of grave AKD. 53 has collapsed due to water entering the grave from the storm drain. Two burials were found in the chamber, the slightly disarticulated male, burial A, was extended north west-south east with his head towards the north west. The contracted east-west female, burial B, was deposited carefully on the north-east side of the chamber. The associated grave goods, consisting of a pot-stand supporting a bowl, were placed to the east of the head (Plate 6). There was clear evidence to indicate that the grave had been reopened to insert burial A.

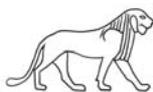


Plate 6. Grave T.53 in Akad cemetery showing double burials and grave goods.

#### **Conclusion**

To date, 56 graves have been excavated in the Akad cemetery providing important data on the cemetery and shedding more light on the double-shaft graves in the region, animal sacrifices and the different types of post-Meroitic, Transitional and Christian graves.

The results from this season suggest that burials within the Akad cemetery began at the south close to Khor Filaiifa during the post-Meroitic period and extended towards the north west, with burial activity shifting towards the north during the Christian period. We surveyed the area between Khor Filaiifa and the River Atbara, but the archaeological remains recovered from that area were very poorly preserved, and the eroded surface with the disappearance of grave superstructures has rendered the archaeological structures invisible. In future it is proposed to survey and test the north-eastern area at Akad in which we expect to discover graves of the Meroitic period. Despite the numerous graves excavated in Akad cemetery, no childrens' burials have been discovered raising the question as to whether they were buried in some other part of the cemetery or if they were buried elsewhere.



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