

Excavations at H25 in the Northern Dongola Reach

Stephen Porter

Introduction

Site H25, known locally as el-Eided Mohamadein, is located 6km north-east of the riverine village of el-Ugal and 3.4km north west of Barquat Kuluf, on the south bank of the Alfreda Nile Paleochannel in the Wadi Khowi (GPS coordinates 18° 50.096' N / 30° 34.265' E). It was first identified and designated as such by the Northern Dongola Reach Survey (Welsby 2001).

Previous work undertaken by the British Museum in the SARS Northern Dongola Reach concession in 2013-2014, funded by the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project (QSAP), confirmed the site's broad *Kerma Moyen*, *Kerma Classique* and Napatan date and identified domestic and administrative structures (Figure 1; Thomas 2014). These included the substantial and well laid-out Building 4, with associated produce stores, as well as evidence for animal husbandry and industrial activity on a scale that suggested H25 perhaps served as a produce collection and distribution centre. A second QSAP excavation season at H25 concentrated its efforts in the southern part of the site in 2014-2015. It

identified a second substantial mudbrick structure, Building 18, with the same layout, but different dimensions to Building 4. A number of other mudbrick structures were identified by that season, in addition to numerous clay-lined ovens, buried storage jars and circular mudbrick storage pits.

This report presents the preliminary results of the third season at H25 (in the field from January 16th to March 8th 2019), which was to be the final QSAP-funded work at the site. It aimed to complete the work of the 2014-15 season and expand upon it, in particular to confirm the character of Building 18. A number of later extensions to the building were identified, which hint at the success enjoyed by the settlement, along with evidence of large-scale food storage and bread production.

Building 18 (Areas F9, G8 and G9)

The site had initially been divided into labelled grid squares measuring 20m x 20m in area. To continue investigating Building 18 and any surrounding archaeology, Areas F9, G8, G9 and G10 were cleared of the overlying windblown sand deposit and any identified structures and features were excavated. This area is located at the present southern limit of the site and as such has suffered much erosion; none of the walls identified this season survived to a height of more than three courses of mudbricks.

Previous work undertaken on Building 18 identified a

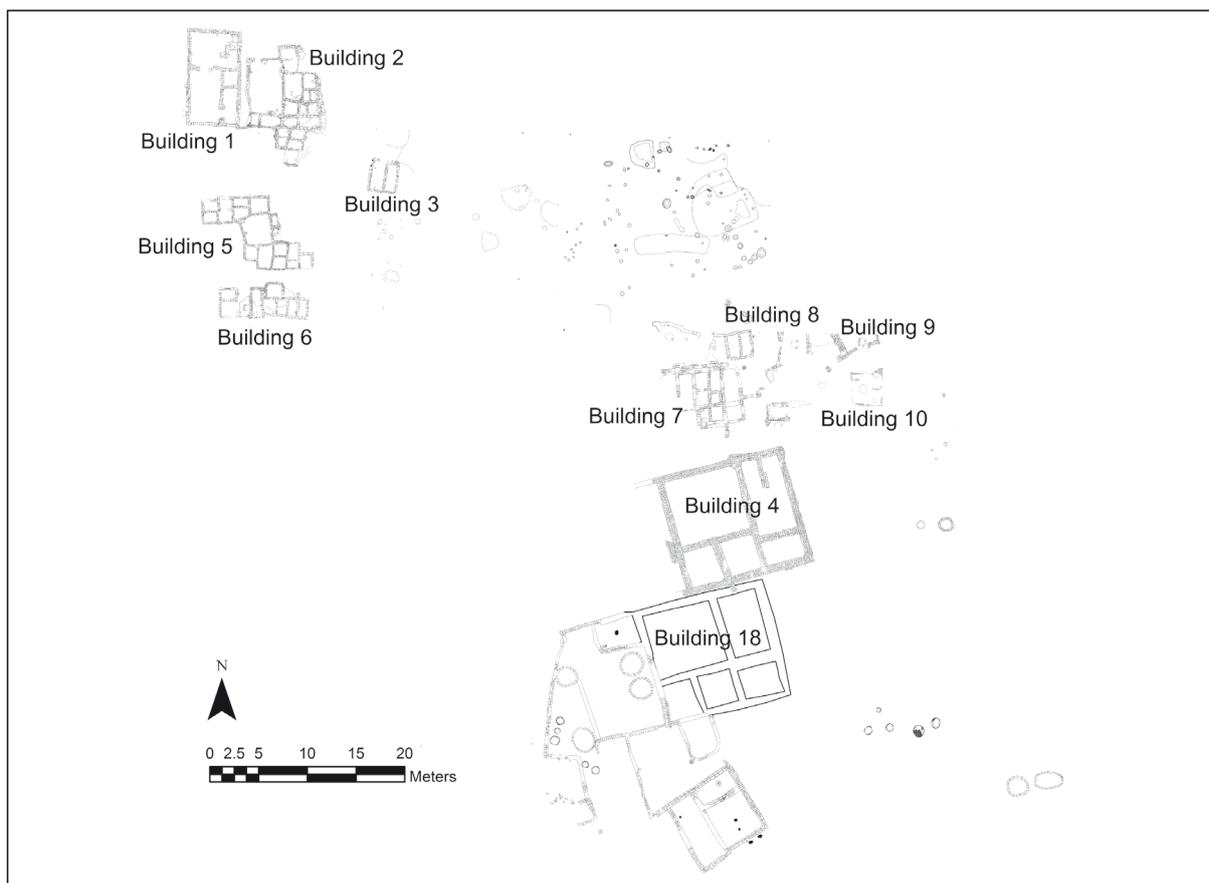


Figure 1. Plan of H25 (S. Porter and R. Thomas).

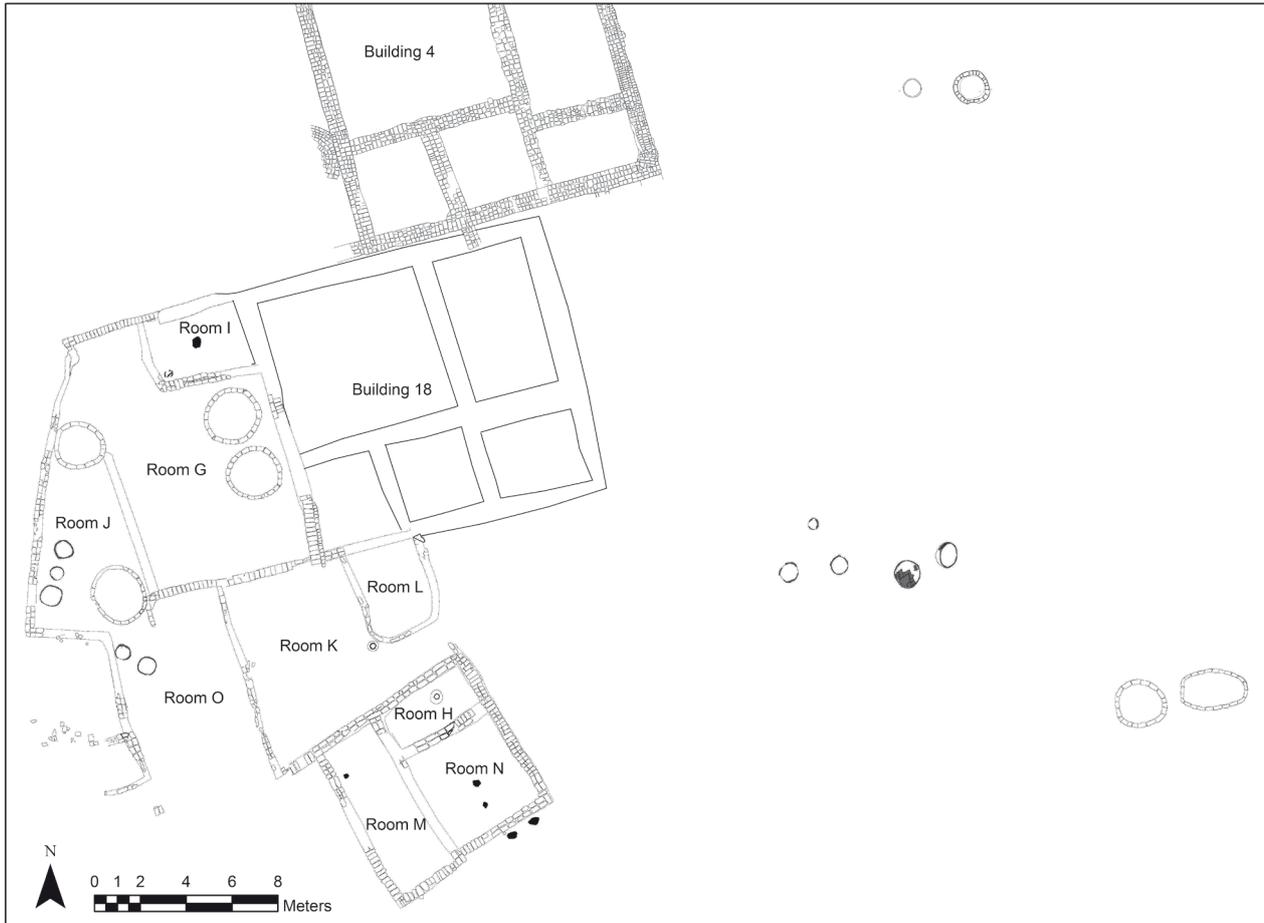


Figure 2. Plan of Building 18 (S. Porter and R. Thomas).

substantial mudbrick building of five rooms, surviving to three courses of brick, which appeared to extend to the west and south. This season's work on Building 18 (Figure 2) identified a courtyard (G) in the west of the building measuring 8m x 12m which, judging by the nature of the deposit contained within its walls, appeared to have been used to hold livestock (Plate 1).

Within the courtyard was a smaller room (I, Plate 2), measuring 4m x 2.8m, from which finds of a domestic

character were retrieved, including a storage jar in the room's south-west corner. Two circular, mudbrick-lined storage pits measuring roughly 2.4m in diameter with depths of 0.28m and 0.4m were also identified within the courtyard. Courtyard G was extended a further 6m to the west soon after its construction by the addition of Courtyard J, and another two storage pits constructed of comparable dimensions to those noted above. These pits appeared to have been used for dumping rubbish once they had fallen into disuse.



Plate 1. Courtyard G, showing mudbrick stores. View north.



Plate 2. Room I with stone post pad.

Courtyard J also contained a series of three clay-lined *tabun* ovens situated along its west wall. These were of similar dimensions, the largest measuring 0.6m in diameter. The 45° angle of this western wall of Courtyard J presumably indicates the presence of a feature or building in the area to the immediate west of Building 18, which is at present unidentified and has probably eroded away. This wall also extended further south to form Room O; the angle of this wall is explained by the presence of a badly eroded building to the southwest, preventing a straight wall being constructed. It proved impossible to characterise this building or the wall as they had been virtually eroded away.

Not long after its initial construction Building 18 was extended to the south by the addition of another courtyard (K) which, like Courtyard G, was used to keep livestock and also contained a small room (L), similar in size and character to I. A large room south of this courtyard measuring 7.7m x 8.5m was also built at this time which was later subdivided into two rooms, and later still into three (Rooms H, M and N, Plate 3). These rooms included post-pad stones for timber posts to support the ceilings, buried storage jars and domestic finds. Room M was of a particularly domestic character with a large quantity of burnt cooking pots accompanied by storage jars; while Room L contained a greater amount of tableware including Egyptian-style bowls.

Another potential courtyard (O) was identified to the southwest of these later extensions of Building 18 but was unfortunately too wind-eroded to be investigated more fully.

Area G10

In Area G10 to the east of Building 18, two mudbrick stores, more substantial than those excavated in Courtyards J and G, were identified (Plate 4). One of these, Store (G10)13, was elliptical in plan, measuring 2.9m in length by 2m wide and 1m in depth with a total of six surviving courses of mudbrick. The other, Store (G10)12, was of the standard circular plan measuring 2.3m in diameter and 0.86m deep. Both had compacted, cobbled bases. Both contained much



Plate 4. Mudbrick stores (G10)12 and (G10)13.



Plate 5. Substantial clay ovens in Area G10, with Oven (G10)7 in the foreground.

pottery of the 18th and 19th dynasties, and were apparently used as rubbish dumps once they had served their original function as stores.

A group of six clay-lined ovens were also found in this area of the site (Plate 5). These, like the mudbrick grain stores, were larger and more solidly built than those identified in the west courtyard of Building 18, the largest measuring 1.5m in diameter with a depth of 0.5m. One of these, (G10) 7, showed signs of having been rebuilt or repaired at least four times.

Any further extension of Building 18 or other structures associated with these features in Area G10 remains unidentified due to the severe erosion of this part of the site.

The Finds

A large amount of pottery was recovered from the excavation, including several near-complete buried storage jars in many of the rooms of Building 18. These confirmed



Plate 3. Rooms H, M and N.



the construction of and subsequent extensions to Building 18 as belonging to the New Kingdom. This would seem to be contemporary with adjacent Building 4 and earlier than the structures previously excavated to the north.

A quantity of animal bone was also recovered from the site. This will be sent to the UK for specialist attention, along with the remaining faunal remains from the 2014-2015 season.

Five small copper alloy objects, possibly kohl applicators or styluses, were identified (Plate 6). These were unfortunately recovered from overlying windblown sand deposits, but if they are indeed styluses are perhaps evidence of the administrative character of Building 18.

Other finds recovered from the site include a large number of grinding stones and a number of ostrich shell and faience beads, mostly of a simple circular design but some of scarab and other motifs (Plate 7).



Plate 6. Styluses, or kohl sticks.



Plate 7. A selection of faience beads from the excavation.

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