

SUDAN & NUBIA

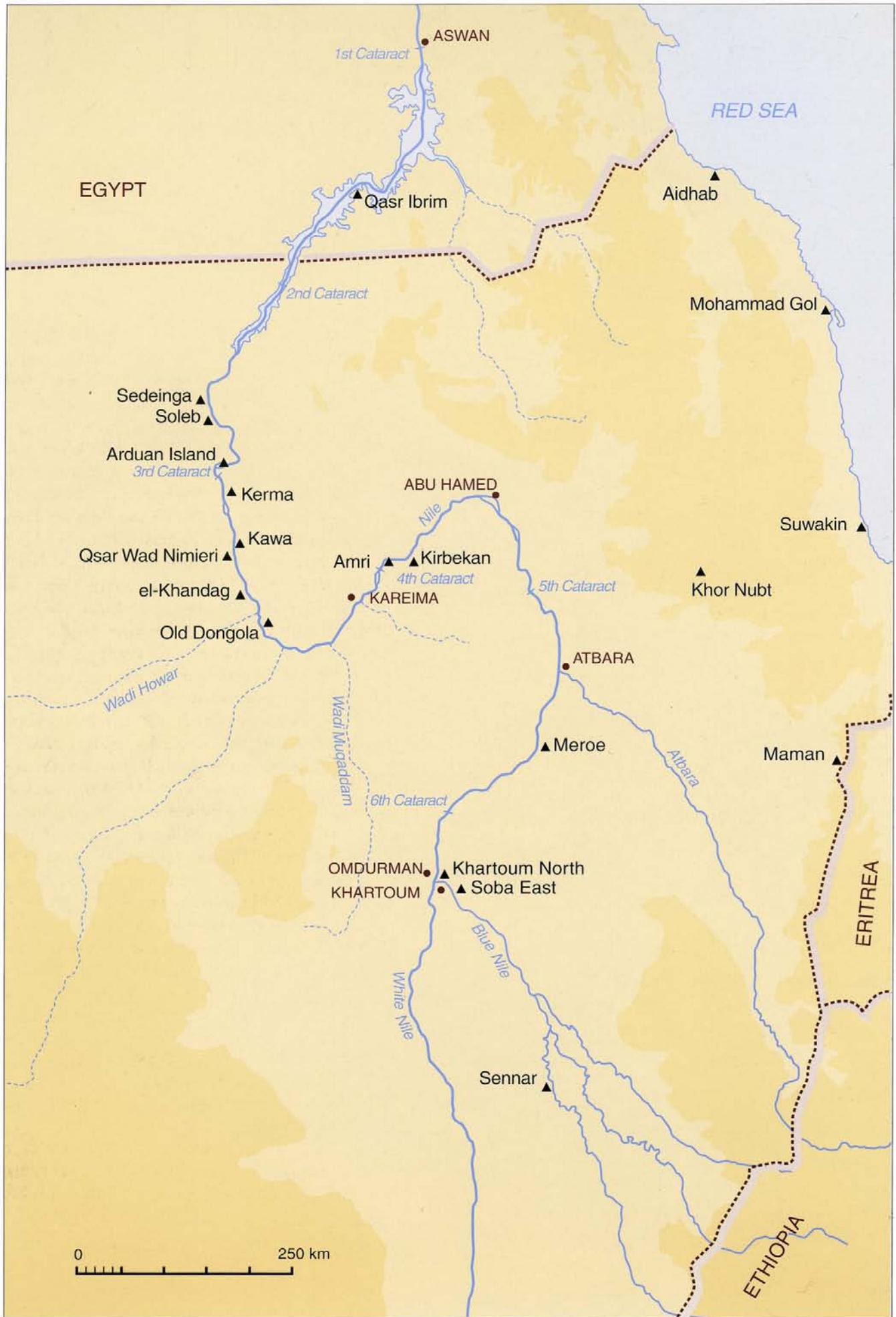
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 4

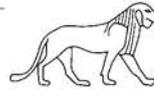
2000





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Front Cover: Meroe. Pyramid BEG N 18 (type XII) before restoration work on the chapel. In the background pyramid BEG N 9 (type VII). Photo taken by F. W. Hinkel in 1980 from the top of BEG N 19 (slide 5467).

Introduction

Vivian Davies

During the last winter the Society resumed its flagship project at Kawa, among other things uncovering more of the early Kushite town, including an extraordinary mud-brick building once decorated with wall-paintings showing royal and divine figures and containing the remains of large ceramic figures of the gods Bes and Beset (see Welsby below). We also responded to the international appeal for help from the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums to document sites threatened by the planned Merowe Dam, carrying out a survey on the left bank of the Nile and on the islands between Amri and Kirkeban above the Fourth Cataract which identified well over a hundred sites of different types and periods (Welsby). Qasr Ibrim, for many years under excavation by the Egypt Exploration Society and still yielding information of first-rate importance (Rose), embodies an acute reminder of the destructive consequences of dams and of the loss to knowledge that such schemes entail.

The need for rescue-work in response to various threats (environmental as well as man-made) is a thread running through much of this issue, which also includes reports on the study and conservation of the monuments at Meroe (Hinkel), excavation necessitated by road-building at Soba East (Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed), archaeological survey in the little-known Fifth Cataract region (Yousef El-Amin and Edwards), and continuing investigation of the Mahas region at the Third Cataract (Edwards and Ali Osman), the latter an interdisciplinary project which now valuably incorporates ecological, ethnographic and linguistic components (Muhammad Jalal Hashim and Bell). We are also very pleased to include two papers on aspects of Islamic archaeology in the Sudan (Intisar Soghayroun el-Zein and Salah Omer Elsadig), hitherto a chronically neglected subject but clearly one with great potential for further research.

It is an enormous pleasure to report that Professor William Y. Adams, one of the great names of modern Sudanese archaeology, has accepted our invitation to become Honorary President of SARS, in succession to the late Sir Laurence Kirwan. Professor Adams takes office in time to preside over our tenth anniversary in 2001, a year in which SARS celebrates a decade of progressive achievement and looks forward to the formidable but exciting challenges that lie ahead.

The Domed Tombs of the Eastern Sudan

Salah Omer Elsadig

Sudan's geographical position at the cross-roads of Africa and its neighbouring of nine countries (see Fig. 1) have been dominant in directing the course of both its history and politics. This vast land of nearly one million square miles in area, has provided a meeting place for different cultures starting from the prehistoric period (175,000BC) until Islamic civilisation rose to prominence from AD 1504.

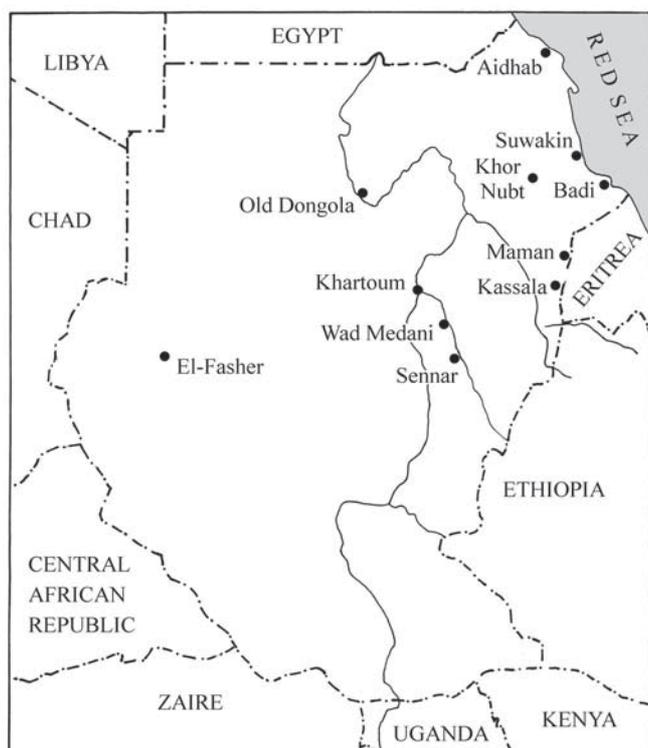


Figure 1. The main Islamic archaeological sites in the Sudan.

The Islamisation of the Sudan

The Arab Muslims' invasion of Egypt in AD 639 ushered the spread of Islam into Nubia. This process of penetration, spread over a long period, culminated in AD 1315 in the conversion to Islam of the first Nubian King Sayf al-Din Abdallah Barshambu-al Nubi, King of Dongola. This king, who had embraced Islam while he was detained at the court in Cairo, was installed by the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt.

In 1504 Soba, the capital of Alwa, the last Christian Kingdom, crumbled under the assault of the local Muslim troops. In its wake the Fung Islamic Kingdom was established at Sennar (Plate 1) and it lasted until 1821. Throughout this period the Kingdom attracted a multitude of Arab and Muslim traders, teachers, and holy men. Gradually Arab tribes

penetrated deeper into the society and intermarried with the local group. The Sudanese communities began to be affected by a slow and gradual change as they emerged from the Medieval age. The Fung ruling court played an important role in encouraging those Muslim Arab teachers and holy men to settle in the country and to instruct the local people. Therefore in the beginning of 17th century there was a great number of prominent Muslim teachers in the Sudan.



Plate 1. Kakar coronation stool of the Fung kings (S.N.M. 5496).

It is difficult to determine satisfactorily a firm date for the arrival of Islam in western Sudan because the historical records have kept silent about this subject, except for some narrative from oral tradition. The Fur tribe established their Islamic Sultanate in AD 1445 and certainly by the reign of Sultan Musa Suleiman (AD 1670-1682) Islam completely dominated the whole way of life in Darfur. In fact, to be more specific, western Sudan during this period was entirely Islamised (O'Fahey and Spaulding 1974, 164-165). Both Arab tribes and Muslim teachers emigrated towards western Sudan and this played an essential role in its Islamisation.

While these crucial historical events were taking place in northern, central, and western Sudan and before the collapse of the Byzantine rule in Egypt in the middle of the 7th century AD by the Muslim invasion, the Eastern Sudan was already known by the Arabs. Some nomadic tribes migrated through the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, then to Eastern Sudan. Strabo (66 BC - AD 24) mentioned that the eastern desert was inhabited by Arabs. Some of them were traders between the Nile in Upper Egypt and the Red Sea ports (Hassan 1972, 14).

Oral traditions collected by D. A. Cameron in 1887 revealed that Hadariba is the name used by the Beja for the Hadarima, who sailed across the Red Sea. They used to cross the Red Sea from the eastern coast of Arabia to the western coast of Sudan. Their ships anchored near the port of Suakin, and they interacted with the Beja tribes (see Fig. 2).

Himyarite immigrants also crossed the Red Sea and settled among the Beja where they intermarried with the indigenous tribes and obtained authority over land and people. According to previous accounts, the contacts between the

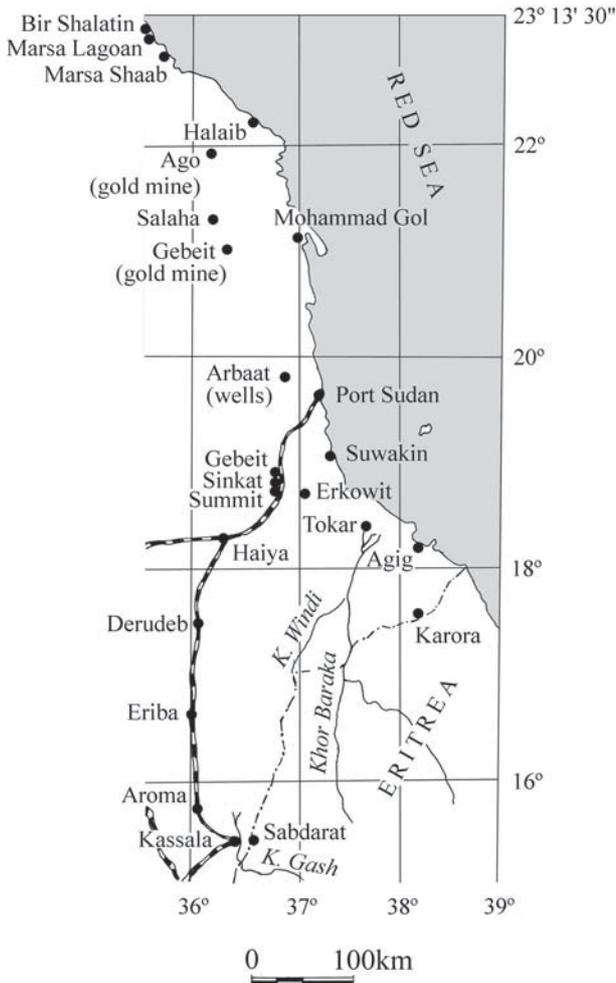
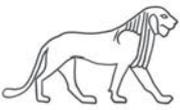


Figure 2. Map of the Eastern Sudan.

Arabs and the Beja were very ancient and can be traced back to the pre-Islamic period. This led to an admixture between the immigrants and the Beja, leading to the emergence of a new tribal group.

Muslims from the first days of Islam were well informed about life on the other side of the Red Sea coast, especially the political situation. This knowledge and contacts with the western coast of the Red Sea were current also during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammad. He sent Muslim immigrants to the Abyssinian court to seek sanctuary from the threat of torture at Mecca. However, Abu Muhjein al Thagafi was banished by Caliph Omer Ibn al Khattab to Badi on the Sudanese coast, which was used as a 'penal station'. Al Tabri states on the authority of al Wagdi:

'In this year Omer banished Abu Mohjan al Thafari towards the west to Badi' (1963, 38).

The real contacts with Arabs came in 216 AH (AD 831) when Abdallah Ibn al Habab, governor of Upper Egypt, made a treaty with the Beja (Burckhardt 1819, 500). This treaty gave complete supremacy to the Arabs over the land.

During the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Mutawakkil the Beja refused to pay tribute and attacked the Arab miners. The Caliph sent an army against them under the command of Mohammad Abdallah el Qammi who defeated their leader Ali Baba. After these incidents the Arabs made great mining activities under prominent chiefs like Abdallah ibn 'Abdal, Hamid al Umari and Beshir ibn Merwan Ishak of the Rabia who operated the mine of 'Wadi el Allaqi'.

We can conclude that all the domed tombs of Jebal Maman (Plate 2), Assreama Derheib, and those north of Port Sudan (Colour Plate XVI) are related to this period.



Plate 2. Muslim domed tombs of type I at Jebel Maman.

As a result of the large scale Arab migration after the rise of Islam, the Eastern Sudan was Islamized. During the Fung Kingdom (AD 1405-1821), armed clashes between the Fung Army and the Hadarab and then the Beni Amer took place in the Beja lands, especially Assareama Derheib. The Fung defeated and subjugated both tribes. On the other hand, intermarriage occurred between the chief of the Abdallab, Sheikh Ajib al-Mankilak and one of the Beja tribal families (Dirar 1981, 46-7).

A distinguished religious personality Mohammad Osman al Mirghani al Khatm, the founder of the Khatmiyya Sufi Order (AD 1792-1853) from the Ashraf of Mecca, arrived at Suakin, travelled to Sinkat and then into the interior of Sudan. He settled for a while at Kassala, before returning to Mecca, but most of his family members settled in Sudan and have become one of the main religious sects. Most of the domed tombs of type III in Eastern Sudan belong to his family (Greenlaw 1976, 13).

The period of Turkish control and the Mahdia played an essential role in the recent history of Eastern Sudan. Thereafter, this part of the Sudan has been intimately connected

Types I and II: Domed Tombs of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The domed tombs of Eastern Sudan are classified into three types according to their design and to the materials and technique used.

The oldest forms, types I and II (Figs 3-4), date back to the 16th and 17th centuries. There is also a later form, that is type III, (a, b, c, d,) (Fig. 6), which has been employed since the 18th century. The remarkable characteristic of such domed tombs is their form. This consists of two types as has been previously mentioned. Domed tombs of type I are considered as the basic origin of the others. This is based upon the historical evidence stated by Crowfoot (1911), and the archaeological material obtained by Seligman (1915). Moreover, the results drawn from their architectural analysis confirm their building typology, technology, origin and date. The domed tombs of Jebel Maman (Plate 2) and Assareama Derheib are the best examples of type I.

The location of domed tombs (*Gubba*) of type I are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. The names and locations of domed tombs of type I in Eastern Sudan.

<i>Gubba</i> Name	Co-ordinates *	<i>Gubba</i> No.	Map Reference
1. Jebel Maman	16° 17' N – 36° 48' E	NE 37, M/16, W.1	NE 37. M. Maman
2. 12 miles N.E. of Jebel Maman	16° 16' N – 36° 30' E	NE 37. M/14. Y.1	„
3. Jebel Shababit	16° 37' N – 36° 38' E	NE 37. M/9. M.1	„
4. Akala Aqwit, Khor	17° 45' N – 36° 13' E	NE 37. I/4. X.1	NE. 37.I. Derudeb
5. Wadi Odib	17° 50' N – 37° 13' E	NE 37. T/5. T.1	„
6. Jebel Anheib	17° 46' 30" N – 37° 12' E	NE 37. T/5. Y.1	„
7. Bir Tihomashnauar	17° 46' N – 36° 37' E	NE 37. T/9. W.1	„
8. Khor Windi	17° 32' N – 37° 12' E	NE 37. I/11. W.1	„
9. Jebel Hambal	17° 16' N – 36° 35' 30" E	NE 37. I/15. V.1	„
10. Gorinti (N.E. of)	17° 17' 55" N – 36° 37' 5" E	NE 37. I/15. W.1	„
11. Assarellerheib	18° 03' N – 37° 56' 30" E	NE 37. F/20. S.1	„
12. Khor Gamarota	18° 01' 20" N – 37° 59' 05" E	NE 37. F/20. Y.1	NE. 37.F Tokar
13. Dilulit (N. of)	17° 56' 30" N – 37° 47' 15" E	NE 37. J/2. F.1	NE. 37.J. Karora
14. Yemnofar	17° 53' 25" N – 37° 49' E	NE 37. J/2. L.1	„
15. Maithumukh	17° 47' N – 37° 46' E	NE 37. J/2 U.1	„
16. Jebel Akontof (W. of)	17° 40' 10" N – 37° 43' 50" E	NE 37, J/7, C.1	„
17. Khor Hafta	17° 32' 45" N – 37° 44' 40" E	NE 37, J/7, Y.1	„

* These co-ordinates are taken from the Sudan survey standard map at a scale of 1:250,000.

with the central Sudan with a unified history. Kassala and Suakin were promoted to provinces during Turkish times. Suakin was the only flourishing port on the Sudanese coast. It was during this period that a new type of domed tomb appeared in the Sudan, designated here as type III (Greenlaw 1976, 8, 12-12-13, 22, 69-70).

These historical events in Sudan's past are reflected in the design of domed tombs which are a useful cultural indicator. Though every period had its own cultural characteristics in the general life of the Sudan, these cultural characteristics are connected, imparting a continuity in Sudanese cultural history.

Type II tombs (Figs 4 and 5, Plate 3) are found in the area between Port Sudan and Halaib. The domed tombs are restricted to the foot of the hills on the west side of the Red Sea coast. Although these domed tombs appear either in a single unit (one domed tomb) or in groups, there are always many graves around them.

They were first mentioned by the 19th century European traveller John Burckhardt on his journey from Suakin to Jidda in Arabia (1819, 63, 458). The local inhabitants of the area have their oral versions of stories about the origin of these domed tombs. When the writer asked the Sheikh of Mohammad Qol, Hamid Nakashob, about the builders of

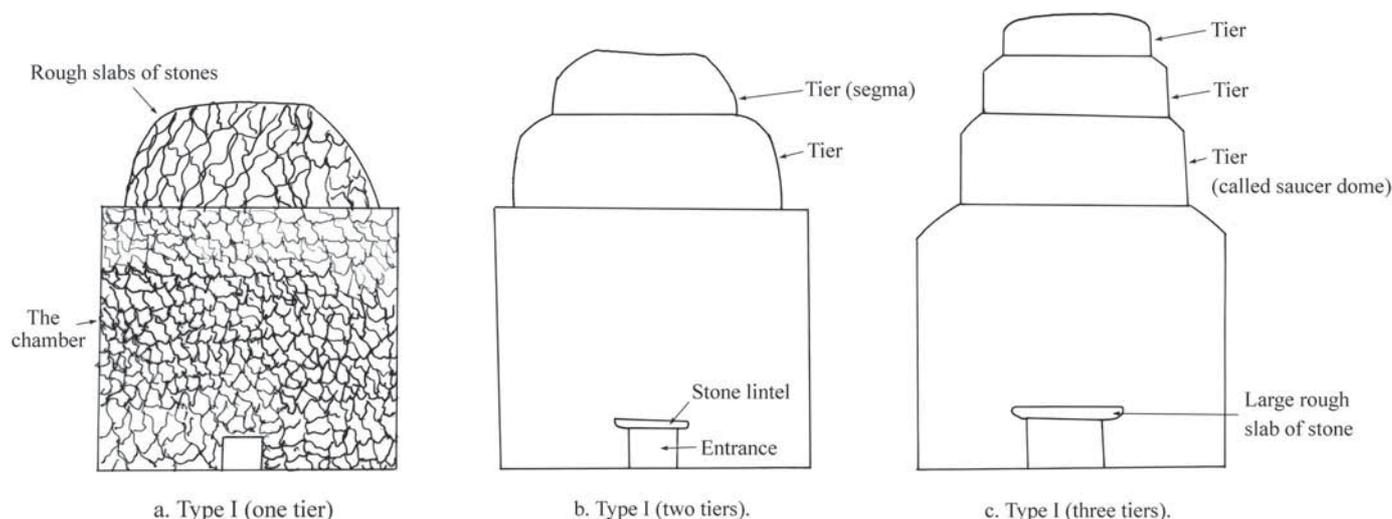


Figure 3. Domed tombs of type I. Surmounting the chamber there is usually one, two or three tiers of square shape.

these domed tombs he was informed that they were built by nas Rumi (people of Rome). He had no explanation for this but he had heard it from his father. The writer believes that the expression is connected somehow with the Turks, and for this reason they called the domed tomb ‘Bait Rumi’ (house of Rome).¹ Although this explanation is given by the citizens, yet they believe the building to be a holy domed tomb. In fact these specific types of domed tomb stand out as a unique traditional architectural style which has never been

tombs (Plate 3) are found on the Islamic necropolis of Dahlak Kebir in the Red Sea (Oman 1974, 275, pls 10-11). Other structures with similar features and function as domed tombs of type II are the Bekar Sultan vaulted tomb in Bekar village (third quarter 12th century AD), and the Kalendar Baba vaulted tomb (Plate 4) in Konya (mid 14th century AD) (Tuncer 1992, 56-61, pls a-b). Both are in Turkey.

The location of domed tombs of type II is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. The location of domed tombs of type II in Eastern Sudan.

Gubba Name	Co-ordinates *	Gubba No.	Map Reference
1 Haicit, Khor	19° 59' 30" N- 31° 28' 35" E	NE 37. A/2.E.1	NE. 37.A.P. Sudan
2. Haieit, Khor	19° 59' 25" N – 39° 28' 40" E	NE 37. A/2.E.2	„
3. Aquetit, Khor (N. of)	19° 58' 40" N – 37° 07' 35" E	NE 37. A/5. C1	„
4. Mogkhor	19° 36' N – 37° 6' E	NE 37. A/II.R.2	„
5. Mohammad Qol (Asayfa)	20° 55' 40" N – 37° 11' 4" E	NE 37. M/5.F.2	NF.37.F.Moh.Qol
6. Handukteb (sieb Khor, S. of two domed tombs)	20° 41' 5" N – 37° 12' 5" E	NE 37. M/II.F.I	„
7. Salala, Bir (E. of)	20° 33' N - 37° 6' E	NE 37. M/9.W.1	„
8. Gumaderiba, Jebel	20° 55' N – 36° 41' 25" E	NE 37. 1/15.V.1	„
9. Demia Kwok, Khor	20° 11' 5" N – 36° 38' 35" E	NE 37. 1/11.W. I	„
10. Eit, Khor	20° 9' 20" N – 37° 4' E	NE 37. 1/15.W.1	„
11. Marob	21° 53' 53" N – 36° 46' 50" E	NE 37. F/20.S.1	NE.37.1 Derudeb
12. Eidarat, Wadi	21° 6' N – 36° 21' E	NE 37. F20/2.Y.1	NE.37.1.Dungunab
13. Hadai	27° 8' N – 36° 23' E	NE 37. J/2.F.I	„
14. Halaib	20° 14' N – 36° 39' E	NE 37. J/2.L.1	NE.37.E. Halaib

* These co-ordinates are taken from the Sudan survey standard map at a scale of 1:250,000.

found in other parts of the Sudan. Generally speaking they are comparable with the domed tombs of the hinterland (Hinkel 1992, 178). There are also resemblance with the examples from Dhalak island in Eritrea, where similar domed

¹ Interview with the Sheikh of Mohammad Qol Hamid Nakashob. October 2, 1993. Institute of African and Asian Studies. Cassette No. 3470.

Type III: Domed Tombs of the 18th to 20th centuries

This is the last type of domed tomb in Eastern Sudan, the latest one having been built for the late Sheikh Ali Betai in 1978 at Hamashkoreb. Apart from the differences in technique and structure between type III and the previous types, I, II, there is another main difference which is that all domed

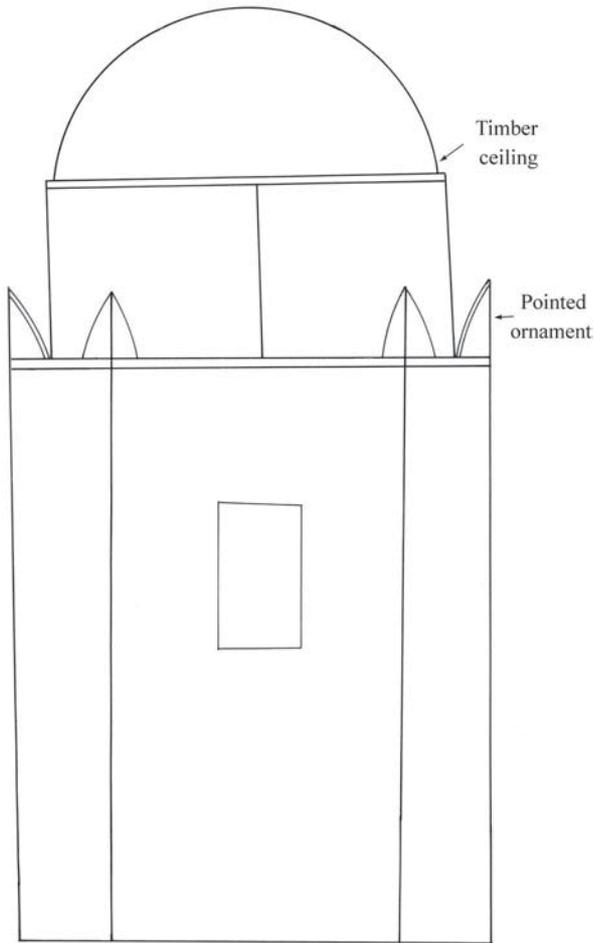


Figure 4. The domed tomb of type II. The west domed tomb of Handukteb. The south elevation.

tombs of type III are found in urban centres like villages or towns, and are scattered all over Eastern Sudan. On the other hand, all the domed tombs of types I and II are found near

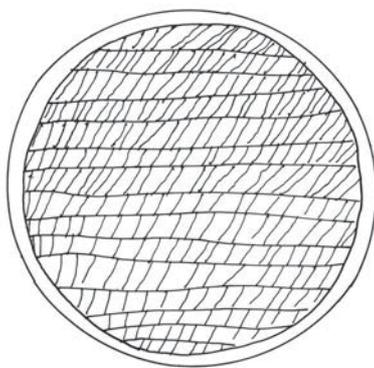


Figure 5. The domed tomb of type II. The timber ceiling of the west domed tomb of Handukteb.

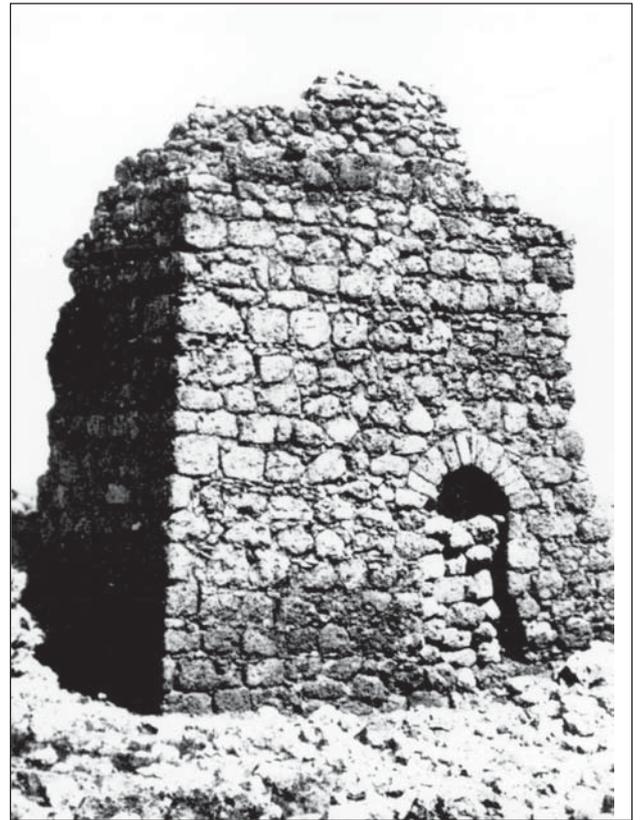


Plate 3. Ruins of the central gubba at Dohlak (after Oman 1974, fig. 10).

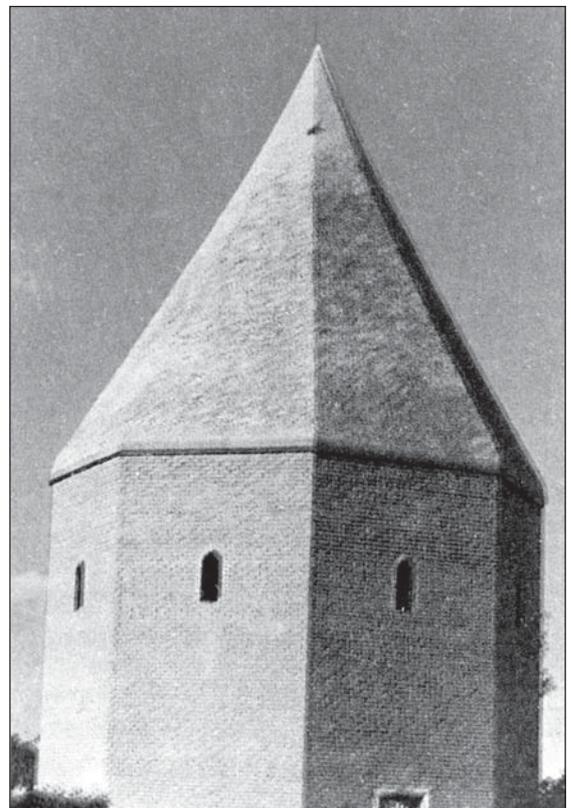
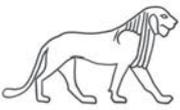


Plate 4. The Kalender Baba vaulted tomb at Konya, Turkey (mid 14th century AD).



ancient villages or deserted places. However, the basic unifying feature between all these types is their building technique style and physical location inside cemeteries like Al Sheikh Abul Fatah (Colour Plate XVII) except for two domed tombs of type III of Taj al Sir at Suakin and Sitti Maryam at Sinkat (Colour Plate XVIII).

Domed tombs of type III can be divided into four sub-types, a, b, c, and d (Fig. 6). Every structure has used a spe-

cial building technique.

They are located in various parts of Eastern Sudan and scattered over important towns there. Three buildings of this type have no domes now, but are mentioned and mapped as complete domed tombs in historical sources and official maps. These tombs are: the Sheikh Barghut, Faki Ya'qub, and Sheikh Akd, and they are included in Table 3.

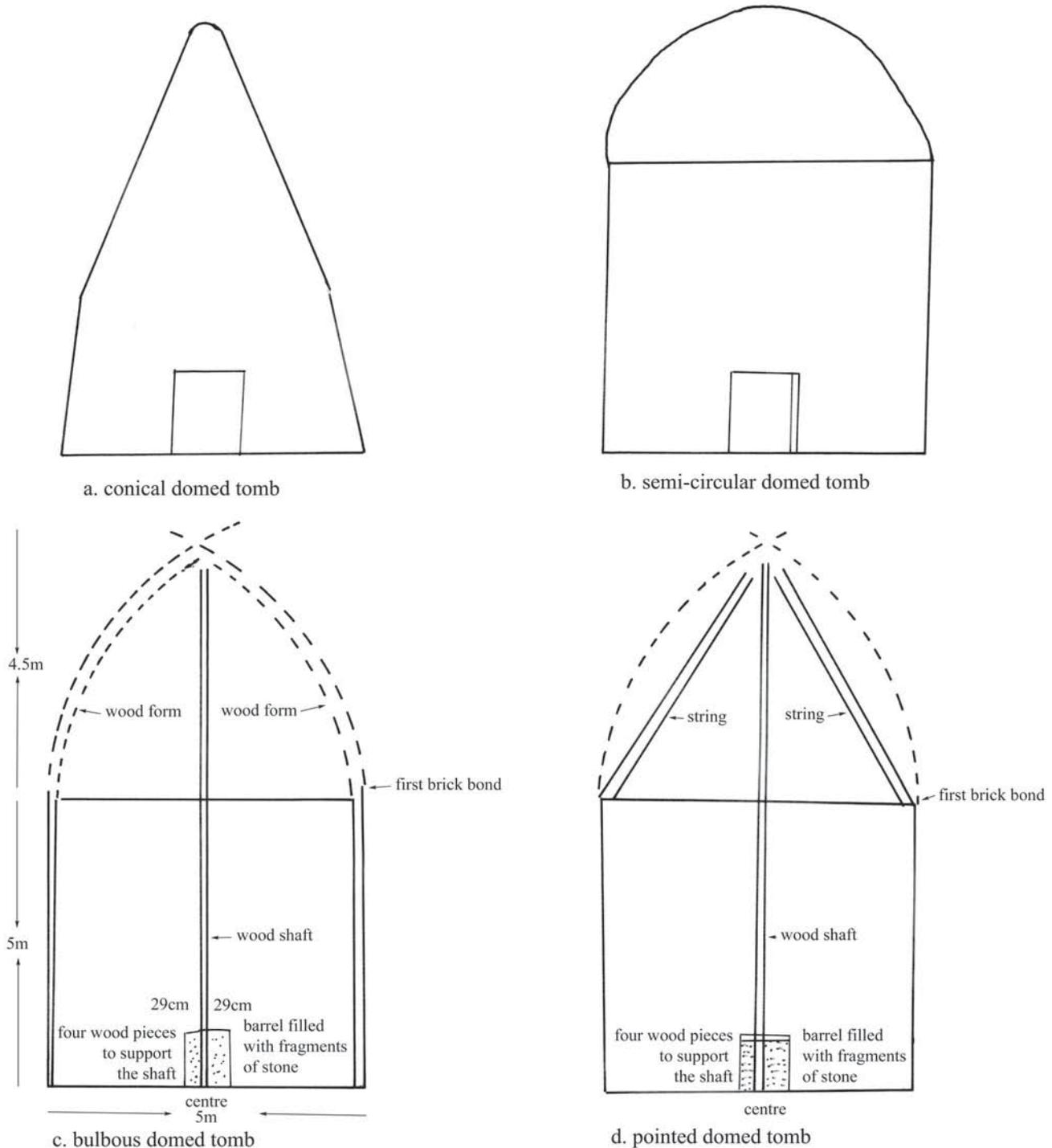


Figure 6. Domed tomb type III. The four sub-types.

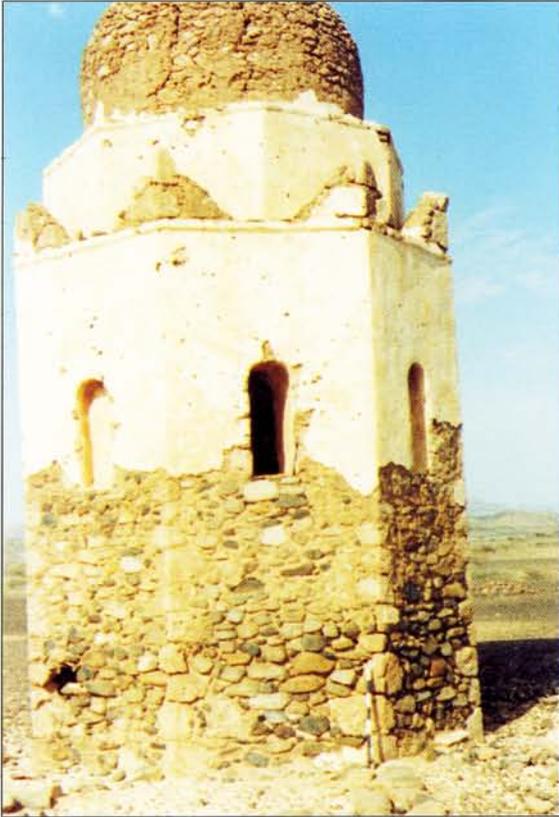
Table 3. Location of domed tombs of type III.

Gubba Name	Type	Co-ordinates *	Gubba No.	Map reference
1. <i>Gubbat</i> Faki Ya'qub		15° 25' 59" N – 36° 25' 1" E	ND-37. A/14-T.1	ND37.A.Kassala
2. <i>Gubbat</i> Al Hasan	c	15° 26' N – 36° 25' E	ND-37. A/14-T.2	„
3. <i>Gubbat</i> Ja'fir	b	15° 25' 59" N – 39° 25' E	ND-37. A/14-T.3	„
4. Sheikh Abdallah al Halengi	d	15° 44' N – 36° 18' E	ND-37. A/8-A.1	„
5. Dafallah ibn Abdallah al Halengi	a	15° 44' N – 36° 17' 59" E	ND-37. A/8-A.2	„
6. Sheikh Ali Betai	d	16° 56' N – 36° 48' E	NE-37. M/4-G.1	NF.37 M Maman
7. Ibrahim Mohammad Osman al Khatim	b	18° 48' 59" N – 36° 50' E	NE-37. E/4-Q.1	NE.37 E.Sinkat
8. Sitti Maryam ibnt Hashim al Mirghani	c	18° 48' N – 36° 50' E	NE-37. E/4-Q.2	„
9. Sheikh Abul Fatah	b	19° 6' N – 37° 20' E	NE-37. A/24-1.1	NE.37.AP.Sudan
10. Mohammad Osman Taj al Sir	b	19° 6' N – 37° 24' E	NE-37. A/24-1.2	„
11. Sheikh Barghut		19° 36' 30" N – 36° 14' E	NE-37. A/II-O.I	„
12. Sheikh Akd		20° 39' 40" N – 37° 08' 1" E	NF-37. M/II-M.I	NF.37 M.Moh.Qo

* These co-ordinates are taken from the Sudan survey standard map at a scale of 1:250,000.

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*Plate XVI. Domed tomb at Mohammad Gol, 7km
from the coast of the Red Sea.*

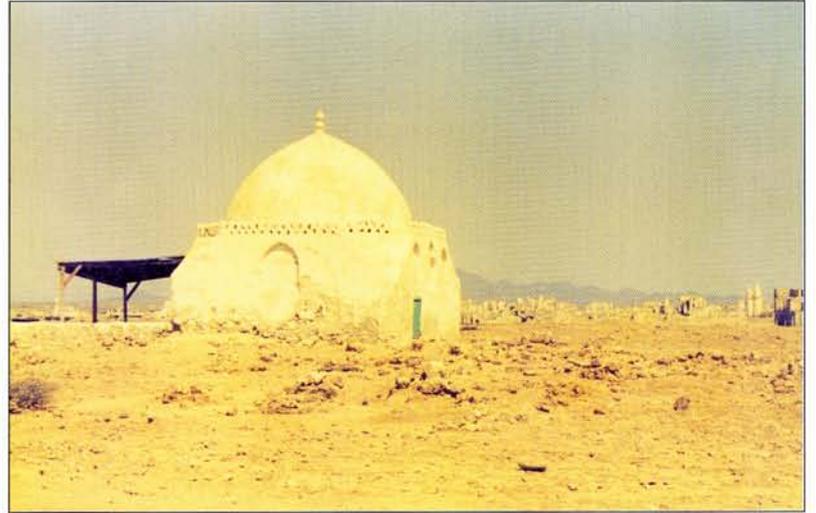


Plate XVII. Domed tomb of Al Sbeikh Abul Fatab (Type IIIb) at Suwakin.

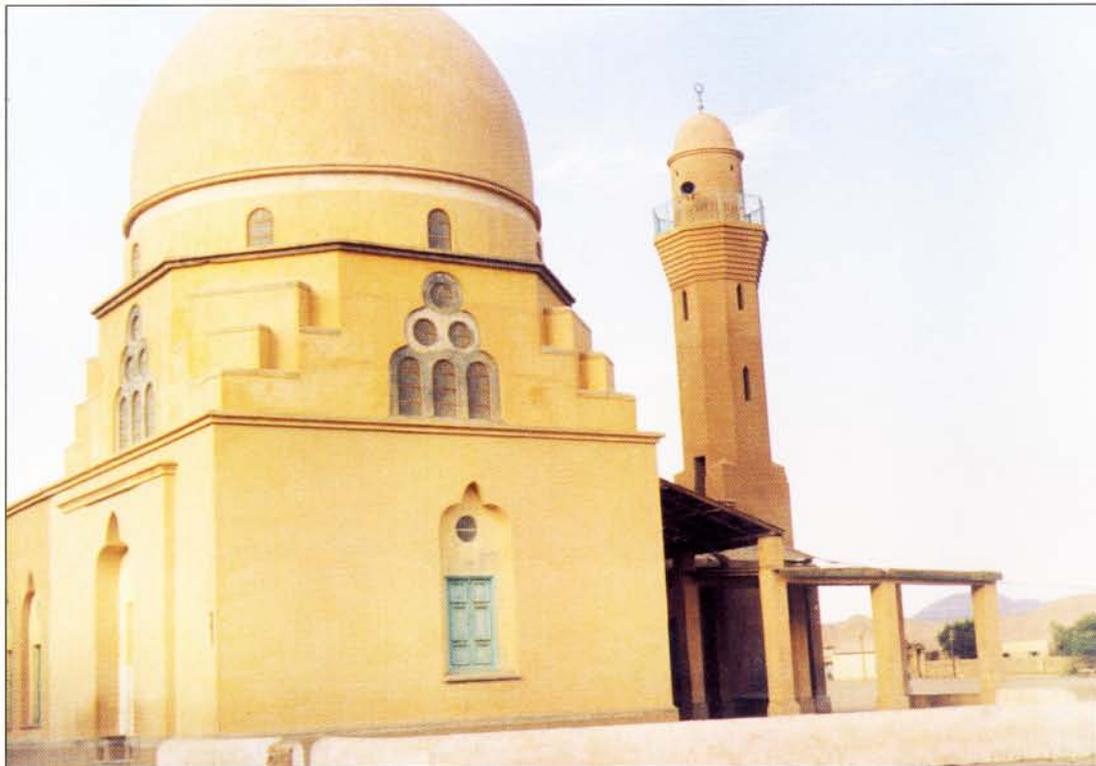


Plate XVIII. Domed tomb of Sitti Maryam (Type IIIc) at Sinkat.