

Architecture and life in villages of the Fourth Nile Cataract in the region of et-Tereif

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Architecture and life in villages of the Fourth Nile Cataract in the region of et-Tereif

Frances Welsh

Introduction

In December 2004, I was in the et-Tereif area of the Fourth Cataract attached to the Sudan Archaeological Research Society's AKSC team.¹ I hoped to make a photographic record of the houses and villages of the present inhabitants soon to be destroyed by the rising waters behind the new Merowe dam and the population relocated to new areas. (Plate 1).² Modern vernacular houses and villages have



Plate 1. River and rocks in the Fourth Cataract.

not received much attention in the past, but two studies were made during the UNESCO campaign to rescue archaeological data and monuments prior to flooding the area (now known as Lake Nasser) caused by the building of the new Aswan High Dam. El Hakim (1999) studied architecture and building methods and Wenzel (1972) studied painted decoration of houses for the area of Nubia between Aswan and Wadi Halfa.

Both these studies demonstrate that although there are similarities in the materials used, etc., there are marked differences from the architecture in the part of the Fourth Cataract which I proposed to investigate. The arched vaulted rooms and extensive coverage with painted decoration of houses characteristic of Nubia did not occur in the study area.

In the short time available, 11 villages were visited, using et-Tereif on the riverbank and Umm Kedissa on Mis Island as bases (living with the team in the dig houses in each case). Over 300 digital images of architectural features of houses and daily life activities of the area were made.

Priority was given to recording pictorially the range of

designs of the houses and their features to show the artistic effect of the creative use of mud and plaster construction.

Due to restricted time and lack of assistance, it was not possible to make detailed surveys of any of the houses or villages. Sketch plans of some houses were made and villages with some measurements of house interiors. The few plans of villages in this paper have been produced from aerial photographs.

No formal ethnographic study was undertaken, but information about people and their families was gathered from informal conversations. Aspects of their way of life and activities such as irrigation and agriculture were noted and recorded photographically where possible.

Methodology

The project was proposed after visiting the area in 2002 although I did not have ethnographical or surveying skills. My background is as an Egyptologist with a deep interest in ancient Sudanese culture, combined with a lifetime of photographing sites and people in the Middle East and elsewhere. This, with an enthusiastic appreciation of vernacular mud-brick housing in Egypt and Sudan and a rapport with the people gained from my childhood spent in Sudan, gave me the confidence to tackle this task. Although this was my own project, I had the invaluable help of a young Sudanese lady, Moona Elhaj Bilal, who introduced me to the ladies of the houses and acted as interpreter to a limited extent.

The method of working developed from day to day according to that day's circumstances. At first general photographs were taken while walking around et-Tereif village. The dig house was then photographed and measured. Thereafter, with Moona's help, various houses were visited. She tapped lightly on the main door and called out words of greeting. Usually the lady of the house would appear and invite us in. After Moona had introduced herself and received a great welcome in view of her grandmother's position (head midwife for the whole area based at Kareima hospital), she explained what we were doing and asked permission for me to photograph. This was always granted and generous hospitality offered in the form of tea and biscuits and I was shown into all the intimate areas of the house. Despite my poor knowledge of Arabic, we had lively conversations. I was more easily accepted when I explained that I had lived in Atbara as a child and that I was now a grandmother.

Physical Setting

The villages and the architecture of their houses were a product of their physical setting on the banks of the River Nile or on rocky islands in its midst (Plate 2). The river

¹ I would like to thank Derek Welsby and SARS for enabling me to carry out this project and providing logistical support in the field. I also wish to thank the following for generous sponsorship towards this work: Mrs Susan Sayer, Alan Hardy of Freshfield Lane Brickworks Ltd, The Brick Development Association Ltd and The York Handmade Brick Co. Ltd.

² All photographs taken by Frances Welsh © SARS



Plate 2. View across the Fourth Cataract from Mis Island.

changed seasonally every year - a swift flowing waterway which was impeded by rocks and islands became a raging torrent with unpredictable behaviour. This would flood its bed and overflow onto any low-lying ground on its banks to form *seluka* land.

All villages were surrounded by, or associated with, date palm groves and areas of cultivated plots beside the river on *seluka* land. The centre of each island had a desert landscape of sand and rocks with little in the way of defined roads or tracks between settlements (Plate 3). Away from the oasis type vegetation beside the river, the desert encroached on the riverbank villages.



Plate 3. Umm Kedissa village with palm trees.

From our base at et-Tereif on the south (left) bank, Ganob to the east and Hantilah to the west were visited along with the small village of Umm Aroshair on the island of Umm Ushur, opposite et-Tereif.

On Mis island, Umm Kedissa village was studied, where the team was based in a local house, and visits were also made to el-Hazama, Umm Gemesa, Umm Quweib, Abu Angareeb, and Muhallitib, which were all villages within walking distance of Umm Kedissa. Also, a short visit by boat was made to the village of Umm Gebir on an adjacent island (Figure 1).

Architectural constraints

The architecture of buildings and layout of villages was

dependent upon physical and social factors which were reflected in their design. These included the physical characteristics of the site, materials available, climatic conditions, and the social structure of the community.

a. Sites

The Cataract region is an area of granitic rocks overlaid with a covering of sediment and sand. Villages were built on high ground where mounds of rocks protrude from the surface and the houses clustered around the highest point. Rocks protruded everywhere and were difficult to remove or flatten without heavy equipment which was not available to the local people (Plate 4). In the flood season



Plate 4. Rough bedrock in a courtyard at Umm Aroshair village.

the islands became very small as the rising river filled the intervening low areas which by December became perfect areas for farming. At that time of year one could walk from Umm Kedissa to Umm Quweib whereas it is shown on some maps as being on a separate island. On riverbank sites such as et-Tereif the village had spread out into the desert with houses being built on the other side of a *wadi* some distance from the river.

b. Materials and manpower

The building materials available in the areas affected the architecture (Plate 5). There was Nile mud or silt as well as animal dung, which could be varied in consistency by the addition of straw or stones or sand (Plate 6). Local



Plate 5. Abu Angareeb. House wall of sections of jalous built on top of protruding bedrock with mud-brick repair.

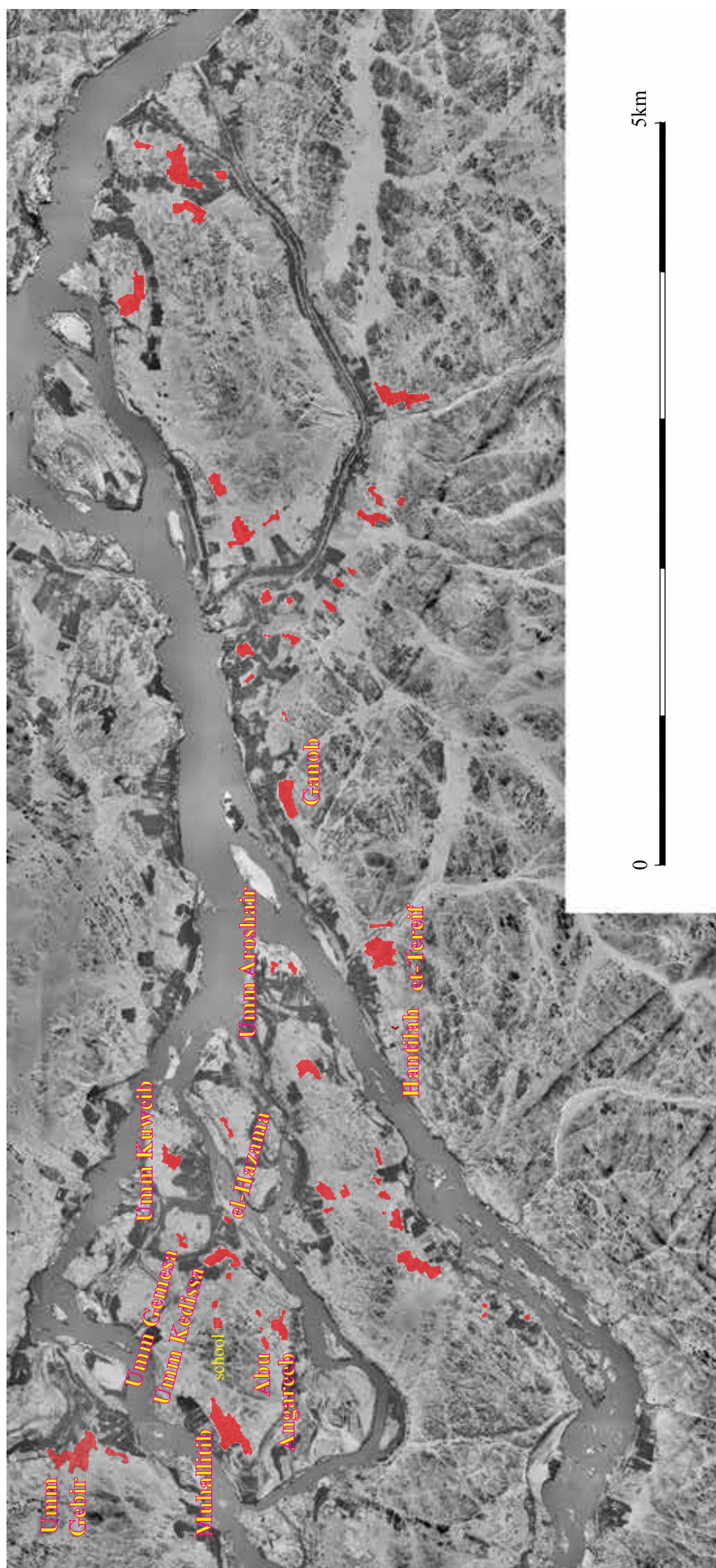


Figure 1. Location of the villages discussed in the text.



Plate 6. House walls of stones embedded in rough *jalous* built on loose boulders and protruding bedrock.

stones varying in size from gravel to small boulders were also used. Wood was available from a limited variety of trees, predominantly date palm with acacia and *dom* palm, while wood of the *neem* tree was imported from “up-river” for use as the main roof beam in houses (Plate 7).



Plate 7. Ceiling of layers of beams and reeds.

A further constraint was the availability of manpower for building and the expertise of the builders. It seems these houses in the et-Tereif area were usually constructed by their owners as a gift for their bride, and I was given the impression that professional help was rarely available for design or building. Ahmed Hassan Sidiq, the owner of house A2 in et-Tereif, told me that he helped his father to build the original house and then added more when he himself married.

c. Climate

The climate affected the architecture of houses in the region. For the extreme heat of the summer colonnades with brick piers, arcades (*berandas*) and open-ended roofed spaces (*loggias*) were cool and breezy but the extreme cold of winter was not catered for (Plate 8). The so-called ‘winter’ *beranda*, although on the leeward side of the courtyard, seemed to be open to the cold air as much as the ‘summer’ one in most cases. Kitchens were often roofed with loosely laid palm fronds to allow smoke



Plate 8. Et-Tereif. House F1 with arcades of rectangular openings and *berandah* shelter.

to escape but the solid walls would have resulted in the room being cool in the summer

d. Social factors

The designs of houses were dictated by the skill of the builders and their architectural aspirations. Their function as a family home for several generations led to the residential compound layout containing several separate ‘rooms’ which were served by one kitchen and one bathroom. Toilets in houses were not seen as the occupants made use of the surrounding fields for the purpose. The social structure in this area of Sudan required that there be separate dwellings called *diwan* for the man of the house who could also join his wife and family in the women’s quarters. This applied to most dwellings in all the villages visited. It ensured that the ladies and children were not intruded upon by non-family male visitors and provided accommodation for hospitality to be given and enjoyed.

Construction

Buildings were made of mud-block construction called *jalous*, which was then mud-plastered and sometimes white-washed (Plate 9). The buildings’ corners were reinforced by the addition of a buttress – the need for this was clear from the signs of wear and tear on the plaster.



Plate 9. Abu Anghareeb. House with unplastered *jalous* walls and door opening.

Unplastered walls showed the usual method of construction (Plate 10). These were not conventionally made mud

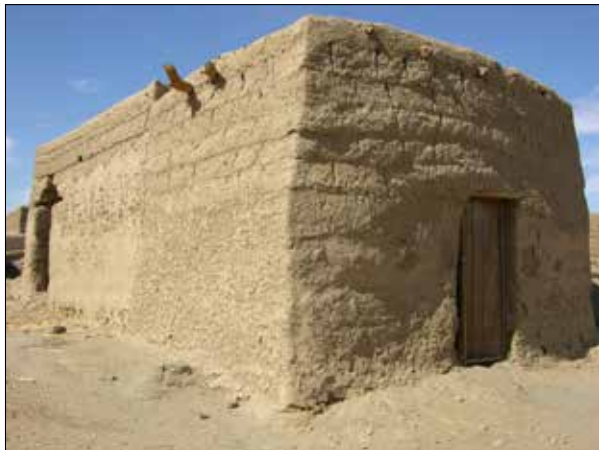


Plate 10. Abu Anghareeb. Rectangular house with jalous walls and two door openings.

bricks, formed in a mould and then dried in the sun before being laid with mortar jointing. These 'blocks' were made on site by means of a mud mixture formed into large 'blocks' fashioned by hand only and laid down without mortar, course by course (Plate 11). First, a foundation



Plate 11. Umm Kedissa. Unplastered enclosure wall of jalous on a foundation of various sized boulders.

trench was laid using "a string" to give a straight line. This was dug out, and then filled with boulders and mud on which the walls were laid, each course being left to dry *in situ* in the sun for about two days (Plate 12), after which further courses were added. Finally, horizontal course lines and vertical 'joints' were marked on the outer surface of the wall to give the appearance of very large mould-made bricks (Plate 13). I was told that they dig the foundation 150mm deep and 150mm wide – this is called the *sas* – into which a mix of mud and stone is laid and it takes three days to dry. The first line of bricks is called the *gabarah*. Before the first blocks are laid, there is a village feast for which a sheep is slaughtered. Bricks are called *tub* and blocks are called *saregah*. Blocks are a mixture of Nile mud, straw and stones. The builder is called *el-woosta*; two men called *tayanah* carry water and a third is the mixer of water and mud. The two water carriers also carry the mud mixture to the wall. One



Plate 12. Hantilah. Unfinished semi-circular animal pen showing jalous construction in progress: heap of prepared mud and stone mixture beside two stages of wall.



Plate 13. Et-Tereif. Finished section of jalous wall showing size of marked "bricks" (adult hand for scale).

hands the portion of mud called *tabaana* to the builder. A 'sacrifice' is made when putting in lintels or doors or windows. At the rear of et-Tereif, an unplastered building showed the construction of a stepped arch. The rounded arches were very well made of conventional mud bricks with a neat group of bricks to make a keystone (Plate 14). I was told that the shape was achieved by using a wooden semi-circular shaped form supported on the two 'steps' of the ends of the side wall to hold it in place until the mud hardened.

On the island of Ishashi, the formwork plank supporting the lintel of an entrance door had been left tied in its place because the mud crest had cracked in drying.

Architectural features

House plans and layouts were similar in all these villages but individual variations to architectural features occurred throughout due to personal preference, availability of raw materials and the exigencies of the site as listed above.

House plans

Houses were usually a series of separate buildings within an enclosure wall with one or two entrances (Plate 15).



Plate 14. Et-Tereif. Conventional arched opening made of mud bricks inserted into a jalous wall.



Plate 15. Mis Island. House in courtyard surrounded by a "wavy" jalous wall.

The buildings were plain rectangular structures of one room without partitions and usually flanked by an arcade on one or more sides and covered by the same roof (Plate 16). An additional room could be added by erecting a separate building close by, extending the roof over both buildings and incorporating further arcades. Three houses, one in Abu Anghareeb, one in Umm Kedissa and one in Umm Aroshair, had a shop space in one corner fronting the street which was formed by building internal walls in a residential room building.

Diwans

The separate men's *diwan* was a similar enclosed area around a room which was built either beside the family house or on a suitable plot in another part of the village. These often had excellent views of the surrounding countryside or of approaching visitors, as at Umm Kedissa (Plate 17). The *diwan* was more carefully built and maintained with superior details such as, for example, arched windows with clear plastic inserted to keep out



Plate 16. Abu Anghareeb. House with two-arched arcade joined to jalous walled enclosure.



Plate 17. Umm Kedissa. Fatma's plastered house with an arcade of three rounded arches standing within a plastered enclosure wall having a gateway entrance at the corner.

sand and cold air, and a better furnished interior such as the provision of carpets on a level prepared floor, metal beds with sprung mattresses, and one of the only two TV sets in the village in a *diwan* at Umm Kedissa. Access from the *diwan* to the neighbouring family house was by way of a casually made break in the party enclosure wall.

Walls

Enclosure walls were built carefully of *jalous* topped with a coping of various shapes which was then plastered with mud (Plate 18). They were very well laid out to achieve a straight line on plan but had to curve up and over obstructions caused by rocks embedded in the ground (Plate 19). These 'wavy' walls usually maintained the same height throughout unless required to accommodate the rising ground surface (Plate 20). Internal walls were similarly built and maintained accurate horizontal and vertical lines. These walls were not bonded together at the corners of the rooms and often showed signs of coming apart and/or repair. The walls at the external corners of buildings were usually reinforced with external buttresses where necessary. Openings, such as arches, windows and doorways, were inserted during the building process.



Plate 18. Et-Tereif. Triangular-shaped coping on the enclosure wall of the mosque.



Plate 21. Et-Tereif. Bedroom interior with level floor and plastered wall having painted decoration of a man on bicycle(?).



Plate 19. North of Et-Tereif. Wall of jalous laid on undulating ground to create a "wavy" wall.



Plate 20. Abu Anghareeb. Jalous enclosure wall of courtyard, house and rear yard built on a slope.

Decorations seem to be invariably painted by the lady of the house (Plate 21). For example, in the guest room of the Et-Tereif dig house, the artist, Mona Abeed Allah, proudly showed her work. It is a simple but decorative floral motif, similar to the henna designs painted on ladies' hands.

House F1 at Umm Kedissa had extensive decorations. There was a plant laden with fruit climbing around the door of one room, a rose painted above the door of the other room, geometrical line patterns, and even a painted sketch of a cat (Um Kedissa means 'Mother of cats'). At Abu Anghareeb a house unusually had painted decoration on its outer wall, including a depiction of a car.

Floors

The local people lacked heavy machinery or sufficient manpower to enable them to clear house sites (or even the lanes between houses) of rocks embedded in the ground which were left protruding from the ground within the courtyards and also inside the lesser buildings such as kitchens and used as bases for domestic uses. The floors of residential rooms were normally flat. However, the courtyard of a house often had a sloping floor as well as protruding rocks (Plate 22).



Plate 22. Abu Anghareeb. House with an arcade of keyhole-shaped openings and protruding rocks in the courtyard.

Arcades (berandas) and loggias

Shaded areas were essential for the periods of extremely hot weather and these were provided by the arcades surrounding rooms (Plate 23) and also by roofing the space between two rooms, or a room and an enclosure wall, to make an open-ended loggia. Arcade openings were key-hole shaped (Plate 24) or rounded arches (Plate 25), and sometimes rectangular (Plate 26), the form often being characteristic of a particular village. A house at Umm Quwaib had a decorated arcade with rectangular doorways and a magnificent roof with huge beams. Shade was also provided by simple shelters of palm branches and leaves laid loosely across a frame of wooden posts – a *rakuba* (Plate 27).



Plate 23. Umm Kedissa, Building F1. Keyhole-shaped opening with inner room and rectangular opening beyond.



late 24. Abu Anghareeb. Arcade openings of keyhole shape.



Plate 25. Abu Anghareeb. House with openings of square and rounded arch shape.



Plate 26. Umm Quweib. House with rectangular openings to the arcade.



Plate 27. Umm Gemesa. Shelter in courtyard of brick pillars roofed with palm branches.

Doors and windows

Doors and windows of rooms were usually simple rectangles (Plate 28) with plain shutters of wood planks set into a frame of four strips of wood (Plates 29 and 30) The lintel above house doors was usually hidden by plaster but a length of log or suitable wood was used which was set into the mud wall construction. Miscellaneous pieces



Plate 28. Umm Gemesa. Exterior of a house with door and window openings and details of a buttress and low mastaba.



Plate 29. Abu Anghareeb. House used as a shop, with an inset wooden door.



Plate 31. Mis Island. House door with a large exposed timber lintel, two-leafed wooden door and doorstep.



Plate 30. El-Hazama. House with an inset wooden door.



Plate 32. Umm Quweib. Ceiling of palm ribs and lintel of rectangular opening to arcade.

of wood (Plate 31) such as plank, tree trunk and sticks, were combined to create a lintel over a door, window or rectangular arcade opening (Plate 32). Thresholds of mud were often made as a separate component so that they could be repaired easily when worn down by use (Plate 33).

The main entrance door to the family house was a distinctive feature indicating the status of the owner (Plate 34). Two large imposing pillars of mud-brick flanked a two-leafed door which in modern times is made of metal as opposed to the traditional wooden door which survived in some poorer areas (Plate 35). The posts and doors were painted with bright colours, often chosen by the wife of the owner. When necessary, steps lead up to the door level and often an existing boulder is used as a door step (Plate 36). Door lintels were sometimes decorated with coloured glass bottles or a shaped crest of mud (Plate 37) and the external wall could have a raised chevron pattern or some colour wash. A small or long *mastaba* was occasionally built beside the main door. Locks or padlocks were fitted to the doors of internal buildings as well as to



Plate 33. El-Hazama. Rectangular door openings with two-part renewable threshold.

the main entrance door. The 'back' door was an opening in the enclosure wall, often near the kitchen, and it had no fittings at all.



Plate 34. Umm Kedissa, Building F3. Main entrance doorway in enclosure wall showing painted gate posts and painted metal two-leafed door approached by built stairway of two-steps.



Plate 35. Umm Quweib, Building K2. Main entrance door of traditional wooden form, opening inwards to the courtyard.

Roofs and ceilings

Roofs were made of one or two huge logs (of the *neem* tree), as beams, stretching from side to side, on which were laid crosswise, as rafters, smaller logs beneath a matting of palm ribs (Plate 38). Palm leaves and mud mixed with animal dung (*zibala*) were laid on top to make a waterproof roof (Plate 39). The ceilings were not usually plastered on the underside and the ends of the roof beams protruded from the outside wall to make a decorative feature. These beams were sometimes supported internally by column-like tree trunks as it seems that the beams often rotted at the point of contact with the plaster of the



Plate 36. Umm Kedissa. Exterior view of main entrance door showing unlevelled bedrock in the street outside and decorated crest on the lintel.



Plate 37. Umm Kedissa. Exterior of entrance doorway to women's courtyard with doorstep formed by natural boulder in situ.



Plate 38. Umm Gemesa. Roof strewn with palm fronds and reeds.

mud-brick wall. Metal rainspouts (*sabaloka*) protruded from the eaves where the roof was slightly dished with raised edges.

Kitchen

The kitchen was in the family house enclosure, not in the *diwan*. It was a shelter or room set into one corner of the



Plate 39. *Umm Gemesa. Roof constructed in traditional way with slightly dished plastered surface and water spouts for drainage.*

courtyard away from other rooms (Plate 40). It was either a complete building or a post and palm branch shelter, usually with at least part of the roof covered with palm-fronds to allow smoke to escape. Cooking was done over a small open fire, or sometimes a two-ring paraffin cooking unit was available. Some kitchens had a 'shelf-unit' built of planks and mud-brick supports, and one real shelf fixed to a wall was seen. There was no running water or electricity available for use in the kitchen.



Plate 40. *Umm Quweib. Area outside kitchen shaded by palm fronds resting on beams.*

Water pot shelter

Water for drinking was stored and kept cool in large earthenware pots (*zirs*) in a shelter or small room near the kitchen, while others were under trees elsewhere in the courtyard (Plate 41). Water for drinking or washing dishes and clothes or bathing had to be brought from either the nearby *jedwell* (irrigation channel) or from the river.

Bathrooms (*hamaam*), aromatherapy area and lavatories

The bathroom was a small room large enough for one person to stand in, and placed near the back door inside the courtyard, usually draining into the lane outside.



Plate 41. *Abu Anghareeb. Emplacement for six water jars in the courtyard shaded by palm fronds close to the kitchen.*

The lavatory was not seen inside houses but one or two unroofed communal structures made of mud brick were provided for each large village. These were built over a partly covered cesspit and consisted of four walls of shoulder height with an opening left as entrance. Most family houses included in or near the kitchen a small smoothed floor area with a pot set into the centre. This was the *dekkah* or aromatherapy area for use by the married ladies of the house. The lady, wearing only an enveloping sheet, sat on a stool set over the pot in which scented wood was burning and could then enjoy the perfumed steam in private.

Animal pens, chicken pen and pigeon houses

Circular animal pens for goats and sheep were placed in clusters on the edge of villages. These were made of stone and *jalous* with a castellated coping. One empty 'chicken coop' was noted. Most houses had a tall pigeon house (*hammam*) built into a corner of the enclosure wall - some with square plan and others with a circular plan - all were empty in December 2004.

Threshing floor

At Umm Kedissa there was a large smoothed circular area in the rocks outside the village which appeared to be a threshing floor.

Unroofed storeroom

A large open roofed storeroom or small courtyard was attached to a house in et-Tereif. This was only accessible from outside the complex and was a place to lay out the date harvest and prepare them for use.

Shops

These were incorporated into the corner of a residence or built as a separate structure with a shaded area in front.

Mosques

Large villages usually had a communal open space, where there was access to the mosque built on the outskirts of the village. Where there were mosques, for example at

et-Tereif and Umm Kedissa, these were simple buildings without minarets.

Generator houses

Electricity was generated in some villages to provide power for lighting and for TV. There was also a grinding mill at et-Tereif. The generator house was a plain square mud-brick building on the outskirts of the village; the generator was turned on for two or three hours in the early evening.

Summary

It is clear that the villages were a product of their surroundings and the environment and the houses within them were an artistic expression of the people who built them by hand and then lived there. Building plans were not standardised because there appeared to be no professional builders or architects. Each owner followed the 'usual' design but included his own choice of detail such as shape of arches and arrangement of rooms which were placed where the ground provided enough floor space clear of protruding rocks. The use of mud-plastered blocks inspired an artistic and aesthetically pleasing style of architecture.

To illustrate this it is useful to consider each of the villages visited and describe their characteristic features of architecture and life style. Each of the individual villages will be dealt with separately and some of the houses discussed in detail.

The houses of island villages were built close together on high ground and clustered around a mound of rocks. These islands are accessible only by river for most of the year. The mainland riverbank villages are similar (Plate 42), but could spread out onto flatter areas around the mound of rocks which make a focal point. These are



Plate 42. Riverbank village of et-Tereif from the rock outcrop to its south with the river beyond.

accessible by overland vehicle transport on desert tracks from Merowe or as far away as Khartoum.

All villages are surrounded by, or associated with, date palm groves and areas of cultivated plots beside the river on river banks and *seluka* land. The main activity and source of income is the cultivation of date palms together with subsistence farming involving ploughing with oxen,

irrigation work and animal husbandry of sheep, goats and a few cattle. No wheeled vehicles were observed on the river islands but a few donkeys were used for transportation of people and goods, including water.

Riverbank villages

Et-Tereif

A large village with one road passing through (Figure 2). The houses were clustered together and the site rose to a low mound of rocks away from the river (Plate 43). Further houses were built on land beyond a *wadi* to extend

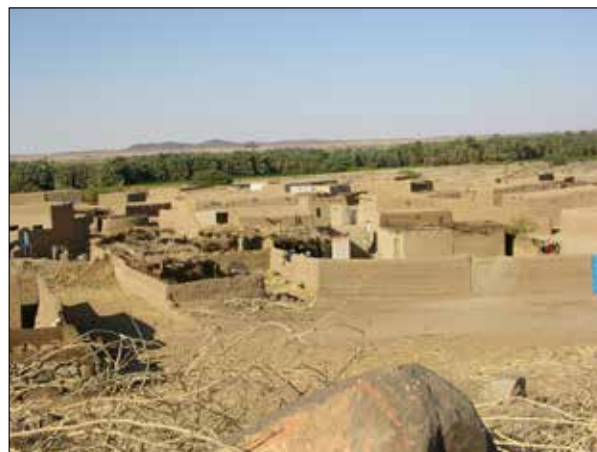


Plate 43. Village of et-Tereif.

the boundary of the village as there was extensive flat land available in that direction.

Streets between houses enabled some entrances to form a small plaza or social area (Plate 44), whereas the main street through the settlement gave access to a large open area in the centre of the village which I was told was used for 'parties, festivals, boys' football and wedding parties' (Plate 45). The village shop also faced this open area and was a separate building with keyhole arched arcade fronting a two-roomed building. Dwelling enclosures were each spacious (Plate 46) and the mens' *diwan* (Plates 47-49) was often separated from the womens' dwelling. The small mosque was on the river side of the village plaza (Plate 50). I was told that there was no need for a large mosque as there were only ten family houses in the village. The narrow streets (Plates 51



Plate 44. Et-Tereif. Small plaza.

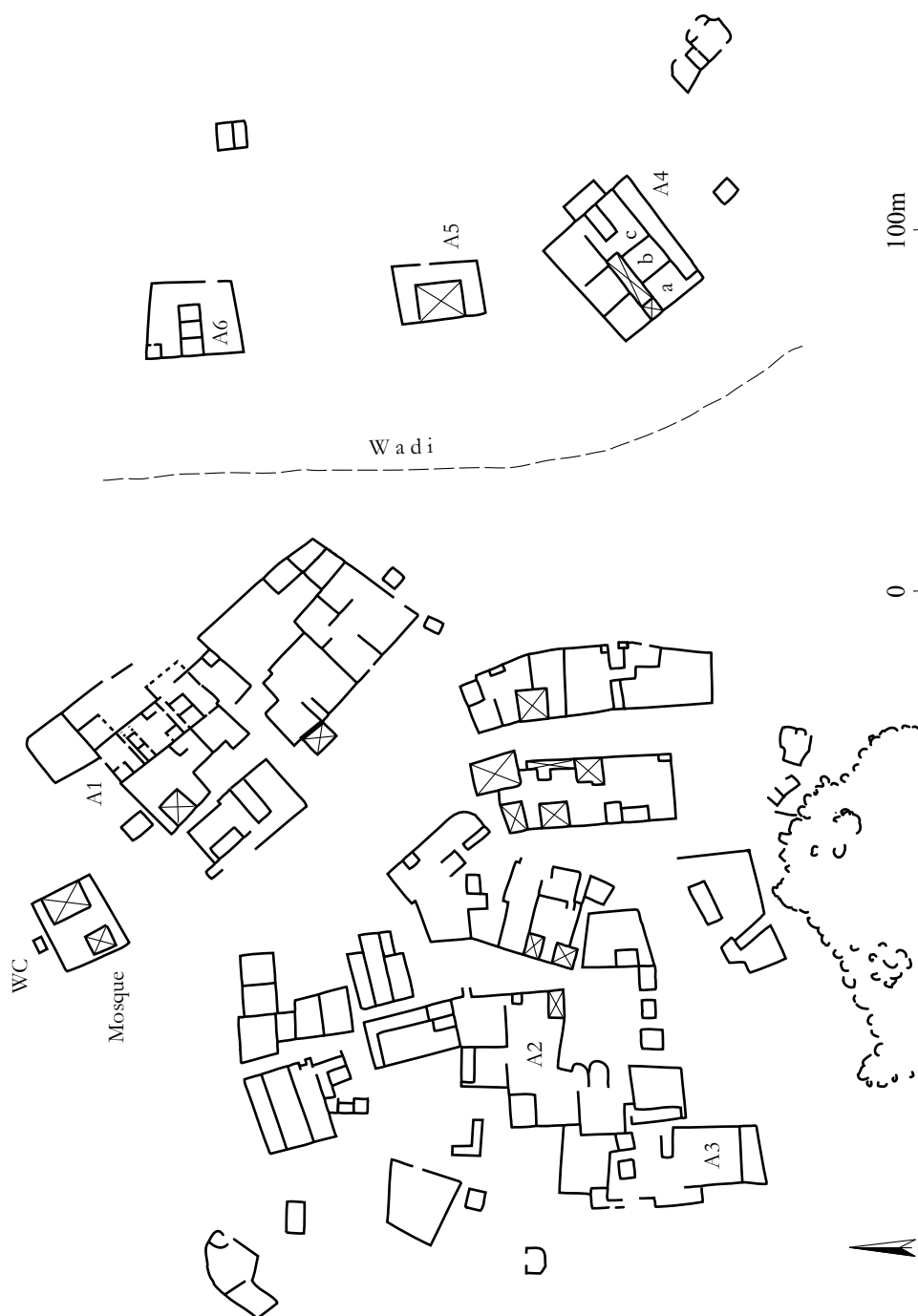


Figure 2. Plan of the village at et-Tereif (scale 1:2000).



Plate 45. Et-Tereif. Main central plaza with shop.



Plate 46. Et-Tereif. Spacious house compound showing entrance doorway and block of rooms with courtyard.



Plate 47. Et-Tereif. House with arcade of rounded openings.



Plate 49. Et-Tereif. A *divan* house on a raised platform situated at the edge of the village.



Plate 48. Et-Tereif. Probably a *divan* house.



Plate 50. Et-Tereif. The mosque with thick enclosure wall – a block with door and windows but no minaret.

and 52) between houses were used by donkeys carrying loads of *berseem* fodder or water to the households, but the main thoroughfare allowed motor vehicles of all sizes to pass. Large overland lorries brought supplies of food, bottled water and manufactured items from Khartoum or transported men as labour force. One Friday a lorry was observed laden with standing men in spotless *galabeyehs* being taken to a funeral.

House descriptions

House A1 – the dig house (Figure 3)

Situated on the edge of the village facing towards the river with a *wadi* on its east side (facing Gunob) (Plate 53). It stood close to the mosque (with toilet behind it) and near to the plaza and shop. This was not a typical house as it had been altered and adapted over several recent years to accommodate the archaeologists who rented the house each winter. The main entrance was a simple two-leaf door of corrugated iron sheet, opening on to a courtyard (the first). Inside, to the left of the doorway were two *hamaam* cubicles and a block room to the right (Plate 54). Ahead a doorway led to a transverse corridor

between the rear wall of a block of rooms and on the left a roofed *loggia* (Plate 55) which led to the inner (second) courtyard (Plate 56). Two rooms beside the *loggia* opened to this yard with the kitchen in one corner (Plate 57) and an additional room in another corner. An opening gave access to the remaining two rooms (Plate 58) and a door led to the rear area of the house (occupied by the owner's family) (Plate 59).

There were no arcades or arches in this house. A large open courtyard abutted the first courtyard without access

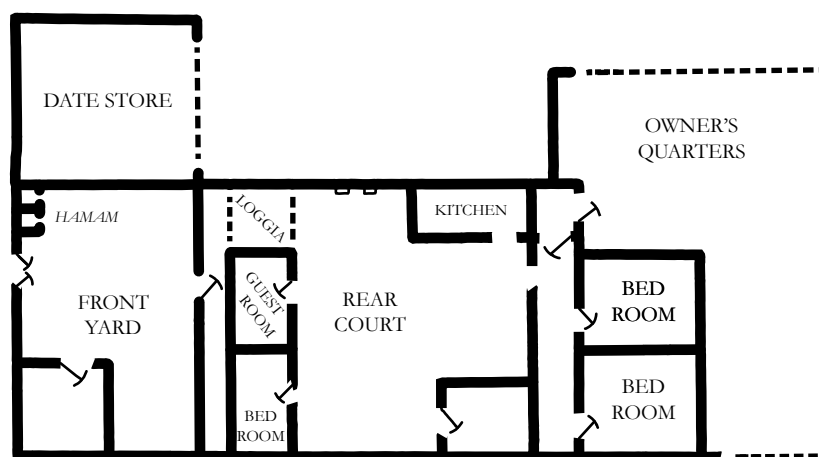


Figure 3. Plan of House A1 at et-Tereif (scale 1:200).



Plate 51. Et-Tereif. Enclosure wall with doorway with shaped crest.



Plate 52. Et-Tereif. Enclosure wall of jalous on boulder foundations – a narrow street.



Plate 53. Et-Tereif, House A1. Enclosure wall with entrance on right.



Plate 54. Et-Tereif, House A1. Inside of front wall, showing two-leaf door and two hamaam.



Plate 55. Et-Tereif, House A1. Loggia between the first and second courtyards.



Plate 56. Et-Tereif, House A1. Ceiling construction of loggia.



Plate 57. Et-Tereif, House A1. Buttress supports to plastered interior wall of second courtyard, with kitchen building at rear.



Plate 58. Et-Tereif, House A1. Kitchen and rough opening in wall to give access to owner's accommodation.

from the house, used for storage for the date harvest.

The owner of the house was Suleiman (who did not reside there). Mohassin was the cook and the paintings in the main guest bedroom were made by Mona Abeed Allah (Plate 60).

House A2 (Figure 4)

This house was in the centre of the village, approached by a road leading from the plaza (Plate 61). Impressive painted doorposts with metal double doors opened onto the main courtyard (Plate 62). Rooms here included a 'summer *berandah*' with an arcade of rounded arches (Plate 63), and another *berandah* in a sheltered corner of the yard. Two further plain rooms were designated for 'women' and 'store' beyond which was an arcade around a room for the elderly father (Plate 64), and a kitchen building in the far corner with a *zir* beside it. At the rear, a door led to another courtyard with arcade room which



Plate 59. Et-Tereif, House A1. Rear rooms at right and door leading to owner's accommodation.

was the *diwan*. A further extension to the right seemed to be another living area or possibly a second *diwan* as it had imposing painted door posts opening onto a different street, and a well-made keyhole arched arcade surrounding a room.

Ahmed Hassan Sidiq (Plate 65) told me he had helped his father (Hassan Sidiq) build the house and then had added to it when he married.

House A3

This was at the back of the village. The *diwan* with a colonnade in front of a room was at the rear of the house and its square columns were painted orange.

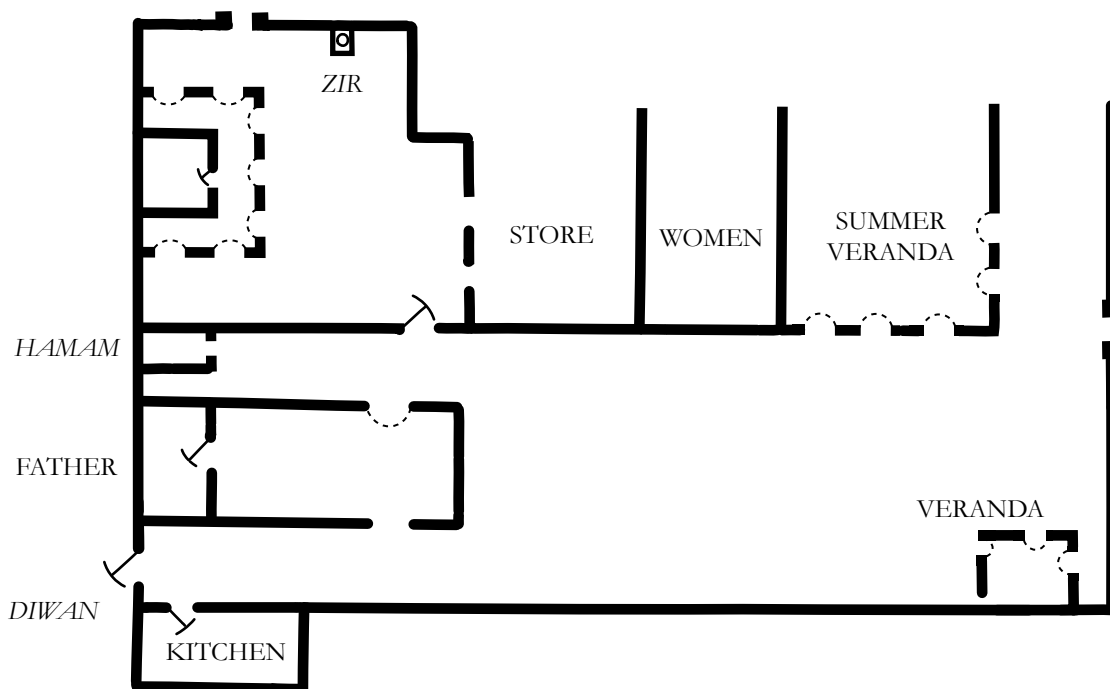


Figure 4. Plan of House A2 at et-Tereif (scale 1:200).



Plate 60. Et-Tereif, House A1. Bedroom with painting by Moona Abeed Allah shown here with her daughter Nife.



Plate 63. Et-Tereif, House A2. Summer berandah with rounded arches and buttresses at corner – all plastered white.



Plate 61. Et-Tereif. Street leading to entrance gateway of House A2.



Plate 64. Et-Tereif, House A2. Berandah with keyhole arches and rain spouts.



Plate 62. Et-Tereif, House A2. Entrance gate with painted patterns on gateposts and summer berandah with an arcade of rounded arches.



Plate 65. Et-Tereif, House A2. Walls built by Ahmed Hassan Sidiq.

The courtyard had two rooms and a kitchen with palm frond roof.

Sa'ad, the husband, was working in Khartoum, and Leyla his wife was caring for their one month old baby, which lay on an *angareeb* (wooden bed) under a green mosquito net suspended from the ceiling, 'sent to me by

my husband'. An older aunt had a nine-month old baby and the 'mother' (grandmother?) was out giving food to animals (goats and sheep). There was a tree in a flowerbed in the courtyard.

Houses beyond the wadi

On the north side of the village, there were six houses

and some animal pens. Some were occupied, while others seemed to be newly built and never occupied. This appeared to be a way to claim extra compensation from the assessors associated with the construction of the dam.

Houses A4a, A4b, and A4c were built side by side in a rectangular block within an enclosure wall with shared party walls (Plate 66). These were occupied by three



Plate 66. Et-Tereif, House 4a. Enclosure wall, entrance doorway with bottles stuck into shaped crest.

related families; two sisters and their families in houses A4a and A4b, who looked after their brother's house (A4c). Each simple house plan was enclosed in its own walled compound having one entrance leading to an open courtyard with block of two rooms at the rear. The separate kitchen room (Plate 67) was built in the corner of the yard and was roofed with palm ribs and fronds (Plate 68). Other views are shown in Plates 69-72.



Plate 67. Et-Tereif, House 4c. House with two keyhole arches and closed window, with rakuba (reed covered) shelter and uneven courtyard floor.

Houses A5 and A6 had not been occupied and were newly built to a standard design (Plates 73 and 74): open courtyard, with arcaded room beyond which was a second courtyard.

Ganob

This small village was a short walk along the river bank to the east of et-Tereif. From a distance this village looked like a fortified settlement with buttress towers (Plate 75),



Plate 68. Et-Tereif, House 4c. Kitchen and zir emplacement in courtyard.



Plate 69. Et-Tereif, House 4c. Room within arcade.



Plate 70. Et-Tereif, House 4c. Inside room with decorated walls containing two angareeb used by the family.

but these were normal house compound walls with tall round pigeon houses. I was assured that there were only six houses and that three big families lived there but I was not able to unravel the relationships or the functions of all the houses as *diwans* or family houses (Plate 76).



Plate 71. Et-Tereif, House 4c. Painted decoration on interior walls.



Plate 74. Et-Tereif, House A5. Newly built house with two keyhole openings and showing two levels of roofing.



Plate 72. Et-Tereif, House 4c. Painted decoration on interior walls.



Plate 75. View of Ganob from the surrounding fields showing jalous walls, both horizontal and circular, and circular pigeon loft, all built on a foundation of boulders and bedrock.



Plate 73. Et-Tereif, House A5. Newly built house with two keyhole openings within enclosure wall.



Plate 76. Ganob. House with square columns and windows.

House descriptions

House B1

Situated at the rear of the village. The impressive entrance doorway was flanked by square columns with a metal two-

leaf door painted in bright colours set over a raised stone step of bedrock. The door lintel carried a castellated crest of mud plaster. A room inside the enclosure to the left of the entrance doorway served as the *diwan*. On the right of the entrance there was the single living room – a rectangular room with arcade around having rounded arches (Plate 77). A small kitchen room had been built outside the enclosure wall with access from the yard, and water installation set against that wall, consisting of two *zirs*.



Plate 77. Ganob, House B1. Rectangular block house with large rounded arch.

House B2

was in the centre of the village. This family house had imposing gateposts flanking a two-leaved metal door (Plate 78), all of which was painted in bright colours chosen by



Plate 78. Ganob, House B2. Main entrance with owner and wife standing beside gateposts and two-leaved metal door painted with bright colours.

the owner's bride. He had built the house a year ago for his bride and included an arcaded room (Plate 79) set into the right-hand corner within the open courtyard. The kitchen was attached to the outside of the enclosure wall. A *mastaba* 'bed' (Plate 80) was built-in at the end of the house arcade but *angareeb*s (Plate 81) were used as usual. A cloth was spread on the sandy floor of the courtyard for the benefit of guests who squatted around the dishes of food laid out upon it.



Plate 79. Ganob, House B2. Arcaded room with rectangular openings.

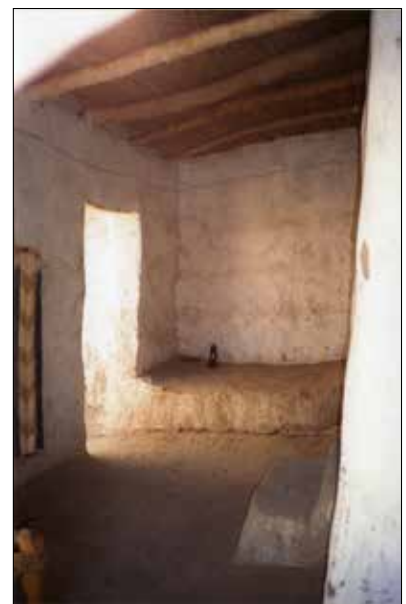


Plate 80. Ganob, House B2. Mastaba built inside arcade.



Plate 81. Ganob, House B2. Angareeb wooden bed inside arcade with ladies in courtyard seated on ground to eat a meal.

House B3

was on the river side of the village and was presumably a *diwan* as it had an attractive semi-circular shaded ground-level balcony (Plate 82) where the owner could sit and greet visitors as they arrived by the road.



Plate 82. Ganob, House B3. Ground level balcony.

Hantilah

This very small village (west of et-Tereif) was a three generation family village. It was built as a linear group beside a rocky *jebel* with close access to the date palm groves between it and the river (Plate 83). The houses had



Plate 83. Hantilah. Distant view of the village in its setting of rocky outcrops and loose boulders.

few arcades but a variety of construction methods were employed including dry-stone wall and mud-block walls of *jalous* (Plate 84). Solid looking cuboid rooms were characteristic of this village. This was the only site where *jalous* building was observed in progress. A circular wall for animal feed was being built in the corner of the yard, and showed clearly the process of laying two courses at a time, and then returning after two days to set the next two and so on. The complicated family genealogy was reflected in the buildings: one room built outside but attached to the enclosure wall was ‘grandmother’s house’ but ‘she is dead’. The grandfather, Abu Kashot, was bedridden and occupied one block room in the centre of the group. He had built the first house on the site for his first wife, while his second wife lived in another house ‘on the island’. His third wife had no children. His son, Idriss Almubarak, extended the house as needed. The wife of Idriss, Assia Bamra, was mother of two young women – one called Hassina Idriss whose father was Idriss, and another called Fatma Mohamed with a different father.



Plate 84. Hantilah. Animal pen of stone wall topped with *jalous*.

House descriptions

The houses were in three groups with different functions: the women’s rooms (Plate 85) near the river consisted of three rooms partly arcaded and having a small courtyard and separate kitchen building. This block had the redundant ‘grandmother’s room’ attached. A storage room for grain and dates formed part of the women’s block. The grandfather’s simple rectangular room and water storage



Plate 85. Hantilah. Family houses with the father’s *diwan* to the left, the grandfather’s in the centre and the women’s quarters on the right.

facility were approached through a dry-stone wall with carefully built entrance. The father’s *diwan* (Plate 86) was sited away from the other buildings and commanded a view of all visitors approaching the village. Simple rounded arches were used in the few arcade openings provided in this village and the only decoration seen was an inscription written on the outside of the women’s rooms – ‘Be in good health’.

Umm Aroshair

The houses in this village on Ishashi Island are built on a rocky outcrop high above the river (Plate 87). The courtyards inside have floors as uneven as the slope up from the river (Plate 88). The group includes a shop with a *mastaba* built onto the back of one of the houses.



Plate 86. Hantilah. The father's house with rounded openings, corner buttress and two rain spouts.



Plate 89. Umm Arosbair, House E1. Exterior wall of house facing the river with imposing entrance on left built on outcrop foundation.



Plate 87. Umm Arosbair. Roughly plastered jalous exterior wall on rocky base.



Plate 90. Umm Arosbair, House E1. Detail of entrance doorway with shaped crest of jalous which is supported by a wooden form-board held on by string.



Plate 88. Umm Arosbair. Enclosure wall of house at top of river bank slope.



Plate 91. Umm Arosbair, House E1. Interior of family room showing plastered walls, window, and owner and wife seated on two angareeb.

House descriptions

The main house E1

This house had an imposing entrance doorway (Plate 89) with a castellated lintel crest which was held secure by a formwork board and string (Plate 90). The main family room (Plate 91) fronted the river and was well built with a ceiling (Plate 92) supported by several large palm logs

whose ends protrude from the exterior wall as a decorative line of discs. An arcade with keyhole openings (Plate 93) had access to the courtyard with rooms and *berandahs* at the rear, the kitchen being set to the side (Plate 94). A second door led off the yard to the *diwan* which also had views of the river.



Plate 92. Umm Aroshair, House E1. Ceiling of family room of large log supporting branches and reeds, the ends of the log protruding through the wall as a decorative feature.



Plate 95. River Nile seen through palm groves on Mis Island.

Umm Kedissa

The village (Figure 5), where the team was based in a local house, is built on the rocky prominence whose highest point is called the 'Hill of Iron' (Jebel Hadid) (Plate 96). From this vantage point, the isolation of this remote island can be appreciated (Plates 97 and 98). On the edge of the village two houses have a view of the wild and beautiful cataract region with the riverbank/mainland in the far



Plate 93. Umm Aroshair, House E1. Exterior wall of family room facing courtyard with arcade of keyhole openings and doorway to diwan.



Plate 96. 'Hill of Iron' (Jebel Hadid) around which the village of Umm Kedissa is built.



Plate 94. Umm Aroshair, House E1. Courtyard with kitchen building flanked by rakuba shelter which includes a zir emplacement.

Island villages

After two weeks, we left the river bank base of et-Tereif and moved by boat and on foot to the island of Mis which is in the heart of the Fourth Cataract – a landscape of river, rocks and date-palm groves (Plate 95).



Plate 97. View of landscape of the Fourth Cataract of palm groves and boulders from top of Hill of Iron, Umm Kedissa.



Figure 5. Plan of Umm Kedissa (scale 1:2000).



Plate 98. View from above the animal pens of the houses and landscape surrounding Umm Kedissa village.

distance. The village was set back from the river bank and canals or ditches had been dug for the transport of water for domestic and agricultural use. The variety of houses can be seen in Plates 99-106.

House descriptions

House F1 (Figure 6)

The dig house had been adapted for use by Europeans but the original layout remained. From the steeply sloping road through the village (Plates 107-109) an imposing gateway (Plate 110) opened into the courtyards of both



Plate 99. Umm Kedissa. A back road with outcropping rocks used as a door step.



Plate 100. Umm Kedissa. Enclosure wall of house with shaped crest over entrance door and protruding rocks in roadway some used as wall foundations.



Plate 101. Umm Kedissa. Large protruding rocks in a road.



Plate 102. Umm Kedissa. Typical house with enclosure wall, imposing gateway and room within, built on sloping rock-strewn surface.



Plate 103. Umm Kedissa. House with rectangular door openings in arcade.



Plate 105. Umm Kedissa. Frontal view of house and loggia shown in Plate 104.



Plate 104. Umm Kedissa. House at rear of village with loggia of square pillars roofed over at front of house.



Plate 106. Umm Kedissa. Outer enclosure wall supporting columns for interior loggia.



Plate 107. Umm Kedissa, House F1 (dig house). Aerial view of house showing rocky foundation and landscape beyond.

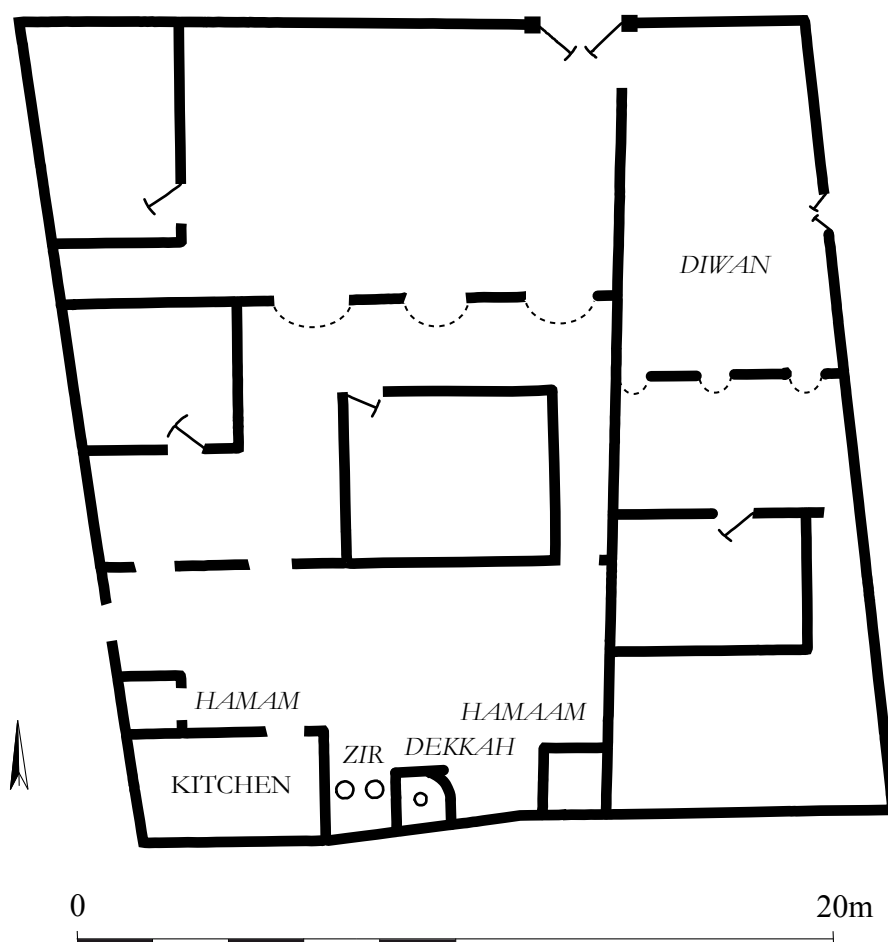


Figure 6. Umm
Kedissa, House
F1.



Plate 108. Umm
Kedissa, House F1.
Roadway beside entrance
gateway.



Plate 110. Umm Kedissa, House F1. View from the diwan, of
the opening in the party wall towards the inside of the gateway.



Plate 109. Umm
Kedissa, House F1.
Entrance and wall of
house opposite entrance
gateway.

family dwelling and *diwan*; a plastered wall dividing the two areas with a roughly finished opening for access between them. The *diwan* was the smaller area and had access to the side alley through a double leaf door (Plate 111). One block room divided by an inner wall to make



Plate 111. Umm Kedissa, House F1. Rear door to street from *diwan* with access to F4c (young men's room).

two rooms was in the *diwan*, and the family dwelling had a more complex group of two rooms joined together by a common roof and arched *berandahs* on each side (Plates 112-117). At the rear on the far side of the rear courtyard, there was a kitchen room (Plate 118) together with *zir* installation, *dekka* place (Plate 119), pigeon house and a bathroom beside the back entrance which had no fittings (Plate 120 and 121).

House F2

Beside House F1 (Plate 122) and below it in elevation, House F2 (Plate 123) and its neighbouring *diwan* (Plate 124) was on a larger scale than House F1. Two separate entrances (Plate 125) gave access from the road and a gap in the dividing wall enabled access between the two compounds. The family dwelling was similar to others but in F3 the *diwan* had individual details that were unique (Plate 126). Tall rectangular openings on the facade of the main building were used instead of the usual arcade of arches.



Plate 112. Umm Kedissa, House F1. Arcade of keyhole-shaped openings, showing room inside with rose painted above door.



Plate 113. Umm Kedissa, House F1. Inside arcade showing room with rose above door on left, ceiling construction and end wall of second room.



Plate 114. Umm Kedissa, House F1. Painted decoration of two S-shapes and circular pattern on external walls of Room 2.



Plate 115. Umm Kedissa, House F1. End wall of Room 1 with Room 2 on left having vine painted around door showing ceiling laid over both rooms and arcades (see Figure 0).

House F4

In prime position beside the plaza (Plates 127-129) this house (F4b) and its *diwan* (F4a) were both well built and contained several rooms. The *diwan* was approached by a flight of concrete steps leading up to an arcade of arches



*Plate 116. Umm Kedissa,
House F1. Painting of cat on
the end wall of Room 1.*



*Plate 117. Umm Kedissa,
House F1. Rear arcade with
keyhole openings.*



*Plate 118. Umm Kedissa, House
F1. Back yard showing from left to
right – dekkah place, roofed zir
emplacement, kitchen with door and
window, shower room (hamaam),
back door.*



*Plate 119. Umm Kedissa,
House F1. Dekkah
installation.*



*Plate 120. Umm Kedissa, House F1. Exterior wall showing steps
leading up to kitchen entrance back door and showing wall
construction rising up according to ground level.*



*Plate 121. Umm Kedissa, House F1. Distant view
of back door and adjacent walls.*



Plate 122. Umm Kedissa, House F2. Exterior view showing pigeon house at corner supported on bedrock foundation.



Plate 126. Umm Kedissa, House F3. White plastered enclosure wall with entrance to another house on the right.



Plate 123. Umm Kedissa, House F2. House and kitchen in enclosure wall.



Plate 124. Umm Kedissa, House F2. The diwan with entry gap broken through party wall. A well plastered house with rectangular openings and plastered enclosure wall.



Plate 127. Umm Kedissa, Houses F4 (a) and (b). Enclosure wall facing plaza with rectangular pigeon house, imposing entrance gateway, plastered and white-painted wall with band of light blue along coping.



Plate 125. Umm Kedissa, House F2. Exterior of house showing pigeon house and room inside enclosure wall, and entrance gateway with doorstep of boulders.



Plate 128. Umm Kedissa, House 4(b).
Pigeon house and imposing gateway.



Plate 129. Umm Kedissa, House 4(b). Entrance gateway
with wall of shop on left.

(Plate 130) which were filled in with glass or clear plastic panes (Plate 131 and 132). At the rear in the alley adjacent to House F1, a small room and yard (F4c) was associated with this *diwan* and was for 'the young men's use' (see Plate 111). A square pigeon house was built at the front of this compound, and a room built at the front of the *diwan's* yard for use as the village shop (Plate 133). The roof of this was carried forward over a paved platform and supported by two pillars to form a shaded area where the men of the village gathered for conversation during the afternoon (Plate 134).

House F5

Beside House F4 and also beside the plaza (Plate 135), this house was the family dwelling with the *diwan* built on the far side at the edge of the village and quite separate from it (Plate 136). Square door openings to the arcade and a flower bed planted with reeds were the distinctive features of the family house (Plate 137). Being a corner house, there was a *mastaba* built around the base of the



Plate 130. Umm Kedissa, House 4(b). Diwan - well built room
raised on platform with three steps leading to arcade of
rounded glazed openings, showing room beyond.



Plate 131. Umm Kedissa, House 4(b). Diwan courtyard.



Plate 132. Umm Kedissa, House 4(a).
Rectangular openings to arcade.

outer wall on the village street side and beside the plaza. The *diwan* F6 (Plate 138) was well built and situated to have a fine view over the river's rocky terrain and approaching visitors (Plate 139). The floor of the main room was levelled and glazing fitted. This room was a prestige room for visitors furnished with thick mattresses on metal beds and a television set.



Plate 133. Umm Kedissa. Shop with shaded loggia attached to the front of House 4 (b).



Plate 137. Umm Kedissa, House F5. Room in the courtyard, having rectangular openings to an arcade, with plants in beds beside them.



Plate 134. Umm Kedissa. The Plaza with mosque on far side and shop loggia on left.



Plate 135. Umm Kedissa, House 5 'mastaba house' enclosure wall including two sides of a room and the main entrance facing the plaza. A mastaba is built around the base of the walls of the room.



Plate 136. Umm Kedissa, House F5. Entrance gateway to courtyard with two-leaf plain metal door with, instead of gateposts, a decoration of stepped bricks on either side.



Plate 138. Umm Kedissa, House F6 (TV house), the diwan for House F5, is sited on the edge of the village with views over the landscape.



Plate 139. Umm Kedissa, House F6. Well-built plastered and painted white enclosure wall with imposing entrance gateway of rectangular painted posts flanking two-leaf metal door.

El-Hazama

We were told that the abandoned village on the rocky heights overlooking our landing place on Mis Island was the original settlement of Umm Kedissa, whose population later moved to the lower site of today's village. Known as el-Hazama, it has the weathered appearance of a piece of modern art (Plate 140). The rectangular houses are beautifully constructed from blocks and perched on top of the large boulders which were used to support mud brickwork where appropriate (Plates 141-143).



Plate 140. El-Hazama. Distant view of buildings on top of the rocky cliffs.

Dwellings are built in a compact unit, some houses being connected by door openings with shared party walls and some fronting a small plaza (Plates 144 and 145). The interiors of the deserted houses were not permanently lived in but showed evidence of repair, especially by the insertion of wooden columns to support ceilings (Plates 146-149).

Umm Gemesa

This small village lies within a short walk of Umm Kedissa in December, but it is clear that the annual flood



Plate 141. El-Hazama. Wall of deteriorating jalous built on uneven rocky foundation.



Plate 142. El-Hazama. Walls in the village of deteriorating jalous, showing lack of bonding and poor state of the door.



Plate 143. El-Hazama. Walls built onto huge protruding rocks.

would fill low-lying areas and separate the villages on islands for some time each year.

Umm Gemesa is a cluster of small houses (Plate 150) built



Plate 144. El-Hazama. House walls built on huge protruding rocks with rectangular opening and a door set in corner with doorstep formed from bedrock.



Plate 148. El-Hazama. Detail of ceiling similar to that in Plate 147.



Plate 145. El-Hazama. House in good condition built onto sloping bedrock including roofed loggia.



Plate 146. El-Hazama. Interior of house with window and rectangular door opening.



Plate 149. El-Hazama. Walls of jalous and mud brick supported on large boulders and roofed with palm branches



Plate 147. El-Hazama. Interior of house in poor condition showing ceiling beams supported by wooden columns.



Plate 150. Umm Gemesa village showing bedrock and trees. An angareeb is used as a ladder to reach the roof top work area.

on higher ground (above the flood level) and shaded by two trees (*gemesa* trees according to a local informant).

Houses were not white-washed but had smooth mud plaster and these 'block' house walls produced an interesting geometric pattern from a distance (Plate 151). Most



Plate 151. Umm Gemesa seen from Umm Kedissa – a pattern of block walls and shadows.

inhabitants were away when we visited and some unoccupied houses needed renovation. Interior walls were coming apart at the corners and had been repaired. Ceiling beams were supported by wooden 'columns' and some exterior plaster was flaking off. An old style wooden door on a pivot was seen here and a low *mastaba* in one house courtyard. The roofs were exceptionally well made with carefully spread mud plaster and smoothed raised edges, (see Plates 152-161).

Umm Quweib

Umm Quweib (Figure 7) is further away from Umm Kedissa. It is shown on maps as a permanently separated island but in December we were able to walk across the fields to reach it. The settlement was built on a rocky site in desert terrain but close to field plots and date-palm groves.

Several 'streets' were left between the houses with the main doorways set into enclosure walls



Plate 152. Umm Gemesa. A well-built house (probably a diwan) on a raised platform on the edge of the village.



Plate 153. Umm Gemesa. House and courtyard with enclosure wall.

which formed the street boundaries (Plates 162 and 163). Houses in Umm Quweib had arcades with stepped key-hole arches, or rectangular openings, and the corners of buildings were strengthened by an additional vertical line

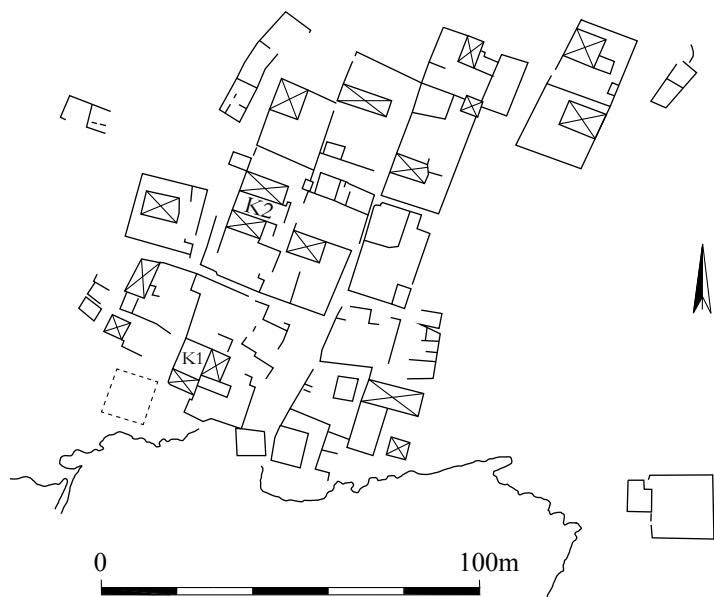


Figure 7. Umm Quweib (scale 1:2000).



Plate 154. Umm Gemesa. House of unusual design – well-made and with smoothly plastered walls.



Plate 155. Umm Gemesa. Plastered and dished roofs to the houses.



Plate 158. Umm Gemesa. Ceiling of room with plastered walls showing signs of repair at the corner caused by lack of bonding.



Plate 156. Umm Gemesa. Shaded rakuba of brick columns and palm branches.



Plate 157. Umm Gemesa. Ceiling with supporting wooden posts.



Plate 159. Umm Gemesa. Alley between houses with a traditional wooden door in an entrance gateway with decorative crest.



Plate 160. Umm Gemesa. Traditional wooden door.



Plate 161. Umm Gemesa. Courtyard of a house with door and three window openings having a low mastaba near the house.



Plate 162. Umm Quweib. Village street with enclosure wall of the house shown in Plate 163.



Plate 163. Umm Quweib. Village street lined with enclosure walls including one doorway with imposing frame approached by natural bedrock "ramp"

of brickwork at each corner.

This village was occupied by ten families, all related to one another.

House descriptions

House K1

was built on the edge of the village on rocks which raised it above the surrounding desert. This necessitated the entrance way to be a sloping ramp which had an external protective wall for privacy (Plates 164-168).



Plate 164. Umm Quweib, House K1. Entrance ramp to enclosure seen from inside the courtyard.

House K2

was on the edge of the village, facing outward. The entrance door had a mud lintel crest and a wooden old-style pivot door. A large workbench was made in the outer courtyard by plastering over a rock outcrop. Arcades had rectangular door openings (Plates 169-174).

For general views of village houses see Plates 175-182.

Abu Angareeb

This village is some way south west of Umm Kedissa and is not close to the river. A wadi forms the centre of the settlement with houses built on either side. Those on the



Plate 165. Umm Quweib, House K1. Diwan with keyhole openings in the arcade built on rock foundation.



Plate 166. Umm Quweib, House K1. Corner of diwan arcade strengthened by a buttress.



Plate 167. Umm Quweib, House K1. Doorway to the family house showing wear of mud plaster on lintel revealing the wood beneath.



Plate 168. Umm Quweib, House K1. Family house with arcade of rectangular openings.



Plate 169. Umm Quweib, House K2. Entrance doorway with decorative crest and door posts including a traditional style wooden door.



Plate 170. Umm Quweib, House K2. Interior of entrance doorway with protruding rocks used as a working platform in the courtyard.

higher part seemed better quality and included a shop. A canal ran through the village at the base of the wadi – it was full of water and only just narrow enough to step across so a palm log laid across was used as a bridge although it was not fixed in place at either end.

Houses had painted decoration, varying from floral designs to a car. Some had rounded arches painted on the whitewash around a rectangular door opening.

Views of the village are shown on Plates 183-202.



Plate 171. Umm Quweib, House K2. Detail of wooden lintel to entrance door showing pivot socket of wooden door.



Plate 174. Umm Quweib, House K2. 'Mat' of paper sacks released to keep sand and heat out of living area.



Plate 172. Umm Quweib, House K2. Detail of base of traditional door at entrance.



Plate 175. Umm Quweib, House K3. Inside arcade of rectangular openings with strong ceiling construction and painting of flowers and plants on rear wall.



Plate 173. Umm Quweib, House K2. Rectangular opening to arcade with rolled up 'mat' of paper sacks above lintel.



Plate 176. Umm Quweib, House K3. Exposed wood of lintel of rectangular opening.



Plate 177. Umm Quweib, House K3. Exposed wood of lintel of rectangular opening.



Plate 180. Umm Quweib. Kitchen where protruding rocks have been used as a base to support cooking equipment.



Plate 178. Umm Quweib. Lady of the house standing beside her dekkah pot set into the floor inside her house.



Plate 181. Umm Quweib. A traditional kitchen where cooking is carried out on small open fires on the floor.



Plate 179. Umm Quweib. Kitchen and palm frond rakuba.



Plate 182. Umm Quweib. A shelf fixed in a kitchen with a roof of palm fronds.



Plate 183. Abu Anghareeb. Jalous enclosure wall with plaster peeling off.



Plate 187. Abu Anghareeb. Enclosure wall of jalous which reduces in height to accommodate the sloping ground, with boulder used for threshold of doorway into the courtyard with house.



Plate 184. Abu Anghareeb. Wall with entrance to courtyard and house.



Plate 185. Abu Anghareeb. Block house with rounded corners.



Plate 188. Abu Anghareeb. House shown in Plate 187 with an arcade of keyhole openings with outer face whitewashed for painted design by Isbraga Khalifa, the lady of the house.



Plate 186. Abu Anghareeb. Building on raised platform – probably a diwan.



Plate 189. Abu Anghareeb. Enclosure wall and imposing entrance with decorative crest leading to the house with rounded arches and loggia.



Plate 190. Abu Anghareeb. House with rounded arch, two windows and loggia (see Plate 189).



Plate 191. Abu Anghareeb. House with two rooms joined by a roofed loggia.



Plate 192. Abu Anghareeb. Well-made enclosure wall with bedrock ramp to entrance leading to a white-painted house with keyhole door openings in courtyard beyond.



Plate 193. Abu Anghareeb. White plastered house with square door and three rounded arch openings to arcade.



Plate 194. Abu Anghareeb. Rounded arch showing construction.



Plate 195. Abu Anghareeb. Corner of house with two keyhole openings.



Plate 198. Abu Anghareeb. House with rectangular arcade openings with kitchen attached having a round-arched opening filled with mud brick and a shaded rakuba and zir place.



Plate 196. Abu Anghareeb. Keyhole arcade opening with room beyond.



Plate 199. Abu Anghareeb. Kitchen with rakuba and zir place – exterior.



Plate 197. Abu Anghareeb. Round arch opening with room beyond.



Plate 200. Abu Anghareeb. Interior view of the kitchen shown in Plate 199.



Plate 201. Abu Anghareeb. Interior of kitchen with cooking in progress.



Plate 203. The family of el-Hantilah.



Plate 202. Abu Anghareeb. Interior of kitchen with shelf unit of wood and mud construction.



Plate 204. A lady, Halima Khadir, of Umm Gemesa.

Muhallitib

Muhallitib was near Abu Angareeb and seemed to be a poorer village. Houses had similar features to those seen elsewhere – few rounded arches but square or rectangular arcade openings, together with loggias.

Notes and Observations

Women's lives in the context of social structure and men's activities

Women in this area of the Fourth Cataract seemed happy, carefree and able to act independently when their men folk were away (Plate 203).³ They did not usually cover their faces (Plates 204 and 205). They worked hard in the house and in the fields. Their house yards were spotless with no litter. Women cooked for their family and menfolk. They took their *mingal* (small scythe) to the



Plate 205. Two elderly ladies at Umm Quweih, House K1 (Plate 165).

fields morning and evening, to cut green fodder (*berseem*) for animals (Plate 206). Some went for water carried in petrol cans on the head or several carried in the hands or else in rubber *gouffas* on donkey back (Plates 207-209).

³ For a discussion of the relationship between the sexes see Abdelrahim Mohammed Salih 1999, 39.



Plate 206. A lady of Umm Kedissa, Jarab, cutting green fodder with her mingal.



Plate 209. Young girl pouring water for goats at Umm Kedissa.



Plate 207. Fatma drawing water from a jadwell at Umm Kedissa.



Plate 210. Fatma among the palm groves of Umm Kedissa.



Plate 208. A lady from Umm Kedissa on donkey back going to collect water.

There were many children. Grandmothers looked after small children while mothers took older children to senior schools in Khartoum, Atbara etc.

Their very colourful robes (*toobs*) were always spotless; they did not wear black clothes.

Moona's grandmother had been head midwife for the whole area and based at Kareima hospital, so all the women were pleased to welcome her and me with her.

One lady (Fatma) was eight months pregnant (Plate 210). Another lady was nine months pregnant and already had nine children which she laughingly said she thought was enough (Plate 211). We met her being escorted by her stepson on foot walking to 'catch the bus to Kareima'. She would have to cross the river by boat and then lie down in a lorry for the rough ride to Kareima Hospital. All women gave birth in hospital.

Women seemed to be the artists of painted murals on interior walls. Womens' quarters do not have men visitors



Plate 211. Lady with three sons – Umm Kedissa.

except relatives and all domestic work including cooking takes place there. The women's aromatherapy area is near the kitchen. Girls left school young to help at home. Women cared for the elderly in the family.

Domestic furniture and equipment

Very little equipment or domestic furniture was available. A metal dresser, small tables, and metal trunks for storing food were sometimes provided. The *angareeb's* primary use was as a bed frame but it was also the chair, settee, baby's bed, draining board for utensils washed up in metal basins, and portable seating facility. An *angareeb* was noted used as a ladder to reach the roof where the man of the house was mending small items. Cooking was over a small open fire using a flat hot plate or metal cooking pot, and some houses had one or two cooking rings. Shelf units of varying complexity had been built beside the cooking area in some kitchens. Tea was served in small glasses from a metal teapot and food served on plates or platters. Eating was with the fingers and no cutlery involved except for spoons used for eating jelly or blancmange. For a communal meal it was customary to sit on the floor around the platter. Twig brooms were used to sweep the floor.

Children

There were a lot of children in all villages (Plate 212). They were happy and free to play around the village in groups (Plate 213). Toys were almost non-existent – empty fruit juice bottles, outdated torch batteries and even a knotted rag, became a car or a ball or a doll in their imaginations. Young children under age 6 were looked after by mother or grandmother (Plates 214 and 215). On Mis Island from about age 6 they went to school at Mis Basic School and older children went away to secondary school or college in towns such as Khartoum, Atbara and Shendi – often with their mothers to care for them.

They walked to school (most had shoes) in the early morning, walked back home for breakfast between 10am and 11am, then walked back to school usually carrying a basin of food wrapped up in a cloth. School ended at about 2pm when they walked back home.

Young children whose mother and older siblings were



Plate 212. Umm Quweib, House K1. Owner of the house with a group of village children.



Plate 213. Abu Anghareeb. Children playing at the palm log bridge.



Plate 214. Abu Anghareeb. Young girl looking after group of village children.



Plate 215. Umm Quweib, House K1. Owner playing his tambour to amuse village children and inspire an impromptu dance.

away, were looked after by other relatives – grandmothers or young women (aunts?). One grandmother told me her granddaughter did not talk yet although five years old because her mother died when she was born, but they looked after her.

The school

Mis Basic School was built in the centre of the island and was centrally placed in relation to the nearby villages. It was an isolated site and did not have dwellings or houses associated with it. This was a standard government building. The compound wall enclosed a large rectangular space with two rows of classroom blocks, one on either side of the central open space.

Children aged 6 years to 14 attended this school; a total of 120 pupils at that time, being both boys and girls, though I was told that the girls did better than the boys. There were four male teachers and two female teachers, all of whom taught all subjects. There was only one teacher for English and the new system for teaching English was considered not as good as the “old” way.

Agriculture and irrigation – animal husbandry⁴

In all areas the *seluka* land (which was areas revealed when the flood subsided) was used to grow green fodder crops and what seemed to be salad or vegetable plants (Plate 216). On the mainland as well as the *seluka* land



Plate 216. Seluka land beside the river.

wide areas were set out with a network of plots divided by mud banks and irrigated as required. Narrower areas available on the islands were used fully and filled the ‘dry’ channels between seasonal islands as well the sloping land falling down to the river’s edge. Water was channelled along ditches and even taken across a low area to the higher ground beyond by means of a simple ‘aqueduct’ made of a channel supported on tripods of sticks (Plate 217).

Men worked in the fields using an occasional donkey and were ‘aided’ by white egrets (Plate 218). On wider areas of good farming land it was possible to plough using a two oxen plough (Plate 219). The plough was made of metal and the yoke holding the two animal heads together was a large heavy-looking log (Plate 220), but made of a lightweight wood called *harraz*.

In the evening these oxen were driven up the steep slope into Umm Kedissa village. It appeared that this ploughman and his team were available to plough anyone’s land who requested it.

Groves of date palms grew around villages on islands

⁴ For a detailed study see Malterer 2013.



Plate 217. Aqueduct bringing water to fields near Umm Kedissa.



Plate 218. Agricultural plots, partly on seluka land which is flooded annually separating Umm Kedissa and Umm Gemesa into two islands.



Plate 219. Man with a plough drawn by two oxen.

and along the river bank on the mainland (Plate 221). These provided the main source of income from export sales for the villagers who were personally emotionally attached to their trees. Two types of irrigation were organised:

ditches were placed beside paths with stone spouts at intervals to divert water across the path to plots on the



Plate 220. Two oxen yoked to a plough with log of wood in harness.



Plate 221. Palm groves around Umm Kedissa.



Plate 222. Irrigation canal and channel across a path in the palm groves.

other side where and when required (Plate 222).

Inside the palm groves, especially on the islands, water was channelled through ditches and also 'pipes' made of hollowed out palm logs (Plate 223).



Plate 223. Hollowed palm logs making water pipes for irrigation in palm groves.

Off-shoots of the palm tree were enclosed by a tub of compost which was tied to the main trunk to enable a new plant to grow to maturity.

Huge date palms were observed in large groves on all the islands, especially a giant palm on Umm Gebir island. I was told that date palms took up to ten years to mature which would affect life at the new settlements where other agriculture would be needed to generate income in the interim.

Apart from the oxen pulling the plough, very few cattle were observed – one at et-Tereif and one at Umm Kedissa and also few donkeys. In all villages there were herds of goats and sheep who scavenged for food and were bedded down in circular pens on the outskirts of villages (Plates 224-226).



Plate 224. Abu Anghareeb. Animal pen of jalous on rock foundation.

Boats and the river

The river flows from north east to south west here in the Fourth Cataract. The current is very strong. In December it was dropping in height rapidly leaving step lines of height in the mud on the bank. The river over centuries



Plate 225. Et-Tereif. A possible animal pen built of stone blocks and jalous on a bedrock and boulder foundation. The carefully made door with lintel suggests that this, clearly multi-period, structure may have had a different function.



Plate 226. Umm Kedissa. Gate to animal pen near House F1.

has created the landscape of rounded boulders and islands with rich brown silt held between the rocks.

There were no landing places – one must step off into the water and scramble up the muddy river bank and unload by throwing luggage and goods up onto the bank as far away from the river as possible.

Boats were simple metal hulled craft of all sizes. There were no wooden *morkab* to be seen. Two to six cross beams were provided to strengthen the hull and on which the rowers and some of the passengers sat while others had to sit on the bottom to spread the weight evenly. If overladen the boats could tip over. A metal rod was fixed through the gunwale on either side to be used as a rowlock. Oars were made of a length of wood with no shaped blade. A hole was made by adding another piece of wood at the appropriate place so that the metal rowlock could fit through it (Plate 227). A small piece of leather or rubber was placed on the rim to prevent wear on the oar. A small rudder was fixed on to the larger boats.

Two oarsmen were used to propel the heaviest large boats. It seemed that no regular ferry boats were at fixed locations. Boats had to be ‘ordered’ and they seemed to be owned individually such as by the headmaster of the Mis Island school.



Plate 227. Metal boat crossing from et-Tereif to Umm Arosbair, showing the mount for the oars.

Reflections of ancient Kush – continuity of culture beside the Nile

This study highlighted the timeless quality in the history of life in the Nile Valley. The River Nile and its annual gift of silt and water have been pivotal in creating the civilisations of ancient Egypt and ancient Kush and cultural artefacts or customs were applicable in both ancient and modern times. Activities, such as agriculture, fishing and boating, were an obvious reflection of the geographical situation and have been practised with little change for millennia.

Catfish were caught in the Nile. Long fishing nets with weights on the lower edge and floats on the upper edge were laid out to dry on the sandy beach. In the palm groves I saw palm leaf rope stretched out to dry and rolled up when ready for use. In the fields the farmers ploughed with oxen as their ancestors had done, and small and large agricultural plots were irrigated in the traditional way but now using diesel pumps to obtain water from the river. Houses were hand made of Nile mud and water in shapes that echoed those of the distant past,⁵ and some details were especially interesting – the wooden pivot doors, *mastabas* around the outer wall and entrance of some houses, and the use of a rolled mat (now made of paper sacks stuck together) to keep flies and heat outside the house.

Some furniture was also a reflection of the environment – trunks were used to store food and linen etc. as the ancient people had used wooden chests. The *angareeb*s and stools were hand carved of the local wood and hand woven seat or mattress added.

Shelters of reeds were made in the fields for the labourers to rest in.

Conclusion

The aims of the project were achieved with the collection of a representative selection of images of the villages and the individual houses which will form an archive of the heritage of the Shagiyah and Monasir people. These may serve as source material for rebuilding within a museum

⁵ Note that the pre-modern houses in the region are very different, see the gazetteer sites 3-O-160, 4-L-119, 4-L-140 and 4-M-79.

context or as the basis and inspiration for a new vernacular architecture. The images also convey aspects of life among the natural surroundings of the Fourth Cataract in Sudan.

These beautiful houses with their individual designs cannot be replaced and one hopes that the skills to build them will not be completely lost now that the population is relocated.

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