



Durham University's Sudan Archive – An overlooked resource in current archaeological research?

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Introduction

Durham University's Sudan Archive is a collection of papers dating to the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in the Sudan (1898-1955). Most of the documents belonged to British officials or their families who lived and worked in the Sudan at the time, and are now kept in Durham University's Special Collections library in Palace Green. This includes both private and official material such as letters, reports and diaries. While some of the more official documents such as reports may have been published on a small scale at the time of their creation, the vast majority of the archive remains unpublished and relatively unknown, at least in archaeological research.

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium and the Formation of the Sudan Archive

The main historical period covered by the Sudan Archive is the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in the Sudan between 1898 and 1956. This was essentially a period of British control in the Sudan, reinforced by Egyptian troops. The preceding campaign to conquer the northern parts of modern day Sudan was a joint effort by Egypt and Britain to recover Egyptian provinces and impose British rule in the region (Collins 2008, 33). To protect both countries' interests, the Sudan was administered by a British Governor General appointed by the Egyptian Khedive and reporting to the British High Commissioner in Egypt (Collins 2008, 33). This effectively led to an elegant solution where British interests in the Sudan were assured without any financial obligations.

Due in part to the historical and political situation, archaeological activity in the Sudan in the early 20th century was inconsistent. The extent to which excavations were administered by the Government varied over time. This was mainly caused by a lack of budget and very little internal funding for archaeology in the country as a whole (Crowfoot 1953). This meant that much of the archaeological work and excavations were carried out by external institutions who acted more or less independently from the Government. Despite obvious issues in the establishment of archaeology at the time, a number of well known important sites including Meroe, Jebel Moya and Jebel Barkal, among others, were excavated in the early 20th century.

The formation of the Sudan Archive in 1957 is likely to have been inspired by a general movement by universities to preserve documents and other materials from former British

colonies during the 1950s (Forbes 1980, 49). Unfortunately this did not include materials from the Sudan which led to a number of Durham University staff, including the first director of Durham University's Oriental Museum T. W. Thacker, as well as former Government officials R. Hill and K. Henderson, to establish the Sudan Archive (Forbes 1980, 49; Corey and Forbes 1983, 1). The collection quickly grew and by 1983 had over 700 individual contributors and a number of research grants, primarily aimed at the conservation of the materials (Corey and Forbes 1983).

The identification of the Sudan Archive as a mainly political and historical archive may have caused the lack of awareness of the archaeological potential of the collection. The current cataloguing system makes it slightly cumbersome to identify relevant archaeological material. For example, searching for the term 'archaeology' returns only four hits; when in fact many more of the documents refer to archaeological sites. This difficulty in the use of the catalogue is further exacerbated by inconsistencies in the spelling of sites and monuments. Both the pyramids and city of Meroe are referred to alternatively in the catalogue as *Merowe*, *Merovi*, *Meroe*, *Bagrariyeh*, *Bakrariyeh*, etc. This can make it time consuming for individual researchers to locate relevant material in the Sudan Archive. This issue combined with the fact that majority of the material in the archive is not relevant to archaeology, may go a long way to explain to lack of extensive use of the Sudan Archive in current archaeological research.

Archaeologically relevant material in the Sudan Archive

A study of the Sudan Archive in 2015 has indicated that as little as 2% of the material may be relevant to archaeological research.¹ However, the size of the collection means that this still corresponds to over 1000 references to individual archaeological sites spread over 700 documents. These references and documents have been assembled into a database which hopefully will soon be accessible to researchers (Figure 1).

While a large proportion of the archaeological material in the Sudan Archive refers to archaeological sites or issues in the Sudan, other countries, especially Egypt are also well represented (Figure 2). In fact slightly more of the photographic material relates to Egypt rather than the Sudan (Figure 3). Photographic material is also the most common type of material representing about 2/3 of the overall types with written material making up the remaining 32%. Of the written material the vast majority is made up of correspondence. This includes letters from archaeologists working in the Sudan to officials in the local government or even back home to England.

A specific document type to highlight is the yearly re-

¹ This was part of the author's masters dissertation at Durham University in 2015 *Excavations in the Archive – An Assessment of the Archaeological Material in Durham University's Sudan Archive*.

DATABASE SUDAN SITES

Sa (cont.) to Semna

SITE	DATE	TYPE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE	COLLECTION	VARIANT
Sabu	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Description of the nearby rock pictures - Pyramid of Sabu - Egyptian forts	SAD.466/14/15	Jackson	
Saddeinga	/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Temple of Amenophis III - Coptic church	SAD.466/18/18-53	Jackson	
Sai Island	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Temple of Tuthmosis III - Granite columns inscribed with crosses and Coptic inscription, may have been taken from the temple to form a church	SAD.466/18/18-53	Jackson	
	22/4/1926	Diary	Addison, F.	- "Nothing very interesting"	SAD.294/19/83	Addison	
	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Nearby rock picture of a giraffe	SAD.466/18/54	Jackson	
	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Description of the Christian remains and the earlier temple from Ramses II period	SAD.466/18/53	Jackson	Sarra
Sarras	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Christian churches	SAD.466/18/57	Jackson	
	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Christian churches	SAD.466/18/58	Jackson	
	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Christian churches	SAD.466/18/60	Jackson	
	n/a	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- 12th dynasty fortress, close by best rock pictures of the province as well as some of the earliest	SAD.466/18-53	Jackson	
	1924-1931	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- View of the fort	SAD.484/10/34	Jackson	
	1924-1931	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- View of the fort	SAD.484/10/35	Jackson	
Selima	1925-26	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- Nearby monastery in ruins	SAD.484/10/5	Jackson	
Semna	n/a	Report	Dunbar	- Description of the fortress and temple - Overview of past archaeological work	SAD.466/18-53	Jackson	
	1924-1931	Photograph	Jackson, H. C.	- View of ruins	SAD.484/10/23	Jackson	

Figure 1. Screenshot of part of the database of archaeologically relevant material in the Sudan Archive.



SUDAN	Kawa	EGYPT	ISRAEL
Abas Fagir	Kerma	Abu Simbel	Bethlehem
Argos	Kumma	Abydos	Haifa
Atbara	Massawarat	Amarna	Hebron
Basa	Meroë	Beni Hassan	Jericho
Buhen	Mirgissa	Cairo	Jerusalem
Defufa	Mograka	Colossi of Memnon	Mount Carmel
Delgo	Napata	Dakka	Nablus
Dengkur	Naqa	Deir el Bahri	Nazareth
El Dab	Nauri	Deir el Medina	Tul Keram
Faras	Noobt	Dendera	
Gezarak al Malik	Nuri	Edfu	OTHER
Giz Bekhit	Old Dongola	El Kab	
Grewid el Ghula	Qasr el Hair	Esna	China
Gubba Selim	Qasr Wad Nimir	Gerf Hussein	Peking
Halfa	Rufaa	Heliopolis	Greece
Hadarab	Sabu	Luxor	Appolonia
Hamadab	Sai Island	Kalabsheh	Jordan
Jebel Afari	Sarras	Karnak	Kerak
Jebel Bakalai	Semna	Komombo	Petra
Jebel Barkal	Sessebi	Korosk	Lebanon
Jebel Bishara	Singa	Medinet Habu	Baalbek
Jebel Teggam	Siwa	Philae	Libya
Jebel Moya	Soba	Qasr Ibrim	Cyrene
Jebel Sihan	Soleb	Qurna	Turkey
Jebel Zankor	Suarda	Ramasseum	Antioch
Kabushiya	Tamai	Sabua	Syria
Kamlin	Tombos	Saqqara	Krak des Chevaliers
Kareima	Wawa	Valley of the Kings	Palmyra

Figure 2. List of archaeological sites and monuments referred to in the Sudan Archive, by country.

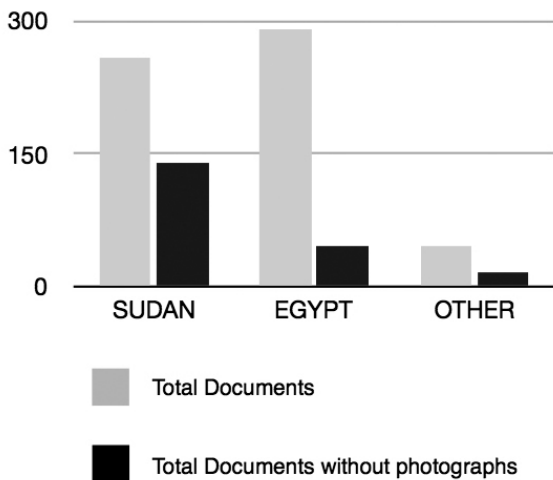


Figure 3. Chart showing the number of documents referring to archaeology in the Sudan, Egypt and other countries.

ports made by the Governor General of the Sudan to the British High Commissioner in Egypt between 1902 and 1952. Dubbed Reports on the Finances, Administration and Condition of the Sudan, these have all been scanned and are available online at https://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/sudan/gov-genl_reports/. Most of these include more or less detailed information on archaeological activity from the preceding year in the Sudan. Often this is only a brief paragraph by the Governor General but some include reports by the Acting Conservator for Antiquities and even individual excavators, as well as lists of acquisitions by the museum in Khartoum.

Many of the dips and rises in the number of references to archaeological sites over the years can be associated with well known historical events (Figure 4). For example the sudden decrease in 1914-15 which remains into the 1920s is due to First World War and its aftermath. A steady rise from 1896 can also be associated with an increase in the possibilities of exploring archaeological sites in the country once a relatively peaceful conditions had been established in the Sudan. The obvious peaks in 1906, 1926 and 1941 represent inspections of archaeological sites in the Sudan which suggests the establishment and development of the Antiquities Division in the Sudan Government. For example, 1906 is the first year after the 1905 Antiquities Ordinance was brought in as well as the beginning of an archaeological collection in the museum at Khartoum. The peak in 1926 is due to the inspection of a number of sites in the Sudan by Frank Addison which is discussed in more detail below.

Contributors

Many of the contributors to the Sudan Archive archaeological documents are well known archaeologists or Egyptologists. These include the so called *Father of Sudanese Archaeology* (Reinold 2000, 30) George Reisner who wrote a number of reports and letters found in the archive and is mentioned numerous times across the material. A number of excavations are also recorded by their instigators, such as John Garstang's work at Meroe. Henry Wellcome's work at Jebel Moya is also well represented in the Sudan Archive, particularly his work

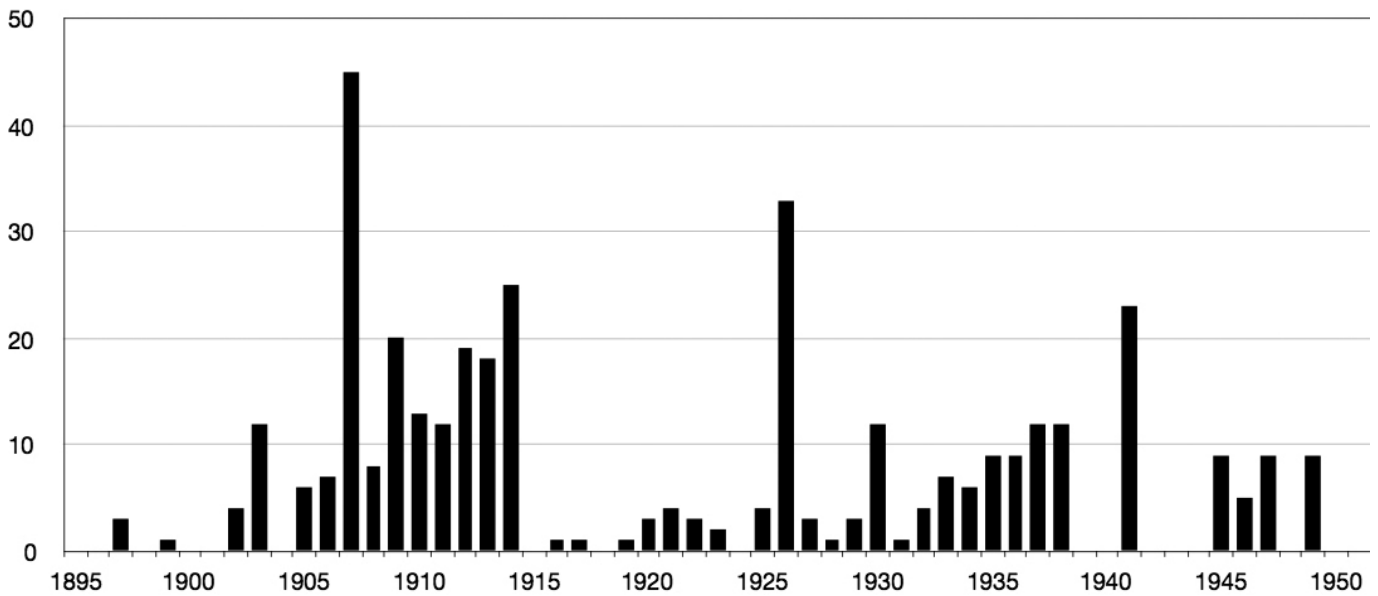


Figure 4. Chart showing the number of references to archaeological sites in the Sudan Archive between 1895 and 1950.

on Neolithic archaeology. Other well known scholars from the early 20th century such as E. A. Wallis Budge and Archibald Sayce are also regularly mentioned in, and contribute to the archaeologically relevant material in the Sudan Archive.

Other contributors include Sudanese Government officials with more or less archaeological training. Both Frank Addison and John Crowfoot served within the antiquities service of the Education Department in the Sudan and were trained archaeologists. Government officials such as the second Governor General, General Sir Francis Reginald Wingate appear to have had a personal interest in the archaeology of the Sudan. This comes across in many of Wingate's letters to and from excavators working in the country, as well as

obvious attempts to increase the government's control and administration of archaeology.

Examples

Example 1 – Meroe in the Sudan Archive

One of the most commonly referred to archaeological sites in the Sudan Archive is the city and necropoleis of Meroe. Information from the archive covers over fifty years of activity at the site and includes major excavations of the city by Garstang (1909-1914) and the pyramids by Reisner (1920-1923) (Figure 5). Visits to the site by officials such as Lord Kitchener in 1911 (Plate 1) demonstrate that the importance

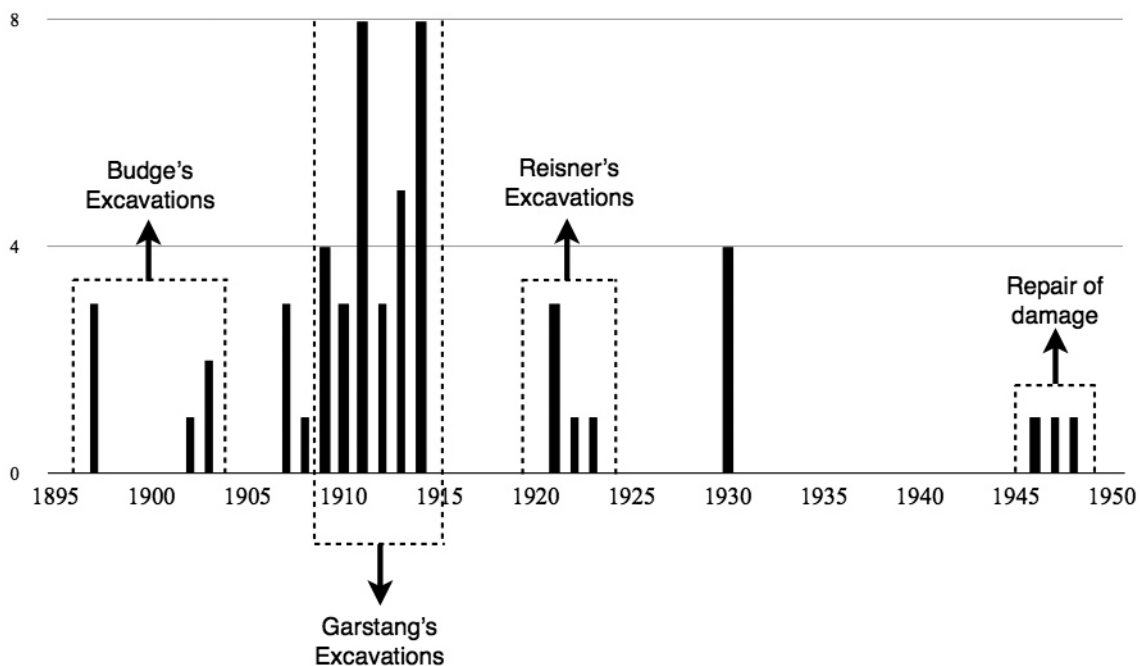


Figure 5. Number of references to Meroe in the Sudan Archive over time, and the archaeological excavations they represent.



temple given by the classical writers was in no way exaggerated, as has hitherto been supposed'

(SAD.285/2/29)

This is the first in a steady stream of letters from both Garstang and Sayce to Wingate documenting the excavation of the city between 1909 and 1914. More or less official reports can also be found in the Sudan Archive which give more detailed information on both the finds and excavation of Meroe. Many of these, included in the Governor General Reports, are similar to those published in Garstang's interim reports on the excavations. It is possible that material in the Sudan Archive could be used to complement and substantiate publications on the early excavation at Meroe which are themselves based on archival material from Liverpool University (Török 1997). More administrative concerns such as financing the conservation of the city after excavation and the division of finds are particularly well covered by material in the Sudan Archive. This includes the minutes from several meetings of the Sudan Archaeological Committee (Plate 2) discussing which finds from the excavation could leave the country and to which institutions they should be sold.

Example 2 – A Sudan Government Official's Diary

Possibly the longest archaeologically relevant document in the Sudan Archive is a diary written by Frank Addison in April 1926. Addison (1895-1958) was an archaeologist who worked for the Sudan government's Department of Education between 1907 and 1931, serving as the Acting Conservator for Antiquities from 1921 (Crowfoot 1959, 231). In April 1926, Addison conducted an inspection of all known archaeological sites and monuments in the Sudan between Wadi Halfa and Dongola. Such a journey dedicated solely to the inspection of archaeological sites would have been extremely rare at the time, these were normally combined with visits to schools which meant more remote archaeological monuments were seldom visited (Addison 1953). It is this journey, undertaken in three weeks, which is recorded in the diary held by the Sudan Archive. Not only does the diary provide descriptions of over 15 sites in the region, it also allows a glimpse into the ways in which archaeology was conducted at the time and

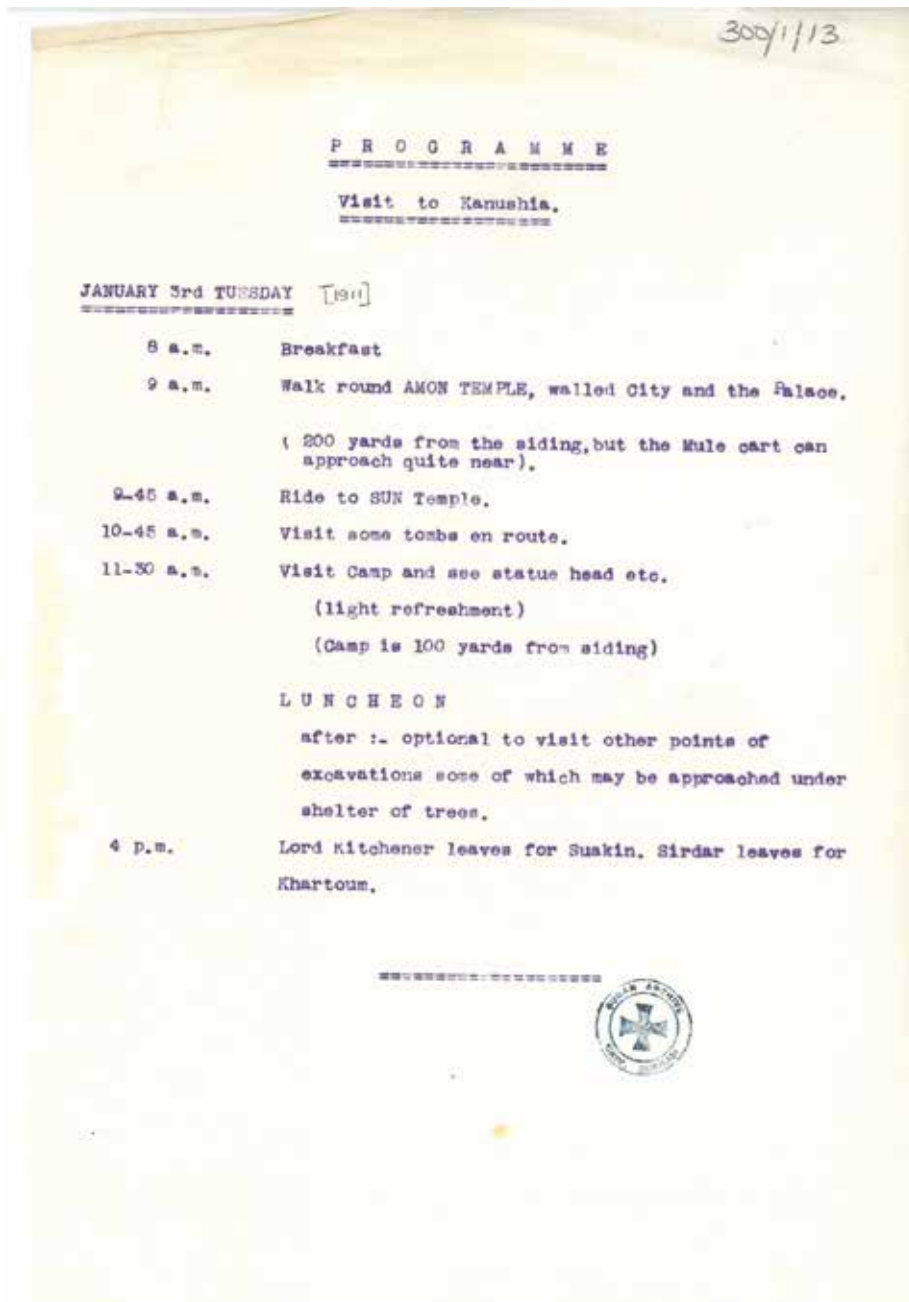


Plate 1. Programme for Lord Kitchener's visit to Meroe in 1911. SAD/300/1/13.
(Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library).

of Meroe was already recognised in the early 20th century. The Sudan Archive's material on Garstang's excavation of the city of Meroe is particularly extensive and includes one of the earliest, if not the first, letter confirming the location of the ancient city. This letter from Sayce addressed to Governor General Reginald Wingate, expresses obvious excitement at the identification of the city:

'We have made one of the most important archaeological discoveries of recent years. We have found the lost city of Meroe, which is as large as that of Memphis, as well as the great temple of Amon where the priests made and unmade the Ethiopian kings. It turns out that the account of the

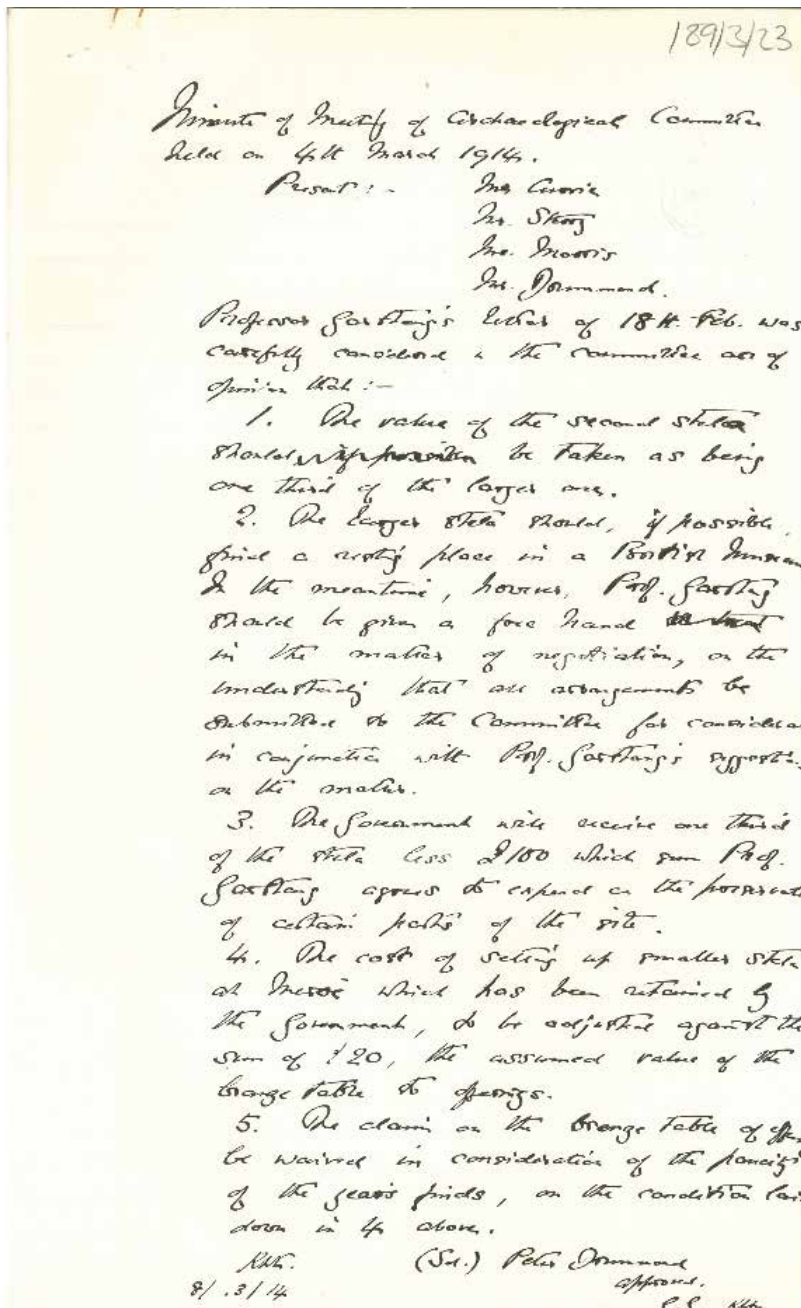


Plate 2. Minutes of the Meeting of the Sudan Archaeology Committee March 1914. S.A.D.189/3/23. Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

two piles of stones'. While Addison does not mention this in his diary, this squeeze was actually requested by Griffith who used it in his 1927 translation of the stela (Griffith 1927, 194).

Example 3 – Archaeology in the Sudan (1897-1955)

The development and history of archaeology in the Sudan during this entire historical period (1896-1955) can be assessed from materials in the Sudan Archive. The information includes not just methods and techniques used but also the administration of archaeology at a governmental level. An increase in the Sudan Government's control of the running of archaeological research in the country is clearly noticeable, although documents also suggest that archaeology was managed, at least to an extent, from the very start of the Condominium. Some of the more unofficial channels taken at the time such as the use of both Reisner and Garstang as advisors to the Government on archaeological matters, are not included in published reviews of archaeological research at the time. The fact that the entire length of the Condominium is represented in the archive means an invaluable insight can be gained into how the archaeological department began and developed at the time (Figure 6). This includes the reasoning behind the establishment of several laws such as the Antiquities Ordinance from 1905, as well as the archaeologists who influenced them. As a non-archaeological archive, the Sudan Archive provides a different perspective on both sites and excavators. Attempts by officials to reconcile squabbling archaeologists are regular occurrences.

The relationship between archaeology and the local populations can also be deduced. The Sudanese are rarely mentioned in archaeologically

effectively conveys both the remoteness and the difficulty in accessing many of the sites. For example, the boat used to access the Egyptian fort at Kumma is described as the 'craziest craft' and as 'full of water, [...] while two men rowed, a third baled out the water with calabash' (Addison 1926). Description like these provide a unique insight into some of the difficulties faced by archaeologists in the Sudan at the time, although according to Addison they all seem to pale in comparison to the lack of tea on the journey.

Despite some of these difficulties, the commitment with which officials such as Addison conducted archaeological research at the time is also indisputable. His description of taking a squeeze of the stela of Seti I at Nauri shows particular dedication, were he had to 'get to the top of the stela by standing on a log of palm precariously balanced across the chasm on

relevant material in the Sudan Archive, unless in reference to the workforce used in excavations. Any major archaeological site is associated with contemporary populations in Egypt or even Europe rather than Sudan, let alone their descendants in the 20th century. The eventual acknowledgement of the local population in archaeological research is not obviously apparent until 1938 with the translation of the Antiquities guide into Arabic. The first Sudanese Antiquities Officer was not appointed until 1946, as part as the so called 'Sudanisation of the Antiquities Section' (Governor General Report 1946).

Summary

A study of the archaeologically relevant material in the Sudan Archive suggests that its is both reliable and invaluable for future research, not just in the reconstruction of past

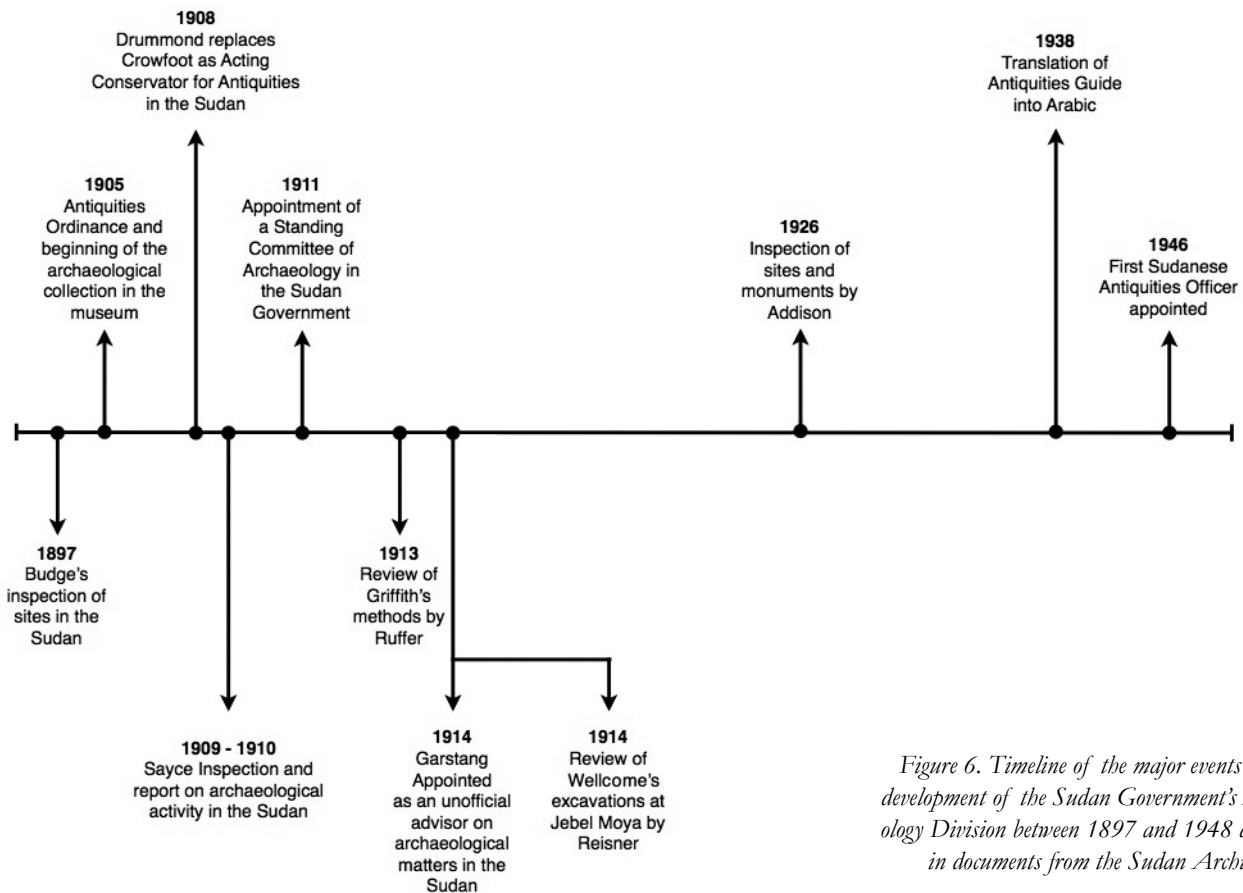


Figure 6. Timeline of the major events in the development of the Sudan Government's Archaeology Division between 1897 and 1948 described in documents from the Sudan Archive.

archaeological research but in the establishment of a more detailed history of archaeology in the Sudan.

The potential of the material is evidenced by the fact that of the excavations mentioned in the Sudan Archive, just under half were ever published and only a third have dedicated excavation reports. While the information in the archive may not be detailed enough to reconstruct the entire results of past research, it can at least confirm the existence of some of these excavations. This is especially important for less official archaeological research or the accidental unearthing of both monuments and artefacts which may not be recorded elsewhere. During the 20th century the Sudan was going through major industrial development and the construction of modern infrastructure led to the unearthing of a number of archaeological sites. For example, the Governor General Report of 1921 records the excavation of several Meroitic antiquities during the construction of the Sennar Dam (Governor General Report 1921). The construction of dams and other infrastructure such as railways led to the relocation or destruction of archaeological sites and monuments during the 20th century. Therefore many sites may no longer be in their original state or context, something which is further exacerbated by the reconstruction and clearance of sites by archaeologists which was not always done systematically. The photographic material from the Sudan Archive is invaluable in studying archaeological monuments within their original setting. This is an ongoing issue in the Sudan with several more dams planned in the coming years, photographic re-

ords of sites in the region soon to be flooded could become valuable in the future (Plate 3). A large number of Egyptian sites such as Philae before the Aswan Dams and the Luxor temples before their clearance are also contained in the Sudan Archive. Due to the recent situation, photographs of both Palmyra and Krak des Chevaliers, now extensively damaged, may also increase in academic value.

Photographs of less well known sites, or from expeditions, can also be found in the archive. An expedition into the Libyan Desert led by Douglas Newbold is particularly well recorded and the Sudan Archive holds an early draft of a report which was actually published in 1928 and includes



Plate 3. Photograph of the temple of Buben in the 1920s before its relocation. SAD.898/1/16. Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

the sites of Zolat Hammad and Abu Sofian. Accompanying this report is a number of photographs and drawings, many of which do not feature in the 1928 publication (Plate 4) (Newbold 1928). While these sites are relevant to current research on rock art in the region, and are mentioned in a more recent article, there is no record of them having been revisited since 1923 (Kröpelin 2004).



Plate 4. Examples of some of the rock drawings from the Libyan Desert recorded by Douglas Newbold in 1923. *SAD.577/3/23*.
Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

Discussion

The three main uses of archival research in archaeology: biographic research, publication of past excavation and history of archaeology, can all be enhanced by material in the Sudan Archive. However due to the relatively short period covered and as a non-archaeological archive, the use of the material is best suited to assess the archaeological methods used in the Sudan during the early 20th century, as well as the historical and political context of many excavations. Without an understanding of this context which often explains why certain methods were adopted above others, the interpretation of past excavation results is problematic (Eberhardt 2008). A

good example of this is the preferred conservation method applied during the Condominium, namely the removal of artefacts and even whole monuments. While this caused damage to some sites, and is often criticised as a method today, much of the information in the Sudan Archive seems to justify it. Archaeologists and governmental officials in the early 20th century were well aware of the damage this caused and it is brought up as a concern several times. However, the major preservation issues at the time caused by both the natural climate of the Sudan and several cases of temples being used as habitations for people and livestock meant that there was often little choice. Especially, in the early days of the Condominium, the Government did not have the necessary funds to build protective walls or employ enough guards to protect many of the archaeological sites. A better understanding of the context of these decisions, as well as damage caused to monuments which had been left exposed after excavations, such as frescoes at Meroe, go a long way to justify the soundness of the methods used, at least to some extent.

Excavation techniques in the Sudan are another example of this, with many methods based on those used in neighbouring Egypt. A letter in the archive by Reisner to Wingate describes an excavation of a pyramid by Budge between 1897 and 1903 at Jebel Barkal. Clearly expecting Nubian pyramids to follow a similar construction of their Egyptian equivalent, Budge ordered a shaft to be excavated from the front of the pyramid chapel searching for the entrance to the burial chamber. Upon reaching the chamber, almost by chance it would seem, Budge decided to keep excavating assuming that a passage up to pyramid must eventually be found (Figure 7). It was Reisner, 15 years later in 1916, who had the idea of digging backwards from the chamber to locate the real entrance and steps to the burial chamber from the surface. Obviously we now know that Egyptian and Nubian pyramids

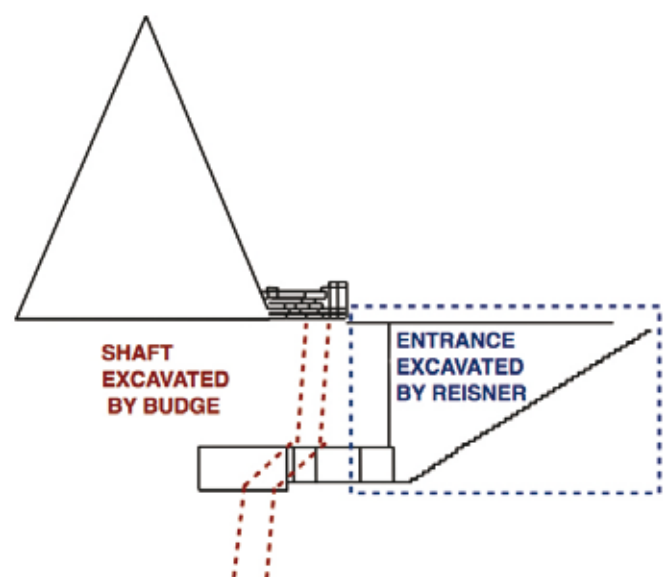


Figure 7. Example of a Nubian pyramid showing the location of Budge's shaft and the staircase excavated by Reisner, based on *SAD.199/2/94*.



are very different but in 1897 there was no previous systematic excavation of Nubian pyramids. This means that Budge would essentially have been in uncharted territory and the only model of pyramid known to him, the Egyptian. Add to that the contemporary assumption that any monumental construction must be Egyptian, Budge's expectation that the two types of pyramid would be similar is not unreasonable.

The influence of Egyptian archaeology on the development of archaeology in the Sudan is a recurring theme in the material in the Sudan Archive, and is not unexpected considering many of the early pioneers of Sudanese and Nubian archaeology were Egyptologists. Another common theme is the extent to which colonialism influenced the development of archaeology in the Sudan. Unlike colonies such as India, where archaeology was used in a tactical attempt to encourage conversions to Christianity by proving the existence of a religion before Hinduism (Chakrabarti 2012), the 20th century inhabitants of the Sudan were completely disassociated from the antique/ancient history of the country. This may have caused, or at least influenced, issues which are ongoing to this day.

This is linked to an obvious disregard for more recent archaeological remains. The discovery of a cemetery from the 16th or 17th century during the construction of a railway station near Jebel Barkal attests to this. The officer in charge, Storrar writes in his diary that many of the graves are made from stones from the neighbouring temples, some of which even bear hieroglyphic inscriptions. Storrar criticises the pilage and damage caused to the temples, all the while using the stones from the cemetery in the foundation of the new station (Storrar 1906).

Many of the issues raised in the archive material still occur today. Conservation is still a concern, mainly due to the climate of the country, with new solutions still being developed. Public perception of archaeology in the country is also worryingly similar. A report and article from the Sudan Archive, by Sayce suggest in 1909 that archaeology in the Sudan would develop due to the exhaustion of sites in Egypt (Sayce 1909). An article from 2012 states nearly exactly the same thing, adding the factor of political unrest (Sharpe 2012). Effectively both these articles, over a century apart, imply nearly exactly the same thing and that when archaeologists cannot work in their preferred region of Egypt or the Near East they move to the Sudan. The extent to which this reflects genuine public opinion is unclear but highlights an issue in the way that archaeology in the Sudan is perceived by some. While exhibition and outreach programs go a long way to counter this in more recent times, the lack of change over a century is still slightly concerning.

Conclusion

Durham University's Sudan Archive has a significant potential in future archaeological research. Ongoing developments in the use of archival material in archaeological research projects and increasing academic interest in the history of archaeology

as a discipline firmly establishes the material from the Sudan Archive as an invaluable resource. The creation of a database last year which will soon be available through the Sudan Archive should make it significantly easier for researchers to use and identify relevant archaeological documents from the collection.

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