

# SUDAN & NUBIA

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Front cover. Stone slab A3 used as a paving slab in Temple 4, Qasr Ibrim, showing Taharqa and Amun (photograph courtesy of F. Aldsworth).

Above. Frontal scan of lion head, Naga (Kroeper and Perzlmeier 2022, fig. 21, © Naga Project, 3-D scans by TrigonArt BauerPraus GbR).

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# The Taharqa temple-church at Qasr Ibrim, Egypt

Fred Aldsworth



Figure 1. Qasr Ibrim, from the south-east, before the flooding of the Nile Valley and the creation of Lake Nasser.



Figure 2. Close up of Taharqa on stone slab A3.

## Preface<sup>1</sup>

The Egypt Exploration Society (EES) became involved with investigations at Qasr Ibrim in Egyptian Nubia when it responded, in the early 1960s, to the UNESCO appeal to save Nubia's heritage in advance of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, which was commenced in January 1960 and completed in July 1970. This resulted in the creation of, what has become, the 479km (298 mile) reservoir on the River Nile, which is known as Lake Nasser (Figure 1).

The Society had already been involved in excavating cemeteries below the fortress, where Walter Emery had worked in the late 1920s and continued in 1961 and 1962 (Mills 1982). However, the EES was also invited by the Egyptian Antiquities Service to conduct investigations on the Qasr Ibrim citadel, a relatively intact city abandoned by the Ottomans in AD 1812, which was expected to be inundated by the waters of the reservoir lake.

A modest season of survey and small scale investigation

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<sup>1</sup> We are pleased to publish this report following consultation with the Egypt Exploration Society and the author [ed.].





Figure 3. Qasr Ibrim, from the south-east, in 1992.



Figure 4. Recent photograph of Qasr Ibrim, from the north, showing the extent of flooding (photo Olaf Tausch, posted 2019 Creative Commons Attribution, 3.0 Unported GNU Free Documentation License).

in 1963 was followed by a major season of excavation in 1964, both under the direction of the Reverend Professor J. Martin Plumley, of the University of Cambridge, during which many of the later deposits and structures were recorded and removed. Plumley continued to direct work on the site until 1976, assisted by Dr William Frend and later by Professor William Y. Adams of the University of Kentucky, who continued to work on the site until 1984. The EES was subsequently represented on the site by Dr Robert Anderson and then by Dr John Alexander of the University of Cambridge.

It had been reported in 1976 that the reservoir had reached its capacity but levels continued to rise although it was thought that the site might survive as a small island. From 1988 until 1995 the investigations were directed by Dr Mark Horton, of the University of Bristol, and subsequently by Dr Pamela Rose until 2008.

In 1992 the site was still attached to the mainland by a small strip of land (Figure 3) but in 1994 it suffered from illicit excavations and vandalism, believed to have been made by local fishermen. This had a devastating effect on the south end of the site with severe damage caused to the Taharqa temple-church, the paved floor of Temple 4, and structures to the south and west. By 1995 the site had become a small island, detached from the mainland, and the opportunity was taken, in 1995 and 1998, to record the results of the previous illicit works. It is these observations that form the basis of this report. Recent photographs indicate that water levels have now risen to about the height of the crypt of the cathedral church (Figure 4), which means, realistically, that meaningful excavations on the site will no longer be possible as all archaeological remains will largely have been damaged or destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

After the completion of 26 seasons of excavation on the site by the Egypt Exploration Society, Pamela Rose has drawn together an overview of the investigations and their results (Rose 2011).

## Introduction

The Taharqa temple-church<sup>3</sup> was first investigated in 1969 following the accidental discovery of two inscribed blocks bearing identical cartouches of the Pharaoh Taharqa in the blocking of the gate at the south-east corner of the defences (Section 1, A31, Figure 47). The stones were thought to be part of a lintel to a small shrine or temple. Taken with other examples of this pharaoh's name, it was concluded that a temple dedicated to Taharqa might have existed at Qasr Ibrim. This proved to be the case in excavations

<sup>2</sup> An on-site inspection would be required to determine the extent of damage [ed.].

<sup>3</sup> Taharqa, rather than Taharqo, is used throughout to maintain consistency with earlier Qasr Ibrim publications [ed.].

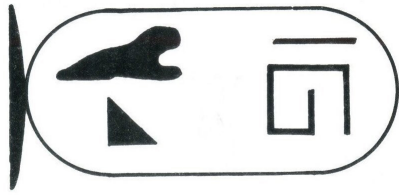


Figure 5. Taharqa's nomen.

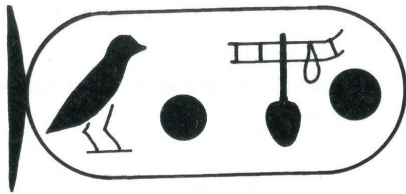


Figure 6. Taharqa's prenomen.

undertaken in 1969 (Plumley 1970, 17-18); 1972 (Plumley and Adams 1974, 228-236, pls XLVIII 2 and 3, XLIX 1, 2 and 3, figs 3, 4 and 5; Frensd 1974); 1974 (Plumley 1975, 10-21 pl. XII and fig. 2); 1976 (Plumley *et al.* 1977, 41-42, pls V4, VI 1 and 3) 1980 and 1982 (Adams *et al.* 1983, 59); and 1984 (Alexander and Driskell 1985, 23-26, fig. 6).

These revealed a complex of mud brick and stone structures originating in a small temple dedicated to Taharqa (Temple 3), which included wall paintings and inscribed columns. This had been later refurbished to form a side chapel of a much larger temple, probably of early Meroitic origin and in use from the reign of Ptolemy I (305/304–282 BC) to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD (Temple 4). When that was mostly demolished in order to reuse much of its stonework in the Cathedral Church, the original small temple was preserved, altered and extended to form a Christian church.

Taharqa, sometimes referred to as Taharka or Taharqo, was the son of Piankhy (Piye), a Nubian king of Napata, who conquered Egypt in 744 BC and founded the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Kushite pharaohs of Egypt. Taharqa ruled as King of Kush and Pharaoh of Egypt from 690 BC until 664 BC. His name appears in two forms in a number of the hieroglyphs carved on the slabs re-used in the floor of Temple 4, and in one case the two cartouches appear together on one slab (see Section 1, A31). His nomen is given as *t3-h-r-k* reading Taharqa. Taharqa's prenomen, *ḥwi-nfrtm-r* can be transcribed as Khu-Nefertum-Re, and was probably intended as 'Nefertum-and-Re'-protect-[me]' or 'Nefertum-is-Protector-of-Re' (Figures 5 and 6).<sup>4</sup>

There are numerous publications recounting the pharaonic history of Egypt and summaries of the history of occupation at Qasr Ibrim have been published by William Adams (Adams 1996, 1-21; Adams and Alexander 2018, 63-64) and Pamela Rose (Rose 2011). It is probably safe to assume that the Taharqa temple (Temple 3) was first erected in c. 690 BC and re-furbished as an element of the Meroitic temple complex, now known as Temple 4, in c. 300 BC (Rose 2007) (Figures 7 and 8). William Adams also published an account of Christian Nubia (Adams 1996, 22-26) whilst Derek Welsby has published a detailed account of the conversion of Nubia and its eventual demise (Welsby 2002).<sup>5</sup> This author has published a summary account of medieval Nubia, with a description of the site's location and its occupation down to 1812 (Aldsworth 2010, 1-5). It seems most likely that the conversion of the Taharqa temple as a church took place shortly after the arrival of Christianity in the area in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century AD, which also saw the construction of the 'Great Church', partly from re-used stones from Temple 4, which later became an Episcopal seat and latterly was described as the Cathedral Church of Qasr Ibrim (Aldsworth 2010).

This report has been assembled from records made in 1995 and 1998 by this writer in response to the illicit excavations and damage caused in 1994. It deals with structures at the south end of the site and specifically with the Taharqa temple (Section 1); mud-brick structures recorded beneath Temple 4 (Section 2); Temple 5 (Section 3); the Christian church (Section 4); and the early defences and south gate (Section 5).

## Section 1. The Taharqa Temple

The illicit investigations conducted in 1994 on this part of the site caused considerable damage to the

<sup>4</sup> See further Eide *et al.* 1994, 129-130 [ed.].

<sup>5</sup> See also for example, Adams 1977, 433-546; Anderson 2004; Edwards 2004, 212-255; Ruffini 2012 [ed.].

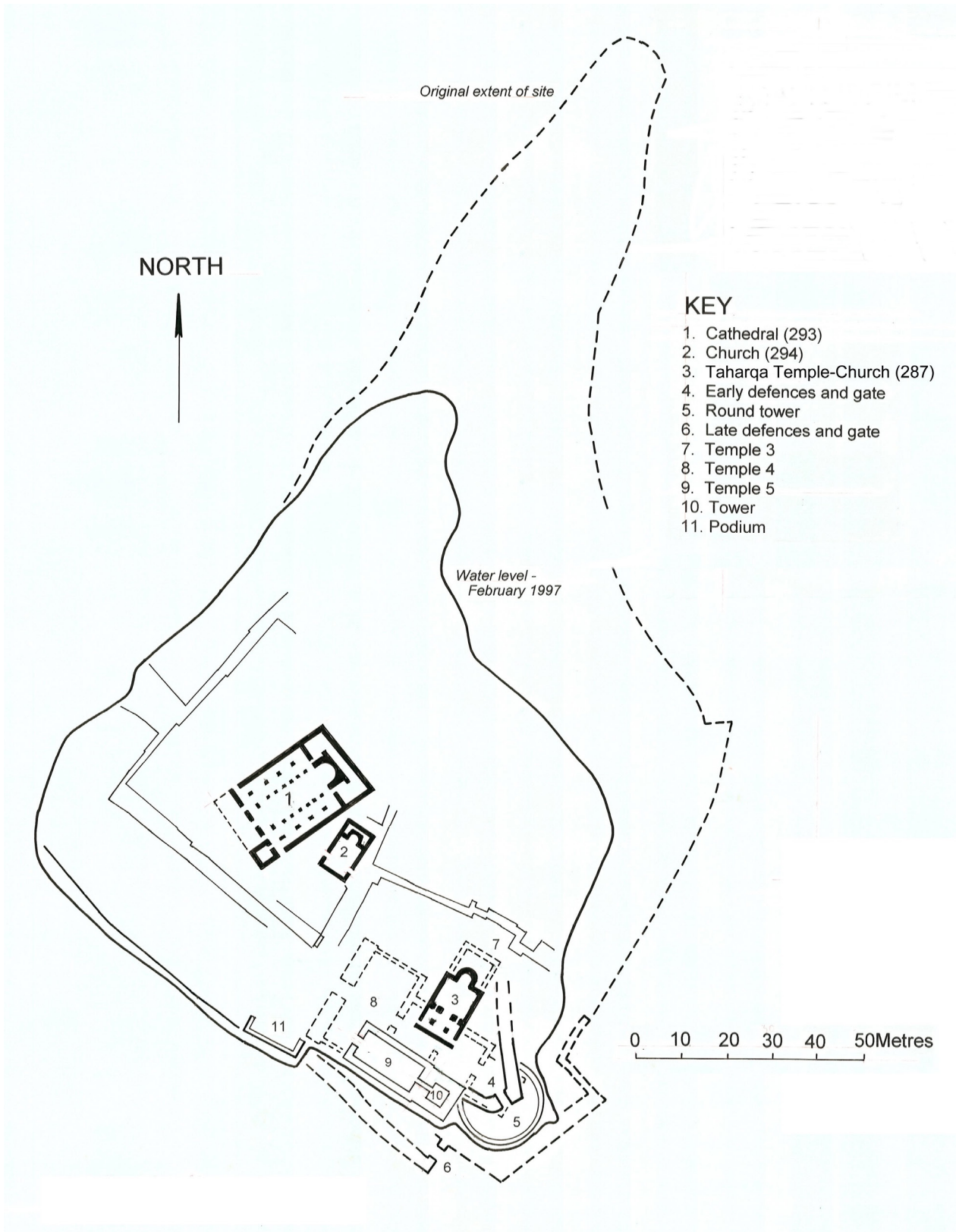


Figure 7. General plan of the site showing the location of the south-east quadrants detailed in Figure 8.



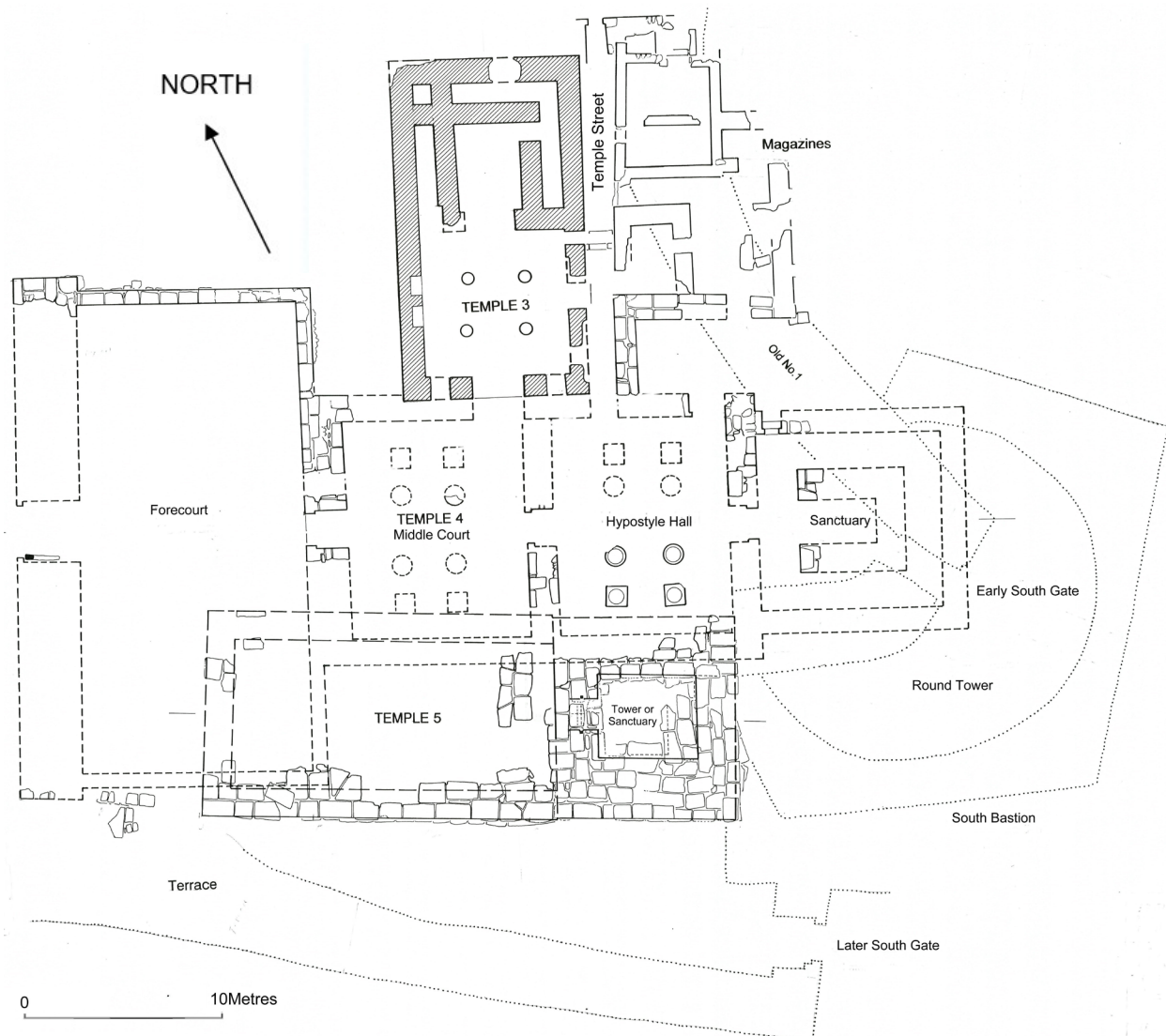


Figure 8. Detailed plan of the south-east quadrant of the site, showing structures referred to in the text.

standing remains of the Taharqa temple-church (Temple 3) as well as to the floors of the temple-church and Temple 4. In the latter case, a number of the paved slabs were taken up and left abandoned on the surface. During the 1995 and 1998 seasons these activities were recorded and are presented here.

The Meroitic temple complex, which included the Taharqa temple (Temple 3), was first excavated between 1972 and 1978 (Plumley and Adams 1974, 228-229; Plumley 1975, 15-19; Plumley *et al.* 1977, 40-42; Anderson *et al.* 1979, 31-33). Further recording was undertaken in 1984 and 1995 and it has been fully described by Pamela Rose (Rose 2007).

The temple was 16.8m in length and 9.8m wide externally, with mud brick walls 1.2m thick. A close examination of the surviving walls of the Taharqa temple-church in 1995 revealed remnants of three successive layers of plasterwork – the later two almost certainly relating to its adaption and extension in the Christian era (see Section 4). The earliest plaster layer was whitewashed and represents a refurbishment of the Taharqa temple at the time that it was incorporated into the Meroitic temple complex. The walls of Temple 4 were then decorated with paintings, including one *in situ* depicting a prisoner procession (Rose 2007, pl. 2A), and many other fragments were recovered during excavations.<sup>6</sup>

In 1998 it was noted that this first layer of plaster lined a pair of niches in the north wall of the main

<sup>6</sup> See further Pyke 2007 [ed.].

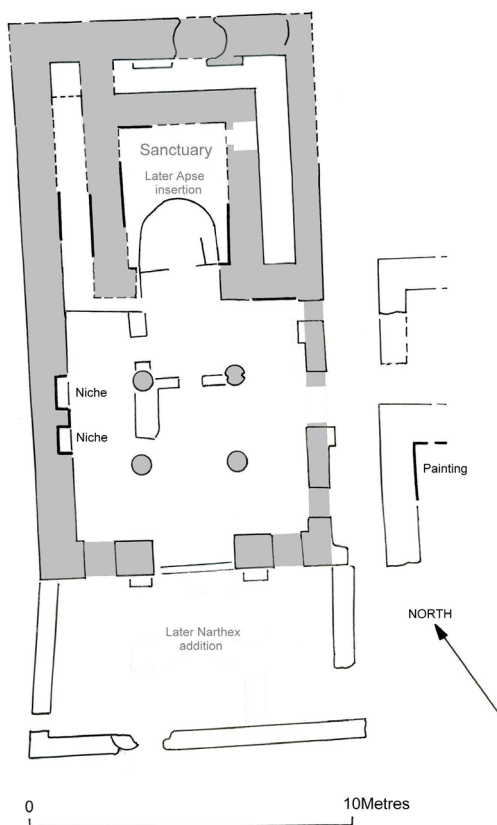


Figure 9. The Taharqa temple-church showing, with the heavy black lines, the extent of surviving Meroitic-era plaster.

body of the Taharqa temple, each about 1m wide and 0.5m deep (Figure 9). These appear to have been original features refurbished as part of the Meroitic complex and presumably each served to contain an object, perhaps a statue. They were both blocked and plastered over in the Christian era (see Section 4).

The disturbances to the Taharqa temple-church had included the removal of altar stones, one of which was broken; the breaking of two column drums; the dismantling of another column; the demolition of a mud brick wall, which had formed part of the higab; and two holes that had been dug in the floor (Figures 8 and 10).

The disturbances in Temple 4 were more extensive and comprised the demolition of mud brick walls, which had formed inserted subdivisions in the narthex of the Christian church; the lifting of a considerable number of paving slabs, which were found to have hieroglyphic inscriptions on the underside; the excavation of a robber trench, removing a wall of Temple 4; and the digging of several holes exposing a mud brick-lined chamber, about 4.4m long and 0.9m wide (Figures 10 and 11). Clearance of the spoil heaps left by these activities revealed a series of earlier mud brick foundations and parts of two door openings (see section 2).

In addition to uncovering the reused slabs with, mostly



Figure 10. The interior of the temple-church in 1995.



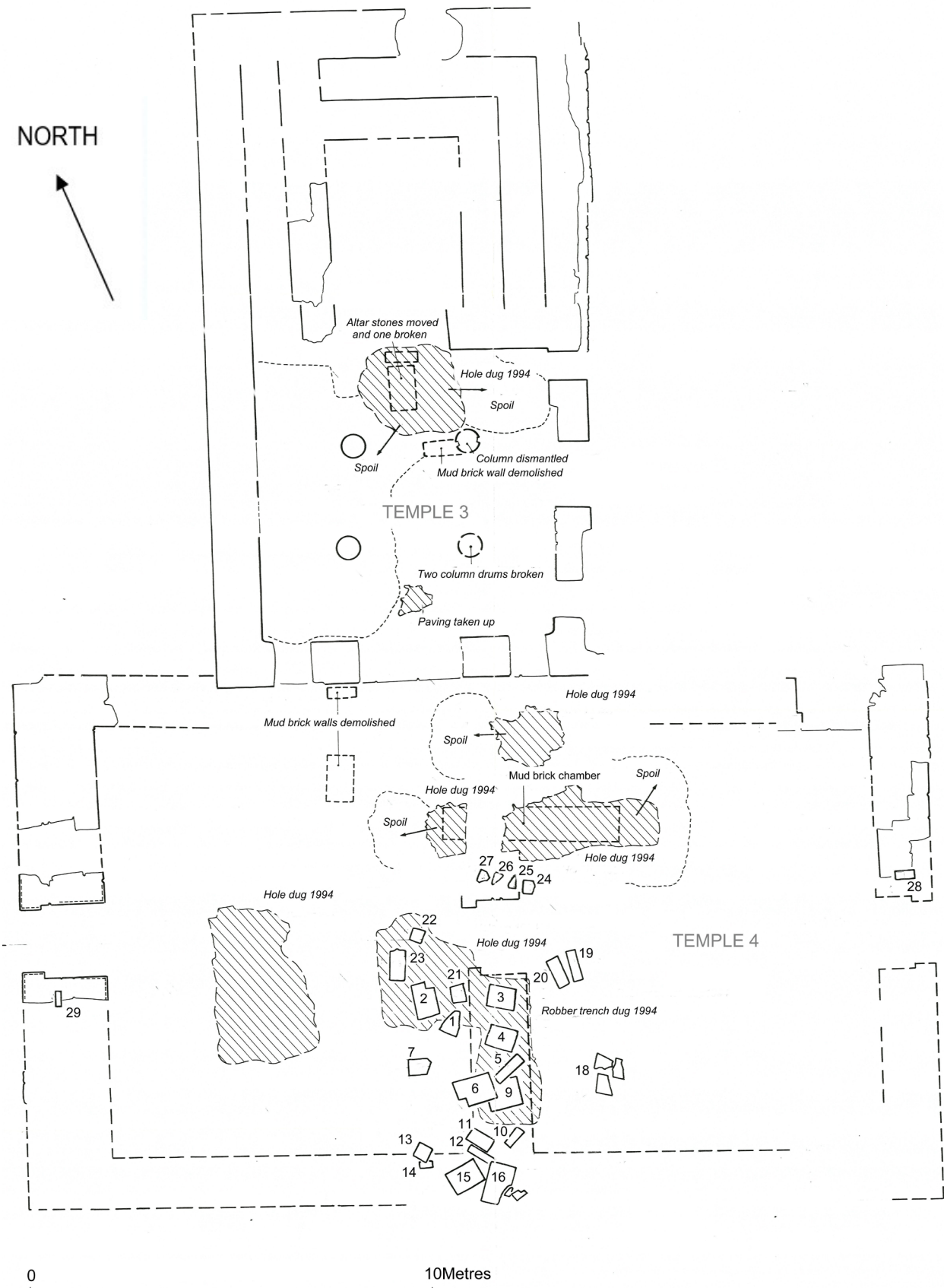


Figure 11. The illicit investigations in 1994. The inscribed blocks, which had formed paving slabs in Temple 4, are shown where they were found in 1995 and numbered 1-21 and 23-29 to correspond with those listed below and referred to as A1-A21 and A23-A29.

incised, hieroglyphic inscriptions, which are largely of white, grey or purple sandstone, a possible dedication deposit appears to have been encountered within the north-west corner of the temple-church extension, or narthex, but all that survived in 1995 was the excavation hole and some pottery sherds. The illicit explorations within the south-west corner of the church extension had uncovered a mud brick-lined chamber, or vault, 4.4m long and 0.9m wide, which continued outside the west wall and presumably, therefore pre-dated the narthex (Figures 11 and 85).

The reused stone slabs, which had formed parts of the paving of Temple 4, were recorded in 1995 (see below A1-A21 and A23-A29) and others of the same period found elsewhere on the site were recorded in 1998 (see below A22 and A30-A60). The area of disturbance from which the first 29 were derived was given the number 'Trench 16' and 'Context 1600'. The stones with hieroglyphic inscriptions were drawn and described by the writer and tracings were made of the more important pieces, some with painted details, by Shelley White.

### Stone blocks, slabs and fragments

**A1** A triangular block of white sandstone, 570mm high, 540mm wide, and 170mm thick, which is rough-tooled on the lower edge and back. The upper face is smooth and has some scratch marks but it is otherwise undecorated (not illustrated).

**A2** A complete block in white gebel sandstone, 890mm high, 590mm wide, and 250mm thick, with a pictorial and hieroglyphic inscription on the upper face. The block is part cut away at the top right corner and this may be an original feature. The left side, top and bottom, are all smooth, but the right side is rough-tooled. There are traces of over-painting the inscribed surface with white paint and there is some, presumably later, graffiti on the left side (Figures 12 and 13).

**A3** A complete block of white gebel sandstone, 660mm high, 580mm wide, and 250mm thick with a pictorial and hieroglyphic inscription incised on the upper face, which includes Taharqa and probably Amun together with a Taharqa nomen cartouche. The upper face has been partially over-painted white and details of the upper body dress and jewellery of the two figures has been painted on to bare stone in red. The left side, top, and bottom are smooth whilst the right side is rough-tooled. There is some, perhaps later, graffiti on the left side (Figures 2, 14, 15).

**A4** A complete block of white gebel sandstone, 700mm high, 600mm wide, and 240mm thick, with a

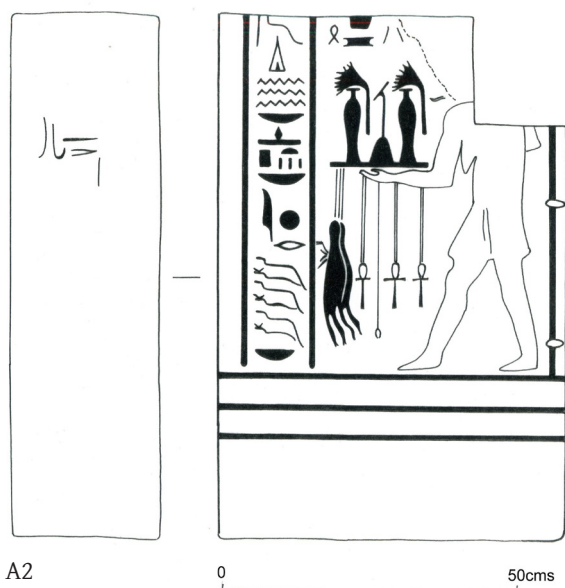


Figure 12. Stone slab A2.



Figure 13. Stone slab A2.



A3

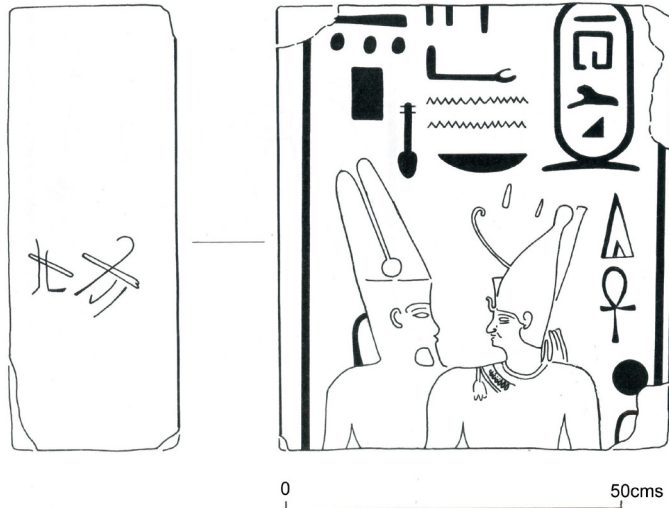


Figure 14. Stone slab A3.



Figure 15. Stone slab A3.

pictorial and hieroglyphic inscription incised on the upper face, which includes the figure of Taharqa and, probably, Khnum. The upper face has been partially painted white and there is overpainting in red on the body of Taharqa and the surround. The right side, the top and the bottom are all smooth, but the left side is rough-tooled. There are traces of incense residue on the right side (Figures 16 and 17).

**A5** A block of white gebel sandstone, 920mm long, 310mm wide, and 280mm thick, with the remains of an incised inscription at one end, which includes a small part of a cartouche, probably of Taharqa. The presence of the remains of two, or perhaps three, later graffiti in a form of script, which may be Meroitic, on one side and the shape of the stone suggest that it had been recycled (Figures 18 and 19).

A4

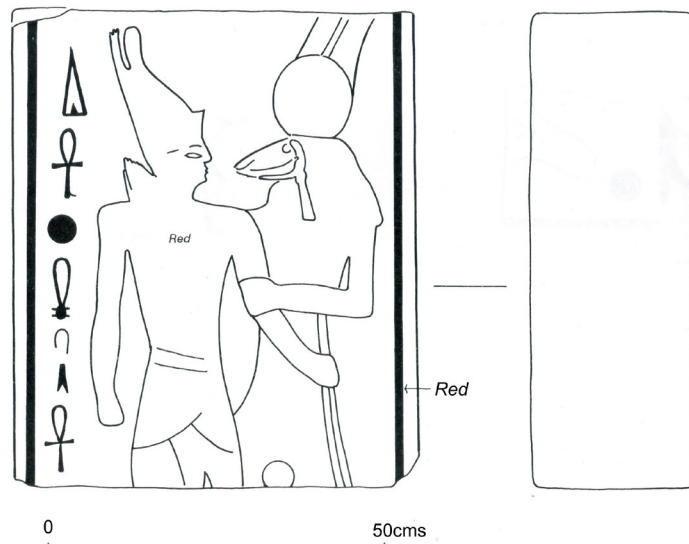


Figure 16. Stone slab A4.



Figure 17. Stone slab A4.

**A6** A large block of purple gebel sandstone, 1.2m long, 740mm wide, and 260mm thick, with a rectangular notch cut out of one corner. The surfaces are all rough-tooled, except one face that is smooth and this carries scratched graffiti in the form of human legs and feet (Figure 20).

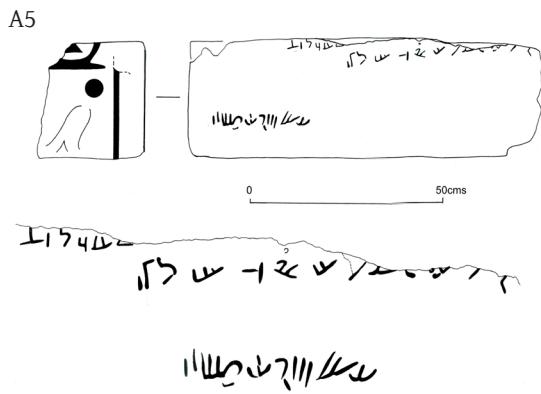


Figure 18. Stone slab A5, with an enlargement of the graffiti.



Figure 19. The two lines of graffiti on stone slab A5.

**A7** A small block of white gebel sandstone, 540mm long, 440mm wide, and 180mm thick. All sides are rough-tooled except one face. Where this has not been re-tooled, by a pecking action with a chisel, it is smooth and has the remains of an incised line, probably the former outline of a hieroglyphic inscription (Figure 21).

**A8** A small block of brown gebel sandstone, 360mm long, 200mm wide, and 190mm thick, which is rough-tooled on all faces (not illustrated).

**A9** A large block of brown gebel sandstone, 870mm long, 650cm wide, and 240mm thick, rough-tooled on all sides except one face which is smooth and painted white (not illustrated).

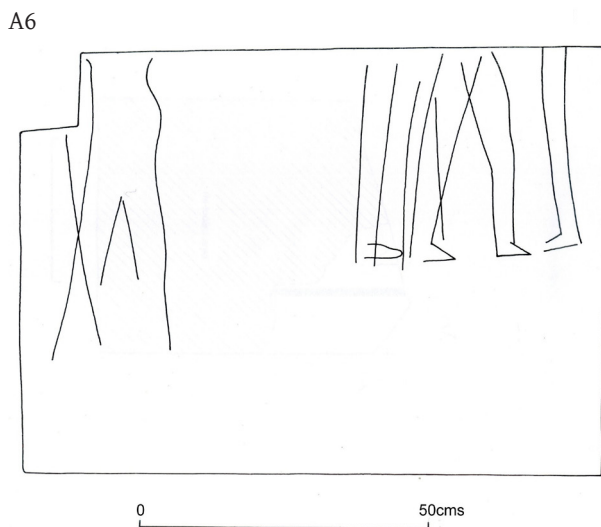


Figure 20. Stone slab A6.

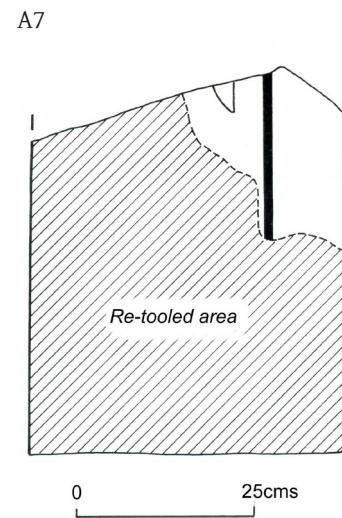


Figure 21. Stone slab A7.

**A10** A block of white gebel sandstone, 520mm long, 230mm wide, and 170mm thick, with incised hieroglyphs including part of a Taharqa nomen cartouche on one face. The left side, top, and bottom are smooth but the right side is rough-tooled, perhaps for re-use (Figures 22 and 23).

**A11** A block of white gebel sandstone, 660mm long, 60mm wide, and 220mm thick, rough-tooled on all but one face that is smooth and has traces of white paint (not illustrated).

**A12** A block of brown gebel sandstone, 720mm long, 220mm wide, and 190mm thick, rough-tooled on all sides except one, which is smooth and painted white (not illustrated).

**A13** A small block of purple gebel sandstone, 430mm long, 390mm wide, and 190mm thick, rough-



A10

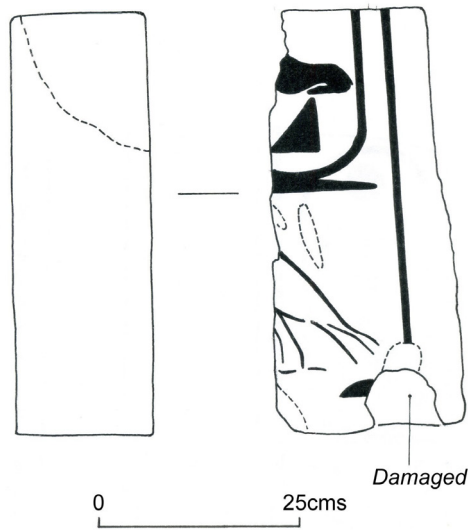


Figure 22. Stone slab A10.



Figure 23. Stone slab A10.

tooled on all but one side that is smooth and painted white (not illustrated).

**A14** A small block of pink sandstone, 630mm long, 320mm wide, and 220mm thick, with two sides smooth and painted white but the remainder either rough quarry-tooled or broken (not illustrated).

**A15** A block of white gebel sandstone, 870mm long, 630mm wide, and 230mm thick, rough-tooled on all but one face which is smooth (not illustrated).

**A16** A large block of white gebel sandstone, 1.11m long, 640mm wide, and 230mm thick, originally part of a door jamb, rebated on one side, with hieroglyphs and Taharqa prenomen cartouches on either end. It also carries a square rebated recess containing a hole which may have been for a draw bar. Several small pieces have been broken off but can be re-assembled (Figures 24 and 25).

**A17** Part of a block of white gebel sandstone, now 890mm long, 400mm wide, and 190mm thick, rebated on one side. It carries score marks on the margins and an inscription of incised hieroglyphs painted white, and then over-painted red, yellow and blue; and painted bands in red and pale blue or white. The bottom side is smooth, the right side is rebated, whilst the top and left sides are broken (Figures 26 and 27).

A16

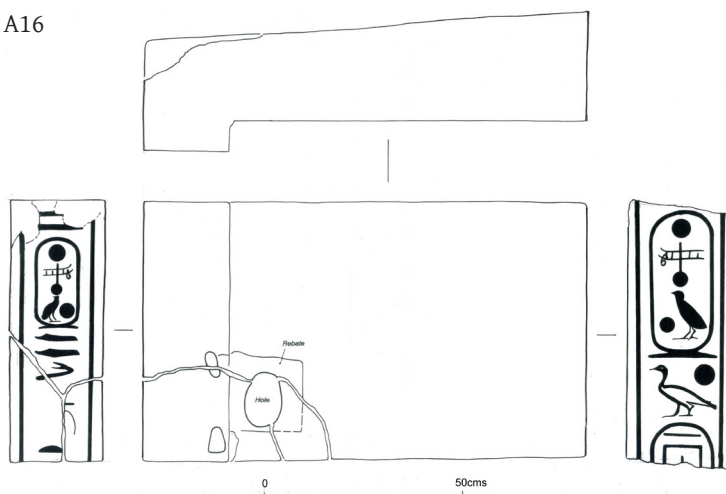


Figure 24. Stone slab A16.



Figure 25. The Taharqa prenomen cartouches on either end of stone slab A16.

**A18** Three broken pieces of white gebel sandstone which when re-assembled produce part of a large block, now 870mm long, 450mm wide, and 170mm thick. It is decorated with incised hieroglyphs and has score marks at the bottom (Figures 28 and 29). The right side is smooth, the left side and lower edge are rough-tooled, and the top is broken. This appears to be one of a pair of similar slabs which had perhaps been designed to be set on either side of an opening. The other one is represented by A21.

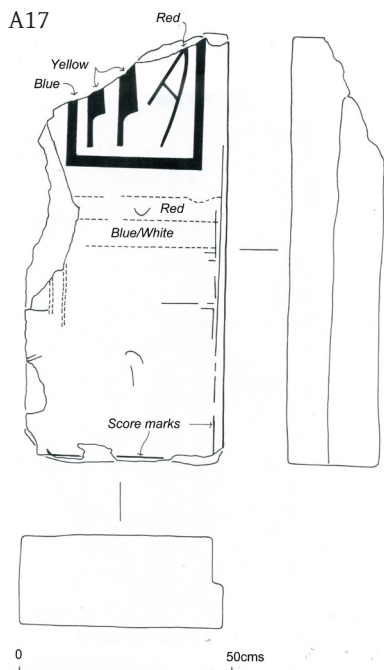


Figure 26. Stone slab A17.



Figure 27. Stone slab A17.

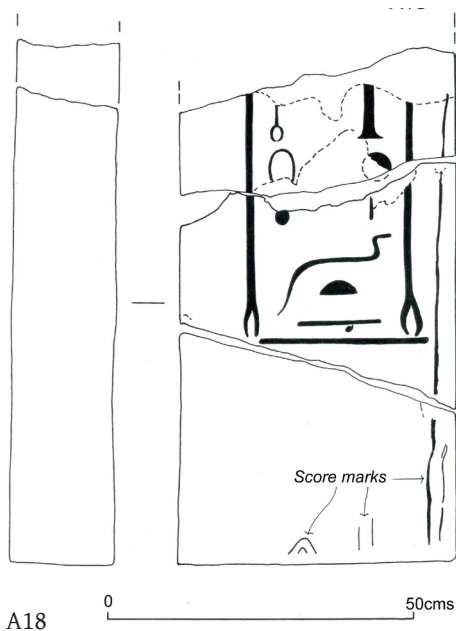


Figure 28. Stone slab A18.

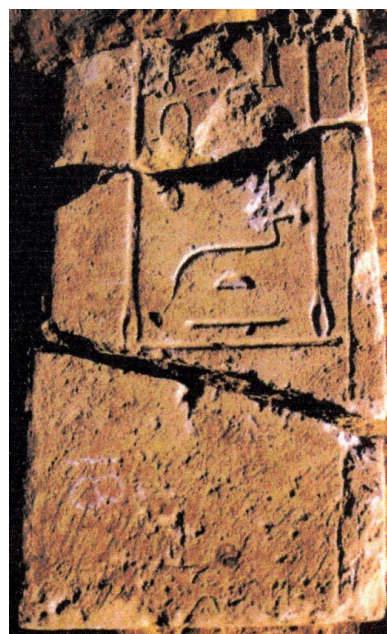


Figure 29. Stone slab A18.

**A19** A plain, un-inscribed block of white gebel sandstone, 900mm long, 220mm wide, and 200mm thick. It is rough-tooled on all faces except one, which is flatter. This has a partial covering of white-painted brown plaster on which a graffito has been scratched depicting a dog, goat or deer (Figure 30).



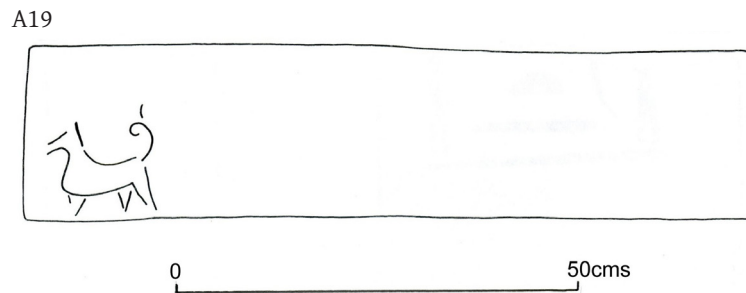


Figure 30. Stone slab A19.

**A20** A block of purple gebel sandstone, 920mm long, 860mm wide, and 250mm thick, which is cut to provide a door jamb at one corner. It is rough-tooled on all sides except one edge, which would have been exposed, and this is smooth. There are scratched graffiti on one of the sides, which has been painted white, and this may indicate re-use (not illustrated).

**A21** Part of an inscribed white gebel sandstone slab, now 420mm long, 440mm wide, and 220mm thick. The face is smooth with incised hieroglyphs but these have been partially defaced, presumably for re-use of the block (Figures 31 and 32). The left side and the bottom are smooth, the right side and back are rough-tooled and the top is broken. This appears to be one of two similar slabs which had perhaps been designed to be set on either side of an opening. The other one is A18.

**A22** Plumley (1970, 18) refers to a Taharqa inscribed stone built into the most westerly of the piers of the south arcade of the Cathedral Church at Qasr Ibrim. This has yet to be re-identified, but another piece noted by Plumley in the Cathedral Church staircase has been recorded here as A30.

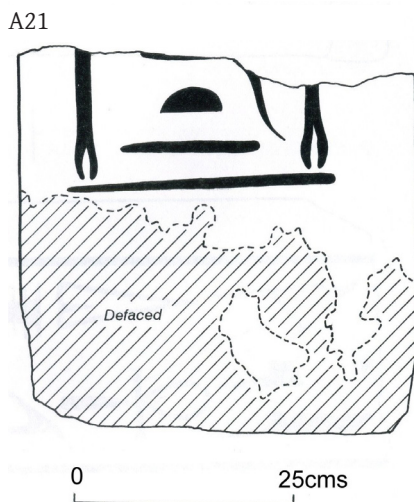


Figure 31. Stone slab A21.



Figure 32. Stone slab A21.

**A23** Part of an inscribed block of white gebel sandstone, now 800mm long, 400mm wide, and 220mm thick, with incised hieroglyphs on the upper surface which have been over-painted in white (Figures 33 and 34). The left side and top are smooth, the right side is rough-tooled and the bottom is broken. This may have formed part of the same structural elements as A18 and/or A21.

**A24** A small fragment of white gebel sandstone, now only 260mm x 200mm and 80mm thick, found in 1995 in spoil from the illicit temple investigations. It has incised decoration on the face which appears to be part of a sun with radiating rays (Figure 35).

**A25** A fragment of white gebel sandstone, now only 390mm long, 320mm wide and 190mm thick, found

A23

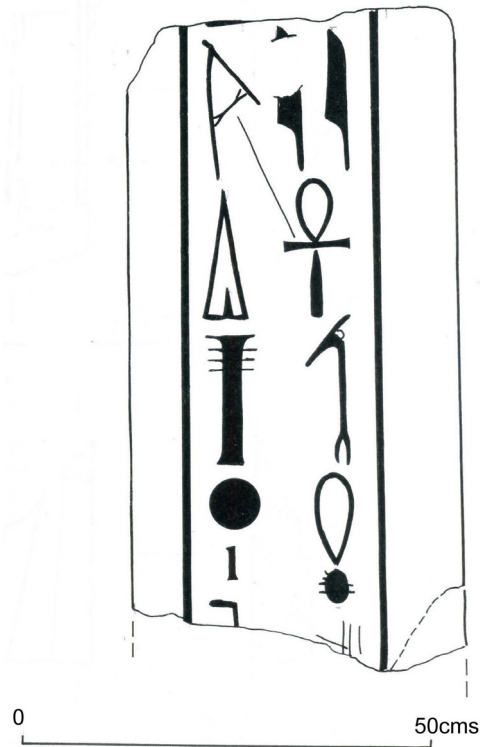


Figure 33. Stone slab A23.



Figure 34. Stone slab A23.

A24

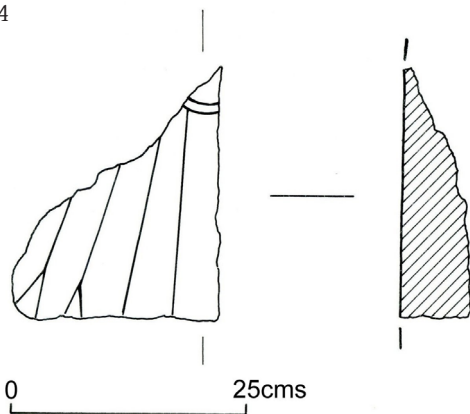


Figure 35. Stone Fragment A24.

in 1995 in spoil from the illicit temple investigations. It is part of a larger piece with a roll moulding and a slightly concave surface decorated with pairs of incised lines between which are traces of red, white, blue, and yellow paint (Figures 36 and 37).

**A26** A small fragment of grey gebel sandstone, now only 270mm wide, 200mm high, and 200mm thick, found in 1995 in spoil from the illicit temple investigations. It is part of a larger piece, perhaps the corner of a capital, with incised decoration (Figures 38 and 39).

**A27** A fragment of white gebel sandstone, now only 360mm wide, 290mm high, and 200mm thick, found in 1995

A25

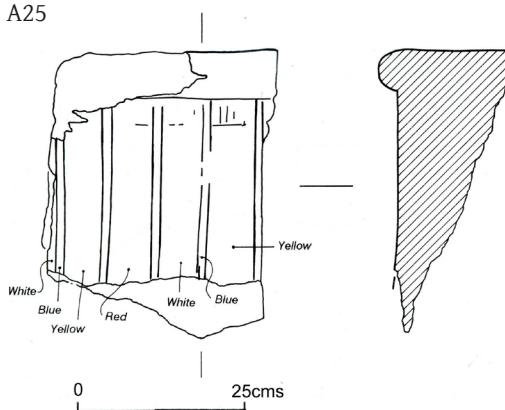


Figure 36. Stone fragment A25.

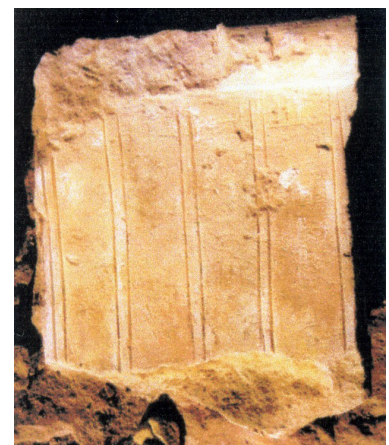


Figure 37. Stone fragment A25.



A26

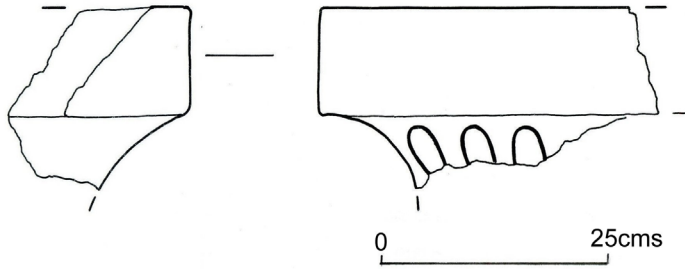


Figure 38. Stone fragment A26.



Figure 39. Stone fragment A26, sideview.

in spoil from the illicit temple investigations. It is part of a larger piece, perhaps the top of a panel, with incised decoration and red, yellow, white, and blue paint on the upper panel and white below (Figures 40 and 41).

**A28** Two conjoining pieces of white gebel sandstone making a block 470mm high, 200mm wide, and 160mm thick which in January 1995 were still built into the underpinning of the south wall of Temple 4 (Figure 11). This block was noted by Plumley (1975, 16, pl. IX.4). The incised hieroglyphs include a nomen cartouche of Taharqa (Figures 42 and 43).

A27

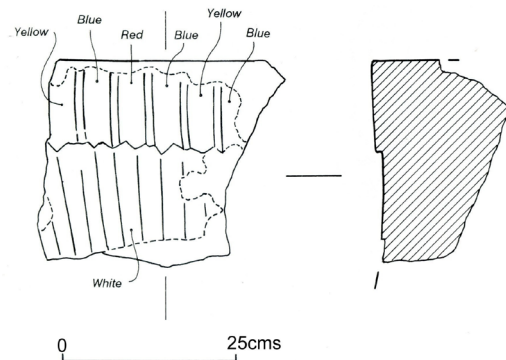


Figure 40. Stone fragment A27.

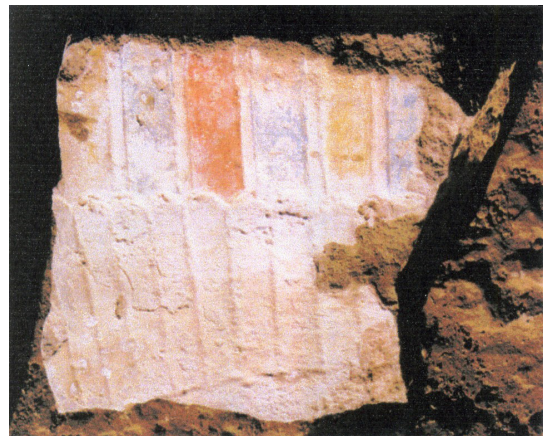


Figure 41. Stone fragment A27.

**A29** A small fragment of white gebel sandstone, now 405mm high, 160mm wide, and 120mm thick, which in 1995 was built into the floor of the tower of the Cathedral Church at first floor level. The incised hieroglyphs include part of a Taharqa nomen cartouche containing traces of red paint. All the edges are rough-cut (Figures 44 and 45).

**A30** Two conjoining pieces of white gebel sandstone representing the remains of a block 670mm high, 470mm wide, and 90mm thick, which in January 1995 were built into the floor of the tower of the Cathedral Church at first floor level. The block was mentioned by Plumley (1970, 18) along with another piece in the most westerly of the piers in the south arcade of the same building (see A22). The incised hieroglyphs include part of a nomen cartouche of Taharqa (Figure 46).

**A31** Among the blocks found by Plumley in 1969 sealing the South Gate were two bearing cartouches of Taharqa (Plumley 1970, 17, pl. XXV.3). Since the hieroglyphs on the two blocks faced in opposite directions, Plumley assumed that, with a central block containing a sun disc, they formed the lintel over a small temple or shrine. The dimensions of the two pieces were given as 770mm x 475mm x 660mm by

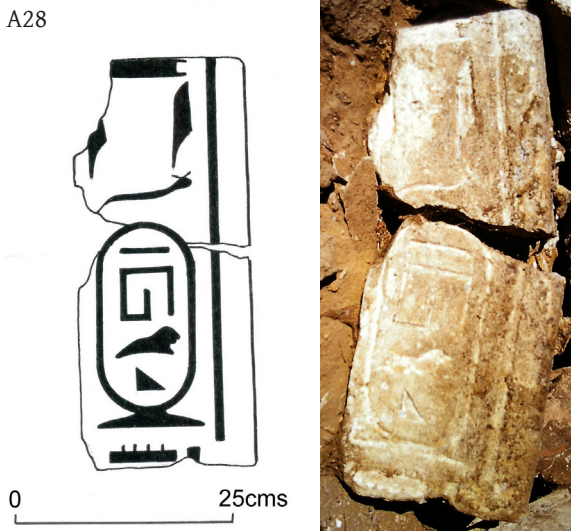


Figure 42. Stone block A28. Figure 43. Stone block A28.

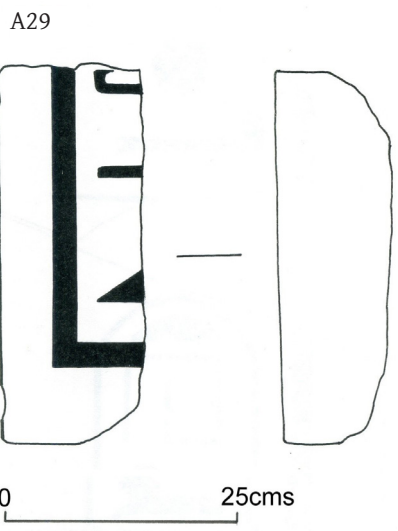


Figure 44. Stone fragment A29.



Figure 45. Stone fragment A29.

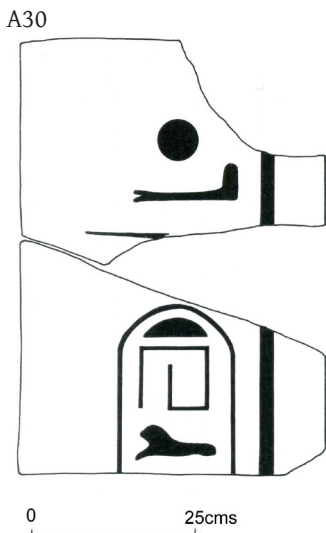


Figure 46. Stone blocks A30.

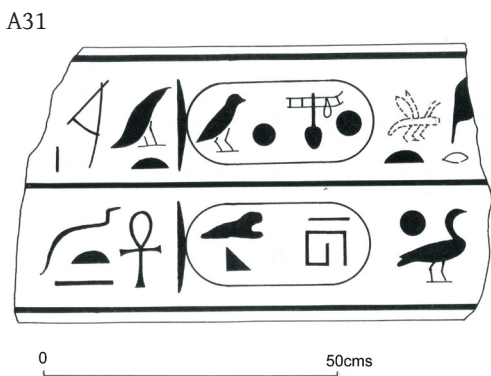


Figure 47. Stone block A31.

465mm. One of the pieces, probably the larger of the two, was illustrated by Plumley and the drawing here, which includes the nomen and prenomen cartouches of Taharqa, is based on his photograph and measurements (Figure 47).

**A32-A35** Plumley and Adams (1974, pl. XLVIII) found four engaged column drums, with incised hieroglyphs, *in situ* on the north side of the temple-church during their excavations in 1972. Although these were no longer in their original positions in January 1995, it was possible to determine which of the eight drums remaining in the church were those photographed in 1972 and the drawing (Figure 48) is of the stone column drums shown in the positions indicated in the published photograph. Each stone drum is 600mm in diameter and 320mm high (for the other four stone column drums see A36-A39).

**A36-A39** In addition to the four engaged stone column drums noted above (A32-A35), four other examples were found lying within the temple-church in January 1995. They presumably formed elements of either the same column or others and carry incised hieroglyphs, including, on A36, part of a Taharqa prenomen cartouche (Figure 49). They are each 600mm in diameter and their heights vary a little – A36, 270mm; A37, 260mm; A38, 320mm; and A39, 250mm.

At the end of the 1995 season three further stone column drums, with hieroglyphs (A40, A41, and A42, and one other stone slab, A43) were found during reinstatement of the temple church complex. These were drawn during the 1998 season along with a number of additional stone blocks mostly recovered from storage magazines where they had been placed following



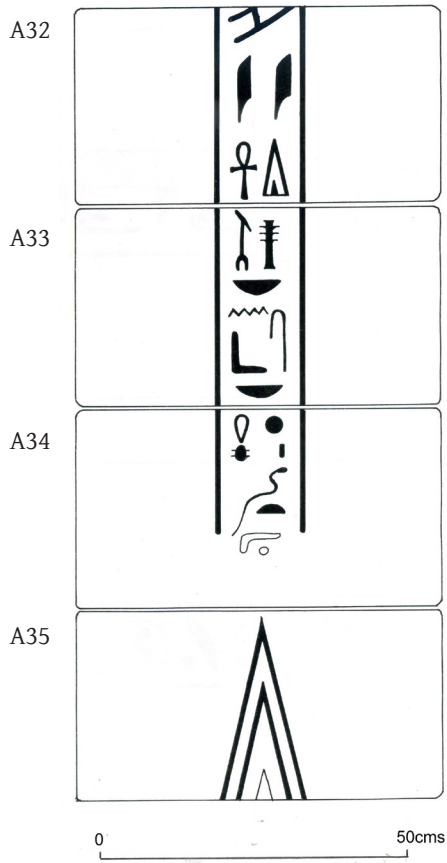


Figure 48. Stone column drums A32-A35.

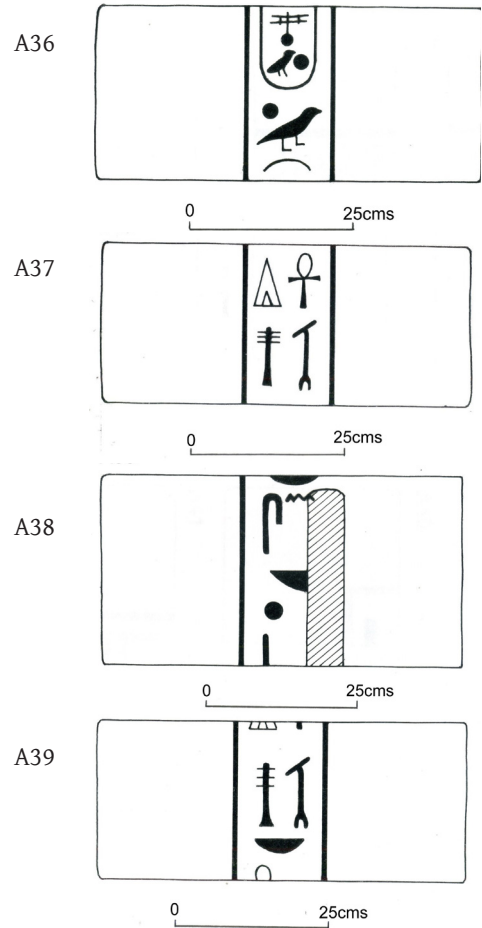


Figure 49. Stone column drums A36-A39.

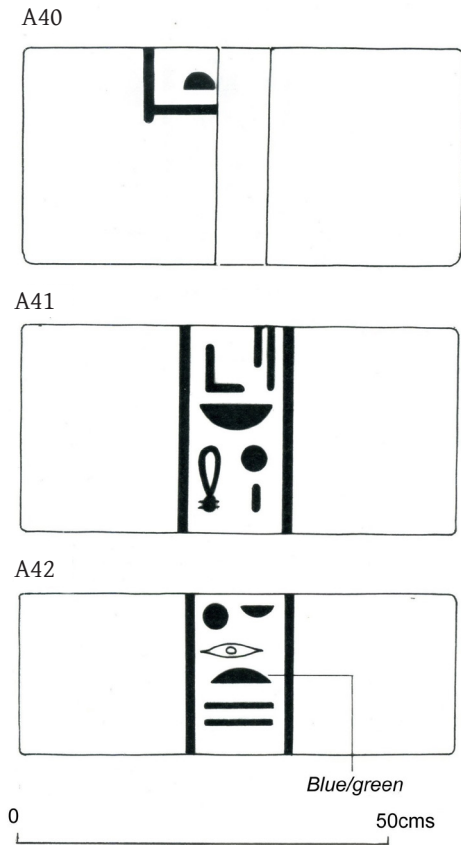


Figure 50. Stone column drums A40-A42.

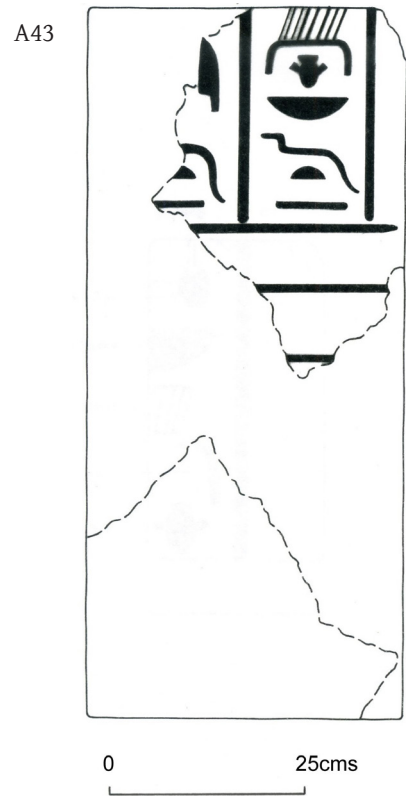


Figure 51. Stone slab A43.

discovery during previous seasons. Some carry old find numbers painted on them (A44-A60).

**A40** Stone column drum, 600mm in diameter and 290mm high, with remains of hieroglyphs cut by a later groove, presumably to support a wooden screen (Figure 50).

**A41** Stone column drum, 600mm in diameter and 280mm high, with hieroglyphs (Figure 50).

**A42** Stone column drum, 600mm in diameter and 220mm high, with hieroglyphs, some of which are painted blue/green (Figure 50).

**A43** White gebel sandstone slab, 900mm high, 410mm wide, and of unknown thickness, re-used, face-up, as a threshold in the Meroitic temple complex. The hieroglyphs are partly worn away (Figure 51).

**A44** A block of white gebel sandstone, 405mm high, 220mm wide, and 150mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 45, 78.1.22/2/8.<sup>7</sup> The hieroglyphs are painted either red or blue/green. The top and bottom sides are smooth and the top side has mortar adhering to it (Figures 52 and 53).

**A45** A block of white gebel sandstone, 505mm high, 270mm wide, and 180mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 11, 76.2.7/10. The hieroglyphs are painted red, white, and orange and all four sides of the block are lightly tooled (Figures 54 and 55).

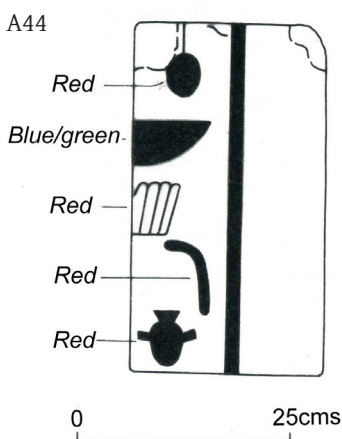


Figure 52. Stone block A44.

Figure 53. Stone block A44.

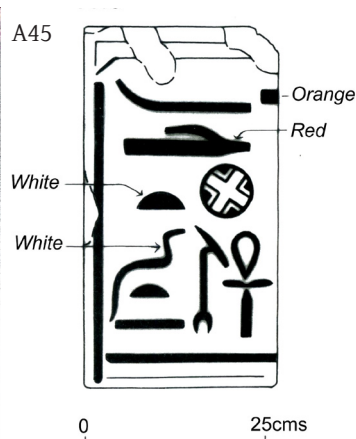


Figure 54. Stone block A45.



Figure 55. Stone block A45.

**A46** A block of white gebel sandstone, 600mm high, 260mm wide, and 140mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 2, 76.1.26/4. The hieroglyphs include part of a Taharqa nomen cartouche in which the ground is painted yellow, and some of the hieroglyphs are painted red or yellow. The top, bottom, and left sides are lightly tooled whilst the right side is rough-tooled with a chamfer on the edge (Figures 56 and 57).

**A47** A block of white gebel sandstone, 390mm high, 200mm wide, and 80mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI, 76.1.27/7. Some of the hieroglyphs, which include part of a cartouche, are painted red. The bottom and right sides are lightly tooled, the left side is rough-tooled, and the top is broken (Figures 58 and 59).

**A48** A small block of white gebel sandstone, 265mm high, 170mm wide, and 60mm thick, with the remains of hieroglyphs including a small part of a cartouche. The right side is smooth, the top side is lightly tooled, and the other two sides are broken (Figures 60 and 61).

**A49** A small block of white gebel sandstone, 250mm high, 220mm wide, and 75mm thick, with the remains of hieroglyphs including part of a Taharqa prenomen cartouche. One of the hieroglyphs is

<sup>7</sup> QI indicates Qasr Ibrim. HI designated hieroglyphic inscriptions. The object number gives the date and sequence of discovery. It reads year. month. day/number of object found that day [ed.].



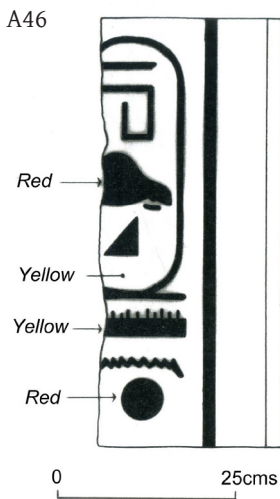


Figure 56. Stone block A46.



Figure 57. Stone block A46.

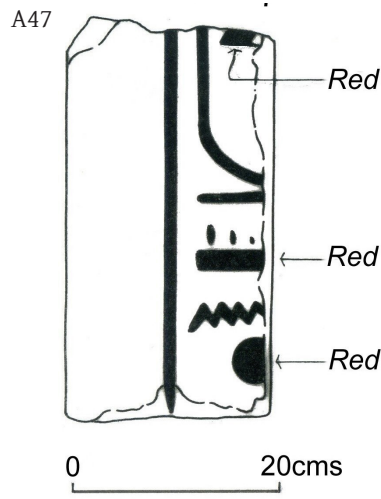


Figure 58. Stone Block A47.



Figure 59. Stone block A47.

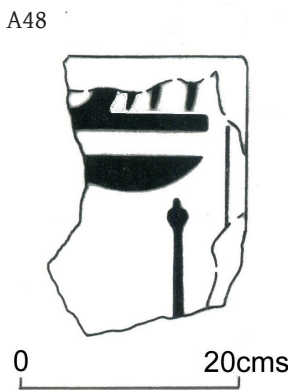


Figure 60. Stone block A48.



Figure 61. Stone block A48.



Figure 62. Stone block A49.



Figure 63. Stone block A49.

painted red. The left side is lightly tooled but the other sides are broken (Figures 62 and 63).

**A50** A block of white gebel sandstone, 280mm high, 400mm wide, and 85mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 3. The upper face carries hieroglyphs, some of which are painted red or blue/green. The bottom side also carries the remains of hieroglyphs, which include a bee. The right side is smooth, the upper side is lightly tooled, and the left side is either rough-tooled or broken (Figures 64 and 65).

**A51** A block of white gebel sandstone 510mm high, 285mm wide, and 120mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 7. Some of the hieroglyphs, which include part of a Taharqa nomen cartouche, are painted either red, white, or black. The top, bottom, and left sides are lightly tooled, the left side has a small rebate, whilst the right side is rough tooled (Figures 66 and 67).

**A52** A block of white gebel sandstone, 410mm high, 190mm wide, and 110mm thick, with hieroglyphs that include part of a nomen cartouche of Taharqa. The left side is rough-tooled and the other sides are broken (Figures 68 and 69).

**A53** A small block of white gebel sandstone, 320mm high, 260mm wide, and 140mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 5. Some of the hieroglyphs, which include the top edge of a Taharqa nomen cartouche, are painted either red or white (Figures 70 and 71).

**A54** A small block of white gebel sandstone, 240mm high, 190mm wide, and 330mm long, which carries the find number QI HI 22 and hieroglyphs, some of which are painted red. The top and sides are rough-

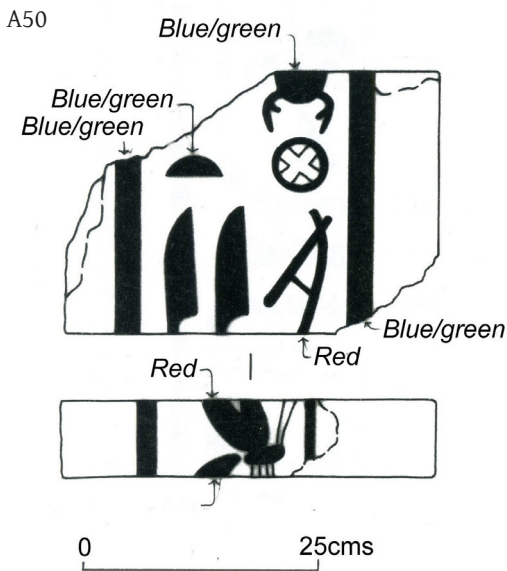


Figure 64. Stone block A50.



Figure 65. Stone block A50.

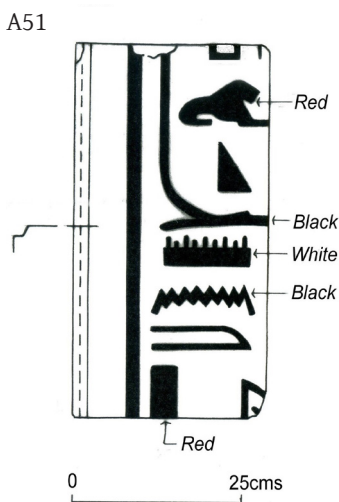


Figure 66. Stone block A51.



Figure 67. Stone block A51.

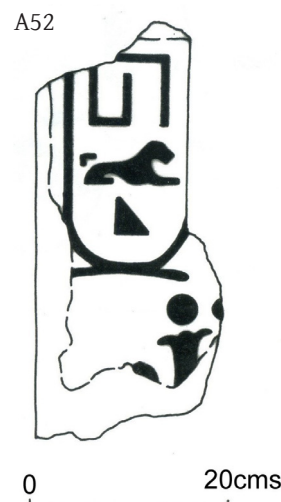


Figure 68. Stone block A52.



Figure 69. Stone block A52.

tooled and the bottom is broken (Figures 72 and 73).

**A55** A block of white gebel sandstone, 365mm high, 195mm wide, and 385mm long. One of the hieroglyphs, which include part of a Taharqa prenomen cartouche, is painted red. The bottom and right sides are smooth, the left side is lightly tooled with traces of mortar adhering (Figures 74 and 75).

**A56** A block of white gebel sandstone, 360mm high, 255mm wide, and 130mm thick, with hieroglyphs that include part of a Taharqa prenomen cartouche. The bottom side is roughly tooled, the top and left sides are lightly-tooled, and the left side is broken (Figures 76 and 77).

**A57** A block of white gebel sandstone, 235mm high, 200mm wide, and 80mm thick, with a hieroglyph in the form of part of a Taharqa nomen cartouche (Figures 78 and 79).

**A58** A block of white gebel sandstone, 360mm high, 170mm wide, and 440mm long, which carries the find number QI HI 69, 80.2.19/1. One of the hieroglyphs is painted red. The left side is smooth but pitted for re-use, perhaps as a gaming board. The bottom side is finely tooled, the top side is roughly tooled, and the right side is broken (Figure 80).



A53

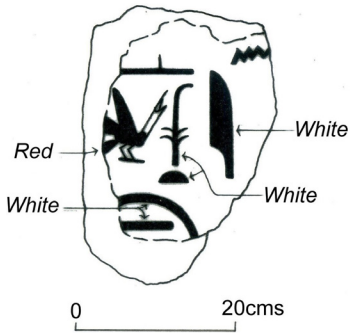


Figure 70. Stone block A53.



Figure 71. Stone block A53.

A54

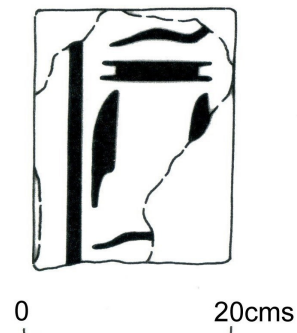


Figure 72. Stone block A54.



Figure 73. Stone block A54.

A55

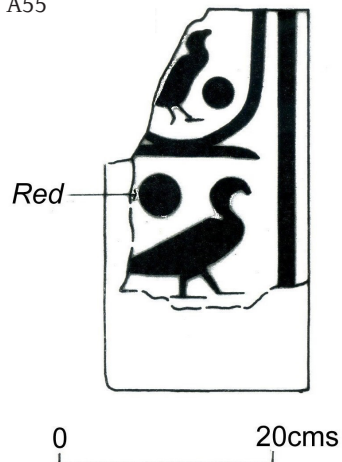


Figure 74. Stone block A55.



Figure 75. Stone block A55.

A56

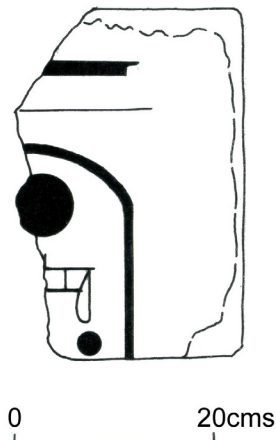


Figure 76. Stone block A56.

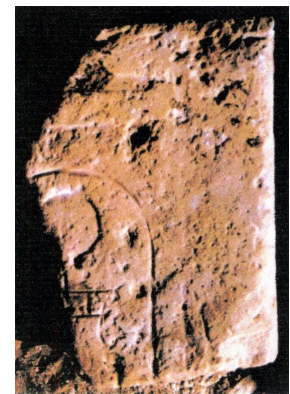


Figure 77. Stone block A56.

A57

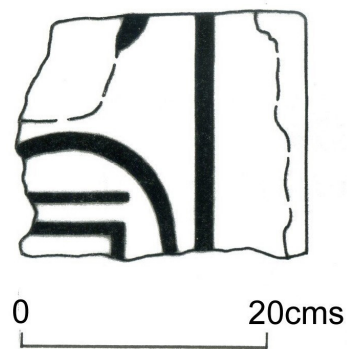


Figure 78. Stone block A57.



Figure 79. Stone block A57.

A58

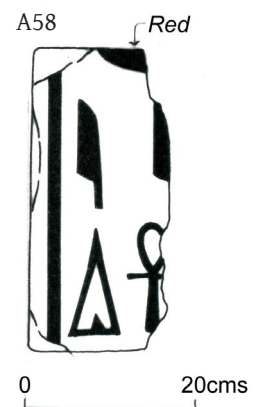


Figure 80. Stone block A58.

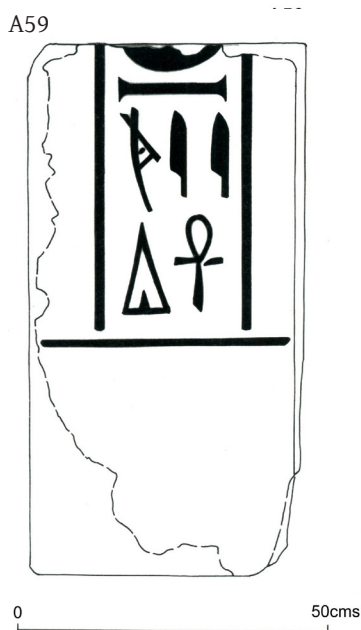


Figure 81. Stone block A59.



Figure 82. Stone block A59.

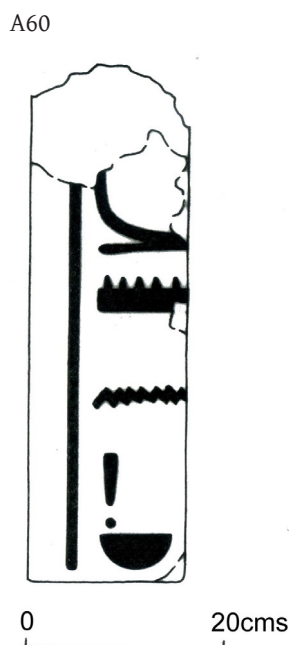


Figure 83. Stone block A60.



Figure 84. Stone block A60.

**A59** A large block of white gebel sandstone, 870mm high, 430mm wide, and 180mm thick, which carries the find number QI HI 21. The red painted hieroglyphs are framed on either side and at the bottom. The bottom side is smooth and the other three sides are lightly tooled (Figures 81 and 82).

**A60** A block of white gebel sandstone, 530mm high, 135mm wide, and 205mm thick, which was found in 1998 lying on the floor of the temple-church. It had presumably been dug up in the period 1995-1998, possibly by local fishermen. The hieroglyphs include a small part of a cartouche. The bottom and both sides are lightly tooled (Figures 83 and 84).

This substantial body of material, together with other pieces that remain undiscovered, must have formed decorative stone columns and panels that adorned an otherwise rather plain mud brick building. Pamela Rose has suggested that some of the pieces may have formed part of a western extension to the Taharqa temple, perhaps a gateway or kiosk, that was removed and the stones re-cycled as floor slabs when the middle court of the Meroitic temple was erected (Rose 2007, 5).

## Section 2. Pre-temple structures

During the general tidying up of the site and the recording of items exposed by the illicit investigations and vandalism of 1994, as well as works undertaken in 1995 and 1998, a number of previously unrecorded structures were noted. Those which underlie, and clearly pre-date, the Taharqa temple-church and Temple 4 are shown in Figure 85. Other more fragmentary remains found on the, now, exposed surfaces under Temple 5 are noted in Section 3, and in Figure 87.

Under and just beyond the east end of the original Taharqa temple were several mud brick walls and a stone threshold of a door, representing a building or buildings of pre-Taharqa date but no precise dating evidence was noted. The remains recorded under the Christian extension, or narthex, to the Taharqa temple and under the Meroitic floor of Temple 4 were more extensive and more comprehensible. Under the narthex of the church, but overlaid by its south wall, was a substantial mud brick chamber, cellar or crypt, aligned roughly north-south and measuring 4.4m in length and 0.9m in width, of which only the top was recorded. It was built with walls of mud bricks and was filled at a later date and is aligned not only with the Taharqa temple-church and Temple 4 but also with the other structures recorded in its vicinity,



with which it may have been contemporary. Its function and date remain obscure.

Other structures recorded included mud brick walls of varying thickness, some of which appear to have been superimposed, and included one possible door jamb. Their function and date remain obscure but they certainly all pre-date the paved floor of Temple 4, which is of Meroitic date. They could be contemporary with the Taharqa temple but are, perhaps, more likely to pre-date it.

Two circular platforms recorded under the south wall of Temple 4 may be related, and are discussed in Section 5, Figures 97 and 101.

### Section 3. Temple 5

This structure of, as yet, undetermined function lies immediately to the west of Temple 4 and was partially overlaid by its Hypostyle Hall, Middle Court, and Forecourt (see Figure 8). What survives indicates that it had stone foundations that had already been reduced to that level by the time that the Meroitic temple complex had been built. Pamela Rose has suggested that building lines scored on the surface of the

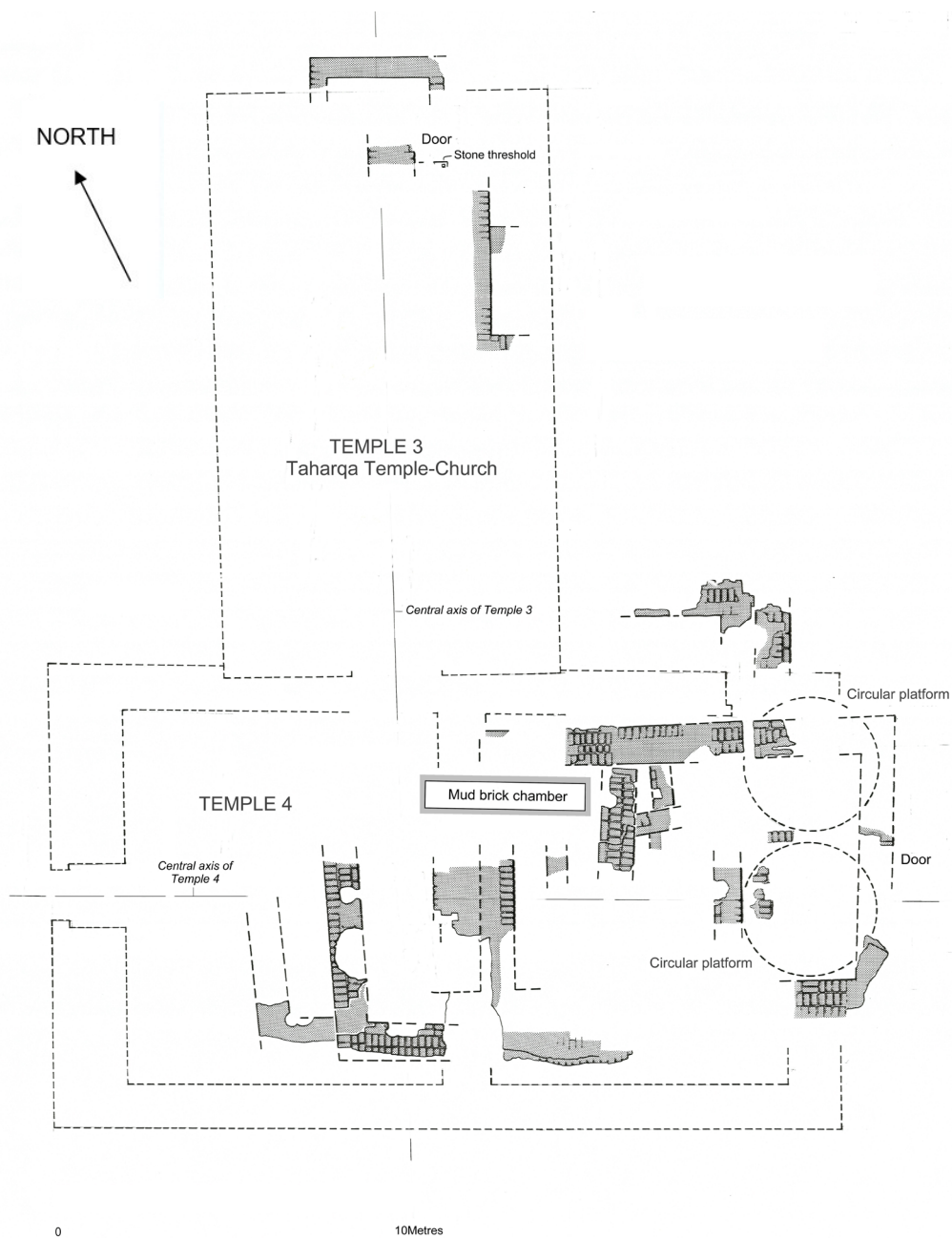


Figure 85. Pre-temple structures recorded under the Taharqa temple-church and Temple 4.

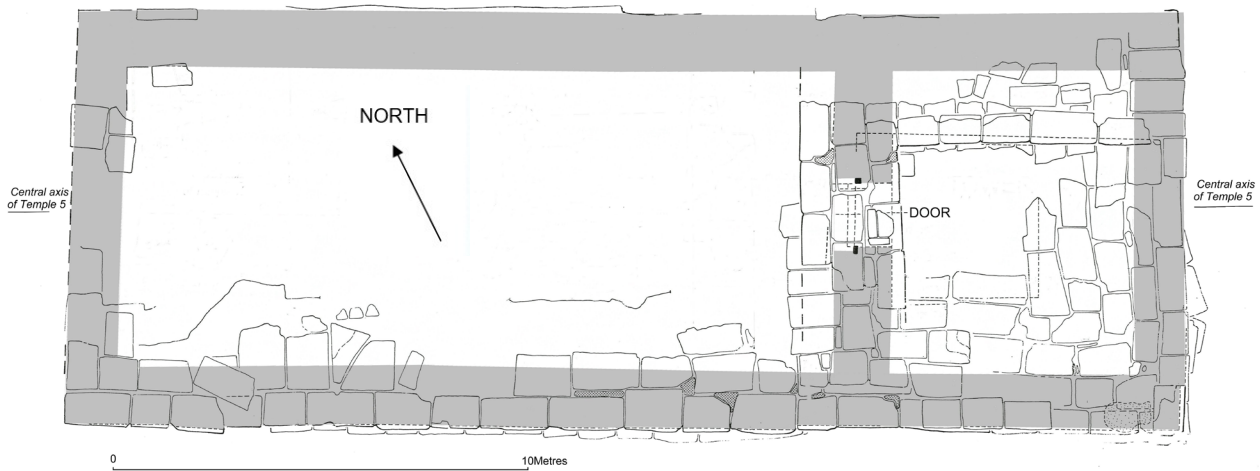


Figure 86. General plan of the remains of Temple 5.

surviving stones indicate where upper courses were proposed but questions whether they were ever added. She also states that the structure predates the Roman military occupation of the site in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and suggests that the massive platform created by the Temple 5 blocks and the nearby Podium are reminiscent of later Ptolemaic and early Augustan works at the temples of Philae and Elephantine (Rose 2007, 5).

As part of the tidying up of this part of the site, after the illicit investigations and vandalism of 1994, the remains of Temple 5 were examined and recorded in some detail in 1995 and 1998. Allowing for all the surviving evidence it was found that the intended structure was rectangular in plan aligned north-west to south-east, but here described, as with the Meroitic temple, as aligned north to south. It measured 26.8m in length by 10.1m wide and contained two rooms or compartments of differing lengths, separated by a partition wall containing a central door opening. The external walls and the partition wall were approximately 1.35m thick (Figure 86).

The compartment at the north end measured 16.8m in length by about 7.5m in width internally and was the least well preserved part of the structure, having been mostly removed when elements of the

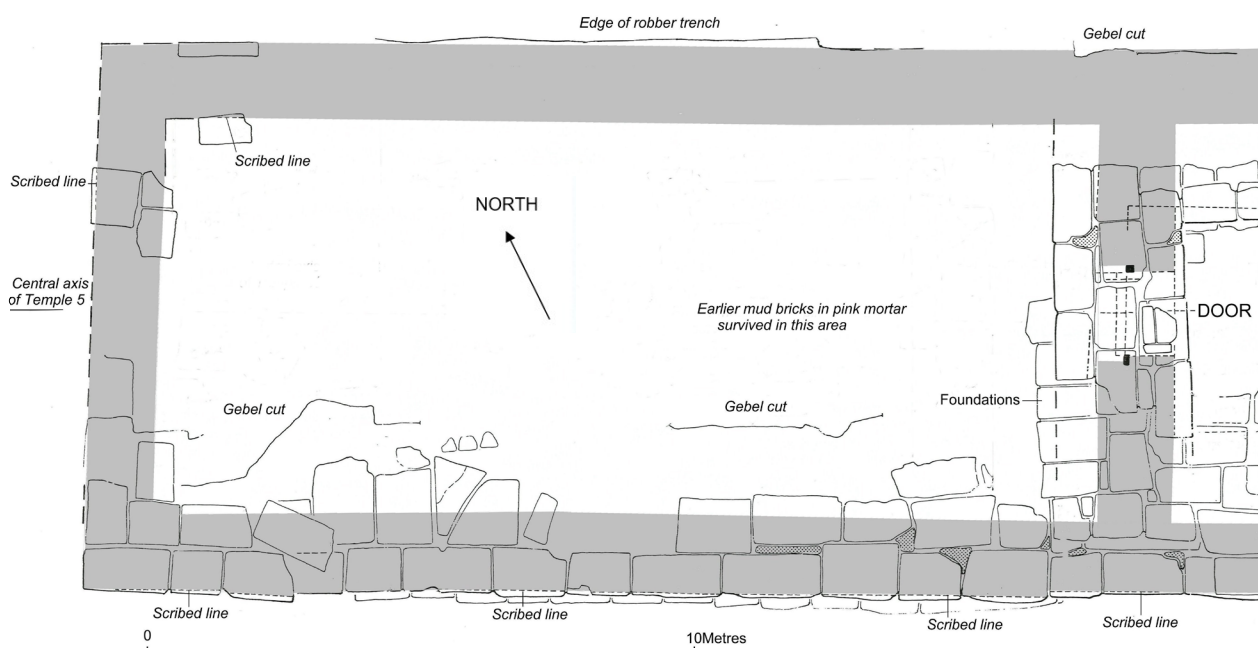


Figure 87. Plan of the north end of Temple 5.



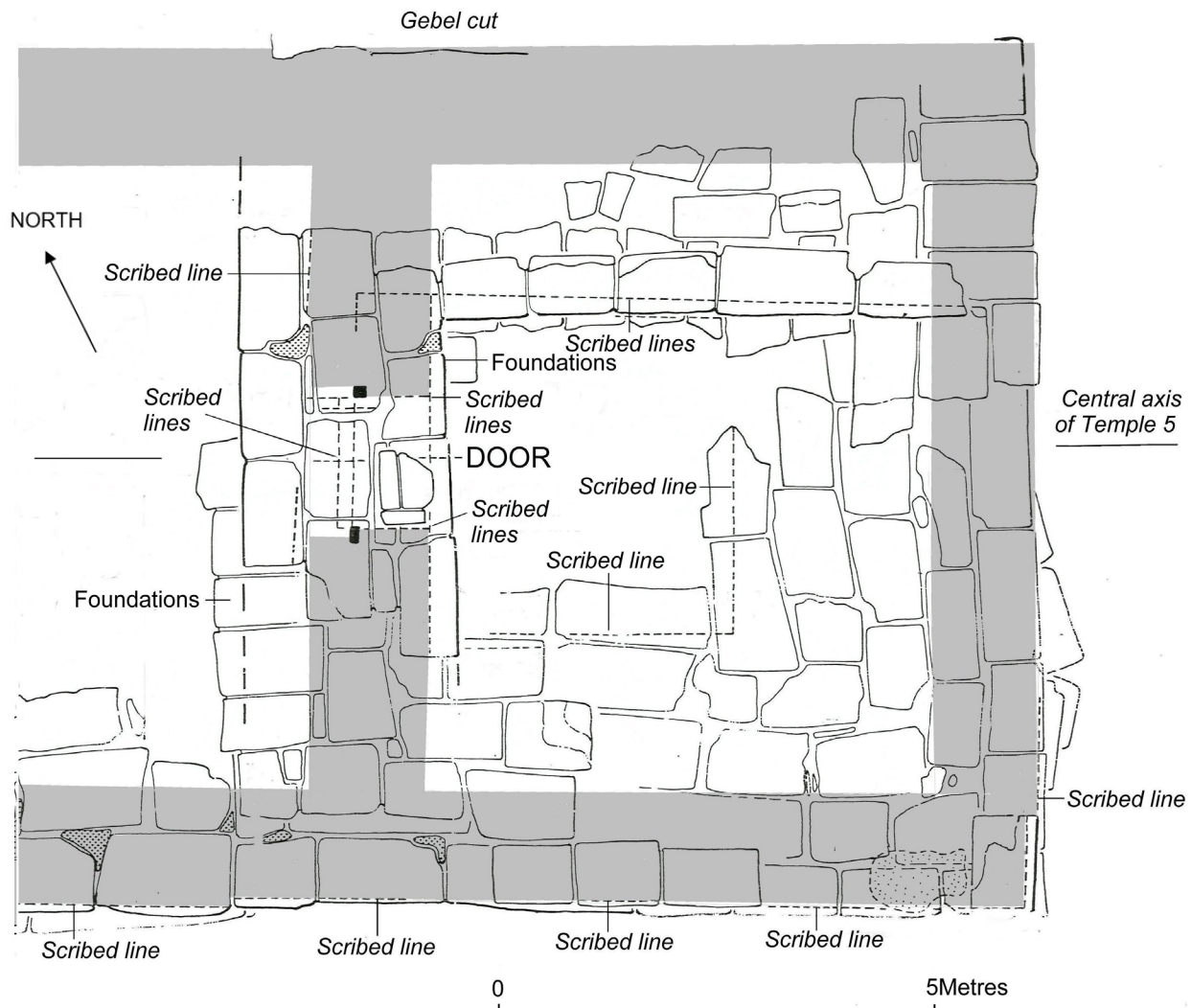


Figure 88. Plan of the south end of Temple 5.

Meroitic temple were built over it. The east wall was now represented only by a robber trench; an original cut in the gebel bedrock, which formed the original east side of a foundation trench; and a scribed line indicating its inner face at the north end (Figure 87).

The north wall was represented by some stone footings with a scribed line indicating its north face near the north-east corner. The west side appears to have been terraced into the top of the gebel sandstone bedrock, which was indicated by several cuts in its surface. The foundation courses of sandstone blocks survived for the west wall, with the uppermost course scribed in several places to indicate the proposed external face of the west wall. There were no remains of an internal floor to this part of the structure but previous activities had exposed a spread of mud bricks in pink mortar, which presumably survive from an earlier period when this structure was erected.

The partition wall forming its southern extremity is described with the south end of the building. The compartment at the south end is preserved to a greater degree than that to the north, presumably as it was less affected by the erection of Temple 4, and measured 8.3m in length north to south by approximately 10m east to west externally, including the partition wall. There are several courses of foundations surviving, along with some courses of superstructure preserved on them. They carry a series of scribed lines indicating the proposed external faces of the south and west walls and there is a foundation trench cut in the gebel bedrock on the east side (Figure 88). The foundations for the partition wall are 2.2m



Figure 89. William Adams' photograph of the Christian church (courtesy Qasr Ibrim Archive, The Trustees of the British Museum).

to 2.4m wide. They carry a series of scribed lines and two post holes, 1.55m apart, indicating a central door opening with wooden door posts centred on the central axis of the building, which is scribed on the partially preserved threshold, as well as door jambs in a proposed partition wall about 1.4m thick. Other scribed lines may indicate the intention to create an internal space measuring only 3.5m north-south by 4.0m east-west, perhaps a sanctuary or the base of a tower.

#### Section 4. The Christian Church

This structure, sometimes referred to in the past as Church 287, was created in the early to mid-6<sup>th</sup> century AD by the conversion and extension of the Taharqa temple, erected in c. 690 BC, which itself had then been refurbished and adapted as part of the Meroitic temple complex, erected in

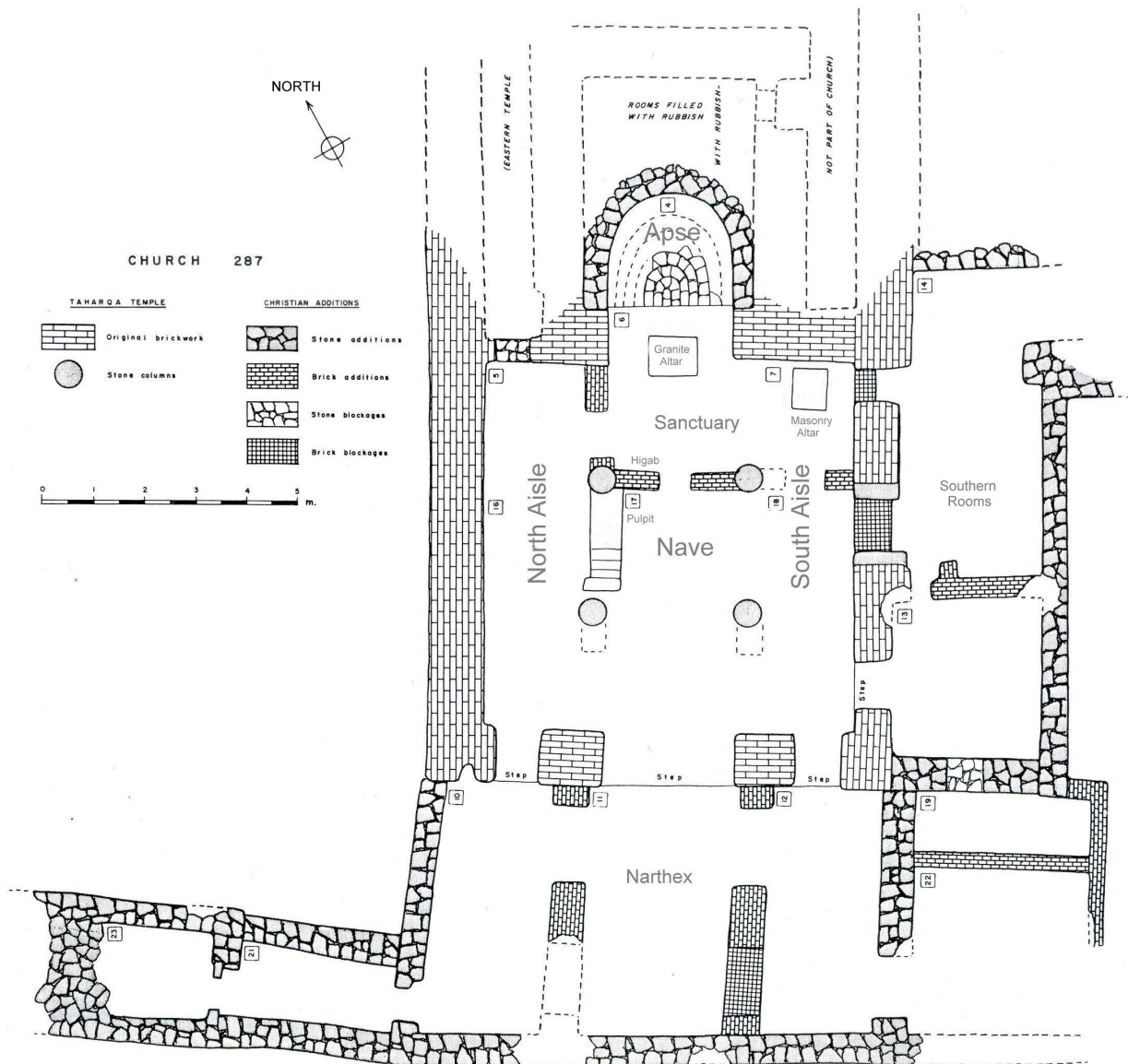


Figure 90. William Adams' plan of the Christian church, with captions added from his text (after Adams 1996, fig. 17).

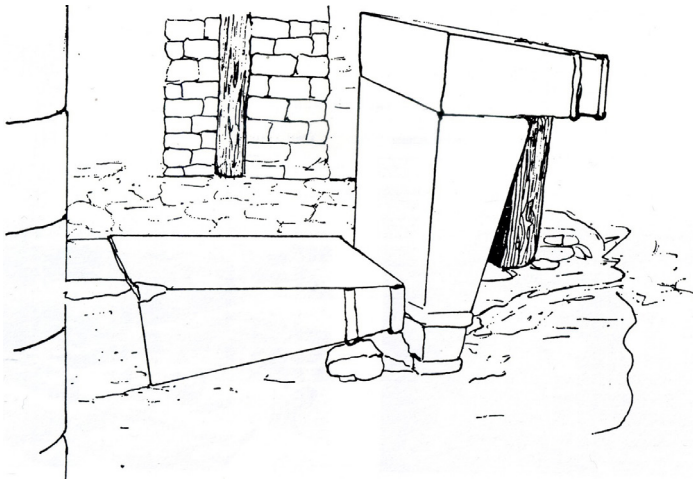


Figure 91. Adams' published drawing of the stone altar, attributed to P. Gartkiewicz (courtesy Qasr Ibrim Archive, The Trustees of the British Museum).

c. 300 BC. It was excavated in 1972 (Plumley and Adams 1974, 228-236) and has been described and illustrated by William Adams (Adams 1996, 69-73, figs 17 and 18, pl. 7a reproduced here as Figure 89; Adams 2010, 41-47, figs 11 and 12).

A stone apse, with stepped tribune, was inserted into the sanctuary of the Taharqa temple; the four standing columns provided division of the main body, or naos, of the existing structure into a nave and aisles; and an extension was added at the west end to form a narthex. A main altar was created by using large pieces of Aswan pink granite in the form of miniature temple pylons salvaged from the Meroitic temple (Figures 90 and 91). The nave and apse of the church

were about 12.5m long and 9.8m wide externally and the narthex, with rough stone walls 0.6m thick, added a further 5.4m to its length, giving a total length of about 17.9m.

William Adams proposed three principal stages in the creation and later refurbishment of the church. The first, in his Early Christian 1 period, dating from AD 500-700, saw the creation of the main elements together with a sanctuary area in front of the altar initially formed by a wooden screen supported in grooves in the columns. It was unclear to Adams whether the narthex was an original feature but it was believed to have been added at an early date.

The changes that are attributed by Adams to his Early Christian 2 period, dating from AD 700-850, were marked by the re-flooring of the entire church with large sandstone slabs. The sanctuary and the east end of the south aisle were partitioned off by mud brick walls, that between the nave and sanctuary replacing the wooden screen, the *higab*, having a central door. A subsidiary altar of masonry was added at the east end of the south aisle; a pulpit of mud brick and stone was added on the north side of the nave, and the narthex was subdivided into three parts by the insertion of two partitions of mud brick. Adams notes that the changes that took place in his Classic Christian period, dating from 850 to 950 AD, were mainly outside the church but did include the blocking of some the openings in the partition walls of the narthex.

The illicit investigations and vandalism that took place in 1994 had a damaging effect on the Taharqa temple-church (see Section 1, Figures 10 and 11). However, the standing walls were not substantially affected and allowed for their closer examination in 1995 and 1998 (Figures 95 and 96). This resulted in the identification of three successive layers of plasterwork – the first attributed to the refurbishment of the Taharqa temple when it was incorporated into the Meroitic temple complex (Section 1, Figure 9). The other two layers are attributed to the Christian era.

The first of the two was a white plaster that could be traced, in some places overlying the earlier Meroitic plaster, around the face of the apse; along the east walls of the sanctuary and aisles; and along the north face of the north aisle, in this case over-sailing the two original Taharqa temple niches that had been blocked by this time (Figure 92). It could be traced in the returns of openings in the external door at the east end of the south aisle and in the west end of the north aisle. It was traced on the west, external, face of two sections of wall forming the west end of the nave, thus indicating that it pre-dated the insertion of the partition walls in the narthex. It was not observed on the internal faces of the north,



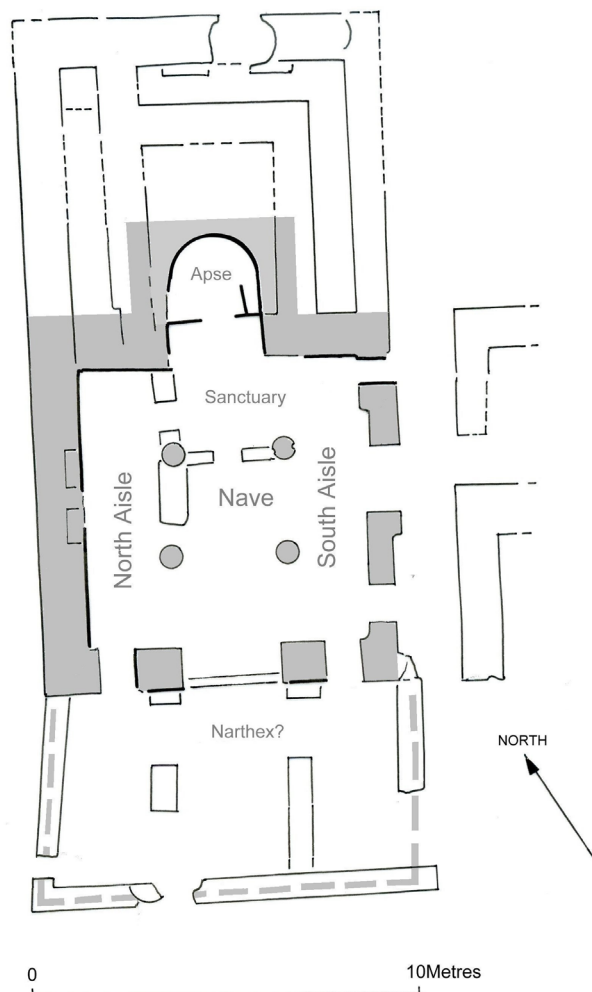


Figure 92. The Taharqa temple-church showing, with the heavy black lines, the extent of the first layer of Christian plaster.

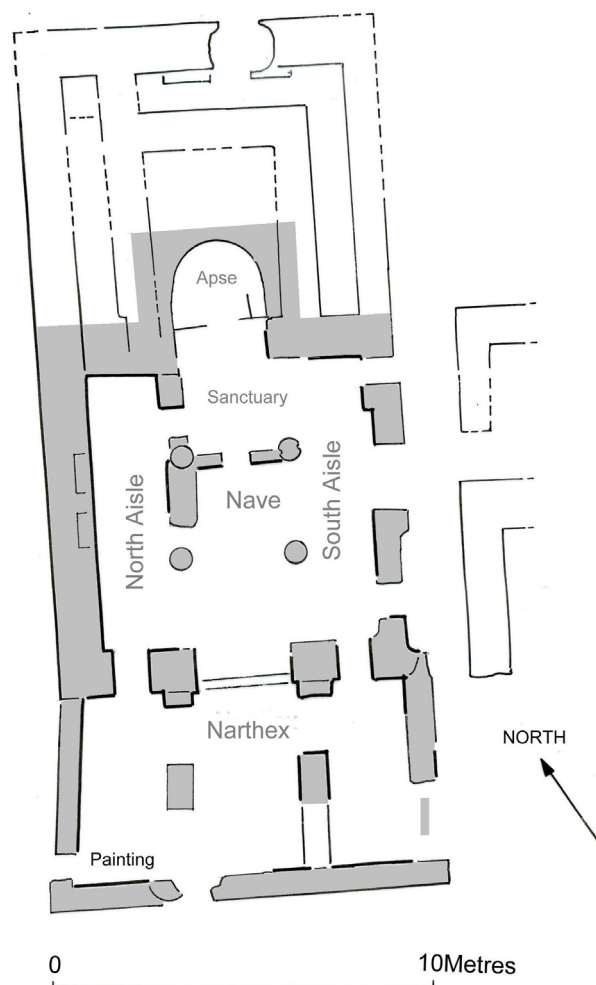


Figure 93. The Taharqa temple-church showing, with the heavy black lines, the extent of the second layer of Christian plaster.

south and west walls of the narthex suggesting, perhaps, that the narthex was a later addition although its occurrence on the east wall of the narthex might indicate otherwise. It seems likely that this plasterwork formed the original decoration of the interior of the Christian church and, possibly, the external face of its west wall. Adams noted that the white-washed front of the tribune, not re-plastered at a later date, bore traces of painted decoration (Adams 1996, 72).

The second layer of plaster is, perhaps, more informative. It was traced, in many places overlying earlier plaster surfaces, on the east walls of the sanctuary; on the north wall of the north aisle; on parts of the west wall separating and forming openings to the narthex; on the south wall of the south aisle; on what remained of the higab and pulpit; on the faces of the walls forming the north, south, and west sides of the narthex, and on one of the partitions within it (Figure 93). William Adams noted faint traces of painted decoration in the main body of the church and in the narthex (Adams 1996, 72).

This second layer of Christian plasterwork was quite distinctive and brown in colour, sometimes referred to on site as purplish-grey. A visual comparison of a sample of this plaster was made with that recently identified on the Church on the Point at Qasr Ibrim and they appeared identical in colour and constituents. The plasterwork on the Church on the Point also appears to have formed part of a restoration



Figure 94. The inscription on the Church at the Point at Qasr Ibrim.

and carries an inscription (Figure 94). This has been transcribed as -

+ JABMIEΛKETICK

and is translated as ‘Father Mielk Episkopos’ or Father Mielk Bishop (Kjølbe-Biddle 1994, 31-32). At least 13, and possibly as many as 18, inscriptions for Miel or Mielkuda have been identified in the Cathedral Church at Qasr Ibrim where they are also believed to have been associated with refurbishments and where there are traces of the

purplish-grey plaster on the walls of the sacristy, the baptistry and the north and south walls of the naos (Aldsworth 2010, 115-121). The employment of similar plasters associated with repairs and, in two cases, with inscriptions to Father Mielk Bishop on three Christian buildings at Qasr Ibrim – the Cathedral Church, the Church on the Point, and on the Taharqa temple-church, all suggest works undertaken following damage caused by an attack on the site.

Bishop Mielkuda’s dates are unknown, but it has been suggested by Włodzimierz Godlewski that the work could have been undertaken at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, following the Mamluk invasions and the large scale destruction of churches in Nubia, since the compound ending -kuda was common at that time (Aldsworth 2010, 143).<sup>8</sup> However, Birthe Kjølbe-Biddle (1994, 31) has suggested that the damage caused to the Church on the Point and the Cathedral Church was associated with an attack by Arabs who captured Qasr Ibrim in AD 956, and she notes that pottery from destruction layers in the Church on the Point supports this date.

The painting on the west wall of the narthex of the temple-church, which was presumably applied after the church had been refurbished, was identified by William Adams as the lower portion of a robed human figure (Adams 1996, 72). He initially suggested that it may represent an early style of Nubian church decoration dating it, perhaps tentatively, to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. He later described the painting as being of a winged figure, wearing a robe of violet and having wings executed primarily in yellow and red (Adams 2010, 45). He then suggested that it was the only remains of a type of Nubian church mural found anywhere in this church and that ‘the execution and the combination of colours was suggestive primarily of Late Christian wall decoration but in this instance there is no actual way of dating the figure’. However, it appears that Adams may not have appreciated that the painting had been applied to plasterwork that formed part of a post-trauma refurbishment. The late date proposed by Adams could fit with a date of post AD 956 for the refurbishment of the temple-church.

If the assertions by William Adams and Birthe Kjølbe-Biddle are correct, and assuming that the painting was, as seems to be the case, executed on the later re-plastering, this throws some new light on the date of Bishop Mielkuda and his restoration of at least three of the Christian churches at Qasr Ibrim.

## Section 5. The early defences and South Gate

The early defences and South Gate were excavated between 1966 and 1969 (Plumley 1970, 12-18). The walls were found to comprise an outer skin of mud bricks, some 850mm thick; an inner skin of rough stone; and an infill of loose stones, giving an overall wall thickness of 4.1m. This has sometimes in the

<sup>8</sup> See further Godlewski 1995; 1996 [ed.].



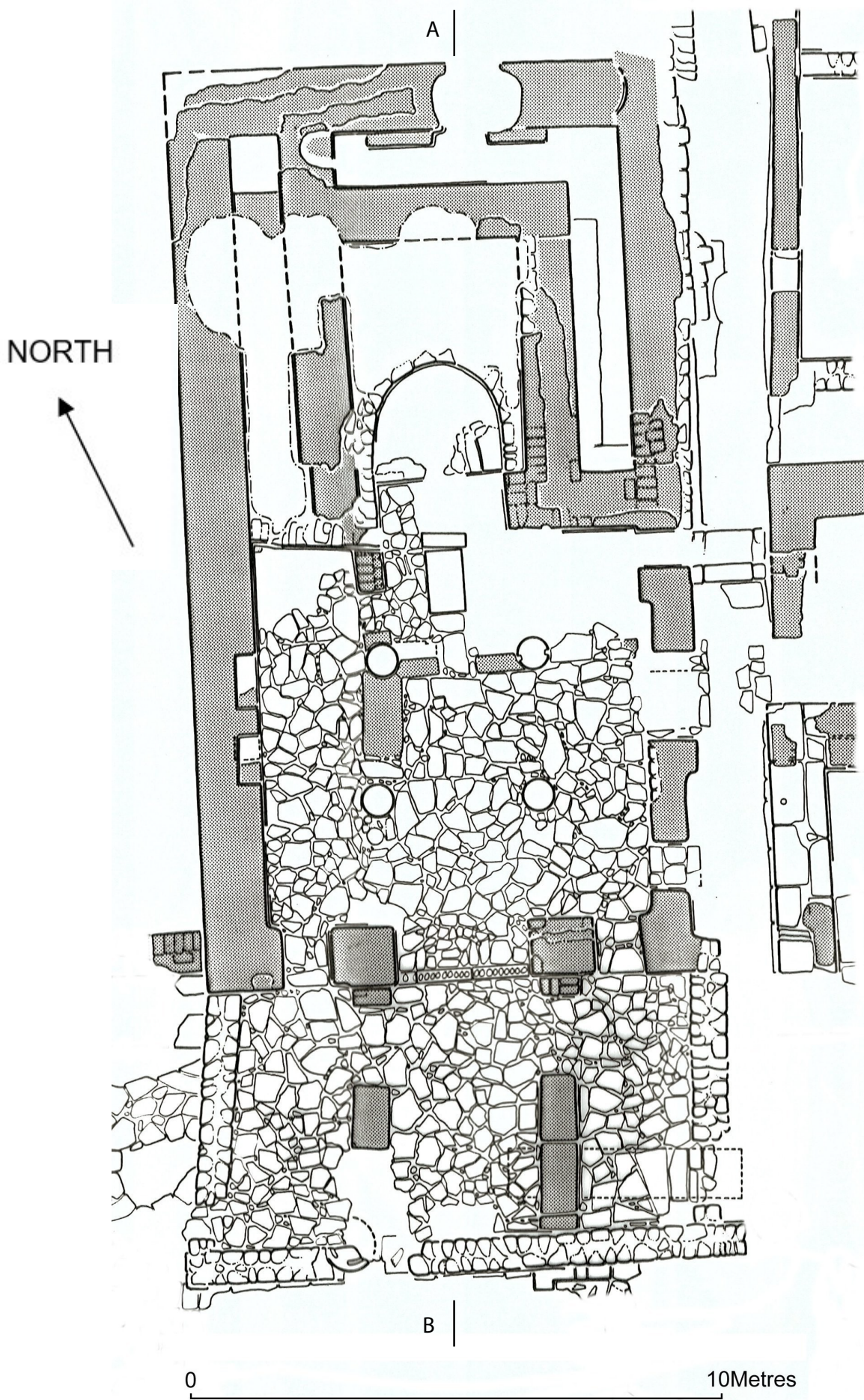


Figure 95. Plan of the Taharqa temple-church as it survived in 1995. For Section AB see Figure 96.



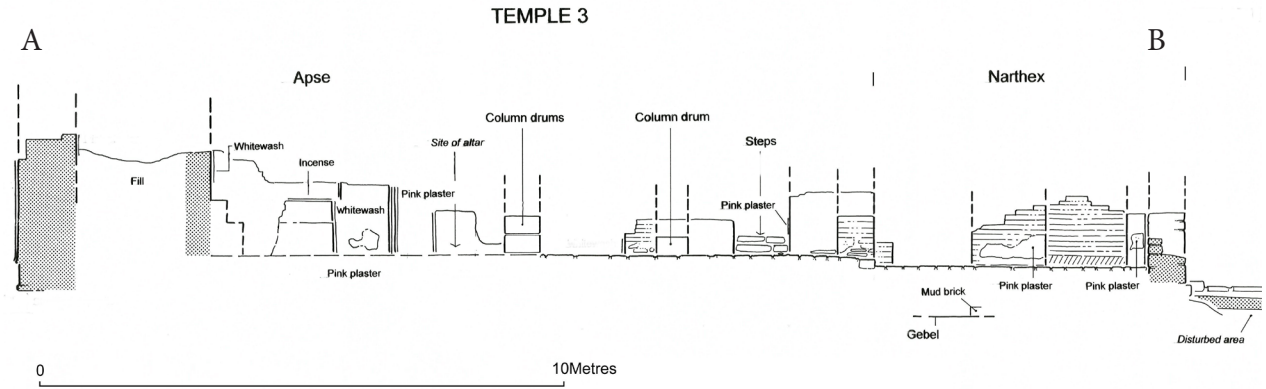


Figure 96. Section AB, looking south.

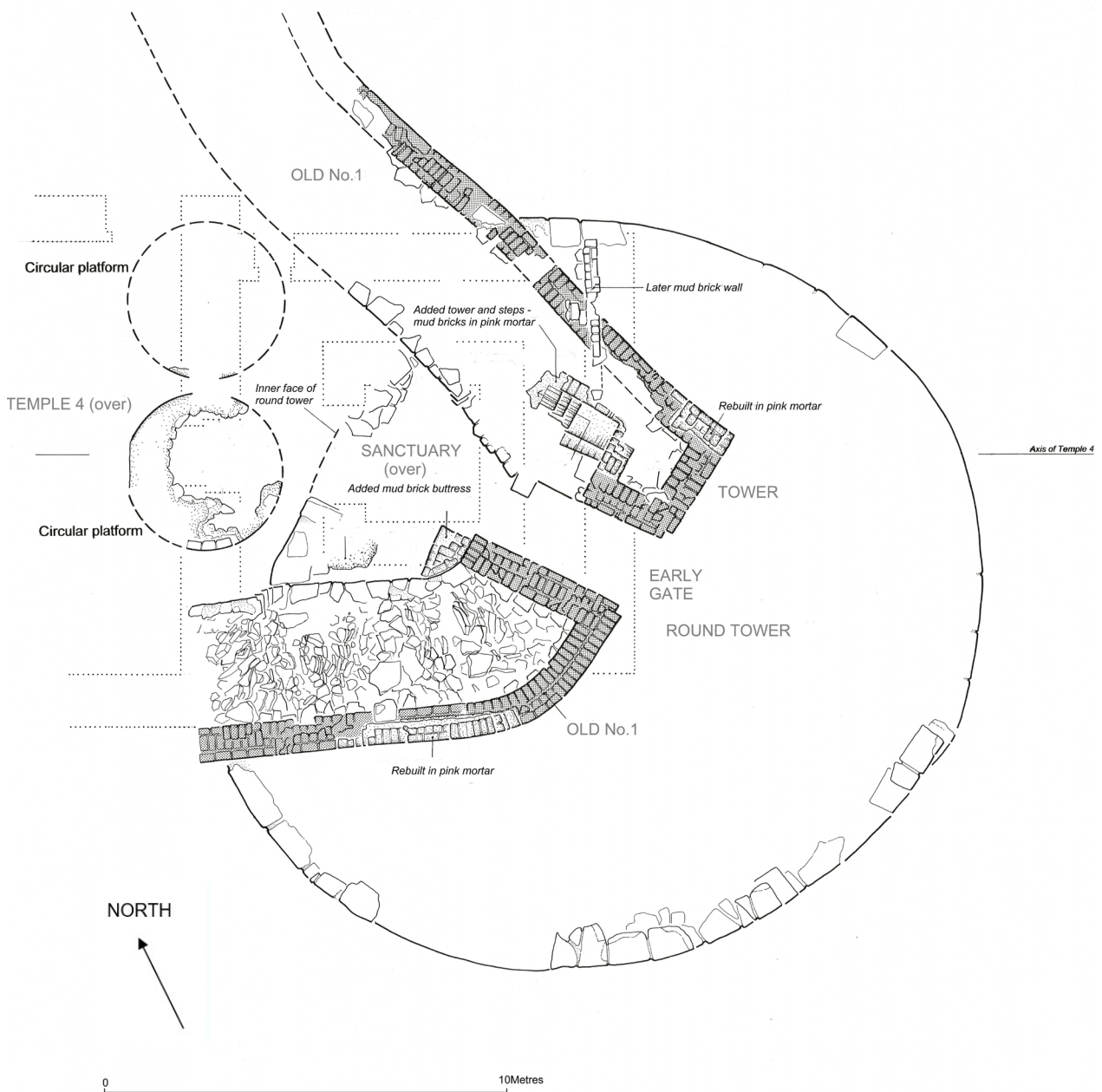


Figure 97. The early defences and the South Gate.





Figure 98. The early gate, from the north.



Figure 99. The early gate, from the east, showing repairs to the wall in the background.

past been referred to as Old No. 1 (Figure 97). The gate was formed by an opening only 1.9m wide, flanked by a mud brick tower on the east side. Radiocarbon dates suggest that these were constructed in the later New Kingdom or the very early Third Intermediate Period (Rose 2011, 4), suggesting a date of, perhaps, c. 1186-945 BC.

The gate was later blocked and a round tower added in its place, probably in the Meroitic period (Adams 1996, 87), employing two re-used inscribed sandstone blocks with Taharqa cartouches (Plumley 1970, 17, pl. 3 and above Section 1, A31, Figure 47). A south bastion was later added around the round tower. A new south gate, sometimes referred to as the Podium gate, was added in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (Adams 1996, 87). This part of the site was affected by the illicit investigations and vandalism in 1994 and was tidied up and recorded in 1995 and 1998 (Figure 97).

The early defences were found to have been repaired on several occasions before falling out of use (Figures 98 and 99). The tower had been repaired and steps added; a buttress had been added on the west side of the gate; and part of the mud brick wall had been rebuilt, in all cases employing mud bricks in pink mortar. By 1998 the south bastion had collapsed, due to water erosion, exposing the face of the round tower (Figure 100).

The principal new discovery here was the fragmentary remains of a pair of circular raised platforms, each 3.8m in diameter and surviving up to about 300mm in height (Figures 97 and 101). Their purpose and date remain obscure but they would have, together, blocked the early gate so presumably post-date its abandonment. They may have served as pedestals for statues in that part of the site which later



Figure 100. The exposed face of the round tower.



Figure 101. The remains of one of the two circular raised platforms.

accommodated the hypostyle hall and the sanctuary of the Meroitic temple complex (Rose 2007, fig. 7.3). They presumably, therefore, post-date the abandonment of the gate but pre-date the Meroitic temple complex.

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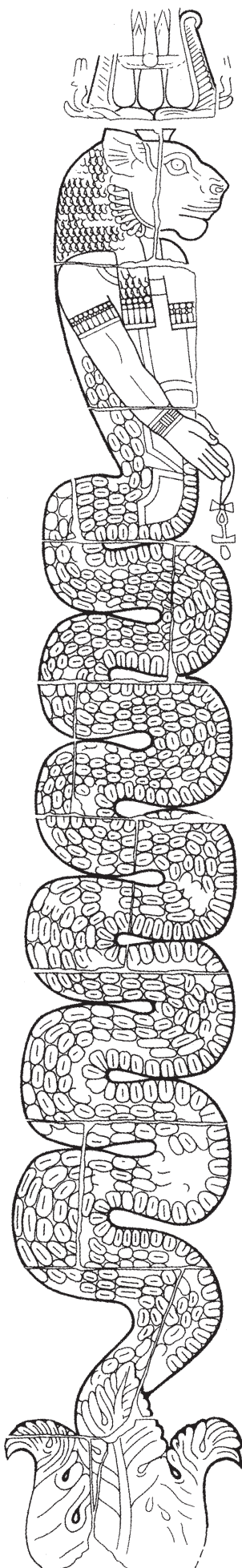
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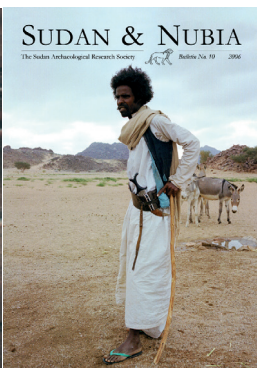
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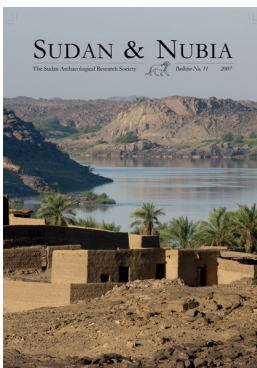
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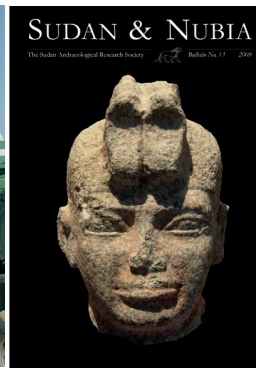
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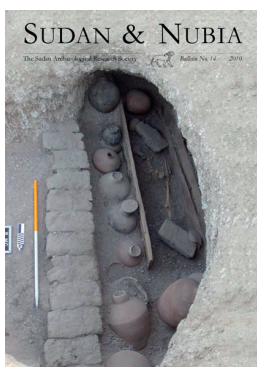
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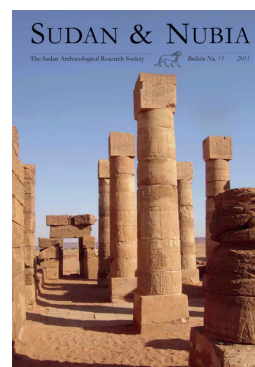
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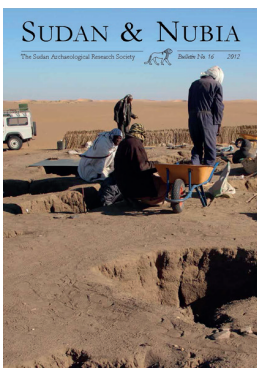
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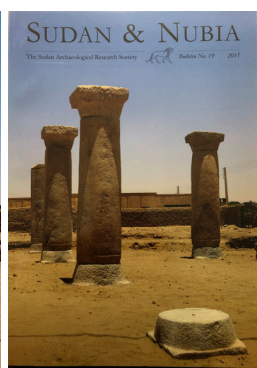
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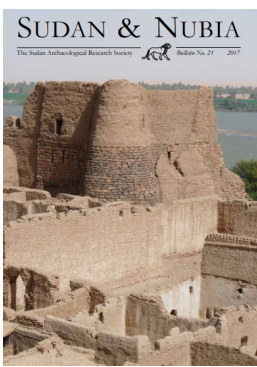
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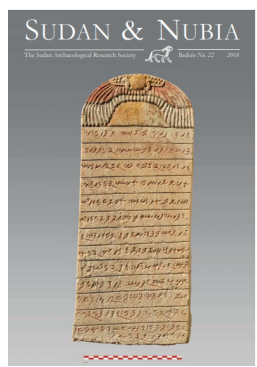
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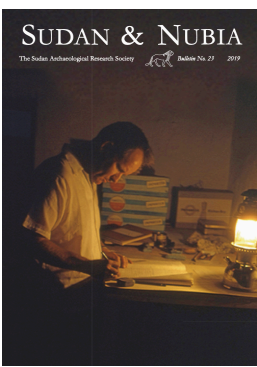
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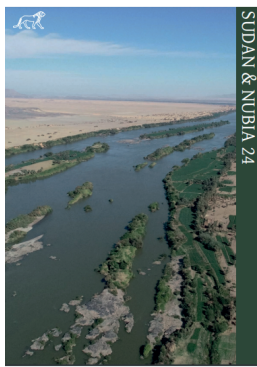
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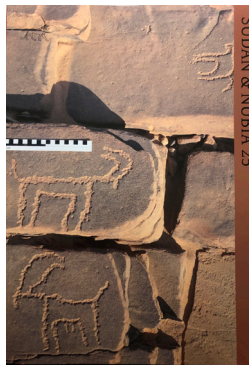
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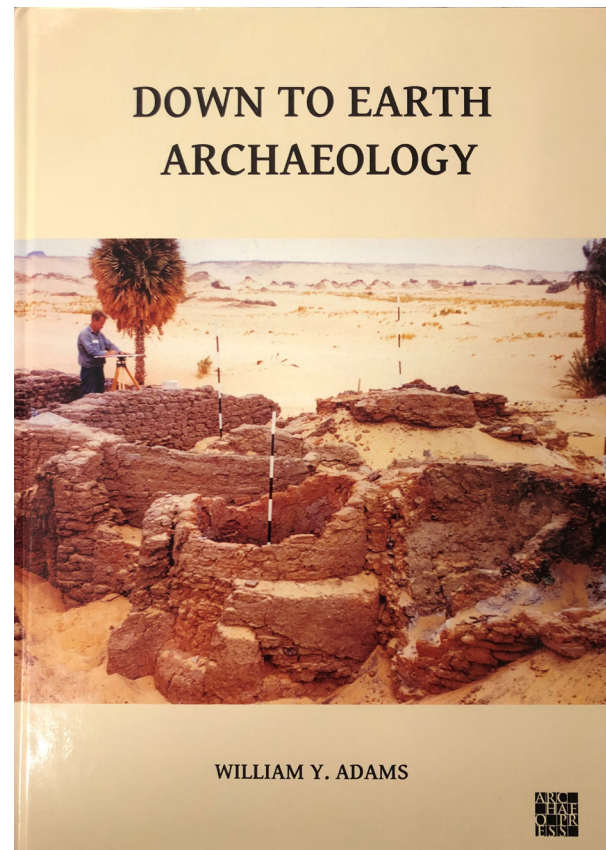
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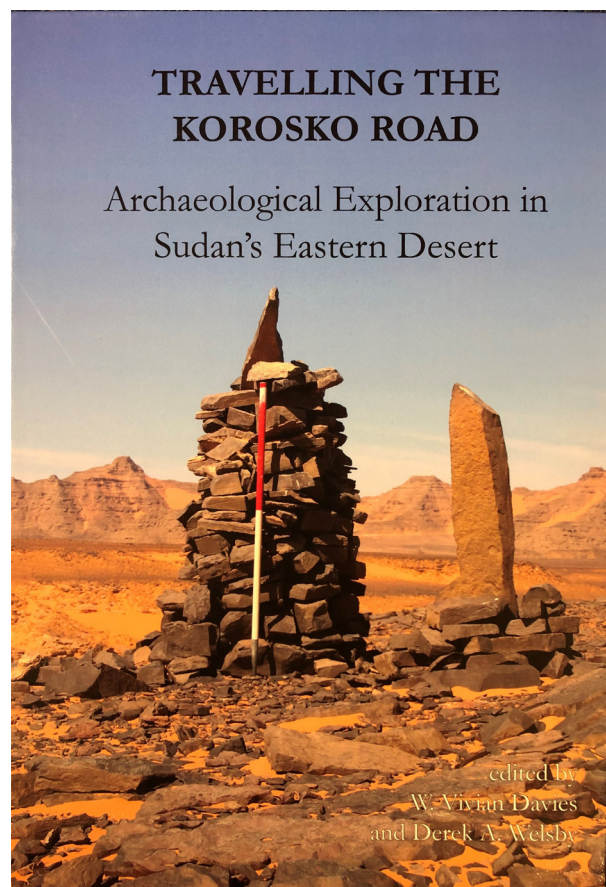
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