SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society

Bulletin No. 2 *1998*


ASWAN
1st Cataract
RED SEA
EGYPT
Karanog
Aniba
Qasr Ibrim
Ballana
Faras
Qustul
Buhen
2nd Cataract
Amara West
Firka
Soleb
Sesebi
3rd Cataract
Dabaki
Northern Dongola Reach
Kawa
ABU HAMED
Nile
Kiliseikal
Kurgus
Suakin
Jebel Barkal
4th Cataract
KAREIMA
5th Cataract
Old Dongola
Bakheit
Soniyat
GABOLAB
Istabel
Jebel Nakharu
Wadi Howar
Wadi Muqaddam
Meroe
el Kadada
Atbara
6th Cataract
Naqa
Jebel Umm Marrahi
Geili
OMDURMAN
KHARTOUM
Soba East
Blue Nile
White Nile
ERITREA
Sennar
ETHIOPIA
0
250 km

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Front Cover: Ceramic statue of the goddess Beset from Kawa.

Introduction

Vivian Davies

Members will note that this second issue of *Sudan & Nubia* is already considerably larger than the first, a clear signal, I am pleased to say, both of our Society's commitment to fieldwork and of the growing interest in Middle Nile archaeology in general. With the four-year programme of survey in the Northern Dongola Reach completed, we began last season a significant new project at Kawa (see Derek Welsby below), a major Pharaonic and Kushite cult-centre and one of the most important archaeological sites in the Sudanese Nile Valley, now threatened by modern development. At the same time our interest in the hydrological research on the Nile palaeochannels in the Dongola Reach continues (Mark Macklin and Jamie Woodward), and we have also supported archaeological survey both in the Bayuda desert in advance of the building of a new road (Michael Mallinson, Laurence Smith and Dorian Fuller) and at the site of Kurgus, the point where the Egyptians appear to have marked the southern boundary of their empire in the New Kingdom (Vivian Davies and Isabella Welsby Sjöström).

Among our guest contributors, two of our Sudanese colleagues report on valuable rescue projects, one on a site affected by the building of the Shendi-Atbara road (Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed), the other in the area of the Fourth Cataract, where a new dam is being planned (Mahmoud el-Tayeb). Also under threat is the site of Soniyat in the Debba Bend, now very plausibly identified by a Polish expedition as the 'Tergedum' mentioned in Book II of Pliny's *Natural History* (Bogdan Zurawski). Rescue is also very much the theme of the Egypt Exploration Society's latest excavations at Qasr Ibrim, the last remaining site in Egyptian Nubia, where an unexpected rise in the level of Lake Nasser/Lake Nubia is damaging strata previously thought to be safe, necessitating urgent work on those areas (Pamela Rose and David Edwards). Fortunately there is no such threat to the Wadi Howar, a long dried-up tributary of the Nile, evocatively known as 'the Yellow Nile', where a German research project is producing fascinating new data on changes in environment and shifts in settlement patterns (Birgit Keding). A different kind of research, on the records of an important early traveller, is represented in our final paper (John Ruffle). Lord Prudhoe, its main subject, will be familiar to many of our readers for his association with the two great lion sculptures from Gebel Barkal, which now grace the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery of the British Museum.

Excavations at Qasr Ibrim
Qasr Ibrim 1998

Pamela Rose

The site of Qasr Ibrim lies some 100km north of the Egyptian/Sudanese border, on the east bank of the Nile. Occupied more or less continuously from at least the early first millennium BC to the 19th century AD, it has served both as a cliff-top fortress, thanks to its location overlooking the Nile, and as a major religious centre in both pre-Christian and Christian times. The settlement site has been excavated by the Egypt Exploration Society since 1963 as part of the rescue programme associated with the construction of the High Dam at Aswan. At that time it was expected that the site would be destroyed by the rising waters of Lake Nasser, but this did not happen, and although fluctuations in the lake level mean that often the site has been cut off from the east bank and turned into an island, it has never been completely submerged. As a result, excavation has continued there to the present day.

The 1998 season saw the first full excavations at Qasr Ibrim since 1992, during which the intention was to continue work in and around areas excavated in 1990 and 1992, along the southern fortifications, and in Trench 10/14, the area around Structure 265, a post-Meroitic house complex (Fig. 1). Since 1992, however, the water level has risen considerably, due to a combination of engineering works in the Wadi Toshka, which now permit a water level 3m higher than it was previously possible to maintain in the lake, and last year's record flood level. Thus, on the expedition's return to the site in January this year, we found not only that part of the intended excavation area was now lost, but also that the high water level was causing significant damage to the site through the erosion of the soft sandstone upon which Qasr Ibrim is built, and through water percolation. This is noticeable, for example, on one of Qasr Ibrim's most well-known features, the Podium (Colour Plate XXXVIII). Here blocks in the lowest course of masonry are becoming dislodged, as a result of which blocks higher up the structure are cracking and moving. All around the edge of the site similar destruction is taking place. This has a particularly important effect in areas where retaining walls are undermined, since here the loose deposits behind the walls become far more vulnerable to wind and water action and are quickly depleted. Water percolation, which now extends to some 1.5m above the surrounding lake level, destroys the organic remains for which Qasr Ibrim is rightly famous, and severely damages both mud-brick and stone structures.

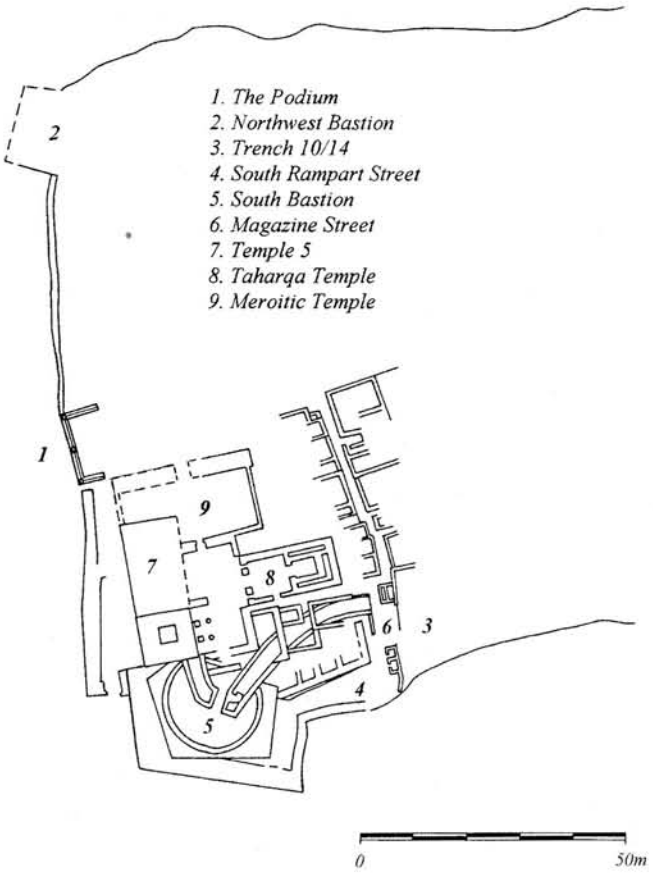

Figure 1. Plan of eastern part of Qasr Ibrim.

It was clearly necessary to adjust our plans to respond to the conditions we found on site, not only by working in areas already under threat, but also in anticipating the possibility that the water level might rise further. Some work was, therefore, undertaken in areas in immediate danger of disappearance, so that, for example, a long section of girdle wall between the Podium and the Northwest Bastion, part of which collapsed during the season, was fully recorded, and small-scale excavations were conducted close to the western edge of the site where earlier work had revealed the foundations for a cut-stone gateway underlying a Christian house. The main areas of excavation were, however, around the South Bastion, and in the area of Trench10/14 (for the latter see Dr. Edwards' report below).

Excavations in the area of the South Bastion

The area of the southern fortifications, including the South Bastion, has a long history of excavation (Anderson *et al.* 1979; Adams *et al.* 1983; Alexander and Driskell 1985). A further major programme of investigation began in 1990, excavating in the area between the outer girdle wall and the Napatan terrace wall which runs northeast from the bastion, known as 'South Rampart Street' (see Horton 1991 for an early summary of these results). This revealed deep rubbish deposits of material of the Roman period (late 1st century BC-early first century AD), the upper levels of which were first probed in 1980. These covered similarly thick but water-affected deposits of Napatan material, which in their turn lay over and against early structural features, including

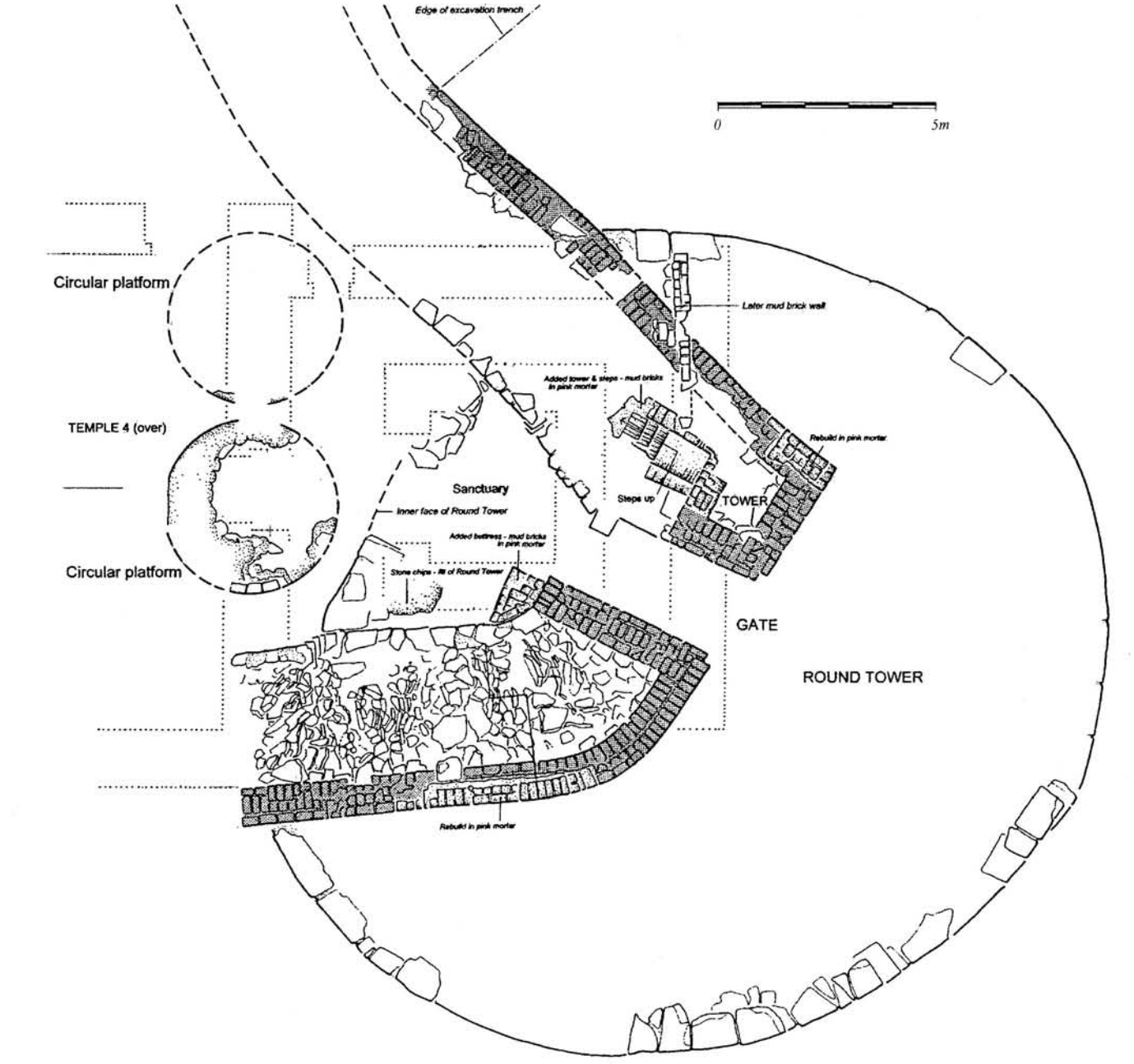

Figure 2. Plan of the South Bastion, scale c. 1:150.

the outer mud-brick casing of the bastion, and early walls and terraces. South Rampart Street is now under water, and water action has led to the collapse of the southern end of the Napatan terrace wall. Regrettable though this is, it did provide an opportunity to investigate the remains behind the terrace and their relationship to other structures. The deposits excavated here consisted of dumps of mud-brick and stone rubble used as fill behind the terrace wall, which were used to level the area for the construction of the Taharqo temple and its ancillary buildings. These deposits, also laid up against an early fortification wall described below, are built above the steeply-sloping gebel surface on which the Napatan terrace wall was constructed. No other structural remains were found except a row of mud-bricks which represented all that remained of the casing of the bastion, the rest having dissolved away. Unfortunately it was not possible to trace any continuation of the stratigraphically earliest structural remains uncovered in 1990, stone-built terraces running below the South Bastion.

Excavation in 1978 demonstrated that the South Bastion consisted of a mud-brick-cased circular stone tower, which itself enclosed an older gateway within massive stone and mud-brick walls (Fig. 2), which were at that time thought to date to the Roman period. By the 1998 season, almost all of the mud-brick casing had been washed away from the round tower, and water percolation had reached c. 1m up the mud-brick gateway inside it. The damage from percolation, and the danger of subsidence of the stone

tower, the footings of which now stand in water, meant that this area too needed immediate investigation.

The walls of the early enclosure are of massive construction, c. 4m in width (Colour Plate XXXIX), with an outer wall of mud brick, the inside face of which also contains horizontal courses of sandstone slabs, and an inner wall of sandstone blocks set in mud mortar. Between the outer and inner walls is a fill of pitched stone slabs. The preserved height of the wall reaches 3m in places, although the original height remains unknown. The entranceway was lined with mud-brick and has small rebates at the outer end, but there is no indication in them of the original presence of jambs or door sockets. Given the massive and apparently defensive nature of the walls, one would expect that the entranceway could be closed, but there is very little evidence for it either here or at the inner end of the gateway.

Soon after its construction, the gateway and walls underwent a series of modifications, executed in mud-brick set in pink mortar. These include the rebuilding of several outer sections of the wall, and the insertion of an internal mud-brick stairway within the eastern part of the entrance. The latter was itself replaced at a higher level as debris accumulated, but eventually went out of use, the stairway being blocked off by a mud-brick wall. The entrance passageway, the floor of which was well worn from use, was also gradually infilled, and narrowed at its inner end, perhaps to allow the positioning of a gate here, but again there remains no evidence for this. The wear in the gateway and the area immediately outside it suggests initially that it was approached on an axis the same as that of the entrance passage, but, as the passage became infilled, this altered to an approach from a westerly direction.

In all, six phases of alteration were identified within the gateway. Whilst these modifications may have been executed in fairly quick succession, they suggest that the fortress was in use for a sustained period of time. Unfortunately we know little else of the plan of the fortress beyond the area of the bastion, and almost nothing of its internal arrangements. The course of the western wall flanking the gateway could be followed for a short distance beyond the bastion, where fragments of the mud-brick outer wall were preserved under Temple 5. On the other side of the gateway, the wall was traceable as far as Magazine Street, where it was cut through by a long north-south wall whose foundations were exposed during earlier excavations in this area. This season's excavations in Trench 10/14 demonstrated its further continuation towards the north-east (see below). The surviving parts suggest that the walls closely followed the gebel edge, and that they enclosed a substantial area, but no other certain traces of them have yet been found, although some areas of massive mud-brick walling were visible beneath the lake surface some 20m east of the edge of Trench 10/14. However, the massive construction of the early enclosure, and the influence it exercised on the orientation of later buildings erected in its vicinity do give some hope that it may yet be identified in other parts of the site.

At some point in the earlier first millennium BC, and prior to the building of the Taharqo temple, the gateway went out of use, and it and short lengths of wall were enclosed by a circular stone tower on the exterior, and a short straight length of similarly-constructed wall on the interior. The tower was built of large roughly-shaped blocks set in white mortar and was plastered on the outside: this was visible for the first time this season, because of the dissolution of its mud-brick casing (compare Colour Plates XL and XLI). The tower was infilled with stone slabs and chippings, which covered the earlier gateway and walls. This fill proved sterile. Outside the tower, the massive walls probably survived to their full height. We have no indication as to where any replacement entrance was located, although the early stairway and ramp identified in 1990 and 1992 excavations in South Rampart Street may suggest the existence of an entrance further east.

An unusual discovery in this year's excavations was made immediately to the north of the internal tower wall, where the remains of two circular stone platforms were uncovered. They can be shown stratigraphically to be a little later in date than the tower. Part of one platform was uncovered in 1974 under the Meroitic temple pavement (Plumley 1975, 16 and fig. 4), and this season much of the rest of it was exposed, but most of the second platform lies under the remains of the innermost rooms of the Meroitic temple. Each platform is c. 4m in diameter, and both are built of stone set in purple mortar, with a well-mortared top surface. Around the edge of both platforms, although surviving only in places, is a mud-brick curb wall, one brick wide, and surviving two courses high. The inside and outside of both platforms were mud plastered.

Their function is unknown, and they appear to be without parallel elsewhere in Egypt or Nubia. Their position and lack of spatial relationship with the walls of the early enclosure make it unlikely that they were part of the fortifications. They are perhaps rather to be related to an earlier structure underlying the Taharqo temple, and following its alignment, since the axis of the platforms appears roughly perpendicular to the later Taharqo temple axis. Their good condition suggests that they remained in use for only a short time, and indeed a canine pawprint survives in the plaster on one platform surface, suggesting that it had not been excessively worn.

As already mentioned, the stone tower was at some point encased by a substantial mud-brick covering, polygonal in shape. Earlier excavation showed the brickwork to have a layer of grass every four courses, as is common in identifiable Napatan structures at Qasr Ibrim, and this suggests that mud-brick buttresses added to the walls of the original enclosure in the area of Magazine Street, which also

include grass coursing, may have been added at the same time.

At some point after the construction of the mud-brick casing, the Napatan terrace wall was built, rendering this part of the earlier fortification wall redundant (whether the western length of the wall was also removed at this time is unclear, but it had certainly disappeared by the time of the construction of Temple 5, which predates Roman activity at the site). As already noted, this appears to be associated with the construction of a small temple complex by Taharqo (690–664 BC), and forms the first link with absolute chronology for this area of Qasr Ibrim. That so much activity should have taken place prior to the Twenty-fifth dynasty occupation of the site, in a period which is conventionally thought of as a time when Lower Nubia was substantially depopulated (Adams 1977, 241-3), highlights the need for reassessment of the archaeological evidence for this period (cf. Williams 1990).

Excavations around the Taharqo temple

Inside the fortifications, there are other indications of pre-Taharqan activity, although these are as yet too limited in extent to interpret. Excavation in previous seasons had revealed substantial mud-brick walling underlying the Taharqo temple on the west, south and east sides, and this season a limited excavation was undertaken immediately south of the temple wall with the intention of clarifying earlier results. Although the scale of exposure was small, five phases of activity predating the construction of the temple were identified. The earliest of these was poorly-built walling associated with a pink plaster deposit, which may, perhaps, be linked with the use of pink mortar in the modifications to the early enclosure. Overlying this was a substantial stone and mud-brick wall, which seems to run along the same east to west line as the later south wall of the temple. This may be related to a thick mud-brick wall, running northwards from under the south wall of the temple, on top of which was part of a stone threshold and wooden door socket. Over these again are other walling fragments which are themselves cut by the temple wall foundation trench. Further south, behind the stone tower and over the circular platforms, are remains of further heavy mud-brick walls and areas of stone paving, some of which had been badly damaged by fire. These too appear to predate the construction of the temple.

Finds

Finds from the area of the South Bastion were very few, due to the wet nature of most of the deposits encountered. This results in the destruction of all organic remains, so that almost the only archaeological material preserved is pottery. In the area behind the Napatan terrace wall, the ceramics can be dated to about the 7th century BC (Dr. Lisa Heidorn, pers. comm.). Within the bastion, not all deposits were wet, but much of the stratigraphy had been removed in earlier excavations, and finds were again few but included a small silver or lead Harpocrates amulet from a disturbed deposit. The deposits encountered in the excavations by the Taharqo temple were, by contrast, dry and have produced abundant organic remains, which await future study. Other finds included a very fine bronze chisel.

One 'discovery' of particular interest was the realisation that small areas of wall painting survived on two adjacent lengths of wall forming part of the Meroitic temple complex. These were executed in red, yellow, black and a thick granular blue (which does not survive well) on a white plaster coating. The decorated coat itself overlay earlier plasterings of the walls, but there is no trace of decoration on these. The recognisable depictions included part of a procession of bound captives (Colour Plate XLII), and, in the register above it, a pair of feet below the bottom of a long red garment belonging to a large-scale standing figure who faces outwards from the corner. On the adjacent wall the plaster is less well preserved, but includes what appears to be a hieroglyph, painted in red. In some areas the wall paintings seem to have been covered over with a further, plain, plaster layer.

The 1998 Excavations in the Trench 10/14 area

David N. Edwards

Excavations in this area during the 1998 season were planned to be on a relatively modest scale, concentrating on the continuation of work on structures identified during the 1990 and 1992 seasons (Edwards 1994a). This area lay to the east of the Meroitic temple complex (see above), close to the original line of the southern walls of the site which had already largely disappeared by the late 1980s due to the effects of water erosion. Lying on the east side of 'Magazine Street', the north end of the area adjoined structures along 'Tavern Street', excavated during the mid-1970s (Plumley 1975; Plumley *et al.* 1977).

In an area previously covered by Ottoman buildings and streets, the last two seasons saw the exposure of parts of a complex of structures, largely of post-Meroitic date, showing a complicated history of additions and modifications (Fig. 3). These included parts of an impressive mud-brick core structure (Structure 265), to which had been added ranges of additional rooms along its west and north sides. Differing markedly from other structures of this period pre-

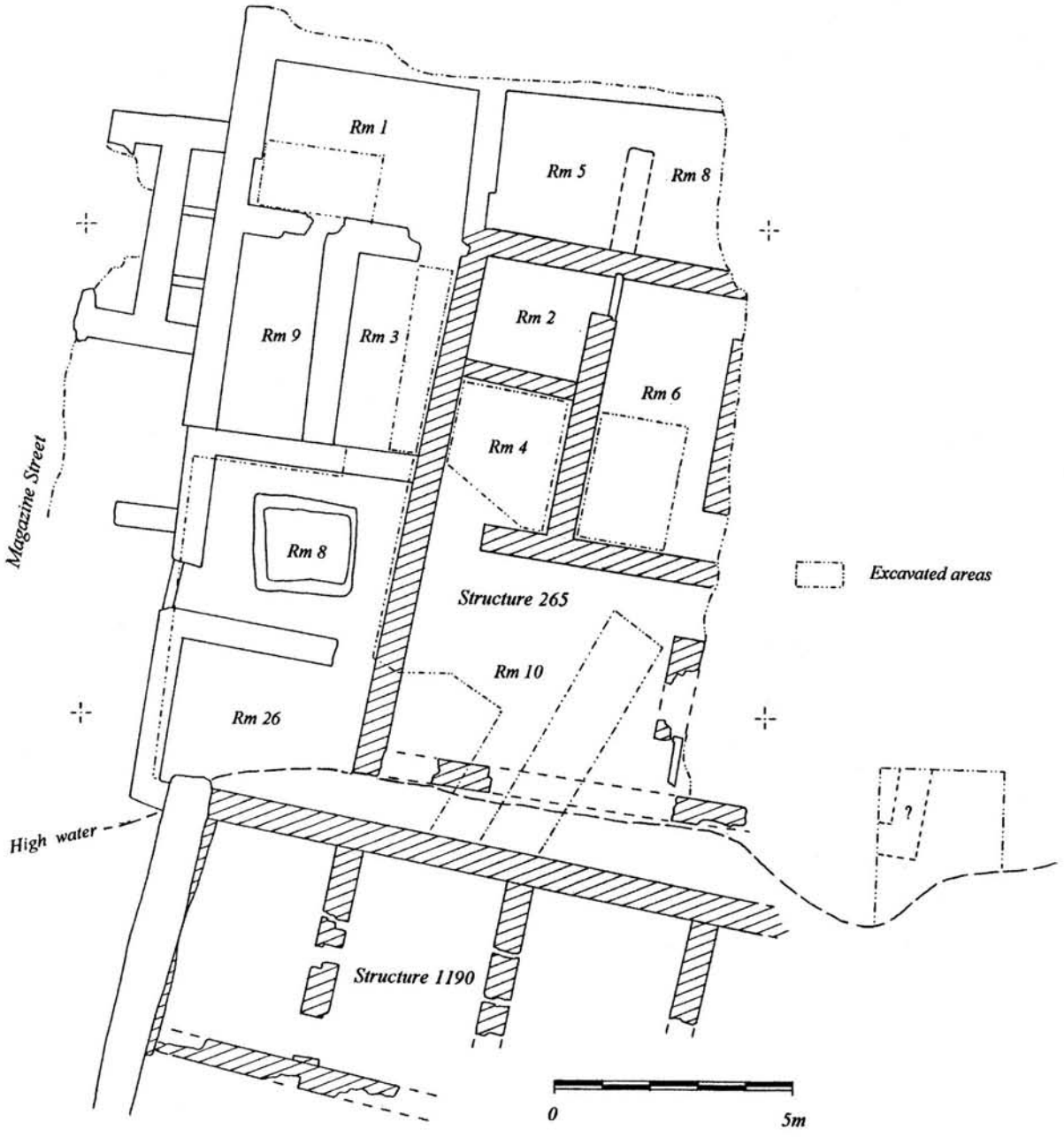

Figure 3. Trench 10/14: Structure 265 and adjacent areas (1992).

viously excavated at Qasr Ibrim, having more in common with what are generally considered Meroitic architectural traditions, this building is of considerable interest, if its function still remains unclear. On its south side, in the area immediately inside the southern enclosure walls, a further poorly-preserved rectangular building (Structure 1190) was also excavated. Limited excavations further west examined the remnants of a small shrine (Structure 189, previously X–35), apparently of late Meroitic date, located near the south end of 'Magazine Street' (Horton 1992, 25). Within the main area, by the end of 1992, excavations had proceeded below the floor levels of most of the complex, exposing parts of a number of earlier structures. However, three deep subfloor cellars still remained to be excavated below the late rooms on its west side.

Preliminary studies of pottery and other material from this area suggested that the core mud-brick structure as well as the southern range of rooms were probably constructed not before the early fifth century, with later additions in the late post-Meroitic period. Well-defined abandonment levels suggested that most of the complex went out of use in the period prior to the appearance of 'Early Christian' medieval pottery wares. However, indications were found of some secondary use of parts of the core structure, extending into unexcavated areas to the east, into the early medieval period. The significance and date of the various earlier features exposed remained very uncertain, although the presence of Roman and/or Meroitic structures seemed likely.

With the resumption of excavations in 1998, it was found that the high water levels during the intervening years had caused very serious damage to a substantial part of this area. The southern range of rooms of Structure 1190, inside the line of the girdle wall, as well as underlying deposits, had been almost entirely destroyed, as had the southern end of 'Magazine Street' including the little that had remained of the Meroitic shrine. Wave erosion had also removed large parts of earlier structures identified, but not excavated during 1992, in particular, a substantial mud-brick terrace wall

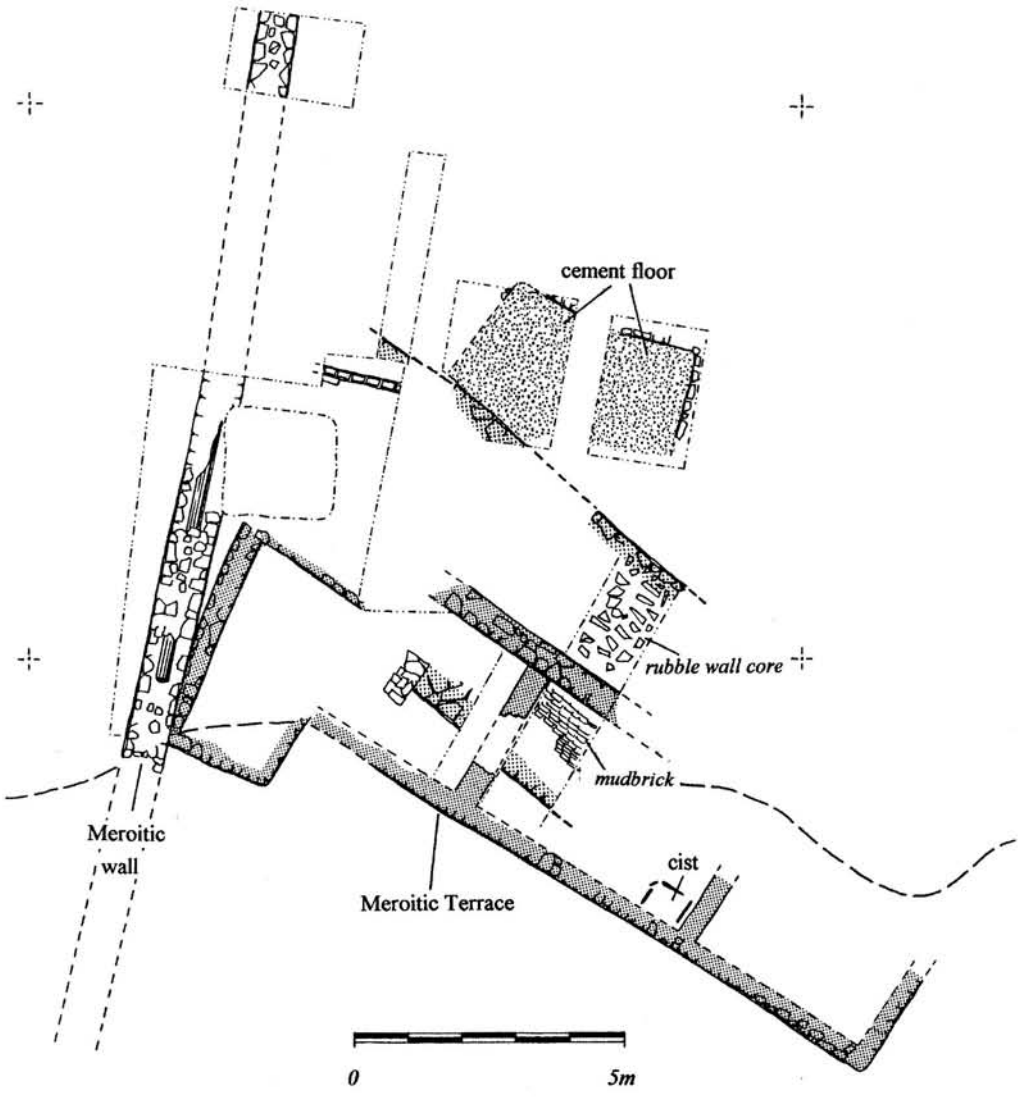

Figure 4. Trench 10/14: the early enclosure wall and Meroitic structures.

which had been partly exposed beneath the floor levels of Structure 1190. By the start of this season, only the much-damaged stone footings of this wall survived at and just below the water's edge. The new edge of excavation, effectively defined by a steeply shelving rubble 'beach', broadly coincided with the line of the southern wall of Structure 265. This survival of the early wall foundations was particularly fortunate in defining, and to a certain extent protecting, a major earlier structural phase, predating the post-Meroitic complex. The new situation we faced posed a number of problems in terms of organizing the most effective response to these new circumstances and the best use of our resources. High water levels coupled with the effects of water percolation into the excavation area precluded any further deep excavations near the southern edge of the area. At the same time, the likely continued erosion of this area made it imperative that the basic sequence of early features in this area was recorded and understood as far as possible, and their relationship to the post-Meroitic levels clearly established. On the other hand, it was appreciated that the destructive effects of percolating water on deep deposits still surviving further north, including the unexcavated cellar fills, demanded at least some limited additional work here to recover more well-contexted samples of the excellently preserved organic remains which are so abundant on the site. To achieve a balance, a number of relatively small areas were excavated, aimed at

1. establishing the date and structural relationship of the early oblique wall close to the water's edge
2. further clarifying the extent and date of other early features beneath the post-Meroitic complex
3. the clearance of another chamber of the post-Meroitic cellars below Room 1

It was hoped that on the basis of the results of this season's work it would be possible to decide whether much further work was justified in this area.

Early levels

A major and important discovery this season was the identification of a length of a substantial stone and mud-brick wall running across the area, aligned approximately north-west-southeast (Fig. 4). Small parts of the interior face of this wall had been exposed in two places during 1992, but its associations were not understood at that time. The width of the wall and the character of its construction correspond with the known characteristics of the early enclosure wall, previously only seen in the area of the South Bastion and the Temple 4–5 complex (see above), to the west of Magazine Street.

Running beneath the south side of the core post-Meroitic structure, the top of this wall had been cut away in several places during the laying of the later building's deep foundations. Its interior structure was also masked by deep deposits of dumped material, which had created a level platform for the floors of Structure 265, deposits which were only partly excavated during 1992. The front face of this wall, or more probably a rebuild, was exposed in a small sondage close to the lake edge. This revealed a section of massive mud-brick walling, possibly a buttress, overlying what appears to be a substantial stone foundation. This foundation probably represents a terrace wall; no traces of underlying bedrock were exposed in this area. While the brickwork was heavily degraded by water percolation, a distinctive pink mortar survived in places, while other areas of walling appear to be built of a rather different types of mud-brick with plain mud mortar. To the north of the brickwork, a section was cut to expose a broad mass of tipped stone wall-core. The well-laid stone internal facing on the north side of the wall was preserved at the north end of this section, with a further area surviving in the southwest corner of room 6. A small sondage below the floor of the room 3 cellar, which penetrated down to bedrock, also exposed a small section of the rear of the wall. Here, the lowest course of stonework appears to have been set into a shallow cut in the bedrock.

No further dating evidence for this wall was recovered, although small quantities of Napatan sherd material were found in layers sealing it. Due to the high water level, no significant areas could be excavated outside the foundations of this wall, but it was noted that deposits built up against its south side appear to contain purely Roman material. The level of the natural gebel bedrock was not reached on the south side of the site, but it now appears that the presence of this massive, if much eroded early wall was an important influence on the later development of this area. Whether new fortifications were constructed outside this wall during the Napatan or Roman periods remains unknown, but it may be suggested that during later centuries further terracing outwards extended the edge of the site to the south, to the line occupied by the major enclosure walls of the Meroitic and later periods.

Meroitic levels

The next major phase may broadly be dated to the later Meroitic period. As noted above, some evidence for Roman deposits was noted along the southern edge of the excavation area, while further Roman levels, probably severely truncated by later activity, may also exist further north. However, no substantial deposits of this date have yet been identified. The next period for which there is substantial evidence, represented by a series of rough stone foundations along the south side of the area, now seem to be of Meroitic date. These formed a terrace with a tower-like projection at its west end. The unusual alignment of this structure would seem to have been determined by its alignment to the earlier enclosure wall, which was presumably still upstanding if

ruinous during this period. As noted above, the main south wall, although largely destroyed by 1998, was seen to have a substantial mud-brick superstructure during 1992. Only limited areas of original deposits immediately behind it survived, having been much eroded recently, as well as being truncated during the construction of the post-Meroitic buildings. However, one small area of water-damaged mud flooring was found in the sondage which exposed the face of the early enclosure wall. This had a small pot-setting buried in it, while a group of three mud loomweights was also found resting on this floor.

A further stone foundation, parallel with the outside terrace wall, and linked to it by a mud-brick crosswall, was exposed during the 1992 season, but any associated floor levels to the north of it also appear to have been truncated during the construction of the post-Meroitic structure. A similar crosswall was partially exposed to the southeast, with an unusual stone-lined cist feature on its west side. The top of this feature had been exposed during 1992, along with a small ash-filled, mud-brick-lined rectangular feature set into one corner of it. However, it was not excavated at that time and the function of this enigmatic feature remains uncertain. By this season, the surrounding deposits had been almost entirely eroded away, causing the stone slabs which lined it to collapse. It was not possible to examine areas south of this terrace wall in any systematic fashion.

In the southwest corner of the excavation area, at the west end of the Meroitic terrace, excavation was possible within the walls forming the tower-like platform here, an area measuring some 3m by 4m. When constructed, the west wall appears to have been cut to some extent into existing street levels in 'Magazine Street', which were sloping down to the south. The walls were then infilled with mixed dumps of rubble and other debris, with a well-defined stratigraphy, and included substantial quantities of Meroitic pottery. As these were likely to provide our largest samples of stratified Meroitic deposits associated with this structure, they were carefully excavated and sieved to maximize the recovery of material. While the lowest excavated levels were water-damaged, the upper layers included much desiccated organic debris, including valuable botanic samples. The north side of this area was defined by a further plastered stone wall. However, its full extent to east and west remains to be determined and it is by no means certain that it was contemporary with the rest of the Meroitic structure; it is certainly possible that it also represents an earlier phase of activity. On the basis of its alignment it could be a part of the outside of the early enclosure, but such a faced stone surface would be anomalous, its exterior normally being constructed of mud-brick .

To the northeast, limited excavations below the floor levels of post-Meroitic rooms 4 and 6 revealed an unusual hard pink cement floor, enclosed by further fragmentary stone walls on its north and east sides, and the robbed-out line of a further wall on its west side. Excavation did not proceed beneath this floor so that its date remains uncertain; material sealing it consisted of levelling dumps associated with the construction of the post-Meroitic building. It is possible that it represents part of the same Meroitic building complex. A further interesting feature of this, however, is that in Room 4, the flooring material rides up against the rear of the wall of the early enclosure, and heavy wear on its exposed surface suggests that there may have been a doorway through it, and the early wall was certainly still upstanding to some degree when the floor surface was in use. Similar wear patterns of a threshold were visible crossing the stone wall at the northeast corner of this floored area. It is certainly possible that this older wall line was in some way incorporated into the later Meroitic structure, if the floor is indeed of that date. However, the possibility remains that the floor may actually represent part of a significantly earlier and unrelated structure. Further excavation is certainly required to clarify the full extent and floor plan of this building. If this first phase of Meroitic activity seems to relate to the construction of a terrace platform and buildings behind it over the east side of the area, the western part seems to have remained open. The results of early excavations in 'Magazine Street' and our own work in this area have so far found no evidence for further buildings in this area. While we have evidence for some fragmentary early walls, aligned north-south, running up the street, their significance still remains unclear. The possibility that there may have been some form of entrance to the site in this area, running up beside the Napatan Terrace, has been considered, but as yet we have no clear evidence for this, while the deposits in this area seem to represent typical comminuted 'street' deposits.

A second phase of Meroitic activity in this area was marked by the construction of a major north-south stone wall, overlying the southwest corner of the terrace platform. Partially exposed in earlier seasons, this was seen to extend as far south as the southern girdle wall (also thought to be of Meroitic date), and later formed the west wall of the post-Meroitic Structure 1190. This year it was more completely exposed and was seen to run beneath the cellars of the post-Meroitic house to near the north end of 'Magazine Street'. A small section of its foundations was exposed under the floor of the Room 1 cellar, but it seems likely that it was largely destroyed during the construction of the cellar below Room 9. Built of rough stone rubble blocks in a mud mortar, an unusual feature of this wall was the insertion of a 5m long palm timber running *along* its foundations. The merits of such a construction technique are by no means clear.

Probably at the same time as the wall was constructed, the area of the corner platform was sealed with a laid mud surface with a hearth set into it. While areas west of the wall seem to have remained as streets, to the east of the wall significant deposits of Meroitic material accumulated on top

of this surface. This included dumps of ash, presumably derived from the extended used of this hearth. These deposits were notable for containing a small but significant quantity of sherds of Meroitic fineware pottery. This area appears to have formed an open 'yard', although its extent and relationship to other contemporary structures further east remain far from clear. Further north, nearly all Meroitic activity had been truncated by the later buildings, but small islands of stratigraphy, including patches of mud flooring, suggest that this surface may have extended northwards for some way. Further excavation beneath the floors of the post-Meroitic cellars below both Rooms 3 and 1 also revealed shallow deposits of street fills, still datable to the Meroitic period, down to or very close to the level of bedrock. Thus, in the northwest part of the trench, there appear to be no significant pre-Meroitic levels.

Post-Meroitic levels

As already noted, some further work was carried out on previously unexcavated parts of the late additions to the post-Meroitic (X–Group) building. In the area of Room 8, excavation continued in the small areas of surviving stratigraphy which surrounded a post-Meroitic cellar/crypt, which had occupied this area before the construction of the secondary structures. This enigmatic structure is one of several which have been found on the site, both in outside 'street' areas and apparently within buildings. The 1992 excavations suggested that this feature probably predated the core post-Meroitic building, being infilled with early post-Meroitic material. However, this further work suggests that it was probably contemporary with it, despite the early character of the dump deposits filling it. As has been found in other cases, it is clear that most fill deposits were essentially secondary material introduced from elsewhere on the site and can do no more that provide a *terminus post quem* for the features they are found in. Similarly 'early post-Meroitic' deposits comprised the bulk of the material used to infill the cellars below Room 1 (see below), which were undoubtedly constructed quite late in the post-Meroitic period.

The development of this small area also appears considerably more complex than we previously supposed. It is clear that the large Meroitic north-south wall was robbed out in this area prior to the construction of this cellar feature, while at least one pit was cut through its robbing trench. On the other hand we know that the southern end of the wall remained in use and was incorporated into the post-Meroitic Structure 1190. On the north side of the cellar, traces of a thin mud-brick wall were found running westwards from the side of the core building of Structure 265. Unfortunately, it was not possible to trace its full course as it was overbuilt by the south wall of Room 9. A very small area of Meroitic deposits survived on its north side, which suggest that the wall was cut into earlier deposits, probably a continuation of the Meroitic 'yard' deposits seen further south, to create a level platform for the construction of the cellar feature.

Excavation of the remaining sub-floor cellars was restricted to one chamber of the three located below Room 1; the largest eastern chamber was excavated in 1992, while the third had unfortunately been much disturbed by illicit digging since then. Removal of the mud floor levels and roofing sealing it showed that they had suffered considerable water seepage, probably relating to Ottoman activities in this area. Several of the roof timbers were very decayed in contrast to the pristine condition of the neighbouring chamber. The cellar chamber measured some 2.3m x 1.4m and was 1.5m deep, with a rather poorly laid mud floor. As found with similar cellars, it was filled to near ceiling height with dense deposits of re-deposited rubbish – of relatively little stratigraphic importance but always productive in artefactual material and pottery. As expected, these fills produced significant quantities of small finds, as well as abundant sherd material and several complete pottery vessels.

As noted above, it was not possible to excavate the one remaining cellar in the building, below Room 9, due both to lack of time and lack of personnel to process and record the very large quantities of pottery and artefacts it would undoubtedly have produced. As has become increasingly apparent in recent years, the major constraint on the progress of excavation lies in finding a way of coping with the vast quantities of material produced by digging!

Near the southeast corner of the area, close to the water's edge, a further small sondage was also excavated to try and determine the eastward extent of Structure 265. No traces of its walls survived in the area, and it was found that Ottoman period intrusions had cut to a considerable depth. However, traces of what appear to be robbing trenches, very poorly defined in the loose deposits, were apparent in section and it seems likely that we have now located the east side of the building.

While the excavations in Trench 10 area were relatively small-scale, they have added considerable detail to our understanding of this area, and it has been possible to salvage important information from water-damaged areas along the lake edge. The recovery of significant deposits of well-stratified Meroitic material is particularly important as little material of this period has yet been found at Qasr Ibrim. Again, it has also been found that only with the closest attention to the details of the stratigraphy has it been possible to unravel some of the complexities of this area.

Finds

Even from such limited excavations, considerable quantities of small finds were again recovered, including a wide range of organic materials, with many wooden objects, leather fragments, textile and basketry fragments, mainly from post-Meroitic contexts if including some earlier residual

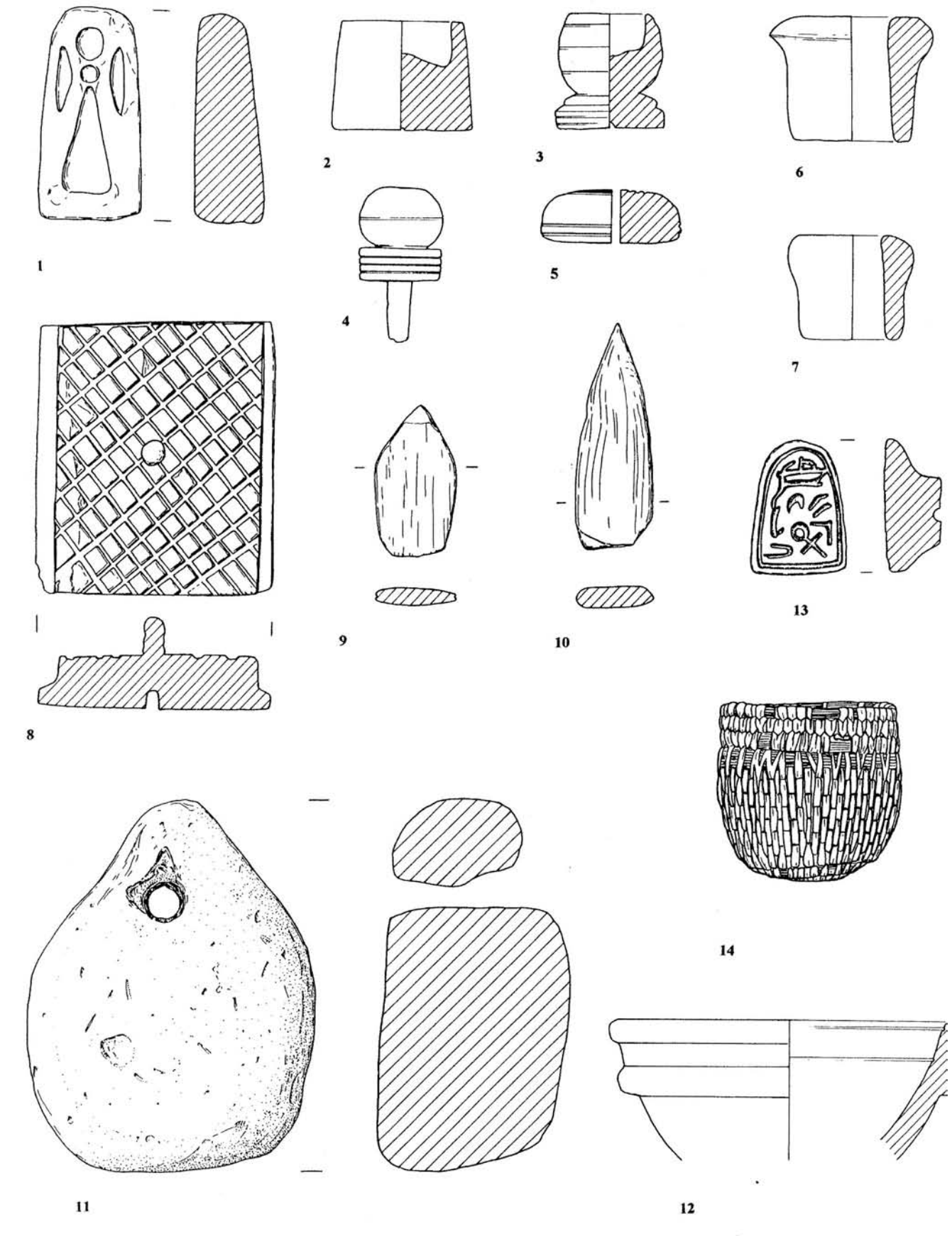

Figure 5. Finds from Trench 10/14, scale 1:2.

material. Although often quite fragmentary, such material again adds to our knowledge of the material culture of this period, as well as our understanding of the clearly complex processes of deposition and re-deposition, at work on the site. Certainly, very little material seems likely to represent what may be considered primary refuse. This was mainly limited to the deposits accumulating in the open 'yard' area east of the north-south wall during the Meroitic period, which in turn contained relatively few small-finds.

The bulk of the better-preserved finds came from the Room 1 cellar chamber, which on the basis of associated pottery is likely to be largely of early post-Meroitic date. A small stone stamp with an '*ankh* design (Fig. 5,1) represents one of several found in this area. Such stamps, carved both in stone and wood appear to have been used in the sealing of jars and amphorae. Several examples of mud seals with various stamp impressions are known from the post-Meroitic cemeteries at Qasr Ibrim (Mills 1982, pl. X, XVI, LXX, LXXIV) and from late post-Meroitic/early medieval contexts at Karanog (Woolley 1911, pl.15). Several complete or reconstructable wooden objects were found, notably what appear to be wooden stoppers and lids (Fig. 5, 2–4), spindle whorls (Fig. 5, 5) and archer's looses (Fig. 5, 6–7), as well as a box lid (Fig. 5, 8) and a finely carved handle (Colour Plate XLIII). A number of small 'picks' in both bone and wood (Fig. 5, 9–10) are a type of object also found before in post-Meroitic and probably earlier contexts. Similar 'picks' are known from Meroitic contexts at Meili Island and elsewhere in Lower Nubia (Adams 1977, 371) and may be associated with a range of weaving-related artefacts such as loomweights and spindle whorls (Edwards 1996, 28). More than 30 mud loomweights were found in this area in 1990–1992, and a few more examples this year, notably a cluster of three complete weights found on the small fragment of Meroitic floor surviving behind the oblique terrace wall (Fig. 5, 11).

Little faience was found. A few rim sherds of one or more bowls represent a type previously seen in this area; their similarity is such that the several fragments recovered in recent seasons could come from a single vessel (Fig. 5, 12). Another unusual find was a near complete steatite stamp, originally with a pierced handle/lug (Fig. 5, 13). Unfortunately, this was relatively poorly-contexted coming from poorly-defined and much-disturbed dump layers sealed between Structure 265 and the remains of the early enclosure. Finds of basketry included several complete circular covers/lids and small 'baskets'. Large quantities of such woven covers, if of a slightly different design, were a notable feature of late post-Meroitic deposits excavated in 1990–92. The likely function of several small 'baskets', such as the example illustrated below (Fig. 5, 14), remains far from clear. Other more 'domestic' finds included three well-preserved hand-brushes, while another prominent feature of the Room 1 cellar fills were numerous stone pounders. Their abundance may be contrasted with the general scarcity of saddle-quern or similar grinding equipment of the type we might expect to be found in material coming from domestic areas. Their functions still remain unclear, but may presumably relate to a range of processing activities. Other more unusual finds included part of a hippopotamus tusk, and raw salt. The former is of some interest as hippopotamus ivory is likely to have been a valuable trade item, but one rarely found in archaeological contexts. The salt, found in the form of large crystals, is also likely to have been an important commodity, perhaps originating from one of the salt-rich oases west of the Nile.

Other minor finds include numerous 'gaming counters' as well as a few fragmentary ostraca found during sherd processing. These included six ostraca/jar labels in Meroitic, interestingly all on sherds of pitched amphorae (Adams' 'Aswani' Ware R.30), also two fragmentary Demotic ostraca. Other textual material was scarce. As found during the 1990 and 1992 seasons, the post-Meroitic deposits continued to produce a small quantity of Meroitic textual material, mainly consisting of rather fragmentary papyrus. The material came from a range of contexts, including the cellar fills below Room 1, other sub-floor deposits below the core building of Structure 265, and from within the fabric of its walls, although very little material was recovered from the excavated Meroitic levels. The most notable of these is a near complete papyrus docket <18009/A26>, found folded and tied amongst the debris of the cellar fill (Colour Plate XLIV). The obverse had a rather worn text in three lines running the length of the docket.[1]

The presence of Meroitic texts associated with this post-Meroitic building complex again draws attention to questions concerning the late survival of the language, a problem previously discussed by Adams (1982). Some material appears to have found its way into the walls through rodent activity, as was demonstrated by the quantities of textile fragments, hair, straw and rodent dung found in 'nests' in the brick and stonework. If such material may be discounted on account of its context, some other finds are more significant. As noted above, the character of the sherd and other finds from the cellar fills leaves little doubt that it was essentially re-deposited secondary material introduced from elsewhere and unrelated to the main use of the building. More interestingly, the character of the sherd assemblage suggests that the deposits significantly predate this part of the building complex, comprising material typical of the early post-Meroitic period. As such, while the presence of Meroitic texts cannot be used to suggest the survival of the use of the language into the late post-Meroitic 'Nobatian' period, it is certainly possible that these papyri were contemporary with the other dump material.

[1] While a full discussion of this and other texts cannot be offered here, it should be noted that this includes the name of Apedemak in the first two lines.

Pottery

The interest of the pottery from the Trench 10/14 area lies in the fact that it comes from a well-documented stratigraphic sequence running from the Meroitic into the post-Meroitic period. The earlier part of this timespan is one for which very little is known of the ceramics at Qasr Ibrim since Meroitic levels have rarely been excavated. Although only a preliminary recording of this material has yet been carried out, and much still remains to be drawn, it is already clear that a more detailed phasing of Meroitic ceramics can be made than has been possible up to now, running from the time of the Roman occupation. Furthermore, a number of specific issues have been highlighted which will repay further close investigation. These include the question of the date of the introduction of finewares into the Meroitic assemblage, and their early relationship to the products of the 'Aswani' workshops. Certainly prior to the occurrence of distinctive Meroitic decoration on finewares, there are a number of simple thin-walled cups and bowls for which it is at present impossible to distinguish whether they are made of 'Aswani' or 'fineware' clays.

At the later end of the timescale, the huge quantity of pottery from the Room 1 cellar (over 220kg.) provided a valuable 'snapshot' of an early post-Meroitic assemblage and included complete and reconstructable vessels. The ceramics from the cellar consisted of many examples of a limited range of forms, the vast majority of which were locally-manufactured wheelmade wares (Fig. 6). These included 'flowerpots' (Fig. 6, 1), thin walled cups of Meroitic type with either a red slip which becomes crackled on firing, or unslipped with clear wet-wiping marks (Fig. 6, 2–3), ribbed cups and bowls with a bright orange slip and simple decoration, cooking pots (Fig. 6, 4–5), short-necked jars with rolled rims, also of Meroitic derivation (Fig. 6, 6), and a few qawadis. There are a few goblets of early 'X–group' type, also with a bright orange slip (Fig. 6, 7–8), but the absence of many of the distinctive 'X–group' wares and forms indicates its early date.

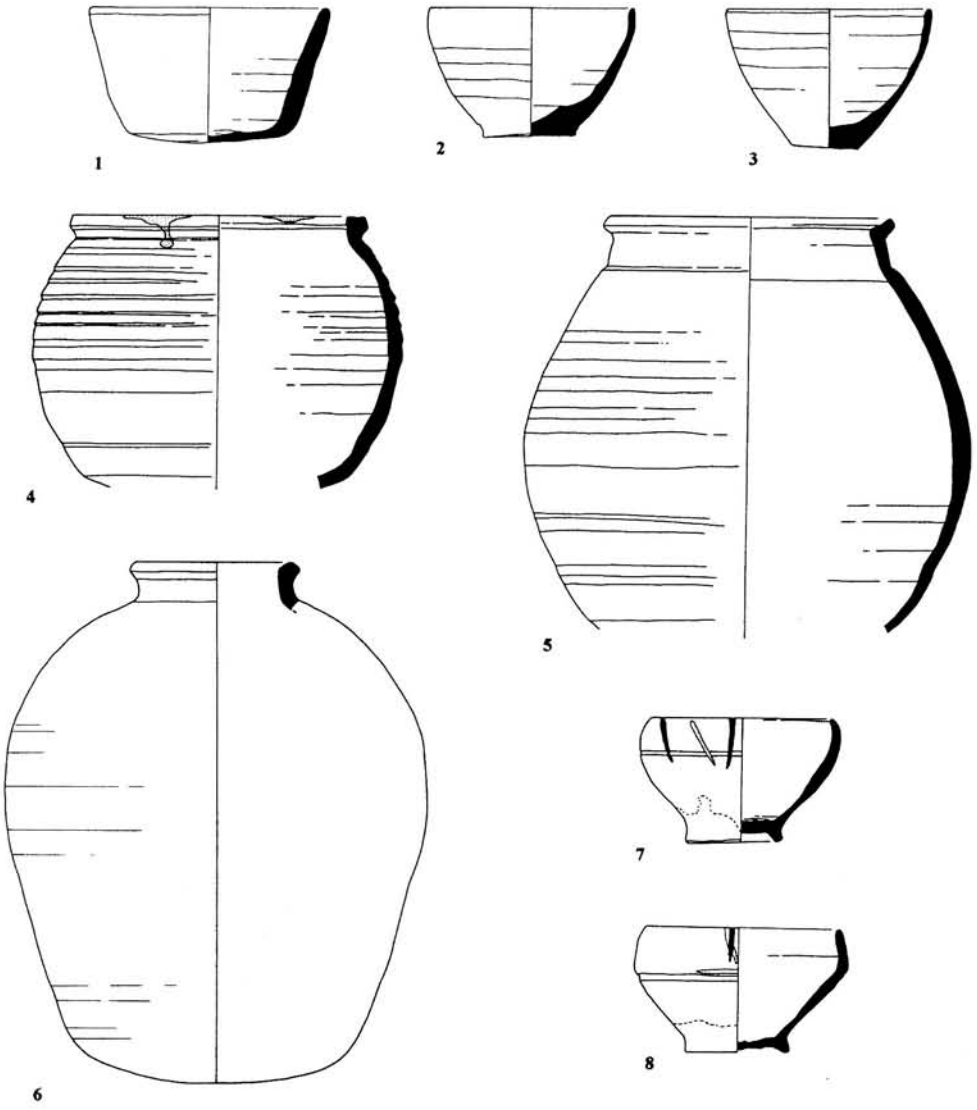

Figure 6. Pottery from Trench 10/14, scale 1:4.

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Plate XXXVIII. Qasr Ibrim. The Podium.

Plate XXXIX. Qasr Ibrim. The early enclosure wall.

Plate XL. Qasr Ibrim. The mudbrick casing of the South Bastion (1990).

Plate XLI. Qasr Ibrim. The round tower in 1998.

Plate XLII. Qasr Ibrim. Part of wall painting showing bound captives.

Plate XLIII. Qasr Ibrim. Carved wooden handle.

Plate XLIV. Qasr Ibrim. Papyrus docket.