

# SUDAN & NUBIA

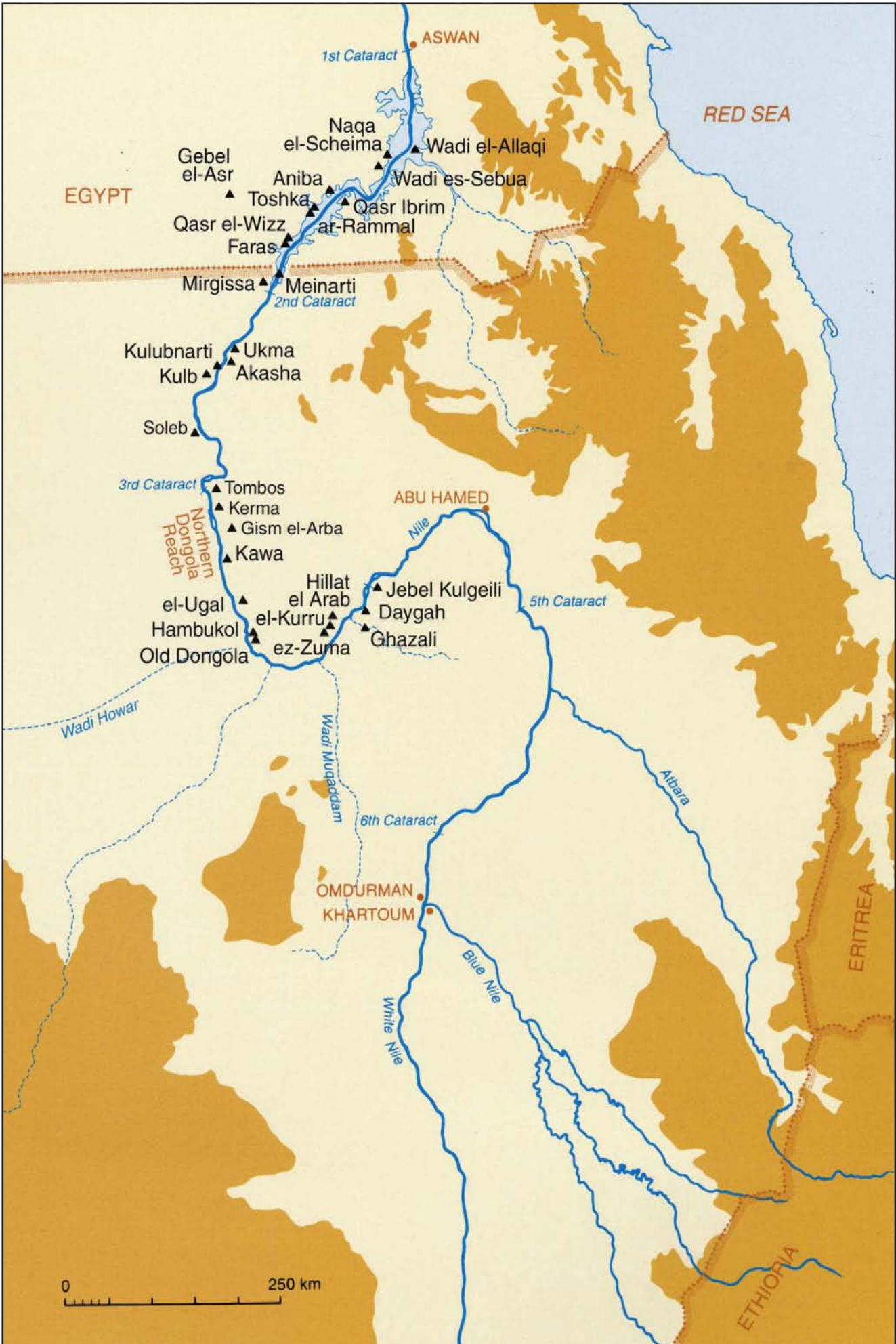
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



*Bulletin No. 3*

*1999*





# SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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*Front Cover:* Temple of Amenophis III at Soleb visited by  
F. W. Green in 1909 (Photo D. A. Welsby).

## Introduction

As the contents of this year's issue clearly demonstrate, *Sudan & Nubia* goes from strength to strength with a developing international profile. The Society's own work in the Dongola Reach is represented by two papers; the first, based on the analysis of human remains, provides fascinating insights into living conditions during the Kerma Period (Judd); the second outlines progress on the continuing research into the geomorphology of the region (Treves *et al.*). A complementary project, carried out in the same region by a French Expedition, has among other things identified a rare native settlement dating to the period of Egyptian conquest (reported on by Gratien). At Kerma itself, exciting new work, uncovering remains of the Napatan and Meroitic Periods, is dramatically extending the history of the site (Salah Ahmed), while of equal importance historically are the results from Hillat el-Arab (near Gebel Barkal), a cemetery with elite burials of the New Kingdom and very earliest Kushite Period (Vincentelli). Research into quarrying and stones receives fresh impetus from work at Gebel El-Asr in Lower Nubia (Shaw and Bloxam) and in Tombois and Daygah at the Third and Fourth Cataracts respectively (Harrell). Surveys in the latter region, threatened by a new dam, are confirming its great archaeological potential (Abdel Rahman and Kabashy Hussein). Among other possibilities, sites in the Abu Hamed Reach can be expected to shed important new light on Nubian monasticism, until recently a neglected subject (Julie Anderson). Further north, Qasr Ibrim, which has long been partially submerged, continues to repay the Egypt Exploration Society's commitment under difficult circumstances (John Alexander). Far from the Nile Valley, museum basements can also be a source of significant 'discoveries' (Wardley and Davies), as may unpublished archival material and archaeological diaries (Welsby Sjöström).

During the course of the year, SARS suffered a serious blow with the passing of its distinguished President, Sir Lawrence Kirwan. Larry was a source of encouragement, support and inspiration for us all. We salute his memory and his contribution to Sudanese and Nubian archaeology (see Obituary, by Harry Smith). We also regret the loss of Prof. Jack Plumley, a specialist in Christian Nubia, who for many years directed the EES excavations at Qasr Ibrim (see Obituary, by John Alexander).

# A New Hilltop Cemetery and Temple of the Meroitic and Post-Meroitic Period at Qasr Ibrim

*John Alexander*

Two extensive cemeteries, both with Meroitic and Post-Meroitic (X-Group) graves, lie in the Wadis north and south of the hilltop fortress of Ibrim and before they were flooded by Lake Nasser in 1968, some 295 graves were excavated and published (Mills 1982). A third, previously unknown cemetery, was found inside the fortress in 1984 and excavated in 1986 (Alexander 1987). It too had been flooded and had lain under the water for a decade before a series of low Niles left it exposed; it has since been reflooded. Also in 1986 a temple (No. 1) was excavated in the cemetery and shown to have been built in the Post-Meroitic period (c. AD 350-550). The significance of these finds is such that preliminary reports are published here in advance of the volume of the X-Group period at Qasr Ibrim to be published by the Egypt Exploration Society.

The new cemetery, here called the Hilltop Cemetery, lies on the triangular spur which forms the northern extremity of the fortress (Fig. 1). It emerged from the water almost completely stripped of loose surface deposits and with all aboveground structures in ruins. Large areas of the sandstone bedrock were exposed allowing the recognition and excavation of 22 rock-cut tombs. Among, and over some of them, was Temple 1, of which the pylon, some courses of the walls and some strata in the interior survived; these were also excavated. The pre-cemetery topography of the northern part of the hilltop could be reconstructed although as much as 5m on the north-west had eroded away. On the west was a surface capping of concreted sandstone; this dipped to the east beneath a more friable and softer stratum. The whole peninsula had been enclosed, probably from the late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, within the curtain-wall of the fortress but the only use made of it seems to have been as a cemetery. The 22 rock-cut shaft graves were quarried with great skill from at least the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD until the 5-6<sup>th</sup> century while five others were partially cut into rock and partially into sand. The building of Temple 1 over some of the graves allowed a relative chronology of two phases to be recognised.

## Phase 1 - The Pre-temple Cemetery

The surviving 22 graves of the cemetery were found over an area of some 4200m<sup>2</sup> but were commonest along the western cliff edge and at the centre of the peninsula (Fig. 2). No traces of superstructures were found but they may not have survived the many buildings erected over them in the 16-

18<sup>th</sup> centuries when many of the graves were cleaned out (Fig. 3). Only two graves contained Phase 1 artefacts; No. 1090 had the west wall of Temple 1 built over it and contained Early Post-Meroitic (c. AD 350-450) ceramics; No. 1124 contained only late Meroitic (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) sherds. Five more graves (Nos 1086-90) had had the depths of their shafts reduced when up to 2m of rock was removed to level an area for the temple.

The graves, with the one exception discussed below, were rectangular and of two types already identified by Emery in the Wadi Cemeteries (Mills 1982). Type I had well-cut rectangular shafts without lateral side chambers at their base (Fig. 4); Type VI had rectangular shafts with lateral side-chambers. In the Hilltop Cemetery only four examples of Type VI were found, the only dated example belonging to Phase II.

All the Type I graves were excavated, their contents being sieved through 10mm sieves. Most appeared to have been cleaned out and left open in Ottoman times, 17-18<sup>th</sup> century sherds being found in natural siltings in them. Some were under garrison housing, and had deliberate infillings. No traces of human bones were found. Sherds of the Christian period were rare, only one grave (No. 1132) having been cleaned out and used as a storeroom in the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 4). The graves had been quarried on four alignments, the NW-SE one (14 graves) being preferred. The others were NE-SW (6), E-W (1) and N-S (1). Their shaft sizes varied, the mouths being between 3.1 x 1.9m and 1.8 x 0.77m and the depths between 0.7 and 1.1m.

A single grave on the central axis of the peninsula (No. 1127) was a variant of this type. It had a pentagonal shaft, 2.5 x 3m in size, well quarried to a depth of 3.5m with vertical sides and a flat bottom (Fig. 2, Colour Plate XXVIII). It lay on a deliberately levelled surface outside the Phase II temple and probably preceded it. There was no surviving superstructure but it had been opened to the bottom and deliberately infilled in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Discussion of Phase 1

Graves of Type 1 quarried in rock or alluvium were found in the northern Wadi Cemetery (No. 192) in 1964 where they belonged to the Meroitic and Post-Meroitic periods. Most were surmounted by small pyramids or mounds of rubble but one area (192B), which was without superstructures, bears the closest resemblance to the Hilltop Cemetery (Mills 1982, 41-3 and pls XLV-VI). Area 192B was a hard sandstone outcrop near the river, part of which had been levelled and enclosed in a well-made stone wall (Plate 1), seven (possibly nine) graves being quarried inside it. Of the eight graves published one (No. 9) was certainly of Post-Meroitic date (as the unpublished No. 10 was said to be), and the others, some of which contained burials, had no artefactual finds, although No. 8 was sealed by reused Meroitic stelae laid face downwards over its mouth. The orientation of all the graves, like the main axis of the enclosure, was north-east to south-

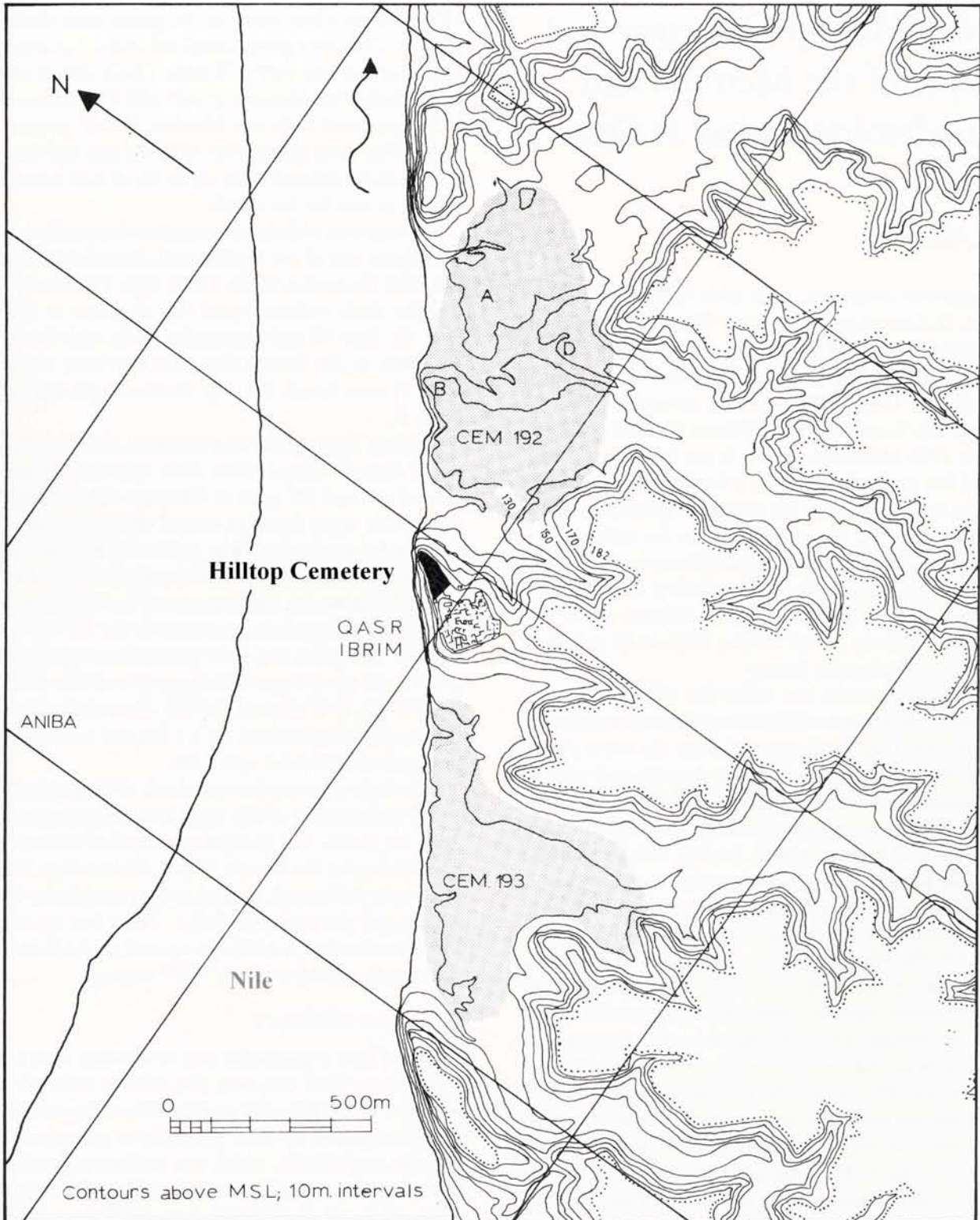


Figure 1. The new Hilltop Cemetery (after Mills 1982).

west. In the rest of the graves in the two Wadi cemeteries 150 had this same orientation while 132 were orientated north-west - south-east. The hilltop graves were very similar: they lacked superstructures, had the same orientations and, where not truncated by later levelling, were of the same depths. Only one was quite different, the deep polygonal

shaft No. 1127 (Colour Plate XXVIII) which stood on its own levelled area of bedrock in the centre of the Northern Peninsula. It may have been the central feature of the cemetery with the other graves quarried round it.

The burial rituals of Type 1 graves could be seen only in Cemetery 192B (Fig. 5). Here two graves had dorsally-



Plate 1. Qasr Ibrim Cemetery 192B in 1963 showing the enclosure for the rock-cut graves looking north.

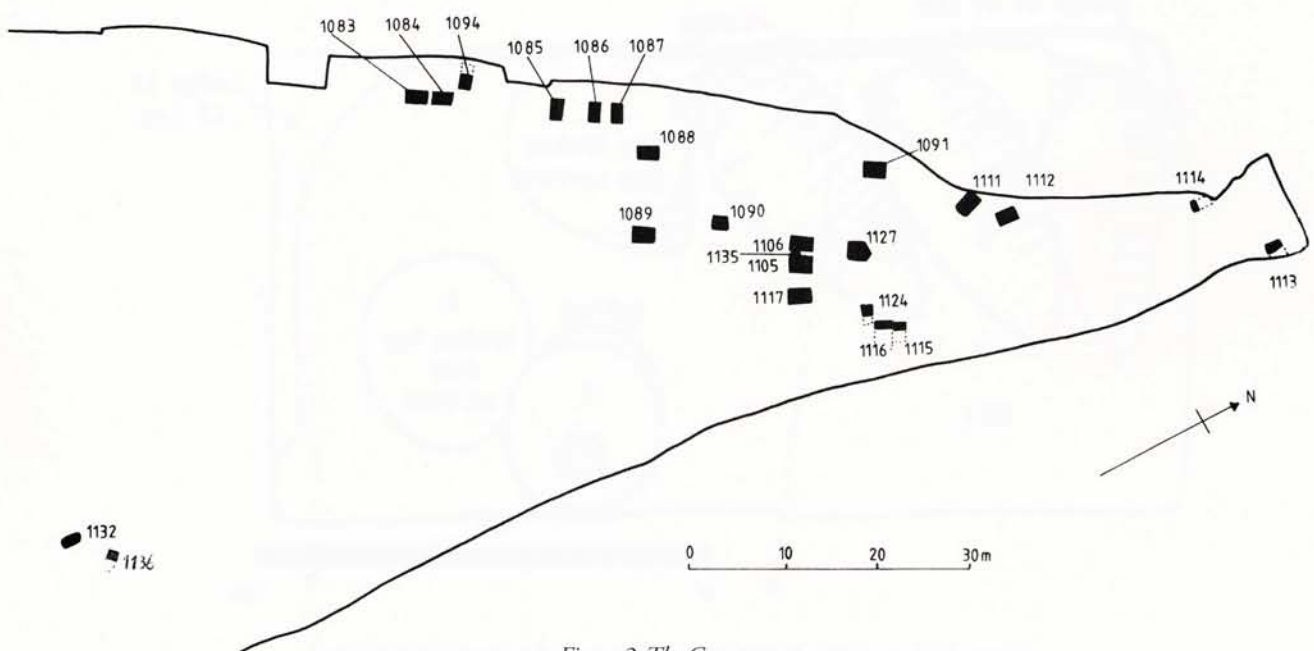


Figure 2. The Cemetery.

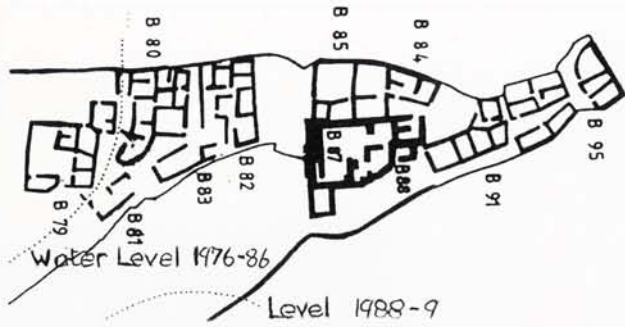


Figure 3. Ottoman houses overlying the cemetery.

extended burials with their hands laid on their pelvises and no artefacts. In the Hilltop Cemetery no burials had survived although Grave 1090, under the temple wall, still had intact 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century pottery in it (Rose 1991). The burial

rituals of Cemetery 192B are so unlike those of the certainly Meroitic graves elsewhere in Cemetery 192 that they are best seen as early Post-Meroitic (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century) in date; Meroitic graves had certainly been robbed of their stelae to provide cover stones. Simple rectangular shafts with extended inhumations were found further south at Semna (Török 1997 quoting Griffith).

Four graves of Emery's Type VI were found in the Hilltop Cemetery and since one of them was quarried through a Type I grave may have been used later than Type 1.

Type VI graves were defined by having a rectangular vertical shaft with one or more side chambers quarried out laterally at the level of the shaft base. Expertly made examples were found in the Wadi Cemetery 192B and a single one in 193. None had more than a 2m deep shaft and their orientations varied. One in Cemetery 192B (Grave 9) had

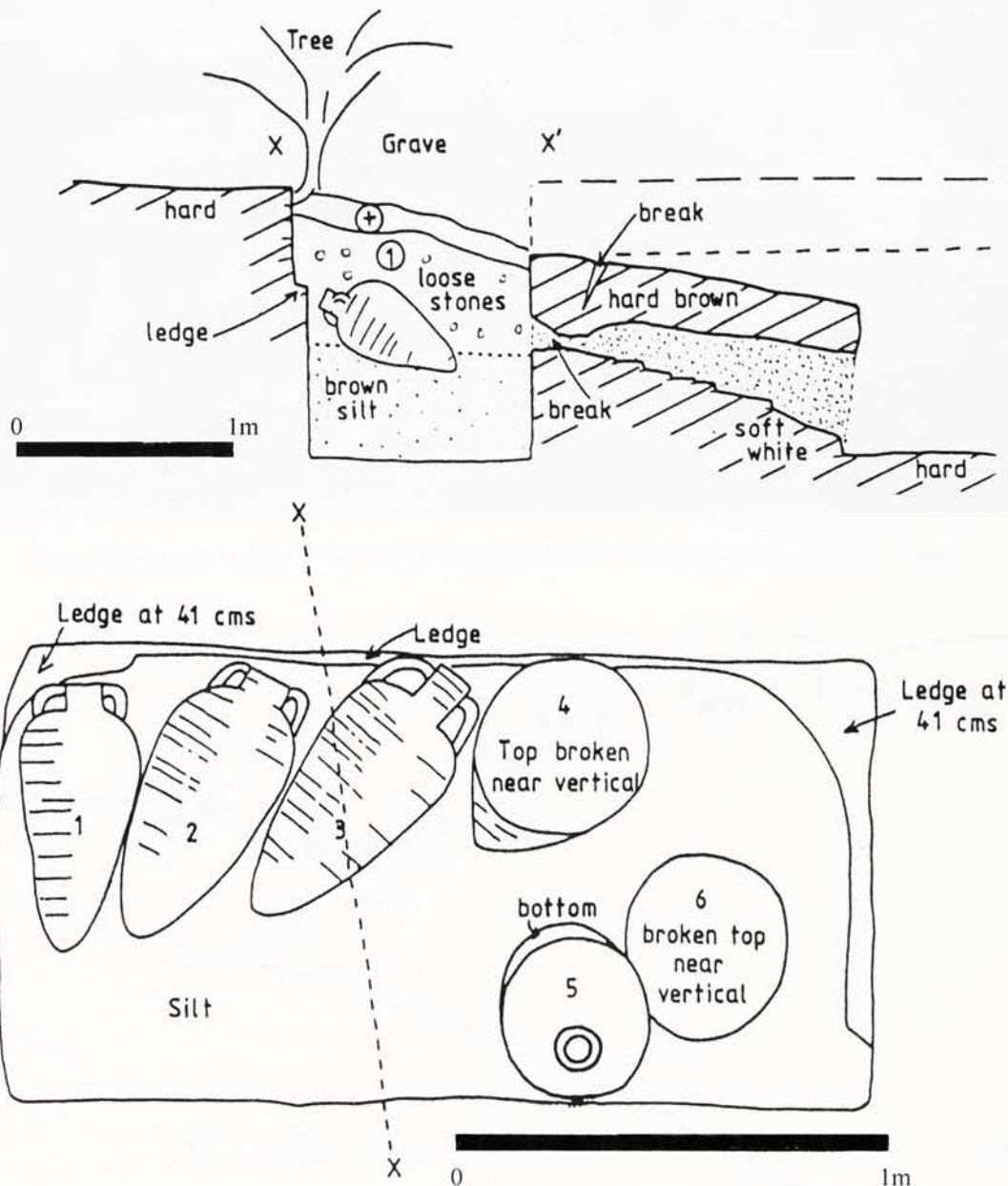


Figure 4. Grave 1132. North section (X-X') and plan at a depth of 650mm.

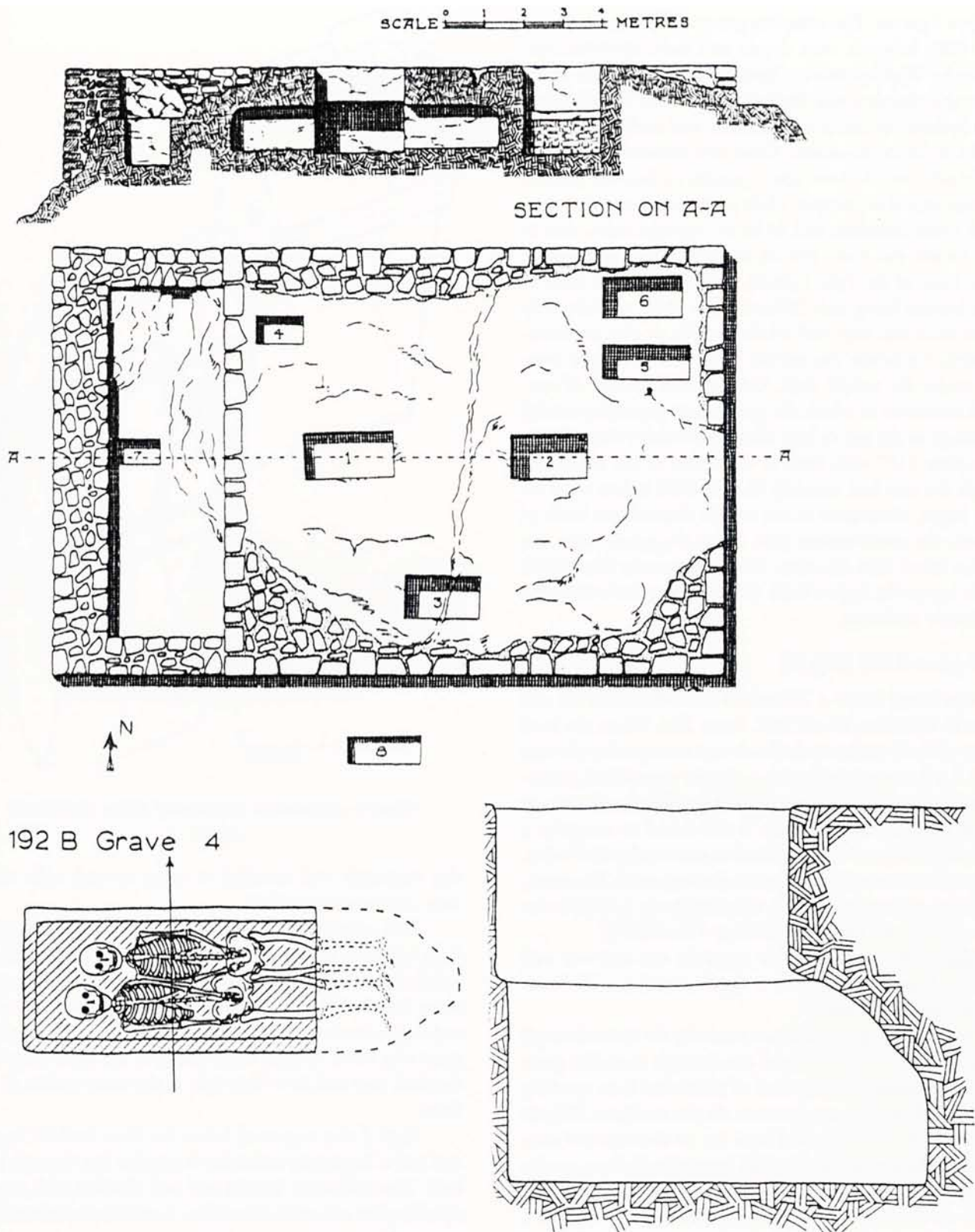


Figure 5. Cemetery 192B and Grave 4 (after Mills 1982).

an intact Post-Meroitic burial. In the Hilltop Cemetery three of these graves (1105-7) were found inside the Phase II temple and one (1091) on the western cliff edge. Three complete ones were quarried in hard sandstone but a fourth (1107) was apparently abandoned uncompleted when it was

found to lie off the hard sandstone in a softer stratum which made shaft and chamber-digging less satisfactory.

Grave 1091 conformed to Emery's criteria, having a single lateral chamber reached by a shaft from the unlevelled rock surface and was orientated NW-SE like the majority of





the Type I graves. The complete graves in the temple (1105 and 1106), however, were deeper and more elaborate than any in the Wadi cemeteries, having two stages to the shafts before the chamber was reached (Figs 6 and 7). They had beam-sockets for floors in the shafts and surface ledges to the shafts for cover-stones. These two elaborate graves lay side by side, only 350mm apart, parallel to, but well west of, the main axis of the temple. Their proximity meant that their lateral tomb-chambers had to be on opposite sides, that of 1105 on the east and 1106 on the west. Their orientation, unlike most of the Type I graves, was NE-SW. The shaft of 1106, besides being only 350mm from 1105, was also only 50mm from the west wall of the temple so that its tomb-chamber, 3m below the temple floor, had to extend westward under the temple wall. Although the stratum of concreted sandstone in which the graves were quarried extended far enough to the east to have allowed it, neither they nor the incomplete 1107 were sited at the centre of the temple although the area had certainly been levelled before work on them began. Excavation in the temple showed two levels of bedrock; the north-eastern part, where the graves were, was 200mm lower than the other. Since the cement floor of the temple lay on the higher level, the lower may have defined a pre-temple enclosure.

#### Shaft-grave 1105 (Fig. 6)

This was found below *c.* 200mm of water-disturbed silt and stones in Ottoman House B87, room 21c. When the level surface of hard sandstone bedrock was uncovered it showed as a 2.2 x 2.1m rectangle with a narrow stone-filled projection at the south-west corner and was parallel to and 300mm east of Tomb 1106 (Figs 8-9). It was found to comprise a three-stage shaft and a burial chamber, cut to a depth of 4.3m. There was no trace of any structure above ground. The tomb, which was at that time empty, was completely infilled in the 18th century and built over (Colour Plate XXVI).

**The Shaft:** this was extremely regularly cut and was well finished. It had been dug to a depth of 4.3m with floors between stages 1, 2 and 3.

Stage 1 was quarried down vertically for 2.3m through banded sandstone. It had been cut through an earlier grave (1135), the remaining fragment of which had been carefully filled in with well-squared stones. At the surface a 150mm deep 100mm wide ledge had been cut on the west and eastern sides whilst pairs of slots had been chiselled out on the northern and southern sides at the level of the ledge. There can be no doubt that the slots were for beams to support a cover which rested on the ledges; seven rectangular blocks of stone in the infilling might have belonged to the cover. The sides of the shaft were extremely well cut and were finished with narrow chiselling but were otherwise featureless. They met the smooth, horizontal floor at right angles.

Stage 2: from the Stage 1 floor, a passage of the same width as the shaft had been driven sideways for 2.1m to make an extension 1.7m high with a shallow arched roof. This was

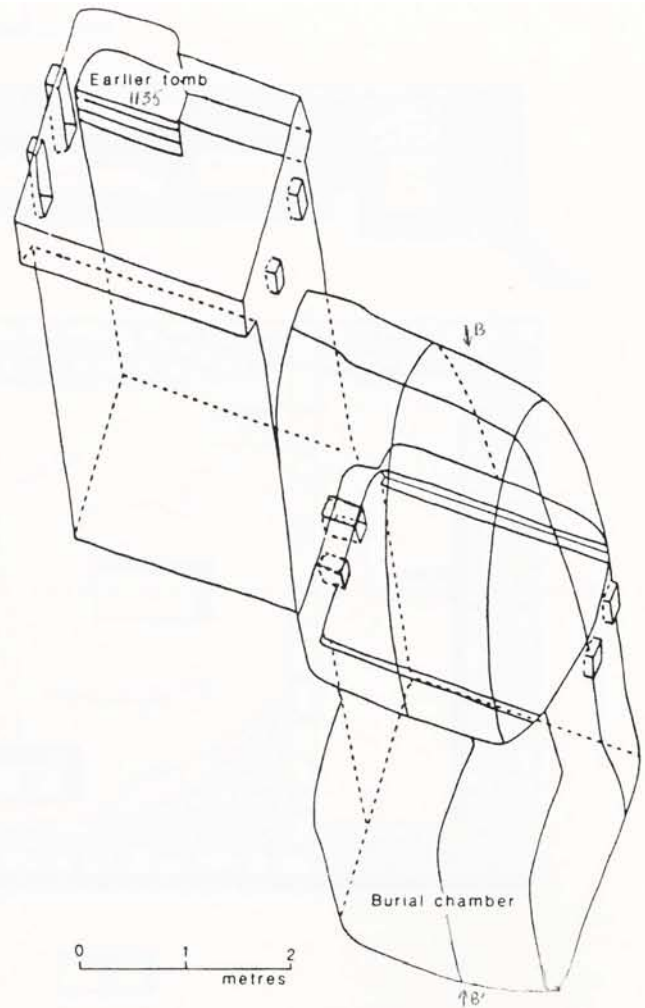


Figure 6. Axonometric projection of Grave 1105 in the temple.

also extremely well chiselled to make vertical walls which were otherwise featureless.

This extension had no floor of rock, for Stage 3 of the shaft had been cut down through it and a floor, probably of wood, inserted. This floor was similar to the one in Stage 1; beam slots had been cut in the northern and southern sides, and ledges on the eastern and western sides. A 1m long fragment of a 100 x 100mm beam found in the fill of Stage 3 of the shaft may well have been part of the latest version of this floor.

Stage 3 was excavated below the floor level of Stage 2 and was a 2m square taken down another 2m through hard rock. The walls were vertical and well finished with narrow chiselling but otherwise featureless. A smooth horizontal floor was made.

**The Chamber:** at the floor level of Stage 3 of the shaft, a chamber was then excavated to the east. It was 1.5 x 2m with a shallow arched roof 1.8m high at the centre. Its walls and floor were well finished but otherwise featureless and there was no sign of a wall blocking the chamber from the shaft.

No traces of human bodies were found either in the chamber or in the shaft although the whole of the infilling

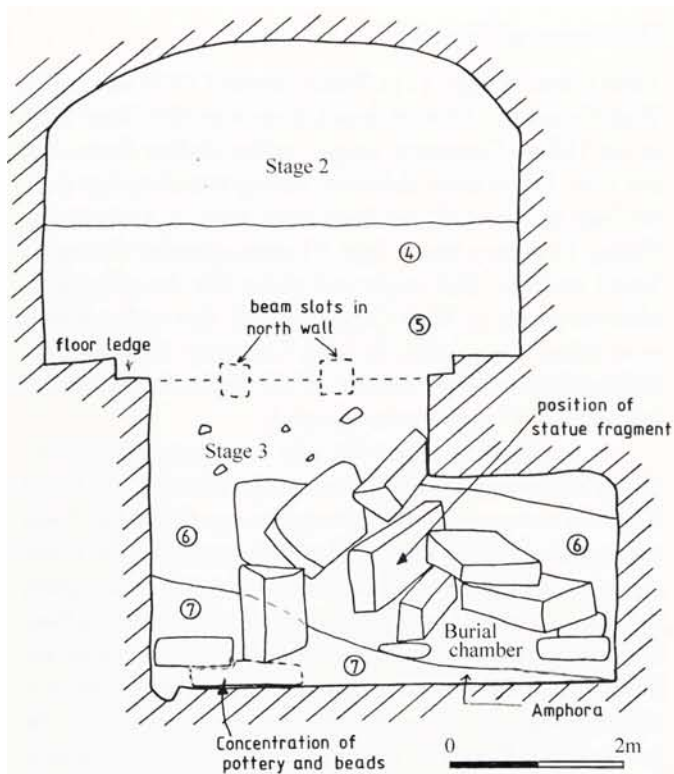


Figure 7. Grave 1105, section B-B.

(8m<sup>3</sup>) was sieved through a 10mm mesh; 2000 animal bone fragments and glazed 17/18<sup>th</sup> century sherds were found at all levels.

On the floor of the chamber, however, and extending across the lowest floor of the shaft, was a stratum of black silt quite different from the rest of the infilling. The silt (layer 7) was 350mm thick against the north wall and sloped down to a 50mm thick layer over the rest of the chamber and shaft. Lying in this silt in the entrance to the chamber was a scatter of 11 globular carnelian beads, a fragment of copper-alloy strip, the rectangular base of small wooden box, an intact ceramic goblet and fragments of nine amphorae imported from Northern Egypt; all the pottery was of late Post-Meroitic types.<sup>1</sup> The tomb appears, from the infilling, to have been completely empty during the earlier Ottoman occupation and was probably part of the 'fine armoury and ammunition store' mentioned in 1684. It was infilled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It seems likely that at that time there was only a shallow deposit of silt in the chamber and lowest stage of the shaft. If this was so then the floors between the stages in the shaft are likely to have been intact as well and to have prevented much silt accumulating at the bottom. In the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD the tomb was open and entered from the temple above it. The robbing of the tomb must have been very thorough for sieving brought to light no human body fragments although other bone was well preserved. The eight-year submersion

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr P Rose for the identification of the pottery and for her comments.

of the tomb could, however, have destroyed objects but the carnelian beads suggest that grave goods were present. It seems likely that the body/or bodies were removed complete and investigated outside the tomb, the pottery was left, most of it having been smashed at the entrance to the chamber. This grave was more elaborate and different in detail from any others known from the Meroitic period and resembled in its construction those of Pharaonic Egypt. Three interpretations seem possible:

(i) That it is the most southerly example yet found of a Pharaonic grave type and was dug in XXV<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or earlier times; it continued to be revered or reused for the next 900 years. The pottery found in the chamber would then be the last use of the tomb after the temple had been built round it.

(ii) That this was an especially elaborate version of the Emery's Grave Type VI. It had been made late in the history of the Hilltop Cemetery destroying an earlier grave, in a consciously archaic style, and a temple was built round it.

(iii) That it was quarried through the floor of an existing temple and belonged to the late 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### Shaft-grave 1106 (Fig. 8)

This was also found when 200mm of water-disturbed silt and stones were removed from the floor of the Ottoman house B87, Room 21c. It appeared as a rectangle 2.17 x 2.39m in the surface of the bedrock. It lay parallel and very close to the west wall of the temple and to shaft-grave 1105 and comprised a shaft and a chamber, the chamber being partly under the temple wall. No superstructure was found unless two stone blocks on the northern lip of the shaft were part of one.

The Shaft was carefully squared and finished with fine chiselling. Its mouth had no beam slots or floor ledges except for a 100mm wide ledge on the western lip beside the temple wall. The walls were carried down vertically through banded sandstone of varying hardnesses for 1.37m when a level floor was cut. At 1m there was an irregular niche in the east face which seemed more likely to be due to the collapse of soft rock than to deliberate creation.

The Chamber: this had been dug westwards from the floor of the shaft for 0.77m and was 1.6m high with a shallow arched roof. This was only 500mm below the west wall of the temple and its partial collapse was presumably due to the weight of the wall. The featureless walls were vertical and well chiselled. No trace of the burial remained although the entire contents of the shaft and chamber were sieved through 10mm meshes and many animal bone fragments were found. The presence of 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century sherds on the floor of the chamber show that it was cleaned out before that time.

The morphology of this tomb suggests that it was a sophisticated form of Grave Type VI which was found in the Ibrim Wadi cemeteries outside the fortress. Its position in the temple suggests that it was not there when the temple was built, since the temple builders were careful to dig out

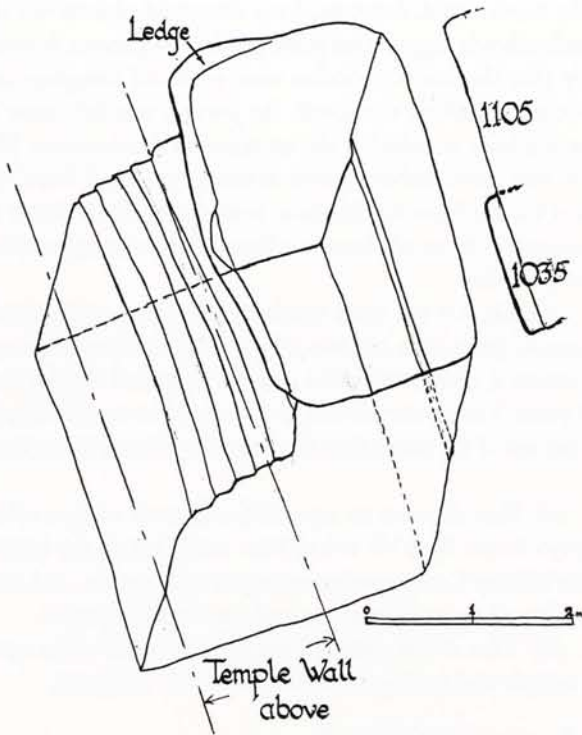


Figure 8. Grave 1106.

another grave which lay on the line chosen for the temple west wall (1090) and reinforce their wall footings there. Since the chamber of this tomb lies only 500mm under the temple wall it must always have been a structural hazard. It is possible that the tomb was also later than its close neighbour 1105 for it was fitted into the narrow space between that tomb and the temple's west wall and is shallower and less sophisticated in design.

#### Shaft-grave 1117

This lay east of, and lower on the hillside than, the other two on a slightly different alignment. It was cut into poorer quality rock and was of inferior workmanship perhaps because of the nature of the rock.

Its shaft was rectangular (2.4 x 1.2m) and cut to a depth of 1.9m; it had a crude roof ledge on the north-west side only. The chamber had been driven northwards for 2.5m under the north wall of the temple and was either unfinished or left in a rough-hewn state. The north end was much reduced in height and resembled a natural cave. No trace of its contents remained but, like the others, it had been empty in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was infilled. Unlike the other two, much of the filling seemed largely to be natural silting from the top of the shaft and it may have remained open for a long period.

If contemporary with 1105 it may have been intended as a balance to it in the eastern half of the temple court but was abandoned unfinished when the soft sandstone proved unsuitable.

#### Discussion of Type VI

Three graves of Type VI in Wadi Cemetery 192B and one in Wadi Cemetery 193 were found, three were like Grave 1091 in the Hilltop Cemetery: simple, rather shallow forms, but one (No. 1) was more elaborate, having two chambers from the base of the shaft; no finds came from it. Only in the Hilltop Cemetery was a Type VI grave quarried through a Type I example. This might well mean, like the pillaging of Meroitic graves in Wadi Cemetery 192, that earlier burials were being disregarded. In both Cemetery 192B and the Hilltop Cemetery the surface of the bedrock was levelled before Type VI graves were quarried.

It is unfortunate that the only three graves with completely undisturbed burials came from Cemetery 192B and there was some confusion in Emery's notes. Grave No. 9 was not included on his plan so that it is not known if it was inside or outside the enclosure wall but it was a child's grave, the objects with it showing that it belonged to the Early Post-Meroitic period. It, and Type I graves 4 and 5, show the burial rite, if these are not reused graves, to have been dorsal-extension with the head to the west and the hands on the pelvis. Grave 8, a Type I grave, sealed by pillaged Meroitic stelae, is shown (Mills 1982, pl. XLVI) without burials although the notes state that it contained an adult female and two infants; it lay outside the enclosure but on the same sandstone outcrop beneath a building of Early Christian date. An additional grave (10) is not shown on the plan but contained the scattered bones of an adult male and female and 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century artefacts (*ibid*, 43). Emery's field diary mentioned that the scattered remains of inhumations in the rectangular enclosure showed signs of mummification but there is no mention of anything similar in the notes on the intact burials. It is possible that the whole of complex 192B belongs to 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries and should be considered as contemporary with the Hilltop Cemetery, perhaps after the temple was built over part of it.

It is possible that at some time before the decision to build a temple on the peninsula was taken, an area at what was to be its centre was levelled leaving a zone of irregular rock at least 2m high in places to the west and south; parts of this were later incorporated into the temple pylon and west wall. If so the levelled area probably extended from round the great polygonal shaft (No. 1127) southwards for some 10m and was up to 10m wide. Its southern limit would have been the 250mm slope up to the higher bedrock level found in the temple court and discussed above. If so the 30mm high plinth under the temple's north wall must have been made later.

From the levelled surface the three Type VI graves were quarried, their shaft-mouths showing the ledges for their cover-stones. Orientated NE-SW two were more elaborate and sophisticated than any other graves in the three cemeteries but no traces of any superstructures were found. The 250mm of sandy deposit between them and the step in the

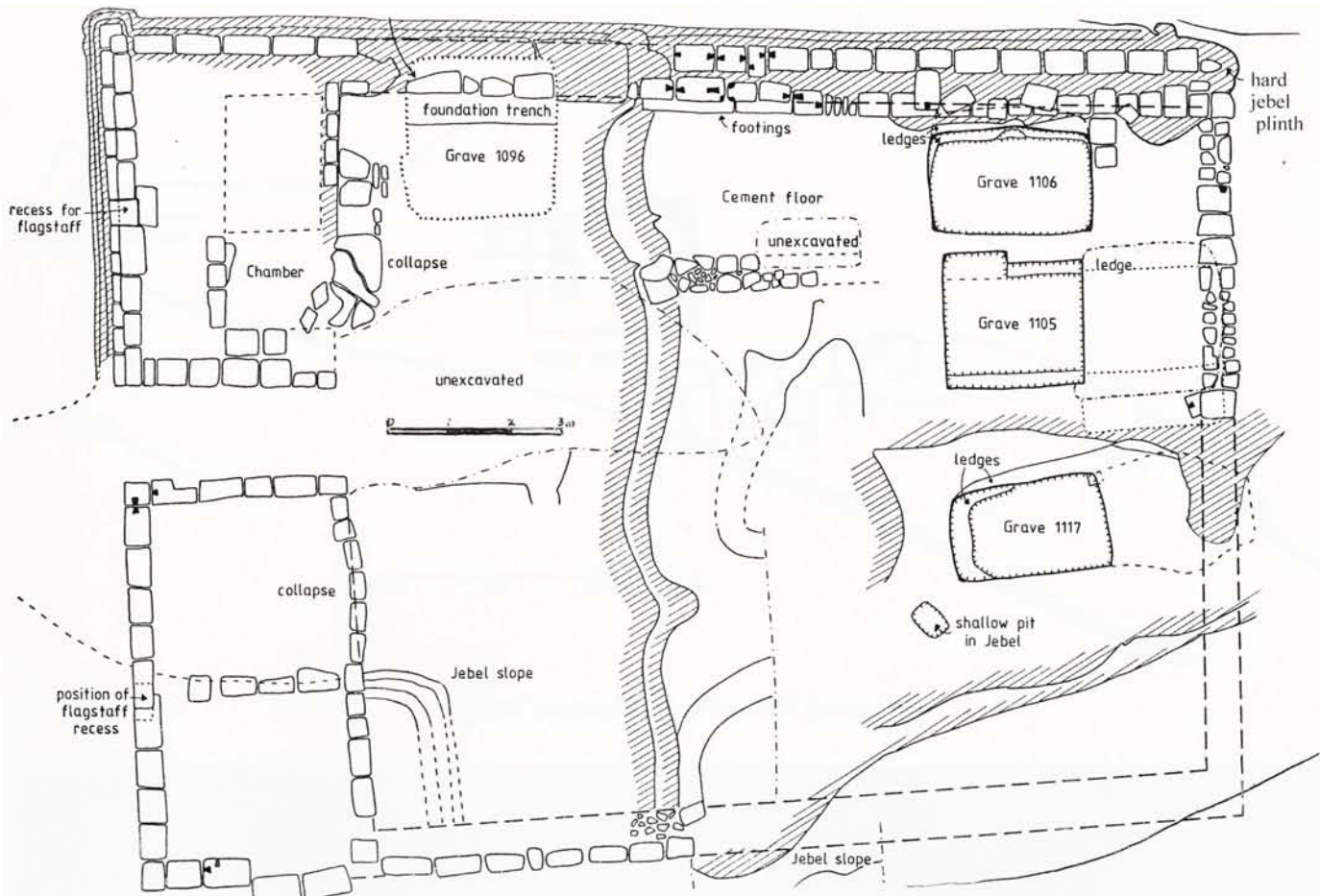


Figure 9. Plan of Temple 1.

bedrock to the floor of the temple court contained only Early Post-Meroitic sherds.

The Hilltop Cemetery within the fortress was in use from at least the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and the graves were spread over some 20% of the hilltop, all being quarried wholly or partly in hard rock. Type I graves were certainly the oldest but, as in the Wadi cemeteries, Type VI graves were found among them. In Wadi Cemetery 192B an elaborate Type VI grave (No. 1) lay on the central axis of the cemetery while another (Grave 9), the only one with artefacts, either lay within or beside it.

#### Phase II, Temple 1 (Fig. 9)

A preliminary study of the temple had been made in 1964 by G. Dale (mss notes). It involved clearing rubble from the pylon and planning the Ottoman (then thought Christian) house in the interior.

##### *Levelling the site.*

When the decision to build was taken the area chosen was neither central to the peninsula (Fig. 10), nor level, nor confined to the hard sandstone. This caused considerable difficulties since up to 2m of concreted sandstone had to be quarried away in the west and south to make a level space and over 2m of unstable friable sandstone dug through in the

east to find a solid foundation for the pylon and the east wall of the temple. To the south, in front of the pylon, an area of at least 10 x 20m was levelled (it may continue under the unexcavated Ottoman garrison houses further south) and a further area not less than 12 x 3m (collapse on the cliff edge has probably destroyed several metres) to the west of the temple. In the process five Type I graves (Nos 1086-89) outside the temple had their shafts truncated and two more (1135 and 1096) were destroyed in the temple. Today, in front of the eastern half of the temple the hillside slopes steeply, but this may be due to later quarrying.

##### *Construction.*

Before being flooded in 1972 this temple was one of the most impressive features of the fortress (Plate 2), its pylon being substantially intact and its west wall standing 6m high; it was remarked on by many visitors. It had been much used by the Ottoman garrison in the 16-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, first it would seem as a military store, the Type VI tombs being cleaned out as cellars, and then in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a dwelling when the tombs were backfilled and floors laid over them. The Ottoman rebuilding of the east wall on a new alignment led to misunderstandings of its plan in the 1963 and later surveys. No excavation was undertaken until 1986 when it had emerged from the waters of Lake Nasser as a

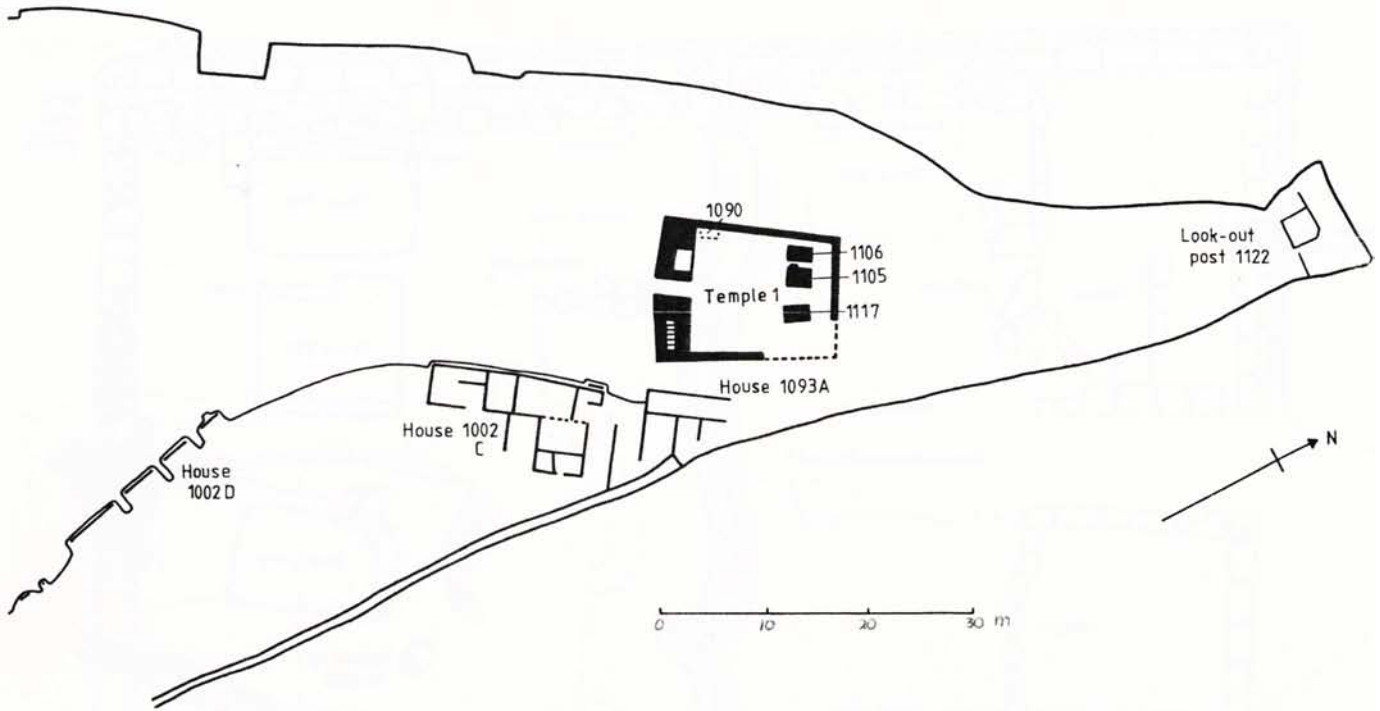


Figure 10. The north-east peninsula and Temple 1.



Plate 2. Temple 1, the pylon façade in 1963 showing the poorly rebuilt Ottoman reconstruction for Houses B-87/88.

heap of rubble with only the pylon preserving its shape. In 1986 all except 15% was excavated and beneath the rubble the foundations and lower courses of the walls, as well as areas of the floors, were found (Colour Plate XXVII).

On a levelled area at the centre of the peninsula the temple was laid out on a NE-SW axis. It must have been laid out as the levelling took place, for the west and north walls stood on a plinth of bedrock, as did part of the pylon. It faced, at a distance of 110m, the entrance to the contemporary Temple 6 (Driskel *et al.* 1988) and it comprised a pylon entered through a central passageway and a single trapezoid 10.4 x 13.4m court or hall. No evidence of columns to support a roof was found in the court/hall but these may well have been removed in the Ottoman reconstructions. A fine window-grill was found in the debris of the east wall and suggests that some part of the court/hall was roofed.

#### *The Pylon*

This was 26m long and 3m thick. The levelling of the area had obviously taken place when the location of the pylon had been decided, for bedrock had not been quarried under it and at the west end still stood 2m high, forming part of it. The central and western parts of its facade were faced with ashlar blocks of sandstone still standing eight courses high in 1963, in which were flagpole sockets on either side of the central doorway which was 1.5m wide with a plain lintel; pink mortar had been used to bed the ashlar. A further eight courses in smaller ashlar still survived above the door and might have been a repair. The rear and eastern part of the pylon was much damaged and was irregularly recessed with a staircase and small chamber inside its upper structure which might have been part of the Ottoman reconstruction.

Between the two facades the infilling was of roughly shaped blocks of stone. Ashlar blocks lined and floored the passage through it from the door and large slabs had roofed it. The base of the pylon at its south-east end was shown in 1986 to have been built up through 2m of friable rock from a terrace further down the steep hillside. Dales' 1963 drawing shows clearly where the hard rock ended.

#### *The Court or Hall*

This was built at the same time as the pylon, in part over previously unlevelled rock.

#### *The West Wall (Fig. 11)*

This had stood nearly 6m high for its entire length in 1963 but had largely collapsed by 1969; it was flooded in 1971, after which it had collapsed outwards leaving its foundations and two lowest courses intact in the rubble. As in the pylon, the undulating surface of the bedrock had not been levelled under the wall but had been trimmed in two areas of the plinth which were 1.8m wide and 0.5m high. The spaces in-between had been filled with large squared stone blocks. On this foundation a 1m wide wall had been erected, made of two rows of well dressed reused ashlar with smaller stones between. These had old tie sockets which in some cases were reused for wooden ties. Two of the blocks (removed in 1964) had New Kingdom inscriptions including the cartouche of Rameses IV. This was identified as coming from an Amun Temple (Plumley 1964, 3-4). At the north end of the wall the rock-cut plinth showed the corner to the North Wall. Sherds of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century pottery came from Grave 1090 under and in the foundations of the wall (Fig. 12). The narrower northwards extension of the wall, included in the temple in the early surveys, was proved part of the Ottoman

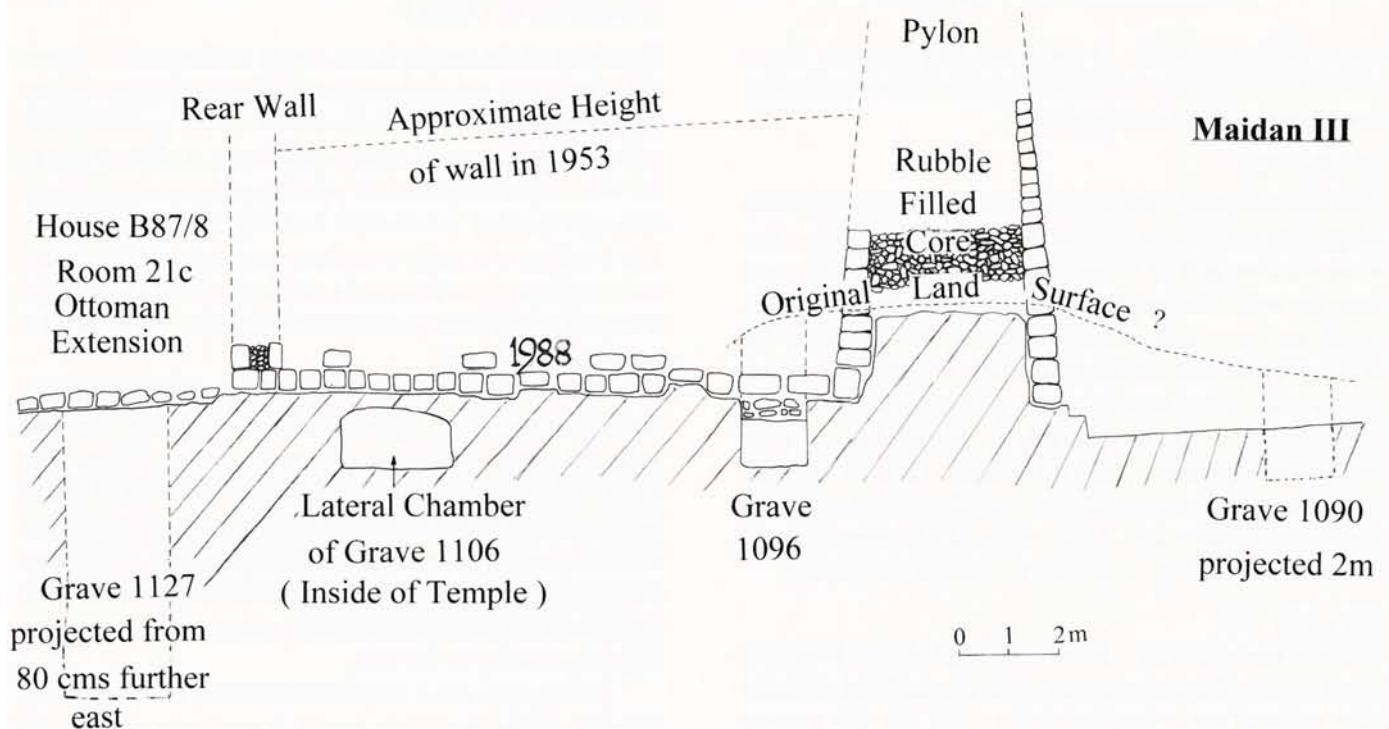


Figure 11. Section along the west wall of Temple 1.

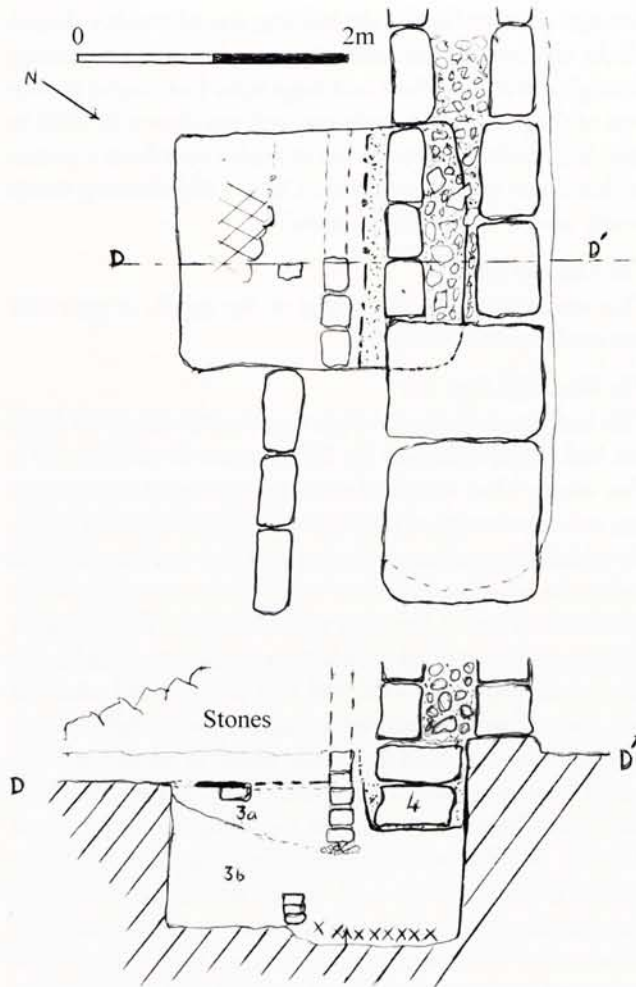


Figure 12. Grave 1090 below temple wall and Ottoman houses. (xxxx = 4-5<sup>th</sup> century pottery).

house B87, Room 21c. It had been laid out over Grave 1090 which had been half cleaned out to allow the foundation of the wall to be strengthened.

#### *The East Wall*

This had collapsed outwards in antiquity, the debris from it lying down the eastern hillside; among the blocks was a fine stone window grill of Meroitic type which may have come from the wall. The wall had been rebuilt in Ottoman times, mostly on a new and curving alignment. In 1986 some 4m of the original wall was exposed where it joined the pylon. At this point it had been necessary to dig down 2m through friable sandstone to find a suitable foundation base on a 2m wide, man-made terrace, in hard bedrock. Here a 1.7m wide wall, also of large reused blocks (1 x 0.7 x 0.4m), was built parallel to the west wall. Many ashlar blocks were scattered down the hillside but none with tie-sockets were found.

#### *The North Wall*

This was recognised by a 30mm high wall plinth of bedrock left at its junction with the west wall. The wall had probably been removed to its bottom course when the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman house was built over it. It was 450mm wide and

was traced for 6m, being composed of a row of ashlar blocks, large ones, like those of the west wall, being alternated with pairs of smaller ones; none had tie-sockets. Towards the south-east corner a stratum of soft sandstone was encountered and here, where the hillside suddenly steepens, the wall had collapsed but had probably required a 2m deep foundation trench like the east wall.

#### *The Interior (Colour Plate XXVII)*

This had been partly sheltered from wave action when submerged and small areas of stratified floor deposits were found. Beneath the Ottoman floors two phases, both with only Post-Meroitic sherds, were found. The bedrock proved to have two levelled surfaces, the northern half 200mm lower than the southern. The lower surface was hard sandstone with a slope through friable sandstone to reach the upper one. At right angles to this face in the northern half a 50mm high by 300mm wide plinth had been left on which a 250mm wide wall of small ashlar blocks had been built across the area; only a 2m stretch of two courses remained. It was aligned to the western edge of Grave 1105.

On the upper, southern half, whose surface sloped gently to the east, a series of two fine cement floors had been laid and had continued over the 250mm wide wall stub and above the earlier surface, sealing 250mm of silty deposit which contained only 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century sherds. The floor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman house B80 was 150mm above the temple floor but no Christian or Islamic period artefacts were found between them although buildings of those periods were found elsewhere on the peninsula; all deposits were sieved through 10mm sieves.

#### Discussion of Phase II

The siting of the temple is not easy to understand. It is possible that it was not realised that the hard sandstone stratum did not extend over the eastern third of the peninsula but even if only discovered when work began, a shift of 4m to the west would have sited the whole temple upon solid bedrock and avoided much extra building and later collapse. The levelling of a wider area than was necessary for the actual temple partly in front and partly west of it is also strange. It caused much extra work but still left the temple with a weak base on the east.

The levelling not only destroyed the upper parts of the shafts of several Type I graves but also resulted in the west wall, and grave 1105, being laid out over two of them. The floors of the temple did not survive above the Type VI graves but it is probable that they continued up to them. The north wall excluded the great polygonal shaft grave (No. 1127) from the temple; it seems probable that the earlier graves had little significance for the temple-builders, except perhaps for some lingering sanctity in the area.

The temple was a major construction, built with considerable skill to an archaic model. A good part of the stone used came from cannibalising earlier buildings, one of them

at least a late New Kingdom one.

The style of the temple is quite different from that of Temple 6 which it faces along the hilltop and represents a different tradition. Since Temple 1 belongs only to the last two centuries before the acceptance of Christianity by Nobatian monarchs it would appear to be a traditionalism looking back to Meroitic and even earlier Egyptian models. The most elaborate grave on the hilltop, No 1105, lies within the temple and, unless reused, is similarly archaic in style.

No traces of roof supporting columns were found in the temple although an empty space on the main axis opposite the entrance and between graves 1105 and 1107 might have marked the site of a shrine. The location of the temple in an élite cemetery within the fortress and the graves within it show that it was a mortuary temple and if so it could not have been intended for less than members of a wealthy non-Christian élite. Elsewhere in the fortress the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries are notable for the high quality of their secular buildings. The century *c.* AD 450-550, 'the century of official peace', (see below) was one in which connections with Egypt, particularly the religious establishment at Philae, was strong and, as at Kalabsha, Egyptian masons may have been employed whether they came as refugees from an increasingly Christian Egypt or merely as highly skilled workmen. Török (1997, 501 and 519) considered 'one room, pyloned and usually columned temples' to have been shaped by the cult practices connected with Nubian gods. The absence of a *temenos* wall and any decoration may indicate that the temple was never completed.

In the light of the new evidence from the fortress of Qasr Ibrim, of both mortuary practices and temple-building in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries, it would seem that the considerable changes that took place were inspired by much earlier Meroitic traditions.

These changes affected both the Hilltop and Wadi cemeteries, and stratigraphic evidence in the former suggests that a revision of their chronology is necessary. The Type VI graves of the Hilltop and Wadi cemeteries, especially complex 192B (Mills 1982, 41-3) belong to the Post-Meroitic rather than the Meroitic period. The characteristics of the rites were only partly a continuation of the local Late Meroitic ones. The primary characteristic of the new rites was that shaft graves were located on hard sandstone where only with great labour and expertise could they be quarried and no traces of superstructures have been found.

Type VI graves, often deeper than Type I, had one or more lateral chambers at the level of the base of the shaft and on the hilltop one (No. 1105) was cut through a Type I grave. In both the Hilltop and Wadi Cemetery 192 they were scattered among Type I graves and none had evidence of tumuli over them. Grave 1105, the most elaborate of all, had Late Post-Meroitic pottery in it and must have been open and in use after Temple I was built.

Two temples (1 and 6) in the fortress have been shown by excavation to have been in existence in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>

centuries. Temple I, built in a traditional style with a massive pylon as a mortuary temple, is unique to Qasr Ibrim in this period while Temple 6, a much older temple built in a less monumental style, ended by being deliberately desecrated, presumably in the Early Christian period. The two temples faced each other along a 110m axis.

Temple 1 was built after the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the ceramics suggest, most probably in the century *c.* AD 453-550, which was the 'century of official peace' in Lower Nubia negotiated by Maximinus and which was reinforced by Roman subsidies to the Kings of Nobatia. Extensive trade and, surprisingly, religious tolerance unaffected by the triumph of Christianity in Egypt, brought prosperity to the region and was probably responsible for this last expression of non-Christian faith.

The Ibrim complex is more completely known than the other contemporary sites since not only the cemeteries but the fortified settlement and the Hilltop Cemetery within it, to which they certainly belonged, have been extensively and recently excavated. Although ceramic fashions changed, a religious identity and a social structure in which an élite perpetuated and developed mortuary practices and temples looking back to an imperial past were able to develop.

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Plate XXVII. Qasr Ibrim. Temple I during excavation.

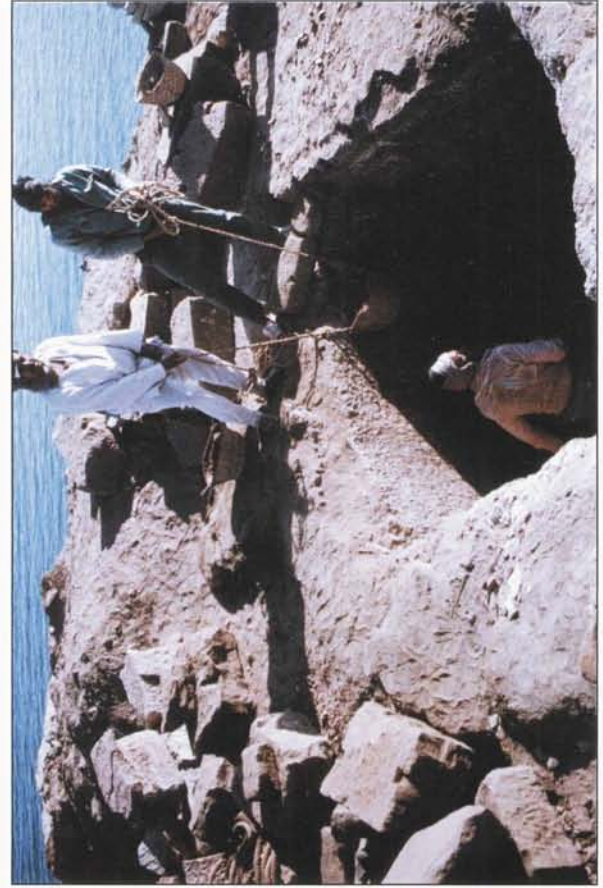


Plate XXVIII. Grave 1127 during excavation.

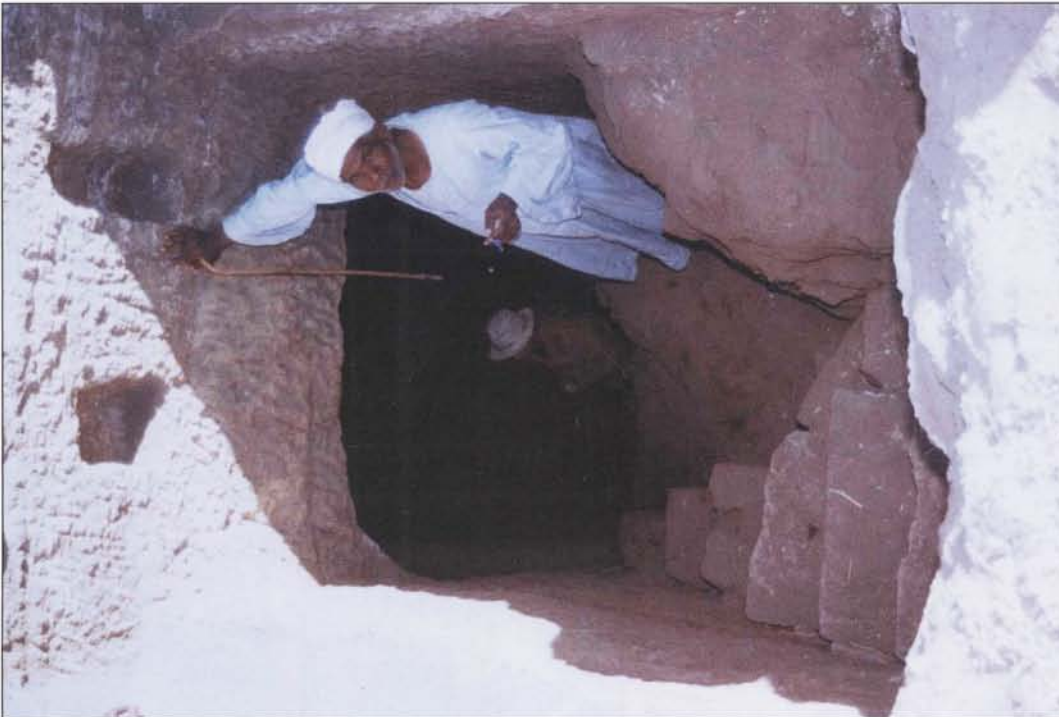


Plate XXVI Qasr Ibrim. Type VI Grave 1105. Entrance shaft showing floor beam sockets.