

SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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Front cover: QSAP Dam-Debba Archaeological Survey Project. Site DS7, Ganati: the re-erected columns in the church (photo: Fawzi Hassan Bakhiet).

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The 2015 Season of Excavations at Kurgus

Andrew Ginns

Introduction

Kurgus is located 40km south of Abu Hamed on the east bank of the Nile between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts. The first campaign of archaeological investigation conducted at Kurgus by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS) focussed on the epigraphy of KRG1, the Hagr el-Merwa (Davies 1998; 2001; 2003) and the survey and characterisation of the fort KRG2 and cemetery KRG3 along with a preliminary survey of the region (Welsby Sjöström 1998; 2001; 2003; 2014).

The first season of the second campaign of archaeological excavation was undertaken by Scott Haddow and Matthew Nicholas. Two sites were investigated: the large medieval fort KRG2 and the multi-period cemetery KRG3 (Haddow and Nicholas 2014). This season excavations were continued in the fort and the cemetery.

Excavations in the Cemetery KRG3

The cemetery is located on the eastern slope of the river valley, above the level of the ancient floodplain. Over 300 grave monuments were present, widely disbursed over an area of approximately 2000m². The burial monuments present displayed a variety of styles; a degree of zoning of those styles was evident. An extended use-life of the cemetery spanning a range of periods is implied by the differing monument types while the zoning implies different areas of the cemetery being used in different periods. The great majority of monuments were circular tumuli. The latest burial monuments present were those of the Christian box grave type.

The objectives of the archaeological investigation of the cemetery in 2015 were little changed from those set out for the 2014 season, the aim being to investigate a greater number the different grave types in order to gain a better understanding of the dating and development of the cemetery. An increase in the excavation sample size of each grave type will give a greater chance of providing dateable artefacts as well as larger skeletal samples for future studies concerning disease, diet, migration and biological affinities. It is hoped that the work at Kurgus will aid the development of a grave type chronology for this little studied region of the Nile.

Results

To augment the population sample recovered in 2014, the 2015 field season also concentrated primarily on the central area of the cemetery. This area was characterised by its Christian box graves on the same archaeological horizon as circular grave monuments. The circular tumuli of this area of the site are perhaps the latest of the Pre-Christian monuments present within the cemetery.

Of the six remaining box-grave monuments present, five were of a typical rectangular form exhibiting vertical sides constructed of large sub-square stones with interiors of smaller stones, gravel and earth. The other box-grave was constructed of medium-sized stones formed into a sub-rectangular based mound, a construction technique owing more to earlier tumuli construction than that of the typical box-grave.

The burials beneath the rectangular monuments had all been laid in deep, narrow, east-west aligned rectangular grave cuts. The deceased had been laid in supine positions with their heads at the west end. Large flat blocking stones had been placed across the width of the grave cut on ledges a little above the height of the burials, leaving the bodies in a void.

Of the several dozen tumuli corresponding to Types 1 and 2¹ within the central area of the cemetery, seven were excavated in 2015. These tumuli had circular bases with steep sides constructed of stones. They either had domed stone tops or flat upper surfaces of earth and smaller stones. It may be that where tumuli of this type exhibited flat tops it was the result of grave robbing rather than it being a genuine tumulus type. The associated grave cuts beneath these tumuli were either circular pits with rounded bases and concave sides or sub-rectangular with fairly steep sides. The bodies were generally laid within them on their sides with legs contracted and their heads to the west.

It was noted during excavation that most of the burials under these tumuli had been robbed. Interestingly, the lower portions of the skeletons usually remained *in situ* with only the upper portions being disturbed. This was presumably because the grave goods being sought by robbers were around the head area. Skulls were on a number of occasions present in an intact state in the robber pit backfill. A large amount of bones from at least four individuals were present within two of the tumuli excavated; these did not derive from the burials associated with those monuments.

As identified by the excavation team in 2014, this central area of the cemetery had tumuli constructed on two distinct archaeological horizons. The tumuli and box-graves discussed above sat on the upper of these horizons. The presence of these tumuli on the same horizon as the box-graves is suggestive of them being from a period not too distant from the Medieval Christian era. Unfortunately no finds were found within the tumuli or associated graves to provide dating evidence.

In this area was a single example of a small construction built against the east side of a large circular tumulus. This feature had several flat rocks arranged to form its upper surface, creating a platform raised up from the ground surface of the cemetery (Plate 1). A large amount of smooth river pebbles was used to adorn the feature's sides and the spaces between the flat rocks. The time spent creating this feature would have

¹ All type number in this report refer to the classification published by Welsby Sjöström (2001).



Plate 1. Rock platform construction.

been not inconsiderable. Its function would seemingly be as a platform on which to leave offerings or to place lamps.

Upon removing tumuli from this area of the cemetery a further eight burials were uncovered. These burials no longer had grave monuments and were cut into the lower of the archaeological horizons. It seems likely that the upper horizon, a layer 100mm thick, was formed during the demolition of earlier tumuli with the rocks from those tumuli reused elsewhere. Seven of these earlier graves exhibited the same characteristics as those of the tumuli burials discussed above. A single infant burial within a circular pit had flat slabs placed upright against its sides (Plate 2). Dating of these earlier graves is again problematic due to the absence of finds.



Plate 2. Burial F1066. Circular grave pit lined with slabs.

Present in the vicinity of the box-graves and Types 1 and 2 tumuli was a single Type 3 monument, F127. This was a flat ring of small and medium rocks with no upstanding monument directly over the grave. The grave cut was a circular pit with concave sides and a rounded base. Due to robbing, the original burial position of the infant remains could not be ascertained.

A little to the south of the central area of the cemetery, two tumuli with differing characteristics were investigated. Both were constructed of large rocks. F178 was circular in plan and dome shaped; this contained a child burial laid in

the supine position with the head to the west in an east-west aligned rectangular cut. Tumulus F163 was also domed but was oval in plan, 4m in length and 1.5m high (Plate 3). This had an east-west aligned rectangular grave cut with lower



Plate 3. Quarter section through the oval tumulus F163.

blocking stones protecting a burial in a supine position with the head to the west. These graves were thus exhibiting some characteristics of Christian burials while retaining pre-Christian style tumuli monuments.

Located lower down the slope of the cemetery, 100m to the south west of the dense central area were around two dozen tumuli of type 5. These are characterised by being of limited height with gently sloped sides and flat tops (Plate 4). The diameters of tumuli over child or infant burials were 1.5-2m, the tumuli over adult burials averaged 7m. They were constructed of medium-sized rocks and earth.



Plate 4. Type 5 tumuli.

Five of this type were investigated, two containing adults and three infants. All the burials had been placed within circular grave pits with concave sides and rounded bases. These burials had been disturbed by robbing activity to varying degrees. The present skeletal remains indicated that burials associated with this tumulus type were laid on their sides with the heads to the west. Fish bones were found within one of the infant graves.

Grave catalogue

F124. Rectangular box-grave monument. The grave was sealed by large, flat blocking stones placed across the width



of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The burial contained an adult in an extended supine position with the head at the west end.

F123. Rectangular box-grave monument. The grave was sealed by large flat blocking stones placed across the width of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The burial contained an adult in an extended supine position with the head at the west end (Plate 5).



Plate 5. Detail of the shroud binding string within grave F123.

F1012. No monument present. The body of an adult had been laid with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular grave pit with concave sides and a rounded base.

F1013. Type 1 rock dome tumulus constructed of large angular rocks. The body of an adult was laid in a supine position with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a sub-rectangular grave pit (Plate 6).



Plate 6. F1013 burial.

F118. Rectangular box-grave monument. The grave was sealed by large flat blocking stones placed across the width of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The body of an adult had been laid in an extended supine position with the head at the west end.

F1017. No monument present. The body of an adult was laid in a supine position in an oval grave pit with its legs contracted and the head to the west.

F1018. No monument present. The body of an adult had been laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular grave pit with concave sides and a rounded base.

F282. Type 2 rock tumulus with steep sides constructed of large rocks with a flattish top of smaller rocks. The body of an adult had been laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular grave pit with concave sides and a rounded base. Bones of a further two individuals were present within a robber pit cut through the tumulus structure.

F276. Demolition deposit. The articulated skeletal remains of a child were present on the level of the natural horizon under the tumulus demolition deposits. The body had been moved from its original location not long after burial.

F291. Type 2 rock tumulus with steep sides constructed of large rocks with a flattish top of smaller rocks. The body of an adult had been laid in a supine position with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular grave pit with concave sides and a rounded base. Bones of a further two individuals were present within demolition deposits directly east of this monument.

F292. Type 2 rock tumulus with steep sides constructed of large rocks; the centre of the monument had been robbed away. The body of an adult had been laid within a circular grave pit with concave sides and a rounded base. Its torso was in a prone position, its legs were contracted and its head was to the west.

F113. Type 2 rock tumulus with steep sides constructed of large rocks with a flattish top of smaller rocks. The body of an adult had been laid on its left side with its legs contracted (Plate 7). The grave cut was a circular pit with concave sides and a rounded base. This monument abutted F300 and was abutted by F114 (Plate 8). A family connection between the individuals buried under these monuments seems probable.



Plate 7. F113 burial.

F1047. No monument present. The body of a neonate had been laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular pit with concave sides and a rounded base.



Plate 8. Tumuli F113, F114 and F300.

F300. Type 1 dome-shaped tumulus constructed of large angular rocks. The body of an infant had been laid on its left side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular pit with concave sides and a rounded base. This monument was abutted by F113.

F114. Type 2 rock tumulus with steep sides constructed of large rocks with a flattish top of smaller rocks. The body of an infant had been laid on its left side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a sub-rectangular grave pit. This burial truncated almost entirely an earlier infant burial. It was also located directly above an earlier burial of an infant laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a sub-rectangular grave cut. This monument abutted F113.

F129. Rectangular box-grave monument. The grave was sealed by large, flat blocking stones placed across the width of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The burial contained an adult in an extended supine position with the head at the west end.

F128. Sub-rectangular box-grave monument. The grave was sealed by large, flat blocking stones placed across the width of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The burial contained an adult in an extended supine position with the head at the west end.

F121. Rectangular box-grave monument. The grave was sealed by large, flat blocking stones placed across the width of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The burial contained an adult in an extended supine position with the head at the west end.

F127. Type 3 rock tumulus, a flat ring of small and medium rocks with no upstanding monument directly over the grave (Plate 9). The grave cut was a circular pit with concave sides and a rounded base. Due to robbing, the original burial position of the infant remains could not be ascertained.

F1022. No monument. The body of an adult had been laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular grave pit with concave sides and a rounded base.

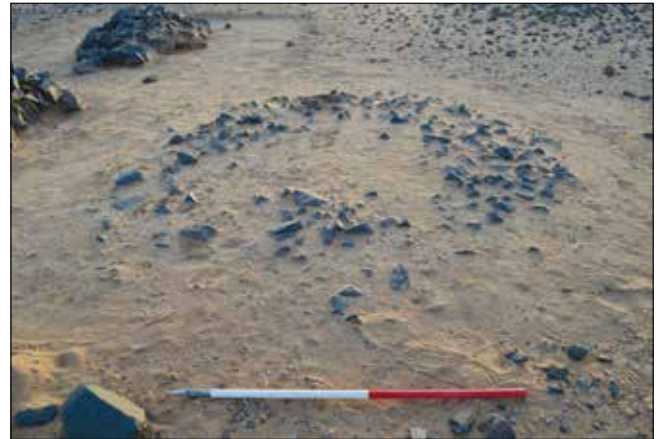


Plate 9. F127 tumulus.

F90. Type 5 tumulus of rocks and earth formed into a circular monument of limited height with gently sloped sides and flat top. The body of a neonate had been laid within a small circular pit with sides lined with sub-rectangular stones (Plate 10). Due to disturbance the original position of the body could not be ascertained.



Plate 10. F90 burial.

F91. Type 5 tumulus with rocks and dirt formed into a circular monument of limited height with gently sloped sides and flat top. The body of a neonate had been laid within a small circular pit with concave sides and a flat base. Due to robbing the original position of the body could not be ascertained.

F92. Type 5 tumulus with rocks and earth formed into a circular monument of limited height with gently sloped sides and flat top. Due to robbing activity no skeletal material was present.

F93. Type 5 tumulus with rocks and earth formed into a circular monument of limited height with gently sloped sides and flat top. The body of an adult had been laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a circular pit with concave sides and a flat base.

F94. Type 5 tumulus with rocks and earth formed into a circular monument of limited height with gently sloped sides and flat top. The body of an adult had been laid within



a circular pit with concave sides and a flat base. Due to robbing the original burial position of the individual could not be ascertained.

F163. Oval-shaped dome cairn constructed of large angular rocks. The grave was a narrow rectangular shape sealed by large, flat blocking stones placed across the width of the cut on ledges a little above the level of the burial. The burial contained an adult in an extended supine position with the head at the west end.

F178. Circular dome cairn constructed of large angular rocks. The body of an infant had been laid in a supine position with the head to the west in a rectangular cut.

F1066. No monument. The body of an infant had been laid on its right side with its legs contracted and its head to the west within a small circular pit with sides lined with sub-rectangular rocks.

Excavations at Fort KRG2

The fort is located approximately 50m east from the current Nile bank and 1.2km south west of cemetery KRG3.

Excavation and survey during previous seasons have given an idea of its general characteristics, scale and date. The fort was roughly square with the main defensive walls having lengths of 72m. At each corner projected large circular towers; rectangular towers projected from the mid points of the main walls.

The objective of the archaeological investigation at the fort in 2015 was to locate, expose and map the extent of the main body of the site. This primarily necessitated the excavation of the main defensive walls and towers of the complex (Figure 1). As well as being a study in its own right this would also allow us to evaluate the scale of the interior settlement area of the fort, thus giving an indication as to the potential for future work within the fort interior.

Results

A great deal of the work required to achieve the main aim was simply shifting sand and collapse deposits from the original structure. As noted in reports from earlier seasons, the defensive walls are constructed of mud brick and have widths of 5m. The degree of preservation varied across the site, the north side having the best preservation (possibly 4-5m elevation) and the remains gradually deteriorating southwards. The southern walls had suffered badly from robber activity; in places robber pits extended down to the lower rock coursing. It was observed that the first metre of wall height had been constructed of rocks.

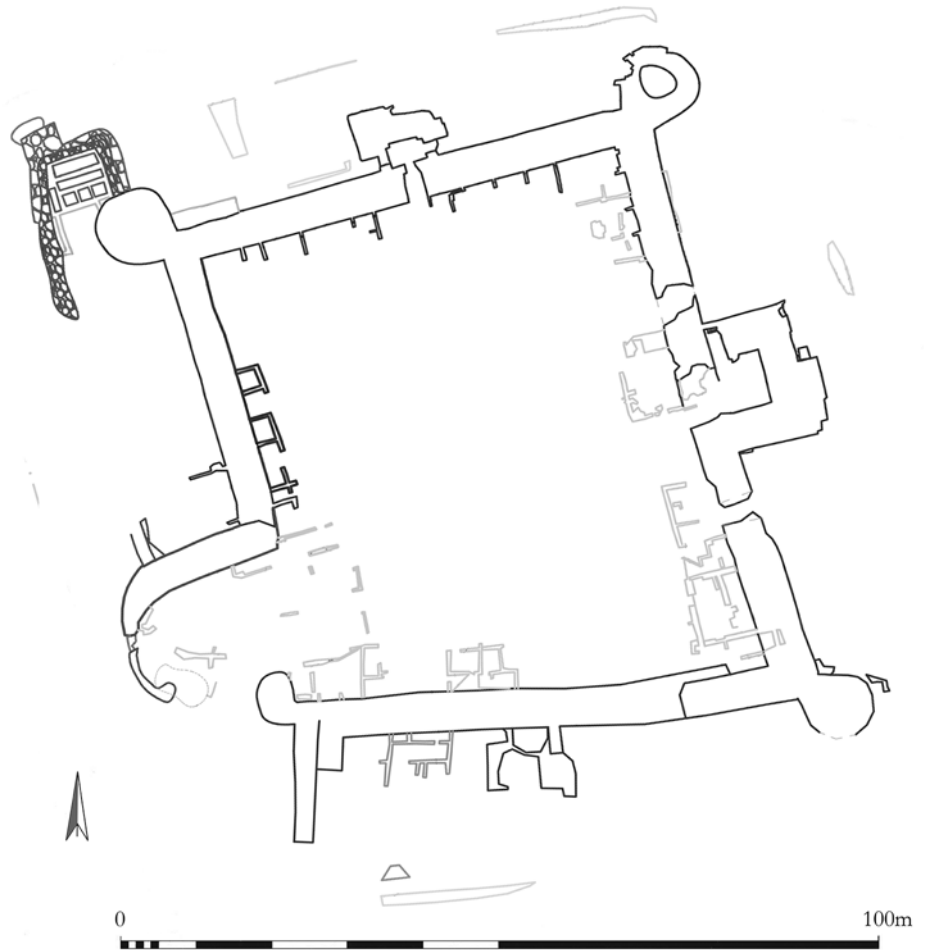


Figure 1. Site plan – scale 1:1000.

Due to the size of the fort structure it was not considered practical or indeed necessary to excavate all the walls down to their foundations. However, the south-eastern tower was indeed excavated to its foundations (Plate 11); it had been robbed down to just above that level. The overlying sand deposits in that area were up to 4m thick, ensuring that the excavation area would rapidly backfill when left unattended. It was, therefore, deemed expedient to complete the excavation of the south-eastern tower this season. Little remained of the mud brick portions of the structure above the intact lower rock courses.



Plate 11. South-eastern angle tower.

The tower had been constructed on an archaeologically sterile compact sand horizon. Early Christian ceramic sherds were present in the lowest deposits abutting the wall. Cut into the natural a little over 1m to the east of the tower was a narrow rectangular cut aligned north west-south east. The deposits above it suggest that it was broadly contemporary with the foundation of the fort. This would appear to have been a grave which had been disturbed (Plate 12). It contained a few bones from its burial.

In the vicinity of the grave, but above a metre of build-up deposits, were remnants of two stone walls. While the remains were not extensive enough to indicate their purposes, they do imply activity around the exterior of the fort. It is quite probable that during many periods of the fort's use, the interior space was at a premium. It seems likely that animal pens at the least would have been outside its confines.



Plate 12. The possible grave and wall remnants constructed above a metre of build-up deposits.

Also constructed on roughly a metre of build-up deposits was a buttress against the south-eastern tower. This was constructed of mud bricks; the surviving remnants of it were present where the tower joins the eastern curtain wall of the fort. The structure had a width of a little over a metre and presumably was designed to reinforcing the wall at this point (Plate 13).

The north-eastern tower had been largely visible at the time of the original SARS survey. During 2015 it was briefly cleaned, elucidating a little more about its characteristics (Plate 14). Unlike the north-western tower (excavated in 2014) this tower contained a room. The room was a sub-circular shape measuring roughly 5m in diameter. No evidence of an entrance to this room was present, any entrance must have been from a height now eroded/truncated. A second contrast in character that this tower exhibited from that of the north-western one was that its bricks were laid as rowlock headers aligned radially from the structure centre. The visible bricks of the north-western tower had been laid flat.



Plate 14. The north-eastern angle tower.

Plate 13. The later strengthening buttress against the south-eastern angle tower.



It may be that the style of brick coursing within the towers differed at various levels; presently not enough of the remains have been exposed to know whether or not this is the case.

Through the cleaning of the northern rectangular interval tower, it became apparent that this structure was actually an entrance. Access was gained through openings of 1.5m width in both the west and east sides of the structure, and then through a 1.5m gap in the main northern wall of the fort. At a later point these entrances had then been blocked with mud bricks, which sat on several metres of accumulated build-up deposits (Plate 15). The northern interval tower had a 12m east-west dimension and was 9m north-south

The eastern interval tower was 18m north-south by 11m east-west (Plate 16). It contained a rectangular room measuring 8m north-south by 6m east-west. It was accessed through a large opening in the main eastern fort wall. The walls of



Plate 15. Detail of the mud-brick blocking of the northern fort entrance; view looking east.

the tower surrounding the room maintained the 5m width of the main fort walls. Against the eastern outer face of the structure, two separate later phases of mud brick structure had been built. These would have strengthened the already substantial tower structure.



Plate 16. The massive eastern interval tower.

The main entrance to the fort was located on its west side. Excavations in this location have not yet fully exposed the remains of the original entrance. Exposed during the 2015 season was a massive mud-brick wall extending 20m west from the western main fort wall. This wall had a width of 5m for the majority of its length, narrowing abruptly towards its west end where the wall curved southwards

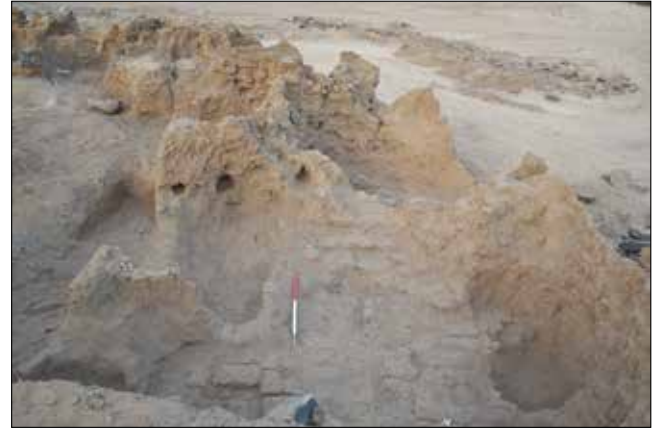


Plate 17. Heavily pitted remains of the curved western entrance defensive wall. View looking west.

(Plate 17). No opposing entrance structure of the same phase as this construction was encountered during excavations.

To the south of the western terminus of the curved entrance defensive wall were the remains of a stone-built structural addition. Its form was that of a north-south aligned wall of 500mm average width. It is probable that what remains of this is just the exterior face, the main body of the wall having been robbed away. This structure did not abut the curved mud brick entrance wall, the space between acting as an entrance during this period of use. At a later period this entrance had been blocked with a mud brick structure sitting on the deposits that had accumulated within it (Plate 18).

The original south-western tower was not encountered during excavation. At some point during the occupation of the fort, this tower along with the majority of the original southern wall had been replaced by a smaller south-western tower and a rebuilt southern wall (Plate 19). It is not currently understood why this would have occurred. The later phase south-western tower's lower portions were constructed of stone, with alternating courses of stretchers and rowlock mud



Plate 18. The curved mud-brick entrance defensive wall, later stone wall addition and mud-brick blocking of the entrance between those structures. View looking west.



Plate 19. Later phase/rebuilt south-western tower. View looking south. Note remnants of interior walls constructed on soft occupation deposits.

bricks laid over this. The location of this tower was north of the presumed position of the original tower. The secondary southern main wall of the fort was skewed from the original alignment of the first phase wall, reducing the interior space of the fort somewhat.

It is hoped that further excavation will reveal the remains of the original southern wall and of the south-western tower. Further excavation may also reveal when this rebuilding of the south-west area of the fort occurred and what necessitated it.

Of the same phase as the rebuild, were two mud-brick walls that seemingly comprised the remains of a further defensive enclosure adjoining the southern wall of the fort. Both walls were oriented at right angles to the rebuilt (skewed) southern wall. One wall ran southwards from the south-western tower, the other ran southwards from half way along the southern wall's length. The southern limits of this 'extension' were not fully exposed.

Noted in the original SARS work on this site was the existence of an outer curtain wall of mud brick. The southern rebuild of the fort's defences would have affected that curtain wall's southern portions to a large extent. It will be interesting to see if an outer curtain wall in this location was enlarged to enclose the 'extension' or was simply dispensed with.

Walls belonging to interior structures were encountered along every edge of the main defensive walls' inner faces. These walls all belonged to a phase much later than the original fort foundation; some are built directly on soft occupation deposits. Ceramic sherds suggest these interior walls would be of a Post-Classic Christian occupation. The walls of this phase abut the main defensive walls. These walls and, therefore, the rooms/buildings that they were a part of were not exposed this season. The study of the interior areas of the fort will be best reserved for a subsequent field season.

It is difficult to judge at this stage how much depth the interior stratigraphy has because the fort may not have been constructed on a flat surface. However, 3m of internal stratigraphy seems likely in most places with perhaps 5m possible in the north-western portions of the site. In the low lying

area inside the eastern perimeter wall of the fort, the trench opened by SARS in 2000 revealed the wall in that place surviving to 2m high (Welsby Sjöström 2001). It is probable that very many archaeological phases will be represented by the remains of the interior buildings and deposits. It is assumed that this site will have a complex stratigraphy that could well span the majority of the Medieval Christian period. A Post-Meroitic pre-fort phase was also encountered during the 2000 excavations.

Encountered during the removal of overburden from around the main walls were seven burials displaying Christian characteristics. These graves would surely have been cut from a horizon 1m or so above what is now remaining (Plate 20). We may assume that these burials belong to the very latest use of the fort or after its abandonment. The burials encountered were not confined to any particular area. It is feasible that up to a 100 further burials could be encountered



Plate 20. Burial present just below the surface of preservation within the fort's internal buildings.

during excavation of the fort's interior. The site (which most probably contained a church) may well have continued to have a certain religious significance after its use as a fortified settlement had ended.

As yet we know of no cemetery directly associated with the settlement phase of the fort. The handful of Christian box-grave burials present in the cemetery KRG3 indicate that it was not the main cemetery associated with the fort. A much larger cemetery must have been used for the large numbers of people who would have lived in and around the fort over its long period of occupation.

Ceramics

Petra Weschenfelder

The 2015 excavation season in the fort at Kurgus (KRG2) focused on the investigation of the fortifications. Through surface clearings of often several meters of sand numerous features of the walls and internal structures were recorded. Even though the sand accumulations often did not provide stratigraphic information, the pottery unearthed during the clearing can give an outline of the date range of the fortifica-



tions when compared to forms and decorations known from Christian sites elsewhere in the Nubian Nile Valley. Yet, as already pointed out in last year's report, the applicability of the ceramic chronology that was established for northern Nubia cannot be taken for granted (Weschenfelder 2014, 153).

Already last year's finds showed a repertoire of ceramics typical of habitation sites with storage jars, cooking bowls, etc. From among this year's finds can be added a lamp and a small heavily blacked and cracked globular jar that might have served the same purpose (Figure 2 a and b).

Tying in with the results of the 2014 season (Weschenfelder 2014, 152f.) the use of the site during the Early to the Classic Christian Periods is suggested by a wide range of vessels (Figure 2 c-j). The Early Christian phase is attested by a stratified walking surface immediately outside the north-eastern tower (Figure 2 f and g). This trench did not provide evidence for the Post-Meroitic use of the site that is suggested by the first campaign's investigation (cf. Welsby Sjöström 1998; 2001).

The absence of ceramic evidence from the Post-Classic Christian period, which was noted during the 2014 season, can now be bridged with several fragments of vessels with sagging bases (Figure 2 k and l) – a feature that Jacke Phillips suggests can be dated to the Post-Classic Christian Period in the Dongola Reach (2003, 413). If this is also the case in the vicinity of the Fifth Cataract we have further support that the use of Kurgus' fort could extend into that period. The *qulla* type filter (Figure 2 m) could date to the same period, even though Phillips pointed out that they could also have already been in use during the Classic Christian period (Phillips 2003, 414).

Also found were fragments of a plain, heavily schist-tempered ware. This ware is comparable to Adams' ware H 15 which he attributes to the Post-Christian Period (1986, 434). It is further documented in the Dongola Reach and the Third Cataract (Edwards and Soghayroun el-Zein 2012, 202). In Kurgus the two fragments were of undecorated body sherds from hand-made vessels of *doka* form. As with most of the previously discussed pottery these fragments come from unstratified contexts, i.e. surface clearing. Nevertheless they suggest that use of the fort or at least the area of the fort in Kurgus extended beyond the Post-Classic Christian Period.

As already pointed out in the 2014 report (Weschenfelder 2014, 152) the inhabitants of the fort, as elsewhere in Christian Nubia, venerated the Archangel Michael. Several vessels bear his name scratched post-firing into their surfaces. While last year's excavation produced an example with a cryptogram of the archangel's name (Weschenfelder 2014, fig. 5a) this year we found also examples of Michael's name written as a monogram (Figure 2 n and o).

These monograms provide a link to the archaeological investigation of the cemetery KRG3. There a fragment of a bowl that can be interpreted as from among the repertoire of the Early Christian Period pottery was found among the stones of a box grave's superstructure (F1009; Figure 3 a).

By scratching, a monogram was incised post-firing into the outer plain surface. The 2015 excavations in the cemetery did not unearth complete vessels (cf. Haddow and Nicholas 2014, 142-147). The pottery was often very fragmentary and mostly occurred as single sherds of a vessel type in the backfill of a grave or of the superstructure. This is problematic for the dating of the excavated tumuli as such fragments in backfill of the grave or of the superstructure may not be contemporary with the burial event.

Of special interest was Krg3-2015-4.2 (Figure 3 b) which was produced in Pharaonic Egypt. It is the upper part of a jar or jug made of marl A (cf. Seiler 2012, 398f.). Since its complete form is uncertain it cannot definitively be attributed to a particular period. Our fragment, from within a tumulus superstructure, bears painted decoration: three parallel lines painted in black. Such decoration, together with the form of the vessel rim, might point towards the early 18th Dynasty up to Thutmose III date of manufacture as discussed by Bourriau. However, her example, item 150, is described as a jug and has one handle. Only about 30% of the circumference of our fragment is preserved so it might have had a handle, or even two. Furthermore item 150 bears a bichrome decoration (cf. Bourriau 1981a, 74, 78 item 150). Such bichrome decoration on these vessel forms is a continuation of a tradition from the Second Intermediate Period. During that period such vessel forms also occur in Egypt in graves of the Pan Grave culture and of the Kerma culture (Bourriau 1981b). A possible early 18th Dynasty dating would be particularly interesting at Kurgus in view of the proximity of the Hagr el-Merwa Thutmoside inscriptions (Davies 2001). However, even if produced during the 18th Dynasty, as it is only a single fragment in itself it does not necessarily provide evidence for direct contacts with Egypt nor can it be directly linked to the Egyptian presence at Kurgus evidenced by the Pharaonic inscriptions. Comparable types of vessels also occur frequently in Lower Nubian sites. Holthoer's study of Lower Nubian New Kingdom sites included several different vessel forms with or without handles that have decoration and rim type comparable to our fragment (i.e. Holthoer 1977, pls 32 and 39; see further examples i.e. from Aniba cf. Wolf 1935, 133, tbl. 82; Askut cf. Smith 1995, 144f., 147). These discussed examples, in Nubia as well as in Egypt (Bourriau 1981, item 264), were frequently also produced with Nile clays rather than with marl clays during the New Kingdom and could have been produced locally. The same superstructure that held our fragment also contained the fragment of bowl Krg3-2015-4.1 (Figure 3 c).

The remainder of the ceramics was less diagnostic. Due to the long use of the site, it is often hardly possible to directly link the pottery fragments and individual graves. Finds like the possibly Early Christian bowl with the monogram could be linked to box-grave superstructure. The evidence is less reliable when sherds come from the otherwise ubiquitous tumuli or even from the collapse of such superstructures. Further excavations may provide more useful chronological data.

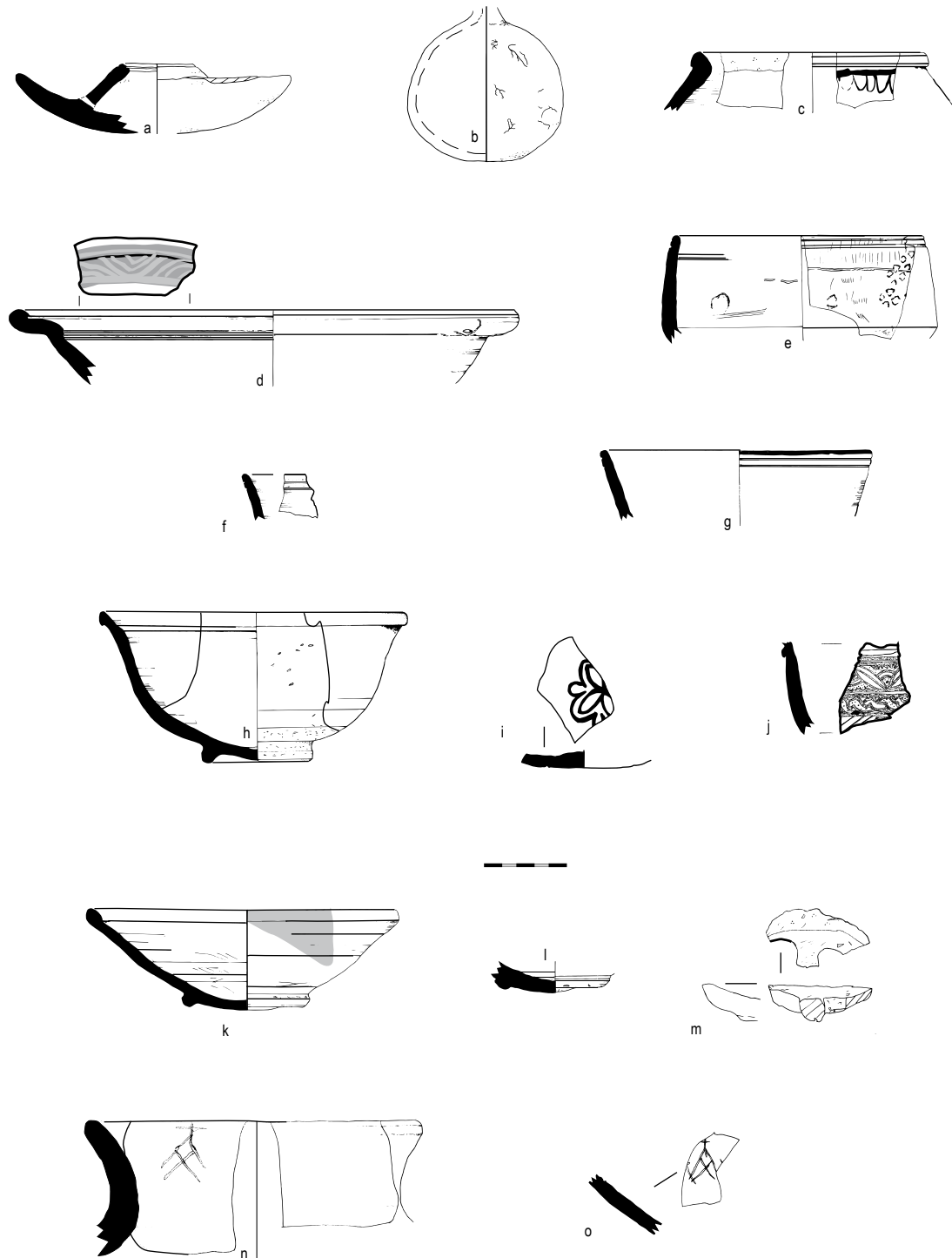


Figure 2. Selection of pottery from the fort – scale 1:4.

- a) KRG2-2015-1.5: Lamp, traces of red slip; b) KRG2-2015-1.1 : Lamp?, blackened by fire, surface cracked; c) KRG2-2015-5.5: Wheel-made bowl, outside red slip and white paint (shaded), inside red slip on upper part only (dotted); d) KRG2-2015-3.2: Wheel-made bowl, red slip interior and exterior, inner rim plum coloured band (dark grey) with cream painted decoration (light grey); e) KRG2-2015-3.9: Wheel-made bowl, red slip interior and exterior, outside: impressed and incised pre-firing. Fingerprints of the potter inside and out. Exterior surface shows irregular scratches that might relate to use, storage or the post-use history of the vessel; f) KRG2-2015-7.5: Wheel-made cup, red slip inside and out; g) KRG2-2015-7.3: Wheel-made cup, red slip inside and out, black rim stripe; h) KRG2-2015-4.5: Wheel-made bowl, red slip inside and out; i) KRG2-2015-3.5: Wheel-made base, outside cream slip on white slip, inside brown painted floral motif on white slip; j) KRG2-2015-1.4: Wheel-made body sherd, white slip inside and out, outside dark brown (shaded), with light brown highlights (dotted); k) KRG2-2015-4.6: Wheel-made bowl, red slip inside and out, exterior black smoked (shaded); l) KRG2-2015-8.2: Wheel-made base, red slip interior and exterior; m) KRG2-2015-6.2: qulla filter, partly red coated (dotted area); n) KRG2-2015-2.7: Handmade jar neck, outside traces of red slip, incised post-firing inside; o) KRG2-2015-9.3: Wheel-made body sherd, white slip on interior and exterior, incised post-firing inside.

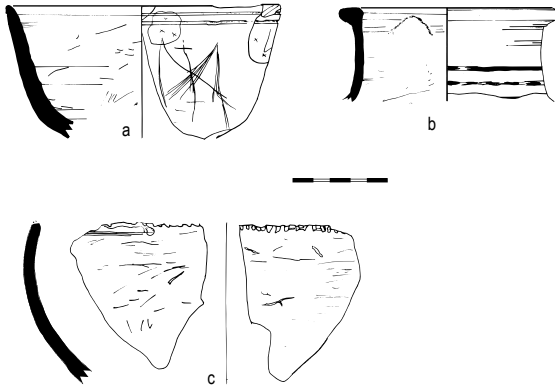


Figure 3. Pottery from the cemetery – scale 1:4.

- a) KRG3-2015-2.3: Wheel-made bowl, plain finish, incised post-firing outside. Fingerprint of the potter inside; b) KRG3-2015-4-2: Wheel-made jar, cream slip inside and out, three black painted stripes on exterior; c) KRG3-2015-4.1: Handmade bowl, smoothed surface outside, rim eroded, with impressed decoration traceable.

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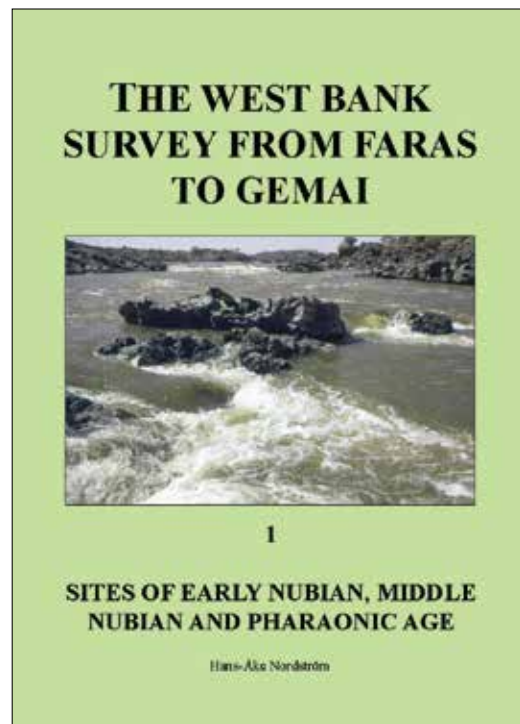
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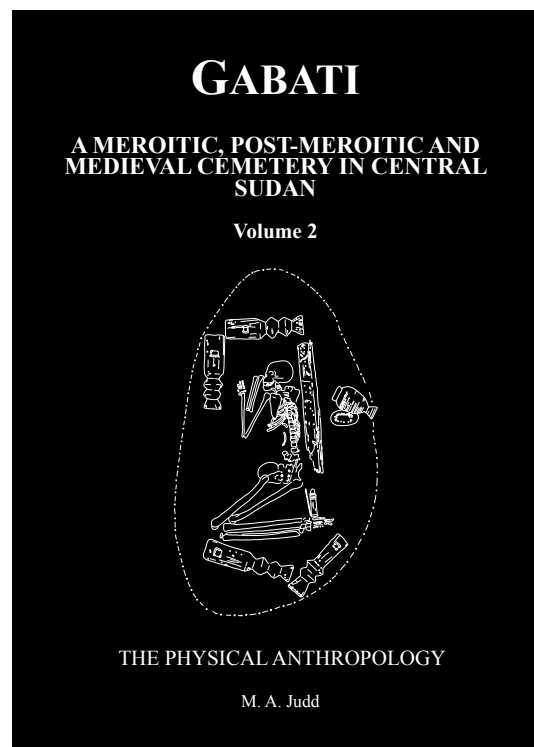
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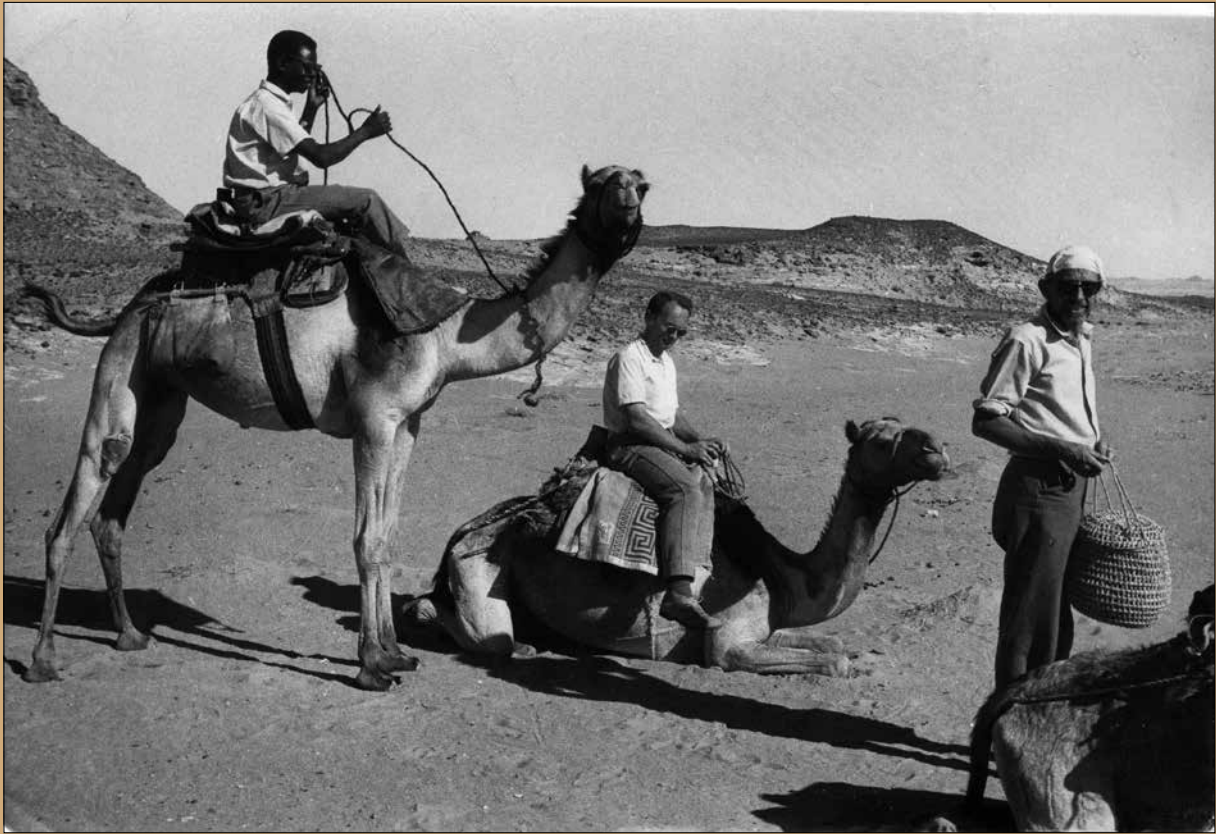
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Members of the University of Ghana Expedition to Sudan. John Alexander (centre), James Anquandah (left), Tony Bonner (right) (photo: SARS Alexander Archive, ALE P003.05).



The Debeira West excavation team 1964 with amongst others, Peter and Margaret Shinnie, John Alexander, John Anquandah and Tony Bonner (photo: SARS Alexander Archive, ALE P003.04).