

SUDAN & NUBIA

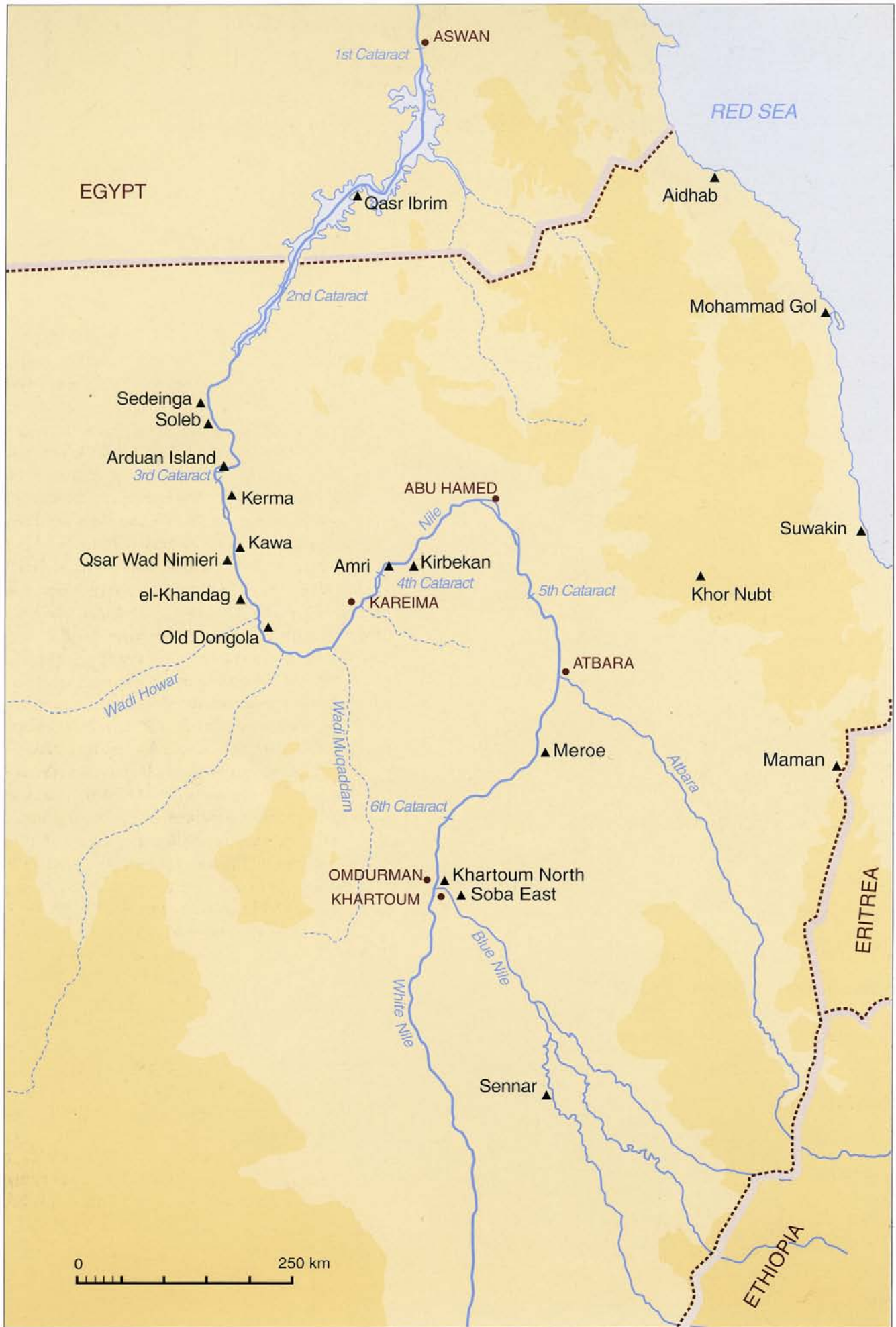
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 4

2000





SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 4

2000

Contents

Introduction

Vivian Davies

1

Reports

Excavations at Qasr Ibrim in 2000

Pamela J. Rose

2

The Kawa Excavation Project

Derek A. Welsby

5

The Royal Pyramids of Meroe. Architecture,
Construction and Reconstruction of a Sacred
Landscape

Friedrich W. Hinkel

11

Rescue Excavations at Soba East

Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed

27

The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Period in the
Republic of Sudan

Intisar Soghayroun El-Zein

32

The Domed Tombs of the Eastern Sudan

Salah Omer Elsadig

37

Archaeological Survey in the Fifth Cataract Region

Yousif M. El-Amin and David N. Edwards

44

The Amri to Kirbekan Survey 1999

Derek A. Welsby

51

The Archaeology of Arduan Island - the Mahas
Survey 2000.

David N. Edwards and Ali Osman

58

Reconstructing Patterns of Settlement in the
Mahas: Evidence from Language and Place-names

Muhammad Jalal Hashim and Herman Bell

71

Miscellaneous

79

Front Cover: Meroe. Pyramid BEG N 18 (type XII) before restoration work on the chapel. In the background pyramid BEG N 9 (type VII). Photo taken by F. W. Hinkel in 1980 from the top of BEG N 19 (slide 5467).

Introduction

Vivian Davies

During the last winter the Society resumed its flagship project at Kawa, among other things uncovering more of the early Kushite town, including an extraordinary mud-brick building once decorated with wall-paintings showing royal and divine figures and containing the remains of large ceramic figures of the gods Bes and Beset (see Welsby below). We also responded to the international appeal for help from the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums to document sites threatened by the planned Merowe Dam, carrying out a survey on the left bank of the Nile and on the islands between Amri and Kirkeban above the Fourth Cataract which identified well over a hundred sites of different types and periods (Welsby). Qasr Ibrim, for many years under excavation by the Egypt Exploration Society and still yielding information of first-rate importance (Rose), embodies an acute reminder of the destructive consequences of dams and of the loss to knowledge that such schemes entail.

The need for rescue-work in response to various threats (environmental as well as man-made) is a thread running through much of this issue, which also includes reports on the study and conservation of the monuments at Meroe (Hinkel), excavation necessitated by road-building at Soba East (Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed), archaeological survey in the little-known Fifth Cataract region (Yousef El-Amin and Edwards), and continuing investigation of the Mahas region at the Third Cataract (Edwards and Ali Osman), the latter an interdisciplinary project which now valuably incorporates ecological, ethnographic and linguistic components (Muhammad Jalal Hashim and Bell). We are also very pleased to include two papers on aspects of Islamic archaeology in the Sudan (Intisar Soghayroun el-Zein and Salah Omer Elsadig), hitherto a chronically neglected subject but clearly one with great potential for further research.

It is an enormous pleasure to report that Professor William Y. Adams, one of the great names of modern Sudanese archaeology, has accepted our invitation to become Honorary President of SARS, in succession to the late Sir Laurence Kirwan. Professor Adams takes office in time to preside over our tenth anniversary in 2001, a year in which SARS celebrates a decade of progressive achievement and looks forward to the formidable but exciting challenges that lie ahead.

The Amri to Kirbeka Survey, 1999

Derek A. Welsby

Introduction

The first major attempt to control the waters of the Nile was the building of the Aswan dam, completed in 1898. With the conquest of the Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian forces much of the Nile Basin lay under their control and it was possible to take a broader view of water management. In Sir William Garstin's report published in 1904 entitled *Report on the Basin of the Nile* he proposed a number of measures some of which were put into effect over the succeeding decades. The Blue Nile was dammed at Sennar (completed in 1925) as was the White Nile at Jebel Aulia (completed in 1937). Subsequently additional dams were completed in 1966 at Rosseires on the Upper Blue Nile and at Kashim el-Girba on the Atbara. Meanwhile the Aswan dam had been heightened in 1912 and 1934 and was replaced by the Sadd el-Ali, the Aswan

the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums in 1989 (Leclant 1990). An appeal was made by NCAM to foreign missions to conduct work in the region (Hakim 1993, 12-13) but few missions have responded. The Gdansk Archaeological Museum has taken a concession for the right bank of the river from immediately upstream of Kareima to Mograt (Paner 1998). The Department of Archaeology of the University of Dongola, based at Kareima, has also undertaken limited work in the vicinity of Jebel Kulgeili (Mohammed and Hussein 1999).

In response to the threat posed to the antiquities of the Fourth Cataract region SARS undertook a single season of survey. The team of eight archaeologists was in the field from 2nd November until 15th December 1999.¹ Although the concession included the whole of the left bank over a distance of 40km and the islands between the two forts at Dar el-Arab (Suweiqi) (Colour Plate XIX) and Jebel Musa (Kirbeka) (Colour Plate XX) at the downstream end of Boni Island, the wealth of archaeological sites coupled with the difficulties of travel in the area meant that only small areas were examined in detail (Fig. 1). These were:

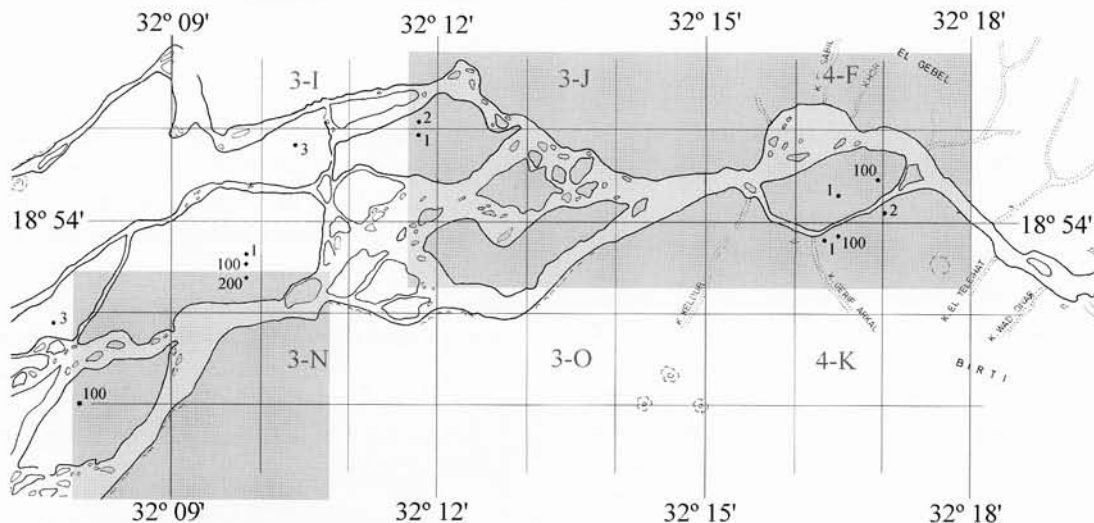


Figure 1. The Amri to Kirbeka Survey.

High Dam, in the 1960s. As early as the 1940s a dam was proposed at the Fourth Cataract and preliminary surveys were undertaken (Gray 1949). In the late 1970s and 1980s the construction of a dam at the Fourth Cataract, known as the Merowe Dam, was again mooted (Hakim 1993, 1-2), while another was proposed at the Kajbar rapids a little downstream of the Third Cataract.

As a response to the Hamdab dam proposal of the 1980s the University of Rome Archaeological Mission mounted a small project (Donadoni 1997) to investigate a short section of the threatened area which will stretch from Hamdab up to Mograt Island, a distance of approximately 170km. This was followed by a preliminary survey of the whole region by

(i) A stretch along the left bank of approximately 1km in the vicinity of the village of Gereif (Fig. 2).

(ii) Birti Island and four other small islands in its immediate vicinity. At the time of the survey one of these, and both it and Birti island, were joined to the mainland (Fig. 3).

(iii) The left bank from a little upstream of Birti as far east

¹ The team consisted of Cornelius Barton (Archaeologist), Pam Braddock (Pottery specialist), Mohammed Faroug (Antiquities officer), Adam Giambrone (Archaeologist), Dave Hooker (Surveyor), Mattias Öbrink (Archaeologist), Donatella Usai (Prehistorian, lithics specialist), Derek Welsby (Director).

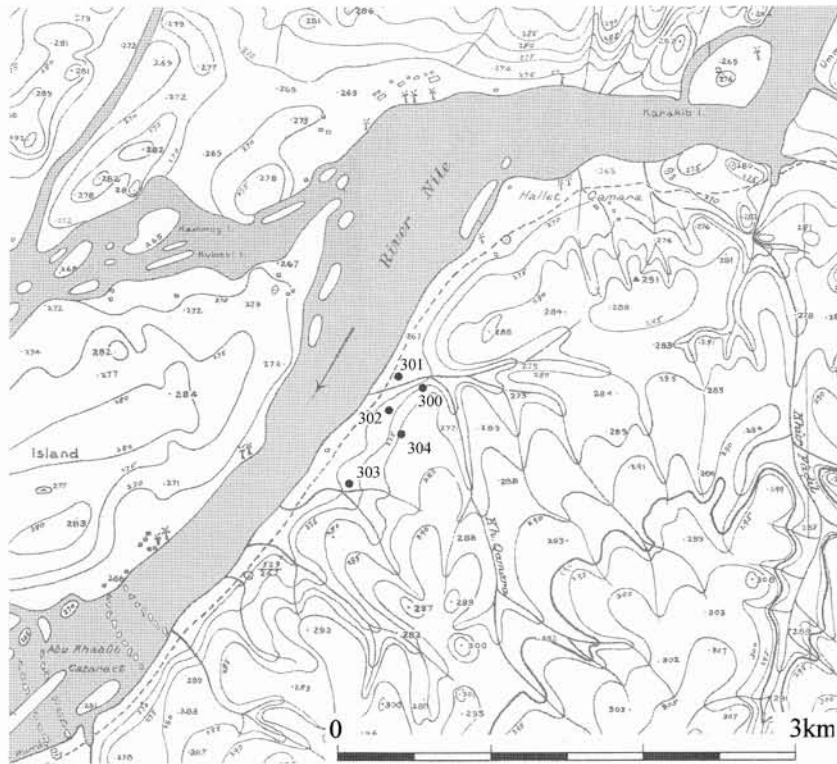


Figure 2. Sites in the vicinity of Gereif.

as longitude $32^{\circ} 18'$ to several hundred metres to the west of the village of et-Tereif.

(iv) Ten islands immediately downstream of el-Tereif including Umm Muri, Mis, Umm Atig, Gammaira and Umm Kweib.

On the islands an attempt was made to locate and record all sites. Defining the limits of the survey on the left bank was much more difficult. Where possible the area examined lay between the edge of the irrigation along the river bank and the top of the first ridge but the presence in some areas of clear palaeochannels and palaeoislands led to areas sometimes well away from the present river's course being included. Also some sites were found up major wadis and these were on occasion included in the survey. We can be reasonably confident that all the major monuments within the areas examined in detail were observed. These include extensive occupation scatters, settlements, fortified enclosures and cemeteries. Many rock pictures was also recorded but the record of these is probably incomplete as they occur in very large numbers, are often extremely ephemeral and the vast numbers of suitable boulders and outcrops on which they could have been carved make an exhaustive survey of them extremely time consuming.

Of the smaller occupation scatter, whether of pottery or of lithics, the recovery rate was probably very low. Prehistoric material is found in many areas but was frequently only noted by our prehistorian after detailed examination of selected areas.

Most of the sites located were described, sketch plans were made where appropriate and many were also surveyed in detail, plans being produced at a scale of 1:500 or 1:100. Artefacts were also collected either from each feature or from transects across the sites and this material was studied by the pottery, lithics and small finds specialists. Many of the rock pictures were traced onto acetate and their locations plotted by GPS or in relation to their local environment by total station.

A total of 126 sites were located falling into a range of types (see Table 1).

Table 1. Types of sites located by the Amri to Kirbekan Survey.

TYPE		
Rock art, concentrations of		216
Settlements		10
Cemeteries (more than one grave)		58
	with tumuli	34
	with box graves of stone	11
	with red brick, lime-mortar rendered mastaba	4
Isolated tumuli		5
Occupation scatters	of lithics and/or pottery	16
Enclosures (defensive?)		1
Miscellaneous, shelters, huts etc		23

² All the figures given in this report are provisional and will probably be adjusted after a careful study of the project archive.

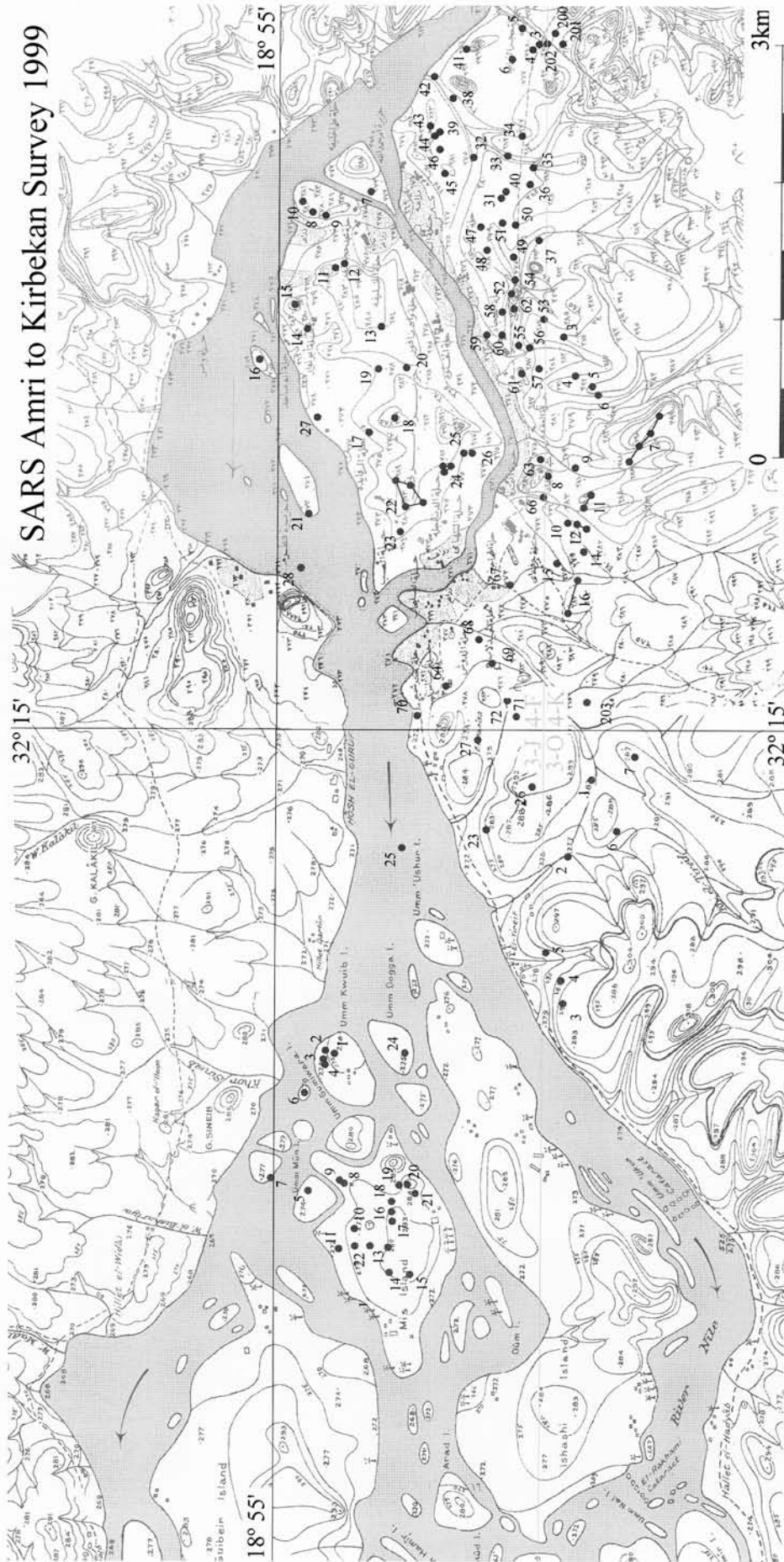


Figure 3. Sites between Mis Island and Birri.



A number of these could be dated with some degree of confidence (see Table 2).

Table 2. Suggested dates for sites located by the Amri to Kirbekan Survey

TYPE	PERIOD	
Cemeteries	Kerma	1
	Post-Meroitic	many
	Medieval	14
	Islamic	2
Settlements	Medieval	7
Occupation scatters including lithic scatters and pottery concentrations	Palaeolithic	1
	Mesolithic	1
	Neolithic	3
	Medieval	1

Rock art

All are carved on granite boulders and outcrops and the hard nature of the stone makes the rendition of fine detail impossible. There are a small number of sandstone outcrops but none of these bore any art. The preferred locations are close to main routes where the art was readily visible to the maximum number of people. Some drawings are isolated, others are closely grouped together, sometimes many covering the whole of the face of a suitable rock. Only very rarely was there superimposition of drawings.

The range of subjects was limited with the vast bulk of the drawings being of camels, either with or without riders (Fig. 4). Some are well executed, others are of very little artistic merit. Cattle are also quite common, some with long sweeping horns (Fig. 5). Almost all have the four legs individually drawn but a few of the cattle have the pairs of legs

joined. Several drawings of ostrich were also noted. The only art that can be directly associated with an historic period are the crosses which are presumably of medieval date. Whether their presence has any relevance to the date of the adjacent rock art is incapable of proof.

Cemeteries

Those of medieval and Islamic date are readily recognisable. The latter were only noted when they were associated with features of earlier date. Many are still in use. At site 3-J-10 the Muslim cemetery lay immediately adjacent to the medieval cemetery with no apparent overlap although some of the stone used to mark the Muslim graves may have been taken from the earlier box graves.

The medieval graves were covered by superstructures either constructed of rough stone (Plate 1) or of red brick.



Plate 1. Box graves in the medieval cemetery at site 3-J-10 on Mis Island.

In the latter case all these appear to have been rendered in a hard lime mortar: all have been extensively plundered so that no details of the form of the superstructure were apparent.

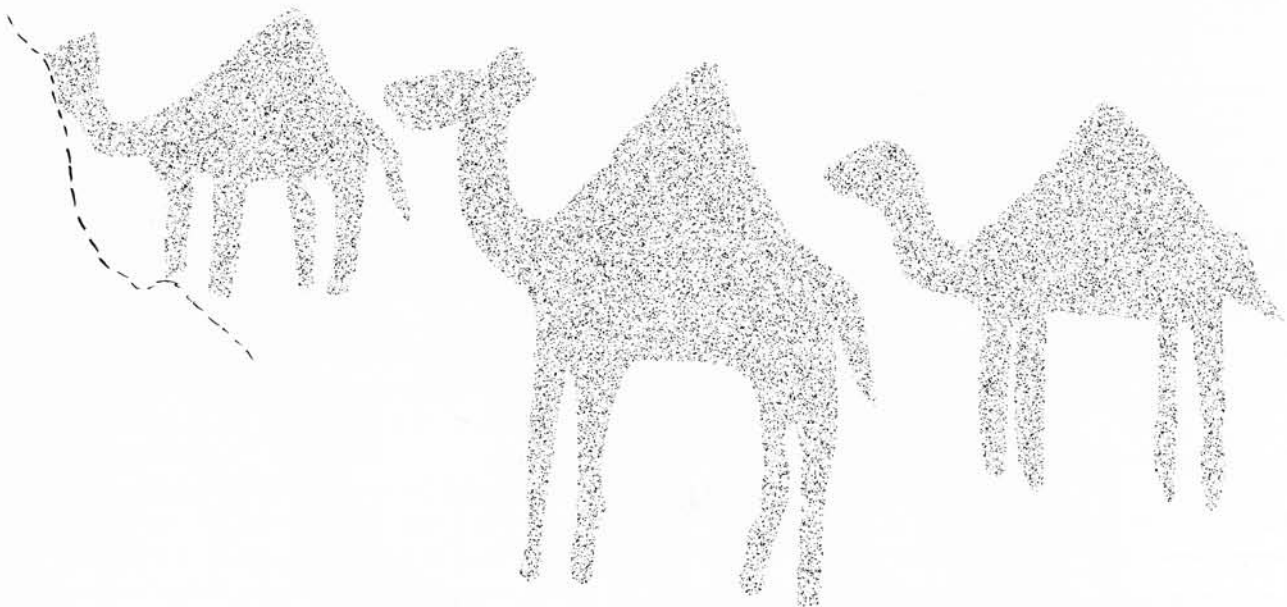


Figure 4. Rock drawings of three camels at site 4-F-34 (1) (scale 1:5).

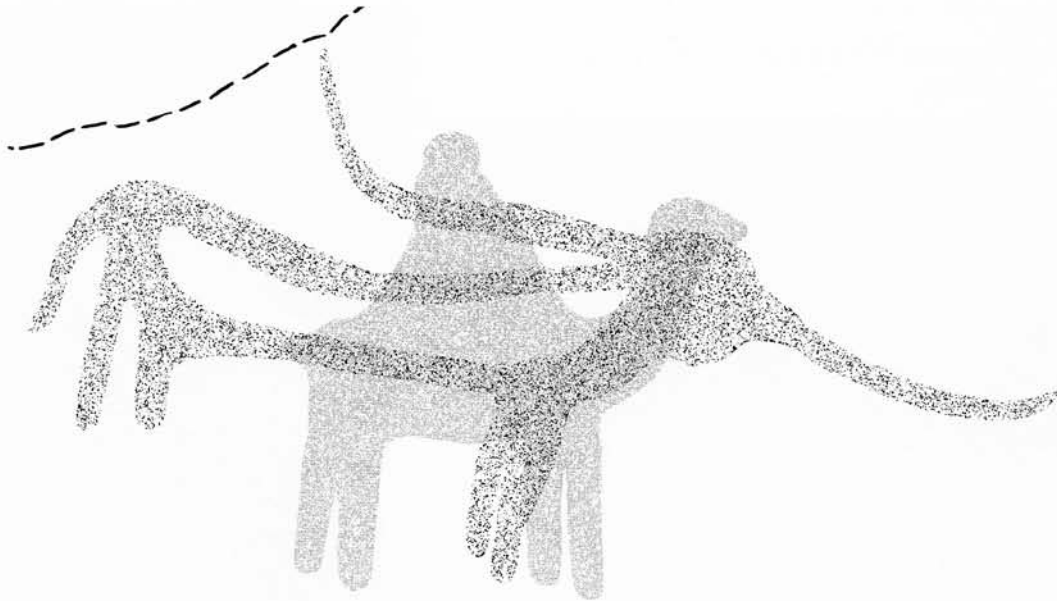


Figure 5. Rock drawing of a camel and rider superimposed on that of a bovine at site 4-F-54 (1) (scale 1:5).

Among the bricks used were small triangular examples approximately 170mm per side and also more elongated triangular bricks of slightly larger size. Some of the box graves were substantial structures up to 500mm in height, many were much lower and some graves were marked only by a setting of stones. Almost all were rectangular, ranging in size from very small monuments perhaps covering the graves of children to others over 2m in length. A few examples of square box graves were noted on Mis Island and at el-Kenisa. Very few of the box graves had been plundered.

A range of tumuli types were noted among which were the following:

Type I - Gravel covered mounds – the tumuli associated with the Kerma pottery appear to have been of this type,

although as they have been much disturbed their original form is uncertain.

Type II - Gravel covered mounds with a stone kerb – these were only noted at site 4-K-9 where they were associated with tumuli of type V. The kerb was a single line of stones.

Type III - Gravel covered mound revetted in stone on the steeply sloping sides.

Type IV - As type III but markedly 'egg'-shaped with the pointed part much higher than the rest of the mound and revetted with stones forming a smooth face right to the summit. Very well preserved examples were found at site 3-O-1 near et-Tereif (Plate 2).

Type V - Small ring tumuli, the ring formed of pieces of



Plate 2. An 'egg'-shaped tumulus, Type IV, at site 3-O-1.



stone (Plate 3).

Type VI - Large ring tumuli with the ring formed of pieces of stone (Colour Plate XXI).

Type VII - Very small (approximately 1m diameter) corbelled structures (Plate 4).

Type VIII - Cairns.



Plate 3. A ring tumulus, Type V, at site 4-F-38.

The date of many of these types is unclear. Similar tumuli to those of type III, excavated in the Jebel Kulgeili region by the Archaeology Department of the University of Dongola at Kareima, are of Post-Meroitic date. Types III, IV and VI are only found on the alluvial deposits in the wadi and palaeochannel beds while the other types almost invariably occupy hill tops and are frequently arranged along ridges (Colour Plate XXII).

Within the settlement at site 4-F-16 a large number of roughly circular pits approximately 0.5 – 1.5m in diameter were observed where the earth was not obscured by wind-blown sand. The abundant Neolithic pottery in this area suggested the possibility that these pits were of that date. However the presence of one burial associated with glass beads, including one melon bead, suggests that they are of later date. Whether they were all graves is unclear but some appear to be too small. Similar features were not recognised elsewhere in the survey.³

Settlements

Most of those recorded were of medieval date. They were characterised by an abundant amount of pottery and by large numbers of granite grinding bases. Structures were difficult to recognise at most sites. Only in the settlement on Umm Muri Island (3-J-5) were mud-brick buildings found in some profusion although none survived as upstanding monuments. At el-Kenisa (4-F-70) the decayed remains of what was probably mud brick indicated the presence of another. Abundant red-brick rubble was found in one area at el-Kenisa surrounding a prominent rock outcrop but the nature of the struc-

³ Concentrations of small circular pits have been recorded at Sai (Geus 1995, 85-6, pl. III), on Arduan Island (Edwards and Salih this volume, 59) and at Kerma (Honnegar 1995).



Plate 4. Roofed grave(?) monument, Type VII at site 4-F-6.

ture from which they came and how the rock outcrop was accommodated within the complex or structure is unclear. The only recognisable church was at site 3-J-18 on Mis Island. This was constructed with outer walls of red brick and mud-brick interior walls and was surrounded by a mastaba of rough stone. The building was approximately 15m square and survived as a prominent mound with small sections of wall and a piece of lime-mortar pavement or basin visible towards the south side. The site on Umm Muri (3-J-5) also had remains of what was presumably originally a stone-walled enclosure but only two sides meeting at 90° could be traced (Plate 5).



Plate 5. Enclosure wall within the medieval settlement at site 3-J-5 on Umm Muri Island.

Fort

On a steep-sided island was a small, stone-walled enclosure with a semi-circular tower enjoying excellent views upstream and with a possible entrance leading down to the water's edge. A small rectangular room was set in the angle of the wall. This was presumably designed for defence but the paucity of occupation material within it suggests that it was not occupied on a permanent basis.

Shelters and huts

Set in among the rocks throughout the survey area were drystone-walled structures, either free-standing 'huts' or 'shelters' abutting against boulders or outcrops (Plate 6). Some of these may be of recent date, others may be of some antiquity. A number were certainly associated with medieval pottery while an archer's loose was found within one. There are also many arrangements of stones (Plate 7), the functions of which are unclear.

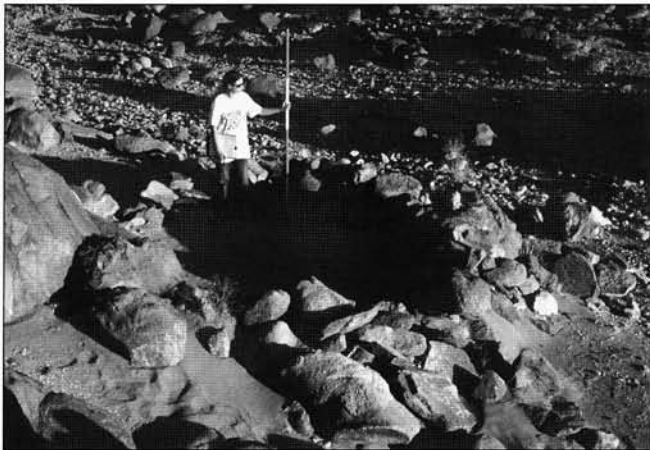


Plate 6. Hut circle at site 3-O-3 (9).

Summary

The survey has highlighted the immense richness of the region in archaeological remains and the potential for further work is considerable. Although many of the sites may offer little of interest for excavation, the medieval settlements would provide significant evidence for human occupation at that period. The massive medieval cemeteries, with the excellent preservation of the bodies which can be expected in them (one recently disturbed grave contained abundant remains of skin adhering to the bones), would be of great interest for studying the physical anthropology and the palaeopathology of the medieval population. The settlement at 4-F-16 with the possibly Neolithic pits is especially interesting. Excavation of a number of the tumuli types would be necessary to clarify their cultural associations and date. The presence of Kerma material offers the possibility of locating further sites of that period in the region and extending the known bounds of the area of Kerma cultural influence, if not of actual control, well upstream of Jebel Barkal.⁴ The presence of Pan Grave pottery in small quantities requires further study. Although the absence for evidence of Pharaonic occupation, in the light of the recent work at Kurgus, is disappointing, the paucity of Kushite material must be significant.

⁴ For the recent discovery of extensive Kerma period sites on the right bank a little downstream by the Gdansk Archaeological Mission, see Paner 1998, fig. 12.



Plate 7. Setting of stones at site 4-F-29 (3) on Umm Nall Island.

Acknowledgements

The Project would like to thank the staff of NCAM for its assistance and particularly for the loan of an outboard motor which made the study of the islands possible. Thanks are also extended to the British Council for their assistance in various way. The project was funded by SARS with the generous assistance of the Bioanthropology Foundation and the British Museum.

Bibliography

- Abdul Rahman Ali Mohamed and Kabbashi Hussein 1999. 'Two Seasons in the Fourth Cataract Region. Preliminary Results', *Sudan & Nubia* 3, 60-70.
- Caneva, I. 1988. 'A Prospection of the IV Cataract', *Nubian Letters* 10, 1-9.
- Donadoni, S. 1997. 'A Survey North of the Fourth Cataract', *Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin e.V.*, 7, 10-22.
- Edwards, D. N. and Ali Osman 2000. 'The Archaeology of Arduan Island - the Mahas Survey 2000', *Sudan & Nubia* 4, 58-70.
- Geus, F. 1995. 'Sai 1993-1995', *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 7, 79-98.
- Gray, T. 1949. 'The Fourth Cataract', *Sudan Notes and Records* 30, 120-121.
- Al Hakim, Ahmed M. 1993. 'Merowe Hamdab high dam and its impacts', *Kush* 16, 1-25.
- Honneger, M. 1995. 'Kerma: note sur la reprise des fouilles de l'agglomération Pré-Kerma', *Genava* ns. 43, 58-59.
- Leclant, J. 1990. 'L'Exploration Archéologique de la Zone de la IV^e Cataracte du Nil', *Comptes Rendus des séances de l'année 1990 Avril-June. Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres*. Paris, 316-320.
- Paner, H. 1998. 'The Hamdab Dam Project, Preliminary Report of Results from Work in the Fourth Cataract Region, 1996-1997', *Gdansk Archaeological Museum African Reports* 1, 115-132.



Plate XIX. Amri to Kirbeka Survey. The medieval forts at Suveiqi looking upstream.



Plate XX. Amri to Kirbeka Survey. View across the Nile from Jebel Musa at Kirbeka.



Plate XXI. Amri to Kirbekan Survey. Tumulus of type VI in the cemetery at 4-F-32.



Plate XXII. Amri to Kirbekan Survey. Tumuli of type V along the ridge at site 4-K-7 looking north towards the Nile.