

SUDAN & NUBIA

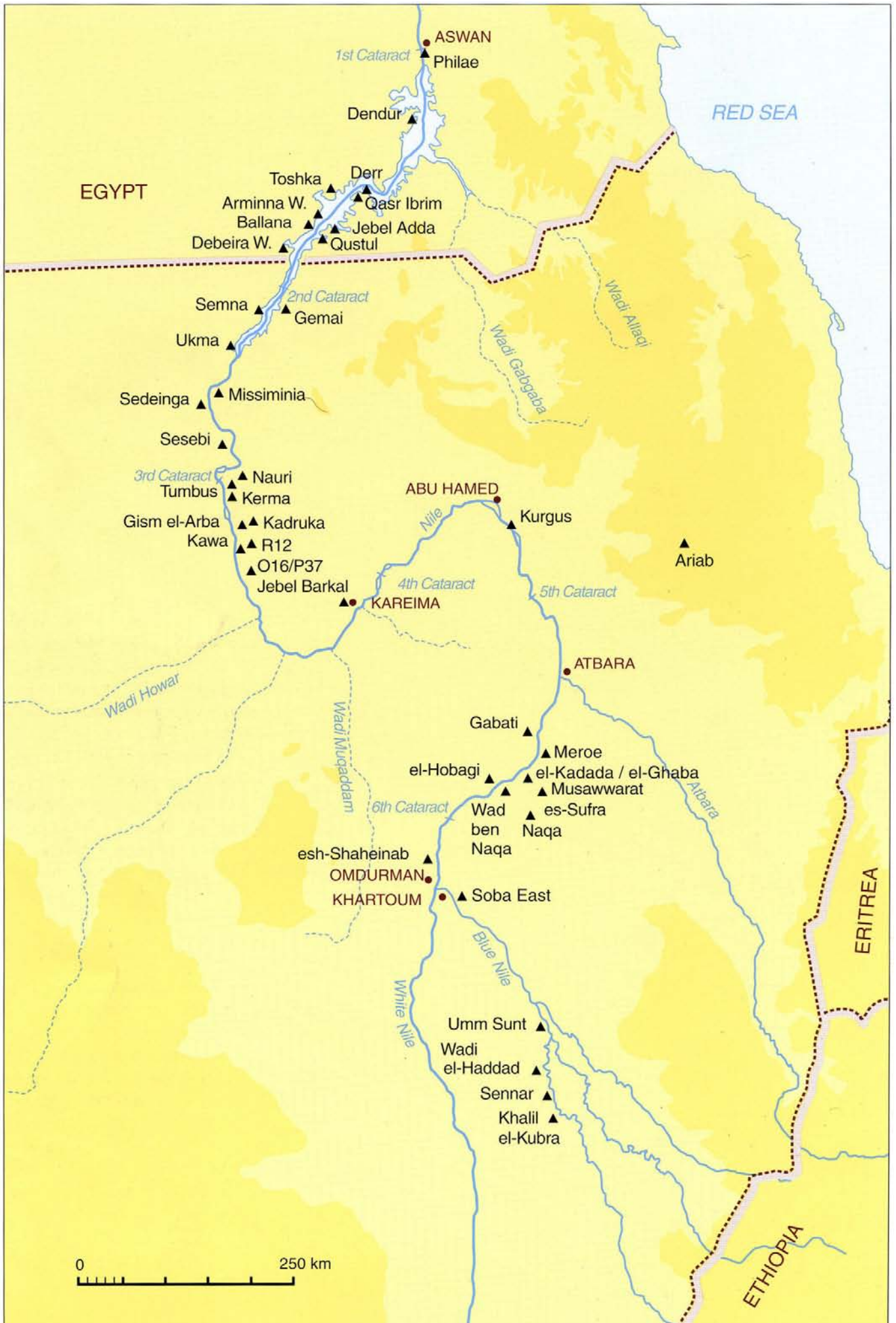
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 5

2001





SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 5 2001

Contents

Introduction

Vivian Davies 1

Reports

Kadruka and the Neolithic in the Northern Dongola Reach 2
Jacques Reinold

First Season of Excavation at Site R12, a Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach 11
Sandro Salvatori and Donatella Usai

Palaeotrauma: a profile of personal injury during the Kerma Period 21
Margaret Judd

Nubians at Hierakonpolis 29
Excavations in the Nubian Cemeteries
Renée Friedman

The Textiles from the Pan Grave Cemetery 38
Jana Jones

The Zooarchaeological Report 39
Salima Ikram

Pottery from the Nubian Cemeteries 40
Serena Giuliani

Kurgus 2000: The Egyptian Inscriptions 46
Vivian Davies

Excavations at Kurgus: The 2000 Season Results 59
Isabella Welsby Sjöström

Excavations within the Pharaonic and Kushite site at Kawa and in its hinterland, 2000-2001 64
Derek A. Welsby

Musawwarat es-Sufra 71
Interpreting the Great Enclosure
Steffen Wenig

Notes on the "non-sacred" parts of the Great Enclosure 87
Dieter Eigner

The Christianisation of Nubia: some archaeological pointers 89
David N. Edwards

Medieval Plant Economy in Middle Nubia: Preliminary Archaeobotanical Evidence from Nauri 97
Dorian Q Fuller and David N. Edwards

Miscellaneous 104

Front Cover: Beaker for funerary libation from el-Kadada, chalice shape, with incised geometric decoration, fired clay. Excavation n° KDD 76/3/59.

Introduction

Vivian Davies

The appearance of this, the fifth, issue of the Bulletin coincides with the tenth anniversary of our Society's founding. It has been an extraordinary first decade, remarkably productive in terms both of fieldwork and publication - one in which we have worked closely with our colleagues in the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of the Sudan to fill gaps in the archaeological record and meet, wherever possible, the threats posed to archaeological sites by modern development. We have organized and supported eight major field-projects (in Soba East, the Northern Dongola Reach, Kawa, the Shendi-Atbara Reach, Gabati, the Bayuda Desert, the Fourth Cataract, and Kurgus) and published five memoirs (two others are in press at the time of writing), as well as *Sudan & Nubia*, an annual bulletin of reports 'fresh from the field'. Furthermore, we have held each year an international colloquium on current fieldwork and research, and we now additionally host the annual 'Kirwan Memorial Lecture', in memory of our distinguished first President.

The considerable funds needed to carry out this extensive programme have been forthcoming most substantially from the Bioanthropology Foundation and the British Museum, upon whose generosity we continue to rely, as we do also on that of the Society's individual Patrons. We intend to mark the Society's achievements with a special publication to be issued in the coming year. As to the future, the reports in this volume, on sites ranging in date from the Neolithic to the Mediaeval Period, amply demonstrate the huge potential for important new discoveries and scholarly progress in our area of interest, both in Sudan and Egypt, promising a second decade as exciting and rewarding as the first.

First Season of Excavation at Site R12, a Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach

Sandro Salvatori and Donatella Usai

Between December 2000 and January 2001 a new arm of the SARS project was opened in the concession area by an Italian team of the “Centro Veneto di Studi Classici e Orientali” of Venice, led by the authors, at the Late Neolithic cemetery of R12. The site, discovered during the SARS systematic survey of the Northern Dongola Reach from Khandag to Eimani (Welsby 1995; 1997; 2001), lies c. 5km to the north-north-east of Kawa, at the southern end of the Seleim Basin (Fig. 1) and less than 100m from another small Neolithic cemetery mound, site R26 (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. Map of the Kawa area with Neolithic cemeteries and R12 location. (after Welsby 2001, fig.14.1).

R12 has the shape of a natural hill of Nile silt standing on a sandy deposit, with a total surface area of 1400m² and rising about 2.15m above the plain (Fig. 3). The mound stretches for 45m from south to north with a maximum width of 35m. It has been modelled by strong erosive processes which disturbed a number of graves mainly along its margins and caused the dispersal of human bones and artefacts.

A systematic surface collection has been conducted as a

preliminary investigation at the site to understand if there were areas more affected by erosive processes and, if that was the case, which ones. As a result it is clear from the distribution of the surface material that the erosion was stronger on the hill flanks than on its top (Fig. 3).

A trench of about 68m², crossing the north-western slope of the mound, from the highest point to the base, through areas of high and low concentrations of archaeological surface material, has been excavated at the site.

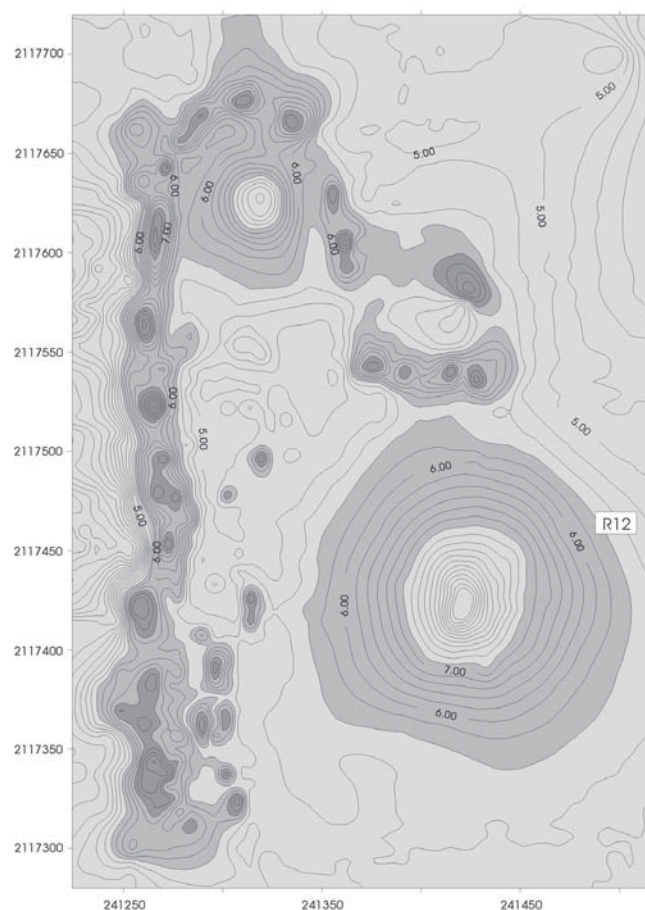


Figure 2. Contour map of site R12 and the surrounding area with dune ridges.

Such a strategy, designed as a preliminary approach to the archaeological investigation of the site, allowed us to investigate the nature of the deposits, the stratigraphic relationship between the natural soils and the grave pits and, moreover, to reconstruct the general trends of wind and, to a lesser extent, water erosion.

The surface of the mound was almost uniformly covered by small quartzite and flint pebbles. These presumably stood on small mounds on top of each grave, as we had the possibility to understand during the excavation of some of them, and subsequently were completely flattened by post-depositional processes affecting the site.

The upper deposit of the mound consists of a residual Nile silt layer resting on a Nile sand layer of unknown depth. The residual silt deposit is actually 1.5m thick at the centre

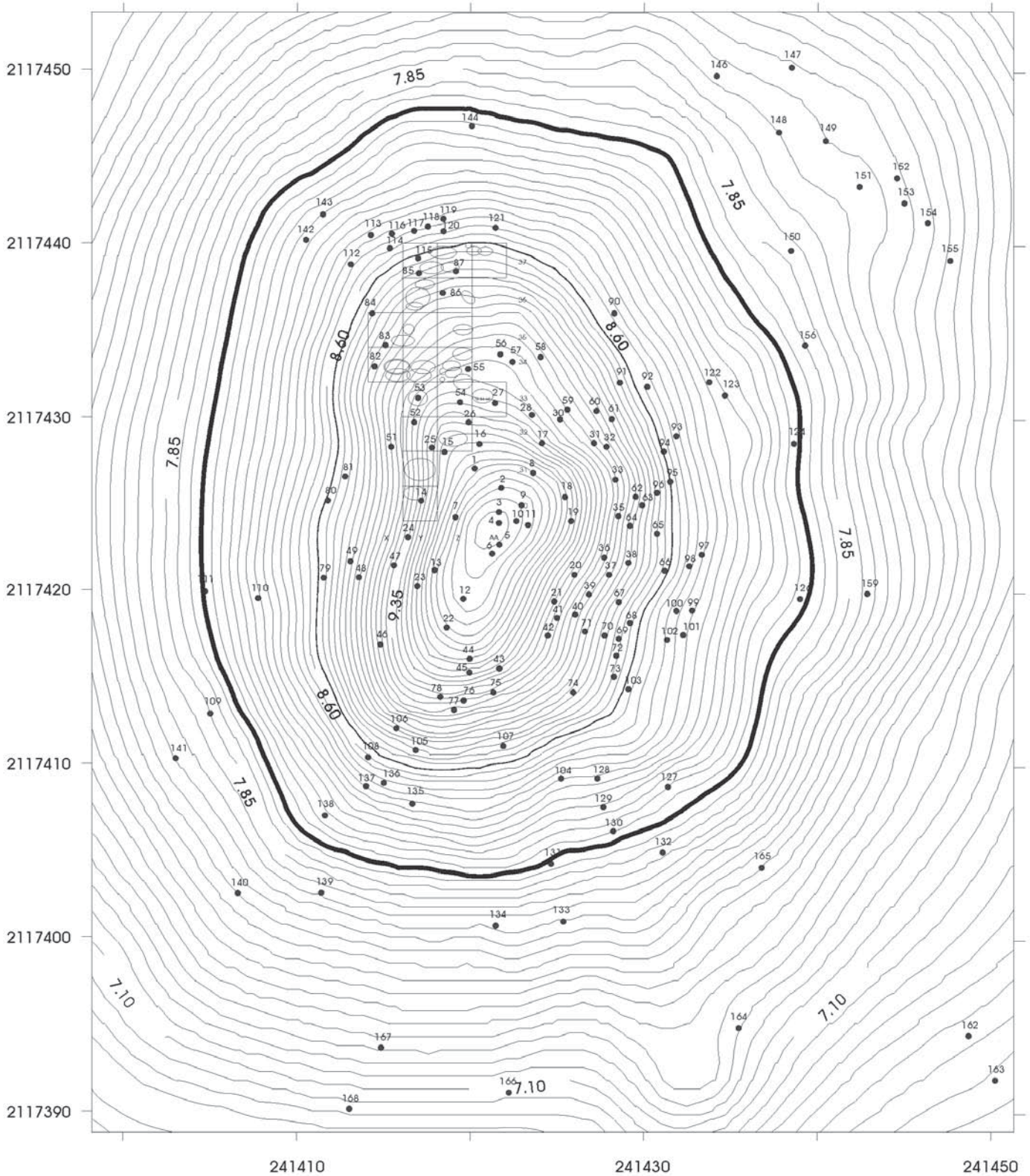


Figure 3. Contour map of R12 mound with the location of the excavation trench and surface collection points.

of the mound and progressively less along its slopes. Such a morphological situation seems to be the result of the strong erosive process affecting the site during the last five or six millennia. It left, still partially preserved like a yardang, a small section of ancient Nile silt sediment in which the grave pits

were originally dug.

For these reasons, in the northern section of the excavation area (at the base of the mound slope), the bodies were lying almost on the surface, without any or with only scant traces of the original pits. On the contrary, in the

southern part of the excavation towards the summit of the mound, grave pits were easily detectable even if, in some cases, the pit was so deep as to reach the underlying sand deposit. In the case of these pits the upper filling deposit had a quite well defined aspect.

Comparing the residual basal height of each grave at the lowest part of the trench with that at the highest, where grave pits were easily recognised, some suggestions can be advanced concerning the amount of erosion and the possible original height of the mound. Assuming as a reference point its top, we can work out that between 1 and 1.87m of soil has been eroded away (Fig. 4). In the better preserved section of the mound, graves are clearly dug in the upper silt layer and the bottom of the pit, when it reaches the sand deposit, is usually plastered with mud. As suggested by intact graves, after the deposition of the deceased the pit was filled with mud. Traces of the silt plastering of the pit bottom was recognised even in the northern mostly eroded graves.

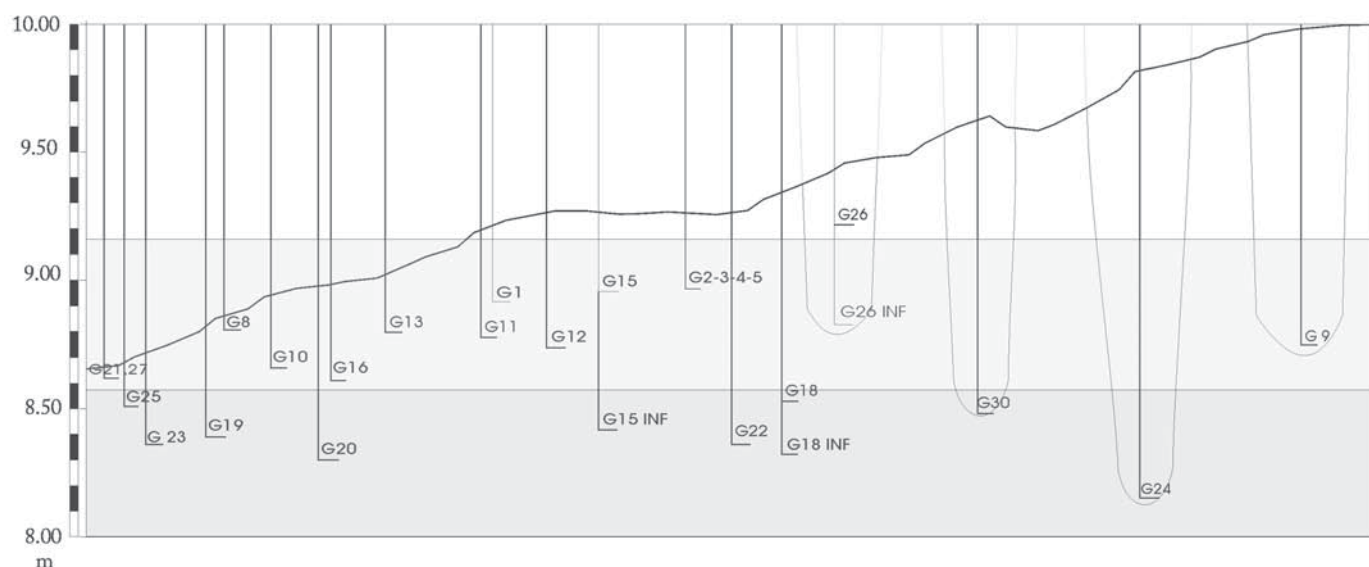


Figure 4. Section of the R12 mound with the comparative depth of the excavated graves. The earliest burials in re-used graves are indicated by INF (inferior).

During this first, short excavation season, 30 grave pits (Fig. 5) were excavated yielding 35 individuals, of which 14 are males, 10 females, three not determined adults, six children and two infants distributed by age and sex as determined by F. Crivellaro (Fig. 6).

Generally speaking, the state of the human bone preservation is poor as a result of both strong salinification processes and the action of termites, though there are remarkable exceptions. Notwithstanding the general situation, a good deal of interesting data was collected on dental and bone pathological lesions which deserve more detailed studies.

Although limited, the area excavated shows a high density of graves approaching 1.5 per m² and we expect there to be more than 200 graves still preserved in the mound deposits.

The actual sample is mainly represented by single deposition pit graves with the exception of Grave 7 (an adult female buried with a new-born). The bodies are mainly lying

flexed on their left side (74.28%), oriented west-east facing north (Fig. 7). A few cases of right side deposition (14.28%) with face to the south have been recorded. For 11.42% of the bodies the side of deposition could not be determined. The prevailing body orientation (the axis skull/spinal column) is west-east (65.71%). Other orientations are: north west-south east (11.43%), south west-north east (5.71%), east-west (5.71%). Finally 11.43% of cases were undetermined. Face orientation is somewhat similar: north (51.43%), north east (14.28%), south (8.57%), south east (11.43%), east (2.86%) and undetermined (11.43%).

The above reported data seem to highlight a quite homogeneous ritual as attested in the contemporary Kadruka cemeteries, some kilometres to the north (Reinold 1994). Some particular cases were recorded. Graves 15, 18 and 26 had two inhumations, one above the other, with the more recent one not in any way disturbing the earlier one. In Grave 15 the two bodies, both adult males, were separated by about

40cm of lime deposit. In Graves 18 and 26 a few centimetres of soil separated the individuals. The second inhumation in Grave 18 (Fig. 8 and Colour Plate XVI) was deposited with the head directly above a large bowl which was part of the funerary furniture of the underlying burial. Both the individuals were adult females. Another two intact inhumations were found in Grave 26, the lower one being an adult female and the upper one a child five or six years old. In the cases of Graves 15 and 26 we recorded the presence of other disturbed human bones. We assume they may pertain to previous inhumations in the same pits. We have to remark that more than one inhumation within the same grave pit is recorded at el-Kadada 75-76 in Central Sudan (Geus 1984, 31).

Although it is probably too early at the present stage of the research to offer any general interpretation of the phenomena so far recorded, we wish to emphasise the

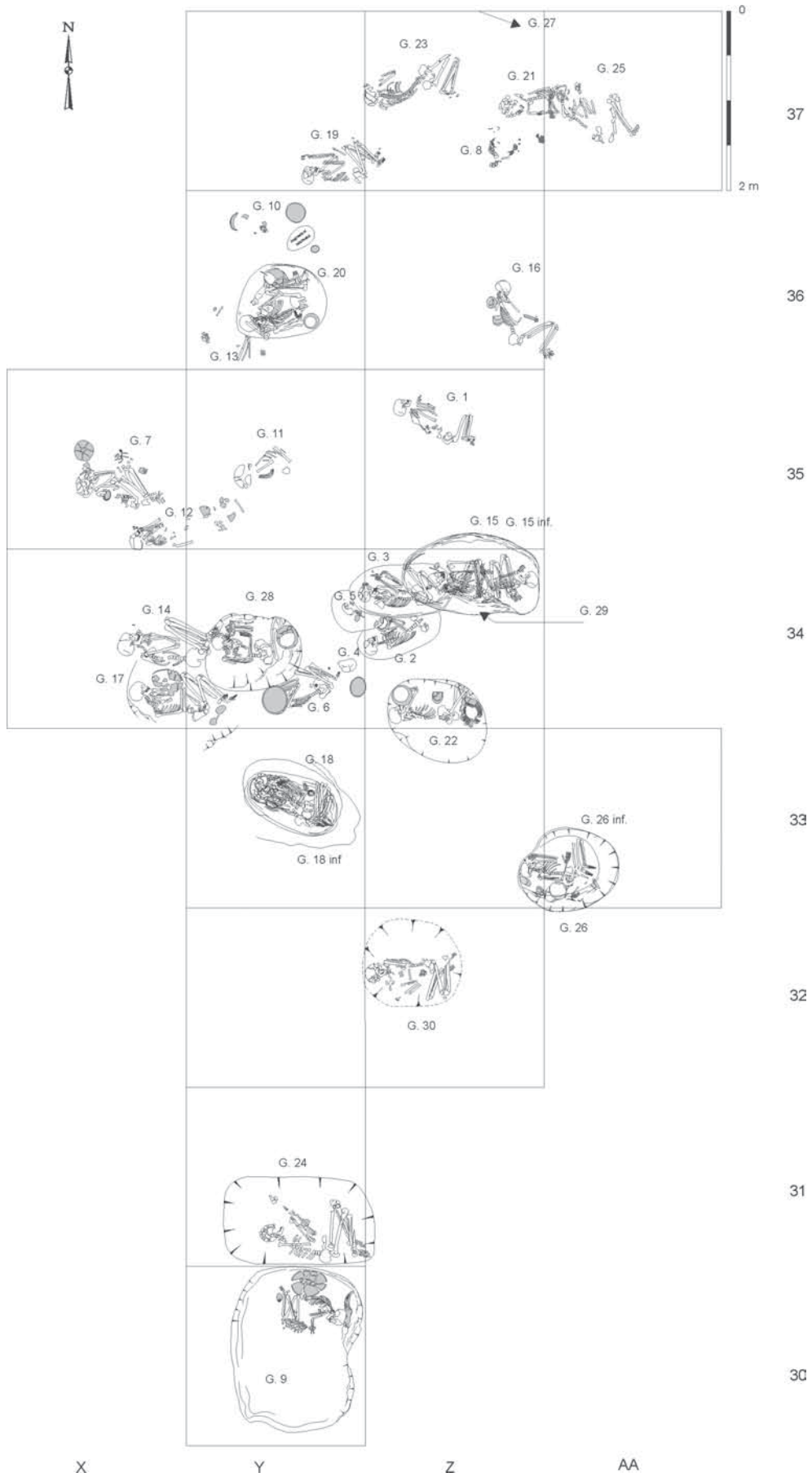


Figure 5. Plan of the excavation trench with grave locations.

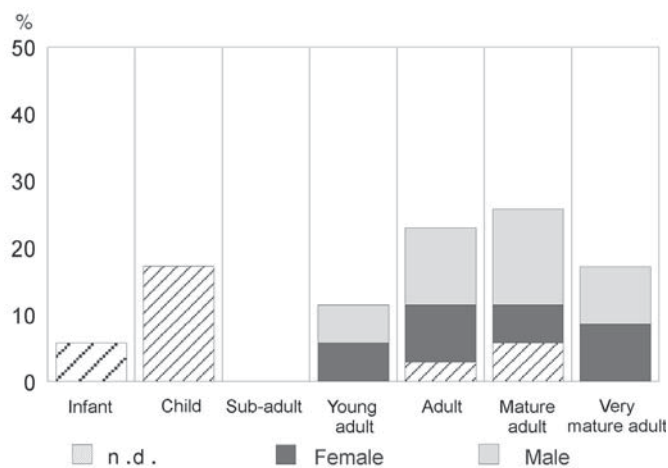


Figure 6. Distribution of sex and age.

difference between the physical relationship of the grave pits in the case of Graves 2, 3 and 5 (Fig. 9). Here we have the evidence of grave pits cutting each other with the following relative sequence: Grave no. 2 has been cut by 5 and both by 3. Two other particularly interesting graves were 20 (Fig. 10 and Colour Plate XVII) and 26. Here the legs were tightly contracted on the left side, the chest and face lay on the bottom of the grave cut, and the arms were tucked underneath the chest resulting in an anomalous torsion of the upper body.

The dead were usually furnished with hand-made pottery bowls and jars (Fig. 11), tools like flint microliths (backed

segments or blades), bone *spatulae* (Fig. 12:4) made from medial-distal diaphysis of ovicaprine or gazelle tibia, punches (Fig. 12:1-2) from large mammal long bones, and pointed objects (Fig. 12:5-6) from large mammal ribs.

In a few cases personal ornaments like pins, possibly from fish spines (Fig. 12:3), stone (amazonite and carnelian) and shell necklaces and bracelets were present. An ivory bracelet was found in Grave 9, that of a child of approximately 6-8 years old (Colour Plate XVIII), whose furniture was composed also of a necklace of amazonite beads, a black and white granite object of prismatic shape (a polisher?), a valve of *Aspatharia* sp. shell and a concentration of small quartzite pebbles near the contracted legs, a feature noted also in Graves 8 and 30. Lying on the head of the child, where red ochre traces were noted, were cow horns. Such is also the case in Grave 20, of an adult male, which was provided with a jar and one bowl, two bone perforators and a small stone axe. In this case the red ochre was distributed in such a way as to suggest that the body was covered with an ochre-soaked fabric.

In Graves 9 and 20, of a child and of an adult male respectively, complete cow horns were found placed on or close to the head of the deceased.

The presence of *Aspatharia* sp. and more rarely of *Ostrea* sp. shells was recorded in at least seven graves.

Stone axes, made of various raw materials, were found. In one case four stone axes were part of the furniture of a disturbed infant grave (Grave 8) (Fig. 13:1,3-5). Three others were found in Grave 21 (Fig. 13:6-8) together with a

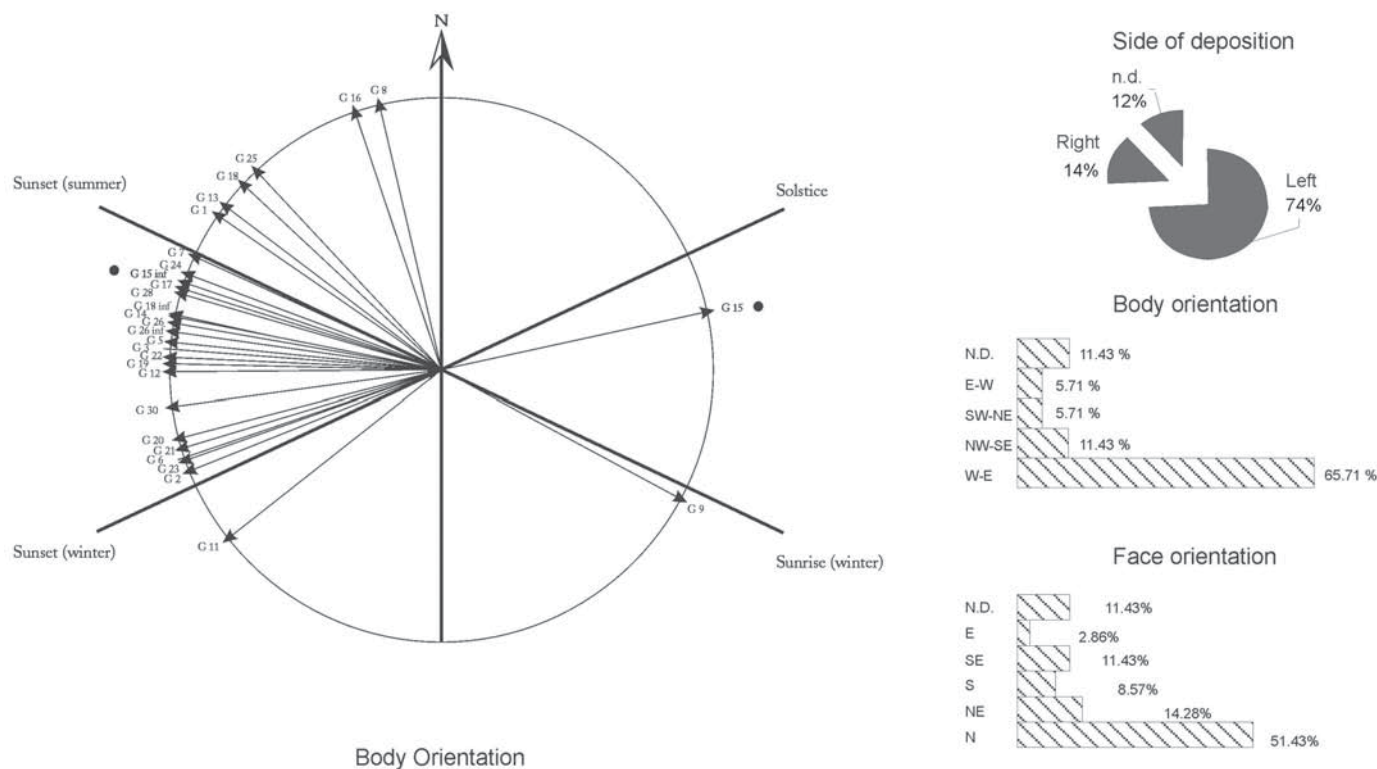


Figure 7. Body position and orientation.

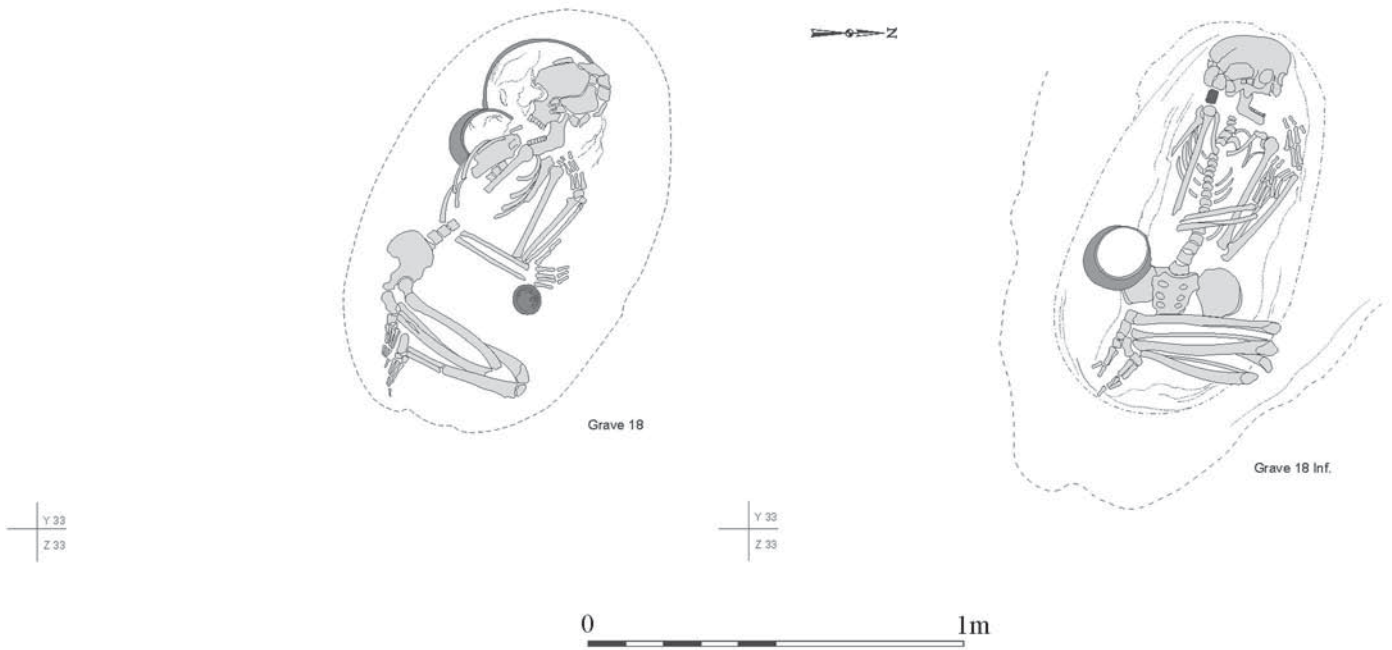


Figure 8. Graves 18 and 18 Inferior.

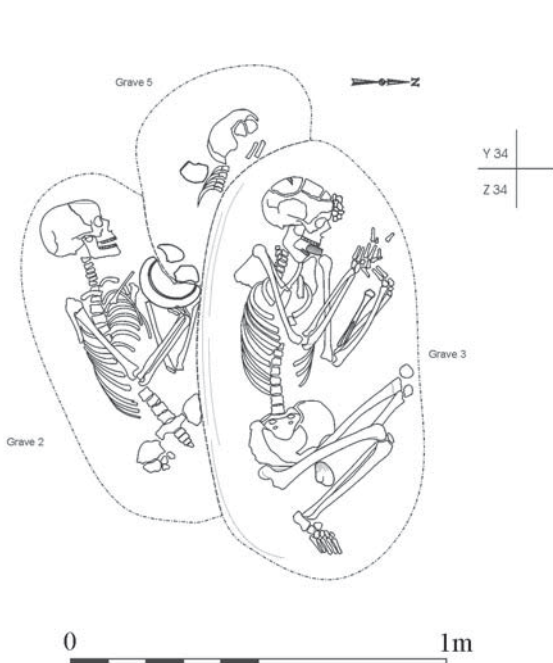


Figure 9. Graves 2, 3 and 5.

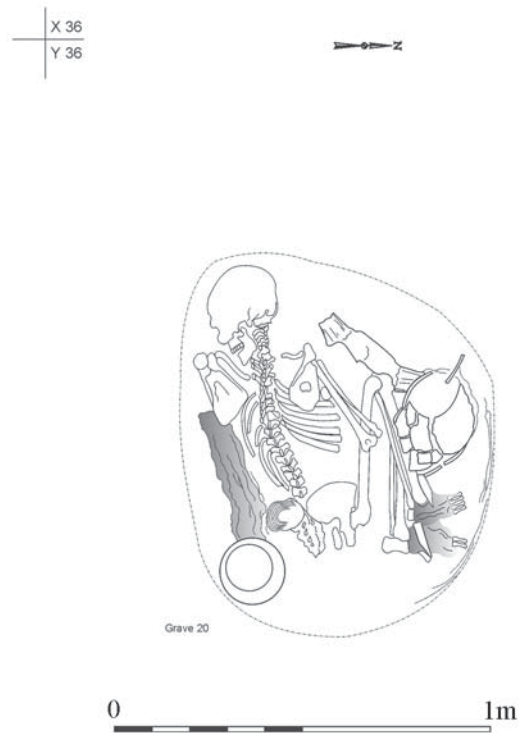


Figure 10. Grave 20.

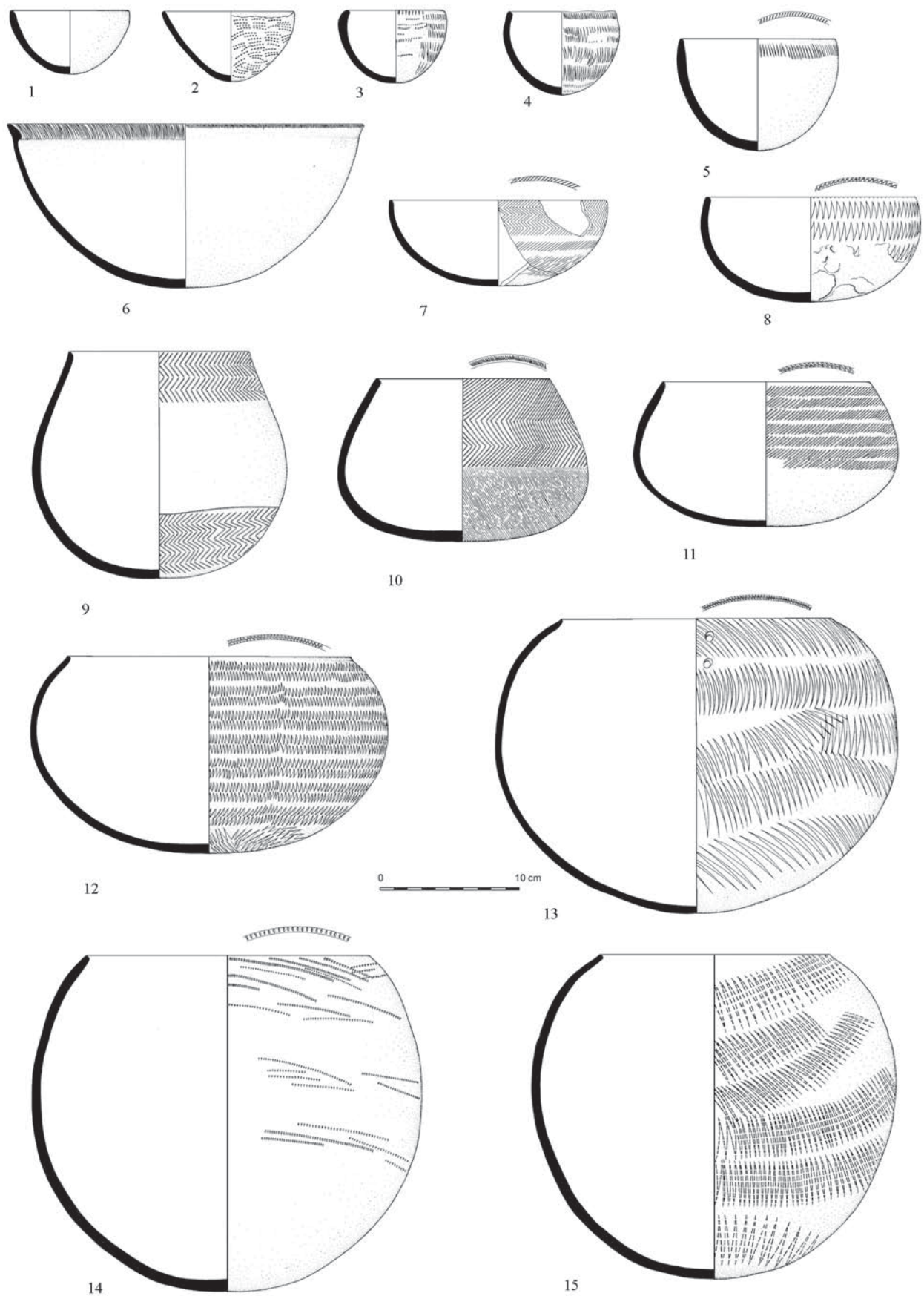


Figure 11. Selected pottery vessels: **1** - Grave 10, Inv. No. 26; **2** - Grave 18, Inv. No. 32; **3-5** - Grave 16 Inv. No. 38, 40, 39; **6** - Grave 9, Inv. No. 5; **7** - Grave 1, Inv. No. 18; **8** - Grave 2, Inv. No. 45; **9** - Grave 20, Inv. No. 34; **10** - Grave 16, Inv. No. 37; **11** - Grave 10, Inv. No. 28; **12-14** - Grave 22, Inv. No. 59, 61, 72; **15** - Grave 17, Inv. No. 31. (scale 1:4).

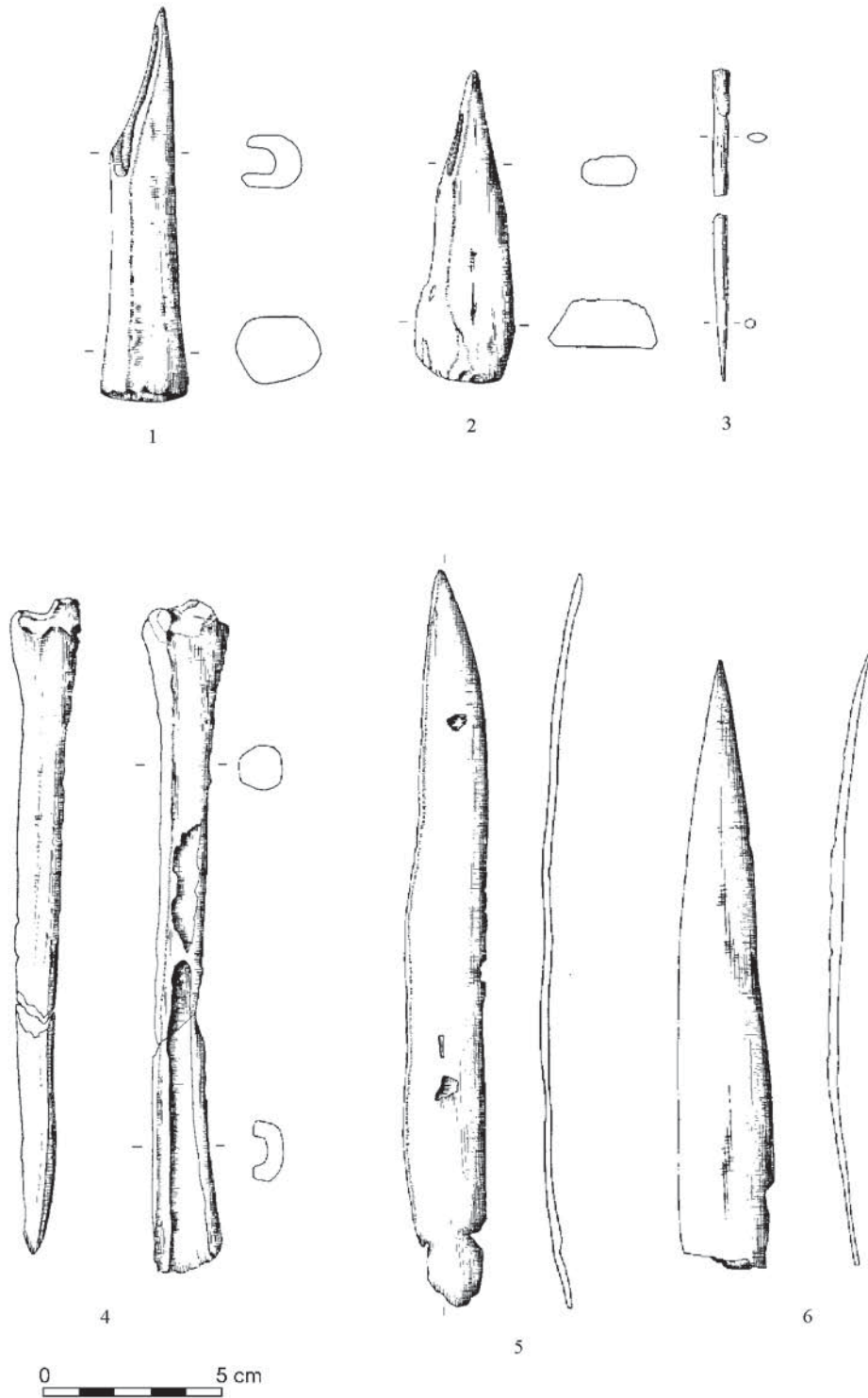


Figure 12. Selected bone objects: 1-2 – Grave 20, Inv. No. 35, 36; 3 – Grave 6, Inv. No. 15; 4 – Grave 3, Inv. No. 20; 5 – Grave 28, Inv. No. 76; 6 – Grave 6, Inv. No. 16. (scale 1:2).

sandstone palette, and another one in Grave 24 (Fig. 13:2) with two flint lunates and a necklace of carnelian beads.

Pottery vessels were very homogeneous in terms of shape and decoration patterns. Plain-rimmed jars, mainly globular, and different kinds of bowls and small bowls, rarely open,

were the main types encountered. The most frequent decorative pattern is a rocker stamp solid or dotted zigzag, followed by herring-bone motifs impressed with a short comb. Rim decoration is usually very simple and limited to impressed oblique parallel segments and rocker stamp zigzag. One pot

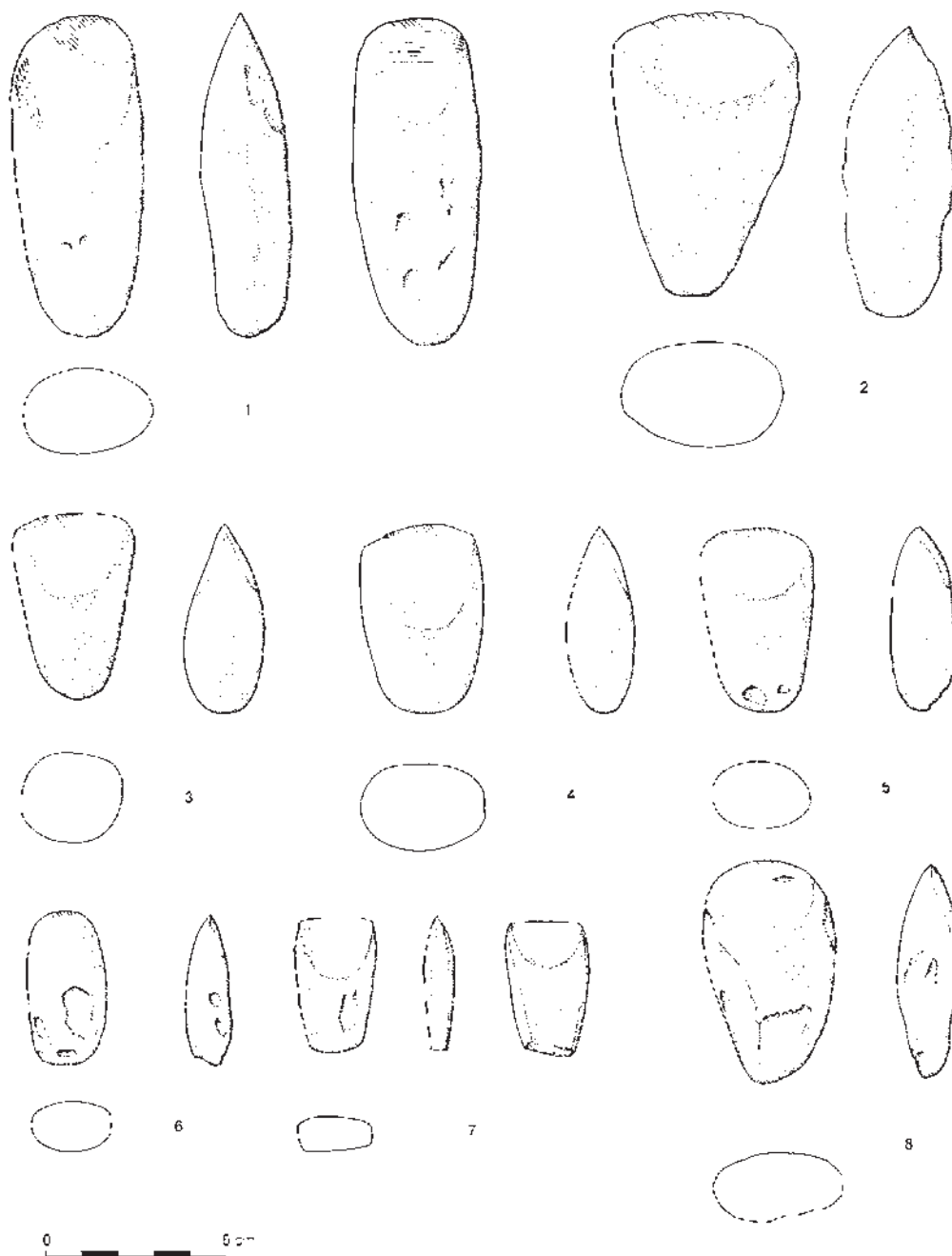


Figure 13. Selected stone axes: **1, 3-5** – Grave 8, Inv. No. 10, 7-9; **2** – Grave 24, Inv. No. 67; **6-8** – Grave 21, Inv. No. 54, 56, 55. (scale 1:2).

is worthy of special mention (Colour Plate XIX) because of its boat-like shape and two opposed depressions on the rim possibly used for pouring liquids. The impressed decoration on this unique vessel is organised on a festoon pattern filled with parallel strokes. Other shapes, like caliciform beakers (Plate 1), are attested only among the surface collection. We can remark that the decoration pattern on the R12 fragments is the same as on the caliciform beaker from the L14 cemetery in the SARS concession area, c. 20km to the south (Welsby 1997, fig. 3; Welsby Sjöström 2001, fig. 5.51), and on the example collected on the surface at the Kadruka KDK.1

cemetery, to the north (Reinold 1987, 51 fig. 11).

The actual sample of excavated graves is still too small to allow us to draw any general inferences on the social structure of the community utilising the cemetery, or on the internal organisation of the cemetery. Notwithstanding this, looking at the general traits which characterise the R12 cemetery, it fits well into the homogeneous substratum which emerges from the analysis of Late Neolithic cemeteries excavated so far in Upper Nubia and Central Sudan. Up to now the closest relationship in terms of pottery shapes and decoration, of lithic and bone tools, is with the Kadruka



Plate 1. Caliciform beaker fragments from surface collection point 27.

KDK.1 and KDK.18 cemeteries in the same general area, confirming the increasing regionalisation trend which, according to J. Reinold (see Reinold, this volume), seems to characterise the cultural development of Late Neolithic populations in northern and central Sudan.

Bibliography

- Geus, F. 1984. *Rescuing Sudan Ancient Cultures*. Khartoum.
- Reinold, J. 1987. 'Les fouilles pré- et proto-historiques de la Section Française de la Direction des Antiquités du Soudan: Les campagnes 1984-85 et 1985-86', *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 2, 17-67.
- Reinold, J. 1994. Le cimetière néolithique KDK.1 de Kadruka (Nubie soudanaise): Premiers résultats et essai de corrélation avec les sites du Soudan central', in C. Bonnet (ed). *Études Nubiennes. Congrès Int. d'études nubienes, Genève, 1990*, Vol. 2. Genève, 93-100.
- Welsby, D. A. 1995. 'The Northern Dongola Reach Survey. The 1994/5 season. a: The Survey', *SARSN* 8, 1995, 2-7.
- Welsby, D. A. 1997. 'The SARS Survey in the Northern Dongola Reach: Preliminary Report on the Third Season, 1994/95', *Kush* 17, 85-94.
- Welsby, D. A. 2001. *Life on the Desert Edge. Seven millennia of settlement in the Northern Dongola Reach, Sudan*. Sudan Archaeological Research Society Publication no. 7. London.
- Welsby Sjöström, I. Y. 2001. 'The Pottery from the Survey', in Welsby 2001, 230-348.



Plate XVI. The Neolithic cemetery at site R12, Grave 18.



Plate XVII. The Neolithic cemetery at site R12, Grave 20.



Plate XVIII. The Neolithic cemetery at site R12, Grave 9.



Plate XIX. The Neolithic cemetery at site R12, decorated bowl from Grave 10.