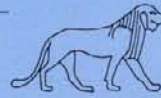


SUDAN & NUBIA

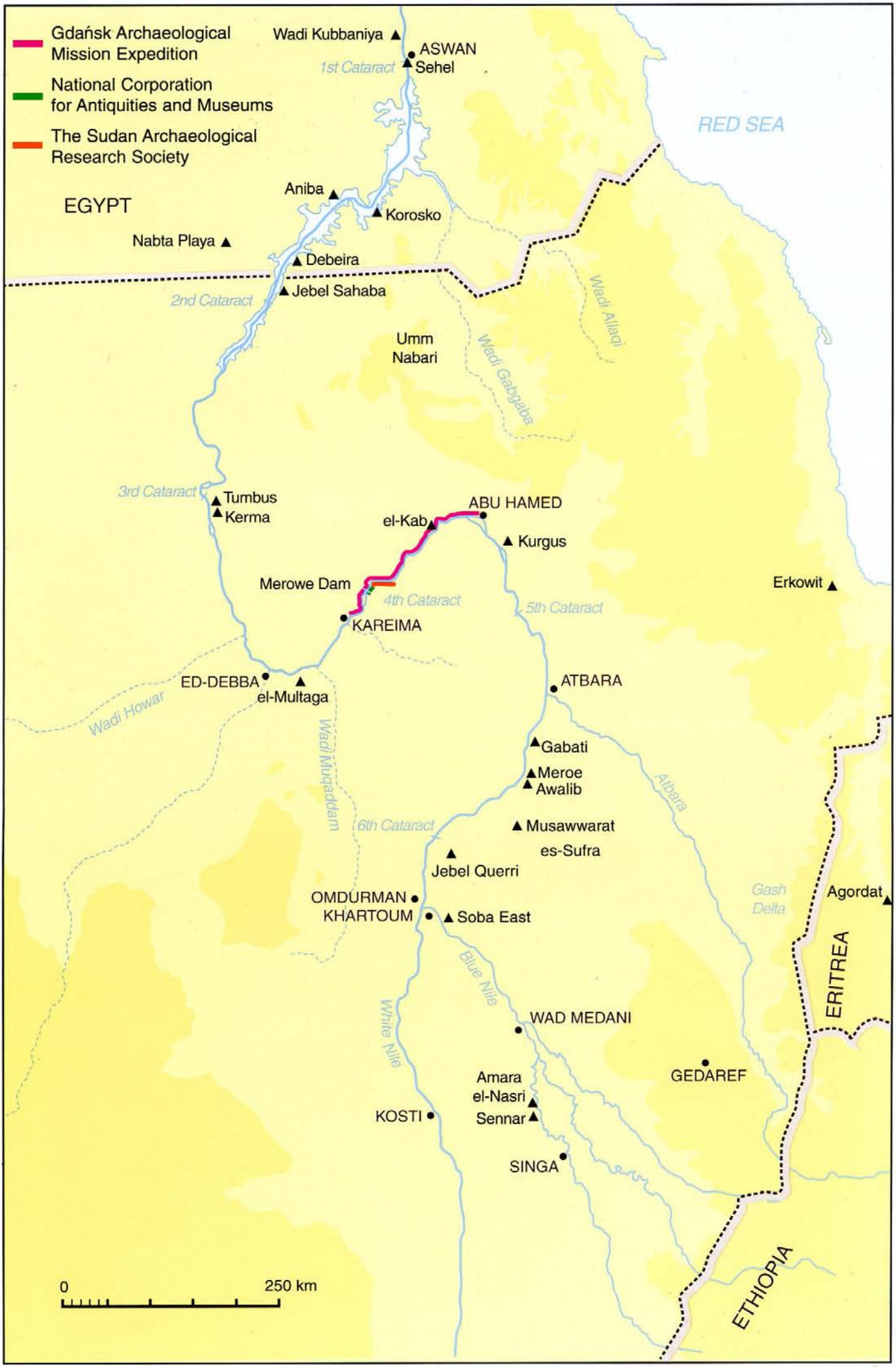
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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SUDAN & NUBIA

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Introduction

Vivian Davies

The Society's two major events of the year, the results of which are published here - the Kirwan Memorial Lecture delivered in October, 2002, and the colloquium on recent fieldwork held in May, 2003 - were extremely well attended. The colloquium incorporated a special session, led by Dr. Salah Mohamed Ahmed, NCAM Director of Excavations, on the Merowe Dam salvage project. The response has been encouraging. Since the colloquium, several organisations have applied for concessions, joining the existing four missions of Gdańsk, NCAM, the French Unit and SARS. Many more are still needed. Interested parties should contact Dr Salah at NCAM tel./fax. 249 11 786784 or the International Society for Nubian Studies c/o dwelsby@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk.

Pharaonic Inscriptions along the Eastern Desert Routes in Sudan

Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni

The boundary stelae and other inscriptions left by Thutmose I and III and their expeditions on the Hagr el-Merwa, a quartz rock at Kurgus near the Nile, a little to the north of the 19th Parallel (see Davies, this volume), are the most southerly evidence for the advance of the ancient Egyptians into Africa so far found. With the consolidation of the new border, military and commercial traffic had the option of following two routes: either along the river or by the shorter route across the desert. From the map (see Map on inside of cover), one can see how the river route from Korosko to Kurgus is much longer, *c.* 1200km, while the overland route between the two sites is only some 500km. Furthermore, this section of the Nile was not easily traversed by boat, as three cataracts, the Second, the Third and the Fourth, made navigation difficult. The Second Cataract and the rapids along the Batn el-Hajar, a stretch of the Nile some 70km in length, forced the Egyptian sailors to unload their merchandise, transport it overland and reload it after having by-passed the cataract. Additionally, the navigation of the long stretch between the two modern towns of ed-Debba and Abu Hamed must have been extremely difficult on account of the prevailing wind, which from November to March blows from the northeast, coinciding with the direction of the river's current in this Reach. These difficulties could be avoided by crossing the desert (Figure 1).

The Ce.R.D.O. expedition of 2001-2002 had two main aims:

- i) to follow the ancient caravan route from Kurgus, which after having crossed the desert of Atmur arrived once more on the Nile at Korosko.
- ii) to find traces of Egyptian military and other activity.

Success was achieved on both counts. Especially important was the discovery of new hieroglyphic inscriptions of the New Kingdom, though in a number of cases further research is required on the question of dating.¹ They record the presence of Egyptian administrative and military personnel at various points along the route.

During the course of the mission, we revisited several

¹ Preliminary readings of the inscriptions discovered during the latest season have been kindly provided by Prof. M. Valloggia of the University of Geneva, Prof. A. Roccati of the University 'La Sapienza' in Rome and Vivian Davies of the British Museum. We are especially grateful to Vivian Davies for reading the important 'Pa-itsy' inscriptions (see below) and for bibliographic references. Further, more detailed study of the inscriptional corpus is intended in due course.

gold mines found during the Ce.R.D.O. seasons 1989/1990/1991. Among these were the gold mine of Omar Khabash (C50 on the satellite photo Colour plate XXVIII) and that of Umm Fit Fit (C2) (Figure 2; Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 110), where pottery sherds collected during the 1990/1991 season were dated to the pharaonic period. The mining settlement of Umm Fit Fit is located on the southern side of a small amphitheatre of low hills. Among the dry stone constructions of round or rectangular plan, we found numerous anvils for the first crushing of the quartz and grinding querns for the pulverisation of the mineral, obtained from a granite quarry opened on the side of a nearby hill. There is also the large area of Umm Nabari, a collection of intrusive granitic rocks composed of surface seams of pegmatites, eruptive rocks that are frequently rich in rare minerals and precious stones such as topaz and beryl. However, it is principally the gold-bearing quartz that is the wealth of the area. We had previously visited the western end of the massif, a vast area of mineral exploration, with hills of worked quartz that testify to the long period of use of the site (A1 – 1989 season; the left yellow square on the satellite photo, Colour plate XXIX) (Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 98ff).

The route that heads for Korosko passes through a valley (marked by arrows on the satellite photo, Colour plate XXIX), which divides the principal massif of Umm Nabari from a low semicircular plateau (Jebel Abu Merekh). During the last season, we followed the Wadi Tonaidba, going along the west

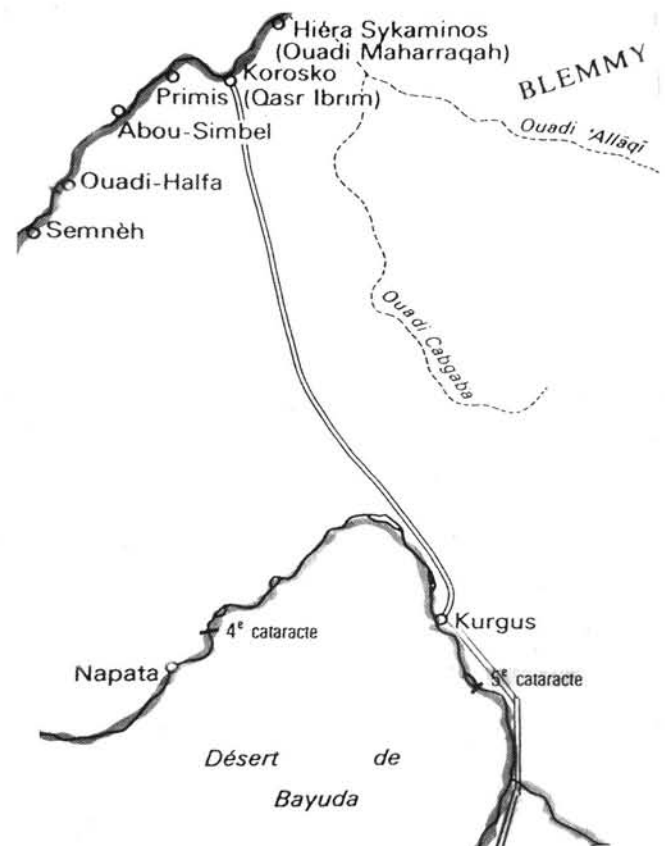


Figure 1. The Korosko Road.



side of Jebel Nabari (Figure 2). About 10km to the north-west of A1, we discovered a cave (first orange square on the left of the satellite photo – Colour plate XXIX) extending right through a low hill, which had probably been formed by water in antiquity (Colour plate XXX). It was an ideal place for caravans to rest, the two openings located at opposite ends of the cave, creating a pleasant breeze making the shelter cool. The cave is some 100m in length and 10m high, with a slight slope, and the bottom is filled with stone debris.

Having entered the southern end of the cave, we noticed an inscription on the wall to the right, deeply incised on the rock, by means of a pick (Plate 1). The patina is slightly lighter than the surrounding rock face. The hieroglyphs are reason-



Plate 1. *Inscription of Chief of Teh-khet, Pa-itsy.*

ably clear; only two, along a vein dark with salts, have been eroded. They appear to read: ‘Chief of Teh-khet, Pa-its(y)’. The inscription is located at some 500-600mm from the floor of the cave. The difficulty of executing the inscription at this height suggests that the floor of the cave was at a lower level in the pharaonic period. The detritus collected at the foot of the wall may conceal other inscriptions. The toponym Teh-khet (region of modern Serra-Debeira) also occurs in another, less clear, inscription, probably of the same official, situated opposite the first, at some 2.5m above the floor of the cave (Plate 2). Executed by superficial pecking, it is almost invisible when the light conditions are not right.

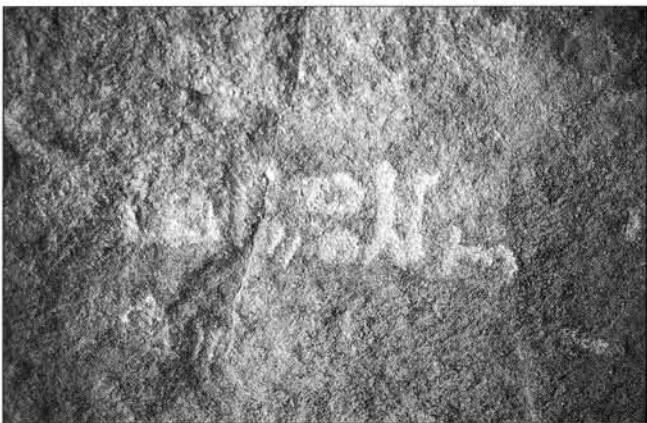


Plate 2. *Inscription including the toponym Teh-khet.*

The patina is slightly lighter than that of the previous inscription. The right-hand wall, adjacent to the southern entrance to the cave, was also once covered with hieroglyphs but wind erosion has obliterated them. There remain only a few signs to testify to the long occupation of the site. The ‘Chief of Teh-khet, Pa-itsy’, is well attested from other sources. Also known as Djehutyhotep, he was a member of an Egyptianised Nubian family, which is traceable over several generations during the early 18th Dynasty, and the owner of a famous tomb at Debeira East. He served as ‘Chief of Teh-khet’ under the co-regency of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (see Säve-Söderbergh 1991a, 186ff., and 1991b, 190ff.).

Exploring the region, 5km to the east of the cave, we found a large circle of stones of over 10m in diameter (the left blue square on the satellite photo – Colour plate XXIX). It encloses the openings of some wells filled with sand and a probable burial area, marked by remains of bones on the surface. Continuing northwards we passed along the narrow valley that separates Jebel Nabari from a small mountainous formation to the west. The valley, some 6km wide at its mouth, narrows to a width of 2km, and then again opens out into a valley about 5km wide. The area is dotted with hills of Nubian sandstone, eroded by the wind into pinnacles. The eastern end of the valley is filled with sand dunes blown by the wind up against the western side of the Jebel Nabari. We carried out a reconnaissance, but it seems impossible that caravans crossed this area of soft sand. The only transitable corridor is the western side of the valley, which is next to the small plateau. Our research, therefore, continued along this side.

Proceeding in this direction (western side of Wadi Tonaidba), at about 17km northwest of the wells we located another inscription on a sandstone wall (second orange square on the left of satellite photo – Colour plate XXIX). Because of its position, the rock-surface, slightly angled in respect to the valley, is partially protected from the wind, contributing to the good state of preservation of the signs (Plate 3). The pecking is shallow and the inscription has a patina very much lighter than that of the surrounding rock, which makes it easily visible even at a distance of several metres. The hieroglyphs stand out clearly: ‘Count, Hornakht, son of

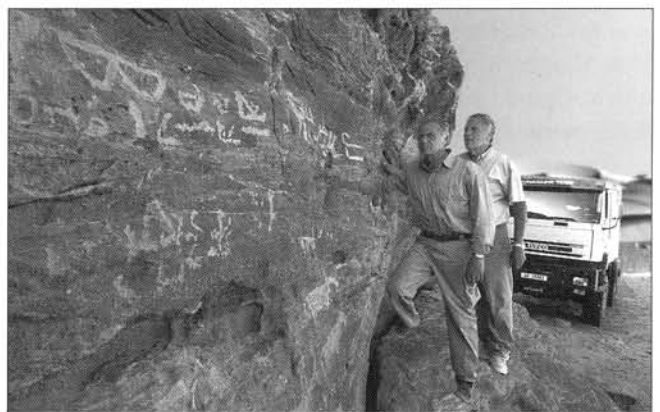


Plate 3. *Inscription of Count, Hornakht.*

Penniut, Deputy Commander of the 'Troops of Miam' (modern Aniba, a major administrative centre of Egyptian Nubia during the New Kingdom). This Hornakht is known from other sources to have served under Ramesses II (Kitchen 1980, 118, no. 66; Kitchen 2000, 81). Incised beneath is a group of cattle-figures. Their patina is a little darker. Fragments of pottery collected at the base of the wall would suggest a prehistoric date for these figures. A dozen metres to the north, a small cavity created by wind erosion protects other representations of cattle (Plate 4). The central figure is



Plate 4. Rock-picture depicting long-horned cattle.

well executed. It has long thin horns, a dappled coat and large teats swollen with milk. In the vicinity, other representations of cattle are of a coarser design. The technique, shallow pecking, is similar to that of the hieroglyphs, while the patina is slightly darker than that of the inscriptions. A few metres away is another line of hieroglyphs (Plate 5). It is positioned above the representation of a herd of cattle, partly



Plate 5. Inscription of a General, Deputy Commander of Troops.

erased by erosion. It reads: 'General, Deputy Commander of 'Troops, [...] (restore perhaps 'Count, Hornakht').

Proceeding towards the north, we copied, at a short distance one from the other, several more inscriptions. One of these, although executed in shallow pecking and therefore not easy to read, is incised on a wall protected from the wind,

and is therefore well preserved (Plate 6). It may possibly read: 'Overseer of the Nubians, Ity'. Another inscription is arranged in two lines (Plate 7):



Plate 6. Inscription possibly reading 'Overseer of the Nubians, Ity'.

(i) 'General, Deputy Commander of Troops,
(ii) Count, Hornakht' (probably the Hornakht of Miam encountered above).

The second line is visible when the light is at an angle; the first line, on the other hand, can be seen only when the wall is completely in shadow - a good example of why it is so difficult to produce a reliable photographic documentation of such inscriptions.



Plate 7. Inscription of Count, Hornakht.

As one continues northwards, the valley opens up and its walls become more exposed to the winds. Inscriptions found here are almost completely eroded. Next to the inscriptions are some enigmatic graffiti and numerous representations of cattle. Further north, we noted another beautiful representation of a herd of cattle (Colour plate XXXI). It is incised about 10m above the floor of the wadi, on a wall of sandstone half submerged in very fine red wind-blown sand. Probably other pictures are hidden under the sand. Numerous sherds of prehistoric pottery are scattered around the base of the hill.



Immediately before the valley opens out towards a vast and sandy plain, we discovered a cave, which rises 5m from the floor of the wadi (third orange square on the left of the satellite photo – Colour plate XXIX). In front of the entrance, an inscription deeply incised in the sandstone was noted (Plate 8). It mentions the ‘Scribe(?), Nebnetjeru...’ (cf.



Plate 8. Inscription of the Scribe(?), Nebnetjeru.

perhaps Kitchen 1980, 121, no. 71; 2000 82-3). The hieroglyphs by the entrance are reasonably clear, while others in the interior are almost completely eroded, a process probably caused by the wind-blown sand that accumulates on the floor of the cave wearing the internal walls smooth. The cave could have been a small rock-temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor, since the inscription noted above is contained within the outline of the representation of a bovine. Outside the cave, on the north wall, another inscription (Plate 9), incised in the sandstone, is located above a group of cattle whose bodies have been roughly smoothed. It reads: ‘Count, Mesu’.

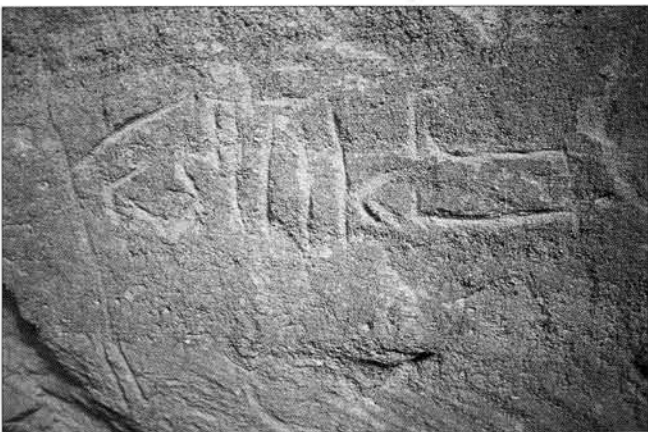


Plate 9. Inscription of Count, Mesu.

During the Ce.R.D.O. season of 1989, we explored the eastern side of Jebel Umm Nabari, and what we found there was in some respects very similar to what has been described above. We discovered a large circle of stones, with a diam-

eter of *c.* 10m, that enclosed some wells. It was located in the plain, near the southern side of Jebel Dayob (blue square on the right on the satellite map – Colour plate XXIX). A dozen kilometres to the southwest (orange square on the right on the satellite map – Colour plate XXIX), we discovered some representations of Horus next to the name of a priest (Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 117; Damiano-Appia 1999, 518ff, with fig. 1). These representations seem to be associated with a cult area, as also appears to have been the case in the ‘Hathor cave’ discovered during the most recent season (see above). All around are numerous representations of cattle, with long thin horns, similar in their execution to those found during the last season.

We may, therefore, hypothesize two different caravan routes that, leaving from Kurgus or the area of Abu Hamed, headed in one case towards the western side of Jebel Umm Nabari and, in the other, towards the eastern side of the same mountain range. Both caravan routes went near areas rich in gold bearing quartz (Colour plate XXVIII, Figure 2). The western caravan route reached gold mines C5 (Abu Siha), C4 (Rod el-Ushal), C3 (one small mine between C4 and C1), C1, C2 (Umm Fit Fit) and A1 (Umm Nabari). The eastern caravan route passed mines C50 (Omar Khabash, where pot sherds of pharaonic date were found), C6 (Nab el Husan), B5 (Nabi) and B4 (Mosei). The mines B5 and B4 were visited during the Ce.R.D.O. season of 1990.

The western and eastern sides of Jebel Umm Nabari are connected by Wadi Murrat. About half way along, Wadi Murrat is flanked by a defensive complex that has the same name as the wadi, located in a position that permitted it to control passing caravans (Figure 2; Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 115ff.; Damiano-Appia 1999, 521-2). It is difficult to determine the date of the fort; only excavation would establish the period of its use, which, however, would seem to be fairly late.

The eastern and western tracks around Jebel Umm Nabari meet again at the northern end of the Jebel (Colour plate XXIX). The area is marked by low sandstone hills eroded by wind action. After about 70km of rolling ‘*hamada*’ one reaches the pass of Khashm el-Bab (Colour plate XXVIII, Figure 2). There are three passes in the area, but that of Khashm el-Bab is the most direct along the Kurgus-Korosko caravan route. It rises 60m from the level of the plain and is flanked by Nubian sandstone, sculpted by the wind. Working with Giancarlo Negro during the 1990 Ce.R.D.O. season, we found numerous inscriptions in an isolated shelter located to the east of the pass, a resting place easily accessible to the caravans (Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 113; Damiano-Appia 1999, 522ff.).

The pass of Khashm el-Bab marks the point where the Kurgus-Korosko route is intersected by the track connecting Buhen with Berenike Panchrysos (Figure 2). This was a long caravan route, dotted with inscriptions of various dates, including the name of Heqanefer found in a rock-shelter (Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 26 and 118-9; Damiano-Appia 1999,

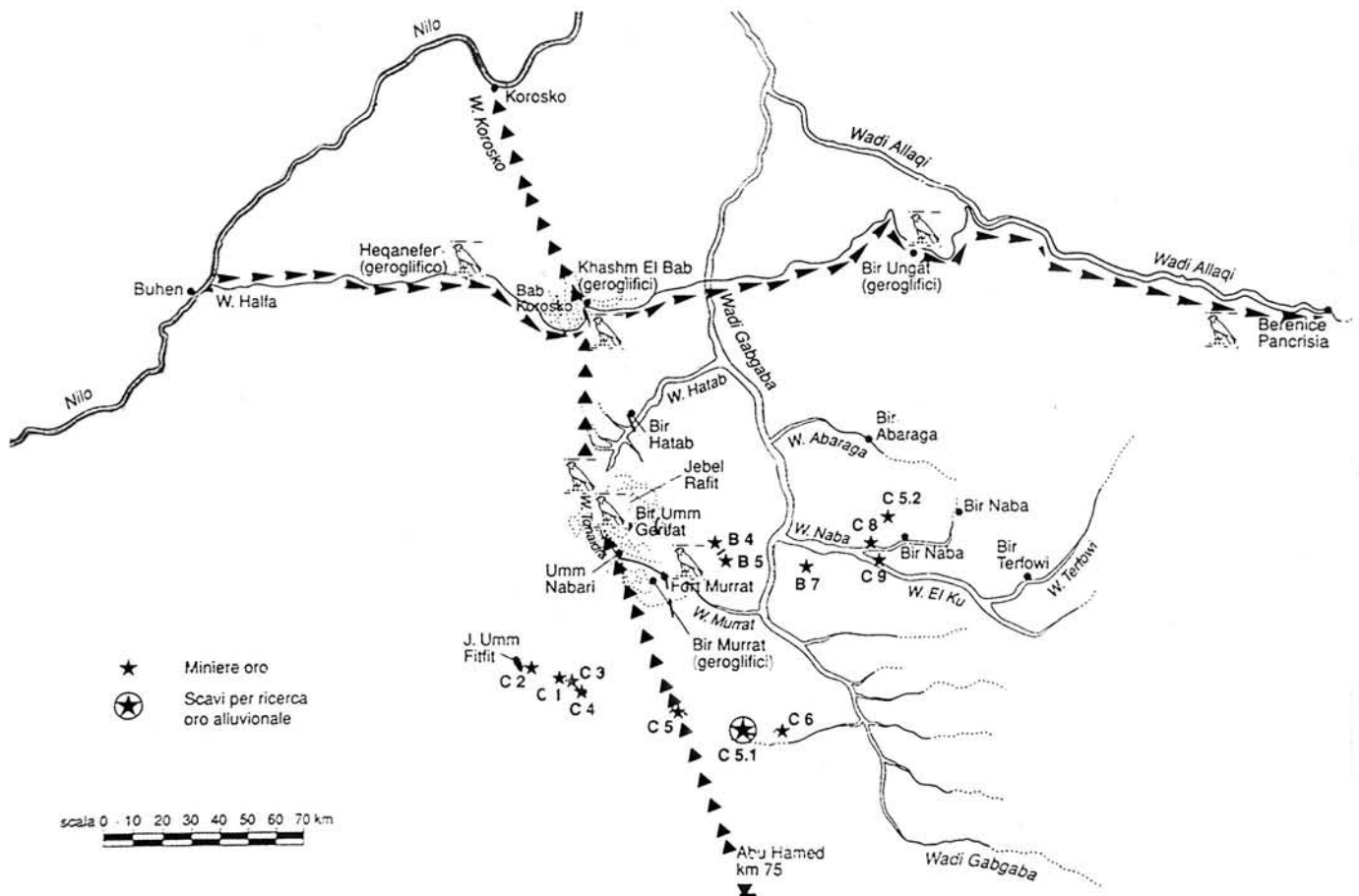


Figure 2. The northern section of the Korosko Road intersecting the road from Buhén to Berenice Panchrysos.

513-7, fig. 1, no. 1), the inscription of Bir Umm Gat (Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 102; Damiano-Appia 1999, 535-7, fig. 3, no. 13), and a small inscription found in Wadi Nasari (Castiglioni *et al.* 1995, 70), about 20km from Berenike, all discovered during the previous seasons.

Our exploration ended 10km to the north of this pass, on the 22nd Parallel that marks the modern border between Sudan and Egypt, approximately 80km from Korosko, today submerged under the waters of Lake Nasser. Much is still to be investigated but our discoveries to date confirm that the ancient Egyptians certainly used the Korosko road. We hope that the good relations that are being established between Egypt and Sudan will allow us to continue our research along this important, ancient route that cut across the desert, avoiding the river and the great bend of the Nile.

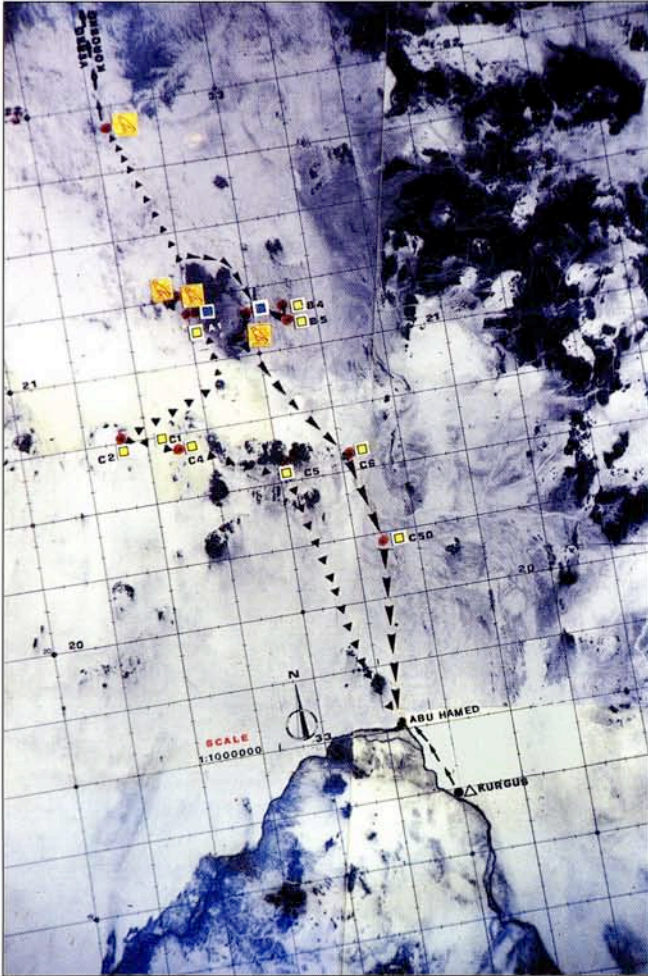
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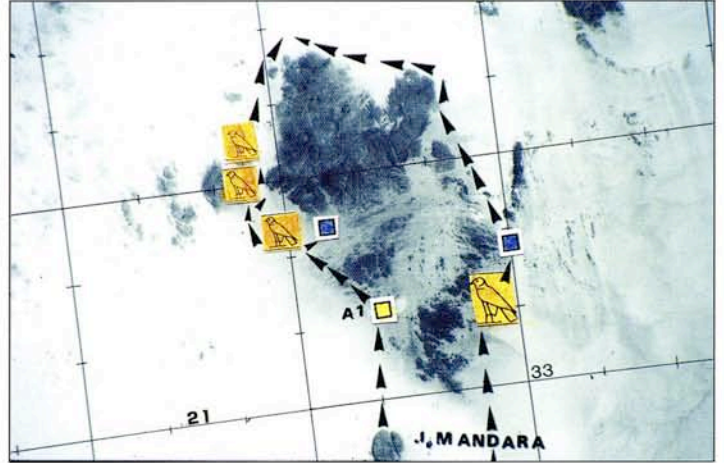
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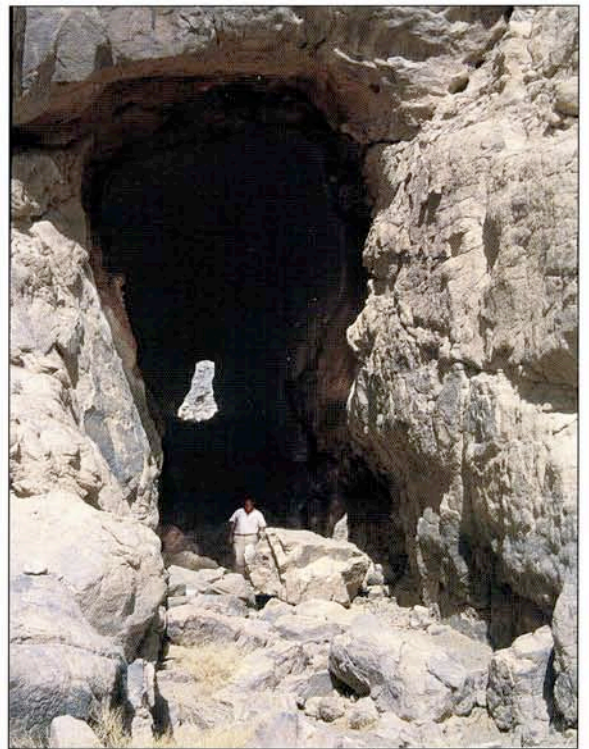
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Colour plate XXVIII. The Eastern Desert.
Satellite photo of the routes from Abu Hamed/Kurgus to
Korosko marked with arrows.



Colour plate XXIX. The Eastern Desert.
Satellite photo of the Umm Nabari massif.



Colour plate XXX. The Eastern Desert.
A cave in Jebel Nabari.



Colour plate XXXI. The Eastern Desert.
Rock-drawing depicting a herd of cattle.