

SUDAN & NUBIA

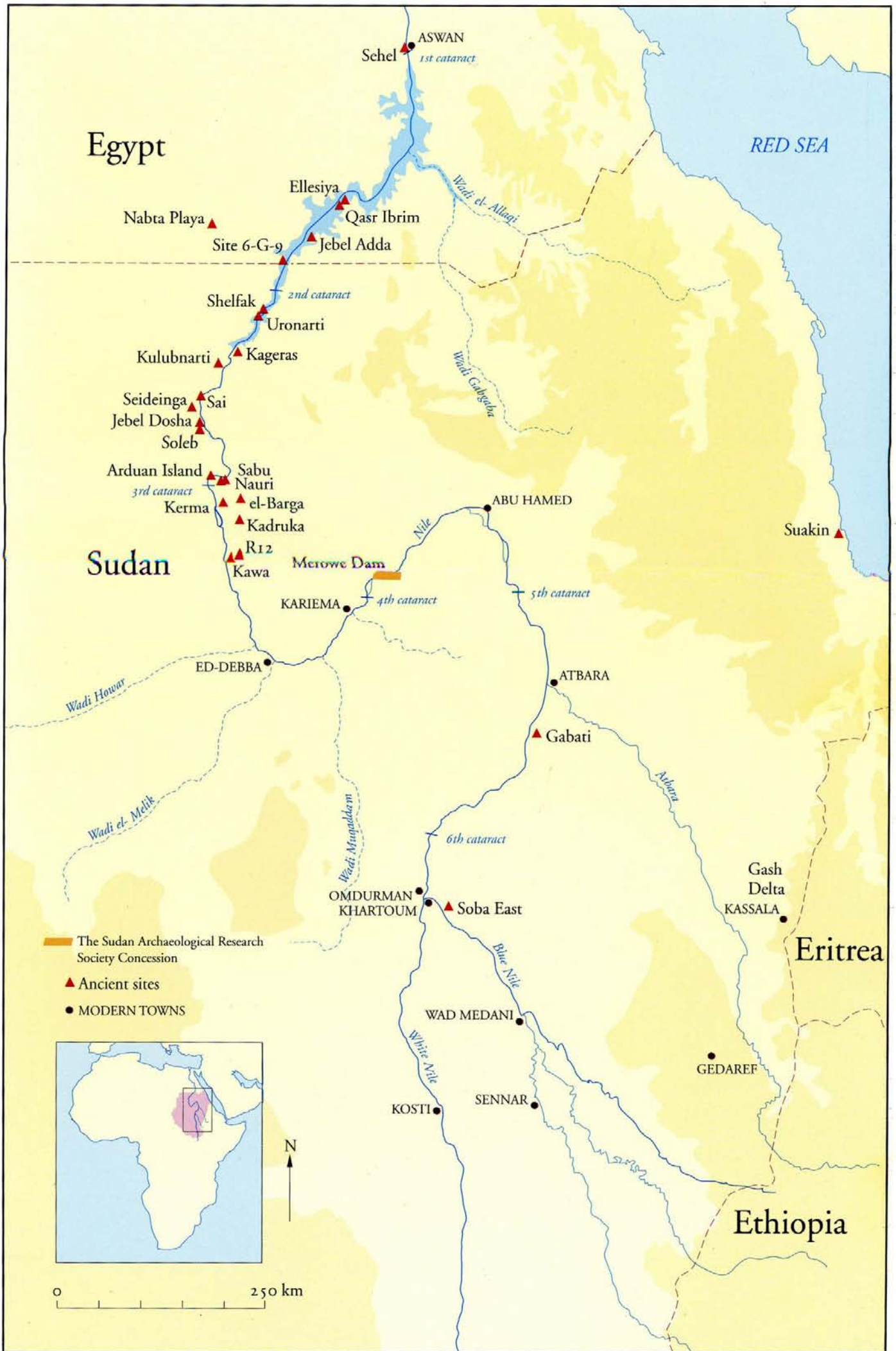
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 8

2004





SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 8

2004

Contents

The Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project

The SARS Amri to Kirbekan Survey. 2

Excavations at the pyramid, Site 4-F-71

Derek A. Welsby

The Central Amri to Kirbekan Survey

A Preliminary Report on Excavations and Survey 2003-04 4

Dorian Q Fuller

Rock art and 'rock gongs' in the Fourth Nile 11

Cataract region: the Ishashi island rock art survey

Cornelia Kleinitz

The SARS Anglo-German Expedition at the 17

Fourth Cataract of the Nile: the 2003/04 season

Pawel Wolf

Reports

Settlement and cemeteries of the Mesolithic 27

and Early Neolithic at el-Barga (Kerma region)

Matthieu Honegger

Cemetery R12 and a possible periodisation of 33

the Nubian Neolithic

Sandro Salvatori and Donatella Usai

The Pre-Kerma: a cultural group from 38

Upper Nubia prior to the Kerma civilisation

Matthieu Honegger

The Nubian Cemetery at Hierakonpolis, Egypt.

Results of the 2003 Season

Excavation of the C-Group cemetery 47

at HK27C

Renée Friedman

Preliminary remarks on the Pottery Corpus from 52

the C-Group Cemetery at HK27C

Serena Giuliani

Physical Anthropological Study of the HK27C 56

C-Group Sample

Joel D. Irish

Jebel Doshā: The Egyptian Inscriptions 60

Vivian Davies

Site 6-G-9 and the Problem of Early Kushite 64

Settlement in Lower Nubia

William Y. Adams

Early Kushite Agriculture: Archaeobotanical 70

Evidence from Kawa

Dorian Q Fuller

Late Antique Evidence in Eastern Sudan 75

Andrea Manzo

Gabati: Health in Transition 84

Margaret Judd

Suakin 2003/4 90

Michael Mallinson

Two different pottery productions in 95

Northern Sudan

Elena A.A. Garcea

Hidden Treasures of Lake Nubia 103

Derek A. Welsby

Miscellaneous

Obituary - Nicholas Byram Millet 105

Julie R. Anderson

Review - N. Finneran 2002. *The Archaeology of* 106

Christianity in Africa.

Derek A. Welsby

Front Cover: Uronarti: view along 'Middle Street' towards the southern defences in March 2004 (photo Derek A. Welsby)



Site 6-G-9 and the Problem of Early Kushite Settlement in Lower Nubia

William Y. Adams

The extent of early Kushite settlement in Lower Nubia has been a matter of debate for nearly a century. Neither the first nor the second Archaeological Survey of Nubia (1907-11 and 1929-34) found any sites, other than temples, that could be clearly attributed to Napatan or early Meroitic period occupation,¹ and in our Antiquities Service Survey of the West Bank from Faras to Gemai (1960-64) we found only one.² The concurrent survey of the East Bank by the Scandinavian Joint Expedition also found only one early Kushite site, possibly though not certainly datable to the 25th Dynasty.³

On the strength of such compelling negative evidence, “dirt archaeologists” like myself have argued that there can not have been any appreciable amount of early Kushite settlement; otherwise we would have found it (cf. Adams 1977, 345). We did, after all, find abundant sites of both earlier and later periods. Philologists on the other hand can point to Napatan and early Meroitic texts which seem to refer unambiguously to places in Lower Nubia, places which, they argue, must therefore have been inhabited.

I want in this brief paper to call attention to Site 6-G-9,⁴ the single site found by us which is, in my view, “the exception that proves the rule” in regard to the scarcity of early Kushite settlement. The site was dug more than forty years ago, and is now under at least thirty meters of water, but the questions that it raises are still very much with us. More importantly, I think they are still capable of resolution, through field work further upriver as well as through a thorough study of the collections from the site, which has yet to be undertaken. It seems particularly apropos to raise the issue now, because the collections from 6-G-9, long housed at the University of Colorado, have recently been transferred to the British Museum, and should be available for study by interested parties.

Site 6-G-9 was one of 262 sites recorded by the Antiqui-

¹ For numerical summaries of the sites found by these expeditions see Adams 1977, 72 and 76.

² Preliminary reports on this work will be found in *Kush* 9-13 (1961-65). Full, final reports are in preparation, and will be published in the SARS monograph series. A volume on the Meroitic and Ballaña sites (Adams i.p.) is in press.

³ Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 322-3. For preliminary reports see Säve-Söderbergh in *Kush* 10-12 (1962-64). See also Säve-Söderbergh 1970.

⁴ The full site designation is NF-35-I/6-G-9, according to the system of site designation adopted in *The Archaeological Map of the Sudan*. See Hinkel 1977, 26.

ties Service/Unesco Survey of the West Bank, between 1960 and 1964. Preliminary excavations were carried out by Hans-Åke Nordström in the spring of 1961. We immediately recognized the special importance of the site, and it was then offered as an excavation concession, along with several neighboring sites, to the University of Colorado Nubian Expedition. The Colorado group completed the excavation in the fall of 1962, compiling extensive field notes and maps and collecting just about every scrap of cultural material from the site. There has, however, been no publication up to now, apart from the brief preliminary reports by Nordström in 1962 and Hewes in 1964. Pottery from the site was also discussed briefly in Lister 1967, 63-4.⁵

My descriptions and discussion here are based partly on personal visits to the site and on the notes and photographs of Nordström, but mostly on examination of the Colorado field records and collections. I have to record my gratitude to Deborah Confer and to Stephen Lekson, at the University of Colorado Museum, for permitting me access to this material, and for assisting my labors.

The architectural remains

Site 6-G-9 was located on the west bank of the Nile within the *omodia* of Gezira Dabarosa, opposite the north end of the town of Wadi Halfa. It was situated on a gentle sandy slope, with an extensive cultivated floodplain immediately in front and the houses of Dabarosa village immediately behind. The preserved remains (Figure 1)⁶ were at best very denuded, as a result of repeated flooding, and had been eroded away altogether at the north, east, and south sides. Only on the west, the side farthest from the river and on the highest ground, was the original limit of the settlement preserved. There was evidence of an earlier occupation in the form of a layer of charcoal and sherds, underlying the house walls, but no traces of structures were uncovered.

The “core” of the site, and the best preserved part of it, consisted of ten stone-walled rooms, eight of which were arranged in a single line, and were backed against an exceptionally heavy wall at the west side (Plate 1). These rooms are here designated as Section B. Adjoining them on both the north and the south were rooms with much thinner walls of mud brick, designated as Sections A and C, which however were in such denuded condition that only small and disconnected fragments were preserved. There were also a very few traces of additional brick rooms on the east. The central part of the site had almost certainly been destroyed by burning, as evidenced by blackening of the walls, masses of blackened, reed-impressed mud found throughout the fill, and ash and charcoal overlying the floors. It

⁵ A complete final report will be included in Adams i.p.

⁶ Room numbers appearing on the plan are those assigned by the University of Colorado Expedition.

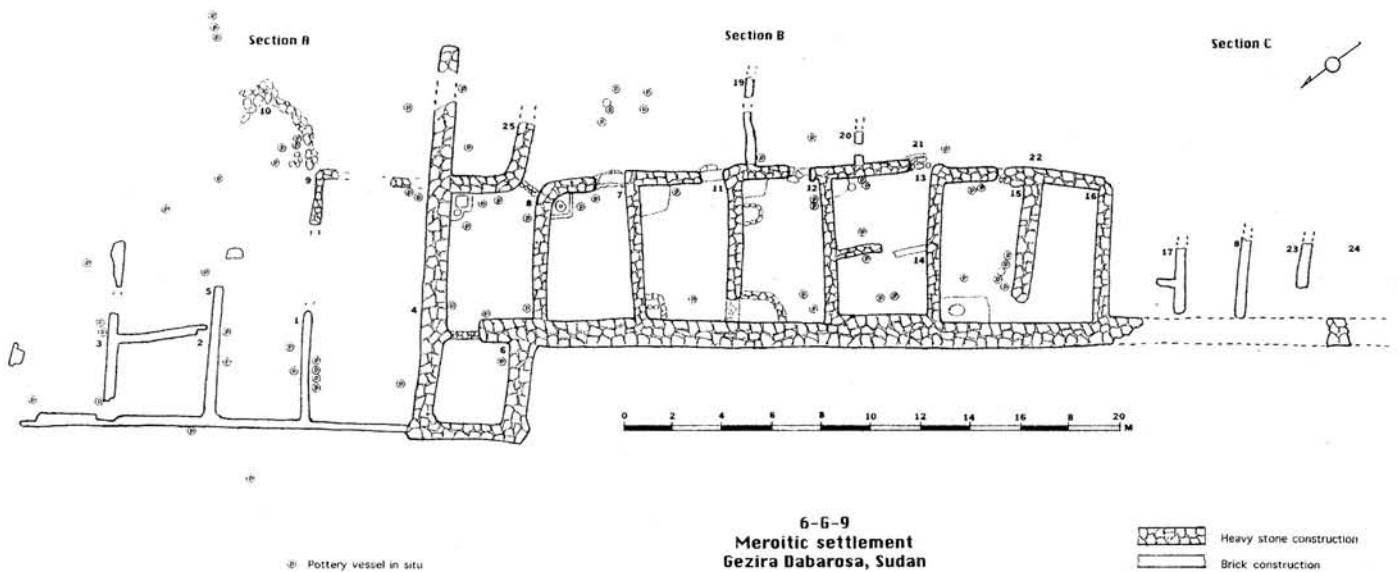


Figure 1. Plan of Site 6-G-9, based on University of Colorado field plans. Room numbers are those assigned by the Colorado Expedition.

seems likely however that some of this material was the residue of cooking activities, for there were ovens and/or fireplaces in nearly every room.

Section B

The ground plan of this part of the site was unlike any other known to us. It consisted of seven rectangular rooms of roughly equal size, although one at a late date had been subdivided into two smaller rooms (Rooms 13 and 14). All were built in a line against a massive, unbroken stone wall at the west, and with a single exception all were entered through doorways in their east walls. Only Rooms 15 and 16, at the south end of the line, were interconnected. From this straight alignment of rooms, one small additional room (Room 6) projected westward at the north end, and another room (Room 25) of undetermined size projected eastward.

The unbroken exterior walls at the north and west were exceptionally massive, having an average thickness of 1m

along most of their length. One section, at the west end of Room 14, was thicker still, having apparently been rebuilt or reinforced after a partial collapse. The long west wall continued southward beyond Section B and served also to enclose the west side of Section C, although only scraps of it were preserved here. Partitions separating the rooms in Section B were considerably thinner than were the west and north outside walls, having an average thickness of 60-70cm (Plate 2).



Plate 2. Detail of masonry in Room 7.



Plate 1. View of the site from the east, with Room 11 at the center.

Throughout all the rooms there was abundant evidence of cooking activity. Corner fireplaces and/or ovens were present in most of them, and extensive deposits of ash and charcoal were found in all of them (Plates 3-4). There were also blackened areas on the floors and walls of most rooms, although these might have resulted from the fire that destroyed the site. Numerous pottery vessels, mostly hand-



Plate 3. Pots and corner fireplaces in Room 8.

made, were partially or wholly buried in the floors of all the rooms except Room 16 (Plates 3-6).

Section A

In this northern, very poorly preserved part of the site the surviving walls were mostly of mud brick stretchers, although there was also at least one room with thin stone walls. The rooms appear to have been similar in size to those in Section B, although only one was preserved on all four of its sides. The rooms of Section A were enclosed on the west by an unbroken thin wall which continued the alignment of the west wall of Room 6, in Section B. There was however no interconnection between any of the rooms in Section A and those in Section B. Pottery vessels were highly



Plate 4. Corner fireplace and floor pots in Room 7.

abundant here, as they were in Section B, but no remains of cooking apparatus or activity were found. However the area shown on the map as Room 10, partly enclosed by a curving alignment of dry-piled stones, might have been an outdoor cooking area.

Section C

As previously noted, this southern section was enclosed on its west side by an extension of the same massive wall that enclosed Section B. Apart from this, there were only a few remnants of thin brick partitions surviving. Apparently, they had separated four parallel rooms of roughly equal size. Neither pots nor cooking remains were found in this part of the site.

The pottery

While the plan of Site 6-G-9, with its very heavy stone construction, is distinctive, it is the pottery which clearly sets this site apart from all others found in the West Bank Survey. There is, unhappily, no surviving complete register of the Colorado finds, but the excavator (Gordon Hewes) wrote as follows in his preliminary report: “[There are] seventy-five essentially intact or restorable vessels, the majority hand-made, cylindrical, with rounded bases and unconstricted mouths, and simple rims [cf. Plate 3]. Of wheel-made vessels, seven conformed to a distinct type with typical Meroitic banded decoration but with a shape so far unreported from other Meroitic sites; all seven lacked bottoms, and were found in inverted position. As with the pots *in situ*, the bulk of the sherds (60% by rough estimate) were plain, hand-made ware, ranging from light brown to dark brown and reddish brown, with a paste of medium coarse silt and abundant fiber temper. The remainder of the pottery was distinguished primarily by the complete absence of any of the fine decorated ware associated with the Meroitic” (Hewes 1964, 178-9). Not mentioned by Hewes, but observed during my examination, were a few sherds of blue-painted “Amarna ware,” which may however have come from the layer of deposit underlying the structures.

My own examination of the very extensive sherd collections at Colorado (well over 100 sacks) largely confirmed the observations of Hewes, although hand-made wares were not quite as preponderant as the excavator suggested. Apart from the conspicuous absence of the familiar Meroitic painted wares, there is an equally conspicuous absence of the Aswan wares which are so prevalent in all later Nubian sites (cf. Adams 1986, 525). There is, to compensate, a rather surprising variety of hard, wheel-made imported wares of types quite unfamiliar to me. A small sample of these was shown to several experts familiar with Late Dynastic, Napatan, and Ptolemaic pottery.⁷ The consensus among them is that the great majority of the wheel-made vessels are Upper

⁷ Janine Bourriau, Víctor Fernandez, Peter French, Pamela Rose, Derek Welsby, and Isabella Welsby-Sjöström.

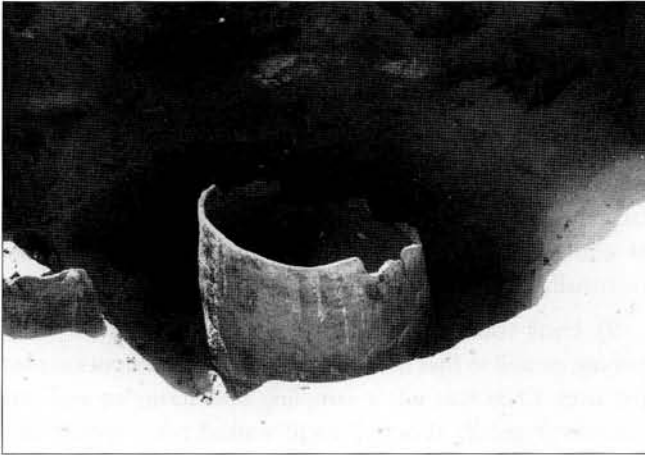


Plate 5. Buried floor pot in Room 12.

Egyptian imports of Ptolemaic date, but with some admixture of Late Dynastic material. It seems probable that the latter specimens were recovered from the charcoal layer which the Colorado excavators found underlying the structural remains at Site 6-G-9. Pamela Rose (personal communication) has written that "In summary, I would say that the bulk of the dateable material is Ptolemaic, and earlier rather than later in that period, most probably with an Egyptian origin rather than an early Meroitic one."

The sherd assemblage at Site 6-G-9 does not show a close resemblance to the sherds either from the Ptolemaic and Roman levels at Qasr Ibrim (Adams n.d.) or those from the early Meroitic cemetery at Emir Abdallah (Fernandez 1984a), where radiocarbon dates between 370 and 180 BC have been obtained (Fernandez 1984b; 1984c). The main correspondence among the three sites is seen in the two heavy and simply decorated wares which I have elsewhere designated as Wares RDR and RDW (Adams n.d., 20-23). These were abundant at both Qasr Ibrim and Emir Abdallah, but are represented by no more than a handful of sherds from Site 6-G-9. On the other hand there is, at Site 6-G-9, a total absence of the burnished black and red hand-made wares, often with punctate or incised decoration, which I have elsewhere designated as HBB and HBR (Adams n.d., 7-8). Both were abundant at Qasr Ibrim and at Emir Abdallah (cf. Fernandez 1984a, 75-78). In their place we have the quintessentially simple, thin-walled hand-made vessels, cylindrical in form, that have not been reported from other sites (Plate 3).

Two mysterious exceptions to all the foregoing generalizations must be noted. On the floor of Room 8, Nordström found two intact lekythoi of typical late Meroitic forms, apparently of Ware W29 (see Adams 1986, 472-3). The only seeming explanation for these anomalous finds, contrasting so markedly with all the other pottery from the site, is that they were buried for safekeeping at some time long after the abandonment of the place.

Other finds

In the course of examining the collections at Colorado, I found and recorded forty six non-pottery objects. Worthy of note among them are a faience *wadjet* eye, a fragment of very fine carved ebony, a fragment of a carnelian ring, a fragment of a small, very fine glass vessel, a fragment of an iron arrowhead, a bone awl, and several rusty iron fragments, of indeterminate form. There are also beads, variously of glass, bone, and faience.

Dating

According to the excavator, "On the basis of three carbon-14 dates and the pottery, which has few resemblances to Late Meroitic wares either in the literature or in the Antiquities Service collections at Wadi Halfa, 6-G-9 was occupied from about 150 to 50 BC. The C-14 dating samples came from charcoal beneath the stone wall of the central structure, charcoal from roof poles which had fallen to the floor of Room 1, and carbonized wheat grains from the floor of Room 15" (Hewes 1964, 178). Derek Welsby (personal communication) has now kindly provided me with a set of calibrated dates, which suggest a dating not very different from that originally proposed by Hughes. These dates however have only a 95% probability of accuracy. On the basis of the ceramics, and their difference from those at Emir Abdallah and Qasr Ibrim, I am inclined toward a dating somewhat earlier than that suggested by the C-14 dates.

Summary and discussion

By comparison with all the other sites found by us as well as by other expeditions, Site 6-G-9 remains an anomaly with-



Plate 6. Buried jar in Room 25.



out close parallels. Both the plan and the construction were distinctive, to begin with. Stone was rarely used in house construction, outside the cataract areas, and no other dwelling had walls nearly as heavy as those at 6-G-9. And why a single line of heavy-walled rooms, seemingly devoted largely to cooking, when all the rest of the site was of flimsy brick construction?

The massive and unbroken west and north wall presents a further mystery. It might conceivably have been the remnant of a perimeter wall which once fully enclosed most of the settlement,⁸ but then Section A was left outside. The projecting Room 6 at the northwest corner likewise seems an anomalous feature, if this was a perimeter wall. An alternative possibility is that the north and west walls—i.e. those on the windward sides—were constructed as a defense against drifting sand; this would also explain the absence of doorways in those walls.

Meroitic settlements have typically yielded large numbers of vessels, abandoned *in situ* (cf. Adams and Nordström 1963, 26-8; Adams 1964, 220), but the number at 6-G-9 nevertheless seems excessive. What were they used for? There were apparently no contents that might have yielded a clue. If this was an important storage site, why so many smaller vessels, but a general absence of corner bins and large *qusebas* (*somas*) which have been found in abundance at other Meroitic sites?

But it is the pottery itself that most clearly sets 6-G-9 apart from all other sites thus far recorded. Hand-made wares are found in considerable abundance in all Nubian sites of all ages (Adams 1986, 411), but the very simple cylindrical vessels, wholly unslipped and undecorated, that prevailed at 6-G-9 (Plate 3) have no counterpart elsewhere. As I have noted, some of the wheel-made wares have been found also at Qasr Ibrim and at Emir Abdallah, but there is also a variety of Egyptian imports that are so far unrecorded elsewhere in Nubia. And the absences, of Aswan wares and of slipped hand-made wares, are as unexpected as are the presences.

There are, it would seem, four possible explanations for the anomaly of 6-G-9.

1), this was the residence of an alien group of settlers, who used pottery different from that of all their neighbors.

2), there were other sites of similar age, and with similar pottery, but we and all the other expeditions failed to identify them due to careless survey.

3), all other sites of similar age, and with similar pottery, were either buried or washed away.

4), there never were any, or many, other sites of similar age.

I will briefly discuss each of these possibilities in turn.

⁸ A nearby site, 6-G-6, was mainly of Ballaña and Christian date, but had a heavy enclosing wall that might have been built earlier. See Verwers 1962, 30-31.

1). On the basis of the hand-made pottery alone, we might indeed have guessed that 6-G-9 was the residence of an ethnically distinct and marginal group—perhaps a slave colony or a group of recently arrived immigrants. The variety of Egyptian imports shows, however, that these people were not impoverished, and were not without external contacts. Most of the larger Egyptian vessels arrived in Nubia as containers for wine, oils, and aromatics, which were essentially luxury goods.

2). I will vouch for the thoroughness of our West Bank Survey, as well as that of our Scandinavian colleagues across the river. Ours was not a sampling operation; we and our laborers (typically about 50 men) walked every step of the 62 km distance from Faras to Gemai, investigating every place where there were traces of structures, graves, or even potsherds. Moreover, we dug or at least tested to the bottom of most of the habitations, to determine if there were or were not Meroitic and earlier structures underlying the later ones. The thoroughness of our exploration is attested by the fact that none of the expeditions that followed up on our preliminary survey—the Polish Expedition at Faras, the French Expedition at Aksha, the University of Ghana at Debeira, the Spanish Expedition at Argin, and the Colorado Expedition at Gezira Dabarosa—found any sites, other than Paleolithic ones, that we had not previously recorded.⁹

3). If we were concerned only with habitation remains, the suggestion that all other sites comparable to 6-G-9 had been buried or washed away might have carried some weight. All the Meroitic habitations found by us were indeed very denuded, and showed signs of repeated flooding. Most were buried either in sand or flood deposits (cf. Verwers 1962, 19-21; Adams and Nordström 1963, 24-8), and three were covered by remains of later periods (Adams and Nordström 1963, 28; Adams 1964, 220; Adams 1965, 150-53). However, this ignores the evidence of cemeteries. Graves both of the Late Meroitic period and of the New Kingdom were plentiful, and were readily identifiable by their ceramic content. But not a single grave was found by us, or by the Scandinavians, that yielded pottery similar to that found at 6-G-9.

4). Eliminating these alternate possibilities, the only reasonable conclusion, it seems to me, is that there really was very little settlement in Lower Nubia during the period, either Napatan or early Meroitic, to which Site 6-G-9 belongs. There was, of course, a continuation of trade passing through the largely deserted region, and at Qasr Ibrim (the terminus of a trans-desert trade route from Korosko) there was a way-station for its facilitation. There probably were others as well, e.g. at Faras and at Dakka, but there was no generally settled farming population. The mention of other places, in early Kushite texts, does not necessarily

⁹ For a map of the various excavation concessions see Adams *ip.*

mean that those places were inhabited; only that they were known landmarks.

Admittedly, the foregoing interpretation leaves unexplained the specific location of Site 6-G-9. Why would early Kushite settlers be attracted to this place and to nowhere else in Lower Nubia? There was indeed a large and fertile floodplain immediately in front, but there were good alluvial deposits along many other reaches of the river, where no Napatan or early Meroitic remains have been found. This was not a logical transshipment point, for the site was more than 10 km to the north of the Second Cataract. I have to admit that for now I have no answer to this riddle.

However, at least some of the mysteries surrounding Site 6-G-9 may still be answered. The single most important one is the dating. There are, unhappily, no surviving organics which might yield a reliable radiocarbon date. The pottery, however, still has possibilities, for the collection of sherds is enormous, and still unstudied as fully as it deserves. The only persons who have looked at any significant quantity of the material are Florence Lister (1967, 63-4) and myself, and neither of us is an expert on the Egyptian wares of the Late Dynastic and Ptolemaic periods. Now that all of the 6-G-9 collections have been transferred to the British Museum, I fervently hope that someone will take up their study. Sorting, classifying, and counting potsherds is tedious work, but their quantitative and qualitative analysis can yield results, in terms of chronology, not obtainable in any other way (for discussion see Adams 1987 and 1989).

Hopefully also, ongoing surveys further upriver may yet find sites comparable, in their ceramic content, to 6-G-9. And it may be possible, on other than ceramic grounds, to establish both the dates and the cultural affinities of such sites.

Bibliography

- Adams, W. Y. 1964. 'Sudan Antiquities Service Excavations in Nubia: Fourth Season, 1962-63', *Kush* 12, 216-250.
- Adams, W. Y. 1965. 'Sudan Antiquities Service Excavations at Meinarti, 1963-64', *Kush* 13, 148-176.
- Adams, W. Y. 1977. *Nubia, Corridor to Africa*. London.
- Adams, W. Y. 1986. *Ceramic Industries of Medieval Nubia* (2 vols). Lexington.
- Adams, W. Y. 1987. 'Time, Types and Sites: the Interrelationship of Ceramic Chronology and Typology', *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 8, 7-46.
- Adams, W. Y. 1989. 'From Pottery to History: the Dating of Archaeological Deposits by Ceramic Statistics', in S. Donadoni and S. Wenig (eds), *Studia Meroitica 1984 (Meroitica 10)*, 423-50.
- Adams, W. Y. i.p. *The West Bank Survey from Faras to Gemai: Meroitic and Ballaṅa sites. Sudan Archaeological Research Society Publication* (in press).
- Adams, W. Y. n.d. *Pottery Wares of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods at Qasr Ibrim*. Unpublished paper distributed by the Qasr Ibrim Expedition and the University of Kentucky.
- Adams, W. Y., and H.-A. Nordström. 1963. 'The Archaeological Survey of the West Bank of the Nile: Third Season, 1961-62', *Kush* 11, 10-46.
- Dinkler, E. (ed.) 1970. *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit*. Recklinghausen.
- Fernandez, V. 1984a. 'Early Meroitic in Northern Sudan: The Assessment of a Nubian Archaeological Culture', *Aula Orientalis* 2, no. 1, 43-84.
- Fernandez, V. 1984b. 'New Radiocarbon Dates for the Kerma and Meroitic Periods', *Nubian Letters* 3, 11-12.
- Fernandez, V. 1984c. 'Radiocarbon Dating for the Early Meroitic in Northern Nubia', *Nyame Akuma* 24/25, 23-4.
- Hewes, G. W. 1964. 'Gezira Dabarosa: Report of the University of Colorado Nubian Expedition, 1962-63 Season', *Kush* 12, 174-187.
- Hinkel, F. 1977. *The Archaeological Map of the Sudan, a Guide to its Use and Explanation of its Principles*. Berlin.
- Lister, F. C. 1967. *Ceramic Studies of the Historic Periods in Ancient Nubia. University of Utah Anthropological Papers* 86.
- Nordström, H.-Å. 'Archaeological Survey on the West Bank of the Nile: Excavations and Survey in Faras, Argin, and Gezira Dabarosa', *Kush* 10, 34-61.
- Säve-Söderbergh, T. 1970. 'The Excavations Carried out by the Scandinavian Joint Expedition in Sudanese Nubia', in Dinkler 1970, 219-244.
- Säve-Söderbergh, T., and L. Troy. 1991. *New Kingdom Pharaonic Sites; the Finds and the Sites. The Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Nubia* 5:2. Uppsala.
- Verwers, G. J. 1962. 'Archaeological Survey on the West Bank of the Nile: the Survey from Faras to Gezira Dabarosa', *Kush* 10, 19-33.