

SUDAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY
PUBLICATION NUMBER 12

ROAD ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE NILE

Volume 2

Excavations from Meroe to Atbara 1994

by

Michael Mallinson
and
Laurence Smith

with contributions by

Fathi Abdel Hamid Salih Khidr
Joyce Filer
Dorian Q Fuller
Salima Ikram
John MacGinnis
Jane Sanford Gaastra
Chris Stevens
David Thickett
Francis Thornton
Willemina Wendrich
Rebecca Whiting
Barbara Wills



SARS
LONDON
2017

ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Gordon House
276 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 7ED

www.archaeopress.com

Sudan Archaeological Research Society

Publication Number 12

General Editor: W. V. Davies

Editor of this volume: D. A. Welsby

ISBN 978 1 78491 646 6

ISBN 978 1 78491 647 3 (e-Pdf)

© The Sudan Archaeological Research Society and Archaeopress 2017

Front cover: Painted potstand T5/92C

Back cover: C17/29 Burial 159.2/T5, detail of pottery vessels in situ

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Marston Book Services Ltd, Oxfordshire

This book is obtainable from The Sudan Archaeological Research Society
c/o Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, The British Museum, London WC1B 3DG
or from the Society's website <http://www.sudarchrs.org.uk>

Also available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

**ROAD ARCHAEOLOGY IN
THE MIDDLE NILE**

Volume 2

**Excavations from Meroe
to Atbara 1994**

Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii-viii
List of Plates	ix-x
Preface <i>Michael Mallinson</i>	xi
Site List	xii
1. Introduction and Summary of the Test Excavations <i>Michael Mallinson</i>	1-11
2. Site Descriptions <i>Fathi Abdel Hamid Salih Khidr, Salima Ikram, John MacGinnis, Joyce Filer and Francis Thornton</i>	13-43
3. Small Finds from the Surface Survey and from Test Excavations excluding Gabati Cemetery <i>Laurence Smith</i>	45-58
4. Report on the Pottery from the Test Excavations: Sites 101.4, 112.3, 112.4, 118FS2, 153.8, 155.4, 165BM, 166.2 and 170.1 <i>Laurence Smith</i>	59-97
5. Gabati Basketry and Cordage <i>Willemina Wendrich</i>	99-100
6. The Leather Samples from Test Excavations at Gabati (site 159.2) <i>Barbara Wills</i>	101-105
7. Analysis of tanning agents from the excavated leather samples <i>David Thickett</i>	107-108
8. Gabati grave goods from the Test Excavations and the consideration of funerary practices <i>Laurence Smith</i>	109-120
9. Bioarchaeological Report from the Excavations from Meroe to Atbara 1994 <i>Rebecca Whiting</i>	121-140
10. The Animal Remains <i>Jane Sanford Gaastra (with a contribution by Salima Ikram)</i>	141-148
11. Environmental Material from the Begrawiya-Atbara Survey 1994 <i>Chris Stevens and Dorian Q Fuller</i>	149-150
Bibliography	151-155
Arabic summary	

List of Tables

Small Finds

- 3.1 Beads from site 112.4. 53

Pottery Report

- 4.1 Groups present in the ceramics from Test Excavations and the period or periods to which they are dated. 60
4.2 Terms used in fabric descriptions for abundance and size of inclusions. 61

Basketry Report

- 5.1 Catalogue of Gabati Basketry and Cordage. 99

Leather Report

- 6.1 Leather Sample Descriptions. 103-105

Analysis of Tanning Agents

- 7.1 Results of tannin tests with ammonium ferric sulphate and aliminon. 108

Bioarchaeological Report from the Excavations from Meroe to Atbara 1994

- 9.1 Scores for pubic symphysis according to Todd and Suchey-Brooks as set out in Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994) and scores for auricular surface as set out in Lovejoy (1985). 123
9.2 Cranial non-metric traits (after Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994, 85-94). 134
9.3 Post-cranial non-metric traits (after Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994, 85-94). 135
9.4 Osteometric measurements (after Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994, 69-84). 136
9.5 Cranial Osteometric measurements (after Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994, 69-84). 136-137
9.6 Post-Cranial Osteometric measurements (after Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994, 69-84). 137-138
9.7 Occurrences of osteoarthritis, by skeleton. 139-140

The Animal Remains

- 10.1 Osteological finds by context, given in Number of Identified Specimens (NISP) 142
10.2 Osteological finds by context, given in minimum number of individuals (MNI) 142
10.3 Non-osteological finds 142
10.4 Summary of the animal bone data 144-148

List of Figures

Site Distribution Map.

xiii

Introduction. Summary of the Test Excavations

1.1	Site 118.FS.4, rock inscriptions.	2
1.2	Site 118. FS.4.1-3, hut circles.	3
1.3	Site 155.4, House S1.	4
1.4	Site 159.2, Tumulus 1, Unit 124.	5
1.5	Site 159.2, Tumulus 2, Unit 118.	5
1.6	Site 159.2, Tumulus 4, Unit 136.	6
1.7	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, Unit 150.	7
1.8	Site 159.2, Tumulus 6, Unit 151 before final clearance.	8
1.9	Site 159.2, Tumulus 11, lower excavated levels.	9
1.10	Site 159.2, Gabati, site plan.	11

Site Descriptions

2.1	Site 101.4, Tumulus 1.	13
2.2	Site 101.4, Tumulus 1.3.	14
2.3	Site 101.4, Tumulus 2.	15
2.4	Site 101.4, Tumulus 2, north-south section, west face.	15
2.5	Site 101.4, Tumulus 3, section.	15
2.6	Site 102.1, Tumulus 1, skeleton in relation to the tumulus.	15
2.7	Site 112.4, Tumulus 1.	16
2.8	Site 112.4, Tumulus 2.	16
2.9	Site 112.4, Tumulus 3.	17
2.10	Site 112.4, Tumulus 4, plan.	17
2.11	Site 112.4, Tumulus 5, section and plan.	18
2.12	Site 112.4, Tumulus 6.	18
2.13	Site 112.3/X1, plan.	19
2.14	Site 118.FS.2.1 S3, plan of stone structure in House 3.	19
2.15	Site 154.5, Tumulus 1, section.	20
2.16	Site 155.4/S1.	20
2.17	Site 155.4/S1/FP1, plan of fire pit south of House 155.4.	21
2.18	Site 170.1, general plan.	21
2.19	Site 170.1, Tumulus 1 and Tumulus 2.	22
2.20	Site 159.2, Tumulus 1, plan.	24
2.21	Site 159.2, Tumulus 3.	24
2.22	Site 159.2, Tumulus 1.	26
2.23	Site 159.2, Tumulus 1.	27
2.24	Site 159.2, Tumulus 1.	27
2.25	Site 159.2, Tumulus 2, east-west section.	28
2.26	Site 159.2, Tumulus 2, blocking stones.	28
2.27	Site 159.2, Tumulus 3.	28
2.28	Site 159.2, Tumulus 4.	29
2.29	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, burial chamber blockings, levels 2, 3 and 4.	29
2.30	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, section.	31
2.31	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, plan.	32
2.32	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5.	33
2.33	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, section along east-west long axis.	33
2.34	Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, plan.	34
2.35	Site 159.2, Tumulus 6, plan.	34
2.36	Site 159.2, Tumulus 6.	34
2.37	Site 159.2, Tumulus 7, north-south section.	36
2.38	Site 159.2, T11, plan.	37
2.39	Site 159.2, T11, reconstruction of the pyramid and offering chapel.	38

2.40	Site 159.2, T11, north-south section of pyramid structure.	38
2.41	Site 159.2, T11, section of pit.	39
2.42	Site 159.2, T11, section through the descendary and burial chamber.	39
2.43	Site 159.2, T11, complete and reconstructed jars recovered from test excavations.	40
2.44	Site 159.2. Pot marks and Meroitic graffito from T11.	41
2.45	Site 159.2, T11, complete and reconstructed jars recovered from test excavations.	42
2.47	Site 159.2, Tumulus 13, plan of the burial pit.	42
2.48	Site map of the Gabati area (sheet BM 159-161,93).	43
Small Finds (excluding Gabati)		
3.1	Examples of Lithic Artefacts.	47
3.2	Grindstones, Type 1-5.	50
3.3	Grindstones, Type 7-11.	52
3.4	Grindstones, Type 12-20 and other small finds.	54
Pottery		
4.1	Forms 1:1.1 - 2:3.3.	70
4.2	Forms 2:5.1 - 10:2.1.	71
4.3	Decoration D1.1 - D13.7.	73
4.4	Decoration D13.8 - B11.	74
4.5	Percentages of featured sherds calculated over all sites considered in the present report.	94
4.6	Percentages of the sherds calculated for Site 101.4.	94
4.7	Percentages of the sherds calculated for Site 112.3.	95
4.8	Percentages of the sherds calculated for Site 112.4.	95
4.9	Percentages of the sherds calculated for Site 118FS.2.	96
4.10	Percentages of the sherds calculated for Site 153.8.	96
4.11	Percentages of the sherds calculated for Site 155.4.	97
Basketry		
5.1	All string found at Gabati was made of three z-spun yarns which were S-plyed (zS3 string).	100
5.2	Schematic drawing of an <i>angarib</i> bed with string at the head for maintaining the tension of the webbing.	100
5.3	Fragment of coiled basket.	100
5.4	Fragment of coiled basket.	100
5.5	Fragment of twill plaited mat.	100
Leather Samples		
6.1	Examples of Leather Samples noted in Table 6.1.	102
Gabati Grave Goods		
8.1	Items from the tomb chamber of Tumulus 1.	110
8.2	Items from Tumulus 2.	111
8.3	Items from the tomb chamber of Tumulus 4.	112
8.4	Items from Tumulus 5 and earrings from Tumulus 13.	113
8.5	<i>Kohl</i> pot and mortar from Tumulus 5; carved wooden piece of bier from Tumulus 6.	116
Bioarchaeological Report from the Excavations from Meroe to Atbara 1994		
9.1	Approximate percentage of each individual skeleton present upon analysis, in 5% increments.	122
9.2	Bar chart showing the distribution of individuals in each age category across the collection.	123
9.3	Distribution of individuals by sex category. Unknown refers to skeletons for which sex could not be determined due to poor preservation.	123

List of Plates

Site Descriptions

- 2.1 Tumulus 101.4 T1 with T2 and T3.
- 2.2 Tomb 307 from Garstang's excavations at Meroe.
- 2.3 Burial 101.4/T1.3.
- 2.4 Burial 101.4/T1.4.
- 2.5 Burial 101.4/T.2.1.
- 2.6 Burial 101.4/ T.3.
- 2.7 Burial 102.1/T1.1.
- 2.8 Tumulus 112.4/T1.
- 2.9 Burial 112.4/T3.1.
- 2.10 Site 118/FS Rock engraving.
- 2.11 Site 118/FS.3 Rock engravings.
- 2.12 Site 118/FS.2 Rock inscription.
- 2.13 Site 118/FS.1.
- 2.14 Tumulus 153.4/T1 excavation.
- 2.15 Burial 154.5/T1.1.
- 2.16 Burial 154.5/T1.2.
- 2.17 Burial 170.1/T5, showing fragmentary state of skeletal material.
- 2.18 C4/17 Gabati site before excavation.
- 2.19 Burial 102.1/T1.1.
- 2.20 C18B/23 House 155.4 /S1 as cleared showing Phase I from the east.
- 2.21 C18B/22 House 155.4/S1 as cleared – Phase I.
- 2.22 C8/20 House 155.4 – Phase II.
- 2.23 JF8/20 118/FS.4 Rock engravings.
- 2.24 C17/7 Burial 159.2/T4 showing detail of skeleton.
- 2.25 C9/6 159.2/T1 general view of burial.
- 2.26 C10/11 Burial 159.2/T4.
- 2.27 C10/4 159.2/T4 Second layer of stones.
- 2.28 C12/14 Burial 159.2/T7 Christian burial.
- 2.29 C17/19 Burial 159.2/T5.
- 2.30 C12/35 Burial 159.2/T5. Detail of ivory *kohl* pot as found.
- 2.31 Post-Meroitic potstand from Garstang's Meroe excavation
(Garstang *et al.* 1911, pl. XLI, no. 9, fig. 8.4).
- 2.32 C17/28 Burial 159.2/T5, Detail of skeleton.
- 2.33 C17/29 Burial 159.2/T5. Detail of pottery vessels *in situ*.
- 2.34 C10/25 T5 Shaft Final Blocking with T1 in the background.
- 2.35 C19/6 159.2/T6 Tomb chamber blocking. Compare with Plate 2.34.
- 2.36 C18/31 'Tumulus' 159.2/T11 and T13. Jars at bottom of grave shaft.
- 2.37 'Tumulus' 159.2/T11, general view of the superstructure.
- 2.38 C10/2 Bed leg detail T1.
- 2.39 C12/12 159.2/T11/102C Detail of incised 'owner's mark' and Meroitic inscription.
- 2.40 Burial 170.1/T2.1/3or.
- 2.41 Burial 170.1/T1.
- 2.42 Aerial photograph of the Gabati/Aliab area.

Pottery

- 4.1 Globular jars from T11.
- 4.2 Globular jars from T11.
- 4.3 Large bowl (Type 2:5.1).
- 4.4 Large bowl (Type 2:5.1).

Gabati Grave Goods

- 8.1 Broad open bowl T1/41C.
- 8.2 Bowl with upright sides T1/42C.
- 8.3 Leaf-shaped arrowhead T1/18.

- 8.4 Knife blade or spear point T1/24.
- 8.5 Imported oil bottle T2/31C.
- 8.6 Examples of beads T2/33.
- 8.7 Worked cowrie shell.
- 8.8 Painted imported oil bottle T4/49C.
- 8.9 Spatula or *kohl* spoon T4/12.
- 8.10 Examples of beads from Tumulus 4.
- 8.11 Examples of beads from Tumulus 4.
- 8.12 Examples of beads from Tumulus 4.
- 8.13 Painted potstand T5/92C.
- 8.14 Painted bowl T5/96C.
- 8.15 Ovoid bowl with lug T5/95C.
- 8.16 Spouted jar T5/93C.
- 8.17 Table amphora T5/94C.
- 8.18 Circular mirror T5/6.
- 8.19 Spatula and nail T5/3.
- 8.20 Stone bowl or mortar T5/97S.
- 8.21 Ivory *kohl* pot T5/5.
- 8.22 Wooden comb T5/21.
- 8.23 Examples of beads from Tumulus 5.
- 8.24 Part of necklace T5/9.
- 8.25 Examples of beads from Tumulus 5.
- 8.26 Necklace of beads T5/2.
- 8.27 Beads from Christian burial, T13.

Bioarchaeological Report from the Excavations from Meroe to Atbara 1994

- 9.1 Begrawiya skeleton 101.4/T1.2/38or during excavation.
- 9.2 Skeleton 101.4/T1.2/38or, both clavicles showing false joints.
- 9.3 Skeleton 101.4/T1.2/38or, showing fusion of 5th and 6th cervical vertebrae.
- 9.4 Skeleton 101.4/T1.2/38or, showing Schmorl's nodes and osteophytic growths.
- 9.5 Skeleton 101.4/T1.6/51or, during excavation.

Environmental Material from the Begrawiya-Atbara Survey 1994

- 11.1. Desiccated stone of *Balanites aegyptiaca* from 112.4/T.1.1/1.
- 11.2. Date stone (*Phoenix dactylifera*) (dorsal and ventral views) from 159.2/T4.1/89Or.
- 11.3. Possible bird of prey/carrion pellet from 159.2/T4.1/89Or.
- 11.4. Possible bird of prey/carrion pellet from 159.2/T4.1/89Or. Reverse and front view.
- 11.5. Fragment of possible bird of prey/carrion pellet from 159.2/T4.1/89Or.
- 11.6. Close-up of hairs within a possible bird of prey/carrion pellet from 159.2/T4.1/89Or.
- 11.7. Two shells of *Limicolaria* sp. from 159.2/T1/27 Or, Unit 128.
- 11.8. Two fragments of freshwater mussel and one of cf. *Limicolaria* sp. (left side). All from 153.8/S1/28Or.
- 11.9. Fragment of river mussel shell (Unionidae/Iridinidae) from 112.3/9Or.
- 11.10. Fragment of freshwater oyster shell, cf. *Etheria elliptica* from 155.4/51/5Or (dorsal and ventral views).
- 11.11. Cowrie shell *Monetaria moneta/annulus* from 101.4/T2/23 Or, Unit 72.

Preface

Michael Mallinson

The first season of survey work in 1993 was undertaken in advance of the construction of the North Challenge Road initially between Geili and Atbara. This work was carried out in the SARS concession area from BM98, opposite the Pyramids of Meroe, to Atbara. A total of 170 sites was recorded and this was published in the first volume of *Road Archaeology in the Sudan* (Mallinson *et al.* 96). In addition, a report was prepared advising the Sudan National Committee for Roads and Bridges of areas which were likely to be damaged by the road construction. The following year it was indicated that due to the advanced development of the road design no rerouting would be possible.

In response to this a rescue season was proposed to excavate the sites clearly at risk in the remaining few months before construction and grading began. A limited amount of funds was provided by the Haycock Fund and within this resource a project was assembled with SARS directed by Laurence Smith and Michael Mallinson. As a total of eight sites with 30 archaeological structures was clearly directly on the road line a methodology was needed that would permit these to be properly excavated and recorded in the available time of three weeks that the funds would accommodate.

As a number of burials was expected and a minimum of two teams would be required, we concentrated on finding suitable specialists in this area. Francis Thornton of the University of Bradford and Joyce Filer of the British Museum, who had worked previously with the British Institute in Eastern Africa at Soba East, agreed to join the project. Dr Salima Ikram returned as a site supervisor and to follow up on her animal bone studies in the first season. Dr John MacGinnis also joined as a site supervisor. The project was conceived as a team effort and the publication involved all team members. Fathi Abdel Hamid Salih Khidr, who was our NCAM inspector for the excavations, carried out site supervision during the season and has been a great assistance since with the publication.

The two teams worked 3-7km apart during the three weeks moving site every three to four days as the work was completed. The excavation was assisted by a small local work force. As the sites were due to be destroyed they were excavated as completely as possible, and only a minimal back filling was done to make the sites safe for passing camels. Full area excavation, as was carried out in the subsequent seasons at Gabati, was not attempted due to the shortness of time and number of sites needed to be cleared. Individual features were gridded out and excavated in quadrants. This permitted whatever local stratigraphy existed to be identified; it obviously did not permit relation of stratigraphy from neighbouring sites. In most cases this was not appropriate as the surrounding areas, even between closely situated sites, were mostly virgin desert.

The stratigraphic evidence was most useful in the cemetery sites to identify from which layer of gravel the burial pit was dug from, and afterwards at which period the burials were first plundered. In the Meroitic and Post-Meroitic sites this burial layer was a white gravel that left a characteristic surface covering after the burial was completed. In the later Christian/Medieval period pits were cut to a shallower yellow gravel level and the bottom then filled with a yellow/orange sand before the inhumation was carried out. The earliest remains which were excavated, and which were associated with some second millennium BC pottery found nearby in the first season, were very shallow burials of several children and one adult/adolescent. No carbon dating was possible but the absence of the characteristic Post-Meroitic/Christian mounds, the layer of yellow sand, and the very close proximity to the surface which suggested a long period of surface erosion indicates that these burials, at BM170, could be associated with the early period of settlement in this part of the Nile Valley.

The work of the two teams produced a large amount of material which is briefly discussed below and in detail in the following chapters. The interest aroused by the discovery of the multi-period site at Gabati permitted funding for a special season in the following year. This was developed from our experience in the first two seasons and is a tribute to the effort put in by the first season's teams. The material recovered from that special season was published first (Edwards 1998) as many of the specialists went on to work on the Gabati project and were thus delayed in completing the earlier season's research. The results from the first excavation season have confirmed the estimated dating of many of the sites recorded in the surface survey season.

The human skeletal remains from all the work at Gabati has recently been published by Margaret Judd (Judd 2012).

SITE LIST

1. MEROE DIG HOUSE 24.3.1994 - 31.3.1994

SITE 101.1 3 Tumuli, 1 Mixed Period, 2 Christian.
Team A

SITE 102.1 1 Tumuli Christian. Team A

SITE 112.4 5 Tumuli, 2 Empty, 3 Post-Meroitic/
Christian. Team B

SITE 112.5 1 Structure Late Christian. Team B

SITE 118 FS2.1 3 Christian Structures, 1 Empty
Tumulus, Inscription. Team B

Team A:

Francis Thornton - Bone Analysis 101.1/T1.1, 101.1/
T2.1, 102.1/T1.1,

Joyce Filer - Bone Analysis 101.1/T1.2 - 6, 101.1/T2.1,
101.1/T3.1

Salima Ikram - Site Supervisor 101.1/T1 - T3,
Fathi Abdel Hamid Salih Khidr - Site Supervisor
102.1/T1

Michael Mallinson	- Survey, Photography
Fedullah	- Excavator
Mahmoud	- Excavator
El Amin Ali	- Excavator
Abdel Minam Mohamed	- Excavator
Abdullah Suliman	- Excavator
Alker Akhmed	- Excavator
Mohamed Abdullah	- Excavator

Team B:

Joyce Filer - Bone Analysis 112.4/T3.1, 112.4/
T4.1, 112.4/T5.1

John MacGinnis - Site Supervisor 112.4/T1, 112.4/T3
-5, 118 FS2.1/S1- 3

Fathi Abdel Hamid Salih Khidr - Site Supervisor 112.4/
T2, 112.5/S1, 118, FS2.1/T1

Michael Mallinson	- Survey Drawings, Photography
Akhmed Mohamed Ali	- Excavator
Bereid Mohamed Ali	- Excavator
Abu Sid	- Excavator
Majoub Ali	- Excavator
Anwar Mohamed Ali	- Excavator
Fatah er-Rakman Akhmed	- Excavator

House:

Laurence Smith	- Small Finds/Pottery
Akhmed Mostafa	- Cook
Hamid Abdullah	- House Assistant

2. GABATI DIG HOUSE 1.4.1994 - 18.4.1994

SITE 153.8 1 Structure Late Christian. Team B

SITE 154.5 2 Tumuli, 1 Empty, 1 Christian. Team B

SITE 155.4 1 Structure Late Christian. Team B

SITE 159.2 9 Tumuli, 5 Meroitic, 4 Christian, 1 Tomb,
Meroitic. Team A

SITE 170.1 5 Tumuli Neolithic or Post-Meroitic/
Christian. Team B

Team A:

Joyce Filer - Bone Analysis, 159.2/T1.1, 159.2/
T2.1, 159.2/T3.1, 159.2/T4.1 159.2/T5.1, 159.2/
T6.1, 159.2/T7.1, 159.2/T11.1, 159.2/T13.1.

Salima Ikram - Site Supervisor 159.2/T1, 159.2/
T3, 159.2/T5, 159.2/T7

Fathi Abdel Hamid Salih Khidr - Site Supervisor 159.2/
T2, 159.2/T4, 159.2/T6, 159.2/T13

John MacGinnis - Site Supervisor 159.2/T11

Michael Mallinson	- Survey, Photography
Majoub Ali	- Excavator
Khullah Fullah	- Excavator
Osama	- Excavator
Zein Bellah	- Excavator
Akhmed el-Mahi	- Excavator
Bellal Taib	- Excavator
Bohadein Sheif	- Excavator
Abdel Rahman	- Excavator
Soliman Adaroub	- Excavator
Shamsadeen Mirgani	- Excavator
Deffullah Dreis	- Excavator and <i>ghaffir</i>
Mohamed Ali Hamid	- Excavator and night <i>ghaffir</i>

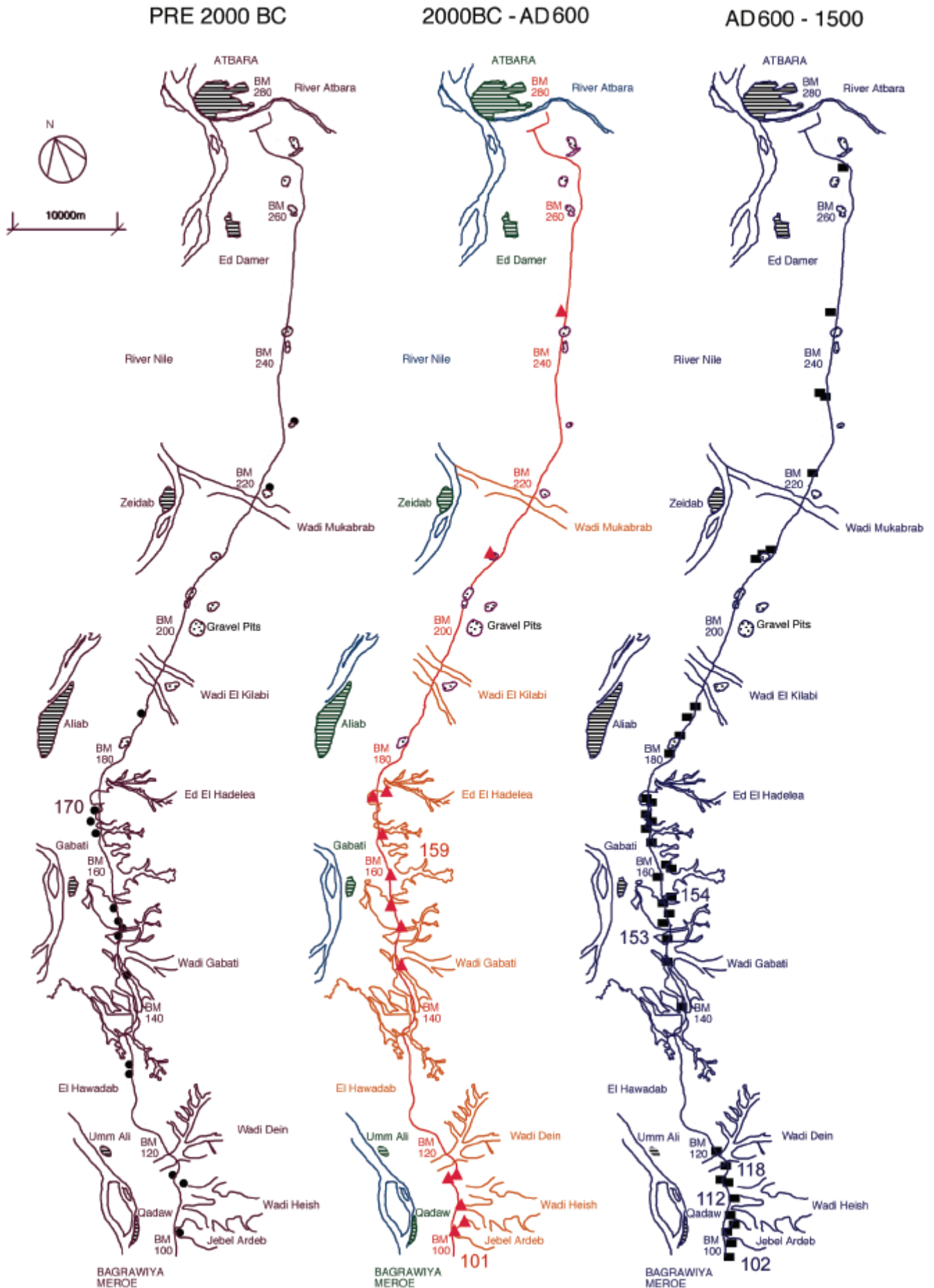
Team B:

Francis Thornton - Bone Analysis, 154.5/T1.1, 154.5/
T2.1, 170.1/T1.1 - 5.1 - Site Supervisor 154.5/T1.1,
154.5/T2.1, 153.8/S1.

John MacGinnis - Site 155.4/S1, 170.1/T1.1 - 5.1

Michael Mallinson	- Survey Drawing, Photography
Fedullah	- Excavator
Osam Said Akhmed	- Excavator
Abdel Majid	- Excavator
Taib Ali	- Excavator
Abdullah Taif Samii	- Excavator
Emad Said Akhmed	- Excavator
Bellal Abdel Farid	- Excavator
Mustafa Ali	- Excavator
Alloa esh-Sharif Hussein	- Excavator
Sheikh Khalid	- Night <i>ghaffir</i>

SITE DISTRIBUTION MAP (scale 1:500,000).



1. Introduction

Summary of the Test Excavations

Michael Mallinson

Meroe

The expedition began work based at the Sudanese Antiquities Service Rest House next to the Pyramids at Meroe. From here three sites were excavated at the south end of the SARS concession area (BM99-274). The first consisted of four tumuli directly on the proposed road line at Jebel Ardeb (BM101-2). The second site was at Jebel Abayud (BM112) and was a series of small tumuli and a hut circle located at the bottom of a *wadi* which the road had to pass through. At the third a camp site was excavated, of possible military origin, on the other side of Wadi Dein (BM118).

At Jebel Ardeb (BM101-2) the tumuli proved to have an origin in the late Meroitic period with the largest, 101.4/T1, (Plates 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4) having a shallow grave surrounded by large stones. The burial was accompanied by pottery, a few beads and a metal band and was laid on a mat. In this tumulus the primary burial was followed by later, probably Post-Meroitic, burials, two of which were in a semi-flexed position aligned roughly north-south with their heads to the south, seemingly disturbed but apparently unaccompanied by grave goods. The last burial was of a small child placed just to the north of the first burial. All four of these burials were on the south of the mound. In the centre of the tumulus was found a Christian burial with a child buried at the feet. The body was extended east-west with the head to the east without grave goods. The grave may have been intrusive; it appears to have been dug through the tumulus at a later period. The alternative sequence is that the grave had been dug beside the earlier burials and then the original tumulus was either moved over the new burial, or constructed over both.

The other two burials at this site to the south were both Christian, one a young adult male, 101.4/T2.1 (Plate 2.5) and one a female, 101.4/T3.1 (Plate 2.6), sealed under a smaller mound. The single burial excavated at 102.1/T1 (Plates 2.7 and 2.19) also proved to be a female of the Christian period under a small mound. The Christian burials were characterised by the remarkable preservation of the bones. The mounds were built of ferricrete sandstone from the *jebels*, mounded over the fill excavated from the grave cuts.

The burials at Jebel Abayud (112.4/T1-T5) (Plates 2.8 and 2.9) were very shallow, almost on the surface, and covered by a mound of ferricrete sandstone, and were either robbed or eroded. The bodies were aligned east-west, although insufficient remained to establish where the head was located or whether the bodies were contracted or extended. The presence of beads in two of the burials suggests a possible post-Meroitic rather than Christian date, although such grave goods can occur in Christian burials (see Gabati, below). The excavated hut circle (112.5/S1) contained Group 2 (Christian/Early Islamic)

pottery, on the surface, and a hearth. Some beautiful decorated Classic Christian Period sherds were present on the site surface.

The camp at Wadi Dein (BM118 FS2/S1-S3) was surveyed in 1993 and in 1994 three hut circles were excavated (Figure 1.2a-c, Plate 2.13). The huts had compacted floors, with Group 3 and 13 (post-Meroitic-Christian) pottery, and a well preserved hearth and depressions probably made to support pottery vessels. No post-holes were apparent among the stones at the perimeter of the hut circle, which suggests that the stones may have been used to weigh down the edge of a tented structure. On the nearby *jebel* were found carved pilgrims' feet similar to those found at pilgrimage sites in Egypt, and throughout Sudan (Figure 1.1, Plates 2.10-2.12). The carvings were distinctive due to the details of hob-nails, and thong patterns, and they included an Islamic inscription of two girls' names which were also recorded. One tumulus at the site was tested but the grave was empty. Excavation of a tumulus here in the previous season had revealed a single Christian burial (see pg. 131).

Gabati

On April 1st the expedition moved to a new dig house at the village of Gabati 30km to the north. The house was hired from the local sheikh, Hashim. Gabati is a small village without services but it was located close to a number of sites which our previous season had shown to be seriously threatened by the road works.

From the new base the area marked as Gabati on the 1:250,000 series maps (from 17° 10' - 17° 14' North, and 33° 44' - 33° 45' East) was worked on between BM 153-170. A total of five sites was studied. The first three to the south of the area were located in the Khor Shangarite. Here we excavated a Late Christian hut, two tumuli, and a fortified Christian house. The Khor Shangarite, when surveyed the previous year proved an extremely rich area, full of structures, several hundred tumuli, and with a diversity of pottery and other surface finds. The hut circle 153.8/S1, which was at the head of the valley, contained a large quantity of Group 1 pottery, a hearth and a wind break, the position of which indicated that the door was on the eastern side. Of the two tumuli excavated one (154.5/T2.1) was empty apart from three fragmentary bones, the other (154.5/T1.1), had an east-west aligned burial of a male buried face down with head to west in an extended position, without grave goods (Plate 2.15), and a second skeleton (154.5/T1.2) of which only part remained, lying east-west on its back, facing north (Plate 2.16). No other tumuli were directly on the road line, so the date of the large cemeteries either side remains uncertain, although they are probably of the Christian period.

The final excavation in the area was of a substantial

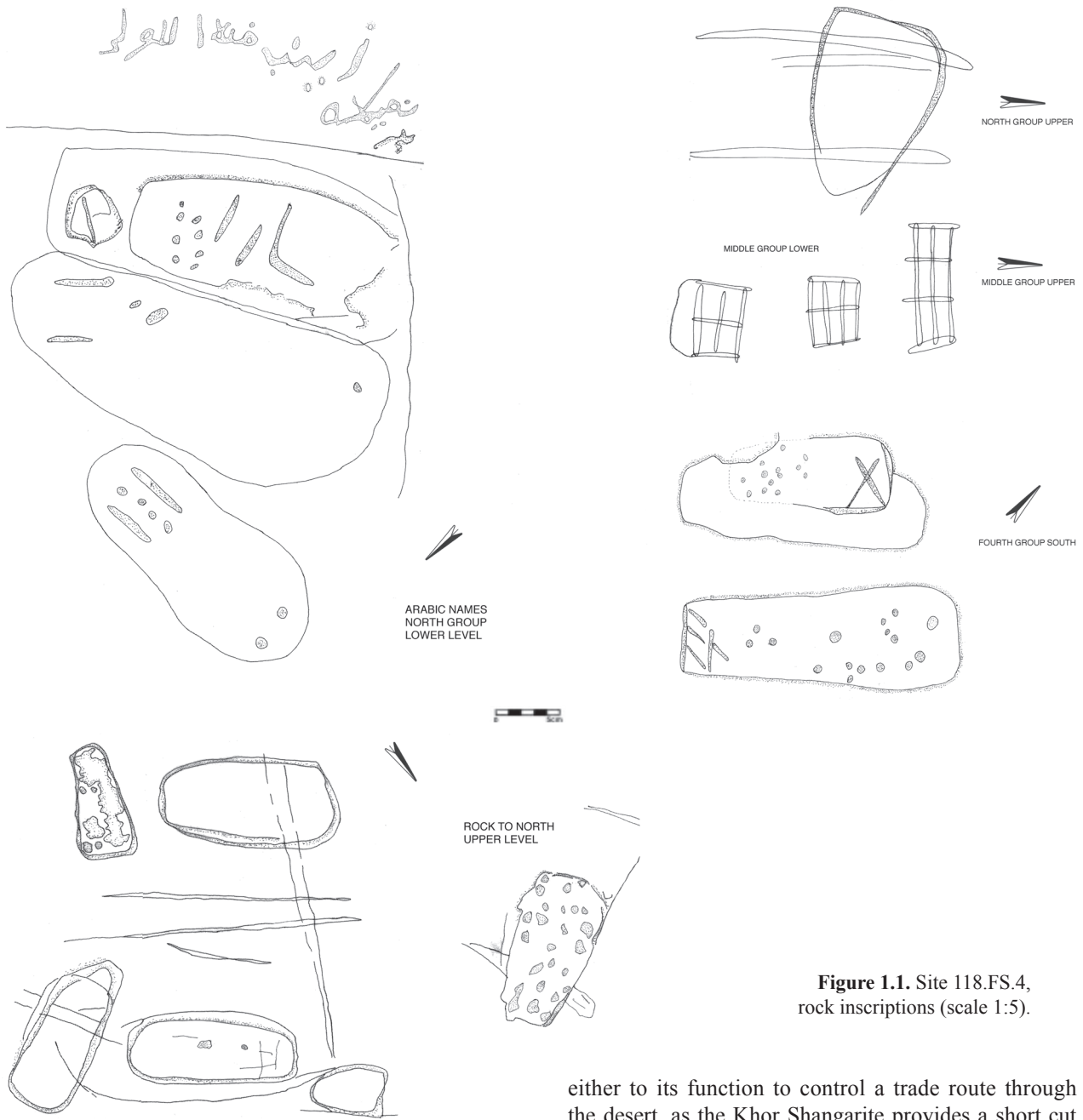


Figure 1.1. Site 118.FS.4, rock inscriptions (scale 1:5).

house (155.4/S1). This was cleared and planned, and two phases of construction established (Figure 1.3, Plates 2.20-2.22). The first phase was a substantial wall built in dry-stone construction similar to that used at Meroe, but which also continued in use well into the Medieval period. This enclosed an area 10 x 15m with a doorway in the south east. The north wall was convex. In the interior of the house, immediately adjacent to the north and south walls, were post-holes and pits, the functions of which are unclear. The later stage involved the construction of light-weight stone walls to form two rooms on the east side, one of which contained a hearth and the other, two substantial pits, presumably for the storage of grain. The post-holes indicate that the structure had a sheltered courtyard, as the central area was much worn, and lacked pits. Outside the house to the south was a large hearth surrounded by stones.

The remote position of the house was due probably

either to its function to control a trade route through the desert, as the Khor Shangarite provides a short cut between the Wadi Gabati and the plain to the north, or possibly, judging by the other structures surrounding it, to it being within a small village related to a wet season utilisation of the *wadi*. A final possibility is some activity related to the surrounding cemeteries and Jebel Abu Sheifa. The site is close to the base of the *jebel*, which is covered in tumuli.

The penultimate site studied was a group of five tumuli 170.1/T1-T5, (Plates 2.17, 2.40 and 2.41) which proved to be associated with relatively young burials. The bodies were all fully contracted, heads to east or north; the sex was indeterminate. The graves were shallow, and the mounds insubstantial heaps of the locally available ferricrete sandstone. Neolithic pottery has been uncovered in the area, and one burial contained a single sherd. It is possible, but will need substantiation with C¹⁴ dating, that these are, therefore, extremely ancient burials. The condition of the bones was very poor, and certainly a Meroitic or post-Meroitic date is probable. Two other sites in the



Figure 1.2a. Site 118. FS.4.1-3, hut circle 1 (scale 1:200).

area were checked, at BM 164 and BM 175, but it was felt that, although close to the road, they might avoid damage due to their proximity to houses. They were both marked by signs. At BM 164 further possible Neolithic pottery was found but no associated graves or structures were apparent in the area, which evidently floods regularly. The most northern site studied from Gabati was adjacent to BM 168, next to the village of el-Adalea.

The final site studied was at BM 159, east of the village of en-Natalia. The site, 159.2 (Plates 2.18 and 2.42), is on a low mound in the middle of the plain between the tumuli-covered foothills and the cultivation. Adjacent on the *jebel* is a quarry, possibly modern, or a modern working of an ancient mine. The village of Gabati lies between the cemetery and the river. Local tradition has it



Figure 1.2b. Site 118. FS.4.1-3, hut circle 2 (scale 1:200).

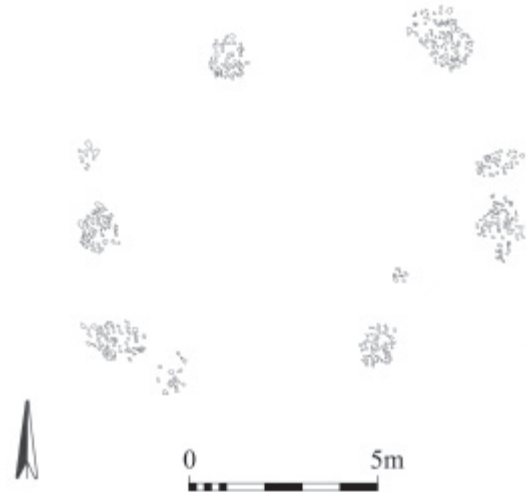


Figure 1.2c. Site 118. FS.4.1-3, hut circle 3 (scale 1:200).

that the village was founded anciently by Queen Koptoi (or Kaptin).

The new road line was expected to pass directly through the middle of the site and would destroy at least 50% of the 80 visible mounds, and render inaccessible the remainder, as banking at this point would cover the remaining area. After excavation of nine of the mounds it was possible to determine the approximate extent and nature of the cemetery (See the layout of the site in Figure 1.10). About 22 mounds are of probable Christian date, and the other 58 of Late Meroitic and post-Meroitic date. A clear area in the centre of the cemetery possibly contains a number of early Meroitic date structures, one of which was excavated in the 1994 season. The importance and uniqueness of the site will be discussed below.

The nine tumuli excavated were chosen due to their proximity to the eastern edge of the cemetery, which made them the most vulnerable ones even if the road had been moved eastwards as discussed with the road engineers the previous year. In fact after the season's work it was discovered that it had been decided already, following a meeting in January between the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan and the Director General of Road Building and Public Works, that the cost of moving the road was too great, and that the road line was to remain unaltered. This increased the urgency of excavating this cemetery particularly due to its likely contents as indicated by the test excavations, described below, and the starting of the road works later that year.

Site 159.2 - Gabati

Tumulus 1

A large gravel tumulus with a post-Meroitic tomb structure beneath. The tomb consists of a rectangular shaft, its long axis aligned at right angles to the river, here approximately east-west. It was cut down 2m through orange gravel to the white gravel underlayer. At the west end a chamber had been hollowed out of the white gravel (Figure 1.4, Plate 2.25). It is similar to the form of those tombs uncovered by John Garstang in 1909-10, and published in *Meroe The City of the Ethiopians* (Garstang *et al.* 1911) (see Plate 2.2).

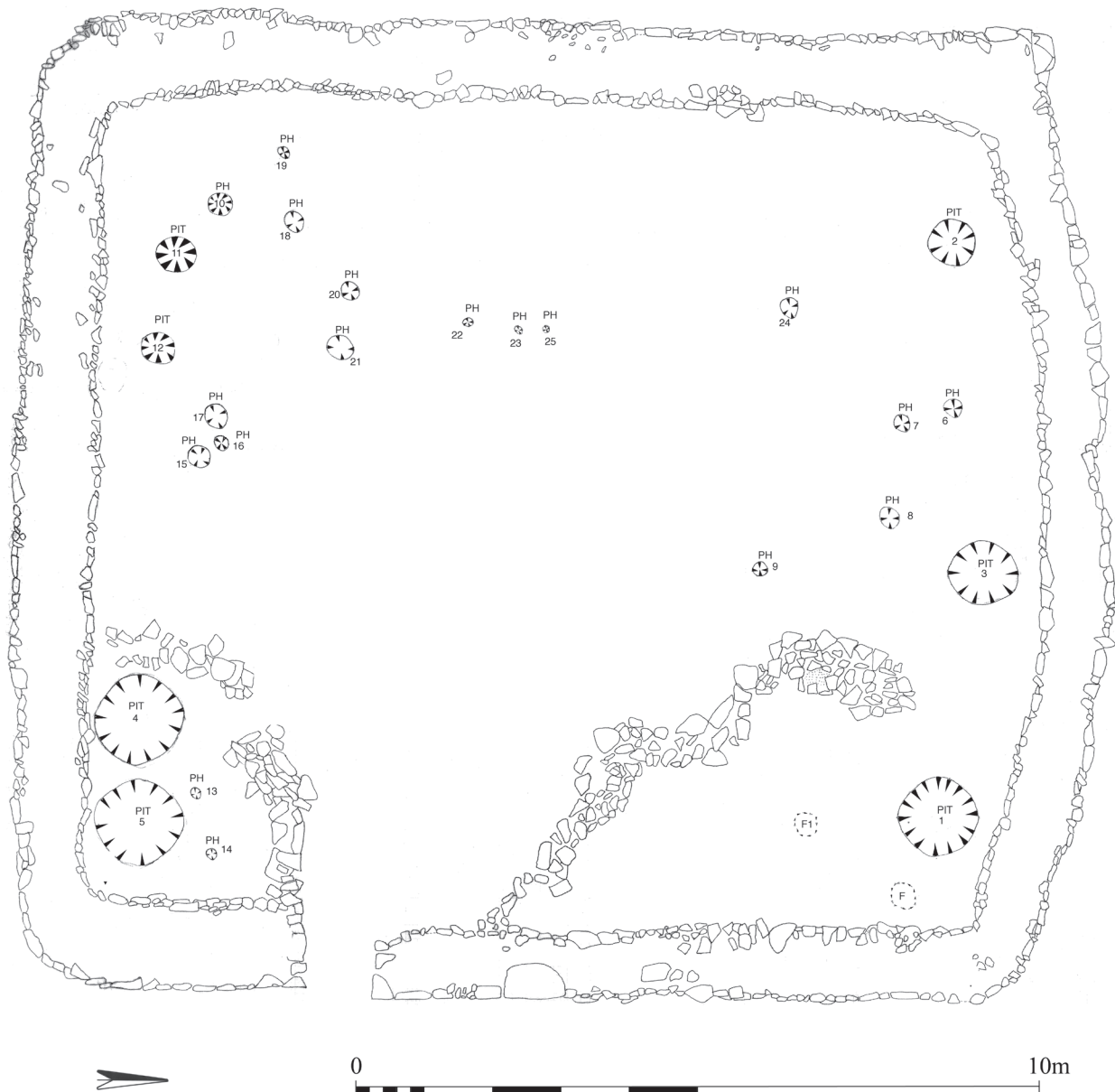


Figure 1.3. Site 155.4, House S1 (scale 1:100).

The deceased was a man laid head to south in a semi-flexed position facing east. The body had been placed originally on a bed (*angareeb*), but this had subsequently collapsed, and remains of the bed surrounded the burial. Accompanying the burial at the head was a bowl, and a wide dish, similar to that of Type H as defined by Garstang (1911, 37-49), with incised zig-zag paint similar to Garstang's Type ZW but decorated differently. The dish lay in the centre of the grave beside the bed.

Both these types at Meroe are from the tombs numbered 302-307, and like these tombs the burials at Gabati were on beds with carved legs around 300mm high (Plates 2.24 and 2.38), although the beds are lighter. At Gabati there is a notable absence of inscriptions in contrast with those at Meroe. The only other burial of this size at Gabati, T5, also had pottery similar to these Meroe tombs. Garstang dates these tombs to be the Classic Meroitic Period (150 BC - AD 150), although they are now considered to be Late Meroitic to Post-Meroitic (AD 150-350). It is pos-

sible that these larger tombs at Gabati could be of this date; the absence of any inscription may have been due to the distance from a temple or city where a literate scribe might have been available or may be due to the apparent lack, or drastic decline, of literacy at this period.

Summary of Objects Registered: 159.2/T1

Unit 124 (See Figure 8.1, Plates 8.1-8.4)

159.2/T1.1/41C - Open black bowl

159.2/T1.1/42C - Small bowl with upright sides, brown and red.

Item No.

1. Rust coloured textile fabric
2. Rope fragments (a-c)
3. Wood sample
4. Leather work (a-b)
5. Rust coloured textile fabric
6. Bed frame south
7. Bed frame west
8. Bed leg
9. Bed leg

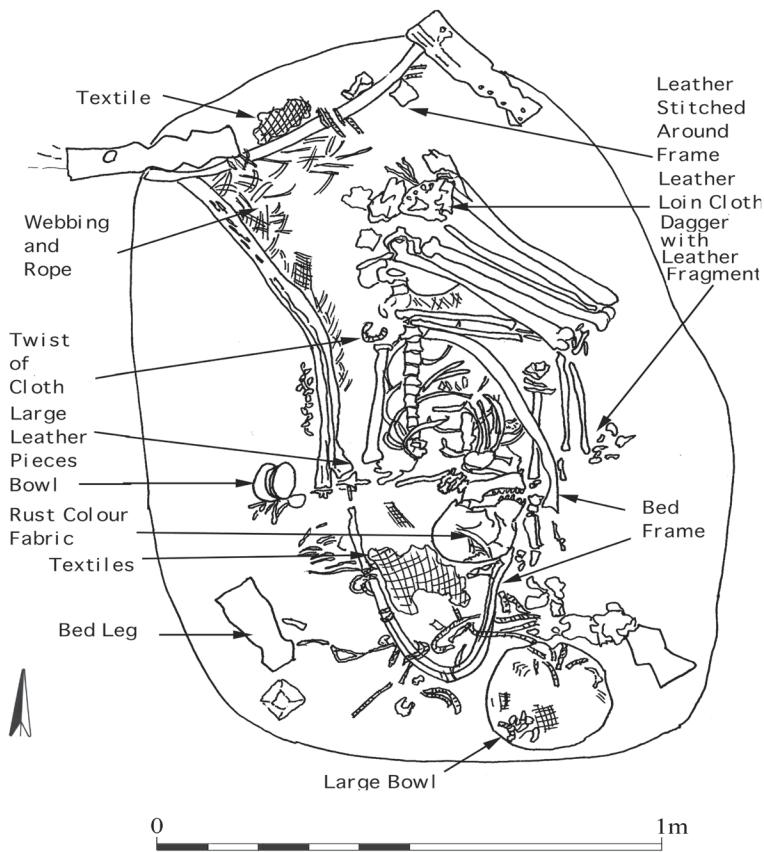


Figure 1.4. Site 159.2, Tumulus 1, unit 124 (scale 1:15).

on a bed which had short legs 200mm high. The bed had collapsed, or was disassembled, and grave goods buried with her lay at head and foot. They consisted of a red wheel-made bottle, considered to be an oil bottle, with a narrow flared top, at her head, and a small black burnished bowl with obliquely-incised vertically applied cordons on two sides and incised cross-shaped motifs, at her feet. The bottle which is similar to Form G32 dated to the later X-Group by W. Y. Adams (1986, 538-542) is a type rarely seen south of Lower Nubia. The burnished bowl, Type ZT in Garstang's classification, is of a common shape, although the decoration is unusual. The bottle may be for burial libations, or food for the dead, as the other bowl contained black seeds, possibly grain. The burial was remarkable in the variety of the textiles and the different types of bead decoration worn.

Summary of Objects Registered 159.2/T2 Unit 118 (See Figure 8.2, Plates 8.5-8.7)

- 159.2/T2.1/31C Red oil bottle
- 159.2/T2.1/32C Black bowl
- Item No.

1. Cloth
2. Textile, leather fragments and beads
3. Leather and textile
4. Textile and tanned skin

10. Bed leg
11. Striped fabric
12. Leather work
13. Fabric and leather
14. Leather (a-c)
15. Stitched leather
16. Stitched leather
17. Cloth
18. Arrowhead, iron
19. Stitched leather (a-b)
20. Rope
21. Plaited leather.
22. Leather/Textile sample
23. Leather thongs
24. Spear tip or dagger blade, iron
25. Leather work.
26. Plaited rope and leather

Tumulus 2

This was the first grave of the post-Meroitic period excavated during the season (Figure 1.5). This time the tumulus was much shallower, and a ring of black stones marked the perimeter, in a manner similar to that recorded by Garstang at the 300-399 Cemetery at Meroe. The shaft descended 1.5m to the bottom of the pit, and large stones in four layers blocked the tomb entrance. The burial was of a woman, fully clothed with her head to the north facing east. She had a baby buried under her legs in a bag, and had been laid

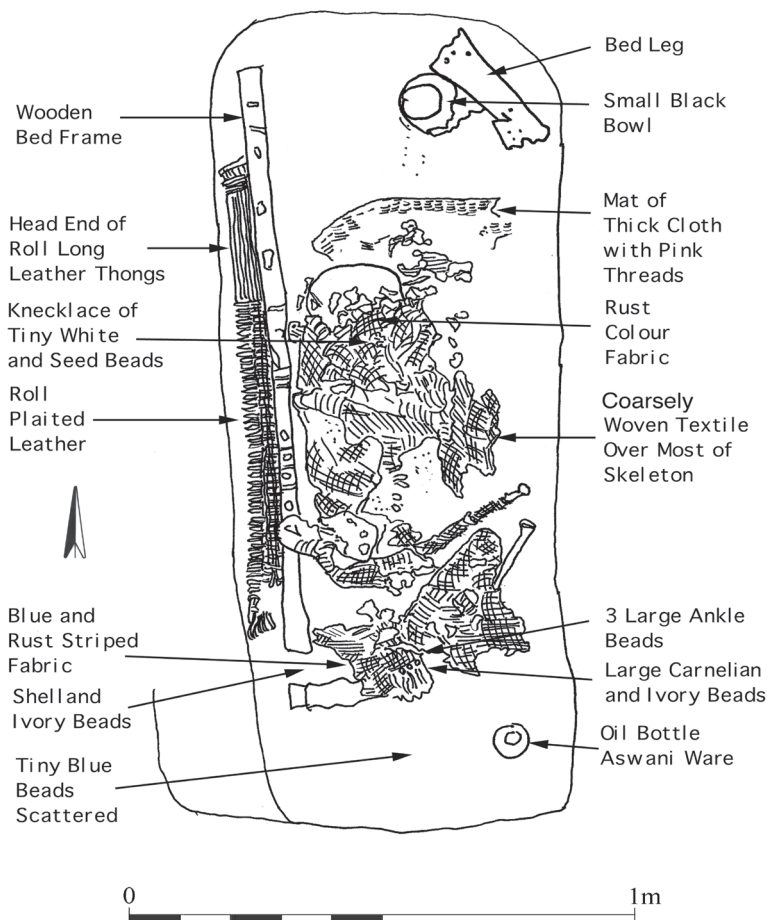


Figure 1.5. Site 159.2, Tumulus 2 unit 118 (scale 1:15).

5. Pelvis sample
6. Leather work
7. Baby skeleton
8. Textile fabric
9. Worked wood and leather
10. Worked wood, leather and textile
11. Skin/leather/fabric
12. Skin/leather fabric
13. Cloth
14. Pink cloth threads
15. Scalp, hair and textiles
16. Textiles
17. Skin/ear/leather
18. Scalp, hair and cloth
19. Cloth
20. Cloth and leather
21. Cloth and leather and woven matting
22. Cloth and leather
23. Cloth and leather
24. Textile
25. Ginger, grey and buff textile
26. Cowrie shell and small beads
27. Seed beads and white beads
28. Baby bones
29. Striped textiles
30. Bed leg
31. Plaited leather from bed stringing
32. Bed frame sample
33. Beads

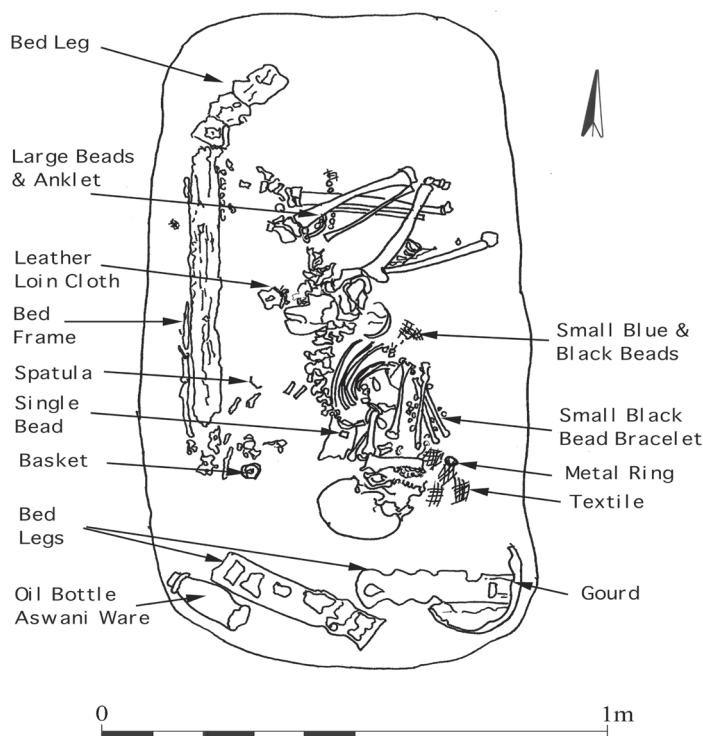


Figure 1.6. Site 159.2, Tumulus 4 , unit 136 (scale 1:15).

*Summary of Objects Registered 159.2/T4
Unit 136 (See Figure 8.3, Plates 8.8-8.12)*

Red oil bottle 159.2/T4/49C
Item No.

1. Anklet and large beads
2. Leather work
3. Small beads
4. Textile
5. Ring
6. Gourd
7. Bed leg
8. Bed legs
9. Bed leg
10. Bed frame
11. Small blue and variously-coloured beads
12. Copper-alloy spatula or *kohl* stick
13. Sample from small baskets
14. Beads
15. Large bead

Tumulus 5

This was a substantial gravel mound with a tomb similar in structure to that beneath Tumulus 1. The tomb, however (Figure 1.7, Plates 2.29-2.30, 2.32-2.34), was larger, and the burial the most impressive uncovered. One of the stones of the tomb blocking had been cut into an oval shape, and inscribed with an axe head or cross-shaped motif. The skeleton was of a female buried head to the south, facing east, and the bed had massive carved legs 350mm long and 100mm square. The grave goods were placed at the foot, although it was hard to tell whether these had originally been on the bed or not.

There were five pots, again similar to some of those of tombs 300-399 at Meroe. One was a pot-stand of Type P,

Tumulus 3

This was a Post-Meroitic/Christian burial under a small ferricrete sandstone mound. The grave cut was shallow and there were no grave goods. Some small fragments of cloth remained. The body was laid with its head to the south, facing east, and the skeleton was in a good state of preservation.

Tumulus 4

This was a grave very similar to that beneath Tumulus 2. It was selected for excavation to see if these small tumuli were related to the large burial at Tumulus 1. The tomb contained an adolescent male(?), head to the south, facing east laid on an *angareeb* (Figure 1.6, Plates 2.24, 2.26 and 2.27). The grave goods included a wheel-made oil bottle similar to that in T2 but damaged, and a gourd. Two dom-palm nuts lay beside the body, and a copper-alloy fibulae/spatula lay near by. A similar object, of a type described by Woolley in the burials from Karanog as a *kohl* stick (Woolley 1910, pl. 36), also occurred in a bent form in one other burial at Gabati (Tumulus 5).

The burial lacked substantial quantities of fabric over it, but was still adorned with a ring, necklaces, and an anklet with large beads. The skeleton was in excellent condition, and the unfused nature of the bones was clear to see. The burial pots may reflect the status or youth of the deceased. After excavation was finished here, and prior to closing up, it was observed that the tomb had cut through the underside of an earlier burial laid in a shallow grave exposing the skeleton embedded in gravel. The grave cut was not apparent from above, and as it was not possible to excavate it, it was left for a future season.

(illustrated in Garstang's *Meroe* as No. 26 pl. XLV, found in Tomb 307), with white painted decoration. A small red bowl was decorated to match. A small red-burnished bowl beside this is similar to Garstang's Type J, found in Tomb 304, and also a red jar with a handle or 'table amphora' similar to R2 Type as defined by Adams, of Nubian production (W. Adams 1986, 470, Form G39) similar to the Aswani Ware R30, and closest in form to J13, in Adams' classification (W. Adams 1986, 534). This was in almost perfect condition, apart from one missing handle. Beside this was a red-burnished spouted vessel with motifs painted on small white backgrounds. The form is similar to Garstang's Type ZK, found in Tomb 15. This tomb was thought to have been of the early Meroitic period by Garstang but these spouted vessels are normally associated with a much later, even Christian, period. This, combined with the absence of inscriptions, indicates a post-Meroitic to 'Transitional' period for these burials.

On the other hand amongst the grave goods was found,

a turned ivory object similar to that found in tomb Beg. W.34 in the West Cemetery (Dunham 1963, 220, fig. 155, no. 13) and this was dated to Generation 24-37, a 1st century BC date. Grave goods, particularly high quality products, can date from much earlier than the burial in which they are found.

Other grave goods include a wooden comb, a bent copper-alloy fibulae or spatula, and a copper-alloy mirror, possibly silvered originally, in two parts. This again would point to a Roman import and a later date, or an item either from the later Meroitic period or continuing Meroitic traditions. The importance of this grave is shown by the scale of the burial, and concentration of quality grave goods. Although the Meroe cemeteries may have had richer grave goods prior to plundering none of them survived undisturbed, and the intact nature of the cemetery at Gabati offers the opportunity to understand what those burials may have been like. It also indicates the importance of the Gabati region in this period and the level of

trade that may have taken place.

The tomb was presumably of an individual of quite high status with access to expensive goods which suggests that she may have been a local ruler or noble. In the Christian period the top of the mound was pitted and a large quantity of Christian pottery was found in the fill. These may have been failed robbing pits, but David Edwards (pers. comm.) suggested that this could reflect the use of cemeteries as a safe place to store food and grain in times of trouble, as holes dug in cemeteries are less conspicuous, and perhaps even thought to have been protected by the presence of the burials.

Summary of Objects Registered 159.2/T5

Unit 150 (See Figures 8.4 and 8.5, Plates 8.13-8.26)

159.2/T5.1/92C Painted red pot-stand

159.2/T5.1/93C Spouted jar

159.2/T5.1/94C Red jar or 'table amphora' with handles

159.2/T5.1/95C Red bowl with lug

159.2/T5.1/96C Red-burnished painted bowl

159.2/T5.1/97S Stone bowl or mortar with attenuated lug corners

1. Large beads
2. Small variously-coloured and white beads

3. Bent copper-alloy fibulae or spatula, and nail

4. Textile

5. Ivory scent jar or *kohl* pot

6. Mirror, copper alloy

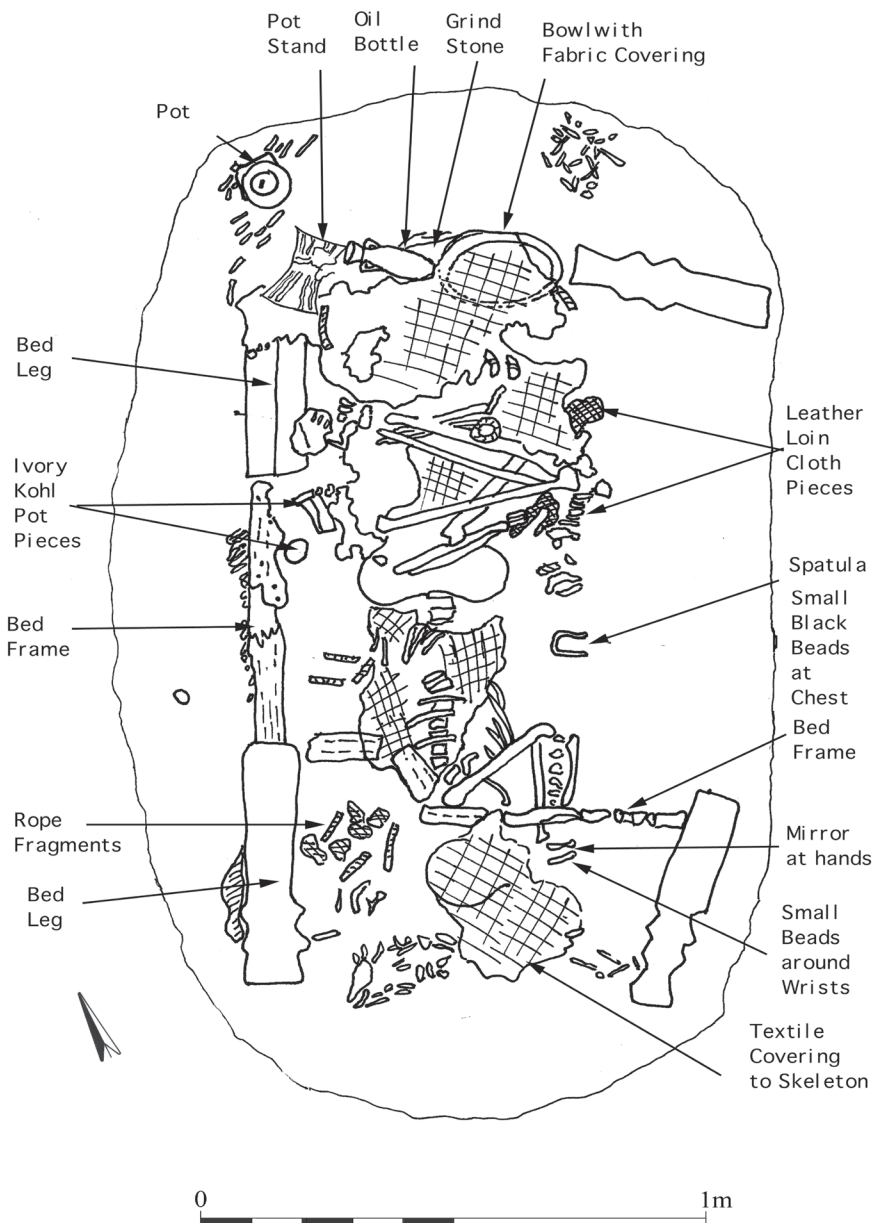


Figure 1.7. Site 159.2, Tumulus 5, unit 150 (scale 1:15).

7. Small beads
8. Leather
9. Small blue-green and white beads
10. Variously-coloured beads
11. Leather bag or apron (a-k)
12. Textile
13. Textile and threads
14. Bed leg
15. Bed leg
16. Bed leg
17. Bed leg
18. Bed frame
20. Leather pieces
21. Wooden comb
22. Beads
- 22a. White bead
23. Rope and leather

Tumulus 6

This tumulus was similar to Nos 2 and 4 in structure, except that the grave pit was shallower, and in plan less square and more kite-shaped (Figure 1.8, Plate 2.35). In this respect it more closely resembled the post-Meroitic graves found by Francis Geus and Patrice Lenoble at el-Kadada. (Geus and Lenoble 1985, 67-92). Tumulus 6, though, was lacking grave goods, and the burial was the only one not on an *angareeb*. The body of an elderly man lay head to the south facing east. The body was covered in a thick shroud, and its head lay on a blanket rolled into a pillow. The only other content was a leather object, possibly an apron, which lay over the feet.

In all five of the tomb burials, leather fragments were found associated with the legs, and it is supposed that this was either part of the offerings or an item of clothing. Leather was also found as part of the structure of the bed frame. Curiously, in the upper part of the fill of this burial the remains of wood with leather ties were found. It can only be supposed that this was the remains of the bier on which the deceased was carried. The absence of grave goods in this tomb would tend to confirm that, if this was a late representative of the type of burials discussed above, it dates to immediately prior to the conversion of the region to Christianity. Alternatively, it may just reflect the extreme poverty of the individual concerned.

Summary of Objects Registered 159.2/T6.1

- 1-7 Lower half of shroud, blanket interlayered
- 8-20 Shroud, blanket interlayered
- 21-22 Shroud, blanket interlayered
- 23-24 Shroud, blanket interlayered
- 25-26 Shroud, blanket interlayered
- 27-28 Biological samples
- 29 Sample from leather object
- 55S Samples of carved wood (Figure 8.5)

Tumulus 7

This tumulus covered a conventional Christian burial, aligned east-west with the head to the east. The skeleton was in a fine state of preservation, and the tumulus was distinguished by the grave cut being in a silt layer not

found elsewhere on the site (Plate 2.28). The upper part of this tumulus, to a depth of half a metre, was made of local ferricrete sandstone cobbles.

Tumulus 8 - 10 and 12

These were not excavated as it was clear that they were intact and similar to Tumuli 1- 6, and would require more recording than time permitted.

'Tumulus' 11

Tumulus 11 was a small Christian burial which (Figure 1.9, Plates 2.36 and 2.37) was intended to be the last excavated. On uncovering the tumulus top, a mud-brick structure (bricks 370 x 170 x 100mm) was revealed which at first was thought to be the top of a Christian tomb as it was aligned true east-west rather than at 100° from north as were the Meroitic tombs. Further clearance revealed a structure approximately 4m square filled with large black stones and a quantity of mud bricks. The top of the fill was full of fine quality Meroitic pottery sherds. It was therefore decided to clear the structure, as it seemed to be Christian in date.

Immediately a tomb shaft was uncovered which went down through mud layers to a depth of 2m, whereupon the remains of a tomb chamber were found, much disturbed but still containing seven intact large globular vessels, and five broken ones. The vessels were clearly Meroitic, and it was decided to record this last Meroitic tumulus

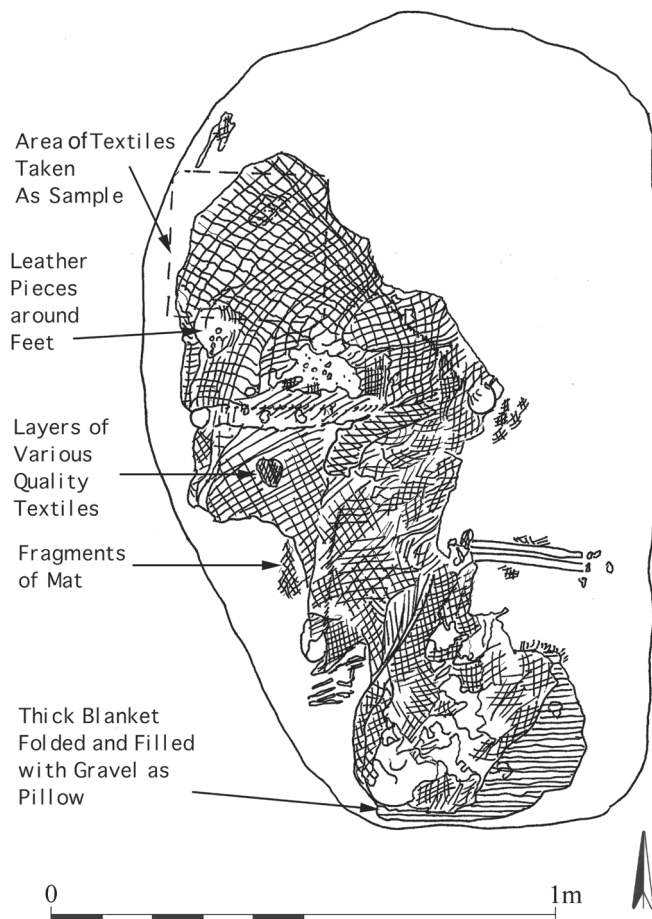


Figure 1.8. Site 159.2, Tumulus 6, unit 151 before final clearance (scale 1:15).

to the level of excavation possible in the remaining time.

The final excavation revealed a structure 8.4 x 4.1m divided into a western section exactly 4.1m square, and a attached chapel 4.1 x 4.3m. The walls were 600mm thick of 1½-brick construction, and had been rendered and painted white on the outside. At the east there was a doorway into the building which originally led straight into the tomb shaft, 1.2m wide, that sloped down to 2m below foundation level. The tomb was cut into the white gravel layer under the square western section of the structure. Its entrance had been blocked with mud bricks and then back-filled with the original fill. At some time in the past, the tomb had been disturbed, a shaft had been cut into the gravel fill and two attempts at robbing had been made, as two pits were found in the gravel, and the blocking had been removed. The large stones found in the front of the chapel may have been part of this blocking, or may have been part of the superstructure. The robbers, after the disturbance, had thrown back into the grave the larger vessels which they presumably considered to be of no value. The tomb seems to have been not at right angles to the shaft but a continuation of it, and the vessels would have been at the foot of the deceased by the entrance. The tomb was completely full of mud-brick rubble, and could not be excavated down to the floor in the time available. Outside the original mud-brick blocking wall there had been four pots including a painted white ware vessel with a serpentine motif, and floral decoration. Inside the doorway were a further eight vessels.

The globular vessels (Plates 4.1 and 4.2) were of four kinds. The first type, of which there were four examples, were black burnished and decorated with rocker marks, and impressions around the neck and rim. The vessels in form are very similar to that found at Shendi (Geus *et al.* 1986, 12, SHQL4), and also by Reisner in the Western Cemetery at Meroe tomb Beg.W.29 (Dunham 1963, 220, fig. 155, no. 9); the date of both these examples is thought to be 1st century BC.

The second type is a red-burnished vessel, three of which were found. These are similar in form to that illustrated by Garstang (1911, pl. XLI, no. 8) but unclassified. These are from the northern group of tombs (no. 400) at Meroe. Of particular interest on one of these pots was an inscription in Meroitic. This is the first example recorded in Sudan, but at Karanog in Egypt, Woolley noted inscriptions on a few of the vessels in Meroitic (Woolley 1910, pl. 107, no. 26 G187. Fxii). The third type, of which two were found, are painted onto a white-slipped vessel, the decoration is serpentine with flowers, and has parallels only much further north, where until now they were thought to have been produced.

Two examples are published by Bonnet (1978, fig. 16, p.125; 1990, nos 357 and 360, also colour pg. 14); they are from Tombs 10 and 3B in the Meroitic Cemetery excavated at Kerma, and date from 100 BC – AD 100. The final type of vessel was a very small globular jar with neck and foot ring. These again have been found further north, and were published by Adams as oil jars (*lekynthoi*), examples of which were also published in the Kerma Catalogue by Bonnet (1990, 246, nos 385). Five of the group of vessels were marked with a symbol which

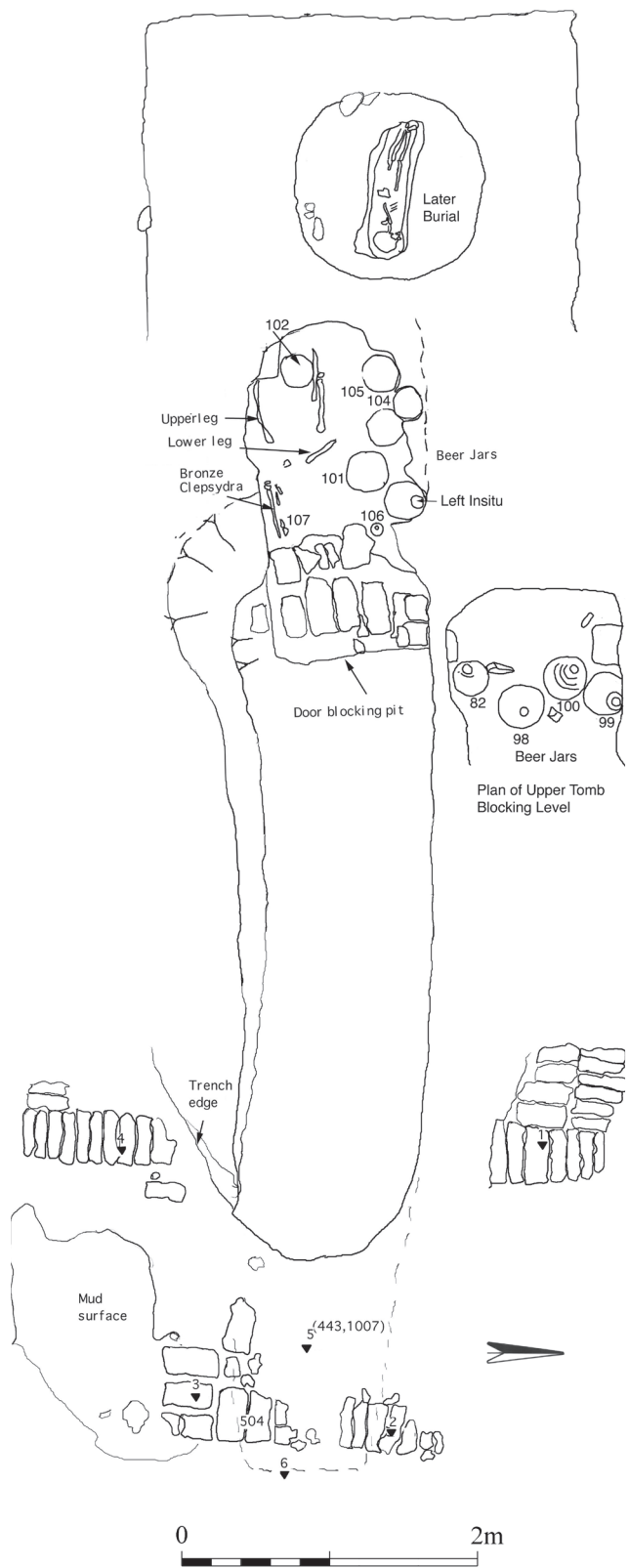


Figure 1.9. Site 159.2, T11, lower excavated levels (scale 1:50).

was also recorded by Dunham at the pyramids at Meroe in Beg.N.11, which dates from Generation 36, around the 2nd century BC (Dunham 1957, 72-73, fig. 44).

The only parallels available for this structure are those recorded at Karanog, where the superstructures were partly stone, and one at the site of Kedurma near the

Third Cataract (Edwards 1995, 40-47, fig. 5). In both these cases however, the superstructure was square and the chapel only a small eastern extension, of less than half the width of the square. The uniqueness of these chapels made it essential that further study was carried out, particularly due to their potentially early date.

Cut into the side of the brick superstructure was a Christian grave. The body was aligned slightly north of east-west, perhaps due to the difficulty of digging through the brick work, with the head to the east.

Summary of Objects Registered 159.2/T11

(See Figures 2.43-2.45, Plates 4.1 and 4.2)

- 159.2/T11/99C Vessel 1 - Black decorated with mark
- 159.2/T11/100C Vessel 2 - Black decorated with mark
- 159.2/T11/98C Vessel 3 - Red, plain
- 159.2/T11/82C Vessel 4 - Painted slipped, broken (re-numbered <1106>)
- 159.2/T11/101C Vessel 5 - Painted slipped with mark
- 159.2/T11/102C Vessel 6 - Red with inscription and mark
- 159.2/T11/103C Vessel 7 - Small red, burnished
- 159.2/T11/104C Vessel 8 - Small black decorated
- 159.2/T11/105C Vessel 9 - Black decorated (broken)
- 159.2/T11/106C Vessel 10 - *Lekythos*
- 159.2/T11/107C Vessel 11 - Sherds

Tumulus 13

This was a very small mound of ferricrete sandstone that covered a female child buried east-west, with head to the east. Unusually, it included jewellery and textiles, but is probably Christian. A number of other small burials around it suggests that this may have been the children's section of the cemetery.

Objects Registered

(See Plate 8.27)

- 159.2/T13.1/71S Earring, copper alloy
- 159.2/T13.1/77S Textile
- 159.2/T13.1/70S Various beads for necklace

Conclusions

The work of the expedition covered all the sites noted as being directly affected by the road line after the Surface Survey in 1993. Twenty-six tumuli in six cemeteries were excavated, and six structures in three settlement sites. A total of 30 individuals was recovered and nine of the burials contained grave goods. The expedition was able to record all the material recovered from these sites in a suitable manner, but the tombs at Gabati raised serious questions concerning conservation. The tombs, of which only five out of a potential 50 with intact grave goods were opened, yielded an enormous quantity of very fragile textiles, leather, wood, ivory, copper-alloy and other metalwork. This prevented any serious attempt that season to excavate completely the site. It seemed clear after our return to Khartoum that it would not be possible to re-route the road due to the additional costs. The road construction was due to start in three to six months after the test excavations, and a suspension of the work around Gabati was likely until the following

spring. Consequently, it was recommended that an excavation be carried out to complete the study of the site at Gabati as soon as possible, which resulted in the subsequent Rescue Season from 1994-1995 (Edwards 1998).

The Publication

It had originally been intended to publish all material from Gabati in one volume. This was not practical to achieve and so the nine burials from the 1994 season are published here as part of the overall work of that season.

The importance of the excavations was partly to verify our dating of cemeteries based on the form of each cemetery and the surface finds which we had attempted in *Road Archaeology* Volume I, but also to safeguard the archaeological heritage inevitably threatened by the road building process. These aims have proved successful. The considerable improvement in identifying the burials from the Post-Meroitic and Early Christian periods in this area has proved invaluable for dating the cemeteries close by. The improvement in knowledge about the pottery and small finds available to non-royal burials away from the major centres in the Meroitic and Post-Meroitic periods has shown to be useful for estimating the contacts of these remoter populations with Meroe, 30km to the south.

A summary of the bone material was prepared by Francis Thornton and Joyce Filer. This has now been superseded by Rebecca Whiting's detailed analysis published here. Specialist studies on the leather and basketry have been provided by Barbara Wills and Willemina Wendrich. The leather analysis indicated that what had previously been identified as shoes were actually a form of loin cloth, which perhaps recalls those depicted as worn by sailors in ancient Egyptian wall reliefs. Wendrich's study documented cultural influences on the basket types and the kinds of grasses used. Laurence Smith, who also worked on the pottery and small finds from the Gabati excavation season, has demonstrated cultural influences from as far afield as Southern Egypt, and others associated with the Red Sea trade. His study presents a summary of the grouping of vessels and objects in each grave, and a brief consideration of their significance.

The illustrations' section attempts to represent key examples of the different excavations, and some of the more interesting finds. The site descriptions are in a standard format, and provide access to all the known scientific data on each site. Drawings show the key sections and contexts of the excavations and spot heights. These drawings have for the most part been included in the text.

The volume is a team effort as were the excavations, and the compilation of the text was worked upon by all team members.

Acknowledgements

This SARS project was made possible by the assistance of the Sudan National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, in particular the late chairman, Prof. Ali Hakim. The project was funded by the Haycock Fund of the British Institute in Eastern Africa and SARS. Help was given by the late Dr John Alexander and Dr Patricia Spencer in reading this text and Vivian Davies in support of the project. Assistance was also provided by the late Dr Friedrich Hinkel who provided the Sudan Archaeological Survey numbers and references for the project.

