

KURTH, DIETER, and URSULA RÖSSLER-KÖHLER (Eds.)

The Archaeology of the 12th Nome of Upper Egypt. Report of Two Surveys in 1980 and 1981

[“Zur Archäologie des 12. oberägyptischen Gaués. Bericht über zwei Surveys der Jahre 1980 und 1981”]

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In spite of a century's systematic exploration of the archaeological sites of Egypt, there is still a good deal of detailed research to be carried out, and interesting new discoveries can still be made. The authors of the study reviewed here have taken up one of the neglected regions of Egypt, the territory of the 12th Upper Egyptian nome of Ancient Egypt, which lies on the eastern bank of the Nile, somewhat apart from traffic, near the modern town of Assiut. The observations concentrate on the remains of the age of the Pharaohs and of Coptic Christianity.

Altogether 56 sites were discovered in two surveys in 1980 and 1981. Of particular interest are three areas:

- an important ancient ruined city near Ma^cabda, whose identity with one of the localities mentioned in the texts is still to be established;
- a decorated and inscribed rock tomb of the Old Kingdom, also near Ma^cabda; and
- the area surrounding the long-known site of Dair al-Gabrāwī, with a relatively large number of sites.

The sites are described in detail in Chapter III or – in the case of the three most important complexes – in Chapter IV, and summarized again in tabular form in Chapter V (the authors of these chapters are Dieter Kurth and Ursula Rößler-Köhler). There follows a presentation of the material from more systematic points of view: the description of the material from late antiquity and from the Coptic period (Chapter VI, Claudia Nauerth), a study of the ceramics (Chapter VII, Günther Korbel) and a survey and architectonic record (Chapter VIII, Wolfgang Kurth). We should not omit mention of the second chapter (the first after the foreword) by Jürgen Horn, in which the information on the topography and archaeology of the 12th nome of Upper Egypt (known before the survey was made) is meticulously collected. It was the fragmentary nature of this information – first noticed in the course of investigations into the legend of St. Victor the Martyr – which was the occasion of the survey.

The various sections of the volume were conceived and composed by the six authors largely independently of each other. From the

reader's point of view a more compact organisation of the work, even one which obliterated the identity of the authors, would have been preferable. It must be admitted, however, that it is difficult to treat individuals with characteristics as various as those represented by the authors of the individual chapters exactly alike. How, for example, can the meticulous work of Jürgen Horn in Chapter II, or what can only be described as the excessive professionalism of Ursula Rößler-Kähler's description of the Old Kingdom tomb in Chapter IV (which bestows on a preliminary report the complete apparatus of footnotes of a final publication), be reconciled with the more tentative treatment of individual finds in Chapter VI (Claudia Nauerth) and Chapter VII (Jürgen Korbel) – not to mention the quite non-Egyptological viewpoint and language of the architect (Wolfgang Kurth) in Chapter VIII? Even so, one thing which should have been possible is the compilation of an index covering the entire material.

Whatever the details may be, the work makes available to Egyptologists and students of Coptic and Christian archaeology important material concerning questions of historical topography, and, as with every increase of material, is very welcome. It is to be hoped that it will provide the impulse towards specific archaeological fieldwork in this archaeologically neglected region.

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