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The Riverbank Survey of the Humboldt University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) in Dar al-Manāṣīr: Preliminary Report for the 2004 Season*

Introduction

The first reconnaissance survey of Humboldt University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) in Dar al-Manāṣīr, the area of the Fourth Nile Cataract, was conducted in March 2004.¹ The mission forms part of the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (MDASP).² The concession area covers a tract of about 40 kilometres in length in the centre of the future reservoir on the left riverbank and the corresponding islands (**Fig. 8**).³

Gebel Musa (*Gabal Musa*), the site of the Battle of Kirbekan (*al-Kirbikān*) in 1885, marks the southern end of H.U.N.E.'s concession area. At the bend of the Nile immediately north of the village of Salamat (*Sug al-Salamāt*) lies the upstream end. Headquarters of the 2004-season were set up in the centre of the concession area, in the village of Mushra (*Mušra al-Hammīr*), just opposite the small island of Tibet (*Titbit*) and close to the southern end of the island of Us.

The majority of H.U.N.E.'s concession area is characterised by the granite swell of the Fourth Cataract and is predominantly made up of a mass of large stone boulders and rocks. Along the river bank one can sometimes find narrow sandy plains.⁴ The region around Mushra is marked by a relatively broad strip of arable land and sandy shores. In contrast, the area north of Kereiti (*Karaiti*) is almost totally void of a riverine area. Rocky outcrops and granite boulders closely approaching the river make the terrain difficult to work in. In some cases, villages may be reached via small tracks (e.g. Kereiti, Umm Jaghor), but to travel by car along the river is generally not possible.⁵ The main modern car track runs a considerable distance from the Nile and follows major wadis and sandy plains in the hinterland (cf. **Fig. 11**). As a consequence, most of the survey was done by foot.

* For checking my English I am grateful to Mr. Robert SCHIESTL.

¹ See J. BUDKA, H.U.N.E. 2004, Teil 2: Begehung des Festlands, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), pp. 105-115; F. KAMMERZELL, Die Humboldt-University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) in Dar al-Manasir – Erster Bericht: Survey 2004, Teil 1: Rahmenbedingungen, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), pp. 99-103; M. LANGE, H.U.N.E. 2004, Teil 4: Die Steinartefakte, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), pp. 131-136; C. NÄSER, H.U.N.E. 2004, Teil 3: Bericht über den Insel-Survey, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), pp. 117-130.

² For general information on MDASP see S.M. AHMED, Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (MDASP), *Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft* 14 (2003), pp. 73-75; S.M. AHMED, The Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project, [in:] D. WELSBY, J.R. ANDERSON (eds.), *Sudan, Ancient Treasures, An Exhibition of Recent Discoveries from the Sudan National Museum*, London 2004, pp. 308-314 and H. PANER, Kerma Culture, Rock Art, Dome Graves and Other Discoveries in the Fourth Cataract Region, *GAMAR* 2 (2003), p. 163.

³ Due to logistic reasons, H.U.N.E. is working in two separate teams, on the mainland respectively on the adjoining islands.

⁴ Cf. S. DONADONI, Beginning a survey at the Fourth Cataract, *Nubica* I/II (1987/88), pp. 153-159; S. DONADONI, A Survey North of the Fourth Cataract, *Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1997), pp. 10-22; D.A. WELSBY, V. DAVIES, *Uncovering Ancient Sudan Archaeological Research Society, SARS*, London 2002, p. 36; PANER, *GAMAR* 2 (2003), p. 164.

⁵ Cf. PANER, *GAMAR* 2 (2003), p. 164.

Results of the first season on the mainland

The first season served to get a general overview of the region and to explore the logistic grounds for future campaigns. The expedition team working on the mainland consisted of Frank Kammerzell (project director), Julia Budka (archaeologist) and Fawzi Hassan Wahid (archaeologist, inspector of NCAM). In addition, Khidir M. Ahmed (archaeologist) joined us for a limited number of days. Since fieldwork lasted ten days only, the following report is of a rather preliminary character.

For obvious reasons, particular emphasis was laid on the spots in the vicinity of the daily departure point at Mushra. A stretch extending up to 2 km outside the riverine area was covered in the region between the villages of Kararir (*al-Karaṛīr*) and el-Debab (*al-Dibāb*), following the major wadis and khors into the hinterland whenever it seemed possible and promising. In addition, a strip extending up to 1.5 km from the river into the hinterland was surveyed between Umm Jaghor (*ʿum Jaġor*) and Kereiti. Finally a very narrow stretch along the river between Shellal and the small village el-Signi (*al-Signi*) was fieldwalked.

A total of 118 sites were documented and registered by GPS. The overall number of site types recorded is 126 since some of the places fit in more than one category.⁶ All in all, the types of sites located so far comprise 39 concentrations of rock art, 24 cemeteries (8 box grave cemeteries, 16 tumulus cemeteries), 3 isolated tumulus graves, 13 shelters built in stone, 8 dwelling places, 19 scatters of occupation, 5 stone rubble walls, 3 enclosures and 12 miscellaneous stone structures. Within the cemeteries two main groups of graves can be recognised: in the first place different types of tumuli,⁷ which very likely cover a time span from Kerma to Post-Meroitic and maybe Medieval times, and secondly box graves, usually attributed to the Christian period.

The span of time covered by the sites found extends from the Prehistoric Period (Palaeolithic to Neolithic) to Post-Meroitic, Medieval and very recent times. Especially in the case of some of the shelters and stone structures with unknown functions it cannot be ruled out that they are of a modern date.⁸ At the moment many uncertainties in dating arise from the lack of proof that artefacts collected during the survey indeed belong to the structures in or on which they were found.⁹ As a consequence, in most cases it was not possible to ascertain an exact date to a particular site.

The bulk of material, however, seems to belong to the Neolithic and Medieval periods. Sites of likely Neolithic date are predominately occupation sites. Only one cemetery which might belong to the Neolithic period according to the size of the pits and the foetal position of the skeletons (MN 002) was recorded. The Medieval period is well attested by different kinds of sites. Most of these sites are settlements (8 sites) or isolated huts and shelters (13 sites). Eight Christian box grave cemeteries were discovered in 2004. Considering the large quantities of tombs within any one of these compact cemeteries (cf. MS 036, approximately 60 tombs) the numerical predominance of contemporary dwelling places is not surprising since these settlements in H.U.N.E.'s concession comprise only a small number of features for a limited number of people.¹⁰

⁶ See D.A. WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, SARS Publication No. 10, BAR International Series 1110, Oxford 2003 (hereinafter referred to as: WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*), p. 121 for a similar situation in SARS's concession.

⁷ For a preliminary typology of tumuli in the area of the Fourth Cataract see WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122.

⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 123.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

¹⁰ For the chronological distribution of occupation sites and cemeteries as well as the preponderance of the first see P. WOLF, *The SARS Anglo-German Expedition at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile: the 2003/04 season, Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), p. 18 with fig. 1 and p. 23.

Mushra

The total number of sites recorded in the area of Mushra is to date 58. The label “MN = Mushra North” was assigned to all sites north of the starting point up to the village of Kararir, covering the large plain of Walad Sabir as well (**Fig. 8**). All types of sites are attested within the Mushra area (18 cemeteries, 1 isolated tumulus, 6 occupation scatters, 2 occupation scatters within stone enclosures, 3 settlements, 3 shelters, 8 miscellaneous stone works, 17 concentrations of rock art).

As D. Welsby has already worked out, different types of tumuli may be found at various locations within the Fourth Cataract region.¹¹ Most of the tumulus cemeteries near Mushra were set in beds of wadis or other sandy plains. These tumuli can be classified as belonging to type III, IV and VI of the typology established by Welsby.¹² Tumuli that occupy the hill tops or are located along ridges (type I, II and V of Welsby), which can be dated by other missions to the Kerma period,¹³ were not found in 2004 in the close vicinity of Mushra but further north only near the village of Shellal (see below).

The following examples are most likely to be dated to the Post-Meroitic period but, since most of the tombs were robbed and destroyed, there is no way to confirm this assumption which is based on parallels found by other missions. A once large tumulus cemetery (site MN 001) is today the site of the modern soccer pitch of Mushra. The site was totally cleared in order to get a flat surface. Only scarce traces of approximately twelve circular gravel-covered mounds survived. Remains of another tumulus cemetery (MN 005) were found set in the alluvial deposits of a wadi just south of the village of Kararir. Because of its location on these sandy sediments the gravel mounds were exposed to erosion and are only partly preserved.

A cemetery closer to the Nile than MN 001 and MN 005 lies south of the village of Kararir (MN 006). It contains a minimum of five tumuli. All five belong to the type of gravel-covered mounds and are of different sizes. The empty pits in the centres of the superstructures give evidence of quite recent plundering. One tumulus was completely stripped of its stones and the blocks were heaped together besides the tomb. Blocks of ancient tumuli frequently have been used as modern building material, since they are available in large numbers and have a convenient shape and size. Quite often they are found reused in dam constructions and in different kinds of walls and terraces.

North of the public school building of Kararir a large plain is once more partly used as a modern soccer pitch, but has also functioned as a cemetery since Post-Meroitic times (MN 009 and MN 010). The site exhibits the common combination of tumuli and box graves.¹⁴ In the southern part at least eight or nine circular tumuli were counted. The types, structures and number of these tumuli are quite unclear due to intensive plundering. In the northern part of the cemetery approximately 40 box graves are well preserved. Between these – presumably Christian – tombs two heavily destroyed tumuli were noted. Due to their dilapidated state of preservation it was not possible to identify type and size. The box graves are organized in the usual pattern (East-West). An Islamic cemetery is located next to the Christian tombs and copies their orientation.¹⁵ In contrast to Islamic guidelines, the Muslim graves are not facing Mecca, but the river. Thus, MN 009-10 may be regarded as an interesting example of adopted burial traditions by people of different religions.

¹¹ For the location of different types of tumuli see WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122.

¹² WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122.

¹³ Cf. WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122; PANER, *GAMAR 2* (2003), p. 168; WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia 8* (2004), pp. 20-21.

¹⁴ Cf. WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 17, site 3-N-302, figs. 2.14 and 2.15.

¹⁵ BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan 15* (2004), pp. 106-107, fig. 2.

Several isolated tumuli were found in the sandy plain of Walad Sabir (MN 012-14) along the modern car track, covering a distance of 1400 meters in a north-south direction. All of them showed traces of recent plundering. Only very few, insignificant sherds were found lying on the surface. The morphology of the tumuli itself is very significant and finds many parallels in the area of the Fourth Cataract. It also fits the typology of tumuli superstructure types established by Welsby (type I, II and IV as well as variant IVa, after Wolf). A large cemetery comprising 115 tumuli of these particular four types was recently partly excavated by the SARS Anglo-German Expedition.¹⁶ Since some of the burials were still found untouched, these tombs could be dated to the Post-Meroitic period.

The southernmost group in Walad Sabir, MN 013, comprises a ring tumulus in a roughly circular form with a diameter of 6 metres.¹⁷ Two stone slabs (46 x 22 x 11 cm; 76 x 32 x 11 cm) were erected vertically on its eastern and western sides.¹⁸ These 'markers' are visible from a great distance. On the eastern side of the monument intact pottery vessels and some sherds were found scattered around the stone slab. The partly smoked vessels belong to the common coarse hand-made ware. According to a local villager, newly-wed women come to the site, pray for fertility and pregnancy and offer food and drinks. Later, these offerings are at the disposal of all passers-by in need and are believed to bring good luck to their donors. Similar rituals are known in modern Egyptian folklore. Acts like depositing or breaking pots at ancient sites are commonly associated with fertility.¹⁹

180 meters to the north of MN 013 a group of three tumuli was recorded (MN 012). Two tumuli are gravel mounds of a vague shape and belong to Welsby's type I. The third tomb, with a circular superstructure and a 'nose'-like annex, is a variant of Welsby's type IV, which was recently described by Wolf as type IVa.²⁰ Site MN 014 was found 200 meters further north of MN 012 and comprises a group of at least three tumuli, which may be described as markedly egg shaped, gravel covered mounds (Welsby's type IV).²¹

Site MN 015 lies 900 metres north of MN 014; no tombs were found within the area between the two sites. MN 015, which suffered some recent destruction, comprises three flat gravel covered mounds with once well placed stone rings.²² One tumulus is circular in shape with a diameter of only 4.5 metres; the two others are oval and much larger. The superstructures measure 10 meters in diameter. The stone ring of one of the large tumuli was slightly damaged on its western side. Some of the stones were piled up to make two small heaps in the centre of the tomb.²³ This is a similar kind of modern re-arrangement of original stones as was recognised at site MN 013.

¹⁶ WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), pp. 22-23.

¹⁷ J. BUDKA, *Auf der Fährte des Kamels am 4. Nilkatarakt (Sudan). Vorläufige Ergebnisse einer ersten Begehung der Nubien-Expedition der Humboldt-Universität (HUNE)*, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 70, fig. 4.

¹⁸ Four very similar stone slabs were found lying horizontally within the tumulus in its southern part. As these stones are all of the same type, one has to assume that they belong to the original structure. Could they have been cover stones of the grave chamber that were unearthed during the process of robbery? Cf. for similar slabs found near tumuli WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), p. 23.

¹⁹ N. EL-SHOHOUMI, *Der Tod im Leben. Eine vergleichende Analyse altägyptischer und rezenter ägyptischer Totenbräuche. Eine phänomenologische Studie*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 27, Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts 22, Wien 2004, p. 84.

²⁰ WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122; in addition WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), p. 22.

²¹ Cf. D.A. WELSBY, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia. Pagans, Christians and Muslims on the Middle Nile*, London 2002, p. 55, fig. 22; WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122, type IV; BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 70, fig. 3; BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 107, fig. 3.

²² Type II of WELSBY as recently described by WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), p. 22.

²³ J. BUDKA, Humboldt-University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) in Dar al-Manāṣīr: The first reconnaissance survey on the left bank, *GAMAR* 4 (2005) (Proceedings of the Conference "The Archaeology of the Fourth Nile Cataract", Gdańsk-Gniew 23rd-25th July 2004), fig. 4.

Mushra South (= MS) covers the region south of Mushra including the villages of Etanub and el-Debab and the adjoining hinterland. Three isolated tumuli were discovered in the hinterland of Etanub, close to the El-Shukuk-pass (MS 028).²⁴ The tombs were set into the sandy sediments of a large wadi. All of them suffered both from erosion and plundering and their date of origin remains unclear. The best preserved gravel covered mound measures 6 meters in diameter and 2 metres in height. A robber's pit, more than 1 metre deep, was cut into the centre of the structure.

Christian box graves are found in different locations: near the riverine area (MS 001) and the cultivated land, but also in the deposits of wadis (MS 031) and set on sandy zones between rocky outcrops (MS 036). Site MS 031 illustrates the worst possible state of preservation (fig. 9). Together with a number of tumuli nearby the cemetery was set into the alluvium of a large wadi in the hinterland of the village Etanub. Thus the tombs were exposed to erosion, which probably began soon after their construction. In recent times, a few robbers' pits destroyed what little was left of the tombs after natural corrosion.

A well preserved medieval cemetery is situated between rocky outcrops near the village of El-Debab (MS 036).²⁵ A minimum of 56 box graves in eight rows, oriented east-west as usual, has been counted. The stone boxes with fine gravel filling and pebbles are in some cases equipped with headstones and footstones. The common dimensions of a tomb measure approximately 2 x 1 metres or 2.30-2.50 x 1.50 metres with a maximum height of 1 metre.

Settlements in the concession area are built of stone – they were called “Anag-remains” by Jackson, who conducted a short reconnaissance survey in the area in 1926.²⁶ They are frequently situated on hill tops or terraces close to the river. This type of location is illustrated by MS 022, a medieval site which comprises at least nine dry stone-walled structures, circular and rectangular units with one or several rooms, as well as simple stone rings.²⁷ A large amount of domestic material was found on the surface – pottery with traces of smoke and cooking ware, animal bones (some of them smoked), stone tools, flakes, baking plates and grinding plates.²⁸

A similar stone village is situated quite far in the desert at the foot of a *gebel*. This settlement (MS 040) seems to be entirely undisturbed, since it is deeply covered with sand. Therefore the site is one of the most promising candidates for future excavation. Seven structures of different kinds were documented: round freestanding huts and rectangular structures built against the rock as well as single lines of stones and simple stone rings.²⁹ A variety of objects, which attests the domestic character of the site, was found nearby and on the surface. Among the most interesting finds are various types of pottery, both hand-made and wheel-made, the most outstanding of which is a decorated rim sherd of a small cup and a collared vase (MS 040.5).³⁰ Different lithic material and stone tools came up, as well as the torso of a small clay figurine of a camel.³¹ According to the surface finds (especially MS 040.5) and the architecture, MS 040 can be dated to the Medieval period, probably around 1000 AD.

In the close vicinity of settlement MS 040, along the modern (and also ancient?) trail, some rock drawings of camels were discovered.³² They consist of different types and sizes and were sometimes arranged in groups. Camels are, so far, the predominant motifs of rock

²⁴ For information on the El-Shukuk-pass see BUDKA, *GAMAR* 4 (2005), pp. 10-11.

²⁵ BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), pp. 70-71, fig. 5.

²⁶ H.C. JACKSON, A trek in the Abu Hamed District, *Sudan Notes and Records* 9, No. 2 (1926), pp. 24-25. For more details on JACKSON'S work done within H.U.N.E.'s concession area see BUDKA, *GAMAR* 4 (2005), pp. 10-11.

²⁷ BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 71, fig. 6; BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 109, fig. 5.

²⁸ Cf. LANGE, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 131 for one grinding plate-fragment.

²⁹ BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 71, fig. 7.

³⁰ BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 110, fig. 6.

³¹ BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 71, fig. 8.

³² BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 72, fig. 9.

art in the area under investigation. According to Welsby, these depictions can be dated to a period ranging from medieval times to the recent past.³³ More concentrations of rock art were found on the rocky outcrops approaching the river near the village of Etanub. The repertoire of motifs is rather restricted. Five main groups of subjects have been defined to date:³⁴ symbols (crosses and various other forms), animals (bovines, camels, equides, caprides, canides etc.), animals with riders (mostly camels and equides), animals with drovers (mostly camels), and humans (hunting and fighting scenes).³⁵ All of these motif types, except the symbols, are attested both in outline and in solid drawing. Animals and especially the camel dominate the rock art corpus. In addition to the drawings some sub-recent Arabic inscriptions were recorded. Some of these are dated and give the name of their producer, e.g. a graffito reads *Ahmed Mohamed, 21/4/98* (site MS 002).

In the vicinity of Mushra as well as north of Kereiti peculiar stone rubble walls or lines made of rough dry-stone (e. g. MS 04, MS 035, KN 037) were found.³⁶ In most cases these structures either follow the ridges of mountains or block the ways to ancient dried out water-channels. Often the stone features are situated between large stone boulders and form a sort of connection between them. The purpose of these wall features is not evident and it may very well be that they represent several distinctive types of installations that served more than one purpose. Sometimes they are connected with stone structures like shelters and huts and rock art (especially with depictions of camels).

Some of these rubble walls could be installations connected with water-harvesting systems,³⁷ especially as some of the structures seem to have a recent origin. In other cases, this seems improbable. According to local villagers the walls were constructed in antiquity³⁸ to keep camels off the cultivated land and away from the wadis that were used for agriculture. As a rule, domestic camels are held in a semi-free state and are allowed to range at will. They travel long distances but stick to familiar tracks and always come back to wells they are already familiar with.³⁹ Because of this behaviour, an interpretation of some of the stone layers (especially those blocking the way to the cultivated areas), as herding walls would make sense.

Shellal

A very narrow stretch along the river between Shellal and the small village of el-Signi (*al-Signi*) was fieldwalked. To date, only six sites in selected areas have been documented (4 near Shellal, 2 in the village of Sabir). A more detailed survey was conducted in 2005 and covered the adjoining hinterland. The small number of sites discovered is probably partly due to the broad arable zone along the river in this area. It is not unlikely that a considerable amount of ancient sites (especially cemeteries) was removed to gain these modern fields (cf. site SA 02).

³³ WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 113.

³⁴ Cf. the motif types classified by WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 111: vegetation, symbols, animals, humans, animals with riders.

³⁵ In addition, on the islands boats and a sketch of a church were found by the team of Cl. NÄSER; cf. NÄSER, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 122.

³⁶ Cf. BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), pp. 112-113, fig. 8.

³⁷ Cf. D.N. EDWARDS, A. OSMAN, *The Archaeology of Arduan Island – the Mahas Survey 2000, Sudan and Nubia* 4 (2000), p. 61, fig. 4 for a similar explanation of rubble walls along the edge of the Wadi Farjar at the Third Cataract.

³⁸ The term “antiquity” in this context could mean various time periods up to the last century.

³⁹ For more detailed information see D.J. BREWER, D.B. REDFORD, S. REDFORD, *Domestic Plants and Animals: The Egyptian Origins*, Warminster 1994, p. 102.

As early as in 1926 several tombs at Shellal were examined by Jackson.⁴⁰ We documented three cemeteries in the vicinity of the village. Two of the sites comprise tumuli and occupy rocky hill tops. At ShS 01 (= Shellal South) traces of a single, heavily destroyed gravel covered mound were recognised. It belongs to Welsby's type I and may be tentatively attributed to the Kerma period according to the morphology of the superstructures and excavated parallels.⁴¹ Another gravel covered mound, set into the rocky outcrops near the river, was recorded as ShS 03. This tumulus is circular in shape, measures 6 metres in diameter and the preserved height is 1 metre. Its location and superstructure might suggest a date of origin in the Kerma-Period. Finally, a small box grave-cemetery (ShS 02, comprising 16 tombs) was found set between the rocky outcrops close to the Nile. The orientation of these tombs illustrates a specific attitude that is well attested in Dar al-Manāṣīr. This means that north-south was measured by the course of the river. Since the Nile is more or less flowing east-west in this particular section of the Cataract area,⁴² the cemetery is consequently orientated north-south (cf. **Fig. 8**).

The remains of a heavily eroded rectangular structure made of (burnt) red mud-bricks were documented as ShS 04. To date it is the only place on the riverbank in H.U.N.E.'s concession area where traces of mud-brick walls are preserved. All the other domestic features discovered so far are built in dry-stone walls.⁴³ Since no finds have been discovered, the date of ShS 04 is unclear and we cannot rule out that the structure is of recent origin.

Umm Domi

The Umm Domi (*'um Domī*) peninsula, situated south of Mushra opposite the small island of Tibet, is a typical example for seasonal islands very common in the Cataract area. Wadi Etanub (*Wādi al-^caitanūb*) separates Umm Domi from the mainland and is used for farming during the period when it is not flooded. Within the wadi, on its northern side, a puzzling feature was recorded (site MS 032). An area consisting of numerous small-sized angular shaped pebbles and some larger rubble stones, measuring 40 x 15 metres, is set on the alluvial deposits of the wadi. It is separated from another pebble-stone-area by 20 metres of sandy surface. The second rocky area measures 35 x 13 metres. The small pebbles that make up the surface are not rounded or worn and an origin from the river must therefore be ruled out. So far, no explanation for this artificial assemblage can be offered.

Umm Domi is the only unit on the riverbank of H.U.N.E.'s concession area which was fully surveyed in the first season. 11 sites were located, ranging from the Neolithic period up to recent times. Located on the summit of the largest hilltop of the peninsula just opposite the island of Tibet a terrace with evidence of stone tool production (site UD 04) was found. This probably Neolithic site measures 20 meters north-south and 10 meters in an east-west direction. Several concentrations of lithic material (flakes and tools) as well as ceramics have been found on the surface.⁴⁴

The dominant features on Umm Domi are various constructions in dry-stone wall-technique that most probably belong to the medieval period. All together, four occupation

⁴⁰ JACKSON, *Sudan Notes and Records* 9, No. 2 (1926), p. 25.

⁴¹ Cf. WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122 and WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), pp. 20-21.

⁴² Following BRADBURY (L. BRADBURY, *The Tombos Inscription: A New Interpretation*, *Serapis* 8 (1984-85), pp. 7 ff., p. 17; L. BRADBURY, *Following Thutmose I on His Campaign to Kush*, *KMT* 3/3 (1992), p. 54, with fig.), the changing directions and different currents of the Nile in the area around the Fourth Cataract are described as *mw pf kd hdd m hnty* (*Urk.* IV, p. 85.14) - "the inverted water" which flows north in flowing south on the Tombos Stela of Thutmose I.

⁴³ In the concession area of SARS, a small number of settlements with mud-brick structures were discovered see WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 123. The remains of a mud-brick building were also found on the island of Us, cf. NÄSER, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 123, fig. 6.

⁴⁴ BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 108, fig. 4.

sites were recorded (UD 03, 06, 09 and 10). Site UD 03 is situated on a small terrace between two hilltops of the peninsula and comprises four stone-built features, partly built against the natural rock. Next to a rectangular feature and a neighbouring wall preserved up to 0.80 metres the rock drawing of a goat-like animal was found. The main feature of the site is a rectangular house (6 x 4.50 m) with stone walls surviving to a height of 1.70 metres and a width of 0.55 metres (**Fig. 10**). The entrance (0.55 metres) lies on the northern side in the shadow of a large rocky outcrop. On the western side a second room or building was built against the house. Only the northern and western walls survived and no entrance was visible. This smaller room might have been a kind of animal shelter.

Set between rocky outcrops of one of the major hilltops of the peninsula a small dwelling place was recorded (UD 09). The site comprises a small segment of a wall-circle built against the natural rock. The revetment of stones measures a maximum height of 1.30 metres. To the east side of this feature two rectangular huts built against the slope with stone walls surviving up to a height of 1.80 metres were found. The larger building (6 x 6 metres, wall thickness 0.50-0.80 metres) has a narrow entrance on its western side (0.55 metres). The second building is a kind of annex built against its north-western corner. Since this room (2.50 x 2.80 metres) has no entrance and the height of the walls is only 0.70 metres it was most likely used as a shelter for goats. The building technique of the features is very similar to UD 03. Many bodysherds of common household wares (mostly hand-made) were lying on the surface and underline the domestic character of the site and its medieval date. Two more stone-built features (one large room and a smaller annex) with a maximum preserved height of 2 meters were set between two large boulders nearby (UD 10).

Umm Domi is divided into an eastern and a western part by a small khor. All sites mentioned above are located on the larger eastern part. On the sandy bottom of the dividing khor close to the river and thus opposite the island of Tibet, two stone built features were recorded (UD 07 and UD 08). UD 07 comprises several wall features that run parallel to the khor and thus almost north-south. The easternmost wall is partly built against the natural rock of the lowest outcrops of the east hilltop. It follows the ridge of these outcrops. In the sandy deposits below two parallel walls were documented. These buildings measure between 1.20 and 2.50 metres in width. The larger one is preserved to a length of about 30 metres. Its northern end, which is very close to the river, was enlarged in width and revetted with stones. Thus, it appears as some kind of pier. The most likely explanation for the installation is connected with water supply and irrigation systems. A relatively recent date for UD 07 is not unlikely. The same holds true for site UD 08, which is located on the western slope of the khor. Another wall feature, similar in orientation and building technique to UD 07, has survived to a length of 10 metres. It measures between 1.40 and 2.0 meters in width, the broadest part again being the northern, stone-revetted, pier-like end. Close to this wall feature a stone hut was built against a large rocky outcrop. It was built in a roughly circular form (4 x 5 meters) and the walls are preserved up to a height of 1 meter. The entrance lies on the southern side. A small annex (2.20 x 2.50 metres) was erected against the west wall. Since the southern wall of this adjoining room was found in a very dilapidated state the question of whether or not there was once an entrance remains uncertain.

Two sites recorded on the eastern part of Umm Domi are spots where objects were found. At UD 002 a lithic flake was picked up from the slope of a rocky outcrop; it might indicate an occupation on top of the surrounding hilltops. UD 05 is possibly related to the medieval stone houses at site UD 03, being the find spot of a small clay figurine of a camel (UD 05.1). Although the material of this piece is different than that of the figurine MS 040.1, the two objects are in general very similar. All four legs of UD 05.1, the tip of the hump and the head are broken off. The remaining features (4.1 x 3.9 x 2.3 cm) nevertheless clearly depict a camel.⁴⁵ Animal clay figurines have been found in small numbers but quite regularly at

⁴⁵ BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 41, fig. 3; BUDKA, *Der Antike Sudan* 15 (2004), p. 110, fig. 7.

Christian dwelling sites in Nubia. They do not resemble votive objects nor did they serve any cult purpose. A likely functional use for these simple, handmade clay figurines would have been children's toys.⁴⁶ The figurines discovered by H.U.N.E. might illustrate the close relationship between the people that were living in the structures where the objects were detected and the depicted animals.⁴⁷

Rock art is not very common at Umm Domi. In addition to the goat-like animal at UD 03, two sites of concentrations of rock art were found (sites UD 01 and UD 11). In total, ten single motifs were recorded. Seven of these were bovines (grouped together in 3 and 4 animals), one depiction represented a camel, one a goat (UD 003) and another one an unspecified quadruped. Although the number of rock drawings on Umm Domi is very limited, it seems that cattle dominate the repertoire.⁴⁸ More rock art was found on the rocky hilltops bordering Wadi Etanub and thus facing Umm Domi (e.g. MS 002-3, MS 005-6). The predominant motif on the mainland is clearly the camel.

Kereiti

The region around Kereiti displayed a high density of sites ranging from Neolithic to recent times. In 2004, a strip to the North of Kereiti (= KN) along the river up to Umm Jaghor and the corresponding hinterland was surveyed, providing 43 sites in total. Since the preliminary results are very promising, one of the first goals of the 2005-season was a continuation of the survey south of Kereiti, covering the southern part of the concession from Gebel Musa to Wadi Kirbegan up to Kereiti.

The types of sites located so far in the area of Kereiti comprise 20 concentrations of rock art, 2 cemeteries (1 large cemetery combining box grave and tumuli; 1 tumulus cemetery of type IV), 8 shelters or huts built in stone, 1 settlement site (combining stone-built houses, a tumulus grave, box graves and rock art), 7 scatters of occupation, 4 stone rubble walls (2 of them possibly herding walls, 2 on the summits of rocky hilltops with a different function) and 1 miscellaneous stone structure, possibly a tower (KN 042, see below).

The dominant feature recorded so far in the vicinity of Kereiti is rock art. Most of the pictures were found by following the modern car track, located on the rocky outcrops that border the sandy plains and wadis in the hinterland of the region. Evidence of rock art close to the river is sparse even though large stone boulders would be available. These observations point to the general connection of the drawings with traffic routes. Since traffic would avoid the river in the Cataract region the rock drawings are consequently found along the land routes and are thus often located in the far hinterland.

Rock art in general can rarely be attributed to a specific period with certainty. The exceptions are certain signs, such as Christian crosses, which should belong to the epoch between the 7th and 15th centuries.⁴⁹ Despite all the difficulties in dating, some depictions of certain animals probably represent the oldest art – like the long-horned cattle (KN 028)⁵⁰ and the giraffe (KN 012).⁵¹ Interestingly, all of these pictures of presumably Neolithic date were found in the surroundings of Kereiti and are, as yet, missing near Mushra or Shellal.

⁴⁶ F. ADDISON, *Jebel Moya, The Wellcome Excavations in the Sudan*, Vol. I, London - New York - Toronto 1949, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁷ Cf. E.E. EVANS-PRITCHARD, *Economic Life of the Nuer: Cattle*, *Sudan Notes and Records* 20 (1937), p. 238; G. KLUTE, *Nomaden in der Sahara*, [in:] U. JOGER, U. MOLDRZYK (eds.), *Wüste, Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung Wüste vom 28. April bis 27. Oktober 2002*, Darmstadt 2002, p. 110 and BUDKA, *Kemet* 13/4 (2004), p. 42.

⁴⁸ Cf. C. KLEINITZ, *Rock art and 'rock gongs' in the Fourth Nile Cataract region: the Ishashi island rock art survey*, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), pp. 11-16.

⁴⁹ WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Cf. A.S. MOHAMMED-ALI, *The Neolithic Period in the Sudan, c. 6000-2500 B.C.*, Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology 6, BAR International Series 139, Oxford 1982, pp. 211-212, figs. 32 and 33.

⁵¹ WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 113.

North of Kereiti the major wadi of the region runs parallel to the river (**Fig. 11**). By 1989 a French-Sudanese expedition led by Jean Leclant had come across a cemetery situated in the bed of this ancient water channel where the modern dirt roads pass through.⁵² To date it is the largest concentration of tombs in H.U.N.E.'s concession area and was recorded as KN 003. Christian box graves (as much as 50 pieces are still preserved, but the original number was much higher) and more than 20 tumuli originating from approximately the Post-Meroitic Period are still visible. The tombs cover a large part of the prominent wadi (**Fig. 12**). The rocks that form the northern and southern edges of the wadi are almost completely covered with rock art. The motifs primarily comprise camels, with and without riders and also with drovers. Some depictions of crosses and bovines were also found.

The very same combination of box graves and tumuli was also observed at site KN 011. A heavily destroyed tumulus was noted that might belong to type Welsby's VI,⁵³ a very small example with a diameter of 3.5 metres. Some 30 metres to the south of this tumulus 10 box graves are still preserved. The original number of this small cemetery might have been higher. Two of the tombs are equipped with headstones and footstones. One is rather small and measures only 1.65 x 0.75 metres; the stones at the head and foot measure 36 x 36 cm. Close to the tombs two rock drawings were discovered, depicting a camel rider and a rider on an equid. In addition to the tombs and rock art, site KN 011 comprises a small stone-built dwelling place as well. Close to the tumulus three rectangular features with stone walls partly set against the natural rock were noted.

A distinctive 'egg'-shaped tumulus of Welsby's type IV was recorded at site KN 013. Two tombs with a diameter of 5 metres were found in a wrecked state set on the alluvial deposits in a wadi in the hinterland of Kereiti.

Several scatters of occupation were discovered in the region. Lithic material and pottery sherds littered the surface at site KN 016. They are situated on a plateau measuring approximately 60 x 20 metres and comprise a small, circular stone setting built against the natural rock as a kind of shelter. Based on the surface finds, KN 016 can tentatively be assigned to the prehistoric period. A simple stone-ring set against a large granite boulder on the summit of hilltops south of Umm Jahgor was documented as KN 041 (**Fig. 13**). It measures approximately 3 x 1.8 metres and was found covered with sand.

Stone structures (e.g. shelters) were frequently found next to and associated with rock art. The best example has been recorded on the edge of a small wadi bed where the modern car track passes. This site, KN 029, consists of two rectangular stone-built structures and two very distinctive, adjacent granite boulders, covered with rock art – to be precise, with camels (**Fig. 14**). The largest structure may be described as an almost square building with an entrance on the southern side. Its walls built of flat stone slabs are still preserved up to a height of 1.50 metres. The interior of the structure was filled with sand. In front of the entrance on the south-eastern corner of the building another, smaller feature built in the same technique has been found. However, in contrast to the larger one, this was built on the natural rock of the site. A very distinctive local stone was used as building material. Around the structures several pieces of pottery, a pottery spindle whorl and stone tools have been collected from the surface. These finds indicate that the site served as a dwelling place for some time. It would be tempting to assume that the inhabitants were identical with those who produced the rock pictures of the camels.

South of the village of Umm Jahgor an (until now) singular site type was recorded. A massive construction out of very thick rubble walls occupies the summit of a hilltop

⁵² J. MONTLUÇON, *Survey de la region de la IV^e cataracte du Nil*, [in:] C. BERGER, G. CLERC, N. GRIMAL (eds.), *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, Vol. 2, Nubie, Soudan, Éthiopie, BdÉ 106/2, Cairo 1994, p. 310, fig. 4 (as place name "Abd el-Haïm (El Kirreit)" is given).

⁵³ WELSBY, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract*, p. 122: "large ring tumuli with the ring formed of pieces of stones".

overlooking the river (KN 042). The walls are built of very irregular stones and are solid in the lower layers. In the upper layers the plan resembles two adjoining circles and an irregular rectangular room set against both of them. The inner diameter of one of the circles is 1.40-1.60 metres, the outer 3.5 metres. The diameter of the complete structure can be estimated at 10 metres, the surviving height is 2.50 metres. All rooms are filled with rubble stones and sand, no floor is visible. Therefore a foundation character of the structure seems likely. It might belong to a building that was once a kind of watch-tower. Its location would suggest a similar function since it is situated at a very significant point along the Nile – here the river does take a curve since it is both the final point of the large island of Boni and the southern end of Us. The building technique of KN 042 reminds one of the thick-walled stone forts of presumably medieval date that are well known in the region.⁵⁴

Conclusions

Summing up, the main structures discovered in H.U.N.E.'s concession area to date are cemeteries (both tumuli and box graves), stone-built huts and shelters and occupation areas without apparent structural remains as well as hundreds of rock drawings. Some preliminary remarks on the distribution of rock art are possible after the first reconnaissance. The boulders overlooking the river are almost totally lacking rock drawings⁵⁵ and scarcely ever exhibit camels, the otherwise dominating motif of the rock art corpus. Concentrations of rock drawings are most common along the modern trails. This very likely implies a connection between the role of the camel as an animal of transport and the locations of frequently used traffic routes. These routes seem to have a long tradition in the region due to the natural landscape (cf. Wadi Kereiti, see above). One of the focal points of interest is the changing role and importance of the camel through the centuries as is reflected by the archaeological remains. The relationship of rock art, caravan routes and human constructions such as rubble walls and shelters as well as the general distribution pattern of settlements will be investigated.

Some sites in Dar al-Manāṣīr provide evidence of long-term cultural continuity. This includes the repeated reuse of numerous locations, especially of tombs, in both systemic and non-systemic ways. The later comprises the translation of the original meaning of ancient structures and a diverse modern use as well as cultic actions. Activities like the modern fertility cult at tumulus MN 013 have the potential to yield information on the local understanding and ideas on death and life in general as well as the people's relationship to ancient monuments and buildings of different cultures and religions.⁵⁶ The documentation of the incorporation of the ancient landscape into a recent cultural context is not only rewarding in terms of Ethno-Archaeology but may provide some information on the primary function and setting of the monuments as well.

H.U.N.E.'s research will therefore not exclusively focus on archaeological matters; the time span of our work will cover a very long period up to the recent past and will include the present inhabitants of the region and their surroundings. Considering the planned flooding of Dar al-Manāṣīr and the resettlement of the population, there is the urgent need to document as much as possible of the modern life and ethnographic setting.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ For the Medieval forts in the area of the Fourth Cataract see JACKSON, *Sudan Notes and Records* 9, No. 2 (1926), pp. 25 and 31.

⁵⁵ The few concentrations of rock art discovered on boulders near the river (e.g. site KN 012) comprise motif types of probably early date like giraffes and canids.

⁵⁶ Modern re-use of ancient tumuli was recently observed in Morocco, J. EIWANGER, *Unter den Säulen des Herakles, Archäologie im marokkanischen Rif als Fenster in die frühe Menschheitsgeschichte*, *Antike Welt* 5 (2004), p. 80. I would like to thank Angelika LOHWASSER for pointing out this parallel to me.

⁵⁷ Cf. the aims of the work of the SARS Anglo-German Expedition, WOLF, *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), p. 17.