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Avant-propos

Les 22 et 23 juin 2007 s’est tenue, à la Maison de la Recherche de l’Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille 3, la 4e Conférence Internationale sur l’Archéologie de la 4e Cataracte du Nil. Cette manifestation, annuelle, avait lieu après les rencontres de Londres, Gdansk, Berlin et Cologne. L’objectif, comme précédemment, était de faire se réunir, peu après la saison de fouille, les chercheurs des différentes missions engagées sur le terrain dans la campagne de prospection des antiquités sous le projet MDAS, afin qu’ils présentent les résultats de la mission précédente, la documentation nouvelle recueillie en abondance, et puissent entamer la réflexion sur le développement de l’occupation humaine dans cette région auparavant si mal connue et que l’on pensait exempte de tout vestige d’importance.

Étaient ainsi représentées à Lille les missions du Hungarian-Sudanese Archaeological Project, de la Sudanese Archaeological Research Society/British Museum, de la GAME, de la Humboldt Universität Nubian Expedition, de la National Corporation for Archaeology and Museums et l’administration du barrage de Hamdab, de la Universität zu Köln/ Forschungstelle Afrika, de l’Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition, du Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology/Polish Academy of Sciences de l’Université de Varsovie, de l’Université de Santa Barbara.

L’équipe de Lille n’était pas présente dans cette campagne de sauvetage, puisque engagée dans la prospection du Kordofan septentrional dans les secteurs de Zankor et d’Abou Sofyan, mais elle tenait à apporter sa collaboration à l’opération. Toutefois, plusieurs chercheurs français, notamment rattachés à, ou dans le cadre de la SFDAS, avaient participé aux travaux, dès leur début.

La publication rapide des Actes, sous la forme d’un supplément à la revue CRIPEL, était notre souci afin que la communauté scientifique dans son ensemble puisse accéder dans les meilleurs délais possibles à ces données inédites, présentées sous forme de rapports préliminaires ; elles mettent dès à présent en évidence, ou confirment, quelques phénomènes essentiels, tels l’importance de la culture Kerma depuis ses phases anciennes, ou encore une forte implantation humaine aux périodes tardives. La synthèse suivra en son temps, répondant à
nos interrogations plus larges sur l'histoire ancienne

de la vallée du Nil soudanais.

La présentation des articles suivra l'ordre géo-

graphique des concessions d'aval en amont, qui fut
celui des communications, le volume s'achevant sur

une comparaison entre cette campagne de sauve-
tage et celle qui précédé la construction du dernier
barrage d'Assouan, par Madame De Simone, experte

de l'UNESCO au Caire.

Cette manifestation n'aurait pu se dérouler sans
le soutien financier de l'Université de Lille 3, du
CNRS (UMR 8164 HALMA-IPEL), ainsi que de

leur personnel et de leurs étudiants ; elle a également
reçu l'appui de l'UFR des Sciences Historiques de
l'Université de Lille 3, de la Région Nord-Pas de
Calais, du Ministère de l'Education nationale, du
Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, de la Section
Française auprès de la Direction des Antiquités du
Soudan et de l'Ambassade de France à Khartoum.
Entre tant d'aides précieuses, n'omettons pas celles
de Camille De Visscher, chargée de la partie édito-
rielle, et de Gilbert Naessens pour la plupart des repro-
ductions photographiques.

Brigitte Gratien
The Humboldt University Nubian Expedition 2007: Fieldwork on Us and Sur

CLAUDIA NÄSER

The fourth field season of the Humboldt University Nubian Expedition (H.U.N.E.) in the Fourth Cataract was conducted from 27 January to 1 April 2007. The team consisted of Mathias Lange (field director Us, archaeologist), Daniela Billig (field director Sur, archaeologist), Reinhold Schulz (archaeologist), Ralf Millenberger (archaeologist), Sandra Lehninger (archaeologist), Björn Briewig (archaeologist), Tim Karberg (archaeologist), Cornelia Kleinitz (rock art research), Peter Becker (architect), Krzysztof Pluskota (ceramologist), Jürgen Dombrowski (photographer) and at-Tayeb Adjak (NCAM inspector). To all of them my sincerest thanks for their commitment. I also wish to thank the local population, especially the inhabitants of the villages Shaqqaiq and al-Marcha, who made the members of the mission very hospitable, as well as the Independent Committee of the Manasir, who...


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supported the realisation of the campaign. In contrast to the previous year, the season went largely undisturbed. Activities concentrated on the islands of Us, Sur and Umm Kieb. All objectives were achieved – the results partially exceeding all expectations. The following contribution will present an overview over the five main enterprises of the season.

Fig. 1. The islands Us, Sur and Umm Kieb with the sites mentioned in the text.
Kerma habitation sites

On Us island two habitation sites of the Kerma period, US037.A and US304.A (Fig. 1), were investigated in an intensive surface sampling and excavations. They belong to a conspicuous cluster of prehistoric habitation sites in the downstream part of the island. This concentration, which also includes the Neolithic site US007 investigated in 2005, marks the southern part of Us as an intensely used, ecologically favoured micro-region in late prehistoric times. Which environmental conditions enabled and supported such an intense occupation, has still to be determined. In terms of structural features, the two investigated sites produced only two fireplaces, and – expectedly – no other habitation architecture. However, they offered rich finds in the form of lithics, pottery and above all faunal remains, including bones of wild game and domesticated cattle, which are currently under analysis.

A further habitation site of the Kerma period was investigated on Sur (Fig. 1 and 2). On this island, the 2004 reconnaissance and this year’s follow-up survey had resulted in the discovery of numerous settlement sites of late prehistoric date. In order to supplement the results from Us and to gain basic data for a continuation of the work on Sur planned for 2008, one of them, SR018.A, was tested in a small-scale excavation. It produced rich find material but no architectural remains amongst the spread of abundant surface stone.

A first result of the analysis and the comparison between the sites of Us and Sur is a striking difference in the ratio of ceramic and lithic find material. While at SR018.A, pottery made up 90% and lithics only 10% of the finds, the ratio is almost reversed in both sites on Us, with about 20% pottery and 80% lithics. An explanation of this phenomenon must await further analysis and – hopefully – further fieldwork. As yet, very little is known about the lifestyle and the economy of the late prehistoric populations in the Fourth Cataract. The newly recovered findings and finds will substantially enlarge our database in this respect.

Fig. 2. View over the excavation area at SR018.A (photograph: H.U.N.E.).


3. See infra, p. 81.
**The rock art on Us and Sur**

The second venture of the 2007 field season was the continuation of the specialized rock art survey on Us. A pilot study in 2005 had marked this island as exceptionally rich in rock art. The documented corpus was outstanding not only in the density of sites and the number of individual petroglyphs, but also in the range of motifs and the quality of their execution. It allows us to identify Us as a focus of rock art making in the Fourth Cataract region.

In the current season, 226 new rock art localities were documented across the entire island, raising their absolute number to 409. The corpus of motifs could again be significantly enlarged. Apart from the usual zoomorphs and anthropomorphs, it also comprises depictions of churches and Christian symbols, as well as the largest corpus of boats recorded in the Fourth Cataract so far (Fig. 3). Compared to most other regions of the Fourth Cataract, composite motifs and scenic representations, such as hunting scenes or humans engaged in various kinds of interaction with each other or with animals, are common.

The majority of the petroglyphs on Us dates to the past two millennia, but concentrated in the southern part of the island there also is an older element — represented particularly by cattle and some of the giraffe motifs. These are likely to date to the Kerma period, reflecting the other indications that this area was a focal point of activities in late prehistoric times. Especially noteworthy are also numerous representations which on stylistic and iconographical grounds can be attributed to the Meroitic era.

As sites of this period are still underrepresented in the Fourth Cataract, this finding offers an important evidence for the occupation of the region in this period. Moreover, rock art of this era has rarely been identified and described in the entire Middle Nile region previously.

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5. *Cf.* on this Cornelia Kleinitz in the present volume.

The specialized rock art survey on Us was complemented by a short reconnaissance on the neighbouring island of Sur. The 38 sites identified there offer a good overview over the rock art of this island. They show a restricted range of motifs, dominated by camel depictions, which are found singly or in small clusters scattered across the island. Very few sites contain other motifs, such as birds, geometric forms and elements of an older, cattle-dominated tradition. In part these quantitative, qualitative and chronological limitations can be explained by the unfavourable geological conditions on Sur, which offer less surfaces suitable for decoration. However, the specific settlement histories and cultural topographies of the different islands also need to be considered, in order to account for the variability in the rock art encountered in the different parts of the H.U.N.E. concession, and the prominence of Us as a centre of rock art creation in the immediate as well as the wider region.

The church SR022.A

The third enterprise of this season was a large-scale excavation at site SR022 (Fig. 1). Situated at the northern tip of Sur island, it had already been recorded in the 2004 survey. The site comprises the remains of a church surrounded by cemetery areas and other buildings, and was judged to be the largest site in the H.U.N.E. concession area.

The target of the 2007 season was the church, which with a size of about 17 x 15 m turned out to be the largest church recorded in the Fourth Cataract so far (Fig. 4). It has a cruciform ground plan with a central domed room and additional chambers in the four corners of the cross, a lay-out typical for Nubian church architecture from the 10th century onwards. A rare feature in this period is the oblong sanctury behind the sanctuary, which is accessible from the southeastern corner room. The importance of the church SR022.A is underlined by one spectacular find. In a layer of windblown sand in a presumably (sub)recent disturbance in the interior of the building, over one hundred fragments of texts on parchment and leather were discovered. This material is not only unique within the region of the Fourth Cataract, but substantially enlarges the altogether small corpus of religious texts from Christian Nubia. The largest fragment from SR022.A is an almost complete sheet of parchment, which carries a Greek text on both sides (Fig. 5). It represents a homily of some church father on the subject of adultery, more precisely adultery committed by elder men, whom nobody would think of accusing of it. The parallel used from the scriptures in this respect is the life of King David after the Second Book of Samuel, chapter 11. Another passage of the text relates to chapter 12 of this Book, namely to an allegory given by the prophet Nathan – which is, however, quoted in a heavily distorted way, possibly implying that

7. In detail on this Daniela Billig in the present volume.
10. The corpus is currently studied by Daniela Billig and Alexandros Tsakos, the epigrapher of the mission.
Fig. 4. The church SR022.A from northeast during the excavation; in the centre the sanctuary with a brick floor (photograph: H.U.N.E.).

Fig. 5. Recto and verso of the "adultery manuscript", find n°. SR022.A/177 text 110 (photograph: H.U.N.E.).
it refers to sodomy, which in fact it does not. The entire composition is so far without parallel.

Concerning the dating of the church SR022.A, its size and general lay-out as well as the pottery recovered in the excavation suggest a date in the Classic Christian Period, from the 10th century onwards. The importance of the entire site doubtlessly ranges high in the archaeology of the Fourth Cataract. Its findings show that even such a remote place as Sur island may add substantially to our knowledge of religious life in medieval Nubia.

The fortress of Umm Kieb

Umm Kieb is a tiny island in front of SR022 (Fig. 1). It is about 430 m long, a maximum 140 m wide and separated from Sur only by a small river channel. Uninhabited today, its northern tip is occupied by a small fortress, UK001, which also was first located during the 2004 survey (Fig. 6). Surface finds from the site mainly dated to the postmedieval Islamic period, but there also was some earlier sherd material. Not least because of its spatial relationship to SR022, the fortress UK001 was chosen

![Image of the fortress UK001 from the north](image-url)

**Fig. 6.** The fortress UK001 from the north (photograph: H.U.N.E.).

as an object of study in the 2007 season. In its maximum extent, UK001 measures \textit{ca.} 42 x 30 m (Fig. 7). Its enclosure wall follows the local topography \textit{i.e.} the edges of the slopes towards the river, giving the structure a somewhat irregular ground plan. The enclosure wall consists of two stone faces with a rubble filling. It is founded throughout directly on the rocks of the cliffs and varies in width from \textit{ca.} 1,5 to 2 m. The steep, rocky slopes prevent the access to the fortress from the three river-ward sides. Today, it is entered through a breach in the southern enclosure wall, which has largely collapsed. Of the original gate no remains could be traced.

Fig. 7. Ground plan of the fortress UK001 (drawing: P. Becker, adaptation: I. Säuberlich).
East of the entrance in the fortress interior, a heap of mudbrick rubble runs 19 m towards the north. It represents the remains of a brick wall of ca. 1.5 m width built on a stone foundation. This wall separated an area of about 15 x 20 m in the eastern part of the fortress, which is dominated by a rubble heap of ca. 2 m height in its centre. The investigation of this enigmatic feature showed that it originally was a large, tower-like structure, measuring ca. 4.5 x 3.5 m, built of stones and reused bricks, and solidly filled with stones and rubble. Its function and date are hard to define. Probably it was an Islamic addition, possibly the substructure of a bastion or a watchtower, whose upper storeys were made of perishable material and are now lost. The presumed dating could explain the prevalence of Islamic pottery on the site surface.

All other constructions visible in the fortress are flimsy low stone walls, which throughout seem to be of (sub)recent date. In several trial excavations no significant stratified deposits were found, reflecting the exposed and eroded condition of the site. In all tested places the cultural deposits were only a few centimetres thick, sitting directly on the bedrock. An intensive surface collection recovered a pottery corpus ranging from the Early Christian to the Islamic period. The fortress was probably used until subrecent times.

At the southern side of the fortress an extra-mural habitation area, UK002, was identified. The pottery collected from this site dates from the Late post-Meroitic to the Classic Christian period. A more detailed description and correlation of the use-life of both sites UK001 and UK002 must await the in-depth analysis of the finds and the architectural features recorded.

The archaeological survey on Sur

The fifth and final objective of the 2007 season was to complete the general archaeological survey on Sur. Previously, only a small part of this island, which is about 7 km long and a maximum 2 km wide, had been explored in the 2004 reconnaissance.12 In the current campaign, 99 new sites were recorded, among them the 38 rock art localities already discussed above. With this, survey coverage of the H.U.N.E. concession area is substantially complete, and allows good distributional and quantitative analyses.

The newly discovered sites on Sur corroborate and complete the picture previously gained on Us and Sherari, the other two islands of the H.U.N.E. concession.13 Evidence for Palaeolithic occupation is comparatively rare, deriving exclusively from the rocky plateau in the island interior, where two knapping sites of Middle and Upper Palaeolithic date could be located. With altogether ten localities – habitation sites as well as burial grounds – evidence from the Neolithic period is unexpectedly rich: a picture which needs further confirmation in the analysis of the collected finds and further fieldwork planned for 2008. As usual, cemeteries and settlements of the Kerma period occur in large numbers. The record of the following periods up to the Meroitic era is again limited. The post-Meroitic period is represented with three of its typical prominent cemeteries. Christian sites are very frequent also on Sur; the most important one, SR022, has already been discussed above.

Sites of all periods are distributed over the entire island, with the exception of major stretches of its western bank, which today is still largely uninhab-

12. For the 28 sites documented then, see Cl. Näser, op. cit., Der Antike Sudan. MittSAG 15, 2004, p. 117 sq., p. 124-128; GAMAR 4, 2005, p. 82-86.

ited. There the rocky hills come close to the river, leaving only a small bank unsuitable for extensive settlement or agriculture. In contrast, the eastern part of Sur until today shows a high settlement density. Correspondingly, a chain of more than twenty Kerma cemeteries was found running along the edge of the rocky plateau over the entire length of the island there (Fig. 8). Furthermore, one knapping site of Neolithic or Kerma date, three Neolithic habitation sites and two Neolithic cemeteries were identified in this area. In the western part of the central plateau one mining site for quartz rocks, apparently used in Kerma and medieval times, was recorded.

The northern, i.e. upstream, tip of Sur abounds in medieval sites, with the church SR022 representing a religious centre of at least regional importance. Not less than five settlements and six cemeteries of Christian date were located in its vicinity (Fig. 9). Moreover, including the sites registered in 2004, four post-Meroitic and one Meroitic/post-Meroitic cemetery were recorded there, testifying to the intense occupation of this part of the island also in the previous periods.

Prospects

Altogether, the 2007 field season added much to our knowledge about the settlement history of the islands of the Fourth Cataract, and helped to enlarge and differentiate the picture gained in the previous campaigns. Detailed investigations produced substantial information on sites of special importance, as SR022 and UK001, and specific site types, mainly the Kerma habitation places, which so far have not been a focus of the archaeological research in the Fourth Cataract. But they also raised new questions, which we hope to follow up and answer in a last field season in early 2008. Among the new research targets, the ancillary buildings at SR022 and the late prehistoric i.e. Neolithic and Kerma habitation sites on Sur take a prominent position.
Abstract

In spring 2007 H.U.N.E. conducted its fourth field season in the Fourth Cataract. The contribution describes the major activities of this campaign and their partly unexpected results, namely:

- the continuation of the rock art survey on Us and a reconnaissance of the rock art landscape on Sur;
- the excavation of the church SR022.A, which among other important findings led to the discovery of over one hundred fragments of inscribed parchment and leather;
- a detailed mapping and architectural investigation of the fortress UK001;
- the continuation and completion of the general archaeological survey on Sur.

The newly recorded and investigated sites fit well into the previously established picture of the chronological and topographical distribution of sites on the islands of the H.U.N.E. concession, and they further enlarge our knowledge about the settlement history in the area of the Fourth Cataract.

Fig. 9. Medieval sites at the northern tip of Sur (outline: SR022; black: settlements; white: cemeteries).