

Abu Erteila – An Archaeological Site in the Butana Region

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This article presents the preliminary results of the Italian-Russian excavations at Abu Erteila started in 2009. The form of and the material from the excavated rooms, as well as a number of finds demonstrate the similarity to several monuments in the Butana region and in particular to Musawwarat es Sufra. Excavations at Kom I and Kom II at Abu Erteila have demonstrated the existence of habitations on both Koms, amongst them fragments of various structures of a temple complex. According to the present data, one may assume that a governor's palace was located in Abu Erteila, including living quarters, a kitchen with heating, a reception hall, facilities for staff and household utilities. It cannot be excluded that this complex might have been used for temporary visits of the king himself. The results of the excavations leave no doubt of the existence of a temple complex in Abu Erteila, constructed at the beginning of the Meroitic period. A lower chronological limit is presumably to be assigned to the 3rd cent. B.C., the upper chronological level to the 5th century A.D. and probably even to the Christian period.

Systematic excavations of the Italian-Russian mission in Abu Erteila¹ started in 2009. In spite of the fact that Abu Erteila has attracted the attention of archaeologists,² this site has even not been registered on most of the archaeological maps of the Sudan up to recent times.

Actually only a part of the archaeological complex of the territory of Abu Erteila on Kom I and Kom II has been excavated. In spite of the fact that no construction was excavated here down to its basement, the form of and material from the excavated rooms and a number of finds surely demonstrate the similarity to the several monuments in the Butana region and in particular in Musawwarat es Sufra, where Steffen Wenig spent many years of his life and scientific career. The preliminary publication of the results of the excavations in Abu Erteila is our contribution to the great estimation of Steffen Wenig's works and simultaneously the modest contribution to the *Festschrift* dedicated to him.

I. Residential Complexes

Excavations at Kom I and Kom II at Abu Erteila, having been organized according to the geophysical survey, demonstrated the existence of habitations on both Koms, in which (or amongst them) fragments of various structures of the temple complex have been

found (see below), re-used or simply discarded and displaced.

I.1 Kom I

Excavations at Kom I carried on the results of the geophysical survey (the size of which accounts now to about 500 square meters) have revealed the existence of an extensive residential complex (pl. I, col. fig. 13). Currently, there are 24 structures marked on the ground plan (21 rooms, 2 passages and one construction of not determined function). The maximum depth of the excavations was 40 cm from the present surface.

The entrances into the building, and the doorways of most of the rooms as well, have not been revealed in the northern part of Kom I (squares 1-12, rooms 1-15) because of the bad preservation of the walls, which does not allow to determine the location of the door ways. Structures at Kom I were found at level 391.21 – 392.84 m a.s.l. None of the buildings has been excavated down to its foundations, but the traces of compacted mud (mud mortar) covering the bottom of rooms 7, 9, 13, 14 and 15 have been revealed. One would assume that these are remains of mud-brick walls eroded by humidity and rain. However, a level of mud mortar and the large extent of this layer lead to the supposition that it represents traces of the flooring at a later restructuring of the rooms.

1 Co-directors of the mission are Eugenio Fantusati (Ismeo) and Eleonora Kormysheva (Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences).

2 See in detail: Fantusati et al. 2012 a, 21.



Plate I: Ground plan of the excavated area on the Kom I. Drawn by Sergey Malykh and Maksim Lebedev

A large entrance to structure 16 was found in the eastern part of the building (pl. II, fig. 1).³ It was marked by two portals and was made of mud and fired bricks. Traces of yellow sand were revealed here and in the structure 16, where the passage leads into it- similar to the main entrance into a domestic house at Hamadab, a satellite town of Meroe City.⁴

³ At house H 1600 in Hamadab, one of the entrances is attested at its north-eastern corner at least for its later period (Wolf et al. 2011, 232).

⁴ Wolf et al. 2011, 232, 228 (classification of Hamadab as the satellite town).

The entrance leads to the structure 16, which is rectangular in shape (2.70 × 4.60 m). It was probably a courtyard where visitors were expecting an invitation or opportunity to enter into the living room. It is located to the south of room 9; its eastern wall is practically a continuation of the eastern wall of room 9. Structure 16 was limited at the south by the partly preserved brick wall. The western wall is made entirely of mud bricks. One can assume that this room 16 was a place for the first audience and the reception of visitors - and thus bore an official character.

A wall, perpendicular to it (direction west-east), which was traced over 3.15 m, 0.65 m wide (pl. II,

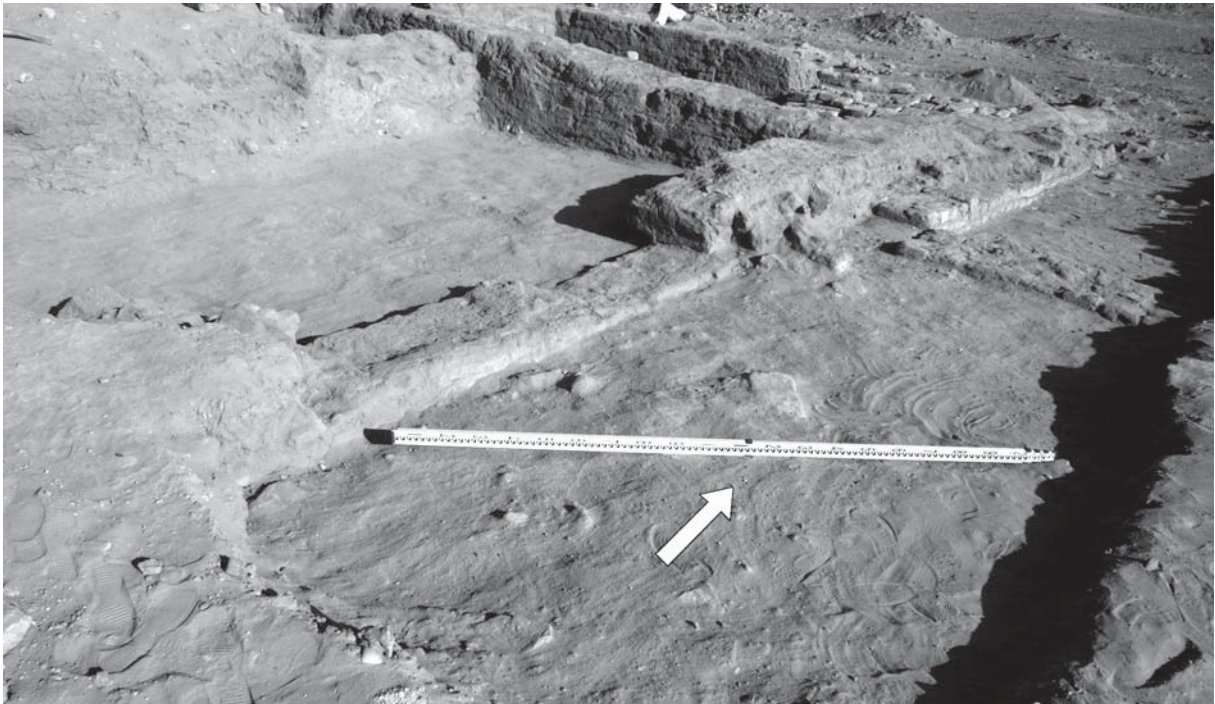


Plate II. Fig. 1: Entrance to the room 16 from the south-east. Photo Maksim Lebedev

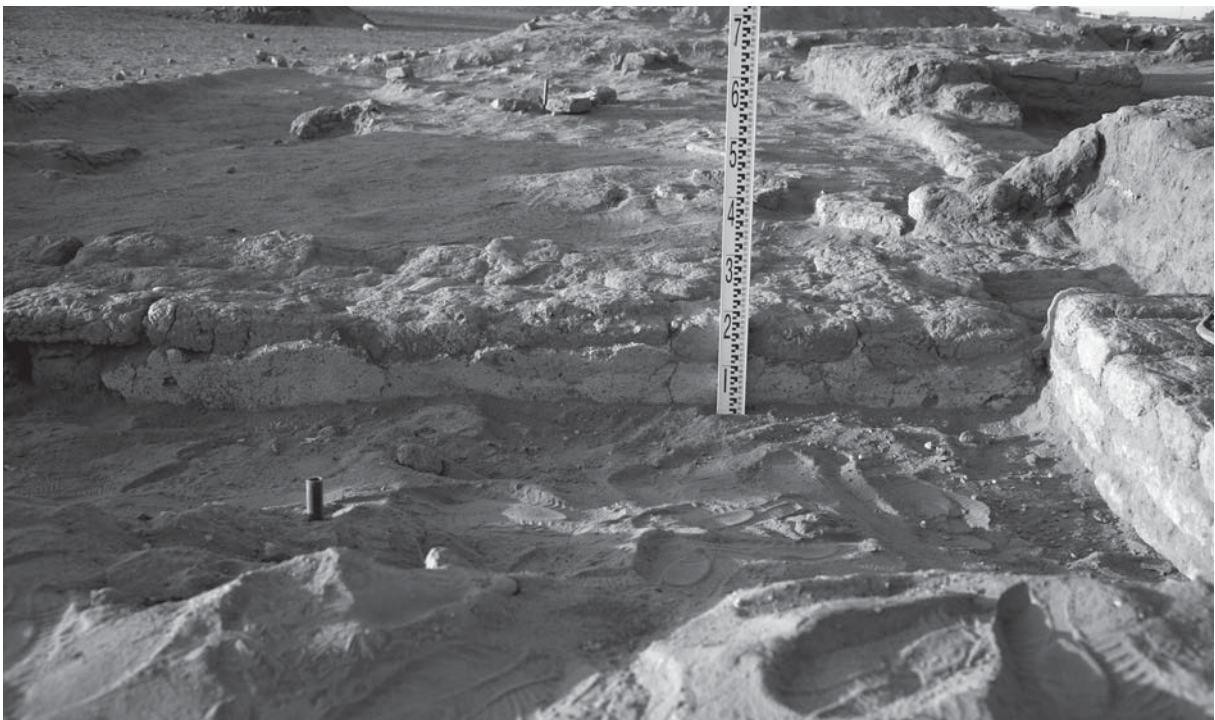


Plate II. Fig. 2: Wall with white plaster, perpendicular to the eastern wall of the room 16. Photo Sergey Malykh

fig. 2; see also pl. I, col. fig. 13, squares 16, 21), was discovered to the east of structure 16, outside of its eastern wall. It is adjacent to the north of the entrance portal and was built of mud bricks and fired red bricks. The wall turns to the south at right angles towards east from the limit of square 16 (1,20 m long and 0.65 m width) and it has traces in square 21. It was plastered outside with white stucco, which was used

for protection against moisture as well.⁵ It may be indicative on the presence of premises and suggests a connection between the structures detected on the both Koms. Taking into consideration the orientation of the structure (or its part) and the existence of several fragments of this wall along the eastern part of

⁵ Fitzenreiter et al. 1999, 155.

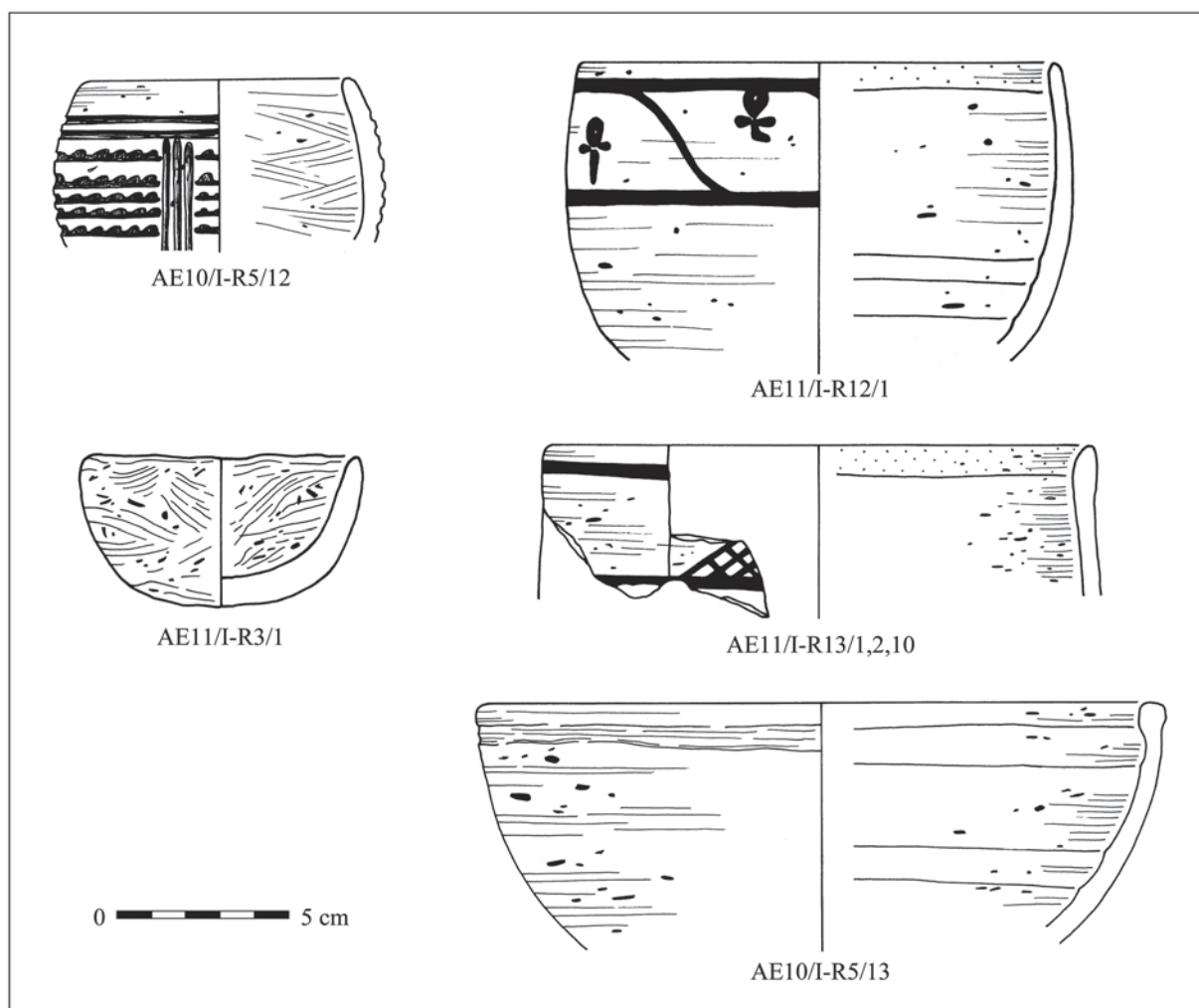


Plate III. Fig. 1: Censors/lamps from the structures 3,5,12 and 13. Drawn by Svetlana Malykh

the excavated area on Kom I, being perpendicular to the north-south oriented wall, one may assume that the constructions on Kom I and Kom II belonged to one large complex of the site, probably a residential and religious one.

The main building on Kom I consisted of residential and administrative premises (covered with good quality white plaster inside, like in structure 5) and kitchens (structures 1 and 2, with vessels and vessel-furnaces). In this case, the kitchen remained within the zone of the main structures. In turn, other small premises, the function of which is unclear, were concentrated in the south. In this case, it is clear that the structure of the main building, which occupies the northern part of Kom I, was built according to a symmetrical architectural outline.

Archaeological investigations at the southern part of Kom I revealed a number of structures, adjacent to the main construction from the south-east (squares 15, 16, 19, 20). The lack of structure remains in the south-western part is remarkable (squares 13 and 14). Most probably they might be identified as an extension

sion to the main construction. However, it must be taken into consideration that squares 17 and 18 have not been excavated yet. The result of these excavations could help to understand the character (or on the contrary the complete absence at this western side) of the residential complex in the southern sector of Kom I. While the kitchens have been found in the main building area, the other small premises, the assignment of which is not clear yet, have been concentrated in the south. The division into northern and southern building parts was the essential feature of the main concept of the residential complex in Hamadab as well.⁶

The distinctive features of the complex are structures 1 and 2, which were symmetrically disposed, as well as structures 3, 4, 5 and 6. Structures 1 and 2 present kitchens, where abundant charcoal and ash was found, traced near the southern wall in both

⁶ Wolf et al. 2011, 232.

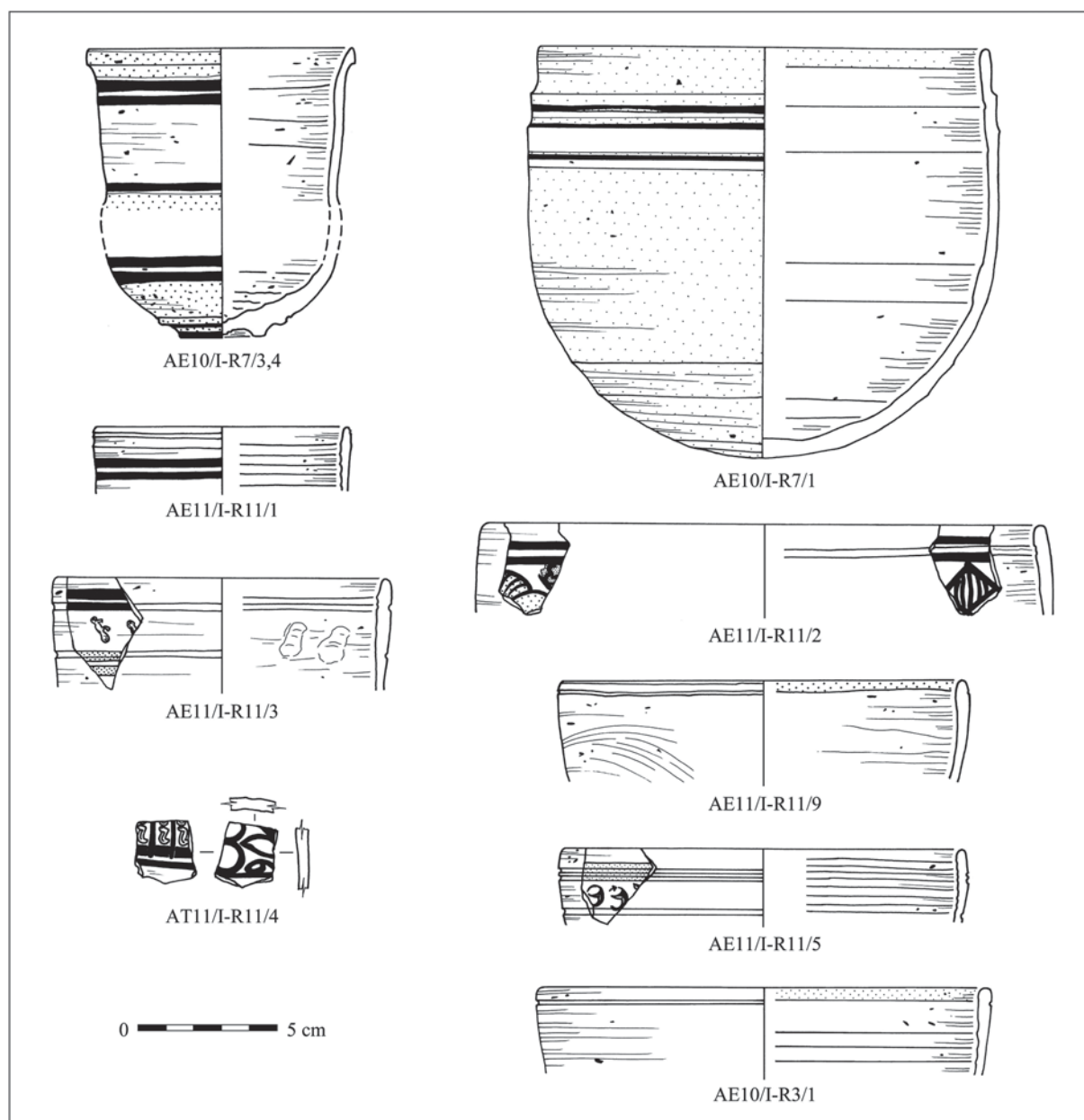


Plate III. Fig. 2: “Egg-shell Ware” discovered in the Rooms 3, 7 and 11 of the Kom I. Drawn by Svetlana Malykh

premises. The size⁷ of the premises is 3.20 × 4.36 m and 2.12 × 4.32 m.

Structures 1 and 2 were connected to the passage in the eastern part, which permits to render them to one set of economic and heating facilities of the building. The walls of structure 2 are well preserved and were constructed by way of longitudinal-transverse masonry. Three layers have been traced, having mud layers between them.

It is remarkable that three layers of the structure filling contain significant amounts of charcoal, ash and over-burned calcified animal bones. Near the southern walls of the both premises, heaps of ash

and small fragments of calcified animal bones have been revealed. These are probably remnants of the cooking of meat food. The kitchen (structure 1) was accessible through a 0.80 m wide doorway from the north-east, from which only traces remained. An analogous couple of kitchens is attested in the «*Kleine Anlage*» of Musawwarat es Sufra and in Hamadab as well.⁸

Along the eastern wall of structure 1 and in the corners of premise 2, eight clusters of pottery are present. Except a single exception (a jar on a ring base), all of them represent remnants of the lower parts of 14 vessels of the same type – big tubular jars

⁷ see in details: Fantusati/ Kormysheva 2010, 271-277.

⁸ Fitzenreiter et al. 1999, 42; Wolf et al. 2011, 233.

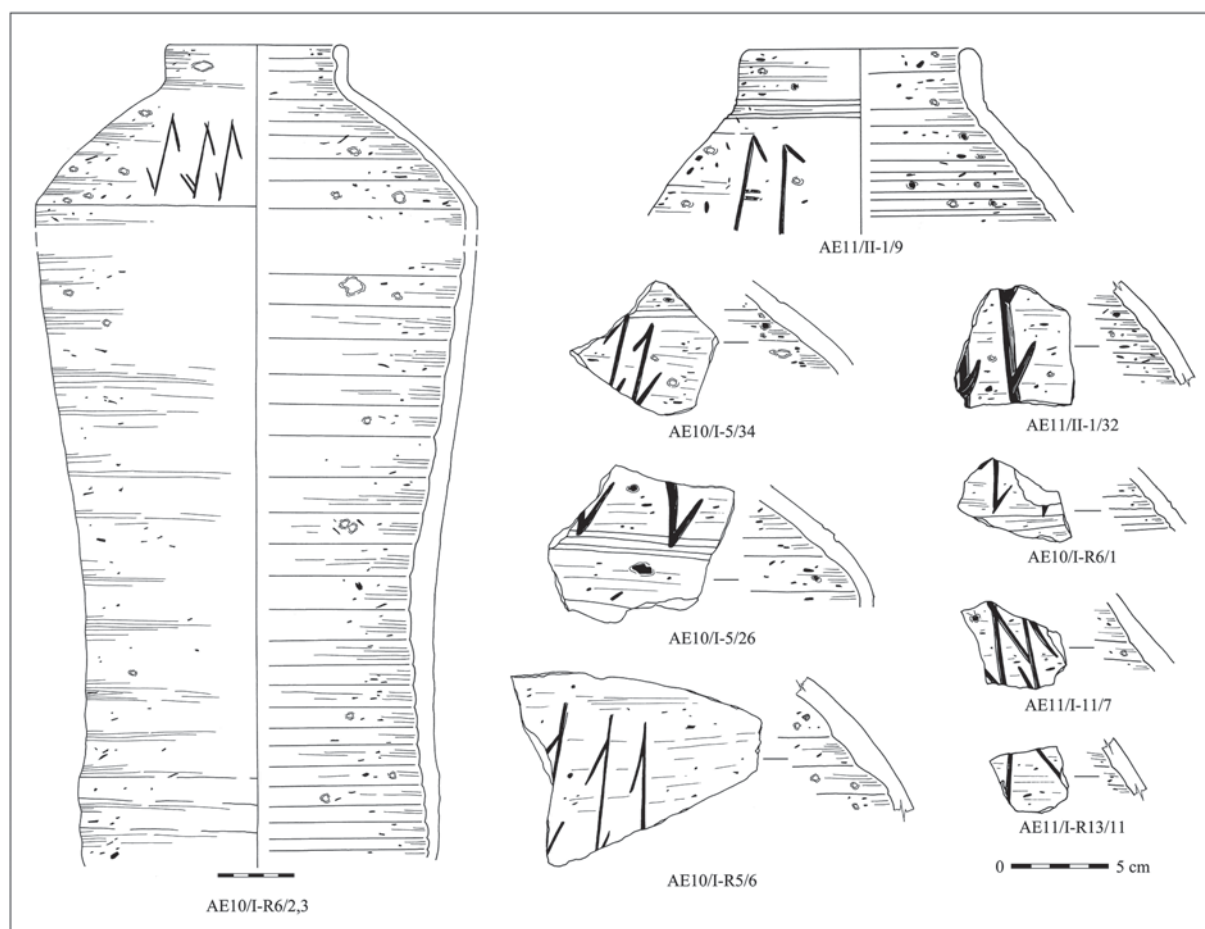


Plate IV. Fig. 1: Large tubular jars with pot-marks discovered on the Kom I and Kom II. Drawn by Svetlana Malykh

with round bottoms (pl. IV, fig. 1). Their form dates them into the late Meroitic period.⁹ Many vessels were set one into another, forming 8 groups. Upper vessels were filled with charcoal and ash. Most probably pots and bowls were placed on the charcoal for cooking or heating up food (as at present in northern Sudanese villages for cooking beans - *foule*). The fact that a new vessel was set into a cracked vessel evidences long-term functioning of these structures as kitchens.¹⁰ Analogous long-term installations of tubular vessel-ovens in the same place and their replacement after breaking are attested in the kitchens of Hamadab.¹¹

A charcoal sample was taken from the filling of the upper vessel of group 8 in premise 2. It was dated 1875±35 BP, i.e. cal 80-220 AD.,¹² which was

the final stage of the kitchens' existence. This period corresponds well to the dating of the tubular jars into the Late Meroitic period, based on comparative analysis with an analogous type of pottery from other monuments of the « Island of Meroe».¹³

Large amounts of pottery fragments have been discovered in the debris of structure 2. It represents usual kitchen utensils (wheel- and hand-made cauldrons and bowls with soot traces on their walls), confirming the function of structure 2 as a place for cooking.

Structures 3 and 4, adjoining structures 1 and 2 from the west, are distinguished by their small size in comparison with the other premises. The same can be noticed regarding structure 11, adjoining structure 4 in the south. The space (0.75 × 1.00 m), overlaid with bricks was revealed in its south-eastern corner.

⁹ Lenoble 1987 a, 91, pl. III; Wolf et al., 2011, 240, Abb. 26.

¹⁰ See in details Fantusati et al. 2012 b, 172-174, fig. 33-35; Fantusati et al. 2012 a, 37-39, pl. 13-15.

¹¹ Wolf et al. 2011, 233-234, Abb. 20.

¹² The radiocarbon dating was carried out by Prof. Gilberto Calderoni (Dipartimento di Scienze della terra – Università «La Sapienza» di Roma). Laboratory sample number: Rome-2200 1875/35 yr BP, 80-220 cal. CE. The calibration

of the conventional radiocarbon reading has been run with data and software after Stuiver M. and Reimer P.J. Radiocarbon calibration program (Stuiver M., Reimer P.J., 1993, 215-230), and the following upgrade Radiocarbon calibration program 1999, Rev. 4.1.2. The authors are thankful to Prof. Gilberto Calderoni for these investigations.

¹³ Lenoble 1987 a, 91, pl. III; Wolf et al. 2011, 240, Abb. 26.



Plate IV. Fig. 2: Southern part of the Kom I, southward view. Photo Maksim Lebedev

A heap of mud bricks was cleaned in the western part of premise 11. It likewise evidences an attempt to divide a large premise into two compartments.

Taking into consideration the determined destination of the premises 1 and 2 as kitchens, one may assume that the small neighboring rooms served as storages for products and kitchen accessories; however, clear evidence in its favor is not yet available. Coarse cooking ware dominates in the premises 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 20, which demonstrate traces of long-term use for cooking (strong soot on walls). The bowl from structure 12, decorated by *ankh* signs, has been identified as a ritual object. A thick layer of soot inside it evidences that it was a censor or a lamp. Moreover, just a small number of kitchen vessels has been found in the filling of premises 3, 7 and 11. On the contrary, vessels of higher quality have been encountered here, some of them with soot inside – an indication of lamps or censors.

A high percentage of fine kaolin made “Egg-shell Ware” is also contained among the ceramic material of rooms 7 and 11 (pl. III, fig. 2). There have been found fragments of bowls with painted lines or covered with a stamped ornament. Structure 5 (size 3.28×3.68 m) is the most remarkable one among the premises of the extreme northern area at Kom I. Traces of high-quality white plaster are clearly visible on the internal west wall, which is a proof of the use of such a coating on some parts of the building with ornate and protective purposes.

Fragments of wall plaster have also been encountered in other rooms of the complex on Kom I (for example, at the northern and the eastern wall

of structure 22, on the eastern wall of the passage between structures 20 and 22), but structure 5, of better quality and greater thickness, distinguishes this premise from others. Similar traces of plaster are attested at Hamadab (Meroitic Period), where the interior walls of the residential buildings have been covered with a plaster of red, yellow and white color.¹⁴ Plaster coating of the same color with shades of blue have been identified at Kom 2 (see below).

The ceramic material found inside structure 5 also differs from that one found in most other structures. A stand for a censor or a lamp was found here, being broken into two parts; four more fragments were scattered throughout the room. Similar stands have been found at Musawwarat es Sufra in the Lion temple and in the «*Grosse Anlage*», where they have been classified as offering stands.¹⁵

Also in the room there were five fragments of two bowls with strong soot inside, which have been used as censers or lamps (pl. III, fig. 1), and they could be placed on the stand. In addition, in the northern part of the room there have been found fragments of large tubular jars with marks (pl. IV, fig. 1). In one case, the mark was made before firing in the form of three slanting lines with notches at the ends. Similar signs have been found on fragments of tubular jars in other areas of Kom I (for example in structure 6), and even

¹⁴ Wolf/ Nowotnick 2010, 29.

¹⁵ Fitzenreiter et al. 1999, 93-94, Abb. 63; with the reference to the analogues in Musawwarat es Sufra Lion Temple (Buschendorf-Otto 1993, 302, Abb. 275; from Große Anlage Edwards 1999, 22, pl. IX; from Meroe Török 1997, II, figs. 130, 152).

on Kom II, so they can mark either products of local pottery or a pottery lot ordered by inhabitants of the building in Abu Erteila.

In the second case, the sign on a tubular jar from structure 5 was filled with white pigment after firing. In all probability it was a symbol of the sun ☉, on a stylized offering table. L. Török dated similar signs on jars to 1st–2nd cent. AD. He considered them to be related to the religious or royal sphere.¹⁶ Currently, due to the lack of sufficient material, it is impossible to determine the exact purpose of room 5, but its importance in comparison with other premises is obvious.

Structures 7 (dimensions 2.40 × 3.20 m) and 14 (dimensions 2.56 × 6.64 m), which have two passages, are different from the constructions on the Kom I. In room 7, the passages are disposed in the eastern and southern walls and have a width of 1.04 and 1.30 m, respectively. Apparently a furnace was located in the south-eastern corner of the room at the level of 391.83 m, where a 0.60 × 0.40 m patch of ash with charcoal was recorded. In structure 14, passages were located in the northern and southern walls; having a width of 1.02 m and 0.84 m respectively.

Structures 11 and 12, separated by mud-brick rubble, originally perhaps one large living room, which has been partitioned later on,¹⁷ is by its size (1.88 × 6.48 m) similar to structure 14 (2.56 × 6.64 m). The latter had a furnace in the western part, constructed in a combination of red and mud bricks. There was another furnace, filled with a layer of ashes and charcoals in the south-eastern part of structure 11.

Structure 12 is disposed to the west from structure 11; the width of its northern and southern walls is 2.90 m. An intrusive burial was found here (see below). The place for the hearth was in the north-eastern part of the room; the north wall was refractory, suggesting an impact of heat from the furnace. Thus, the structure was used as a dwelling room.

Passage 8, which stretches along the east-west, had a branch in the southern part in the form of a passage (13) leading to structure 6, limited in the east by the western wall of structure 4. Judging from the available material, its southern part had a kind of entrance to structure 7, which in turn has an opening into structure 15 through passage 13. Consequently, structure 15 has two doorways.

The south wall of construction 9 shows traces of a re-use of the passage that was probably later

blocked. These traces of re-use are the most vivid evidence of a later restructuring (or annex) of the other constructions. So, the individual data permits a reconstruction, which is noticeable in the stone layers of the building. It attests the use of red bricks of different sizes, re-applied to reconstruct the south wall of structure 3. Furthermore, the presence of the several fragments of charcoal indicates that the structure suffered from one or more fires after which it needed reconstruction of its damaged parts.

Structures 9 and 10 are approximately of the same size (4.46 × 2.37 × 4.40 m and 2.20 m, respectively); they are comparable to structure 2. Perhaps they composed an apartment complex of the residence owners. It should be noted, however, the existence of a pass (width 102 cm) in the southern part of the western wall of structure 9, composed of mud bricks and demonstrating a resemblance with structure 14. The passage was blocked later. This fact also speaks in favor of the previous assumption on restructuring or making an annex to the main building on Kom I.

Structure 13 has an oblong shape and is located to the east of structure 7. It might play the role of a corridor joining the northern part with the passage (Structure 8 in pl. I, col. fig. 13).

Structure 15 (4.20 × 2.20 m) is limited in the east by structure 14. Both structures had a common mud brick wall. Structure 15 was limited in the south by a mud-brick wall with a passage of 0.80 m width. The structure is also restricted in the west by a mud brick wall and a passage. Structure 15 was investigated to the level of 391.75–391.77 m, where a layer of dense texture (silt, clay, sand) was fixed; probably the floor level. This assumption is confirmed by the remains of a furnace (0.70 × 1.50 m) in the south-eastern part of the structure, which was filled with ash (thickness 7 cm, level 391.75–391.82 m) and which reached down to the floor level. It is perhaps the latest construction of the complex.

There have been found two large stones (size 0.50 × 0.52 × 0.24 m and 0.50 × 0.40 × 0.17 m) with traces of broach possibly used as kitchen countertops in structure 15 at level 391.99 m (in the eastern part) and 391.96 m (in the southern part, near the passage).

A brick pavement was found at a level of 392.10 m, preserved on an area of 0.80 × 0.70 m in structure 17 (2.40 × 2.72 m) and situated to the south of structure 16. An accumulation of bricks on a plot of size of 1.00 × 0.60 m in the south-eastern corner of structure 17 was possibly a result of the furnace's collapse.

Structures 18–19 and 23–24 have a similar plan: in fact, they represent a combination of a small premise which leads to bigger premises (room 18 has a rectangular shape of 1.92 × 2.40 m, the length

16 Török 1972, 37, fig. 2.11, 2.12; see also: Fantusati et al. 2012 b, 43–44, pl. 21.

17 Reducing the size of the rooms in Hamadab (prolixity and narrowing) was typical for Hamadab in the last phase of its use (s. Wolf et al. 2011, 228–229).

of structure 19 is not less than 6.80 m, width 2.32 m, structure 23 is 1.76×2.28 m, structure 24 is 3.68×2.12 m). Structure 23 was paved with sandstone tiles at a level of 392.38 - 392.44 m. Fragments of fired bricks with traces of half-circles impressed by fingers in wet clay have been found in the filling of structure 24. Such bricks were used for arches and vaults.¹⁸ It is possible that rooms 18 and 23 played the role of utility rooms, and structures 19 and 24 provided a passage for them. Such structures tend to be separated from the housing.¹⁹ Thus structures 20 and 22, surrounded by structures 18, 19, 23 and 24, are unlikely to have been inhabited, but perhaps had economic functions (pl. IV, fig.2).

Generally, it should be noted that the identification of a specific-purpose of the structures presents considerable difficulties. For example, a significant number of whole and broken off grindstones, made predominantly of quartzite and hard grained, dense sandstone, rarely pink granite and basalt was attested in the filling of structures 5, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 16 which are situated in a distance from the kitchens with furnaces. Seven stones and one knife-grinder have been found in structure 5 at a depth of 391.21 - 391.47 m, seven grindstones in structure 9, four grindstones in structure 11, three grindstones in structure 12, six grindstones in structure 14, three grindstones in structure 16. Further 21 grindstones and a basalt stone hammer have been found in the upper debris layer at Kom I.

Flat oval grindstones could be used as pallets for grinding several products such as grains, but also for mineral pigments. For example, a fragment of basalt grindstone with traces of red ochre was found in the square 10, on the upper layer (392.25 - 392.65 m), and a rectangular piece of red ochre has been found together with other grindstones in structure 9.

Similar grating pieces of sandstone have been found in Musawwarat es Sufra during the excavation of the Lion temple.²⁰ Thus, these tools are not necessarily associated with food preparation; they could have been used for grinding other materials, such as mineral paints like it has been done in a variety of applications, both domestic and religious. It is not surprising to find large numbers of them in room 5, which has no pronounced economic functions. It demonstrates their religious or administrative character due to the presence of stands for censers.

18 see for example Spencer 1979, 141-142; The same bricks were discovered at Amun Temple in Meroe (Grzymski 2003, 22, pl.IX).

19 Fitzenreiter et al. 1999, 51.

20 Buschendorf-Otto 1993, 279-280, Abb. 212-214.

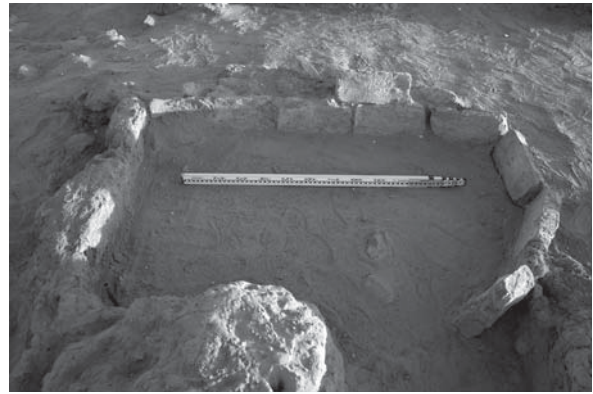


Plate V, Fig. 1: Semicircular construction 21. Northward view. Photo Sergey Malykh



Plate V, Fig. 2 a, b: Constructions in the square 19. Photo Maksim Lebedev

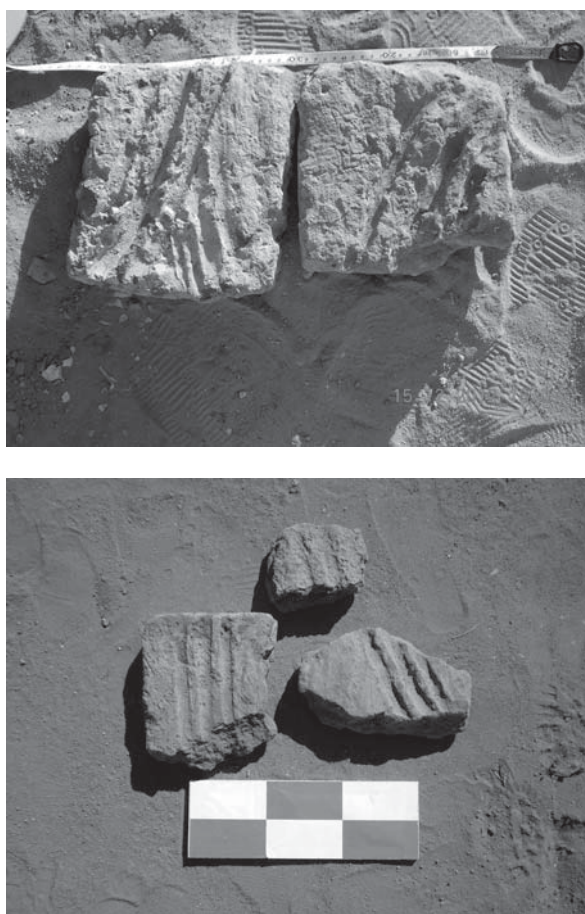


Plate V. Fig. 3 a, b: Fired bricks used for vault constructions. Photo Maksim Lebedev and Eugenio Fantusati

Some facts evidence rebuilding and a reconstruction of separate premises in a building on Kom I: At the south wall of room 3 the use of burnt bricks of various sizes is attested. They have been re-used again in order to restore the wall. Furthermore, the presence of charcoal and ash indicates that the structure suffered from one or several fires, and it needed reconstruction of damaged parts thereafter.

The whole complex, at least in its northern part, suffered from a fire and perhaps even from two fires: a first layer of charcoal and ash has been observed at level 392.05 m, a second one at 391.87 m. Besides, before the excavations, the area of both Koms was almost completely covered with broken red bricks - clear evidence of destruction.

A layer of ash was attested in structure 14, traces of which are visible at level 391.80 - 392.15 m disposed in the direction from south to north. The thickness of the layer is 3-7 cm. Traces of ash and charcoal have also been noted in structure 16 at level 391.75 - 391.78 m. They are likely to be indicative of fire as well. However, these traces of ash and charcoal do not correspond to the burnt layers of fire, identified above, because the ash layer is blocked by

a brick wall of structure 14, the size of which before the overlap must have been much larger. Accordingly, we can assume that a restoration has taken place on several premises at Kom I after local fires, which however, did not lead to the total destruction of the buildings at Kom I. The very fact of restructuring is evident. However we have to bear in mind that there took place a remarkable reduction of the room sizes in the later Meroitic period.²¹

The small size of the room in the southern part of Kom I (pl. IV, fig. 2), in comparison to the northern part, evidences in favour of the rebuilding or a new construction of the residential complex. It is also remarkable that the semicircular structure 21, which has been found on the upper layer filling of structure 20 at level 392.76 - 392.82 m (pl. V, fig. 1), is shaped like a drinker for livestock, its size is 1.03 × 1.69 m. In square 14, on the top layer, on the same level with the oval structure 21, the spot of ash with scraps of burnt logs has been marked, which can be interpreted as remains of a construction - a shed for cattle or a leash for livestock.

Three pits in areas 23, 24 and 25 (pl. V, fig. 2 a, b) are perhaps evidence of a late reconstruction at Kom I. All of them are covered inside with clay and have the circumference remains of red brick with a narrow trough (level 392.30 - 392.82 m). Analogies for such constructs are not known. It appears that these holes were made directly into the wall that earlier divided these premises, punching them. It is possible that they were used for construction supports.

A layer of bricks was attested at the south of structure 23. It extended to the limits of the excavation. The width of the masonry is 0.64 m, its length is 1.20 m. This structure could have been used as a utility premise.

Semi-circular arches existed in some parts of the buildings on Kom I (pl. V, fig. 3 a, b), as is testified by bricks with a distinctive decor in the form of longitudinal grooves, applied at the time of their casting. Vaulted ceilings are known in the architecture of Meroitic residential complexes.²² The roof of the building is now completely absent, but the thickness of the walls (0.33 to 0.84 m) indicates that they could have reached a height of hardly one floor.

Structures 18 and 19 are of smaller size, with structure 19 having the smallest size (1.24 × 0.96 m). It is possible that structure 19 was used as an utility room, while room 18 provided the passage for it. Presumably one can identify the small structures

²¹ Wolf et al. 2011, 229.

²² see for example Jacquet 1971, 122, fig. 29; Woolley 1911, 11-13.

The plan shows three excavated areas of the necropolis of Tell el-Fel. Area 1 (top left) contains several pits and a small structure. Area 2 (top right) features a large, complex structure labeled 'Grave 1' and several other pits. Area 3 (bottom) shows a large, complex structure labeled 'Grave 2' and several other pits. The plan is divided into three sections by a grid. A scale bar at the bottom indicates 0 to 2 meters. A north arrow is located in the top left corner. The legend on the right identifies various materials and features: fired brick masonry, mud brick masonry, mud mortar, sandstone, other stones, white plaster, pressed mud, mud with sand, pressed mud bricks, sand, fired brick, mud brick, fragments of fired brick, charcoal, ashes, and jar-oven.

23 and 43 in the same way. Such areas were usually separated from the dwellings.²³

is preserved in the royal residence of Meroe and the religious center of Awlib.²⁴

The type of the masonry walls, which have been found in this part of the excavated area, indicates that the structure was built of parallel rows of bricks filled with clay mixed with organic particles and potsherds. Such masonry is attested in many ancient settlements of Meroe. The dimensions of the bricks are 0.30 x 0.17 x 0.07 m. In those places where the bricks were lost, their surviving traces in the plaster coincide with this measurement. The orientation of the masonry is northeast - southwest. The form and the manner of the masonry, as well as the material and size of the red bricks are almost identical to what

24 Particular observations of the members of the mission in Awlib and Abu Erteila.

25 The temple of Amun and Isis in Meroe could serve as example (Garstanget al. 1911, 12, 18; the palace in Wad Ban Naga: Vercoutter 1962, 263–299; Bradley 1984, 197–200. On this constructive method see also Török 1997, 118, 208, 210.

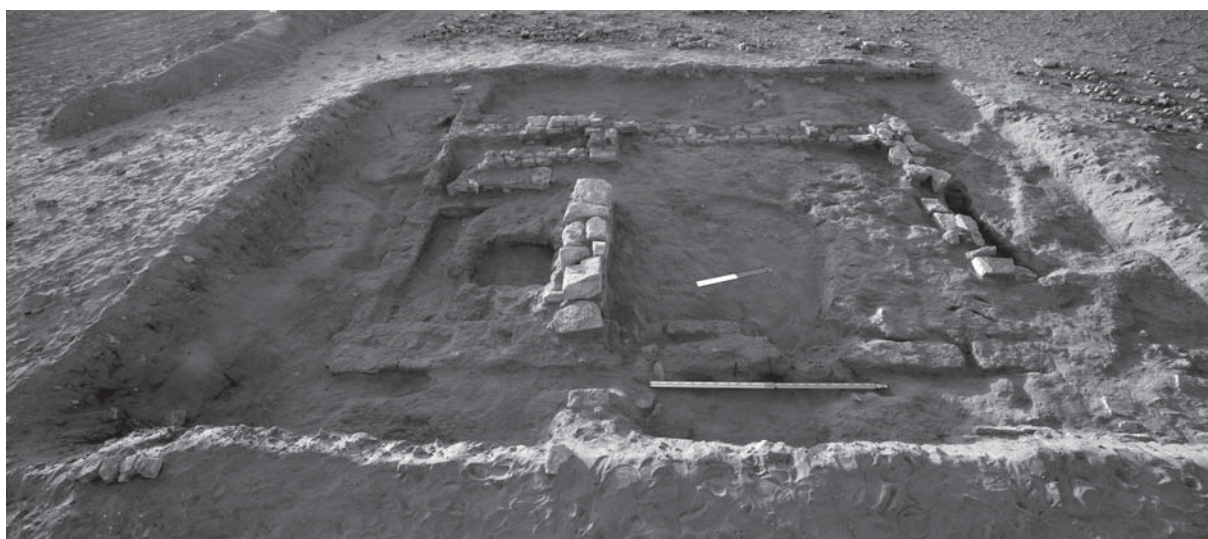


Plate VII. Fig. 1: Kom II. General view of the excavated area. Photo Maksim Lebedev

and burnt brick as a building material is known in central Sudan since the Meroitic Period.²⁶

Summarizing the available data, we may suggest that the complex excavated at Kom I was divided into two parts - north and south. As the material demonstrates, the northern part of the construction belonged to an apartment complex, while the southern part was probably reserved for kitchens and heaters for the living quarters of families serving the main building, as well as for purely economic premises. It is not excluded that here, in this layer, there are remains of a fairly late reuse of this complex, which is evidenced, in particular, by structure 21.

Given the orientation of buildings (or parts of it) and the presence of wall fragments along the eastern part of the excavation at Kom I, perpendicular to the north-south oriented wall, it can be assumed that the buildings on Kom I and Kom II belonged to the same large complex, being of possibly residential and religious character. Whether there was a kind of ramp, remains to be solved.

I.2 Kom II

The total excavated area on Kom II was 85 sq.m; the depth of the excavation from the present surface was 21-22 cm. The present surface rises in this area from west to east (pl. VI, col. fig. 14).

The material used for the construction of buildings, as it was the case at Kom I, was a combination of red fired and gray-brown mud bricks. However, in contrast to Kom I, fragments of re-used sandstone blocks, from a temple have been met here more often.

A rectangular structure of 7.48×4.92 m has been found in the excavated area, elongated with a little deviation on the north-south line. Two structures - room 1 in the south and room 2 in the north evidently existed here (pl. VII, fig. 1). However, the removal of the upper layer has shown that the structures passed at least three construction stages.

In its earliest stage (1), the building represented a rectangular structure, the walls of which were made from burnt and mud bricks, plastered with high quality white stucco.

After some time (stage 2), the structure was divided into two rooms (1 and 2) by a partition using mud brick and stone parts from an ancient temple, some of them with relief decoration with, in one case, traces of paintings in yellow, red and blue on a plastered sandstone block. At the same time, the western wall was repaired and the northern wall of the building was completed, using sometimes decorated fragments of sandstone blocks as well.

In a final stage 3, a wall of 0.80×2.00 m size and 50-55 cm width was built over the existing structures. It crossed the southern and western walls of the original building under the corner angle (pl. VII, fig. 1). This corner was coated with plaster. Construction 3, apparently, was the latest stage of the existence of structure 2.

Secondary building material was also used in this structure along with fragments of mud bricks, fired bricks and stone blocks. At the distance of 1.80 m to the south of the overlying wall, a corner is fixed and coated with plaster (pl. VII, fig. 2). All these parts, originally belonging to the temple (see below), constituted possibly the most ancient structure in this area. The method of construction differs from Meroitic technology, permitting to determine this

²⁶ Fitzenreiter et al. 1999, 154-155.



Plate VII. Fig. 2: The angle of the construction with the traces of colored plaster. Photo Eugenio Fantusati

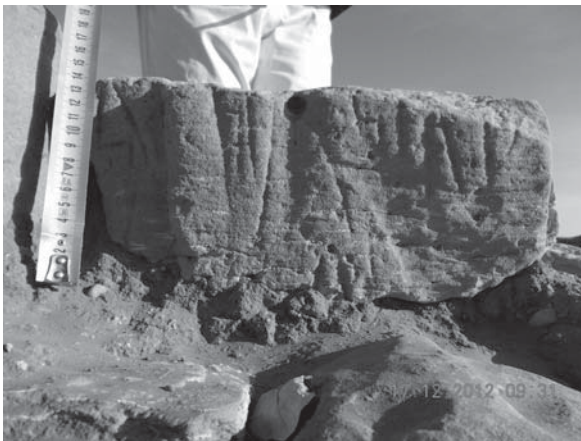


Plate VIII. Fig. 1 a, b: Re-used fragments of the temple columns. Photo Sergey Malykh

wall as the most recent construction of the excavated part of Kom II.

Stage 2 is most clear. The building belonged to this stage consisted of two rooms. In the south-west corner of the rectangular room 1 of 3.80×1.90 m in size, an area of a pressed layer was cleaned (size 1.20×0.40 m). The consistence of this layer is similar to the texture of crushed mud bricks. The northern wall contained a passage to room 2. Room 2 had a rectangular shape as well (size 3.80×4.00 m). The inner

walls of these rooms were covered with white plaster. The lower level of the plaster (391.47 m) probably marks the level of the floor.

The northern wall of room 1 of 2.30 m length and 0.53 m width is at the same time the southern wall of room 2. It consists of re-used architectural blocks - mostly disintegrated from the columns of the temple (pl. VIII, fig. 1), and possibly blocks from walls. Protruding ornaments of embossed stripes are visible on two semi-circular fragments of a column,



Plate VIII. Fig. 2 a, b: Northern wall of the Room 1. Decorated sandstone fragments. Photo Sergey Malykh

located at the base of the excavated walls, oriented east-west. There are also treated sandstone pieces (architectural details), and rectangular blocks with traces of a relief ornament that possibly was initially also a part of the wall (pl. VIII, fig. 2).

During the work at Kom II, two bricks with longitudinal traces of fingers have been discovered (dimensions: 21 × 27 cm, the plastered corner is clearly visible) - analogous to those found at Kom I. As it has already been noted, these bricks are usually reserved for the construction of vaults. Therefore, we can assume the presence of arch structures at Kom II as well.

There have been found the lower parts of four round-bottomed jars, dug into the ground in the eastern part of room 1 and in the north-western corner of structure 2. These vessels have close parallels to Late Meroitic vessel ovens, discovered in the kitchen-rooms 1 and 2 at Kom I. They were partially filled with ash and charcoal as well; and they have traces of soot inside.

The lower part of a globular jar of the late-Meroitic period²⁷ has been also found in the north-western corner of room 2 (pl. IX, fig. 1). The inner surface of the jar has traces of soot, which indicates that it was secondary used. The same is true for the tubular jars, the rim and the upper part of the shoulders of which was gently knocked down. This jar bears two signs on the shoulders outside, painted with yellow-white pigment. One of them is a stylized ancient Egyptian symbol of life "*ankh*". Its paleography is also characteristic for both the Classical and the late-Meroitic Period.²⁸ As to the second mark, applied to the opposite side of the vessel, it is preserved in

fragments and nothing particular can be said on its meaning.

To conclude, rooms 1 and 2 discovered on Kom II can be interpreted as kitchens, having a close analogy regarding the inventory and the architecture in the kitchens of Kom I. The filling of these rooms on Kom II had an admixture of charcoal and ash. Based on the shape of the tubular jars, re-used as ovens, and given radiocarbon datings obtained from the analysis of the most recent vessel-ovens on Kom I, a similar date can be assumed for the final stage of the kitchens' existence at Kom II – between the end of the last century B.C. to the beginning of the third century A.D.

I.3 Remnants of the Temple Complex

Various fragments surely related to the temple complex were found in the course of excavations on the territory of the two Koms. All of these fragments can be provisionally divided into two parts – the fragments re-used in buildings of a later period, and the fragments scattered throughout the excavated area at a depth from 3 to 15 cm from the modern surface. The latter may also be parts of later constructions; however, currently their "secondary" role cannot be reconstructed.

Among the finds, the most interesting are three fragments of columns (pl. IX, fig. 2): one with a hieroglyphic inscription and decoration, another one with the image of the god Hapi, and a third piece with a solid base, which has been found in the south-western part of Kom I (see below). In addition, small limestone fragments (destroyed parts of columns) with traces of hieroglyphs were found. Numerous smaller column fragments with traces of decoration in a form of embossed floral motifs in vertical lines were found at Kom II. Parts of the wall were constructed from semi-circular sandstone pieces,

27 For a parallel to this form of jugs see Lenoble 1987 a, 91, pl. VII. 6, 16; Wolf et al. 2011, 240, Abb. 26.

28 For analogues forms of bowls see for example Edwards 1999, 31 (ZN 915), pl. XII (915). Robertson/ Hill 2004, 130, pl. IXb (no. 3, 4).

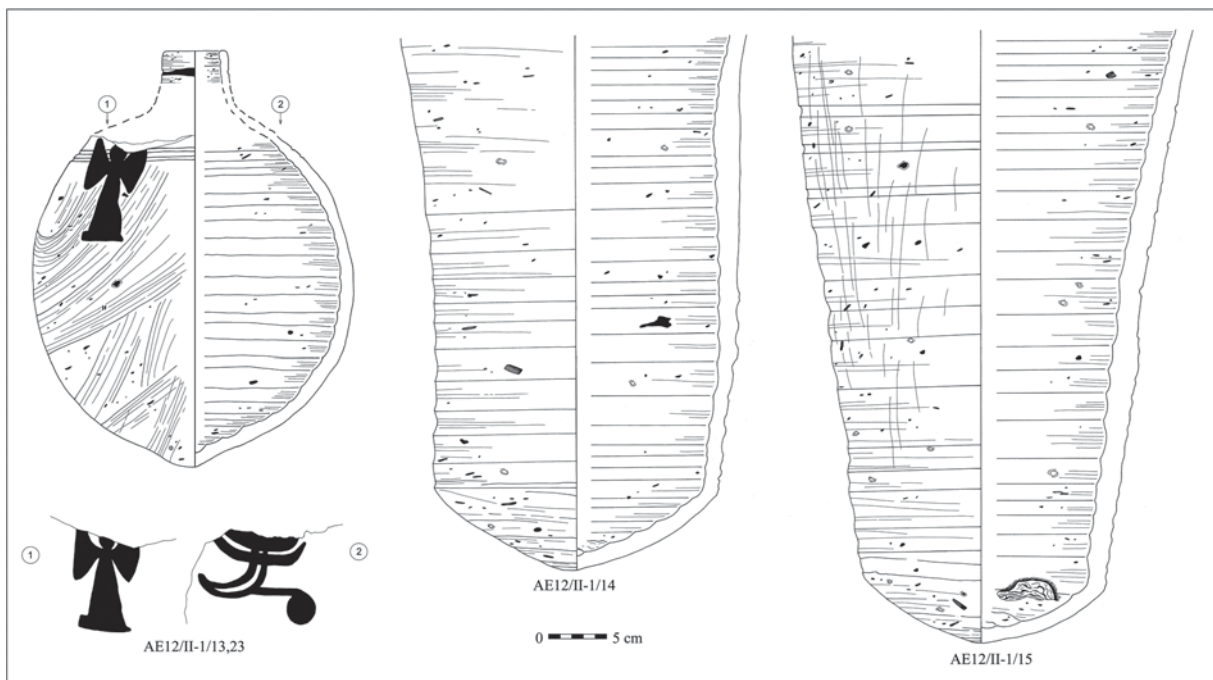


Plate IX. Fig. 1: Globular jar (reconstruction) and large tubular jars re-used as ovens discovered in the north-western corner of the Room 2 of the Kom II. Drawn and reconstructed by Svetlana Malykh



Plate IX. Fig. 2: Fragments of columns, found on the Kom II. Photo Eugenio Fantusati



Plate X. Fig. 1, a, b, c: Fragment of column with the hieroglyphic inscriptions. Photo Sergey Malykh. Drawn by Maksim Lebedev

the form of which shows that they undoubtedly belonged to columns. A small semi-circular piece having a form very reminiscent of those and used in the corner of the outer temple walls, has been also discovered. However, its fragmentary and poor preservation does not allow to assert it with precision.

Two sandstone fragments decorated with the winged sun disc surrounded by uraei found in

the northern and southern sectors of the Kom II belonged to the temple complex.

Deposits of such stone presumably were situated ten kilometers away from Abu Erteila, their possible origin being Djebel ab-Amera. According to the observations of P. Lenoble, exploitation of sandstone caves on the northern slope of Gebel Makbor was a source for the construction of sanctuaries and official monuments at the site.²⁹

Fragments of a column with hieroglyphic inscription

A big fragment of a column (diameter 47.5–48 cm, height 11.5 cm) has been found in fallen position in the southern sector of Kom II at level 391.49 - 392.01 m (pl. IX, fig. 2). On one side, this column fragment has 3 columns of fragmentary preserved hieroglyphic inscriptions (pl. X, fig. 1a, b, c). A similar text, headed by five stars, is preserved on the other side of the column on its lower part. The upper part of the column is decorated by a single figure, which is repeated three times.

Inscription I

Transliteration:

ir.n=f mnw pn

ʕnh ntr nfr nb qnj nswt bjt nb t3.wj

di=f n=f ʕnh hʕw

Translation:

“he made this monument...”

“may live excellent god, lord of victory, king of the Two Lands...”

“He gives to him life and appearance as a king...”

Comments: This formula of a dedicative inscription on monuments devoted to a god («he made this monument»), which is preserved on the first column fragment, is known from the obelisk of Piye from Kudakol (Leti Basin) in a rather archaic form (*sdm.n=f* model), being characteristic for Egyptian texts³⁰ with the preposition *m* in front of the word *mnw*,³¹ which is absent in our text. In the dedicative inscription of Arnekamani from Musawwarat es Sufra, the same formula is attested: “he made (*sdm=f*)

²⁹ Lenoble 1987 b, 213; Lenoble 1992, 75.

³⁰ For these inscriptions cf. Grallert 2001, 144-170.

³¹ “He made this monument for his father” see Kormysheva 2006, 36-38.

this monument for you“; however, the word “this” is written in another manner - *ipn*.³²

The formula *‘nh ntr nfr* – “may live the excellent god”, with which the second column of the inscription starts, is known from the ram statue of Taharqa from Kawa temple T³³ and from the Aspelta sphinx from Defeia.³⁴


The word combination – “*king of the Two Lands*” in this mode of writing was characteristic for Ptolemaic texts and is attested in inscriptions from Edfu, Dendera, Philae, Ombos;³⁵ although this word combination, however in other graphics, is attested already since Dynasty XIX.³⁶ This formula was preserved also in the titles of Meroitic kings who wrote their names in Meroitic hieroglyphs, for example in an inscription of Amanikhabale from Basa.³⁷ This title is likewise preserved in an inscription of Natakamani from Wad ban Naga, representing one of the latest known Egyptian inscriptions. In this coronation inscription, addressed to Isis, his throne name *hpr k3 R*³⁸ is preceded by the same title like in the inscription on the column fragment of Abu Erteila -

 “the king of Upper and Lower Egypt,

Lord of Two Lands”. The names of the royal family, in one case Natakamani and Arikankharor, in the other case Amanitore and Arikankharor, in the Lion temple of Naqa, are preceded by both variants



of the title:  and .³⁹ The title  is

attested in the inscription of Shorkaror at Djebel Geili, where his very names are written in Meroitic

hieroglyphs.⁴⁰ The word combination  as a king title is attested in inscriptions in the pyramids of Meroe (Beg. N 17) with Amanitenmomide,⁴¹

whose name is written in Meroitic hieroglyphs, and Amanikhatashan.⁴²

These examples demonstrate the stability of the royal title, borrowed from Egypt, even during a period when the inscriptions themselves were written in Meroitic hieroglyphs. The only exception is the inscription of Natakamani and Amanitore in Wad Ban Naga, which theoretically would allow to “make a chronological extension” of the probable dating of the dedication text from Abu Erteila. The lower chronological limit of the use of such a phrase with the same hieroglyphs can be fixed to a period not earlier than the reign of Ptolemy III Euegetes I

(247-221 B.C.), when a change from  to 


is attested for the first time. This period corresponds to the reign of Arnekhamani (Beg. N 53). The possibility of such an early date is indirectly confirmed

by traces of the signs  on one of the column


fragments (s. below), marking an ‘intermediate period’ during which both variants of writing have been used, as well as by the other inscription on the lower part of this column fragment with similar meaning.

The word *qnj* as the epitheton of ‘lord’ (king) in this graphic variant, as it has been used in this inscription, is also known from Ptolemaic texts.⁴³ Moreover, this word, in the same graphic variant, was used behind the word *hq3* “ruler” in the inscription of Arnekhamani at Musawwarat es Sufra.⁴⁴

The hieroglyph after the sign *‘nh* is damaged in column 3. In all probability, there was the sign

 *nw*, which was used as equivalent of *n*⁴⁵ in Greco

Roman texts. Exact analogies to the graphic variant

 *h’w*, is not attested in other Egyptian inscriptions from Kush.

tions from Kush.

of hieroglyphs from this title were preserved on the Pyramid Beg. N 19 Trekeniwl (REM 0062).

⁴² According to Griffith 1911, 85, Pyr. A 39 immediately behind A 32.

⁴³ The mode of writing is specially referred to Greek Period Wb V, 41, 5, 6.


⁴⁴ Hintze 1962, 23 (6), Block Nr. 351, 365, 366, Abb. 4, 5, Taf. XII; Hintze et al. 1993, 85, Abb. 36. Here these signs have been attributed to the word *hq3* – ruler, however, on our mind it is the adjective *qnj* – “victorious” (subsequently victorious king), as it is in the case of our text, where this word is a definition to the word *nb*.

⁴⁵ see for example Junker 1906, 35, 42-43, 48, 65, 67.

³² Hintze 1962, 23 (6), Block Nr. 351, 365, 366, Abb. 4, 5, Taf. XII; Hintze et al. 1993, 85, Abb. 36.

³³ Macadam 1949, 88, Inscr. XXXVII [0337], 89, Inscr. XL [0463]; Kormysheva 2006, 106-109, Cat. 87, 88. This epitheton was often used in the Ramesside inscriptions (see for example, Grimal 1986, 169-172).

³⁴ Vercoutter 1961, 97-104; Kormysheva 2006, 228-229, Cat. 229.

³⁵ Wb. II, 331, 15, Belegstellen to Bd. II, 484, 15. The using  for *nswt hjt* was attested in Greco-Roman period: Daumas et al. 1988, p. 379 (491); Kurth 2010, p. 113 (53).

³⁶ Wb. II, 331, 13.

³⁷ Griffith 1912, 70.

³⁸ Griffith 1911, 67f.; s. also REM 0140.

³⁹ REM 0017, 0020; Zibelius-Chen/ Gamer-Wallert 1983, 32f., fig. 16, pl. 10.

⁴⁰ Griffith 1911, 53; REM 0002.

⁴¹ REM 0066, 0067, Griffith 1911, 85, pl. XXXIV. The rests

Inscription II

On the lower part of the same fragment of the column, three vertical columns of hieroglyphs are preserved (width of every column: 9.5 cm). Here, the same phrases “*he gives...*”, “*live excellent god...*”, “*he made...*” are visible. Above two of the three preserved columns, a freeze of five stars is distinguishable. It is partially eroded towards the third hieroglyphic column. In this case, we are dealing with the same inscription: just with columns and hieroglyphs being much smaller.

Inscription III

During the excavations at Kom II, another very small fragment of a column with the remains of hieroglyphic inscriptions was detected (pl. X, fig. 3a, b). The preserved hieroglyphs permit to identify the royal title *nswt bitj*, probably a part of the word *h'w*, and the word *it*, both of which may be related to a dedicatory inscription of the king who built the temple ‘for his father’ (preceding probably the name of the god).

Assuming that the fragment belongs to the same column as the previous inscriptions, it should be part of the second line, which respectively can be reconstructed as follows (right to left):

Taking into consideration all these facts, the whole inscription may be restored as:

“He made [his monument for his] father...”

“May live excellent god, [...] King of Upper and Lower Egypt ...”

“He (god) gives him (king) [an appear]ance as a king...”

Besides the above mentioned hieroglyphs three identical engravings, without parallels amongst other Meroitic images, are symmetrically exposed above the inscription I on the free space of the fragment at equal distances. One may cautiously suggest that these three figures, resembling a contour image of saints, were carved later onto the monument, representing a kind of symbol for the initiated only. Blurred by time, the contours of a figure reminding a cross, out of shape by the destruction of the soft sandstone, might have been contemporary to this décor as well.

Given the presence of population in Abu Erteila during the Medieval Period,⁴⁶ it can be assumed



Plate X. Fig. 2: Figure of Saint on the Pyramid Beg.N 7. Photo Maksim Lebedev

that there is a kind of Christian “symbolism” on a “pagan” monument, which had lost its original value by that time. The latter is confirmed by the very looting and the reuse of parts of the temple. An image on one of the pyramids of Begrawiya (pl. X, fig. 2)⁴⁷ could serve as an analogy.

To sum up it may conclude that the presence of hieroglyphic inscriptions with paleographic characteristics of texts permits to relate this inscription to Meroitic kings contemporary of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, most likely starting with Ptolemy III. The most intensive relationship between Ptolemaic Egypt and Kush has been assumed to exist during the reigns of Ptolemy II and Ptolemy VI. Consequently, a preliminary date for this monument may be proposed between III and II centuries B.C.

These inscriptions leave no doubt that a temple existed at Abu Erteila, having been constructed by the king’s order. The most remarkable fact is the combination of both variants of the king’s title on one and the same column, confirmed by inscriptions I and II. Theoretically, the inscription on the other

et al. 2012 a.

47 The authors thank M. Lebedev for this material.

46 On this subject see Fantusati et al. 2012 b, 51, 53; Fantusati

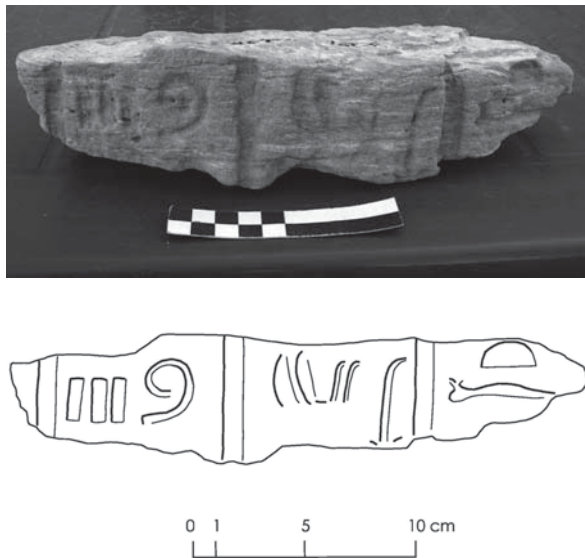


Plate X. Fig. 3 a, b: Fragment of a column with the hieroglyphic inscription. Photo Sergey Malykh. Drawn by Maksim Lebedev

side of the column, and in particular the small fragment with traces of the hieroglyphs *nswt bitj*, could be part of the same inscription of a larger fragment of the column. However, the possibility of an inscription left by different kings cannot be excluded, and consequently the possible reuse or usurpation of the monument by various kings. The both writings of the word combination designating the king are attested several times in Ptolemaic texts (in the temples of Esna, Edfu, and Dendera). This combination is also attested in the inscriptions of Arkamani and Adikhalamani from Dakke and Debod.⁴⁸ Thus, the assumed attribution of our monument to one of these kings is very probable. If the assumption is true, it is in turn evidence in favor of a more ancient date of the habitations of Abu Erteila, probably even the III century B.C.

Fragments of a column with an image of Hapi

A big fragment of a column with a diameter of 47.5 cm and a height of about 40 cm has been found fixed near the eastern wall of room 1 at level 392.10 m. On its surface, the torso of the Nile god *Hapi* is preserved with his typical head-dress of lotus flowers and buds, rising from a small pool, fixed on his head (pl. XI, fig. 1a,b). The hands of Hapi, in which he holds *hes*-vases, pressed to his chest, a jet of water that flow from the *hes* vases is pictured over

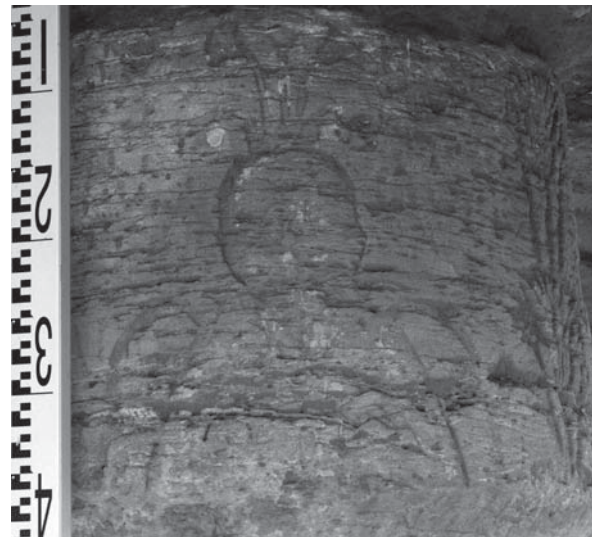


Plate XI. Fig. 1 a,b: Fragment of the column with the image of Hapi. Photo Sergey Malykh. Drawn by Maksim Lebedev

his shoulders. This iconography is attested among various iconographical variations with Hapi décor, characteristic for a number of temples in the Nile valley (in Meroe and Egypt).⁴⁹

The location of the Hapi figure between garlands of flowers is known at Dakke⁵⁰ and at Kalabsha⁵¹ temples, but in a different position - the gods of the Nile hold trays with gifts and move in the procession of the gods. The figures of god Hapi libating from *hes*-vases pressed to their chest, are known from the columns in the Amun Temple and in temple F at Naqa, however, not being surrounded by garlands of flowers. At Naqa (Amun Temple), for example, the Hapi gods are represented in a kind of procession of equal figures (on the gate) or looking at each other (on the columns) libating with *hes*-vases.⁵²

48 See for example Roeder 1930, 205, 212 – 227, 245 – 274; Roeder 1911, 48-49, 56-66, 71-77, 81-85.

49 For this subject see Kormysheva 1995, 115-142.

50 Roeder 1930, 320, 325, § 706 – 709, Taf. 121 a, b.

51 Gauthier 1911 - 1927, 13-15, pl. III, XI A, B, XVI B, XII-XIII.

52 Griffith 1911, pl. XXI, XXIII.

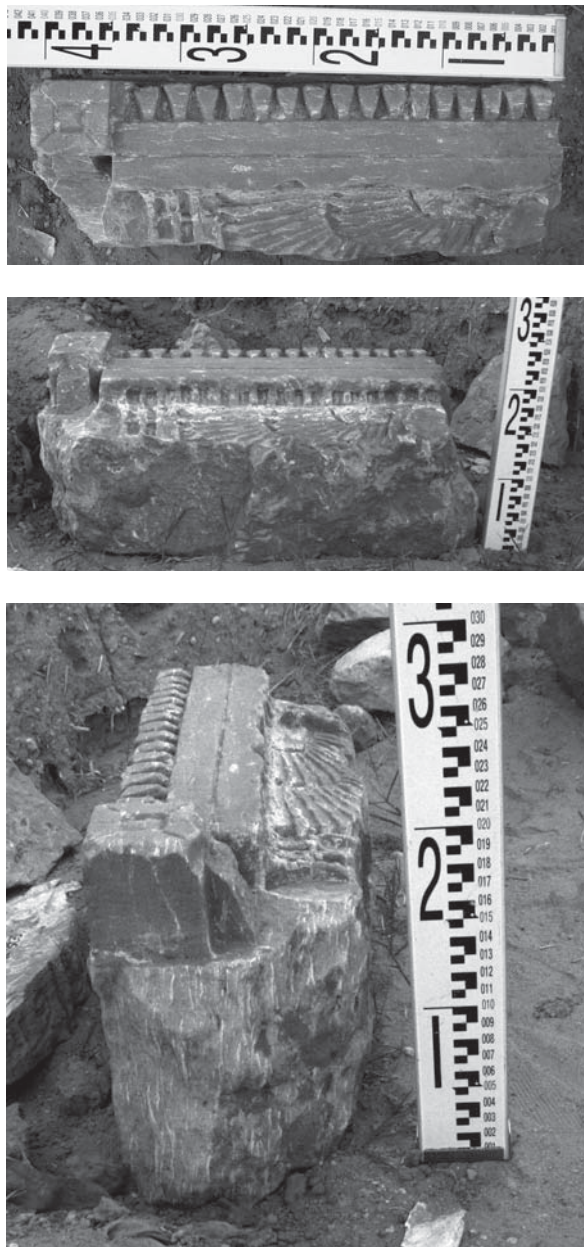


Plate XII, Fig. 1a,b,c: Fragments of the lintel decorated with winged sun disc. Photo Sergey Malykh

The character of the composition at Naga is not exactly the same as what was found in Abu Erteila, because at Naga two figures of Hapi are pictured within the same relief frames, facing each other and being framed by columns of Meroitic hieroglyphic inscriptions. However the pose of Hapi's hands with *hes*-vases from which the libation is made, pressed against the chest, is identical to the representation on the fragment of a column in Abu Erteila. Here, in Abu Erteila, the original picture may be definitely qualified as a decoration of the column base surrounded by two garlands of lotus flowers and buds.

Identical images of Hapi are attested in the temple of Amara, built by Natakamani and Amanitore,

with the only difference that in Amara two figures of Hapi, following each other, are depicted within each relief field.⁵³

Hapi images on the base of columns or in the wall reliefs of a temple were intended to emphasize the main functions of the king on earth: the provision of the Nile flood granted by Hapi. Therefore these figures are always placed on the basement of the composition, as a reflection of the earth, in opposition to the upper part, which symbolizes the sky.⁵⁴ A fragment of plaster with remains of red and yellow paint of a royal headdress has been found near this column fragment with the Hapi representation. This cannot be directly attributed to the image of Hapi, but it certainly evidences that the temple reliefs were painted, like all walls of the premises where the white plaster coating of was painted with yellow, blue and pink colors (see above).

Fragments of lintels

The fragment of a sandstone lintel with the size of 45 cm length, 13 cm height, and 22.5 cm thickness, decorated with a winged sun disc has been found in the southern part of the Kom (pl. XII, fig. 1a,b,c). In its style the fragment appears very similar to the samples from the Hathor Mammisi in Naqa (in past publications wrongly designated 'Roman Kiosk').⁵⁵ By the style of the ornament at the top of the fragment, it is clear that the decoration of this fragment is identical to the middle part of the lintel décor of the Kiosk at Naqa (pl. XII, fig. 2).

A small sandstone fragment decorated with the wings of a sun disk (size 0.21 x 0.13 m) was found here as well, in the northern part of the excavation area (pl. XII, fig.3). Presumably, this fragment is a part of a lintel, originally belonging to the same structure as the previous one.

Another fragment of white sandstone has been discovered in the north-western corner of structure 12 at Kom I (level 392.01 m) in upside down position. It is decorated with a relief in the form of a sun

53 Griffith 1912, pl. VI. On the columns at Naqa and in Musawwarat es Sufra (s. Wenig 1977, 459-475, Abb. 6-11).

54 For Hapi in Nubian temples see Kormysheva 1995, 118-119, Abb. 3, 4.

55 Kroeper et al. 2011, 117. Similar images are preserved in the Amun temple of Naqa (Hofmann/ Tomandl 1986, 101), to the west from temple IA 300 in Musawwarat es Sufra (Hofmann/ Tomandl 1986, 94), Meroe (Hofmann/ Tomandl 1986, 45), in Musawwarat es Sufra see Hintze et al. 1993, plans 5, 7; on a lintel of a chapel in Sedeinga, (Welsby/ Anderson 2004, 298, Cat. 300); cf. also in Meroe (Török 1997, pl. 105, 291-1).



Plate XII. Fig. 2: Kiosk in Naga. Photo Eleonora Kormysheva

disk, entwined with two uraei (pl. XIII, fig. 1a,b). Its size is: length 73 cm, height 26 cm, thickness 17 cm; the length of the decorated space is 64.4 cm; it was covered with a thick layer of white plaster.⁵⁶

The context of the find points to the reuse of this very important architectural detail. Its decor is typical for different kinds of constructions, in particular for doorways, lintels as well as altars. As an analogy, one can refer to the reconstruction of the entrance to the Lion Temple pylon in Musawwarat es Sufra,⁵⁷ where a sun disk, wreathed by uraei, decorates the portal of the Pylon. The same type of decoration is attested in the Amun Temple of Naqa.⁵⁸ Judging by the preserved form, it can be assumed that this fragment could be a part of the gate structure. In favor of this assumption speaks the decorated side of the track, enough to be put into the gate. On the other hand, the size of the face is rather small for the



Plate XII. Fig. 3: Fragment of lintel decorated with the sun disk. Photo Eugenio Fantusati

gate. Accordingly, the suggestion that this fragment belonged to a (later broken) altar cannot be excluded.

Available data indicates the presence of a temple complex in Abu Erteila and it is likely that it is still preserved in the lower stratigraphy of the site. To determine its original position, as well as the god worshipped, is not yet possible. The only find in this respect is the fragment of a faience statuette (pl. XIII, fig. 2) with the animal paws of a lion or a leopard. It has been discovered at the northern wall

⁵⁶ This fragment has been marked on the ground plan of Kom I near the northern wall of structure 12; level 392.04 m.

⁵⁷ Hintze 1971, Taf. 15, 19, 100; Hintze et al. 1993, Plan 5-7.

⁵⁸ Hofmann/ Tomandl 1986, 101 and from the chapel in Sedeinga (Netemkhor); Welsby/ Anderson 2004, 298, Cat. 300; see also Baud 2010, 223.



Plate XIII. Fig. 1a,b: Fragment of sandstone decorated with the sun and uraei. Photo Sergey Malykh



Plate XIII. Fig. 2: Fragment of a faience statuette. Photo Svetlana Malykh

(north-western corner) of structure 6 at Kom I (level 391.26 m). However, this single piece does not allow any meaningful conclusions.

It should, however, be born in mind that the two settlements (Abu Erteila and Awlib) shared a great hafir, which is in use up to now. P. Lenoble, who stressed the close connections between these two settlements too, called them 'sworn brothers'. He correctly pointed out that the hafir was controlled by temples not yet identified.⁵⁹ If these assumptions are correct, one may suppose that the temple complex

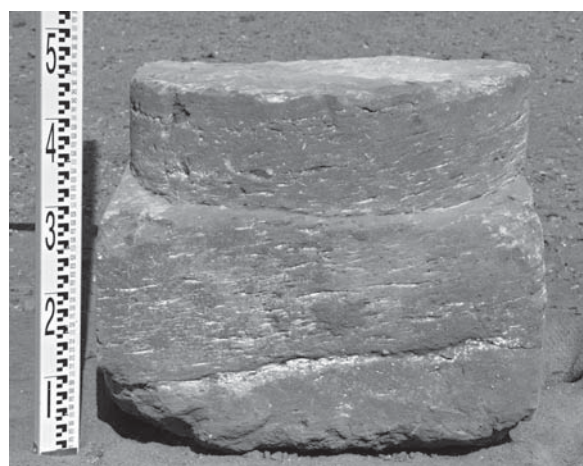


Plate XIII. Fig. 3 a, b: Fragment of the column found in the south-western part of the Kom I. Photo Sergey Malykh

of Abu Erteila could be associated with the temple of Amun in Awlib, from the religious point of view. However, at the moment, we cannot go further with this assumption.

II. Sounding on the Territory Adjacent to the Area of Excavations

In order to determine the possible location of the temple, the 5 x 5 meter sounding was dug outside of the excavated area of Kom II, in its northern part (temporarily marked as Kom II N). Two fitting fragments of columns, as well as the traces of an east-west oriented wall have been revealed at level 391.95 m.

With the same purpose, a column fragment (pl. XIII, fig. 3 a,b), traces of which have been found on

⁵⁹ Lenoble 1987 b, 213.

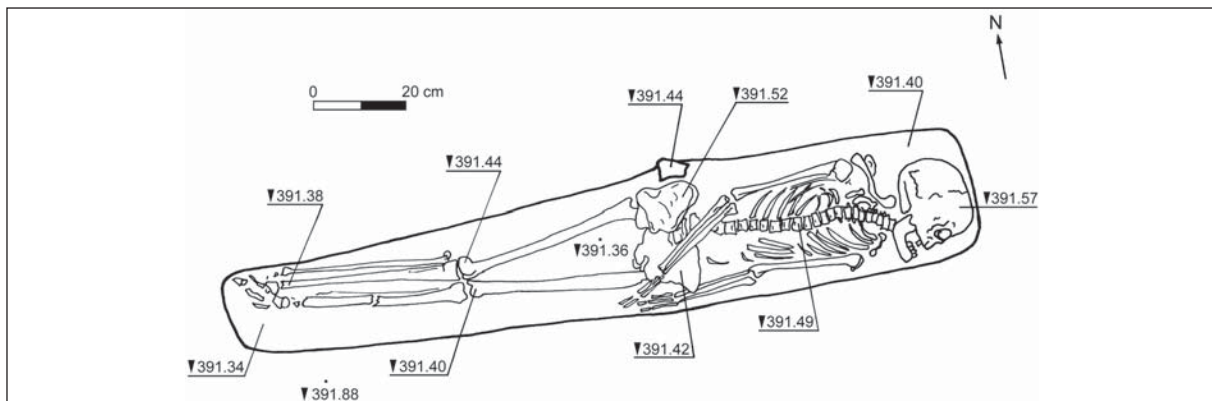


Plate XIV. Fig. 1: Skeleton from the Grave 1. Drawn by Sergey Malykh

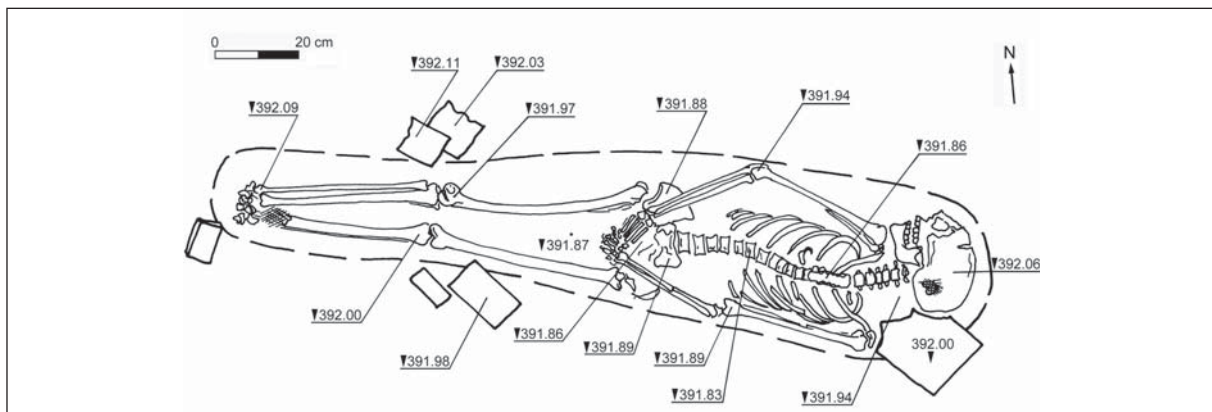


Plate XIV. Fig. 2: Skeleton from the Grave 2. Drawn by Sergey Malykh

the surface in the south-western part of Kom I, has been excavated outside of the systematic excavations of the site. One fragment represents a rectangular base and a part of the column, both carved from a single piece of sandstone. The diameter of the column is 47.5 – 48 cm. The fragment represents a rectangular base (or probably, cubic abacus) as it is attested in the temple of Amun at Naqa).

III. Burials in Abu Erteila

In the upper layers of Kom I and Kom II eight human burials have been found. Most likely they were made after the residential and administrative buildings have been abandoned, evidenced by the fact that some of the grave pits have been dug through the walls of the building structures at Kom I. Respectively, the remains of the walls might have been covered with soil and could not be seen at the time of the grave construction.

Six intrusive burials have been found, arranged in simple grave pits without grave goods at Kom I. Five of them are concentrated in the area of structures 11, 12 and 14, and grave 1 being situated about 5 m to the north-west of this group (pl. XIV, fig. 1).

Three of the discovered graves (1, 2 and 6)⁶⁰ demonstrate the unity of the funeral rites: the body is stretched on his back, oriented east-west, head to the east. The arms are crossed in the pelvis (grave 2; pl. XIV, fig. 2) or one of the hands is stretched out along the body while the other rests on the bones of the pelvis (grave 1).

Grave 1 was situated in structure 8, the size of the grave pit of anthropoid form is 1.90 × 0.45 m – precisely corresponding to the body form (the size of the skeleton is 1.65 × 0.40 cm). The northern wall of room 8, which was built earlier in mud brick, has been partially punched due to this inhumation. The pit contained a skeleton in extended position, oriented east-west, head to the east. The right hand was on the pelvis, the left hand, near to the pelvis, was extended along the body. Probably it was a young individual.

⁶⁰ Burial 6 has not yet been excavated, since it was in a deeper level than the 2011 and 2012 excavations. Only the limits of the grave pit have been recorded, as well as its orientation and the fact that the body was covered with a straw mat. However, the orientation of the burial pit is similar to the orientation of graves 1 and 2, suggesting a similarity with grave 6.

Small pieces of fabric have been found at the head and at the left foot in the Grave 2 (pl. XIV, fig. 2). There have been no grave goods. Remains of the fabric, which was preserved at the dead, allow to assume that the body has been wrapped in a woolen shroud, as it can be concluded from well preserved burials in the necropolis of Djebel Geili. In Djebel Geili, the position of the hands on the pelvis is attested for all female burials.⁶¹

This body position is known from Gebel Makbor – an area of stone deposits, which have been used for the constructions of Abu Erteila and Awlib.⁶² The comparative analysis of this type of inhumation also demonstrates a similarity with Late Meroitic burials (IV century A.D.) in El-Kadada and burials in the area of 4th Nile Cataract.⁶³

It may be assumed that the arms of the deceased in the grave 2 have originally been crossed, but not tightly fixed – thus they were displaced. The same could have been the case with the head: while the deceased in grave 1 faced south, the skeleton in grave 2 faced north. However, it is possible that they were originally laid face up, and that the head position changed later due to the decomposition process. In graves 1 and 2, the deceased were wrapped in a woolen cloth⁶⁴ (dust particles were preserved in some bones), and the body in grave 6 was covered with straw mats.

Grave 3, with similar orientation of the body, was situated in square 10 at level 391.70 m. Two burials (3 and 5) at Kom I, disposed not far from graves 2 and 6, have a different orientation of the bodies: north-south with a slight shift to the east (pl. XIV, fig. 3; pl. XIV, fig. 5). Both of them were found in identical pose - lying on the back in extended position, feet crossed, right arm along the body, left arm is slightly bent at the elbow and let down to the right one. Traces of tissue demonstrate that the bodies had been wrapped in a shroud. These burials were intrusive into the wall, as described above, and therefore were buried after its collapse.⁶⁵

Grave 4 shows a similar orientation and mode of inhumation: the body is stretched on the back in roughly east-west orientation, head to the east, but with a shift to the south, the right arm is extended along the body, the left one rests in the area of the pelvis, the feet are crossed (pl. XIV, fig. 4).

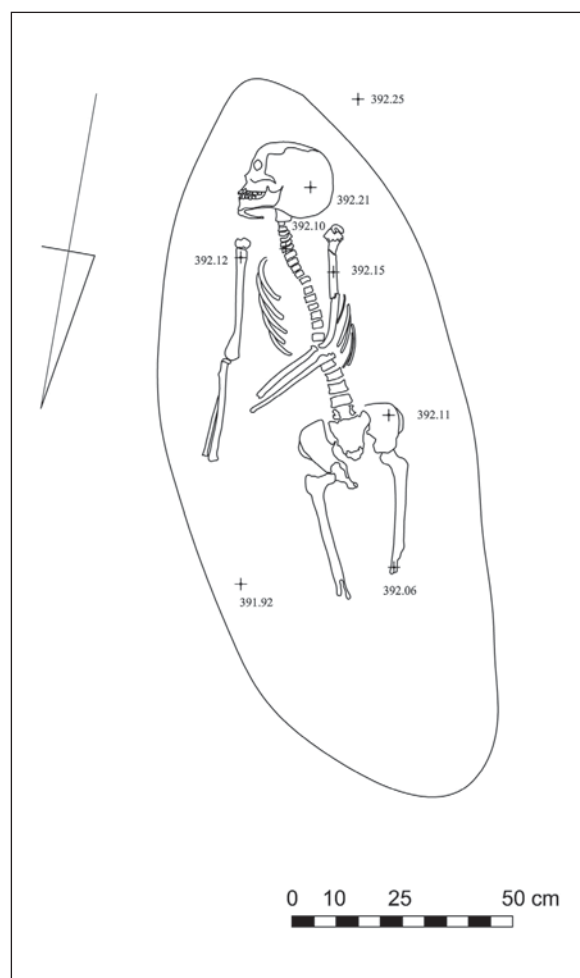


Plate XIV. Fig. 3: Skeleton from the Grave 3. Drawn by Marco Baldi

The dating of the burial 5 given here has become possible thanks to the radiocarbon analysis of the bones performed at the University of Rome that revealed their conventional age corresponding to 765 ± 40 yr BP, or 1160-1255 A.D. in calibrated data.

According to previous excavations, undertaken by Salah Mohamed Ahmed and P. Lenoble at the eastern plain of Abu Erteila, the inhumation of a woman laid on her back was discovered. Her skeleton was oriented north-east – south-west with the face turned towards the east and the hands resting along the pelvis. This peculiar position, according to Salah Mohamed Ahmed, can be tentatively dated to the early Christian Period.⁶⁶

The tradition of a body's disposition ascends in the Napatan period, the same position of a body is fixed also into a sarcophagus,⁶⁷ it is widely known in the Meroitic Period in various settlements,⁶⁸ in

61 Caneva et al. 1988, 209.

62 Lenoble 1987 b, 222-227, fig. 5, 6, 7.

63 Lenoble 1987 a, 89, 101, p. 1; Zurawski 2005, Fig. 5, 6.

64 See in details: Fantusati et al. 2012 a, 52.

65 On Meroitic burial customs in non-royal cemeteries see: Geus 1989, 163-185; cf. Eisa 1999.

66 Salah 2011, 299-301.

67 Bonnet 1999, 5, 12-14, fig. 4-6; Simon/ Maureille 1999, 39, fig. 2.

68 Näser 1999, 19-21, 27, fig. 2; Geus 1999, 33, pl. 1.

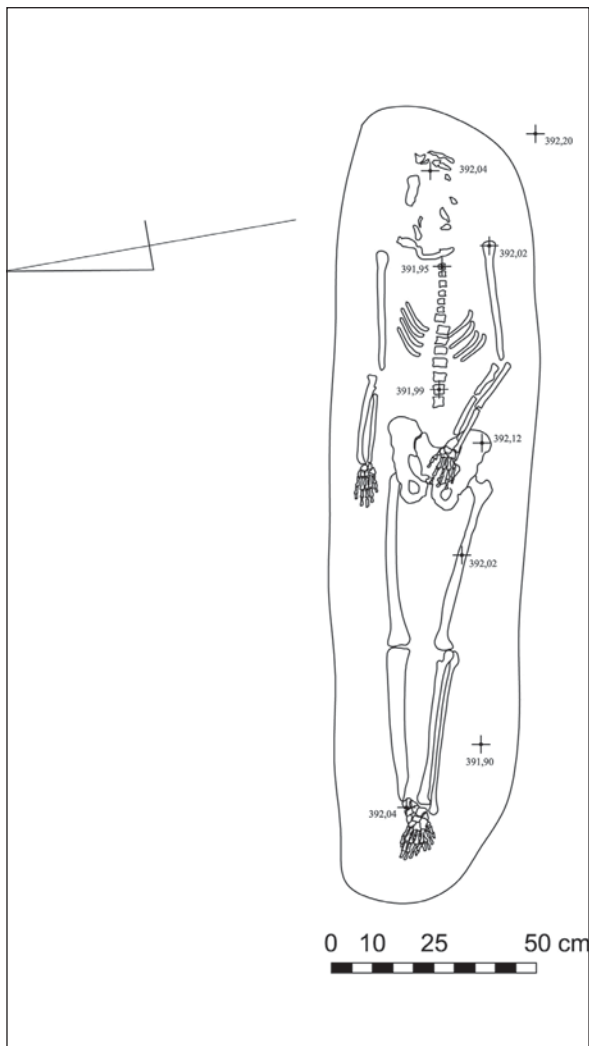


Plate XIV. Fig. 4: Skeleton from the Grave 4. Drawn by Marco Baldi

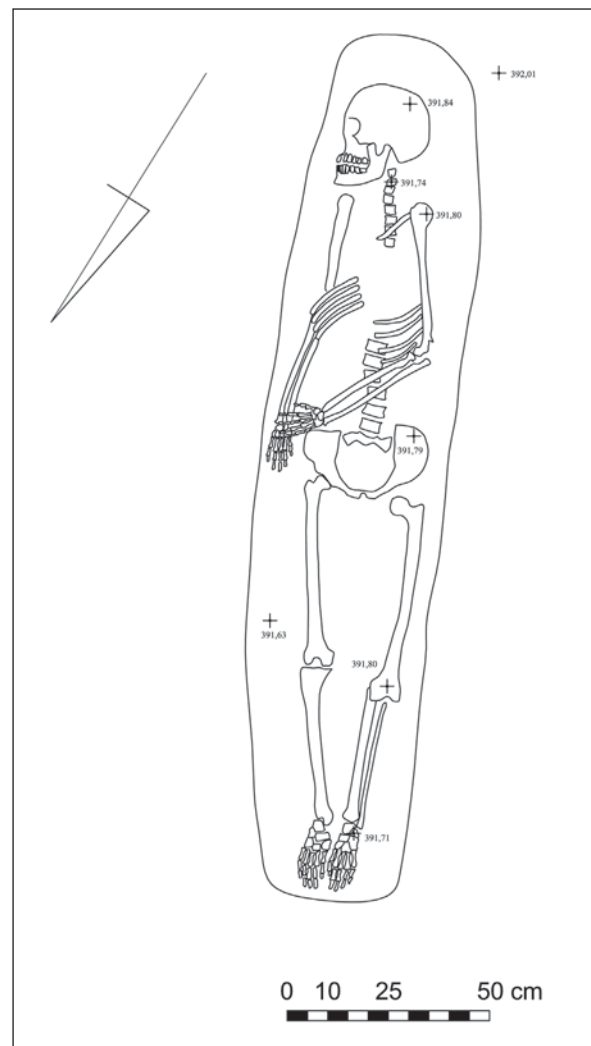


Plate XIV. Fig. 5: Skeleton from the Grave 5. Drawn by Marco Baldi

the post-Meroitic time⁶⁹ and the early Christian period⁷⁰ as well.

Another two burials without grave goods have been recorded at Kom II. One of them has been found just outside the northern wall of the rebuilt premises (pl. XV, fig. 1, a, b) and probably belonged to a young woman, the other one to a child of more than one year (pl. XV, fig. 2). The skeleton of the child (pl. V, fig. 2) as well as the woman's skeleton were oriented towards west. The location of both skeletons shows that these were intrusive burials, marking the final stage of the existence of the complex. This

orientation of the skeletons is not attested among the burials at Kom I.

The bodies were stretched west-east, with a slight shift to the north, head to the west. The woman's body rested on its right side, facing south; the child, on its left side, facing north. The woman's arms were extended, hands crossed on the pelvis. Based on tissue remnants on the upper part of the body, it can be concluded that the body was wrapped into a shroud.

The position of the hands and the upper part of the child's feet are not clear, since the burial was disturbed by animals and the bones were partially missing. The orientation of the head to the west is attested for Christian burials.⁷¹ Thus, both these burials at Kom II might indicate a very late occupation of the site.

⁶⁹ Zurawski 1998; Kendall 2004, 482, fig. 8, 9. For similar burials see Bonnet et al. 1978, fig. 11-12; Geus 1982, fig. 6; Geus 1983, pl. XIa; Lenoble 1987 a, pl. I; Bonnet et al. 2006, fig. 5. For the burial see also Dunham 1963, fig. 34a-b; Geus 1978, pl. IXb; Vercoutter 1979, fig. 4; Williams 1991, fig. 100a; Geus 1996, fig. 17; Welsby 1996, fig. 26; Näser 1999, 19-21, 27, fig. 2; Geus 1999, 33, pl. 1.

⁷⁰ Salah 2011, 299-301; Caneva 1988, 209.

⁷¹ Geus 1995, 88; Geus et al. 1995, 118, fig. 15; SN 18., 120, fig. 19, pl. VIIa, pl. IX; SN 140, 120-121, fig. 20, pl. X; SN 182; Zurawski 1996, 126, fig. 4, 134, fig. 9.

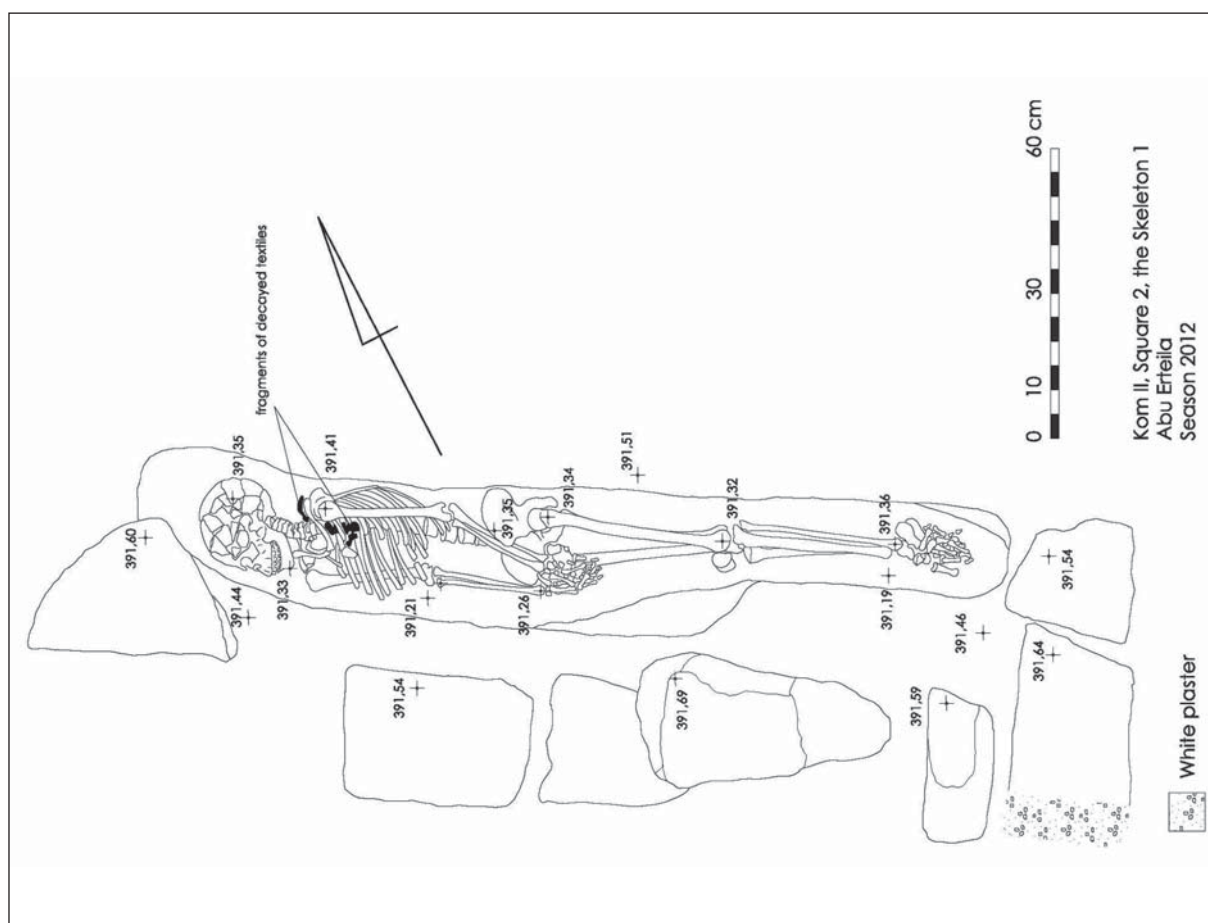
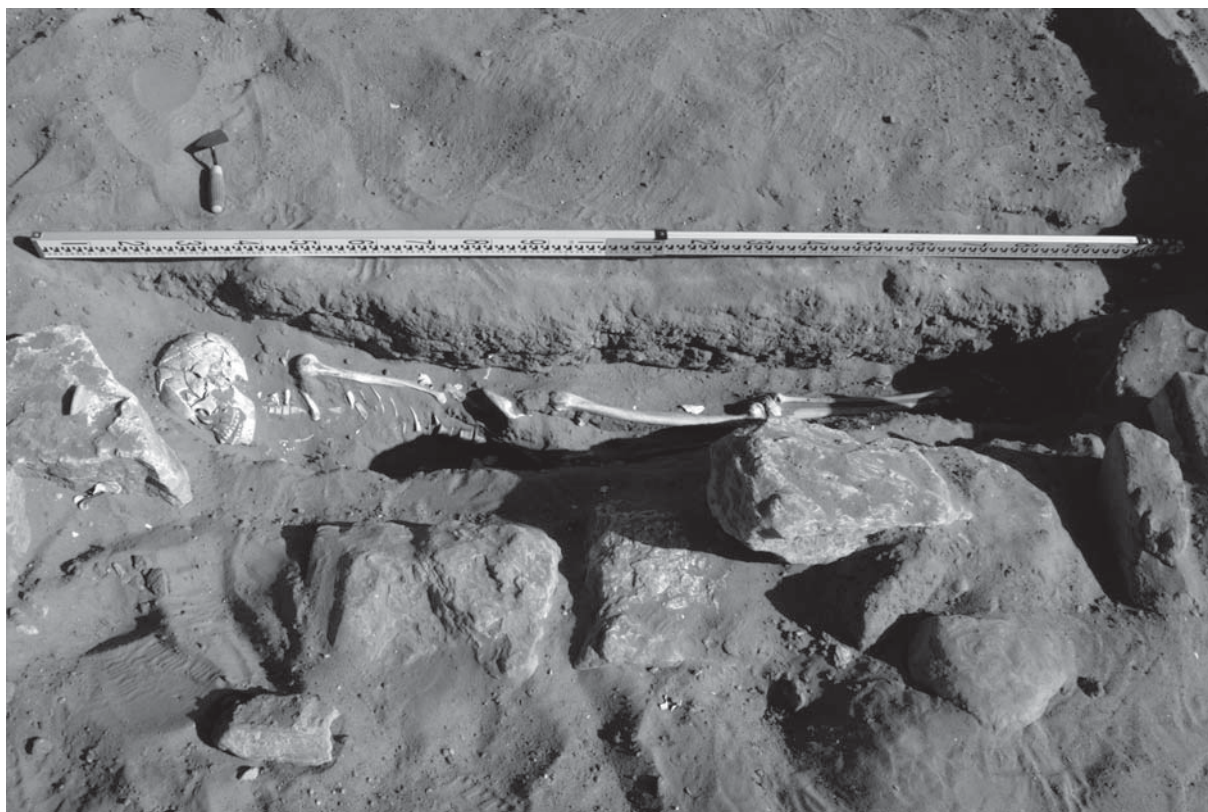


Plate XV. Fig. 1 a, b: Grave 1 on the Kom II. Orientation west-east. Photo Sergey Malykh. Drawn by Maksim Lebedev

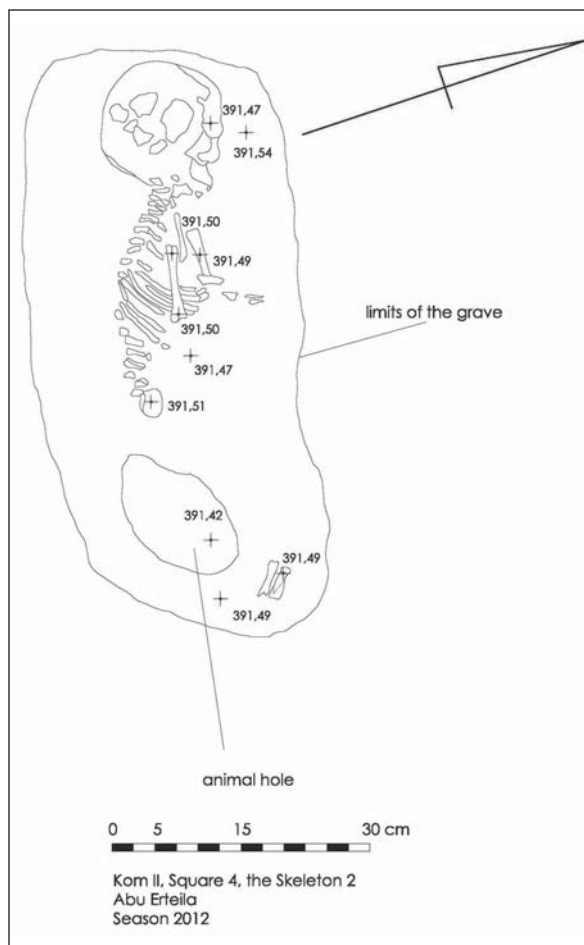


Plate XV. Fig. 2: Child skeleton. Drawn by Maksim Lebedev

Conclusion

According to the present data, one may assume that a governor's palace was located in Abu Erteila, including living quarters, a kitchen with heating, a reception hall, facilities for staff and other household facilities. It cannot be excluded that this complex might have been previewed for temporary visits of the king himself.

The results of the archaeological excavations leave no doubt of the existence of a temple complex at Abu Erteila, constructed at the beginning of the Meroitic period, when the Egyptian language was still in use. Taking into consideration the close relations between Abu Erteila and Awlib, where an Amun temple was situated, it may be assumed that the temple of Abu Erteila could have been devoted most likely to a member of the triad of Amun or, on the contrary, to a local Meroitic god. Further excavations and the detection of the original location and layout of the temple (the number of rooms and the shape of the sanctuary) shall be able to confirm this assumption, even in absence of written sources.

The present findings suggest not only the existence of a temple, but of a whole temple complex: a hall of columns, pylons (?) and possibly a mammisi - based on the analogy with the mammisi of Hathor at Naqa. Since the artifacts have been found either reused or dumped, and at a considerable distance from each other, it must be assumed that the original temple building is located in lower stratigraphic layers. This assumption is indirectly confirmed by pottery fragments found in the excavating layer, most of which date into the late Meroitic period, when the dedicatory inscriptions have not been composed in Egyptian language anymore.

The material collected in the course of the excavations is insufficient to draw conclusions about the nature of the settlement of Abu Erteila. However, if a separate necropolis is not discovered and the number of graves remains limited by intrusive ones as it is attested now, the settlement may have been identified as a seasonal or temporary settlement, possibly used even for a temporary stay of the king. This assumption has a logical consequence with a seasonal nature of the filling wadi and is confirmed by the necessity to construct hafir. That means that the environment in this region was not able to provide a permanent (for example a settled agricultural) settlement with the necessary quantity of water.

The geographical location of Abu Erteila next to the Wadi el-Hawad, a temporary watercourse (wadi) that flows into the Nile near Hamadab, a satellite town of Meroe, should be taken into account as well. Being disposed on a transport route linking the Nile Valley and the desert areas to the east of Meroe, with a temple of Amun located in Awlib and a Lion temple in Basa, south-east of Abu Erteila, Abu Erteila certainly must have had a great administrative and religious significance.

Taking into account the identification of Hamadab as a satellite town of Meroe located at the mouth of the Wadi el-Hawad, one can assume that Abu Erteila, situated at the Wadi el-Hawad as well, could have served as a temporary station of the king. Artifacts with royal symbols and inscriptions support this. Indirect evidence to this assumption is the possible interest of the king for areas at the upper course of the Wadi el-Hawad, in particular, for the Lion temple in Basa.

In any case, the comparative analysis of archaeological artifacts suggests the discovery of a new large settlement (or even the administrative center) of the Butana district. This is shown by various distinctive features - the longitudinal-transverse masonry, a combination of fired bricks and mud bricks, kitchens with bowls typical for the area, vessels, stands for the

offerings that are well known in the district of the Butana, shape and decoration of pottery typical for the second half of the Meroitic Kingdom.

Chronologically, the excavated structures may be attributed to the last period of the existence of Meroe (I - IV centuries B.C.). The presence of kitchens with many ovens that served both for heating and cooking points to the nature of the building, such as a high quality of construction, which was probably destined as an apartment complex for senior royal administration or priests.

The layout of the buildings and their dimensions suggest that they might belong to a noble family of a high priest, or a local chief, that is, those who lived in the so-called 'elite buildings', but also to the temporary station of a king himself. In this case, the excavated rooms could be part of a palace and/ or economic extensions of a temple, which is to some extent confirmed by the discovery of fragments of fine ware ('egg-shell ware') on the western edge of the structures, usually related to public buildings.

The lower chronological limit of this monument is not yet established since only the upper layers of the Koms have been excavated yet. According to the presence of the Egyptian dedicatory inscription, as well as fragments of early Meroitic pottery at the surface, a lower chronological limit of the monument can be expected in the 3rd century B.C. The nature of the structures in the upper layers with their small room dimensions and the poor inventory, with hastily dug intrusive burials at Kom I and Kom II even with variations in the normative orientation of the skeleton (Kom II), and fragments of late to post Meroitic pottery, support the abandonment of the complex in the IV-V centuries A.D.

It is possible, however, that the area was inhabited until the Christian Period. This is supported by several surface finds of pottery fragments, which are characteristic for the Christian Period, the orientation of the intrusive burials at Kom II, which is attested for the early Middle Ages, as well as the preliminary data of the archaeological sounding north of Kom I, where building remains presumably belonging to an early Christian basilica have been revealed.⁷² This data, however, need further confirmation by archaeological excavations.

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⁷² see in details: Baldi/ Varriale 2011, 372-379.

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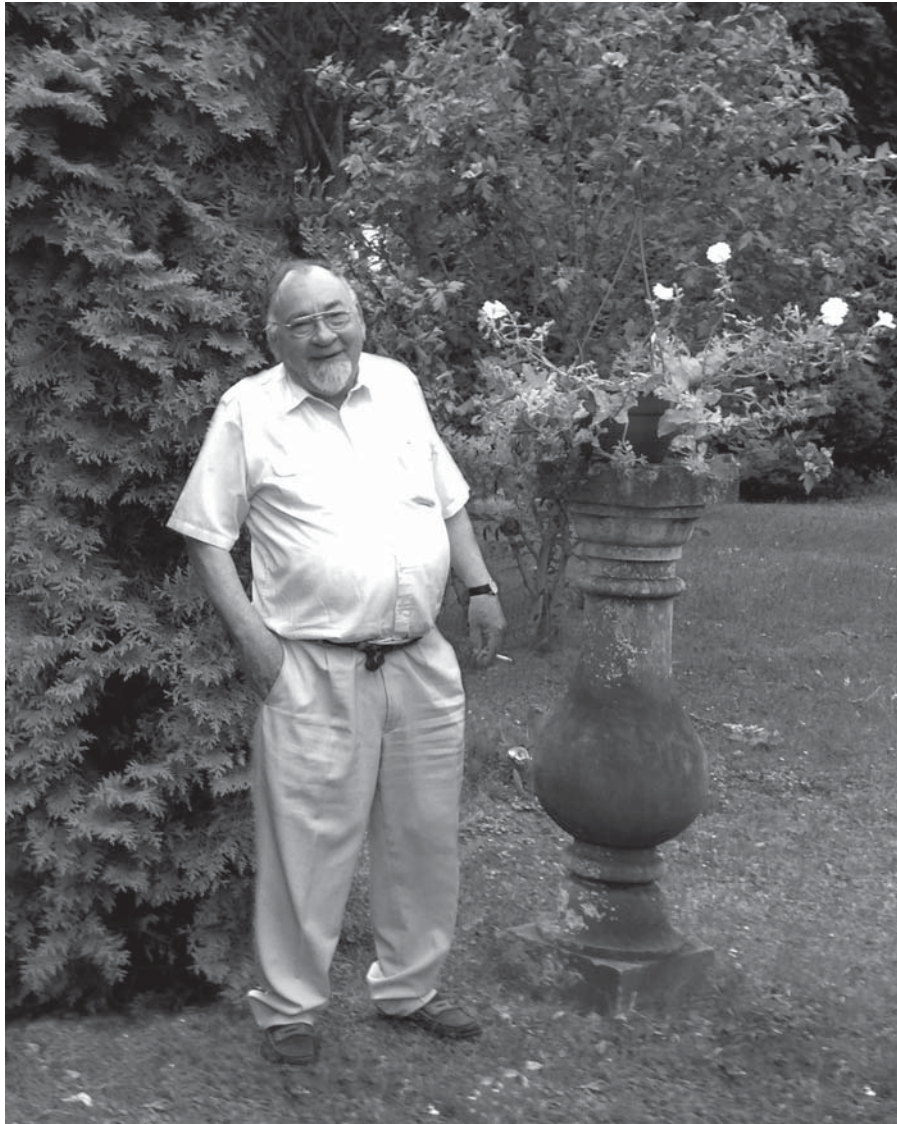
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EIN FORSCHERLEBEN ZWISCHEN DEN WELTEN

ZUM 80. GEBURTSTAG VON STEFFEN WENIG

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON

ANGELIKA LOHWASSER & PAWEL WOLF



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(Foto: Claudia Näser)

FRONTISPIZ: Der Jubilar im Garten seines Hauses in Berlin-Karow
(Foto: Jane Humphris, Bildbearbeitung: Frank Joachim)

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DANK

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