

tural analysis of the religious complex in the ancient town of Kerma and excavated a group of extraordinary graves in the Eastern Necropolis. The mission included a physical anthropologist and an archaeozoologist. The Antiquities Officer accompanying the mission made an inspection tour of a number of archaeological sites on both banks of the Nile as far north as Sadenga.

University of Warsaw expedition

The Polish expedition worked at the Christian capital (Old Dongola) from 5 February to 15 March 1982. Directed by Professor S. Jakobielski, the mission resumed excavation of the Christian houses and the recovery of the plastered murals on the interior walls of the Dongola mosque.

Oriental Institute of Naples expedition

This mission, directed by Dr. R. Fattovich, is engaged in surveying the Gash Delta (Kassala Province, Eastern Sudan), a part of the country which is almost unknown archaeologically. Hundreds of new sites have been discovered and recorded systematically.

North Texas State University expedition

This is a joint venture with the University of Khartoum, under the general direction of Dr. T.R. Hays. The mission spent three months surveying the Buttana region (north central Sudan) which is rich in archaeological remains.

University of Rome expedition

This mission, headed by Professor S. Donadoni, undertook excavations at the Napatan religious centre at Jebel Barkal (northern Sudan). Two well preserved lion statues were discovered and removed to the regional archaeological museum at Jebel Barkal.

The French Archaeological Unit

Under the direction of Dr. F. Geus, the members of this section are working in the Sudan following a cultural agreement between the French and Sudanese governments. For six successive seasons the unit has been engaged in rescue excavations at Al Kadada (Shendi region), an area rich in remains and seriously endangered by the construction of new agricultural schemes. Many prehistoric and Meroitic sites have been recorded and excavated systematically.

Expedition of the Instituto di Paletnologia, University of Rome

Under the direction of Professor S. Puglisi, this

mission carries out yearly excavations on prehistoric sites a few kilometres north of Khartoum. The work last season was supplemented by a geological survey in the region of the 6th Cataract.

**EXCAVATIONS BY THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA
TO THE SUDAN
1982-1983 SEASON**

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The research that was begun ten years ago has been continued this winter at Kerma (Northern Province). The Swiss Archaeological Mission has also taken on responsibility for excavation at sites that are endangered by development in the urban areas or by enlargement of the areas of cultivation. As a result, a building of the Napatan era (about 500 BC) has been discovered. This construction appears to belong to the urban centre which developed after the abandonment of the ancient city of the 3rd and 2nd millennia. Within the ancient city, which is one of the oldest on the African continent, a large surface area has been studied and the stages of architectural development have become clearer. In the necropolis, several tombs have revealed new and original discoveries as well as providing abundant material.

The Napatan building

A project for the construction of a house on a plot of land in the centre of the modern town of Kerma that contained signs of archaeological remains, prompted us to intervene. The owner of the plot, Sayid Ali Bakhit, has kindly agreed to delay construction, and we have thus been able to uncover the mud brick masonry of an edifice which was modified many times. The building contains a group of elongated chambers, oriented on a N-S axis. On the southern side there is a vestibule and annex rooms. Several ceramic vessels filled with ash and wood charcoal were found set in the mud. Other pottery (probably buried as foundation deposits), beads and faience amulets have also been recovered. To the west, there are domestic ovens which were used to prepare bread for offerings (?). Conical, flat or rounded bread molds have been found which are

comparable to those present at other sites in the region (Gebel Barkal, Kawa, Tabo). The ovens of the temple were built upon older remains, and the arrangement shows that bread making continued during a long period.

A preliminary study of the pottery and other objects recovered suggests an occupation dating to the Napatan era. Excavations during our next season will permit the recognition of earlier levels and establish a plan of the successive buildings. It will be necessary to extend the research in order to understand how the later urban centre was organised around this monument.

The ancient city

A vast surface clearance has revealed part of the southwestern quarter of the ancient city of Kerma. The houses were built along difference street layouts which appear to have been determined by changes in the defensive arrangements. The ramparts were bordered by deep ditches which were often filled, either with rubbish or during enlargement of the built-up area. It is thus possible to find architectural features that represent the changes which took place over several centuries. Over time the yards with sinuous walls and the houses (originally of small dimensions) became more and more spacious. Food stores, often with circular silos of impressive size, seem to have been arranged according to the layout of the quarter which was originally irregular and later orthogonal. A potter's workshop has been studied in which a vault supported the sole of a kiln that can be dated to the end of the 3rd millenium. This technological achievement has not previously been described for such an ancient period.

The stratigraphic studies carried out in the area of the circular huts suggest that this quarter of the city was occupied for several centuries by inhabitants belonging to a class of relatively modest means, and it seems, therefore, that a special part of the city was reserved for this class.

During the clearance of a pit at the edge of the great temple (the western Deffufa), a narrow chamber, 1.95m by 1.30m, was revealed that was clearly designed for the preservation of valuable items. This hiding place is deeply inserted into the solid mass of mud brick, and its walls are faced with small sandstone slabs which are covered with a layer of dried mud.

The Eastern Necropolis

A zone which corresponds to the end of Ancient

Kerma is being studied. This period saw the establishment of a more hierarchical class system, and the tombs are clearly differentiated; simpler tombs are grouped around large tumuli which make their first appearance at this time. The ceramics seem to indicate that the first permanent settlement was established at the end of the occupation of Ancient Kerma. During the funerary ceremonies, which may have been the occasion for a banquet, numerous bowls were upturned on the ground. Evidence for this comes from the eastern side of one superstructure, marked by a circle of small black stones 10m in diameter, where 18 bowls have been discovered placed upside-down. One of these, with a decoration of small dots in relief, is reminiscent of certain vessels from central Africa.

The tomb of a child about one year old has also been discovered. Although plundered (the head and arms are missing), this tomb has provided some unusual remains. The body was covered by a cattle skin and rested on another skin on a straw mat. The clothing, a red leather loincloth, was preserved. It was decorated with four diamonds of blue and white beads. The same pattern is found on the loincloths of the Nubian soldiers in the wooden 'model' from the tomb of Mesekhti at Assiout in Middle Egypt (ca. 2100 BC). A dagger was placed on the hip of the child, who also wore a necklace of black and white beads. A fan was found near the hands, in front of the face. Several ceramic bowls of very fine quality completed the material found in the tomb. On the west side of the circular pit were the remains of two lambs sacrificed during the funeral ceremony. Both wore collars of plaited leather thongs attached to a long cord, and one was remarkably decorated: on its head was a sort of cap with a disc of ostrich feathers attached by thongs. This was fitted with a perforated band of red leather which passed through the horns and finished on each side of the head with precious ornaments of blue beads forming a series of triangles with other black and white beads. The coat of the lamb was marked by several patches of red ochre, a practice which may very likely be associated with magical or religious rites.

The decoration of this animal recalls rock drawings at Tibesti and in the Libyan desert. The clay statuette of an animal found in the cemetery of Aniba would also indicate a widespread use of this type of ornamentation. It would be far-fetched to imagine that the disc of ostrich feathers discovered in this tomb is a symbolic solar disc, but it is difficult not to compare our discovery with the representations of the god Amun in the form of a ram.