

## Comments and conclusions

Trampling cannot be completely ruled out in a surface collection rich in notches and denticulates. However, I do not think that it had such an impact. Edges are fresh. The alternate and alternating retouch, which is the rule on pseudo-tools, is never found. Notched and denticulated edges are rarely associated with other working edges, and appear therefore to have been intended as distinct tools.

This assemblage compares closely with the one found at Buur Medow 1 in typology, type percentages, stylistic attributes, as well as technology (Mussi 1987). However, similar industries are not known elsewhere in Somalia or in East Africa (Mussi in press; Coltorti and Mussi in press). The dating is still an open question. On typological grounds, it can be assumed that those "Mode 5 industries" are of Holocene age. Apparently, they pre-date the introduction of ceramics. The suggested age is anything between 10000 and 5000 years old. It is hoped to better define their chronology in the future.

I propose to informally call the assemblages from Buur Medow 1 and Buur Ad as well as others from the area that appear to be similar but are still under study, "Luuqian" after the name of the nearby town of Luuq.

## Acknowledgements

This research is supported by grants from the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (Rome, Italy). In Somalia, it had the support of the Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts.

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## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA TO KERMA (SUDAN) - SEASON 1988-1989

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The work of the Swiss Archaeological Mission took place from 8 December 1988 to 28 January 1989. As in the past, the two raïs from Tabo, Gad Abdallah and Saleh Melieh, directed a team of 70 to 80 workmen. Fieldwork was concentrated on six locations within the concession, as well as on the nearby site of Koya, on the left bank of the Nile (facing the town of Argo), where a rescue excavation was made necessary after the discovery of a grave in the courtyard of a house.

### The Pre-Kerma settlement

An area of 18 by 12 m was entirely exposed revealing 50 storage pits and post holes belonging to circular huts. The clearance of these surfaces, which are very time-consuming, will make it possible for us to complete the overall plan of the settlement dating around 3000 BC. Several hearths have been preserved, but for the most part the occupation levels have been lost through erosion. Some clusters of pits were frequently surrounded by huts, a layout reminiscent of African villages in which granaries are located in the centre of the settlement. The artefacts found in the pits were identical to those collected during the two previous excavations.

### The ancient town

The north-eastern quarter of the town seems to have developed along one of the roads leading towards the centre. As on the eastern side, the general outlines of the northern ditches constitutes a U-shaped depression that sinks deep into the urbanized area. Soundings cut across the ditches have shown that during the Classic Kerma phase (1750-1500 BC), the occupation levels were situated 4 to 5 metres above the depression. All the fortification walls have disappeared.

The north-eastern end of the town was occupied by a few peculiar buildings, the small rooms of which were surrounded by large courtyards. Flimsy structures were built against the enclosure walls. In front of these buildings, rounded walls delimited a broad passageway that let to the central building, the foundations of which were laid on sand. Many features suggest that these buildings were used for religious or official functions.

Such an hypothesis is supported by the fact that the urban pattern takes into consideration this passageway.

Large enclosures, certainly meant for cattle, were uncovered along the north-south road leading to the Deffufa, the main temple. Closer to the town's centre and at some distance from the main access roads, were two groups of houses built around small courtyards. It could be that these houses belonged to a relatively poor population, in view of the very simple layout, the small size of the rooms, as well as the lack of gardens and of silos.

### **The religious quarter of the ancient town**

The stratigraphic analysis started last year on the eastern side of the Deffufa was resumed. We had already noticed that small buildings were rebuilt several times at the same place, within the enclosure wall of the religious complex. Beneath the foundations of one of these chapels, we found several objects that were part of a votive deposit. Amongst them, an inscribed stela is of great historical interest since it reveals the use of Egyptian writing during the Middle Kerma phase (2050-1750 BC). Beneath the deposit, the well-preserved foundations of an older chapel have been recovered. They were related to an enclosure wall, itself bound by an older sinuous wall.

### **The eastern necropolis**

Two new sectors, CE 17 and CE 18, have been studied. CE 17 permits a better appreciation of the transitional phase between Middle and Classic Kerma. Several burials can be associated with the practice of human sacrifice. Generally, the principal personage lay on a bed, in a bent position. The sacrificial victims were placed next to him; in two cases this involved a woman and an adolescent with his face turned downwards.

Two square chapels were discovered to the northwest of a large tomb the superstructure of which was formed by a circle of mud bricks surrounded by the usual ring of black and white pebbles. Though the pit, rectangular in shape, had been robbed, it was possible to identify the bones of at least three individuals, three whole sheep, and 88 joints of meat from 11 sheep and one goat.

### **The eastern Deffufa**

After the surprise discovery of an internal staircase leading to the upper terrace, a re-clearance of the monument was undertaken. Thus the two rooms have been entirely cleared and redrawn. The mass of brick-work and the internal layout are at slight angle with regard to the facade; the architect took into account both the

nearby tumulus K III and the usual northern orientation of the cult edifices. Four construction stages have been recognized. Originally the two chambers were vaulted. Pilasters and an internal casing were added after a fire. Then, after the collapse of the roof, a new one was rebuilt using wood which was supported by a row of axial columns.

In the southern room, a paving made of reused stones sunk into the mud belonged to the last period of occupation. Amongst the stones, we found several sandstone slabs which no doubt originated from Ancient Kerma graves. One is circular in shape and the other rectangular with an engraved image of a boat. A great number of fragments of faience tiles were found, belonging to the same period as the paving. Many are similar to those described by G.-A. Reisner, while others involve a very different type of ornament. Worthy of mention are a kind of black cone inserted into a support, rilled tiles which were attached to each side of a small wooden board, and some fragments of animal sculptures different from the lions mentioned by G.-A. Reisner.

### **Recent excavation in the modern town of Kerma: a pottery factory**

The projected scheme to build a house about 120 m to the south of the Napatan buildings excavated between 1982 and 1985, initiated a rescue excavation in the modern town. The remains recovered are those of a pottery factory of the Napatan period; they consist of a house, a kiln and several pits. The kiln, 2.40 m in diameter, was fed through an open shaft facing the west. The firing chamber was installed on vaults supported by four pillars. Puddling and decanting pits occupied a large area. They yielded pottery that was thrown away after faulty manufacture. A mud-brick house provided with an open annex and with kitchens was also exposed. The ovens and the jars used for stocking fish indicate a lengthy period of occupation. After the house was destroyed, but while the factory was still in operation, several circular huts were installed on the site of the house.

### **Rescue excavation at Koya: a Christian vaulted grave**

Last summer's torrential rains provoked the collapsed of the vault of a Christian grave located in the courtyard of a house at Koya. At the request of Sayed Khider Adam Eisa, Acting Director of the Sudan Antiquities Service, a rapid investigation was undertaken.

The funerary chamber, accessible through a shaft located to the west, measures 2.60 m by 1.40 - 1.20 m. Its internal height is about 1.10 m. The bodies were introduced into the burial pit through a small door. The

first inhumation involved a man between the ages of 30 and 40. Next to his head was an oil lamp. Later on, the bodies of a woman and those of two old men were placed in the pit. An interesting feature of this tomb is the epitaph painted on the door and the southern jamb. The text, written in Greek, is representative of the early Middle Ages. This sector, which is not far from a church, the remains of which are still to be found, is occupied by a large cemetery.

## EXCAVATIONS IN GEILI PROVINCE 1988

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The Italian Mission for Prehistoric Research carried out the annual campaign of excavation in the Geili area from 23 November to 22 December 1987. Excavations concentrated on the site of Kabbashi (ND 36-B/5-L-4 of the Archaeological Map of the Sudan), east of the Kabbashi railway station, 35 km north of Khartoum.

The Kabbashi site consists of a Merotic cemetery with burial tumuli composed primarily of older (Mesolithic) debris. During the 1986 campaign three tumuli were opened and their funerary chambers discovered and documented. On cultural criteria, the cemetery is attributed to a Late Meroitic period. The underlying prehistoric deposits were still *in situ* and were probably better preserved than any other in the region (Caneva 1987).

This year's program dealt with both periods documented at the site. For the Merotic remains, research focused on the original dimensions of the tumuli, the procedures used in the construction of the earth mounds, and the evidence for funerary ceremony. The second part of the program dealt with the extensive excavation and study of the prehistoric sites lying beneath two of the tumuli. These had been tested in 1986, revealing two distinct sites; one characterized by wavy-line and the other by dotted wavy-line pottery. This year excavation concentrated on the second site.

The three tumuli partially excavated in 1986 were completely dismantled this year. It was discovered that the mounds had been constructed by heaping deposits directly on the ancient compact surface of the prehistoric site. This surface is typical of the region and appears everywhere in the exposed parts of the desert. It is produced by deflation and consists of a solid gravel cap with pebbles half embedded in the compact layer of filtered sand. The sterile yellow gravel, dug out of the

burial chamber, was the first material to be deposited on this older surface. In all the cases examined, this soil was prepared to make a kind of ring around the access pit, regardless of the shape of the pit itself.

As for funerary ceremony, traces of fire were found in different spots on the surface below the mounds, and on the stairway which gives access to one of the graves. This tumulus also included a small pit, dug into the prehistoric debris, 2 m from the main tomb, containing an infant burial adorned with chains of disk-shaped ostrich eggshell beads.

The prehistoric research consisted in the extensive excavation of the prehistoric site beneath Tumulus A. This is located at the western edge of the cemetery, close to the ancient river bed. Excavation this year covered an area of 34 m<sup>2</sup>. Other soundings, over a total of 11 m<sup>2</sup>, were carried out around the edges and in the area surrounding the present mound, in order to identify the actual perimeter of the original tumulus. Indications of ancient digging were found 15 m from the burial pit. Therefore, the area presumably intended to be occupied by the tumulus appears to have a diameter of no more than 30 m. Thus, the original mound covered a smaller area (the diameter being 10 m less) and had a higher top than today. As expected, the ancient deposits all around this area had been removed down to the sterile gravel to build the tumulus. Only traces of the Mesolithic deposits were found outside this area. They consist mainly in remains of human skeletons embedded in the hard virgin soil. In view of future research in this environment, it should now be taken into account that while excavation between tumuli is probably useless, it may be extremely fruitful beneath them.

The prehistoric deposits are 45 cm deep and rich in pottery (dotted wavy-line), lithics and faunal remains. Living surfaces were also discovered, scattered with querns and grinding stones.

Kabbashi-A is the first dotted wavy-line pottery site excavated in this region. Compared with the results obtained during the first campaign (the excavation of Tumulus B) and in the previous research at Saggai (Caneva 1983), the new data encourage a series of considerations. It is now clear that at least two assemblages, chronologically distinct and defined by different ceramics, characterize the Mesolithic of the Nile Valley. They are very similar in their settlement pattern (large settlements on the river bank), subsistence base (wild fauna including a large amount of fish and molluscs) and burial customs (contracted burials beneath the settlement). Living surfaces with large querns and contracted burials (or traces of them) were discovered in all sites.

Pottery decoration is the only remarkable difference. This distinction has traditionally suffered from a lack of attention: Arkell (1949:84) defines dotted wavy line