

■ SUDAN

The University of Geneva Archaeological Mission to Kerma: Preliminary Report Following the 1990-91 Campaign

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Excavations at Kerma were carried out by the Swiss Archaeological Mission to the Sudan between 8 December 1990 and 1 February 1991. Unfortunately, serious illness overtook several members of the Mission and after 25 December the number of workman had to be reduced from 100 to 25. The workman were led by the *rais* of Tabo, Gad Abdallah and Saleh Melieh. The problems caused by illness also necessitated the abandonment of the work planned on the eastern necropolis.

Rescue excavations in the modern town were important in giving us new insights into the final stages of the Kerma culture. Remains of a vast residential building, perhaps a palace, were discovered. This should be compared with other monuments built after the conquest of the area by the Pharaohs of the eighteenth Dynasty. Conservation of the architectural remains will allow visitors to see these very impressive ruins of the final Kerma period.

Our excavation programme concentrated on the northwest quarter of the ancient town, where well-preserved houses gave us information not only on the architecture of this area but also on aspects of daily life.

The Beit El Shetan (Devil's House) Monument

Our attention was first drawn to the building known to the local inhabitants as the "Devil's House" nearly seventeen years

ago, when it had just been destroyed by a fire and we noticed very substantial stone foundations in the ruins. Since the initial fire, others had broken out and the owners had decided to clean up the site, which had become a rubbish dump, thus giving us the chance to undertake a systematic excavation.

The structures uncovered belonged to a building with very thick walls (1.90 m); reconstructed, the central part must have measured at least 26 m long by 10 m wide. There were three large rooms (5 m x 7 m), above which must have been another floor. In the central room, a shallow well was surrounded by a low wall. Against the main structure, on the southwest, were narrow, elongated storerooms that no doubt belonged to an earlier phase. Several fragments of seal impressions testified to the importance of the objects that had been kept here, and also to the particular role played by the inhabitants of the building.

Large beads of faïence, vitrified quartz and cornelian found in the construction levels of the building were almost certainly the remains of a votive deposit. The whole complex seems to have been the centre of a residence of which the part belonging to the outbuildings had disappeared. Postholes and granaries, containing sherds of ancient and middle Kerma date, showed that the stone building had replaced an earlier structure.

The Ancient Town

A study was made of twelve houses in the northwestern quarter of the ancient town. While all were dated to the middle Kerma period they had very diverse plans. There were single room houses, houses with two adjacent rooms and one example that had three rooms forming a rectangular block. The traditional plan was of a central courtyard dividing the two main parts of the building. House 100 had this plan, but its exterior courtyard had a curious triangular form. The wide enclosure wall, which had been rebuilt several times, followed first an irregular and sinuous path, then became more rectilinear. Its western end terminated in an unusual apsidal building that opened into the courtyard. The building's entrance

was ornamented with two flanking pillars, beside which were the postholes of a more flimsy closure. The roof had been supported by a central post. The floor of the apse had originally been carefully covered with a wash of red ochre. The floor contained traces of stakes, whose function could not be ascertained.

After careful study of this building, we interpreted it as a place for meetings and cult activities. Even today, family members will meet each evening in a building (*el messiid*) set slightly apart from their house, in order to discuss their problems and to pray.

The Meroitic Cemetery of the Ancient Town

Remains of mud brick pyramids were discovered for the first time at Kerma. The three that were found had square foundations with sides of, respectively, 3 m, 4.5 m and 9 m. Access to the funerary chambers was by means of a descending passage leading to a door in a large wall. The burial chambers were fairly large and vaulted. Several holes made by tomb robbers were found at the corners of the pyramids and explained the almost complete absence of finds. The only remains were fragments of jars found in the fill, which gave a date to the tombs of between the end of the first century B.C. and the first century A.D.

It must be stressed that the robbing of the Meroitic tombs varies greatly in extent from one tomb to another. It seems likely that these three tombs had once contained a rich assemblage of grave goods, since even the human remains had been removed.

■ TANZANIA

Paleoanthropological Exploration in the Manonga Valley, Northern Tanzania

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The Wembere-Manonga Paleontological Expedition (WMPE) initiated a paleoanthropological field program in the Manonga Valley of northern Tanzania during the summer of 1990. The geographical location of the research area is depicted in Figures 1 and 2. The aim of the expedition was to explore the potential of the area for future paleontological and archeological research relating to the earliest stages of human evolution. This paper provides a preliminary account of the paleontological and geological investigations that were conducted in the Manonga Valley during August of 1990.

Fossil sites in the Manonga Valley were first discovered at the site of Tinde by Grace and Stockley during the late 1920s (Grace and Stockley 1930). The fossiliferous deposits at the site were referred to in initial reports as the Tinde Bone Beds (Stockley 1929, Grace and Stockley 1930). Hopwood (1931) published a brief note describing the early collections of fossil mammals from the Manonga Valley, and based on his study of a jaw fragment of a primitive elephantid, Hopwood estimated that the site was equivalent in age to that of the Kaiso Formation in Uganda (i.e., Pliocene in age). A similar fossil assemblage to that found at Tinde was later reported from the locality of Kiloleli, just to the north of Tinde (Williams and Eades 1938, Quennell et al. 1956), but no details of the fauna were provided. In 1959, Kleindienst and Haldemann carried out a brief geological survey at Tinde and Kiloleli, during which time they collected additional