

Report on the
14th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission
in Syene / Old Aswan (2013/2014)

by

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1. Introduction and Overview

The 14th season of the joint archaeological project of the Swiss Institute of Architectural and Archaeological Research Cairo and the Aswan Inspectorate of the Ministry of State for Antiquities in Syene/Old Aswan took place between October 17th, 2013 and April 12th, 2014¹.

¹ We are grateful to the Ministry of State for Antiquities and the members of the Permanent Committee for granting permission to undertake the Joint Mission in Aswan. We appreciate very much the fruitful cooperation with our colleagues of the Aswan Inspectorate in this joint mission. The mission was directed by CORNELIUS VON PILGRIM, in close cooperation with FATHI ABU ZED and NASR SALAMA. The fieldwork was directed by WOLFGANG MÜLLER. Team members were the Egyptologists M. MAREE, V. MICHEL, A. POTZGALSKI and MARCUS MÜLLER, the archaeologists M. HEPÄ, T. KOCH, U. MATIC, D. REBER, L. REMBART and I. WINET, the photographer A. KRAUSE, the paleo-zoologists J. PETERS and U. MUTZE, and the conservator E. PEINTNER. Assigned inspectors and further member of the missions were FAYSAL HELMY ABDELWAHAB HELMY, ADEL KAMIL TOHAMY, MOHAMED GAD EL RAB AHMED, HANY SALAH MAHMUD MANSUR, SAID AHMED ALI EL-RAWI, AZHAR MOHAMED SALEH GADA, MAHMOUD ABDELLA ABDALLAH, NOHA MOHAMED HASSAN, OUWEIDA MOHAMED AHMED. In summer 2013 work was supervised by ALYAA ABD ELMONSEF HASSAN ALI, HEBÄ SAAD HARBY and WAFÄÄ MOHAMED ISSA. We are much indebted to PAMELA ROSE for correcting the English of this report.

Archaeological Work (Fig. 1)

Fieldwork last season was conducted mainly in the two areas, Area 2 (Birket Damas) and Area 3 (Khnum Temple of Domitian). Whereas the work in Area 3 was triggered by the construction of a supporting wall at the eastern limit of the area, the excavations in Area 2 continued the research of previous seasons in the south-eastern corner of the fortified town². Additional work was conducted in Area 1 (Isis Temple) as a continuation of a wider study of Roman domestic architecture started in the previous year³. The work focussed on further cleaning and recording of House 5 in order to prepare for stratigraphic excavations in the coming season. The multi-storied and well-preserved house is located to the south of the Temple of Isis and may have been a central building of the temple administration. However, the north-eastern corner of the house has suffered badly from uncontrolled earlier excavations, which have resulted in the collapse of brickwork in several rooms.

The systematic survey of current construction sites continued during the whole season. Salvage excavations were conducted in three areas in the Sheikh Saleh district of Old-Aswan.

Three tombs of the Middle Kingdom and possibly earlier date were discovered in sondages beneath layers of the Late Period in the south-eastern corner of the ancient town (Area 2). They belong to a cemetery of mudbrick tombs in close to the south of the town wall, which was investigated in 2011. The cemetery may extend still further to the north, but the location of a proper urban settlement at this time remains uncertain.

Further investigations in the following stratum (G) revealed significant information regarding the fortified town of the Persian Period. Since the town wall and the units of domestic buildings inside

² Cf. for publications on earlier seasons: C. VON PILGRIM ET AL., 'The Town of Syene. Preliminary Report on the 1st and 2nd Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 60 (2004), pp. 119-148 (henceforth quoted as: *1st Report*). *Idem*, 'The Town of Syene. Preliminary Report on the 3rd and 4th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 62 (2006), pp. 215-277 (henceforth quoted as: *2nd Report*). *Idem*, 'The Town of Syene. Report on the 5th and 6th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 64 (2008), pp. 305-356 (henceforth quoted as: *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*). *Idem*, 'The Town of Syene. Report on the 7th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 66 (2010), pp. 179-223. (henceforth quoted as: *Report on the 7th Season*). C. VON PILGRIM ET AL., 'The Town of Syene. Report on the 8th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 67 (2011), p. 157-161 (henceforth quoted as *Report on the 8th Season*). C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'Report on the Ninth Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan (2008/2009)', *ASAE*, forthcoming (http://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_9th_Season_2008-2009.pdf) (henceforth quoted as: *9th Season*). *Idem*, 'Report on the Tenth Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan', *ASAE*, forthcoming ([http://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_on_the_Tenth_Season_of_the_Joint_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_in_Syene_Old_Aswan_\(2009_2010\).pdf](http://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_on_the_Tenth_Season_of_the_Joint_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_in_Syene_Old_Aswan_(2009_2010).pdf)) (henceforth quoted as: *Tenth Season*). *Idem*, 'Report on the Eleventh Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan (2010/2011)', *ASAE*, forthcoming ([http://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_on_the_Eleventh_Season_of_the_Joint_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_in_Syene_Old_Aswan_\(2010_2011\).pdf](http://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_on_the_Eleventh_Season_of_the_Joint_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_in_Syene_Old_Aswan_(2010_2011).pdf)) (henceforth quoted as: *Eleventh Season*). C. VON PILGRIM ET AL., 'Report on the Twelfth Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan (2011/2012)', *ASAE*, forthcoming (http://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/SwissInst_Report_Aswan_2012.pdf) (henceforth quoted as: *Twelfth Season*). C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'Report on the 13th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan (2012/2013)', *ASAE*, forthcoming (http://swissinst.ch/downloads/Swissinst_Report_Aswan_2013.pdf) (henceforth quoted as *Thirteenth Season*).

³ The investigation in House 5 (Area 2) is financed by the Austrian *Fond für Wissenschaft und Forschung* (FWF Project P23866 „Housing in Antiquity in Syene and Elephantine, Upper Egypt” under the direction of S. LADSTÄTTER).

the walled area have been shown to be contemporary and both lack any evidence of similar pre-existing structures, they may be considered as a planned new foundation. The fortification is most probably to be identified with the Syene garrison of the Persian army and its mercenaries attested in the Aramaic Papyri from Elephantine. The unique construction technique of the town, extensively studied in earlier seasons, had already suggested strong influence from non-Egyptian builders. The discovery of Aramaic ostraca with Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Phoenician and Persian names and the notification of a military unit of the Persian army in the 12th and 13th season permits the assumption that the houses in this stratum were mainly inhabited by mercenaries, as was the situation in the so-called Aramaic quarter of the 5th century BC at Elephantine⁴. Major new information in this respect may be expected from a group of papyrus documents discovered in the houses in the last season, the more so as one of the document sealings shows the impression of an Achaemenid seal. Due to their bad condition of preservation, however, the papyri need considerable conservation before any further assessment about the nature of texts can be given.

The excavation of the animal necropolis in the subsequent Ptolemaic stratum was continued, and increased the number of buried animals to c.300. The analysis of the skeletons was started by the palaeo-zoologists U. MUTZE and J. PETERS and provided remarkable results. According to the number of animals studied up to now, the majority of skeletons shows features indicative of serious diseases or congenital defects.

Salvage excavations in the modern town and the necessity of urgent construction work in order to consolidate the eastern limit of Area 3 resulted in investigations in various quarters of Medieval Aswan. After the removal of an enormous amount of modern debris, excavations in Area 3 were limited to the immediate zone of a retaining wall to be built at the steep eastern limit of the area. The work revealed well-preserved buildings of comparatively high standard from the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. A small prayer room, a fully equipped room with an oil-press and a staircase in a street leading up the hill towards the east are some remarkable features in the context of the best-preserved stratum. Whereas Area 3 is located well within the limits of the Roman town, two salvage excavations were conducted in the northern districts which developed only in Early Islamic and Fatimid times. In one of these sites a major street was uncovered. The accumulations in the street cover a time span of more than 500 years and illustrate the remarkable persistence of the street pattern in the Islamic town.

Protection Measures

The mission built an enclosure fence at the eastern side and a perimeter wall at the southern side of Area 3 in 2003, but subsequent constant leakage and fracturing of pipes caused a steady weakening of the foundation of the iron fence. In summer 2013 the mission started an extensive

⁴ The publication of the ostraca is in preparation by A. LEMAIRE and B. PORTEN to whom we owe a first assessment of the inscriptions.

cleaning of the site in order to prepare a consolidation of the slope. A burst sewer in the street alongside the area led eventually to a collapse of the enclosure fence for a distance of about 20m in September 2013 (Fig. 14). Due to the unstable state of the steep slope at the inner side of the fence, a repair of the enclosure was only possible after a solid reinforcing of the scarp. Thus a retaining wall was built in order to support the street alongside the area over a distance of 50m. The construction works were carried out by a local contractor⁵. The wall was built in a frame construction of reinforced concrete including 17 sectors of stone masonry (Fig. 27). Wherever possible the alignment of the wall was adapted to the archaeological structures in order to preserve as many features of the medieval buildings beneath as possible (Fig. 21).

Besides the fieldwork, anthropological and palaeo-zoological studies and the documentation of rock inscriptions were continued, and also the restoration and documentation of pottery and small finds.

During the whole field season the mission conducted an archaeological training programme for members of the local inspectorate of the MSA⁶.

2. Investigation of a town quarter of Graeco-Roman and Late Period Syene (Area 2)

Investigations in Area 2 were continued in Season 14 (Fig. 2).⁷ According to the site management plan, it was decided to preserve and – where necessary - reconstitute the walls of Building 1, to preserve the walls of Stratum G wherever possible and to preserve the Roman Houses 21 and 18. The latter had two vaulted cellars that had been, until recent acts of vandalism, in very good condition. The investigation of the pre-Ptolemaic layers was thus limited to areas not covered and not endangering these buildings. Minor Early Roman structures⁸ to the west of the already-excavated area were removed.

Stratum H – The Pharaonic cemetery

Pharaonic layers predating the construction of the town wall were only encountered in two deep soundings, Trenches 7 and 8. In both trenches parts of tombs were observed (Fig. 2).

⁵ The construction works were made possible through the financial support of the German Embassy in Cairo.

⁶ Participants of the Field School were ASMAA SADIK SALIM, MUSTAFA SAID MOHAMED, ASMAA MOHAMED BASHIR, FATHIA AHMED EL-HEFNY, GALA ABDEEN SIAM, MOAZ SAYED IBRAHIM and NAGLA FATHI RAMADAN.

⁷ Cf. H. JARITZ/M. RODZIEWICZ, 'Syene – Review of the Urban Remains and its Pottery', *MDAIK* 50 (1994), p. 115-141 for earlier work on the site. C. VON PILGRIM, in C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'The Eight Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan', *ASAE* 84 (2010), p. 318, W. MÜLLER, in *Tenth Season*, p. 2-6, *idem*, in *Eleventh Season*, p. 4-15, *idem*, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 2-12, *idem*, in *Thirteenth Season*, p. 5-12 for the work of the Swiss-Egyptian Joint Mission.

⁸ H. SCHWAIGER, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 13-16.

Tomb 10

The tomb found in Trench 7 was mostly covered by the Late Period town wall (Fig. 3). The southern end of the tomb was marked by a 1-brick-wide east-west wall. Only 1 m of the wall was visible in the small trench. The wall ran under the town wall at an obtuse angle. A north-south wall to the north of it probably separated two chambers of the tomb. The wall was visible for a length of 1.4m.⁹ While the eastern chamber could not be excavated because of the threat this posed to the town wall that covered most of it, two burials came to light in the western chamber. One, an adult individual (Burial 1) was lying on its right side. The head was to the south, and the face looked towards the east. The skeleton of a child lying to the west of it (Burial 2) gave the impression of being mixed up (it was lying on its belly with the head to the north) and was probably disturbed by Burial 1. Very little pottery was found with the burials that has yet to be dated.

Tombs 11 and 12

Two tombs were observed in Trench 8 (Fig. 4), situated to the north of Building 2. These tombs were much better preserved than Tomb 10. Both mud-brick constructions were chamber tombs with barrel-vaulted roofs. In the case of the earlier western Tomb 11, the chamber was 80cm high from bottom to the impost of the vault. The height of the chamber was ca. 1.20m, the width 60+x cm, and the length ca. 90+x cm. The tomb showed an irregular ground-plan in which the western and southern walls were not perpendicular to each other. This peculiarity was probably due to the surface of the granite on which these tombs were constructed. The chamber was filled with densely packed mud-brick debris, most probably the collapse of the vault that was only preserved at the northern section. The eastern part of the vault was destroyed when Tomb 12 was constructed. At the bottom of the chamber were found the remains of a wooden coffin, mostly traces of its white colour, and in it parts of the feet of one individual.

Tomb 12 was constructed without any regard for Tomb 11. The chamber of the earlier tomb must by then have been completely filled with mud-brick debris. The chamber of this tomb was 90cm wide, and its height was 1.10m. Neither the southern nor the northern limit of the chamber was within the area of the trench. Two phases of burials were encountered. The initial burial was again put in a wooden coffin painted in white. Only remains of the feet lay within the trench. The secondary burial was positioned at a significantly higher level in the chamber. Slightly dislocated bones of the legs of one individual were recorded.

As was the case with Tomb 11, no material of any kind was found inside the chamber except for the human remains. Pottery found on top of the collapsed roof of Tomb 12 was tentatively dated to the Middle Kingdom.

⁹ While the precise meeting point of the two walls was covered by later structures and could thus not be recorded, the elevations and technical features of both walls and the fact that they are perpendicular to each other make a close relation between them highly probable.

There is little doubt that the tombs described above belong to the Pharaonic cemetery already encountered to the south of the Southern Sector of the town wall.¹⁰ Besides the tombs a false door was found reused in the Late Period as a threshold (Fig. 5).¹¹

Stratum G

The deep trenches in several parts of the area brought crucial new information about the stratigraphic relation between the town wall and the intramural settlement. The southern parts of the town wall were built immediately on top of the bedrock in the south, as were the earliest walls of Stratum G. The granite surface itself sloped down from south to north. While its elevation at the northern face of the southern sector of the town wall was ca. 97.8m asl, it was only 94m at the northern limit of Trench 8. In order to create a level building surface for the houses of the town, extensive levelling was necessary. Above ground structures were removed and recesses filled in with material that consisted mostly of domestic and industrial waste. Only in those recesses did structures predating the construction of the town wall remain standing.

The detailed investigations of Buildings 2, 3 and 4 and layers associated with them brought about a significantly more complicated understanding of the development of these structures.

Building 2

Unit 1

The western part of Building 2 was completely excavated (Figs. 2 and 6). Building 2 covers an area of more than 60sqm, Unit 1 ca. 20sqm. Room 1 of Unit 1 had a north-south extension of ca. 1.60m and an east-west extension of 2.4m. It was entered from the north via a door more than 1m wide near its north-western corner. Two phases of wooden thresholds were still *in situ* (Fig. 7). Both to the east and west of the door recesses in the stone socle of the wall suggest supports for door-jambs made either from wood or sandstone.

Room 2 was entered via the door already excavated last season.¹² The newly discovered main door of the Unit showed how narrow the connecting door between the rooms was. The room had the same width as Room 1 and a north-south extension of 1.40m. A narrow north-south mud-brick wall (half a

¹⁰ W. MÜLLER, in *Eleventh Season*, p. 5-13.

¹¹ The false door is slightly damaged and undecorated. It was dated to the 6th Dynasty by C. VON PILGRIM and MARCEL MAREÉ. C. VON PILGRIM, 'Anmerkungen zu den französischen Grabungen von 1906-1911 im Kontext der neueren Forschung in Elephantine', in É. DELANGE (ED.), *Les fouilles francaises d'Éléphantine (Assouan), Vol. 1. Textes, MAIBL 46*, Paris 2012, p. 281 identified a *mastaba* depicted on several historical photographs with a false door similar to that found in Area 2 still *in situ* (É. DELANGE (ED.), *Les fouilles francaises d'Éléphantine (Assouan), Vol. 2. Planches, MAIBL 46*, Paris 2012, p. 185-186 docs. 475-477) with tomb NE 66 on the modern plan of the excavations on Elephantine (S. SEIDLMEYER, in W. KAISER ET AL., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. Neunter/Zehnter Grabungsbericht', *MDAIK 38* (1982), Abb. 7).

¹² W. MÜLLER, in *Thirteenth Season*, p. 6.

brick wide) ran at a distance of 60cm from the eastern wall. The space between this wall and the western wall of the building was filled with a compact mixture of mud-brick debris and mud-mortar. Most probably this installation constitutes a *mastaba*. It was either used as a bed, or, due to its length of only 1.4m, as a bench for sitting or storage in the most intimate location of the small unit.

All inner walls of the unit were plastered with thick layers of mud plaster. The plaster covered both the stone socle and the mud brick walls on top of them.

The most important find connected to Unit 1 were remains of papyri found in both rooms (positions given in Fig. 2). They were in very bad condition due to the humid environment and acts of vandalism. Several documents were stored in small pottery vessels. Seal impressions on mud were found with the documents.

Unit 2

Investigations in Unit 2 focused on Room 2 where the working platform at the southern wall showed several phases of use (Fig. 8). The original ensemble of cooking installations in the south-eastern corner of the room consisted of a small oven (diameter ca.50cm) and an area with ash and charcoal, probably a cooking area, to the south of it. All these installations would have blocked the entrance to the east of them and were therefore not part of the original furnishings of the room. The oven is plastered with the same layer of mud plaster as the wall that closed the door. Several layers predating the cooking installation were recorded but no further installations could be observed due to the limited space available for excavation.

Installations surrounding Building 2

The building was surrounded by several courtyards. Ovens found in them were evidence of the fact that these courtyards were used for cooking and baking. The most elaborate installation of this kind was a battery of three ovens dating to Stratum G/1, situated to the east of Building 2 in courtyard Building 2/C1. During Stratum G/2 a peculiar semi-circular pedestal made of mud bricks and mud mortar was attached to the inner face of the town wall. During the earlier phases of G a small courtyard was created in the north-eastern corner of the area belonging to Building 2 (Building 2/C2. This courtyard was used for cooking and baking over a long period of time (three multi-phase ovens and substantial ash-layers were encountered) and was entered via a door through its southern wall. Most probably the northern limit of the courtyard was the massive stone-wall running under Building 1/C1.

To the west of Building 2 the situation was similar. At the beginning of Stratum G, an oven was situated just to the west of the south-western corner of Building 2. A battery of two ovens situated at and half covered by the western section was dated to Stratum G/1. In a small trench the south-western corner of a wall was found with two doors with thresholds of sand stone, one leading towards the west and the other towards the south. As the remains of the Roman houses to the east of Building 2 were

preserved, it is not clear whether there was any north-south wall between the corner found to the west and Building 2. If the corner constituted the south-western corner of the courtyard to the west of Building 2, it would have had an east-west extension of ca. 4m. Ovens like those dating to Stratum G/1 are anyway usually built against a wall. This hypothetical wall, located ca. 60cm to the west of Building 1, would then constitute the western limit of the area belonging to Building 2 and be roughly aligned to the eastern wall of Building 5.

The building was situated in the centre of an area with courtyards. The lot belonging to the building was defined by the town wall in the east and two massive stone walls in the north and south. It had a north-south extension of 10.2m and an estimated east-west extension of ca. 17.2m. The setting of Building 2 and the installations surrounding it have close parallels in Area 15.¹³

Building 4

Recording of the ground plan of Building 4 (Figs. 2 and 9) was completed insofar as it was not covered by later structures. The building comprised several probably unroofed rooms that were mostly used for food production. Several bread-ovens and vessels for storage and food preparation were found. The situation was similar to that of the area around Building 2, just lacking a central house. Such a central unit would be difficult to place in the area due to its irregular shape. The orientation of all walls dating to Stratum G was perpendicular to the Eastern Sector of the town wall. The obtuse angle enclosed by the Eastern and Southern Sectors of the wall and the granite massif in the south-eastern corner considerably limited the available space. The western limit of the building was disturbed by Building 3, but its western wall must have been more or less at the same location as the western wall of Building 3, thus well aligned with the western wall of Building 2. The ground plan of the building was changed during Stratum G when the former western wall (only the 1.2m wide stone-socle of the wall was preserved), situated in Room 4 was abandoned and the building was significantly extended towards the west. At the same time an east-west wall made of mud bricks of very bad quality was attached to the stone wall that had served as the northern wall of the building during earlier Stratum G. The former door near the north-western corner (the doorway was 1m wide with a partly preserved wooden threshold) of the first phase of the building was abandoned in the process. The width of the earlier doorway and the dimensions of the wall were evidence of the fact that an outer wall with a main entrance into the building had been situated here.

In Room 6, the easternmost courtyard, a grinding stone of rose granite was found. Together with the working-platform in the south-eastern corner of the courtyard, the typical ensemble of domestic bread production, like those found on Elephantine Island became evident.¹⁴ A bread oven and cooking place were found in the neighboring Room 5, which was connected with Room 6 via a 70cm-wide door that

¹³ *Idem*, in *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p.315-317 fig. 3.

¹⁴ Cf. A. KREKELER, 'Stadtgrabung am Westkom von Elephantine / Wohnbauten des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.', in M. BIETAK (ED.), *Haus und Palast im Alten Ägypten, DÖAW XIV (UZK XIV)*, Vienna 1996, p.112-113, figs. 5 and 7.

showed traces of a wooden threshold. Most of the earlier phase of Building 4 was covered by the massive walls of Building 3. The southern wall of Room 6 continued towards the west, thus creating a nearly symmetrical ground-plan to the building. Rooms 4, 5 and 6 had their doors aligned with each other (in the case of the door between Rooms 4 and 5 this door has to remain hypothetical due to the severe destruction by illicit digging in the area. As most of Room 1 was covered by the massive foundations of Building 3, the earlier phase of the building could not be observed here.

The second phase of the building, especially the newly-added western part, showed several functional indicators such as bread-ovens, cooking places and working areas. From Room 7, both Room 9 and Room 1 could be reached via elaborate doors. The threshold of the door into Room 1 was at a level ca. 50cm higher than the contemporary mud floors in Room 7. A small staircase with two steps still in situ in Room 7 was therefore necessary. This special construction was due to the granite surface that sloped up towards the east and brought about a significantly higher floor-level in Rooms 1 and 3. A small working platform was situated at the northern wall and a multi-phase fire place in the centre of Room 7 (Fig. 10). As was the case with the door from Room 5 into Room 6, the doorway was flanked by a pilaster-like construction: one mud brick protruded into Room 7. The northern part of the door was covered by later structures. As was common with most doors of Stratum G it had a wooden threshold. The door from Room 7 into Room 1 however had a sandstone slab as a threshold. The walls delimiting Room 7 were mostly constructed from a mixture of mud bricks and stone rubble. All walls showed a thick coating of mud plaster. The open fireplaces in the room left considerable traces of soot at the western wall. Due to the fact that the walls consisted mostly of stone, the doorjambes were small mud brick walls. This became especially clear in the door into Room 1. The width of this extremely narrow door was only ca. 50cm.

At the southern limit of Room 9, set against the inner face of the town wall, the bottoms of three vessels were embedded in a mud-brick construction. These vessels were most probably the remains of a storage installation as no traces of fire were found in or around the vessels.

Room 8 was completely filled with organic material. Probably it was used for some time for keeping animals. During the earliest phase of use of the room, a large bread oven (diameter: 1m) was situated at its southern end.

The special character of Building 4, especially when compared to Building 2, becomes evident both in the ground plan and the building materials. All the walls of Building 2 were made in exactly the same way, with stone foundations and low stone-socles as the base of mud brick walls made of bricks of very low quality, typical of Stratum G in Area 2 and Stratum J at Area 15 (as was the use of wood for important constructional elements).¹⁵ With the exception of the massive northern and western walls of early Stratum G, the walls of Building 4 were narrow to the point that it seems highly unlikely that they ever carried permanent roofs. Most inner walls of the building were made in a rather makeshift way with stone rubble and mud brick debris being the basic elements of the construction. The heavy

¹⁵ W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p. 317.

use of mud mortar and mud plaster was crucial for the stability of these structures. It seems to be significant that small mud-brick pilasters were often added to the faces of the walls next to doors in order to give them additional stability. Building 2 constitutes an area of courtyards or open rooms defined by massive outer walls and thus compensating for the difference in orientation between the two sectors of the town wall. This multifunctional cluster of rooms, most probably predominantly used for food production, was a very convenient way to make use the limited space in the south-eastern corner of the intramural settlement in Area 2.

Building 5

The easternmost part of another building was found immediately to the west of Building 4. The eastern wall of the building was disturbed by the foundation pit of the western wall of Building 3, and the exact relation between Buildings 3 and 5 is thus difficult to determine. Two rooms of the building were within the excavated area, both of them connected via a door that had been walled up during the later Stratum G. An oven (diameter ca. 85cm) was situated in the northern room, just to the west of the door. The north-western corner of the northern room was found ca. 3.2m to the west of the eastern wall. As mentioned above, another door led into a courtyard to the north. This door connects Building 3 to the system of courtyards around Building 2.

Building 5 clearly follows the spatial organization shown in the other excavated structures of Stratum G. It is remarkable anyway that its northern wall is not aligned to the northern wall of Building 4 but to the southern wall of Building 2, thus closing the gap between Buildings 3 and 2. Any speculation about a narrow passage between the buildings had thus to be abandoned. A peculiar installation abutting the outer face of the northern wall of Building 4, a narrow wall protruding towards the north and forming a small niche, already made the existence of such a street highly improbable.

Stratum F

Building 3

Recording of the ground plan of Building 3 was completed (Figs. 2 and 11). The northern half of the building consisted of a large rectangular room (11.5x5m). As was the case with Room 3 in Building 1, the room constituted the substructure for elevated architecture on top of it.

The southern half of Building 3 showed a more irregular ground plan, again due to the course of the two sectors of the town wall and the granite outcrop at their south-eastern corner,. The southern limit of the structure coincided with the southern limit of Building 4, except for the easternmost room that had to be adapted to the granite surface. The western wall of the southern part of the building was not aligned with the western wall of the northern room. Most of this area was still covered by a Roman cellar and thus not accessible for excavation. A massive platform of granite and sandstone rubble (with a few reused stone tools and *spolia*) formed the centre of this part of the building. The platform was of

roughly square ground plan with a side length of 3.2m. Scarce traces of the mud brick architecture on top of this foundation were only observed where the platform abutted the southern wall of the northern room of the building.¹⁶ The function of this construction, in some places consisting of three layers of stone rubble that were covered with a massive mud-brick platform, has to remain unclear for the time being. Suffice it to say that whatever stood on top of this foundation was extremely heavy and, positioned as it was, of the utmost importance for the function of Building 3. Small rooms were situated to the west and east of the substructure that was located roughly symmetrically in the central axis of the building.

The building covered approximately 90m². Several aspects of Building 3 resemble traits of Building 2. The construction with terrace-like platforms has no predecessor in the earlier strata. A hypothetical entrance-ramp or staircase in the north was not preserved but could well have been destroyed by the animal burials during Stratum E. No animals were buried during Stratum F. The ground-plan of Building 3 with a room in the north that covers the whole width of the building and three significantly smaller rooms in the south with a massive foundation in the central room clearly shows elements of a small temple or sanctuary. Hence the platform in the central northern room might be interpreted as the foundation of a *naos*.

Grave 9

After the abandonment of Building 3, and predating the construction of Building 1, a single individual was buried in a shallow pit to the east of Building 1 in a supine position with the head to the east (Fig. 12). The burial was obviously not part of a regular cemetery. Most probably it was connected to several extramural burials along the eastern sector of the town wall.¹⁷

Stratum E

The expected¹⁸ western limit of the animal cemetery of Stratum E (early 2nd century BC until the end of the 1st century AD) was not found. At least during Strata E/2 and E/3 the area of burials extended further to the west than the western limit of Area 2. Together with the animal skeletons of earlier seasons, the total number now amounts to ca. 300 individuals. As the study of the animal bones from Area 2 is now in the hands of JORIS PETERS and URSULA MUTZE, no further layman's

¹⁶ W. MÜLLER, in *Thirteenth Season*, p. 8 still assumed that the platform constitutes a later phase of Building 3. While the platform was definitely abutting the earlier southern wall of the rectangular room to the north of it and the dimensions and texture of the mud-bricks differ slightly from the other walls of the building, it seems at the moment more likely to attribute this phenomena to the building process.

¹⁷ *Idem*, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Idem*, in *Thirteenth Season*, p. 18.

assessments are necessary. The picture drawn based on preliminary assessments prior to professional investigation will be corrected significantly.¹⁹

Conclusion

The archaeological work in Area 2 was nearly completed. The only remaining part of Area 2 still awaiting further archaeological investigation is Building 1/C1, where the Late Period structures are mostly unknown. The results of the work up to now are promising but much further work is necessary. Of primary concern will be a study of the pottery and the numismatic evidence in order to create a consistent absolute chronology for the site. While the end of Stratum E is dated beyond any doubt to the early 2nd century AD,²⁰ the beginnings of the custom of burying animals in the south-eastern corner of Syene can only be dated very tentatively to the beginning of the 2nd century BC. Similarly, the absolute chronology of Stratum F is far from established. The fact that the architecture of this stratum marks a completely new building tradition and seems to be more similar to Stratum E than to Stratum G, is insufficient for a serious attempt at dating Building 3. Recent research done on the Aramaic ostraca found in Area 2 during Seasons 12 and 13 gave a date for the earlier Stratum G in the second half of the 5th century AD.²¹ Even taking into account the preliminary nature of much that can be said at the moment about the findings in Area 2, the complexity and completeness of the archaeological record mean that the site will become a crucial element in any future presentation of the archaeology of Aswan.

3. A town quarter of Mediaeval Aswan (Area 3)

The area commonly known for the partly preserved Early Roman temple it contains ("Temple of Domitian") is one of only three protected research areas of the Swiss-Egyptian Mission where archaeological work is possible without time pressure. While the temple has been the subject of several studies,²² the investigation of the settlement remains only started in the 2nd and 3rd Season of the Swiss-Egyptian Mission.²³

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13-19. Concerning the small creatures, it has to be stressed that no birds have yet been found among the bones.

²⁰ *Idem*, 'Syene (Ancient Aswan) in the First Millennium AD', in E. R. O'CONNELL (ED.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD. Perspectives from New Fieldwork*, *BMPES* 2, Leuven 2014, p. 66 no. 8.

²¹ *Cf. supra*, p. 3 no. 4.

²² *Cf.* H. JARITZ, 'Untersuchungen zum "Tempel des Domitian" in Assuan', *MDAIK* 31 (1975), p. 237-257 with a summary of previous research (*ibid.*, p. 237-241).

²³ K. C. BRUHN, in *2nd Report*, p. 251-253.

The area is situated ca. 60m to the east of the Corniche il-Nil. It is limited to the west by the German Hospital and, to the north of it, by the derelict garden of the former Grand Hotel. Its northern neighbour is a modern house. To the east, in the north-east of the area, more than six metres higher than the pavement of the "Temple of Domitian", a modern road is situated. A granite massif to the east of the area that was already depicted on the map of the *Description de l'Égypte*,²⁴ is the reason for the difference in elevation between the road and area (Figs. 1 and 13).

Area 3 is situated in the northern part of the Graeco-Roman town. The steep slope to the east of it was covered with terraced houses from the Late Ptolemaic Period onwards. Besides these architectural remains, rock inscriptions dating to the Middle Kingdom were found in Areas 61²⁵ and 71,²⁶ situated immediately to the east of the modern street.

Excavations in Area 52²⁷ have shown that the mediaeval bank of the River Nile was situated only 30m to the west of the western limit of Area 3. As remains of monumental Roman Imperial architecture were observed in the close vicinity, the same should be true for the river bank during the Graeco-Roman Period.²⁸ Area 3 is thus situated near the economic and political centre of Roman Syene.

In spite of the fact that there was no imminent threat of Area 3 being destroyed by modern construction activity, events during the summer 2013 enforced immediate action by the mission. The eastern section and parts of the perimeter wall on top of it had collapsed due to several large-scale leaks in the sewers running under the street to the east of the area (Fig. 14). It was therefore necessary to construct a massive retaining wall against the eastern section of Area 3. The modern material that had accumulated up to 6m high at the eastern limit of the site was removed and the new wall built as near to the old perimeter wall at the western limit of the street as possible. The thus newly won area for archaeological investigation measures approximately 180m² (Fig. 15 and 16). Due to the bad condition of the eastern section and the perimeter wall on top of it, the new retaining wall was built in sectors. Sector by sector was first excavated and then given over to the contractor.

The archaeological results are important additions to the already published work of the Joint Mission at the site. The excavation of all layers and structures at the section down to the planned foundation layer of the new wall brought new insights into the later history of the medieval and post-medieval period at the site. Three major strata or building phases could be discerned.

Stratum D

²⁴ *Description I*, pl. 31. Cf. W. MÜLLER, 'M. DE DAPPER, 'The Urban Landscape of Aswan', in Y. TRISTANT/M. GHILARDI (ED.), *Landscape Archaeology: Egypt and the Mediterranean World*, *BiEtud*, Cairo, forthcoming for a detailed discussion on the topography of this part of Aswan.

²⁵ W. MÜLLER, in *9th Season*, p. 13-17.

²⁶ *Idem*, in *10th Season*, p. 17.

²⁷ *Idem*, in *9th Season*, p. 20-23.

²⁸ *Idem*, in O'CONNELL (ED.), *BMPEs 2*, p. 66-67. H. JARITZ, 'Ein Bau der römischen Kaiserzeit in Syene', in M. KRAUSE, S. SCHATEN (EDS.), *Themelia. (Fs. Grossmann), Sprachen und Kulturen des christlichen Orients 3*, Wiesbaden 1998, p. 160-163.

In the southern part of the area, a stone wall was discovered that was preserved to a height of at least 5m. The wall runs parallel to the eastern sector and may be preserved under the foundation of the modern retaining wall. The 0.6m-wide wall was made of sandstone (partly reused blocks). In the southernmost part of the area a pillar made of fired bricks was attached to the wall by a narrow wall of fired mud-bricks that fitted into a niche in the western face of the wall (Fig. 17). The function of the pillar, of approximately square ground plan (side length ca. 70cm), is unclear. The bottom of a pottery vessel was embedded in the construction of fired bricks. The brick-construction showed a thick layer of white lime-plaster.

To the north of the niche, the wall protrudes ca. 30cm towards the west. More than 12m of the wall were excavated but its northern end was not found. The installation may be best understood as part of a terracing wall that was required to the steep slope to the east of the area. As the construction layer of the wall was not reached it could not be dated.

House 4

In the north-east of the area, the western part of a house (House 4) was investigated. The building is preserved to a height of more than four metres (Fig. 18). The main entrance into the house was into Room 3 from the north-south street to the west of it. As Room 1 could not be excavated for security reasons, the northern limit of House 4 is unknown. Rooms 2 and 3 were connected by a door with a vaulted doorway. As only the top 40cm of the carefully constructed keystone vault was visible, the original floor of the building is situated at least 1.5m deeper and covered by later material (Fig. 19). As the infill of the rooms was not removed, it is not possible to give even an approximate date to the house, it is, however, most probably of pre-Mamluk date.²⁹ At the northern and southern walls of Room 3 remains of the barrel-vault of the room were still visible. No remains of a vaulted roof were visible in Room 2. The second storey of Rooms 2, 4 and 5 had a wooden floor that rested on beams. Rectangular holes in the walls gave the position of these beams (Fig. 19). The second floor of Room 3 was constructed in the same way, in this case on top of the barrel-vault.

Room 5 showed a remarkable feature: in the first floor of the house an especially adorned niche, resting on a pair?? of two ornamental smaller niches, was created. The niche was an element of the decoration of the room (Fig. 20) and was still visible when the house was reused in the 14th-15th century and the level of the former 2nd floor had become the ground floor of the house. Due to its very good state of preservation, a special recess in the face of the retaining wall was constructed in order to let the niche stay visible (Fig. 21).

Stratum C

²⁹ We thank FELIX ARNOLD and GREGORY WILLIAMS for a first assessment of the pottery found in Areas 3 and 81.

In the Early Mamluk or Ayyubid Period, a city quarter with prestigious buildings came into existence around the still completely preserved Roman temple. The overall plan of houses and streets remained the same for a very long period. In the Early Mamluk Period a decorative façade, made of sandstone (mostly reused blocks) and fired bricks, was added to the western front of the eastern row of buildings, while the houses to the west of the street were completely new constructions.³⁰ The buildings were organized along a north-south street. The street shows distinct bend towards the east at its southern end and is 1.6m wide.

House 4

The entrance into House 4 remained at the same place as during the earlier use of the building (Fig. 23). The level of the threshold made of sandstone was such that the doorway between Rooms 3 and 2 was already completely blocked; no connection from Room 3 into other parts of the house could thus be confirmed. A makeshift construction of sandstone and fired bricks protruding into the street to the west of Room 2 may well be the last remains of a small staircase leading to an elevated door into Room 2. Most probably the preserved threshold into Room 3 was just the latest in a succession of doors that were constructed during the long period of use of the house.

The most noteworthy aspect of the reuse of House 4 during Stratum C was the construction of a small room within former Room 1 (Fig. 22). The room was at a significantly higher level than the threshold of the door into Room 2 and belongs to an even later phase of use. The approximately square room (side-length 1.8m) revealed a carefully laid pavement of fired bricks and a small niche at its south-eastern corner. The niche showed several layers of white lime plaster and was clearly orientated towards the east. Both the dimensions and the construction have their nearest parallels in open air spaces for prayer in the "Fatimid Cemetery".³¹ The room could be entered from the north via a door near the north-eastern corner and from the street to the west near the south-western corner where a door had been broken through the western wall. Remains of a sandstone threshold were still *in situ*. Due to several robbery pits and other modern activities, most of the floors in Room 2 and 3 were destroyed. Only next to the eastern section, in Rooms 4, 5 and the easternmost part of Room 1, was an intact stratigraphy found. Here the latest phase of Stratum C, dating to the 14th and 15th century AD, was encountered. Floor levels were 2m higher than the threshold of the door into Room 2. Most probably the higher level of the floors is again due to the granite outcrop to the east of the area. All floors of this stratum were paved with fired bricks. The upper portions of the walls of House 4 were renewed and repaired with unfired mud-bricks.

House 5

³⁰ K. C. BRUHN, in *2nd Report*, p. 253.

³¹ Cf. U. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *La Necropoli Musulmana di Aswan*, Cairo 1930, p. 19-21 figs.28-30. *Jahresbericht des DAI 2010, AA 2011/1. Beiheft*, (2011), p. 134 (http://www.dainst.org/sites/default/files/media/download/05_JB_2010_Kairo.pdf?ft=all).

The other houses to the east of the north-south street were more difficult to discern, as because of the bend in the street the available area between the eastern limit of the street and the eastern section of the area - and thus the accessible portion of the ground-area of the buildings - became more and more restricted. However, the walls were not as well preserved as was the case with House 4.

As in House 4, traces of an earlier house at the same location, namely the remains of a barrel-vault made of mud bricks, were still visible. During early Stratum C the house consisted of a single room that was accessed from the north-south street via a 90cm-wide door. The door was carefully constructed with thresholds and door-jambs made of sandstone and shows at least two phases. It was finally walled up when Room 2 was constructed. The northern wall of the small room with a niche in its eastern wall would have blocked the doorway. The façade of the house was made in an especially decorative way with sandstone for the socle and around the door and corners, and fired bricks for the wall itself. Again at least four phases were discerned. In the latest phase a floor paved with fired bricks was constructed in Room 3 at the same level as was the case in House 4.

House 6

House 6 was in very bad condition. Only in the southern part of R2 were remains of several floors preserved. Again at least three phases of use were observed. A part of the collapsed vaulted roof of R2 was found in one piece on top of the latest floor. The pottery sealed by the collapse was dated to the 14th-15th century AD. The floors were compact mud floors, partly with a makeshift pavement of crudely set stone and pottery fragments. The entrance into R2, including its wooden threshold was still *in situ*. The threshold was at a significantly higher level than was the case with the door into House 5. As no earlier threshold was found for the door, the contemporary street-surface must have sloped up from north to south. Both the floor and the well-preserved southern wall showed traces of fire.

In Room 1 and the northern part of Room 2 no floors of Stratum C were preserved. A sanitary installation in Room 1, consisting of an east-west channel that drained into a well-like construction to the west of it clearly predated the walls of Stratum C (Fig. 24). Probably due to the construction of House 6, the eastern end of the channel was destroyed and, just to the west of the eastern section, a wooden board was used for closing it. Of the original cover only one sandstone slab was still *in situ*. The channel consisted of two side walls and a floor made of fired bricks. The inside of the conduit was plastered with white lime plaster on a base-coat of mud plaster. The width of the channel was 70cm, of the conduit 20cm.³²

The well-like construction, a roughly circular pit with a diameter of ca. 1.20m, had a facing of well-set fired bricks. Similar constructions were encountered several times in Aswan³³ and were a common occurrence in Fustat.³⁴ They were most probably used for the disposal of waste-water and house

³² Cf. W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the 7th season*, p. 184, fig. 4 for a similar channel in Area 31.

³³ Cf. *Idem*, in *9th Season*, p. 15 for a similar situation in Area 50.

³⁴ W. KUBIAK/G. T. STANLON, 'Fustat Expedition: Preliminary Report, 1966', *JARCE* 10 (1973), p. 17-19 no. 26.

garbage.³⁵ For the first time in Aswan, such a pit was found in connection with a channel thus making its interpretation as a sanitary pit most probable.

House 7

Only 10sqm of a single room of this house were within the excavated area. The room could be entered via a 1.30m wide door with a massive threshold, part of an unfinished granite column, that protruded into the street (Fig. 25). The threshold was at approximately the same level as was the case with the entrance into House 6. Besides a well-preserved cooking place in the north-western corner, several installations, most probably connected with oil production, were observed within the excavated area. A massive mortar (diameter 90cm) made of sandstone and partly sunk into the floor in the north-eastern part of the room was probably used for the grinding of the raw products. A wooden pivot at the centre of the bottom of the mortar, and grooves, radial at the bottom and vertical at the inner walls of the vessel, hint at the use of the mortar as a small mill with a rotating millstone inside the stone vessel. The oil press was situated in the southern part of the room and partly covered by the eastern section. The fluid won in the pressing was collected in a small circular channel and then collected in a subterranean stone vessel to the north of it. The wooden frame and groove into which the lid of this vessel fitted were well preserved. The mud floor of the room was impregnated with spilled oil. Among the industrial installations found to date in mediaeval Aswan,³⁶ the oil press in Area 3 is by far the best preserved.

The south-western corner of the house was adorned with a reused Roman granite column (Fig. 24). Both this architectural ornament and the door with the massive threshold stress the importance of House 7.

The urban character of the medieval city quarter in Area 3

During Stratum C, the houses to the east of the north-south street formed a closed block of houses with a more or less common façade towards the street. The block resembles an *insula* in the Roman sense with shops and workshops that could be entered from the surrounding streets. The different use of space between the much bigger houses to the west and the shop-area to the east is clearly evident and probably due to the topographical situation with the steep hill to the east.

This special situation may also be the reason for a staircase that was attached to the outer face of the southern wall of House 7 (Fig. 26). Four carefully constructed steps were within the excavated area. They were made of fired bricks with sandstone slabs as stepping stones. The preserved width of the staircase was ca. 1.20m. The southern limit was not preserved due to modern illicit digging. The

³⁵ *Iidem*, 'Fustat Expedition: Preliminary Report, 1971', *JARCE* 16 (1979), p. 110.

³⁶ Cf. W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the 8th Season*, p. 129-130 for Area 37 and *ibid.*, p. 135 for an installation in Area 40b. The precise function of these installations is unclear.

staircase was public and served as a road up the hill. A similar situation was observed further to the east during the Ptolemaic Period in Area 46.³⁷

The system of streets in Area 3 during the Mamluk period therefore consisted of the north-south street and an east-west road branching towards the west between Houses 2 and 3³⁸ and the public staircase connecting the quarter with the terraced houses uphill to the east.

Stratum B

Only scarce traces were preserved of the latest phase, most probably dating to the 19th or even early 20th century. These structures were contemporary with House 1 already excavated in Season 3.³⁹

Conclusion – Area 3 and its implications for the history of Aswan

The findings from other areas of Aswan⁴⁰ and the interpretation of historical sources led to the assumption that the southern part of Aswan was abandoned some time in the 15th century AD, and the town became the modest settlement documented by the Napoleonic expedition at the end of the 18th century. Whether or not this decline in inhabitants was due to the Black Death, or whether it was the result of numerous invasions that occurred from the 15th century onwards, cannot be answered with certainty for the time being.⁴¹ The findings in Area 3 at least confirm the hypothesis of a hiatus from the Late Mediaeval Period until the 19th century. The new retaining wall is now protecting the area and enabling future archaeological research (Fig. 27).

4. A short term rescue excavation in the Kelany district (Area 80)

During the summer months of 2013 several foundation pits were observed. Worth mentioning among these investigations was a short term excavation in Area 80,⁴² situated in the Kelany district of Aswan next to the Kelany hotel in the immediate vicinity of Areas 75⁴³ and 76.⁴⁴ Due to the bad condition of the neighbouring houses no real excavation was possible. In a small trench at the centre of the bottom of the foundation pit, medieval structures were documented and associated pottery retrieved.

³⁷ *Idem*, in *9th Season*, p. 9-10.

³⁸ K. C. BRUHN, in *2nd Report*, p. 251.

³⁹ *Loc. cit.*: A coin dating to 1835 gave a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the house in the south-eastern corner of the area.

⁴⁰ Cf. W. MÜLLER, in *Ninth Season*, p. 20 for Area 52, where coins buried by the collapse of the river-embankment wall gave a *terminus post quem* for the abandonment of the wall and the installations connected to it in the year 1367 AD (we thank H. C. NOESKE for this information).

⁴¹ C. VON PILGRIM, in *1st Report*, p. 120-121.

⁴² The site was situated in 17, Sh. Kelany. The investigation took place on June 27th 2013 and was supervised by WOLFGANG MÜLLER.

⁴³ W. MÜLLER, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 21-22.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22-23.

5. Investigation of a city quarter in the northern part of Mediaeval Aswan (Area 81) (Figs. 28-29)⁴⁵

Several areas in the vicinity of Area 81 have been excavated in earlier seasons. From these investigations it became clear that the area was situated within the mediaeval town of Aswan. Areas to the west such as Area 30⁴⁶ show that this part was used as a cemetery during the Roman Period while areas to the immediate east showed no traces of regular burials.⁴⁷

Roman activities at the site (Strata D – F)

In a trench in the eastern part of the area, the bedrock, saprolithic granite, was reached at a level of 94.2m asl. During Stratum F, a 0.5m-wide wall made of granite rubble and coated in a thick layer of mud-plaster was constructed on top of a thin layer of wind-blown sand that covered the granite. The wall crossed the trench in an east-west direction. Stratum F was tentatively dated to the 2nd-3rd century AD.⁴⁸ Stratum E, built immediately on top of the remains of the east-west wall, was characterized by feeble mud-brick walls. Their function has to remain unclear due to the limited size of the trench.

Stratum D was only represented by some layers with settlement and mud-brick debris that had accumulated on top of the remains of the earlier strata. Pottery from these layers was preliminarily dated to the Late Antique Period.

Stratum C/2 (Fig. 29)

Stratum C/2 marks the beginning of the Islamic town in this part of Aswan. Houses 2 and 3 were constructed on top of a layer of wind-blown sand that had accumulated on top of the abandoned Roman remains.

They were separated by a 2.6m wide east-west road that met at a T – junction in the north-east of the site with a north-south road. The eastern and western limits of House 2 were outside the excavated area. Of the two detected rooms of House 2, Room 1 had an east-west extension of more than 4.3m. Only 1.7m of Room 2 lay within the excavated area.

⁴⁵ The Area, situated in 4, Sh. Mahkama Qadima in the Kelany district of Aswan had been under observation since 11.09.2013. The excavation started on November 17th and lasted until December 5th 2013. The work was directed by MARIOLA HEPA and WOLFGANG MÜLLER. The foundation pit of the planned building measured ca. 60sqm and had been excavated to a depth of 2.5m below street level. Only a small trench of ca. 12m² in the eastern half of the site was excavated due to the fact that the modern foundation pit had been excavated inside the ruins of a house and the severed walls of the former house posed a severe threat to the security of the excavating team.

⁴⁶ W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the 7th Season*, p. 181-182.

⁴⁷ A skeleton found in Area 33 was not buried in a regular manner (W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the 7th Season*, p. 196 fig. 19).

⁴⁸ The pottery of the pre-medieval strata was preliminarily dated by LAURA REMBART.

Only a small part of House 3 could be investigated within the limits of Trench 1. The eastern front of the house was just within the limits of the excavation at the eastern section of the area. The inner walls of the only room excavated were plastered with white lime plaster. The floor was a simple mud floor with traces of white plaster.

House 2 showed a succession of doors at the eastern end of its northern wall. The levels of the thresholds had to be raised as the street layers outside the house accumulated. The same was true of the door into House 3 at the western section of Trench 1. The contemporary interior of House 2 could not be excavated due to limited space available.

Stratum C/1

While House 2 remained in use throughout Stratum C, House 3 was abandoned and replaced with House 1. The southern limit of this house remained more or less the same as had been the case with House 3 (the width of the east-west street did not change), but the eastern limit was situated further to the west at a distance of ca. 1m from the eastern section. Two rooms of House 1 were within the excavated area. The eastern one had a carefully laid pavement of fired bricks and sandstone slabs, but in the eastern room no traces of a floor were found.

At the eastern end of the room of Room 1 in House 2, a cooking installation was observed. The floor in the room had risen over time to such a level that the barrel-vaulted roof of the original room had to be given up. Therefore the layout of the house must have changed considerably during Stratum C/1.

The beginning of Stratum C/2 was dated preliminarily to the 8th – 9th century AD, and the end of C/1 to the Early Mamluk or Ayyubid Period.

Stratum B

Later layers were only detected in the sections. It is unclear whether the east-west road was then still in use. During Stratum B, a new 1m-wide north-south road came into existence. It could only be observed in the southern section. It was flanked by two half-brick wide walls that were still preserved to a height of 1.20m. The character of the architecture of Stratum B resembled that from nearby Areas 56 and 58:⁴⁹ walled-in open air areas that were probably used for workshops and the keeping of animals. Such areas are typical of the outer limits of settlements until today.

Conclusion

The results from Area 81 complement the archaeological map of Aswan. The lack of Pharaonic material fits well with the findings in neighbouring areas. The structures dating to the

⁴⁹ W. MÜLLER, in *Ninth Season*, p. 9-10.

Roman Period were only encountered in Trench 1. It is thus hard to interpret them and the fact that no traces of burials, whether bones or typical material, were found, should not be overestimated as the walls of Strata E and F could well be parts of funerary structures.

The results concerning Early Islamic and Mediaeval Aswan were far more consistent. Of special importance was the fact that the founding layer of the Early Islamic town could be discerned with unprecedented clarity. The longevity of House 2 was remarkable, as was the width of the east-west street that makes it one of the more important streets in the mediaeval town, comparable to the north-south street in Area 40.⁵⁰ Secondary streets, like the north-south street in Area 3⁵¹ or the north-south street visible in the southern section of Area 81, were significantly narrower.

6. Late Antique tombs (Area 82) (Figs. 30-31)⁵²

Two Late Roman chamber tombs with multiple burials were excavated in the centre of the foundation trench. The eastern tomb showed no traces of a vault. Its simple mud-brick chamber (2.32x2m) contained 10 interred individuals. Most of them were disturbed by consecutive burial activity in the chamber. The southernmost burial was deposited on top of two pottery pipes. This burial custom was observed in Areas 25⁵³ and 49.⁵⁴ All individuals were buried in a supine position with their heads to the west. Among the buried individuals were both children (infans 1 and 2) and adults.

The western tomb was in much better condition. Substantial parts of the two-chambered tomb were preserved. The tomb measured 2.35x2m. The northern chamber measured 1.5x2m, the southern one 0.85x2m. No human remains were found in the northern chamber. In the southern chamber four individuals, two small children (infans 1) and two adults, were interred.

The tombs showed the same orientation and similar dimensions. Both can be dated to the Late Antique period and have clear parallels in the tombs of neighboring Area 49. The short-term investigation provided important information on the extent of the Late Antique cemeteries of Aswan.

At least three Islamic buildings phases had been destroyed by the foundation pit and could only be recorded in the eastern section.

Abstract:

This report gives an overview on the work conducted during the 14th season of the joint archaeological project of the Swiss Institute of Architectural and Archaeological Research, Cairo and the Ministry of

⁵⁰ *Idem*, in *Report on the 8th Season*, p. 134-135.

⁵¹ *Cf. supra*.

⁵² The area is located in the Sh. Sheikh Saleh opposite house nr. 102. Excavations lasted from April 5th until April 7th 2014 and were supervised by W. MÜLLER.

⁵³ W. MÜLLER/F. MAHMOUD EL-AMIN, in *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p. 341.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, in *Tenth Season*, p. 15.

State for Antiquities, Aswan in Syene/Old Aswan. Fieldwork concentrated on further investigations of a Ptolemaic animal cemetery and a domestic quarter of the Persian Period in Area 2. After parts of the perimeter fence at the eastern slope of Area 3 (Temple of Domitian) had collapsed in summer 2013 a retaining wall was built in order to support the street running above the steep gradient at the eastern limit of the site. Excavations at the bottom of the wall revealed a well-preserved stratum from the Ayyubid Period. Salvage excavations were carried out in three construction sites. The excavations contributed further to the archaeological landscape of Aswan in the Late Roman and Mediaeval Periods and revealed a section of a major street in a mediaeval quarter, and tombs of the Late Roman Period.

Figures:

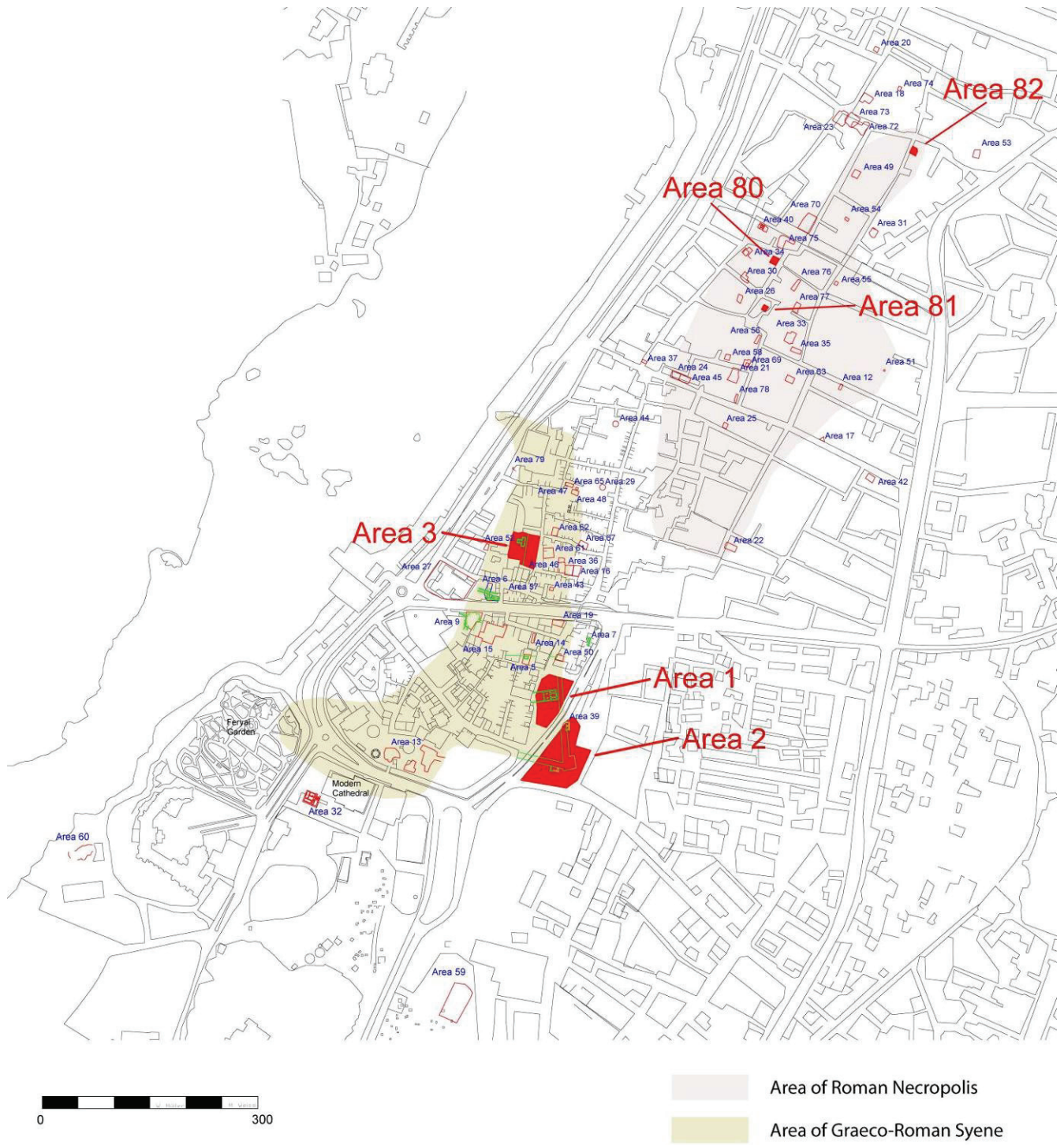


Fig. 1: Aswan: Map of excavated areas.



Fig. 2: Plan of Area 2.



Fig. 3: Area 2: Tomb 10.



Fig. 4: Area 2: Tombs 11 and 12.



Fig. 5: Area 2: False Door.



Fig. 6: Area 2: Overview of Building 2/Unit 1.



Fig. 7: Area 2: Building 2/Unit 1/Room 1: Detail of wooden threshold.



Fig. 8: Area 2: Building 2/Unit 2/Room 2: Detail of cooking installation.

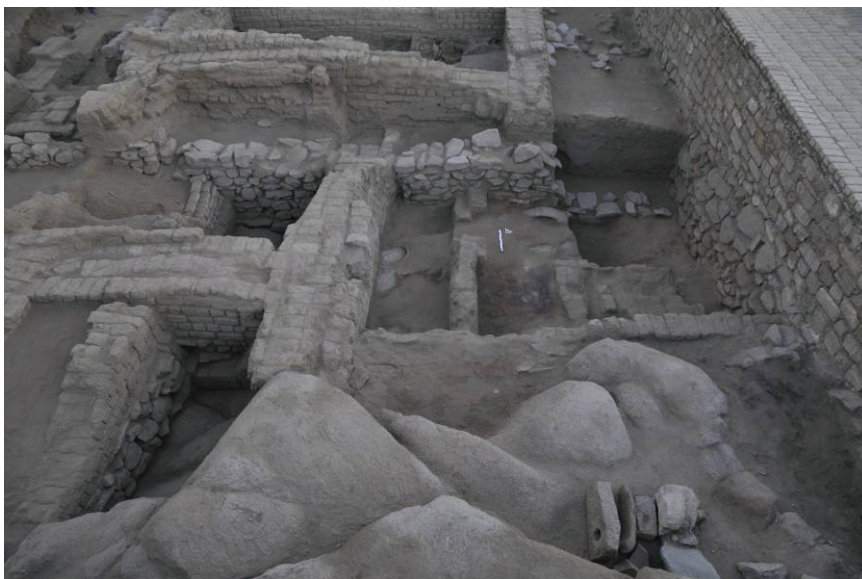


Fig. 9: Area 2: Overview of Building 4.



Fig. 10: Area 2: Overview of Building 4/Rooms 7 and 9.



Fig. 11: Area 2: Overview of Building 3.



Fig. 12: Area 2: Burial 9.

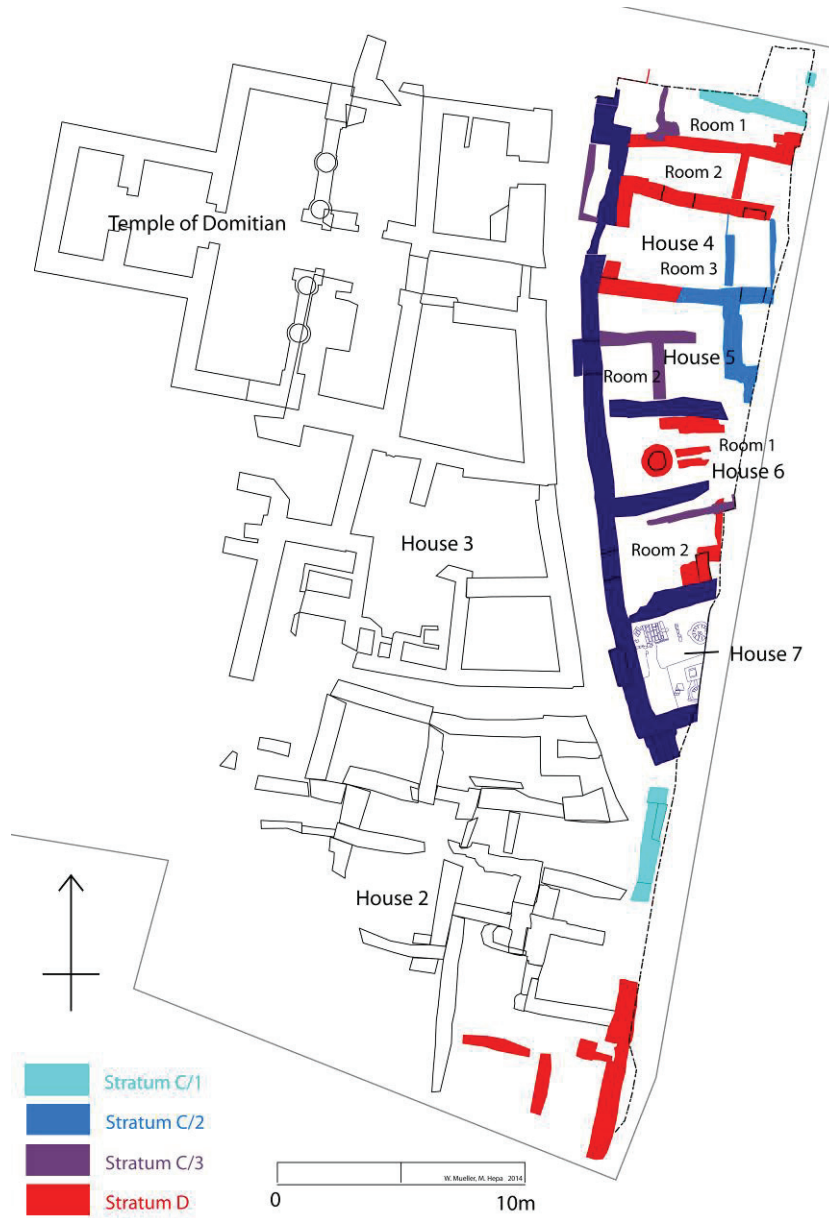


Fig. 13: Plan of Area 3.



Fig. 14: Area 3: Collapsed eastern section.



Fig. 15: Area 3: Area investigated during Season 14.



Fig. 16: Area 3: Overview of the eastern section of Area 3 before the construction of the retaining wall.



Fig. 17: Area 3: Detail of a stone wall of Stratum D.



Fig. 18: Area 3: Overview of House 4.



Fig. 19: Area 3: Detail of House 4: vaulted doorway.



Fig. 21: Area 3: Decorated niche after the completion of the retaining wall.



Fig. 20: Area 3: Detail of decorated niche in House 4



Fig. 22: Area 3: Detail of possible prayer place in House 4.



Fig. 23: Area 3: Detail of door into House 4.



Fig. 24: Area 3: Detail of sanitary installation.



Fig. 25: Area 3: Detail of an oil-press in House 7.



Fig. 26: Area 3: Detail of a staircase to the south of House 7.



Fig. 27: Overview of Area 3 with completed retaining wall.

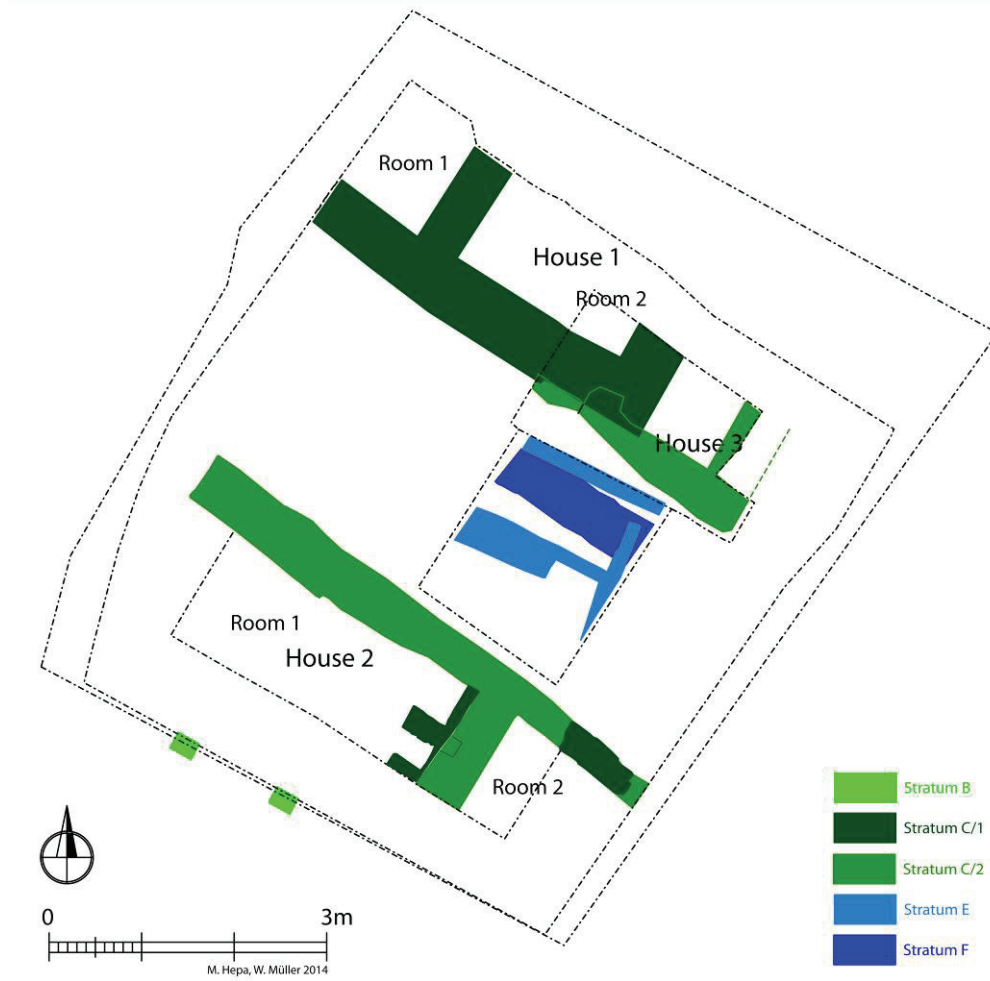


Fig. 28: Plan of Area 81.



Fig. 29: Overview of Area 81.

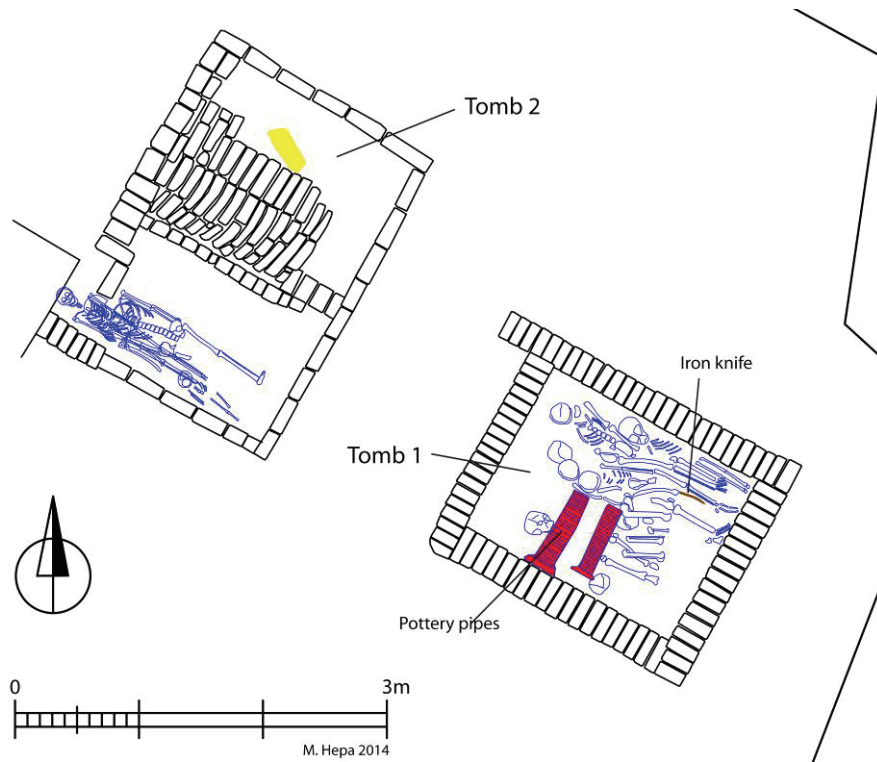


Fig. 30: Plan of Area 82.



Fig. 31: Tomb 1 in Area 82.