

Report on the
15th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission
in Syene / Old Aswan (2014/2015)

by

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1. Introduction and Overview

The 15th 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 was carried out between October 18th, 2014 and April 14th, 2015¹.

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 NASR SALAMA. The fieldwork was directed by WOLFGANG MÜLLER. Team members were the Egyptologists M. MAREE, V. MICHEL, and MARCUS MÜLLER, the archaeologists M. HEPHA, U. MATIC, L. REMBART, G. WILLIAMS and I. WINET, the numismatist H.-C. NOESKE, the epigraphers S. TORALLAS TOVAR and A. ZOMENO RODRIGUEZ, the photographers N. GAIL and A. KRAUSE, the palaeo-botanists U. THANHEISER and B. ECKL, the paleozoologists J. PETERS and U. MUTZE, the anthropologists J. NOVACEK and K. SCHEELEN, the draftsmen B.-C. SCHIEBE and O. VON PILGRIM, and the conservators M. KRUTZSCH and E. PEINTNER. Assigned inspectors and further members of the mission were MAHMOUD ABDELLA ABDALLAH, FAYSAL HELMY ABDELWAHAB HELMY, FATHIA AHMED EL-HEFNY, HALA MOHAMED HUSSEIN, GALAL ABDEEN SIAM, ADEL KAMIL TOHAMY, MAHMOUD MAMDOUH MOKHTAR, MUSTAFA SAID MOHAMED, HEBA SAAD

A major aim of last season's fieldwork was to conclude the excavations in Area 2 (Fig. 1). The work focused on additional investigations in the older layers in the northern part of the site. The results contributed significantly to a better understanding of the urban layout of the Late Period occupation, which seemingly was organized in several quarters separated from each other by dividing walls.²

The systematic survey of current construction sites continued during the whole season. Salvage excavations were conducted in several areas in the districts of Koka and Sheikh Saleh in Old Aswan.

Comprehensive works were carried out in two construction sites in close vicinity of the "Roman Shrine" (Area 5), which was excavated by the SCA in 1999, about 100m north of the Isis Temple. Due to the small size of the building lots the excavation was limited in both of the sites to trenches of a depth of up to 8m in order to study most importantly the stratigraphy and the kind of architecture in this town quarter. Remains of the Roman occupation were encountered beneath remarkably well-preserved buildings of medieval date. An exceptional building equipped with painted wall plaster and a terrazzo floor contributes to

HARBY, SAID AHMED ALI EL-RAWI, TAISSER BADR MOHAMED AMER and HOUYDA MOHAMED AHMED. We are much indebted to PAMELA ROSE for correcting the English of this report.
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://swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_on_the_Tenth_Season_of_the_Joint_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_in_Syene_Old_Aswan_\(2009_2010\).pdf](http://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://swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_on_the_Eleventh_Season_of_the_Joint_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_in_Syene_Old_Aswan_\(2010_2011\).pdf](http://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*), *IIDEM*, 'Report on the 14th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan (2013/2014)', *ASAE*, forthcoming (http://swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_2014th_Season_2013_2014.pdf) (henceforth quoted as *Fourteenth Season*).

the general impression of Roman-style architecture dominating the character of this town quarter (see ch. 4).

The southern limit of the medieval town was already a major interest of the mission from the time when a long-term salvage excavation was conducted next to the Coptic St. Mark's Cathedral. According to the map produced by the Napoleonic Expedition and from some aerial photographs of the 19th and early 20th century the medieval town wall was suggested to be located in the garden area in front of a house directly to the south of Area 32. The company owning the house, however, prohibited any archaeological sondages and auger core drillings on the property. Following a change of ownership, construction works started in spring 2015 and the mission finally was granted access to carry out a limited investigation of the area. Excavations, however, took place under extremely difficult working conditions, since the contractor was allowed to blast away the bedrock concurrently with the rescue excavations in the same area.

Substructures of the town wall were uncovered in the middle of the area. A sequence of buildings attached to the wall at its northern side offers clear chronological evidence for a dating of the fortification for the first time (see ch. 6).

The construction site comprises the garden area in front of one of the few significant architectural landmarks still existing in Aswan. The house once belonged to the English physician Dr H.E. Leigh Canney who purchased the land in 1899 from the Anglican church. He commissioned the house from the famous British architect Charles F.A. Voysey in 1905, who was one of the leading exponents of the English Arts and Crafts movement.³ Even if now the garden area of the house is lost and will be soon occupied by a shopping mall it is to be hoped that the house proper will be kept under protection as an architectural landmark and be added to the list of national architectural heritage.

The high potential of consistent monitoring of on-going construction sites and short-term investigations was once again demonstrated in Area 61. After the site was excavated in previous seasons further archaeological features became visible when the contractor cut back the edges of the foundation pit: a rock-cut tomb of the Middle Kingdom and a short segment of a Ptolemaic construction of sandstone blocks. The stone foundation may be connected with a similar wall recorded in an earlier season in Area 46 further to the east. It indicates that there was a large temple terrace at the south-western slope of the rocky outcrop to the east of the Khnum temple of Domitian (see ch. 3).

³ Numerous books and articles were published about C.F.A. VOYSEY, for a full bibliography see <http://www.voyseysociety.org/voysey/bibliography.html>. Cf. recently N. WARNER, An Architect Abroad – The Life and Work of Somers Clarke in Egypt, in: *MDAIK* 68, 2012, p. 258-260.

Further brief investigations were carried out in two sites in the Suq area. Two buildings phases of presumably medieval date were attested in a small construction site in the Suq street Sh. Ahmed Maher (Area 83).⁴ However, the small size of the area and the precarious condition of the ruined houses surrounding the site impeded any detailed excavation.

The investigation of an illicit excavation in an abandoned house at Sh. Haris just to the south of Area 74 brought further evidence for Middle Kingdom activities to the north of the Late Period town (Area 85).⁵ At the bottom of a shaft of 7m depth Middle Kingdom pottery sherds were collected beneath several metres of layers of loose windblown sand. The sherds were associated with narrow mudbrick walls and may provide evidence of the extent of the area of Middle Kingdom activities related to processing, transporting and quarrying of granite and the accompanying installations for the provision of workmen observed in nearby Areas 18, 23,⁶ 72, 73 and 74 further to the south.⁷

The epigraphic work this season focused on a cluster of rock inscriptions next to a café just south of the headquarters of the Tourist Police (Area 79). The inscriptions in the back yard of the café were exposed only after several meters of modern waste were removed and the rocks were carefully cleaned (see ch. 7).

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

The analysis of the skeletons from the animal cemetery in Area 2 was continued by the palaeo-zoologists U. MUTZE and J. PETERS. The analysis of human skeletal remains was carried on by J. NOVACEK and K. SCHEELEN.

Over the past years many salvage excavations were conducted in layers relating to medieval Aswan. The pottery assemblages from these excavations may be considered as a major source for a general study on the development of medieval pottery in Upper Egypt. Well stratified assemblages from three key sites (Areas 40, 81, and 84) were recorded by G. WILLIAMS this season.

Another major task of the season was compiling a detailed inventory of all objects and pottery collections temporarily stored in the magazine of the mission at the Swiss dig house at Elephantine in preparation for their transferral to the newly built MSA magazine next to the Inspectorate of Antiquities. Eventually the transfer took place on December 1st 2014 and April 8th 2015 respectively.

⁴ The work lasted from May 13th until May 15th 2014 and was supervised by ADEL TOHAMY.

⁵ An examination of the illicit digging was made possible by the local Antiquities police on December 12th 2014.

⁶ C. VON PILGRIM, in *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p. 307-311.

⁷ VON PILGRIM/MÜLLER, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 17-21.

During the whole field season the mission conducted an archaeological training programme for members of the local inspectorate of the MSA.⁸

(C. von Pilgrim)

2. Completion of the archaeological investigation of the Birket Damas area (Area 2)

Since the town wall, the extra-mural areas and most of the intramural settlement remains had been investigated in previous seasons,⁹ only a small part in the northern part of the intramural area, Building 1/Courtyard 1, needed to be excavated. As the Roman layers had already been removed, only the Ptolemaic phases of Building 1 and preceding structures awaited excavation. As was the case in the southern part of the intramural area, excavation was limited to parts not covered by Building 1 and structures contemporary with it (Fig. 2).

Stratum G

Except in the southern part of the intramural area, in none of the trenches that were dug down to the bedrock were pre-Late Period structures observed. An east-west oriented rectangular structure that abutted the western face of the town wall was constructed immediately after the construction of the town wall. The narrow structure was 2.6m wide and extended ca. 4.8m to the west from the town wall. Massive walls (0.7m wide) consisting mostly of broken sandstone with some granite rubble enclosed a small room little more than 1m wide. Only two layers of stones with traces of mud brick of very bad quality on top are evidence of the fact that the stone walls were foundations for a building erected in mud brick. The function of the structure is completely unclear. It was probably only used for a short period, presumably during the construction of the town wall. It might have served as a ramp or similar construction for the transport of building materials (Fig. 3).

During Stratum G/2, the quarter in the southern part of the intramural area was limited to the north by W2-456/457 (0.9-1m wide). Both the southern and northern faces of this wall were coated with a thick layer of mud plaster (Fig. 4). As was common for most walls dating to Stratum G, a mudbrick wall with bricks of very bad quality was constructed on top of a socle

⁸ Besides the ongoing training programme for the members of the mission, a special Field School was held for ZEINAB ABBAS MOHAMED.

⁹ 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, *idem*, in *Fourteenth Season*, p. 4-12 for the work of the Swiss-Egyptian Joint Mission.

consisting of sandstone and granite rubble. The mud brick portion of the wall was only preserved in its western part (Fig. 5). 4.5m from the western face of the town wall, the wall showed remains of a door construction with a threshold consisting of two sandstone blocks. The eastern block showed a mortice for a (presumably wooden) doorjamb, and the western one was the threshold proper showing clear traces of wear (Figs. 4 and 6).¹⁰ The threshold could not be excavated completely due to Ptolemaic structures on top of it that had to be preserved. This door most probably constituted the main entrance into the walled-in quarter further south.

Ca. 3.5m to the north of W2-456/457, an east wall of similar construction was observed. Other than the southern wall, W2-471 (Fig. 4) was built against a slope that was due to the remains of the "ramp" to the south of it. The contemporary surfaces were at a significantly higher level to the south than to the north of W2-471. The northern face of the wall especially was covered with several phases of mud plaster. Within the excavated area, neither to the north nor to the south of the wall, were any abutting walls observed. Remains of a huge vat were found *in situ* at the northern face of W2-471 in the north-western corner of the area excavated in Season 15. The wall may represent the southern limit of another town quarter to the north. The area in between most probably constituted a street connecting the two quarters to the rest of the town further west.

Soon after the construction of W2-456/457, a narrow north-south wall (W2-467) made of bricks of very bad quality abutted the threshold exactly at the location of the doorjamb and ran for 2.7m to the north where it ended in a small rectangular structure, probably a platform or supporting construction, as at 1.45m north of the threshold another wall branched off towards the east (Fig. 6). This wall had to be reconstructed from observations in a section to the east of it as only one layer of bricks was preserved and it was heavily damaged by later structures. The wall defined a courtyard similar to Unit2/C2 and can be dated to Stratum G2/b. Two ovens, situated in the north-eastern corner of courtyard Unit2/C2 were observed just to the south of W2-456.

W2-467 was soon given up and covered by layers of windblown sand and ashy material. Due to the accumulation of material to the north of the door, a small mud brick wall was constructed 0.2m to the north of the threshold in order to keep the entrance clean. A small oven was constructed 1.3m to the north of W2-456. The oven showed several phases and was used over a long period of time, hence the ashy layers. The oven (diameter: 0.4m) was of the cylindrical type most probably used for baking bread (Fig. 7).

Area 2 and the Persian garrison town of Syene

¹⁰ Cf. for a similar threshold in Area 15: W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the Fifth and Sixth Season*, fig. 55a.

As most rescue excavations are rather limited in size, they can rarely be conducted to the depth necessary to reach pre-Ptolemaic layers. Even if layers dating to the Late Period are encountered at a higher level, the investigated area is usually too small for any architectural analysis not to mention research on urbanism. Area 2, a protected research area and Area 15, an exceptionally large rescue excavation, were the only areas where several buildings could be investigated and some idea of their spatial organization could be obtained. As for the internal structure and functional differentiation within the town, several differences between Area 15 and Area 2 can be stated. The organization of space in Area 15 during Stratum J was dominated by Building 9.¹¹ The nucleus of this building covered an area of 140sqm, significantly more than Building 2 in Area 2 at only 60sqm. While not only the size but also the ground-plan are different, the situation with a central building surrounded by courtyards used mostly for food production is similar as is the location of the buildings next to the town wall.

A most significant and important indicator for different uses of the parts of the town excavated in Area 15 and Area 2 is the material culture. While in Area 15 a huge quantity of stone weights and weapons, mostly arrowheads, were found,¹² both find groups were very scarce in Area 2. Also, imported amphorae, abundant in Area 15, were found in much smaller numbers in Area 2. One reason for these characteristics may be the location of the sites within the town. Area 15 is situated in the close vicinity of the river and the harbour, whereas Area 2 lies in the very south-east "at the back" of the town with much less access to the extramural areas. It thus seems feasible to assume that the special military-administrative aspect of Area 15 was not common for the whole of Persian Syene but was limited to those parts of the town that served as interfaces to the outside world.

Several houses on the island of Elephantine¹³ and in Tell el Herr¹⁴ resemble Building 9. Building 2 in Area 2 is of a simpler type but the division of the ground floor into two separate units seems to be special. Compared to Tell el-Herr, the most striking difference, as has recently been pointed out,¹⁵ is the more regular spatial organization. This organization is additionally stressed by massive stone walls that limit different quarters of the town, especially in Area 2. While the comparison of a small fortress like Tell el-Herr (ca. 2.5ha) and a town, albeit of modest size, seems to be slightly problematic, the differences from

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 315-317.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

¹³ A. KREKELER, 'Stadtgrabung am Westkom von Elephantine/Wohnbauten des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.', in M. BIETAK (ED.), *House and Palace in Ancient Egypt*, UZK 16, DSchrÖAW 14 (Vienna 1996), p. 111 plan 9.

¹⁴ House 9 resembles type IV of houses in Tell el-Herr (S. MARCHI, *L'habitat dans les forteresses de Migdol (Tell el-Herr)* (Paris 2014), p. 41 fig. 53 and p. 199-200).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

Elephantine remain remarkable, but are most probably due to the long building tradition and the topographical situation there.¹⁶

Stratum F

Stratum F saw the destruction of W2-471. A huge pit was evidence of the dismantling of the wall and the retrieval of its mud bricks. The pit was filled in with mud brick debris and organic material. Among the debris at the bottom of the pit, the torso of an animal sculpture (unclear whether of a lion or a sheep) made of local sandstone was found (Fig. 8). W2-456/457 was still in use and even repaired. A tree pit was dug 0.5m to the north of the wall. The circular pit was 1.4m deep and measured 1–1.2m in diameter (Fig. 9). No other contemporary constructions of similar nature were found in the area.

Several walls abutting the western face of the town wall were observed in a narrow trench. W2-455 and W2-279 met at a pronounced recess in the town wall. W2-466 was constructed later than W2-455 but coexisted for some time with it. Most of these constructions were covered by W2-326 and to the west of this construction were destroyed by later activities. Most probably they are remains of small courtyards situated along the western face of the town wall. Their stratigraphic assignment is due to the fact that the earlier wall W2-455 sat on top of the remains of W2-471 and that all the walls were covered by the construction layer of Stratum E.

Stratum E¹⁷

Strata E/7-8

The earliest layers dating to Stratum E were connected with the construction of the earliest phase of Building 1 during Strata E/7 and E/8. A heap of mud bricks was found in the northern part of the courtyard. The bricks were piled up without any mortar. Two layers of bricks were preserved. A layer of grano-diorite chips and rubble was contemporary with the heap as was a simple oven, used for cooking (Fig. 10). These remains were covered by loose layers with some animal dung. W2-456/457 was given up. Only some remains of the eastern sector of the wall may have been visible.

In the north-western part of the courtyard, an enigmatic small mud brick construction (W2-474) measuring 0.7 x 0.5m was in use during this phase. After Stratum E/6 it was dismantled

¹⁶ MÜLLER, in *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p. 327.

¹⁷ Cf. for previous work in Building 1/C1 W. MÜLLER, '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. 64-66 and *idem*, in *Thirteenth season*, p. 10 - 11.

and replaced by a slightly smaller but otherwise similar structure (W2-362) a little further to the south.¹⁸ These mud brick constructions were an important part of whatever happened in and around Building 1. Their exact function is completely unclear. They may be the last remains of pedestals for an altar or a statue.

Stratum E/6 onwards

Building 1/C1 only came into existence when W2- 316 and the first phase of W2-167 were constructed during Stratum E/6. As significantly more dung and organic remains had accumulated around Building 1 than further to the north, it became necessary to build a small staircase and a terracing construction to the east of it that abutted the northern face of W2-316 (Fig. 11). The 1.40m-wide staircase was a mud brick construction that was exactly aligned with the staircase leading up to the elevated nucleus of Building 1 in Stratum E/6. The granodiorite threshold to the north of the entrance into Building 1 was a later addition to this staircase and was set into the uppermost step made of mud bricks. The threshold now constituted the third uppermost step of the small staircase. Contemporary with W2-316, a mud brick structure was constructed in the eastern part of the courtyard. It was limited in the south by an east-west-running one brick-wide mud brick wall (W2-295). Its nucleus consisted of mud bricks piled up without mortar. The construction gives an impression similar to that of the construction layers of the first phase of Building 1. The construction sits immediately on top of a thin layer of granite and granodiorite chips and is thus probably connected to nearby construction works. It is conceivable that these mud brick structures are the remains of a rampart leading up the town wall, probably evidence of repair work that was so frequently attested at the eastern face of the wall.¹⁹

In Strata E/5 and E/4 layers of mud brick debris and mud mortar alternating with dung layers accumulated until the staircase was completely covered in Stratum E/4.

Animal Burials

During Strata E/2 and E/3, the majority of animal burials took place in Courtyard 1 (Fig. 12). In the earlier phases, Strata E/4 to E/8, only occasional interments were observed (11 skeletons were retrieved). At that time the courtyard was not used so much for the keeping and burying of animals, as not only were there fewer burials but also the layers of animal dung were significantly thinner. The development of the burial customs over time translates into the development of Building 1 and *vice versa*.

¹⁸ *Idem*, in *Thirteenth Season*, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Idem*, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 7, *Idem*, in O'CONNELL (ED.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD*, p. 61.

While the first burials took place more or less all over the place, with the only exception being the nucleus of Building 1, activities became more organized with the creation of courtyard 1 in Stratum E/6.

Conclusion

Regrettably vandalism, which since 2011 has been a constant companion of the work in Area 2,²⁰ increased considerably in Season 15. While the destruction of walls and other visible remains continued, additionally extensive illicit excavations were conducted on the site. Three major pits and several smaller ones were observed and reported. The damage done to walls and other structures was considerable.

In spite of these problems, the discoveries of Season 15 complimented and concluded the work of former seasons. Crucial additional information on the organization of the Late Period settlement was gained by confirming the northern limit of the area around Building 2 and the southern limit of another walled-in quarter to the north of it. All animal burials available for excavation were retrieved and will be the subject of an ongoing extensive archaeozoological study. Furthermore, additional information on the architecture and chronology of Building 1 was obtained. With the conclusion of archaeological work in Area 2, the next steps in developing the site as a publicly accessible central archaeological area can be implemented.²¹

(W. Müller)

3. Middle Kingdom burials and a Ptolemaic temple (Area 61)

Reinvestigations of the site became necessary, when the construction team working on the site since 2010 (!) started to dig into the steep slope to the east of the area, and bones and pottery appeared.²² The part of the area to the west of the slope was already investigated during season 10.²³

A burial site of the Middle Kingdom

At least two layers of completely disturbed burials were observed (Figs. 15 and 16). The exact number of individuals could not be determined as nearly all bones were displaced. The bodies had been deposited in a crevice within the granite without any additional architecture or other

²⁰ Cf. for vandalism and other problems C. v. PILGRIM, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 2-3.

²¹ Cf. v. PILGRIM, ASAE 84, p. 342 fig. 24 with the plan for site management.

²² The work started on November 26th and continued until November 30th 2014.

²³ W. MÜLLER, in *Tenth Season*, p. 13-17.

means of protection. Pottery that was found with the bones was dated to the late Middle Kingdom.²⁴ It is a remarkable coincidence that a group of rock inscriptions of the same date was found several metres further to the west.²⁵ The burials are the first evidences of Middle Kingdom funerary activity as far to the north of Aswan as Shôna.²⁶ This is of special interest as a soul-house, albeit dating to the early 12th Dynasty, was found in Area 45.²⁷

The foundation of a Ptolemaic temple²⁸

The cause of the destruction of the burials was a wall of massive sandstone blocks that filled the crevice just to the south of the bones and ran in a north-eastern – south-westerly direction. Three layers of blocks were preserved (Figs. 15 and 17). With the exception of the lowest course of stones, all visible faces were carefully finished. The blocks were 0.4 – 0.5m high, 0.5-0.6m wide and one block was (1.2+x)m long. The width of the wall could not be determined. One block showed traces of red colouration, probably positioning marks.

The foundation pit was limited to the north by a narrow (one brick-wide) mud brick wall. The gap between the wall and the sandstone blocks was filled with reddish lime mortar that was also visible between the blocks. An investigation of the wall and the mortar showed two clearly discernible phases of construction.

In the northern extension of Area 46, several sandstone blocks were found *in situ* (Fig. 18).²⁹ They were part of a north-east – south-west wall. The wall was preserved for a length of 3.3m. The wall ran into the northern section and was destroyed in the south. One displaced sandstone block was found to the south of the wall. As there was no sign of further destruction of the wall in the western part, the width of ca. 2.30m measured at the northern section was most probably the actual width of the foundation. Two courses of blocks were preserved. The lower course was laid out with a central row of headers and two rows of stretchers at the faces of the wall. The second course of blocks only consisted of headers. The southern faces of the blocks of the upper course showed carefully crafted *anathyroseis* (bed joints) as did the surface of the blocks, where a central (slightly shifted to the south-east) *anathyrosis* that measured ca. 1.45m in width, covered both blocks. Except for a carved grid

²⁴ For a first assessment of the pottery I thank IRENE FORSTNER-MÜLLER.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14, figs 33 – 37.

²⁶ Only a few examples of burials dating to the Middle Kingdom are attested for Old Aswan. Cf. for evidence from Area 2: W. MÜLLER, in *Eleventh Season*, p. 9, *idem*, in *Fourteenth Season*, p. 5-6.

²⁷ Cf. I. FORSTNER-MÜLLER/W. MÜLLER, 'A new discovered "soul-house" in Aswan', in: A. JIMÉNEZ SERRANO/C. VON PILGRIM (EDS.), *From the Delta to the Cataract: Studies dedicated to Mohamed El-Bialy*, forthcoming.

²⁸ I thank CORNELIUS VON PILGRIM for helping me with interpreting and dating the architectural elements.

²⁹ The one-day investigation was carried out by WOLFGANG MÜLLER on September 6th 2009. The blocks were discovered when, during the construction works in Area 46, the steep slope to the north of the area collapsed.

line near the eastern face, but not exactly parallel to it, the lower course showed no special markings with the exception of several small mortices for moving and placing the blocks. Traces of pinkish and whitish mortar were found on the joints and visible surfaces.

As the orientation is nearly identical, and the dimensions, the masonry and the mortar are similar to the findings in Area 61, it is feasible to assume that both walls belonged to the same building. A sandstone block of similar dimensions with traces of the same pinkish mortar on it that fell out of the slope a little further to the south of the sandstone wall would then be an indicator of the south-eastern limit of the building, and the blocks in Area 46 would mark the eastern limit (Fig. 19). The distance between the preserved faces of the walls in Area 61 and Area 46 measures approximately 18m. From these dimensions, and assuming that 18m is the width of the structure, the sandstone walls belong either to a terrace with the temple proper on top of it or are the foundations of its *temenos* wall. Due to the topographical situation with the steep slope to the east of Area 61, some kind of terracing construction is a necessary prerequisite for any kind of major building in this area. The bottom of the crevice in Area 61 is at a level of 105.8m,³⁰ and the building ground in Area 46 is at 107.9m. The preserved top of the sandstone wall in Area 46 is at a level of 108.14m, and in Area 61 at 107.4m. Due to the absence of datable material only an approximate date can be proposed. Details of the architecture and the use of characteristic pinkish mortar have clear parallels in Ptolemaic buildings on Elephantine and in Syene.³¹

The vicinity of a prestigious building nearby may explain the wealth represented in the material culture and the architectural elements found in the western part of Area 61 and in Area 62 during the Late Ptolemaic and Early Roman periods.³²

(W. Müller)

4. The neighbourhood of the Temple of Isis and the "Roman Shrine" (Areas 84 and 88)

These areas were situated in the modern town quarter of Koka immediately to the north-east (Area 84) and east (Area 88) of the "Roman Shrine" (Area 5),³³ to the south of Area 15 and just opposite Area 50³⁴ on the same road. Area 84 was situated ca. 8m to the north of Area 88, only separated from it by one modern house (Fig. 20). The vicinity of the Roman Shrine, a

³⁰ All elevations given are in metres above sea level (asl).

³¹ W. MÜLLER, 'Hellenistic Aswan', in D. RAUE ET AL. (EDS.), *The First Cataract of the Nile*, SDAIK 36 (Berlin/Boston 2013), p. 127-128.

³² MÜLLER, in *Tenth Season*, p. 16-17. Area 62 is currently prepared for publication by MARIOLA HEPA.

³³ A. KELANY/K. C. BRUHN, in *1st Report*, p. 136-139.

³⁴ MÜLLER, in *Tenth Season*, p. 16-19.

rectangular exedra-like small stone building of Doric order with its entrance to the north, is of the utmost importance.

Area 84

Due to the fact that the level of the current surface is some 8m higher than the floor level of the shrine, wide safety margins had to be left unexcavated to the south and north of the site in order to protect the neighbouring buildings (Fig. 21).³⁵

Stratum E

The earliest stratum was only investigated in a small trench in the eastern part of the excavation. There, a narrow north-south street (ca. 1.50m wide) was encountered. A building to the east of it showed a large gate opening to the street further to the east. Of this gate a large (1.10m wide) sandstone threshold with two rectangular holes for the mounting of the door jambs remained *in situ* (Fig. 22). As the wall to the north of the door was only half a brick wide, it most probably led into a courtyard.

The street was limited in the west by a massive, roughly conical pillar-like stone construction mostly consisting of reused blocks. It probably constituted the reinforced corner of a house that was destroyed when House 5 was constructed (Fig. 23). Thus, presumably, prior to the existence of House 5, an east-west road branched off towards the west. The earliest street layers were dated to the Late Ptolemaic period.

Stratum D

House 5

The complete southern wall of Room 1 was situated within the excavated area. The east-west width of the room was 5.2m (Fig. 24). The room showed a perfectly-preserved terrazzo floor and painted walls. The painted plaster was mostly destroyed. Traces give the impression that the walls were painted solely with a dark yellow colour probably intended to

³⁵ The excavation started on August 24th and lasted until December 13th. The work was started and conducted until October 16th by the Egyptian members of the mission. From then on, the excavation was conducted jointly by the Swiss Institute and the MSA Aswan. The work in Area 84 marks a great achievement with respect to the efficiency of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission as the work was done in complete cooperation of the whole team. It was due to the effort of the Inspectors that this important site could be investigated in the manner presented below. The Egyptian members of the team working in the site were: FAYSAL HELMY ABDELWAHAB, FATHIA AHMED EL-HEFNY, HALA MOHAMED HUSSEIN, GALAL ABDEEN SIAM, ADEL KAMIL TOHAMY, SAID AHMED ALI EL-RAWI, MAHMOUD ABDELLA ABDALLAH, TAISSER BADR MOHAMED AMER and HEBA SAAD HARBY.

give the impression of gold. The colour was painted on very thin lime mortar that was applied directly on the mud brick wall. The southern wall showed a wide opening in its centre. The opening had a width of 2.60m. Such a width is definitely too large, especially if one takes into account that no door-jambs of any kind were found. Either a room to the south of Room 1 was entered via a non-closable passage or the opening led into a niche or apse (Fig. 25).

During the second phase, the entrance in the southern wall was reduced in a way that allowed the construction of a proper door that was 1.40m wide. It was flanked by huge granite blocks (c. 1.60m high and 0.30m wide). Floor and wall plaster were renewed. Before plaster and floor were constructed, soft greyish finely-grained mortar, presumably consisting of a mixture of lime and ash, was applied. Multicoloured decoration could be reconstructed from the badly-preserved remains of plaster. While a kind of stone imitation was painted on top of a black and red horizontal stripe on the eastern and southern wall, the western wall only showed dark yellow painting with some unintelligible stripes. To the east of the eastern door jamb and partly covering it was a niche that came into existence when a part of the earlier opening was closed, and was decorated in a more elaborate manner. Here, the central zone of - an up to now unintelligible - image was bounded by black and red stripes (Fig. 26).³⁶

The stratigraphic position of House 5 has to remain ambiguous for the time being. It was in use for a very long time.

A first cursory investigation of the material found within the only room of the house situated within the limits of the excavation produced a date of use or at least abandonment. Material found on top of the floor was dated preliminarily to the 4th century AD at the earliest. In a deep trench under House 1/Room 1 parts of a street paved with sandstone slabs were found. The level of the street surface was nearly the same as the floor level in House 5/Room 1. Material found on top of the pavement was of the same date as the pottery found inside Room 1.

To the east of the north-south street to the east of House 5, which still existed at this time, only traces of the walls of Stratum D were preserved and these were later mostly incorporated into the construction of the building of Stratum C.

Stratum C

This building showed at least two phases and was preserved up to a height of 2m in some areas. The ground plan of the building (House 4) was difficult to discern as only a small part of it was within the excavated area and this part was disturbed by later buildings and pits (Fig. 27). Approximately 7.4m of the house were investigated. 4 rooms could be identified. All

³⁶ The better-preserved parts of the wall paintings were retrieved by ERICO PEINTNER and stored for further study.

rooms were part of substructures supporting the house proper. These substructures consisted of vaulted rooms with very low roofs that were most probably used for storage.

The latest phase of House 5 (with the second phase of wall paintings) abutted one wall of House 4 and rested partly on top of its foundation (the north-south street had then been given up). It was thus contemporaneous with Stratum C/2 that can be dated to the earlier Roman Imperial period. Stratum C/1 can be dated by means of coins and pottery to the early 4th century AD. A wall sitting on top of the southern wall of House 5/Room 1 and partly destroying the painted niche and later door construction abutted a wall of Stratum C/1. This wall showed the eastern part of a door with a plastered inner face that was in exactly the same location as the western face of the earlier door in House 5/ Room 1. The threshold and stone hinge of the door were still *in situ*. The threshold, a massive granite block, was broken and tilted towards the east.³⁷ The eastern door jamb of the latest door into House 5/Room 1 was shortened in order to allow the placement of the threshold at the planned level on top of it. The wall was mostly destroyed by walls dating to Stratum B.

Stratum B

During Stratum B, a densely built-up town quarter of the Early Islamic period covered the area (Fig. 28). The earliest houses were situated at the southern limit of the excavated area. Of those buildings only the northern walls of two houses were located within the site. House 1 abutted a huge stone wall preserved to a height of ca. 6m. To the south of House 2, a mud brick wall ran in an east-west direction and abutted the eastern end of the stone wall to the south of House 1. When House 1 and 2 were constructed, a north-south street came into existence between the two houses, and the wall to the south of House 2 was broken through for the width of the street.

House 1

The house was the best-preserved building found in Area 84 (Fig. 29). Its walls were still standing to the height of one storey. Three rooms were investigated. In its earliest phase a window was located in the eastern wall of the house. During the second phase the window was walled up and a staircase constructed in Rooms 1 and 2. The first flight of stairs was completely preserved. During the final phase a mud brick pillar was built as a support of the staircase that had before been supported by a vault made of fired bricks. A door through the supporting wall connected Rooms 1 and 3. Room 2 showed a vaulted roof. A construction of

³⁷ The destruction of the threshold may be due to an earthquake, evidence of which was also found in Area 5 (KELANY/BRUHN, in *1st Report*, p.139).

fired bricks adorning the eastern façade of House 1 most probably protected the wall from damage by buckets or baskets towed from the street into the house via the window (Fig. 30).

House 2

Only one room of the house was situated within the investigated area. As was the case with House 1, the state of preservation was very good. The technique of construction was also similar. Mud brick walls consisting of very compact hard mud bricks rested on socles of well dressed sandstone blocks of varying height. The foundations were shallow constructions of granite rubble and broken sandstone. Room 1 had a vaulted roof. The most remarkable feature of the house was the elaborate door that connected it to the north-south street to the west of it (Fig. 30).

House 3

Parts of two rooms of the house were within the excavated area. Both rooms were covered by a vault. The most remarkable feature was an east-west wall preserved in the northern section that abutted the western wall of the house. This wall was mostly constructed of small reused blocks, most probably of Late Antique date. The vault covering the easternmost room of the house was largely preserved. The vault rested on a row of fired bricks that were part of the construction of the eastern and western wall of the room. The height of the vault was rather low at only 2m. The vault covering the western room of the house was not preserved.

Houses 1, 2 and 3 were constructed more or less contemporaneously. While Houses 1 and 2 were separated by a north-south street, House 3 abutted the eastern wall of House 2. Only House 1 showed several phases of use, but a robber's tunnel coming from the west of the house damaged all rooms significantly in such a way that no real stratigraphy was left for investigation. While all houses of the Stratum were built to last, they were actually lived in for a very short period of time. Only one thin mud floor was preserved in the rooms of Houses 1 and 2. Maybe the original floors of the houses were paved with fired bricks or stone slabs that were later robbed before the buildings were abandoned. The rooms were filled with mud brick and settlement debris dating from the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods.³⁸

Area 88³⁹

³⁸ The dating of the construction of the houses is based on an analysis of the pottery by GREGORY WILLIAMS.

³⁹ The investigation lasted from March 26th until April 14th 2015 and was for the most part directed by MARIOLA HEPA. The site covered an area of 45sqm. Only ca. 20sqm were excavated due to security reasons.

Stratum C

The earliest structures in Area 88 were only encountered in two small trenches at the western and eastern end of the area (Fig 31). Scarce traces, mostly narrow mud brick walls were not sufficient to give any idea of the architecture. Suffice it to say that it followed a completely different building scheme to that of the later buildings found in the area. From a first assessment of the pottery an Early Roman or Ptolemaic date was suggested.⁴⁰

Strata B/3-B/5

In the 2nd century BC, a completely new building tradition started. Two rooms of a house were within the excavated area, the westernmost room nearly completely. This room was entered from the east via a door with door jambs and threshold made of sandstone blocks (Fig. 32). The door was ca.0.7m wide and (the southern door jamb) was preserved to a height of ca. 1.70m. The eastern room was mostly destroyed by a huge robbery pit in the north-east of the area. The western wall and north-western corner of the eastern room were preserved, and within the limits of the excavation. The dimensions of the room were ca. 2.8 x 2.3m. The western wall showed a door in the southern and a small niche in the northern part. A granite slab served as the door lintel. A slightly smaller but otherwise similar slab was used as a lintel for the small niche. The door was ca. 1m wide and 1.5m high. The niche was 0.36m wide. The bottom of the niche was destroyed, probably when the lower wall was eroded due to heavy use. A door led from the room to the south. The lintel and the eastern door jamb were destroyed but the threshold that was still *in situ* allowed the width of the door to be calculated as ca. 0.70m. The southern door jamb of the door connecting the western and eastern room was set into the southern wall of the room; the northern one was connected to a narrow north-south wall. Due to the narrowness of the wall, it is difficult to reconstruct a roof on top of either the western or eastern room. Most probably both rooms were parts of a courtyard.⁴¹ The niche in the western wall is however an uncommon feature for a courtyard. The northern wall of the house proper was situated at the southern section of the area. The orientation of all walls follows that of the "Roman Shrine", the houses in Area 84 and hence the town wall of the Late Period. The wall partly rested on a socle and foundation of massive sandstone blocks. These blocks were most probably reused temple blocks. Near the eastern limit of the excavated area a wall branched off towards the south. Due to the fact that the largest blocks were used in this part of the socle, the north-western corner of the main building was situated

⁴⁰ I thank MARIOLA HEPA for a first on-site assessment of the pottery.

⁴¹ Cf. for a similar door construction in a courtyard in Area 2: H. SCHWAIGER, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 14, Fig. 23.

here. Another wall, also resting on sandstone blocks (of significantly smaller dimensions) continued towards the east. The robbery pit destroyed this part of the wall. When following the tunnel for several metres, another well-dressed sandstone block was found that was aligned to the preserved block in the east-west wall. Thus the eastern wall of the house was constructed in the same elaborate way as the northern one. The narrower wall continuing to the east was most probably part of another courtyard to the east of the house.

The courtyard was used over a long period of time and the threshold was raised accordingly. At the end of its use, a hinge was put at the south-western side of the door. Two huge mortars, one made of granite and the other of sandstone were positioned to the east and west of the door. Finally the doors were walled up and the room was refilled with settlement debris (Fig. 33).

Stratum B/1 – B/2

The latest Roman house on the site was erected on top of the main building of Stratum B/5 (Figs. 34 and 35). The former courtyards were replaced by a new spatial organization. The western wall of the former courtyard with its door and niches was given up. Now the north-eastern corner of a house was situated within the area. Two narrow north-south walls made of bricks of very bad quality abutted the northern face of the northern wall of the house. One wall in the western part of the area showed a door and small staircase. The floor level in the western room was significantly lower than in the eastern one. A trough was built into the wall just to the south of the door. Another contemporaneous wall presumably abutted the house at its north-eastern corner (this area was severely disturbed by the robbery pit). The width of this courtyard can be reconstructed as 3.1m. The courtyard or room was entered from the house via a door near its north-eastern corner. The door was ca. 0.8m wide. The eastern face of the eastern wall of the house and of the wall continuing from it to the north was heavily burned, and the room to the east was filled with burned debris. If this is evidence of destruction by fire it affected only a small part of the building.

Conclusion

The findings in Area 84 are of the utmost importance in two respects. Firstly, House 5 with its terrazzo floor and painted walls shows a standard of living hitherto unknown from Syene. Room 1 with its large opening to the south does not look like part of a normal domestic dwelling. Probably House 5 served as a club-house situated on a square to the north of the "Roman Shrine". The fact that this square was carefully paved with sandstone slabs is another hint that this part of Kôka was a prestigious neighbourhood of the Roman town. Secondly, the

well-preserved Early Islamic houses are discoveries of the utmost importance. It was possible to investigate a small but still significant part of Early Islamic Aswan. The layout and organisation of the houses is evidence of a single act of planning and foundation for the whole quarter. The results from Area 81 and other small rescue excavations in the north of Aswan can now be put in context.⁴²

From the results of the excavation in Area 84, it was expected to find another part of the Early Islamic city quarter in Area 88. Surprisingly, no Islamic pottery or architecture was found. Immediately after removing the last remains of the modern house, Late Antique layers were encountered. Contemporary layers in Area 84 were 5m deeper. The only conceivable reason for this phenomenon is that the houses in Area 84 were built against a steep slope, probably consisting of earlier ruins. In Area 84 itself, a significant difference in elevation was observed between west and east. Here the floors of House 5 were at an even deeper level. A similar slope must have existed between Area 88 and the "Roman Shrine".

As is usual for small rescue excavations, in both areas the results with respect to architectural structures were poor and inconclusive, at least if seen standing alone. Taking into account the results of other excavations in the vicinity, however, most notably in Areas 1 and 2,⁴³ it is evident that the houses investigated in Area 88 are part of a well-known and archaeologically investigated quarter of Syene, most probably identical with the "Phrourion" mentioned in the Patermouthes archive.⁴⁴ The most significant evidence for this suggestion is the fact that the orientation of the houses in both areas is the same as the eastern sector of the town wall. Other parts of the town show a differently oriented street grid.⁴⁵ The fact that the major Roman building phase started in the 2nd century AD has an interesting parallel in the findings in Area 2, at the southern limit of the presumed town quarter.⁴⁶

(W. Müller)

5. The southern limit of medieval Aswan (Area 86)⁴⁷

⁴² Cf. for Area 81: p. W. MÜLLER, in *Fourteenth Season*, p. 19-21.

⁴³ T. KOCH/W. MUELLER, 'Antike Wohnkultur in Syene (Assuan) am Beispiel der Areale 1 und 2', *AÖ* 25/1 (2014), p. 39-44, T. KOCH, in *Thirteenth Season*, p. 4-5, H. SCHWAIGER, in *Twelfth Season*, p. 12-16.

⁴⁴ MÜLLER, in O'CONNELL (ED.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD*, p. 62-64.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63, pl. 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66, *idem*, 'Urbanism in Graeco Roman Egypt', in M. BIETAK/E. CZERNY/I. FORSTNER-MÜLLER (EDS.), *Cities and Urbanism in Ancient Egypt*, *UZK* 35 (Vienna 2010), p. 251.

⁴⁷ The archaeological work started on February 17th and lasted until March 9th 2015.

When the Swiss – Egyptian Joint Mission was informed that construction work was going on, the excavation by the contractor had already started. Even as rescue excavations go, working conditions were exceptionally bad. After some animosities from the side of the construction company and owners of the area, it was finally possible to start the work with the substantial support of the MSA inspectorate in Aswan. While no further assaults by the employees of the company happened for the

Topographical remarks

The area is situated to the immediate south of Area 32, in the former garden of the so-called "Voysey House" (Figs. 1 and 39).⁴⁸

Work in Area 32 has shown that the limits of the Roman, Early Islamic and Fatimid town were situated to the north of Area 32, in the vicinity of the modern Coptic Cathedral that was erected without any archaeological investigation and consecrated in 1995.⁴⁹ While Ptolemaic and Early Roman tombs and Late Antique fosse – ditches were evidence of the fact that Area 32 was located outside the town proper, houses dating from the Ayyubid and Early Mamluk periods onwards occupied the whole area and continued under the street separating Areas 32 and 86.⁵⁰

The setting of the site is defined by the uneven granite surface with a pronounced granite massif to its west and an upwards slope in the eastern part of the area. The archaeological investigations took part in the central south-western part that was situated in a depression in the bedrock.⁵¹

The southern and eastern part of the medieval town wall of Aswan is depicted on the map of the Description de l' Égypte.⁵² There, the members of the Napoleonic expedition provide an impression of Aswan at the very end of the 18th century. The town wall, labelled on the map as "Enceinte des Arabes batie en Granit", runs from massive fortification works on top of what is now the Feryal Garden in a south-easterly direction to a huge U-shaped bastion, and then continues further east in a slight curve. As the remains of this bastion could be identified on top of the granite massif just to the west of Area 86,⁵³ it was clear that the medieval town

duration of the excavation, the situation remained difficult for the mission as it was not possible to stop the ongoing construction work (mostly preparation of the building ground by blasting or breaking the bedrock). Additionally, at the beginning of the work, the excavation of the construction company continued during the night. This work had to be supervised by a workman of the mission. Due to these circumstances and the short time at the disposal of the mission, only a very limited area in the centre of the huge site (less than 60sqm of more than 2600sqm) was spared by the construction work for archaeological investigation.

⁴⁸ Cf. W. MITTELHOLZER ET AL., *Afrika Flug. Im Wasserflugzeug "Switzerland" von Zürich über den dunkeln Erdteil nach dem Kap der Guten Hoffnung* (Zurich 1927), fig. 53 for the situation at the southern part of Aswan ca. 1926.

⁴⁹ W. MÜLLER, in *Report on the 7th Season*, p. 193-195. *Idem*, in O'CONNELL (ED.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, in BIETAK ET AL., *Cities and Urbanism in Ancient Egypt*, p. 242-243.

⁵¹ Cf. for a summary of geological and geomorphological survey carried out together with MORGAN DE DAPPER from Ghent University: W. MÜLLER/M. DE DAPPER, 'The Urban Landscape of Aswan', in Y. TRISTANT/M. GHILARDI (EDS.), *Landscape archaeology: Egypt and the Mediterranean world*, BIBLIOTHÈQUE D'ÉTUDE, forthcoming.

⁵² *Description I*, pl. 31.

⁵³ I thank CORNELIUS VON PILGRIM for drawing my attention to a historic photograph taken from the area of modern Feryal Garden that shows the granite outcrop prior to the construction of the modern houses standing on top of it today.

wall of Aswan and thus the southern limit of the Islamic settlement of this period were situated in Area 86 even before the archaeological investigation started.

Pre – Islamic Remains

For reasons described above, only the medieval layers could be investigated properly. The observation of earlier remains was limited to sections of pits that had already been excavated down to the bedrock by the construction company.

The famous Rock Inscription of the sculptor Bak and his father Men, situated just to the south-west of the site and hewn into the granite promontory that carried the aforementioned bastion of the medieval town wall is ample evidence of Pharaonic activity in the area. Pharaonic pottery, mostly dating to the New Kingdom, was found in deep trenches in Area 32 but not in Area 86.⁵⁴

The earliest remains uncovered were several pits observed in the eastern section of the deepest trench just to the north of the investigated area. Though no bones nor pottery were retrieved from these pits, similarities with Roman and Ptolemaic graves in a similar stratigraphic position in Area 32⁵⁵ and the fact that the pits were lined and covered with mud bricks in a manner typical of Early Roman and Ptolemaic burials in other areas of Syene,⁵⁶ makes an interpretation as Roman or Ptolemaic pit-burials probable.

Typical Roman quarry marks and a huge layer of quarry debris covering the whole area are ample evidence of Roman quarrying activity. The same quarry was already observed in Area 32.⁵⁷ It seems feasible that the depression in Area 86 mentioned above was at least partly due to this activity.

Medieval remains

Stratum C

Post-Roman structures predating the town wall were most probably connected to workshops, gardening and the keeping of animals (Fig. 36). All these activities took place immediately on top of the Roman quarry debris. The most peculiar features were fence-like constructions made of pottery vessels - mostly amphorae - that were positioned upside-down and arranged

⁵⁴ MÜLLER, in *Report on the 7th Season*, p. 186.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186-187. The preliminary date given in the report seems now, after more work on the stratigraphy and the associated material, too late. An Early Roman or Ptolemaic date now seems more probable.

⁵⁶ *Idem*, in *9th Season*, p. 6 for Area 45.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, in *Report on the 7th Season*, p.193. The quarry marks resemble those found and extensively investigated in Area 60 (*Idem*, in *Tenth Season*, p. 11-12).

in lines. In the south-eastern part of the investigated area, just to the north of the town wall and partly covered by it, were several circular or at least curved alignments, one of them enclosing a bread oven (Fig. 37). As these constructions were not high enough to constitute an obstacle for humans or animals they most probably were markers of different areas of property or function. As several of these structures were found beneath the later town-wall but none to the south of it, the southern border of the town was already in existence prior to the construction the wall.

Stratum B

The most important result of the work was the localization of the medieval town wall of Aswan. The wall ran through the area in an east-west direction. The surprisingly narrow wall was preserved to a height of 2m in some parts (Figs. 38 and 39). The wall ran against the granite that sloped upwards in the east of the area, and was cut by the loader prior to archaeological excavation in the west where it was still visible in the western section of the site. The western part of the wall was only ca. 1.8m wide. At ca. 10m from a granite boulder that formed its preserved eastern end, the wall becomes significantly wider. At an abrupt protrusion towards the north, it reaches a width of 2.5m. This special construction may be due to the elevation of the area further east and constitutes either a support or a part of a staircase leading up the wall. The wall was made of very hard compact sandy mud bricks. The outer face of the wall seems to have been hardened by fire (the wall was not burnt, but slight traces of heat were visible).

To the south of the wall no contemporary man-made structures were found. Huge layers of wind-blown sand had accumulated against the wall.

To the north of the wall the situation was completely different. Here three building phases of houses were investigated.

Stratum B/3

The earliest structures contemporary with the town wall were not houses but large open areas separated by narrow fence-like walls made of a crude mix of fired bricks (mostly broken), sandstone and granite rubble, mud mortar and (mostly broken) mud bricks. These structures were only observed in two trenches, one at the western, and the other at the eastern limit of the investigated area.

The eastern structure consisted of a north-south wall that abutted the town wall and then ran for ca. 12m to the north where it formed a corner with a wall running to the east. The corner rested against at a small isolated granite boulder. The wall was ca. 0.8m wide near the town wall and measured only ca. 0.25m further north. 1.8m to the south of the north-western corner

of the structure, a short (0.9m long) one brick-wide east-west mud brick wall abutted it. This wall served as a support of the narrow north-south wall.

In the eastern part of the area, walls encountered in several trenches could be reconstructed as a system of courtyards. The central courtyard measured 3.60 x 2.30m and was connected to the courtyards to the east and north via two doors. The doors were crudely made and 0.50–0.60m wide. An east-west wall abutted the western face of the western wall of the central courtyard 1.9m to the north of the northern face of the town wall. This wall also showed a door of 0.60m width. Construction and dimensions were identical to the situation in the western part of the investigated area.

Structures like those in Area 86 were encountered in several parts of medieval Aswan. As was the case in Area 86, they were often situated at the periphery of the town.⁵⁸

A wall sitting on top of the structures of Stratum B/3, but disturbed by House 3, could not be investigated in greater detail. The wall is however evidence of the fact that some time elapsed between the abandonment of the structures of Stratum B/3 and the construction of House 3.

Stratum B/2

While the structures of Stratum B/3 were still visible and in use in the western part of the excavated area, the eastern part was now overbuilt by Houses 1 and 3. Only small parts of these houses were within the excavated area (Fig. 40).

House 1, situated to the east of Courtyard 1, showed walls made of fired bricks and mud bricks. A staircase situated in the south-western corner of the only room excavated led to a higher floor of the house. The floor of the house was paved with sandstone slabs. A small room (1.2 x 0.6m) attached to the outside of the south-western corner with a small opening towards the south has its closest parallel in a similar room, in this case made of stone, in Area 3.⁵⁹ In both cases the room represents the bottom of a shaft that was connected to a simple toilet.⁶⁰ The accumulated waste was then disposed of via the small opening from the courtyard.

Only parts of House 3, the western part of one room to the east of Courtyard 2, were investigated. As was the case with House 1, the room showed a paved floor. The southern wall of the house abutted a construction made of fired bricks, most probably a support pillar at the corner of the house.

The walls of the houses were repaired several times. They were in use for a long time. Some time after the abandonment of the houses (some settlement debris had accumulated in the

⁵⁸ Cf. *Idem*, in *Tenth Season*, p. 9-10 (Area 58), *idem*, in *9th Season*, p. 15-16 (Area 49). Both in Area 49 and 58 however, the walls were curved and their date was significantly later.

⁵⁹ K. C. BRUHN, in *2nd Report*, p. 252 fig. 14 (House 2/Room f).

⁶⁰ I thank FELIX ARNOLD for this interpretation.

rooms), their walls collapsed in one piece and buried the rooms beneath them. In some cases, as in Room 2 of House 1, parts of the inventory of the first floor including several storage vessels came to lie on top of the collapsed walls.

Stratum B/1

In the latest phase, the structures dating to Stratum B/3 in the western part of the investigated area were overbuilt by House 2 while House 1 and 3 were still in use. The eastern and southern limits of House 2 were within the excavated area. The southern wall of the house ran parallel to the town wall at a distance of 1.5m. The southernmost room of the house was completely within the excavated area. It measured 2.6m x 1.4m and had a small opening in its southern wall. The opening was only 1m wide and, just like the inner walls of the small room itself, heavily burned. The traces of long-time exposure to fire and the infill of the room, consisting of layers of charcoal, ashes and burnt mud are evidence of the room's use as a furnace.

Of special interest with respect to the use of the room was a small channel that left the building via the eastern wall and led to a well-like sewage pit in the centre of a spacious courtyard to the east of House 2 (Fig. 41). The channel was of similar construction to installations in Area 3 and Area 31. In Area 3, the channel was also connected to a drainage pit. These channels are elaborately constructed: the side walls and floor are made of fired bricks or sandstone and later coated in a thick layer of lime plaster. The roughly circular pit is ca. 1m wide and coated with fired brick on the inside and broken sandstone pieces on the outside.⁶¹ Most probably a water tank or basin was situated on top of the small furnace-like room. House 2 could well be the first medieval building with a bathing installation ever found in Aswan.

Of the two rooms further north only the north-south extensions were preserved. The room immediately to the north of the furnace showed a small granary-like construction made of fired bricks in its south-eastern corner and little more by way of functional indicators.

The northernmost room had a north-south extension of ca. 3m and showed another hydraulic installation at its northern end. Here a small pedestal made from fired bricks and lime mortar showed a distinct impression (diameter approximately 0.4m) of a U-shaped vessel or small basin in the mortar on its top. The southern face of the pedestal was delicately contoured and had obviously decorative aspects. The room was entered via a door from a spacious courtyard to the east.

Two courtyards were an important part of the spatial organization. The southern courtyard (Courtyard 2) was limited by Houses 1, 2, and 3 and in the south by the town wall. A narrow

⁶¹ MÜLLER, in *Fourteenth Season*, p.16-17.

wall separated it from Courtyard 1 to the north. Both courtyards were connected by a door. The most significant installations in Courtyard 2 besides the sewage pit were traces of a garden, namely several circular planting pits within a narrow stripe of muddy soil, most probably a small channel for irrigation.

Conclusions

As neither the pottery nor the coins have yet been studied properly, only a tentative attempt at dating the wall and houses can be made. Taking into account the findings in Area 32, a date for the construction of the wall at the earliest in the Ayyubid Period seems most feasible.⁶²

In spite of the difficult circumstances mentioned above it has to be stated that the primary objectives of the excavation were accomplished. As usual with rescue excavations, compromises had to be made. The Roman and earlier layers that could not be investigated here are well known from the excavation in Area 32.

In Area 86, the town wall of medieval Aswan and with it the southern limit of the settlement were visible for the first time since the 19th century. Finally, the map of the ancient town can also be completed in its southern part.⁶³ The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated.

(W. Müller)

6. The northern limit of the "Fatimid Cemetery" (Area 87)

The short-term investigation became necessary when the cellar of the "Mall Hakim", just to the north of the Aswan inspectorate, was extended towards the west.⁶⁴ The excavation took place inside the building and was restricted to a narrow strip of untouched sediment at the northern end of a long subterranean room (Fig. 13). A massive layer of windblown sand covered several layers of Islamic burials. Of these burials no skeletons were found *in situ* but an east-west stone wall seemed to limit a group of burials to its north (Fig. 14). At least three phases of burial pits were identified. The latest, probably modern burial was cut into the windblown sand on top. As the pottery has yet to be studied, no details concerning the date can be given. The result resembled the findings in Area 59, the foundation pit of the new MSA magazine of Aswan.⁶⁵ As was the case in Area 59, and is clearly visible on satellite

⁶² *Idem*, in *Report on the 7th Season*, p. 193.

⁶³ The only exception was a part of a tower that was encountered in the shaft of an illicit excavation in Area 7 (K. C. BRUHN, in *1st Report*, p. 140-143.).

⁶⁴ Work started on March 21st and lasted until March 23rd.

⁶⁵ W. MÜLLER, in *Tenth Season*, p. 10-11.

images predating the construction of the Mall Hakim, the Fatimid cemetery covered this area in recent times.

(W. Müller)

7. Rock Inscriptions at the former riverbank (Area 79)

The epigraphic work this season focused on newly revealed inscriptions along the cornice, beside the café just south of the headquarters of the Tourist Police (Area 79). Inscriptions on this outcrop were copied in haste by Flinders Petrie⁶⁶ and Jacques de Morgan⁶⁷ and were subsequently forgotten, overbuilt or destroyed. Not only is the work by the Swiss Institute relocating many of them so that we can study them afresh, it has uncovered examples that were hitherto unknown. One section of the outcrop emerged last December upon removal of accumulated rubbish, which took three days to clear.

Standing out among the new inscriptions is a well-carved figure of a Thutmoside official, dressed in a long kilt and holding a staff and sceptre (Fig. 42). A column of hieroglyphs before him reads: ‘The nobleman and count, mouth of the King of Upper Egypt, ears of the King of Lower Egypt, the second god’s-servant of Amun, Pima the Black’. The reading of the name, while otherwise unattested, seems certain. The epithet ‘the Black (*km*)’ has been noted for other individuals and is suggestive of Nubian origins, though the man was evidently employed at the temple of Amun-Ra in Thebes. There is a faint possibility that the name must rather be read as a deviant spelling of Puyemra, a name borne by a ‘second god’s-servant of Amun’ from the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, but the traces hardly support this. A man named Paneb, presumably from the Ramesside Period, left a much cruder smaller figure further below.

In the narrowest part of a path beside the café we found the oldest inscription of the group, dating back to the 11th Dynasty. In recent decades it became wholly obscured by dirt, but it was previously copied by Petrie⁶⁸ and De Morgan⁶⁹, again with errors. The text is contained in a frame before the figure of a man, who is identified as ‘one truly beloved of his lord, the sealer Nehi(‘s son) Khety’. Further research is necessary to determine if this man is attested elsewhere.

⁶⁶ W.M.F. Petrie, *Season in Egypt*, London 1888, nos. 279–296, 354–356.

⁶⁷ J. DE MORGAN, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l’Égypte antique* I, Vienna 1894, pp. 42 [1]–44 [21].

⁶⁸ PETRIE, *o.c.*, no. 280.

⁶⁹ DE MORGAN, *o.c.*, p. 43 [12].

The largest inscription in the area is Petrie, *o.c.*, no. 290 = De Morgan, *o.c.*, p. 43 [18]. This panel is in the formalised style and layout of other local inscriptions from the late 12th and early 13th Dynasties. A standing male figure represents the principal owner, but his wife, children, parents and a brother are also named. Petrie and De Morgan missed half the names and the entire offering formula, but all these have now been deciphered and drawn – in exacting circumstances, as two-thirds of the inscription are inside the foundations of a modern house. The inscription commemorates Iatu, a previously unattested officer of a locally stationed regiment. Spanning the height of the horizontal text was a concluding remark in two vertical lines, but for the decipherment of their unusual content we are largely thrown back on the copies by Petrie and De Morgan, as part of the rock was later split off and removed. It seems to read: ‘Those named (lit. the names) wish that Satet hears (‘receives’) recitations of the names and utterances of the names, just as ... names ...’ Maybe one day the missing portion will resurface.

(M.Marée)

Figures

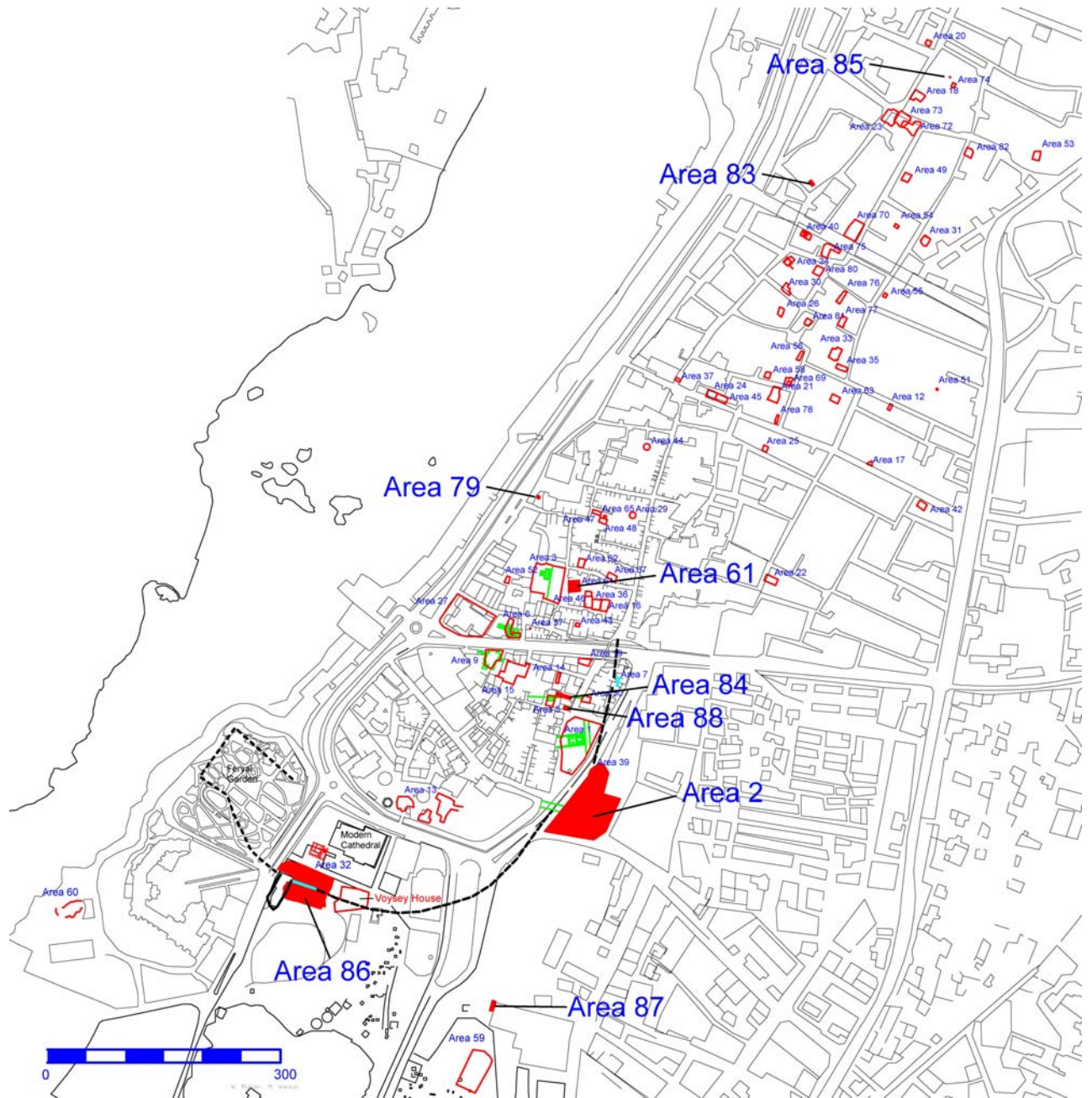


Fig. 1: Map of investigated areas.

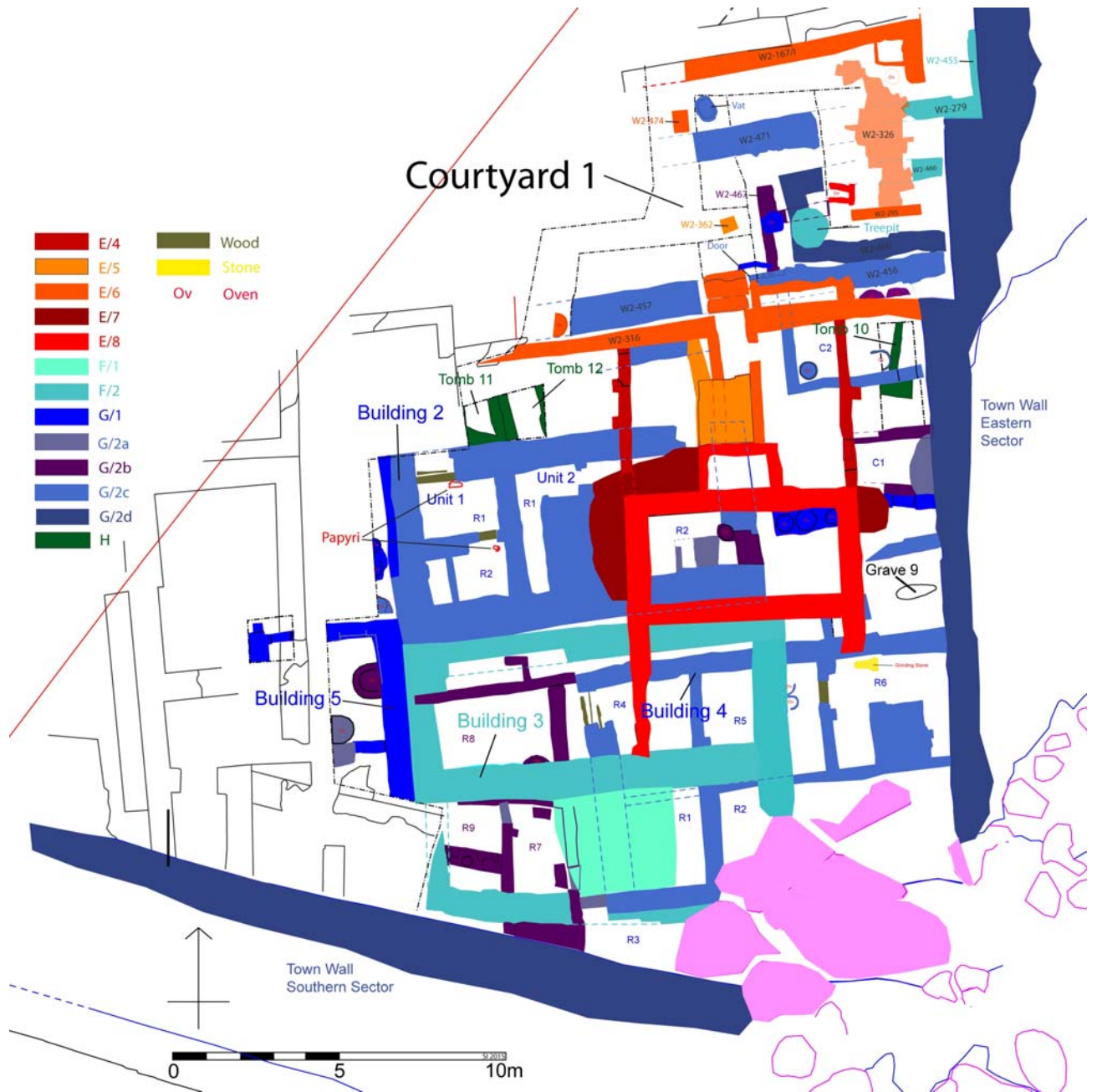


Fig. 2: Plan of Area 2.



Fig. 3: Area 2: W2-460 from the west (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 4: Area 2: Overview of Stratum G from the west (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause).



Fig. 5: Area 2: Northern face of W2-457 (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 6: Area 2: W2-456. Detail of the entrance with W2-467. (photo Swiss Institute)



Fig. 7: Area 2: Oven dating to Stratum G/2a. (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 8: Area 2: Detail of animal sculpture *in situ* from the south (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 9: Area 2: Tree pit dating to Stratum F (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 10: Area 2: Construction layer Stratum E/8 (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 11: Area 2: Entrance into Building 1 (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 12: Area 2: Burials of animals (photo Swiss Institute).

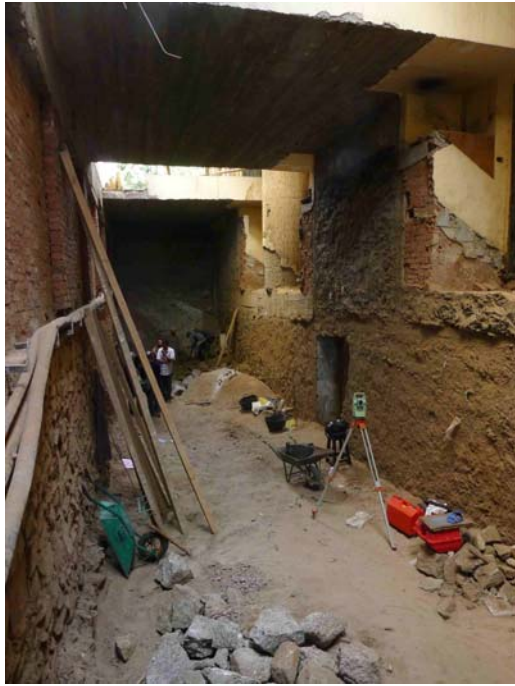


Fig. 13: Overview of Area 87 from the south (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause)



Fig. 14: Area 87: Detail of stone wall (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause).

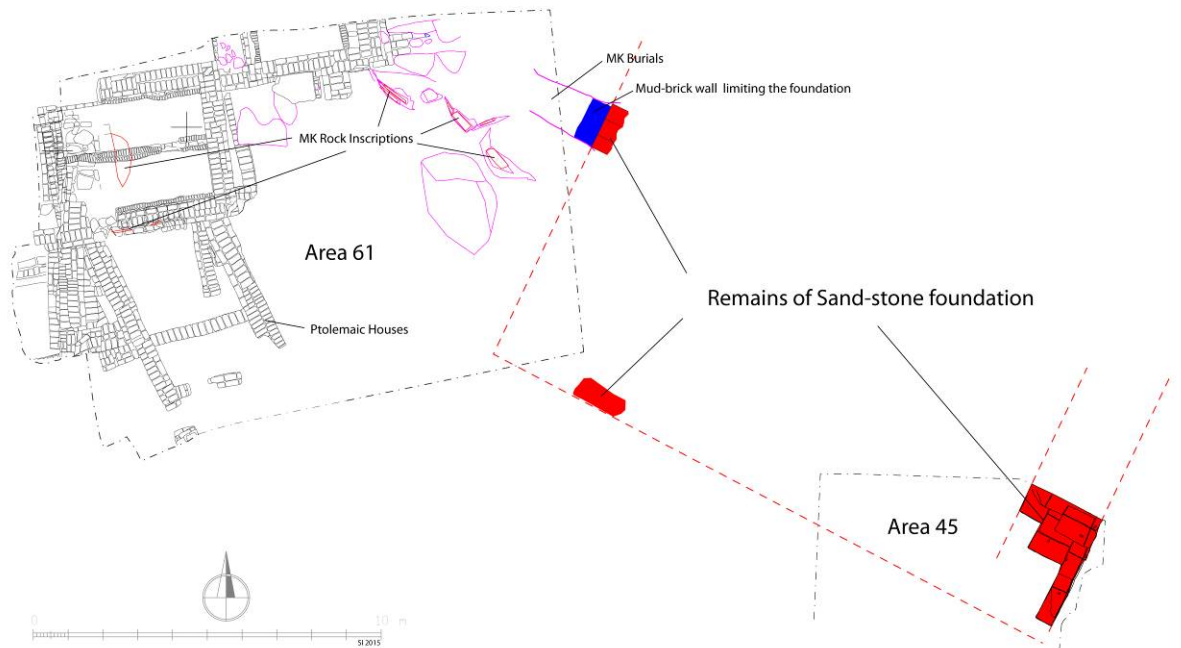


Fig. 15: Plan of Area 61 and environs.



Fig. 16: Area 61: Middle Kingdom burials.
(photo Swiss Institute)



Fig. 17: Area 61: Sandstone wall (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 18: Area 46: Sandstone foundation from the south.
(photo Swiss Institute)



Fig. 19: Area 61: Overview from the west (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 20: Overview of Areas 84 and 88 from the east (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause).

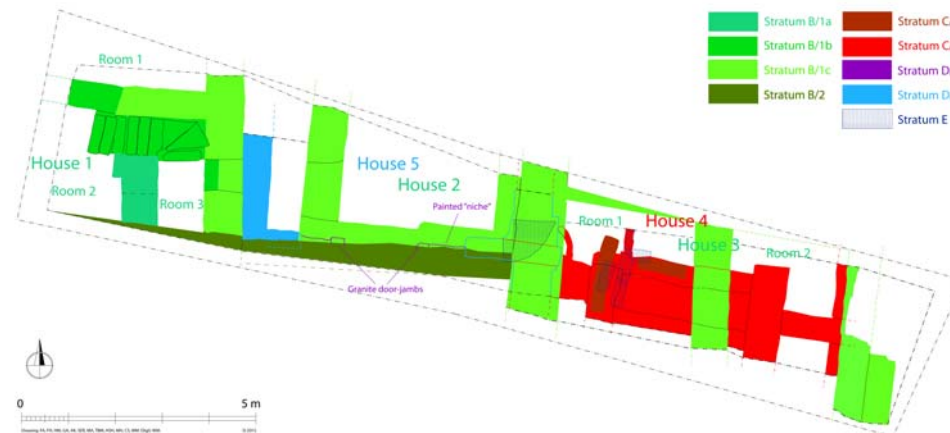


Fig. 21: Plan of Area 84.



Fig. 22: Area 84: Detail of door construction (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 23: Area 84: Detail of sandstone installation painted Stratum E (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 24: Area 84: Overview of House 5 from the west (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 25: Area 84: Southern wall of House 5/Room 1 with door (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 26: Area 84: Detail of the niche (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 27: Area 84: Overview of House 4 from the south (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 29: Area 84: Overview of House 1 from the west (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 28: Area 84: Overview from the west (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 30: Area 84: View at the eastern facade of House 1 through the door into House 2. (photo Swiss Institute)



Fig. 32: Area 88: Detail of door (Stratum B/5) (photo Swiss Institute).

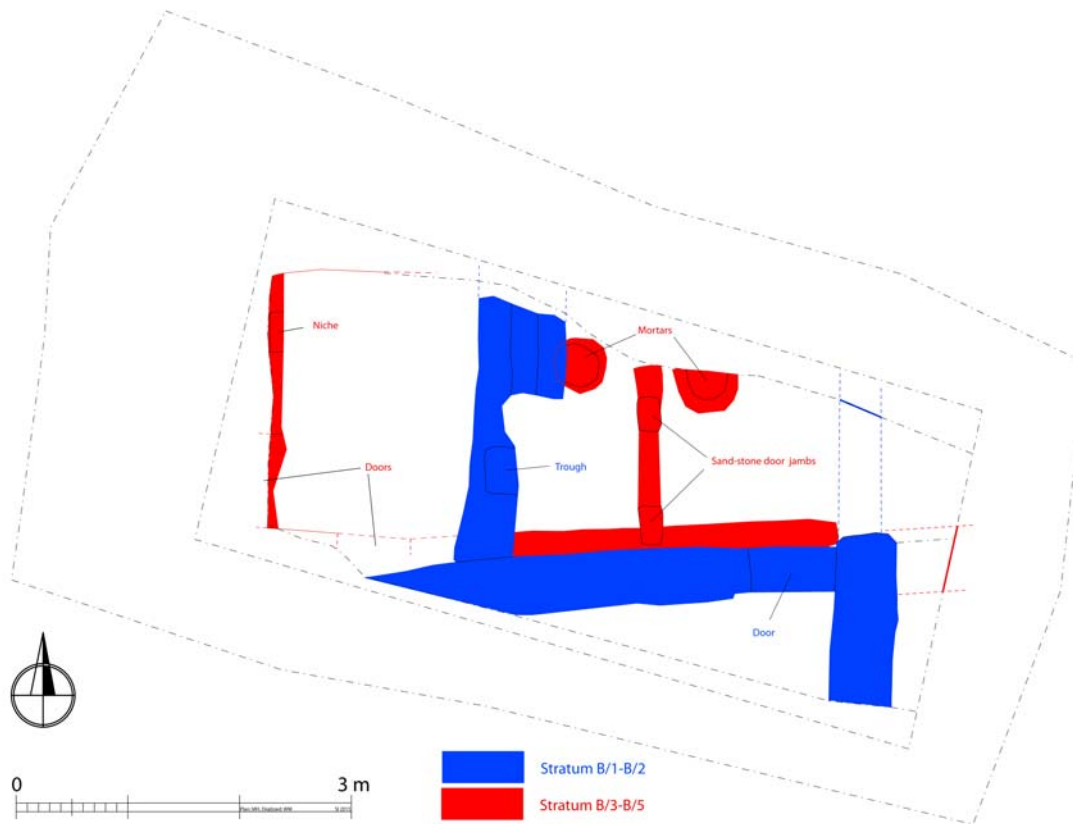


Fig. 31: Plan of Area 88.



Fig. 33: Overview of Area 88 from the east (Stratum B/3) (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause).



Fig. 34: Overview of Area 88 from the east (Strata B/1 and B/2) (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause).



Fig. 35: Area 88: Southern section (photo Swiss Institute).

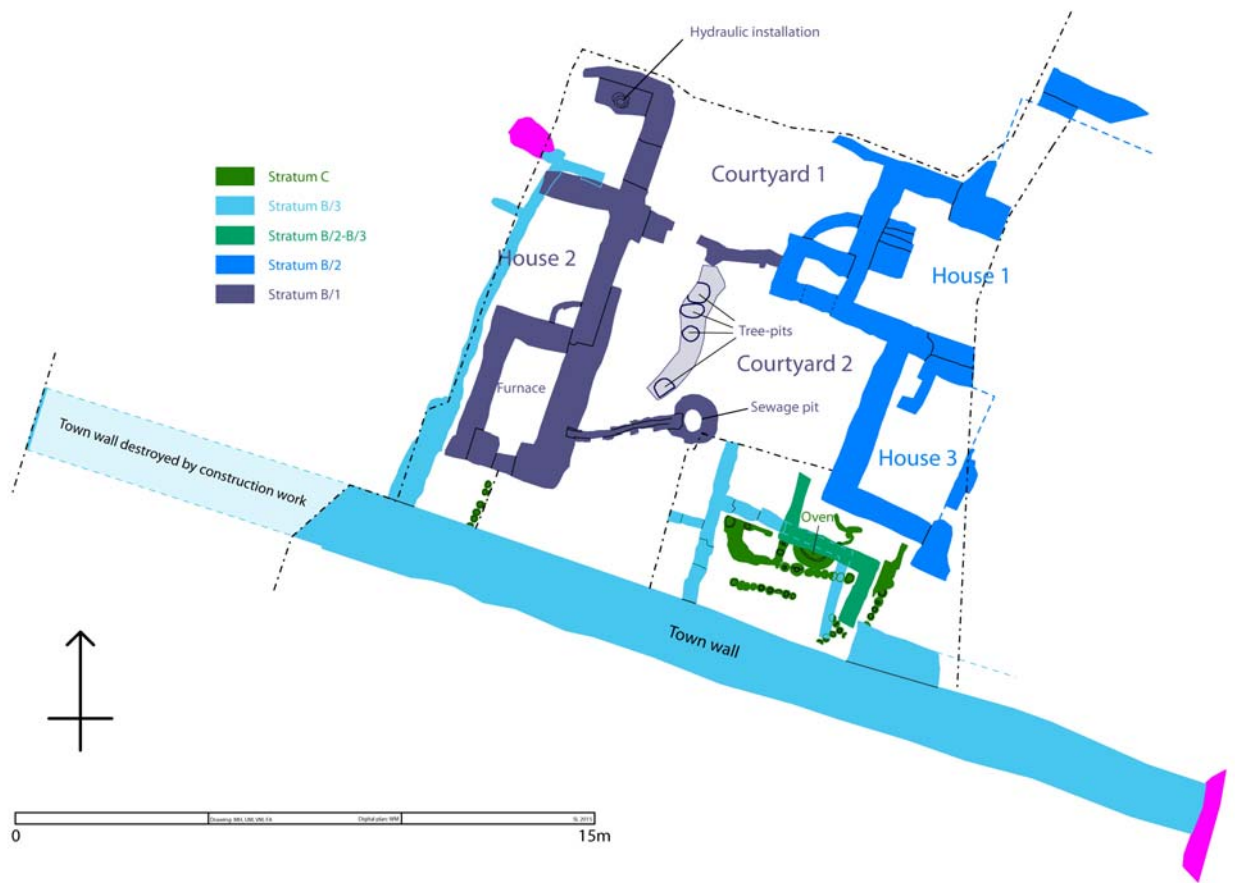


Fig. 36: Plan of Area 86.



Fig. 37: Area 86: Alignment of pottery vessels with bread oven (photo Swiss Institute).



Fig. 38: Overview of Area 86 from the west (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause)



Fig. 39: Overview of Area 86 from the west with the "Voysey House" in the background (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause).



Fig. 40: Area 86: Overview of Houses 1 and 3 from the east (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause)



Fig. 41: Area 86: View of the channel in Courtyard 2 (photo Swiss Institute/Axel Krause)



Fig. 42: Area 79: Detail of rock inscriptions (photo Swiss Institute/ Axel Krause).