

Report on the
13th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission
in Syene / Old Aswan (2012/2013)

by

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in cooperation with

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1. Introduction and Overview

The 13th 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 22nd, 2012 and April 14th, 2013¹.

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 and MOHAMED EL-BIALY. The fieldwork was directed by WOLFGANG MÜLLER. Team members were the Egyptologists, I. FORSTNER-MÜLLER, M. MAREE, V. MICHEL and MARCUS MÜLLER, archaeologists J. DORNER, J. ERCI, M. HEPÄ, B. KALFA, T. KOCH, H. LIEDL, U. MATIC, L. PELOSCHKE, J. POLITSCHNIG, L. REMBART, H. SCHWAIGER, epigrapher S. PFEIFFER, S. PFEIFFER-CABOR, S. TORALLAS TOVAR and A. ZOMENO RODRÍGUEZ, photographer N. GAIL and A. KRAUSE, geomorphologist M. DE DAPPER and the geologist R. Sauer, anthropologists J. NOVACEK and K. SCHEELEN, the numismatist H.-C. Noeske, and conservator E. PEINTNER. Assigned inspectors were ALYAA ABDEL MONSEF HASSAN ALI, HANY SALAH MAHMOUD, HALA MOHAMED HUSSEIN, MAHMOUD ABDELLA, SAID AHMED ALI EL-RAWI and TAISSER BADR MOHAMED AMR. In summer 2012 work was supervised by AHMED AWAD ALLAH SELIM. We are much indebted to PAMELA ROSE for correcting the English of this report.

Archaeological Work (Fig. 1)²

Archaeological work last season concentrated mainly on the domestic quarter in the south-eastern corner of the fortified town (Area 2). The complex development of Roman houses, mainly from the 2nd century AD, was studied and recorded³. Beneath the Roman building layer a sanctuary-like building of the Ptolemaic Period was discovered and excavated. It consisted of a raised substructure with an inner division and the remains of a staircase in the axis of its northern side. In the vast courtyard around the building more than 150 animal burials of various species were uncovered. The burials cover a period from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD.

In the framework of a wider study of Roman domestic architecture, excavations were resumed in Area 1. Work started in House 5, an exceptionally well preserved house in the district to the south of the temple of Isis.

The systematic survey of ongoing construction sites continued throughout the season (Fig. 1). Architectural remains of major interest were discovered in Area 67 where numerous fragments of decorated temple blocks were collected during the demolition of a house two years ago, and where construction work has now started. At the eastern limit of the site an extraordinarily well-preserved retaining wall of the Late Period with later additions was uncovered. It may have been part of a platform or similar construction to consolidate the building ground on top of the granite massif to the east of the Temple of Domitian. Possibly it is to be identified with a construction sketchily indicated on the map of the Napoleonic expedition.

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. Preliminary Report on the 7th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 66 (2010), pp. 179-223. 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*).

³ The investigation in the domestic quarters and the study of pottery 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).

Rock Inscriptions

Construction activities in Area 71 had already started at the end of season 12.⁴ After the construction pit of former Area 61 was extended to the south, a group of four rock inscriptions of the 13th Dynasty was exposed in situ (Figs. 2-3). Scattered blocks with two further inscriptions were discovered in the foundations of the demolished house in the construction site. One of them is of remarkable quality, and dates to the 12th Dynasty (Fig. 4). All inscriptions were retrieved and temporarily stored in Area 2. The newly discovered inscriptions must be seen in the context of other inscriptions found in previous seasons in the immediate neighborhood. They all concentrate on a large granite massif to the east of the Temple of Domitian, mapped by the Napoleonic expedition and subsequently covered by houses during the 19th century.

A second concentration of rock inscriptions in immediate vicinity is located further to the west at the former bank of the Nile. The inscriptions were already included in earlier corpora but without any details of their exact location⁵. Most of them are now covered by the cornice and adjoining houses, but a group of inscriptions of the same date is still accessible in the backyard (kitchen) of a small coffee shop to the south of the police building (Area 79). These inscriptions were cleaned and recorded and will be included in a broader study of rock inscriptions in the urban area of ancient Aswan (Fig. 5)⁶.

Conservation Works in Area 2

The restoration of the town wall of the Late Period was continued and completed⁷. Missing sections of the wall, which originally consisted of undressed granite rubble, were rebuilt with walls of small reused sandstone blocks and mud mortar in order to allow the viewer to distinguish between ancient and added stonework. Corresponding to the original construction of the wall two layers of sun-dried mud bricks were laid on top of the stone socle. Additionally, walls of well-preserved Roman houses at the western limit of Area 2 were repaired and consolidated.

⁴ MÜLLER, in: *Twelfth Season*, p. 17, fig. 26.

⁵ Cf. W.M.F. PETRIE, *A Season in Egypt 1887*, London 1888, pl. X-XIII and DE MORGAN, *Cat. des Mon.* p. 43f. Rarely some of these inscriptions are depicted on early photographs of Aswan, see e.g.. de Morgan, p.44 no.1 (=Petrie, pl. XI no. 293) in W. WEISS, *Im Lande der Pharaonen. Ägypten in historischen Fotos von Lehnert und Landrock*, Heidelberg, 2004, p. 107.

⁶ The study of rock inscriptions is conducted by MARCEL MAREÉ.

⁷ We are much indebted to the *Bundesamt für Kultur BAK* of the Federal Department of Interior in Berne for the financial support of the site management in this area.

Finally, the empty space to the east of the town wall was cleaned and covered with gravel in order to prepare this zone for a possible open-air exhibition of architectural elements currently stored in several inadequate storage places (Fig. 6).

Besides the current fieldwork the restoration and documentation of small finds and pottery continued. The latter concentrated on Ptolemaic and Roman pottery found in previous seasons in Areas 13 and 15⁸. The geomorphological survey conducted by M. de Dapper continued by means of further core drillings and investigations of construction pits.

The analysis of human skeletal remains from a Roman cemetery in Area 45 also continued⁹. 114 additional individuals were identified, and among them only 22 individuals were without any traces of burning. The vast majority of skeletons (82) show evidence of cremation. Up to 23 individuals can be assigned to just one cremation event. Only ten skeletons were secondarily burned without the intention of cremation.

During the whole field season the mission conducted an archaeological training programme for members of the local inspectorate of the MSA¹⁰.

C.v.P.

2. A room in an Early Roman house (Area 1)

After a long break (since 2004) archaeological work was resumed in the southern part of Area 1.¹¹ Work focussed on House 5/Room A (Fig. 7).¹²

At the start of the excavation Room A was still filled to a level of more than 2m with (mostly Late Antique) material. The room was partly covered by the remaining walls of the significantly later House 2 (Fig. 8).¹³

In the exceptionally well preserved eastern and western walls the remains of a barrel-vault were visible. As is the case with the roof of Room B, the inclined vault was built against W1-504.¹⁴

⁸ The Ptolemaic and Roman pottery is studied by SABINE LADSTÄTTER and LAURA REMBART.

⁹ The anthropological studies were conducted by J. NOVACEK and K. SCHEELEN.

¹⁰ Participants of the Field School were HALA MOHAMED HUSSEIN, HALA FOUAD, TAISSEER BADR MOHAMED AMER, TAMER HAGGAG ATEIA HASSAN, AZHAR MOHAMED SALEH, HOYDA MOHAMED AHMED and NOHA MOHAMED HASSAN.

¹¹ For earlier research *cf.* H. JARITZ/ M. RODZIEWICZ, 'Syene – Review of the Urban Remains and its Pottery', *MDAIK* 50, pp. 117-122. *Idem*, 'Syene – Investigation of the Urban Remains in the Vicinity of the Temple of Isis (II)', *MDAIK* 52, pp. 233-237. BRUHN, in: *1st Report*, pp.127-134. *Idem*, in: *2nd Report*, pp. 238-251.

¹² Work lasted from February 25th until May 28th and was supervised by H. SCHWAIGER and T. KOCH.

¹³ BRUHN, in: *2nd Report*, pp.243-246 fig. 12.

¹⁴ *Cf.* A. J. SPENCER, *Brick Architecture in Ancient Egypt* (Warminster 1979), p. 125 fig. 82. According to SPENCER'S terminology the vault is of type d1.

The inner faces of the walls of Room A show traces of whitish lime plaster. In the southern half of Room A all walls shows traces of heavy burning (Fig. 9). The soot from the fire was – at least on the face of the eastern wall - again covered with white plaster.

Wall W1-508 contains two niches. The northernmost niche was well preserved. The opening of the niche was narrower than its width because an upright brick was added to the northern face and later plastered to the rest of the wall (Fig. 10). The second, southern niche was walled up when W1-502 was constructed. Another niche (Fig. 9) in the southern wall of the room (W1-505) still contained two granite *mortaria*.

Room A was connected to the rest of the house via three doors. The door leading from Room A into Room B was very low and gives a make-shift impression. As the first phase of lime plaster covers both the faces of its doorway and the western face of W1-079, the door most probably was part of the original design. A door near the north-eastern corner of Room A was severely damaged when W1-165, the northern wall of House 2, was constructed. At the southern end of the room, a trapdoor led down to the basement of the house. Both the opening and traces of fixtures for the lid of the hatch are well preserved at the face of the southern wall (Fig. 9).

The earliest floor was well preserved in the southern part of the room. The floor rested on the crown of the vaulted roof of the lower floor. The space between the vault and the eastern and western walls was filled with layers of mud bricks in order to construct a flat base for the floor of the room.¹⁵ A later floor level could be reconstructed from a partly repaired erosional groove visible at a level of 0.2m above the earliest floor.

T. K.¹⁶

3. Investigation of the town wall of Syene and extramural areas (Area 2)

The investigation of the town wall was continued and completed.¹⁷ The study of coins found in layers associated with the town wall helped to ascertain the absolute chronology of the wall and its repair phases. A coin of Ptolemaios II found in layers predating the construction of the earliest casing at the Eastern Sector of the wall (ES2)¹⁸ gives a *terminus post quem* for the beginning of repair work at the town wall.¹⁹

To the east of the eastern sector of the town wall a test-trench was dug in order to verify the results of augerings in the Birket Damas area.²⁰ The results from the drillings, namely that no

¹⁵ As material from these locations was deposited at the time of construction, it is crucial for dating the whole building. L. REMBART proposed a preliminary Late Ptolemaic to Early Roman date.

¹⁶ The contribution was translated and adapted by W. MÜLLER.

¹⁷ Cf. MÜLLER, in: *Twelfth Season*, pp. 5-12 fig. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁹ I thank H. C. NOESKE for this and all other numismatic informations in this paper.

²⁰ W. MÜLLER/M. DE DAPPER, 'The Urban Landscape of Aswan', in Y. TRISTANT/M. GHILARDI, *Landscape Archaeology. Egypt and the Mediterranean World*, BdE (Cairo, forthcoming).

pre-modern human activity was to be expected in the region of the former lake, was confirmed.

During cleaning of the granite-massif to the east of the bastion of the town wall, covered by intact layers of Roman and Late Antique date and – probably – Pharaonic quarry debris, a huge assemblage of Predynastic pottery fragments was found. Though no architectural nor other features were found associated with the pottery, the discovery provides further evidence of early human activity on the western shore of the former lake/river branch.²¹ This situation is up to now confined to Area 2 within the archaeological record of Aswan.

4 Investigation of a town quarter of Graeco-Roman Syene (Area 2)

With the investigation of the town wall complete, archaeological investigations in the eastern part of the intramural settlement in Area 2 started, with a special focus on structures predating the Roman houses of Strata D, C and B.²²

Stratum G

The most complete structure of Stratum G (Fig. 10-11) so far excavated is the southernmost part of Building 2. Two living units belonging to this building lay within the area excavated in Season 13. The western unit (Unit 1) was only represented by 0.5m of its southernmost rooms. Both rooms show an east-west extension of ca. 1.6m. A door led from R1 into R2. Several thresholds were observed, evidence of the fact that the door was in use over a long period of time. The original wooden threshold and remains of the wooden doorjamb of the earliest phase of the door were still preserved (Fig. 12). The doorway was only 0.5m wide. The eastern wall of the unit, which also served as western wall of Unit 2, was constructed of bricks of very bad quality. These bricks were typical of Stratum J in Area 15.²³ As was the case there, the walls rested on foundations made of stone rubble and were coated in a thick layer of mud plaster for the sake of stability. The southern and northern walls of Unit 1 were remade in stone during a later phase of the house's use.

The complete area of Unit 2 lay within the excavated area. However, as significant parts were still covered by Building 1, some walls had to be reconstructed in order to provide a complete ground-plan. R1, the westernmost room, comprised a half-turn staircase. The stairwell was entered from the north. A narrow corridor under the second flight of the stair in the

²¹ MÜLLER, in: *Tenth Season*, p. 3 n. 7. *Idem*, in: *Eleventh Season*, p. 5.

²² For the use of the term *stratum* cf. MÜLLER, in: *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p. 314 n. 29.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

westernmost part of the room probably served as a small store-room. A 0.5m wide door near the north-eastern corner next to the bottom of the stairs led into the eastern room R2.

Room 2 was entered from the north via a door near its north-eastern corner. The reconstructed width of the doorway measured ca. 0.9m. Another door of the same dimensions was situated at the eastern wall of Building 2 near the south-eastern corner. The doorways of the main entrances into the house were significantly wider than the interior doors. Several phases of the doors and multiple layers of mud-plaster are evidence of the fact that the building was in use over a long period of time. The remains of an installation at the southern wall of Room 2 may be evidence of the fact that the large (12.5m²) area served as a courtyard. Unit 1 covered an area of ca. 40m² and was thus slightly smaller than Buildings 4 and 5 in Area 15²⁴ but are well within the range of common sizes of living units on contemporary Elephantine.²⁵

While the ground-plan of the units remained the same, the surroundings of Building 2 changed significantly. The earliest phase, G/2, was only excavated in few areas. To the north of Unit 2 an east-west wall of unknown width ran at a distance of 2m from it. Future excavations will show whether a road or a narrow courtyard was situated to the north of Building 2.

In Stratum G/1 a massive stone wall was erected just to the north of the wall of Stratum G/2. The wall was 0.8m wide and abutted the western face of the town wall. A similar but slightly narrower wall was constructed 1.5m to the south of the building. Several narrow walls made of the same bad quality brick material as Building 2 abutted the southern face of the southern stone wall (Fig. 13). The granite massif at the inner corner of the town wall was incorporated into the building in a kind of casemate construction. Most of the walls dating to Stratum G to the south of Building 2 were damaged or destroyed by Building 3 at the beginning of Stratum F. The remaining walls give the impression of fence-like structures that delimited courtyards and open areas.

A one-brick-wide east-west mud-brick wall abutted the eastern face of Building 2 just to the north of the main entrance from this side. A battery of 3 bread-ovens was built against the wall (Fig. 14), evidence of the fact that an open courtyard with the town wall as its eastern limit was situated to the east of Unit 2. A door at the eastern end of the wall, next to the town wall, opened towards a yet unexcavated area to the north. The door had a sandstone threshold. Courtyards with batteries of three ovens are a common trait of Late Period houses on Elephantine and in Aswan.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-320 fig. 3.

²⁵ Cf. A. KREKELER, 'Stadtgrabung am Westkom von Elephantine /Wohnbauten des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.', in M. BIETAK (ed.), *Haus und Palast im alten Ägypten*, UZK 16 = *DenkschrWien* 14 (Vienna 1996), p. 111.

²⁶ MÜLLER, in: *Report on the 5th and 6th Season*, p. 316-317 n. 28. Building 3 resembles architecture dated to Stratum H/1 in Area 15.

Stratum F

In Stratum F/2, in which Building 2 and its units still existed and were in use, Building 3 was built in the southern part of the area (Figs. 10 and 13). Its architecture and building materials differed significantly from the structures of Stratum G. The massive walls were made of compact sandy bricks. These sturdy bricks and the width of the main walls (1.3m) made stone foundations and thick layers of mud plaster redundant. The preserved walls are parts of a casemate construction. A massive north-south wall abutted the granite massif to the south and cut through earlier architecture. Even the east-west stone wall to the south of Building 2 was destroyed. The northern wall showed the same dimensions and nearly touched the southern wall of Building 2. To the south, earlier walls were reused and integrated into the new casemate construction. A stone platform measuring 3.5 x 3m that abutted the southern wall of the central room and a north-south stone wall at the western limit of the excavated area may be slightly later additions (Stratum F/1). As was the case with Building 1 at a later period, all these constructions were necessary in order to make use of the sloping granite surface near the south-eastern inner corner of the town wall. As only the substructures of Building 3 remained, little can be said about its design or function.

Absolute chronology of Strata F and G

A first assessment of the pottery and architectural parallels from other areas allow a tentative dating of Stratum G to the Persian Period. Stratum F was significantly later but still pre-Ptolemaic in date.²⁷ At the end of Stratum F the Late Period buildings were abandoned and fell into disrepair. After a long period of time, activity started again during Stratum E/8, when the ruins of the earlier structures were still standing and partly reused. Building 3 was much better preserved than Building 2 due to the difference in building materials. The northern wall of Building 3 was dismantled and its bricks were used for the production of mud-mortar. A shallow pit for the processing of mud-mortar and brick mass was found under most of Building 1. The long period of abandonment from the end of the Late Period until the 2nd century BC has close parallels elsewhere in Aswan.²⁸

The development of Building 1 (Stratum E)

Building 1 – Strata E/8 and E/7 (Figs. 10 and 15)

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 323-325.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

The nucleus of Building 1 consisted of an elevated rectangular room measuring ca. 7 x 4m (R3) and a second room to the south of it of the same east-west dimension and a north-south length of at least 4m. The southern end of the room was destroyed by a huge robbery pit and modern animal activity, but most probably coincided with an earlier east-west wall of Stratum F.²⁹ Both rooms were substructures for an elevated floor that was not preserved. Room 3 was filled with densely packed mud-brick debris and mud mortar. In Room 4 a massive mud-brick platform abutted the inner faces of the walls. At the centre of the northern wall a small room (R2) marked the entrance to the elevated part of the building. Due to the fact that Building 1 was erected on uneven ground, on top of the ruins and brick debris of the buildings of Strata F and G that sloped up from north to south, the northern wall of the building was founded at a deeper level than the southern part, that sat immediately on top of the ruins of Building 3. The podium-like impression must thus have been more impressive from the north. A staircase or ramp could not be demonstrated for the earliest phase of the building. It was probably replaced by later constructions.

A rounded *mastaba*-like construction consisting of granite rubble and mud mortar was built around the north-western corner of the building, abutting the western face of R2 in Stratum E/7. Probably it was necessary because of the deep building-ground in this area. A construction consisting of loose granite rubble that abutted the western face of the '*mastaba*' served as an additional means of support. The sturdy construction may also have provided easier access into the building via R2 by compensating for the difference in height between the southern and northern outer surfaces. Traces of a stone construction were found to the east of R2 and at the north-eastern corner of the building. With the exception of a structure abutting the eastern face of the eastern wall of R3, the stones do not seem to belong to a similar structure to that at the north-western corner. The stone structure to the east of the building looks like the foundation for a pillar or wooden post.

Building 1 – Strata E/6 and E/5

The first preserved staircase or ramp leading up to the entrance into R3 was constructed in Stratum E/6 (Fig. 16). This staircase was delimited by two 1-brick-wide mud-brick walls that were approximately 0.90m apart. The staircase was completely overbuilt in Stratum E/5. Details of its construction could therefore not be obtained but it will not have differed significantly from the staircase in Stratum E/5. The staircase met the northern wall of R2 at its centre. To the north of the staircase a narrow path or corridor ran between the two delimiting walls. Near W2-316 a door with a probable wooden threshold led through the eastern delimiting wall into the open area to the east. A short mud-brick wall ran further north with

²⁹ Cf. *infra* chapter 'Excursus: A burial-ground for animals'.

the same orientation as the eastern delimiting wall. The stone wall W2-316 was linked with this mud-brick wall in such a way that both walls must have been constructed in the same building process. The western delimiting wall was significantly damaged when the staircase of Stratum E/5 was constructed. Hence a possible door connecting the corridor with the area to the west has to remain hypothetical for the time being. While the area where the western delimiting wall and W2-384 met was completely covered by the pavement of the threshold of Stratum E/5, both the course of the corridor and a granite slab, serving as a stepping stone to the north of the door into C1, allow a reconstruction of the width (0.9m) and location of the main entrance into Building 1 at that time. As was the case with W2-316, W2-384 was constructed at the same time as the staircase. W2-316 and 384 differ significantly from all preceding walls of Building 1 as they were made of stone, mostly granite rubble with some broken sandstone. W2-316 abutted the western face of the eastern sector of the town wall at a point where it jumps back 1m to the east due to the fact that the width of the wall was reduced in two steps from 8.5m at the point where W2-316 abuts it to 5.8m after the second step 5.4m further north. In the area of C1 earlier strata were only reached in a few trenches. They showed that, as was the case to the south of Building 1, the remains of the structures of Stratum F and earlier were preserved much better than in C2/R5. Hence, before the construction of W2-316 and 384, an earlier massive stone wall (0.8m wide) that abutted the town wall just to the north of W2-316, may have delimited the area of Building 1 to the north. While the eastern limit of the staircase was maintained during Stratum E/5, the western limit was changed considerably. Only the rose-granite foundation of the new western wall that abutted the north-western corner of R2 and ran at an angle towards the stone walls was preserved. The staircase proper covered an approximately square area of 2 x 2m. As the first step of the staircase, a reused granite tool of unknown function, is preserved. The original height of the staircase, and with it the original floor-level of R3 or at least R2 can be approximated as 0.8-0.9m. As the level of the pavement to the north of the staircase is 98.2m asl, the highest remaining part of R3 (the south-western corner) must at 99.3m asl still be preserved to the former floor level or even higher. The elevation of the podium was thus rather modest. To the north of the staircase a corridor paved with sandstone and granite slabs continued further to the north through a doorway into C1 that was significantly wider than during Stratum E/6.

The first phase of the northern wall of C1 was contemporary with W2-316 and 384. Only the rose-granite foundation is left of this early stage of the wall. The wall ended 1.6m from the face of the town wall, where a door led to the north. The situation to the north of C1 during the earlier phases of Stratum E has yet to be investigated. At that time the western face of the town wall was still the eastern limit of the courtyard. Poor-quality mud-brick constructions were used for repairs to the already significantly-damaged face of the wall. The western limit

of the courtyard is covered by several metres of ancient layers supporting the modern street further to the west.

Besides obscure remains of mud-brick structures along the town wall, a small mud-brick installation ca. 2.5m to the north of the southern entrance into C1 is the only construction of earlier Stratum E preserved in the courtyard. The pillar-like object is square with a side length of ca. 0.4m. Its orientation differs significantly from that of Building 1. It is situated in the eastern part of the projected course of the stairway/corridor in R1.

Throughout C1 a very compact mud surface was observed. This surface made it possible to investigate the chronological relations of objects in and around C1. The pedestal mentioned above was erected on top of the surface. Thus a slightly later date for its construction is possible.

Building 1 – Stratum E/4

With the construction of two narrow mud-brick walls abutting the '*mastaba*' and the north-eastern corner of R3, Room 1 came into existence (Figs. 10 and 15). The room, probably an open courtyard, was divided by the staircase-cum-corridor into two parts. The former function of the '*mastaba*' was now made redundant. The western wall abutted W2-384. Near the stone wall a door opened into C2/R5. The threshold was resting on a mud-brick bedding. A sandstone slab fitting exactly into the bedding was found reused in W2-228. To the south of the door a mud-brick pilaster jutted out 0.15m from the western face of the wall. The pilaster protruded into the opening of the door and was damaged in its south-eastern part when the threshold was removed. A second pilaster with the same dimensions and construction was situated only 0.80m to the south on the same wall and at the eastern face of the eastern delimiting wall of R1. These constructions supported the narrow walls that fenced off the courtyard-like open anteroom R1. A door opened through the eastern delimiting wall into the narrow courtyard between the western face of the town wall and Building 1 (C4). The door situated near the south-eastern corner of R1 was severely damaged but had similar dimensions to the door next to the north-western corner. The northern face of the southern wall of R1 was already quite eroded when the eastern delimiting wall was constructed against it.

Building 1 - Strata E/3 and E/2

In Stratum E/3 W2-384 was partly dismantled and replaced by W2-228 (Figs. 17 and 18). Its fabric comprised both granite rubble and a high proportion of reused sandstone fragments. The earlier door connecting Building 1 and the courtyard C1 was walled up and replaced by a new entrance that was 1.5m wide and situated slightly to the east of the earlier door. During Stratum E/3 the staircase was abandoned and thus ignored by the door. The level of the

threshold was adapted several times to the rising level of material accumulating in C1 and R1. After removal and reuse of its threshold, the door from R1 into C2/R5 was walled up. In the northern courtyard of C1 significant changes took place. The northern wall was replaced by a wall orientated slightly differently from its predecessor. A new wall was constructed as the eastern limit of the courtyard. It abutted the town wall at the northern face of the same edge as W2-316, met the northern wall of C1 at its eastern end and continued further to the north, hence creating a new room to the south of C1. It was later destroyed by House 12. The situation to the north of C1 has yet to be investigated in detail. The new eastern wall of C1 was renewed several times and only parts of its foundation, consisting of granite rubble and sandstone fragments, were preserved. Next to the eastern end of the northern limiting wall a door led into the narrow corridor to the east. A sandstone threshold between the western face of the town wall and the eastern end of the northern wall of C1 showed that the earlier door at this location was still in use. The wall provided the courtyard with a proper eastern inner façade and hid the eroded town-wall with its edges from view. In Stratum E/2 the western wall of R1 was replaced by a mud-brick wall with the same dimensions but on a slightly different orientation. The wall abutted the north-western corner of the old nucleus of Building 1 and partly covered W2-228. It is unclear whether a new construction replaced W2-228 at that time or whether the stone-wall was the foundation of a completely lost mud-brick wall that was connected to the new western wall of R1.

Building 1 - Stratum E/1

Stratum E/1 saw a complete remodelling of the area around Building 1. In Courtyard C1 ovens and installations connected to the keeping of smaller animals such as pens and drinking troughs were constructed. The western end of the courtyard from Stratum E/1 onwards could be reconstructed from the northern section of C2/R5. A well preserved bread oven was situated in the south-western corner of C1. The reduced east-west dimension of the courtyard measured ca. 12.5m. A door was broken through the northern delimiting wall of C1. The stratigraphic situation in the courtyard was rather complicated and has yet to be analyzed in the context of the later Strata of Roman housing at the site.

Suffice it to say currently that more than eight ovens in the south-western part are evidence of baking and cooking activity on a scale larger than domestic production (Fig. 19). The installations connected to the keeping of animals were concentrated in the eastern part. Rooms 2 and 3 of Building 1 remained in use. A stone wall abutted the western wall of the building. It was aligned to the wall separating Room 3 and Room 4. These courtyards and their relation to later Strata have yet to be studied in detail. Investigations during Season 12 showed that,

other than in C1, although there was also some evidence for baking, the prevailing activity was the production of granite and grano-diorite artefacts, such as mortars and millstones.³⁰

Excursus: A burial ground for animals

From the construction of Building 1 onwards animals were buried in its vicinity. 154 out of at least 157 skeletons were used for a spatial and quantitative analysis. These were the best preserved skeletons with clear localizations. Due to the fact that pits were often used for numerous consecutive burials and that the pits were usually very shallow and thus within easy reach of dogs, many skeletons were damaged or destroyed soon after burial. After careful evaluation of the complete palaeozoological material the number of buried individuals is expected to rise significantly.

	E/2 and E/3	E/4	E/5 - E/8	Complete
Rams	10	4		14
Sheep/Goats young	25	10	1	36
Sheep/Goats adult	46	27	2	75
Bovidae	1	0	2	3
Equidae		1		1
Birds	5	0		5
Dogs	11	4		15
Unidentified	3	2		5
Complete	101	48	5	154

Table1: Stratigraphic distribution of burials

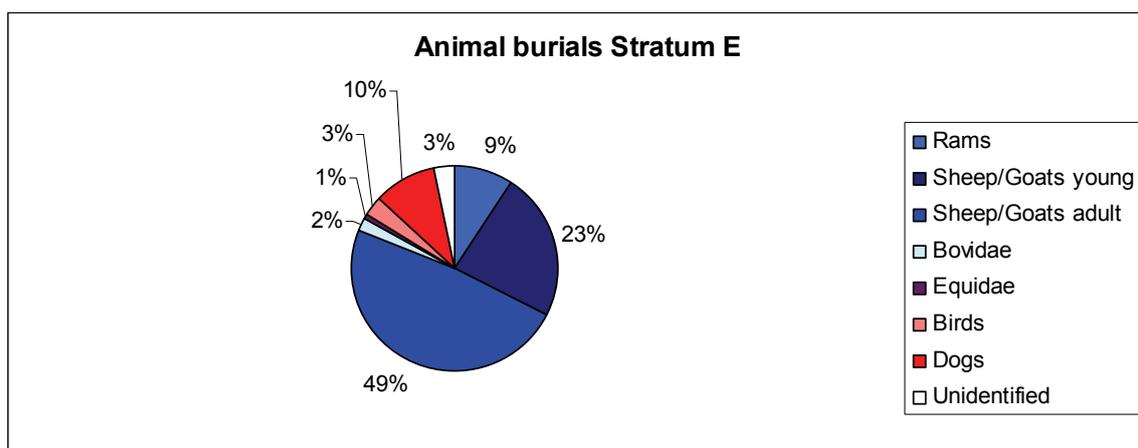


Diagram 1: Burials of animals during Stratum E.

³⁰ Cf. SCHWAIGER, in: *Twelfth Season*, p. 14.

Diagram 1 shows a quantitative analysis of animal burials over all phases of Building 1.³¹ By far the biggest group comprised sheep and goats. Among those a minority were rams³² or young animals. Dogs were well represented; birds very rare and bovine or equine skeletons were exceptional.

Only a few animals could be attributed to Strata E/5 to E/8. Even if later burials had disturbed or destroyed some of them, the quantitative difference would be significant. Five animals are insufficient for any kind of meaningful statistical comparison or interpretation. However it is important to note that animals were buried in the vicinity of Building 1 from the beginning of its existence. It is also striking that two specimens of the otherwise rare *bovidae* are among the animals buried during the earliest phases of Building 1.

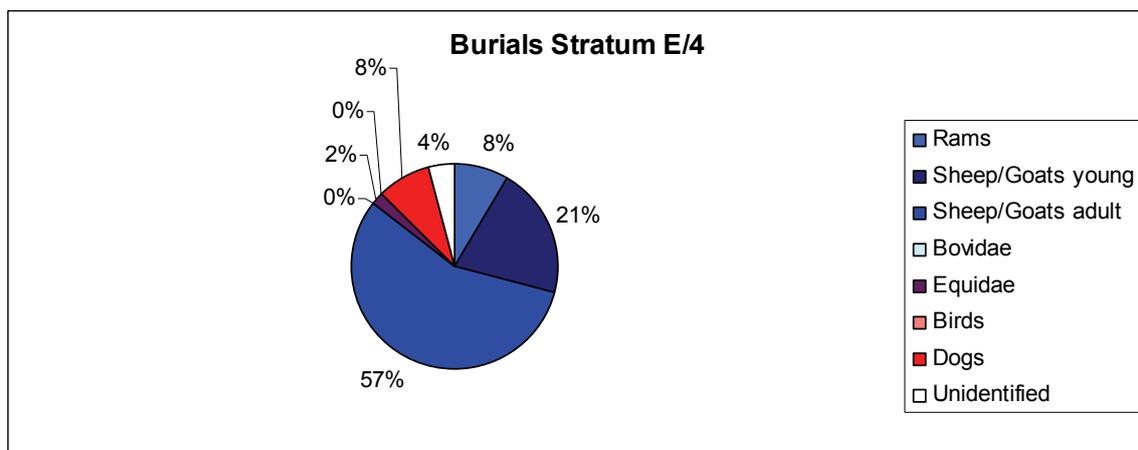


Diagram 2: Animal burials of Stratum E/4

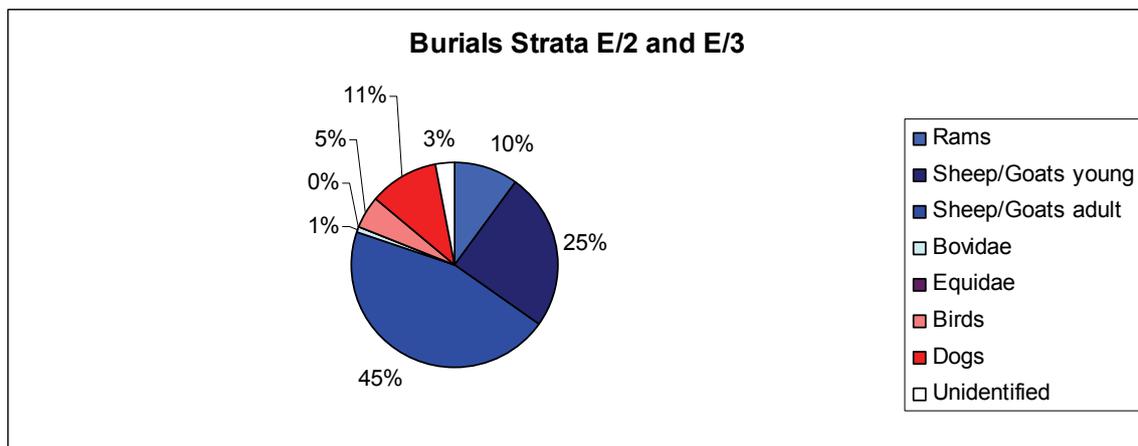


Diagram 3: Animal burials of Stratum E/2 and E/3

³¹ As the animals are not yet identified by a palaeozoologist the result presented in the charts in this chapter have to be understood as preliminary results. The general statistical character however should not change significantly.

³² Differentiation between sheep and goats was not possible. It has to be noted that only animals with preserved characteristic horns or remains of such were identified as rams. After professional analysis the proportion of rams may become significantly larger.

There were more than twice as many burials in Strata E/2 and E/3 (101) than in Stratum E/4 (48). Among the later burials the proportion of goats and sheep was slightly smaller (80% in Strata E/2 and E/3 compared to 86% in Stratum E/4) and a higher percentage of the sheep and goat group were rams or young animals. The most striking change is the appearance of birds in Strata E/2 and E/3.

	E/2 and E/3	E/4	E/5 - E/8	Complete
C1	69	0	0	69
C2/R5	12	43	3	58
C2/R6	15	2	0	17
C4	0	1	1	2
R1	4	2	1	7
Other	1	0	0	1
Complete	101	48	5	154

Table2: Spatial distribution of burials during Stratum E.

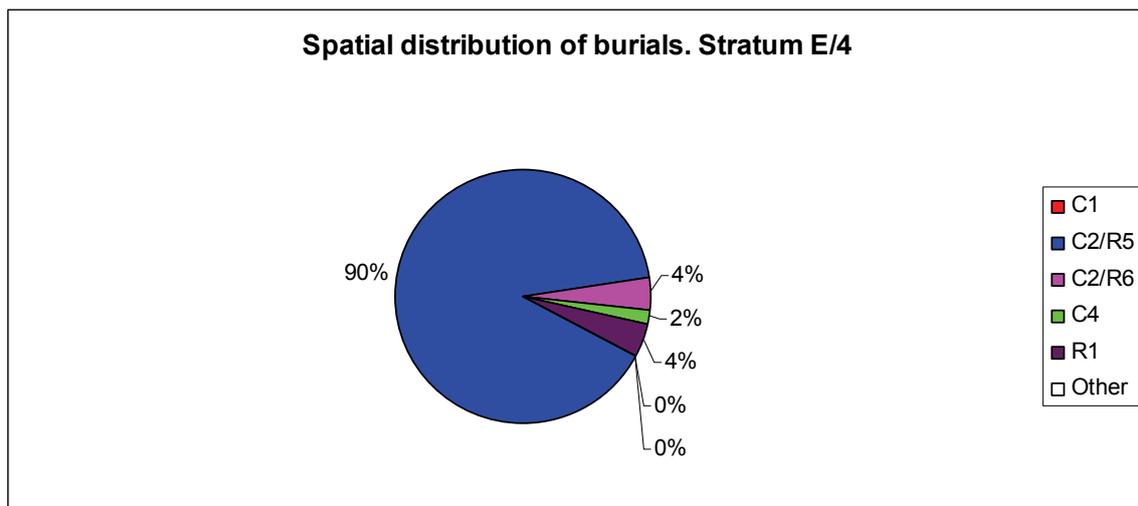


Diagram 4: Spatial distribution of burials in Stratum E/4

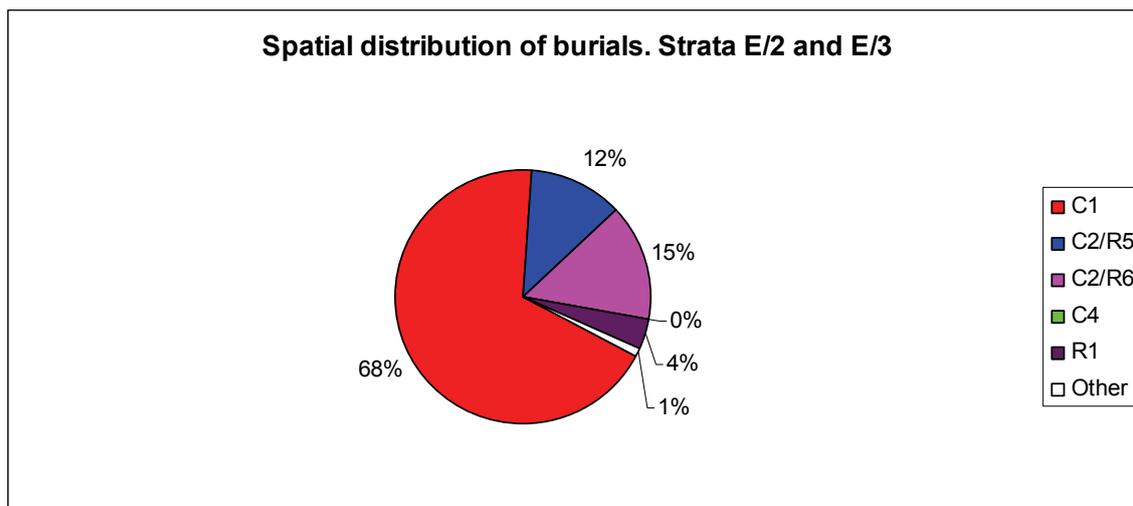


Diagram 5: Spatial distribution of burials in Strata E/2 and E/3

A comparison of the spatial distribution of the burials shows that while nearly all burials during Stratum E/4 took place in courtyard C2/R5 (Fig. 20), the preferred burial ground in Strata E/2 and E/3 was courtyard C1.³³ There were still burials in C2/R5, but less than (for example) in C2/R6 that was already occasionally used in Stratum E/4. In both diagram 4 and 5 it is evident that R1 was only rarely used at all times. C4 was only used sporadically during Stratum E/4. A remarkable feature was the fact that the shallow burial pits were dug into massive layers of dung and other organic matter, probably the remains of hay or animal fodder and the remains of the bodies of earlier burials. Hence the courtyards around Building 1 were not only used for the burial but also for the keeping of animals.³⁴

The area to the south of Building 1 (C3) was covered with a mixture of animal bones and organic material. They were certainly parts of complete burials that had been destroyed by dogs or later construction activities. The abundance of bones in C3 and the presence of dung is evidence that C3 was also used for burials, and that Building 1 therefore did not extend that far to the south, as the only areas without traces of burials are the rooms that made up the nucleus of Building 1 (Rooms R2, R3, R4).

Besides the clear chronological development concerning spatial distribution and the increasing number of burials, the burial customs also changed over time. The term 'burial' is used in this context due to the fact that the animals were not just disposed of but were interred carefully, sometimes, especially during Stratum E/4, accompanied by pottery, often fragmented plates or bowls (Fig. 21). In Strata E/3 and E/2 the heads of rams and adult sheep/goats buried in the northern courtyard C1 were covered with large body sherds of

³³ As mentioned above, layers earlier than Stratum E/4 are not yet excavated in C1. As neither dung nor bones but mud-brick debris was observed in several pits and trenches in the courtyard, the current picture seems to be correct.

³⁴ The term 'burial ground' is thus misleading and is used in this context as a *terminus technicus*.

amphorae or similar large containers (Fig. 22). While the same was true for some smaller animals buried in this courtyard, most of the dogs and young goat/sheep were either buried without protection or covered as a whole with fragments of pottery vessels.

Special cases among the animal burials are burials obviously connected to constructions during Strata E/2 and E/3. Most of the birds were buried in the area of the former staircase beneath the new threshold of the door leading from R1 into C1. Some of the birds showed traces of textiles. They were not mummified but wrapped in fabric. The burial pit was lined with body sherds, and the animal remains were later covered with fragments of pottery, sometimes from the same vessel.

A sheep or goat was deposited on top of the western wall of R1 prior to the construction of the later western delimiting wall of Stratum E/2. This burial is the only example of a sheep/goat outside C1 where the head of the skeleton was covered with a body sherd (Fig. 23). The bones were covered with mud mortar connected to the construction of the new wall on top of it. The animal must thus have been deposited on top of the remains of the earlier wall during the construction process.

Absolute Chronology

As the pottery has yet to be studied, dating depends to a large extent on coins. However, a good parallel for the pottery found associated with burials dating to Stratum E/4 was found in a building to the south of the southern sector of the town wall.³⁵ A coin gave a *terminus post quem* for the latter assemblage of pottery and other material in the reign of Ptolemy VIII/Euergetes II (145-116 v. Chr.). With a date of Stratum E/4 to the 1st half of the 2nd century BC, a construction date for Building 1 in the first half of the 2nd century BC seems most probable. Strata E/3 and E/2 were dated, mainly based on the pottery, to the 1st century AD.³⁶

Interpretation

The most significant aspect of Building 1 is the burial of animals around it. The chronological development started with few burials, until Stratum E/4 when the building was completely refurbished and more and more of the surrounding area was used for an ever increasing number of burials as well as for the keeping of animals. During Strata E/3 and E/2 the development reached its peak with the integration of courtyard C1 into the burial ground

³⁵ MÜLLER, in: *Eleventh Season*, p. 14 figs. 19 and 20. The pottery was initially wrongly dated to the 3rd century BC.

³⁶ I thank L. REMBART and M. HEPA for information concerning pottery.

and significantly more elaborate burial customs for the animals. While the southern and eastern limits of the burial ground were defined by the town wall, the northern limit was given by the northern delimiting wall of C1 (no remains of burials or dung were found to the north of this wall). The western limit of the burial ground may coincide with a north-south road situated to the west of C2/R5 in Stratum E/1 and Stratum D.³⁷ The ground plan of Building 1 shows several peculiarities that might provide some indications as to what was the building's role in the context of the keeping and burying of animals. The elevated nucleus of the building was entered via a impressive doorway and staircase from the north. The staircase and entrance were adapted several times, probably due to the increasing number of animals being kept and the difficult terrain in the area of C2/R5. The distinctive character of Building 1 and the nature of the burials with the careful treatment of animal carcasses indicate a kind of non-profane environment. Whether the carefully chosen label 'Building 1' can be dropped in favour of a more precise designation such as 'sanctuary' will become clear after a careful study of other similar buildings in Egypt and abroad. The small pilaster-like installation in the courtyard C1 may well be the remains of a pedestal for an altar or other cultic installation. On the other hand, the fact that the area was not used exclusively for burials but was also a kind of open air farmyard, marks a remarkable difference from other known animal cemeteries of the period. While, at least near the end of the use of the burial ground, some of the animal bodies were protectively covered with potsherds, others were covered with lime, probably in order to accelerate decomposition.

The area around Building 1 that was used continuously in the same way for a very long period of time changed completely at the end of Stratum E and the beginning of Stratum D. Burials ceased altogether and, while some keeping of animals continued in C1, the overall character changed and the courtyards were subdivided into smaller units that were used for food production and as workshops.

Whatever the final opinion about the function of Building 1 and the interpretation of the animal burials may be, the uniqueness of the area around Building 1 in the context of the town as a whole is certain. In the first half of the 2nd century BC, at a time when elsewhere in Aswan the 'urban phase' of the Graeco-Roman period started,³⁸ more than 450m² of precious building ground in the south-eastern corner of the town were used for burying and keeping of animals. Only at the beginning of the 2nd century AD after a delay of at least 250 years did a densely built up town quarter come into existence here. The phenomenon may be due to the vicinity of the Temple of Isis just 80m to the north. As has been pointed out, the fact that the

³⁷ SCHWAIGER, in: *Twelfth Season*, pp. 14-16.

³⁸ W. MÜLLER, 'Urbanism in Graeco-Roman Egypt', in M. BIETAK ET AL. (ed.), *Cities and Urbanism in Ancient Egypt*, DÖAWW 60/UZK 35 (Vienna 2010), p. 247. Cf. for the urbanisation in the 2nd century BC. as a phenomenon in Egypt as a whole *ibid.*, p. 234.

town wall was only preserved in Areas 1 and 2 may be evidence that, with the construction of the temple in the reign of Ptolemy III, the south-eastern part of the town was reserved as a *temenos* area.³⁹ The *temenos* was then reduced significantly in the Roman period and a town quarter, protected by the *temenos* wall, came into existence, just as was the case with other temple precincts in Egypt. Any interpretation of the findings in and around Building 1 has to take into account the neighbourhood of the Temple of Isis.

Roman domestic structures (Strata D, C and B)

The investigations of Season 12 were completed.⁴⁰ The study of the stratigraphy and associated material was continued.⁴¹ This work produced more detailed insights into the chronology of the Roman town quarter. According to dates given on ostraca with tax-receipts found in layers connected to House 19, the first phase of Roman houses was constructed at the beginning of the 2nd century AD at the earliest.⁴² The tradition of densely built up private houses with courtyards continued until the end of Roman rule in Egypt and beyond as was shown in previous excavations in the same city quarter in Area 1.

5. A multi-phase retaining wall at the highest spot of Syene (Area 67)

The area⁴³ was first investigated during Season 11,⁴⁴ when the modern house at the site was dismantled (Figs. 24 and 25). At that time a large number of decorated blocks that had been reused in the foundations of the modern house were retrieved. Most of them belonged to a temple of Ptolemy IV that was located on Elephantine Island.⁴⁵

Late Period (Stratum D)

A north-south wall of unknown width was situated at the western limit of the site. The wall ended in a corner approximately 1m from the northern limit of the excavated area. It was constructed similarly to the Late Period town wall. A mud-brick wall rested on top of a high socle mostly made from granite. The banking wall was preserved to a height of almost 6m.

³⁹ *Idem*, in: *Report on the 7th Season*, p. 194.

⁴⁰ SCHWAIGER, in: *Twelfth Season*, pp. 12-16.

⁴¹ Work started on January 21st and lasted until May 28th. The excavation was supervised by H. SCHWAIGER.

⁴² I thank S. TORALLAS TOVAR for this information.

⁴³ The area is situated in Shona, in 14, Sh. Harid Ibrahim Arif. Excavations were conducted from February 28th until March 21st 2013. The work was supervised by M. HEPA.

⁴⁴ VON PILGRIM, in: *Eleventh Season*, p. 2.

⁴⁵ C. UBERTINI, *Elephantine XXXIV. Restitution architecturale à partir des blocs et fragments épars d'époque ptolémaïque et romaine*, AVDAIK 120, Mainz 2005.

The north-south extension was 8.5+x m in length. To the east of the wall, massive layers of windblown sand accumulated with very little anthropogenic material. Taking into account the character of these layers it is prudent to assume that no further structures contemporaneous with the wall existed to its east although the excavated area was rather small.

Ptolemaic/Roman-Imperial (Stratum C)

After a considerable amount of time (during which 2m of wind-blown sand had accumulated),⁴⁶ a mud-brick construction was added to the east of the Late Period wall. The east-west dimension of the construction was 2m, the north-south 4.5m +x (its northern end was situated outside the excavated area). At the same time or slightly earlier, another mud brick wall was constructed to the north of the north-east corner of the Late Period structure. The mud-brick construction most probably constituted a repair to the wall, as was the case with the eastern sector of the town wall in Area 2 (Phase III, ES3).⁴⁷

Late Antique casing (Stratum B)

In the Late Antique period a casing consisting of reused sandstone blocks was constructed against the eastern face of the repair of Stratum C. Prior to that, and as was the case at the north-eastern corner of the wall of Stratum D, a wall, consisting mostly of granite rubble, was constructed to the south of the southern face of the mud-brick wall dating to Stratum C and against the eastern face of the wall of Stratum D. The casing was 2m wide. Only a few blocks of the two lowest courses of the construction were preserved. Some of these reused sandstone blocks showed decoration of the same kind as those already retrieved from the foundations of the modern house (Fig. 26).⁴⁸ Thus at least one station on the journey of these *spolia* could be retraced. This discovery may help to shed new light on a discussion concerning the origin of blocks that were deposited in the temple of Isis. These blocks, stylistically and technically identical to the ones found in Area 67, were thought to have been reused for the building of a Late Antique church to the north of the former English Anglican Church (now replaced by the modern Coptic Cathedral of Aswan).⁴⁹

The modern house from the early 20th century (Stratum A)

⁴⁶ Due to the fact that pottery and coins have yet to be studied, the date is hypothetical for the time being.

⁴⁷ MÜLLER, in: *Twelfth Season*, p. 7-8, figs. 4 (plan) and 8 (photo).

⁴⁸ As was the case with the blocks retrieved during Season 12, EWA LASKOWSKA-KUSZTAL kindly provided a first assessment.

⁴⁹ *PSBA* 30 (1908), p. 73. Cf. the discussion by VON PILGRIM, in: *1st Report*, p. 131 n. 30.

The Late Antique casing was removed except for some blocks of its foundation in the early 20th century. Material from the retrieval pit and local oral traditions corroborate this date. The relation between the modern foundation and the retrieval pit of the Late Antique wall shows that the modern house was built immediately after the blocks had been robbed. A cursory investigation of houses in the vicinity of Area 67 showed that more blocks with similar decoration were reused all over this part of Shona. Presumably the dismantling of the Late Antique wall was thus directly connected to the re-urbanisation of this town quarter. The dismantling process was highly selective, as visible remains of Stratum D and the rose-granite parts of the construction of Stratum D were left untouched, probably due to the fact that there was enough good building material available from the sandstone wall.

Interpretation

Construction and repairs to the wall dating to Stratum D show clear parallels with the town wall that ran to the west of Area 67 and was differently orientated.⁵⁰ On the map of Aswan as depicted in the *Description de l’Egypte* a walled in area is shown on the top of an outcrop to the east of Area 3.⁵¹ The wall is shown just as a line but most probably marks a retaining wall that was part of a terrace. Questions as to the nature of the building that stood on top of this terrace/platform at the highest point of ancient Syene must remain unanswered for the time being.

W. M.

⁵⁰ The course of the wall was reconstructed from findings in Areas 36 (MÜLLER, in: *Report on the 7th Season*, pp. 198-199), 46 (MÜLLER, in: *Ninth Season*, pp. 11-13) and 62 (MÜLLER, in: *Tenth Season*, p. 17).

⁵¹ *Description I*, pl. 31.

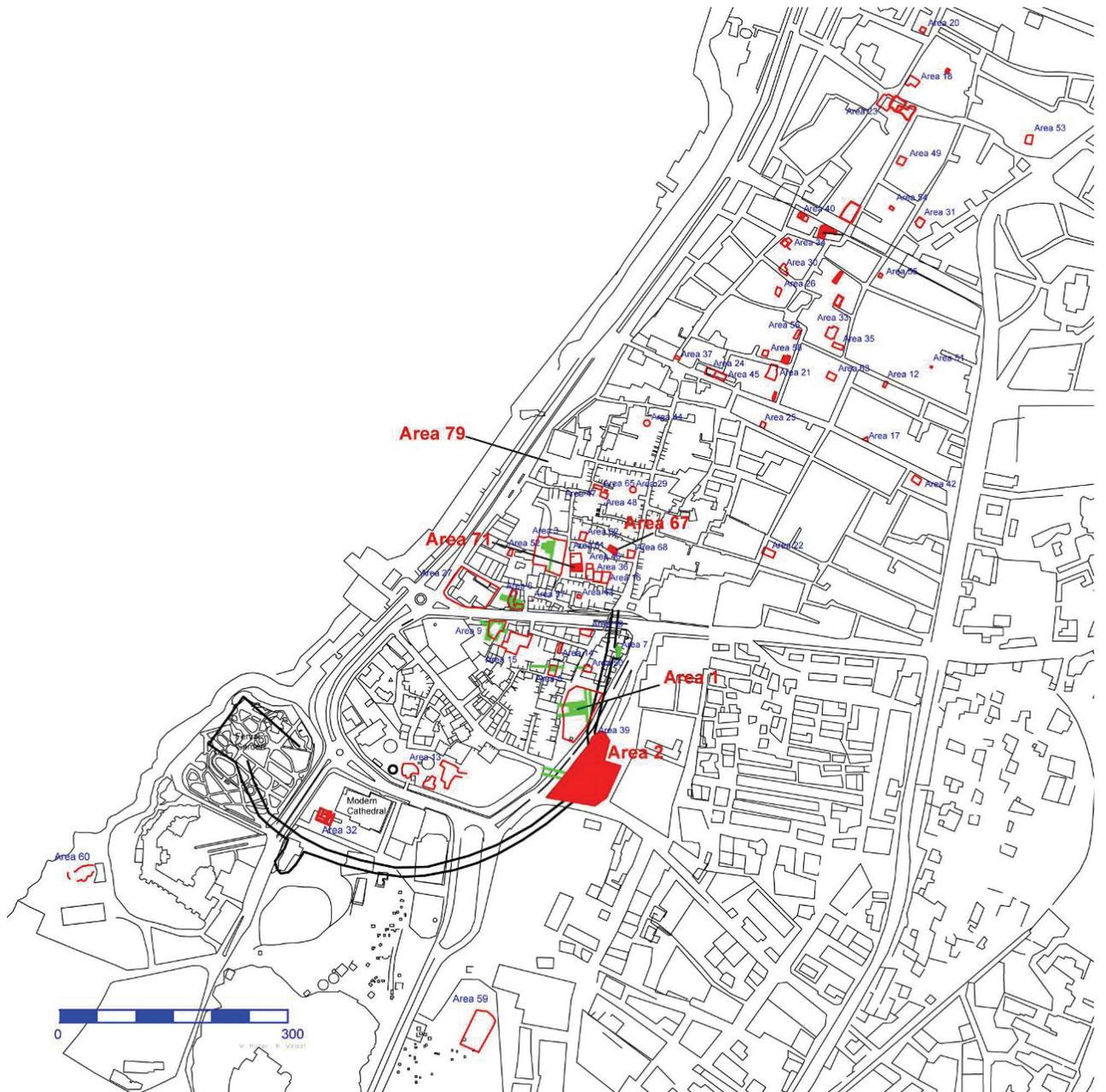


Fig. 1: Map of excavated areas.

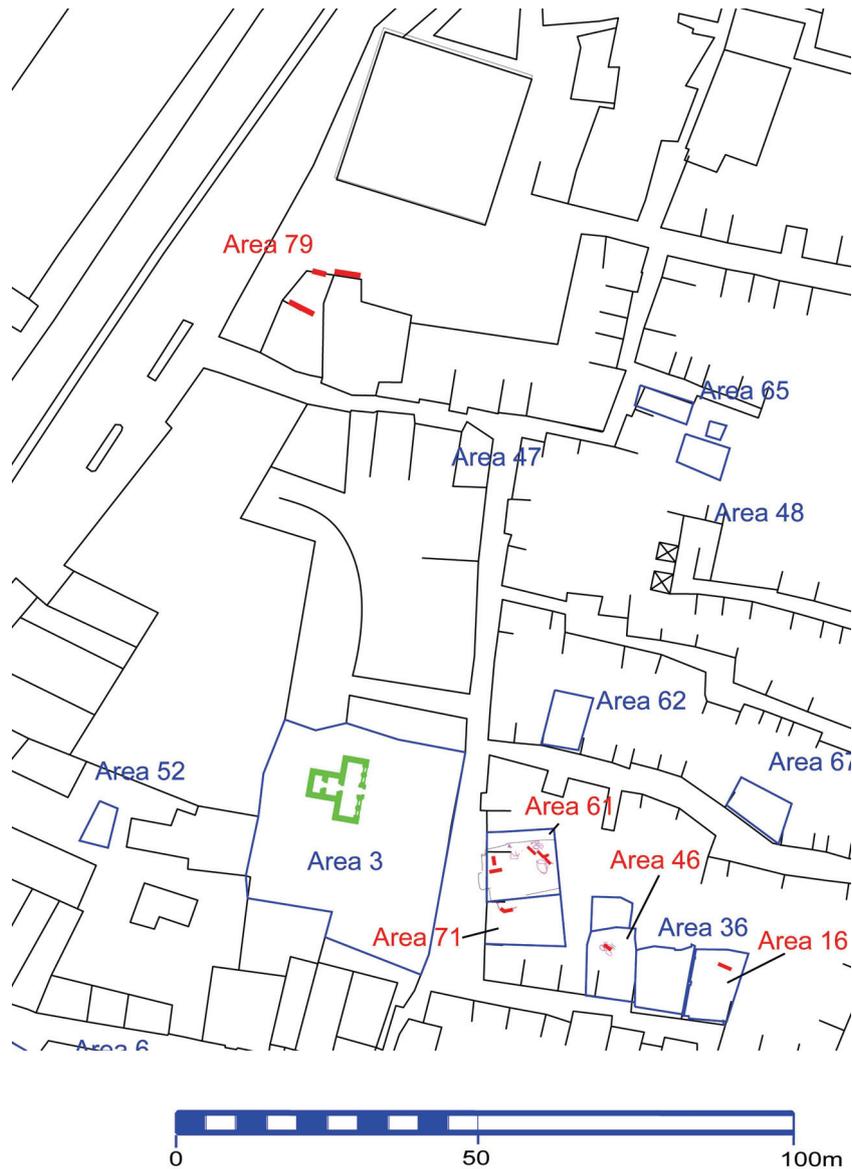


Fig. 2: Map of rock inscriptions discovered by the Swiss-Egyptian Mission.



Fig. 3: Area 71: Granite massif with inscriptions *in situ*.

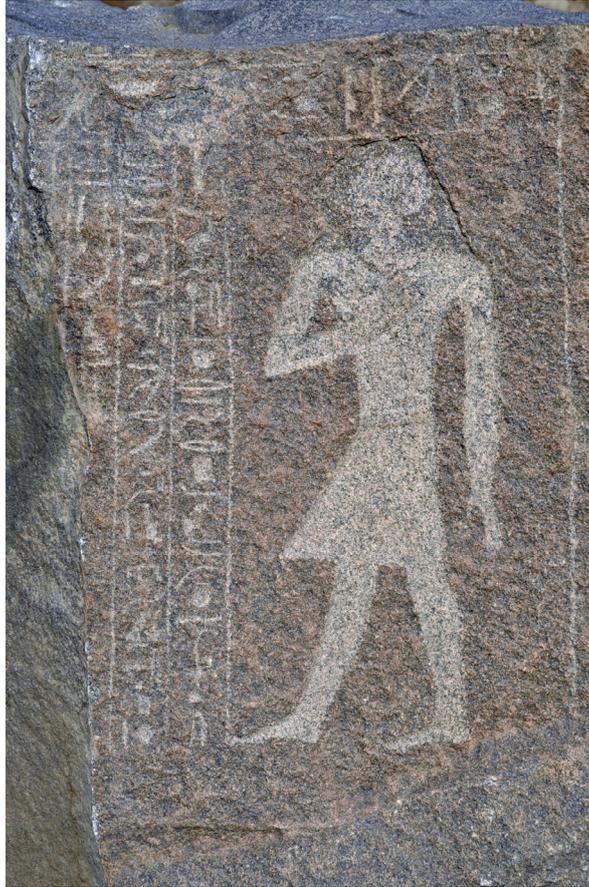


Fig. 4: Area 71: Granite fragment with rock-inscription (photo by Axel Krause)



Fig. 5: Area 79: Rock-inscription and surroundings.



Fig. 6: Area 2: Town-wall and eastern part of Area 2 at the end of Season 13.

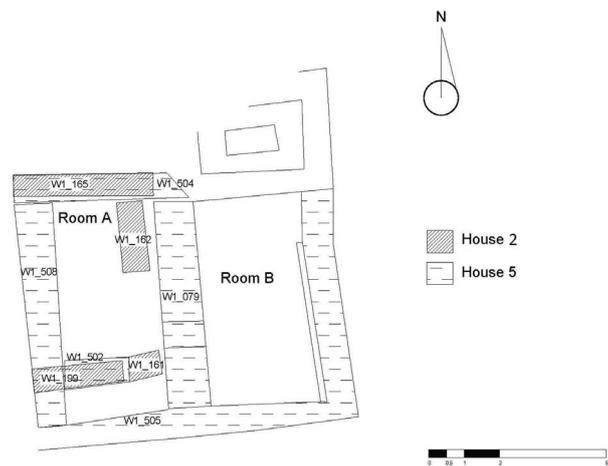


Fig. 7: Area 1: Plan of House 5/Room A.



Fig. 8: Area 1: Overview of House 5/Room A (photo by Nicolas Gail).



Fig. 9: Area 1: Detail of Wall W1-505.



Fig. 10: Area 2: Plan of Strata G/2 – E/4.



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



Fig. 12: Area 2: Detail of door in Building 2/Unit 1.



Fig. 13: Area 2: Overview of southern structures dating to Stratum G.



Fig. 14: Area 2: Detail of bread ovens with entrance into Building 2/Unit 2/R2.



Fig. 15: Area 2: Overview of Building 1.



Fig. 16: Area 2: Detail of the staircase in Building 1/R1.

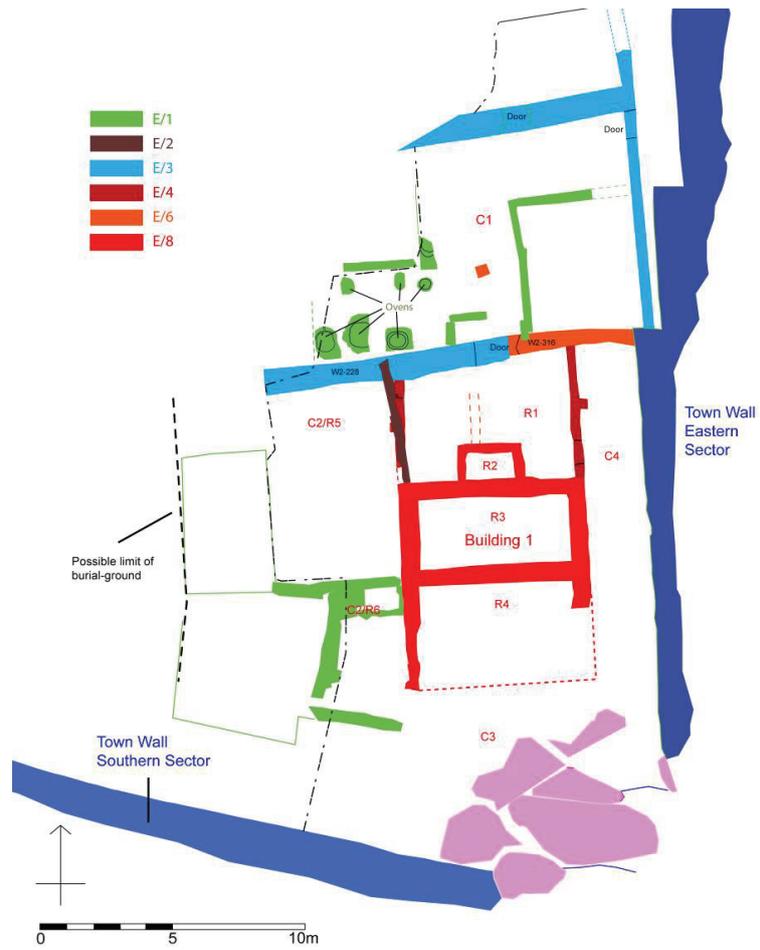


Fig. 17: Area 2: Plan of Building 1 (Strata E/3, E/2 and E/1).



Fig. 18: Area 2: Overview of Building 1 (Strata E/3 and E/2).



Fig. 19: Area 2: Overview of Courtyard 1 with bread-ovens.



Fig. 20: Area 2: Building 1/Courtyard 2/R5 with animal-burials.



Fig. 21: Area 2: Animal burials with pottery (Str. E/4).



Fig. 22: Area 2: Animal burial with covered head (Str. E/3).



Fig. 23: Area 2: Animal burial on top of wall (Str. E/3-E/2).

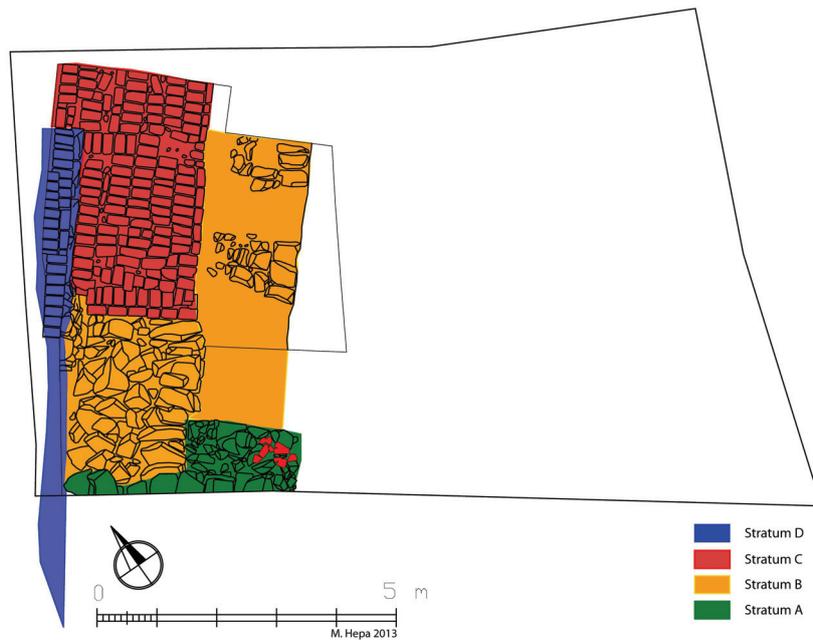


Fig. 24: Plan of Area 67.



Fig. 25: Overview of Area 67.



Fig. 26: Area 67: Reused blocks in the Late Antique casing.