



## Book Reviews

Jacques Reinold. *Archéologie au Soudan: Les civilisations de Nubie*. Paris: Editions Errance, 2000.

Margaret Judd  
Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan  
The British Museum  
Great Russell Street  
London, England WC1B 3DG

At the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a team of French scholars under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte diligently documented the natural history, geography and ancient monuments observed during their journey along the Nile, which ended at the 1st Cataract. Their annotations and engravings resulted in a massive 24-volume publication, *La Description de l'Égypte*, that inspired other adventurers to investigate the ancient Egyptian landscape and the lands further to the south. Among these explorers, Cailliaud led a French scientific mission as far as Meroe, which was one of the earliest research expeditions to Sudan. Like his predecessors, Cailliaud systematically documented and illustrated all of the ancient sites including their monuments, architectural plans, inscriptions and reliefs, many of which are the sole surviving records of monuments now reduced to rubble. The subsequent roles and contributions of the French to Sudanese archaeology are assembled in *Archéologie au Soudan: Les civilisations de Nubie*, the supplementary catalogue to the public exposition *Fouilles Françaises et Franco-Soudanaises. Contribution à l'histoire du Soudan* in Khartoum and Paris (2000-2001).

Following the opening remarks on the French-Sudanese corroborations by Jean Leclant (Secrétaire Perpétuel de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) and Hassan Hussein Idriss (Director General of Antiquities and Museums), Reinold positions Sudan within Africa and then embarks on a geographic odyssey that surveys the diverse and often inhospitable terrain from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Cataracts of the Nile, which was

the foremost factor that limited the exploration of Sudan by ancient and modern travelers. Most notable among these natural obstructions was the Batn el-Hajar (belly of rock) immediately south of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cataract, which divided this region of the Nile Valley into Lower (north) and Upper (south) Nubia. His vivid descriptions are punctuated with numerous colour plates that depict the stark contrast between Sudan's desolate landscape and majestic ancient monumental architecture. For those unfamiliar with Sudanese archaeology, Reinold includes a chronological sequence of Sudan's archaeological periods spanning from the Early Palaeolithic (300,000 BC) to AD 1000 for Lower Nubia, Middle/Upper Nubia, and Central/Eastern Sudan. The sequence of Upper Egyptian cultures beginning with the Neolithic is also integrated since the history and archaeology of these two countries were inestimably entwined.

The next section traces the development of Sudanese archaeology, commencing with Burckhardt's treks into the Middle Nile region during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues into the modern era, when the Antiquities Service of Sudan was created in 1939 and A. J. Arkell became the first 'Commissioner for Archaeology.' The role of the French in Sudanese archaeology intensified when Jean Vercoutter was appointed to the position of Commissioner (1956-60) and a global appeal was made by UNESCO to save the Nubian monuments that were threatened by the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The Sudanese government distributed archaeological concessions to responding international teams and since then, French archaeologists have maintained a permanent presence in Sudanese archaeology, and many of their excavations are referred to here. This presence was strongly influenced by the creation of an archaeological collaboration between the Sudanese and French in 1969-la Section Française de la Direction des Antiquités du Soudan (SFDAS). Reinold clarifies the mission's role with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) in Sudan and elaborates on the subsequent excavations, salvage projects and archaeological issues with which the SFDAS was involved. These last 30 years, 1969-1999, provide the foundation for this volume and exposition.

The bulk of the book is devoted to a survey of the archaeological periods of Sudan north of

Khartoum, and the various factors that facilitated cultural changes, notably the environment and the Egyptian presence, are discussed. Reinold describes the architecture and artefacts associated with each culture, and because many of the artefacts were excavated from a cemetery context, the funerary traditions of ancient Sudan are highlighted, beginning with Site 117 at Sahaba, one of the earliest known cemeteries in Nubia and Central Sudan. Though not specified here, this cemetery is acknowledged as one of the earliest archaeological examples of collective violence based on the association of lithic points with the skeletons and, therefore, signifies an important event in the anthropological studies of human conflict resolution. The ensuing Epipalaeolithic period (ca. 8000-5000 BC) is associated with the introduction of pottery, notably the "wavy line" and "dotted wavy line" styles, both of which were ubiquitous in the 6<sup>th</sup> Cataract region.

The Neolithic period, Reinold's particular area of expertise, follows and two key sites both excavated by SFDAS, el-Kadada and Kadruka, are illustrated. A new artefact type that emerged during the Neolithic period was the anthropomorphic statuette; these small statuettes were recovered from the tombs of adults of both sexes, as well as infant burials. Reinold suggests that they may be portrayals of a mother goddess or connected with a fertility cult, but also may simply be toys. The feature articles devoted to the Neolithic burials provide detailed qualitative descriptions of the grave goods, photographs, and line drawings of typical adult and child burials. Reinold proposes that the multiple interments of two to three adults indicate human sacrifice at the time of burial, while the burials of children less than six years of age in pottery vessels at el-Kadada are characteristic of an age-associated ritual.

A similar format is followed to examine the A-Group, Pre-Kerma, C-Group, Kerma, Napatan, and Meroitic periods with a focus on the material culture and funerary program, although in many cases the discussion is limited. Reinold describes the Lower Nubian A-Group culture as one that bridged two distinct socio-economic regimes, the northern agricultural economy of the Egyptians and the southern pastoral Nubian economy. During this period, exotic Egyptian-manufactured goods, such as alabaster jars and metal tools, were interred in A-

Group graves, while the primary resources (e.g., ivory, ebony, and ostrich feathers) of Central Africa and the Red Sea were channelled north into Egypt. Reinold reviews explanations for the disappearance of this culture before sketching the Pre-Kerma Period that emerged south of the Second Cataract during the A-Group decline, when for the first time Egyptian goods were found in Upper Nubia. About 2300-1500 BC the C-Group emerged in the old A-Group territories and the populace appeared to live harmoniously with their Egyptian neighbours. Reinold explains that three or four cultural phases were identified from morphological changes observed among ceramics, burials, and settlement patterns: black-incised pottery was introduced; burial structures shifted from stone-slab covered burial pits to vault-covered pits in which the individual was laid on a bed; and sophisticated permanent structures of stone or mud brick replaced the encampments identified in the early phase. The increase in frequency of Egyptian artefacts in Upper Nubia throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC indicated that the rocky, turbulent waters of the Batn el-Hajar no longer deterred the Egyptians from expanding their trade network southward into Central Africa.

The Nubians also flourished from this economic relationship and as a result, a new kingdom arose about 2500 BC that now takes the name of the modern town erected beside it-Kerma. Reinold contrasts the ancient city at Kerma, physically recognized by the massive mud brick defuffa (considered to be a ritual center), to the rural site at Gism el-Arba, noted for its collection of miniature clay animal models. Egyptian influence was extensive at Kerma and is observed in the structural features of temples, palaces, and living quarters; Reinold notes that African influences are also visible, but he offers few details. Reinold describes the funerary changes observed through the Kerma Ancien, Moyen and Classique periods, the latter being associated with lavish royal burials and multiple interments, which are considered to be human sacrifices. This section concludes with an inventory of typical Kerma period grave goods that were recovered from Kerma, Saï, and Mirgissa, all of which are beautifully photographed.

Reinold traces the intimate economic and sociopolitical relationship between Egypt and Nubia, which fluctuated between amicable and hostile since the Pre-Kerma Period when the Egyptians

controlled the Nile Valley north of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cataract and the people in the vicinity of Kerma regulated the waters between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Cataracts. By about 2000 BC the Nubians had become a power to be reckoned with and were not content with their role as middleman in the Egyptian trade system and, as a result, the Kerma empire slowly expanded into the First Cataract region. Wary of any further Nubian northerly infiltration, the Egyptians reinforced their northern fortifications at the 1<sup>st</sup> Cataract and by the reign of Sesostri III they had reclaimed their territory at the Batn el-Hajar. Here, they constructed a second series of fortifications to keep the Nubians at bay, while retaining prosperous economic relations; within two centuries, however, internal politics threatened Egyptian unification and the troops positioned along the frontiers were forced to return to the cities to restore order. The northern Egyptian throne fell prey to the Hyksos, who in collusion with the Nubians decreased the area of Egypt's domain until Egypt, exasperated by this conspiracy, physically retaliated in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Following the subsequent collapse of the Kerma empire (ca. 1520 BC) at the hands of Thutmose I, Egyptian authority and cultural influence was endemic throughout Nubia, notably at Mirgissa, Saï, Soleb and Sedeinga, which are highlighted in this catalogue. Once again the reader is treated to exceptional views of the sites and colour plates of finely crafted statuary, both monumental and portable.

The Nubians eventually penetrated Egypt as far as the delta and their rule over Egypt and Nubia as the XXV<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, though short-lived (ca. 713-656 BC), preceded the rise of the Kushite empire, which has been divided into two phases: the Napatan period (ca. 850-270 BC) and the ensuing Méroitic period (ca. 270 BC-AD 350). The reintroduction of pyramids into the funerary programme is considered by Reinold to be the signature of the Kushite culture and though these pyramids emulated the Egyptian monuments, Reinold describes them as much shorter, narrower and independent of the earth-cut burial chamber over which they were built. Similarly, when compared to Egyptian temple design, which remained predominant throughout the Kushite period, the Kushite temples were less grandiose in proportion, were reduced to one or two rooms, and were dedicated to a local god such as 'Apedemak.' Although Reinold offers an apt

description of this enigmatic lion-like deity, a visual illustration is noticeably absent. The sites featured by Reinold are not those known for their immense architectural programmes or royal cemeteries, but they are equally important to Sudanese archaeology. For example, Wad Ben Naga, first visited by various 19<sup>th</sup> century explorers, produced a stone altar inscribed with Meroitic and Egyptian hieroglyphics, which aided in deciphering Meroitic writing. Reinold presents the sites of el-Kadada and el-Hobagi to explore the declining years of the Meroitic period, marked by the disappearance of the pyramids. A fleeting section introduces Christianity and Islam to Sudan with an equally sparse visual representation of material culture from these two periods.

*Archéologie au Soudan: Les civilisations de Nubie* is a sumptuously illustrated book and the aerial views of many of the sites are indeed breathtaking. Written in French, this book provides the interested public with an overview of Sudanese archaeology and culture history based primarily on the results of the last 30 years of French excavations, which was its intention as an accompaniment to an exposition. Individuals in search of a comprehensive overview of Sudanese archaeology, particularly for the centuries following the Meroitic period (ca. AD 350), will need to supplement this volume. A bibliography of publications derived from the French excavations concludes this work along with a list of the objects displayed at the exposition. Slightly under half of the artefacts gathered for the exposition are depicted here with the majority favouring the Neolithic period; the text is similarly weighted. The absence of bioanthropological information is conspicuous considering the overwhelming number of tombs excavated over the years and the many hundreds of individuals disinterred. The integration of such information would have enhanced the interpretations derived from archaeological material, and would have afforded a balanced perspective of the daily lives and culture of the ancient people investigated.

Reinold's contributions to Sudanese archaeology, notably the Neolithic period, are renowned among his peers and I for one anxiously await the final detailed publication of the sites and the many skeletal collections summarily presented in this work.