

# ORIENTAL INSTITUTE NUBIAN EXPEDITION (OINE) PUBLICATION PROJECT

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With the acceptance of OINE 14, 13, and 12 and the editing of volume 14 awaiting publication, activities for the Medieval Serra East and Dorginarti Fortress phase of the project included continued work on the Dorginarti database by Lisa Heidorn and the finalization of the 3-D reconstruction of Dorginarti by Nadejda Reshetnikova. We moved again to volume 11 on Serra East Fortress, and especially its seal impressions, but also beginning a process of updating the manuscript, adding color photographs, of both the excavation and the objects. Working in the lab rather than the field can often have surprises, great and small, as these reports have shown over the years. Our volunteer photographer, Larry Lissak, who has been photographing masses of sherds from Serra East for the databases made one discovery this year, of a decorated stand. Serra East had its own pottery industry, and one simple stand apparently made there was incised, probably by a Nubian employed at the fort, with a herd of goats running around the shaft.



Figure 1. Dorginarti Level III-IV fortress from the east, ninth-early eighth centuries BCE. 3-D rendering by Nadejda Reshetnikova, 2019.

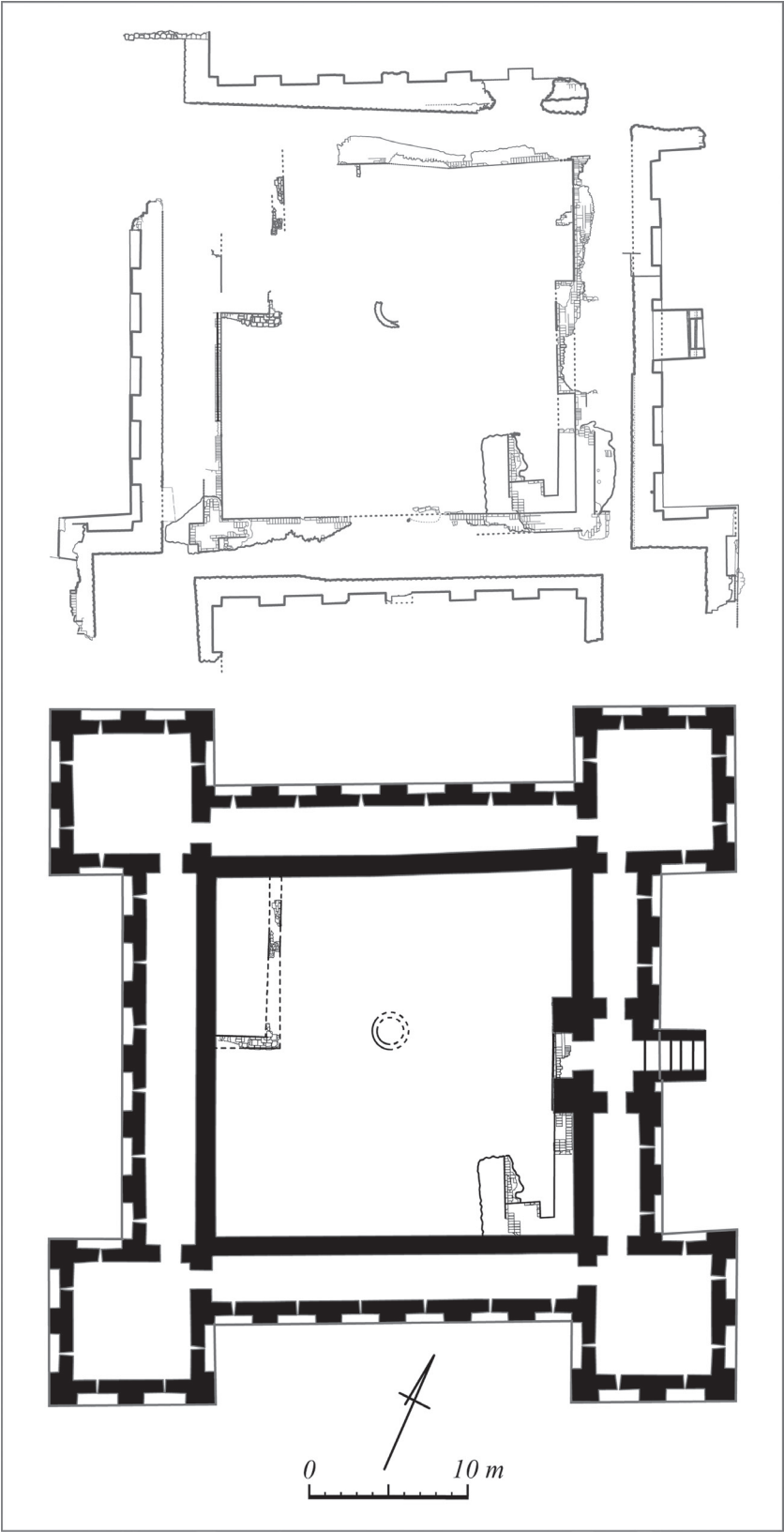


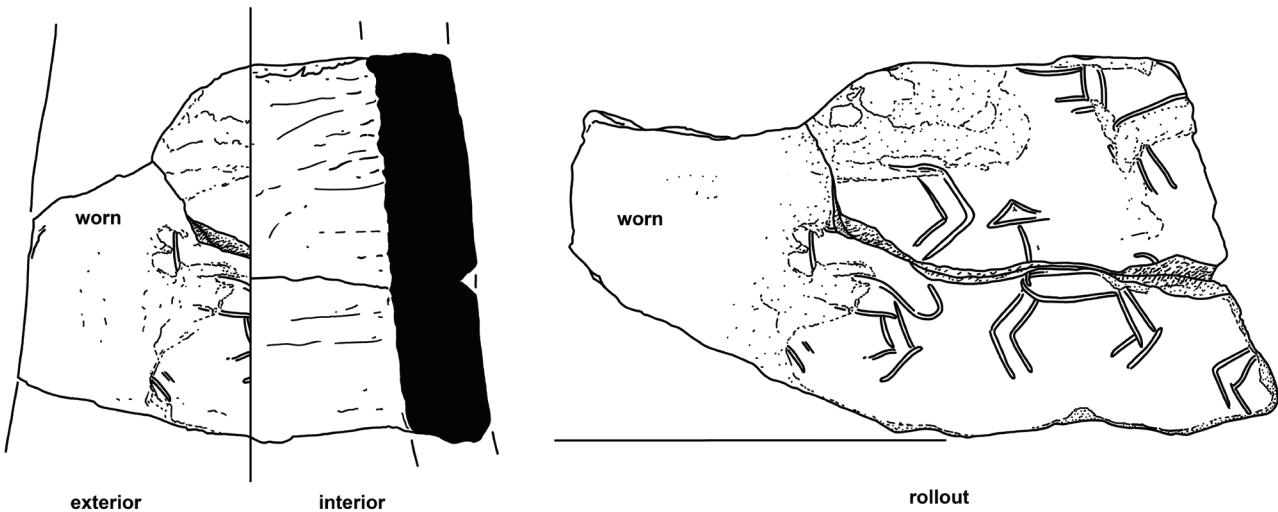
Figure 2. Dorginarti Level II fort plan and reconstruction (James Knudstad), sixth century BCE.

The main effort this year was preparing for the next major project, publishing the 2007–8 excavations in the Fourth Cataract salvage project planned for three years and two or three volumes. This effort included securing support, which bore fruit with the approval of grants from the Shelby White-Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications located at Harvard, and from the National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Grants program, which will enable us to build the volumes. We will begin the first year by organizing the records in detail, setting up a detailed pottery and object classification and beginning the process of creating plans and pottery drawings. This process can be quite complex, as it will require processing GPS and survey data and creating plans of superstructures, shafts, and burials that can be presented in layers.

As reported in the *OI Annual Reports* in 2007 and 2008, as well as in published articles, the Oriental Institute's work in the Fourth Cataract was like the previous operations in the 1960s, occasioned by a dam. Unlike the Aswan High Dam, which enhanced irrigation while providing power, the Merowe Dam, as it is called, was built just for power. Although not as large as the lake behind Aswan, the Merowe dam extends upstream 174 km, and it displaced many tens of thousands of people, inundating the entire country occupied by the Manasir, with some of the Rubatab upstream, and the Shaikiyya downstream. We had been assigned a concession at Shirri Island, capital of the Manasir, but not only did they not accept being displaced, they found the proposed compensation to be entirely inadequate. Partly in hopes of a better arrangement and because they associated archaeologists with the dam, they ordered all archaeologists to leave their area in 2006, a decision they later reaffirmed.

The loss of Shirri to archaeology was severe, at the least, but the expedition from the Gdansk Archaeological Museum in Poland under the direction of Dr. Henryk Paner offered us a choice of sites out of a huge concession in Shaikiyya territory, so the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition was able to take the field with plenty to do, financed by grants from the National Geographic Society and Packard Humanities Institute, under the direction of Geoff Emberling and Bruce Williams. Once in the field, the expedition was repeatedly and decisively aided not only by Dr. Paner and the Gdansk team, but by the Omda of Amri, Hassan Mohammed Hassan, whose help was indispensable.

Figure 3. Fragment of a potstand from Serra East with incised goats, early eighteenth century BCE.





We began work in 2007 at Hosh el-Geruf, a site with many large grindstones that turned out to be a gold-processing center. Fortunately, our team included Dr. Carol Meyer of the OI, who has made a specialty of studying gold mining in Egypt's Eastern Desert, and geologist Professor James Harrell of the University of Toledo, who had studied mines and quarries in Egypt and Sudan for decades. Although gold has been mined widely in the Fourth Cataract Region, with dozens of large grindstones for pulverizing ore found throughout the region, Hosh el-Geruf is a unique center. Pottery came from three main periods at the site: Mesolithic-Neolithic, Kerma-Old Kush, circa 1800–1550 BCE, and early Napatan, circa 750–600, with Kerma-Old Kush pottery strongly predominant.

After sampling and excavating at Hosh el-Geruf, the expedition moved to work at a large Kerma-Old Kush cemetery near our village, Al-Widay, excavating a sample of its 110 tombs (Al-Widay I) and a small plot of tombs nearby at Al-Widay II. Hosh el-Geruf was unusual enough that in June 2007 the *New York Times* published a story about it in the science section.

In our second season, 2008, we returned to Al-Widay I, but this time with a different objective. In the 1960s rescue, whole cemeteries had been dug. This allowed research into chronology and culture with more complete data. However, in the Fourth Cataract, no large cemeteries of this period had been completely excavated, so the OINE undertook the complete examination of all the Al-Widay I tombs, which is now a unique undertaking for the survey region.

We were still very much cooperating with the Polish team, who were also excavating a few selected sites on an island just south of Al-Widay, Umm Gebir (Mother of Tombs). We were allowed to undertake more survey on this island, finding over a hundred sites. After completing the Al-Widay cemeteries, we transferred excavators to Umm Gebir, setting up four teams to dig different sites: a Nubian cemetery dating to the Egyptian New Kingdom (mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1480–1330 BCE), a curious Napatan site that may have been a settlement and which the Gdansk team reassigned to us, a small Neolithic settlement, and a cluster of what are known as dome graves on a rocky eminence. Graves of this type are well known in the Fourth Cataract and the adjacent desert to the south, the Bayuda. They are elongated chambers constructed of perpendicular fieldstones carefully corbelled to create a chamber for the deceased, who is not placed in the ground, but on the surface within it. The dates seem to be post New Kingdom and Napatan, roughly 1000 to perhaps 600 BCE.

The brief resume above also shows the structure of the proposed publications, in three major parts, Hosh el-Geruf, Al-Widay, and Umm Gebir. We now begin the work, with details of site presentation, pottery fabric analysis, a program for drawing, photographs, and some database design in process.

Our research and “production” team for the new project includes Adrian Chlebowski (surveyor), Geoff Emberling, Jim Harrell (geologist), Lisa Heidorn, Jacek Kabaciński (lithic specialist), Carol Meyer (gold-working specialist; artist), Sasha Rohret (animal bone specialist), Aaron de Souza (pottery), and Bruce Williams.







OPPOSITE: Figure 4. On the road to the Fourth Cataract, once again. TOP: Figure 5. OI staff, Al Widay 2007. Standing: Hashem Mubarrak (cook and agent), Geoff Emberling, Mohammed Ali (house owner), Mahmud Suleiman (NCAM inspector), Tom James, Randy Shonkweiler, James Harrell. Seated: Bruce Williams, Debra Heard, Lisa Heidorn, Megan Ingvolstad, Justine James, and Carol Meyer. BOTTOM: Figure 6. The publications of the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition at the Fourth Cataract are eagerly awaited!