

K E R M A

2010-2011

SOUDAN

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Cover figure : Wadi el'Arab, excavations in 2010. Photo: Philippe Marti.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT KERMA (SUDAN)
PRELIMINARY REPORT TO THE 2010-2011 SEASON

The investigations of the Swiss Archaeological Mission started on 1st of December 2010 and ended on 2nd of February 2011. As usual, the mission was organised in two teams.

The team directed by Matthieu Honegger worked in the eastern cemetery of Kerma and in the site of Wadi El-Arab. There was no intervention in the museum this season but the definitive installation of the objects in the showcases with small panels and images is scheduled next winter. The team was composed of the Rais Khidir Magbul who supervised 6 local workers. Two Swiss specialists worked in their respective domains : Marc Bundi (supervision of the construction of the walls protecting the eastern cemetery, delimitation of the limits of the surrounding fields in the presence of the director of the Kerma Museum and the cultivators) and Daniel Conforti (archaeology and drawing). Seven students from Neuchâtel (Laure Prétôt, Leyla Duvannel, Camille Fallet, Julien Spielmann, Bastien Jakob, Philippe Marti, Lucie Honegger) and a curator of the Kerma Museum (Shahinda Omer) participated in the mission. Louis Chaix (zooarchaeology) spent two weeks with us to work on the faunal remains of Wadi El-Arab.

The team led by Charles Bonnet pursued its works at Dukki Gel and conducted restoration projects in the ancient city of Kerma and at Dukki Gel. It was composed of the Rais Gad Abdallah, Saleh Melieh, Abdelrazek Omer Nuri and Idriss Osman Idriss who supervised 60 local workers. Abdelmagid Mahmud, director of the museum participated to the excavation. Five specialists from Switzerland worked in their respective domains: Philippe Ruffieux (ceramology), Inès Matter-Horisberger (archaeology and drawing), Alain Peillex (archaeology and drawing), Patricia Jehger (drawing) and Jean-Michel Yoyotte (photography). Prof. Dominique Valbelle (University of Paris IV, La Sorbonne) worked on the publication of a stela of Aspelta found at Dukki Gel.

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The investigations during this campaign focused on the following sites :

- Wadi el-Arab where we continued our cleaning in sectors opened last year covering 128 square metres. Two stratigraphic trenches were dug in order to improve our understanding of the strata and to confirm the limits of the numerous habitation structures identified (postholes, huts, pits and fireplace).
- The eastern cemetery with the continuation of the excavation in the Ancient Kerma area. In parallel, a first low wall 1500 metres long was built to protect the western limit of the cemetery which was constantly threatened by the extension of agricultural fields and vehicle traffic.
- Dukki-Gel, where Charles Bonnet continued his work on temples, sanctuaries and fortifications of Nubian or Egyptian traditions (18th dynasty). He also managed the restoration of a part of the site by reconstructing in mud brick the foundations of the main buildings.
- As usual some restoration work was conducted in the ancient town of Kerma where the success of the museum has provoked an increase in the number of visitors to the archaeological sites, and the acceleration in the degradation of the previous restorations.

After the winter campaign in the Sudan, the team works the rest of the year on the results of the excavations and some students have the opportunity to begin their master's thesis or PhD's projects in relation to the archeology of Kerma. If Jérôme Dubosson started some years ago his PhD on pastoralism in north-eastern Africa, this year two new projects were accepted. The first one undertaken by Camille Fallet deals with the biological anthropology of the people buried in the eastern cemetery in order to understand the origin and the development of the Kerma population during a millennium. The second one consists of a reflection on the function and perception of archaeological museums in Sudan. Focusing on the National Museum of Khartoum and the Kerma Museum, this work, conducted by Marc Bundi, will explore the Sudanese cultural politics and the role of patrimony in the perception of identity.

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