AN ENIGMATIC SUBTERRANEAN BUILDING WITHIN THE GREAT WALLS AT ELKAB

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Stan, speaking for many archaeologists in the field, nobody can wish for better company on an archaeological mission in Egypt, or elsewhere for that matter. As a mentor, you have always given full support and created opportunities to young researchers to study ancient Egyptian material culture in its country of origin.

In 1905, British archaeologists Archibald H. Sayce and Somers Clarke reported on the find of a granite block bearing the name of king Khasekhemwy at the Upper Egyptian site of Elkab. The block was brought to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, but although currently lost, it constitutes decisive evidence of the existence of an Early Dynastic temple at the site of Elkab. Although the approximate location where the block was discovered is known, the area has never been subjected to a thorough archaeological investigation. In this paper we present the results of archaeological investigations carried out in that area, with the objective to verify the presence of such an Early Dynastic building and to investigate its role in the local and regional cultic landscape. The results, although not meeting the original objective, allow to understand the area's stratigraphy and add two new structures to the archaeological map of Elkab. These consist of a mud brick enclosure, probably of fairly recent date, and the subterranean part of a stone building that, based on the ceramic evidence, is to be dated in the Roman period, possible the 2nd century AD.

During excavations at Elkab in February 1901, British archaeologists Archibald H. Sayce and Somers Clarke discovered several granite blocks in the north-eastern corner of the Late Period Great Walls (Fig. 1). Two blocks were decorated with standing human figures while a third one contained the Horus and Seth name of Khasekhemwy, last king of the 2nd Dynasty (Sayce & Clarke 1905: 239). The block bearing the king's name was brought to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and registered as JE 34808 (Bussmann 2010: 41). Unfortunately, the current whereabouts of this inscribed block, as well as the two other decorated ones, are unknown and no drawing or photo of them seems to exist.

Khasekhemwy was not only the last king of the 2nd Dynasty but also the last Abydene ruler. He initially bore the name Khasekhem, meaning 'The Power has Appeared', which was changed later in his reign to the dual form Khasekhemwy ('The Two Powers have Appeared'), possibly in order to celebrate a restoration of the unity of the country after a period of civil war and/or religious turmoil (Hoffman 1980: 350–351; Wilkinson 1999: 91; Baker 2008: 178). Apart from Abydos, where Khasekhemwy not only constructed a monumental funerary enclosure, known as the Shunet ez-Zebib, but also the largest tomb ever built in Egypt's early history, it seems that especially during the earlier part of his reign, he attached particular importance to the site of Hierakonpolis, the ancient Predynastic capital just across the Nile from Elkab. At Hierakonpolis, he undertook a substantial ritual building programme (among other documents, a depiction of a temple foundation ceremony was found on a granite door jamb bearing his name; see Engelbach 1934). His so-called 'Fort' at Hierakonpolis, constructed in mud brick, but probably embellished with a relief-decorated cultic stone infrastructure at its entrance (see Alexanian 1998), is presumably also a large mortuary or ceremonial enclosure.

It has long been assumed that the blocks from Elkab may also belong to an Early Dynastic temple founded by Khasekhemwy (Hendrickx & Huyge 1989: 13, no. 27; Wilkinson 1999: 309). Moreover, it can be hypothesised that he created a new cultic landscape in the symbolic twin towns of Hierakonpolis and Elkab at a scale previously not recognised which perhaps also reflected "a programme to consolidate central government control of the national economy through the institution of local temples" (Wilkinson 1999: 311). In view of Khasekhemwy's substantial ritual building activity in Hierakonpolis and his attested presence at Elkab (Hartmann 1993; Bussmann 2010: 462), the presumed location of the decorated blocks was archaeologically investigated in the Spring of 2017 in order to verify the presence of an Early Dynastic construction in this part of the site and to investigate its role in the local and regional cultic landscape.

Previous investigations in the north-eastern corner of the Great Walls

According to Sayce and Clarke (1905: 239), other fragments belonging to the same granite monument at Elkab had been found at the end of the 19th century by their compatriot James Edward Quibell, in probable connection to a mud brick building in the north-eastern corner of the Late Period Great Walls.[1]

[1] The remains of a small north-west–south-east oriented mud brick wall are still visible on the surface today (Fig. 2) in this part of the site. Whether this wall can be identified as part of the mud brick building of "unknown date", mentioned by Sayce & Clarke (1905: 239) in connection to Quibell's excavation, can not be stated with absolute certainty but is highly probable.

Quibell, who excavated at Elkab in 1897, left no information on the location of these finds and his published report (Quibell 1898) does not contain any information with regard to these granite blocks.

A survey of this part of the site was undertaken by the Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab in March 2015. The occurrence on the surface of a large amount of building materials, fragments of red granite and sandstone blocks that were clearly sculpted for building purposes (Fig. 2), indicate the former presence here of a construction of undoubtedly monumental character. These remains seem to be partially concentrated around a small depression that could potentially be the result of previous excavations (Quibell?) in the area. A multi-receiver electromagnetic induction (EMI) survey[2] in this area (about 0.3 hectares), measuring simultaneously the apparent electrical conductivity (ECa) and the magnetic susceptibility (MSa) of the subsoil over multiple depths, moreover suggested the existence of some large linear features with distinct boundaries, probably (double?) mud brick walls or pavements, in the first meter below the surface (Huyge & Claes 2015: 15). A survey of the surficial geology with hand drillings was conducted in 2016. It consisted of eight drillings, starting from a central point (drilling 01) in the north-east corner, following lines parallel to the northern (drillings 01–05) and the eastern courses of the Great Walls (drillings 06–08) respectively (Fig. 3).[3] Except for drilling 01, all drillings present a uniform stratigraphy: the base is formed by a layer of Nile flood sediments, covered by a veneer of sub-recent aeolian sand; in the line parallel to the eastern part of the Great Walls the aeolian veneer itself is covered by a thin layer of colluvium derived from the ongoing erosion of the thick mud brick enclosure wall. All those sediments are of natural origin. In drilling 01, however, a 3 m thick layer of, most probably, man-made material was found.

These observations seemed relevant to the early temple, but needed to be confirmed archaeologically.

Results of the archaeological excavations of 2017

The main objectives of the 2017 excavation were to undertake systematic test-trenching in order to evaluate the archaeological features within this area as well as to interpret the stratigraphical context (Huyge 2017). To this aim, two long perpendicular test trenches (TK1 and TK2), each measuring 30 × 2 m, were laid out along the two series of drillings, parallel to respectively the north-western and north-eastern courses of the Late Period Great Walls and incorpo-

[2] The EMI-survey was executed in 2015 by Philippe De Smedt of the Department of Soil Management of Ghent University, Belgium. Field measurements were conducted with a multi-receiver EMI instrument (Dualem-21S sensor).

[3] A summary of the results is presented in the annex.

rating both the potential mud brick walls or pavements suggested by the EMI-survey and the above-mentioned depression (Fig. 3). During the course of the excavation, these trenches were systematically enlarged (trenches TK1a–c and TK3; see Fig. 3) and several profile pits, each measuring 2 × 1 m, were excavated in order to interpret and find correlations with the local soil stratigraphy (TK1-PP1–4 and TK2-PP1; see Fig. 3).

Already at an early stage during the excavation, it became clear that the south-western section of TK1 proved to be natural soil. A large depression consisting of a mixed fill that was clearly different from the surrounding sediment could be delineated in the north-eastern section of the trench and was tentatively identified—based on the description by Sayce and Clarke (1905: 239)—as Quibell's excavation trench. Therefore, our efforts were concentrated on the north-eastern section of TK1 as well as on the north-western extremity of TK2 where archaeological features also seemed to be limited to that part of the trench (Fig. 3). The above-mentioned extensions TK1a–c and TK3 were concentrated in this zone in order to investigate the remains of a mud brick structure that was the only partly visible archaeological feature on the surface (see note 1). A stone structure was subsequently found beneath the remains of the mud brick wall. Apart from the aforementioned surface finds, very little pottery or artefacts of any kind were present in the different trenches. This of course hampered the dating and interpretation of the excavated structures.

Description of the mud brick remains (Figs 4–5)

A mud brick wall (Lc6) discovered in the north-western extremity of TK2 ran north-east–south-west through TK3 towards the mud brick wall (Lc10) that was still visible above ground. The prolongation of Lc10 towards the north-west was badly damaged by the end of the 19th century excavation trench and by a large fox warren. Lc6 was followed towards the south-west, where a mud brick corner was quickly discovered in TK1b (Lc12). A corresponding corner to this was discovered to the north-west in TK1c providing the outline of the structure. The walls were all rather narrow—1.5 brick wide—and constituted of alternating courses of headers and stretchers. Immediately to the north-west of Lc6, a large and well-preserved mud brick collapse was discovered that was cut by Quibell's excavations (Fig. 5). This collapse provided a hypothetical height for the wall, probably no more than five courses above the four still standing. This would suggest a low—ca. 1 m high—enclosure wall rather than a closed building. The mud brick structure was built on loose windblown sand without any foundation and was more or less square in shape, measuring approximately 7.40 × 6.60 m.

Description of the stone structure

The excavation was continued in the space within the mud brick walls in order to assess the disturbance caused by Quibell's trench and to gain a better insight in the stratigraphy of the area. A deep sounding was established by ultimately combining three adjoining profile pits (PP2, PP3 and PP4; see Fig. 3) and indicated that the disturbed area ended at ca. 90 cm below the above-mentioned brick collapse. This corresponds to about 120 cm (81.95 m for the south-western part) and 180 cm (81.70 m for the north-eastern part) below the surface.

At a depth of about 2 m below the surface, large displaced sandstone ashlars were discovered, resting on a neatly laid out pavement of sandstone slabs which itself was located at ca. 260 cm below the surface (Lc16, at 80.84 m; Fig. 6). The rest of the area was subsequently excavated to a similar level, exposing three stone walls built of large sandstone ashlars (Lc19, 20 and 22; Figs 4, 7–9). The largest and best preserved wall (Lc19; see Figs 7–8) followed the same north-east–south-west orientation as mud brick wall Lc6 and was still standing up to a height of 140 cm which corresponds to four courses. It was interconnected with two other walls (Lc20 and 22; see Fig. 9) standing perpendicularly to the former as cross walls and defining as such a space of roughly 2.40 × 2.50 m. Both these cross walls were partly dismantled as their preserved height is roughly half a meter lower than that of wall Lc19. The sandstone ashlars measure between 46 and 140 cm in length, vary between 32 and 48 cm in height and are max. 35 cm wide. They are undecorated and visibly reused from (an)other earlier structure(s) as they present varying degrees of finishing and were sometimes re-cut to fit their present position. The largest one in the lower course of wall Lc19 has suspension holes cut in its side (Fig. 4) which constitutes additional proof for the fact that blocks have been reused in the construction of this building.[4]

Although made of slabs of irregular dimensions—probably also re-used and re-worked—the sandstone floor is even and nicely executed (Fig. 6). The slabs are 10 cm thick and the joints between them were filled with fine medium silty sand. Some are more yellowish while others have a more reddish colour. The floor itself is lined with more solid sandstone ashlars, forming a straight outer line along the south-western and north-western side. These ashlars most probably served as the base for outer walls that were entirely dismantled.

[4] Suspension holes have been noticed before in quarries and coptic hermitages as means to suspend things from. Their presence in this particular block suggests it was once placed differently with the suspension holes on the lower side. These holes themselves seem to indicate an earlier re-use, when the ashlar in question was still in its original location. (Depraetere & Depauw *in preparation*)

Due to time constraints, the building could not be excavated entirely. In order to complete its ground plan, a test trench was excavated in the north-west profile to locate the north-westernmost corner of the building (Fig. 4). Complementary information was obtained from a series of drill tests that allowed us to confirm the presence of a wall parallel to the north-east–south-west oriented stone wall Lc19. A first drill test was made above cross wall Lc22 and a second one centrally placed in the north-west profile between cross walls Lc22 and Lc20. At a distance of respectively 73 cm and 1 m from the edge of the profile, the presence of such a wall was confirmed. A third drilling was done above the northern sandstone cross wall (Lc20) but here we did not encounter the wall. Possibly this cross wall is only preserved up to the second stone layer.

The building can thus be reconstructed as a rectangular construction of 6 × 3.5 m (outer measurements) consisting of two, probably interconnected, rooms measuring 2.5 × 2.4 m and 2.4 × 2.3 m (inner measurements) respectively (Fig. 4). The largest ashlar in Lc22 can be identified as a threshold serving as a doorway between both rooms (Figs 4, 9).

A foundation trench, about 20 cm wide was identified around the outer side of Lc19, cut into the natural alternating sand/silt layers (Fig. 11, layer 5) and was later cut again by Quibell's excavation trench (Fig. 11, layer 3). This foundation trench, still clearly recognisable at the top level of Lc19, suggests that this part of the building was completely or largely underground. The fact that the exterior surface of the wall was irregular whereas the interior sides were smooth (Fig. 8) also suggests that the building was intended as a subterranean construction. This would also account for the significant difference in level between the mud brick structure and the stone building. Moreover, although the mud brick structure seems to follow the same orientation as the stone building, suggesting a connection between the two structures albeit at different levels, there exists no stratigraphical connection between both edifices. After the mapping and further excavation of the stone pavement, it also became clear that the mud brick structure is not covering the entire stone building, but is lying more towards the north-east (Fig. 4). Furthermore, the relatively simple architecture of the mud brick construction contrasts glaringly with the monumental character of the subterranean stone structure.

The stratigraphy of the fill within the stone building reveals that Quibell's excavation had reached the top of the highest preserved stone wall (Lc19, at 82.13–81.97 m; Figs 4 & 11), but never reached the cross walls or stone pavement.

The stone pavement, measuring 3.40 × 2.80 m (including the surrounding wall foundations), is present only to the south-west of these walls, continuing however under the inner cross wall (Lc22; see Figs 9 & 11). It appears that within the space delineated by the standing walls (Lc19, 20 & 22), the floor

was removed (Figs 7–9). This is suggested by the presence of a couple of fragmentary slabs appearing from underneath Lc22 that may have been broken when the pavement was dismantled (Fig. 4, 9).

Description of the stratigraphy

In order to understand the relation between the architectural remains, the sequence of their filling and the evidence of previous investigations, the study and interpretation of the stratigraphical evidence proved to be critical. What follows is a brief description of the stratigraphy as observed within the stone building.

The stratigraphy of the fill within the stone building—that is the undisturbed sediment (Figs 10–11, layer 4) below Quibell's excavation fill (Figs 10–11, layers 2–3, 5–6)—consists in the upper part of flash flood sediment of brown to dark brown fine sandy silt to silty fine sand with pockets of dense fine yellowish sandy silt lumps. Since the corners of these inclusions are sub-rounded due to transportation over a short distance and a limited area, they are most likely eroded from a nearby layer and form a local phenomenon. This flash flood sediment sits on top of and eroded the underlying sticky dark brown fine sandy silt to silty fine sand of fluvial origin, identified as such because of the horizontal orientation of the inclusions within the sediment. The top of this deposit is preserved at max. 82.20 m and ends at 80.79 m—the level of the sandstone floor—within the building.

This dark brown silty deposit is different from the lower silty layers outside the building.[5] It consists of an undifferentiated deposit (no banding/lamination/layering), whereas in the latter we see a fine lamination with alternating sandy and silty layers or lenses that suggest a fluvial floodplain origin. This indicates that the former deposit may result from a sedimentation process or event other than a gradual formation year after year. Obviously, this is in itself the result of the fact that the formation of this deposit happened at a much later stage after the dismantling of the stone building. Further drill-core research in the wider area will be necessary in order to fully understand the origin of these flash flood and fluvial deposits that post-date the building's destruction in this specific location within the perimeter of the Late Period Great Walls.

[5] Documented in TK1-PP1, south-east profile, TK1-PP4, south-east profile and TK1, north-west profile (= Lc5).

Date of the structures

Although this cannot be stated with absolute certainty, stone blocks from Elkab's main temples were most probably recycled and used for the construction of the stone building. The extant remains of these temples date to the Ramesside period and Dynasties 26–30 (Hendrickx & Huyge 1989: 7, nos 1–2), meaning that the stone construction cannot be older than the Late Period. Unfortunately, this date cannot be narrowed down since, as stated above, none of the blocks were decorated or contained inscriptions and hardly any archaeological material was found during the excavation. Only a handful of diagnostic pottery sherds were recovered from both the foundation trench and from what was left of the fill on top of the stone pavement as well as inside the walled part of the stone building beneath and around the old excavations. All sherds can be dated roughly to the Graeco-Roman period. The most diagnostic one, unfortunately found in secondary stratigraphical context (Fig. 11, layer 3) outside the construction, is a two-handled amphora neck (Fig. 12) for which good parallels exist in the pottery corpus from the Graeco-Roman village at Elkab[6] which is situated at about 400 m south of the present excavation (Fig. 1). The principal occupation phase of this Graeco-Roman settlement can be situated in the first half of the 2nd century AD (Hendrickx 1998: 1356).[7] Other excavated artefacts include some tiny fragments of faience, flint material and remains of animal bone, as well as more sandstone and granite fragments, but did not provide any additional chronological clues. Although the scanty ceramic material evidently constitutes inconclusive evidence to date the remains of this construction, there are for the time being no other elements that allow us to propose a more precise date other than the 2nd century AD for this stone construction. Whatever its exact date, it is clear that it does not date to the 2nd Dynasty or Early Dynastic period.

The date of the mud brick structure is even more difficult to define. No datable artefacts have been found in association with this construction and as stated above, no stratigraphical link exists with the stone edifice; the bottom of the mud brick walls are situated about 60 cm above the preserved maximum height of the walls of the stone construction. Although they both have a similar

[6] Personal communication by Stan Hendrickx who is to be thanked for dating and analysing the ceramic finds.

[7] This part of the Graeco-Roman village was excavated by the Belgian Archaeological Mission under the direction of the late Herman De Meulenaere during ten seasons of fieldwork between 1967 and 1982. The results of these excavations have never been properly published and with the exception of the Greek ostraca (Bingen & Clarysse 1989) and a larger article on the potters' houses (Hendrickx 1998; this paper also deals with the amphorae that were found in these houses: see pages 1371–1374), only a handful of short notes have appeared (listed in Hendrickx 1998: 1353, n. 4).

orientation, the mud brick structure has been built partially over the south-western half of the stone building which could indicate that at the time of its construction, the older building was already out of use and no longer visible. In our opinion, this could indicate that the mud brick construction is of fairly recent date and must be associated with modern activity in this part of the site. This structure is presumably the 'brick building of unknown date' in which fragments of granite were found by Quibell (Sayce & Clarke 1905: 239). Since such fragments were also found in the immediate surroundings, there does not necessarily need to be a contextual relation with the brick structure or even the stone building. According to Quibell (1898: 2), in certain parts of the area inside the Great Walls, the surface is covered "with little parallel ridges" which indicates "that cultivation has been carried on there within the last few years". The area Quibell refers to is located outside the ancient settlement of Elkab which at least until the 1840's was visible in the landscape as a large tell. This tell was situated roughly between the temples of Elkab and the south-western course of the Great Walls and was almost completely destroyed in the course of the 19th century.[8] Photos by Jan Herman Insinger from the 1880's (Raven 2009: 202, figs 1–2) indeed show that at least a large portion of the area between the north-western course of the Great Walls and the temple enclosure was under cultivation. Whether this cultivated area extended all the way toward the north-eastern corner of the Great Walls is a matter of speculation but these photos show in any case that modern activity was going on inside the Great Walls.

Purpose and function of the buildings

Whatever the precise chronological attribution of both structures, its function and purpose are equally elusive. Their isolated location in the north-eastern corner of the Great Walls where other contemporaneous monumental buildings or residential areas are absent, the lack of *in situ* artefacts, inscriptions or decoration on the walls, or other archaeological indications make it difficult to elucidate the nature and function of these buildings, particularly that of the stone construction. However, since the building was not completely excavated, further excavation could uncover more clues.

Considering its monumental nature, it must however have been a building of some importance. Its largely underground nature may point to a tomb or the crypt of a small temple that was completely dismantled aboveground. Since no traces remain of the superstructure of the building, this identification remains conjectural although its location could suggest a funerary nature. Indeed, the

[8] For more information on the location of this tell and its gradual destruction, see Claes & Hendrickx 2021.

building is positioned in an area of the site that from Predynastic times onwards has been in use as a large burial ground and this more or less continuously until the Middle Kingdom (Hendrickx & Huyge 1989: nos 24, 26, 28–34, 38–42, 44, pl. II). Even if many of these funerary features were likely no longer apparent in the Late Period, especially those situated within the Great Walls (Hendrickx *et al*. 2010: 156), it is possible that the traditional funerary meaning and use of this area was still remembered.

It was already mentioned that in our opinion, the mud brick structure is most probably of recent date and can possibly be associated with modern cultivation in this part of the site. As it is a very simply built construction that strongly resembles some of the mud brick structures in modern Egyptian villages, these mud brick walls most likely pertain to some kind of low enclosure, perhaps an animal pen.

Concluding remarks

Although it is clear that an Early Dynastic building from the reign of Khasekhemwy must have been present at Elkab, there is for the time being no decisive evidence to locate it in the north-eastern corner of the Great Walls. Like the other re-used blocks, the decorated granite blocks with Khasekhemwy's name most probably originate from another location within the site, possibly from the temple complex that is situated in the south-western quarter of the area that is enclosed by the Late Period enclosure wall (Fig. 1).

These temples, dedicated to the goddess Nekhbet and the gods Sobek and Thoth, date in their current state to the Ramesside and Late Periods but were also erected using older blocks (Capart 1940: 21–23; Vandersleyen 1971: 31–32; Derchain 1970). Yet, despite the fact that the earliest discovered architectural remains within the temples only date back to the 13th Dynasty (Eder 2002), it is more than probable that earlier temples (Old Kingdom, Early Dynastic or even Predynastic?) were erected at the same location.[9] The wealth of 6th Dynasty rock inscriptions that cover the cliffs of the nearby Wadi Hellal, which mainly refer to priests attached to the temple of Nekhbet (Vandekerckhove & Müller-Wollermann 2001), and the presence of large mastabas dating to the 4th Dynasty immediately north of the Great Walls that were built for persons that could be identified as 'Overseer of priests' or 'Inspector of the priests' (Quibell 1898: 3–5; Limme 2000: 17), leave no doubt on the presence of a temple at Elkab as early as the Old Kingdom. Moreover, given the impor-

[9] Several mud brick walls were found below the north-western angle of the temple of Nekhbet, carefully cut to allow for the construction of the stone walls of the later temple (Stienon 1940: 36; 1950: 37). The date or function of these walls could not be established but it seems that the construction of the later temples was done with 'respect' for the older mud brick walls that were carefully cut and otherwise left *in situ*.

tance of Elkab's principal deity Nekhbet as the tutelary goddess of Upper Egypt from the Early Dynastic period onwards but also as divine protectress of the pharaoh, the opposite would seem highly unlikely.[10] Also, the presence of a Terminal Predynastic or Early Dynastic petroglyph in the Wadi Hellal, depicting a *pr-wr*, the ancestral and archetypal shrine of Upper Egypt (Huyge 2002: 198), provides an important indication for the presence of a shrine or temple at Elkab at the onset of the third millennium BC. Although its location is still unknown, the decorated blocks found by Quibell, Sayce and Clarke provide additional proof for the existence at Elkab of such an early temple or shrine. Given the close interconnection that exists between the cult of Nekhbet and that of the king, expressed for instance in the pharaoh's *nbty* or 'Two Ladies' title which is attested from the 1st Dynasty onwards (Wilkinson 1999: 203, 292) or other important Early Dynastic documents,[11] it should be no surprise that Khasekhemwy, who can be considered as the most prolific builder of all Early Dynastic rulers, also erected a temple at Elkab—the home realm of the goddess Nekhbet—especially after having re-established internal stability in Egypt. However, the location of this temple or shrine remains unknown until today. It is in any case not situated at the spot that has always been assumed to be the location of Khasekhemwy's temple at Elkab.

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[10] For an overview of the origin and evolution of the cult of Nekhbet in the Early Dynastic period, see Hartmann 1989: 19–39.

[11] E.g. the Narmer mace head and Narmer ivory cylinder (both kept in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) show the king in association with the vulture goddess Nekhbet. Specifically for Khasekhem(wy), we would like to refer to the stone vessels from Hierakonpolis (Quibell 1900: pls XXXVI–XXXVIII) and Saqqara (Lacau & Lauer 1959–1961: pl. 3.18) where Nekhbet is depicted facing the *serekh* of Khasekhem with an accompanying inscription *ḫnty.t Nḫb* which refers to Nekhbet as 'She of Elkab'.

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ANNEX

Drilling 01
Location (UTM-coordinates): 36R/0479705/2778611
Z = + 83.31 m
Date: 09/11/2016

0–50 cm
Very slightly silty fine sand; 7.5 YR 3/3 -/3 (dull brown–brown); homogeneous
Aeolian sand
50–250 cm
Fine sandy silt; 7.5 YR 4/3 (brown); heterogeneous; no lamellation; very few sherds
Most probably mud brick material
250–350 cm
Fine sandy silt to silty fine sand; 7.5 YR 4/3 (brown); fine lamellation
Most probably infill
350–(500) cm
Fine sandy clayey silt; 350–400: 10 YR 6/4 (dull yellowish orange); 400–500: 7.5 YR 4/3 (brown); fine lamellation
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 02
Location: 10 m west of 01
Z = + 83.39 m
Date: 09/11/2016

0–130 cm
Aeolian sand
130–(300) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 03
Location: 20 m west of 01
Z = + 83.01 m
Date: 09/11/2016

0–130 cm
Aeolian sand
130–(200) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 04
Location: 30 m west of 01
Z = + 83.09 m
Date: 10/11/2016

0–150 cm
Aeolian sand
150–(400) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 05
Location: 36 m west of 01
Z = + 83.13 m
Date: 10/11/2016

0–160 cm
Aeolian sand
160–(200) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 06
Location: 10 m south of 01
Z = + 83.44 m
Date: 10/11/2016

0–100 cm
Fine sandy silt to silty fine sand; 7.5 YR 4/3 (brown); colluvium derived from eastern course of Late Period Great Walls
100–290 cm
Aeolian sand
290–(450) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 07
Location: 20 m south of 01
Z = + 83.13 m
Date: 10/11/2016

0–50 cm
Colluvium derived from eastern course of Late Period Great Walls
50–210 cm
Aeolian sand
210–(400) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

Drilling 08
Location: 28.5 m south of 01
Z = + 82.91 m
Date: 10/11/2016

0–50 cm
Colluvium derived from eastern course of Late Period Great Walls
50–90 cm
Aeolian sand
90–(300) cm
Nile floodplain sediment

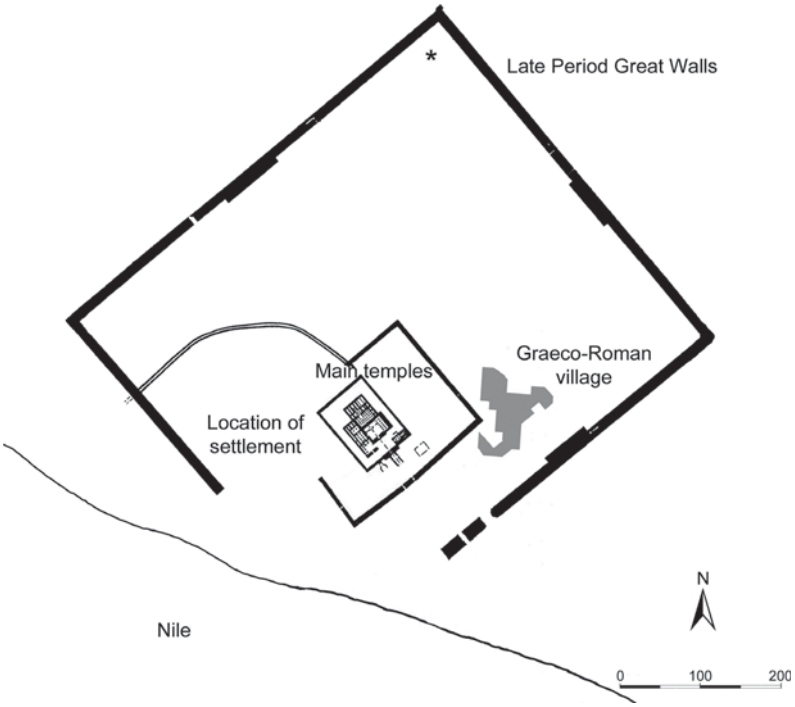


Fig. 1. Site-plan of the town-site of Elkab with main locations mentioned in the text. The * indicates the spot where the Khasekhemwy blocks were found (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).



Fig. 2. View on the north-eastern corner of the Great Walls prior to the start of the excavations, with several fragments of sandstone blocks and pieces of red granite. In the background (centre), part of mud brick wall Lc10 can be seen (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).

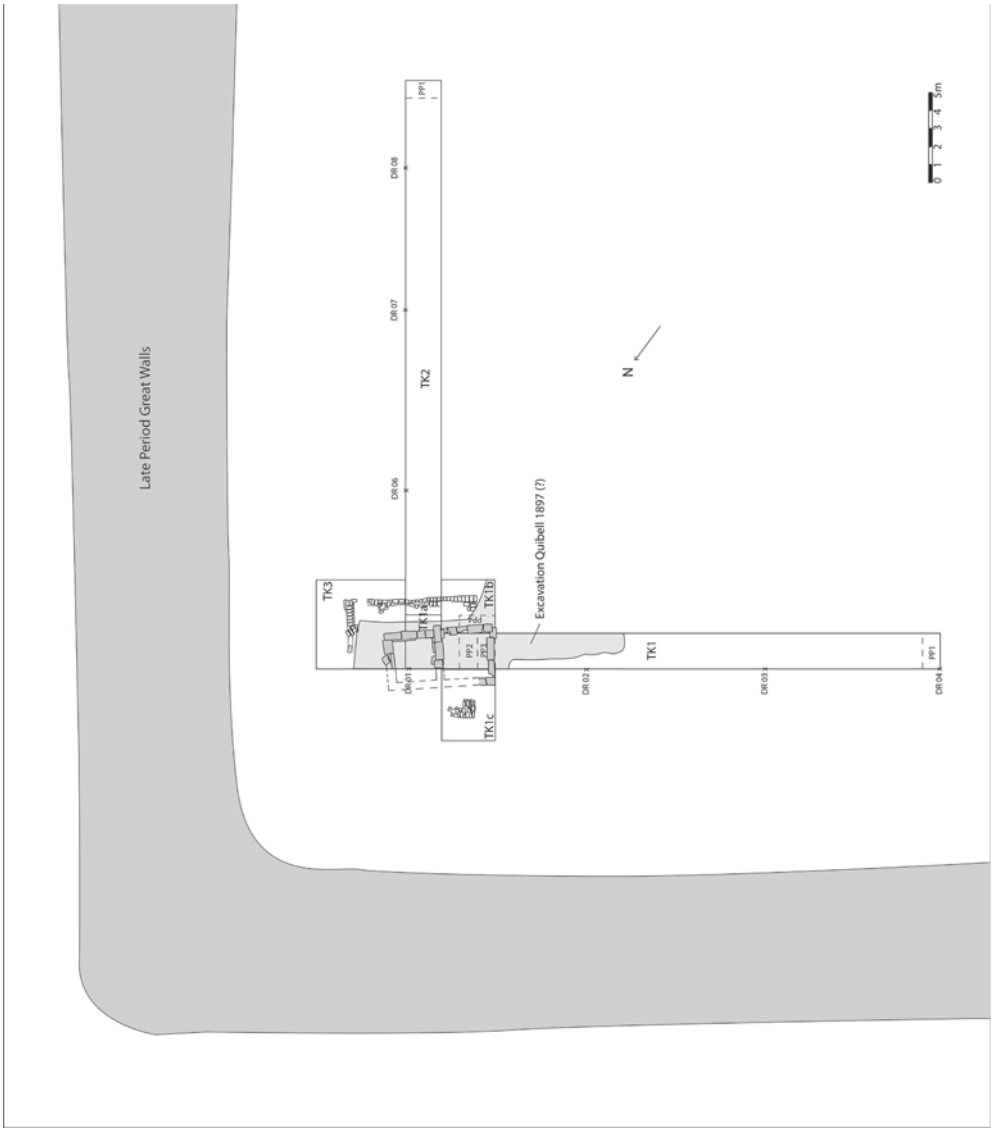


Fig. 3. General plan showing the layout of the trenches and the locations of the drillings (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).

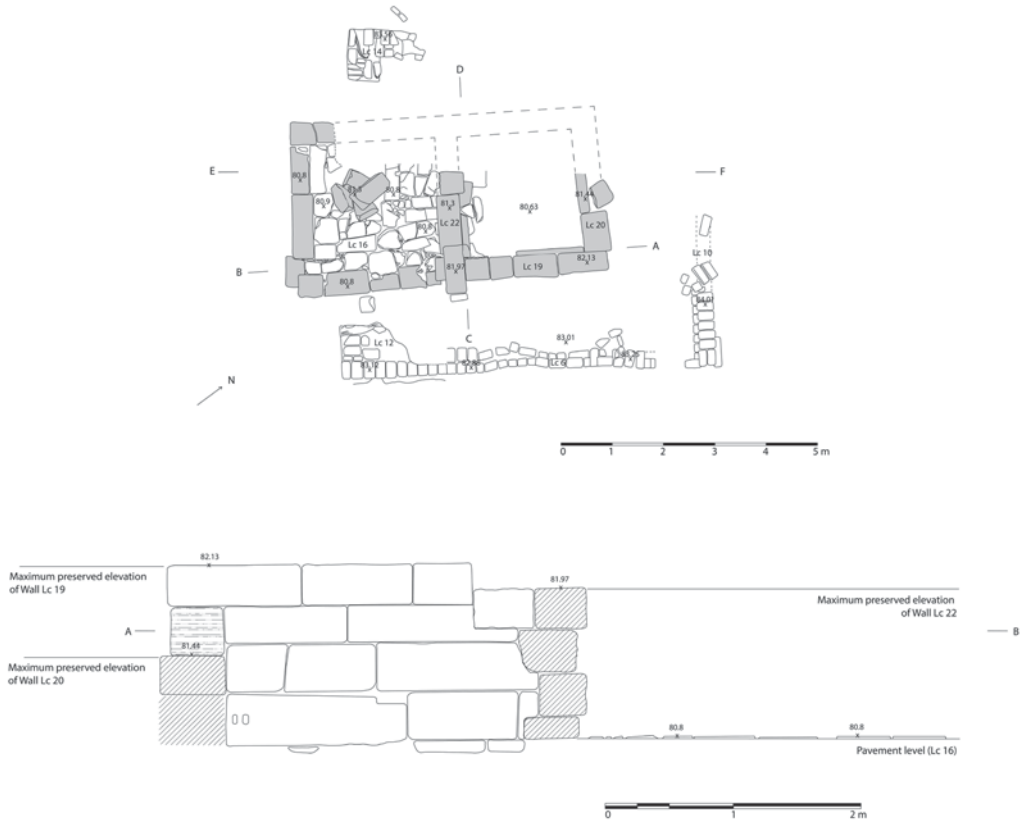


Fig. 4. Groundplan and section-plan of the structural remains (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).



Fig. 5. Overview of the excavation before and after the discovery of the stone building. View from the north-east (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).



Fig. 6. The sandstone floor (Lc 16) of the south-western room.
View from the south-east (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).



Fig. 7. Overview of the stone building. View from the south-west
(© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).



Fig. 8. North-eastern room respectively from the north-west and the south-east, showing the difference in wall finishing on the in- and outside (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).



Fig. 9. The south-western cross wall (Lc22) respectively from the north-east and south-west, showing the large ashlar that was presumably used as a threshold for a doorway (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).

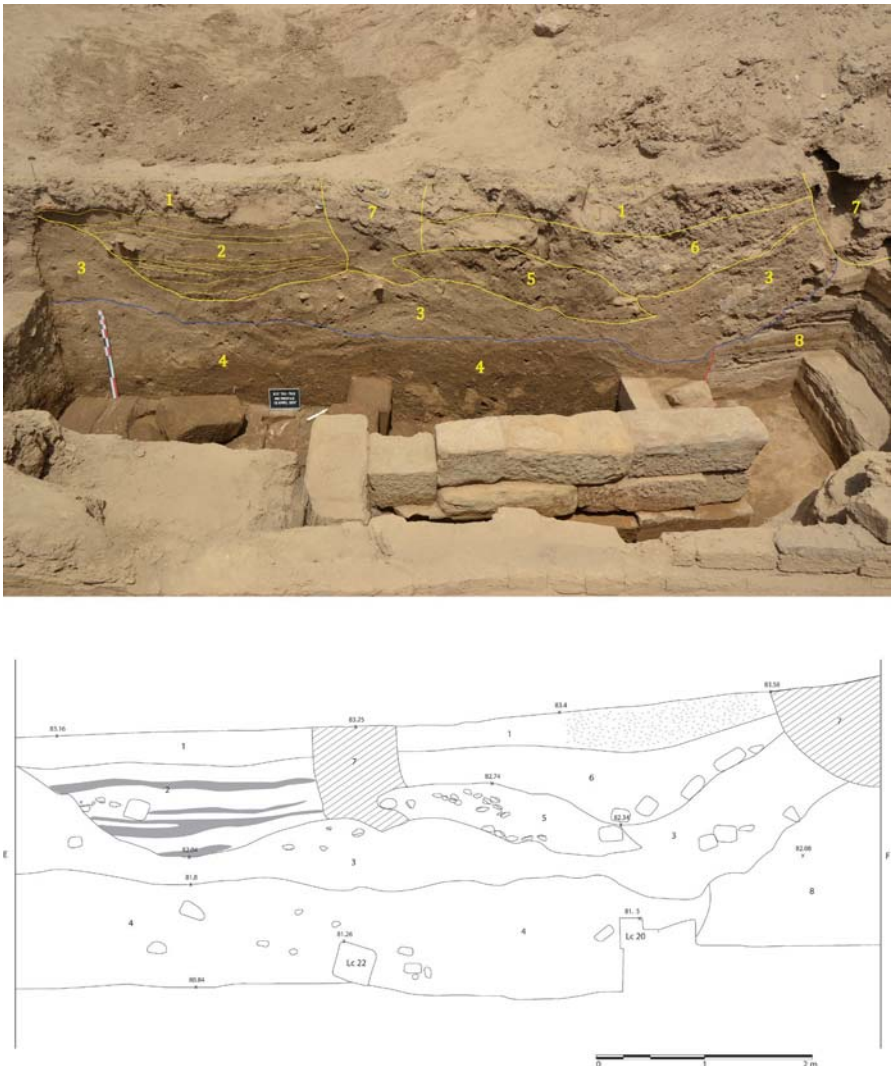


Fig. 10. TK1/TK3, north-west profile with Lc19 in the foreground (indicated as E–F on the groundplan in Fig. 4): 1) dust layer; 2) alternating layers of medium slightly silty sand and light brown silt; 3) fine loose light brown silty sand; 4) fine compact brown to dark brown silty sand (upper section) to sandy silt (lower section); 5) lense of dark brown mud brick fragments and sandstone fragments; 6) fine sandy silt with mud brick fragments; 7) fox warren; 8) natural stratigraphy (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).

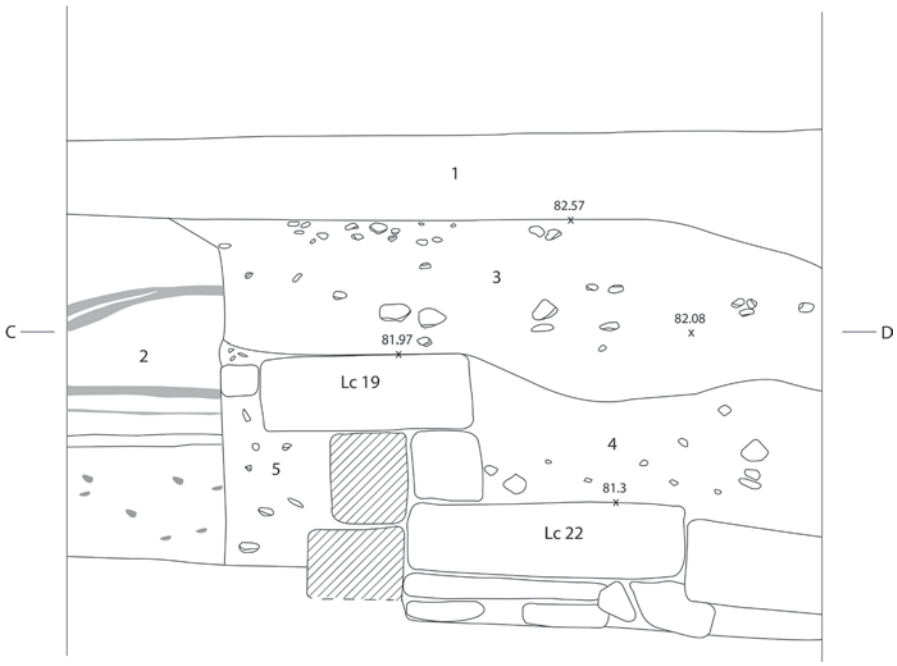


Fig. 11. Inner cross wall (Lc22) with foundation trench of stone wall Lc19 visible in the profile (indicated as C–D on the grounplan in Fig. 4): 1) dust layer; 2) alternating layering of very fine aeolian sand and fine slightly silty to silty layers; 3) fine loose light brown silty sand; 4) fine compact brown to dark brown silty sand (upper section) to sandy silt (lower section); 5) foundation trench (© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab).

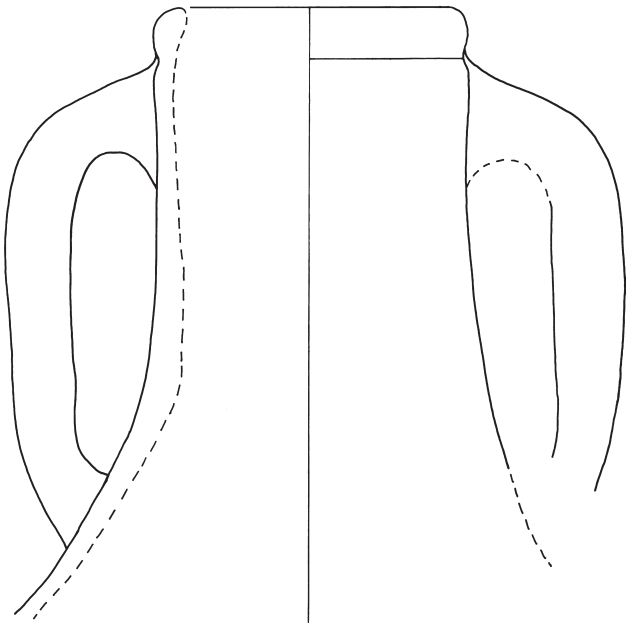


Fig. 12. Neck of a Roman amphora, possibly 2nd century AD
(© Belgian Archaeological Mission to Elkab; drawing by Layla Mesotten).