

MtoM – ZUMA

SUDAN

EARLY MAKURIA RESEARCH PROJECT EXCAVATIONS AT EL-ZUMA PRELIMINARY REPORT

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The present excavation at el-Zuma constituted the first step in the Early Makuria Research Project¹ designed to contribute to a better understanding of a significant period in Nubian history between the 4th and 7th century AD. The first season lasted

from December 23, 2004 to January 27, 2005.²

The objective was to examine a number of burials with the purpose of identifying their cultural attribution and their place in Nubian chronology.

THE CEMETERY AT EL-ZUMA

El-Zuma village lies on the right bank of the Nile, about 25 km downstream from Karima and Jebel Barkal (for a map of the Dongola Reach, cf. *Fig. 1* on p. 386 above). The cemetery, which occupies the higher ground on the western fringes of the village, was visited and recorded by a number of scholars since the 19th century, amongst them Lepsius,³ Budge,⁴ followed more recently by Żurawski.⁵ Theirs were, however,

merely brief accounts, rough sketch plans, finally, ground and aerial photographs of the necropolis. Contrary to cemeteries with similar burials and chronology, at Ballana and Qustul in lower Nubia,⁶ Hammur and Tanqasi in Dongola Reach,⁷ or El-Hobagi in central Sudan,⁸ which have witnessed some degree of investigation, the el-Zuma burial ground, apparently of equal importance, has seen little in the way of exploration.⁹

- 1 For an overview of the *MtoM* project and its program, see remarks by W. Godlewski in this volume, pp. 385-388.
- 2 The team was headed by Dr. Mahmoud El-Tayeb. It comprised: Ms Urszula Wicenciak, archaeologist-ceramologist; Mrs. Hanna Kozińska-Sowa, Mr. Artur Obluski, archaeologists, documentalists; Mr. Yassin Mohamed Saeed, surveyor (NCAM). Mrs. Nahla Hassan, archaeologist, represented the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums. The animal bone assemblage was studied by Mrs. Marta Osypińska and her contribution is included in this volume.
- 3 R. Lepsius, *Brief aus Aegypten, Aethiopien und der Halbinsel Sinai* (Berlin 1852).
- 4 W. Budge, *The Nile. Notes for travellers in Egypt and the Egyptian Sudan* (12th edition) (London 1912), 866-867.
- 5 B. Żurawski, *Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and Ez-Zuma* (Warszawa 2003), 380-381.
- 6 W. Emery & L. Kirwan, *The Royal Tombs of Ballana and Qustul* (Cairo 1938).
- 7 M. El-Tayeb, "Excavation at Hammur Abbassya", in Żurawski, op. cit., 130-139; P.L. Shinnie, "Excavations at Tanqasi 1953", *Kush II* (1954), 66-85.
- 8 P. Lenoble, "A New Type of Mound-Grave (continued): Le tumulus à enceinte d'Umm Makharoqa, pres d'el Hobagi." *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 3 (1989), 93-120; id., R.P. Disseaux, Abd El Rahman Ali Mohamed, B. Ronce and J. Bialais, "La fouille du tumulus à enceinte el Hobagi III," *Meroitic Newsletter* 25 (Paris 1994), 53-117.
- 9 The site has been the object of repeated plunder and destruction over the past centuries, but the recent rapid growth of the village population and corresponding construction development due west now constitutes a direct threat to its very existence.