

Nubian Project

Bruce Williams

Illustrations for both the volume on Cemetery L and the volume on other early remains were completed this year, and a draft manuscript for New Kingdom remains is also far advanced.

The New Kingdom presents a number of problems in the course of life in Lower Nubia, most important of which is the apparent rapid disappearance of population after ca. 1450 B.C., leaving a gap in the sequence of occupation that lasted virtually until the second century A.D. However, at Qustul, cemeteries excavated by the Oriental Institute contain burials that date well into the Nineteenth Dynasty, two centuries later. One of the most interesting pieces of evidence is a fragment of a stela that has been prepared for the publication by William Murnane. This belonged to an important priest and administrator in the temple of Hathor at Abu Simbel, across the river just downstream. On it, Sa-Iabshek (meaning "son of Abu Simbel," obviously a man of local origin) prays to Hathor, Lady of Iabshek, and her consort, Horus, Lord of Buhen (a great Egyptian fortress somewhat upriver), for eternal renewal and permanent service in the temple.

The most important new evidence to emerge from these groups is a small number of relatively modest tombs dating to the period when Kush ruled Egypt, the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, and later. Only one other cemetery of this period is known from Lower Nubia, at Mirgissa. The burials at Qustul closely resemble those in a vast cemetery near the Fourth Cataract and they show that part, at least, of Lower Nubia could be settled at this time.