Preface

In many respects, Nubian archaeology and its study is special among the various archaeological subdisciplines. Perhaps this is because survey work is carried out in a countryside that is in many parts rather barren and remote and that promotes magnificent international cooperation under the auspices of the National Committee of Antiquities and Museums. Starting with the support from Khartoum, the number of archaeological missions, in close contact with colleagues working on related issues in Egypt, is growing. Nubian archaeology is an academic locus for the mutual exchange of information about material culture, especially at the conferences of the International Society of Nubian Studies and at the International Conference for Meroitic Studies, and this area of research provides an enormous output of scholarly publications. Another aspect worth mentioning about Nubian archaeology concerns its ‘interdisciplinary work-style’. In Nubian archaeology, interdisciplinarity is not just a buzzword. This is probably due to the research format of the surveys that has shaped many scholars in this field. Surveys do not shed light on a certain period or a certain material culture of one population, nor do they end up dealing exclusively with historical periods, as they are defined by modern humanities. As an effect, the archaeology of Nubia is used to take account of topics that are not restricted to fixed research questions.

It is in this spirit that this volume tries to combine two approaches: On the one hand, subjects are dealt with from a macroscopic spatial perspective with the aim of linking periods and regions in a meaningful way. Geology and topography as the setting of all cultural development and diachronic views on fauna, flora, anthropology and language prepare the groundwork for the following chronological roadmap. This volume intends to be an update of all historical and archaeological studies ever pursued on Nubian topics, and not a full presentation. Such ventures have already been undertaken in the past decade, especially the compilation and analysis of historical data by LÁSZLÓ TÖRÖK in his study Between Two Worlds in 2009. On the other hand, it is beyond any doubt that the material culture has to be understood as well as possible before developing far-reaching theories. For this reason, a number of contributions deal with the type of finds that archaeologists expect to discover in the field. Pottery studies, the most important of all find categories, give an overview of the state of research. Object categories like leatherwork and lithic tools will also be addressed.

Surveys have been the basis of the tremendously rich collection of data on Ancient Nubia, and it is therefore imperative that we give credit to some survey projects that broaden again, as did their predecessors during the 20th century, our mind in respect to this prolific and fascinating human development between the Red Sea Mountains and the Eastern Sahara, next to and along the river Nile.

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