

1. INTRODUCTION

This publication is based on the research and documentation work undertaken on Sai Island, Sudan, in the years 2013 and 2014 by the author and is part of the FWF START project Y-615 “Across ancient borders and cultures” (Fig. 1).²⁰ The goal is a reassessment of the architectural remains of the southern area of the New Kingdom fortified town on Sai Island, named SAV1 (Pls. 52.1 and 54). This part of the settlement, which makes up about one third of the entire town, was excavated in the 1950s and 1970s by a French Mission.²¹ The main publication, with the results of the excavations carried out in the years 1970–1973, was published in 1975 by Michel Azim.²² While he provides an overview of the excavated areas, with occasional detailed observations, the present publication shall provide more solid in-depth documentation and analysis, by reexamining the former results and putting them into a wider context. A major objective of the current work is the provision of new

plan material, since Azim’s plan of the town while being an important source of information, is unsatisfactory in that the distinction between the actual state of the ruins and a suggested reconstruction is often not clear.²³

As already described by Azim, six occupational phases can be identified for this area, ranging from the 18th Dynasty Pharaonic town up to the Ottoman fortress, erected in 1560 and lasting until 1820. Apart from the prominent ruins of this fortress and the remains of the New Kingdom settlement, most notable are the Meroitic ruins – primarily small dwellings – and structures from the Late Middle Ages, which seem to have been refugee shelters with a spiral-form ground plan.²⁴ The other occupational phases manifest themselves through the pottery finds. The present study, like Azim’s work, concentrates solely on the remains from the New Kingdom period, in accordance with the topic of “Across ancient borders and cultures”.

²⁰ The FWF START Prize Y-615 is complemented by the ERC Starting grant no. 313668 “*Across Borders – Settlement patterns in Egypt and Nubia in the 2nd Millennium BC*” (principle investigator Julia Budka). This project commenced in 2012 and is projected for five years. The project blog with further information and literature references can be found at: <http://acrossborders.oeaw.ac.at>. My thanks go to Julia Budka for having given me the opportunity to become a member of the team and for all the help and valuable information she has provided me with in the past years. I would also like to express my thanks to Meg Gundlach, for proofreading and critically assessing my text.

²¹ Directed by Jean Vercoutter. Since that time the island has been a French concession supervised by the University Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille 3.

²² AZIM 1975. See also GEUS 2004.

²³ Cf. AZIM 1975, 98, pl. IV. For example, there are six columns depicted in the main room of SAF2, even though only the two northern ones actually exist *in situ*, while the other four are reconstructed.

²⁴ AZIM 1975, 93–95; for the Meroitic ruins see GEUS 1994, 141–150.

