Excavations in the Settlement of Ismant el-Kharab in 1995–1999

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with an Appendix by Gillian E. Bowen

Introduction

During the years 1995–99 five field seasons were conducted at Ismant el-Kharab, ancient Kellis. Brief reports on this work have been published in the Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology (Hope 1995, 1999a; Hope and Bowen 1997). In presenting a summary of the results of those excavations here it was decided to base this upon the published reports, with modifications and additions, thus facilitating access to their contents. The format of the reports will be changed to bring together the various discussions of the different excavation areas; however, in these sections the work conducted during each season will be outlined sequentially. This report focuses upon the results of the excavations conducted within the Main Temple Complex and present only brief summaries of the work elsewhere, while separate discussions of the site’s various churches by Gillian Bowen and the results of the first excavations in Area C by Kevin Hickson appear in this volume. Preliminary observations on the architectural evolution of parts of the Main Temple complex, specialist reports on various categories of artefacts, inscribed material, flora and fauna, and specific discoveries are also presented within this volume.

The programme of work during the four seasons can be summarized briefly as follows; for the locations of each of the areas investigated see Figure 1. In 1995 excavations were conducted between January 3rd and February 18th. The focal point of this work was the inner temenos of the Temple of Tutu (D/1); some examination of the area around the monumental tombs on the northern edge of the site (D/7; Hope and McKenzie 1999) and of the large East Church (A/7) was also undertaken. In addition to the excavations the study of textual material and various categories of other material continued. Drs A. Alcock, I. Gardner and K. A. Worp (University of Amsterdam) undertook final checking of the Greek and Coptic documents for editions that have now been published (Gardner 1996; Worp 1995). Dr Worp also identified and made facsimile copies of the Greek material found in 1995. The study of the ceramics from the houses excavated in Area A between 1986 and 1991 was completed by Shirley Patten and Amanda Dunsmore (then Macquarie University and Monash University respectively); Carla Marchini studied all glassware excavated in 1995 and Gillian E. Bowen (Monash University) continued her study of the coins. Botanical material was examined by Professor

1 The excavations in the 1995, 1995–96 and 1996–97 field seasons were funded by the Australian Research Council through a major grant awarded to C. A. Hope (Monash University) and I. Gardner (then Edith Cowan University, now University of Sydney) and which was administered by Monash University; a small grant from the same body awarded to C. A. Hope in 1998 partially funded the 1998–99 season. A generous donation from Interstar Securities Pty Ltd of Melbourne in 1995 made possible the purchase of computer equipment for use on site, while throughout the entire period covered by this report Rosemary and Eric Cromby kindly provided funds to enable a Monash student to participate in the excavations. Additional financial assistance has been received from the Egyptology Society of Victoria (Monash University) and various members of the expedition that supported the 1997–98 and 1998–99 fieldwork. On behalf of the Dakhleh Oasis Project I wish to acknowledge our debt to all of these sponsors. As always, the officers of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Cairo, Khargeh and Dakhleh have been of great assistance in facilitating the work; I wish to express sincere thanks to Ashraf es-Sayed the SCA representative to the Project who annually assisted the work at Ismant el-Kharab in numerous ways.

2 Reports on the excavations at Ismant el-Kharab have appeared in this bulletin since its inception in 1990 and in Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities XV–XVII (1985–7) and XIX (1989), and Mediterranean Archaeology 1 (1988) and 8 (1995); an overview is published in Hope 1999b.

3 I am grateful to Professor N. Kanawati for his permission to use these articles as the basis for this contribution.

4 I omit any discussion of the final stages of the excavation of the West Tombs in Area D/7, for which see Hope 1995, 57–8.
Figure 1  Plan of Ismant el-Kharab showing main excavation areas (original drawing by J. E. Knudstad supplemented by J. Dobrowolski and B. Rowney). Scale 1:5000.
Neil Hallam (Monash University) and Dr Ursula Thanheiser (University of Vienna).

The 1995–96 and 1996–97 seasons were each of eight weeks duration, from late December until mid-February. Both produced major discoveries that considerably extend our understanding of the activity at the site. The excavations were conducted in four parts of the site: Area A, in the Large East Church (A/7) and a house complex to its north (A/9, House 5); Area B, within the north-western corner of the large colonnaded hall in Structure 1 (B/1/2); Area C in five rooms of a large complex in the westernmost part of the area (C/1/1) and three rooms in a complex in the centre of the area (C/2/1); and within Area D, in various locations within the inner temenos of the Main Temple (D/1–5), the East Gateway into the inner temenos (D/9), in the complex between the Inner Temenos wall of the Main Temple and Enclosure 1, and in the gateway into the West Temple complex (D/10).

Professor R. S. Bagnall (Columbia University) and Dr K. A. Worp prepared for publication editions of the two codices discovered in 1988 within the kitchen of House 2 in Area A (Bagnall 1997; Worp and Rijksbaron 1997). The 1997–98 and 1998–99 seasons at Ismant el-Kharab were short, of only five weeks duration each; the former was essentially a study season and the latter a combination of study season with restricted excavations in three parts of the site: Area B/1/3, Area C/2/2–6 and Area D/1. Considerable progress was made in the study of artefacts and textual material, and an edition of Coptic documentary texts from Area A was published (Gardner et al. 1999). 1999 also saw the publication of a volume of preliminary reports on the work of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, which contains various accounts of the work at Ismant el-Kharab in the 1992–93 and 1993–94 field seasons (Hope and Mills 1999).

**THE EXCAVATIONS**

1: Areas A–C

1.1 House 5, A/9: 1996–97

The excavation of this mud-brick house unit (A/9) was commenced in 1997. It is located approximately 25 m due north of the Large East Church (Bowen this volume) and almost on the eastern edge of the central residential sector of Area A. It was decided to excavate a house unit in this part of the site to determine whether, like other parts of Area A, it was essentially a late third- to fourth-century development (Hope 2001, 54–5) and to determine the religious persuasion of its occupants. An important aspect of this is the possibility that they might have been Manichaean as is the case for other residents in Area A (Gardner 1993, 1996; Gardner and Lieu 1996; Gardner and Worp 1997; Gardner et al. 1999). The total number of rooms in the unit has yet to be determined. The examination of four proceeded to a depth of 2.50 m. and surface sand was removed from some adjacent rooms. The rooms examined form a block of three large, interconnecting rectangular rooms on a north-south axis in the western part of the house, with a stairway that opens off the central room to the east. To the north of the stairway are two further rooms, access to which is also from the central room via doors in the eastern end of its north wall and the northern end of its east wall. Walls visible at surface level attest the existence of other rooms on the east, some with storage bins, indicating that they are preserved to an upper floor level. Doorways at this upper level are visible. The main rooms all appear to have had barrel-vaulted roofs.

Remains of floor surfaces belonging to upper rooms were found in two of the rooms examined, which also preserved parts of their barrel-vaulted roofs in place. Most of the roofs had collapsed, however, or were in an extremely precarious state and so were removed. The architectural features, as revealed to date, are similar to those of the other houses excavated within Area A: namely the provision of wall niches and the use of white plaster upon select sections of the walls only. No original lower floor levels were reached. On the basis of the artefacts found, predominantly ceramics, and particularly four bronze coins from within the earth floors of the room above the central western room, it would seem that this structure was occupied during the fourth century. The coins cover the period of Licinius to Julian (313–63; Bowen below). The heads from two terracotta anthropomorphic figurines and one zoomorphic figurine were found in the excavations (Stevens this volume).3

Due east of House 5 lie a series of mounds that have much vitrified clay upon their surfaces. It would seem probable that pottery kilns are located here.

1.2: Area B

1.2.1. The North-West Corner of the Colonnaded Hall in Structure 1, B/1/2: 1996–97

Area B is located to the north of Area A and contains three main building complexes. Structure 1, which lies closest to Area A, has over 216 rooms, several of which bear traces of painted wall plaster, and it is built upon at least two levels; it is the result of four probable building phases. Excavations conducted in 1988 within the south-western corner of Room 1 (Figure 2),8 a large colonnaded hall built against the south wall, revealed several metres of stratified deposits, numerous phases of occupation, and sections of classical wall paintings both in situ on the south and west walls and fallen from the roof (Hope 1987, 167–72). Ceramics and jar doockets written in Greek indicated a

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3 The excavation of this house was completed in the 2000 season and that work will be reported in the forthcoming proceedings of the Third International Dakhleh Oasis Project Symposium, *Oasis Papers III*, to be edited by G. E. Bowen and C. A. Hope.

8 The structures of Area B were surveyed by J. E. Knudstad and during the course of this the room numbers cited here were allocated.
Figure 2  Area B/1: south-western corner showing location of excavation units (drawing by J. E. Knudstad).
Plate 1  Area B/1: drawings on southern wall of Room 30.

Plate 2  Area C/2: kilns in C/2/4 looking south.
period of use spanning the second to late fourth centuries (Hope 1987, 167–72; 2001, 53–4). 7

To gain a firmer picture of the use of this important building it was decided to open a larger area (B/1/2) at the northern end of the same hall (Figure 2). Extensive areas of wall collapse were revealed, some with small sections of monochrome, red-decorated plaster on a white ground still adhering. Excavations concentrated in the north-western corner where the walls were better preserved. Removal of surface sand and some brick collapse revealed four doors that originally provided access to Room 29 on the north, Room 30 on the north-west and Rooms 31 and 32 on the west. Each of these preserves traces of painted plaster on the walls; in Room 29 there is elaborate herringbone coursing of the brickwork (Knudstad and Frey 1999, Figure 13.10). The door into Room 29 has been blocked and converted into a cupboard, once fitted with wooden shelves. On either side of this feature the north wall of the hall also preserves painted-plaster decoration. Set within a square panel on the wall west of the cupboard there is a representation of a female bust; the identity of the figure is uncertain. Its facial features have been damaged and this area is filled with mud plaster; several other areas of damage have been filled in this way. There is at least one metre further to floor level.

The upper fill in the Rooms 30–32 was removed. In Room 30 numerous black-ink drawings adorn the walls. These include: a prostrate figure, presumably male, lying in an erotic posture upon a couch set within an arch (Plate 1), a soldier with shield, several figures on horseback and a wheeled contraption. 8 Several lines of inscription are incised lightly into the plaster; these are in Greek but have yet to be studied. All of the inscriptions and drawings are located fairly high upon the wall and were obviously executed when the building no longer served a formal function. Drawings at a similar height were also found on the west wall in the south-western corner of Room 1, as was an inscription in Greek lightly incised into the wall, mentioning several persons with the name Aurelius, indicating that it was written either in the third or fourth century (Hope 1987, 170–2; 2001, 54).

1.2.2 B/1/3: 1999

In the western part of Structure 1 in Area B are a series of connected rooms, the walls of which contain numerous niches (Figure 2, Rooms 75C and 81). As this concentration of niched rooms is only found here, and given that texts refer to the storage of documents within niches (Hope 1999c, 105 note 163), it was decided to test the possibility that these rooms could have housed some of the village archives. The southern part of the entrance, Room 75C, into this complex of chambers was selected for excavation. This room, in addition to containing various niches and providing access to other rooms similarly equipped, communicates directly with a system of corridors that lead to the exterior of the building on both the east and west via Room 75B, and into the colonnaded hall via Room 75A (Figure 2). The areas in which all of the test excavations have been located forms an addition (Phase 2) on the west and south to the original core (Phase 1) of the Area B Structure 1 building. 9

Unfortunately, nothing survived in the excavated area to confirm the supposed function of the suite of rooms nor to determine its actual function. Upon the floor were found considerable accumulations of animal manure, identifiable as from donkeys, and this, along with the evidence from the other excavation unit B/1/1 (Hope 1987, 169), seems to indicate that this structure witnessed considerable use as a stable probably during the late third and fourth centuries to judge from the ceramics that were found. Amongst the sherd s within floor levels some of 1st–2nd century CE date were found.

1.3: Area C

1.3.1 1996–97

Area C lies to the east of Area B and north-east of the residential sector of Area A. It comprises two main mounds, designated C/1 and C/2, separated by low depressions (Figure 3). Unlike all other parts of the site, although there are traces of mud-brick walls visible on the surface, none projects above surface level and no discrete building units can be determined. Examination of the dense, surface sherd scatter indicated that occupation in this area might predate that in Area A and thus be contemporary with the earliest development of the present Main Temple of Tutu, which took place in the mid-first to early second centuries CE (Hope 2001, 48–51). Test excavations were conducted upon each of the mounds, designated C/1/1 and C/2/1; these are discussed elsewhere in this volume by the excavator, Kevin Hickson.

Dating evidence for the activity in C/1/1 was provided by the discovery of 19 ostraka of the mid-third century. The sequence of ceramics from this area resembles material found in test excavations under houses in Area A (Dunsmore this volume). Concerning the ostraka Dr Worp writes:

Area C/1 yielded a batch of 19 Greek ostraka, the majority of which can be related to one person, Psais son of Pasoul who in some is named Psais son of Soul. The ostraka concern, i.e., tax receipts which bear more or less precise dates. One finds references to the third regnal year of the Galli (252-53), the reign of the Valeriani (between 254 and 260), and to regnal years 1 = 4 and 2 = 5 which are 269–70 and 270–71; furthermore receipts are dated to regnal years 2, 4, 5, 6, 12 and 13.

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7 These docket s were studied by the late Dr G. Wagner whose date ascription is cited here.
8 A study of these by Helen Whitehouse will appear in Oasis Papers III.
9 Part of this core unit is visible in the upper right of Figure 2 marked with a heavier line.
Figure 3  Area C: locations of excavated areas (drawing by B. Rowney).
Figure 4 Area C: plan of buildings in which C/2/1 and C/2/4 are located (drawing by B. Rowney).
The excavations in C/2/1 yielded ceramics from different phases which resemble those from C/1/1, though some different shapes are attested. An ostrakon found in this excavation yielded references to the fourth and fifth years of the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, that is 163–4 and 164–5 CE, indicating that the area may have been occupied from the mid-second century. This is the earliest evidence for domestic activity discovered at the site so far.

1.3.2 1999

Previous examination of Area C indicated that it comprised two low mounds separated by a depression. The latter appears in part at least to be a modern feature resulting from traffic across the site, observed this season, and thus may not reflect the ancient topography. The area occupies approximately one third of the site; on the west it merges with Area B.

This season work focused on gaining more data on Area C/2, and five small units (C/2/2–6; Figure 3) were excavated. Their locations were determined following a general delineation on the surface of the walls remaining from the various structures. This revealed that the general layout of the buildings in C/2, as also in C/1, differs from that in the other residential part of the site studied to date, namely Area A, which dates from the late third to late fourth centuries. Area C contains large areas of contiguous structures that comprise open courts flanked by smaller rectangular rooms, most of which were flat-roofed. Area A contains discrete residential units set within their own enclosures with all but the central courts barrel-vaulted. Unfortunately the preservation in Area C/2 is such that only the lower parts of the walls survive and few additional architectural details remain. Of the units excavated in C/2/2, C/2/3 and C/2/5 each consisted of a single room, C/2/4 was a courtyard containing pottery kilns and C/2/6 was part of an open area that contained a kiln.

C/2/2 lies on the east side of the mound and is part of a small complex of which four rooms could be identified; it measures 5.08–5.10 by 4.14–4.22 m. It contained a large storage bin in its south-western corner, two hearths and several circular depressions in its floors. Excavation through the upper floor surfaces in the south-western corner revealed part of a brick wall below the storage bin, but no major structures. The walls of the unit are built directly upon the terrace on which the site stands. The north and west walls preserved sections of three layers of superimposed, polychrome-painted plaster. The motifs were not well preserved, though one may have been a vine with grape clusters. C/2/3 lies to the north-east of C/2/2 and is a room 4.03 by 2.12 m. The only feature of interest here was the discovery of the burial of a child, approximately two years of age at death, set within the north wall (Hope 1999a, Plate 5). It had been inserted there after the room had undergone considerable deflation, but no grave goods were found and thus its date could not be determined.

C/2/4 (Figure 4) was discovered as a result of surface wall clearance on the north of C/2/1 (Hickson this volume). This court abuts the north of the complex in which the latter is located and they lie in the centre of the area. It measures 12.37–13.70 by 17.85–18.40 m; examination of the court’s features was restricted to those along the west wall and in the north-eastern corner (Plate 2). Walls visible at surface level show that the court may have been divided into smaller areas but further work is necessary to define the details. In the north-western corner the lower parts of the firing chambers of two kilns were found. They have internal diameters of 2.04 and 1.66 m; the larger has a wall thickness of 56 cm and the smaller of 35 cm. Neither showed pronounced vitrification of the wall lining; from their sizes it would seem that they had been used for the firing of pottery vessels. Some fragments of unfired but formed vessels were found in the area and due east of the kilns was part of a large circular ceramic disc. This may be identified as a bat, the device upon which potters centre the clay to be fashioned into a vessel, and which separates the clay from the wheel head of a kick-wheel. Clearly we have in the court of C/2/4 part of a potters’ workshop. The kilns represent a late addition to the courtyard and have been dug through the upper strata. Prior to their insertion the court may have served domestic purposes as is indicated by the remains of various rectangular chambers against the west wall and which could have been used for storage. One chamber is preserved in the south-west and provides access to a door; from this door a pathway leads diagonally across the area. Against the south wall of this room, within sand fill, was a considerable quantity of potsherds. Another room was defined in the north-eastern corner of the courtyard; this contained two rectangular storage bins, one in each of the eastern corners. The southern bin contained 39 kg of millet.

C/2/5 is a small room to the south-east of C/2/1 and C/2/4, and south-west of C/2/2. It was selected for excavation as a magnetometer survey carried out in Area C during the previous season had indicated the existence of a number of features in this part of Area C that may have resulted from exposure to heat (Smekalova this volume). In addition, distinctive contours were visible on the map produced by this survey that relate to concentrations of iron slag visible on the surface. Indeed, most of the surface in this southern part of Area C has a litter of iron slag. C/2/5 was selected for testing because a circular feature could be observed at surface level within its south-western corner and it seemed to coincide with one of the anomalies identified during the survey. The feature turned out to be only a clay storage bin that had once sat upon the roof of the room and had collapsed into the room with much of the roofing material when its beam supports were removed. Amongst this collapse were a number of ceramic vessels. The room did produce, however, quantities of iron slag, though this appears to have entered the room during its filling and does not indicate that the room was used
Figure 5 Area D: Main Temple and buildings to its north-west (drawing by J. Knudstad, J. Dobrowolski, B. Rowney).
in connection with iron working. A discussion of the evidence for metalworking at the site by Mark Eccleston is included in this volume. This disappointment was compensated for by the discovery of two small deposits of papyri inscribed in Greek. Amongst this material were pieces from several documents that could be reconstructed. They cover the period 111/2–146/7 CE and four relate to a single family, thus we have a small archive that must concern one-time occupants of the structure in which C/2/5 is located.

Dr Worp has identified the contents of the documents as follows:

P99.2 Document 1: census declaration by Tithoes in year 9 of Antoninus Pius = 146–7 CE.

P99.2 Document 2: repayment of a loan by Psenamounis, son of the Tithoes of document 1, to his father in year 8 of Antoninus Pius = 145–6 CE.

P99.2 Document 3: receipt for payment of taxes in year 14 of Trajan = 111–2 CE.

P99.2 Document 4: a second census declaration issued by the same Tithoes as document 1 but 14 years earlier, thus in 132–3 CE.

P99.3 Document 1: a loan of money to the same Tithoes as P99.2 documents 1 and 4 in year 22 of Hadrian = 138 CE.

P99.3 Document 2: end of a contract dealing with the sale of a house.

C/2/6 is located near the southern edge of Area C also in the same area that showed numerous anomalies on the map generated by the magnetometer survey. It comprises an area 2.00 by 3.00 m. The fill contained large amounts of ash and iron slag, but also some pieces of glass slag. Two circular features were revealed, one with a diameter of 1.00 m and the other 40 cm. The larger one may represent the bottom of a kiln, but with a diameter of 1.00 m and the other 40 cm. The fill contained large amounts of ash and iron slag, but also some pieces of glass slag. Two circular features were revealed, one with a diameter of 1.00 m and the other 40 cm. The larger one may represent the bottom of a kiln, but nothing survived of its structure.

The results of these excavations confirm that Area C/2 was a domestic quarter in which light industrial activity also took place. This seems to have comprised pottery manufacture, iron smelting and possibly the manufacture of glass and faience. The textual data and the majority of the ceramics indicate a period of use in the second century, though some of the ceramic material may be of the Ptolemaic Period. On the western edge of C/2 the only sherd of Egyptian Barbotine ceramic to be found at Ismant el-Kharab was discovered. That Ismant el-Kharab was occupied during the Ptolemaic Period is indicated by some fragments of demotic papyri from the Main Temple of Tutu (Tait this volume), stylistic analysis of some of the decorated cartonnage from the large West Cemetery, 31/420-C5-1 (Schweitzer this volume) and also some ceramic vessels from that cemetery.

2: Area D: The Main Temple and Associated Structures within the Inner Temenos

Area D on the west of the site contains Enclosure 1 with the Main Temple complex dedicated to Tutu, Neith and Tapshay, Enclosure 4 with the West Church complex and the West Tombs, and the West Temple complex dedicated to Neith and Tapshay. The inner temenos of the Main Temple (Figure 5) contains the following structures: the remains of the stone temple and its surrounding courts with subsidiary structures (D/1); the large two-roomed, mud-brick painted Shrine 1 (D/2) and three other mud-brick structures assumed, because of their location within the temenos, to have had a religious function (Shrines II–IV; D/3–5). The stone temple was excavated between 1991 and 1994 (Hope et al. 1989; Hope 1998, 806–14; Whitehouse and Hope 1999); the excavation of Shrine 1 commenced in 1991 and continued throughout all subsequent seasons. From 1995–96 onwards most of the remaining principal structures within the inner temenos were investigated to varying degrees, excepting the outer room of Shrine I, as were the gateways into the temenos and that into the West Temple complex.10 Awaiting examination are the areas between Shrines I and IV, II and III and the eastern half of the area between the colonnade.

2.1 The Inner Temenos of the Main Temple: D/1

2.1.1 The West Court of the Temple of Tutu: 1995

The area to the west of the Main Temple was filled with mud-brick collapse from the temenos walls under wind-blown sand; there were several distinct deposits of articulated brick collapse at different levels. The clearance of this material revealed an open court with flimsy mud-brick structures on the north (Figure 5), which await full excavation, and two sandstone basins and three brick chambers on the south (Plate 3). The sandstone basins are each cut from a single block. The northermost is the smallest and stands to an extant height of 85 cm; its walls are 18–20 cm thick and it has internal dimensions of 1.12–1.17 m east-west by 84–89 cm north-south. The southernmost basin stands to the same height as its neighbour; its walls are of a similar thickness, but its internal dimensions are 1.91–1.98 m east-west by 1.33 m north-south. Both of these basins have a single perforation that opens into an area adjacent to their western and northern sides and where there is a mud-plastered rectangular depression in the earth floor of the court. These perforations have been plugged from the exterior. The sandstone basins are certainly an original part of the layout of the court and may be identified as lustral basins; they were originally free standing.

At a later stage small mud-brick chambers were constructed on the south and east of the sandstone basins. There are two on the east measuring 1.75–1.79 m by 1.08 m and 1.84–1.88 m by 0.93–1.06 m; each has a narrow.

10 The West Temple itself was excavated during the course of the survey of the Dakhleh Oasis, see Knudstad and Frey 1999, 202–4.
Plate 3  Area D/1: Main Temple, West Court looking south-west.

Plate 4  Area D/1: blocks from the dismantling of the Main Temple found due south of the Contra-Temple.
entrance through the south end of the east wall. This wall aligns with the western edge of the north door into Room 1 of Shrine I (D/2) and abuts the corner of its outer west jamb. The walls of these rooms are one brick wide. To the west of the southern chamber, and south of the stone basins, is a single chamber. It is entered from the west via a doorway that was originally closed with a door of wood or palm rib. With the construction of these three chambers any access to Shrine I from the Western Gate and thus the West Temple would have been made more circuitous. Open cupboards, some with shelves, are built into the south wall on both sides of the north door into Shrine I and one is white-plastered (Plate 3). A discussion of the peculiarities of the construction of these cupboards is included in the report by J. Dobrowolski (this volume) on the architectural evolution of the Main Temple and Shrines I–II.

The floor of the court is of earth, though there are traces of what may have been a plaster coating. On a deposit of earth above the floor of the court, numerous sandstone blocks from the temple were found; unfortunately only small fragments preserved decoration. A similar deposit of blocks (Plate 4) was uncovered during the excavation of the area between the Contra-Temple (Rooms 6–7 of the temple) and the northern door into Shrine I, amongst which were some with architectural features including a drainage channel, and others preserving incised painted-relief decoration. One of these depicts the emperor Pertinax, who had a three-month reign in 193 CE, presenting a sistrum to Tapshay (Plate 5; Kaper and Worp 1995, 113 and Figure 3). The block originates from the south jamb of the door into the sanctuary of the Contra-Temple (Room 6). The figure of the goddess and the area surrounding it have been liberally covered with oil libations. A well-preserved bronze figure of Tapshay was discovered beside a sandstone pedestal in the north-eastern corner of the sanctuary embedded in such oily accumulations on the floor (Kaper and Worp 1995). The building of Room 6 has been assigned to an early phase within the evolution of the Main Temple (Dobrowolski this volume), though whether this occurred under Pertinax or whether the decoration was added during his reign to a pre-existing doorway is uncertain, but I assume the latter.

Amongst the architectural debris found in the West Court a fragment from the capital of a gypsum-plastered, baked-brick column was found, which may have derived from the column at the south-western corner of the outer room of the Contra-Temple (Room 7). The base of this column is in situ, as is that at the north-western corner; they have elaborate gypsum-plaster mouldings at the base above which, on the north-western one, there are traces of fluting. Adjacent to the base of the latter a section from below the capital was found, and this also is adorned with fluting modelled into the gypsum plaster. The section of capital found near the south-western column base preserves decoration of appliqué, three-petalled flowers in gypsum plaster. Stucco decoration comprising rosettes attached to multiple stems has been found throughout the

Plate 5 Area D/1: block from the inner door of the Contra-Temple showing Pertinax offering to Tapshay.
remains of the temple, while fragments from small Corinthian-type capitals and other floral elements in the same material were found in the region of the Portico of the Main Temple. From that same region derive numerous sections from metopes in stucco that were undoubtedly attached to the entablature atop the columns of the Portico. This material indicates that there was a considerable quantity of classical-style architectural decoration within the temple, complimenting the painted motifs of classical inspiration that are found on the walls of all buildings and the forecourt within the inner temenos. The most elaborate elements of classical form in stucco found within the temple are the small plaster heads, presumably of deities, set within tondos (Hope 1998, 823–5), the original placement of which is unknown though this was presumably around a doorway. The use of stucco for sculpture within the temple extended to numerous busts and heads on various scales of Egyptian deities: Isis, Isis-Lactans, Isis-Demeter and Serapis (Hope 1998, 821–3).

The West Court is bounded on the west by the inner and outer temenos walls (Figure 5; Plate 3) that abut one another on the north but are separated by almost one metre on the south, whereas elsewhere they are some 5 m apart. The earlier, inner temenos is not well preserved; a low, white-plastered bench is built against its inner face. The outer temenos wall is better preserved; three brick buttresses connect the two walls, and the intervening area was filled with earth containing chert nodules. The buttresses increase in depth to the top, indicating that when they were erected the eastern wall was already leaning distinctly to the east. As a result of this, the majority of the eastern wall collapsed into the West Court, whereas the outer wall was better preserved (Plate 3). A brick bench also lines the walls of the south-eastern corner of the West Court.

Set into the southern end of both walls is a double gateway. The gate through the inner temenos wall is the original means of access from this enclosure to the West Temple. It is 1.03 m wide with mad-brick jambs and was closed by a door that pivoted against the south wall; a wooden pivot is in place here. When the outer temenos was added a sandstone gateway was erected, abutting the earlier gateway on the west. It is 1.00 m wide on the west, 1.37 m wide at the reveals and 1.83 ± 0.01 m deep; it stands to a maximum height of 2.06 m on the south with nine courses of stone in place. The floor of the gateway is also of sandstone; on top of this floor were several earth floors. A door pivot is set within a depression in the south-western corner and remains within show that the door originally had an iron pivot. There is a socket to receive a sliding wooden bolt 1.02 m above floor level at the western end of the north reveal. The bolt-hole measures 52 cm wide by extant 37 cm high and is preserved to a depth of 36 cm. The sandstone gateway is completely undecorated; deposits of oily material face its courses on the exterior west face. Such deposits occur throughout the Main Temple and also in the West Temple and clearly reflect cult activity; they have also been noted at Deir el-Hagar (Mills this volume). An analysis of one sample from the Main Temple, carried out by Andrew Ross (this volume) of Monash University, has produced a preliminary identification as a vegetable oil, possibly olive oil, moringa oil, tiger-nut/chufa oil or almond oil. Olive cultivation has been proposed as a major agricultural activity in Dakhleh (Bagnall 1997, 78–80).

This double West Gateway provides access to another court on the west. Only the area immediately adjacent to the exterior of the gate was excavated, though some clearance of surface sand over a larger area was undertaken. This outer court is also filled with brick collapse on its south, and on top of this sandstone blocks from the temple were found level with the upper extant courses of the stone gateway. They flank approximately a pathway in the surface of the collapsed wall, which is worn smooth, probably from dragging stone blocks along it. One of the blocks found here is decorated with an intact figure of a king in high relief (Plate 6) reminiscent of the style of the relief work on the main axial gateway (1A) and the door into Room 3 (Door 1). No cartouches accompany the royal figure. Another block found in the area preserves part of an engaged-column shaft and does not appear to derive from the Main Temple. This and other blocks found during the course of the excavation of the temple may attest the existence of an earlier religious structure on the site of the present temple, a possibility given greater credence by the discovery of the remains of a rectangular stone structure beneath Rooms 3 and 4 of the Tutu Temple and which was originally thought to be a foundation platform (Whitehouse and Hope 1999, 95–7). Both within and below the brick collapse in this court other stone blocks were found, including half of the undecorated cavetto cornice from the exterior of the stone gateway.

The outer court has brick chambers on its north and south sides that form part of the last stage of development around the Main Temple. This saw the erection of what is termed Enclosure 1, which contains numerous building blocks and a processional route leading from its gateway on the east to the East Gateway through the two temenos walls around the temple. When this was built the means of

11 Parallels to this decorative technique are not forthcoming from contemporary monuments elsewhere in Egypt, but illustrations of columns decorated in this manner can be seen in classical art, for example in the House of the Vettii at Pompeii circa 62 CE and at Boscoreale 50-40 BCE, see B. Andreae, The Art of Rome, London, 1978, illustrations 74 and 207, and R. Ling, Roman Painting, Cambridge, 1991, illustrations 80-1 and Plate IIIA; and in Coptic textiles of the fourth century, see for example M-H. Rutschowscaya, Coptic Fabrics, Paris, 1990, 83–5. Elaborate architectural elements executed in stucco have been found in other parts of the Mediterranean, however, for example at Salamis on Cyprus, see G. Argoud, O. Callot and B. Helly, Salamine de Chypre XI: Une Résidence Byzantine ‘L’Huilerie’, Paris, 1980, 31–3, Plates XXIV–XXVII.
communication between the Main Temple and the West Temple was interrupted and a less direct method was created through a room in the south-western corner.

The excavations in the West Court yielded some interesting artefacts. The two brick chambers on the east of the lustral basins, excavated in 1993, yielded numerous Greek ostraka of fourth-century CE date. Material of a similar date was found in the small room south of these basins; this included several Greek ostraka, a cache of ceramic vessels, four glass ingots and a door key. There were also numerous small clay cones, probably gaming pieces. In addition, of earlier date, there were a small bronze figure of an Egyptian goddess, a copper plaque with a figure of Bes and a billon drachma of Antoninus Pius showing Isis Pharea and the Alexandrian lighthouse (see below). This had been perforated for use as a pendant. Another glass ingot was found upon the floor of the West Gateway associated with several large, polychrome glass beads and one complete, and several fragmentary ivory pins. Near the inner gate through Temenos 1 a handle from a bronze vessel in the form of a lion's head was found. From the area between the western walls of the inner and outer temenos came fragments from a multi-string, glass bead necklace. One of the rows of beads consisted of glass beads with gold cores and another had silver cores. This material, together with the evidence provided by the quantity of glass found at the site and pieces of glass slag, lends weight to the suggestion that glass of high quality was manufactured at Ismant el-Kharab. It is likely that the small brick chambers surrounding the lustral basins are fourth century additions and may post-date the use of the temple as a place of worship.

2.1.2 The North-West Corner of the Inner Temenos

2.1.2.1 1996–97

In the 1992–93 season the removal of surface sand revealed the existence of numerous, small mud-brick chambers to the north of the rear of the Main Temple and west of Shrine II (Figures 5–6). These rooms are of flimsy construction and appeared to be related to food production and storage. Work was largely restricted to the eastern part of the area. In the western part, extending up to the inner temenos wall, the sand clearance revealed a large section of collapsed but still articulated wall with 43 courses, fallen from either the inner or outer temenos walls (Figure 7). Under this collapse a circular structure was also found. In 1996–97 the clearance of the area under the wall collapse was resumed. Excavations have reached a depth of 3.5 m below original surface level and three main phases of constructions have been unearthed. The fill in this area comprises layers of sand separating extensive deposits of brick collapse from the temenos walls and the structures of the area (Figure 7). The following building sequence may be suggested (Figure 6; Plates 7–8); excavations did not reach the basal clay upon which the site is built.

Phase 1

Within the area excavated there was a mud-brick structure with a barrel-vaulted roof. Its dimensions are unknown as only a single course from the vault was revealed within Vaulted Room 1 in the south-western corner of the area (Figure 6, early wall). This had been cut back Phase 2.

Phase 2

A stone-lined, rectangular structure was then constructed. Its walls have been revealed on the north, west and south; the south wall abuts the brick wall of the earlier structure.
Figure 6  Area D/1: north-west corner showing wells and associated structures after excavation in 1998–99. (drawing by B. Rowney, adapted by C. A. Hope).
Figure 7  Section through Area D/8 into north-west corner of D/1 (drawing by J. Dobrowolski and C. A. Hope).
Plate 7  Area D/1: north-west corner showing part of the stone feature and mud-brick chambers, looking south-west.

Plate 8  D/1: north-west corner showing mud-brick well and barrel-vaulted chambers, looking south-east.
The lengths of the sides of this structure as revealed are: north wall 3.17 m, south wall 5.65 m and west wall 3.50 m; they stand to a height of 0.70–1.05 m and are 70–72 cm wide. It is built of roughly-shaped sandstone blocks laid without mortar. There is no trace of the eastern wall, which may have been removed for constructions of Phase 3. Tentatively, the structure is identified as a well. While it was in use the eye was constantly cleared. The dredgate from this process eventually built up over the walls themselves and certainly formed considerable deposits outside the well. No evidence survives for the emplacement of any mechanical water-lifting device. It is possible that during the use of the well there was some subsidence on the north-east as in this area the stone wall is no longer horizontal. The stone walls were constructed on red Nubian clay, but this may not represent the basal formation as it does not contain the ubiquitous salt veins of that material nor is it as hard. Below the level of the base of the walls the material that fills the area on the west contains mud-brick collapse (Plate 7), indicating that the base of the cut for this stone structure has yet to be found.

Phase 3
An oval, mud-brick well was constructed at the eastern side of the stone well (Plate 8). It has been revealed to a depth of approximately 4 m. It is 2.05 m north-south and 2.63 m east-west; its walls are 36–39 cm wide, though the upper five courses are only half of this. Originally it had a wooden beam across it, socketed into its wall from north to south, to assist in the raising of the water presumably in ceramic jars. A series of mud-brick chambers surround the remains of this well (Plates 7–8). The walls of these are built directly onto the walls of the earlier stone well and the dredgate beyond them on the west and south, but are upon an accumulation of dredgate 95 cm thick above the stone wall on the north (Figure 7). These rooms are built against the northern and western sections of the inner temenos wall, and therefore the layout of the temenos as it now stands was in existence before they were erected. The excavations of 1995–96 north of this area (D/8), however, showed that the west wall of the inner temenos may once have extended further in that direction but was cut back (Figures 7, 12; Plate 22), possibly when the present west end of the north inner temenos wall was built. This is clearly an insert into an earlier section of wall (Figure 5). Thus, the west inner temenos wall may predate the construction of the rooms around the circular well and may predate that well also. Whether it was contemporary with the construction of the Phase 1 well has yet to be determined.

The structures around this well were constructed on two levels with a staircase abutting the north of the well providing access to the lower-level rooms (Figure 6; Plate 7). The latter are probably to be identified as magazines as their height was originally only on average 1.0 m. The number, size and height of the upper-level rooms cannot now be determined due to poor preservation. It is the remains from this upper level lying east and south of the well that were excavated in 1992–93 and the floors of which are approximately at the same level as those surrounding the Main Temple. Parts of this upper level abut the oval well to the south and remain in the north-west corner of the area.

The lower level comprises a variety of rooms. Three are rectangular and flat-roofed; one of these lies against the north temenos wall, one is in the north-western corner and the third is against the west wall. There is an L-shaped room in the south-western corner of the area that also had a flat roof and at the eastern end of which there is the remains of a short flight of steps. The roofs of all of these rooms were supported by wooden beams set into the temenos walls (Plate 7) and comprised palm ribs plastered with mud. In the south of the area excavated, which lies to the south and south-west of the circular well, there are two barrel-vaulted chambers (Vaulted Rooms 1–2) larger than the other rooms but of a similar height (Figure 6; Plates 7–8). Only that on the south-west of the well was excavated. All of these rooms contain the remains of small storage basins. Their floors were all built out into the area between the walls of the earlier stone well; to what distance is unknown as this region has suffered extensive damage due to collapse and subsidence. This would have been necessary to provide access to the various rooms. It should be noted that parts of a floor surface level with the court at the west of the Main Temple were found extending over the roofs of the two barrel-vaulted chambers (Plate 7). This floor was laid over a mud-brick paving.

Dating
The disturbed nature of most of the deposits found in this area makes dating the phases outlined above difficult. As noted, the upper-floor surfaces in the court west of the temple extend over the two vaulted chambers showing that Phase 3 structures were in existence before these late floors were formed. A single ostrakon was found in the roof of barrel-vaulted Room 1 on the south. This is written in Old Coptic; this fact and the decoration upon the potsherd point to a late third century date for the piece (Gardner 1999). Pottery vessels (Dunsmore this volume) found within this room at floor level seem best ascribed to the mid- to late third century, or early fourth at the latest, as does a single coin found associated with these vessels. A Greek ostrakon from upper brick collapse yielded a date of 294. Thus, it is suggested that Phase 3 might be ascribed to the third century. This would accord well with information from other parts of the Main Temple, which indicates that final modifications to the temple complex took place at that time (Hope 2001, 49–51).

There is no inscriptive or numismatic evidence to enable a dating of the two other phases to be suggested; the pottery from the lower deposits awaits study. Further excavation within the area is necessary before either of these can be defined more clearly. It may be noted that there is no definite evidence for activity in this part of
the site before the reign of Nero (54–68 CE; Bagnall, Worp and Tait this volume).

2.1.2.2 1998–99

Following the 1996–97 excavations some of the sand that completely filled the eastern barrel-vaulted chamber (Vaulted Room 2) collapsed into the excavated area and this was removed in 1998–99. At the same time the area between the front of this chamber and the surviving edge of the well and the narrow space due east of this were investigated.

The northern end of the east wall of the chamber was revealed. This stops short of the wall of the circular, mud-brick well, and between it and the well there is a small recess that is barrel-vaulted east-west. The eastern end of this vault abuts a north-south wall of ashlar and rough sandstone blocks. This wall is aligned with the eastern exterior edge of the brick well and is set upon red crumby earth that is probably dredged from the clearing of the stone well. If this is so then this stone wall post-dates the use of the stone well; the storage chambers around the brick well are also built on this same material. This wall may be connected with other stone features at the north-western corner of the outer room of the Contra-Temple (Figure 6). They are visible in the eroded earth floor of the temple’s rear court. It is highly probable that there are structures beneath the West Court and also due east of the oval mud-brick well. In the latter region there are small mud-brick structures that appear to be contiguous with the upper level of chambers around the well. One of these, to the east of the brick well, certainly contains a ramp or stair (Figure 6) that may have provided access to the lower level of chambers in this region. These areas certainly require excavation and it is hoped that this will reveal traces of an earlier structure on the site of the Main Temple. That this may also have been a temple is indicated by the discovery of various architectural stone fragments built into the walls of the Tutu Temple and found amongst the rubble from it, which were not cut for that temple. The rectangular stone area beneath Room 3 of the Main Temple (Figure 5; Whitehouse and Hope 1999, 95–7) may have been a part of such a building.

In cleaning the area excavated in 1996–97 a remarkable discovery was made. Immediately north (outside) of the doorsill into Vaulted Room 1 (Figure 6; Plates 7–8), fragments from numerous clay sealings were found. Several of these preserve the same impression, that of a seated griffin, the tale of which appears to end in a crowned serpent’s head (Plate 9). The impression probably derives from a ring; the sealings were once affixed to the door of the brick chamber. Following their removal on entry into the chamber they were simply thrown to the ground and, quite surprisingly, were not trampled to dust under foot. The device upon the sealings depicts Nemesis. This figure is often depicted accompanying Tutu or his mother, Neith, and may rest one paw upon the Wheel of Fate; such an image is found with Tutu, represented as a sphinx, on the rear wall of Shrine I within the Main Temple complex (Kaper 1991, 65). The crowned serpent’s head on the tail of the image is unusual. When Tutu is depicted as a sphinx a standard element of the iconography is that the tail ends in a serpent’s head, but this is not crowned. It appears that this element of the iconography of Nemesis on the seals is borrowed from that of Tutu in part, and indicates clearly an association between the two. Further, the use of this seal upon the door into the chamber shows that whatever was stored within it was temple property and fell under the protection of Tutu and Nemesis. This proves that the storage chambers were constructed and used at a time when Tutu was still worshipped in the temple rather than being associated with the period following the abandonment of the cult sometime after 335 CE.12 The period of their construction/use may have been in the third to early fourth century as ceramics found in them indicates.

As part of the general cleaning of the area a further 61cm of fill was removed from within the mud-brick well. This indicates that this structure was sunk to a greater depth than the stone structure; its base has yet to be revealed. The fill comprised moist sand with the occasional mud brick.

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12 From this date comes the latest reference to a priest of Tutu at the site (P.Kell. I Gr. 13.14: Worp 1995, 38–42 and this volume).
2.2: Shrine I, the *Mammisi* D/2

2.2.1 1995

Excavations within this shrine were restricted to an area adjacent to the south wall in the western half of Room 1, extending east to the niche cut into that wall. This niche is opposite the door into the room in the centre of the north wall that provides access to the court at the rear of the Main Temple (Plate 3).

This area, as with other parts of the room previously excavated, yielded two distinct levels of structural collapse: the lower with sections from the central part of the upper-vaulted roof and the upper with sections from the sides of the vault and wall. The decoration upon the central part of the vault represents classical-coffer motifs; the sides of the vault and wall are decorated with pharaonic-style cult scenes. The south wall itself is decorated with classical-panel motifs framed by vines. All sections of the decorative scheme found this season represent a continuation of that found in other parts of the room. The detailed study of the classical paintings was commenced by Dr Helen Whitehouse of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; as this will take several years to complete it is premature to attempt to summarize her findings here.

The study of the pharaonic-style decorative scheme by Dr Olaf Kaper made significant progress as a result of the 1995 discoveries. Although the decoration upon the fragile plaster of the vault has suffered badly from the collapse of the structure and ancient defacing, it is possible now to identify the shrine as having been a *mammisi* (Birth House). New reliefs show that the days of the lunar month are represented and named, and, most significantly, there is a scene of Khnum potting at his wheel in front of seated figures of Isis and Tapshay. The reconstruction of the very fragmentary reliefs will take much time to complete. Major progress was made, however, in the removal of the plaster from the collapsed brick and its consolidation, and the reconstruction of parts of the scenes was commenced.

The register below the springing of the vault is decorated with a scene showing a procession of priests bringing offerings to figures of Tutu and Neith (Kaper 1997, 87–137). Although it has been badly damaged by deliberate defacing of the figures, many pieces were found in the rubble and the sand below it. Amongst these fragments were several which show that the scene in fact continued across the face of the niche, which had been closed with plaster at the time the room was decorated. Hence, rather than being a niche it should be identified as a small, sealed crypt. In its base there is a small circular depression and a narrow cavity projects into the rear wall at base level; there is no trace of its original contents.

Beneath the levels of collapsed vault and wall within Room 1 there was a deposit of sand and then deposits overlying the original floor that clearly illustrate the reuse of the room for non-religious purposes. Here were found a hearth surrounded by accumulations of straw and a woven-fibre mat, which may have been used as an animal blanket (Plate 10). Pottery associated with this material is of the fourth century. It is probable that the graffiti on the western end of the north wall of the room (Bowen, Hope and Kaper 1993, 20; Kaper 1999) and the defacing of the pharaonic paintings were contemporary with such reuse.

2.2.2 1995–96 and 1996–97

Work was again focused within Room 1, the westernmost of the two rooms; in the 1995–96 and 1996–97 seasons the eastern half of the room was excavated down to the upper layers of collapse (Kaper this volume b, Plate 1). This contains sections from the lower part of the vault, which was decorated with three registers in pharaonic style. Removal of this layer revealed much of the north, south and east walls, including the doorway into Room 2 on the east. The walls carry classical decoration of alternately coloured panels with female heads set within squares topped with birds at their centres. The drawing of one of the birds preserves its black outlines showing it to be drawn in pharaonic style. On the northern doorjamb, facing into the room, a male figure in Egyptian style is painted at the same level as the classical panels (Plate 11). The east wall south of the door preserved another representation of Tutu as a sphinx upon the sign for the union of the two lands of Egypt (*smn3-t3wy*). Several fragments from the decoration of the south side of the vault have yielded paintings that confirm the identity of the shrine as a *mammisi*. The importance of such structures within temple theology in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods particularly accounts for the elaborate decoration accorded to this shrine, which far exceeded that of the Main Temple itself. The *Ismant el-Kharab mammisi* is amongst the last to have been built in Egypt. A larger area of the collapsed pharaonic decoration was lifted in 1996–97 than in previous seasons enabling a more thorough reconstruction. The results relating to the decorative scheme in general are described by Kaper (this volume b).

Amongst the numerous blocks from the vaulted roof of the shrine that preserve classical decoration comes a large section from the centre of the room (Plate 12). This was decorated with a female bust within a circle upheld by small human figures; on either side of this central design the vault was decorated with geometric designs with floral and human elements (McGregor this volume). The bust is preserved only below the head; the figure wears an undergarment and a shawl, a necklace and has long tresses. Her identity is uncertain. Surrounding the bust within the circle is a polychrome segmented motif.

2.3: Shrine II, D/3: 1995

This structure is located on the north side of the Main Temple, separated from it by a corridor, and abutting the inner temenos wall (Figures 5 and 8). In its final form it comprised four main rooms. The two on the east, Rooms 3–4, are on the same axis and interconnected, with doors
Plate 10  Shrine I (D/2): remains of squatters’ activity, looking south-west.

Plate 11  Shrine I (D/2): decoration on the east wall north of the door, looking east.
Plate 12  Shrine I (D/2): fragment of the painting from the centre of the vaulted roof.

Plate 13 Shrine II (D/3): Rooms 3 and 4 looking west; the remains of the vault is over Room 2.
Figure 8  Shrine II (D/3): Plan (drawing by J. Dobrowolski).

Plate 14  Shrine II (D/3): remains of decorated plaster on the inner face of the north wall.
in the centres of their east walls. Room 3 has a niche located approximately in the centre of its rear wall (Plate 13). This has been re-cut on at least one occasion; a second niche in the same wall to the north is partly blocked by the north wall of the room. The door in the eastern wall of Room 4 leads into a large open space on the north of the colonnade, another in the south-western corner of the room opens into the corridor north of the temple, and a third in its north-eastern corner leads into a corridor that runs the length of the two rooms. The walls of the south-eastern corner of Room 4 are fitted with open cupboards. The corridor is divided into two spaces, Rooms 5 and 6, by a door; a door in the western end of its north wall originally provided access to structures between the inner and outer temenos walls. At the eastern end of Room 6 there is a small pot oven and the floor around it had considerable accumulations of ash and chicken feathers. The north wall, above the oven, preserves a small section of plaster painted with parts of a green panel design below a foliate-scroll motif (Plate 14) of the same design as occurs in Shrine III. This may indicate that the entire inner face of the inner temenos wall from the east wall north of the gateway, along the north wall of Shrine III to Shrine II was originally decorated with this design.\textsuperscript{13}

The other two rooms, 1 and 2, are located to the west and are side by side. They were both originally accessed from a corridor on their east, which was entered via a door opening off the north corridor of the Main Temple into Room 1. There was no direct communication between these two rooms and those on the east in the last phase of the use of this building. At some stage in their use a wall was constructed blocking access to Room 2; entry was then gained by a door cut through its west wall, which is certainly a late feature. In the floor of this room there are scars from narrow earlier walls that have been removed and plastered over, and the lower parts of the south and west walls include irregularly-shaped stones. Although Rooms 1–3 were clearly all barrel-vaulted, only Room 2 preserved a part of this vault (Plate 13). At floor level in Room 2, in the north-eastern corner, a mud storage basin was found; it measures 33 cm high, has an internal diameter of 73 cm at the base, and its walls are 3–4 cm thick. The other main architectural elements of Shrine II are a staircase (Room 7) opening off the south end of the corridor that gives access to the western rooms, leading to the roof of Room 3, and a large cupboard (Room 8) under these stairs opening of the temple’s north corridor.

The structure would seem to have been religious in its original layout, which does not resemble that described above, but there were numerous alterations and additions made over time (Dobrowolski herein), and it certainly witnessed domestic activity in the late fourth century. This was made abundantly clear not only by artefacts found within it but also excavations carried out immediately to the east of Room 4. Here large amounts of domestic refuse were found within ash, including large quantities of pottery. The majority of the sherds derive from large storage jars and kegs, many with resin coatings on the

\textsuperscript{13} For the significance of this section of decoration in reconstructing earlier phases of the layout of the temple see Dobrowolski this volume.
Excavations in the Settlement of Ismant el-Kharab in 1995–1999
Figure 9  Shrine II (D/3): Gilded-wooden naos from bin in south wall of Room 4 (drawing by B. E. Parr). Scale 1:4.
Excavations in the Settlement of Ismant el-Kharab in 1995–1999

Figure 10  Shrine III (D/4): Plan (drawing by J. Dobrowolski).

Figure 11  The East Gateway (D/9) with Gate North 1–4 and Gate South 1–3 (drawing by J. Dobrowolski).
was on mud-brick collapse some 65 cm above the latest floor. They had been positioned here intentionally, but why is not clear. The upper floor of this shrine comprised compacted earth, and it was higher on the east than the west, where a deliberate low mound had been created. Into this mound a mild s-shaped channel had been cut and lined with fourth-century potsherds. It runs north-south and is 50 cm from the east wall (Figure 10). At the southern end, which is higher than the northern end, there is an irregularly-shaped depression and a bowl is set into the northern end of the channel. The bowl was obviously intended to receive whatever flowed along the channel, but there is no evidence to indicate what this might have been. It is clearly a late feature not related to the primary function of the room.

The division of Rooms 2 and 3 would also appear to be of a similar date. The added wall in Room 3 stands 90 cm high and is 18–20 cm thick. Access to the eastern part of both rooms was impeded by walls of uncertain height that delineated a rectangular area immediately inside the door. The floors associated with these features and the dividing walls are contiguous with the upper floor in Room 1 into which the channel is cut. When this floor was laid, low brick benches were built against the northern, south-western and north-western walls of the room. Room 1 had a series of superimposed earth floors above two of white plaster. Excavations in the south-eastern corner of this room revealed deposits associated with the construction of the shrine below the gypsum floors, amongst which was pottery similar to that found dumped under the houses of Area A and in the lowest deposits of Area B (Hope 1987, 170 and Figure 5; Patten 1999, 87–8), and in Area C (Dunsmore this volume). This material may be ascribed to the first-second centuries CE.

An interesting selection of objects was discovered in Shrine III. These include nine fragments from wooden boards inscribed in Greek, three of which join, 30 Greek ostraka, nine reed pens and fragments from several others. Whilst the number of ostraka discovered is not unusual, the concentration of inscribed wooden boards and pens is atypical for this part of the site. The text upon the wooden board reconstructed from three fragments has been identified by Dr Worp as a school exercise, as has that upon one of the ostraka. The possibility that scribal activity took place in Shrine III contemporary with the final stages of use of the temple, maybe associated with teaching, seems reasonable in light of these finds. One fragmentary board deserves special comment as it preserves four lines of Homer's Iliad, more specifically Book XII, lines 294–7 (Hope and Worp 1998). Other works of classical authorship are rare from Ismant el-Kharab; to date only the three Cyprian Orations by Isocrates (Worp and Rijksbaron 1999) and a Greek ostrakon containing a mythological story about Kyknos, son of Poseidon, have been found. A sandstone offering

14 The former from the kitchen of House 2 in Area A and the latter from the area immediately east of Shrine II in the Main Temple complex.

2.5: Gate North 1 and 2, the North-Eastern Corner of the Forecourt and the North Colonnade Columns: 1995 and 1995–96

The removal of wind-blown sand from the area immediately south of Shrine III in the north-eastern corner of the Forecourt, designated OA1, commenced in 1995 and was continued in 1995–96. Below this was mud-brick collapse from the surrounding structures and within which were sections from the northern colonnade. In the 1995 season part of the papyriform capital from the second column in the colonnade was found, painted with a motif resembling a palm frond. One section from the shaft of the column showed that it had been painted red below a horizontal border that contained a polychrome vine motif on a white ground. During the work in 1995–96 other sections from the colonnade were found amongst the wall collapse as were sandstone blocks probably from the dismantling/collapse of the inner East Gateway. The collapse lay upon the floor of the court, which slopes down from the entrance to Shrine III into the Forecourt.

1995–96 also saw the excavation of the stairway that abuts the inner East Gateway, termed Gate North 1, the entrance into Gate North 2 and more of the north-eastern corner of the court (Figure 5; Plate 15). The stairway comprises three sets of four steps, some with wooden beams set into their corners, separated by short half-landings; they undergo two 90 degree turns before reaching the roof of Gate North 1 (Figure 11). There is a deep open cupboard, originally with three shelves, beneath the uppermost half-landing at the top of the stairway. Within this were four ceramic vessels. A low bench abuts the exterior wall of this room.

The small recess that fronts the entrance to Gate North 2 contains a low mud-brick platform off which the door into the room opens (Figure 10). This room contains wind-blown sand and some brick collapse from its barrel-vaulted roof. In the north-eastern corner on the roof there are the remains of several rectangular mud-brick basins. The chamber itself awaits clearance. Where the southern end of the wall that forms the porch abuts the first column of the north colonnade traces of the painted-gypsum plaster upon the column are preserved. This shows an upper horizontal band containing a vine motif between black lines, comprising green leaves attached to
a red and green stem, and red tendrils alternating with bunches of grapes coloured yellow with red outlines. It is 15 cm high and the framing lines are 2.2–2.5 cm; below this are inverted V-shapes on a pale-green ground preserved 27 cm in height. They could not originally have been much longer; the left band of these is yellow and the right red. The composition of the plaster upon which the inverted V-shapes are painted is sandier than that under the vine motif and forms a distinct layer that overlaps it; the two may not, therefore, be contemporary. A similar situation was noted in relation to the decorated shaft found south of Shrine III (above). On the front of the column the original decorated plaster has gone (Plate 15); here mud plaster patches the damaged area and serves as the base for another layer of white plaster that extends onto the walls of the door into Shrine II. The column is preserved 2.855 m in height above the upper mud floor of the court; the top of the vine motif is 1.975 m above the floor. At the base of the column shaft there is a single horizontal rib and the shaft stands upon a pedestal 90 cm wide and 20 cm high.

The second column in this colonnade differs from the first. It stands upon a pedestal, but the shaft has a lower square rib and then a low rounded one; these features are coated with white gypsum plaster. Beneath this, however, another layer is visible. The features of the base of the shaft are the same as those in the outer plaster, but better preserved; the upper rib is painted red. This indicates that there is a degree of variation in both the modelling and painting of the columns. The columns at the western end of the southern colonnade stand upon a pedestal and have a double, angled rib at the base of the shaft; they are coloured green.

2.6: East Gateway, D/9: 1995–96

The East Gateway into the temple is located between Shrines III and IV, and lies on the central axis through the Main Temple (Figure 5); it was the main point of entry into the structures within the Inner and Outer Temenos enclosures. In fact, excavation has revealed two stone gateways each set within the mud-brick temenos walls; they are termed the Inner and Outer East Gates (Figure 11; Plate 16). They are of similar size, approximately 4 m wide and 4 m deep, and they are set 3 m apart. The inner gate stands to a maximum height of 2.25 m at the eastern end of the northern section and the outer gate to a height of 1.85 m at the western end of its northern section. Both are constructed of sandstone, but have limestone paving, and the area between them is also paved with limestone for the width of the doors and then with sandstone. Earth floors covered this paving. The use of limestone here is unique, otherwise it was only used for sculpture (Hope 1998, 814–9). Neither gate preserves any trace of decoration. Although some large blocks of sandstone were found during clearance in the region to the west of the gates, no fragments from lintels or cavetto cornices have been discovered. Pivots are sunk into the eastern end of the northern reveal of each gate. The Inner Gate is built within the Inner Temenos and the Outer Gate is within the Outer Temenos. The latter extended the area of the temple complex by approximately 5 m on its north, south and east, but on the west the two walls are almost adjacent. The area between the two temenos walls contains mud-brick chambers that can be accessed from doors opening between the two gates (Plate 17) and others at various places through the Inner Temenos wall. None of these chambers has been examined. They are preserved to two storeys in height in the area between the two stone gates, where they have unfortunately suffered from much collapse but also considerable burning. The arrangement of rooms adjacent to each gate is similar: the room adjacent to the Inner Gate on the north (Gate North 1) contains a stairway and it is probable that its counterpart north of the Outer Gate (Gate North 4) does also. At a distance of 4 m on either side of the Outer East Gate the exterior face of the Outer Temenos is set back slightly. This coincides with the width of the rooms that flank the gate and may have been intended to create the impression of a pylon. It is possible that the same effect existed in the Inner Temenos but this is obscured by later adjoining walls.

The brick collapse that filled the area between the gates contained numerous pockets of ash and charred material, and the walls of the rooms immediately to the south are badly burnt. The majority of the artefacts found amongst the collapse were of a domestic nature, and much of the ceramic material was of the fourth century. Amongst the finds, however, were two limestone feet from a statue or statues. The style and workmanship of the pieces are identical to that of another found within the Portico of the temple, whence also come other fragments from limestone statues (Hope 1998, 814–9). The feet and several fragments appear to derive from life-size figures of Isis or Isis-Demeter and may have been erected atop the pedestals that front the Portico (Worp and Hope this volume). Another item of exceptional interest is a baked clay tablet of oval shaped with text incised into it in Greek. The content of the inscription is economic and of great interest, but the object itself is the first of its type of Roman date to have been found in Egypt (Worp and Hope 2000). A series of ostraka inscribed in Greek were found in the fill, mostly incomplete or illegible; near floor level was a terracotta head of Harpocrates (Stevens this volume).

Confirming the evidence from the domestic material that the region of the East Gateway witnessed a change of function in the fourth century, as with many other parts of the temple, are a series of stone ‘seats’. There are four positioned against the inner (western) face of the Outer Gate on both the north and south, and single ones within the western end, on the north, of the Outer Gate, and the northern inner (eastern) face of the Inner Gate (Plates 16 and 17). Those against the Outer Gate consist of narrow rectangular slabs of sandstone set upon mud plaster, while that against the Inner Gate has a circular upper
section on a rectangular base carved from a single block of sandstone. It has three depressions in its upper face. It is unlikely that these relate to the activity of any temple gate-keeper. Access to the area between the gates from the east was blocked at some stage by a mud-brick wall set on the sill of the east end of the Outer Gate (Plate 16); this must post-date the use of the temple for religious purposes.

2.7: Shrine IV, D/5

2.7.1 1995

This balances Shrine III, being located in the south-eastern corner of the Inner Temenos; it was also built into the colonnade and comprises three rooms (Figure 5). The large rectangular room, Room 1, is situated on the west and is entered through triple doors in its west wall. This entrance system parallels that into the outer room of Shrine I located in the south-western part of the Inner Temenos. It is possible that the function of Shrine IV is, therefore, related in some way the Shrine I, the *mammisi*. There is a single niche in the centre of the eastern wall of the room and doors at each end of this wall provide access to two smaller, rectangular rooms, 2 and 3, located side by side.

The excavation of Shrine IV reached only a preliminary stage, with the clearance of surface sand. This revealed much mud-brick collapse from its walls and also that the shrine's walls preserve elaborate classical-painted decoration. Only the upper parts of this were revealed. Rooms 2 and 3 appear to have two layers of white gypsum plaster. The outer layer in each room seems to be decorated with a vine-leaf border above a panel motif on a red ground; the nature of the decoration upon the second layer has yet to be determined. The walls of the outer room carry different designs and only that upon the south wall was exposed sufficiently to enable identification. Here are octagons connected to squares drawn in yellow outline upon a deep-red background; the octagons are framed with a wave motif and there are bowls of fruit within the squares. Unfortunately, the walls throughout are in a very bad state of preservation; major conservation will be necessary before and during excavation.

2.7.2 1995–96 and 1996–97

The upper collapse was removed from Room 3, and areas along its northern, eastern and southern walls have been cleared to various depths. This work was carried out by the conservator Laurence Blondaux who describes the treatment of the plaster elsewhere in this volume. This has
revealed that there are, in fact, two layers of painted plaster over an original white layer upon all walls excepting that which divides Rooms 2 and 3. Here there are only the two outer layers. This would indicate that originally there was only one eastern room; this parallels the situation to the north of Gate North 1, though that room, Gate North 2, is larger than the original eastern room of Shrine IV (Figure 5).

The outermost of the decorated layers has a coffer-design with birds and floral motifs upon a deep-red background. This design occurs only in Room 3 of the shrine and is well-preserved only on its north wall. An upper border with a lozenge motif only would seem to have been painted on the sections of the second layer of plaster that have been revealed on the eastern and southern walls of Room 3. While the lowest layer of plaster was not painted, at some stage it received a series of dipinti. On the east wall south of the central niche are black ink drawings of a cult image of Seth, a small figure of Tutu as a sphinx and a vulture with wings outstretched. On the south wall there is a single bust of Bes, bearded and wearing a feather crown. These depictions confirm the identification of the structure as a shrine; they are discussed in this volume by Olaf Kaper and the classical paintings are described by Helen Whitehouse.

2.8: The South Gateway: 1995–96

The South Gateway is located equidistant between Shrines I and IV within Temenos 1 (Figure 5). It is 1.35 m wide and fronted by a small porch formed by two mud-brick walls 1.35 m and 1.39 m long that project into the Inner Temenos wall, and which are 1.70 m apart. The area between these walls and around them contained wind-blow sand with some brick collapse, and below this within the porch is a large pit cut through its floors. This reveals the construction details of the gateway. The temenos wall in the door is built upon a rough stone wall 48 cm high. The walls of the porch extend to the same depth as this wall and sit upon a mud-brick floor that appears to extend under the stone wall. The interior faces of the porch are white-plastered down to this floor level. It would, therefore, appear that there was a step down into the porch, and thus the Inner Temenos, from the south. The entrance was closed with a door, presumably of wood, which was locked from the inside by a large bolt that fitted into the western wall of the porch 92 cm above the top of the stone wall.

Traces of a second mud-brick floor occur 30 cm above the first and on this level there is a door-sill at the northern entrance to the porch. A second layer of white plaster coats the interior walls of the porch down to this floor level. At some stage the entrance through the temenos wall was blocked with mud bricks, a maximum of nine courses of which are preserved.

The inner face of the temenos wall and the outer faces of the walls of the porch are coated with white plaster and painted in polychrome with a foliate-scroll border above green panels. This design appears to be the same as that in Shrine III and the section from Shrine II; a small section of a painted green panel with a floral spray radiating from the centre to each corner was found upon the wall south of the large niche, due south of the axial door into the Main Temple. The interior face of the Inner Temenos wall to the west of the South Gateway preserves the same decoration as far as the entrance into Room 2 of Shrine I. This seems to prove that at one stage the entire eastern section of the Inner Temenos wall supported classical-style panel and scroll decoration.

An interesting feature of the construction of the walls of the South Gateway is the variety of differently-coloured mud bricks and mortars that occur. These coincide with different walls or sections thereof and may indicate separate construction phases or modifications of the original layout. The same situation pertains in other parts of the complex, especially noticeable in the western end of the northern wall of the Inner Temenos. Alternatively, different sources of both the mud for the bricks and the mortar could have been used contemporaneously, producing different shades; however, the composition of the bricks also varies.

3: Other Parts of Area D

3.1: D/8: Between the Inner Temenos and the Wall of Enclosure 1

A peculiarity of the extension to the Inner Temenos by the Outer Temenos wall is that the latter cannot be traced at the western end on the north (Figure 5). Instead, in this region there is a complex of mud-brick structures that extends from the Inner Temenos wall to the wall of Enclosure 1 in which the entire temple complex is set. Before excavation commenced it was assumed that this building predated the extension of the Outer Temenos and possibly even the construction of the Inner Temenos wall, which deviates to avoid several of its rooms. It was hoped that in excavating here some evidence for structures earlier than the temple might be found. This work commenced in the 1995–96 season and continued in 1996–97.

The area appeared to contain an open court with three rooms (1–3) on the west and six (4–8 and 14) on the east. A lane separates this block from a row of rooms against the wall of Enclosure 1 and provides access to the structures west of the Main Temple. Clearance of surface sand (Figure 12), however, showed that the court comprised three distinct areas (Rooms 9–11), that the northernmost, Room 11 communicates with the lane to the north, and the southernmost, Room 9, leads to the structures west of the Main Temple (Figure 5). Rooms 1–3 form a discrete block to which access was from the west; the eastern block of rooms is entered from the northern lane through Room 8. It is evident that the rooms form two distinct groups and that the northern wall of the Outer Temenos has been cut back for the erection of the eastern block. Whilst the area appears to be domestic or for storage, it is not clear if the two groups of rooms were contemporary; both have undergone various architectural modifications.
Figure 12 D/8: Plan of fourth-century domestic complex (drawing by J. Dobrowolski).

Plate 18 D/8: Copper-alloy ewer from roof of Room 1 after conservation (31/420-D6-1/D/8/1).
Plate 19  D/8: Room 2 showing sections from a wooden window frame.

Plate 20  D/8: Room 3, pottery vessels embedded into the earth floor north of mud basin.
Excavation began with Rooms 1–3. As throughout the entire area, the fill comprised sand covering substantial deposits of mud-brick collapse from the walls and roofs. Entrance was via a door at the south end of the west wall of Room 2; this room may have been open to the sky or flat-roofed, though evidence for the latter is scant, only a few sections of date-palm logs being found. Rooms 1 and 3 are both barrel-vaulted; Room 3 is unusual in being vaulted from east to west with the vault built against the longest walls. In fact, there is evidence that this was not the original roofing and the base of a window remains in the west wall of the room at surface level that has been blocked, presumably when the vault was constructed. In the vault fill adjacent to the west wall three intact, ceramic vessels were found, one a large barrel-shaped water keg. In the fill on the east side a bronze coin of year 18 of Antoninus Pius (156 CE) was found. Almost at surface level in the doorway into Room 1, amongst brick rubble, was a considerable quantity of very small fragments of inscribed papyrus that had probably been blown into the room. Most of the vault of this chamber survives. A complete one-handled copper-alloy ewer was found on the roof in the south-western corner (Plate 18).

Architectural features within these three rooms are few. An open cupboard with three shelves is set into the west wall of Room 2 north of the door (Plate 19) and a staircase opens off its south-eastern corner. This room was not excavated because of the instability of its eastern wall. At floor level in Room 2 the sections from a wooden window-frame were found (Plate 19). In the south-eastern corner of Room 3 there is the lower part of a circular, mud storage basin, extant 21 cm high and with an internal diameter 69–74 cm, and against its northern side three ceramic jars were buried in the floor (Plate 20). Each of these had been covered with a ceramic lid and set into a pit, and covered with mud bricks. They simply contained earth fill. An interesting collection of bronze coins was found in the room.15 On the floor of the storage bin were three of Constantine I (covering 313–24) and wedged into the brickwork over the buried jars was one of Numerian (283–4); in the floor to the west were two fourth-century issues, one of Constantius II dating to the period 348–58. From deposits immediately overlying the floor, and which contained numerous potsherds, botanical and faunal material, came one of Maximianus (286–96), two pre-reform issues of Diocletian (284–96), another pre-reform issue, emperor uncertain, two of Constantine I dating to 318–24, two of Constantius II as Caesar (330–6), a Helena and a possible Valens (364–78).

Excavations below the floors of Rooms 1–3 succeeded in locating traces of earlier activity (Figures 7 and 12; Plate 21). The remains of a north-south wall 60 cm wide was found, preserved to only a few courses in height, at the level of the base of the west walls of these rooms and to their immediate east (Plate 22). Level with this remnant wall at various points within all of the rooms were deposits of animal dung; this material underlies the north and south walls of Room 1. In Room 2 the north-south wall seems to be built over another wall; this is certainly the case on the south, but on the north it is level with its upper two courses. The lower wall is 1.20 m wide, preserved to a height of 1.00 m and projects into the room 40 cm from the face of the north-south wall; there was no evidence that it extended further to the east (Plate 21). It sits upon Nubian basal clay and the material surrounding it to the height of the dung layer and base of the north-south wall is earth with some broken mud bricks. The two early walls are not at right angles to one another; the full width of the north-south wall was only determined at the south end of Room 1. This wall would appear to have been cut back when the rooms were built; it is roughly aligned with the Inner Temenos wall of the temple to the south. In addition to this, in the south-eastern corner of Room 1 the edge of what may be a well was found also cut into the basal clay (Plate 22). This lies due north of the wells that are located in the north-western corner of the Inner Temenos. The section drawing through that area and into D/8 (Figure 7) shows that the lower north-south wall of D/8 is approximately at the same level as the floors of the lower level of chambers surrounding the brick well in the Inner Temenos. The section east-west through Room 1 of D/8 also indicates the extent to which the basal clay has been cut into and that there has been considerable subsidence in this region.

Within the other parts of D/8 floor level was reached in Rooms 6–8 and 12–13. Room 8 is entered from the northern lane and provides access to Rooms 14, 4–7 and thence 12; from Room 12 the U-shaped court Room 10 is reached through a low-arched door in its south wall. It is assumed that Room 10 communicates with Rooms 9 and 11 but no doors have been revealed. Rooms 7 and 12 both have stairways with cupboards beneath. An imported Nile-silt amphora of fourth-century date was found in the Room 12 cupboard and in the Room 7 cupboard was a small pouch containing a bronze blade and four coins, one each of Licinius, Constantius II, Constans and Valens, thus covering the period 313–78 CE. All rooms were filled with wall and roof collapse. Room 13 lies due north of Room 3 across the laneway. Beneath its southern end traces of earlier wall were also revealed (Figure 7).

Substantial quantities of papyri inscribed mainly in Greek and a few in Coptic were found, as were several fragments from wooden boards inscribed in Greek. These occurred both in upper fill, in the collapse from roofs and also at floor level. Those from the latter context tend to be far better preserved; they come from Rooms 7, 8 and 12 on the east. Dr Worp comments upon the material as follows: The texts in question, to be dated almost without exception to the late 3rd and 4th century CE, are written mostly on papyrus, but there are also a number of Greek ostraka, and a few more fragments of wooden boards.

15 I owe the identifications of the coins to Dr Gillian E. Bowen.
Plate 21  D/8: Room 2 showing sub-structure wall, looking west.

Plate 22  D/8: Room 1 showing the western edge of a possible well.
Many of the papyrus fragments are much damaged, but even so a strikingly-large number of parts of Greek private letters occur; the better preserved letters refer to personal matters and contain, sometimes, enigmatic phrasings like ‘the (love?)-charm (sent?) to the brothers, which cannot be changed’ (P96.49). Furthermore, next to the fragmentarily-preserved private letters there are a number of smaller or larger fragments of private or official documents (e.g. petitions to some higher authority) deserving further study, as they yield pieces of very diverse, but always interesting, information about the ancient village of Kellis and its inhabitants. For example P96.1 fragment 08, contains a petition from a young woman to a certain Pausanias, a provincial strategos/exactor who was also a police commissioner, about the theft committed by her brother [!] of property belonging to a parental inheritance. Of special interest is a wooden board coming from Room 8; each side contains the text of an individual horoscope, one of which refers to a person born in the month Epeiph (day numeral lost) of the year 108 of the era of Diocletian, i.e. the summer of 392 CE. Next to the date according to the Alexandrian calendar there is also an alternative date according to the Egyptian calendar. Initial study of the text has already shown that apparently there is a conflict between the calendrical date of the birth and the astronomical positions of various planets vs. the signs of the zodiac as indicated in the text (see now de Jong and Worp 2001).

In addition to the horoscope just discussed, it may be noted that on the other side of the same board is another horoscope now dated to 388 CE, while from Room 4 come a further three, dating from 332, 337 and 364 (de Jong and Worp 2001).

3.2: D/10: Gateway into the West Temple

Due west of the Main Temple complex lies the West Temple (Figure 1; Knudstad and Frey 1999, 202–4). This small sandstone temple is dedicated to Neith and Tapshay (Kaper 1999, 73–4); it stands within its own complex and enclosure wall. The temple was investigated during the course of the survey of the site in 1981. Although the jambs of its doorways and the sanctuary were decorated there is little precise evidence for its actual date of construction, though its layout resembles that of the Main Temple (Hope 2001, 51–2). It was decided, therefore, to excavate the main sandstone gateway into its enclosure in the hope that it might preserve some inscriptions or reliefs to assist in dating of the temple. Unfortunately, the gateway was undecorated; this seems to be a feature of all of the stone gateways into the temples at the site.

Excavation focused upon the stone gateway itself, one chamber on its north, two on the south and an area due east of the stone gateway extending up to the exterior of the west wall of Enclosure 1 (Plate 23). The gateway itself is preserved to a height of 1.40 m on the south above the
remains of its stone floor. On the east the jambs are 1.13–1.15 m wide at the base and the are 1.35 m apart; the south section is 3.46 m deep and the north section is 3.11 m. It is, therefore, slightly smaller than the stone gateways into the Main Temple from the east but larger than its western gateway. Excavation to basal clay showed that a foundation pit for the gate was cut into the Nubian clay, and into this were set sandstone-foundation blocks upon which the jambs of the gate were built and which also supported the flagstones of the floor. Between these the pit was filled with sandstone rubble. The rooms flanking the gateway were also built upon the Nubian clay. In addition to being cut into the basal clay, the foundation pit was also cut through two salt-hardened clay deposits on its east that contained crushed sandstone. These pieces may have resulted from the dressing of the sandstone blocks that were used in the construction of the West Temple or the Main Temple. Sealing the foundation cut is a compact deposit of sand with small pieces of sandstone against the gateway and brick rubble on the east; over this various earth surfaces formed that represent the ground level at the time the West Temple was first in use. These surfaces were cut through to the depth of the basal clay when the west wall of Enclosure 1 was built. This confirms that this enclosure was erected only after the West Temple was built, and presumably also after the building of the Main Temple and its two temenos walls, as Knudstad surmised (Knudstad and Frey 1999, 196). The west wall of Enclosure 1 is preserved to a height of 40 courses. A doorway with an upper arch opens through this wall due south of the gateway into the West Temple, providing a means of communication between the two temple complexes.

The rooms on either side of the gateway were both originally entered from the west. At some stage the door into the room on the south was blocked and access was then only provided from the room to its south. Both rooms abutting the gateway have vestiges of original pale-green-painted plaster; no designs were visible on the pieces preserved, though elsewhere in the rooms surrounding the West Temple polychrome classical decoration is preserved. The exterior faces of their respective eastern walls are set back from the face of the gateway, and the same situation occurs in relation to the walls of the rooms adjacent to them. This would have produced a pylon-like effect in the same manner as on the exterior east walls abutting the gateways through the two temenos walls around the Main Temple. The enclosure wall of the West Temple incorporates brickwork from earlier structures, noticeably wedge-shaped column bricks, and the two chambers flanking the gate have been altered on several occasions. Although a few objects were found that relate to the original use of the temple, the majority were of seemingly domestic nature and attest the use of the area for non-religious purposes in the second half of the fourth century CE.

The excavations outlined above, and other studies included in this volume, have yielded data that extends considerably our knowledge of the occupation at Ismant el-Kharab. Whilst no structures or in situ material of the Ptolemaic Period have yet been discovered, the dating of several demotic inscriptions from the Main Temple (Bagnall et al. this volume; Tait this volume) confirms the evidence from the study of ceramics and decorated cartonnage (Schweitzer this volume) from the Kellis 1 cemetery, that the site must have been occupied during that period. Remains of domestic activity of the period may be found in Area C, possibly C/1, where the excavations have revealed parts of a settlement of the first to third centuries CE. This sector of the site, in addition to being residential, also witnessed metalworking and ceramic production, if not also glass and faience manufacture. Its period of occupation coincided with the building and development of the Main Temple and the West Temple, and also the ‘Civic’ Building in Area B/1.

It is possible that an earlier temple stood on the site of the Main Temple. This is indicated by architectural fragments found during the course of the excavation of that monument and the stone platform underneath its eastern end. The existing complex within the Inner Temenos underwent considerable extension and modification of its layout and decorative scheme during the approximately 200–250 years16 of its use as a centre for the worship of Tutu and his co-templar deities. This complex contained a considerable amount of classical decoration and it appears that the walls of the entire forecourt were originally painted with a classical-panel design topped by a foliate scroll. Similar paintings have recently been revealed on the walls of the temenos at Deir el-Hagar. In an early layout the Inner Temenos may have been quite different to its final form, as the excavations in Area D/8 and in the north-west corner of the Inner Temenos indicate.

The excavation of the Large East Church and the West Church (Bowen this volume) has revealed the extent to which the dominance of Christianity over the other religions practised at the site in the fourth century impacted upon its monumental character. Their building and use coincides with the development of the residential sector of Area A, the documents from whence clearly illustrate the changing religious beliefs of the inhabitants from the late third century and throughout the fourth century. Other parts of the site continued to be used, but the focus appears to have moved to Area A: thus the temples in Area D witnessed a dramatic change of function from the religious heart of ancient Kellis to domestic quarters, even animal stables, where considerable amounts of garbage also accumulated; the formal complexes of Area B saw similar changes. From the domestic structure of Area D/8 come

16 From the reign of Hadrian, whose name appears on the lintel from the main axial entrance into the temple, at least until 335, from which date comes the last reference to a priest of Tutu; this period may have been longer, extending into the mid-first century if the pedestal with the Nero inscription derives from this building and not an earlier one.
several Greek horoscopes, the latest of which provides also the last date from the site. Drawn up in 392, it provides concrete evidence that activity continued until the end of the fourth century, though it would appear in a much-reduced form. As yet it is still uncertain why the site was abandoned and the theoretical model that seems to suit the evidence best is that salination, following over-exploitation of water resources, and an increase in sand-dune build up, forced the residents to move elsewhere.

Appendix: The Coins from the 1995–96 and 1996–97 Seasons

Gillian E. Bowen

During the 1995–96 and 1996–97 seasons of excavation a total of 115 coins was found. The distribution and quantity from each area is as follows:

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With the exception of five specimens which were found on the final day of excavation in the 1997 season, all of the coins were cleaned, dimensions were recorded and identifications made where possible. The solitary issue from House 4 was struck by Constantius II between 347–58. The majority of coins from the Large East Church were heavily corroded and only 46 are identifiable. These range in date from the late third century, the earliest being an issue of Carus, 282–3, to a type that was struck by Valentinian I and Valens between 364–75. All of the coins from House 5 were cleaned and identified. One was struck by Licinius between 313–24, two by Constantius II between 347–58 and the latest specimen was minted under Julian, 355–63. The two coins found in the Main Temple were heavily corroded. No identification is possible for one as all of the features are totally illegible; however, the metrology attests an issue struck no later than the third century. No positive identification has yet been made for the second specimen. The obverse is completely worn but the faint outline of an eagle can be seen on the reverse. This type, together with the metrology, is suggestive of a late third-century issue. The issue from Shrine II dates to year 12 of Trajan, 109. Two other issues of Trajan were found in Shrine II in the 1995 season. One, a billon tetradrachm with Nike in flight was struck between years 1-4, 98-102, and is the earliest coin found at the site; the second is a billon drachma with Nilus reclining (Plate 24), is of uncertain date. Another billon drachma struck in year 12 of Antoninus Pius, 150, (Plate 25) was found at the rear of the temple in the same season. One coin from Shrine III is identifiable; it was struck in the year 340. Twenty-five coins from D/8 have been identified. These span the second to the fourth centuries: three issues date to the second century, six date to the late third century, six date to the period 313–30, two fall within the 330–5 time-frame, a further seven can be placed between 347–63 and there is a solitary issue of Valens, 364–78. This was found with three other coins in a leather pouch in the under-stairs cupboard of Room 7; the other coins are of Licinius, 313–20, Constans, 347–8 and Constantius II, 347–58. The coins from the Main Gate date to the mid-fourth century whilst those from the gate into the West Temple were struck between 313–20. All three specimens from the West Church date to the reign of Constantius II, 337–61, and the specimen found on the surface in Area B is a billon drachma struck in year 3 of Hadrian, 119.


Worp, K. A., this volume, Short Texts from the Main Temple, 333–49.

