



FRANCIS GEUS (1941 – 2005)

Francis Geus was still at the head of the SFDAS¹ (French Archaeological Unit of the Directorate General of Antiquities and National Museums) when I met him for the first time in Khartoum during the winter 1983-1984. I had been recently appointed professor in the University of Lille and he was to join me as a maître de conference one year later. I had asked him to visit together the island of Sai, concession of Lille University, and he nicely organized an unforgettable trip in the North of Sudan, allowing me so to discover many important sites on the way.

Francis had his first archaeological experience in Mirgissa in 1964, thanks to his professor, Jean Vercoutter who took an important part in the Salvage Campaign of Nubia. Three years later, he was sent to Khartoum in order to prepare the future SFDAS; he had then many opportunities to work on various places in Central Sudan and to take part in the survey directed by André Vila South

of Dal. But in 1972, he left Khartoum to join Vercoutter's expedition in Sai which was to become his proper field. In 1973-1975, he was appointed assistant in Lille University, while he finished his Doctorate on the Island of Meroe in the Napatan and Meroitic periods.

Since 1975 to 1984, Francis Geus directed the SFDAS, then officially created. After many field works, the salvage campaigns in Kadada, an archaeological site condemned to disappear by an important irrigation program, represented for him one of the most outstanding experiences of his professional life. First interested by the Napatan and Meroitic remains, he became quickly attracted by the environmental components in the Middle Nile and by the Prehistoric times and he constituted little by little a team in connection with several French and European laboratories specialized on paleobotanical

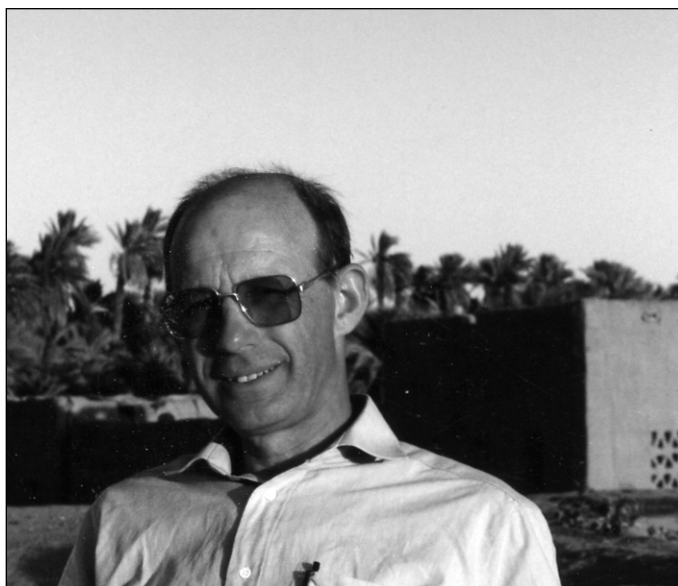
remains, archaeozoology, mineralogy and using new technologies.

In October 1984, he turned back to Lille and was then, until 1999, my closest colleague. He was certainly rather sad to be far from Sudan, but he compensated that frustration by teaching Nubian Cultures to the students with whom he had a stimulating relationship and by publishing in 1986 the first volume of a new publication which he called "Archéologie du Nil Moyen", as an homage to the ancient CNRS unit of Jean Vercoutter. This periodical, financed by the Foreign Office and by the Foundation Schiff Giorgini, was entirely the work of Francis and Carla Geus who assisted wonderfully her husband through all his undertakings.

In 1991, he decided to start again the digging of Sai, interrupted since 1981, and he enlarged the former project to the entire island. He was deeply impressed by the archaeological

wealth of this particular territory and he tried to associate geomorphologic and archaeological surveys in a spirit of pluridisciplinarity: he became more and more interested in the history of the regional environment and promoted the development of studies on the anthropology, evolution of landscape, archaeozoological and botanical evidences, etc. until his last campaign on the site.

In September 1994, we organised in Lille the VIIIth International Conference of Nubian Studies. This event gave us the opportunity of working more closely together and discussing many subjects. Driving me back kindly to the centre of the city, he told me several times his interests outside nubiology and I learnt to know him better. I encouraged him to finish the writing of his Habilitation which he presented successfully the 15th of November 1999 in front of a jury composed of Profs. Jean Leclant, Hans Nordström, Pierre Vermeersch, Charles Bonnet et myself.



¹ Section française de la direction des antiquités du Soudan



Relieved of that burden, Francis felt more strongly the homesickness of Sudan and he seized the first opportunity to live there anew. In 2000, he became again director of the SFDAS for the next four years and devoted a large part of his time to the study of Sai. Fallen ill during the spring 2004, he was sent back home, in urgency. We learnt his death in Kerma, last

January, while we were hosting a mission including his successor at the head of the SFDAS, Vincent Rondot, and my successor in Lille University, Didier Devauchelle, on the way to the site of Sai where the work will go on as he would have wished.

DOMINIQUE VALBELLE, LILLE 2005

Francis Geus war der Herausgeber einer der wichtigsten sudanarchäologischen Zeitschriften:

ARCHEOLOGIE DU NIL MOYEN

Fouilles au Soudan et en Nubie

Archéologie du Nil Moyen ist spezialisiert auf Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen, die im Mittleren Niltal südlich des 1. Kataraktes und den benachbarten Regionen durchgeführt werden.

Hrsg. Francis Geus

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