



Start of fieldwork for the ERC grant “UMMA” project



The first excavation season of the project “UMMA – *Urban Metamorphosis of the community of a Medieval African capital city*” has just begun. It is funded by a European Research Council Starting Grant awarded to Dr Artur Obłuski from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW). It involves a 5-year program of excavations at Dongola, Sudan. This year’s fieldwork season, directed by Dr Obłuski and Dr Dorota Dzierzbicka (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw) will last four months. In all, the team will spend 16 months in the field.

The team of researchers assembled by Dr Obłuski has an interdisciplinary character. It consists of archaeologists, epigraphers, documentalists and pottery specialists. During its work in Dongola it will also take advantage of the latest scientific methods in cooperation with specialists in the sciences, such as physics, biology and chemistry.

The “UMMA” project aims at analyzing the transformation process of the city of Dongola from an important Christian centre, the capital of the kingdom of Makuria, into a Muslim city. “In my PhD thesis I looked into the development of Medieval Nubian kingdoms. Now I will be researching their decline and the emergence of new societies” – explains Dr Obłuski.

In the current season the team will focus their research on the residential district from the 14th to 16th century – a time when Dongola underwent political, social and religious changes. Archaeologists think that such deep changes in the city’s society must have been reflected in individual households and families. That is why they will be investigating residential houses: their internal plans and fixtures as well as traces of their inhabitants’ everyday lives.

The history of PCMA UW in Sudan goes back to mid-20th century, to the rescue work by prof. Kazimierz Michałowski in Faras. Afterwards, he received a permit for work in Dongola. The excavations were first directed by an architect, Antoni Ostrasz, then – for a few decades by Dr hab. Stefan Jakobielski (IMOC PAS), followed by Prof. Włodzimierz Godlewski (University of Warsaw). Currently they are headed by Dr Artur Obłuski. Earlier this year the PCMA UW opened a branch in Sudan – the Polish Archaeological Unit in Khartoum.