



## ALIPH Foundation funds new PCMA UW project to revitalize the oldest mosque in Sudan

**The Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW) is launching a new cultural heritage protection project “Baraka: Revitalization of the Oldest Preserved Mosque at Old Dongola” funded by the International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH). The Old Dongola mosque is the oldest preserved mosque in the Republic of Sudan. The Baraka project aims to rehabilitate the building using the latest conservation methods and re-open it to local and international visitors with an engaging exhibition on Islamic heritage.**



Old Dongola, originally named Tungul, was the capital of the Kingdom of Makuria from the 5th to the 14th centuries. From the 16th century onwards, under the Funj Sultanate, it developed as a regional political center and hub for teaching of Islam. The Old Dongola Mosque, a building continuously used for 1100 years, is the only surviving edifice to have withstood these transitions and historical events.

The two-storey building, 12m high, stands on top of a sandstone outcrop, dominating the landscape. Originally built as a throne hall or church in the early 9th century, it was converted into a place of worship for Muslims in 1317. It served the communities for over 600 years, until 1967, when it was closed due to structural instability and the construction of new mosques in nearby villages.

A multidisciplinary team of Polish, Sudanese, and Japanese experts, led by Dr. Artur Obłuski, PCMA UW director and head of the archaeological expedition to Old Dongola, will work on the challenging tasks of documenting the building, stabilizing its structure, and opening it as a historical monument. Working with the Sudanese National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM), the team will include specialists from the PCMA UW, Warsaw University of Technology, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, and Poznan University of Life Sciences. The team will relocate a colony of bats, inhabiting the building, stabilize the structure and conserve the polychrome wall paintings and historical inscriptions on the walls.

The team already collaborates closely with local communities, including the local Imam and Sheikhs, to develop an exhibition space and engagement programs focusing on Islamic heritage of Old Dongola. Workshops and hands-on capacity



building programs will be part of the project, where young Sudanese experts will be trained in wallpainting conservation, and local residents and students will delve into engagement program design and visitor tours to raise awareness of heritage protection.

The ALIPH Foundation awarded a grant of over 1 million USD to the PCMA UW for implementing this three-year, holistic project. In the autumn of 2022, it also awarded an emergency relief grant for the project "[Emergency Measures to Preserve the Church of Archangel Raphael, Old Dongola, Sudan](#)".

Polish scholars have pioneered research on the Medieval Nubian Kingdoms in Sudan over the past seven decades; a PCMA UW expedition has been working in Old Dongola since 1964.

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Thanks to the support of ALIPH

*Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW) coordinates Polish archaeological research in the Eastern Mediterranean since 1959 (since 1990 under the present name). In recent years, it broadened its scope of interest into the Arabian Peninsula and the Caucasus. Currently about 20 projects are ongoing in Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Cyprus, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Georgia and Armenia. The PCMA UW also runs Research Centres in Egypt, Sudan, Cyprus and Georgia.*

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