

OLD DONGOLA 1993/94

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The 27th field season of Polish excavations at Old Dongola lasted from December 20, 1993 until February 21, 1994.¹ The work programme included excavations of three separate sites:

- Kom H - monastic compound located on the site of Christian cemeteries in the eastern part of the concession area (directed by Dr. S. Jakobielski);
 - Kom A - fortifications of Old Dongola (under the supervision of Prof. W. Godlewski);²
 - Kom E - situated east of the village of el-Ghaddar, site of the so-called Mosaic Church (EEC) (supervised by Dr. B. Żurawski).³
- In the close vicinity of this site, Kom F was partly explored (survey by Dr. K. Misiewicz) leading to the discovery of a small mud-brick church built on a typical "Nubian plan" (codenamed FC) and dated to the Late Christian period (12th-13th century).

KOM H

Work continued in the northwestern part of the Kom, where in previous seasons part of the monastery's main building, heavily

¹ The Mission comprised: Dr. Stefan Jakobielski, director; Prof. Włodzimierz Godlewski, Dr. Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, Dr. Bogdan Żurawski, Mr. Krzysztof Pluskota, archaeologists; Dr. Krzysztof Misiewicz, archaeologist and geophysicist; eng. Radosław Kostro, architect; Mr. Wojciech Chmiel, restorer; Miss Dobiesława Bagińska, draughtsperson; Mr. Marek Pietrzak, photographer. The Sudan Directorate of Antiquities was represented by Syd. Taha Abdalla Mohammed, member of the staff of the Conservation Laboratories of the National Museum, Khartoum. The excavations were financed by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University with special aid from the State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN).

² Cf. *infra*, separate report, p. 93f.

³ Cf. *infra*, separate report, p. 98f.

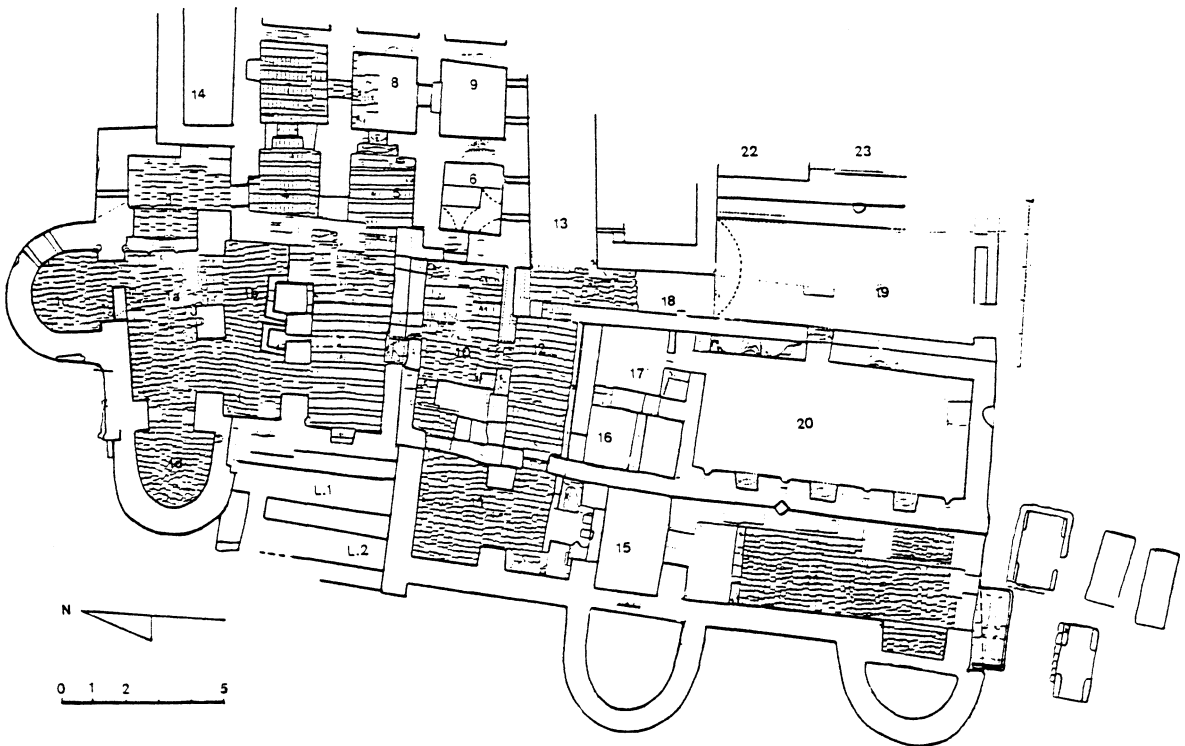


Fig. 1. Plan of the northwestern part of the Monastery. Drawing R. Kostro.

rebuilt and enlarged, had been excavated (Site NW).⁴ The gradual rebuilding started, it would appear, at the end of the 11th century and continued throughout the 12th and 13th centuries (Fig. 1). This season's work included clearing of a complex of rooms situated to the south of the excavated part of site NW, down to the level of the paving, viz. Rooms 16, 17, 15, 18, 21 and partly Rooms 13, 19, 20 together with the enclosure wall and a part of the Cemetery TWH (tombs: TWH 14-TWH 17, from the 12th century on). The southernmost part of this cemetery was excavated in the 1989 season.⁵ Seven consecutive stages of interior rebuilding and remodelling were identified, embracing a time span from the 11th until the late 13th century. The development in this part of the building was undoubtedly connected with consecutive architectural designs of the western gate of the monastery as well as the handy storerooms for provisions (Rooms 16, 17 and 21).⁶ Room 21 in the last period of occupation was utilized as a kind of dump, presumably used from the upper storey. Quantities of potsherds and even whole pots of Late and Terminal Christian periods were found, including several footed bowls with the owner's graffiti of two archimandrites of the Monastery, i.e. Lazaros and Marianos. The latter is mentioned in these inscriptions as the "archimandrite of the Holy Trinity", seemingly supporting the hypothesis that the Monastery was dedicated to the Holy Trinity. At least six murals representing the Trinity

⁴ For previous work at this site, cf. S. Jakobielski, Old Dongola 1991/92, *PAM* IV, 1993, pp. 102-106; id., Old Dongola 1993, *PAM* V, 1994, pp. 115-126.

⁵ *Ibid.*, and S. Jakobielski, K. Pluskota, B. Żurawski, Polish Excavations at Old Dongola, Twenty-fifth season, 1991/92, *Kush* XVI (1993), p. 294f.

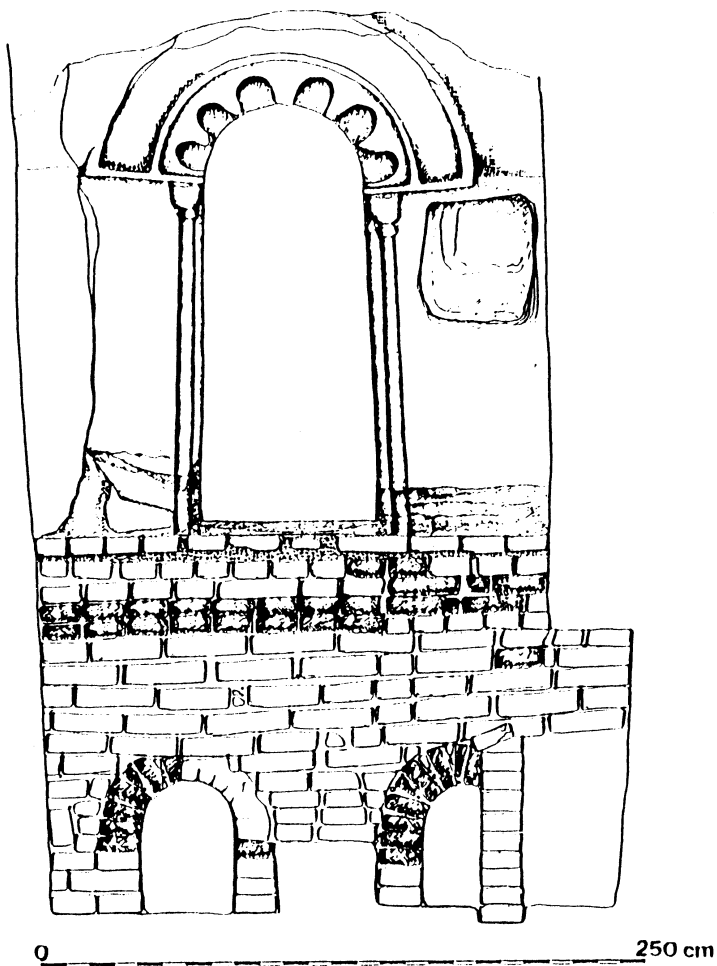
⁶ A large household area was located in the northeastern corner of the monastery compound, cf. B. Żurawski, The service area in the Northeastern corner of the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola. A preliminary report, *Nubica* 111,1, 1989-1993 (1994), pp. 319-360.

have been found on the walls of the part of monastery excavated so far. Lazaros, on the other hand, is mentioned in the same kind of graffiti as the "archimandrite of Pouk". A similar name (Pouko) associated with a monastery appears on the tombstone of Marianos, bishop of Faras (AD 1105-1138),⁷ but the monastery has not been identified. To the north of the famous crypt of archbishop Georgios (investigated during the past season⁸) with a set of religious and magical texts in Greek and Coptic covering its walls.⁹ The south wall contains a homily ascribed to Euodius, bishop of Rome (P. Morgan Ms 596, f.24v-25v) and the east one an unidentified as yet version of Transistus Mariae. Another two parallel crypts were discovered in Room 1A just below the portal in the doorway from Room 1A to Room 3 (Figs 2 and 3). Both contained five inhumations each; occasional rainfall flooding of the northern crypt has heavily affected the interior, introducing a thick layer of mud. The tomb equipment of the southern crypt comprised qullas (for water) and oil lamps accompanying each body. The richly decorated linen and cloth body wrappings are noteworthy. The walls of the two crypts were neither plastered nor inscribed. The crypts must have been used in the 13th century (and perhaps even later). Work did not proceed beyond the documentation phase, leaving the bodies untouched. The location of wooden altars was identified in Rooms 3 and 5 situated to the east of the crypts; in both cases the altars were placed against the eastern walls, providing decisive evidence for the commemorative function filled by this part of the building, where also pulpits (*ambos*) and portals (recalling a

⁷ Cf. J.M. Plumley, The stele of Marianos, Bishop of Faras, *Bull. Nus. Nat. Varsovie* 11 (1971), pp. 77-84; J. Kubińska, *Faras IV*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 38-40.

⁸ Cf. *PAM V*, pp. 121-122.

⁹ I am indebted to Father Mark Sheridan O.S.B. for identifying the Coptic texts thought to be apocryphal.



OLD DONGOLA '94 KOM H

sun dried brick
 burnt brick

Fig. 2. Shafts of the crypts in Room 1A and a portal above. Seen from the west. Drawing B. Żurawski.

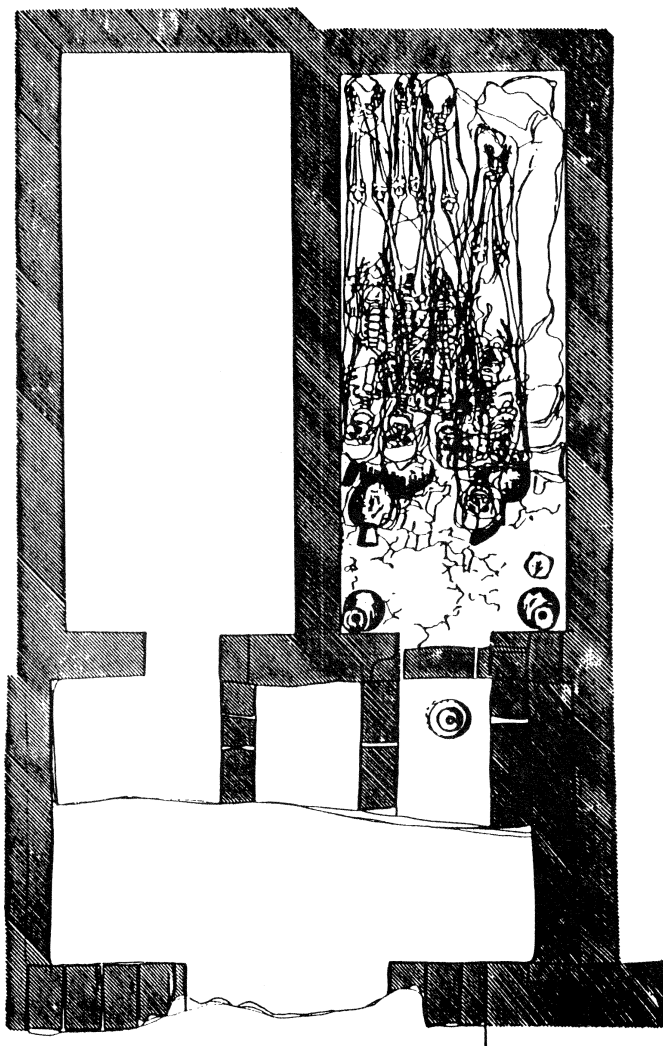


Fig. 3. Plan of crypts in Room 1A. Drawing B. Żurawski.

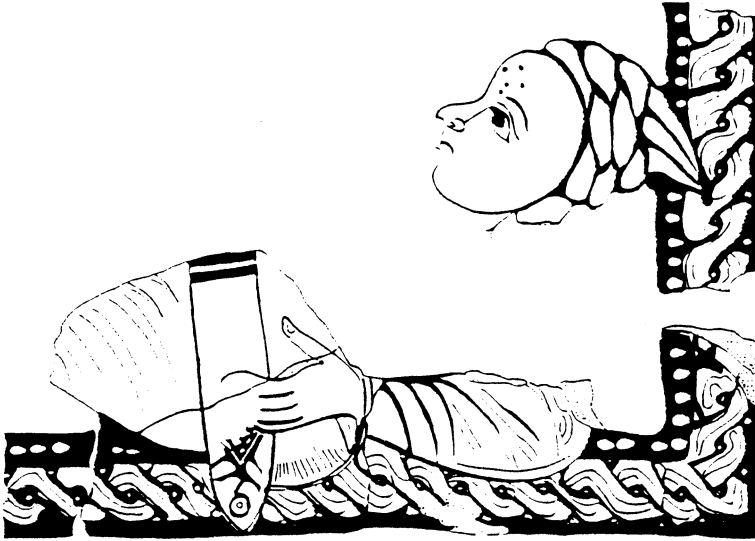


Fig. 4. Fragments of a terracotta screen sculptured and painted on both sides, with a representation of a resting warrior. 12th century AD. Drawing M. Martens-Czarnecka.

kind of iconostasis) existed. Such an arrangement allowed commemorative services to be held in the rooms. An important visitor's graffito was found in Room 9 in the older part of the Monastery. The text was concealed under a layer of white-wash introduced during a renovation carried out at the time of the erection of the mortuary complex of archbishop Georgios. It mentions the name of Chael (II), bishop of Faras, written no doubt on the occasion of his visit to the monastery. Chael was appointed bishop in AD 1097 (he died around 1125-1130), i.e., sixteen years before the death of Georgios in 1113. A major stage in the rebuilding of this part of the Monastery is thus dated very precisely.



Fig. 5. Fragments of a large marble tray. Drawing D. Bagińska.

As in the previously uncovered part of the monastery's rooms, interiors were decorated with mural paintings dating from the 12th and 13th century. Nine new paintings were uncovered. Murals of the 13th century merit attention. In Room 18 (corridor) there was a large (2.30 x 1.80 m) composition of Three Youths in a Fiery Furnace in excellent condition, pro-

vided with a painter's signature, Michaelkudda, recorded for the first time in Nubia. Two representations of the Holy Trinity found in the same room are of considerable importance for the iconography of Late period painting in Nubia. A decorative frieze running around Room 20 indicates the use of stencils by Nubian painters of the period. Epigraphic material from the monastery contained mostly graffiti (including a long text with several names of monks) in Room 21, also eight fragments of tombstones in Greek, seven ostraca and two scraps of parchment cards from codices in Greek and Old Nubian. Of great value are fragments of terracotta screens (Fig. 4) and window grilles, sculptured and painted on both sides, as well as a fragmentary marble tray (Fig. 5). A large deposit of Late Christian pottery from Room 21 provides grounds for a repertoire of vessel forms in use at the monastery in the 13th century. To the south of the northwestern part of the Monastery, five new tomb superstructures (numbered TWH 14-TWH 17) were uncovered in the TWH cemetery. All seem to date to the Late Christian period. The superstructure of Tomb TWH 17 built against the outer face of the south wall of Room 21 is preserved whole, plastered with white gravel-lime plaster. The top part of the structure is shaped to form an elaborate cross design.