

OLD DONGOLA

EXCAVATIONS 1997 - KOM A

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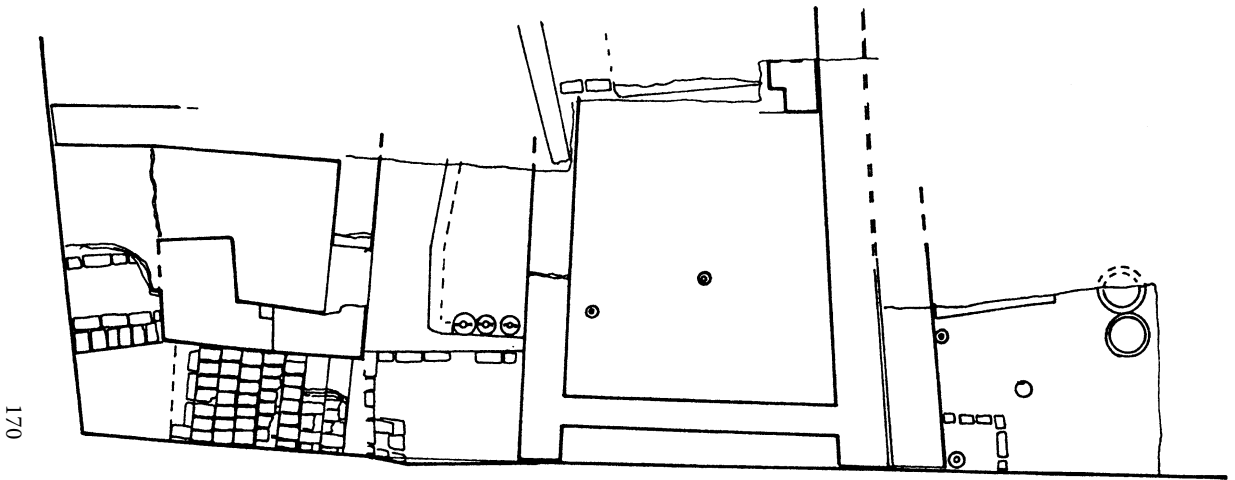
Excavation work on the acropolis of Dongola was conducted from February 1 until the end of the month¹ and constituted a continuation of a program began in 1990.² A trench opened in the previous season in the northwestern corner of the fortified settlement was now completed. On an area of 4 x 10m, the earliest layers of settlement were reached, revealing four main periods of occupation: 1) remains of the oldest houses; 2) house A.105 from the Early Medieval period; 3) a period when the area was used for domestic purposes; 4) post-Christian habitations (House A.101).

PERIOD I: THE OLDEST SETTLEMENT

The oldest structures were erected immediately on bedrock. They were uncovered only to a small extent, because of the limited area of excavations and the good condition of later architectural remains from period II. The buildings, presumably of a residential nature, were constructed of mud brick with red brick used for certain parts of the structure. House A.111, identified already in the 1996 season, was found to have been built 2.0 m away from the inside face of the fortifications which are contemporaneous with it. The space was not, however, a passage intended for communication, because a narrow room (48 cm wide between walls) was added to the house on the

¹ The work was carried out by the author in association with Ms D. Bagińska, Ms L. Badowska, and Ms M. Jaskulska, students of archaeology.

² W. Godlewski, Old Dongola. Kom A, 1996, *PAM VIII*, 1996 (1997), pp. 179-187.



*Fig. 1. Houses A.106 and A.105.
Drawing W. Godlewski.*



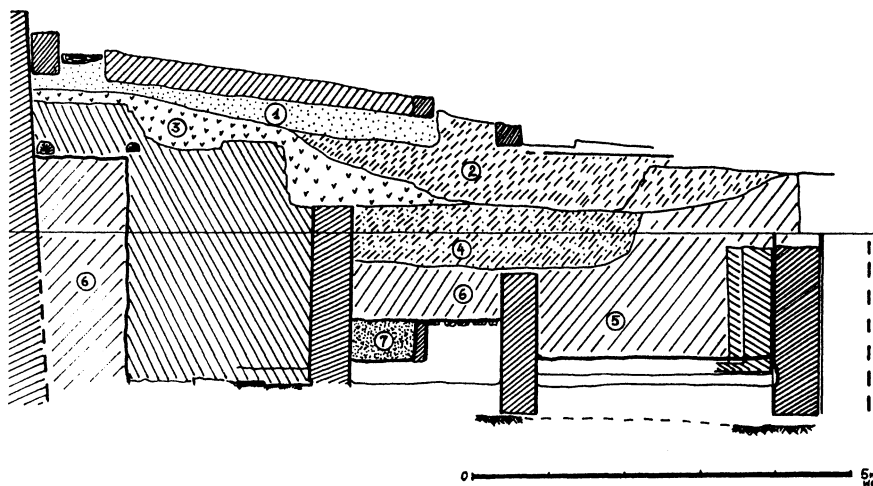
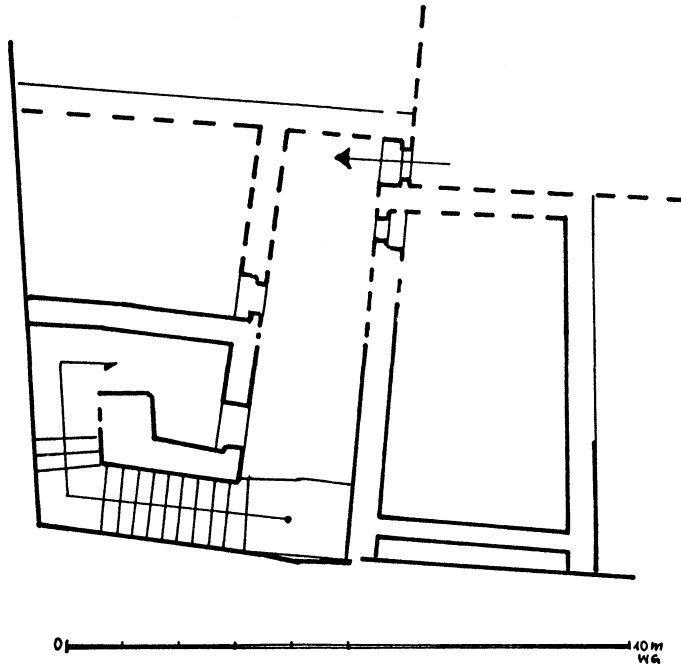


Fig. 2. Houses A. 106 and A. 101. N-S cross-section. Layers: 1. sand; 2. sand with organic material; 3. sand with ashes; 4. rubble, small fragments of brick, mortar, plaster; 5. rubble with sand; 6. bricks; 7. dust.
Drawing W. Godlewski.

west; this narrow room was connected structurally with a bathroom located on the upper floor - the only evidence uncovered to suggest that the house had been storied - and a low bench on top of which ashes were discovered. Pottery found in the vicinity of the walls represents early ware: small bowls of Red Ware with painted decoration in the form of a horizontal cream-colored geometric ornament on a black background; similar sherds had been found in the fill of the platform located to the west of the fortifications. The ware can be dated provisionally to the early 6th century.



*Fig. 3. House A. 106 - reconstructed plan.
Drawing W. Godlewski.*

PERIOD II: EARLY MEDIEVAL STRUCTURES

The early structures were dismantled almost entirely (the preserved walls do not exceed 40 cm in height) and the area was leveled. The new houses built in the area were aligned in a row and attached to the inside face of the defenses. Two houses were discovered in the trench (A.106 and A.105), their outer walls abutting each other, but neither was completely excavated. House A.105, which was more fully explored, occupied the very corner of the fortifications and was attached to both the western and northern face of the big wall. Its mud-

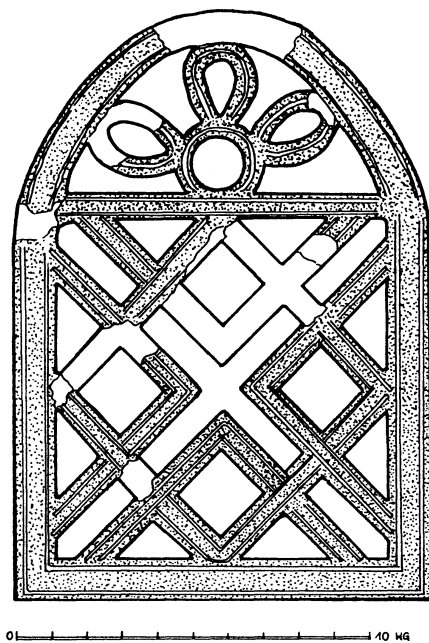


Fig. 4. House A.106. South wall founded on earlier structures (House A.111). Photo W. Godlewski.

brick walls were preserved to a height of 3.70 m. Only the three parallel rooms on the west, attached to the western defense wall, were cleared. The corner room contained a staircase leading to the upper floor. The interiors were finished in plaster. The eastern part of the house remains unexplored. Taking into consideration its location and its urban frame of reference, it can be assumed that house A.105 was accessible from the circuit street, in similarity to other early fortifications in Nubia, i.e., at Sabagura and Ihmindi.³ It was undoubtedly storied, but the actual number of floors remains uncertain. Large arched windows in the street walls on the level of the upper floor had

³ F.W. Deichmann, P. Grossmann, *Nubische Forschungen*, Berlin 1988, pp. 57-94.

terracotta grilles. Fragments of these were found in the room with the staircase. One of these grilles (Add.97.139) has been reconstructed almost whole: h.85 cm; w. 60 cm; th. 4.5 cm. It seems that the grilles were part of the original furnishings of the house which can be dated on the grounds of the tableware, found in the toilet shaft in the previous season,⁴ to the middle of the 7th century. The house underwent some rebuilding at one point in its existence, but the nature of the changes will be more apparent once the entire structure is cleared. The room next to the staircase



*Fig. 5. Window-grille, A.106.
East wall of the house
Drawing W. Godlewski.*

was filled with a big mastaba making use of three amphorae set in the western wall. Two of these had inscriptions on their shoulders and the upper parts of the body. Written in big buff letters were the names of persons and their offices, including the Bishop Maria. The way in which the name was written, without any clear indication of it having been abbreviated, does

⁴ W. Godlewski, *PAM VIII*, 1996 (1997), p. 183, fig.5.

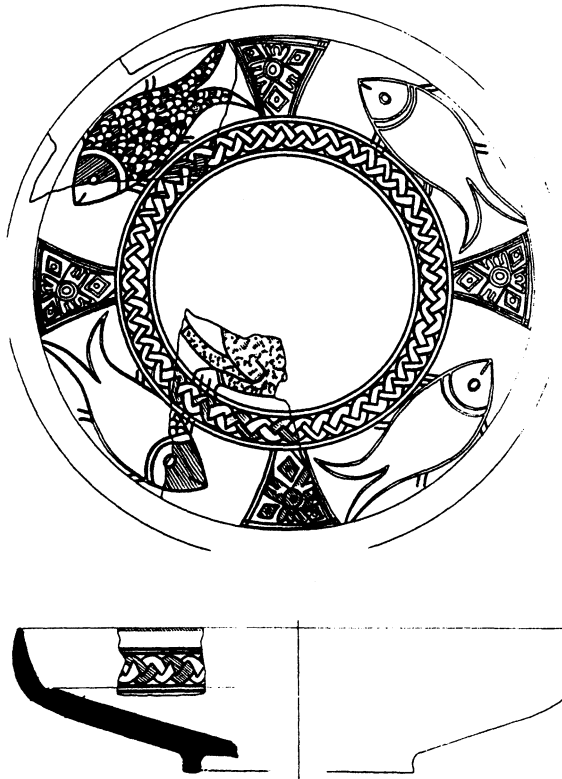


Fig. 6. Plate, Add.97.085. Reconstruction.
Drawing D. Bagińska.

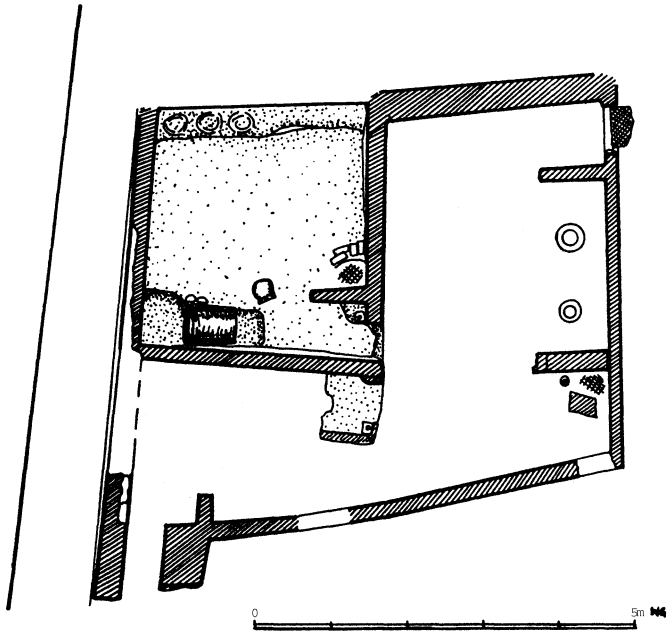
not exclude the possibility of a longer form of this astonishing name for example, Mariakudda.⁵ Much less doubts are aroused

⁵ H. Satzinger, Das Altnubische Nameselement -Kouda: "Diener"? [in:] *Intellectual Heritage of Egypt. Studies presented to Laszlo Kakosy* [=Studia. Aegyptiaca XIV], 1992, pp. 519-521.



*Fig. 7. Center stamp, floor of bowl, Add.97.216.
Photo W. Godlewski.*

by the bishop's identification with Dongola, although the town's name was not mentioned. The vessel is undoubtedly of local origin and can be dated to the turn of the 7th century, suggesting that bishop Maria was in charge of the Dongolan church at this time. The second of these inscriptions, written with the



*Fig. 8. Houses A.100 and A.101.
Drawing W. Godlewski.*

characteristic abbreviations, mentions the archpresbyter Michael Psate. Both seem to be addresses of a kind, written on amphorae filled with wine, presumably sent from the nearby vineyards in the Letti Basin. Some typical mudstoppers, with impressed grapevine leaves on the bottom and stamped letter and ornamental designs on top, were found in the fill inside the house. Based on the pottery evidence, it can be said that house A.106 was abandoned in the 10th century and that the whole district of the town was leveled and used for domestic

purposes, such as the large silos for dry products. Habitations once again appeared in this area in the 14th century. On top of the partly destroyed western defense wall and the leveled fill inside the walls, House A.101 was constructed along with a walled courtyard (A.102). The house, which was actually more of a guardhouse, was constructed as part of a general rebuilding of the northwestern corner of the fortifications. It is noteworthy that the soldiers stationed in the building still used wheel-made pottery, both tableware and storage vessels, that can be linked with the Terminal Christian Period. A similar house was discovered on the top of the northeastern bastion.⁶ The foundation fill of House A.101 (deposits above the ruined staircase of House A.105) yielded an ostrakon with a Greek text which Dr. Adam Łajtar⁷ has identified as the beginning of Psalm 26. The paleography of the text and its dependence on Old Nubian corresponds to the chronology of the layer in which it was found, and permits a date at the turn of the 13th century and perhaps even the beginning of the 14th century. It is, thus, one of the latest Greek texts to be found in Dongola and indeed in all of Nubia. It should be remembered that the Tower Church,⁸ which was uncovered in 1995 superimposed on top of one of the central bastions of the northern line of the fortifications, was undoubtedly still in use in the 14th century.

⁶ W. Godlewski, Old Dongola town fortifications, 1993, *PAM V*, 1994 (1995), 131, fig. 2.

⁷ A. Łajtar, Psalm 22,1-2 nebst der invocatio Dei auf einem Ostrakon aus Alt-Dongola (Sudan), *JJP XXVII*, 1997, in press.

⁸ W. Godlewski, Old Dongola. Kom A 1995, *PAM VII*, 1996 (1997), pp. 114-117.