

NCAM Director General Dr. Nigm ed-Din M. Sherif with Stefan Jakobielski (left) and Włodzimierz Godlewski, inspecting work on the ground floor of the Mosque Building, 1974



## DONGOLAN STUDIES: RESEARCH AND PERSPECTIVES

In 1964, having completed the salvage excavation of the cathedral at Faras (within the frame of UNESCO's Nubian Campaign), Kazimierz Michałowski was granted permission by Sudan's antiquities organization to continue research in Ancient Nubia. Dongola was the only logical choice after Faras in order to broaden the scope of Polish Nubian studies, which he spearheaded at the time.

Architect Antoni Ostrasz started with mapping the site. He opened trenches inside the Church of the Granite Columns (RC, Cathedrals 3 and 4), setting the tasks for the first two seasons of research (from 1964 to 1966). In 1967, Stefan Jakobielski took over as head of excavations and supervised the work for forty years. From 1990 his expedition concentrated on the site of the Monastery on Kom H, while another expedition, directed by Włodzimierz Godlewski, investigated the area of the Citadel (Jakobielski 2001a). In 2007, Włodzimierz Godlewski took over as head of the expedition. Excavation and restoration work has been concentrated in recent years on the Citadel, within the Monastery and inside the Mosque Building.

Of importance for understanding the Dongola agglomeration as a whole is other research conducted over the years at various points of the ancient town: exploration of the El Ghaddar necropolis by a Canadian expedition from the Royal Ontario Museum,

directed by Krzysztof Grzymski (1987), and by a mission from the Sudan Antiquities Service supervised by Mahmoud el-Tayeb (1994); investigations on Kom E in the neighborhood of the tumulus cemetery, by a team from the Research Center for Mediterranean Archaeology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, headed in the field by Bogdan Żurawski (1995).

The field survey carried out by the Southern Dongola Reach Survey (SDRS) of Bogdan Żurawski, encompassing the southern parts of the Dongola agglomeration, contributed to a better understanding of this part of the town (Żurawski 2003:106–117). Żurawski's aerial photographs of the site have also played a substantial role in a fuller recognition of site topography overall.

### KEY RESEARCH ISSUES

#### 1. Church architecture

P.M. Gartkiewicz's in-depth studies of the Old Church and Cathedrals 3 and 4, as well as initial research on Cathedrals 1 and 2 and the Cruciform Church, gave well grounded insight into church architecture at Dongola and its leading role in Nubian architecture overall (Gartkiewicz 1975; 1990). This is best exemplified by the observation, confirmed in further studies, that the churches of Dongola played an inspirational role in the construction of the cathedrals of Paulos and Petros in another major center

of the kingdom, in Faras. Gartkiewicz was also responsible for an overall vision of the dynamic and multidirectional development of Nubian architecture based on basilican and central complexes (Gartkiewicz 1980). Research on Nubian church architecture was continued by Włodzimierz Godlewski, who demonstrated the creative approach of the Dongolan milieu of architects and builders in drawing up plans for new cathedrals and in developing a new church plan superimposing a cross over a rectangle and adding projecting transept wings (Godlewski 2006a). Of particular importance is gaining an understanding of the role of commemorative monuments built on a cruciform plan, i.e., Building B.III on the Citadel (SWN) and the Cruciform Church (CC).

## 2. Civil architecture

Explorations of fortifications, palaces and houses of Dongola, by Włodzimierz Godlewski, have contributed a more rounded view of the town and its history, as well as insight into the role of the royal court for the development of the Dongola agglomeration (Godlewski 1982; 1991a; 1999).

## 3. Monastic architecture

Stefan Jakobielski's work on the Monastery on Kom H has highlighted the position of the monastery establishment in the life of the Dongolan community and its substantial contribution to the development of Makurite art (Jakobielski 2001b).

## 4. Wall paintings

Ongoing studies of murals decorating the monastic annexes, carried out by Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, have revealed the formal and thematic richness of Dongolan painting in the Late Kingdom of Makuria (Martens-Czarnecka 2001; 2011). Research by Dobrochna Zielińska and Włodzimierz Godlewski on the fragmentary paintings from commemorative building B.III and church B.V on the Citadel has led to the identification of royal painting ateliers working in the tempera technique from the 7th through the 11th century (Godlewski 2004a; Zielińska

2004; 2010). New paintings were recently uncovered inside the Mosque Building and inside the Royal Church on the Citadel (B.V).

## 5. Epigraphic studies

Initiated by Stefan Jakobielski, they are now being continued by Adam Łajtar, who has published all the Greek texts, as well as some of the Dongolan Greek–Nubian graffiti, furnishing his readings with extensive updated commentary (Łajtar 2003a; 2011; Łajtar, Twardecki 2003).

## 6. Cemeteries

Bogdan Żurawski's investigations of the extensive Dongolan necropolis have identified many elements characteristic of tomb construction and burial customs in force in the Kingdom of Makuria (Żurawski 1997a; 1999). Anthropological studies initiated by Tadeusz Dierżykray-Rogalski and Elżbieta Promińska are now being continued by Robert Mahler.

## 7. Pottery and pottery workshops

Krzysztof Pluskota spent several years studying the pottery workshops of Dongola and Dongolan pottery in general. His monograph on the subject is to be expected shortly (Pluskota 1990; 1991; 2001; 2010). New studies on the pottery uncovered recently on the Citadel have been published by Katarzyna Danys-Lasek (2012).

## 8. Animal bone studies

Marta Osypińska is working on the deposits of animal bones from the Citadel (2013).



Przemysław M. Gartkiewicz (left) and Stefan Jakobielski in the mission workroom, 1972