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## Dongola, Sudan : excavations in 2011

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2011

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WŁODZIMIERZ GODLEWSKI

## DONGOLA, SUDAN. EXCAVATIONS IN 2011

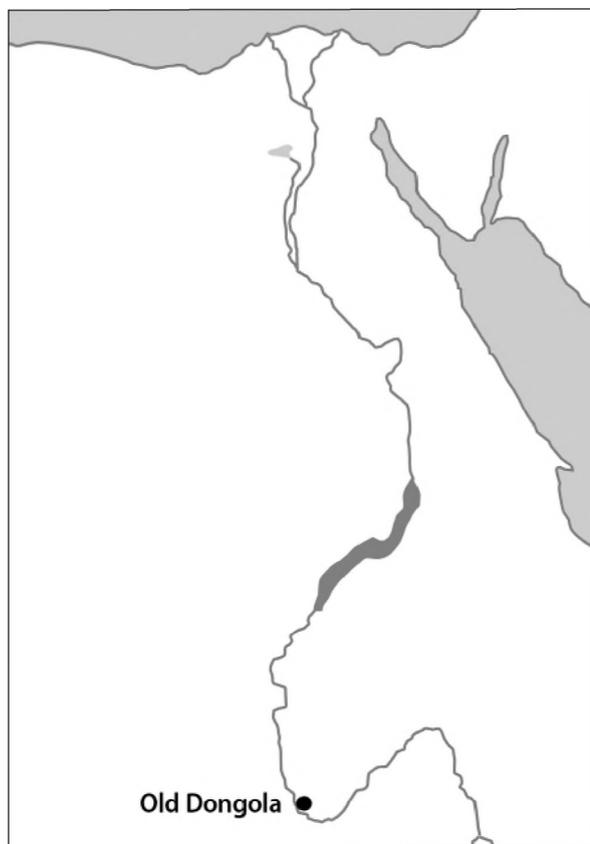
The team of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw (PCMA) carried out excavations in Old Dongola from 4 January to 15 February 2011.<sup>1</sup> The excavation and restoration program this season covered two complexes on the Citadel, that is, the royal buildings (B.I and B.V) and Buildings VI and IX at Site C.1, the monastery church on Kom H, the interior of the Throne Hall in the so-called Mosque, and Site B north of the Citadel (Fig. 1).

### Citadel: Building I (Palace of King Ioannes)

Chambers B.I.41 and B.I.36 in the western, domestic part of the palace and the vestibule B.I.24 by the northern entrance to the building were explored (Fig. 2). The main thrust of the investigations was on verifying the dating of particular phases of the structure and on reconstructing the function of the western quarters in the palace complex. The pottery found in B.I.41 comprised local, Dongolan production as well as imports. These were mainly amphorae, from Aswan, Middle Egypt and the Mareotis; the assemblage could be dated to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Palestinian containers and glass vessel were recorded for the first time in this assemblage. With regard to the vestibule B.I.24, removal of the upper layers of debris, presumably from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> c., revealed the top of the narrow slit windows in the south and east walls. These must have been more air vents than anything else. Explorations did not proceed beyond that point this season.

### Citadel: Building V

Excavations were planned over the entire area of the building (21×17 m), the chief goal being to uncover the tops of the massive outer walls (1.2 m thick) and the upper parts of the central brick pillars and the round pilasters engaged on the east, south and north sides of the naos (Fig. 2). The west wall and the western end of the north



wall appear to have been dismantled down to the ground apparently in search of building material sometime probably in the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> c. The southern and eastern parts of the structure stand to a height of 3.6 m and have preserved lime plastering with murals high on the walls (Fig. 3) as well as pillars and pilasters (Fig. 4). The plan of the building was drawn (except for the western part where the walls have not been preserved to comparable height) and it was found that it was a domed building raised on a central plan of a cross circumscribed on a rectangle with an entrance

<sup>1</sup> The Mission was directed by Prof. Dr. Włodzimierz Godlewski (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw) and composed of: Mr. Szymon Masłak, archaeologist (PCMA UW); Ms. Katarzyna Danys-Lasek, ceramologist (freelance); Dr. Artur Obluski, archaeologist (freelance); Dr. Dobrochna Zielińska, archaeologist and

art historian (IA UW); Ms. Karina Joanna Sosnowska, restorer of murals (freelance); Dr. Joanna Then-Obluska, archaeologist (freelance). The National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums, Sudan, was represented by Ajab Said el-Ajab, archaeologist (NCAM Inspector).

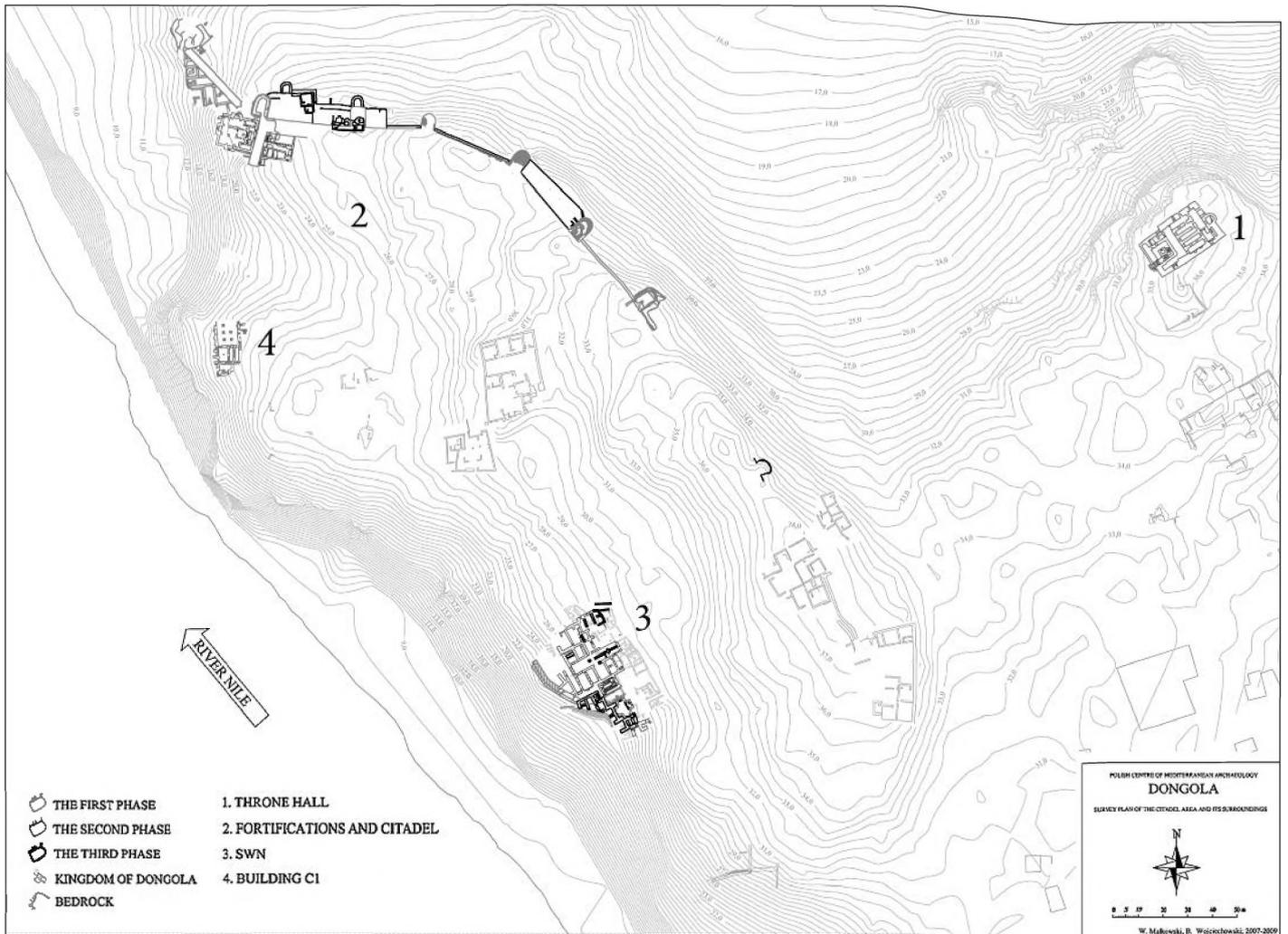


Fig. 1. The Citadel in Dongola and the Mosque Building (The Throne Hall) (by W. Malkowski, B. Wojciechowski; Archive of PCMA).  
Ryc. 1. Cytadela w Dongoli oraz Meczeta (Sala Tronowa).

noted in the northern annex facing the royal palace. Building V was therefore in all likelihood a sacral structure functionally associated with the royal palace (B.I). It certainly appears to be one of the best built structures discovered so far in Dongola. The construction date is still vague, but it surely predated the 9<sup>th</sup> c.

Planning for the conservation effort that the uncovering of apparently well preserved wall paintings would necessitate, the team suspended explorations and had a shelter roof (corrugated sheet of metal on a metal rod framework) installed over the wall tops and pillars (Fig. 5). The western façade was left open assuring proper ventilation inside the protected structure and facilitating further exploration as well as wall painting conservation.

### Citadel: Site C

Testing inside Building VI, which had been uncovered in the 2010 field season, was designed to trace the remains of the underlying earlier structure (Building B.IX). Like the structure on which it was superimposed, B.IX

turned out to be made of dried brick and was also intended for domestic use, presumably as a storage area for dry goods. This purpose is suggested by the narrow rooms (Fig. 6). The buildings were occupied successively during the Late Period of the Makurian Kingdom (11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> c.).

### Monastery of St Anthony the Great (Kom H): Church

The monastery church excavated in 2002–2005 by D. Gazda (2010) was cleared again in order to carry out additional research aimed at determining the construction date and the layout of the first foundation. The original documentation of the building was supplemented with a detailed record of the flooring and its relation to the stone footings under the central pillars and columns. This architectural study of the structure has demonstrated that the original foundation was a three-aisled basilica with a central tower and a presumed wooden roof (Fig. 7). None other of the churches currently known from Makuria represents this type which is modelled on late 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> c. Byzantine

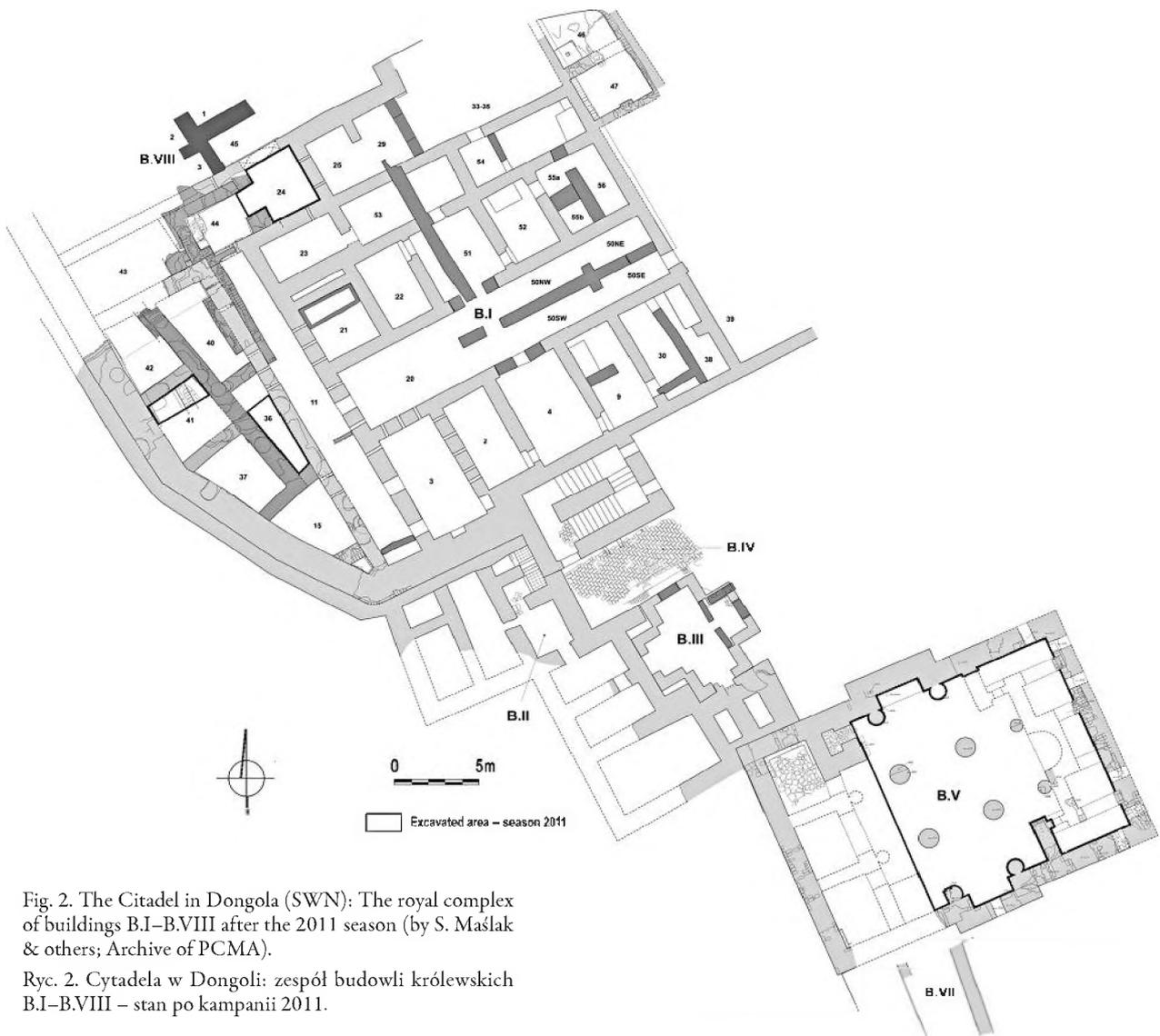


Fig. 2. The Citadel in Dongola (SWN): The royal complex of buildings B.I–B.VIII after the 2011 season (by S. Maślak & others; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 2. Cytadela w Dongoli: zespół budowli królewskich B.I–B.VIII – stan po kampanii 2011.



Fig. 3. Building B.V. Fragment of a wall painting of an angel with an inscription (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 3. Budowla B.V: fragment malowidła (anioł) z inskrypcją.



Fig. 4. Building B.V: top view of the SW pillar (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).  
Ryc. 4. Budowla B.V: filar południowo-zachodni, widok z góry.



Fig. 5. Building B.V: a metal shelter roof (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).  
Ryc. 5. Budowla B.V po zabezpieczeniu blaszanym dachem.

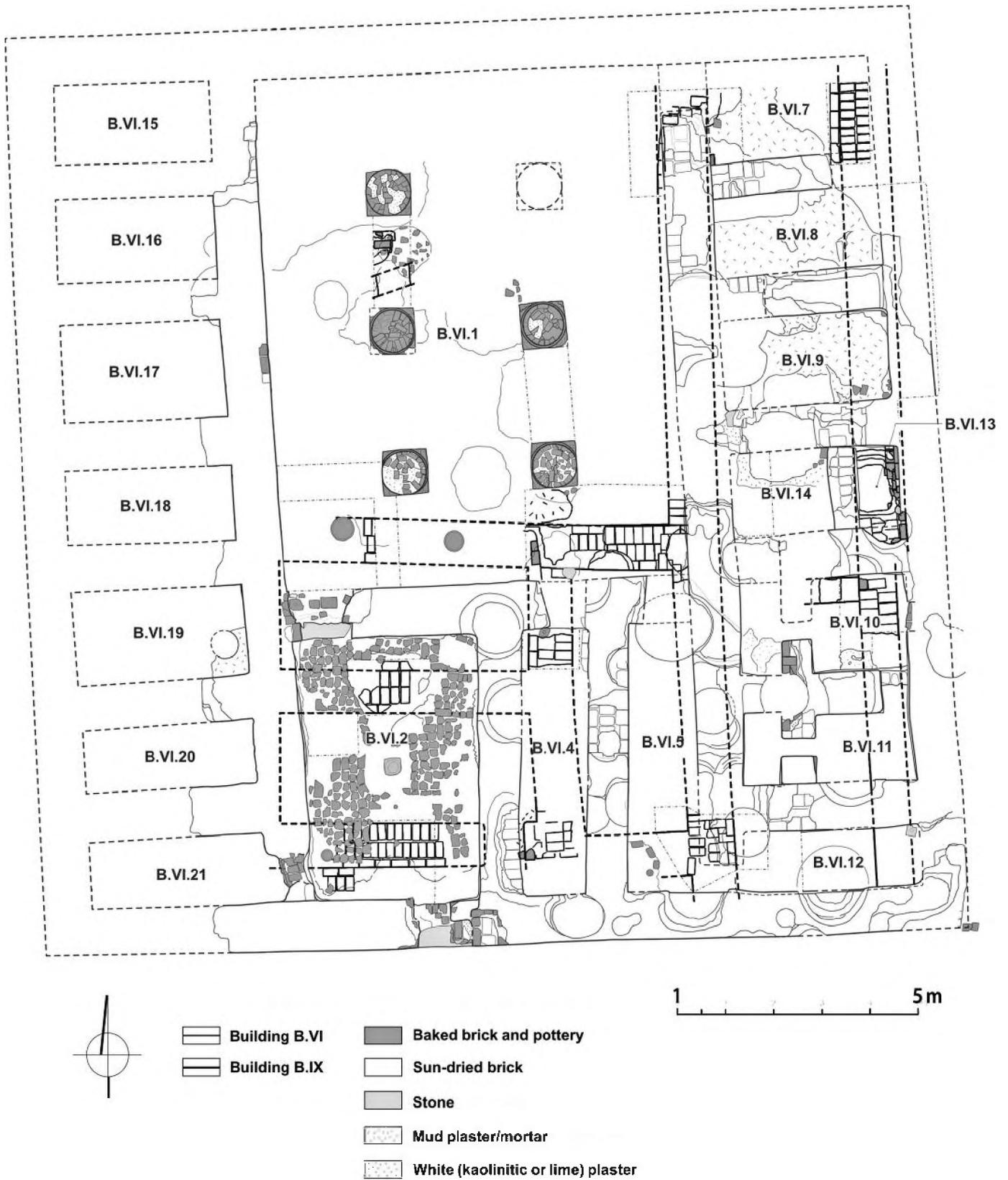


Fig. 6. Site C on the Citadel in Dongola: Building B.IX and the later Building B.VI (by S. Maślak; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 6. Cytadela w Dongoli. Stanowisko C: budowla B.IX oraz późniejsza budowla VI.

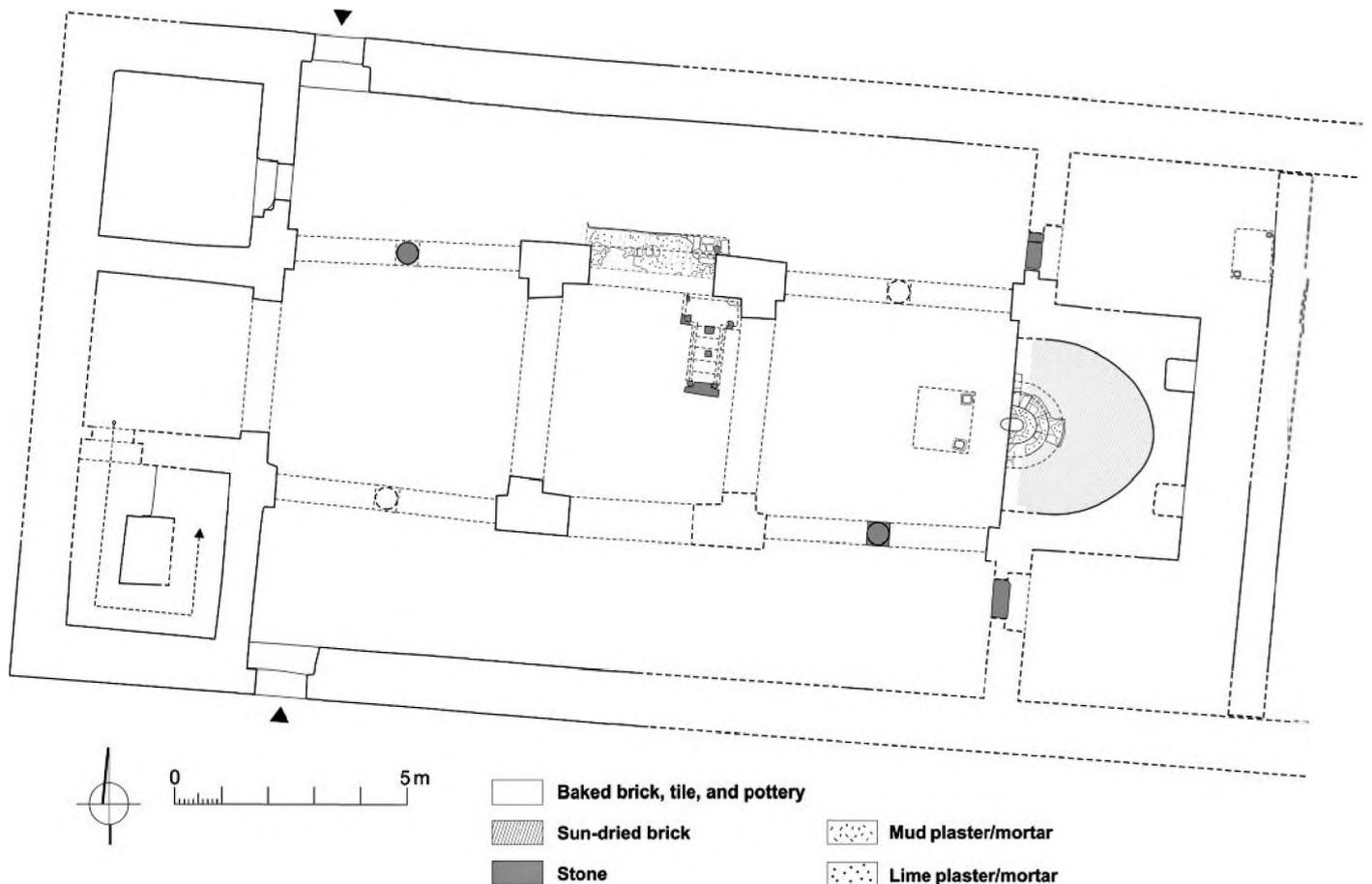


Fig. 7. Site Kom H: plan of the first Monastic Church from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. (by S. Maślak; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 7. Kom H: plan kościoła klasztornego, oryginalna faza z końca VI w.

patterns (e.g., el-Alahan in Anatolia). At the same time, the monastery church features the tripartite design of the eastern and western ends of the basilica with characteristic twin entrances from the north and south in the western part that was typical of Dongolan church architecture in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> c. The staircase in the south-western unit must have led up to the emporas, which were supported on the columns standing east and west of the central tower. A synthronon filled the apse behind the sanctuary which occupied a spot in the eastern end of the nave, although the position of the original altar screen proved impossible to trace. An altar stood in the prothesis (north-eastern unit) by the east wall, and the pulpit was located in the nave, by the north-eastern pillar. Its position at right angles to the pillar is again a feature not encountered in other Dongolan church complexes.

All things considered, the monastery church on Kom H should be recognised as representing a highly untypical architectural design. Potsherds from the fill of graves inside the late sanctuary, especially Grave G.3, excavated in 2007, can be taken as a proof that the monastery church was built in the last decade of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. at the latest.

### Mosque (Throne Hall)

The conservation project carried out by a Polish-Sudanese team inside the Throne Hall, which had been the official seat of the Makurian kings until 1317 when the building was changed into a mosque, was continued, focusing on the east wall and the south-western corner (Fig. 8).

The murals fragmentarily preserved on the east wall north of the mihrab were cleaned and protected, revealing a large narrative composition which occupied the entire upper part of the east wall. The scene represents the Nativity. One observes the image of resting Virgin, the Child in a manger, Salome and Joseph, angels, shepherds and the Magi on horseback.

Cleaning of royal images in the south-western corner of the hall revealed on the earliest plaster layer a narrative composition from the childhood of Christ. At present one can discern Mary holding the Child who is picking dates from a bent palm tree at his mother's request. The scene, which is based on the apocryphal gospel (PsMt. 20), has not been noted hitherto in Nubian wall painting iconography.

Fig. 8. Plan of the Mosque (Throne Hall), the second floor (by S. Medeksza, W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 8. Meczet (Sala Tronowa) – plan pierwszego piętra budowli.

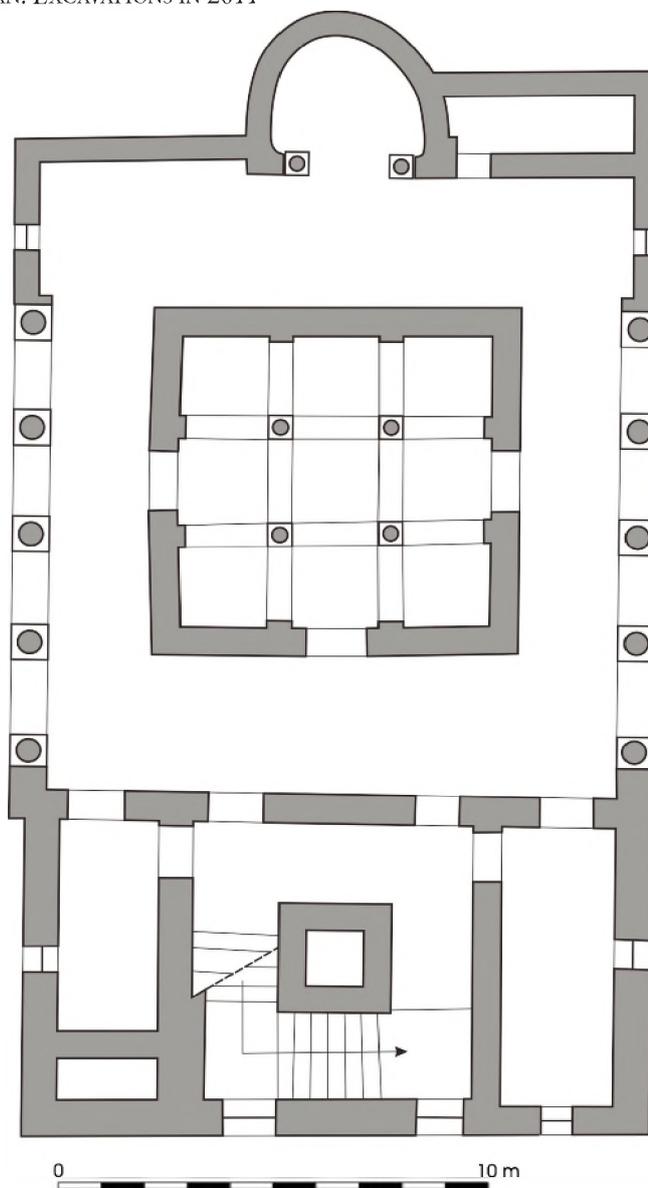


Fig. 9. Site B: House DH.100, view from the north (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 9. Stanowisko B: dom DH.100, widok od północy.



### Site B: late housing architecture in Dongola (DH.100)

Two 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> c. houses were cleared and partly investigated in the area east of the Cruciform Building (CC) and north of the Citadel fortifications (Fig. 9). The two complexes are typical of post-Makurian (Kingdom of Dongola, the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> through the early 19<sup>th</sup> c.) domestic architecture in Dongola. A dried brick ground-floor structure comprising two rooms, it consisted of a bigger square room with two wall mastabas (platforms) and a stone “base” for a now missing wooden column supporting the ceiling, and a narrow domestic unit furnished with

stone querns set in a podium which also contained a vessel for collecting flour.

Polish versions of reports from Dongola are on-line: [www.polacynadnilem.uw.edu.pl](http://www.polacynadnilem.uw.edu.pl)

English versions of reports from Dongola are on-line: [www.pcma.uw.edu.pl](http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl)

For the seasons 2008–2010 see also GODLEWSKI 2010.

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### DONGOLA, SUDAN. WYKOPALISKA SEZONU 2011

Misja wykopaliskowa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (Centrum Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej) pracowała w stolicy Królestwa Makurii – Dongoli w okresie od 4 stycznia do 15 lutego 2011 roku, kontynuując wieloletni program badawczy nad budowlami królewskimi (Cytadela: Pałac Johanna – budowla I i kościół królewski – budow-

la B.V, we wnętrzu Sali Tronowej – budowli zamienionej w 1317 roku na meczet) oraz na terenie zespołu monastycznego w kościele klasztorным.

Szersza informacja o wynikach prac misji w 2011 roku, jak również w latach wcześniejszych, znajduje się na stronie internetowej UW: [www.polacynadnilem.uw.edu.pl](http://www.polacynadnilem.uw.edu.pl).