

# Włodzimierz Godlewski

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## Dongola, Sudan - Season 2013-2014

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WŁODZIMIERZ GODLEWSKI

## DONGOLA, SUDAN – SEASON 2013–2014

**Keywords:** church, Dongola, Makuria, monastery, Nubia

The team of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw worked in Dongola from 16 November to 21 December 2013 and from 17 January to 5 March 2014. The fieldwork, financed by the PCMA and by the Qatar – Sudan Archaeological Project (QSAP), was conducted on the Citadel – on the fortifications and the complex of royal buildings (SWN), in the Mosque Building/Throne Hall, and on Kom H (Monastery of St Anthony). Other projects carried out this season included site management works to render Dongola accessible to tourists, studies on pottery from the Funj Period (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> c.), research on locally produced and imported amphora stoppers, as well as on inscriptions and animal bones. Cleaning and reorganising works were also conducted in a storeroom housing finds from excavations in the Monastery on Kom H and surrounding buildings.<sup>1</sup>

## The Citadel

### Fortifications

Work focused on the eastern part of the northern stretch of the Citadel's fortifications, as well as on the northern section of their eastern part. Overall, the length of investigated walls reached a total of 130 m. Works in the northern sector between Towers NW and N.1 have brought to light fortifications of the Citadel that were structurally altered most likely in the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> c., in the face of a threat of Ottoman invasion. A mud brick casing was built on the accumulated sand deposits in order to



reinforce the original walls of the Citadel dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> c. (Fig. 1). Towers N.1 and N.2 were also refurbished. The aim of these measures was to shield unprotected dwellings perched atop the somewhat damaged original fortifications, whose curtain wall measured 5.6 m in width. Several sectors of low-rise residential buildings were constructed on the sand deposit on which the casing of the Citadel walls was founded, additionally stabilising the dunes at the foot of the walls (Fig. 2). Investigation of these

<sup>1</sup> The Mission was directed by Prof. Włodzimierz Godlewski (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw) and composed of: Ms Katarzyna Danys-Lasek, archaeologist/ceramologist (freelance); Ms Teresa Dziedzic PhD, architect (Wrocław University of Technology); Ms Lucia Dominici, volunteer (Italy); Ms Dorota Dzierzbicka PhD (IA UW); Ms Justyna Dziubecka, student of archaeology (IA UW); Mr Łukasz Jarmużek MA, archaeologist (IA UW); Ms Jolanta Kurzyńska, wall painting conservator (Academy of Fine Arts, Kraków); Prof. Adam Łajtar, epigraphist (IA UW); Mr Szymon Maślak, archaeologist (PCMA UW);

Ms Marta Osypińska PhD, archaeozoologist (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznań); Ms Agnieszka Ryś, student of archaeology (IA UW); Dr Romuald Tarczewski, architect (Wrocław University of Technology); Ms Anna Wodzińska PhD, ceramologist (IA UW); Mr Maciej Wyzgół, student of archaeology (IA UW); Ms Dobrochna Zielińska PhD, archaeologist (IA UW). The National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums, Sudan, was represented by Ms Amal Mohamed Ahmed and Ms Balsam, archaeologists.



Fig. 1. Mud brick casing wall between Towers NW and N.2. View from NE (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 1. Mur licujący z cegły suszonej pomiędzy basztami NW i N.2. Widok z północnego wschodu.

houses yielded numerous finds, above all hand-formed ceramics (**Fig. 3:1**), fragments of textiles, as well as amulets and pipe stems (**Fig. 3:2**), which provided grounds for dating them to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> c., as well as wooden objects (**Fig. 3:3**). On the eastern side, the fortifications were additionally reinforced with two walls running parallel to the original ramparts. One of them was built of roughly hewn sandstone blocks likely reclaimed from a representative structure in the Citadel, and the other was constructed of broken ferruginous sandstone and bricks. The two walls also stabilised the sand dune at the foot of the Citadel walls (**Fig. 4**).

#### The SWN Site – B.V

In the Citadel, work continued on the SWN site, in the palace of King Ioannes (SWN.B.I) and in the royal church (of Archangel Raphael, SWN.B.V). Murals preserved on the walls and pillars of the church, and in particular their state of preservation, hindered the progress of works in the naos and the *prothesis* of the church. Inside the *prothesis*, on the northern and eastern walls, several compositions were brought to light and subjected to consolidation works. The paintings show priests of the church of Raphael offering gifts to the enthroned Virgin Mary and the apostles (**Fig. 5**). The murals are supplemented by Greek inscriptions (legends) and prayers in Greek and Old

Nubian. Although the state of preservation of the painted plaster varies, entire compositions are legible. Also the accompanying inscriptions allow for a fuller understanding of the interior decoration of the *prothesis* which constitutes a unique example among the known sacral buildings of Makuria.

#### The SWN Site – B.I

In the palace of King Ioannes (SWN.B.I) work was conducted in the south-eastern part of the complex, bringing to light mainly Funj Period dwellings built on the relics of the upper floor of the palace (**Fig. 6**). Excavations conducted in the palace staircase (B.I.01), beneath its baked brick vaults, yielded a large assemblage of animal bones which, to judge by pottery recovered from the same layers, was deposited there in the 14<sup>th</sup> c.

#### Kom H – The Monastery of St Anthony

Work on Kom H concentrated in the south-western part of the complex. It consisted in clearing the external facades of buildings erected along the outer face of the monastic enclosure wall, as well as in exposing previously excavated, well-preserved tomb superstructures in their vicinity.

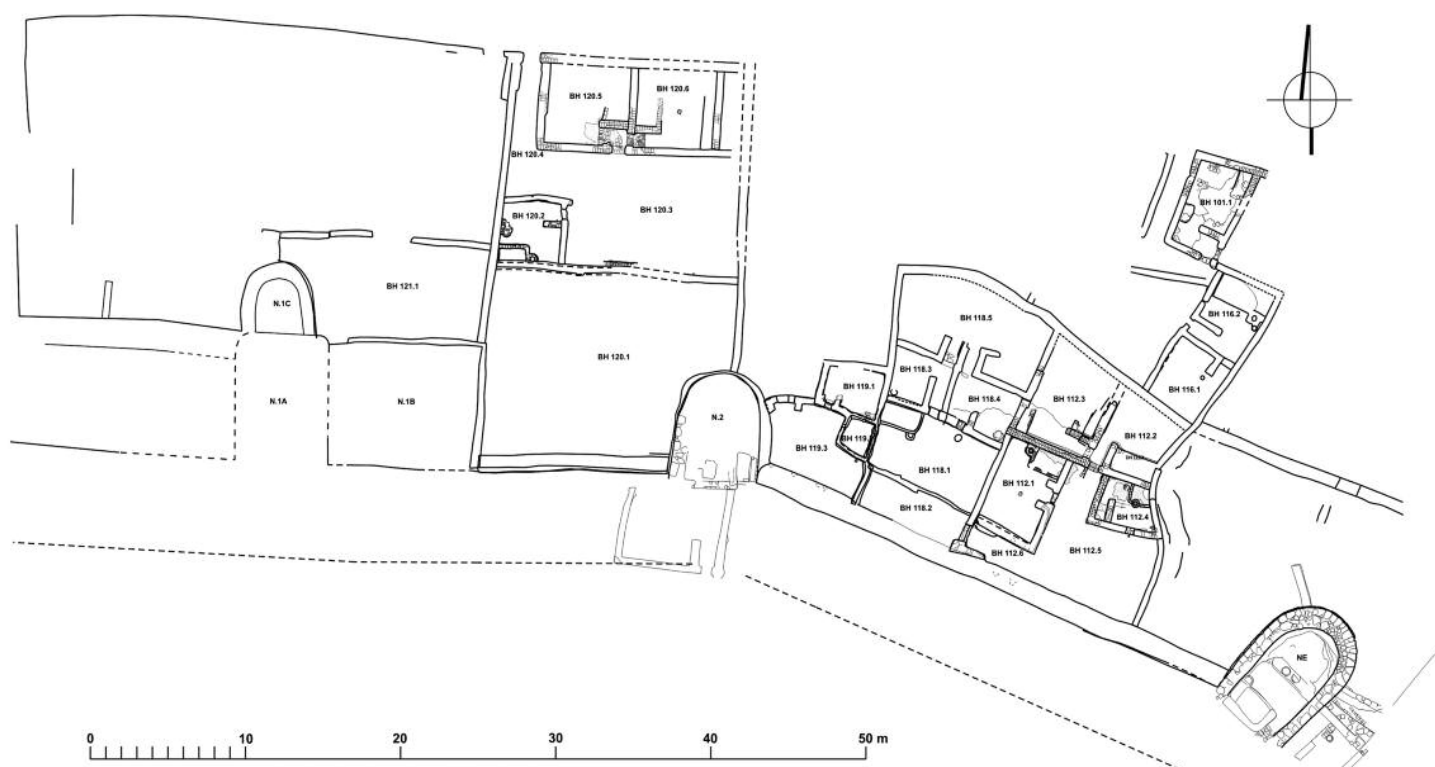


Fig. 2. Houses on the sand deposit in front of the casing wall between Towers NW and N.1. Plan (Drawing S. Maślak; Archive of PCMA).  
Ryc. 2. Zabudowa mieszkalna na wydmie przed murem licującym pomiędzy basztami NW i N.1 – plan.



Fig. 3. Finds from the Funj Period houses. 1 – handmade pot; 2 – pipe stem; 3 – wooden bowl (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 3. Znaleźiska z wnętrza domów z okresu Fundż. 1 – ręcznie wykonany garnek; 2 – cybuch fajki; 3 – misa drewniana.



Fig. 4. Two walls running parallel to the original ramparts on the eastern side of the Citadel, to the south of Tower E.1 (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 4. Dwa mury biegnące równolegle do pierwotnych umocnień po wschodniej stronie Cytadeli, na południe od baszty E.1.



Fig. 5. The Church of Archangel Raphael, *prothesis*, east wall. Apostle Peter (Photo D. Zielińska; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 5. Kościół Archaniola Rafała, *prothesis*, ściana wschodnia – Apostoł Piotr.





Fig. 6. Site SWN. House of the Funj Period, built over the SE part of the destroyed palace of Ioannes (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 6. Wnętrze domu z okresu Fundż zbudowanego nad częścią południowo-wschodnią zniszczonego pałacu Johannaesa.



Fig. 7. The tombs on the courtyard on the western side of the Southwest Annex of the Monastery of St Anthony (B.III), after renovation (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 7. Odnowione nagrobki na dziedzińcu po zachodniej stronie aneksu południowo-zachodniego przy klasztorze św. Antoniego (B.III).



Fig. 8. The shield wall, protecting the sacral complex from sand. View from S (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 8. Mur zabezpieczający przed piaskiem zabudowę sakralną, widok od południa.



Fig. 9. The granite capital of Cathedral III (end of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.) exposed in front of the shield wall (Photo W. Godlewski; Archive of PCMA).

Ryc. 9. Granitowy kapitel z Katedry III (koniec VII w.) eksponowany na tle muru zabezpieczającego przed piaskiem.

Conservation works were conducted in Building III of the Southwest Annex, decorated with numerous wall paintings, and on tombs in the cemetery (Fig. 7). The superstructures of the tombs vary in form, but the most common type is a cruciform body on a rectangular platform. The tombs were built of baked brick and carefully plastered. Funerary stelae were mounted on their western walls, where their impressions are still visible, and oil lamps were placed in small niches. One of the tomb superstructures preserves a text written on the plaster in Greek: it is a prayer for the soul of a woman named Kariti.

### The mosque building

Architects from the Wrocław University of Technology elaborated plans for the construction of a new roof over the structure and for securing the walking level on the upper floor of the building.

### Site management

As part of the site management project, the team began removing archaeological dumps accumulated during earlier excavations and started the construction of a wall to the north-east of the sacral complex encompassing the Cathedral and the monumental Cruciform Building. The wall, which is to measure three meters in height, will shield the exposed buildings from encroaching windblown sand. Two sections of this wall have been built, spanning a total of 70 m (Fig. 8). The space along the inner face of the western section of this wall was used for the exhibition of granite capitals from the Dongolese Cathedral dated to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. They were mounted on cement bases measuring one meter in height (Fig. 9).

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**DONGOLA, SUDAN – SEZON 2013–2014**

Prace wykopaliskowe misji Centrum Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej UW tego sezonu trwały w okresie 16.11–21.12.2013 i 17.01–5.03.2014. Badaniami objęto następujące odcinki:

- fortyfikacje i przylegające do nich zabudowania mieszkalne (**Ryc. 1, 2**), w których odnotowano znaleziska z okresu Fundż (XVI–XVII w.; **Ryc. 3**);
- stanowisko SWN: kościół Archaniola Rafała, gdzie odsłonięto szereg malowideł naściennych (**Ryc. 5**), oraz pałac Johanna (budowla B.I) – z późniejszą zabudową (okres Fundż; **Ryc. 6**);
- kom H – klasztor św. Antoniego, gdzie odczyszczono

fasady budowli wzniesionych wzdłuż muru obwodowego. Prowadzono tu także prace konserwatorskie i zabezpieczające (**Ryc. 7**).

W ramach zarządzania stanowiskiem – jego ochrony i udostępniania zwiedzającym – wzniesiono mur zabezpieczający przed nawiewaniem piasku (**Ryc. 8**), a jego wewnętrzne lico wykorzystano jako tło eksponowania granitowych kapiteli z katedry dongolańskiej z VII w. (**Ryc. 9**). Szersza informacja o wynikach prac tego sezonu, jak i w latach wcześniejszych, znajduje się na stronie internetowej UW: [www.polacynadnilem.uw.edu.pl](http://www.polacynadnilem.uw.edu.pl).