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Old Dongola: Excavations 1997

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OLD DONGOLA

EXCAVATIONS 1997

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The 30th season lasted from January 26 to March 8, 1997.¹ Work continued on three separate sites: Kom A (city of Dongola), Kom H (Monastery northeast of the town) and Koms R (Pottery Kilns).

KOM A

Prof. W. Godlewski continued excavations on the site of the fortifications of Old Dongola. The dig, which reached close to 7 m in depth, covered the area in the northwestern part of the kom located inside the northwestern corner of the city walls. The investigations revealed a pair of two-storey houses (97.116, 97.115), one complete with a stairway leading to the upper storey. Both structures, whose original period of use can be dated to the 7th century to judge by the pottery, featured a high standard of execution (fine plastering, terracotta window grilles in the upper-storey windows etc.). A passageway was found leading underneath the western wall of the fortifications from the Pillar Church to the inner town.²

¹ The Mission comprised: Dr. Stefan Jakobielski (director), Prof. Dr. Włodzimierz Godlewski, Dr. Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, Dr. Bogdan Żurawski, Mr Krzysztof Pluskota, archaeologists; Mr Wojciech Chmiel, restorer; eng. Zbigniew Solarewicz, architect; Ms. Dobiesława Bagińska, documentalist. The NCAM was represented by Syd. Mustafa Ahmed El-Sherif, member of the staff of the Conservation Laboratories of the Sudan National Museum. A group of volunteers, students of archaeology from Warsaw University, Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw and the University of Gdansk also took a part in the excavations: Misses L. Badowska, B. Dziadowicz, M. Jaskulska, J. Kociankowska, M. Michalska, and Messrs K. Kotlewski, J. Świącicki.

² Cf. *infra*, separate report by W. Godlewski, pp. 171ff.

KOM H

In the area of the monastic compound, a further part of the Western Annex to the Monastery was excavated by a team directed by S. Jakobielski. Continued exploration of the complex brought to light in Building NW-S three barrel vaulted rooms preserved to their full height of 4 m with wall paintings dating to the second half of the 11th and the 12th centuries. Numerous inscriptions were also found in the interior. A spectacular find of metal objects, including an oversize iron key, was made in a kind of cellar in the easternmost part of the building. Most of the conservation effort was directed at protecting the paintings and consolidating the building which included a reconstruction of parts of the walls and arches and covering the building with a new roof.³

KOMS R

In the pottery manufacturing area, excavations supervised by K. Pluskota comprised Kom R1 dated to the Early Christian period. A latitudinal trial trench over 3 m deep was dug right across the kom revealing the complete stratification of the site and making it possible to establish that individual kilns were utilized more than 30 times each. A full repertoire of forms produced in this center begins with 6th century thin bowls and ends with the 8th century local amphorae.⁴

³ Cf. *infra*, separate report by S. Jakobielski, pp. 160ff.

⁴ A detailed report on these works will appear after completing the investigation of this site planned for the next (1998) season of excavations. For previous works, cf. K. Pluskota, Dongola - a pottery production centre from the Early Christian Period [in:] Coptic and Nubian Pottery, II, International Workshop, Nieborów, August 29-31, 1988, *Occasional Paper of National Museum in Warsaw* 2, pp. 34-55; S. Jakobielski, *PAM* IV 1992 (1993), pp. 109ff; S. Jakobielski, K. Pluskota, B. Żurawski, Polish excavations at Old Dongola - twenty-fifth season, 1991/2, *Kush* XVI, 1993, pp. 234 ff.