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Old Dongola: Fieldwork Seasons 2005

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OLD DONGOLA

FIELDWORK

SEASONS 2005/2006 AND 2006

Stefan Jakobielski and Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka

Two seasons of excavations were carried out at the site of the Monastery on Kom H (otherwise identified as the Monastery of the Holy Trinity) in Old Dongola: the 41st between 14 December 2005 and 27 January 2006,¹ and the 42nd between 18 November and 20 December 2006² (for previous work, cf. Jakobielski 2005a; Martens-Czarnecka 2005b; Gazda 2005a; for the most recent studies, cf. Jakobielski 2005b; Gazda 2005b; Martens-Czarnecka 2005a; 2006; Żurawski 2006; Jakobielski (ed.) 2006; Jakobielski 2008).

Work was undertaken in the so-called Southwestern Annex and the Southwestern Building, concurrently with the excavation of the Monastery Church and the area adjoining it on the east and south (reported on separately in this volume by Daniel Gazda, who has been in charge of this work from the beginning). In the later season, part of the so-called Central Building was excavated, as well as the area east of the Monastery Church and the easternmost part of the Northwestern Annex (specifically Room 26 and a passageway leading to it). Investigations of Kom J, began in 2003, were completed by Daniel Gazda (see Appendix 2 below).

- 1 The staff was directed by Stefan Jakobielski and comprised Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, archaeologist, art historian; Karol Piasecki, anthropologist; Adam Łajtar, epigraphist; Tadeusz Badowski, restorer; Daniel Gazda, archaeologist; Ryszard Szemraj, restorer, constructor; Andrzej Romanowski, archaeologist; Anna Błaszczuk, archaeologist, draftsman; Marek Puzkarski, architectural documentalist; Małgorzata Purzyńska, archaeologist; Roman Łopaciuk, geodesist; Beata Teodorczyk, documentalist; Aneta Cedro, student of archaeology from Toruń. The inspector representing the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums was Amal Mohammed Ahmed. The funds for this (and the next) field campaign were provided by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw with some financial assistance for travel expenses from the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Ureusz Foundation.
- 2 The staff was directed by Dr. Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka and comprised Stefan Jakobielski, archaeologist and epigraphist; Dobiesława Bagińska, archaeologist, pottery specialist; Dorota Moryto-Naumiuk, restorer; Hanna Kozłowska-Sowa, archaeologist, draftsman; Daniel Gazda and Jarosław Świącicki, archaeologists. Umaima Hasab Ar-Rasul, restorer in the Sudan National Museum, represented the NCAM. Augmenting the staff as volunteers were Anna Błaszczuk, archaeologist, draftsman, and Natalia Jakubowska, photographer.

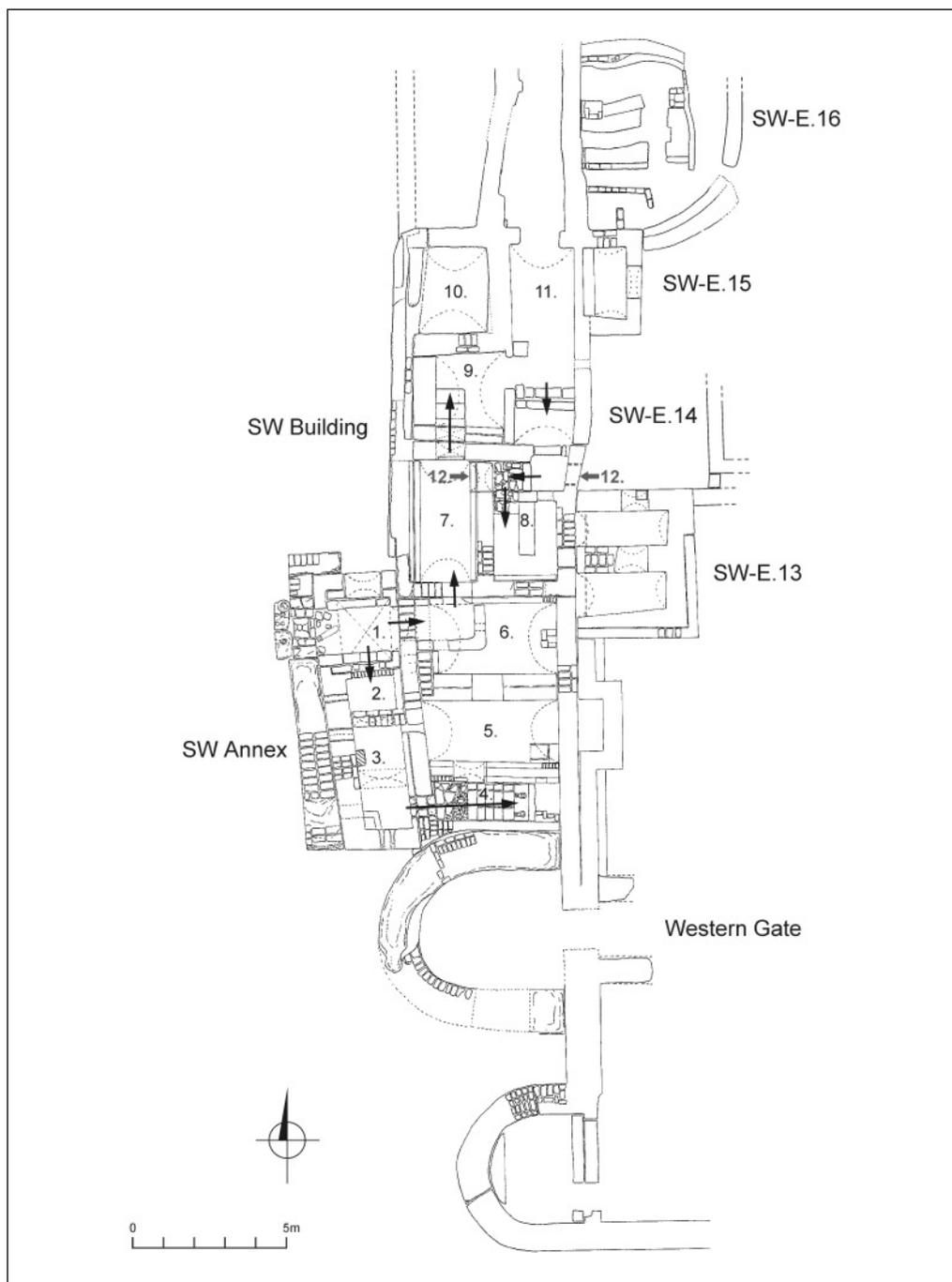


Fig. 1. Plan of the southwestern part of the monastery compound
(Drawing J. Świącicki and M. Puzkarski, updated by M. Momot)

EXCAVATIONS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN BUILDING
AND SOUTHWESTERN ANNEX

Excavations along the west wall of the Southwestern Building (for earlier work, cf. esp. Jakobielski 2005a: 261-271) proved that the wall had been renovated repeatedly in the past, the repairs and modifications totally obscuring its original appearance. As the outer wall of the Monastery, it had been open to the elements, especially the northerly and westerly winds. Close examination of the lower part of the wall revealed a fragment of the original bond, virtually the same as in the west wall of the so-called Main Monastery Building, of which it appears to be an extension to the south. It thus appears that the Southwestern Building (still called so for convenience) may be dated back to the 8th century, like its northern counterpart. The Southwestern Annex, however, is definitely not earlier than the 10th century [*Fig. 1*].

In the Late Christian period, the Annex, attached as it appears to be to the southern end of the Main Monastery Building, was connected with it by an entrance cut in the north wall of Room 6, suggesting a possible passageway into the monastery compound through a vestibule (1). The Southwestern Building, itself many times rebuilt, comprised at least 12 rooms on two floors, joined by a system of stairways recorded in three of the rooms, that is, 7, 9 and 11. An additional staircase in Room 8 on the upper storey, apparently put in at a later date, may have opened onto the roof. This complicated system of communication inside the edifice goes back most probably to the original building phase. As such, it must have been entered from the outside through a door in the west wall of Room 7. The position of this alleged gate could not be established by excavation as it had been obliterated already in antiquity by intensive repairs intended as

structural reinforcement (including addition of extra walls on both sides). A transversal corridor (12), running to the east and entered from Room 7 on the ground floor of the Southwestern Building, gave access through an arched doorway straight into the monastery compound, and particularly into a small rectangular yard (SW-E.14) of overall dimensions 7.50 by 4.50 m, lining the east façade of the Southwestern Building. By the time of the discovery, the yard had been completely engulfed by a sand dune. On the south, it was closed by a small building (4.50 by 4.00 m), comprising two narrow rooms (SW-E.13-13A), and in the northwestern corner there was a single barrel-vaulted room (SW-E.15; 3.30 by 2.00 m), built of mud brick, and entered from the east through a high, arched doorway. Originally, it had narrow slot windows on the north and south, and it was constructed with older walls as its western and northern limits.

While the north and south range of the yard is clearly defined, the eastern limit has not been determined satisfactorily as yet. There were some remnants of a heavily destroyed structure with a narrow entrance in its west wall, stuck close to the outer, northeastern corner of SW-E.13, but no traces were found of any further extension to the north of the mentioned structure closing the yard at its northeastern corner. So far, however, the original level of the yard in this place has not been reached.

The SW-E.13 structure (4.00 x 4.50 m), closing the yard from the south, is attached to the outer east wall of the Southwestern Building, where it joins the Southwestern Annex. In fact, this wall is at its core the original western enclosure wall of the monastery compound. The building,

preserved to a height of 3.10 m, is characterized by extremely thick walls, ranging in breadth from 0.70 to 0.82 m [Fig. 2]. It comprises two narrow rooms (1.10-1.30 by 3.10 m), originally barrel vaulted and apparently with a thin layer of compact mud instead of a paved floor. An arcade connected the two chambers. The entrance was from the courtyard through a door in the north facade [Fig. 3]. Curiously enough, the walls were not founded on the paved surface of the monastery courtyard, but some 0.35 m higher, on a level of rubble originating from a mud-brick wall, which had evidently collapsed at some earlier time. This is likely to have been the face of the enclosure wall. Remnants of the facing survive in the lower part of the wall, taken advantage of as a kind

of table or bench inside the room (13B). The other possible interpretation of the rubble bedding is that it represents an earlier structure, the thin walls of which were incorporated into the outer south and east walls of the new building erected on its spot [cf. Fig. 2]. Interestingly, these two walls stand directly on top of the brick pavement of the monastery courtyard.

Four main occupation levels originating from the Late and Terminal Christian Period were observed in the rooms. All of them indicate household use. The southern chamber (SW-E.13B) may have even served as a kitchen at some point, as suggested by the soot on the wall, traces of the mounting of wooden shelves on the walls, an enclosure filled with sand, rubble and ashes. The rising occupational level in the

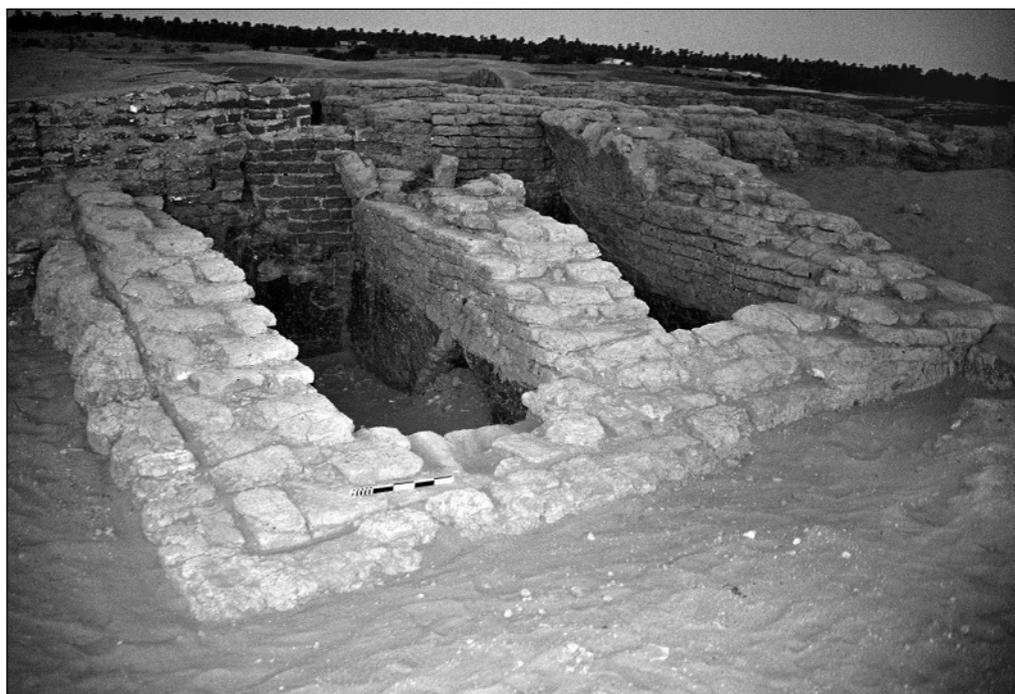


Fig. 2. Structure SW-E.13 looking northwest, early into the excavations
(Photo S. Jakobielski)

yard (SW-E.14) created a situation in which the building in the last two phases of utilization was entered through a narrowed door, down steps made of stones [cf. *Fig. 3*]. A thick stratum of *sebbakk* had formed on top of the rubble in front of the building entrance, and storage pits were cut into this layer.

Regardless of its intended use, the structure with its extra thick walls must have acted as a buttress for the outer, northeastern corner of the Southwestern

Annex and the walls of the upper floor of the Southwestern Building superimposed here on top of the partly tumbled monastery enclosure wall.

Repairs to its eastern face, evidently made earlier, are proof of the poor condition this wall had been in. They were observed in a trench dug alongside the wall, excavated to the original level of the main monastery courtyard at a point where it was reinforced over a stretch 4 m long with a casemate buttress of red brick [*Fig. 4*].³ A kind of



Fig. 3. Entrance to SW-E.13 from the yard, used at level 2 (one before last). In the background, the arched doorway connecting the two chambers (Photo J. Świącicki)

³ The dating of this structure to the 12th century when the floor was added to the Southwestern Annex, presented in Jakobielski 2005a: 262-263 before the excavation was completed, is now considered incorrect, but this does not detract from the hypothetical role played by the platform that was thus formed in the communication system of the complex. Understanding the reasons for introducing in the 12th century a flight of steps in Room 4 should help to verify this idea.



Fig. 4. Red-brick inner reinforcement of the monastery enclosure wall (Photo J. Świącicki)

buttress wall of the same material was built to reinforce the rest of the weakened enclosure wall, all the way to the Western Gate. The western (outer) face of the gate was lined in red-brick and apparently rendered with hard gravel-lime plaster, of which a fragment is still preserved [Fig. 5]. The gate appears to have been 1.32 m wide between the jambs, which had been formed of ashlar sandstone blocks, some still *in situ*. These blocks were apparently dismantled in the Terminal Christian phase to repair other walls, like the renovated main entrance to the Southwestern Annex in the vestibule (1) and the west façade of the Southwestern Building. The next step was a semicircular wall built of mud brick in front of the entrance to protect it from the sand dunes building up against the western wall of the



Fig. 5. The western gate looking east (Photo S. Jakobielski)

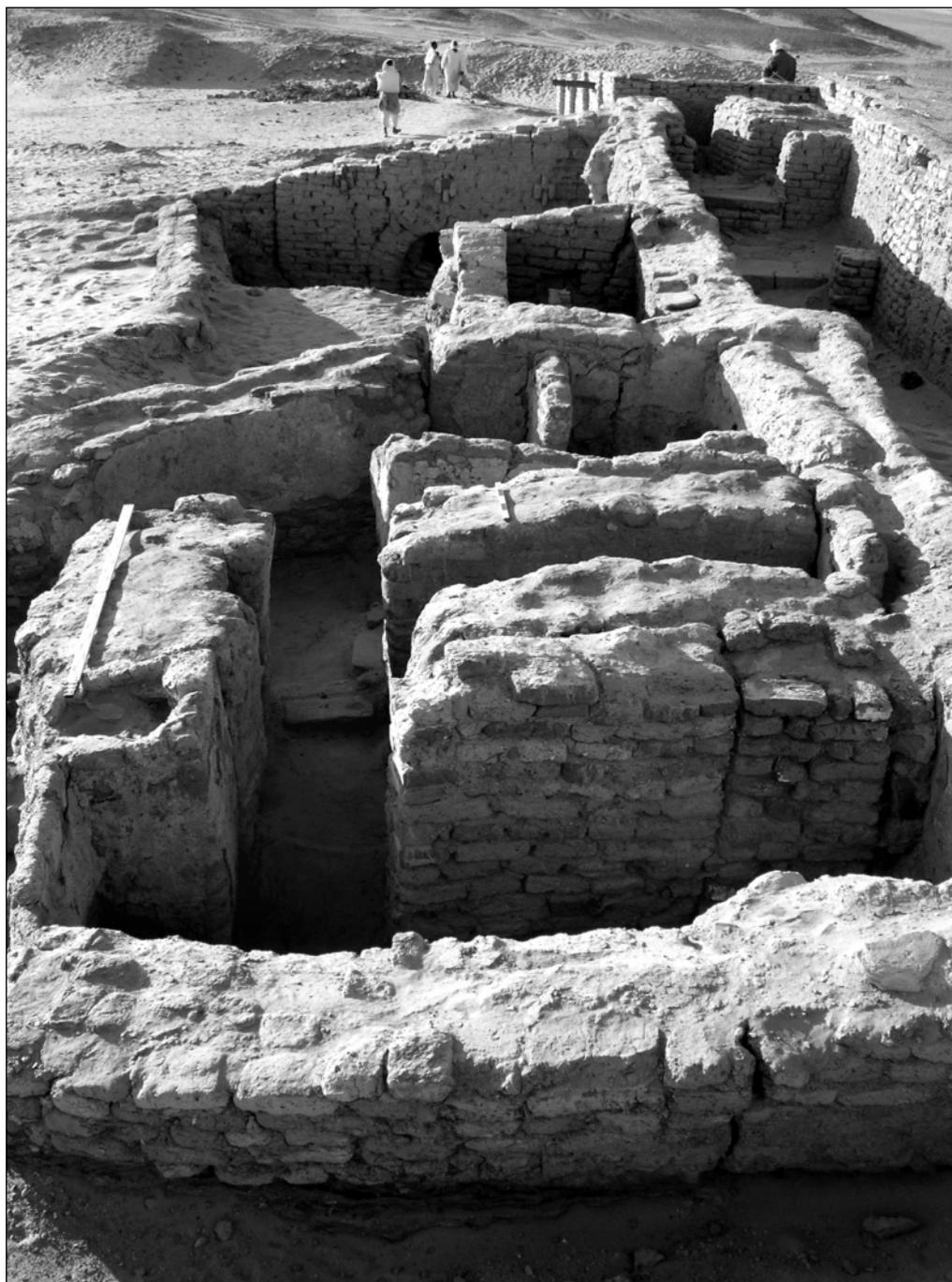


Fig. 6. Structure SW-E.16 looking south; in the far background, facade of SW-E.13
(Photo J. Świącicki)

monastery compound. This addition came slightly before the construction of the Southwestern Annex.

To recapitulate the chronological sequence of the structures in question in the light of the updated excavation results, the phases of development of the complex are as follows:

1) Southwestern Building, erected most probably in the 8th century (with subsequent episodes of rebuilding of the upper story in the 11th and 12th centuries);

2) Thin-walled structure attached to the western monastery enclosure wall on the east, later incorporated into Building SW-E.13, possibly of 9th century date;

3) Red-brick buttress wall propping up the enclosure wall and repairs to the Western Gate, 9th-10th century;

4) Semicircular wall in front of the Western Gate, 10th century;

5) Southwestern Annex, original phase (that is, Rooms 4, 5 and 6), not earlier than the 10th century; addition of the passageway (Rooms 1-3 and presumably construction of the upper story, second half of 11th/beginning of 12th century;

6) Buildings SW-E.13 and SW-E.15, not earlier than the 12th century.

North of the yard and standing against the east wall of the Southwestern Building was another unusual structure (SW-E.16). Its layout, including a more or less semicircular wall on the east and southeast is the result of multifarious episodes of rebuilding and apparently diversified function [Fig. 6]. The latest level of use (excavations have not gone beyond this level



Fig. 7. Hydraulic installations found piled in compartment SW-E.16A, seen from the south; note stairs in the adjacent compartment to the north, at the top of the photo (Photo S. Jakobielski)

so far) pertains to a time when the interior was remodeled. In this phase it comprised four narrow compartments (each 0.50 to 1.10 m wide), divided by walls of various thickness (ranging from 1.00 to 0.15 m) and opening into a transversal passage. Remains of a floor made of compact mud were found in this passage, some 1.60 m below the preserved tops of walls. Remnants of three subsequent coats of whitewash were observed on these walls, as well as faint traces of decoration in red paint on the middle coat.

The southernmost compartment (SW-E.16A-B) comprised two small rectangular rooms (1.10 x 1.00 and 1.10 x 0.75 m) delimited by thin walls, only one brick wide, which were incorporated from the original structure when it was rebuilt. The westernmost of these contained at this level a pile of Terminal Christian pottery, among which there were several terracotta pipes of different types and two toilet seats, one evidently brand-new [Figs 7, 8] This

material seems to have been thrown in there on purpose during an episode of cleaning or rebuilding. However, the chamber itself seems to have been designed much deeper than the rest of the compartments and its bottom has yet to be reached.⁴ Some 1.20 m below the pile of pottery, in fill composed of sand and *sebbakh*, remains of a collapsed and defaced wooden construction were found.



Fig. 8. Examples of the hydraulic installations found in SW-E.16A: ceramic toilet (top right) and various types of terracotta pipes, the most common type being the one at bottom right (Photo S. Jakobielski)

⁴ Similarly in the two northern compartments, where no floor has been found; excavations were stopped in sand on a level corresponding to the mud floor of the transversal passage.

The second compartment from the south had a flight of stairs installed in it, ending blankly on the outer, east wall of the SW-Building [cf. *Fig. 7*]. It could have given out only onto the top of a thick wall to the north of the stairway. The other compartments held no apparent equipment of any kind, and only a surprisingly insignificant amount of pottery, mainly of Terminal Christian date.

The function of structure SW-E.16 has not been established beyond doubt, but a latrine⁵ (and possibly a bath) is a justifiable idea judging by the objects found in SW-E.16A, which could have been dismantled in the final phase. Nonetheless, there has been no evidence so far, at least on the excavated level, for the use of this structure in the presumed function.

Architectural sections through the Southwestern Annex were completed this year and some restoration works done in the

interior. Parts of the Nativity mural from Room 5 (Martens-Czarnecka 2005b: 273-277), the same where a composition of dancing figures during a festival dedicated to the Virgin Mary was found (Martens-Czarnecka 2005b: 276-281; 2006a: 46-48), were reattached following minute analysis of loose fragments of painted plaster done in season 2004/2005. Renewed cleaning in preparation for the restoration resulted in exposing the figure of a saintly bishop, until then hidden under a layer of dirt. Some of the surviving plaster fragments of the Massacre of Innocents composition from the vault of Room 6 were also conserved and mounted on the walls of the chamber. Preservation measures were taken with regard to four murals from the Annex and the newly discovered paintings from the Central Building (see below, Appendix 1, conservation report by D. Moryto-Naumiuk).

EXCAVATIONS IN THE NORTHWESTERN ANNEX

Additional excavations were carried out in Room 26 of the Northwestern Annex, reaching the original building level made up of compacted mud. In 2000, explorations of this room with its completely preserved vault had been left off at the level of a floor laid of (mainly mud) bricks and identified as the upper occupational level (Jakobielski 2001b: 274). The walls were found to be only unevenly rendered with mud mortar. The fill consisted of nearly one and a half meters of ashes mixed with *sebbakh* and a considerable amount of Classic and Post-Classic Christian potsherds (mostly utility vessels). No original

furnishings were found except for the remnants of a low bench (*mastaba*) running the length of the west wall; it had obviously been dismantled at some point. The only entrance to the chamber at the lower level was situated in the easternmost part of the south wall, leading into a passage (later turned into Room 28B) which opened into a space on the south side, where there was a yard at that time (Jakobielski 2003: 215-219; 2006b: 215-216). Room 26 was lit indirectly through a high, arched inner window (later blocked) set in the upper part of the west wall [*Fig. 9*].

5 Such an intended use is also suggested by the positioning of entrances in SW-E.16B, which are located not in line, but at the opposite ends of the east and west walls, as is the rule in modern toilets in this part of Sudan, so that the user is concealed from view.

The brick bondwork of the north wall of Room 26, right next to the corner with the east wall, preserves evidence of a doorway, which was 1.00 m wide [Fig. 10]. From here one entered the space between the Southern and Northern Buildings (later remodeled into Chapel 13. It now appears that in its earliest form the room was part of a passage running from the south alongside the western façade of the Main Monastery Building (that is, through later rooms 30,

28B and 26) on the axis of the main entrance gate to the yard of the Southern Building [Fig. 11].⁶ The passage in the north wall was blocked in the middle of the 11th century when the development of the Southern Building effectively cut off access to this part.⁷ Room 26 was created by adding a wall with entrance on the south, built presumably in place of an arcade similar to the one that separated rooms 28B and 30. At this time, the room already had

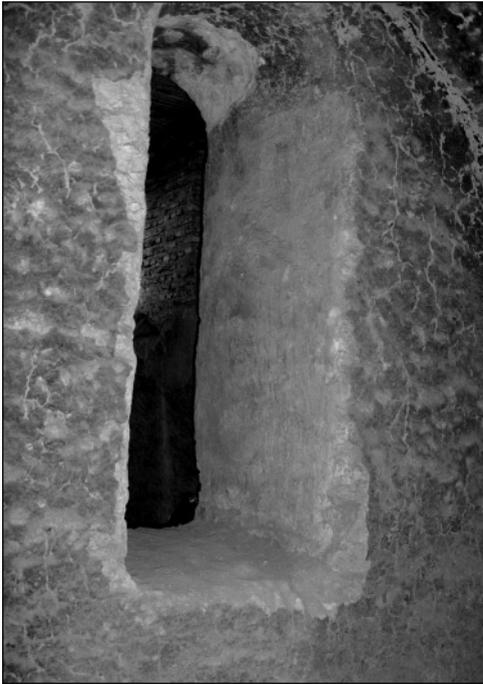


Fig. 9. Arched window in the west wall of Room 26 of the Northwestern Annex, opening into Room 25. Wall surface blackened by soot. (Photo S. Jakobielski)

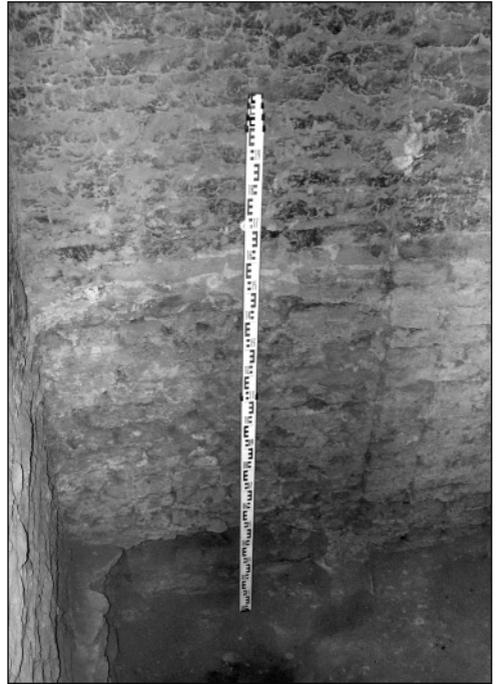


Fig. 10. North wall of Room 26 in the Northwestern Annex. Note vertical line in brick bondwork marking western jamb of doorway. At bottom left, remnants of a dismantled bench (Photo J. Świącicki)

6 This discovery changes essentially the interpretation of the appearance of the South Building in its earliest phase; the question has been discussed extensively in a paper presented at the conference of Nubian studies in Gdańsk/Gniew in 2007, cf. Jakobielski, Świącicki, forthcoming.

7 Rooms 29, 31 and 23, as well as a new gate from the west (rooms 10, 12, 16-17) were added onto the Southern Building (NW-S) at this time. The Southern Gate became superfluous and was subsequently blocked.

a barrel vault. It was made to communicate with the Main Monastery Building through two doors pierced in the east wall of Room 30. It is likely that the rest of the passage was covered at this time with a roof of palm beams (the sockets for these beams can be observed in the east and west walls of Room 30). Soon afterwards, the two passages into the Main Monastery Building were blocked

and the inaccessible part of the passage was turned into what appears to be a rubbish dump (mainly ashes).

Further complications appeared when an upper floor was added to the Southern Building in the second half of the 11th century. After an unsuccessful attempt to reach the Main Monastery Building from Room 26 through a door cut in the east wall, the builders came up with a unique solution. They tunneled through the fill outside the south wall and constructed a vaulted corridor on the level of the original entrance, opening at the other end straight into Room 36 of the Main Monastery Building

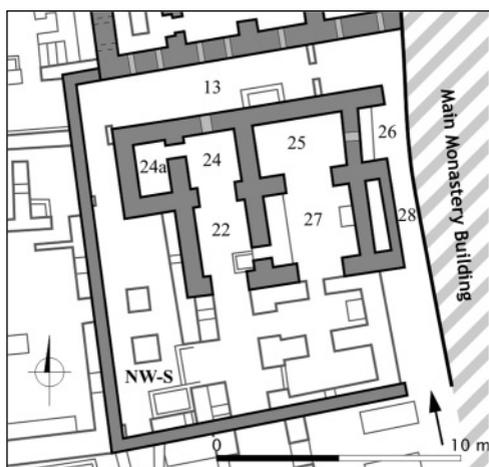
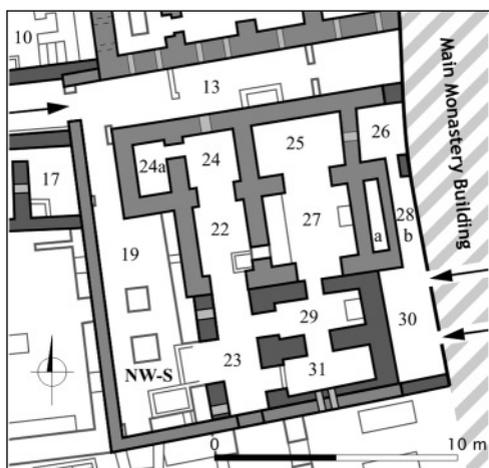


Fig. 11. Plan of the Southern Building of the Northwestern Annex: original phase from the 10th century (top) and phase from the mid 11th century (Drawing M. Momot)

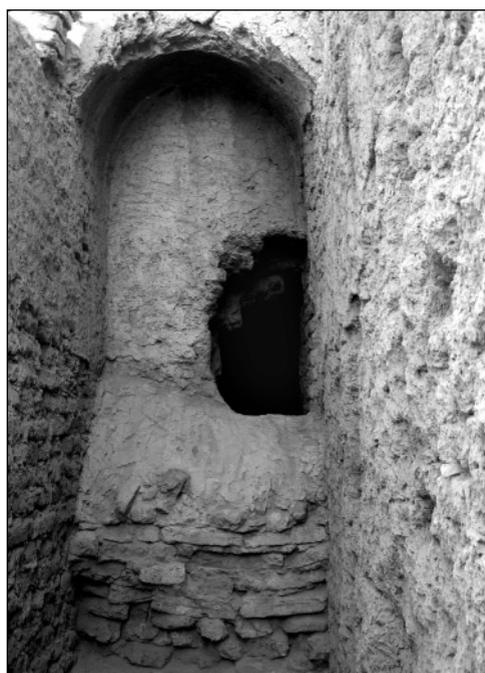


Fig. 12. Opening pierced in the wall between Rooms 28 and 26 of the Northwestern Annex in the latest period of use; seen from the south, from Room 28. Below it, the vault of a covered underground passage joining Rooms 26 and 36 (Photo S. Jakobielski)

(excavated in 2002). Platforms with steps leading down into the tunnel were built at both ends, that is, in Rooms 26 and 36. The rubbish dump which had accumulated in the rest of the old passage was leveled and chambers 28A and 28B were given separate vaults, to be used as cellars accessed from the upper storey through trapdoors in the floor (cf. Jakobielski 2001a: 161-162 (Figs 20-23); 1997: 160-162; cf. also 1998: 59). In the latest phase, an irregular opening was cut

from cellar 28B into Room 26 [Fig. 12]. Thus, the original communication pattern leading to the Annex from the south was restored in some sense. A door was pierced in the upper part of the south wall of Room 30, and the upper parts of the arcade between Rooms 30 and 28B were used again. Room 26 appears to have remained in use even after the vault of cellar 28B had collapsed and Room 30 started being used again as a depository for ashes.

EXCAVATIONS IN THE CENTRAL BUILDING

In order to uncover the northern entrance to the Monastery Church (see below, report by D. Gazda in this volume), a part of the Central Building (H-CB) touching upon the Church from the north was partly cleared of sand. The building, preserved to the upper-story floor in places, and composed of several rooms, forms a small mound just north of the ruins of the church.

Both red brick and mud brick were used in the construction of the walls, obviously in different building phases, but until more work is done no chronological determinations can be hazarded. Drifted sand was cleared from two rooms: CB.1 (3.50 by 2.40 m) situated by the northern church façade, between the northern entrance and the northwestern corner, and CB.2 forming a kind of vestibule (2.00 by 6.00 m) on the axis of the northern church entrance, transversally to CB.1 [Fig. 14]. A passage with stone threshold, 1.80 m wide, with a now lost arcade connected the two chambers. The walls of CB.1 had been finely plastered and whitewashed once, larger remnants surviving only the west wall. They are preserved to a height from c. 1.00 to 2.20 m. The wall of the church formed the south side, while a doorway in the northwestern corner of the north wall

gave onto the interior of the Central Building (as yet unexcavated). The west wall, which was also the outer wall, had a window opening in it, 0.60 m wide, presumably originally fitted with a ceramic grille. Fragments of just such a grille were found inside this unit, the

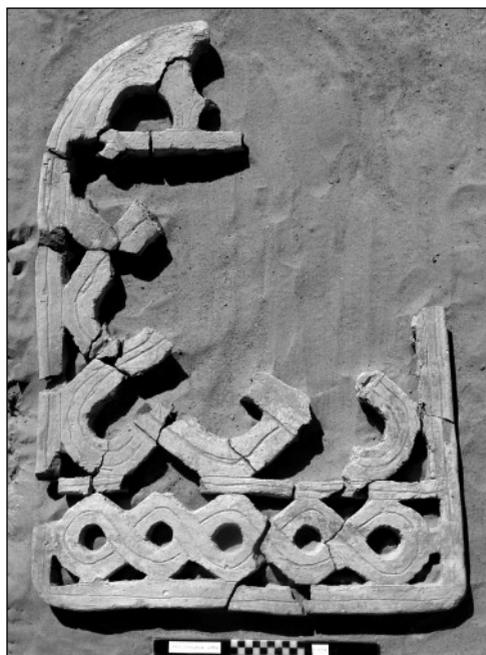


Fig. 13. Terracotta window grille found in Room CB.1 (Photo J. Świącicki)

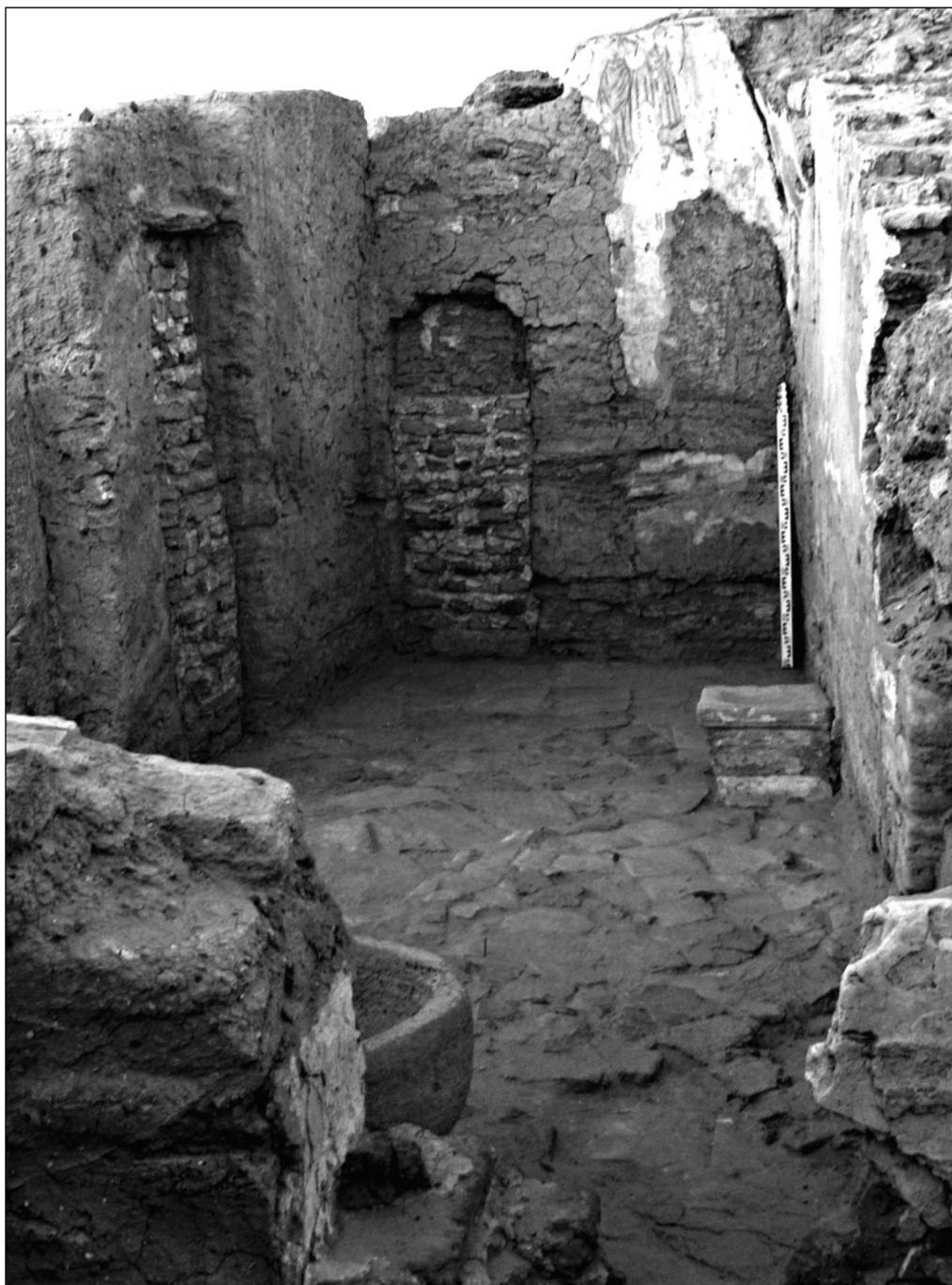


Fig. 14. The Central Building (H-CB), Room CB.2 looking north toward the passage leading inside the building (Photo S. Jakobielski)

reconstructed dimensions (0.59 by 0.88 m) suggesting that it may have come from this window [Fig. 13]. No furnishings other than a kind of mastaba (2.40 by 0.50 m) along the south wall and made of a single course of red bricks were discovered.⁸ A brick floor filled room CB.1, unlike the vestibule CB.2, where irregular stone slabs were introduced over most of the surface to fill out the ceramic tile floor [cf. Fig. 14]. The building was rebuilt at least twice and renovated, the plasterwork on the walls bearing testimony of numerous repairs. The walls of the vestibule were of mud brick with the exception of the east wall, which was of red brick and had sandstone ashlar blocks used in the jambs of

the doorway leading into the eastern part of the structure [cf. Fig. 15]. Other doorways opened from the vestibule into the western and northern parts of the building.

Painting on the walls included a fragmentarily preserved standing angel east of the doorway on the north wall (fragments of the face of the figure were recovered from the fill); the yellow robes were rendered in linear manner with dark purple lines for the contours. Repainting at a later date included the addition on the same coat of whitewash of a representation of two standing saints (monks?), shown as if under the archangel's protection. The mural is very poorly preserved, the paint washed out by rains and peeling, so that merely an outline



Fig. 15. Northern entrance to the Monastery Church with stone basin next to it; photo looking south from Room CB.2. Note that a part of the church wall including the eastern jamb of the blocked entrance is totally missing (Photo S. Jakobielski)

8 The possibility that the feature marks a burial has been considered but not verified archaeologically as yet.

of white-robed figures with haloes and the face of one of the saints have been preserved [Fig. 16].

The murals from the east wall are practically completely washed out. The residual color remaining on the plaster suggests a row of figures with a representation of Mary presumably at the northern end (identification based on traces of typical robes), and archangels with characteristic *diskoi* beyond.

The vestibule was furnished with a big footed basin (for washing feet before entering the church ?), carved from a single piece of ferruginous sandstone. It stood next to the blocked entrance to the church [Fig. 15].



Fig. 16. Angel and two saints (monks ?) in Room CB.2 (Photo S. Jakobielski)

The other chamber had a sandstone stand resembling a low stool with concave top and two cut runoff channels on either side, mortared to the east wall. It is likely to have served as a stand under a big vessel (*zir*) containing water [Fig. 17]. The plinth bears an incised inscription in Greek (of the presumed donor of the stand ?):

+ ΑΒΒΑ ΔΑ[••••] Η(ΚΑΙ) ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜ(ΟC)
that is, + *Abba Da[niel]* (or *Da[wid]*), *presbyter and administrator*.

Paradoxically, the only dating evidence for usage of this structure in the Late and Terminal Christian periods is provided by the state of preservation of the northern entrance to the Monastery Church. This entrance, originally about a meter wide, was made narrower with a partial blocking of mud brick.⁹ The massive stone basin was then stood (or put back in place) against the blocking. The last phase was a complete blocking of this entrance with ashlar sandstone, thus cutting off the Central Building from the Church.

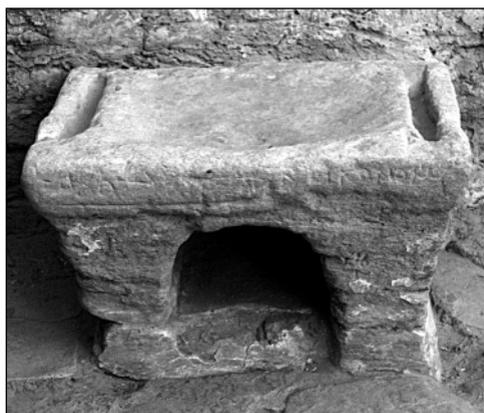


Fig. 17. Sandstone stand in Room CB.2 (Photo S. Jakobielski)

9 Possibly in the end of the 11th or at the latest in the 12th century, when other mud-brick divider walls were introduced into the church interior.

PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF UNCOVERED STRUCTURES

Protection measures undertaken in the Monastery Church comprised reinforcing of all the edges of preserved pavements with mud plaster and filling the holes in the paving. Preserved wall plastering had all the edges similarly protected with a mass consisting of sand mixed with water-diluted polyvinyl acetate. The west wall of the church in the center and northern sections, preserved very low, was rebuilt with original red brick, but in another bond and mortar to a height of nearly 1.80 m, thus separating the Church from the *Kellion* (Unit S) on the west of it (Jakobielski 2001c: 23 with bibliography). A roof sloping to the west (of the same construction as the one over the Annexes, cf. Jakobielski 2001b: 278) was introduced in the northwestern chamber, part of the northern aisle and the northwestern part of the nave, this in order to shelter wall paintings of the *Trinity* and

Adoration of the Magi (cf. Gazda 2003: 234-235; 2005b: 89-90). In the case of other murals (in the Central Building, too), once the preservation measures were completed, they were protected by building parallel walls of re-used brick close to the face and filling the intervening space with pure sand. Plastic sheets and a layer of mud mixed with gum Arabic on the tops of these screens prevent water from seeping in at the top.

Protective maintenance of the roofs above the Northwestern and Southwestern Annexes, the Southwestern Building and the western part of the Monastery Church included in 2006 the laying of a new layer of *zibala* (mixture of dung and mud). All the windows and doorways were walled up at the end of the season to prevent illicit entrance until work can be resumed next time.

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APPENDIX 1

OLD DONGOLA 2006:
CONSERVATION REPORT

Dorota Moryto-Naumiuk

One of the chief tasks of the conservation team working this season in the monastery on Kom H (for previous conservation reports, cf. Jakobielski 2001: 278; Jakobielski 2003: 228-229; Jakobielski 2005: 272) was to put together the mural depicting the *Massacre of the Innocents* from the tumbled southern part of the vault in Room 6 of the Southwestern Annex. The original vault had been constructed of mud brick, coated with mud plaster and white-washed with kaolin clay. The difficulty lay in the fragmentation of the remains, many being preserved on single bricks or as loose pieces of plaster, which had additionally been twice removed from their original position, further breaking any connections which may have remained after the first exploration of the vault. Closer observation of the material also indicated that part of the plaster had been distorted and the painting layer washed out by rain sometime in the distant past.

Considering the short season this year, the decision was taken to salvage all the bigger pieces, which were easier to identify and replace in position. Smaller loose fragments and parts of the background have been protected by placing them in sand in flat boxes and storing them for further work.

The painted surface of fragments of murals still adhering to loose bricks was cleaned mechanically and consolidated with a 2% solution of PARALOID B72 in toluene. Once the solvent had evaporated, the surface was protected with several layers of Japanese tissue paper attached with KLUCEL G (c. two big spoons of dry adhesive per half a liter of water). The painted layer was cut away from the bricks [*Fig. 1*]. It was then placed face down and the back side was reinforced by daubing it delicately (so as not to dissolve it) with a water dispersion of PRIMAL AC33 (1:10). Putties made of fine sand, clay from crushed mud brick with a few percent of polyvinyl acetate added were used to fill the losses. The Japanese tissue was then removed from the face by soaking and the elements were arranged on a 2 mm mesh screen, attached to it with the same plaster used for the putties.

Bigger parts with identifiable elements of the composition were reintroduced on the south wall of Room 6, below the non-existent vault from where they had come. This was done using an appropriate ATLAS adhesive instead of the regular building material, in this case mud mortar, which takes too long to set and is too weak for immuring a large and heavy element. The

mural would have been softened and deformed before the mortar had set.¹

The screens with attached fragments of murals were fixed to the walls and shored up for the duration of the setting process. The excess margins of the mesh screen were cut to size and the edges of the murals protected with mud mortar.

The same procedure was applied to a fragment of plaster with scratched graffito from the collapsed arch of the entrance arcade between SW.6 and SW.1. In this case a sand-lime mortar was used to set the

fragment in the wall because of the relatively small size of this piece (c. 0.25 m²) and hence low weight.

The effectiveness of this experimental method of fixing larger fragments on walls will be observed closely before it is used on a larger scale.

Another important conservation effort this season was to protect the murals newly discovered in the Central Building (H-CB), among others, a depiction of an angel on the north wall of Room CB.2 (cf. above, *Fig. 16* on page 340).



*Fig. 1. Work on the murals in a makeshift conservation atelier at the site
(Photo M. Martens-Czarnecka)*

¹ Murals painted on clay or mud ground or plaster containing a large addition of silty elements are not resistant to water. Caution is recommended, since excessively long action with liquids causes intensive softening and deformation.

The first step was to clean the surface with glass fiber brushes. The painting surface was covered with 3% KLUCEL G in alcohol. To make the plaster stronger and in order to make the loosened part of the plaster re-adhere to the wall, injections were made of PRIMAL AC33 with VINA-VIL NPC (1:1) in water (1:6). The outer edges of the plaster were reinforced and the surface plaster losses filled with a lime putty (one part lime to four parts sand with PRIMAL E330 and VINA-VIL NPC added), used in conformity with the original lime coating of the wall.

The same processes in treatment were applied also to the remnants of paintings on the east wall in Room CB.2. There, however, the painted layer of lime plaster was found under a coating of mud, which had to be removed first with scalpels and glass fiber brushes.

The state of preservation of previously treated paintings was checked and conservation intervention undertaken wherever needed. The mural of a King (P 18/NW 12S) in Room 12, North-western Annex, required cleaning of the dust from the painting surface. This was accomplished with brushes and revealed a yellowish tone, which is probably the effect of earlier conservation. Tests made in order to establish the safest method for clearing this substance demonstrated that pure alcohol compresses gave the best results. It was decided, however, not to

remove this protective layer for the time being, as it serves its purpose, safeguarding the original painting layer. Cracks have been observed in some parts of murals, apparently due to the subsidence of the building. These were filled in with mortar of the same composition as the original plaster, that is, one part of clay to two parts of sand with PRIMAL E330 mixed in.

The mural of the Archangel Raphael taming a unicorn (P 14/SW3 E) on the east wall of Room 3 was also cleaned of dust, the plaster coating was strengthened and loosened parts fixed to the wall with injections made of a mixture of PRIMAL AC33 with VINA-VIL NPC (1:1) in water (one part glue to six parts of water). The outer edges of plaster were reinforced with a putty composed of clay and sand (1:2) with PRIMAL E330 added in.

The same methods were applied in treating two other paintings found in Room 4 of the Southwestern Annex, depicting St Epiphanius (P 22 SW4.S) and Christ in a medallion (P 20/SW4.W). In the latter case, the surface of this painting is covered in many places with a layer of clay that adheres to the painting layer much more strongly than the paint to the plaster. To protect the painting layer, it was decided to impregnate it instead with 3% KLUCEL G in alcohol which does not change the original colors and is rather mild and easily removable, but not waterproof.

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APPENDIX 2

EXPLORATION OF KOM J
IN OLD DONGOLA (2002 AND 2006)

Daniel Gazda

Kom J neighbors with the North Church (NC) and Christian cemetery (TSJ), situated east of the modern track from el-Ghaddar village to the ruins of the Throne Hall-Mosque and Citadel on Kom A, about 450 m west of the monastery compound on Kom H (for a general plan of the Polish concession at Dongola site, cf. Jakobielski 2001: 4-5). It was first explored in December 2002 (Jakobielski 2003: 224) and again in January 2006, both times by the present author.

It is on oval mound measuring c. 15 m across and rising to a height of 3 m on the west, north and south. Toward the east there is a low ridge connecting it with Kom I. The ground is strewn with red-brick rubble and small pieces of broken stone.

A rectangular trench (c. 8.00 by 6.50 m) was dug in the southeastern part of the mound in order to determine the character of the architecture located here (suggestions have included a church, monumental mausoleum or cemetery area, cf. Jakobielski 2001: 4). Testing in other parts of the kom established the thickness of deposits, which consist of sand and rubble on top of bedrock: not exceeding 0.20 m in the central part, not more than 0.40 m in the western part and the area where the trench was excavated.

Relics of two unidentified structures in very poor state of preservation were cleared under a layer of drifted sand and fine rubble, one in the southeastern part of the mound and the other situated more centrally [Figs 2, 3]. One corner of the more easterly of the two structures was made of sandstone blocks reused from a Napatan or New Kingdom temple, as suggested by a block with two hieroglyphic signs in low relief, ḥ (or similar, cf. Jakobielski 2003: 224 and note 15 – Gardiner's signs A40, A42, A46,

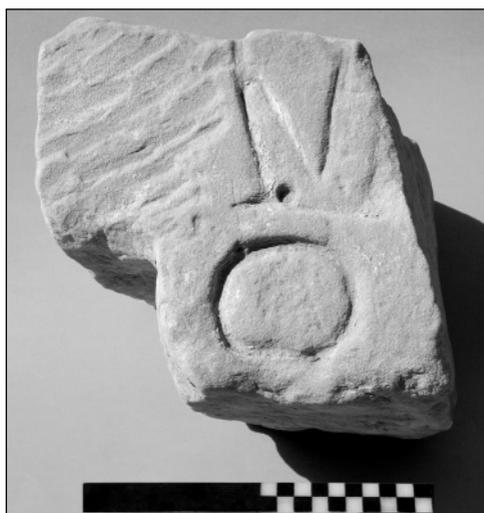


Fig. 1. Block with hieroglyphic signs
(Photo D. Gazda)

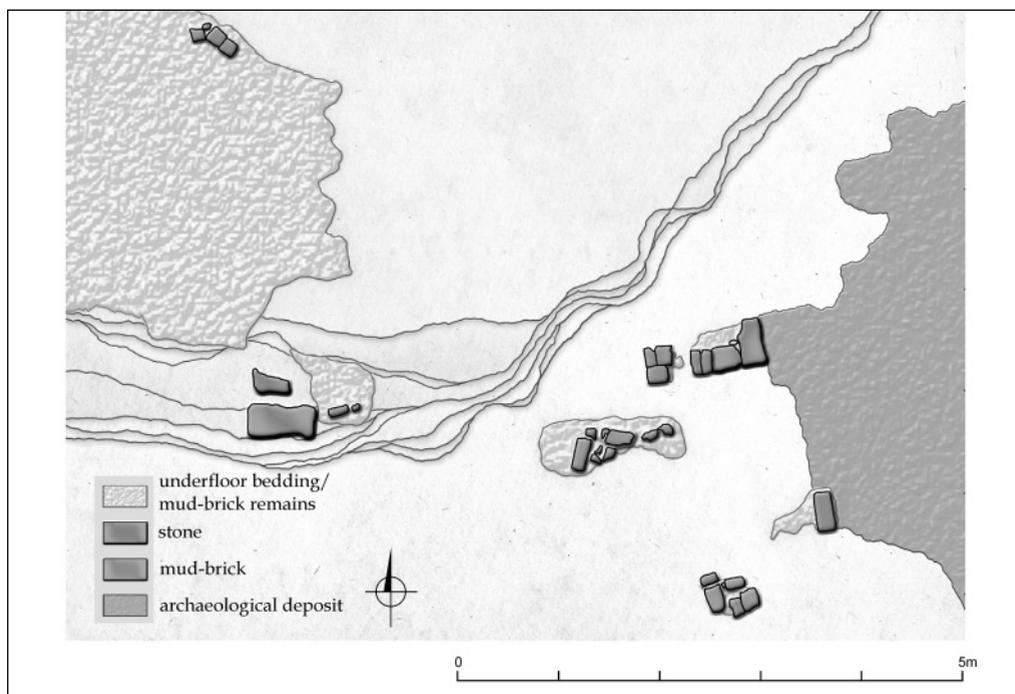


Fig. 2. Plan of remains on Kom J (Drawing A. Błaszczuk and D. Gazda)



Fig. 3. Remains of structures on Kom J, seen from the east (Photo D. Gazda)

C8 or C10) and r^c , both painted yellow [Fig. 1], found at the top of the mound, where a shallow trench had been cut in bedrock under one of the walls. The fill of this structure contained some Post-Classic Christian pottery of Dongolan production (11th-12th century).

Three ceramic tiles measuring 23x12x3.5 cm formed a residual pavement in the central part of the mound, resting on a bedding of sand a few centimeters thick, laid directly on bedrock. The rubble here also contains fragments of wall plaster in white, red and gray color. The structure

with the pavement could have been at least 5 m long.

East of the eastern one of the two structures was an archaeological layer c. 0.20-0.25 m thick. Testing yielded pottery and organic remains.

Interpretation of the structures based on the limited evidence available is impossible, although the feature in the center of the mound could have been a mausoleum. It was most definitely not a church. To judge by the recorded ceramics, at least some part of this architecture was still in use in the 11th/12th century.

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