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Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 21, 193-211

2012

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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NAQLUN (NEKLONI) EXCAVATIONS IN 2008–2009

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with appendix by Jarosław Zieliński²

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Abstract: Continued excavation concentrated on uncovering monastic architecture in the central and southern parts of Kom A: Buildings J, K and L and the monastic refuse dump from the 5th through 10th centuries. A hoard of Abbasid dinars and metal objects (lamps and *polycandelion* among them) were uncovered in the fill of a structure, which had burned down in a huge fire that consumed the central part of the monastic compound. The event was dated by coins to the middle of the 10th century. The refuse dump at the southern fringes of Kom A (Site B) functioned from the end of the 5th century to the 10th century. More graves of the 12th–early 13th century were uncovered in the southwestern part of the medieval cemetery on the main kom.

Keywords: Fayum, Naqlun, Monastery, Building J, site B, Cemetery A, funerary stelae, archeobotany

Excavations on the central kom in Naqlun continued in 2008 and 2009 in the central and southern parts [Fig. 1, inset]. Attention focused on a complex of buildings (K, L, M, N) in the southern quarter, discovered already in previous seasons of fieldwork, and on further clearing of Building J, located directly to the south of Church A. Another section of cemetery A was also explored, preparing the area for exploration of the monastery building lying below it.

Renewed investigation of the early monastic dump on the southern fringes of the central kom (discovered and tested in the 1986, 1987 and 1993 seasons, see Godlewski *et alii* 1994, 209–212, 217–226) was aimed at refining the chronology and stratigraphy of the dump. An extensive structure B.21–B.26, sealing the early layers, was cleared; its northwestern end,

B.1–B.3 was documented (see Maślak 2012, in this volume). A test pit was dug within the confines of unit B.26 and to the north of it, this mainly in the 2008 season, and then extended 6.00 m northward in 2009. The results of this work are reported separately in this volume (see Derda, Dzierzbicka 2012).

Specialist studies in the 2008–2009 seasons included documentation of the pottery (see Danys-Lasek 2012, in this volume) and glass finds. Current anthropological research was carried out on human remains from the medieval cemetery and the crypts from Kom B (see Dzierzbicka, Ożarek 2012, in this volume). The wood artifact collection from the present as well as past seasons was examined for species identification (for a report, see Zieliński, Zych 2012, in this volume).

SOUTHERN QUARTER OF BUILDINGS ON THE KOM

Trenches in buildings at the southern end of the kom tested in the S.1–S.3 trenches dug in 2006 and 2007 (Godlewski 2007: 199–202) were deepened and extended in the 2008 season, revealing extensive architecture with individual complexes separated by a maze of narrow lanes [see *Fig. 1*]. Organizing this quarter was a narrow lane running from west to east and turning at a right angle to proceed southwards. Building L was located on its southern side, Building K, or rather two structures making up complex K separated by a narrow passage turning off to the north, was on the northern side. Where it turned southward the lane was lined on the eastern side by two complexes separated

by a wider alley running off to the east, Building M to the south of it and Building N to the north of it. The lane between buildings K and L was 1.33 m wide, narrowing slightly to 1.28 m beyond the bend. The alley running between buildings M and N was wider, measuring 1.83 m; the passage turning to the north between two parts of building complex K was also 1.80 m wide. The sand surface of the alleys was not hardened.

There can be no doubt that the complexes were part of a more extensive residential quarter located in the southern part of the main kom. It is also evident that they suffered severe damage and were rebuilt on a number of occasions with

Team

Dates of work: 1 September–4 October 2008; 19 October–26 November 2009

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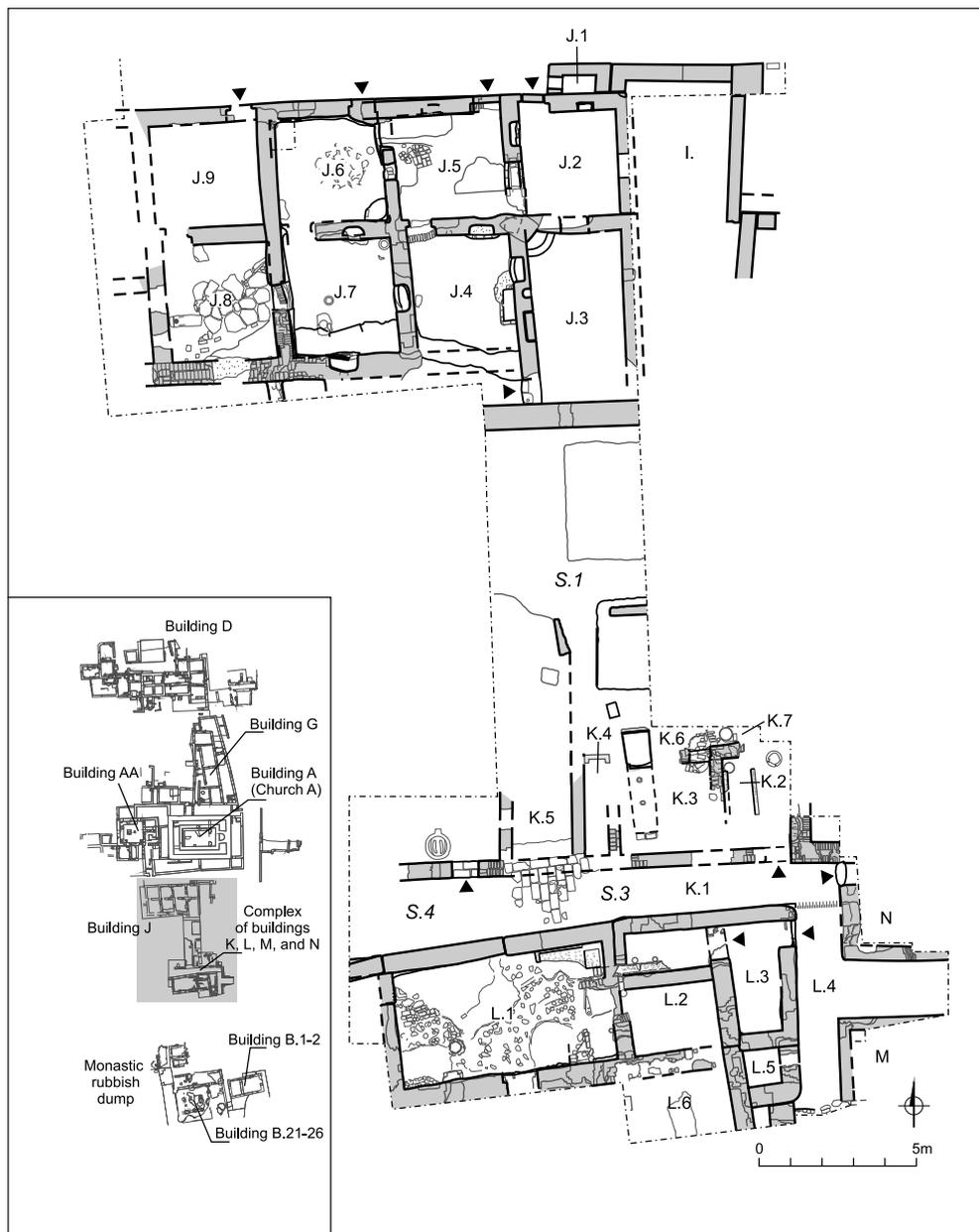


Fig. 1. Building J and Buildings K, L, M and N in the middle and southern part of the central kom; inset, plan of the monastic complex on the central kom (sites A, B and D); state for 2009 (Plan S. Maślak, updating documentation by J. Dobrowolski, W. Godlewski, D. Zielińska, S. Maślak, PCMA archives)

some modification of the overall layout. It is noteworthy that the cemetery on the main kom does not seem to have covered this area despite tombs evidently of the same date as graves in the cemetery (12th–13th century) appearing further south, in the refuse dump (see Derda, Dzierzbicka 2012, in this volume).

BUILDING COMPLEX K

The complex of rooms north of lane K.1 appears to comprise two different units: K.2–K.7 and K.10, to the east and west respectively of a passage running to the north (K.5; 7.34 m a.s.l.) [Fig. 2, see also Fig. 6]. The western unit (K.10) appears to have been constructed atop the ruins of an older building (K.20), the only surviving evidence of which was a stone pavement.

A fragment of this pavement had been cleared in 2005 (Godlewski 2007: 199–202) comprising regularly laid slabs of limestone, recorded at 7.14 m a.s.l.

A distinct edge on the northern side of the excavated floor indicated where a wall had once stood. This ghost wall (dismantled down to the foundations) was traced for a distance of approximately 2.20 m N–S (to the north wall of unit L.1) and 2.50 m E–W and was about 1 m wide, judging by the layers in the western baulk. The floor level of this building approximated that of unit L.20 (7.23 m a.s.l.) to the south, which was also very poorly preserved.

The eastern unit of rooms (K.2–K.7) is not easy to interpret due to poor preservation of the architecture and evidence of repeated rebuilding, reflecting a number of occupational levels. Preserved sections of the south and west walls were constructed of baked brick, some of which had been burned through in a fire; the average brick dimensions were 25 x 12.5 x 6.5 cm. The walls were about 40 cm wide. Bonding in the surviving lower parts of these two walls consisted of a course

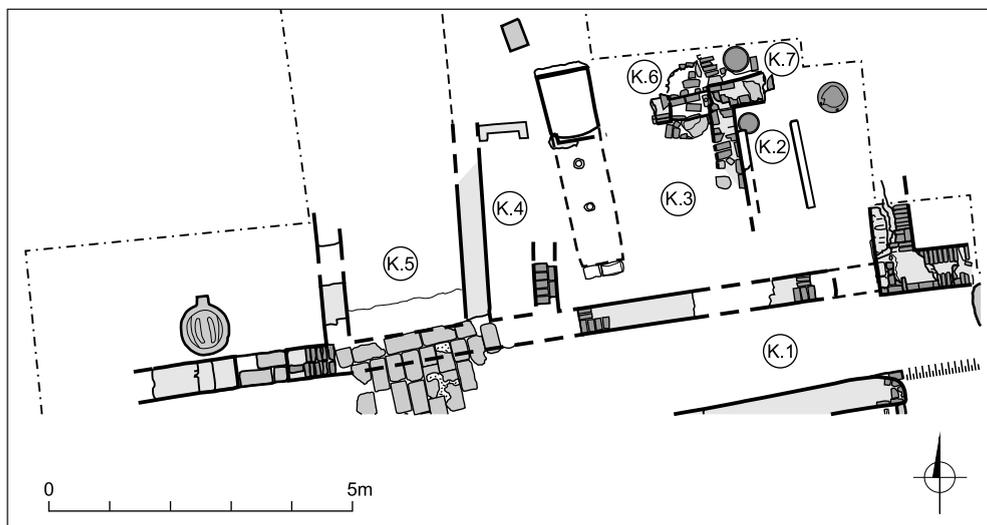


Fig. 2. Building complex K after the 2008–2009 seasons
(Plan S. Maślak, PCMA archives)

of headers on end laid on two courses of stretchers or bricks with the header transverse to the wall thickness. Despite the missing southwestern corner, the two walls seem to have comprised the eastern unit of Building K, which would have been entered from the southeastern corner, near Building M.

A poorly recognized space, K.2, estimated size 2.90 m by 1.80–2.00 m, opened behind the entrance. The west wall, constructed of baked brick and preserved at the northern end, was 0.40 m thick. Installations inside it comprised a possible basin against the west wall and two vessels sunk into the floor, which lay approximately 7.17–7.20 m a.s.l. Two parallel walls of a single row of baked bricks, coated with waterproof lime plaster, were set 0.78 m apart; the preserved part of the west wall of the two, adjacent to the west wall of the room, measured 0.55 m and was 0.21 m high. The eastern of the two walls was 1.38 m long and rising to 0.41 m in height. Both were founded at 7.22–7.24 m a.s.l., but the bottom of the installation was not preserved. The vessels were sunk by the north wall of the room, the one in the

northwestern corner preserved complete (rim diameter 34 cm, depth 78 cm), the one in the northeastern corner broken but preserving the handles [Fig. 3]. A third vessel, completely preserved, was located on the opposite side of the wall, in room K.7; it had a brick casing at walking level.

Rooms K.3–K.4 could have been two separate rooms or one space with a cellar and an unrecognizable installation by the west wall. The walls and floor in this area survive in very poor condition. A rectangular cellar constructed of dried brick occupied the center of this space, presumably under the walking level, which was established at approximately 7.15 m a.s.l. [Fig. 4]. It was 3.20 m long, aligned north–south, and 0.80 m wide inside. The actual cellar part at the southern end measured 2.05 m by 0.80 m and was barely 0.60 m high under a low flat barrel vault. Up to a height of 0.46 m the walls comprised a single row of bricks lacking plaster on the inside. Two air vents in the roof were apparently in the floor level of the room above and were sealed with ceramic bungs wrapped in palm leaves. The entrance shaft at the northern end was higher, approximately 1.40 m, measuring inside 1.15 m by 0.80 m. It, too, had a barrel vault springing from the east wall (preserved only at the northeastern corner), which means that it was at right angle to the axis of the cellar proper. This suggests that the destroyed entrance was located in the west wall. Judging by the height of the east wall (1.47 m), this opening was likely accessible from the floor level (approximately 7.15 m. a.s.l.). The floor inside the cellar consisted of bedrock without a mud floor. The purpose of this cellar, found filled with loose sand, could not be determined.



Fig. 3. Vessels on either side of the north wall of unit K.2 (north at bottom)
(Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)

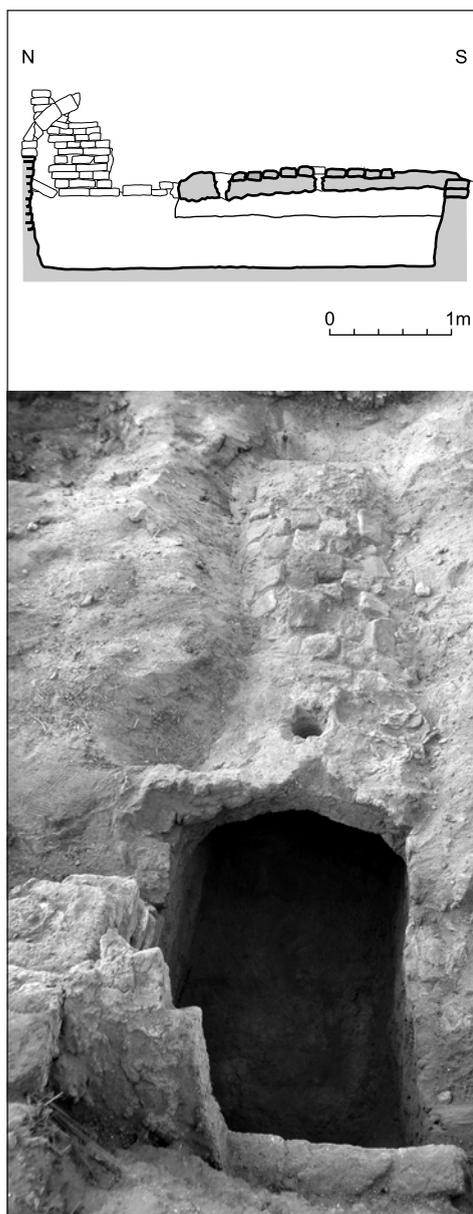


Fig. 4. Cellar in room K.3–K.4, view of the entrance shaft and vaulted roof seen from the north (left) and section looking east (Photo W. Godlewski, drawing Ł. Krupski, PCMA archives)

The western unit of complex K, comprising K.10, was tested first in 2006 when the southeastern corner of the room was cleared (at least 1.80 m by at least 2.40 m). The preserved sections of the south and east walls were constructed of small-sized baked bricks, one was 0.40 m wide and the other 0.50 m. The bond was an alternating stretcher–header type. One doorway led from lane K.1, the other from passage K.3 on the eastern side. The floor level could not be traced. The fill consisted of ashes. A round stone basin lay by the south wall, but it was impossible to determine with certainty, which level it should be related to and what its function might have been (see Godlewski 2008: 196–197, Fig. 2).

BUILDING L

Building L is the biggest complex in this trench. The five rooms explored so far (L.1–L.3, L.5–L.6) were constructed on top of an earlier building (L.10) and are structurally not homogeneous. It may have been unified into a single unit in the course of a rebuilding project [Figs 5, 6; see also Fig. 1].

The earlier structure, remains of which were discovered under rooms L.1 and L.2, comprised at least three units. The walls were built of a dark dried brick in alternating courses of headers and stretchers. The south wall of L.10.1 was 0.45 m wide and has been preserved to a height of 0.47 m. Remains of a baked-brick structure were recorded north of it, joining the face of the wall and bonded with lime mortar. The wall was faced with baked brick and plastered with lime render. It could be part of some kind of water installation.

New units (L.1–L.3) were built on top of the ruins of L.10 and rebuilt repeatedly.

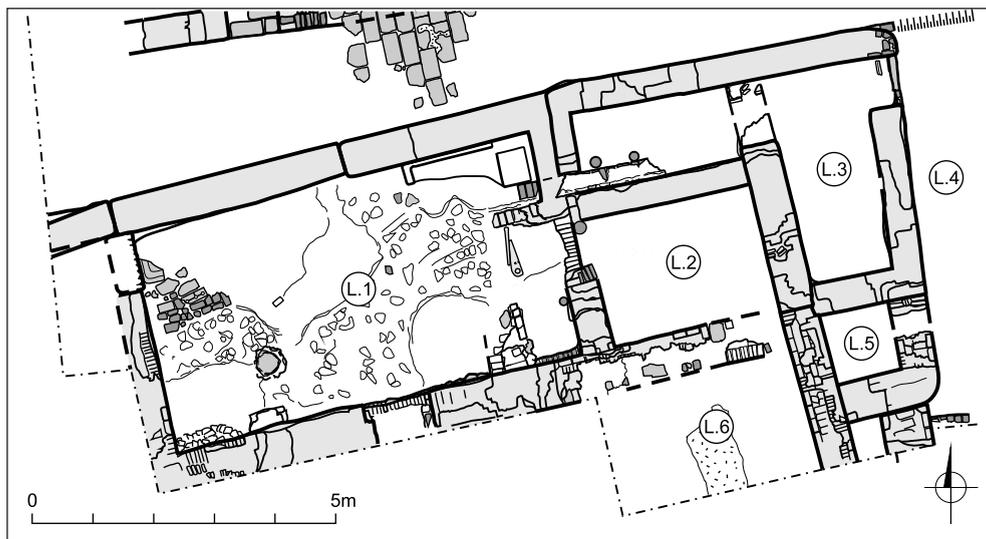


Fig. 5. Plan of Building L after the 2008–2009 seasons
(Drawing S. Maślak, PCMA archives)



Fig. 6. Building L, view from the west; note the ruins of Building complex K on the extreme left and Building M at right back (Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)

The northern part of this complex has been excavated. L.1 is the biggest unit, 25 m², originally accessed from the west. The walls constructed of dried brick were not structurally homogeneous. The northeastern corner contained an installation of baked brick coated with lime plaster, the southwestern one a large storage jar sunk into the walking level. The function of this room is ill-defined. L.2 and L.3 were entered from the east, but were connected with L.1, blocking the entrance to it from the east. The three units functioned together, most probably in some domestic or industrial role, in the 10th–11th century. It merits recalling an unusual find made in the northwestern corner of L.2 in 2005: concealed in a small niche was a straw-wrapped bundle containing two bronze dies for striking Abbasid dinars (Godlewski 2007: 1999 and Fig. 6) [Fig. 7]. The rubble fill also produced fragments of Coptic codex sheets on vellum (Godlewski 2007: 203–204).

BUILDINGS N AND M

Building N was the most solid structure within the complex and, judging by the

foundation level (7.37 m a.s.l.), had been built later than Building complex K. The southwestern corner of the structure (unit N.1) was uncovered and the western end of unit N.2 was most probably a kind of vestibule attached to the south wall of N.1 [see Fig. 1]. Walls 0.56 m thick were constructed of sun-dried brick and baked brick, laid alternately, a course of headers and a course of stretchers. The vestibule was entered from the west, the threshold recessed approximately 1.45 m to the east relative to the southwestern corner of the structure. N.2 was entered through a door 0.80 m wide and furnished with a stone threshold, located at the north end of the west wall where it joined the wall of N.2. The founding of the west wall of N.2, at a level 0.40 m above the founding of the south wall of N.1 (7.75 m a.s.l.) may suggest that the northern room was added to the building after some time.

The northwestern corner of Building M, separated from N by a wide lane, could be explored within the confines of the trench. The wall of sun-dried brick was 0.40 m thick and had the same type of bonding as the walls in Building N.



Fig. 7. Two parts of a bronze die for striking Abbasid dinars (Nd.05.312) and the bundles as found (left), wrapped in straw for protection (Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)

THE CENTRAL QUARTER — BUILDING J

Building J lay south of an east–west running street along the south side of buildings A (church tower) and AA. Its northern facade and rooms J.1–J.3 were uncovered in 2005 (Godlewski 2007: 199–201) and it was then dated provisionally to the 6th century. In 2009 the eastern end of this building was excavated (rooms J.4–J.8) [Fig. 8]. The building probably extended further to the west.

The structure had burned down in the middle of the 10th century, after which it was rebuilt in altered form. After its final abandonment, the ruins served for a while as open domestic space, and then as a medieval burial ground (Cemetery A), which caused further damage to the burnt walls. Once

the cemetery layer was removed, eight rooms could be investigated, all belonging to the later phase of occupation when the doors on the street side were blocked and the structure was accessed only from the south [Figs 9, 10].

The building comprised initially ground-floor double-room units with a door to each from the street on the northern side. Three segments have been cleared; room J.8 was presumably part of the fourth segment. The dried-brick walls were baked in the mid 10th-century fire. A rebuilding that occurred before the conflagration entailed blocking of all the northern entrances. In effect, rooms J.4–J.8 became a single interconnected

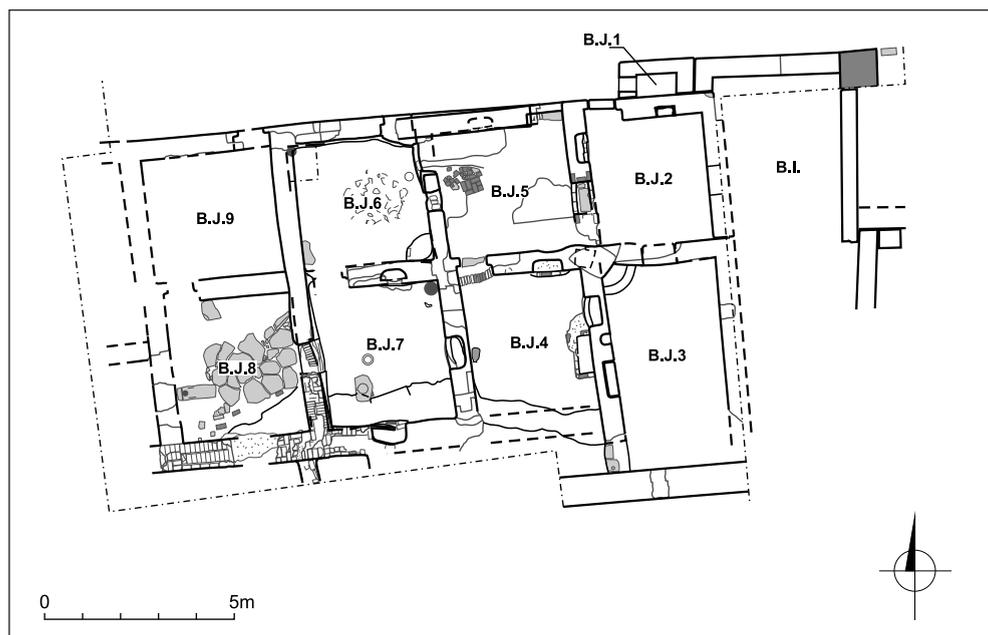


Fig. 8. Plan of Building J, state after the 2008–2009 seasons
(Plan S. Maslak, PCMA archives)



*Fig. 9. Building J. Rooms 6–7, viewed from the south
(Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)*



*Fig. 10. Building J. Rooms 4–5, viewed from the south
(Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)*

complex accessible via a door in the south wall of J.8, which probably functioned as a vestibule. In the final phase, when the passage from J.8 to J.7 had been blocked, only four rooms remained in the complex (J.4–J.7), which was now entered probably through the damaged south wall of J.4.

Finds from rooms J.6 and J.7 emphasize the importance of this complex in the monastic compound. The rubble in front of a niche in the center of the south wall of room J.7 yielded a pot of gold coins, stuck together by the hot ashes resulting from the fire that consumed the building [Fig. 12, bottom right]. The hoard contained 18 intact dinars and 62 cut pieces of coins, which had undoubtedly been in circulation as well (they could be classified into categories by weight). Dinars of Caliph Muqtadir (AD 908–928) predominated [Fig. 12, center right]. A *polycandelion* made of bronze with chains for suspension from a ceiling beam [Fig. 12, left, second from bottom] was also found in the rubble of room J.8, as was a bronze lamp for mounting on a candelabrum [Fig. 12, bottom left]. It could not be ascertained whether these two lighting objects had actually been used in this room or had just been stored there. The fire also consumed the entire contents of rooms J.6 and J.7 leaving only fire-resistant items like a metal box which turned out to be a salt cellar [Fig. 12, top right], fragments of bronze box or casket fittings [Fig. 12, left, second from top] and a dozen or so bone codex page markers [Fig. 12, top left].

Room J.8 produced yet another surprise: a funerary stela (Nd.09.592) reused as a slab in the floor pavement [Fig. 11]. It is the only complete stela found at Naqlun (H. 104 cm; W. 36 cm; Th. 9–13 cm) and was dedicated to Thomas. The slab



Fig. 11. Funerary stela of Thomas (Nd.09.592) reused in the pavement of room J.8 (the skeleton is not connected; it belongs to a medieval burial made in the ruins) (Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)



Fig. 12. Finds from Building J (counterclockwise from bottom right): pot of gold coins; Abbasid dinar, reverse and obverse, from the pot; salt cellar (Nd.09.381); bone codex page markers (Nd.09.463); casket fittings of bronze (Nd.09.534); bronze polycandelion (Nd.09.466); lamp of bronze (Nd.09.532) (Photos T. Derda [coins], W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)

must have been salvaged from a tomb in Cemetery C situated in the western part of the monastic compound (Godlewski, Czaja-Szewczak 2008; Zych 2008) and presumably belonged to a late phase of use of that burial ground. In any case, its reuse in the floor of one of the rooms of Building J before its burning in the middle of the 10th century, but already after its alteration in the 9th century, provides a terminal

date for Cemetery C. The tombstones and indeed, all of the tomb superstructures have disappeared completely from the cemetery; their fragments as well as stone blocks were probably reused in the building of the Church of the Archangel Gabriel in the 8th/9th century. Fragments of other stelae were found in structures belonging to the enlarged Building AA (Godlewski, Łajtar 2006).

CEMETERY A

The area of Building J and the street separating it from Building A to the north constituted part of the extensive medieval Coptic cemetery, which existed on the kom in the 12th–13th century (Godlewski 2011). The total count of explored graves in the 2009 season was 39 [Fig. 13].

A few masonry superstructures were also preserved, T.411 and T.419 the most fully, in the southwestern part of the trench despite general ground erosion [Fig. 14]. T.411 had a superstructure of baked brick, T.419 of dried brick. Both were rectangular in plan, 2.26 m by 0.85 m and at least

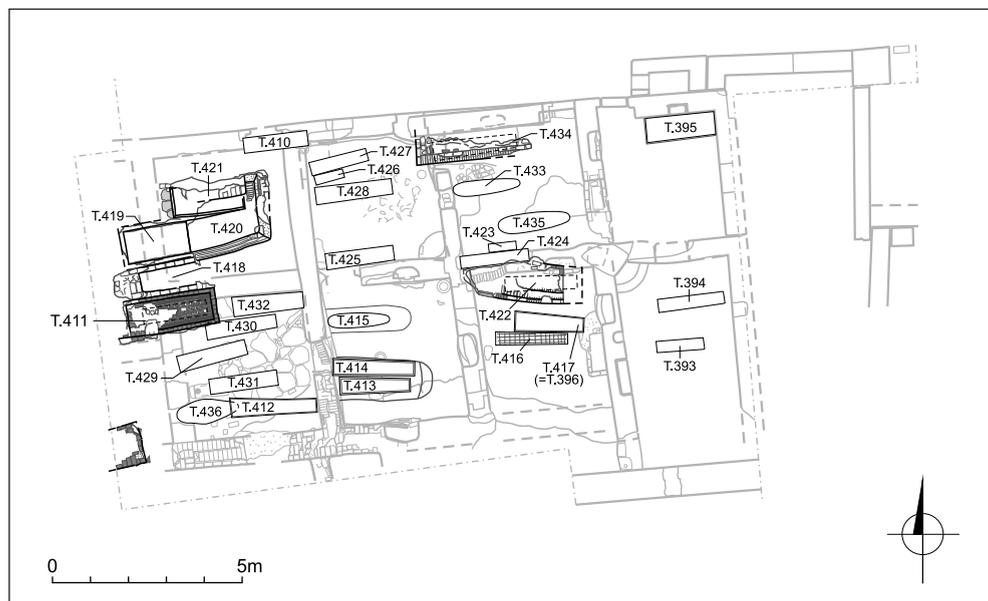


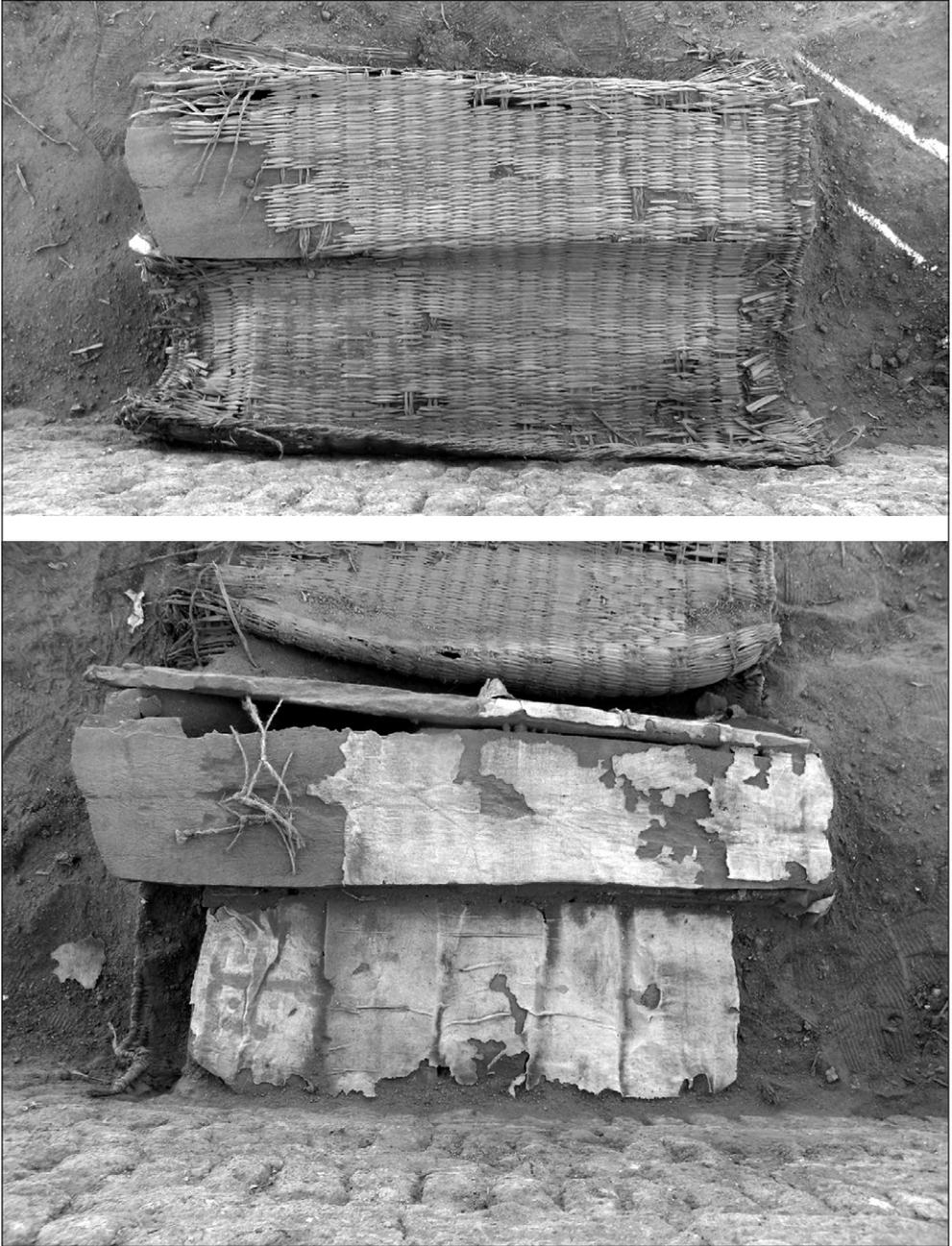
Fig. 13. Southwestern part of Cemetery A, section explored in 2009 (Plan S. Maślak, PCMA archives)



*Fig. 14. Tomb superstructures T.411 and T.419 from Cemetery A, view from the east
(Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)*



*Fig. 15. Exploration of graves from Cemetery A inside room J.5, view from the east
(Photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)*



*Fig. 16. Coffins covered with mats (left) and with a shroud
(Photos W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)*

1.67 m by 0.83–0.88 m respectively. The first one had an earth mound 0.38 m high, the second featured a presumably rounded top on a rectangular structure. The reconstructed height was 0.60 m in the first case and at least 0.60 m in the second. There was no evidence of plastering on the superstructure of T.411, while the other superstructure was covered with a thick coating of lime plaster with polished surface.

All the burials except one excavated in 2009 had been placed in wooden coffins; the one exception was a structure made of palm-leaf ribs (*jarids*) [Fig. 15]. The grave pits were approximately 0.70–0.80 m deep. In the western end of this section of the cemetery the burials were

in much worse condition, apparently due to elevated ground humidity of deposits in the area. Only the bones and glass vessels from the grave furnishings have survived. No shrouds or robes were recorded, while in graves from the eastern part of this section of the cemetery there were cases of coffin shrouds painted with crosses and mats covering the coffins, as well as textiles preserved inside the coffins [Fig. 16].

A unique glass ampulla [Fig. 17, right] was found in the coffin of T. 413, a rich burial, which also contained a wooden comb, a ring and another glass bottle [Fig. 17, left]. The ampulla was a flattened moldmade vessel, 16 cm high, with fine decoration on the sides (Mossakowska personal communication).



Fig. 17. Glass bottle (Nd.09.331), left, and ampulla (Nd.09.332) from grave T.413 in cemetery A (Photos W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)

MONASTIC REFUSE DUMP

Exploration of the refuse dump at the southern fringes of the site had to be interrupted in 2008 after reaching two crypts, apparently disturbed by earthworks carried out in this spot presumably in the 1970s [Fig. 18]. The two crypts, like the two burials in unit B.26, T.500–T.501 (see Derda, Dzierzbicka 2012; Dzierzbicka, Ożarek 2012, both in this volume), have been identified as being of the same date as the Coptic cemetery on Kom A (end of 12th and 13th century). Whether they constituted a separate cemetery or part of the burial ground on Kom A cannot be easily established at this point. There were certainly no graves present in the 100 m or so of ground separating this complex of graves from the southern fringes of cemetery A (i.e., Buildings K and L excavated during the reported seasons).

The results of the investigations reported by T. Derda and D. Dzierzbicka

have led to a revision of ideas concerning the dating of the monastic refuse dump. It now seems that it operated from the turn of the 5th and the 6th century through the mid 10th century, most probably until the fire that destroyed the related architecture in the central part of the site (Buildings A and AA, plus J). Documents found in the fill and the pottery confirmed the dating of the refuse dump. At the end of the 10th century, the ground was levelled and structures B.1–B.3 and B.21–B.26 constructed. Dinars of caliph Hakim found in the fill of B.1–B.3, taken together with fragments of Coptic and Arabic texts, as well as ceramics, suggest that the origins of this architecture should be placed at the turn of the 10th century. The medieval graves appear to have taken advantage of the ruins in a pattern similar to that observed in the central part of this late burial ground around the oldest church.

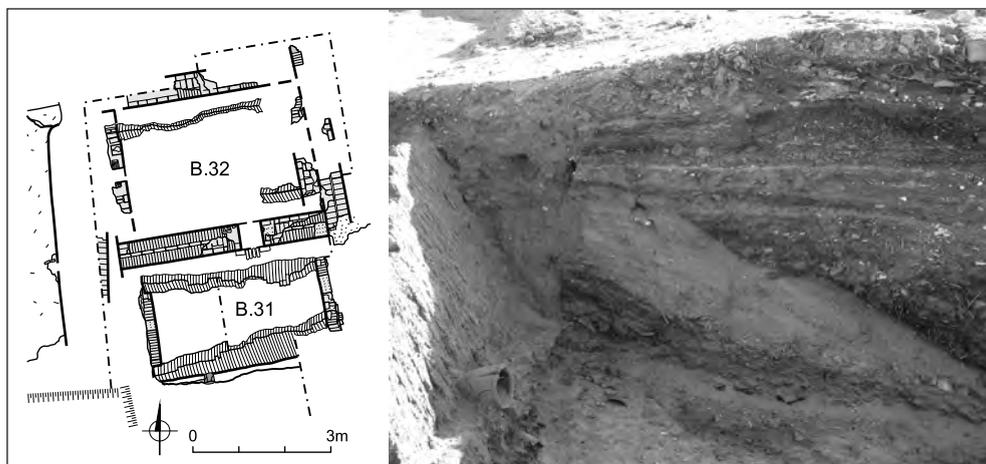


Fig. 18. Plan of two crypts in the monastic refuse dump area (left) and view of crypt B.31 (at far left in photo) and the foundation cut made in the refuse dump accumulation (Drawing S. Maślak, photo W. Godlewski, PCMA archives)

APPENDIX

NAQLUN 2008: ARCHAEOBOTANICAL STUDIES

Jarosław Zieliński

PCMA Associate

The program of archaeobotanical studies at the site focused primarily on the extensive worked wood assemblage (see Zych, Zieliński 2012, in this volume), but the opportunity was taken to examine also samples of plant material recovered from the excavation of medieval burials in Cemetery A in Naqlun in previous seasons (the chronological span of the cemetery is currently set at from the second half of the 11th through the 13th century).

The sample set comprised plants preserved in different extent and form: mostly leaves and in a few cases fruit. Plant remains had been found in specific circumstances, that is, as stuffing of various forms of pillows or as a presumably nice-

smelling bundle placed under the head of the deceased. In all cases the plants had been placed inside the coffins intentionally.

A specific case of a collection of fruit being placed inside the knotted sleeve of the tunic undergarment of one of the burials (T.500) was excavated this year; identified remains included apple (*Malus* sp.), two peaches (*Prunus persica*), an almond (*Prunus amygdalus*), grapes (*Vitis vinifera*) (for the burial, see Dzierzbicka, Ożarek 2012, in this volume).

The most frequent plant in the collection examined this season was the common reed *Phragmites australis*, represented by leaves and one case of fragments of inflorescence. This was

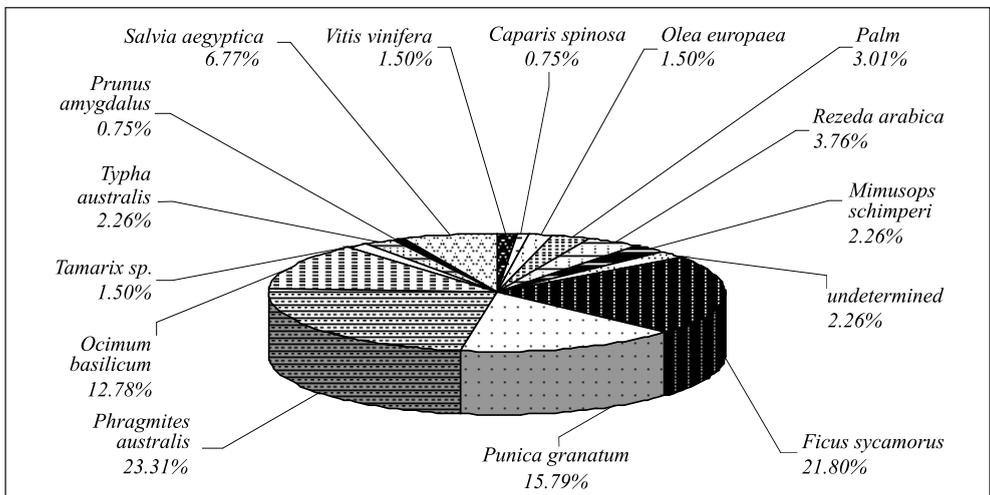


Fig. 19. Species structure of plants examined from the medieval burials in Cemetery A in Naqlun (Processing J. Zieliński)

followed closely by the sycamore *Ficus sycamorus*, only leaves, and pomegranate *Punica granatum*, both stems and leaves. Taken globally, 32 of the examined samples contained fragments of *Phragmites australis* (23.3%). Of these, 29 had fragments of *Ficus sycamorus* (21.8%) and 21 fragments of *Punica granatum* (15.79%) [Fig. 19]. A sizable presence of *Ocimum basilicum* (12.78%) was also noted.

The fruit (or seeds) found in the

collection were represented by a smaller sample. Macro- and microscopical examination of the collected plant remains revealed the following species: pomegranate *Punica granatum*, apple *Malus sp.*, grapes *Vitis vinifera*, olives *Olea europaea*, citruses *Citrus sp.*, dates *Phoenix dactylifera*, peaches (*Prunus persica*), almonds (*Prunus Amygdalus*), fruit of *Zizyphus spina-christi*, fennel *Anethum foeniculum* and celery *Apium graveolens*.

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