

Polish Excavations at Faras—Second Season 1961-62

by KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI

THE Second season of excavations lasted from 22 November 1961 to 19 February 1962.

The mission was made up as follows :

Prof. Dr Kazimierz Michałowski—Director of Excavations.

Mr Marek Marciniak—Egyptologist, assisting the Director.

Mr Antoni Ostrasz—Chief Architect.

Miss Kamila Kołodziejczyk—Archaeologist.

Mr Stefan Jakobielski—Coptic Specialist.

Mr Stanisław Jasiewicz—Head of Laboratory, National Museum, Warsaw.

Mr Tadeusz Biniewski—Photographer.

During the absence of Professor Michałowski, the work was directed by Mr Marciniak.

About 90 workmen were employed.

The inventory of Egyptian inscriptions was made by Mr Marciniak ; that of Christian inscriptions by Mr Jakobielski, who also made the inventory of photographs. Mr Marciniak and Miss Kołodziejczyk were responsible for the inventory of objects.

Mr Ostrasz, assisted by Mr Tomasz Mrówka—architect of the Polish Archaeological Centre in Cairo, who was with the Mission during the later part of the season—and Miss Kołodziejczyk drew all the plans, sections and reproductions of architectural details. All the photographs were taken by Mr Biniewski.

We wish to thank Sayed Thabit Hassan Thabit, Commissioner for Archaeology in the Sudan, as well as Sayed Nigm ed Din Mohammed Sherif, Senior Inspector of Antiquities at Wadi Halfa, who have always given us the best of help and in every way facilitated the carrying out of our task at Faras.

Messrs W. Y. Adams, J. Leclant, P. L. Shinnie and A. Vila made several suggestions during the course of our work, for which we thank them.

The schedule of work during the second season of excavations was dictated by the most important of last year's finds : the discovery, at the end of the season, of two memorial chapels and four funerary stelae, published in our first report.¹

¹ Cf. K. Michałowski, ' Polish Excavations, 1961 ', *Faras*, I, pp. 97-122 ; ' Polish Excavations at Faras, 1961 ', *KUSH* x, pp. 227-34 and *Archaeology*, June 1962, pp. 113-20. L. P. Kirwan, *Unesco Courier*, 1961, no. 10, p. 40.

KUSH

Thus, after resuming work on the site in November 1961, two sectors had to be cleared :

1. The cupolaed building which appeared to mark the grave of Bishop Joannes, who died in the year of the Martyrs 722 (i.e. 1006 of our era) at the age of 82 ;
2. The great building, the sandstone and fired-brick walls of which suggested it might be a late Meroitic palace, a church or a monastery of the early Christian period, and which certainly antedated the chapels built against its east wall.

First of all, a large quantity of sand (about 8000 m³) forming the east, south and west slopes of the Kom had to be cleared away and the walls of the Arab Citadel on its top had to be dismantled.² So, by the end of this season, the main façades of the Church under the Citadel had been almost completely freed, except for the north and south sides where two mud-brick vaulted passages, dating from the second Christian period, are built against its walls. Although the inside of the building has not yet been completely cleared, the ground-plan is quite visible and gives us more than a mere idea of the position of the five aisles. The best finds of the season are the remarkably well-preserved mural paintings inside this church. Their thorough cleaning has been left over for next year.

While the Citadel walls were being dismantled, several inscribed and decorated blocks from Pharaonic and Meroitic buildings, as well as stones from earlier Christian churches (the Great Church and the Rivergate Church)³ were found, re-utilized in these walls.

PHARAONIC PERIOD

So far, we have counted eighty-four decorated and inscribed Pharaonic blocks. Apart from which, we noticed many more that are still part of the walls of the Church under the Citadel. This is most striking on the west side of the church. Out of the 32 Pharaonic blocks visible to date in these walls, 21⁴ are on the west side. Contrary to what we found during the first season (165 blocks from the temple of Thotmes III) and to the finds of our predecessors Griffith, Vercoutter and Adams who, jointly, uncovered 128 blocks from the same temple, the proportion between the Thotmes III and Ramses II blocks found during this present season seems rather to favour the latter.

² Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, pp. 173-81, plans, II, IV-V.

³ Ibid., p. 178.

⁴ The fact that more blocks were re-utilized in this wall than in the others might prove that at this spot, at the foot of the Kom, we and our predecessors have stumbled on a 'quarry' of Pharaonic blocks meant for re-utilization.

Our inventory of Pharaonic inscriptions has been in the main drawn up according to the same principles as that in *Faras I*⁵. However, due to the fact that this year we have found smaller blocks with less well preserved surfaces, it has been difficult to adopt the typological classification according to hieroglyphic signs, which was feasible last year when we were dealing with better preserved and larger material.

As far as the Thotmes III blocks found this year are concerned, it is probable that they mostly come from the inside walls of the temple. One important find was three blocks in the west wall of the church bearing the cartouche of Thotmes II, father of Thotmes III.

As to the Ramesside blocks, as none have so far been found here of a size approaching that of the Thotmes III blocks, we are led to think that maybe there was merely a shrine for Ramses II at Faras,⁶ his Great Temple in the region being about 10 km. away to the south, at Aksha.

MEROITIC PERIOD

Meroitic material gathered during this season is less varied than that of last. However, a few stones—which form the entire inventory of Meroitic objects, along with two fragments of inscriptions (Inv. No. FA 47/61-2 and F 100/61-2)—are remarkable for their artistic value. What deserves most particular attention is a cornice re-utilized over the south entrance to the Church under the Citadel. It is not often that in Nubia, in a Christian church, one comes across a Meroitic element used in its original form and for its original purpose.⁷

The cornice (PLATE LIV, a), is of grey sandstone (*h.* 0.53 m.; *l.* 2 m.; *t.* 0.42 m.) and is characterized by a frieze of two alternating pairs of uraei carved in deep relief. One pair—wearing on their heads the horned disc of Hathor—are marked on the body with the sign *Htm*; the other—smooth bodied—bear a plain disc. This piece of sculpture is remarkably well-preserved, with traces of red colouring still to be found on the serpents' heads. Their eyes are very large and prominent. The lower part of the cornice is decorated in the typical style: a very prominent winged sun-disc with two serpents, below which appear the thin bands of a simple fillet with arched loops. The serpent on the left wears the double crown, that of Lower Egypt being fluted. The one on the right wears the *tf* crown capped by a small sun-disc. A plain red moulding underlines the whole length of the cornice.⁸

The other Meroitic stone worth noting is a little grey sandstone offering table (Inv. No. F 15/61-2) distinguished by its shape and unusual decoration.

⁵ K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, pp. 25-73.

⁶ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, VIII, p. 89.

⁷ For the time being left *in situ*.

⁸ The broken Meroitic cornice we found last year was split into four pieces, all embedded in the walls of the Arab Citadel. Cf. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 178, fig. 132.

KUSH

Although hammered on one side, it is clearly rectangular with a triangular section (*l.* 28.5 cm., *w.* 21 cm., *th.* 8 cm.) (PLATE LIV, b).

A prominence bearing a palm-leaf design is slightly scooped out to form an outlet gutter. In the table top itself are two basins shaped like baseless cartouches with *Kbh* vessels on their stands on either side and two rows of three loaves.

Only one serpent (on the left) remains on a fragment of a Meroitic stele. This, made of grey sandstone (Inv. No. FA 71/61-2), was arched in its lower part and decorated with the winged disc shaped as a rosette. Beneath the serpent, in the centre of the stele, an amphora is portrayed on its stand with *B³* figures with discs on either side of it. The entire surface is very worn. The right side of the stele and the lower part are missing. Above the tympanum only the first line remains of an inscription in Greek, engraved at the time of re-utilization.

We can end this list of Meroitic objects with two fragments of inscriptions, Inv. No. FA 47/61-2 and Inv. No. F 100/61-2 (PLATE LV, a).⁹

CHRISTIAN PERIOD

The Christian remains uncovered this year fall into two distinct groups, namely :

1. The chapels and the tomb of Bishop Joannes, built against the west wall and in the axis of the church ;
2. The Church under the Citadel, built of stone and fired-brick.

Also, we might add the tomb of the three bishops Kolouthos, Stephanos and Aaron below their three funerary stelae which are inserted in the sandstone west wall of the church.

With the exception of the tomb of Joannes which has been completely cleared this year, these constructions have so far only been partly excavated. This means that a number of questions can only be touched upon without as yet being answered. Nevertheless, we believe it useful to present our discoveries at once without waiting for them to be thoroughly explained.

The Tomb of Joannes

As mentioned above, the only monument completely uncovered this season was the tomb of Joannes (PLATE LVII, a). It follows the central axis of the church, about 1.90 m. from the west wall to which it is joined by the two mud-brick chapels we found last year.¹⁰ The construction itself is a rectangular underground crypt of mud-brick (*h.* 1.50 m. ; *w.* 2 m. ; *l.* 2.70 m. ; east-west wall 2.70 m. ; north-south wall 2 m.) topped by a similar fired-brick edifice with a

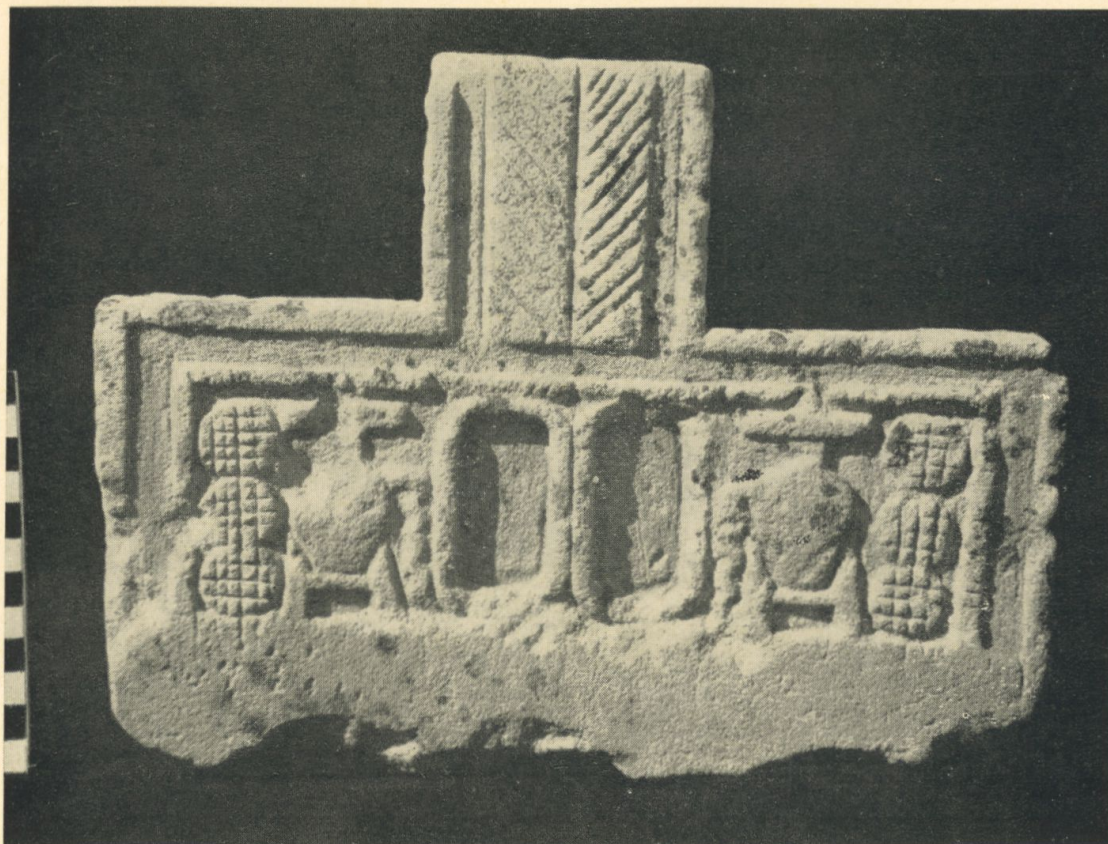
⁹ The transcription of these two documents will be published in the second volume of *Faras* (Polish Excavations).

¹⁰ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 97 ; KUSH x, p. 227.

PLATE LIV



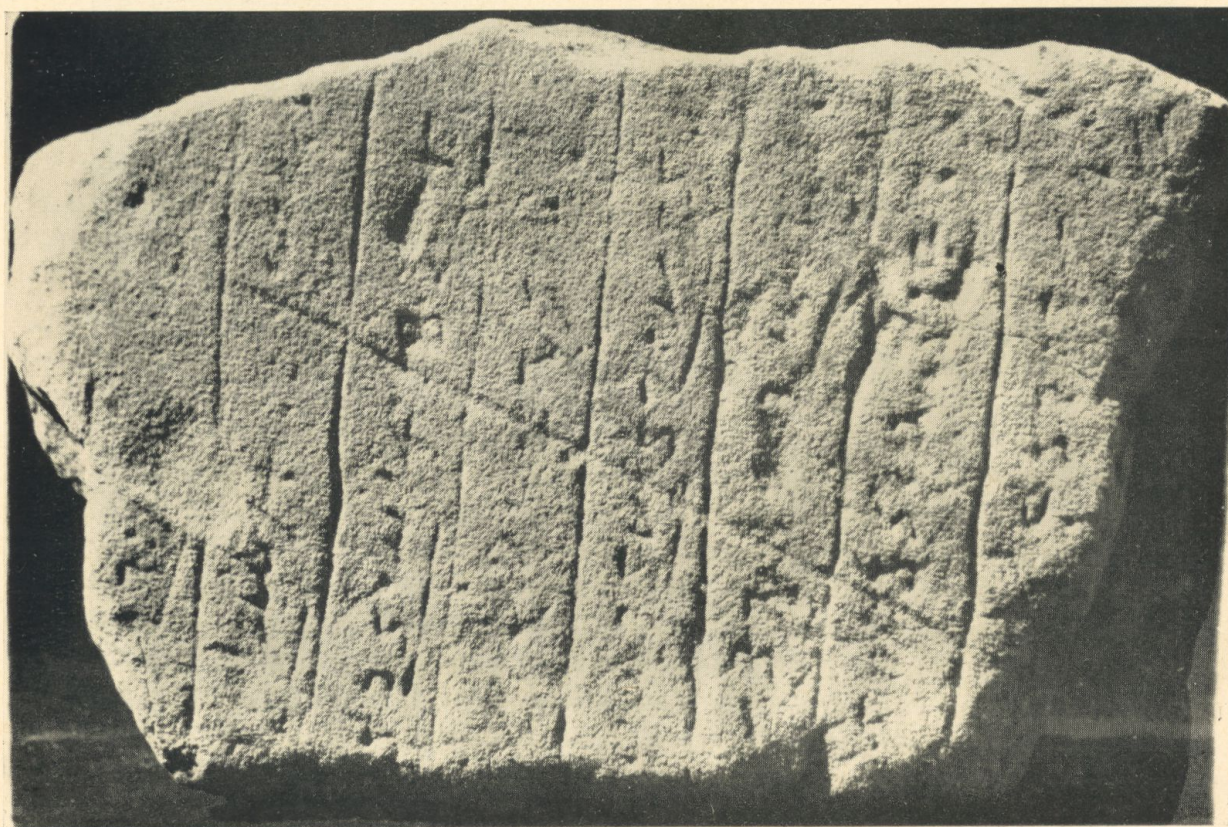
a. MEROITIC CORNICE. SOUTH ENTRANCE, CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL



b. SMALL OFFERING-TABLE. MEROITIC (Inv. No. 15/61-2)

facing p. 238

PLATE LV



a. MEROITIC INSCRIPTION (Inv. No. F 100/61-2)



b. STELE OF KOLOUTHOS

PLATE LVI

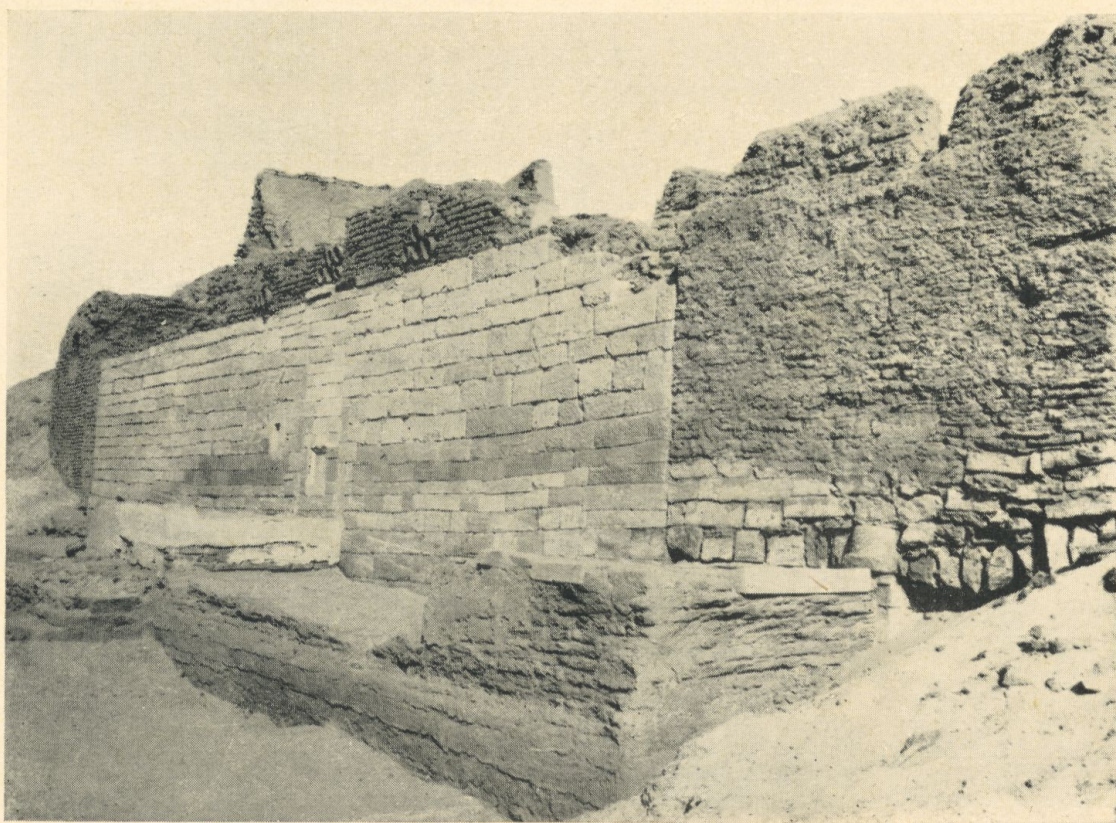


EARTHENWARE VESSELS FOUND IN THE TOMB OF JOANNES

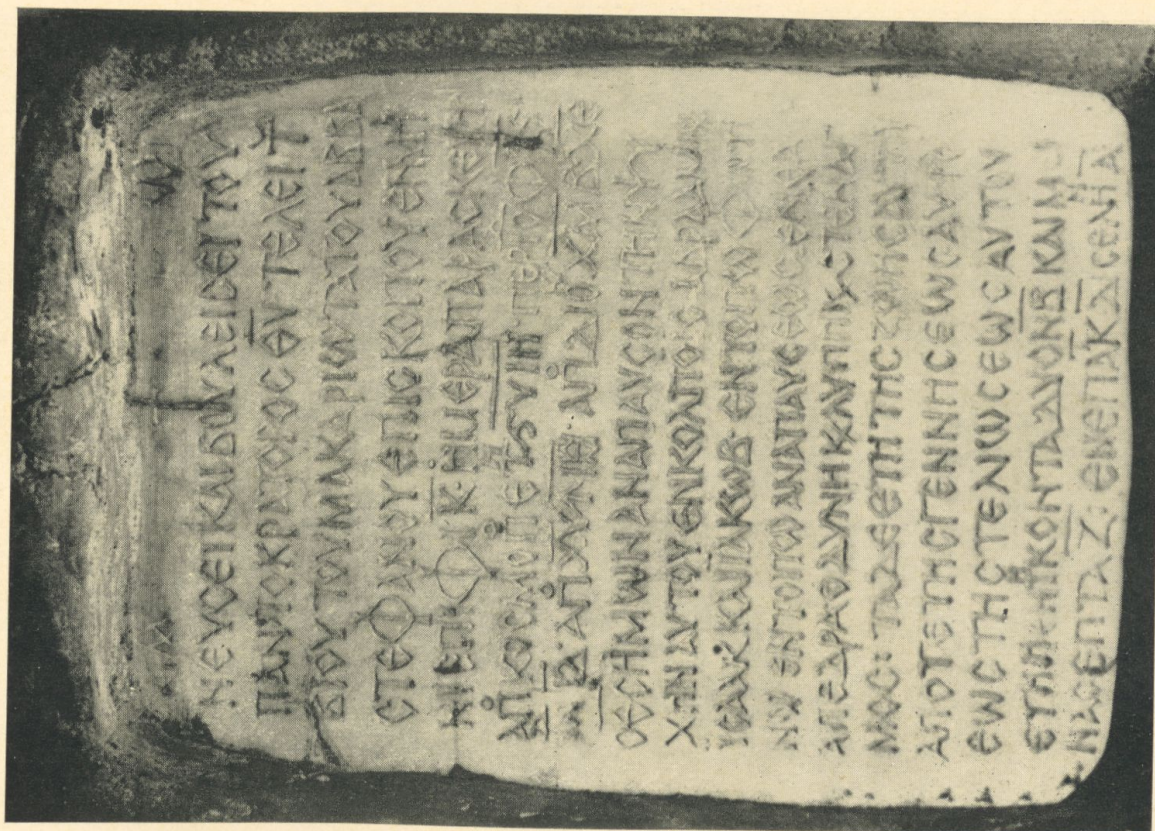
PLATE LVII



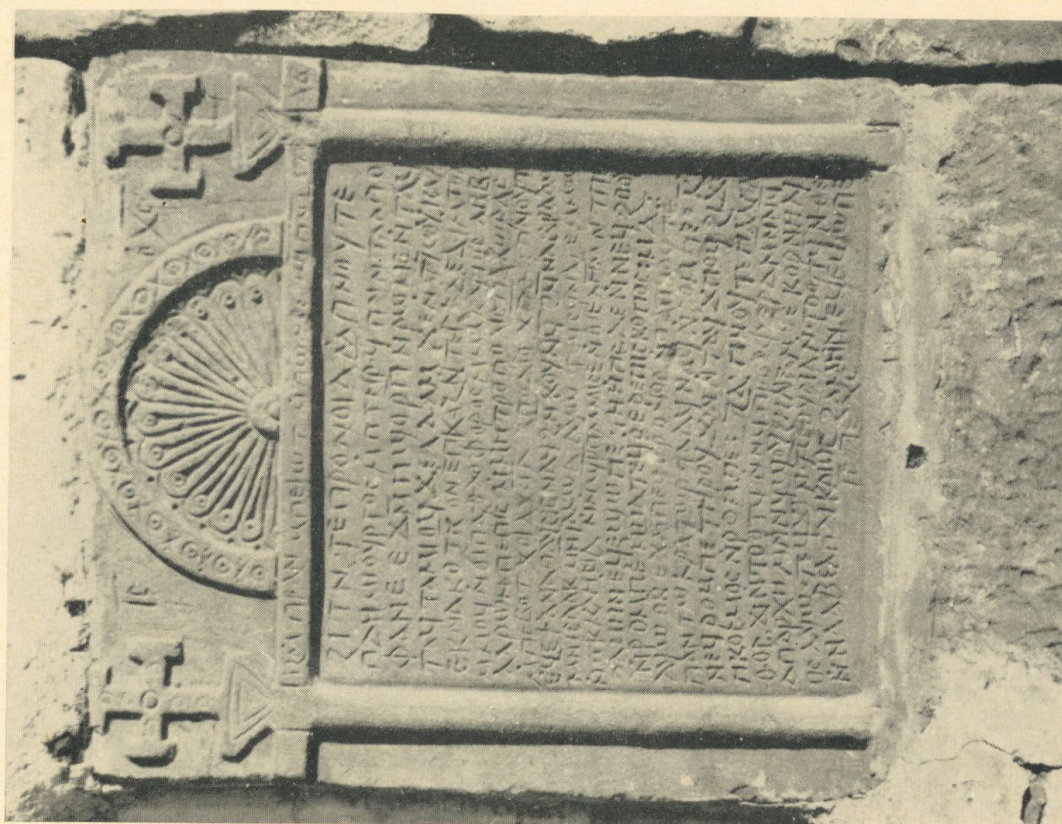
a. EAST WALL, CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL AND TOMB OF JOANNES



b. WEST WALL, CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL



b. STELE OF STEPHANOS

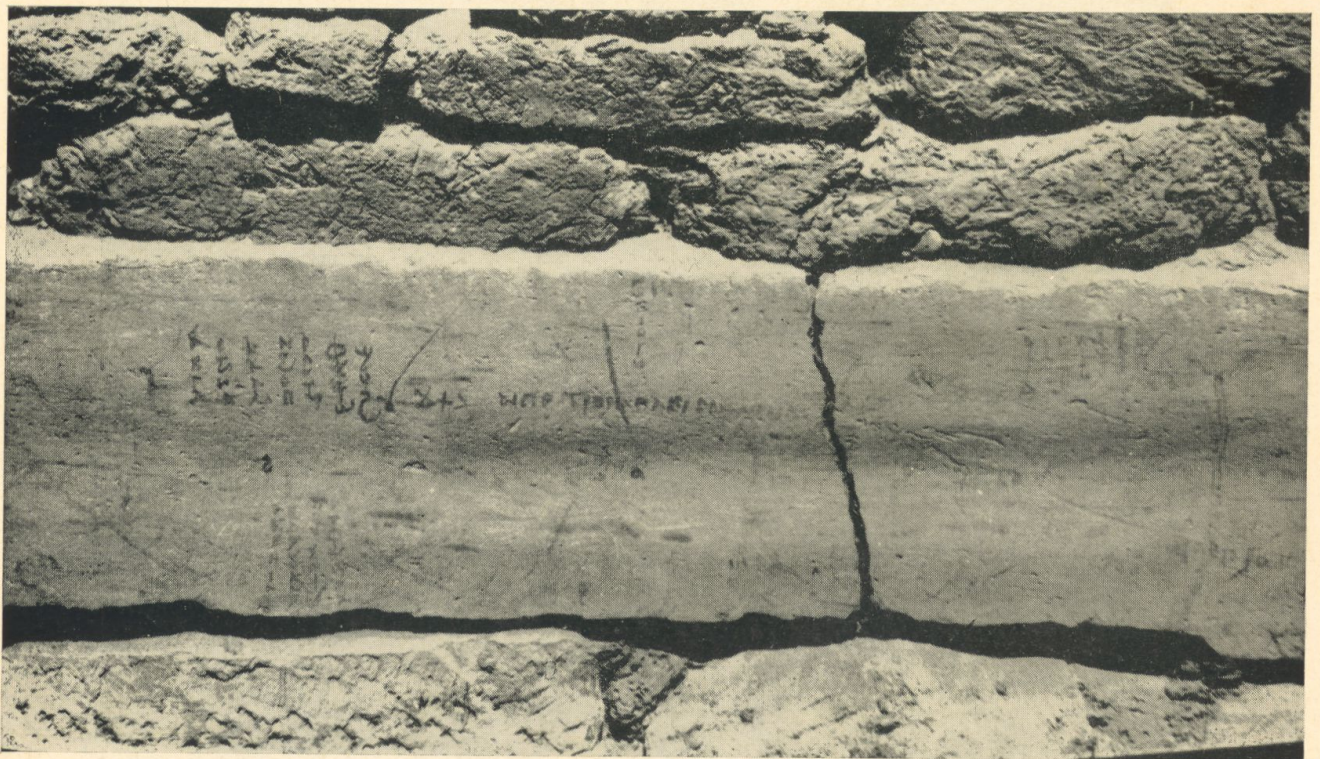


a. STELE OF AARON

PLATE LIX



a. ORNATE WOODEN BEAM. LINTEL OF THE WINDOW IN THE SOUTH WALL OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL



b. SANDSTONE BLOCK WITH COPTIC ALPHABET EXERCISE. RE-UTILIZED IN THE SOUTH WALL OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL



MURAL OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL LEFT OF SOUTH ENTRANCE TO THE
CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL



LARGE MURAL OF THE THREE YOUTHS IN THE FURNACE

PLATE LXII



a. THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL ON THE EAST WALL OF THE NARTHEX



b. NATIVITY MURAL

cupola (*h.* 1.90 m. Cupola *h.* 1.40 m. ; *diam.* 1.20 m.). The entrance is in the west side, that is from inside the chapel of the Madonna. It is a rectangular shaft (*w.* 0.87 m. ; *l.* 0.81 m.) of mud-bricks faced with clay. A very narrow flight of three steps (*l.* 1.03 m. ; *w.* 0.45-0.35 m.) leads down to the grave itself, which was closed by a massive rectangular slab (84 × 46 × 12 cm.). This was sealed all round with clay. Above it four crosses were marked in the clay filling. The stele of Joannes was affixed to the wall just above the entrance to the tomb.

Within, the grave was a vaulted crypt (*l.* 2 m. ; *w.* 1.20 m. ; *h.* 1.20 m.). Both the sides and the vault were faced with clay. At the time of discovery, the crypt was filled with damp, greenish sand which covered five skeletons lying east-west with their heads to the west. Most likely the texture and colour of the sand were due to the decay of the corpses. By each head was a porous earthenware water jar, two of which are of yellow clay painted on the neck and handles, and two of red clay, only one of which was decorated (PLATE LVI).

Close beside the water jars, lying in the sand, were three little blackened plate-shaped lamps. The one belonging to the skeleton nearest the north wall has a spout pierced with two little holes. Near the head of the last skeleton in the north-west corner, was a large jar decorated with the carved symbol of a font(?).¹¹ In the north-east corner, another large jar (Inv. No. F5, 14/61-2) sealed with clay (imprint: band of foliage) still contained some grain. Alongside this skeleton lay a long bishop's staff (only a few traces of charred wood visible), ending in a bronze cross (Inv. No. F5, 10/61-2) fixed to the staff by a bronze band (Inv. No. F5, 11/61-2), both covered with a nice green patina. Near to the cross, a small round clay disc (Inv. No. F5, 12/61-2), pierced through the centre, lay in the sand. A few seconds after the grave was cleared, before even the sand on the floor of the crypt could be swept up, half the vault crashed down.

We made an opening into the cupolaed structure to see what was inside. It contained nothing but sand, fragments of potsherds and charred wood, bits of leather and rubble. There was no entrance to this, and it was only a funerary monument erected over the tomb. When the sides were built, stone blocks had been fitted into the inside corners, and the cupola rested on these. When the building was finished, the outside had been covered with a layer of white facing. Thus, the whole forms a mausoleum, reminiscent of the mausoleum tombs of Qasr Ibrim.¹²

Knowing the contents of the tomb, and also the fact that the oldest stele—that of Joannes—was fixed above the entrance in a niche, with the stele of Petros to its right, without any niche, we can come to some conclusions. There

¹¹ Cf. Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia Medioevale*, IV, pl. clxxxii, fig. 21 ; Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, pl. xlv, p. 90.

¹² Cf. Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia Medioevale*, I, p. 113, fig. 25.

is no doubt that the skeleton lying along the north wall in the crypt is that of Joannes. It is the only one to have had a bishop's cross, a more elaborate lamp, and two large jars. The four other skeletons could be those of deacons who assisted the bishop in the church of Pachoras. Once the grave was fully occupied, the five crosses were stamped above the slab which closed it, showing that five bodies were buried there.¹³ In order that the stele of Joannes could be placed where we found it, the Madonna's chapel at least must have been built, as the upper part of the stele—like that of Petros—is higher than the wall of the cupolaed funerary monument. Besides, the east wall of the Church under the Citadel was used as the west walls of the chapels at the time when they were built (FIG. 1).

For the time being, we do not wish to broach the question of the final chronology of the above-mentioned monument. However, it is quite certain that the chapel of the Madonna was already in existence when the stele was affixed. The succession of events must have been fairly rapid: Joannes, the old bishop who died at the age of 82, must have been a most venerable figure whom it was appropriate to honour with an imposing mausoleum, a chapel, and a stele.¹⁴

The figure of Saint Michael, Archangel, is painted in front of the entrance to the church,¹⁵ standing on the left and on horseback on the right. His monumental image decorates the wall of the narthex—west wall, to the right of the entrance—showing that he was the saint most venerated there, the true guardian of the portals. It is thus easy to understand why the first chapel, that with the fresco of the Archangel Michael, should have been added to that of the Madonna to form together the entrance to a holy place.

A mud-brick wall (*l.* 2 m. ; *h.* 1.20 m.) forms an extension prolonging the east wall of the chapel of the Madonna towards the north. A mud-brick pillar

¹³ The study of bones made recently by Professor Dzierżykray-Rogalski in Warsaw has proved that one of the interments was of an old man of at least 80. He was a hunch-backed cripple. Was this Joannes who died at the age of 82? Another skeleton was also that of an old crippled person. The fifth skeleton was found without its skull.

¹⁴ On 21 November 1962, during the third season of excavation at Faras, a list of 27 bishops was found written on the south-east inner wall of the Church under the Citadel. There were three Bishops Johannes cited. The third of them, who died on the 24th of the month of Thot, A.D. 1006 was the twenty-second on the list and was recognized as the one we have mentioned before.

The confusion of dates is due to an erroneous reading of the letter † as T, which by the way, was accepted by many scholars (cf. *Faras*, I, p. 112). The sign † must be read as Ψ. This had already been considered by us, but the conditions of the discovery of the tomb suggested the first interpretation (cf. *Faras*, II, in the press). The same reading of the letter † must be applied to the stele of Bishop Petros who was twenty-fourth on the list. He died on the 27th of the month of Pachons, A.D. 1062 and not A.D. 562.

In view of this discovery, a new chronology for the wall paintings in the chapels, i.e. of Archangel Michael and the Virgin must also be established.

¹⁵ Cf. below, p. 249.

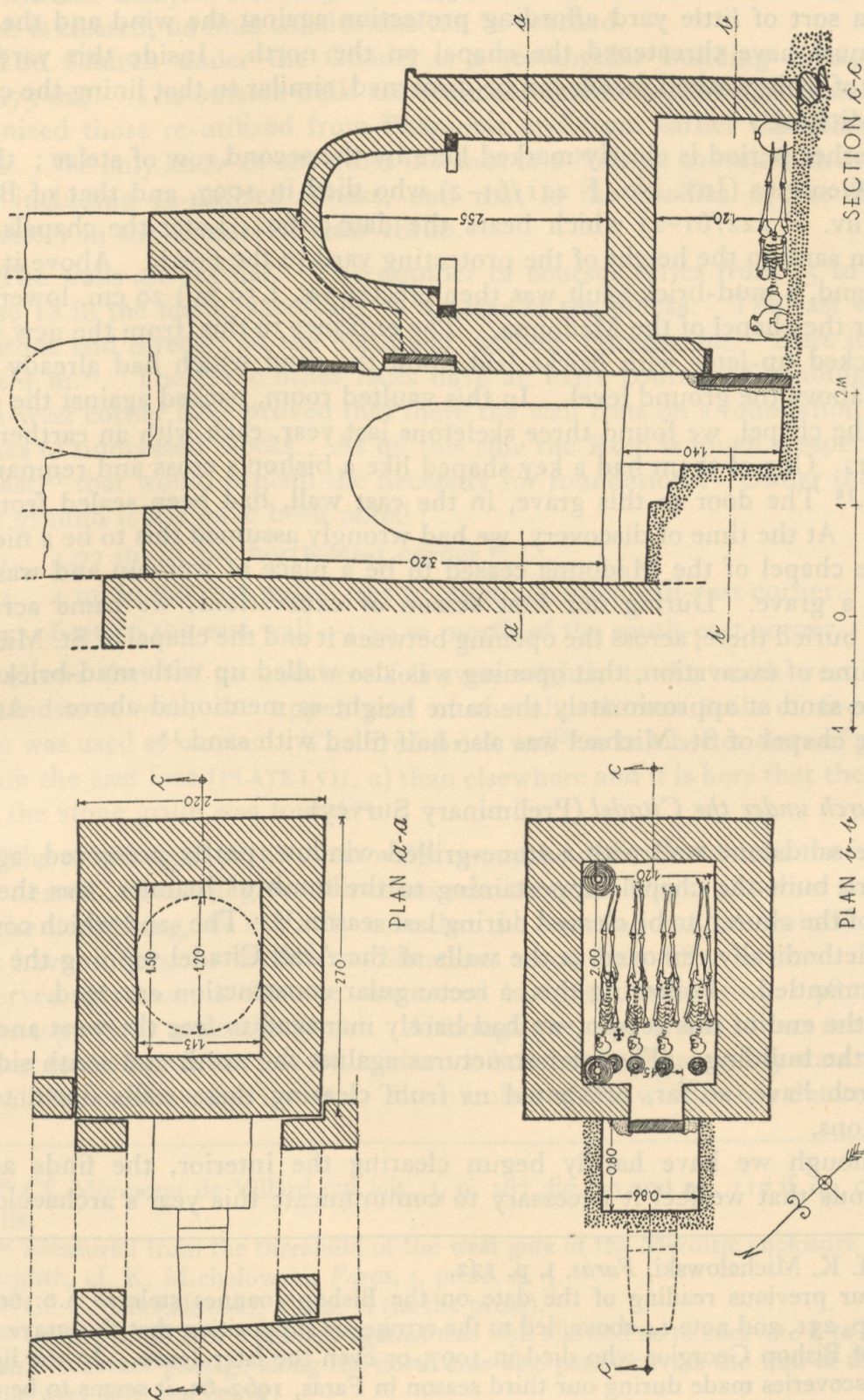


FIG. 1. PLANS AND EAST-WEST SECTION OF THE TOMB OF JOANNES

erected against the church wall at the point where this extension begins forms with it a sort of little yard affording protection against the wind and the sand which must have threatened the chapel on the north. Inside this yard, the remains of whitewashed facing can be discerned, similar to that lining the chapel of St. Michael.

Another period is clearly marked here by the second row of stelae; that of Bishop Georgios (Inv. No. F 221/61-2) who died in 1097, and that of Bishop Iesou (Inv. F 222/61-2) which bears the date 1169. Later the chapels were buried in sand to the height of the protecting yard to the north. Above it, on a bed of sand, a mud-brick vault was then erected (*w.* 1.50 m.) 20 cm. lower than that over the chapel of the Madonna. The entrance to this, from the new vault, was blocked up later with bricks laid upon the sand which had already risen 1.60 m. above the ground level. In this vaulted room, backed against the north side of the chapel, we found three skeletons last year, each with an earthenware water jar. One of them had a key shaped like a bishop's cross and remnants of clothing.¹⁶ The door to this grave, in the east wall, had been sealed from the outside. At the time of discovery, we had wrongly assumed this to be a niche.¹⁷

The chapel of the Madonna ceased to be a place of worship and was also used as a grave. During our first season of excavations, we came across a skeleton buried there, across the opening between it and the chapel of St. Michael. At the time of excavation, that opening was also walled up with mud-bricks laid upon the sand at approximately the same height as mentioned above. At that time, the chapel of St. Michael was also half filled with sand.¹⁸

The Church under the Citadel (Preliminary Survey)

The sandstone wall with a stone-grilled window, partly preserved, against which are built the chapels appertaining to the tomb of Joannes, was the first section of the church to be cleared during last season.¹⁹ The sand which covered it was methodically removed as the walls of the Arab Citadel topping the Kom were dismantled. Following this, a rectangular construction emerged.

By the end of this season, we had barely managed to free the west and east faces of the building. The later structures against the north and south sides of the church have, so far, prevented us from clearing these walls down to the foundations.

Although we have hardly begun clearing the interior, the finds are so momentous that we feel it necessary to communicate this year's archaeological

¹⁶ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 122.

¹⁷ Our previous reading of the date on the Bishop Joannes stele as A.D. 606, cf. KUSH x, p. 231, and note 14 above, led to the erroneous supposition that this grave might be that of Bishop Georgios who died in 1097, or even the later Iesou. In the light of recent discoveries made during our third season in Faras, 1962-63, it seems to be rather difficult to accept this.

¹⁸ Cf. *Faras*, I, p. 122.

¹⁹ Cf. K. Michałowski, KUSH x, p. 236.

data without delay. We fully realize, however, that until the whole of the church is cleared, no final conclusions can be reached.

The Church under the Citadel is a rectangular building (*l.* 24.80 m.; *w.* 22.75 m.). The outside walls are of sandstone blocks, amongst which can be recognized those re-utilized from Pharaonic and from earlier Christian monuments. We only know of one other instance of a Nubian church with analogous walls including re-utilized blocks, and that is the basilica of the Southern Monastery in the Citadel of Qasr Ibrim.²⁰

The walls are regular. The number of courses varies from 15 in the east wall to 18 in the north, according to the size of the blocks. The east wall is of sandstone laid directly on the black soil, without foundations. Here it rises to about 4 m.²¹ The three other faces have an extra course. Soundings in the north-west corner have proved that there the wall rests on a foundation of three courses of undressed blocks. As on this side the Kom is much steeper than on the east,²² that would explain the necessity for foundations. Under the church three ground levels have been noted:

1. 4.07 m. in the north-west corner.²³
2. 4 m. in the east wall—4.35 m. south of the north-east corner.
3. 6 m. in the east wall—4.30 m. north of the south-east corner.

This shows that the ground here fell away slightly to the north-west. Above the sandstone wall, the upper part of the church was built of fired-bricks. Loam was used as mortar. The fired-brick wall²⁴ is in a better state of preservation on the east face (PLATE LVII, a) than elsewhere and it is here that the window with the stone grille was found.²⁵

The total height of the outer walls cannot be determined until the interior is fully cleared; that will give indications relative to the height of domes and vaults. For the time being, we can only note that the east wall had four windows which must have undergone certain modifications since they differ in size. The best preserved of these is the one uncovered last year, measuring 1.78 × 0.74 m. It was topped by a wooden lintel. Although the tops of the others are missing, the first to the north has a re-utilized stone lintel and we can safely state that once they all boasted wooden lintels. The number of the windows is determined by

²⁰ Cf. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, I, p. 107, fig. 90 and pp. 117 ff. *op. cit.*, II, pls. lviii–lix.

²¹ Measured from the threshold of the west gate of the Meroitic enclosure excavated by Griffith, cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 20, n. 3.

²² Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, II (in the press).

²³ On the south side a passage against this wall allowed us to excavate it to a depth of 1.50 m. Another passage along the north side also partly covers the wall of the church. For the west side, see below.

²⁴ The size of bricks as well as the length of the wall are given in *Faras*, I, p. 123

²⁵ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 126.

the interior arrangement of the church. The ground-plan shows that it was divided into five aisles, the middle one ending in an apse, the rounded interior of which must have been decorated with paintings, which would explain the absence of any window in the middle of the east wall. The four existing windows each correspond to one of the lateral aisles.

The west wall is shorter than the east wall, for at the south-west corner is an inset into which were built the steps leading to the south lateral entrance. This was altered later. Two mud-brick walls (60 cm. thick) were built so as to mask this irregularity of shape. Previously, the west wall had been 18.70 m. long and contained another great doorway (*h.* 2.60 m.; *w.* 1.20 m.). The upper part of the wall, i.e. the fired-brick, contains seven windows, measured as follows, beginning from the south: I: *w.* 0.70 m., II: *w.* 0.69 m., III: *w.* 0.64 m., IV: *w.* 0.68 m., V: *w.* 0.69 m.; VI: *w.* 0.70 m., VII: *w.* 0.68 m.

The one above the main entrance still has a brick arch on the inside—possibly they all had—and a wooden lintel on the outside. Five of these windows were found stopped up with saqqiya jars (PLATE LVII, b), but for the one near the north-west corner mud-bricks were used.

When it was cleared, we found the main entrance had been closed with stones of the same type as those used for the walls, i.e. carefully wrought sandstone blocks, partly coming from older buildings. A platform made of earth mixed with rubble (*w.* 2.15 m.; *l.* 21.50 m.) supported by a mud-brick wall (*w.* 0.50 m.) ran the whole length of the church, like a terrace. In the centre rose a fired-brick construction, a sort of 'mastaba', faced with cement (*l.* 3.40 m.; *h.* 0.74 m.; *w.* 2.12 m.). This was connected to the lower platform which came to cover the stone steps that used to lead to the main entrance of the church.²⁶ These steps were also made from re-utilized blocks, amongst which can be seen the red granite shaft of a column.

There is no shadow of doubt that this is some funerary structure erected over the church steps. Close study of the cement shows that here are two graves, one built against the other. The one to the right would be the oldest, a layer of cement showing on its north side against which the other was later built; a fresh coat of cement then covered the whole enlarged construction. This alteration, transforming the main entrance into a burial place, explains the presence of the three funerary stelae affixed to the sandstone wall on this side of the church. In the middle of what had been the door was the white marble stele of Bishop Kolouthos (PLATE LV, b) who died in the year of Diocletian 639, i.e. A.D. 923. The pink sandstone stele of Bishop Aaron (PLATE LVIII, a), who died in 689 D. (A.D. 973) is on its right; and to its left, outside the blocked up doorway, is the little yellowish-white marble stele of Bishop Stephanos (PLATE LVIII, b) who

²⁶ Cf., for the shape of that construction, the Christian tombs found by Griffith in Faras western cemeteries. *LAAA*, xiv, pl. lvii, 3 and 7.

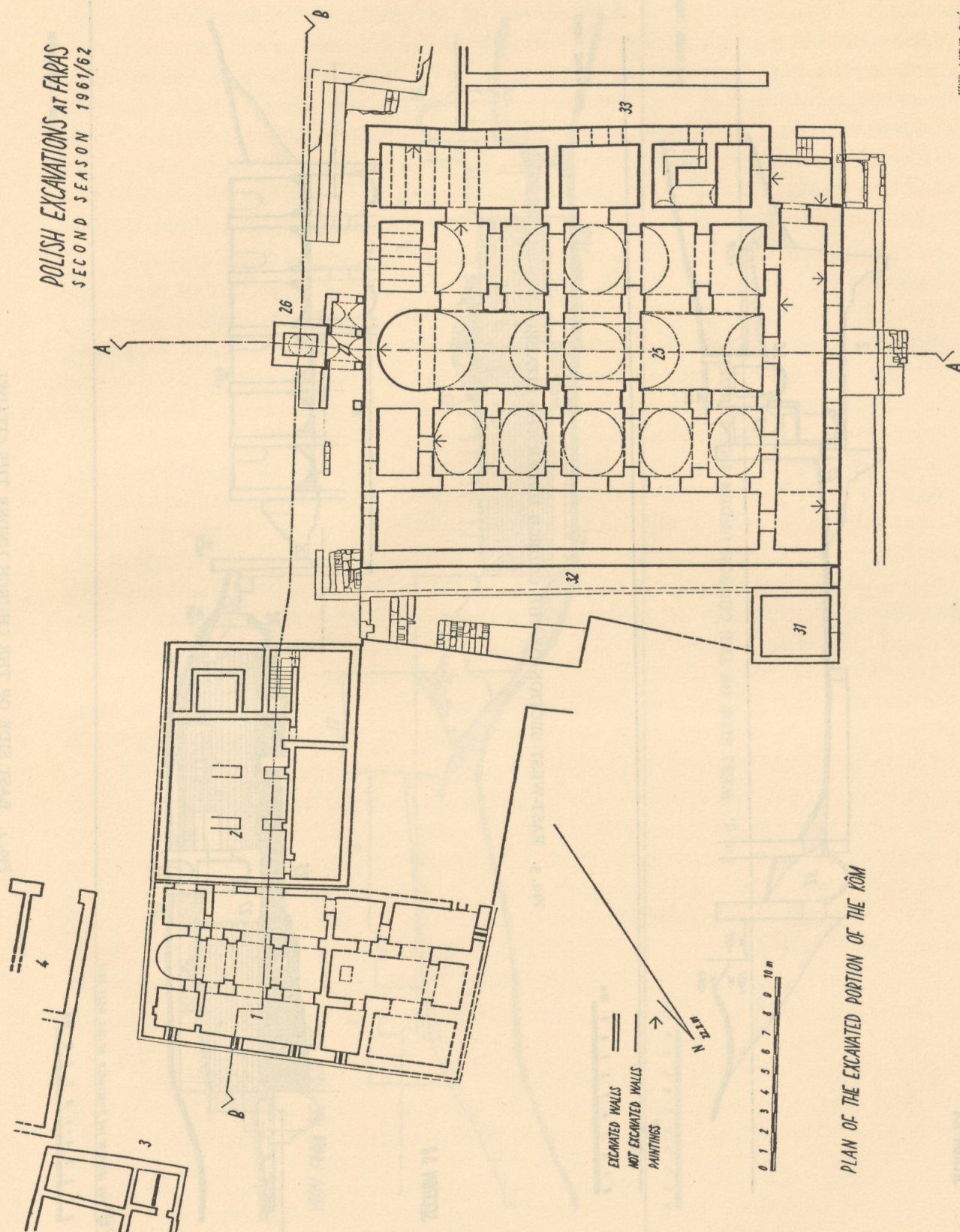


FIG. 2. PLAN OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL

SECTION AA

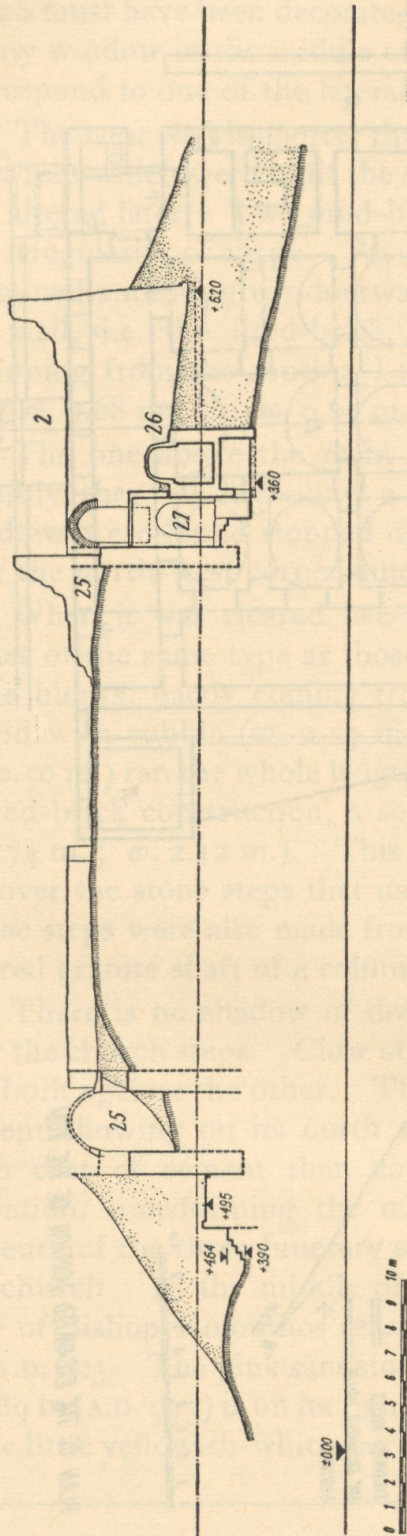


FIG. 3. EAST-WEST SECTION OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL

SECTION BB

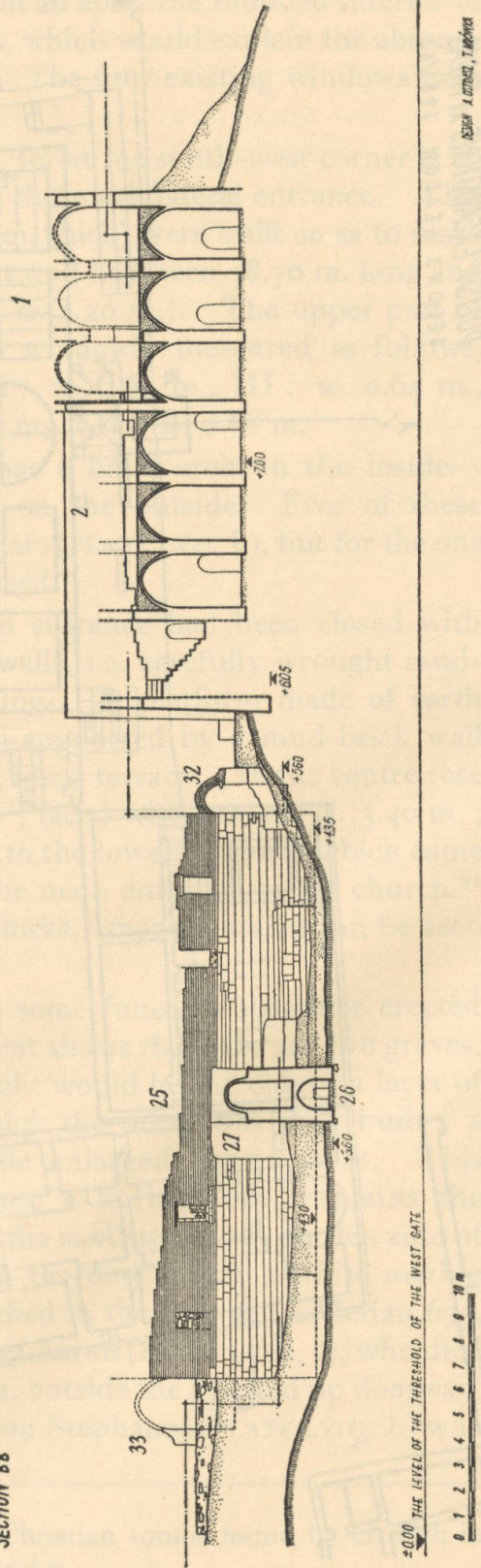


FIG. 4. EAST SIDE OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL

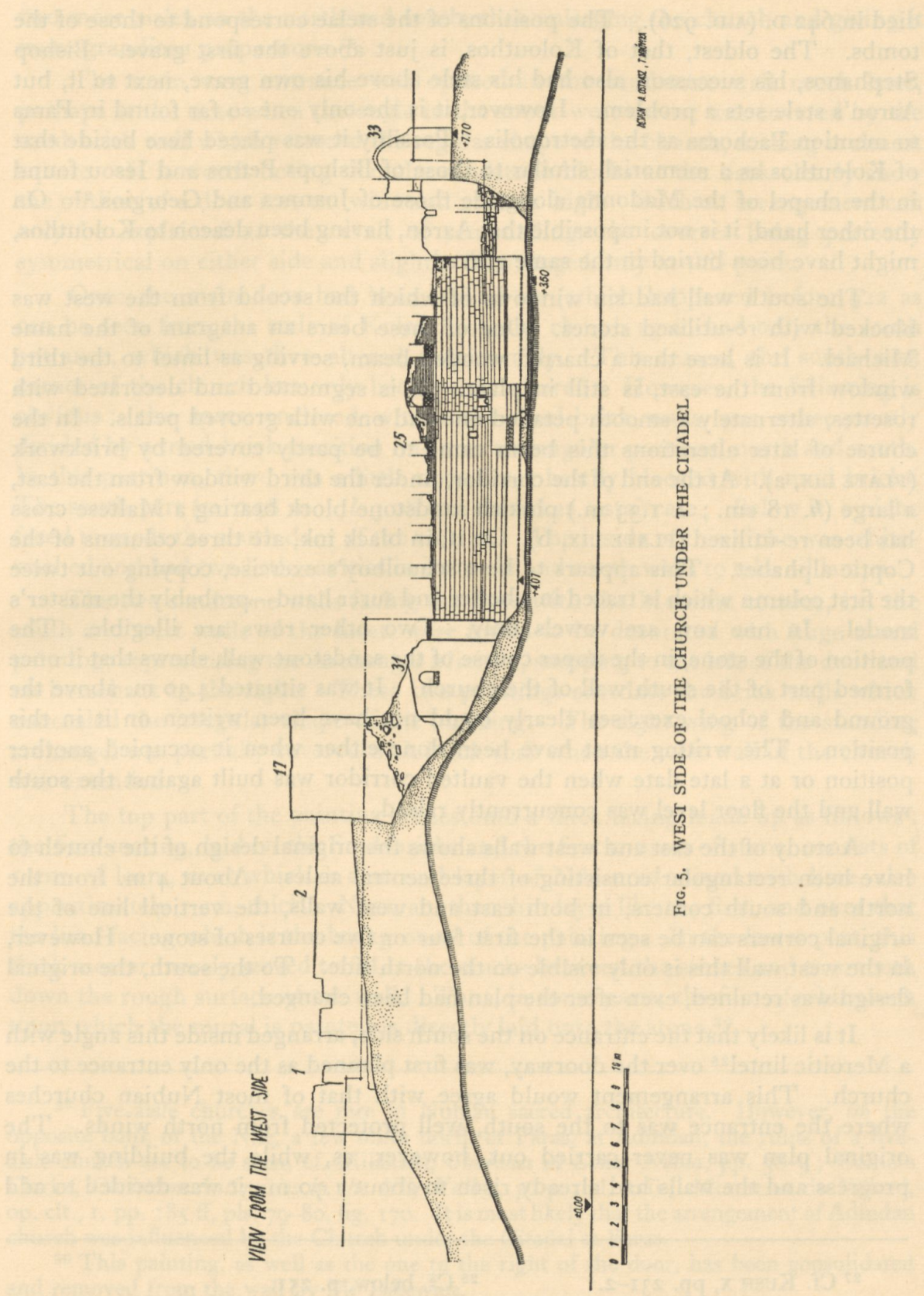


FIG. 5. WEST SIDE OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL

died in 642 D. (A.D. 926). The positions of the stelae correspond to those of the tombs. The oldest, that of Kolouthos, is just above the first grave. Bishop Stephanos, his successor, also had his stele above his own grave, next to it, but Aaron's stele sets a problem. However, it is the only one so far found in Faras to mention Pachoras as the metropolis. Possibly it was placed here beside that of Kolouthos as a memorial, similar to those of Bishops Petros and Iesou found in the chapel of the Madonna alongside those of Joannes and Georgios.²⁷ On the other hand, it is not impossible that Aaron, having been deacon to Kolouthos, might have been buried in the same grave.

The south wall had six windows of which the second from the west was blocked with re-utilized stones. One of these bears an anagram of the name Michael. It is here that a charred wooden beam, serving as lintel to the third window from the east, is still in place. It is segmented and decorated with rosettes, alternately a smooth petalled one and one with grooved petals. In the course of later alterations this beam came to be partly covered by brickwork (PLATE LIX, a). At the end of the corridor, under the third window from the east, a large (*h.* 18 cm. ; *l.* 1.33 m.) pinkish sandstone block bearing a Maltese cross has been re-utilized (PLATE LIX, b). On it, in black ink, are three columns of the Coptic alphabet. This appears to be a schoolboy's exercise, copying out twice the first column which is traced in a better and surer hand—probably the master's model. In one row are vowels only. Two other rows are illegible. The position of the stone, in the upper course of the sandstone wall, shows that it once formed part of the south wall of the church. It was situated 4.30 m. above the ground and school exercises clearly could not have been written on it in this position. The writing must have been done either when it occupied another position or at a late date when the vaulted corridor was built against the south wall and the floor level was concurrently raised.

A study of the east and west walls shows the original design of the church to have been rectangular consisting of three central aisles. About 4 m. from the north and south corners, in both east and west walls, the vertical line of the original corners can be seen in the first four or five courses of stone. However, in the west wall this is only visible on the north side. To the south, the original design was retained, even after the plan had been changed.

It is likely that the entrance on the south side, arranged inside this angle with a Meroitic lintel²⁸ over the doorway, was first planned as the only entrance to the church. This arrangement would agree with that of most Nubian churches where the entrance was to the south, well protected from north winds. The original plan was never carried out, however, as, while the building was in progress and the walls had already risen to about 1.70 m., it was decided to add

²⁷ Cf. KUSH x, pp. 231-2.

²⁸ Cf. below, p. 251.

two more aisles on the north and south, thus enlarging the church and giving it more grandiose proportions.²⁹

The main west entrance was opened in the sandstone wall much later, perhaps at the time when the angle in the south-west corner was covered by the mud-brick wall which restored the regular shape of the church, making it almost square. It is worth noting that the sandstone blocks at the back clearly show the outline of a door 1.20 m. wide and 2.60 m. high. Such an arrangement can only be explained as the result of remodelling, the courses being perfectly symmetrical on either side and slightly disarranged only at this point.

Once the main door had been walled up (which happened before 922 as can be seen from the stela of Kolouthos), the church again had only the south entrance, which was then altered considerably. This season, the south-west corner of the church has only been partly cleared. However, the following is obvious: the space enclosed within the mud-brick walls was subsequently divided by a mud-brick partition into two rectangular portions, north and south. In this partition, there was a little door, later hastily blocked with mud bricks. The south part (*w.* 0.98 m. ; *l.* 3.08 m.) served as a staircase. Below it, a niche faced towards the south door of the church. The inside of this niche was white-washed and had two little cavities in its north and south walls to take oil lamps.

The two sandstone walls facing the door with the Meroitic cornice, i.e. the south and west walls of the inset, were found to be decorated with huge mural paintings representing the Archangel Michael, standing to the left of the door and on horseback to the right. These two paintings antedate the brick walls which concealed the irregular shape of the building. The right wing of the standing archangel was partially covered with brickwork when the west wall of the church was extended.

The top part of the painting comes onto a thick facing made up as follows: the first coating, laid on the fired-bricks and the first courses of stone, consists of 1 cm. of loam, over which is a second layer of Nile mud mixed with lime, also approximately 1 cm. thick. Next, another thin layer like the first, and over that the lime facing which is the background of the painting. In the lower part, this thick mortar merely served to fill in the cracks between the stones and to smooth down the rough surface of the wall. Thus, in some parts, the film of whitewash upon which the mural is painted is directly laid onto the stone.³⁰

²⁹ Five-aisle churches are rare in Nubian sacred architecture. However, on the opposite bank of the Nile, a few miles north of Faras, at Adindan, the ruins of a five-aisle church are to be seen, cf. Mileham, *Churches in Lower Nubia*, pp. 38-9; Somers Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley*, p. 70, pl. xvii; Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 185 ff, pls. 79-80, fig. 170. It is most likely that the arrangement of Adindan church was influenced by the Church under the Citadel at Faras.

³⁰ This painting, as well as the one to the right of the door, has been consolidated and removed from the wall by Mr Jasiewicz.

The saint (PLATE LX) is shown standing, wearing a long white tunic with brown bands. A long greenish cloak with a wide collar and checked with dark brown lines is gathered on his right shoulder with a round brooch. Peeping out from under the tunic are reddish-brown pantofles. The huge wings, traced with scales, form the background. The right hand just shows below the sleeve, gripping a sword in its scabbard which is supported from below by the fingers of the left hand. On the crown³¹ are three black, red and white crosses, resting on square plaques. Above, there is an inscription in black which reads :

ⲁⲓⲣⲭⲁⲩⲧⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ.³² Behind is a yellow halo circled by two bands, one red and one white. The mass of black hair framing the oval face covers the ears. The wrinkles on the forehead, the eyebrows, and the nose are almost a geometrical design in red and black. The small mouth is red and shaped like the letter π as is the chin.

This figure is more elongated (*w. circa* 1.10 m. ; *h. circa* 1.80 m.) than the one found in the chapel of Joannes.³³ The difference between the two paintings is marked, especially as regards facial composition. As opposed to the classical, tranquil lineaments of the archangel in the chapel, here we have the severe, almost threatening features of a warrior. In contrast to the serene almond-shaped eyes of the first fresco, here is a piercing, penetrating look stressed by the semi-circular lines above and below the eyelids. This difference is not only due to the disparity of subject matter : the archangel in the chapel being cast in the part of a soul-guiding saint, whereas here he is very much a warrior-saint, guarding the entrance to the church.³⁴ The question of style should also be taken into consideration. This is discernible in the vastly different conception of the two representations. If the widespread wings are characteristic in the chapel fresco, the church painting is entirely elongated—although not in the exaggeratedly deformed Coptic style of the painting of the Apostles in the church north of Faras Citadel ;³⁵ and although different from the soft-eyed expression of the chapel fresco, the piercing look of St. Michael is as yet but a prefiguration of the expression found in the wide open eyes of Coptic paintings.

If, because of the stelae of Joannes and Petros found in the chapels, we can ascribe those paintings to the first half of the 11th century, for the church fresco we have nothing to go on but purely archaeological data. The mud-brick wall, built to lengthen the west wall of the church partially covers the archangel's wing, which must therefore have been painted prior to the architectural alteration.

³¹ The crown had fallen off, but we found it and pieced the fragments together.

³² The lettering resembles that of the inscriptions above the murals of the Archangel Michael and of the Madonna found in the chapels of Joannes. Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, pp. 102, 105, figs. 37, 41.

³³ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 99, fig. 37 ; KUSH x, pp. 228-9, pl. lxxv.

³⁴ Cf. Réaux, *Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien*, p. 44.

³⁵ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, pl. xxxiv.

We tentatively suggest that this was done at the time the great west entrance was opened. We cannot assign any definite date, but the stele of Kolouthos (923) affixed to the wall which later came to block this door gives us a date *ante quem*. It is improbable that the great western entrance, after demanding such drastic remodelling of the façade, should have been in use for only a short time. So it seems likely that late 8th or early 9th century would be a guess close to the truth. We hope that further clearing of the interior may bring to light new clues permitting us to date the painting more accurately.

To the right of the entrance, the sandstone wall facing west inside the inset is decorated with a large mural of St. Michael on horseback. Here, he is shown as High Constable of the Heavenly Host, commanding the fray against the rebel angels whom he thrusts into the abyss. This painting (*w.* 2.20 m.) is badly damaged. The torso and head of the saint are missing and the remaining surface is very worn.³⁶

The archangel is shown on a galloping horse. His left hand holds the bridle and his right the light brown, black tipped lance with which he is striking a small falling figure, whose white tunic, striped with black and with traces of red can barely be distinguished. It is, no doubt, one of the rebel angels. Behind the rider a fragment of cloak flies out stiffly in large folds. This is light brown, adorned with a reddish brown criss-cross design enclosing red and green beads. The bay horse has both forelegs raised, hindlegs bent. The fetlocks are painted white, the hooves and waving tail—the tip of which is drawn on the entrance pillar—black. The horse is richly caparisoned in cloth with criss-cross embroidery, bordered with braid and studded with round stones, alternately red and green. From the crupper dangles a row of tassels fixed to a braided band. A yellow bell hangs on the horse's breast.

This composition belongs to the series of *Cavalier Saints*, such as St. Mercurios in the church of Abdel Gadir.³⁷ Unfortunately, the poor condition of the painting precludes all analysis of style. It would, however, seem likely that the murals on both sides of the door were painted at the same time. The galloping horse is a bold composition, showing great competence and mastery by the artist craftsman.

The doorway to the church is crowned with the Meroitic cornice mentioned above. Several graffiti have been noted on the greyish-white facing of the entrance wall; among them the names of presbyter Iesou and deacon Mary(?). The right side of the entrance bears a graffito with the date 601(?) of the Martyrs, i.e. A.D. 884.³⁸ At some later date this wall was covered with a fresh film of

³⁶ As the clearing proceeded it proved necessary to consolidate this painting immediately. That is why there is no photograph of it *in situ*. It has been removed by Mr Jasiewicz and we hope to present in the next volume a photograph taken in the Museum.

³⁷ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, xv, pls. xxxv and xxxvi.

³⁸ The Coptic letters allow two possibilities for reading this date: $\chi\alpha$ or $\chi\phi$, i.e. 601 of the Martyrs, or 671. That is to say A.D. 884 or 954.

plaster. Inside, the entrance is vaulted; but all along the cornice a wooden beam (*l.* 1.46 m.; *w.* 22 cm.; *h.* 14 cm.) serves as a lintel. A round hole (*diam. circa* 12 cm.) was bored into the right side of this beam, evidently serving as a socket to pivot the door. In the left side of the entrance there is a cavity³⁹ to house the bolt of the door.

The doorway afforded access to a long passage (*w.* 2.42 m.; *l.* 16.90 m.)—the narthex. Although only partially cleared, this has provided us with two large murals, one on the west wall and one on the east. The western one, to the left of the door (2.90 × 2.50 m.) has been cleared to a depth of 2.50 m. and represents the Three Young Hebrews in the Furnace (PLATE LXI).

This painting is exceptionally well preserved. The colours are bright and the surface shows hardly a scratch. After being photographed, it has been covered again with sand for protection until next season, when it will be wholly cleared, removed from the wall and taken to the Museum.

The main part of the composition takes up the space between the first and second windows to the south; but it extends on either side beneath these apertures. On the brick-red background, the flames of the furnace are outlined in black. The centre is taken up by the monumental figure of the Archangel Michael dressed in a long sleeved white robe with a green collar with brownish bands. Over this a cloak of like colour and ornament is belted with a black-bordered white girdle. On his feet are brown pantofles. A gold crown with a double border of pearls and studded with green stones lies upon the mass of black hair of which two little curls show on the forehead under the crown. The crown is topped by three small crosses in rhomboidal settings affixed to rectangular bases, bordered with pearls. Behind, the yellow halo is slightly elongated and circled with black and white lines and a wide elliptical band. The features are strongly marked by black lines. The slightly arched brows and long, open eyes are stressed with green lines. The small nose is somewhat curved; the mouth rendered by an arched line. Traces of red are still to be seen in the lips. The chin is in the shape of a letter π . The two yellow wings are decorated with brown peacock feathers with green eyes, and their lower edge is scalloped out in the form of large scales, navy blue like the outer contour. The left hand clasps to the waist a round fluted paten. On that hand rests the long staff held in the other.

The staff, ending in a light brown cross and circled with metal bands, is held obliquely, cross down, black point up. The cross is studded with green stones. The position of this long staff stresses the protective attitude of the Archangel towards the Three Youths in the Furnace. At his right, two figures are covered by his horizontal right wing and the staff, the cross of which reaches below their waists. The one on his left is under the outstretched left wing.

³⁹ We propose to study the details of the door in the following report, after the area has been completely cleared.

As described in Daniel III, 21, the three men are 'in their coats, their hosen and their hats'. The coats, fastened at the breast with round brooches, the 'hosen' embroidered with a brown and red criss-cross design enclosing green and dark red dots,⁴⁰ the hats upon the thick black hair are parti-coloured, red and green and topped by round buttons. There they stand, hands raised in prayer, in their richly ornate garments—for they also wear brown pantofles and white tunics with brown and green bands, wide borders and round green and red stones. Dalmatics too, embroidered in brown checks with red and green stones and edged with a wide, dark blue border, embroidered with pearls and studded with stones like the tunics. The border on the cloak of the man on the angel's right is yellow. On their raised wrists are wide bracelets with pearls and stones. Two curls fall out onto the foreheads from under the tiny hats. The heads of the three figures are inclined towards the archangel. The noses are curved, the eyebrows long, the mouths indicated by a red line and the chins by a letter π. The black eyes, shaped like those of the angel, are drawn with green lines and calm, serene expressions. Below the figures appear the following names: first on the left: ΑΝΑΝΙΑ; second on the left: ΑΖΑΡΙΑ; on the right: ΜΕΣΑΗΛ; below the angel: ΜΙΧΑΗΛ. These names are those of Ananiah, Misael and Azariah⁴¹ frequently distorted. The theme of the Three Youths in the Furnace was very popular in early Christian art.⁴² In Nubia, the same subject is found in three other churches, to wit: Abd el Qadir, Tamit⁴³ and Kalabsha.⁴⁴ However, the protective attitude in which the angel is seen here, safeguarding the three figures, two on his right and the third on his left, with his staff and wings, seems to be exceptional.⁴⁵

Also, we can hazard a very special interpretation. The mural is practically over the grave of the three bishops buried against the west wall. The stelae of Kolouthos and Aaron in the bricked-up door, and that of Stephanos to the

⁴⁰ They are undoubtedly dressed in late Parthian clothes, so characteristic of Palmyrian sculptures. Cf. K. Michałowski, *Palmyre*, II (1962), p. 144 and the very important studies on this subject by H. Seyrig, *Syria*, xvii (1936), p. 238 sq.; xviii (1937), p. 4 sq.

⁴¹ Cf. *Daniel*, I, 7 and III, 21; Kurt Kuhl, *Die drei Männer im Feuer*, 1930.

⁴² Cf. L. Réaux, op. cit., p. 400. ⁴³ Cf. Monneret de Villard, op. cit., III, pl. clxii.

⁴⁴ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, xv, p. 73, pl. xxxviii; J. G. Herzog zu Saxe, *Steichzuge durch die Kirchen und Kloster Aegypten*, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Professor J. Leclant has drawn my attention to the article written by E. Drioton in the *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, vi, 1942, pp. 1-8, where he published a Coptic relief of the 7th century representing the same subject, where two youths are on the left of the angel and the third one on his right. The position of the youths is thus the reverse of our fresco. Drioton thinks that there was a common model (illustration of a manuscript) for the compositions on this subject. This composition where the angel inclines his staff in a protective gesture, seems to be typically Egyptian.

north of it, correspond in their respective positions exactly to those of the painted figures : two south of the archangel, one north. In the Book of Daniel (III, 25) 'the form of the fourth is like the Son of God', and sometimes the angel sent by God is shown holding a scroll over the heads he is protecting (here his wings). Nowhere is there specific mention that this angel might be Michael; but as guardian and protector of this particular church, he assumes the part. Thus we are confronted with a local interpretation of the story; and this interpretation, together with the position of the painting on the west wall of the narthex, suggests a transparent allusion to the three bishops, one-time servants of the church of Saint Michael, Archangel, protected by their patron after their death.

As to the style of this composition, the following points should be noted. The artist who painted the chapel frescoes (with the tondo of the Madonna and the composition of the archangel following the curved line of the vault)⁴⁶ fitted his work into the surface at his disposal; whereas here the painter proves to have been quite unconcerned by the fact that two windows pierced the wall. He simply broke the frieze of flames above the heads of the two southern figures and sketchily continued the line of the angel's right wing flat along the window-sill. To the north, the window cut into part of the wing, which the artist bent downwards under the sill. This nonchalance which is almost naïve takes us far from the classical tradition, but brings us very close to the general practice in Nubian churches of the second Christian period (i.e. starting from the 10th century). Notwithstanding, this is without doubt a masterpiece of Byzantine art, remarkable both for its execution and for its state of preservation. The fact of its being so well preserved can also be taken into account when we attempt to date it. Probably the latter period of utilization of the church, i.e. the end of the 12th century. Next season may provide further indications, once the lower part of this mural is cleared.

Opposite this mural is another, also representing the Archangel Michael (PLATE LXII, a). Here, two layers of painting are discernible. It is difficult to see the subject of the first; but it was painted *al fresco*, whereas the second is a *tempera* in the *buono fresco* technique.

Only the upper right hand portion of the saint has so far been uncovered. The head and the left shoulder are missing. He is standing clad in a long-sleeved white tunic, over which is a vast white dalmatic with double brown bands. Over this is thrown a very elaborate garment: long yellow stoles are wrapped round the body. The material is rich adorned with discs studded with a row of white, red and green stones. The centre part is fastened with red and pale green round buttons. Circular and rhomboidal gems are also embroidered onto the yellow background of this vestment. The border is very wide and embroidered with pearls. The left wing droops against the body. It is yellow, with

⁴⁶ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 109; KUSH x, pp. 230-1, pl. lxxvi.

brown peacock feathers with red eyes. The contours are red, the underside being shaped like big scales picked out in black and white. Close to his body the saint holds a round fluted paten, the bottom of which is decorated with a Coptic cross within a circle of pearls. In his raised right hand, he holds a yellowish staff with decorative ironwork.

This second painting shows the same characteristic details of clothing and wing design as the large mural of the Three Young Men in the Furnace. It is therefore likely that it is a work of the same date, i.e. the end of the 10th-12th centuries.

Among the other murals of the church under the Citadel, in the north aisle, on the eastern face of one of the partitions, we have uncovered the upper part of what appears to be a Nativity (PLATE LXII, b). This extends upwards into the vault. The top is circumscribed with a pale blue arch, studded with white and red stars. Three of them are still preserved in the northern part. This arch was bordered by a black and white line and a wide red band. On the white background, white robed angels fly with red rimmed, yellow wings. In the top row, three angels are visible. Below them, four stand with outspread or drooping wings of the same colour. Two of them are blowing old-gold trumpets. One of the lower group of angels has a short pinkish brown cloak. They all have round faces and brown hair gathered off their foreheads by a band of pearls. To the right, the star of Bethlehem is portrayed over a sort of canopy decorated with four crosses, two large and two small, painted old-gold.

This mural is painted onto a very thin facing and the surface is very brittle.⁴⁷ It most likely belongs to the latest set of paintings, perhaps 11th century.

In several other parts of the church, traces of mural paintings have been noticed as the upper parts of the walls were cleared. This general clearing of the top was necessary in order to get an idea of the groundplan of the construction. Thus, many fragments were found in the sand in the northern part of the narthex: their characteristic is a predominance of dark purple over other colours.

The whole of the apse was painted. The south wall of the south aisle carries traces of a fresco which ran right along the top of the wall. It is a broad band of interlock-pattern in red and yellow.

A summary of this year's excavations cannot give a complete description of the Church under the Citadel. However, we believe we can already base a few suppositions upon the data obtained, pending the final synthesis which will only be possible once we are in possession of all the material available.

There can be no doubt that this church was first planned as a three-aisle church and that it was later enlarged in the course of construction by the addition of the south and north aisles. It is in the outer walls of these two additions that we have found several sandstone blocks with Maltese cross or vine-leaf designs

⁴⁷ Mr Jasiewicz has consolidated the part which we cleared. It was then covered with sand again.

and, in the north wall, two stones with drawings.⁴⁸ It is therefore obvious that stones were re-utilized here from another Christian building already in ruins at the time when this church was built. Now there is only one church in Faras whose walls could have been used as a 'quarry' for a new building in those days: it is the Great Church, south of the Great Kom. Griffith⁴⁹ stressed the condition in which he found its remains: the walls were partly razed to the foundation stones. That is why it proved impossible to trace its plan. However, among the blocks lying about in the sand, a few Greco-Corinthian capitals, granite columns and other decorated stones were found *in situ*. We have already suggested⁵⁰ that the Great Church of Faras may have been the first Christian cathedral in Pachoras; and the dressing of its walls is the same as those of the Church under the Citadel, to wit: the lower part is of stone and the upper of fired-brick.⁵¹

The Great Church is the only Nubian church which 19th-century travellers saw as a mound of stones. The others, Rivergate Church for instance, still at that time had the appearance of monumental ruins.⁵² That is why we believe the following to be likely: the Great Church, first cathedral in Pachoras, was built at the latest at the beginning of the second half of the 6th century. That it still belonged to the Greco-Roman tradition is shown by the capitals. Sited between the Meroitic enclosure and an irrigation canal⁵³ it collapsed—perhaps owing to floods, perhaps due to some other cataclysm. So the clergy began to build a new church on higher land, i.e. on the artificial hill already at that time 2 m. high, to the north of the Great Church. The original plan was a three-aisle church, built like the Great Church, with sandstone blocks in the lower part. Then the building was enlarged. The next season will most probably give us the exact date of the foundation and enlargements of the church which must be not later than the 8th century.

As for the interior decoration, apart from the large mural glorifying the three bishops Kolouthos, Aaron and Stephanos in the guise of the Three Young Hebrews in the Furnace—for which we suggest the 10th–11th centuries—we beg to reserve our opinion also until the end of next season's excavations.

⁴⁸ The east and west walls only have re-utilized Pharaonic stones in their lower courses.

⁴⁹ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 59–60.

⁵⁰ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, p. 82.

⁵¹ The same building methods have been described by P. L. Shinnie in the church of Ghazali, Cf. *Ghazali—A monastery in the Northern Sudan*, 1961, p. 8.

⁵² Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 66 ff.

⁵³ Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras*, I, pl. i.