

# Polish Excavations at Old Dongola :

First Season, November–December 1964

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## INTRODUCTION

THE three-year campaign of Polish excavations at Faras in 1961–64, which embraced four seasons of field work had, like all recent excavations in Nubia, the character of salvage work.<sup>1</sup> The results of our research were : discovery of a large number of murals dated from the 8th to the 13th centuries, hundreds of inscriptions, monumental architectural remains, the Cathedral, the Bishops' Palace, and the monasteries, as well as a great number of small objects all of which created an important source for further study of the history of the former capital of the Kingdom of Nobadia and the episcopal see at Pachoras.<sup>2</sup>

As is known, at the beginning of the 8th century, King Mercurios had unified the two Christian kingdoms of Northern and Middle Nubia, namely Nobadia and Makuria, into one state, and chose for the capital of the united kingdom Old Dongola,<sup>3</sup> situated between the Third and Fourth Cataracts of the Nile.

This site had never before been systematically excavated. Only one church, which in 1317 was transformed into a mosque, was superficially investigated by some scholars.<sup>4</sup> It does not seem strange, therefore, that the Department of

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<sup>1</sup> K. Michałowski, 'Polish Excavations at Faras', KUSH x (1962), pp. 220–44 ; xi (1963), pp. 235–56 ; xii (1964), pp. 195–207 ; xiii (1965), pp. 177–189.

<sup>2</sup> Id., *Faras, Fouilles Polonaises, 1961*, Warszawa (1962) ; *Faras, Fouilles Polonaises, 1961–62*, Warszawa (1965) ; id., *Faras—Die Kathedrale aus dem Wüstesand*, Benzinger Verlag, Zürich—in press ; id., 'Nubie Chrétienne', *Africana Bulletin*, II (1965), pp. 9–26 ; S. Jakobielski, 'Liste des évêques de Pakhoras', *Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences*, III (1965), pp. 152–170 ; T. Dzierżykray-Rogalski and E. Promińska, 'Szczątki kostne pierwszych kapłanów Pachoras z okresu wczesnochrześcijańskiego w Faras', *Przegląd Antropologiczny*, xxix (1963), pp. 225 ff. ; E. Promińska, 'Jaw bones and teeth of the Pachoras bishops excavated in 1961–62 in Faras', *Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie*, III, pp. 213–218.

<sup>3</sup> U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia cristiana*, Rome (1938), pp. 81–3 ; L. P. Kirwan, 'Notes on the Topography of the Christian Nubian Kingdoms', *JEA*, xxi (1935), p. 61 ; H. N. Chittick, 'The Last Christian Stronghold in the Sudan', KUSH xi (1963), p. 264 ; K. Michałowski, KUSH xii (1964), p. 199.

<sup>4</sup> R. Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia and Sinai*, London (1853), p. 260 ; Waddington and Hanbury, *Journal of a visit to some parts of Ethiopia*, London (1822), p. 65 ; S. Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley*, Oxford (1912), p. 44 ; J. W. Crowfoot, 'Christian Nubia', *JEA*, xiii (1927), p. 144 ; U. Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia Medioevale*, I, Cairo (1935), pp. 246–8 ; id., *Storia*, p. 220 ; O. G. S. Crawford, *The Fung Kingdom of Sennar*, Gloucester (1951), pp. 34–7 ; P. L. Shinnie, 'Old Dongola Church', KUSH III (1955), pp. 97–8.



## KUSH

Antiquities had confided the task of systematic excavations at Old Dongola to the archaeological mission which in recent years had gathered most material concerning one of the capitals of Christian Nubia.

Dongola (Dunqulah) is mentioned by nearly all the Arabic writers dealing with Nubia<sup>5</sup> as the capital of Makuria, which under the ancient name of *Tmkr*<sup>c</sup> appears already in the tribute list of Tuthmosis III for the year 1450 B.C.<sup>6</sup> As it is generally understood this Kingdom was converted to Greek Orthodox Christianity in A.D. 569.<sup>7</sup>

Only systematic excavations could create a true image of the town about which so much controversial information exists in Arabic sources. For instance, Masūd, ambassador of Saladin's brother Turan-shah, sent to Dongola after 1173, reported to his master that the country was poor, growing only a little millet and a few dates. The King had ridden bareback on a horse out of his palace, the only building of Dongola not made of grass. He did not understand Arabic and had merely laughed when addressed in it.<sup>8</sup> However, Abu Saleh, travelling in Nubia at about the same time, describes Dongola as a large town, with many churches, big houses and wide streets. When he speaks about the King's palace he says that it was covered with numerous domes of red brick which reminded him of structures in Iraq. According to him, this type of vault had been introduced into Nubia by King Raphael in A.D. 1002.<sup>9</sup>

As we know, Dongola had survived as a capital of the independent Kingdom of Nubia till the beginning of the 14th century.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Site*

The beginning of field work at Old Dongola had been preceded by a survey, aimed at establishing the limits of the area of concession proper which was done in November 1964 by the Director of the Polish Mission, Mr Kazimierz Michałowski, together with the Senior Inspector of Antiquities, Mr Nigm ed-Din Sherif.

Along the eastern bank of the Nile there is a deserted area some 2.5 km. long and 1.2 km. wide (cf. Plan I) with ruins here and there emerging from the sand

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<sup>5</sup> U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia*, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> A. J. Arkell, KUSH XI (1963), p. 321; id., *History of the Sudan*, London (1961) (2nd ed.), pp. 185 f.

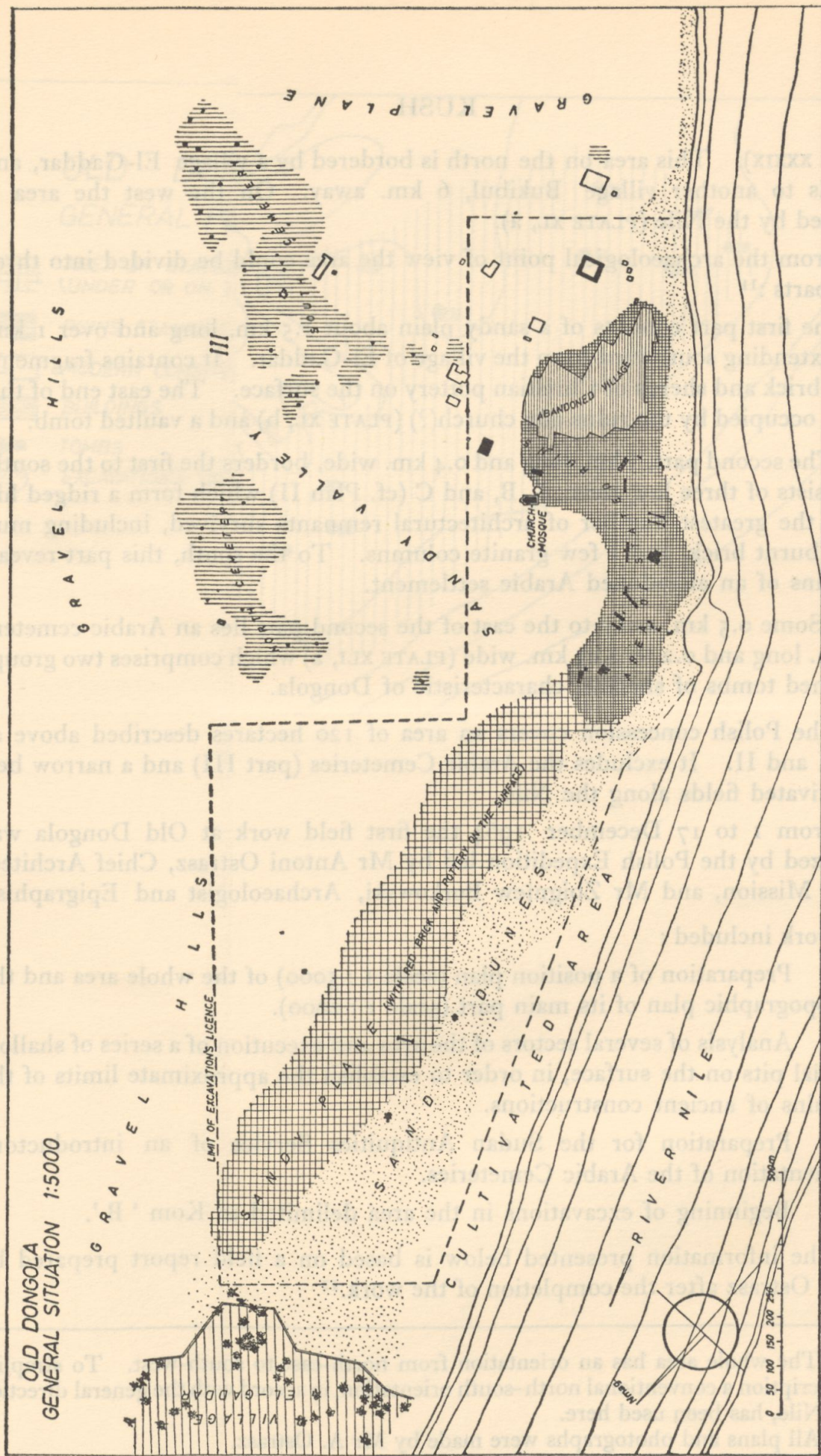
<sup>7</sup> E. Zyhlarz, 'The Countries of the Ethiopian Empire of Kush', KUSH VI (1958), p. 14; L. P. Kirwan, 'The Nature of Nubian Christianity', in *Firka*, Oxford (1939), pp. 50 f.

<sup>8</sup> A. J. Arkell, *History of the Sudan*, p. 195, referring incorrectly to Abu Salih's *Churches and Monasteries* (ed. B. T. A. Evetts and W. F. Butler), pp. 149 ff. The correct source is E. Blochet, *Histoire d'Égypte de Maqrizi*, Paris (1908), p. 112; cf. also U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia*, p. 197.

<sup>9</sup> B. T. A. Evetts and W. F. Butler, *Churches and Monasteries of Egypt attributed to Abu Salih, the Armenian*, Oxford (1895), p. 265.

<sup>10</sup> U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia*, p. 226.





PLAN I. GENERAL SITUATION OF OLD DONGOLA



## KUSH

(PLATE XXXIX). This area on the north is bordered by a village El-Gaddar, and extends to another village Bukibul, 6 km. away. On the west the area is bounded by the Nile (PLATE XL, a).

From the archaeological point of view the area could be divided into three main parts :<sup>11</sup>

I. The first part consists of a sandy plain about 1.5 km. long and over 1 km. wide extending southward from the village of El-Gaddar. It contains fragments of red brick and sherds of Christian pottery on the surface. The east end of this part is occupied by the ruins of a church(?) (PLATE XL, b) and a vaulted tomb.

II. The second part, 1 km. long and 0.4 km. wide, borders the first to the south. It consists of three low *koms*, A, B, and C (cf. Plan II) which form a ridged hill where the greatest number of architectural remnants survived, including mud brick, burnt brick, and a few granite columns. To the south, this part reveals the ruins of an abandoned Arabic settlement.

III. Some 0.5 km. away to the east of the second part lies an Arabic cemetery 1.2 km. long and 0.2 to 0.25 km. wide (PLATE XLI, a) which comprises two groups of domed tombs of sheikhs, characteristic of Dongola.

The Polish concession covers an area of 120 hectares described above as parts I and II. It excludes the Arabic Cemeteries (part III) and a narrow belt of cultivated fields along the Nile.

From 1 to 17 December 1964 the first field work at Old Dongola was organized by the Polish Expedition led by Mr Antoni Ostrasz, Chief Architect of the Mission, and Mr Zbigniew Borkowski, Archaeologist and Epigraphist.

The work included :

1. Preparation of a position plan (scale 1 : 5000) of the whole area and the topographic plan of its main part (scale 1 : 2000).
2. Analysis of several sectors of the area and execution of a series of shallow trial pits on the surface, in order to establish the approximate limits of the ruins of ancient constructions.
3. Preparation for the Sudan Antiquities Service of an introductory documentation of the Arabic Cemeteries.
4. Beginning of excavations in the area delimited as Kom 'B'.

The information presented below is based on a field report prepared by Mr A. Ostrasz after the completion of the work.<sup>12</sup>

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





<sup>11</sup> The whole area has an orientation from north-east to south-west. To simplify the description a conventional north-south orientation, in accord with the general direction of the Nile, has been used here.

<sup>12</sup> All plans and photographs were made by Mr A. Ostrasz.



## OLD DONGOLA

GENERAL PLAN OF THE SITE 1:2000

-  AREA OF STATED RUINS  
(UNDER OR ON THE SURFACE OF GROUND)  
 RUINS STANDING HIGH  
 MODERN CONSTRUCTIONS  
 BUILDINGS  
 TOMBS  
 EXCAVATIONS 1964

CEMETERY

CEMETERY

NORTH

SOUTH

CEMETERY

CEMETERY

ABANDONED  
VILLAGE

CEMETERY

RIVER NILE

Nmag

0 20 40 60 80 100 200m

PLAN II. OVERALL PLAN OF THE SITE



## POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT OLD DONGOLA: FIRST SEASON

### *Surveys*

I. The area between Kom 'B' and the village El-Gaddar rises to a height of 7–10 m. above the level of the Nile in December and is a plain of some 1 km. long. Three sections can be distinguished along the whole area, which differ in character (Plan I). Along the Nile there is a narrow belt of cultivated land, and parallel to it lies a series of sandy dunes overgrown with bush and scanty vegetation, with pieces of burnt brick scattered here and there, and remnants of mud-brick constructions emerging from the sand. Further to the east lies a sandy plain, 0.2 km. wide, bordered on the east by the desert. It yields large quantities of pottery and a few pieces of burnt brick. On the same plain some 0.2 km. south of El-Gaddar village, lies a small column of red granite. Further to the east of the plain about 0.7 km. from El-Gaddar, rises the ruin of a small mud-brick construction with fragments of arches and vaults preserved (cf. PLATE XL, b). The biaxial composition of the plan of construction suggests a church designed on the plan of a Greek Cross, covered at the intersection of the arms by a small dome which no longer exists. On a low hill some 100 m. south-east of the ruin lies a shallow grave covered by a vault, which seems to represent the only Christian grave confirmed so far in Old Dongola. Further in the same direction one reaches a hilly gravel desert bordered on the east by a chain of low mountains.

II. Kom 'A', 0.4 km. long and 0.2 km. wide, is the highest point of the area (cf. PLATE XXXIX), rising to 35 m. above the level of the Nile.<sup>13</sup> The limits of the *kom* are defined by topographical features. On the north-west it is bordered by almost vertical rocks some 10–15 m. high, sloping steeply towards the Nile. On the opposite end a steep sandy slope borders the *kom*. The north and east sides of the *kom* are marked by a descent of the terrain (the difference of levels amounts to 4 m.), caused by sand blown upon the constructions of mud brick. The position of the buildings partly preserved there seems to point to an arrangement like a citadel (cf. Plan II). In the middle of the *kom* there rises to a height of several metres the ruin of an edifice of mud brick. The whole terrain of the *kom* slopes considerably to the north and east. The difference between the highest points on the south-east and the north of the *kom* is 13 m. On the east the difference amounts to 15–18 m. The surface of the *kom* is covered with sand, pieces of burnt brick and sherds of Arabic and Christian pottery. There are also walls of mud brick either on the surface or just underneath, which in some parts run down towards the Nile and on the east reach the rocks. Some metres away from the ruin in the middle of the *kom* there are two columns of pinkish granite emerging from the sand to a height of 0.5 m.

Kom 'B'. To the north of Kom 'A' there is a smaller *kom*, 'B', 0.3 km. long and 0.2 km. wide. Its terrain slopes down towards the north. The

<sup>13</sup> As a relative 'O' level, the level of the Nile in the first days of December 1964 were taken. In relation to the 'O' level the datum point between Kom 'A' and the Church-Mosque has an elevation of 31 m.



difference of levels between the south and the north is 10 m. There is only one small hill in the middle, 3 m. high, whose highest point lies 18 m. above the level of the Nile. On the west the *kom* slopes some 6 m. downwards to the Nile and forms a narrow belt of blown sand on the edge of the slope which marks the western limit of the area. On the east the terrain runs gently down and passes into a sandy wadi. There is no evident topographical feature on this side to form a limit to the *kom*. However, there are other indications which could be considered as a natural border on this side of the *kom*: in its eastern part there are remnants of mud-brick structures, pieces of burnt brick and pottery which form a contrast with the sandy wadi. Exactly in the middle of the *kom* emerge the upper parts of a few columns of grey granite. This was the place where our excavations started. Some 60 m. away from the first group of columns, five others made of the same stone protrude to a height of 1 m. above the ground level. In the south-east sector of the *kom* lies the lower part of a capital of grey granite.

*Kom 'C'* extends to the south and east of *Kom 'A'*. It covers an area of  $0.5 \times 0.3$  km. which is almost flat; the difference of levels varies between 3–4 m., with the highest point rising to 32 m. above the level of the Nile. The south of the area is occupied by ruins of an abandoned Arabic village. In the south-east part of the *kom*, on a rocky point, lies a church which in 1317 had been transformed into a mosque<sup>14</sup> (PLATE XLI, b). Over the whole area emerge fragments of walls of mud brick. Most of them seem to have been plastered several times; they have 4–5 layers of white lime plaster. There is also Christian and Arabic pottery on the surface of the area. The limits of *Kom 'C'* are easy to trace. On the north it is bordered by the gentle slope of *Kom 'A'*; on the west the limit consists of a steep rock and sand slope descending towards the Nile. The south and east limits are marked by the difference between the surface of the *kom*, which is covered with rubble and pottery sherds, and that of the neighbouring area, covered with gravel.

The three *koms* described above cover an area of some 0.25 km.<sup>2</sup> (25 hectares). It seems most likely that the configuration of the terrain, the ruins emerging on the surface, and the pottery mark the central and most important part of ancient Dongola, which must have been situated within this area.

III. Some 0.5 km. to the east of the *koms* lies an Arabic necropolis 1.2 km. long and 0.2–0.25 km. wide (cf. Plans I, II and PLATE XLI, a). The necropolis is divided into two parts, northern and southern, by a sandy wadi which begins somewhere on the plain extending along the Nile between El-Gaddar village and the *koms*, and goes on to the east. Thus the southern cemetery covers an area of some 12 hectares, and the northern one some 6 hectares. Besides these two big cemeteries there are four others, which contain only a few graves, scattered around the whole area. The first is situated some 0.25 km. west of

<sup>14</sup> Cf. p. 289, n. 4.



## POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT OLD DONGOLA: FIRST SEASON

the northern cemetery, two others lie some scores of metres to the west of the southern cemetery, and the fourth, which contains a dozen or so graves, lies some 60 m. from a small wadi which borders Old Dongola on the south.

Four main types can be distinguished among the structures on the Arabic necropolis :

(a) Dug-out graves marked with flat raised platforms some 20–30 cm. high, either covered with fine white gravel or framed with burnt brick. A stone placed on one or both ends indicates the location of the grave. (cf. PLATE XLI, a). The two big cemeteries comprise several thousands of these graves.

(b) Vaulted tombs of sheikhs rising to a height of 5–8 m. with a diameter of 6–8 m., made of mud brick (PLATE XLII, a ; cf. also PLATE XLI, a).

(c) Rectangular graves of mud brick covered with a dome (PLATE XLII, b).

(d) Small structures set on a rectangular plan, made of fine flat stones without mortar or of mud brick.

Apart from the types described above, there are remnants of bigger constructions of brick and stone scattered over the area of the two big cemeteries and in the neighbourhood.

It is evident that flat hills were deliberately chosen for the cemeteries. Therefore the limits of these areas are very clear, defined by topographical features and the differences in character of the surface of cemeteries (gravel) and the wadis (sand).

### *Excavations*

A fragment of construction has been unearthed on Kom ' B ' at a place where eight columns emerge from the sand. The character and arrangement of this discovery suggest a church designed on a central plan (cf. Plan III).

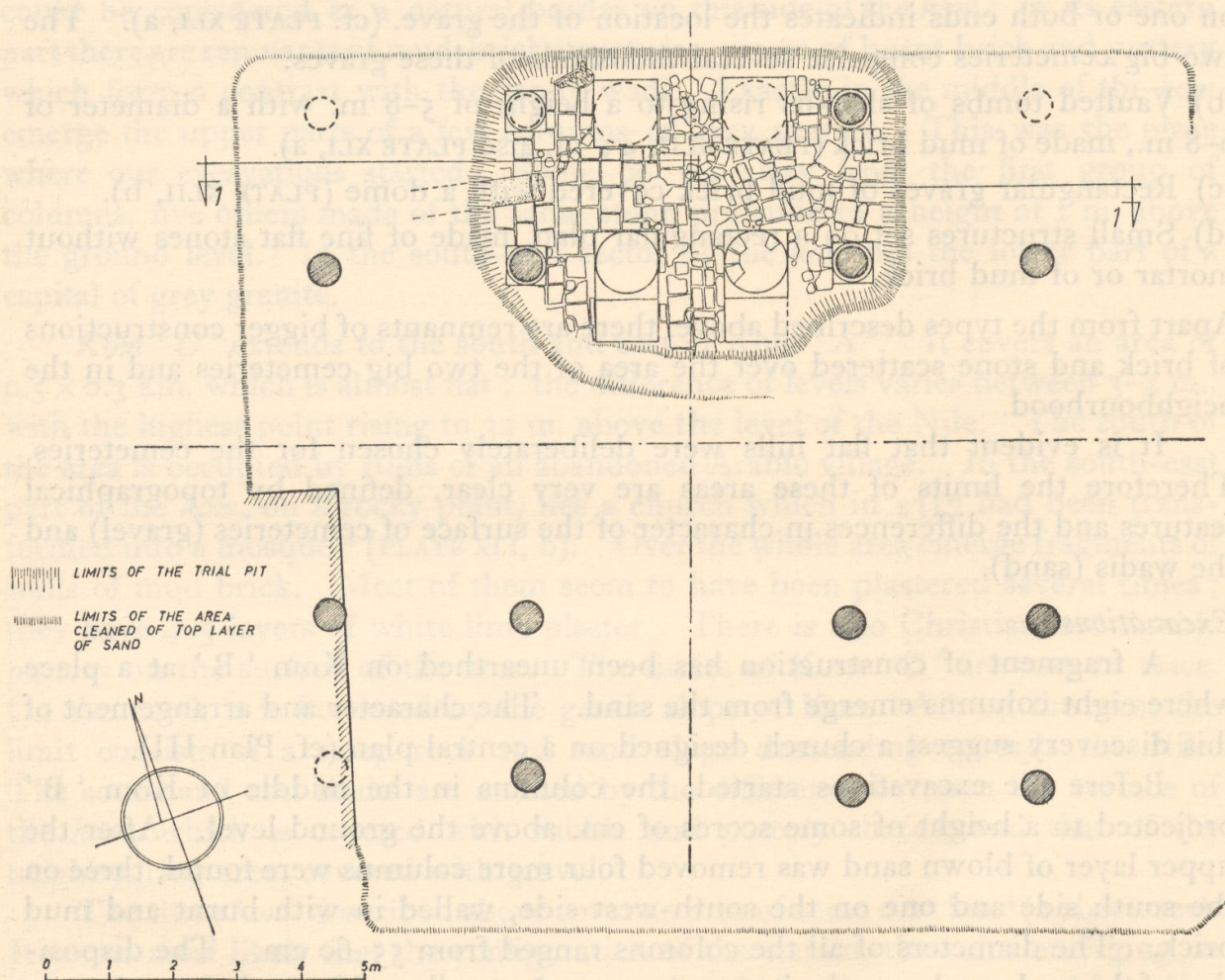
Before the excavations started, the columns in the middle of Kom ' B ' projected to a height of some scores of cm. above the ground level. After the upper layer of blown sand was removed four more columns were found, three on the south side and one on the south-west side, walled in with burnt and mud brick. The diameters of all the columns ranged from 55–60 cm. The disposition of the twelve columns *in situ* (PLATE XLIII, a) as well as of four missing columns, whose places can easily be established, show that the building had a cruciform plan, with its main axis oriented east and west.<sup>15</sup> This arrangement is based on the intersection of two wide perpendicular naves accompanied by two side aisles, half as big as the naves. This crossing of the aisles results in an arrangement with the central element in the form of a square with four rectangular elements along its sides and four smaller square elements at its angles. Thus, within the area delimited by the disposition of the columns, we have an arrangement set on the plan of a Greek cross. The orientation of the main axis to east

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<sup>15</sup> The description of the axis as oriented east and west is conventional. The orientation is in fact 22° south of magnetic east.



and west is defined by disposition of the columns and the different widths of the two central naves. The nave running east-west is 5.5 m. wide, while the intersecting one (north-south) is only 5 m. wide. The width of the aisles which are parallel to the east-west nave is 2.5 m., while those at right angles are 3 m. in width. Thus, the side aisles elongate the overall plan to east and west, and emphasize the orientation of the building in this direction. The extent of the area excavated this year and the number of architectural elements discovered do

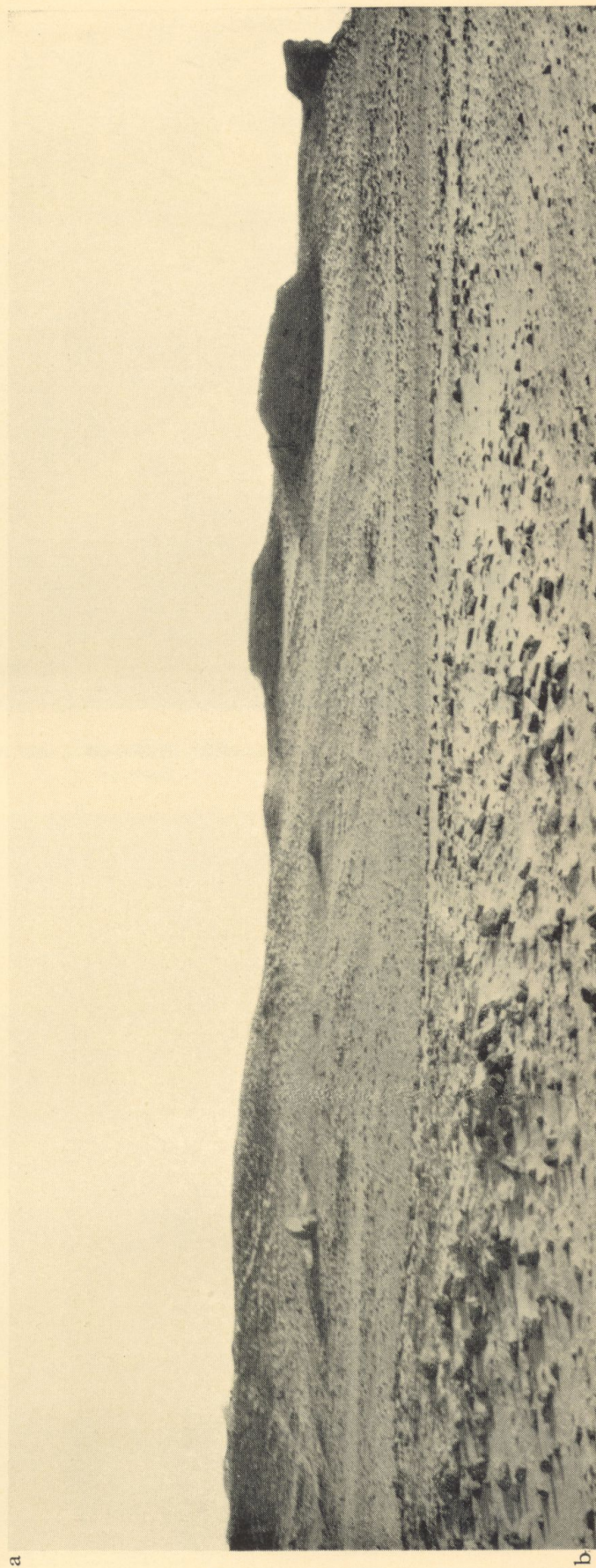
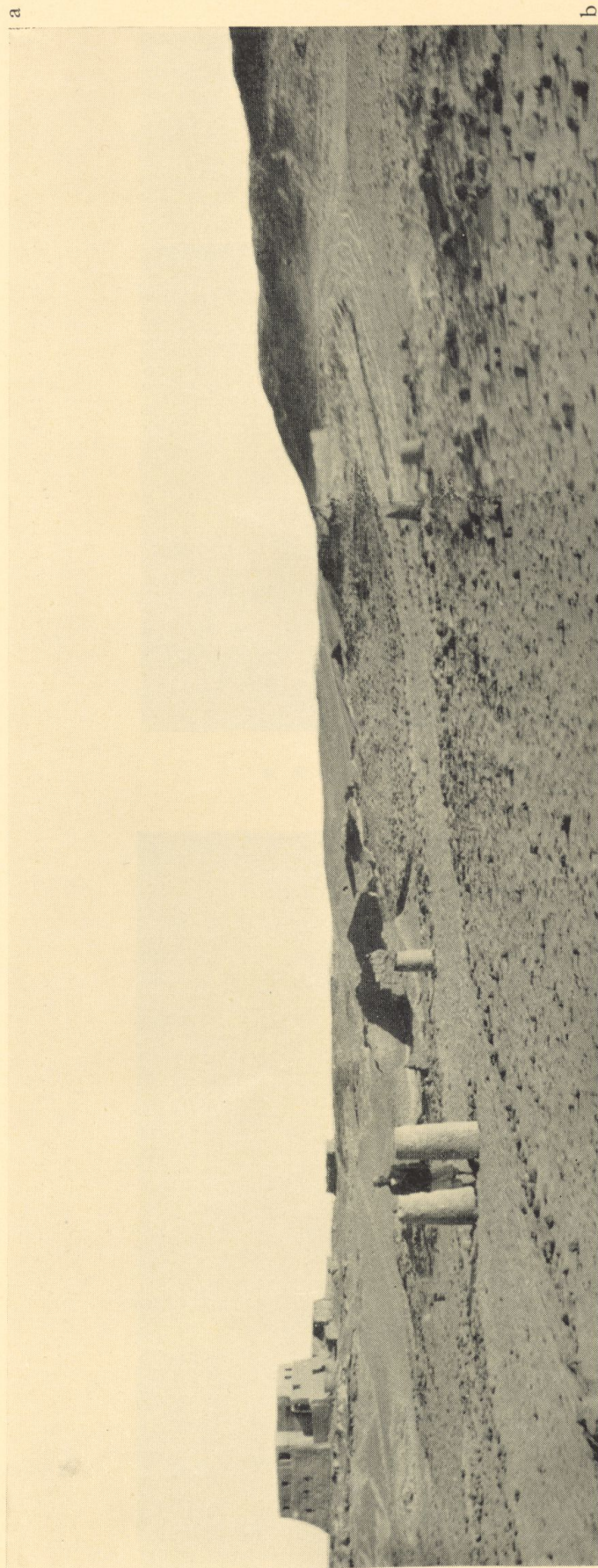


PLAN III. EXCAVATED AREA IN KOM 'B': THE CHURCH

not allow the drawing of a more precise plan of the building or a study of its construction. Though the whole space within the limits marked by the columns has been cleared of the upper layer of sand to a depth of 1 m., no traces of an outer wall of the building were found. The mud and burnt brick wall uncovered in the south-west part of the area, in view of the character of its construction and its direction in relation to that of the columns, seems to be a later addition unconnected with the plan of the building. A definite interpretation of the wall and its relation to the building will not be possible until the level of its foundation is examined. To achieve this, a considerable enlargement of the excavations will be required.



PLATE XXXIX



GENERAL VIEW OF KOM 'B' FROM THE NORTHEAST  
cut through centre along line a-b)



PLATE XL



*a.* SANDY SLOPE OF KOM 'A' FROM THE NORTHEAST



*b.* RUINS OF THE CHURCH EAST OF THE SANDY PLAIN



PLATE XLI



*a.* DOMED TOMBS OF SHEIKHS IN THE SOUTHERN CEMETERY, AND DUG-OUT GRAVES MARKED WITH STONES



*b.* CHURCH-MOSQUE OF OLD DONGOLA FROM THE SOUTHWEST



PLATE XLII



*a.* TOMB NO. 43 IN THE SOUTHERN CEMETERY



*b.* TOMB NO. 17 IN THE SOUTHERN CEMETERY



PLATE XLIII



*a.* EXCAVATION IN KOM 'B': COLUMNS OF THE CHURCH EMERGING FROM THE SAND



*b.* KOM 'B': POSITION OF THE COLUMNS AND PIERS IN THE CHURCH, SEEN FROM THE WEST



*c.* KOM 'B': NORTHWEST PART OF THE TRIAL PIT



PLATE XLIV



*a.* CAPITAL FROM OLD DONGOLA



*b.* CAPITAL FROM THE FARAS CATHEDRAL  
(inv. no. FK 8/63-64)



*c.* CAPITAL FROM OLD DONGOLA



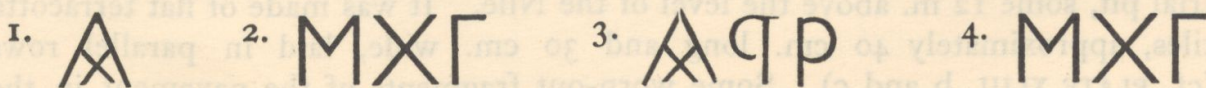
*d.* CAPITAL FROM THE FARAS CATHEDRAL  
(inv. no. FK 9/63-64)



## POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT OLD DONGOLA: FIRST SEASON

Apart from uncovering the upper parts of the columns, a trial pit 6 × 4 m. large and 4.5 m. deep was dug on the sector embracing one span of the north-south nave (cf. Plan III). Three complete columns and a tile floor have been excavated together with the lower parts of brick piers situated between the columns (PLATE XLIII, b). A fourth column has been found east of its base, some 1 m. above the floor level. The capital of the column lies near the base. The height of the columns (shaft and base) varies from 4.2 to 4.3 m. They are almost identical in form and character with the columns from the Cathedral at Faras.<sup>16</sup> Not only is the material the same—grey granite of the Third Cataract in Dongola, and red granite of the First Cataract in Faras—but the dimensions are also similar. (The diameter of the Faras columns is 55–60 cm. and the height of the shafts 3.8 m.). The rough execution of the surface of the columns and the irregular (elliptical) shape of the cross sections are also alike. The shape of the bases in the two places is almost identical. A flat plinth 70 × 70 cm., and 6–8 cm. high, is cut from one piece of stone, with a cylindrical block tapering towards the top to fit the lower end of the column (cf. PLATE XLIII, b). The bases for the central columns are 0.4 m. high; all the other bases seem to be a dozen or so cm. higher.

The capital uncovered in the trial pit is 85 cm. high and repeats the decoration of the Faras capitals (cf. PLATE XLIV, a and b). Some 50 m. west of the trial pit, just under the surface of the sand, a second capital was found, which apparently belongs to one of the columns. Its decoration also can be compared with Faras capitals (PLATE XLIV, c and d). Two characteristic cavities in the two ends point to its later usage as a handmill. The decoration of this capital is in the form of four trapezoid surfaces in low relief, with monogrammatic inscriptions:—



The inscriptions on the opposite sides of the capital (2 and 4) are identical (cf. PLATE XLIV, c).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A complete documentation of architectural material from the Cathedral at Faras is published in vol. III, *Faras, Fouilles Polonaises, 1962–64*, in press. Cf. also K. Michałowski, KUSH XII (1964), p. 202 and KUSH XIII (1965), p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> The reading of the monograms is rather difficult. Most probably they should be read as follows: 3. 'Α(ρχι)στρ(ατηγο)ς Κ(υριο)υ or (Πρωτο)στρ(ατηγο)ς Κ(υριο)υ. Archistrategos is the epithet of Archangel Michael, thus the letters MX in monograms 2 and 4 seem to be an abbreviation of his name. Α in monogram 1 means 'Αρχαγγέλος. There is no satisfactory explanation of the letter Γ in monograms 2 and 4. The sequence of characters precludes here a numerical cipher. None of the numerous explanations of similar abbreviation XΜΓ fits here. It is not impossible that the abbreviation MXΓ is used for the names of two Archangels: Μ(ι)χ(αήλ) Γ(αβριήλ) but there is no clear analogy to such an explanation.



Apart from the architectural elements described above, there were discovered in the trial pit the lower parts of four brick piers whose purpose in the spatial arrangement of the building is difficult to establish. Two piers are placed between two columns of the central span, two others between columns of the row at the north (PLATE XLIII, b and c). The first two piers have their lower parts in the form of upright rectangles  $1.7 \times 1$  m. large and 0.6 m. high, which seem to form a sort of base for circular pillars 0.98 m. in diameter. A portion of the round eastern pillar is preserved to a height of some 30 cm.; of the other pillar only one course of bricks survives. Of the two other piers only the bases remain, 1 m. long; 1 m. wide and 0.6 m. high. However, there are traces of round pillars on their upper surfaces. All the piers were made of burnt brick. For the construction of the pillars special trapezoidal bricks were used which made it possible to obtain a round shape.

The piers most probably suggest a later alteration of the church, which had essentially changed its original basilica-like spatial arrangement. This happened to many Nubian churches of the same type, as well as the Faras Cathedral<sup>18</sup> and the church at Ghazali.<sup>19</sup> In those two churches, however, the columns were walled in with piers and did not play any part in the modified arrangement of the building. In Dongola the columns were used as elements of construction in the new spatial arrangement. If this is true, the construction and the composition of the interior after rebuilding involved a combination of post-piers and columns together. Any further suggestions concerning the arrangement seem premature in view of the fact that the excavated part is a relatively small portion of the whole structure.

As was mentioned before, a floor was found throughout the whole area of the trial pit, some 12 m. above the level of the Nile. It was made of flat terracotta tiles, approximately 40 cm. long and 30 cm. wide, laid in parallel rows (cf. PLATE XLIII, b and c). Some worn-out fragments of the pavement in the eastern part of the pit had been repaired with irregular pieces of tiles and with ordinary brick laid in a haphazard manner.

The stratigraphy of the pit is clearly legible. From the surface of the *kom* down to the depth of some 3.5 m. there is a layer of blown sand with a narrow horizontal band of grey-black colour, made of ashes and dust of dissolved mud bricks. The band points to a temporary occupation of the place. A relatively small quantity of pottery which was found in this layer is exclusively of Arabic origin (hand-wrought pottery). Beneath the layer of blown sand and above the pavement lies a rubble of burnt brick 1 m. thick. It comes from the walls and the vaults of the Church. This layer yielded only a few sherds of Christian

<sup>18</sup> Cf. p. 297, n. 16 above.

<sup>19</sup> P. L. Shinnie and H. N. Chittick, 'Ghazali—A Monastery in the Northern udan', *SASOP*, no. 5 (1961), p. 16.



## POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT OLD DONGOLA: FIRST SEASON

pottery. Both the capital and the column lying in the pit were found upon the layer of rubble, thus clarifying the sequence of destruction of the elements of the building.

### Conclusion

In the light of the discoveries at Faras it seems that the date of the structure at Dongola can now be established. The comparison of the dimensions and proportions of the bases and the monolithic granite columns, and the decoration of the capitals, in both edifices (cf. PLATE XLIV, a, b, c and d) prove that we are dealing with the same period of Christian architecture in Nubia. Also the floor of burnt brick appears in both places. The granite columns had been introduced in the Cathedral at Faras in A.D. 707 by Bishop Paulos, who also used the same material to decorate the interior of the so-called Great Church.<sup>20</sup> These two churches had the shape of a basilica. The alteration of the Cathedral into a church with cupola and piers took place in the second half of the 10th century. These alterations could have been connected with the principle advocated by Ibn Sebba that churches should be vaulted.<sup>21</sup>

It is thus quite clear that our discoveries at Faras have been of great importance to the work and study at Old Dongola, even though systematic excavations have only just begun.

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<sup>20</sup> K. Michałowski, *Faras—Die Kathedrale aus dem Wüstesand*, in press.

<sup>21</sup> Vansleb, *Histoire de l'Église d'Alexandrie*, p. 54; P. L. Shinnie and H. N. Chittick, *Ghazali*, p. 16.