

Polish Excavations at Faras, 1961

by KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI

THE first season of Polish (Warsaw University and National Museum) excavations in Faras lasted from 2 February to 6 March 1961. The members of the expedition were:

MR KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI :	Director of Excavations
MR WIESŁAW KOZIŃSKI :	Architect
MR MAREK MARCINIAK :	Egyptologist and Epigraphist
MR ANTONI OSTRASZ :	Architect
MISS BARBARA RUSZCZYC :	Archaeologist
MR TADEUSZ BINIEWSKI :	Photographer
MR WŁADYSŁAW KUBIAK :	Arabic scholar and Secretary of the Polish Centre of Archaeology, Cairo, took part in the first week's work
MRS JANINA BIELSKA :	Architect, joined the team later, completing its numbers.

About ninety workmen were engaged.

Supervision was, for the most part, the responsibility of Miss Ruszczyc and Mr Marciniak. The latter is responsible for the inventory of inscriptions, and the former for the registers of objects found and of photographs, as well as for the camp in general. Messrs Ostrasz and Koziński, with Mrs Bielska, traced the plans, profiles, and sketches of architectural detail. All photographs were taken by Mr Biniewski. Mr Marciniak assisted in drawing up this report.

We wish to thank Sayed Thabit Hassan Thabit, Commissioner for Archaeology in the Sudan, and Sayed N. M. Sherif, Senior Inspector of Antiquities, who from Wadi Halfa granted us every facility enabling us to carry out these excavations. Messrs J. Vercoutter, L. P. Kirwan and W. Adams¹ made important suggestions to us, especially regarding their own researches in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Western Faras, granted as a concession for archaeological research by the Sudan Antiquities Service to the Polish Expedition, lies within the following

¹ Mr Adams kindly put at our disposal a complete list of the archaeological sites discovered in our concession, as well as the bibliographical references to them.

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limits as shown on the Sara quadrangle (sheet 22° 07' 30"/31° 20' in the Egypt-New Series 1:25,000 maps published by the U.S. Ordnance Department, 1953): southern limit, line 946,000; western limit, line 661,000; northern limit, the Egyptian frontier; eastern limit, the west bank of the Nile. This terrain covers some 7 square km. and comprises the thirty-four archaeological sites discovered during former excavations by Mileham (1909) and by the Oxford Archaeological Expedition led by F. Ll. Griffith (1910-12).

No detailed plan of the Kom was available to show the various levels. It was therefore necessary, before beginning to excavate, to draw a plan showing the stratification inside the Meroitic enclosure which had been partially excavated by Griffith.

The Kom rises to a height of approximately 16 m. above the level of the Nile in February 1961. All the remains on the slopes and summit of the Kom which seemed likely objects for study were marked on Plan 1 and, as the ruins emerged from the surrounding sands, it was possible to make east-west, north-south sections of the Citadel, including the Byzantine Church (see Plan 1).

Definitive publication of the Kom will not be possible until the excavations are completed, but already the first season allows clear recognition of the remains of four periods corresponding to the four groups of ruins mentioned by Griffith as a result of his work at Faras, namely:

- A. New Kingdom
- B. Meroitic
- C. Christian
- D. Arab

To avoid delaying this report, and with a view to presenting the results of this season's excavations as soon as possible so as to encourage special studies on the basis of these findings, bibliography has been limited to the most essential references. Readers are directed to the pages of Griffith's reports² where all necessary references are to be found. The short bibliography of Faras West, including manuscripts in the archives of the Sudan Antiquities Service, may also be considered to supplement this report.

A. NEW KINGDOM

The most important find from the New Kingdom period consists of 165 pinkish and yellowish grey sandstone blocks from the Temple of Thotmes III (PLATE LXXIV, a). Counting the forty blocks already mentioned by Griffith³ and excavated last year by Vercoutter and Adams, the total number of inscribed and

² 'Oxford Excavations in Nubia', *LAAA*, VII-XV, 1921, et seq.

³ It should be noted that nine of the blocks mentioned by Griffith are missing. We cannot, therefore, ascribe them to any of the above-mentioned groups.

decorated blocks is 294. The face of some of these is badly damaged owing to the action of chemical salts, but generally speaking they have been well preserved, thanks to the dry sand in which they were buried. They can be separated into seven distinct groups :⁴

1. blocks adorned with incised hieroglyphs about 30 cm. high and with traces of yellow colouring;
2. hieroglyphic inscriptions in relief, some of which still show traces of red, yellow and blue;
3. fragments of scenes of ritual dancing, offerings, etc.;
4. blocks decorated with *hakeron* motifs. These are all in very deep relief. On some blocks colours can still be distinguished : green, black, yellow, red;
5. fragments of the cornice, decorated with blue and white leaves;
6. cylindrical cornice;
7. slabs from the ceiling. These bear yellow stars on a blue ground.

Not a single block from the Temple of Thotmes III has been found intact. They are all split into at least two pieces, broken, and in some cases bear traces of hammering. Evidently they had been reconditioned for use in later buildings. Most of these blocks were found in one area, south of the Meroitic ruins below the south-west point of the Kom (level -1 m., see Plan 1). They were interspersed with 200 uninscribed blocks, also probably removed from the temple walls. Many of them show marks made by the workmen's tools. All these stones seem to have been gathered together in preparation for building activities which never took place. It is also possible that, having already been used twice, they were intended to be used a third time.⁵ They were found beneath the sand, scattered over an area some 300 m. square. Digging somewhat above them, fragments of Christian pottery were found mixed with the sand. The alluvium, which may have been the old tilled soil, showed under 30-40 cm. of this sand.

None of these stones were taken from the foundation of houses which we believe to be Meroitic. Some, however, came from the interior of these houses, where they were deeply buried in sand. Griffith seems to have believed that they

⁴ Griffith only published drawings, but no photographs. The description of the blocks excavated in 1960 has not yet been published, but we will be able, thanks to the kindness of Messrs Vercoutter and Adams to include it in our detailed report, which is to be published in French.

⁵ A sandstone slab, one of the first found in this collection, bears an Arabic inscription worded thus : ' Sa'id Mohammed Nur, 19.VII.1935 '.

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THE CITADEL AND SURROUNDINGS PLAN OF THE EXCAVATED PORTION



were excavated by 19th-century *sebakh*-seekers who dug beneath them to get what they wanted.⁶ However, it does not seem very likely that these heavy stones would have been moved simply for the sake of *sebakh*.

What archaeological data concerning the temple to which they originally belonged can we get from studying the conditions of this find? First, a very important fact: the majority of these stones come from the upper parts of the temple—architraves, cornice and ceiling. There are probably not more than two blocks in all, representing fragments from the ritual dance scene, which were part of the lower courses of the wall. The temple itself must have been of considerable size judging from the hieroglyphs. In their upper part, the walls must have measured at least 0.70 m. in width.

These measurements have been preserved by two blocks inscribed with hieroglyphs on two sides (inv. no. A6/61, A48/61). It would be difficult to state very definitely which side of the wall either series belongs to, but it appears to be an outside inscription. Most of the hieroglyphic reliefs are damaged, which leads us to believe that they decorated the outside of the temple; however, the colours are so well preserved in the block bearing the cartouche of Thotmes II (inv. no. A52/61) that this may not be the case.

The most difficult problem is that of the location of the temple. In his report Griffith placed it approximately on the spot where he found the inscribed blocks. He believed he could trace a street between the north and south gates of the enclosure in such a manner that it would skirt the temple.⁷ However, there is no trace of anything there which could be the foundations of the temple. It is true that Griffith⁸ seemed to consider the walls of the houses he discovered between the Citadel and the enclosure walls as belonging to these foundations. Nevertheless, that suggestion cannot be accepted owing to the disproportion between the thickness of the temple blocks and that of the walls of the houses. Moreover, the measurements of that housing complex have nothing in common with the measurements estimated in proportion to the two afore-mentioned blocks (inv. no. A6/61, A48/61). The fact that the blocks of the lower courses are missing and that most of those found are from the architraves, cornice and ceiling, seems to indicate that the temple itself was further off. Several scholars have suggested that the remains of the temple could be under the Citadel and the Byzantine church, that is to say at the bottom of the Kom. The answer to that could only be given by entirely excavating the Kom.

In the course of this year's work, a trench was dug into the eastern slope of the Kom. This trench was 33 m. long, 6.50 m. wide and 10 m. deep, extending to approximately a quarter of the way through the Kom at its widest point.

⁶ *LAAA*, VIII, p. 90.

⁷ *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 28 ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, XIII, p. 34, fig. xxv.

Up to date, no trace has been found of the Temple of Thotmes III. Let us hope that next season may provide an answer to the problem.⁹

B. MEROITIC PERIOD

The Meroitic period is represented within the enclosure, which itself dates from that time,¹⁰ by architectural fragments of sandstone such as cornices decorated with friezes of cobras and winged solar discs, grilles and pieces of sculpture. It is evident that during that period there were a number of small shrines here. The Meroitic blocks (PLATE LXXIV, b) have been partly re-utilized in the walls of the Arab fort, from whence specimens of the same type as those found by Griffith were removed,¹¹ namely :

- a. four pieces of a large cornice (inv. no. A157/61, A168/61), measuring $0.47 \times 0.96 \times 0.25$ m.
- b. one piece from another cornice, smaller, but delicately wrought. (Inv. no. A171/61), dimensions $0.265 \times 0.39 \times 0.15$ m.
- c. two fragments of cornices which merit special mention because of the floral design—strip of foliage—in place of the winged disc which was the most characteristic motif in Egyptian art.

We have here a good example of classical influence on Meroitic architecture. This could only have been manifest at Faras during Griffith's B/C period—that is the 1st–2nd century A.D. It was at that time, during the long Meroitic period of prosperity in Lower Nubia, that classical influence must have reached its peak. However, until the Kom is excavated, it will not be possible to pin-point

⁹ Probing 50 m. west of the Enclosure, between the west gate and the south-west tower, we uncovered a block from the Temple of Ramses II brought from elsewhere

by the inhabitants of Diffi. It reads as follows :



and can be considered to

complete the list of Ramesside stones published by Griffith (see *LAAA*, VIII, pl. xxv, 1–6, p. 89). We have found no Ramesside inscriptions on the stones from the Temple of Thotmes III. So Griffith seems to have been right in supposing a Ramesside Temple separate from that of Thotmes III. However, we must point out that during the last days of our excavations, at the bottom of a trench we had dug into the eastern slope of the Kom, at a depth of 2.10 m. we found the remains of a mud brick wall under the ruins of a Meroitic house. This wall is doubtless older than the house, and might well be all that is left of some New Kingdom building. It has only been partly cleared, so that we can only give the size of its bricks : $36-7$ cm. \times $17-18$ cm. \times $7-8$ cm. Its direction is east-west.

¹⁰ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 25 ff.

¹¹ *LAAA*, pl. xxix, 3–9, 23.

the monuments. No trace whatsoever of the foundations of the Meroitic temple was found by Griffith in the enclosure.¹²

One find deserves very special attention.¹³ It is a rectangular sandstone object (inv. no. 139/61) the surface of which is carved with two rectangles on either side of a palm leaf, surmounted by unidentified leaves and surrounded by Meroitic inscriptions. At first sight, one would consider it to be something pertaining to burial ritual, as the palm leaf and the leaves suggest. Moreover this object is comparable with another, studied by Griffith¹⁴ which he interpreted as a Meroitic symbol of the Isis cult.

In his plan of the enclosure, Griffith¹⁵ has marked the stone constructions which he thought to be the foundation walls of the Temple of Thotmes III. His plan is not very accurate, so we measured everything again and drew up a new plan, adding other walls of the same type discovered during excavation of the Thotmes III blocks.¹⁶ These constructions, in their lower courses, are made of rough-hewn blocks, laid horizontally. The corners are of wrought stone, and there is no doubt as to their being above ground courses. Here, of a certainty, we have rectangular (9×9.50 m.) or square houses with outer walls about 0.90 m. thick. The general type is of four rooms 3.50×4.50 m. Where the rooms are smaller, recesses are also found (e.g. no. 19). Between these houses run alleys of three different widths: 2.20 m., 1.50 m., and 0.90 m. respectively. On the walls of one house which we partially excavated, a layer of mud bricks is clearly visible laid over a course of stone. Closer inspection of these ruins gave results of the first importance for dating. Whereas fragments of Christian pottery are to be found everywhere in the sand, both around and inside the houses, fragments of Meroitic pottery (inv. no. 1/61, 6/61, 8/61, 14/61, 23/61, 26/61, 28/61, 30/61, 36/61, 38/61, 42/61, 51/61, 54/61, 57/61,

¹² We must not forget to mention one last item: a cornice moulded on a sandstone slab (inv. no. A58/61) of which only the left side remains, and which was found among the blocks of the Temple of Thotmes III. It is possible that this was part of a naos, inserted in the mud brick wall. To the same category of finds belong a few fragments of stone grilles (inv. nos. 41/61, 48/61) and several pieces of terracotta grilles similar to those found by Griffith (*LAAA*, XIII, pl. xxix, 5-7, 9-23).

¹³ While clearing the passage under the Byzantine church, we found a store of objects from Griffith's old diggings: five small Meroitic C-period (2nd-3rd centuries) offering tables (Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, pl. xxx, 1, p. 35). Nos. 2990 and 2989 are probably those mentioned by Griffith (*LAAA*, XII, p. 171-2990). Apart from articles marked with Griffith's inventory numbers, we found at the same spot: (a) an offering table of pink sandstone, dating from the same period (inv. no. 138/61); (b) a round offering table, decorated with two rows of four rounded hands, probably belong to group X of finds. Among these objects was also a fragment from the base of a statue 'b' (Griffith, *LAAA*, XI, pl. lxxvii, p. 176). All these objects most probably constitute a deposit accruing from excavations of Meroitic mastabas (Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, p. 58, note 1).

¹⁴ *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 49 ff.

¹⁵ *LAAA*, XIII, pl. xxv.

¹⁶ Plan 1, nos. 18-24.

64/61, 65/61) were found wedged between the stones under the lower courses. Beneath the south wall of room B in house 19 an ostrakon was found bearing Meroitic or Demotic lettering. The lower courses are at a level almost exactly 0.50 m. higher than that of the threshold of the west gate of the enclosure excavated by Griffith.¹⁷

It seems most likely, therefore, that these were Meroitic houses. The type of wall (lower courses of stone and upper ones of mud brick, corners of well-wrought stone) corresponds exactly to that of the Great Enclosure wall. Not a single Thotmes III block has been re-utilized for the building of these houses. We can thus infer that they were erected while the temple was still standing. The fact that a few Ramesside stones, and one with a *hakeron* motif, were used in the south-west tower of the enclosure wall might give a clue as to the date of the houses inside the enclosure (provided we can be sure this was not a segment restored during the Christian era). If this was erected late in the Meroitic period, as Griffith thought, then the houses inside it would represent the remains of an older architectural complex, i.e. dating from the most prosperous age in Lower Nubia—late 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.

C. CHRISTIAN PERIOD

The earliest traces of Christian times we found on the eastern side of the Kom, at the bottom of the long trench cut through the sand to about the centre of the hill. We deliberately chose that site as it was the only one with no superficial mud brick remains and thus offered a chance of getting through to the centre of the Kom without hindrance from later buildings. A trench 33 m. long, 6.50 m. wide and 10 m. deep was dug without encountering traces of any constructions.¹⁸ From this trench, about 2200 cubic m. of sand were emptied into the Nile. At the west end of the trench it was necessary to dismantle part of the walls of the Arab fort (see below) as well as the mud brick walls of an Arab house behind it. Thirty or 40 cm. below the foundations of the Citadel wall, that is 10.50 m. down, a most important complex of buildings came to light. This consisted of five separate elements:

- A. Part of a fired brick edifice with a cupola (Plan 1, section 2).
- B. Two chapels built of mud bricks and part of a passage.
- C. Adjoining the chapels, a large wall of fine sandstone courses surmounted by a fired brick wall in which is a window with its stone grille partly preserved.
- D. Above these chapels, at the 9.10 m. level, another mud brick building showing traces of vaulted openings.
- E. Late Christian remains.

¹⁷ See *LAAA*, XIII, p. 27, pls. xxiv, xxviii.

¹⁸ The first days of digging in the trench yielded fragments of Meroitic walls and a mud brick wall at the opening of the trench.

SECTION on A-A

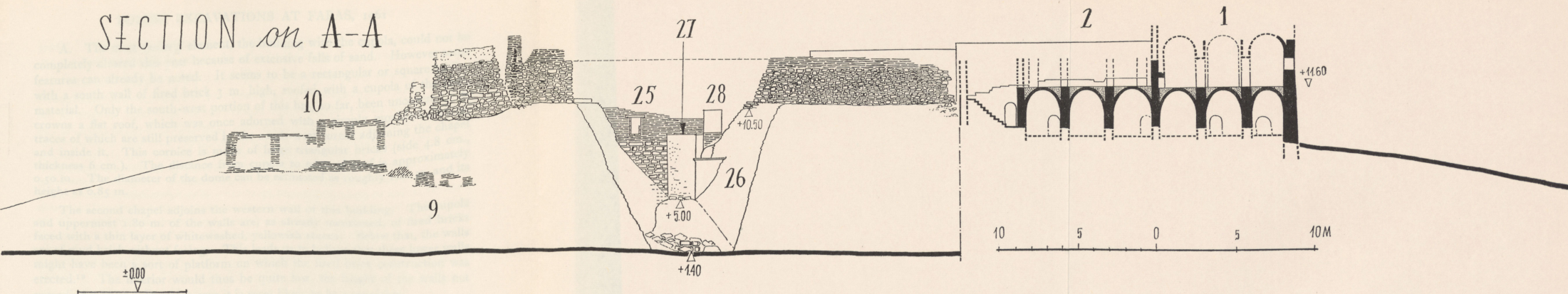


FIG. 2

SECTION on B-B

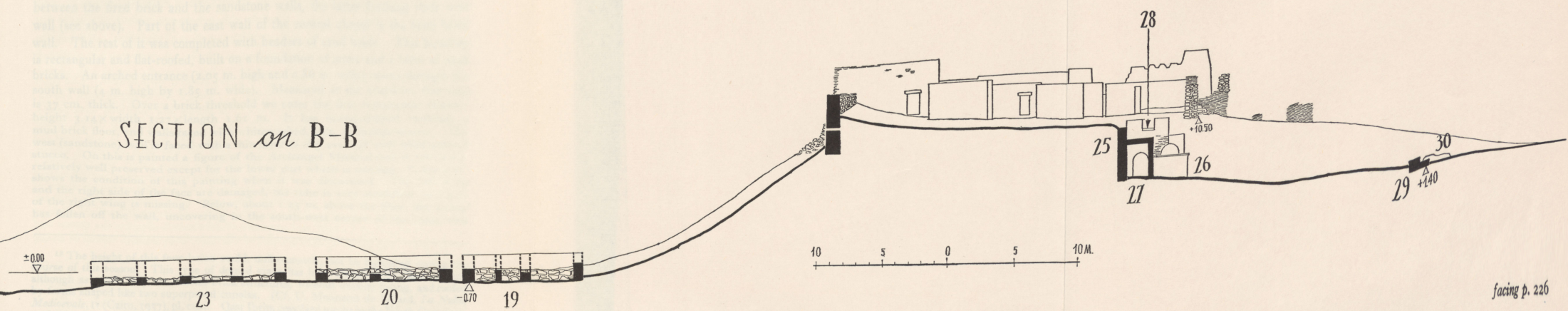


FIG. 3


A. The most easterly element, the building with the cupola, could not be completely cleared this year because of extensive falls of sand. However some features can already be noted. It seems to be a rectangular or square edifice with a south wall of fired brick 3 m. high, roofed with a cupola of the same material. Only the south-west portion of this has, so far, been uncovered. It crowns a flat roof, which was once adorned with a simply moulded cornice, traces of which are still preserved in the south-west corner adjoining the chapel and inside it. This cornice is made of large triangular bricks (side 4.8 cm., thickness 6 cm.). The distance from cupola to edge of roof is approximately 0.50 m. The diameter of the dome can be estimated as roughly 1.20 m. and its height as 0.85 m.

The second chapel adjoins the western wall of this building. The cupola and uppermost 1.80 m. of the walls are, as already mentioned, of fired bricks faced with a thin layer of whitewashed, yellowish stucco. Below that, the walls are of mud brick without facing. This leads us to believe that these lower walls might have been a sort of platform on which the fired brick construction was erected.¹⁹ The interior would thus be quite low, the height of the walls not exceeding 2.50 m. In which case it is most likely to be a sepulchre.

B. The most important buildings are two or three mud brick chapels between the fired brick and the sandstone walls, the latter forming their west wall (see above). Part of the east wall of the central chapel is the fired brick wall. The rest of it was completed with headers of mud brick. This building is rectangular and flat-roofed, built on a foundation of stone and a layer of mud bricks. An arched entrance (2.05 m. high and 0.86 m. wide) opens through the south wall (4 m. high by 1.85 m. wide). Measured at the entrance, this wall is 37 cm. thick. Over a brick threshold we enter the first rectangular chapel: height 3.14 × width 1.27 × length 1.61 m. It has barrel-shaped vaulting, a mud brick floor, and walls faced with whitewashed, thin, yellowish stucco. The west (sandstone) wall is faced with a thin layer of clay overlaid with whitewashed stucco. On this is painted a figure of the Archangel Michael (see PLATE LXXV), relatively well preserved except for the lower part which is missing. PLATE LXXV shows the condition of this painting when it was discovered. The left wing and the right side of the face are damaged; the robe is very scratched, and part of the right wing is missing. Below, about 1.25 m. above the floor, the facing has fallen off the wall, uncovering in the south-west corner of the room two

¹⁹ The height of this foundation could, unfortunately, not be measured during the course of this season. This type of domed grave has been found in Christian Nubia, although as a rule they are cubical brick structures, without outside facing, and roofed by forms shaped like two superposed cupolas. (Cf. U. Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia Medioevale*, iv (Cairo, 1957), pl. cxxi. Qasr Ibrim cupolaed tombs in the North Cemetery, and *ibid.*, pl. cxxii, Medinet Addeh cupolaed mausoleums.)

blocks of stone with a partly hammered out hieroglyphic inscription. These must have been re-utilized at the time the large stone wall was built. On the southernmost the incised sign *nb* can still be clearly read, and the remainder,

 , appears on the next block to the north. They are upside down. These two blocks lie in the tenth course of the foundation wall, counting downwards. We shall return to these stones which must have belonged to the Temple of Thotmes III.

The figure of the Archangel Michael, whose name in black ink appears in Greek above and to the left of his head, is preserved to a height of 1 m. The head, from chin to diadem measures 15.50 cm. The figure is depicted standing, and holding in his right hand a long rod terminating in a cross. This rod is brown and circled with metal bands figured by narrow double lines. In the middle of the cross is a second one, shaped like a Maltese cross, the arms of which are prolonged by yellow balls. The angel's hair is thick and curly, completely covering his ears, and is caught in a net seemingly made of small scales. On the top of this, just over the forehead, is a crown above which the hair bulges like a dome. The crown is a band of gold, studded with precious stones (circular and rhomboidal) and bordered with a row of pearls. Above the nose, and on both sides, rise three little crosses inside diamond-shapes.²⁰ The face is oval, the forehead high, the eyes almond-shaped with black irises, the nose very thin. The mouth was probably small with full lips. Behind the head the halo is yellow, red and dark red.

The angel is clad in an ample white tunic, striped with brown. The right sleeve, which is the only one visible, ends in a yellow band striped with brown. Part of the belt shows, adorned with precious stones and bordered with pearls. Over the tunic a yellowish cloak with a brown edge is fixed on the breast, under the right shoulder, with a cross-shaped brooch. The branches of this cross are rounded, edged with pearls, and in the centre are five rows of round stones. The left hand holds a circular object which looks like a paten, adorned with a double circle of pearls. The widespread wings are painted yellow, with peacock feathers outlined in pinkish brown. The underside of the wings is made of large scales, also pinkish brown. The archangel's dress, and other iconographic details such as the scaly wings, bear no clear analogy to other Christian paintings previously found by Griffith at Faras and Abdel Gadir²¹ save for the crown and the net, which are to be seen in a picture of St Mercurios in the Church of Abdel

²⁰ A similar diadem with three crosses is worn by the 'Horseman Saint' in a fresco at Abdel Gadir (cf. U. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, iv, pl. clxxv).

²¹ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII and xv.

Gadir.²² Of course the striped white tunic is conventional in Christian iconography, and is also found on the Apostles in the Citadel Church.²³

This composition seems much more studied and better proportioned than other Christian paintings previously discovered at Faras. The large, widespread wings give the figure balance and are well adapted to the vaulted chamber, as too are the sweeping lines of the cloak. His great width characterizes this archangel, distinguishing him from the elongated figures typical of Coptic paintings in Nubia and Egypt. Details, such as the peacock feathers and scales on the wings, and the delicate tracery of the face, combine to prove craftsmanship in good studio tradition. We have here, without the slightest doubt, a true masterpiece of late Byzantine brushwork. Griffith had already (quite correctly) noted about the River Gate Church (loc. cit.) that the style of the paintings he found at Faras showed closer kinship to Byzantine art than to the Coptic tradition. The mural of Archangel Michael can only strengthen this view.

When this chapel was opened, a few painted or scratched graffiti were still visible on the other walls. On the north wall: \dagger Παφηνλ. An archway in the north wall led into the second chapel. This entrance is 3 cm. wider and 10 cm. lower than the first.

The second chapel is rectangular (1.94 × 1.30 m.). Its barrel vaulting is 15 cm. lower than that of the first chapel. The whole interior is faced with whitewashed, yellowish stucco. There are other differences to be noticed between the two chapels. First, the east wall of the second chapel is, up to a height of 1.85 m., the west wall of the domed building. Only the part above that is built of mud bricks. On the west wall, that is the sandstone wall, the layer of yellowish stucco is laid directly on the stone, without the intermediate layer of clay. Over it, a thin second layer of the same material bears the white-wash. The undercrust is visible in the lower reaches and shows traces of inscriptions and graffiti. On the whitewashed layer there is a Madonna and Child painted inside a tondo²⁴ (PLATE LXXVI).

This painting is not so well preserved as the first. The Mother's eyes are scratched and the Child's face is partly deleted. The Virgin's robe, the lower part of which is missing, is also greatly scratched. Beneath the tondo, in the middle of the wall, traces can still be discerned of a large, brownish yellow cross, decorated with precious stones and a narrow red border. Lower still, the top crust of stucco has dropped off, uncovering part of the first layer on which are

²² Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, xv, pl. xxxv.

²³ See above; also *LAAA*, xiii, pl. xxxiv.

²⁴ Cf. the torso of an Archangel in a rayed tondo, painted in the church of Es-Sebua (U. Monneret de Villard, iv, pl. cxli).

three inscriptions in black ink. A few letters are still recognizable. The principal one is five lines long and reads :

1. †.....α.....δε.ιν.....εικ.ρ.....
2. ρινκ...нка.....ς εικεροу...то.с.ς.....
3. ραρρ...н...α...роу на.....
4. ...у...а чер..ї.....
5.п.....

Above the tondo, on the whitewash, is a very clear inscription in black ink:

† μαρια μηρ : του χυ : снр тоукосмоу and below to the left between the circle and the vault : ι]с о хс

The encircling band framing the picture is 7.5 cm. wide. It is brick-red, edged with two rows of white pearls with red spots in the middle. Between these, as ornaments, are set large round stones, joined by tiny rounded links. Inside the frame (diam. 1.65 m.) against a brick-coloured ground is very carefully painted the representation of a stone wall. The blocks of stone simulate rustic laying. Against this background stands out the figure of the Madonna carrying the Infant Jesus. She wears a cloak with a hood drawn over her head. The halo is yellowish, bordered with blue. The hair is not depicted against the grey-blue lining of the hood. The face is very long (15.50 cm. from chin to hood). Traces of the eyebrows, the right eye, and the very thin long nose, similar to that of Michael, can be discerned. The mouth is smaller and narrower than the Archangel's. The whole body is wrapped in a rich, grey-blue mantle, striped with alternate bands of peacock-blue and greenish brown. These bands are studded with round stones set in red circles and surrounded with pearls. This mantle, bordered in greenish brown, uncovers only Mary's face and left hand with outspread thumb. The crook of the left arm supports the white clad Infant, whose right hand, raised to the height of the Mother's cheek, holds a peacock-blue bowl. A similar bowl, painted old gold, is downturned by the lower left hand. The Child's halo is shaped like a cross, three branches of which are visible, above and on each side of the head. Long hair covers the ears. The face itself, although badly damaged, shows the lineaments of a man, not of a child. This is quite frequent in Byzantine art.

In style this painting shows the same characteristics as that of the Archangel Michael. In contrast to the elongated figures of the Apostles in the murals of the church north of the Citadel, both those of the Madonna and of the Archangel fill a broad space, but are composed with beautiful proportion within their

circular frames. These begin directly under the vault, so that the artist has inscribed his subjects in the most satisfying manner possible within the space at his disposal. There is not a doubt that we have here an example of Greek-Byzantine art, without trace of the typical style which marks Coptic art. The careful drawing, the richness of minute detail, can only be the work of craftsmen trained in a school where the traditions of classical art were cherished.²⁵

From an historical point of view, the east wall is of greater interest. It once bore five commemorative stelae,²⁶ arranged in two rows, four of which are still in place²⁷ (PLATES LXXVII, a, b and LXXVIII, a, b). In the centre of the lower row, 1.73 m. above the floor, sunk into a niche 7 cm. deep hollowed out of the fired brick wall, is a blue-grey marble stele, cracked in four pieces (height 0.515 m., width 0.40 m.). Upon it, in very elaborate lettering, are fifteen lines of Greek text and, in the right-hand margin, some letters and one word which appear to complete the text. This is one of the oldest Christian inscriptions yet found in the region of Faras, not to say in all Nubia. It is the stele of Bishop Joannes who died in A.D. 606 at the age of 82, and represents a document of unique importance for the chronology of the architecture of this whole region (see below) (PLATE LXXVII, a).

To its right is another stele, that of Bishop Petros. It is of sandstone (measuring : height 0.50 m., width 0.30 m.) and fixed flush with the wall (PLATE LXXVII, b). The lettering is carved with little care and the Coptic text has seventeen slightly crooked lines.

In the upper row the two remaining stelae are similarly flush with the mud brick wall. The left-hand, sandstone, stele of Iesus (PLATE LXXVIII, a) (measuring: height 0.41 m., width 0.29 m.) is framed in two slim columns, the capitals and pediments of which have the same shape leaves interlaced with two bands. An arched row of beads rests on the capitals. Within it are signs going from left

²⁵ Two experts, Mr Stanisław Jasiewicz, Chief Conservator and Head of the Warsaw National Museum Laboratory and Mr Antoni Ostrasz, Chief Architect of the Warsaw University Archaeological Expedition at Faras, worked from 25 March to 3 April on the protection of the above-mentioned paintings. They have stated that the technique of these paintings was not that of fresco as had formerly been supposed, but was the tempera painting technique mixed eventually with that of *buono fresco*. The following work has been done : A. Removal of the mural painting (Archangel Michael) from the wall of the first chapel; B. Conservation of the painting after removal. The partially detached clay plaster, frail and brittle, with cracks in all directions, has been consolidated with special canvas and a new support of mortar and a wooden frame has been made. The painting has been transferred from Faras to Wadi Halfa Museum; C. Preservation work to conserve *in situ* the painting in the second chapel (Madonna), until such time as it can be removed.

²⁶ We reserve the right to publish a description and translation of these stelae in our final report.

²⁷ The fifth was not found in its place, nor in the chapel at all.

to right. The Greek text, interspersed with Coptic, commemorates Bishop Iesou and covers twenty-three lines. These lines are engraved and painted alternately black and red.

On the right of this stele, above that of Joannes, is the stele of Bishop Georgios (PLATE LXXVIII, b) (height 0.51 m., width 0.33 m.) framed by two little voluted Ionic columns. Above them, narrow architraves comprising half a rosette round a half circle with a dot in the middle may perhaps represent the sun's rays. On either side of this rosette are two crosses with branches of equal length.²⁸ Under the architraves, between the columns, there are sixteen lines of Coptic writing.

To return to the stele of Bishop Joannes : it is the only one to be inserted in a niche and is sited exactly opposite the image of the Virgin. Moreover, the fired brick wall in which the stele is set is at the same time the western wall of the domed edifice which has not been excavated, and the stele seems to occupy the centre of this wall. A complete explanation will not be available before the fired brick building is excavated, but we can already offer a suggestion : this being a very low-walled construction (in contrast to the chapel and the other Christian monuments found on the Kom) seems to indicate that it might be a tomb. If this were to prove so, we might well suppose it to be that of Joannes who, dying in 606 at the great age of 82, may have been the first bishop of Pachoras.²⁹ At any rate his stele occupies the centre of its western wall.

The evangelization of Nubia did not take place earlier than between A.D. 540 and 548, probably under impetus from the Imperial Court of Byzantium.³⁰ If the stele gives the date of the fired brick edifice, it also gives us an approximate date for the chapel, which cannot be much later than 606, as it would probably have been built over the stele of Joannes, which is obviously commemorative and not sepulchral. At any rate, the chapel must have existed as a place of worship before 662, that is to say before the second stele (that of Bishop Petros) came to join the first. If we suppose the fired brick building to have been a tomb, then it could only be that of both bishops, or else why should it bear the stele of Bishop Petros too, and that so hastily set? If, on the other hand, the chapel were by then already a place of worship, and the stelae merely commemorative, as their short texts—different from those on sepulchres³¹—seem to indicate, that would then provide an explanation for the presence of the other stelae.

We have to admit that the chapels were built approximately at the time when the Joannes stele was set in the wall, and not later than that of Petros. These

²⁸ For the decoration of the stelae, see U. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, iv, pl. cxxx, Sakinya inscriptions.

²⁹ The ancient Greek name for Faras.

³⁰ See Griffith, *LAAA*, xiii, p. 51.

³¹ Cf. H. R. Hall, *Coptic and Greek Texts of the Christian Period*, xi (1905), pp. 3, 8, pl. viii.

PLATE LXXIV



a. BLOCKS FROM THE TEMPLE OF THOTMES III



b. MEROITIC BLOCK



THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

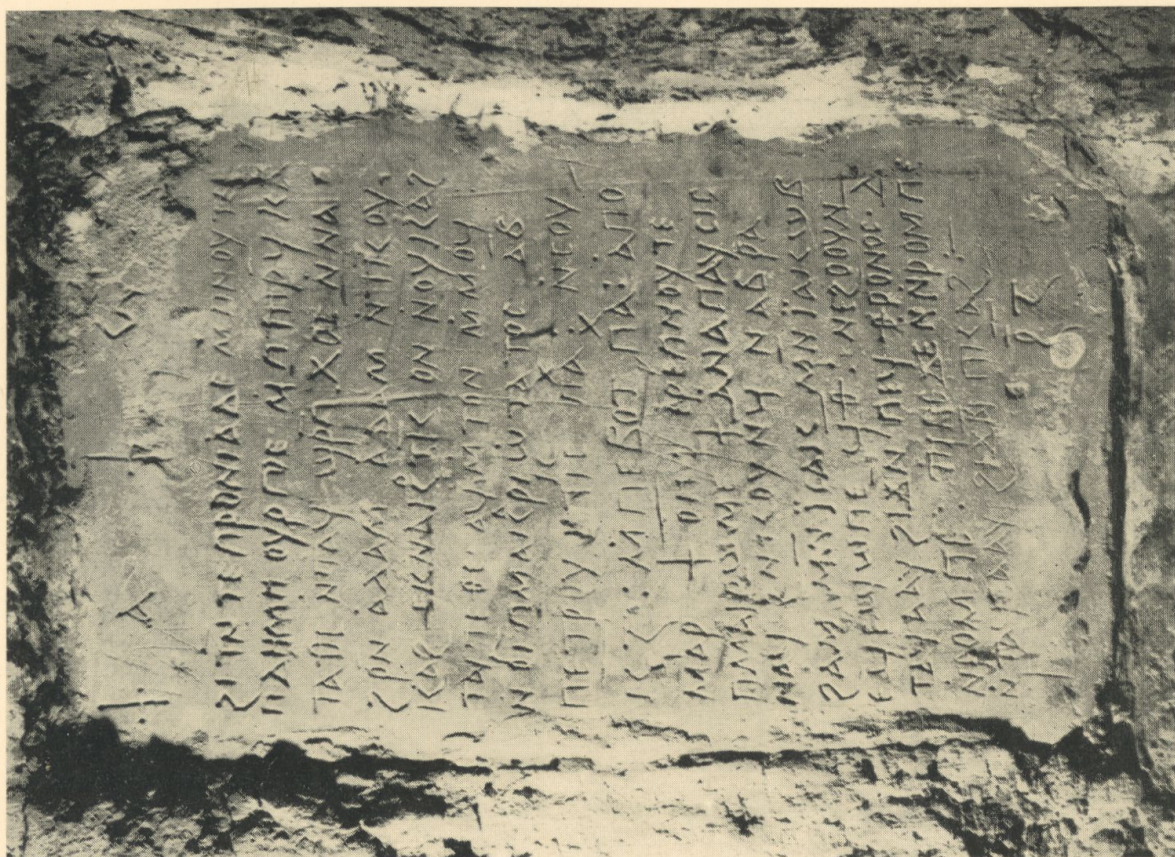
PLATE LXXVI



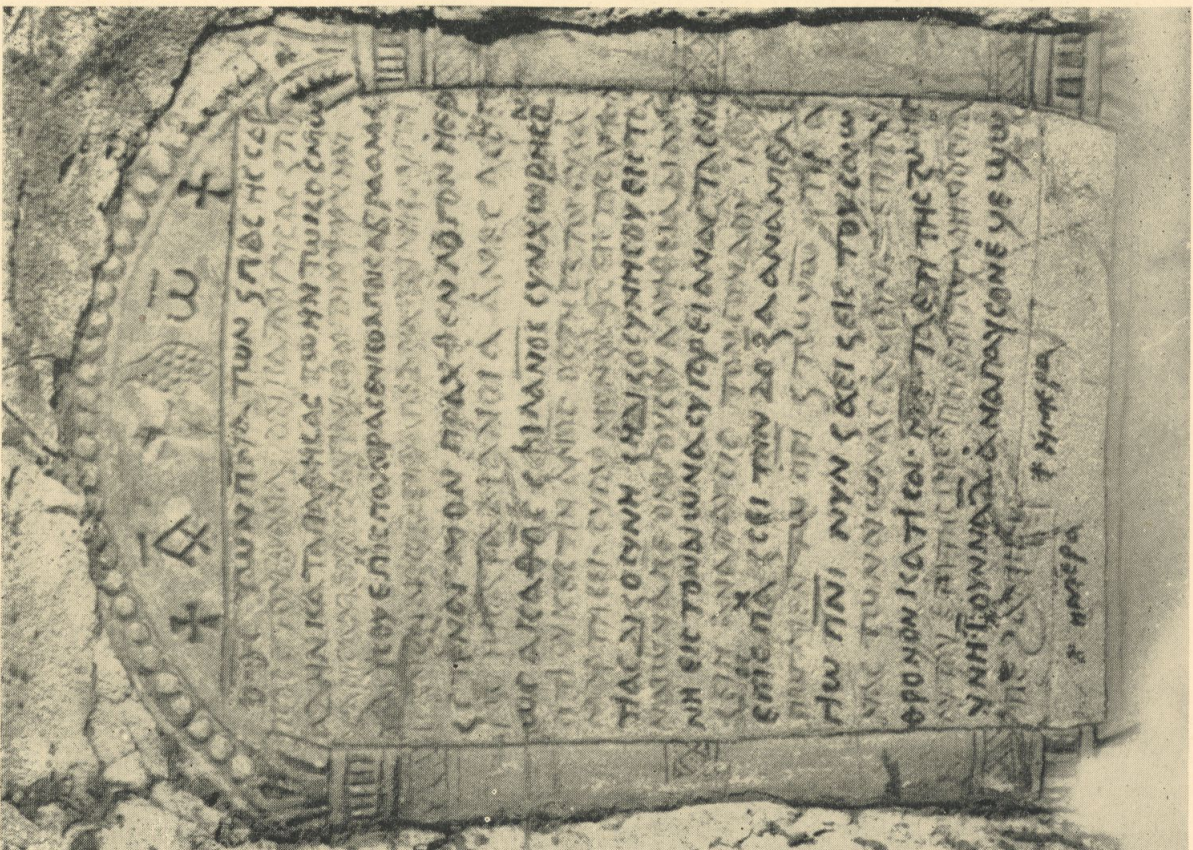
THE MADONNA AND CHILD



a. STELE OF BISHOP JOANNES



b. STELE OF BISHOP PETROS



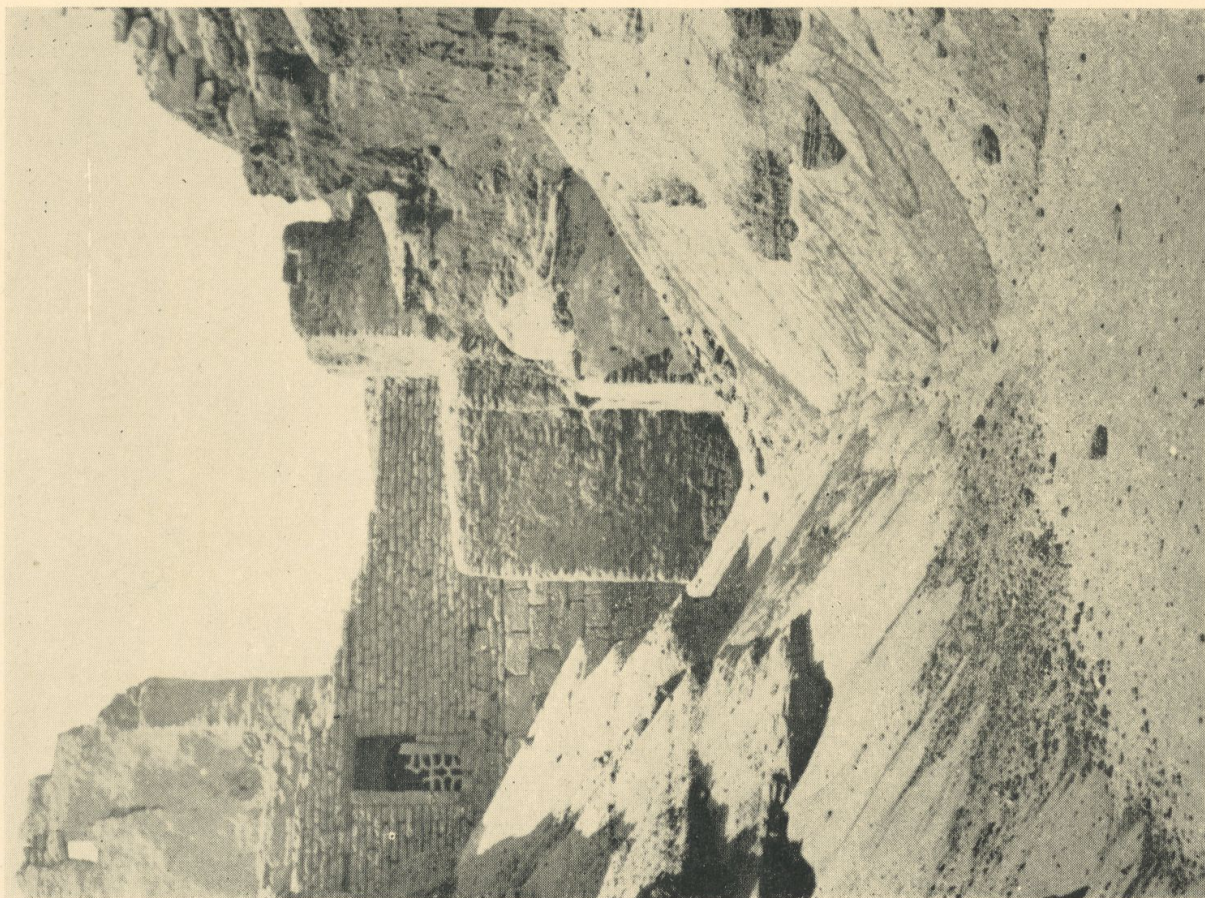
a. STELE OF BISHOP IESOUS



b. STELE OF BISHOP GEORGIOS



b. THE WINDOW



a. THE SANDSTONE WALL AND ADJOINING STRUCTURES

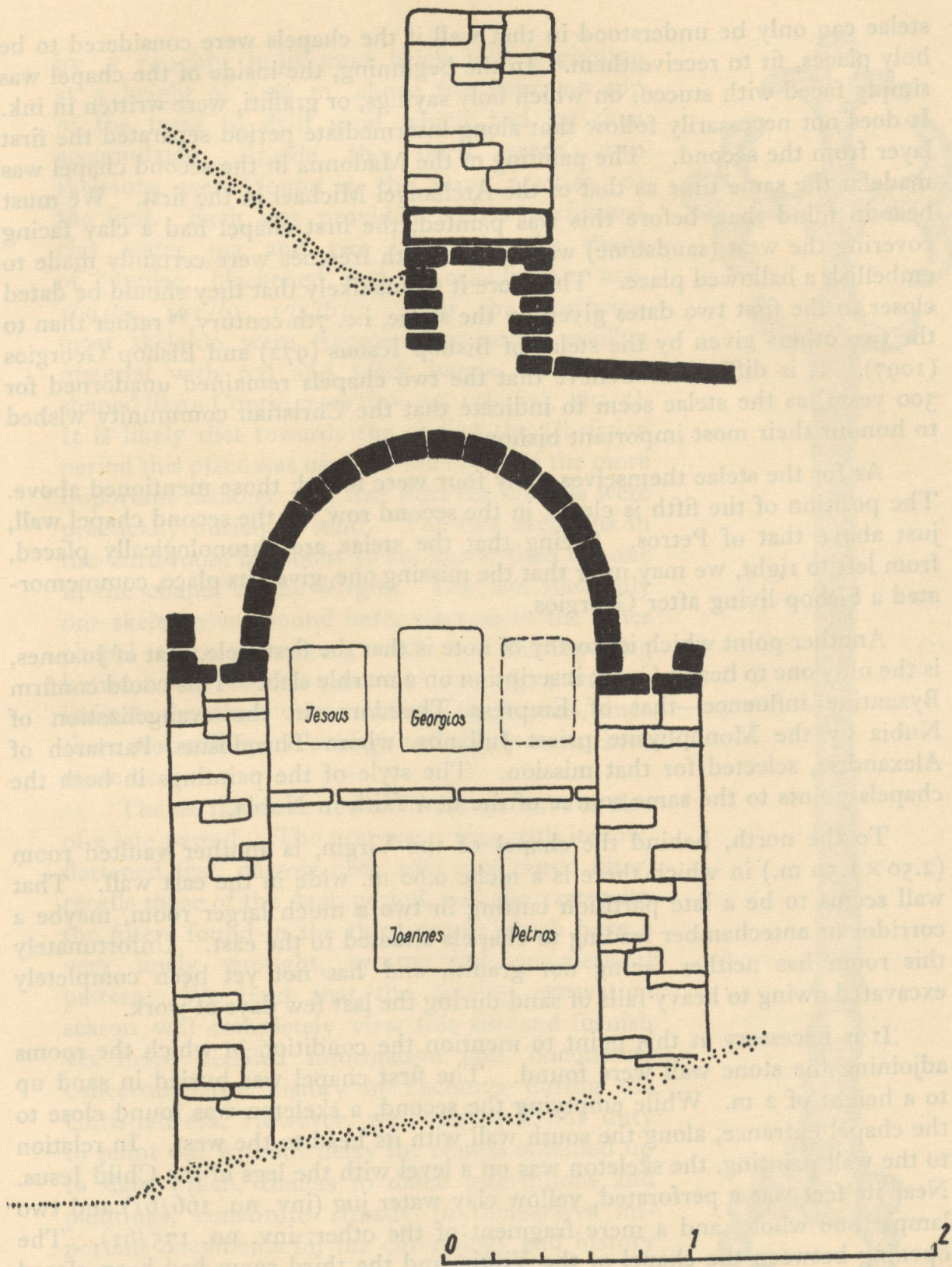


FIG. 4

stelae can only be understood in that wall if the chapels were considered to be holy places, fit to receive them. In the beginning, the inside of the chapel was simply faced with stucco, on which holy sayings, or graffiti, were written in ink. It does not necessarily follow that along intermediate period separated the first layer from the second. The painting of the Madonna in the second chapel was made at the same time as that of the Archangel Michael in the first. We must bear in mind that, before this was painted, the first chapel had a clay facing covering the west (sandstone) wall only. Both frescoes were certainly made to embellish a hallowed place. Therefore it seems likely that they should be dated closer to the first two dates given by the stelae, i.e. 7th century,³² rather than to the two others given by the stelae of Bishop Iesous (972) and Bishop Georgios (1097). It is difficult to believe that the two chapels remained unadorned for 300 years, as the stelae seem to indicate that the Christian community wished to honour their most important bishops.

As for the stelae themselves, only four were found; those mentioned above. The position of the fifth is clear: in the second row, on the second chapel wall, just above that of Petros. Seeing that the stelae are chronologically placed, from left to right, we may infer that the missing one, given its place, commemorated a bishop living after Georgios.

Another point which is worthy of note is that the first stele, that of Joannes, is the only one to bear a Greek inscription on a marble slab. This could confirm Byzantine influence—that of Empress Theodora—in the evangelization of Nubia by the Monophysite priest Julianos, whom Theodosius, Patriarch of Alexandria, selected for that mission. The style of the paintings in both the chapels points to the same source of the new faith in Nubia.

To the north, behind the chapel of the Virgin, is another vaulted room (2.50 × 1.50 m.) in which there is a niche 0.60 m. wide in the east wall. That wall seems to be a late partition cutting in two a much larger room, maybe a corridor or antechamber leading to chapels situated to the east. Unfortunately this room has neither facing nor graffiti, and has not yet been completely excavated owing to heavy falls of sand during the last few days of work.

It is necessary at this point to mention the condition in which the rooms adjoining the stone wall were found. The first chapel was buried in sand up to a height of 2 m. While emptying the second, a skeleton was found close to the chapel entrance, along the south wall with its head to the west. In relation to the wall painting, the skeleton was on a level with the legs of the Child Jesus. Near its feet was a perforated, yellow clay water jug (inv. no. 166/61) and two lamps (one whole, and a mere fragment of the other; inv. no. 175/61). The opening between the chapel of the Virgin and the third room had been closed

³² The stele of Bishop Joannes is dated 606, and that of Bishop Petros, 662.

by a roughly built mud brick wall beginning at a height of 1.50 m. above the floor, on top of the mass of drift sand which had by then accumulated. Inside the third room, two skeletons were found in the same position as the first. Each was provided with a perforated clay water jug and two lamps in the shape of cupulae, blackened and oil-caked (inv. nos. 169/61, 171/61, 173/61). Near the northernmost skeleton were fragments of some woollen material with red and black bands, and a key shaped like a Coptic cross (inv. no. 176/61), FIG. 5). It is likely that towards the end of the Christian period this place was used for the burial of the more important bishops. At that time the chapels were practically buried in sand. The two skeletons in the third room lay about 50 cm. lower than the one in the chapel of the Virgin. The fact that only one skeleton was found here, whereas in the other chapel there were two, and that the opening between the rooms was not blocked, seems to indicate that these were relatively late burials, since there was still space enough to bury at least three more bodies.

The earthenware found in these tombs is also of a late period. The first water jug, with its low, flattened feet, narrow neck and very crude filter, recalls those of the Arab period, and contrasts with the filters found in the third room, which have a very finely wrought, symmetrical, geometrical pattern. We trust that the coming excavation season will completely clear this site and furnish yet more detailed information and documents concerning the history of Pachoras during the Christian era. However, we consider it our duty to point out without delay the results obtained up to date which, thanks to dated inscriptions and paintings, constitute already in themselves important documents for the chronology and history of the Christian monuments at Faras.

C. In the course of describing the domed building and the two chapels, mention has often

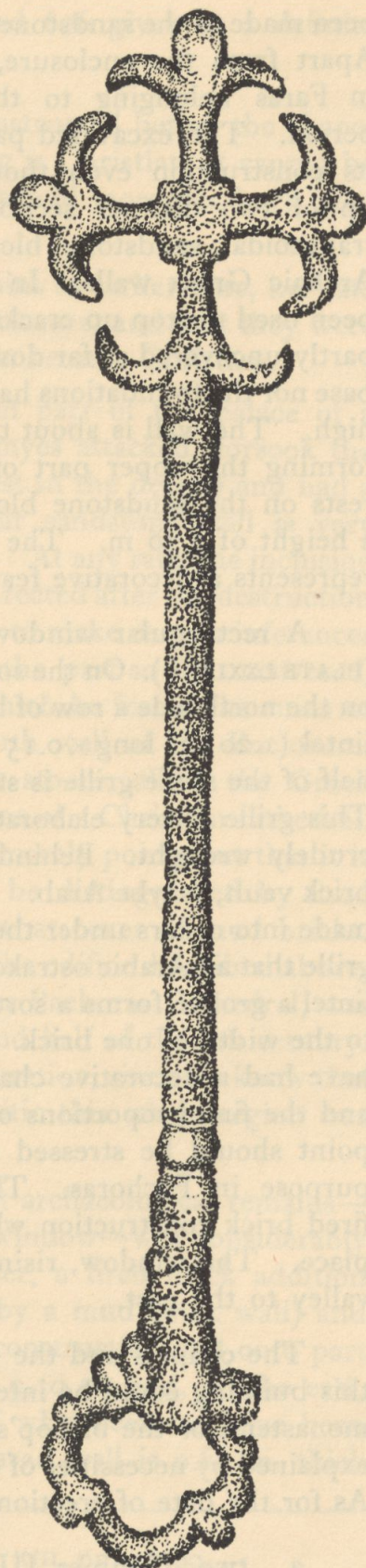


FIG. 5

been made of the sandstone wall against which these chapels, abut (PLATE LXXIX, a). Apart from the enclosure, this wall is so far the only recorded architecture in Faras belonging to the Late Meroitic or perhaps the Early Christian period. The excavated part of it allows certain points to be made concerning its construction even though much of it remains unexcavated. It is made up of two distinct sections, the lower of which is built of rectangular or trapezoidal sandstone blocks, carefully wrought and fitted, reminiscent of Archaic Greek walls. In the upper part of this fired bricks have sometimes been used to stop up cracks between the stones. This part of the wall has been partly uncovered as far down as the fourteenth course, i.e. 4.70 m. Neither the base nor the foundations have yet been reached. Each course is about 0.20–0.25 m. high. The wall is about the same thickness as that of fired bricks (0.65 m.) forming the upper part of the wall. The portion of fired brick wall which rests on the sandstone blocks is preserved—where it has been uncovered—to a height of 2.30 m. The third course is of bricks laid on edge and doubtless represents a decorative feature of the façade.

A rectangular window (height 1.18 m., width 0.74 m.) commences here (PLATE LXXIX, b). On the south side the frame comprises a row of bricks laid flat; on the north side a row of bricks laid on edge. Above, a well-preserved wooden lintel (1.20 m. long \times 0.15 m. high \times 0.20 m. wide) tops the window. Almost half of the stone grille is still in place, giving the window an ornamental aspect. This grille is very elaborate, curved and arched, but the oblong stone bars are crudely wrought. Behind the window can be seen traces of a much later mud brick vault, maybe Arab. This wall, and probably the building behind it, were made into cellars under the central court of the Arab Citadel. It is behind this grille that an Arabic ostrakon was found (inv. no. 161/61). On either side of the lintel a groove forms a sort of ornamental moulding on the wall. This is made to the width of one brick. It is clear that the eastern face of the building must have had a decorative character, as evidenced by these two simple mouldings and the fine proportions of both the wooden lintel and the stone grille. This point should be stressed as it shows the importance of the building and its purpose in Pachoras. The great sandstone wall seems but to support the fired brick construction which was built imposingly high and in a well-chosen place. The window, rising above the enclosure, had a view out over the Nile valley to the east.

The chapels and the place dedicated to the bishops' stelae being so close, this building could be interpreted in three ways: it may have been a church, a monastery, or the bishop's palace. The heightening of the wall can mainly be explained by necessities of defence, characteristic of such buildings at that period. As for the date of erection, there are two facts to be taken into consideration:

- a. two Thotmes III blocks were re-utilized in the sandstone wall (see above);

- b. the chapel with Bishop Joannes' stele dated 606 gives us a definite *ante quem* limit.

It is evident that this monument must have been constructed before the chapel abutting its wall. On the other hand, if the building is Christian, it cannot be earlier than the first half of the 6th century, and it would moreover have been one of the first in Pachoras.

However, it is not impossible that these are remains of earlier date, i.e. late Meroitic, more or less contemporaneous with the Enclosure, and that they were merely adapted for use by the new regime after Nubia became Christian.

The excavated wall could, therefore, have been part of the palace of a Meroitic *pésaté* (a local ruler) who, when the Blemmyes attacked, forsook the former Western Palace (found by Griffith further west in the desert) and had a new one built inside the fortified enclosure.³³ Our sandstone wall is very similar to certain parts of the Meroitic Enclosure wall. At any rate, the inclusion of two Thotmes III blocks therein is proof that it was erected after the destruction of the New Kingdom temple. It also seems possible to make certain inferences from the manner of its construction, as seen from the part so far uncovered. Griffith³⁴ wrote a short report on the condition in which he found the ruins of a 'Great Church' between the Citadel and the south wall of the Enclosure. In the graceful capitals, granite columns and other stones, all in the Greek Corinthian style,³⁵ he did not hesitate to see the remains of a Christian cathedral. However, he was able to suggest no date for it. He merely points out that it is the only one among the several Faras churches to be distinguished by fired brick walls laid on sandstone courses, with no use whatsoever of mud bricks. That is exactly the method of construction used for the edifice described above, which justifies our belief that the 'Great Church', or Pachoras Cathedral, was erected at the same time as our wall, i.e. in the second half of the 6th century. That would explain the classical appearance of its decoration, since we know that in the period which immediately followed the Meroitic this whole region was submitted to strong classical influence.

D. The site which provided so many important archaeological remains—domed construction, chapels, the building with the window—was considerably altered during the following period. Somewhat later, a fired brick addition was built onto the roofs of the chapels (buttressed by a mud brick wall) and partly overlapping onto the west wall of the domed construction and onto part of the cupola itself. This erection is at the level of 9.10 m. and, on the east, adjoins the wall with the window. The remains of what seem to have been large square pillars have been uncovered. The pillared wall is 0.60 m. thick

³³ Cf. Griffith, *LAAA*, XIII, p. 29.

³⁴ See *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 59–60.

³⁵ Griffith, loc. cit., pl. xxxvii.

and there are what appear to be traces of arches on either side of the pillars which rise above the cupola. The walls were faced with a thin layer of stucco and lime. The south aperture and the offset of the arch on the east pillar seem to indicate a window rather than a door. In section this structure and, consequently, that of the window openings, show at the same height as the window in the great wall. Before it, the flat chapel roofs form a kind of terrace facing south. It seems likely, therefore, that we have here one of the transformations of the large building previously described.

To the south chapel roof terrace corresponds another eastern platform adjoining the wall. It is made of stones resting on the *sebakh* and sand which cover the eastern side of the domed building. The fact that it lies 10 cm. higher than the base of construction no. 4 and was built at a time when the domed building was already covered in sand, permits us to consider it a later element, useful however as an additional illustration (see above) confirming our opinion as to the prolonged use of the edifice with the window. In fact, as it rests against the wall of construction 4, the platform proves that this edifice was used when the domed building and the entrance to the chapels were entirely buried in sand. That could only be during the Arab period when the sandy slope of the Kom formed the base of the Citadel.

E. In the course of this season, we excavated part of some mud brick ruins on the north and east slopes of the Kom. These were, most probably, dwellings or store-rooms connected with the more important monuments then standing in the north sector of the Kom—that is to say, the monastery and the church.

We cleared these remains in order to get an idea of their plan and their position. They are all built of mud brick. The outer walls are 0.55 m. thick, the partitions 0.60 m. thick. The house marked no. 3 on the plan is trapezoidal and contains four rooms (2×4.20 m.) and two recesses, more or less like the Meroitic house, 19, at the foot of the west slope. No. 5 complex (see plan) seems less regular. Very likely we have here

1. the remains of two rectangular houses, A and D, built back to back;
2. two houses, B and C, belonging to a single project;
3. two houses, E and F;
4. two rooms, in one of which only part of the walls are now standing.

No. 6 seems to be a mud brick buttress and no. 7 the remains of some small cellars. No. 4 presents a more solid construction, composed of two rectangular rooms (5.70×2.40 m.) erected against the eastern wall of the church. On the plan it is clearly visible that between these dwellings and the church stretched a sort of platform or terrace, closed off by no. 6. This platform cut off, so to speak, the church and the monastery from the dwellings which clustered close to them on the north-west. The entrance was to the south. A few re-utilized

stone blocks from older constructions are still to be seen in this wall. Nos. 9 and 10 constitute the remains of a dwelling complex of the same type as that which surrounded the hill, flanking the sacred buildings on the south-east. No. 12, erected on the smaller kom which is only a south-east spur to the large Citadel-Kom, shows the remains of perhaps a more important edifice belonging to a different category from the other houses(?). It is more solidly built, and part of the vault and the entrance arch are still there. Here, one would be inclined to see a gate, or some sort of chapel, erected on the little hill close by the large ecclesiastical group on the central Kom. Griffith has pointed out ruins of the same type on the little kom between the Citadel and the west gate of the Enclosure.³⁶ It is easy to see that there were other chapels round the main church on the big Kom for processional and ritual purposes.

The most imposing group of this period, which can be called the second Christian age at Faras, consists of the monastery and church, the latter mainly excavated by Griffith.³⁷ It is a large trapezoidal two-storey building of mud bricks. Its east wall is 20.50 m. long and its north wall 16.80 m. It stood some 3.30 m. high. Griffith was not able to excavate the lower part which consists of a large corridor³⁸ and some vaulted rooms. He considered them mere substructures to the church and other edifices built at the level of the church.³⁹ Moreover he thought there was some connection between the elevation of this church and that of another, noted by Somers Clarke,⁴⁰ in the capital of ancient Dongola.

In the course of this season, the church and part of the monastery were completely cleared—an area large enough to allow us to reach certain conclusions more definite than Griffith's. The complete understanding and explanation of all the facts will only be possible when the western part of the monastery is cleared. For the time being it still lies under remains of the Arab period. Mr A. Ostrasz is preparing a special study of this group (monastery and church) with a view to formulating a suggestion as to its reconstruction. We have here one of the best preserved groups in Faras from the second Christian period. We shall, therefore, limit the description here to pointing out the more important discoveries made this season, which may already necessitate a change in the views hitherto expressed by archaeologists concerning this building, and might help in the formulation of a provisional hypothesis.

Griffith found in the citadel church the remains of some very important frescoes⁴¹ painted in the apse and the left aisle of the church. Our plan, compared to Griffith's, shows a few corrections and additions made possible by the

³⁶ *LAAA*, XIII, p. 61, pl. xxxviii.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 57 ff., pl. xxxiii.

³⁸ During this season the height of this could not be accurately measured.

³⁹ Cf. *LAAA*, XIII, p. 58.

⁴⁰ *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley*, pp. 43-4.

⁴¹ See loc. cit., pls. xxxiv-xxxv.

new excavations. The whole group appears to be more rectangular than trapezoidal, as Griffith's plan suggested. In the north vestry there is a small niche in the east wall; whereas in the north wall there were twin windows. There was also an entrance from this vestry into the left aisle. The walls, shown in Griffith's plan in front of the apse, are in fact merely pillars. Thus, the nave had quite a different architectural aspect from that which he envisaged. Slightly above the floor, in the south walls of the left aisle and of the south vestry were three low niches, 0.65 m. high and, 1.15, 1.17 and 1.38 m. high, respectively.

The church was paved with thin slabs (about 1.50 cm. thick) of pink sandstone, fitted in an irregular pattern. The west part was partitioned off, and arranged otherwise than Griffith supposed. Practically, it was nothing but a repetition of the general church plan: nave and aisles, with two vestries. In the apse, vestiges can still be seen of a rectangular altar facing the east wall. In room G, which corresponds to the north vestry, traces have been found of a rectangular mud brick stand, maybe a baptismal font. In the south wall of the north-west section of the church is a doorway, 68 cm. wide, in the south-west corner. 45 cm. east of this, in the same wall, is a small recess, the use of which is yet unknown. The finding of this opening in the side wall of the church confirms Mileham's suggestion⁴² when he noted the same feature in the monastery church at Wadi Natrun. Monneret de Villard pointed out to Griffith that this division of a church into two almost identical halves, one for the clergy and one for the congregation, is a characteristic feature of Byzantine churches to be found in the monasteries of north-east Italy (Noricum).⁴³

The interior of the western part of the church was faced with a thin layer of whitewashed stucco. On the west wall, near the door, the lower part of frescoes, depicting the feet of the Apostles, were found. These feet are painted red on a white ground, apparently repeating the decoration of the central apse. This is another point tending to prove repetition of the essential elements of the main part of the church in the part reserved for the congregation.

To return to the description of the monastery: it is a two-storey building, the main entrance to which, on the south side, was a mud brick archway decorated with a moulding of fired bricks laid flat, tracing the sweep of the arch in red. This entrance opened into a large vaulted corridor.⁴⁴ Of the seven eastern rooms which border it, six open into it. The entrance to one, the third from the south, has not yet been found. As the rooms have not yet been completely cleared, it is not possible to describe them in detail. Plan 1 shows them to be

⁴² Griffith, *LAAA*, addenda to XIII and xv, p. 114.

⁴³ See above-mentioned addendum.

⁴⁴ 1.45 m. wide. As to its height, that will only be ascertained after complete excavation.

6.20 m. long, their width varying between 2.18 and 2.35 m. The rooms bordering the corridor on the west have not been excavated. However, they are proved to exist by visible traces of apertures in the corridor wall, as well as by the presence of holes on the surface of the Kom both west of the church and inside the Arab houses. All these rooms are probably dormitories and store-rooms; the church and the more ecclesiastical quarters of the monastery must have risen above them.

The upper floor was reached by a sort of winding staircase, inside the corridor wall and for one flight parallel to it. The staircase started from a recess to the right of the main entrance. Ten steps hewn out of stone are still in place. Two half steps, which led respectively from the head and foot of the staircase westward into the corridors are missing. These stairs led to a rectangular room (2.65×4.75 m.) which may well have been an open court for the facing, visible on the lower courses of the wall only, does not give the impression that this was a roofed-in space. From there, a narrow opening in the north corner of the east wall gave onto a platform, transformed many times during the Arab period. It has lost its eastern side, which fell at the same time as the walls of the rooms beneath. One could imagine this platform corresponding in plan to three of the ground floor rooms beneath it; and that here also were three rectangular communicating rooms, with a single entrance to the three from the south. In the third room, i.e. the one built along the south side of the church, a wider entrance through the west wall gave access to a rectangular room (6.65×2.60 m.). This chamber occupied the space above the corridor, and rejoined the stairs leading down to the ground floor. It is in that room that a Coptic commemorative stele (inv. no. 106/61) was found lying on the floor, about 1 m. away from the church wall. Contrary to the corridor and the downstairs rooms, which bear no trace of facing, all the upstairs rooms had all their walls faced with a yellowish stucco of the same type as that used in the church. These upstairs rooms, one would therefore be inclined to consider as devoted to ritual purposes, or as being assembly rooms for the monks.

The most interesting feature of the monastery is doubtless its church. When publishing his report on the Citadel's North Church, Griffith did not venture to suggest a date for its construction. However, now it seems possible, in the light of all the finds from the first Christian period, i.e. late 6th and 7th centuries, to venture a guess at it. The latest date given by the stelae in the chapel of the Virgin is 1097—the death of Bishop Georgios. An inscription found by Griffith in the River Gate Church gives the date 1181, and Griffith proposed to associate it with the laying of the first stone of this church.⁴⁵ The difference between the murals in the Citadel Church and those in the chapels

⁴⁵ Cf. *LAAA*, XIII, p. 85.

clearly points to the fact that the decoration of the church is later than that of the chapels. The careless draughtsmanship and the elongated figures of the Apostles with their wide-open eyes, are quite different from classical tradition and much closer to the principles which guided eastern Mediterranean art of the Late Roman period, as seen in Coptic art. The style of painting in the River Gate Church is much closer to that of the chapel paintings. The walls too are indicative of a period of good workmanship, akin to that of the Meroitic Enclosure, of the buttress under the window, and of Griffith's 'Great Church' south of the Citadel. We are thus led to believe that the River Gate Church is also a building of the first Christian period in Faras—i.e. late 6th–7th century. The stone Griffith mentions must therefore have been only a funerary stele which happened to be among the church rubble, and had nothing to do with the erection of that edifice.

It is not only the style of painting in the Citadel Church which reminds us of the traditional Coptic buildings of Egypt. We have already mentioned one parallel with the monastery churches of Wadi Natrun (see above). In regard to a false double window in the north façade of this church, Griffith had already noted (*loc. cit.*, p. 59) a similarity to the White and Red Monasteries of Sohag. The two upper stelae in the chapel of the Virgin—one of which is in Coptic and the other in Greek with Coptic interpolations—constitute a further point in favour of this theory. The persecution of Copts in Egypt in 722⁴⁶ may have caused an increase in the Coptic population of Pachoras, as Griffith correctly pointed out in his report (*loc. cit.*, p. 56), stressing that all the inscriptions and graffiti on the western fringe of Faras, whether in churches, cemeteries or anchorite caves, are pure Coptic between the 8th and 10th centuries.

To sum up the chronology of Christian buildings within the Enclosure of Faras, we venture to put forward the following :

1. The large sandstone foundation wall, with the fired brick superstructure and the window : second half of the 6th century.
2. The domed building, the chapels, the 'Great Church' and the River Gate Church (the two latter excavated by Griffith) : early 7th century.
3. The church and monastery in the north part of the Citadel : somewhere between the 8th and 10th centuries.

D. ARAB PERIOD

The Arab period in Faras has not left sufficient accurately dated evidence to allow any theory as yet concerning the chronological order of the architecture on the Kom. It is, however, clear that some buildings of the Christian period

⁴⁶ Poole, *History of Egypt*, p. 27.

were partially adapted and re-utilized during the Arab period. We have already mentioned the mud brick vault added to the construction with the window, as too the fact that it is behind the grille of that window—and therefore inside the building—that the Arabic ostrakon (inv. no. 161/61) was found. That alone proves that older constructions were partly used by the Muslim population. The second Arabic inscription found this season was a stone stele taken from the uppermost layer of the great trench east of the Citadel. If we agree that older buildings continued to be used at the beginning of the Muslim period, even those at the low level of the North Citadel Church, then we must also admit that at the time—impossible as yet to define—when the surface of the Kom was levelled, stones were used for the construction of the great Citadel wall, and that these stones were taken from older buildings, both Pharaonic and Christian. This wall, in parts preserved to a height of 3–4 m. crowned the summit of the Kom, encircling within its system of fortifications both the monastery and the church.

The ruins of two rectangular towers (no. 14 on the south-east slope and no. 17 in the west-centre of the Kom) are still standing. The lower courses of the wall are at a depth of 10.50 m. laid on a bed of *sebakh*, sand and gravel mixed with ashes. At a height of 1 m. from the base of the wall, a line of loop-holes opens, 2–4 m. apart. These were formed by arranging fired bricks so as to make an opening 15 × 15 cm. Upwards from a height of 2.50–3.50 m. the stone walls have mud brick superstructures. The construction of these walls is not uniform, and it is very easy to recognize those parts which are later arrangements from those hasty repairs which, according to Griffith⁴⁷ date from the Mahdi's days. During the excavation of the east trench numerous fragments of shells were found, certainly souvenirs of Kitchener's artillery.

Certain parts of the Arab fort, such as the south-east tower, were built with greater care. The lower courses are made of well fitted blocks. Among these are still to be found Pharaonic stones from the Temple of Ramses II. In the stretch of wall it was necessary to dismantle there were three fragments from the Temple of Thotmes III. On the south-west side, the line of the fortified wall could not be exactly traced, as that side of the Kom has been greatly damaged. A door (1.40 m. wide × 2.30 m. high) in the north wall of the south-east tower gave access to the fortress. Here, abutting the inside of the wall two rooms were built of mud bricks and bits of stone, with a very narrow entrance from the court. These were probably stables, later used as dwellings. The roofs would have been straw mats, laid over rafters of tamarisk branches, such as can be seen today on Nubian houses. The southernmost room was most likely a sort of sentry box. A large trapezoidal court linked the two towers and a cluster of houses in the northern sector of the Citadel. These would be Arab dwellings which grew around the core of the monastery. As the needs of the garrison

⁴⁷ Loc. cit., p. 57.

grew, mud brick rooms were added to those already existing. Here, it is possible to make out three-roomed houses. These rooms, about 14 m. square, were all inhabited until quite recently. While Griffith was excavating, he found inside the church a series of small recesses which were still used for stabling goats. So the earthenware and other articles of everyday use found in these ruins are modern.

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* All Field Notes are available for study at Nubia Operations Office, Wadi Halfa.