

Polish Excavations at Faras, 1962-63

by KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI

THE third season of Polish excavations (Warsaw University and National Museum) in Faras lasted from 23 October 1962 to 10 April 1963. The members of the expedition were :

Mr Kazimierz Michałowski—Director of Excavations.

Mr Antoni Ostrasz—Chief Architect and Deputy Director.

Mr Stefan Jakobielski—Epigraphist.

Miss Kamila Kołodziejczyk—Archaeologist.

Mr Józef Gazy—Chief Restorer.

Mr Mieczysław Niepokólczycki—Photogrammetrist, Architect and
Photographer.

Mr Władysław Kubiak, Secretary of the Polish Centre of Archaeology, Cairo, was in charge of the organization of the camp. Mr A. F. Shore of the British Museum helped us for two months with the transcription and interpretation of Greek and Coptic texts. At the end of the season Mr Tadeusz Dzierżykray-Rogalski was responsible for the uncovering of the bishops' tombs and for the anthropological study of the skeletons. Mrs Marta Kubiak assisted Mr Józef Gazy in removing the mural paintings. Mrs Krystyna Michałowska made the drawings of the graffiti, of some architectural details and of some pottery. Mrs Jadwiga Lipińska helped in preparing the inventory of objects. Mr Marek Marciniak assisted in drawing up this report. Mr Kazimierz Łątka took part in preparing the photographic documentation at the beginning of the season. About 120 labourers were engaged with rais Mahmud Mohammed Ali as foreman.

We wish to thank Sayed Thabit Hassan Thabit, Commissioner for Archaeology in the Sudan, and Sayed Nagm ed-Din M. Sherif, Senior Inspector of Antiquities, for every facility they granted us. Messrs W. Y. Adams, L. P. Kirwan and P. L. Shinnie made important suggestions to us, especially regarding their own researches in the area.

This season of excavations lasted for five and a half months, which enabled us to uncover the interior of the Church under the Citadel and also other important buildings hidden in the sand under the Arab Citadel. The discovery of over one hundred murals in this church is certainly the most important find of the season. But the excavations of other monuments in the southern slope of the Kom, such as the pillar which probably supported the cross ; the ruins of an edifice built of sandstone and burnt bricks, which we think is the remains of a monastery ; the remnants of another church constructed from the same materials,

KUSH

as well as the southern necropolis of the bishops and the cloister, all have a decisive value in dating this archaeological complex.

To the north of the Cathedral, that is the Church under the Citadel which was partly excavated during the previous season,¹ and at the same level, we discovered two mud-brick buildings with monumental staircases, on the walls of which there are still some traces of paintings. These were probably parts of a bishop's palace, or perhaps the residence of the Eparch (PLATE XXXVIII, a). They were partly covered by the North Monastery on top of the Kom,² most of which was dismantled this season after the documentation had been completed. The ruins of two houses were also discovered under the eastern part of the Monastery. (FIG. 1 shows the location and measurements of every building brought to light this season.)

Over 300 items are included in the season's inventory. Special attention should be paid to the beautiful chalice of dark red glass, with a laurel branch engraved on its stem (PLATE XXXIX, a), which was found in a hiding place (cachette) under the altar in the Cathedral. Another find was a sandstone niche with carved intertwined branches and two fishes—perhaps this was the font. A sheet of parchment and fragments of others are probably fragments of a Greek Psalmody. Over 200 inscriptions in ink on the walls of the Cathedral, hundreds of graffiti, three new bishops' stelae (those of Mathaeus, *obiit* A.D. 765; Ignatios, *ob.* 802; and Petros, *ob.* 999) represented historical material of the greatest importance. But the most outstanding discovery of this nature was the list of twenty-seven bishops of Pachoras which gives the names of the bishops and partially preserves the dates of their deaths (only days and months being shown). This list was inscribed in a niche situated in the south-east room of the Cathedral, which also contains portraits of some of the bishops. Accordingly we named it 'the Bishops' Room.'

The numerous archaeological and epigraphical documents found during the third season enabled us to try and collate certain facts regarding the stages of construction of the various buildings on the Big Kom of Faras during the Christian period. First there are the two late Meroitic elements, found *in situ*, incorporated in architecture of the Christian period. These are the eastern door of the Southern Palace and the courses of older walls which form the base of the three aisles of the Cathedral under the Citadel (PLATE XXXVIII, b). Had it been a late Meroitic temple or the enclosure surrounding a Naos from which we found several small cornices?³ For the moment we cannot give any opinion on this matter. The same applies to the eastern door of the Southern Palace. One fact, however, is indisputable. At the time when it was decided to utilize these late Meroitic walls for the construction of the Cathedral under the Citadel they

¹ Cf. *Faras*, II (in print).

² Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 130 ff.; KUSH X (1962), pp. 239 ff.

³ Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 80-5.

POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT FARAS • THIRD SEASON • 1962/63
PLAN OF THE EXCAVATED PORTION

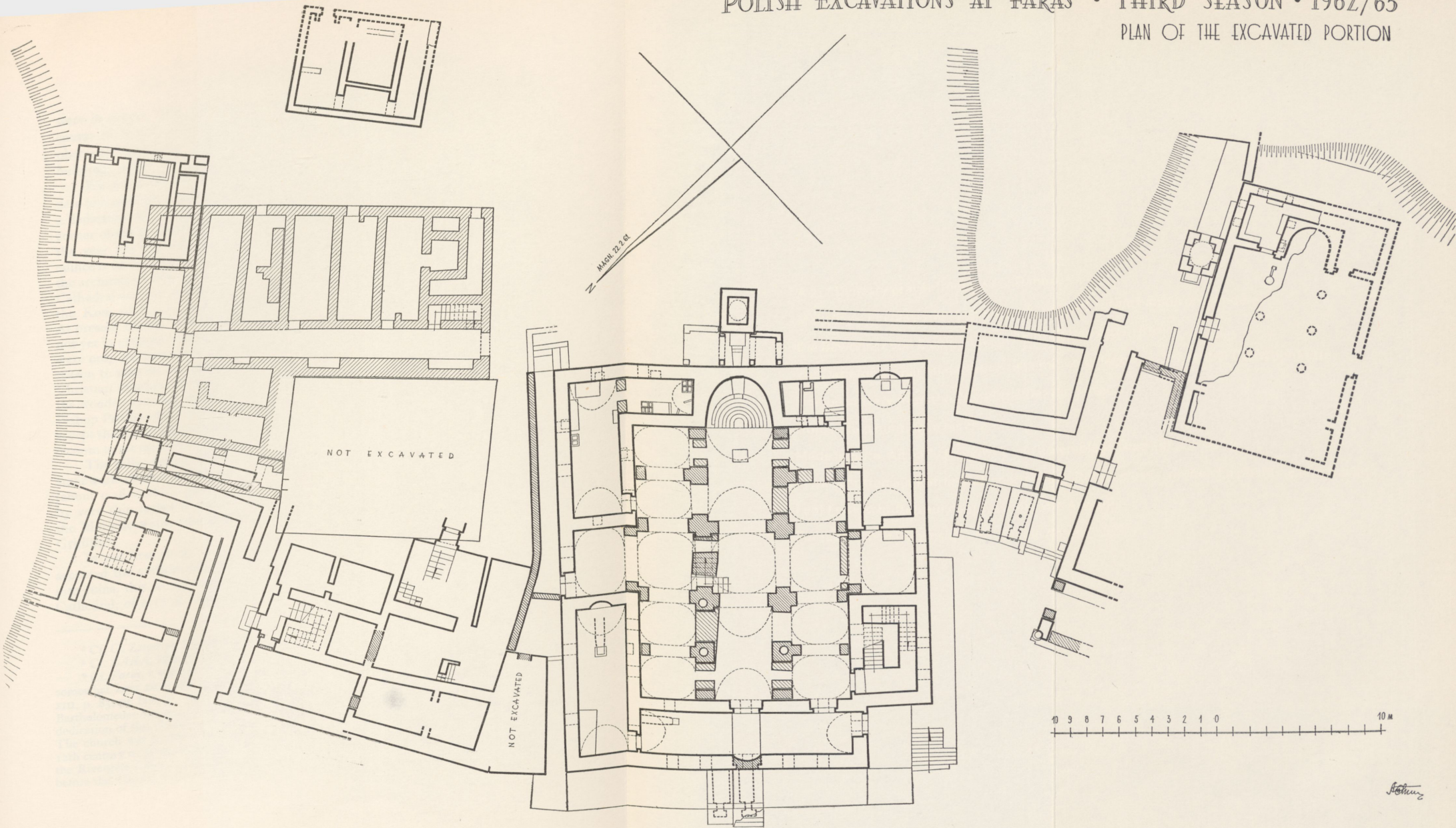


FIG. 1

Bohner

POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT FARAS, 1962-63

were in ruins. The Christian architect completed and enlarged them with a course of blocks which were less carefully wrought, originating from ancient pharaonic buildings, from the same Meroitic ruins and from earlier Christian buildings which were already in ruins.

What was the probable date of this new construction? We now have some data to enable us to risk a hypothesis. Two stones bearing, in Coptic and Greek, a dedication by Bishop Paulos (PLATE XXXIX, b) are inserted into the north-west corner of the building which we believe to have been a monastery and they give the year A.D. 707 as the date of its construction or consecration. But this edifice is on another axis from that of the Cathedral under the Citadel. Why did the architect of this ancient monastery decide to construct it aslant the axis of the Cathedral and not parallel to it as was the case with all the other buildings under the Kom of Faras, such as the Bishops' Palace and the North Monastery? At present we can see but one explanation: the Cathedral under the Citadel was not yet in existence when the construction of the monastery was started. There were only the ruins of a late Meroitic temple and the Christian architect had no reason to take its orientation into consideration. There was, however, an older Christian monument which dictated the location of the new building. It was the wooden cross set up either by the first Christian missionaries or by the same Bishop Paulos when he decided to build a monastery there. We are inclined to accept the first of these two explanations. It is well known that it was a Byzantine custom to set up a cross at the place where a monastery was to be built.⁴

The pillar supporting the cross was constructed quite differently from the stonework of the monastery. The sandstone blocks are of small dimensions (about 0.18-0.26 × 0.34-0.42 m.) and are set in regular horizontal rows joined by very thin layers of mud. The same building technique, resembling that of the Meroitic walls, was also to be seen in the Rivergate Church excavated by Griffith.⁵

In our first study of the chronology of Christian architecture at Faras we accepted the earliest date for that building as the 7th century.⁶ If later it fell into ruins, this would explain the finding, reutilized in the outside walls of the Cathedral, of several decorated blocks which had originated from the Rivergate

⁴ Cf. G. Zanarini, *Histoire de l'église byzantine* (Paris, 1954), pp. 135, 203.

⁵ Cf. *LAAA*, XIII, pp. 66 ff.

⁶ Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 151 ff. The Rivergate Church was probably reconstructed in part somewhat later since the grave stele of Parthenios dated 897 A.M.=A.D. 1181 (*LAAA*, XIII, p. 85, pl. lxii, 3; lxiii) was found in the Haikal. Griffith supposed that the name Bartholomeus—deacon of the Virgin—added at the end of the inscription might be the dedication of this church. It could, however, have been only the date of its restoration. The church was probably completely buried in sand and abandoned at the end of the 12th century or at the beginning of the 13th (see below, p. 198). It is quite possible that the Rivergate Church was made still smaller and used during the last Christian period before the Church of the North Monastery called 'of the Citadel' was constructed.

Church and from the so-called 'Great Church', the remains of which were mentioned in Griffith's report.⁷ These latter edifices were probably the first churches in Pachoras. Their voluted capitals and floral ornamentation are reminiscent of the traditions of classic art which infiltrated into Nubia from Roman Egypt during the Meroitic period. The fact that these two monuments had fallen into ruins—due to an earthquake, or to a high Nile flood (both were situated at a very low level), or, perhaps, to the first Arab raids—was probably the reason for the new project to construct a basilica on higher ground in the middle of the enclosure where formerly a Meroitic temple had stood.

THE CHURCH UNDER THE CITADEL

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

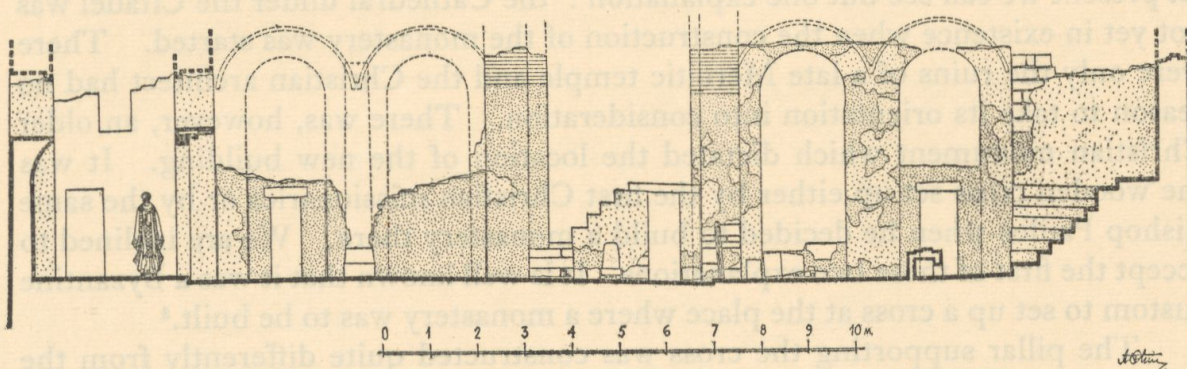


FIG. 2

Anyhow the clear analogy between the construction of the pillar supporting the cross and that of the walls of the Rivergate Church, and its difference from the walls of the monastery erected in 707 by Bishop Paulos (which are analogous to those of the Cathedral under the Citadel) compels us to consider the pillar of the cross as the most ancient Christian architectural feature on the south-west slope of the Kom. This would explain why Paulos considered it necessary when siting the monastery to follow the orientation of the pillar and it is quite understandable why this place was, to the Christians of that time a holy one, as is stated in Paulos's dedication. It also seems probable that Paulos, who was the metropolitan of Pachoras mentioned in the list of bishops, conceived at the same time the plan to transform the ancient ruined Meroitic temple into a new basilica to replace the two ruined churches—the Great Church and the Rivergate Church. The Greek stele of Paulos states as much, if the expression *ἀνανέωσεν* is to be taken in its exact sense and not as a mere repetition in typical Byzantine style. This being so, we have one more argument for considering Paulos responsible both for the foundation of the monastery and for the transformation

⁷ *LAAA*, xiv, pp. 57 ff.

of the ancient Meroitic ruins into a Christian church. Anyhow the method of building the walls of the two edifices shows such a clear analogy that there is no doubt as to the relatively close dates of their construction.

The Meroitic walls were re-utilized in the new church since they were well preserved to a considerable height near the South door, which was surmounted by the cornice decorated with winged discs and a frieze of snakes.⁸ This is probably one reason why the walls are of stone up to a height of 4 m. in 16-18 horizontal courses, and above that of burnt bricks with the windows situated in the superstructure. The sandstone walls of the South Monastery (contemporaneous with the new church) have only six horizontal rows of stones, the rest being of burnt brick except for the corners which are reinforced with sandstone blocks.

We propose to accept the end of the 7th or perhaps the beginning of the 8th century as the probable date for the foundation and construction of this church. Because of the discovery there of the list of bishops and beautiful murals, we think that it was the episcopal or metropolitan church and we feel justified in naming it 'the Cathedral under the Citadel'.⁹ Paulos's dedication mentions the reign of King Mercurios, who is known from an inscription in a small church at Tafah¹⁰ (dated 18 Khiak, 9 indiction, year 427 of Diocletian, equivalent to 14 December 710).¹¹ The inscription describes the good work that had been accomplished in the consecration of that place, making an allusion to the transformation of the pagan temple there into a church. In the life of the Patriarchs of Alexandria Mercurios was referred to as the King of Dongola,¹² and was called the New Constantine.¹³ It is quite probable, therefore, that his

⁸ Cf. KUSH XI, p. 237, pl. liv, a.

⁹ In our first studies of the results of the two excavations seasons (cf. *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*, III (1962), no. 1, pp. 3 ff. and no. 4, pp. 97 ff.; *Archaeology*, vol. 15 (1962), pp. 113-19; KUSH X (1962), p. 232) on the basis of an erroneous reading of Bishop Joannes' stele, we proposed the beginning of the 7th century as the probable date of this construction. Accepting an earlier date for the death of Bishop Joannes it seemed probable that he might be the founder of this church in view of the situation of his tomb. This date was also accepted at first by other scholars. Only after the discovery of the list of bishops it became possible to clear up the confusion in the reading of the letter—cross as *tau* or *psi* in the date of Bishop Joannes' death, thus making it 1006. We were able to correct this date in a supplementary note in the first volume of Faras (cf. *Faras*, I, p. 112) but unfortunately it was impossible to change the conclusions giving the historical interpretation of the two murals which were found in the funerary chapels of Joannes and which we dated erroneously to the 7th century instead of the 11th. Their style is similar to that of the frescoes excavated this season in the Cathedral which originate from the penultimate period of the decoration of this edifice.

¹⁰ Cairo Museum, No. 45317, *ASAE*, x (1909), p. 17.

¹¹ Cf. Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia Cristiana*, p. 80, 159.

¹² There is no doubt that he was the king who united the two kingdoms. Cf. Monneret de Villard, op. cit. pp. 81-3.

¹³ Cf. *Patrologia Orientalis*, v, p. 140 and Monneret de Villard, op. cit., pp. 80, 96.

reign represented the rebirth of the political and cultural power of Christian Nubia and that the adaptation of the Egyptian temple at Tafeh into a Christian church was similar to the architectural activity taking place in Faras at the same time. Perhaps it might even give some indication as to the date of the transformation of our Meroitic edifice into a Christian cathedral.

At first the walls of the Cathedral were faced with whitewash. Traces of it are still visible under the first layer of plaster on which the earliest murals were painted. It is difficult to believe that such an important church could have had its interior unadorned for more than a few years since the Orthodox rite required the representations of the Holy Virgin and of the Saints for purposes of worship. So the murals preserved on the first layer of plaster were probably painted shortly after the building was completed. At first the church was a basilica consisting of three aisles and adjoining rooms which were covered with a wooden roof supported by granite columns. Violet is the predominant colour in every composition painted on the first layer of plaster. The two Archangels in the Narthex on either side of the main west entrance were painted during the 'violet period' (PLATE XL, a and FIG. 3, nos. 1-2). Ignatios, Archbishop of Antioch is painted in the same colour on the west wall of the north aisle (PLATE XLI, a and FIG. 3, no. 7). This painting was probably executed in honour of Bishop Ignatios of Pachoras, the only one in the list to bear the name. He was in charge of the metropolis of Pachoras from 766 to 802. A graffito, bearing the date A.D. 885 and situated in the Narthex to the right of the south entrance is also scratched in the earliest layer of plaster.

It was just about that time, the end of the 9th century, that the partial repainting of the Cathedral began. On the list of bishops which is inscribed in the niche in the 'Bishops' Room' the first fifteen names are written by the same hand. Undoubtedly this list was copied from another which had been covered by a new layer of plaster. The figure of Christ Emmanuel painted in the same niche and on the same layer of plaster shows quite different values of colour and style from the frescoes of the 'violet period' (PLATE XL, b and FIG. 3, no. 32). The existence of this painting was taken into consideration by the scribe in setting up the list of bishops, which means that the mural was painted before 903, before the death of Bishop Andreas whose name was the first to be inscribed by another hand.¹⁴ The Christ is clad in a dark brown robe decorated with rosettes of white pearls. This composition introduces a new style of decoration which became characteristic of the church after its transformation into a basilica with cupolas. In the same room the portrait of Bishop Petros (973-999) (PLATE XLI, b and FIG. 3, no. 40) had evidently been painted before the vaulting was added to the room since part of the inscription appertaining to it was covered by the vault. To the right of the bishop there is a portrait of King

¹⁴ The other names which follow on the list were added after the death of each bishop.

PLATE XXXVIII



a. THE BISHOP'S PALACE AND THE RESIDENCE OF THE EPARCH

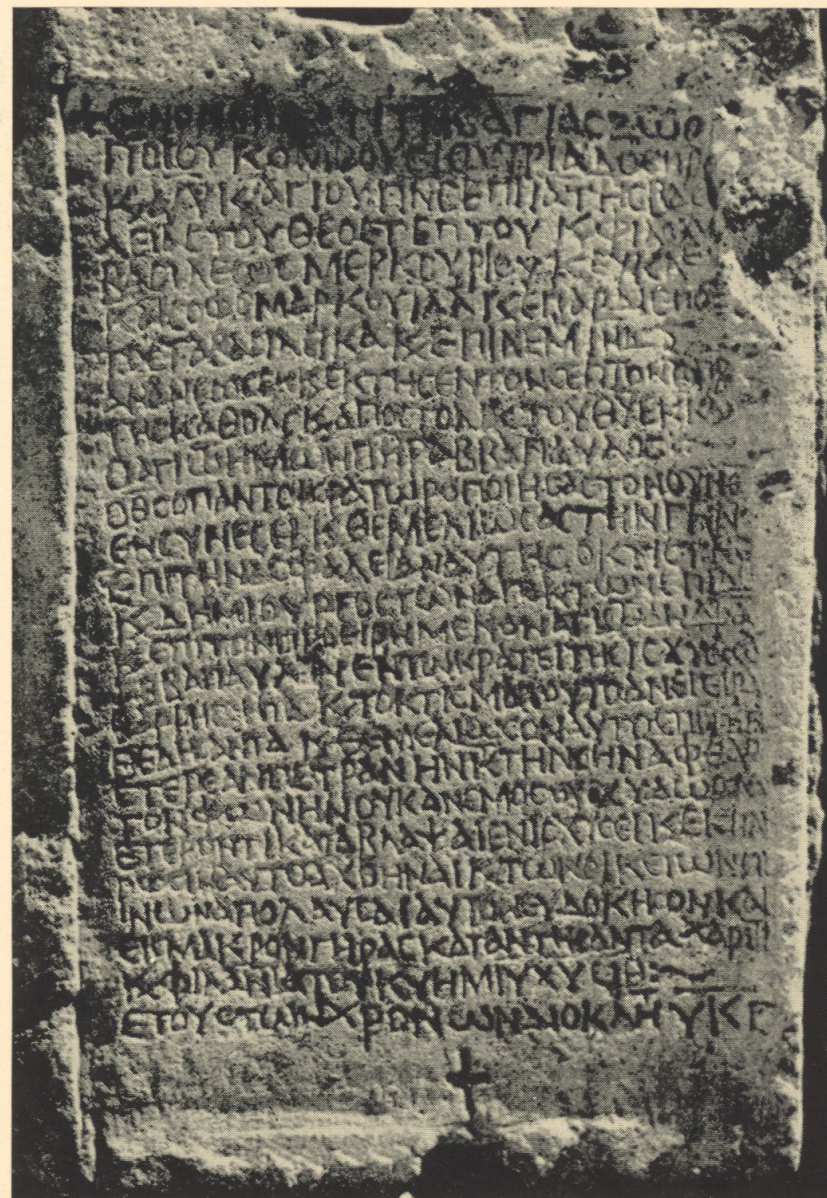


b. SOUTH ENTRANCE TO THE CATHEDRAL WITH THE MEROITIC CORNICE

facing p. 200



a. THE CHALICE



b. GREEK DEDICATION STONE OF BISHOP PAULOS

PLATE XL



a. TWO ARCHANGELS IN VIOLET, FRAMING THE NICHE WITH THE VIRGIN

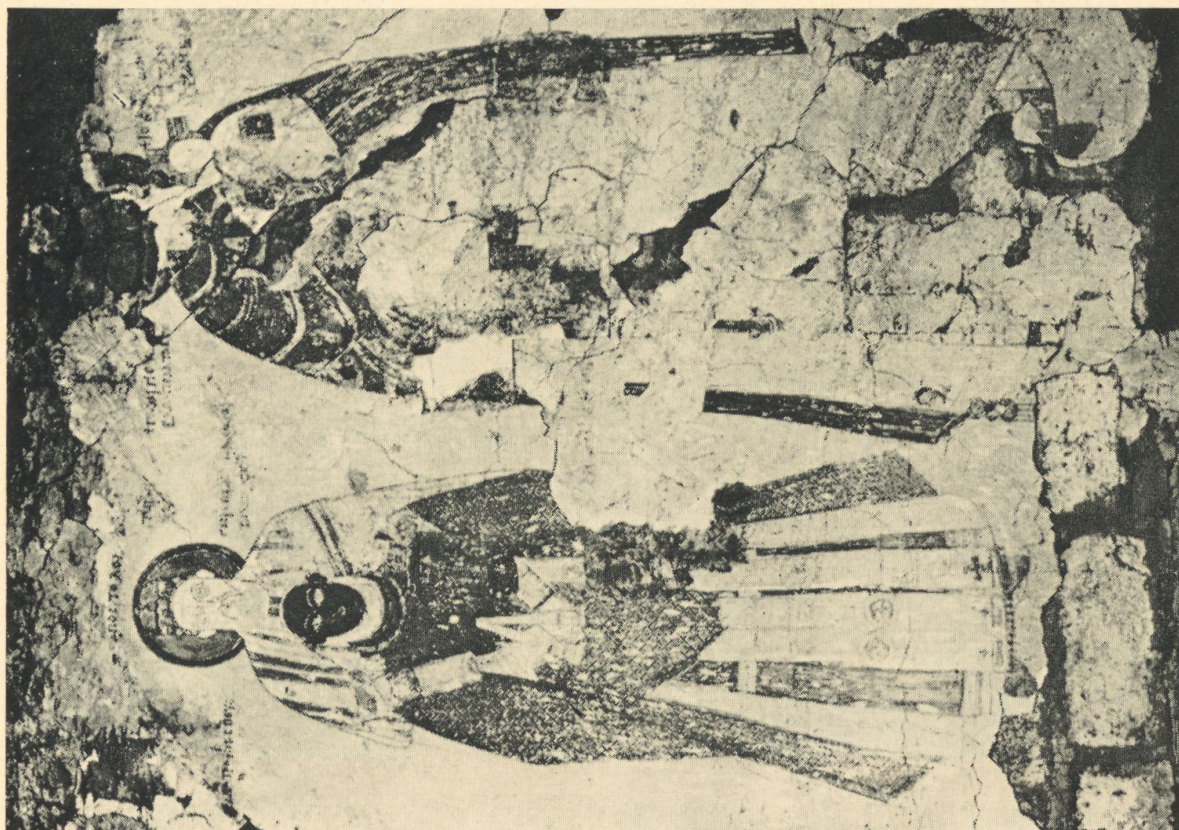


b. CHRIST EMMANUEL WITH THE LIST OF BISHOPS, FLANKED BY TWO ARCHANGELS

PLATE XLI



a. THE ARCHBISHOP IGNATIOS OF ANTIOCH



b. PORTRAIT OF BISHOP PETROS
(to the right—remnants of the figure of King Georgios—only crown and part
of the head are preserved)



a. PORTRAIT OF BISHOP MARIANOS PROTECTED BY THE HOLY VIRGIN



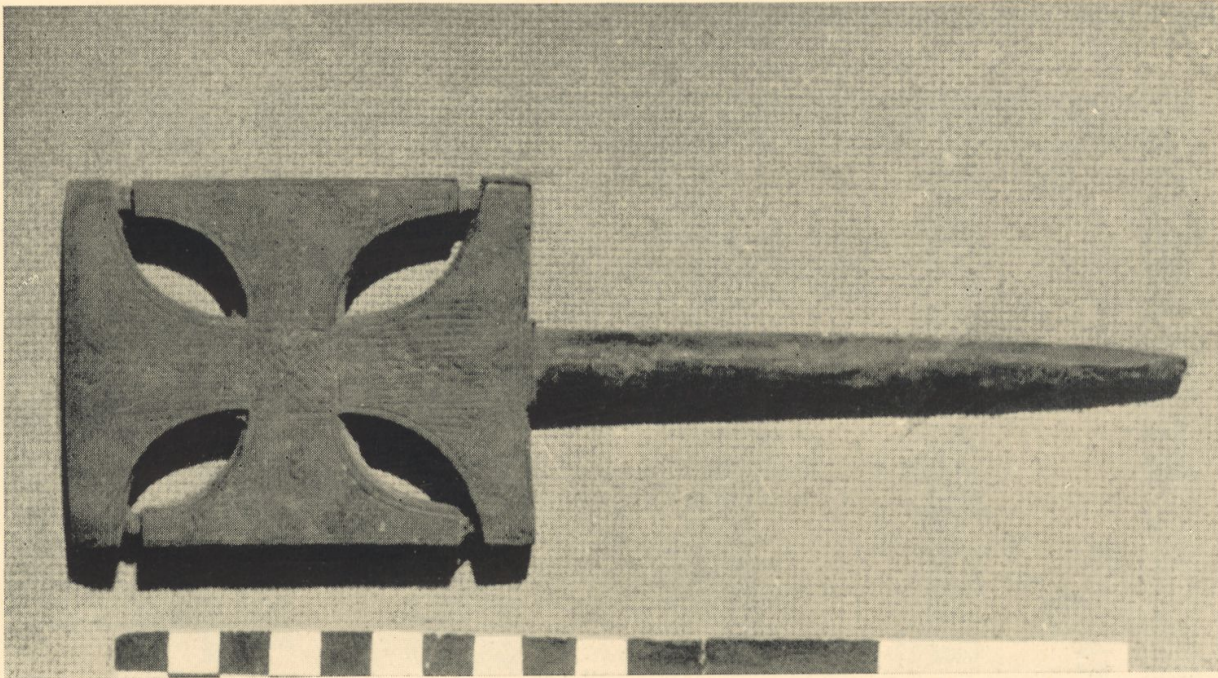
b. MURAL OF MARTHA THE QUEEN MOTHER

PLATE XLIII



THE BIG MURAL OF THE NATIVITY

PLATE XLIV



b. WOODEN BISHOP'S CROSS



a. MADONNA THEOTOKOS PAINTED OVER AN EARLY MURAL
OF THE FIRST PERIOD

POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT FARAS, 1962-63

Georgios who reigned from 969 to 1002¹⁵ (FIG. 3, no. 41). This painting is also partly covered by the vault. (The chapel to the west of this room, which has retained its cupola gives some indication as to the reconstruction and the addition

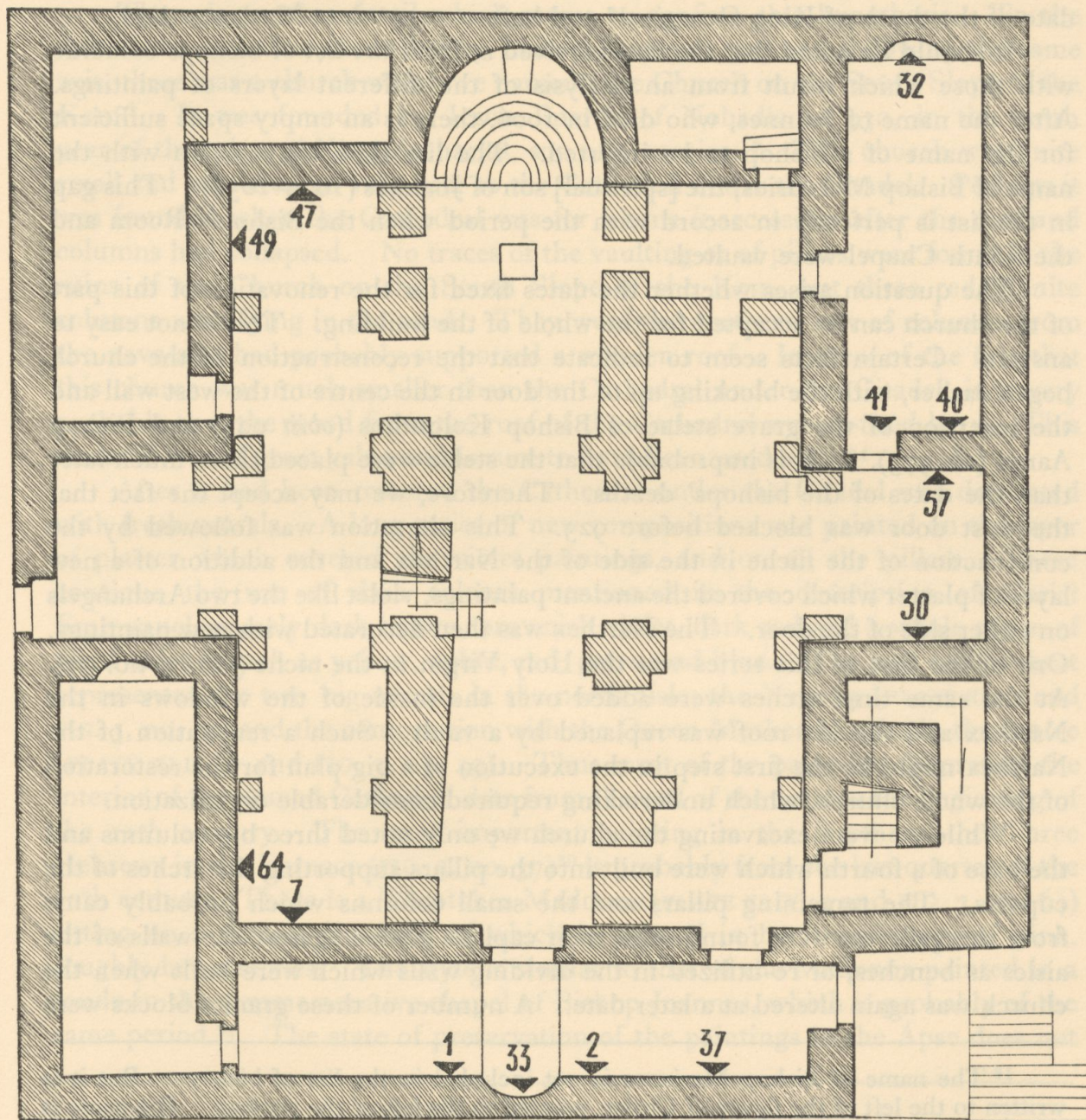


FIG. 3

of the domed roof.) Two layers of paintings are visible on the west wall, one of them in violet (no. 30) and the other in red (the Three Hebrews in the Furnace, no. 30). On the east wall, there is a composition representing the Holy Virgin

¹⁵ Cf. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

and Child protecting the spritual son of Joannes, Bishop Marianos, who died probably in 1039. Part of this mural was painted on the cupola (PLATE XLII, a and FIG. 3, no. 57).¹⁶ Thus, in this part of the church at least we have fairly close dates for the renovation which must have taken place after 1002/6, the probable date of the death of King Georgios¹⁷ and before 1039 when Marianos died.

It should be noted that the dates arrived at from the list of bishops coincide with those which result from an analysis of the different layers of paintings. After the name of Joannes, who died in 1006, there is an empty space sufficient for the name of a bishop to be inserted. The list then starts again with the name of Bishop Mercurios, the [spiritual] son of Joannes (1039-1058). This gap in the list is perfectly in accord with the period when the Bishops' Room and the South Chapel were vaulted.

The question arises whether the dates fixed for the renovation of this part of the church can be accepted for the whole of the building. This is not easy to answer. Certain facts seem to indicate that the reconstruction of the church began earlier, with the blocking up of the door in the centre of the west wall and the insertion of the grave stelae of Bishop Kolouthos (*obiit* 923) and Bishop Aaron (*ob.* 973).¹⁸ It is improbable that the stelae were placed there much later than the dates of the bishops' deaths. Therefore, we may accept the fact that the west door was blocked before 923. This alteration was followed by the construction of the niche in the side of the Narthex and the addition of a new layer of plaster which covered the ancient paintings, violet like the two Archangels on either side of the door. The Narthex was then decorated with new paintings. One of the first of this series was the Holy Virgin in the niche (FIG. 3, no. 33). At the same time arches were added over the inside of the windows in the Narthex and the old roof was replaced by a vault. Such a renovation of the Narthex might be the first step in the execution of a big plan for the restoration of the whole church, which undertaking required considerable organization.

While we were excavating the church we only noted three big columns and the base of a fourth which were built into the pillars supporting the arches of the cupolas. The remaining pillars and the small columns which probably came from the galleries were found with their capitals placed against the walls of the aisles as benches, or re-utilized in the dividing walls which were built when the church was again altered at a later date. A number of these granite blocks were

¹⁶ The name of Bishop Marianos is not included in the list of bishops. But it is written to the left of the figure of Christ, painted to the left of the portrait. His name is also mentioned in a graffito in the south aisle. It would be possible, however, to interpret this portrait as that of the Bishop Mercurios, [spiritual] son of Bishop Joannes. Mercurios was the metropolitan of Pachoras from 1039 to 1058. There is an empty space on the list between his name and Joannes and it could well have been intended for the name of Marianos. Both were probably spiritual sons of Joannes and succeeded him as bishops, first Marianos and then, after his death, Mercurios.

¹⁷ Cf. List of Nubian Kings, Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

¹⁸ Cf. KUSH XI (1963), pp. 244 ff.

collected together in the north part of the Narthex. We must assume, therefore, that the restoration of the church took a considerable time and that the vault of the Bishops' Room and the cupola of the south chapel represent the last stage of the work.

There is another detail which seems to confirm this hypothesis. To the east of the monastery founded by Bishop Paulos in 707 and following the same axis, there was a church which we named 'the Church on the South Slope of the Kom'. It was founded by Iesou Eparch of Nobadia in 930, in the tenth year of the reign of King Zacharias, son of Georgios.¹⁹ This church was quite small and was situated very near to the Cathedral under the Citadel. Perhaps it was founded when the Cathedral was for a time inaccessible after the roof and columns had collapsed. No traces of the vaulting or of pillars were found in the ruins of the Church on the South Slope of the Kom, but three red granite columns were lying in the sand. They were the northern row of columns from the nave and had probably supported a wooden roof. In view of the fact that this church was much smaller than the Cathedral under the Citadel, it is very probable that the wood from the roof of the Cathedral was re-used here. This material was of great value and is sure to have been used again.

After it had been restored the Cathedral under the Citadel was decorated with fresh murals. A long series of new compositions was painted on the layer of plaster which covered the violet paintings, and on all the pillars. These continue the use of dark colours mentioned in the description of Christ Emmanuel, namely dark brown, brownish violet, dark red and a whole range of vivid colours such as yellow, ochre, red, green and blue. The new style is best represented by two big murals in the north aisle, the Nativity (PLATE XLIII and FIG. 3, no. 47) and the composition with the Queen Mother Martha in the centre (PLATE XLII, b and FIG. 3, no. 49). Thus most of the paintings decorating the interior of the domed Cathedral date from the end of the 10th or the beginning of the 11th century. The most important painting in the Narthex—the Three Hebrews in the Furnace (FIG. 3, no. 37)²⁰ is probably from the last quarter of the 10th century. There is a Theotokos Madonna (PLATE XLIV, a and FIG. 3, no. 64) sitting on a throne, the back of which is painted in horizontal rows of pink, roughly hewn stones. The style is similar to that of the Madonna painted in a tondo in the commemorative chapel of Bishop Joannes, which is probably of the same period.²¹ The state of preservation of the paintings in the Apse does not

¹⁹ This is the first time the name of King Zacharias has appeared in an inscription. He was Zacharias III, son of Georgios. His reign was known only from Arabic texts and up to now it has been very difficult to ascertain his exact dates, cf. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-14 and 223.

²⁰ Cf. *Faras*, II (in print), *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*, III (1962), 4, pp. 101 ff., figs. 4-8.

²¹ Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 118 ff., and the supplementary note added by the author on p. 112. Cf. also KUSH x, pl. lxxvi.

allow us to draw any conclusions regarding the different stages of renovation of that part of the church. Two elements, however, give us a certain indication: the figure of an Eparch and that of a king (to the right of the composition in which the Holy Virgin is portrayed protecting the founder of the church(?)) are painted over the figures of Apostles which were undoubtedly the original decoration in the Apse. It is quite probable that these two figures were added after its re-opening, when the building had finally been transformed into a domed cathedral.

The interior of the Cathedral was again to be altered, but for this second renovation we have only a date *ante quem*, which is the death in 1169 of Iesou, the last bishop of Pachoras mentioned in the list, whose stele was found in the commemorative chapel of Joannes during the first season of excavations.²² In the spaces between the pillars separating the nave from the aisles were built walls or screens of mud bricks set on foundations made of stones re-used from other parts of the Cathedral, such as capitals, bases and fragments of the shafts of red granite columns, which have hidden the paintings on the pillars. These additions were not arranged symmetrically. Thus, for example, to the right of the entrance to the nave, the space between the pillars was blocked right up to the arch, while to the left it was considered sufficient to build a screen about 2 m. high. In the screen, as in the south wall, narrow entrances were provided to give access from the nave to the aisles. The same principle was followed in the Haikal. On the north side the screens were about 2 m. high; at the base they were the same width as the pillars, while at the top they were only thin walls of mud brick. On the south side the space between the Tribune and the fourth pillar was completely walled up. An arched door, with a small window above it, gave access from the Haikal to the vestibule leading to the Baptistry and a low screen separated the south chapel from the aisle. The remnants of the paintings preserved on these additional structures represent the last stage of development of the mural paintings at Faras. It is quite probable that the vaulted corridor on the north side of the church is also of this period since its floor is 0.10 m. higher than the floor of the church.

It is possible that the break in the list of bishops coincided with the partial destruction of the Cathedral—the collapse of the vaulting in the nave. It is a striking fact that while uncovering the church we did not find any rubble from the vaults or cupolas of the Apse or of the Haikal. It may be supposed, therefore, that these remnants of the roofing were cleared away soon after the catastrophe. If that was so, we must assume that the final alteration of the church (the separation of the two aisles from the nave by walls and screens built in between the pillars) took place at the time when the nave lost its cupolas. This would explain firstly why the state of preservation of the paintings in the nave is much worse than those in the aisles; and secondly why only screens were constructed in the north aisle of the nave, while walls reaching right up to the

²² Cf. *Faras*, I, p. 116, fig. 49; KUSH x (1962), pp. 227 ff., pl. lxxviii, a.

vaults were built in the south aisle. The south aisle was much more exposed to the sun than the north aisle, where the sun shone only in the afternoon and the screens let in enough light without exposing it to the heat.

The partial collapse of the nave was perhaps the result of a raid by the Arab garrison of Qasr-Ibrim. The chief of this garrison, Ibrahim el-Qurdi, was defeated in 1173 or 1175 near Adendan, several kilometres to the north of Faras.²³ (This date coincided with the end of the episcopate of Iesou.) After this victory for the Christians, a new period of relative prosperity started in Faras. There were not the means for a complete reconstruction of the cathedral which was partly buried in the sand, but the cleaning of the nave in order to preserve the two lateral aisles and the adjoining rooms permitted the church to be used. In this last period the two lateral aisles of the cathedral and the other rooms were rather dark, for the windows were covered and the sunlight could only penetrate above the top of the screens at the side of the nave.

Under every painting there was a lamp which smoked and blackened the lower part of the murals and the yellow crosses painted under each of them. On a level with these crosses we have found holes in which hooks had been fixed whereon to hang the lamps.²⁴ The Cathedral was still accessible after it had ceased to be used for baptism, for we found the vaulted sepulchre of a bishop in the Baptistry. There were three lamps, two water jugs, and a beautiful wooden cross (PLATE XLIV, b) around his skeleton. We may suppose that this is the sepulchre of one of the latest Bishops of Pachoras, who died after Iesou the last on the list.²⁵

We should mention here another bishop's tomb of a late date which we found in the northern part of the commemorative chapel of Joannes.²⁶ The vault of this tomb, which contained two skeletons (one with a beautiful bronze bishop's cross) and that of the Holy Virgin's chapel were covered by a construction of burnt bricks built up against the exterior wall of the Apse at the level of the windows.²⁷ When we brought this constructure to light during the second season of our excavations we could not understand its purpose. Now, however, that we have uncovered Petros's tomb, the arched superstructure of which is of burnt bricks built up against the outside of the north wall of the Church on the South Slope of the Kom and topped by a cupola, we have no doubt that the former construction was an analogous sepulchral structure.²⁸ The tomb is

²³ Cf. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

²⁴ Such a device was found by Shinnie in the church at El-Ghazali; cf. P. L. Shinnie, 'Ghazali—A Monastery in the Northern Sudan', *SASOP*, vol. 5 (Khartoum, 1961), p. 25, pl. xv, a.

²⁵ The connexion of this tomb with Tamer seems doubtful as the date on his tombstone is still not clear. Cf. G. Lefebère, *Recueil des Inscriptions Grecques-Christiennes d'Egypte* (Cairo, 1907), no. 636, p. 121; F. Ll. Griffith, *JEA*, vol. 11 (1925), p. 262; F. Ll. Griffith, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period* (Berlin, 1913), p. 129. Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 163, gives probably an erroneous date for the death of this bishop, 709 A.M.—A.D. 993.

²⁶ Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 121 ff.

²⁷ Cf. *Faras*, I, p. 128 (D).

²⁸ Cf. KUSH XI, pl. lvii, a.

probably of the same period as the south corridor of the Cathedral²⁹ and the stairs which led to the north corridor. If Tamer was the bishop buried in the Baptistry, then the sepulchre above Joannes' tomb contained the bodies of one or more later bishops whose names are as yet unknown.

The North Monastery could not have been built before the end of the 12th century. At that time both the palaces and the houses on the east slope of the Kom were completely buried in the sand. The walls of these buildings were partly re-utilized to construct the foundations of the North Monastery which was built in four stages, and the small church³⁰ on the first floor was added later when the monastery was enlarged. This small church replaced for worship the Cathedral under the Citadel, which at that time was partly covered with sand. The small dimensions of the church in the North Monastery are the best proof of the decline of the community at Faras in the late Christian period.

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To summarize : The most prosperous period at Faras seems to have begun with the reign of Mercurios at the beginning of the 8th century. It was then that the edifice dedicated by Paulos and situated to the south of the Cathedral under the Citadel was built. During the 8th century the Cathedral was decorated for the first time with murals in violet. Pachoras, which was mentioned even in the 10th-century inscriptions (e.g. Aaron's stele of 973) as the metropolis, had remained the capital of Northern Nubia after its union with Central Nubia at the beginning of the 8th century under King Mercurios.³¹

The 10th century brought the development of the church into a basilica with cupolas, which replaced the earlier wooden roof and the best bishops' portraits were painted at this time. The list of twenty-seven bishops which we discovered is an extremely important historical document. These bishops known from the dedications as founders or builders of various edifices become real historical persons thanks to their portraits painted on the walls of the church. Anthropological analyses of the skeletons discovered in the tombs to the south of the church have yielded valuable data for the study of the features of the persons portrayed. Thus, for instance, Bishop Marianos is shown with a face of light olive colour surrounded by a black beard, while the head of Petros is painted in dark brown and instead of a beard he had but a few black tufts under his lower lip. His actual skull shows typically negroid features which seems to explain the nearly black colour of the head in the portrait.³²

²⁹ Cf. *Faras*, II (in print). ³⁰ Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 135 ff., pls. 63-74.

³¹ Cf. L. P. Kirwan, 'Notes on Topography of the Christian Nubian Kingdom', *JEA*, XXI (1935), p. 58 ; P. L. Shinnie, 'Medieval Nubia', *SAS* (Khartoum, 1954), p. 13.

³² According to the anthropological examination of the skull made by T. Dzierżykraj-Rogalski.

While the church was under reconstruction, another was founded to the south by the Eparch Iesou during the episcopate of Elias in the tenth year of the reign of King Zacharias III, 930. The largest series of murals was painted after the restoration of the church, at the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th, while another period of paintings is to be noted in the decoration of the walls added between the pillars, probably at the end of the 12th century. Thus we have in the Church under the Citadel a series of Christian paintings executed over a long period. The first phase dates from the 8th century, and the second from the 9th. The third and longest phase may be dated to the end of the 10th and the 11th century, while the final manifestation of this art appears to be of the 12th century. By the beginning of the 13th century the Cathedral and the buildings on the south slope of the Kom were already partly buried in the sand.

This was the end of the Christian architecture in the enclosure at Faras. The use of sandstone blocks, burnt bricks and wooden beams was characteristic of the sacred architecture. Mud bricks were used only for building arches, vaults and cupolas during the later reconstruction of the church. During this period mud bricks were also used for domestic buildings, houses and even bishops' palaces. In the last stage of Christian architecture at Faras, however, mud bricks were the medium for the Monastery and the North Church of the Citadel.³³

³³ Cf. *Faras*, I, pp. 130 ff.; KUSH x (1962), pp. 239 ff.