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Reports

- An inscribed basin of the 18th dynasty (reign of Amenhotep III) from the fortress of Shalfak in Lower Nubia** 1
W. Vivian Davies
- Angareeb-bed production in modern Nubia: Documenting a dying craft tradition** 11
Manuela Lehmann
- The biocultural heritage and historical ecology of date palm cultivation in Nubian villages, northern Sudan** 24
Philippa Ryan, Mohammed Hassan, Mohamed Saad, Marcus Jaeger, Caroline Cartwright, Dorian Fuller and Neal Spencer
- The archaeological and heritage survey of the Northern el-Mahas region. First season's report (2020)** 40
Abdelrahman Ibrahim Said
- Preliminary report for the Western Desert of the Third Cataract Region Project (Wadi Gorgod - first season 2018-2019)** 49
Hamad Mohamed Hamdeen, Altayeb Abdalla Hassbrabo, Safa Gamal Idres, Samar Salah Mustafa, and Fatima Idris Mahmoud
- Starting anew at Old Dongola** 67
Artur Obłuski and Dorota Dzierbicka
- From development displacement and salvage archaeology in Nubia to inclusive sustainable heritage and development crafting in Old Dongola** 82
Peter Bille Larsen
- Dialogue Community Project in Old Dongola (2019-2021)** 95
Tomomi Fushiya
- Wadi Abu Dom investigations: El Rum Oasis** 108
Tim Karberg and Angelika Lohwasser
- Goldmines, nomad camps, and cemeteries: The 2018 season of the Atbai Survey Project** 121
Julien Cooper
- Archaeological report on the excavation of a post-Meroitic necropolis at el-Madanab (Shahid Rescue Archaeological Project)** 135
Fakhri Hassan Abdallah, Romain David and Iwona Koziaradzka-Ogunmakin
- The archaeological site of Damboya in the Shendi Reach. Second season** 154
Marc Maillot
- Building E at Damboya, second season** 168
Gabrielle Choimet
- (Re)examining the tomb of Queen Yeturow at Nuri** 184
Meghan E. Strong, Susan Doll, Fakhri Hassan Abdallah, Helen O'Brien, Simone Petacchi, Abigail Breidenstein and Pearce Paul Creasman
- Dental insights into the biological affinities of the inhabitants of Gabati over a period of cultural transition** 195
Emma L. W. Phillips, Joel D. Irish and Daniel Antoine
- Jebel Hawrā, a new archaeological site in Eastern Sudan** 209
Enrico Giancristofaro

Studies

Was the individual buried in MOG012.4 a Christian, a pagan, or both? Evidence for the appropriation of Christianity from a Late Antique-Early Medieval tumulus grave on Mograt Island 221
Claudia Näser, Alexandros Tsakos and Jens Weschenfelder

After ‘InBetween’: Disentangling cultural contacts across Nubia during the 2nd millennium BC 230
Aaron de Souza

Skeuomorphism in Kerma metal vessels 243
Carl Walsh

Heart scarabs and other heart-related objects in New Kingdom Nubia 252
Rennan Lemos

***Sheikh and Melik* 1925: A short note** 270
Paul T. Nicholson

Book reviews 274

Obituaries

Peter MacKenzie Smith (1946-2020) 279

Professor Abdelgadir Mahmoud Abdallah (1937-2021) 279

Sandro Salvatori (1948-2020) 280

George Hart (1945-2021) 283

Biographies 284

Miscellanies 289

Front cover. Cattle and two goats\gazelle from Site GRD-14 in the Wadi Gorgod (photo Hamad Mohamed Hamdeen).

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Starting anew at Old Dongola

Artur Obłuski and Dorota Dzierzbicka



Figure 1. The logo of the socio-archaeological project at Old Dongola.

Introduction

Old Dongola has been the focus of research by archaeologists from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, since 1964. For over 50 years, each season has produced new data – mostly on the history, architecture, art and craftsmanship in the capital of the medieval Kingdom of Makuria (for overview and bibliography, see Jakobielski and Scholz 2001; Godlewski and Dzierzbicka 2015; Godlewski *et al.* 2018). However, the last 50 years has also brought about a redefinition of the aims of archaeological research in Sudan (Näser and Tully 2019; Fushiya 2020). It has become clear that expeditions must go beyond conducting archaeological research to working for and with local communities (Atalay 2012), and implementing the concepts and practices of public archaeology (McGimsey 1972; Merriman 2004; Schadla-Hall 2006). Given these developments, a reconsideration of the goals and priorities of the expedition was in order. This article summarises new fields of activity that the Polish Expedition has undertaken recently at Old Dongola in collaboration with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM). In 2018, both institutions agreed to make changes to the management strategy and goals of the expedition. Firstly, it was decided that fieldwork should focus on the site's Islamic heritage – a hitherto understudied research area of paramount historical and cultural importance. Secondly, a redirection towards collaborative archaeology was prioritised. Finally, sustainable development of the local communities. All three strategic goals, when achieved, were to result in the emergence of an environment conducive to local development, protection of world heritage and research. This overarching goal is expressed in the slogan 'Development, Heritage, Archaeology', embedded in the new expedition logo (Figure 1). The design was based on a painting of the Mosque at Old Dongola, presented by a local artist and retired teacher to the Polish team (Fushiya and Radziwiłko 2019, Plate 1).

Archaeology of the Funj period at Old Dongola

The first of the new goals is implemented within the framework of the project 'UMMA: Urban Metamorphosis of the community of a medieval African capital city', funded through a European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant launched in 2018. The project focuses on the period between the 14th and the 19th centuries, especially the so-called 'Dark Ages of Sudan' (14th-15th centuries) and the subsequent period of domination by the Funj Sultanate upstream of the Third Nile Cataract and of the Ottomans further north. The project is intended as the first study of the liminal phases of the Kingdom of Makuria in its capital city. Reportedly, around 1365, under the pressure of migrating Islamic Arab tribes, the royal court abandoned Dongola (Maqrizi in Vantini 1975, 699). One would expect that the departure of the ruler would lead to the demise of the city. Yet, 150 years later, according to historical narratives Dongola was still a thriving and populous urban settlement (Leo Africanus in Vantini 1975, 772). One of the main

research goals of the project is to determine the impact of the weakening of this central authority and migrations of Islamic Arab tribes on the kingdom's capital city and its community. UMMA also seeks to identify the interactions between the local community and newcomers, and trace the process of religious conversion of the population. The long-term goal is to study the life cycle of Old Dongola as an urban organism from its birth in Late Antiquity until its death in the early 20th century.

The project started with non-invasive magnetic and ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys of the citadel (Obluski *et al.* forthcoming). In the Makurian period, the citadel was fortified, the seat of the urban and state-level elite, built up with residential and religious architecture (Godlewski 2013, 21-29). Following the collapse of Makuria, houses were built on top of the ruins of the royal city. The magnetic survey provided the general outlines of structures in the settlement on the citadel and north of its walls (Figure 2). The GPR survey proved much more effective and provided a detailed image of the street plan (Figure 3). The imagery, combined with the results of excavations, has revealed that the Funj-period structures partially incorporated relics and the old spatial arrangement of the citadel into the new urban layout. This new plan, in turn, seems to have remained fairly consistent from the 16th century onward, with only minor changes. Thus far, the project has shown that, in the 16th-18th centuries, the Funj-period city built atop the citadel in Old Dongola had an egalitarian character. It was densely filled with houses built on an irregular network of streets, with a main route running around the entire hill matching travellers' descriptions (Çelebi 1994, 151). Shorter streets led into the settlement. This contrasts with the elite architecture of the citadel in the Makurian period and corroborates information about the abandonment

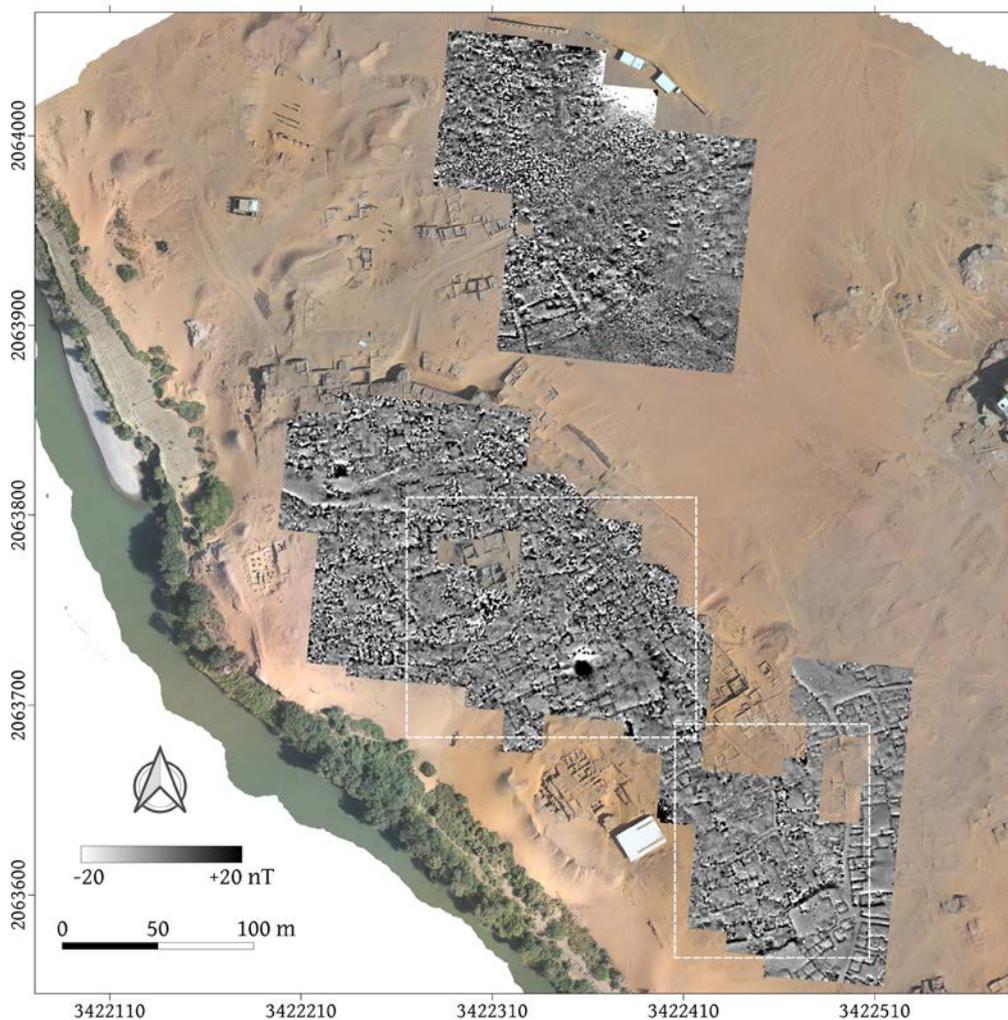


Figure 2. Results of the geomagnetic survey (T. Herbich and R. Ryndziewicz).

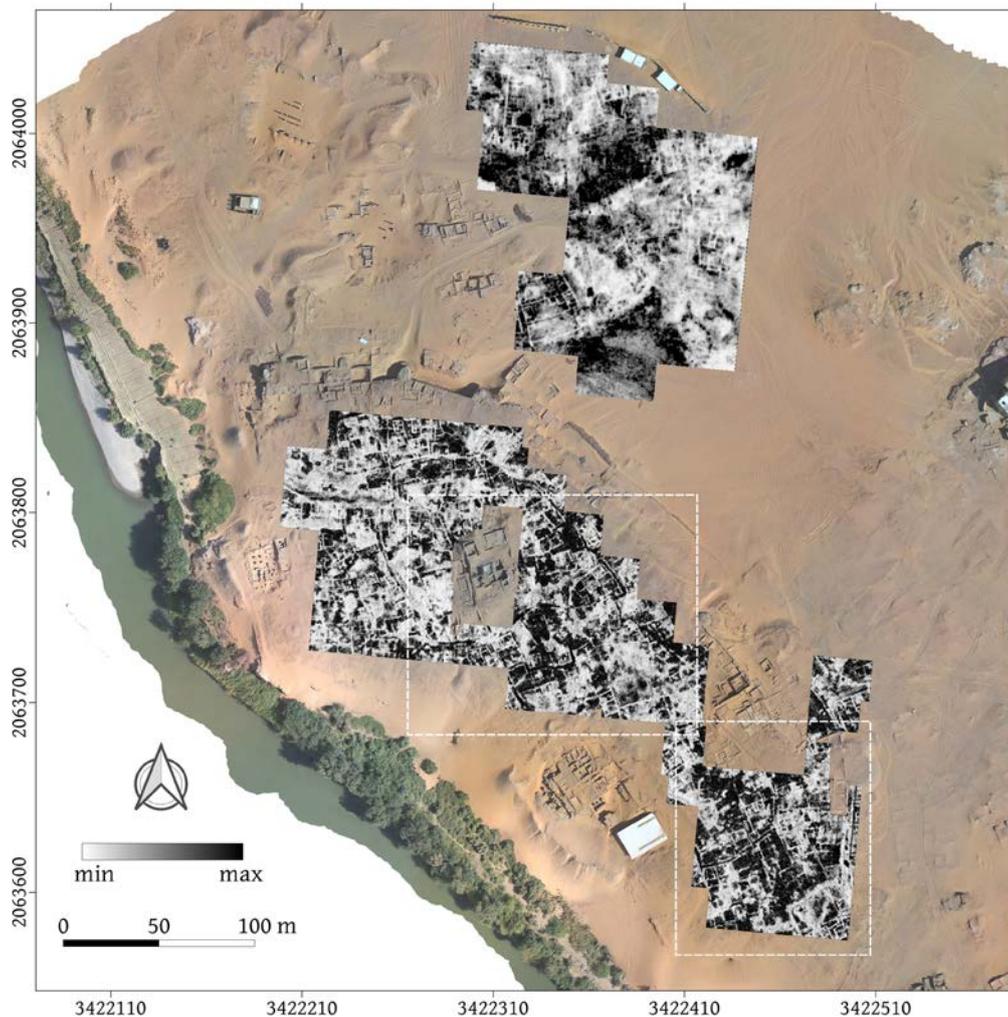


Figure 3. Results of the GPR survey (T. Herbich and R. Ryndziewicz).

of the capital by the royal court (Maqrizi in Vantini 1975, 699).

A typical Funj-period house was single-storey, with a flat, thatched roof of palm leaves usually supported by a pillar in the middle of the room. A basic domestic unit was a two-room module consisting of one large, nearly square, multipurpose room, and one narrow storage room at the back (Obłuski *et al.* 2021). The first of these spaces was furnished with benches of various sizes. Wider benches were probably used for sleeping, while narrow ones served as supports for storage vessels. A vessel with traces of burning on the inner surface, often found sunk in the floor or in the upper surface of a bench, could have been used for warming up food, or heating the room itself as well as for 'smoke baths' still practiced by women in Sudan. The narrow room served as a pantry, and its furnishings consisted of storage vessels sunk in the floor, placed on shelves, suspended from roof beams, or hung on pegs in the walls (e.g. Room U39, see de Lellis 2021, 113 or Room U26b, see Wyżgoł 2021, 188-192). The known examples of similar structures are from Attiri, Ginetti (Adams 1987, 337), Gergetti Island (Vila 1977, 32-37), Diffinarti/Abumulgum (Edwards 2018, fig. 1) and Jebel Kadamusa (Osman and Edwards 2012, 187-194).

The Funj-period houses differ significantly from the elite residential buildings of the Makurian period discovered at Old Dongola so far (Godlewski 2013, 96-107). The medieval dwellings usually had a ground floor with vaulted ceilings supporting an upper floor accessed by means of a staircase. The flat-roofed, single-storey houses of the later period represent a markedly different architectural tradition. Their spatial organisation suggests that daily life was centred on activities performed in a large, open courtyard.

A striking difference between medieval and Funj-period houses is the lack of toilets in the latter. It points to the use of chamber pots or other containers for this function.

In some cases, the dwellings formed larger clusters that seemed to follow kinship and probably ethnic ties at a higher level of social structure. Such compounds featured buildings comprising two or more interconnected spaces as well as single rooms clustered around a courtyard (e.g. Compound U1/16/17/18/30/35, see de Lellis and Maślak 2021). In some cases, they shared a common food processing space (Room U45, see Maślak and Deptuła 2021, 136-137). The large courtyards, accessed from the city's narrow streets, seem to have been hubs of daily activity and social life. The size of the excavated compounds is the sole indicator of diversity in social rank. The smallest complete compound measured 66m², and the largest at least 445m², while the average size of a household was about 200-250m² (Obłuski *et al.* 2021, 242). The compounds comprising a larger number of buildings and rooms also seem to exhibit greater functional diversification. The small compounds, in contrast, have two or three multifunctional rooms and lack spaces identifiable as storerooms or kitchens. We have not yet identified any gendered spaces. The majority of the investigated Funj-period compounds had a single courtyard lacking recognisable internal divisions, with only one entrance from the street. The only identified gendered activity, cooking, was done in the common area of the compound, either in the courtyard or a kitchen accessed from it.

So far, the construction of the earliest typical Funj-period houses can be placed in the 16th century (Building U26a/26b radiocarbon-dated by sample S388; Wyżgoł 2021; Dzierzbicka 2021b). It seems to confirm the hypothesis that after the abandonment of the capital by the royal court, the remaining community and newcomers may have occupied existing medieval structures, adapting them for their purposes (Obłuski 2014). Accumulation of sand and other material (mostly animal dung) forced the new inhabitants of the citadel to abandon them and subsequently new-style housing was introduced all over the city, inside and outside the citadel.

A hitherto unattested building tradition has also been uncovered (Wyżgoł and Deptuła 2020). Dwellings east of the citadel, uncovered in the 2018-2019 season (e.g. Compound U21a/21b/28a/28b/29/47a/47b/96, U15/37/40 see Deptuła 2021; Wyżgoł 2021) and in 2021 (Deptuła forthcoming), include wattle-and-daub structures made of reeds covered with mud mortar. Despite the use of a different building technique, the mud-brick and wattle-and-daub houses are very similar: furnished with benches and entrances flanked by stub walls. Neither is there a significant difference in the household inventories between the two types. In the 2019-2020 season, wattle-and-daub structures were excavated inside the citadel (Deptuła forthcoming). This technique is quite popular south of Khartoum in modern Sudan and may indicate the ethnic diversity of the Old Dongola population during the Funj period.

One of the main foci of the UMMA project is investigating religious transformation at Old Dongola at the twilight of the medieval period. To date, however, no buildings of apparently religious purpose have been identified. This is fairly consistent with claims in literary sources that the inhabitants of Old Dongola were living in a kind of religious and spiritual limbo when the first Islamic missionary, Ghulam Allah, arrived (MS BA, CCVIII, transl. in MacMichael 1922, II, 35; Trimmingham 1949, 100). This event cannot be precisely dated, but could have happened at the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century (MacMichael 1922, II, 10, 13-14; Holt 1967, 145). From these narratives, we may infer that religious conversion to Islam in Old Dongola, occurring from the 14th probably until at least the 16th century, was more a political than a spiritual and social change. The lack of religious architecture in the citadel suggests that Islam was not yet institutionalised. The rulers of the new polity that emerged on the ruins of the capital city of Makuria were Muslim, yet there was no urge to convert the community, which may have remained Christian for a long time. The fall of state support for Christianity, matched with a shortage of priests, paints a picture of a declining and degenerating Christianity and a religious vacuum. This must have been advantageous for

proselytising Sufi Muslim holy men, filled the spiritual void.

Islamisation of Dongola seems to have gained momentum around the mid-17th century. Its key agent was Hassan *walad* Kashkash, the King of Dongola, who institutionalised and strengthened it by establishing the office of *qadi* (Islamic judge) and appointing Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Saleh, the Suwar ed-Dahab, to the post in AD 1683/4 (Hasan 1971, 347-348). Approximately the same time (1672/3 AD), Çelebi reports the presence of seven Friday mosques, nine houses of prayer, and six religious schools in the city (Çelebi 1994, 151). The Islamisation of urban space has not yet been confirmed by current archaeological research in the citadel. Either we are unable to recognise these buildings and distinguish them from regular houses, or they were located outside the citadel. The latter possibility is consistent with information shared from the local community - that religious schools, or *khalaawi*, had been founded in what is now known as the Abandoned Village, a residential district south of the citadel. On the other hand, the absence of mosques from the urban landscape was clearly not uncommon in Sudan, given that, for example, not a single mosque was found at Shendi in the mid-20th century (Crawford 1951, 61). Overall, the Islamisation in Sudan was very slow, and even 18th century sources claim that, despite being Muslims, the Sudanese were aware of only the basic principles of Islamic law (Bruce 1804, VI, 389-390; Trimingham 1949, 100-101; see, however, Spaulding 1977).

Importantly for the study of Islamisation at Old Dongola, excavations of Funj-period strata have yielded new textual sources, among them two letters dated to this period. One was written on behalf of King Kashkash by his scribe. This fairly short document contains instructions given by the king to a subordinate. The second letter provides information about social and economic relations in the community, reporting on the existence of a local market, and loans made by holy men (*fuggara*). It also mentions Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Salih, whom we can tentatively identify with the first *qadi* of Old Dongola, the Suwar ed-Dahab, appointed by King Kashkash.

An unexpected find was a large Makurian structure located in the centre of the citadel (Figure 4). Funj period houses constructed on top of it obscure most of its form, but during the 2021 season an apse was identified in its eastern part, leading to a tentative identification of the building as a church. The apse, measuring 6m in diameter, is the largest uncovered in Nubia thus far. A test trench has enabled us to estimate its preserved height as about 9m. A change of brick bonding to a herringbone pattern in the uppermost courses confirms that the preserved top of the apse wall formed the spring of its semidome. Wall paintings extant inside the apse show male figures arranged in two rows, one above the other. The upper row must have extended into the semidome over the apse. The painted plaster seems to represent a late phase of decoration and covers a blocked opening c. 2.5m high and 0.7m wide, presumably a window, in the north-eastern part of the apse. Another relic of the church is a row of three massive pillars built of fired brick, two at the mouth of the apse and one to its south. They seem to belong to the latest phases of the building. In addition, south of the apse, where one would expect the *diakonikon*, we found an almost completely preserved dome, c. 7.5m in diameter. It probably covers a structure separate from the church, as the pillars of the latter rose much higher than the base, and even the top of the dome. The character of the structures - the church with the apse adorned with depictions of figures resembling apostles and the smaller, domed building, as well as their location in the heart of the city and kingdom - are reminiscent of the Faras cathedral and the tomb of the archbishop Ioannes (Godlewski 2006); however, at this stage the comparison is only a hypothesis.

Studying social change through household inventories

Research on the identity of the inhabitants of Old Dongola in the Funj period and studies on the social, economic and religious changes taking place in its communities are conducted with the use of finds

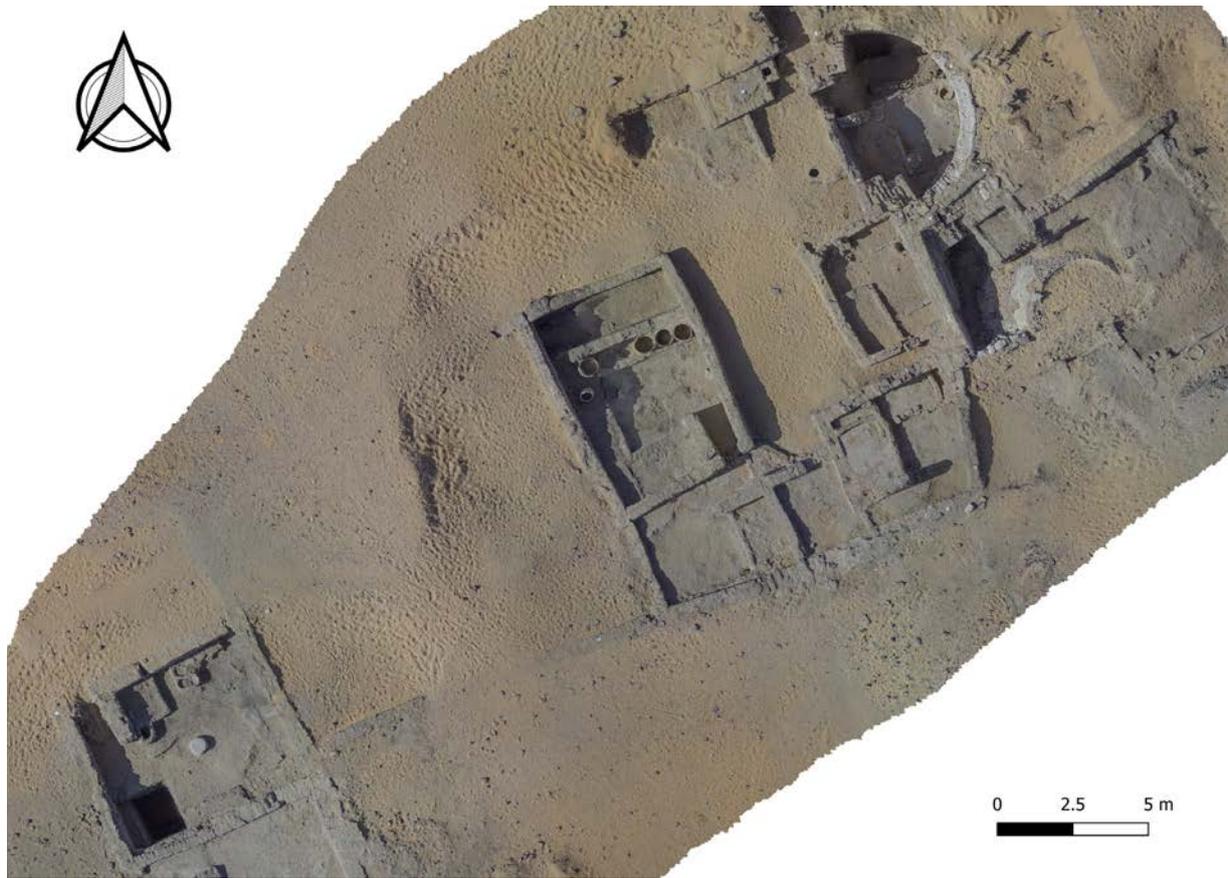


Figure 4. Orthophoto map of the remains of newly discovered structures in the middle of the citadel (A. Chlebowski).

constituting household inventories. Thanks to a meticulous collection policy, recent excavations produced a great quantity of objects made of various materials, including basketry and cordage, leather and wooden items, pottery, smoking pipes, glass bangles, and beads. Studies of Funj period material culture have gained a new momentum from the single-context stratigraphic method of excavation, which allowed for collection of precise contextual data and establishment of chronological sequences (Dzierzbicka 2021a; Obłuski and Dzierzbicka forthcoming).

The phasing of pottery finds based on their archaeological contexts led to the creation of a preliminary chronological sequence, thus far limited to assemblages dated to the 17th and 18th centuries. The UMMA pottery team, led by Katarzyna Danys, recognised a vast repertoire of forms (Danys forthcoming). This has revealed diversity in fabrics and pottery-making techniques in Old Dongola and its vicinity, challenging earlier claims that the repertoire of vessel shapes in this period was limited (see Phillips 2003, 432). The richness and variety of decoration, including combinations of impressed, incised, painted and applied patterns, disproves the notion that pottery makers in this period lacked interest in the vessels' aesthetics. The Dongola pottery assemblage has affinities with vessels from Lower Nubia and the Sennar region. The standard repertoire includes mostly handmade forms: distinctive open bowls fired red on the outside and black on the inside (PT8), closed bowls (PT67), short-necked jars (PT20, PT21, and PT41), baking plates (PT13), and incense burners (PT4), as well as *qawwadis* (PT87) – the only wheel-made pots of this period (see Figure 5).

While the finds differ little from one Funj period household to another, there are striking differences between these and assemblages from domestic contexts of the Makurian period (see Godlewski 1990; 2010, 76-77; 2013, 97-107). One is the large amount of basketry found in the houses of the later period (Warowna forthcoming). While handmade pottery dominated in the 17th and 18th century strata, wheel-

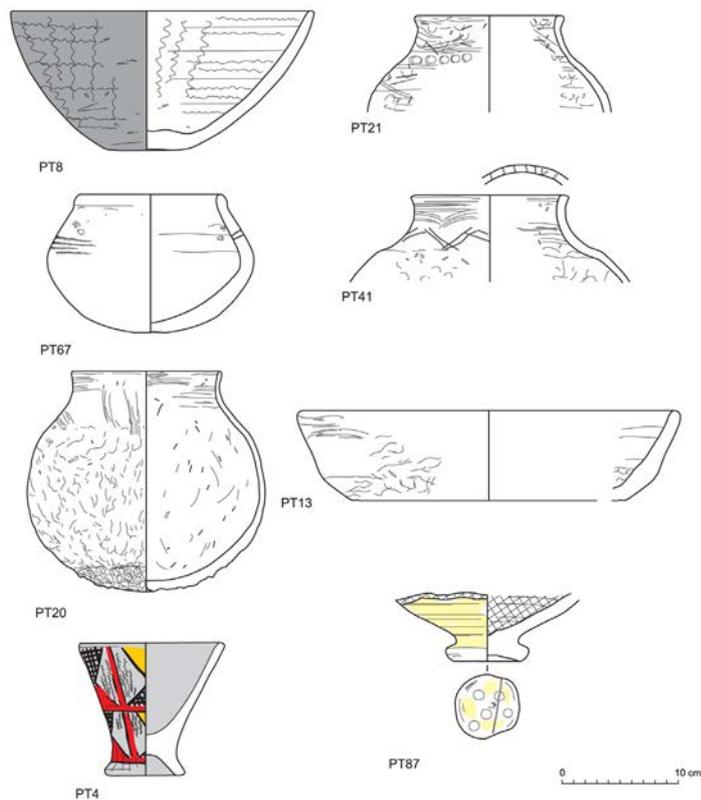


Figure 5. The most characteristic pottery types from Funj Period excavations at Old Dongola (K. Danys).

made forms were by far the most common in the Makurian period (Danys 2015; 2018). In addition, Makurian assemblages included lamps and glass vessels, which were absent from Funj-period houses. The latter yielded incense burners and bowls made of wood and gourds, as well as leather sacks (Danys forthcoming; Cervi forthcoming a). The above suggests changes in artisanal traditions and the emergence of new customs, primarily related to the storage, preparation and serving of food. However, it needs stressing that the excavated houses from the Funj period in Old Dongola probably had owners of lower social status than the city's Makurian houses, which likely belonged to the highest elite of the Makurian kingdom. Another distinctive class of Funj period objects were *hijbat*, amulets held in leather cases (Cervi forthcoming b). These are part of a tradition going back to the medieval period (see Anderson 2016, 9), but the

Arabic texts found within the leather cases place them firmly in the Islamic world.

One of the noteworthy novelties that appeared in Old Dongola during the Funj period were smoking pipes, mostly pipe-bowls of fired clay and stone (Danys and Wyzgoł 2018; forthcoming). Their arrival, probably associated with the introduction of tobacco, was quite early, on the basis of the presence of early Ottoman pipes in Old Dongola and elsewhere in the Middle Nile Valley. Smoking must have suited local tastes, as it appears to have swiftly led to locally produced pipes in the 17th century AD. Most of the specimens recovered, however, were imports from the Ottoman Empire. In addition to providing valuable information on local customs, they offer evidence for contacts between Old Dongola and the outside world (Figure 6).

Important information regarding the place of Old Dongola in interregional trade networks may be obtained from beads and fragments of glass bangles, abundant in the layers dated to the 16th-18th centuries. The abundance of Red Sea and Indian Ocean mollusc shells suggests better connections between Old Dongola and the Sudanese coast than in the medieval period (Then-Obłuska forthcoming b). Glass beads, which constitute 90% of the beads, have been subjected to chemical composition analyses to determine their origins and production sites. Awaiting results, Joanna Then-Obłuska turned to the social aspects of glass personal adornments in Funj period Sudan (Then-Obłuska forthcoming a). Glass bangles, for example, were probably worn by women, as can be inferred from their size, as well as ethnographic data. Their find spots, therefore, may indicate gendered spaces within Dongolawi households.

Towards collaborative archaeology and sustainable development

The community engagement project, funded by the Polish Ministry of Higher Education and Science within the framework of the 'Dialogue' Programme, started in 2019 (see Fushiya and Radziwiłko 2019; Fushiya



Figure 6. Selected pipes from Funj Period excavations at Old Dongola: Kaolin fabric (1-3), alluvial fabric (4-6), and stone (7-9) (M. Reklajtis).

2021, this volume; Larsen 2021, this volume). It built upon existing relationships between the expedition and the community and improved them, while analysing them in the process. Living in Ghaddar, the team had developed neighbourly relations generating sporadic interaction with the local community. Efforts to support local schools in Ghaddar were made by Stefan Jakobielski, the former director of the expedition. Oral histories have been collected in the area (Bashir 2003, 519). The Polish expedition developed a community project in 2008 as part of the Polish Aid programme, focusing on conservation of the mosque to prepare it for tourists and increase awareness of local and regional history (Obłuski *et al.* 2013). However, as elsewhere in places where archaeology developed without the involvement of people who have social, historical and cultural associations with the object of archaeological investigation, the distance between archaeological fieldwork and the local community was vast. Therefore, there was a need to revitalise and enhance relations between the expedition and the local community, to implement best practices in the narration of the site and to explore ways of contributing to community development. Thus, the Old Dongola community engagement programme and heritage management plan were born.

Activities were carried out by Tomomi Fushiya (University of Leiden, University of Warsaw) and Peter Bille Larsen (University of Geneva) (see Fushiya 2021, this volume; Larsen 2021, this volume). Among the activities was the creation of community-based resources through interaction with those living near the site. An important component of the project was extensive communication with the local communities: formal and informal interactions, interviews, focus group discussions, outreach and collaborative programmes. An important point was to identify the local values and meanings of the site among the local community of el-Ghaddar (Fushiya forthcoming). Meetings were held with leaders of the local community, the Old Dongola Committee, as well as officials at various administrative levels including the Locality of el-Ghoted and the Unity of Old Dongola to launch collaborative projects in community engagement in heritage protection, and to discuss sustainable development strategies around the site.

Several visits to the Abandoned Village and Islamic cemeteries with members of the Ghaddar community (in particular, Sheikh Mohammed Sati Mohammed and Babikir Khalifa), who generously shared their historical knowledge of these areas, helped to locate places of importance for the development of Islam at Old Dongola (mosques, tombs of sheikhs, religious schools). The main tangible output of the project is a book integrating diverse narratives of Old Dongola and its history authored by Tomomi Fushiya (Fushiya forthcoming). Consultations about its content were undertaken with community members and local teachers during field seasons.

Two types of outreach activities were organised within the framework of the project to disseminate information. Both included site tours to raise awareness about Old Dongola's archaeological remains among the community and create an opportunity for the expedition to interact with local people. The first component of community outreach was a school programme consisting of a series of poster workshops for local students and teachers from schools in Ghaddar, Hammor and Bokkibil. It consisted of field trips with guided visits, during which student groups took photos and recorded information on features and landmarks they deemed important and remarkable. Subsequently, the groups created colourful posters using the images and information they had collected. At the end of each workshop, the students gave presentations of their work. The workshops raised awareness about the importance of preserving the site and stimulated the curiosity of the students towards the site and archaeology.

The second outreach programme consisted of Site Open Days, approximately once a month, during the team's presence in the field. These events were intended for all members of the local community, attracting residents of Ghaddar, as well as other villages in the neighbourhood. On Site Open Days, the archaeologists welcomed from tens to about a thousand visitors, and gave guided tours of the site. The main goal of this outreach programme was to introduce the people to the site. Visitors learnt about archaeological work and the protecting importance of heritage, while archaeologists learned about the community's interests and preferences concerning the tours. In addition, training for the tourist police was conducted in cooperation with the local tourist police station. Guided tours for groups of policemen were provided in order to raise awareness of the historic value and cultural importance of the site.

One of the aims was community participation and to work towards incorporating the knowledge, questions and ideas of local people into archaeological practice, and to increase the social relevance of fieldwork. Meetings (*wanasa*) with the local community and craftswomen were held at the house of the Polish archaeological expedition in Ghaddar on Open Days to exchange knowledge on selected everyday objects found during excavations. Following the principles of community archaeology (Atalay 2012, 55-59), the project seeks reciprocal gains for archaeologists and the community, aiming to benefit the community and work with it rather than see it as a subject for research. The Open Days bring mutual benefits, as archaeologists gain insights into the uses of traditional materials and tools, while local craftspeople have a chance to interact with artefacts and draw inspiration from historic workmanship.

The project has identified and assessed community needs, skills and options for heritage development. The potential for developing community-based businesses was assessed by looking at handicraft and food production to enhance the value of heritage through direct socio-economic benefits. A local craft study and collaboration with basketry makers led to a revitalisation of traditional crafts and the development of offerings to tourists. Archaeologists' visits to basketry makers also permitted them to learn about mat-and basket-making techniques and gain a better understanding of this material when found in archaeological contexts.

The project provided an opportunity for Sudanese university students and NCAM employees to build capacity in community archaeology and values-based heritage management, training them to look at beyond a site's scientific value. During the project, a community evaluation survey was conducted using

four local assistants. In 2021, a training workshop in community-based tourism for over 30 participants was organised in Ghaddar by UNESCO, the Governorate of the Northern State, and the Polish Archaeological Expedition. It addressed the historic importance of the region, the economic impact of tourism, and aspects of community tourism services like homestays, hospitality and cuisine, handicrafts and tourism guidance.

The project supported the development of community-based tourism by providing material and logistical aid to the first homestay tourist accommodation in Ghaddar. Promotion of tourist services, including accommodation, cuisine, local crafts and guided tours, helps local inhabitants benefit from their heritage and should have a positive impact on the local economy.

A strategy for heritage and sustainable development was agreed by stakeholders and facilitated by Peter Larsen. A series of discussions and workshops were held at local, national and international levels to agree issues and priorities concerning development in the locality and uses of heritage. A Stakeholder Meeting for the Strategy of Heritage and Sustainable development for Old Dongola was organised at the house of the Polish Expedition (Figure 7). The meeting was led by Larsen, with 34 national and local stakeholders, as well as members of the Polish team. At the end of the meeting, the '*nafeer*' for Old Dongola was produced and all relevant stakeholders present agreed to cooperate on the sustainable development of the area and an action plan for 2021. It is an important milestone, and is crucial for achieving nomination to the World Heritage List.

New initiatives have been launched to complement the 'Dialogue' funded project. In 2020, collaboration with local schools was expanded with the launch of the programme 'We are only miles apart' coordinated by Marcin Gostkowski. The aim is to establish cooperation and heritage-based cultural exchanges between Polish elementary schools and schools near the archaeological site. Activities include promotion of Sudan's culture and heritage in Poland through workshops and fundraising. The funds raised are to benefit elementary schools in Sudan, specifically for repairs and renovations in schools in the Old Dongola area, and to purchase classroom furnishings and teaching aides according to the schools' needs. In 2020, visits to the schools and meetings with teachers and headmasters were held to determine the schools' needs. The project also funded annual prizes for students with the best results in each class at the end of the school year.

The community-based approach to archaeology has expanded to virtually all research avenues pursued at Old Dongola. Meetings were held with potters in the nearby village of Djabarona to learn about local pottery-making traditions and technologies. In addition to ethnographic knowledge, this provided insights



Figure 7. *Nafeer* stakeholders' gathering at Old Dongola (M. Reklajtis).

into the late medieval and early modern pottery found at Old Dongola. Furthermore, a visit was paid to Nigerian *zir* (water jar) makers at ed-Debba to investigate their pottery-making techniques, and compare them with local traditions. Investigations combining local knowledge and sociocultural associations with archaeological findings were implemented in archaeobotanical studies and household archaeology.

Last but not least, the expedition organised and funded a three-day football tournament, the Old Dongola Cup, bringing together teams from nearby villages. The football pitch at Ghaddar, located next to the Polish expedition house, was levelled and provided with new goal nets. The purpose of the initiative was closer integration of the archaeological team with the local community and promotion of sport as a platform for cultural exchange.

Heritage protection and management

The protection, conservation and site management programme carried out with the support of the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project was boosted by cooperation with the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Assessment of the state of preservation of one of the largest collections of medieval wall paintings in the world has been completed and priorities for the protection and conservation of the most endangered wall paintings set. The wall paintings that have been exposed over the years need regular care and, in some cases, immediate intervention. Most issues apply to the most recent discoveries, particularly in Building SWN.B.V.

The site management plan aims to protect the continuous cultural landscape of the site and its environment, and the preservation of the site's integrity and authenticity. In the coming season, priorities will be set with all the stakeholders from the local communities up to the state level in order to reach agreement. The main issues currently are the boundaries of the site and preservation of the landscape. The latter is complicated by the fact that some houses have been built within the site boundaries. It is a challenge for the future to find solutions that will ensure the protection and integrity of the site without damaging relations between the expedition and the local community.

The National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) has started to apply for the addition of Old Dongola to the UNESCO World Heritage list. The national importance of Old Dongola was previously recognised in 1994 through its inclusion on the tentative list of the UNESCO World Heritage programme. The archaeological expedition of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, is eagerly supporting this endeavour. NCAM and the expedition have agreed that the narrative of the outstanding universal values of the site needs changing. The emphasis so far has been on Old Dongola as being a capital of the Christian Kingdom of Makuria. It excluded the rich Islamic heritage of the city, which includes the oldest preserved mosque in Sudan, the *qubbat* cemetery, including the tomb of Ghulam Allah, one of the earliest Islamic missionaries to Sudan, as well as the agglomeration of early modern Old Dongola inhabited from the Funj period until the early 20th century. These aspects combining the traditions of two monotheistic religions form a unique visually symbolic Middle Nile Valley cultural landscape.

The current approach stresses the relationship between heritage and local communities in contemporary Sudanese society. Using multiple narratives, the statement of significance for the nomination, and prospective site management measures, this will be more sensitive to social inclusion, equity and sustainability, considering potential positive and negative impacts on local communities. Community participation in management planning and practices has gained importance in recent decades, recognising the social relevance of heritage (Logan 2004; Jokilehto 2009), as it responds to local needs, concerns and characteristics of heritage and management systems. It is key for departing from a colonial, Eurocentric concept surrounding heritage (Smith 2006; Winter 2014) and for the decolonisation of heritage from concept through to research, methods of conservation, and management (Chirikure *et al.*

2010). Community engagement has contributed to the preparations for nomination by exploring the local value of Old Dongola, highlighting ways in which local residents wish to take the initiative to preserve and use their heritage for cultural and social benefits.

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