

PREFACE

In 2015–2016, a mission from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, continued fieldwork and conservation at the site of Dongola. Work was conducted in cooperation with the Sudanese National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums within the frame of two research programs funded by the Qatar–Sudan Archaeological Project: QSAP.10 and QSAP.31. The two focal points of the fieldwork were the Great Monastery of St Anthony (Kom H) and the Citadel of Dongola. The team also engaged in conservation and reconstruction work in the staircase of the Mosque Building, the former Throne Hall of Makuria.

In the monastery, excavation work was carried out in the western courtyard, the Monastery Church and the Central Building. In addition, a reassessment was made of the architectural phasing of the northwestern part of the monastery (so-called Northwest Annex). Furthermore, research on the previously uncovered burial complex of the bishops of Dongola, particularly the inscribed crypt of archbishop Georgios, led to the publication in 2017 of a volume by Adam Łajtar and Jacques van der Vliet, *Empowering the dead in Christian Nubia. The texts from a medieval funerary complex in Dongola (JJP Supplement XXXII, Warsaw)*. Lastly, a shelter built over the western part of the Monastery Church permitted the transfer of several wall paintings from the walls in the naos of the late church. The murals are now on exhibition in this secure space.

In the complex of royal buildings on the sites SWN.B.I and B.V on the Citadel, a new roof was built over the Church of Archangel Raphael. This measure was vital for the protection of several dozen wall paintings preserved in the

interior. The new shelter also ensured proper conditions for the documentation of compositions and inscriptions from the late 8th–early 9th century, which survive on the walls of the royal church.

Protective works in the Mosque Building consisted of the reconstruction of the upper part of the staircase and building a roof and terrace over the west part of the building. The interior of the building had been exposed to wind, sand, and rain for nearly two hundred years due to damage and ultimate destruction of the roofing over the stairwell. Now the roof is in place, and visitors can admire from the rooftop terrace a stunning view of the landscape surrounding the ruins of Dongola – the Nile, the cemetery with domed tombs, and the abandoned village to the south of the Citadel.

The papers presented in this volume report on the fieldwork, conservation and restoration work and present the results of studies on uncovered texts and objects.

Thank are due all the participants in the research: archaeologists, conservators, architects, epigraphists, ceramologists, and others, for their unfailing dedication to the work and for their important intellectual contributions to the study of the civilization of Dongola, the capital of the kingdom of Makuria.

The expedition is also grateful to the University of Warsaw, the Sudanese National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, and the Qatar–Sudan Archaeological Project for support that made research in Dongola possible.

Last but not least, words of gratitude are due to all colleagues whose work brought this publication to fruition.