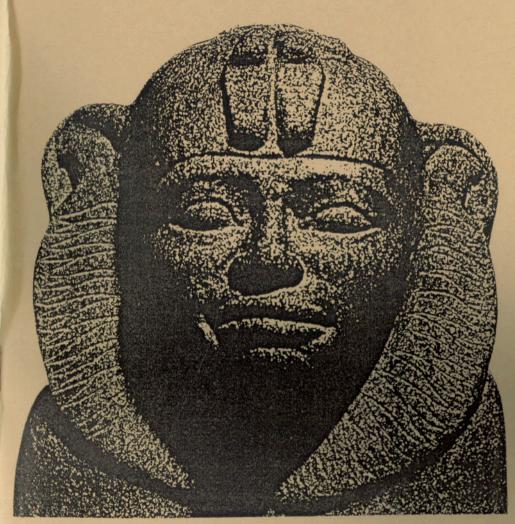
# Nubian Letters

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August 1990

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# A BRIEF REPORT FROM THE FINNISH NUBIA EXPEDITION 1964-1965 TO THE MURSHID AREA SOUTH OF GEMAI EAST.

DR. GUSTAF DONNER, HELSINKI, FINLAND.

Since the area was a direct continuation of the area of the Scandinavian Joint Expedition we have been waiting up till now with the publication in order to co-ordinate our tables with those of the S.J.E. notably those of the Middle Nubian volume which appeared in December 1989. There were finds from almost all periods of Nubian history. All in all, fifty-one sites were investigated, forty-two of them in toto. The remaining nine were Christian or Moslem. The dating of the sites is shown in table 1. The total of the table does not correspond with the total of the sites due to the fact that some of them contained finds from two periods.

### Rock drawings

In addition to Dr. Hinze's registrations the expedition found nine rock drawings. Among them were giraffes, cows, oxen, with bent horns and a Pharaonic boat with men standing on deck, one of them Pharao himself.

#### Neolithic remains

The neolithic sites belonged to the Southern Methodist University according to the stipulations in the concession license. We excavated, however, one site that contained pottery of the sandy ferruginous ware associated with Early Khartoum.

### A-group

All the three A-group sites were habitation sites or "camp sites". The pottery from two of them displays the "wolvesteeth" associated with Es-Shaheinab.

#### C-group

There were cemeteries from all of Bietak's "stages".ending with graves with mudbrick and pottery from C-group and New Kingdom.

#### Kerma culture

The expedition excavated three Kerma cemetaries, one of which was Kerma Ancien and two kerma Classique.

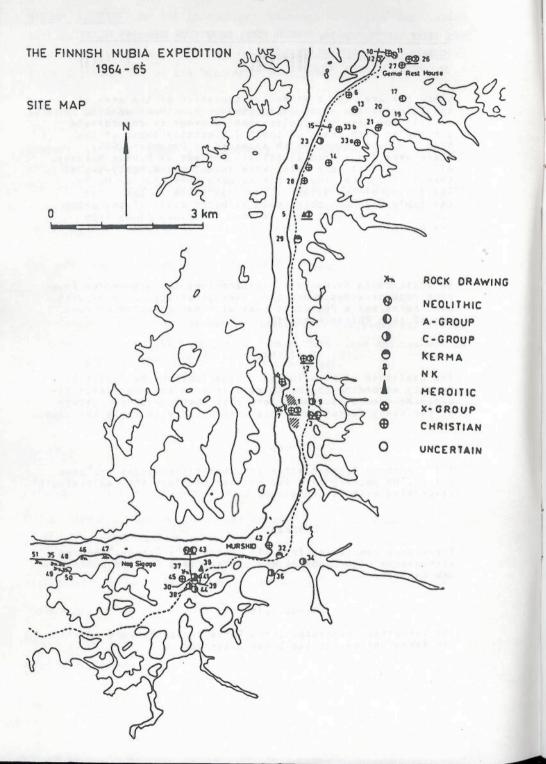


Table 1. The total of the table does not correspond with the total of sites due to the fact that some of the sites contained finds from two historical periods.

TABLE 1.

4 17	<u> </u>		Habitation sites	Cemeteries	Rock drawings	Mis- cellaneous	Total
Neolithic	• •		3				3
A-Group	•••		4				4
C-Group			2	5	1	bhatar and	8
Kerma			er water it	3			3
Pharaonic			1	2	1	alla punch	4
Meroitic	••	••	1	2		Inno/dice	3
X-Group			2	2			4
Christian			7	7		1	15
Moslem	٠	:.		2		Dan car i v	2
Uncertain			2	2	7	en e u	11
Total	٠		22	25	9	1	57

### New Kingdom

The pottery from the sites yielded vessels of simple wheel-made ware. In addition was found sherds from a blue painted jar which belongs to the Amarna period and of a quality that R.Holthoer has seen only in the museums of Cairo and Berlin.

### Meroitic culture

Meroe was well represented with graves containing painted pottery, iron weapons and ankle rings, bronze objects, amulets, beads, scarabs and decorated pottery.

#### X-group

One site contained over 100 graves. There were the usual axes and daggers and a bronze bowl, certainly of roman origin. Sherds were collected from two denuded habitation sites.

### The Christian period

The Christian remains were, as could be expected, numerous. For the benefit of our two pathologists, Professor A. Telkkä and Dr. J. Ahlqvist who stayed with the expedition for two weeks, two cemetaries containing together more than 100 graves were dug. On the island Ushinarti there was a Christian settlement with a large labyrinthic structure as a dominating feature. The building resembles the "blockhouse" on Meinarti described by W.Y. Adams in Kush 1964.

Currently (May to June) Eugen Strouhal examines our rather extensive bone-collection. We are also doing thermo-luminiscence analyses of pottery from the transitional periods.

All in all, the results of the expedition were gratifying in that, thanks to the narrowness of the habitable area and the thorough surveying (trial pits and trenches in sandy, uncertain areas) we think that most of the existing sites were actually found.

## EXAMINATION OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MATERIAL OF THE FINNISH NUBIA EXPEDITION.

DR. EUGEN STROUHAL, PRAGUE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Skulls , mandibles , and various postcranial bones representing a total of 110 individals were brought by the Expedition to Helsinki , where I examined them recently . They could be divided into a series originating from three Christian cemeteries and in several smaller groupings dated G-group . Kerma . Meriotic , and X-Group periods . A set of metric and descriptive features was used to study their morphology which will be compared with the range of variation of population of the adjoining concession area

of the Scandinavian Joint Expedition . A strikingly rich body cevidence was gained for paleopathology, comprising vertebral tuberculosis, a possible metastatic tumour, cases of arthritiand osteomyelitis, frequent dental disease, etc. On the contrary, the material was not representative for demographic conclusions, which had to be based on the archaelogical field data. They revealed a curious scarcity of infant and child burials in most of the investigated cemeteries.

Aknowledgement. The study was aided by a grant of the Sigrid Jusélius Foundation. Helsinki, Finland.

INTERIM REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS AT SOBA EAST, CENTRAL SUDAN, 1989-1990.

ISABELLA Y. SJÜSTRÜM AND DEREK A. WELSBY, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, UNITED KINGDOM.

Following on the work carried out under the aegis of the British Institute in Eastern Africa by Welsby and Daniels in four previous seasons at Soba, a further campaign has been planned to run for three seasons. This is the interim report on the first season.

MOUND M12 (trenches M14-16) is a prominent, largely natural mound, crowned by the remains of a red brick building. As is usual with the red brick buildings at Soba, it has been extensively robbed, but its ground plan was clear (fig. 1) and occupation deposits survived in many of the rooms. The pre-church features were relatively unspectacular, consisting chiefly of an ostensibly random series of post-holes and irregular pits, with the exception of a conical pit with an opening measuring 3.20m in diameter and 2.30m in depth (the bottom being rounded). Among the large amounts of pottery recovered from the pit were late Meroitic/post-Meroitic beer jar necks, a complete qadus and quantities of Soba ware.

The 'Church' Period - The building was aligned east-west, with three aisles and two ranges of rooms to the east. The main structure measured 17 by 11m in size, with an L-shaped room at the western end, possibly secondary, measuring 15m by 4.40-7m, with an entrance on the south side. The roof over the aisles was supported on timber posts resting on stone post-pads. At least some of the internal walls were coated in a mud rendering, whitewashed and painted in red, blue and vellow. In places there are also suggestions that the external walls were rendered in a

hard, white lime mortar. The east-west alignment of the building, together with the remains of a timber altar in room 3 and two phases of *higab*, one of timber, the other red brick indicate that the building was a church.

In the earliest church phase a large, 'bathtub'-shaped pit (3.04  $\times$  1.51m) was dug into the bedrock along the western edge of room 1 to a depth of 1.24m. The vertical sides, rounded into the bottom, were rendered in a brown mud mortar. No indication of function was found, but the most plausible use, as a tomb, is seemingly belied by its north-south alignment and the absence of an inhumation: nor can it have been a font, the rendering not being water resistant. When excavated, the feature was found to contain large quantities of red brick rubble - overfired. deformed bricks: the pit must therefore have been filled intentionally. Room 1 as a whole is superfluous to the usual Nubian church plan, although Church A on mound B does, however, have a range of rooms behind the sanctuary which included a crypt. A pit was located near the western side of room 3. containing a complete jar, measuring 39cm in diameter and 53cm in height, covered with a piece of wood and filled with earth. but no artefacts. The function of this feature, which belongs within the life-span of the church, is unclear: it could easily have been concealed from view and was presumably used for storage.

Throughout the lifetime of the building layers of sandy soil built up in most of the rooms: it is notable that with the exception of the mortar coated red brick pavement in room 1 and the surface in rooms 6 and 7 no floor surfaces as such were noted.

The 'Post-Church' Period - Numerous post-holes and pits were cut into the church period deposits, and these pre-dated the robbing of the red brick walls and floors.

The church on mound M12 is only the sixth known and excavated church in the Kingdom of Alwa. It had two phases, the earlier without a narthex but with a timber higab, the later with an added narthex and a red brick higab. However, the addition of room 7 is not necessarily contemporary with the installation of the brick higab. There was no projecting sanctuary chamber as seen in the churches on mound B. Room 3/4 is unusual in that no trace of wall or other partition was found, to divide the diakonikon from the sanctuary chamber. The function of the extra room behind the sanctuary range is also unknown.

As in church C stone post-pads supported the timber posts which would have supported the roof over the nave and aisles. The surface area of the church was  $187\text{m}^2$ , with the narthex measuring another  $67.5\text{m}^2$ ,  $254.5\text{m}^2$  in total, slightly larger than church C on mound B. It is not clear what is the chronological relationship between the excavated churches of Soba.

AREA MN3 (TRENCHES MN10 & MN13) lies 150m to the north of M12. It is a low gravel mound covered in a mass of pottery including a large amount of the Early Medieval Soba ware. Excavation of an area of 175m² revealed a sequence of amorphous deposits with abundant occupation material in the form of ash. pottery and

bone. but no structural remains. It was only at a depth of 50cm that a hard surface was found, cut by a large number of postholes and showing the first upstanding remains of mud brick walls and traces of hearths. Beneath this surface was a build-up of a number of gravel and earth floors each pierced by post-holes and associated with five mud brick walls and a number of hearths. All the mud brick walls belonged to buildings which lay largely outside the excavation area. The walls appear to be on a roughly parallel alignment, but although this would seem to indicate a certain plan to the whole, three of the four walls came to an end within the trench without any obvious reason, stopping in midspace. Excavation in the 1989-90 season was halted at the base of the wall foundations, but it is likely that a considerable depth of stratigraphy remains to be investigated before the subsoil is reached. Evidence of metal working activities was recovered.

AREA MN8 (TRENCHES MN11 & MN12) lies 120m to the south west of mound M12, on the other side of the *khor*. Excavation uncovered an area of 291.5m² and revealed over 400 post-holes and pits. Wind and water erosion of the site have removed the individual levels from which the post-holes had been cut. The traces of two circular timber huts were noted, one measuring 5m in diameter with a hearth in the centre. The other hut had a diameter of

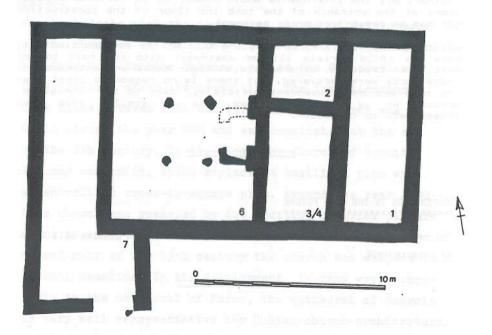


Figure 1. The church on mound M12

circa 4.5m. With part of its mud floor still surviving with a raised kerb 4-5cm high. Possibly associated with the hut was a complete beer jar set into the ground with its rim level with the floor surface, and with a black burnished bowl serving as a lid. A large pit in the northern corner of trench MN11, measuring 1m in diameter and 1m in depth, contained only a small amount of the Early Medieval Soba ware, and a large number of pots which appear to be later or Post-Meroitic in style. This material may represent a pottery assemblage of the transitional phase between the late Meroitic period and the Post-Meroitic pagan and then Christian' kingdom of Alwa. The post-holes in the pre-church phase on mound M12 and in area MN8 were paralleled by similar occurrences in the pre-church phases on mound B. This activity, combined with Soba ware, suggests the widespread use of timber as a major building material in the early Medieval period: was early

THE RED BRICK TOMB was discovered in 1988 when a lorry broke through its vault. The tomb, aligned east-west, measures 2.49 × 1.5m internally and is entered through a narrow door with a triangular bediment set in the centre of its west wall. Red bricks were used throughout the construction of the tomb, the chamber of which had been cut into the bedrock; both interior and exterior were coated in a whitewashed mud blaster. A total of 15 or 16 adult skeletons have been found within it, biled one upon another. All the internments would appear to be contemporary. In front of the entrance of the tomb the floor of the construction but had an uneven red brick payement.

Adiacent to, as well as cutting the fill of the construction pit, were six child burials aligned east-west with the head to the west. some crouched, others laid on their backs and extended. No grave goods were recovered, but there is no reason to doubt that the tomb and the subsequent burials all date to the 'Christian' period. An as yet unexcavated tomb of similar type lies immediately to the south.

### CONFERENCES IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Medieval Soba a timber-built city?

The next congress of the International Society for Nubian Studies will be held in 1994.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

P.M. Gartkiewicz, The Cathedral of Old Dongola and Its Antecedents, Nubia I. Dongola 2, Warsaw 1990, 326 pp.

The first volume in a new series has appeared; after numerous seasons of excavations at the site of Old Dongola a series of monographs is in preparation of which a volume on the cathedral of Dongola is the first one to see the daylight. Although the number of the volume, Dongola 2, suggests that it is the second to appear, the first volume, on the history and general description of the site is still in preparation. In shape and lay-out the present series follows closely the well-known series of Faras.

The book deals with the seccessive phases of development of the churches on the site, the so-called Old Church and the Church of Granite Columns, called the Cathedral of Brick Pillars after its revaulting. The investigations took place between 1964 and 1975. The Old Church was built around the year 600 and was demolished at the end of the 8th century. In its place the Church of Granite Columns was built, which replaced a basilical plan with a centralized cross-in-square plan. Around the year 1000 this church was reshaped by the addition of brick pillars meant to carry a roof of vaults and domes. Since the second half of the 13th century the church was subject to gradual demolion. In its development, in many ways comparable to the cathedral of Faras, the cathedral of Dongola is very well representative for Mubian church-architecture. This monographs analyses and describes the history and the development of the building in a thorough and detailed way. A maybe somewhat confusing element in the book is the names given to the successive phases in the development of the building. The first two are merely called 'church' whereas only the last phase is referred to as 'cathedral', suggesting that it took this function only after the vaulting of the church. Since the stress of the book is on the development of the architecture, little is said on its functioning as a cathedral.

The book is a promising start of a series the following volumes of which we are eagerly awaiting.

K.C.I.

### PERIODICALS RECEIVED

# NUBIA CHRISTIANA, AKADEMIA TEOLOGII KATOLICKIEJ, WARSZAWA

## AVANT-PROPOS:

Il est dans l'ordre des choses qu'à Varsovie soit créée une série de publications concernant la Nubie chrétienne. La Nubiologie, discipline nouvelle dont la naissance est étroitement liée avec Varsovie, met au premier rang les questions de la Nubie chrétienne. Les raisons en sont multiples.

Traditionnellement, l'histoire et les monuments de la Nubie pharaonique restent dans le domaine des égyptologues. La période méroîtique, vu sa culture spécifique, est devenu le champ d'études d'un groupe spécialisé de chercheurs. On doit ajouter le caractère particulier des problèmes linguistiques de cette période, les difficultés de lecture et de compréhension entière de l'écriture méroîtique. Cela ne veut pas dire que la nubiologie rejette la période pharaonique et celle du royaume de Méroé, mais cette dispersion des thèmes d'études a fait que les chercheurs nubiologues se sont surtout concentrés d'une part sur la Nubie chrétienne, d'autre part sur la préhistoire de ces régions, y compris tous les problèmes démographiques, climatiques, géologiques et écologiques liés avec les débuts de la civilisation sur les terres de l'actuel Soudan.

Encore avant sa parution, la série Nubia Christiana souleva un large intérêt parmi les savants. Il en fut question lors des colloques nubiologiques de Chantilly et de Cambridge, la preuve en sont des articles de chercheurs étrangers envoyés à la rédaction. Il semble juste que ces articles furent placés par la rédaction en tête du premier volume. Il s'agit d'un article de J. M. Plumley sur les découvertes les plus récentes en lien avec les débuts du christianisme en Nubie, et un autre de G. Vantini sur les traditions de la Nubie chrétienne dans les coutumes populaires de la Nubie actuelle. Le premier auteur fut récemment élu Président de la Society for Nubian Studies, l'autre est à l'origine d'un compendium monumental des sources orientales concernant la Nubie, en traduction anglaise, publié rêcemment par l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences et l'Académie des Sciences de Heidelberg.

La série Nubia Christiana est surtout adressée aux nubiologues, mais aussi aux spécialistes de disciplines limitrophes. Egalement, la rédaction a estimé utile de présenter les études dans une des langues de congrès, pour les rendre accessibles aux chercheurs de tous les pays. Les larges résumés en polonais ont pour but de favoriser dans le milieu polonais l'intérêt pour les questions de la Nubie. Ainsi, Nubia Christiana est d'une part un fruit de l'activité scientifique du milieu varsovien, d'autre part une annonce pour les spécialistes de la création d'un nouvel organe dont les colonnes sont ouvertes à tous.

Nubia Christiana est une publication de l'Académie de Théologie Catholique à Varsovie. De ce fait, le lecteur y trouvera certaines des plus intéressantes thèses de diplôme consacrées à la Nubie et écrites à la Chaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne de cette haute école.

Actuellement sous les auspices de ce centre universitaire, Nubia Christiana pourra prétendre dans l'avenir à devenir un organe international de la Society for Nubian Studies.

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## **NUBICA**

International Annual for Ethiopian, Meroitic and Nubian Studies Edited by Piotr O. Scholz & C. Detlef G. Müller

Publisher: Verlag J. DINTER, Buchholzstr. 8-10, D-5000 Köln 80

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- history (cultural, religious, ecclestical, exploration)
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especially for islamic studies

Im ersten doppelten Band I/II für die Jahre 1987-1988 sind bereits erschienen:

Untersuchungen und Abhandlungen: The peopling of the northern Ethiopian-Sudanese borderland between 7000 and 1000 BP: A preliminary model (R. FATTOVICH); Die kuschitische Religion aus der Sicht von E. Kormyschewa in ihrem Werk Religija Kuša (Ch. ONASCH); Remarks on structural engeneering in Nubia based upon a study on christian houses 'A' and 'B' in Old Dongola (S. MEDEKSZA); Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache (Fadidja/Mahas Dialekt). Teil I (M. KHALIL)

Forschungsgeschichte: "Aethiopia, oder das Reich von Axume und von Meroe" Auszüge aus seiner zehnbändigen Geographie der Griechen und Römer (1788-1825) mit Einführung und Anmerkung von Piotr Scholz. Teil I. (K. MANNERT)

Feldforschungen und Ausgrabungen: Italian excavation at the Jebel Barkal in 1987 (S. DONADONI); Beginning a Survey at the Fourth Cataracts (S. DONADONI); Naqlun - Deir al-Malak Gubracil (J. DOBROWOLSKI); Deir el Naqlun (Nekloni) 1986-87. First preliminary report with Appendix from 1988 (W. GODLEWSKI et al.); A note of the location of sites. Studied by the Canadian expedition to the Dongola Reach (K. GRZYMS-KI); Speisen und Tischsitten in Äthiopien (G. FISSEHA)

Aus Sammlungen und Museen: Zum Stand der Nubien-Sammlung des Ethnographischen Museums zu Khartoun (U. BRAUKÄMPER); Die C-Gruppe Keramik aus Toschke in Krakau (J. ŚLIWA); Kurzbericht zum Stand der Vorarbeiten zu der Publikation der Objekte der J. Garstang Ausgrabungen in Meroë (1910-1914) in The National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, Liverpool (P. SCHOLZ)

Glossen, Miszellen und Diskussionsbeiträge: Nochmals zur Tempelkirche von Akša (P. GROSSMANN); Der Berliner Kaufvertrag P. 11277 (M. KHALIL); Nubisch-ägyptisches Lehnsgut I (M. KHALIL); Arabisch wird zur Sprache der Kopten (C. D. G. MÜLLER); Zur Ubiquität des byzantinischen Kultusbildes (K. ONASCH); Aithiopen und der Osten (P. O. SCHOLZ)

Bibliographie, Rezensionen und Büchernotizen Nachrichten, Informationen, Kongreß- und Konferenzberichte Sonderteil: VI. Internationale Konferenz für nubische Studien in Uppsala 1986.

### Für die kommenden Jahrgänge sind bereits eingegangen:

Navigation and naval warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea (V. Christides); Sudan sites and Monuments: Archaelogical sites in the Mahas-Region (D. N. Edwards); Archäologie der Arabischen Wüste (G. Fuchs); Example of Symbolism in Coptic Art (G. D. Girgis); Deir el Naqlun (Nekloni) 1988-89. Second preliminary report

(W. Godlewski u. a.); Monasteries in Nubia. An open issue (P. Jeuté); Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache: Fadidja/Mahas Dialekt. Fortsetzung (M. Khalil); Die nubische Königsdynastie des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts im Lichte der archäologischen und schriftlichen Quellen (G. Kubaszewski); Inscriptions from Naqlun (A. Lajtar); Aethiopia oder das Reich von Axume und Meroe (1825), mit einem Kommentar. Fortsetzung (K. Mannert/P. O. Scholz); Nubien und Ägypten im Lichte der neuesten Forschung (C. D. G. Müller); Hellenismus und Meroë (P. O. Scholz); Koptische Stoffe aus der Sammlung W. Olef/Heidelberg (P. O. Scholz); Bemerkungen eines Geologen zum Goldvorkommen in Nubien (H. Sommerlatte); Der Weg des nestorianischen Christentums nach China unter Berücksichtigung der Südroute (J. Tubach).

E. de R