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*Nubian Letters*®

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Smidswater 8, 2514 BW The Hague  
The Netherlands

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E D I T O R I A L

"The moment of departing  
is very hard."

Writing Editorials is sometimes a pleasant task, sometimes, however, it is a rather difficult one.

This time it would be a pleasant task if we just had to announce a contribution of a Polish specialist in the field of Christian architecture and liturgy in the Nile Valley, Dr Tadeusz Golgowski,<sup>2</sup> followed by some brand-new information from Dr Karel Innemée about his long-expected Handlist of Nubian Wallpainting and by a Table of Contents of Nubian Letters 1 - 22, composed by Mrs Elisabeth de Ranitz.

But, alas!, we also have to announce our Farewell to the benevolent readers, as this periodical is now coming to an end. In a contribution, dedicated to the history of Nubian Letters, Paul van Moorsel enumerates the various reasons for our decision.

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<sup>1</sup> a line in a Nubian Song on Farewell Day  
(Gwendolen A. Plumley, El Tanbur, Cambridge, n.y., p. 50).

<sup>2</sup> cf. for his subject also: Paul van Moorsel, Did the Nubian Church use the chalice-ark?, Nubian Letters 16, pp.12-13.



Twelve years of Nubian Letters may allow some insight into twelve years of studies in our field in general. It seems to be the more appropriate to give this kind of survey on the eve of the Conference in Lille, as the history of the Nubian Studies of the three last decades will be discussed there extensively.

The Editors of Nubian Letters are grateful for the interest of so many colleagues and especially for their texts for publication and for their financial support.

Finally : a special word of appreciation to the Editor of Archéologie du Nil Moyen, Dr Francis Geus, for his willingness to open his pages for all communications concerning the International Society for Nubian Studies and for Preliminary Reports.

But even this does not detract from the fact that, as the Nubian poet sings:

"The moment of departing is very hard".

The Editors of Nubian Letters.

# NOW THE CURTAIN FALLS OVER NUBIAN LETTERS

an evaluation

by Paul van Moorsel

We owe it to the initiative of Elisabeth de Ranitz that, shortly after the Conference in Heidelberg (1982), Nubian Letters first appeared. In the Editorial of issue no. 1 the aim of this new periodical was put into words as follows: "... some people realized that the interval of four years between the conferences was too long to exchange up-to-date information." (NL 1, p.2). It was also stated: "The time between, for instance, an excavation and the publication of a report of it in the proceedings of a conference can take several years. Nubian Letters wants to provide such information of current interest." (Ibidem)

And now, eleven years and twenty-one editions of Nubian Letters later, when we cast a backward look, we note in the first place that this small periodical has published a total of 23 longer or shorter Excavation Reports. More or less regular themes were:

Jebel Barkal (NL 1, 3, 7, 9 and 10)

Dongola (NL 1, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 13)

Soba East (NL 3, 8 and 15)

Meroe (NL 5, 7 and 9)

as well as reports on the work of the French Section in Khartoum (NL 1, 10, 12, 16 and 21), the four last of which were devoted to El Hobagi.

In addition, on seven occasions the journal published a list of Fieldwork in Nubia and adjacent areas; six of these lists were compiled by Friedrich Hinkel (NL 5, 7, 9, 11 and 16). This indicates how over a considerable period of time Nubian Letters was able to function as an effective means of communication with respect to current fieldwork. Moreover, it goes without saying that there was always space for all sorts of reports about and on behalf of the International Society for Nubian Studies, for Nubian



Letters was published under the auspices of this Society.

Back to Fieldwork : Since Nubian Letters appeared with a fair degree of regularity, despite slight delays which in the course of time became unavoidable, our journal was able to include a good number of Preliminary Reports 'hot off the press'. In this way the journal reflected current trends in research; indeed, many contributions were received on Prehistory and Architecture while, on the other hand, articles appeared on just two occasions on the subject of Nubian philology.

Reference was frequently made to Nubian Letters in important bibliographies and publications. Let me mention the regular feature Fouilles et Travaux en Egypte et au Soudan by Jean Leclant and Gisèle Clerc in Orientalia, not forgetting the Byzantinische Zeitschrift and, also, Oriens Christianus. Thomas Hägg refers to it in his Nubian Culture Past and Present, Stockholm, 1987 and M. Rassart-Debergh and J. Ries also make mention of the journal in their Actes du I<sup>er</sup> Congrès Copte (1988), Louvain-la-Neuve, 1992.

Nubian Letters even offered a home to Congress Papers, in particular those which otherwise would never have been published elsewhere or only at a very much later date. This applies in particular to seven Papers which were presented at the third International Congress of Coptic Studies held in 1984 in Warsaw, the proceedings of which could not appear for the next six years. These seven papers, all devoted to Nubia, were published partly in NL 2 (August 1984) the rest following in NL 3 (February 1985) and were therefore made available to interested parties shortly after the conference. This signified a gain of five years for the authors. It must be added of course that Wl. Godlewski, Coptic Studies / Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies (Warsaw, 20-25 August 1984), Warsaw 1990, is a much glossier publication than our own Nubian Letters lays claim to being, or intends to be.

Nevertheless, the first signs of insufficient copy were noticed in NL 11 (August 1988) and in an Editorial to NL 18 (February 1992) the Editors wondered openly whether it would not be better, should copy remain so scarce, to stop publication (Ibidem, p.1). Reference was made to periodicals which in 1982, at the incipience of Nubian Letters, did not yet exist, such as Archéologie du Nil Moyen, Nubica and Beiträge zur Sudanforschung. Moreover, it was unfortunate that the number of expeditions to the Sudan did not, for a variety of reasons, particularly increase. No wonder therefore that, with the lack of sufficient copy on Nubia, Nubian Letters began to publish articles on Coptica. Evidence of this is to be found in NL 6, 17, 19 and 20. Implicitly, however, this shift of attention meant the beginning of the end. After all, the Journal of Coptic Studies, available since a number of years, was the more likely publication for such articles.

And so the Editors have finally taken the brave decision to make issue no. 22 the last. We are pleased that the Editors of Archéologie du Nil Moyen are prepared to take over the publishing tasks required for the good functioning of our International Society which up until now have been carried out by Nubian Letters. Space will undoubtedly also be found there for Preliminary Reports, following the tradition of Nubian Letters.

With this last issue therefore, appearing shortly before the International Congress in Lille, Nubian Letters is no more. According to the well-known saying: "Partir, c'est mourir un peu", and it is indeed so. But this farewell is final. The curtain now falls over the enterprise for which all thanks go to the auctor intellectualis, her husband Paul de Ranitz and the printer, Theo Poelman. I know, since I, along with Karel Innemée, have been privileged to follow the life history of Nubian Letters from close-by.

Alphen aan den Rijn, July 1994



SOME REMARKS ON THE OBJECT FOUND IN OLD DONGOLA  
(SUDAN)

During the 1967/1968 campaign in Old Dongola Polish team have found in the Church of Granite Columns an object which deserves, because of its unclear function, some words of commentary.

Our object is a clay pipe (inv. no D 25/67-68), slightly ribbed and covered outside with a reddish slip. It is 42 cm high, its diameter increases from 23,5 cm in the bottom part to 29 cm at the top. The walls of the pipe are decorated with four Greek crosses standing on the steps. The endings of the crosses and the steps have small openings. White line surrounds the edges of the crosses. Four white-painted schematic representations of birds with a vessels hanging from their beaks are depicted between the crosses.

The pipe, broken into several pieces, was found in the sand filling the baptismal font in the Church of Granite Columns. Considering the date of the church and the place where the object was discovered it seems justified to say that our pipe can be dated most probably from the first half of the IX century A.D.

The object described above was published by Kamila KOŁODZIEJCZYK in 1971. Author has presented it as a tabernacle<sup>1</sup>, and later describes it as a *turris* or *pyxis*, which could served as a cover for a chalice containing the eucharistic bread<sup>2</sup>. However, it seems that the author confounds two different functions of this vessel: a tabernacle (a recipient for keeping the Eucharist) and a cover for the chalice which was used in some Eastern liturgies. Do the both proposed solutions refer to our object?

In the first centuries of the Early Church the Eucharist was kept in private houses, usually in a small metal, wooden, clay or ivory boxes called *pyxis*, *scrinium*, *capsella*, *arca*, often with an adjective *sancta*. From the V century Eucharist usually was storage at the church in special rooms (*sacraria* or *secretaria* in the West and *pastophoria* in the East). In the Western Church consecrated bread, offered for the sick, was put on the altar in a special vessel shaped of a circular, rectangular or polygonal tower (lat. *turris*). Eastern liturgical prescriptions are unclear considering the way of storage of the Eucharist. In the Coptic Church for example, the Eucharistic bread can not be kept until

the next day - every particle should be distributed among the members of the community or should be eaten by the clergy<sup>3</sup>.

Do the object from Old Dongola has anything in common with a practice of keeping the Eucharist? The shape of the vessel seems to speak against such an interpretation. It is hard to imagine that something like Eucharist could be kept in a pipe, which is open from both sides and has its walls perforated.

As a kind of a supplement for the previous interpretations we would like to add another interpretation of the object described in this article. In the Coptic medieval liturgy we find a covers for chalices called Ark (gr. *kibotos*) or Throne of the Chalice. These covers served to protect the chalice from overthrowing<sup>4</sup>. However, the object from Old Dongola seems to be too deep and too unstable to play such a role.

The place where the vessel was found (baptistry of the Church of Granite Columns) shows another possible interpretation. It might be a stand for a vessel used during the rites taking place in a baptistry. In the Eastern liturgies the rite of anointment (gr. *myron*) goes immediately after the baptism. A special dish filled with oil was placed usually on a decorated base which looked similar to the object from Old Dongola. Identical stands for the vessels were known in the Middle East from many centuries<sup>5</sup>. The best parallel for our vessel are the clay stands found in the monastery of Epiphanius in Thebes (Upper Egypt). One of them, a clay pipe, slightly ribbed and covered with a slip, with a diameter of 22 cm, 49 cm of height and with the wide edges looks quite similar to the find from Old Dongola<sup>6</sup>. Walls of the pipes are painted with black bands. The excavators draw our attention to the fact that the shape of these stands did not evolved in Egypt from the Old Kingdom until the VI-VIII century and it close us to the date proposed for these objects in Thebes.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that in the light of all remarks cited above the function of the mysterious object found in Old Dongola has not yet been explained satisfactory. However, only two last interpretations should be taken into consideration.

Tadeusz GOLGOWSKI

Warsaw





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- 2/ KOŁODZIEJCZYK, *op. cit.*, p. 245
- 3/ H. DENZINGER, *Ritus orientalium Coptorum, Syrorum et Armenorum in administrandis sacramentis*, Würzburg 1863, p. 90-91 ; G. GIAMBERARDINI, *La consecrazione eucaristica nella Chiesa copta*, in: *Aegyptiaca christiana*, Cairo 1957, p. 32-33
- 4/ A cover of chalice appears for the first time in the Coptic sources in the middle of the XIII century A.D., though the first preserved objects come from the modern times, cf. G. GRAF, *Ein alter Kelchtron in der Kirche Abu Sefen*, BSAC IV, 1938, p. 29-36
- 5/ For instance, perforated cylindrical stands for cultic vessels found at Tell Qasile (Israel) and dated from XI-X century B.C., cf. *Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, London 1975-1978, vol. IV, p. 975
- 6/ H.E. WINLOCK, W.E. CRUM, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, New York 1926, Part I, p. 92, fig. 48, pl. XXX,c

## FIGURE

- 1/ Object found in the baptistry of the Church of Granite Columns in Old Dongola, inv. no D 25/67-68



## A HANDLIST OF NUBIAN WALL-PAINTINGS

The First Issue - Abdallah-n-Irqi - is available now.

As announced in Nubian Letters 18, a handlist of all known Christian wall-paintings from Nubia, both preserved and lost, is being composed at Leiden University. It consists of a loose-leaf system in DIN A4 (140 grs. paper). The documentation of each painting comprises a line-drawing of the mural, the data of the original context, a plan of the building with indication of the original location, the present whereabouts, a detailed description and a bibliography.

When necessary, updates of the documentation-sheets will be sent to the subscribers. The system is also available on floppy-disk (3.5 inch), accessible in WP 5.1. Details on the disk-version and its use are available from the editor.

The first issue, comprising the paintings from Abdallah-n-Irqi, is available now. It consists of a set of 50 sheets, describing the paintings from the Central Church (the paintings from the other churches are to follow shortly). A sample sheet is included in this issue of Nubian Letters.

Issues to follow in the course of 1995 will comprise the paintings from Abd al-Gadir and Naga al Ogba.

You can subscribe to the Handlist of Nubian Wall-paintings by ordering the first issue at a price of Dfl. 20,- / \$ 10,-. This does not oblige you to buy the following issues; subscribers will be informed concerning the appearance of each new issue and can decide on ordering at each mailing.

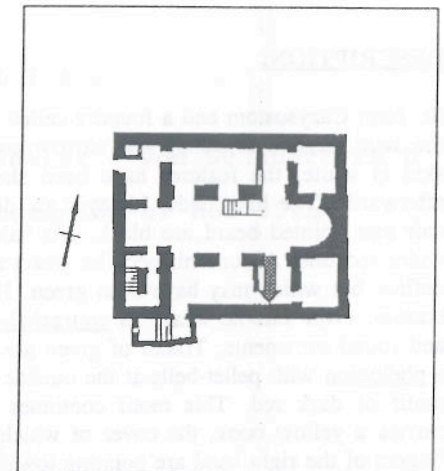
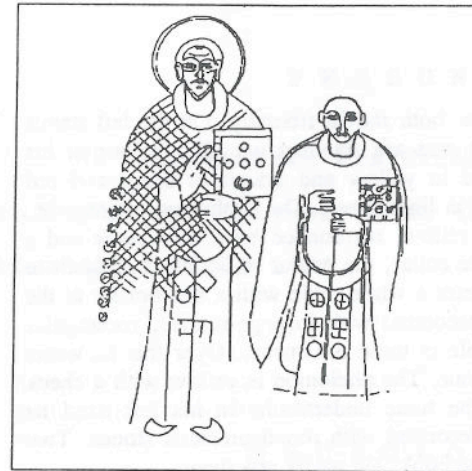
A binder with title for approx. 200 sheets is available at a price of Dfl 15,- / \$ 7.50.

You can subscribe by sending an international money order of Dfl 20,- (for one set of sheets) or Dfl 35,- (for one set of sheets and binder) to the editor:

Dr. Karel C. Innemée,  
Dept. of Early Christian Art,  
Leiden University,  
P.O. Box 9515,  
NL-2300 RA Leiden  
The Netherlands

The system will also be available at the Conference of the International Society for Nubian Studies, 11-17 September 1994, in Lille.

record number: ANI022



### DATA CONCERNING PAINTING AND SITE

site: Abdallah-n-Irqi

building: Central Church

location in building: southern wall of southern nave

size: H. 115 cm; W. 81 cm

subject: St. John Chrysostom and the priest Petou

date of work: ca. 1000

### DATA CONCERNING PRESENT LOCATION

state of preservation: preserved

collection: Coptic Museum, Cairo

inventory nr.: 11473

catalogue nr.:

**DESCRIPTION:**

St. John Chrysostom and a founder called Petou, both shown frontally. On the left stands the saint. His face is long and narrow and his ears are standing out. The colour of his skin is white, the features have been sketched in yellow and drawn in black and red afterwards. The lines under his eyes are drawn in light green. The eyebrows, moustache, hair and pointed beard are black. His halo is yellow, surrounded by a thin black and a wider red line. Around his neck he wears a wide collar, the colour of which is difficult to define, but which may have been green. He wears a white tunic with a red border at the bottom. Over this he wears an epitrachelion, decorated with lozenge-shaped, rectangular and round ornaments. Traces of green are visible in these ornaments. Over this he wears a phelonion with pellet-bells at the outside contour. The phelonion is yellow with a check motif of dark red. This motif continues on the tunic underneath. In his left hand he carries a yellow book, the cover of which is decorated with round precious stones. Two fingers of the right hand are pointing towards the book. He wears red shoes.

At his left hand side the founder Petou is standing. He is at least one head shorter than the saint and his feet are at a higher level than those of the saint. The outlines of the figure are drawn in black over a yellow sketch. Yellow and black lines are not corresponding everywhere. His skin is brown and his face is round. Around his neck he wears a red collar. He is barefoot. He wears a white tunic with a red border at the bottom and with double black lines around the cuffs. He wears a white epitrachelion decorated with square and round ornaments and with bells at the lower border. His phelonion is white. Both hands are in front of his breast. In the left arm he holds a yellow book, set with red, round stones.

Inscriptions: the figures are identified by the following inscriptions next to their heads:

TOAPIOC IΩANNHC XPICTOMOC

and

+ΠΕΤΟΥ Π

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**P E R S O N A L I A :**

We congratulate Mrs Erica Dinkler - von Schubert Ph D  
in Heidelberg (Germany), at the occasion of her 90th  
birthday in July 1994.

**N E C R O L O G Y :**

We regret the passing away of our esteemed  
colleagues :

Bernard Bothmer,

Louis-Antoine Christophe,

Friedrich-Wilhelm Deichmann,

and Gustaf Donner.-

Paul van Moorsel.



# Nubian Letters®

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