

OLD DONGOLA

KOM A (1996)

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The excavation work at Kom A in Dongola, which lasted from January 16 to February 13, 1996,¹ was a continuation of a project began in 1990. The object of research was the western wing of the fortifications in the northwestern corner of the circuit and the town architecture in this part of the city. An extensive L-shaped trench, the long arm 9.0 x 20.0 m, the short one 4.0 x 15.0 m, was excavated down to the level of the foundations of the defense wall on its southern inside face. The thickness of the archaeological layers in this part reached 5 m.

FORTIFICATIONS: WESTERN WALL

A 20 m section of the western wall was uncovered. The wall is a massive mud-brick structure, c. 4.10 m wide at the bottom, founded directly on the bedrock, which slopes down to the south and west. The outer face of the wall, which is slightly inclined, was faced with stone blocks for a length of c. 15.0 m to the south of the corner tower. The southern side of the western wall did not have a stone facing. The part of this wall that is best preserved abuts the corner tower, where it exceeds 6.0 m in height. The wall appears to have been faced in stone only to a certain height, not more than 1.5 m above the level of the foundations (Fig. 1).

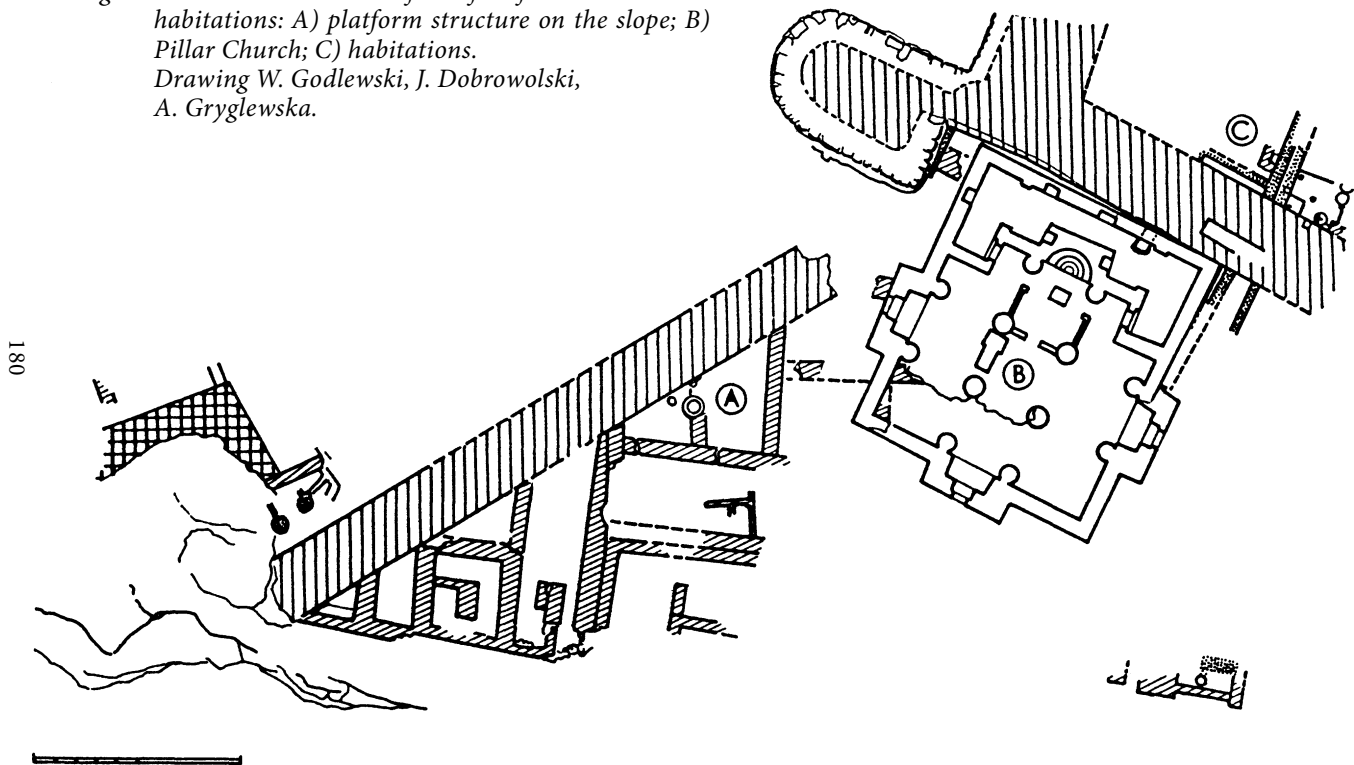
TOWN ARCHITECTURE

Two levels of domestic architecture and a number of occupational layers, accumulated once the area had been abandoned, were identified in a trench running along the eastern

¹ The work was carried out by the author in association with Dr. Adam Łajtar.

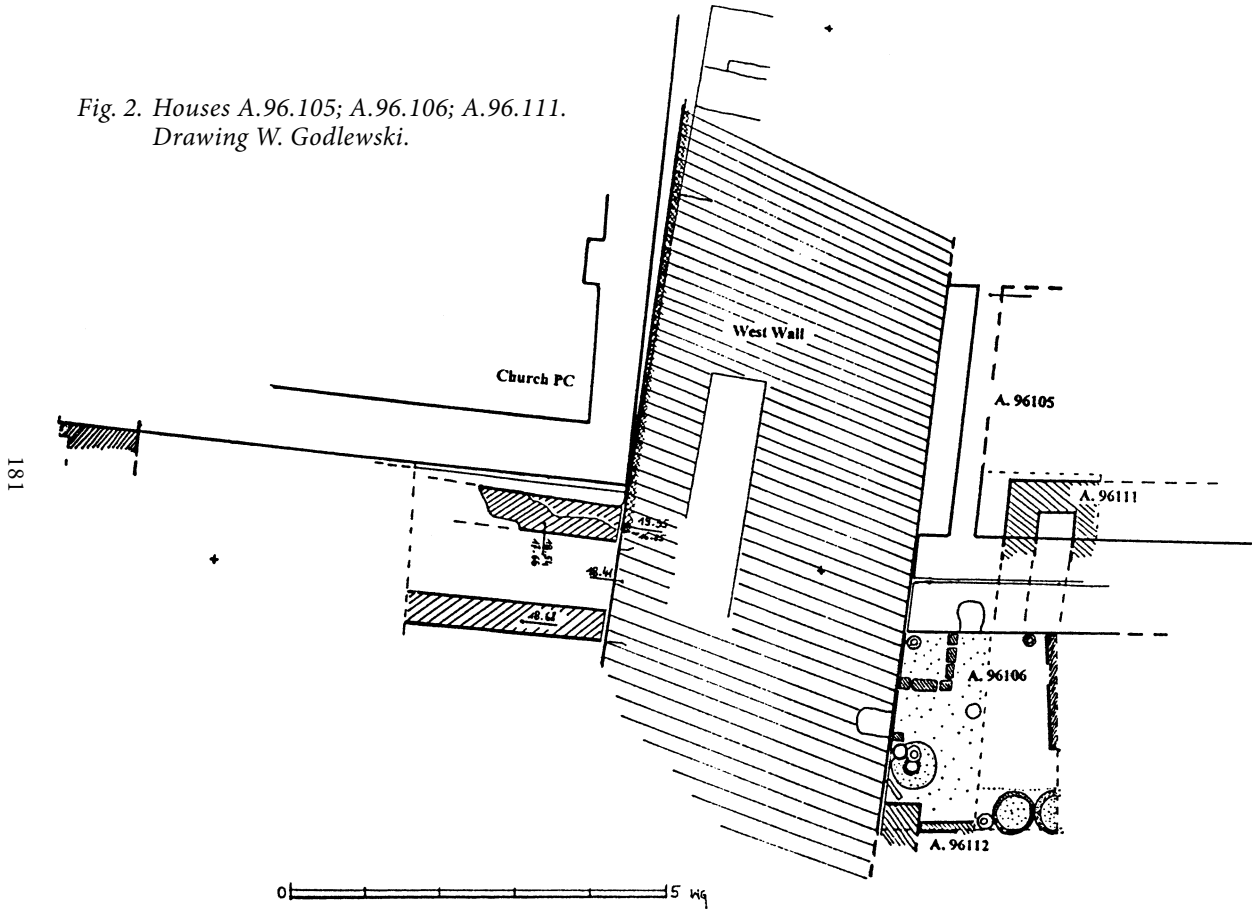
Fig. 1. Northwestern corner of the fortifications and the habitations: A) platform structure on the slope; B) Pillar Church; C) habitations.

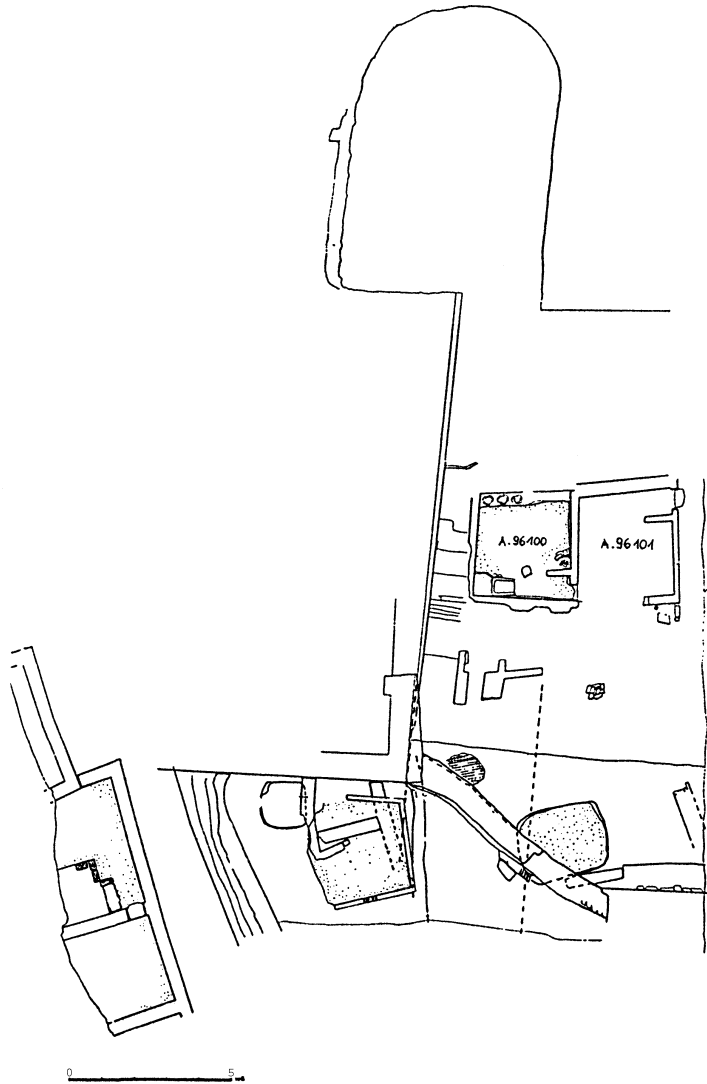
Drawing W. Godlewski, J. Dobrowolski,
A. Gryglewska.



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Fig. 2. Houses A.96.105; A.96.106; A.96.111.
Drawing W. Godlewski.





*Fig. 3. Post-Christian habitations: Houses A.96.100 and A. 96.101.
Drawing W. Godlewski.*

inside face of the defense wall. The oldest layer consists of house A. 96.111, of which only the northwestern corner has been identified in the trench. A characteristically narrow room (49 cm wide from wall to wall) on the west (Fig. 2) is presumably the bottom section of a toilet facility. Between the house and the inside face of the western wall there was a passage 113 cm wide, but it was not a street running alongside the wall, because in the southern part of the trench a large storage vessel and a mud-brick structure were discovered adjacent to the face of the wall.

The pottery from House A. 96.111 and from inside the storage vessel Add.96.209 is early: mainly small red bowls with painted decoration in metopes suspended from the vessel rim (Fig. 4). The ware, form and decoration all point to a local Dongolese production, possibly dated to the late 5th or 6th century.² The handmade pottery (storage vessel and bottle neck) also appears to be of local production.

After the early structures were levelled, two houses: A.96.105 and A.96.106, were erected in their place. The structures were situated side by side, abutting the defense wall (Fig. 2). House A.96.105, only partly excavated, had a narrow toilet unit next to the wall, measuring 41 cm by 330 cm on the inside. To the east of this facility there was a large room measuring 330 x 500 cm. The pottery from the narrow unit consisted of a big set of table ware: plates (Fig. 5), shallow bowls, sometimes decorated with concentric bands, bottles with squat body (Fig. 6), as well as parts of a wooden casket: a wooden key, elements of a wooden lock and metal fittings. The pottery dates the house to the second half of the 7th century.

The neighboring house A. 96.106, which is contemporary, was also only partly excavated. Big handmade bowls found on a

² Similar bowls were found in the fill reinforcing the slope on the western side of the wall. A bowl of the same type was discovered among the furnishings in tomb A.14 in Firka, dated to the early 5th century.

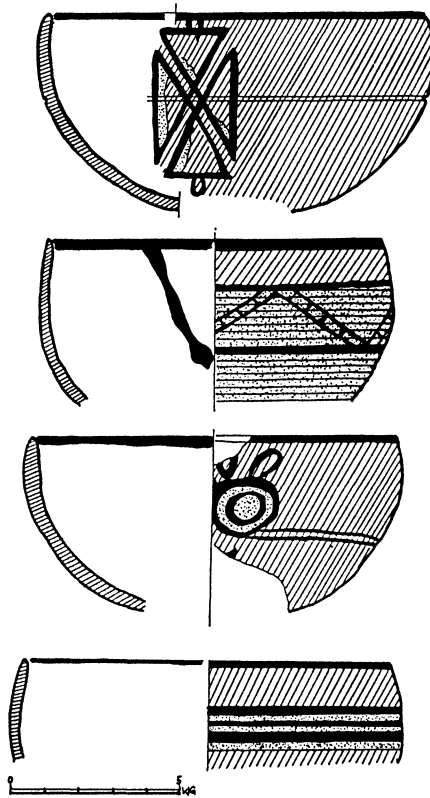
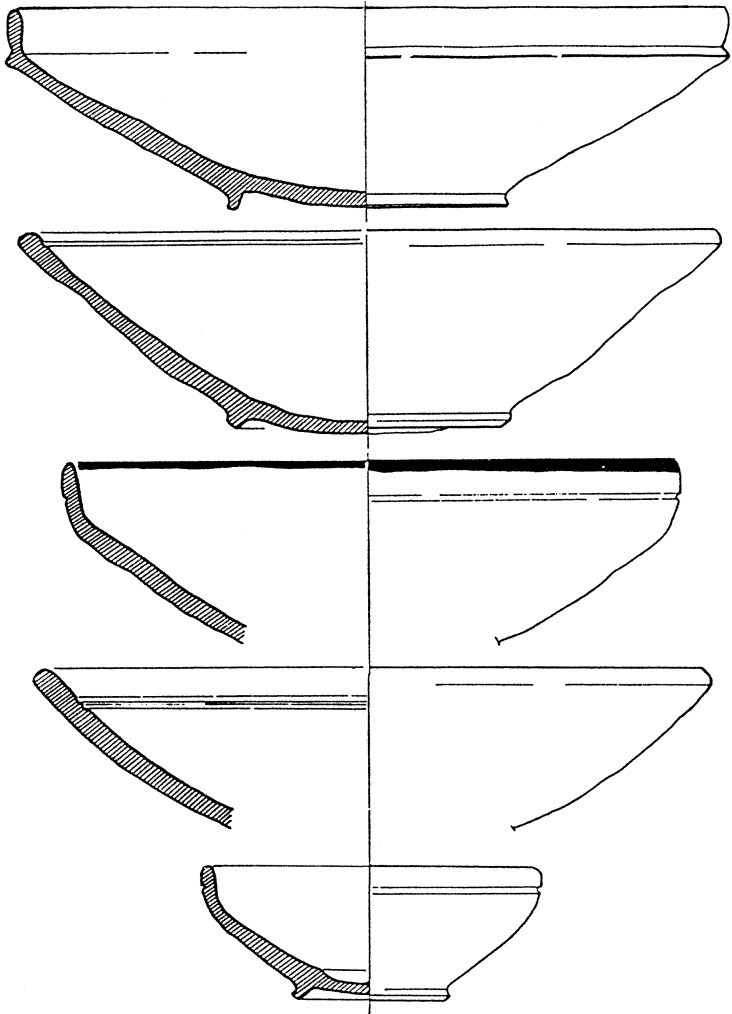


Fig. 4. Early bowls: Add.96.169; Add.96.205; Add.96.168; Add.96.174.
Drawing W. Godlewski.

tamped floor, a hearth and ashes strewn around it leave no doubt that the unit served kitchen purposes. At least three occupational levels were identified.

After the two houses were destroyed, not earlier than in the 10th century, the area was levelled and used for domestic purposes. At least two large containers, presumably for dry



*Fig. 5. Plates: Add.96.096; Add.96.109; Add.96.121; Add.96.123;
Add.96.120.
Drawing W. Godlewski.*

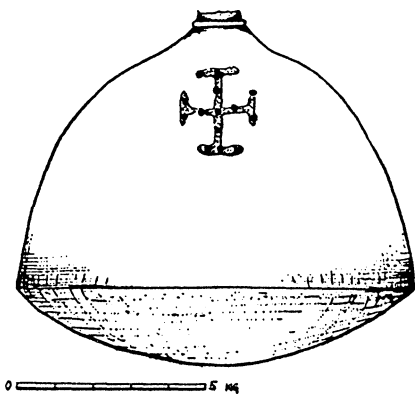


Fig. 6. Bottle. Add.96.162.
Drawing W. Godlewski.

goods, were observed. The fortifications to the south of the Pillar Church were also partly dismantled at this time.³

In the post-Christian period, the northern part of this area was occupied by two large houses and the southern part was a sandy courtyard used seasonally as a donkey pen (Fig. 3). House A.96.100 was erected on top of the western defense wall. It consisted of a small unit measuring 2.90 x 3.20 m, with an entrance with *tuddik* in the southeastern corner; the room had two benches, one abutting the northern wall and the other one in the southwestern corner, with *gessebas* (containers for dry products) standing on them. The pottery found on the tamped floor was both wheel- and handmade. Of interest is a relatively big assemblage of Terminal Christian period vessels, which could support a date for the construction of the house in the early post-Christian period (14th-15th century). The neighboring house A.96.101 is very similar and both habitations exhibited a rather domestic character. The two structures closely resemble the house uncovered on the crown of the northeastern tower. It is possible that they had served the sentries that stood on guard on the city walls.

The houses inside the Dongola fortifications, only partly identified so far, have a series of features that connect them to

³ W. Godlewski, Old Dongola. Kom A, 1995, *PAM* VII, 1996, 116-120, 186.

habitations built outside the walls (House A, House B, House PCH.1) and the houses discovered at Karanog (House 1).⁴ The most characteristic feature is the narrow toilet unit located in the end outer part of one of the rooms in the house. It is also an important indication that houses A.96.105 and A.96.106 were indeed storied structures.

⁴ L.C. Woolley, *Karanog. The Town*, Philadelphia 1911, 26-27.