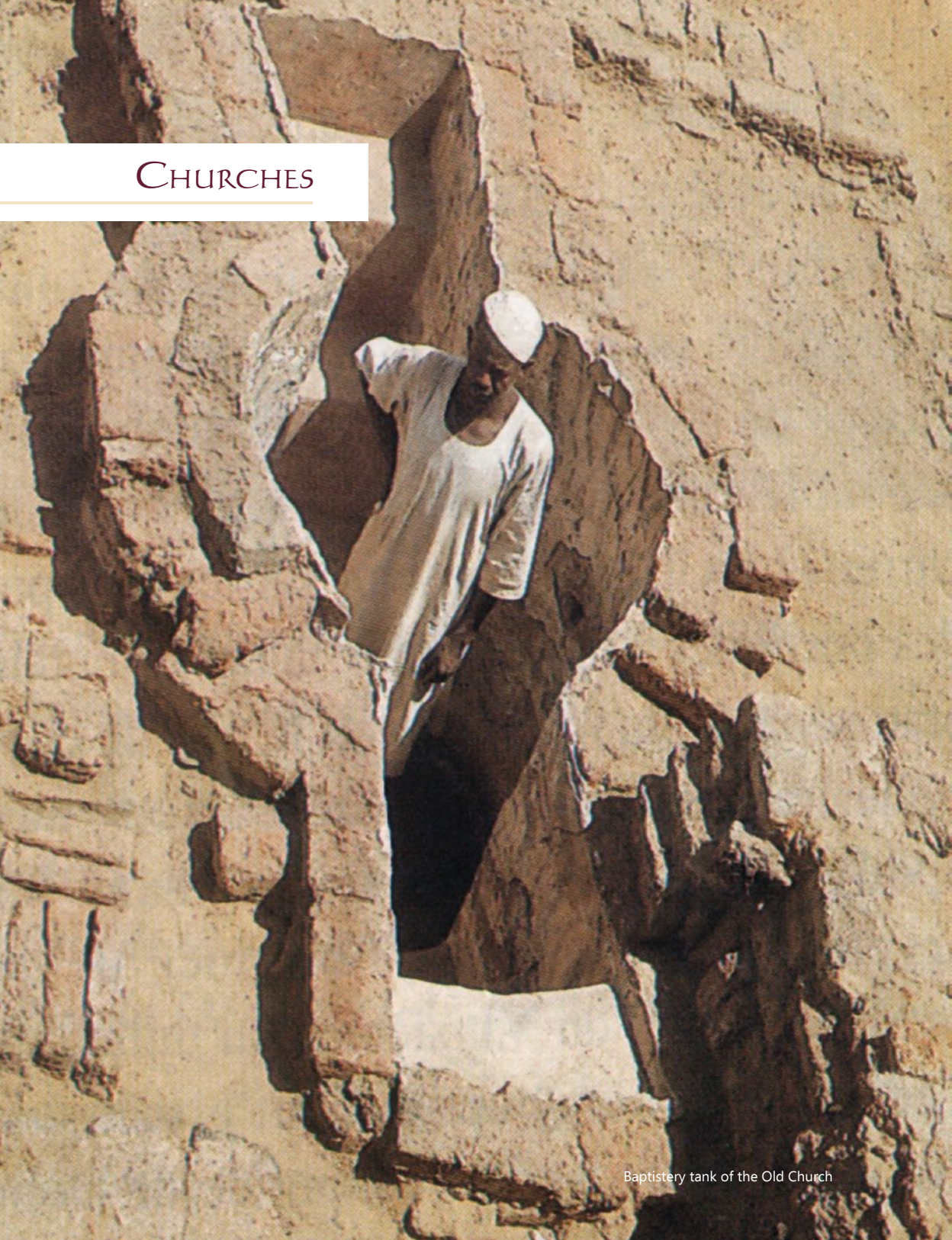


CHURCHES



Baptistry tank of the Old Church

The first churches were built in Dongola in a new quarter north of the Citadel. This sparsely settled area of the Citadel accorded opportunities for unhindered development, drawing heavily on outside inspirations to meet the growing needs. In form, these new buildings depended largely on the preferences and traditions introduced to Makuria by Christian missionaries, but their size and building technique were due to teams of local builders who had recently honed their skills in the construction of the Citadel. The first church structures in Dongola, the Old Church (OC) and Building X (BX), as well as the Mosaic Church I (MC.I) located already on the southern fringes of the Letti Basin, and also the first commemorative buildings, Early Church D (EDC), and the Monastic Church in the monastery on kom H (HC) were erected on very different plans and introduced a great variety of architectural templates to Dongola. It is also important that a considerable number of religious buildings of very varied function was constructed in rather less than fifty years, a very short period indeed.

The two largest, the Old Church and Building X, were raised alongside one another, giving rise to a religious complex that would continue to develop for the next 800 years. As there were no pagan temples in Dongola, the missionaries and first bishops were not tempted to convert them into churches, as was Theodore, the bishop of Philae, who did this systematically in Philae and Nobadia (Monneret de Villard 1935; Adams 1965, 2009; Gartkiewicz 1982b). In Dongola, everything was based on imported patterns right from the start.

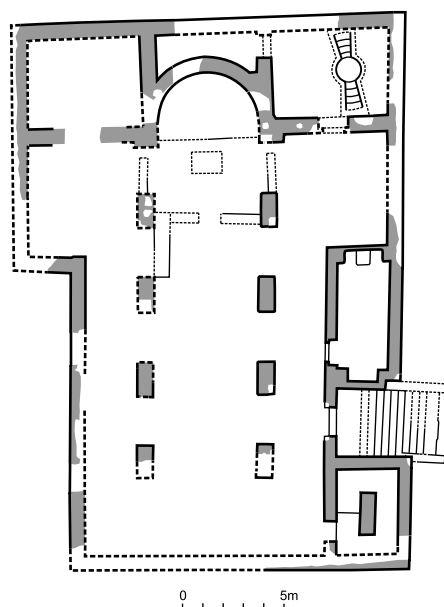
The two church buildings that were erected in the initial period of Christianity in Dongola, the Old Church and Building X, differed in layout and construction, and likely also in function. The Old Church was certainly an ordinary church, but the more monumental Building X with the two crypts under the apse must have served a commemorative function. Three other

smaller buildings believed to originate from this period were executed with different functions in mind, hence the varying architectural solutions. The Mosaic Church (MC.I) was a small, three-aisled basilica serving a local community, and may have been connected with the nearby rock-cut tombs, currently interpreted as belonging to royals. The Early Church D (EDC), connected with a tomb located by its northwestern corner, was in all likelihood a commemorative structure. On the other hand, the Monastic Church on kom H (HC) was one of the most ambitious building projects undertaken in Dongola.

OLD CHURCH (OC)

The oldest church in Dongola assumedly, the Old Church (Gartkiewicz 1990: 30–94) was a medium-sized (27.15 m by 19.10 m), three-aisled, pillared basilica with a naos that widened at the eastern end to form a sort of dwarf transept. It also had a narthex in the western part of the naos. The apse was

Old Church (OC)



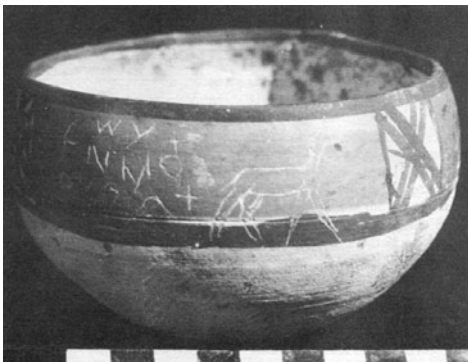
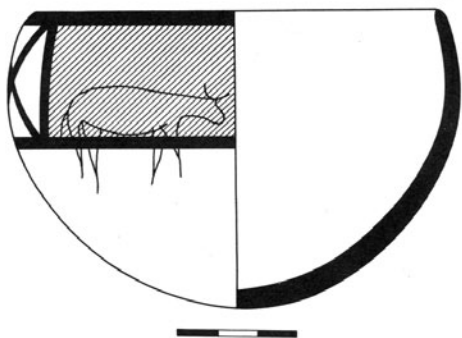
separate from the eastern wall of the church, but there is doubt as to whether the passage between the *pastophories* was already in existence. The two *pastophories*, one on either side of the apse, were accessible from the naos through centrally positioned doors. The southeastern room doubled as a baptistery, being furnished with a round and deep pool and two sets of steps, from the east and west. The monumental southern entrance, seemingly the only entrance to the church, was located beside a corner staircase, which suggests emporia. East of the entry there was an annex serving as a chapel. The liturgical furnishing were characteristic: a *synthronon* in the apse, the altar in the sanctuary (bema) in the eastern end of the nave, separated from the rest of the naos by a partially preserved altar screen. The pulpit was located by the northern arcade of the nave, abutting the western end of the altar screen.

Gartkiewicz dated the construction and use of the church initially to the period between the mid-6th and mid-8th centuries, and later to the first half of the 7th century (Gartkiewicz 1990: 278-279). Godlewski (1990) placed the construction in the second half of the 6th century, perhaps even the middle of the century, when the Kingdom of Makuria converted to Christianity. A deposit of Dongolan pottery, consisting of small bowls of Red Ware with painted decoration, uncovered in the foundation

layer of the church staircase, confirmed the mid-6th century dating (Pluskota 1990). Gartkiewicz also suggested that the builders had not come from local workshops, but the skilled use of mud brick would favor local masons, perhaps working under the supervision of a missionary who would have introduced architectural ideas from his native region.

P.M. Gartkiewicz (1990: 88-94) pointed to sources of inspiration for the layout of the Old Church in Egypt as well as Cyrenaica (basilica at Hermopolis Magna, Eastern Church of Apollonia), but also Palestine and Syria (churches in el-Tabha and Sardijilla). He considered the dwarf transept and the block form of the east end of the building as key characteristics of the Dongolan church. The Syrian and Palestinian examples are nearer to the Old Church in scale and layout, as well as in the block form of the east end of the building. The basilica at et-Tabha (Krautheimer 1981: 168-169) also had a passage joining the *pastophories* behind the crescent-shaped apse, making it the closest parallel of the Dongolan edifice. Another characteristic apparently shared by the Old Church is the connection between the naos (transept) and the *pastophories* via doorways centered in the separating walls. Basilicas possessed of transepts were popular solutions only during the 5th and 6th centuries, thus nicely positioning the Dongolan variant within the mainstream of Byzantine architecture.

Red Ware bowl from the Old Church (mid 6th century AD)





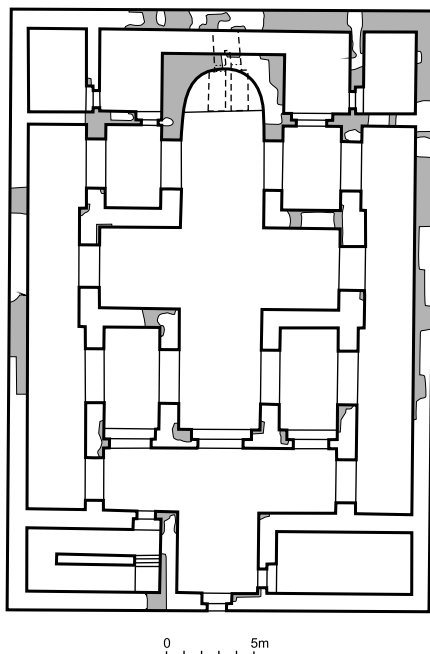
Staircase in the northwestern room of Building X (BX)

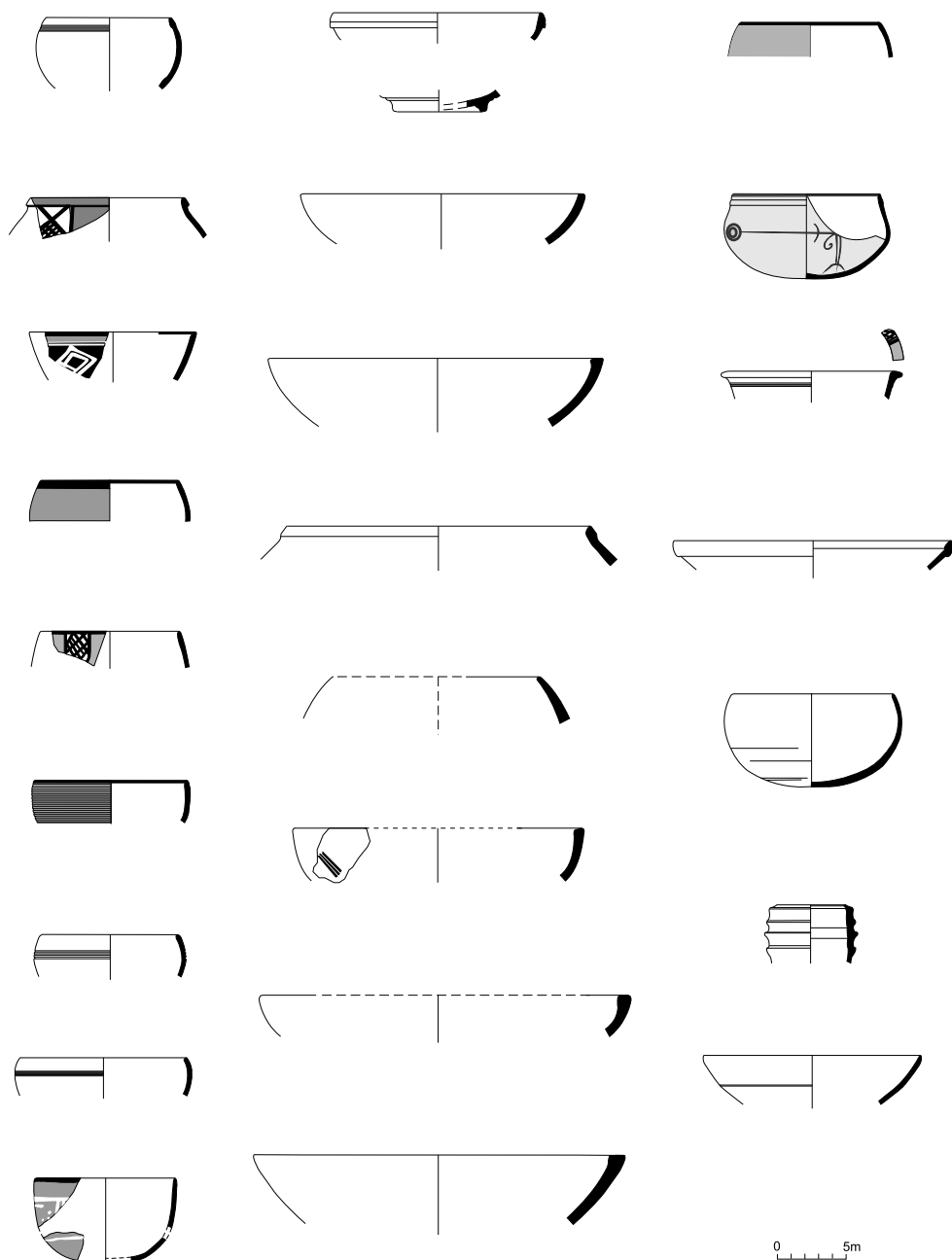
BUILDING X (BX)

Building X (Godlewski 1990) was built on empty ground between the Old Church and the northern gate of the Citadel (some evidence of earlier construction was noted in the western part of the building). Solidly built of red brick with a brick floor, this structure was without parallel in Makuria, but it played an important role in the development of several Makurian church plans.

It was the first building to be erected on the spot and has been investigated only fragmentarily, owing to the fact that the First Cathedral (EC.I and EC.II) and later the Cruciform Church (CC) were built on top of its remains. Explorations below the stone floor of the later buildings have helped to recognize the plan and size of the structure (33.40 m by 23.60 m). The central part had a cruciform layout with the west and east arms slightly longer than the others, the east one ending in an apse. Rectangular rooms appeared between the arms; long corridors sided the building on the north and south, and on the west there was a kind of narthex,

Building X (BX)





Repertoire of mid-6th century pottery from Building X (BX)

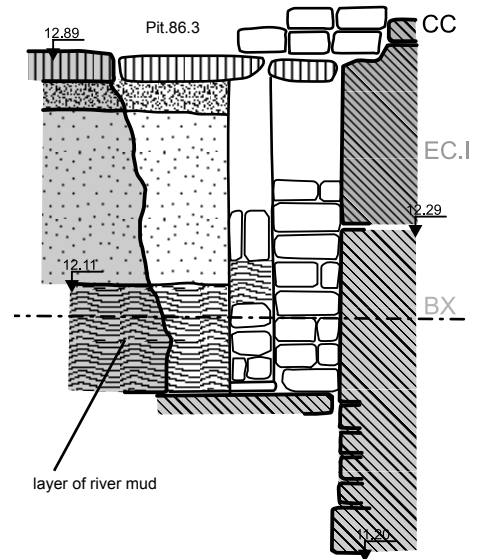
joining the square entrance vestibule in the centre. Two rectangular corner chambers flanked this vestibule, the northern one containing a staircase.

The apse projected between the *pastophories*, which were connected by a passage behind it. Each *pastophory* consisted of two interconnected chambers, being entered through a doorway immediately next to the head of the apse. No traces of a *synthronon* or altar were found, but it was noted that

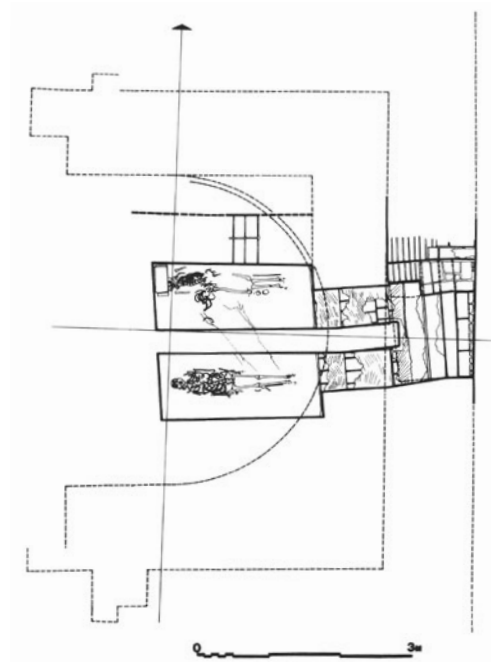


Burial in one of the crypts of Building X (BX)

Section through the western part of Building X, recording a thick layer of river mud



Two crypts of Building X (BX)



the floor in the apse was raised. This proved to be due to two crypts of about the same size, which were located underneath the apse. They were entered from a vertical shaft, the opening of which was centered in the passage behind the apse. Buried in the crypts without any tomb equipment were the bodies of two men (Promińska 1979), individuals of particular importance for Makuria, considering that they were venerated in each successive religious building built on the spot right to the end of the 15th century. It seems plausible to connect the original burial (and building foundation) with the Christianization of Makuria. This would make the structure contemporary with the Old Church.

Like many other buildings in the Byzantine Empire and Italy, Building X was related conceptually to the Apostolorum Basilica in Constantinople (Krautheimer 1981: 72–73, 254–256). The nearest parallel for the naos, however, is the Church of St. Titos

in Gortis on Crete (Krautheimer 1981: 268). The character of the building, its layout and function were probably determined by the needs of the newly baptized ruler of Makuria on the one hand, and the influence of the missionaries and first priests connected with the Byzantine circle on the other. The parallel with the Apostolorum Basilica of Constantinople, built by Constantine the Great and reworked by Justinian, is without doubt symbolic, testifying to the aspirations of Makurian court circles.

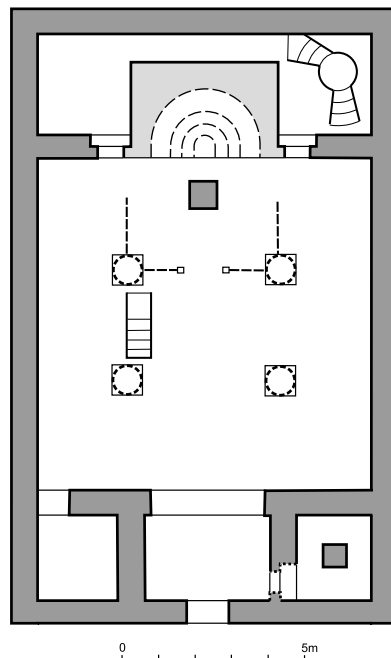
FIRST MOSAIC CHURCH (MC.I)

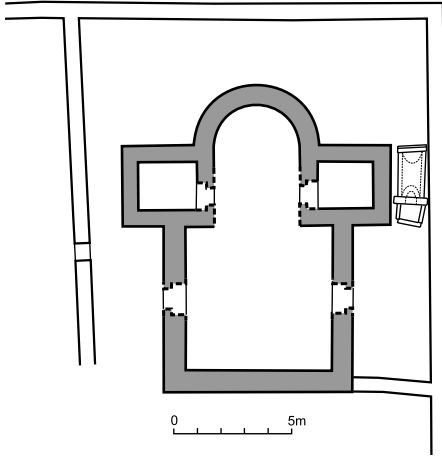
The First Mosaic Church was a small, three-aisled basilica (16.70 m by 10.40 m) serving the needs of a local community, perhaps connected in some way with the rock-cut tombs in the vicinity. Both the western and eastern ends of the structure followed Dongolan designs. Doors on either side of the apse gave access from the naos to the



Sandstone capital from the First Mosaic Church (MC.I)

First Mosaic Church (MC.I)





Early Church D (EDC)

pastophories, which were connected by a passage behind the apse. The western end was tripartite with a central vestibule and corner rooms, of which the southern one had a staircase installed in it. The body of the church was presumably divided into three aisles with two pairs of columns, which ended up in the western portico after the rebuilding. The floor was paved with stone slabs. The liturgical furnishings followed a standard: *synthronon* in the apse and *cancelli* screening off the altar in the eastern end of the nave. A panel of carved floral and geometric decoration from the southern chancel post presumably belongs with the original interior decoration of this building. A stone pulpit stood between the pillars screening off the north aisle. A deep round baptismal pool furnished with two sets of steps on opposite sides was fitted into the southern sacristy (Żurawski 2012: 153–156).

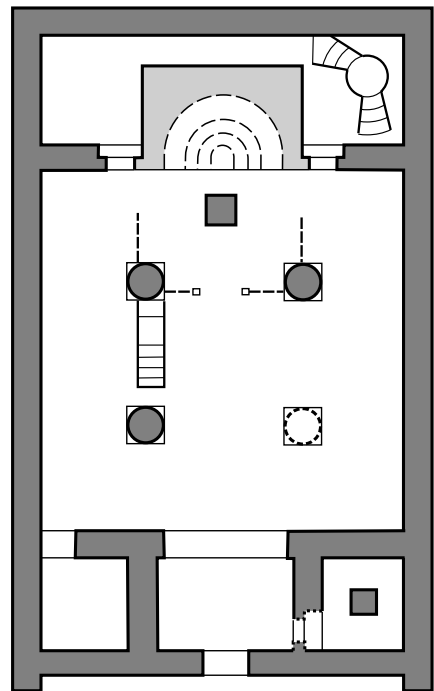
There can be no doubt that the First Cathedral with its five-aisled body provided the model for this church. It was raised presumably in the second half of the 6th century. Corinthianizing capitals presented an awkward stylization of acanthus leaves and were most certainly of local manufacture, based on imported patterns.

EARLY CHURCH D (EDC)

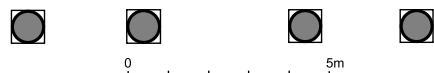
Early Church D, located on the northern fringes of the agglomeration, was connected with a tomb located by its northwestern corner. It was small and square in plan (13 m by 11.50 m), single-aisled with an apse and *pastophories* on either side of the bema. The projecting *pastophories* imparted on the building the plan of a Latin cross, the top arm being formed of a projecting apse (Dobrowolski 1991).

SECOND MOSAIC CHURCH (MC.II)

The building boom that followed the siege of Dongola in the middle of the 7th century



Second Mosaic Church (MC.II)



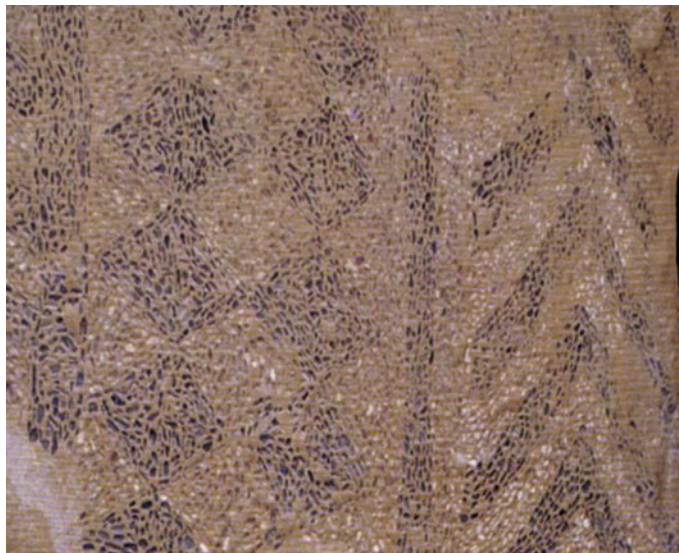
included the reconstruction of the First Cathedral as a domed basilica. This provided inspiration for a number of church renovation projects all over Makuria, not to mention local foundations. Modifications of the same kind were introduced in the Mosaic Church (Żurawski 1997b; 2012: 157–156), although little can be said for certain. Presumably after the columns were removed from the central part of the basilica, four round pillars were erected instead, using voussoir-like blocks of stone for the purpose. These pillars stood on the stone floor of the basilica and most likely supported a central dome, thus establishing a domed basilica plan, but with new, significant features. The span of arches between the central pillars was wider than the spans of lateral arches to the west and east, highlighting the central position of the naos.

Interior decoration was also a major concern in the Second Mosaic Church (MC.II), as revealed by the floor mosaic. It was more of a geometric design and was laid in the same local technique as in the case of the Second Cathedral (EC.II). While there is little specific

chronological evidence for the rebuilding of the earlier Mosaic Church, the floor mosaic goes a long way in suggesting a likely date in the second half of the 7th century.

Yet another important feature was the four-column western portico with a wider central intercolumnar space. A portico in front of the western facade is presented by the Church of the Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs in Gerasa and all things considered, there is reason to believe that the Gerasan structure influenced to a considerable extent the way in which the Mosaic Church in Dongola was rebuilt. It, too, had a central cruciform layout of the naos and four architecturally distinguished corner rooms. If the newly introduced mosaic floor and the uniqueness of the architectural design are anything to go by, central authorities must have had some say in the rebuilding. In the functional sense, the interpretation of this church remains open. On the one hand, it was furnished with a baptismal pool, but on the other hand, it may have been connected initially with the presumably royal rock-cut tombs found in the vicinity.

Fragment of a floor mosaic from the Second Mosaic Church (MC.II)



NEW TYPE OF CHURCH

The second half of the 9th century continued to be a highly creative period in church building in Dongola and likely in the region around it as well. Important buildings were erected, three in Dongola — the Pillar Church (PC) on the western platform running along the river bank near the north harbor, Building V (B.V) within the royal complex on the Citadel and Church D (ED) on the northern outskirts of Dongola, interpreted as a monastery church — and one, known as the Church of Mariankudda and possibly a monastic church, on the north kom in Hambukol. Lower Church III in Banganarti also had a similar plan. All three buildings in Dongola demonstrated a similar cross-over-rectangle design with projecting transept wings, resembling the plan of the Panaghia Church in Skripou in Greece, which dates from 873/4 (Rodley

1994; Krautheimer 1981: 330). It is difficult to say whether a connection existed between the two types of churches, but an original contribution of Makurian architects to church architecture, contemporary with the Byzantine inscribed-cross churches of the Macedonian dynasty, is quite probable, harmonizing well with the specifically Dongolese creativity manifested by the new type of cathedral (RC.I) and commemorative building (CC).

PILLAR CHURCH (PC)

The Pillar Church is a medium-sized building, 16 m by 15 m, built on exposed ground, on an artificial platform formed by the leveling of residential architecture (Godlewski 1996: 116–120; 1998: 132–133). It was made of red brick, including bricks of special shape

Central and eastern part of the Pillar Church (PC)

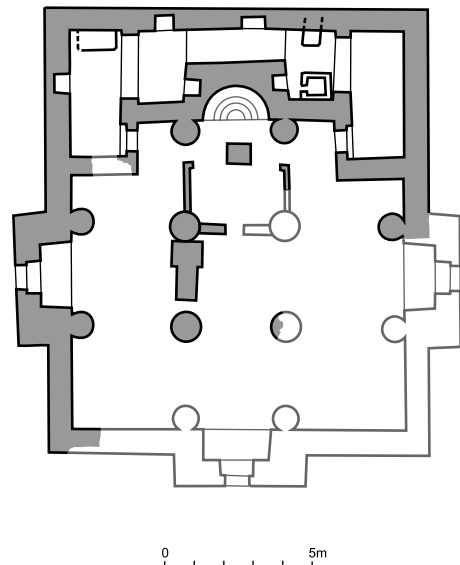




Sanctuary of the Pillar Church (PC)

for the construction of round pillars and pilasters. The plan was of the cross-over-rectangle type with projecting north and south arms. Entrances led through each arm, as in the cruciform buildings CC and B.III (see page 76). The four-pillared naos had very prominent round pilasters projecting from the side walls, and was probably domed over the central bay. In the eastern part, on either side of the apse, there were *pastophories* in the shape of a reversed "L", much like those in the Third Cathedral (RC.I), with entrances in the side walls of the naos. An eastern corridor connected the *pastophories* behind the apse. The western part of the church is missing. There was a *synthronon* in the apse and masonry chancel posts separating the eastern part of the naos with the masonry altar placed centrally in the bema. The pulpit was traditionally located by the northeastern pillar. A table altar stood by the east wall of the prothesis and in the north part of the

Pillar Church (PC)



diakonikon an oven for baking the Eucharist bread was set against the apse wall, although it is not clear whether it had been built there originally or was added later. The dating of the Pillar Church is not definite, but it is likely to be no later than the second half of the 9th century. It was almost certainly built before the Third Cathedral was rebuilt.

KING'S CHURCH (B.V = BUILDING V)

The structure erected to the south of the commemorative building B.III.1 (see pages 35ff.) within the Royal Complex on the Citadel, occupied a high stone platform intended presumably to compensate for the uneven original rock surface in this part of the citadel. The walking level inside Building V was 1.80 m higher than the floor inside the commemorative monument and the "Palace of Ioannes".



Narthex of the King's Church (B.V)

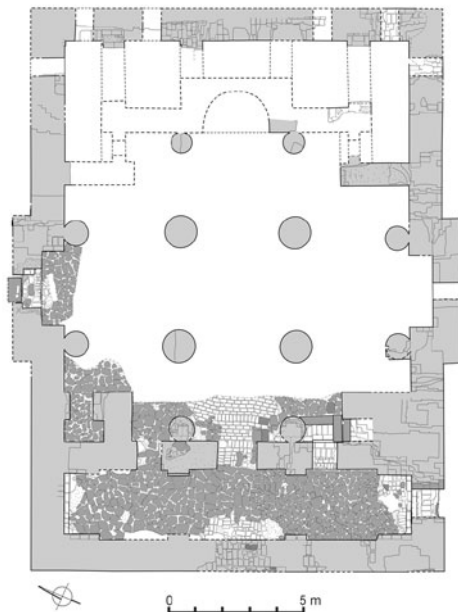


One of the pillars of the King's Church (B.V)

The King's Church is a medium-sized building, 24 m by 15 m, made of red brick, including bricks of special shape for the construction of round pillars and pilasters. The plan was of a cross-over-rectangle type with a dome and projecting north and south arms.

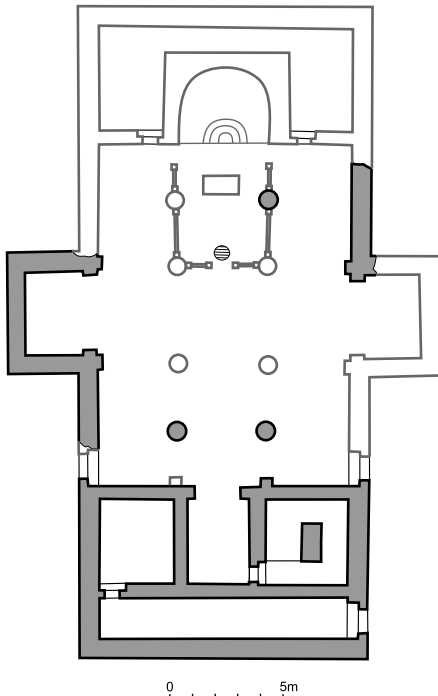
Excavations in the western and north-western part of this substantial church

King's Church (B.V)



building uncovered the robbed out west wall and western part of the north wall. The brick from this part of the structure was salvaged sometime in the 19th and 20th century, but the walls in the southern and eastern parts of the building still rise to a height of 3.60 m. The floor in the narthex and the northwestern part of the naos was made of broken sandstone slabs. The narthex was a narrow space filling the whole width of the building, separated from the naos by a wall with three doorways under stone arcades. It was entered from the south, through a doorway faced with sandstone blocks, well dressed and with sharp edges. Another entrance led directly into the building through a central doorway installed in the north wall. The walls of the narthex were coated with lime plaster; fragmentary wall paintings have been preserved on these walls.

Church of Mariankudda in Hambukol



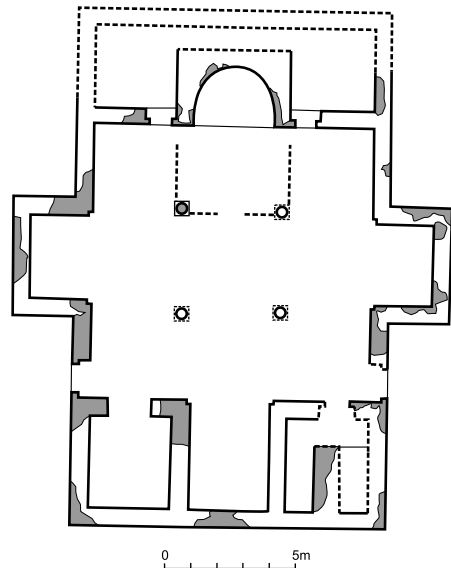
A staircase in the southwestern part of the naos was accessible from the naos as well as from the narthex, being located just inside the southern of the three passages between the naos and narthex.

Murals and inscriptions, written in Greek and Old Nubian, have been recorded on the well preserved walls of the naos. The excavations of the naos and eastern part of the church will be possible under condition that restoration of the murals be conserved simultaneously.

CHURCH D (DC)

Church D was built probably at the same time on the northern outskirts of Dongola, on top of an earlier commemorative chapel (EDC). It was constructed of stone blocks and brick, on a cross-over-rectangle plan, with two projecting arms on the north and south (Dobrowolski 1991). It was a building that combined rather harmoniously a new type of central building with the traditional basilica of elongated proportions (19.20 m

Church D (DC)



by 16.20 m). There were two entrances in the western end of the building, one leading from the north and the other from the south. The square naos with four granite columns of squat proportions was reminiscent of the Throne Hall in Dongola and was also covered with a wooden roof, which emphasized its cruciform layout, and had what was most probably wooden dome in the central bay. The eastern part of the church had the traditional *pastophories* connected by an eastern corridor, accessible through doors at the front of the apse. The west end was tripartite and had a staircase in the south-western corner room. Not much remains of the liturgical furniture, but the apse most certainly had a *synthronon*, since the altar was located in the eastern end of the naos, likely behind a screen.

LATE CHURCHES

Of the several other churches built in Dongola in the Late Period, three have been investigated thoroughly. These are the Northwest Church (NWC), the Tower Church (TC) and the North Church (NC). The fourth, Church F, was not fully excavated.

The period was much less creative in Dongola than the building booms of the 8th and 11th century. Dongolan buildings became smaller as did Makurian churches in general (Adams 1965; Gartkiewicz 1980). They were built of mud brick, suggesting limited financial means, and started taking on the characteristics of civil architecture. The latter, meanwhile, began to take on stature, as indicated by the residence in Hambukol near Dongola (Grzymski, Anderson 2001: 15–77). Nevertheless, late Dongolan churches were still characterized by a variety of forms, each built according to a different plan, as well as a connection to local forms, most visible in the Northwest Church (NWC). The Upper Church in Banganarti was exceptional — in form, size and in plan (Żurawski 2004). It was most probably a royal court foundation from the end of the 11th century.

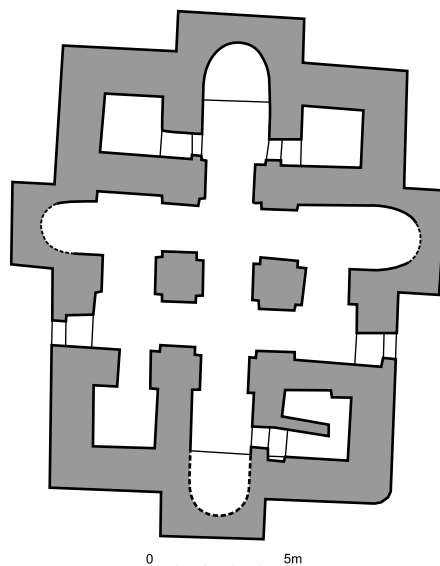
CHURCH AT HAMBUKOL

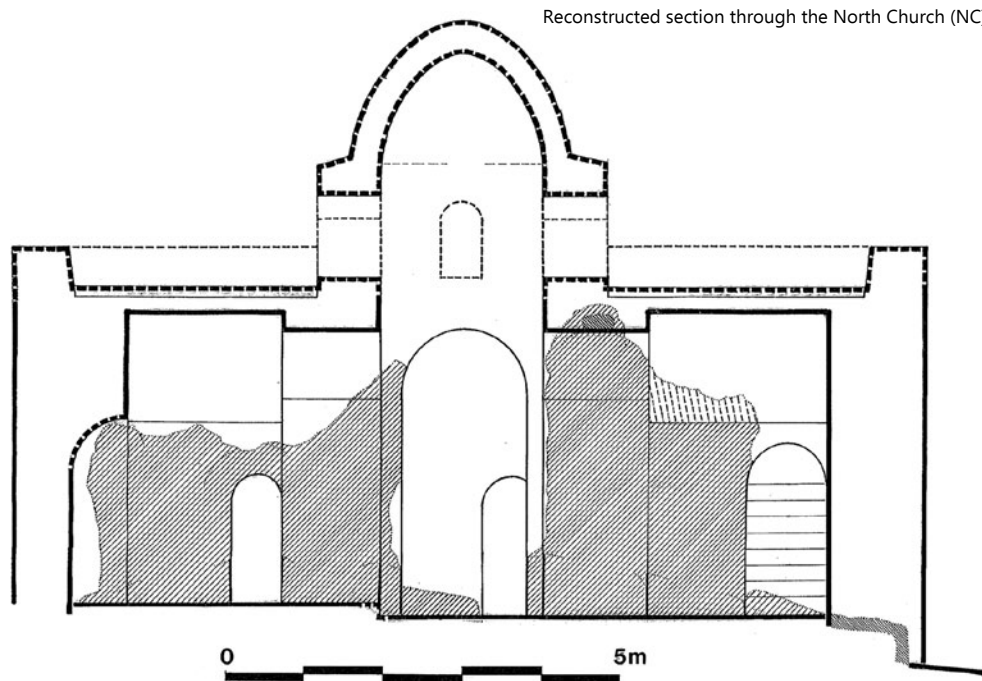
One of the most important churches of the late 9th century in Makuria was the edifice raised at Hambukol, 5 km north of Dongola (Anderson 1999: 73–74). It was founded probably by the tetrarch Mariankudda, who died in AD 887, and whose funerary stela was placed in the floor of the entrance to the sanctuary (Łajtar 2003a: 81–93). Built on a central, cross-over-rectangle plan, with projecting north and south arms, it was even more elongated than the other churches. The transept was of the same width as the nave and was probably domed in the center. Two rows of four round pillars divided the naos. The tripartite eastern end held a staircase in the southwestern room and was extended by a narrow external narthex with an entrance from the south.

NORTHWEST CHURCH (NWC)

The Northwest Church was built on a cross-over-rectangle plan with four arms projecting from the facades (Jakobielski, Medeksza

Northwest Church (NWC)





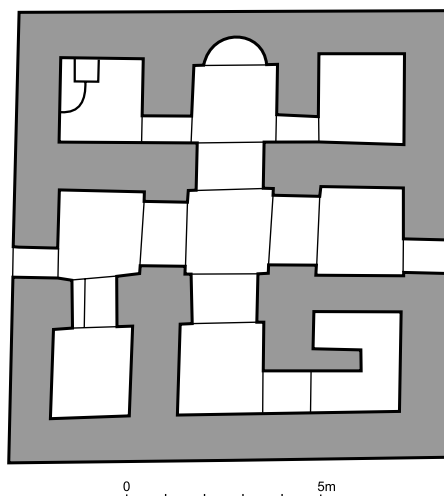
1990). The thick walls and two massive cross pillars in the naos differed markedly from 9th century designs. The traditional side entrances from the north and south led into a very constricted naos with two cross-shaped pillars, two side apses, and most likely a third, western apse on the main building axis. The fourth apse in the east followed a traditional design with lateral *pastophories*, the one difference being that they were now made accessible from the sanctuary. The altar screen, probably in the form of a *templon*, has not survived. The pulpit was traditionally located north of the screen. A staircase in the southwestern corner chamber, together with the massive walls, suggested emporia of some sort. The existence of four apses inside the church correlated well with a passage in the biography of the Coptic patriarch Christodoulos (1047–1094) (Vantini 1975: OSN 213), speaking of delegations of bishops being sent to Makuria and Ethiopia to establish relations (Munro-Hay 1998: 32, 150). During one such mission, the Coptic bishops blessed four sanctuaries in a newly built church. While implying that the NWC church was the building in question, the report also draws attention to a new phenomenon in Makurian religious architecture, that is, the appearance of *parekklesia* (side chapels). This new trend was well documented in the Upper Church in Baganarti (Żurawski 2004). Stefan Jakobielski dated the NWC church to the 12th century and this dating seems to be correct overall, although pushing the time back to the 1060s–1070s, when the visit of the above-mentioned bishops took place, is also reasonable. The design of the eastern end with *pastophories* accessible from the sanctuary appeared earlier at a small church in Sonqi Tino (Fanfoni 1979), where a portrait of King Georgios III was preserved, dating the building to the second half of the 10th century. A similar type of church in the form of a cross-over-rectangle and with all four arms projecting is the small building

from Tamit, called the Church of Angels (Monneret de Villard 1935: 154; Bresciani 1964: 35; Grossmann 1982: 81–82). The side entrances to this church in the north and south arms relate it to Dongolan-type churches of the Late Period, and not the CC and CB structures, but the proposed dating to the 13th century (Adams 1965: 117) is decidedly too late. It would be more correct to link the construction of the Church of Angels in Tamit with the close of the 12th century. The earlier date in the 9th century (Grossmann 1982: 82) cannot be upheld in view of the way in which the *pastophories* communicate with the sanctuary, which cannot be dated earlier than the second half of the 10th century.

NORTH CHURCH (NC)

The North Church of Dongola (Godlewski 1990) with its massive walls is like a building planned as a cross-in-square. The constricted space inside it, the eastern sacristies accessible from the sanctuary and the general massiveness of the structure relate it to the NWC church, but even more so to the churches at Serre (Mileham 1910: 40–45; Godlewski 1996:

North Church (NC)





Interior of the Tower Church (TC)

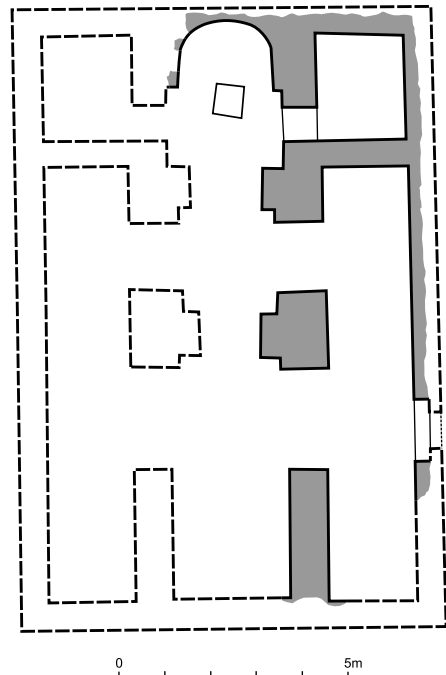
43). A staircase in the southwestern chamber and the massive walls are again testimony to emporia of some kind. The central part of the naos undoubtedly was domed, although it is difficult to resist the impression that there was a number of domes at different levels.

The date of construction in the 13th century is quite plausible, although the archaeological evidence is limited. The North Church seems to be later than the Northwest Church.

TOWER CHURCH (TC)

The Tower Church from the second half of the 14th century (Godlewski 1996) is probably one of the latest projects executed in Dongola. It was built on top of a ruined tower, extending in part onto the fortifications to the northwest. It is a domed basilica typical of the latest period in Makuria, likely with one entrance from the south, reflecting the approach from the city. The three-aisled naos was set off by masonry pilasters bearing the weight of a dome above the eastern part of the nave. The apse in the east end had

Tower Church (TC)



lateral sacristies communicating with the sanctuary. A masonry altar was located in the open space of the apse.

SECOND CRUCIFORM CHURCH (CC.II)

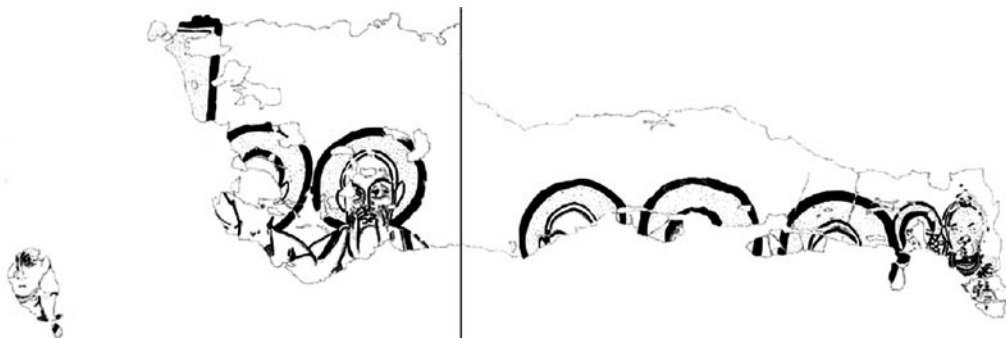
The Second Cruciform Church also belongs in this latest period of church building in Dongola, although it is difficult to speak of a new structure in this case. The original Cruciform Church was destroyed during the second Mamluk raid on Makuria in 1286 and it had to be adapted hastily to serve liturgical needs. Earlier structures inside it were made use of to reinforce the supports of the central dome by the eastern *triforium*. The central dome, however, had been destroyed and the debris had to be removed. The entrance from the west was blocked up and a keystone bearing a monogram of King Georgios I(?) appeared centrally in the arch; it must have been taken from one of the earlier entrance arches. The entrances in the north and south arms were narrowed and a square vestibule added earlier in front of the south door was left unchanged. The east end of the naos underwent the most extensive alteration. In front of the portico, between the bases of which the original *synthronon* still stood, a massive *ciborium* was built, its dome supported on four corner pillars. An altar was placed in the center of the *ciborium*. On the west side, the *ciborium* was attached to the older walls, which limited the east end of the naos on the east, in front of the eastern portico. It was a kind of sanctuary screen, with a centrally placed *templon*, of which the only trace is the position of the posts. The existence of a roof over this part of the building remains an open question.

CHURCH B.III.2

After the political situation had stabilized in Dongola, presumably in the first half of the 14th century, the commemorative building (B.III.1, see page 35) was transformed into a small church. The entrances in the eastern, northern and western arms were blocked,

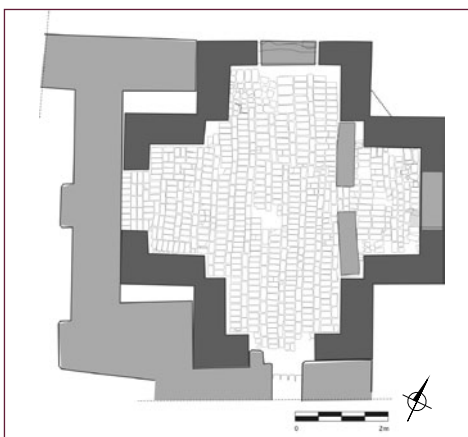
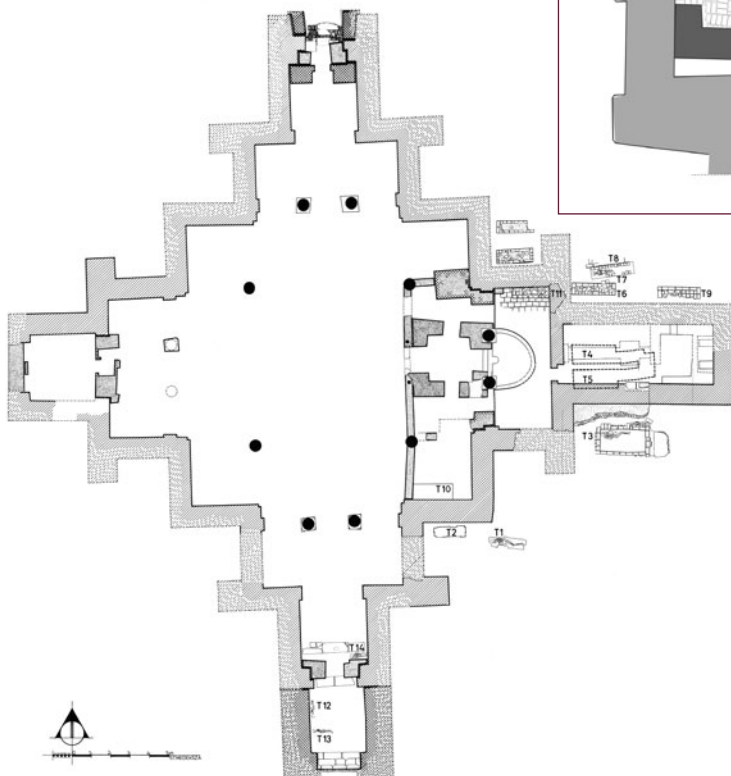
Keystone with a monogram of (the King) Georgios, reused in the west wall of the Second Cruciform Church (CC.II)





College of Apostles and Bishop of Dongola,
fragmentary murals from Church B.III.2 on the citadel

Second Cruciform Church (CC.II)



Church B.III.2 (Site SWN)



Bishop of Dongola,
detail of mural on the opposite page

leaving only one door from the south. The floor level was raised by 40 cm and a new brick paving was introduced. Just in front of the passage from the central space to the eastern arcade a high altar screen was constructed, providing only a narrow entrance to the sanctuary. The interior was coated with a new mud plaster and paintings typical of church decoration. A fragmentary college of apostles has been preserved in the sanctuary, including a portrait depiction of a bishop of Dongola. The characteristic headgear of the priest, topped by a cross with semicircular arms, is also known from

the Rivergate Church at Faras and the Monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola.

Remnants of a Nativity scene were preserved north of the altar screen.

The church remained in use presumably until the fall of Christianity in Dongola. After a while the floor was covered with a thick layer of windblown sand and the interior used by the later inhabitants of the citadel as storage and household space.

Eastern arm of Church B.III.2 with narrowed entrance
and fragmentary late murals on the wall

