

THE CENTRAL CHURCH OF
ABDALLAH NIRQI

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES AT LEIDEN
THE NETHERLANDS EXCAVATIONS IN NUBIA, ABU SIMBEL NORTH 1962-1964

FIELD-DIRECTOR: ADOLF KLASSENS

THE CENTRAL CHURCH OF ABDALLAH NIRQI

BY

PAUL VAN MOORSEL . JEAN JACQUET . HANS SCHNEIDER

Watercolours: Servaas Wildschut

Photographs: Frits van Veen

Drawings of the wall-paintings: John Caspers

With 39 figures and 101 plates



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To the Memory of Servaas Wildschut

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INTRODUCTION

BY

ADOLF KLASSENS

The site of Abdallah Nirqi on the West bank of the Nile, about 3.5 kilometres to the East (local North) of the temple of Abu Simbel, belonged to the area of the concession granted to the Netherlands by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in consultation with Unesco (Figs. 1-2).

The concession, Abu Simbel North, contained two settlements, the ruins of which had been analysed during a Survey undertaken by the Egypt Exploration Society under the supervision of Professor W. B. Emery and carried out under the direction of H. S. Smith during the early months of 1960. Both Emery and Smith drew our attention to this area and advised us to apply for a concession.

The two settlements, both along the river's edge, were called respectively Town B, "a Meroitic and later town site", about 2.5 kilometres to the East (local North) of the Abu Simbel temples and Town A, "a walled town of the Christian period with suburbs to the East and West (local North and South)", with a cemetery which was called Cemetery 249.¹

The area Abu Simbel North would be flooded completely in 1964-65 by the waters of the reservoir behind the newly constructed High Dam in the Nile near Aswan.

The Dutch excavations were organized by the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and financed by the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research. They were carried out during the seasons 1962-63 and 1963-64 as part of the contribution of the Netherlands to the International Campaign for the Preservation of the Monuments of Nubia which started officially with an Appeal launched on 8 March 1960 by the Director-General of Unesco.

Both "Town B" and "Town A" had been visited during former campaigns and surveys undertaken in consequence of the raising of the first Aswan Dam and of the flood level in the Nubian reservoir in 1907-1912 and 1929-1934.

Arthur E. P. Weigall passed the two sites in 1906: "About four kilometres north of Abu Simbel, which can now be seen in the distance, there are more ruins of Graeco-Roman buildings, standing on a mound of sand overlooking the river" ... "Less than a kilometre from the last-mentioned fortress there are the ruins of a town, near the river's edge. The

¹ Harry S. Smith, *Preliminary Reports of the Egypt Exploration Society's Nubian Survey*, Cairo 1962, pp. 40-44, with plates iv and v.

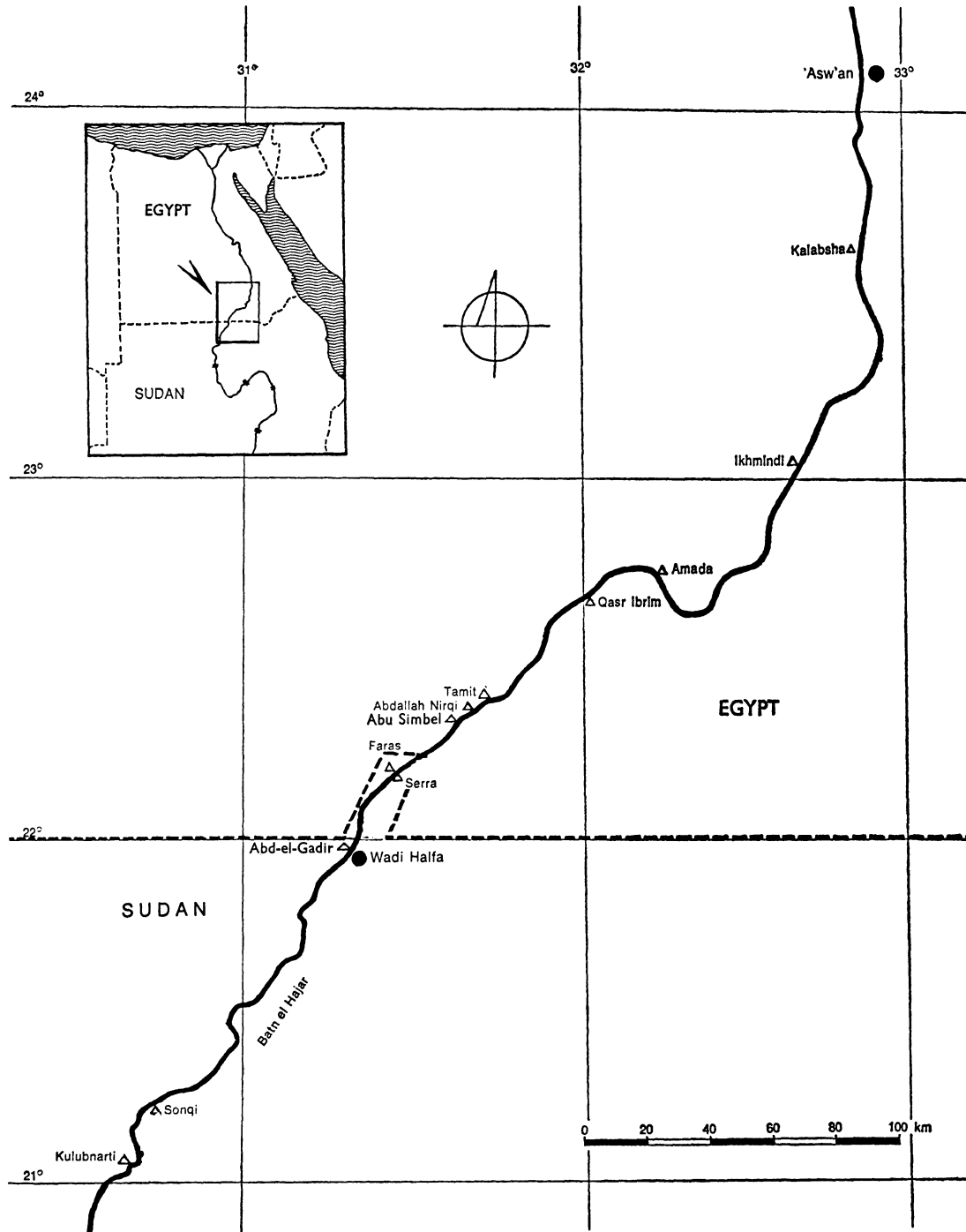
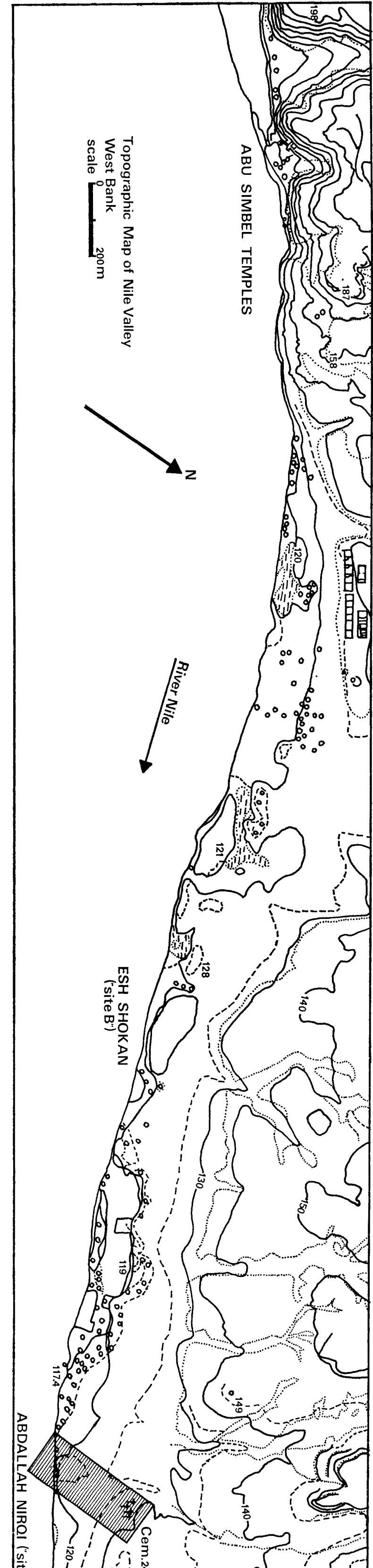
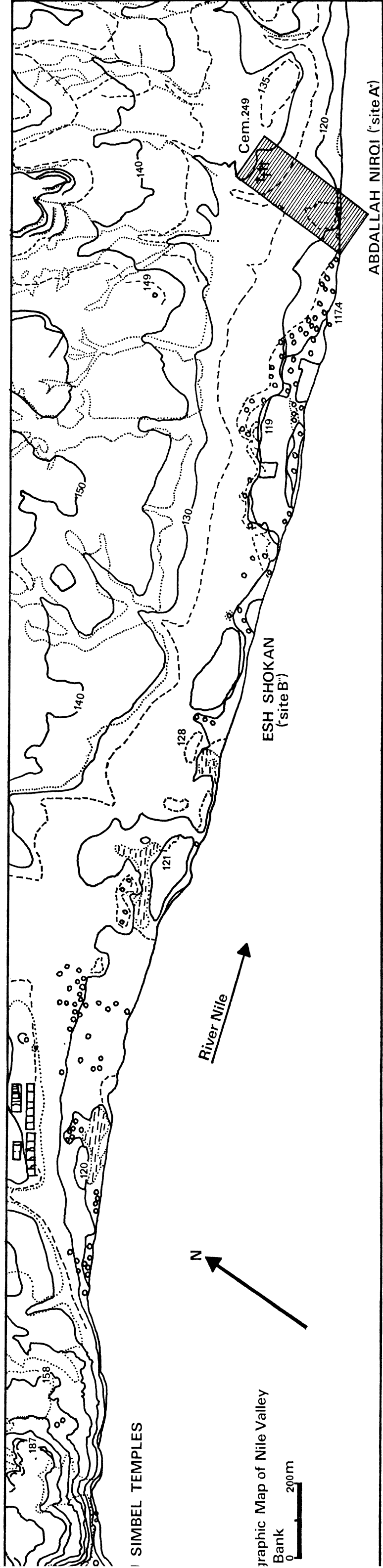


Fig. 1





pottery is Ptolemaic and Roman".² The ruins referred to were respectively the citadel of "Town A" and the settlement "Town B".

W. B. Emery and L. P. Kirwan examined "Town B": "The remains of a town to the north of the great temple of Abu Simbel with its adjacent Cemetery 214".³

Ugo Monneret de Villard visited "Town A" and found the remains of "*una chiesa, disgraziatamente distrutta sino all'altezza di un metro circo sul pavimento*".⁴

He called the site 'Abdallah Nirqi after the name of the local farmer: Abdallah-n-Irqi, place of Abdallah,⁵ as was confirmed to us by his son who still lived near the site during our excavations.

The church, discovered by Monneret de Villard was in fact the eastern church, belonging to the eastern suburb near Cemetery 249. The central church, inside the walled town, was cleared by the Dutch Mission. The remains of a third church were found in the western suburb, denuded down to its foundation layer.

The town site as a whole was explored by a Mission of the Hungarian Academy of Science under the direction of Prof. László Castiglione during the late summer and early autumn of 1964⁶ (Fig. 3).

The work of the Dutch Mission was concentrated during the whole of the first season 1962-63 and the greater part of the second season 1963-64 on "Town B", the Meroitic settlement locally known as Shokan (Ash-Shaukan).⁷

The clearing of the interior of the central church of Abdallah Nirqi, which had remained unnoticed by former expeditions, started on the last day of 1963 and was completed on the 16th of January 1964.⁸

The staff of the Dutch Mission consisted at the time, apart from the undersigned as field-director, of Helen Jacquet-Gordon, Jean Jacquet, architect, Hans D. Schneider, Servaas

² *A Report on the Antiquities of Lower Nubia in 1906-7*, Oxford 1907, p. 124.

³ *The Excavations and Survey between Wadi es-Sebua and Adindan 1929-1931*, Vol. I, Cairo 1935, p. 23, see also p. 417.

⁴ *La Nubia Medievale I*, Le Caire 1935, p. 170; plan on p. 171, Fig. 159.

⁵ See H. D. Schneider, Abdallah Nirqi — Description and Chronology of the Central Church = *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit*, hrsgb. von Erich Dinkler, Recklingshausen 1970, pp. 87-98 (88).

⁶ L. Castiglione, Abdallah Nirqi 1964 = *Magyar Tudomány* 1965, 467-488; En aval d'Abou Simbel. Fouilles de sauvetage d'une ville de l'ancienne Nubie chrétienne: Abdallah Nirqi, = *Archaeologia*, No. 18, Paris Sept.-Oct. 1967, pp. 14-19; See also Evzen Ilnátek, Maradský archeologický výzkum v Nubii, = *Archeologické Rozhledy* 17, Praha 1965, pp. 852-858, and *Orientalia* 35, (1966), p. 149, nr. 41. Fig. 3 has been adapted from the plan of the site, published by Castiglione.

⁷ Jean Jacquet, Remarques sur l'architecture domestique à l'époque Méroïtique, Documents recueillis sur les fouilles d'Ash-Shaukan, = *Beiträge zur Ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde*, H. 12 (1971), pp. 121-131, pls. 17-20.

⁸ Preliminary Reports of both seasons: A. Klasens, De Nederlandse opgravingen in Nubië. Eerste seizoen 1962-1963, = *Phoenix IX*, 2 (1963), pp. 57-66; tweede seizoen 1963-1964, *ibid.* X, 2 (1964), pp. 147-156; *id.*, *Jaarboek 1963. Nederlandse Organisatie voor Zuiver Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*, 's-Gravenhage, 1964. p. 108, pls. 1-4; *id.*, Dutch archaeological Mission to Nubia. The excavations at Abu Simbel North 1962-1964 — *Fouilles en Nubie (1961-1963)*, Cairo 1967, pp. 79-86, pls. IV-VIII, XII; H.D. Schneider in: *Spiegel Historiae*, 7, no. 9. Bussum 7 sept. 1972, pp. 481-482. See *Orientalia* 33 (1964), 360, no. 42 and 34 (1965), 201-203, no. 49.

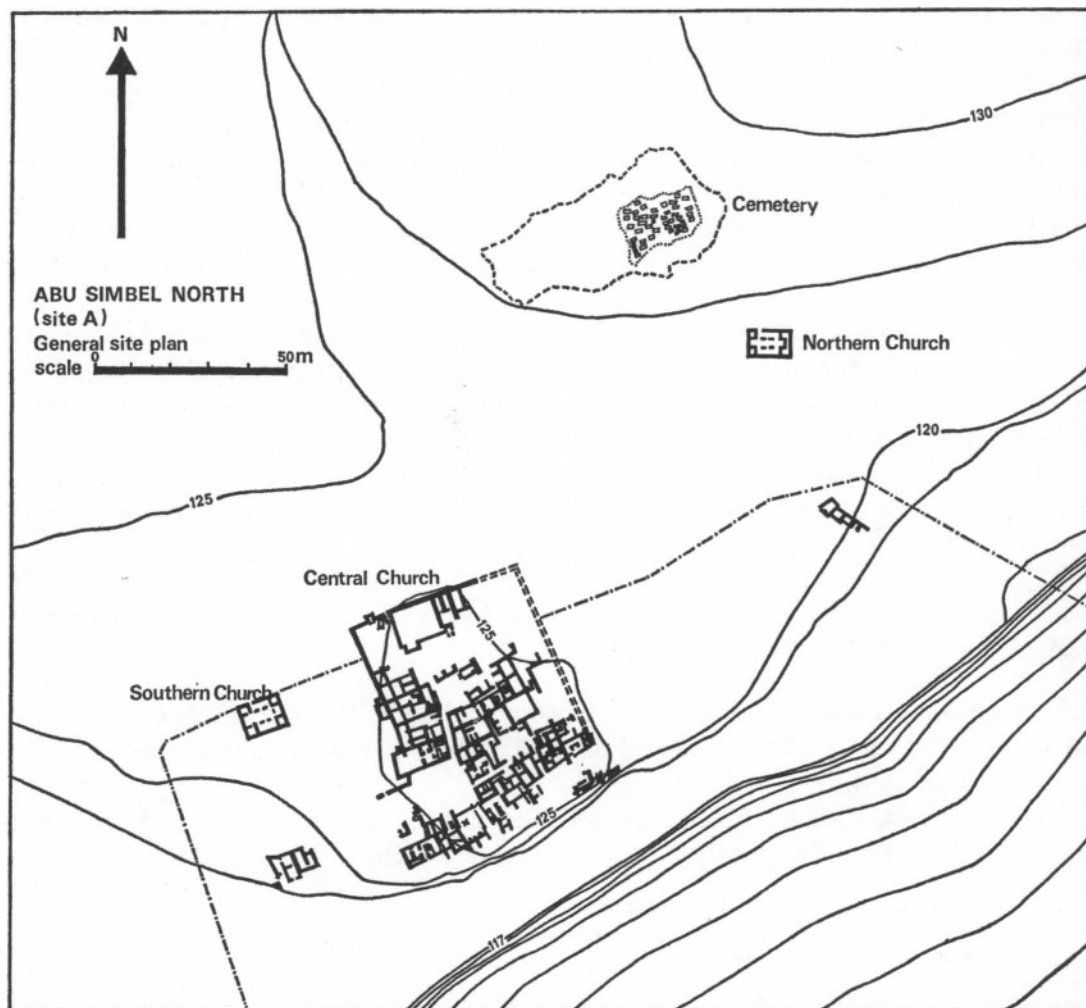


Fig. 3

Wildschut and F. G. van Veen, photographer. The inspector from the Department of Antiquities was Ahmed Nachati. The 50 workmen from Kuft were led by Reiss Hissein Khalil Ibrahim.

The expedition was housed in the houseboat "Gerf Hussein", which was moored in front of the temples of Abu Simbel, where the activities to save these most impressive monuments of Nubia had already started. Both the "Gerf Hussein" and the tug "Kertassi" were, together with their crew, kindly placed at the disposal of the Dutch Mission by the Antiquities Department of Egypt.

The Central Church appeared to be surprisingly well preserved up to a height of about 3 metres, the level of the springing of the vaults covering the different parts of the church. The rooms were filled with almost clean sand which had protected the remaining paintings on the walls of the north aisle, the nave and in particular of the south aisle and inside the

arched doors leading from the nave to both aisles, altogether providing the most complete series of Christian paintings in the whole of Egyptian Nubia.

It appeared that the church, at the time of its abandonment, possibly as late as the 15th century, was already completely buried in the sand and could be entered only by means of a secondary staircase at the south-western end leading down from the roof-level and a similar secondary entrance in the west wall. When the bricks of the vaulted roofs were taken away and used for some other purpose as no traces of them were found, the church was probably very quickly filled with the clean and protecting sand.

The type of the church was determined by William Y. Adams as being Type 2b, the Buhen Type, dated to c. 650-800 A.D.⁹

The paintings in the church were clearly of two different styles, at the time of their discovery called "Byzantine", applied on a thin layer of whitewash, and "Nubian", applied on a thicker layer of so-called Coptic plaster, a cement of a pinkish colour. The paintings could be dated with the help of the abundant material found by the Polish Mission under the direction of Professor Kazimierz Michałowski in the Cathedral of Faras. Those dated c. 750-800 A.D. are now called paintings of "the violet style" and those dated c. 980-1020 A.D. are now called paintings of "the white style". The analysis of the architecture of the church, of the pottery and other finds from the church, of the style of the paintings concurs with the evidence from the stratigraphical exploration of the site by the Hungarian Mission of Prof. Castiglione.

The church was built in the middle of the 8th century, when it also received its first paintings of "the violet style". The flourishing period was around 1000, when the paintings of "the white style" were applied, partly covering the paintings of „the violet style". The church probably was used until the 15th century when it finally was abandoned and left to be filled up with the sand which already for a long time had covered it from the outside up to the level of the roof.

The paintings, which had been photographed on the site and all of which had been copied in watercolour by Servaas Wildschut, could be saved, except those which were too fragmentarily preserved, thanks to the arrival just in time, the 10th of January, of a team of Egyptian and Jugo-Slav experts under the direction of Dr. Zaky Iskander, Mihailo Vunjak and Milorad Medić, a total of 23 with a surface of more than 30 square metres. The paintings were cleaned, impregnated, coated with glue and covered with layers of gauze, taken from the walls and transported on wooden boards, first to Wadi es-Sebua,¹⁰ later to the laboratory of the Cairo Museum where they received a final treatment and mounting,¹¹ and finally to the Coptic Museum, where they could be photographed for the second time in September 1970.

Apart from the sandstone architectural elements of the church which were transported

⁹ Architectural Evolution of the Nubian Church, 500-1400 A.D. = Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt, Vol. IV (1965), pp. 108-110. The church was wrongly called the Southern Church, also in: Byzanz und der Christliche Osten = *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* 3, Berlin 1968, pp. 362-3, 365; pls. 408 and 431b.

¹⁰ See for the technical details: Milorad Medić, Abdallah Nirki = *Institut Yougoslave pour la protection des monuments historiques. Participation de la Yougoslave dans l'action internationale pour la sauvegarde des monuments de la Nubie antique*, Beograd 1965, pp. 58-66 (Jugo-Slav), with Summary in French pp. 93-94.

¹¹ *Illustrated London News*, February 5, 1966, pp. 38-39.

to Cairo and remained there : a pair of columns, a door lintel and a pair of consoles, all the other finds from the church were presented to the Leiden Museum of Antiquities. They were inventorized as F 1964/11.1-59 and F 1965/5.1-76.

We were fortunate in finding Dr. P. P. V. van Moorsel prepared to study and publish the wall paintings found in the Central Church of Abdallah Nirqi. Several studies appeared already from his hand about the subject.¹²

We express our gratefulness to all those who made the excavations possible and advised and encouraged us throughout the campaign and during the preparation for this publication of the unique Church of Abdallah Nirqi.

Many of them have been mentioned in the lines above and many will be in the following texts.

Thanks are due in particular to the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research, who not only financed the expedition but also made it possible to publish the results in this way, together with the Publishers Firm E. J. Brill at Leiden.

We are grateful to the Egyptian Department of Antiquities and its staff, in particular to the Director-General at the time, Dr. Anwar Shukry, and the Inspector of Nubian Antiquities at Aswan, Mr. Abdin Siyyam.

We thank also the Under-Secretary of State, Dr. Gamal Mokhtar, the authorities of the Cairo Museum of Antiquities and the Coptic Museum.

The Special Representative of Unesco in Cairo for the International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia, Louis A. Christophe, helped and advised us throughout the campaign.

We owe the saving of the paintings to the team of Egyptian and Jugo-Slav experts under the direction of Dr. Zaky Iskander, his Jugo-Slav colleague Michailo Vunjak and the restorer of paintings Milorad Medić. We thank them together with their staff and the staff of the laboratory of the Cairo Museum.

We thank also in particular Professor Kazimierz Michałowski and members of the Polish Mission to Faras for their generous cooperation and for making available to us the rich material from their excavations on behalf of the study and publication of our wall-paintings.

We are grateful also to Professor William Y. Adams for his advice with regard to the architecture of the church and the pottery.

The publication of all wall-paintings, even the most fragmentary ones, would not have been possible without the artistic qualities of the young promising scholar who, as a member of the staff of the expedition, copied all of them in watercolour, Servaas Wildschut. He died at the early age of 25 on the 16th of January 1969. To his memory this Volume is dedicated.

¹² Abdallah Nirqi = *Spiegel Historiae* 2 (1967), nr. 7-8, pp. 387-392; Une théophanie Nubienne = *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* XLII, 1-4, 1966 (publ. 1968), pp. 297-316; Die Wandmalereien der zentralen Kirche von Abdallah Nirqi = *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit*, hrsgb. von Erich Dinkler, Recklinghausen 1970, pp. 103-110; Der Kontext der Wandmalereien von Abdallah Nirqi. Perspektiven und Fragen = *Acta Orientalia Neerlandica*, Leiden 1971, pp. 22-27; Die Nubier und das glorreiche Kreuz = *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* XLVII, 1972, pp. 125-134; Gli Scavi Olandesi in Nubia = *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueologia Cristiana*, Barcelona 5-11 Oct. 1969, 1972, pp. 589-595.

THE ARCHITECTURE

BY

JEAN JACQUET

State of preservation of the church

The site of Abdallah Nirqi lies four kilometers to the north of the temples of Abu Simbel, on the west bank of the Nile. Here, the originally fairly flat surface of the plain has been greatly altered by the construction of mud-brick buildings, their utilization over a period of time and their ultimate destruction. Indeed, in this area continually swept by strong north winds, buildings form barriers against which the sand is piled, thus gradually forming hillocks. This is what happened at Abdallah Nirqi. After the abandonment of the site, sand invaded the village covering the houses to more than half their height. The upper parts of the buildings, left exposed to the elements, fell into ruin and the debris, consisting mainly of mud-brick and straw, disintegrated and was blown away. But the buried lower sections being well preserved, the plan of the buildings, cut horizontally at a fairly high level, became clearly visible on the surface. It was thus that the church which we are about to describe first appeared to us (Pl. 1).¹

Description of the church

Exterior

The church, roughly rectangular in form and built entirely of mud-brick, measured 12 × 14 m. Its exterior was devoid of any ornamental motifs or architectonic elements other than windows. The walls had a slight batter.²

The monument was preserved to an average height of 3 meters. The walls were built directly on the sandstone bedrock which may have been slightly levelled off for this pur-

¹ The discovery was made during the winter of 1963 while the mission was excavating a Meroitic village somewhat further south.

² The limited time at our disposal did not permit of the clearance of the exterior of the church down to its foundations.

pose. The roof consisted of a number of barrel vaults which were, however, invisible from the exterior since the outer walls doubtless rose higher than the level of the spring of the vaults. This arrangement is still frequently found in present-day Nubian houses as well as in the surviving Christian monuments of Egypt.

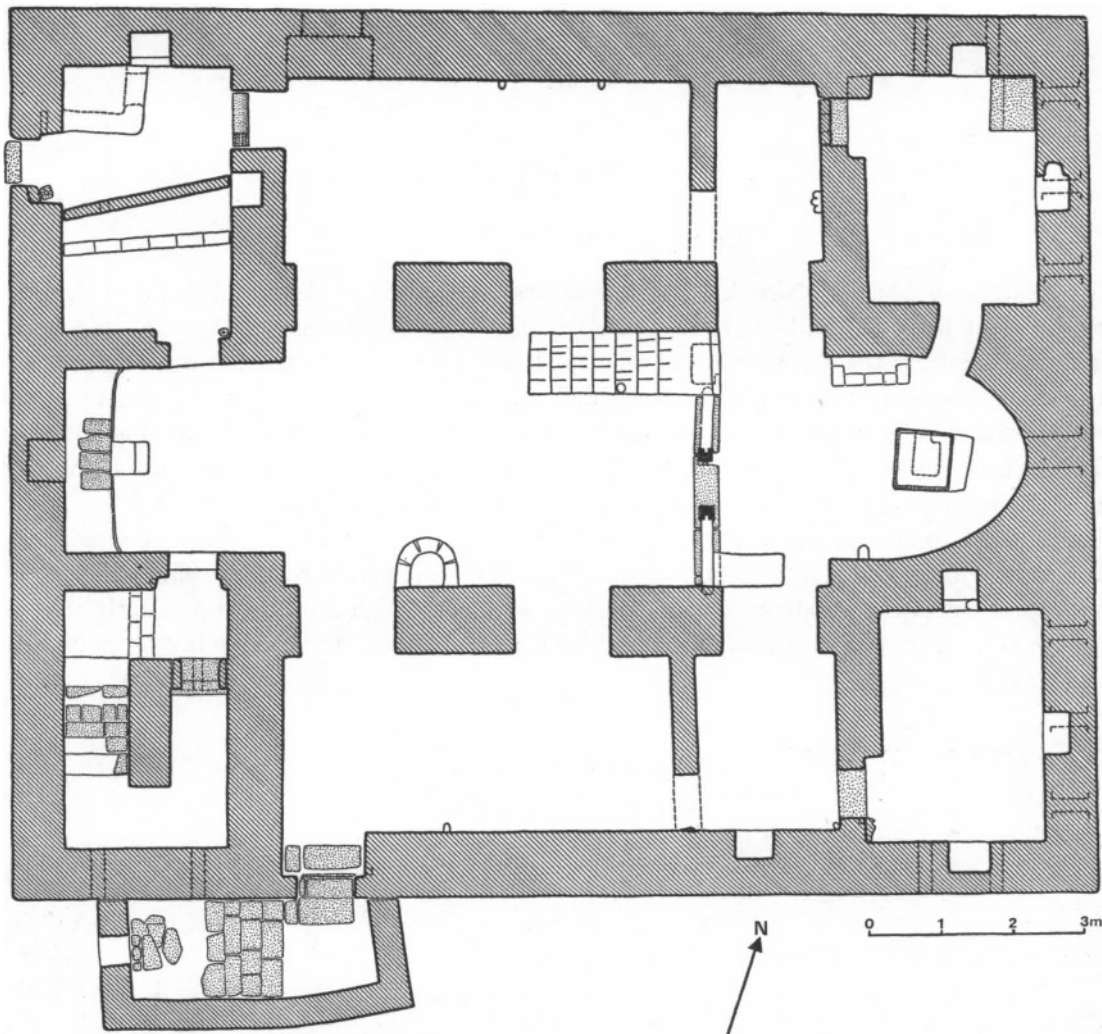


Fig. 1

The plan

The church, composed of three naves, was of a type classical in Nubia, with the apse at the east end inscribed within the rectangle of the outer walls and flanked by lateral rooms.

The comparable space at the west end was occupied by one lateral room and a staircase (Pl. 4, 5^a and 5^b).³

As we shall see, the original plan of the church underwent various alterations, due to two principal factors :

- (1) An internal reorganization which can be attributed to the evolving form of the liturgy.
- (2) The struggle to prevent the monument from being sanded up. (Cf. plan, fig. 1).

The entrances

Originally the church had two entrances, one on the north side, the other on the south, both situated at the western end of the outer walls of the lateral naves. The one-leafed doors closing these entrances both opened inwards from east to west.

The north entrance seems to have been abandoned at a period when invasion by the sand could no longer be prevented. It was then carefully blocked with mud-brick and covered with a coat of whitewash which extends out over the whole interior surface of the wall.

The south entrance comprised a sandstone lintel surmounted by an arched impost. Two rectangular blocks of sandstone forming consoles were imbedded in the facade on either side of the entrance, at the level of the top of the arch. The western console was decorated with an engraved criss-cross pattern. The door could be fastened by means of a bolt which fitted into a slot cut into the east side of the door recess. This entrance likewise underwent a series of alterations, necessitated by the drifting sand. Originally its monolithic threshold was only 17 cm. high. It was gradually raised by the addition of slabs of sandstone, until it reached a height of 47 cm. At this point, the threshold was so high that an intermediate step had to be placed in the door recess; this was composed of two slabs, 10 cm. thick, placed end to end (Pl. 6).

Because of the rising surface level outside the church, there came a time when these measures were no longer adequate. A flight of steps was then built leading down from the surface to the entrance along the south side of the church, limited by a casing of mud-brick, the bricks being of larger dimensions than those used in the church itself. Access to the stairway was gained through a narrow opening in the west wall of the staircase, on a level with the desert. A few piled-up stones facilitated the descent to a first landing, of beaten earth, situated 60 cm. lower than the threshold. These elements — the west wall of the casing with its narrow opening, and the piled-up stones, represent the final stages in the alterations of the entrance. Three steps, covered with sandstone slabs, led down to a second landing at a level 15 cm. higher than the late doorsill mentioned above. Against the sill, the landing was reinforced by a sandstone slab. (Cf. pl. 7 and fig. 2, section 2, where the door is seen from the inside and the stair well is indicated by dotted lines).

³ We shall limit ourselves here to giving a detailed description of the monument, without broaching the problem of the evolution of the Nubian church or its functioning. William Y. Adams has devoted an important article to these questions in the *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, Vol. IV, 1965, pp. 87-139.

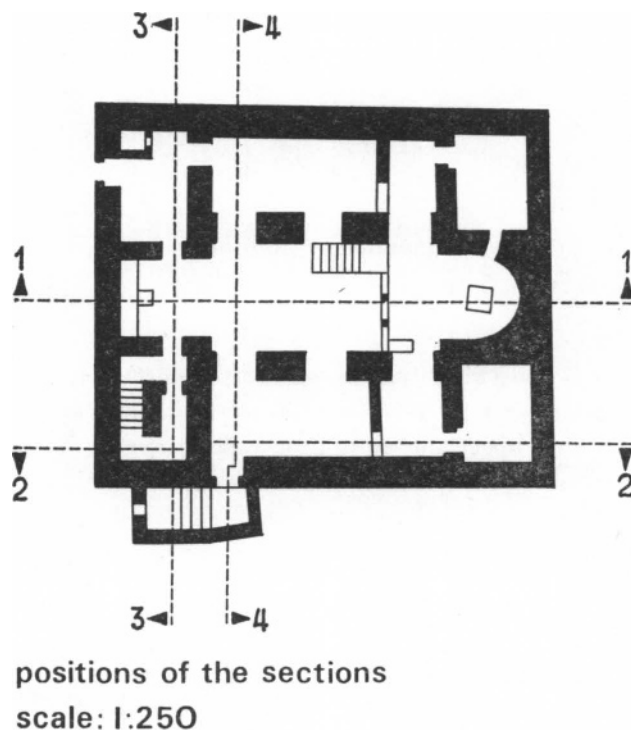


Fig. 2

The floors

Since the church was founded on bedrock, the latter had been roughly levelled off and covered with a layer of beaten earth to form the floor. The floor-level throughout the church was uniform except in the north-west corner room, where it was slightly higher.

The naves

The central part of the church consisted of three naves, each separated from the other by two heavy rectangular pillars, supporting semi-circular arches. At each end of the nave, the arches rested on pilasters, mere reinforcements of the north-south walls.

The central nave was 3.50 m. wide (Pl. 8 and 9). It was prolonged at the west end by a slightly narrower porch (2.60 m. wide), ⁴ adjoined on the north by a room, and on the south by the well of the stairs. The vault covering this porch was lower than the vault of the central nave. The west wall of the porch was occupied by a slightly incurved bench of mud-brick, 40 cm. high. The surface of the bench in its central part had been reinforced with four slabs of sandstone, and two small axial steps led up to it. Above the bench was a niche which had later been blocked up with mud-brick.

⁴ The 'western bay' in the terminology adopted by Adams, *o.c.*, p. 95, § 5.

Two doors opened out on either side of the porch, that on the north leading to the small north-west room, that on the south giving access to the staircase (Cf. fig. 2, section 3).

In the central nave, two structures should be noted. The first was a semi-circular enclosure of mud-brick adjoining the south-west pillar. Its original height can be estimated at about 40 cm. The interior of the enclosure, composed of beaten earth, as well as the traces visible on the pillar, suggest that amphorae or waterjars had stood here.

The second structure was the ambo which occupied its traditional place against the north-east pillar. It was a compact construction of mud-brick which encroached to a considerable degree upon the passage between the two pillars leading to the north aisle without, however, obstructing it entirely (Pl. 2). The platform at the summit of the ambo was reached by a flight of seven steps, each about 30 cm. wide and 23 to 24 cm. high. This platform (measuring 65 × 75 cm.) had been bounded on the east side by a brick parapet whose original height of approximately 60 cm. could be recognized thanks to the existing traces (Cf. fig. 2, section 1).

From the structural point of view, the central nave extended eastwards as far as the apse, and the lateral naves as far as the lateral rooms. Functionally, the eastern limit of the central nave was formed by the Higab,⁵ while the lateral naves were interrupted at the level of the Higab by transverse dividing walls, containing doorways.⁶ The dividing wall in the north nave was 1.65 m high, that in the south nave 1.45 m.. The asymmetrically placed doorways, simple openings without doors, were surmounted by arches of mud-brick. At their south ends, these arches, instead of being supported on pilasters, were directly engaged in the walls of the naves, as can be seen on the plan. The transverse wall of the south nave was displaced slightly to the west in relation to the Higab and to that of the north nave (Pl. 3b and 3a; fig. 2, section 4).

The Higab

The Higab, occupying, as it did, the space between the ambo the south-east pillar of the central nave, was consequently off-center in relation to the latter, though this was not immediately evident to the eye. It was composed of two columns, flanking a central opening, on either side of which were low brick walls, shutting off the nave to a height of one meter. The ensemble rested on a basement of sandstone slabs, the central slab forming the threshold of the door (Pl. 10). The lower parts of the monolithic sandstone columns,⁷ square in section, were fitted into slots in the foundation slabs. The upper parts, round colonettes emerging from the square bases, were surmounted by capitals. The square bases were of the same height as the walls flanking them and their front faces were decorated in relief with an intertwined motif contained within a frame which followed the edges of the stone. The decorative motifs on the two bases were not identical; for example, on the north side, the intertwined design

⁵ *Higab*, being the screen that separates the central nave from the presbyterium (the *Haikal*).

⁶ *o. c.*, p. 95 : Functional Divisions, § 1, where Adams puts forward his point of view concerning the evolution of the plan.

⁷ The south pillar had been broken, and restored by means of a metal gudgeon. The fragments of the pillar were found lying in the apse.

was surmounted by four "cabochons", while on the south side there were only two. The sides of the bases, hidden by the small brick walls, contained deep vertical grooves, originally intended to hold stone balustrades. This suggests either that the brick walls had replaced such balustrades or that the columns were reused elements from an earlier church. The surmounting colonettes were of rather poor workmanship, being unevenly rounded and wider at the top than at the bottom. Adhering to parts of the north column was a thick layer of wax mixed with soot, the remains of candles stuck there in order to allow them to burn down.

The capitals, finely sculptured, were decorated with plant motifs : a pair of palm branches on each side, ending in volutes (Pl. 20). Tied, as it were, at their base by an astragal, these branches spread out to support the abacus, thus forming the transition from the circular to the square plan. The abaci, ornamented with horizontal lines, bore a centrally placed rectangular motif on each face. The door was no doubt originally covered by an arch supported on these columns.

As we have already seen, the naves were closed at the east end, the central nave by the Higab and the lateral naves by transverse walls. The space left open between these walls and the installations at the east end of the church (apse and lateral rooms) formed a transverse hall having the full width of the church, which Adams calls the presbyterium.⁸

The Presbyterium (The Haikal)

This space contained the following installations :

(1) At the south end, a niche had been made in the south wall of the church. The niche contained a wooden shelf.

(2) A small brick wall, one meter high and 45 cm. thick, running east-west across the presbyterium at right angles to the Higab, and adjoining the south-east pillar of the central nave, appears to have been added at a later date. Its height as well as its relatively flat surface showing signs of wear, all suggest that it was used as a table. This wall left only a narrow passage for access to the south part of the presbyterium (Pl. 11).

(3) Two niches in the rear wall of the ambo, one above the other, may have been used for the storage of cult objects (Pl. 12). The lower niche, which was the larger of the two, was floored with a sandstone slab. The width of its opening was reduced by the construction of a jamb (of beaten earth) on its south side.

The apse

The apse was 2.80 m. wide and 2.75 m. in depth from east to west. It was thus narrower than the central nave, being comparable in its dimensions to the west porch. It was not semi-circular, its shape approximating more closely to a parabola than to the arc of a circle.

In the center of the apse stood the altar, roughly oriented according to the axis of the church. It was a small, square, brick construction, 1.15 m. high, the walls of which showed a pronounced batter. A step, 18 cm. high, ran along its back (eastern) face. A small cupboard,

⁸ o. c., p. 95, note 32.

65 cm. high, inside the alter was reached from the north side by means of a small opening, 30 cm. high. This cupboard may have been a reliquary (fig. 3, section 1). A doorway in the north wall of the apse had been cut through at a later period to give access to the northern lateral room. Its roof had never been properly reinforced by a vault of its own, the bricks of the wall in which it was cut having the aspect of a corbel vault.

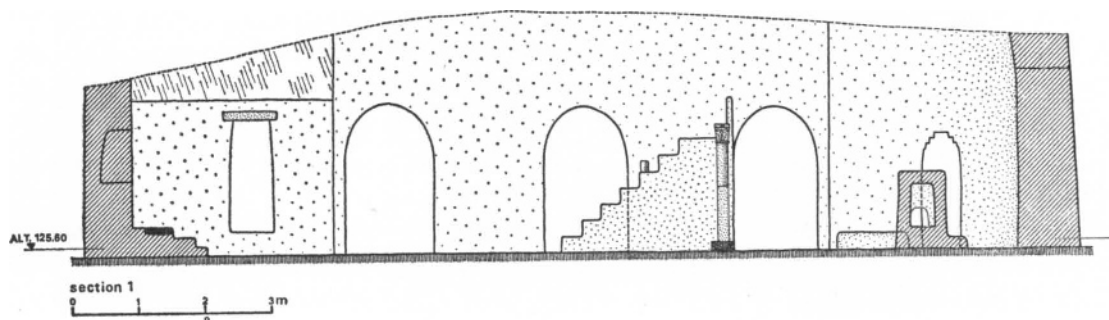


Fig. 3

Between this door and the north-west corner of the apse, a small brick bench, 1.10 m. long and 40 cm. deep, had been constructed. Its preserved height of 25 cm. seems to have been its total original height, since the whitewash on the wall of the apse against which it was built extended down as far as the surface of the bench. On the other hand, the wall here showed no traces of wear. In the axis of the apse, and therefore also of the church, a window, 43 cm. wide, pierced the wall at a height of 2.60 m. from the floor. The existence of a window in this position was most exceptional, and as far as we know, unique in the churches of Nubia. It may perhaps have been a later addition. It was blocked up when a wall was built against the east facade of the church.

The eastern lateral rooms

Originally, these two rooms displayed a remarkable symmetry, the doors, windows and niches of both being similiary placed.

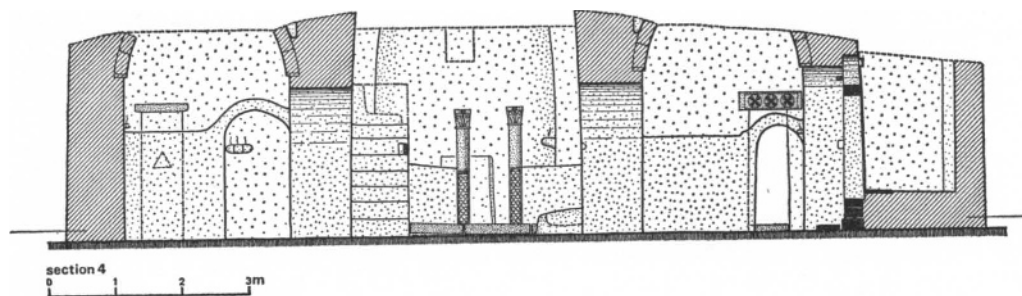


Fig. 4

The north room (the prothesis of the Greek churches) had, however, undergone various alterations. As we have seen, the entrance from the apse was added at a later date. It replaced the original door, opening on to the north side nave, which was then blocked up with mud-brick. The sandstone lintel and threshold were, however, preserved, and a triangular judas window was cut through the blocking at eye-level (fig. 4, section 4). The north face of the doorway had also been modified, thus covering the emplacement of the door socket.

As found, the room contained two niches, but it is possible that a third niche, symmetrical to the one in the south room, had formerly existed at the place where the late doorway was cut. The east niche was slightly enlarged by a recess on its north side.

In the north-east corner of the room was a small closet with its opening on the south side. It was about 50 cm. high, and consisted of a brick wall, supporting a sandstone slab which also served as a table (Pl. 13).

There were no fewer than 5 windows in this room. These were simple, rectangular loopholes, high and narrow, placed 2.30 m. above the floor. The windows on the east side must have pierced both the masonry of the vault and that of the outer wall. In common with all the windows in the church, they were walled up at a later date.

The south-east room, the diaconicon, has not undergone any alterations. Above the door was a thick lintel of pink sandstone, decorated on the nave side with three crosses inscribed in circles (Pl. 14). A slab of sandstone formed the threshold. The leaf of the door opened inwards, from left to right.

The mud mortar in the south-west corner of the room still retained the mark made by the axis of this door. Also in the south door-jamb we noticed a square orifice which may have been a slot destined to receive a bolt. If this hypothesis is correct, the door must originally have opened from right to left, and been subsequently changed to open in the opposite direction.

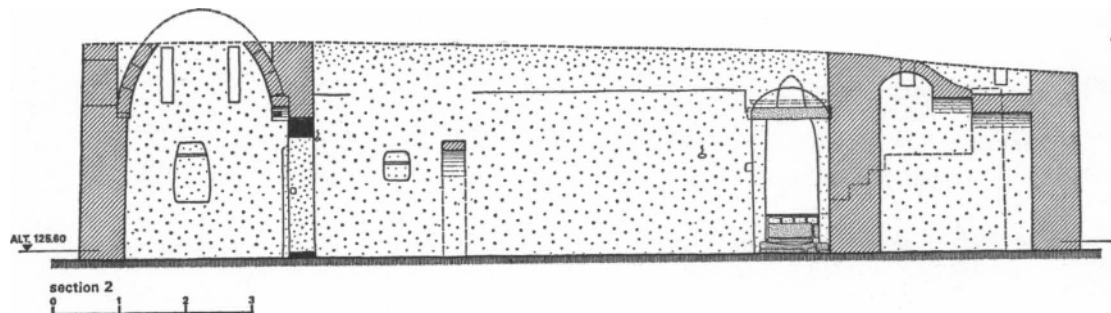


Fig. 5

The diaconicon was furnished with three niches placed in the axes of the south, east and north walls. The south and north niches each contained a shelf, and the north niche also had an upright on the east side, which reduced the size of the opening. It was surmounted by a second, smaller niche, arched at the top. With this one exception, all the niches in the church had flat ceilings supported on lintels.

Here, as in the prothesis, the room was lit by 5 narrow windows, similarly placed to those in the north room (fig. 5, section 2). Under the debris of the fallen roof, which obstructed the east windows, we found some small olive branches, with their leaves.

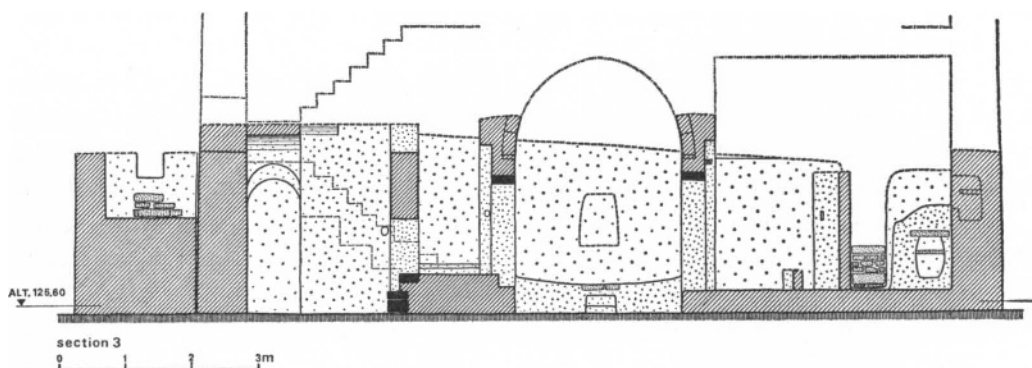


Fig. 6

The north-west lateral room

This room, measuring 3.10 m. by 2.35 m., formed the counterpart of the staircase (fig. 6, section 3). It had been extensively altered in the course of the church's existence. Its floor (at least in its latest stage) was about 30 cm. higher than that of the general level of the church. In its original state this room was entered by a door opening on to the west porch. It was a one-leafed door, as was evident from the door socket found *in situ* in the south-east corner of the room.

There were at least two niches in this room : one in the east wall and one in the north. A third niche may have been destroyed when the west door was made at a later date. The north niche was divided into two levels separated by a rough-hewn stone tablet, the lower part being partially closed by a small mud wall.

A closet, similar to that in the prothesis, but vaulted and with its entrance on the east side, had been built in the north-west corner of the room, perhaps at a later period.

The blocking up of the north door of the church gave rise to the following changes in this room :

- (1) A new entrance was made in the west wall of the church opening into this room.
- (2) A doorway was likewise made in the east wall connecting this room with the north side nave.
- (3) The room was divided in half by the construction of a thin east-west wall.

The east doorway, roughly cut through the wall, was originally provided with a sandstone sill. This sill was later raised by the addition of a section of a column placed lengthwise across it. Judging by the remains of a vertical groove, this column had perhaps previously formed part of an *higab*. A sandstone lintel roofed the doorway. The work was roughly done and the upper

part of the wall had been filled in with rubble to consolidate it. This opening had never contained a door (pl. 15).

The west doorway, the new entrance to the church replacing the condemned north entrance, was just as roughly constructed as the east doorway. Its door-leaf opened inwards from left to right, as can be deduced from the presence of a door-socket on the south side and of a bolt-slot in the north jamb.

Here too, in the continuous struggle to keep out the sand, the threshold was raised several times till it reached a height of 60 cm. above the ground. At the same time a protecting dry-stone wall was built on the outside, along a sloping path leading down from the south-west corner of the church.⁹

Thus access to the church on this side was gained through the north-west room. It was then that the thin wall was built, dividing the room in two; still later this was replaced by a similar wall standing slightly more to the north. The latter, preserved to a height of 1.75 m., contained a small judas window at eye-level. The construction of these thin walls may have served one of several purposes: they may have been used to channel traffic towards the north side aisle, or to keep out the ever-present sand, or perhaps to preserve at least part of the room (the south half) for its original use. Possibly all three reasons were valid simultaneously.

The staircase

The staircase was in the south-west corner of the building. It is most improbable that this staircase ever led to a tower as towers are not usually found in Nubian churches. Moreover, the presence of a tower would have been indicated by a reinforcement of the base of the walls, which was not the case. The hypothesis of a staircase leading to a gallery overlooking the central nave may also be dismissed, as the lack of space under the vault excludes this possibility. We must therefore assume that this staircase simply led up to the roof.

Access to the stairs was via a door opening out of the west porch. Two steps made of rubble bound together with an earth mortar and covered with beaten earth, led up to a first landing. The doorway had a stone lintel, and traces of the slot for receiving the bolt show that the door opened inwards from west to east.

Having entered the door, one turned to the right, mounted two low steps, and reached a second landing at the bottom of the stairs proper. Only the first flight of steps remained, but this was sufficiently well preserved to permit the theoretical reconstruction of the stairway up to the presumed level of the roof (voir fig. 6, section 3). The steps, of irregular length, were reinforced with small sandstone slabs. A third landing, at the top of the first flight, led on the left to the destroyed second flight, the stairs turning counter-clockwise around a rectangular central pillar.

Coming back to the first landing, let us examine the recess under the stairs. This recess was accessible through a narrow opening in the brick wall which joined the rectangular central

⁹ This passage traversed the enclosure wall surrounding the agglomeration; it was a dry-stone wall, built at a later date than the church. (Cfr. László Castiglione, "*Abdallah Nirqi 1964. AZ MTA NUBIAI EXPEDICIOJANAK ASATASA*", Magyar Tudomány 1965, 7-8.

pillar to the east wall of the staircase. Above this opening was a 'loop-hole' window similar to those in the east lateral rooms. The wall may have been the result of a later alteration, replacing a one-leafed door whose previous existence can be deduced from the presence of the bolt-slot in the west wall of the recess. The floor of the recess was on a level with that of the west porch and consequently lower than the first landing from which two steps led down to it. These steps were of sandstone. The roof of the recess consisted of a series of small barrel vaults supporting the stairs. These vaults, on an average about 50 cm. long, became successively lower as they followed the slope of the stairway.

There were two windows of the type described above, in the south facade of the church, one lighting the recess under the stairs from above, the other illuminating the third landing at floor level. The former must have been partly blocked by the fourth landing; this does not imply, however, that the landing was a later alteration.

The roofing of the church

The roof of the church was composed of a number of barrel vaults whose disposition reflected the ground plan. The lower parts of these vaults were well enough preserved at the time of excavation for us to be able to recognize the method used in their construction. The mud-bricks used for this purpose were thinner than those used in the walls. Their faces generally displayed three grooves made with the fingers, intended to assure better adhesion with the mortar.

The springers of the vaults in the side aisles projected slightly beyond the walls upon which they rested. However, this arrangement was not found in the west porch. The roofing of the central nave and of the apse was too badly damaged to allow any observations to be made (fig. 4, section 4). As the height of the vaults was proportional to their width, the vault of the central nave must certainly have been the highest.

Since the apse, roofed by a vault terminating in a semi-cupola, was narrower than the central nave, the function of the two vaults produced an arch at the front of the apse — the Triumphal Arch. The same arrangement existed at the other end of the central nave, at the point where it encountered the vault of the west porch.

The east and west lateral rooms were covered with vaults at right angles to those of the three naves.

In all these constructions the bricks, placed perpendicularly to the axes of the vaults, were set edgewise in inclined courses, the whole resting against one of the end walls, a familiar method in Egypt, and one which made it possible to build without scaffolding. The direction of inclination of the courses in each vault depended on the architectural requirements. Thus :

The central nave : Courses inclined towards the east, resting against the vault of the apse. Even though the intrados of the latter was lower than that of the vault of the nave, the extrados of the two vaults could have been on the same level if the vault of the apse was thicker.

Lateral naves : Courses inclined towards the east, resting against the walls of the east side rooms.

Apse : Courses inclined towards the east, resting against the semi-cupola.

West porch : Courses inclined towards the west, resting against the west wall of the church.

Prothesis : Courses inclined towards the south, resting against the apse.

Diaconicon : Courses inclined towards the north, resting against the apse.

We have already mentioned the possibility that the outside walls of the church rose higher than the spring of the vaults, which were consequently invisible from the exterior. The spaces left between the vaults were partly filled in with earth or broken mud-brick. This filling, properly levelled off, formed passages which made it possible to walk about on the roof, above whose surface only the tops of the vaults protuded.

The Wall Surfaces

The whole of the interior of the church had been whitewashed before being decorated with paintings. This coating was partially renewed while the building was in use. The whitewash was put on over a layer of earth mortar mixed with straw, with which the walls and vaults were plastered. Traces discernable on the East facade of the church lead us to suppose that the exterior had been treated in the same fashion.

Lamps and Candles

Several supports for lamps were found in the church. These consisted of small, flat, oblong stones fixed into the walls at about 1.50 m above the ground, forming consoles. We found six of them *in situ*, five in the naves and one in the apse. Others may also have existed elsewhere although there do not seem to have been any in the small lateral rooms. The south nave possessed two, the first at 1.10 m. to the east of the entrance, the other in the south-east corner, immediately below the lintel of the door to the diaconicon. Two were placed in the north wall of the northern nave, and one in the east wall below the Nativity scene. The latter was a triple support which could accomodate three separate lamps or one large lamp with multiple wicks. One console was found on the south side of the apse.

All these consoles were covered with a thick coating of earth impregnated with a greasy substance. They could have served as supports for candles as well as for the lamps in the form of small cups, of which many examples were found during the excavation.

The ambo also was provided with a place for a lamp or candle; several lamps of the sort described above, encrusted with sand and wax, were discovered *in situ* standing one inside the other on the edge of the fifth step (pl. 2).

Alterations in the plan

In the course of this description we have mentioned various changes effected in the plan of the church during the course of its existence. Let us now sum them up, differentiating between the changes necessitated by the constant struggle against encroaching sand and those due to the evolution of the liturgy.

To the first group belong the blocking up of the north entrance, the construction of the staircase outside the south door, the blocking of all the windows in the east part of the church,

the piercing of a new entrance in the west facade between the north-west room and the north nave, and the division of the north-west room itself into two parts.

The second group includes the filling up of the central niche in the west porch, the establishment of a passage between the apse and the prothesis, and the building of the low wall against the Higab, cutting across the presbyterium.

Conclusion

The church of Abdallah Nirqi was without doubt the best preserved of its type excavated on Egyptian territory during the campaign to save the monuments of Nubia. Adams, in his typology, classes it in accordance with its general characteristics among the churches of type 2b.¹⁰ However, certain elements, either original or added, belong to other types, such are the passage between the apse and the prothesis, and the transverse walls of the lateral naves.¹¹ These variants, however, do not appear to indicate a chronological evolution in the plan of the Nubian church, since they are found in churches both earlier and later in date than Abdallah Nirqi.

¹⁰ Adams, *o. c.*, pp. 108-110.

¹¹ *o. c.*, p. 100, last paragraph.

THE OBJECTS

BY

H. D. SCHNEIDER

From the nature of the objects it would seem that the clergy had deliberately left their church. Not a single piece of value, except a bronze incense burner (no. 41) was left behind. Nevertheless the remains of quite a few objects of interest have been found in the church. A synopsis of these finds has been published in Erich Dinkler's "Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit", 1970, 90 sqq. We divided the objects into five rubrics according to material, 54 items in all. In comparison with other materials, extensive use had been made of pottery for large objects, which can be imputed to a shortage of timber. This is also significant for other settlements where big lamps, stools, basins and window balustrades were made of pottery. (cf. our nos. 23, 28, 29). A holy-water basin (no. 31) shows a striking resemblance to a similar object from Ghazali.¹

Wood was apparently only used for more precious things, such as an icon (no. 45) and a box (no. 44). The number of jarstoppers of unbaked clay is amazing. They mainly occurred in the Nave (A5) and Sacristy (A7). They had been stamped by means of wooden or stone stamps (cf. no. 35) that were wiped over with a red colouring matter, which printed off onto the mud. A great deal of these stamped sealings are similar to patterns found in Faras and Ghazali.² They prove that winejars were imported from the same production centres. Wine was produced in the monastery at Faras³ or had been imported from Aswan (Monastery of St. Simeon).

Nearly all the lamps are of the late saucer and candlestick types. They come from the Northern Aisle (A4) the Nave (A5) and the Haikal (niche in the pulpit (A9). The same lamps have been found in the crypt of Joannes, a bishop at Faras ca. 1000 A.D.⁴ A composite lamp was used in the Vestry (A1). Glass cups (nos. 46, 47, 48) came from Egypt and a green glazed chalice (no. 27), manufactured at Fostat, was traded to the south ca. 1150 A.D. Fragment on parchment (nos. 52, 53, 54) of a Gospel text in Coptic (Sahidic dialect) were scattered on the floor in the Nave and Northern Aisle. They may date from the 9th or 10th cent. and prove

¹ P. L. Shinnie & N. H. Chittick, *Ghazali—a monastery in the Northern Sudan* (SAS Occasional Papers no. 5) 1961, Pl. XII, a and b.

² Cf. G. S. Mileham, *Churches in Lower Nubia*, Philadelphia 1910.

³ El Wizz, see F. Ll. Griffith, *LAAA XIII* (1926), p. 64; see also W. Y. Adams, *Kush X* (1962), p. 281, no. 42; cf. B.G. Trigger, *History and Settlement in lower Nubia*, 1965, p. 147.

⁴ K. Michałowski, *Faras II*, 51 sqq.

that Coptic was used during services in the Central Church. A small tombstone with a Sahidic epitaph belongs to the corpus of Christian Nubian tomb stelae from the 10th cent. (no.39).

Because of their deplorable condition (jar stoppers) not all the articles could be saved. Nevertheless, those items that are in some way of interest are incorporated in the list. The whole collection is in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden at Leiden. The inventory numbers of this museum are mentioned and the register-numbers of the field catalogue are added in brackets. All dimensions are given in centimeters and the scale of the drawings is marked on each figure.

CATALOGUE OF OBJECTS

a) Unbaked clay

For the jarstoppers only dimensions of seal-offprints are given.

1. Jarstopper with stamped sealing in red. Geometric pattern, visible twice. Dim. 3.7×2.7 . Place A5, not saved.
2. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Letter marks, visible only once. Dim. 6.7×2.6 . Place A5, not saved.
3. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Geometric pattern, visible three times. Dim. 5×5.6 . Place A5, not saved.
4. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Footshaped pattern, visible three times. Dim. 6.8×2.7 . Place A5. No. F1964/11.27 (Reg. no. 203).
5. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Geometric pattern, visible four times. Dim. 6.4×4.8 . Place A5; cf. stone seal from Faras, Mich. *Faras I*, Pl. xxvii, 3.
6. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Geometric pattern, visible three times. Dim. 6.3×5.5 . Place A5.
7. Jarstopper with stamped seal of circular designs, in red. Visible twice. Diam. 3.2. Place A5; cf. pattern of seal from Faras, Monn. de Vill., Vol. 4, pl. clxxii, 6.
8. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Composite cross pattern, visible three times. Diam. 4.4. Place A7. No. F 1964/11.28 (Reg. no. 204); cf. Ghazali, pl. xx : centre seal with almost similar pattern (Plate 26).
9. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Geometric pattern, visible five times. Diam. 6.4. Place A7. No. F 1964/11.29 (Reg. no. 205).
10. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Geometric pattern, visible five times (Dim. 8×5) and a second one visible only once (Diam. 3.2). Place A7. No. F 1964/11.30 (Reg. no. 206).
11. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Radial pattern, visible twice. Diam. 4.8. Place A7; cf. clay seal from Faras, Mileham, p. 36, no. 35.
12. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Composite pentagram, visible once. Diam. 5.5. Place A7. No. F 1964/11.35 (Reg. no. 211).
13. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Geometric and cross patterns, visible twice. Diam. 7.5×4.5 . Place A7.
14. Jarstopper with stamped seal in red. Pentagram surrounded by circles, visible four times. Diam. 4.5. Place A7; cf. seal upon jarstopper from Faras, Mich., *Faras I*, pl. xxviii, 3; see also Mileham, p. 53, no. 10. No. F 1964/11.36. (Reg. no. 212).

15. Cross, plastered white, two pieces missing. Diam. 28×4.5 .
Place A4. No. F 1964/5.74.

N.B. : Total number of unbaked jarstoppers in the church : 42.

b) Pottery

16. Toy of baked mud. Diam. ca. 3.5, h. 3.8.
Place A1, No. F 1964/11.12 (Reg. no. 198). (Plate 27).
17. Lamp. Circular shape, hard brown ware, covered with thick layer of resinous substance.
Diam. ca. 7, h. 4.2.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.26 (Reg. no. 202); cf. Monn. de Vill., Vol. 4, pl. CLXXXI, 2, from Faras; and Mileham, pl. 20, a, from Faras.
18. Lamp. Oblong shape, pink ware, incised patterns upon beak. Wick still inside. Dim. 1. 10, w. 5.5 and h. 3.5.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.6 (Reg. no. 182); cf. Monn. de Vill., Vol. 4, pl. CLXXXI, 13, 15, 16.
19. Three candlesticks, two with handles, brown ware with thick layer of resinous substance.
Dim. : 19a, diam. 12; 19b : diam. 13; 19c : diam. 10.5. Place A4. No. F 1964/11.39a, b, c (Reg. no. 215); cf. Mich., *Faras II*, pl. xvii, 4; Mileham, pl. 20, d and e.
20. Three candlesticks of saucer-type, cream ware with thick layer of resinous substance.
Dim. : 20a : diam. 10; 20b : diam. 10.5; 20c : diam. 11. Place A4. No. F 1964/11. 40 a, b, c (Reg. no. 216); Mich., *Faras I*, fig. 113, 114 ("assiettes funéraires"); Mich., *Faras II*, pl. xvii, 5, 6, 7 ("lampes").
21. Lamp. Bowl shaped, brownish ware, walls covered with resinous substance. Dim. : diam. 9.6, h. 5.2.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.55 (Reg. no. 232).
22. Tripartite lamp. Composed of three cups of decorated red ware, redslipped, rimbands in black; walls of cups pierced. Dim. : diam. cups : 10, h. 4.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.4 (Reg. no. 180). (Plate 29).
23. Lamp. Composed of eight cups, grouped around central cup, pale brown fabric, yellow slip, rather smooth, inside covered with thick layer of resinous substance. Wick in one cup preserved. Dim. : diam. 25, h. 7.5.
Place : Surface N.W. Church, probably belonging to the Vestry furniture. No. F 1964/11. 37 (Reg. no. 213). (fig. 23).
24. Lid cut from the bottom of a *saqieh* jar, surface white powdered incised cross pattern upon knob, incised pentagram upon body. Dim. : diam. 22, h. 9.2.
Place A6. No. F 1964/11.1 (Reg. no. 177).
25. Lid cut from the bottom of a *saqieh* jar, incised mark upon body. Dim. : diam. 30, h. 16.8.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.11 (Reg. no. 187).
26. Lid (fragment) cut from the bottom of a *saqieh* jar, two incised marks. Dim. : diam. 30.
Place A5; not saved (graffito).

27. Chalice. Hard, porous, white fabric, moss-green glazed, Egyptian import. 12th-13th century. Dim. : diam. 16.5, h. 10.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.33 (Reg. no. 209); for type only cf. Mileham, p. 52, no. 6; for ware cf. Adams, *Progress Rep. Part II*, Table III, group G II. (Plate 18).
28. Domed cover of basin, supported on pillars (fragments); cream slip, guirlande-patterns in red and black circles; upon body bold flower patterns in red. Incised wavy groove between two incised parallel grooves; coarse utility ware. Dim. : diam. ca. 39.
Place A6. No. F 1964/11.41 (Reg. no. 217). (Pl. 39).
29. Two fragments of balustrade. Coarse, porous, buff fabric, yellow slip outside, brown slip inside. One piece with pilaster-shaped ornament, the other with bold motive in black. Dim. : respect. 15×2 , 9.5×5 .
Place A6. No. F 1965/11.5 a and b (Reg. no. 181); cf. Mich., *Faras I*, p. 166; Ghazali, pl. xiv. See for monumental proto-types of the pilaster-capital ornaments : Mileham, pl. 26a (from Faras); Monn. de Vill., Vol. 3, pl. CLXXVII and CXXVIII; see also no. 43.
30. Platter (fragment). Depression in centre, red ware, carbon streak, red wash. Cross pattern in medallions in relief around centre. Dim. : 21×26 .
Place A8. No. F 1964/11.31 (Reg. no. 207); cf. Mich., *Faras II*, pl. LVIII, no. 4.
31. Holy water basin (fragment). Coarse red ware, carbon streak, pinkish wash. Incised patterns upon rim. Originally consisting of eight loops, of which five are intact. Dim. : diam. ca. 8.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11. 10. (Reg. no. 186); cf. Ghazali, pl. XI, XII, a, b. (Pl. 17).
32. Potsherd with black painted inscription. Brown coarse ware. Dim. : 7.5×4.5 .
Place : Surface.
33. Strainer (fragment). Hard brownish fabric, yellow slip almost lustrous. Dim. : 9.5×9 .
Place A1. No. F 1964/11.23 (Reg. no. 199). (Plate 27).

c) Stone

N.B. Stone implements found in the church :

- 1 large hammer stone (A6), no. 33a
- 1 mortar stone (not saved)
- 10 rubbing stones (not saved)

34. Fragment of sandstone. Geometric designs. Dim. : 8.3×7 .
Place : Surface.
35. Stamp of sandstone (fragment). Geometric design. Diam. : 6.
Place A6. No. F 1964/11.24 (Reg. no. 200).
36. Stone weight cut out of an offering table. Sand stone. Dim. : $24 \times 14.4 \times 6$.
Place A6.
37. Hone of slate with traces of sharp instruments on both sides. Dim. : $6.3 \times 6 \times 1.5$.
Place A3. No. F 1964/11.8 (Reg. no. 184).
38. Basin of sandstone, with two short handles. Diam. : 52, h. 38.
Place A2, left in situ. (Plate 19).

39. Rectangular stela with Coptic text in the Sahidic dialect. Sandstone. Found inserted in the wall adjoining A7 at the N-E corner of the church. Dim. $21 \times 18 \times 9$. No. F 1964/11.32 Reg. no. 208). For discovery and photo's see H.S. Smith, Prelim. Report. Egypt Expl. Soc., *Nubian Survey 1962*, 42, Pl. v. 2; A. Klasens, Dutch Archaeological Mission to Nubia, *The Excavations at Abu Simbel North 1962-64*, Antiq. Dept. of Egypt, Fouilles en Nubie, 1967, 86, Pl. v; text : *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Chr. Zeit*, 91-92. (Plate 23 and 24).

1. $\text{ZI}\overline{\text{T}\overline{\text{N}}} [\text{TE}\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{PO}}}\overline{\text{N}}]$
2. $\text{IA } \text{M}[\overline{\text{P}}]\overline{\text{NOYTE}}$
3. $\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{N}}}\overline{\text{A}} \overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{TAQ}\overline{\text{M}}}$
4. $\overline{\text{TON}} \overline{\text{M}}[\overline{\text{MO}}]\overline{\text{Q}} \overline{\text{N}}$
5. $\overline{\text{BI}} \overline{\text{PMAKAP}\overline{\text{IO}}}\overline{\text{C}}$
6. $\overline{\text{E}}[\overline{\text{EO}}]\overline{\text{AWPAKH}}$
7. $\overline{\text{PP}}'\overline{\text{PC}} \dots \overline{\text{A}} \overline{\text{Z}\overline{\text{N}}}$
8. $\overline{\text{COYCOOY}} \overline{\text{NE}}$
9. $\overline{\text{OOUT}} \overline{\text{INA}} \overline{\text{IE}}$

Commentary : l. 1-2. $\text{ZI}\overline{\text{T}\overline{\text{N}}} \text{TE}\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{PO}}}\overline{\text{N}}\text{IA}$: $\text{ZI}\overline{\text{T}\overline{\text{N}}} \text{TE}\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{PO}}}\overline{\text{NO}}\overline{\text{IA}}$, a typical Nubian opening formula on tombstones found from Kasr Ibrim to Ghazali; cf. H. Junker, *ZÄS* 60, 1925, 116, 140; Togo Mina, Inscriptions coptes et grecques de Nubie, *Bull. Soc. d'Arch. Copte*, 1942, nos. 311, 316, 318, 321.

l. 3. $\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{N}}}\overline{\text{A}}$ probably a mistake for $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{NE}}\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{N}}}\overline{\text{A}}$ which in other examples is followed by $\overline{\text{MN}} \text{CAP}\overline{\text{X}} \overline{\text{NIM}}$ "(God) of the spirits and of all flesh".

l. 6. Name of the deceased : $\overline{\text{E}}[\overline{\text{EO}}]\overline{\text{AWPAKH}}$.

l. 7. $\overline{\text{PP}}'\overline{\text{PC}}$: $\overline{\text{PP}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{CBYTEROC}}$ cf. Togo Mina *o. c.* nos. 35 and 89. This title is followed by three letters, the last being a $\overline{\text{A}}$, probably the numbers of a date, although the Era during which the event took place is not mentioned.

Translation :

"Through the Providence of God of the spirits he had entered into his rest, the blessed Theodorake, the Presbyter (in the year ?) on the 6th day of the month Thot, 15th Indiction".

Date :

Regarding text matter and appearance of the stela, it belongs to the same class as the Saqinya stelae, the greater part of which is dated in the 10th cent. Cf. U. Monneret de Villard, *Inscrizioni del cimitero di Saqinya*, 1933, p. vii; Togo Mina, *o. c.* p. vi. It is also much related to the Ghazali stones from the 10th and 11th century. The stone either came from the cemetery (Cem. 249) nearby or had originally been placed in the small domed chapel of a tomb found by the Hungarian expedition underneath the later structures at the south-eastern corner of the church. This tomb was built on the same level as the church's.

d) *Metal*

40. Cross. Bronze, one piece missing. Diam. 6.4.
Place : Surface East of church. No. F 1964/11.16 (Reg. no. 192). (Pl 27).
41. Incense burner. Bronze; chains and hook still attached; pieces of charcoal inside. Diam. : 8.3, h. 11. For a similar example see Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, p. 30, pl. xxxviii, no. 1. (from Balayzeh, dated 8th cent.). Place A4. No. F 1964/11.15 (Reg. no. 191). Photograph in *Kunst und Gesch. Nubiens*, p. 100, fig. 30). (Plate 25).
42. Flat ring. Iron. Diam. : 3, h. 2.3.
Place : Surface East of Church. No. F 1964/11.17 (Reg. no. 193); cf. Mich., *Faras II*, p. 65, fig. "Ferret d'une canne d'Évêque". (Plate 27).
43. Pin. Iron. Dim. : length 15.6.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.3 (Reg. no. 179). (Plate 27).

e) *Various materials*

44. Fragment of box. Hard wood, with small hole. Dim. : 8.2 × 11.6.
Place : A7. No. F 1964/11.21 (Reg. no. 197).
45. Two fragments of an icon. Wood, painted on plaster. Parts of picture of a saint with background of star-decoration, blue and yellow. Dim. : 21 × 9.3; 23.3 × 7.5.
Place A5, No. F 1964/11. 34 (Reg. no. 210).
46. Fragment of cup. Translucent, pinkish very thin glass. See Shinnie and Harden (*o. c.* sub 47), p. 73, i, fig. 45. Dim. : h. 3.7, w. 5.7.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.14 (Reg. no. 190). (Plate 28)
47. Fragments of cup. Light green vertical ribbed glass, flaking whitish. Diam. bottom 3.5, h. 4.5.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.19 (Reg. no. 195); cf. C.J. Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Gläser und Steinschnittarbeiten aus dem Nahen Osten*, 1930, Gläser aus islamischer Zeit (Egypt, X-XI cent.) Band I, p. 46; Band II, Tafel 8, no. 15, 17, 23; Tafel 9, no. 1, 2, 3. Cf. also the Islamic glass from Soba discussed by Harden in Shinnie and Harden, *Soba*, Sudan Ant. Service occ. papers no. 3 p. 60, fig. 35, no. 5 and fig. 37, no. 29 (9-12 cent.). (Plate 28).
48. Fragments of bowl. Amber coloured glass (Shinnie and Harden *o. c.*, fig. 45). Dim. : diam. bottom 4; diam. upper part 8.4, h. 4.2.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.20 (Reg. no. 196). (Plate 28).
49. Rosette. Plaster. Dim. : diam. 2.7.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.9 (Reg. no. 185). (Plate 27).
50. Bead (fragment). Blue glass paste with fine multicoloured cross-patterns. Dim. : length 1.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.13 (Reg. no. 189). (Plate 27).
51. Peg. Bone. Dim. : length 5.
Place A3. No. F 1964/11.7 (Reg. no. 183). (Plate 27).
52. Fragment of parchment with Coptic text on both sides. Dim. : 2.5 × 2.7.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.12 (Reg. no. 188).

53. Fragment of parchment with Coptic text on both sides. Capitals in red. Dim. : 4. 3 × 4.9.
Place A5. F 1964/11.18 (Reg. no. 194).
54. Two fragments of parchment with Coptic writing in black and red. Rubrum : "Gospel according to St. John".
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.38 (Reg. no. 214).

N.B. All three pieces with Coptic text (52, 53, 54) are in the Sahidic dialect and belong to the same MS. The RECTO has a yellowish colour, while the VERSO is bleached to white. The VERSO is written in a different handwriting; the characters are thinner and rather gracefully drawn. As regards our fragments the paradigmata and MS examples in Maria Cramer's *Koptische Paläographie* (1964), examples no. 20, 21, 23, 25, 28 seem to point to the 9th or 10th cent.

f) Monumental Pieces

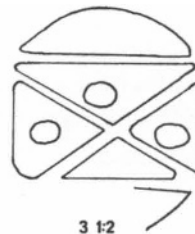
55. Fragment of ballustrade. Sandstone. Dim. 18 × 12,5.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.25 (Reg. no. 201). Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras* I, 158, fig. 94.
56. Pair of consoles of sandstone. Incised geometric designs, grooves painted red. Dim. 29 × 10 × 43; 28 × 8 × 40.
Place : outside southern principal door (Reg. no. 239). Now in Cairo. (Plate 21).
57. Doorlintel of sandstone. Decorated with three Maltesian crosses in relief, painted red. Dim. 112 × 27 × 19.
Place : Door A6/A8 (Reg. no. 238). Now in Cairo. (Plate 21).
58. Pair of columns of sandstone. Lower shafts sculptured with entrelac designs. The capitals have a palm-leaf ornamentation, which varies on each side. Dim. 184 × 22,5. (Plate 20).
Place A5 (Higab) (Reg. no. 237). Now in Cairo. Cf. U. Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia Medioevale III*, Pl. cxxvii (Faras). J. M. Plumley in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens*, photo 98. S. Jakobielski, *ibidem*, photo 148.



1 1:2



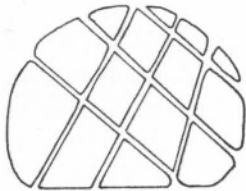
2 1:2



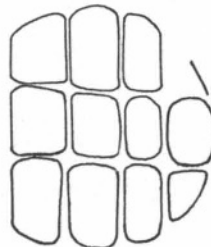
3 1:2



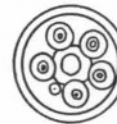
4 1:2



5 1:2



6 1:2



7 1:2



8 1:2



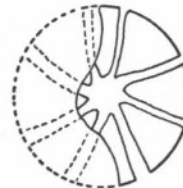
9 1:2



10 1:2



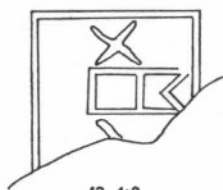
10a 1:2



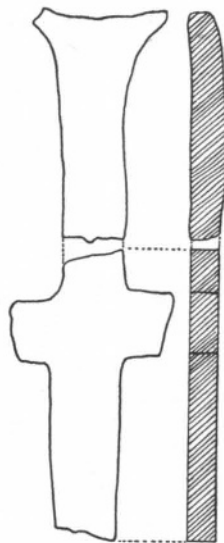
11 1:2



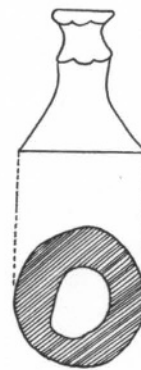
12 1:2



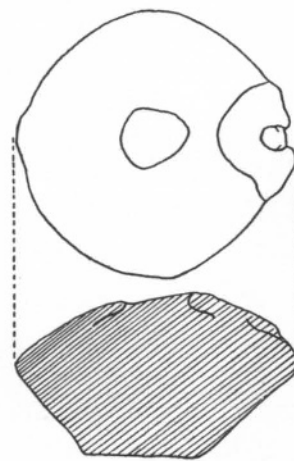
13 1:2



15 1:4



16 1:2

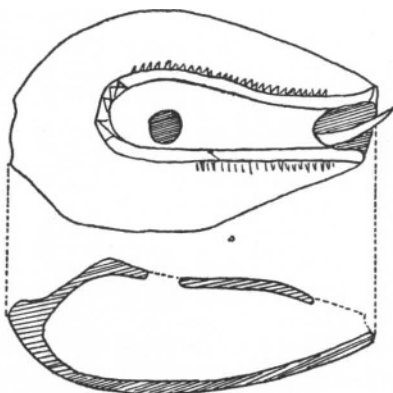


17 1:2

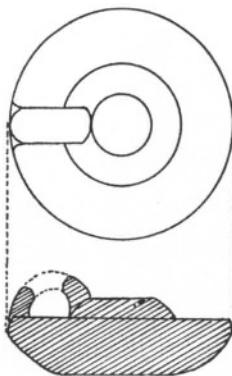


14 1:2

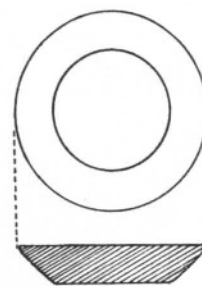
Objects, Figs. 1-17



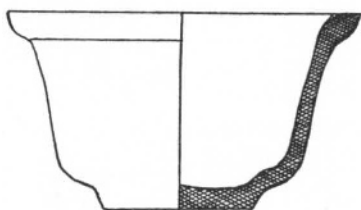
18 1:2



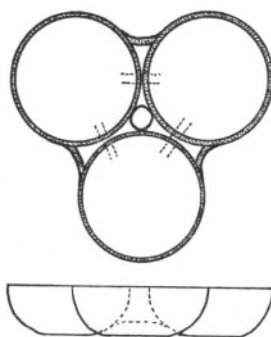
19a 1:4



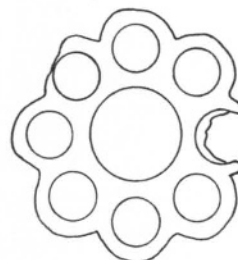
20a 1:4



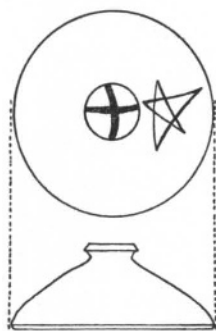
21 1:2



22 1:6



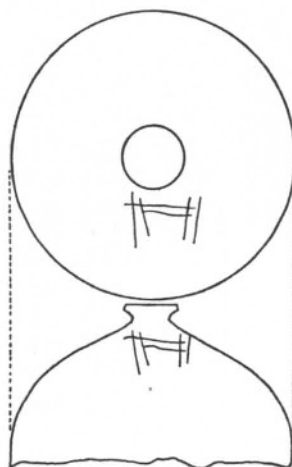
23 1:8



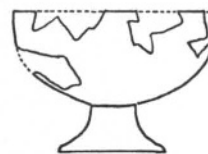
24 1:8



26 1:2

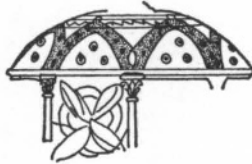


25 1:8



27 1:6

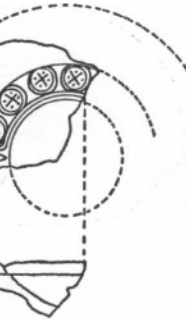
Objects, Figs. 18-27



28 1:12



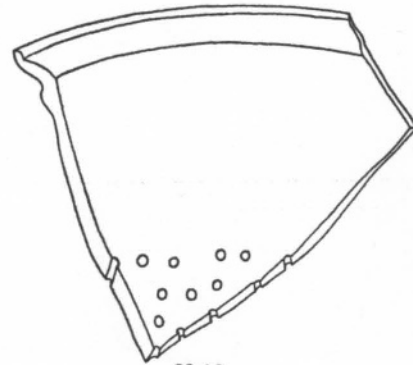
29 1:4



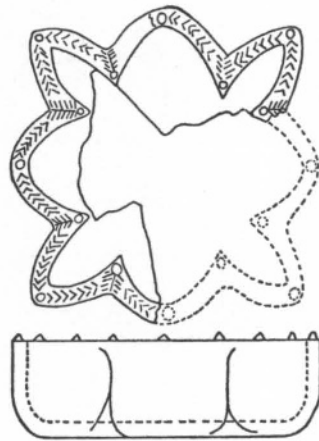
30 1:10



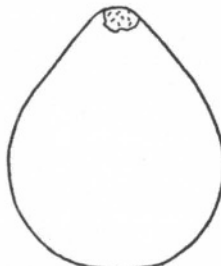
32 1:2



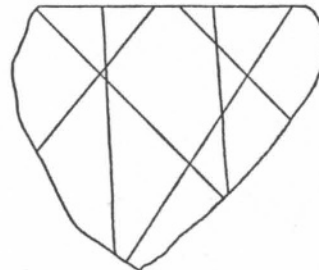
33 1:2



31 1:10



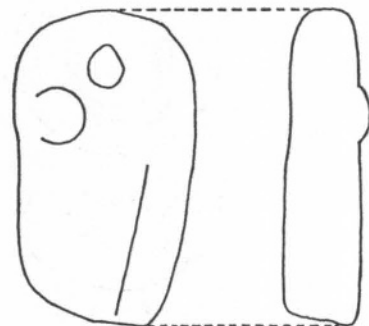
33a 1:4



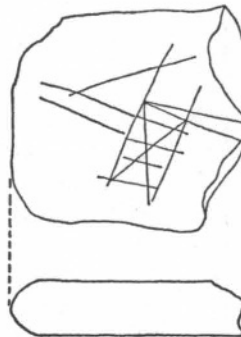
34 1:2



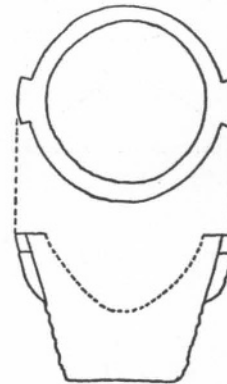
35 1:2



36 1:6

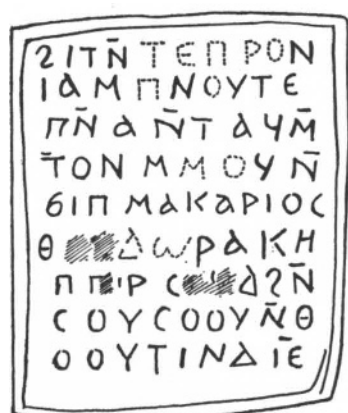


37 1:2

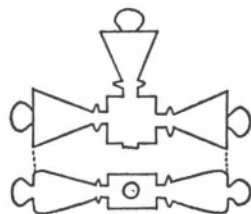


38 1:20

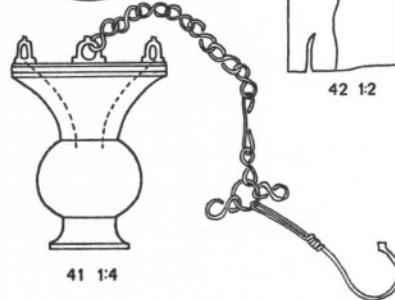
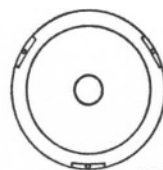
Objects, Figs 28-38



39 1:4



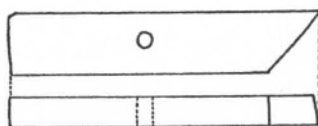
40 1:2



41 1:4



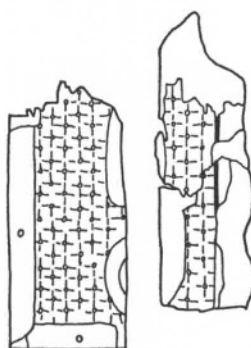
42 1:2



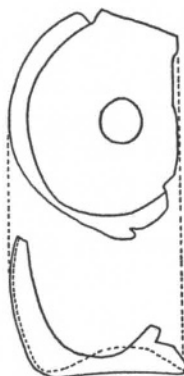
44 1:2



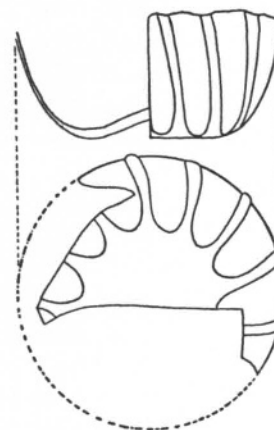
43 1:4



45 1:6



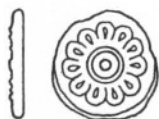
46 1:2



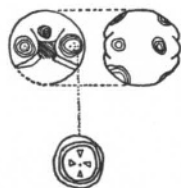
47 1:2



48 1:2



49 1:2



50 1/2:2

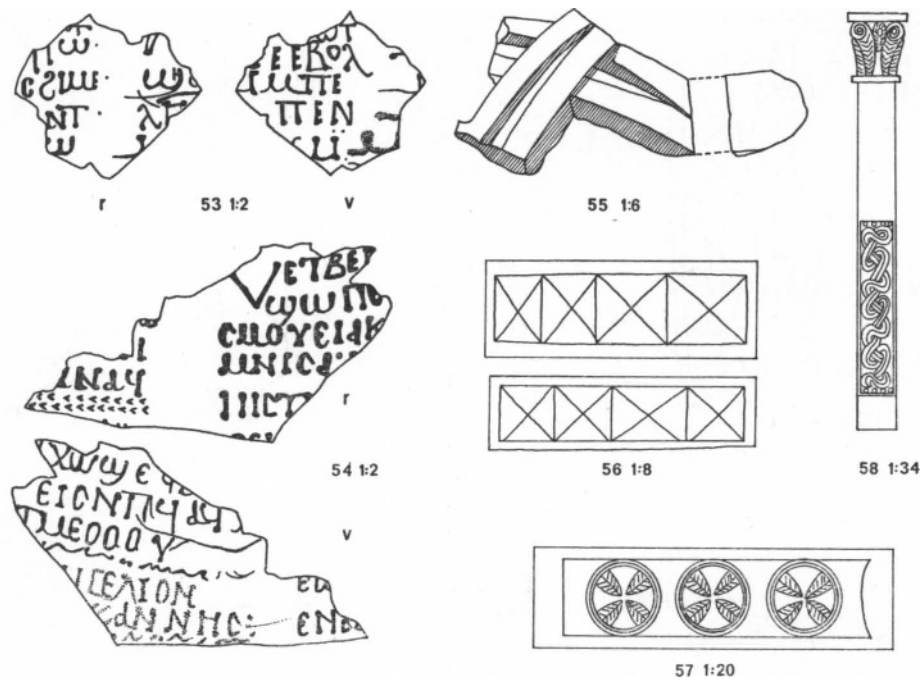


51 1:2



52 1:2

Objects, Figs. 39-52



Objects, Figs. 53-57

EPIGRAPHICA

BY

H. D. SCHNEIDER

Apart from the legends accompanying the paintings a number of other, mostly short texts could be traced on the walls of the Church. These texts had been written with black paint on the plaster or had been incised with a sharp instrument, most of them in a rather careless handwriting. They contain prayers and praises addressed to Saints worshipped and depicted in the church, or give only a title or a name of a visitor or passer-by. The languages used are Greek, Coptic and Old Nubian, sometimes a mixture of the three. The Arabic texts give only the names of people who entered the church at the time when the building was abandoned and already partly sanded up, as they were always situated on the upper part of the walls. A summary of the inscriptions, which were all in a very bad state, follows here.

A favourite prayer in rather stumbling Greek and Nubian seems to be a request for help and protection. It was addressed to Jesus Christ for the benefit of a man called "Jèsoukouda" (no. 8; place : room 6 near painting 6b (*Epimachos*). Two other examples of this kind (no. 1, no. 4) were painted on the wall with the *Theophany* with a cross (painting no. 6/4) and the priestly figure of the Nubian dedicant next to this, but the authors' names are lost.

The Archangel Michael, who played such an important part in Nubian Christianity, is honoured with three texts of the same character. The painted text no. 7 (place near painting 6/6b) was pencilled down by a believer whose name might be read "Giorgios". It runs : "Give me your blessing, O, Jesus, my Lord, Son of God, Jesus the Christ, and (you) King Michael, Archangel, my Lord..." Text no. 12 (place : room 5; Plate 22) has been incised and begins with : "King of Angels, Michael" (written as a numerical code). Then follow the names of Adam and Isaac and three other (Nubian ?) words.

At the bottom we see the legend to a painting, "Michael", which appears twice, both in the conventional spelling and as a numerical code. The text ends with two numbers, the equivalent of "amèn". The third invocation of Michael's protection is text no. 13 (Place : room 5; Plate 16). This is incised and shows the same opening formula and names. It ends with the words "Michael, remember me" in Coptic. No. 3 (Place : near painting 6/3) has been scratched into the plaster and means "the Holy Melitōn". It may have been inspired by the human figure with the same name in the *Theophany* with a cross No 6 (Place : near painting 6/6b) gives the name of "Phoibammōn" and the monogram for "presbyteros". The epithet "the Ethiopian" most likely refers to the writer's home country. No. 9 (Place : arch e) is a name "Orolèkis", and no. 10 (Place : room 7, eastern wall) may stand for the title "diakonos". The Arabic graffiti were incised in the Nave. No. 16 : "Ahmed el-Hassan (- ?-) Rassol" and no. 17 : "Nasr Yakoet Altm- ?-Aty Glam az-Aldeen.

+ ΚΕ ΙΥ
 ΧΥΦΥΛ
 ΔΞΟΝ
 ΛΟΥΤΕCΟΝ ΕΚΕ
 ΠΑCΟΝ ΕΝΔΥΝΑ
 ΜΙCΟΝ ΒΟΗΘΕΙC
 · ΝΤΟΥ ΕΝΥ.....

no. 1 (6.4)

ΓΛΟC ΜΕΝΤΩΝ

no. 3 (6.2)

ΝΕΜ
 CΟΥ Τ ΜΤΑΡ ΧΑΤΚΑΙ

no. 2 (6.1)

+ Κ̄Ε ΙΥ
 ΧΙ ΦΥΛ
 ΔΞΟΝΕΥ
 ΛΟΓΗCΟΝ
 ΠΑCΟΝ·ΕΝΔΥΝΑ
 ΜΙCΟΝ ΒΟΗΘΕ
 ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛ

no. 4 (6.1)

ΕΠΥ|^ν7ΜC>
 ΜCΩΧΑC'ΙΔΗ
 ΝΟΥΤΧ
 ΔΙΛΑΡΙ
 U

no. 5 (6.6)

ΙCĀNK Π
 ···ΦΟΙΙΜΩΝ
 ΔΙΘΙΩΨ.

no. 6 (6.6)

CΜΟΥΕΜΜ·
 ἮC ΠΧΟΕΙC ἮΥ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ
 ΔΜΟΩΠΑΤΟΓΙΟΡ
 ἮC Ο ΧC ΠΡΡΟ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΑΡΧΑΓΓΕΛΟC ΠΧΟΕΙC
 Μ¹¹ΟΟ·Ν ΧΙC ΜΗ Φ ὪC

no. 7 (6.6²⁴)

† κ̅ε ι̅υ κ̅υ φυλαξον ευλογησον
 εκεπασον ενδυμιασον
 βοηθεισον του. δουλου.
 της ουκουδαδα πιποκ\cυο
 γενιτο ζαμην

no.8(6.b)

οροληκic

no.9(c)

ιχ η'....

ΔΙΑΝΟC IΒ

no.10(7)

\ααυ σα
 ν̅ακασουν
 χ̅ε.σ α δanna
 ερωμιν π̅μα
 χ̅χ ϕ + χ̅ω υι
 c εχων

no.11(8.1)

† αγγελος 'ουρου
 'χ̅π̅θ̅ δ'αδm σακ
 αναω ταντιλα
 ταλασεμ

ΜΙΧΑΗΛ
 χ̅π̅θ̅ γ̅θ̅

no.12 (5)

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΟΥΡΟΥ
 χ̅π̅θ̅ α/αδ
 " γ̅θ̅
 αc

ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΔΡΙΠΜΟΥ

no.13(3)

THE POTTERY

BY

H. D. SCHNEIDER

Pottery specimens found in the central church amount to 99 items, mostly potsherds. Except in rooms A7 and A8 where only a few sherds were found, pottery occurred everywhere. It has to be emphasized that the complete vessels found were saucers and small bowls (Form Class A) and that all of these came from the HAIKAL (room A9). The niche in the eastern side of the small rectangular altar yielded a set of small bowls and others of the same kind were scattered on the floor in front of it. These bowls and saucers may have been used as containers for oil and other liquids during ceremonies, and were stored in the altar niche.¹

The niche in the base of the pulpit also contained saucers and (sherds of) small bowls. The rest of the pottery consisted mainly of sherds, the majority of which was found in one place. This is the vaulted and intact room under the staircase (A3), which apparently served as a storage place or magazine. Here we discovered a lot of potsherds of various wares. All broken pots were saved here, probably to reuse their material for other purposes, for example for cutting lids out of *Saqieh* jars, for strainers and ostraca. No material has been thrown away, a habit we noticed in Nubia before the great evacuation and which still can be observed in Egypt itself. It is this "dump" that provided us with a rather varied collection of wares, "en vogue" mainly during the later Christian period.

A preliminary classification of the material can be found in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit* (ed. E. Dinkler), 1970, 92 sqq. In the present contribution we give a list of the whole collection in more detail. Many of the specimens stand on their own, no other parallel examples of the same wares being found in the church. Our primary intention was to give a precise description of the material, and where possible we have identified the different wares with those from other sites, on criteria of Form, Fabric and Decoration. All ware descriptions are based on the results of the analysis of Nubian Pottery by W. Y. Adams. His "Introductory Classification of Christian Nubian Pottery"² and the "MS Field Manual of Nubian Pottery Wares" being superseded now by later research published in his "Progress

¹ Cf. M. Cramer, *Das Christlich-Koptische Ägypten Einst und Heute*, 1959, p. 42: "Er (the altar) ist würfelförmig, aus Ziegeln erbaut und nach Osten offen, Die Höhlung nimmt Bezug auf Apokalypse 6.9. Sie dient zur Aufbewahrung der Reliquien und des Chrisam".

² *Kush* X, 1962, p. 245 sqq.

Report on Nubian Pottery" and "The Evolution of Christian Nubian Pottery"³ we mainly referred to these later works as far as possible.

The whole collection of Abdallah Nirqi pottery from the Central Church is in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden at Leiden. The inventory numbers of this museum are mentioned with each specimen and field catalogue numbers are added in brackets.

Form Classes

The pottery can be grouped according to seven Form Classes, ranging from flat saucers to *Saqieh* jars, numbered A-G. All together they include 44 Form types. On the whole these forms are short and broad and have — with the exception of the saucers and small shallow bowls (Class A) — a ring base (Footed Bowls, Class D). Cups without foot do not occur. The use of class A was greatly developed. Vases are rare. Greater vessels of coarse utility wares are not abundantly represented as might be expected in the household of a sanctuary.

- Class A 1-14 Saucers, and small shallow bowls, with curving sides, flat or rounded bases.
- Class B 1-3 Cups on low foot.
- Class C 1-14 Bowls and Plates, with flat or rounded bottoms.
- Class D 1-9 Footed Bowls, all rather shallow and with high ring bases.
- Class E 1-3 Vases, straight sides, low footed.
- Class F Pots, one complete specimen only.
- Class G *Saqieh* jars, one complete specimen only. (See also "lids" nos. 24, 25, 26).

Wares

The pottery wares from the Central Church are divided into four general categories. A. Red wares, B. White Wares, C. Coarse Utility Wares, D. Imported Glazes.

A. Red Wares

Though not in such quantity as the white wares, red wares are well represented in the church. Especially red or orange slipped wares, mat or polished, with a rather porous but very hard, buff or tan fabric are conspicuous for saucers and small shallow bowls. On the greater part of the specimens of Form class A, decorations are confined to a black rimband, or rimticked designs, whereas a black painted centerpiece (nos. 1, 12) or a Coptic monogram (no. 8) has been added. All examples in this class belong to groups N IV, N V and N VI, ca. 900-1350 A.D. (nos. 1-19). Other varieties of red wares are represented by a group of sherds and one complete bowl, which have a rather porous, coarse, very hard fabric with a buff or deep brown colour; they are thick in section. They show a red or orange slip, sometimes

³ *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen 1970, p. 111 sqq.

polished and are decorated with patterns of Classic Christian style in black. All seem to be confined to the later traditions of Classic Christian Wares (see nos. 20, 21, 23, 25, 52), except of no. 24 which is an example of the Early Christian Ware group N III, ware R 10, ca. 750 A.D. No. 45 represents an imported ware from Aswan, ca. 1050-1300 A.D.

B. *White Wares*

The finest kind in this group is made of rather porous, hard, reddish buff or tan fabric. Its colour varies from cream, pinkish to grey with a highly polished surface. Decorations are in Classic Christian style in black and red brown showing radial patterns, cross motives and center seals. Mainly with saucers and bowls (nos. 35-39). A coarser variety has a white slipped surface and, if decorated, has a black rimband (nos. 26-34). Imported Aswan Medieval White Wares (ca. 1150 A.D.) are represented by nos. 26, 31, 32 and 74. A third ware group is formed by sherds with a coarse and porous, rather soft fabric, with a greyish or pinkish and even a brick-red colour. The slip is mostly yellow or pale orange and floral or geometric patterns in black and purple are applied on its surface. To this group (N IV-N V, 850-1200 A.D.) also belongs a ware which can be identified with Adams (Introd. Classification ware 16a) Classic Christian Yellow, which is conspicuous for the main bulk of specimens in the list. A polished variety of this group we meet in no. 48 of Classic Christian polished yellow ware (Group N IV ware W10). In the group of Classic Christian white wares we incorporated our no. 69 with a pinkish fabric, a pale cream, orange shaded slip, which rubs off very easily, and elaborate decoration (Vase E1) (Introd. Classif. ware 16b). See also nos. 68, 70-72. An interesting piece is no. 40 (D9) of Aswan Byzantine cream ware (group AII ware W3), of ca. 750 A.D., being the oldest ware in the church. This piece offers a terminus post quem for the foundation of the church.

C. *Coarse Utility Wares*

Greater Form types like larger bowls, vases and *Saqieh* jars, (not abundant in the church), were made of coarse utility wares. There are at least six varieties to be distinguished. The first has a coarse, brownish-grey fabric with pieces of straw, it is carbonstreaked and decorated with a slip of cream colour mostly with bold linear black and red patterns; see for example no. 28. (Adams Introd. Classif. ware no. 17). A second ware is the Christian Red Utility Ware (Group NU, ware U5, ca. 600-1500 A.D.), see no. 87. A third kind we distinguish in no. 76, which is of ware U10, (Group NU) or Later Christian Pink Utility ware, ca. 1100-1500 A.D. The fourth is used for no. 81, a *Saqieh* jar (Class G), group NU, ware U14 or Later Christian Slipped Utility ware (ca. 1100-1500 A.D.) and the fifth is represented by a hand made bowl (Class C8) of ware H8 in group DIII, or Later Christian black domestic ware, ca. 1100-1500. The sixth is a ware of very hard thin, grey or yellowish fabric with a cream slip. It is found only with larger vessels and certainly belongs to the group of Terminal Christian Wares (N VIII) ca. 1350-1500 A.D.; see nos. 87, 94.

D. *Imported Glazes*

In the vaulted staircase-room two sherds have been picked up with glazed appearances, nos. 92, 95. To the same category also belongs the chalice of moss-green glazed ware, described

under no. 27 (objects). These glazes are of the Later Fatimid and Mamluk periods. During these times the industry of glazed wares, especially in Fostat, produced bowls with painted figurative ornaments under a glaze, and also with incised motives under a monochrome glaze with a grey-green or celadon colour. The glazes from the church are decorated in a style different from the imported arabic glazes of Soba (Sudan), which seem to date from the 10th cent.

The Abdallah Nirqi glazes are apparently later, 12th-15th century. They range in Group G II, ca. 1150 A.D. (chalice) and Group G IV (black or green *sgraffito* wares) ca. 1350 A.D. (sherd nos. 92, 95).

Conclusions and Chronological context

A few concluding remarks may follow this general inventory. Among the Abdallah Nirqi wares white wares dominate red wares. Saucers and small bowls and broad-footed bowls with heavy ring bases outnumber other Form types. The oldest wares belong to group N III (ware R 10, ca. 750 A.D.) and group A II, a Byzantine ware imported from Egypt, in the 8th cent. In this cent. the church was built and its walls decorated with paintings of the first or violet style. A few specimens of Classic Christian fine white ware (group IV, ware W5) follow at a somewhat later date (9th cent.). Instead of fine style Classic decorations (the elaborate style of Group IVA), the simpler style of groups N IVB, N V and N VI (ca. 850-1300) is significant for the main bulk of the pottery. Later Christian wares, Nubian made and imported (Aswan wares), decorated (triple-lined friezes) and undecorated, are well represented in the Church. Glazes and glass were imported from Egypt during the 11th-15th cent. Like the objects, the pottery shows a striking resemblance to material from Faras, for example to the decorated sherds from the church under the citadel in that town. These can be dated at the end of the 10th cent. as they were found near the stelae of a priest and two bishops, (Aaron, 972†) cf. Michałowski, *Faras I*, 170, fig. 120; 169, fig. 118, 119 (partly); *Faras II*, pl. xxxiv, no. 2, pl. xxxviii, nos. 4, 6, 8; pl. xi, no. 3; xli, nos. 1, 3, 4, 6; pl. xlIII, no. 1; pl. xlviii, nos. 4, 5; pl. l, nos. 3, 4, 5; pl. lvi, nos. 4, 5, 6. As a matter of fact both styles and painting-themes and the legends and other epigraphica on the church walls testify to the strong influence of the important clerical and cultural centre of the country, Faras. At least until ca. 950 A.D., when the kilns of Faras stopped producing pottery, ceramics were imported from there. The use of Late Christian and Terminal Christian wares proves that the Central Church of Abdallah Nirqi still functioned as late as the 15th century. But by that time the flourishing period of the church which lasted from ca. 950-1100 was already long past.

LIST OF POTTERY SPECIMENS

1. Saucer (A5) Mat red; black rimband and black rosette centerpiece. Group V ware R 22 (Post Classic mat red ware) ca. 1200 A.D.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.49¹ (P. 107, 1). Photograph in *Kunst und Gesch. Nubiens* etc., p. 101, fig. 31. (Centerpiece : fig. 1; Plate 31).

2. Saucer (A10) Pale orange, black rimband.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.49² (P 107, 2).
3. Bowl (A12) Pale red, rimticked.
Place A9. No. F 1964/11.49³ (P 107, 3)
4. Bowl (A12) Orange, black rimband.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.49⁴ (P 107, 4).
5. Bowl (A6) Orange, rimband, polished.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.49⁵ (P 107, 5).
6. Bowl (A9) Ditto.
Place A9. No. F 1964/11.49⁶ (P 107, 6).
7. Bowl (A11) Pale red, rimticked.
Place A9. No. F 1964/11.49⁷ (P 107, 7).
8. Saucer (A4) Deep red slip, polished; black rimband and black painted monogram in centre. Group N VI, ware R11 (Late Christian polished orange ware) No. F 1964/11.49⁸ (P 107, 8). (Monogram : fig. 8; Plate 32).
9. Saucer (A10) Red slip, polished.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.49⁹ (P 107, 9).
10. Saucer (A14) Fine pinkish-red fabric, appearance as if "hammered", brownish-red slip, polished.
Place A4. No. F 1964/11.48 (P 106).
11. Saucer (A3) Pale red, polished, black rimband.
Place A7. No. F 1964/11.51 (P 110).
12. Bowl (A5) Red, polished, black rimband; centerpiece : deep-brown painted cross.
Place A5. No. F 1964/5.78. Group V, ware R 21. (Post-Classic Orange ware). (Centerpiece : fig. 12; Pl. 32).
13. Cup on low foot (B3) Red brown slip, almost complete, all covered with rather thick layer of greasy substance. Place A4. No. F 1965/5.23.
- 14-17. Sherds
From bowls and saucers.
from A9 (altar) No. F 1965/5.26
Surface No. F 1965/5.45
A9 (altar) No. F 1965/5.54
A3 (storage) No. F 1965/5.55
18. Bowl (C3) Half preserved, red brown slip, very smooth surface.
Place A4. No. F 1965/5.58.
19. Bowl (A8) Flat, buff, rather thin, soft fabric. Slip orange, highly polished, brown rimband. Group N V, ware R 21 (Post-Classic polished orange ware) ca. 1150. Place A4. No. F 1964/11.52 (P 111). Photo : *Kunst und Gesch. Nubiens*, p. 101, fig. 33. (Plate 30).
20. Bowl (C1) Almost complete, round bottom, deep brown fabric, orange slip, polished, black linear panelled decoration and red rimband;

- Group N VII : Terminal Chr. Wares, ca. 1300 A.D. Place A5. No. F 1964/11.59. Photo in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens* etc., p. 101, fig. 35. (Pl. 35).
21. Sherd (C2) From bowl, angular profile, flat bottom. Red brown fabric, coarse unfinished surface at bottom, upper part rather smooth, slip red brown; continuous wall frieze between framing bands. Place A7. No. 1964/5.3. (Pl. 37).
22. Sherd (C4) Rim from bowl, rather soft buff fabric, pale red slip. Decoration with lozenge patterns, in brown with red filling. Group N VII, ware R 20 (Terminal Chr. heavy red ware). ca. 1350. Place A3. No. F 1965/5.15. (Pl. 37).
23. Sherds (E3) From vase. Hard, rather coarse straw tempered fabric, pale red slip, mat; decorated with linear pattern in black with red filling. Place A3. No. F 1965/5.17.
24. Sherd Thick hard red fabric. Red brown slip. Guilloche pattern between framing bands in black upon cream. Group N III, ware R 10, transitional orange ware, ca. 750. Place A3. No. F 1965/5.18. From large pot or jar. (fig. 24; pl. 37).
25. Sherd (C5) Very thick, coarse, pink coloured fabric, orange slip; flakes of paint can be easily rubbed off. Continuous wall frieze in pale brown. Late or Terminal Chr. Ware ca. 1250 A.D. Place A3. No. F 1965/5.21.
26. Saucer (A1b) Angular profile, yellowish slip, no decoration. Group A IV, ware W 12 (Aswan Medieval White ware) ca. 1150 A.D. Place A9. No. F 1964/11.50 (P 108, 1). (Plate 32).
27. Saucer (A7) Thin fabric, cream slip, mat, black rimband. Place A9. No. F 1964/11.50² (P 108, 2).
28. Saucer (A6) Ditto. Place A9. No. F 1964/11.50⁴ (P 108, 3).
29. Saucer (A6) Ditto. Place A9. No. F 1964/11.50⁵ (P 108, 5).
30. Saucer (A2) Very hard greyish fabric. Yellowish slip. Deep groove inside upon bottom. Place A7. No. F 1964/11.53 (P 112).
31. Cup (B2) Footed, hard cream-greyish fabric, cream slip covered with thin layer of greasy substance. Group A IV, ware W 12 (Aswan Medieval White ware) ca. 1150 A.D. Place A5 (pulpit). No. F 1964/11.54 (P 113) (Plate 31).
32. Cup (B1) Footed, angular profile. Very hard thin cream fabric. Cream yellowish slip. Group A IV, ware W 12 (Aswan Medieval White ware) ca. 1150 A.D. Place A7. No. F 1964/11.56 (P 115) (Plate 31).

33. Saucer (A1^a) Hard thin greyish fabric. Cream slip covered with brownish greasy substance.
Place A3. No. F 1964/11.57 (P 116).
34. Sherds Fragments from saucers. See nos. 14-17.
Place A9 (altar). No. F 1965/5.33.
35. Sherds Bowl, cream slip, lustrous. Interior collar band, guilloche pattern in purple. Radial pattern in centre. Group IV, ware W 5 (Classic Christian fine white ware) ca. 850 A.D.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.4. (Decoration : fig. 35; Pl. 38).
36. Sherd From bowl. Very hard pinkish-brown fabric.
Exterior : cream to orange slip.
Interior : cream slip, highly polished.
Centerseal : cross pattern, cf. Adams, p. 270, fig. 18; Griffith LAA XIII, p. 90, pl. XLVI, no. 4; Mich., *Faras II*, p. 161, pl. LV 5, p. 198, Pl. LVI, 4, 5, 6.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.7. (seal : fig. 36; Plate 38).
37. Sherd Fragment of flat bottom. Very hard grey-pinkish fabric.
Exterior : cream, highly polished; spiral groove around centre.
Interior : cream slip, emblem centerpiece, cross pattern upon square in black.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.16. (Centerpiece : fig. 37; Plate 38).
38. Sherd From bowl. Very thin, greyish fabric; white slip, lustrous. No decoration.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.48.
39. Sherd From bottom of bowl. Cream orange slip.
Interior : centre seal, cross pattern.
Exterior : spiral groove around centre.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.77. (Centerseal : fig. 39; Plate 38).
40. Sherd (D9) Rim. Rather hard, pinkish fabric with white particles and glimmer.
Exterior : yellow slip.
Interior : orange yellowish slip, mat; ledgeband decoration with guilloche pattern in black and red and exterior bodyband with vine wreath pattern in black. Group A II, ware W3 (Aswan Byzantine cream ware) ca. 750 A.D.
Place A7. No. F 1965/5.1. (Pl. 37).
41. Sherd (D3) Half of footed bowl. Rather hard brownish fabric. Orange-yellowish slip which has a dark shadow unto carina.
Exterior : continuous wall frieze : floral (leaf) pattern in black. Deep groove above superior framing band.
Interior : traces of collar band in black. For decoration pattern cf. the "fragment d'un linteau de porte" in Mich., *Faras I*, p. 155, fig. 85, no. A46/61. Place A3. No. F 1965/5.2. (Pl. 37).

42. Sherds (C14) Fragments from bowl. Hard pinkish-grey fabric.
Exterior : thin red orange slip.
Interior : thin yellowish slip. Emblem centerpiece : cruciform pattern in brown filled with red.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.8; 52, 53. (Centerpiece : fig. 42 ; pl. 37).
43. Sherd (C13) From flat bowl. Hard, rather coarse buff fabric. Pale red slip.
Interior: orange slip, interior bodyband with curvilinear pattern in purple.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.10.
44. Sherd From vase (?). Pinkish fabric.
Exterior : orange slip, rim decorated with curvilinear pattern in brown and panelled wall decoration with rosette in black.
Interior : yellow slip.
Place A9 (altar). F 1965/5.12. (fig. 44; Plate 37).
45. Sherd From vase (E1 ?). Hard, rather porous buff fabric, broad carbon streak; slip orange red. Exterior : collarband of repeated circular patterns in brown; panelled wall frieze in brown. Left panel with figure of cock or peacock, right panel with floral pattern. Group A IV, ware R 24 (Aswan Medieval decorated red ware), ca. 1100 A.D.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.11. (fig. 45; Plate 38).
46. Sherd Very hard fabric. Ochre slip, polished.
Exterior : ribbed below rim.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.64.
47. Sherd (D6) Fragment of bottom from footed bowl. Very hard, fine, pinkish-brown fabric. Yellowish slip. Dim : 17 × 13.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.24.
48. Sherd Ditto. Hard, fine, pinkish-grey fabric.
Exterior : yellow slip fired to orange.
Interior : yellow slip, two interior bodybands and two concentric bands near centre of bottom, in red brown. Group N IV, ware W10 (Classic Christian polished yellow ware, 850-1000 A.D). Photo *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens*, p. 101, fig. 34. (Plate 33).
Place A3. No. F1965/5.27.
49. Sherd Ditto.
Exterior : orange slip.
Interior : cream slip
Dim. : 10 × 10
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.28.
50. Sherd (D1) From small footed bowl. Coarse, pinkish fabric with many particles.
Pale red slip, rather smooth.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.30.

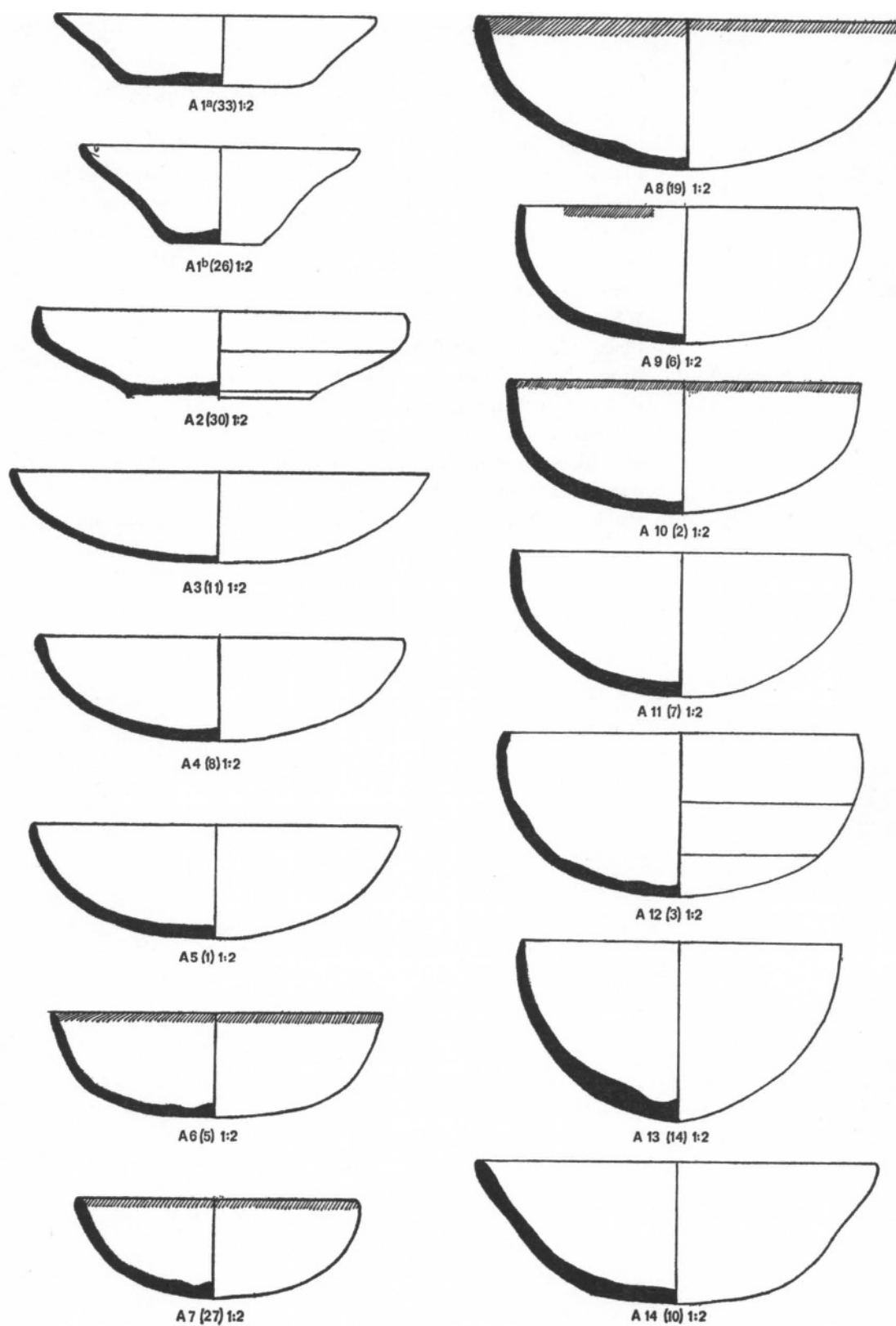
51. Sherd From small bowl. Pinkish fabric. Cream slip. Incised monogram ($\chi\pi\Theta$) Letter X missing. Numerical code for $\mu\iota\chi\alpha\eta\lambda$
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.31. (Monogram : fig. 51; Pl. 38).
52. Sherd (C10) From bowl. Fine brownish fabric. Cream slip, on upper part fired to orange. Decorated with interior collarband. Group V, ware R 21, (Post-classic polished orange ware) ca. 1150 A.D.
Dim. : 11×7 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.32 (Pl. 38).
53. Sherds (D5) 7 Pieces from flat shallow footed bowl. Rather brittle, brownish fabric. Hard smooth surface.
Exterior : Orange slip
Interior : cream slip. Decorated with curvilinear pattern. One sherd with round hole.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.34.
54. Sherd From bowl. Hard, pinkish fabric, pale red slip. Decorated with geometric pattern in black.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.38. (fig. 54).
55. Sherd From small bowl. Brownish fabric, cream slip with red rimband and graffito.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.39. (Graffito : fig. 55).
56. Sherd Rather coarse buff fabric. Pale orange slip. Decorated with geometric pattern in brown.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.41. (fig. 56).
57. Sherd Rather hard, buff fabric, smooth surface. Interior : red brown slip.
Exterior : cream slip, decorated with collarband in brown.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.42.
58. Sherd Rim of bowl. Very hard, greyish fabric. Cream slip. Rim orange with black wavy patterns. Dim. : 5×4 .
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5. 46.
59. Sherd Rim, brownish fabric.
Exterior : pale orange slip. Groove under rim which is covered with short incised strokes.
Interior : cream slip. Dim : 3×2 .
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.49.
60. Sherd (C12) Fragment flat bowl. Rather hard, cream fabric.
Exterior : orange slip
Interior : yellow slip, red rimband, interior bodybands in red-brown. Part of branch-pattern still visible upon bottom in red-brown.
Graffito. Place A4. F 1965/5.5.
61. Sherd From bowl. Grey-brownish fabric.
Orange slip, red band; round hole in wall; groove below rim.
Dim. : 8×5.4 . Place A3. No. F 1965/5.59.

62. Sherd (C11) From small bowl. Rather coarse grey-brownish fabric. Orange slip, red rimband. Two broad concentric grooves.
Interior : body decoration in purple, almost lost. Dim. : 11.5×5.
Place A3. No. 1965/5.63.
63. Sherd Hard red fabric with black temper.
Exterior : orange slip, smooth, three deep grooves below rim.
Continuous wall frieze in purple brown; wavy pattern.
Interior : slip yellow with a reddish shadow. Rimband red; round hole.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.5. (fig. 63; Pl. 37).
64. Sherd From small bowl. Rather thin buff fabric. Bright orange slip, almost lustrous. Brown rimband.
Interior : pinkish slip.
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.50.
65. Sherd Thick buff ware. Orange slip, polished. Geometric pattern with little circles in black.
Place A3. F 1965/5.14. (fig. 65; Plate 37).
66. Footed bowl (D8) Rather thick pinkish, porous fabric with quartz and white particles. Orange slip, very smooth. Decorated with broad, brown rimband. Group N VI, ware R 11 (Late Christian polished orange ware). *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens*, p. 101, fig. 34.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.43 (P 101). (Plate 33).
67. Footed bowl (D4) Rather fine brown-red fabric. Yellow slip, almost lustrous.
Interior: cream slip, no decoration except two parallel bodygrooves.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.29; 60; 61.
68. Sherd Rim from bowl. Rather hard thick buff fabric. Decorated with 3 deep parallel grooves and an exterior collarband with curvilinear pattern in brown. Slip orange rather powdery.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.66 (fig. 68). (Plate 40).
69. Sherds (E1) 8 Pieces from vase (E1). Pinkish fabric. Pale orange slip which rubs off very easily.
Exterior : collarband with guilloche patterns and continuous wall frieze with curvilinear decorations.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.19. Group N IV A. Classic Christian white ware (ca. 900 A.D.). (Plate 38).
70. Sherd Pale orange slip. Interior decorated with an interior bodyband of curvilinear patterns, a bird motive and a guirlande pattern which are both partly visible.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.9.
71. Sherd Rim from bowl or small vase. Pinkish fabric.
Exterior : orange slip, decorated with black collarband in brown (rather vague) one groove filled with black paint.

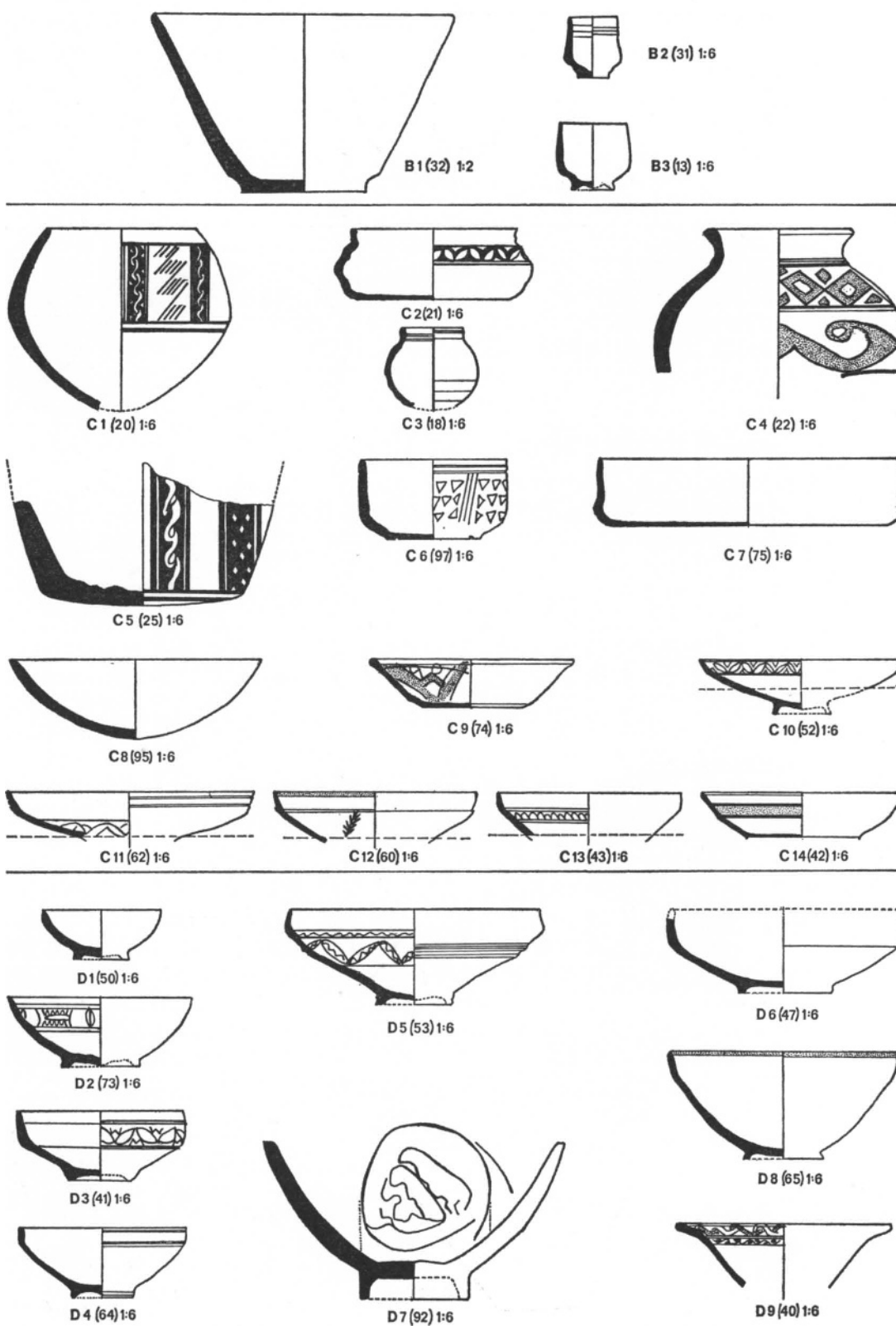
- Interior : cream slip.
Dim. : 3×3.5 .
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.47.
72. Sherd
Rim from vase. Ridge outside below rim, brownish fabric, orange slip. Dim. : 7×5.5 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.65.
73. Footed bowl (D2)
Rather soft buff fabric, rough surface, pinkish slip.
Interior : panelled wall frieze of curvilinear patterns in black. Emblem centerpiece in black. Group N VI, ca. 1250 A.D.
Place A7. No. F 1964/11.45 (P 103). Photo *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens*, p. 101, fig. 33. (Plate 30).
74. Bowl (C9)
Flat bottom, rather hard pinkish fabric. Pale red slip which has an orange shade at the rim; rather smooth. Decorated with red rimband.
Interior : two floral (?) patterns opposite each other in black, filled with red.
Graffito $\chi\pi\theta$, obverse direction, monogram for $\mu\iota\chi\lambda\eta\lambda$.
Group A IV, ware 12 (Aswan Medieval White ware) ca. 1100 A.D.
Place A5. No. 1964/11.46 (P 104) (graffito : fig. 74; dec. pattern : fig. 74; Plate 34).
75. Bowl (C7)
Rim from flat bowl with angular profile. Hard thin pink fabric. Pale red slip, smooth. Dim : 17.5×6 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.67.
76. Sherd
From great jar. Rather coarse and porous cream fabric; cream slip. Decorated with incised cross or star pattern. Group NU, Ware U10 (Later Christian Pink utility ware) 1100-1500 A.D.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.44.
(Graffito : fig. 76; Pl. 40).
77. Sherd
Rather thin, very hard brownish fabric. Broad carbon streak. Orange slip, linear pattern in black.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.13 (fig. 77).
78. Vase (E3)
Two sherds. Hard pinkish fabric, straw-tempered. Slip pale brown, rather smooth. Geometric patterns in black, filled red.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.17 and No. F 1965/5.69. (Pl. 37).
79. Pot (F1)
Bulbous shape on low foot. Pale red slip. Parallel and wavy body-grooves, covered with dark greasy substance.
Place A7. No. F 1964/11.42 (P 100).
80. Bowl (E2)
Flowerpot model. Very thick red fabric, levigated with straw. Pale red slip, rather smooth.
Place A3. No. F 1964/11.44 (P 102).
81. *Saqieh* pot (G)
Upper part gently ribbed. Four depressions to give place to ropes. Rather smooth greyish surface; one incised cruciform pattern

- near bottom knob. (Later Christian slipped utility ware, ca. 1100-1500 A.D. Group NU, Ware U 14).
Place A3. No. F 1964/11.58 (P 117).
(Graffito : fig. 81; Plate 36).
82. Ear from pot
Dim : length 7, w. 3.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.22.
83. *Saqieh* knob
Dim. : 4×4.5 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.36.
84. Sherd
Thick red fabric, inner part dark brown, rather smooth surface with brick-red wash.
Graffito. Dim : 11.5×9 .
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5.37.
(Graffito : fig. 84).
85. Sherd
Thick straw-tempered, brownish fabric; narrow carbon streak. Red slip.
Graffito, partly preserved.
Dim. : 5.5×4 .
Place : surface. No. F 1965/5. 43.
(Graffito : fig. 85).
86. Sherd
Body sherd from great storage jar.
Thin pale red slip.
Dim. : 14×18 . Place A3. No. F 1965/5.71.
87. Sherd
Rim from great jar. Hard, thin, yellowish fabric. Dark slip, smooth. Interior : yellow slip. Dim. : 14×7.3 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.20.
88. Sherd
From great storage jar, gently ribbed. Very thin reddish slip. Dim. : 16×13 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.56.
89. Sherd
Ditto. Decorated with red rimband.
Dim. : 18×12 .
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.62.
90. Sherds (10 pieces)
Ditto.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.73.
91. Bowl (C8)
Very porous, soft and crumbly; straw-tempered, conspicuous mica, colour dark-brown; handmade.
Highly polished dark-brown surface.
Group D III, ware H8 (Later Chr. black domestic ware), ca. 1100-1500 A.D.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.47 (P 105). (Plate 33).
92. Bowl (D7)
Fragment. High foot, red-brown, dense fabric.
Exterior : yellow, glazed.
Interior : green with incised Arabic (coufic) characters and center-

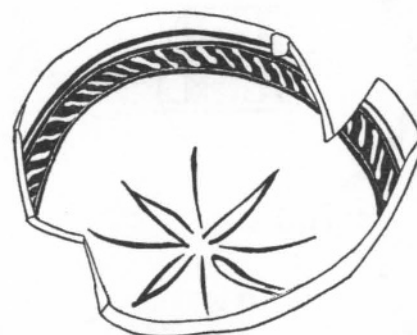
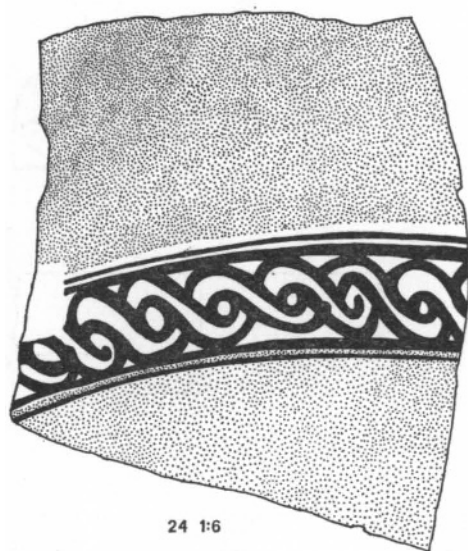
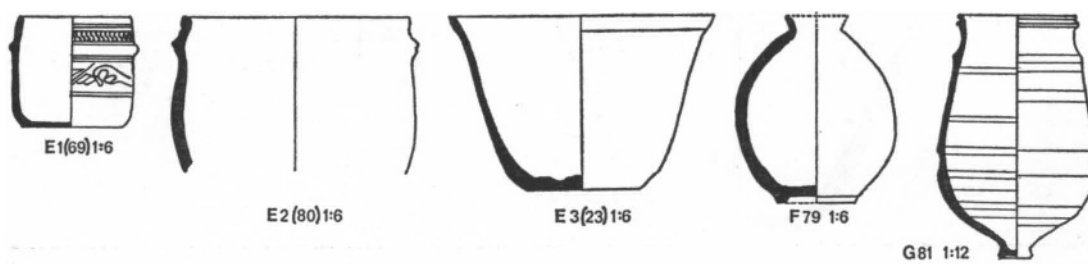
- decoration under a glaze. Group G IV, B2, (Sgraffito ware, black or green) ca. 1350 A.D.
Place A5. No. F 1964/11.2. (Body decoration : fig. 92; Plate 40).
93. Bowl (C6) Flat bottom with round hole. Rather hard huff fabric; red brown slip. Exterior: panelled wall frieze of deeply impressed geometric patterns covered with thick layer of greasy substance. Cf. Arminna fig. 43. Place A3. (staircase). No. F 1965/5.25 (Plate 40).
94. Ringbase of jar Very hard dense yellow fabric.
White slip; lustrous, diam. : 6.5, h. 4.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.35.
95. Sherds (2 pieces) From shallow bowl or saucer. Hard greyish fabric;
Exterior : celadon green;
Interior : black incised scrolls and incised emblem centerpiece also filled in with black under a glaze. Group G IV, B2 Sgraffito ware, black or green, ca 1350 A.D.
Place A3. No. F 1965/5.72. (centerpiece fig. 95, Plate 40).



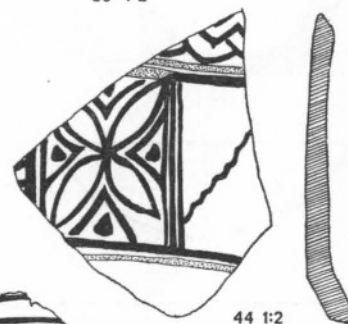
Pottery, Form Class A



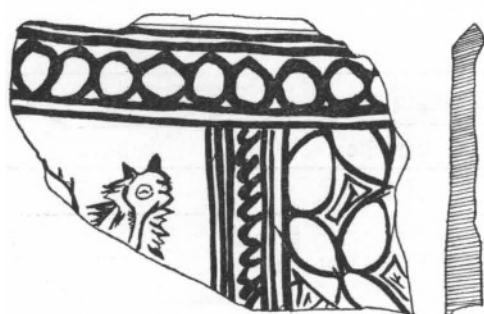
Pottery, Form Class B-D



35 1:2



44 1:2



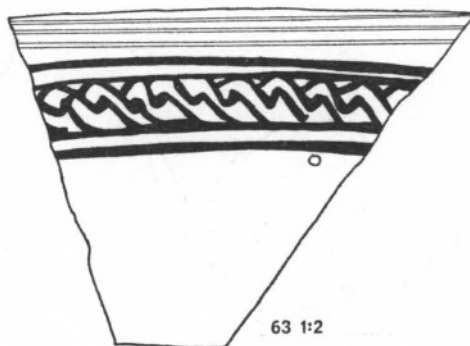
45 1:2



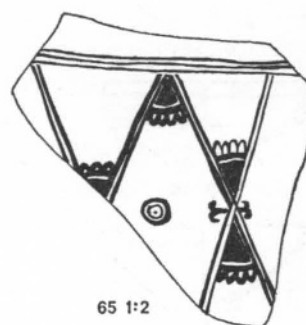
54 1:2



56 1:2

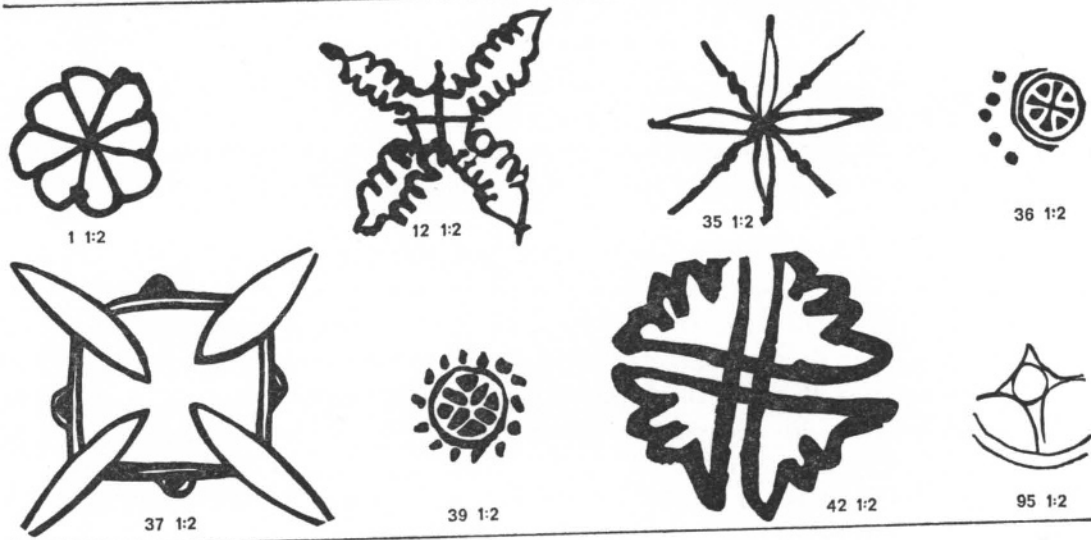
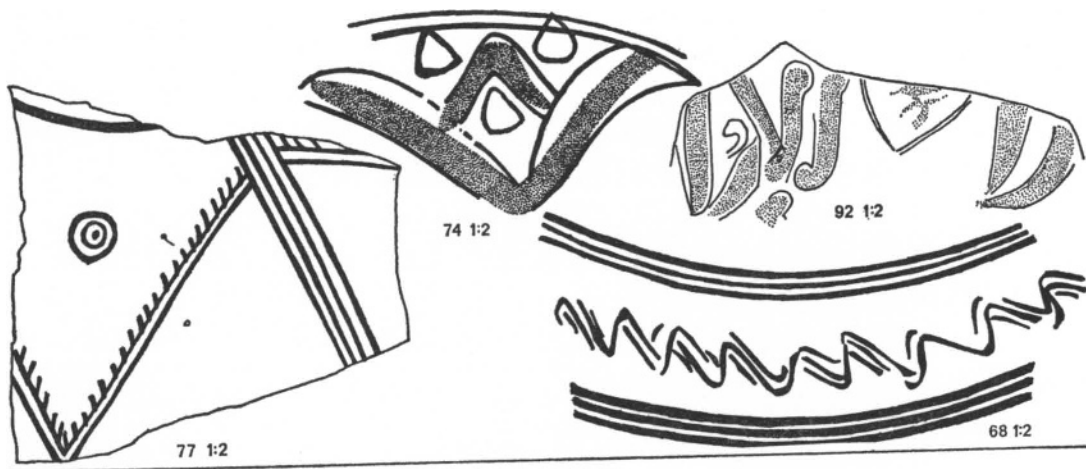


63 1:2



65 1:2

Pottery, Form Classes E-G, Specimens



Pottery, Specimens

THE WALL-PAINTINGS *

BY

PAUL VAN MOORSEL

Stylistic observations

1. *Introduction*

The great wealth of the central church of Abdallah Nirqi lies in its paintings, all executed in the *al secco* technique already familiar to us in Nubia since the discovery of the cathedral in Faras.¹

It is, in any case, difficult to talk about the wall-paintings of Abdallah Nirqi without bringing in Faras, the ecclesiastical and civil centre of the area, and also its cultural centre. Faras influenced the small places round about in many ways, and may thus provide excellent terms of reference for all who are concerned with the Christian art of Northern Nubia, and therefore also for us.² We are in the fortunate position of being able to date the paintings in the cathedral of Faras fairly accurately, thanks to the presence of a large number of episcopal portraits and of a reasonably well-kept list of the bishops of Faras.³ These discoveries also enable us to date the paintings in the region ruled over by Faras, to which Abdallah Nirqi belongs. Moreover, the paintings in the cathedral of Faras surpass those in the small churches in the diocese both in number and (often, in any case) in quality, so that from this point of view as well Faras provides a good background against which to place the *seccos* of Abdallah Nirqi. It must be said that when we speak of *frescoes* in the following pages this expression is used not in the proper sense of the word, but to mean wall-paintings in general, regardless of the technique employed.

Having now, very shortly, sketched in the geographical framework within which our

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to the authorities of the Department of Antiquities and of the Coptic Museum in Cairo, to Prof. Dr. K. Michałowski, Dr. S. Jakobielski and Mr. T. Gołgowski in Warsaw, to Prof. Dr. K. Weitzmann in Princeton, to the Revd. Nicholas Ozolin in New York, to Mrs. Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel, Miss M. E. Th. de Grooth and Mr. C. Schuddeboom in Leiden for the various kinds of help they have provided.

¹ Cf. H. Jędrzejewska, *Das Konservieren der Wandmalereien von Faras = Catalogue Essen*, pp. 27-31. See also M. Vunjak et M. Medić, *Travaux de dépose et de transfert des peintures murales en Nubie = Participation de la Yougoslavie dans l'action internationale pour la sauvegarde des monuments de la Nubie antique*, Beograd, 1965, pp. 89-91.

² Cf. K. Michałowski, *Faras. Centre artistique de la Nubie chrétienne*, Leiden, 1966, pp. 1 sqq.

³ *Die Kathedrale*, pp. 18-19. and S. Jakobielski, *La liste des évêques de Pakhoras = Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie polonaise des Sciences*, vol. III, (1966), pp. 151-170.

frescoes must be placed, we may now say something about the various *styles* to be found in Abdallah Nirqi.

2. *The styles*

In Abdallah Nirqi we find two different styles, which, with the help of the discoveries in Faras, can be dated and placed fairly accurately.

A. The violet style of Abdallah Nirqi (circa 750 — circa 800)

Of the first style, which Michałowski found in the cathedral of Faras, known as the violet style ⁴ and employed throughout the entire eighth century, we found specimens in our church dating from the latter half of the century. The date of our church is not earlier than about 750. Michałowski, who pays particular attention in describing the various styles in Faras, to the range of colours employed, draws attention to the frequent use now made of violet; later in the century it was enriched with yellow nuances, though violet and steel-grey remained dominant. ⁵ This would seem to be directly applicable to the fresco in the apse of Abdallah Nirqi (fr. 5/5), which is, moreover, painted on to a layer of white plaster, just as was used for the foundation in early paintings. Without anticipating the description of our unfortunately very fragmentarily preserved apse fresco, I would like to draw attention to the fact that as well as the predominating violet and the steel-grey which is found, for example, in Peter's key, there are also many yellow nuances. So much for the colours of this style. But there are other characteristics to be mentioned, and here I make grateful use of the words in which Prof. K. Weitzmann described the Nubian styles at the Symposium on Christian art in Nubia held in Essen in September 1969. ⁶ If we consider, for example, the St. Peter in our apse, which we have just mentioned, Weitzmann's comment on the portraits of the Apostles Peter and John in Faras are entirely applicable here: ⁷ "Characteristic ... are the straight outlines which tend to flatten the figures while at the same time their somewhat thickset proportions suggest the massive structure of their bodies, underlined by their large, almost clumsy feet and their heavy, square heads. Their faces are designed with thick and almost geometric lines and with enormously large eyes with a blank gaze". ⁸ Weitzmann rightly assumes Coptic influences here. His description of the painting of St. Peter and St. John in Faras, a fresco dating from just after 700, is remarkably applicable to the St. Peter in our apse, and in many respects may also be applied to a later fresco in our church, no. 6/7, (an archangel with *protégé*) from the end of the eighth century. With regard to this later painting, which is perhaps of the same date as fresco 6/4a (a protection by a *Maria Hodigitria*), it may be generally observed that it is indeed less refined than the earlier examples in Faras, but that it does still stem from the same tradition. Whereas in Abdallah Nirqi the ideal of the oval head was still aspired to, though

⁴ K. Michałowski in *Die Kathedrale*, pp. 72-73, and *Catalogue Essen* pp. 17-18.

⁵ K. Michałowski in *Catalogue Essen*, p. 18.

⁶ Published in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 325-346.

⁷ See *Catalogue Essen*, no. 5.

⁸ Weitzmann, p. 327.

no longer with complete success, we find the equally traditional triangular shape of nose still maintained. Also entirely true to this tradition is the decorative motif of little stars made up of white or red dots, which is found in the earliest frescoes in Faras,⁹ but also in a Sinai icon of the eighth century, showing the Crucifixion¹⁰ and which we find in Abdallah Nirqi in the above-mentioned frescoes 6/7 and 6/4a. The same is true of the decorative motif of little rosettes made up of white dots, which decorates the *chlamys* of our archangel in fresco 6/7, and which had already been found in a seventh century Sinai icon depicting the three young men in the fiery furnace,¹¹ as well as in a picture of an unknown saint in chapel 17 in Bawit.¹² Weitzmann suggested, in the article already mentioned, that these rosettes in Nubia are typical of what is known as the white style.¹³ Fresco 6/7, however, is still in the violet style, albeit in a late period, as we have said, not much earlier than the year 800; though we may reckon that one of the characteristics of the subsequent style, namely the double folds, may already be seen both here and in fresco 6/4a. We have already stated our agreement with Weitzmann in his view that the violet style in Nubia shows a Coptic influence. Our agreement is due partly to the fact that the problem of portraying somebody full faced at the same time as he is stretching out his hands to somebody next to him is solved in the same way in Bawit as later in Abdallah Nirqi¹⁴. That Palestinian influences could also be observed is suggested by the similarity of the decorative motifs to old Sinai icons,¹⁵ and also, I believe, by the fact that there is a Nativity scene in Faras, already in the violet style, modelled on a Palestinian example.¹⁶ We shall draw attention elsewhere to the fact that the Nubians already had their own altars not only on Golgotha in Jerusalem but also in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. There must, then, have been contacts with Palestine, including contacts of an artistic nature, even though it is difficult to determine how these occurred, and how frequently they took place. Finally, as far as the violet style is concerned, we may, I believe, distinguish two phases, one from rather soon after 700, to which the apse fresco is still belonging, and a second, from the end of the century, from which frescoes 6/7 and 6/4a must date. The other violet examples in our church are too fragmentary to be dated exactly.

B. The white style of Abdallah Nirqi (circa 980 — circa 1020)

The majority of the frescoes in our church date roughly from the years in which Bishop Petros I (ca. 973 - 999) ruled in Faras. In his description of the style which typifies this period Michałowski draws attention to the red colour, to which yellow is added, while in about 1000 the

⁹ See *Die Kathedrale*, p. 105 and *Catalogue Essen*, ill. 7 (a slightly later piece).

¹⁰ G. et M. Sotiriou, *Icons du Mont Sinai*, vol. 1, Athens, 1956, ill. 25. See J. Clédat, *Le Monastère et la nécropole, de Baouît*, vol. 1, Le Caire, 1904, ill. xxx, xxxii, cii, ciii and cvi.

¹¹ G. et M. Sotiriou, *o.c.*, ill. 12 and 13.

¹² J. Clédat, *o.c.*, ill. xlv, 1.

¹³ Weitzmann, p. 330.

¹⁴ See our description of fresco 6/7 in Abdallah Nirqi.

¹⁵ See above, notes 10 and 11.

¹⁶ See Faras, fresco 36. We see here a Nativity scene with the same opening as is found in that on the Palestinian relic-case in the Vatican Library and on several Christmas icons of Sinai (G. et M. Sotiriou, *o.c.*, ill. 17-18 and Weitzmann, p. 329). Weitzmann, p. 311, considers this shape to be the first imported into Nubia during the white style-period.

colours were further enriched with dark brown, violet and blue.¹⁷ In our church the sketches were generally made in yellow and red, and these colours, together with black, brown and some green, are also found in the clothing. Blue occurs only rarely. The features are most frequently painted in red and black, with the mouth drawn in the form of an x and the chin in that of a π. Weitzmann, who sees this phase as a later period of the "white style" which began in the second half of the ninth century, draws attention to the tendency already noted by Michałowski of showing folds by double lines. In the tenth century, according to Weitzmann, it is hardly possible to speak of folds any more: "One can hardly call them folds any longer, since they have become too abstract and have developed a rhythm of their own, disassociated from the material quality of a textile."¹⁸ Clothing is seen ornamentally; it does not fall downwards, but is stretched like a net. This is where the check motif originated. Another new element is the custom (perhaps influenced by the "Keramion") of giving Christ and Mary a background made up of bricks.¹⁹ It was also probably in this period that the custom began of not only portraying *protégés* or founders a size smaller than their patron, but also of making them "float" next to him, with their feet a little way off the ground. The decorative motif already found in the clothing of the violet style, of little rosettes and stars made up of white dots, is still maintained, though in a rather coarser form. The double-fold style, according to Weitzmann, is Palestinian in origin, witness the Sinai icon of the Crucifixion already familiar to us, and also the *Sacra Parallela MS* in Paris, cod. gr. 923, which is probably also of Palestinian origin; the Chludoff-psalter should also be mentioned,²⁰ as Malitsky has shown on various grounds that its illuminations were partly influenced by Palestine.²¹ The iconography of the white style (as, for the sake of simplicity, we shall continue to call it) also often seems to show Palestinian influence. We shall only mention this here *en passant*, as we shall be discussing the iconographical characteristics in more detail elsewhere. Weitzmann draws attention to the extraordinary opening in the Nubian version of the manger in the Nativity scene. This variation is undoubtedly (and in this Weitzmann is quite right) of Palestinian origin, but his comment that this form was first taken over by the Nubians in the white style requires a small marginal note. In any case, a Nativity scene with such an opening can already be found in Faras in the eighth century. The form of the Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace is, however, a different matter. There are two examples of this theme in Faras, one in the violet style and one in the white style. The later example in Faras, from our period, bears a strong resemblance to a Palestinian icon of the furnace in the Sinai monastery, dating from the seventh century.²²

¹⁷ Cf. *Die Kathedrale*, pp. 80 sqq.; K. Michałowski: *Faras, Centre artistique de la Nubie chrétienne*, Leiden, 1966, pp. 17 ff. and: *Catalogue Essen*, pp. 21-22. In certain "white" frescoes in Abdallah Nirqi one is struck by the broad "bags" painted under the eyes and the amazingly aquiline noses.

¹⁸ Weitzmann, p. 329.

¹⁹ The *Keramion* is an icon, showing the head of Christ against a background made up of bricks. See also § 40, note 1.

²⁰ Chludoff-psalter, Historical Museum, Moskou, cod. 129.

²¹ N. V. Malitsky, *Traits d'iconographie palestinienne dans le psautier à illustrations marginales du type Chludoff* = *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, vol. 1, pp. 49-63.

²² G. et M. Sotiriou, *o.c.*, ill. 12.

Moreover, in Faras Cathedral there is a portrait of St. John Chrysostom, painted fairly early in the white style period, in the second half of the ninth century, in fact. This portrait does not resemble the ascetic type known since Middle Byzantine times, which we are to meet later in the white style period in Abdallah Nirqi, but it does bear great resemblance to a seventh century icon on Sinai.^{23 24} Weitzmann believes that these and other inspirations from the Palestinian side reached Nubia much more directly in this period than in the period of the violet style, in which the Copts probably acted as intermediaries. There remains, however, a strong Coptic influence in Nubian art, which is hardly surprising, considering the many relations between Nubians and Copts, whereas in time Byzantium also came to exert an influence, witness the portrait of St. John Chrysostom in Abdallah Nirqi. Although in Faras Cathedral frescoes were found dating from a later period than that of the "white style" (from the end of the eleventh century until 1173/1175) this cannot be said of our little church. Here only two style periods can be distinguished, the later violet style and the more mature period of the white style, both of which bear witness to the artistic activities of probably itinerant painters, who naturally found the greatest opportunities for development in Faras, but who nevertheless did not neglect the small churches in the surrounding countryside. It is not within the scope of this study to show how in the eighth century and also at the end of the tenth century Nubia enjoyed a time of political prosperity; for this we refer to the literature, which is already widely known.²⁵ Suffice it to say that, as is often the case in history, it is also true of Nubia that wealth and prosperity coincide with a cultural boom. We are immediately bound to add that this artistic production is not primarily the fruit of native Nubian creativity, but also reveals outside influences, from Palestine, as we have seen, but certainly no less from Christian Egypt. It is understandable that in times of prosperity, in particular, fruitful relationships can be built up with such foreign cultural areas. This the Nubians were by no means slow to do, as even the frescoes of little Abdallah Nirqi clearly show.

Catalogue

The line-blocks are from photographs and water-colours.

N.B. The numbers 4/, 5/, and 6/ indicate respectively the northern nave, the central nave and the southern nave.

The numbers a/, b/, c/, d/, e/, and f/ indicate the *intrados* in the arcades between the three naves.

Unless other indications are given, the paintings date from the white style.

4/1a : Fragments of a standing Virgin *Hodigitria*.

1b : Fragment of a man (?).

1c : Fragment of a man.

2 : Archangel with *protégé*.

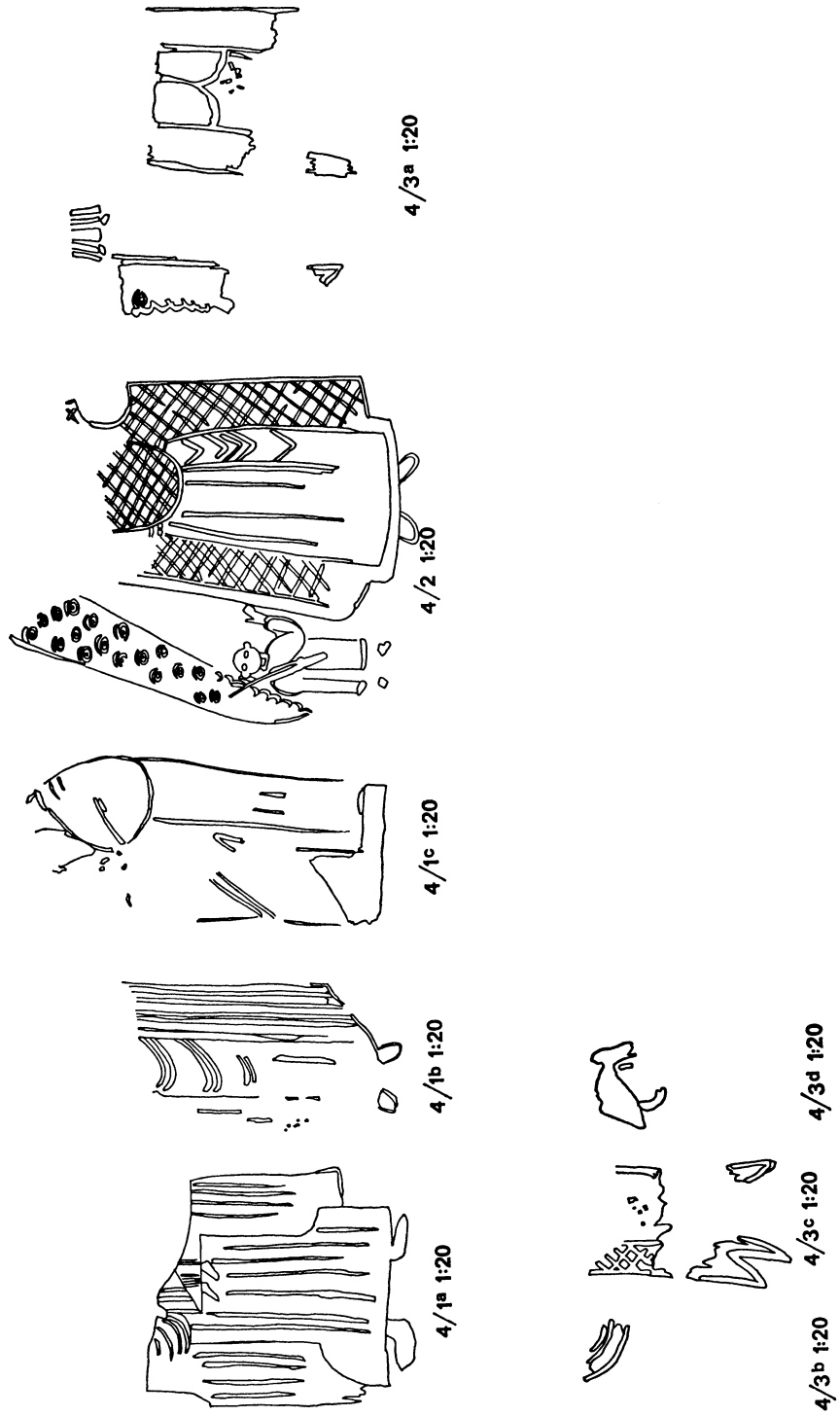
²³ G. et M. Sotiriou, *o.c.*, ill. 21.

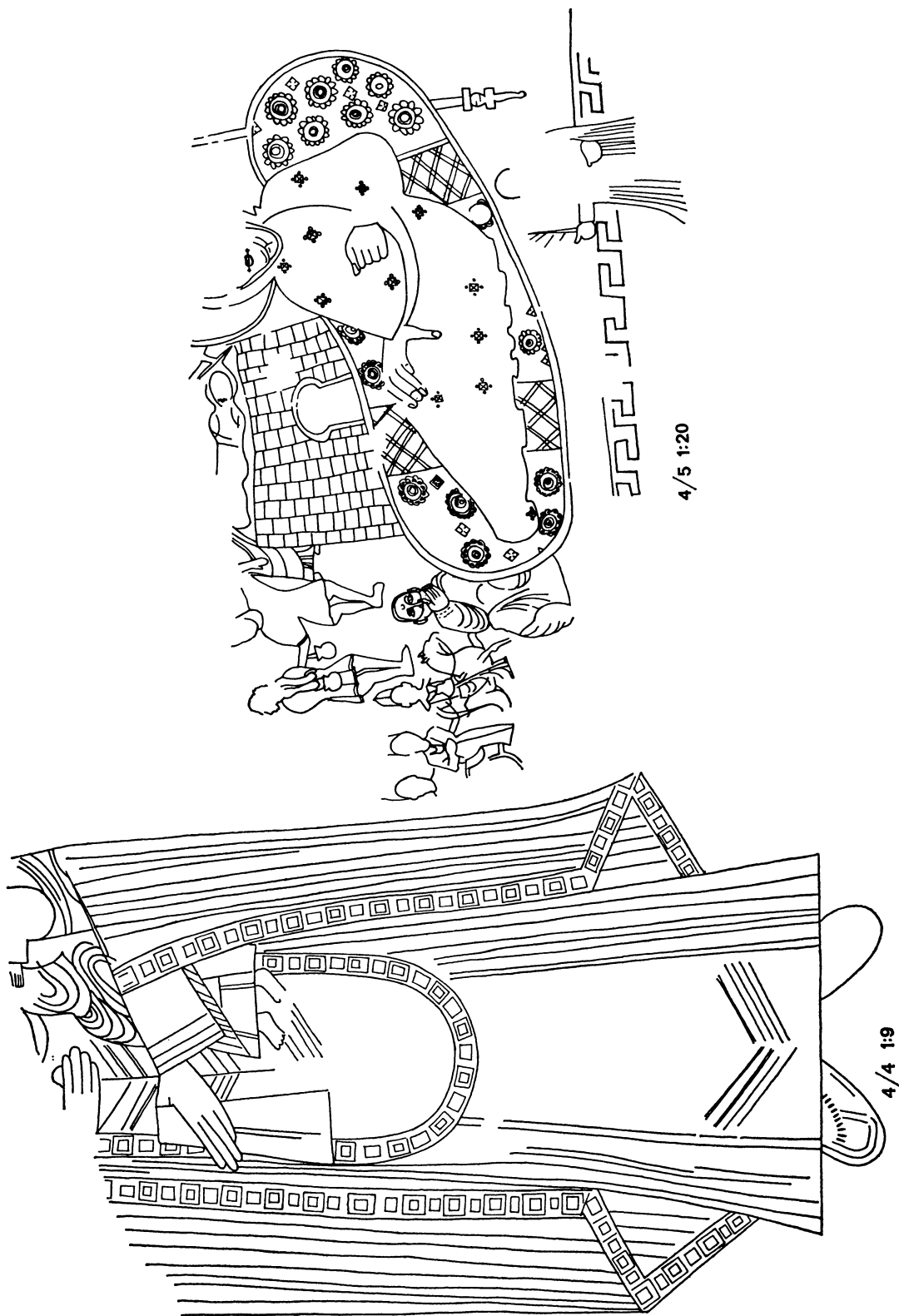
²⁴ Weitzmann, pp. 311-332.

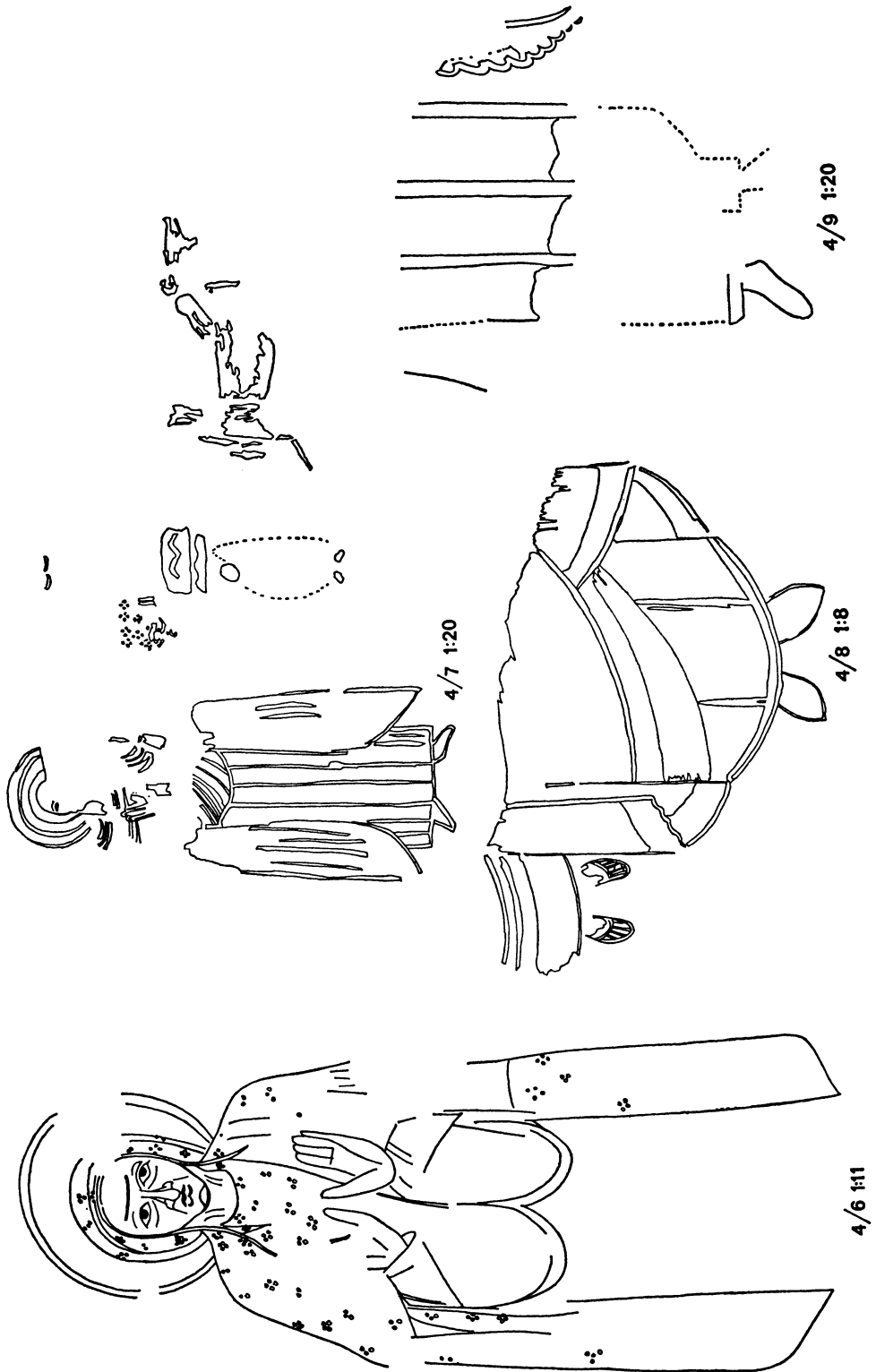
²⁵ *Die Kathedrale*, pp. 32-36, but especially : U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia Cristiana*, Rome, 1938, pp. 98 *sqq.*

- 3a : Fragment of a saint with *protégé*.
 - 3b : Fragment (identification impossible).
 - 3c : Fragment of an Angel.
 - 3d : Fragment (identification impossible).
 - 4 : Fragment of a standing Virgin *Hodigitria*.
 - 5 : Fragments of a Nativity-scene.
 - 6 : *Maria Orans*.
 - 7 : Fragments of St. Anne.
 - 8 : Standing Virgin (?) and a *protégé* (fragments).
 - 9 : Fragment of an Angel.
-
- a/east : Fragment of an Angel
 - west : Christ *in tondo*.
 - b/east : Saint with *protégé*.
 - west : Christ with book; background of clouds.
 - c/east : Mary *Eleousa* ? (violet style ?)
 - west : Fragments of a Saint. (violet style ?)
-
- 5/1 : Fragment of a standing figure (also traces in the violet style).
 - 2 : Christ in *clipeus* between the four beasts over a cross (fragments).
 - 3 : Fragments of two Angels and a horse.
 - 4 : An Angel with a *protégé* (fragments).
 - 5 : Fragments of the apse-decoration : *Maria Orans* between Apostles.
 - 6 : Fragment of a cross and an unknown object.
 - 7 : An Angel and a *protégé*.
 - 8 : Fragments on whitewash and coptic plaster.
 - 9 : Fragments on whitewash and coptic plaster.
 - 10 : Vague traces.
 - 11 : Fragments of a Nubian *protégé*.
 - 12 : Fragments in violet and white style.
-
- d/east : Throning Saint (David ?).
 - west : Bishop 1.
 - e/east : Bishop 2.
 - west : Throning Virgin *Hodigitria*.
 - f/east : Cross with *gemmes* and *velum*.
 - west : Saint with censer in his left hand (Zacharias ?).
-
- 6/1 : Angel with sword on horseback.
 - 2 : Fragments of two standing figures (violet style).
 - 3 : Fragments of a Saint on horseback (St. Mercurius ?).
 - 4a : Fragments of a protection by a Virgin *Hodigitria* (violet style).

- 4b : Theophany with a cross.
- 5a : Rider 3, with a man in a jar.
- 5b : St. John Chrysostom and Petou, a priest.
- 6a : Rider 4 (St. Theodoros Stratelates?).
- 6a' : Unknown anachorete.
- 6b : Rider 5 (St. Phoibammon?).
- 6b' : St. Epimachos on horseback.
- 7 : Fragments of an Archangel with *protégé* (violet style).
- 8 : Traces of two periods, the face being remade in the white style, the other part dating from an earlier period.
- 9 : Fragments (identification impossible).









A/east 1:20



A/west 1:20



B/east 1:20



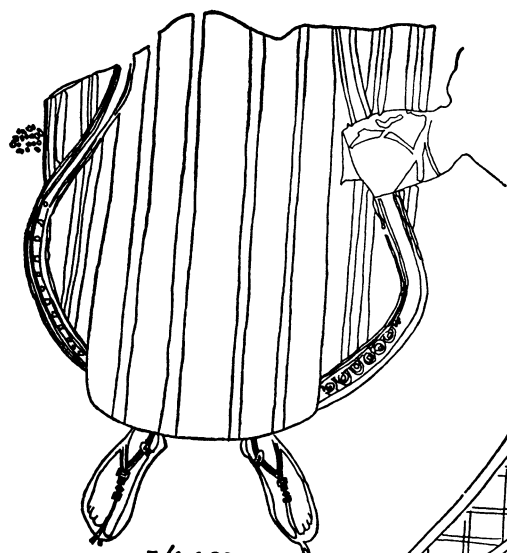
B/west 1:18



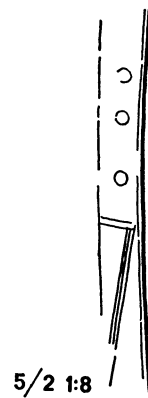
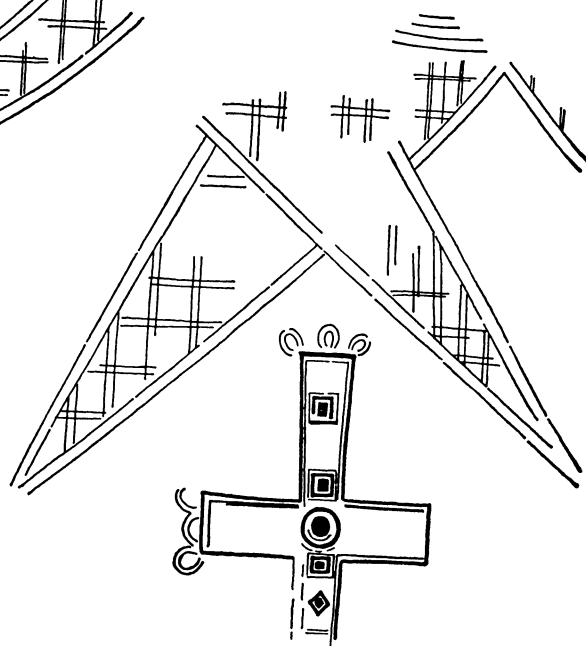
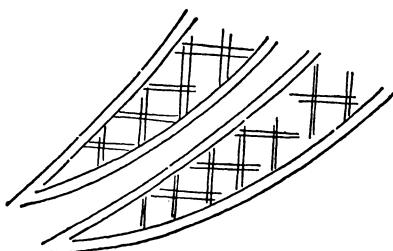
C/east 1:20



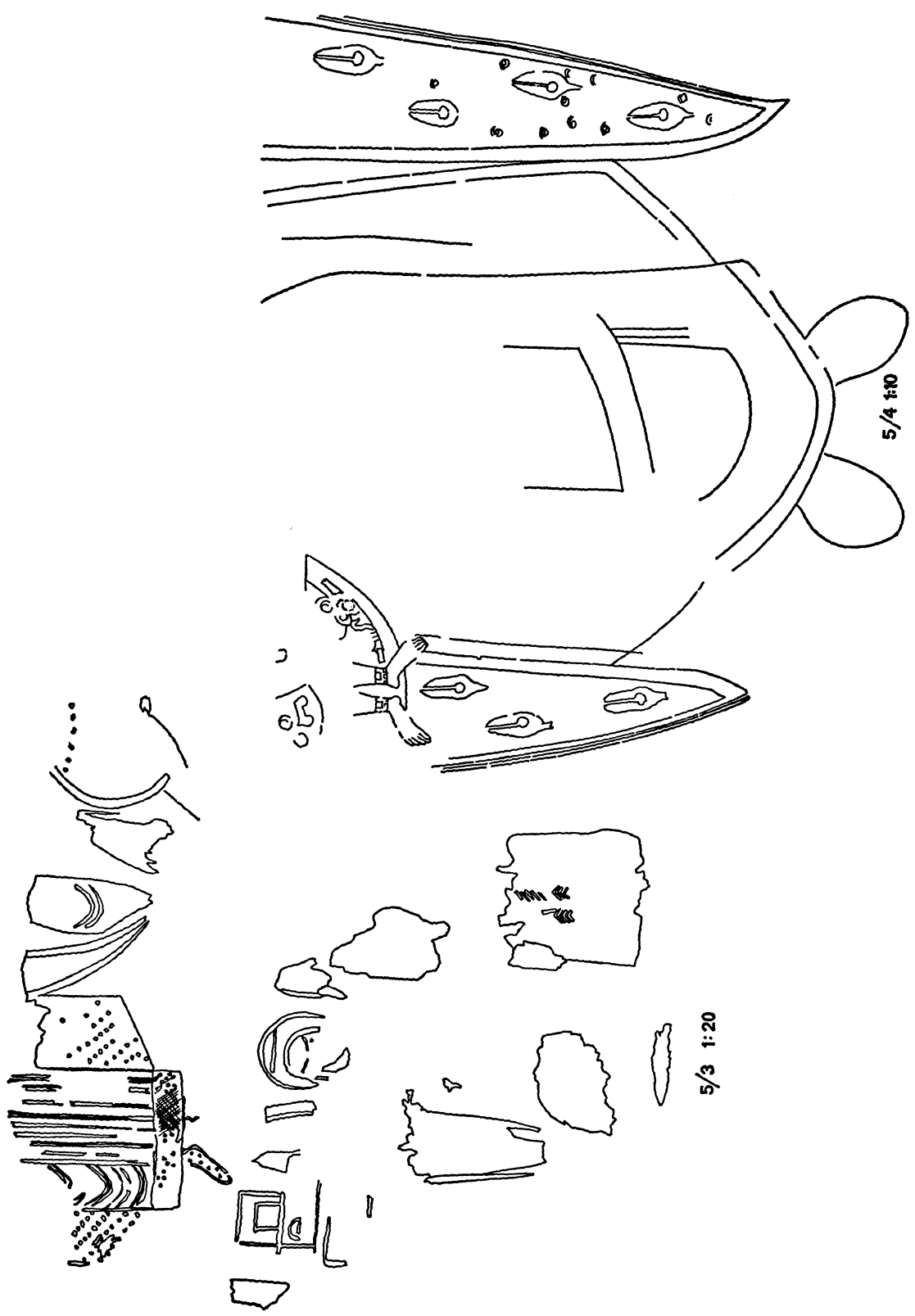
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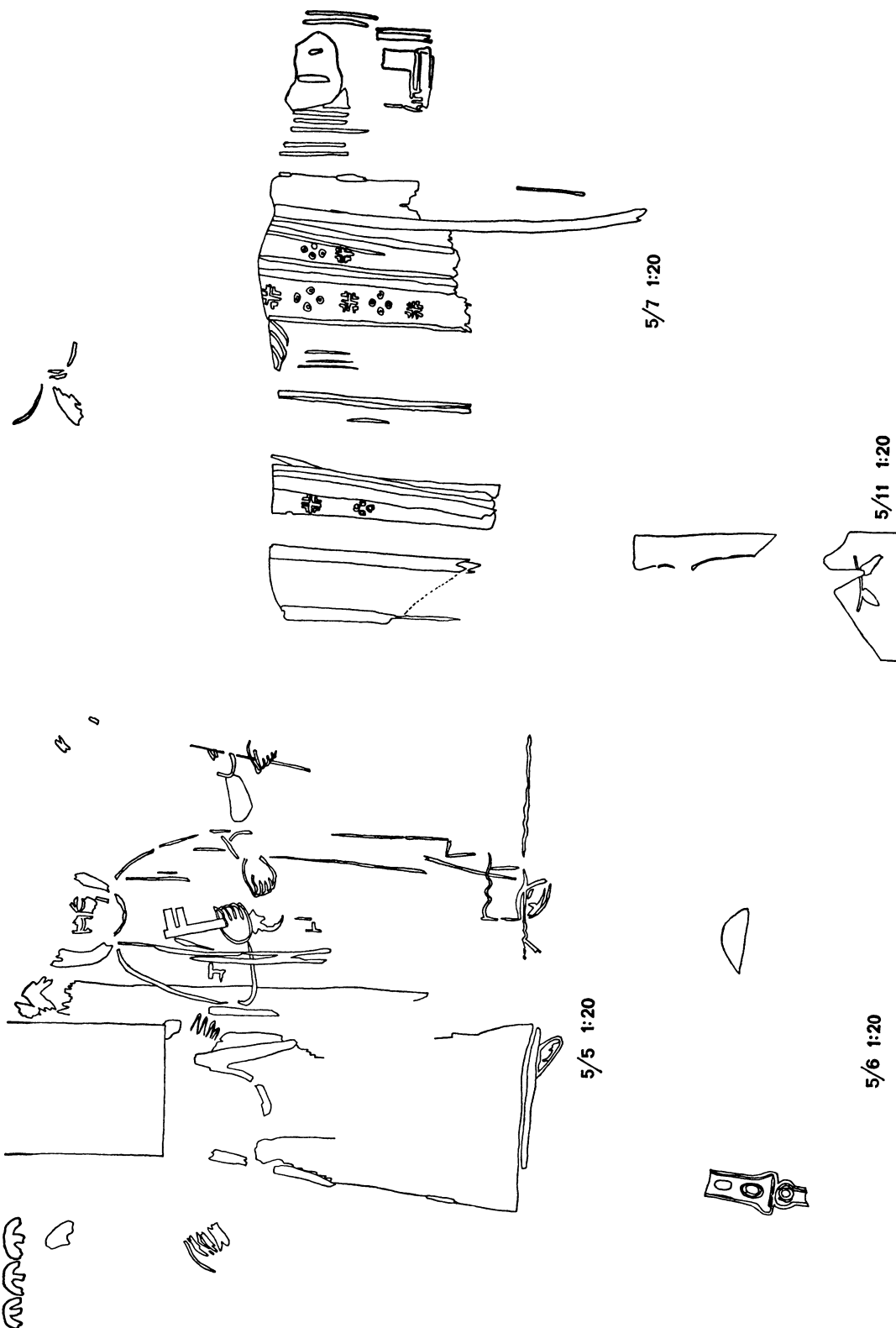


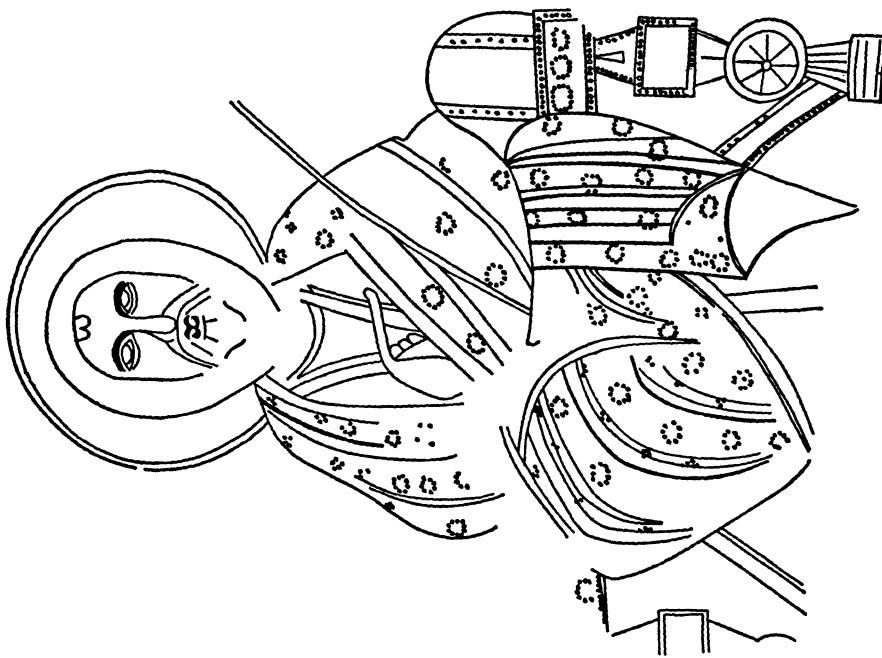
5/1 1:20



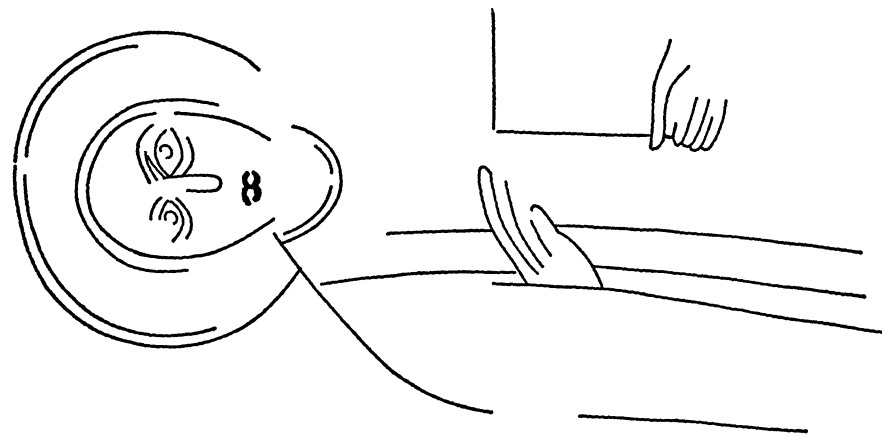
5/2 1:8



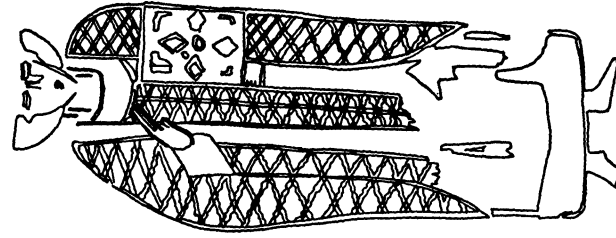




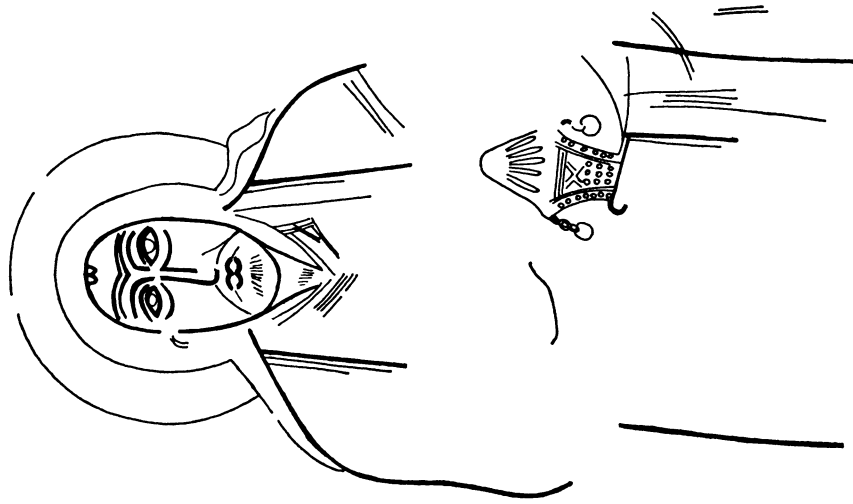
D/east 1:8



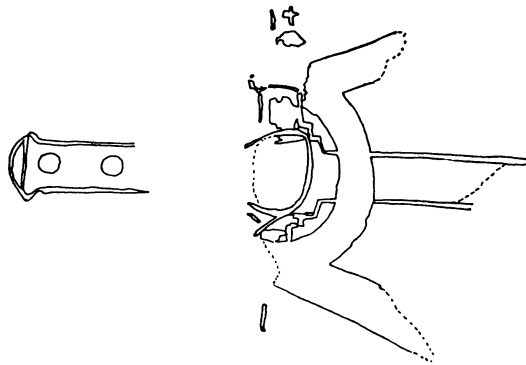
D/west 1:75



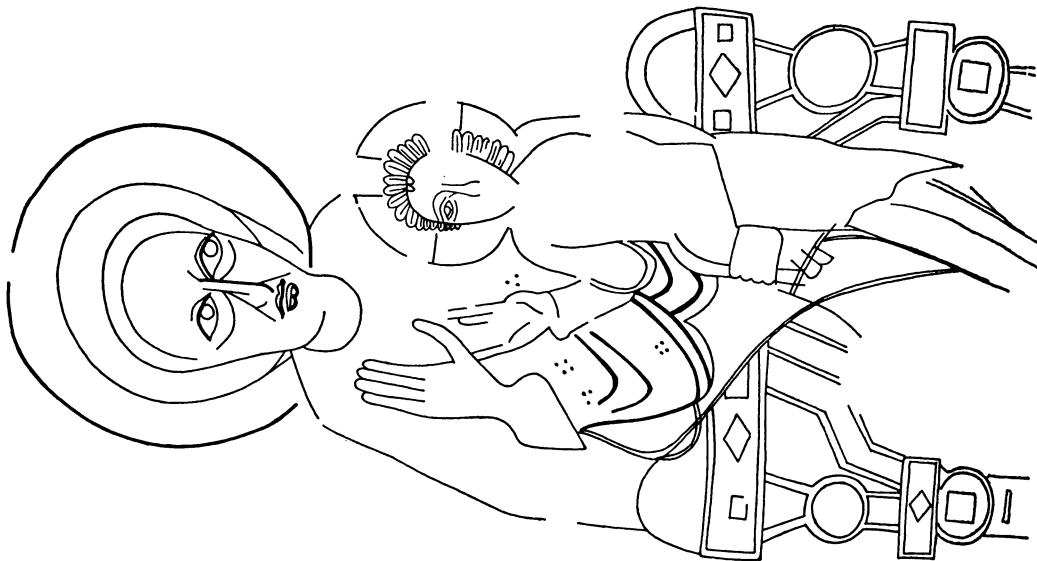
E/east 1:20



F/west 1:7,5



F/east 1:20



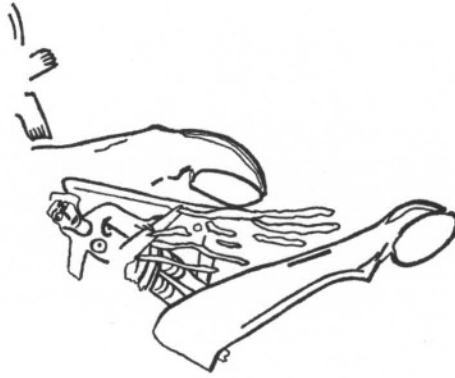
E/west 1:7



6/1 1:12



6/2 1:16

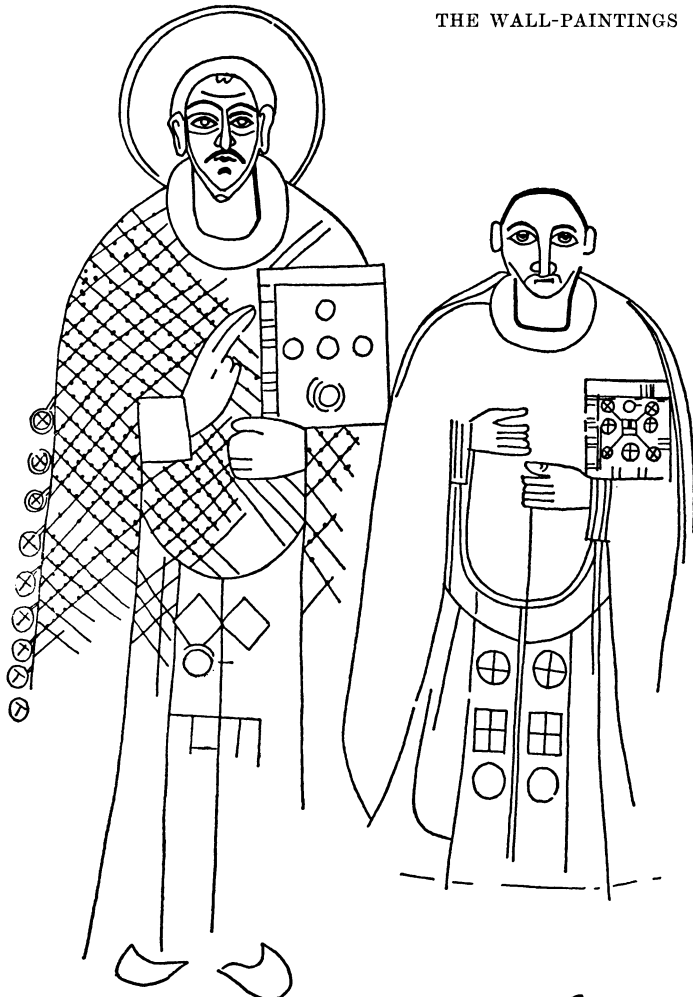




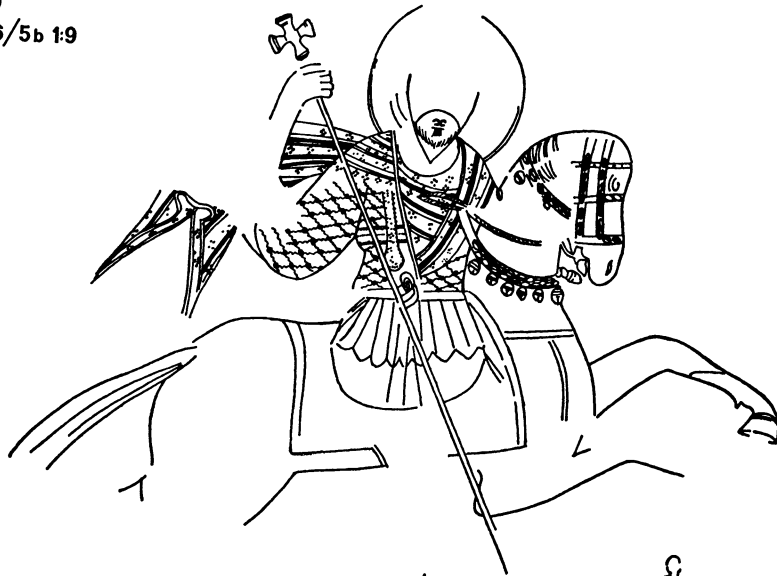
6/4 1:16



6/5a 1:19



6/5b 1:9

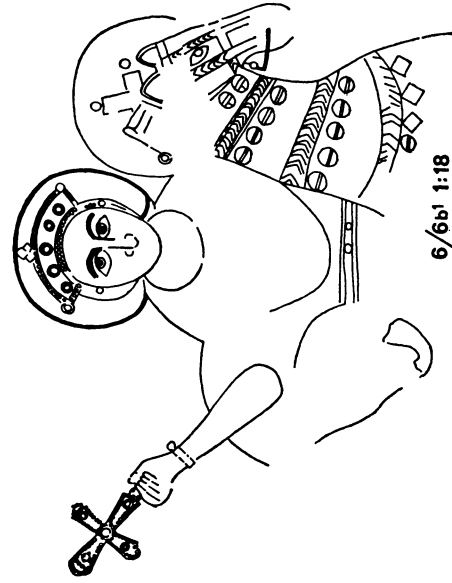


6/6a 1:16

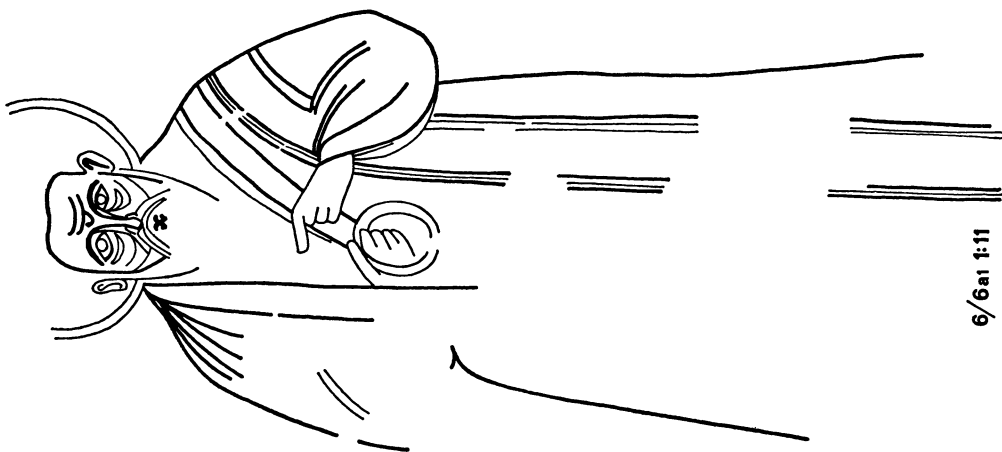




6/6b 1:20



6/6b 1:18



6/6a1 1:11



*Description of the individual wall-paintings**A. The paintings in the violet style*

§ 1. *Fresco 5/5*. Apse composition (Fragments). Not saved. See pl. 41.

On the wall of the apse the archaeologists found the remains of paintings on a layer of white plaster. A number of standing figures were distinguishable, three of them fairly clearly : a purple-clad figure on the left, in the posture of an *Orante*, and on the right two figures dressed in white garments. The figure in purple, on the left, is wearing a tunic and an overgarment; the latter is pulled up to breast level by the raised hands. The overgarment has a yellow border, in which occur various motifs which are difficult to reconstruct. The figure next to this one is wearing a white tunic and a white pallium; he is carrying a key in his left hand. His head is surrounded by a yellow nimbus. The figure next to him also holds an attribute, a small staff. As to his clothes, little can now be said about them with any degree of accuracy. The fragments described here were all found *under* the calotte of the apse, which had itself collapsed, together with any paintings it may have contained.

Thanks to the figure carrying the key it is possible to reconstruct this apse-painting, fragmentarily preserved though it is. This figure can even, because of his clothing, be identified as a man, and, moreover, as an apostle, since in Nubian art only apostles wear the white tunic and the white pallium. His attribute shows that the figure is that of St. Peter. St. Peter is also found in other apses in Nubia. We see him, for example, in the Church of the Šeiḥ, also known as St. Raphaël's Church, in Tamit ²⁶ where the apse must have been painted in the eleventh or twelfth century. ²⁷ St. Peter is one of the twelve apostles portrayed in Tamit; in their midst Mary sits enthroned, with her child on her lap. If we now look at Abdallah Nirqi, the few remains we have seem to fit in well with the picture sketched for us in Tamit. In Abdallah Nirqi another man is standing next to St. Peter; he may also be an apostle, whereas the figure in purple on the other side, the *Orante*, can only be Mary. That Mary could be portrayed not only as enthroned but also as a praying figure we see from the apse in chapels 2, 17, 20 and 46 of Bawit, in Egypt, which date from the fifth to the seventh century, or perhaps even a little later. ²⁸

These apses, and others in Bawit (e.g. Plate 100), Saqqara and elsewhere on the Nile are typified not only by the presence of Mary among other saints, mostly apostles, but also by the

²⁶ *L. N. Med.*, ill. 150, 1.

²⁷ I. Baldassarre, *Le Pitture = Tamit (1964) / Missione archeologica in Egitto dell'Università di Roma*, Roma, 1967, p. 59.

²⁸ Bawit, Chapel 2 : Ch. Palanque, *Rapport sur les recherches effectuées à Bawit* = *Bull. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 5 (1906), p. 12-13 and ill. 12; Chapel 17 : J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit*, vol. I, Le Caire, 1904, pp. 75 sqq. and ill. XL-XLIV; Chapel 20 : J. Maspéro et E. Drioton, *Fouilles ... à Baouit*, Le Caire, 1931, pp. x and 10, ill. xxxi-xxxiv and Chapel 46 : J. Clédat, *Nouvelles recherches à Baouit, campagnes 1903-1904* = *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 1904, p. 523, ill. 2.

Plan of the preserved paintings in the Central Church of Abdallah Nirqi

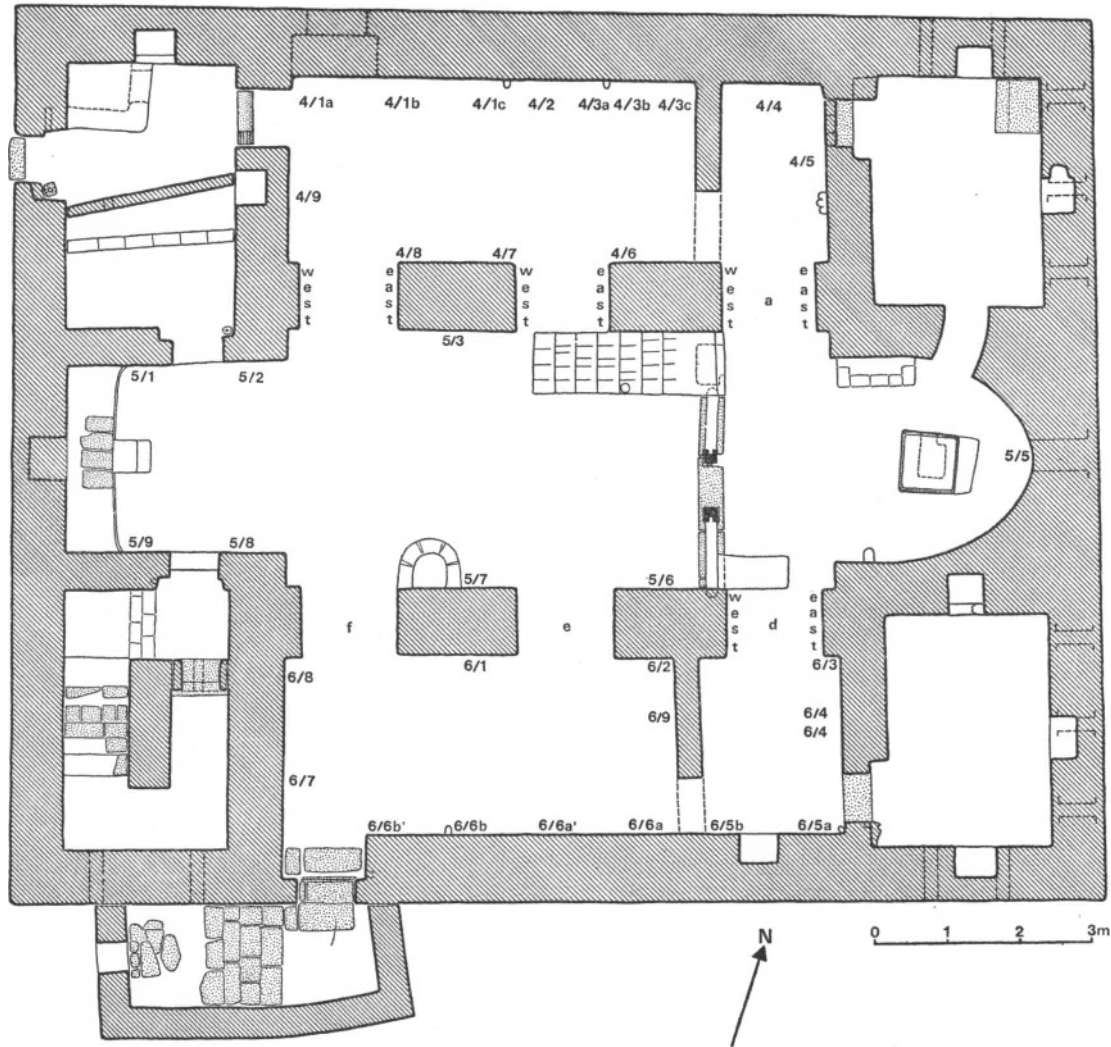


Fig. 1

portrayal in a higher zone, that is in the apse calotte, of Christ enthroned, surrounded by the four living creatures.²⁹ This Theophany thus forms the *pendant* of the Mother of God below, surrounded by a *theoria Sanctorum*; when Mary is shown seated on a throne she has her child on her lap, and occasionally is even breast-feeding him.³⁰ As has already been mentioned elsewhere,

²⁹ See F. van der Meer, *Maestas Domini*, Città del Vaticano, 1938, pp. 255-281.

³⁰ Bawit, Chapel 42: J. Clédat, *Nouvelles recherches à Baouit, campagnes 1903-1904* = *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 1904, p. 522, fig. 1.

this double composition was very popular with the Copts.³¹ They attached importance to expressing not only the greatness of Christ, but also his humble human form, and to joining these two aspects of his person together in one composition.³² That this double composition was also well known in Nubia may be seen from the above-mentioned apse-painting in the Church of the Šeih in Tamit, as well as from the following short catalogue :

1. Es-Sebua, a painting from the first period of Es-Sebua.³³
2. Aksha, the temple church, its architecture dated very roughly by Adams as between 600 and 1100.³⁴ It is not entirely certain that there are paintings of Mary with the apostles in this church.
3. Tamit, St. Paul's Church, paintings from the ninth to the tenth century.³⁵
4. Sonqi Tino, paintings from the first half of the twelfth century.³⁶
5. Tamit, un-named church, with frescoes which Baldassarre dated as about twelfth century.³⁷
6. Kulb (Kulubnarti), where the church building was dated by Adams as thirteenth or fourteenth century.³⁸
7. Sinesra, according to Adams a church of the type that was being built between 1150 and 1400.³⁹
8. Abd-el-Gadir, a church built at a late date.⁴⁰

Obviously this catalogue, compiled partly with the help of a similar list drawn up by Baldassarre,⁴¹ makes no claim whatsoever to be complete. But it may, I believe, suffice to make clear that the apse composition in question was very popular in Nubia. Almost all the churches listed in this catalogue possessed, at the time of discovery, the apse composition in a more or less complete form.

³¹ See P. P. V. van Moorsel, *De Galaktotrophousa en de Monophysieten = Opstellen voor H. van de Waal*, Amsterdam-Leiden, 1970, pp. 125-136; *Idem*: *Die stillende Gottesmutter und die Monophysiten = Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 281-290.

³² A different view from I. Baldassarre, *o.c.*, pp. 46-47 : "La iconografia che unisce, su due registri, la raffigurazione dell'Eterno, (secondo la visione apocalittica di Ezechiele) a quella della Madonna con figlio, e cioè della manifestazione storica della divinità, sembra avere un preciso significato dottrinale, e nel suo essere continuamente ripetuta e sottolineata, particolarmente in ambiente monofisita, mostra qualcosa di programmatico".

³³ M. Medić, *Travaux sur des monuments historiques, Ouadi es Sebua = Participation de la Yougoslavie dans l'action internationale pour la sauvegarde des monuments de la Nubie antique*, Beograd, 1965, p. 92.

³⁴ *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 206, and W. Y. Adams, *Architectural Evolution of the Nubian Church, 500-1400 A.D. = JARCE*, IV (1965), pp. 87-139, especially p. 134.

³⁵ I. Baldassarre, *o.c.*, p. 59.

³⁶ G. Vantini & S. Donadoni, *Gei scavi del diff di Sonqi Tino = Rendiconti della Pont. Accad. Rom. di Archeol.* XL (1967-68), p. 254.

³⁷ I. Baldassarre, *o.c.*, pp. 54 and 59.

³⁸ *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 234, and W. Y. Adams, *o.c.*, p. 137.

³⁹ *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 120 and W. U. Adams, *o.c.*, p. 118.

⁴⁰ *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 214 and W. Y. Adams, *o.c.*: 138.

⁴¹ I. Baldassarre, *o.c.*, p. 47. Cf. P. P. V. van Moorsel, *Der Kontext der Wandmalereien von Abdallah Nirqi, Perspektiven und Fragen = Acta Orientalia Neerlandica*, Leiden, 1971, pp. 22-27.

In the cathedral of Faras, on the other hand, as in the church on the citadel of Faras ⁴² remains were found only of the lower part of the painting. The same is true of the apse painting of Abdallah Nirqi. We may, however, assume that the three last-mentioned apse frescoes also consisted, as was customary, of the Theophany with the four living creatures. All the more because this composition, albeit in a shortened form and enriched with a cross-trophy, is found both in Abdallah Nirqi and also elsewhere in Nubia, other than in apses. ⁴³

There is one more small detail to which I would like to draw attention, and that is the place occupied by Peter in the apse of Abdallah Nirqi. In many apses in Bawit, as for example in chapels 6, 17 and 20, Peter stands at Mary's right hand. In our church in Abdallah Nirqi, however, as in the Sheik Church at Tamit, we find him on her left hand. It is doubtful, however, whether one should draw any deep conclusions from this apparent uncertainty. It is, I think, more important to establish that the central church of Abdallah Nirqi probably also had the familiar Coptic double-zoned apse composition; it was presumably painted in its present form in the apse of Faras Cathedral at the end of the ninth century, ⁴⁴ employed at about that time or a little later in St. Paul's Church in Tamit and later became customary in a number of places in Nubia. As far as dating our example is concerned: the apse painting of Abdallah Nirqi is executed in a range of colours which may be considered typical of the violet style, so that we are inclined to think in terms of the eighth century. Now our church dates from about 750. Since the apse space is the first to be decorated this would also make dating from the violet period possible, and, indeed, probable. In that case we are confronted here with one of the oldest apse paintings found in Nubia.

§ 2. *Fresco 6/4a. Protection by a Virgin Hodigitria. (Fragments) Saved. See Pls. 69 and 93.*

Of the painting only a fragment has been preserved, partly hidden behind fresco 6/4b, the Cross Theophany. The protagonist of our painting is a Virgin *Hodigitria* on the right, whose head, like that of her child, has unfortunately not been preserved.

She is wearing a purple tunic, embellished with pink *clavi* with white edges, as is customary in Faras in the violet style. Over this she wears a pallium, which is also purple. Her clothing is decorated with white dots in the form of a star. On her left arm she is carrying her child, who is dressed in a yellow garment; Jesus is holding a scroll in his hand. Here we have the oldest painting of the Virgin *Hodigitria* in our church. Later, in what is known as the white style, this type occurs several times. ⁴⁵ The Mother of God has her arm round the shoulders of her *protégé*, and her hand is resting on his right shoulder. This type of protection also occurs in Faras, for example in fresco 57. ⁴⁶ Only this fresco is of a more recent date than ours.

⁴² *L. N. Med.*, vol. IV, ill. 143,1 and 143,2.

⁴³ See P. P. V. van Moorsel, Une Théophanie Nubienne = *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 42 (1966, publ. 1968), pp. 297-316.

⁴⁴ *Die Kathedrale*, pp. 119-123.

⁴⁵ This type first occurs in the Syrian Rabula-codex of 586, and is often found in the cathedral of Faras, as early as the first period. See Gólgowski, *Virgin*, pp. 295-312.

⁴⁶ Gólgowski, *Virgin*, pp. 309-310.

The *protégé* is a small, standing man, whose head is still largely visible, and whose body is partly hidden behind the wing feathers of the Theophany. Over a white tunic he wears an overgarment, decorated at the shoulders with several horizontal red bands. He is holding out his pink hands to the Mother of God. Of his right hand, however, only the fingers are still visible.

Between Mary and her *protégé* we see a bald little fellow with sticking-out ears and large eyes, shown *en face*. He is dressed in a pink tunic. I shall come back later to the motif of the stars made up of little white dots. It is not improbable that Jesus was holding up his right hand in a gesture of blessing.⁴⁷

§ 3. *Fresco 6/7*. Archangel with *protégé*. (Fragments) Saved. See Pls. 70 and 74.

1. The fragment shows an archangel taking into his protection a small man who is standing next to him. The angel is portrayed full-face; his *protégé* is on his right. The angel's head is not quite oval, and the large eyes, nose and mouth are drawn in heavy, red lines. The eyebrow above the right eye continues the line of the nose. The nose has a shadow on that side, as a section in the shape of a triangle. The mouth is a thin line, widened at the ends by small vertical lines. The hair consists of curls, which entirely cover the ears. Around the head is a thin, yellow nimbus.

To understand this fresco properly we must compare it with the paintings in Faras.

Faras, fr. 98 (violet style, early eighth century) : The drawing of the head is finer, the contours more oval than in Abdallah Nirqi. There is the same triangular build up of the nose, but the eyes are more finely drawn, since there (as elsewhere) not *one* colour has been used, like red in Abdallah Nirqi, but stronger and weaker expressive colours. Thus in fresco 98 a thin, brown line is drawn between the eyebrow and the eyelid, which is no longer found in Abdallah Nirqi. These comments are also applicable, I believe, to fresco a83 in Faras.

Fresco a83 (violet style) : ⁴⁸ This fresco makes clearer to us how we should see the hair of the angel in Abdallah Nirqi. In the case of the latter the hair, or rather curls, are in wavy, red lines, which can hardly be described as horizontal; small vertical stripes draw in more details of the coiffure, but in such a way that, at first sight, at least, there seems to be an illusion that the hair is held together by small ribbons. This same way of painting, though in a more stream-lined form, is seen in fr. a83. There we also see more clearly what in Abdallah Nirqi has only been partially saved (a part of our fresco has flaked off), i.e. the upper part of the coiffure, which is held together by a hair band; above this the hair springs out again, like a sort of crown of hair. In my opinion, however, it is hair which is lying on the head, but painted out of perspective.

For good measure we may also compare these paintings with fresco 99 (St. Michael) in Faras. It will then be observed that the Faras examples are, also from this point of view,

⁴⁷ See Gołowski, Virgin, figures 1, 2 (in reserve), 5 and 6. In Abdallah Nirqi, however, fresco e/west, Christ has *three* fingers raised.

⁴⁸ K. Michałowski, Die wichtigsten Entwicklungsetappen der Wandmalerei in Faras = Kl. Wessel a.o., *Christentum am Nil*, Recklinghausen (1964), pp. 79 sqq., fig. 36.

firmer in form and more delicately executed than that of Abdallah Nirqi. As to the clothing of the angel in Abdallah Nirqi : he is wearing a white tunic, the cuffs of which are decorated with stars made up of little red dots. The tunic is held in at the middle by a belt. Across the right knee the tunic has a circular yellow decoration, surrounded by a red border. The folds of the tunic are drawn in with violet lines. Over this he wears a *chlamys*; round the neck it is wine-red and decorated with little rosettes made up of white dots, but for the rest it is yellow, trimmed with vertical bands of red. The front part of the *chlamys* is gathered up and flung over the left arm; in the left arm the figure carries the *sphaira*, the attribute of an archangel. Both the clothing and the attribute may be compared with St. Michael in the fiery furnace, of the late violet style in Faras (fr. 80). This resemblance also extends to the way in which the wings of the two archangels are painted in Abdallah Nirqi and Faras respectively : the rather schematic way in which their wings are sketched shows an evolution with respect to the more subtle stage to which the Gabriel of Faras's early style owes his handsome wings. The right hand of the archangel in Abdallah Nirqi rests upon the left shoulder of his *protégé*, whom he is literally taking under his widely-spread right wing. I have already mentioned the decoration of red dots on the cuff painted here. These little stars made up of red dots are also found on the cromorne of the violet St. Michael (fr. 99) and on the sword of St. Gabriel, also violet, (fr. 98) in Faras. The rosettes on the wine-red upper part of the *chlamys* of our archangel in Abdallah Nirqi may be compared with Faras, fr. a83 (head of an angel, also violet style).

The *protégé*. He has a pink-coloured skin, by contrast with the angel, who, as is usual in Nubia, is white. His head is oval, his mouth, chin, nose and eyes are drawn in red, like those of his *protector*, with this small difference, that in this case *both* nose lines are continued into the eyebrows. His protuberant ears, small moustache and unpretentious hair (which may include a small beard) lead us to assume that this is a portrait. He is dressed in a white tunic with a few light-grey, vertical bands on it, and over this is thrown a yellow coat, decorated at the right shoulder with horizontal bands, one white and three red, and round the bottom with two horizontal red bands. Although the man is portrayed full face, he is stretching out both his open hands to the archangel. Seeing this fresco for the first time, one gets the impression that both hands are joined to the one right shoulder. As this is not so much a pictorial problem as one of drawing and of perspective, comparison with two wall-drawings in Bawit may provide an explanation. There, too, we find the problem of having to show several figures not only full-face, but also with both hands stretched out to the side. The trunk is seen from the front, with the right arm entirely in view, while the lines of the other arm go right through the trunk.⁴⁹ This can be drawn, in a more or less primitive way, but not painted. That explains why here, in a fresco in Abdallah Nirqi, we see the trunk from the front, and at the same time the hands stretched out to the right, but with only the arm of the right hand visible. Thanks to the afore-mentioned drawings from Bawit we know where the left hand comes from. As a final indication I would like to point out the wide, yellow strip which falls over the left arm, and which is easily visible below both the hands. It seems quite clear that here not only two hands are intended, but, as is usual, two arms as well.

⁴⁹ Two wall-drawings in Bawit: J. Clédât, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, vol. II, Le Caire, 1916, fig. 24-25.



Fig. 2

In connection with the above description there are various things which should be said about the characteristics of style which we have already briefly mentioned.

It can be stated that this painting (6/7), like the previous one (6/4), is in the violet style, which begins early in the eighth century (from 707) and continues until halfway through the ninth century. Our fresco is in any case, or so it seems to me, more recent than the numbers 98, 99 and a83 in Faras. It shows more affinity with fr. 80, from the end of the eighth century. It is as if the artist of Abdallah Nirqi still masters the language of lines and colours of the violet style, but as if his idiom is now less subtle, or rather more simple. In the description we also came across the decoration with various sorts of star and rosette motifs, which we also found in the very earliest violet period in Faras. Although this scheme of decoration is discussed in more detail elsewhere, including in connection with Prof. K. Weitzmann's comments, so that we do not need to say much about it here ⁵⁰ it is certain that this also carries us in the

⁵⁰ See p. 3.

direction of the violet style. If we here point out that *one* of the young men in the fiery furnace of fr. 80 in Faras Cathedral also has red dots in the form of stars on his cuffs, then it is obvious that our fresco, 6/7, the drawing of which bears such a striking resemblance to Faras' Michael in the fiery furnace of fresco 80, must find a place at the end of the eighth century.

2. This scheme of composition also occurs in Tamit, and even several times in Faras (in the cathedral), but these examples are of a later date. An earlier example was found in 1936 in a mausoleum in Antinoe where in about the sixth century we see, next to a deceased woman (a certain Theodosia), a St. Kollouthos, with his left hand laid upon her shoulder. A. Grabar comments on this: "Son geste de protection fait reconnaître en lui un saint psychopompe".⁵¹

§ 4a. *Other early fragments.* c/west and c/east. Not saved. See Pls. 42 and 43.

Besides the three fragments known to us, 5/5, 6/4 and 6/7, other remains were also found of paintings from an earlier phase. As far as their distribution over the church is concerned, we may say that they were found mainly at the back of the central nave, but also in arch c, between this nave and the left side-nave. A minute fragment was found in the right side-nave, near fresco 6/2. We know therefore, that in a comparatively early phase paintings were also made *outside* the apse. Unfortunately, however, the fragments are only rarely as easy to make out, from an iconographical point of view, as, for example the apse fresco. None of these fragments were saved after the excavation. But in two cases we are able to guess at the nature of the paintings:

c/west and c/east: Here we must add at once that both paintings were painted over at a later stage.

c/west: Here is a saint, probably male, depicted full-face; at the time of excavation only half the figure was visible. The saint appears to be carrying an object in his left hand, perhaps a book. The facial features, the nimbus and the outlines of the overgarment are light violet, but the garment itself is executed mainly in the same yellow which may be called typical of the second period of Abdallah Nirqi.

On the saint's right, next to his head and shoulders, floats a founder, painted on a smaller scale⁵²: the tunic and overgarment, with outlines in the pale yellow just mentioned, two bare feet and remains of the hands and feet, were still visible at the time of excavation. The two parallel violet lines running vertically across the chest are remarkable.

c/east: Here some scanty remains were found, which should perhaps be seen as the remains of what was once a Virgin *Eleousa*. This theme does not, however, occur elsewhere in Nubia earlier than about 1000, so that this may possibly be precisely that part which was painted over in a later period.⁵³ The significance of a pale pink field above right of the drawn head is even less clear.

⁵¹ A. Grabar, *Deux Monuments Chrétiens d'Égypte* = *Synthronon*, Paris, 1968, p. 4.

⁵² In very many cases in Nubia the *protégé* is shown as *floating* next to his guardian saint. See Gólgowski, *Virgin*, p. 310, and M. de Grooth, *Mögliche Einflüsse auf die nubische Protektionsgebärde* = *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 22 (1971), pp. 9-19.

⁵³ Concerning the *Eleousa*: *Die Kathedrale*, p. 107.

§ 4b. *Fresco 6/2*. Two standing figures. Fragments, of which only a part could be saved. See Pls. 47 and 64.

Two standing figures were depicted, of which only the middle sections have been found. The head and feet were already missing. In the first place, the fresco is painted on white plaster and therefore belongs to the first period. This is not true of a later "restoration", of which more later.

The figure on our left is the largest, and also, therefore, the most important. He is wearing a light-brown tunic, and over it a light-red coat or pallium that is decorated, like the *Hodigitria* of Abdallah Nirqi, fresco 6/4a, with white, vertical lines and, moreover, with the familiar white dots in the form of a star. Next to this figure on the left is a plant with flowers and cobs, and behind this are several vertical lines, all in pink. The right hand of our figure is raised to his breast; the elbow is still just visible.

The figure on the right is turned towards him, and is clad in an apparently white tunic, on which several light-brown vertical bands are still visible. The coat, which, like that of the previous figure, leaves part of the tunic uncovered, is light-brown, with the folds shown by double pink lines. The man's left hand is raised (if I am right) and it must be noticed that at a later time ("white style") when fresco 6/3 was painted, a small part of this figure (from the left shoulder to the elbow and hand, to be precise) was done afresh in pale pink. I am of the opinion that the double pink folds also date from this later time. As far as I am concerned the date is not such an important question; the interpretation presents more difficulty. Milorad Medić recently suggested that the chief figure might be the Mother of God. If we assume that the original purple colour has faded with time, then this is not beyond the bounds of possibility, but this is in the nature of hypothesis.⁵⁴

§ 5. Remarks on the dating of frescoes 5/5, 6/4 and 6/7.

The apse fresco is difficult to date with accuracy. We can, however, make use of the following information :

The painting is done on a layer of white plaster, or whitewash, which is not the case with the other paintings, where a more recent method has been employed.

The apse was the first part to be decorated, while we know, on the other hand, that the church must have been built in about 750.

Finally, the apse fresco is similar to the violet style as we know it from Faras. Not only the range of colours used, but also the drawing, points to this. Note, for example, the St. Peter from our apse.

Thus we think we can assume the apse of our church to have been decorated in the second half of the eighth century.

Now for frescoes 6/4 and 6/7 :

Both show connections with a late phase of the violet style as we know it from Faras. Let it suffice to bear in mind the fact that the archangel of fresco 6/7 could only be fully

⁵⁴ M. Medić, Abdallah Nirqi = *Participation de la Yougoslavie dans l'action internationale pour la sauvegarde des monuments de la Nubie antique*, Beograd, 1965, p. 63, no. 47.

understood when compared with the Gabriel in Faras, which dates from the beginning of the eighth century, even though the former was clearly of a later date. This is rather borne out by the likeness to fresco 80 in Faras (St. Michael in the fiery furnace) which dates from the end of the eighth century. In brief it may be said that it most probably dates from shortly before 800.

What K. Weitzmann calls one of the characteristics of the white style, which began round about 850, i.e. the double fold style, is not yet found in the fresco mentioned above, unless the horizontal bands on the coats of the *protégés* in the wall-paintings 6/4 and 6/7 can be seen as their remote forerunners.

B. *Paintings in the white style*

§ 6. *Fresco 4/1a. Standing Hodigitria. (Fragments). Not saved. See Pl. 44.*

Only the lower half of this fresco was discovered. It shows a Virgin *Hodigitria*. She is wearing a dark-blue tunic and a purple coat. Vertical dark-brown stripes suggest folds. Her shoes are red. The child is wearing a purple tunic; the colour of his pallium can no longer be distinguished.

T. Gołgowski says of this type: "To the representations of this period one can also add murals of the Standing Virgin with the Child from Faras, in their majority, dated for the period between the second half of the 9th century and the second half of the 11th century".⁵⁵ Elsewhere the writer says: "Ten representations of the Virgin at Faras, half of their total number, are Standing Virgins with the Child on the left arm",⁵⁶ a conclusion which is also relevant for Abdallah Nirqi, where we shall find yet another Standing *Hodigitria* on this wall, i.e. fresco 4/9.

As to the date, I shall (making grateful use of Gołgowski's remark that most of the Faras frescoes of this type are from between 850 and 1050) for the time being place our painting hypothetically in the same period. After discussing the other paintings on this wall we shall once again return to the matter of dating.

§ 7. *Fresco 4/1b. Fragment of a man (?). Not saved. See Pl. 44.*

This part of another figure, also shown full-face, was found right next to the fragmentarily preserved *Theotokos Hodigitria*. Here, too, only the lower half of the painting was discovered. In view of the size of the fresco this is most probably a saint, not a founder, as in Nubia founders and *protégés* were generally portrayed anything from one to many sizes smaller than their protector.⁵⁷ He is wearing red footgear, and is dressed in a white tunic, over which is thrown a yellow coat; the folds of the coat are shown as double pink stripes, running vertically downwards under the left arm. This overgarment shows strong similarities to that worn by

⁵⁵ Gołgowski, *Virgin*, p. 302.

⁵⁶ Gołgowski, *Virgin*, p. 312.

⁵⁷ It must, moreover, be said that in our church the founders and *protégés* are usually shown "floating", which is not the case here.

Christus Emmanuel in the cathedral in Faras, fresco 54,⁵⁸ although the colours are different. Other parallels in the cathedral are :

- the coat of Mary next to Queen Martha (beginning of the 11th century) in fresco 19,
- the coat of the apostle in the apse, identified by Prof. Michałowski as Thomas, which dates in its latest form from the end of the 10th century.⁵⁹

Even if it is not certain that this is a male figure, perhaps a saint, as far as dating goes there is less uncertainty, as may be seen from the parallels mentioned. Weitzmann has pointed out that the artists of the white style “began to ornamentize the double folds in such a way that they lost their original purpose of modelling the body”.⁶⁰ Elsewhere Weitzmann remarks that they can hardly be called folds any more; they have become too abstract for that. They have developed a rhythm of their own, that has become detached from the material qualities of the stuff.⁶¹ These are the folds which we also observe in our fresco, so we may assume it to be a work of the white style, even though it would be desirable to narrow this vague dating.

It is also in respect of these folds that this painting resembles our fresco 4/1a, showing a standing *Hodigitria*.

§ 8. *Fresco 4/1c*. Fragment of a man. Not saved. See Pl. 45.

Here is a male figure, shown full-face, whose head, hands and feet were no longer visible at the time of excavation. The man is wearing a wine-red tunic and a white coat. The outlines of the coat are painted in very light-green, almost yellow lines. There are also red stripes here and there on the coat, presumably the remains of folds. This piece may be compared with the founder in the Nubian Theophany (fresco 6/4) and the founder in the fresco of the saint on horseback, 6/5, but the comparison is not particularly enlightening. This is probably because this is not a founder or *protégé* after all. The reasons against are the same as we put forward in discussing the previous fresco 4/1b. If this man was indeed a local celebrity, clerical or otherwise, he would, after all, have been portrayed in the form of a founder or *protégé*. The man therefore remains an enigma.

§ 9. *Fresco 4/2*. Archangel with *protégé*. Partly saved. See Pls. 45 and 68.

A considerable part of this picture was preserved, but only a smaller part saved.

Both archangel and *protégé* are shown full-face.

The archangel is wearing a white tunic, decorated with red, green and yellow vertical lines, edged with black. Over this he wears a yellow coat, bordered with red and decorated with

⁵⁸ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 51.

⁵⁹ *Die Kathedrale*, p. 121.

⁶⁰ Weitzmann, p. 329.

⁶¹ Weitzmann, p. 329.

checks made up of red lines. The coat has a belt, which is also yellow and is decorated with green dots. The archangel is holding up the front of his coat, so that the tunic underneath is clearly visible. In his left hand he carries a round ball, or *sphaira*, the attribute of archangels.

Both the angel's wings are scattered with eyes, painted mainly yellow; the wing feathers are yellow on the inside, black and yellow on the outside.

The right wing is stretched out over a small, floating *protégé*. The angel is wearing shoes (red in colour), the *protégé* is barefoot. His skin is pink, his head rather round, and he is dressed in a yellow tunic, trimmed round the lower edge with red. Over his shoulder he wears a yellow stole, or some similar garment, bordered with red and decorated with red dots. His left hand is raised in acclamation, but in his right hand he holds a palm branch.

The check motif on the coat of our archangel is not exceptional in Nubian art of about the year 1000. I may perhaps draw attention to the St. Michael from Faras (fresco 102) from the second half of the 10th century,⁶² and the portrait of Bishop Petros there,⁶³ but also to the painting of St. John Chrysostom (fresco 6/5b) at Abdallah Nirqi, which is also from the last years of the 10th century, as we shall see. The check motif is a further step in the ornamentalisation of Nubian art, of which the double-fold style was an earlier phase. K. Weitzmann says of this: "The love for a crowded and almost garish garment ornamentalisation with ribbons and rosettes and many other patterns ... during the 10th and early 11th centuries in Nubian fresco painting apparently reflects a popular and national trait".⁶⁴

To return to our fresco, after all this I would like to say that a date of round about the end of the 10th century is not improbable.

§ 10. *Fresco 4/3a*. Fragments of a saint with *protégé*. Not saved. See Pl. 46.

Little more can be said of this fragment than that it portrays a saint with his *protégé*, or with a founder, both of them full-face. The saint is presumably dressed in a tunic, no longer visible, of a very light colour, over which is thrown a *lacerna*-like coat; this is pink, with a yellow border, and the front is held up to the chest. Level with his right shoulder can be seen what is probably the lower half of a founder or *protégé*, barefoot and dressed in a red tunic. All in all the data are too scanty to be able to speak of any date.

§ 11. *Fresco 4/3b*. Fragment. Not saved. See Pl. 46.

Of this painting only a segment of a yellow band, trimmed with red, has been found.

§ 12. *Fresco 4/3c*. Fragment of an Angel. Not saved. See Pl. 46.

The preserved fragment of this fresco consists only of two downward-hanging, yellow wings, the outlines of which are in red. On the left wing are remains of the check motif of which we

⁶² *Catalogue Essen*, no. 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, no. 14.

⁶⁴ Weitzmann, p. 330.

spoke in more detail in fresco 4/2. This painting therefore probably also dates from the end of the 10th century.

§ 13. *Fresco 4/3d*. Fragment. Not saved. See Pl. 46.

This is a fragment in white, yellow and pink, which evades any further interpretation.

§ 14. *Remarks on the dating of frescoes 4/1a to 4/3d*.

Among the frescoes 4/1a to 4/3d are several which we have not yet been able to date. To recapitulate :

- 4/1a (*Hodigitria*) : this is placed hypothetically between the second half of the 9th century and the second half of the 11th century.
- 4/1b : dated in the white style (i.e. between the second half of the 9th century and the early 11th century).
- 4/1c (man) : no date given.
- 4/2 (archangel with *protégé*) : probably end of 10th century.
- 4/3 (saint with *protégé*) : no date given.
- 4/3b : no date given.
- 4/3c (angel) : probably end of 10th century.
- 4/3d : no date given.

Thus : wherever there is any degree of certainty, or anyway of probability, in dating this series of paintings, we place them in the white style, and in two cases our assumption even tends towards the end of the 10th century. If we are to conclude that these frescoes all date from the same period, on the grounds, for example, of the paintings being placed at the same height, the similarities in use of colour (yellow with red decoration : 4/1b, 4/2 and 4/3c) or drawing (double folds in 4/1b and 4/1a; the check motif in 4/2 and 4/3c; the front of the coat being pulled up to the chest in 4/1a, 4/2 and 4/3a), then it is obvious that the fragments we are able to date give the date of the *whole* series, and for obvious reasons we think in terms of the 10th century. Since this reasoning cannot, however, be considered water-tight, there still remains a hypothetical element.

§ 15. *Fresco 4/4*. Standing *Hodigitria*. (Fragment) Saved.. See Pl. 71.

This is a fragment of a Mother with child, of the same type as fresco 4/1a, a Virgin *Hodigitria*. Here, too, only the lower part has been preserved. ⁶⁵

Mary is wearing a purple tunic with white *clavi*, and over it a purple overgarment, caught up to her breast, with a handsome yellow border. This border is decorated with alternating red and yellow squares, in which are white dots which give the illusion of stones. ⁶⁶ The tunic

⁶⁵ Also a small part of a nimbus.

⁶⁶ A motif which we have not found elsewhere in Nubia.

and overgarment are scattered here and there with rosettes of little white dots. The extraordinary thing is *not* that Mary is holding her right hand in front of her breast, and has a *mappula* in her left hand, as is also the case in Faras,⁶⁷ but rather that we cannot easily make out how the child can be sitting, as he is seated *not* on Mary's left arm, but behind it. The folds on Mary's tunic and overgarment are shown by a few dark lines, most of them vertical. Mary is wearing red shoes; the straps of the right one are still visible.

The child Jesus is wearing a white tunic with yellow and pink stripes (probably *clavi*) and a gold-yellow *himation*, decorated with red folds. It is not improbable that Jesus was holding up his right hand in blessing. Like the rosettes of white dots already mentioned, Weitzmann also sees the folds here as symptoms of the white style.⁶⁸ On the right, next to the fresco, can be seen a pink patch, probably the remains of an angel. To the right of this is an inscription, ANNA. It is remarkable that, if our hypothesis is correct, a *Theotokos Hodi-gitria* was painted twice in one period. This is, in fact, a devotional, and we know that in Nubia these were often repeated in the same church building. Moreover, we should bear in mind that from the very beginning a low wall separated this fresco from numbers 4/1a to 4/3d, and that it was in a small space between the left side-nave and the "prothesis" which in Nubia, because of the large Nativity-scene, was often also dedicated to the Virgin.

§ 16. *Fresco 4/5. Nativity. (Fragment). Saved. See Pls. 75-77.*

1. The main figure in this partially preserved, but still visible fresco is the Mother of God. She is resting on a bed next to the crib. The bed runs more or less diagonally from below left to middle right and it is practically flat. It is decorated with sunflower motifs and with small Coptic crosses, but also with wide bands with the familiar check motif, painted here in double lines. This all gives the fresco a decorative character. It is all painted in red, with only the edge of the bed in pink.

Mary is in a half-lying position, three-quarter face, with her left elbow leaning on the top of the bed. The knees of her short legs are drawn up, and covered by her right hand, which is far too large. Her left hand is held closed in front of her breast. Unfortunately the head is very badly damaged, but the mouth and the outlines of her face, in so far as they have been saved, are sensitively drawn, in red. She is wearing a white hairnet and a *maforion* which, like her overgarment, is purple. This is relieved only by the little squares, surrounded by white, cross-shaped dots, and by two thin, white lines, one of which runs from the left shoulder to the middle, where it forms a parallel with the other: probably a rudimentary portrayal of folds.

Behind the bed is the brick crib in which the child lies. The red-painted upper side of the crib is raised somewhat, so that we see the child Jesus in his yellow and white swaddling clothes, from above. Of the damaged head only the outline of the mouth and slight remains of a cross-nimbus are still visible. The brickwork of the crib is carelessly painted, in red lines,

⁶⁷ See Faras, the frescoes 69 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 83), 19 (*Ibid.*, ill. 77) and 60 (*Ibid.*, ill. 59).

⁶⁸ See Weitzmann, pp. 328-332. In my opinion, however, these rosettes and white dots are already found in the violet style.

and its key-hole shaped opening (of which more later) is also filled in red, with rough brush-strokes. Behind the bed is a long, yellow shaft, which should not be taken as the leg of the bed, as it continues above the bed, but rather as the shaft of a cross (see fresco 18 in Faras, the so-called great Nativity scene, where four such crosses stand behind the bed).⁶⁹

At the foot of the bed sits Joseph, on a pink cushion, in a more or less squatting position. His bald, over-large head is drawn in a few red lines; the nose, ears, mouth, eyes and eyebrows are shown by a few rapid, red brushstrokes. The bad proportions of his figure are not improved by his large hand, which, in a traditional gesture of shyness, he has raised to his mouth. He is wearing a yellow coat, the folds of which are shown by a few red lines.

Behind him, on the left, the three wise men come riding up. Their dwarf-sized horses were sketched in first, in red and yellow lines, and only afterwards were the riders painted with their Phrygian hats in two colours (as is often the case in Nubia). As in fresco 18 in Faras, their skin is light red. The foremost wise man is dressed in white, the second in dark red and the last probably in yellow. The painting is executed in rather a free manner, so that the third horse is barely recognizable.

Above the wise men two shepherds, in very short tunics, are standing next to the crib. Their skin is light red in colour also. The tunic of the one on the left is terracotta, that of the one on the right pink. Both are carrying a bucket on their right arm, just as the shepherds in the Faras fresco mentioned above. The one on the left has his hands in front of his face, but the other is taking him by the arm and pointing to a figure next to him (an angel?), of whom the feet and the lower part of the tunic and pallium are still visible. At the bottom the composition is finished off with a red Meander-motif, interrupted by the standing figure of a founder or foundress, whose face, like that of the shepherds and the wise men, is red. This figure is holding a palm branch in its hand, and is wearing a white coat. The clothing suggests a female person, maybe a founder.

2. As far as the date is concerned, we have plenty of information :

- the check motif on the bed, later to be found on the clothes of St. John Chrysostom (about the year 1000), and that does occur frequently in the white style.
- the cross-shaped white dots surrounding little squares, on Mary's overgarment, which represent a further stage of the star-shapes made up of white dots, of the violet style.
- the decorative nature of the bed-covers, which suggest a period in which the national tendencies of Nubian painting were becoming more developed.⁷⁰

The first conclusion is, then, that we find ourselves here in the white style, and probably indeed, at the very end of the 10th century.

3. Perhaps we may here examine the place which the Nativity of our little church should be given in the large number of Nubian Nativities. This is also necessary from the point of

⁶⁹ See also a fresco in the citadel church in Faras (*L.N. Med.*, ill. 144,2) and one in Abd-El-Gadir (*Ibid.*, ill. 177).

⁷⁰ See Weitzmann, p. 330.

view of an iconographical comparison. The chronology is, however, a problem. I have therefore numbered those items where dating is to some extent possible in arabic numbers, and the others alphabetically.

1. Faras, cathedral, frescoes 36 and 36A, 8th century (*Die Kathedrale*, p. 145).
- a. *Ibid.*, Nativity scene, under fresco 18, 9th century? (*Die Kathedrale*, p. 145).
2. *Ibid.*, fresco 18, circa 1000 (*Die Kathedrale*, p. 147).
3. Abdallah Nirqi, circa 1000.
- b. Faras, citadel church (*L.N. Med.*, ill. 144, 2).
- c. Es-Sebua, temple church (*L.N. Med.*, vol. I, fig. 73).
Cfr. M. Medić, Travaux sur des monuments historiques = *Participation de la Yougoslavie dans l'action internationale pour le sauvegarde de la Nubie antique*, Beograd, 1965, p. 92.
- d. Tamit, church of the angels (*L.N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 162: "quasi totalmente distrutta: ma ricorda molto quella di Es-Sebua").
- e. Sonqi Tino (Compare G. Vantini e S. Donadoni, Gli scavi nel diff di Sonqi Tino = *Rendiconti Pont. Acc. Rom. di Archeologia XL* (1967-1968), p. 252).
- f. Abd-el-Gadir (*L.N. Med.*, ill. 177).
- g. Kulubnarti (W. Y. Adams, The University of Kentucky Excavations at Kulubnarti, 1969 = *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 141-154, in particular page 146).

All these frescoes were at the front of the church, on the left. The easiest to date is the third Nativity scene in the cathedral of Faras (no. 2 in our little catalogue). There we also see what is now missing from the only fragmentarily preserved fresco of Abdallah Nirqi — the ox and ass, which in the Nubian tradition are placed behind the crib, not to mention Joseph, and the angels, wise men and shepherds, who are clearly shown in no. 2 of our catalogue. The decorative representation of the bed in this last-mentioned fresco resembles that in our church, though here it has been drawn more swiftly and less subtly.

4. From an iconographical point of view there are various peculiarities. First the crib: Christ is lying in a crib made of bricks. There is nothing peculiar about this.⁷¹ but there *is* the keyhole-shaped opening in the crib, which we also met in numbers 1 and 2 of our little catalogue. In his conference in Essen in 1969 K. Weitzmann named a number of parallel examples from Palestine, and drew the conclusion that there were Palestinian influences.⁷² We may most certainly see here a reflexion of the altar which was in the Cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

We hope to come back to the relations between Nubia and Palestine, but we would like here to make two remarks which are of importance for this form of picture:

⁷¹ See the cathedra of Maximianus at Ravenna (circa 550) (G. Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, I, Gütersloh, 1966, ill. 152), the relic container from Palestine in the Vatican (*Ibid.*, ill. 153), an icon in the Sinai Monastery (*Ibid.*, ill. 154), and mosaics in Hosios Loukas (*Ibid.*, ill. 157) and in the capella Palatina at Palermo (*Ibid.*, ill. 159).

⁷² See Weitzmann, p. 331. See also my *Die Wandmalereien der zentralen Kirche von Abdallah Nirqi* = *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 103-110, especially p. 105.

In the first place, it appears that the Nubians had an altar in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, near the altar of the Jacobites and Nestorians. This information originates from 1333, but we should not rule out the possibility that the Nubians had already their own altar at an earlier date, in times of greater prosperity.⁷³

In the second place, there is evidence, also dating from the 14th century, to support this theory, if King Melchior, one of the three wise men from the East, was a Nubian. Nubian pilgrims to the Holy Land were seen as his successors. According to a legend he made a stay near Calvary, where later the Nubians obtained a chapel.⁷⁴

As to the fact that the Mother of God is painted in the fresco in our church in a half-lying position, with her left elbow leaning on the top of the bed, we may look to G. Wellen, who has shown that this was at an early date already a stereotype position for Mary in child-bed.⁷⁵ He says that for her to be resting on a blanket is also traditional, and is found frequently from the sixth century onward.⁷⁶

Then there is the remarkable fact that all the Nativity scenes known to us in Nubia were painted in the front left part of the church. In our church it decorates the wall of the "prothesis" — to use a Byzantine name which may possibly not be applicable here. We know that in the Middle Byzantine rite of the "Prothesis" allusions are made to the child and to the star of Bethlehem. But the question is whether we may presume a connection with the Byzantine — and in particular the Middle Byzantine — form of service.

Finally, our painting shares with at least three other Nubian frescoes the peculiar characteristic of the crosses set up behind the bed. Should this be regarded as further evidence of Nubian devotion to the cross, or should we not be content with this as an explanation?⁷⁷

§ 17. *Fresco 4/6. Virgin as Orante. Saved. See Pl. 72.*

Fresco of a woman in *orante* attitude, shown full-face. The outlines of the face, chin, mouth, aquiline nose and eyes, and the lines of the forehead and neck are drawn in yellow. Some lines have been roughly "gone over" or added later in purple: the creases at the right and left of the mouth, the nose and the eyebrows. These last have been made heavier with dark grey. The pupils are also grey. The face, with bags under the eyes, heavy eyebrows, sharp nose and unattractive mouth, appears to be that of an old woman.

The woman is wearing a grey hairnet, a purple *maforion* and purple coat, all strewn with the familiar stars made up of white dots. From the top of her head two white lines run down to the side of her neck, where there are several extremely fine brushstrokes. Is this perhaps

⁷³ O. F. A. Meinardus, *The Christian Kingdoms of Nubia = Nubie, par divers archéologues et historiens*, n.p., n.y., pp. 133-164, especially p. 160-161

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ G. A. Wellen, *Theotokos*, Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1960, p. 53.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ See for the relation between the Nativity and the H. Cross: E. Zyhlarz, *Grundzüge der nubischen Grammatik*, Leipzig, 1928, p. 168.

meant to indicate a veil? The head is surrounded by a yellow nimbus, edged with a white line. The two hands, held in front of the breast in an attitude of prayer, have caused part of the overgarment to be pulled up to above the knee, like a pair of purple curtains. This reveals the tunic, which is dark grey, but white at the sleeves, where it is decorated with yellow stripes.

The purple colour of her clothing makes us think this *Orante* to be Mary. The strange thing is, however, that the *Theotokos* as *Orante*, already exceptional before the iconoclastic controversy as "Einzelbild", ⁷⁸ is not found at all in the cathedral in Faras, ⁷⁹ and as far as we know has not been found anywhere else in Nubia either. The only other painting of a Virgin as *Orante* in Nubia would then be in the apse of our church in Abdallah Nirqi. There, in all probability, as we have seen, Mary is shown as an *Orante* in the midst of the apostles, and probably as early as the 8th century. But the painting now in question is certainly of a later date, that of the white style. The features, in particular, point to it being not earlier than the episcopate of Bishop Petros of Faras (972-999). ⁸⁰

§ 18. *Fresco 4/7*. St. Anne. Only a small part could be saved. See Pl. 48.

Fresco of St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, depicted standing, full-face, and probably though not certainly, as an *Orante*. At the time of excavation her head was already badly damaged, so that we can only say that round her head she wore a hairnet, painted in sea-green, and round this a light-brown *maforion*, the folds of which are represented by a few red-brown stripes. This *maforion* falls to her shoulders, where the familiar folds in the same red-brown were still distinguishable. The *maforion* was edged on the outside with a very dark red line, around which was a narrow, light-brown nimbus. Over a light-red tunic St. Anne was wearing a yellow overgarment, the folds of which were shown by means of long, dark, vertical lines. She was wearing red shoes. The front of her coat was caught up to breast level, probably because she was shown in an attitude of prayer. On the other hand, it is by no means impossible that she had her child on her left arm, and was only holding up the right hand in a gesture of acclamation. Next to and above her head was written her name in Greek :

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On St. Anne's right, drawn on a much smaller scale, was a floating figure, a founder, which at the time of the excavation was already barely visible. His skin seems to have been dark in colour, so the painting may have been a portrait.

⁷⁸ G. A. Wellen, *Theotokos*, Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1960, p. 167.

⁷⁹ T. Golgowski, *Virgin*, p. 297.

⁸⁰ K. Michałowski in the introduction to the *Catalogue Essen*, pp. 20-21.

As to the date there is not much information. The colour green which occurs in St. Anne's hairnet only came into use in the white style.⁸¹ This is also true of the yellow.⁸² Moreover, we saw remains of the "double folds" which, according to K. Weitzmann, are characteristic of this period. It is known that St. Anne was also found in Faras Cathedral (fresco a112). There, too, she was shown in a standing position, and there, too, in the front of the left-hand side of the church, just as here. There, however, she was painted in the first half of the 8th century.⁸³

§ 19. *Fresco 4/8. Virgin Mary (?) and protégé. (Fragment) Not saved. See Pl. 50.*

The fragment, that was found but not, unfortunately, saved, showed the lower half of two standing figures, apparently shown full-face, a large figure and (on its right) a small. The large figure is wearing yellow shoes, and a white tunic decorated with two small, purple *clavi*; over this is thrown a purple coat, edged around the bottom with white. The small figure is not only drawn on a smaller scale, but is also higher, as is customary with *protégés*. He has bare feet and wears a coat, of which the somewhat purplish coloured border can be seen. His skin is light-brown in colour, so these remains are probably those of a local celebrity, who had himself painted as a *protégé*. To find out the point of this painting we must, I think, be able to place the main figure. Only the clothing can be of any help to us. As far as our present information goes, the main figure here is dressed in the same sort of way as the Virgin *Eleousa* from the Narthex of Faras Cathedral,⁸⁴ which was painted in about 1000, with the difference that the Virgin in Faras is wearing a tunic and overgarment of the same colour and with the same motifs. The point, however, is that — like our enigmatic figure in Abdallah Nirqi — the Mother of God in Faras is wearing a coat which not only covers the long sides of the tunic (as, for example, in frescoes 4/1a, 4/4, and 5/6 in Abdallah Nirqi), but also hides the front of the tunic from view. K. Michałowski puts this as follows: "In der Mantelöffnung sieht man einen schräg gerafften Zipfel des Kleides".⁸⁵ This is, we believe, also the case here in Abdallah Nirqi, just as we apparently also have here a representation of the Mother of God, in view of the purple colour of her coat. In both frescoes, here and in no. 93 in Faras, we see some lines immediately below the knee, going up towards the right. In Faras this may perhaps have something to do with the fact that Mary is carrying her child on her arm. Could this also be the case in Abdallah Nirqi? Certainly, of the twenty paintings of the Virgin in Faras Cathedral half are standing *Hodigitrias*,⁸⁶ and we ourselves have found two in this North nave of Abdallah Nirqi.⁸⁷ The scantiness of our information about this fragment is such that we are reluctantly bound to say that it is extremely difficult to date it, and we are thus bound to leave the question open.⁸⁸

⁸¹ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 39, 42, 47, 50.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 80 sqq.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸⁴ Fresco 93, *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 24 and 25..

⁸⁵ *Die Kathedrale*, p. 106.

⁸⁶ See T. Gołowski, *Virgin*, p. 312.

⁸⁷ Abdallah Nirqi, frescoes 4/1a and 4/4.

⁸⁸ If we connect this fragment with the white style (e.g. on the grounds of the *protégé* being depicted higher up) this can be no more than conjecture.

§ 20. *Fresco 4/9*. Angel. (Fragments) Not saved. See Pl. 49.

Here several barely interpretable fragments of paintings were found. A standing angel, probably painted full-face, is the only part which can be at all clearly recognized: his light-red coat, trimmed with vertical yellow panels, his red shoes and yellow wing with a red border.

The upper part, which was only very fragmentarily preserved, is a complete mystery. Dating is practically impossible.

§ 21. *Fresco a/east*. Angel. (Fragment). Not saved. See Pl. 51.

Unfortunately this wall-painting, in the most easterly passage between the north side nave and the main nave, was only very fragmentarily preserved; all that was found were the head and a few remains of the wings of an angel. The wings are, as is customary, yellow, without any further drawing to show the feathers (perhaps the result of poor conservation over the centuries), while the contours, the drawing of the face and the outline of the nimbus are painted very light brown. Obviously, in such circumstances it is not possible to arrive at an exact date.

§ 22. *Fresco a/west*. Christ *in tondo*. Not saved. See Pl. 52.

This wall-painting, incomplete when found, is on the west side of the most easterly passage between the left side-nave and the main nave, and shows the half-figure of Christ *in tondo*. Of the frame a few lines, mostly grey, are still visible. Christ is dressed in a coat of various shades of red. In his left hand he is holding a closed, yellow codex, to which he is pointing with the other hand — a rudimentary gesture of speech that is also found in other places (e.g. in fresco 6/4b in Abdallah Nirqi). In the middle of the cover of the book a stone is painted. The nimbus is yellow, and, true to tradition, has a cross on it. On the face the eyes, drawn in black and red lines, and the pointed nose, are still visible. The pupils are yellow.

G. A. Wellen has remarked that this motif (the *imago clipeata*) disappears from Christian art with the iconoclastic controversy as being a "Sondermotif".⁸⁹ T. Golgowski has already shown how it managed to survive in Nubia after this.⁹⁰ In this connection he mentions the picture of an archangel in Es-Sebua,⁹¹ and another of Christ with a chalice in his hand in Faras Cathedral.⁹²

He could have added to these a series of *imagines clipeatae* of Christ which form a part of the frequently occurring Nubian Theophany, pictures which do not, as far as I know, date from *before* the white style.⁹³ Our motif occurs most frequently in the latter context. Otherwise

⁸⁹ G. A. Wellen, *Theotokos*, Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1960, p. 185. In view of the great number of *imagines clipeatae* in the Middle-Byzantine period (Cf. O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, London (1948), p. 55), Wellen cannot have meant this to be general.

⁹⁰ T. Golgowski, *Virgin*, p. 309.

⁹¹ *L. N. Med.*, vol. IV. ill. 141a.

⁹² *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 11.

⁹³ See P. P. V. van Moorsel, Une Théophanie Nubienne = *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 42 (1966, publ. 1968), pp. 297-316.

we meet it seldom and in Abdallah Nirqi not at all. Both the colour range and the drawing of our fresco (consider especially the eyes, nose and hands, for example) place it in the same period of time in which Bishop Petros (972-999) had a portrait of himself painted in Faras, or perhaps a little later.⁹⁴

We may, perhaps, when considering our fresco, wonder why Christ is here dressed in a coat in which several shades of red are mingled. Perhaps — but this is only conjecture — the colour was originally violet, but the colour which was mixed with this red has faded.

§ 23. *Fresco b/east*. Saint and *protégé*. Not saved. See Pl. 53.

On the east side of the middle passage from the left nave to the main nave is a fresco of which only vague traces of the upper half were found upon excavation. These clearly reveal that this is a saint, with a *protégé* next to him (on his right), on a smaller scale of course; they are both seen full-face. The saint most probably had a white complexion and a yellow nimbus with a red surround. His *protégé* has the familiar light-red skin which we have seen in the case of other *protégés* (e.g. frescoes 6/4a, 6/7, 4/2 and 4/5) and the is dressed in a tunic and overgarment in which white and green are the main colours. Perhaps we should regard this as something of the same sort as the clothing of the founder-figure in fresco 6/5a, which has not yet been discussed. The latter wears a green tunic, and over it a white coat with *clavi* in both white and light-brown. In our case dating is as difficult as identifying the saint who is portrayed here.

In connection with the scheme of composition in which the *protégé* stands on the right of the guardian saint, we here present a list of those wall-paintings in Abdallah Nirqi which are constructed according to the same pattern: nos. 4/2, 4/3a, 4/8, 5/4, 6/4a, 6/4b, 6/5a, 6/7. Let it be added that they date from various style periods, and that most of the *protégés* are shown "floating".

§ 24. *Fresco b/west*. Christ with book against a background of clouds. Saved. See Pls. 54 and 65.

In the middle passage between the left side-nave and the central nave the half-figure of Christ is painted, on the west side. The square frame is decorated with a Meander-motif. The main colour of both the figure of Christ and the frame is purple. Christ is dressed in a light, perhaps white, tunic and a purple pallium, part of which — following the Egyptian custom⁹⁵ — covers his right shoulder. His pallium is decorated with rosettes made up of white dots, and at the bottom of it are dark-coloured double folds. Here, too, he is pointing with his right hand to a closed codex which is held in the other hand; as far as we can make out, the lid seems to be richly decorated. Of Christ's head the dark beard, part of the nose, the eyes and eyebrows are still visible, as well as the red contours of his grey-painted hair; the latter is surrounded by a nimbus, regular in form and grey in colour, with a cross upon it which is slightly larger than the nimbus. In the background are stylised yellow clouds.

⁹⁴ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 57-59.

⁹⁵ Cfr. F. van der Meer, *Maestas Domini*, Città del Vaticano, 1938, p. 257.

The use of the Meander-motif as a frame is already familiar to us from fresco 4/5 (the Nativity scene). With a slight variation it is also well-known in Faras Cathedral, ⁹⁶ and it also occurs at an earlier date in Bawit, ⁹⁷ always forming a frame. It is, moreover, interesting, that together with the Meander-motif the stylised way of portraying clouds can also be seen in Faras Cathedral, fresco 20, where the Trinity is seen above such a bank of clouds, under which are three cross-trophies. Altogether it is an unusual composition, dated by K. Michałowski in the beginning of the 11th century. ⁹⁸

With his help we can draw up a short list of other Nubian wall-paintings in which these stylised clouds are found :

1. Faras, the cathedral, fresco 20 (just mentioned). Beginning of the 11th century.
2. *Ibidem*, fresco 122; Bishop Georgios (1062-97), protected by the Virgin and Christ. Here the clouds are over Christ as he protects Georgios. ⁹⁹.
3. Faras, Rivergate Church; a bishop, protected by Christ appearing out of cloud-filled *tondo*, ¹⁰⁰ 11th century?
4. Abd-El-Gadir; an eparch, protected by Christ appearing out of the clouds, ¹⁰¹ 12th century?

Elsewhere in the Christian art of this period the theme of stylised clouds is rare. ¹⁰² It seems to be a peculiarity that they only occur where Christ is portrayed, and in the Trinity in Faras, which is portrayed as a three-person Christ. The intention is obviously that the figure is shown as belonging to another, other-worldly realm. In this present wall-painting, which is icon-like in its presentation and in its fine frame, this is also the case.

As the facial features have only been partially preserved exact dating is difficult. It seems to me, however, that we have no arguments for considering this fresco much older than stated in our little catalogue. It probably belongs to the beginning of the 11th century. The double folds in Christ's pallium also point in this direction.

§ 25. *Fresco 5/1*. Fragment of a standing figure (also traces in the violet style), of which only a part could be saved. See Pls. 56 and 101.

Of this wall-painting only the lower part has been preserved. This shows a dark-brown tunic, with vertical black lines and four red *clavi* on it, which is clearly visible, thanks to the wide open coat worn over it. This coat is yellow, with double, vertical, red lines on it. The coat is edged round the bottom and at the front with a wide white border, upon which are dark-

⁹⁶ Faras, cathedral, fresco 20 (Cf. *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 84) and fresco 108 (*Ibid.*, ill. 54).

⁹⁷ J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, vol. I, Le Caire, 1904, ill. cxi and vol. II, Le Caire, 1916, ill. vii.

⁹⁸ *Die Kathedrale*, p. 160.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *L. N. Med.*, vol. 3-4. Rome, 1957, ill. 145.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ill. 179.

¹⁰² By way of comparison, however, I here mention a cloudscape with St. Michael at Daphni (See W. Weitté, *Mosaiques paléo-chrétiennes et Byzantines*, Milan-Florence (1954) ill. 128).

coloured rosettes. The sandals under the white feet are fastened with decorative red straps.¹⁰³ To the right of the figure an inscription was found, barely legible. Of the painting briefly described here only the left half (from the beholder's point of view) could be saved. When this part was removed a few scanty traces of an older, no longer identifiable painting appeared. One of the colours used must have been violet. Perhaps this older painting, then, belongs to the violet style.

A peculiarity of our fresco 5/1 is the way in which the front of the coat is open. Parallels can be found in Faras, in the *Rivergate Church*¹⁰⁴ and in Abd-El-Gadir.¹⁰⁵ Finally, the fact that double folds are used here, and that we find a very bright range of colours, characteristic of the years round about 1000, makes me feel that this fresco should also be placed in the "white style", and in any case earlier than the parallel we mentioned from Abd-El-Gadir.

§ 26. *Fresco 5/2*. Christ in *clipeus* between the four beasts over a cross. Fragments, of which only a part could be saved. See Pl. 57.

We have here a fragment of a composition partly made up of a number of wings which run sometimes parallel and sometimes across each other, below which is painted a cross with jewels. The way in which this cross is placed leads us to suppose that both elements form part of a single composition.

The wings are yellow, decorated with the check motif, which is executed in double lines. The two lower wings cross each other; into the space between them protudes part of the cross with gemmes. Left, slightly higher up, are two almost parallel wings. On the right only a minute part remains, with two enigmatic, almost horizontal red lines.

The cross with gemmes, a so-called "Tropfenkreuz", is also yellow, bordered with red, while remains were found of garlands made up of red beads, and also the remains of a dark-coloured *velum* that hung over the horizontal beam.

Dating does not seem to present much of a problem. In my opinion both the colours and drawing (e.g. the check motif) place the composition in the richer period of the white style, perhaps as early as the 11th century. The reconstruction of the upper half of the composition presents rather more of a problem. In connection with this painting I believe it to be worthwhile to look at the place of the cross-trophy in the Nubian church, and it will then be necessary to say something of the combination of the two components found here: the cross-trophy and the composition which we find above.

First of all the reconstruction of the wings. We know that in Nubia certain creatures were often depicted with precisely this sort of wings. See, for example, the fragmentarily preserved fresco 85 in Faras Cathedral.¹⁰⁶ There the wings seem to belong to the four living creatures — lion, calf, man and eagle — which, according to Revelation 4,8 each had six wings.

¹⁰³ Compare the sandals in fresco 51 in Faras Cathedral (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 53), and in fr. 54 (*Ibid.*, ill. 51).

¹⁰⁴ *L. N. Med.*, ill. 145.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, ill. 178.

¹⁰⁶ P. P. V. van Moorsel, Une Théophanie Nubienne = *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 42 (1966, publ. 1968), p. 304, fig. 2.

We find these wings depicted, moreover, in a similar way (both as to drawing and to colour) in the church of Abd-El-Gadir.¹⁰⁷ There they form, in the words of Monneret de Villard, a "Rappresentazione simbolica del Cristo e dei quattro evangeli: medaglione avente nel centro la testa del Christo, con attorno i quattro emblemi degli evangelisti con quattro ali. Sopra è scritto + IC O XC".¹⁰⁸ Only in the fresco in Abd-El-Gadir the wings are decorated in a way which suggests the representation of eyes, which in this piece of Abdallah Nirqi is not present, or anyhow are no longer visible. The way in which the wings are arranged in our fresco may be compared with the painting in Abd-El-Gadir, so that we may conclude that the painting in our church is also of the four beasts. In this context the two enigmatic, almost horizontal red lines, top right of our fragment, could be explained as belonging to the set of wings out of which the head of the calf appears. Here, too, a *clipeus* must have been painted in the middle, with the half-figure of Christ. Abd-El-Gadir is not our only point of comparison, as is seen from the fact that a similar composition was also found in Sonqi Tino. S. Donadoni speaks of a "Christ entouré par le tétramorphe des évangélistes".¹⁰⁹

We find the same motif in Kulubnarti, described by W. Adams as "the familiar head of Christ with the symbols of the four evangelists".¹¹⁰ Perhaps I should mention the fact, that the fresco in Abd-El-Gadir was in the left side-nave, the one in Sonqi in the space opposite the apse, and the one in Kulubnarti in the southern side-nave. The excavators often speak of the "symbols of the evangelists". It is more correct, however, to speak here of the four living creatures, which the Copts commemorate on 8 *Hatur*. Then it also becomes clearer that we have here a theme that took its inspiration from the Coptic apse composition, and more particularly from the *Maiestas Domini* within this form.¹¹¹ Seeing the parts of the church where this theme was usually depicted they cannot be given any liturgical significance. It *does*, however, have a share in the eschatological inspiration, centred upon the Second Coming of Christ of the original great representation of the *Maiestas*.

As for the cross under our Theophany, this is one of the various crosses with jewels, or cross-trophies to be found in Nubia.¹¹² Occasionally such a cross-trophy is depicted as in bloom, or radiating light,¹¹³ and sometimes with a *velum* hung over it.¹¹⁴ Elsewhere we have gone

¹⁰⁷ *L. N. Med.*, ill. 180.

¹⁰⁸ *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 216.

¹⁰⁹ S. Donadoni, Les fouilles à l'église de Sonqi Tino = *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen 1970, pp. 209-218, this quotation on p. 214, see *Ibid.*, ill. 192.

¹¹⁰ W. Y. Adams, The University of Kentucky Excavations at Kulubnarti, 1969 = *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 141-154, this quotation on p. 146, see *Ibid.*, ill. 121.

¹¹¹ F. van der Meer, *o.c.*, pp. 255 sqq.

¹¹² Es-Sebua (*L. N. Med.*, ill. 140, 2). Faras, cathedral, fresco 20 (see *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 84) Abdallah Nirqi, frescoes f/east and 5/6. Abd-El-Gadir (*L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 216), with the inscription "O (C)TAYPOC". This summary is not chronological. We may further add the gemmed crosses which form a part of the so-called Nubian Theophany (see P. P. V. van Moorsel, *art. cit.* pp. 308-309 with the exception of no. 6).

¹¹³ Es-Sebua twice (*L. N. Med.*, ill. 140, 1 and 2) shows affinity with the cross with rays of light which stream from the intersection, in the Hagia Sofia in Saloniki (8th century). See: M. van Berchem et E. Clouzot, *Mosaïques chrétiennes du IV^e au X^e siècle*, Genève, 1924, p. 182, fig. 233); see also a glass chalice in Washington, Dumbarton Oaks (see *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 10 (1967), ill. 11b) from the 6th century.

¹¹⁴ Tamit, church of the angels, with inscription "CTAYPOC" (*L. N. Med.*, ill. CLXV), Abdallah Nirqi, fresco f/east.

into the great Nubian devotion to the cross in more detail, ¹¹⁵ but for the time being I shall only mention what is necessary for our subject.

This veneration was apparently greater in Nubia than the place of the Holy Cross in the Coptic calender (*17 Tût* and the two days following) would lead us to suppose, even taking into consideration that this feast coincided with the halt of the rising of the Nile. The Nubians had, in fact, close connections with Jerusalem, where they had an altar in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the rocky ground of Golgotha, where the head of Adam was said to have been found. This information does not, it is true, date from before 1345, but there is reason to assume that the Nubians were already in possession of this chapel before that. ¹¹⁶ That these connections with the Holy Sepulchre also had consequences for the faith in Nubia appears, for example, from reading the CTAYPOC text, which was written in Serre in 973, in Old Nubic, and which is one of the few texts in that language known to us. In this text Christ explains the part he has assigned to his glorious cross at the Last Judgment. I quote some passages from the translation by Griffith: "Sitting on the throne of glory I shall judge the whole world, and the glorious Cross shall be set in my right hand ... and all who have believed in the Cross with their whole heart shall dwell under it, in its name either having filled the hungry, or else clothed the naked, or written a book of its praise and placed it in a church". ¹¹⁷ Thus Nubia takes its place in the early Christian tradition which interprets the sign of the Son of Man, that, according to St. Matthew 24, 30, shall appear in the heavens at the Second Coming, as the cross-trophy. If this is so it will cause us no surprise that there in Abdallah Nirqi, fresco 5/2, the cross-trophy is depicted under Christ with the four living creatures. Both motifs are equally eschatological. This also explains why in Nubia the cross, on the one side, and Christ with the living creatures on the other, were combined to form the composition of the Nubian Theophany with the cross, of which there are a abundant examples in the white style, including in our church. The interesting thing about our fresco 5/2, however, is that here we see, as an exception, the two elements next to each other, although clearly related to each other, but not yet in the form which was to find such great following. ¹¹⁸ In this sense the theme is unique.

§ 27. *Fresco 5/3. Fragment of two angels and a horse. Not saved. See Pl. 58.*

At the back on the left, in the central nave, a number of fragments were found, but it is not clear in how far these are related to each other.

Uppermost was the lower half of a fresco which represents an angel, full-face. On the left of the angel are the words: ΜΙΧΑΗΛ

ⲭⲡⲟ

ϥⲟ

The angel is wearing a white

¹¹⁵ P. P. V. van Moorsel, *art. cit.*

¹¹⁶ O. F. A. Meinardus, *The Christian Kingdoms of Nubia = Nubie par divers archéologues et historiens*, n.p., n.y., pp. 161-2.

¹¹⁷ F. L. Griffith, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*, Berlin, 1913, p. 48. The CTAYPOC text contains a shortened version of a panegyric on the cross by Ps.-Chrysostom (Migne, P. G., 50, 819), which keeps coming back to Efreem (B.K.V.Ephr. I (1870), p. 370 sqq., especially p. 373 sqq. (See E. Dinkler and E. Dinkler-von Schubert, *Kreuz, Lex. d. christl. Ikonographie*, vol. II, pp. 562-590). A Coptic equivalent of our CTAYPOC text was found in 1965 in Qasr-el-Wizz, also in Nubia.

¹¹⁸ P. P. V. van Moorsel, *art. cit.*

tunic, on which are light-brown and light-blue double bands, vertical and curved, which appear to suggest folds. The bottom of the tunic is edged with yellow, with a red check motif on it, with blue spots. The angel's coat is light-red, and is decorated with blue spots. The shoes are edged with red lines. On the angel's left there remains a fragment of a yellow wing, outlined in red-brown. To the right of this remnant of a wing a light-yellow mark was found, upon which were two curved, horizontal, red-brown lines, and above these the beginning of a line in the same colour. To the right is another yellow mark, in which two parallel, light-brown, vertical lines can be seen. Further right, in red lines, is what is probably the back part of a horse, on which is written:



We shall not go into the inscriptions in further detail here (See *Epigraphica*, no. 12 and no. 13), and shall be content with the assumption that, because of these inscriptions, this angel may be identified as Michael. The double lines and the check motif point to the white style. If indeed a horse has been painted here, it is a rather unusual representation. To my knowledge the only saint on horseback to be painted in a central nave is in Abd-El-Gadir.¹¹⁹ Below there is also an angel, painted full-face; the only parts of him which could still be seen are part of his head, with the eyebrows and eyes painted light blue, the nimbus and parts of the wings in yellow, and a few remains of a tunic in the same colour. A number of yellow, almost square-shaped lines to his left could, with some imagination, be seen as remains of a small piece of architecture. To his right are some patches in various shades of yellow, with something grey which could resemble palm branches. Perhaps this dates also from the white style!

¹¹⁹ *L. N. Med.*, vol. 1, p. 216, no. 9.

§ 28. *Fresco 5/4*. Angel with a *protégé* (Fragment). Saved. See Pls. 55 and d66.

Above the pulpit is a painting of a large angel, of which only the lower half has been preserved. Near the angel remnants have been found of the painting of a *protégé*. Both are apparently shown full-face.

The angel is wearing a long tunic, reaching down to just above his large feet; it is decorated with some white *clavi*, and with a narrow, white border round the bottom. Above this white border is a wide, purple band, which continues upwards at the two sides of the tunic. It is difficult to interpret a darker band, which runs diagonally from the level of the right shin-bone up to the left knee, where it becomes a yellow, upward-curving line. Over the tunic the angel wears a light-coloured coat with a yellow border. Both the angel's yellow wings are hanging down. They are bordered with red, and scattered with eyes and stylised peacock feathers. In Faras we usually find peacock feathers as a decoration on the wings of the archangel Michael.¹²⁰ The fact that the tunic of our angel is trimmed with bands of purple also rather points in this direction.

The *protégé* is painted rather high up, against his right wing: the colour of his spread out, light-brown, bare feet shows clearly that this is a local celebrity. Behind his feet is a line, which is probably intended to be the lower part of his overgarment.¹²¹ The inside of this garment is edged with white, and above this is a rich, red and black motif, perhaps inspired by flowers. This same motif is also found in the badly preserved tunic of the *protégé*. It is striking that a man of such wealth should not be wearing shoes, although there is some simple decoration at the ankles.

In view of the colours used, and also the drawing, I am of the opinion that this fresco dates from the beginning of the 11th century.¹²²

§ 29. *Fresco 5/6*. Fragment of a jewelled cross and an unknown object. Not saved.

On the right at the front, opposite the pulpit, a fragment of a jewelled cross was found (the lower part); it was painted yellow, bordered with red and decorated with red stones, alternating with green ones. In answer to the question why the lower part of the vertical beam rests against some upward-curving object, which is also decorated with a red stone, I refer to Faras Cathedral, frescoes 71, 20, 37 and 38, where the same thing can be seen.¹²³

¹²⁰ Cf. Faras Cathedral, fresco 55 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 51) fresco 94 (*Ibid.* ill. 60-61), and probably also other frescoes (*Ibid.* ill. 34, 36 and 62).

¹²¹ Cf. T. Gołowski, *Remarques sur l'iconographie de l'évêque de "Rivergate Church" = Mélanges K. Michałowski*, Warsaw, 1966, pp. 97-101, especially ill. 1 and 2. I am indebted to T. Gołowski for his advice on this matter.

¹²² Cf. the peacock feathers in two frescoes from the end of the 10th century in Faras (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 60-61), of which those on the wings of our angel in Abdallah Nirqi can only be called a further evolution.

¹²³ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 44, 84, 88 and 89. In this connection it is interesting to make a comparison with, for example, the legs of thrones: Abdallah Nirqi, frescoes d/east and e/west; Faras, cathedral, fresco 47, (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 73), 43 and 34 (no illustrations). We then conclude that these were totally different in shape.

In § 26 the Nubian devotion to the cross has already been discussed. In view of the colours I am inclined to date this piece in the mature period of the white style, i.e. early in the 11th century.

Finally, top right, next to the fragment of the jewelled cross, another purple patch was found, the lower part of which is horizontal.

§ 30. *Fresco 5/7*. Saint (angel and a *protégé*?) Not saved. See Pl. 59.

Two fragments belonging to the painting of a saint, full face, perhaps an angel. A very small part of the neck, shoulder and nimbus has been preserved, drawn in yellow lines, and also a part of the clothing. The tunic is perhaps white, or anyway light in colour; the accuracy of this interpretation is, however, questionable, if attention is paid to the yellow line in the middle of the front part of the tunic. Over the tunic is a yellow coat, decorated with little red ornaments in the form of a cross, alternating with crosses made up of red dots. It looks, however, as though the front of the coat is flung over the left arm in the familiar manner (see Abdallah Nirqi fresco 4/7) so that the tunic should be visible. On the left and right are a few lines, horizontal at the top, running towards each other at the bottom; these contain yellow patches and could thus well depict wings.

On the left side of this enigmatic figure, at the breast level of the main figure just described, are several vertical, light-purple lines, surrounding rather small, yellow and green patches. Are these the remains of a *protégé*? Both the colours and the decorative motifs on the coat of (what may be) the angel make a date of about 1000 A.D. probable.

§ 31. *Various fragments*. Not saved.

At the back of the central nave on both the south side and the other sides, extremely scanty remains were found. A brief description of them follows :

fresco 5/8 : Fragments on whitewash (first period) and on a layer of what is known as Coptic plaster (second period).

fresco 5/9 : Also fragments on the two sorts of under-layer mentioned above.

fresco 5/10 : Traces of painting. A layer of 4 cm thickness : mud, whitewash, mud, whitewash, colour, whitewash, colour, whitewash, mud, whitewash, Coptic plaster. Over the niche in the centre : whitewash, colour, mud, Coptic plaster.

fresco 5/11 : Fragment of a Nubian *protégé*. Hardly anything has been saved, except the bare feet, light red in colour.

fresco 5/12 : Fragments of 1st and 2nd period : pink, purple, yellow, green.

§ 32. *Fresco d/east*. Man seated on a throne (David?). Saved. See Pl. 89.

Representation of a seated man. The features of his oval head are painted with red lines and light-grey shade lines. His mouth has the shape which is characteristic of the white style : X. Above it is a drooping moustache; the chin, too, is drawn in. The hair is white, the nimbus

yellow, but bordered round the outside with red. Over a white tunic, decorated with purple *clavi*, the saint wears a pallium, also purple, in which the folds are depicted by dark double lines. In his closed left hand the saint holds a thin staff, to which he is pointing with the index finger of the other hand; he holds the other three fingers of that hand wrapped in something purple, such as a *mappula*. The throne which is of the type we also find in fresco e/west, is also without a back, but it does have richly sculpted legs and a fine cushion decorated with a green check motif. Both the chair and the purple pallium are decorated with the little white dots arranged in the shape of stars and rosettes. All the more reason to place this piece in the flourishing period of the white style, ca. 1000.

Identification poses a more difficult problem. Before going into this I think it is useful to comment on the purple coat with the white dots, described above. We have already seen coats of this sort in Abdallah Nirqi, on Christ and on Mary, but, strangely enough, not on any other figures. In the cathedral of Faras, too, this coat, is worn only by Christ¹²⁴ and by Mary.¹²⁵ The same is also true of several wall-paintings in Bawit, though there the decorative motif is used considerably more sparingly.¹²⁶ But it is not only in the Nile area that we find this combination of the purple pallium with a decoration of white dots, but also in the cycle which Pope John VII (705-707) had painted in the church of St. Maria Antica, in Rome.¹²⁷ We may further mention here several Greek psalters, which came into being shortly after the iconoclastic controversy. Thus in the *Pantocrator Psalter* this costume was worn by kings such as David¹²⁸ (who, moreover, was often shown with grey hair and in a few cases¹²⁹ without a crown), by Saul,¹³⁰ by Absalom¹³¹ and also by the Mother of God.¹³² We see the same in the pictures of King David in the *Chludov Psalter*.¹³³ The only thing that should be said about these manuscripts is that in them the kings often wear a paludamentum instead of a pallium. This is also true of a miniature in MS 265 Leningrad, fol. 4 verso,¹³⁴ where we find both David and Melchizedek wearing coats of this colour and with this decoration. Dufrenne speaks here of a "manteau royal, décoré de groupes de quatre points blancs".¹³⁵ At the moment we do not wish to discuss the part played by Palestine in the extension of the decorative motif of stars and rosettes made up of white dots, as that is done in the first chapter of this study, but we shall be content with adding to Dufrenne's comment that of Delbrück, where he

¹²⁴ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 51, 84, 88-89, 90 and 95-96.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, ill. 24-25, 64-65, 76, 77, 80 and 94.

¹²⁶ J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, vol. I, Le Caire, 1904, ill. XLII, and J. Maspéro-E. Drioton, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouît*, Le Caire, 1931 (ill. XXXII and XLIII).

¹²⁷ P. J. Nordhagen, *The frescoes of John VII in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome*, Rome, 1968, p. 76 and ill. XCIII.

¹²⁸ S. Dufrenne, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du moyen âge*, Paris, 1966, ill. 2, 3, 4, 8, 18 and 28.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, ill. 8.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, ill. 9.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, ill. 28.

¹³² *Ibid.*, ill. 8.

¹³³ N. V. Malitsky, *Traits d'iconographie palestinienne dans le psautier à illustrations marginales du type Chludoff = Seminarium Kondakovianum*, vol. I, Prague 1927, pp. 49-63, ill. iv and v.

¹³⁴ Cf. S. Dufrenne, *o.c.*, ill. 25.

¹³⁵ S. Dufrenne, *o.c.*, p. 34.

describes the triumphal *trabea* costume as being purple "mit traditionellen goldenen Rosetten" ¹³⁶ This garment is the highest grade of toga, and was originally the festive apparel of the king and the conquering warrior. Purple is always reserved for royal personages, and apparently this is also the case with this form of decoration. Actually this means that in early Christian art not only emperors, but also kings are dressed in this way, and also — as is commonly known — Christ and Mary.

Applying this to our fresco of the man on a throne in Abdallah Nirqi, it may be said that he is of royal blood, on the grounds of the purple *clavi* on his tunic and his purple coat with the familiar decoration of white dots formed into rosettes and stars. This is borne out by the nature of the throne. The fact that there is no cross in the *nimbus* rules out the possibility of his being Christ. The absence of the Gospel codex opens up the possibility of the saint belonging to the Old Testament. It may be said that there is no crown, but this is sometimes also the case with King David. ¹³⁷ Moreover, David's hair as we often see it in the *Pantocrator Psalter* ¹³⁸ is often grey, like that of the man in our fresco. He is also depicted in Bawit with this same grey hair, and without a royal crown. ¹³⁹ The staff could then be a sceptre. ¹⁴⁰

Is this sufficient reason to assume that this saint should be identified as King David? Perhaps. We cannot, as yet, be absolutely certain.

§ 33. *Fresco d/west*. Bishop 1. Saved. See Pl. 61.

A standing bishop, painted full-face, and next to him an inscription which is difficult to read. In the oval head, outlined in black, the mouth, nose and eyes are shown with red lines, and the eyebrows, moustache, hair and beard in black lines. The nimbus is yellow, as usual, and is surrounded by black and red lines. Over a bright red tunic the man is wearing a yellow *Epitrachilion*. His *Felonion* is yellow, and was probably decorated with a check motif. Round the neck is a collar, with traces of red at the top. From the right shoulder a narrow band runs downward, under the right hand, which is pointing to a closed *codex* in the man's other hand. The colours, as well as the drawing, especially that of the features, make it likely that the date is about the year 1000.

§ 34. *Fresco e/east*. Bishop 2. Not saved. See Pl. 62.

A standing bishop, shown full face. The top of the painting is missing. The saint's head comes down to a sharp point, and the mouth and nose are shown in red; of his eyes only a few yellow and green lines are now visible, and this is also the case with his ears and a part of his yellow nimbus. The tunic is red, bright red at the cuffs and pink at the bottom. The *Felonion* is yellow, and is decorated with a check motif made up of red lines, like that of our

¹³⁶ R. Delbrück, *Die Consulardiptychen*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1929, p. 53.

¹³⁷ See footnote 129.

¹³⁸ S. Dufrenne, *o.c.*, ill. 3, 8, 18 and 28.

¹³⁹ J. Clédat, *o.c.*, vol. II, Le Caire, 1916, ill. XIII.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. J. Clédat, *o.c.*, vol. I, Le Caire, 1904, ill. XVII.

fresco 6/6 and the Faras fresco 83.¹⁴¹ Over this *Felonion*, round the neck, is a white garment, that hangs down from the neck in two narrow white bands, in between which there is still room for part of the *Felonion*. At first sight the meaning of this is not clear. It cannot be an *Omoforion*, unless there is some mistake, as that is supposed to be worn over the *Felonion* in another way.¹⁴² It can certainly not be an *Epitrachilion*, since that was worn *under* the *Felonion*, and consisted, moreover, of two bands which were sewn together.¹⁴³ A point of comparison may be found in a wall-painting in Bawit, showing the African St. Cyprian. There, over the chasuble, we see a narrow, white garment which goes round the neck and falls from the shoulders, over the front of the body, down to the ground. It is decorated with small crosses.¹⁴⁴ This can hardly be anything other than a pallium, even though here it is worn in a different way than, for example, in the St. Apollinare in Classe.¹⁴⁵ Thus this is probably, in the painting here in Abdallah Nirqi, a bishop-saint from the west. A similar garment is also worn by a bishop-saint painted in Faras Cathedral in the first half of the 11th century, at the earliest (Faras, fresco 49), which, moreover, has not yet been more exactly identified. Our saint is pointing with his right hand to the Gospel *codex*, which he is holding in the other hand; its lid is decorated with square and round red stones. His shoes are grey. The inscription is not clear. The date of the fresco is about 1000 A.D.

§ 35. *Fresco e/west*. An enthroned *Hodigitria*. Saved. See Pl. 88.

An enthroned *Theotokos Hodigitria*. In Mary's head, which is bent towards Christ, the features are sketched in yellow, and almost all are reinforced with red lines, some of them very dark, the x-shaped mouth, the creases next to and under the nose, the eyebrows, the lines under the eyes (where some green has also been used). The pupils of the eyes are practically black. This way of painting is reminiscent of that of fresco 4/6 (Virgin as *Orante*). Mary is looking at Christ. She is wearing a grey hairnet and a purple *maforion*, and has a yellow nimbus, outlined in red; she also wears a white tunic and a purple coat. The *maforion* and coat are scattered with the familiar stars made up of white dots. Double black and white stripes are clearly visible on the part of her coat which is caught up to her breast, and yellow stripes on her tunic indicate folds. The throne is of the type familiar to us from fresco d/east; it is covered with a white cushion, and is also without a back-rest. Jesus is sitting up straight on Mary's left knee. Mary is holding Jesus' legs just below the knee, with her left hand, in a rather artificial manner. Jesus has red, curly hair, two locks of which fall over his forehead,¹⁴⁶ and a yellow nimbus on which is a light-green cross. He is dressed in white.¹⁴⁷ His

¹⁴¹ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 47.

¹⁴² Faras, fresco 60 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 59).

¹⁴³ See Abdallah Nirqi, fresco 6/5a.

¹⁴⁴ Ch. Palanque, Rapport sur les recherches effectuées à Baouit en 1903 = *Bull. de l'Inst. Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, 5 (1906), ill. ix.

¹⁴⁵ F. van der Meer and Chr. Mohrmann, *Atlas van de Oudchristelijke Wereld*, Amsterdam, 1958, p. 140.

¹⁴⁶ See *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 35.

¹⁴⁷ As is customary in the cathedral of Faras: see Gólgowski, Virgin, *passim*.

right hand is raised, with three fingers held up, but the thumb and index finger bent. T. Gołowski calls a similar position of the fingers in Faras, fresco 69, an "act of blessing".¹⁴⁸ Though the date is not much of a problem (here, too, I believe we are in the white style, not before the time of Bishop Petros I), from the iconographical point of view there are various things to be said.

We know that the *Theotokos Hodigitria* type is of Syro-Palestinian origin. The *Orante* gesture Mary is making with her right hand in our fresco cannot, however, be traced back to this origin. We find the same gesture in a Virgin *Hodigitria* in Faras, fresco a18,¹⁴⁹ which dates from the first half of the 8th century, in fresco 90, also in Faras,¹⁵⁰ which dates from about 750, and in fresco 105, once again in Faras,¹⁵¹ which dates from the beginning of the 11th century. K. Weitzmann has summed this gesture up as "a pose which in the ancient vocabulary of gestures means surprise, but in a Christian context had acquired the connotation of an orant".¹⁵² Moreover, he draws attention to the 6th century ivory from Saulieu.¹⁵³ where an enthroned *Hodigitria* is depicted with the same *Orante* gesture. Weitzmann assumes that Egyptian inspiration has led to this variation. T. Gołowski draws attention to the same gesture in a standing *Hodigitria* in a 7th century miniature from Alexandria.¹⁵⁴ Weitzmann recognized certain stylistic peculiarities of the ivory from Saulieu in Nubia, especially "the tendency to angularity, thickset proportions, and especially the large heads".¹⁵⁵ It occurs to me that our fresco in Abdallah Nirqi shows this large head more than any of the other Nubian wall-paintings representing the H. Virgin. Stylistically we also find a strong Egyptian influence, which — with the addition of their own variation — must have passed on the *Theotokos Hodigitria* icon, originally Syro-Palestinian in origin, to the Nubians.¹⁵⁶

§ 36. *Fresco f/east*. Jewelled cross with *velum*. Not saved. See Pl. 60.

Fragments of a jewelled cross, outlined in red and for the rest mainly yellow; the intersection is somewhat widened, and over it hangs a light-red *velum*. We have already discussed the many proofs of Nubian devotion to the cross-trophy in connection with fresco 5/2 and shall have more to say on the subject when we come to fresco 6/4b. I shall content myself here with drawing attention to a Nubian parallel in Es-Sebua,¹⁵⁷ and to a Ravennan predecessor in the baptistery of the Arians, from which it can be seen that in this respect Nubia was much indebted to Byzantium.¹⁵⁸

¹⁴⁸ Gołowski, *Virgin*, p. 306.

¹⁴⁹ See *Catalogue Essen*, ill. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 35.

¹⁵¹ See *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 72.

¹⁵² Weitzmann, p. 328.

¹⁵³ *Catalogue Les Trésors des Eglises de France*, Paris, 1965, ill. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Gołowski, *Virgin*, p. 298.

¹⁵⁵ Weitzmann, *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Weitzmann, *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 158.

¹⁵⁸ M. v. Berchem et E. Clouzot, *Mosaïques chrétiennes du IV^{me} au X^{me} siècle*, Genève, 1924, p. 172, fig. 219.

§ 37. *Fresco f/west*. Saint with censer. Saved. See Pl. 86.

A standing holy man, the yellow outlines of whom can still be seen; even more clearly visible is his head, with the yellow features of the chin, mouth, mouth creases, nose and eyebrows reinforced in red, as we have already seen in frescoes e/west and 4/6. Here, too, the mouth has been given the familiar X-shape. The white hair, which shows up against a yellow nimbus, hangs to his shoulders. The man is apparently wearing a red tunic, of which part is still visible under the point of the beard and the neck, and which we also see in various other places, such as at the right sleeve.

In his left hand the saint is holding an object hitherto unknown to Nubian iconography, but which can, with the help of Christian art from other provinces easily be recognized as a censer.

What *are* typically Nubian are the two little bells which are fixed to the censer by small chains. The censer is yellow, with white dots on it which are probably meant to be stones, and is decorated with simple motifs in red. The small openings for the smoke to escape through are also red. The top of the censer is rather bluntly shaped, and it is held from underneath.

It is thus clear that this must be the holder of a priestly office. He is not a bishop, for he has no Gospel codex.

Is he perhaps an Old Testament priest? There is, it is true, some evidence against this, in that he is not wearing the coat so often given to Old Testament priests by Christian artists, and which we are to see again in Abdallah Nirqi fresco 6/8. On the other hand, the similarity, including that of the attribute, to the Old Testament priest Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, as depicted in Bawit, is striking.¹⁵⁹ There we also see the same neck, the white hair down to the shoulders and the censer.

We can go even further, and draw attention to a mosaic in the church of Parenzo, portraying Zacharias, which dates from the 6th century. It is true that there Zacharias is wearing the *lacerna*, which is not found in Bawit or in Abdallah Nirqi, but there, too, he has white hair down to his shoulders and (just as in Bawit and in Abdallah Nirqi) a box of incense in his left hand, and (as in Bawit) is holding a censer in his other hand.¹⁶⁰

The date is not much of a problem: I believe we are in the white style, not before the time of Bishop Petros I.

§ 38. *Fresco 6/I*. Angel with sword, on horseback. Saved. See Pl. 99.

An angel with outspread wings, on horseback. The head is shown full-face, but not the body, for in his right hand the angel is holding a red sword, held out in the direction in which he is going. His head, the crown of which is no longer visible, must have been oval. It was probably painted in its present form at a later date. The angel is holding his head slightly to the right (as we see it). The features, and also the chin, mouth, nose, eyes, eyebrows and

¹⁵⁹ See Ch. Palanque, Les recherches effectuées à Baouît en 1903, = *Bull. de l'Institut. Français d'Archéologie Orientale* (1906), ill. iv.

¹⁶⁰ M. v. Berchem et E. Clouzot, *Mosaïques chrétiennes du IV^{me} au X^{me} siècle*, Genève, 1924, ill. 227.

neck are shown with a few red lines, some of which (e.g. the nose, the pupils and the rims of the eyes) are reinforced with some dark lines. The nose is shown three-quarter face, as it were, from the left, and this impression is strengthened by the direction of the pupils, which are looking to the right from our side. A similar way of painting the nose and pupils is also found in Abdallah Nirqi, fresco 6/4b, in the case of one of the four living Creatures (man). The angel's wings in our fresco are yellow, with white dots on them. At the bottom they are trimmed with a red „fringe”, probably meant to be feathers. At the top the wings, which are wide-spread, are edged with white and red. The angel is wearing a green tunic, the outlines of which are sketched in white and yellow, and round the bottom is a border of pinkish-red. The same is true of the cuffs; both are decorated with white dots. The coat is blowing out to the left; it is drawn in red outlines, and allows us a glimpse, just behind the angel's shoulders, of another vertical red band. Below the outstretched right hand we notice two curved red lines. The lower one, together with the almost herring-bone-like decoration above it, probably belongs to the horse's harness. The upper line could either be an rein or else something to do with the sword. Of the horse little can now be seen, but we can tell that the harness is decorated with shells and little bells. The horse must have been white. The right legs, like the edge of the saddle, are red; of the riased left leg only the yellow sketch line is still in existence. The right fore-leg is standing on a scaly snake, which continues behind the back legs of the horse. The head of the reptile has not been saved. The colours and the drawing, especially of the face, make me place this in the white style, probably between 980 and 990, since there are many similarities with the Nubian Theophany with the cross (fresco 6/4b), as we have already mentioned.

The iconography is a different matter. This is rare. Winged angels on horseback do not, to my knowledge, occur very frequently in Nubia. The sword is a familiar attribute for an angel, and is, for example, attributed in Coptic literature to Gabriel.¹⁶¹ In the cathedral of Faras, too, Gabriel with a sword was already painted in the violet style.¹⁶² As an angel, such a sword-carrying warrior had a right to wings, but as a warrior he could apparently not be imagined without the horse so often accorded to other war-like saints. Hence the rather remarkable tautology. Finally there is the snake, but we do not know whether this may also be seen as an attribute of Gabriel.

§ 39. *Fresco 6/3*. Fragments of a saint on horseback, of which only a part could be saved. See Pls. 63 and 67.

The rider is seated on a dark-brown horse, of which only the lower part of the legs is white. The horse is galloping. On its back is a saddlecloth, of which the background is yellow, decorated with a light-red motif, with light-red dots in the checks; along the bottom the saddlecloth is edged with black and red lines, between which are small, bright-red circles, probably meant to represent stones. The cruppers are hung with small, pink ornaments, on which there is a little yellow pattern. Unfortunately, the fragmentary remains found during excavation do not allow any further description of the animal. The horseman is even more difficult.

¹⁶¹ C. Detlef G. Müller, *Die Engellehre der koptischen Kirche*, Wiesbaden, 1959, p. 37 and p. 143.

¹⁶² *Catalogue Essen*, ill. 1.

All that we know of him is that his skin is white; he has on a white tunic with yellow (or perhaps yellowy-red) double folds, and red stirrups. Part of his tunic is blowing out behind him. It is still visible below the belly of the horse. His overgarment is rather orange in colour. Between the horse's forelegs is a small man, falling over backwards with his legs drawn up. He has been pierced by the sword of the horseman; there are drops of blood. The small figure is dressed only in red trousers, which reach down to his knees, and which are decorated with a few double folds.

Top right, immediately next to the foremost leg of the horse, we could still see the bare, brown feet of the founder, in the characteristic spread-out position with which we are already familiar. A minute fragment of his light-red coat was also found. A few inscriptions found underneath this scene are difficult to make out, and offer little help in identification.

Dating poses little difficulty, in my opinion, The check motifs, double folds, colours, etc. place this piece in the mature period of the white style; perhaps I may also draw attention here to the many similarities which this fragment shows with the fresco Abdallah Nirqi 6/5a, also a saint on horseback. The stance of the horses is different, but they are both decked-out in the same manner. The position and clothing of the horsemen also show striking similarities. My conjecture is that this piece should be placed at the end of the 10th century.

As to the question of who is portrayed here, it must be said that no satisfactory solution can be given here. We can think of at least two saints, St. Claude and St. Mercurius, both of whom were honoured in Egypt, St. Claude on *11 Ba'ûnah* (June 5th) and St. Mercurius on *25 Hatur* (November 21st), and both of whom were depicted on horseback. A more important similarity is that both pierce a human figure. Of these two saints on horseback St. Claude is, so far, less known in Christian art. In Nubia he has not yet been found (it is, in fact, not yet certain that fresco 70 in Faras Cathedral is of St. Claude), but recently his likeness was re-discovered in a church in Esna,¹⁶³ where the figure of the victim, however, has only been partially preserved. This is regrettable, since, ironically enough, it is often the victims who enable us to identify the saints who are fighting against them. Thus Michałowski managed to identify a saint on horseback in the cathedral of Faras as St. Mercurius, partly on the grounds that the victim of the horseman in Faras was wearing a crown on his head.¹⁶⁴ The same is seen in the pen-drawing in the Vatican Library, where Mercurius is also running his spear through a man with a crown on.¹⁶⁵ There are two other frescoes in Nubia of which I am not certain whether the victim is clearly depicted as a king.¹⁶⁶

This relationship between a victorious Mercurius and a crowned victim is connected with the legend that the saint, who had been tortured and had died long before, returned to earth to kill Julian the Apostate during his campaign against the Parthes. It is known that Julian's contemporaries were already in some uncertainty as to exactly how he died. Since the

¹⁶³ S. Sauneron, Les neuvième et dixième campagnes archéologiques à Esna, mars-avril 1967 et mars-avril 1968 = *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, 67 (1969), pp. 87-116, ill. XIX and XX.

¹⁶⁴ *Die Kathedrale*, p. 128.

¹⁶⁵ *Vatic. Copt.* 66, fol. 287 verso, Cf. M. Cramer, *Koptische Buchmalerei*, Recklinghausen, 1964, ill. 82.

¹⁶⁶ Tamit, *chiesa degli angioli*, *L. N. Med.*, ill. 163 and Abd-El-Gadir, *L. N. Med.*, vol. 1, p. 216.

beginning of the 6th century St. Mercurius has been mentioned in this connection. The earliest source is a Syrian legend about Julian the Apostate, written between 502 and 503. According to this legend, Mercurius is supposed to have appeared to somebody in a dream saying that he was going to kill the emperor Julian.¹⁶⁷ The Copts have praised him in many legends from the 9th century onwards.¹⁶⁸ Historically, however, it seems certain that no St. Mercurius has ever actually existed, but that his *Vita* was based on the description of the lives of other soldier-saints. Caesarea in Cappadocia soon claimed to have his relics. In Egypt Old Cairo and Gamoulah laid claim to this honour.¹⁶⁹ Among the Copts his popularity exceeded that of St. Claude, and on these grounds it is more likely to be Mercurius who is depicted in Abdallah Nirqi than Claude. We have, however, no definite proof, since the victim in Abdallah Nirqi has no crown. This lack of certainty is shared, however, by all the saints on horseback in Abdallah Nirqi — with one exception. Of the six mounted saints, then, (including the angel) there is only one whom we can name with certainty.¹⁷⁰

§ 40. *Fresco 6/4b*. Theophany of the cross. Saved. 980-990 A.D. See Pls. 78-82.

This portrays the half-figure of Christ in a small *mandorla*, surrounded by the four living creatures (man, eagle, calf and lion) with their wings, and a Greek jewelled cross which has been added to the composition. There are many inscriptions, including some next to the founder, on the left.

Christ has an oval head, with the features drawn in a very stylized manner: a red x-mouth, a black moustache, a dark-red, straight nose with angular sides, black eyebrows and pupils, while the remaining lines around the eyes are also red or black. The lines under the eyes are "touched up" with a little green. The black hair is brushed round the head, revealing only the two white ears, and it carries on into a tiny, pointed beard. The hair partly covers the cross on Christ's nimbus. The nimbus is ocre-yellow, but edged with black and red. Christ is dressed in a dark-brown *tunica clavata*, the dark colour being further reinforced by black, vertical lines. His coat is purple, as are the *clavi* of the tunic, but the coat is also covered with wide, double bands of brown. Both shoulders are covered by the coat. With two fingers of his right hand he is pointing to a closed *codex* in the other; its cover is handsomely decorated with stones. The half-figure of Christ shortly and sketchily described here stands out against a greenish background, on which a brick motif can be made out.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ H. Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, Paris, 1909, p. 97.

¹⁶⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, London, 1915, p. 231 sqq., 256 sqq., 283 sqq. On p. 1161 sqq. also an Ethiopian legend.

¹⁶⁹ St. Binon, *Documents grecs inédits relatifs à S. Mercure de Césarée*, Louvain, 1937, p. 15 sqq.

¹⁷⁰ It may be of interest that a recent Ethiopian source, the book of paintings of Qes Kasa, shows Mercurius on a black horse. Cf. W. Staude, *Die ikonographische Regeln in der äthiopische Kirchenmalerei* = *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 13 (1958), pp. 236-308, especially p. 259.

¹⁷¹ This brick motif is also found in frescoes in the cathedral of Faras, fresco 85 (Cf. P. P. V. van Moorsel, *Une Théophanie Nubienne* = *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* XLII (1966, publ. 1968), pp. 297-316, fig. 2); fresco 20, a Holy Trinity (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 84-85); fresco 26, Christ with a chalice in *tondo* (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 11); fresco 34,

The small *mandorla* is surrounded by the yellow wings of the four living creatures. Each of these creatures is seen between a set of three wings, scattered with eyes: above left is the man, above right the eagle, below right the calf and below left the lion. The first two heads, those of the man and the eagle, are the best preserved. Pairs of wings can also be seen protruding from the ends of the jewelled cross, which separates the four creatures from each other. The head of the man is almost feminine in appearance, in spite of the x-mouth and the hawk-nose (the reverse of the angel on horseback in fresco 6/1) especially because of the black hair which, here too, is springing out above the hairband, though this is probably meant to be seen as lying flat on the head. The collar is green, as is also the case with the eagle and also, presumably, with the other two creatures. Originally each creature had its name written next to it. Thus next to the man was written *μελιτων*, next to the eagle *ἀγραμμαπαπ*, and next to the lion *παρμυρα* — all names borrowed from Coptic magic.¹⁷² The name of the calf is now illegible. Next to the other animals we can also read three times *αριος*. These words lead us to the origin of this composition, i.e. the Trishagion-Theophany. This is the composition which in Egypt and Nubia, and probably also in our church, filled the apse calotte; it can be roughly described as Christ sitting on a throne, surrounded by the four living creatures of Revelation IV. Christ usually has a book in his hand, and sometimes, as in chapel 17 in Bawit¹⁷³ there is written on it: *αριος αριος αριος*. This in its turn recalls the thrice repeated “Holy” of the liturgy, that in the Anaphora of St. Mark was sung by the four creatures.¹⁷⁴ What is not found in the Egyptian and Nubian apse compositions, but *is* found here, is the cross. More of this later.

The figure of the founder, on the left, with a palm branch in his hand, is brown, with an oval face; the features, such as the mouth, nose, moustache, eyes and eyebrows, are shown by stylized red and black lines. The man is wearing a small cross on his breast, so he is probably a cleric. He has bare feet, and is wearing a red coat with sleeves, over which is another white garment. His cuffs are black, as are the coverings round his ankles. This is probably a portrait.

As to the date, I propose about 980, on the grounds of the resemblances to the portrait of Bishop Petros in Faras,¹⁷⁵ which must have been painted in about 976, while this fresco was painted earlier than the portrait of Bishop Marianos (1005-1039?) in Faras.¹⁷⁶

As has already been explained in a previous study,¹⁷⁷ this Theophany with the cross in the church of Abdallah Nirqi is by no means alone in the Nubian world. Here is a catalogue of those parallels so far known, with their dates:

Maria lactans (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 76); fresco a106, an enthroned *Hodigitria* (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 73) and fresco 105, a *Hodigitria* in tondo (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 72). All these examples date from the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th. To what extent we can find here the influence of the KEPAMION, which came to Constantinople in 968, must be further studied. (Cf. A. Grabar, *La Sainte Face de Laon / Le Mandyion dans l'art orthodoxe*, Prague, 1931, pp. 24-25).

¹⁷² See A. M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte Koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. III, Brussel, 1930, p. 129, no. 3.

¹⁷³ F. van der Meer, *Maestas Domini*, Città del Vaticano, 1938, p. 260.

¹⁷⁴ F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, Oxford, 1965, pp. 131-132.

¹⁷⁵ Faras, fresco 60 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 57-59).

¹⁷⁶ Faras, fresco 69. (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 81-83).

¹⁷⁷ P. P. V. van Moorsel, *art. cit.*

1. Faras, cathedral, a painting which has disappeared, under fresco 71, from the second half of the 9th century. ¹⁷⁸
2. *Ibid.*, fresco 85, circa 1000. ¹⁷⁹
3. and 4. *Ibid.*, frescoes 37 and 38, circa 1000. ¹⁸⁰
5. Tamit, Sheik Church (St. Raphael), circa 1000. ¹⁸¹
6. Faras, *Rivergate Church*, beginning of the 11th century. ¹⁸²
7. Faras, cathedral, fresco 71 can better be called a cross with Theophany, 11th century. ¹⁸³
8. *Ibid.*, fresco 66, possibly from the 13th century (kind information from Dr. St. Jakobielski). This example is very badly damaged. A reproduction was not available.

Our example is not, then, the oldest, but it belongs to a tradition which first appears in Faras in the second half of the 9th century, and which still exists there in the 13th century. Considering the development within the 9 examples now known to us, we arrive at the following conclusions :

- The figure of Christ becomes progressively smaller, the cross larger.
- After Abdallah Nirqi the inscriptions with **αριοc** are no longer found.
- Next to the frescoes Faras 37 and 38 the inscription CTAYPOC (or CTAYPOY) draws the attention to the cross.

Furthermore, here and in Tamit the cross is decorated as well. As to the significance of our theme, on the basis of what has just been said we can already state the following :

The early disappearance of the thrice-repeated **αριοc** shows that the composition lost its liturgical significance round about 1000. It occurs nowhere in a main nave, let alone in the apse, and yet can be found here and there in the church building, in the cathedral of Faras, no less than five times ! This proves, to my mind, that the theme is devotional. That explains why it is never found but in side naves, among Nubian national saints, and also why it can be offered as an *ex voto*. ¹⁸⁴ It is clear that this composition owes its devotional character to the cross, upon which progressively more attention is fastened, so that in fresco 71 in Faras (no. 7 in our catalogue) we should really speak of a cross with a Theophany, rather than a Theophany with a cross. We already know, from the description of fresco 5/2, to what extent the cross, or rather the jewelled cross, was venerated in Nubia. It was depicted as blooming, or radiating light, draped with a *velum* ¹⁸⁵ or hung with little bells. ¹⁸⁶ All this, I believe, justifies the conclusion that the cross was precious to Nubia, especially the cross-trophy. In view of

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Die Kathedrale*, p. 125.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. P. P. V. van Moorsel, *art. cit.*, fig. 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 88 and 89.

¹⁸¹ *L. N. Med.*, ill. 154.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, ill. 146-147.

¹⁸³ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 44.

¹⁸⁴ This is the case in Abdallah Nirqi, in the *Rivergate Church* of Faras, and perhaps also in Tamit.

¹⁸⁵ See our description of fresco 5/2.

¹⁸⁶ *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 84, 90-91 and 44.

the Nubian relationship with Jerusalem this is hardly surprising. Monneret de Villard mentions even an Ethiopian monarch who, according to the late 6th century passio of St.-Arethas, sent his crown, after his abdication, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.¹⁸⁷ As we have information about a Nubian altar of 1345 in Golgotha, in the place where the head of Adam is supposed to have been found,¹⁸⁸ we may at least presume that this Nubian chapel is older, and does not date from the years after 1200, which were difficult years for Nubia, and for the Nubian Christians.

Three questions remain :

- When this Theophany loses its connection with the Trishagion (as is soon the case) what sort of Theophany does it then become ?
- What is the significance of this trophy of the cross ?
- What is the role of the cross-trophy in this Theophany ?

As far as the first question is concerned, it must first be realised that in the East Theophanies are full of eschatological meaning. Whether or not this expectation takes shape in the liturgy (e.g. in the Trishagion) the Theophanies are always full of it. This is also true of our Theophany, where the cross-trophy seems to impart some new significance to the composition. What significance ? We must consider the jewelled cross in the apse of St. Apollinare in Classe. In the centre of the cross, at the intersection, can be seen the bust of Christ; above the cross is the word IXΘYC, and below it SALVS MVNDI. According to E. Dinkler this apse mosaic is not only meant to depict the Transfiguration on Thabor (witness Moses and Elias), but also the Second Coming of the Lord at the Last Day (witness the jewelled cross).¹⁸⁹ In Nubia the jewelled cross is often placed upon a platform,¹⁹⁰ which has the same significance as the throne upon which, in olden days, Syrian and Egyptian artists placed the jewelled cross when they showed the preparation of the Second Coming. St. Matthew 24,30, says about this second coming of the Lord: “καὶ τότε, φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τον υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετα δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς.”

What the evangelist calls “the sign of the Son of Man” made Origenes think of the cross,¹⁹¹ and Didache,¹⁹² St. Efrem¹⁹³ and St. John Chrysostom¹⁹⁴ have even interpreted it quite clearly as the cross-trophy. The same is done in 973 in Serre near Faras, by the anonymous poet of the CTAYPOC hymn, already familiar to us. The author has Jesus say that at the

¹⁸⁷ U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia Cristiana*, 1938, p. 180.

¹⁸⁸ O. F. A. Meinardus, *The Christian Kingdoms of Nubia = Nubie par divers archéologues et historiens*, n.p., n.y., pp. 161-162.

¹⁸⁹ E. Dinkler, *Das Apsismosaik von S. Apollinare in Classe*, Köln und Opladen, 1964, p. 50 sqq.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. in our catalogue above, numbers 3, 4, 5 and 7 and also Faras, fresco 20, see *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 84.

¹⁹¹ Origenes Explic. Matth. = *G.C.S.* 38, 1933, pp. 100-101.

¹⁹² *Didachè*, 16, 6, edition Funk-Bihlmeyer, Tübingen, 1956, p. 9.

¹⁹³ *S. Ephraem Syrus, In secundum Domini adventum*, edition J. Salvioni, Rome, 1742, p. 213.

¹⁹⁴ S. Johannes Chrysostomos. Hom. 76 in Matth. = paragraph 3 = *P.G.* 58, 698.

Last Judgment he will have the glorious cross in his right hand. Those who have believed in his cross with their whole heart and have performed works of charity out of love of the cross, or have written a hymn to the cross, will have nothing to fear. When the cross is raised and ascends to Heaven, they will be able to follow it. Regular prayer to the cross-trophy is thus a means of obtaining salvation. Here follows a litany of praise to the holy cross, the first lines of which — strikingly enough — glorify the cross as the hope of Christians and a resurrection from the dead. The author also places before the worshippers of the cross of Christ the promise of blessing on earth: they will reap a rich harvest. Strengthened by this belief the Nubians will be able to persevere until the time when the Lord himself comes to gather in his harvest, with the cross-trophy in his hand.¹⁹⁵ It is this jewelled cross which was not only shown by the Nubians next to the old Trishagion Theophany, as in Abdallah Nirqi fresco 5/2, but was also given a place *within* this composition, as in the present example, and its parallels; assuming that it was the Nubians who combined the two elements. But we know of twelve Armenian miniatures from between the 15th and the 17th century which show a cross, in the middle of which is a *clipeus* with Christ on a throne, surrounded by four angels who are sounding the trumpet for the Last Judgment. We see the four living creatures in six of the twelve manuscripts on the secondary page included in the *Deésis*.¹⁹⁶

Is the above assumption correct, even if the Nubians did design this composition?

The elements of this composition are found together in various places after the apse mosaic of St. Pudenziana in Rome; I mean, Christ, the cross and the living creatures. Moreover, Christ with the living creatures is found in the Coptic and Nubian apses and the bust of Christ at the centre of the jewelled cross in the apse of St. Apollinare in Classe, in Palestine and also elsewhere,¹⁹⁷ but the first time that these elements are combined in a Theophany of the cross is in Nubia in about 850.

§ 41. *Fresco 6/5a*. Horseman 3. (Fragment). Saved. About 1000 A.D. See Pls. 83 and 87.

Horseman with founder; below the horseman is a man in a jar. Painted at the same height as the possible St. Mercurius opposite. This fresco, too, has been only fragmentarily preserved. It is possible there was a further sequel to the scene above Horseman 4 and Horseman 5, and St. Epimachos and the Hermit, but it has now disappeared. There was, in any case, room for one. The horseman is seated on a white horse, an ambler, with black hoofs and tail. Its position is determined by the fact that the rider is just reining it, apparently to look down at the man in the jar.

On the horse's back is a saddlecloth, yellow, but decorated with a light-red check motif filled in with light-red dots; the saddlecloth is bordered with a number of alternating green and red stones, set in little yellow circles, the whole pattern being bordered on both sides by two

¹⁹⁵ Cf. E. L. Griffith, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*, Berlin, 1913, pp. 42-47.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. P. P. V. van Moorsel, *art. cit.*, pp. 313-315.

¹⁹⁷ I. Sevcenko mentions several monuments, mainly 6th century, in: K. Weitzmann and I. Sevcenko, *The Moses Cross at Sinai = Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), p. 397. Cf. also: A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte*, Paris, 1958.

red lines. The red tail cruppers are decorated with small, hanging, red ornaments, decorated with a yellow pattern.

Of the horseman, we can still recognize his bare right foot in the red stirrup, decorated with white dots, his white tunic with yellow-red bands, part of which is blowing back under the belly of his horse. We can still see the horizontal pink and green stripes of his overgarment.

Between the stirrup and the right foreleg of the reined-in horse is a small man sitting in a jar almost up to his shoulders. The jar is red, and decorated with mainly red, horizontal bands. The man's skin is brown, but the features of his head, which is held up, are drawn mainly with black lines, as are the outlines; only here and there, as, for example, with the eyes, has red been used.

Above his head is the partially legible inscription :

ΚΥΡΙΛΕΩΝ 'ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥ

Below the man in the jar are some black and red lines. Left of the mounted figure, seen from the viewer's point of view, is the founder, his brown feet in the spread position; he is dressed in a green tunic on which are both white and red *clavi*, and over this he wears a white coat.

The check motif, the double folds and lines, the colours and the drawing (e.g. the x-shaped mouth of the man in the jar) point to a date of about 1000 A.D.¹⁹⁸

It is striking that this fresco shows strong resemblances to the possible St. Mercurius opposite, at the same height (fresco 6/3).

Above, when we were discussing 6/3, we mentioned that often it is the victims who hold the key to identification of the saints who are attacking them. Thus, as we try to identify this saint on horseback, we shall begin with the man in the jar.

Is he a victim? We may assume that this horseman, like almost all saints on horseback, is armed, but it is not clear at whom he is aiming his weapon, as we cannot see it. It is, in

¹⁹⁸ Cfr. K. Michłowski, *Faras, centre artistique de la Nubie Chrétienne*, Leiden, 1966, p. 17 : "Sur les nouvelles fresques exécutées du temps de l'évêque Pétros domine totalement le style rouge-jaune avec une large utilisation du blanc et du vert pour les détails. Une des caractéristiques qui apparaît dans le traitement des vêtements est le filet jaune imitant la broderie. Les robes blanches des anges et des saints sont ornées de larges doubles gallons jaunes soulignant les plis. Dès ce moment le tracé de la bouche rappelle la lettre X et celui du menton Π". See also : Weitzmann, pp. 328-329 : "The double folds are rendered with soft, dark red brush strokes at fairly regular intervals and, while some of them still suggest an intention to model the body, most of them develop an ornament rhythm of their own ... But almost as soon as this new style had taken root in Nubia, artists began to ornamentize the double folds in such a way that they lost their original purpose of modelling the body". And a little further, where he speaks of the archangels painted under Bishop Petros in Faras, in the bishop's room in the cathedral church, he says : "About a century later the Emmanuel figure was flanked by two worshipping angels, whose white mantles were decorated with double lines which still reveal by their swinging curves and rhythmic order the derivation from the traditional fold system, but by now have acquired the character of richly embroidered ribbons, sewn to the garment. The yellow color of these ribbons apparently stands for gold which was intended to give to the archangels the impression of imperial splendour ... The garments with the ornamentized double folds are quite often enriched by a pattern of dotted rosettes which fills spaces between the lines".

theory, possible that he wants to hurt the man in the jar, and that the latter, expecting this, is asking for pity. This is, however, probably not the case; or anyway that is not how I see it, for the following reasons :

- The victim of the saint on horseback is usually shown as already defeated. Any preliminary discussions which may have taken place are not shown.
- Our man in the jar is quoting a liturgical text, i.e. "Kyrie eleison". This places him on the other side.
- The saint on horseback is reining in his horse. He is not galloping, like the presumed Mercurius, and like horseman 4, whom we shall see later. There, enemies are being slain, and the rider is riding at them at the gallop. Here it seems as if he is just passing by somebody who is in need, and who calls upon him for help, like another Christian who is faced with a saint more powerful than himself. For these reasons, especially when we take them all together, I think the man in the jar qualifies as someone in need calling for help, but not as a victim of the saint on the horse. Apparently he is in danger of becoming the victim of something, or somebody else. Like King Eurystheus, who was afraid of the Erymanthian boar brought to the place by Hercules, and in his fear crawled into a *Pithos*. This is, however, the only iconographical parallel known to us.

No other pictures of people in jars have yet been found, either with or without saints on horseback. I do not rule out the possibility that this man has also got into a jar out of fear. On the other hand, it is quite possible that he was *put* into it. In either case he may be in danger. As we do not, unfortunately, know the legend which is illustrated here, a study of the water-jar in the late ancient world would be of use. In general it can be said that the jar was a symbol for water, which in that part of the world was a precious commodity, and also of life. Ecclesiastes 12,6 also mentions the jar as such. It is not, then, unreasonable that Mr. H. I. Marrou has expressed the idea, in connection with this fresco, that it may refer to the coming of new life, the resurrection¹⁹⁹. Though this does provide a possible interpretation which clarifies the general meaning of the incident, the legendary event which is illustrated here still remains a mystery.

§ 42. *Fresco 6/5b*. St. John Chrysostom and Petou. Saved. About 1000 A.D. See Pls. 84 and 85.

St. John Chrysostom and a founder called Petou, both shown full face. The inscriptions read as follows : Τ Ο Α Τ Ι Ο Ϛ Ι Ξ Α Ν Ν Η Ϛ Χ Ρ Ι Ϛ Τ Ο Μ Ο Ϛ and + Π Ε Τ Ο Υ

✠

¹⁹⁹ A comment by Prof. H. I. Marrou at the eighth International Congress for Christian Archeology in Barcelona, October 1969. Mr. L. Török (Budapest) intends to publish in the Proceedings of the 2nd Nubian Conference (Warsaw, 1972) a study about "the slave in the jar".

On the left stands the saint, with the physionomy which has been typical of him since middle Byzantine times — a thin head with protruding ears.²⁰⁰

Our saint has a long, narrow face, first sketched in yellow, with the features drawn in afterwards, mainly in black and red. The lines under the eyes are shown in light green. The eyebrows, moustache, hair and pointed beard are jet black. The mouth was probably x-shaped. The nimbus is yellow, ringed around the outside first with black and then with red. Round his neck the saint wears a wide collar, the colour of which is difficult to define; it may have been green. He is wearing a white tunic, with a red border round the bottom, a handsome “*epitrachilion*” and a “*felonion*” with little bells. The check motif, so familiar to us from other paintings, is carried over from the *felonion* on to the tunic. On the *felonion* the check motif is made up of brown lines. Because John is carrying in his left hand a fine yellow *codex*, the lid of which is set with precious stones, and with his other hand is making a gesture of speech, the middle of the front part of his *felonion* is caught up; this allows us to see his *epitrachilion*, made up of two parallel bands, decorated with checks, circles and squares, some of which are green. The bishop saint is wearing red shoes.

The founder Petou, on the other hand, the priest shown “floating” next to him, is barefoot; otherwise he is wearing the same garments as his *protector*: a white, or perhaps greyish, tunic, with a red border round the bottom and with double vertical lines on the cuffs; an *epitrachilion* with the same motifs as those of his patron, also decorated with little bells, and a white *felonion*. He, too, has in his left hand a *codex*, the cover of which is set with fine red stones; his right hand is held to his breast. The skin of the *protégé* is reddish-brown, the same colour as his collar. The facial features are drawn carelessly, in black.

It would not appear to be difficult to date this piece. I consider it to be a product of that period which was so fruitful in Abdallah Nirqi, the last years of the 10th century. It cannot have been painted later than Horseman 3, above, which I have dated about 1000.

From an iconographical point of view various things should be said. First of all, it is striking that John Chrysostom has a different physionomy here from that in the older fresco, in Faras.²⁰¹ As we have said, our fresco fits into the tradition of the Middle Byzantine period, which also continued later in Byzantium.

It is also remarkable that John is without his *omoforion*, whereas in Faras at that same time it was shown in several portraits of bishops.²⁰²

The fact that the *felonion* is decorated with bells is not new in Nubia after Faras.²⁰³

St. John Chrysostom was well known in Nubia. Not long ago W. H. C. Frend found in Qasr Ibrim a Coptic MS with a sermon by the saint on the four living creatures, which, as we know, were so much venerated in the Nile area.²⁰⁴ We have not yet, however, sufficient

²⁰⁰ By contrast with his portrait in Faras; See *Catalogue Essen*, ill. 10, where the head of John Chrysostom is broader.

²⁰¹ See footnote 200.

²⁰² T. Gołowski, *Remarques sur l'iconographie de l'évêque de "Rivergate Church"* = *Mélanges K. Michalowski*, Warsaw, 1966, pp. 97-101.

²⁰³ Cf. *Die Kathedrale*, ill. 59 and 83.

²⁰⁴ W. H. C. Frend, *Nubia as an outpost of Byzantine Cultural Influence* = *Byzantinoslavica* 29 (1966), pp. 319-326, especially p. 324.

information to give a reasonable complete picture of the place occupied by John Chrysostom in the religious life of Nubia.

§ 43. *Fresco 6/6a*. Horseman 4. (St. Theodorus Stratelates?) Saved. See Pls. 92 and 93.

Shortly before 1000 A.D.

Saint on horseback, killing a monster in the presence of a woman. The saint is riding the best-preserved horse in the whole collection of Abdallah Nirqi. The horse is dark-red in colour, with a black tail and a white front to its head. Both forelegs are raised rather high. The horse's harness, which is round the animal's head and neck, is white, with touches of green, hung with shells and little round bells. This white is repeated in the white ends of the forelegs. On the animal's back is a black-bordered saddle, upon which the rider is seated; he is shown full-face, but not, of course, side-saddle. Here again we see double perspective at play.

As to the oval head, in so far as it is still visible, we can say that the complexion is white, and that the features are shown in red and black. The mouth is, here too, simply a red x, the chin is drawn in with a few quick, black strokes, and so is the drooping moustache above it. The head seems to have been sketched in first in red, but these red outlines are hidden behind the black hair, which has been added afterwards; the hair continues into a little pointed beard, and also lies in waves on the shoulders. The nimbus, the colour of which can no longer be distinguished, is surrounded by a red line. Unfortunately, there is no trace of any writing. Like the saints on horseback in our frescoes 6/3 and 6/5a this fourth rider is also wearing a light-coloured, probably white, tunic, decorated with double bands, and here, too, they are still visible, particularly at the feet. Over this he is wearing a sort of coat of mail, decorated with checks made up of wavy red lines (a motif already used in fresco e/east) with dark-red dots where the lines cross and green dots in the squares. The coat of mail is held in at the waist by a white band, loosely knotted; below it fall stripes of alternating green, white and red-brown, which show up well against a horizontal, wide, red stripe, edged at the bottom with green, which also seems to belong to the overgarment. Over the coat of mail the horseman wears a purple *chlamys*, bordered with white, which blows out behind him in a very decorative manner, thus emphasizing the flying action of the saint on horseback. Over the *chlamys* run broad, dark bands, accompanied by thin parallel lines, also dark. The whole thing is strewn with stars made up of white dots. A green collar is surrounded by the flapping coat. In his raised hand the horseman is holding in a strap a cross-lance, with which he is spearing a monster which is under the raised forelegs of his mount. There is blood spurting out. On the right, sketched in yellow, is something that looks like a tree, behind which is a small woman, painted in light brown. It must, furthermore, be said of this fresco, and, indeed, of the series which follows, that they have been painted on to the wall, and not (as in the case of the probable St. Mercurius and horseman 3) half on the wall and half on the vaulting, which has since disappeared.

As to the date, I consider that the check motif, the double folds, the drawing of the face and features, and indeed the whole posture, particularly that of the horseman but also that

of his fiery mount, provide sufficient points of contact to justify dating shortly before 1000.

Identification of the man is more difficult. That is the reason why we have simply called him "horseman 4", following on from the angel on horseback, the probable St. Mercurius and horseman 3. Originally this saint was thought to be St. George. For although there was not, it is true, much left of the defeated monster, and identification on these grounds was therefore difficult, there was always the attribute of the woman looking on. It is, however, a fact, that the victory of St. George over the dragon and the freeing of the princess, so well-known in the West, hardly occurs at all in the Greek MSS. In this connection Delehayé draws attention to a rather late Greek text, not older than the 14th century.²⁰⁵ Thus it is improbable that this horseman is St. George.

A perhaps not unacceptable alternative is St. Theodorus Stratelates, in actual fact a duplication of St. Theodorus Tiro. St. Theodorus Stratelates (the general) was first described in the so-called Acts of Augarus in the 9th century. There we read how the saint prepares to fight the dragon which is plaguing his natal city, Euchaïta. He comes to the district where the dragon is, and falls down on the grass in sleep. A devout woman, Eusebia, warns him of the danger which threatens him. But Theodorus, armed with the sign of the cross and strengthened by prayer, challenges the dragon (while Eusebia weeps) to come out of its lair. The dragon comes out, making the ground tremble under its feet, and is immediately speared by the holy man. Many heathen soldiers who witness this, embrace Christianity.²⁰⁶ The fact that this St. Theodorus Stratelates (however legendary his existence was next to his original "ego", St. Theodorus Tiro) was venerated by the Copts, is evident from, for example, MSS. of his biographies. Three such MSS. include pen-drawings :

1. *Vat. Copt. 66*, fol. 210 verso, from the 9th or 10th century (photo in M. Cramer, *Koptische Buchmalerei*, Recklinghausen (1964), ill. 81),
2. *Vat. Copt. 58*, fol. 194 verso, from the same time,
3. *Pierpont Morgan 613*, fol. 1 verso, 903 A.D.

These drawings are accompanied by inscriptions, while the horseman is always shown spearing a monster; only in *Vat. Copt. 58* is this difficult to see. The first two pen-drawings also show the woman.

In view of these signs of veneration of St. Theodorus Stratelates by the Copts in the 9th and 10th centuries, it does not seem impossible that at the end of the 10th century he also enjoyed fame in Nubia. A final argument for identifying our horseman as St. Theodorus Stratelates is his purple *chlamys*, strewn with the familiar stars made up of white dots. Clothing of this colour and with this decoration has so far been seen only on Christ, on Mary and on the probable David. And now on this horseman. From the „*Encomium*” of Theodorus of Antioch on St. Theodorus Stratelates, as published by E. A. Wallis Budge,²⁰⁷ it appears that Theodorus

²⁰⁵ Cf. H. Delehayé, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, Paris, 1909, p. 74.

²⁰⁶ Cf. H. Delehayé, *o. c.*, p. 27.

²⁰⁷ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, London, 1915, pp. 1-48.

Stratelates was of royal blood. This would explain the purple colour of his *chlamys* and the decorative motifs on it. We cannot, however, be certain. That is why it is more prudent to continue to call him „horseman 4’’.²⁰⁸

§ 44. *Fresco 6/6a’*. Hermit. (Fragment). Saved. About 1000 A.D. See Pls. 90, 92 and 93.

A badly damaged and not completely preserved wall-painting of a standing man, full-face. Red and yellow are the predominant colours. The face makes rather a stereotype impression, and is almost mask-like, with the small x-shaped mouth above the white beard, and the almost square eyes below their heavy eyebrows which run into the nose. All these features are painted almost entirely in red. The large ears, too, which are not at the same level. The hair is white. The nimbus is yellow, surrounded by a red border.

Of the man’s clothing we can only say that he is wearing a large yellow coat, which reveals the neck and a part of the chest — unless, that is, he is wearing a white tunic. The folds of the coat are shown by a number of double red lines, as usual in the white style. The man is probably also wearing a belt. With the index finger of his closed left hand he is pointing to the left; in the other hand he is holding something round (a handle?) that, because of the damage to the fresco, cannot be made out in further detail, though it may be the strap of a jar or bag. It seems certain that this must be a hermit. They were known in Nubia. Which hermit it is supposed to be, however, is uncertain. Not St. Onuphrius anyway, who is shown in the cathedral of Faras in his hair shirt.²⁰⁹ As to the date, we are here, I believe, in the flourishing period of the white style, about 1000.

§ 45. *Fresco 6/6b*. Horseman 5. (St. Phoibammpn?). Saved. Beginning of the 11th cent. See Pls. 92, 94 and 95.

Picture of a saint on horseback, with servant. This is the only horseman in the series in Abdallah Nirqi who has *no* halo. In view of the surroundings in which this man is portrayed, however, we must still presume him to be a saint. His face is sketched rather roughly with a few black lines. The hair, beard, mouth, nose and eyebrows are also black, but varied in places (e.g. in the eyebrows) with small, red lines. The head-covering is striking — a yellow hat with white dots at the lower edge and little chains on the right and left, hung with little bells; a remarkable whole, so far unknown in Nubian painting, which we can only relate to the Crown of King Caleb of Axum, of circa 525 A.D., which was also decorated with little chains.²¹⁰ Seen from our position, on the left of the horseman a cross (also yellow) is painted. Although the horseman is shown full face, he is mounted in the usual manner, already familiar to us. His bare right leg stands out, apart from its sketchy, white outlines, against the white, yellow-bordered saddle, which is decorated with a red check motif scattered with darker dots. The

²⁰⁸ It is perhaps worth mentioning that a recent Ethiopian source which we have already mentioned, i.e. the book of paintings of Qes Kasa, attributes to Téodoros Mesraqawi a red horse. See: W. Staude, *Die ikonographischen Regeln in der äthiopischen Kirchenmalerei* = *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 13 (1958), pp. 236-308, especially p. 259.

²⁰⁹ Faras, fresco 53 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 74-75).

²¹⁰ U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia Cristiana*, Rome, 1938, p. 180.

horseman is dressed in a grey, scaly jacket; the scales are edged with white. Round his waist he wears a belt, also grey, with round, white buttons on it. The *chlamys* is white, decorated with orange stripes which follow the rhythm of that part which is flying out behind the horseman. A yellow *fibula* holds the coat together. The horse is white, as far as we can still make out, though the outline is drawn in yellow. Of the animal's legs little remains to be seen. The nose, however, the rims of the ears and the two neckbands with white shells, from which bells are hanging, are orange. The horseman, or the saint on horseback, is holding up his bared right arm to spear with his staff (formerly a cross-stave) ²¹¹ a monster or something of the sort, which we can no longer see. The lance is dark in colour. With his left hand he is holding the reins, which also seem to be held by somebody, perhaps supposed to be a *page*, shown just in front of the horse, full-face. From the head and right arm the man would seem to be dark brown; his other hand is hidden behind a shield, the yellow outline of which is still clearly visible. The rest of the "page" is also only preserved in the yellow sketch lines.

What are we to make of this fresco? The anatomy is lamentable, compared with that of the foregoing two horsemen. Also, here the horse appears to be more of an attribute than a *dramatis persona*, as it was there. Thus we cannot ascribe this fresco to the same master or masters who produced the preceding three saints on horseback. Nevertheless, there is much to be said for placing this piece in the white style, though perhaps somewhat later. But it cannot be much later than the beginning of the 11th century.

Another, no less important point, is that of identification. Immediately next to the raised right hand is written :

A I
Γ Β
Ι Α
Ο Μ
C Ν

It is obvious that above the A of "Hagios" another O, and perhaps also a cross, have disappeared. So it would seem that from the horseman's own name one more letter (perhaps two) is missing.

If we look at the *graffito* a little lower, (See Plate 96), we read :

Ι C Ἀ Ν Κ Π
· · · ϕ ο ι ι β μ ω ν
Α Ι Θ Ι ω ψ .

This makes it even more probable that this is St. Phoibammon, who is already portrayed as a crowned horseman in Bawit, Chapel 27. ²¹² There, however, he is not killing anybody

²¹¹ Information from Mr. and Mrs. J. Jacquet.

²¹² J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, Le Caire, 1904, ill. LIII-LIV.

with his lance. He is one of the four saints with which lists of martyrs usually begin : Victor, Phoibammon, Georgius and Menas. ²¹³ His feast day is, for the Copts, on 27th *Tubah*; he was a soldier, and died a martyr's death under Maximianus and Arrianus.

§ 46. *Fresco 6/6b*. St. Epimachos. Saved. Beginning of 11th century. See Pls. 92, 95, 97 and 98.

St. Epimachos on horseback. Above his head is an inscription which reads : Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ
ΕΠΙΜΑΧΟΣ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ (sic!) ΤΟΥ ΧΥ Below the front quarters of the
mount are two inscriptions, the lower of which, probably also the older, is a dedication,
consisting of the same sort of formulae as the dedication in 6/4b. The saint is shown full
face, although his horse is moving to the right and is in profile, just as was the case with the
previous saints on horseback.

The face is almost round, and with its red and black features it must have made a fairly
stereotype impression. The mouth is, unfortunately, no longer visible; the nose is rather
angular. The black hair is brushed round the head, in a few powerful strokes, leaving the small,
white, pointed ears free. On his head Epimachos is wearing a handsome yellow crown (probably
intended to be gold). This is bordered with black, but round the edge are, again, white stones.
In the middle of the crown is a cross, the left and right extremities of which are crowned with
"Tropfen". Five round, white stones are painted on the front. Around the crown is a yellow
nimbus, surrounded by red-black lines. Rather remarkable are the three yellow crosses painted
on the top of the nimbus. Epimachos did formerly have a collar, probably green in colour
(as, for example was the case with Horseman 4) and he is dressed in a yellow coat, on which
is a check pattern made up of red lines. A belt, also yellow, and bordered with red stones, is tied
round the coat. St. Epimachos is holding his bared right arm aloft, in a position like that of
Horseman 5. In his hand he is holding a fine jewelled cross. ²¹⁴ Round his wrist he is wearing
a beautiful *bracelet*, to which a bell is attached. Part of a similar sort of *bracelet* can be seen
on his left hand, in which, behind the head of his steed, he is holding a shield with a cross on it.
The horse is dark red, and has on a handsome girth and collar with herring-bone motifs, from
which bells are suspended. The animal is remarkably short at the back, and, like Horseman 5,
shows little sign of the flying gait of the three previous animals.

The drawing of St. Epimachos' face, his posture, and the check motif on his coat place
him, I believe, in the white style and considering the position of his horse, in the same period
as that in which Horseman 5 was painted, i.e. the beginning of the 11th century, at the latest.

The saint Epimachos is not totally unknown in Nubia as a horseman. He was probably
the patron of the church in the temple of Abu Hoda, where there is also a painting of him.
Weigall describes this wall-painting as follows : "a large horse with rich trappings, and having
upon it a rider — depicted with much flying drapery, and wearing a crown studded with blue
stones — who is thrusting downwards with a long spear at a dragon. Above the horse's head

²¹³ H. Delehay, Les martyrs d'Egypte = *Analecta Bollandiana* 40 (1932), p. 113.

²¹⁴ See the cross in the hand of Queen Martha in Faras, fresco 19 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 77 and 79).

there is a circle enclosing the head of God or an angel".²¹⁵ The figure of God or of an angel *in tondo* is missing from our painting, neither is there — or anyway not any longer — a dragon.

St. Epimachos was venerated in Egypt. A St. Epimachos of Pelusium is known there, who was remembered on 4 *Hatur*.²¹⁶ Perhaps this Epimachos is the same one as the martyr who, according to Eusebius, died under Decius.²¹⁷ As both of them, in their legends, are devoid of any historical character, Delehayé considers it possible that they are one and the same saint.²¹⁸ The saint Epimachos whom the Copts celebrate on 14 *Paknoh*, is also buried in Pelusium, so that he, too, is probably the same one. Another St. Epimachos, who can be mentioned in order to complete our documentation is remembered on 25 *Abib*.²¹⁹

§ 47. *Fresco 6/8*. Traces of two periods. Saved. See Pl. 91.

A puzzling painting, because it was not completed at one time. The oldest part of this fragmentarily preserved fresco shows the trunk and shoulders of a male figure, clad in a terracotta coloured tunic and a priest's coat — the type of coat, that is, worn by Old Testament priests in ancient Christian art. This is a wide coat, held together at the breast by a *fibula*.²²⁰ In Bawit Zacharias was depicted wearing the same sort of coat.²²¹ The present state of the fragment is too bad for us to be able to see whether the coat is also decorated with stars made up of the familiar white dots, but this possibility cannot be ruled out. The gesture of the right hand, too, with the thumb and middle finger held together and the others stretched out, is not found among New Testament saints. It resembles, it is true, the gesture of blessing, originally the *geste* of the speaker, such as is often found in Nubia, but there the hand is held straight up, while here it is shown in a horizontal position. What this man was holding in his other hand can, unfortunately, no longer be seen. One way or another there is little that we can say about the original painting. But I believe that it certainly depicted an Old Testament priest. Whether it was Melchizedek, Zacharias or some other priest we can no longer tell.

In a later period, however, the top part of this painting was renewed, after a new layer of plaster had first been lavishly applied over the top of the old one. This has been roughly done. The white, asymmetrical head, which can hardly be described as oval, is sketched in red, while the sharp, irregular nose and eyes are painted in black, alternating with the same red. Above the small mouth (*not* x-shaped!) is a heavy, drooping moustache, black, like the pointed beard and the hair which hangs down to the shoulders. Of the *halo* all that we can now see are

²¹⁵ A. Weigall, *A Report of the Antiquities of Lower Nubia*, Oxford, 1907, pp. 139-141, quoted in *L. N. Med.*, vol. I, p. 174.

²¹⁶ Cf. M. van Esbroeck, S. Epimaque de Péluse = *Analecta Bollandiana* 84 (1966), pp. 399-442 and : *Id.*, S. Epimaque de Péluse, la translation arabe = *Analecta Bollandiana* 85 (1967), pp. 441-457.

²¹⁷ Cf. Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, 41, 17. Ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin, 1955, p. 258.

²¹⁸ H. Delehayé, Les martyrs d'Egypte = *Analecta Bollandiana* 40 (1922) p. 85.

²¹⁹ H. Delehayé, *o.c.*, p. 108.

²²⁰ Cf. Picture of Melchizedek in Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome (See : J. Wilpert, *Die Römische Mosaiken und Malereien*, Freiburg/Breisgau, 1916, ill. 8.).

²²¹ J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, vol. 2, Le Caire, 1916, ill. VIII.

a few bits of red and black outline. The excavators called the man “John the Baptist”. We may compare him, for example, with a wall-painting of John the Baptist *in tondo* in Bawit,²²² with which it does indeed share striking common features. But exact identification remains difficult. As to dating the two periods, this, too, creates problems. The last period is undoubtedly from the white style, but later, I believe, than the early 11th century. It is still very difficult to determine, when the Old Testament priest can have been painted because of the present state of the fresco. We shall have to leave the question open.

Plan of the preserved paintings from the violet style

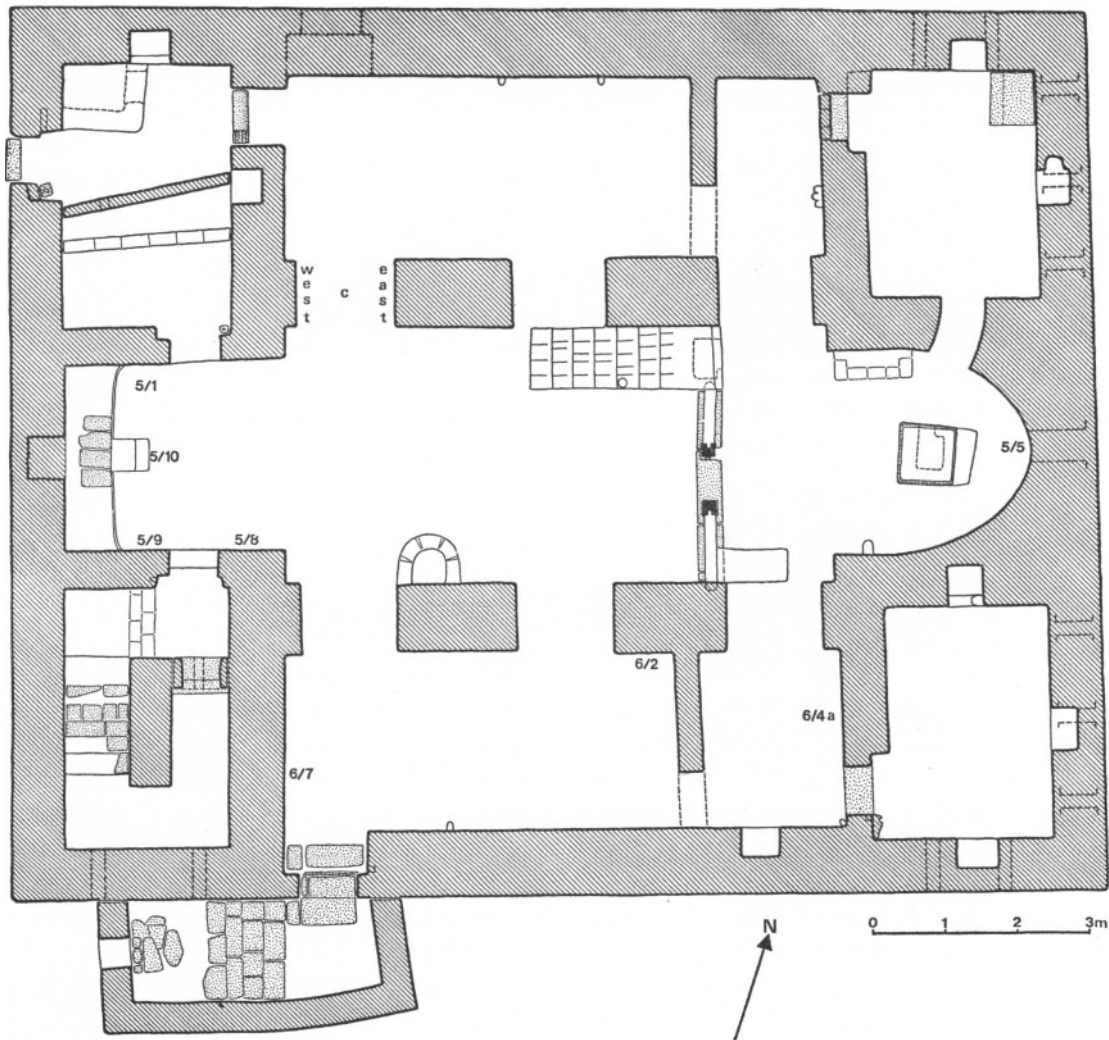


Fig. 3

²²² *Ibidem*, ill. VIII/2.

§ 48. *Fresco 6/9*. Fragments. Not saved.

A few fragments in shades of yellow and red, on the left of a dividing wall in the right side-nave. The remains cannot be identified. The most we can do is to guess at some kind of building, above right.

Iconographical observations.

The themes depicted on the walls of our church invite not only a description of the various items, but also some general iconographical observations, however modest these may perforce turn out to be.

A *The violet style*

The most important fresco from the period of the violet style must have been the apse fresco, the largest (even though the remains which we found were few) and also the one which is considered the most important from the liturgical point of view. Like many other apse frescoes in Nubia ours, too, is Coptic in character, even though it is one of the oldest frescoes which Nubia has given us. But what else in our church was painted in the violet style? A plan of the church will perhaps make this clearer :

For the plan of the saved paintings from the violet style : see fig. 3.

c/east : *Mary Eleousa*?

c/west : Fragments of a Saint.

5/1 : Vague traces

5/5 : Fragments of the apse-decoration : *Maria Orans* between Apostles.

5/8 : Fragments of whitewash and coptic plaster.

5/9 : Fragments on whitewash and coptic plaster.

5/10 : Vague traces.

6/2 : Fragments of two standing figures.

6/4a : Fragments of a protection by a Virgin *Hodigitria*.

6/7 : Archangel with *protégé*.

Our problem is : is what has remained to us from this period merely a chance selection? — a selection rendered even more casual by the fact that our archeologists did not always have the opportunity, in the short time at their disposal, to find out what remains from an earlier period may have been hidden under the white frescoes which were discovered. Is it mere chance that in the entire left side-nave not a single painting from the violet style was found? We know that the Nubians, even in the 8th century, had no strict iconographical plan, such as we find, for example, in Byzantine churches. Needless to say, the search is made much more difficult by not knowing what pictures we should expect. The iconographical possibilities presented by our Nubians are numerous! There are, however, various observations we should make. *Probably* there was no Nativity scene painted in Abdallah Nirqi's violet period, as there was in Faras.²²³ We would expect to find such a painting in the same place as a Nativity

²²³ Faras, frescoes 36 and 36A. See : *Die Kathedrale*, p. 145.

scene was painted in our church at a later date. It is a rare fact in Nubia that as well as the apse composition this theme is also almost always found in the same place, i.e. at the front of the left side-nave. The second thing to be remarked upon is that at the end of the 8th century Abdallah Nirqi had already acquired a protective Mary *Hodigitria*. It is sufficiently well known that this old, originally Palestinian, form of painting, also enjoyed popularity in Faras in the violet style. Thirdly, it is striking that in Abdallah Nirqi an archangel was painted as early as the 8th century, together with a *protégé* (fresco 6/7). In Faras, too, traces are already found in the violet period of a great devotion to angels, ²²⁴ while at that time somebody also painted a *protégé* with his patron. ²²⁵ Fourthly, it is worth noticing that except in the apse, our church has left no portraits of apostles from this period, such as found indeed in the cathedral of Faras. ²²⁶ One saint who was already painted in Faras at an early date, but is reproduced in Abdallah Nirqi only in the white style, is St. Anne. ²²⁷ Important Christological themes such as the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the Transfiguration on Mount Thabor and the Ascension, which were all familiar enough in 8th-century Palestine, ²²⁸ are not passed on to us from Nubia, either at this time or later. Abdallah Nirqi is no exception to this. If, therefore, we want to, or have to, speak about influences from Palestine already being present in the violet style period, then we are confined, iconographically speaking, within certain limits. Right from the beginning the Nubians, like the Egyptian Christians, attached great importance to the devotional element in their choice of the themes which they depicted in their churches, while in Palestine a theologically balanced scheme of iconography was already emerging. The question is whether Nubia was dependent in this upon a selection made by Egypt from what was being done elsewhere, or whether this selection was the result of Nubia's own choice.

B. *The white style*

For Abdallah Nirqi the white style only begins in the last quarter of the 10th century, when this style had already become traditional. In this, Abdallah Nirqi is hardly an experimental garden, but one in which one finds fruits which have already ripened elsewhere. Is this also true of its iconography? This matter can best be left until we have characterized the iconography of Abdallah Nirqi as a whole.

The first point is that the apse composition has been maintained. We now know that this is not unusual, as almost up to the last days of Christian art in Nubia this old Coptic theme was faithfully adhered to. It is true that in the course of time the apse of the cathedral in Faras was enriched with portraits of dignitaries, shown as *protégés*, but there are no traces of these

²²⁴ *Ibidem*, frescoes a89 (Michael), 98 (Gabriel) and 99 (Michael).

²²⁵ *Ibidem*, fresco a47 (Nubian protected by a Saint). Cf. M. de Grooth, *Mögliche Einflüsse auf die nubische Protektionsgebäude* = *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 22 (1971), pp. 9-19.

²²⁶ *Ibidem*, fresco a106 (St. Peter and St. John).

²²⁷ *Ibidem*, fresco a112.

²²⁸ Cf. the Palestinian relic shrine in the Vatican Library and : Joannes Damascenus, *Oratio Apologetica prior, adversus eos qui sacres Imagines abjiciunt cap. VIII D - E* = Michael le Quien, *Johannes Damascenus, Opera Omnia quae exstant et ejus nomine circumferuntur*, vol. I, Paris, 1712, p. 310.

in our church. It is certainly true that our apse painting is badly battered, but it is also true that such high-ranking *protégés* might be expected to be found in a provincial capital such as Faras rather than in a smaller place. Moreover, the custom of painting prelates and notables in the apse in this way indicates that this motif, which was originally hieratic, was employed in Nubia in a more homely way. That the „honour of the apses” was not for ordinary people, but was reserved for those of high degree, makes no basic difference to this.

Secondly it must be noted that in this period Abdallah Nirqi acquires a Nativity scene with a typically “Palestinian” crib, accompanied, exceptionally enough, by a founder. Where our third theme, the cross-trophy, is concerned, and its popularity in Abdallah Nirqi, here, too, our church is no exception to the Nubian rule. Although we may look in vain in the violet style for the jewelled cross, slightly later its prestige rises enormously, and it is found in many places and in many compositions in Nubian churches.²²⁹ We find the cross-trophy shown in bloom, or radiating light (though there are no exemplars of these in our church), or else draped with a *velum* or decorated with garlands hung with bells; from the second half of the 9th century we also find the Theophany with the cross, nine examples of which have been preserved, and which is a unique composition, found so far only in Nubia. We would need to make a comparison with the devotion to the cross in neighbouring lands to establish whether this popularity of the cross-trophy was an exceptional phenomenon, and we should also find out to what extent the various forms of painting so far unknown to us may have been imported into Nubia. It is a fortunate circumstance that as well as those paintings of the cross-trophy, which we have already mentioned we also have the CTAYPOC text as evidence of devotion to the “sign of the Son of man” (St. Matthew 24,30) in the Nubia of this time. This makes it clear that this is no mere chance phenomenon, nor one which existed only in the *art* of Nubia. The “sign of the Son of man” is full of eschatological significance, and that is how the cross-trophy in our paintings should also be considered. It touched the Nubians deep down in their very existence. That, we believe, is the only explanation for the frequent appearance of both the cross-trophy and the cross-Theophany in their churches. As Weitzmann believes that there were direct Syro-Palestinian influences during this period, we may certainly ascribe a large part of the growth and the luxuriant bloom of the devotion to the cross to the influence of Jerusalem.

Earlier (i.e. in the violet style) the Egyptian Christians did, according to Weitzmann, act as an intermediary between Palestine and Nubia, but they didn’t play this part in the white style period.²³⁰

And, in fact, Palestinian representations of the Cross with the head of Christ in its centre are numerous. On the other hand, our composition of Christ with the four living Creatures seems to have been born in Egypt. So, maybe, the Nubians made a “conflation” of both themes, painting Christ with the Cross-Trophy *and* the four living Creatures in their churches.²³¹

²²⁹ See the catalogues given with the description of frescoes 5/2 and 6/4b in Abdallah Nirqi.

²³⁰ Weitzmann, p. 334.

²³¹ See P. P. V. van Moorsel, Die Nubier und das glorreiche Kreuz = *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 47 (1972), pp. 125-134, especially p. 134.

So far in our iconographical observations we have come across various different spheres of influence : that of the Coptic liturgy in the apse fresco, the iconography of the holy places of Palestine in the Nativity scene, and a growing conviction that the devotion to the cross-trophy also came from the Holy Land. This last theme must be strongly connected with the Second Coming of Christ at the day of the Lord. Another very Coptic characteristic is also found in the place which Nubian art attributes to Mary. It is a well-known fact that in 431 the General Council of Ephesus, acting at the suggestion of the Egyptian Patriarch Cyrillus of Alexandria, bestowed upon Mary the name of *Theotokos*, Mother of God. This pronouncement of the Council also helped to stimulate the development of the place occupied by Mary in iconography, including, of course, in the place from which the initiative for this dogma was taken, i.e. Egypt. Mary is frequently depicted in Coptic monasteries as *Hodigitria*, as *Orante*, or as *Galaktotrophousa*, to mention only the best-known.²³² No small wonder, then, that in nearby Nubia we also find many traces in art of veneration of the Holy Virgin, as early as the violet style. Gołgowski, in his study on the Virgin in Faras, mentions two examples of the standing *Hodigitria* from this period,²³³ while we also know of one in Abdallah Nirqi (fresco 6/4a). Most of the frescoes of the Mother of God in the cathedral of Faras, however, date from the first half of the 11th century, i.e. from just after the beginning of the second period in Abdallah Nirqi, and even then the standing *Hodigitria* already seems to be much loved. In our church fragments were found of two frescoes from about 1000 A.D., showing the standing *Hodigitria*, and a third wall-painting showing an enthroned *Hodigitria* from that same time. Although the standing *Hodigitria* was Palestinian in origin, the open, raised, right hand shows that this motif was passed on to the Nubians by the Copts. One exception within the range of frescoes of the Holy Virgin so far known to us, is the painting of the Mother of God as an *Orante* in our church,²³⁴ which also dates from the end of the 11th century, or a little later. The only answer that can be given to the questions arising from this is simply to point to our apse fresco, where Mary is shown as an *Orante*. We know that Mary is also depicted in Bawit as an *Orante*, in four apse frescoes. To sum up, however, I believe we may say that as far as the veneration of the Mother of God is concerned, Nubia may well compete with Egypt, and continues along the path already embarked upon there. I have explained elsewhere how the fact that round about 1000 A.D. the typically Coptic motif of the *Galaktotrophousa* was still being painted in Faras, is a sign of the close ties the Nubians had with the Copts in Egypt.²³⁵ This is the same relationship with the Alexandrian patriarchate, the love of which towards the Mother of God is also a sign among the Christians in Abdallah Nirqi.

Equally strongly related to Coptic life is the great devotion of the Nubians to angels. Though the violet style already gives evidence of this, including in Abdallah Nirqi, this is also true of the white style. In our church nine angels were painted at this time, three of them

²³² For this last subject see : P. P. V. van Moorsel, *Die Stillende Gottesmutter und die Monophysiten = Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 281-290.

²³³ Gołgowski, *Virgin*, ill. 1 (fresco 90 at Faras) and 2 (fresco a18, also at Faras).

²³⁴ Cf. Gołgowski, *Virgin*, p. 297.

²³⁵ See footnote 8. In total three representations of this type were found in the cathedral of Faras.

with a *protégé*. One great exception is the angel with spread wings, on horseback. Should one be tempted to give a negative answer to the question posed at the beginning of this paragraph as to whether the iconography of our church is original, there is here a clear exception.

Seen from another point of view, however, this horseman is far from being an exceptional figure. Probably, again, under Coptic inspiration, six, or perhaps even seven saints on horseback were painted in Abdallah Nirqi, and at least one of these is quite exceptional, i.e. the one with the man in the jar calling to him. All of them date, we are certain, from the white style. Horsemen from the violet style have not yet been found in Nubia, so that this genre, like the devotion to the cross-trophy, probably only caught on in Nubia at a later date. Both the saints on horseback and the cross-trophy belonged there to the typical *devotionalia* and were also portrayed in the side-naves and subsidiary rooms; ²³⁶ we must, however, bear in mind that in Faras Cathedral the cross-Theophany was painted several times (six, in fact) but that few horsemen were depicted, while in our church and in Tamit (the Šeiḥ Church, or St. Raphael Church) this relationship is exactly the reverse. It would seem that in this respect the preference of the town was different from that of the country. We know that in places like Abu Hoda and Abd-El-Gadir, and in the Church of the Angels in Tamit, many saints on horseback were painted. In this, too, Abdallah Nirqi is no exception to the iconography current there. Nor is it exceptional that in Nubia Christ is hardly ever shown alone; this occurs, to be exact, twice, and both are cases of frescoes which were actually inspired by icons. It is also understandable that here, where the church is not a cathedral, few bishop-saints have been portrayed — only three in all. It is, however, striking, that there is a portrait of St. John Chrysostom, while it is possible that one of the others was a saint of the latin church.

While the many angels indicate Coptic inspiration, as do the many saints on horseback, the portrayal of Old Testament saints, such as our probable David and the Old Testament priest of fresco 6/8, may also have been done under Coptic inspiration, since in Bawit Old Testament characters and even whole cycles were already being painted. ²³⁷ Moreover, in these years Nubia had several kings with Old Testament names. ²³⁸ This, too, may suggest that the Nubians shared with the Copts their veneration of Old Testament saints.

There is one important theme, however, which we find in various places in Nubia, including the cathedral in Faras, ²³⁹ but which is not found in Abdallah Nirqi, and that is the Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace. It is difficult to explain this absence, the more so as in so many other respects Abdallah Nirqi does fit exactly into the picture we have formed as a result of other excavations.

To sum up, we can, I think, say that in the white style, too, the iconography of Abdallah Nirqi, as elsewhere in Nubia, owes much to the Copts. First of all in the great degree of freedom enjoyed by the artists and by those who commissioned them, which may be contrasted with

²³⁶ Fresco 5/3 in Abdallah Nirqi does, however, suggest that there even in the main nave the painting is one of a horseman.

²³⁷ J. Clédat, *o.c.*, vol. I, ill. xvi-xix and vol. II, ill. xiii.

²³⁸ 920 a.f. : Zacharias III; 1002-1006 : Raphael; ± 1080 : Salomo.

²³⁹ Faras, cathedral, frescoes 80 (*Catalogue Essen*, ill. 7) and 94 (*Die Kathedrale*, ill. 60-61).

the obedience to a strict iconographical scheme such as was usual among the Byzantines. Much of what the Nubians painted they learned about from the Copts. They were also, however, indebted to others — directly indebted to Palestine, and at one time to Byzantium as well; they may perhaps also have been creative to some extent, from an iconographical point of view, certainly in the period of the white style, but time and time again they merely added to what already existed, without it ever occurring to them that the new might have difficulty in fitting in with the old. The criterion used was devotional, hardly ever strictly dogmatic. Not to mention the fact that they had no notion at all of Dionysius the Areopagite and his ideas. How easy this is to understand can be seen from a look at the linguistic situation in Nubia. In our church a fragment of a Coptic MS was found, while in Qas'r Ibrim various MSS in Coptic were discovered, probably dating from the 11th century.²⁴⁰ On the other hand, 200 years later the Armenian traveller Abu Saleh tells us that in his time the Nubian bishops still preached in Greek.²⁴¹ We ourselves are familiar with the Greek (rather bad Greek) used in *legendae* accompanying the frescoes in Abdallah Nirqi. Finally, towards the end of the 10th century Old Nubian seems to have come into use as a written language. Old Nubian MSS. have already been found, together with those mentioned above, in Qas'r Ibrim.²⁴² If we consider all this information, we get the impression that Nubia attached itself to several different language areas, even though in about 1000 A.D. Nubians started to write down their own language — a phenomenon which is contemporary with the increasing local influence upon the Nubian style of painting at that period. Probably the Nubians were aware that they needed the relationship with Greek and Coptic, and did not wish to isolate themselves. It must have been for similar reasons that they later began to make more use of Arabic. This same receptiveness which we find in the linguistic field is also seen in Nubian painting, not only at this period, but also both earlier and later, in both style and iconography. Thus Christian art in Nubia was a mirror of what was going on both nearby and far away, all of which was collected together rather freely by the Nubians to form a sort of symbiosis such as the original designers could never have dreamed of; it came into being not as the fruit of some great concept but as the result of many contacts with the artistic centres of the East.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Catalogue Essen</i>	<i>Katalog Das Wunder aus Faras</i> , Essen, 1969.
Golgowski, Virgin	T. Golgowski, On the Iconography of the Holy Virgin Represented on Faras Murals = <i>Études et Travaux</i> II (1968), pp. 293-312.
<i>Die Kathedrale</i>	K. Michałowski, <i>Die Kathedrale aus dem Wüstensand</i> , Zürich, 1967.
<i>L. N. Med.</i>	U. Monneret de Villard, <i>La Nubia Medioevale</i> , 4 vols. Rome, 1935-1957.
Weitzmann	K. Weitzmann, Some Remarks on the Sources of the Fresco Paintings of the cathedral of Faras = <i>Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit</i> , Recklinghausen, 1970, pp. 325-346.

²⁴⁰ W. H. C. Frend, Nubia as an outpost of byzantine cultural influence = *Byzantinoslavica* 29 (1966), pp. 319-326, especially p. 324-325.

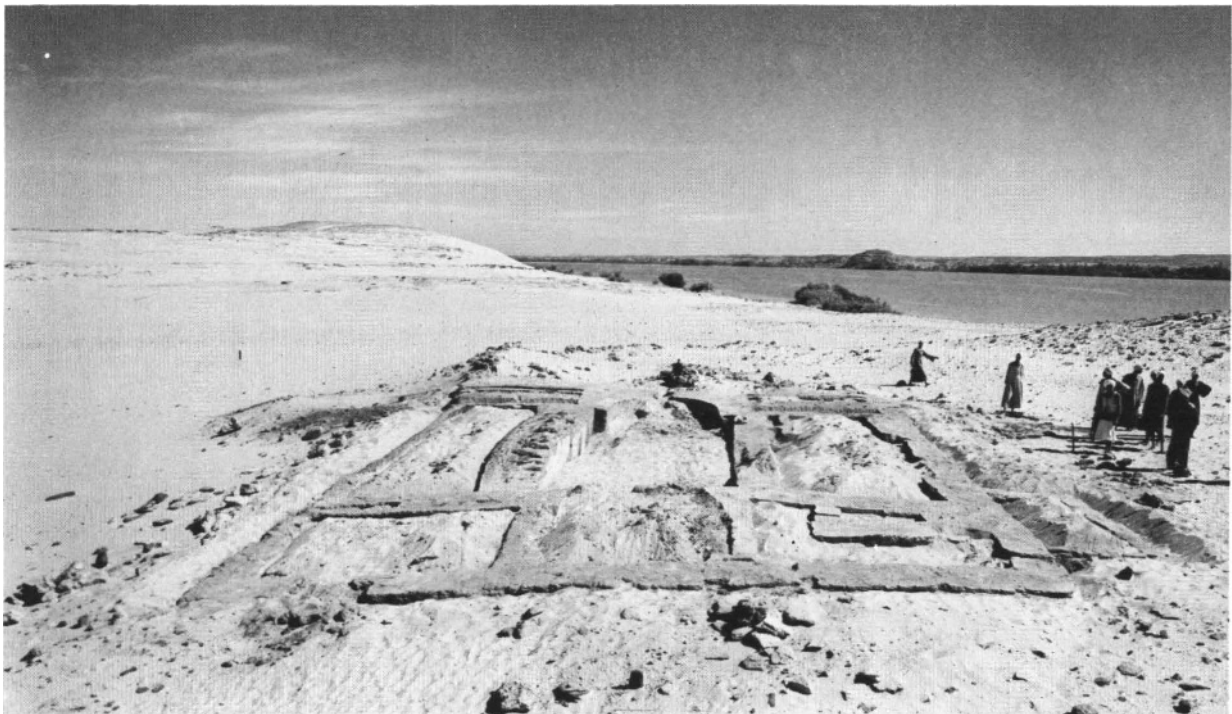
²⁴¹ *Ibidem.*

²⁴² *Ibidem.*

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PLATES



1. The church of Abdallah Nirqi at the beginning of the excavation, seen from the west. In the background the Nile.



2. The ambo.



3a. The dividing wall in the north nave seen from the west.



3b. The dividing wall in the south nave seen from the west.



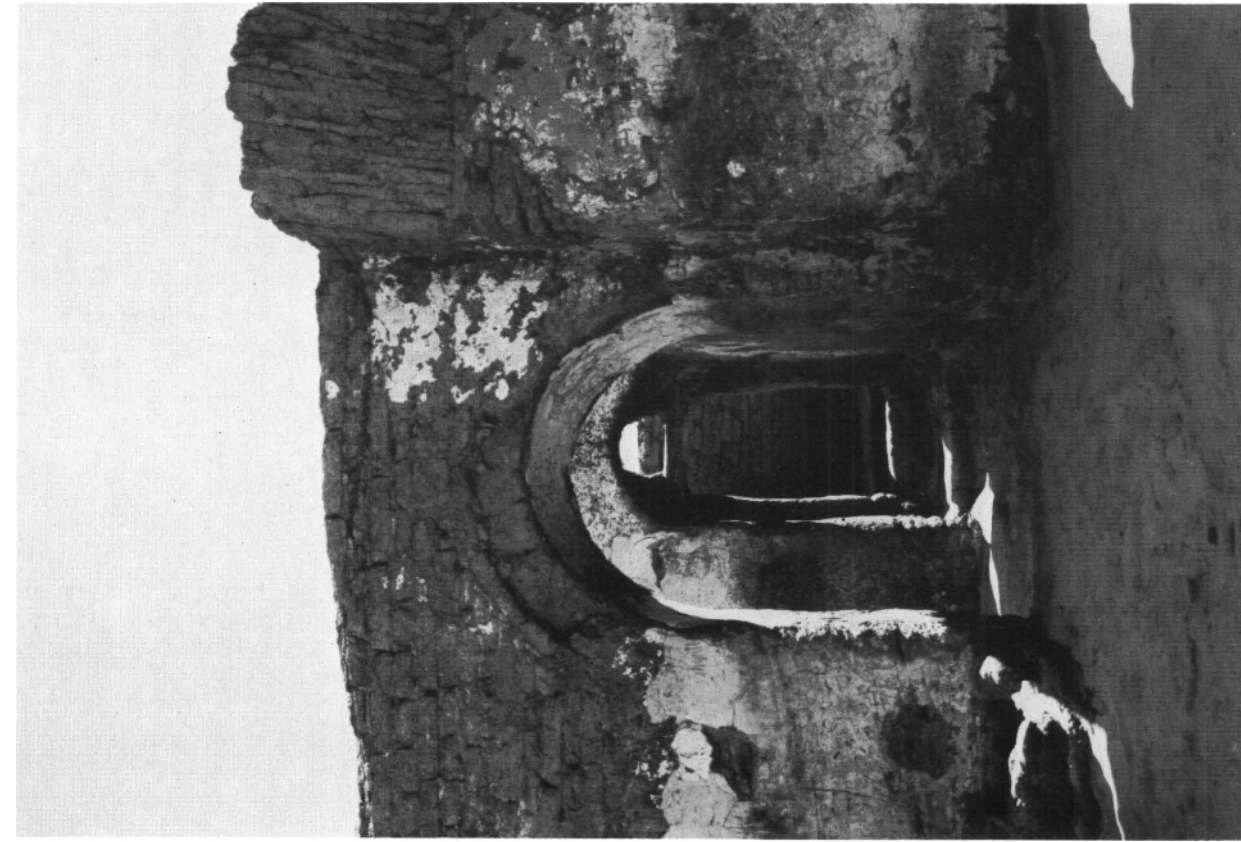
4. The church at the end of the excavation seen from the south-west.



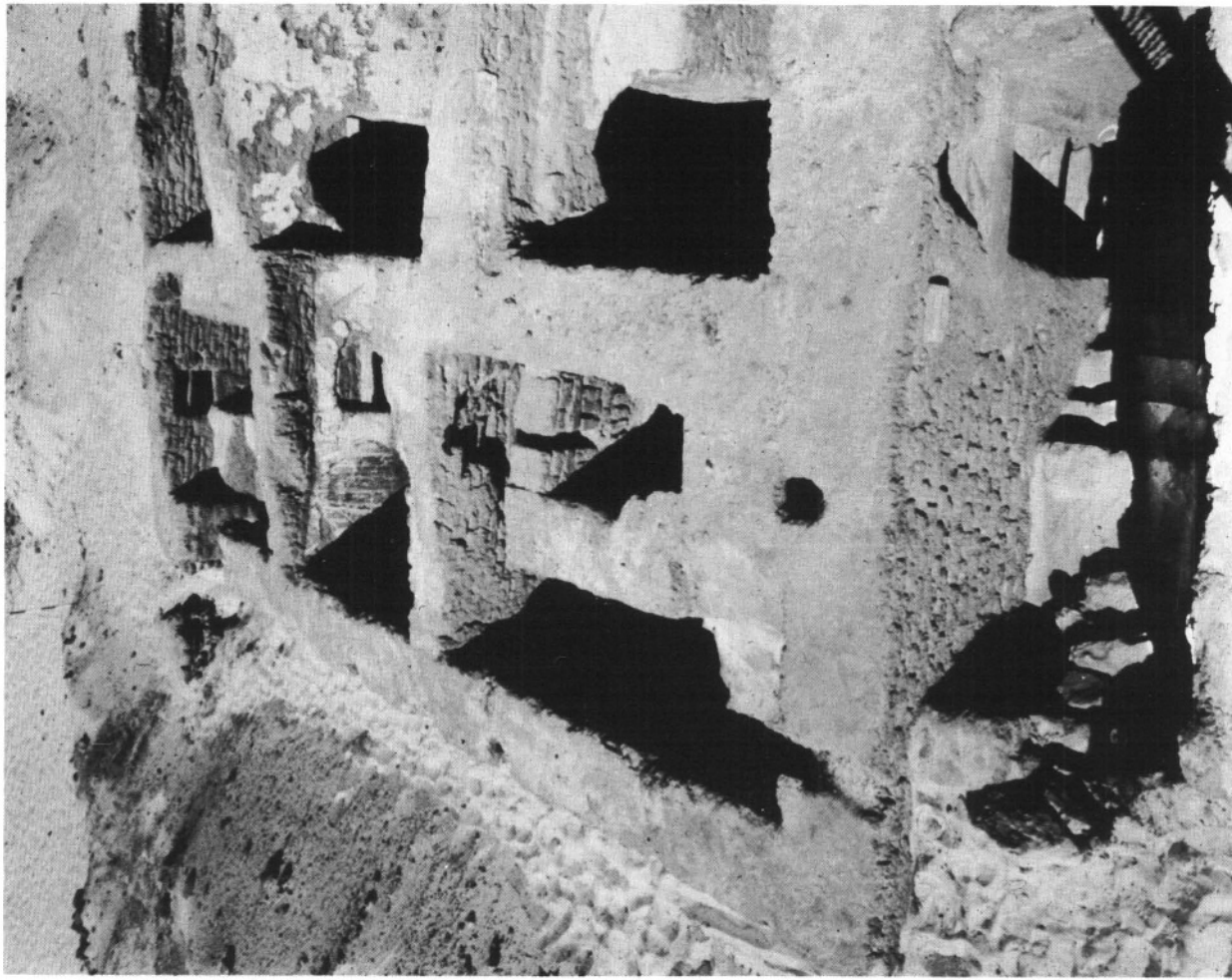
5a. The church at the end of the excavation seen from the east.



5b. The church at the end of the excavation seen from the south.



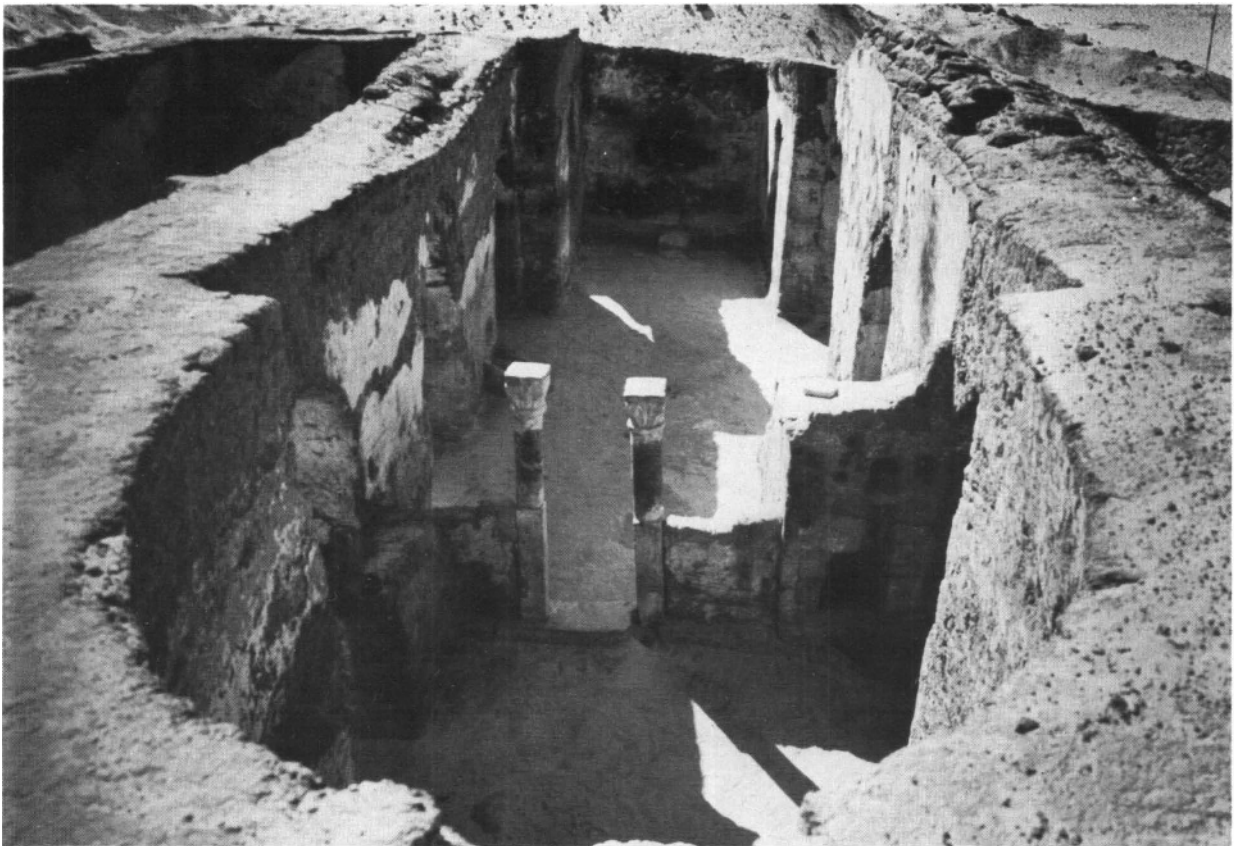
6. The south entrance seen from the central nave.



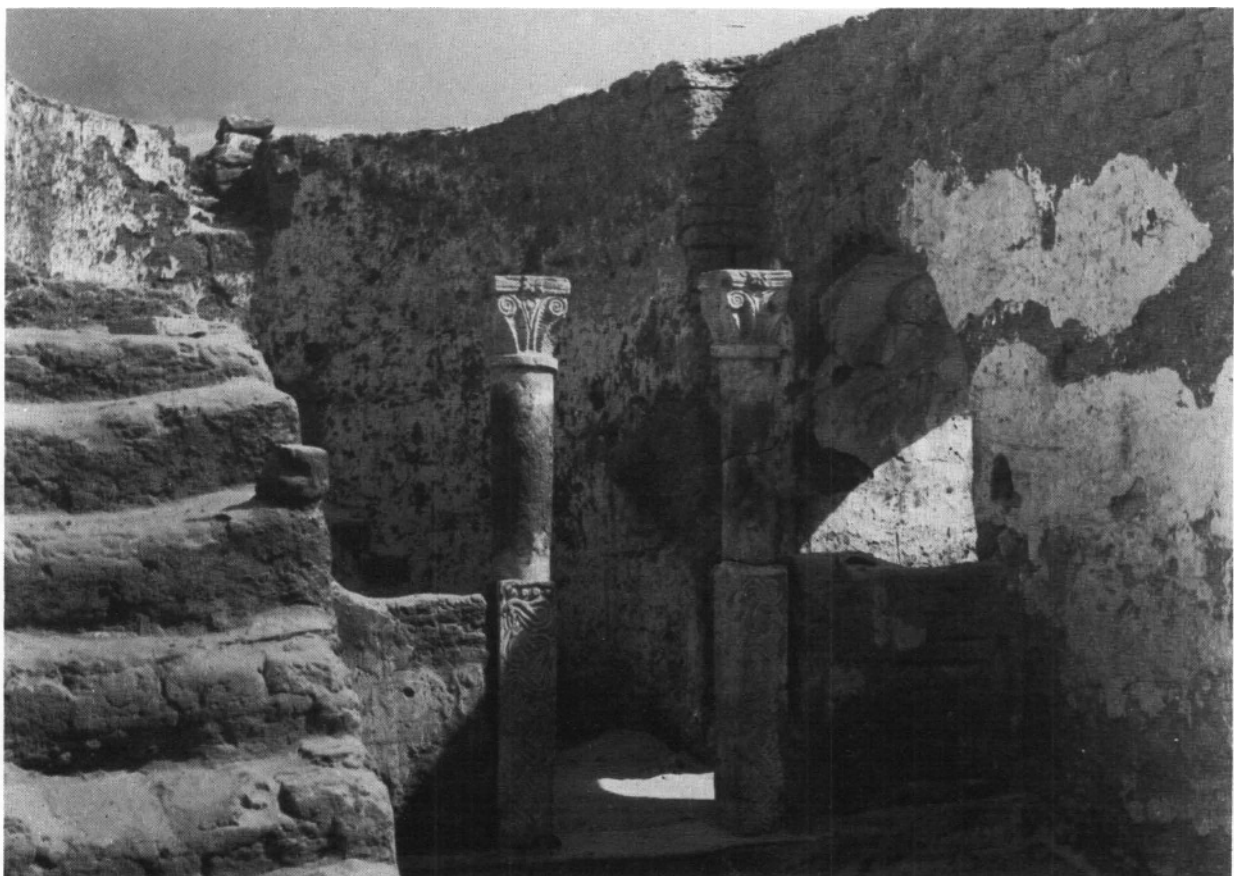
7. The entrance and its staircase along the south side of the church.



8. The central nave seen from the west.



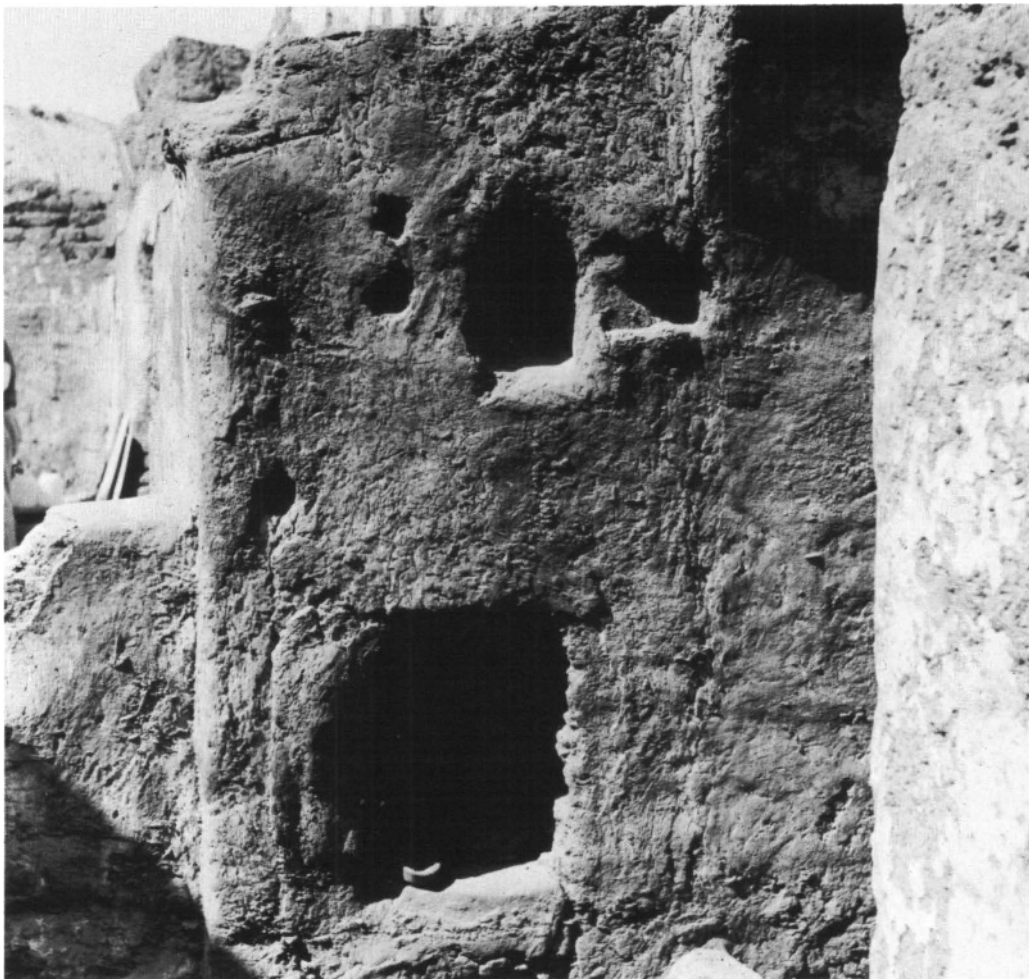
9. The central nave seen from the east.



10. The Higab seen from the central nave.



11. The south side of the presbyterium.



12. The eastern side of the ambo.



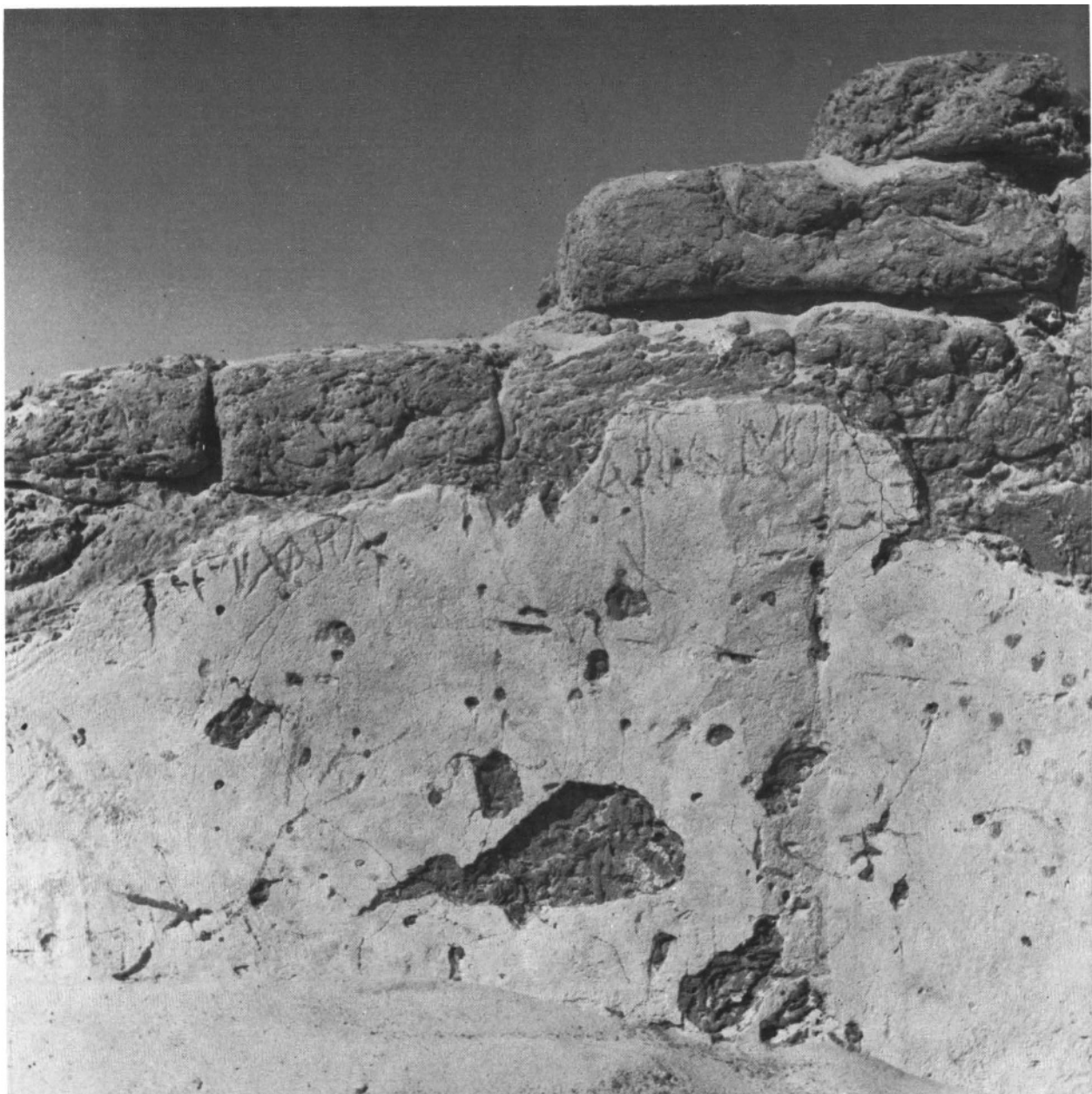
13. The north-east angle of the north-east room.



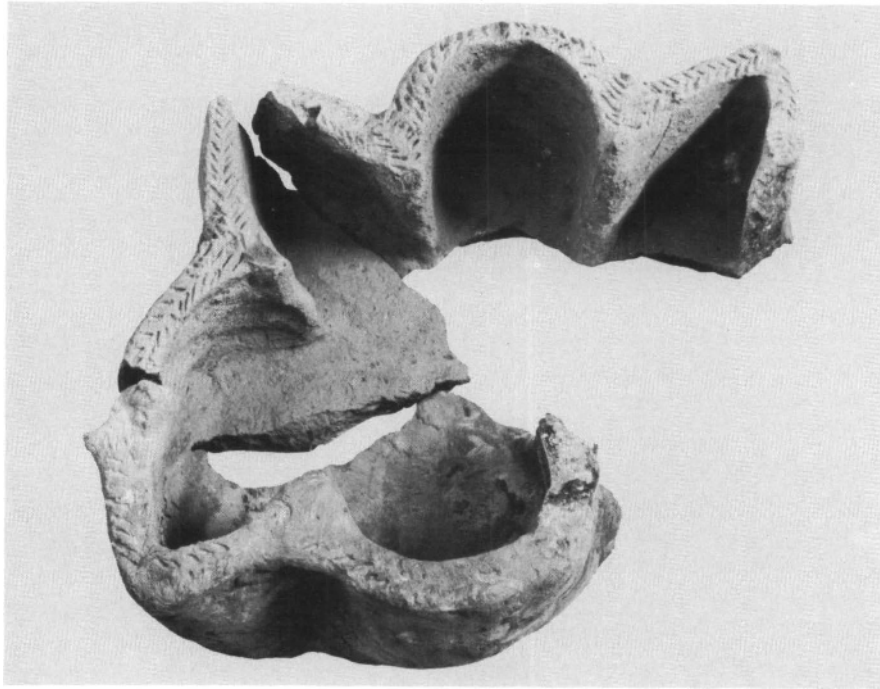
14. The lintel of the door to the diaconicon.



15. The east doorway of the north-west lateral room seen from the north nave.



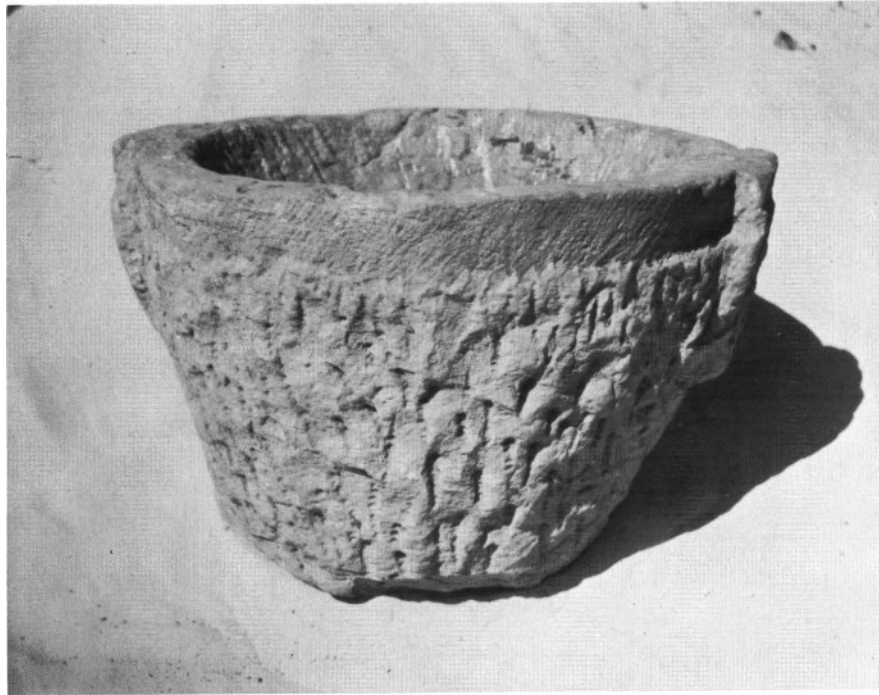
16. Epigraphica, no. 13.



17. Holy water basin: Object 31.



18. Chalice: Object 27.



19. Basin: Object 38.



20. Pair of columns: Object 58.



21. Pair of consoles and a doorlintel: Objects 56, 57.



22. Epigraphica, no. 12.



23. Stela *in situ*: Object 39.



24. Stela: Object 39.



25. Incense burner: Object 41.



26. Jarstopper: Object 8.



27. Objects 16, 33, 40, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51.



28. Glass-fragments: Objects 46-48.



29. Tripartite lamp: Object 22.



30. Pottery 19, 73.



31. Pottery 32, 31, 1.



32. Pottery 12, 26, 8.



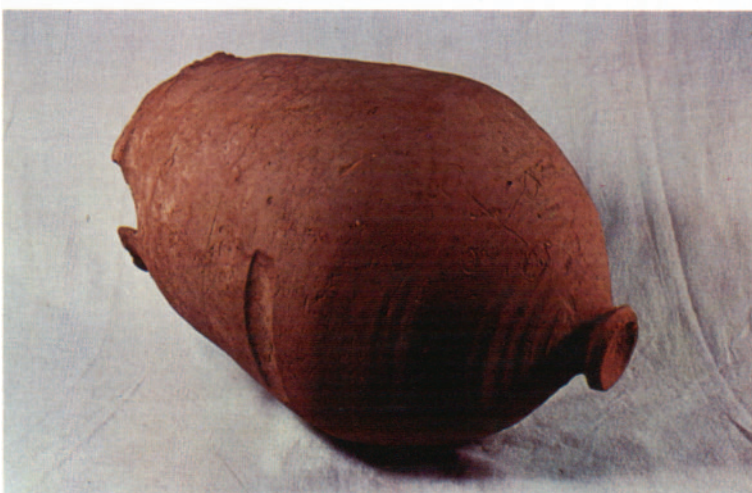
33. Pottery 91, 48, 66.



34. Pottery 74.



35. Pottery 20.



36. Pottery 81.

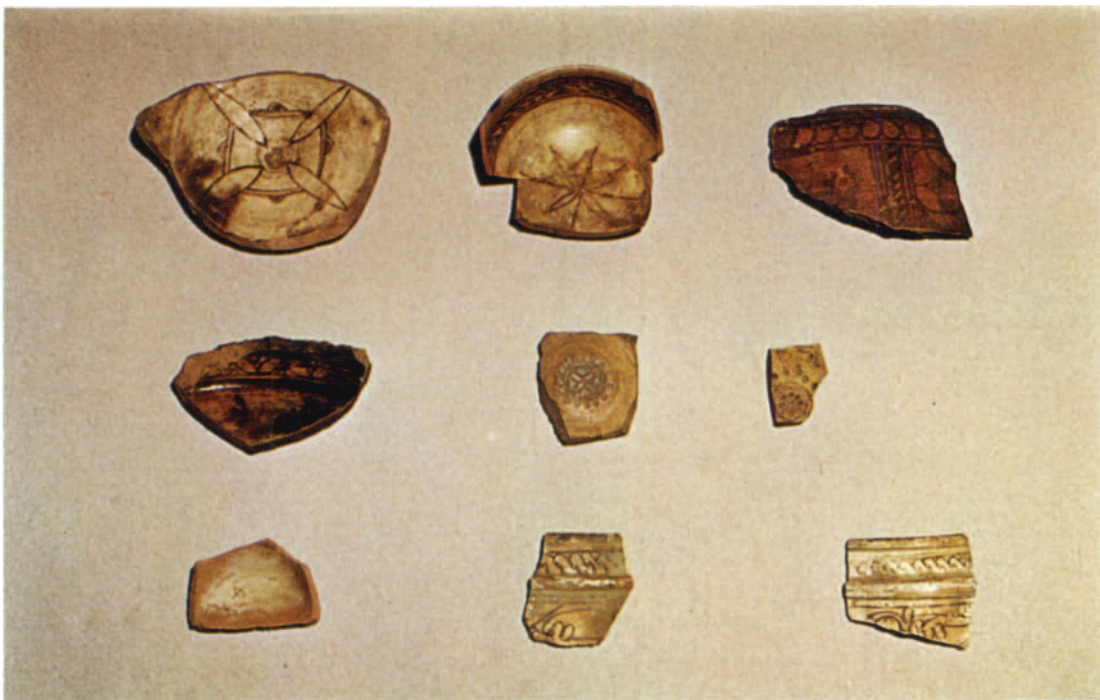


37. Pottery

42
78
22

62 64 65
24
40

42
41
21

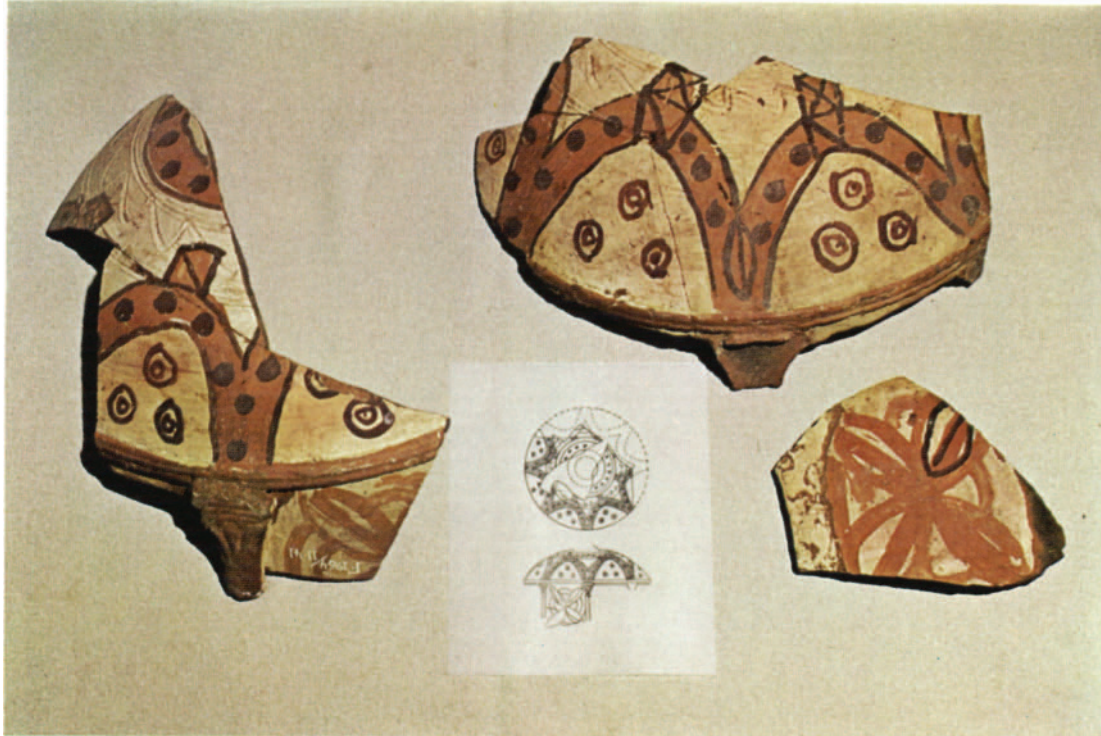


38. Pottery

37
52
51

35
39
69

45
36
69



39. Object 28.



40. Pottery

76
92

95

68
93



41. Maria *Orans* between Apostles.



42. Fragments of a Saint.



43. Maria *Eleousa* (?).



44. Standing *Hodigitria* and fragment of a man.



45. Archangel with *protégé*.



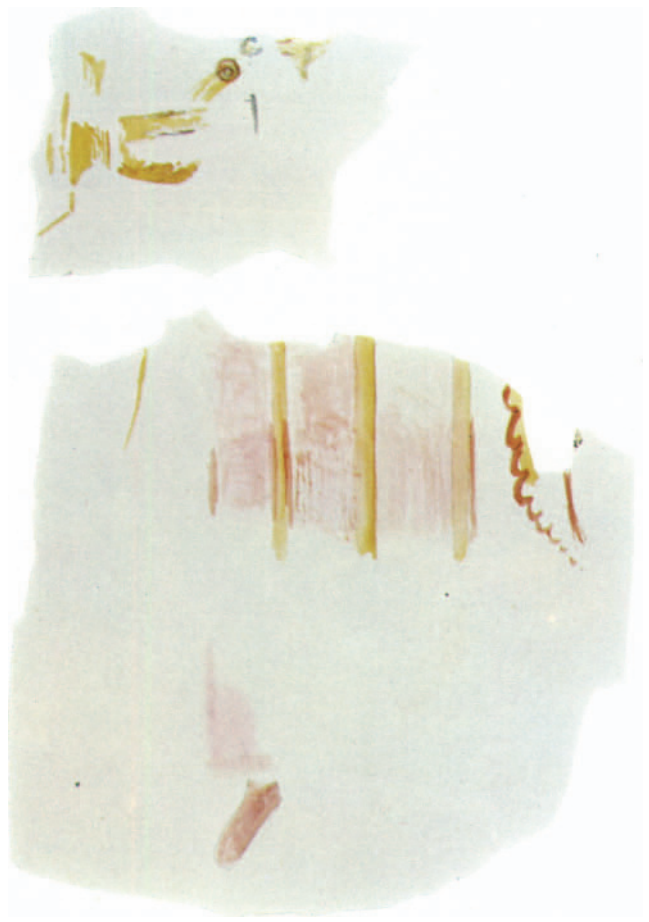
46. Fragments of a Saint with *protégé* and of an Angel.



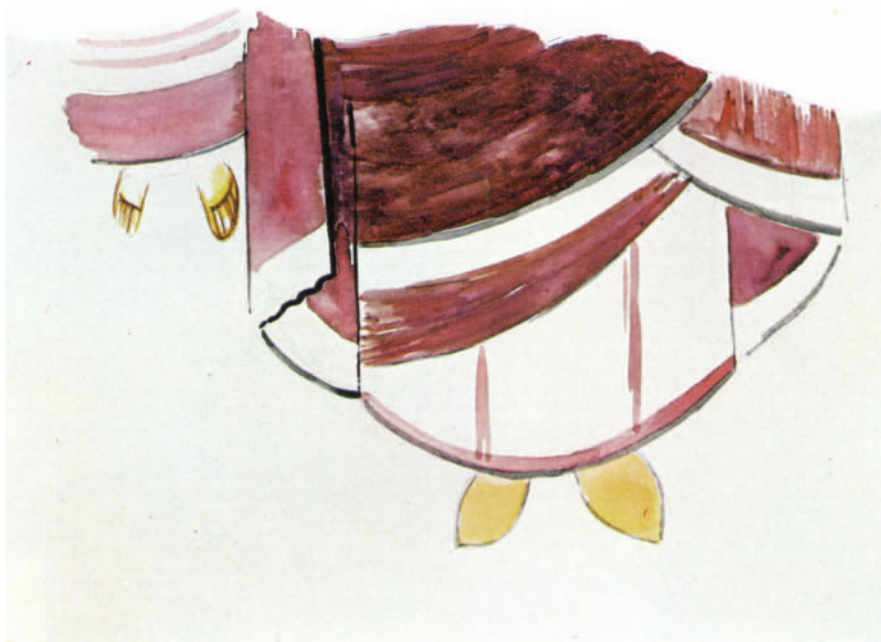
47. Fragments of two standing figures.



48. St. Anne.



49. Fragments of an Angel.



50. Standing Virgin (?) and *protégé*.



51. Fragment of an Angel.



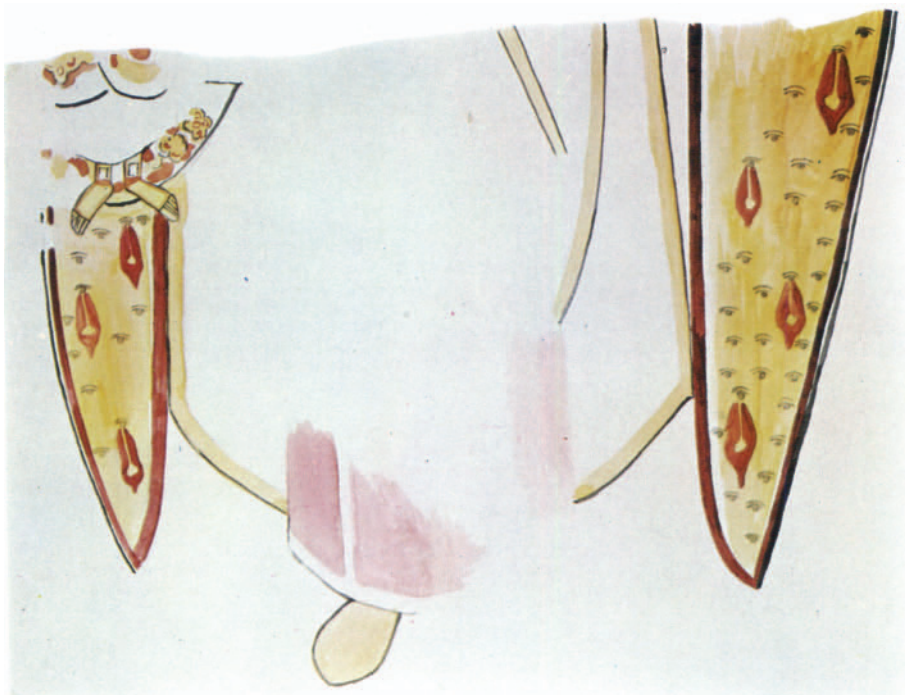
52. Christ *in tondo*.



54. Christ with book.



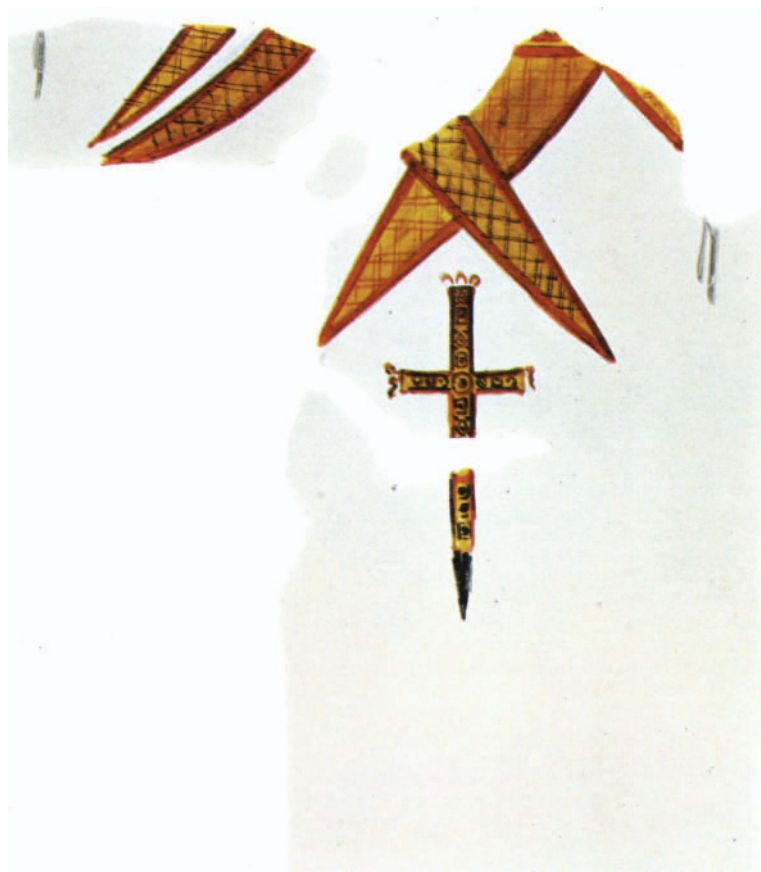
53. Saint with *protégé*.



55. An Angel with a *protégé*.



56. Fragment of a standing figure.



57. Christ in *clipeus* with the Four Beasts over a cross (fragments).



58. Fragments of two Angels and a horse.



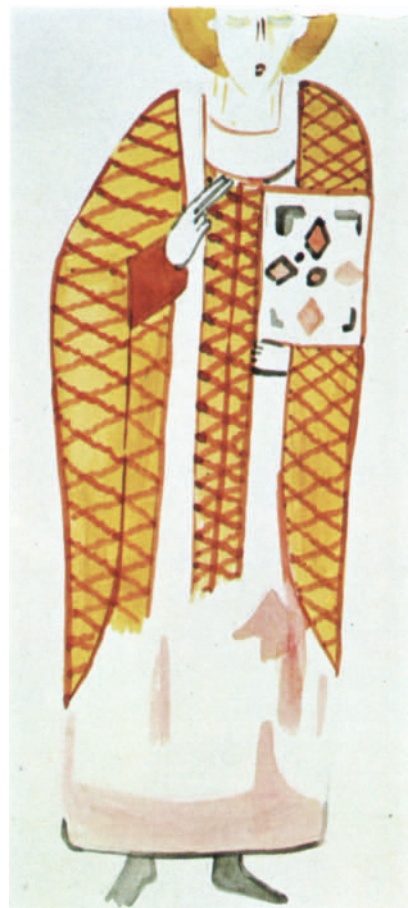
59. An Angel and a *protégé*.



60. Cross with *gemmes* and *velum*.



61. Bishop 1.



62. Bishop 2.



63. Fragments of a Saint on horseback (St. Mercurius?).



64. Fragments of two standing figures.



65. Christ with book.



66. An Angel with a *protégé*.



67. Fragment of a Saint on horseback (St. Mercurius?).



68. Archangel with *protégé*.



69. Theophany with a cross and protection by a Virgin *Hodigitria*.



70. Archangel with *protégé*.



71. Fragment of a Virgin *Hodigitria*.



72. Maria *Orans*.



73. Detail of Plate 69: *protégé*.



74. Detail of Plate 70: *protégé*.



76. Nativity scene (detail).



75. Nativity scene (detail).



77. Nativity scene.



78. Theophany with a cross.



79. Detail of Plate 78.



80. Detail of Plate 78.



81. Detail of Plate 78.



82. Detail of Plate 78.



84. St. John Chrysostom and Petou.



83. Horseman 3 with a man in a jar.



85. Detail of Plate 84.



86. Saint with censer (Zacharias?).



87. Detail of Plate 83: The man in the jar.



88. Throning Virgin *Hodigitria*.



89. Throning Saint (David?).



90. Hermit.



91. Head of Saint.



92. Horseman 4 (St. Theodorus Stratelates?), Hermit, Horseman 5
(St. Phoibammon?), and St. Epimachos.



93. Horseman 4 and a Hermit.



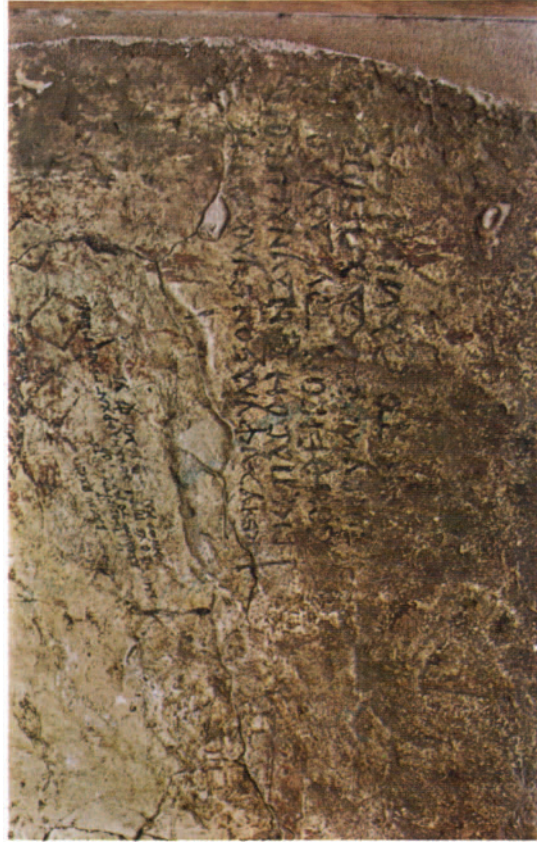
94. Horseman 5 (St. Phoibammon?).



95. Detail of Plate 94.



96. Grafito with the name of St. Phoibammon.



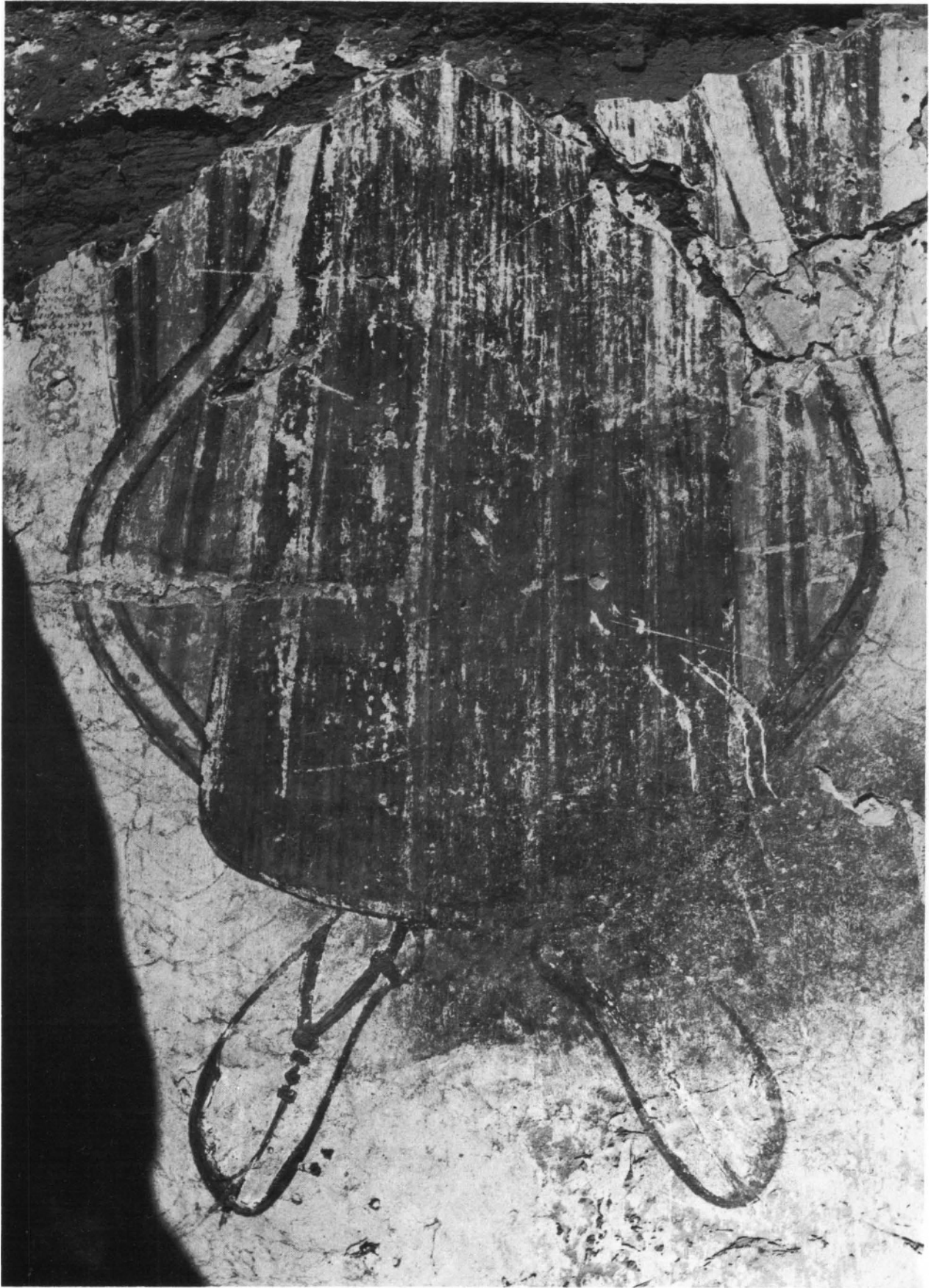
97. Epigraphica, no. 8.



98. St. Epimachos.



99. Angel with sword on horseback.



101. Fragment of a standing figure.



100. Bawit, Chapel 6.