

ORIENTAL INSTITUTE NUBIAN EXPEDITION (OINE) PUBLICATION PROJECT

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With the submission of OINE volume 14, *The Second Cataract Fortress of Dorginarti*, by Lisa Heidorn, OINE volume 12, *Cerre Matto, the Christian Period Churches, Houses, Workshops, and Cemetery*, edited by Bruce Williams, and the major part of a catalog of beads by Joanna Then-Obłuska, the OINE publication project has fully resumed. The year 2015–2016 has been a landmark for us, and each volume represents a new departure, both for the project and Nubian studies.

The OINE Publication Project continues to have tasks in hand, some just begun, some partly completed, and some still to be planned in detail. Most immediately, Dorginarti and Cerre Matto's Christian Period town are being modeled in three dimensions, and to forward that end, the architect, Nadejda Reshetnikova, stayed some time in Chicago to work with Lisa Heidorn and Bruce Williams, and to present preliminary models to the Publications Office for discussion and review. A database needs to be established, to furnish an ordered and coherent repository for records, drawings, and photographs that could not be included in OINE volumes 12, 13, and 14. OINE 13, *Cerre Matto, the Christian Period Pottery, Small Objects, Glass, and Texts*, has yet to be completed, as is detailed below.

Dorginarti and Ongoing Research

Lisa Heidorn

The manuscript of *The Second Cataract Fortress of Dorginarti* (Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition, volume 14) was delivered to the publications office in March. The excavation report comprises eight main chapters, including detailed discussions of the fortified enclosure and the architecture preserved within it, the Level II fortified platform construction, the pottery, and the objects. Specialists' studies of the beads, glass, inscribed pottery, and metallurgical equipment and objects are included, as well as an appendix on pottery groups from selected stratified areas. While the focus of the book is on the remains from Levels II, III, and IV, the topical studies also consider materials from the later use of the fort in the Meroitic and Christian periods.

The study of the material remains from the fortress has given rise to a number of research questions relating to the history of social and cultural interactions in the early first millennium in northeast Africa, that is, between Egypt and the Sudan, and the subtle ways that material remains might reflect genuine cultural affiliation. To this end, I plan to do further work on the pottery from the royal cemeteries of Kush at el-Kurru, Nuri, and Meroe in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Some pottery from the ancestral tombs, attributed to the

predecessors of the kings and queens of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, was published in my 1994 article (“Historical Implications of the Pottery from the Earliest Tombs at El Kurru,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 31: 115–31), while selected vessels from the tombs of the Kushite kings and queens is currently in press (“The Boston Museum of Fine Arts Pottery from the Twenty-fifth Dynasty Tombs at el-Kurru and Nuri,” in the forthcoming *Proceedings of the 13th International Conference for Nubian Studies, Neuchâtel, 1st–6th September 2014*). The next stage of this research focuses on additional unpublished pottery from the same tombs, as well as from royal tombs post-dating the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, when the Kushite kingdom was centered solely in the Sudan. The research is partly supported by the Shelby White-Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications grant that the project received in 2013–2014.

I am also currently working on an article for a forthcoming publication of *Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne*, the topic of which is ceramic imports found in Nubia. My article discusses the East Greek and Levantine amphorae from the sixth-century platformed fortress at Dorginarti.

Qasr el-Wizz

Artur Obłuski, Alexandros Tsakos, Dobrochna Zielińska, Grażyna Zofia Żukowska, Barbara Wagner, and Olga Syta

Last year brought substantial progress in the study of the past of the Qasr el-Wizz monastery. At the moment, the catalog of pottery from the site, including both drawings and descriptions, is almost ready for publication. The textual finds are cataloged, transcribed, and translated. The painted wall decoration is cataloged and pigment samples are analyzed. The research on the history of the architecture of the monastic complex as well as its contextualization in a wider perspective of Nubian and north African architecture is in its final stages.

The chemical composition of pigments from the Qasr el-Wizz monastery was analyzed in order to evaluate the variability of the used materials and painting technology. The analytical procedure, consisting of non-destructive methods, was proposed for the comprehensive characterization of the samples. X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF, for elemental information), was performed at the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Archaeometric Research, Biological and Chemical Research Centre, University of Warsaw, and Raman spectroscopy (for molecular information), at the Faculty of Chemistry, Warsaw University of Technology.¹

Plaster samples that refer to two developmental phases of the church were taken under consideration. Types A, B, C, and F can be linked to the original phase of the church in the fifth/sixth centuries, and type D comes from the constructions made at the beginning of the eighth century. Both groups of samples provided information about all pigments that were used in the painted decoration of the church. For yellow, the color massicot (lead pigment) was used, and iron oxide-based pigments like hematite were used for red and darker, brown and violet shades. For black color, carbon black (soot) was used. White pigments revealed a difference between samples that can be dated to the original phase and the later rebuilding in the eighth century. In both phases gypsum was used as a white pigment. Later samples contained calcium carbonate and magnesium and calcium sulphates exactly like pigments from the Paulos Cathedral that was raised in the neighboring Faras, the capital city of Nobadia. The cathedral was erected when Nobadia and Makuria merged into one political entity at the end of seventh/beginning of the eighth century. Another affinity is the use of magnesium based

pigments also present in painted decoration of both Wizz and Faras: a characteristic feature of the Makurian painters' workshop.

New, enhanced description and analysis of the monastic complex has been completed, as well as of the cemeteries and graves found around Qasr el-Wizz, not only by the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition but also by the Harry Smith Egypt Exploration Society Survey in the early 1960s. Results of the analysis of the architectural development of the main monastic church have been presented to a wider audience in the largest publication devoted to Christianity in the Nile Valley in recent years: *Aegyptus et Nubia Christiana, Jubilee Volume for Professor Włodzimierz Godlewski*, edited by A. Łajtar, A. Obłuski, and I. Zych, Warsaw (2016). A new approach to the architectural remains of the church resulted in a more holistic view of the history of the building, from its initial phases as a small sixth-century Egyptian-patterned church for a small community to a double-church suited for the needs of pilgrims visiting the monastery in tenth–eleventh centuries.

This year, research on the textual record from Qasr el Wizz concentrated around two axes: study of the ostraca and paleographical analysis of manuscripts. As for the latter, Wizz offers very useful insights, since it provides a specific context (the monastery), quite good chronological limits for the Coptic material which constitute the vast majority of the texts found (between the sixth and the eleventh centuries), and very interesting comparanda to well-dated finds from Egypt (e.g., the manuscript with the fragment of *Sermo Asceticus* by Stephen of Thebes), as well as to dated paleographic practices from Nubia (the touching of the lobes of the letter phi with red/orange ink; see Tsakos 2016, https://www.academia.edu/25932136/A_palaeographic_detail_from_Nubian_manuscripts_the_decoration_of_the_lobes_of_the_letter_Φ_with_red_ink).

Readings of some of the ostraca were improved during two special meetings of the Coptic-reading seminar of professor Anastasia Maravela, where one ostrakon proved to be part of correspondence between the Qasr el-Wizz monastery and the bishop of Omboi on religious matters, while another was analyzed as a school exercise. This ostrakon is written in a very uncertain hand, combines single letters, and includes a list of Greek words beginning with the letter *ksi*. Interestingly, the letter *ksi* is not written in the casual Nubian manner, namely as a Coptic *hori* with a superlinear stroke, but in a Greek or Coptic manner. This constitutes a valuable insight into the way writing was learned in this Nubian monastery, and tells us that a non-Nubian was the teacher from whom the student at Wizz copied.

Cerre Matto (Serra East)

Bruce Williams

Cerre Matto, the Christian Period Pottery, Small Objects, Glass, and Texts (OINE 13) has seven chapters, apart from the obligatory introduction and conclusion, reflecting the complex reality of medieval Nubia. The chapter on pottery covers the usual types of vessel found in archaeological contexts, made more interesting here by the prevalence of decoration that includes Byzantine, Arab, and African elements. Of special interest is the glazed pottery, several hundred pieces here being published by Donald Whitcomb and Tasha Vorderstrasse. There were some new discoveries in glass, which is being studied by Carol Meyer. Alexandros Tsakos has just completed a major contribution on documents and potmarks. Finally, Serra contained some very limited evidence of Ottoman period activity, after ca. 1563, which needed separate treatment.

Glazed Pottery from Cerre Matto

Donald Whitcomb and Tasha Vorderstrasse

Although glazed ceramics have been found at a number of sites in Nubia, they are generally not found in large numbers. At Cerre Matto, however, the excavations uncovered a relatively large number of ceramics of different types which offers an opportunity to study the import of pottery into Nubia as well as possible signs of local production. The appearance in Nubia signals changes in the relationship between Nubia and Egypt, which provides new evidence for trade that occurred between the two regions. This connection has its focus on Aswan and, beyond this town, relations with Yemen and the Arabian coast of the Red Sea, pointing to Nubia as part of a larger regional trading network.

Although research by Greg Williams for his dissertation on Aswan ceramics at the University of Bonn suggests that polychrome glazed wares were common there by the ninth–tenth centuries (G. Williams, personal communication), these wares are not found at Cerre Matto. Rather, the glazed wares first appear in approximately the twelfth century, with the appearance of ceramics with underglaze painted designs, which is similar to types found farther north on Elephantine Island and in Aswan (G. Williams, personal communication). At least some of these may have been imports from the north, but the majority may have been produced locally. More study remains for this and the other glazed types found here.

The majority of glazed types are monochrome wares, some with graffiato decoration, on cream or frit fabric imported from Egypt. Sgraffiato or incised decoration becomes prevalent in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries and are paralleled with slip-painted glazed wares; both of these types extend into the Mamluk and Ottoman wares of the fifteenth century. A very small number of sherds seem to be imports of these latest periods, decorated in blue and black underglaze painting on a white base. Two exceptional pieces may be mentioned: the first is black under blue painting probably from Syria, and the second is a fine lustre ware made in Andalusia, possibly Valencia, a long way from Cerre Matto but not unique. Large numbers of Spanish pottery were imported into Egypt and were presumably transshipped southwards.

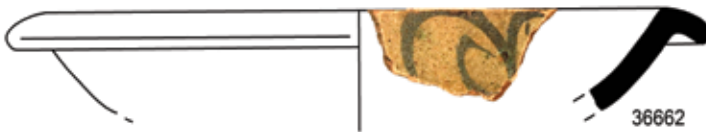


Figure 1. OIM E36662 — an orange-tan fabric with brown paint under a clear glaze; possibly twelfth century of local production

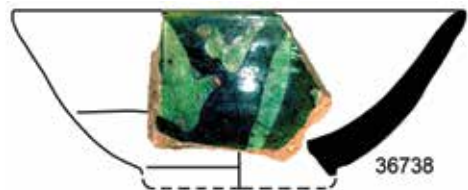


Figure 2. OIM E36738 — a dark red fabric with white slip paint under a green glaze; a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Egyptian ware

All this suggests that bulk trade in goods such as glazed pottery started in the twelfth century with a small amount of pottery, but increased considerably in the Mamluk period. This seems to reflect the historical situation in the region. The Ayyubids do not seem to have been particularly interested in Nubia aside from one large campaign against them, but Egyptian interest in the area increased in the Mamluk period and the area became, for a time, a subject state to Egypt. All this explains why the pottery increased through time, as ties between Egypt and Nubia became more pronounced and the two areas increasingly came into contact with one another.

Glass from Cerre Matto

Carol Meyer

The discovery of another box of glass sherds from Serra nearly tripled the corpus and resulted in a complete rewriting of the section on glass. It also permitted us to say much more about the corpus. Judging from the comparanda it fits well into the twelfth–fourteenth century range. The most common glass vessel type is a small vial for perfume or kohl, of a shape and decoration (if any) found in Egypt, the Sinai peninsula, and into the Palestinian area. Much of the glass is of poor quality, so bubbly and impure that it appears to be a local product manufactured from recycled glass. This speaks for a certain degree of glass working skill. One exception to this is a vial base made of a high-quality emerald green glass, probably with a high lead content, a type of glass found in small quantities from Kairouan in Tunisia to Fustat to Nishapur in Iran. Another unusual sherd has a very dark body decorated with vertical columns of short white stripes, a type of decoration attested, if sparsely, from Armant in middle Egypt to Hama in Syria.

Texts from Cerre Matto

Alexandros Tsakos

A visit to Oxford and the Griffith's archive launched a discussion concerning the provenance of the manuscripts for which Serra East has become renowned in the world of Early Christian literacy. The most valuable fruits from this often detective-like investigation are summed up by Bruce Williams in Appendix B of OINE volume 13. In the main body of chapter six dedicated to the textual record from Cerre Matto, the thorough edition of all unpublished texts illustrated the importance of private religious beliefs and practices among the inhabitants of



Figure 3. Illustration from Serra Greek Manuscript 2S-95

Cerre Matto. Against such a background, the examination of non-textual signs and symbols incised after firing on pottery sherds found at the site indicates means by which text and image correlated, and through the study of which our understanding of the development of Late Christian literacy and religion is enhanced.

Illustrated Manuscript Page from Building SO at Cerre Matto

Tasha Vorderstrasse

The illustrated manuscript page from Serra East (Serra Greek Manuscript 2S-95) comes from the Greek version of the *Liber Institutionis Michaelis*, which has been part of an ongoing research project by Alexander Tsakos (see Tsakos 2014, especially pp. 52–53, which refer to this manuscript). The illustration that appears here has thus far not received any comment, since previous publications have focused on the literary aspects rather than pictorial content, which is typical in studies of texts from Nubia, where illuminations on manuscripts have received limited scholarly attention. The illustration found at Serra depicts a man wearing blue striped pants sitting cross legged, pointing his right hand at something that is largely missing although it is in a circle (perhaps a cross?). He is looking to his left, however, possibly at a figure who is not well preserved. It is unclear whether the manuscript was in fact illuminated at Serra itself, as is the case of the Coptic manuscript in the British Library (British Library Or. 6799) that was to be deposited at Serra, but its place of production is not specified (Layton 1987, pp. 89–90, cat. no. 83). Nevertheless, an illuminated Old Nubian manuscript published by Griffith in 1913 (see Taf. II) was made at Serra, which shows there was a school of manuscript production there.

The studies of this manuscript illustration are ongoing, but thus far suggest a close connection with an Old Nubian illustrated manuscript page found at Qasr Ibrim, now in the British Museum (Frend 1965, p. 536, pl. 5; British Museum EA 82963). Neither of these manuscripts look like illustrated Coptic manuscripts from Egypt. Other illuminated manuscripts found in Nubia do however show parallels with Egyptian manuscripts such as the Qasr el-Wizz Coptic apocrypha (Hubai 2009, pp. 40–46), which could raise questions about where some manuscripts were actually made. Nevertheless, the close relationship between the Serra and Qasr Ibrim illuminations argues for a local manuscript production center in Nubia distinct stylistically from the one already identified at Serra. These questions continue to be investigated further for the final publication of the manuscript illumination.

Conclusion, the Publication Project, and the Future

Beyond the immediate tasks, the work on the Middle Kingdom Fortress and its successor installations, OINE 11 must be completed. A number of smaller units and groups of finds from Qustul-Ballana, especially the Christian period, need attention, as do Meroitic and Christian remains from Dorginarti. Of special importance are the excavations by the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition in the Fourth Cataract during 2007 and 2008, at Hosh el-Geruf, al-Widay, and Umm Gebeir — excavations that elicited interest from the *New York Times* for the discovery of the gold processing center of Hosh el-Geruf.

Note

¹ The analyses were performed as a part of the project on the technology of Nubian murals, financed by the National Science Centre of the Republic of Poland (project no. 2011/01/D/HS3/0611).

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