

ORIENTAL INSTITUTE NUBIAN EXPEDITION (OINE) PUBLICATION PROJECT

Bruce B. Williams and Lisa Heidorn

We note with sadness this year the passing of George Scanlon, who directed the major excavation at Qasr el-Wizz. Having worked also at Gebel Adda, he went on to undertake the large-scale excavation at Fustat, the original city that became Cairo, and had a distinguished career as professor of Islamic art and archaeology at the American University in Cairo. In 2009 he was awarded a medal by the government of Egypt for his contribution to the Aswan High Dam salvage campaign. Publication of his excavation at the monastery of Qasr el-Wizz will make a major contribution to the history of Christian culture and especially monasticism in northeastern Africa.

The year 2013–2014 has been an eventful one for the OINE publication project. Each of its four major parts has interesting news, and there have been some exciting discoveries. Major challenges lie ahead, but the most significant general development has been the arrival of two major sources of support to add to the grant from the Michaela Schiff Giorgini Foundation to support architectural presentation of Serra East fortress. The Shelby White and Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications awarded a grant that joins a grant from the American Research Center in Egypt's Antiquities Endowment Fund to support work on the Napatan fortress of Dorginarti and the medieval Christian town at Serra East. We expect that these will enable enough drafting, photography, architectural drawing, and research to see these projects through to completion.

Projects of this size have help from many directions and this year has been no exception for OINE. Lawrence Lissak is continuing with his invaluable aid, now photographing many objects for the museum catalog. Margaret Romm has joined us to help sort out a mass of scanned drawings Lisa Heidorn made some time ago.

Dorginarti. Lisa Heidorn

I have almost finished the chapter analyzing the pottery from the fortress of Dorginarti, and this work will have implications for both the cultural and social history of Lower Nubia.

The pottery includes Egyptian wheel-made vessels, which reflect the northern orientation of the fort's soldiers and their lines of supply (fig. 1). Such vessels constitute the majority of the pottery from the earlier and later levels at Dorginarti, with many of the large containers made of a marl clay fabric associated with clay sources in Upper Egypt, where the jars were filled with provisions (fig. 2).

In addition, the presence of handmade pottery at Dorginarti reveals that the Kushites inhabiting the fortress were using handmade cooking vessels similar to those that had been used to identify the Nubians working for the Egyptian administration in earlier Middle and New Kingdom Egyptian forts (fig. 3). In the case of Dorginarti, however, it is the Kushite conquerors of Egypt themselves who built and managed the fortress, beginning in the latter part of the eighth century BC.

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Figure 1. Upper Egyptian marl jar
OIM E49570



Figure 2. Egyptian silt jar



Figure 3. Nubian cooking pot

The decorative technique of the pots and bowls is, however, distinct from the earlier second-millennium handmade repertoire. The forms clearly represent an indigenous population that either inhabited the Second Cataract region or came from somewhere outside the Egyptian cultural sphere. Similar forms – with the distinctive pattern burnishing and incised rim decoration – have been found to the north at Qasr Ibrim and at Napatan sites in the Debba Bend, more than 500 kilometers to the south of the Second Cataract, and at the Napatan fort of Gala Abu Ahmed, in the Wadi Howar far to the southwest in the Western Desert (fig. 4).

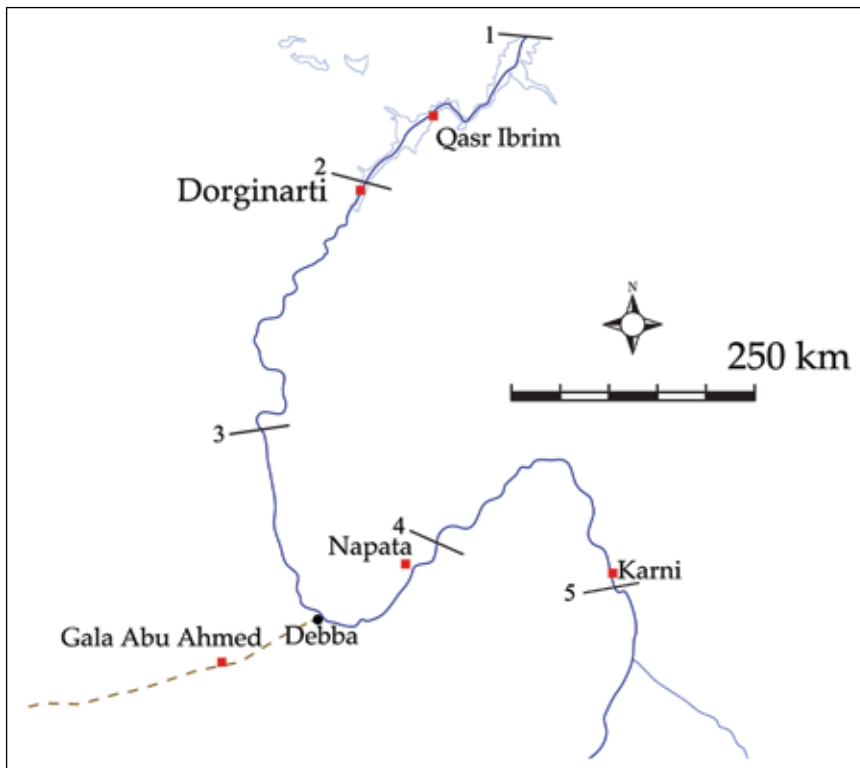


Figure 4. Map of related sites in Sudan. Numbers indicate the cataracts

The Kushite army contingents who used the fortress were composed of people from Nubia, Egypt, and possibly also the Mediterranean. They used northern wheel-made ceramic types for their everyday activities, but they also employed handmade forms, including a large number of cooking pots and serving vessels.

I have also undertaken a thorough study of the architecture, a task that has been made easier because of the existence of the accurate records and sketches produced by James Knudstad, who excavated Dorginarti. The final plans will be drawn in the coming year. Distinguishing the different phases of rebuilding apparent in the enclosure walls, residences, and official buildings will clarify whether the fort was occupied sporadically or continuously over the course of its lifetime. Frequent reconstructions may indicate the former. The pottery from Levels III and IV shows no appreciable chronological differences to identify any settlement pattern from different periods.

The general layout and architecture of the Level III–IV fortress of Dorginarti indicate a clear military function, similar to that of the earlier Middle and New Kingdom Second Cataract forts. There are bastions along the wall situated closely enough together to protect bowmen from enemy fire; there are gates with flanking bastions and access to the rampart atop the wall; there are remnants of parapets to protect archers; and there is a protected stairway to the Nile for the provision of water. This fortress was a functioning military outpost and not a mere symbol of power.

The topographic and geographic situation of the fortress on the steep northern banks of the island, with about 400 meters separating it from the western shore of the river, makes it clear that its primary function was to guard the open river channel running west of the island and the western shore beyond. Boats plying the river would have had to stop here to unload or reload goods and/or passengers before or after they navigated the rocky rapids of the cataract, especially when the river level was low. The boats themselves might have been portaged overland between navigable water channels, as happened much earlier along the Middle Kingdom slipway built at Mirgissa, only 16 kilometers to the south. A similar overland portage of goods and boats was used by the British, Egyptian, and Canadian military forces in the vicinity of Wadi Halfa during their excursion up the Nile to aid Major-General Gordon against the Mahdi in 1884–1885.

The metallurgical study of the crucible and tuyère fragments from Dorginarti is currently underway at the University College London facility in Qatar, under the direction of Martina Renzi, Thilo Rehren, and Edgar Pusch.

Serra Fortress. *Bruce Williams*

By December, Nadejda Reshetnikova had completed a reconstruction of James E. Knudstad's survey and created annotated archaeological-architectural plans for the Middle Kingdom fortress and later New Kingdom buildings, including some eighteen figures and a major plan (to be two very large fold-out plans in OINE 11). All the elevation points have been included and all the notes about deposits and details of structures to allow the reader to see both visual and descriptive information together. In the PDF file they are layers so that the user can choose the type of information presented (fig. 5).

Serra Fortress deposits were a major source of seal impressions, various lumps of clay used to seal documents and containers that offer extremely valuable information about the flow of information, goods, people, and control in ancient societies (fig. 6). While the sealings

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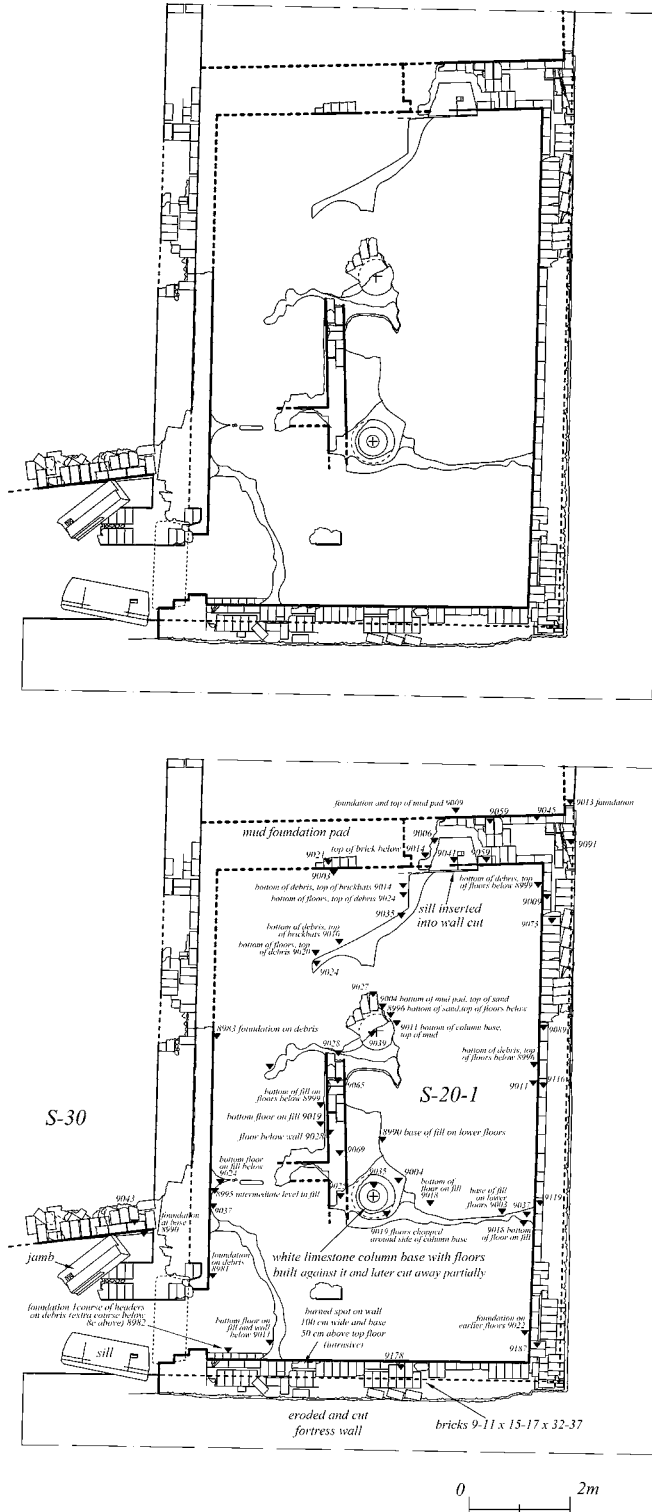


Figure 5. Serra S20-1 New Kingdom reception hall with a door frame of inscribed for Senwosret III shown as loose blocks beside the door. Top: plan without notes; Bottom: annotated plan (Nadejda Reshetnikova)



Figure 6. Serra sealing of the late Twelfth Dynasty from Serra East fortress, Field number 2S 535a. Left: the seal impression; Right: the back of the sealing, showing impressions of two pegs and cords

of Serra East had been studied, new information and ideas developed in the last two decades made a re-study highly desirable. Susan Penacho and Kathryn Bandy, advanced graduate students in NELC, undertook and completed this work with the resulting discovery of many dozens of new seal types, including new persons and institutions, while also identifying what each seal was used to secure — a bag, a peg, or a document.

Cerre Matto, the Christian Town at Serra East. *Bruce Williams*

The town of Cerre Matto, unlike so many archaeological sites, was very much three dimensional, including buildings with two and more stories, despite centuries of damage. The architectural part of the project has been correspondingly challenging, but a substantial part of a new annotated archaeological architectural plan is now complete. This is being made to correspond to the plan of Serra Fortress in scale as well as information, because the town actually used the fortress walls — already almost three thousand years old — partly for defense, partly for structural support, and even for raw material. We expect to augment the plans and drawings with a large number of photographs to give the reader of this publication a strong visual experience of the town and the texture of its structures (figs. 7–8).

Archaeology can be full of surprises and coincidences, and they occurred this winter. Nadejda had been engaged by Tim Kendall to work at Gebel Barkal in the town of Kareima, Sudan. She arrived in January to find that Serra's architect in both seasons and dig director from 1963 to 1964, Jim Knudstad, was also going to be there! This offered her a chance to meet and work directly with the architect who had originally planned both Serra East and Dorginarti. It just so happened that I was staying in Kareima at the same time, working with Artur Obluski at the monastery of Ghazali. So, with the kindest encouragement from both directors, Tim and Artur, Jim, Nadejda, and I were able to have not just a reunion, but a day-long working session that gave us new insights into the Serra/Dorginarti excavation.

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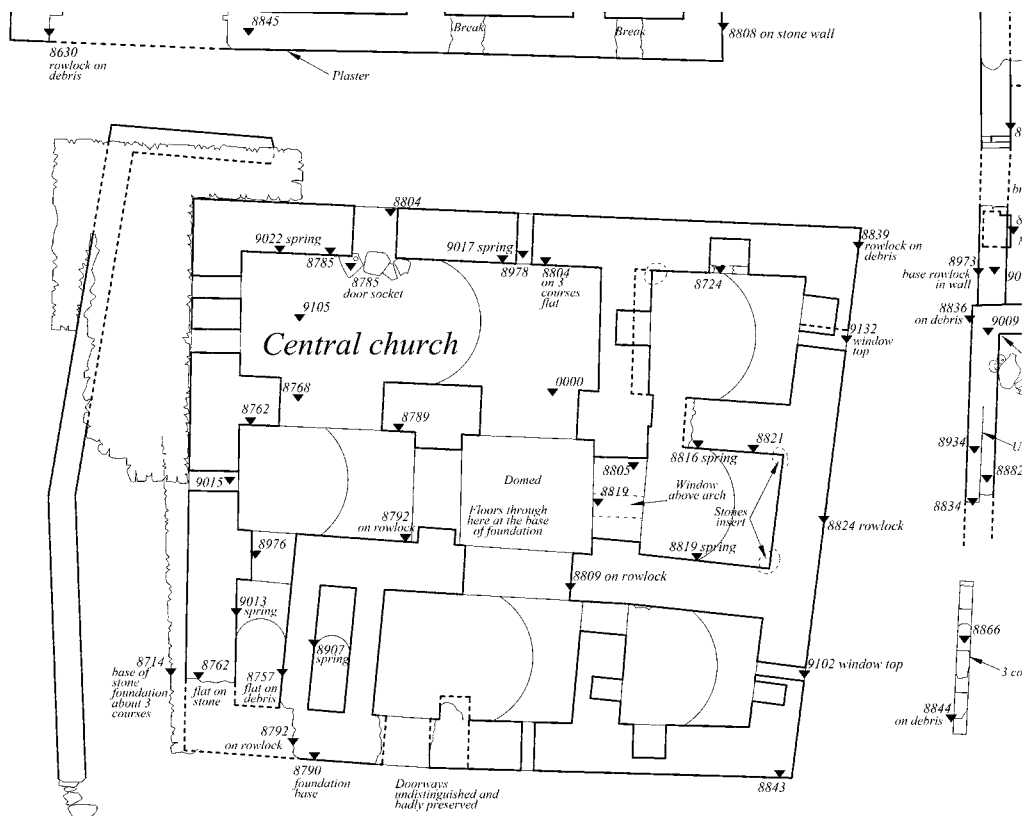


Figure 7. The ground floor of the Central Church, annotated plan (Nadejda Reshetnikova)

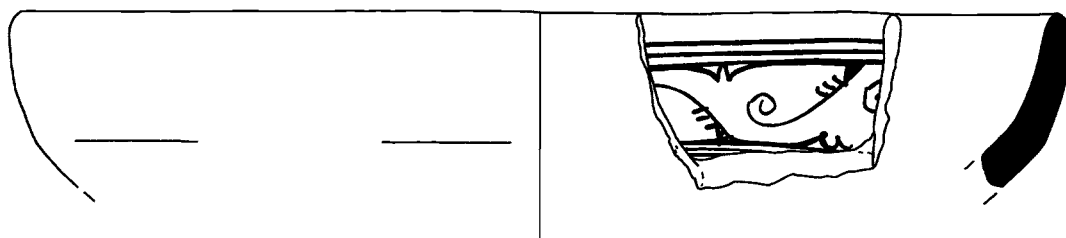


Figure 8. A major challenge is the illustration of Christian-period painted pottery, which appears individually unique as seen in this drawing. Top: bowl sherd OIM E37421 as photographed; Bottom: the sherd as drawn by Carol Meyer

Cerre Matto, Wall Paintings and Inscriptions.

Alexandros Tsakos and Dobrochna Zielinska

During the last year, the texts from Cerre Matto have been almost fully identified and the study of the contents of the fragments on parchment, stone, pottery, and painted plaster is very much advanced. The highlight of this year's work was the identification of an inscription painted on a tablet held by the enthroned figure of Christ from the sanctuary of the Central Church (fig. 9). It contains the introductory verses of the Gospel of John in Greek. This is one of the very rare instances in which Greek was used in the town of Cerre Matto and it represents a tradition of using Greek in the liturgy most probably even after it had ceased to be used in Egypt. Otherwise, Greek, Coptic (found mainly on stelae), and Old Nubian (found mainly on manuscripts), were the languages in use. This is also the only inscription recorded from the wall paintings.

Although the churches originally had many wall paintings, those that remained were neither numerous nor well preserved. The best-preserved decoration was in the Central Church, where two representations show elements that are characteristic of the iconographical program of Nubian churches. As mentioned above the sanctuary was decorated with the standard apse composition in its abbreviated form. This was the Christ in Majesty accompanied by the Apostles. Elsewhere in Lower Nubia (Nobadia), this variant of the apse decoration is known from churches at Sonqi Tino of the tenth century and Abd el-Gadir of the thirteenth century, and it was most probably an adaptation of the complete composition made to fit the relatively small dimensions of the sanctuaries in such churches.

In the niche of the eastern wall of the northern pastophorion (prothesis) there is a representation of Christ of a type that dates after the ninth century, when at least three types of Christ representations (as known to date) began to occupy this specific wall in Nubian churches. The painting was very badly preserved but one can see that the robe of Christ was decorated with the eye-motif (fig. 10). This type of representation of the Christ allows us to identify the composition as that of Christ consecrating wine in the frame of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.



Figure 9. Tablet in the hand of Christ from the sanctuary of the Central Church. The inscription is from John 1:1. It reads: εν αρχη ην ο λογος και ο λογος ην προς τον θεον και θεος ην ο λογος; In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

Qasr el-Wizz. Artur Obluski, Katarzyna Danys-Lasek, Dobrochna Zielinska, and Alexandros Tsakos

The Qasr el-Wizz project is approaching its final stages. We are very happy to bring to a wider audience ground-breaking results which will surely meet the high standards of pre-

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Figure 10. Christ from the northern pastophorion of the Central Church with eyes shown on the robe. Photograph digital editing

the medieval kingdom in Lower Nubia. It was built at the dawn of the Christian civilization in Nubia in the sixth century CE. Afterwards, it was rebuilt several times, firstly after the union between Nobadia and Makuria (the kingdom in northern Sudan just south of Makuria), when it obtained a layout typical for the Makurian church architecture. Later alterations adjusted the church to a new role, as a monastic church that had become a place of commemoration for an important local saint: This was, perhaps, Apa Dios or Dioskoros, to whom the monastery was dedicated.

Analysis of the iconography and the style of the wall paintings in combination with the plaster typology and architectural rearrangements permitted us to date the rebuilding of the church to around the turn of the eighth century. The painted decoration on the walls the northwestern corner of the church are similar to the murals from the so-called Paulos Cathedral in Faras, which dated to the year 707 CE (fig. 11).

Almost three thousand ceramic objects have been organized into an exhaustive cata-

vious volumes in the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition publication series. The monastery and its dependencies were excavated by Harry S. Smith, Keith Seele, and George Scanlon during the 1960s. Scanlon's results were published, in part, in two preliminary reports in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* in 1970 and 1972. In the course of the current project, we studied about three thousand potsherds, about two hundred textual finds, and dozens of fragments of plaster with painted decoration. We also analyzed afresh the architecture of the monastic complex and the neighboring cemeteries. The publication will include unpublished material from not only the Oriental Institute excavations but also work of Harry S. Smith, thanks to him and the Egypt Exploration Society.

Studies renewed for the present project proved that the monastic church is one of the earliest, if not the earliest known and preserved church in Nobadia,

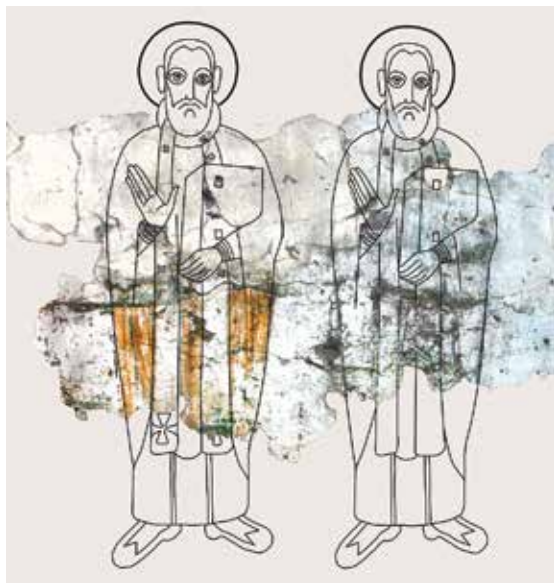


Figure 11. Two saints painted on a wall, restored from parts of their robes (Dobrochna Zielinska)

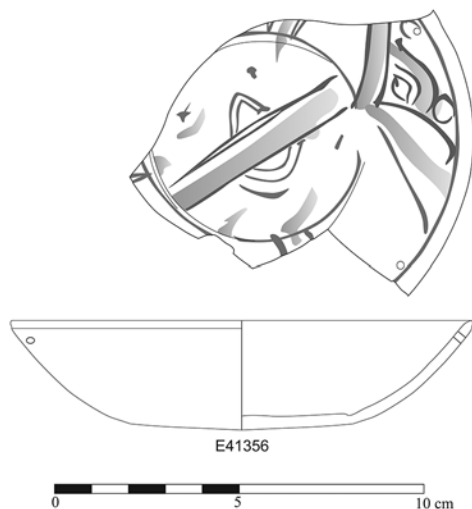


Figure 12. Pottery bowl from Qasr el-Wizz OIM E14536 (Katarzyna Danys-Lasek)

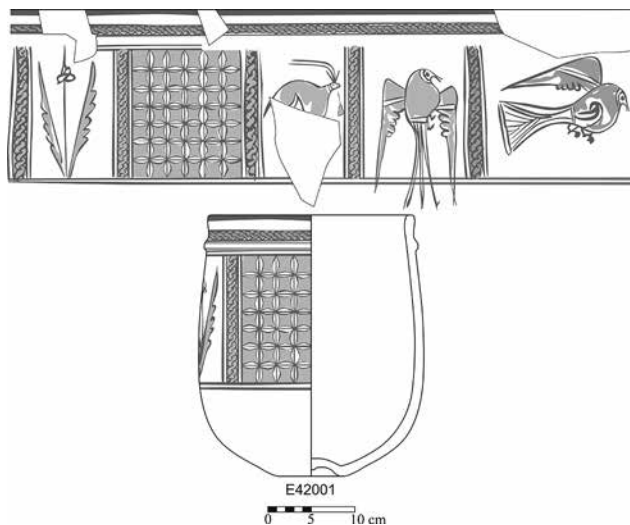


Figure 13. The well-known painted pottery vase OIM E42001 from Qasr el-Wizz (Katarzyna Danys-Lasek)

log. Progress in the scholarship on both Nubian and Egyptian pottery allowed us to carry out the study of ceramics anew, including macro-morphology, fabrics, and decorations. The finest example of Qasr el-Wizz pottery is an incomplete plate produced at a southern Egyptian workshop with decoration that combined influences, both Nubian and Egyptian, with strong inspiration from glazed pottery of Splashed Wares manufactured in Iran during tenth century (fig. 12). Imported vessels from middle and northern Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, and the kingdom of Alwa, the southernmost Nubian Kingdom, found at Qasr el-Wizz are evidence for the eclectic character of Nubia-mingling elements of Mediterranean and African civilizations.

The study of the texts found at the monastic site, even in their fragmentary state, offer us very interesting insights into the monastic life. First, we now know some of the names of the monks who inhabited Qasr el-Wizz, for example, ΔΙΟΣ (Dios), ΔΙΟΣΚΟΡΟΣ (Dioskoros), ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ (Ioannes), and ΛΑΖΑΡΟΣ (Lazaros). Reading the text preserved on a terra-cotta funerary stela, we learn the name of a hegoumen (the abbot) ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ (Ioannes) of the monastery Apa Dios or Dioskoros, which can be most probably identified as the monastery at Qasr el-Wizz.

One of the most interesting finds is a documentary manuscript from Wizz. This is a list of land properties with estimations of the annual output expected from these properties. We thus get an insight into the economic activities of the monks living at Qasr el-Wizz as well as into the territory in which the monastery of Apa Dios/Dioskoros had properties and where it exercised some sort of authority that went beyond the spiritual mandate natural to a monastery.

Further light upon the spiritual world in which our monks lived is shed by another manuscript preserving a previously unknown work about Shenoute, the renowned abbot from Upper Egypt and founder of Sahidic (Upper Egyptian Coptic) literature.