

Short history of the Church of Makuria (mid-6th–early 12th century)



Abstract: The article outlines the history of the Makurian church from the conversion of the kingdom to Christianity until the death of the archbishop Georgios in AD 1113, focusing particularly on the relations of the Makurian Church with the Church of Alexandria, and emphasizing its independence from Byzantine and Coptic influence from the second half of the 8th century until the time of Georgios.

Keywords: Makuria, Church, Archbishop Aaron, Archbishop Georgios, Bishop of Pachoras Paulos, King Ioannes I, King Zacharias I, King Merkurios, King Ioannes II, King Chael, King Georgios I, Metropolitan bishop of Pachoras Ioannes I, Church of Archangel Raphael in Dongola [SWN.B.V]

Two decisions taken in the first half of the 6th century were crucial to the formation of Africa's most important late antique and early medieval kingdom, the Kingdom of Makuria. First, the power center was transferred from the region of Napata to the territory of Dongola and second, relations were established with Byzantium, Makuria acknowledging conversion to Christianity as a prerequisite condition for admission to the Byzantine civilizational sphere. This coincided with Justinian's aspirations to spread Christianity beyond the borders of the Empire by political means. The one-sided report of Nubia's Christianization left by John of Ephesus cannot be considered as a just base for the present considerations. Archaeological sources, broadly understood, are much more reliable in this respect. The huge citadel fortifications of Dongola and the rock tombs on the southern fringes of the necropolis in el-Ghaddar, as well as the building MC on Kom E, a civil structure in their vicinity, constitute at present the fullest body of evidence for the first stage in the emergence of Makuria as a Christian kingdom with its power center in Dongola (Godlewski 2013b).

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The anonymous king, who is the most likely person to have been buried in one of the tombs (RT.1) in el-Ghaddar north of Dongola, seems to have been a highly cultured man with broad horizons, clearly no stranger to the late antique world. It is more than likely that he and his kind came from the elite of the fallen Meroitic kingdom with roots deep in ancient Roman civilization. Missionaries arriving most probably from Anatolia established a monastery in the desert near the Citadel (the so-called Kom H). Not only did they convert the royal court to Christianity, but they also laid the foundations for the Church of Makuria. The

fullest picture of these missionary efforts at this stage of the research is given by the Monastery Church on Kom H, which remained an inspiration for the kingdom's religious architecture for the next millennium (Godlewski 2018b) [Fig. 1]. The monastery included two buildings: NW.B.I, which probably sheltered the first monks and candidates for monks, and NW.B.II, which was where the local community held its gatherings, and finally the Central Building just north of the Monastery Church, the walls of which bear the earliest wall paintings found to date in the monastery complex. It cannot be excluded that those primarily respon-



Fig. 1. Monastery on Kom H, aerial view from the northeast; center left, ruins of the Monastery Church, bottom right the Central Building (roofed), center right, the roofed Northwest Building; the Nile can be seen on the horizon, beyond the town, and at top left, the Mosque (PCMA UW Dongola Project/photo S. Lenarczyk)

sible for the conversion of the kingdom to Christianity were buried in the crypts of Building B.X and their worship ceased only after the complete destruction of the CC.II church (Godlewski 2013b: 39–41 and 75).

Makuria's Church was formed as a Chalcedonian institution and it must have been the Chalcedonian Church of Alexandria that played a decisive role in the administrative development of the Church of Makuria. The conversion of Makuria should be considered from three perspectives. The external perspective takes into view the role of Byzantium in spreading Chalcedonian Christianity in an effort to curb the regional expansion of the Monophysite Church. The other

two perspectives are of a local nature: on one hand, there is the ruler's expectation to legitimize his power based on the new religion and, on the other hand, the civilizational impact of Makuria's adherence to the Christian world through the opening of the kingdom and Makurian society *en large* to an economy-driven relation with Byzantine Egypt. The Constantinopolitan Creed on the walls of chambers in the monastery, including the Monastery Church, is of a much later date, being attributed to the times of the Kingdom of Dotawo, but it may be assumed that this tradition in the Monastery was rooted in the 6th century, that is, in the period of early Christianity in Makuria (Lajtar 2018).

KING IOANNES AND THE CHURCH OF MAKURIA: TURN OF THE 6TH CENTURY

The end of the 6th century saw the emergence of Great Makuria following the incorporation of Nobadia after the year 580, as well as the establishment of a territorially developed church administration. In a centralized state with a civil authority fostering the development of urban centers, the Church established three bishoprics in the territory of Nobadia. Cities located between the First and Second Cataract, in the territory incorporated into the Kingdom of Makuria, were naturally better developed. The most developed of these was Kurte, of which little is known, then Phrim and Pachoras, the latter having the largest citadel after Dongola. In keeping with Byzantine practice, these centers became seats of bishops, ordained presumably

in Alexandria. Considering that three separate bishoprics were formed in this territory and taking into account the number of temples changed into churches to prevent further pagan worship, one is entitled to view pagan belief as still strong in Nobadia. It is also possible that the impact of the Monophysite Thebaid on the territory between the cataracts had to be countered and reduced.

An important issue to consider is why only two bishoprics, compared to Nobadia's three, were formed in the remaining, proportionately huge territory of the kingdom. One was in Zae and the other in Dongola. In the present state of the research, there is nothing to intimate the existence already at this date of the other bishoprics later mentioned

in Coptic from the times of Ioannes II (see below).

Altogether, in the earliest period, the existence of five bishoprics is documented by the three surviving cathedrals: the one in Phrim founded by Bishop Agathos (according to a foundation inscription) (Łajtar and van der Vliet 2010: 15–20), the

one in Pachoras built by Bishop Aetios to believe the List of Bishops from the Cathedral, and the last one in Dongola, the so-called Cathedral EC.I [Fig. 2]. No such architectural evidence comes from Kurte and Zae, but the existence of these bishoprics in the early period is attested in documents of a later date.

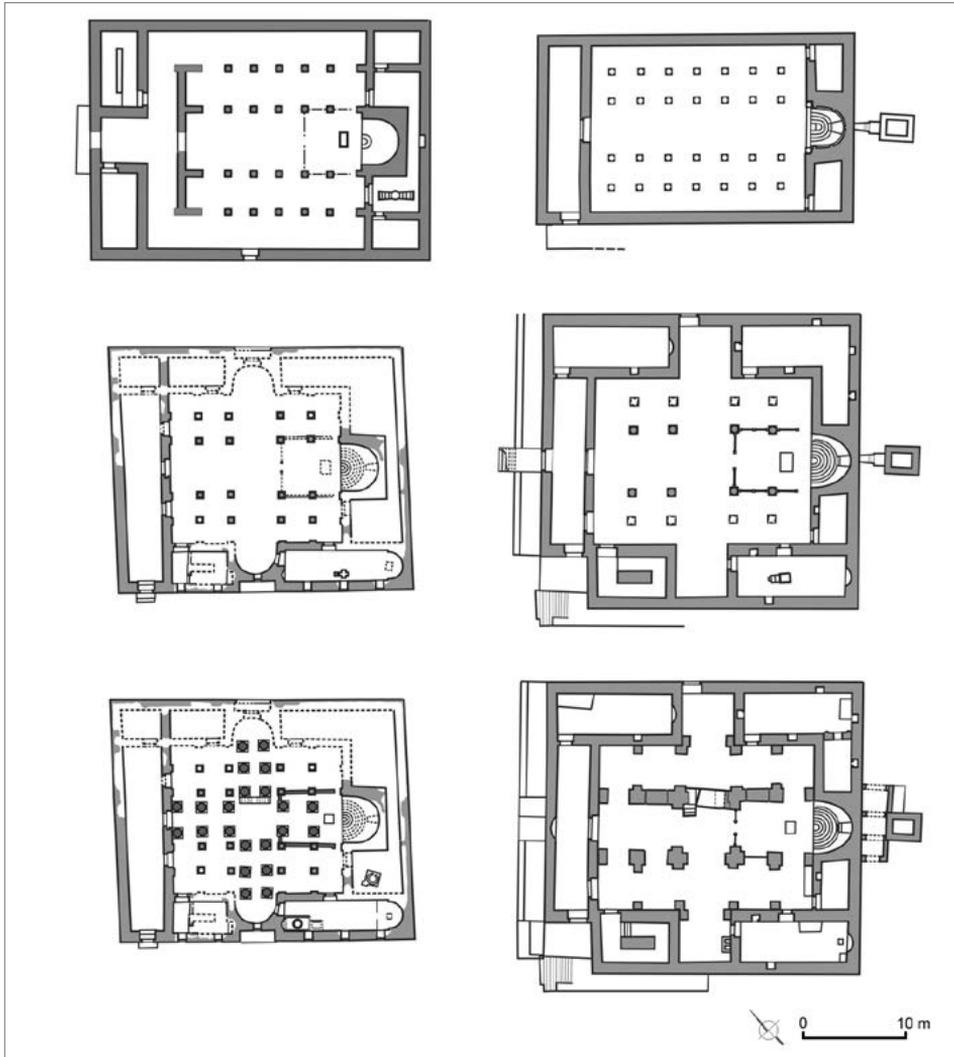


Fig. 2. The known cathedral churches from Dongola and Pachoras (6/7th–13th centuries): left, from top, Dongola EC.I, Dongola RC.I, Dongola, RC.II; right, from top, Cathedral of Aetios, Cathedral of Paulos, Cathedral of Petros (Digitizing E. Czyżewska-Zalewska)

The first bishops must have been outsiders as it is unlikely that the local community had grown sufficiently in numbers and stature, even assuming that the monastery in Dongola had already been functioning for more than a dozen years. One would think that the Bishop of Alexandria would have

had the last say in the case of the bishops' nominations, but most certainly they could not have proceeded without the favor, if not the will, of the king. The cathedrals in Makuria were constructed, presumably, by local craftsmen with essential support from outside the kingdom.

THE CHURCH OF MAKURIA IN THE REIGN OF KING ZACHARIAS I: THE YEARS 653—ABOUT 670

Zacharias took the throne right after the successful defense of the citadel in Dongola against raiding Arabs from the north, during a period of turbulent change, the Arab aggression and evident weakness of the Byzantine Empire. The departure of the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria Cyrus and the diligence of Benjamin, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria (623–662), in taking over the property of the Chalcedonian Church in Egypt, including the actual churches, must have reflected importantly on the situation.

The consequences of the events in Dongola—the city had been damaged and the cathedral razed as well as some settlements around Dongola (like Selib perhaps) were destroyed—demanded the Church's efficient cooperation with the civil authorities. The cathedral had to be rebuilt urgently. A new domed basilica, EC.II, was constructed, the mosaic floor in the sanctuary clearly demonstrating local ambitions in terms of interior decoration (Godlewski 2011). Mosaics were also introduced in a highly interesting religious and public building, coded MC, located on Kom E, where the entire naos

featured such floors. The Church was evidently a buoyant and socially important organization in this age.

The arrival in Dongola of Bishop Joseph from Syene had a political underpinning regardless of whether he was acting as an envoy for the Arab governor of Egypt (646–656) ʿAbdullāh Ibn Sād Ibn Abī Sarḥ or as a missionary for the Pope Benjamin. He clearly represented Egyptian interests, although his exact objectives are obscure. He had surely been charged with the task of subordinating the Makurian Church. His funerary stela is an important document (Jakobielski and van der Vliet 2011). The bishop seems not to have attained his goals prior to his death and we know nothing of his successor in Dongola. The Makurian Church remained Chalcedonian and in the King's protection and with bishops already ordained in the five bishoprics: *Qurta*, Phrim, Pachoras, Zae and Dongola. There is no evidence for a larger number of bishoprics at this time.

The king's role in shaping Makurian politics during this breakthrough period must have been crucial. A monument to the heroes of Dongola's defense was built

in front of the entrance to the palace. This small cruciform building with a dome and quality wall paintings symbolizes a continuation of Makurian court politics and the court's understanding of late antique civilization (Godlewski 2013b: 34–39; Zielińska 2010). Dongola had its own well-trained and ambitious artistic milieu as demonstrated by the mosaic floors and wall paintings. The monastic community in Dongola may also be seen as the court's intellectual powerhouse.

The king had no doubt that the threat from the north had not been stopped. There is nothing but the Arab literary

and historical tradition in favor of the signing or even negotiation of some kind of *baqt* at the walls of Dongola. The Arabs were fighting the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanids, and Makuria was for them nothing but a military episode. The king, however, enlarged the citadel, building the northwestern tower on the Nile side. This is the state of our knowledge on the subject (Godlewski 2013b: 20–22). It is most likely that the King and the Bishop of Dongola (that is, of the Church of Makuria) had not lost a strong belief in a rapid rebuilding of the Byzantine Empire.

THE CHURCH OF MAKURIA AND KING MERKURIOS (697–715/20) AND HIS SON ZACHARIAS (UNTIL THE 740s)

A ruler of unknown name reigned in the last quarter of the 7th century, after Zacharias I and before Merkurios. It may be assumed that he followed the same policies as his predecessors. The new Cathedral, the Church of the Granite Columns (RC.1), was built most probably during his reign.

The times of his successor, King Merkurios (697–about 720), are much better illuminated by written sources compared to the earlier reigns. The foundation stelae from the Cathedral of Paulos in Pachoras (Jakobielski 1972: 39–45; Kubińska 1974: 14–19; Łajtar 2003: 260–270; van der Vliet 2003: 3–15) and the Church in Tafah (Kubińska 1974: 18–19), added to the information from the *Life of the Patriarch Michael I* by John Deacon (Vantini 1975: 40–45), highlight the special role played by this ruler in the development of the Makurian Church

and its relations with the Monophysite Alexandrian patriarchate. Merkurios is referred to by John Deacon as a New Constantine, which has been interpreted as proof of the introduction of Monophysitism in the Makurian Church and of this Church's subordination, in terms of structural organization, to the Bishop of Alexandria. Establishment of direct contacts with the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria is a fact, confirmed by John Deacon's report of the conflict between the Bishop of Dongola Kyriakos and king Abraham, one of the successors of Merkurios, and the role played by the Patriarch Michael I in resolving this conflict. In turning to the patriarch with a request to remove Bishop Kyriakos from office and ordain in his place Ioannes, the man sent with this request to Alexandria, the Makurian king undoubtedly acknowledged the authority of the

patriarch. However, this does not necessarily prejudice the question of whether the Church of Makuria was subordinate to the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria or not.

Events at the turn of the 7th century and in the early years of the 8th century bear on the transformation of the Church of Makuria, although the full scope of the change is beyond comprehension. On one hand, there is the new cathedral in Pachoras and the person of its founder, the Bishop of Pachoras Paulos (Godlewski 2006: 43–76). On the other hand, there is the elusive figure of King Merkurios in Dongola, who is known from local Makurian sources as a proponent of a centralized state structure administered by the Eparch of the Kingdom Markos, which stood in opposition to the territorial organization of the Church with most likely the five bishoprics mentioned above.

In Dongola, a new splendid cathedral, RC.I, the third in line, was raised next to Cathedral EC.II, which was rebuilt after the Arab raids (Gartkiewicz 1990: 109–261) [see *Fig. 2*]. This colonnaded foundation on a central plan was the work of a local architect. Two cathedrals standing close to one another were not so uncommon in early Christian times; the same can be said of Arwan and Makurian Churches with double cathedrals in Soba and, not much later, in Dongola (EC.II and RC.I). The question is why this happened in Dongola. It may have been ambition (doubtful) or there may have been reasons more complex than that and of greater importance to the Makurian Church as an institution. Cathedral EC.II went back to an earlier age; it was a continuation of the first cathedral, EC.I.

The new cathedral, RC.I, quickly became a model for other buildings; already in 707, the first cathedral in Pachoras was rather hastily developed and a new complex of buildings raised for Bishop Paulos [see *Fig. 2*].

One wonders about the identity of this Bishop Paulos, who founded a cathedral on his own, along with an associated complex of structures south of it, and who heralded this to his flock on behalf of King Merkurios and the Eparch of the Kingdom Markos, in bilingual foundation stelae written in Greek and Coptic. These two inscriptions stand without parallel. Their form is exceptional, their wording very diplomatic, taking into account the attachment of the royal court to Greek as the official language and the local popularity of Coptic in Nobadia, which was incorporated as a province barely a hundred years earlier and still showed a preference for its own traditions best attested in its religious architecture. Paulos must have been a man of special importance. By formulating his foundation stelae in two languages, following the Dongolan model of the new cathedral RC.I, Bishop Paulos was in all likelihood emphasizing his roots. He may have been a Dongolese, perhaps someone close to the king, someone from the royal family, although this is not said in the text on the stelae. The architecture of Paulos' cathedral is Dongolan overall, but the wall paintings decorating the interior apparently are not, especially when compared with the early wall paintings from Dongola preserved in the Central Building of the Monastery on Kom H (Godlewski in preparation), the Cruciform Building on the Citadel (Zielińska 2010) and House A in the

northern town (Martens-Czarnecka 1990; Jakobielski 2004). They are the work of a different group of painters, most certainly not the royal-commissioned atelier, rendering their creations on lime plaster (Godlewski in preparation). From a technological point of view, the wall paintings from the Cathedral of Paulos are different; the murals were painted on a coat of mud plaster with whitewashed surface.

The question to be asked at this point is whether the new cathedrals in Dongola and Pachoras were a reflection of a new situation in the Church of Maku-

ria, pressed by King Merkurios into a union with the Alexandrian Monophysite Church? The *History of the Patriarchs* is convinced that this was the case, but there may be more to the issue than meets the eye. In any case, the simultaneous functioning of two cathedrals in Dongola is an important sign: was there perhaps some kind of tolerance agreement between the Church and the King? New texts from Makuria may yet bring light to bear on what the Makurian Church was like in the early 8th century.

THE CHURCH OF MAKURIA DURING THE REIGN OF KYRIAKOS AND IOANNES II: SECOND HALF OF THE 8TH CENTURY

The *History of the Patriarchs* is the only source of information on the serious crisis in Makuria in the late 730s, resulting from the conflict between the young king Abraham and Bishop Kyriakos. Immature political adventurism is perhaps not the sole reason for the altercation between the young ruler and the elderly bishop. The events that followed the death of Abraham and his successor Mark in tragic circumstances should be seen as proof of a deeper crisis, touching on Dongolan affairs that are beyond the scope of current knowledge. The two kings were killed, Mark despite seeking asylum at the altar of the church, as reported by the *History of the Patriarchs*. Perhaps the relations between civil and church authorities were at the root of the conflict. This was a time when the Chalcedonian bishop returned to Alexandria and the Abbasids seized power from the Omayyads over the territorially extensive Arab realm. These

events were surely followed closely in Dongola, as far as circumstances allowed.

The one to introduce serious changes in the royal administration of the kingdom was the next king, Kyriakos, and it is also then that the Church of Makuria underwent significant changes, including its administration. The *History of the Patriarchs* presents Kyriakos in very flattering terms as a defender of the Monophysite patriarch, reporting with great imagination the expedition mounted by the King of Makuria all the way to Fustat in Cairo. The description is more literary than factual. In reality, Kyriakos reformed the kingdom, establishing Nobadia as an eparchy. The names of the first three eparchs are known from epigraphic sources. However, their authority in Nobadia was not necessarily related in any way to the implementation of the *baqt* treaty, because it did not define the trade relations between Egypt and Maku-

ria. The Eparch of Nobadia had wider powers and his seat was in Pachoras, in the largest citadel after the Dongolan fortifications that the kingdom had. Like Dongola, Pachoras, too, was based in an extensive agricultural hinterland.

It is in this situation that Bishop Ignatios (766–802) came to preside over the see of Pachoras. His funerary stela, which was mounted on his simple tomb on the southern side of the cathedral, contains some interesting bits of information. He was ordained as a bishop two years before being called up to the bishopric of Pachoras; before that he was a monk at some unknown monastery and he continued to consider himself a monk even after being ordained. The stela says that he was a monk for 58 years, for 36 years a bishop, spending 34 years of that time in Pachoras. His stela is exceptional in the Makurian milieu, both in its graphic form and in the composition of the text (Łajtar 2003: 279–289). It is written in Greek and the year of his death is given according to the Alexandrian Era, from the creation of the world (Ochala 2011: 183–204); this was the first use of this dating formula in Makuria and after him three other bishops of Pachoras had the same chronology cited on their stelae. Ever since his tomb was discovered, Ignatios had been considered a foreigner to Makuria. His term in office as bishop was linked to a flourishing of the art of wall painting in Pachoras, although one should keep in mind that at this point the cathedral had already been standing for almost 50 years and there were surely standards in force for adorning the interior with murals. No one noted, however, the connection between the arrival

of Ignatios in Pachoras, which could not have occurred without the approval of King Kyriakos and the Bishop of Dongola, with the renewal of the Chalcedonian patriarchate in Alexandria in 742 and the installation of Bishop Cosmas there. There can be no doubt that Cosmas, and his successors as well, were driven by the need to restore their administrative control over the churches they had owned earlier in Egypt which Pope Benjamin had taken over after 645. The only report available is that in the *History of the Patriarchs*: a somewhat nervous and fantastic description of the cooperation between the Patriarch Michael and King Kyriakos, and it could be an attempt to cover up the real situation.

Considering that there are other “migrants” from the North apart from Ignatios, a good example being the priest Zacharias from Dongola, whose stela confirms his origin (Łajtar 2003: 111–115), relations between the Church of Makuria and the Chalcedonian bishops of Alexandria should be seen as practically a certainty. It is easier in this context to understand the changes taking place in the Church of Makuria. Bishop Ignatios was most likely a metropolitan bishop, the superior of the bishops in Kurte and Phrim, and the same can be said of his successor, Bishop Ioannes I, as confirmed by an inscription from the years 802–804 from the Church of Archangel Raphael in Dongola (A. Łajtar and T. Derda, personal communication, 2016). Likely in the mid-8th century, concurrently with Kyriakos’ establishment of the Eparch of Nobadia, the Church of Makuria established a metropolitan bishop over the same territory. Both the civil and the religious authori-

ties had their seats in Pachoras. A reliable description of the situation inside the Church of Makuria would require a broader source base than is currently available, but it seems that there was a climate of general tolerance sustained by King Kyriakos and the archbishop of Dongola Aaron (even if the year in which he took office is not known) on one side and

the Pachoras metropolitan on the other, although there is no evidence that Bishop Ignatios ever held this title. All that is clear is that the title existed after 802. It is highly probable that Ignatios was the first metropolitan of Pachoras and that he had been called on to serve in this capacity by the Chalcedonian Bishop of Alexandria with the Makurian king's placet.

THE INSCRIPTION FROM THE CHURCH OF RAPHAEL IN DONGOLA: THE YEARS 802–804

The first lucid report from a meeting of Makurian bishops gathered together in the Church of Raphael on the Citadel in Dongola, a meeting which took place under the patronage of King Ioannes II and which was headed by Archbishop Aaron, was inscribed in the church *diakonikon*, 3 m above the floor, hence intended for posterity [Fig. 3]. The Greek text was formulated with care and described the situation inside the Church

of Makuria at the beginning of the 9th century (A. Lajtar and T. Derda, personal communication, 2016). The text is not dated, but to judge by the dates of death of some of the participants, it must have taken place between 802 when Ignatios died and Ioannes I was made the metropolitan bishop of Pachoras in his place, and 804 when King Ioannes II died, leaving the throne of Makuria to his successor Chael. The meeting lasted for seven days.

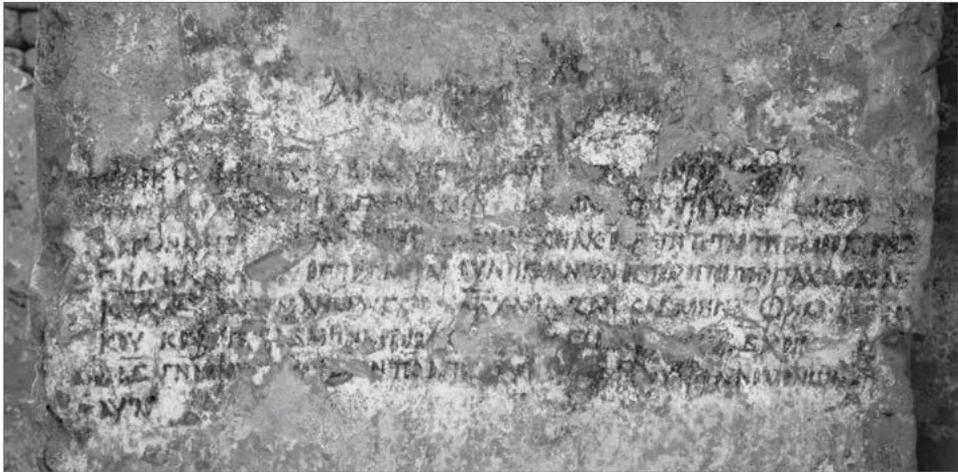


Fig. 3. Inscription recording a meeting of the Makurian Church hierarchy between AD 802 and 804, in the diakonikon of the Church of Archangel Raphael on the Citadel (PCMA UW Dongola Project/ photo M. Reklajtis)

The record of the meeting lists the participants in hierarchical and territorial order: Archbishop Aaron, Metropolitan of Pachoras Ioannes I, and the Bishops of Ouno unger(?), Zae, Kurte, and Phrim.

This listing reflects the five existing bishoprics and a description of Makurian Church hierarchy, while distinctly acknowledging royal patronage. The walls of the cathedral in Pachoras and

the Church of Raphael (SWN.B.V) in Dongola preserved the oldest paintings from the official program of representations of Bishops, Kings and members of the royal court. This program was to undergo intense development in the 10th and 11th centuries, as well as later, and it would start being introduced also in the more local church buildings around the land (Godlewski 2008).

CHURCH OF GEORGIOS I: MID 9TH–10TH CENTURY

The “nationalization” of the Church of Makuria, a process observed already from the beginning of the 9th century, speeded up significantly during the rule of the Dongolan dynasty of kings starting with Zacharias II and terminating with Georgios IV (Godlewski forthcoming). The EC.II cathedral was dismantled during this period and a grand building on a cruciform plan, the Church of Iesou, referred to as CC.I, was raised in its place by King Georgios I. The literary tradition has it that it was built as a thanksgiving for the safe return of Georgios from a meeting with the Caliph in Baghdad. But the building may have had another

important purpose: the commemoration of Makuria’s conversion to Christianity, marking the long historical traditions of the Church of Makuria. This can be read from the architecture: a domed complex on a cruciform plan with a commemorative chapel in its eastern arm, built over a crypt containing the burials of two nameless men who must have been interred in the 6th-century Building B.X once standing on this spot. The Cruciform Building, CC.I, was built on the combined foundations of Building B.X from the mid-6th century, the first cathedral EC.I from the second half of the 6th century that was ravaged by the

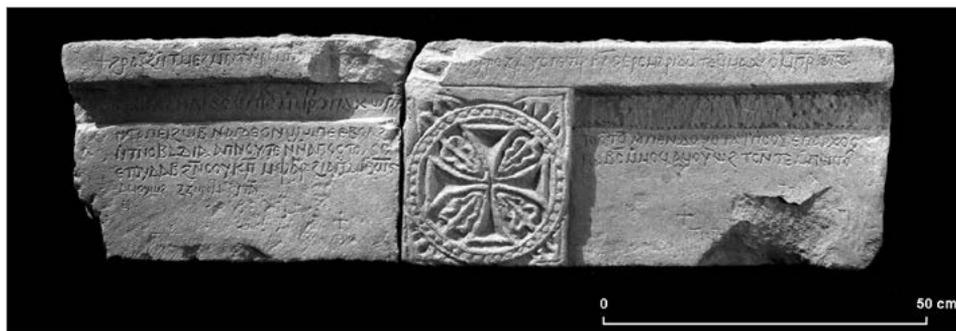


Fig. 4. Lintel from Pachoras (AD 930) with the foundation inscription of the Eparch of Nobadia Iesou, containing the titles of King Zacharias son of Georgios, Mother of Kings Mariam and metropolitan bishop Helias (PCMA UW Archives/photo A. Dziewanowski)

Arab invaders, and the second cathedral EC.II from the mid-7th century. The site was obviously a hallowed place and remained so throughout the existence of the churches in this place (Godlewski 2013b: 61–64 and 39–41).

Two other cathedrals were also rebuilt under the rule of the Dongolan dynasty: cathedral RC.II in Dongola and the cathedral in Pachoras, rebuilt completely by Bishop Petros [see *Fig. 2*]. The walls of this new building bear a well-preserved official program of representation, including Bishop Petros in the protection of Saint Peter the Apostle, next to King Geor-

gios IV in the protection of the Virgin, both in the *diakonikon*, and the Mother of Kings Martha in the protection of the Virgin Theotokos and the Child in the northern aisle, the space that was intended for women (Godlewski 2008).

It is interesting to note in this context a lintel, on the southern side of the Cathedral of Pachoras (dated to 930), bearing the foundation inscription of the Eparch of Nobadia Iesou [*Fig. 4*]. It contains the titles of other officials: King Zacharias son of Georgios, Mother of Kings Mariam and metropolitan bishop Helias (Jakobielski 1972: 110–114; van der Vliet 2003: 15–21).

BISHOP IOANNES OF PACHORAS AND HIS BISHOP SONS

The ordainment of Ioannes as Bishop of Pachoras in 999, at the age of 74, was an important and unprecedented event that has gone underestimated in modern research. Who was Ioannes? Surviving archaeological and written sources, mostly from the 12th and 13th centuries, support the assumption that he was not a person of the clergy and that he had two adult sons, Marianos and Merkurios. He is of interest, however, in the context of events linked to Bishop Marianos, his son, and the Archbishop of Dongola Georgios.

The preserved epigraphic sources, mainly stelae, demonstrate that before this Ioannes no layman had ever been ordained a bishop in the Church of Makuria and at such an advanced age. The reason must have lain with Dongola, not Pachoras, and it may have been of a political nature. It is more his son Marianos and his ambitions as manifested in his portrait from the Cathedral (Michalowski 1974:

208–221; Jakobielski et al. 2017: Cat. 95), in which he is depicted standing between Christ and the Virgin Theotokos [*Fig. 5*], that speak volumes regarding the identity and position of Ioannes. Marianos's presumed connections with Babylon in Egypt (and hence the Coptic patriarch, whose seat was moved from Alexandria to Cairo, as well as the fact that his name was struck from the list of bishops written on the wall of the cathedral in Pachoras (see Jakobielski 1972: 190–195), possibly in effect of his actions, and his funerary stela from Phrim may be interpreted as attestations of his unfulfilled royal ambitions (Łajtar and van der Vliet 2010: 86–91). The following interpretation of the situation is possible: Perhaps King Georgios had no son, but he had an aged brother whose sons had been sent to the monastery much earlier in order to maintain political order and preserve the rules of inheritance. Georgios was followed on



Fig. 5. Bishop Marianos, portrayed standing between Christ and the Virgin Theotokos, mural from the Cathedral in Pachoras, The Professor Kazimierz Michałowski Faras Gallery, National Museum in Warsaw (Photo T. Żółtowska)

the throne by Raphael, who was most probably the son of his sister. The change is signaled by a change of royal names, from the Georgioses, Zachariases and Ioanneses of an earlier time to Raphael. Thus, it would be a side line, but the succession to the throne would have been in accordance with an old Nubian tradition (Godlewski forthcoming).

This line of reasoning is furthered by the tomb of Ioannes with wall paintings in the vestibule depicting the Virgin Theotokos and the Archangel Michael. His sons and successors on the episcopal throne of Pachoras were not buried there, even though they died many years after him. The stela of Bishop Chael of Pachoras, son of the Bishop of Dongola Joseph, was removed after his death. It

may be assumed that there was opposition in the Church against nominees from the royal family and in particular against sons living in monasteries and ordained as bishops because of dynastic politics.

The wall paintings from the Cathedral of Pachoras tell a story that may be interpreted as a record of Bishop Marianos's ambitions. Not only did he commission the painting of his portrait in the protection of Christ and the Virgin Mary on the cathedral walls, but he also had a burial chamber prepared in the southern vestibule of the Cathedral, where his portrait was painted above the altar. It is also possible that Marianos purchased his nomination in Egypt, a common enough practice in this period.

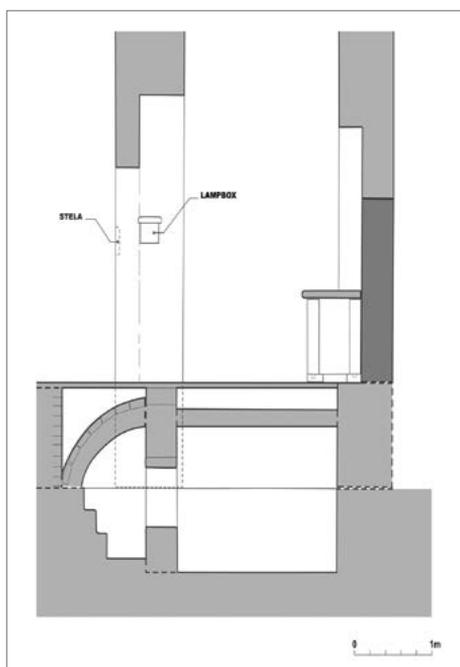
THE CHURCH OF ARCHBISHOP GEORGIOS AND THE THREE KINGS OF DOTAWO: SOLOMON, GEORGIOS IV AND BASILIOS

Members of royal families who became bishops and archbishops, like Georgios, introduced the posthumous cult of bishops to the Church of Makuria, paralleling the posthumous cult of rulers which was already a standard (Godlewski 2013a). The tomb and chapel of Georgios by the Building NW.B.I in the Monastery on Kom H [Fig. 6] is the best evidence in this respect, elaborated even further in the neighboring sanctuary with two crypts (Łajtar and van der Vliet 2017).

The Dongolan Georgios is an exceptional figure in the history of the Church of Makuria. As archpresbyteros and archistylites, he established the cult of his royal father not at the burial site, but in

a place that was publicly accessible, that is, a church which he founded and where the king was depicted being carried by an archangel *psychopompos*, possibly Raphael, although the identification cannot be certain (we can refer solely to the preserved wall paintings in the Church of Raphael on the Citadel from the end of the 8th century), in the company of the Apostles, to the heavens to a waiting Christ Pantokrator shown above.

Georgios managed something even more important, which ensured his greatness: he prevented the introduction of Arabic into the liturgy of the Church of Makuria, which is what the Patriarch Christodoulos did in Egypt, and he did



this by promoting mass translation of Greek texts into Old Nubian, which thus became an official language also of the Church.

It is presumably Georgios who can be said to stand behind the developed and monumental cult of the dead kings of Downtawo, represented so extravagantly in the Upper Church at Banganarti (Żurawski 2014). The sanctuary of Anna next to the Monastery Church in Dongola can also be linked to his episcopate.

A broader view of the evolution of the Church of Makuria in this period and its relations with the Church of Arwa and with Egypt remain more or less unknown. Changes were taking place for sure, but they were not linear. The

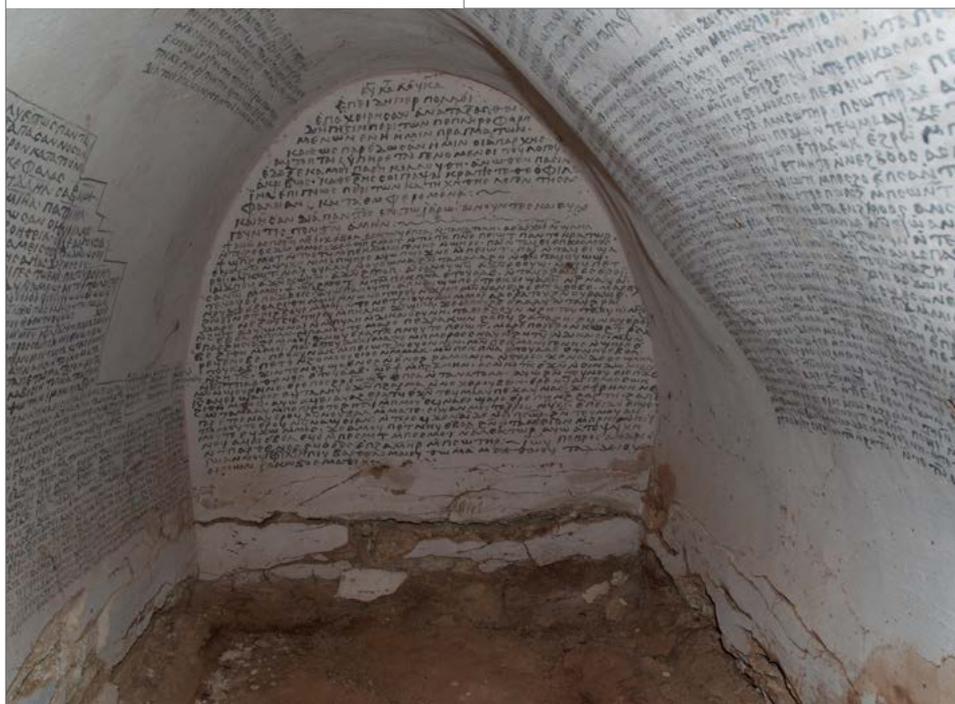


Fig. 6. Crypt believed to be the last resting place of Archbishop Georgios in the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola: top, E-W section looking north; bottom, view from the entrance (PCMA UW Dongola Project/photo C. Calaforra-Rzepka, drawing W. Godlewski and S. Maślak)

Constantinopolitan Creed preserved on the walls of the monastery in Dongola, including the Monastery Church, and also identified among the texts from Gebel Adda is perhaps the most important witness of the transformation. The union of the kingdom with Arwa must have had its impact on the functioning of the Church of Makuria, but very little is known about the Church of Arwa, hence it cannot be said how the Arwan Church's traditions could have influenced the Church of Makuria after

the union. One thing is rather clear: the church organization of the two rather did not merge into one homogeneous unit, as indicated by the Coptic lists of bishoprics, which report the episcopal sees of Makuria separately from those of Arwa (Seignobos 2015).

The history of the Makurian Church in the 12th through 14th centuries, after Makuria's union with Arwa, in times referred to as the Kingdom of Dotawo, was even more complicated, but that will be the subject of another article.

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How to cite this article: Godlewski, W. (2018b). Short history of the Church of Makuria (mid 6th–early 12th century). *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, 27/1, 599–616. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0013.2444>

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