

# SUDAN & NUBIA

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Front cover. Stone slab A3 used as a paving slab in Temple 4, Qasr Ibrim, showing Taharqa and Amun (photograph courtesy of F. Aldsworth).

Above. Frontal scan of lion head, Naga (Kroeper and Perzlmeier 2022, fig. 21, © Naga Project, 3-D scans by TrigonArt BauerPraus GbR).

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# Old Dongola cemetery excavations: winter 2020 field season

Robert Stark

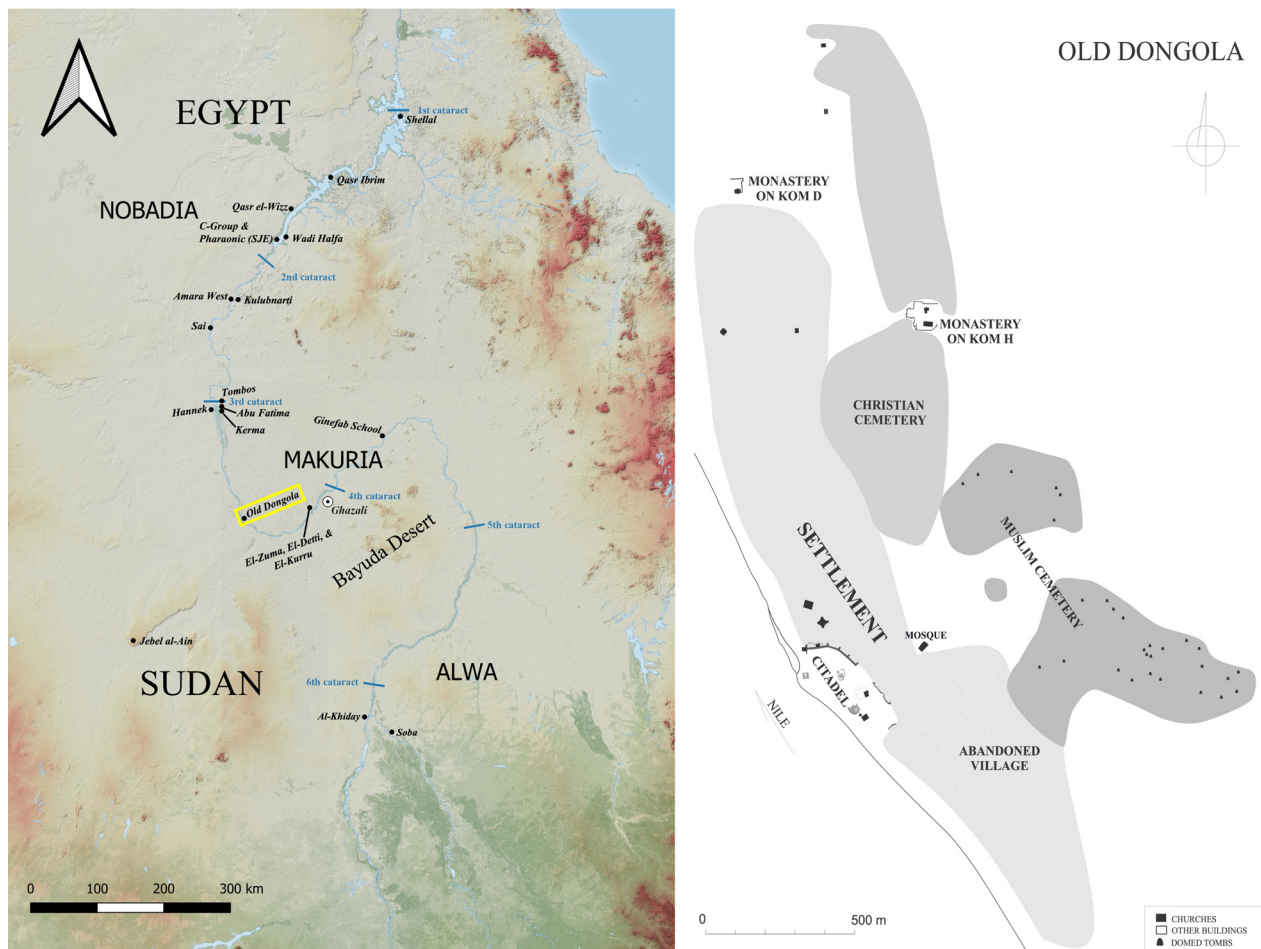


Figure 1. Location of Old Dongola (outlined in yellow) and site aspects.

## Introduction

Burial excavations and associated bioarchaeological analyses were undertaken from January 25<sup>th</sup> to March 9<sup>th</sup> as part of the winter 2020 field season at Old Dongola (18.223056, 30.743889; c. 242m asl), where the UMMA project is ongoing (see Obłuski 2021). Burial excavations focused on three areas: the citadel and in two locations within the Christian cemetery located north of the citadel (Figure 1). In total 23 individuals were excavated and analysed during the winter 2020 field season.

The abbreviation ‘ODB’ for ‘Old Dongola Burial’, has been adopted as a prefix for all burials (e.g. ODB1, ODB2). Each burial was also assigned a field number (FN) as its official registration within the UMMA Project single context system (see Dzierzbicka 2021). The use of ODB was adopted to provide a single inventory system for clarity in recording burials excavated across multiple sectors of the site. The term ‘grave,’ has been adopted to indicate burials within specifically constructed graves (e.g. a grave shaft, a burial chamber), while surface burials with no specifically constructed grave architecture elements have not been given an associated grave number designation. For the winter 2020 field season, the burial recording sequence was initiated at ODB2, ODB1 having been excavated in the winter 2019 field season (see Stark 2021).

Stark, R. 2022 [DOI 10.32028/9781803274096-66-81].

Osteological assessment was conducted according to the methods presented in Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994), Schaefer *et al.* (2009), AlQahtani *et al.* (2010), and Nikita (2017). In cases where sex could not be confidently assigned, individuals were recorded as ‘indeterminate’. Stature was estimated according to Raxter *et al.* (2008). Subadult stature was not estimated. Subadult age categories follow Lewis (2007); adult age categories follow Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994).

## Burials excavated

### Burials on the citadel (Sector 1)

In the autumn of 2019 wind erosion exposed several fragments of human skeletal remains within Square 11I58 on the citadel. To inhibit further erosion and to mark the location of this exposed burial, a brick perimeter was established around the area (Figure 2).

The burial was situated on a roughly NW-SE axis and was highly degraded, containing only small remains of a probable adult female skull (ODB2), with the head pointing towards the northwest, and the partial radius of a subadult (ODB3). Preserved remnants of a course of unfired bricks of uncertain function were identified directly below the skeletal remains of ODB2 and ODB3, suggesting an association between the two.

Six small finds were also recovered from the same deposition context as ODB2/ODB3: a spherical ground stone object (46.27 x 51.88mm); a gourd fragment with an engraved pattern; a fragment of ceramic (6.70mm thick) with a blue surface treatment; a broken fragment of what appears to have been a roughly square, flat bead with a rounded edge (4.43mm thick); a flat-ended, spherical blue bead (6.96 x 5.68mm,



Figure 2. Surface burial of ODB2 and ODB3.



Figure 3. ODB2 and ODB3 small finds.

monastery on Kom H. Both graves had a typical Christian E-W alignment and employed largely similar designs. No evidence of any surface superstructures was preserved over either Grave 1 or Grave 2.

#### Grave 1 (ODB4)

Grave 1 measures 2.42 x 0.73 x 0.67m and is located astride Squares 7G35 and 7H35, being the more northerly of the two graves documented in this area. Grave 1 comprises a burial cut into the bedrock and covered by a partially collapsed vault of unfired bricks (c. 0.31 x 0.18 x 0.09m) set lengthwise on the short edge (N-S) on c. 0.1m wide ledges carved out of the bedrock along the north and south margins of the grave cut (Figure 4).

Each row employed three bricks: one on foot angled inwards from the north and south wall ledges and a third brick spanning between these two. At the western end of the vault, the last course of unfired bricks is set abed (E-W). The entrance to the burial chamber at the western end of the vault was sealed by a series of unfired bricks set abed (N-S). The exterior and the interior of the vault had a smooth, uniform appearance with preserved evidence of a surface applied material suggestive of a sort of mud-like plaster.

A single, middle adult (c. 40–49 years old) male individual, documented as ODB4, was interred within Grave 1. This individual was interred in a supine position with their head facing upwards at the western end of the grave. The left hand was placed over the pelvis, while the right hand was situated beside the pelvis along the hip. The original position of the feet could not be determined due to post-depositional alteration. Small fragments of poorly preserved and highly friable black-coloured textile were present in the pelvic region, most likely indicating the use of a burial shroud for interment.

#### Grave 2 (ODB6–ODB20)

Grave 2 is located within Square 7H34 and measures 2.63 x 1.16 x 0.83m, being located almost directly south of Grave 1. Grave 2 comprises a burial cut into the bedrock and was covered by a vault of unfired bricks (Figure 5). The unfired bricks (c. 0.31 x 0.18 x 0.09m) forming the vault were set on foot on the short edge (N-S) on ledges along the northern and southern margins of the grave cut. These ledges measured 0.16m wide and comprised a construction of unfired bricks set abed c. 5 courses high and separated from the adjacent bedrock by infilled soils. These constructed flat ledge surfaces, onto which the unfired vault

with 1.58mm aperture); and an ellipsoidal, clear bead with vertically oriented matte white lines (5.07 x 5.62mm, with 1.06mm aperture) (Figure 3).

Given the location of Individuals ODB2/ODB3 outside of a formal cemetery and the shallow surface deposition, it appears evident that the burials of ODB2 and ODB3 reflect later, and most likely post-abandonment, interments on the citadel; radiocarbon dating will help to confirm this supposition.

#### Graves 1 and 2 (Sector 2)

Grave 1 (ODB4) and Grave 2 (ODB6–ODB20) were identified during removal of previously deposited sand overburden within the modern hydro corridor in the vicinity of the



Figure 4. Collapsed vault of Grave 1 (left) and interment of ODB4 (right).



Figure 5. Grave 2 burial vault (left) and post-excitation bottom (right).

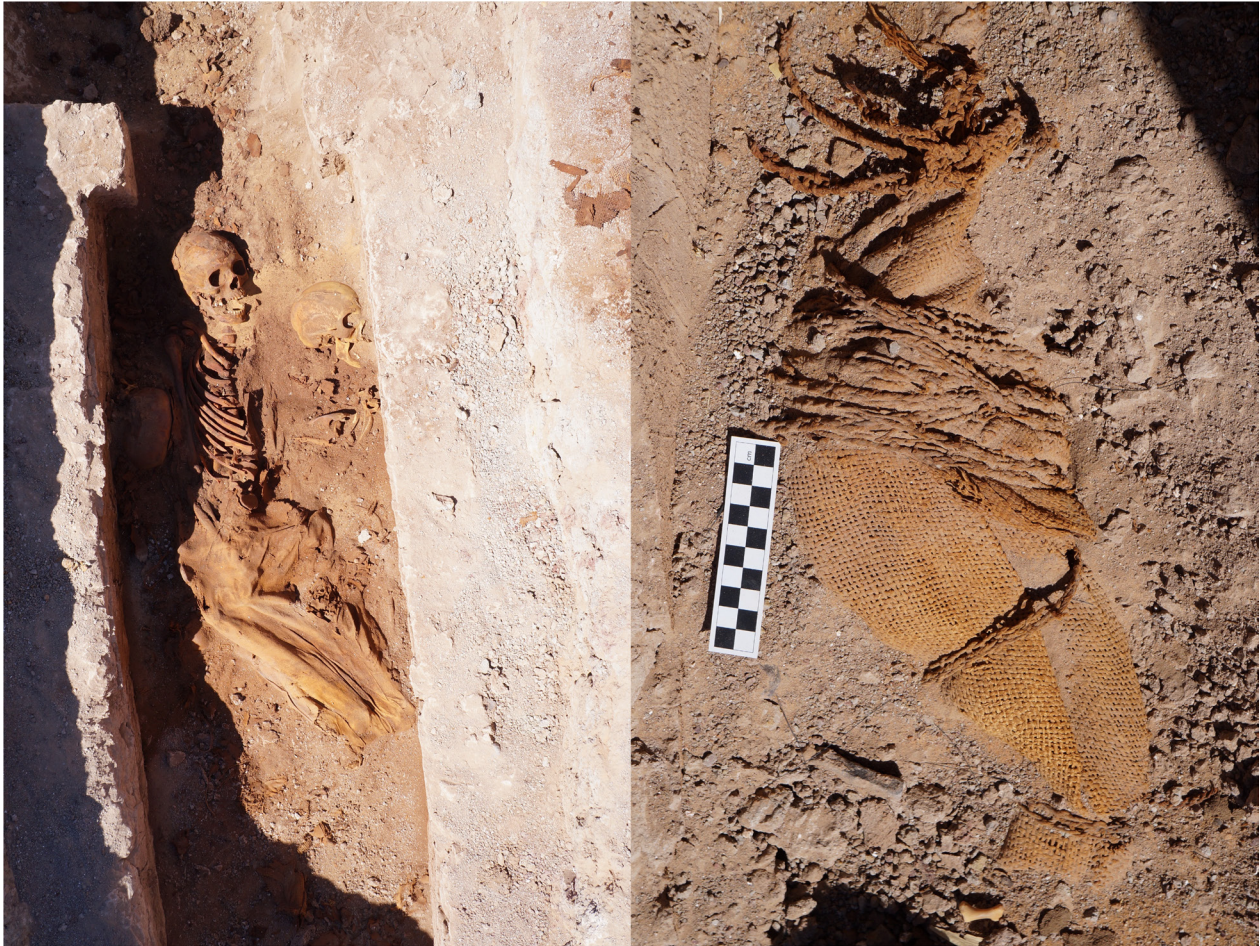


Figure 6. Individual ODB17 within Grave 2 (left) and outer shroud fabric (right).

bricks were set, were left exposed, while the wall surfaces forming the interior of the burial chamber were covered in a mud-like coating. The western end of the burial chamber was demarcated by a blocking wall/entrance of unfired bricks (N-S), being, from north to south: one brick set abed; one brick set on foot, forming the northern jamb of the entrance 'doorway;' an unfired brick set abed at ground level forming a sill/threshold; a brick set on foot, forming the southern jamb; and a brick set abed. These five bricks formed an entrance of sorts, which was sealed, at the vault level, with courses of unfired bricks set abed (N-S). West of this entranceway was a sloping (W-E) roughly semi-circular depression carved into the bedrock, ostensibly excavated for facilitating the introduction of interments into the burial chamber, though this function is not entirely clear.

The unfired brick vault over the burial chamber was constructed using abutting rows of two bricks set on foot on the short edge (N-S) and lent against one another, extending from the south and north ledges. The vault was covered inside and out with a smoothed mud-plaster like coating.

Following initial documentation and removal of the partially collapsed unfired brick vault, it quickly became apparent that, unlike Grave 1, the roughly similarly sized Grave 2 contained multiple interments. Excavation of Grave 2 resulted in the identification of fifteen individuals: ODB6 through ODB20. These comprised males, females, one individual of indeterminate sex, and subadults, of various ages (Table 1 and Table 2).

All fifteen individuals were interred with their heads to the west, save for ODB18, a subadult, who was interred roughly N-S. The hands were either over the pelvis, at the sides, or a combination thereof; the position of the feet was generally side by side, though specific positioning of the feet does not appear

Sex	Subadult (<20)	Young adult (20-34)	Middle adult (35-49)	Total
Subadult	6	-	-	6
Male	-	2	2	4
Female	-	1	3	4
Indeterminate	-	1	-	1
Total	6	4	5	15

Table 1. Distribution by age and sex of individuals in Grave 2 (ODB6–ODB20).

Individual	FN	Age (years)	Sex	Stature (m)
ODB6	3	5.5-6.5	Subadult	-
ODB7	4	35-45	Female	1.570 ± 0.025m
ODB8	5	20-25	Male	1.575 ± 0.032m
ODB9	6	6.5-7.5	Subadult	-
ODB10	7	25-35	Female	1.573 ± 0.025m
ODB11	8	2.5-3.5	Subadult	-
ODB12	9	3.5-4.5	Subadult	-
ODB13	10	45-55	Female	1.608 ± 0.025m
ODN14	11	20-23	Male	1.756 ± 0.032m
ODB15	12	13-15	Subadult	-
ODB16	13	25-30	Indeterminate	1.529 ± 0.025m
ODB17	14	35-40	Male	1.686 ± 0.032m
ODB18	15	9.5-10.5	Subadult	-
ODB19	16	35-45	Female	1.591 ± 0.025m
ODB20	17	35-45	Male	1.610 ± 0.032m

Table 2. Individuals interred within Grave 2.

evident, but was almost certainly dictated by the use of burial shrouds, fastened around the ankle area.

All fifteen individuals were interred in textiles, which appear specifically to be burial shrouds. The level of preservation of such shrouds was highly variable, ranging from only a few small fragments to almost complete. In general, removal of the shrouds resulted in even further degradation as the preserved material was highly friable. The nature of the fabrics recovered suggests the use of two shroud types, with an initial shroud of finer, more delicate feel, and a second fabric of a coarser straw-yellowish material, approximating matting, as an outer layer. This outer layer was most frequently fastened with a string/cord. In at least one case, ODB14, a string comprised of intertwined yellow and black fibres was used. All fastenings, both for inner and outer shrouds, adopted a typical crisscross pattern across the body length (Figure 6).

The nature of the fifteen individuals interred in Grave 2 brings into question the timing of such depositions. None displayed evidence of having been deposited and later positionally altered to facilitate



subsequent burial introductions, as would be typically expected in the case of secondary burials. Rather, all were identified in positions of full skeletal element articulation, with only minor observations of element drift within the given shrouds, which most likely resulted from gravitational movement of elements following decomposition. All remained wrapped in burial shrouds. Such evidence brings into question whether they were all interred during a singular event or within a short period of one another, as later re-use does not seem evident (see Duday 2009, 75-76; Gligor 2014).

The order of introduction and positioning of bodies also appears to have been dictated by space, with individuals appearing to have been fitted into the available space, atop and beside one another, with several burials being tightly compacted against the northern and southern edges of the grave. Three burials are of further note: ODB8, ODB13, and ODB14. These three individuals were buried one atop the other with the western half of each individual extending through the burial entrance into the previously noted semi-circular area, while the eastern half of each body was within the vaulted burial chamber. Such insistences of fitting all of these individuals into a single grave, as opposed to excavating additional graves, again suggests a purposeful connection between these fifteen individuals, though what sort of connection that might have been is presently not clear.

#### ODB5

During surface cleaning around Grave 2, the remains of a subadult individual (c. 1 year old) were identified in a shallow surface interment. The skeletal remains were highly fragmented and poorly preserved. The depth of interment was approximately 50mm, though given the rapid alteration of the ground surface in this area due to aeolian dispersal of sand, the original depth of interment is uncertain. No evidence of a grave structure, nor grave cut into bedrock, was identified. No artefacts or associated burial textiles were identified.

#### **Burials in proximity to the modern Muslim cemetery (Sector 2)**

Based on the results of geophysical survey, which identified east-west oriented anomalies consistent with Christian burials, an area directly across from the modern Muslim cemetery was chosen for investigation as a possible boundary edge of the medieval Christian cemetery. The area selected falls within Squares 8G52, 8H52, and 8I52 of the UMMA project grid system from wherein Graves 3 to 6 (ODB21 to ODB24) were identified.

#### Grave 3 (ODB21)

Grave 3 was identified in Square 8G52, being marked by a substantially eroded fired brick pavement superstructure, having a maximum preserved dimension of 1.60 x 1.60 x 0.09m. During cleaning of the underlying surface to expose the area of the burial cut, a series of brick installations became evident. Specifically, at the eastern boundary of the grave shaft a single row of unfired bricks set on edge (E-W) extending N-S was identified; abutting this row of unfired bricks was an E-W oriented installation of highly degraded unfired bricks set on edge (N-W), at the western end of which a second course of unfired bricks set on edge (E-W) forming a N-S boundary of the grave cut was identified (Figure 7). The presence of these installations suggests a broader area of development of which Grave 3 may have been a part.

At a depth of c. 0.2m below the surface within the grave shaft, an isolated clump of evidently human hair atop a broken fragment of pottery was identified (Figure 8). The deposition of this hair and pottery fragment appears to have been deliberate; no associated interment was identified at this level. The deposition of hair, fingernails, magical texts, and objects associated with the body of a given person, deceased or living, for apotropaic purposes are attested within several preserved textual accounts from earlier time periods in the Nile Valley, with documented cases from Pharaonic and Greco-Roman Egypt

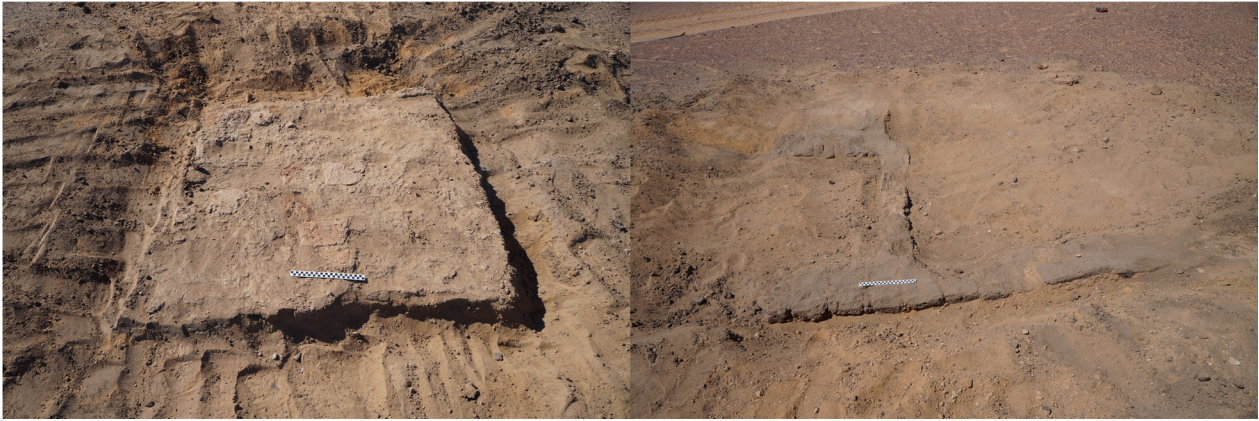


Figure 7. Preserved superstructure of Grave 3 (left) and brick installations (right).

(see Kambitsis 1976; Betz 1992; Tassie 1996, 2000; Dielman 2012). Though the similarity to such practices from earlier time periods in the region suggests a possible explanation for the inclusion of such items in Grave 3, specific attestation of the inclusion of hair within Makurian period and later graves is presently unknown to the author. Ethnographic accounts of apotropaic practices related to ceremonial hair cutting, often in association with the first haircut of infants or the cutting of infant hair, and disposal/deposition of hair offerings in the earth, in rivers, in grave contexts and sacred structures (e.g., churches) among Copts, Muslims and several groups in Upper Egypt, have been documented in more recent periods, perhaps suggesting a broader presence and retention of such practices in the region (see Blackman 1927; Murray 1935; Tassie 1996).

Excavation of the grave cut for Grave 3 resulted in the identification of a mud plaster-like coating of the shaft cut into the bedrock. Along the western wall of the grave shaft, at 0.7 m below the surface, was what appears to have been a step or ledge, measuring 0.7 x 0.35 x 1.00m. The top of this feature comprised two unfired bricks set abed (N-S) atop the underlying bedrock. The bottom of the grave shaft was reached at 1.7m and measured 0.96 x 0.74m. Along the northern margin of the grave shaft, at a depth of 1.64m, was a thin ledge, measuring 0.98 x 0.09 x 0.06m. This ledge, being covered in a mud plaster-like coating, had nothing on it and has no counterpart along the southern wall; it is unclear what function this ledge served within the grave shaft.

Extending downward from the northwestern limit of the grave shaft was a small set of stairs with at least four identified steps, measuring in total 0.71 x 0.51 x 0.52m. These stairs lead to a rounded doorway, measuring 0.18 x 0.55 x 0.46m, of a barrel-vaulted tomb, the chamber of which measures 2.10 x 0.42 x 0.55m. The chamber was sealed with a series of unfired bricks set abed (N-S) and extends in an easterly direction. The interior surface of the burial vault was covered with a mud plaster-like coating and was otherwise unaltered (Figure 8). The space available within the grave shaft coupled with the small size and angle of entry into the vaulted burial chamber of Grave 3 was restrictive to such a degree that excavation was not possible. Given the depth of the shaft and the high likelihood that additional burials are present around Grave 3, it was ultimately decided to re-seal the burial vault and re-fill the grave shaft to await the opportunity for full excavation of the surrounding area in a subsequent season. For the purpose of radiocarbon dating, a piece of fragmentary rib from what appears to have been the last individual interred within Grave 3, a probable young/middle adult female, was collected (ODB21).

#### Grave 4 (ODB22)

Grave 4 was located within Square 8H52, c. 10m south of Grave 3. During surface cleaning of this area the remains of a highly degraded single course unfired brick pavement superstructure was identified over the



Figure 8. Hair atop pottery sherd in Grave 3 (top left); 'step or ledge' in grave shaft (top right); excavated burial shaft (bottom left); vaulted burial chamber (bottom right).

grave cut. The level of degradation of the superstructure bricks suggests previous surface damage, most likely through water and/or aeolian erosion and exposure. This pavement was preserved to a maximum dimension of 2.47m E-W by 0.90m N-S. The unfired bricks utilised for creating the superstructure were of a typical dimension, measuring c. 0.33m long x 0.18m wide x 0.09m thick. The placement of unfired bricks in the superstructure is such that at the SE and NE corners a single mudbrick is set abed in a N-S direction (this is probably true at the SW and NW corners as well, but they are so degraded that identification as such was not possible). Between the abed bricks at the corners are two peripheral rows of mudbricks set on edge (E-W). The central portion of the superstructure employs a series of mudbricks placed on edge on a diagonal, on a NW-SE axis, giving a sort of lightning bolt appearance to the middle of the pavement. The presence of a fragment of fired brick(s) abutting the eastern edge of the superstructure brings into question the potential presence of a lamp box; however, the degree of degradation and absence of any associated pottery fragments did not permit confirmation of this (Figure 9).

At c. 1.26m below the surface, a brick burial cover was identified. This cover extended along the majority of the length of the Grave 4 burial cut, being 2.26 x 0.43 x 0.23m (Figure 10). The construction employed a lower and upper course of bricks. The lower course comprised a single row of bricks, a mixture of both fired and unfired, set abed (E-W) on a ledge cut into the bedrock of the grave shaft. The upper course comprised a series of primarily fired (red) bricks, with unfired bricks intermixed seemingly at random, set on edge E-W lengthwise along the southern and northern edges of the grave cut, with N-S set bricks spanning between these two rows. The lower course of bricks appears to have functioned as a stabilising support for the upper course. All of the bricks utilised were of a typical dimension, being c. 0.33 x 0.16 x 0.1m.

Demarcating the western extent of the interment of ODB22 were two unfired bricks, one atop the

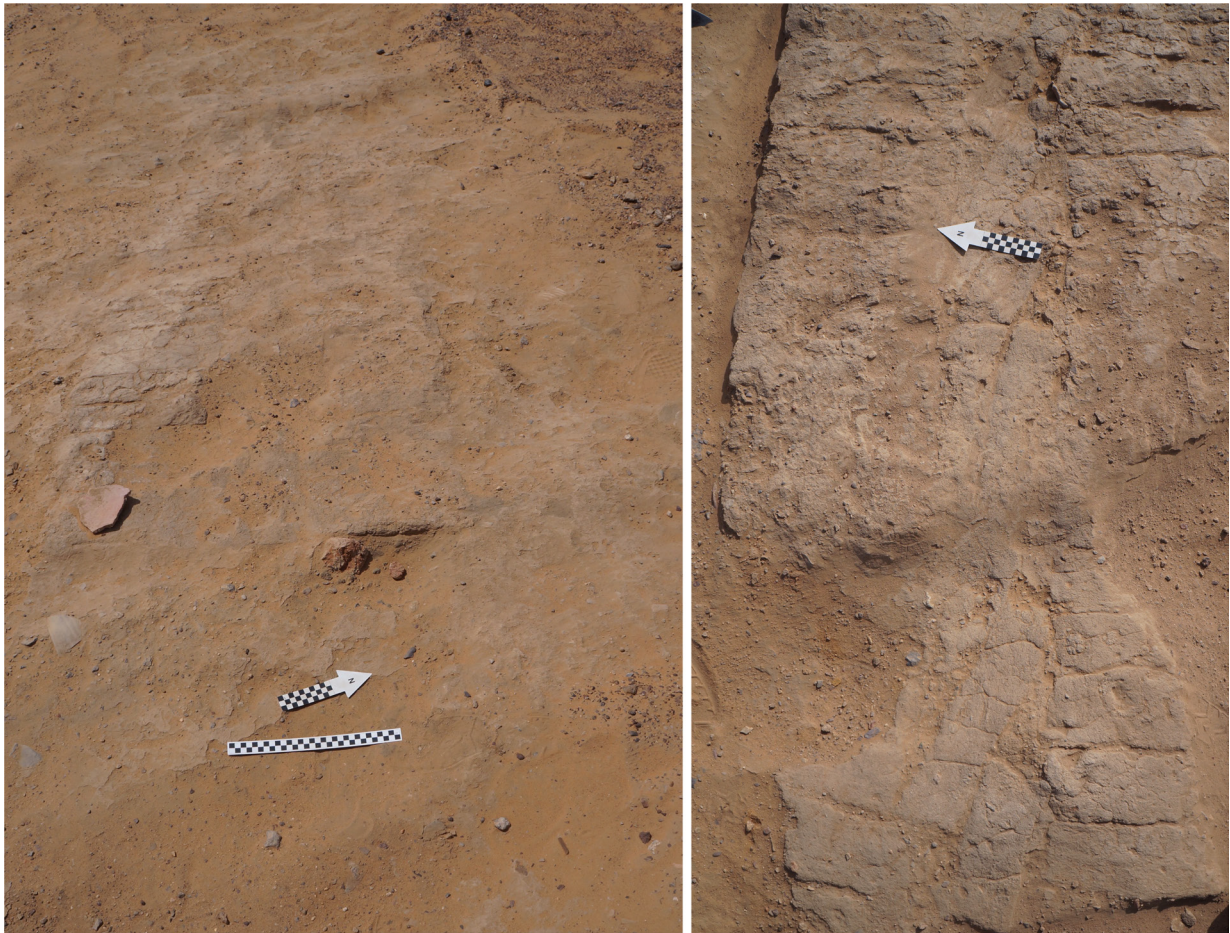


Figure 9. Superstructure of Grave 4 with fired brick fragment at the east end (left) and unfired bricks placed aslant (right).

other, set abed (N-S) directly against the top of the skull, leaving a c. 0.1m empty space between these bricks and the ultimate western extent of the grave cut. Conversely, at the eastern end of the grave cut a small 'pocket' had been carved into the bedrock beyond the grave cut length, evidently to accommodate the feet of ODB22 (Figure 11).

Individual ODB22, a middle adult (c. 35-45 years) male, was interred with the head to the west with the body in an extended supine position. The area utilised for the interment of Individual ODB22, cut into the bedrock below the burial cover, tapered from west to east such that the western area, where the head and torso of ODB22 was located, was wider (0.44m) than the eastern end (0.22m), where the feet were located. Though highly friable, evidence of what was most likely a burial shroud around the body was present. The hands were placed beside the pelvis with the fingers angled into the centre of the pelvic area; the feet were side-by-side.

#### Grave 5 (ODB24)

Grave 5, being 2.22 x 0.61 x (W)1.40–(E)1.50m, is located 1.68m south of Grave 4 within Square 8I52. The superstructure marking this burial was substantially eroded, being preserved to a maximum dimension of 2.22 x 0.76 x 0.05m, with the eastern and western ends of the superstructure being particularly eroded. The unfired bricks utilised for creating the superstructure were of a typical dimension, measuring c. 0.33m long x 0.18m wide x 0.09m thick.

The superstructure over Grave 5 employed peripheral rows of unfired bricks set on edge (N-S) along the northern and southern edges; centrally, at the western edge was a row of unfired E-W oriented bricks



Figure 10. Brick burial cover of Grave 4 (left) and lower course of burial cover bricks with abed brick west of the skull (right).



Figure 11. Interment of ODB22 in Grave 4 (left) and tapered bottom of Grave 4 (right).



Figure 12. Pavement style superstructure (top) and burial cover of Grave 5 (bottom).

set on edge in pairs of two, followed (i.e., moving east) by three single bricks in a row set aslant on edge (NE-SW) forming a lightning bolt type pattern, and then a row of bricks set on edge E-W in pairs of two at the eastern end.

During excavation of the grave cut, at c. 1.0m, a burial cover constructed of an upper course of unfired bricks and a lower course of fired bricks was identified. The burial cover measured 1.94 x 0.61 x 0.23m. All of the bricks employed were of a typical dimension, being c. 0.33 x 0.16 x 0.10m. The construction of this burial cover was the same as that utilised in Grave 4 (Figure 12). The width of the grave bottom below the ledge cut into the bedrock onto which the burial cover was placed, where Individual ODB24 was interred, was wider at the western end (0.40m) than the eastern end (0.25m), creating a tapered appearance fitted to the width of the interred individual.

Individual ODB24, an older adult (>50 years) female, was interred in an extended supine position with the head to the west. A substantial amount of head hair was preserved; this was brownish-blond in colour and had a noticeably wavy curl to it. Preserved evidence of what was most likely a burial shroud, though highly degraded, was present in the pelvic region. The hands of this individual were placed over the pelvis and the feet were side by side. A single fired red brick set on edge (N-S) was identified directly west of the skull of ODB24, being 0.28m from the western terminus of the grave cut. The placement of this brick, much as in Grave 4, in direct proximity to the skull may suggest some level of head protection, though it may also simply have functioned as part of the lower course used to support the overlying brick burial cover (Figure 13).

#### Grave 6 (ODB23)

The roughly E-W cut for Grave 6 was identified at 0.30m below the surface during the excavation of Grave 5 and comprised a shallow depression (0.87 x 0.21 x 0.09m) cut into the bedrock adjacent to the southern edge of the Grave 5 cut. Grave 6 is located in the area between the unfired brick superstructure of Grave 5 and another, as yet unexcavated, grave superstructure to the south. The grave cut for Grave 6 is separated from that of Grave 5 by a narrow strip of bedrock, c. 0.1–0.3m in width. The variable width of this bedrock division is accounted for by a disparity in the alignment of Grave 5 in relation to Grave 6 (Figure 14).

The skeletal remains of a c. 6.5–7.5 year old subadult (ODB23) individual, based on dental development, were identified within Grave 6. Individual ODB23 was interred on the bedrock in an extended, supine position with the hands along the thighs and the feet side by side. No evidence of a burial cover or vault



Figure 13. Burial of ODB24 in Grave 5 (left) and brick above head of ODB24 (right).

was present. The skeletal remains of ODB23 were highly degraded and very poorly preserved; no textiles were identified.

The shallow depth of Grave 6, both from the surface and in terms of the depth of the burial cut into the bedrock; the absence of an evident burial cover or vault; and the early dating of ODB23 (39 BC to AD 204; 95.4%), all suggest that Grave 6 (ODB23) is an atypical burial within the broader Christian cemetery landscape at Old Dongola. Additionally, despite ample room for a longer grave cut, Grave 6 is noticeably too short for the interment of ODB23, the feet of this individual sloping upwards almost to the ground surface level along the eastern terminus of the grave cut, which may suggest this burial was expediently executed. The direct proximity of Grave 5 and Grave 6 brings forth a number of questions. It is possible that if Grave 6 was established significantly before the advent of the medieval period in Nubia, as suggested by radiocarbon dating, its location next to the subsequently established medieval period Grave 5 occurred simply by chance, though the separation of the two grave cuts by c. 0.1–0.3m would make such establishment very serendipitous. It is also possible that while seeking to establish Grave 5, the burial of Grave 6 was discovered and avoided, which seems more likely given the evident temporal disparity between the two graves (see Table 3, below).

### Textiles in the Graves

Save for ODB2, ODB3, ODB5 and ODB23, all of the individuals excavated during the winter 2020 field season had evidence of preserved textiles used in burial. Textile preservation ranged widely, from only a small



Figure 14. Burial of ODB23 in Grave 6 (bottom) and Grave 6 (outlined in yellow) in relation to Grave 5 (top).

fragment of highly friable material that disintegrated upon the slightest touch, to well preserved, almost complete textiles. Among the burials excavated at least three varieties of textile were evident: a finer blackish-appearing inner layer; a coarser mat-like straw-yellow outer layer; and a yellowish textile woven into a black textile that was only present in association with ODB24. Two varieties of fastening rope designs were also documented: a finer, fenestrated, helical patterned yellowish rope, and a rougher, black and yellow interwoven fibrous appearing rope. Figure 15 provides a photographic overview of the macroscopically observed differences. Specialist analysis of the recovered burial textiles is forthcoming.

### Radiocarbon Dating

Five skeletal samples were submitted to the Poznań Radiocarbon Laboratory for radiocarbon dating (Table 3). The returned dates are broadly similar, save for Sample #77 from ODB23 in Grave 6, which falls well outside of the expected

date range for medieval Nubia and as previously discussed, brings forth additional questions about this atypical burial. While it is not readily possible to draw deep inferences from only four radiocarbon dates, it is worth noting that the remaining four radiocarbon dates progress temporally roughly south to north, with the most southerly graves (i.e. Grave 4 and Grave 5) having the earliest dates, while the most northerly grave (i.e. Grave 2) has the latest date, with Grave 3 falling in-between. Future radiocarbon dating of additional burials will help to further refine the chronology of development of the Christian cemetery at Old Dongola.

### Conclusions

Winter 2020 excavations within the expansive Christian cemetery at Old Dongola identified a multiplicity of burial styles, ranging from single to multiple interment brick vaulted burials, to a shaft burial with stairs leading to a vaulted chamber with multiple interments, to surface burials, burial pavement superstructures, and the use of brick burial covers. Such diversity of approaches to burial in proximity to one another brings forth numerous additional questions about socio-temporal variation in burial style and the implications of such to deeper understandings of life at Old Dongola and within medieval Nubian society more broadly. Continued excavations within the Christian cemetery at Old Dongola will help to provide further refinement to the findings presented herein.





Figure 15. Textiles – typical inner layer (top left); outer textile layer and helical pattern rope (top right); yellow-on-black textile from ODB24 (bottom left); and black-and-yellow bicolour rope (bottom right).

Sample #	Material	Grave #	ODB #	BP	BC/AD (95.4%)	Poznań Lab #
42	Femur	2	20	1275 ± 30 BP	AD 665 to AD 822	Poz-126743
76	Rib	3	21	1370 ± 30 BP	AD 605 to AD 772	Poz-137838
77	Femur	6	23	1950 ± 40 BP	39 BC to AD 204	Poz-138123
82	Rib	4	22	1455 ± 30 BP	AD 568 to AD 650	Poz-137840
85	Rib	5	24	1455 ± 30 BP	AD 568 to AD 650	Poz-137841

Table 3. Radiocarbon dates for burials excavated in winter 2020 at Old Dongola.

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