

DEIR EL-NAQLUN 2014–2015. PRELIMINARY REPORT

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Abstract: The complex of the Nekloni monastery in Fayum (Deir el-Naqlun) was explored in yet another three seasons of fieldwork by a team from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology. On the plateau, investigations were carried out in the southern part of Building D (Rooms D.50 and D.41–D.44), northern part of Building E, western part of the 12th–13th-century Cemetery A and Building I. A 6th-century Hermitage EE.06 in the Naqlun hills to the east of the plateau was cleared, yielding a collection of study material, especially pottery from the kitchen unit dated to the second half of the 5th–6th century. The assemblage from the kitchen unit was composed of cooking pots and saucepans; tableware was represented by goblets, plates and bottles (*qullae*), while storage/transport vessels mainly by amphorae. Products of Egyptian workshops were mixed with imported wares of North African and Eastern Mediterranean origin (including Cyprus, Cilicia and Gaza).

Keywords: Fayum, Naqlun/Nekloni, monastery, Cemetery A, Hermitage EE.06, pottery, documents Greek and Arabic, 5th–6th century, tableware, goblets, cooking pots, *qullae*, storage vessels, amphorae

The excavation in the monastic compound of Nekloni, the medieval monastery at Deir el-Naqlun, was continued over the course of two seasons in 2014 and one season in 2015. The work was concentrated in the southern part of the building complex on Site D, as well as inside Buildings E and I further to the south. Several graves were explored in a section of the medieval, 12th–13th century cemetery located in the western part of the site, in the ruins of Building J. Rescue work took place in the partly damaged Hermitage EE.06.

Elementary protection work was implemented in Buildings A, G and D. With the help of local bricklayers some walls were

protected or partly reconstructed using red and dry bricks accessible at the site and bonded with mud mortar.

In addition to current fieldwork, finds from earlier seasons were documented and studied: amphorae mud stoppers by Dorota Dzierzbicka; Greek documents by Tomasz Derda; Arabic documents for final publication by Christian Gaubert; glass artifacts from Cemetery A and other Naqlun locations by Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert; pottery by Katarzyna Danys; last but not least, wall painting fragments from Room D.50 in the southern part of Building D were studied by Agnieszka Ryś and building materials by Szymon Maślak.

BUILDING D

Building D and specifically the tower DB.II in the monastic compound was excavated in the 1990s (Godlewski and Parandowska 1994: 56–59). Current exploration concentrated on the architecture directly to the south of this feature, namely, Rooms D.50 on the east and D.41 and D.44 on the west, separated by Staircase D.42.

These chambers were built on the rocky slope falling to the north, leveled partly with rubbish discarded from Building D [Fig. 1]. The local stratigraphy indicates that this southernmost line of rooms was added in the latest phase of the functioning of the monastery on the upper plateau, that is, in the 11th–12th century. The founding level in the case of these chambers was approximately 1.20 m above the walking level inside structure DB.II.

ROOM D.50

The easternmost room in this line was 8.45 m long and 3.98 m wide. It was entered from the west via a staircase in D.42

that formed a passage from DB.II [Fig. 2]. Three buttresses (two preserved) reinforced the south wall of the next chamber to the north, D.9 [see also Fig. 8]. There were also two bins for dry goods in its eastern part; one measured 2.09 m by 1.04 m, the other 2.03 m by 2.65 m [see Fig. 1]. The inner walls of the chamber were not plastered.

The chamber was filled with rubble which included all kinds of architectural debris: bricks both baked and dried, limestone and ceramic floor tiles, a large quantity of wooden beam and ceiling plank fragments as well as wooden wedges, and numerous lime-mortar window grilles with remains of windowpanes [see below, section on building materials and Figs 9–11]. Painted wall plaster fragments were also in evidence, retaining a bright coloring and presumably constituting the decoration of the chambers on the upper floor of the building in this part [Fig. 3]. The compositions cannot be easily reconstructed based on the hundreds of tiny pieces that

Team

Dates of work: three seasons: 2014/1: 16 March–3 April; 2014/2: 23 September–15 October; 2015: 5 September–6 October

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Papyrologists: Prof. Tomasz Derda (2015), Joanna Wegner, PhD candidate (both Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw; 2014/2)

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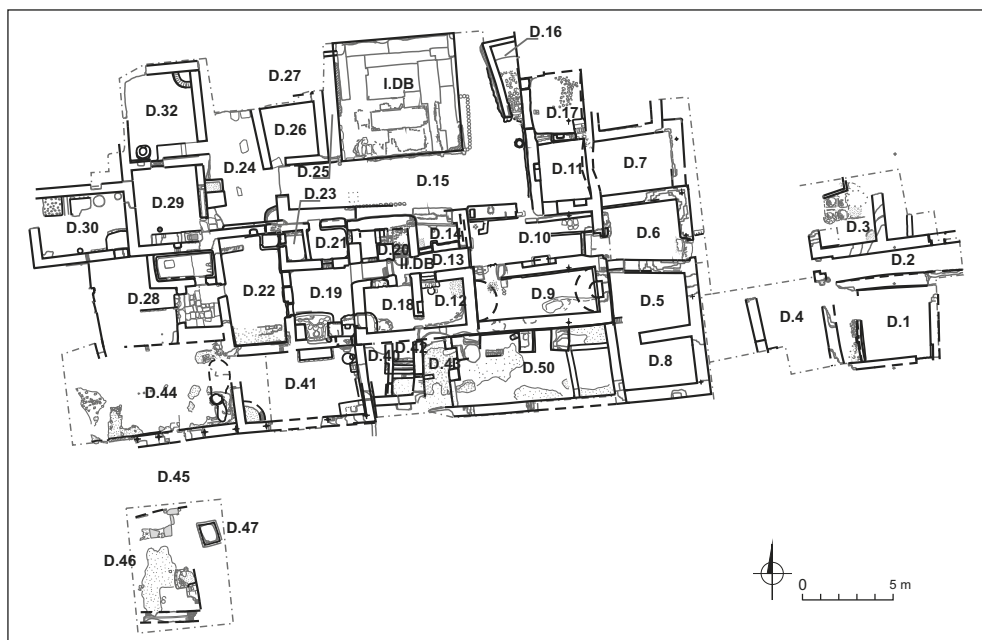


Fig. 1. Plan of Building D, state at the end of the season in 2015; inset, general plan of the monastic compound on the plateau (S. Maślak, PCMA archive)



Fig. 2. Room D.50, view from the east during excavation
(All photos W. Godlewski, PCMA archive)



Fig. 3. Wall paintings: top left, fragment showing the structure of painted wall plaster with straw filler; top right and center, stylized floral, animal and figural motifs; bottom, fragments of legends in Coptic (Photos not to scale)

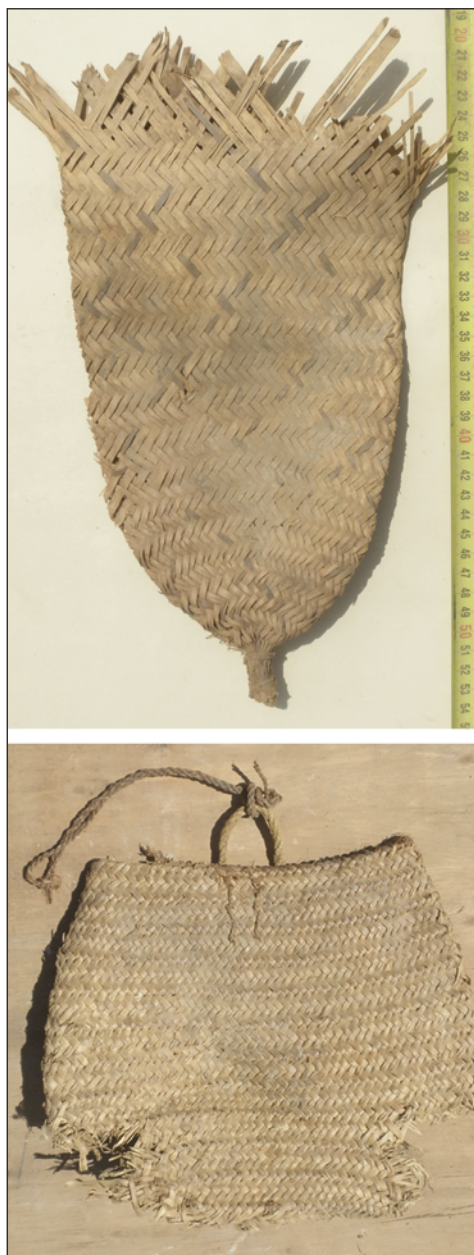


Fig. 4. Basketry from the fill of Room D.50: top, small decorated basket; bottom, large basket (Photos not to scale)

were discovered. More importantly, they bore legends in Coptic. Most of the decoration represents stylized floral motifs, but there were also representations of animals and human figures. Numerous fragments of wall paintings had already been found earlier in the fill of rooms to the east, north, and northwest of Room D.50 (Godlewski 1990: 33; 1992: 51; 2000: 131–132; Godlewski and Parandowska 1994: 57).

The lower layers of the rubble fill yielded relatively few potsherds, representing mainly late LRA 7 containers and bag-shaped bottles with internal waterproofing. There were also stamped mud stoppers [Fig. 5], palm-leaf baskets of large size [Fig. 4 bottom] as well as small ones, elaborately made and even decorated [Fig. 4 top]. A dozen or so of the latter, believed to have been used for transport purposes, was found at the bottom of the storage bin in chamber D.47.

The fill also included numerous objects, like a sieve, masher, round palette, barrel(?) hoop, stems of bunches of dates (*Phoenix dactylifera*), stripped and prepared for use in some unknown purpose, but also a hand cross, and a painted wooden board depicting the bust of a saint (icon?), as well as a fragment of a multi-nozzled oil lamp made of stone [Fig. 7]. A separate category of finds was constituted by texts in Coptic, written down mainly on paper, although some were on papyrus [Fig. 6 top left], and fragments of codex covers made of leather and stiffened with layers of pressed papyrus cards [Fig. 6]. These could well represent the remains of a library or scriptorium once located in Building D. Numerous better preserved remains of this potential book collection were discovered earlier in the remains of Building D, that is, in Rooms D.22 and D.24.

ROOM D.41

A large room, 6.62 m by 3.90 m, was located west of the staircase and was cleared in part in 1998 (Godlewski 1999: 116). It had plastered walls and a bin set off by a brick wall in the southwestern

corner [see *Fig. 1*]. A pit was dug down to bedrock level in its western part, where the rock falls away steeply from south to north. The lower layers of the rubbish fill contained a rich assemblage of papyrus waste cuttings with preserved fragmentary texts



Fig. 5. Stamped mud stopper: left, top view; right, close-ups of impressed stamps (Photos not to scale)



Fig. 6. Book-related remains: top left, Coptic texts from the debris in Room D.50: crumpled letter on paper on the left and papyrus fragment on the right; top right, two different leather codex bindings; bottom, papyrus waste cuttings used to stiffen codex covers (Photos not to scale)

in Greek. These old texts must have been used as cover stiffeners for book codices; cover fragments and stiffened parts of covers have also been found [Fig. 6]. The assemblage recalls the finds from 1998, leaving virtually no doubt as to their interpretation as waste from a bookbinding workshop. The damaged book covers presumably came from the destroyed monastic book collection. Codex cards with Coptic texts and book illustrations were found earlier in the fill inside Building D.

Tableware recorded in context with the papyrus waste can be traced back to the workshops of Aswan in southern Egypt, dated there to the 9th–10th century.

ROOM D.44

The westernmost room in this line was large, 8.20 m by 3.90 m, but the walls were much less well preserved. In its eastern end, it had a cellar partly cut into the rock and covered with a dried-brick vault [see Fig. 1]. The cellar was found empty.

[WG]

BUILDING MATERIALS FROM ROOM D.50

The tops of walls confining Room D.50 on the west, north and east were traced in earlier seasons (Godlewski, Derda, and

Górecki 1994: Fig. 9; especially Godlewski 1999: Fig. 1, room at bottom right without designation), but it was not until the spring



Fig. 7. *Artifacts from the fill of Room D.50: top left, barrel hoop (insert, other side of hoop joining); center, wooden cross; bottom left, fragment of a multi-nozzled lamp of stone; right, fragment of a painted wooden icon(?) (Photos not to scale)*

of 2014 that the south wall of the room was recognized and about a meter of rubble fill removed from the topmost floor. The lower registers of the walls were uncovered along with other architectural structures inside the room. But it was the fill that yielded, by paradox, the most valuable data on building materials used in this part of the Nekloni monastic complex. These included sun-dried bricks, baked bricks, ceramic tiles, stone tiles, and lime mortar, the last three used for floors. Window grilles were among architectural elements found in the rubble as well. The different building materials will be considered in succession.

SUN-DRIED BRICKS

Bricks from the rubble were examined for color, raw material and dimensions. Three basic brick types were distinguished:

1. Gray in color, made of Nile silt mixed with a considerable amount of chopped straw, mostly 25.0–26.5 x 11.5–10.3 x 6.0–7.5 cm, seldom of smaller size (22 x 11.0–11.5 x 5.0–5.5 cm). There are traces of light gray-creamy clay mortar on their surfaces. Some bricks of both modules preserved plastering that was whitewashed and vividly painted (see above). The plaster itself was made of creamy-yellowish clay of desert origin mixed with a considerable amount of vegetal filler [see above, *Fig. 3* top left]. The closest parallel for the larger brick module are bricks of virtually the same size (24 x 11 x 6.5–7.0 cm) used in the construction of Tower I.D.B standing to the north of Room D.50. The smaller bricks match the bricks used for the buttresses reinforcing the north wall of D.50 (21–23 x 10.5–11.0 x 5.0–5.5 cm), which is, in fact, the south wall of Room D.9.

2. Yellow in color, made of clay of desert/gebel origin mixed with a considerable amount of chopped straw, evidently wheat, measuring 22.0–23.0 x 10.5–11.0 x 5.5 cm. Gray mortar (of Nile silt?) with vegetal filler additionally indicates that these specimens all came from the destroyed upper parts of the east, west and south walls of Room D.50.
3. Creamy in color, made of clay of desert/gebel origin mixed with a considerable amount of chopped straw, and bedded in gray mortar (of Nile silt?) with vegetal filler bricks (24.5–26.0 x 12.0–13.0 x 4.5–5.0 cm, 22.5 x 11.0 x 5.0 cm, 22.5–23.5 x 10.5–11.5 x 6.0–6.5 cm) coming from the same walls of Room D.50.

BAKED BRICKS

Baked bricks were relatively rare finds in the fill of Room D.50. Most were fragmented; dimensions could be determined for only a few (23.0–24.5 x 11.5–12.0 x 7.0–7.5 cm). They were made of Nile silt fired red and purple. Baked bricks were used rarely and haphazardly in the nearby structures (for example, walls of Room D.50), with the exception of one of the buttresses reinforcing the south wall of Room D.9 [*Fig. 8*].

CERAMIC TILES

Ceramic tiles were made of Nile silt, here fired always red, with a smoothened flat top as usual and bottom that was left coarse [*Fig. 9* bottom left]. The tiles measure 24.5–25.0 x 24.5–25.0 x 2.0–3.3 cm (seldom reaching 4.5 cm in thickness). In most cases, traces of gray ashy-lime mortar (see below) were noted on the upper surface of the tiles, suggesting their use as

a floor substructure. However, many tiles had the upper surfaces dirty and worn (slippery), having been used obviously as a floor, only later covered with a mortared floor. Ceramic tiles, mostly fragmentary, were used also for encasing windows and framing gypsum-cast window grilles.

STONE TILES

Macroscopic examination of the tiles leads to a reasonable assumption that all the tiles originated from the same outcrop of white stone, which in some cases may be precisely defined as nummulithic limestone [see *Fig. 9* top]. Virtually none of the stone tiles from Room D.50 was regular in shape

(by contrast with the exceedingly rectangular tiles from the rubble in adjacent Rooms D.5–D.8, S. Maślak, personal observation; see Godlewski 1990: 33). Considerably differing in length and width, they have a similar thickness between 2.3 cm and 3.4 cm. The few specimens with more regular edges testify, however, that they were originally of rectangular shape.

Usually both the top and bottom surfaces were flat and smoothly dressed. In some cases, however, the bottom surface was left roughly hewn. As a rule, these specimens were larger and thicker (3.5 cm to 7.0 cm) than their more carefully cut counterparts, and usually less rectangular in shape.

Traces preserved on the bottom surfaces of all these tiles prove that they were laid in a very thin layer of gray (Nile silt?) mortar with chaff. This mortar topped a thin layer of yellow desert sand and/or finely crushed rock.

Most of the stone tiles from this rubble fill were covered with a thick layer of gray ashy-lime mortar (see below). However, just like the ceramic tiles described above, some of the tiles were dirty and worn smooth by use, indicating that they had not been overlaid by any later floor. Some were even covered with a greasy black coating, accompanied by brown-orange stains on the edges of the tiles, their top and more infrequently their bottom (Maślak 2016: 154, *Fig. 5*).

LIME MORTAR

The mortar used for the floor itself consists of a matrix of lime with a considerable admixture of finely crushed light yellow rock (local gebel) mixed with a little plant filler and powdered baked brick [*Fig. 9* bottom right]. The gray color was due



Fig. 8. Front face of buttress reinforcing the south wall of Room D.9 (so located inside Room D.50)

to fine, almost indistinguishable grains of ash. It was laid directly on the tightly packed, irregular stone tiles and/or, less frequently, ceramic tiles bonded with gray (Nile silt?) mortar with chaff. The ashy-lime mortar layer is 2.5–3.0 cm thick and gets thicker against the walls (up to

4.5–5.0 cm). The surface was carefully smoothened at making and made slippery, as well as dirty, by use.

Fragments of sounder floors made of lime mortar were found as well. They consisted of clearly distinguishable layers. A relatively thin (0.5–1.5 cm) layer of gray (Nile



Fig. 9. Floor tiles from the rubble of D.50: top, assorted tiles of nummulithic limestone; left, ceramic tile, top view; right, piece of lime mortar floor with section view (not to scale)

silt?) mortar was covered with baked brick rubble mortared in lime with fine sand as filler. This base layer (4–7 cm thick) was topped with a sub-pavement of the same thickness (approximately 4–6 cm to 7 cm), made of yellowish lime mortar with a significant addition of fine sand and coarse gravel, and insignificant powdered baked brick. The top surface consisted of a very thin (less than 1 mm) layer of smoothened pink (to purple) lime mortar with extensive content of powdered baked brick.

WINDOW GRILLES

No complete window grille was found in the rubble from Room D.50 (window grilles with glass panes were found also in the fill of Rooms D.5–D.8 to the east of Room D.50, Godlewski 1990: 33) [Fig. 10]. However, the surviving fragments provide details on the technology of execution and decoration. Each window grille was cast from pure gypsum(?) of

white color with extremely rare inclusions (for example, fine chaff). While still liquid, the material was poured into a frame made of wooden slats laid flat on the exposed rock. Impression of the slats can be seen on the edges of some of the grilles, while the uneven and yellowish backside attests to the surface on which the casting was done. The front is by contrast white (the color of gypsum) and smoothened.

The decoration of the grilles consists of openings in the shape of circles and Greek crosses with circular or ellipsoidal arms. There was no clear regularity in their disposition and it may be assumed that no established pattern existed. Artisans were obliged apparently to use both motifs but the arrangement depended only on rules of symmetry (more or less) and their own choice. The dimensions of the crosses are more or less unified (each arm has about 5–6 cm in diameter), but those of the circles vary significantly with a reconstructed diameter from approximately 10.5 cm to 15 cm.

The circular and Greek cross openings were apparent only because they were closed roughly through the middle of the thickness of the window grille by glass panes. Inserted with their rounded and thickened edges into the gypsum matrix, panes usually were of circular shape except for a few irregular pieces of evidently reused glass. They were made of transparent to translucent glass, mostly green or blue in color, exceptionally olive-colored or colorless.

Vents were pierced through the thickness of the window grilles. They were usually made a few centimeters from the edges, on the main axes as well as at the corners. The vents were relatively small, measuring about 2 cm to 5 cm in diameter,



Fig. 10. Fragments of window grilles with remains of glass windowpanes, views from both sides and section view

depending on whether it was the front or back. They were smoothed inside and around the openings on the front side of the grille (Maślak 2016: 154, Fig. 6).

No complete window grille is known from Nekloni. The bottom parts appear to have been rectangular in shape with slightly rounded corners. The clearly curved edges may be interpreted as belonging to an arched top. The dimensions are obscure save for the thickness which is an average 3 cm to 5 cm (seldom less than 3 cm). Based on the fragment of the bottom edge with preserved corner, the width of a single window grille, assuming a symmetrical arrangement, could be estimated at about 55 cm. It is a rule that window grilles are much higher than they are wide.

WOODEN ELEMENTS

The collection of wooden and generally “organic” artifacts from the fill of Room D.50 (wooden fragments of roof were found also in the fill of neighboring Room D.10, Godlewski 1992: 51) was significant but not easily identifiable as architectural elements. Slats of varying length, thin and narrow (approximately 4.5–6.5 cm) were decorated with two shallow grooves running parallel to the edges on either long side and filled with red or, seldom, black paint [Fig. 11]. Small holes at the shorter ends indicated that they were nailed, most likely to the roof beams to form a ceiling. Other wooden objects such as wedges may have been used in the architecture as well.

[SM]



Fig. 11. *Wooden architectural elements from the debris of Room D.50: top, ceiling planks; bottom, roofing beams*

OTHER BUILDINGS IN THE MONASTIC COMPOUND

Explorations in the central part of the monastic compound on the plateau encompassed the central and northeastern parts of Building E (between Buildings D and A located further to the south) and Building I to the east of Building J, yet further to the south.

A few small containers built of brick were observed by the north wall of chamber E.2 of Building E which had yielded the archive of Banu Bifam, found in 1997. The bins were accompanied by a large storage pot over 1 m high. It now looks that the house was constructed in the second half of the 10th century at the

earliest, on the ruins of an earlier building destroyed by fire. Graves from Cemetery A (T.507–T.515) in E.5 and E.6 restricted the exploration of these chambers.

In Building I, two rooms were excavated, the northern one measuring 4.35 m by 2.92 m, the southern 5.35 m by 3.15 m. The upper level of fill was exposed, consisting of dried-brick debris from the walls. Ample pottery evidence from the northern room: plates, bowls, cooking pots with lids, many almost completely preserved, and one very fragmented storage pot, dated from the 10th century [Fig. 12].

[WG]



Fig. 12. Pottery from Building I: left, qulla; top right, vase; bottom right, chalice

CEMETERY A

Eleven inhumations: five male, three female and three children, were excavated in the southwestern part of Cemetery A in the central part of site A on the plateau. The graves preserved rectangular tomb superstructures built of red brick. Burials were made in wooden coffins, which were

in a poor state of preservation. Grave goods included small glazed bowls or glass phials near the heads, whereas the burial shrouds and textile dress were not preserved due to penetration of water, which caused serious damage in this part of the cemetery.

[WG]

HERMITAGE EE.06

Hermitage EE.06 was situated in the southern part of the Naqlun hills, in a small vale, isolated from the nearby hermitages

EE.01 and EE.02. Traces of illicit digging were noted in 2014 and rescue excavations were undertaken. It was found that the

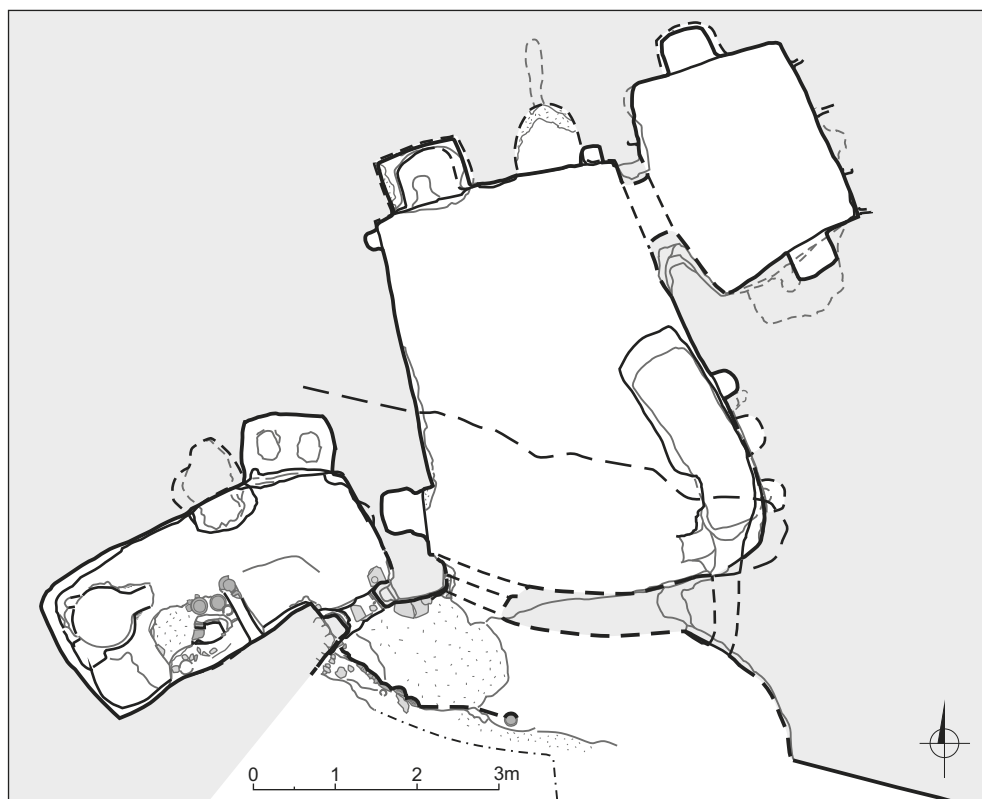


Fig. 13. Plan of Hermitage EE.06
(S. Maślak, PCMA archive)

hermitage had once been cleared, including the storage bin, and then backfilled. The fill included some of the original archaeological material, mostly potsherds, objects of everyday use and scraps of papyri.

MONK'S CELL

The hermitage comprised living quarters in the form of two rock-cut chambers opening onto a small courtyard [Fig. 13]. It was intended for a single hermit and may be considered one of the earliest in the eastern part of the Nekloni monastery, having been occupied in the late 5th and early 6th century. It was abandoned most probably in the 7th century.

Of the two, chamber A.1 was neatly cut to a rectangular plan, 4.20–5.10 m by 3.00–4.00 m, broadening in the southern part and with an entrance in the southwestern corner. It was about 0.80 m wide. The facade (south wall) was completely destroyed save for the edges on either

side, including an offset intended for the door. The walls were plastered repeatedly with mud plaster tempered with either straw (ground plaster of gray color) or sand (beige finishing plaster). Five coats of plaster have been recorded. The ceiling was not plastered. A gray plaster floor, heavily tempered with straw, was preserved fragmentarily, having been destroyed mostly by the illicit digging.

A rectangular bin was cut into the floor in the southeastern corner of the chamber. It was 2.30 m (to 2.70 m at floor level) long by 0.90–0.70 m wide and 2.12 m deep. At the southwestern end it passed into a narrow rock-cut air vent, which was 1.80 m long and ended in a round opening just above the walking level in the courtyard. The opening was neatly finished with plaster around the edges, matching the plastering of the courtyard walls. The bin was covered level with the floor of the chamber with a structure of reeds



Fig. 14. North wall of Room A.1 in Hermitage EE.06

supported on palm-wood beams mounted in sockets along the long sides. Elements of this covering were found during the excavation. A trapdoor giving access to the chamber must have existed in the southern part of the bin.

Three niches on two levels were cut in the north wall opposite the entrance [Fig. 14]. The niche in the eastern part of the wall was cut from the floor and arched (H. 0.98 m; W. 0.83 m; D. 0.78 m). It was well plastered, which could be observed despite the damage. Above it was a small semicircular niche, close to the corner, its sill at 1.41 m above the floor. It was 0.26 m high, 0.22 m wide and 0.16 m deep. It, too, had been plastered repeatedly. The third niche was also high up on the wall, rhomboidal in shape, 0.60 m high, 1.11 m to 0.72 m wide and 0.72 m deep. An open hollow was cut in the floor of the niche,

0.28 m deep. It was plastered, like the other niches and the wall.

Peg holes had been cut into the wall above the large niches, at 2.00 m above the floor in the case of the eastern one and 1.75 m respectively for the western one. The third peg hole was in the northwestern corner, 1.80 m above the floor.

The east wall presented three small conchoidal niches in the southern part of the wall, above the bin in the floor. The sill levels were 0.92 m, 1.04 m and 1.30 m above the floor respectively starting from the south. The niches were from 0.20 m to 0.31 m high, from 0.36 m to 0.43 m wide and from 0.23 to 0.27 m deep. They were plastered with at least four coats of plaster. Two other niches were cut in the opposite, west wall, at the extreme edges. They were conchoidal in shape, the sills at 1.26 m above the floor in the case of the



Fig. 15. Kitchen in unit B of Hermitage EE.06

northern one and 0.64 m for the southern one. The northern one was small (H. 0.20 m; W. 0.22 m; D. 0.16 m) and plastered repeatedly. The southern one was already in the doorway and was arched (H. 0.50+ m; W. 0.50 m; D. 0.47 m). Four holes for wooden pegs ran just below the line of the ceiling, at regular intervals of approximately 0.55–0.60 m. Traces of mud plaster used to set the wooden pegs could still be observed.

The other chamber was accessible from the northeastern corner of the first one. Unit A.2 was also rectangular, 2.10 m by 2.36–2.78 m, 1.85 m high, evenly cut and left unplastered, without evidence of a mud floor. The entrance was damaged; originally it must have been 1.66 m high and about 0.90 m wide. It had two niches, one in the north and the other in the south walls. The first was 1 m above the floor, the second 0.60 m. The northern niche was conchoidal in shape (H. 0.56 m; W. 0.80 m; D. 0.50 m), the southern one rectangular (H. 0.92 m; W. 0.55 m; D. 0.44 m), additionally recut on the western side to make it bigger and deeper. Both were plastered inside and had plaster on the wall around the opening.

Wooden peg holes were cut in all the walls and preserved traces of mud plaster used for mounting the pegs. There were eight in the east wall, all on different levels: five just below the line of the ceiling, 1.63–1.71 m above the floor, another by the west wall at 1.48 m and two at 1.14–1.23 m in the middle of the wall. The three holes in the north wall were just under the line of the ceiling, two in the corners and one above the niche (1.64–1.73 m above the floor). The south wall presented two peg holes above the niche, 1.61–1.67 m above the floor, and a third in the northwestern

corner, 1.48 m above the floor. Finally, there were two peg holes in the west wall, on either side of the entrance, 1.51–1.53 m above the floor.

KITCHEN UNIT

To the left of the entrance to the cell was the doorway leading into a rectangular chamber cut into the rocky slope and partly built. Some evidence of the masonry could be observed by the entrance. The upper parts of the vault were not preserved, but it was presumed to have been about 2 m high, that is, at least above the vault of the niche in the north wall. Only the jambs of the entrance, built of mud brick, seem to have been plastered. Part of the walling of the courtyard could still be seen to the west of the doorway. The bricks were of the dried variety, about 25 x 12 x 7 cm. The plastering was of mud, tempered with sand and straw chaff. It reflects an episode of renovation in this part of the hermitage.

The chamber was 4.00 m long and 1.50–1.80 m wide (total area approximately 6.60 m²). The entrance measured 0.50 m in width on the outside, broadening to 1 m on the inside. The jambs were 0.25 m long and thick. Inside the chamber, by the eastern jamb, stood a stone with a well worked socket for a door post. The threshold was constructed of bricks and stones bonded in mud mortar; it had been remade.

A brick divider sectioned the unit into two parts. It had two phases, being made higher at some point. The eastern part of the room, inside the door, had a niche cut in the northeastern corner. The sill of the niche was 1.06 m above the walking level and it was probably arched, 1.00 m wide and 0.65–0.70 m deep. There were two hollows in the bottom of the niche, 0.26 m and

0.32 m in diameter, presumably acting as stands for vessels. A pit (1.05 m by 0.86 m, 0.45 m deep) was cut in the floor below the north wall. The passage to the western part of the unit was barely 0.40 m wide after the partition was extended. The unit was 1.85 m long and was fitted with a kitchen in the southeastern corner, backing the divider wall with the reinforcing LR 7 amphorae placed upright at the end. The kitchen comprised an irregular platform of variable construction with a fireplace lined with bricks, measuring 0.22 m by 0.48 m, matching the size of cooking pots [Fig. 15]. Hollowed in the floor by the west wall was a round pit 0.75 m in diameter and about 0.10 m deep. A rectangular extension 0.37 m long and 0.18 m wide was cut to the east of it. The rock showed evidence of burning in this extension.

The fill of the kitchen unit contained an extensive assemblage of artifacts illustrating the everyday life of the monk. These included textiles, sandals, basketry, cordage, glass objects, mollusk shells, as well as botanics (fruit fragments and stones). Tomasz Derda identified one of the papyri scraps from the kitchen unit as an invitation in Greek addressed to the monk living in the hermitage, written in a practiced hand by someone probably from Aphroditopolis. He dated it to the 6th century in general, although the papyri fragments from the storage bin inside the cell were not as uniform and could have been partly from the 7th century in his opinion. However, it is not clear that these scraps can be tied in directly with the occupation of the hermitage.

[WG]

POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE FROM THE KITCHEN UNIT IN HERMITAGE EE.06

The pottery assemblage from the kitchen unit serving as storeroom comprised a set of well preserved forms, either complete or reconstructed from fragments. The pottery groups that were distinguished presented a functional picture of the kitchen furnishings. These groups comprised: tableware, cooking ware, vessels for storage and transport, each characterized by a broad variety of forms.

TABLEWARE

The tableware was composed mainly of Egyptian B (Group K),¹ manufactured

in Middle Egypt or in the Delta and the Fayum region. In terms of forms, ledged goblets, e.g., Nd.15.017 [Fig. 16], were very common. They bore traces of burning on the floor, which could suggest that food was heated in them (conceivable in a kitchen context) or that they were lamps in secondary use. Similar ledged goblets with traces of use were found elsewhere in Naqlun, in Hermitages 25 (Godlewski, Derda, and Górecki 1994: Figs 22.6–12) and 87 (personal observation, unpublished), and in the monastery rubbish dump (Danys-Lasek 2014: Figs 4:

¹ Groups of tableware pottery: Egyptian Red Slipped A, B, C Wares, described in Hayes 1972: 387; a different classification proposed by Mieczysław Rodziewicz based on finds from Alexandria, composed of Group K, characterized by red slip and alluvial fabric, Group O with red/orange slip, made of pink kaolinitic clay in the Aswan region of Egypt, Group W of the same origin, but covered with white slip (Rodziewicz 1976: 50, 54 and 61–65, respectively). Middle Egyptian origin suggested by Pascale Ballet and Maurice Picon (1987: 40, 41), but other regions, like the Delta and Fayum Oasis, have also been reconsidered (Hayes 1972: 387–401).

Nd.08.7575, 5: Nd.11.323), as well as at the sites of Hawara (Marchand 2009: Fig. 9a) and Amarna (Faiers 2005: Fig. 2.9:85, 86), among others.

An outstanding specimen, Nd.15.045 [see Fig. 16], represented ERS H Ware.² This shape derives from Late Roman C pottery produced in the Eastern Mediterranean, mainly in Asia Minor. Parallel forms are known as LRC Hayes form 1A, late 4th–early 5th century (Hayes 1972: Fig. 65:1). Examples of Egyptian vessels of this kind made of Nile clay were recorded at Naqlun (Danys-Lasek 2012: Fig. 4: Nd.08.666; 2014: Fig. 10A: Nd.11.371), but also, for example, at Karanis (Johnson 1981: Pl. 7:57), Hermopolis Magna (Bailey 1990: Fig. 19:130) and Antinoe (Guidotti 2008: Fig. XIII:108).

Numerous fragments represented plates of different shapes, mainly with downturned rim (also so-called Samian), belonging to ERS B (Group K). They bore simple, engraved decoration: circumferential grooves on the rim and concentric on the floor, e.g., Nd.15.025 [see Fig. 16]. Parallels are found on Late Roman sites along the Nile Valley, e.g., at Naqlun in Hermitage 25 (Godlewski, Derda, and Górecki 1994: Fig. 24.2) and the rubbish dump (Danys-Lasek 2012: Figs 4: Nd.08.667, 5: Nd.08.763; 2014: Fig. 9A: Nd.11.448), Karanis (Johnson 1981: Pl. 7:61) and Hermopolis Magna (Bailey 1998: Pl. 22:D.166). Plate Nd.15.024 (only the lower part preserved) was manufactured in North Africa (Hayes NARSW). These imported vessels were noted in Naqlun in earlier seasons, in the rubbish dump,

for example (Danys-Lasek 2012: Fig. 5: Nd.08.780).

Qullae and bottles made of marl and Nile clay were numerous in the kitchen assemblage. The ones of alluvial clay had cream slip on the outside, sometimes with orange-red and black geometrical and vegetal patterns painted on the shoulders, e.g., Nd.15.053, Nd.15.056 [see Fig. 16]. A noteworthy fact is the black bitumen layer on the base, as in the case of Nd.15.053. Similar examples were recorded in Naqlun, Hermitage 87 (personal observation), Karanis (Johnson 1981: Pls 19:120, 18:129), Antinoe (Guidotti 2008: Fig. XL:321), Hermopolis Magna (Bailey 1998: Pl. 50), among other sites.

COOKING VESSELS

Vessels intended for cooking were the most numerous category in the assemblage from the kitchen unit [Fig. 17]. They came in a variety of shapes, comprising deep, handled cookers with or without neck, and one outstanding bag-shaped example, Nd.15.031, parallel to a specimen from Kellia (Egloff 1977: 52:6), as well as hemispherical saucepans, like Nd.15.064 with white-painted decoration, similar to examples from Naqlun (Godlewski, Derda, and Górecki 1994: Fig. 22:19), Esna (Jacquet-Gordon 1972: Pl. CCXXV:L7), Kellia as type E115 (Egloff 1977: Pl. 47:7) and Tell San el-Hagar (Bavay, Bovot, and Lavigne 2000: Fig. 20:8). The vessels were made of Nile fabric. They were all thin-walled. They had seen extensive use, their outer surface being almost totally black,

² Donald M. Bailey identified the Egyptian Red Slipped H Ware (ERS H) as a tableware group manufactured near Hermopolis Magna, characterized by an alluvial fabric with pink core, thin orange outer layer and reddish-brown outer surface in fresh break (Bailey, Spencer, and Davies 1982: 27; Bailey 1990). ERS H corresponds to Group K in M. Rodziewicz's classification.

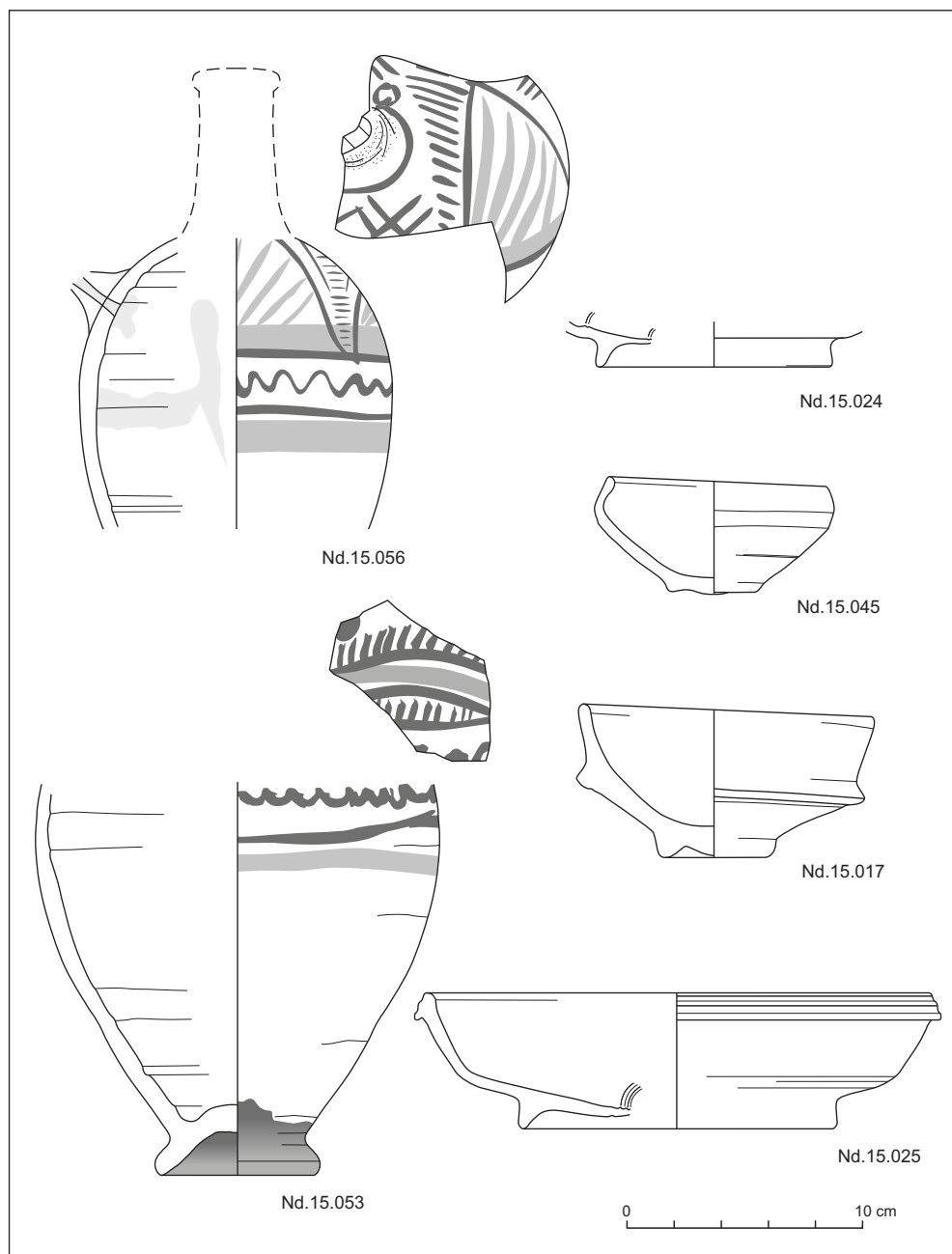


Fig. 16. Selection of tableware: goblets, plates and qullae
(Drawing K. Danys)

but it was possible to affirm that the outer walls were red-slipped.

AMPHORAE

The transport containers discovered in unit B comprised both Egyptian and imported amphorae. The first group was represented solely by LRA 7 specimens, preserved in fragments, with rims shaped like type E174 from Kellia (Egloff 1977: Pl. 58:5) or AE 7-1.5 according to a typology established by Delphine Dixneuf (2011: Pl.

157:321). Examples have been found already extensively in the Naqlun monastery rubbish dump (Danys-Lasek 2012; 2014), and in Hermitage 25 (Godlewski, Derda, and Górecki 1994), among others.

The imported containers were represented mainly by two types, LRA 1 (made of creamy yellow or light orange hard, grainy fabrics) and LRA 4. The first type has been recorded frequently at Naqlun, in different parts of the site, including the eastern and western hermitages, the

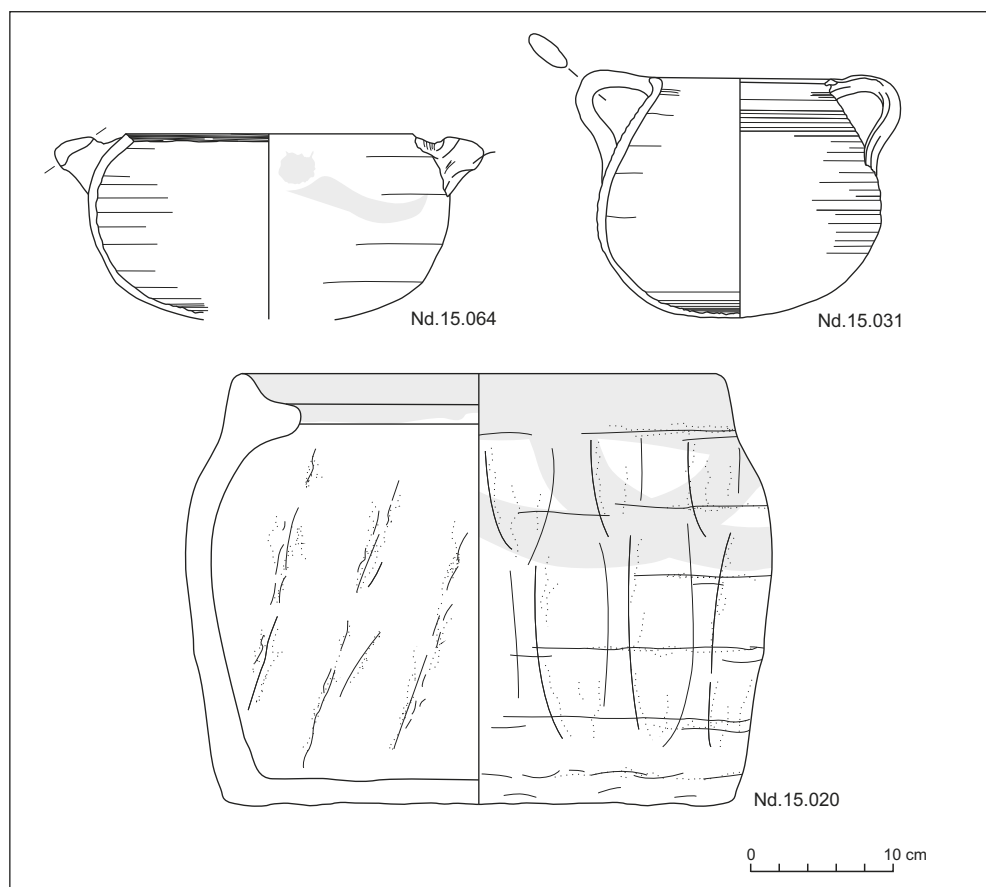


Fig. 17. Selection of cooking and storage vessels
(Drawing K. Danys)

monastery complex and the rubbish dump dated to the 5th–7th century (Godlewski, Derda, and Górecki 1994; Danys-Lasek 2012; 2014). The same can be said of Gaza LRA 4, corresponding to type 4 according to Grzegorz Majcherek (1995: 169), with the characteristic lumps of clay below the rim. They seem to have been the most common in Naqlun during the 6th century.

The storage vessel, Nd.15.020 [see Fig. 17], completely preserved, was hand-made of an alluvial fabric. Bands and slabs of clay were stuck one to another to form the vessel and then all the surfaces were smoothed. A red burnished slip covered the outer surface, while the inner one remained a natural beige. The white-painted decoration was composed of a rim band and crossed arcades. No published parallels are known.

CONCLUSIONS

The assemblage from the kitchen unit of the hermitage was examined in terms of the mutually related functionalities of the group. There was a great number of cooking

pots and deep bowls used for food preparation, supplemented with a storage vessel that was used most probably as a container for grain or flour. The tableware repertoire consisted of large plates and small goblets, the latter bearing traces of burning, hence their presumed role in heating food. Egyptian amphorae LRA 7, used mainly as containers for transporting wine, completed this assemblage, attesting to the unit's role as a store. Other wine containers came from Gaza. Amphorae LRA 1 are believed to be used mainly for transporting olive oil from the Eastern Mediterranean. The repertoire is not unlike that found in pottery assemblages from other hermitages in the eastern group, but differs from that registered for hermitages in the western group, e.g., Hermitages 87 (personal observation) and 85 (Zurek 2008). Goblet Nd.15.045 of a shape dated to the 4th–5th century is the earliest in this set. Plates, such as Nd.15.025 of Egyptian origin and Nd.15.024 imported from North Africa, can be tied in with the 5th–6th century, as can the decorated *qullae*.

[KD]

RECAPITULATION

Illicit digging had not disturbed the kitchen unit, hence the material from this area was useful in dating the occupation of the hermitage. Concluding, the earliest date for this pottery assemblage can be placed in the second half of the 5th century, using as parallels other Naqlun contexts to begin with. The date of the hermitage is situated firmly in the 6th century, but apparently no later than its third quarter.

Other work concentrated in Building D on the plateau revealed a rubble fill

inside Room D.50 that turned out upon examination to belong most likely to the upper storey(s) on this site. The lavishness of the painted wall decoration, coupled with window grilles and ceramic and stone floors, suggest that an important part of the monastery, certainly including the monastic book collection, may have indeed been located on the upper floor in this area, bringing forth yet new evidence to confirm a suggestion put forward already during the first excavations in this quarter of the site.

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