

CRYPT 3 IN THE NORTHWEST ANNEX OF THE MONASTERY ON KOM H IN DONGOLA: REPORT ON THE EXPLORATION IN 2012

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Abstract: Archaeological exploration of Crypt 3 in the commemorative burial complex in the Northwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola in 2012 completed the process of investigation of the three crypts, discovered in the mid-1990s but not fully excavated at the time. Crypt 3, built together with Crypt 2, hosted remains of five individuals. Remains of textiles and grave furnishings were also discovered, among them an oil lamp and part of a broken amphora. Crypt 3 constituted an integral part of a commemorative complex consisting of a naos, two sanctuaries with altars and screens, and a prothesis with altar.

Keywords: Dongola, monastery (HDONG), crypts, burials, textiles, Northwest Annex, pottery

Excavations by a Polish archaeological mission in the Northwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola in 1993 uncovered one burial crypt, followed by two more in subsequent years [*Fig. 1*]. All three of the chambers were opened and provisionally investigated by a team led by Stefan Jakobielski, but no major exploration was undertaken at the time (Żurawski 1996: 127; 1999: 224–237; Jakobielski 1994: 119; 1995: 87).

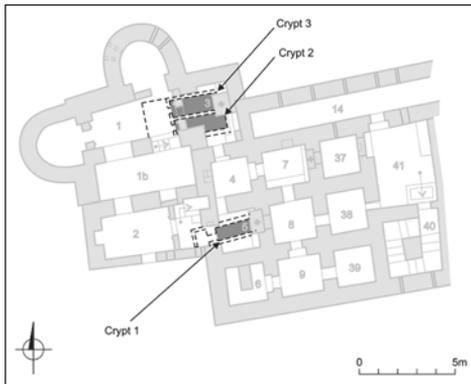
The northern part of the Northwest Annex to the monastery has served as a commemorative chapel of the bishops

of Dongola (Godlewski 2006; 2013b: 85–91). The crypts located there were assumed to hold the burials of bishop Georgios and his followers (Godlewski 2013b: 89). Two of the crypts were re-explored in 2009 (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012). The third was opened and evaluated in 2010, assessing accessibility, restrictions on working space inside the crypt, soil cohesion, condition of skeletons, their adornments and personal effects as well as roof solidity. Excavation of the chamber was determined as difficult but feasible. In 2012, the crypt

was reopened and thoroughly investigated by the same team of researchers working there from 2009.

CRYPT ARCHITECTURE

The two crypts in the northern part of the Northwest Annex [Fig. 1], Nos 2 and 3, originally designated as graves Nos 26 and 27 (Żurawski 1999: 230, Fig. 24),



were constructed inside a large trench excavated under the northwestern corner of Building NW.B.I (Tower), accessible from a single shaft on the western side (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 342–343). After exploration the shaft and Crypt 2 were studied from an architectural point of view and the remains examined by an anthropologist in 2009 and 2010; Crypt 3 was similarly investigated in 2012, the work being part of a comprehensive survey of the entire commemorative complex connected with bishop burials in the three crypts. Altogether 19 burials of men had been made over a period of more than a hundred

Fig. 1. Plan of the Northwest Annex in the Monastery on Kom H with the location of the three crypts (Drawing W. Godlewski, M. Puzkarski, updated S. Maślak; after Jakobielski and Scholz 2001)



Fig. 2. General view of the interior of the crypt before exploration; note (arrow) position of skull stuck in the left-side corner (Photo R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

years between the 12th and the 14th century. It was not possible to establish the frequency with which the crypts were opened for new burials, but it appears that the time intervals between successive events were rather long. It seems likely that all three crypts were in use in order to ensure that enough time had passed between successive burials in the individual chambers. Crypts 1 and 2 were opened the most often — seven burials in each — whereas Crypt 3 received five individual burials, perhaps on five separate occasions.

The trench housing Crypts 2 and 3 (for a description of Crypt 1 see Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012) was 2.44 m wide, from 4.11 m to 4.58 m long and 1.60 m deep. It was cut in soft limestone bedrock outside the tower NW.B.I, by the northwestern corner of the structure. The crypts were built inside the trench and casing walls were constructed on the western side, forming a shaft that enabled continuous access to the subterranean chambers. It was 2.44 m wide, like the pit with the crypts, and 0.68 m to 0.81 m long, and was furnished with a step 0.47–0.58 m wide and 0.40 m high on the western side, leading down into the actual shaft which was 1.20 m deep. A masonry lining wall of fired brick stood on three sides.

Entries into the crypts were narrowed down, the sides encased in a wall one-row deep, constructed of fired brick. Crypt 2 had a door 0.35 m wide, and the door of Crypt 3 was 0.76 m wide at discovery, but could have been more narrow, as suggested by some extant remains beside the entrance, by its east wall.

The crypt in question [*Fig. 2*] had the walls built of fired brick measuring 34 cm by 16 cm, 7–8 cm thick. A flat dried brick, 32–33 cm by 7 cm, was used for the

vault, which was constructed freehand. It was supported against the east wall of the crypt, suspended on the end wall at north and the edge of the earlier-built vault of Crypt 2. The inside measurements of the chamber were: 2.45 m long, 0.98–1.00 m wide, 1.00–1.05 m high. The south wall, shared with Crypt 2, comprised seven courses of fired brick in regular bondwork. The north wall, 0.58 m high, also comprised seven courses of bricks. The east wall, 1.05 m high, was constructed entirely of fired brick and its opposite, the west wall, 1.00 m high, was founded lower by three courses of bricks compared to the other walls and was four-bricks thick, that is, 0.40–0.45 m. Technically, it was interbonded with the shaft outside the crypt. Above that, it was only one-brick thick (16 cm) and pierced by the entrance under an arch, which was 0.26 m wide and 0.54 m high. In the southwestern corner of the crypt, the vault structure changed inexplicably to bricks laid flat. No plaster was observed on the walls of the crypt inside, although it does not forejudge the presence of internal plastering, the walls of the crypt having suffered severely from excessive humidity.

The crypt was opened once in 1994 (Jakobielski 1995: 87) with some preliminary archaeological investigations being done at the time for the purpose of the preliminary documentation. At the time, the deposit accumulated inside the crypt was found to be heavily hardened due to intensive water penetration. This was not confirmed presently, although damp had indeed resulted in deterioration of the inside wall surfaces. The surface of the fill had also crusted as a consequence.

[WG]

EXPLORATION OF CRYPT 3

State of preservation, research method

An irregular cut just inside the entrance to the crypt is evidence of the extent of the exploration carried out by the first discoverers. Its irregular shape was determined most probably by human bones embedded in the fill, stopping the first explorers when they encountered them. The trench was about 0.70 m wide and 0.55 m deep, irregular in shape, stopping off where the bones started. A single terracotta oil lamp in the southwestern corner, just inside the entrance, was the only artifact retrieved at the time (Żurawski 1999: Figs 24 and 27). The two skeletons in view were partly buried in a leveled sand-like fill and covered with a thin layer of mud and extensive termite mud shelter tubes [Fig. 2]. There were some textiles in very poor state of preservation, covering the bodies. Human bones found inside the trench were poorly preserved as well, but the undisturbed ones on top of the fill were in relatively good condition. A human skull was cemented in the northeastern corner, some 15 cm above the fill.

There was about the same space available for the explorer as in the neighboring Crypt 2 explored earlier, but a different consistency of the fill required a modified methodical approach. Before, the restricted space and loose fill did not allow for more than just an arm's length slice to be explored at a time (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 345), exacerbating the process of following horizontal relations in detail through all the layers. In the case of Crypt 3, the high cohesion of soil, while considerably limiting the organic material survival rate, allowed for systematic layer by layer horizontal exploration of the whole surface of the fill.

Adequate measures to protect against biological hazards were taken when excavating Crypts 1 and 2: disposable protective suits with hoods, anti-dust goggles, a FFP2-grade filtering mask with valves and latex or nitrile gloves (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 352). Air circulation inside Crypt 3, once it was opened, was relatively better than in the other two vaults and the fill seemed devoid of active biological agents. Nonetheless, the same protective measures were employed.

Exploration of the burials

The topmost layer of inhumations had to be cleaned first of dirt and termite mud shelter tubes, not without effort owing to the restricted space. Two large pieces of textile were found in the process, one on the chest and arms of skeleton I, the other on the lower parts of the legs of the same individual. Further cleaning revealed three small textile fragments from the pelvis and the remains of a fragmented leather belt in the waist area. A small textile fragment adhered to the vault of the skull of the second burial, while another piece of fabric rested on the pelvis of this individual. The textiles were photographed *in situ* [see Fig. 11], excavated and transferred to a field laboratory for examination by a specialist (see below, section on the finds).

The inhumations were found undisturbed [Figs 3,4] save for the small bones of the feet of individual II (most probably due to expected taphonomic processes). The bones were preserved in relatively good condition with almost all of them intact. The two skeletons were partly submerged in a few centimeters of compacted sand. Skeleton II lay in general on top of a thin (no more than 2 cm deep) layer of mud, the cracking of its surface indicating

at least one high-humidity episode. The darkened color of the layer only below the inhumations proved that the products of body decomposition had operated only

in those areas, therefore the moisture responsible for cracking the surface of the thin layer mentioned above must have got from outside, seeping through the walls



Fig. 3. Topmost layer of inhumations; individual burials (I and II) and solitary skull (VI) (Photo R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

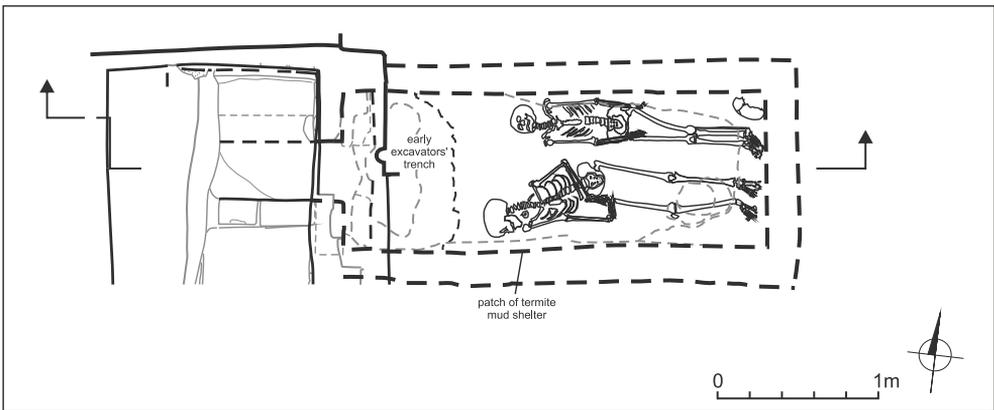


Fig. 4. Topmost layer of inhumations; individual burials (I and II) and solitary skull (VI) (Drawing S. Maślak, R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

and entrance. Skeleton I, cutting through the layer on which skeleton II was found, lay on a successive layer of brown-colored, hard and compacted sand, darkened only directly below the body. The feet of both individuals were turned to the right. The left fibula of skeleton I with the proximal end missing was found next to the tibia, parallel to it; this fragment was broken off *post mortem* and most probably had dissolved completely in the soil (the brittleness of the bones, possibly due to osteoporosis, rendered them prone to disintegration, especially when broken off and crushed). The right tibia was turned clockwise (as seen from the proximal end perspective) and covered the right fibula from above, indicating that the leg had been turned before skeletonization was completed.

A patch of termite mud shelter tubes was found stuck to the south crypt wall, 13 cm above the fill next to the edge of the trench [see *Fig. 4*]. It is interpreted as marking the spot of an object of some kind standing against the wall for a long time.

Lying in the sand below the feet of individual II were the remains of the body of a pottery container discovered in place [see *Figs 9, 10*]. It was a 12th-century amphora made in a local workshop at Dongola (see below, section on the finds).

Underlying the layer with the topmost inhumations was an accumulation of rock and mud rubble, leveled with a layer of compacted sand from a few to a dozen or so centimeters thick. The debris consisted of small fragments of soft rock as well as some dried-brick fragments and a few small potsherds. It lay on top of a second set of skeletons. Separating the sand from the underlying rubble was another layer of mud, no more than 2 cm thick, featuring

the characteristic cracked surface attesting to there being at least one more high-humidity episode.

Exploring human bones buried in such hard soil proved to be a time-consuming and demanding task, especially in terms of the endurance and patience of the people involved. However, the hardness of the layer allowed a comfortable position next to the exploration spot, ensuring a good field of vision and a steady hand without compromising the brittle bones. Even so, the most delicate bones could not be extracted undamaged.

The southern half of the crypt was full of dried mud brick and their fragments (save the spot where the amphora described above was discovered), some still with adhering patches of mortar. A few appeared to be in bond, resting horizontally at the bottom of the crypt. Those on the torso of individual III, like those on the floor to the south of it, were found intact and undisturbed [see *Fig. 5*].

Three skeletons (numbered III, IV and V) were found below the rubble. A thin layer of dried and cracked mud between the bones of the pelvic area and around the legs in the topmost parts of the layer can be taken to be evidence of moisture. The skeletons were intact and nearly undisturbed. The bones of skeleton III, partly covering the other two burials, were easily discernible and removed for documentation in the field laboratory. Those of individuals IV and V were partly commingled. Careful exploration and detailed documentation of the position of almost every bone in the assemblage allowed for highly reliable sorting of almost all of them (save for the small bones of the hands and feet, and most of the vertebral columns) into separate skeletons.



Fig. 5. Collapsed(?) bricks and rubble on top of the lower layer of inhumations (Photo R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

The evidence, however, was not conclusive with regard to the burial sequence of the two [Fig. 7].

Skeletons occupied the northern half of the floor in the chamber and were laid directly on top of its surface, which was cut into bedrock, sinking a dozen or so centimeters below the foundation level of its walls.

The skull in the northeastern corner of the chamber was cemented in place with mud [see Figs 2 and 8]. The basal part faced the corner and the forehead was toward the north wall, the right lateral

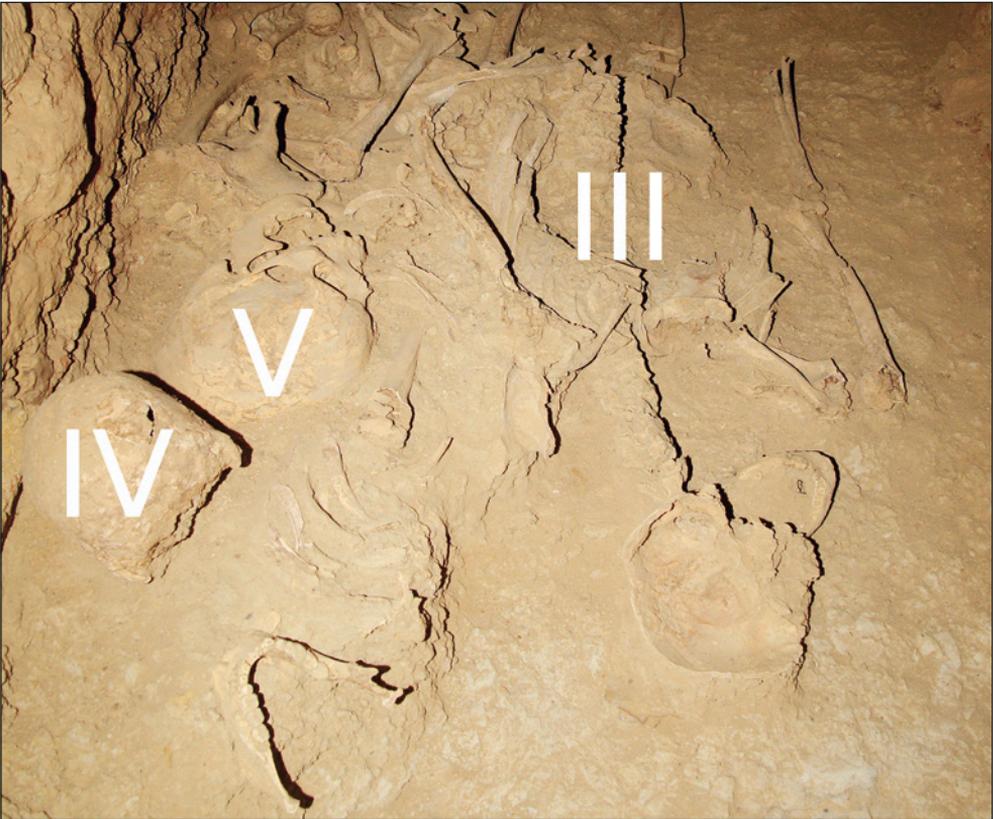


Fig. 6. Second layer of skeletons; individual burials (III, IV and V) (Photo R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

surface facing up parallel to the ground. Upon extraction, it was found to be just the calvarium filled with mud, embedded in which was also a fragment of the left half of the upper jaw of a ruminant with

palate and two buccal teeth (selenodont type) present in their sockets. Two other more medial sockets hosted remains of two more teeth and the labial-most socket was empty.

[RM]

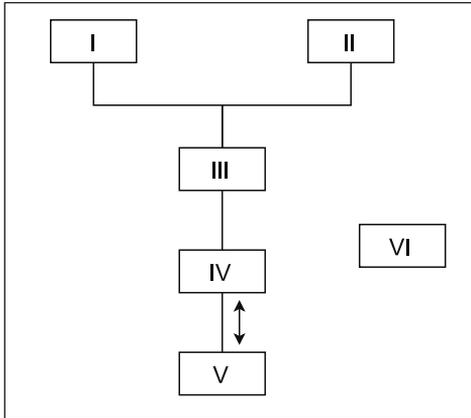


Fig. 7. Diagram of burials in Crypt 3
(Interpretation R. Mahler)

FINDS FROM THE CRYPT

Remains of the original furnishings inside the crypt included a clay lamp (D.95.034: Dia. 12.6 cm, Dia. base 5.7 cm, H. 5.5 cm, see Żurawski 1999: 233, Fig. 27) and a few sherds from a broken amphora. Some textiles were also recorded.

Pottery

The lower part of an amphora discovered in the crypt (HDd.12.001) was found embedded in a compact layer that covered also the burials from the first phase of the use of the burial chamber [Fig. 9]. Thus,



Fig. 8. Solitary skull stuck to the wall in the northeastern corner of the crypt
(Photo R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

there can be no doubt that it belonged to the original furnishings of the tomb. By type, the amphora represented the latest production of the Dongola ceramic workshops, type F–G in Krzysztof Pluskota's classification (Pluskota 2005: Pl. 8) and appears to be consistent with a date in the 12th century [Fig. 10]. The fabric was a pink clay with black-colored break, tempered with tiny lime grits, fragmented shell and chaff. The outer surface was pink-red and heavily eroded in places. There was no sign of resination on the inner surfaces.

The other pottery material from the exploration of the crypt comprised 17 sherds of late Dongolan amphorae analogous to the HDd.12.001 container,

three pieces of *qawadis* (*sagqiya* pots), and a sherd each of a storage container, a storage jar very much like a jar from Building VI on the Citadel (Danys-Lasek 2014: Fig. 1: Add.12.196) and an orange-slipped thin-walled vase. Most of the sherds were thick-walled or medium-thick and extremely hard, attesting to the good quality of the ceramic matrix and well-handled firing. The likeliest scenario is that the sherds had been in the fill of the haunch of the vault of the crypt, although some of them, especially the small thin-walled vase fragment, could have been mixed into the mortar bonding the bricks of the vault.

[KD-L]



Fig. 9. Lower part of an amphora in place, embedded in the clay on the floor of the crypt in the southeastern corner (Photo R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

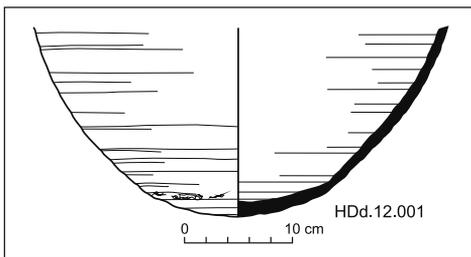


Fig. 10. Amphora HDd.12.001: Dongola type F–G (K. Pluskota's classification) (Drawing K. Danys-Lasek)

Textiles and dress accessories

The quantity of finds from Crypt 3 was not as extensive as from Crypts 1 and 2 studied in 2009 (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 353–359), mostly due to preservation issues. It proved impossible to establish either the size or form, or function of the scraps recovered from Crypt 3. Raised levels of humidity inside the crypt at some point in its existence, while did not actually displace the textiles, contributed to the rapid disintegration of organic fibers. Some of the pieces were stuck in the softened clay and formed inextricable masses once the damp had evaporated. The position of the scraps on the skeletons could be taken as suggestive of their function, but only one textile (ADd.12.229 from burial II) was identified conclusively as a burial shroud. The textiles were found on all parts of the bodies, also on the skull and among the bones of the feet [Fig. 11].

The shoulders and chest of the individual designated as burial I were

covered with a roll of thick woolen fabric (ADd.12.232), identified as a tapestry weave, with a red-brown checker ornament on it. Three scraps of a silk fabric in twill weave (ADd.12.233) were recovered from

the area of the pelvis. Above the pelvis were fragments of a leather belt (ADd.12.228), 2.5 cm wide but of unknown length, fastened with a leather button [Fig. 13].



Fig. 11. Fragments of a silk shroud ADd.12.229, found on the skull and feet of the skeleton from Burial II (Photos R. Mahler, PCMA UW)



Fig. 12. Textiles arranged in boxes, ready for storage (Photo B. Czaja)



Fig. 13. Textile and dress accessories (Burial I): woolen textile ADd.12.232, silk scrap ADd.12.233 and leather belt ADd.12.228 (Photos B. Czaja)



Fig. 14. Textiles from Burial II: bottom left, silk shroud ADd.12.229 and detail of the weave, right column; top right, linen textile ADd.12.230; top center, silk textile ADd.12.231 (Photos B. Czaja)

In Burial II, a silk shroud in plain weave (ADd.12.229) was found on the body, head and feet of the skeleton. It was decorated with a colorful set of thin red, dark blue, cream, brown and green stripes, very much like silk shroud HDd.09.047 found with a burial in Crypt 2 in 2009 (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 351–352). The biggest pieces were preserved around the feet and in the area of the head, neck and ribs. Scraps of a plain-weave linen fabric (ADd.12.230) with a navy blue checker ornament on a cream ground were found on the pelvis. Last, there was a small scrap of silk in twill weave (ADd.12.231), beige-green in color [Fig. 14].

The textiles recovered from the crypt were cleaned of superficial dirt with a fine brush and low-powered mini-vacuum. Water immersion was excluded due to the poor preservation of these fragments. Pieces which had solidified in the clay from the fill were cut out with the surrounding mass and stored in this condition without any attempts at cleaning them. All the textiles were described and photographed, then placed between sheets of acid-free paper in cardboard boxes [Fig. 12].

[BC]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human skull in the corner

Reconstructing the history of the crypt is crucial to an explanation of the interesting features observed inside. The most peculiar in this case is the skull in the northeastern corner of the chamber. The original interpretation (Żurawski 1999: 30, Fig. 24) assumed the presence of four bodies and assigned the skull to the second skeleton from the south. The excavators interpreted displacement from its position with the

rest of the skeleton as possible in the case of heavy flooding (Jakobielski 1995: 87), the skull floating freely and becoming cemented to the wall with mud washed from the ceiling and walls.

This interpretation is no longer tenable in the light of the results of the present excavation. A mud accumulation would have been needed under the skull to support it and allow it to be cemented in place some 15 cm above the fill as an outcome of suggested flooding. No signs of such accumulation have been observed. There are however two other explanations of the situation encountered.

The most credible hypothesis suggests intentional placement to explain the peculiar location high above the fill in the corner, orientation with basal part facing the corner and surprising content — animal teeth — in the mud filling the calvarium. This explains all the features observed and seems the most likely sequence of events, despite there being no evidence of the use of tools in forming the mud cementing it in its unusual position above the fill. Examination of the skull morphology revealed a number of extensive trauma-like depressions [Fig. 15]. Assuming these were indeed evidence of traumatic episodes, then the lesions, though severe, seem to have healed completely. In fact, the obliteration is so complete that the most severe of them are likely the outcome of taphonomic factors. It may be suggested that the calvarium does not come from a regular burial.

The second hypothesis, no longer valid, assumed that the skull in question attested the presence of earlier inhumations before the crypt was incorporated into the commemorative complex (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak

2012: 342–344). In this interpretation the skull in its position in the northeastern corner would have been the only remains of the original fill of the grave that was removed almost fully when the incorporation took place, in order to prepare a grave

for new burials. This is pure speculation and it does not explain all the peculiarities observed. In particular, there is nothing to support the supposition that the sand and mud or other fill could have ever reached higher than the top level recorded

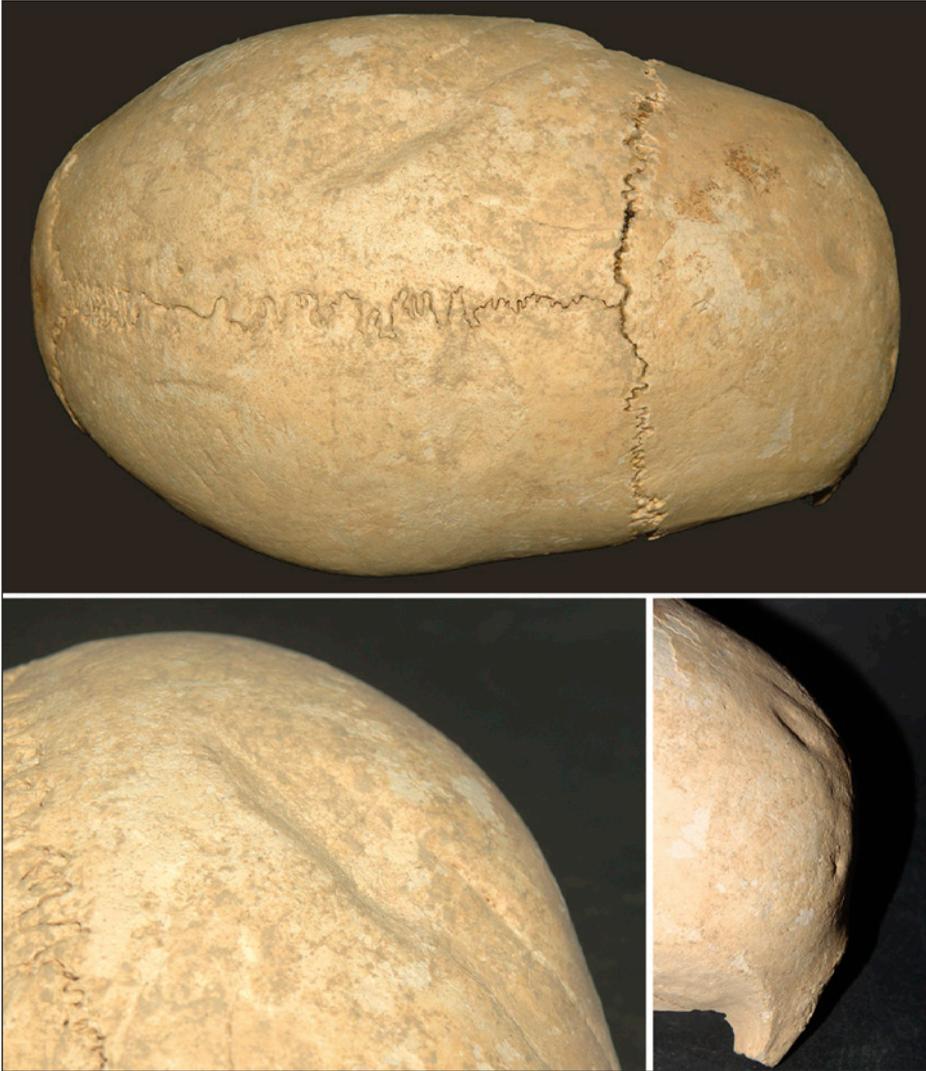


Fig. 15. Close-up of the calota
(Photos R. Mahler, PCMA UW)

during exploration. Moreover, there is no evidence to support the supposition that Crypts 2 and 3 predate the commemorative complex.

Excluding the skull (marked as individual VI) from the count of inhumations bears out Jakobielski's original count of five inhumations inside the crypt (Jakobielski 1995: 87).

Inhumations

Assuming that Crypts 2 and 3 were built as an integral part of a commemorative complex the three inhumations of the lowest level were contemporaneous with it. The complex was built some time after the burial of the Archbishop Georgios (Godlewski 2013a: 674; 2013b: 87), who died in AD 1113 to believe the text of his funerary inscription in Crypt 1 (Łajtar 2002: 166, 190). The layer of rubble separating the upper burials from the lower ones may suggest damage to the vault; however, the architectural analysis rules out such a possibility. Taking this into account the strange crowding of the bodies in the lower tier against the north wall, leaving the southern half of the crypt empty for subsequent burials and then covering them with the rubble may be interpreted as a special arrangement either in favor of subsequent important inhumations or, unusually, to cover something. Skeletons of the lower tier could have been exposed to humidity, as attested by the cracked appearance of mud between the bones. Analogous marks left by the second high-humidity episode were noted on top of the rubble leveling the lowest tier of bodies.

The arrangement of bodies inside Crypt 3 follows similar rules as in case of Crypts 1 and 2. All the skeletons were found lying in more or less supine position,

parallel to the main axis of the crypt. Judging from the arrangement of the feet, however — twisted to the right — and the disarticulations in the shoulder girdle of individuals II, III, IV and V, the bodies had been buried originally resting on their right side. Their heads were to the entrance at west and facing south. Their hands were originally on their thighs and the legs were together, but neither crossed nor flexed. There is no evidence of the legs being tied together. The curious arrangement of skeleton II [see *Fig. 4*] was most probably due to an attempt to move the corpse while some of the soft tissues were still keeping the bones together, probably a short time after the funeral. Or else an effort was made at the time of the funeral to align the head of individual II with that of individual I, thus causing the corpse to become twisted. Released tension once the wrappings disintegrated resulted in the left leg and pelvis spontaneously moving to the current position.

Considering that skeleton II was found mostly above a very thin layer of silt, while skeleton I clearly cut through it, a cautious assumption will place the burial of individual II later than that of individual I. The burial sequence is shown in the diagram [see *Fig. 7*]: skeleton III was buried clearly before the vault was damaged and inhumations IV and V took place at a later time. The calvarium of individual VI cannot be stratified at all.

All the inhumed individuals were men (except for individual VI, the sex of whom could not be determined with an acceptable level of certainty), similarly as in the case of the two other crypts (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 347, 351). Individuals I and III died at an advanced

age of 50 and more, individual II reached the age range of 45–55, individual V was 40–50, and IV died in his thirties. The youngest was probably individual VI who died at the age of 20–35 years; it seems clear, however, that it was just the skull and not his or her burial that was found there. The age ranges given here are of a biological nature and should be seen very cautiously as reflecting the actual age of the deceased.

Plastering and filling

It is very unlikely that the walls and vault of the crypt were originally plastered. The early explorers stated that the “enshrined bodies in the northern crypt were found imbedded in a stone-hard layer of mud washed down from the walls and cemented by water” (Żurawski 1999: 224–225; see also Żurawski 1996: 127). But Jakobielski observed that “the walls of the two crypts were neither plastered nor inscribed” (Jakobielski 1995: 87). They were rather roughly rendered with mud, possibly in preparation for the actual plastering, but the mud layer on the walls and vault was thin and the thickness of the mud deposit overlying the leveled rubble was insignificant, hence it is unlikely that plastering was ever on the agenda.

Similarly, Jakobielski’s early interpretation of a considerable part of the fill as a thick layer of mud being the result of “occasional rainfall flooding of the northern crypt” (Jakobielski 1995: 87) can now be recognized as mostly rubble from roof damage and subsequent leveling with very

little of the accumulations being introduced there by seeping moisture.

[RM]

CONCLUSIONS

The architectural analysis indicates that both Crypts 2 and 3 were built at the same time as an integral part of the commemorative complex. There is no evidence to show otherwise.

Crypt 3 hosted not seven as was the case of Crypts 1 and 2, but five bodies. The sixth, a solitary skull, can hardly be considered as a burial. An earlier working hypothesis that the skull in the northeastern corner represented remains of an earlier burial exhumed before the crypt was incorporated into the complex now seems unlikely (Godlewski, Mahler, and Czaja-Szewczak 2012: 342 and above). However, if it were an intentional arrangement (but not a burial), then the purpose of it has yet to be determined.

The walls and roof of the crypt, although washed with mud, were most probably never plastered.

Similarities connecting Crypt 3 with the other two burial chambers concern the architecture, but also the textile remains and the relatively advanced age of the inhumed. Moreover, the absence of matting, separating successive layers of inhumations, could be attributed to the unique circumstances behind the special arrangement in this respect: a relatively thick layer of sand covered rock and mud rubble.

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