



Angel under the microscope

Physic-Chemical Analysis of Nubian Wall Paintings

The National Museum in Warsaw, 27th of June, 2016



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Physic-Chemical Analysis of Nubian Wall Paintings

The culture of the Christian Nubian kingdoms flourished in the Middle Nile Valley between the 6th and the 14th century. Prime examples of their artistic legacy are the magnificent wall paintings from Faras, which can be admired at the National Museum in Warsaw, Poland. Although their unique style and iconography has fascinated scholars for nearly 50 years, their material aspect has not yet been studied in a systematic fashion.

Within the framework of the project “Technology of the Nubian Wall-Painting: history, techniques, conservation-treatment” (no. 2011/01/D/HS3/06119) funded by the National Science Centre of the Republic of Poland, samples of nearly all discovered Nubian murals were collected and analysed for the first time. The team of specialists from the University of Warsaw, the National Museum and the Warsaw University of Technology took the chance to enter into cooperation with researchers from the Getty Conservation Institute w Los Angeles, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Istituto di Metodologie Chimiche di Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche and Sapienza University in Rome and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The results proved to be exceptionally rich. The craftsmanship of Nubian painters, hitherto considered somewhat provincial, was found to represent the highest quality and skill. Initially the artists drew upon an enduring local tradition, but the arrival of Christianity from Byzantium brought new sources of knowledge and materials. With the rise of the kingdom of Makuria the painters used better-quality pigments originating from both neighbouring Egypt and the Near East. The research has shown that the rulers could even afford to import the world's most expensive pigment besides imperial purple – lapis lazuli. The conclusion of the study after over four years gives an opportunity to invite specialists from other centres conducting research on Nubian wall-painting and to present the project results.



University of Warsaw
Biological and Chemical
Research Centre



Monday, 27.06, the National Museum in Warsaw

10-10:20 welcoming speech

10:20-10:40

Dobrochna Zielińska/ Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

"Nubian wall-painting. Outline of past salvage projects and chemical research"

10:40-11:00

Loredana Sist / Egittologia presso la facoltà di Filosofia Lettere Scienze Umanistiche
e Studi Orientali, Università Sapienza, Roma

"The paintings from the church of Sonqi Tino: story of a rescue"

11:00-11:20

Barbara Wagner/ Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Archaeometric Research, Biological and Chemical
Research Centre, University of Warsaw

**"Short introduction to chemical investigations: challenges and limitations from the
beginning"**

11:20: 11:35 coffee break

11:35-11:55

Olga Syta/ Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Archaeometric Research, Biological and Chemical Research
Centre, University of Warsaw

Grażyna Zofia Żukowska/ Faculty of Chemistry, Warsaw University of Technology

Barbara Wagner/ Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Archaeometric Research, Biological and Chemical
Research Centre, University of Warsaw

**"What have been found in samples - analytical approach to interdisciplinary Nubian
wall paintings project"**

11:55-12:15

Katharina Uhlir/ Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien Conservation Science Department

**"Scientific Investigations of Fragments of Painted Decoration from the Church in Nag' el-
Scheima"**

12:15-12:35

Petr Svora, Sylwia Svorová Pawełkowicz/ Institute of Inorganic Chemistry, Academy of Sciences
of the Czech Republic

"Nubian plasters - SEM analysis"

12:35-13:00 discussion

13:00-14:30 lunch break

14:30-15:00

Noemi Proietti, Valeria Di Tullio/ Laboratorio di Risonanza Magnetica "Annalaura Segre"

Istituto di Metodologie Chimiche, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Area della Ricerca di Roma 1

**"A Multi-Analytical Study of Detached Mural Paintings Belonging to the
Pictorial Cycle of The Nubian Church of Sonqi Tino"**

15:00-15:20

Michał Łukomski/the Getty Conservation Institute

**"Analysis of the state of preservation of paintings from Faras using interferometric methods: a
path to rational strategies for collection care"**

15:20-15:40

Dobrochna Zielińska/ Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

" Results of chemical analyses in a cultural context."

15:40 -16:10 discussion

16:10-18:30 poster session