

The way we live, dwell, and a place where we live can say a lot about ourselves. What we do, and where we do that, determine who we are and what our society looks like. We are also sure that what we do, and how we live differ enormously from that how our parents and grandparents lived and behaved. Investigation of these aspects helps answer questions about the structure of our society. But what if we are all gone, and there are only little remains left? Are archaeologists able to establish where all the past activities happened, and how the life of a household looked like? The answer fortunately is yes. Even if people cleaned up their surrounding the remains of actions are literally trampled into floors.

The presented study will try to answer the questions of the way, in which family relations, religion, group identity, gender roles have changed in Old Dongola in Sudan after the decline of the Christian Kingdom of Makuria, when the city became a capital of a small, already Muslim, local polity – the Kingdom of Dongola. Old Dongola is located on the right bank of the Nile, halfway between the Third and the Fourth Cataract. It was a capital of the Makurian Kingdom from the 5<sup>th</sup> century until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Although the political shift is well documented in written sources, the actual social change among Nubians remains obscure.

The way archaeology can answer questions of the way society changed in this turning point in a history of the city is to focus on houses. Dwellings uncovered in Old Dongola have a form of house compounds surrounded by wall consisting of several buildings grouped around a shared courtyard. Uniformity of furnishing suggest that each building stated a separate house inhabited by a single family, a part of an extended family inhabiting a whole compound. General lack of artefacts left on spot and uniformity of furnishing of the houses complicates the task of reconstruction of the way people used space.

The chemical analyses are a powerful tool in in interpretation of archaeological record. It is proved that human activities leave detectable traces that tend to fix to floors. Chemical analyses including analysis of elements have been used for a long time in archaeology. The most popular was phosphorus analysis indicating occurrence of food wastes, hearth debris and latrines, but other elements may indicate other activities as grain grinding, cooking or keeping animals.

Once we will learn how inhabitants of Dongola dwelled in their houses we will be ready to answer questions concerning their daily lives. Who did cook with whom, if the strangers had access to family space of houses, could women have socialized with house guests, how often did the men even see women in the house, did the neighbours do their chores together? It will all sum up to an image of the society inhabiting this African city for over four centuries from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, if we will be able to trace chronological change, then we could determine to what extend social changes accompanied the spread of Islam and fall of the Kingdom of Makuria.