Horned Crown – an Epigraphic Evidence
Amongst large collection of mural paintings\(^1\) from the famous excavations of Kazimierz Michałowski at Faras in the Sudan there are several portraits of kings and high court dignitaries, represented usually under protection of holy figures.\(^2\) These murals originating from the period between twelfth and fourteenth centuries pose several problems which till now are not sufficiently transparent. One of those is a question of the attire of the Nubian nobles, and in particular, the headgear in form of a horned crown worn by them. The identity of depicted persons was apparently so obvious for painters that rarely a caption (usually applied to other murals) was given. Legends, even if they were written, disappeared or were found considerably damaged. Similar situation can be observed also in murals recently discovered in Banganarti\(^3\) where no legend is extant to portraits of all five court dignitaries having horned crown which were represented in the Raphaelion.

Different types of such crown are known and may generally be classified as follows (Fig. 1):

1. Helmet with a pair of horns, topped by a crescent lying on its side, mounted on a rod.\(^4\)

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\(^{1}\) The subject of this article was not chosen at random: one of the early interests of Karol Myśliwiec at the beginning of his scientific career was the head-dress of noble figures as a criterion for its identification and dating (K. Myśliwiec, Le portrait royal dans le bas-relief du Nouvelle Empire, Varsovie 1976, pp. 20–22); I wonder whether in the time of his jubilee this theme can still preoccupy, or at least, enjoy him.


1. Types of crown of Nubian dignitaries: 1. **Helmet with a pair of horns, topped by a crescent on a rod**: a) Crown of the dignitary from the church at Abd el-Qadir, inv. No. 12; b) Reconstructed crown of a dignitary under protection of the Virgin and Christ; from the apse of Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 1B. 2. **Helmet with a pair of horns with a cross instead of the crescent**: Crown held in hand by a dignitary represented in Chapel 3 in the Upper Church (Raphaelion) at Banganarti. 3. **Helmet with crescent without horns**: Crown of Aron, a dignitary under protection of Christ from the south aisle of Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 63. 4. **Helmet with pair of horns but without the crescent**: Reconstructed crown of a dignitary under protection of Archangel Michael, from the South Chapel in Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 74. 5. **Diadem with a bucranion with two pairs of horns**: a) A dignitary holding the diadem in hand, on west pilaster in the nave of Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 13; b) Crown of a dignitary represented in Room 20 in the Upper Church (Raphaelion) at Banganarti. 6. **Composite crown: a diadem mounted on the horned helmet**: Crown of an eparch protected by Christ, from the nave of the Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 7 (Drawing M. Momot).
2. Helmet with a pair of horns with a cross instead of the crescent mounted on the rod.  
3. Helmet with crescent without horns.  
4. Helmet with pair of horns but without the crescent.  
5. Diadem with a corned bucranium topped by a sphere with an additional pair of horns.  
6. Helmet with a pair of horns together with the diadem of two pairs of horns mounted on it.

Many terms relevant to the identification of a rank of individual figures were already proposed. Recently the names ‘ruler’, ‘royal person’ or simply ‘king’ are applied to

[a] Dongola, House B:  
S. Jakobielski, W. Godlewski, Dongola 1978–1980, EtudTrav XIV, 1990, p. 400, Fig. 4;  
M. Martens-Czarnecka, Wall Paintings discovered in Old Dongola, [in:] S. Jakobielski, P.O. Scholz (Eds), Dongola-Studien, 35 Jahre der polnischen Forschungen in Zentrum des makuritischen Reiches, Warszawa-Wiesbaden 2001, p. 282, Fig. 25;  
[b] Gamar, Faras Cathedral,  
M. Tymowski, p. 272; ID., pp. 269–282; ID., Pl. CLXIX – on which the rod with crescent is destroyed.  
[c] Banganarti, chapel 3:  
M. Tymowski, p. 286, Fig. 14.  
[d] Dongola, House B:  
Martens-Czarnecka, Faras VII, pp. 93, 97, 100, 103–105, Pls 139–140; S. Jakobielski, Tentative d’identification de certaines peintures de Faras, EtudTrav XXII, 2008, pp. 104–106, Fig. 3;  
Ead., Archangels as protectors, p. 676, Fig. 4;  
[b] Banganarti, chapel 2:  
L. Laptas, EtudTrav XXII, 2008, pp. 103–104, Fig. 7;  
M. Tymowski, Studia M. Tymowski, p. 272; ID., GAMAR 8, 2013, p. 187, Fig. 8;  
c) Banganarti, room 21:  
M. Tymowski, GAMAR 8, 2013, pp. 189, 191, Fig. 13;  
d) Crown drawn on potsherd from Serra East:  
e) Faras Cathedral, a drawing of crown scratched on plaster:  
Michalowski, Die Kathedrale, p. 35.

[a] Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 63:  
Michalowski, Die Kathedrale, pp. 169–170, Pls 95b, 96;  
ID., Wall Paintings, Cat. No. 58;  
Martens-Czarnecka, Faras VII, pp. 93, 97, 100, 103–105, Pls 139–140; S. Jakobielski, Tentative d’identification de certaines peintures de Faras, EtudTrav XIX, 2001, pp. 70–73, Figs 8–9;  
Jakobielski et al. Pachoras Paintings, Cat. No. 132;  
[b] Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 5:  
Michalowski, Wall Paintings, pp. 46, 52, 60;  
Jakobielski, EtudTrav XIX, 2001, pp. 73–77, Fig. 10;  
ID. et al., Pachoras Paintings, Cat. No. 148.

[a] Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 74:  
Martens-Czarnecka, Faras VII, pp. 94, 97, Pls 145, 154;  
Ead., L’archange Michel sur les peintures de Faras, EtudTrav XII, 1983, pp. 184, 190–192;  
Jakobielski, EtudTrav XXI, 2007, p. 48;  
ID. et al., Pachoras Paintings, Cat. No. 135.

[a] Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 13:  
Michalowski, Die Kathedrale, pp. 44, 166, Pl. 93;  
ID., Wall Paintings, Cat. No. 61;  
Martens-Czarnecka, Faras VII, pp. 99, 101, Pl. 159; W. Godlewski, The Late Period in Nubian Art – from the middle of 13th to the end of 14th centuries, [in:] R. Gundlach, M. Kropp, A. Leibundgut (Eds), Der Sudan in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart (Sudan Past and Present), Frankfurt a/Main, Berlin 1995 [= Late Period], pp. 39–40, 56, Fig. 2;  
Jakobielski et al., Pachoras Paintings, Cat. No. 138;  
b) Banganarti, room 20:  
Laptas, Banganarti Paintings, pp. 249–251, Figs 4–5;  
Zurawski, Studia M. Tymowski, pp. 284, 286;  
ID., GAMAR 8, 2013, pp. 187f., Fig. 12;  
c) possibly also Banganarti, sketch in room 22:  
Zurawski, Studia M. Tymowski, pp. 286, Fig. 14.

[a] Faras Cathedral, field inv. No. 7:  
Michalowski, Die Kathedrale, pp. 165–166, Pl. 91;  
M. Martens-Czarnecka, Some remarks on iconography of rulers and archangels in Nubian painting, EtudTrav XXI, 2007, pp. 105–106, Fig. 10;  
Jakobielski et al., Pachoras Paintings, Cat. No. 140.
them, while previously, when no murals from Dongola region were known, even by the
same authors they were labelled ‘eparchs of Nobadia’, as opposed to Nubian kings wearing
crowns of the so-called ‘Byzantine type’, i.e. diadem with pinnae or kamelaukion variety.
Besides the names proposed for kings and queen mothers there were also some efforts
made to identify other nobles represented in the Faras Cathedral, thus names of Eparch
Marikuda and Urrosi were imputed to two of them. There were studies of the significance
and origin of horned crown used in Christian Nubian period, seeing it in both indigenous
Kushite and Ballaña tradition as well as Sassanian influence. However, no effort has been
made so far to exemplify the elements of the dress of these figures in view of possible simi-
larities and differences. After all, names of several official titles next in rank to the Nubian
king are known, as eparchos, nauarchos, exarchos, meizon, domestikos etc., recently
complemented by tetrarchos and hegemom. Whether is it possible that except the eparch any
one of them not having been depicted? Therefore the main purpose of this short article is to
turn attention to this problem, and also to a discrepancy between the multitude of pictorial
records and the paucity of epigraphic ones which would serve to identify these paintings.
Curiously enough there are only three examples where the rank of the depicted dignitary
in a horned headgear was mentioned directly, but only in one instance this information
can be regarded as definite. The latter concerns the mural depicting a protection scene in
which a figure, presumably of a Nubian dignitary, wearing composite crown (of type 6)
stands frontally side-by-side with Christ, who watches him over.

The painting originally adorned the west face of the south-eastern pillar in the Faras Cathed-
ral (at present in the collection of the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum inv. No. 24353). It
was discovered on the nave’s floor in rubble of a collapsed section of the pillar. The mural
with the head of Christ, and a dignitary’s crown is preserved only (Fig. 2). The painting
is dated to the twelfth century on archaeological, stylistic and epigraphic grounds.

10 Cf. e.g. ŻURAWSKI, Studia M. Tymowski, pp. 269–282; Id., GAMAR 8, 2013, pp. 187f.; W. GODLEWSKI,
Bishops and Kings, the official Program of the Pachoras (Faras) Cathedrals, [in:] W. Godlewski, A. Łajtar (Eds),
Between the Cataracts. Proceedings of the 11th International Conference for Nubian Studies, Warsaw University,
[= Bishops and Kings].
12 GODLEWSKI, Late Period, p. 56 (these identifications seem highly doubtful, cf. JAKOBIELSKI, Pachoras
Paintings, commentaries to Cat. Nos 138 and 143).
13 ŻURAWSKI, Headgears, pp. 121–135.
14 Cf. T. HÄGG, Titles and honorific epithets in Nubian Greek texts, Symbolae Osloenses LXV, 1990,
pp. 147–177.
15 Dimensions: W. of representation – 70cm; H. of Christ’s head – 21.5cm; H. of the crown – 26cm.
16 The mural’s high moisture levels made it impossible to carry out appropriate conservation procedures,
hence the marked difference in the painting’s original and present (inferior) condition. That is the reason that the
original photo showing the object in situ is solely used here notwithstanding dislodged fragments of the painting
forming a hindrance in drawing up a facsimile of the inscription.
17 It is much later than the pillar originating from the main rebuilding of the Cathedral in the late tenth
century as it was painted on second, additional layer of plaster applied on the pillar.
18 Characteristic rendering of facial features of Christ, his halo with the cross of flared arms.
19 A similar graphic style of letters and a rare formula of the legend, analogous to that which describes
portrait of King Moyses Georgios dated to 60s of the twelfth century.

3. A facsimile of the legend to the eparch’s figure – drawn after piecing the dislodged fragments together (Elaborated by S. Jakobielski and M. Momot).
The crown represented on the mural is composed of two parts: a diadem with *bucranium* mounted on a helmet (Figs. 1.6 and 2). A pair of upward-turned horns, of which only the one on the left survives, are attached to the base of the helmet. Fine chains of pearls or small bells hang from the extant horn. The helmet is topped by a crescent lying on its side, mounted on a long rod capped by a row of pearls and bounded by double lines (rings?). Three round brownish-red jewels adorn the crescent. The *bucranium* on the diadem (represented as a bull-mask with green eyes) has a pair of upward-turned horns terminating in single pinnacles which are topped with small spheres. The other pair of similar, but slightly smaller, horns is attached to a sphere adorned with a large, round, green jewel and fastened to the upper part of the *bucranium*. A series of pearls hangs from the lower pair; single ones hang from the upper. Above the conjunction of the upper pair of horns a brown (leather?) strap[^20] is seen fixed to vertical element and wrapped in a V-shape around the base of the rod attached to the helmet.

The crown, drawn with a black line, is depicted as white with a grey shading possibly in an attempt to present it as a silver one.

The legend in Greek (cf. Fig. 2) is written in black ink to the left of the crown, regardless its incompleteness clearly states what a dignitary had been represented on the painting, namely the eparch (of Nobadia). There must have been at least three lines of text, though at present only fragments of two remain (Fig. 3):

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[† o]τος εκτιν
[− − −] επαρ[(ος)
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(+)*This is (...) eparch ...

The analogous scheme of legend beginning with expression οὐτος ἐστιν appears in Faras Cathedral paintings only once, in a legend describing a figure of King Moyse Georgios[^21] reigning from 1155 most probably until 1191.[^22] The beginning of line 2 must have contained the dignitary’s name and judging from the space at disposal it ought to be a short one of a maximum six characters. During nearly whole of the second half of the twelfth century certain Adam (ἈΔΑΜ) fulfilled functions of the ‘Eparch of Nobadia’ and the ‘Domestikos of Pachoras’. His name perfectly fits in with the text and could perhaps be interpolated if only we would have sufficient evidence that the painting originates just of this half of the century, and it is not earlier as can be suggested by a relatively prominent

[^20]: On a hypothesis concerning the leather strap and technique for mounting the two parts of crown see Michalowski, Wall Paintings, pp. 44–45.


location occupied by this composition in the Cathedral. For the title ἐπαρχος a typical abbreviated form appears here which is widely used in texts and cannot be mixed up with popular abbreviation ΠΑ (but never: ΠΑΡ) for Παχορας (Pachoras = Faras). Most probably the third line provided the further part of eparch’s title: NO (or NOB) = of Nobadia, or of Nobadians and perhaps also another title in the twelfth century, customarily held by eparchs, namely: Domestikos of Pachoras written also in abbreviated form ΜΩ ΠΑ as attested in texts from Qasr Ibrim. A tentative interpolated text of the legend would perhaps be as follows:

[† ο]γτος εκτιν | [ΑΑΑΜ] επαρ | [Β Μ ΠΑ]

My identification of this crown as the eparch’s one was already made during the fieldwork at Faras, but never presented in detail. As such it was included into the first elaboration of the paintings from Faras and cited in many general publication on Christian Nubia. Is however worth bringing it back for a new theory being created and recently endorsed by W. Godlewski concerning this and other dignitary’s figures from Faras who accepts that they are representation of kings wearing ‘the Nubian crown of the Kingdom of Dotawo’, however no literary source nor inscription referred to is mentioned to support his belief. According this author the change of regalia drew from a supposed personal union between Makuria and Arwa (i.e. Alodia) and the crown was derived from southern Nubian tradition. It is in that work called also an ‘Arwan crown’.

The next identification of a dignitary on the basis of extant inscription is known since 1928 when F.Ll. Griffith published the report on works at Abd el-Qadir church near Wadi Halfa including in it a representation of local dignitary under protection of Christ and possibly another saintly person (Fig. 4). The mural is currently housed in the Sudan National Museum, inv. No. 24325. The dignitary depicted in an attitude of a founder of church, wears a crown of type 1 of the present classification. The legend is not extant (and there is doubtful whether has ever been written), but beside the figure a text of five lines framed with a thick line occurs, no doubt connected with the painting. F.Ll. Griffith transcribed the greater part of text, which can be complemented as follows (Fig. 5):

24 Michalowski, Die Kathedrale, p. 165.
26 Ibid., p. 277. Further (p. 277) he writes: Both Michalowski and Jakobielski believed it to be the crown of the eparchs of Nobadia. There is hardly any doubt that these were different forms of royal Nubian crowns, worn at various royal court ceremonies. The most complex form is presented by the helmet with horns topped by a crescent on a shaft and the front decorated with bucranium and two pairs of horns.
27 Griffith, AAALiv XV, 1928, Pl. XXIX.12.
5. Ink inscription accompanying the figure of a dignitary depicted in Abd el-Qadir church, inv. No. 12 (Phot. B. Żurawski).

K(ύρι)ε̣ φύλαξον | εὐλογ(ησον)οδηγήσον [ΜΑ]ΡΙΚΟΥ·Α(ς) | [μ]έγ(ας) | [ἐ]πάρχ(ε)ς
[ΝΟΒ·Ο] | [ΠΑΡ·ΝΟΒ·Ο]

Ο Lord, guard, bless (?) (and) guide Marikouda great (?) eparch of Nobadians, domestikos (?) (of Pachoras).

The reading of the text is still doubtful in part. At the end of the line 3 en epithet of the eparch is expected and reading μέγας is not sure. The title ‘great eparch’ is not attested in texts, but it might be put by the scribe to emphasise the importance of portrayed person. The title domestikos regularly follow the title of eparch in texts of the Late Christian period, however the abbreviation which occurs here is not met. A variant form using ω instead of ο is quite common. Thanks to Włodzimierz Godlewski’s identification of Marikouda as the Eparch of Nobadia mentioned in written sources from Qasr Ibrim, the Abd el-Qadir painting can be dated to 1270s.

The inscription cannot be treated as a proper legend. It reminds rather the scheme of dedication formula of donors of Faras paintings used in the beginning of eleventh century, and perhaps occasionally later:

+ K(ύρι)ε̣ Ι(ησούς) Χ(ριστοῦ) (... ...) φύλαξον εὐλόγησον σκέπασον ἐνδυνάμησον βοήθησον τὸν δούλον σου... († Lord Jesus Christ, and [here a theme of the painting]}

28 Following suggestion of Griffith who reads here CON.
30 GODLEWSKI, Late Period, p. 38. In a recent work (Bishops and Kings) the identification of this figure as the eparch was abandoned by W. Godlewski in favour of a king.
31 PLUMLEY, New Light, p. 235.
guard, bless, protect, strengthen, help Thy servant [here a name of the donor]...),\textsuperscript{32} however, it seems that the formulation on Abd el-Qadir mural got another character and it would be rather more likely that the painter used a part of this formula to describe the depicted dignitary rather, than to accept that an eparch was a founder of this dignitary’s portrait. Therefore most probably the eparch (this time wearing slightly modest type of horned crown), and not a king, is concerned here.

The third example of the representation of a Nubian dignitary in a horned helmet is known from the documentation drawing of a mural from the Rivergate Church at Faras (\textbf{Fig. 6}). The figure is depicted under protection of the Holy Trinity, according to Nubian iconography represented as three busts of Christ.\textsuperscript{33} The painting was evidently provided with a legend of seven lines. The text is in Greek, or in Greco-Nubian. It was presumably

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\textsuperscript{33} Listed in category 1 (c), n. 5, \textit{supra}. For the description of the painting done on the basis of unpublished original (coloured) drawing see Martens-Czarnecka, Rivergate, pp. 368–369.
barely visible at the time of discovery and seems to be mistranscribed by F.L.L. Griffith (Fig. 7), but no photograph of it is available. An attempt to imagine what was there written is presented here, on the very same figure.

A tentative translation: This is (NAME) Eparch of Nobadia and also Domestikos Pachoras (...) ...), and also Samet\textsuperscript{34} (... ...) many years to (him).

As to the name of the eparch mentioned in the text the letters which are read by Griffith do not suggest any known one. It is possible that it ended with ...kouda.

There is an unique literary source describing the eparchs headgear in writings of Abu-l-Makarim (formerly known as Abu Salih, the Armenian):\textsuperscript{35} at Bujar\textsuperscript{ā}š [i.e. Bu\textsuperscript{ā}r\textsuperscript{ā}s = Faras], the capital of the province of al-Mar\textsuperscript{i}s, which is a well populated city, there is the dwelling of Jaws\textsuperscript{ā}r, who wore turban (\textsuperscript{a}ş\textsuperscript{ā}bah) and two horns (al-qurnayn) and the golden bracelet (as-su\textsuperscript{w}ār adh-dhahab).

And there is no other evidence available so far for identification of dignitaries wearing horned crowns. All written information in inscriptions mentioning kings are applying to figures wearing Byzantine types of crowns, or unfortunately, to figures with crowns not extant.

\textsuperscript{34} Samet in Old Nubian is the equivalent of Greek domestikos. Another possible title of the same beginning is sametiñol.

\textsuperscript{35} Cf. G. V\textsuperscript{A}NTINI, Oriental Sources concerning Nubia, Warsaw-Heidelberg 1975, p. 323; Arabic text in: L.E. Matveev, V.V. Kubbel (Eds), Arabskije istočniki XII–XIII vekov po etnografii i istorii Afriki južnee Sahary, Leningrad 1985, fol. 119, p. 35.
From the other hand, a hypothesis that the horned crown might have been used also by Nubian kings of the Late Christian Period is worth considering even for a single reason: a similarity between king’s and eparch’s vestments and attributes, as a bouffant overskirt, a kaftan, a bow or a sac-ended sash, i.e. a wide strip of fabric hanging from the right shoulder, draping across the chest and left arm. Another question is, of course, why and when the change of kings’ attire came (if it really happen), and this might be answered only with the help of textual or epigraphic evidence, and this, at present, is just lacking.

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