MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

BULLETIN
DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210

Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani

Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].

Conditions d'utilisation

L'utilisation du contenu de ce site est limitée à un usage personnel et non commercial. Toute autre utilisation du site et de son contenu est soumise à une autorisation préalable de l'éditeur (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). Le copyright est conservé par l'éditeur (Ifao).

Conditions of Use

You may use content in this website only for your personal, noncommercial use. Any further use of this website and its content is forbidden, unless you have obtained prior permission from the publisher (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). The copyright is retained by the publisher (Ifao).

Dernières publications

9782724711271	*Du côté de chez Zeus*	Emmanuel Botte (éd.), Hélène Cuvigny (éd.), Michel Reddé (éd.)
9782724711677	*La Description de l'Égypte*	Paul-Marie Grinevald
9782724711714	*La pensée et la pratique pharmacologiques d'Avicenne*	Sylvie Ayari
9782724711899	*BCAI 40*	
9782724711288	*Karnak-Nord XI*	Colin Hope
9782724711622	*BIFAO 126*	
9782724711059	*Les Inscriptions de visiteurs dans les Tombes thébaines*	Chloé Ragazzoli
9782724711455	*Les émotions dans l'Égypte Ancienne*	Rania Y. Merzeban (éd.), Marie-Lys Arnette (éd.), Dimitri Laboury, Cédric Larcher

© Institut français d'archéologie orientale - Le Caire

Usama Abdel WARETH, Pierre ZIGNANI

NAG AL-HAGAR
A FORTRESS WITH A PALACE OF THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

Second Preliminary Report

After the latest excavations at the archeological site of Nag al-Hagar, it is now possible to bring forward several complementary precisions and hypothesies concerning this place [1]. Until today, five digging campaigns have been undertaken by the office of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization of Aswan [2]. The first campaign conducted by Chief Inspector Mohi el-Din Mustafa [3] took place from December 26th, 1984 to February 28th, 1985 [4]. The four following seasons were directed by Inspector Usama Abdel Wareth. The second campaign was held from January 15th to March 16th, 1986 and, in particular, brought the discovery of seventy-seven coins hidden in one single place [5]. The third campaign took place from January 15th to March 22th, 1987 [6]; the fourth from December 1st, 1987 to January 25th, 1988 [7]; and the fifth from November 1st, 1988 to January 25th, 1989 [8] (a selection of discovered objects, pl. 23-25).

1. We are indebted to Mr. H. Jaritz for his encouragement, his help and for putting his documentation at our disposal. We also would like to thank Mr. G. Wagner for his precious advice and pertinent remarks. Thanks are due to Mr. J.-M. Carrié who gave us references about the late Roman military organization in Upper Egypt and to Mrs. S. Bickel and Ms. C.L. Roach for the translation and the correction of the present text.

2. For selected examples of discovered objects see pl. 1-3.

3. Mohi ed-Din Mustafa and H. Jaritz, " A Roman Fortress in Nag al-Hagar ", *ASAE* 70, 1984-1985, p. 21-31 and pl.

4. List of discovered objects: 3 pottery oil lamps; 1 bronze oil lamp; 1 pottery bowl; 1 pottery seal; 2 lids of oil lamps; half a man's statue of bronze; 1 bronze miniature head of a man; 1 bronze miniature leg of a man; 1 glass plate.

5. List of other objects discovered: 1 pottery oil lamp without decoration; 1 circular seal of pottery with the figure of a cavalier on one side, and on the other side an animal (gazelle?), the head of which is destroyed; 1 circular seal of pottery with a Coptic inscription on one side and the figure of a fish and crosses on the other; 1 circular seal of pottery with a cock (the other side is destroyed); 1 pottery bowl with a long cylindrical neck.

6. List of objects discovered: 2 connection elements of tobacco pipes, one of them with geometrical decoration; 2 pottery oil lamps without decoration; 2 pottery oil lamps with handles decorated with botanical motifs; 1 copper coin with Arabic inscription minted in Constantinople in 1255.

7. List of objects discovered: 1 pottery oil lamp decorated with a cross; 1 pottery oil lamp with traces of decoration on both sides; 6 badly oxidized copper coins; 1 copper bowl with a diameter of 3,5 cm; 1 copper kôhl container.

8. List of objects discovered : 1 porcelain ink-pot; 1 fragment of a pottery horse head, the features of which are outlined with colour; 1 pottery oil lamp without decoration; 1 part of a jar-stand stuccoed and decorated with a cross.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

Inside the enclosure wall facing the Nile, the zone excavated until now represents about one third of the surface of the fortress; that is to say a rectangle of 170 m by 60 m (pl. 22 and 25).

1. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE LONG KNOWN

The site of Nag al-Hagar which regained attention after the digging of an irrigation canal by farmers, is a place whose historical past has been made known through the cartography of travellers and the descriptions of some scholars.

In his 1910 guide to the antiquities of Upper Egypt, A.P. Weigall reported different archeological sites from Kom Ombo to Aswan [9]. Regretting a lack of interest for this part of the territory, he cites first of all the place called " Khanag " which, according to him, was the site of an ancient town with traces of a temple and a Christian church of the earliest times.

Under " Khanag ", Weigall obviously described the site of Nag al-Hagar, for " Khanag " was then the name of a group of eight villages, of which Nag al-Hagar was one of the most populated [10].

The maps of the Nile Valley in the *Baedeker* traveller's guide from the end of the last century mention, at the position of Nag al-Hagar, some ruins under the name of the village " El-Ghannake " (German ed., 1891) and " El-Khannakeh " (French ed., 1898). The map of the English *Baedeker* of 1929 still shows " El-Khannâq " but no longer points out any archeological vestiges.

Since " El-Khannâq " also covered Nag al-Hagar at this time, one observes in the index of R. Engelbach that during the thirties this site furnished the Cairo Museum with one or several object(s) [11]. Lacking any precision on this or these object(s), we nevertheless mention two authors who have published pieces of interest for this site.

According to J. Lesquier, the epitaph of a soldier, unfortunately without chronological reference, " *Caecilius Victor...*, sold. de Postumus Romulus " (*CIL* III 12075) was found in " Ḫanaq " [12]. Thanks to the investigations of Usama Abdel Wareth in the area, the original inscription which is cited by Lesquier has been founded again in an ancient quarry half a kilometer east of the actual village of Nag al-Sheikh Amer. This place was once maped as the railway station of " El-Khannâq " [13].

9. A. P. Weigall, *A Guide to the Antiquities of Upper Egypt*, London, 1910, p. 390.

10. A. Boinnet, *Le Dictionnaire géographique de l'Égypte*, Cairo, 1899; see Hagar p. 225 (538 hab.) included in the population of the 8 villages of Khannak p. 326 (1865 hab.).

11. R. Engelbach, *Index of Egyptian and Sudanese Sites from which the Cairo Museum Contains Antiquities*, Cairo, 1932, p. 29.

12. J. Lesquier, *L'Armée romaine d'Égypte, d'Auguste à Dioclétien, MIFAO* 41, Cairo, 1918, p. 411 and 525. In the work of R. Cavenaile, " PAREAD ", *Aegyptus* 50, 1970, p. 236, n. 552 we find a mention of the same epitaph but with Syene as place of provenance.

13. See *Survey of Egypt*, scale 1:100,000 (1929), sheet 16/78.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

The other author, F.L. Griffith, reports from a visit to the Roman vestiges of " Kom el-Ahmar " near the village of " el-Khannâq ", two Greek texts engraved one upon the other on a column eight inches in diameter [14]. The first text is inscribed with the name of the Emperor Vespasian, the second, which is superposed, mentions the name of Alexandros who belonged to the clergy [15] (pl. 27 *a*). It is interesting to compare the description of the site given by the Egyptologist, although summary, with our own observations. He indicates at the south of the kom a mudbrick enclosure with gates on its southern and northern sides linked by a street (he specifies that the northern gate in stone was not decorated) and traces of a gate facing the Nile with a Corinthian capital close by. He interprets the heap of granite columns at the east of the fortified surface as a temple [16] and describes the eastern side of the enclosure as having no gateway. He also points out a big Roman sarcophagus in red granite with a decoration of garlands and amphoras which is still in place today, but which is really a bathtub (pl. 28 *a*) [17]. It is worth noting that Griffith places the fortress to the south of the kom. This seems to suggest that at present the cultivated region north of the enclosure wall is also an archeological zone.

The topographical map of the *Description de l'Égypte*, planche 2, represents next to the village of " El-Khannàgéh " the kom with the designation " ruines romaines " whose surface is twice as long as it is large, unlike the area visible today, which is square. If the scale of the map is precise, the dimensions of the ruins are about 250 m from east to west, which corresponds roughly to the width from the Nile to the actual village; but the 550 m indicated from north to south are by far superior to the dimensions of the fortress including its surroundings. They might cover the area of an agglomeration whose rests Griffith still would have seen, and whose vestiges Weigall, some ten years later, also referred to as an ancient town.

The general map of Egypt and Nubia drawn up by Fr. Caillaud, which does not represent the modern village, is nevertheless interesting since it indicates the presence of ruins under the toponym whith the great historic denotation " Beleth Roum " [18], which means " the ruins of the Roman village ", or else the " Byzantine " or " Christian village ", or simply the " village of foreigners ".

Several maps of the XVIIIth century indicate for this place the name of " Girbe " [19] which seems to be copied from the very instructive travel account of F.L. Norden. He

14. F. L. Griffith, " Notes on a Tour in Upper Egypt ", *PSBA* XI 1889, p. 231 sq. and pl. III. For these inscriptions mentioned under Silsilis (!) see A. Bernand, *De Thèbes à Syène*, Paris, 1989, n° 174, p. 115 sq. and J. Bingen, « D'Hermonthis à Philae », *CdE* 129, 1990, p. 154.

15. Griffith mentions by error Hadrian as the founder of the temple (?) in the first inscription.

16. See M. ed-Din Mustafa, H. Jaritz, *op. cit.*, p. 22, fig. 1, in fact, the *principia*.

17. *Ibid.*, pl. II *a*.

18. Fr. Caillaud, *Voyage à Méroé, au fleuve Blanc, au dela de Fazoql, à Syouah et dans cinq autres oasis*. Dans les années 1819, 1820, 1821 et 1822, Paris, 1823, pl. LIV and LV.

19. E. Mentelle and P. G. Chaulaire, *Carte physique et politique de l'Égypte*, an 7 de la République (1798); Savary, *Lettres sur l'Égypte*, nouvelle édition, Paris, 1798, p. 1; C. S. Somini, *Voyage dans la Haute et Basse-Égypte*, 1798, vol. 4, pl. XXVIII (map taken from D'Anville); D'Anville, *Mémoires sur l'Égypte ancienne et moderne*, Paris, 1766, p. 218.2 : « Carte nommée dans le pays Missir ».

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

not only produces in his book a map with the Arabic spelling of " Girbe ", he also publishes some views of the site taken from his boat and a description dated December 18th, 1737 [20]. One of the two views is particularly eloquent for the west side of the fortress (Nile side). It represents towards the Nile a gateway with an arch (pl. 27 *b*). Constructed in irregular ashlar masonry, it is flanked by two columns or pillars set in the masonry and adjoined on one side by a projecting tower. On either side of this building stands the rests of a wall which is much damaged, but of the same type of masonry as the gate. Closer to the Nile, at the bottom right of the picture, one can see part of a wall set in the river bank. In the eyes of Norden, these ruins convey an impression of strangeness in the Egyptian landscape. As he says: " elles (the ruins) s'y distinguent par les grands blocs de pierres quarrés, qui d'ordinaire ne sont pas d'usage dans les bâtiments turcs ". *A priori*, the comparison with pharaonic architecture was excluded. It is possible that the other view reported by Norden represents the urban site which could have been adjoining to the fortress.

Even if the editor at the beginning of the first volume warns us against the imperfections of the traveller concerning the spelling of Arabic or foreign words, it is interesting to look at the Arabic way of spelling Girbe غربه which refers, as does the " Beleth Roum " of Caillaud, to a foreign occupation of the site.

A lexicographical research [21] on this toponym, whose transcription with vowels is not precise, elicited the following results.

— H. Wehr, *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart*, Wiesbaden, 1985: under غرب *ġaraba* one finds: غُربه *ġurba*, Abwesenheit vom Vaterland; Verbannung, Exil; Fremde.

— E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, London, 1877: under غرب *ġaraba* one finds: غُربه *ġurba*, The state, or condition, of a stranger or foreigner; being far, or distant, from one's home or native country.

— R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires Arabes*, Leiden, 1881: under غرب *ġaraba* one finds: غُربه *ġurba*, exil, ou encore le pluriel d'étranger غريب *ġarīb*.

According to these sources and accounts, it seems that with the appellation " Nag al-Hagar " the collective memory of the inhabitants of the region has lost the last indicator of a foreign, Roman or Byzantine presence. The remembrance of such a past does not exist any more among the actual villagers.

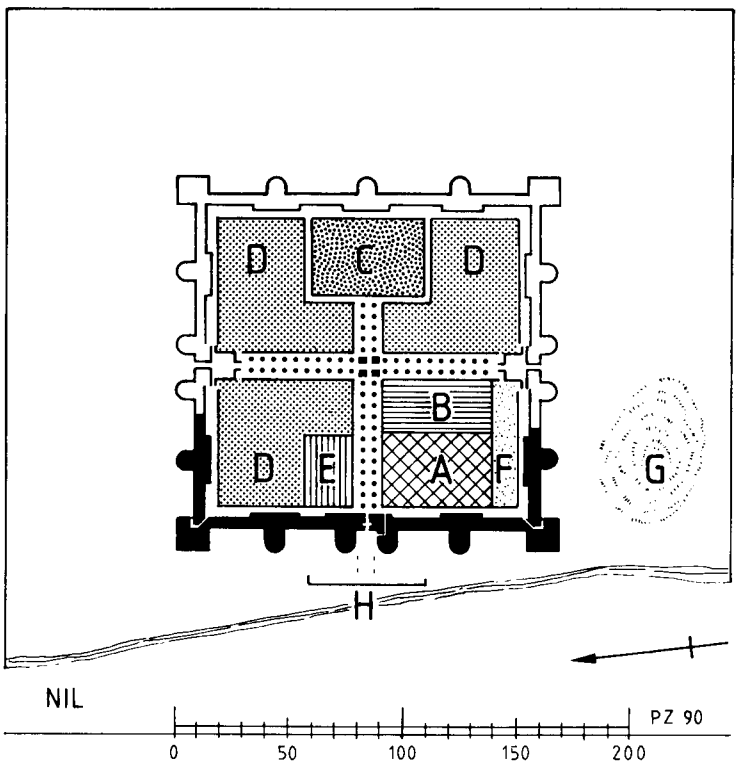
20. F. L. Norden, *Voyage d'Égypte et de Nubie*, nouvelle édition, Paris, 1795, for the description of Girbe vol. 2, p. 154, for the cartography vol. 3, pl. CXXVI, for the views vol. 3, pl. CXXVIII.

21. This study was undertaken by Mrs. F. Jaritz to whom we are very grateful.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

2. THE ENCLOSURE WALL

To judge from the vestiges and the traces observable in the ground in the non-excavated parts of the kom, the enclosure wall demarcates a quadrilateral of about 170 m on it's north-south axis and 155 m on the east-west axis. The corners were protected by square bastions. Three sides had gates: the west, north and south. These last two sides are not entirely excavated, but high concentrations of stone chips interrupting the trace of the mudbrick wall on the surface of the kom enable us to ensure the existence and exact position of these gates. Furthermore, the account of Griffith precisely corroborates our observations on the site [22]. On the east side a tower seems to stand against the enclosure wall instead of a gate.



A: Palatium. — B: Thermae. — C: Principia. — D: Barrakks. — E: Horrea. — F: Working area. — G: Heap of pottery. — H: Harbour.

Fig. 1. Hypothetical sketch of the Roman camp of Nag al-Hagar.

22. Griffith, *loc. cit.*

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

Halfway between the gates and the bastions at the corners, U-shaped towers stood in front of the rampart. Similar towers also flanked the gates.

The western part facing the Nile is nowadays excavated. It is preserved on an average up to the height of one course of the sandstone blocks which constituted the facing on both sides of the enclosure wall which was filled with rubble. The U-shaped towers and the corner bastions were constructed according to the same principle. The gateway where one or two courses more are preserved was entirely constructed in full masonry. The blocks seem to have been assembled in a dry stonework with plane-dressed joints and, astonishingly, they show no lifting marks nor pry or shift holes. Many, but not systematically all of them have a socket to receive a swallow tail cramp. The stones have been taken over and recut from a Ptolemaic or, more probably, Roman building as is attested by certain dispositions for the fastening and by little canals hollowed out in order to favor the distribution of the mortar [23] which belongs to another constructional logic than the present vestiges.

This front, built with big quadrangular blocks, contrasts with the other sides which were erected according to the same plan, but in mudbrick.

Several parallels, which we will discuss in more detail later on, can be drawn from the enclosure walls of four other military installations in Egypt [24]: the Roman fortress of Qasr Qarun [25], the Roman camp of Luxor [26], the Roman fortress at Elkab [27], and the second phase of the construction at Mons Claudianus [28].

23. J.-Cl. Golvin, J.-Cl. Goyon, *Les Bâtisseurs de Karnak*, Paris, 1987, see p. 112: « Évolution de la technique de pose des blocs de grès »; J.-Cl. Golvin, J. Laronde, « Étude des procédés de construction dans l'Égypte ancienne (I) », *ASAE* 68, 1982, p. 165-190 and pl.; J.-Cl. Golvin, J. Laronde, A. El-H. Maarouf, « Étude des procédés de construction dans l'Égypte ancienne (II) », *ASAE* 70, 1984-1985, p. 371-381 and pl. In this article the authors mention the probable disappearance of this technique in the Late Roman Empire. See precisely the way of construction of the gates of the enclosure wall of the camp of Luxor in M. El-Saghir, J.-Cl. Golvin, M. Reddé, S. Hegazy, G. Wagner, *Le Camp romain de Louqsor*, *MIFAO* 83, Cairo, 1986.

24. For the moment we have deliberately eliminated from these parallels the castrum of Nicopolis (R. Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries*, vol. 1, 1793) and the enclosure wall of Babylon which do present some analogies, but only from the typological and not from the constructional point of view.

25. J. Schwartz and H. Wild, *Qasr Qarun/Dionysias* 1948, Fouilles franco-suisses, *Rapport* I, Cairo, 1950; Schwartz, *Qasr Qarun/Dionysias* 1950, Fouilles franco-suisses, *Rapport* II, Cairo, 1969.

26. P. Lacau, « Inscriptions latines du temple de Louxor », *ASAE* 34, 1934, see the plan after p. 96; El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *loc. cit.*

27. J. Capart, « Troisième rapport sommaire sur les fouilles de la Fondation égyptologique Reine-Élisabeth à el-Kab », *ASAE* 46, 1947, p. 337-355, esp. p. 346-354; A. Badawi, « Notes architecturales », *ASAE* 46, 1947, p. 357-371; *id.* in Capart, *Fouilles de El-Kab*, p. 79-82.

28. T. Kraus, J. Röder, W. Müller-Wiener, « Mons Claudianus — Mons Porphyrites », *MDAIK* 22, 1967, p. 108-205. For the enclosure wall see p. 116-119. In our opinion this enclosure wall has the fewest common features with the Nag al-Hagar typology.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

2.1. THE GATES

2.1.1. **The western gate, porta praetoria.**

The gate facing the Nile, which is likely to have linked the harbour to the *principia* (which stood in the eastern part of the kom where many granite columns still lay on the ground), was already described in the first preliminary report by Mohi ed-Din Mustafa and H. Jaritz. One can see it, still with its arch, in the view of the enclosure wall seen from the Nile which Norden drew (pl. 27 *b*). It is interesting to point out the analogy of this gate with the one facing the Nile in Luxor, the most richly decorated and certainly the principal one of this camp (unfortunately, almost entirely covered by the modern street). The width of the passage is identical in both cases (3.8 m) [29]. Comparatively, the central passage of the triumphal arch of Diocletian at Philae, a commemorative monument, is noticeably less wide (3 m) [30].

2.1.2. **The northern and southern gates.**

On the north as well as on the south side the trace of the enclosure wall is interrupted by a spot of stanstone chips which also appears less intensely some meters inside. One can conclude that these were on either side of the fortress, observed already by Griffith, the two gates which were linked by a north-south axis which crossed the *via praetoria*, the *via principalis*. These double spots can be explained with the help of the plans of the secondary gates at Luxor [31], the gate of the fortress of Qasr Qarun [32], and the fortress of Elkab [33]. They certainly were gates with court and counter court of which only the uprights of the passages (door and counter door) were built in stone.

2.2. RAMPART

We already mentioned the singularity on the west side of the rampart of big quadrangular blocks opened in the middle by a monumental gate. Seen from the Nile, the entire exterior must have presented a very solemn aspect. The 4.30 m thickness of this side is slightly inferior to the section of the mudbrick walls of the other faces of the fortress which are 4.50 m wide [34]. As in the other Roman military positions mentioned,

29. El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, see the description of gate 1, p. 6 and for the importance of this gate, p. 25.

30. U. Monneret de Villars, *La Nubia Romana*, Rome, 1941, fig. 4-8.

31. El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, see the description of the gate p. 2, 4-6, p. 6-9, and on the typology, p. 26.

32. Schwartz, Wild, *Rapports* 1, *op. cit.*, p. 65-68; Schwartz, *Rapports* 2, *op. cit.*, plan 2.

33. Badawi, *op. cit.*, fig. 32, p. 364. This example has only received a preliminary study.

34. This measure is identical at Luxor; see El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

the enclosure wall, as well as the U-shaped towers [35] and the square bastions at the corners, were built in full masonry. According to a study by D. van Berchem, the importance of the section and the massive construction could correspond to an effort of the engineers of the Empire, which he dates at the end of the IIIrd century, to give greater resistance to the rampart [36].

2.2.1. **The corner bastions.**

At the two excavated bastions, the first course has often disappeared. In spite of this, it is easy to reestablish the outline of about 14 m × 14 m, close to the one at Luxor which is about 13 m × 13 m; to the one at Elkab of about 12.5 m × 12.5 m; and superior to the one at Qasr Qarun of about 9.5 m × 9.5 m.

At the north-western bastion one finds the trace of a postern opening towards the east. The corridor, which entered into the camp, can partially be followed thanks to an under-construction of burnt brick (for a secondary water conduit?) which turns at a right angle and then proceeds on the diagonal of the bastion towards the interior. The southern bastion is destroyed underneath the level of this arrangement.

This remarkable system can also be observed in two other places, the Roman camp of Luxor [37] and the fortress of Elkab [38].

2.2.2. **The U-shaped towers.**

Between the bastions and the gates stands an intermediary U-shaped tower which has the same dimensions as the identical type of towers flanking the gates. It projects itself 9 m to the exterior and is 6.5 m wide [39]. On the uncovered vestiges of these towers no postern could be observed such as one finds at Luxor.

The two mudbrick towers on the north and south ramparts are visible only at the point of junction with the enclosure wall.

2.2.3. **The access to the rampart.**

At each intermediary tower, whether built in stone or in mudbrick, one can observe five foundations respectively in stone and in brick standing against and parallel to the enclosure wall. These foundations are placed at regular intervals on either side of the axis of symmetry of the tower, the middle pile being centered on this axis.

35. See El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 9, the two hollow, U-shaped towers (A and B) flanking the pylon at Luxor seem to be an exception.

36. D. van Berchem, « Recherches sur la chronologie des enceintes », *Syria* XXXI, 1954, p. 265.

37. See especially the plan of Lacau, *loc. cit.*

38. Badawi, *op. cit.*, p. 360 sq.: the author describes one of the passages which was well preserved and whose measures were identical to ours, and he proposes an axonometrical section. His drawing of the passage on the interior of the enclosure wall (with the corner of the walls) is too vague as to allow a restitution of this missing part.

39. The dimensions of this type of tower are: at Luxor 9 m in projection and 6.2 m in width; at Qasr Qarun 5.8 × 5.8 m. Elkab, which is the smallest fortress of our examples, has no intermediary towers.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

North of the *porta praetoria* a foundation of the preceding type remains, still showing a first step followed by a space and by the masonry of the gate which has the same width as these piles standing against the enclosure wall. The distance between this foundation and the axis of the tower north of the gate corresponds exactly to half the length of a system of five foundation piles.

Obviously, we have here the bases of a staircase leading to the covered way upon the wall and it is certain, according to the length of the staircase north of the gate, that the five foundations are the piles of two symmetrical flights of stairs serving one central landing (see fig. 2).

On the plan of P. Lacau of the Roman enclosure wall of Luxor one can find the same layout of the access, but without the symmetrical flights [40]. Although a substructure exists in the north-west corner of the fortress, it is not possible to conclude the presence of stairways in the corners, as in the camp of Luxor.

At Elkab A. Badawi describes a well preserved system of staircases leading to the way upon the wall which could correspond to the one that existed at Nag al-Hagar, namely " steps going up on the back of a vault. " [41]

A sandstone block with two complete steps laying next to the west wall shows the width of the emmarchement of 35 cm for a rise of 14 cm and a slope of 23.6 ° which are very comfortable values for a military installation [42].

This data allows us to estimate the height of the landing at 3.40 m and the length of the stairway at 8.5 m.

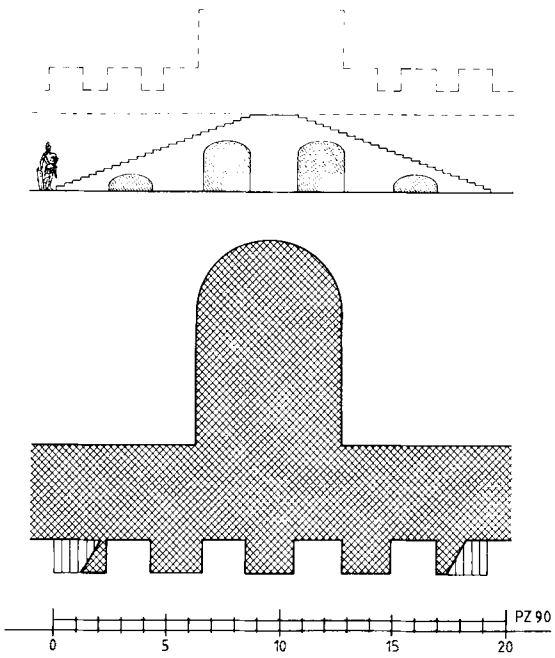


Fig. 2. Principle of the stairway.

This height is rather low in respect to the proportions of the monumental gate, but also in comparison with the height of 8.05 m proposed for a tower at Luxor [43]. One might suppose that another flight of stairs left from the landing level towards the interior and in the axis of the tower serving a way upon the wall at a higher altitude. The question of the access to a terrace on the tower which is likely to have existed, remains open.

40. Lacau, *loc. cit.*

41. Badawi, *op. cit.*, p. 367 sq.

42. In comparison, these values correspond in the contemporary construction to the slope of a perron and to the optimal relation of 2 rises + 1 emmarchement = 63 cm, which architects should apply.

43. El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 10, tower B : « le pylône, à partir de ce niveau, n'est plus entaillé, sauf à une hauteur de 8,05 m, qui doit marquer le sommet de la tour ».

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

3. EXTRA MUROS

With the exception of a zone north of the north-western bastion where the Egyptian Antiquities Organization has uncovered the remains of a church and some annex buildings (not surveyed), no excavation of any importance has been undertaken outside the enclosure wall.

3.1. A HARBOUR?

In front of the *porta praetoria*, the space between the two towers has been paved. Further down towards the Nile remain some big paving stones which belonged to a street which linked the gate to a harbour installation over a few meters. As we already pointed out in § 1, Norden obviously still observed remnants of this installation and represented a wall set in the river bank in his plate CXXVIII-3 (pl. 27 *b*).

3.2. A POTTER'S CENTER OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE

The heap of pottery south of the fortress (fig. 1) which has already been mentioned by Mohi ed-Din Mustafa and H. Jaritz as a site of production, represents, according to P. Ballet and M. Picon, a regional production center of ceramics (mainly group O) in late Roman and Byzantine Egypt [44].

3.3. A TOWN?

Up to now, only the account of Griffith and the illustration of the topographical map of the *Description de l'Égypte* which we mentioned in § 1 allow us to suppose the existence of a town in the cultivated fields north of the actual archeological zone.

4. INTRA MUROS

The quadrangular plan is divided by two streets, the *via praetoria*, linking the gate of the same name to the *principia*, set against the opposite wall, and a transversal street, the *via principalis*, which links the secondary gates. The fortress of Nag al-Hagar corresponds indeed to a well known plan of Roman camps [45]. Inside the quarters, a system of small lanes existed, one section of which is still visible. Along the enclosure wall went a *via sagularis*, permitting quick access to the staircases towards the top of the wall.

The excavated zone is divided into two parts to the north and the south of the *via praetoria*. Often nothing but the substructures remain of the buildings, or at best

44. P. Ballet, M. Picon, « Recherches sur l'origine de la céramique des Kellia », *CCE* 1, 1987, p. 45-47.

45. For the different types of Roman camps, see the article of R. Fellmann, « Der Diokletianspalast von Split im Rahmen der spätrömischen Militärarchitektur », *AntWelt* 2/1979, p. 48, fig. 5 and the examples.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

one or two courses above the floor level. The Roman constructions were realized in mudbrick which was frequently sandwiched between burnt bricks. The later buildings were constructed in stone or re-used burnt bricks.

Before giving a summary description of the structures which can still be observed inside the enclosure wall, let us mention the many architectural elements in stone laying on the site, namely: many capitals and columns, fragments of pharaonic architecture, one of which is inscribed with the cartuches of Vespasian, a fragment of a *tabula insata* (which served as a millstone in later times) in the name of Trajan (pl. 29 *a*), an octagonal stone (pl. 29 *b*) which might have been an altar [46] and a tympanum decorated with Coptic motifs (pl. 30 *a*).

4.1. THE VIA PRAETORIA

The partly preserved street is made of big stone slabs, none of which bears traces of intensive use. The 12 m width of the pavement is very important.

Upon close observation at 2.5 m on either side of the central axis one notices a running foundation of burnt bricks or its negative trace. This suggests a partition of this street according to the type street with colonnade, with a central, 5 m wide passage and lateral spaces of 3.5 m including the width of the columns. This layout has been observed many times in Roman camps, especially at Luxor [47] and at Qasr Qarun [48],

46. A similar piece in much better shape has been found re-used in the foundations of the Roman camp of Diocletian at Palmyra M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre* VIII, Warsaw, 1984, p. 80, pl. L.99.

47. Lacau (*op. cit.*, p. 18, and plan) says : « Baraize a reconnu également que chacune des deux rues était bordée d'une colonnade suivant la formule classique. Les colonnes ont une base en grès, mais le fût est formé de briques cuites à section triangulaire, chaque brique constituant un quart du fût et le tout était recouvert de plâtre simulant la pierre : ce sont des colonnes bon marché ». See also the plans (although certainly taken over from the article of Lacau) in : L. Habachi, " Clearance of the Area to the East of Luxor Temple ", *ASAE* 51, 1951, p. 447-468, pl. 1; Monneret de Villars, " The Imperial Cult at Luxor ", *Archeologia* (*or Miscellaneous Tracts to Antiquities*), The Society of Antiquaries of London 95, 1953, p. 85-105 and pl. 30-34; Badawi, *Coptic Art and Archeology*, 1978, p. 106-108; Schwaller de Lubicz, *Le Temple de l'homme* 2, rééd. 1977, pl. 25, 31, 88; J. G. Deckers, " Die Wandmalereien im Kaiserkultraum von Luxor ", *JDAI* 94, 1979, p. 600-652, spec. p. 603-605; Golvin, Reddé, " L'enceinte du camp militaire romain de Louqsor ", *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* III, 13. Internationaler Limeskongreß 1983, 1986, p. 598, reject on the basis of a " nettoyage rapide " of the presence of such a street with colonnade which would be on a Coptic or even Islamic level. In the collective work of El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, the authors refer to an article by Fellmann, " Le camp de Dioclétien à Palmyre et l'architecture militaire du Bas-Empire " *Mélanges Pierre Collart*, Lausanne, Paris, 1976, p. 182, to reject once again the hypothesis of a street with colonnade. It seems nevertheless difficult to contest the observations and the plan (although the scale is too small) of Lacau. The description which he gives of these columns refers to a typically Roman construction technique. This is also the opinion expressed orally by P. Grossmann.

48. Schwartz, *Rapports* 2, *op. cit.*, pl. 2 and p. 70-82, where the author interprets the alley with colonnade as an open variant of a basilical plan.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

but also at the camp of Diocletian at Palmyra [49], at the palace of Diocletian at Spalato [50] or at the last phase of the *castrum* of Drobeta (end of the IVth century) [51]. According to the similar example of the camp at Luxor and the similarity of the architecture of the enclosure walls and the streets with colonnade, we consider the presence of a tetrastyle at the intersection of the *via praetoria* and the *via principalis*.

4.2. SOUTH OF *VIA PRAETORIA*

This part of the site presents itself as a very homogeneous complex of rooms dating from the same period of construction as the enclosure wall. Soundings in certain rooms reveal an earlier level of occupation about one meter deeper. It is obvious that the site has been subject to later reshaping but the state of conservation of the excavated remains allows us to distinguish only a few structures.

4.2.2. **An earlier level of occupation.**

This level revealed by the soundings is characterized by a system of small, one brick large walls of crude construction. In two places, pottery bowls were set in the original ground compacted earth.

4.2.3. **The Roman vestiges.**

Among the vestiges belonging to the construction of the fortress, three building complexes can be distinguished which all seem to be closely linked with each other.

We recognize a huge residence of a similar typology as the imperial residences or the ones of military chiefs of the Late Roman Empire. Within what we call the palace or *palatium* [52] one can see next to the *via praetoria* a complex of public or formal rooms preceding the apartments with adjoining *thermae* and a working or service area.

49. K. Michałowski, *Palmyre*, Fouilles polonaises 1959, Warsaw, 1960. On plan 2 notice the foundation soles which leave the columns of the transversal porticos c, e, d, f on either side of the street. See in the article of Fellmann, " Der Diokletianpalast ", *op. cit.*, the plan of Gawlikowski (*Le Temple palmyrénien*, Warsaw, 1973). Fellmann specifies in his article, " Le camp de Dioclétien ", *loc. cit.*, " les colonnades qui se croisent sont des constructions antérieures au ' camp ' lui-même mais le tétrastyle qui marque leur intersection daterait de la tétrarchie ".

50. Fellmann, " Der Diokletianpalast. ", *op. cit.*, fig. 1-2; Don Frane Bulic, *Kaiser Diokletians Palast in Split*, Zagreb, 1929. See ill. 11, 27-32.

51. Fellmann, " Der Diokletianpalast ", *op. cit.*, Plans of R. Florescu (" Les phases de construction du castrum de Drobeta [Turnu Severin] ", *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms, Beihefte BonnJb* 19, 1967, p. 144-151).

52. We use this word according to the terminology existing in papyrological sources (*SPP* XX 230.2,4 et *P. Beatty Pan.* 1) although some specialists reserve this appellation for the imperial palaces of the capitals (N. Duval, " Existe-t-il une ' structure palatiale ' propre à l'antiquité tardive? ", *Le Système palatial en Orient, en Grèce, et à Rome*, Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, juin 1985; " Palais et cité dans la *pars orientis* ", XXVI *Corso di Cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantine*, Ravenna, May 1979).

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

The architectural vestiges are characterized by many elaborate details (namely the way of treating the corners of the rooms) and by the frequent use made of apses. This area was furthermore equipped with a sophisticated system for the supply of fresh water and was crossed underneath by a *cloaca*.

4.2.3.1. *The palace.*

The main entrance on *via praetoria* is still visible. To the west of the entrance, the façade was constructed with butresses; to the east it was linear. The double winged door [53] flanked by two pilasters opened on an entrance hall with an apse (pl. 30 *b*) whose floor was covered with thin rectangular slabs (about 4 cm) of conchiferous limestone, as will be found in the following rooms. In the center of the apse, one slab is curiously missing. Its absence might indicate the place of a pedestal.

This room opens to the west through a large passage to a long parallel vestibule which also ends with an apse flanked by two pilasters. This hall is bordered by half columns set against the length walls and opens to the east through a door which has been reduced at a later time (the uprights of the reshaped door stand on the original pavement) [54].

The space reached through this vestibule opens in three directions towards three halls or groups of halls which are independent of each other.

— To the north, one enters a square room shut in the middle of a construction of which no other accesses could be observed, but the mudbrick vestiges are obviously very disrupted and mingle with the natural ground. This room, which perhaps was not roofed over, had a grey concrete floor of which part of the under-construction in burnt bricks is preserved as well as some traces of the flooring. The four corners received a column of which one quarter was set into the masonry.

— To the east, pavement of the distribution space ends against a step of which a few millimeters still stand above the level of the paved floor. This step was flanked by uprights which received on their exterior a half column and on the interior bevelled edges of 45° (pl. 31 *a*). This majestic doorway was probably the entrance from the palace to the baths (which we will describe later on). A small parallel corridor must have been used as secondary access, namely towards the latrines, located at the articulation of the three parts of the palace.

— To the south, a double winged door opened towards the apartments (pl. 31 *b*). One entered through an apse into a courtyard with porticos which preserved only

53. In the passage of the door the pavement has preserved traces of the movement of a door wing and of a receptacle for a vertical bolt; the housings of the two sockets for the hinges are cut in the ground, in the western one we have been able to notice the presence of a piece of iron covering and reinforcing at its base the pivot of the wooden door.

54. These secondary upright probably hide the sockets of the two wings of the original door (sounding with a needle through the secondary masonry).

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

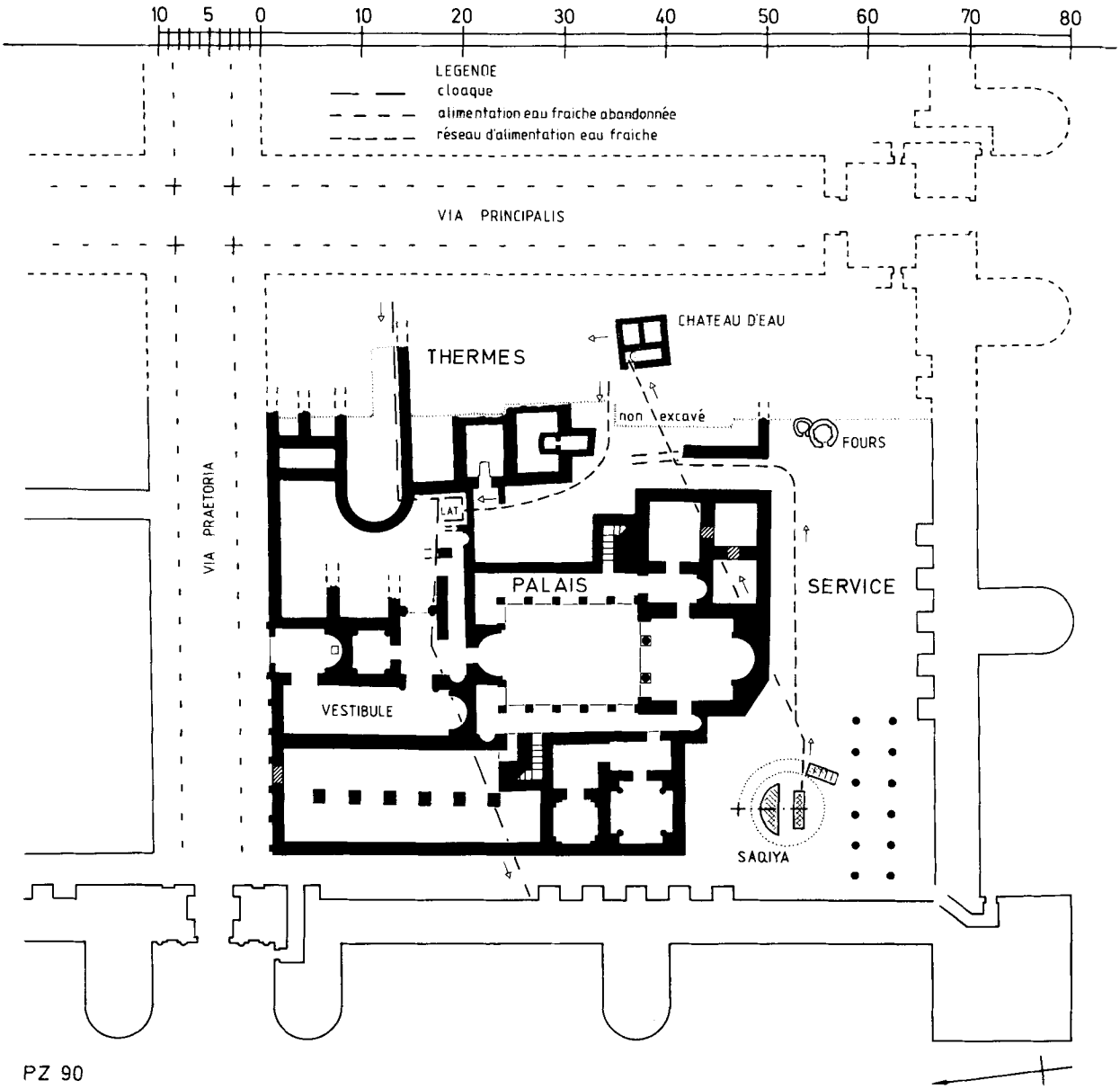


Fig. 3. South-west quarter of the fortress, the Roman vestiges.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

a few traces of pillars. The courtyard is paved on a large strip in the length axis, the shoulders received a floor in gray concrete which one also finds one step higher under the porticos.

At the end of the portico courtyard was the paved main room with an apse flanked by two pilasters at the back in the axis. Elevated by one step, it was completely open towards the courtyard on its north face where two columns divided the open space into a central passage and two smaller lateral ones. It is instructive for the restitution of this hall to compare it with the ensign chapel of the *principia* in the camp of Diocletian at Palmyra. One notices a similarity of the construction and of the space. As Gawlikowski points out, the use of this form was frequent in the palaces of the Late Roman Empire and halls with apses are characteristic of the official residences of this time [55].

On either side of this hall one could access to a corridor continuing the porticos.

The eastern corridor had a flooring of the concrete type. It is included in a quadrangular complex in which it opened to three rooms of which only the foundations remain today.

In the paved west corridor, a door with two wings gave access to a square space containing four paved rooms. The two western cul-de-sac rooms feature particular treatments of their corners. One room has received fold up pilasters; the other room had protruding corners with an angular column inserted by one quarter which gave it a cruciform plan.

On either side of the porticos, set respectively against the eastern and western dwelling wings, are two important piles of full masonry whose function is at first intriguing. On both sides it is possible to observe a small, well-defined platform with a grey concrete floor which goes forward into the homogeneous space of these foundation piles. They are, in fact, the foundations of staircases serving at least one superior level of palace apartments which is divided in the middle by the height of the reception hall and the courtyard.

At the western foundation of stairs we found traces of stucco of a passage at a right angle, linking the portico courtyard to a great space which was divided lengthwise by solid pillars, certainly to support a vaulted roof. The absence of flooring, the typology and the situation of these two long rooms covered by vaults suggest the space was a service area.

4.2.3.2. *The* thermae.

The partially excavated *thermae* area is much destroyed. It is probable that the *thermae* extended to the *via principalis* which is not so far from the limit of the excavated part. It was impossible to see remains of a *hypocaustus* or of heating *tubuli*.

55. Gawlikowski, *op. cit.*, p. 67 sq. and plans of. M. Baranski.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

From the already described access from the palace it is difficult to recognize the succession of spaces towards the main rooms of the bath.

The *cloaca* (which has probably been torn open in order to re-use the burnt bricks) shows few traces of the structures which existed upon the ground level. One can nevertheless recognize in a square diversion of the canalization with a pile of burnt bricks in the middle, the position of latrines whose floor made of limestone slabs is in part preserved (pl. 33 *a*).

To the north-east of the entry we have a fairly unclear area where dust of burnt bricks mingles with the earth. Here lays an individual granite bathtub [56] with a festoon decoration on one side.

It is still difficult to assign a precise function to each room of the bath. One can observe, however, that the only visible furnace (*praefurnium* or the water heating for individual bathtubs?) is located at the south of the three rooms belonging to the bath. This suggests a layout of rooms becoming less and less hot from the south to the north, the big hall with an apse being the *frigidarium* [57] (pl. 33 *b*). With the exception of this hall, whose foundations were made of stones assembled by mortar, the foundations of the *thermae* were executed in burnt bricks which since have been systematically taken away for re-use (this might explain the absence of traces of the *suspensura* and the *tubuli*). Comparing it with other baths [58], it is probable that this one also had direct access from the exterior, from *via praetoria* or *via principalis*.

4.2.3.3. *Water conveyance and draining.*

The *saqiya*, which has already been described by Mohi ed-Din Mustafa and H. Jaritz [59], dates from the Roman period. It stands at the origin of a masonry conduit in burnt bricks which, passing round the south-east corner of the palace (pl. 32 *a*), conveyed water to the only building which still rises above the kom. It has replaced, certainly for reasons of accessibility in case of problems, a first conduit which passed underneath the palace whose presence can be seen in negative in the mudbrick foundations of the apartments. The construction of the first conduit must also have been

56. Outside the enclosure wall the Egyptian Antiquities Organization has also found a granite bathtub with handles which was abandoned there when being re-used (pl. 6 *b*). A bathtub with a similar motif stands in the *caldarium* of a Greco-Roman bath at Karanis. See S. A. A. El-Nassery, G. Wagner, G. Castel, " Un grand bain gréco-romain à Karanis », *BIFAO* 76, 1976, p. 231-275, pl. XLIII. 31.

57. On this layout, see Vitruvius, *Book* V, chap. 10.

58. A. el-M. El-Khachab, " Les hammams du kôm Trougah ", *ASAE* 54, 1957, p. 117-140; Schwartz, Wild, *Rapports* 1, *op. cit.*, p. 51-62: Le bain public. For other examples of big Roman baths in Egypt, see: W. Kolataj, " Recherches architectoniques dans les thermes et le théâtre de kôm el-Dikka Alexandrie ", in *Das Römisch-Byzantinische Ägypten*, Akten des internationalen Symposions 1978, Trier, 1983, p. 187-194; A. El-M. El-Khashab, *Ptolemaic and Roman Baths of Kom el-Ahmar*, *ASAE-Suppl.* 10, 1949, p. 35-52 and pl. 2-3; F. M. Wasif, " A Graeco-Roman Bath at Tell Sersena ", *ASAE* 63, 1979, p. 177-182 and pl. 1-11.

59. *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

made of burnt bricks which have been taken away. It is probable that the preservation of the second one is due to its re-use as the foundation of a later building. The construction supplied by these canalizations was a *castellum aquae* whose well preserved walls enable us to understand its functioning (pl. 32 *b*). The water, which was conveyed to the west face, entered through an opening at the bottom of the building into a deep space where a *saqiya* lifted it up to pour it into the two tanks set high up in the construction. On the north side, two lead pipes go through the masonry and the thick hydraulic mortar of the corresponding reservoir. The complex being in a non-excavated area, it is not possible to have a precise idea about the distribution of the water, except for a canalisation of ceramic pipes fitting into each other which brought fresh water to the latrines (pl. 33 *a*) in order to insure a continuous sweeping of the canal. In a sounding, two parallel pipes of this type have been found which seem to make way towards a working area at the foot of the southern rampart.

An already mentioned *cloaca* coming from the east appears in the big hall (pl. 33 *b*) with an apse in the baths. Constructed in masonry of burnt bricks, it is covered by bricks layed out in a chevron pattern (pl. 34 *a*). It is 0.45 m wide and 0.50 m high and heads towards the western enclosure wall into what seems to be underground tanks (collectors?) of which no continuation could have been observed until now.

4.2.3.4. *A working area.*

The space between the palace, the *thermae* and the southern rampart, although much disrupted by secondary constructions, was occupied by a working area of which kilns with an important layer of ashes and trash are preserved. At the south-west corner of the fortress, bases of a double colonnade seem to belong to a covered building of the Roman period, perhaps in connection with the use of the *saqiya*.

4.2.4. **The later vestiges.**

In the Roman working area described above, one can observe two phases of subsequent constructions.

The first phase located at the south-west corner of the enclosure wall is illustrated by a church described by Mohi ed-Din Mustafa and H. Jaritz [60] which profited from existing columns and the site against the wall. To this period belong perhaps also some quadrangular rooms, one of which is paved and contains a slab inscribed with a christogram flanked by an A and an ω written upside down, as well as another square hammered slab (stelae?).

These vestiges are crossed by several transversal walls which belong to a later phase of construction which can be associated with the erection of a second and bigger church whose preserved foundations remind one of the churches at Luxor Temple: the one in front of the pylon and the one to the south-west which P. Grossmann dates to the

60. El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 28 and fig. 3.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

VIth-VIIth century A.D [61]. Behind this church one finds a well preserved baptistry south of the Roman kilns.

Outside this area there are many traces of later buildings set against the west enclosure wall. At the north-west corner of the palace the foundations of a construction in stone masonry stand above the Roman structures. It contained a room to which a staircase was adjoined. A closed space with a circular millstone and an alignment of blocks layed out in a circular arc is located next to these last vestiges.

4.3. NORTH OF *VIA PRAETORIA*

Compared to the area at the south, the remains uncovered north of the street form a more heterogeneous complex. The ground level, on which are built the Roman and later constructions, is higher; wide spaces reveal no information. No occupation earlier to the foundation of the camp can be noticed.

4.3.1. **The Roman vestiges.**

Among the preserved remains one can distinguish three types of buildings: long spaces which might be identified as *horrea*, housing blocks of the *insulae* type and an arrangement of paved spaces bordered by walls for which no explanation can be found for the time being. This very lacunary area was served by a system of small secondary lanes of which one portion perpendicular to the *via praetoria* still exists to the east of the *horrea*.

4.3.1.1. *Horrea?*

The vestiges thus designed consist of two groups platforms standing higher than the street level. The floor, which is preserved in certain places, is made of mortar with pounded terracotta and small inlaid gravel, of the *opus insignum* type (pl. 34 *b*). At the bottom of the walls, which are destroyed today, this flooring does not go up again; one finds instead a linear and clear finishing which excludes the possibility of a water-tight execution. The oblong shape of these halls flanked by thick walls suggests long naves for the stockage of goods close to the principal gate and the harbour installation. The preserved foundations of the space between these constructions and the *via praetoria* indicate a ground level roughly equivalent to the street level.

4.3.1.2. *The* insulae.

It is difficult to give an explanation of the plans of two nearly square houses (pl. 25) which have undergone many transformations in Coptic times. The construction technique

61. Grossmann, " Eine vergessene frühchristliche Kirche beim Luxor Tempel ", *MDAIK* 29, 1973, p. 167-181.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

is identical to the one of the palace : upon mudbrick foundations came walls sandwiching a core of mudbricks between burnt brick masonry at the outside.

4.3.1.3. *The paved spaces.*

These spaces, in the north-west part of the excavated area, are floored with a rather crude pavement upon an under-construction in burnt bricks. They seem to be closed by walls from the Roman period and to belong to a complex of buildings.

4.3.2. **The later vestiges.**

In this part of the site, the only trace of a later building is the plan of a construction with a staircase immediately next to the *porta praetoria.* Astonishingly, it employs the same technique of sandwich walls as the Roman buildings close by, but with re-used materials, namely burnt bricks. Other evidences of the occupation of the site during a later period consist only of the re-use and the reshaping of the Roman structures probably used as dwellings. In these transformations one notices many elements of Roman construction, especially a huge quantity of burnt bricks in the shape of a quarter of a column [62].

5. THE TREASURE OF COINS

As already mentioned in the first lines of this article, among the discoveries in the excavation of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization of Aswan was a load of 77 coins found during the 1985-1986 season while clearing the U-shaped tower of the rampart north of the *porta praetoria.*

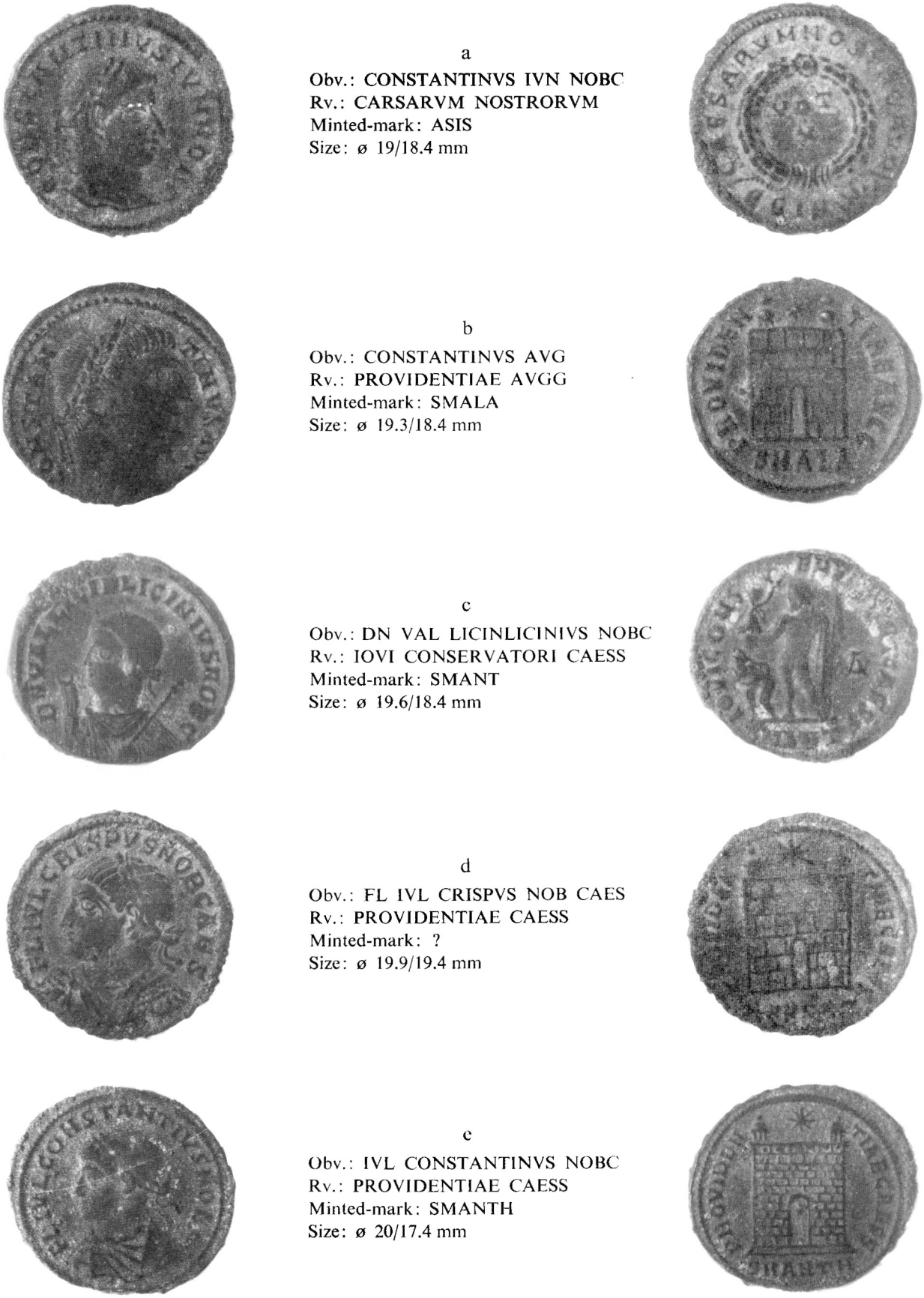
The load lay underneath a stone of the outer circular south face, 90 cm deeper than the level of the preserved vestiges. The localization of this discovery is however strange and we think that the treasure could have been hidden at this place only after the breaking up of the enclosure wall, that is to say in a state of preservation identical to the actual one.

The coins are oxidized to different degrees and require a specialized cleaning for an exhaustive study of this important load. Many of them are nevertheless still readable and they all have been struck at the beginning of the IVth century A.D.

We have been able to identify 14 coins in the name of *Constantinus*, 2 in the name of *Constantius*, 4 in the name of *Licinius* and 2 in the name of *Crispius.* The rest, which are much too oxidized to be read, also seem to belong to the period of *Constantinus.* As far as we can see, the coins have been minted in different places of the Roman Empire: Alexandria, Antioch, Siscia.

62. This indicates that there was a great profusion of brick columns, speaking in favor of the thesis of a street with colonnade mentioned in § 4.1.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net



a
Obv.: CONSTANTINVS IVN NOBC
Rv.: CARSARVM NOSTRORVM
Minted-mark: ASIS
Size: ø 19/18.4 mm

b
Obv.: CONSTANTINVS AVG
Rv.: PROVIDENTIAE AVGG
Minted-mark: SMALA
Size: ø 19.3/18.4 mm

c
Obv.: DN VAL LICINLICINIVS NOBC
Rv.: IOVI CONSERVATORI CAESS
Minted-mark: SMANT
Size: ø 19.6/18.4 mm

d
Obv.: FL IVL CRISPVS NOB CAES
Rv.: PROVIDENTIAE CAESS
Minted-mark: ?
Size: ø 19.9/19.4 mm

e
Obv.: IVL CONSTANTINVS NOBC
Rv.: PROVIDENTIAE CAESS
Minted-mark: SMANTH
Size: ø 20/17.4 mm

Fig. 4. Selected coins of the Nag al-Hagar treasure. (Éch. 2/1 env.)

© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

6. THE DATING

Up to now, only the treasure of coins described under the preceding point gives a tangible indication of dating the site and allows us to conclude that the fortress was occupied during the IVth century.

It is, however, possible to precise the date of construction through observation on the architectural vestiges.

6.1. THE ARCHITECTURE

We have already noticed that the typology of the enclosure wall of Nag al-Hagar fits clearly into a number of Roman camps in Egypt. It presents, in particular, absolutely identical architectural features as two other examples preserved in the Thebaid : the camp of Luxor and the fortress of Elkab.

The four identified parallels are all constructions of the Late Roman Empire with the following datings:

— Qasr Qarun, end of the IIIrd century [63];

— Mons Claudianus, extension and new enclosure wall, end of the IIIrd, beginning of the IVth century [64];

— Luxor, end of year 301 beginning of 302, date of the foundation of the camp [65];

— Elkab, no dating. According to the similarity of the corner bastions with Luxor and the dimensions of small square forts in the desert of Syria, one can date this place to the period of the Tetrarchy [66]. This dating could be confirmed by the discovery in the fortress of Elkab of a treasure of identical coins as the ones from Nag al-Hagar [67].

Due to the many similarities which Nag al-Hagar presents with these four positions, we propose without hesitation to date this fortress from the time of Diocletian.

The vestiges of the palace are, as far as we know, unique in Egypt, although this type of building is mentioned, quite rarely of course, in the papyrological sources of the Late Roman Empire [68]. Thus, one finds in *P. Beatty Panop.* 1 an order to prepare

63. Schwartz, *Rapports* 2, *op. cit.*, p. 1 sq.

64. Kraus, Röder, Müller-Wiener, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

65. El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

66. A. Poidebard, *La Trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie. Le limes de Trajan à la conquête arabe*, Paris, 1934.

67. J. Bingen, " Le trésor n° 2 de el-Kab ", *CdE* 45-46, 1948, p. 162-177; in Capart, *op. cit.*, " Les trouvailles monétaires ", p. 103-105, see ' le trésor n° 2 '. Bingen gives with the study of this treasure a *terminus post quem* for the Roman army abandonment of the fortress: [illegible] 380. Although part of the coins of Nag al-Hagar still requires a cleaning, the best preserved pieces of this treasure could indicate roughly the same period of abandonment of this place.

68. A. Lukaszewicz, *Les Édifices publics dans l'Égypte romaine*, Warsaw, 1986, p. 52.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

an imperial residence (*palatium*) in the Tripheion of Panopolis for Diocletian during his southward journey on the Nile in 298 [69].

A. Lukaszewicz suggests that the order concerned rather the fitting up and furnishing of a sufficiently vast building [70], as the apartments of the Roman representative in this town must have been too modest to receive the emperor. This author also points out another papyrus (*SPP* XX 230.2,4) from the IVth century which contains an account of expenses for the construction of a *palatium*. This unfortunately very lacunary account mentions expenses for columns (l. 1), for mudbricks for the walls (l. 3), for burnt bricks for the boiler room of the baths of the gymnasium (l. 6) and a place to strike money (l. 9).

One can find many points of comparison between the palace at Nag al-Hagar and important residences of the Late Roman Empire in other places, such as the palace of the *Dux of Ripae* at Dura-Europos (Syria) and the villa at Konz (Germany) which is supposed to have been the summer palace of Constantin or a residence of the imperial family [71].

One notices in these two parallels that the apartments are distributed in two wings on either side of the reception hall with an apse. Adjoining the apartments one always finds a complex of *thermae*.

Like the magnificent example of the retirement residence of Diocletian at Spalato, these palaces open up on a gallery which dominates the landscape. As the palace at Nag al-Hagar is located inside the enclosure wall of the fortress, the architects have adopted a more classical solution for this situation without view: the courtyard with porticos.

Finally, how could we not associate in a more imaginary sphere the setting of the account of Dorotheos (*P. Bodmer* XXIX) whom D. van Berchem identified in a recent article as a soldier of the guard of Diocletian and who moves about in a palace with many halls, a courtyard with portico preceded by an entrance with a *vestibulum* [72].

The text and the comments of the editors of the papyrus [73] permit one to specify certain parallels between the account and the vestiges.

The setting of the poem is a palace complex with several distinct areas, namely a much protected and private " divine " palace including the upper floors (v. 60) which is preceded by a courtyard with portico. Between this area where the emperor lives

69. T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library*, Dublin, 1964, p. 34 sq.

70. Lukaszewicz, *loc. cit.*

71. A.G. Mckay, *Römische Häuser, Villen und Paläste*, 1980: Dura-Europos, p. 161 sq. and ill. 147; Konz (*Contionacum*), p. 190 and ill. 170. For the same style of typology though much simpler, see also the villa of a rich farmer in Kent (middle of the IVth century) at Lullingstone, p. 213 sq. and ill. 194-196 (this example would point in the direction of the thesis of Duval, *op. cit.*, about the spreading and the re-use of palace architecture in domestic architecture).

72. Van Berchem, " Des soldats chrétiens dans la garde impériale, observations sur le texte de la vision de Dorothéos », *StudClas* XXIV, 1986, p. 155-163.

73. A. Hurst, O. Reverdin, J. Rudhardt, *Papyrus Bodmer* XXIX, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny - Genève, 1984.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

and the exterior of the palace lays a more public and frequent zone. It is in this zone that Dorotheos, after some omission, receives the order to stay in a *vestibulum* without penetrating to the interior of the " divine " palace, but also without leaving the palace complex:

v. 55 *J'avais mal rempli ma fonction redoutable : les vieillards s'écartèrent*
v. 56 *Et me donnèrent l'ordre de me poster dans le vestibule, de ne pas pénétrer*
v. 57 *À l'intérieur et de ne pas me laisser écarter du palais vers l'extérieur,*
v. 58 *Mais de surveiller les portes et l'enclos de la cour.*

Let us mention also that the palace contained an ensign deposit which took the place of a prison.

The editors suggest that the palace described refers to a real model and, for chronological reasons, propose the palace of Nicomedia.

Without coming to quick conclusions, we point to the geographic proximity between the palace of Nag al-Hagar and Nag Hammadi, the place of discovery of the codex including the *Vision of Dorotheos* which is dated at the end of the IVth or the beginning of the Vth century [74].

6.2. THE CERAMICS

Through the ceramics on the surface one can observe an occupation of the site concentrated between the IVth and the VIth centuries with possibly a slight extension into the VIIth century, according to a type of pottery (in small quantity) which lasts until this period [75]. No observations have been made up to now on the material from the soundings revealing a level prior to the fortress.

6.3. A LEVEL PRIOR TO THE FORTRESS

A Roman presence seems to have existed prior to the foundation of the fortress if one considers the inscribed blocks mentioned in § 4 as well as the visible traces in the deeper soundings.

7. IDENTIFICATION

What was the name of this fortress, which troop did it accommodate, has the palace really been an imperial residence in the time of Diocletian?

If one follows the interpretation of van Berchem, the *praeses* of the Thebaid, who held simoultaneously civil and military power, resided in Upper Thebaid between the highest concentration of his troops and stood under the protection of a detachment of

74. *Ibid.*, Appendice of R. Kasser and G. Cavallo, " Description et datation du codex des visions ", p. 116.

75. According to information kindly given by Mrs. P. Ballet.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

the *Legio III Diocletiana* [76]. He goes on stating that the residence of the *praeses* in Upper Thebaid was also the one of Diocletian during his journey in this area at the end of year 298, and he suggests the enigmatic place mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* called *Praesentia* (place which has seen the presence of the emperor) [77]. According to *P. Rainer* (*SPP* XX, 84) and the suggestion of U. Wilken in his study of the text that *Praesentia* is close to *Ombos* [78], van Berchem concludes that the two positions are identical.

Considering the extremely singular and luxurious vestiges at Nag al-Hagar, we propose to modify slightly this still judicious interpretation and to suppose that this site, about 10 km south of *Ombos*, was the imperial residence of Diocletian in Upper Thebaid [79].

When commenting on the mention of the supplies sent to the troops in Upper Egypt in *P. Rainer* (*SPP* XX, 84, l. III,4) — Ὄμβους ἤτοι Πραισέντεια —, U. Wilken said that *Praesentia* and *Ombos* were but one place. A few lines further he balanced his statement considering other supply deliveries to military positions in Upper Thebaid and to *Praesentia*, as well as the *Notitia Dignitatum* which mentions two separate places, and he concludes that *Praesentia* was probably close to *Ombos*.

The same interpretation is also found in the *Dizionario Dei Nomi Geografici E Topografici Dell' Egitto Greco Romano* by A. Calderini which locates *Praesentia*, still with the same sources, as a site in Upper Egypt close to *Ombos* [80].

76. Van Berchem, " L'occupation militaire de la Haute-Égypte sous Dioclétien ", *Roman Frontier Studies*, 1967, p. 123-127.

77. *Notitia Dignitatum Or.*, éd. Böcking 1839-1853, ch. 28, 10: *Legio Tertia Diocletiana Praesentia*, p. 74 sq. We mention, by the way, the comment of Böcking on the name of Praesentia (p. 321 sq.), which he does not know but which he supposes being the " *Thebaico Praesidio* " of Strabon (XVII, p. 813), of Agatharchide and of Ptolemy (IV. 5) who locates this place close to " Tarut-Esshérif " which would be in Egyptian " Terôt ", in Arabic " Darouah " or " Darouth-Scarban " and which would be located on the bank of Quoussieh. His reference to " *L'Égypte sous les Pharaons* " of Champollion takes us to " Têrot " in Middle Egypt at the embranchment of the Bahr Yussef, which brings us closer to Hermopolis (also according to the dates of the sources of Böcking). As far as the mention of the *Mémoires de D'Anville* are concerned, they send us to the Sudanese coast at the port of " Dohro " (*sic*). In all these cases one can notice the coincidence of the toponyms with the locality 5 km north of Nag al-Hagar, Darouah. Let us point out here that although much controversy subsists on the chronology of this period, it is admitted since the study of van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantinienne*, Paris, 1952, that the *Notitia Dignitatum*, composed at the end of the IVth and the beginning of the Vth century, reflects, in general for Orient and Egypt, the state of the armed forces under the Tetrarchy.

78. U. Wilken, *APF* 7, Berlin, 1924, p. 105.

79. According to an observation made by van Berchem in a letter, one should notice that the *Notitia Dignitatum* presents *Ombos* and *Praesentia* one after the other, the line coming in between being an addition reflecting the time of the Second Flavian Dynasty.

80. For *Ombos*, see: vol. 3, fasc. 1, Milan, 1978, p. 386. For *Praesentia*, see: vol. 4, fasc. 2, Milan, 1984, p. 189.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

Concerning l. III,4 of the above-mentioned papyrus, we notice that ἤτοι can be understood as meaning a precision or a particularity of *Praesentia* with *regard* to *Ombos* [81] — " *Ombos*, more specifically *Praesentia* ". This allows us to imagine that *Praesentia*, though distant from *Ombos*, was administratively attached to it.

Another example of a camp of the Late Roman Empire called according to a more important town close by is pointed out by S. Sauneron [82]: the camp of *Toeto-Psinaula* in the panopolite nome. He identifies *Toeto* as being the modern town of Tahta and *Psinaula* as the ancient name of Chandavil. As the two towns are separated by about 17 km, he proposes that the Roman camp was located at equal distance from both of them. He explains the name referring to the two distinct places, not by the absence of localities in the immediate surroundings of the military post, but by the fact that the administrative authorities on whom the camp depended were probably established in two cities.

As it seems probable now that Nag al-Hagar is *Praesentia*, we still have to find out when this place was constructed. It is in fact generally admitted that Diocletian made a journey to Upper Egypt at the end of year 298 [83], but it must be noted that *Praesentia* appears neither in *P. Beatty Panop.* 1 dated September 298, nor in *P. Beatty Panop.* 2 dated from January and February 300. This last text mentions troops of the *Legio III Diocletiana* established at Syene with the governor of Thebaid as well as in the panopolite nome, but the places occupied, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum* by the same legion, Thebes, *Ombos* and *Praesentia*, are not referred to. From the last study of the camp at Luxor we know that it is normal that this place is absent from the panopolite registers since it was only founded during the last weeks of the year 301 [84]. Despite the doubt remaining on the localization of the residence of the governor of Thebaid, the *praeses*, for which *Ombos* can not be excluded *a priori,* it seems that the existence of the fortress of Nag al-Hagar is not due to the imperial visit of the year 298. This evidence thus raises the question about the date and the reason of the foundation of *Praesentia.*

As the recent publication of the Roman camp at Luxor suggests, Diocletian, who published an edict against the Manicheens in Alexandria on March 31st, 302, made perhaps a second journey to Upper Egypt during which he might have attended the foundation of the Luxor camp [85]. He thus might have resided in his *palatium* [86] prepared

81. Precision kindly communicated orally by Mr. G. Wagner.

82. S. Sauneron, *Villes et légendes d'Égypte*, *BdE* 90, Cairo, 1981, p. 101-107. The name of the camp whose precise location has still to be discovered is known through administrative papyri.

83. On this campaign of Diocletian see also: A. K. Bowman, " The Military Occupation of Upper Egypt in the Reign of Diocletian ", *BASP* 15/16, 1978, p. 26-38. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* 284-602, Oxford, 1964, p. 38-53.

84. El-Saghir, Golvin, Reddé, Hegazy, Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 21 and p. 29 and see T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, Cambridge Mass., 1982, p. 55.

86. Perhaps the *palatium* the construction expenses of which have been noted in *SPP* 230.2,4 mentioned in § 5.1.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

at Nag al-Hagar since his first visit to Egypt. Through the presence of the Emperor this place took the highly symbolic name *Praesentia*.

This fortress, probably the residence of the *praeses* by this time, was one of the posts for the redistribution of the armed forces during the withdrawal from the Dodecaschoenus and the establishment of the frontier at Philae. It seems likely that the *Papyrus Rainer* (*SPP* XX, 84) [87] and the *Notitia Dignitatum* reflect this state of affairs.

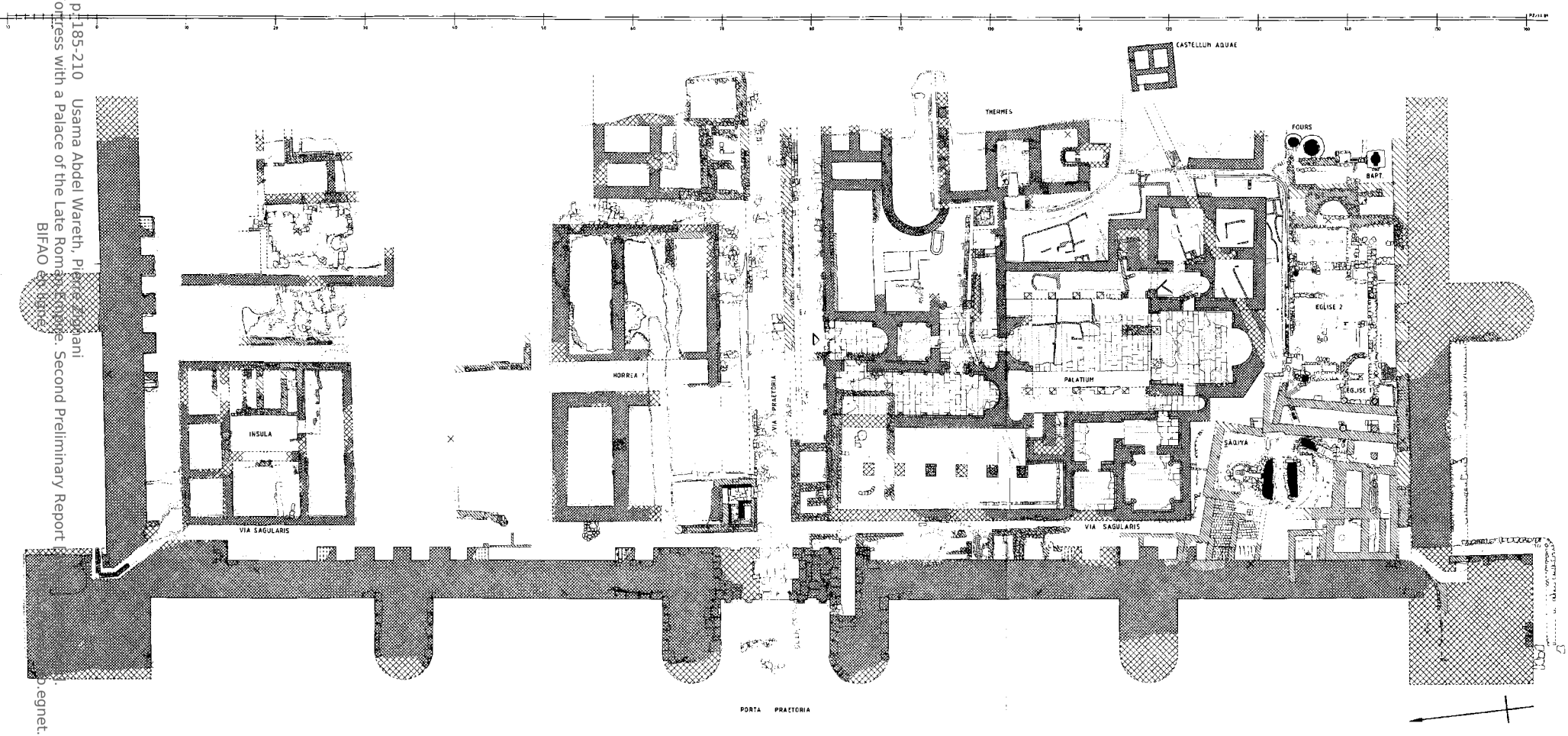
87. This papyrus is dated later than *P. Beatty Panop.* 2, see van Berchem, " L'occupation ", *op. cit.*, p. 126.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

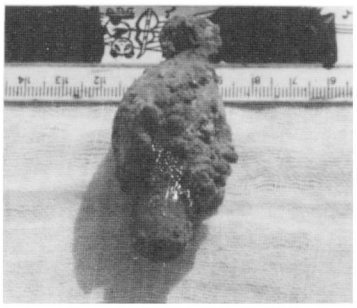
BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report
© IFAO 2026
BIFAO en ligne
www.ifao.egnet.net

Tetrarchic period in crossed hatching.

Coptic period in single hatching.



1742



1743

1742/1743/1744:
pieces of miniatures.

1752: pottery with long neck.

1753: pottery for pipe.

© Schweizerisches Institut für ägyptische Bauforschung und Altertumskunde in Kairo, for all the plates.

© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

Pl. 24 Selected examples of discovered objects. [Sq.: 1/2]

1740: pottery seal.

1749/1750/1751: circular pottery seals.

1749

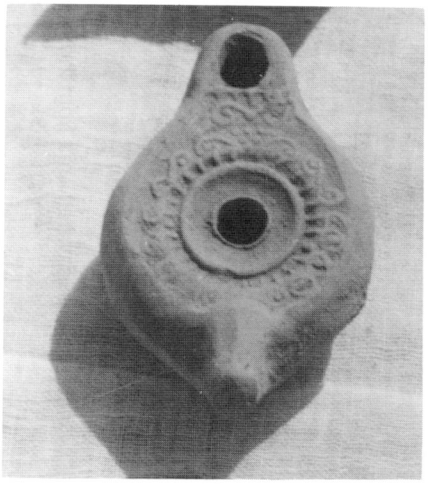
1750

1751

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

1735

1736



1756

1735/1736/1756-1/1756-2: pottery oil lamps.

1746

1739: upper part of an oil lamp.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

View of the excavated area from the north rampart.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

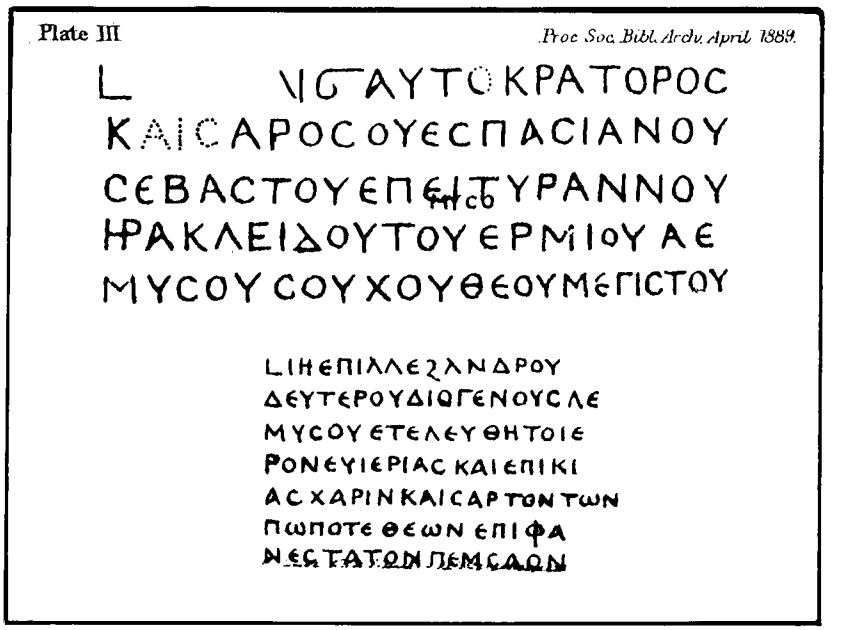


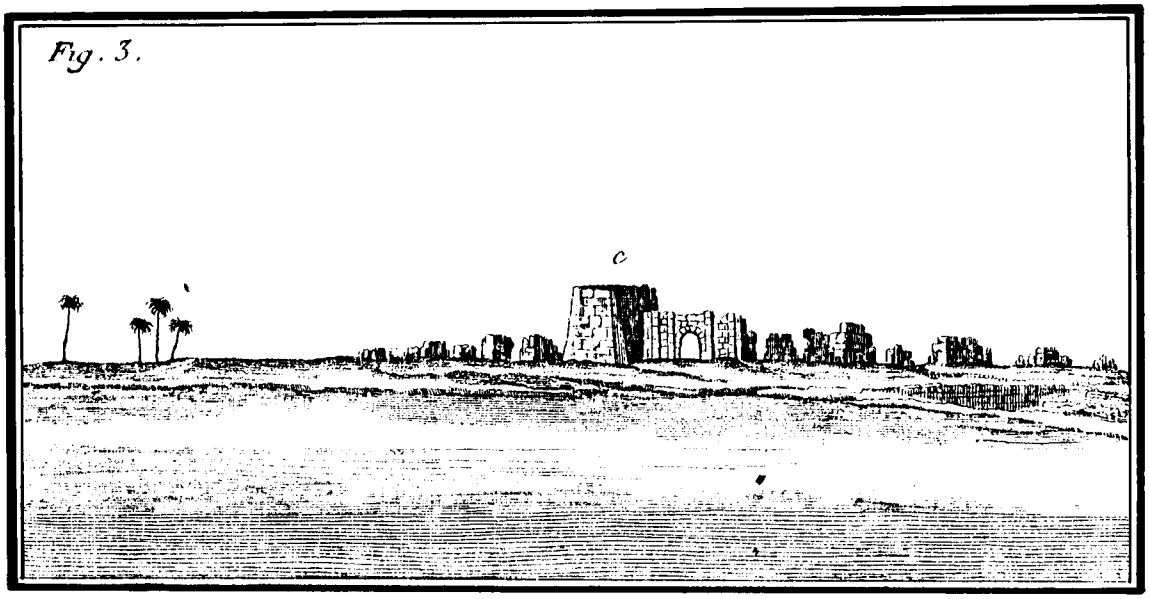
Plate III

Proc Soc Bibl Archy April 1889

L \IC ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΟC
ΚΑΙCΑΡΟCΟΥΕCΠΑCΙΑΝΟΥ
CΕΒΑCΤΟΥΕΠΕΙΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΥ
ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΔΟΥΤΟΥΕΡΜΙΟΥΑΕ
ΜΥCΟΥCΟΥΧΟΥΘΕΟΥΜΕΓΙCΤΟΥ

ΛΙΗΕΠΙΛΛΕϹΛΝΔΡΟΥ
ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΥΔΙΟΓΕΝΟΥCΛΕ
ΜΥCΟΥΕΤΕΛΕΥΘΗΤΟΙΕ
ΡΟΝΕΥΙΕΡΙΑCΚΑΙΕΠΙΚΙ
ΑCΧΑΡΙΝΚΑΙCΑΡΤΩΝΤΩΝ
ΠΩΠΟΤΕΘΕΩΝΕΠΙΦΑ
ΝΕCΤΑΤΩΝΠΕΜCΑΩΝ

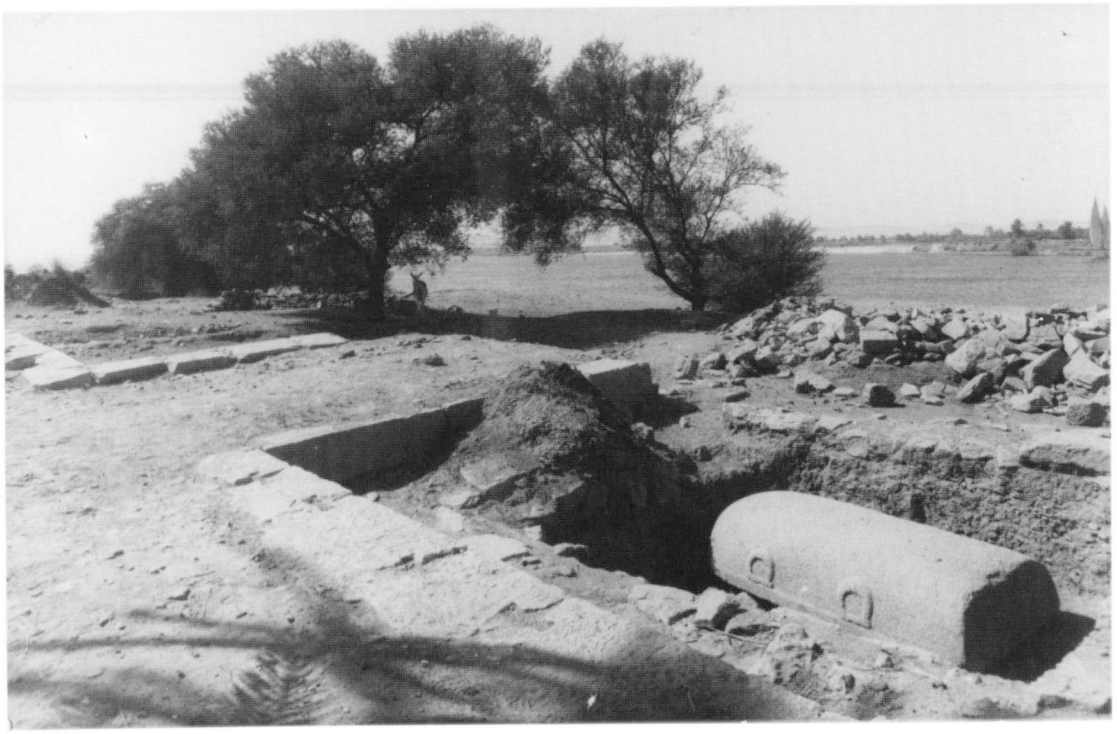
a. Greek inscriptions copied by F.L. Griffith (*PSBA* 11).



b. Drawing of F.L. Norden (vol. 3): « Girbe, vu d'un autre côté, ruines antiques ».

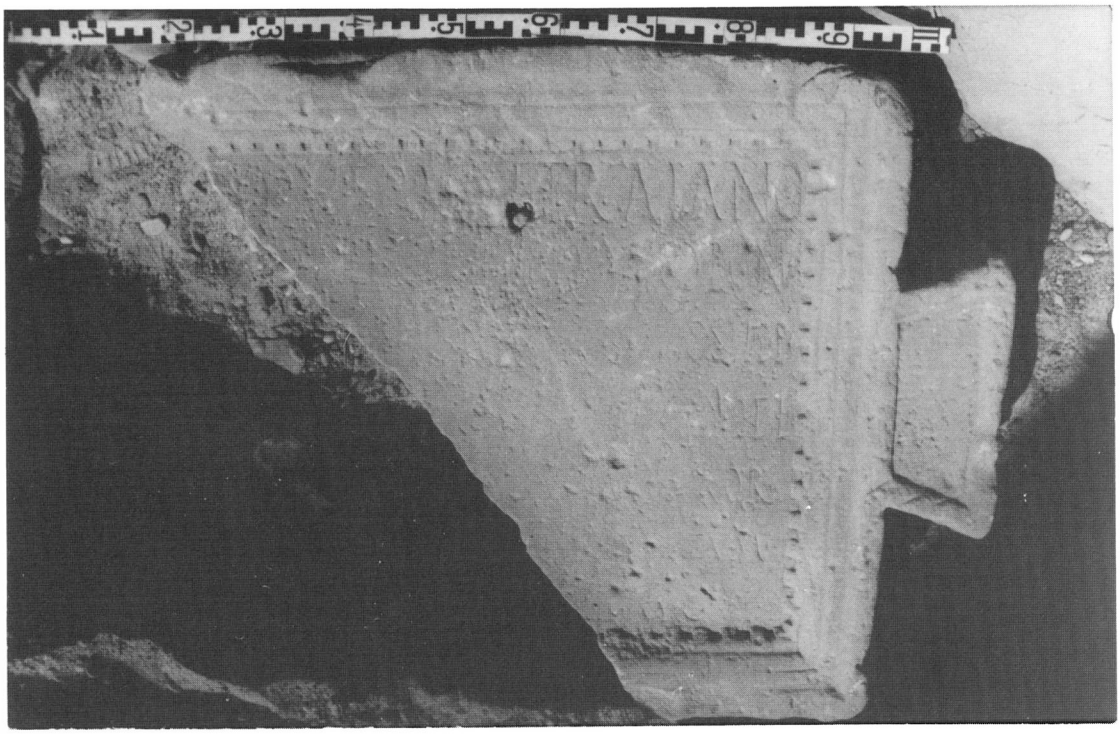
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

a. Red granite bathtub with festoons.



b. Red granite bathtub with handles.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net



a. *Tabula insata* inscribed in the name of Trajan.

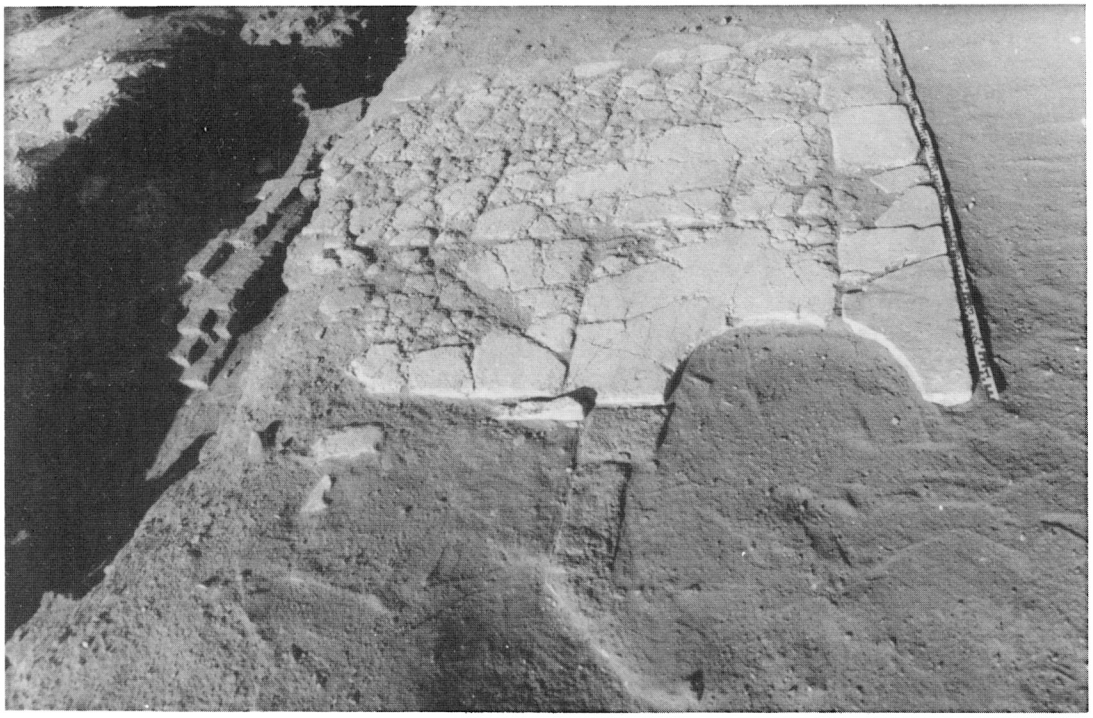
b. Polygonal altar (?).

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

a. Coptic tympanum.

b. Entry of the *palatium*.

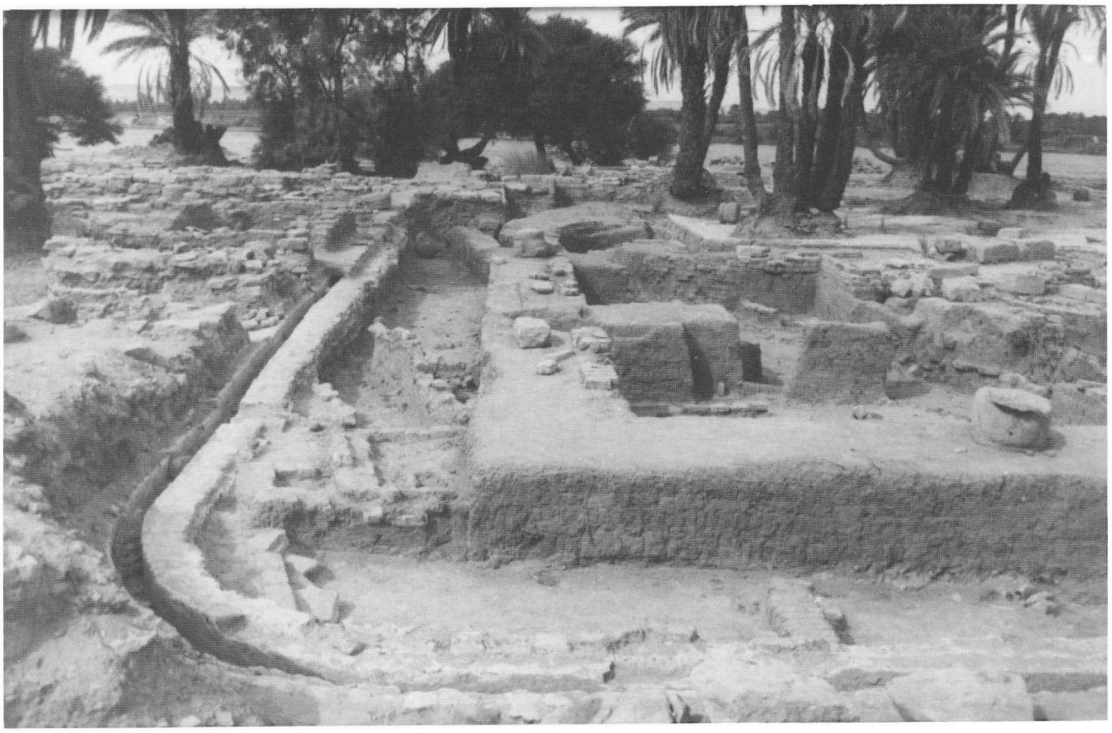
BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net



a. Detail of the passage towards the *thermae*.

b. View entering the courtyard with portico towards the main hall of the *palatium*.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

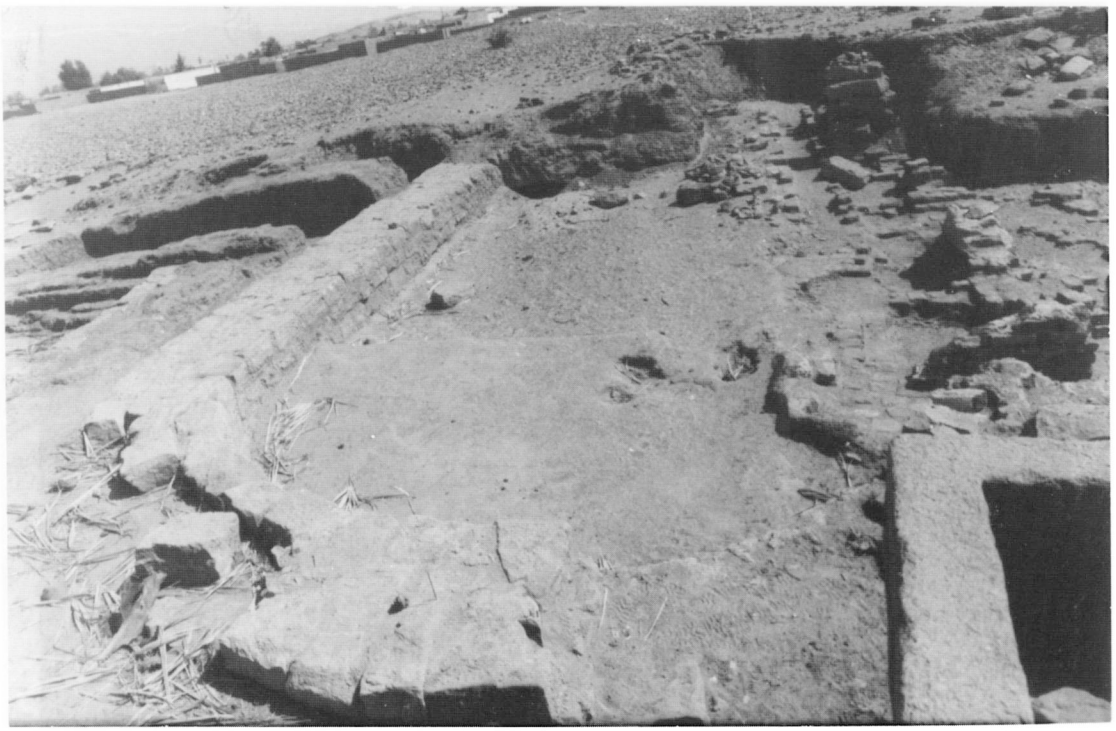


a. Water conduit passing round the east wing of the *palatium*.

b. Castellum aquae:
to the left, the compartment for the *saqiya*, to the right, two tanks.

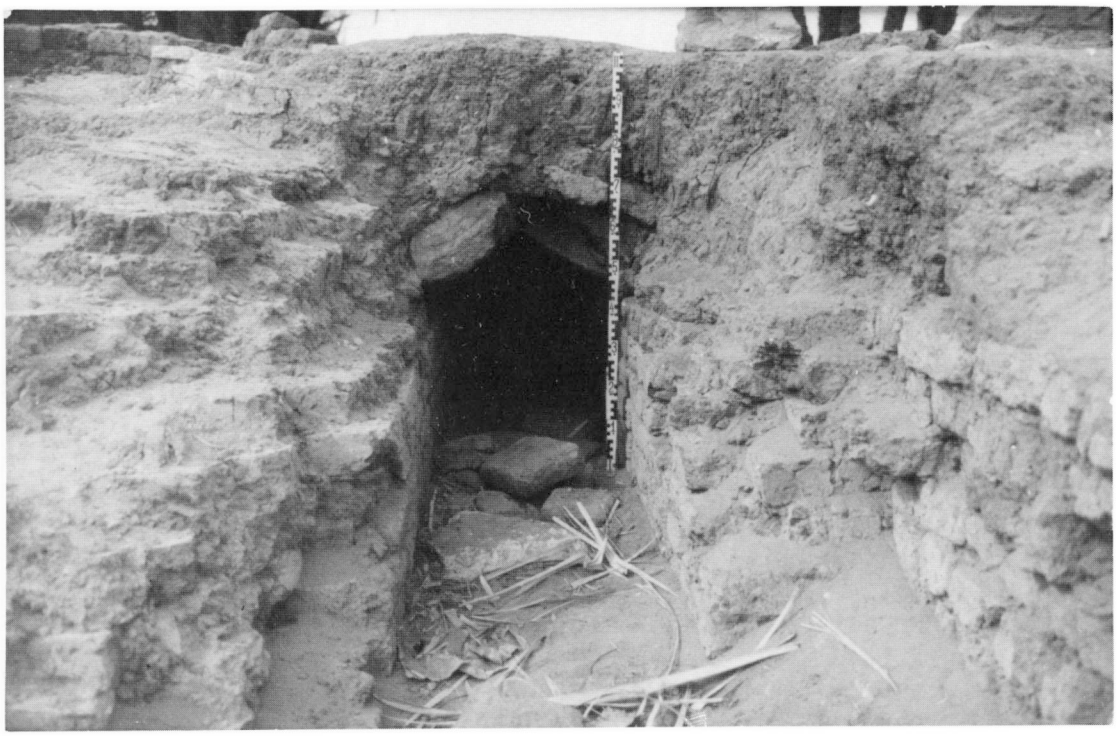
BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

a. The latrines.



b. Foundations of the big hall with an apse in the *thermae*.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net



a. *Cloaca*.

b. *Horrea* with floor in *opus signinum*.

BIFAO 92 (1993), p. 185-210 Usama Abdel Wareth, Pierre Zignani
Nag al-Hagar. A Fortress with a Palace of the Late Roman Empire. Second Preliminary Report [avec 12 planches].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net