



#### WHAT:

A premiere presentation of re-created costumes based on wall paintings from the cathedral of Faras in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw and the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum, accompanied by a popularisation session at Sorbonne University.

#### WHEN & WHERE:

**15 October 2024, 3:30 PM–5:00 PM**

**La Sorbonne**, Centre de civilisation polonaise, Campus Malesherbes  
108, boulevard Malesherbes, 75017 Paris  
Room 208

**17 October 2024, 12:30 PM**

**Musée du Louvre**, Auditorium Michel Laclotte, Room 1  
As part of the Louvre Museum's regular programme *Midis de l'archéologie!*

#### CONTEXT:

In the 1960s, the Egyptian government decided to build the Aswan High Dam. To study and salvage areas threatened by flooding by the Nile, scholars from twenty-six countries participated in a UNESCO-led initiative to save cultural heritage. A Polish team, led by Prof. Kazimierz Michałowski from the University of Warsaw, chose as their research site the city of Faras, one of the medieval capitals of the Kingdom of Makuria, which existed in today's southern Egypt and northern Sudan between the sixth and fourteenth centuries. The discovery of a cathedral and a set of unique murals marked the beginning of studies that remain a Polish specialty today. Faras Gallery at the National Museum in Warsaw houses a globally unique collection of medieval Nubian art.

Particularly now, during the tragic civil war in Sudan, our efforts remind the world that not only the people of this country, but also its rich heritage are under severe threat. We hope that the international community will support peace efforts in Sudan.

**#keepeyesonsudan**

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In cooperation with Nubiologists at the University of Warsaw, Dr Karel Innemée leads a project titled *Costumes of Authority: Depicting the Royal Family and Clergy in Medieval Nubia*. As the scarcity of written sources make studying medieval Nubia incredibly difficult, to learn more about the medieval Kingdom of Makuria, the researcher has turned to iconographic sources, archaeological and iconographic data being the primary knowledge base for Nubia studies.

In the archaeological and historical research phase of the project, Dr Innemée, along with Dr Magdalena Woźniak-Eusèbe and Dr hab. Dobrochna Zielińska, examined how Christianity, a new faith that came to Nubia from Constantinople in the sixth century, influenced the official attire of rulers and religious leaders. Like today, garments and decorative elements were part of a non-verbal communication system, where each element had its meaning. Monumental images of the court and clergy members were an essential part of Nubian church decoration, meant to influence worshippers and demonstrate the connections between the kingdom, the church, and the divine source of power. Costume studies have shown how rich a source of knowledge these murals could be.

To understand the material aspect of these garments – their construction, volume, and weight – a key

# DRESS TO IMPRESS

part of the project was the recreation of five outfits depicted on the murals that once adorned the walls of the cathedral in Faras. Two examples of royal attire, the garments of two royal mothers (a position at court ensuring the inheritance of power, characteristic of Nubian culture), and the attire of a bishop were selected for reconstruction.

The royal garments illustrate an evolving combination of visible Byzantine influences, brought to the kingdom with the Christian religion, native cultural elements, and new fashion trends from the Muslim East. The ecclesiastical attire, unchanged throughout the centuries of Christianity in the region, demonstrates Nubia's strong ties to the Church of Constantinople.

The work of archaeologists from the University of Warsaw was supported by designers from SWPS University, who expanded the analysis of archaeological material with practical knowledge based on the ergonomics of movement, the construction of garments, fabrics, and methods of dyeing and decorating them. The first task in this research-design process was to reconstruct the historical colours of royal and clerical attire. The basis for this was archaeological research by Dr Magdalena Woźniak (University of Warsaw) and the unique expertise in natural dyeing of Dr hab. Katarzyna Schmidt-Przewoźna (SWPS University). In order to achieve reliable results not only knowledge of dyes, but also of the fabrics that were used in medieval Nubia, their production and trade, were indispensable.

From the colour palette proposed by Dr hab. Schmidt-Przewoźna, designers Dorothée Roqueplo and Agnieszka Jacobson-Cielecka selected the ones closest to the original colours, using collections from the Textile Research Centre in Leiden (NL) and the murals from Faras at the National Museum in Warsaw. The most challenging task was translating the two-dimensional, sometimes unclear murals into three-dimensional forms and understanding the layers of the garments, including those not visible in the paintings but known from tradition or other sources, including our knowledge of Christian rites. Close cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experience between specialists from various fields were indispensable and crucial.

On fabrics dyed according to the colour palette, stencil-printed patterns, hand embroidery, and appliqués were applied. Bishop's stoles and mappae (handkerchiefs symbolising high social status, borrowed from Byzantine culture) were hand-embroidered by Alicja Kozłowska and Anastasia Bernatowicz, graduates of the School of Form at SWPS University, and Lena Nowak. The entire team working on the construction of the costumes and the decoration of the fabrics was led by Dorothée Roqueplo. The accessories worn by the figures, originally made of gold, were recreated from brass with

the use of natural and synthetic gemstones by Bartosz Wiking Głowacki and Kuba Łagunionok.

The reconstructed costumes were presented on models to fully showcase their physical form and impact on viewers. Sudanese people, representatives of the communities from the Netherlands and Germany, impersonated Nubian dignitaries and were photographed at Pastoor van Ars Church in The Hague. The artistic concept and styling of the photographs were created by Paulina Matusiak, with the photos taken by Eddy Wenting.

The projects *Creations of Power: Depicting the Royal Family and Clergy in Christian Nubia and Dress to Impress* are unique examples of transdisciplinary academic collaboration, which not only generates and popularises new knowledge, but also demonstrates that past artefacts and phenomena can have a contemporary face.

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#### **WHO:**

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#### **PEOPLE INVOLVED:**

##### **Dr Karel Innemée**

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##### **Dr Agnieszka Jacobson-Cielecka**

*project curator, Institute of Design, SWPS University*

##### **Dr hab. Grzegorz Ochała**

*epigrapher, Faculty of Archaeology, UW*

##### **Paulina Matusiak**

*designer, Faculty of Design, SWPS University*

##### **Dorothée Roqueplo**

*costume Designer, Faculty of Design, SWPS University*

##### **Dr hab. Katarzyna Schmidt-Przewoźna**

*researcher, expert in natural dyeing, Institute of Natural Fibers, Faculty of Design, SWPS University*

##### **Dr Magdalena Woźniak-Eusèbe**

*archaeologist, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, UW*

##### **Dr habil. Dobrochna Zielińska**

*archaeologist, Faculty of Archaeology, UW*



**PHOTOGRAPHY:**

Paulina Matusiak & Eddy Wenting

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:**

Paulina Matusiak

**ORGANISERS:**

Museum of the University of Warsaw, University of Warsaw, SWPS Innovations, SWPS University

**PARTNERS:**

Musée du Louvre, Université Paris-Sorbonne, Centre de civilisation polonaise, Polish Institute in Paris

**PATRONAGE:**

Permanent Delegation of Poland to UNESCO

