

# The headquarters building in the tetrarchic fort at Nag'al-Hagar (Upper Egypt)

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The excavations of the tetrarchic fort at Nag'al-Hagar, on the E bank of the Nile c.30 km north of *Syene* (Aswan) and the First Cataract, began in 2005 as a joint mission directed by M. Mackensen between the Supreme Council of Antiquities Aswan, the Swiss Institute of Architectural and Archaeological Research on Ancient Egypt at Cairo, and the Institute of Prehistory and Archaeology of the Roman Provinces of the University of Munich. The fort has an almost square shape; its defences include projecting U-shaped intermediate towers, square corner towers, three gates, and a v-shaped ditch, enclosing an interior of c.2 ha. One of its most remarkable features is the presence of a palace within the defences in the SW quadrant.

A preliminary report of the excavations in 2005-8 of the Late Roman fort was published in this journal by M. Mackensen,<sup>1</sup> giving a detailed account of the tetrarchic defences, as well as of the palace complex and the barracks in the interior. The present note will provide an update on the latest results of the excavations (2009-12) in the area of the headquarters building.

## The *principia* (headquarters building)

The remains of the *principia* are located in the centre of the E half of the fort near the E enclosure wall (fig. 1), at the end of the main street leading up from the Nile through the W gate (*porta praetoria*) and following the central axis of the fort. This area of c.30 x 35 m was completely uncovered to determine the size and orientation of this main building and its interior rooms, as well as the buildings adjacent to the south, which together served as the centre of administration and command for the whole fort. This building complex was designed in an impressive style to emphasize its important function within the fort.

The central part (building A; fig. 2) had a width of c.13 m and a length of 22 m. Its walls were built on a foundation trench 2 m wide and c.0.60 m deep filled with quarriestones. The construction set on this foundation was of massive brick walls, with an elevated floor, probably of cut limestone, of which there remained only parts of the brick foundation, set into a thick layer of sand. From these architectural details it is clear that the *principia* were built in a particularly massive style, with high walls and an elevated roof, to stand out among all the other buildings in the *retentura*.

The entrance into the *principia* was found in the W wall. The *via praetoria* ran from the *porta praetoria* in the west, dividing the interior into N and S halves and leading directly to

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1 M. Mackensen, "The tetrarchic fort at Nag'al-Hagar in the province of Thebaïs: preliminary report (2005-8)," *JRA* 22 (2009) 286-311. The following reports have since appeared: M. Mackensen and M. El-Bialy, "Fourth report of the Egyptian-Swiss joint mission at the Late Roman fort at Nag'al-Hagar near Kom Ombo (Upper Egypt)," *ASAE* 84 (2010) 243-58; M. Mackensen and R. Franke, "Eine Mannschaftsunterkunft im tetrarchischen Kastell Nag'al-Hagar bei Kom Ombo (Oberägypten)," in C. Ebnöther and R. Schatzmann (edd.), *Oleum non perdidit. Festschrift für Stefanie Martin-Kilcher zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag* (Antiqua 47; 2010) 81-94; R. Franke, "Demonstration kaiserlicher Macht am Nil. Das spätrömische Kastell Nag'al-Hagar bei Kom Ombo in Oberägypten," *Antike Welt* 2012 no. 5, 57-65.