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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE HERMITAGE IN TOMB 1152

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Archaeological activities in the hermitage were carried out between 14 January and 3 March 2006, foremost in the courtyard situated on the rock terrace in front of the entrance to the Middle Kingdom tomb.¹

Meanwhile the books discovered in 2005 (Górecki 2007: 266-272) underwent conservation treatment in the labs of the National Museum in Alexandria between 5 March and 11 April and in August-September 2006.² The two papyrus books were threatened by microorganisms and their conservation had to be delayed until this threat could be dealt with effectively. As for the third book, comprising parchment cards held between wooden covers, the conservation program was completed successfully (for a detailed conservation report, see below, contribution by D. Kordowska in this volume), permitting the contents to be identified. The bigger set counting some 25 cards holds excerpts from the Book of Isaiah (Fig. 1). The lesser set, comprising only two cards both of which appear to be palimpsests, is part of the apocryphal Martyrium Petri, referring to the miraculous cures effected by the Apostle (Fig. 2).³ Both the Book of Isaiah and the Martyrium Petri have been dated provisionally to the 9th-10th century.

- 1 The mission was directed by Tomasz Górecki, assisted by a team comprising Iwona Antoniak, coptologist; Małgorzata Czapińska, architect; Eliza Szpakowska and Andrzej Ćwiek, egyptologists; Cristobal Calaforra-Rzepka, wall painting restorer; Jarosław Śliwa, photographer; Mariusz Dybich, organization and technical safeguarding of the work in the burial shaft. The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by Manal Mohamed Abd el Naby el Shazly from the Islamic-Coptic Inspectorate in Luxor.
- 2 The work was carried out by Daria Kordowska and Anna Thommée-Stachoń of the PPKZ S.A. Book, Prints and Archives Conservation Department in Toruń.
- 3 I am indebted to Prof. Tito Orlandi for identifying the parchment texts and suggesting a provisional dating.



Fig. 1. Parchment card with a fragment of the Coptic text of the Book of Isaiah (Photo D. Kordowska)



Fig. 2. Parchment card with the text of the Martyrium Petri (Photo D. Kordowska)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CONSERVATION WORK

The work was concentrated in the southern part of the complex, inside the tower (B), to its northeast and at the northern edge of the hermitage, where excavations reached the E-W border wall (for a plan of the hermitage, see Górecki 2004: Fig. 1 on 174; 2007: Fig. 1 on 264, updated).

The vertical shaft in the back chamber of the Middle Kingdom tomb was investigated for two days. It turned out to lead to a burial chamber filled with rock rubble

and blocks of stone. The current depth of the shaft is c. 18 m counting from the edge around the opening to the top of the rubble fill, which presumably goes down even further (possibly at least another 8 m).⁴ The examination of the feature did not give a clear answer as to whether the shaft had been empty or filled with debris at the time that the Coptic hermitage was installed in the tomb. A number of premises indicate that it was rather filled



Fig. 3. Bottom of the shaft in T 1152 with entrance to further parts of the tomb at left back (Photo E. Szpakowska)

⁴ H.E. Winlock's excavation notes give the depth of a shaft in the adjacent and practically identical Tomb 1151 as 26.10 m. The notes, which are now in the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, were consulted by Andrzej Ćwiek, to whom I am indebted for this information.



Fig. 4. Storage pithos by the south wall of the hermitage enclosure (Photo T. Górecki)



Fig. 5. Leather pouch from an amphora in the pithos (Photo J. Śliwa)

to the top throughout this period and was not excavated until modern times. The rubble filling the bottom end of the shaft and the corridor branching off horizontally from it, the entrance to which could be discerned above the top of the rubble in the east wall [Fig. 3], made it impossible to determine whether the chamber it had led to was ever completed as a burial place.

In the southern part of the hermitage courtyard, excavations revealed part of the rock face, cut vertically in the Pharaonic period and adopted later as a natural border of the hermitage on this side. A round pithos of dried clay, 0.72 m high and 0.87 m in diameter, was found about 0.60 m from this edge [Fig. 4]. Lying on top of a layer of debris inside this storage container were eight Egyptian amphorae of the LRA 7 type. They were all empty, except for one which contained an empty leather pouch among organic remains [Fig. 5]. Outside the pithos there was a reused censer most probably from the Late Period and six LR 7 amphorae lying around it.



Fig. 6. Faience amulet bearing an inscription from the Book of the Dead on the top and bottom (Photo J. Śliwa)

The rock debris just 2 m north of the storage container contained practically right under the surface the skeletal remains of two or three completely destroyed human mummies. The bones were burned in part, mixed with animal remains, rock debris and mummy wrappings. It is quite likely that they had been brought up from one of the nearby tombs and discarded by treasure hunters in search of antiquities for sale. The only object found with these remains was a heart-shaped amulet made of faience, partly damaged but overall in good condition [Fig. 6] It bears an inscription on both sides, identified as coming from Chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead, which is a spell protecting the heart of the deceased. The object has been dated to the Late Period.

Explorations inside the tower were completed in this season, bringing to light a diverse material representing different epochs. It is because the tower had been founded on a rubbish dump containing both Pharaonic and Coptic material. Once the excavation was completed, the trench inside the tower was backfilled to the level of the original mud floor, which was reconstructed to its original form.

The rubbish dump to the northeast of the tower yielded large quantities of potsherds, organic remains, textiles and glass vessels.

At the northern limits of the hermitage the rock slope was cleared all the way to the border wall raised of loosely arranged stone blocks laid without mortar. Finds again included large quantities of cooking

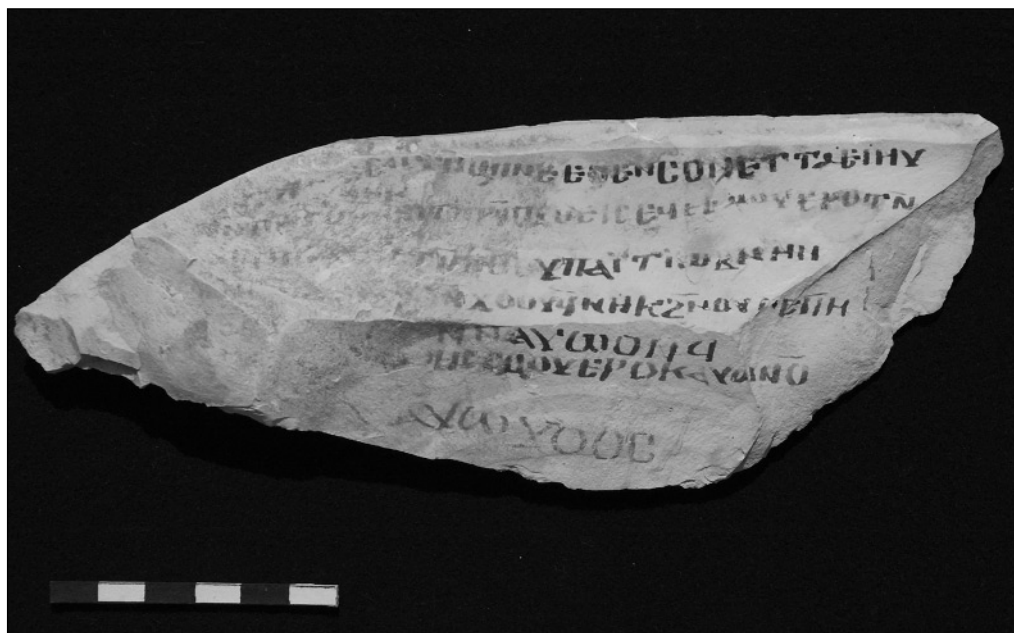


Fig. 7. Coptic ostrakon on a limestone chip
(Photo J. Śliwa)



Fig. 8. Tower B during the restoration of the corner, viewed from the south (Photo T. Górecki)

and table ware. Directly next to the wall, a kind of bench for sitting or sleeping was uncovered with a row of mud bricks running around it. It would have been covered with a mat or loose rushes.

Most of the excavated finds represent the Coptic period in the history of this site. Ostraca are especially numerous, this particular one on a limestone chip revealing a fine, almost bookish lettering [Fig. 7]. Of the Pharaonic objects one should mention foremost a papyrus fragment containing the name of a fourth priest of Amon,⁵ a wooden statuette head with green polychromy (Ptah-Sokar-Osiris), several ushebti, fragments of cartonnages and faience beads of varying shape.

Conservation activities inside the hermitage concentrated on protecting and clarifying the wall paintings. This has led to the identification on the north wall of the corridor of a figure of a horseman with a cross held high in his right hand in a gesture of victory.

Architectural conservation included the restoration of the corners of the tower using original bricks retrieved from the tumbled walls [Fig. 8].

REFERENCES

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- 2004 Sheikh Abd el-Gurna. Coptic hermitage, first interim report, *PAM XV* [=Reports 2003], 173-179
- 2007 Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (Hermitage in Tomb 1152). Preliminary report, 2005, *PAM XVII* [=Reports 2005], 263-272

5 The text was identified and read by Edyta Nowak-Kopp, who is working on the hieratic text of a funerary character found on the *recto* of this document. The documentary text in abnormal hieratic on the *verso* is being studied by Günter Vittmann