



Honorary “Bene Merito” distinction for Dr. Zbigniew E. Szafrąński

Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna awarded **Dr Zbigniew Szafrąński** of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw, longtime director of the institution's Research Center in Cairo, the honorary „**Bene Merito**” distinction for his role in promoting Poland and Polish Mediterranean archaeology abroad. Polish Ambassador in Cairo Michał Murkociński decorated Dr. Szafrąński during a ceremony held on 19 October 2015 at the seat of the Research Center in Cairo, which was attended by friends and associates from the international archaeological community in Egypt.

Dr Zbigniew E. Szafrąński has been associated with the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw since 1979 when he started working on Polish archaeological teams in Egypt. He participated in the excavations carried out by the Centre's missions in Alexandria, Saqqara and Western Thebes, cooperating also with the Austrian archaeological expedition to Tel el-Dab'a/Awaris. Since 1999 Dr Szafrąński has been in charge of the Polish Egyptian Archaeological and Conservation Mission to the Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari. During this time the Upper Terrace of the Temple was opened to the public in 2002 and the [Solar Cult Complex](#) most recently in February 2015. In 2000 he became a deputy director of the Polish Centre and in 2005–2015 he headed the Research Center in Cairo, which is the foreign branch of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology founded in 1959 by Prof. Kazimierz Michałowski and charged with the organization and coordination of Polish archaeological research in Egypt and the Near East. During these years the Center in Cairo also organized a busy schedule of lectures and seminars presenting the work of researchers and students from many institutions in Poland and abroad associated with the Center. In 2007 Dr. Szafrąński initiated at the invitation of Dr Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, preparations for a [celebration of 70 years of Polish archaeology in Egypt](#) and coordinated the work of an extensive team organizing a hugely successful commemorative [exhibition held at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo](#). A bibliophile in his own right, Dr. Szafrąński never passed a chance to enlarge the Cairo Center's modest library resources. He has represented the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology at many international meetings and conferences and participates actively in Cairo's scientific life. He is also a successful public lecturer always willing to present Queen Hatshepsut and her extraordinary funerary temple to the interested public. His role in strengthening ties with archaeological institutions in Cairo is inestimable and has contributed substantially to promoting Polish archaeology on the international scene.

