

POLISH CENTRE OF  
MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN CAIRO  
WARSAW UNIVERSITY

# Newsletter

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Since last autumn, the Center has again been involved in projects ranging from Egypt (seven missions) to Sudan (three) and Syria (two). The Kom el-Dikka project in Alexandria has progressed without interruption. The work in Deir el-Bahari, Marina el-Alamein, and Tell el-Farkha took place as usual in winter and spring. Important discoveries were made in Sheikh Abd el Gurna on the west bank in Luxor. The mission to Tell el Farama (Pelusium) took to the field twice, in March and in July-August. The excavations in Marea have just resumed, and those in Naqlun and Saqqara West are about to start. In Syria, the excavations in Palmyra took place in April-June, and another mission worked in May in the Hama Museum. The winter season in Sudan was particularly busy, with surveys and excavations in the area to be flooded by the Merowe dam in the region of the Fourth Cataract. The standing project in Dongola proceeded according to plan.

On March 16-17, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was the site of an international colloquium held by the Centre on "The auditoria of Kom el-Dikka in the cultural and educational life of the late antique city". The event, which was attended by over twenty leading authorities on ancient education and intellectual life, was the idea of Professor Ewa Wipszycka from Warsaw University and Professor Roger Bagnall from Columbia University. It was made possible thanks to financial support from Professor Bagnall and a special contribution from Warsaw University. The Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie and its President Professor Mustafa al-Abbadi joined in the proceedings and offered a dinner party at the Pharos University Club.

The scholarship program of the Polish Ministry of Education is in its third year with the holders for 2004/2005 being Ewa Czyżewska from Warsaw University and Joanna Then from Jagellonian University, Cracow. Jadwiga Iwaszczuk, Urszula Wicenciak (both from Warsaw), and Sebastian Borowicz from Cracow arrived for the second semester.

On August 31, Michał Gawlikowski completes his term as Director of the Centre, having been in charge of the institute since 1990. For the past five years, he and his wife Krystyna have been with us in Egypt. He now returns to resume teaching at Warsaw University.

He is replaced by Piotr Bieliński, currently head of excavations at Tell Arbid in Syria, who will be residing in Warsaw for the time being. The Centre in Cairo shall be run by the Deputy Director since 2000, Zbigniew Szafranski, who is also heading the restoration mission to Deir el Bahari.

## **Excavation and Restoration in Egypt**

### **ALEXANDRIA**

The year-round Polish-Egyptian Mission in Kom el-Dikka, run by Grzegorz Majcherek, has made it a top priority this season to explore in full the recently uncovered lecture halls of Late Roman date (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century), situated immediately behind the back wall of the great portico traversing the complex from north to south. A generous grant from Columbia University, arranged through Professor Roger Bagnall, has greatly benefited the progress of work in this area.

Heavy equipment was used to remove the

towering 8-m build-up of modern layers of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century date, forming the escarpment to the west of the line of halls. Huge dumps of earth from recent excavations needed to be removed also from the central part of the site.

The removal of over 5000 cubic metres of earth in this operation opened the way to regular excavations of a further four auditoria in the western part of the site, raising the number of discovered classrooms to seventeen. The newly uncovered structures were immediately consolidated and partly restored.

The overlying medieval strata in the presumed location of yet two other auditoria were investigated and removed in preparation for excavations, scheduled to take place in the coming months.

The international colloquium held in March fully confirmed the academic character of the halls. This has given the Kom el-Dikka site an entirely new dimension.

## **DEIR EL-BAHARI**

### **THE TEMPLE OF HATSHEPSUT**

The season from December 2004 to mid-April 2005 was dedicated to completing the restoration of the Solar Cult Complex and the Northern Chapel of Amun-Re, both off the north side of the restored courtyard on the Upper Terrace.

The Polish-Egyptian mission directed by Zbigniew Szafranski also continued to document and excavate in the Royal Chapels off the south side of the same courtyard. This task included documenting the relief decoration found *in situ*, as well as the hundreds of loose fragments believed to come from this part of the Temple. Several dozens of new pieces were attributed to their proper place, some filling gaps in the inscriptions decorating

the walls and ceiling of the Chapels of Hatshepsut and of Tuthmosis I.

The shaft tombs explored in the Hatshepsut Chapel contained material dated to the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasties. All were disturbed in recent times. One of the cartonages belonged to Vizier Pa-di-amenat, perhaps a grandson of Osorkon III of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty. The 27<sup>th</sup> regnal year of this king was recorded on one of the mummy bandages.

The restoration of two figures of Hatshepsut in the form of Osiris from the Upper Portico has been completed, and a preliminary conservation of a statue of king Amenhotep I, found in 1982 in Asasif, was undertaken.

After over 20 years of work on the Temple of Tuthmosis III, the subject of nearly all the temple wall reliefs has been established. Digitalizing the documentation concerning the three innermost rooms, which will constitute the first volume of the publication, is now in progress. While the work of identifying further fragments in the stores will surely never end, digital processing and incorporation of the new finds will no longer pose a problem.

### **THE HATHOR SHRINE**

Having just published "The Temple of Hatshepsut. The Solar Complex" (Deir el-Bahari VI), Janusz Karkowski returned to Deir el Bahari for last checks of plates for

a forthcoming publication of the Hathor shrine, prepared together with Nathalie Beaux.

#### **SHEIKH ABD EL-QURNA**

##### **(TOMB 1152)**

In February-March 2005, Tomasz Górecki continued the excavations of a Coptic hermitage installed in this New Kingdom tomb. The season brought an important discovery: three books dumped on a rubbish heap in the courtyard of the hermitage. This is the first discovery of ancient Coptic manuscripts in Egypt since 1952.

Restorers were brought from Warsaw post-haste to protect the books while still in the field. Nonetheless, full conservation treatment needs to be performed under laboratory conditions.

Two of the books are papyrus codices bound in leather (about 140 and 100 cards respectively). The third is a collection of loose parchment documents in different hands, kept between wooden covers. While the latter remains to be identified, the papyrus books were found to be, one the Canons of Pseudo-Basil in Coptic, the other an Encomion on St Pisenthios, a bishop of Coptos until AD 632, also in Coptic. Both codices were dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, and both represent the oldest known versions of the respective texts.

Moreover, until now the Canons had been known only in later Arabic translation.

#### **MARINA EL-ALAMEIN**

##### **EXCAVATIONS**

In March-April 2005, Wiktor A. Daszewski excavated both in the necropolis and the town of Marina situated on Egypt's Mediterranean coast. One of the objectives was the continued exploration of Tomb 21, an underground courtyard hypogeum coupled with an aboveground building that included facilities for banqueting. The burial chamber was entered and found to contain 33 burials, most of them mummified. The remains were examined by anthropologist Maria Kaczmarek.

In the town centre area, several rooms around the previously excavated public paved square were cleared. The largest of these, hitherto referred to as a 'basilica', featured an apse and two rows of columns down the aisle; it is barely 5.5 m wide. Near the entrance, a fragmentary inscription in honour of a governor of Egypt is dated to year 14 of Hadrian (AD 130).

#### **MARINA EL-ALAMEIN**

##### **RESTORATION**

From mid-April through May 2005, a joint Polish-Egyptian mission under Stanisław Medeksza continued its work at Marina. Steady progress has been made in the restoring of five of the houses excavated in the 1990s.

Moreover, Tomb T6, excavated some years ago, had its hexastyle façade restored, including two central columns complete with Ionic capitals. Restoration work presently undertaken on the pillar tomb T12 led to the discovery of a block with a Greek inscription probably identifying two of the secondary burials.

#### **PELUSIUM (TELL FARAMA)**

In February-March 2005, architects Michał Smoła and Anna Ośnicka spent a short season in the theatre, preparing a project for presenting the remains. The idea is to set up a few granite columns and outline the stage building with low brick walls. While not strictly restoration, this would facilitate comprehension of the poor remains, simultaneously preserving extant architectural members from further decay.

In charge of archaeological fieldwork, Krzysztof Jakubiak opened a small excavation to the east of the theatre, uncovering two successive street pavements and the remains of a possibly Hellenistic building razed to make room

for the theatre. A Hellenistic dump was also found under the western entrance.

In July-August 2005, the mission started excavating to the north of the theatre. Israeli army bulldozers had wrought much damage in this area. The first-opened square proved rather disappointing, offering little beside late antique floors and some still later pits. But excavations in a nearby square revealed a partly preserved mosaic of early date, showing water birds and plants in a meander frame. The mosaic was immediately removed by experts from the SCA and will soon enhance the new museum in el-Arish.

#### **TELL EL-FARKHA (GHAZALA)**

From April to mid June 2005, a joint team from Poznań and Cracow, under the direction of Marek Chłodnicki and Krzysztof Ciałowicz, worked again at Tell el-Farkha in the village of Ghazala (Daqahliya Governorate). More will be said once the report is available.

### **Excavations in Sudan**

#### **OLD DONGOLA**

##### **THE TRINITY MONASTERY**

In recent years, Stefan Jakobielski has been excavating the so-called SW Annex of the monastery with its magnificent paintings, mostly of the 12th century. Last

December and January, the backfill was once again removed from the already protected paintings, and work proceeded on exploring further rooms. The ancient walls and especially the vaults were conserved or reconstructed as required, and the entire excavated part covered with the same kind of traditional roofing that had been used earlier to protect the NW Annex. All six rooms of the SW Annex have now been cleared down to the original floor level and further interesting paintings have been found, including a huge figure presumed to be St. Epiphanius, and an image of St. Jeremy the Prophet, now reduced to scattered fragments of painted plaster. The door jambs were painted with two representations of the Holy Virgin *Galaktotrophousa*. One of the new paintings is a remarkable scene representing a festival in honour of an icon of the spinning Virgin, with masked figures of men leaping and dancing, shaking sticks, censers, and rattles, and apparently singing texts in Old Nubian that accompany the picture. The distinctly African flavour of this scene is unique.

Other motifs include the Massacre of the Innocents observed by King Herod seated on his throne, painted on a fallen vault. This scene, preserved in fragments, still awaits recomposition, hopefully during the coming season.

Interestingly, all the dedicatory inscriptions in the SW Annex mention women donors alone. Assuming the neighbouring NW Annex was a *xenodocheion*, it could mean that we are dealing here with the women's quarters.

### THE CONVENTUAL CHURCH

By now, about two-thirds of the building, including a rectangular presbytery, has been cleared by Daniel Gazda. The church is very poorly preserved, but the overall plan is clear, showing granite pillars separating the aisle from the collaterals. Some remains of mural paintings were found. Under the altar there are two funerary crypts.

Four funerary stelae were found, unfortunately out of context, reused in the floor. Of greatest importance is that of Joseph, former bishop of Aswan and the founder of the monastery, who died in AD 668.

### THE EARLY MAKURIA PROJECT

The program conceived by Włodzimierz Godlewski will take advantage of the results of the oncoming Merowe Dam Project to reconsider the beginnings of the Kingdom of Makuria in the region between the Third and Fourth Nile cataracts. An important objective is to understand the

processes behind the transformation of Meroitic society (Kush – Meroitic Period) into Makurian society, taking place in the 4th and 5th centuries in a region which a mere century later was the seat of the three separate kingdoms of Nobadia, Makuria and Alodia.

Current evidence from Dongola - early fortifications being not earlier than the late 5th century and numerous tumuli of 5th-6th century date discovered in the extensive cemeteries of El Ghaddar – has already shown that the capital of Makuria was not founded before the first half of the 6th century. Last year's salvage operations in the Fourth Cataract area and survey of the region on the east bank of the Nile between Dongola and el-Zuma have brought attention to the many tumuli cemeteries dotting the landscape, as well as any number of fortresses standing on the Nile, all of which have been dated provisionally to the period of Early Makuria. This suggests that the earliest centre of Early Makuria was located most likely in the vicinity of Kushite Napata.

#### **SURVEY BETWEEN KHOR UMM GIZLAN AND SHEMKIYA**

In December 2004, a team headed by Marek Chłodnicki and Bogdan Żurawski surveyed the stretch of the east bank

upstream from the Merowe Dam and the Fourth Nile Cataract. All in all, 74 archaeological sites were registered. They include 36 tumulus cemeteries, the most important being Es-Sadda and Hagar el-Beidha, containing altogether over 400 tumuli of the Kerma and Post-Meroitic periods. Furthermore, ten Christian cemeteries of box graves including from a dozen to almost 900 graves (more than 2000 graves altogether) were recorded. Three Christian fortresses (Shemkhiya, el-Ar, and Hagar el-Beidha) were surveyed. Several settlements of Middle Palaeolithic, Neolithic, and later date were also discovered.

A survey on foot between Khor Umm Ghizlan and Khor Hussein recorded some Neolithic, Post-Meroitic, and Christian cemeteries of box graves.

### **Excavations in Syria**

#### **PALMYRA**

From mid-April to mid-June 2005, a mission under Michał Gawlikowski excavated two different sites in the ancient city. One of these corresponded to the location of a shelter to be built over the Bellerophon mosaic found in 2002. Investigations focused on the foundations of the room containing the mosaic and the immediate neighbourhood. While not many structures associated with the mosaic

have survived, later periods are better represented, although poorly preserved. The shelter will be built by architects from the DGAM, drawing on design suggestions provided by the mission.

The mission also returned to the Allat sanctuary which had been excavated in the late 1970s. Some additional soundings were made, discovering four life-size honorific statues of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD in the process. We are privileged to have Daria Tarara's fine computer renderings of the sanctuary in its successive phases. Work also progressed on the development of a new presentation for the Palmyra Museum, requested by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

A major task of the season was the re-making of the great lion of Allat, which had been set up in front of the Museum in 1977. Bartosz Markowski, sculptor and stone conservator, undertook to dismantle the sculpture and to rebuild it on a new foundation. It now appears as it did in

Antiquity – a relief projecting from the wall.

#### **HAWARTE/HAMA**

In May, a team of restorers led by Ewa Parandowska worked on the premises of the Hama Museum, patiently reassembling the wall paintings from the mithraeum at Hawarte. Any parts of images recomposed from the hundreds of small fragments collected from the rubble in the course of excavations were incorporated digitally into existing computer images of the walls of the Mithraic grotto.

In some instances, it even proved possible to separate successive layers of painting, a feat that could not be achieved as readily with the paintings surviving on the rock walls of the complex.



## **Members on the Polish Centre active with other missions in Egypt**

**Tomasz Herbich** (archaeologist-geophysicist):

Bawit (Louvre, Director Dominique Benazeth)

Buto (DAI, Director Ulrich Hartung)

Buto (IFAO, Director Pascale Ballet)

Fayum Oasis (University of California, Los Angeles, and Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Director Willeke Wendrich)

**Magdalena Włodarska** (archaeologist):

Abydos (University of Michigan, Director Janet Richards)

**Anetta Łyżwa, Szymon Maślak** (archaeologists):

Dakhla Oasis Project (Director Anthony Mills, team of Fred Leemhuis)

**Robert Rogal** (restorer):

Tuna el Gebel (SCA)

## **Lectures held at the Polish Centre in the season 2004/2005:**

**Grzegorz Majcherek**, The Lecture Halls of Ancient Alexandria (October 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Karol Myśliwiec**, Neighbours in Death: Tombs of Fefi and Temi in Saqqara (October 26<sup>th</sup>)

**Gawdat Gabra**, The Representations of the Patriarchs of Alexandria in Art (November 30<sup>th</sup>)

**Salima Ikram**, The Animal Mummy Project in the Egyptian Museum (December 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Piotr Bieliński**, Pots and People. Digging in Ancient Mesopotamia (February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005)

**Piotr Parandowski** presented his film "Egyptian Diary" and read from his Polish book of essays (February 5<sup>th</sup>)

**Włodzimierz Godlewski**, The Beginnings of Christian Nubia (March 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Adam Łukaszewicz**, Julius Caesar in Alexandria (March 22<sup>nd</sup>)

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