POLISH CENTRE OF
MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN CAIRO
WARSAW UNIVERSITY

Newsletter

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Following in the wake of our March Newsletter, this issue reports on the activities of the Polish Centre since then, also presenting brief notes on the work that had then been in progress or had just been completed, especially in Sudan.

In Egypt, the Kom el-Dikka project continued before and after the summer break; at Marina el-Alamein excavations took place in March, followed by two months of restoration work; the prehistoric site of Tell el Farkha in the Eastern Delta was investigated. In August-September, the Byzantine city of Marea on Lake Mariout was again under excavation. The dig season in Syria and Lebanon started in spring and went on through the summer. Extensive reports on all these activities will be published, as usual, in our annual bulletin Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean (PAM).

Soon after closing the excavation season in Marina, the former Director of this Centre, Wiktor A. Daszewski was taken seriously ill while lecturing in Germany. We are glad to report that his recovery is proceeding remarkably well and we hope to see him back in Egypt in due time and in good shape.

It is our pleasure to announce that our colleagues Lech Krzyżaniak and Stefan Jakobielski, directors of excavations in Kadero and Dongola, respectively, have been commended for their work over many past seasons by the Government of Sudan and duly awarded the distinction of the country's Order of the Two Niles. The ceremony, attended by the Polish Ambassador H.E. Joanna Wronecka, took place in Khartoum on April 27. Our heartfelt congratulations go to both our friends. It is worth noting in this connection that Stefan happens to be the longest active archaeologist excavating in Sudan, as well as a senior member of our Centre, considering that he embarked on his career in the field in Faras in 1961. We wish him many happy returns to the dig.

On September 9, the Minister of Culture of Lebanon, Dr. Ghassan Salamé, opened an exhibition on our excavations in Chhim. The breathtaking beauty of the venue, the Beiteddine Palace and Museum, and its prestigious history can hardly be matched by the modest offerings of a Roman and Byzantine village in the Chouf mountains. And yet, writes Tomasz Waliszewski in the companion volume to the exhibition, "two thousand years of history of the Lebanese countryside" sing praise to the stupendous tenacity and continuity of tradition that has been brought to life for the first time in that country as a result of our excavations. The event in Beiteddine was attended by the Rector of Warsaw University, Professor Piotr Węgleński, who took the opportunity to visit our excavations in Palmyra and Chhim.

Shortly before, the Rector appointed Michał Gawlikowski to another three-year term as Director of this Centre. At the end of the summer, Marek Lemiesz and his wife Edyta left after two years in Egypt. Marek has resumed his job at the Archaeological Museum in Poznań. New arrivals include Jadwiga Iwaszczuk, an Egyptologist and member of the Hatshepsut team, who is in charge of our house in Heliopolis, and Paweł Lewicki, a student of Oriental Studies from Warsaw University, who is helping with secretarial work.

For the first time this year we are profiting from a scholarship program of the Polish Ministry of Education that enables six graduate students to pursue their research in Egypt for extended periods of time. We are grateful to the Ministry, and to the Polish Embassy in Cairo, for opening this opportunity. Currently, the Centre is hosting the following:

Miss Iwona Kozieradzka from Poznań University (funerary amulets during the New Kingdom), for the academic year;

Miss Dobrochna Zielińska from Warsaw University (Coptic painting), for the academic year;

Mrs. Agnieszka Kowalska from Warsaw University (iconography of women at the Ancient Egyptian royal court), for the first semester.

Excavations and Restoration in Egypt

ALEXANDRIA

The work on Kom el Dikka went on into the early summer and resumed in September, under the direction of Grzegorz Majcherek. Considerable amounts of soil have been removed from the central part of the site in preparation for future excavation. Progress was made on exploring the graves of the Upper Necropolis (11th-12th centuries) and removing them subsequently in order to reach the Late Roman ruins beneath.

The restoration work included securing some of the vaults in the Bath complex excavated many years ago with an eye to preparing a safe tourist pathway along the southern portico. While this task has yet to be completed, another path now leads from the secondary entrance to the site on Safia Zaghlul Street to the Villa of the Birds and up to the Theatre. The main task underway, however, is to restore the foundations of the Theatre Portico, in anticipation of having more of the columns raised. At the same time, the back wall of this colonnade is being restored bit by bit, as soon as it is unearthed. It is fairly certain by now that a line of elongated halls, each provided with stepped benches along three sides and a prominent seat in the middle of the back wall, extends all the way from the Theatre to the northern limit of the area accessible for excavation. These auditoria of Late Antique date constitute an interesting issue for study that will doubtless profit from further work in the near future.

As a result of a sustained effort to study the backlog of Islamic pottery, all the Egyptian glazed fabrics have now been documented. The conservation of coins is also progressing.

MARINA EL ALAMEIN

The excavations took four weeks in March and were headed as usual by Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski. The mission cleared Tomb 29, discovered the previous year on the proposed site of the local museum (eventually built in another location). The tomb contained several loculi burials, offering tables, and a terracotta sarcophagus. Small finds date from the 1st century AD.

An early 1st century AD colonnaded square in the ancient town has now been cleared in its entirety. Some of the adjoining structures have been investigated, among them a colonnaded court containing a round structure (?) in the middle.

MARINA EL ALAMEIN – CONSERVATION PROJECT

A Polish-Egyptian team headed by Stanisław Medeksza was occupied throughout April and May with the conservation and restoration of seven houses located in the southern part of the ancient town. Walls were rebuilt and a number of vertical elements raised, including an aedicule with original capitals and cornice, but most of all, extant parts were secured wherever possible. In the course of cleaning work, many interesting finds were made, including coins, lamps, and a bronze statuette of Aphrodite.

Three of the underground tombs in the site necropolis were restored, their dromos walls being raised, and protecting enclosures erected over the sunken courtyards.

TELL EL FARKHA (GHAZALA)

This Predynastic site at Ghazala village (Daqahliya, Eastern Delta) is being excavated jointly by the Poznań Prehistoric Society and Jagiellonian University in Cracow, in cooperation with this Centre. The fieldwork lasted from late February to early May and was co-directed by Marek Chłodnicki and Krzysztof Ciałowicz.

Tell el Farkha has already been established as an important settlement in the Nagada III Period. A monumental building on the Western Kom, described as a temple by the excavators, was found to be preceded by another building representing the Lower Egyptian culture. Its ruins contained, among other artefacts, imported Palestinian pottery, counting tokens, and clay seals.

The eastern Kom revealed a cemetery, with brick-lined, vaulted tombs dated to the Nagada III Period and the beginnings of the First Dynasty. Among the tombs, a curious, roughly circular building, 8 m in diameter, features a mud brick grid in lieu of a floor. The function of this structure has yet to be ascertained.

MAREA

Hanna Szymańska directed the third season of explorations at Marea on Lake Mariout in August-September.

The water supply to the public bath discovered last year was the main issue with which the team concerned itself this year. A huge rectangular well situated nearby to the north and 5 m deep (thus reaching the water level of the lake) has been explored. A channel led from the well to a vaulted cistern. Associated pottery dates to the 6th-7th centuries, being contemporary with the finds from the baths themselves.

A *saqiya* was discovered within a round enclosure, 8 m in diameter, surrounding the well, the wall buttressed on the outside. It seems to be the third such installation known from Ancient Egypt, the other two being an Early Roman installation in Hermopolis Magna and a Byzantine structure in Abu Mina.

A small courtyard once decorated with marble slabs and columns was cleared close to the women's part of the baths; it had likely been used as a resting area. With this, the excavations of the baths can be considered as closed, even if more work is needed to preserve the uncovered structures.

SAQQARA

At the moment of writing, the Polish-Egyptian excavations in West Saqqara are in full swing. Multiple late burials and rock tombs of Sixth-Dynasty date are being explored. More information will be forthcoming once Karol Myśliwiec and his team have completed work in late October and presented their report.

NAQLUN

Likewise, the excavations by Włodzimierz Godlewski in this Coptic monastery in the Fayum are ongoing. The season is due to close at the end of October.

Excavations in Sudan

DONGOLA

The mission under Stefan Jakobielski continued work in the monastery of the Holy Trinity in January-February. Part of yet another monastic building was unearthed on the inside of the main enclosure, on the outer side of which there is the already excavated Annex (not connected on the ground level) with its rich collection of murals.

Part of the Monastery Church has been excavated, revealing the steps of the synthronon and a granite column separating the nave from the northern aisle. A later wall incorporating this column bears a painting of three horsemen and dates to the 11th-12th centuries.

BANGANARTI

From mid-January to March Bogdan Żurawski excavated a church in the village of Banganarti, some 10 km south of Old Dongola. It contains several chapels adorned with mural paintings representing kings, bishops, and saints. It appears to be the royal necropolis of Makuria, apparently in use from the 6th century to the 12th. Surely this discovery will go far in advancing our knowledge of the history and art of Christian Nubia.

An exhibition on this site is currently open in the National Museum in Warsaw. An international seminar on "Banganarti - art and archaeology on the Middle Nile" was held there on October 29.

Excavations in the Levant

PALMYRA (SYRIA)

From late April to mid-June, a mission headed by Michał Gawlikowski excavated a church, which is in all likelihood the cathedral of Palmyra. While the date of the building has yet to be established, there is evidence of massive restoration works, which can be attributed to Justinian in 527. We were able to clear the nave and both aisles, but not the *pastophoria*. The one to the left apparently contains several reliquaries.

The most striking feature of the church is a *solea*, that is, a raised walk through the middle of the nave. Not previously encountered in any Syrian church, it is well known from Greece, as well as Egypt (Abu Mina). In this case, it was lined with marble slabs and set off by a chancel.

We were able to raise some columns of the atrium in front of the church and clear this area entirely.

An unexpected discovery awaited us not far away. A test pit behind the city's colonnaded thoroughfare revealed a mosaic, the first such find in Palmyra in sixty years. It could be determined that the decorated floor was 6 m wide and over 9 m long. The floor features panels representing various animals, surrounded by elaborate frames of abstract design. A first tentative dating, based on stylistic appreciation alone, suggests the late 3rd to mid-4th century AD.

TELL QARAMEL (SYRIA)

At the foot of this tell near Aleppo Ryszard Mazurowski has found the remains of a Pre-Pottery Neolithic village (8th-7th millennia BC), featuring round and oval houses, similar to those known from the neighbouring regions of Turkey, Syria and Iraq. They are buried under layers from the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium BC).

TELL ARBID (SYRIA)

The excavations of an important 3rd millennium urban site in northern Gezira (in Syria, close to the Turkish border), headed by Piotr Bieliński, started in August and ended in mid-October. The results shall be reported later.

CHHIM (LEBANON)

Likewise, the Roman-period rural site in the Chouf mountains in Lebanon has continued to be investigated by Tomasz Waliszewski. Since the seasons lasted from September through early October and has only just finished, we cannot as yet report on the results.

For the exhibition at the Beitedddine palace, see above.

Members on the Polish Centre active with other missions in Egypt

Tomasz Herbich, Piotr Kołodziejczyk (geophysicists):

Deir el Bersha (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Director Harco Willems);
Buto (DAI, Director Ulrich Hartung);
Tell el Dabaa (Universität Wien, Director Manfred Bietak);
Abydos (University of Pennsylvania/Yale University/Columbia University, Directors Stephen Harvey, Joseph Wegner);
Saqqara (University of Pennsylvania, Director David Silverman);

Ewa Parandowska, Cristobal Calaforra-Rzepka (art restorers):

Deir Suriani, Wadi Natrun (Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, Director Karel Innemée).

Anna Południkiewicz (ceramicist):

Tebtynis (IFAO – Università di Milano, Director Claudio Gallazzi);

Janusz Karkowski (Egyptologist):

Memphis University Epigraphic Expedition to the Great Hypostyle at Karnak (Director Peter Brand);

Ewa Laskowska-Kusztal (Egyptologist):

Elephantine (DAI – Schweizerisches Institut, Director Cornelius von Pilgrim).

Our lecture programme was resumed after the summer break with a conference on "Saqqara: New Insights and Open Questions" held by Karol Myśliwiec on October 8. Karol also had a seminar concerning his previous excavations at Tell Atrib at the IFAO on October 12, and lectured at the AUC as the Simpson Professor of Egyptology last May.

Language Consultant Iwona Zych
Cover Layout Edyta Lemiesz
Drawing above Marek Puszkarski

© Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, Warsaw University
11, Mahalla Street, Heliopolis – CAIRO
Tel. (+202) 415 62 78, fax (+202) 290 44 59
e-mail: polarch@internetegypt.com

DIRECTOR: MICHAŁ GAWLIKOWSKI

DEPUTY DIRECTORS:

GRZEGORZ MAJCHEREK (ALEXANDRIA), ZBIGNIEW SZAFRAŃSKI