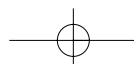
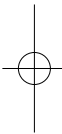
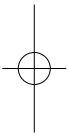
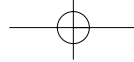


Joanna Aksamit



TELL EDFU





Edfu, the Egyptian *Djeba* and Roman Apollinopolis Magna, capital of the second Upper Egyptian nome, can be regarded without much exaggeration as the place where Polish archaeology in Egypt was born. In the mid 1930s, Kazimierz Michałowski and Tadeusz Wałek-Czarnecki, professors of the University of Warsaw, were looking to organize the first Polish excavations in the Mediterranean. Egypt was for them a natural choice, not the least because both scholars had already established bonds of friendship with colleagues from the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo. That friendship resulted in official collaboration between the University of Warsaw and the IFAO. After much deliberation the tell at Edfu was chosen as the place to start Franco-Polish excavations. The ancient centre of the cult of Horus and one of the most important Upper Egyptian towns, Edfu promised results of excava-

tions interesting for scholars studying all phases of Egyptian culture, from pharaonic till Arabic times.

Edfu developed as an urban centre under the Fifth Dynasty, perhaps even earlier. The town was located on a rocky outcrop dominating the alluvial plain and became, therefore, a centre of agricultural production. It was also a point of departure for caravan routes heading for the gold mines in the Eastern Desert, as well as for Kharga Oasis and farther south to Nubia. Edfu flourished in later times also, but the part of the town situated west of the Ptolemaic temple was abandoned in the 11th century AD.

Around 1860, when Mariette started clearance of the Horus temple, the western part of the tell was handed over for the purposes of *sebakh* digging. In the end effect, all but the westernmost part of the original mound was destroyed almost completely.

Even in the first decades of the 20th century, local inspectors of the Service des Antiquités supervising the digging could only save loose antiquities taken over from the *sebakhin*.

From 1914 Tell Edfu was excavated by the IFAO. The French expeditions (directed by Lacau, Henne, Guéraud, Alliot) concentrated on the upper layers of the tell, searching mainly for Greek and Coptic papyri. Their efforts met with considerable success, but the excavations were discontinued repeatedly for various reasons.

The first season of the Franco-Polish mission, directed by Bernard Bruyère, started on 7 January 1937. The Polish members of the mission were Kazimierz Michałowski and Jerzy Manteuffel, a renowned Polish papyrologist, who joined the expedition for all three campaigns. The IFAO was represented by Jean Sainte Fare Garnot, an Egyptologist, who took part also in the next campaign. In the next two seasons, Michałowski directed the excavations and the team also included French Egyptologists Jean de Linage (1938, 1939) and Christiane Desroches (1939), as well as Polish architects Arnold Czczot (1938) and Tadeusz Górski (1939), and anthropologist Stanisław Żejmo-Żejmis (1939).

Polish scholars concentrated on the ancient town. In 1937, the uppermost layers, representing the latest phases of occupation of the tell, had already been largely removed in the effect of earlier excavations and *sebakh* digging. Still, the resumed excavations revealed ruins of a Coptic monastery from the 7th century AD and some remains from the Byzantine Age. The work concentrated on the living quarter from Roman and Ptolemaic times, where excavations brought to light, among others, the remains of Roman baths and a marketplace building

from the same time with relief fragments from a dismantled Ptolemaic sanctuary incorporated in the walls as building material. A separate Jewish quarter was situated in the southern part of the tell. Of particular interest among the small finds was a collection of ostraca, mostly Greek and Demotic, but also some Latin and Aramaic ones. By 1939, the cleaning of the Ptolemaic level had practically been completed. Earlier strata, underlying the Ptolemaic town in many parts of the tell, remained unexcavated.

At the base of the southern end of the tell extended a necropolis used from the late Old Kingdom until the end of the Second Intermediate Period. For years the *sebakhin* had been bringing to light mudbrick mastabas of local officials of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties and Middle Kingdom tomb stelae, but practically no information survived on the original location of these finds. Alliot excavated and documented two of these mastabas, but it was the Franco-Polish mission which first took up regular excavations not only of the town, but also of the necropolis.

Already during the first season the team located the site of the mastaba of Qar, called Pepi-nefer, the nomarch of Edfu in the Sixth Dynasty, that had been discovered by *sebakh* diggers in 1912 and subsequently destroyed (the stela and false door were sent to the Cairo Museum). The burial shafts of the mastaba, discovered by the Franco-Polish mission, proved to be undisturbed and yielded a rich tomb equipment, which is now held mostly in the Cairo Museum. Other mastabas followed, ranging in date up to the beginning of the First Intermediate Period. Foremost among them is the mastaba of Isi, father of Pepi-nefer

and also a nomarch, who after death was deified and worshipped as a local "saint". The false door of that mastaba, saved from the *sebkhin* in December 1932 by Ragheb Ibrahim Effendi, local inspector of the Service des Antiquités, cleaned and published by Alliot in 1933, was subsequently left on the spot and completely covered by debris falling from the top of the tell.

The Franco-Polish mission re-excavated the mastaba in 1938 and in the following year discovered the burial shafts of Isi and his consort, Lady Sesh-seshet. Particularly the last shaft, which had escaped the attention of robbers, is noteworthy for its unusually rich equipment.

During the First Intermediate Period a town wall was constructed across the necropolis. While the exact date of its construction is not known, one is tempted to cite the famous text of Ankhtify from his tomb at Moalla, recording the story of his capture of Edfu at that time and his subsequent activity there: *The god Horus fetched me to the nome of Edfu... I found the domain of Khuu [governor of Edfu] like a swampy estate neglected by its keeper... I caused a man to embrace those who had killed his father or brother in order to re-establish the nome of Edfu.* The fortifications incorporated the superstructures of mud-brick mastabas as bastions of a kind. The wall, reinforced repeatedly, remained the western limit of the town at least till the end of the Second Intermediate Period, pushing the necropolis outside, to the western part of the former Old Kingdom cemetery. In 1938 and 1939, the Franco-Polish mission working there excavated numerous tombs from the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period. The tombs were mostly multiple chambers built of mud brick or irregular un-

derground corridors dug in the underlying rock. The burial chambers of Old Kingdom mastabas were also used as family burial places. All tombs, except one, were anonymous and inscribed material was scarce. The necropolis at Tell Edfu was abandoned at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty. After that, burials were made in the nearby cliffs of Hager Edfu, the move being justified not only by an apparent change in burial customs, but perhaps also by yet another extension of the town occurring at this time.

The Egyptian antiquities law of the 1930s permitted the excavated objects to be divided between Egypt and the institutions carrying out the excavations. After each of the three campaigns the finds regarded as the most important remained in the Cairo Museum. The IFAO participated in the *partage* only in 1939 and, consequently, the most numerous share of the finds from the Franco-Polish excavations went to Warsaw, accompanied by a gift from the IFAO, including several objects from the earlier French works at the site. As a loan of the University of Warsaw, the finds from Edfu became the core of the Gallery of Ancient Art, opened in 1938 at the National Museum in Warsaw. They have remained Poland's only collection of antiquities of this scope and variety, originating from controlled excavations at a single site in Egypt.

The outbreak of World War II put an end to the work of the Franco-Polish mission, but even those three short campaigns had an enormous impact on Polish archaeology in the Mediterranean. In the difficult years after the war, when everything had to be started anew, Michałowski embarked not only on rebuilding the Gallery, but also on

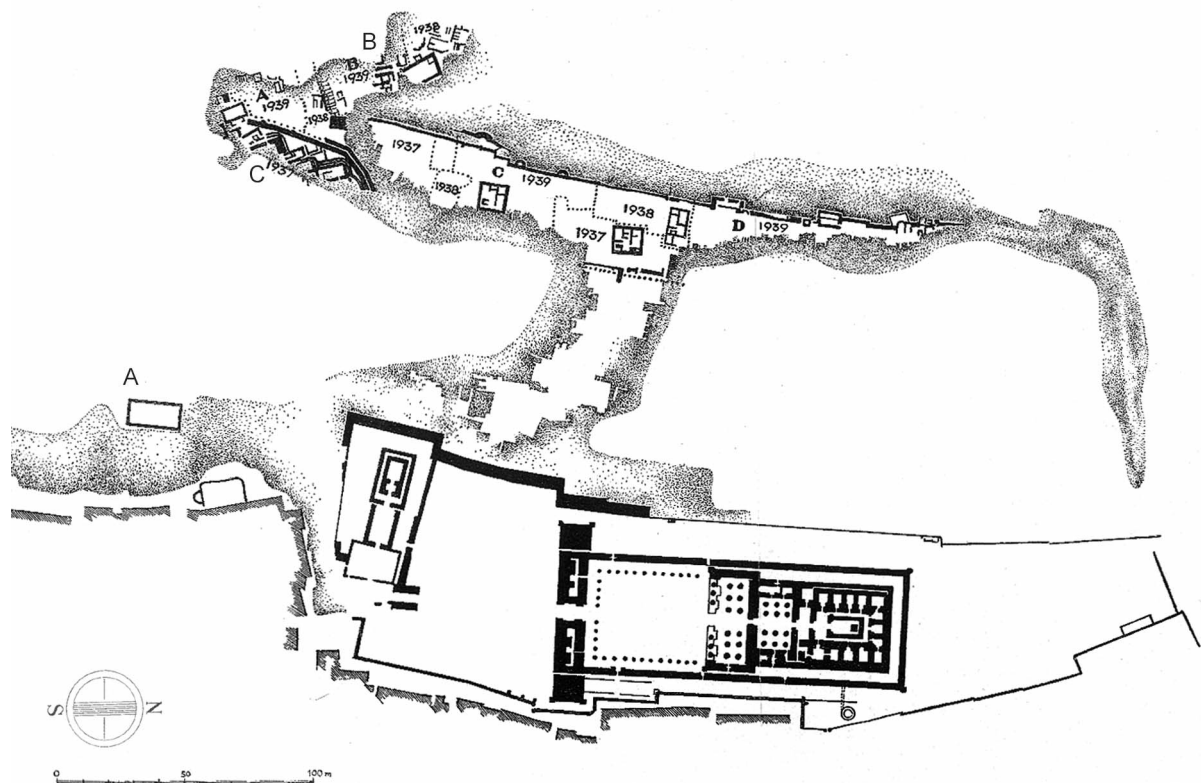
training young scholars to resume work in Egypt as soon as circumstances permitted. He never returned to Edfu. Instead, he initiated successful Polish archaeological projects in Egypt, as well as in other countries of Africa and the Near East. The antiquities from Edfu became the subject of numerous articles and dissertations. For their authors, as well as for next generations of students of Egyptian, Near Eastern or Classical archaeology, the excavations in Edfu assumed legendary status, representing the heroic beginnings of Polish activity in Egypt.

The false door of the mastaba of Isi, which was brought to Warsaw after the 1938 campaign, has remained the centerpiece of the National Museum's Egyptian Gallery and the discoveries of the Franco-Polish mission still hold an inspiring potential for future research. The excavations at Tell Edfu have been resumed recently, although by scholars from other countries and representing other institutions. There are still numerous problems to be solved, concerning the town as well as the necropolis.

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Plan of Tell Edfu after the third campaign of Franco-Polish excavations
(after: Tell Edfu 1939, FFP III, plan no. 1)



- A - Fifth Dynasty, mastaba excavated by Alliot in 1932
- B - Mastaba of Isi
- C - Mastaba of Qar



*Excavations at Tell Edfu. In the center, J. Sainte Fare Garnot, J. Manteuffel, K. Michałowski
(National Museum in Warsaw photo archive)*



*False door of the mastaba of Isi. Edfu Sixth
Dynasty. Warsaw, National Museum
Inv. No. 139944 MNW
(Photo Z. Doliński)*



*Ointment jar with a lid with the names of king Teti
Calcite. From the mastaba of Isi. Edfu. Sixth Dynasty
Warsaw, National Museum, Inv. No 139962 MNW
(Photo Z. Doliński)*

*Stela of Sabni, Chancellor of the God and his wife,
priestess of Hathor Ankh-iout. The stela was seriously
damaged during the war and subsequently restored.
Limestone. Edfu. Sixth Dynasty
Warsaw, National Museum, Inv. No. 138874 MNW
(Photo Z. Doliński)*





*Hathoric emblem carved on a drum from a Ptolemaic column, found re-used in a marketplace building from the Roman Period
Sandstone. Edfu. 1st century BC
Warsaw, National Museum, Inv. No. 139379 MNW
(Photo Z. Doliński)*



*Baboon statue discovered in 1921/22 in the ruins of a Ptolemaic sanctuary during French excavations on the main tell. Muzzle restored.
Sandstone. 3rd-1st century BC
Warsaw, National Museum
Inv. No. 141271 MNW
(Photo Z. Doliński)*