

## The 20th Anniversary of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission Marina el-Alamein

Grażyna BĄKOWSKA-CZERNER, Rafał CZERNER

2015 marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission Marina el-Alamein and the 30th anniversary of the discovery of the site. During this time architectural and archaeological research has been carried out at the site; numerous relics of historic building structures have been preserved and conservation methods have been improved.

The ancient town discovered on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt at the location of today's Marina el-Alamein developed from the second century BC to the sixth century.<sup>1</sup> It is suggested, although this still needs to be proven beyond doubt, that the town's name was Leucaspis or Antiphrae.<sup>2</sup> A few remains of Hellenistic-Roman structures were accidentally unearthed and then scientifically uncovered by Prof. Wiktor A. Daszewski in 1985 during the construction of a modern tourist village.<sup>3</sup> Continuation of the research brought to light many architectural structures: houses, public buildings, har-

<sup>1</sup> W. A. Daszewski, *Marina El Alamein – the site of an unknown Graeco-Roman settlement on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt*, [in:] *Marina El Alamein, Archaeological background and conservation problems*, L. Krzyżanowski (ed.), vol. 1, Warsaw, 1991, p. 12; Id. *Graeco-Roman town and necropolis in Marina el-Alamein*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean", XX (Research 2008) 2011, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> W. A. Daszewski et al., *Excavations at Marina el-Alamein 1987–1988*, "Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo" 46, 1990, p. 15–17; A. Twardecki, *Marina – nowe polskie stanowisko archeologiczne w Egipcie. Próba lokalizacji na mapie Egiptu grecko-rzymskiego*, "Studia i Materiały Archeologiczne" 9, 1992, p. 107–118.

<sup>3</sup> W. A. Daszewski, *Témoignage de l'urbanisation de la Côte Méditerranéenne de l'époque hellénistique et romaine dans la lumière des fouilles de Marina el Alamein*, "Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie" 132, 1995, p. 14.

bour warehouses, sections of streets, a church and a huge necropolis. From the very beginning, conservation of the unearthed remains was also undertaken by successive conservation missions. The Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission Marina el-Alamein was organised in 1995, under the leadership of Prof. Stanisław Medeksza.<sup>4</sup> The mission has been working as a cooperation between the Egyptian State Supreme Council of Antiquities, the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of University of Warsaw, and the Faculty of Architecture of Wrocław University of Science and Technology, with the extended support and long-time cooperation from the Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art. It collaborates with the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations of Jagiellonian University and with Adam Mickiewicz University.



Figure 1: The Alexandria National Museum on the opening day of the jubilee exhibition (Photo: Piotr Zambrzycki)

In the jubilee year, two academic events took place: an exhibition organised in the Alexandria National Museum opened in May, and an international interdisciplinary conference “Greco-Roman Cities at the Crossroads of Cultures” in the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław in September.

Dr Mamdouh Eldamaty, Minister of State for Antiquities and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology invited to the Alexandria National Museum for the inauguration of the exhibition “20 years of the Egyptian-Polish Conservation Mission Marina el-Alamein”, on 26th of May 2015. The

<sup>4</sup> S. Medeksza, *Marina el-Alamein. Conservation Work 1995*, “Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean” VII (Reports 1995), 1996, p. 42.

achievements of the mission in the course of its work, the architectural and archaeological research as well as the results of the preservation and conservation activities were presented at the exhibition and in the lecture that accompanied the inauguration.

The opening ceremony was attended by Dr Mahmoud Afifi, Head of Egyptian Antiquities Sector of Supreme Council of Antiquities, Dr Nadia Khedr, Director of the Alexandria National Museum, Dr Zbigniew Szafranski, Director of the Cairo Branch of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of University of Warsaw, Jacek Buda, First Secretary of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Cairo, Prof. Andrzej Koss, Director of the Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Prof. Rafał Czerner, Director of the Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission Marina el-Alamein, and Head of the Department of History of Architecture, Art and Technology of the Faculty of Architecture, Wrocław University of Science and Technology and by Polish and Egyptian members of the Conservation Mission.



Figure 2: During the opening ceremony of the exhibition at the Alexandria National Museum (Photo: Piotr Zambrzycki)

The interdisciplinary conference “Greco-Roman Cities at the Crossroads of Cultures” was held in Wrocław on the 17–18 September 2015 to celebrate the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission Marina El-Alamein.

The ancient town at the location of today’s Marina El-Alamein on the northern coast of Egypt, found itself at the crossroads of several cultures. The

Hellenic civilisation, to which the settlement owes its emergence, later replaced by the Roman civilisation, both benefited from the town's position on the land and sea trading routes connecting different regions, mainly Alexandria with Cyrenaica, and also leading further to the west and towards the Orient. Egyptian influences, however, are equally strong. Over time, the city became the seat of a Christian bishopric. Meeting here, various cultures arose, grew in strength, after which their significance weakened; however, they always coexisted, influencing each other. The syncretism prevailing here is notable in art, architecture, religion and worship.



Figure 3: Inauguration of the jubilee conference at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław (Photo: Piotr Zambrzycki)

Representatives of different disciplines and research methodologies were invited to the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław to an academic discussion and exchange of experience: archaeologists, architects, specialists in religious studies, historians, conservators, and other researchers of archaeological sites and towns with a similar history and place in the ancient world, art and culture.

The conference was organised by the Department of History of Architecture, Art and Technology of Faculty of Architecture of Wrocław University of Science and Technology, the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of University of Warsaw, Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations of Jagiellonian University and Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art. The academic board included the following professors: Wiktor A. Daszewski and Michał Gawlikowski (University of Warsaw),

Patrizio Pensabene (Sapienza University of Rome), Tomasz Waliszewski (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology), Jacek Kościuk and Rafał Czerner (Wrocław University of Science and Technology). The conference gathered over 50 specialists representing nearly 30 academic research centres from different countries.<sup>5</sup> The results of their research was presented in 33 papers and several posters.



Figure 4: Professors Patrizio Pensabene and Alessandro Roccati summarizing the conference (Photo: Piotr Zambrzycki)

The inauguration of the conference was attended by Prof. Cezary Madryas, Vice-Rector for Development of Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Prof. Elżbieta Trocka-Leszczyńska, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Prof. Marta Kudelska,

<sup>5</sup> Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University, Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies. Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Archaeological Museum in Cracow, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Bologna University, Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations. Jagiellonian University, Cracow University of Technology, German Archaeological Institute Cairo, Institute for the Study on Ancient Mediterranean. NCR Rome, Institute of Archaeology. Jagiellonian University, Institute of Archaeology. University of Warsaw, Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, International Institute for Humankind Studies. Florence, National Preserve “Chersonesos of Taurica”, Opificio delle Pietre Dure/Scuola di Alta Formazione. Florence, Padova University, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology. University of Warsaw, Sapienza University of Rome, Società Piemontese di Archeologia e Belle Arti, Technical University in Kielce, The Berenike Project, University Ca’ Foscari. Venice, University of Leicester. School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Łódź, University of Rzeszów, University of Turin, University of Wrocław, Wrocław University of Science and Technology.

Director of the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations, Jagiellonian University and former directors of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology Prof. Michał Gawlikowski and Prof. Wiktor A. Daszewski, the discoverer of the archaeological site in Marina el-Alamein. The conference was also honoured by the presence of Prof. Tomasz Waliszewski, Director of Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw.

Research on important archaeological sites was presented during the conference. They concerned different parts of the Mediterranean world from North Africa through Egypt, the Kingdom of Meroe and Cyprus towards Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and further on to Georgia and Crimea.

The topography of Ptolemais was presented by Jerzy Żelazowski (University of Warsaw). Monika Rekowska (University of Warsaw) compared this site with Apollonia, the second major port city of Cyrenaica. The paper presented by Patrizio Pensabene and Eleanora Gasparini (Sapienza University of Rome) also referred to Cyrenaica, comparing its architecture with Egyptian. They emphasised the mutual influence of Cyrene and Alexandria. Attention was paid to political, social and economic changes, which also had an impact on the development of the architecture of the cities. Of great importance in these studies is the question of the late antique housing at Ptolemais.

Most of the papers were related to cities of the Greco-Roman Egypt. Grzegorz Majcherek (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology), head of the Polish-Egyptian mission working at the Kom el-Dikka, presented architectural design in post-classical Alexandria. This was a period of the disintegration of urban life visible in the slow decline of the domestic quarter, but also the period when a grand new complex of lecture halls was created. A combination of new building styles and innovative building techniques was discussed.

Numerous papers concerned the archaeological site of Marina el-Alamein. Wiktor A. Daszewski (University of Warsaw) presented the history of the discovery and the first research conducted there. A further investigation was described in the paper by Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner (Jagiellonian University) and Rafał Czerner (Wrocław University of Science and Technology) who presented the strong influences of different civilisations, which are visible in the topography of the city, the architecture of public buildings, tombs and houses, as well as in art and religion. Iwona Zych (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology) discussed the archaeological research conduc-



ted within the Marina el-Alamein Site Presentation Project (MASP) funded by the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE/EAP). The uncovered sections of residential architecture in the central and northern parts of the city dated from the first centuries of Roman occupation of Egypt were presented.

In addition to the archaeological and architectural works, geological research has been carried out on the site by Janusz Skoczyła and Małgorzata Mrozek-Wysocka (Adam Mickiewicz University). The purpose of the petroarchaeological research conducted in the Marina was the study of the provenance and the use of building and ornamental stones. Mrozek-Wysocka points out that among the raw material a very large petrographic diversity can be observed. The results of the study indicate various places as they sources of marble artefacts from Marina excavations, inter alia, Proconnesos, Carrara, Pentelikon. This may provide a contribution to the debate on the possible transport routes and stone trade relations within Mediterranean area in the Greco-Roman period.

Restoration work and research were also presented. The conservation and preservation of architecture has been conducted primarily by researchers from the Wrocław University of Science and Technology. Such work was illustrated by Wiesław Grzegorek and Wojciech Osiak (Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission Marina el-Alamein), who is also involved in the conservation of sculptured elements. Piotr Zambrzycki (Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art), who carried out some reconstruction and the conservation of numerous elements of architectural decoration and sculptures in Marina, presented the techniques involved in its execution. The conservation of sculpture and painting has been carried out by specialists from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. During the archaeological excavations, many fragments of wall paintings were found. Marlena Koczorowska (Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw) presented their conservation.

Example of conservation research conducted in the temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari was described by Teresa Dziejczak and Mariusz Caban (Wrocław University of Science and Technology). The authors presented a short story of the reconstruction of the sculpture of Queen Hatshepsut as Osiris. They showed the results of architectural research and of studies regarding the correct reconstruction of the statue.

Two papers were dedicated to the research on Marea. Krzysztof Babraj (Archaeological Museum in Cracow) and Janusz P. Kogut (Cracow University of Technology) discussed the development of this ancient city in the



light of archaeological excavations. In their paper, Dagmara Wielgosz and Mariusz Gwiazda (University of Warsaw) presented changes in the use of space in the 6th–8th century house in Marea. Mohamed Kenawi (Alexandria Centre for Hellenistic Studies. Bibliotheca Alexandrina), head of the international archaeological mission at Kom al-Ahmer and Kom Wasit in the Western Delta of Egypt, elucidated the recent results of the fieldwork and the evidence for the strong commercial trade system with the Mediterranean. The influences of different cultures are also evident in the architecture of Hermopolis Magna, presented by Marek Barański (Technical University in Kielce), as well as in Bernike on the Red Sea. The latter was discussed by Iwona Zych (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology). A recently completed magnetic survey and archaeological Polish–American projects have provided extensive data for reconstructing a picture of the topography of this site. Examples of multi-cultural patterns are also evident in the architecture of Meroitic Napata. Palace of Natakamani is a perfect example of this – presented by Emanuele Ciampini (University Ca' Foscari).

Typological studies of the shops and workshops of the early mediaeval settlement of Abu Mina were presented by Jacek Kościuk (Wrocław University of Science and Technology), who co-authored another paper entitled “Application of analytical methods in analysing of architecture and urbanism of Mediterranean cities”. This was presented by Anna Kubicka (Wrocław University of Science and Technology), who discussed the cosine quantogram method and its application around the sites of Marea and Paphos.

At the conference the development of architecture in Nea Paphos in Cyprus was also mentioned. New evidence on the Hellenistic architecture in the area of Agora was provided by Ewdoksja Papuci-Władyka, Łukasz Miszk and Karolina Rosińska-Balik (Jagiellonian University). Aleksandra Brzozowska (Wrocław University of Science and Technology) presented the reconstruction of the West Courtyard from the so-called “Hellenistic House”.

Ilona Skupińska-Løvset (University of Łódź) presented her research on the early Roman town Bethsaida/Julias on Lake Gennesaritis. Andrzej Mrozek (Jagiellonian University) also spoke about Bethsaida and other cities of Palestine at the time of Jesus. Two papers were dedicated to the architecture of houses in the Middle East. Michał Gawlikowski (University of Warsaw) spoke about Roman houses in Syria based on the example of Palmyra. Domestic architecture in rural Phoenicia in Jiyeh (Porphyreon) and Chhim in the Roman and Byzantine period was discussed by Tomasz Waliszewski (Pol-





ish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology), Michał Dzik (University of Rzeszów) and Mariusz Gwiazda (University of Warsaw).

The Roman architecture of Georgia was presented by Lana Burkadze (Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University) based on the example of Gonio-Asparus. Several papers were dedicated to the architecture of Chersonesos of Taurica. The research conducted by prof. Jerzy Rozpędowski on its Ancient Theatre was illustrated. This building was also referred to by Oscar Kubrak (University of Warsaw) in his search for analogies in other Greco-Roman cities. The audience gained an insight into the architecture of the Roman baths in ancient cities of North Africa, summarised by Maciej Czapski (University of Warsaw) and public latrines in some Roman provinces, studied by Andrzej Wypustek (University of Wrocław).

Very often the speakers referred to research on architectural decoration. More space was dedicated to this subject by Niccolò Mugnai (University of Leicester), who discussed egyptianizing motifs and Alexandrian influences on some elements of architectural decoration from Mauritania Tingitana. Agata Kubala (University of Wrocław) discussed the Greek and South Italian architectural elements in the collection of the Museum at University of Wrocław.

In addition to the architectural subjects prevailing at the conference, some papers on other issues were also delivered. Carla Sfameni (Institute for the Study on Ancient Mediterranean. NCR Rome), on the basis of selected archaeological and literary sources, presented an overview of the different attitudes toward mythological statues in Late Antiquity. Agnieszka Dzwonek (The Berenike Project) presented Ceramics from Berenike and Anna Południkiewicz (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology) looked at ceramics from Ptolemaic Athribis. Johanna Sigl (German Archaeological Institute Cairo) spoke about Greco-Roman influences on the cuisine of the inhabitants of Syene. Elvira D'Amicone's (Società Piemontese di Archeologia e Belle Arti) paper was dedicated to Egyptian surveying methods. Alessandro Roccati (University of Turin) referred to ancient texts, and Adam Łukaszewicz (University of Warsaw) spoke about inscriptions in the tomb of Memnon (Ramesses VI).

The conference was summarised by professors Patrizio Pensabene from the Sapienza University of Rome and Alessandro Roccati from the University of Turin.



### Note about the authors

**Grażyna BAKOWSKA-CZERNER** is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisation, Jagiellonian University in Kraków. The area of her research includes: magical gems, meroitic pottery, art and archaeology of Greco-Roman Egypt. Publications: Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner, Alessandro Roccati, Agata Świerzowska (eds), *The Wisdom of Thoth. Magical Texts in Ancient Mediterranean*, Oxford 2015, Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner, *Some Remarks on Meroitic Pottery from Jebel Barkal/Napata*, "Beiträge zur Sudanforschung" 9, 2015, 455–464, Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner, Rafał Czerner, Grzegorz Majcherek, *Research and Conservation in the Roman Baths of Marina El-Alamein in the 2012 and 2013 Seasons (Polish-Egyptian Conservation Mission)*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" 24.1, 2015, 109–134.

**E-MAIL:** [grazyna.bakowska-czerner@uj.edu.pl](mailto:grazyna.bakowska-czerner@uj.edu.pl)

**Rafał CZERNER** is a Professor at the Department of History of Architecture, Arts and Technology, Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology. The area of his research includes: conservation of monuments, medieval, Roman, Egyptian architecture and architecture of Greco-Roman Egypt, as well as contemporary architecture. Selected recent publications: *The Architectural Decoration of Marina El-Alamein*, British Archaeological Research (BAR) International Series 1942, Oxford 2009; *Architecture of the Temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir El-Bahari. Some Remarks on the Hypostyle Hall: Study on Architectural Elements of the Roof Structure* [in:] P. Kousoulis, N. Lazaridis (eds.), *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of Aegean, Rhodes, 22-29 May 2008*, Vol. II, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 241, Leuven: Peeters 2015, pp.159–173; *An Outstanding Building in the North-western Part of the Episcopal Complex in Novae* [in:] L. Vagalinski, N. Sharankov (eds.), *Limes XXII. Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies. Ruse, Bulgaria, September 2012*, "Bulletin of the National Archaeological Institute", XLII (2015), Sofia 2015, pp. 179–187.

**E-MAIL:** [rafal.czerner@pwr.edu.pl](mailto:rafal.czerner@pwr.edu.pl)

