

# Editorial

## *Quid novi ex Nubia*

The present volume of *Études et Travaux* we are proudly presenting to our readers deserves attention for at least two reasons. On the one hand, being the thirty second issue in the series it confirms the strong and durable position of the journal on the international scholarly periodicals' market. On the other, it is a completely new proposal of a homogenous, special volume in which we have abandoned the thematic diversity of the previous issues in favour of a multi-faceted, in-depth presentation of the ancient and medieval cultures of Sudan. Such a volume was announced long ago and has been eagerly awaited by many. The first issue of *Études et Travaux* published in 1966 had a picture of St Anna from the Cathedral in Faras on its cover. Two years after the termination of the Faras dig it promised more than one article by Stefan Jakobielski on the list of the Pachoras bishops ('La liste des évêques de Pakhoras') and anthropological analysis of their teeth and jawbones by Elżbieta Promińska ('The Jawbones and Teeth of the Pachoras Bishops. Excavated in 1961–1962 in Faras, Sudan').

It took fifty-three years for the cultures of the Middle Nile Valley to find an adequate presentation in the *Études et Travaux*. Most articles in this volume were contributed by foreign authors, who present key research on Nubia. Alongside the papers from the Polish authors, they share one thing, namely all are tributes to Prof. Stefan Jakobielski, whose distinguished career links the heroic beginnings in Faras with the glorious years in Old Dongola, where the mission under his command made discoveries which rewrote the history of medieval Nubia. Stefan devoted all his life to research of Nubian visual arts, architecture and epigraphy. His first year as the excavations' director in Dongola coincides with the release of the first volume of *Études et Travaux*, to which he contributed one of his most important articles. But this is not the end of Stefan's long relationship with our journal.

The thirty second volume of *Études et Travaux* shows the milestones of his career and the long path trodden by Polish and world Nubiology over the last half-century. In the future we would like to return to this concept of monographic volumes devoted to ancient and medieval Nubia. We hope we will be able to publish the next special Nubian volume within a timespan of less than fifty three years. The number of Polish and foreign missions working in Sudan has increased dramatically in past decades. Consequently, the number of fascinating discoveries, thematic studies, technological analyses, laboratory tests, etc.



1. Professor Stefan Jakobielski (right) with Bogdan Żurawski (left) and Elżbieta Wanot (centre) at Dongola, 1985 (Phot. J. Kucy).

has also amplified. They all bring something new to Nubiology. We hope that in a few years, with the help of an outstanding international team of reviewers and authors, we will be able to show the achievements of Polish and world Nubiology in accordance with the highest requirements of editorial art.

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In 1966, when the first issue of *Études et Travaux* was released, Poland had only one archaeological mission in Sudan. Excavations in Dongola, the capital of the Kingdom of Makuria, had begun only two years earlier. In July 1964, the waters of Lake Nasser flooded the Faras Cathedral, and in December the first season of Dongola excavation took place. Prof. Kazimierz Michałowski was director of the mission until his death in 1981. The fieldwork of the first and second campaigns was supervised by Antoni Ostrasz. Stefan Jakobielski replaced him during the 1966/1967 season and headed the mission until 2006 when Włodzimierz Godlewski took over the rudder of the Dongola nave. Artur Obłuski has been managing the work in Old Dongola since 2018. Old Dongola was the only Polish concession in Sudan until 1972, when the mission organised by Lech Krzyżaniak began field research at the Neolithic site in Kadero. Excavations were preceded by field reconnaissance between Khartoum and the Sixth Cataract (on both banks of the Nile). Of the dozen or so archaeological sites registered, Kadero, located 18kms north of Khartoum, was deemed most promising.

1972 marked itself in the history of Polish Nubiology in a special way. The Society for Nubian Studies was established, with Michałowski as its first chairman, in this year. The opening of the Nubian Gallery in the National Museum in Warsaw in 1972 was coupled with the *Colloque Nubiologique Internationale* (19–22 July), which took place in the museum building.

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a rapid development of Polish field research in the Middle Nile. In winter 1993, the Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition (GAME), under the direction of Henryk Paner, began reconnaissance in Jebel Querri near the Fifth Nile Cataract. After two weeks of work, the GAME moved to Sennar, the former capital of the Funj Sultanate on the Blue Nile. January 1995 witnessed the team surveying the proposed Khartoum-Atbara road. A year later the GAME started rescue works in an area expected to be flooded by the Nile waters dammed up upriver from Morwi Island. Initially, the GAME concession covered the entire right bank from Karima to Abu Hamed, later, after rescue missions from other countries joined the project, its size was reduced.

In 1998, the Southern Dongola Reach Survey (SDRS) was launched. The mission of the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences since 2010), under the direction of Bogdan Żurawski, undertook the task of registering archaeological sites and conducting field research on the right bank of the Nile between Old Dongola and Ez-Zuma. A year earlier, in February 1997, a brief reconnaissance in the region of Abkur culminated in the discovery of the Meroitic temple in Soniyat. In total, during three years of SDRS fieldwork, about 900 archaeological sites were registered and excavations were carried out in Soniyat, Abkur, Hammur Abbasija, Diffar, Deiga and Bakhit. The SDRS mission also accomplished a rescue operation in Usli on the left bank of the river where a Post-Meroitic cemetery was accidentally unearthed by road builders. A side effect of this research was the discovery of the Kushite temple in Usli. A significant achievement of the SDRS was the unearthing of the foundations of a huge Kushite temple on the right bank of the Nile, in Hugeir Gubli.

In the first year of research, the SDRS team started field work in Banganarti, which had been endangered by the intensive horticulture in the Nile palaeochannel. In February 2001, a trial pit in the eastern slope of the main *kom* in Banganarti revealed a ruin of a pilgrimage church dedicated to Archangel Raphael. In addition to sixty wall paintings, excavations in Banganarti, Raphaelion brought a rich epigraphic crop of nearly a thousand wall inscriptions. The progress of excavations in 2004–2008 was significantly slowed down by the Banganarti mission's commitment to rescue operation in the area of the Fourth Cataract. Salvage works started with a field reconnaissance in 2003 were followed by the excavation in a huge fortress at Dar al-Arab by a joint Polish-British mission. Polish-Sudanese excavations on the islands of Saffi and Uli duly followed in 2004. The efforts of two missions operating under the aegis of the PCMA focused on the left bank of the Nile between the *manatig* (districts) of Shemkhiya and Khor Ghizlan.

Polish rescue work in the area of the Fourth Cataract ended with the division of the finds. Just like during the famous *partage* of murals and other objects discovered in Faras,

the Polish side obtained half of all finds excavated in the endangered region, including bronze vessels from the royal barrow in Hajar el-Beida.

In December 2004, the mission under the direction of Mahmoud el-Tayeb started systematic research on the most important post-Meroitic graveyard in the Middle Nile. The fieldwork in Ez-Zuma continues to this day, bringing an extremely rich crop of finds from burial mounds belonging to tribal leaders. In 2006, the first campaign of the new project of the PCMA took place. From 15<sup>th</sup> January 2006 to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2006, a mission under the direction of Włodzimierz Godlewski carried out documentation work in the medieval defence complex in Merowe esh-Sheriq and in the tumulus cemetery in Tanqasi, inaugurating research on the beginnings of the Kingdom of Makuria (MtoM Project).

The last season of the rescue operation in the area of the Fourth Cataract took place in 2008. In the following year, the GAME team began exploration of a huge concession covering most of the Bayuda Desert. The work continues to this day.

The end of the salvage operation in the Fourth Cataract coincided with the commencement of rescue works in Selib, nine kilometres downriver from Banganarti. Surface reconnoitring in 2008 resulted in the discovery of a Meroitic settlement (Selib 2). The excavations in Selib started in full swing in 2010, after the final completion of the rescue operation in the area of the Fourth Cataract. Research there allowed tracing cultural changes in the Dongola region from the fall of the Meroitic Kingdom to the end of the golden age of medieval Nubia (ninth-eleventh centuries). The decision of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan (NCAM) to merge the concessions in Selib and Banganarti gave a new name to the project: the Polish Expedition to Banganarti and Selib.

The first half-century of the Polish archaeological research in Sudan ended with an archaeological expedition of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznan Branch, to Bir Nurayet. The mission headed by Michał Kobusiewicz and Przemysław Bobrowski, which took to the field in November 2010, also included Krzysztof Pluskota, a veteran of Polish archaeological research in Sudan. It was he who, at the end of the 1990s, accompanied by the Dutch writer and photographer Arita Baaijens, discovered the fabulous rock art gallery in Bir Nurayet.

2013 was marked by an important return to Sudan. Marta Osypińska and Piotr Osypiński went back to the Affad 23 site, which they already investigated during the SDRS project. Their research in Affad changed the image of prehistory in this corner of the world.

The fabulous site of Kadero, excavated since 1972, was closed in 2004 after its director Lech Krzyżaniak passed away. In 2012, Poznań prehistorians opened investigations of a Neolithic site at Khor Shambat in Omdurman.

Polish Nubiology was highly honoured in 2017 when Artur Obłuski received a prestigious ERC Starting Grant for the investigation of the Muslim society established in Dongola after the fall of the Christian Kingdom of Makuria. Research on a previously unknown scale began in Dongola in 2018 and will last for the subsequent five years. In 2018, the history of Polish Nubiology touched upon its beginnings, when the work of the Polish mission in Soba, the capital of the most southern of the three Nubian kingdoms, began. Noteworthy, in April 1939 Anthony John Arkell, the British Commissioner for Archaeology in Sudan,

proposed Michałowski to carry out in Soba the first Polish excavations in Sudan. The grant from the Polish National Science Centre for the exploration of this remarkable site ultimately went to Mariusz Drzewiecki then an employee at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

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The thirty second volume of *Études et Travaux* appears on the eve of great anniversaries in Polish Nubiology. At the beginning of 2021 we celebrate the 60th anniversary of Polish excavations in Nubia and the bicentenary of the first Polish scholarly visit to Sudan. The details of the Michałowski's first season at Faras are well known to readers in Poland and abroad, although the travel of Józef Sękowski in Nubia deserves a short note.

Sękowski crossed the southern border of Egypt in April 1821. He braved southwards as far as he could during the Ismail Pasha war expedition, providing Polish readers with an excellent description of the Nile Valley above the First Nile Cataract. Thanks to his fluent command of Arabic, he understood the reality around him better than other travellers, drawing attention to details usually overlooked by others. This is particularly evident in his ethnographic comments and remarks. His observations on Arabic and Nubian are also extremely valuable. He wrote that the inhabitants of the Wadi Shellal (from Jebel Silsila to Dehmit) spoke a language which they themselves called Shellali. He noticed the differences between this dialect and the Nubian language spoken by native Nubians, who called themselves *Barabra*, which in the language of their northern neighbours is an abusive term. Sękowski travelled through Lower Nubia a few months after Frederick Cailliaud, but before Linant de Bellefonds. He gave a description of the ruin on the island of Darmus, rightly identifying it as a fortress. His remarks about Christian paintings in the Kushite temples are also very interesting. While describing the temple in Kalabsha, he did not forget to mention the famous Silko inscription, which he read in the original.

Sękowski was the first Pole in Faras, where he noticed a temple and... nothing worthy of note. He mentioned the ruins of the church on Kulb Island. After leaving Saï Island he stopped on the border of Dar Mahas, the southernmost point of his Nubian journey.

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In the short history of Polish Nubiology, sketched above, the name of Stefan Jakobielski appeared more frequently than others. We are proud that we had the honour to dedicate the thirty-second volume of *Études et Travaux* to Stefan, our colleague, friend, teacher and today our associate in the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences. We will never stop bowing to his achievements, which he has often shared with our readers on the pages of *Études et Travaux*. So far he has graced thirteen volumes of the series with his excellent studies. These articles are the high notes of the journal. For reasons not entirely dependent on us, we did not make this volume in time for his 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017. However, we will definitely strive to improve and

prepare a timely *Festschrift* for his centenary. But for now, we wish Stefan the best of health, strength and many creative inspirations, which have never left him in the past and will certainly never leave him in the future.

Bogdan Żurawski

Subject editor of the volume

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