

**THE SCHEDIA PROJECT AT KOM EL GIZA / KOM EL HAMAM (DEPARTMENT OF BEHEIRA)
REPORT ON THE FOURTH SEASON 2006**

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Introduction

The joint project of the University of Goettingen/Germany and the University of Bern/Switzerland at ancient Schedia (modern Kom el Giza / Kom el Hamam) was continued in 2006 in two campaigns. An excavation campaign took place between January 1st and February 28th 2006. It was followed by a campaign devoted to the study of pottery, which took place between March 1st and April 15th. The pottery found in this season is stored at Kom el Giza. Some small finds were brought to the storerooms at Mustafa Kamel/Alexandria.

The aims of this fourth season have been as follows:

I. Excavation (cp. area-maps fig. 1, 2)

1. Kom el Giza: completion of two stratigraphical sondages at Kom el Giza (area 7 and 16); supplementary examinations in one area of the old excavations of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization (area 3)
2. Kom el Hamam: completion of several stratigraphical sondages (areas 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15) and execution of some new trenches (areas 18 – 22, 25 - 28)
3. Execution of one new stratigraphical sondage in the fields east of Kom el Giza (area 24)
4. Execution of one new stratigraphical sondage southwest of Kom el Hamam (area 23)
5. Kom el Sherif: Execution of one new stratigraphical sondage (area 17)

II. Numismatic analysis of the coin finds, which contributes to a history of coin circulation in Greco-Roman Egypt and helps with dating the stratigraphic units.

III. Analysis of pottery for statistical purposes, which contribute to the economic history of Greek and Roman Egypt and as an element of dating for the stratigraphy of the site.

¹ The project is financed by the German Research Foundation. Directors are Prof. Dr. Marianne Bergmann/Göttingen and Prof. Dr. Michael Heinzelmann/Bern, permanent members are Dr. Archer Martin/Rome (pottery analysis) and Ralph Rosenbauer M.A./Bern. The Egyptian Antiquities Organisation was represented during the excavation by the inspectors Ibrahim el Disouqi and Ashraf Abd el Rahman, during the study of pottery by Mustafa Mahmud Abu Houssein, for whose friendly and effective help we are very grateful. The restorator Ashraf Abd el Menem from the Damanhur office of the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation helped us by restoring some objects during the excavation and worked as a full-time restorator during the pottery-campaign. We thank the Supreme Council of Antiquities for the permission to continue our work at Schedia and especially Mr. Magdy Ghandour and at Damanur Mr. Fawzi el Choulani for their constant help.

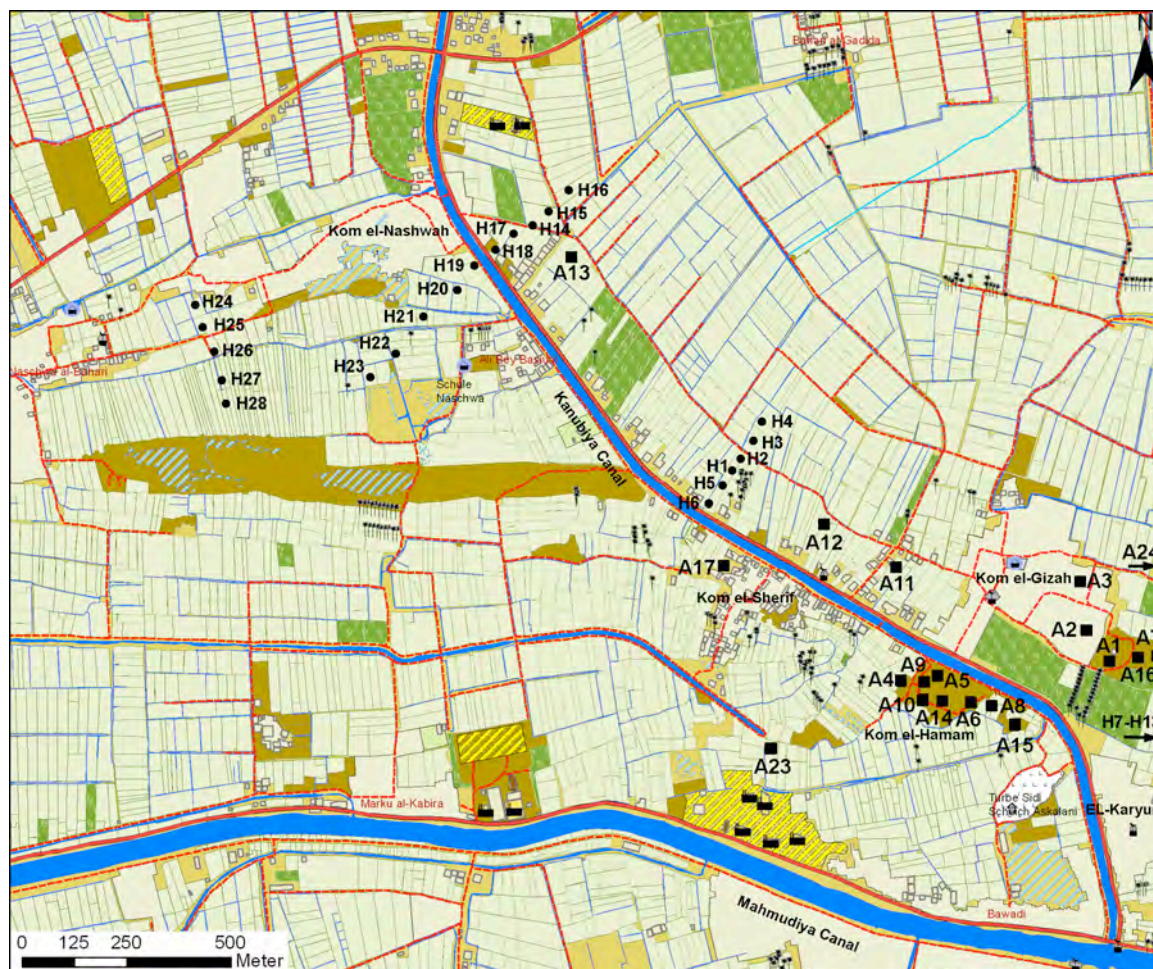


Fig. 1: Plan of Schedia showing areas of stratigraphic sondages (A) and drillings (H)

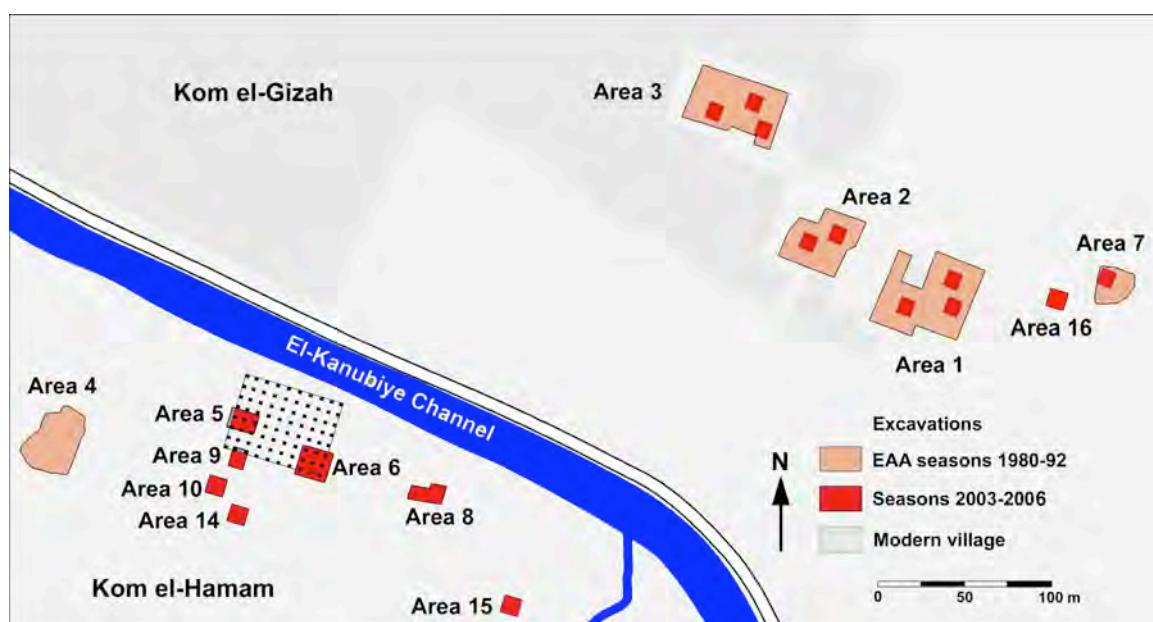


Fig. 2: Map of Kom el-Gizah and Kom el-Hamam with areas of investigations

I. Excavation

1. Kom el Giza

At Kom el Giza work has been continued in two trenches (area 7 and 16) which were begun in the seasons 2004 and 2005. *Area 7* is situated west of a huge wine press, excavated by the EAO in the 1990s. During the seasons 2004 and 2005 on a level 1,5 m below the wine press huge ashlar blocks have been found belonging to an earlier wall with a slightly different orientation. In order to investigate this stone- structure the trench has been enlarged for two more meters to the west. In the Northwest corner of area 7 a huge platform has been partially excavated (6 x 3 m, continuing to the west and north)(fig.3, 4).

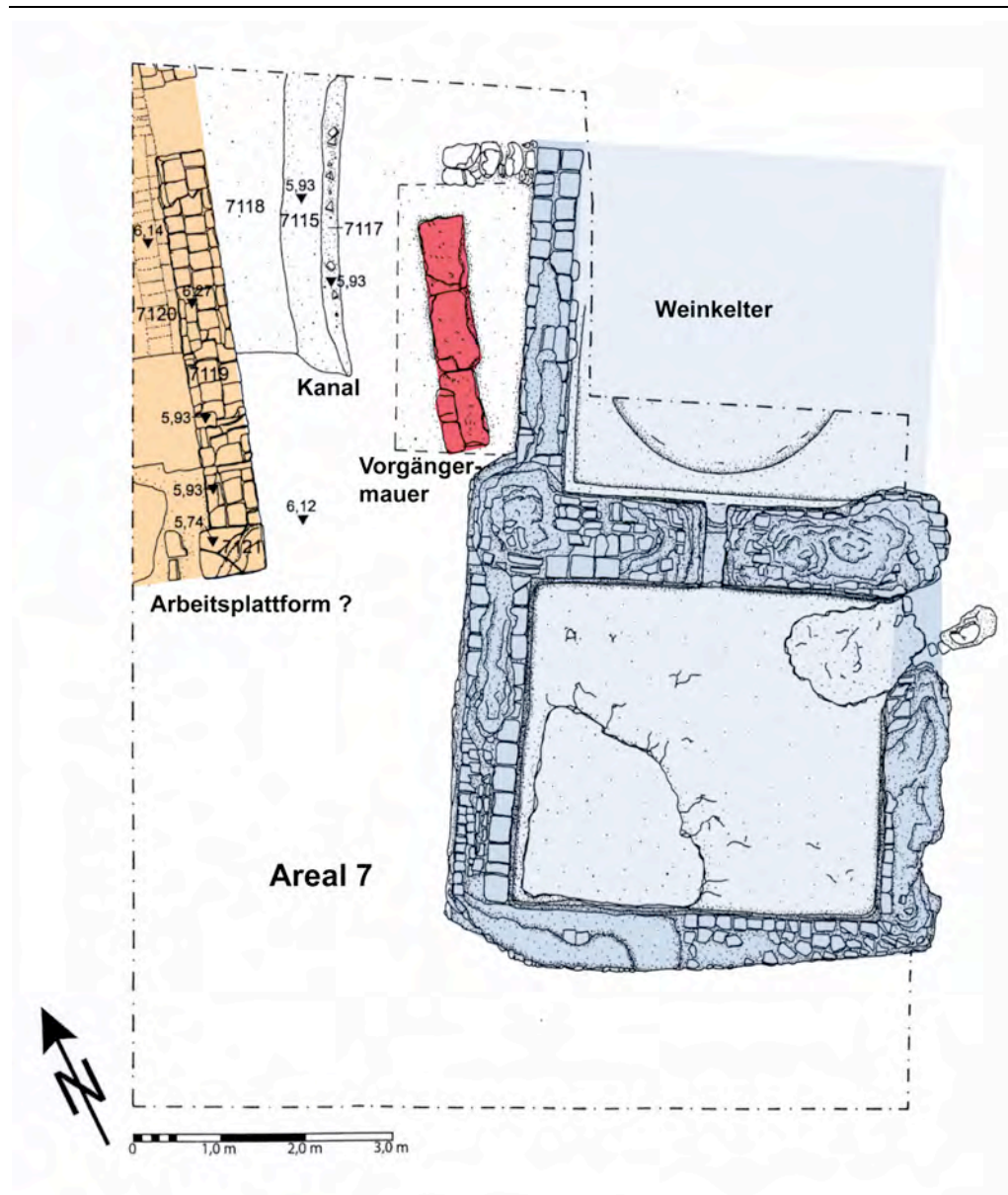


Fig. 3: Plan of area 7

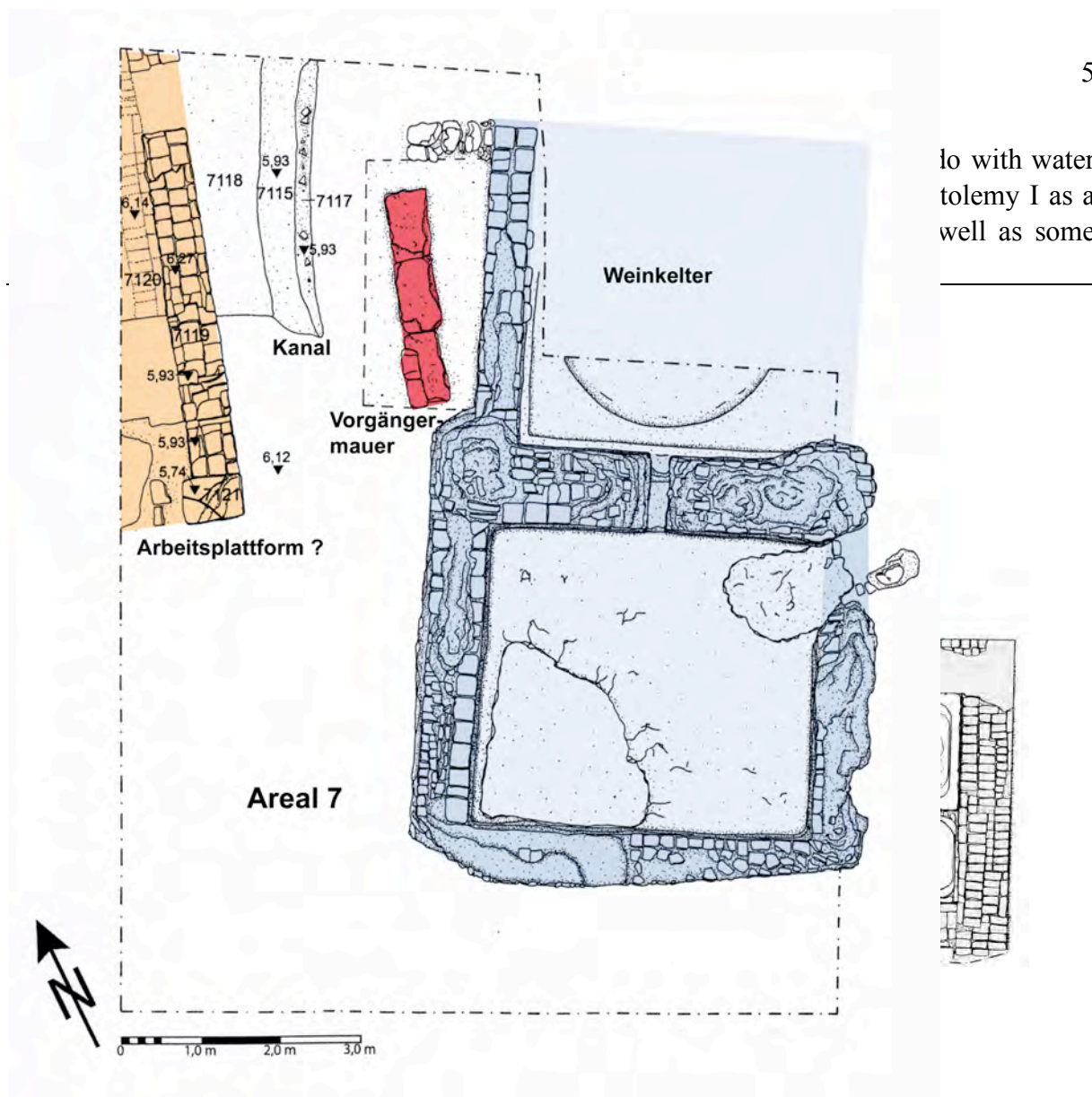
Its eastern wall is preserved to a height of 1,5 m and consists of burnt bricks with a foundation of ashlar blocks. Its corners are strengthened by ashlar stones. The south side is constructed in mud brick. The inner part of the construction is completely filled with mud brick and preserved to a height of about 2 meters. The purpose of this massive platform has not been clarified up to now. Its orientation and foundation level correspond with the huge ashlar blocks already excavated 2004. Probably both constructions belonged to one and the same construction phase. However the stratigraphy between both constructions was disturbed by a later channel with a northeastern orientation. It consisted in a rough construction of burnt bricks and amphora-fragments and among the covering elements there was a reused ashlar triglyphon-frieze.



Fig. 4: area 7

In area 16, begun in the season 2005, work has been continued. Several Byzantine and Late Roman phases have been investigated up to a depth of about 2,50 m below the actual surface. Most of the structures discovered are made of mud brick and belong to simple working installations for several purposes. However they remain isolated as no continuous walls or floors have been traced in this area.

In area 3 the area west of the round baths, excavated by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization in 1986/87 and flooded by water the whole year long, has been pumped out and cleaned in order to execute a sondage (3 x 3 m) along the western front of the building (fig.5). Its aim was to find dating material for the building. Although the working-conditions in this trench were very difficult because of the ground water, some results were gained. Below the round baths a structure was found with walls made of burnt brick and a floor consisting of sand and



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2. Kom el Hamam

At Kom el Hamam investigations of the huge pillar building⁴ and the earlier phases below this unusual building have been continued. Thanks to the low water table in *sectors 5 and 6* during some weeks in January and February it was possible to investigate the stratigraphy unto a depth of about 5 meters below the surface. Several earlier phases consisting of mud brick walls, floors and water channels have been uncovered. The analysis of pottery and coins shows, that these layers and constructions belong to the first century A.D.

Also in *area 9* work has been continued. Here in 2004 and 2005 the southern front of the above mentioned pillar building with an outer mud brick wall has been discovered. South of it, with a parallel orientation, a huge wall consisting of big ashlar blocks and a superstructure of mud brick has been found.

In 2006 additional investigations in the northern part of the sondage aimed at checking the relation between the pillar building and the outer mud brick wall. Contrary to our first interpretation it seems now that the south-side of the pillar building was closed from the beginning by massive mud brick walls. Thanks to the low water table excavation has also been continued between the pillar building and the huge wall down to a depth of about 4 meters below surface. It is now clear that this massive wall with its unusual diameter of 2

² Recently shown by the still unpublished excavations of Paolo Gallo at Nelson Island in the Bay of Abukir.

³ Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Copenhagen 40. Egypt: The Ptolemies (Copenhagen 1977) Nr. 36.

⁴ See Reports 2003-2005.

meters was grounded on a foundation made of opus caementicium, which is probably several meters deep. The wall consists in 5 layers of big ashlar blocks (each measuring 1,20 x 0,40 x 0,45 m) followed by a mud brick wall, which is preserved up to a maximum height of about 2 m.

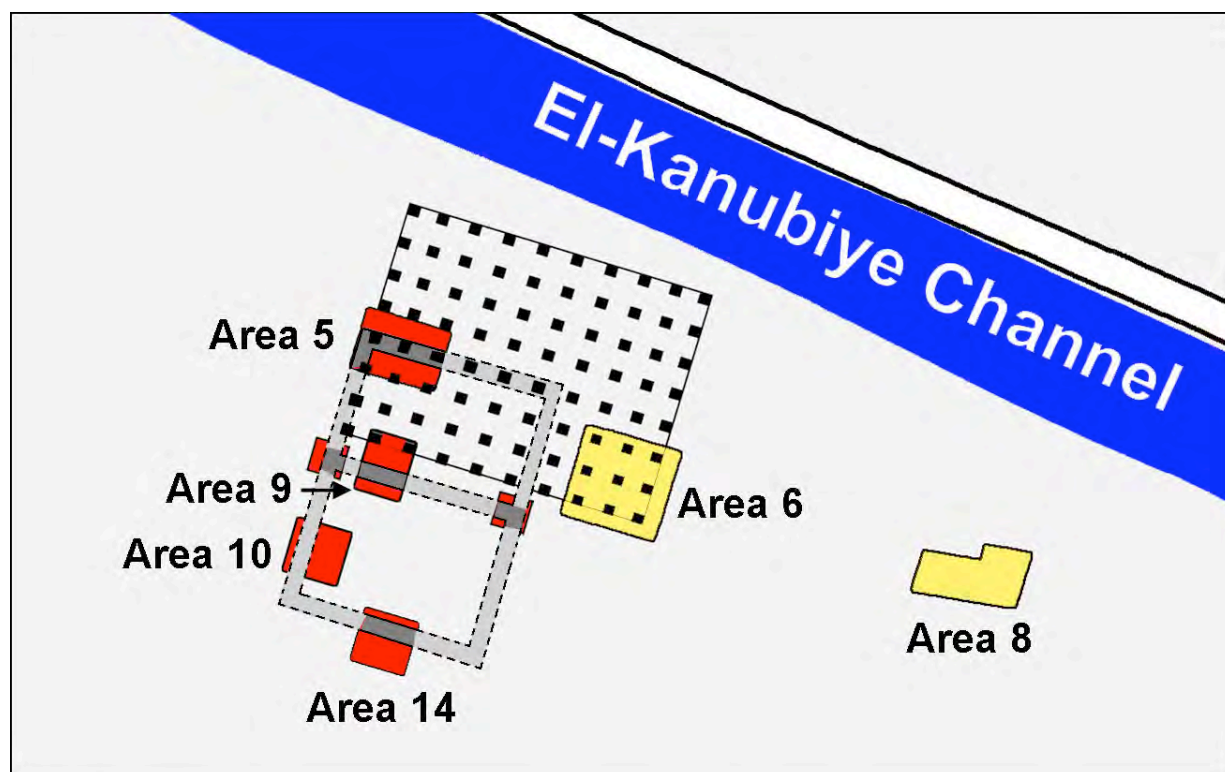


Fig. 6: Kom el Gizah, areas of investigation

In order to explain the purpose of this monumental wall a series of smaller trenches has been executed east and west of the trench 9 (*areas 18 – 22, 25 - 28*). Thus the wall could be traced on a length of about 32 m. In its western part the original corner has been found, although its stones have been robbed out in late antiquity (fig.7). Also in the east the wall seems to be interrupted; however there are some indications that it turned south after 32 m. Although the purpose of the wall is still not quite clear, there seems to be no doubt, that two more structures belong to the same building: they all have the same orientation, the same foundation level and the same construction technique and are equally monumental. In *trench 5*, some 21 m to the north there is a massive foundation (large 2,80 m; deep 1,50 m) made in opus caementicium and in *trench 14*, circa 26 m to the south of the big stone wall and below the pillar building, there is a further mud brick wall 2 m wide and with foundations in caementicium. It seems possible that these three walls belonged to a temple or some other monumental building. Some coin finds seem to indicate, that this structure was erected in the 1st cent. AD. Also in this case the pottery remains to be analyzed.



Fig. 7: western corner of the ashlar wall

In *area 14*, which has reached in 2005 only late Roman / Early Byzantine layers, excavations have been continued. In a depth of about 1,50 m below surface an interesting construction has been uncovered. It consists of 4 parallel huge pithoi without bottom, all of them installed with an inclination of 45° (fig.8). At the lower west end of the vessels traces of an intensive fire could be observed; however the original purpose of this installation is still to be clarified. According to coin and pottery finds this installation belongs to the late Roman period. In its surroundings mud brick walls and floors of several phases have been observed. Future analysis of the finds will give further evidence, if they belong to the same period.



Fig. 8: area 14

Area 15 is located on a small isolated part of the Kom some 100 m east of Kom el Hamam. During the season 2005 some mud brick walls have been unearthed forming two rooms of a habitation and a corridor outside of the building. In 2006 excavation continued tracing the remains of two earlier houses with mud brick walls and several floors (fig. 9). Fire places, simple earth beaten floors, small water channels connecting single rooms as well as a huge amount of amphora, cooking and coarse ware are indicating that these structures also belong to simple houses. The structures probably date from the Roman to late Roman period, however further evidence will be given by the numismatic and ceramological analysis.



Fig. 9: area 15

3. Area 24 (east of Kom el Giza)

Circa 500 meters east of Kom el Giza the results of the geophysical prospections showed a series of very strong, round anomalies with an diameter of ca. 10 m. In order to check one of these features, a sondage of 7 x 4 m has been executed. Immediately below the surface a huge pit has been traced, about 1,20 m deep, which was filled in a late period by fragmented burnt bricks and pottery. In the bottom of the pit a thick layer of ashes and burnt earth demonstrated that some sort of fire took place, however the purpose of this structure could not be clarified. Depending on further analysis the finds seem to indicate a late antique or Byzantine dating. In a deeper layer without pottery a number of Ptolemaic coins from the 2nd century B.C. were found.

4. Trench Area 23 (southwest of Kom el Hamam)

Some 600 m southwest of Kom el Hamam the geophysical prospection shows two parallel alignments in a distance of about 30 meters. It seemed possible that this feature is to be interpreted as a channel belonging to the channel-system around Schedia. Trench 23 (14 x 4 m) was executed to check the north side of this structure. However the excavations revealed that the magnetic anomalies shown by the geophysical prospection is caused not by a built construction but by two different layers of earth, one of which containing alluvial sand with high quantities of magnetic minerals. Because of the rising water table these earth features could not be followed deeper than about 1,20 m below surface.

5. Kom el Sherif

In order to check the stratigraphy and the phases of use of Kom el Sherif in the west of Schedia, a trench of 10 x 8 m has been executed at its westernmost part (*area 17*). The excavations reached a depth of ca. 2,50 m below surface and revealed a very complicated and intensive use of the whole area with different working installations like ovens, open fire places etc. The floor level was raised repeatedly, several channels and ditches crossed the area. Although some smaller mud brick walls were traced, they seem not to belong to a closed building structure. The area rather seemed to form a kind of open working area. Depending on further analysis of the finds this area seems to have been used between the Roman and Byzantine period. However the earliest phases have not been reached.

II. Numismatic analysis

During the season 2006 about 690 coins have been found and analyzed by H.-C. Noeske. The earliest datable coins belong to the beginning of the Ptolemaic period (Ptolemaios I. Soter), the latest to Heraclius (early 7th cent. AD). More than 70% belong to the late Roman and Early Byzantine period. Less than 5% are of the Ptolemaic period most of which have been found in Kom el Giza. This result may indicate that this area was settled earlier than the other parts of the town, even though most of them did belong the late antique stratigraphical units. In connection with the pottery the coins give important indications for the chronology of the stratigraphical units of each single area.

III. Work on the pottery

The season 2006 has been especially rich in pottery finds, mainly consisting of sherds of amphorae and coarse ware from the Roman and Byzantine period. About 800 boxes have been collected, cleaned, partly restored and begun to be studied under the guidance of A.Martin.

Contrary to the last years - due to the serious danger of the bird flu, which made it necessary for the group, working on the pottery to live at Alexandria – the pottery remained at the end of the excavation at Kom el Giza for further study. Among others the study of the pottery of *area 5* in the pillar-building has been finished and the statistical analysis is under way. First results show the predominance of utilitarian ware and amphorae over the whole period, but significant changes of the percentage of local and imported wares between the first and the last periods of the pillar building, i.e. the first/second and the sixth/seventh century. Further analysis will show the detailed chronology and thus the economic implications of these changes.

IV. The earlier finds from Kom el Giza at Mustafa Kamel/Alexandria

In 2006 the mission received the Supreme Council's permission to study and publish, in collaboration with the Egyptian colleagues, the finds from the excavations executed by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization at Kom el Giza from 1980 to 1992, which are now stored at Mustafa Kamel in Alexandria. A first assessment of the material was made, in order to gain an impression of the bulk and character of the material and to apply for the funding of this task.

(English text checked by Prof.Dr.Dr.h.c.C.J.Classen, D.Litt.Oxon.)

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