

THE SCHEDIA PROJECT AT KOM EL GIZA / KOM EL HAMAM (DEPARTMENT OF BEHEIRA)
REPORT ON THE FIFTH SEASON 2009

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Introduction

The project of the University of Goettingen/Germany at Schedia (modern Kom el Giza / Kom el Hamam) was continued in a fifth and final field season which took place between January 1st and February 28th 2009.¹ The pottery found in this season is stored at Kom el Giza. Some small finds will be brought to the storerooms at Mustafa Kamel/Alexandria. The activities of the 2009 season were as follows:

1. Excavation: continuation of the stratigraphical investigations at Kom el Giza (areas 1, 2, 3 and 7) and Kom el Hamam (areas 5, 9, 10, 14, 30-32)
2. Geoarchaeological and geophysical examinations in order to investigate the ancient landscape and topography of the settlement (David Jordan MSc)
3. 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 (Dr. C.-H. Noeske)
4. Analysis of pottery, which contribute to the economic history of Greek and Roman Egypt and as an element of dating for the stratigraphy of the site (Dr. Ch. Roemer-Strehl)
5. Archaeo-zoological analysis of animal bones to explore aspects of ancient alimentation and agriculture (Prof. Dr. Michael McKinnon)

1. Excavation (cp. area-map fig. 2)

At Kom el Giza work has been continued in areas 1, 2, 3 and 7, which have been originally excavated by the EAO in the 1980/90s and re-examined by the current project during the seasons 2003-2006. The general aim of these final investigations was to get better evidences for the dating of the building structures and to learn more about their original functions. At Area 1 a thorough cleaning in the southern part has

¹ The project is financed by the German Research Foundation. Directors are Prof. Dr. Marianne Bergmann/Göttingen and Prof. Dr. Michael Heinzelmann/Cologne. The Egyptian Antiquities Organisation was represented during the excavation by the inspectors Hisham Noaaman Atallah and Ibrahim Soubhi Ibrahim, for whose friendly and effective help we are very grateful. We thank the Supreme Council of Antiquities for the permission to continue our work at Schedia and especially Mr. Magdy al Ghandour and at Damanur Mrs. Niema Ibrahim Slim for their constant help.

been carried through in order to complete the general plan of this sector. Small stratigraphical trenches have been executed on the south side of the two stepped tomb monuments. They revealed a high quantity of fine wares, ashes and burned animal bones. Immediately south of the better preserved stepped monument a series of seven broken amphorae arranged in a semi-circle has been excavated. One of the amphorae was filled with miniature vessels. All these evidences seem to underline, that some kind of ritually motivated activities were going on in the vicinity of the monument, suggesting once more that these structures were actually tomb monuments, even though no real inhumation or cremation has been found yet.

In area 2 the basins have been studied in more detail executing some smaller trenches to get a better evidence for the dating of the late antique basins in this sector. Surprisingly on a much lower level, ca. 2 meters below one of the basins in the eastern part of this area a massive wall consisting of huge ashlar blocks has been found. In the remaining time for excavation it was not possible to define the purpose of this impressive structure.

In area 3 the round bath has been cleaned once more in order to complete the general plan and to study its phases of construction. Immediately outside its southern façade and entrance an undisturbed area of ca. 2 x 5 m has been excavated down to the foundations of the bath complex. This area obviously was used as passage way and dump area for the ashes and waste of the bath itself. The excavation revealed a dense stratigraphy of thin layers of uses demonstrating a continuous utilization of the bath through a long period from its probable Hellenistic construction until the Imperial period.

In area 7 previous excavations of the EAO had exposed a huge wine press. During the season 2006 on its eastern side an earlier building has been partially excavated on its eastern side, which showed on two sides a façade with burnt bricks on massive stone foundation. In 2009 we investigated the interior of the building. The excavations showed that the outer façades of burnt bricks were reinforced on their inside by massive mud brick walls (diameter: ca. 1 m). The interior was subdivided into small rooms with simple pavements on a level much higher than its outer foundations. Obviously the building has to be interpreted as a normal house, which was built however on a kind of massive basement. Maybe this arrangement was to avoid inundation during the seasonal flooding of the delta.

Excavations at Kom el Hamam had two main aims: 1. to clarify the question of an entrance of the huge pillar building, which has been investigated during the previous seasons, 2. to find out more about the still unidentified building structure, which consists of huge walls on foundations of opus caementicium.

Concerning the question of a possible entrance of the the huge pillar building three sondages (30, 31, 32) have been carried through in the outer pillar perimeter. Sondages 30 and 31 showed, that all of the apertures between the outer pillars actually were closed from the beginning by mud-brick walls. Only sondage 32 in the middle of the southern long side of the pillar building provided some evidence, which can be interpreted as potential entrance. Thus the whole building complex was completely closed on all sides except of one small entrance in the centre axis of the long side. As has been shown by the previous investigations the interior of the building was subdivided by further mud brick walls into long narrow halls covered by groined vaults made of opus caementicium. The original function of the building remains somehow speculative; however typological comparisons suggest, that the building might have been a storage facility. In sondage 30 remains of an earlier road and canal have been unearthed, which run parallel along the northern long side of the building. This means that the lay out of pillar building respects earlier boundaries.

During the seasons 2005 and 2006 remains of a impressive building consisting of mud brick walls with a diameter of 2m on foundations of opus caementicium and ashlar blocks have been found in sondages 5, 9 and 14. In order to get an better understanding of the layout and dating of this interesting and monumental structure sondages 10 and 14 have been carried further on and were enlarged. In both areas continuations of the opus caementicium foundations and mud brick walls have been traced. Meanwhile we know of at least 5 parallel walls in east-west direction as well as 2 similar north-south orientated walls. Particularly intriguing was the finding of a massive substructure, ca. 10 meters long, 4 meters large and 2 meters high, made of quarrystones in the east part of area 14. However the layout and function of this impressive complex remains open for the moment. As far as chronology is concerned, preliminary numismatic and pottery analysis indicates an Early Imperial date of origin.

2. Geoarchaology and geophysics

One of the main aims of this season was to gather more information on the ancient landscape and topography. In particular the search for the Canopic Nile and the canal was continued. Under the supervision of D. Jordan three geophysical prospection methods have been applied: Electrical Resistance Tomography (ERT), electromagnetic conductivity and magnetometry. Especially successful was the ERT, with ca. 20 long sections. Additionally two corings and sedimental analysis have been carried through. As a main result it seems now quite clear that the Canopic Nile has to be located between Kom el Hamam and Kom el Giza, following more or less the course of the modern Kanubiye canal. Moreover it seems likely that there was a kind of harbour area between Kom el Sherif and Nashwa. On the basis of this important geophysical results further drilling and sedimental analysis have to be carried through (planned for July 2009).

3. Numismatic analysis

During the season 2009 about 160 coins have been found and in part been analyzed by Dr. H.-C. Noeske. The earliest datable coins belong to the beginning of the Ptolemaic period (Ptolemaios I. Soter), which have been found in the surroundings of the bath at area 1.

Examination of previously found coins, which are stored at Mustafa Kamel has been continued. Altogether 5600 coins coming from Schedia have been investigated so far. In connection with the pottery the coins give important indications for the chronology of the stratigraphical units of each single area.

4. Work on the pottery

During the season 2009 ca. 150 boxes of pottery, mainly consisting of sherds of amphorae and coarse ware from the Roman and Byzantine period, but also some fine ware of the Hellenistic period have been collected. Study of this material has begun during the field season by Ch. Roemer-Strehl, giving first evidences for the dating. The analysis of this material and of the pottery found during the former seasons at Schedia will be continued in a separate study season under the guidance of A. Martin and Ch. Roemer-Strehl.

5. Archaeo-zoological analysis

During the five seasons of the current project about 10.000 fragments of animal bones have been collected, forming one of the largest complex of stratified samples of Roman Egypt. All these artefacts have been analyzed in February 2009 by M. McKinnon. The results will allow further insights into the daily life of the inhabitants of Schedia and will contribute to our knowledge of ancient alimentary and agricultural aspects. For example, one interesting result is, that at Schedia an exceptionally high number of oversized pigs were grown.

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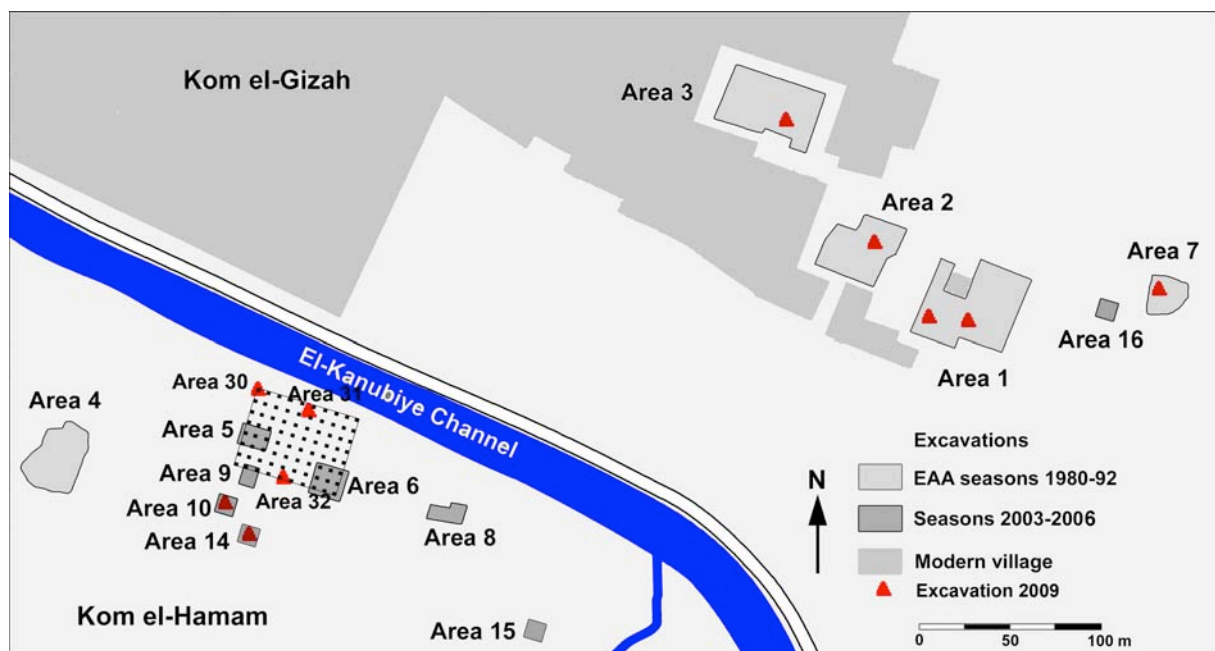


Fig. 1: Kom el Giza / Kom el Hamam. Map with areas excavated in 2009



Fig. 2: Kom el Giza. Area 1. Documentation and excavation at the stepped monument



Fig. 3: Kom el Giza. Area 1, stepped monument with amphorae



Fig. 4: Kom el Giza. Area 2, wall structure below basins



Fig. 5: Kom el Giza. Area 3, excavations south of round bath



Fig. 6: Kom el Giza. Area 7, house with mud brick walls



Fig. 7: Kom el Hamam. Area 10, caementicium foundation



Fig. 8: Kom el Hamam. Area 14, caementicium foundation



Fig. 9: Kom el Hamam. Area 30, northern façade of the pillar building



Fig. 10: Lamps