

# RESEARCH CENTRES

## RESEARCH CENTRE FOR MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY ITS EXCAVATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST\*

### I

The tradition of Polish studies on Mediterranean archaeology goes back to the closing years of the 18th century. Stanisław Kostka Potocki was at that time one of the foremost experts on Graeco-Roman antiquities. A noted collector, he also engaged in excavations of his own at Nola, Southern Italy, which led him to some highly original observations concerning the chronology of Greek vases. The hypotheses he formulated preceded by 30 years Gerhard's scientific classification of this particular category of archaeological material.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest development of Mediterranean archaeology, which in the course of the 19th century grew into an independent branch of science, occurred precisely at a time when Poland was no longer independent. Even so, in the early 20th century, science recorded the names of Poles, the results of whose research contributed to the achievement and fame of foreign scientific centres. Karol Lanckoroński's expedition to Pamphylia and Pisidia,<sup>2</sup> Mineyko's excavations at Dodona, Tadeusz Smoleński's<sup>3</sup> short but brilliant research in Egypt and, finally, the work of the first chairs of classical archaeology at the Polish universities in Galicia — Piotr Bieńkowski's in Cracow and Karol Hadaczek's and Edmund

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. Michałowski, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki jako archeolog* (Stanisław Kostka Potocki as an Archaeologist). *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* (History of Art Year-Book), a publication of the Polish Academy of Sciences History and Theory of Fine Arts Committee, Warsaw, 1956, pp. 502—513; M. L. Bernhard, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki — kolekcjoner waz greckich* (Stanisław Kostka Potocki — Collector of Greek Vases), *Meander*, Vol. 6, 1951, No. 8—9, pp. 431—449; M. L. Bernhard, *Naśladownictwo waz greckich w dobie Oświecenia* (Imitations of Greek Vases in the Age of the Enlightenment). *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki PIS* (Art History Bulletin of the State Institute of Art), Vol. XII, Warsaw, 1951; S. Lorentz, *O polskich zbieraczach waz antycznych* (Polish Collectors of Ancient Vases). *Meander*, Vol. 2, 1947, No. 1, pp. 4—14; S. Lorentz, *Polskie badania archeologiczne w okresie wczesnego klasycyzmu* (Polish Archaeological Research in the Period of Early Classicism), published in the collective work: K. Kumaniecki and others, *Epoka Peryklesa* (The Age of Pericles), Warsaw, 1949, pp. 107—130.

<sup>2</sup> K. Lanckoroński, *Städte Pamphylens und Pisidiens I—II*, Wien, 1890, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> J. Pilecki, *Działalność naukowo-badawcza Tadeusza Smoleńskiego w dziedzinie archeologii egipskiej* (Tadeusz Smoleński's Research Activity in Egyptian Archaeology). *Archeologia* (Archaeology), Vol. 10, 1958, Warsaw—Wrocław, 1960 pp. 219—238; J. Pilecki, *Tadeusz Samuel Smoleński — pionier egiptologii polskiej (1884—1909)* (Tadeusz Samuel Smoleński — Pioneer of Polish Egyptology, 1884—1909). Reports on the proceedings of a commission of the Polish Academy of Sciences Cracow Branch, January—June 1960, pp. 1—4.



Bulanda's in Lwów — all these foreshadowed independent research by Poles and the growth of a cadre of Polish classical archaeologists.<sup>4</sup>

However, it was not until 1936 that the first Polish excavations within the areas of the world of antiquity were organized. Warsaw University, jointly with the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in Cairo, sent an archaeological expedition to Edfu in Upper Egypt. The three-year work there (1936—39) bore fruit in a three-volume publication and a most valuable set of relics of ancient Egyptian art, which became the basis for the department of Egyptian Art at the Ancient Art Gallery of the Warsaw National Museum. The outbreak of the war in 1939 brought this welcome start of Polish archaeology to a standstill.

But, even though in 1945 Polish Mediterranean archaeologists seemed to have been starting anew from scratch, the scientific contacts established before the war and the reputation gained were, in fact, by no means lost.

The early post-war years were spent on a reconstruction of the material basis for research. Part of the collections, which had been taken away by the Nazis, were brought back, the archaeology chairs were re-established, collections re-formed and a new programme of staff development drawn up.

Even so, it was not until 1956 that, thanks to the initiative of Soviet scholars from the Hermitage and Leningrad University, the first Polish post-war archaeological expedition left for territories, that had once been part of the ancient world to do excavation work at Mirmeki in the Crimea, a Greek late 6th-century colony which in the Hellenistic period developed into the second most important urban centre after Panticapaeum.<sup>5</sup> Work at Mirmeki was followed by excavations at Kalos Limen on the western coast of the Crimea,<sup>6</sup> Tell Atrib in Lower Egypt,<sup>7</sup> Palmyra in Syria,<sup>8</sup> Dabod in Nubia, Alexandria — that pearl of Hellenistic culture — and, finally, Faras in the Sudan.<sup>9</sup> And in the most recent period, in addition to excavation work proper, Polish archaeologists have embarked on another kind of activity in

<sup>4</sup> S. Gąsiorowski, *Badania polskie nad sztuką starożytną* (Polish Research on Ancient Art), a Polish Academy of Learning publication, Cracow, 1948.

<sup>5</sup> K. Michałowski, *Mirmeki*, I, 1956, Warsaw, 1958; *Раскопки древнего Мирмекия. Наука и жизнь*, No. 9, 1957, pp. 54—56; *Fouilles polonaises à Mirmeki en Crimée*, *Atti del settimo congresso internazionale di archeologia classica*, 1961, Vol. III, pp. 67—72; *Les fouilles polonaises de Mirmeki*, *Schriften der Sektion für Altertumswissenschaft der DAdW zu Berlin* 1961, pp. 84—88; V. F. Gaydukevitch, *Мирмекий II. Советские раскопки в 1956 г.*, Warsaw, 1959.

<sup>6</sup> M. L. Bernhard, *Sprawozdanie z objazdu strefy archeologicznej ZSRR* (Report on a Tour of Archaeological Areas of the U. S. S. R.) *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* (Year-Book of the National Museum of Warsaw), Vol. 4, 1959, Warsaw, 1961, pp. 7—38; M. L. Bernhard, *Kalos Limen. Fouilles polonaises en Crimée*, *U. R. R. S., 1959. Bulletin du Musée Nationale de Varsovie*, No. 1, Vol. 2, Warsaw, 1961, pp. 3—10.

<sup>7</sup> K. Michałowski, *Les constructions ptolémaïques et romaines à Tell Atrib*. *Atti del settimo congresso internazionale di archeologia classica* 1961, Vol. III, pp. 219—229; *Tell Atrib (1957—1958)*. *Вестник древней истории*, 1960, No. 1, pp. 186—202; *Les filtres à eau d'Athribis*. *Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, No. 11—12, 1957—1958, pp. 185—189; A. Sadurska, *Die polnischen Ausgrabungen in Ägypten im Jahre 1958*. *Klio*, Bd. 38, 1960, pp. 284—291.

<sup>8</sup> K. Michałowski, *Palmyre*, I — *Fouilles polonaises 1959*. Warsaw, 1960; *Palmyre*, II — *Fouilles polonaises 1960*, Warsaw, 1962 (in print); *Fouilles polonaises à Palmyre 1959*. *Annales Archéologiques de Syrie*, Tome X, 1960, pp. 1—20; *Fouilles polonaises à Palmyre 1960*. *Ibid.* pp. 93—110; *Fouilles polonaises à Palmyre 1961*. Tome XI, 1961, ss. 63—82; *Les fouilles polonaises de 1960 à Tell Atrib et Palmyre*. *Studi Classice III*, Acad. R. P. R., 1961, pp. 265—269.

<sup>9</sup> K. Michałowski, *Faras. Fouilles polonaises 1961*, Warsaw, 1962 (in print); K. Michałowski, *Faras. Polish Excavations 1961*, Kush VII, Khartoum, 1962.



Egypt — archaeological reconstruction and plans for the conservation of relics: the famous temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari and the temple at Abu Simbel, the largest hewn in rock.

This dynamic development of archaeological research called for certain new organizational measures. The necessity to co-ordinate the work done by Warsaw University and the National Museum of Warsaw required the establishment of a special agency subordinated to the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The Polish Academy of Sciences Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology — separated from the History of Material Culture Institute under a Polish Academy of Sciences Secretariat resolution dated October 2, 1956 — was set up as an auxiliary scientific agency of the Social Sciences Section. In the first stage of the Research Centre's existence, the work done there followed three directions, as reflected in the organizational structure of the Centre; this comprised three Divisions: (i) Documentation of Relics, (ii) Archaeology of Asia Minor, and (iii) Archaeological Theory and Methodology.

The Documentation of Relics Division has extended its work to embrace all the objects of ancient art and material culture within the country's collections, both public and private. This was because no inventory or scientific catalogue had hitherto been made of the bulk of the country's collections — collections, which, on the one hand, are often of considerable scientific value and, on the other, constitute the basic auxiliary material for the popularization in this country of knowledge about the world of antiquity. The Division has already to its credit one volume of *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* as Fascicle IV of the Polish series.<sup>10</sup> The documentation for a *corpus* of Roman sarcophagi in Polish collections — a *corpus* initiated in its iconographic arrangement by Karol Robert half a century ago<sup>11</sup> — is in preparation. In some cases, when working on certain groups of objects, the Division co-operates closely with the museum concerned; this happened, for example, in the instance of B. Filarska's publications on Roman glasses.

In addition to the publications covering major collections, research was also started in more detail on certain smaller groups of relics. The respective publications include *Le Papyrus Mythologique de Te-Hem-En-Mout* by T. Andrzejewski (*Musée National de Varsovie*, No. 199, 628, Warsaw, 1958) and the monograph *Tables Illiaques* by A. Sadurska, now in print.

The Division for the Documentation of Relics has hitherto engaged also in the collection and preparation of the architectural documentation of excavations. At present, this documentation has so much expanded, however, that one of the Division's most urgent requirements is the setting-up of a special section for the architectural documentation of the excavation work conducted by Polish expeditions to the Middle East.

The series of *Mirmeki* excavation publications, started in 1957, has since been extended also to other archaeological *chantiers* — Palmyra and Faras in particular. These, being publications of the Polish Academy of Sciences, are the result of co-operation between the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology and

<sup>10</sup> M. L. Bernhard, *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, Pologne, Varsovie, Musée National 1, Fasc. 4, Varsovie, 1961; fascicles I—III were published in the years 1931—36 by the Polish Academy of Learning, K. Bulas having been author of fascicles I and II, and K. Bulas and E. Bulanda of fascicle III.

<sup>11</sup> C. Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs*, Berlin 1890—1919, 4 Bde.



similar scientific institutions. The publication *Mirmeki* concerning the results of the excavations in the Crimea was based on co-operation between the Polish Academy of Sciences, the U. S. S. R. Academy of Sciences, Leningrad University, the Leningrad Hermitage, and the Warsaw National Museum; the *Palmyra* and *Faras* publications were a result of such co-operation mainly with Warsaw University. Even though not all the excavation reports have found their way into Polish Academy of Sciences publications (e. g., the documentation of the Tell Atrib excavations has hitherto been printed in *Annales de Service des Antiquités de l'Egypte*, Vol. LX, 1960), in future the Academy will certainly assume patronage of the entire range of Mediterranean excavations. In view of the international importance of the discoveries made, the above publications have been appearing in French. Through the intermediary of the Academy Centre for the Dissemination of Scientific Publications, the Research Centre has been conducting an extensive exchange with major archaeological institutions abroad, in this way also enriching its own library with the latest specialist publications, some of which are otherwise difficult to obtain.

In view of the increasing amount of publishing work, it would seem to the point to split up the present Documentation of Relics Division into three separate divisions, the terms of reference of which would be:

- (i) a Division for the Documentation of Relics, which would retain in its charge the collections now in existence;
- (ii) a Division for Archaeological and Architectural Documentation, which would do the draftsmanship and reconstruction work on the relics of ancient architecture and town planning discovered by the Polish expeditions, while at the same time serving as a basis for studies on the reconstruction or conservation of world-famous monuments;
- (iii) an Excavation Division, the main responsibility of which would consist in the preparation for print of reports on the excavation work in progress.

The human and animal bone material, which accumulates year by year on Polish excavation sites, confronts the Research Centre with a novel problem, the solution of which is at present being partly effected. Thanks to an agreement with the Polish Academy of Sciences Section VI (Medical Sciences), a Palaeopathological Division is shortly to be set up, to be linked organizationally with the Research Centre, while remaining under the Section's scientific protection; this Division will take over all the research on the human bone material found on Polish excavation sites. At the present moment, three major sites call for such very close co-operation with anthropologists: (i) two Arab necropolises on Kom-el-Dikka Hill in Alexandria, (ii) the Valley of Tombs at Palmyra, and (iii) the necropolis at Faras in the Sudan.

A considerable number of problems, which require dating, must remain in obedience until such time as closer co-operation is established with anthropologists.

The Research Centre's Archaeology of Asia Minor Division, which has its headquarters in Cracow, has hitherto confined its activities to the preparation of bibliographic material and to work on the few relics of early Islamic art in Polish collections. In the next few years, the Division should acquire more favourable conditions for its work in view of the fact that we are on the eve of extending our excavations to Mesopotamia. This, however, requires even today some preliminary work on the historical and archaeological documentation of those areas. The subject-matter of the excavations pursued for the last three years at Palmyra must be extended to embrace some of the archaeological problems on which the



staff of the Cracow Division are now engaged. Research on the fauna and flora of ancient Mesopotamia as a preliminary stage for the encyclopaedic atlas, which is now in preparation, of artistic representations of the plants and animals of ancient Mesopotamia will undoubtedly constitute a serious contribution of Polish studies to international research on Mediterranean archaeology.

It is quite probable that in the not too distant future other research groups, set up for specific areas, will be established at the Centre, alongside the Division for the Archaeology of Asia Minor. These may consist of such institutes — modestly termed field stations — as the Warsaw University Archaeological Station — in Cairo, and of stations working at home on the preparation of documentation for *ad hoc* field expeditions. The special conditions of field work in the Middle East involve the necessity of applying the most elastic forms, commensurate with the execution of difficult and tactically complex undertakings. The existence as part of the Research Centre of a group like the Cracow Division for the Archaeology of Asia Minor ought to be considered as a favourable expression of our research potential.

All detailed studies in any field, not excluding systematic monographic outlines, must be based on a solid methodological foundation. Thus, the existence within the Research Centre of the Division for Theory and Methodology is both correct and understandable, if only in view of the Centre's wide scientific contacts with foreign countries and the constantly expanding range of research, which extends far beyond the limits of factual documentation as expressed in synthetical monographic outlines.

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The Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology employs 8 full-time workers and more than a dozen contract workers.

The complex character of the archaeological studies conducted at the Research Centre expresses the need to extend their knowledge by the junior scientific staff who are employed at the Centre either as full-time auxiliary workers or as contract workers engaged on definite tasks within the Centre's general research plan.

The training of staff within the Research Centre is aimed at enabling junior workers to master the complex research methods used in archaeology, and to grasp the complex character of archaeological studies. Even now, the archaeologists employed at the Research Centre are being taught the principles of architectural documentation, which is the basis of all field work.

## II

The range of problems on which the Research Centre is engaged can best be illustrated by a short account of the excavation work conducted in the course of 1961 alone. During that year, archaeological research in the Middle East was concentrated in the Sudan, Egypt and Syria.

Faras (ancient Pachoras), the political and cultural centre of Egyptian Nubia in the New Kingdom period, was the principal excavation site in Sudanese Nubia. Excavations had first been started there 50 years ago by an Oxford expedition led by Professor Griffith. These excavations embraced some small and rather peripheral sectors of the settlement and the necropolis. The Polish expedition, after having



obtained a seven-and-a-half hectare archaeological concession, had to select such an excavation site as to ensure within a short period of time maximum success to the work, while bearing in mind the fact that in another 3 years the area would be flooded by the Nile's waters as a result of the construction of the Aswan dam.

We resolved to embark on the digging-up of a huge *kôm*, which had been left untouched in the course of earlier work. The main *kôm*, i. e. an artificial hill



Fig. 1. Wall with window lattice. Chapels; in the foreground the tomb of Bishop Johannes

on the top of which there are the ruins of an Arab citadel and a Christian monastery, is located within defence walls of the Meroitic period, which had been partly investigated by Griffith. The immense area of the Faras *kôm* (1.32 hectares) necessitated the digging-over method. The stratification method could not be used in view of the two-to three year period of the project. At a depth of some 2 metres from the top of the hill, under the ruins of the citadel, we uncovered some earlier constructions, consisting of a stone wall with a superstructure of baked brick, provided with a brick window with a stone lattice; this was the first such element of architectural decoration ever to be discovered *in situ* and in a state of preservation in Nubia. Between the wall and the building cupola of baked brick in its vicinity there are three chapels of dried brick, decorated with beautiful frescoes, and containing inside, commemorative masonry stelae of the Bishops of Pachoras with the oldest early-Christian inscriptions in Greek and Coptic. The discovery of these relics enabled the dating of two stages of early-Christian building at Pachoras.



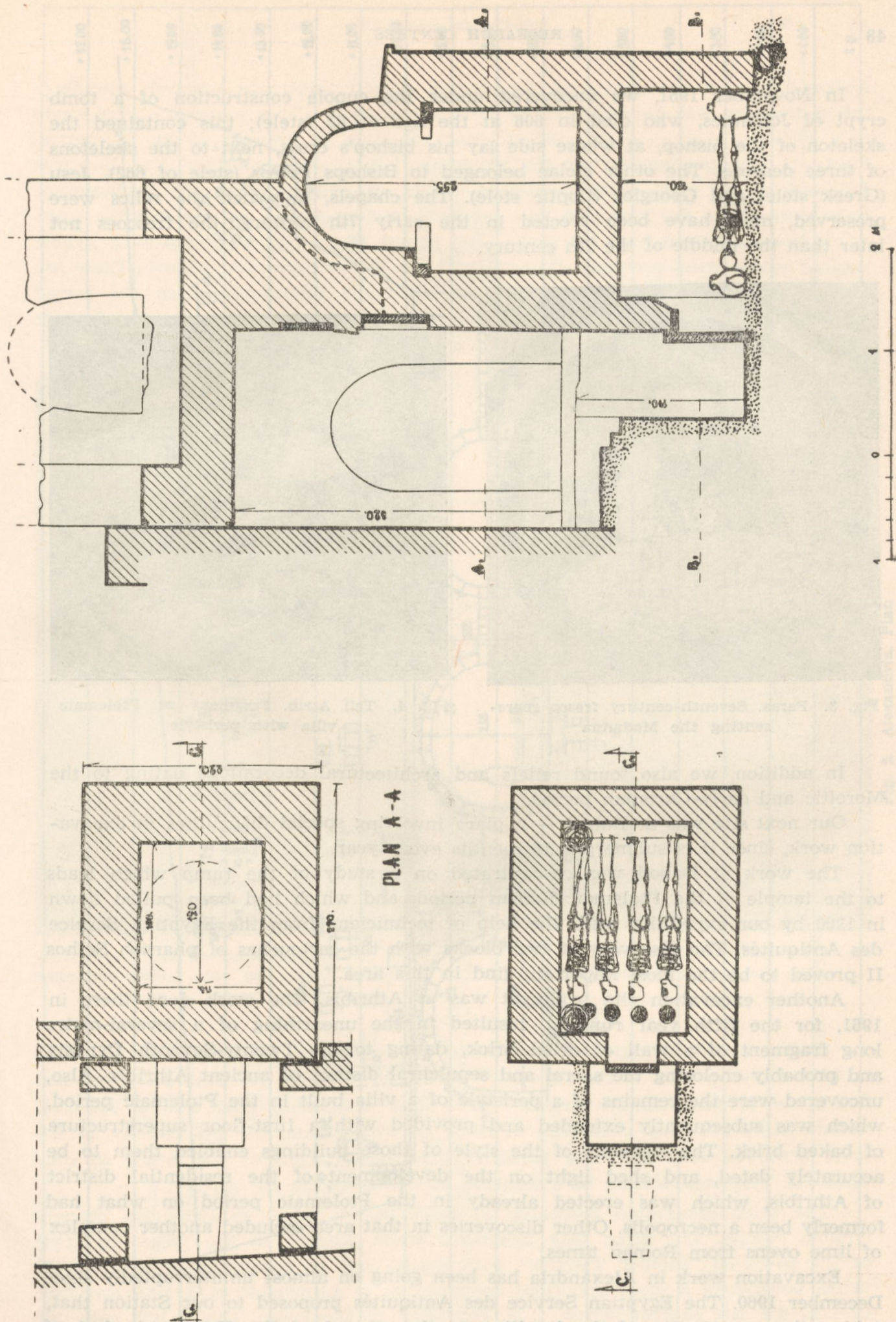


Fig. 2. Faras, Cross-section and plan of one of the chapels and the tomb of Johannes



In November 1961, we uncovered under the cupola construction of a tomb crypt of Johannes, who died in 606 at the age of 82 (stele); this contained the skeleton of the bishop, at whose side lay his bishop's cross, next to the skeletons of three deacons. The other stelae belonged to Bishops Petros (stele of 662), Jesu (Greek stele) and Georgios (Coptic stele). The chapels, in which the relics were preserved, must have been erected in the early 7th century, the frescoes not later than the middle of the 7th century.



Fig. 3. Faras. Seventh-century fresco representing the Madonna

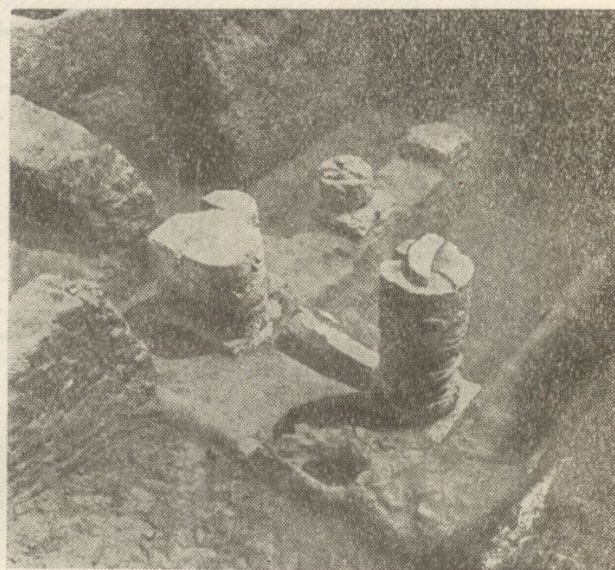


Fig. 4. Tell Atrib. Fragment of Ptolemaic villa with peristyle

In addition, we also found reliefs and architectural decorations dating to the Meroitic and early-Christian period.

Our next site was at Dabod — a place involving special difficulties in excavation work, since it is submerged 10 months every year.

The work at Dabod was concentrated on a study of the ramp which leads to the temple of the Ptolemaic-Roman period, and which had been pulled down in 1960 by our expedition with the help of technicians from the Egyptian Service des Antiquités. The discovery of two blocks with the cartouches of pharaoh Sethos II proved to be the most important find in this area.

Another excavation site in Egypt was at Athribis. The work done there in 1961, for the fifth year running, resulted in the unearthing of a several-metre long fragment of a wall of dried brick, dating to the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty and probably enclosing the sacral and sepulchral district of ancient Athribis. Also, uncovered were the remains of a peristyle of a villa built in the Ptolemaic period, which was subsequently extended and provided with a first-floor superstructure of baked brick. The elements of the style of those buildings enabled them to be accurately dated, and shed light on the development of the residential district of Athribis, which was erected already in the Ptolemaic period on what had formerly been a necropolis. Other discoveries in that area included another complex of lime ovens from Roman times.

Excavation work in Alexandria has been going on almost uninterruptedly since December 1960. The Egyptian Service des Antiquités proposed to our Station that, taking the opportunity of the levelling to the ground of the Napoleonic fort of



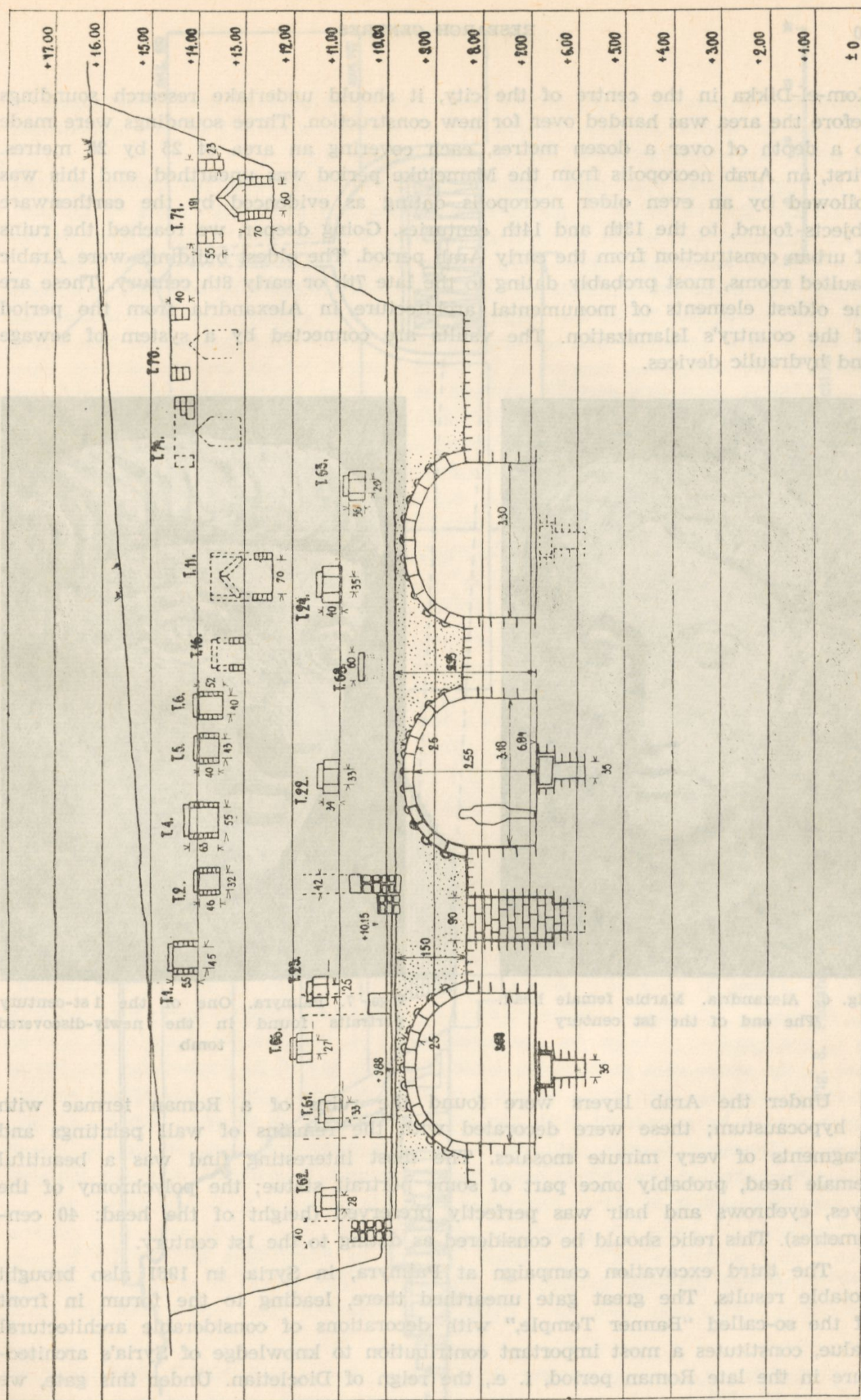


Fig. 5. Alexandria. Plan



Kom-el-Dikka in the centre of the city, it should undertake research soundings before the area was handed over for new construction. Three soundings were made to a depth of over a dozen metres, each covering an area of 25 by 25 metres. First, an Arab necropolis from the Mameluke period was unearthed, and this was followed by an even older necropolis dating as evidenced by the earthenware objects found, to the 13th and 14th centuries. Going deeper, we reached the ruins of urban construction from the early Arab period. The oldest buildings were Arabic vaulted rooms, most probably dating to the late 7th or early 8th century. These are the oldest elements of monumental architecture in Alexandria from the period of the country's Islamization. The vaults are connected by a system of sewage and hydraulic devices.

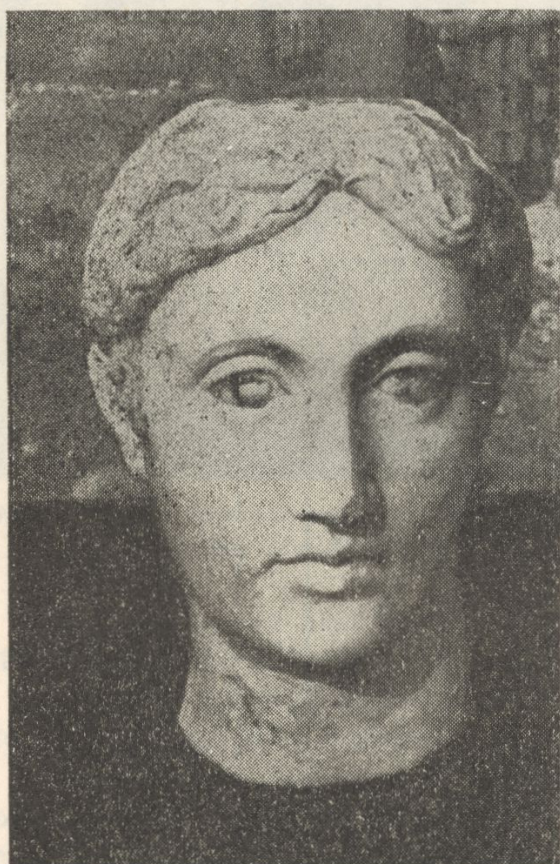


Fig. 6. Alexandria. Marble female head.  
The end of the 1st century



Figs. 7. Palmyra. One of the 1st-century portraits found in the newly-discovered tomb

Under the Arab layers were found the ruins of a Roman *termae* with a hypocaustum; these were decorated with the remains of wall paintings and fragments of very minute mosaics. The most interesting find was a beautiful female head, probably once part of some portrait statue; the polychromy of the eyes, eyebrows and hair was perfectly preserved (height of the head: 40 centimetres). This relic should be considered as dating to the 1st century.

The third excavation campaign at Palmyra, in Syria, in 1961 also brought notable results. The great gate unearthed there, leading to the forum in front of the so-called "Banner Temple," with decorations of considerable architectural value, constitutes a most important contribution to knowledge of Syria's architecture in the late Roman period, i. e., the reign of Diocletian. Under this gate, we



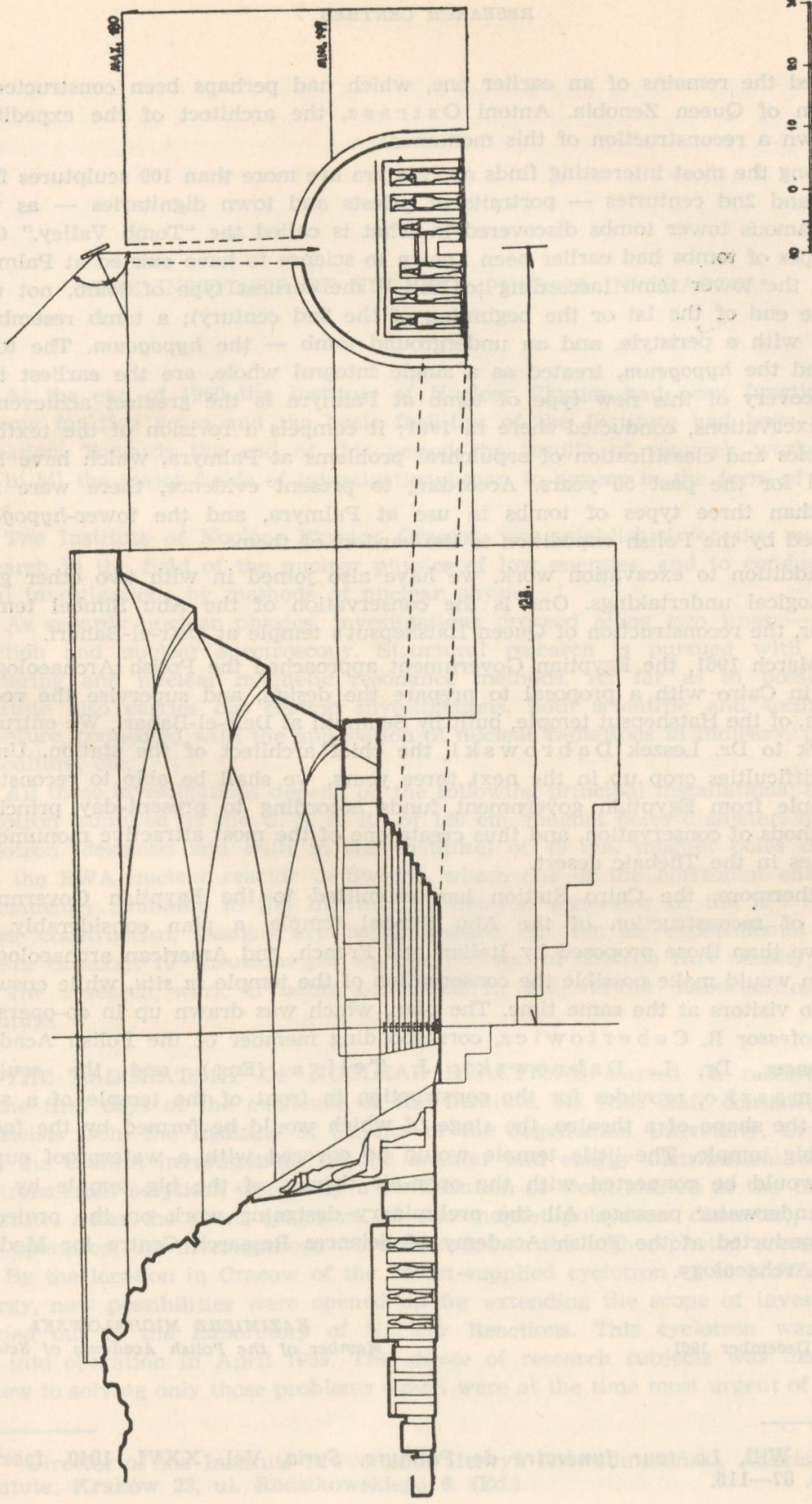


Fig. 8. Polish plan for the conservation of the Abu Simbel temple. Cross-section



uncovered the remains of an earlier one, which had perhaps been constructed in the reign of Queen Zenobia. Antoni Ostrasz, the architect of the expedition, has drawn a reconstruction of this monument.

Among the most interesting finds at Palmyra are more than 100 sculptures from the 1st and 2nd centuries — portraits of priests and town dignitaries — as well as the famous tower tombs discovered in what is called the "Tomb Valley." Only three types of tombs had earlier been known to science to have existed at Palmyra, namely: the tower tomb (according to Will,<sup>12</sup> the earliest type of tomb, not used since the end of the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century); a tomb resembling a house with a peristyle, and an underground tomb — the *hypogeum*. The tower tomb and the *hypogeum*, treated as a single integral whole, are the earliest type. The discovery of this new type of tomb at Palmyra is the greatest achievement of the excavations, conducted there in 1961; it compels a revision of the textbook systematics and classification of sepulchral problems at Palmyra, which have been accepted for the past 50 years. According to present evidence, there were four rather than three types of tombs in use at Palmyra, and the tower-*hypogeum* discovered by the Polish expedition is the earliest of them.

In addition to excavation work, we have also joined in with two other great archaeological undertakings. One is the conservation of the Abu Simbel temple, the other, the reconstruction of Queen Hatshepsut's temple at Deir-el-Bahari.

In March 1961, the Egyptian Government approached the Polish Archaeological Station in Cairo with a proposal to prepare the design, and supervise the reconstruction, of the Hatshepsut temple, built by Senmuth at Deir-el-Bahari. We entrusted the work to Dr. Leszek Dąbrowski, the chief architect of the station. Unless major difficulties crop up in the next three years, we shall be able to reconstruct the temple from Egyptian government funds according to present-day principles and methods of conservation, and thus create one of the most attractive monumental ensembles in the Thebaic desert.

Furthermore, the Cairo Station has submitted to the Egyptian Government a plan of reconstruction of the Abu Simbel temple, a plan considerably less expensive than those proposed by Italian and French, and American archaeologists. Our plan would make possible the conservation of the temple *in situ*, while ensuring access to visitors at the same time. The plan, which was drawn up in co-operation with Professor R. Cebertowicz, corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Dr. L. Dąbrowski, J. Teliga (Eng.), and the sculptor A. Siemaszko, provides for the construction in front of the temple of a small dam in the shape of a theatre, the stage of which would be formed by the façade of the big temple. The little temple would be covered with a waterproof cupola, which would be connected with the open-air theatre of the big temple by way of an underwater passage. All the preliminary designing work on the project is being conducted at the Polish Academy of Sciences Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology.

Warsaw, December 1961

KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI

Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences

<sup>12</sup> E. Will, *La tour funéraire de Palmyre. Syria*, Vol. XXVI, 1949, fascicles 1—2, pp. 87—116.