Report on the

25th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission

in Syene / Old Aswan (2024/2025)

by

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1. Overview

The 25th season of the joint archaeological project of the Swiss Institute for Architectural and Archaeological Research in Cairo (Swiss Institute) and the Inspectorate of Antiquities of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) in Aswan (Joint Mission) was carried out from 26 October 2024 until 11 December 2024 and continued from 29 January until 27 March, 2025[1].

[1] We are grateful to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the members of the Permanent Committee for granting permission to continue the Joint Mission in Aswan. We appreciate very much the fruitful cooperation with our colleagues of the Aswan Inspectorate in this joint mission. The mission was directed by C. VON PILGRIM, in close cooperation with USAMA FAHMI EL-AMIN. The fieldwork was directed by W. MÜLLER. Team members were the archaeologists M. DEVIGNE (ABERDEEN), YULIA DMITRIEVA (MOSCOW) and C. RAC (TÜBINGEN), the numismatist HÉLOÏSE AUMAÎTRE (ALEXANDRIA) and the anthropologists J. NOVÁČEK and K. SCHEELEN-NOVÁČEK (WEIMAR). Egyptian members of the mission were the assigned Inspectors of Antiquities MANAL MOHAMED MOHAGER HUSSEIN, YUSRA KHALFALLAH ELZOHRY OSMAN and ABEER ABDEL RADY ABDEL HAFIZ ABDER MEGID for excavation and SAMAH ELSAYED ABDELHALIM EISA, AHMED MOHAMED AHMED MOHAMED and SAID EL-RAWY in the magazine. - We are much indebted to P. ROSE for correcting the English of this report. Mistakes are of course entirely our own.

Current state of the new magazine in Area 2

In 2020, a new magazine was built at the request of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, specifically for the potsherds and anepigraphic stone objects found by the Swiss-Egyptian joint mission in Old Aswan since 2000. It is located on the southern edge of Area 2 in Birket Damas (Figs. 1 and 2) and contains not only a large storeroom, but also a smaller room for storing equipment, two offices and two guard rooms. The large storage room is equipped with shelves that offer over 1200 linear metres of space for boxes and bags.

The construction work was carried out by Al-Habashi Contractor Cairo, a company that has worked for MoTA on several previous projects. As a guard, a local member of staff from the Swiss institute is always on site.

Unfortunately, the magazine has not been officially put into operation as it has still not been connected to the local power grid. All the necessary paperwork has been in the hands of the relevant authorities in the governorate for some time, and a member of staff from the Swiss Institute is permanently on site as a guard and contact person for the local authorities and the Inspectorate of Antiquities.

Moreover, the official transfer of the magazine to the authority of the Inspectorate of Antiquities is still pending.

For this reason, the planned transfer of the ceramic finds from the provisional and dilapidated Gebel el-Shisha magazine to the new magazine in Area 2, which had been repeatedly approved by the Permanent Committee, could not be realised in the recent working season.

Fig. 1: New magazine in Area 2 and blockyard south

Open-air storage of architectural elements in Area 2

Directly in front of the magazine is an organised storage area containing smaller decorated temple blocks and larger anepigraphic stone objects (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2: blockyard south). They originate from various excavations in the town area and were transferred here from the Isis Temple at the request of the Inspectorate in 2019.

The open space outside the Late Period town wall in the northern half of Area 2 is intended for the large number of large-size architectural elements from the urban area of Old Aswan. Also at the request of the Inspectorate, a large group of artefacts from the Isis Temple area and from the temporary storage area at the reservoir in Talaina were transferred there in 2019 (Fig. 2: blockyard north; Fig. 4). In preparation for the transfer of the remaining components from Talaina to Area 2, which was once again approved by the Permanent Committee, all the blocks stored in Talaina were relocated, sorted and catalogued in autumn 2024 (see below). A large number of the blocks stored in the open air had already disappeared under dense vegetation. A total of 70 large-sized elements, mostly made of granite, and 390 smaller blocks were documented and prepared for transfer back to Area 2.

However, the transfer of the architectural elements scheduled for mid-December 2024 was cancelled on 7 December by Director General Usama Fahmi el-Amin stating that the Inspectorate of Antiquities intends to build a new magazine for all the missions working on the West Bank on the particular area in Area 2 designated for the new arrangement of the architectural elements from Old Aswan.

The status quo will therefore be maintained until this issue has been clarified.

Fig. 2: Overview on blockyards in Area 2.

Archaeological monitoring of Old Aswan

The permanent monitoring of construction sites in the urban area of Aswan in order to carry out rescue excavations where necessary, that is, where ancient layers or building remains are encountered and endangered as a result of the building process, continued in the past working year.

However, there was no need for archaeological intervention or rescue excavations at any site, except the evaluation of one case of illicit digging. This illicit excavation was discovered in the Shouna district, about 300 metres north-east of the Khnum Temple of Domitian. At the request of the Inspectorate of the SCA in Aswan, the Swiss institute investigated the site during the last week of August 2024. After locating the site in the urban area, it became clear that this was another illicit excavation in a ruined house on an abandoned plot of land where a similar robbery shaft was already investigated in November 2006 (Area 29).[2] The necessary measurements and documentation were carried out in a three-day operation by W. Müller, but these did not yield any discoveries beyond those already made in 2006. Due to the unclear legal status of the house ruins, a longer-term surface excavation was not carried out.

Archaeological excavations (Area 3)

In the second half of the working season, the Joint Mission continued the archaeological investigations in the area of the Khnum Temple of Domitian (Area 3), the last of the town's three protected antiquities areas still under investigation. After the façade of the pronaos and the forecourt were completely uncovered last year, the badly damaged foundations of the two cult rooms were now uncovered in order to finalise the investigation of the temple's building structure and to evaluate the stability of the foundations with regard to a possible partial anastylosis.

Inevitably, the sondages within the cult areas also focussed on the earlier buildings. In order to correlate these with the urban development already investigated in former seasons, the excavations focussed on the areas on both sides of the *Naos* and the street running directly south of the temple (see below). For a future presentation of the temple in its urban context, the work in the coming season will concentrate on the final uncovering of the street running along the temple to the east and the domestic area to the south of the forecourt, which is still covered with scant remains of walls from the later Roman period.

[2] C. von Pilgrim et al., 'The Town of Syene – Report on the 7th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 66 (2010), p. 180.

Object studies

Studies of objects this season focussed on documenting the coins found in Syene since 2013 and a reassessment of already studied older finds in the light of recent research. This resulted in a wealth of new information that will be of great value for the stratigraphic and chronological evaluation of the various areas excavated in the town (s.b.).

During a two-week stay, the anthropologists J. Nováček and K. Scheelen-Nováček completed the documentation of the group of burials from Area 45, comprising more than five hundred individuals, with the examination of a further 136 skeletons (s.b.). This leaves only the late antique burials from Area 49 on the northernmost edge of the ancient city area to be studied in the coming seasons.

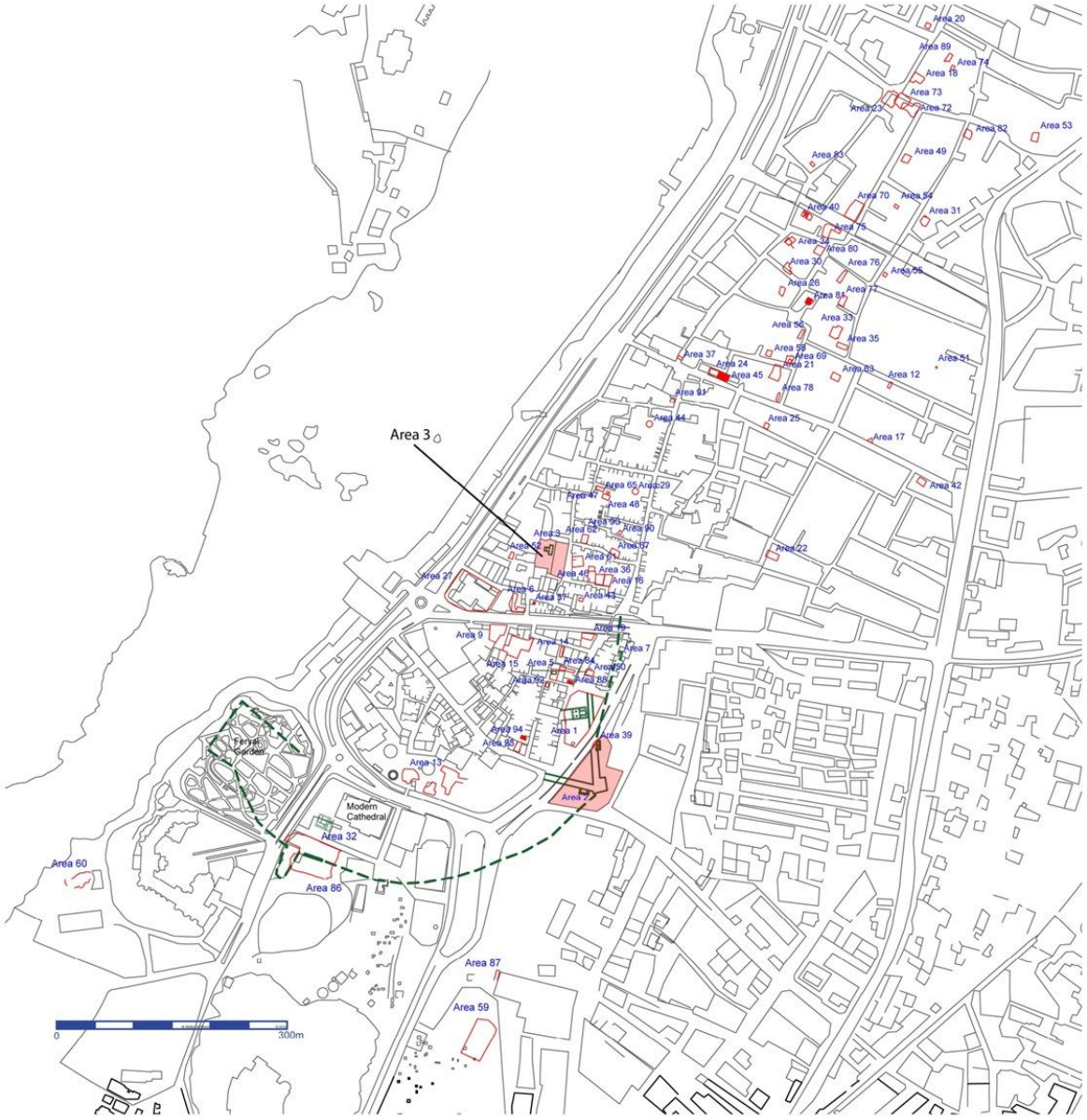

Fig. 3: Map of Aswan showing investigated areas.

2. Work in Talaina: preparations for the transport of architectural elements to the mission's central lapidarium in Birket Damas (Area 2)

Following a request by the MoTA, the architectural elements found by the mission and stored in Talaina were identified and documented to prepare their transport to the lapidarium in Birket Damas (Area 2). This open-air storage area is located outside the town wall and comprises two parts (Fig. 2). Blockyard South is located in front of the magazine and south of the town wall's Southern Sector (Fig. 1). The significantly larger Blockyard North is limited in the west by the Eastern Sector of the town wall and in the east by the area's perimeter wall (Fig. 4). In 2019,[3] the Aswan Inspectorate of the MoTA allocated the latter space to the Joint Mission as a storage area for large architectural elements and other stone artefacts. Granite boulders with rock inscriptions retrieved from rescue excavations had already been stored there for some time.

Fig. 4: Area 2: Blockyard North.

Many architectural elements were transported there from Talaina and Area 1 in the following years. The transfer of the stones was requested by the MoTA and carried out under close supervision by its Aswan Inspectorate.[4]

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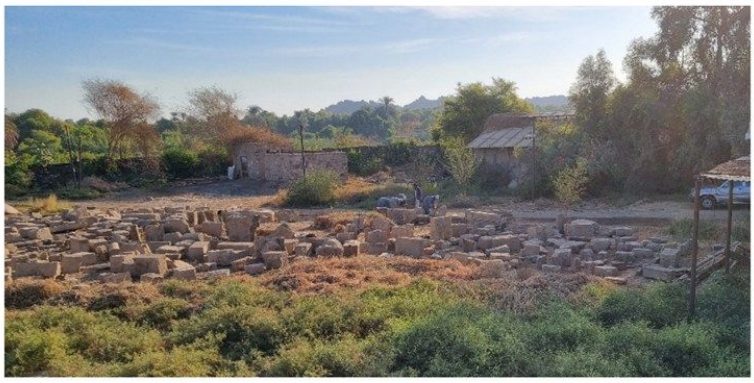
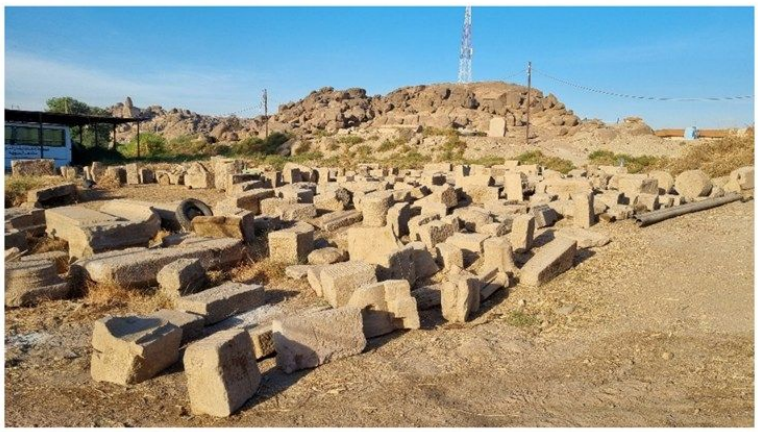
[3] C. VON PILGRIM et al., ‚Report on the 19th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2018/2019)', *ASAE, forthcoming,* (henceforth cited as *Nineteenth Season*), (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_Swiss_Egyptian Mission ASWAN 2019.pdf), p. 3.

[4] C. VON PILGRIM et al., ‚Report on the 20th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2020)', *ASAE, forthcoming,* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_ASWAN_2020.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Twentieth Season*), pp. 3-4, C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, ‚Report on the 22nd Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2021/2022)', *ASAE, forthcoming,* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission ASWAN 2022.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Twenty-Second Season*), pp. 6-8, C. VON PILGRIM et al., ‚Report on the 24th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2023/2024)', *ASAE, forthcoming,*

In the open-air storage area in Talaina, vegetation had grown over many architectural elements. After the vegetation was removed, many blocks from Philae and some architectural elements from Syene became accessible. In total, 70 architectural elements made of granite and sandstone were collected. Some of these objects were from Area 6, the others had been collected in the former storage area in Area 1 in 2003 and 2004 (Figs. 5-7).[5]

Fig. 5: Open-air storage in Talaina before cleaning





Figs. 6 and 7: Open-air storage at Talaina after removing the vegetation and cleaning.

(https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_Swiss-Egyptian_Mission_Aswan_2024.pdf), (henceforth cited as *Twenty-Fourth Season*) pp. 2-3.

[5] *Cf* K.-C. BRUHN, in C. VON PILGRIM et al, in ‚The Town of Syene. Report on the 3rd and 4th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 62 (2006) (henceforth cited as *Second Report*), fig. 15 for a map with findspots of "classical" architectural elements in Old Aswan.

Amongst these, a monumental "heart-shaped" column from Area 6 is of special interest. It was found out of position in a pit in Area 6 (Fig. 8). Nearby, the base for a column of the same shape and dimensions was reused in a later wall.[6] Such pillars are elements of an "Alexandrian Peristyle", a courtyard inside a private house or part of a public building, as in Aswan (the rose granite column is 2.67m high).[7] Many other such parts of public buildings from the centre of Roman Syene are already stored in Blockyard North. Two bases for heart-shaped columns, capitals and elements of roof construction, all of them in classical style, are all that is left of the splendour of an eminent town of Roman Egypt. Only if these objects are stored together in a protected and easily accessible place such as the lapidarium in Area 2 is it possible to study them properly and thus gain crucial information on the architectural repertoire of Syene that would otherwise be lost.

Fig. 8: Heart-shaped column.

Three monumental stelae that were reused as floor slabs in the baptistery in Area 6 are examples of the reuse of Pharaonic, traditional Egyptian elements in Late Antiquity.[8] An interesting, roughly contemporary parallel to this practice are twenty stelae reused as parts of the pavement of a street in Area 96.[9] It is fascinating evidence of religious coexistence that at the same time, monumental stelae of the gods of Sehel were esteemed and probably venerated parts of the decoration of a building in Area 95.[10]

These are just some of many examples that show that architectural elements and other stone objects are important historical, cultural and religious sources.

Parts of the former office building of the Italian mission responsible for moving the Temple of Philae in the 1970s are now used as an archive and magazine by the MoTA, with two rooms allocated to the Joint Mission. Architectural elements and other stone objects from Area 6 and decorated blocks from a temple dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius and reused in the Late Antique casing of the Southern Sector of the Late Period town wall of Syene

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[6] *Ibid.,* pp. 262-264. The base is now stored in Blockyard North in Area 2.
[7] *Cf.* P. PENSABENE, *Elementi Architettonici di Alessanria e di altri Siti Egiziani* (Rome 1993), pp. 125 and 127 and A. DELL'AQUA, 'The Use of the Heart-Shaped Pillar in the Ancient Architecture: Examples and Circulation', in L. BOMBARDIERI et al. (eds.), *SOMA 2012. Identity and Connectivity. Volume II, BAR* 2581 (II) (Oxford 2013), for the type and its distribution.
[8] BRUHN, in *Second Report,* p. 260.
[9] W. MÜLLER, in C. VON PILGRIM et al., Report on the 23rd Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2022/2023), *ASAE, forthcoming* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report Swiss-Egyptian Mission Aswan 2023.pdf)(henceforth cited as *Twenty-Third Season*), pp. 7-8.
[10] *Idem,* in *Twenty-Second Season,* pp. 15-18, figs. 19-22.

in Area 2 are stored in the northernmost room.[11] Additionally, this room contains fragments of an Old Kingdom mastaba that had been stored in Area 1 before the start of the Joint Mission (Fig. 9). Their original findspot is unknown. In another room, 390 objects from Area 32, mostly small fragments of decorated blocks, are stored.[12] All these objects were documented (measured, photographed and described).

Fig. 9: Fragment of an Old Kingdom mastaba of unknown origin.

As the Aswan Inspectorate did not allow the transport of objects to Area 2 at the last moment, a space for storing large architectural elements from Syene was created in the northern part of the open-air storage in Talaina (Fig. 10). Since it is on higher and rocky ground, the objects are safe from floods and vegetation. 86 fragments of smaller columns, mostly of granite, already stored nearby by the inspectorate, were documented and left in place. All other stone artefacts were returned to their original places of storage inside the magazine.[13]

[11] H. JARITZ/M. RODZIEWICZ, ‚*Syene – Review of the Urban Remains and its Pottery,' MDAIK* 50 (1994), p. 117, n. 5 and W. MÜLLER, 'Syene (Ancient Aswan). Aswan in the First Millennium AD', in E. R. O'CONNELL (ed.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD. Perspectives from New Fieldwork, BMPS* 2, (Leuven – Paris – Walpole 2014), p. 61, pl. 6.
[12] C. VON PILGRIM et al., ‚Report on the 7th Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 66 (2010) (henceforth cited as *Seventh Season*), p.195.
[13] Work lasted from October 27th until December 12th, 2025.

Fig. 10: Area reserved for large architectural elements from Syene

3. Archaeological work in Area 3

As in the last season,[14] the focus of the archaeological work was on the "Temple of Domitian" in Area 3 and its urban context.[15] Since it is impossible to assess with certainty to which deity the temple was dedicated in the following, it will be referred to as Temple of Domitian out of convenience.[16]

The temple has been the subject of research by the Swiss Institute for some time. HORST JARITZ was the first properly to investigate and publish what was then visible of the small temple.[17] Being one of only three protected areas in Aswan, Area 3 was subject to extensive archaeological investigations from the beginning of the Joint Mission. After several seasons focused on the medieval[18] and Late Period town quarter and the construction of a massive retaining wall at the area's eastern edge,[19] work on the Temple of Domitian was resumed in Season 24.

[14] W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* pp. 11-32.
[15] The excavation in Area 3 started on January 26th and lasted until March 27th, 2025.
[16] *Cf.* C. DE WIT, 'Les incriptions du temple de Domitien à Assouan', *CdE* 35 (1960), p. 119.
[17] H. JARITZ, 'Untersuchungen zum „Tempel des Domitian" in Assuan', *MDAIK* 31 (1975), pp. 237-257.
[18] K.-C. BRUHN, in *Second Report,* pp.251-253. W. MÜLLER, in C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, ‚Report on the 14th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2013/2014)', *ASAE, forthcoming* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_14th_Season_2013_2014.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Fourteenth Season*), pp. 12-18, *idem,* in *Nineteenth* Season, pp. 13-14, *idem* in *Twentieth Season*, pp. 9-10, *idem,* in Twenty-*Fourth Season,* pp. 32-43.
[19] W. MÜLLER, in C. VON PILGRIM et al., 'Report on the Sixteenth Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2015/2016)', *ASAE, forthcoming,* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_16th_season_2015_16.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Sixteenth Season*), pp. 3-13, *idem,* in C. VON PILGRIM et al., ‚Report on the 17th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2016/2017)', *ASAE, forthcoming*, (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_ASWAN_2017.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Seventeenth Season*), pp. 3-13, *idem,* in C. VON PILGRIM et al., ‚Report on the 18th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2017/2018)', *ASAE, forthcoming*, (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report_Swiss_Egyptian_Mission_ASWAN_2018.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Eighteenth Season*), pp. 4-10, *idem,* in *Ninetteenth Season,* pp. 4-11, *idem,* in *Twentieth Season,* pp. 6-8. The study of the Late Period pottery by CHARLES THIRY has been finished and is currently being prepared for publication.

Fig. 11: Plan of Area 3 (Strata K-H).

Fig. 12: Temple of Domitian: Façade of the *Pronaos*. Orthomosaic from a 3D SfM Model by Carmen Rac.

House 20: The predecessor of the Temple of Domitian (Stratum J/2)

The temple was built on a lot formerly occupied by House 20 (Fig.11). The house was constructed in Stratum J/2. At the time, neither Houses 16 and 17 nor Street 1 existed. A large open area extended to the east of the house. Several ovens found there hint at centralised food production (Fig. 11).[20]

The poorly preserved western part of House 20, which was not covered by the temple (Rooms 1-6), was investigated during Season 17.[21] The northern wall of the house bordered Street 5, the southern wall (W410b) Street 1. Neither the western nor the eastern limit of the building could be ascertained, as its western part lies outside the excavation to the east of Area 3, and it is covered by the temple's forecourt in the east. It shows a north-south extension of ca. 15m and an east-west extension of more than 22m.

The spatial organisation of the house was only partly evident in the western part. There, activities presumably in connection with the construction of the German Hospital and the Grand Hotel further to the east at the beginning of the 20th century, along with numerous later episodes of illicit digging, had left only scarce remains of mud brick walls and traces of mud brick pavements at the southern limit of the building. Massive foundations of granite and sandstone rubble from an earlier building (Stratum K/1) were only partly reused by House 20. W410b rested on such a foundation, as did the eastern wall of Room 1. The area of Room 6 might well have been subdivided into several smaller rooms. The most remarkable feature of this room is a well-preserved staircase in its northeastern corner.

To better understand the ground plan of House 20, two trenches were excavated inside the *Naos* of the temple: 25-3-3 in the western and 25-3-4 in the eastern room (Fig. 11). These trenches had to be very small in order not to endanger the temple's foundations. In both trenches, a 1.5-brick-wide east-west mud brick wall was encountered (W810).

In 25-3-4, an east-west wall (W824) was found 1.40m south of W810, situated under the southern wall of the *Naos*. Remains of a vault were preserved in both walls. The vault was carefully constructed as part of W810 and W824.[22] The large (38 x 18cm) bricks used for the vault were only 6cm thick and showed grooves, probably made with bare fingers on their surfaces.[23] The vault was inclined towards the west. The floor of the room was a carefully constructed mud brick pavement (Fig. 13). The ceiling of the reconstructed vault shows a maximum height of ca. 1.30m. As this is too low for a regular room, it can be interpreted as a substructure under the proper floor of the house, probably used for storage.

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[20] W. MÜLLER, in *Eighteenth Season,* p. 11.
[21] *Idem,* in *Seventeenth Season,* p. 15
[22] *Cf.* F. ARNOLD, *Elephantine XXX. Die Nachnutzung des Chnumtempelbezirks, AV* 116 (Mainz, 2003), p. 164, fig. 106a.
[23] *Cf.* A. J. SPENCER, *Brick Architecture in Ancient Egypt* (Warminster, 1979), pl. 18 (type d2) and *ibid.,* pp. 141-142

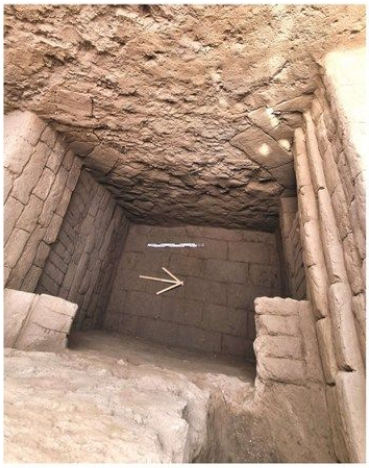

Fig. 13: House 20: Vaulted room with mud brick pavement.

While the room north of W810 was vaulted in trench 25-3-3, the northern room in trench 25-3-4 showed no such construction. Here, two building phases could be discerned. In its earliest phase, the room showed an identical mud-brick pavement at the same level as in the room south of W810. After some time, attested by surfaces and accumulated material on top of them, a north-south wall (W826) was abutted to the northern face of W810. This wall was just 85cm long and more than 60cm wide (it was partly covered by the western section of the trench). The layout and construction of the wall may be evidence of a door or small entrance accessing the room from the west (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14: House 20: Door jamb in northern half of trench 25-3-4.

This might be evidence of a significant change in layout and probably function. As a vault was detected in 25-3-3 to the north of W810, a north-south wall may be assumed between the two trenches. Due to the bad condition of the temple foundations above, no deeper excavation was possible to the south of W810 in 25-3-3. Thus, a vault seems probable but could not be verified there.

Despite numerous pits from illicit digging, House 20 was best preserved in 25-3-16 (Fig. 11), the area to the south of the *Naos* and the west of the *Pronaos*. There, two north-south walls (W825 and W828) limited another vaulted room (Room 8) (Figs. 15 and 16). The room was ca. 2m wide. Both walls abutted W410b in the south. If, as

seems probable, W824 in trench 25-3-4 limited this room to the north, it was 4.8m long. The vault was inclined towards W410b. A massive mud brick pavement rested on top of the vault. The top level of this floor fits well with the reconstructed vault in trench 25-3-4. The pavement was renewed several times. In its later phases, the vault under it was already caved in and partly collapsed.

Fig. 15: House 20: Overview of 25-3-16 from the north.

Fig. 16: House 20: Overview of 25-3-16 from the south-west.

Room 7, to the west of W825, was not vaulted. Considering that the narrow, vaulted rooms constituted substructures, one would expect a neighbouring room without a vault to be a filling room as part of a casemate construction. This was not the case, however, as both the northern room in trench 25-3-4 and Room 7 showed several distinctive phases of use (Fig. 17). The earliest floors in Room 7, simple mud surfaces, are at the same level as the mud brick pavements in trench 25-3-4 but are slightly higher than those in Rooms 1 and 2. These floors were covered by a massive filling layer of mud brick debris. Another finely stratified layer of mud floors rested on top of this filling. Slightly later, a 20cm thick *mahmara* layer corresponds with a repair of the southern wall of House 20. A decorated

jar with a perforated bottom was sunk into this layer (Fig. 18). As in numerous examples from other areas, the vessel was located in a corner of the room,[24] where it probably served as a drainage vessel. The last preserved floor was a mud brick pavement that reached the level of the floors on top of the vault in Room 8.

Fig. 17: House 20: Western section of Room 7 with several floor levels.

Fig. 18: House 20: Overview of Room 7 from the north with drainage vessel.

As House 20 was inhabited from Stratum J/2 to early Stratum H, it showed at least four distinct building phases. Coins found on top of the pavements in Rooms 1 and 2 could be dated to 113 – 40 BC.[25] The house was thus

[24] *Cf.* W. MÜLLER, 'Domestic Structures in Graeco-Roman Syene (Modern Aswan)', in S. LADSTÄTTER, V. SCHEIBELREITHER (eds.), *Städtisches Wohnen im östlichen Mittelmeerraum 4. Jh. v. Chr. – 1. Jh. n. Chr., AF* 18 = *DÖAW* 397 (Vienna, 2010), p. 436 for examples from Area 15.

[25] All numismatic information was provided by HÉLOÏSE AUMAÎTRE.

constructed in the 1st century BC, at the very end of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt. As a preliminary analysis of the pottery shows,[26] the building was in use until the Temple of Domitian was constructed at the end of the 1st century AD.

Though the ground plan of House 20 was enhanced this season, its spatial organisation and function are still enigmatic. The western part of the building (Rooms 1-6) seems to differ significantly from the rooms further east. The fact that there are no visible construction joints in W410b is evidence that all investigated rooms belong to the same building. Rooms 7 and 8 are north-south oriented, while the vaulted rooms encountered in the trenches under the *Naos* show an east-west orientation. Except for the doorway in trench 25-3-4, there is no evidence of how the vaulted rooms were entered. In the small area where the pavement on top of the vaults was preserved, no evidence of hatches or similar means of entry was found.

For structural reasons, the unvaulted rooms Room 7, Room 6 and the northern room in trench 25-3-4 were rather open courtyards than roofed with other materials. Thus, during the earlier phases of the house, the floors showed significantly different levels. Constructions such as the staircase in Room 6 were necessary to connect these floors. In the absence of a roof, more and more material accumulated in the courtyards so that, over time, the building's floors levelled out.

The level of the latest of three visible consecutive thresholds of a doorway that entered House 20 from Street 1 fits well with the level of the mud brick pavement in Room 8 (Fig. 19). The doorway was more than 1m wide (its eastern part is still covered by the remains of House 3). Further excavation in Street 1 will be necessary next season to investigate the construction and phases of this doorway more thoroughly.

Fig. 19: House 20: Walled-up doorway from Street 1.

[26] I thank MARIOLA HEPA for all information concerning pottery.

The Temple of Domitian (Stratum H)

Previous results

While the architecture and spatial organisation of the eastern part of the temple and its forecourt could be established last season, several uncertainties remained. Foremost among these lacunae was the exact ground plan of the temple. On the plan published by HORST JARITZ,[27] prominent parts of the walls were still covered with modern debris.

The amount of debris that had accumulated between Jaritz's investigation in the 1970s[28] and 2001[29] is striking. An analysis of modern material from illicit digging in Area 3 showed that many were undertaken within this timeframe. The fact that no more illegal activities have been observed since the construction of the retaining wall and ~~a~~ fence at the eastern limit of the site in 2014 shows how effective these measures are for the area's safety.[30]

Earlier destructive activities had damaged the western part of the Temple of Domitian. Other than the *Pronaos* and forecourt, where well-preserved elements of its architecture, such as significant parts of the façade of the *Pronaos,* are still extant (Fig. 12), the *Naos* was destroyed to well below floor level in the 19th century.[31]

Also, the integration of the temple into the contemporary cityscape still required investigation in more detail. The orientation of the Temple of Domitian differs from most Egyptian temples as its entrance is not facing towards the Nile to the west but towards the east. This probably makes the temple a processional sanctuary,[32] an important part of the religious topography of Syene.

At a more local level, the primary connecting element between the Temple of Domitian and the surrounding town was its forecourt. Accordingly, its eastern perimeter wall, with the entrance into the temple precinct in its centre, was not parallel to the temple's façade but aligned with Street 7 (Fig. 11). While limited excavations will be conducted in Street 7 next season, this year Street 1 was chosen for a stratigraphical investigation of the chronological and topographical connection between the temple and neighbouring houses.

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[27] JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31, p. 240 and, Abb. 2.
[28] *Ibid.,* pl. 48a.
[29] W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* p. 7, fig. 5.
[30] C. VON PILGRIM, in *Fourteenth Season,* pp. 3-4.
[31] JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31, p. 242. *Cf.* R. RICHARDSON, *Travels Along the Mediterranean, and Parts Adjacent. Vol. I,* (London 1822), pp. 350-352, still saw the temple with preserved roof in 1818.
[32] LOCHER, *Topographie und Geschichte der Region am Ersten Nilkatarakt in Griechisch-Römishcer Zeit,* p. 68 refers tot he Temple of Domitian as a "Dependence" of the Temple of Khnum on Elephantine.

Fig. 20: Overview of the Temple of Domitian from the north.

Fig. 21: Overview of the Temple of Domitian from the west.

Preparations for the construction of the Temple of Domitian

Immediately before the construction of the temple in Stratum H, House 20 was dismantled, and its ruins were filled with densely packed mud brick debris, most probably from the walls of the house. W410a, the partly rebuilt and widened wall W410b, met the south-western corner of the *Pronaos* (Figs. 11, 17 and 21).

The former doorway from Street 1 into House 20 was closed by W783. The same mud bricks were used for this wall as for W410a and the eastern sector of the perimeter wall of the forecourt (Fig. 19).[33] The façade of the *Pronaos* is aligned with the construction joint between W783 and W410a. W410a served as a terracing wall for the temple and was a crucial part of its construction.[34] As the original orientation of the wall was maintained, it is not parallel to the temple. Like the forecourt, the wall adapts the temple to the street grid.

Graffiti in the *Pronaos* of the Temple of Domitian

The *Pronaos* was entered from the forecourt via a small staircase and a preserved massive sandstone threshold. While the floor, a sandstone pavement like the one in the forecourt, was destroyed in the southern part of the *Pronaos*, it is mostly preserved in its northern part (Figs. 20-21) but in a roughly square area in the northeastern corner of the *Pronaos* the pavement is missing.[35] While the inner faces of the walls of the *Pronaos* show no original decoration or inscription, two well-preserved graffiti of boats were scratched into the eastern and intercolumnar walls next to the north-eastern corner of the room (Figs. 22-23).[36] Both boats show detailed cabins. The mast of the southern boat (Fig. 23) was destroyed when the upper part of the intercolumnar wall was dismantled; the northern boat shows a mast with a stylised crow's nest and reefed sail. The stern of the southern boat is shaped like a lotus flower and a small human figure sits on top of the cabin. Behind the boat stands a stylised human figure. Another small boat, albeit much more poorly preserved, adorns the socle of the façade of the *Pronaos* near its southern end.[37]

The application of modern documentation methods started last season, continued. For the graffiti, a DEM of the boats (Figs. 22 and 23) provided a much clearer picture than the digital photo. Due to the damaged surface of the wall and numerous gouges,[38] the shallowly scratched graffiti were only fully visible for half an hour each day.

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[33] W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* p. 27.
[34] *Idem*, in *Nineteenth Season,* p. 13.
[35] RICHARDSON, *Travels Along the Mediterranean,* p. 511, describes how the floor inside the temple was removed when he conducted an excavation to find the tropical well of Eratosthenes.
[36] *Cf.* J. H. E. DIJKSTRA, *Syene I. The Figural and Textual Graffiti from the Temple of Isis at Aswan, BeiträgeBf 18* (Mainz, 2012), pp. 73 – 79 for boat graffiti from the Temple of Isis.
[37] *Cf.* W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* p. 29, fig. 28, for the only graffito on the pavement of the forecourt.
[38] *Cf.* DIJKSTRA, *Syene I,* pp. 27-29 for the term *gouge.*

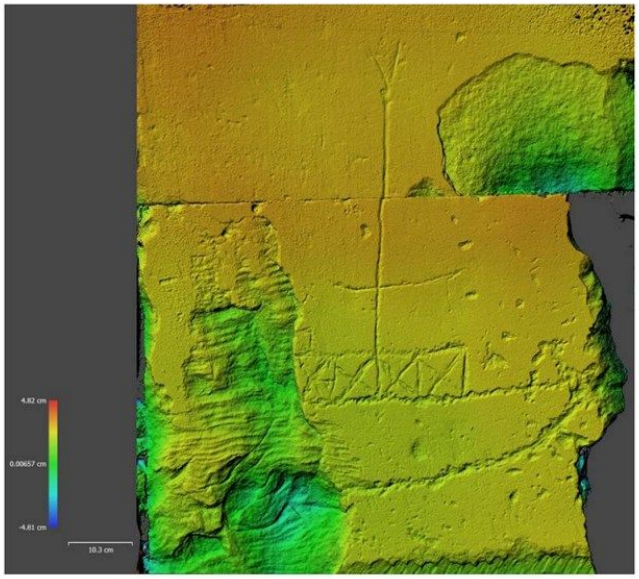

Fig. 22: Northern graffito on the eastern wall of the *Pronaos*. Digital Elevation Models and Colour Ramps created with Agisoft MetaShape® by Carmen Rac.

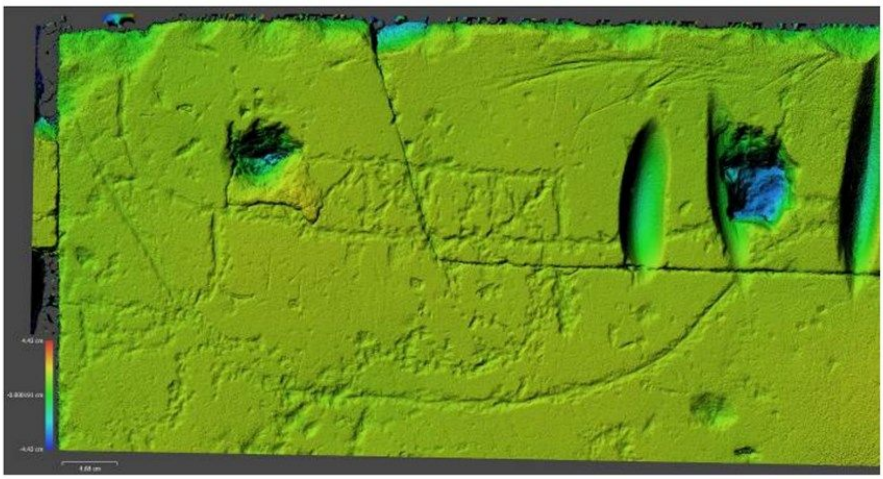

Fig. 23: Southern graffito on the eastern wall of the *Pronaos*. Digital Elevation Models and Colour Ramps created with Agisoft MetaShape® by Carmen Rac.

The *Naos* of the Temple of Domitian

Before this season, the reconstruction of the temple by HORST JARITZ,[39] based on his investigation on site, the published plans of POCOCKE[40] and the Description de l'Égypte,[41] was the most reliable source for the design of the *Naos*. It was known that the *Naos* consisted of two rooms, the *Adyton* in the west and an anteroom in the east, separated by an intermediary wall with a doorway in its centre. As the area to the west of the *Pronaos* was still

[39] JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31 (1975), p. 238, fig. 1.
[40] R. POCOCKE, *A Description of the East I* (London, 1743), pl. 48A.
[41] Description de l'Égypte, Antiquités I (Paris, 1820), pl. 38, 5.

covered with modern debris before this season's work, the existence of the wall was evidenced by early plans and descriptions of travellers,[42] but its location and dimensions were purely hypothetical.[43]

After the removal of the debris and modern waste, the situation was much clearer. Only the foundations remain of the *Naos* of the temple (Figs. 11, 20-21 and 24). At the western end of the building, even those foundations are severely damaged. There, only the eastern row of what were formerly two rows of sandstone blocks is preserved. Of the wall between the western and eastern room of the *Naos*, only parts of the lowest course of stones remain at the southern wall of the *Naos*. This is probably because the foundation of this wall is significantly shallower than those of the outer walls of the *Naos*. Its bottom level is at 96.75m asl. It rested on a bed of clean, grey riverine sand that infilled the space between the pre-existing outer walls.[44]

Fig. 24: Temple of Domitian: Detail of the *Naos* with intermediary wall and sand bed from the north.

The outer foundations are 1–1.25m wide and, in places, more than seven courses of sandstone blocks (2.25m) deep (Fig. 25). The bottom level of the foundations of the outer walls of the *Naos* is ca. 95.4-95.7m asl at its eastern end in trench 25-3-4 and ca. 95.6m asl at its western end in trench 25-3-3. Thus, contrary to earlier assumptions,[45] the foundations of the outer walls of the *Naos* are not significantly deeper in the west, and the foundation is thus not stepped. As the foundation of the southern wall rests on top of an earlier mud brick wall of House 20, it is shallower than the foundation of the northern wall, with just loose debris beneath it.

[42] *Cf.* for example RICHARDSON, *Travels Along the Mediterranean,* p. 351-352.
[43] JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31, p. 242.
[44] This might be the sand mentioned by RICHARDSON, *Travels Along the Mediterranean,* p. 510, albeit he described brown sand.
[45] JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31, p. 246.

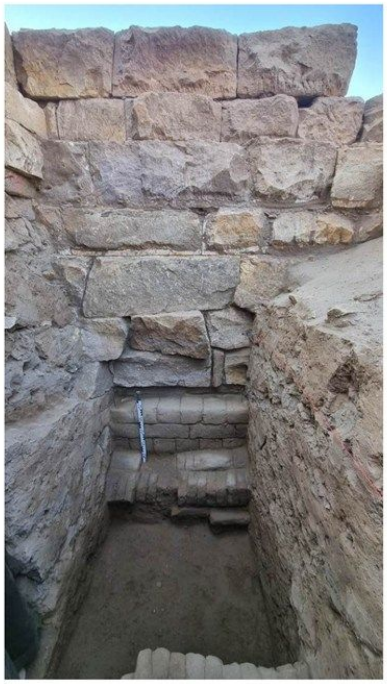

Fig. 25: Temple of Domitian: Detail of the foundation of the southern wall of the *Naos*.

During the construction of the foundation, each course of blocks was roughly dressed before mud brick debris was filled in to the top level of the course. In some cases, shallow trenches were dug into the infill to work on the faces of the foundation. Extensive layers of sandstone chips alternating with mud brick debris are evidence of this construction process. To the south of the *Naos*, the area between the renewed former southern wall of House 20 and the foundations of the temple was infilled in the same way.

The western wall of the *Pronaos* was constructed differently. Here, the foundation consisted only partly of sandstone blocks. In the area of the *Naos*, the bottom level of the blocks was at ca. 97m asl. They rested on three to four courses of mud bricks, some of which were of very bad quality (Fig. 26). To the south of the *Naos*, a massive mud brick wall consisting of up to nine courses of bricks constituted the lower part of the foundation (Fig. 27).

Fig. 26: Temple of Domitian: Detail of the foundation of the western wall of the *Pronaos* (inside the *Naos*).

Fig. 27: Temple of Domitian: Detail of the foundation of the western wall of the *Pronaos* (to the south of the Naos).

With a length of 6.40m and a width of 6m, the dimensions of the *Naos* resemble those given by JARITZ.[46] The east-west extension of the anteroom is ca. 2m, and of the *Adyton* ca. 1.70m. The intermediary wall is ca. 1m wide. The measurements are approximations as the foundations were wider than the upstanding walls. Gridlines were only visible on the preserved top surfaces of the outer walls of the *Naos*. As Jaritz had already assumed, the anteroom was larger than the *Adyton.*

The order of construction of the temple could be determined at least concerning its western part. After the demolition of House 20 and the renewal of its former southern wall, the outer walls of the *Naos* were constructed. For the first two (southern wall of the *Naos*) to four (northern wall of the *Naos*) layers of blocks, mud brick debris was filled in between the walls. Then the foundations were presumably built up to floor level. As a next step, a layer of grey sand was put into the *Naos* on top of the mud brick infill. Then, the foundation of the intermediary wall between the western and eastern room of the *Naos* was built on top of the sand. This wall abutted the northern face of the southern wall of the *Naos* (it is not preserved at the northern wall).

At the same time, the mud brick wall under the western wall of the *Pronaos* was constructed. This wall abutted the outer wall of the *Naos* while the sandstone foundation on top of it bonded with the higher courses of the outer walls of the *Naos*. It is unclear what material was used to fill the gap of more than one metre to reach the pavement level inside the *Pronaos*. An investigation inside the southern part of the *Pronaos* planned for next season should bring more clarity in this respect.

The urban context of the Temple of Domitian: Street 1 and House 28

Street 1 came into existence in Stratum J/1, when the large area to the south of the building that preceded House 20 was covered by Houses 16, 17 and 8. The east-west street was 1.7m wide and in use until it was overbuilt by

[46] *Ibid.,* p. 254, tab. 1.

House 3 in the medieval period.[47] According to the ceramological analysis, Houses 16 and 17 were contemporary with the earlier phases of House 20 and thus in use from the end of the Ptolemaic Period well into the first century AD (Fig. 28).[48]

A common feature of House 20 and the contemporary houses south of Street 1 was the presence of small, vaulted rooms with mud brick pavements. In House 20/Room 2 and House 16/Room 1, the floors and ceilings of these rooms were plastered with fine white lime mortar.[49] These rooms were part of the substructures of the respective houses.[50]

Fig. 28: Street 1 from the south.

House 28 was built on top of houses 16 and 17 in Stratum H.[51] The house's western wall rested on a foundation of granite rubble that cut into the vault in House 16/Room 2. The house's western wall is aligned with the western wall of the *Pronaos* of the Temple of Domitian. Except for Rooms 1-3, the spacious building was mostly covered by later structures. Due to its size, Room 3 probably constituted a courtyard.[52]

While the southern part of the house was mostly destroyed, the eastern part of its northern wall was preserved to a height of more than 3m and showed a doorway onto Street 1. Four phases of House 28 were preserved. The doorway of the earliest phase (House 28d) was walled up with bricks of very poor quality soon after the construction of the house and replaced with an elaborate sandstone construction (House 28c). At the same time, a significant

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[47] W. MÜLLER, in *Eighteenth Season,* p. 11, *idem,* in *Nineteenth Season,* p. 11-12, *idem,* in *Twentieth Season,* p. 12-13.
[48] M. HEPA, in *Twentieth Season,* pp. 18-21.
[49] *Cf.* W. MÜLLER, in *Sixteenth Season,* p.15, for a small, plastered cellar at the western limit of the area.
[50] S. MARTIN-KILCHER/J. WININGER, *Syene III. Untersuchungen zur römischen Keramik und weiteren Funden aus Syene/Assuan (1.-7. Jahrhundert AD), BeiträgeBf* 20 (Gladbeck, 2017), pp. 41-42. A similar room from Area 13A was dated to the late 1st – early 2nd century AD
[51] W. MÜLLER, in *Sixteenth Season,* pp. 14-15.
[52] *Idem,* in *Nineteenth Season,* p. 12 and *idem,* in *Twentieth* Season, p. 13.

portion of the northern wall of the house was renewed. The doorway of House 28c was ca 80cm wide and comprised door jambs and a threshold made of sandstone (Figs. 29 and 30). The door hinge was at the eastern limit of the two-piece threshold. The western door jamb was a reused threshold or lintel. The threshold of the new door was ca. 60cm above the level of the hypothetical threshold of the door of House 28d. At the time of excavation, both doorjambs were preserved to a height of 1.20m. The top of the western doorjamb was broken. Several gouges in the outer surfaces of the doorjambs signify a long period of use.[53]

House 28b saw a further elevation of the threshold by ca. 70cm. The threshold of this phase was made from mud bricks. A modern illicit dig between the two thresholds destroyed any other doors or constructions. Judging from the street layers, however, it seems plausible that several thresholds fell out of use and were walled up until the level of the threshold of House 28b was reached. As the mud bricks are heavily worn, it is unlikely that a stone threshold was used for this phase of the door. The new level of the threshold brought about significant changes in the construction of the doorway, as the lintel of the doorway of House 28c was too low and was thus removed together with the upper parts of the door jambs.

Only the eastern part of House 28a is preserved but is mostly covered by House 3. The interior structure of this phase of the house is thus still unclear.

Fig. 29: View of the northern façade of House 28.

[53] *Cf.* DIJKSTRA, *Syene I,* pp. 27-29. If found, as often attested, on doors or other stone elements, they are presumably not evidence of "acts of personal religious devotion" (*ibid.,* p. 27) but of the deeper meaning the door had for the safety of the house and its inhabitants.

Fig. 30: House 28: Walled-up door of House 28d and the thresholds of Houses 28c and b.

A stratigraphical investigation was conducted in Street 1 to establish the relative chronological relationship between the Temple of Domitian and House 28 (Figs. 21, 28, and 31). Limited excavations in the western part of the street had established the stratigraphical connection between the early phases of House 20 and Houses 16.[54]

Of special importance were the thresholds and doorways into Houses 20 and 28. Regretfully, the doorway into House 28 was completely excavated in an illicit dig, making it impossible to find any layers directly abutting its thresholds. As the layers at the eastern section of the trench in Street 1 that ran against the threshold and walled-up door of House 20 and the western wall of House 28 remained untouched by this disturbance, the local relative chronology could be established. The trenches in the street were arranged in a cross-section to establish a proper stratigraphical connection between the thresholds and street layers. The east-west sections proved that the street did not show any inclination, making it easier to compare the levels of street layers and thresholds over a wider area.[55]

As in many other areas of Syene, the feet of the mud brick walls were protected from erosion where the street met them. There, stone slabs, fragments of mortars or other stone vessels and other stone artefacts were placed against the wall, often pressed against a thick layer of mud mortar. These constructions were only observed on such parts of the walls where the mud bricks were already damaged or were especially exposed (Fig. 29).[56]

The principal assumption here is that layers connected to the thresholds of House 20 date to a time before the doorway was walled up, when the house was still in use. As street layers abutting the latest threshold of the door into

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[54] W. MÜLLER, in *Eighteenth Season,* pp. 11-12, *idem*, in *Nineteenth Season,* pp. 11-12.
[55] *Cf.* MARTIN-KILCHER/WININGER, *Syene III*, p. 67 for the methodology and the character of typical street layers.
[56] *Cf. ibid.,* p. 69, figs. 4.2 and 4.3 and W. MÜLLER, in Twenty-Fourth Report, p. 28, fig. 27 and n. 54.

House 20 touched the lower courses of the western wall of House 28c at a level consistent with the bottom of the threshold of this phase, House 28c and d were contemporary with the last phases of use of House 20 and thus predated the construction of the Temple of Domitian. As all layers connected to House 28b abutted the wall that closed the doorway into House 20, the temple's construction occurred while House 28c still existed. The street surfaces contemporary with the pavement of the forecourt were thus 1.80m lower than the latter.

The formation processes in Street 1 show significant changes that can be synchronised with the phases of House 28. The layers associated with Houses 28d and early House 28c, alternating finely stratified layers of windblown organic material, street surfaces, and *mahmara* (places where mud mortar and plaster were produced), are typical of streets. The same situation was encountered in the western part of the street, with the layers connecting House 20 and House 16 in Stratum J/1.[57]

The situation changed in the later phases of House 28c. Then, extensive dumping took place in the street. In the course of these activities, deep pits were dug and filled with settlement debris (predominantly pottery but also some animal bones and other organic material).

With the construction of House 28b, dumping stopped. Now, regular, finely stratified street layers prevailed for some time. The accumulation of compact mud brick debris on top of the latest street surface marked the end of this phase of use. Later street surfaces are lost, probably because they were removed as, over time, the street had reached a level that compromised its function as an important line of communication. No street surfaces contemporary with House 28a were preserved.

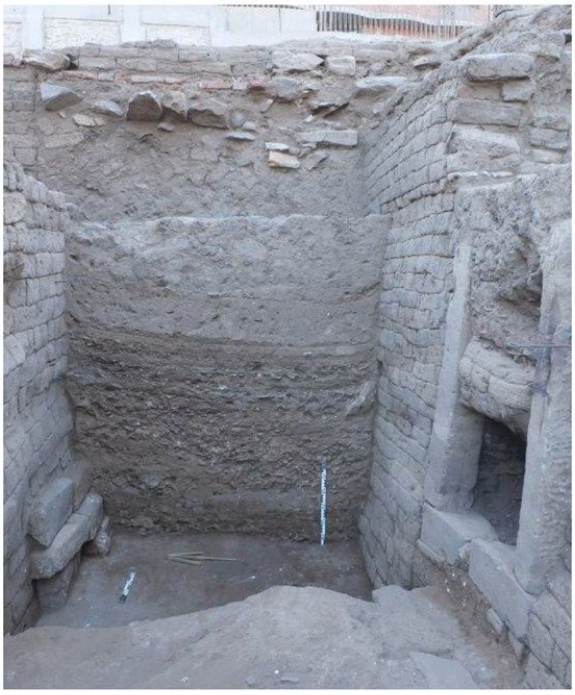

Fig. 31: Street 1: Western section with street layers and mud brick debris at the end of Season 25.

[57] *Cf.* C. VON PILGRIM, *Elephantine XVIII. Untersuchungen in der Stadt des Mittleren Reiches und der Zweiten Zwischenzeit, AV* 91 (Mainz, 1996), p. 19 for formation processes in streets.

Before this season's work, House 28 was dated to the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century AD. The *terminus post quem* for the construction of the house was an ostracon found immediately under the southern wall of House 28.[58]

To resolve the chronological discrepancy between the stratigraphy of Street 1 and Rooms 1 and 2 of House 28, more work inside the house is necessary to connect its southern part with Room 3 and Street 1. Currently, Rooms 1 – 2 may belong to a later phase of House 28 or another building altogether. Looking solely at the pottery from the earliest floors in Rooms 1 and 2, there seems to be no compelling reason against a late 1st century AD date for the construction of the house.[59] An infill under a pavement of sandstone slabs in Room 1 dates to the 1st - 2nd century AD. The level of this floor fits well with the threshold of House 28b.[60] The latest material from the trenches in these rooms dates to the 3rd century AD.[61] In the southern part of the house, no phases of House 28a were preserved and are still covered by medieval houses. Based on material gained in Room 3, House 28a was preliminarily dated to the 2nd half of the 4th century AD. As the medieval houses sit on top of House 28, no later phases of the building were preserved. There is thus a significant chronological gap between Stratum H and the early medieval period. As a hiatus seems improbable, several phases or houses on top of House 28a must have been removed before Houses 2 and 3 were constructed. This hypothesis fits well with the situation in Street 1, where post-3rd-century layers are missing.

After this season's work, the previously established architectural and stratigraphical sequence has to be adapted. House 28, the marker for Stratum H, was constructed when House 20 still existed and was in use. House 20 was thus occupied just until the construction of the Temple of Domitian, in the early phases of House 28c. Contrary to the assumption in Season 24,[62] the temple thus does not belong to Stratum J/1 but to Stratum H.

Medieval remains north of the *Naos* of the Temple of Domitian.

First medieval activities in Area 3

As the focus of the work was on the western part of the area, only scarce medieval remains were encountered this year. The stratigraphical investigation of Street 1 showed that the walls of House 3 rested on the ruins of House 28a and a massive infill of mud brick debris covered both the rooms of the dismantled house and former Street 1. This infill was more than 1.50m deep in places and belonged to the construction process of House 3. To create a horizontal building ground, the remains of Late Antique houses south of Street 1 were removed. The infill most probably consists of mud brick debris from dismantling these buildings (Figs. 29 and 31-32).[63]

The date of the infill and the question of when the forecourt of the temple was abandoned and subsequently overbuilt with House 32 are crucial for the settlement history of the town quarter. Together with material from the

[58] M. HEPA/W. MÜLLER, in *Twentieth Season,* p. 29, based on S. TORALLAS-TOVAR, in *Twentieth Season,* pp. 30-31, who proposed a date at the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century AD for the undated tax receipt based on palaeography.
[59] M. HEPA/W. MÜLLER, in *Twentieth Season,* pp. 23-24.
[60] *Ibid.,* p. 24.
[61] *Ibid.,* p. 24-28.
[62] W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* p. 29.
[63] *Cf.* VON PILGRIM, *Elephantine XVIII,* p. 20, for the use of mud brick debris from dismantled buildings.

infill, the pottery and coins found immediately on top of the pavement of the forecourt will be studied in the coming seasons. The relative chronology and archaeological sequence established last season will thus be transformed into an absolute chronology and determine, for the first time in this part of Syene, the transition from the Roman to the early medieval period.

Fig. 32: Area 3: Plan of Strata C-D.

House 32

House 32 was constructed in the early medieval period using the walls of the Temple of Domitian, which was still well preserved at that time. The earliest phase of this prestigious house included amenities such as a toilet connected to the sewer in Street 5. The toilet and a small water tank in Room 1 were set against the northern part of the façade of the *Pronaos*.[64] The carefully constructed sewer and other elements of the Fatimid town mark the highest standard of urban living in Aswan until the modern period.[65]

Due to the doors that connected the former *Pronaos* with Rooms 1 and 2, this part of the former temple belonged to House 32. In House 32b, the room was subdivided by two east-west walls.[66] The northern wall sat on the pavement and abutted the northern door jamb and column of the temple. Only 1m of the plastered stone socle was preserved, consisting of reused fragments of blocks from the temple. Judging from another wall of House 32b abutting the western face of the façade of the *Pronaos*, the upper portions of the wall were made from mud bricks.[67]

A similar wall abutting the southern doorjamb was constructed in a deep foundation pit that destroyed the pavement there. Other elements of medieval reuse were two small indentations in the pavement next to the eastern wall in the northern part of the *Pronaos*. The shape and dimensions of these small holes resembled those already observed on the pavement of the forecourt and imply a probable use as pot stands for amphorae.[68] Such installations show that the original floors of the temple were used, even in the later phases of House 32.

House 30

House 30 covered the western part of the Temple of Domitian in the medieval period. It shared the northern wall with House 32. Only two rooms of the house could be investigated. The southern wall of these rooms was the northern wall of the *Naos*, the western wall of the *Pronaos* limited Room 2 in the east. Because – judging from the situation inside the *Naos* - the bottom of the foundation of the original wall of the *Pronaos* was higher than the floor level, and since the northwestern corner of the *Pronaos* was ca. 1m south of the north-eastern corner of Room 2, the western face of this wall was completely remodelled and reconstructed with roughly hewn, reused sandstone blocks and fired bricks. It bonded with the northern wall of Houses 30 and 32 (Fig. 33).

Only the very eastern part of Room 1 was preserved. There, the remains of a carefully set pavement of fired bricks were seen. Room 2 was divided into two parts by a narrow wall (Fig. 34). The northern half of the room preserved a complete pavement of fired bricks. Bricks and construction matched the pavements in neighbouring Room 1 and House 32c/Room 1. Traces of a sandstone construction in the north-eastern corner of Room 2 might constitute the remains of a staircase that led up to a doorway through the eastern wall to the west of the *Pronaos*. The door hinge is still *in situ* next to the north-western corner of the *Pronaos*. The function of the pedestal made of sandstone and fired bricks in the northwestern corner of the room is unclear. Probably it was part of another staircase leading to a

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[64] W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* pp. 34-37.
[65] *Ibid.,* pp. 32-34.
[66] *Ibid.,* p. 39 and H. JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31, p. 243.
[67] W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* p. 38.
[68] *Ibid.* p. 27.

doorway into Room 1. As the wall between Rooms 1 and 2 was overbuilt with a sandstone wall in a later phase of the house, the existence of such a door remains hypothetical for the time being. The floor of Room 2 was significantly lower than the contemporary level of Street 5.[69] The infill of the room contained material dating to the 19th century that was probably deposited there when the temple and House 30 were dismantled.

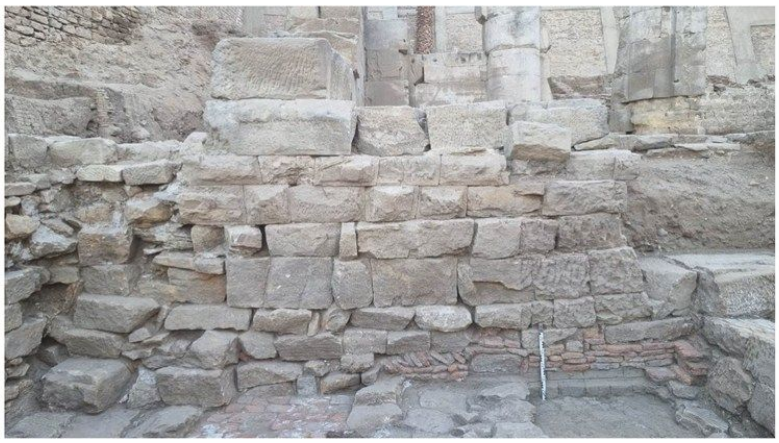

Fig. 33: Western face of the eastern wall of House 30/Room 2.

Fig. 34: House 30/Room 2.

Results of the work in Area 3

This season's work has produced crucial new data concerning the main monument of Area 3, the Temple of Domitian. After removing the modern debris covering parts of the *Naos*, the ground plan of the temple was documented in its entirety for the first time.

Technical details concerning the process of construction of the building and the way it was placed on top, and made use of earlier architecture, could also be studied and documented in detail.

[69] *Cf.* W. MÜLLER, in C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'Report on the Fifth Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Syene / Old Aswan (2004/2005), *ASAE, forthcoming,* p. 3, fig. 2. for a similar subterranean room in Area 15.

An important secondary result of the investigation of the temple concerns the topography of the area. All street surfaces in Street 1 were horizontal, as was the bottom level of the temple's foundations. Thus, contrary to previous assumptions,[70] the steep slope towards the western limit of the area is not due to the local topography but exclusively the result of modern activities.[71] The difference between the floor levels of House 8 and the contemporary street layers in Street 1 is evidence of the fact that the smooth slope from south to north already existed in antiquity.[72] This characteristic of the cityscape was accentuated when the Temple of Domitian was erected on top of a terrace that consisted of the ruins of House 20 and a massive infill. The reconstructed and reinforced former southern wall of House 20 now limited and supported the terrace and the temple on top of it towards contemporary Street 1, which ran 1.80m below it to its south.

The investigation of Street 1 and the phases of House 28 confirmed the dynamics of the formation processes in Area 3. The continuous struggle of the inhabitants to maintain access to their houses and keep the streets functional in the face of ever-rising street levels is evidenced by the adaptations of the doorway into House 28 on a smaller scale and on a larger scale the control of the level of Street 1 by removing material from it. The first measure was private; the second one was public. All these countermeasures, however, could not prevent the continuous raising of street and floor levels over time. Thus, as in other places,[73] the domestic quarter rose while the surfaces inside the temple remained at the same level. While the threshold of House 28c was still 1.80m lower than the pavement in the forecourt of the temple, the bottom of the northern wall of House 28a was nearly at the same level. Although there is no evidence that the temple was ever used as a church, the forecourt was never overbuilt until the end of the Roman period. Later phases of houses to the south of Street 1 soon rose above the level of the temple.

The floors in the earliest phase of House 32c were only slightly higher than the pavement in the forecourt of the temple. As the other houses of the new quarter further south had to adapt to this level, the higher ground consisting of ruins and still-standing houses from the Roman period had to be levelled. The floors of House 3 were still ca.1m higher than the floors of House 32, indicating the enormous difference in level that had to be managed.

The well-preserved medieval remains to the north of the *Naos* further complemented our knowledge of the temple's reuse after its abandonment. Houses 30 and 32 show a common façade facing Street 5 and are part of a prosperous neighbourhood of Fatimid Aswan. This quarter showed elements of central planning, such as the design and construction of their outer walls and a public system of wastewater management. The high-quality floor in House 30/Room 2 adds to that impression.

Wolfgang Müller

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[70] JARITZ, *MDAIK* 31, p. 246.
[71] *Cf.* W. MÜLLER, in *Twenty-Fourth* Season, p. 31.
[72] *Idem,* in *Nineteenth Season,* p. 13.
[73] *Cf.* K. BRUHN, in C. VON PILGRIM et al., 'The Town of Syene. Preliminary Report on the 1st and 2nd Season in Aswan', *MDAIK* 60 (2004), p.127 for the Temple of Isis.

4. Coins from Areas 2 and 13: preliminary results

This season's work aimed to assess the material (conditions of preservation, periods of production, etc.), to determine the priorities for study and restoration for future missions and to initiate the process of inventorisation and study for publication purposes.[74]

The study focused on coins from Area 2 and Area 13. These areas were chosen because they are already partly published and have been the subject of several studies on pottery and other aspects of material culture. This report is intended to provide a first overview of the material.[75]

Area 2

Area 2 is located in the Birket Damas district of Aswan. It has been the focus of research since the beginning of the Joint Mission. Archaeological work there has intensified since 2010 and concluded in 2015. The south-eastern corner of the town wall of Syene is the defining monument of the site. It was constructed in the Persian period and shows repairs from the Ptolemaic to the Fatimid period.[76] The area can be subdivided into an *intra-* and *extramural* part.

The *intramural* settlement continued from the Persian period until Late Antiquity, and - judging from nearby Area 1 – even until the early medieval period.[77] An animal necropolis was located there during the Ptolemaic and Early Roman Imperial periods,[78] followed by a densely built-up quarter of Roman Syene.[79]

Except for a short-term Ptolemaic installation,[80] the area outside the town wall was mostly used for dumping, especially during the Roman period when several metres of waste accumulated there.[81] During Season 10 (2009/2010), archaeological work focused on this *extramural* part of Area 2. Twenty bronze coins were recovered from it. The latest coin (10-2-22-2/1), a 12 *nummi* minted in Alexandria by Tiberius II Constantinus, *c*. 574 – 582 AD (Fig. 35),[82] was found in the dump south of the town wall. Most of the material excavated (17 coins) dates from the 4th-5th centuries AD and consists of small bronze modules in an extremely poor state of preservation. They are barely

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[74] The investigation took place from the 2nd to the 23rd of February 2025 in the magazine of the MoTA in Aswan.
[75] The coins from earlier seasons (until 2015) were initially studied by H. C. NOESKE. His results will be systematically assessed and, if necessary, updated in line with current research.
[76] MÜLLER, in O'CONNELL (ed.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD,* pp. 64-65.
[77] *Cf.* MARTIN-KILCHER/J. WININGER, *Syene III,* pp. 124-196.
[78] *Cf.* M. HEPA et. al., 'Neuentdeckung in Assuan. Ein ungewöhnlicher Tierfriedhof', *AW* 2/18 (2018), pp. 25-29, and MÜLLER, in O'CONNELL (ed.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD,* pp. 60-62
[79] *Cf.* L. REMBART, *Syene IV. Die Ptolemäische und Römische Keramik aus den Arealen 2 und 13c, BeiträgeBf* 22 (Gladbeck 2020), pp. 7-10, and T. KOCH/W. MUELLER, 'Wohnkultur in Syene (Assuan) am Beispiel der Areale 1 und 2', *AÖ* 25/1 (2014), pp. 39-44.
[80] C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'Report on the Eleventh Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene / Old Aswan (2010/2011)', *ASAE*, *forthcoming* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report on the Eleventh Season of the Joint Swiss_Egyptian Mission in Syene_Old Aswan (2010_2011).pdf) (henceforth cited as *Eleventh Season*), pp. 13-15.
[81] *Ibid.,* p. 15.
[82] Obverse: draped bust right, [DN]CON[S-TANTPPAV]. Reverse I B cross, ΑΛΕΞ.

legible (if at all) and are typical of the productions after Diocletian's reform (11-2-11-6/52 on Fig. 35).[83] Two Ptolemaic coins of Series 9[84] were recovered, figuring the head of Zeus Ammon on the obverse and two eagles standing left, wings closed, with a cornucopia in the left field.[85] Those coins (40 units) were minted in Alexandria between *c.* 113 – 40s BC.

Of the 46 coins found in the eleventh campaign (2010/2011) – except for one Islamic bronze coin (14th AD?) – the latest material dates to the 4th-5th centuries AD, which is consistent with observations on the pottery,[86] and represents the majority of the finds (64.4 %). Two Early Roman coins were recovered. One of them is a billon tetradrachm (debased silver) of emperor Nero, minted in Alexandria in 65/6 AD (11-2-48-0/2 on Fig. 35).[87] The obverse features the radiate bust of the emperor while the reverse displays the bust of Alexandria with the elephant headdress. The second, in bronze, was minted in the 1st century AD, possibly also under Nero. Of the ten Ptolemaic coins, most are Series 9 bronze coins, mainly struck in Alexandria, as well as two casts. One corroded bronze coin, figuring the head of Alexandria with the elephant headdress on the obverse and an eagle with spread wings on the reverse, was minted in the 2nd century BC, possibly c. 150 – 115 BC (11-2-32-2/3 on Fig. 35).[88] The coin gives a *terminus post quem* for a small building of unclear function south of the town wall. The building and a mud brick wall attached to it are contemporary with the intramural animal necropolis and constitute the only extramural architectural structures of Ptolemaic or Roman date.

In Season 12 (2011/2012), 83 coins were recovered in Area 2. Their dates range from the 3rd century BC to the 5th (or perhaps 7th for one hardly legible coin) century AD. Besides ten Late Roman coins (4th-5th c. AD), five Early Roman coins have been identified: a tetradrachm minted under Diocletian, a bronze coin from the reign of Antoninus Pius, and three more bronze coins from the 1st–2nd century AD. The billon tetradrachm of Diocletian,[89] minted in Alexandria in 285/6 AD, shows the laureate and cuirassed bust of Diocletian on the obverse and Eirene on the reverse (12-2-126-8/1 on Fig. 35). The coin is from a layer connected to the Late Antique tower at the corner of the town wall and provides a date for this phase of the fortification. 65.1 % of the coins date to the Ptolemaic period. Three quarters of those belong to Series 9 (113 – 40s BC, including a few casts) (12-2-93-5/3 on Fig. 35). 12-2-93-5/3 was found in a layer of settlement debris east of the town wall. One quarter of the Ptolemaic coins were minted in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Among them, a bronze coin from the 2nd century BC (12-2-59-2/9 on Fig. 35)[90] and some coins of Series 5, including the one presented below, are of special interest. Excavations outside the Eastern Sector of the city wall

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[83] These coins, when illegible (which is often the case, see: O. PICARD, C. BRESC, T. FAUCHER, *et al.* [eds.], *Les monnaies des fouilles du Centre d'études alexandrines: les monnayages de bronze à Alexandrie de la conquête d'Alexandre à l'Égypte moderne* (Alexandria, 2012), p. 200), can be attributed to these productions thanks to their module and manufacturing technique.

[84] Ptolemaic bronze coins are classified according to the Series established by O. PICARD and T. FAUCHER (see O. PICARD/T.FAUCHER, 'Les monnaies lagides', in *Les monnaies des fouilles du Centre d'études alexandrines,* p. 11-108).

[85] C. LORBER, *Coins of the Ptolemaic Empire, Part II: Ptolemy V through Cleopatra VII* (New York, 2025) (henceforth cited as *CPE*), B745.

[86] W. MÜLLER, in *Eleventh Season*, pp. 4-5, 15.

[87] A. BURNETT et al., *Roman Provincial Coinage. Volume I: From the death of Caesar to the death of Vitellius (44 BC - AD 69)* (London, 1992) (henceforth cited as *RPC I*), 5289).

[88] The coin probably belongs to Series 7B, *CPE* B649 (monogram in left field unclear).

[89] *RPC* X, ID 75916 (temporary).

[90] Series 6E = 7C, *CPE* B638 = B696. Minted in Alexandria. Obverse: Head of Zeus Ammon. Reverse: Two eagles standing left on a thunderbolt, wings closed, cornucopia in left field. The residual coin was found in the *intramural* Roman town quarter.

yielded a Ptolemaic coin in layers under a casing that belonged to Ptolemaic repairs of the damaged Late Period wall, thus providing a terminus *post quem* for its first repair phase.[91] This coin (12-2-91-6/4 on Fig. 36),[92] of the type Zeus Ammon / eagle standing left on a thunderbolt, figures a *harpè* on the reverse. These coins are attributed to the city of Joppa on the Levantine coast and would belong to Series 5, minted between *ca*. 225 and the end of the 3rd century BC. They were recently studied by Thomas Faucher and Bérangère Redon,[93] who pointed out that a larger number of these coins has been recovered in Egypt than in Syria and Phoenicia, and that they are usually found in and around places frequented by Ptolemaic soldiers. The current hypothesis is that these coins arrived in Egypt with the return of troops from Syria and Phoenicia after the battle of Raphia in 217 BC. The most southern find so far recorded was at Berenike Trogodytica. The find at Syene, which hosted a Ptolemaic garrison,[94] is further corroboration of the link between this issue and the Ptolemaic army.

Of the 60 coins from Season 13 (2012/2013), only one is Roman: a billon tetradrachm, minted under Nero at Alexandria in 67/8 AD (13-2-35-1/2 on Fig. 35),[95] showing the radiate bust of the emperor and the veiled bust of Hera Argeia. The coin was found in layers associated with the last phase of the *intramural* animal necropolis in Area 2.

All other coins (13-2-9-1/3, 13-2-115-1/1 and 13-2-130-4/4 on Fig. 36) date to the Ptolemaic period, the vast majority to Series 9 (113 – 40s BC). Most of the coins were struck, some were casts. All of them were heavily corroded. The findspots of most of the Series 9 coins from Area 2 postdate the animal necropolis,[96] but some were found in layers connected to the burial ground or its central sanctuary. These complement the evidence provided by the study of pottery assemblages,[97] and thus allow more precise dating of the necropolis. A Ptolemaic bronze coin minted in Alexandria in the 2nd century BC was found in an empty burial pit in the animal necropolis (13-2-114-2/1 on Fig. 36).[98]

Of the nine coins found during Season 14 (2013/2014), eight are legible. All date to the Ptolemaic period (Series 9 (c. 113 – 40s BC)).

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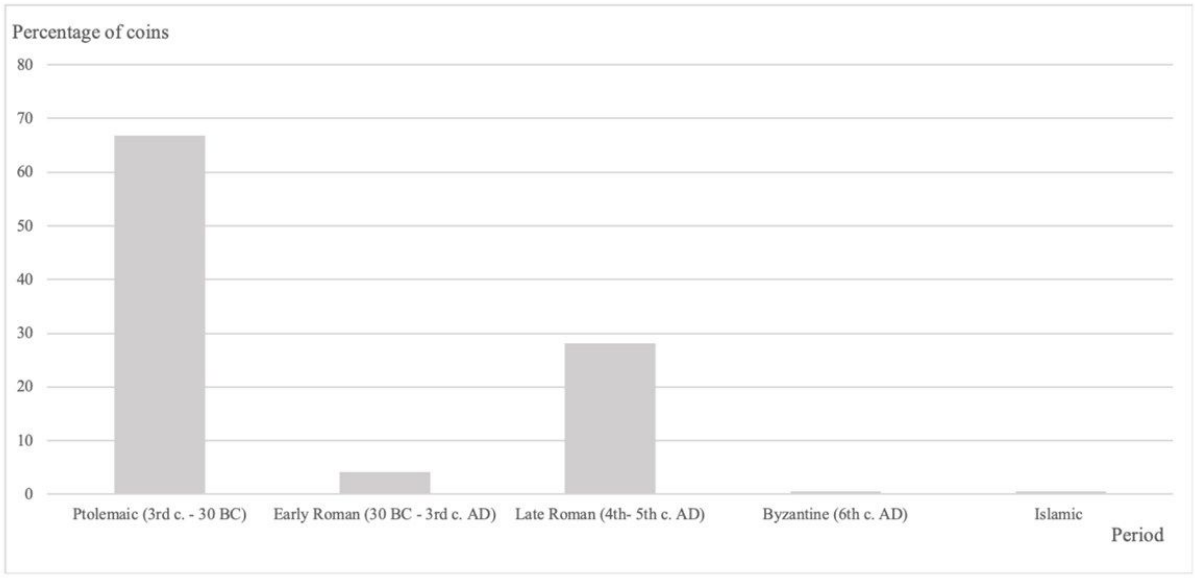
[91] *Cf.* C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'Report on the 13th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene/Old Aswan', *ASAE, forthcoming* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Swissinst_Report Aswan 2013.pdf), p. 5.
[92] Series 5, *CPE* B474.
[93] See: B. REDON/T. FAUCHER, 'Recent discoveries of BE arrowheads and Joppa coins in the Eastern Desert of Egypt: In the footsteps of the Ptolemaic army', *BASOR* 388 (2022), pp. 1-29.
[94] *Cf.* S. PFEIFFER, *Griechische und Lateinische Inschriften zum Ptolemäerreich und zur römischen Provinz Aegyptus* (Berlin, 2015), n. 25, pp. 132-136 for an inscription presumably found on Elephantine Island (I. Louvre 14= I. Thèbes 302 = OGIS I 111 = SB V 8878 = TM 6398) where Boethius is called *Phrourarch* and commander of the garrison of Syene. LOCHER, *Topographie und Geschichte der Region am ersten Nilkatatarakt in Griechisch-Römischer Zeit*, pp. 64 and 82-83.
[95] *RPC* I, 5315.
[96] C. von Pilgrim, W. Müller, *Report on the 13th Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission in Syene / Old Aswan (2012/2013)*, p. 13-19.
[97] MARIOLA HEPA, in *Sixteenth Season*, pp. 27-32.
[98] . Series 6E = 7C, *CPE* B638 = B696.



Tab. 1: Area 2, Percentage of coins by period of production

To conclude, in the course of five campaigns, Area 2 yielded a total of 217 coins, all bronze except three of billon. Despite the significant corrosion of the majority of them, 90 % could be identified or at least linked to a period. The finds cover a chronological range from the 3rd century BC to the 14th (?) century AD. Among the coins identified, 66,8 % are Ptolemaic (3rd century – 30 BC, mainly 113-40s BC), 4.1 % are Early Roman (30 BC - 3rd century AD), 28.1 % are Late Roman (4th-5th AD), 0.5 % are Byzantine (6th century AD) and 0.5 % are Islamic (14th century AD?).

10-2-22-2/1 | 11-2-11-6/52 | 12-2-126-8 | 13-2-35-1/2 | 11-2-48-0/2 | 12-2-93-5/3

Fig. 35: Coins from Area 2 (Scale 1:1). Photos by Héloïse Aumaître.

13-2-9-1/3 13-2-115-1/1 13-2-130-4/4 13-2-114-2/1 12-2-91-6/4

Fig. 36: Coins from Area 2 (Scale 1:1). Photos by Héloïse Aumaître.

Area 13

Area 13 was a special case among the rescue excavations undertaken by the Joint Mission in Syene. The three sub-areas (Areas 13a, b and c) were investigated over three years (4th – 6th Season). Both the duration and the area of this investigation were exceptional. The excavation in the southernmost part of Graeco-Roman Syene revealed a prosperous town quarter from its beginnings in the 3rd century BC until Late Antiquity. The publication and study of the material culture is well underway.[99] Coins were found in the houses and streets of this quarter. As the study of the coins from this area is still in progress, the data and numbers provided are temporary and preliminary.

84.1 % of the 82 coins recovered during the 4th season (2003/2004) – all bronze except one of billon[100] – are legible. They range from the early Ptolemaic (3rd century BC) to the medieval period (14th-15th century AD).

Four Islamic coins dating to the 14th-15th centuries were recovered, as well as one Arabo-Byzantine (7th century AD), four Byzantine (ca. 6th century AD) and ten Late Roman coins (4th-5th century AD). The Early Roman Imperial period (30 BC–3rd century AD) is well represented with 16 coins minted in Alexandria, the vast majority of them dating to the 1st century AD. Among those, a coin of Vespasian produced in 76/7 AD,[101] four coins of Claudius probably minted in 49/50 or 50/1 AD,[102] and two coins of Augustus, minted *ca.* 2 BC – 8/9 AD[103] and *ca.* 19/8 – 12/1

[99] C. VON PILGRIM, *Second Report,* pp. p. 264 – 270. M. HEPA, *Ein griechisch-römischer Siedlungsbefund in Assuan/Ägypten. Areal 13c. Stratigraphie und Kleinfunde* (MA thesis, University of Cologne, 2011). MARTIN-KILCHER/WININGER, *Syene III,* pp. 41-45. REMBART, *Syene V.*

[100] The roman billon tetradrachm, encased in concretion, has been selected for restoration to enable its identification. At first sight (but to be confirmed), it could have been issued in the 3rd century AD.

[101] 4-13-86-2/6 (*RPC* II, 2459). Obverse: Laureate head of Vespasian right, ΑΥΤΟΚ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ ΟΥΕΣΠΑΣΙΑΝΟΥ. Reverse: Bust of Alexandria right, L ENAT.

[102] 4-13-45-41/4 and 4-13-45-51/3 (*RPC* I, 5175 or 5182). Obverse: Laureate head of Claudius right. Reverse: winged caduceus and four ears of corn tied, AYTOKPA. 4-13-45-51/1 (*RPC* I, 5183). Obverse: Laureate head of Claudius right. Reverse: clasped hands; LIA.

BC,[104] are of special interest. Of 32 Ptolemaic coins, nine belong to Series 9 (113-40s BC, ¾ stricken and ¼ cast), two to Series 6 (Alexandria, *ca.* 205/200 BC – *ca*. 150 BC), one interesting overstrike to Series 6,[105] one hemiobol with a *harpè* in the left field[106] (Joppa, last quarter of the 3rd c. AD, see discussion above) to Series 5, one coin to Series 4[107] (*ca*. 241 – *ca*. 225 BC) and two to Series 3 (*ca*. 261 – *ca*. 241 BC). The most ancient find, a diobol of Series 2, dates from the beginning of the Ptolemaic period (*ca*. 294 – 261 BC).

The 5th Season yielded 374 bronze coins, of which 86.1 % have been identified (at least regarding their period of production). Apart from two Islamic coins, the numismatic material ranges from the beginning of the Ptolemaic period (1st quarter of the 3rd century BC) to the Late Roman period (4th—5th century AD).

At least 41 Late Roman coins have been recovered, including some SALVS REIPUBLICAE,[108] SECVRITAS REIPUBLICAE,[109] some Constantius II coins, including one from Antioch (5-13-0-0/31 on Fig. 37),[110] and one coin of Diocletian minted in Alexandria just after the reform *ca* 296.[111] Of the 37 Early Roman coins minted in Alexandria, most date to the 1st century AD and, to a lesser extent, to the first quarter of the 2nd century AD. They include three coins of Domitian minted in 90-93 AD (5-13-227-16/3b on Fig. 37),[112] at least one coin of Vespasian[113] (69-74/5 AD), eight of Claudius[114] (41-53 AD), two of Tiberius of hippopotamus type[115] (17/8-19/20 AD) and five of Augustus,[116]

4-13-45-11/1 (*RPC* I, 5151). Obverse: laureate head of Claudius right, with star. Reverse: Hippopotamus right, LΔ, AYTOKPA.

[103] 4-13-45-51/2 (*RPC* I, 5029). Obverse: laureate head of Augustus right. Reverse: Cornucopia. ΣEBAΣTOΣ. For Augustus' alexandrian coinage, the datation follows Laurent Bricault (L. BRICAULT, 'Le monnayage d'Auguste à Alexandrie', in O. DEVILLERS AND K. SION-JENKIS (eds.), *César sous Auguste* (Paris, 2012), pp. 107–123).

[104] 4-13-20-1/1 (*RPC* I, 5007). Obverse: bare head of Augustus right, CEBACTOC. Reverse: Sacrificial implements, KAICAP.

[105] 4-13-0-0/20 (surface find). In concretion. Obverse: Head of Demeter over head of Zeus (?). Reverse: Overstruck over eagle with cornucopia over shoulder.

[106] 4-13-72-1/1 (*CPE* B473). Obverse: Head of Zeus Ammon right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings closed, *harpè* in left field, ΠTOΛEMAIOY BAΣIΛEΩΣ.

[107] 4-13-17-1/1. AE, trihemiobol. Obverse: Head of Zeus right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings opened (?).

[108] Theodosius I, Valentinian II, Arcadius, 383 - 403 AD. Obverse: Draped, cuirassed and diademed bust of the emperor right. Reverse: Victory advancing left, dragging a prisoner, SALVS REIPUBLICAE.

[109] Valentinianus I, Valens I, Gratian. 364 - 378 AD. Obverse: Draped, cuirassed and diademed bust of the emperor right. Reverse: Victory advancing left, holding palm and wreath, SECVRITAS REIPUBLICAE.

[110] 5-13-0-0/31 (*RIC* VIII Antioch 50 (or 59)). Obverse: Bust, pearl-diademed, draped, cuirassed, right, CONST-ANS AVG. Reverse: Two soldiers, helmeted, draped, cuirassed, facing front, heads toward each other, each holding inverted spear in outer hand and resting inner hand on shield; between them, a standard, GLORIA EXERCITVS.

[111] 5-13-0-0/1 (Surface find; *cf. RIC* VI, Alexandria, 46-48). Obverse: Radiate bust right, IMP C DIO[CLETIANVS P F AVG]. Reverse: Figure standing receiving [small Victory on globe from Jupiter], ALE, CONCORDIA MILITVM

[112] Including 5-13-227-16/3B. Domitian, 90/1 AD (*RPC* II, 2743). Obverse: Laureate head of Domitian right. Reverse: Ibis, right; LI.

5-13-0-0/19 (surface find). Domitian, 92/3 AD (*RPC* II, 2691). Obverse: Laureate head of Domitian left. Reverse: Griffin seated, right, with wheel, LIB.

[113] 5-13-0-0/3 (surface find; *cf. RPC* II 2408, 2419 etc). Obverse: Laureate head of Vespasian right, [AY]TOK KAIΣ ΣEB[A OYEΣΠAΣIANOY]. Reverse: Bust of Sarapis right. Date off flan.

[114] Examples: 5-13-0-0/6. 52/1AD(?) (*RPC* I, 5193). Obverse: Laureate head of Claudius right, [TI KΛAY KAI] CEBAC ΓEPMA. Reverse: Eagle standing right, wings closed, head reverted; L I Γ?, AYTOKPA.

5-13-215-2/2. 51/2 or 52/3 AD, (*RPC* I, 5187 or 5193). Obverse: Laureate head of Claudius right; Reverse: Eagle standing right, wings closed, head reverted. Date illegible.

5-13-215-4/3B, 41/2 - 45/6 AD. Obverse: Head right. Reverse: Hippopotamus right, AYTOKPA. Date off flan.

[115] 5-13-153-4/5 and 5-13-478-1/1.

[116] Including 5-13-299-2/1. *ca*. 18/7 AD (*RPC* I, 5003). Obverse: Bare head of Augustus right, CEBACTOC. Reverse: Temple of Mars Ultor, KAICAP.

5-13-291-8/2. *Ca*. 5/4 - 3/2 BC (*RPC* I, 5013). Obverse: Garlanded altar between two laurel branches, ΣEBAΣTOY. Reverse: KAIΣAPOΣ in two lines in wreath.

among them one of its first emission in Alexandria as Octavian (30 – 28 BC), with types patterned after those of the last queen of the Ptolemaic kingdom, Cleopatra VII Thea.[117] Most of the 236 Ptolemaic coins from Season 5 are heavily corroded. Among them, 106 can definitely be attributed to Series 9 (113 – 40s BC, stricken and casts), two to series 7B[118] (c. 150 – 115 BC), one to Series 6 (1st half of 2nd c. BC),[119] three to series 5 (last quarter of the 3rd century BC), possibly including at least one from Joppa, five to series 4 (*ca*. 241 – *ca*. 225) (5-13-64-3/2,[120] 5-13-56-2/4,[121] 5-13-0-0/18,[122] on Fig. 37) and more than ten to Series 3 (c. 261 – 241 BC) (5-13-56-1/4[123] and 5-13-79-1/1[124] on Fig. 37). The most ancient coins are two bronze diobols of Series 2, one minted under Ptolemy II Philadelphus[125] (*ca*. 275 – 261 BC) and one minted under Ptolemy I Sôter[126] (294 – 282 BC) (5-13-64-7/2 on Fig. 37), showing significant signs of wear from long circulation.

Of 113 bronze coins recovered during the 6th Season, 91.2 % have been identified or at least linked to a period. Among them, 12.6 % are Late Roman (4th-5th c. AD), 2.9 % are Early Roman (1st century AD), and 84.5 % are Ptolemaic (from *ca* 261 BC to 40s BC). Later Roman finds include SALVS REIPUBLICAE bronzes, as well as two FEL TEMP REPARATIO of Constantius II.[127] The Early Roman finds consist of one coin of Tiberius[128] (18/9 AD) (6-13-69-5/2 on Fig. 37) and two of Augustus[129] (2 BC – 12 AD). Concerning the Ptolemaic period, 30 coins belong to series 9 (113 – 40s BC), three to Series 6E=7C (2nd century BC), nine to Series 5, including at least one from Joppa[130] (last quarter of 3rd century BC), 14 to Series 4 (ca. 241 – ca. 225 BC), and 12 to Series 3 (c. 261 – 241 BC)

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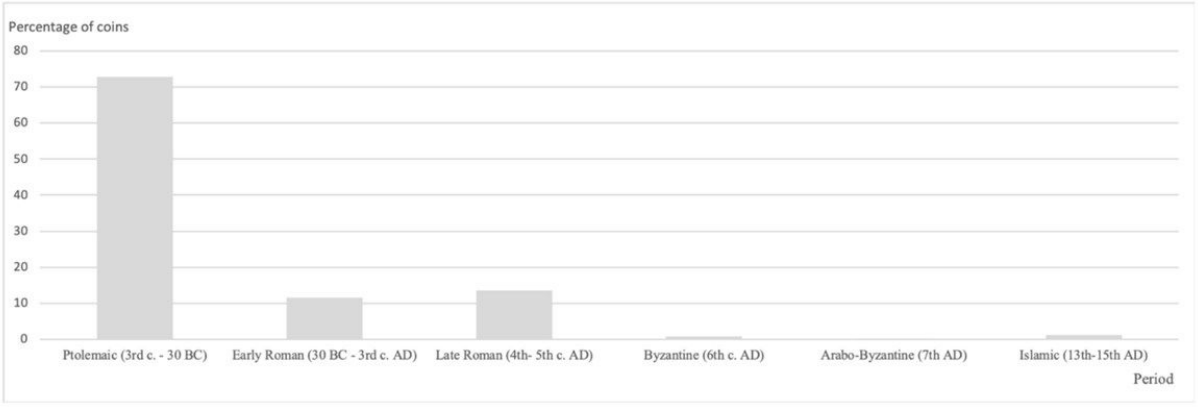
[117] 5-13-42-3/2 (*RPC* I, 5001). Obverse: Bare head of Augustus right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings closed.
[118] 5-13-0-0/12 (surface find) and 5-13-301-1/4, (*CPE* B647). Obverse: Head of Isis/Demeter right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings opened, monogram ΠΑ in left field, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[119] Series 6A-6B (*CPE* B565 or B572). Obverse: Head of Isis/Demeter right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings opened, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[120] 5-13-64-3/2. Series 4A, 2.5 obols, *CPE* B360. Obverse: Head of Zeus Ammon right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings opened, cornucopia over shoulder, Λ between the legs, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[121] 5-13-56-2/4. Series 4B, tetrobol, *CPE* B366. Obverse: Head of Zeus Ammon right. Eagle standing left, wings closed, head reverted, cornucopia over shoulder; E between the legs, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[122] 5-13-0-0/18 (surface find). Series 4D, Trihemiobol, *CPE* B379. Obverse: Laureate head of Zeus right. Reverse: Eagle standing left on thunderbolt, wings opened, ⊏ between the legs, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[123] 5-13-56-1/4. Hemiobol. Obverse: Head of Zeus Ammon right. Reverse: Eagle standing left, wings opened, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[124] 5-13-79-1/1. Diobol. Obverse: Laureate head of Zeus right. Reverse, Eagle standing left on thunderbolt, wings closed, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[125] 5-13-194-4/1. Series 2H, *CPE* B200. Obverse: Laureate head of Zeus right. Reverse: Eagle standing left on thunderbolt, wings opened, monogram Σ over shield over monogram XP? in left field, monogram AI between the legs, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.
[126] 5-13-64-7/2. Series 2D. Obverse: Laureate head of Zeus right. Reverse: Eagle standing left on thunderbolt, wings opened.
[127] 6-13-117-1/15 and 6-13-117-1/16.
[128] 6-13-69-5/2. *RPC* I, 5086. Obverse: Head of Livia right. Reverse: Two ears of corn and two poppies, LE.
[129] Including 6-13-69-5/1. *RPC* I, 5026. Obverse: Laureate head of Augustus right. Reverse: six ears of corn tied together, ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ.
[130] 6-13-71-5/3.



Tab. 2: Area 13, Percentage of coins by period of production (preliminary results)

To conclude, in three excavation seasons, Area 13 yielded 569 coins, almost exclusively of bronze, of which 86.8 % have already been identified (at least to a period). Among them, 1.2 % of the finds are Islamic (13th-15th c. AD), 0.2 % Arabo-Byzantine (7th c. AD), 0.8 % Byzantine (6th c. AD), 13.5 % Late Roman (4th-5th c. AD), 11.5 % Early Roman (30 BC - 3rd c. AD, mainly 1st c. AD), and 72.8 % are Ptolemaic (294 – 40s BC).

Conclusion

This overview marks only a first step in the new numismatic study of the coins from Syene. The scientific project will be accompanied by a special numismatic conservation project to assist research by cleaning the coins and to protect them from further corrosion.

Coins are important cultural and historical sources. They show how imperial or royal power was perceived by those subjected to it. After all, coins were the most widespread media for showcasing the image of the ruler and aspects of his program or ideology.

In an urban archaeological project with many often small and widely dispersed areas, absolute chronological data from coins are indispensable to connect sites that cannot be linked stratigraphically. They thus help to answer questions concerning the history and development of the town and provide the context for meaningful historic narratives.

Fig. 37: Coins from Area 13 (Scale 1:1). Photos by Héloïse Aumaître.

(Héloïse Aumaître)

5. The anthropological investigation of human skeletal remains from Area 45

Over the last years,[131] anthropological research has focused on Area 45. In Season 25, this long-term endeavour was finally finished.[132] With an estimated total of ca. 500 individuals,[133] the most human remains of all excavated areas in Old Aswan were found in this area. It lies in a densely populated part of the necropolis south of the Roman town of Syene.[134] Area 24, immediately west of Area 45, as well as Areas 22 and 58 further north, belonged to the same part of the cemetery but were significantly smaller in size and thus contained fewer burials.[135] Since these sites were investigated in rescue excavations, the usual problems of urban archaeology, like time pressure and a difficult security situation, applied. Work in the western part of Area 45 had to be stopped prematurely and only the latest phases of the cemetery could be investigated, otherwise, the number of individuals would have been significantly larger. This became evident from the much smaller eastern part of the same area. There, three distinct phases of burials were observed. A stela reused in one of the latest tombs in the western part of Area 45 was dated to the 6th/7th century AD,[136] while the second phase of burials was dated to the second half of the 4th century AD.[137] Pottery from the earliest graves in the eastern part of Area 45 was dated to the Early Roman Imperial period.

Most individuals were buried in small, vaulted chamber tombs. The size of these mud brick constructions rarely exceeded 2x1.5m, and the height of the vaulted chamber was only up to 1m. The superstructures of these tombs – if preserved – consisted of simple, low mastabas that sometimes were covered in white lime plaster. In the latest phase, parts of the superstructure were made of fired bricks. Shafts, usually at the western end of the chamber, allowed frequent access and thus consecutive burials over a long period without destroying the tomb. The entrance into the chamber was walled up after the burial. In some cases, the shaft was closed with a square stone slab.[138] The bodies were put into the chamber in a supine position with the head in the west. In the restricted space of the chamber, up to thirty or more individuals were placed on earlier burials.[139] Due to this practice, every interment damaged the earlier burials in the tomb.

Evidence of the regular use of cremation from Area 45 is a special case not only for Aswan but for the *Chora* (Egypt south of Alexandria and the Mediterranean coast) as a whole. A construction first attributed to a single

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[131] *Cf.* J. NOVÁČEK/KRISTINA SCHEELEN-NOVÁČEK, in *Eighteenth Season*, pp. 31-33, *idem,* in *Twenty-Third Season,* pp. 12-15, *idem,* in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* pp. 44-46.
[132] The investigation was conducted from February 19th until March 4th, 2025, in the magazine at Aswan.
[133] The number is an estimate after a first recording and is due to change after synchronising the archaeological and anthropological data.
[134] W. MÜLLER, in C. VON PILGRIM/W. MÜLLER, 'Report on the Ninth Season of the Joint Swiss-Egyptian Mission at Old Aswan / / Syene', *ASAE, forthcoming,* (https://www.swissinst.ch/downloads/Report 9th Season_2008-2009.pdf) (henceforth cited as *Ninth Season*), pp. 4-6.
[135] J. NOVÁČEK/KRISTINA SCHEELEN-NOVÁČEK, in *Twenty-Third Season,* p. 20 with references.
[136] J. H. F. DIJKSTRA, 'Three Funerary Stelae from Aswan', in A. JIMÉNEZ-SERRANO, *From the Delta to the Cataract. Studies Dedicated to Mohamed El-Bialy, CHAN* 76 (Leiden/Boston 2015), 26-27.
[137] W. MÜLLER, in *Ninth Season*, p. 6. The date is based on numismatic evidence provided by H. C. NOESKE.
[138] *Cf. ibid.,* p. 15, fig. 20 for an example from Area 49.
[139] J. NOVÁČEK et al., 'Roman and Late Antique Burials from the Old Town of Aswan (Egypt)', *Anthropologie* LVII/I (2019), pp. 6-7.

cremated body can be interpreted as an *ustrina*, a central place for cremating bodies,[140] in the light of recent anthropological results that identified the cremated remains of 80-100 individuals.[141]

Methods applied this season included the morphological estimation of age-at-death, sex[142] and stature,[143] as well as morphometric measurements[144] and the evaluation of individual skeletal traits.[145] Possible pathological alterations were observed and interpreted according to the recommendations of Schultz.[146] Additionally, current palaeopathological literature was consulted.[147]

Altogether, 136 individuals were investigated this season. Except for a few individuals from Areas 10-58, 2, and 87, the vast majority (134 individuals), originated from Area 45. arts of the following complexes were objects of this investigation: 8-45-1, 8-45-2, 8-45-5, 8-45-8, 8-45-15, 8-45-17, 8-45-24, 8-45-28, 8-45-29, 8-45-30, 8-45-31, 8-45-33, 8-45-35, 8-45-38, 8-45-42, 8-45-43, and 9-45-336. The majority were individuals extracted from commingled human remains found in Tombs 30 (28 individuals), 31 (28 individuals), and 33 (36 individuals).

Among the 134 individuals investigated this season, all age-at-death categories could be observed, including five individuals who died during or immediately after their birth, and four individuals of 70 years and older. Altogether, there were 65 subadults (0-14 years), 12 juveniles (14-20), and the remaining 57 individuals were adults. As most of the individuals were very incomplete and/or fragmented, the sex could only be estimated in a few cases of adults. It was possible to identify seven males and ten rather or probably male individuals, four females and eight rather or probably female individuals, all of them juvenile or adult. Many of the individuals were subadults and juveniles and did not yet exhibit skeletal morphological traits connected to sexual dimorphism. Several complexes contained human remains, which were burnt considerable time after the death of the individuals (Fig. 38). There were no true cremation burials in this season's investigation.

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[140] W. MÜLLER, in *Ninth Season,* p. 4.

[141] J. NOVÁČEK/KRISTINA SCHEELEN-NOVÁČEK, in *Twenty-Fourth Season,* p. 46.

[142] D. FEREMBACH/I. SCHWIDETZKY/M. STLOUKAL, 'Recommendations for Age and Sex Diagnoses of Skeletons', Journal of Human Evolution 9 (1980), pp. 517–549 and F. RÖSING/M. GRAW/M. MARRÉ/S. RITZ-TIMME/M. A. ROTHSCHILD/K. ROETZSCHER/A. SCHMELING/I. SCHROEDER/G.GESERICK, 'Recommendations for the forensic diagnosis from sex and age from skeletons', Homo - Journal of Comparative Human Biology 58 (2007), pp. 75-89.

[143] M. TROTTER/G. C. GLESER, 'Estimation of stature from long bones of American Whites and Negroes', American Journal of Physical Anthropology 10 (1952), pp. 463-514 and M. H. RAXTER/C. B. RUFF/A. AZAB/M. ERFAN/M. SOLIMAN/A. EL-SAWAF, 'Stature estimation in ancient Egyptians: A new technique based on anatomical reconstruction of stature', American Journal of Physical Anthropology 136 (2008), pp. 147-155.

[144] R. MARTIN/K. SALLER, *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie in systemischer Darstellung* (Stuttgart, 1957³) and S. OUSLEY/R. JANTZ, 'Ch. 15: Fordisc 3 and Statistical Methods for Estimating Sex and Ancestry', in. D. DIRKMAAT (ed), *A Companion to Forensic Anthropology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), pp. 311–329.

[145] RW MANN/DR HUNT/S.LOZANOFF, *Photographic Regional Atlas of Non-Metric Traits and Anatomical Variants in the Human Skeleton*, (Springfield, 2016).

[146] M. SCHULTZ, 'Paläopathologische Diagnostik. Anthropologie', in R. KNUSSMANN (ed.), *Handbuch der vergleichenden Biologie des Menschen. Vol. 1.1*, (Stuttgart, 1988), pp. 480–496.

[147] A. C. AUFDERHEIDE/ C. RODRÍGUEZ-MARTÍN, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Human Paleopathology*, (Cambridge, 1998), DJ ORTNER, *Identification of Pathological Conditions in Human Skeletal Remains*, (San Diego 2003²) and CS LARSEN, *Bioarchaeology. Interpreting Behaviour from the Human Skeleton.* (Cambridge, 2015²).

Fig. 38: Adult female individual, 30-40 years (8-45-15-2/1, Individual II). Fragment of the left tibia with influence of heat. The fragment exhibits two different degrees of heat influence, as well as vestiges indicating that burning happened a longer time after the death of the individual, when the bone tissue was already dried out. Photo by Jan Nováček and Kristina Scheelen-Nováček.

Commonly, pathological conditions, such as different alterations connected to meningeal processes, inflammations of upper airways (Fig. 39), osteoarthritis, as well as healed fractures (Fig. 40) were observed. Furthermore, dental and oral pathologies such as periodontitis, caries, dental calculus, abscesses and ante-mortem tooth loss were frequently observed.

Fig. 39: Subadult individual, 4-6 years (8-45-17-1/1, Individual 1), porous bony layer in the nasal cavity, most likely due to a haemorrhagic and/or inflammatory process. Photo by Jan Nováček and Kristina Scheelen-Nováček.

Fig. 40: Adult, probably female individual, 30-50 years (8-45-30-4/10, Individual I). A fracture of the sixth right rib, which was not fully healed at the time of the individual's death. Photo by Jan Nováček and Kristina Scheelen-Nováček.

Hopefully, the anthropological study of all human skeletal remains excavated by the Joint Mission in Aswan will be finished in the next seasons. The final publication will give unique insights into the composition, living conditions and development of the population of Syene over more than three millennia.

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