

*Report on the work of the
Egyptian-German Mission at Matariya / Heliopolis in Spring 2012**

by

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The spring season of the joint mission of the Ministry of State of Antiquities with the University of Leipzig at Matariya / Heliopolis was carried out from February 26th 2012 till March 31st 2012.² The excavation work was mainly concerned with Site 200 within the north-western part of the main temple precinct, the area north of the shopping mall "Suq el-Khamis" (**Fig. 1**).³ In addition, a magnetometric survey was carried out in the area west of the obelisk, known as Misraa es-Segun. Furthermore, a grid system with GPS references for the enclosure was established.

The earlier history of the area: For the first time bread moulds and beer jars of 4th / 5th Dynasty were identified in Site 200 lying within the medieval debris layers of the squares M24/N24, while single pottery finds from the top layers of cultivated land in square M21 dated to the 12th Dynasty. Among the relief fragments found during this season, some may be attributed to reused mastaba blocks of the Old and Middle Kingdom.⁴

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The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by the inspector IMAN MOHAMMED KELANY. To her, to the director of antiquities at Matariya, MOHAMMED FARID, as well as to the authorities of the storerooms at Tell el-Hisn, HODA IBRAHIM and ASHRAF ABD EL-HAFIZ, we would like to express our sincere thanks for their kind support and cooperation.

² The first part of the season was devoted to cleaning work in 26 squares of 10x10m each. Besides garbage disposal from neighboring houses, dense vegetation covered all squares.

³ Earlier excavation work in 2005 by a Egyptian-German joint expedition was published by M. ABD EL-GELIL – R. SULEIMAN – G. FARIS - D. RAUE, The joint Egyptian-German Excavations in Heliopolis in Autumn 2005, in: *MDAIK* 64, 2008, 1-9; further fieldwork of the Supreme Council of Antiquities was conducted by GAMAL FARIS in 2004/2005 and AIMEN ASHMAWY from 2006-2010.

Previous excavation work of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in the area of the shopping mall Suq el-Khamis (area 201) was carried out in 2001-2003; for objects discovered in these seasons, see Y. HAMID KHALIFA and D. RAUE, Excavations of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Matariya: 2001-2003, in: *GM* 218, 2008, 49-56.

⁴ Exc.-No. H24-9-13, I24-10-6; Similar relief fragments with raised relief of high quality were discovered in the foundation of the so-called "high sand of Heliopolis", a large ring structure in the

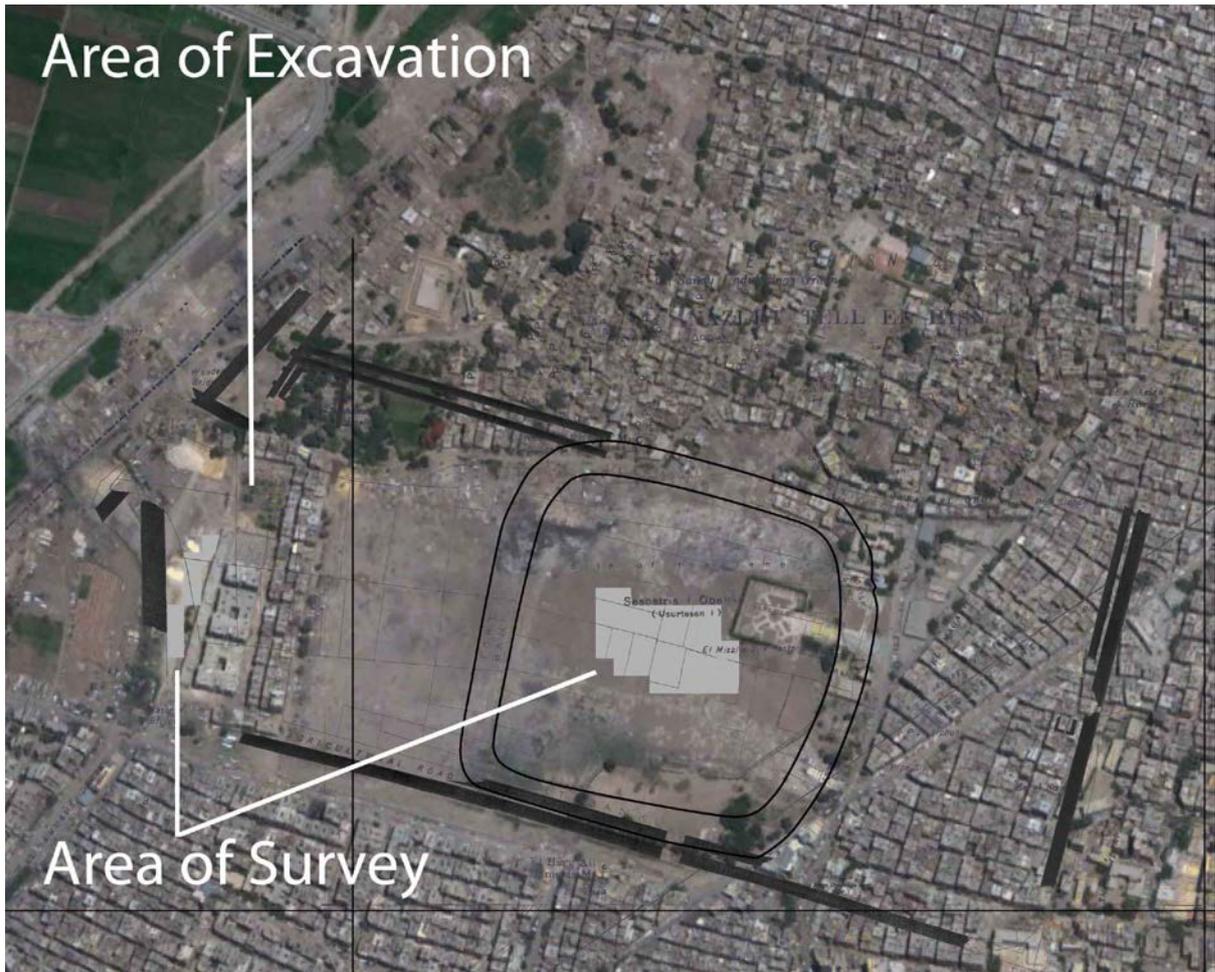


Fig. 1: Work of the Egyptian-German Mission in Spring 2012 in the temple precinct of Matariya / Heliopolis; in black: walls as seen by W.M.F. Petrie in 1912 (ÄMUL_201200525)



The Hyksos era was represented by fragments of 'Fish Plates' of Second Intermediate Period date. A fragment of a larger marl vessel with the depiction of a gazelle(?) is probably to be dated to the same period (**Fig.2**).

Fig. 2: Fragment of pottery vessel with depiction of a gazelle(?), probably 2nd Intermediate Period, exc.-no. H24-17-2

centre of the temple district, see MOHAMMED ABD EL-GELIL – ADEL SAADANI – DIETRICH RAUE, Some Reliefs and Inscriptions from Matariya, in: *MDAIK* 52, 1996, pp. 143-156.

The temple of the Amarna Period: There is plenty of evidence for the activity of Akhenaten in the precinct of the sun-god in Heliopolis. Fragments of sculpture made of silicified sandstone and a large number of *talatat*-fragments were found in the past in Heliopolis itself and reused in the surrounding buildings as well as in the medieval architecture of Cairo.⁵ Decorated and undecorated limestone blocks, each originally measuring 52.5 x 25 x 22 cm, were found this season, especially in a layer of greyish loam with high quantity of limestone chips that testifies to a medieval destruction layer, especially in the squares M24/N24. Several fragments indicate limestone columns built of *talatat*-fragments with palm leaf capitals (column diametres: up to 62 cm). Most fragments bear the titles of the Aten (**Fig. 3a**), parts of large-scale representations of the Aten-disc and its rays, some of them before offering piles, as well as the cartouches of Akhenaten, and Nefertiti. Finely executed representations of the royal family are preserved on a couple of fragments (**Fig. 3b**).



Fig. 3: Fragments of *talatat*-blocks, of the Amarna Period: a) Name of the Aten, exc.-no. M24-12-4, (AMUL_201200258); b) lower part of representation of a king's daughter, exc.-no. M24-23-2, (AMUL_201200327).

⁵ D. RAUE, *Heliopolis und das Haus des Re*, *ADAIK* 16, 1999, pp. 309-312; M. ABD EL-GELIL – R. SULEIMAN - G. FARIS - D. RAUE, in: *MDAIK* 64, 2008, pp. 4-5.

A name of the precinct of the Amarna period follows the full title of the sun-god and can be restored to A-Jtn "Aten reach". This toponym has not been attested yet. Small fragments of purple and orange quartzite originally coming from sculptures of the royal family have also been documented⁶. However, the original location of the sanctuaries built by Akhenaten remains unknown.

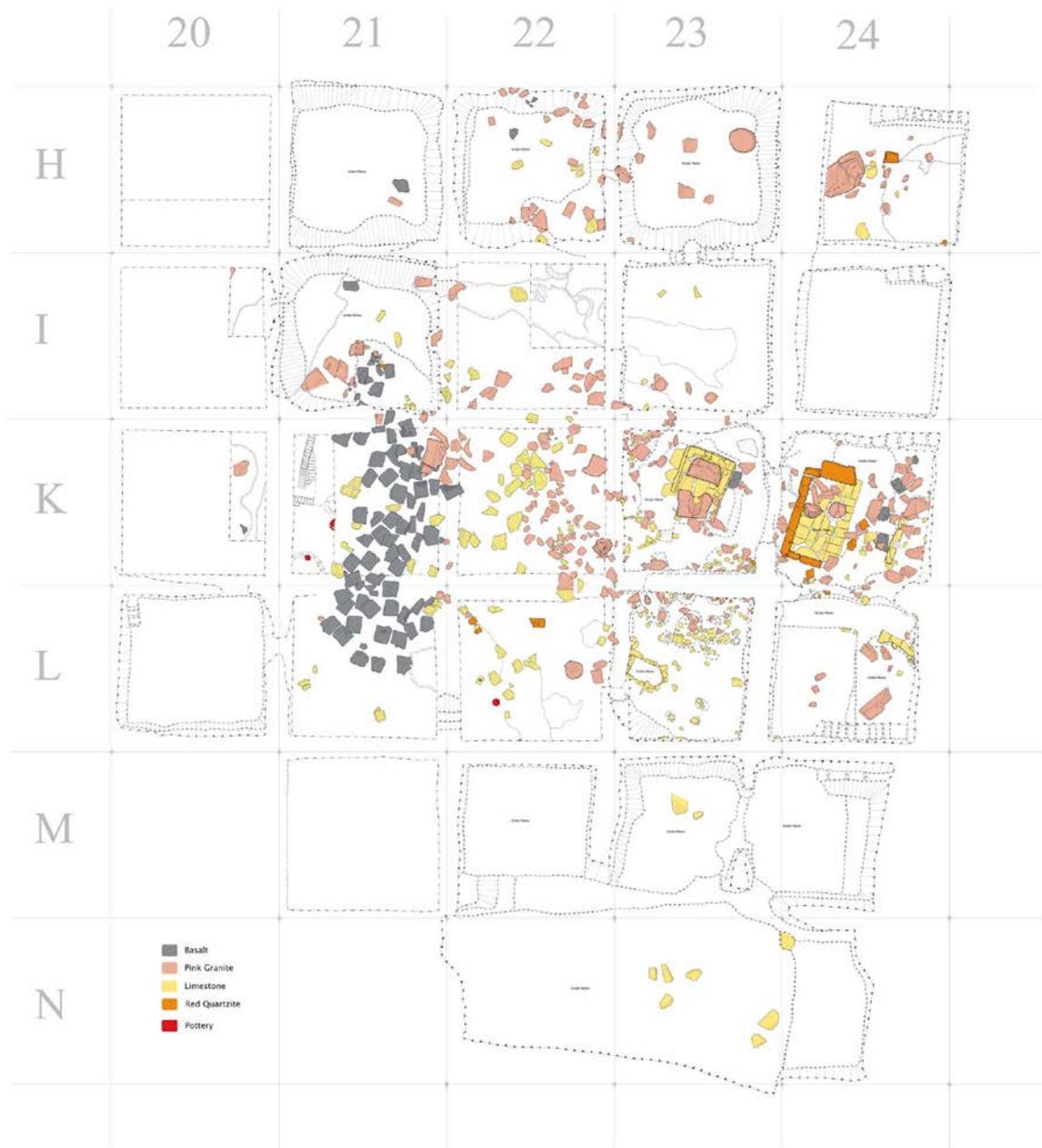


Fig. 4: Temple Site 200, after excavations 2001-2012.

⁶ Exc.-No. I24-13-2, N24-16-4, compare M. ABD EL-GELIL - R. SULEIMAN - G. FARIS - D. RAUE, in: *MDA/K* 64, 2008, Taf. 3d.

Most squares of Site 200 bear evidence for the destruction levels of a temple of Ramses II (**Fig. 4**)⁷. The level of the New Kingdom itself was not reached in this spring season because of the height of the water table.⁸ Several pavement slabs point to floor levels between 12.40 - 12.60 m for the Ramesside Period.



Fig. 5: Site 200 from east, with pedestals in squares K23/K24, courtyard in I23/I24 and basalt structure in L21/K21/I21 (AMUL_201200301).

There are indications for the assumption of an open courtyard in squares I23-I24; a large fragment with rounded top points to the presence of open spaces, too. Like all other inscribed limestone blocks, it bore the name of Ramses II. A pedestal of a colossal statue was discovered in square K23 in 2010 yet. Set with the same orientation, facing north, a quartzite structure in K24 can now be interpreted with certainty as a pedestal for another sculpture as well (**Fig. 5**).⁹ Both pedestals allow, for the first time, the investigation of the orientation of a temple within the precinct

⁷ The position of the temple could eventually match with the orientation given by the position of the obelisk of Sesostri I., see Fig. 1.

⁸ February 26th, 2012: 12.63 m; March 31st, 2012: 12.45 m; Autumn 2005: 11.80 m.

⁹ The rectangular shape points to a standing figure of a king. A large fragment of a kilt with a dagger was discovered in square I21. It suggests that this was a large standing figure of New Kingdom date.

of Heliopolis. This clearly deviates from the magnetic north and also from the enclosure walls. The courtyard was embellished by the re-erection of at least four statues of Sesostris I by Ramses II who usurped them. The sculptures depicted the seated king in double life-size. Heads of statues were found in 2005 in the squares K21, K22 and L22¹⁰. Large fragments of another head were found in K24 and L23. The lower part of a seated statue is preserved from the belly down to the feet, and its location suggests another parallel, seated statue facing south in square H23/H24 (**Fig. 6**). In addition, the top of a back pillar of a dyad inscribed (or re-inscribed?) for Ramses II and Isis was found in H23 in 2003¹¹. More gods are attested among the statuary and its inscriptions: the god Thoth is mentioned on a red granite statue fragment dating to the Middle Kingdom; a fragment of the same material indicates a life-size depiction of a king in the sed-feast cloak¹².



Fig. 6: Lower part of a seated colossal statue and large pit in the south-eastern part of square H24 (ÄMUL_201200328).

¹⁰¹⁰ M. ABD EL-GELIL – R. SULEIMAN – G. FARIS - D. RAUE, in: *MDAIK* 64, 2008, p. 6 with n.17, Pl. 5. The well preserved head from square K21 was brought to the citadel of Cairo by the SCA some years ago.

¹¹ The fragment has erroneously described as lintel by M. ABD EL-GELIL – R. SULEIMAN – G. FARIS - D. RAUE, in: *MDAIK* 64, 2008, p. 5. Also the interpretation of the assemblage of basalt blocks as a frame of a foundation probably needs revision and further study.

¹² The authors are grateful to TOM HARDWICK for this identification.



Fig. 7: Fragment of falcon statue, quartzite, New Kingdom, exc.-no. H24-13-2; (ÄMUL_201200357).

Beside fragments of red granite, other materials were used for the temple's statues, as such as a rather micacious variety of granodiorite and yellow-brown quartzite¹³. The latter material was used for a double life-size statue of a falcon (**Fig. 7**). Several fragments of this sculpture of the New Kingdom were found in a large pit in square H24. Osmanic pipe-heads from the same pit point to a rather late date of this feature.

The orientation of the temple of Ramses II in Site 200 clearly deviates from the magnetic north, and from the orientation of the enclosure walls of the precinct (**Fig. 1 and 5**). Future discoveries of pedestals and foundation blocks *in situ* will help to determine the precise orientation of the sanctuary of the 19th dynasty. The same orientation can be observed to the southwest of Site 200: the geomagnetic measurements west of the shopping mall Suq el-Khamis, named Site 202, displays structures aligned northwest/southeast but might belong to modern debris layers¹⁴.

The dedication of the sanctuary in Site 200 remains unknown. The presence of sculptures mentioning Isis and Thoth do not allow the identification of the sanctuary with one of those that are attested for the reign of Ramses II, such as his House of Millions of Years at Heliopolis. The reliefs and inscriptions from Site 200 display a

¹³ A life-size yellowbrown quartzite statue of Rameses II. was found in square K22 in 2005, see M. ABD EL-GELIL - R. SULEIMAN - G. FARIS - D. RAUE, in: *MDAIK* 64, 2008, p. 7, Pl. 6. It was brought to the open-air museum of Matariya at the obelisk of Sesostri I.

¹⁴ Additional measurements with the Fluxgate Gradiometer in the main Temenos area west of the obelisk of Sesostri I. did not show clear evidence for archaeological features. This is probably due to the highly magnetic loam layers of up to three meters depth.

rather lavish execution and may support a date in the later decades of the reign of Ramses II.¹⁵ One fragment mentions the purification priests of Heliopolis (wab.w Jwnw) and may be assigned to a stela text of the 19th/20th Dynasty (exc.- no. L23-10-2)

There is no epigraphic evidence for any temple decoration after the Ramesside Period from Site 200, although pottery finds attest continuous activity down to the Mameluk Period¹⁶. Most fragments were encountered in a layer of black-brown loam that can probably be identified as alluvial deposits. Pottery finds of the later Roman period point to the date of the first major destruction of the temple. The temple must have been deserted for a while. After obelisks and sphinxes had been removed systematically, from the Ptolemaic Period onwards, large-scale activity turned the site into a quarry for subsequent building projects in Cairo and its surroundings.

¹⁵ For monuments of Ramses II and evidence for an increase of royal attention from his fourth regnal decade onwards would match with inscriptional evidence from the temple district and other monuments of this sovereign from Heliopolis, see D. RAUE, *Heliopolis und das Haus des Re*, *ADAIK* 16, 1999, pp. 122-126, 331-368, 406-409.

¹⁶ For a report on the state of the temple precinct in the Mameluk Period, see U. HAARMANN, *Luxor und Heliopolis: Ein Aufruf zum Denkmalschutz aus dem 13. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, in: *MDAIK* 40, 1984, 153-157.