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## NOTE DE L'AUTEUR

**Année de la Campagne :** 2019 (16 juin – 8 juillet)

**Numéro et intitulé de l'opération de terrain :** 17124 – Mission archéologique au site de Philadelphie, le Fayoum (Kūm al-Ḥarāba al-Kabīr Ğirza)

**Composition de l'équipe de terrain :** Ruey-Lin Chang (National Taiwan University, Department of History), Sayed Awad Mohamed (archaeologist, MoA), Simone Nannucci (archaeologist, UMR 7044 Archimède / université de Strasbourg), Sylvie Marchand (ceramologist, Ifao), Mohamed Gaber (topographer, Ifao), Cassandre Hartenstein (papyrologist), Younes Ahmed (restorer, Ifao) and Pang-Chi Wang (archivist/publicist). The MoA was represented on the field by Rabiaa Yahia Abd al-Fattah. The Centre for Antiquities Restoration in the Fayyum also took part through Mohammed Amin Abd al-Hamid Khalil.

**Partenariats institutionnels :** Joint French-Austrian Mission of the IFAO and the IKAnt-ÖWA (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

## 1. Preamble

- <sup>1</sup> In 2018, we succeeded in identifying two significant quarters in the urban area of Philadelphia: a quarter of potters (sector 37)<sup>1</sup> and a quarter of storehouses (sector 15, sector 40). Their remains are limited at relatively early Ptolemaic strata (mid. 3rd–2nd century BC). Two other quarters, though with less distinctive and coherent traits, also emerged: a quarter of water reservoirs (S12, S13, S39) still uncertainly dated, as well as a quarter (S38) which may or may not be related, at its Ptolemaic level, to the quarter of potters.



Fig. 2. Location of the sectors investigated during the third excavation season at Philadelphia (S37, S38, S41 and S201-203). Based on satellite images from 7/11/2010, DigitalGlobe© / ORION-ME©, GoogleEarth©, with modifications by R.-L. Chang and Mohamed Gaber.



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## 2. Quarter of potters: S41 & S37

- 5 In both of the two sectors, *sabbaḥīn*'s destruction reached extensively the natural substratum, at the level of which the remains are located.
- 6 In S41, our work was carried out in two phases. We first excavated a pair of kilns arranged in the north-south direction (see fig. 3), and then cleaned up a EW 15 m × NS 3 m stripe extending eastwards from the south-eastern corner of the trench for the kilns (see fig. 4). This operation strategy was modelled on our work in S37 in 2018, in order to offer a pertinent comparison of two trenches representative of the urban planning.
- 7 Of the two kilns, only the circular combustion chambers, cut directly into the bedrock, are preserved. They are 0.85–1 m deep and built from mudbricks. The external diameter is about 3 m, while the internal diameters varies: 2.5–2.6 m for the northern kiln and 2.2 m for the southern one. It is remarkable that in the southern kiln, a cross-shaped support for the firing chamber floor stays in place. It is built in mudbricks which constitute two low walls running diametrically and intersecting each other at about the right angle. Roman potsherds, dated notably to the end of the 2nd century AD, mingle with Ptolemaic ones. This mixture was presumably caused by the *sabbaḥīn*, who dug out and threw aside the majority of the content of the northern kiln.

- 8 In the second trench opened in S37, one kiln was found, preserved also only in its combustion chamber (see fig. 5). This 1 m-deep circular chamber is cut into the bedrock and built from mudbricks, with an external diameter of 1.9 m and an internal one of 1.4 m. Pottery sherds from the ancient backfill and levelling, composed of ash and fallen bricks of the kiln, are coherently dated to the 2nd half of the 3rd century BC.
- 9 Both in S37 and S41, the kilns are surrounded by foundation trenches oriented at the cardinal points, which confirms again the Hippodamian urban planning of Philadelphia. In S41, foundation trenches were revealed on the east and west sides of the kilns; few bricks were spared by the *sabbahīn* only on the west side. The foundation trench on the east side adjoins a 7.8 m-wide stretch of flat bedrock which corresponds to the Straße C defined by L. Borchardt (see fig. 1). In S37, the tafla brickwork in the foundation trenches is well preserved. Ceramics found in the trench backfill are dated to mid. 3rd–2nd century BC.

Fig. 3. S41 (PhF1903), two pottery kilns, viewed from the south. Photo by S. Nannucci.



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Fig. 4. S41 (PhF1903), eastward extension, viewed from the south-east. Photo by S. Nannucci.



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Fig. 5. S37 (PhF1903), a pottery kiln enclosed by foundation trenches, viewed from the north. Photo by S. Nannucci.



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### 3. Chronological superimposition and rubbish dump: S38

- 10 In S38, a trench of EW 7 m × SN 10 m was opened (see fig. 6). It lies to the west of the first trench of the same sector investigated in 2018, situated at the southeastern corner of the block B2 in Borchardt's sketch (see fig. 1). For lack of time available, only in the eastern half of the trench did we descend to the relatively early Ptolemaic foundation level. On the east, west and south sides of this part of the trench, the remains of foundation walls are aligned orthogonally; the architectural relations between them is for the time being unclear. It is noteworthy that the foundation wall on the south side runs along Borchardt's Straße 3. The material used for the foundations varies on different sides: mudbricks or tafla bricks.

Fig. 6. S38 (PhF1903), viewed from the south. Photo by S. Nannucci.



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- 11 These bricks were levelled anciently, to accommodate a construction in mudbricks superimposed on the earlier foundations. What remains of this construction from a later phase consists of three 0.3 m-thick walls adjoining each other at the right angle (EW 1.4 m × NS max. 2.2 m). The east and west walls parallel a previous foundation trench running NS, while the north wall runs over the same foundation perpendicularly. In the space enclosed by the three walls, there is evidence of a floor made of compacted soil. There are also remains of manure, and a few small ceramics therein do not offer any dating clues for the time being.
- 12 Above the level of the mudbrick construction, the whole area of the trench was covered in an ancient rubbish dump, which abounds in ceramics. These ceramics can be coherently dated to the 2nd half of the 2nd century BC. Directly on top of the rubbish dump, a mudbrick wall of a later date is superimposed. There is yet no clue as to the

date of its construction. Our investigation of the whole excavation trench will be completed next season.

#### 4. The long wall: S201–3

- 13 A good reference for our definition of sectors here is an ancient road in the form of a shallow depression, which cuts through the west end of the long wall and runs northwards into the supposedly urban center of Philadelphia. Two sectors on either side of this road, S201 (W; see fig. 7) and S202 (E) were marked for investigation. A third sector along the long wall, S203 (see fig. 8), was set at 271 m to the east of S202. The sizes of the trenches opened in the three sectors are respectively EW 8 m × NS 5 m, 5 m × 5 m and 5 m × 5 m.

Fig. 7. S201 (PhF1903), a section of the long wall, viewed from the north. Photo by Sayed Awad.



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Fig. 8. S203 (PhF1903), a section of the long wall, viewed from the east. Photo by Sayed Awad.



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- 14 The common features of these three sections of the long wall are: layer of desert sand deposit under the surface with very few pottery sherds or none, construction posed directly on the bedrock, wall bottom consolidated with gray marl mortar (fingerprints left by ancient workers in S203) and alteration of stretching and heading bricks from course to course. The width of the wall varies between 1.80 and 1.72 m. The maximum height, encountered in S203, is 1.15 m. Only in S203, plaster in marl mortar on wall sides remains.
- 15 The function of the long wall is still under investigation. If it was related to the control of trade, it could be suggested that customs gate once existed between S201 and S202 and that a trade road connecting the Nile Valley with Philadelphia was located to the south of the wall.<sup>3</sup> Although the date of the wall construction is still not clear, the ceramics of the surface can be consistently dated to the Byzantine and early Islamic periods, spanning from the 4th to the 7th century AD.

## 5. Notable objects

- 16 Twenty artefacts have entered the Kum Ushim register: 10 stamped amphora handles (from S41), 5 ostraca (1 Demotic one from S37, 1 Demotic one from S38 and 3 Greek ones from S38; see fig. 9), 1 terracotta lamp (from S38; fig. 10), heads of 2 terracotta figurines (1 from S37 and 1 from S38) and 2 elements of miniature column in Egyptian faience (from S37). The objects deposited at the Kum Ushim storehouse and reserved for our future study are: 1 Greek dipinti (from S38), 1 Greek ostracon (from S41), 3 scraps of papyrus (from S38), fragments of 2 lamps (from S26 and S38), 1 terracotta figurine of a quadruped (from S38) and 1 miniature terracotta hedjet crown (from S38).

Fig. 9. S38 (PhF1903), discovery of a Greek ostracon. Image by R.-L. Chang and S. Nannucci.



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Fig. 10. S38 (PhF1903), a terracotta lamp. Photo by S. Nannucci.



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## NOTES

1. This quarter of potters is located at the south-eastern part of the urban block B3 and corresponds with the Grabungsplatz II (i.e. 2nd place of excavation) where P. Viereck and F. Zucker operated in 1908–1909. For the numbering of urban blocks by L. Borchardt in the south-western zone of Philadelphia, as well as the location of the Grabungsplätze, see fig. 1.
  2. See DAVOLI 1998, pp. 164–165, 175, fig. 80.
  3. DAVOLI 2010, p. 358, mentions customs barriers set by perimeter walls in Bakchias, as well as possible ones in Karanis and Soknopaiou Nesos.
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