research and excavation
season 2014
Report on research and restoration activities
Season 2014

- Research and excavation in al-Qasr.
- Conservation, restoration and reconstruction of private houses in al-Qasr.

In its thirteenth season, the activities of the Qasr Dakhleh Project (QDP) were limited. A full, normal season could not take place in view of various negative travel advisories, which made that most non-Egyptian members of the team could not come.

Different from the previous seasons, the activities of the 2014 season of the QDP were quite limited. Due to the absence of foreign staff and time constraints, it was decided that only maintenance work and some documentary research would be carried out. The whole 2014 season of the QDP lasted from 25 February till 16 March.

There were no administrative or security delays and the field season began on March 3rd and lasted till March 10th.

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Research.
Due to the absence of the archaeological staff no excavations could take place. Some further study of the documents was carried out.

Restoration and reconstruction.
Conservation, restoration and reconstruction of the Shihabiyya quarter and surroundings.

As in the previous season still no decision was taken by the relevant authorities about the use of the five restored and/or reconstructed houses of the south-western part of the Shihabiyya quarter. So, again we had to persist in the decision not to continue with restoration and reconstruction work in al-Qasr as long as such a decision has not been taken. As these houses always have been places to live in, they should preferably be used for that function again. They are fit to be used as such, because in accordance with the decision of the Permanent Committee of 18 September 2008 electrical wiring and water pipes and sewage drains have been installed. But whatever function they get, it is important to note that if these houses have no viable function and are not used
in a sensible way, they will most probably slowly fall to pieces again and the entire restoration will have been in vain.

Maintenance of these unique houses should be performed regularly, so that major maintenance problems can be avoided. Inhabitants of such houses are well placed to cope with small maintenance issues before they become big. In the 2013 season the QDP has started to perform this neglected maintenance task and it was continued in this short season.

The lower part of the façade of Bayt Al-'Uthman, Bayt al-Qadi and Bayt al Qurashi with annex was completely re-plastered, because they were disfigured by graffiti.

Fig. 1: Facade replastering. Fig. 2: Replastered facades of Bayt al-Qurashi and Bayt al-Qadi.

Most of the maintenance work needed to be done in the annex of Bayt al-Qurashi. The roof beams of room bQur 8a were found not to be robust enough so that the roof had become unstable. Therefore, two additional roof beams were mounted to support and stabilize the roof. The roof itself received a new covering.

Fig. 3: Placing new roof beam. Fig. 4: New roof beams in place.
Fig. 5: New roof covering.

A number of other, minor repairs - mainly replastering and assembling wooden anchors for the strengthening of wall joints - were carried out in the annex of Bayt al-Qurashi as well as in Bayt al-Qadi.

Fig. 6 & 7: Wooden anchors for the strengthening of wall joints.

I note with great satisfaction that the freak hail storm on the morning of March 9, which ravaged Dakhla, has not done any damage to the houses in al-Qasr which have been restored by the QDP.
As in the previous season we were prevented from doing maintenance work in Bayt al-Qurashi by Mr. Ahmad Salim, the general director for Islamic and Coptic Antiquities of the SCA in the New Valley, who apparently rents this house from an undisclosed "owner", although the house was totally destroyed and virtually nonexistent until 2014 when the QDP started to reconstruct it. It is hoped that soon there will be clarity concerning the ownership and the supervisory role of the SCA.

Fig. 8: The team of 2014.

The 2014 season lasted from 25 February till 16 March. Of the foreign members of the QDP team only Dr. Frederik Leemhuis was present.

The maintenance activities were executed with the help of and in close cooperation with the local collaborators of the QDP-team. These local collaborators consisted in 2014 of 15 workmen from al-Qasr. This team was overseen by the experienced and long lasting associate of the QDP Mr. ‘Abd-al-Ghaffar Mohammed. The practical help and cooperation of Mr. Rizq Abdalhay Ahmad, chief restorer of the SCA in Dakhla is gratefully acknowledged.
The supervising inspector of the SCA was Mrs. Iman Abdalhady Nasr. Mr. Yasir Sayyid Ali was assigned as a restorer. I gratefully acknowledge his experienced cooperation. I also express my gratitude for the encouragement and assistance of Mr. Kamil Bayyumi, director for Coptic and Islamic Antiquities of the SCA for West Dakhla. The involvement of the general director for Islamic and Coptic Antiquities of the SCA in the New Valley, Mr. Ahmad Salim, has been noted.

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Fred Leemhuis
Field director QDP