



Katarzyna Urbaniak-Walczak
1956-2003

Dr. Katarzyna Urbaniak-Walczak, Coptologist and Keeper at the National Museum in Warsaw, died prematurely on June 10, 2003.

Katarzyna studied Christian archaeology at the Catholic Theology Academy in Warsaw in 1977-1982. Her interest in Coptic Egypt, especially Coptic language and literature, was awakened then and she embarked on her first translations from Coptic, published in the Academy's periodicals. Having obtained her diploma, she took up an assistantship in the Institute of Egyptology of Warsaw University. While on scholarship in Egypt in 1985-1986, she met Prof. Martin Krause, who encouraged her to further her studies of the language and culture of Christian Egypt in Germany. Katarzyna spent the next three years, from 1987 to 1990, at the Westfaelische Wilhelms-Universitaet in Muenster, preparing a doctoral dissertation, which was presented in 1991 and later published, on the subject of Coptic representations of Conceptio per Aurem and their literary prototypes.

OBITUARY

Returning to Poland, Katarzyna accepted a position at the National Museum in Poland, first in the Ancient Art Gallery, then in the Collection of Eastern Christian Art, where she worked as Keeper of Coptic Art until her tragic death. Concurrently with her duties at the Museum, she taught Coptic to students at the Department of Egyptology and the Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University.

Exceptionally devoted to her work and always perfectly organized, Katarzyna liked to teach and liked helping students. Her dream was to establish in Warsaw a separate center of Coptic studies that could serve young scholars interested in the field. Her current professional interests centered on translations of hitherto unpublished Coptic texts from the Polish excavations at Naqlun in Egypt. She was also considering writing a professorial thesis devoted to Coptic hermenei texts.

Yet another dream that Katarzyna had - and was not given the opportunity to put into life - was to reopen a permanent exhibition of Coptic art, textiles especially, at the National Museum in Warsaw. She had devoted several laborious years to a program which she headed, devoted to the study and conservation of objects of Coptic art in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw. She had just completed the first stage of this broadly envisioned project entitled "Christian Art in Egypt" and had proudly opened an exhibition presenting the results.

Katarzyna was deeply and passionately involved in everything that she did. An avid scholar, she also had that valuable tenacity that is so often lacking in young researchers today. Despite a sensitive nature, she never let herself be stopped by any obstacles or misfortunes. She knew where she was headed and did whatever was required to reach her destination. An unfortunate accident put a stop to her plans. Katarzyna's premature death has dealt Polish Coptology a heavy blow, and the archaeological community has lost in her a kind and learned colleague.

Bożena Mierzejewska



Mohammed Said Saleh
1931-2003

Cook and friend to all of us, residents of the Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology staying in Cairo for longer or shorter periods of time on our way to the excavations, Mohammed Said Saleh passed away in January of 2003.

He was an indigenous Nubian, whose family originated from Dabod, and he was brought up in Cairo by his father Saad, an excellent professional cook who spent many years in Saudi Arabia. Upon returning to Cairo in the early 1960s, Saad worked at the Centre which was then directed by Professor Kazimierz Micha^owski. The Professor valued his skills very highly as he was indeed an excellent cook who knew how to serve very fine meals.

Saad was already advanced in years, so he soon brought his son Mohammed to help him out in the kitchen. Thus it was that in 1966 Mohammed became our cook and Saad put in appearances only occasionally, bringing his professional advice to bear at the more important receptions that the Professor used to hold when in Cairo.

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Mohammed proved to be as talented as his father and, more importantly, he was willing to listen to our requests and advice on how to prepare dishes as exotic to him as Polish borsch, both hot and cold, cabbage soup, and broth. He willingly made our traditional "pierogi", dumplings which he called Polish ravioli.

Italian cuisine had few secrets from him and he also prepared many local specialties which we could appreciate in the best possible form, such as admirable lamb kebabs cooked on coals lighted with the help of our hair driers and a variety of vegetable dishes which he introduced to us, such as artichokes with zucchini in dill sauce and eggplants stuffed with meat, which the more flippant of our colleagues christened "shaved mice".

Occasionally, his imagination got the better of him and he once served us fruit jelly which he had treated with potassium permanganate, because he liked the color better!

His crème caramel was the best in the world - and there was never enough of it.

Mohammed listened to us speaking (so we thought!) Arabic and patiently tried to understand. Sometimes he would ask in Polish what on earth did we mean. I think he understood a great deal of Polish, having been with us for so many years.

As he grew old he grew accustomed to sending younger and older servants out on shopping errands (the main products he always purchased himself). Meanwhile, he would sit in the window drinking coffee and having a quiet smoke. If he had an extra cigarette, he would stick it behind his ear. He also used to keep small change in his ear.

After many years devoted to working at the Centre he was presented with a motorcycle - it was Krysia Polaczek's initiative and the University bought it for him. He was really delighted and he must have felt himself rejuvenated for he got himself yet another wife, a girl younger than his eldest daughter.

We shall all miss him, the man who was a friend and a permanent fixture at the Centre, one of the people that made the Centre a home to return to. Never again will we have the opportunity to taste the kind of crème caramel and 'masbut' coffee that he used to make.

Elzbieta Daszewska