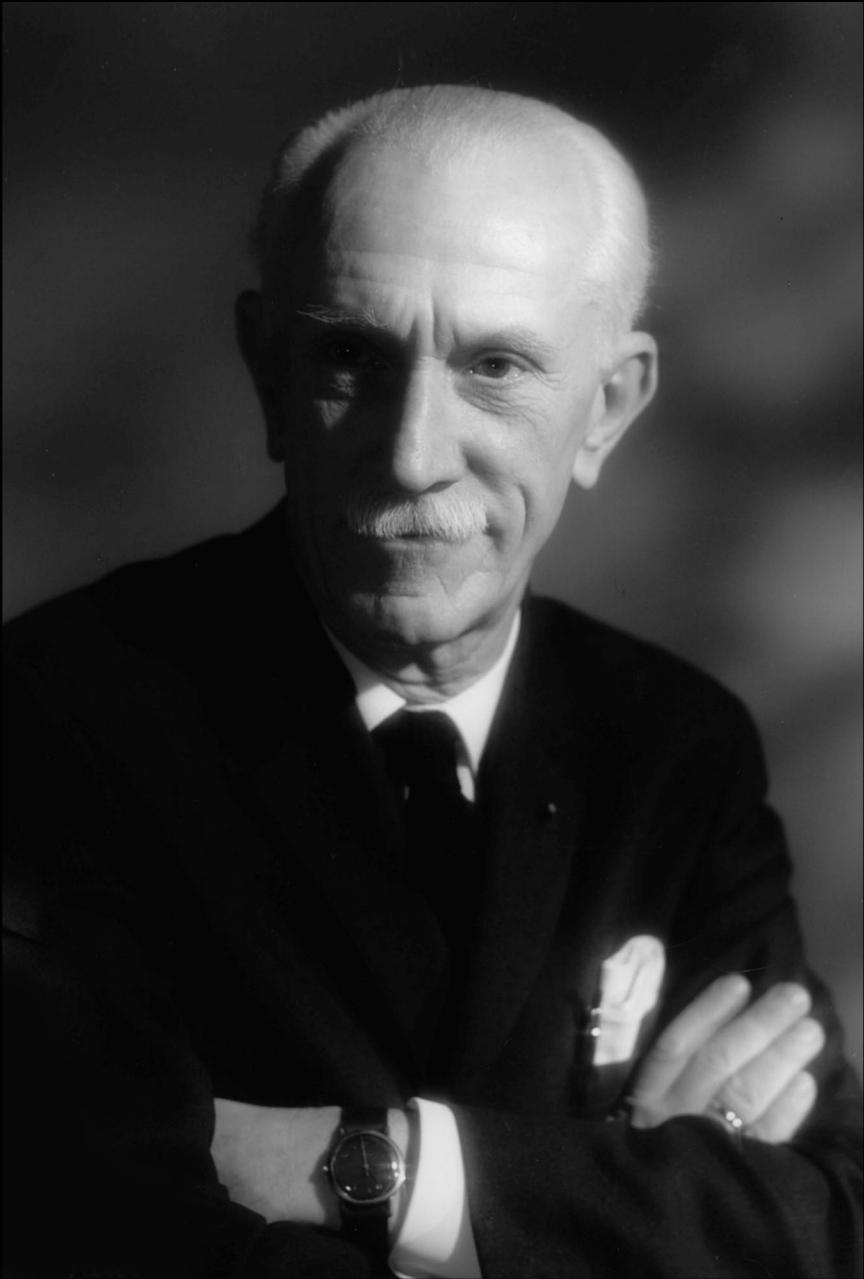


KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI

In memoriam

IN MEMORIAM



KAZIMIERZ MICHAŁOWSKI (1901–1981)

Twenty years ago Polish Mediterranean archaeology lost its founder. He would have been one hundred this year.

He is remembered by several generations of pupils as a white-haired fatherly figure of unquestionable authority, and a man inspired by a vision. This vision consisted of nothing less than introducing his country to the group of nations taking an active part in the study of the great civilizations of the Mediterranean. In the nineteen thirties, not much enthusiasm or understanding could be mustered in a newly independent Poland for the ambitions of a young archaeology professor of Warsaw University. Yet in the pursuit of the mission he had chosen for himself not once in his life did he bow to adversity.

The beginning he made, starting the French-Polish excavation in Edfu (1936-39), was brilliant, but was soon followed by six years of languishing in a Nazi POW camp. Some of his fellow prisoners in Woldenberg remembered all their life the course in Egyptian hieroglyphs they took there with him.

Captivity broke many a career, but not his. After the war, rebuilding the University and the National Museum in Warsaw with its Egyptian and Classical collection apparently took up all of his attention, while Egypt and Greece seemed as unattainable as the moon. When some trendy colleagues criticized Classical archaeology as a “bourgeois science”, Michałowski readily agreed to change the name to “Mediterranean”. Little did he know that a couple of years later this subterfuge would be essential to the fulfillment of his dream.

The label permitted him to seize the opportunity that presented itself after 1956 to return to Egypt. As he would not take up Edfu without his partners, he chose the site of Tell Atrib in the Delta. Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria, Deir el-Bahari in Luxor, and Palmyra in Syria followed suit in short succession. Practically at the same time the great international rescue effort in Nubia provided Michałowski with his most important discovery – the cathedral of Faras and its mural paintings. By 1961 Michałowski was directing five major excavation projects in three Arab countries. In 1965 Nea Paphos on Cyprus was added as a foothold on Classical soil.

His vitality and stubborn perseverance against all odds was legendary. In fact, he never retired, not until a banal accident precipitated his demise. He did not hesitate, however, to pass the responsibility for one site after another to his pupils.

Today, though we conduct altogether some twenty operations in five countries of the Middle East, four of the original six sites are still under excavation.

All this would have never happened without the man. It is eminently fitting that the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology he established now bears his name (since 1983). More importantly, it is to this day strongly marked by the subtle presence of its founder.

Michał Gawlikowski