



Fig. 1 Ahmad El-Sawi at Abusir in year 1974 (photo M. Zemina)

Prof. PhDr. Ahmad Abdel-Qader El-Sawi

Miroslav Verner

On the 30th of September 2017, Professor Ahmad El-Sawi, a renowned Egyptian archaeologist and an active organizer in the field of research and protection of Egyptian antiquities, passed on.

After his graduation from the Department of Egyptology of the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University, Ahmad El-Sawi started to work for the then Egyptian Antiquities Service, now the Ministry of Antiquities. From the very beginning, he in particular enjoyed archaeological field work and was fully dedicated to it. Not surprisingly, he very soon became a successful and respected excavator and expert in archaeology, especially in the field of Graeco-Roman antiquities. His name is connected with large excavations and rescue works at different Egyptian archaeological sites.

From 1962 to 1964, during the international salvage campaign in Nubia under the auspices of UNESCO, he participated in the exploration of the famous sites of Qustul and Balliana. Due to the outstanding results of his work, he was appointed director of excavations at several prominent archaeological sites. For example, he directed

the exploration of Kom Abu Bello, a large cemetery of the Greek town of Terenuthis on the western branch of the Nile, during which invaluable funerary stelae, statues and other archaeological artefacts were discovered. During the exploration of Kom Abu Bello, Ahmad El-Sawi was assisted by the then beginning and young archaeologist, Zahi Hawass, now a renowned representative of Egyptian archaeology. Another very prestigious archaeological site in which Ahmad El-Sawi worked was Tell el-Basta, Greek Bubastis, the center of the cult of the goddess Bastet in the eastern Delta. Here, he discovered and explored a large cemetery of cats, the sacred animal of Bastet. However, he was not only a successful field archaeologist, but he was also very active in organizing the work of the Antiquities Service, in which he became the Head of the Pharaonic and Graeco-Roman Department.

Fig. 2 From the left, František Váhala, Miroslav Verner, inspector Lutfi and Ahmad El-Sawi during the excavation of the mastaba of Ptahshepses at Abusir in year 1974 (photo M. Zemina)



Fig. 3 Ahmad El-Sawi and Miroslav Verner (first and third from the left) in discussion at Abusir (photo M. Zemina)

In 1978, Ahmad El-Sawi received a scholarship at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, where he later defended his doctoral dissertation. His tutor was Professor Fritz Hintze from Humboldt University in Berlin. After his return to Egypt, his life and work took a new path: he began teaching archaeology. He was promoted to professor at the Faculty of Arts at Sohag University in Upper Egypt where he established the Department of Archaeology and subsequently truly his own school of archaeology. During his several decades' long work at the department, he educated many very active and successful Egyptian archaeologists. His years as a professor, however, were not confined to lecturing only. His great experience and archaeological knowledge also fructified in a number of articles in Egyptian and international scientific journals, including a monograph on Tell el-Basta. With regard to his merit for Egyptian archaeology, a special volume of studies was published in his honour by the Supreme Council of Antiquities in 2006 on the occasion of his 75th jubilee.

Ahmad El-Sawi was not only an experienced and respected archaeologist and dedicated guardian of the Egyptian historical and cultural heritage, he was above all a warm-hearted, kind and pleasant man, a true gentleman.

We became close friends during his scholarship at Charles University in Prague in the late 1970s and early 1980s. On weekends, we used to visit monuments and archaeological sites, make trips to the mountains and woods and, most of all, talk about Egyptian archaeology. He loved Prague and enjoyed his scholarship in the Czech (then Czechoslovak) Institute of Egyptology at the Faculty of Arts. Back in Egypt, he used to say with a smile that it was also his institute. I admired not only his experience in Egyptian field archaeology and his dedication to Egyptian antiquities, but also his grace in dealings with people and willingness to help any time if needed. When I faced some difficulties in my work in Egypt, I often came to him to discuss problems and ask him for advice. He was a strong personality, a man of principles always ready to defend the right thing and not to bow to pressure. With his passing away, the team of the Czech Institute of Egyptology lost a true friend. We shall miss him very much but his memory will remain deep in our hearts.

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