

Quseir al-Qadim

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Although the Quseir Project did not have a field season this year, we were actively engaged in the study of the materials uncovered during the first season. As the result of a formal division with the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities, a very large percentage of the materials excavated was sent to the Oriental Institute. By law, no written materials may leave Egypt, so none of the Roman period ostraca or Islamic letters came to the Oriental Institute; but the materials sent include a very good study collection of both Roman and medieval Islamic pottery, glass, matting, and textiles as well as coins and other small objects. These materials were sorted and labelled by Barbara Strauss and Joan Barghusen, and the textiles were drawn by Jonathan Brookner and Michael Fitzpatrick (the other categories of objects had been drawn in the field), all of whom volunteered many hours each week all summer long for these laborious tasks.

A large (350 pages) preliminary report, describing the excavations and regional survey and presenting a representative sample of each of the wide range of materials discovered, was prepared and taken to Cairo in December. This preliminary report is scheduled to be published this summer through the American Research Center in Egypt.

The co-directors spent a month in Cairo from mid-December to mid-January studying the materials from the first season which had been kept in Egypt. Most of the Roman and earlier materials are in the Egyptian Museum; the medieval objects are largely in the Islamic Museum. The rest, both Roman and Islamic, will become part of the collection of the Regional Museum for the Red Sea Region, in Ismailiya. Trips were made to Alexandria, to compare our Roman materials with those

of the great classical port there, currently being excavated by a Polish expedition, and to the site of Quseir al-Qadim.

While in Cairo, the co-directors also made the necessary arrangements with the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities for the second field season, which will take place during winter, 1980. During the second season we will continue our excavations on the harbor site and will extend the regional survey looking for other small port sites along the Red Sea and for evidence of human presence in the desert, especially from the prehistoric period. The excavations on the port site will concentrate on the major storage and distribution center of the Roman port and a major warehousing area of the medieval port. In addition, the possible "Indian quarter" of the Roman town will be investigated further. Study of the urban organization of the port, both the carefully laid-out Roman town and the more freely growing medieval one, will be directed toward gaining knowledge of the dynamics of the economic system, both within the town and between the town and the major city in the Nile Valley to which it was linked.

Rock drawing from the desert near Quseir; currently undatable, but similar to prehistoric drawings found in the Sahara.

