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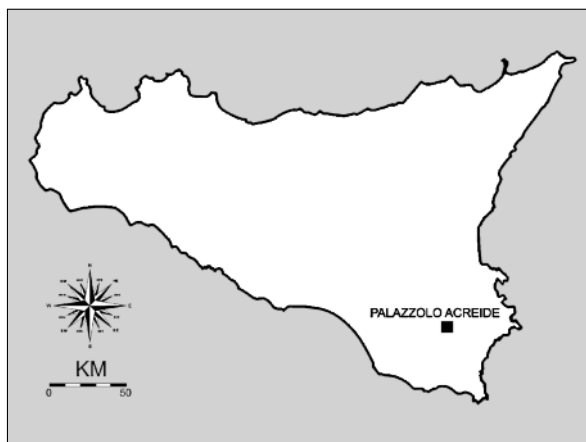
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PALAZZOLO ACREIDE, SICILY, ITALY. EXCAVATIONS IN 2014

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The archaeological site of *Akrai*, located in the south-western outskirts of the modern town of Palazzolo Acreide, in the south-eastern part of Sicily, was founded in a naturally strategic site, atop the Acremonte plateau (sometimes also called Acre Monte or Serra Palazzo), i.e., one of the hills forming the Hyblaean Mountains. Interests in this ancient town have a long and rich history, mostly because its name appeared in ancient written sources, i.e., *History of the Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides (VI.5.2), *The Library of History* of Diodorus Siculus (23.4.1), and *History of Rome* by Livy (XXIV, 35–36) or *Itinerarium Antonini* (89, 8: *Agris*) and *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Segmentum VII – *Via Selinuntina: Agris*). The discovery of the town occurred in several stages, which seems to illustrate the European way from antiquary and historical studies to modern archaeology (CHOWANIEC, REKOWSKA 2013). For the first time in 1558, the ancient name *Akrai* was correctly connected with archaeological ruins in the vicinity of Palazzolo Acreide by a Sicilian monk Tommaso Fazello (1498–1570). Archaeological excavations began already in the 19th c. and lasted for one hundred years (JUDICA 1819; ORSI 1891; BERNABÒ BREA 1956; CHOWANIEC 2015). Since 2009, thanks to a cooperation agreement between the University of Warsaw and the Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa, new archaeological excavations were started (CHOWANIEC 2013). The research in 2014 was a continuation of previous fieldworks (WIĘCEK, CHOWANIEC, GUZZARDI 2014).

In this excavation campaign, lasting from 2 September to 30 October, the following persons took part: Marta Fituła MA, Prof. Jolanta Młynarczyk, Tomasz Więcek MA, Urszula Wicenciak PhD, Anna Gręzak PhD, Krzysztof Domżański PhD, Jerzy Żelazowski PhD, Miron Bogacki PhD, Monika Rekowska PhD, Laurent



Chrzanowski PhD, Wiesław Małkowski MA, Marcin Wagner MA, Monika Więch MA, Piotr Zakrzewski MA, Krzysztof Chmielewski PhD and Hanna Rokońska MA from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, as well as 38 students of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw.¹ The excavations in 2014 were possible thanks to a grant from the National Science Centre (UMO-2011/03/B/HS3/00567), a grant from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (SPUB 4815/E-343/SPU/2014/2-1), as well as private sponsors.

Akrai, as a Greek colony, was founded in 664/663 BC and until the 3rd c. BC played a rather marginal role. It was almost completely dominated by Syracuse, equally in political, cultural or economic terms. At this time the mother-colony was developing very quickly, its population was growing, and expansionary policies were being carried out resulting in new conquered lands (DOMÍNGUEZ 2006: 274). For this reason, it was necessary to establish a colony that would act as a guardhouse at Syracuse's borders and would control access to the south-eastern part of the island from the west (COPANI 2008: 16–17). This role was played by *Akrai*. Intensive development began probably in the mid-3rd c., at the time of the Syracusan tyrant Hieron II's rule,² as attested by buildings erected then

¹ I would like to thank all the members of the archaeological team for the excellent collaboration. Extraordinary thanks go to Beatrice Basile PhD – the then Director of Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa, to Prof. Rosalba Panvini – the present Director and to Rosa Lanteri PhD – Director of the

Archaeological Department of Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa.

² *Akrai* belonged to the Kingdom of Syracuse, which is, in the context of an agreement between Rome and Hieron II in 263 BC, confirmed by Diodorus Siculus (*The Library of History*, 23.4.1).

(BERNABÒ BREA 1956). After the collapse of Syracuse in 212 BC the history of *Akraï* shows many gaps (BERNABÒ BREA 1956: 149, n. 22, pl. XXXII:3; WILSON 1988; 1990: 22–23, 159, 291). Only rebuilding phases of some buildings, e.g., the theatre, and single artefacts allowed for an assumption that habitation of the town was continued even after the takeover of Syracuse by the Romans.

The archaeological works in 2014 were focused on exploring and documenting Late Roman and Byzantine strata with destruction, levelling and rebuilding levels. These are visible in architectural remains, built with reused blocks and architectural elements, which more or less copied and duplicated earlier foundations (Fig. 1). These levels were only remains of a secondary use of a Late Hellenistic and Early Roman residential complex. The registered destruction is related to an earthquake(s) around the 60s – 70s of the 4th c. AD, confirmed by characteristic deformation of architecture, collapse of structures in one direction as a consequence of oscillation or fractures in the walls. After that natural catastrophe, the area was covered by a levelling

stratum, filled with heavily mixed, heterogeneous archaeological material. A majority of pottery represents the groups dated from the 4th to the 6th c. AD, i.e., vessels imported from blossoming North African workshops in the 4th – early 5th c. AD (LEITCH 2011; 2013: 285–289) or Aegean Cooking Ware, Pantellerian Ware and amphorae (WICENCIAK 2015; DOMŻALSKI 2015). It should be mentioned that in this stratum some Hellenistic or even earlier items were also found, such as flints, coins, pottery (black gloss, including black and red figured sherds) or damaged architectural pieces, originally belonging to archaic or classic foundations, e.g., a fragment of a capital, preserved only to the height of the annulets and sections of the echinus and necking, with an analogy discovered in the Doric peripteral temple of Aphrodite, situated at the highest area of the south-eastern skirt of the town and built in the mid-6th c. BC (BERNABÒ BREA 1986).

It seems most probable that in order to recover this part of the house, that means to dump and level the earthquake destructions, the inhabitants used all possible

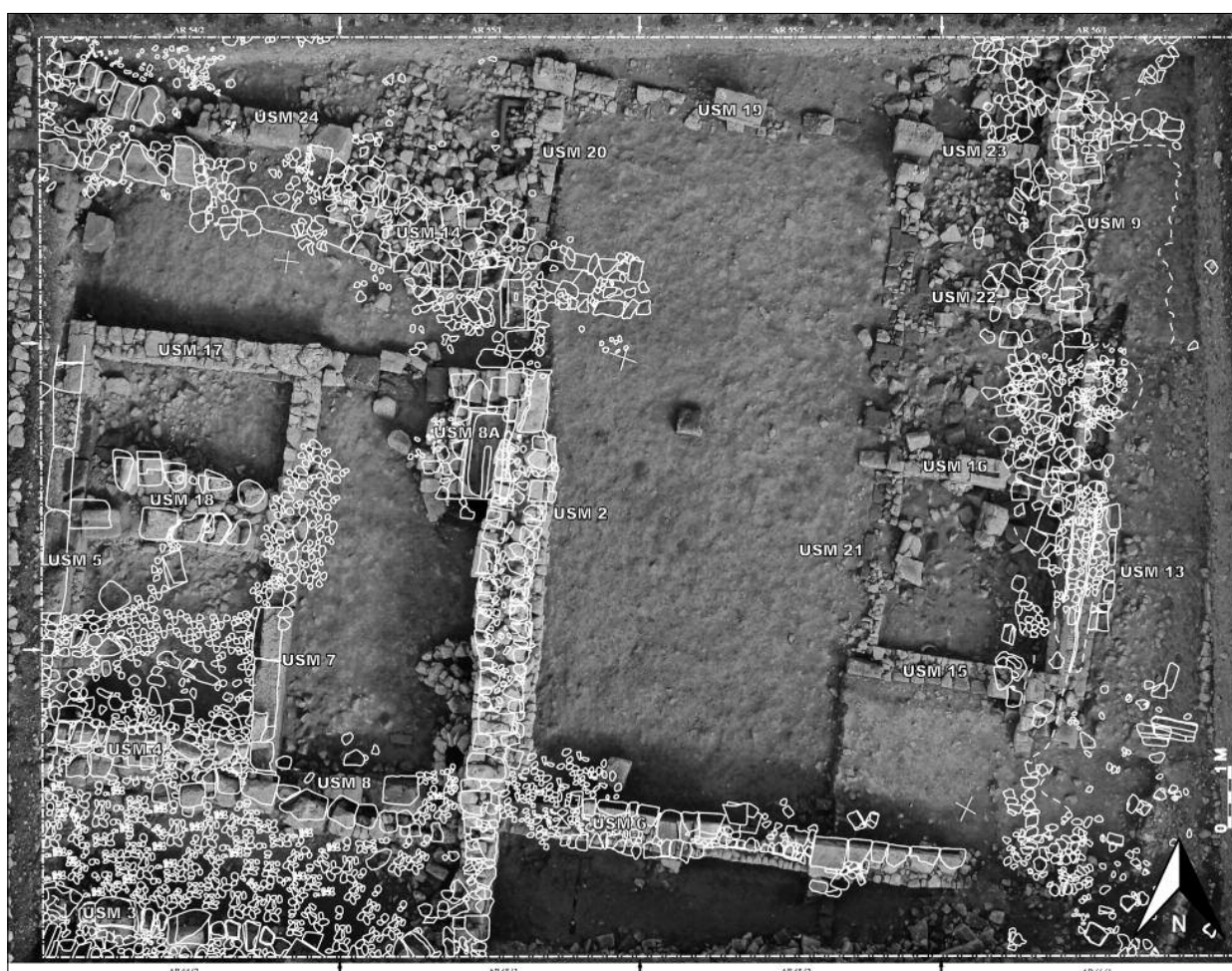


Fig. 1. Aerial photo and plan of Trench I with a Late Hellenistic-Roman residential complex and Late Roman and Byzantine features (white contours) in 2014. USM – Unità Stratigrafica Muraria – Structure Stratigraphic Unit (Photo M. Bogacki, drawing R. Chowaniec).
Ryc. 1. Fotografia lotnicza i plan wykopu nr I z późnohellenistyczno-rzymskim kompleksem mieszkalnym oraz konstrukcjami późnorzymskimi i bizantyjskimi (białe kontury). Stan na koniec 2014 r. USM – Unità Stratigrafica Muraria – Stratygraficzna Jednostka Strukturalna.

materials and soil, acquiring it from all available sources, i.a., quarries or the no longer functioning south-eastern part of the town.

On the so-prepared levelling layer, new sloppy constructions were built, composed of careless choice of re-used elements – often not only architectural details, but also



Fig. 2. Examples of destruction, levelling and secondary adaptation of the Late Hellenistic-Roman residential complex in the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods. Walls/USM 9 (a) and 18 (b) (Photo Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 2. Przykłady zniszczenia, wyrównania i wtórnego przystosowania późnohellenistyczno-rzymskiego kompleksu mieszkalnego w okresie późnoantycznym i bizantyjskim. Mury/USM nr 9 (a) i 18 (b).

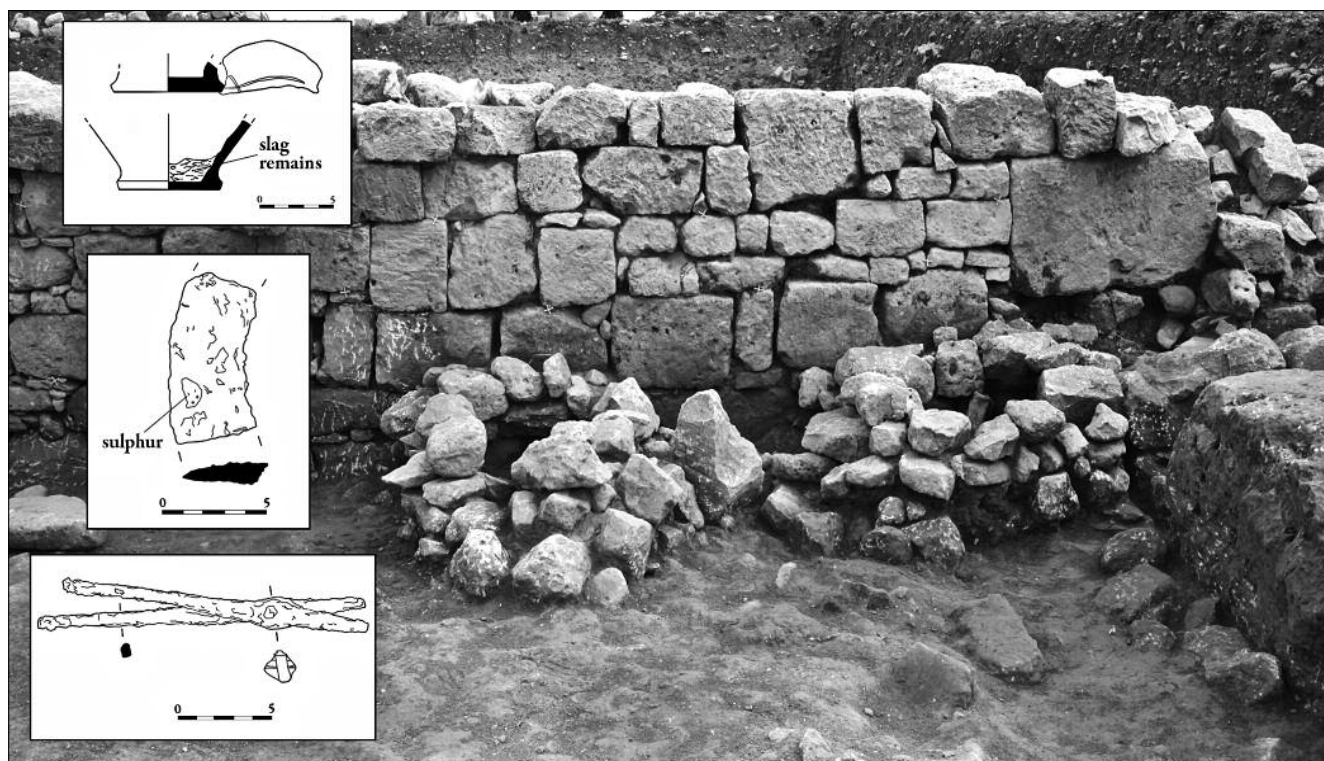


Fig. 3. The workshops area located west of Wall/USM 2 (see Fig. 1) in the western part of Trench I and examples of tools found here (Photo Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 3 Strefa produkcyjna zlokalizowana na zachód od muru/USM nr 2 (por. Ryc. 1) w zachodniej części wykopu nr I i przykłady znalezionych tu narzędzi.

fragments of stone *mortaria* or olive presses. Structures and secondary divisions of rooms roughly followed the original walls of a given house. Examples may be provided by constructions, acting as partition walls rather than load-bearing ones, listed under Nos. 8, 9, 14 and 18.³ For example, Structure 9 lies on a firm rubble of stones and roof tiles, thus covering an earlier phase with Walls 16, 22, 23 and partially 13 (Fig. 2:a). Another example would be Wall 18, which was built to separate Room 1, formed by Walls 4, 5, 7 and 17. It is clearly visible in the section of Wall 18, where under two faces/rows made of re-used blocks lies a compact layer of roof tiles, originally covering the whole Room 1 (Fig. 2:b).

This phase is clearly connected with the adaptation of residential rooms by arranging new zones, delineated with sloppy or slightly unstable partition walls, solely for household use. That term can mean not only middens, but also areas destined for production. A vast amount of bone hairpins, badges and semi-finished products, bronze

needles, terracotta moulds or “curry-combs” for producing and decorating of pottery, samples of pigments, and most of all small furnaces with slags scattered around, and fragments of recast bronze items, testify to intensive production here. The numbers of tools, e.g., hand pestles, stylus point tools, tongs/pincers made of iron, punches, chisels, as well as fragments of a clay vessel used for melting with remains of slag and nodules of slag or knives for partitioning/cutting of sulphur could also testify to the function of this area as workshops (Fig. 3).

A primary use of the area described above, i.e., the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman residential complex, will be investigated and studied during the coming season of excavations.

In 2014, in the framework of a scientific interdisciplinary project on the production of pottery in the regions of Sicily and south Italy, archaeometric investigations on cooking- and common-ware found in *Akrai* began.⁴ In

³ The structures are marked on the attached plan (Fig. 1) as USM.

⁴ The research is coordinated by Prof. Germana Barone and Prof. Paolo Mazzoleni, in cooperation with Simona Raneri PhD

and Simona Mangioni MA from the University of Catania, Department of Biological, Geological and Environmental Sciences.

April of the same year, in Museo dei “Viaggiatori in Sicilia” in Palazzolo Acreide, an exhibition related to the archaeological investigations at *Akrai* was opened.⁵ In connection with the exhibition, thanks to the collaboration with Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa, on 4–5 April, a scientific conference “Missione

archeologica ad *Akrai*” was organised in Palazzolo Acreide by Ms Marta Fituła.

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⁵ Warm thanks go to Maria Musumeci PhD and Ms Francesca Gringeri Pantano for the help and support in the organisation.

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PALAZZOLO ACREIDE, SYCYLIA, WŁOCHY. WYKOPALISKA W 2014 R.

Stanowisko archeologiczne *Akrai* ulokowane jest na południowo-zachodnich obrzeżach współczesnego miasteczka Palazzolo Acreide, w południowo-wschodniej części Sycylii, w prowincji Syrakuzy. Historia zainteresowań tym starożytnym ośrodkiem miejskim oraz tradycja studiów badawczych i prac wykopaliskowych w jego obrębie jest nadzwyczaj długa i bogata. Jednakże przeprowadzone dotychczas badania dostarczyły przede wszystkim wiedzy ogólnej związanej z historią miasta i skupiły się na okresie od jego założenia około 664/663 roku p.n.e. do upadku Syrakuz w 212 roku p.n.e.

Od 2009 roku na terenie stanowiska archeologicznego, na podstawie porozumienia o współpracy między Uniwersytetem Warszawskim a Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa prowadzone są prace badawcze, w tym od 2011 roku badania wykopaliskowe, które koncentrują się w części mieszkalnej miasta.

W trakcie sezonu wykopaliskowego w 2014 skupiono się przede wszystkim na odsłonięciu i zadokumentowaniu faz późnoantycznych, w tym warstw destrukcyjnych, powstałych w trakcie trzęsienia (lub serii trzęsień) ziemi w latach 60. i 70. IV w. n.e., warstw wyrównawczych oraz wtórnego zaadaptowania obszaru na potrzeby gospodarczo-wytwórcze (**Ryc. 1, 2**).

W poziomie warstw wyrównawczych, zalegających poniżej konstrukcji późnoantycznych, znalazł się mocno

przemieszany i niejednorodny materiał zabytkowy. Wraz z materiałem późnoantycznym, z III–IV w. n.e., w warstwie wystąpiły zabytki zarówno archaiczne, jak i hellenistyczne, co może świadczyć o tym, że nowy poziom użytkowy tworzono z wszelkich dostępnych materiałów, pozyskując ziemię do przykrycia zagruzowania z rozmaitych, być może nieużytkowanych już w tym czasie części miasta.

Po wyrównaniu i przystosowaniu poziomu do dalszego użytkowania, wzniesiono nowe konstrukcje, które cechuje niedbałość, nieprzemyślany dobór wtórnie wykorzystanych elementów – nie tylko detali architektonicznych, ale również fragmentów kamiennych mortariów czy pras do oliwy. Wprawdzie struktury i wtórne podziały pomieszczeń odpowiadają w przybliżeniu przebiegowi oryginalnych murów domu późnohellenistyczno-rzymskiego, jednak są raczej prowizoryczne. W zarejestrowanej fazie wtórnego zaadaptowania pomieszczeń odsłonięto także obszar służący celom produkcyjno-gospodarczym. Pod takim terminem kryją się nie tylko jamy śmietnikowe, ale przede wszystkim strefy wygospodarowane do celów wytwórczych. Ogromna liczba kościanych szpil, plakietek i półproduktów, igieł brązowych, forma do terakot, a przede wszystkim niewielkie piecyki, z rozrzuconym żużlem i fragmentami przetapianych brązowych przedmiotów, świadczą o intensywnej działalności produkcyjnej prowadzonej w tym miejscu (**Ryc. 3**).