

Derda, Tomasz

In memoriam Tomasz Markiewicz (1974-2009)

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IN MEMORIAM
TOMASZ MARKIEWICZ
(1974–2009)

TOMASZ MARKIEWICZ was an Egyptologist, papyrologist, and historian. He was a promising researcher and an excellent teacher who was employed as an assistant professor in the Department of Papyrology in the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw.

He was born on 2 December 1974 in Warsaw. In his childhood, he spent four years in Libya (1984–1988) and this time greatly influenced his future choice of career. The splendours of ancient Leptis Magna and the antiquities of ancient Cyrenaica roused his passion for history and for antiquity. Having returned to Warsaw, he completed his secondary education with honours at Czacki High School in Warsaw in 1993. He subsequently started his university career, first choosing to study economics at the esteemed Warsaw School of Economics in 1993. A year later he decided to follow his childhood dream and joined the ranks of the students of Egyptology at the University of Warsaw. He concluded both of these studies *summa cum laude* in 1998 and 1999 respectively.

Tomek, who was not exactly thrilled with his economic education, put it to the best possible use by developing an interest in the ancient economy. In his philological studies he followed his teacher, Jan Krzysztof Winnicki, by majoring in demotic. This subsequently led to an interest in Coptic. He used both of these areas of interest to study documentary

texts. This brought him to the Department of Papyrology to take part in Tomasz Derda's papyrological seminar and Greek course. It was there that the three of us met, starting a relationship of scientific collaboration and friendship, abruptly terminated by his death thirteen years later. At its foundation lay an unusual request from a publisher to translate the Babatha papyri into Polish, the task assigned by Tomasz Derda to Tomasz Markiewicz and Jakub Urbanik. Years later, the two translators cherished that moment while visiting the ancient site of En-Gedi.

The choice of topics for his master theses at both the Warsaw School of Economics and the University of Warsaw – the function of currency in ancient Egypt and a survey of the salt tax ostraca both in Greek and demotic, respectively – shows how skilfully he was able to combine disparate methodologies acquired through his economic and philological studies. This he pursued further in his doctoral research, which led to a dissertation written under the direction of Jan Krzysztof Winnicki. It was devoted to the study of *Indebtedness in Abnormal Hieratic and Demotic Documents. A Study of Credit in Ancient Egypt*. This work, presented in Warsaw in October 2005, was awarded the prestigious Prime Minister's prize. In due course, Tomasz was employed at the Department of Papyrology of the University of Warsaw. Being an Egyptologist by training, he added his skills in demotic and Coptic papyrology as well as his knowledge of economics to the Department's long-established tradition of research on Greek papyrology.

A substantial part of Tomek's university career was carried out abroad. He studied and researched for two years in Cologne, first, in 1999/2000, thanks to a grant of the Gemeinschaft für studentischen Austausch in Mittel- und Osteuropa e.V. (GFPS e.V.), and then, in 2001/2 as a scholarship-holder of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst. While in Cologne, he continued his studies in Demotic and Coptic under the direction of Heinz-Josef Thissen. He was a frequent visitor at the Department of Ancient History of the Catholic University of Leuven, creating part of the friendly and collaborative international community of scholars who would choose to spend their summers in this Belgian town working in the library there. In 2008 he was a Kosciuszko Foundation Fellow at the Department of Classics of Stanford University.

As a student, Tomasz Markiewicz became a regular contributor to *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, mostly editing Coptic documentary texts from Polish excavations, but also publishing on legal and economic matters connected to his current research on credit in Greco-Roman Egypt. His interest in the economy of the ancient world arose when he was simultaneously studying Egyptology at the University of Warsaw and economics at the Warsaw School of Economics. The familiarity with modern economic theories and the ancient world – a rare combination indeed – helped him move on the shaky grounds of the ancient economy, the subject of heated academic debates for over a century. His scholarly merits were not only recognised among his colleagues: as a PhD student he was twice distinguished with the eminent Young Researcher’s Scholarship of the Foundation for Polish Science.

In his scholarly interests, Tomek did not limit himself to the study of ancient Egypt; he also stood out through his profound knowledge of Greek and Roman matters. It was, indeed, his task at the Institute of Archaeology to introduce young adepts of the discipline into the methodology of ancient history. Exploring the history of mentality, he aimed to recreate the image the Greeks had of Egypt and the Egyptians. He started collecting material for a book on this subject; the first result of this research was a paper on King Bokchoris, considered one of the most important lawgivers of ancient Egypt and also one of the wisest representatives of the Egyptian civilization. We shall publish the first chapter of this never-to-be-completed book in *JJP* 40 (2010).

In the last years, Tomasz, influenced by the studies of Ewa Wipszycka, was becoming more and more attracted by the problems of Christian Egypt. His knowledge of Coptic naturally brought him even closer to this aspect of the history of antiquity. Shortly before his death, he was awarded a grant that would allow him to co-direct the excavations at Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (West Thebes) and to publish important Coptic texts found there. The last article he published in his lifetime, in *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt: Ostraca, Papyri, and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, ‘The Church, clerics, monks and credit in the papyri’ (pp. 178–204), gives witness to how readily he was able to combine his multi-faceted scientific interests, conducting truly mod-

ern interdisciplinary research: Egyptology, economy, and the history of Late Antiquity.

Tomasz died at his home in Warsaw on 30 September 2009. His loss leaves an empty space among his friends, students, and colleagues. In our everyday matters, in academic debates, in our joint travels, we are left without a companion, friend, and expert. He bequeathed his impressive scientific library – collecting books was one of his great passions – to the Raphael Taubenschlag Library of Roman Law and Papyrology. These books mark even more dramatically his presence among us and his sudden departure...

[Tomasz Derda & Jakub Urbanik]

A POSTSCRIPT

I was, I daresay, a close friend of Tomek, and thus I cannot help writing a few phrases that will probably seem out of the ordinary in the convention of an academic's typical obituary. When a young man passes away, especially one so gifted and so valuable as Tomek was, the pain and the emptiness are even more, dramatically more, unbearable, than when we bid our last farewell to the people who have been blessed with a long and ripe life. Tomek's life was neither long nor ripe. It had barely begun. What he left behind painfully shows what this life could have been, had it been long and ripe.

I met Tomek thirteen years ago when he – a young student of Egyptology – started coming to our library to work on his master theses. He was then just about to graduate from the Warsaw School of Economics and he already knew that in his academic life he wanted to combine his passion for ancient Egypt with his economic interests. Together with his teacher, Jan Krzysztof Winnicki, who had left us only a few months before Tomek, we were happy to see how Tomek's scientific curiosity was evolving and ripening. Someone like him was missing among Warsaw papyrologists – our team was to be enriched by a demotist who had the passion and patience to study the poorly researched legal and economic

texts written in the first millennium BC in Egypt. Tomek knew that for a better understanding of these matters knowledge of ancient Greek was mandatory. He acquired it with awesome facility under my direction. Among other talents he was also gifted with this one: great linguistic skills. He quickly learnt new languages: not only did he overcome the difficulties of Egyptian in its various forms – he read hieroglyphics, hieratic, demotic, and Coptic texts – but he also effortlessly mastered modern languages as well. His English and German were impeccable, and he spoke and read French without a difficulty.

Tomek was thirteen years my junior. Yet, notwithstanding, we quickly found a common language; we thought and spoke the same way on various topics. We used to play bridge together. We would go skiing together. He was a great companion; he entertained his friends not just with scientific talks but also on classical music, which he loved. It was never too easy to enter his world; he was an introvert, a rather closed person, at first glance not easily approachable. But once this exterior shell had fallen, overcome, another Tomek came into sight: smart, with a sparkling, often self-directed sense of humour. This Tomek shall we remember – we, his friends and companions of Warsaw Papyrology – and this Tomek shall we miss. The papyrological rooms in Warsaw, without him, shall never be the same.

[T. D.]