

# The Topography of the Town of Pathyris in the Light of the Current Research

Wojciech Ejsmond

Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences

Wojtek.ejsmond@wp.pl

Aneta Skalec

Independent researcher

anetaskalec@gmail.com

Julia M. Chyla

Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre, University of Warsaw

julia.chyla@gmail.com

## Abstract


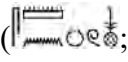
The town of Per-Hathor, also known under its Greek name Pathyris, was occupied since the Predynastic Period up to the medieval times. It is well known for its Ptolemaic papyri, ostraka, and inscribed wooden tablets, which enable scholars to attempt reconstructions of the topography and social life in the settlement. What the previous studies lacked were a detail spatial and archaeological data regarding this area. The Gebelein Archaeological Project was initiated in 2013 and one of its aims is to fulfill this void.



## Keywords

Gebelein, Ptolemaic, Greco-Roman Period, Papyrology

## Toponyms of the area and state of the research

Gebelein is located about 30 km south west from Luxor, on the west bank of the Nile (Pl. 1). The current Arabic name of the place (Gebelein) means «two mountains», and its ancient Egyptian name

Inerti () had this same meaning. This micro-region encompasses several archaeological sites, i.e. the Northern, Central, Southern, and Muslim necropoleis; remains of rock quarries, two concentrations of petroglyphs, and locations of two towns: Sumenu (; Greek Krokodilopolis,

Κροκοδείλων πόλις)<sup>1</sup> in the north, and Per-Hathor (ancient Egyptian Pr-Hwt-Hrw  or ; Greek Pathyris (Παθύρις), called by Strabo (XVII, 1, Ἀφροδίτης πόλις), Coptic Pathur, Παθρ or Παθγρις)<sup>2</sup> in the central area. Two main settlements are located there nowadays, al-Gharirah in the north, approximately in the area of ancient Sumenu and el-Shaikh Mousa, which took its name from the mausoleum of Shaikh Mousa (S in Pl. 4). The latter settlement is placed in the area where the lower part of the town of Pathyris was located (Pls. 1 and 2).

Many scholars conducted excavations in the area, but they have rarely published sufficient reports from their works.<sup>3</sup> Thus the place and its significance is poorly known from an archaeological point of view, despite numerous and valuable Greek as well as Demotic texts were sourced from there and were used to reconstruct the topography and history of the settlement.<sup>4</sup> This micro-region is the subject of fieldworks and studies by the Gebelein Archaeological Project, conducted under the auspices of the Polish Centre of the Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, since 2013.

## History of the town

The name Inerti is already attested in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty papyri from the Northern Necropolis of Gebelein,<sup>5</sup> while the first mentioning of the name of the town of Per-Hathor is dated to the Middle Kingdom period,<sup>6</sup> although the toponym may have been introduced already in the Old Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> The town seems to have been permanently occupied through the pharaonic times and nothing indicates that it played a significant role in territorial administration before the Ptolemaic times.<sup>8</sup> The town housed a temple dedicated to Hathor, and possibly other gods, since the early dynastic times up

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<sup>1</sup> Sumenu was located next to the Northern Necropolis in Pre- and Early Dynastic times and a New Kingdom Temple dedicated to Sobek lord of Sumenu was discovered 3,7 km north from the cemetery (Bakry 1971; Betrò 2006; Ejsmond 2018, 392-393), but the exact location of the Greco-Roman town is unknown. Pierre Jacotin 1825, Pl. 5, located it next to the necropolis, but so far no remains of a settlement later than the Old Kingdom were reported there.

<sup>2</sup> Gauthier 1925, 117; Baldacci 1975-1976, Tav. B; Ejsmond 2016; Ejsmond et al. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> For the research history see e.g.: Curto 1985; Fiore Marochetti 2013, 6-9.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplony-Hekel 1992/3, 1994, 1995; Vandorpe / Waebens 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous 1930; Posner-Kriéger 2004, 9; Papazian 2020.



<sup>6</sup> Baldacci 1976, Tav. A.

<sup>7</sup> Jacquet-Gordon 1962, 119.

<sup>8</sup> For the pharaonic history of the town see e.g. Fraser 1893, 496-500; Schiaparelli 1921, 126-127; D'Amicone 1988; Donadoni-Roveri 1994a. The limited space of this paper does not allow a sufficient description of the history of the town. The settlement during the pharaonic times will be described elsewhere. More attention will be given to its history starting from the Third Intermediate Period in the present paper, because some structures mentioned in Ptolemaic documents, may date from that time.

to the Greco-Roman Period.<sup>9</sup> The local veneration of Hathor prompted the name of the settlement, Per-Hathor, which was latter written by Greeks as Pathyris.

Some of the pre-Ptolemaic structures were in use in the following times. The Third Intermediate Period at the site is represented by mud-bricks bearing names of Pharaoh Pinedjem I and the High Priest of Amun from Thebes, Menkheperra, in the temple area.<sup>10</sup> It is often stated in publications that the stronghold was erected by the High Priest of Amun, Menkheperra, and used in the following times;<sup>11</sup> however, this claim was never substantiated by any published evidence. The general outline of the walls of the temenos can be reconstructed thanks to an unpublished sketch made by Norman de Garis Davies, kept at the Griffith Institute in Oxford.<sup>12</sup> Bricks with the name of Mekheperra were found only as a small concentration in the northern part on the temenos. The thick wall surrounding the temple complex is still preserved at some spots and its location corresponds with the plan sketched by de Garis Davies. The remains of this wall consists of unstamped bricks, thus there is no evidence that it was constructed by Menkheperra.<sup>13</sup> However, a fortress was located in that area during the Ptolemaic times (see below). It is possible that part of the temple complex was adapted for such a purpose or some construction was established south of the *temenos*.

Information about the history of the region are provided by the *Great Donation Text* carved on the walls of the Edfu Temple dating from Ptolemaic times. Some parts of the inscription were copied from Late Period papyri.<sup>14</sup> This source provides a glimpse into the local toponyms and distribution of the land tenure during the Late Period and early Ptolemaic times. There was one main canal passing between the two mountains of Gebelein, going to Armant and further north.<sup>15</sup> Domains of the Edfu Temple were located in several places in the region.<sup>16</sup> What is significant for our study is the determinative ending the word Per-Hathor in the text.<sup>17</sup> It is the Gardiner's sign Q1, , meaning «place».<sup>18</sup> One should expect here O49, , which is the determinative for a word denoting a settlement. This may suggest that the town was deserted, but the toponym was still in use, however denoting just a place, not a settlement.<sup>19</sup> There is no evidence that the town was inhabited during the

<sup>9</sup> Fiore Marochetti 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Ejsmond et al. 2018.

<sup>11</sup> This information was published by Schiaparelli 1921, 126-127. J. Lull (2005, 225) suggests that it may have been a watchtower.

<sup>12</sup> Davies n.d. It will be published elsewhere in a paper on the temple at Gebelein.

<sup>13</sup> For references and discussion see Ejsmond et al. 2018, 239-240.

<sup>14</sup> Manning 2003, 245-248.

<sup>15</sup> For the waterways in the Pathyrite nome see Andrews 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Manning 2004, 246-248; Andrews 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Meeks 1972; Baldacci 1976, Tav. C; Manning 2004, 245.

<sup>18</sup> Gardiner 1994, 500.

<sup>19</sup> The authors would like to thank Dawid F. Wiczorek for this suggestion.

Late Period, thus the use of the determinative may correspond with the actual situation of deserted town.

The town received an impulse for development around 186 B.C., when the Great Revolt in Upper Egypt was suppressed.<sup>20</sup> A Ptolemaic military base was established in the nearby Krokodilopolis and between 165 and 161 B.C. Pathyris started to host an auxiliary garrison.<sup>21</sup> The town became a nome capital at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. (the precise date is unknown)<sup>22</sup>.

Pathyris became the metropolis of its nome probably because the Ptolemaic rulers wanted to control the Thebaid and prevent future rebellions from capturing the district in case of unrests in the south. The Gebelein micro-region is strategically located. The Eastern Mountain of Gebelein can be used as a stronghold to enable control of the navigation on the Nile as well as the route and canal between the two hills.<sup>23</sup> The town of Krokodilopolis was near the entrance to the Darb Arbain and Darb Rayayna, which are communication lines to the oases of the Western Desert and present day Sudan, as well as through the Theban mountains to Hiw/Diospolis Parva respectively.<sup>24</sup> Gebelein is also located at the beginning of an irrigation basin,<sup>25</sup> therefore, this place could control canals going to the northern end of the basin in Birket Habu.<sup>26</sup>

Pathyris held the function of the nome capital until 88 B.C.,<sup>27</sup> when the settlement was probably destroyed or abandoned for some time in the effect of the revolt during the reign of Ptolemy X Alexander.<sup>28</sup> The garrison existing in the town was abolished and the production of administrative documents ceased.<sup>29</sup> The name of the Pathyrite nome only sometimes occurs in written sources after 88 B.C.<sup>30</sup> Strabo mentioned it as Aphroditopolis,<sup>31</sup> thus suggesting the continuation of the settlement's occupation, at least in a limited extent in Roman times. The argument that some cult places were in use in the settlement is the stela dedicated to Isis of Pathyris<sup>32</sup> in the times of the

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<sup>20</sup> Vandorpe / Waebens 2009, 18. On the revolt see Veisse 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Vandorpe / Waebens 2009, 43; Winnicki 1978, 68-78; Vleeming 1987, 156-162.

<sup>22</sup> Vandorpe / Waebens 2009, 18.

<sup>23</sup> For the routs see Graeff 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Graef 2005; Ejsmond in press.

<sup>25</sup> Grieshaber 2004, 13, 16, 28, 79, 80.

<sup>26</sup> Birket Habu is an artificial lake made by Amenhotep III. This large construction could obstruct the canal system and it is likely that the canals starting at Gebelein were terminating there (see Graham et al. 2016 and Toonen et al. 2017, for the current research on the paleocanals). This place was also the border of the Pathyrite and Memnonia (Thebes) nomes (Łajtar 2012, 171), most probably because it was also the border of the canal systems.

<sup>27</sup> Vandorpe / Waebens 2009, 49-50; Łajtar 2012, 171.

<sup>28</sup> For this revolt see e.g. Veisse 2004, 64-73; Fischer-Bovet 2014, 108-109.

<sup>29</sup> Vandorpe / Waebens 2009, 49-50.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Milne 1905, 20-21; Bernand / Bernand 1969, insc. 40 and 51.

<sup>31</sup> Strabo, *Geographia* XVII, I, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Chapels dedicated to Isis appear in at least four documents from Pathyris (Chaufray / Wegner 2016, 41).

Emperor Trajan.<sup>33</sup> The human occupation of Gebelein during Roman times is further indicated by fragments of three wooden coffins tentatively dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.<sup>34</sup> Roman and Byzantine pottery was found on the Western Mountain, west from the remains of Pathyris, but the exact location is unknown.<sup>35</sup>

The town re-gained its significance in the late antiquity, when it probably became the seat of Blemmey kings in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> Its later history is represented by Fatimide times mausoleums located south-west from the town.<sup>37</sup>

### Topography of the Ptolemaic Town in the Light of the Current Field Research

There are two maps showing the location of a *kom*<sup>38</sup> west of the northern part of the Eastern Mountain of Gebelein (dark spot below the word Pathyris in Pl. 3) which may have accumulated through centuries of the human occupation of the place. It was reported by several scholars that these are the remains of a settlement used since the prehistoric times.<sup>39</sup> They also mentioned ruins on the slope of the hill, south-east from the *kom*. The *kom* and ruins can be equated with the remains of the Ptolemaic Pathyris. The ruins were explored by the Italian mission in 1910 (see below), but the results of the works were never sufficiently published. Pharaonic times toponym lists<sup>40</sup> and the sanctuary of Hathor «Lady of Inerti» on the top of the town hill<sup>41</sup> further ensure the location of the pharaonic town.<sup>42</sup>

So far, most of the studies focused on textual sources.<sup>43</sup> Little attention was paid to the archaeological evidence, with the exception of a valuable paper by Giovanni Bergamini about the topography of the Ptolemaic town.<sup>44</sup> He analysed previously unpublished sketches and photographs

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<sup>33</sup> Milne 1905, 40-41.

<sup>34</sup> Unpublished artefacts in the Cairo Museum under the number: TR 9.8.27.1-5. Their exact find-spots in Gebelein and date of their delivery to the museum are unknown.

<sup>35</sup> Donadoni-Roveri 1994b.

<sup>36</sup> Eide et al. 1998, 1196 *infra*.

<sup>37</sup> Ejsmond et al. 2019, 230-233.

<sup>38</sup> Jacotin 1826, Pl. 5; Linant de Bellefonds 1882.

<sup>39</sup> Fraser 1893, 496-500; Lortet / Gaillard 1909, 34, 225-226.

<sup>40</sup> Gardiner 1947, pl. 1.

<sup>41</sup> D'Amicone 1988.

<sup>42</sup> Fiore Marochetti 2009, 1-16.

<sup>43</sup> Pestman 1965 and Vandorpe / Waebens 2009 made a great deal of meticulous and priceless research on the topography of the town and its archives. However, the present authors made some adjustments and are proposing some corrections in light of the current research. The size of this paper does not allow to address all the issues individually, thus the present authors will provide their own opinion on the topography without going into a discussion with the aforementioned authors.

<sup>44</sup> Bergamini 2003.

that document numerous structures unearthed during the Italian excavations in 1910. However, they lack topographic data, like spatial reference points that would enable one to precisely locate documented archaeological features in the area. On the basis of the information provided in the sketches, archival photographs, and knowledge of the site's topography Bergamini was able to set the plan in the landscape. Further research conducted by the members of the Gebelein Archaeological Project allowed to propose some adjustment to the plan.<sup>45</sup>

The plan published by Bergamini is simplified. Most houses and streets are drawn with straight angles, which was not the case in Pathyris, as one can see on the images published by Bergamini.<sup>46</sup> It is more plausible that the town was developing in a rather organic way with streets adjusted to the topography and earlier building phases of the town. It was observed during the fieldworks that the plan should be shifted further west and north in some places.<sup>47</sup> The southern extension of the temenos wall of the temple (O in Pl. 4) does not find a justification in archaeological record.<sup>48</sup>

The street S2 may be in the general area of the «dromos» (δρόμος), also known as the «road of the gods» (*mj.t ntr*) attested in texts<sup>49</sup> locating it in the northern part of the town.<sup>50</sup> This *dromos* may have been starting on the north-eastern side of the mountain and then it leads up to the top of the hill, through the passage between the Rocks I and II a<sup>51</sup> (passage in Pl. 5) into the settlement. Further on, it was leading into the temple.<sup>52</sup> This same way is used nowadays by the members of the Gebelein Archaeological Project to reach the temple when going from the rock-cut chapel of Hathor below the *temenos* on the eastern side of the mountain,<sup>53</sup> because it is the easiest path. There are two large granite blocks in the south-western part of the *temenos* (S3 in Pl. 4), which indicate location of an entrance to the temple. They may indicate the spot where the entrance to the temple was situated,<sup>54</sup> and it would be natural that the gate to the *temenos* would be in front of the entrance to the temple. One can also speculate that the *dromos* was a processional way linking the Hathor chapel at the eastern foot of the mountain with the main temple on the top of the rock. The word *dromos* fits the

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<sup>45</sup> Georeferencing made by J. M Chyla enable setting of the plan into the topography of the Eastern Mountain (for methodology see: Ejsmond et al. 2020, 105-120).

<sup>46</sup> See the figures at the end of this paper.

<sup>47</sup> Detailed analysis of the topography was made by Lena Tambs (see Ejsmond et al. 2020, 105-120), who is also working on a paper on the physical landscape of Ptolemaic Pathyris.

<sup>48</sup> Ejsmond et al. 2020, 105-120.

<sup>49</sup> P.AdI.Dem. 2; P.AdI. 1; P.Lond. III p. 8-9, no. 880; P. Stras. II 85. It is meant here the spot, not necessarily the street itself. According to Lena Tambs, the street itself should be moved more to the north-west.

<sup>50</sup> Vandorpe / Waebens 2009, 22.

<sup>51</sup> For the numbering of the rocks see: Ejsmond et al. 2017, 241-243.

<sup>52</sup> P.Grenf. II 35.

<sup>53</sup> Takács et al. 2015.

<sup>54</sup> See also Ejsmond et al. 2018.

street's function.<sup>55</sup> A noticeable feature of the settlement plan is that most of the streets are leading to the place where the presumed entrance to the temple complex was located (S3 Pl. 4).

Another very important feature of the topography of the town, which was overlooked by previous scholars, were terraces on which the houses were constructed.<sup>56</sup> The slope here is very steep and such installations were necessary. One of the documents from Pathyris mentions that a spot for a construction works need to be leveled.<sup>57</sup> At least some of the terraces had a form of vaulted constructions, referred to in Greek papyri as *kamara* (καμάρα).<sup>58</sup>

Characteristic elements of the town were the citadel, known in Greek as *okhyroma* (ὄχυρωμα) or *rsj.t* in Demotic<sup>59</sup> and the temple of Hathor, rebuilt for the last time by Ptolemy IX Euergetes II.<sup>60</sup> The stronghold was probably situated south from the temple complex since thick walls and fragments of bread molds as well as amphorae were found there during the current fieldworks. Such artefacts indicate storage and processing of food which may have been a supply of a garrison housed within strong, thick walls. It is possible that the fortress was erected, or part of the temple area was converted into the fortification, when the nome capital was established in Pathyris.

The inhabitants of the town would require a burial ground. The Central Necropolis of Gebelein (B in Pl. 1) is located less than 500 m west from the settlement and is the likely candidate to be the burial ground, but no Ptolemaic interments were ever reported there. This cemetery was used at least since the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,<sup>61</sup> and it probably replaced earlier burial grounds overlapping with the town.<sup>62</sup> The latest attestation of burials found at the Central Necropolis dates to the first half of the first millennium B.C.<sup>63</sup>

Arthur Weigall mentioned that a Greco-Roman cemetery was located in the northern part of the eastern slope of the Western Mountain.<sup>64</sup> Current analyses of archival records paired with the results of the recent field surveys showed that there were at least three First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom tombs re-used during the first millennium B.C. and beginning of the A.D., including one of them housing a collective burial of 40 Greco-Roman mummies.<sup>65</sup> Thus, this spot (C in Pl. 1),

<sup>55</sup> Pensabene 1995, 205.

<sup>56</sup> Ejsmond et al. 2020, 105-120.

<sup>57</sup> Chaufray / Wegner 2016, 29.

<sup>58</sup> On καμάρα in the papyri see Husson 1983, 122-128. A. Skalec is currently working on a paper on the *kamara* in Pathyris.

<sup>59</sup> Vleeming 1987, 156-162.

<sup>60</sup> Vandorpe/Waebens 2009, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Farina 1929.

<sup>62</sup> Pre- and early dynastic burials at the western foot of the rock, below the town strata, were reported by Lortet/Gaillard 1909, 34, 225-226.

<sup>63</sup> Unpublished fragments of wooden anthropomorphic coffin.

<sup>64</sup> Weigall 1910, 298.

<sup>65</sup> Marro 1929, 33; Ejsmond et al. 2020, 105-120.

located about 1,5 km north-west from the town, may have been the final resting place of the inhabitants of the town.

The area around the town was used in the late antiquity and medieval times. Hermits hewn in the nearby rocks their dwellings or re-used numerous pharaonic tombs. This aspect of the use of the landscape requires further investigations.<sup>66</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The broader area of Per-Hathor/Pathyris presents urban, funerary, and ritual landscapes that require further explorations and may provide information on life in provincial areas during pharaonic and Greco-Roman times. Wealth of records and numerous aspects of the town cannot be adequately described here due to the limited size of the paper. Per-Hathor/Pathyris has never been the subject of a comprehensive study, but hopefully this text is the first step in this direction.

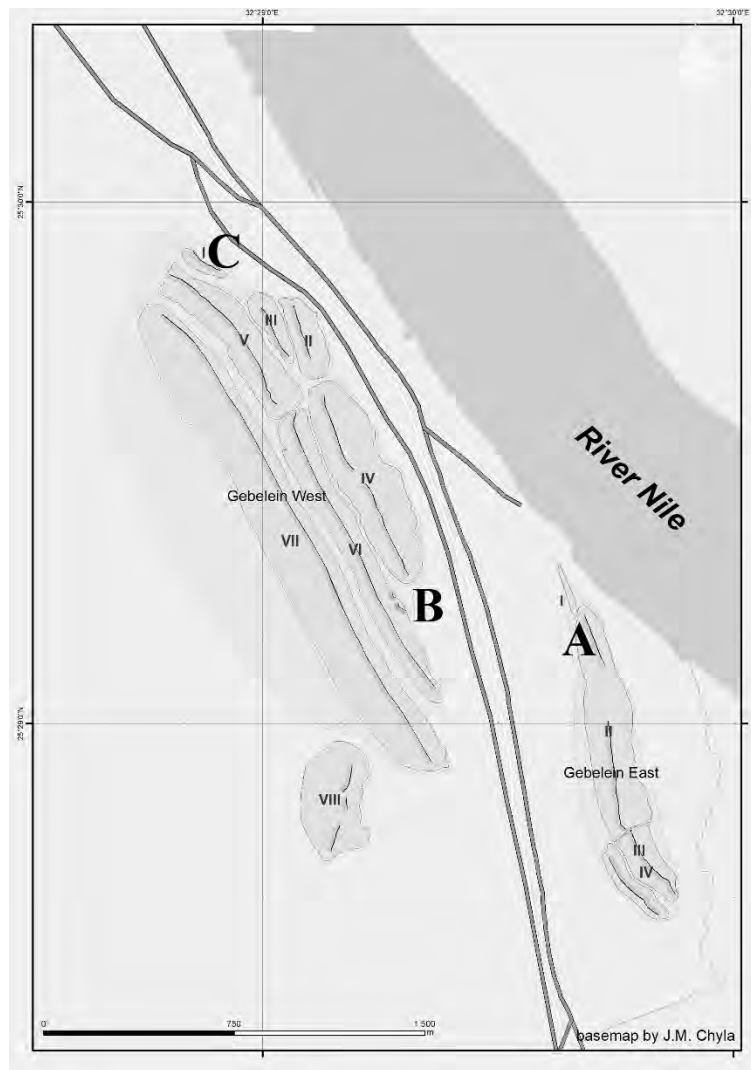
## **Acknowledgments**

Wojciech Ejsmond and Julia M. Chyla would like to thank the Polish Centre of the Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw for research scholarships founded by the National Agency of Academic Exchange and the University of Warsaw for financial support of the field research at Gebelein and the Polish Centre of the Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw for its kind help with the project.

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<sup>66</sup> For some observations see Ejsmond et al. 2017, 255-256.

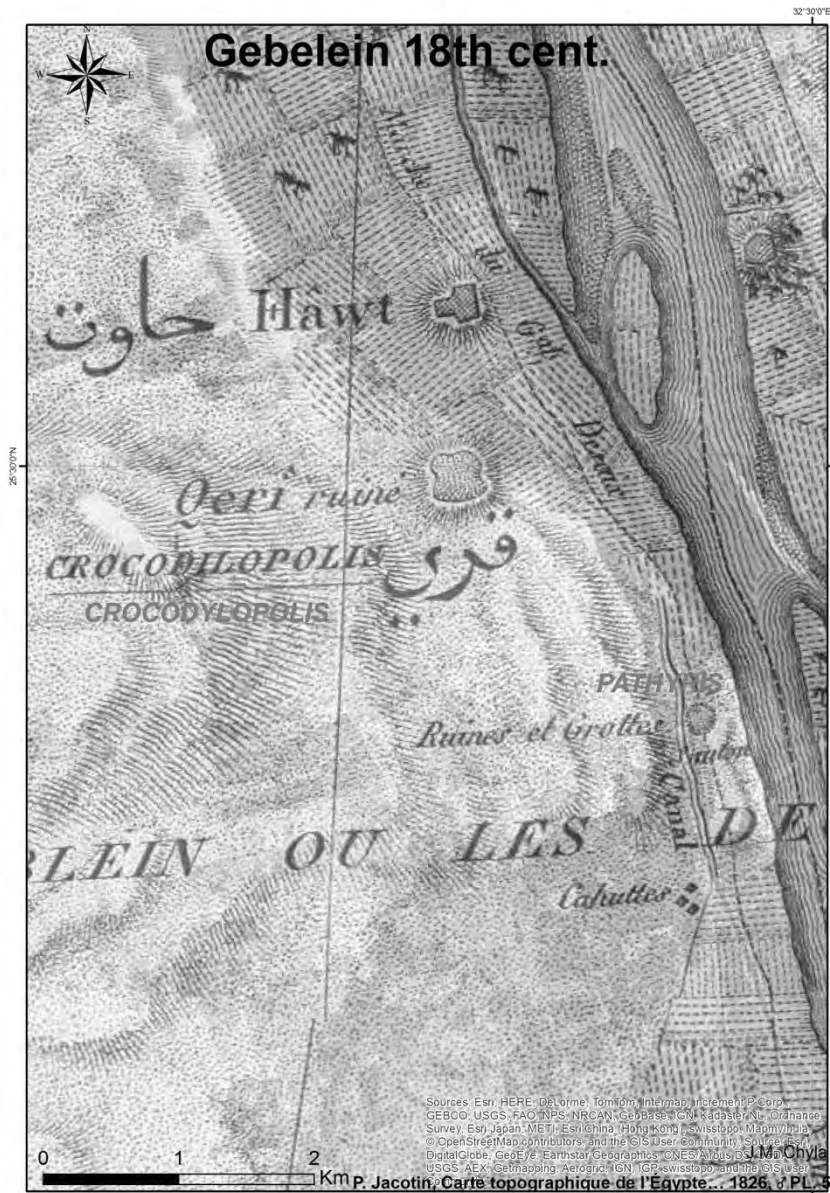




Pl. 1. Selected archaeological sites of Gebelein, A – Per-Hathor/Pathyris; B – Central Necropolis; C – eastern part of the Northern Necropolis used in Greco-Roman times as cemetery (base map by J. M. Chyla, elaborated by W. Ejsmond).



Pl. 2. Eastern Mountain of Gebelein, looking east (photo. by D. F. Wiczorek).



Pl. 3. Georeferenced map by Pierre Jacotin (1826, two maps were joint together, Pls. 4 and 5, on the satellite image from 2013 provided by Satellite Imaging Corporation (by J. M. Chyla).



Pl. 4. Plan of Pathyris (Bergamini 2003: Fig. 5), georeferenced on a 2013 satellite image of the northern part of the Eastern Mountain (J. M. Chyla and W. Ejsmond; for detail discussion on topography see Ejsmond et al. 2020, 105-120).



Pl. 5. The town area, temple, and the passage between the rocks (looking north, phot. W. Ejsmond).

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