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## Amelia Hertz (1878 - 1942/1943) and Her Contribution to the Research on the Beginnings of the Egyptian Civilization

Research of Amelia Hertz on the history of ancient Egypt and the Near East<sup>1</sup> have recently became an unexpected rediscovery. In effect, works of this versatile scholar which encompass also the field of avant-garde literature<sup>2</sup> of her time, were recollected and saved from sinking into oblivion.

The obliviousness of Amelia Hertz's works was so deep and consequent that it is now necessary to remind the reader of the most important facts in her life<sup>3</sup>. A native of Warsaw, she was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 1878<sup>4</sup> in a family of a

<sup>1</sup> The following paper only regards her works on the Egyptian civilization. The deserts of A. Hertz in Assyriology were recently recollected by M. Kapełuś (2009). My detailed work regarding the scientific work of A. Hertz is being prepared and should be published shortly. Although some of A. Hertz's works have been published in Poland, they were not included in Polish bibliography of Mediterranean archeology (Majewski and Bittner 1952).

<sup>2</sup> The literary works of Amelia Hertz, spread and hard to obtain, has recently been recollected by Marian Lewko (2003) and some of her dramas were recently highly appreciated in an English translation (Kosicka 2003).

Various inaccuracies occur here as well. The basic material was studied by Maria Hulewiczowa in a brief bio prepared for the "Polski słownik biograficzny" (Hulewiczowa 1961) where she also mentions some information received from vaguely specified family members. On the other hand M. Lewko (2003) in an introduction to Hertz's dramas mentions that information on the author's family were provided by her niece, Janina Hertz, daughter of Leon Hertz. Janina Hertz dedicated a large story to the memory of her aunt Amelia, entitled "Księga Umarłych Królowej Nofritari młodszej" based on the events from the rule of Ramesses II and Merenptah ( Hertz 1970).

<sup>4</sup> In the above quoted bio the birth date of A. Hertz is given as 1879, but with all certainty it should be 1878 since that year was given in a short curriculum vitae accompanying her doctoral thesis (Hertz 1904). An unanimous confirmation may also be found in a biography written by A. Hertz herself that she had sent to Kazimierz Czachowski in a letter of 19.12.1932 (the Manuscript Department of the Jagiellonian Library, manuscript 8973 III, page 177). A correct birthdate is given by M. Lewko (2003,

well known general practitioner and social worker Max Hertz<sup>5</sup>. In the spring of 1896, at 18 years of age, she passed the final exams in the II Female Gymnasium in Warsaw. Even at that time she was chiefly interested in the history of ancient civilizations and languages as well as pure sciences, but as a female she was not allowed to undertake proper academic studies. She decided to go abroad, where she stayed during 1898 – 1904, studying at first in Switzerland (two semesters in Bern) and later in Berlin<sup>6</sup>.

This stage of her education was closed by Miss Hertz with a doctorate in chemistry achieved in Berlin in 1904 (Hertz 1994)<sup>7</sup>. However four years later she decided to return to her initial study interests and undertook studies in Germany in the history and languages of the ancient East as well as archaeology (1908 – 1912). In the field of Egyptology her mentor was one of the luminaries of that field – Adolf Erman (1854 – 1937)<sup>8</sup>. The next stage of her education was Paris, where she graduated from École do Louvre in 1913<sup>9</sup>.

At the same time Amelia Hertz continued her literary work, having published allegoric dramas since 1905 (her achievements fall into expressionism and symbolism) as well as short stories and novellas (Lewko 2003)<sup>10</sup>. Her studies on the widely comprehended topics of the history of civilizations, theory of culture and history of writing as well as more detailed topics in the field of Egyptology and Assyriology were printed since 1914, chiefly in renowned French and German scientific papers<sup>11</sup>.

- p. 5) however a few other works quote the date provided by "Polski słownik biograficzny (1961)". The circumstances of the tragic death of Amelia Hertz are also unclear; it is more probable that it occurred in 1943 rather than 1942.
- 5 It is necessary to recall that Max Hertz together with Janusz Korczak were cofounders of the "Nasz Dom" orphanage in Pruszków that operated in 1919-1926. He was married to Paulina of the Lande family. Amelia had three older siblings (Dorota, later Toeplitz, Mieczysław and Cecylia, later Oderfeld) as well as a younger brother Leon.
- 6 It was here that she passed her final high school exams in 1901 (in the Friedrich-Realgymnasium zu Berlin), chiefly in chemistry, physics and mathematics, with an aim to begin doctoral studies. It is noteworthy that it was Amelia's father, with her future in mind, who pushed her towards sciences instead of humanities or philological studies, which were the subject of her own choice (Lewko 2003, p. 20).
- 7 She passed the doctoral exam on 21.06.1904 and was granted the doctoral title on 06.08.1904.
- 8 Except from Berlin Amelia also stayed in other German academic centers (Heidelberg, München, Leipzig).
- 9 This information was not confirmed by the Louvre Museum. Amelia Hertz's stay in Paris also left no traces in the Polish Library (information from Ms. Ewa Rutkowska, the director of the Archives in the Adam Mickiewicz Museum in Paris, in a letter of 10.01.2008).
- 10 The works of Amelia Hertz were highly regarded by Wilhelm Feldman and Kazimierz Czachowski, as well as literary scholars of the time. See among others Gajda (1980: 67-68), Eustachiewicz (1986: 276-279), Podraza-Kwiatkowska (1993: 45-46).
- 11 Until now I managed to find 36 of her scientific publications from the years 1914-1937 as well as 21 dramas and novellas from the years 1905-1939. In "Bibliografia polska 1901-1939", vol. 11, Warszawa 2009, p. 378-380 only 19 of her scientific publications and 3 dramas are mentioned.

After the outbreak of World War I Amelia Hertz returned to Warsaw and committed herself to educational work: in 1915-1919 she was a German teacher in the Cecylia Plater-Zyberk gymnasium where together with her sister Cecilia Oderfeld she took active part in secret teaching during World War I (Palczewska, Krasnowolska 1987). In 1926, based on her abounding research, she became an active member of the Polish Oriental Society<sup>12</sup>. She was soon connected with the Free Polish University circles (a private university existing since 1918/1919), where she taught since 1930 as a docent in the Humanities Faculty, lecturing on the history of writing, history of ancient civilizations of the Near East and history of the Near East in antiquity.

Amelia Hertz and her close ones did not survive the tragic events of World War II. After a transfer to the Warsaw ghetto Amelia Hertz has been arrested in unknown circumstances in 1941 and was transported to the Pawiak jail, where she has been tortured to death in 1942 or 1943<sup>13</sup>.

During the period between World Wars, in the 30. of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Amelia Hertz was the only Polish researcher to be interested in the prehistory and early history of Egypt and its relations to the Near East. This is chiefly attested in her paper published in 1934 (Hertz 1934). In this work she shows perfect orientation in the state of research at the time, which she uses as a base to present subsequent culture sequences, beginning with the Upper Palaeolithic Period (Capsien). In case of the Upper Palaeolithic the author includes sites such as Sebil, Nag Hammadi, Helwan, Abu Ghalib and Abydos, characterised by the presence of microlithic tools. In case of Abydos she proceeds with necessary caution while quoting a private information regarding the presence of microlithic tools in Egypt as early as the Middle Kingdom<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> See a letter by A. Hertz written on 13.12.1926 to prof. Władysław Kotwicz, where she thanks for notifying her of this important distinction (the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków, sign. 4595, vol.4, p.14). See also a list of active members of the POS published in "Rocznik Orientalistyczny" 5, 1927: 251.

<sup>13</sup> It was impossible to establish a more precise date. Some sources (among others Hulewiczowa (1961) and other authors following her) remark that 1942 was the year of her death. However, according to information given by Olszewicz (1947, p. 88) the year 1943 seems more likely. That date can also be found in the list of war loses published in "Rocznik Orientalistyczny" 15 (1939-1949), Kraków 1949, p.449. It is certain on the other hand that Amelia's older sister, Cecilia Oderfeld, died of typhoid in the Warsaw ghetto on 23.11.1941; her older brother Mieczysław was also murdered in Warsaw in December, 1943. I am not aware of the fate of her younger brother, Leon, the father of Janina Hertz. It is surprising that the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw has no information on Amelia Hertz (a reply of the archivist Michał Czajka received in 2008); there were also no results from a query to the Yad Vashem archive in Jerusalem (a reply signed by Mr. Mark Shraberman, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Although Herman Junker (1877-1962) was inclined to count this site (Abydos) into the Upper Paleolithic Period. Information regarding microlithic tools was provided by dr. Elise Baumgartel (1892-1975), a friend of Amelia's from the time of her studies in Berlin with A. Erman.

Later the author proceeded to discuss Neolithic cultures. Among the Late Neolithic sites she analised Merimde Beni Salama, Helwan, Fayum and Maadi, and Deir Tasa in Upper Egypt - "the most primitive" of them all, as well as Badari, based on the research by G. Brunton and G. Caton-Thompson. On the basis of this review the author reached the following conclusion (Hertz 1934: 154): "Viel geschützter lag das von beiden Seiten den Nilarmen umrahmte Delta und in seinen Sümpfen sind die ersten Siedlungen auf ägyptischen Boden sowie die Anfräge der ägyptischen Kultur voraussetzen. Von da aus übernahmen sie die Nomaden, daher die Aehnlichkeit zwischen ihren Kulturgütern. Aber bei Entlehnungen wird stets eine Auswahl getroffen, und ein nachgeahmtes Stück ist nicht immer mit seinem Vorbild identisch, es kann z.B. primitiver ausfallen oder nach dem Gutdünken des Entlehners verändert werden, darum finde ich es natürlich, dass wir auch Differenzen im Inventar der verschiedenen Stationen feststellen".

Further on Amelia Hertz creates the following description (Hertz 1934: 156-157): "Am Schluss des Jungpaläolithikums began eine Besiedlung des Deltas, was eine Entwicklung der Kultur in diesem Teile des Niltals zur Folge hatte. Die mit dem Delta in friedlichen oder feindlichen Beziehungen stehenden Wanderstämme übernahmen einen Teil seiner Kenntnisse und Fertigkeiten und versuchten nun auch im Niltal festzusetzen, anfangs, solange das Reich, eventuell die Reiche im Delta kulturell tief standen und daher schwach waren, in deren unmittelbarer Nachbarschaft (Heluan, Fayum) später, nach der Entwicklung und Erstarkung dieser Staaten, in weiter Ferne, damit die slten Siedlungen die neuen nicht erreichen und zerstören könnten (Tasa, Badari, Nagada). [...] Keine direkten noch indirekten Beziehungen scheinen auch anfangs zwischen dem Delta und den Siedlungen der neuen Nomadenwelle exiestiert zu haben, die die Badariniederlassungen zerstörte, deren Bewohner bis nach Nubien vertrieb und, sich in Nagada festsetzend, das oberägyptische Reich gründete. [...] Das Delta blieb aber wie vorher entwicklungs- und veränderungsfähig und das ist ein Grund der grossen Unterschiede zwischen den sogenannten ersten [el-Amrah] und zweiten Kultur [el-Gerzeh], die um S.D. 38 miteinander in Berührung kommen. Oberägypten representierte in jener Zeit in Auslese und mit gewissen Modifikationen eine ältere, Unterägypten eine jüngere Phase der Delta-Kultur, bei der noch dazu, wie wir spatter sehen weren, vieles fremden, aus Asien kommenden Einfluss zugeschrieben werden muss".

It is interesting to see how she explains the situation that led to the creation of the Badari culture (Hertz 1934: 161): "Neben diesen Kulturwerten vorderasiatischen Unsprungs, findet sich manches deutlich ägyptisches. Die Badari-Kultur stellt daher das Resultat einer Mischung verschiedenei Einflüsse dar und ist meiner

Ansicht nach nur verständlich, wenn wir sie Nomaden zuschreiben, die sehr lange Zeit mit den zivilisierten Staaten Vorderasiens in Berührung waren, von ihnen manches, wenn auch nicht alles lernten, und schliesslich ins Niltal wanderten, wo sie wiederum in die Wirkungsphäre des Deltas gerieten und schliesslich, sich im Süden festsetzend, selbstständig zu arbeiten anfingen. Doch verstanden sie, sich selber überlassen, nicht ihr ursprüngliches hohes Niveau zu bewahren, daher der Verfall der allerfeisten Keramik. [...] Man hat den Eindruck, dass die Badarileute Nomaden gewesen waren, die nach Jahrhunderten dauernden Beziehungen mit verschiedenen vorderasiatischen Kulturen nach Aegypten übersiedelten".

This view does not fall very far from the opinions of researchers nowadays (Ciałowicz 2005, p. 40): "The Badari people are therefore not heirs to one simple tradition; they also cannot be derived from one source. The Badari culture was certainly a complex and deeply Egyptian culture, in which we may see the beginnings of development that led to the creation of a later civilization".

There is also an interesting and completely forgotten input by Amelia Hertz regarding one of the eventual throne names of Narmer (von Beckerath 1984: 36-37). Taking into account the seal of Tarkhan (Petrie et al. 1913, tabl. II, 2; Kaplony 1963: 9, 25), Amelia Hertz proposed an assumption that the t3 (Gardiner G47) located in a serekh, should be linked with Nahrmer's name as King of Upper Egypt (Hertz 1928-1929: 128-129). At the beginning of Narmer's rule, as a ruler of Upper Egypt, he was only entitled to the njswt name, which according to our researcher was exactly T3. Only after he had conquered the Delta and joined combined Both Countries he adopted the Mn throne name, to be traditionally known as Menes (Hertz 1928-1929: 128-129). At the same time with this line of thought the author tries to prove that Narmer was the same person as Menes, which even today is accepted by many scholars (Ciałowicz 2005: 79, 83-86).

It was this shortest text by Amelia Hertz, where she voiced her opinion in such an important matter, that became the reason of a misunderstanding. In the family tradition this early contribution published in 1929 rose to the rank of her most distinguished work, "the young scholar won high renown and a scientific prize at the Sorbonne University for deciphering a previously unknown papyrus" (Hulewiczowa 1960-1961, p. 472). The archaic seal or its impression were easily transformed into "a papyrus" in the eyes of the family (it was Egyptian after all!), it was not possible however to explain what the eventual "prize at the Sorbonne University" was<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> The most recent account even mentions a "medal of distinction" and the alleged papyrus was reputedly published by A. [sic!]Petrie (see Kapełuś 2009: 59).

At the same time more or less (1928) Amelia Hertz also joined a strict archaeological discussion regarding the origin of characteristic ceramic ware with wavy handles that was present in Egypt during the el-Gerzeh period (Naqada II) (Hertz 1928a; for opposite view see Kantor 1942)16. Having thoroughly studied the material and the opinions of researchers, the author undertook a dispute with Henri Frankfort (1897-1954) who stated that vessels of this type occurred in Egypt as imports from Palestine/Kanaan and contained olive oil from that land. According to his opinion the cultivation of olive trees was not known in Egypt at the time and furthermore it was possible to trace a typological development of vessels of this type in Palestine (Frankfort 1924: 104-105; Scharff 1927: 31-32). Having agreed that the cultivation of olive trees was unknown in Egypt at the time, Amelia Hertz pointed out, however, that that vessels of that type could have served as containers for storing and transporting other plant oils produced at the time. This is attested by inscriptions on vessels and special plaques (they are hard to interpret unequivocally, however), which clearly prove that oleaginous plants were cultivated and oil was produced locally. According to Amelia Hertz, however, the contents of those vessels were slightly different - they served the Egyptians to transport cedar oil obtained in Lebanon as a by-product of cutting cedar trees transported along the Nile. Here the author asks the following question: what the "cedar oil" really was? According to her line of thought as many as four possibilities need to be taken into account. It could have been proper cedar oil, obtained in the process of distillation of cedar wood (according to Pliny's description), alternately oil obtained from resin produced during the growth of cedar cones; it could have also been cedar resin obtained by making cuts in tree bard or the so called cedar manna, that is the sweet produce excreted from cedar branches and setting in granules.

The "cedar oil" essentially would have been a product obtained by the Egyptians during their expeditions to Lebanese cedar woods; they were the ones who organised transport and it would only be logical that they must have provided the vessels. Finally the author gives an argument from the scope of the so called comparative history of civilizations: the vessels in question, whether used for transporting olive or cedar oil, must have been created in Egypt since well formed handles of no decorative but strictly practical significance (facilitation of transportation and picking up) "are the traits of an improvement or invention that could have only been created by a leading civilization, that is the Egyptian one" (Hertz 1928: 82)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Currently we are sure that vessels of this type (class W according to Petrie) derive from Kanaan/Palestine. For newer literature and chronology see M. Jucha 2008.

<sup>17</sup> See also Hertz 1928: 74: "Die Erfindung erfolgt nur in den Grenzen der Kultur, die in einer bestimmten Zeit die höchste ist, und vor ihr aus verbreitet sie sich bei den niedrigerstehenden Völkern, wo

Another interesting and important text was published in 1932, here the author tried to compare the input of Upper and Lower Egypt into the general development of the Egyptian civilization at the end of prehistory and beginning of history (Hertz 1931). As a result she reached a conclusion that the North of the country was clearly dominant. In the Delta the author located not only the origins of writing, but – in her opinion – it was also there that annals were written for the first time. As she concludes, it is certain that the civilization of the Delta was more advanced than the civilization of Upper Egypt. This opinion she voiced a number of times at different occasions.

Important elements of Amelia Hertz's research were comparative studies on civilizations. In this topic she published a treatise on Egypt during the archaic and the beginning of the Old Kingdom period as compared to the development of the civilization of the Mayas and Aztecs in Yucatan (Hertz 1924). The author found in both civilizations similar stages in the development of writing (from pictograms to syllabic writing) as well as the development of construction; she also analysed the development of other fields of art. When comparing basic stages of social development, political organisation, economy and agriculture she reached a conclusion that despite such a significant distance in time the knowledge and level of technical development of both civilizations were at the same level.

Amelia Hertz also paid a lot of attention to the history of writing, aiming to trace its development and the transition from pictograms to writing proper (Hertz 1916; 1917; 1934a)<sup>18</sup>. In order for it to be created particular social conditions, organisation and hierarchy must have existed in a proper cultural circle. As mentioned above – she compared the writing of the Mayas and the Egyptians. The author set together the development of both those systems in order to establish what mechanisms drove those processes. According to her both the Egyptian and the American system are classified as so called independent (creative) systems, while other systems she named derived ones (re-creative, imitative).

She was also keenly interested in the newest discoveries and research regarding the history of writing, among others the so called Proto-Sinaitic writing as well as aspects of psycholinguistics (Hertz 1928) or the link between writing and the forming of artistic conceptions, as well as the relationship between writing and drawing (Hertz 1929). This field of interest also encompasses her ponderations

sie je nach ihren Kenntnissen und Fertigkeiten besser oder schlechter nachgeahmt, oder bei grossen Entwicklungsunterschieden überhaupt nicht übernommen wird. Nie aber kann ein umgekehrter Fall eintreten".

<sup>18</sup> Beginning from 1930 Amelia Hertz taught among others the history of writing in the Free Polish University.

on the beginnings of geometry and mathematical knowledge (Hertz 1929; 1933; 1934b). As a starting point for her studies she adopts the ornaments of carefully decorated Proto-Elamite vessels (Susa I) and it was in Elam that she saw the cradle of mathematical knowledge that radiated to Babylonia on one side and to the Indus valley on the other.

Apart from her professional interests and research, Amelia Hertz occurs also as an active popularizer of the knowledge of the civilizations of Egypt and the ancient East. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II put the final end to her various activities.

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