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*Bīr Shawīsh, Small Oasis: Ostraka and Other Inscribed Material*

**ABSTRACT**

The present dissertation is primarily a publication of a group of primary sources. These sources come from the recent archaeological exploration by Charles University in Prague of the site of Bīr Shawīsh in the Bahriya Oasis (“Small Oasis” in Classical Antiquity) in Egypt’s Western Desert and consist of inscribed material written in Hellenistic Greek or koinē. Their majority belongs in the family of documentary texts, while a smaller group consists of informal inscriptions. Both texts and inscriptions are written or incised on fired potter’s clay supports and can be dated to around 400 CE.

The core of this dissertation consists of an annotated edition of these texts and inscriptions (Chapter 3), immediately followed by a synthetic and interpretative Chapter 4 in which the cardinal issues inherent to the published material are treated in detail. An important part of the edition are the analytical indices and appendices. Chapter 1 serves as a general introduction to the work; Chapter 2 presents the historical and archaeological context of the edited inscribed material. The dissertation ends with Reference Bibliography and Plates of individual text-bearing artifacts.

This work is the first comprehensive treatment of a group of sources from the recent Czech excavations at Bīr Shawish; it contributes substantially to the documentation so far available from the Western Desert in general and the Small Oasis in particular, as the newly published inscribed material doubles the number of texts from the Small Oasis published to date. As is apparent in Chapter 4, the new corpus contributes to the interpretations of the economic, administrative and social history of late antique Egypt, while challenging some earlier interpretations and posing new questions or opening different perspectives for future research.

**KEY WORDS**

Late Antique Egypt; Western Desert; Bahriya; Small Oasis; Bīr Shawīsh; Documentary Papyrology; Texts; Inscriptions; Ostraka; Greek; Coptic; Ancient Economy; Edition; Early Christianity