



## Philae landing site J is now named 'Agilkia'

04 November 2014

Egyptian history has been explored, new words invented and appropriate comparisons sought for; a total of about 8300 suggestions for Philae's landing site on Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko were received at the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR), the French Space Agency (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales; CNES) the Italian Space Agency (Agenzia Spaziale Italiana; ASI) and the European Space Agency (ESA). The Lander Steering Committee acted as the jury and opted for 'Agilkia', the island onto which the temple from Philae was moved.

"The decision was very close," says Felix Huber of DLR, who heads the Steering Committee. "We had many good suggestions for naming landing site J." The choice has been made – 'Agilkia' – the island in the Nile that in 1980 became the new location for the Temple of Isis, as its previous home – the island of Philae – was flooded by the construction of the Aswan Dam. More than 150 participants suggested this name, so a choice had to be made: the winner of the competition is Alexandre Brouste from Le Mans, France. About his choice, Alexandre says: "I suggested the name Agilkia because it is closely linked to Philae. It's the name of the island where the temples were moved once on the island of Philae in Egypt. The landing, if everything works well, will be a great moment and I am very happy to live it in the heart of the mission from ESOC in Darmstadt."

### Proposals from Abydos to Moby Dick

The final decision for the new name was made by the narrowest of margins; the runner-up 'Abydos', the name of an ancient city on the Nile, was beaten by just one point. Egypt and its historic sites appealed to many applicants, and so 'Bigeh', 'Osiris', 'Kemet' and 'Memphis' were often mentioned. There were also new word creations, in which the participants playfully addressing this topic suggested 'Philandujah' – in which the jubilation 'Hallelujah' is included – along with 'Philaedelfia' and 'Valojota' – the valley of the Greek letter iota, which added imagination to the competition.

Even the Star Trek Klingon language was proposed; "Qapla is the Klingon word for 'success' and therefore suitable," said a candidate. Comparisons with the Moon landing made for ideas such as 'Sea of Tranquility II' in reference to the landing site of the lunar module and 'Eagle', the name of the module itself. Also, 'Moby Dick' would have fitted, according to one candidate – the whale was struck with a harpoon, and the Philae lander will anchor itself to the comet surface with two harpoons.

### Landing from an altitude of 22.5 kilometres

On 12 November 2014, the first landing on a comet will take place. In the Lander Control Center (LCC) at DLR, this means shift work around the clock to monitor and control the Philae lander. At 09:35 CET Philae will undock from the Rosetta spacecraft at an altitude of 22.5 kilometres and descend to the comet. The team in the LCC expects to be able to confirm the landing at 17:00 CET. When the necessary data from space arrives back at the control room in Cologne, Philae will already have been on the comet's surface for almost 30 minutes. Because of the great distance, real-time contact with the lander is not possible.

"The touchdown will be a great challenge," says Philae Project Manager Stephan Ulamec of DLR. In the landing ellipse, which has with a diameter of approximately one kilometre, the lander will not only encounter flat terrain, but also some boulders and slopes, which could jeopardise a safe landing. However, the software developed by DLR, which will autonomously

control the Philae lander, has been continuously tested and optimised to prepare the lander for as many circumstances as possible.

Immediately after touchdown, the lander will begin its scientific studies. A total of 10 instruments are fitted on the lander and will examine the comet's surface, its atmosphere and the layers beneath the surface. This will be a first in the history of the study of comets; data has never before been acquired on the surface of a comet.

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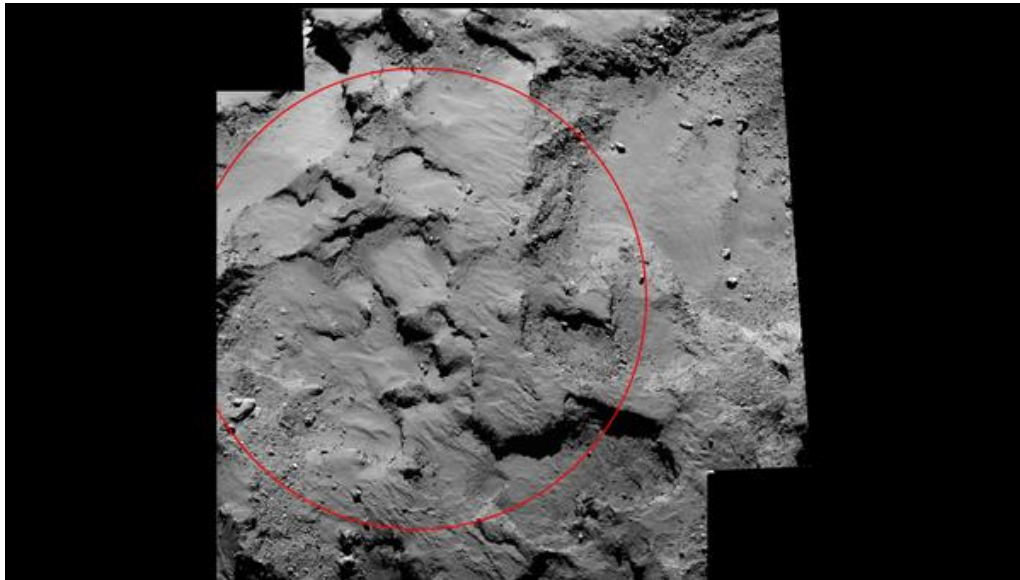
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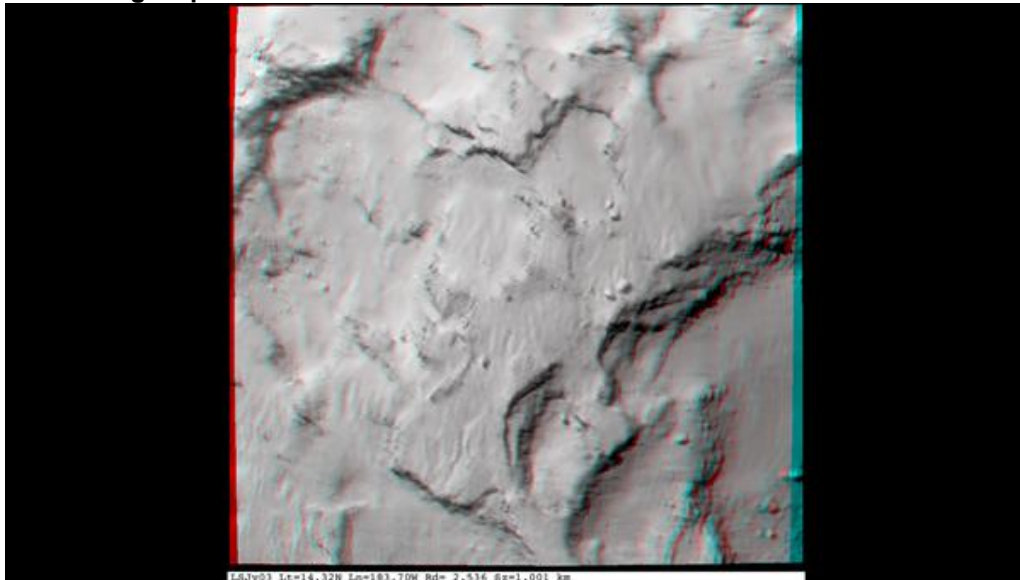
## Landing site Agilkia is located on the 'head' of Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko



Landing site Agilkia is located on the 'head' of Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko. The mosaic comprises two images taken by Rosetta's OSIRIS narrow-angle camera on 14 September 2014 from a distance of about 30 km. The image scale is 0.5 metres per pixel. The circle is centred on the landing site and is approximately 500 metres in diameter.

Credit: ESA/Rosetta/MPS for OSIRIS Team MPS/UPD/LAM/IAA/SSO/INTA/UPM/DASP/IDA.

**The 3D image of landing site 'J' shows that only a few steep slopes are located in the landing ellipse**



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