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KOM TUMAN. SEASON 2016

In 2016 the Centre for Egyptological Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences resumed the work of the Russian Archaeological Mission to Kom Tuman (Memphis). This season the work of the mission was mainly focused on studying the workshop area in the squares VII.A12, the buildings in the squares X.F2/F3-G2/G3, the area of the “white wall” and the Palace of Apries.

Keywords: Memphis, Kom Tuman, Palace of Apries, White walls, workshop, Late Period, Ptolemaic Period.

In 2016, the Centre for Egyptological Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (CES RAS) continued its work at Kom Tuman (Memphis). The site is located 20 km to the south of Cairo, to the east of a modern village Ezbet Gabri.

The CES RAS concession includes three *koms*: Kom Tuman (Tell Aziz), Kom Dafbabi and the southern part of Kom Azizia; its overall area is approximately 50 ha. The remains of the Palace of Apries, excavated in 1908–1910 by W. M. F. Petrie¹, are the landmark of this site. W. M. F. Petrie, who was making general layout of the ancient city, defined the area to the east of the palace as a “camp”, and made a few soundings to trace its enclosure wall². The “camp” area is generally considered to be the place of excavations by M. D. Pacha in 1901–1902 that resulted in discovery of a large building and a cache of bronze objects hidden in its foundation³,

¹ PETRIE 1909 b. The palace was re-examined by B. Kemp in 1976 (KEMP 1977) and more recently studied by the Portuguese Mission in 2000–2011 (TRINDADE LOPES, BRAGA 2011).

² PETRIE 1909 a: 4–5, pl. 1.

³ DANINOS 1905; JEFFREYS 1985: 40–41; ИВАНОВ 2009.

however the exact location of that place remains unknown. Apart of these episodes, the area of the “camp” had remained unexcavated until 2001, when the CES RAS was granted a permission to study this area.

The Russian mission started its work in the central part of Kom Tuman (squares VII.C9–VII.D9). In course of excavations a series of Persian buildings that may be associated with administrative purposes were uncovered there; some of them were equipped with water supply and drain systems. The buildings were located in close proximity to a large complex of workshops that could be related to the Palace of Apries⁴. To this quarter of the city was adjoined a fortification wall covered with a thick layer of white plaster⁵. The upper strata of the studied areas date to the early Ptolemaic period, while the lower ones (reached so far) — to the XXVI Dynasty. Nevertheless, the results of hand auger drilling indicate that this place was settled at least since the Old Kingdom.

In spring of 2016 (March 23 — April 27), the Centre for Egyptological Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences resumed its work at Kom Tuman (Memphis). The team of the current season included Galina A. Belova (director of the Mission); Mrs. Alham Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim, Mrs. Heba Abu Bakr Mahmoud (inspectors of the MCA); Ali Farouk Al-Quftawi (foreman of workmen); Alexander Belov, Bernard Boismoreau, Dieter Eigner, Tatiana Fedorenko, Nikolay Frolov, Sergej Ivanov, Sabine Laemmel, Anton Simonenko, Helena Tolmatcheva, Oksana Vingolte, Victoria Yarmolovich⁶.

The work of the Mission was simultaneously carried out in the following directions:

- 1) archaeological works;
- 2) core-drilling;
- 3) study of objects and work in the magazine.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

This season, archaeological work was focused on the following tasks in three locations: a) continuation of studying the area in the central part of Kom Tuman (squares VII.A12, VII.B12, VII.C12); b) continuation of work in the rescue excavations area stated in fall 2014 (squares X.F23–G3); c) archaeological survey at the Palace of Apries.

Excavations in the Central Area

The work in the squares VII.A12–VII.C14 started in the season 2005–2006. In the course of excavations during several years (2005–2015) it became clear that this area had been occupied by workshops that had functioned since at least the Late Period until early Ptolemaic time.

⁴ БЕЛОВА 2009; БЕЛОВА 2012.

⁵ БЕЛОВА 2015.

⁶ The Centre for Egyptological Studies of RAS would like to thank Dr. Khaled el-Enany, the Minister of Antiquities, Dr. Mostafa Amin, the Secretary General of

the MSA; Dr. Mahmoud Afifi, Dr. Yousef Khalifa, Mr. Hany Abu El-Azm, Mr. Ebriham Rfat Ebriham, Mr. Essam Khamis Shaaban, Mrs. Alham Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim, Mrs. Heba Abu Bakr Mahmoud, whose help was vital for organizing and conducting properly the work of the expedition.

The workshops specialized in different industries: stone-working (making vessels of alabaster and sculpture manufacture); production of Egyptian blue and glass; faience production; metal smelting, etc. The area had several phases of functioning that involved change of its size and planning by abandoning old structures and building new ones.

This season the work was focused on the 10×10 m square VII.A12 (fig. 1). Excavations in this square started last season. The first planum (level c. 16,92 m ASL) contained several consecutive floor levels that could be related to stone-working activities.

In 2016, this area was excavated to the level of c. 16,50 m ASL. The workshop of the earlier phase was located within a mudbrick structure, which most probably extended to the north and to the east. The floor level contains a thick (up to 0,30 m) layer of lime-like material. The south-eastern part of the floor features a number of small pits that could be used for installing vessels, or as a support for tools.

The character of the floor makes it possible to suggest that at this stage the area was used for grinding minerals which was essential for the production of Egyptian blue and glass.

Simultaneously, the cleaning of the previously excavated areas (squares VII.B12 and VII.C12) was done. The aim of this work was to trace the eastern face of a massive mudbrick Wall 23/30. This wall is oriented along the north-south axis. Its width is c. 11 m; its excavated length is 80 m, and it is highly probable that this wall extends through the most of Kom Tuman. The eastern face of the wall is covered with a thick (up to 2 cm) layer of white plaster, as seen in the square VII.A12.

Due to architectural studies as well as studies of pottery, the main parts of the wall were preliminary dated to the Late Period. At the same time, the results of core drillings and test soundings provide firm evidence that this wall was erected upon a much earlier structure.

It is possible to suggest that this wall had a fortification purpose. The results of the 2015 excavations in the square VII.C12 show that this wall was enforced with tower(s).

Apart of studying the wall itself, in 2016 we were looking for more evidence on the shape and size of the tower(s) (fig. 2). Most probably, the tower(s) had outer walls of app. 2 m thick, and thinner inner partitions; the inner space was filled with earth. Due to bad preservation of the structure and the limited area of excavation, the entire planning of the tower was not uncovered. This will be a task for the next season.

Excavations in the Rescue Area (Squares X.F3–G3)

In 2016, we continued excavations in the squares X.F2/F3–G2/G3 that had been started in autumn of 2014. In 2014–2015, a number of mudbrick structures were uncovered in this area. The most significant among them is the building having a doorway made of big limestone blocks, leading to an inner room with whitewashed walls. Other parts of the building were located outside the boundaries of the excavation area.

Therefore, in 2016, the excavation area was extended to the east by adding two 10×10 m squares (X.F2, X.F3, fig. 3).

By the end of the season, two new rooms (3,2×2,2 m and 3,2×2,5+x m) were discovered in the square X.G3; all uncovered rooms of the building are connected via doorways located along the west-east axis. It is likely that the building extends to the south. Unfortunately, numerous robbers' pits in the area (and especially in the square X.F3) became a serious obstacle for the study.



Fig. 1. Overall view of the excavated area in the Square VII.A12

Fig. 2. Northern face of the tower attached to the Wall 23/30 in the Square VII.B12





Fig. 3. Overall View of the Excavation Area in the Squares X.F2/F3-G2/G3

Archaeological Survey at the Palace of Apries

An important part of the season's work was held in the area of the Palace of Apries (fig. 4). In 2016, we carried out an archaeological survey in order to study its relation to the entire area of Kom Tuman, as well as peculiarities of this structure that are essential for further work on the site.

The survey included collecting surface material, hand auger drilling, documenting the most important architectural elements, and rescue operations in order to preserve some parts of the palace.

The results of the survey will help us to elaborate methodology for further study and conservation of the Palace remains.



Fig. 4. Overall view to the Palace of Apries

HAND AUGER DRILLING

In 2016, our team continued a series of drillings with a hand auger. The drillings provided collection of samples from different depths that were analyzed. Each of these drillings followed a specific task and brought new information on the position and depth of archaeological and geological layers.

Drilling № 97 (Square VII.I11, depth of 13 m) was performed in order to check the data obtained by D. Jeffreys in 1989, who claimed to have reached the *gezira* sand at this point⁷. Our sounding was performed to a much lower level (2,08 m ASL); the material includes archaeological strata dating to the Late Period — New Kingdom; *gezira* sand was not recorded.

Drilling № 98 (Square I.P20, depth of 11,9 m) was performed at the northern part of the concession. Its aim was to clarify the structure of the northern part of the Palace of Apries enclosure wall. The received data makes it possible to conclude that the foundation of the wall goes down until app. 1,92 m ASL.

⁷ GIDDY ET AL. 1990: 7.

More soundings were done in close proximity to the Palace of Apries in order to study its stratigraphy (drillings № 101, 103, depth up to 11,6 m). The results of the tests prove that the massive mudbrick platform of the palace was built upon earlier structures.

STUDY OF OBJECTS AND WORK IN THE MAGAZINE

In 2016, we continued studying the finds and pottery discovered during this and previous seasons. The work was done in the Mit Rahina magazine.

One of the principal objectives of the pottery analysis during the 2016 excavation season at Kom Tuman was to clarify the overall chronological sequence at the site. All pottery assemblages collected in 2013–2015 were reviewed that allowed us to accurate dating for archaeological strata.

The study of small finds of seasons 2001–2016 was focused on technological aspects of their fabrication which provides important information of production activities that had taken place in the Late Period at Memphis in general, and at Kom Tuman in particular.

The current results of the Russian Archaeological Mission to Kom Tuman (Memphis) are ready for publication and hopefully will come out in the nearest future⁸.

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⁸ IVANOV 2015; YARMOLOVICH 2015.

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КОМ-ТУМАН: СЕЗОН 2016

В 2016 г. Центр египтологических исследований Российской академии наук возобновил полевые исследования на памятнике Ком-Туман (Мемфис). В этом году было продолжено изучение производственного комплекса в квадрате VII.A12, построек в квадратах X.F2/F3-G2/G3, «белой стены» и дворца Априя.

Ключевые слова: Мемфис, Ком-Туман, дворец Априя, Белые стены, мастерские, Поздний период, птолемеевское время.