

Preliminary Report on the First Season in Kom Truga

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In memoriam Alessandra Nibbi

The area of Kom Truga (County Beheira, near to Damanhur) has never been explored completely.[1] Hogarth described the site in 1895, and he dug two pits to 4 m depth, but it was still Roman.[2] The bath and its mosaics, which were delivered to the Museum in Cairo, were found at the beginning of 1950's by accident.[3] We managed to find two mosaics at the exhibition, a third in the stock-book declaring unidentifiable place of finding, while we have not been able to find the fourth one. After the first exploration the second and last attempt happened in 1992, when an Egyptian expedition worked for a week in the flat, north-east part of the village. Unfortunately, no official report was prepared about this expedition either. In 2002 and 2004 the Oriental Institute, Chicago and EES surveyed the archeological site, determined the GPS figures and made a short description of the area.[4] I examined the site in 2003, 2004 and 2005, and surveyed the size of the area, the expansion and the possible starting point of the excavation. I also tried to estimate the required equipments and workforce.



Fig. 1. Space photo of the area

The Old Egyptian name of the town found in the west Delta of the Nile was *Hut-Jabet-Meni* or *Hut Jabet Iszet*. [5] It may have existed since the age of II Ramses, but can be found on geographical lists only from the 30th dynasty, as a significant settlement in the third Lower-Egyptian nomos by the Libyan border, to the west of *Nesi*. [6]



Fig. 2. Ancient names of the Western-Delta

According to two Greek inscriptions found earlier, it may have been one of the garrisons of the Macedonian army and it contained a *Kleopatreum* (earlier *Aristeion*) to the honour of Cleopatra. [7] Its Greek name was *Psenemphaia*, what we can read on the Greek decree found earlier in the area. [8] Its Coptic name was *Theroge*, [9] which has given the settlement its presently used name. The town has survived many earthquakes. One of them happened in the 1st century BC and the town was rebuilt in Roman Times. [10] Later it was ruined by one or more earthquakes and a flood, [11] too, but it has always been rebuilt. It lies by the Libyan border, beside commercial and caravan routes to Libya. Based on remains it used to be a significant economic centre, where inhabitants produced wheat, olives, olive oil and possibly wine. There may have been a depot or distributaries for traders. The invading Arabs found it a suitable place and renovated the buildings, which operated as an economic centre until the last earthquake in the 12-13th century.

For two weeks before starting excavations we surveyed the site measuring 350 meters to N-S directions, 450-500 meters to E-W, and lies on the outskirts of the present settlement, directly beside the village and cemetery. We tried to identify the layout, age and size of the buildings. During the survey we found numerous superficial remains, mainly ceramics and glass,

sometimes terra-sigillata and light blue faiens pieces, and 20 mill-stones around the archaeological area.



Fig. 3. Ruins of a small temple



Fig. 4. Ruins of a building



Fig. 5. Ruins and rolling stones of an earthquake

The majority of the ceramics were amphorae, everyday vessels, cups, glasses, plates and lamps. They mingled with modern vessel remains.

Originally I wanted to explore the remains of a building (Building E) at a site that I called „temple hill“, as it is the most extended mount containing the most ruins. After examining the site I changed my mind and began the exploration next to the cemetery, on the western side of the area as by cleaning a smaller mount in the west we found five standing amphorae, the tops of which were missing, in one of the rooms of the building here (Building A). To our sorrow, for the next day local people dug and cast three of them, unfortunately, and we managed to save only two of them. I thought we had found the store-room of the building. The cleaned walls looked special and they seemed to have a secondary structure built on the original wall.

As a consequence, we started exploration here. First we opened a 3 m x 15 meter segment in the west-east direction to remove the debris starting from the present level and to reach the western wall of the building. Later we widened this segment by two metres to the north. Before we reached the main western wall of the building, we found several smaller and bigger plastered and unplastered stone blocks.



Fig. 6. The stones have fallen down to the West of the wall.

It was clear that the western wall fell to the western direction in the earthquake. The numerous vessel remains, the coloured wall paintings (blue, yellow, red, green, black), the marble fragments, the basalt grinder built in the wall made me think of an important building.

In the debris there were many burnt wood and logs of various diameter as well as bronze nail-heads, maybe the remains of furniture. The wall showed at least two building phases: the upper part consists of irregular, smaller stones, under which there is regular walling, while there is a rough base at the bottom. 280 cm-s to the present height of the wall there are hardly any findings, the soil changes to sand.



Fig.7. The Western wall of the building „A”

In the southern section of the western wall running from north to south we found a waste pipe opening, which was hiding a piece of the first locally made terra sigillata vessel decorated with leaves. On the outer part of the pipe there was ditch made of regular stones, which was ruined by the earthquake.



Fig. 8. Mouth of the ruined pipe

In the foreground of the wall there was a 1.3 times 0.5 m building made of oval, regular stones. As it is not paralel with the wall I am unsure how to define it. There are Roman stone fences surrounding plants and trees that are similar to this.



Fig. 9. An oval „building” in front of the Western wall

We found the first coin from a depth of 120 cm-s, beside the wall identified as of the Ptolemaic Period. The brass coin corroded by salt might have come from the age of II Arsinoe, wife of II Ptolemaios at the end of 3rd century BC.[12]

Based on this I decided the explore the western wall from the east as well to get a proper cross-section. Following this we found the water or sewage pipeline set from amphorae at the depth of 70-80 cm-s. The bottom of the amphorae was cut off, the neck of the other amphora was joined and fixed with brass wires (we found its pieces). The canal went to the northeast and consisted of four differently coloured two-handed amphorae. It rose by 3%. The fifth amphora went to the east under the north-south secondary wall joining the nothern wall of the main building. Above that there was a vertical amphora neck from the floor level into the canal.



Fig. 10. The pipe of amphoras



Fig. 11. The vertical pipe joined to the amphoras

The second coin appeared here. Recently finished restoration shows that it is a faulty printed coin of VII Cleopatra from 35-32 BC.[13]
Only the upper 40 cm-s of the secondary wall consisted of stones, under that we found clay brick layers. After 2.3 meters it also ran into an east-west secondary wall. In order to find where the canal continued, we opened the eastern side of the north-south secondary wall. The canal was really there but consisted only of amphora's necks and was very similar to *fistula* (pipeline), although the handles were put beside the necks. The pipeline consisting of amphora necks was 1.7 meters long and stopped at going into a heap of stones. It rose by 5%.



Fig. 12. The pipe line at the Easter side of the secondary wall

The heap of stones was not a direct continuation of the canal, it deviated by 1% to the north, as a result it could not have functioned as sewer cover. During deepening it turned out to be the part of a secondary building.



Fig. 13. The pipe line and the remains of another building

Moving to the east we found a round-shaped pool by the eastern wall of the main building with soot in its centre and numerous vessel fragments around. It might have been the stove of the secondary building used for cooking.



Fig. 14. The stove and the Eastern wall of the building „A“

We opened a part of the eastern wall of the main building to southern direction. 240 cm-s to the north-east corner we found another secondary wall running to the east. On the southern side of this wall we found a bread baking shape and fragments of several amphorae.

We continued work in deeper ground on both sides of the north-south secondary wall. At the northern opening of the main wall, on the western side, right above the stone course of the wall we found a stove divided into two compartments. It contained a high amount of glass cinders. It is still being examined but it seems to have been working as melting furnace, probably used for making glass. At the depth of 2 meters in the northern corner of the north-south secondary wall we found another round-shaped ruined pool at the bottom of the wall. In the explored stratum we found amphorae, plates, bowls, glasses and glass fragments, among them a nearly completely unbroken pot with soot at the bottom with a holey lid.

Unfortunately, the salty soil nearly absolutely damaged the findings made of faience, we could remove them only in small pieces, although we were fortunate to find fragments of a greenish blue faience vessel decorated with relief showing on its surface the foreleg of a cow or an ox of excellent quality from 3-2nd centuries BC.

During exploration the untouched parts of the Ptolemaios-period buildings seemed to have been garreted with clay bricks in Roman Times, this way elevating the floor level or raising the buildings, probably against the flood. Unfortunately, the majority of these bricks were taken by local people of the modern village to build their houses. The limestone material of the visible buildings was destroyed by rain and salt precipitated by irrigating neighbouring fields.

The building we partly explored may have been the Cleopatrium (a temple or shrine dedicated to Cleopatra), to which wall an inn was built in Roman times according to the previously mentioned source in Greek.[14]

Among the ceramics fragments of Early Islamic lead-glazed vessels can also be found, which proves habitation after the Arab conquest.

In the following season we would like to continue to further exploration of the mount (kom) to get proof of the functions of the building(s) and correct dates. We are going to make a georadar project to detect invisible, underground walls and we are going to use geodetic GPS instruments to clarify this year's measurements.

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Dr. Suzanna Vanek
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[1] Bernard, *Delta Greeks, I., Pt. 4.881-931.*

[2] Report of Hogarth to EEF in 1895. See: P. Spencer, *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H S Smith (EES 1999)*, 305, 308-11.

[3] A. M. El-Khachab, *ASAE 54 (1956)*, 127-132. Unfortunately the provenance of the mosaics was not known in the register.

[4] Penny Wilson's report: www.ees.uk.deltasurvey/541-570

[5] H. Gauthier, *Dict. Nom géogr. IV. (1927) p. 47.*; G. Daressy, *Une inscription d'Achmoun et la géographie du nome Libyque. ASAE 16 (1916) pp. 221-246.*

[6] Daressy *op. cit.*

[7] Bernard, *op. cit. pp. 893-894.*

[8] Now it is in the Alexandria Museum. O. Guéraud, *BSA Alex., 32 (1938) pp. 21-40.*; Bernard, *op. cit. 899 ff.*; Gauthier, *op. cit.*; Daressy, *op. cit.*

[9] Gauthier, *op. cit.*

[10] Bernard, *op. cit. 899 ff.*

[11] Bernard, *op. cit. 900 ff.*; F. Chamoux-M. Roussel, *Hellenistic Civilization. Blackwell, 2002. pp. 262-263.*

[12] See coins from the excavation of A. M. Khachab, *op. cit.*

[13] Same in: Khachab, *op. cit. Pl. XII. 7, 11.*

[14] Bernard, *op. cit. 899 ff.*