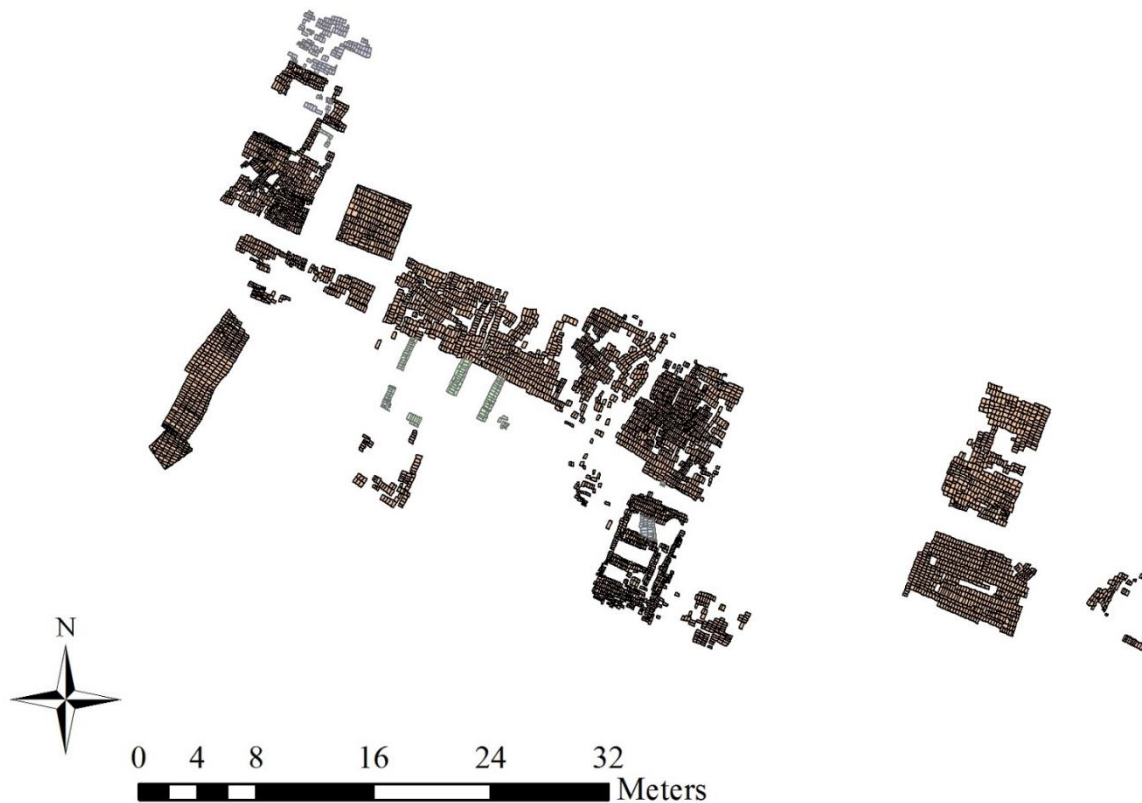


**Preliminary Report for Season 2015**  
**Excavations at Tell Timai**  
**University of Hawaii**  
**June 2 to July 2, 2015**



**Directors:**

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## Excavations at Tell Timai 2015

### Introduction

An archaeological team sponsored by the University of Hawaii and led by Professor Robert Littman and Dr. Jay Silverstein with Assistant Director Dr. Claire Malleson conducted excavations from 2 June to 2 July 2015. The archaeological team consisted of 24 archaeologists from America, Egypt, Australia, England, and Thailand. The archaeological study focused on three areas of interest: 1) the rescue archaeological zone consisting of five *fedan* in the northeastern portion of the tell, 2) the temple/mastaba complex in the northwestern portion of the tell, and 3) the investigative work at Tell el Rub'a in preparation for construction of a magazine dedicated to Tell Timai artifacts.

The project is grateful to the Ministry of State for Antiquities (MSA) Inspectors led by Dr. Saad el Sayed Monsour with Mr. Seif el-din Sameh el Saied el-Iraqi, and Ms. Marive Emad Wahba, and trainee inspectors Ms Eman Elsayed Youssef, Ms. Lamiaa Shehata el Sayied Mohamed and Mr. Maher Adel Sayed for their support and guidance throughout the work of the season. We are also grateful to Dr. Mamdour el-Damaty and the MSA Inspectors in Zamalek.

### Investigations

The 2015 season focused on three areas of archaeological investigation at Tell Timai expanding on work from previous seasons and one area at Tell er Rub'a. Archaeobotanical analysis was conducted on carbonized remains for remains from this season and previous season's work by Dr. Claire Malleson. Ceramics from this season and previous seasons were studied by Mr. Sherif Abdel Moneim (MSA). During the Tell Timai 2015 season a Sokkia Set 3110, a Trimble total station and Pentax autolevels were used to control unit elevations and conduct surface and unit feature mapping following the base datums established in previous seasons of work. Excavations were conducted by context—individual features were documented and sampled to establish form, function, history, and date. Conservators from the MSA (Mr. Hamed Mostafa Kamel, Mr. Wael Fathala, Mr. Aly Mohammed and Mr Ibrahim Mahmoud) assisted with the cleaning and conservation of artifacts.



**Map of the areas investigated (El Rub'a left, North Tell Timai right).**

# 1) The Rescue archaeological zone consisting of five *fedan* in the northeast portion of the tell

## Excavation Unit O7-21

Area Supervisor: Dr. Meg Gundlach (USA)

Archaeologists: Ms. Fonn Chonnikarn (Thailand), Ms. Abby Delavega (USA), Ms. Lannie Rollins (USA)



O7-21 At Close

This unit was opened to explore the connections between the units previously excavated by the MSA in grid O7 and those previously excavated by the Tell Timai archaeologists in grid N7, due to the imminent threat to the area. The youngest level of occupation consists of the mudbrick walls that form the eastern and southern boundaries of the unit, as well as a step. This occupation lies atop several layers of fill, with around 1.5m removed across the unit. Despite the discarded nature of this deposition, many complete vessels of domestic use were recovered and dated to the Ptolemaic Period. The fill layers also contained a large number of figurine fragments relating to personal/domestic worship, particularly Bes, also Ptolemaic in date.

The oldest layer, which is now well under the water table, appears very similar in layout to known domestic and industrial areas from N7. In total, six walls pass through O7-21 at the lower occupational level. In addition to the two clear levels, an intrusive well is prominent within the unit. Likely Roman in date, the well clearly cuts through several walls of the older occupation. The well itself was damaged in antiquity, resulting in the collapse of the south side onto several amphorae. Thus, though the well clearly cuts through the older occupation, the preservation of the collapse at 0.5m under the walls of the second occupation may suggest a date *between* the two periods of building.





Intrusive Well (F004)



Amphorae Under Well Collapse

#### **Excavation Unit O7-22**

**Area Supervisor: Mrs. Isabel Zermani (USA)**



O7-22 At Close

O7-22 was opened in order to more directly connect O7-21 to the previously worked areas in N7 and at approximately 3.5x5.5m, it fills the gap between the two. At opening, there were no visible features in this area. However, it is now clear that, like O7-21, two clear occupational levels are present. Once again, because of the high water table it was impossible to fully investigate the older level. What is clear, however, is that the industrial and domestic areas of N7 are still prominently represented in O7.

### **Excavation Unit O7-23**

**Area Supervisor: Ms. Courtney Bobik (USA)**



Unit At Close-Facing East

The main objectives for excavating in this unit were to stratigraphically record the features within this salvage area and determine the functions and purposes for the installations present within the unit.

A large fired brick installation is located in the SW quadrant of the unit. The installation is a circular to curvilinear fired brick structure. Under the installation was a fired brick floor/surface. Within this installation was a fairly large circular/ oval ceramic vessel. The majority of the ceramics recovered from Unit O7-23 date to the Ptolemaic period.

### **Excavation Unit P5-11**

**Area Supervisors: Ms. Casey Preston (Australia) and Mr. Graham Rogers (USA)**

**Archaeologist: Ms. Rachel May (USA)**

We reopened a unit previously excavated initially by the SCA prior to 2011 and briefly by a Tell Timai Project team in 2011. The 2011 excavation uncovered a significant amount of intriguing artifacts which bore further investigation. The 2015 excavation elaborated a sequence of mudbrick walls of various phases and uncovered a storage area; however, due to the loss of stratigraphic information from previous interventions, the chronological and physical relationships of these features cannot be established. Ceramic remains from the upper fill layers have been identified as Ptolemaic, but no analysis has yet been done on the ceramics from the more significant *in situ* features which would give us a clearer picture of the dates and functions of the unit's occupation. To facilitate the excavation process, the unit was divided into three sections: south, central, and north.

In the southern end of the unit there seems to be a cellar or storage area. There is a large red fired brick platform along the west wall which corresponds to a plaster floor, and appears to be the main



feature of the room. This platform has a large ceramic vessel sunk into the center which was outlined in limestone bricks and lined with plaster. The excavation of a pedestaled semicircular feature in the northeast corner of the section revealed that the southern portion of P5-11 contained collapse of the upper story of the building.

In the central area of the unit there was a complex sequence of walls. Even though the chronological relationship between all of these walls is unclear, a ceramic analysis indicates an occupation beginning in the early Ptolemaic Period and continuing possibly into the Roman Period.

The north end of the unit appears to be a mudbrick platform partially removed during previous excavations. The north, east, and south walls of the section are solid mudbrick. The eastern two-thirds of the surface also is also mudbrick. The western side of the section contains collapsed bricks, defining the edge of the original structure. No further information on the nature of this structure exists.



Fired brick installation in Unit P5-11

## 2) The temple/mastaba complex in the northern portion of the tell

### Excavation Units L6-3, L6-4, M5-1 and M6-17

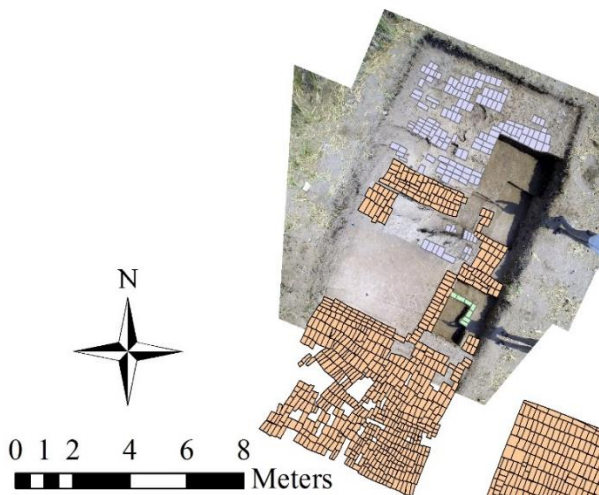
**Area Supervisor:** Mr James Bennet (UK)

**Archaeologists:** Mrs. Kelsey Kahlbaum-Hoisington (USA) and Ms. Nora Shawky (Egypt)

The purpose of this season was to define the phasing and extent of the large mudbrick complex and its stratigraphic relationship to the limestone temple foundations.

### Excavation Units L6-3 and M5-1

#### L6-3 and M5-1



Unit L6-3 was opened to assess the extent and nature of the large complex of mud brick buildings. The mudbrick surface extends out beyond the units dimensions and is part of the large mudbrick surface excavated in previous seasons. The function of this mudbrick complex is still undefined.

Unit M5-1 was opened as this was the location where the sarcophagus fragments were originally located after they had been looted probably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The primary reason, like in L6-3 was to assess the extent of the mudbrick surface excavated in previous seasons. Like in L6-3 there was a substantial overburden of modern debris and rubbish from the local villages which was mixed in with degraded mud bricks. The northern area of M5-1 was dominated by a large thick mudbrick structure with no rooms and appears to be a better preserved area of the large mudbrick structure in L6-3. Future excavations will provide a better chronological and stratigraphic relationship between the upper and lower parts of M5-1 and L6-3.

### Excavation Unit L6-4

This was an L-shaped unit designed to define the northern extension of a long north-south wall found in L6-1 in 2013. This was achieved; however the rest of the area was heavily damaged by the Sebakhin with limited or no preservation of *in situ* mudbrick walls. A number of coins were found in F001 and F002 that have a consistent motif of a double eagle on the reverse that has a preliminary

date of Ptolemy VI-VIII. This would correspond with the coin dates for the fill events in L6-3 and M5-1.

### Excavation Unit M6-17

M6-17 was reopened in 2015 to assess the nature and function of four voids. F003 was the main void and was filled with a limestone chip fill (F003) that had a vessel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. Under F003 was a layer of mud fill. In the second void only a thin layer of mudbrick collapse was covering an earlier wall which is marked in blue in the graphic below. Furthermore this void had a semi-circular cut placed into it during the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD, this provides the only information about the destruction of the complex. An alternating limestone and mud construction technique was also observed in this void. The third void was opened with a thin layer of mud brick collapse on top of a floor surface that was contemporary with the overall mudbrick elements around it. The fourth void was left unopened.

The presence of an alternating limestone and mud fill corresponds to the construction technique for the limestone temple foundations. Therefore, it can be said that the mudbrick building elements in this area are contemporary with the construction of the limestone temple.

The removal of a dirt road that traverses the area provided conclusive evidence that the large mudbrick surface found in 2014 extends underneath the road and matches up with the orientation and extent of the surface found in 2013-2014.



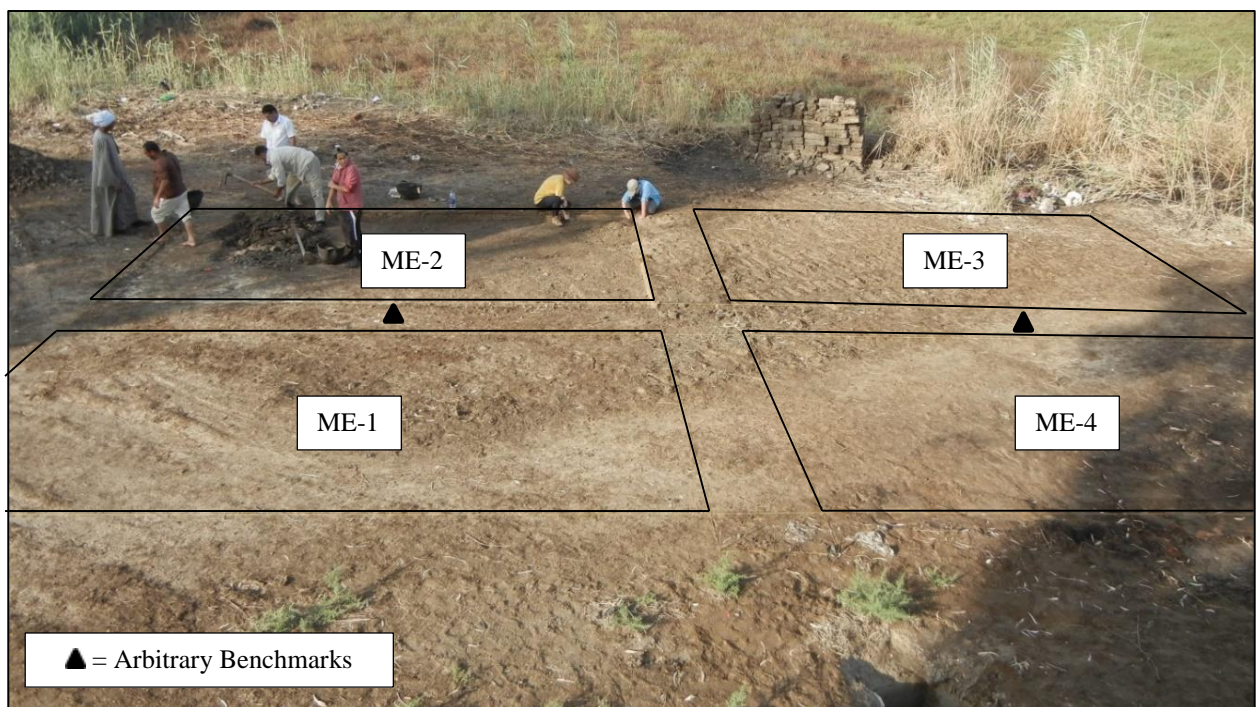


### 3) Investigative work at Tell el Rub'a in preparation for the construction of a magazine dedicated to Tell Timai

**Area Supervisor: Mr. Hal Bonnette (USA)**

**Archaeologists: Ms. Anna Mentiplay (Australia), Ms. Jessica Burden (USA), Ms. Yvette Osborne (USA)**

At the instruction of the MSA, the Tell Timai Project will construct a secure facility at Mendes to store its artifacts. Before construction begins, the area selected by the MSA for the facility must be excavated to investigate and document its cultural and temporal phasing. The site selected by the MSA is directly south of the Mendes Project compound and covers an area that is 9 by 15 meters. This area was divided into four units of 4 by 7 meters with a one-meter balk between them. The units were arbitrarily labelled ME-1, ME-2, ME-3, and ME-4 (see the graphic below).



Layout of the four units south of the Mendes Project compound. The photograph was taken from the roof of the compound's southwest corner facing south.

The surface feature in each unit contained modern building material, probably from the construction of the Mendes Project compound in the 1960s, and the soil was hard, possibly from vehicular traffic in the area over the course of many years.

After the surface layer was removed, however, we immediately came down onto mudbrick architecture in each unit. The most prevalent walls were in units ME-2 and ME-3 that were side by side in an east-west direction. The layouts of the walls in both units show buildings lining a passageway that could be a street (see the graphic below). Another, smaller

passageway was found running south from the street in the southeast portion of ME-2. The left photograph in the graphic below shows the walls and passageways in units ME-2 and ME-3 looking west. The right photograph shows them facing east.

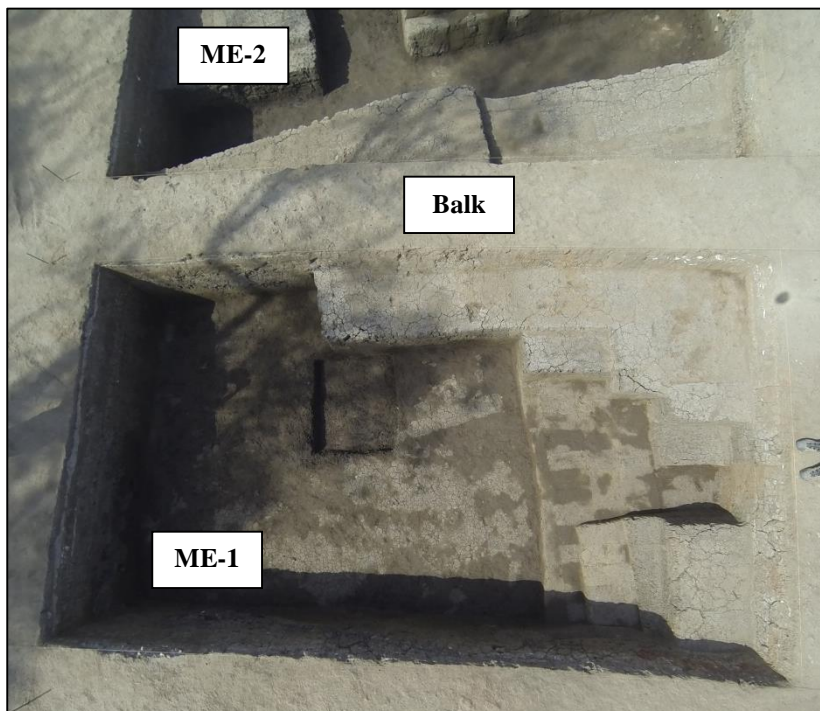


Facing west



Facing east

The oddity of the massive architecture in ME-2 is the lack of corresponding architecture in ME-1. The wall in the north side of ME-2 extends into the balk that separates ME-2 from ME-1; however, even though, there is a mudbrick wall that runs along the other side of the balk in ME-1, they appear unrelated (see the graphic below).



Overhead photograph of ME-1, ME-2, and the balk separating them.

Also unclear is the relationship of the complicated walls on the west and south sides of unit ME-1. We hoped that the excavation of unit ME-4 would help us understand the architecture in the western end of ME-1; however, too little of it was excavated to prove useful.

About 20 figurines or amulets, or fragments thereof, were found in all of the units except for ME-4. Most of them were found in the fill in the passageway that runs through units ME-2 and ME-3. The datable figurines and amulets come from the Late Period (Second Persian Period) or early Ptolemaic Period.

Only the pottery from features in ME-2 (the three layers of fill in the passageway where many of the figurines and amulets were found) was analyzed by season's end. As with the figurines and amulets, the pottery dated to the Late Period or early Ptolemaic Period (circa 350-300 B.C.). According to Tell Timai's ceramicist, the collection he analyzed was not for domestic use, but for funerary or cultic use in temples and tombs. He likened them to the pottery he analyzed from the temple area in the northwest portion of Tell Timai.

## **INTERPRETATION**

The architecture in the excavation area at Mendes is monumental indicating that the buildings were not used for domestic purposes. Rather, they, plus the funerary/cultic pottery and figurines and amulets, suggest that the area was a temple or funerary complex. Also, if the dating of the pottery and figurines/amulets could be considered commensurate with the buildings, then the complex could date to the Second Persian Period of the Late Period or the early Ptolemaic Period.

**Dr. Claire Malleson**  
**Timai, Egypt**  
**1<sup>st</sup> July 2015**