Report for the Winter Season 2019 Excavations at Tell Timai University of Hawaii December 11, 2019 to January 17, 2020



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Supervising Field Directors: Dr. James Bennett Hal Bonnette Colleen Westmor

## **Excavations at Tell Timai 2018**

#### I. Introduction

An archaeological team sponsored by the University of Hawaii and Directed by Professor Robert Littman and Professor Jay Silverstein conducted excavations and restorations from 11 December to 15 2019 to 15 January 2019. The archaeological team consisted of 16 archaeologists from America, Egypt, Australia, France, Canada, and England. The archaeological study focused on three areas of interest: 1) the temple complex in the northwest portion of the tell, 2) the columned area in the central portion of the tell, and 3) the excavation work at Tell el Rub'a in preparation for construction of a magazine dedicated to Tell Timai artifacts in the area of the existing storage buildings

The project is grateful to the Ministry of Antiquities (MOA) Inspectors led by Nora Gamal Abdel Salam, Abdel Rahman Fawzy Mahmoud, Mohamed Abdelatif Abdelhamid, and the restoration and conservation work led by Hamed Mostafa Kamel, as well as the Director of Dakhaliya office of the MOA, Sayed Eltahawy for their support, effort, and guidance throughout the work of the season.

#### **Investigations and Restoration**

The Winter 2019-2020 season focused on three areas of archaeological investigation at Tell Timai expanding on work from previous seasons in the north and central portions of the tell and the continuation of the area identified for construction of a Tell Timai magazine at Tell el Rub'a. The areas in the north consisted of:

- 1. Exploration of columned area where excavation was begun in 2013 (Area Grid R17).
- 2. Expansion of the temple foundation and surrounding temple complex (Areas M6 and K8).
- 3.Continuation of the excavation at the Tell el Rub'a magazine at Units ME-1 through ME-4

Restoration was begun and 75% competed at the limestone temple foundation located in north Tell Timai (Grid M6) and a sign was put in place describing the archaeology and history of the structure.

#### **Spatial Controls**

Unit Grids are based on the 2007 University of Hawaii 50m-grid system which uses alphabet characters west to east and numbered grids north to south. During the Tell Timai 2018 Winter Season, a Sokkia Set 3110, a Trimble total station and Pentax autolevels, and Emlid GPS 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



Figure 1. Map of the areas investigated (North and Central Tell Timai left, Tell El Rub'a right).

# II. Excavations in the North of Tell Timai:

Unit Field Director: Dr. James E. Bennett

Assistant Archaeologists: Emily Gershman, Debra Karbeshewski, Caitlin Stewart, Aneeka Shezad, and Bethany Revell

## *M6-3*

*Research Objective:* To define the architectural layout on the southern area of the limestone temple foundation.

On the southern side of the temple platform in M6 a small section of limestone paving was identified (F002) (Fig. 1). Beneath the limestone paving ceramics of the Late Ptolemaic – Early Roman Period were found further confirming the construction date for the temple platform.



Fig. 1. Overhead view of the Stone Surface (F002) Abutting the South Face of the Limestone Platform

## M6-20

*Research Objective:* To define the architectural layout on the northern area of the limestone temple foundation.

On the northern side of the temple platform, several sections of a mud brick structure of unidentified function were identified running adjacent to the side of the limestone foundations (Fig. 2). The deposits in the area were all heavily disturbed with modern material being found in the lowest levels of excavation. Beneath the mud brick structures was alluvial silt and no further excavations were taken place.



Fig. 2. Partially preserved mud brick structure running parallel to the northern side of the limestone foundations.

# K8-1

*Research Objective.* To define the architectural limits of the northern temple at Tell Timai and the chronological phases in the area to the south of the limestone temple foundations in grid square M6.

A 10 x 10m unit was excavated in grid square K8 (K8.1). The surface (F001) had a mixed cultural context with ceramic material dating from the Ptolemaic Period (2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE) until the Late Roman Period (5<sup>th</sup> Century CE) (Late Roman Amphora 4: 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE; Cypriot Red Slip/Late Roman D Ware 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE). Other notable finds included a small limestone figure of a seated Isis (Fig. 3) and a bronze coin of Claudius II Gothicus dated to 278-280 CE (Fig. 4). Many limestone fragments with chisel marks on were also identified as coming from the Roman quarrying of the limestone temple foundations and the temples walls (F008).



Fig. 3. Seated limestone statuette of Isis



Fig. 4. Coin of Claudius II Gothicus

**F003, 004, 005, and 006. The Late Roman Pits:** Cut through the Roman quarrying (F008) was a series of irregularly shaped pits (F003, 004, 005, and 006) (Fig. 5). Two of the pits F003 and F005 were cut directly through the Roman quarrying layer and into the temple sand foundations (F010). Very few ceramics were found in the pits, however in F005 a rim of a Late Roman Amphorae 1 (LRA 1) dated to the 5th to 7th Century CE and a rim of a Late Roman D Ware (Cypriot Red Slip Ware) bowl dated to the late 5th to early 6th Century were found.



Fig. 5. Late Roman Pits Cut into the Roman Quarrying Debris on Top of the Sand Box Foundations.

**F008.** The Late Ptolemaic – Early Roman Quarrying: F008 was a large feature that extended across the whole unit. The feature consisted on limestone chips and disturbed sand (Fig. 6). The few diagnostic ceramics within the quarrying rubble indicated a date of the late Ptolemaic to early Roman Period. Also, within F008 was a miniature bronze Isis Situla of the Ptolemaic Period (Fig. 7), possibly from a disturbed foundation deposit.





Fig. 6. Post Excavation of Late Roman Pits Showing Roman Quarrying of Stone and Sand across the unit (F008) Fig. 7. Small miniature Isis Situla (Ptolemaic).

### F009 and F010. The Sand Foundations and Associated Mud Brick Architecture:

Directly below F008 (Roman Quarrying) were the foundations of a large Late Dynastic to Early Ptolemaic temple. The mud brick boxes (F009 and F010) contained sterile sand for a depth of at least one metre and ten courses of mud brick (Fig. 8). Excavations had to stop as the water table was reached.

To the north of the sand foundations in the northern sector of the unit was a series of mud brick lined rooms with a fill (F013) (Fig. 9). The fill of the rooms dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE based on the ceramic assemblage. The dating of these fills in association with the architecture of the sand box foundations would suggest a date for the construction of this temple in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.



Fig. 8. Sand Box Foundations of the Late Dynastic – Early Ptolemaic Temple



Fig. 9. Late Dynastic – Early Ptolemaic Mud Brick Temple Structures

# **Preliminary Conclusions**

The preliminary conclusions indicate the presence of a large Late Dynastic – Early Ptolemaic (4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) temple which was constructed in the north of Tell Timai. The temple was later destroyed or taken down by the late Ptolemaic Period with quarrying taking place in the Roman Period. The subsequent quarrying of the stone and sand occurred over a period of time, and the blocks reused in later constructions, possibly even the Late Ptolemaic – Early Roman temple complex identified just to the north in grid square M6. Later in the Late Roman Period, the area was heavily disturbed by the cutting of pits into the quarrying rubble.

### **Conservation of the North Temple Platform**

Field Director: Professor Jay Silverstein and Dr. James Bennett Field Foreman: Ayman Farouk and AbdelAziz Farouk Conservator: Hamed Mostafa Kamal

Conservation work was initiated in the north of Tell Timai to expose, conserve and preserve the Late Ptolemaic – early Roman limestone temple foundations in grid square M6. Many of the blocks were put back into place and the temples blocks mortared back into place (Figs 10 and 11). The work is approximately 75% complete. An information sign was erected in the area describing the structure and its importance to the local area. A small mastaba was constructed to the east of the platform and the monuments from the northern part of Tell Timai (several columns, temples blocks and a granite mortarium) were transferred to the platform (Fig. 12F). Future work in 2020 will include completion of the temple foundation restoration and the erection of a fence around the structure.





Fig. 10. Preservation of the Limestone Temple Foundations in the North

Fig. 11. Preservation of the Limestone Temple Foundations in the North with the Monument Zone in the Background.



Fig. 12. Monument Zone to the East of the Limestone Temple Foundations in M6.

# III. LATE ROMAN BUILDING(S) IN THE CENTRAL PORTION OF THE TELL

Excavation Units R17-2, R17-3, R17-4, R17-5 Area Field Director: Mr. Hal Bonnette (USA) Supervisor for Unit R17-2: Ms. Amandine Madelpech (France) Supervisor for Units R17-3, R17-4, and R17-5: Mr. Hal Bonnette Archaeologists: Mrs. Eileen Kerhouant (USA), Ms. Ashraquet Fahkry (Egypt), Ms. Aya Ibrahim (Egypt), Ms. Shanea Dornan (USA) Archaeobotanist: Mrs. Sarah Keel (Australia)

### **Objectives:**

During the 2013 season at Tell Timai, Unit R18-1 was opened near, but not adjacent to, a fallen column. During that excavation 442 Roman coins were found, but limited architecture. For the 2019/2020 winter season, the decision was made to excavate around the fallen column with the goal of finding its base and studying the habitation layer on which the base is located as well as looking for evidence of other bases from which the direction of a colonnade might be determined. Finally, a looter's pit was found located next to the column, so another goal was to remove the fill and study its walls and the finds at its bottom.

To meet these two goals, Units R17-2 and R17-3 were opened on the fallen column's east end, Unit R17-5 was opened on its west end, and Unit R17-4 was opened next to the column's south side over the looter's pit. All units were 5x5m, except for R17-4, which was 2.5x4m.

### **UNIT R17-2**

The main goal for that unit was to find the column base and then to expand out from it to find more bases and eventually evidence of a colonnade. The features F002, F003, F004,



Figure 1 : Unit R17-2

F006, F008 and F017 were layers of architectural debris due to the fall of the column that were composed of pieces of fired bricks, plaster, charcoal and ceramics. A fired brick wall appeared in the F004, and a semi-circular mudbrick wall in the F005, both with an orientation West to East.



Figure 2 : Roman lamp

<u>Dating</u>: The different elements allowing dating of this phase are the different bronze coins of the Roman Period, ceramics dating from the late Roman Period. Also found was a potentially Loesche IV type oil lamp (see Figure 2) based on the shorter and parallel volutes dating between 20 and 100 CE<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 3 : Captial

### Column capital :

In the middle of the Unit was found a column capital of Corinthian type in pink granite (see Figure 3) with a diameter of 67 cm. Few corinthian column capitals have been discovered in the Nile Delta<sup>2</sup>. Typically their shape was derived from the Ptolemaic Period. Contrary to the regular roman capital, the helices and the corners volutes are separated from the acanthus

leaves and the helices are facing each other toward the inside or the outside. For the column capital uncovered in R17-2, it is toward the inside. In the corner, two bunches of grapes are visible. The four corners of the abacus are decorated by spiral horns and a row of acanthus leaves. The other three faces of the capital are in poor condition.

<u>Dating</u>: At the end of the excavation season, only a few elements allow a phasing based on the other examples found in the Delta dating between the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE.

# Floor (F015) and plaster (F013) :

Near the mudbrick structure, remains of plaster and a few fired bricks were revealed in place showing several elements of the preparation of the floor (see Figure 4). At the South-East corner of the unit, it is mainly composed of plaster and broken fired bricks, while in the part near the capital, the level of soil preparation was made with broken fired bricks and sand. The decision to remove the balk between Unit 17-2 and 17-3 was made to see if the floor continues in the other unit which revealed even more fire bricks in place on a total surface 3.70 meters wide and 4.90 meters long (see Figure 5). All the fired bricks were oriented in the same direction southeast to northwest suggesting that it is the same room.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> http://theses.univ-lyon2.fr/documents/getpart.php?id=lyon2.2000.ebertrand&part=21348

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Judith McKenzie, Rhys-Davids Junior *et al.*, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, C. 300 B.C. to A.D.* 700, Volume 63, pp. 221-225.

Dating : The ceramic analysis from this area of the unit showed Late Roman phase.



Figure 3 : Fired bricks in situ

Figure 5 : Floor in situ

# Mudbrick installation (F016)

At the south end of the unit, a curvilinear mudbrick installation (F016) was uncovered with two layers of fill F007 and F011. This installation seems to be associated with a bench consisting of mudbrick and fired brick on the eastern part of the structure and have been destroyed by the fall of the column. This structure can be linked to storage facilities based on the rest of the installations found in the excavation season.

Dating: The only elements which allow dating are few sherds of the Roman era.

# **Dump (F005 and F009)**

Near the looter's pit a mudbrick wall was a dense layer of broken pottery which could suggest a dump. This layer where was within clay soil and contained some charcoal. Among the objects green faience was also discovered.

Dating : The ceramics belong to the beginning of Roman Period.

# Amphorae (F012 and F014) :

Below the pottery dump were discovered six amphorae standing *in situ* in a line (see Figure 6). The archaeobotany analysis showed that figs, dates, flowers (see Figure 7) were inside some of the amphorae. These different elements could suggest that the place was used to store food.

Dating : The amphora design appears to date from the Ptolemaic era to the Late Roman era.



Figure 6 : Amphorae

Figure 7: Flowers inside an amphora

# **UNIT R17-3**

Unit R17-3 was opened north of R17-2 with a one-meter balk between them. After the fired brick floor in R17-2 was found to extend into the balk, it was removed so the floor could be followed into R17-3, which, as stated above, it did (see Figure 8).



Figure 8. Extension of the fired brick floor from Unit R17-2 (top) into R17-3 (bottom).

The north end of the unit consisted of collapsed mudbrick and fired brick (see Figure 9). The mudbrick was in the northeast corner and appears to have collapsed westward. The collapsed fire brick appears to have been a wall. Under the collapsed fired brick is a segment of a pink granite column. The season ended before the column could be excavated to determine its diameter and length. From what was exposed, one end of the column was broken.

The layers above the mudbrick and fired brick collapse and the column segment contained dense architectural debris. The theory is that the column fell causing the mudbrick and fired brick to collapse on top of it. The north balk shows that the structure collapsed from east to



Figure 9: Collapsed mudbrick (top), fired brick, and a column segment.

west, which is the opposite of the damage caused by the fallen column abutting Units R17-2, R17-4, and R17-5. The balks show that it fell from west to east causing damage to structure around it.

<u>Dating</u>: The pottery found in R17-3 indicate that it dates to the Late Roman period,  $4^{\text{th}}$  to  $6^{\text{th}}$  centuries CE.

# **UNIT R17-4**

The looter's pit was located on the south side of the fallen column and R17-4 was placed over it. Even though four meters of fill were removed from the pit (see Figure 10), its bottom was not found by the end of the season. We also discovered that the pit also extends laterally as a tunnel to the northwest under a fired brick wall another three meters. Although it is unfortunate that someone would vandalize an archaeological site, by removing the fill at such a depth allowed an examination of the balks and the finds at a depth that would not have been possible during a regular excavation.

The most informational finding was a fired brick structure at a depth of about three meters. The bricks form two walls running northwest to southeast. The construction from bottom to top consists of three courses of brick headers on their side, a thin black mortar on top, three courses of brick stretchers, and topped with a thick plaster (see Figure 11). The walls were connected by fired brick that the looter broke through.



Figure 10: Unit R17-4.



Figure 11: The construction of the brick wall.

To follow the brick structure further, the balk between R17-4 and R17-2 was removed down to the bricks and then an additional meter of soil was removed in R17-2. It was when this last meter of soil was removed to the brick level that the amphorae discussed about were found. The brick structure appears to be large based on the walls excavated this season. To determine its size and purpose will require further excavation in subsequent seasons.

<u>Dating</u>: The pottery found in the fill dated from the Hellenistic Period to the Late Roman Period. However, the six amphorae found in situ near the fired brick building date from the Late Ptolemaic Period to the Early Roman Period, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. So, this structure could predate the structure, fired brick floors, and mudbrick installation in Unit F17-2.

#### **UNIT R17-5**

Unit R17-5 was placed at the west end of the fallen column. As discussed above, its capital was found earlier in the season in Unit R17-2, so we then knew the column's orientation. At the time the unit was opened, the west end of the column was buried. During excavations we found that its west end was flat indicating that the base would be located in that area. Also, a circular brown soil stain was seen directly next to the column end. While excavating the stain, we found the base (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: Unit R17-5.

Next to the base in the southeast corner of the unit, we found a thick layer of collapsed mudbrick under which was a thick, linear layer of broken pottery (see Figure 12). The linear nature of the broken pottery indicates that the pottery was crushed in place by the collapsed mudbrick.

Not far from the base were two stone blocks. One was made of pink granite and could be a lentil from the top of the column. The other stone block might be one of a number of blocks used to make a surface on which the base stood.

<u>Dating</u>: An analysis of the pottery indicates that the column base is Late Roman, as expected. The layer of broken pottery was not removed from the unit, so it has not been analyzed. However, a amphora neck that is exposed is Late Roman, as well.

#### SUMMARY

During the 2019/2020 winter season, four units were opened on three sides of a fallen column. The column's capital was found on its east end and the base on its west end. Evidence shows that the column fell from its base eastward crushing a structure in the process. Another column was found just northeast of the fallen column that fell westward damaging mudbrick and a fired brick wall. In the looter's pit abutting the south side of the fallen column, we found evidence of a large fired brick structure. At this time, we cannot determine whether this structure and the one damaged by the falling column are related.

The size and purpose of the different (or related) structures could not be determined by season's end. Future seasons work is necessary to make those determinations. What is known from the analyses of the pottery and some coins is that the area is from the Late Roman period (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE), except for the fired brick walls at the bottom of the pit, which could be Early Roman.

#### **IV. CONTINUATION OF MENDES MAGAZINE EXCAVATIONS**

Unit Field Director: Colleen Westmor

Assistant Archaeologists: Mohamed Farouk, Skylar Joseph, Chad Mohammed Booth, Jeffery Hardy, Marin Trunkey, Annabel Cheng

A 9 x 15 m area, previously excavated in 2015 and 2018, was reopened this season to continue exploring the area set by the ministry for construction of the Tell Timai Project's new magazine. Our goals were to excavate the final exposed room within the structure, look below the presumed floors of each room within the structure, better understand the phases of construction for all architectural elements within the units, and explore the depth of the rubbish feature outside of the structure.



End of 2018 season plan map

After cleaning the four units, we began to excavate the 'Room 4' within the structure. This room showed similar evidence of destruction of burning and collapse as the three rooms excavated in 2018. Within this collapse, the ceramic finds were consistent with the phasing (Late Period/Early Ptolemaic Period) represented throughout the structure. Figurine fragments, as well as faience amulets, similar to those found within the other rooms were also recovered. However, unlike the previous rooms, the cultural materials of this room were domestic in nature. No obvious floor or floor assemblage was found in this room. The only evidence for a floor in Room 4 was a large ceramic floor buried into a silt layer with a ceramic dish covering the opening at the top.

After excavating the final room visible within the 9 x 15 m area, all four rooms were excavated down to the current water level. Our goal was to reach the bottoms of the mudbrick walls in search of an obvious floor level. In all four rooms, the soil beneath the collapse and room assemblages were consistent with Nile alluvium silt deposits. Few cultural materials were recovered from these layers. Most materials in the alluvium were

animal bones, a few ceramic sherds, and the rare local and non-edible mollusk shell. In some rooms, the bottoms of the mudbrick walls were reached just before the water table prevented further excavations. No signs of floors were found while excavating or in the profiles of the rooms/unit.

While excavating 'Room 4' and exploring to the bottom of the mudbrick walls, special attention was paid to the architecture of the structure and surrounding walls. Many of the walls within the structure appear to have undergone a series of alterations during their use. The central East-West wall appears to have had two openings that were closed off. 'Room 2' appears to have originally larger and after a collapse, a wall was added without removing all the collapse and thus making the room smaller. While one wall was found to predate the structure last season, this season another wall was found to postdate the structure. This later phased wall sits above the southern wall of the structure and could represent an expansion of the southern room or a later phased building. If the later, the collapse fill into these rooms may not be associated with the visible structure, but from a later structure built above it that can only be seen by this southern wall. Considering the depth of the silt deposit in the four rooms, this season a likely possibility.

The final goal of the area was to continue to explore the rubbish deposit outside of the structure, primarily to the south. The western portion of this deposit was not excavated in 2018, so this section was lowered to be level with the portion already excavated. Since the water table was approximately a meter lower this season compared to last season, an effort was made to explore further down the rubbish deposit. A decision was made to conduct this effort by excavating a 2 m sondage within the rubbish deposit south of the structure as the concentration of material culture would have been too great to complete the exploration to water level within the time constraints of the excavation. Ceramics from this deposit were consistent with the Ptolemaic phasing from the upper levels excavated in 2015 and in 2018 The deposit continued unaltered until just above the water table, where the soil changed to a silt deposit similar containing only a few pieces of cultural material.



End of Season 2019/2020 Plan Map



Fig. Artifacts of Note