

**Tell Timai Summer 2023
Preliminary Report
Nottingham Trent University
and
University of Hawaii
Excavation Report
Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt**



Directors:

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Excavations at Tell Timai Summer 2023

Introduction

An archaeological team sponsored by Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom, and the University of Hawaii, United States, led by Dr. Jay Silverstein conducted excavations from 3 June until 11 July 2023. The archaeological team consisted of 9 archaeologists from England, America, Australia, France, Bermuda, and Egypt. The archaeological study focused on the Roman well discovered in the Winter 2022-23 season of the Tell Timai Project and the adjacent Late Period and Ptolemaic Temples discovered during the Winter 2019-20 season.

Team

Director	Dr Jay Silverstein
MOA Inspector	Hany Gomaa
Archaeologist	Stacey Bagdi
Archaeologist	Bianca Rowley
Archaeologist	Nourhan Moustafa
Osteologist	Skylar Joseph
Archaeologist	Alexander Cook
Geologist	Debra k
Egyptologist	Camille Brillaux
Student Egyptologist	Anna Bay
Surveyor	Greg Bondar

Acknowledgments

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Spatial Controls

Unit Grids are based on the 2007 University of Hawaii 50m-grid system using alphabet characters from west to east and numbered grids from north to south. During the Tell Timai 2018 Winter Season, an Emlid RTK GPS was 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. Walls and structures are identified by the Grid in which they were first identified and then given a sequential number (i.e., Wall K7.003).



Map showing related units from 2019 until 2023.

Research Objectives and Excavation Summary

The principal objective of the research this season was to fill continue the exploration of the temple precinct begun in 2019 and identify the general size and shape of the temple and complete the excavation of the circular red brick structure to determine if it was a Roman bath.

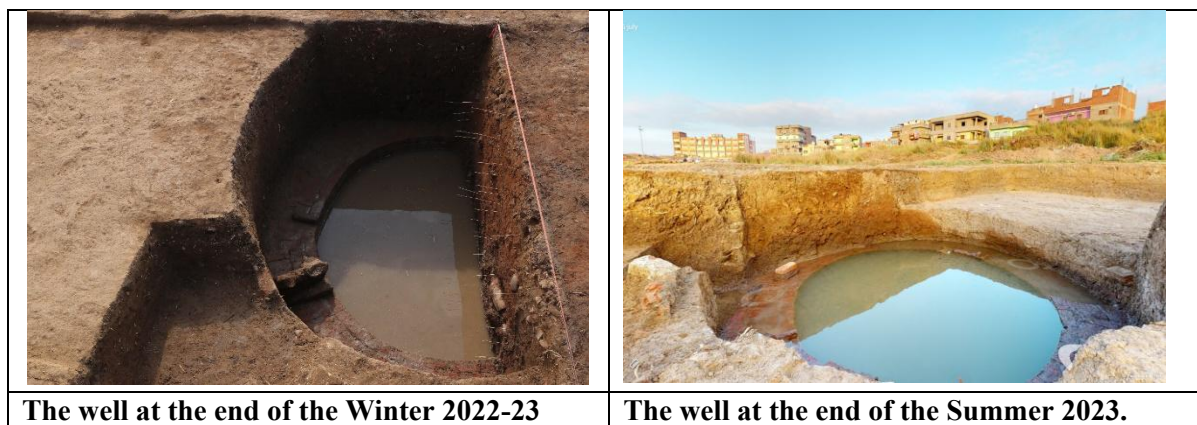
A. Red Brick Well (Unit L7-2):

The red brick structure excavations indicate that the structure, at least at its final phase of use was a well. The earliest use of the structure has not been determined, but all the artifacts associated with the feature date to the Late Roman Period. The mix of broken pottery and animal bones may indicate that it was no longer used as a source of water in its final phase. The brick structure does appear to exceed 1.5 in thickness, although the full foundation structure was not explored due to concerns about undermining the structure and the ability to process the high density of ceramics within the well.

The stratigraphic sequence above the well suggests that there had been a building over the well that had collapsed, possibly associated with a fire. Finished stones, plaster, and brick appeared in the upper and lower layers of the structure. Above the well, in the southeast corner of the unit, a continuation of the fertility figurines deposited in Unit L7-1. Figurine styles including Bes, Ithyphallic Harpocrates, and Tanagra in association with Late Roman Amphorae 1 indicated a 3rd C. BC date for the deposit, predating the well that is far below this stratum. The edge of this deposit in L7-2 yielded some badly eroded fragments of the ithyphallic Harpocrates figurines, a poorly preserved bronze coin that appears to date to Ptolemy II based on the presence of Galatian Shield on

the coin confirming the date of the deposit to the latter half of the 3rd Century BC or early 2nd century BC.

It appears that the well was either cut into earlier Ptolemaic deposits or was repurposed during the Roman period and that it has an unknown prior function. The Ptolemaic deposit supports the suggestion that the area to the south contained a Ptolemaic religious structure that had a mammisi associated with it.



B. Units K7-10, K7-11, K7-12, K7-13, K7-15, K7-16

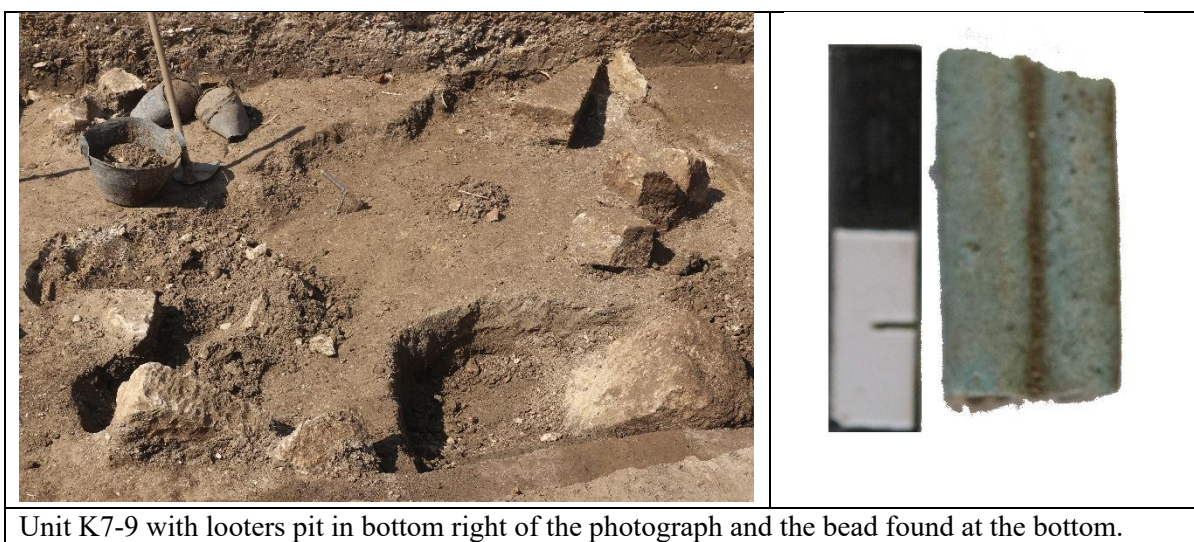
These units were opened to explore the area between the well and the Late Period Temple to the south. Within 10 cm of the surface, an extensive mudbrick area was found with some of the surface still showing evidence of a lime plaster floor. Dating this surface is tenuous because the top layer above it was thin and highly disturbed by modern activity. The few artifacts that were found, small carinated bowls, suggest a Ptolemaic date. In the south end of K-13 where the floor appears to abut a wall, two small offering vessels were found possibly consisting of a bowl and cover. There are some limestone pieces suggesting that a small niche had been constructed just above the junction of the wall with the floor and that the small covered bowl had been set in place within the wall architecture. These types of offering deposits appear consistently throughout the Late Period and Ptolemaic temple foundations, although there are known mostly after the miniature vessels are found in highly disturbed contexts.



Figure. Offering vessels from K7-13-F3

C. Units K7-9, K7-14, K8-5, K8-6, L8-1

These units were opened to follow the Northern wall of the Late Period Temple and the southern wall of the Ptolemaic temple. The later wall appears contemporaneous with the extensive mudbrick surface to the north and it was either built as an addition or extension of the lower earlier wall. The northwest corner of the earlier was exposed in Unit K7-9. There, large limestone temple wall blocks were pulled down during an episode of intentional destruction. At the corner itself, an ancient looters pit with a large stone block pulled into it indicated that during this destruction episode, someone had dug a targeted pit to find the foundation deposit for the temple. A temple stone block was pulled into the pit afterwards. The pit was excavated but the only evidence of the foundation deposit that was found was a single faience bead.



In units K8-6 and K8-5, where they join on the north junction, there was a disturbed foundation deposit on the upper wall that is believed to date to the Ptolemaic Period. Scattered throughout this area were miniature vessels and in a niche in the wall was a decomposed faience vessel. Two broken limestone scribal plaques were found although no text was readable on them.





To the west, Unit L8-1 found a considerable expanse of mudbrick wall. That connection of the wall with the Late Period Temple and the Ptolemaic Temple has not been established yet. The elevation suggests that this architecture was part of the later phase of construction.

D. Unit K8-8

Exploration of the South Western Corner of the Late Period Temple Foundation

K8-8 and K8-8B

Field Supervisor: Skylar Joseph

Objectives:

K8-8: An initial 3m x 6m unit was opened directly next to K8-1, which was previously excavated in the 2019/2020 Winter season. The objective for this unit was to explore the Western extent of the temple foundations to determine more precise dimensions for the larger structure.

K8-8B: After reaching the foundational sand layer in K8-8 without finding any related walls, it was decided to extend 1m off of the SW corner of K8-8, 1.5m South and West with the intention to find the foundational walls associated with the sand layer. After one wall became visible on the western side without a corresponding Southern corner, it was decided to extend the unit 1.25m x 1.10m directly to the South of the visible wall.

Excavation Summary:

Following the removal of the modern surface debris from K8-8 (F001), three distinct areas became visible; a Northern fill layer, a central compacted mud floor area, and a Southern limestone chipping area.

The Northern 1/3 of the unit was predominantly a Roman fill layer (F003, F005, F006, and F009). As the fill was removed, evidence of a Roman red brick and mudbrick structure became visible in the North Western corner, while more of the compacted mud and limestone chipping appeared in the North Eastern corner. Below the Roman fill layer was disturbed foundational sand (F012) for the Late Period Temple. Evidence of Late Roman 1 and Late Roman AE3 amphora fragments dates this disturbance layer to occurring sometime between 360-730 AD. Excavations for F012 were stopped due to the high water table making continued excavation without a water pump impossible.

The central compacted mud floor (F002) was bisected on the Western side (F011 and F013), as this was the area with lower preservation. Within the bisection was Late Roman Pottery, most notably the presence of Late Roman Amphora 4 fragments, which dates this area to the 4th-7th Century AD. Collapsed mudbrick walls were present on the Northern and Southern sides of the bisection, indicating a possible relationship with the floor.

The Southern limestone chipping area (F004, F007, F008, F010) revealed heavy disturbance during the Roman period as a result of the lime mining which occurred across the greater temple area. While some areas of the limestone chipping only span a depth of 20-25cm, the Southern baulk between K8-8 and K8-8B reveals the limestone chipping in this area spanned a depth of 68cm. Below the limestone chipping area was a mud fill/collapse layer, which sat directly above the foundational sand for the Late Period temple (F014). As with the Northern area of foundational sand (F012), F014 was disturbed during the Roman Period, as evidenced by the presence of LRA 5/6 (1st-8th Century AD) and Roman Two-Handled Cookpot 145 (390-500 AD) fragments mixed with earlier pottery fragments as well. With the K8-8B extensions to the unit, Western (F006) and Southern (F007) foundational walls for the Late Period temple were discovered. These walls ran more than 6 courses in depth and continued deeper into the foundational sand, but the full extent of the walls was unable to be determined due to the high-water table. Outside of the two walls was mudbrick collapse which was unable to be fully excavated due to time constraints. At closing, the Southern wall (F007) was one brick wide and four bricks in length, which continued into the Eastern and Western baulks. The Western wall (F006) is at least two bricks wide and eight bricks in length, continuing into the Northern baulk. At the corner where the two walls adjoin, sits a single limestone cornerstone on top of the Western wall (F006). Due to the fact that the full SW extent of the walls could not be determined, it is uncertain whether we have found the SW extent of the original temple foundations, or if they continue further to the South and West, as the continuation of the Southern wall (F007) into the baulk would suggest.



Figure: Unit K8-8 showing the mudbrick wall corner capped with a limestone block.

Conclusions:

The entire area of K8-8 and K8-8B was heavily disturbed due to the limestone mining during the Roman period, as well as through the construction, and later collapse of Roman structures in the area. Mixed in with the Roman pottery were other artifacts and pottery which likely originated with the original temple structure, but due to their presence alongside Roman pottery indicates they were disturbed from their original placement. In order to gain a better picture of the Late Period temple construction in this area, deeper excavations will be needed when the water table is either at a lower level and/or when a water pump will be available for use in order to excavate below the water table.

E. Conservation Activities

During the course of the season several conservation and site improvement activities were undertaken. The temple foundation in Grid M6 had been severely damaged by looters over the last two years. This damage was repaired. And the restoration of the temple foundation was completed.



View west of the monument mastaba and temple foundation.

At the security watchpoint in the center of the tell, solar-charge lights were installed to enhance site security.



Figure: Night view of the new lights

On the road that runs through the Tell connecting Timai el Amdid with Kfir el Amir, a new sign was set in place identifying the Tell Timai Archaeological site.



Dr. Jay Silverstein
 Director, Tell Timai Project
 Nottingham Trent University
 10 July 2023

Tell Timai, Summer 2023

Register Book

S م	Excavation Number رقم الحفائر	Registration Number رقم التسجيل بسجل قيد الاثار	N of object عدد القطع	Material المادة	Description الوصف	Dating التأريخ	Measurements in centimeters المقاسات سنتيمتر	Picture صورة الاثر
1	L7-2-F19-B4		1	Wood	Double-perforated semi-circular bead with a ridged design on the rim	Roman	W= 12.9 mm H= 9.7 mm W= 7.2 mm Wt= 0.67 g	
2	K8-4-F11-B2		1	Stone	Complete scarab bead with design	Greco-Roman	L= 15.2 mm W= 11.1 mm H= 6.9 mm Wt= 1.39 g	
3	K7-9-F9-B2		1	Faience	Double cylindrical Bead		L= 19.5 mm W= 9.6 mm Th= 5.7 mm Wt= 0.2 g	

4	K7-14-F9-B1		1	Ceramic	Complete small bowl, chipped		H= 40.6 mm W= 73.2 mm	
5	L7-2B-F30-B3		1	Ceramic	Complete three-lobed pitcher, chipped		H= 140.8 mm W= 82.4 mm	
6	K8-4-F6-B7		1	Ceramic	Complete juglet	Roman	H= 71.5 mm W= 65.2 mm	
7	L7-2B-F23-B10		1	Ceramic	Complete Offering Cup	Roman	H= 71.5 mm W= 65.2 mm	
8	L7-2B-F32-B6		1	Limestone	Weight with hole and inscription of a cross on one side	Roman	H=133 mm W=60 mm Wt= 130.3 g	

9	K7-14-F5-B3		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl	Greco-Roman	W= 75.8 mm H= 22.9 mm	
10	s		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl	Greco-Roman	W= 58.3 mm H= 21.0 mm	
8	M6-Temple-B1		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl Lid	Greco-Roman	W= 56.7 mm H= 20.0 mm	
9	M6-Temple-B2		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl	Greco-Roman	W= 27.3 mm H= 12.7 mm	
10	L7-2-F29-B2		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl	Roman	W= 28.4 mm H= 17.5 mm	

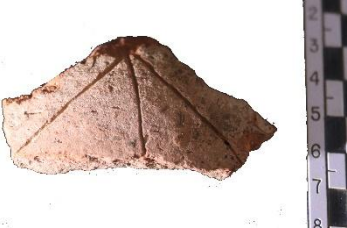
11	K8-6B-F12-B12		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl	Greco-Roman	W= 69.3 H= 28.8	
12	K6-6B-F13-B9		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl	Greco-Roman	W= 65.2 mm H= 24.7 mm	
13	K8-6-F7-B1		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl Lid	Greco-Roman	W= 61.3 mm H= 20.6 mm	
14	K8-6-F4-B1		1	Ceramic	Small Offering Bowl Lid	Greco-Roman	W= 62.9 mm H= 28.2 mm	
15	K7-14-F5-B2		1	Ceramic	Figurine, 2 women	Ptolemaic	H= 108.7 mm W= 83.7 mm L= 82.2 mm	

16	K7-2-F33-B33		1	Faience	Hathor head and two small fragments, damaged, poorly preserved	Ptolemaic	H= 38.6 mm W= 24.7 mm Th= 10.8 mm	

Tell Timai, Winter 2022-2023

Study Book

S م	Excavation Number رقم الحفائر	Registration Number رقم التسجيل بسجل قيد الآثار	N of object عدد القطع	Material المادة	Description الوصف	Dating التأريخ	Measurements in centimeters المقاسات سنتيمتر	Picture صورة الاثر
1	L7-2-F33-B6		1	Bronze	Coin. Obverse: Zeus Amon. Reverse eagle with Galatian Shield Mark	Ptolemy II	D= 19.0 mm Th= 3.3 mm Wt= 0.8 g	
2	Auger 20-1.3m-2010		1	Bronze	Coin. Obverse: Portrait of Roman Emperior. Reverse: Roman soldier spearing a fallen enemy	Late Roman	D= 15.9 mm Th= 1.6 mm Wt= 0.2 g	
3	L7-2-F33-B2		3	Terracotta	Figurine Fragments: A) Torso of Harpocrates, B) Head and upper body of Harpocrates, C) Unknown Fragment	Ptolemaic	A) L= 72.6 mm W= 39.4 mm B) L= 74.7 mm W= 65.4 mm C) L= 47.1 mm W= 35.3 mm	

4	K8-5-F2-B6		1	Terracotta	Figurine Fragment from a plaque	Greco- Roman	L= 78.6 mm W= 72.6 mm Th= 25.1 mm	
5	L7-2-F33-B4		1	Terracotta	Figurine Fragment, Phallus from Ithyphallic Harpocrates	Ptolemaic	L= 58.1 mm W= 28.3 mm Ht= 40.6 mm	
6	K8-8-F11-B25		1	Ceramic	Ostraca Fragment. Potsherd inscribed with linear shape	Greco- Roman	L= 66.9 mm W= 34.8 mm Th= 8.1 mm	
7	K8-4B-F13-B7		1	Ceramic	Ostraca with MX carved on it	Greco- Roman	L= 138.9 mm W= 51.9 mm Th= 15.1 mm	
8	K8-5-F2-B4/K8-6-F9-B5		2	Limestone	Two Scribal Tablets made from 5 fragments. A) Two pieces chipped to hold plaster face. B) Smoothed tabet with possible	Late Period- Ptolemaic	A) L= 98.0 mm W= 71.1 mm Th= 16.8 mm B) L= 135.1 mm W= 115.0 mm Th= 18.5 mm	

					traces of hieroglyphs.			
9	L7-2B-F32-B3		1	Ceramic	Small 2-handled bottle with white slip. Handles are missing.	Roman	Ht= 140.8 mm W= 84.9 mm	
10	K8-4-F12-B2		1	Ceramic	Juglet, ribbed surface, handle missing	Roman	Ht= 87.2 mm W= 49.2 mm	
11	K8-5-F7-B3		1	Ceramic	Small crenelated bowl with a string-cut base. Rim chipped	Greco-Roman	D= 108.4 mm Ht= 40.9 mm	
12	L7-2B-F30-B14		1	Ceramic	Amphora stand, one side broken	Greco-Roman	D= 117.9 Ht= 51.8	

