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THE SIXTH SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT GURUKLY DEPE, SOUTHERN TURKMENISTAN (2015)

The sixth season of the Polish-Turkmen excavations at Gurukly Depe was carried out from September 15th to October 18th, 2015, and was a continuation of the archaeological exploration started there in 2010 (KAIM 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015). The excavations were financed by the research grant no. 2012/07/B/HS3/00908 from the National Science Centre and conducted by the Polish team in cooperation with the Archaeological Park *Köne Serakhs* headed by Azatgeldi Bayramov. The team included: Barbara Kaim, Nazarij Buławka, Maja Rzeplińska, Anahita Shahrokhi (University of Warsaw), Piotr Piekarz (State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw) – archaeologists, and a group of students: Anna Bucholz, Bartłomiej Kujda, Bolesław Galkowski, and Marta Lazurek. The works were supervised by an inspector, Atamurat Ödayev, the representative of the Archaeological Park *Köne Serakhs*.

The primary focus of the sixth season of excavations at Gurukly Depe, just like during the previous seasons, were two areas of the site: one located on its highest south-western part, where relics of a supposed manor house were unearthed, and another in the eastern part of the site, in the middle of the eastern side of a defensive wall (Fig. 1).

The 2015 season substantially improved our understanding of the initial layout of the western part of the site where the excavations in two trenches conducted during the previous seasons (14 I and 11 I) were continued and two new trenches (15 I and 11 Ł) were opened.

Trench 11 I revealed remains of walls of three rooms on the northern side of the supposed residence. After a careful (brick after brick) removal of layers of mud bricks, which were previously considered a filling for construction of a new building, an interesting evidence related to storage practices appeared (Fig. 2).

The rooms had a kind of a basement for storage built in the following way: a kind of brick benches about 0.70 – 1.00 m high were constructed along the sides of the rooms. Large storage jars were placed in the spaces between these ‘benches’ and then the empty space between the jars was filled with earth and bricks until it reached the height of the rims of the jars. Afterwards, one or two layers of mud bricks were placed upon this fill and used as a floor, whereas the jars were sealed with baked bricks. This way, the whole surface of the room could be freely utilized for any purpose other than storage, while the storage jars could be accessed simply by removing baked bricks (Fig. 2). The practice was observed in two rooms for two consecutive



floor levels (Fig. 3) – the upper floor of the third room was deteriorated due to erosion.

The pottery fragments as well as two bronze coins of the Sasanian king, Peroz I (459–484 AD), found on the lower floor of one of the excavated rooms suggest they were in use during the second half of the 5th c. AD. About 20 cm below the level of the floor (269.65 m a.s.l.) of the room adjacent to the northern external wall of the building, the bottom of this wall appeared. So it is now clear that the excavated building was constructed in the 5th c. AD. It was in use at least until the first half of the 7th century, as suggested by pottery and coins of Khosrau II (590–628 AD) found on the upper floor of one of the rooms during the previous season of excavations.

The date assumed for the construction of the building has been proved correct by excavations in Trench 13 I. The floors of the rooms excavated there during the previous season were exposed at a level similar to those in Trench 11 I. Pottery fragments found on the floors dated also to the 5th c. AD.

The eastern external wall of the manor house was unearthed in Trenches 11 L and 11 Ł. The bottom row of bricks of the wall was found there at the level of 268.89 m a.s.l. As the excavations progressed, it became clear that the investigated building had been built upon an older structure, probably a manor house too. But it was impossible to say more about this phase of occupation of the western part of the site.

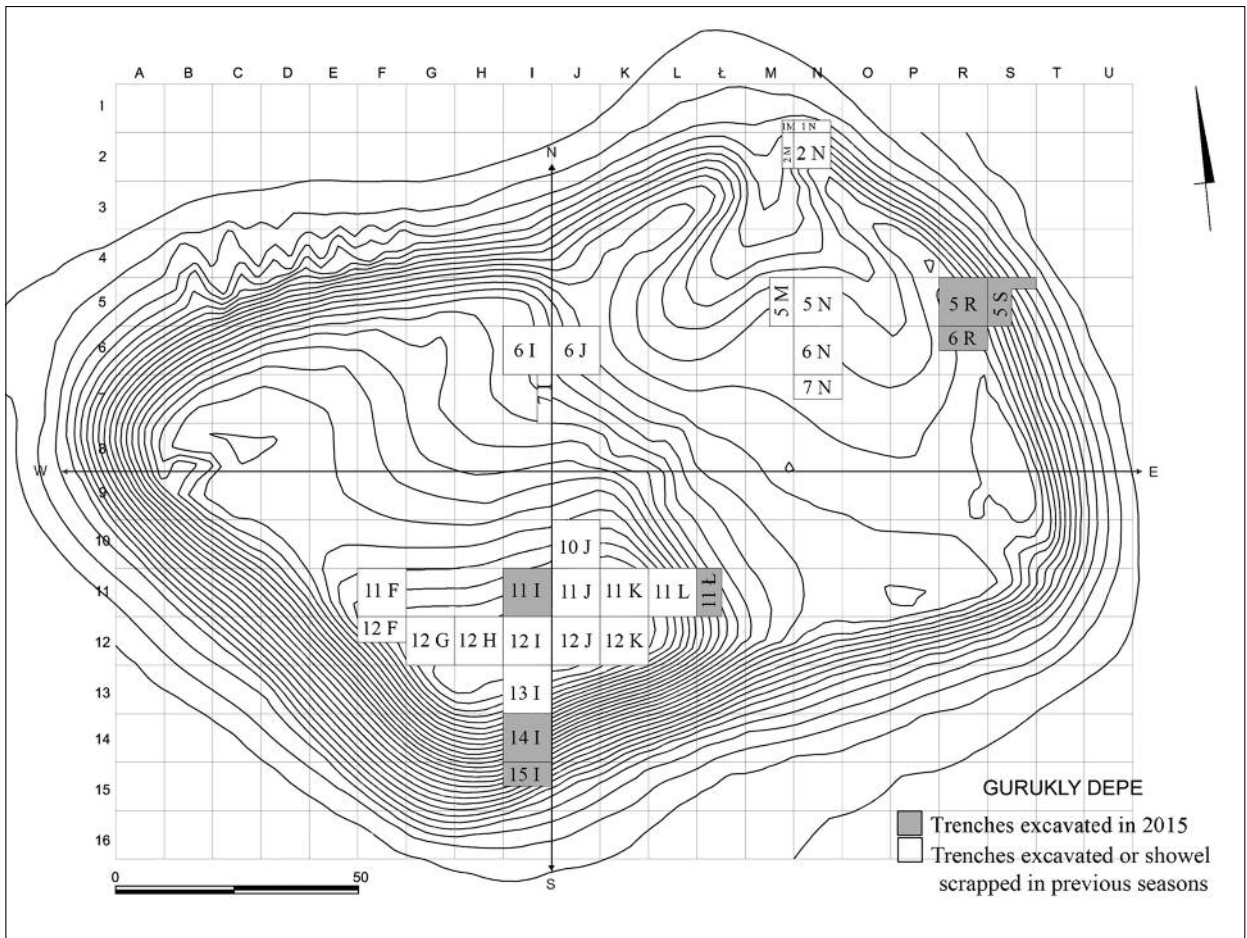


Fig. 1. Topographical map of Gurukly Depe with the location of the trenches (drawing by J. Kaniszewski, N. Buławka).

Ryc. 1. Mapa topograficzna Gurukly Depe z lokalizacją wykopów (rys. J. Kaniszewski, N. Buławka).

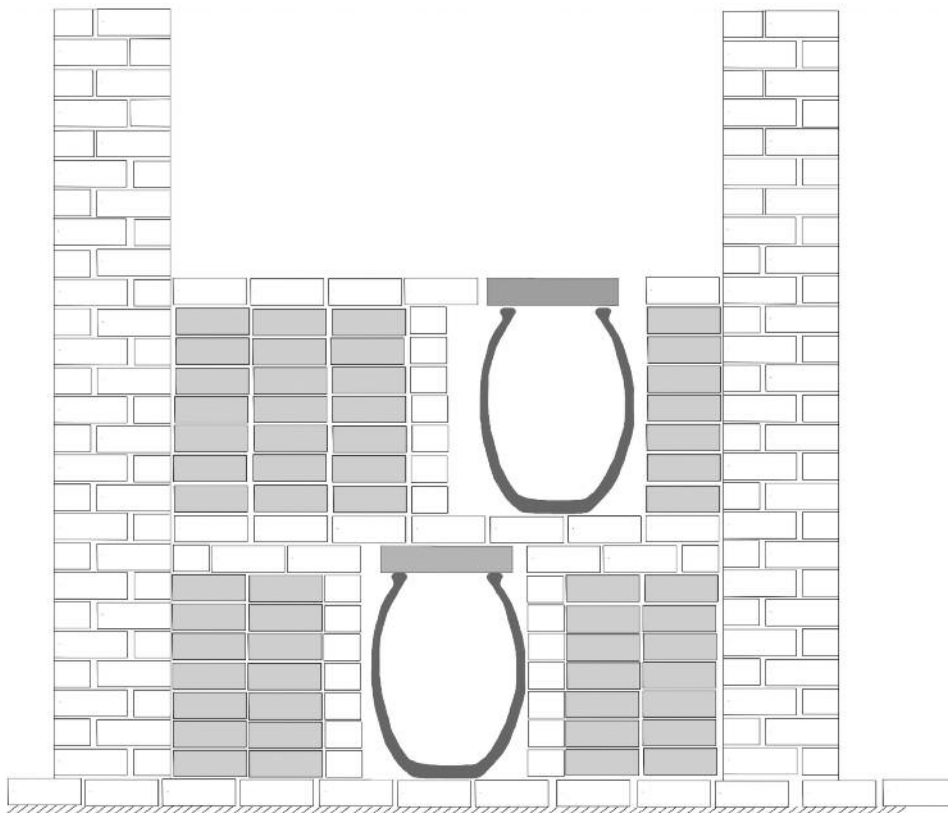


Fig. 2. Trench 11 I. A storage jar on the upper floor, below a rim of another jar is visible (photo by B. Kaim).

Ryc. 2. Wykop 11 I. Naczynie zasobowe stojące na podłodze pomieszczenia, poniżej widoczny wylew innego naczynia (fot. B. Kaim).



Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the system of basements identified in Trench 11 I (drawing by B. Kaim).

Ryc. 3. Rekonstrukcja systemu piwnic zidentyfikowanego w pomieszczeniach eksplorowanych w wykopie 11 I (rys. B. Kaim).

However, the 2015 excavations in Trench 14 I, opened in 2014, and in the new Trench 15 I have provided some information about the earliest phase of settlement at the site of Gurukly Depe. A fragment of a solid defensive wall that once surrounded the western part of the site was exposed in Trench 14 I during the 2014 season. After the 2015 excavations, it is clear that the wall was connected with a platform (glacis), no less than 5 m high and extending ca. 10 m southwards. The only information about the way the platform was constructed is that its sloping outer face was built of mud bricks of the same size as the wall (43–44 × 43–44 × 11–13 cm). There was an outer walkway 4 to 5.5 m wide on the upper surface of the platform in front of the curtain and the tower (Fig. 4). While the size of the bricks and the form of the tower suggest that the platform and the wall may be dated to the Parthian period, too little evidence is currently available to enable more precise dating.

During the second phase, the southern part of the platform was raised by ca. 1.5 m. A new structure resembling a right trapezoid consisted of layers of brown clay,

brown clay mixed with sand, and sandy layers lined with mud bricks which created a kind of containers of similar sizes. The space between the defensive wall and this new structure was filled with river sand with scarce clods of pure clay. Adjacent to the structure and built directly on the layer of sand was a wall, one brick thick (40 × 40 × 9–10 cm), divided by projections two bricks thick. The wall was preserved up to the height of ca. 1.20 m. It was pierced at intervals by small loopholes arranged in two rows in a checkerboard pattern (Fig. 5). Because the space between this wall and the defensive wall was also filled with sand, the loopholes' function could have only been decorative.

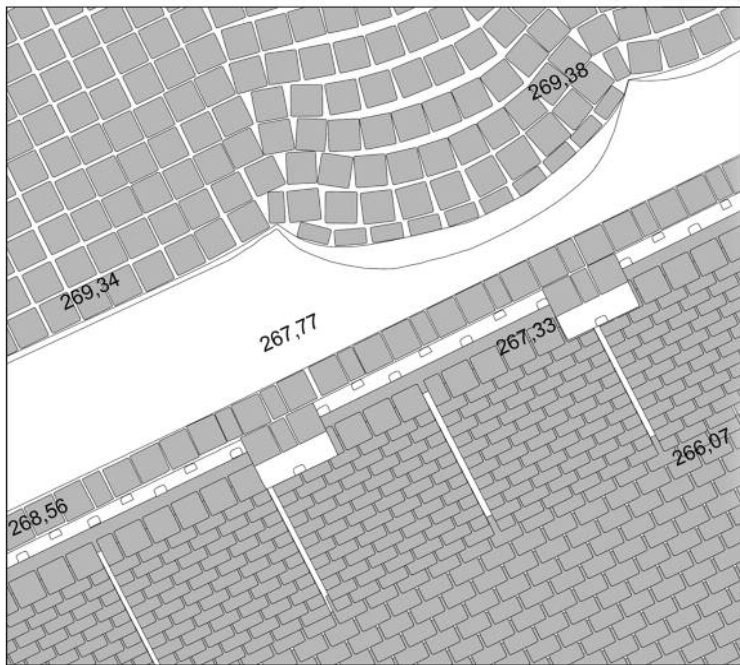
The topography of the site suggests that the defensive wall surrounded its whole western part. However, only future excavations will be able to show whether it was a fortified settlement or a fortified country manor built during the Parthian period. In the 5th c. AD, the eastern side of the defensive wall was so destroyed, that its remains were not unearthed at the level at which the excavations in Trench 11L were closed at the end of the season (268 m a.s.l.) and where they were expected to be.



Trench 13 I



– Defensive wall

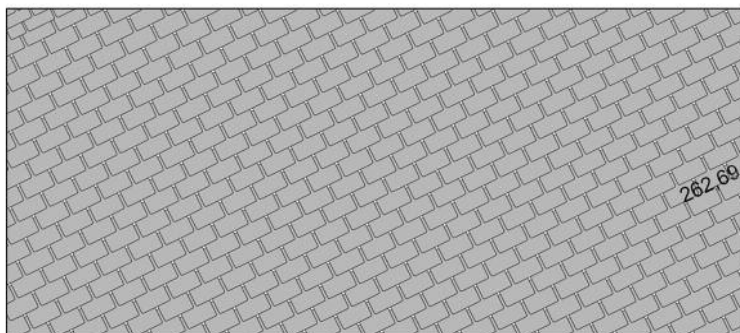


Trench 14 I

– Wall with
loopholes

– 2nd phase
of the platform

– 1st phase
of the platform



Trench 15 I



Fig. 4. Plan of trenches 13 I, 14 I, and 15 I
(drawing by N. Buławka).

Ryc. 4. Plan wykopów 13 I, 14 I i 15 I (rys.
N. Buławka).



Fig. 5. Trench 14 I. Remains of a wall with loopholes (photo by B. Kaim).

Ryc. 5. Wykop 14 I. Pozostałości muru z otworami strzelniczymi (fot. B. Kaim).

The date of the construction of the first enclosure wall of the eastern part of the site is still unknown. Excavations in Trenches 5 R, 5 S, and 6 R have revealed some poorly-preserved remains of mud brick structures datable to the 5th c. AD, yet the limited exposure made very difficult to understand their nature and function. The trenches will be reopened for what will hopefully be a more fruitful season.

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**SZÓSTY SEZON WYKOPALISK NA STANOWISKU GURUKLY DEPE
W POŁUDNIOWYM TURKMENISTANIE (2015)**

Podczas szóstego sezonu wykopalisk na stanowisku Gurukly Depe, w południowym Turkmenistanie, kontynuowano prace zarówno w zachodniej, wyższej, jak i we wschodniej, niższej części stanowiska. Najbardziej owocne okazały się wykopaliska w części zachodniej. W dwóch pomieszczeniach należących do północnej części rezydencji lokalnego właściciela ziemskiego zidentyfikowano ciekawy sposób konstrukcji swego rodzaju piwnic, w których ustawiane były naczynia zasobowe. Otóż wzdłuż ścian pomieszczeń budowano z cegieł suszonych rodzaj obiegających je ław, zaś pośrodku ustawiano naczynia zasobowe. Przestrzeń między zasobowcami wypełniano ceglami i ziemią do wysokości ław i wylewów naczyń. Na koniec, na całej powierzchni kładziono jedną, dwie warstwy cegieł suszonych, na

wylewach naczyń kładziono cegły wypalane, które można było łatwo usuwać w razie konieczności dostępu do zasobowców.

W wykopach 14 I i 15 I odsłonięto część dużej ceglanej platformy, na której stał lub do której przylegał mur obronny z małą, półokrągłą basztą. Tego typu konstrukcje są dobrze znane w architekturze obronnej Azji Środkowej od okresu hellenistycznego.

We wschodniej części stanowiska, w wykopach 5 R i 5 S odsłonięto bardzo źle zachowane pozostałości ceglanych konstrukcji. Z uwagi na ich stan zachowania jak i obecny stan badań w tej części stanowiska ich interpretacja jest jeszcze niemożliwa.