MISZELLEN

The Work of CES RAS in Egypt

Galina Belova

Archaeological Excavation in Memphis

In 2001 the Center of the Egyptological Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (CES RAS) started the archaeological surveys in the northern part of the site Memphis. The site is situated in 30 km to the south of Cairo and represents dozen of artificial mounds (in Arab: tell or kom), under which the ruins of the ancient capital of Egypt are rested. The Russian concession includes the territories of the modern Kom Tuman, Kom Dawbaby and Tell Azizia. The concession area is 20 hectares.

Memphis was founded at the end of IV – beginning of III millennium BCE by the legendary king Menes, who is identified now with Hor Aha or Hor Narmer by the scientists. According to the traditional point of view this ruler annexed Delta to the Upper Egypt and created the unified state. Memphis became the capital centre from the time of foundation and occupied advantageous strategic position at the turn of Delta and Valley, that allowed to control political and economical life of the country. The ancient Egyptians called Memphis “The Balance of the Two Lands”. The geographical name “Memphis” derived from the Egyptian words “men nefer” – “the beautiful pyramid”. This name bore the funereally complex belonged to the king of the 6th dynasty Pepy I and located at the capital necropolis Sakkara. Memphis was the capital of the Egyptian state during the Old Kingdom (about 2686 – 2125 BCE). The palaces of the famous pharaohs, builders of the majestic pyramids of Giza and Sakkara raised inside the mighty fortress walls of Memphis.

Later, at the time of the Middle (2055 – 1650 BCE) and the New (1550 – 1069) Kingdom, when Thebes (modern Luxor) became the religious center of the state, Memphis retained its importance as political, economical and administrative center of the state and as the second capital.
The temple of Ptah, the main deity of Memphis and protector of the king power, was the center of the city at that time. Every new ruler endeavored to decorate the sanctuary of Ptah. Especially Ramses the Grate succeed in this activity.

During the Late period, when Egypt endured the time of the political dissociation and economical decline, Memphis was exposed to the awful destruction by the hostile armies: twice the city was taken by the storm by Assyrians (671 and 667 BCE), twice by Persian armies (525 and 341 BCE) and once by Nubian ruler Pianhi (730 BCE). But once and again Memphis was rebuilt in all its glory and splendor.

In 332 BCE Egypt was conquered by the army of Alexander the Great. The Alexandria was established and the capital of the reduced state transferred there. But Memphis didn’t lose the significance of the state capital. The flow of goods from the Upper Egypt and Africa went through the ports of Memphis to Alexandria. The new rulers of Egypt from the Ptolemaic dynasty were crowned at the temple of Memphis. Their residence was situated also here, presumably in the central part of Kom Tuman.

Memphis still remained as an important capital center in the Roman time. The Greek historian Strabo, who visited Egypt in the late I century BC described Memphis in such a way: “The city of Memphis is big and densely populated, the second after Alexandria, with the population of the mixed race, the same like those, that lives together in Alexandria”. (Srabo, XVII, 32). The fall of Memphis started from the Byzantine period and corresponded to the general decline of the state. The final event at the history of Memphis became the Arab conquest of Egypt in 632 BCE and foundation of the garrison city of Fustat that later became the capital of the state – al-Qahira (modern Cairo).

The territory of the Russian concession never was systematically studied with the archaeological methods. Only in the beginning of 20th century several short-term excavations were conducted here that revealed the remains of the strong fortress walls and the temple constructions. In the end of 19th century the stone relieves were discovered on the territory of Kom Dawbaby, that let us to presume the existence of the temple devoted to the Asiatic deity Mithra at this place. Since 2001 CES RAS has carried out large-scale archaeological and geophysical works at the site Memphis. The main task of the first seasons was geophysical survey of the concession area. As a result was determined that the thickness of the archaeological layer is about 12 m, the topographical map the region was charted and the most perspective places were chosen for the excavation due to magnetic and
electro surveys. Archaeological investigations showed that the upper layers of the site can be dated to the Greco-Roman period. The architectural details, terracotta figurines, amphorae for the transportation of wine and oil can be distinguished among the finds. The finding of the lime head of the king that can be dated to the XXVI dynasty (7th BCE) became the unique discovery.

On December 2003-January 2004 CES RAS together with The Supreme Counsel of Antiquities of AR Egypt and with participation of Belgian Egyptologists from Catholic University of Leuven has conducted the first season of archeological excavation on the site. For two months was studied the area of 600 square meters in the central part of Kom-Tuman. During the excavation were uncover building with sizable three meter thick adobe walls. The metallurgical furnace for the smelting of bronze sided with one of the walls.

Among the most interesting finds of the season are: amulet in the form of the Eye of Horus made of lapis lazuli, the Bes-vessel, the fragment of the relief with the depiction of the women in the adoration pose, the vessel with the hieratic inscription.

**Excavations in Tell Ibrahim Awad**

Tell Ibrahim Awad belongs to the first-class sites of the history and culture of ancient Egypt. These features can be explained by two interrelated factors, i.e. historical and geographical. This site has advantageous strategic position as it is situated in a fertile part of the Eastern Delta, between the two ancient Nile beds -Pelusian and Tanis along which ancient roads went to Sinai and South-Western Asia. These roads known in ancient Egyptian writing tradition as “the ways of Horus” led to eastern countries and contacts between these countries and ancient Egypt were passed through here.

The geographical factor played an important role in the history of Tell Ibrahim Awad where as far back as in the IV-th mill. BCE a large settlement with temple and necropolis was founded. In the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh Narmer who united Egypt in the late IV or beginning of the III millennium BCE campaigns to Sinai and the eastern Mediterranean region were carried out. The memory of this great king was retained throughout the period of Ancient Egyptian civilization. The finds from the temple at Tell
Ibrahim Awad establish this fact. Hundreds of artworks made of ivory, semi-
precious stones, faience and other objects from the time of Narmer and his
successors were found during the excavation of the temple complex which
existed at least for one thousand and fifty years. The temple functioned
under the builders of the Great Pyramids in Gisa, under pharaohs of the
Middle Kingdom up until newcomers from the East - the Hyksos conquered
and occupied Egypt during 600 years, founding their capital Avaris only a
few kilometers of Tell Ibrahim Awad.

The corpus of unique works of art was revealed under the foundations
of the subsequent constructions of the sacred temple-sanctuary following the
I - III Dynasties. The burial ceremony of sacred object during the
construction of new temple structures is well known in many cultures.
However, only in some cases it can be confirmed in terms of archeology.
This fact is also characteristic for the Egyptian archaeology. The same
collections of small objects of art dated to the Early Dynastic time were
found only at the temple in Tell Ibrahim Awad and at three other temples in
southern Egypt. Those collections were deposited in the foundations of the
sacral constructions.

Undoubtedly this temple complex was of great significance for the
whole of Egypt. Both inhabitants of neighboring towns and villages and
inhabitants of areas located far from the Delta came here. The character of
the finds evidences that religious services dedicated to later Egyptian
pharaohs who believed themselves to be the successors of the greatest
pharaohs of ancient time and pursued an active foreign policy to the east of
the Delta were celebrated in this temple.

In the East Delta the earth is satiated with historical events beginning
from the time of the formation of the first state in the history of Egypt,
founded as far back as the pre-historic period. The archeological study of
the site in Tell Ibrahim Awad allows throwing new light on the history and
culture of not only the Delta but also of Egypt as a whole. The point is that
the archaeological excavation in the Delta started comparatively not long
ago and all that we know about the ancient culture is based on the study of
sites located in the valley part of Egypt. The present excavations in the Delta
already make it possible to contribute much that is new to the history of
ancient Egypt. Not being an ordinary monument, Tell Ibrahim Awad opens
new pages of ancient Egyptian civilization and academic knowledge.
Excavation in Alexandria

The history of Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt, began in 331 BC, when Alexander The Great founded the new capital of Egypt on the spot of a small village Rakote.

Already under the first Ptolemies – a new dynasty of Egypt rulers - Alexandria became one of the biggest and most beautiful cities of Mediterranean world, the center of the Hellenistic culture. The famous Alexandrian Museon and the Library with the richest collection of rolls, the Lighthouse of Pharos were situated here. But after the Arab conquest and founding of a new capital at el-Fustat (nowadays Cairo) a swift decline of Alexandria started which was aggravated by natural disasters. Wars and earthquakes have destroyed her main buildings. Because of transgressions of the Mediterranean sea part of the city with palaces and port installations were submerged.

In 2003 the Center for Egyptological Studies of the RAS started archaeological survey of the coastal area beginning at the Anfushi Bay till Agami region. The territory of the concession covers an extensive area, which is known by the classical sources. According to a Greek geographer Strabo (I century CE), it included the Eunostus — the western harbor. Unlike the Great Harbor (the eastern one), which was used for tying down royal and military fleet, the Eunostus was the port for commercial ships. Thus, it became the main Egyptian portal of trade with the countries of the Mediterranean. Strabo describes a navigable channel, which was dug to connect the Eunostus with the Lake Mareotis and thus to provide an opportunity to ship goods to- and from the Nile valley.

In April 2003 and May 2004 the CES RAS in cooperation with “Nasledie” (Ministry of Culture, RF) and the Russian Confederation Underwater Activity held the first and the second seasons of the underwater archaeological research at Alexandria.

The aim of the seasons was conducting an underwater survey: examination of geomorphology and relief of the seabed, detecting and documenting archaeological monuments, selection of the most important sites for further study and definition of the methods that will be used during the forthcoming excavations.

Before starting the work, a satellite image the surveyed area was geo-coded within the Global Positioning System. All archaeological objects reveled during the survey were marked on the map, that will be the base of the forthcoming geoinformation system.
Geomorphology and the relief of the coastal area are marked with numerous geological breaks and sand-banks. These may be the results of geological processes, such as earthquakes that used to cause destruction of the city.

In this area an accumulation of artifacts, including building blocks of grey granite and limestone, was found. The area is also marked by a large accumulation of ceramics, represented by different kinds of storage and transportation ware.

**Excavations of the cache of Royal Mummies TT 320**

In the 1880s in a local black market in Luxor unique works of ancient Egyptian art began to appear. The Egyptian authorities became interested in the source of the objects. Abd el-Rassul, a local interpreter and antiquities dealer was suspected at once. Daud Pasha, a mudir of Kena forced Abd el-Rassul to give away the secret of a tomb situated in one of the rock massives of Deir el-Bahri to the south of the Hatshepsut burial temple.

Later this cache was named “TT320”. The mummies of many great rulers of Egypt had rested there for some eighteen hundred years.

In July 1881 Emile Brugsch, the acting Head of the Service of Antiquities while G.Maspero was absent entered the cache. He was deeply impressed by a large number of coffins with remains of queens and pharaohs, by the rich burial inventory which had still been preserved in the tomb in spite of the fact that for 10 years it had been a source of profit for the Abd el-Rassul family which had removed the objects which they thought the most valuable. It is difficult to understand what guided M. Emile Brugsch-Bey, a professional photographer, who had worked for the Service of Antiquities of Egypt for many years. In 1881 he removed the contents of the tomb, some 6000 objects, in a matter of two days, not taking a single photo or sketching let alone making an exact layout, a description of finds or the arrangement of the objects. The discovery was published by the French Academy of inscriptions et Belles-lettres at the end of July 1881. Later on September, this news caused a sensation at the International Congress of Orientalists in Berlin.

In 1882 G. Maspero and M. E. L. Wilson accompanied by Brugsch and Abd el-Rassul went down into the tomb for a repeated survey. G. Maspero also wanted to find out if the funerary chamber was connected with
the other burials of the Valley of the Kings, in particular with the burial of Seti I. Its last corridor had never been completely excavated. It became clear that one can enter the tomb only through its own shaft.

In 1919 the expedition of the New York Metropolitan Museum made an attempt to survey the tomb. The expedition noted that it was dangerous to carry out works in the tomb as the rocks forming the walls of the corridors had been partly destroyed, probably due to the access of dry air. Later, the entrance to the tomb was completely blocked by fallen stones.

The purpose of the expedition leading by the Czech egyptologist J. Cerny with the support of the French Institute in Cairo (IFAO) was transcribing the wall inscriptions of the priest-king Pinodjem II and his wife Neskhons. Unfortunately only one inscription has been preserved. The scientists were able to copy it.

Dewachter was the last specialist who in November 1975, as he said, «surveyed the shaft quickly». Thus, the surveys conducted at TT 320 were not complete at all. According to J. Romer «the accounts concerning the secret cache and its contents are so poor, that one can only to be surprised if there were any facts about the cache and its robbery which caused Maspero and the authorities to conceal them».

The main problems connected with the «royal cache» were clearly defined by A. Nevinsky: when was the tomb built? Who did it belong to?; and at last what is the history of the «royal cache» in the 21st and 22nd Dynasties? As to the time of the tomb's construction a number of scholars believed that it was built in the time of the 18th Dynasty. Brugsch was the first to suggest this. It seems that the construction of the tomb was completed for the burial there of the priest-king Pinodjem II, i.e. to the 10th year of the king of the 21st dynasty Siamon (978 - 959 BCE). Probably, they constructed a small tomb first and later extended it. It was difficult to determine to whom this tomb belonged, because the excavators did not leave any archaeological documentation. The American scholar Winlock advanced a hypothesis that the burial was made for Queen Jahmes-Inhapy the consort the 17th dynasty king Sekenenra Taa II. The queens' mummy was founded among the others. Nivinsky assumed another idea. According to him the whole family of the priest-king Pinodjem II was buried there.

In order to reveal the secrets of the cache, a joint Russian - German expedition started new excavations in November - December 1998. The archaeological team included Dr. G. Belova, Prof. Dr. E. Graefe, A. Blobaum, Dr. A. Krol, and architect N. Reshetnikova. The research was continued on April 2003 and March-April 2004.
First of all the layout of the cache with the real dimensions of the Tomb was made by the architect N. Reshetnikova. In the course of work it became obvious that many assumptions in Egyptological literature should be rejected and the generally accepted identification should be revised. The fragmentary archaeological material revealed during clearing of the tomb is of great interest.

The excavations threw some light on the history of the 21st dynasty, which still remains mysterious to some extent. During the time of the last Ramessides, a mass plundering of the Theban necropolis was conducted. According to the preserved documents numerous inspections checked the state of the royal burials. The remains of the great rulers were transferred to safer places. The inscriptions on the mummies' shrouds tell about the "odysseys" of the royal mummies that had left their own tombs in the Valley of the Kings and in the Valley of the Queens in order to rest finally in the rock cachet of Deir el-Bahri. The mummies were restored during their wanderings in the tomb of Sety I and in the burial temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu. Unfortunately, during these "restorations" the mummies were "freed" of their precious belongings, because they, like the tomb, belonged to the royal treasury.

Today, due to the excavations of the joint Russian-German missions of 1998, 2003 and 2004 year we are able to better understand the history of 21st Dynasty that until now was full of mysteries and contradictions.

The Archaeological Survey at Deir el-Banat (Fayoum)

In May and November 2003 the CESRAS together with the Institute of Bioarchaeology (San Francisco, USA) with the participation of the specialists from the Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology of RAS conducted the first and the second seasons of archaeological and paleoanthropological researches at the site Deir el-Banat (Fayoum oasis).

The site is located on the southern outskirts of the Fayoum in the waste land, 2 km to the south-north from the monastery Deir el-Malak Gabriel (Deir el-Naklun). The name of the site means in Arabic "the convent". The site consists of two parts: ruins of the monastery and the vast necropolis.
Necropolis

The necropolis is situated in the southern part of the site. It occupies an area of 4.2 hectares. The site was partly excavated by the Department of the Islamic and Coptic monuments of the Fayoum inspectorate of the Supreme Counsel of Antiquities in the 80-90th years of the 20th century. According to the archaeological reports the necropolis of the site was in use from the Greco-Roman till the Coptic period. The mummies in the cartonages painted with the images of the Egyptian gods were uncovered in the burials dated to the Roman time. Most of the cartonages were made of the papyrus' leaves with the hieratic and demotic inscriptions. The mummies were put in the ornamented and inscribed anthropomorphic coffins. The famous Fayoum portraits were placed upon the faces of some mummies.

In burials dated to the Coptic period most of the buried persons are robed in the garments rich ornamented with the polychromatic embroidery and wool application and are wrapped in the linen shrouds. All the corpses were naturally mummified due to the dry climate of desert.

The finds made by Egyptian archaeologists during the excavations and kept in the storage of the Supreme Counsel of Antiquities were thoroughly studied and documented by the collaborators of CES RAS in November 2003. The anthropoid painted coffins, fragments of the cartonages, Coptic textiles, terracotta figurines consist the majority of finds.

At the same time Dr. R. Wolker, the director of the Institute of Bioarchaeology, carried out the X-ray study of three mummies that were found at Deir el-Banat and kept in Kom-Ushim museum (Fayoum). The X-ray photographs of one of the mummies revealed that the corpse was decapitated. Obviously, it was made during the mummification process in order to remove the internals from the body.

Important results were reached due to survey of the paleoanthropological material from the Deir el-Banat necropolis.

It was ascertained that the average life-span of the population was 25.1 year. The inhabitants of Deir el-Banat were suffered from the periodontit, anemia and almost without exception from the osteoporosis, that was caused by the shortage of iodine and iron in food.

The study of the craniums revealed two morbid events of syphilis and one event of trepanation of the skull. Several graphical reconstructions of the faces of the dead persons were made.
The Convent

The convent is located in the northern part of Deir el-Banat. The ruins of the church, refectory and living quarters are still visible here.

The conducted researches let us to conclude that the convent was established in 6th century and have been existed till 11th century, when it was probably destroyed during the persecution of Christians by caliph el-Hakim from the Fatimid dynasty.

The results of two seasons of works let us to come out with a preliminary suggestion. The really vast necropolis of the Deir el-Banat certainly can not be linked only with the Coptic convent. Most of the burials of the Greco-Roman time that were excavated within the necropolis are evident of the same conclusion. Obviously, in the Greco-Roman period the site Deir el-Banat was necropolis of the nearby city, one of those that were in a great number founded during the rule of the first Ptolemaic in the Fayoum oasis. The discovery of this city and thorough study of the necropolis will be the main task of the future seasons.

The restoration projects CES RAS

Since 1999 the Center for Egyptological Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences together with the Grabar Art Conservation Center has taken part in conservation projects. During four years (1999-2003) the Russian specialists documented and restored more than 200 icons, including the famous collection of icons from El-Moallaqa church in Old Cairo. The project has been carried out under authority of the Supreme Counsel of Antiquity of ARE, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the American Research Center in Egypt, The Netherlands Institute of Egyptological and Arabic Studies in Cairo and the Institute of Coptic Studies (ARE).

The church of Virgin Mary el-Moallaqa (that means “the hanging” in Arabic) was named so due to its original construction – the building of the church is situated on the northern wall of the Roman fortress Babylon. First time this church was mentioned during the reign of the Coptic patriarch Joseph (831 – 849). The famous curved wooden panel with the depiction of the Entrance to Jerusalem originated from the church and dated to 5-6 century BCE (The Coptic Museum, Cairo). In 11-14th centuries the church was used as an official residence of the Coptic patriarchs. The church
Synods were conducted here, where the major questions of belief were discussed.

The interior of the church is richly decorated with the ornamented painting. The pulpit raising on 15\textsuperscript{th} columns is executed from the white and colored marble and is decorated with the stone mosaic and carving and dated to the 11\textsuperscript{th} century.

The marvelous wooden altar screens of the 12-13\textsuperscript{th} century separated the altar part from the other church. They are covered with the wonderful carving and inlaid with the black wood and ivory. Among all the geometrical ornaments the carved and inlaid wooden crosses particularly have special meaning for Copts.

The central altar (sanctuary) of the church is devoted to the Mother of God. Two others are devoted to St. George and St. John the Baptist. In every sanctuary the ciborium that looks like wooden painted dome resting on 4 columns is located above the altar. Above the altar of St. John the Baptist is situated the ciborium with the painting close to icons in technique and dated approximately to the 12\textsuperscript{th} century. The subject of the painting is Jesus Christ surrounded by archangels, seraphim and cherubim.

The wooden door in the southern part of the church covered with the skilful curving leads to so-called “the small church”. This is the most ancient part of the Hanging church. The sanctuary of this side-chapel devoted to St. Theckla Himenud, the patron of the Ethiopian church. The painting of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century is still preserved in concha. In the upper part of the Composition there is representation of the Mother of God with the Child surrounded by two angels. The composition of the Twenty four elders of apocalypses is situated below. Another painting with the subject “the Nativity” was discovered at the same wall in 1984 and dated to the same period.

The church has unique collection of icons, most of them can be dated to the 18-19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Among them can be distinguished the icon of the Mother of God with the subjects devoted to the main events and holidays from the life of the Virgin. The other relic of the church is Byzantine icon of St. Marc the apostle dated approximately to the late 14\textsuperscript{th} – the first half of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century.

In February 2004 started the large-scale project on the restoration of the interior of the church. The specialists from the leading Russian restoration institutions and collaborators of CES RAS took part in this project.
Most of the monuments of art from the church are in the bad state of preservation. The mosaic stone panels in the sanctuary were partly lost therefore they were completed during the restoration based on the preserved fragments. The main problem that arose before the specialists became restoration that means the correction of the consequences of the previous unprofessional conservation treatment. Almost all the wall painting from the St. Theckla Himenud side-chapel and ciborium of the St. John the Baptist sanctuary were covered with the dark film of synthetic glue that caused the peelings and separations of the paint layer. The original painting was partly lost and covered with the layer of the latest restoration preparation layer and overpainting.

The using of materials and techniques that were tested and made a good showing in the restoration practice, the longstanding experience of work in Russia and Egypt allowed our restorers to manage with the tasks and to fulfill the first stage of the conservation project successively.

In February – March 2004 were conducted the works on the restoration of the wall painting at the St. Teckla Himenud side-chapel, the ciborium and stone mosaic from the St. John sanctuary and several altar screen. The project will continue till the September – October 2004.