RUSSIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION AT GIZA

SEASON 2012
REPORT
ON THE WORKS OF THE RUSSIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION AT GIZA (SEASON 2012)
executed for the members of the Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society

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In the season of 2012, work of the Russian archaeological mission (Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences) was supported by the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Donation Fund of the Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society. The main objectives of the field-season of 2012 (items in bold letters were financed from the donation of the Society):

I. Cleaning of the area opposite the tomb GE 20-22;
II. Epigraphic survey in the tomb GE 20-22;
III. Cleaning of the area opposite the tomb GE 11;
IV. Cleaning of the area opposite the tomb GE 12;
V. Protective and consolidation works in the tomb GE 12;
VI. Execution of architectural plans and section-drawings of tombs and shafts;
VII. Study of anthropological materials, pottery, and finds.

Once again, the members of the Russian Archaeological Mission at Giza are grateful for the financial support provided by the members of the Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society. In 2012, the Mission was awarded with a £250 grant from the Donation Fund of the Society. The award was transferred to Moscow via the Western Union, cashed in, and later converted into Egyptian pounds (2650 EG pounds). These funds were spent on consolidation works in and around the threatened tomb GE 12.

Urgency of works. Political and economic instability continues to threaten Egyptian antiquities. Like in 2011, the season of 2012 started with sad news about attempts to loot burial shafts and chambers in the tomb of GE 23. The tomb GE 23 was not inscribed, although its chamber had a right rectangular form and the walls were diligently smoothed. The criminals partly excavated the shafts but gave up when they realized the lack of any prospects (both shafts had already been studied in 2009).

The new door and restored walls of the tomb of Tjenti I (GE 11) might have
attracted undesirable attention to the site. However, undertaken protective measures demonstrated their effectiveness. The tomb of Tjenti I was still closed and the valuable reliefs were secured. We decided to continue our consolidation works and protect one more tomb to the north from GE 11. The monument belonged to another Tjenti – Tjenti II. It was excavated in 2008-2009 and got the field number GE 12.

Significance of the tomb. This tomb is situated in the northern part of the excavated area, on the same level as Tomb 11, 10 meters to the north of it. The tomb was noted by Lepsius (LG 77), but he recorded only a part of the inscribed entrance (without the northern door jamb), as well as inscriptions from drums and an architrave.

The tomb GE 12 belonged to the ‘acquaintance of the king, overseer of the workplace of necropolis workers’, and ‘master of secrets of the king’s workshop’ Tjenti. The monument is dated to the 5th Dynasty and contains a rear inscription concerning the completion of the tomb under Tjenti’s son:

‘It is his eldest son, the overseer of the funerary priests, the scribe Ptahiutni who made it for him (i.e. Thenti II), when he was buried in [the beautiful West], according to what he had said to him about it, while he was alive on [his] two legs’.

Two drums and one architrave were inscribed with offering formulae and different titles of Tjenti while the northern door jamb was decorated with a relief.
Condition of the tomb. Like GE 11, the tomb GE 12 was cut at the edge of two geological strata of the Mukattam formation. Inscriptions and the relief were curved in limestone of a relatively good quality. The tomb suffered greatly from later activities around the monument and erosion. The southern walls of the room 12A and shaft 3 were partly destroyed when ancient stonemasons cut the nearby tomb GE 18. The breaches in the walls had never been restored.

The tomb was inhabited in the early Middle Ages, when a brick oven was built over the shaft 4, and during the XIX century, when its walls were covered with rough plaster. A Jewish amulet made of silver with remains of a bronze chain was found in this plaster. False-doors in the room 12A and inscriptions are still covered with soot and have to be cleaned.

Burial chamber 4A, which is still closed with original blocking stones, has not been fully cleaned since its ceiling has a deep crack. On the floor of the chamber one can expect to find remains of a disturbed burial. However, the threat of collapse temporary suspended our works in the chamber.

The entrance to the tomb was considerably weathered and the rock under the jambs had literary disappeared. In 1936, these destructions were fixed on photos of Ibrahim Mohammedani, expedition photographer of George Andrew Reisner. Later on, the
monument, as well as other rock-cut tombs of the area, was buried under debris from the construction of a road at the top of the cliff. After its rediscovery in 2006, the tomb was exposed to local villagers and its valuable epigraphic materials were under a constant threat of destruction. GE 12 is situated in the vicinity of an extensively used path over a hill of debris. It was routed by local small traders who used to enter the Giza Plateau through a hole in the fence next to the site. Every time they climbed on the top of the cliff, the traders passed over the tomb and saw its decoration. Between the seasons of 2011 and 2012, someone scrawled a huge Arabic graffito on the first architrave, just over the inscription of Tjenti’s son. This disappointing fact also urged us to choose GE 12 as the priority for our consolidation efforts.

GE 12 in 1936: Harvard-MFA Expedition, photos A7613_NS.

Rediscovery of the tomb of Tjenti II in 2006

Fragment of a royal statue found in the shaft 4
Cleaning of the area. Once again, our first task was to clean the tomb from the garbage which flew inside because of the eastern winds or was thrown by occasional visitors. We also had to move the debris opposite to the entrance.

Reisner’s photos boded no good: it looked like the limestone under the entrance was badly weathered. We could face a problem with fixing the door since usual fasteners needed some solid rock. After three days of cleaning, the workers managed to find the rock which went down for an uncertain depth. That was a challenge for the architect of the mission.

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Sergey Vetokhov held up his routine work in the tomb GE 20-22 and proceeded to making measurements and calculations in connection with our consolidation project in GE 12. At the first sight, it seemed possible to close the tomb of Tjenti II together with the nearby tomb of
Khufuhotep (GE 15). Both entrances were very much alike in their size. However, since the tombs were cut not at the same line and the entrance to GE 15 was decorated with inscriptions in low relief, it appeared to be hardly possible to set two doors in one metal frame and not to complicate direct access of researchers to come to Khufuhotep’s inscriptions. A compromise project would have raised the price considerably and would not guarantee a better protection. For this reason, we decided to close with a door only one tomb, leaving Khufuhotep’s chapel for the next season.

*It was hardly possible to set two doors in one metal frame without a considerable rise in price for the project.*

**Waiting for the door.** As soon as all the preparatory works were finished, we contacted the metalworkers who helped us to close the tomb of Tjenti I. They asked one week to execute the order. Meanwhile, we were continuing excavations opposite the tombs GE 11 and GE 20-22.
Works opposite the tomb GE 11, which was closed with the help of the TVAES in 2011.
Setting the door and stonework. On the one hand, a double-leaf door made for the tomb provided a comfortable access to the inscription of Tjenti’s son; on the other hand, it was firmly fastened in the bedrock and secured a trusted protection from vandals. The weathered walls, as well as breaches inside the tomb, were restored with limestone blocks.
Final result of works supported by the TVAES.
CALCULATION OF WORKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Works</th>
<th>Items of expenditure</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning of the tomb GE 12 and the area around</td>
<td>4 workers hired for 3 days</td>
<td>600 EG pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-leaf iron door</td>
<td>materials, lease of equipment, metalworkers</td>
<td>2000 EG pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building protection</td>
<td>limestone blocks, cement, powdered gypsum, stoneworkers</td>
<td>350 EG pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2950 EG pounds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2650 EG pounds</strong></td>
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The donation provided by the members of the Society covered about 90% of the costs necessary to fulfill the described project. The Eastern necropolis faces overpopulated and polluted Cairo and the Russian concession is at the very border between the ancient necropolis and the modern city. Example of the tomb GE 11, which was consolidated with the help of the TVAES, demonstrated an efficiency of measures that had been taken against further destructions. Today we have one more tomb protected from vandalism and natural threats in this most endangered area at Giza. However, it is just the beginning.

Five more tombs of the eastern edge with reliefs and inscriptions are still open for anybody from the village and may suffer serious damages. Epigraphic materials inside these tombs still need professional conservation. During the season 2012, members of the mission discovered a unique painting in the tomb GE 20-22. That is the first known Old Kingdom rock-cut painted chapel at Giza. The painting is badly damaged and covered with soot and salt. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct all the main scenes. The painting needs cleaning and conservation, the tomb itself is still open.

The members of the Russian archaeological mission at Giza would like to express a deep gratitude to all the donators of the Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society for their contribution to our project. We feel responsible for the people who left memories of themselves at Giza and we are looking forward to having the further fruitful cooperation with the TVAES.
Bibliography on the tomb GE 12 (LG 77):


We thank you for your support!

Russian archaeological mission at Giza