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## The Fifth Season of Excavations at Gurukly Depe, Southern Turkmenistan (2014)

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## THE FIFTH SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT GURUKLY DEPE, SOUTHERN TURKMENISTAN (2014)

**Keywords:** fortifications, Late Sasanian pottery, Sasanian manor houses, Serakhs Oasis

The fifth season of excavations at Gurukly Depe, a Partho-Sasanian site near Serakhs, took place from 14 September to 18 October 2014 and was a continuation of excavations started here in 2010.<sup>1</sup> As in previous years, our archaeological works were financed by Research Grant No. 2012/07/B/HS3/00908 from the National Science Centre and conducted by the Polish-Turkmen team directed by the author. The participants were: Maja Rzeplińska (University of Warsaw), field assistant and supervisor of Trenches 11 F and 12 F; Nazarij Buławka (University of Warsaw), supervisor of Trenches 13 I and 14 I; Piotr Piekarczyk (State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw), supervisor of Trenches 5 R and 5 S; inspector Atamurat Odayev, the representative of the Archaeological Park *Köne Serakhs*, who gave logistical support for the expedition. We were assisted by a group of students from the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw: Paweł Borycki, supervisor of Trench 11 L, Agata Kostrzewa, Agata Michalewicz, Daniel Prusaczyk, Weronika Sobiech, Joanna Szymczak, and Daria Trzos.

During the fifth season, our archaeological works were focused on two areas of the site: one located on its highest, south-western part where remnants of a manor house are unearthed and the other, on the eastern part of the site, in the middle of the east side of a defensive wall (Fig. 1).

With fifteen trenches excavated or scraped so far in the south-western part of the site, we are able to draw a more complete plan of the manor house. However, the method employed does raise significant problems of interpretation in that we record the walls of the building that happen to be visible just several centimetres below the surface. They are not necessarily all contemporary and further exploration in this area is still needed to determine



phases of the building history. Notwithstanding these uncertainties, results of our work suggest that the building consisted of a series of rooms adjacent to the outer wall of the building. In Trench 13 I, the excavation of four such rooms revealed during the 2013 season on the south side of the manor house was continued. The work is very difficult and slow because all rooms were filled with regularly laid layers of sun-dried and backed bricks. Apparently, the area occupied by the manor house of the Late Sasanian Period was being prepared for the construction of a new building of which little has survived except some fragments of its walls. They are preserved to a maximum height of 20–30 cm and represent the last architectural phase in this part of the site. Only in one of the rooms in Trench 13 I a mud brick-paved floor was reached. Fragments of three large storage jars were found on it. They were supposedly used for storing cereals. In the course of our excavations, a very large number of fragments of this type of vessels was recovered in this part of the site. This suggests that agricultural products collected from fields of the manor house's owner were stored here.

<sup>1</sup> B. KAIM, *The First Season of Excavations at Gurukly Depe, Southern Turkmenistan, 2010*, "Światowit" VIII (XLIX)/A (2009–2010), 2011, 207–208, pls. 213–215; eadem, *The Second Season of Excavations at Gurukly Depe, Southern Turkmenistan, 2011*, "Światowit" IX (L)/A (2011), 2012, 233–237; eadem, *The*

*Third Season of Excavations at Gurukly Depe, Southern Turkmenistan, 2012*, "Światowit" X (LI)/A (2012), 2013, 203–207; eadem, *The Fourth Season of Excavations at Gurukly Depe, Southern Turkmenistan (2013)*, "Światowit" XI (LII)/A (2013), 2014, 241–246.

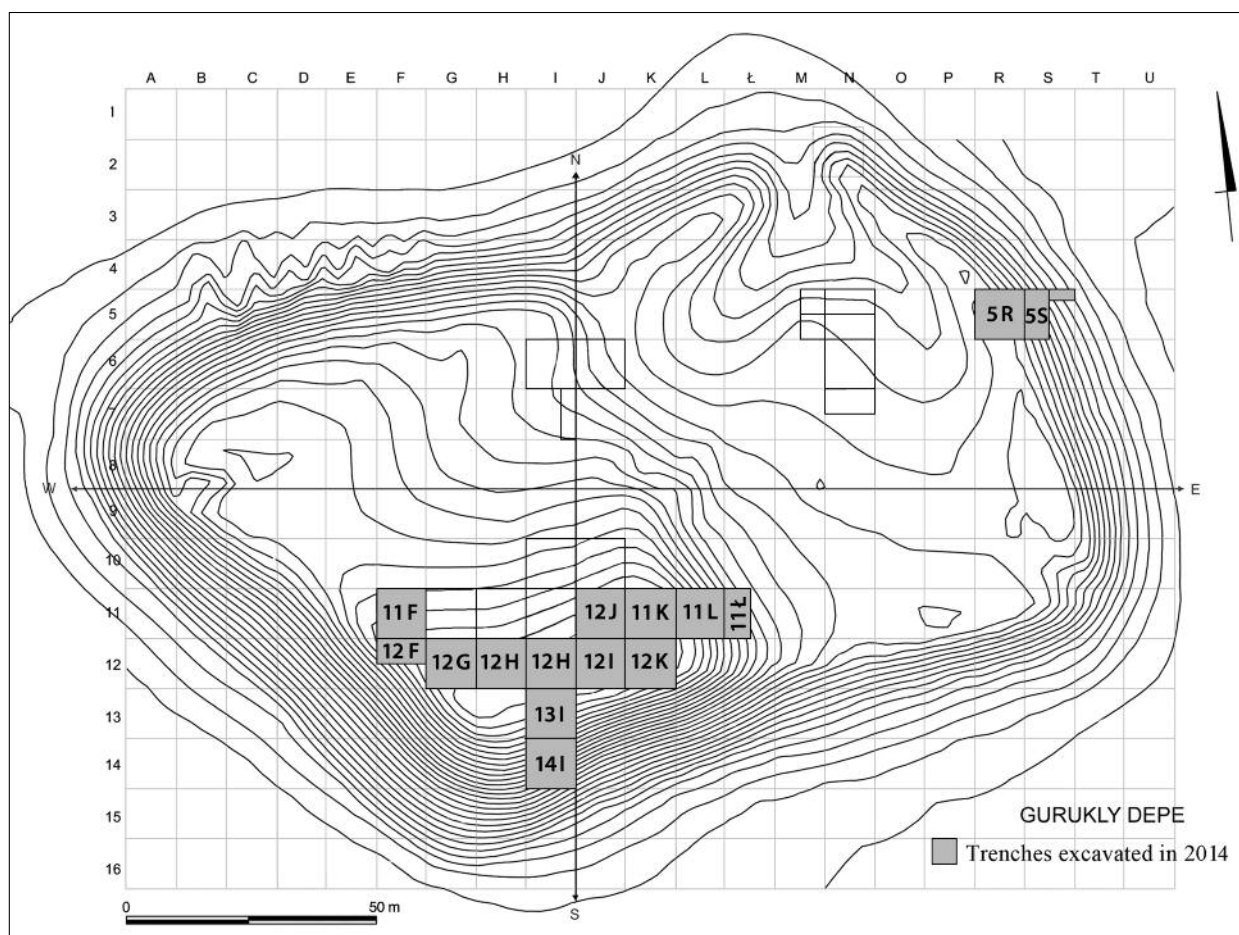


Fig. 1. Topographical map of Gurukly Depe with the location of trenches (Drawing J. Kaniszewski, P. Borycki).

Ryc. 1. Mapa topograficzna Gurukly Depe z lokalizacją wykopów.



Fig. 2. Trench 11 L. Outer wall of the manor house and the walls of rooms adjacent to it (Photo B. Kaim).

Ryc. 2. Wykop 11 L. Mur zewnętrzny rezydencji i ściany przylegających doń pomieszczeń.



Fig. 3. Excavation of defensive wall in Trench 14 I (Photo B. Kaim).

Ryc. 3. Prace przy odsłanianiu muru obronnego w wykopie 14 I.

The walls of three rooms abutting to the eastern outer wall of the building were uncovered in Trench 11 L (**Fig. 2**). Here the rooms were also filled with layers of bricks.

The southern side of the residence adjoined a defensive wall surrounding this part of the site (**Fig. 3**). Roughly at the middle of the excavated part of this wall, an oval tower (5.2×1.5 m) protrudes from its front line. A base of the wall has not yet been reached. There is also a lack of any dating evidence for its construction. It is expected that further excavation will produce sufficient material for properly established chronological relationship between the manor house and the construction of the fortification wall.

Houses with spacious rooms, with floors paved with backed bricks, adjoin the northern face of the excavated building. Part of such a house, which probably represents the last building phase in this part of the site dated initially to the 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD was unearthed in Trenches 11 F and 12 F. The last season of excavation conducted here revealed some earlier structures on the ruins of which the abovementioned house was built.

In the eastern part of the site, the excavation in Trenches 5 R and 5 S that was started in 2011 was continued in 2014. A small sounding excavated in Trench 5 S revealed a platform of compacted clay on which a defensive wall with inner corridor of the third phase was constructed. The platform was probably built on the ruins of a wall of the earliest, i.e., fourth phase of the defensive wall construction but this has to be proven by future excavations.

The last season of excavations at Gurukly Depe yielded a multitude of pottery fragments, mainly of the Late Sasanian Period (**Fig. 4**) but only a few small finds, such as a Sasanian carnelian stamp seal with representation of a bird (**Fig. 5**), a Late Parthian coin and a flint tool discussed below by Karol Szymczak.

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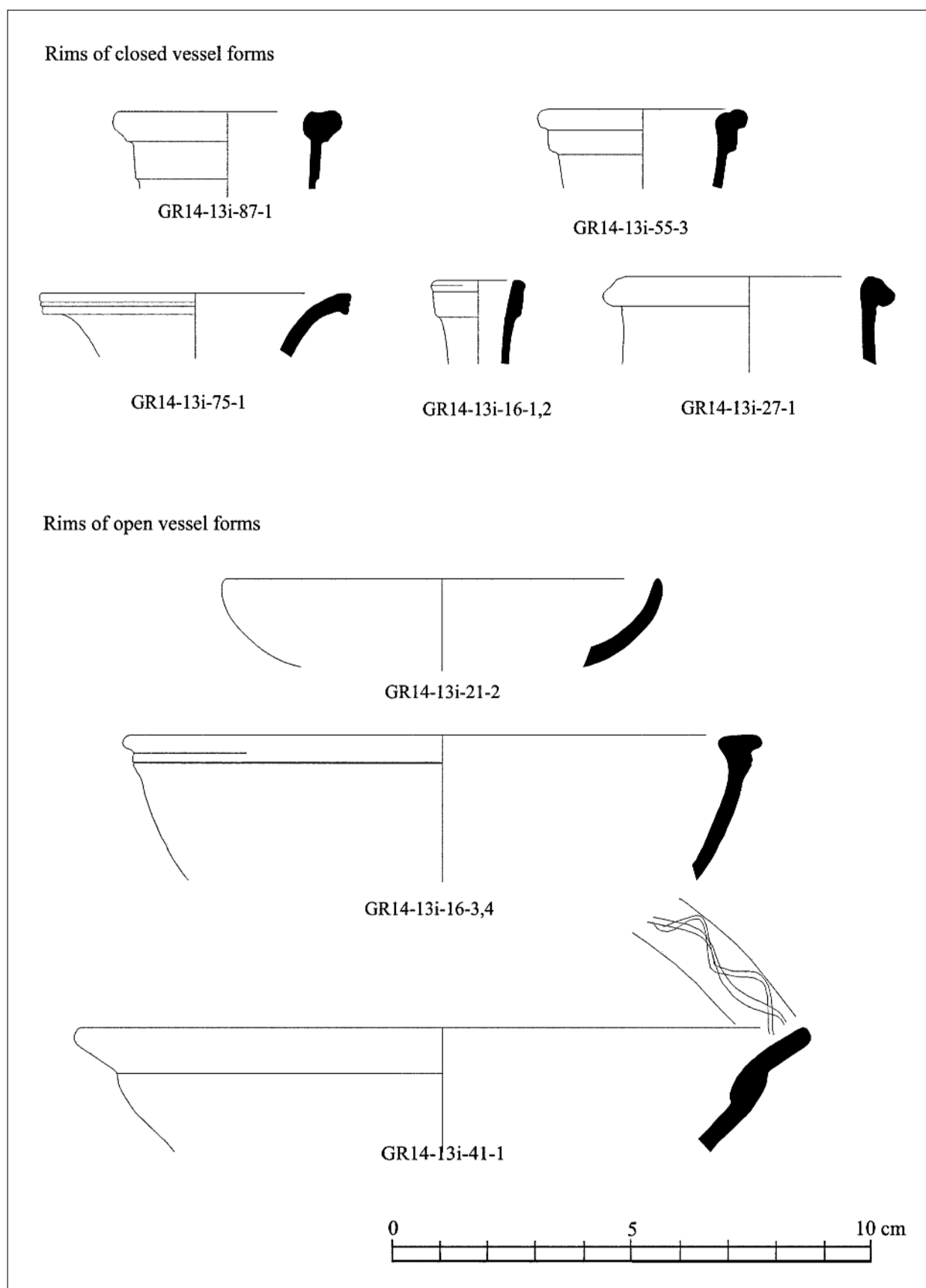


Fig. 4. Late Sasanian pottery from Gurukly Depe (Drawing N. Buławka).

Ryc. 4. Ceramika okresu późnosasanidzkiego z Gurukly Depe.



Fig. 5. Sasanian stamp seal with representation of a bird, from Trench 12 K (Photo B. Kaim).

Ryc. 5. Sasanidzka pieczęć stemplowa z przedstawieniem ptaka, znaleziona w wykopie 12 K.

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### PIĄTY SEZON WYKOPALISK NA STANOWISKU GURUKLY DEPE W POŁUDNIOWYM TURKMENISTANIE (2014)

Podczas kolejnego, piątego sezonu prac wykopaliskowych na stanowisku Gurukly Depe, w południowym Turkmenistanie, kontynuowano prace zarówno w południowo-zachodniej, najwyższej, jak i we wschodniej, niższej części stanowiska. W części południowo-zachodniej, oprócz odczyszczania widocznych tuż pod powierzchnią zarysów ścian rezydencji należącej prawdopodobnie do lokalnego właściciela ziemskiego, prowadzono prace wykopaliskowe w wykopach 13 i 14 I, 11 L, 11 Ł, 11 F, 12 F (**Ryc. 1**). Pomieszczenia, których zarysy odczyszczono w wykopach 11 L i 13 I, były wypełnione kilkoma warstwami cegieł

(**Ryc. 2**). Dotarcie do podłóg pomieszczeń wymaga więc wyjmowania cegieł wypełniska, co bardzo spowalnia tempo prac. Kontynuowano też wykopaliska w wykopach 5 R i 5 S założonych na wschodnim boku muru obronnego otaczającego osadę (**Ryc. 3**).

Śród drobnych zabytków znalezionych podczas tego sezonu wymienić należy sasanidzką pieczęć stemplową (**Ryc. 5**), monetę z okresu późnopartyjskiego (I–II w.) oraz prezentowane poniżej przez Karola Szymczaka narzędzie krzemienne.