

# **KURRU ARCHEOLOGICAL PROJECT (QSAP-13)**

## **2016-2017 Field Report**

For this season, our field activities commenced on 25/Jan./2017 and lasted till 27/Mar./2017 . During which our team was involved in the activities listed hereunder. The preparation for the field work and the post excavation works, including preliminary analyzes of the material recovered, photographing and storing the artifacts, fixing equipment preparing the accounts and writing up the reports, beside other logistical matters, took much more time.

### **SURVEY**

The reconnaissance survey started and conducted during the last seasons has continued. It was meant to locate any archaeological features related to the cemetery, or post-dated it, that may shed light on any of the unanswered issues. Previous attempts conducted revealed some features in the vicinity of the cemetery. Yet some of the main issues, i.e. the royal settlement of those who established the state in its early or late stages, the choice of the location of the cemetery etc. remain to be answered.

As a prerequisite before marking the boundaries of the site, we continued during the 2016/2017 field season surveying further portions of the site vicinity. it yielded:

1. Few surface finds of stone artifacts of various phases from various localities, but of no concentration.
2. Stone foundation c.100m west of the site, looked at first to be a burial, but clearance showed foundation of small hut. The few pot sheds revealed were not diagnostic (fig 1).



**(fig 1)**

3. On top of a high sandstone hill. 2.5 m south of the site, a collapsed watching tower built of sandstone, currently 2.5 m high was located. Close by few disturbed graves, some were plundered. The potsherds collected call for Christian and Islamic types (fig 2).



**(fig 2)**



4. Two Kushite queries were located in sandstone formations. Both were cleared showing clear signs of the ways they were measured and cut (fig 3). The first is 200 m. west of the site while the second is 3 Km north east at EL-Date c.500m west of the right bank of the Nile.



(fig 3)

### **EXCAVATION and RE-ECAVATION**

The fifteen spoil heaps in the middle field left behind from last season were cleared. Some of these were very large measuring over 5m×3m and over 2m high (fig 4).



**(fig 4)**

It has been previously tested and proven which heap belongs to which burial. We started by loosening the soil to separate the broken and fragmented sandstone blocks from the rubble. The stones we taken to a point distant from the burials, and there arranged in a mastaba form, for any future reuse (fig 5).



**(fig 5)**



Then sifted the soil using a mechanical sifter. Wheelbarrows were take the soil from where the heap was to a point distant from the burials to where the sifter was (fig 6).



**(fig 6)**

potsherds and other finds were picked from the sifter and the rest of the soil was to be transferred by a truck to a point outside the buffer zone. Over 13000 potsherd and reasonable number of small finds including shawabties, figurines, fragments of fiancés and alabaster pieces, were recovered (fig 7).



(fig 7)

## **RESTORATION and CONSERVATION**

Our plan for the 2016-2017 season was to restore the unroofed burial chambers and the staircases and their entrances . This was postponed due to difference of opinion with NCAM . The matter remains to be solved before the 2017-2018 season begins . The funds allocated then, for this work, minimal though it was due the cuts, were reserved for the restoration plan to be agreed upon.

## **PROTECTION**

For the last 100 years, since Reisner's work in the site, it remained unprotected and subjected to a century of continuous misuse causing partially irreplaceable damage to the antiquities. During those years, together man and nature have played a negative role in endangering its monuments. Some of the soft sandstone blocks were partly eroded or weathered when exposed to sunlight and wind. Cars and humans cut



their ways forming trails and truck tracks across the field. The flow of the two rain water channels intersecting the site drain water annually posing a threat to the antiquities on their sides. The southern tributary has eroded its northern and southern edges to reach a point 1-3m. of the royal pyramids, Ku-4 and Ku-18. A terrace of 33m. long to a height of 1.2m was built against the northern edge to protect Ku-18 of Shebtku (fig 8). The erosion in the southern edge of the channel approaching Ku-4 of queen Arti will be dealt with next season.



**(fig 8)**

In the second season, a mud wall was built to protect and mark the site and its buffer zone. Later some trucks broke through following their old track. To avoid such actions, we started constructing a line of cement pillars, each 25-30 cm. in diameter, 1 m. high and 1.2 m apart from each other's (fig 9). this will be continued to cover the rest of the site limits.



**(fig 9)**

After the spoil heaps were removed, the natural surface showed to be uneven. A plan was drawn to manage the rain water for the prevention of more damage. Shallow channels were scraped on the surface sloping the water either towards the northern wadi or the southern one, away from the antiquities (fig 10).





**(fig 10)**

Yet the two wadis intersecting the site drain annually have stones and trash in their bottoms restricting the flow of the water. Part of this was cleared. The rest will be dealt with next season.

A meeting was held with members of the local community meant to draw their attention to the importance of the site and to raise their awareness (fig 11).



**(fig 11)**

Visits were arranged for the school boys and girls of Kurru village to the site intended to link them with their heritage and why the site should be conserved and protected (fig 12).



**(fig 12)**



## **MANAGEMENT**

Within the broad plan developed jointly by the two missions working in the site the following steps were considered:

1. For the comfort of the visitors a temporal resting center with toilet facilities is being constructed. This will be replaced by the permanent center later.
  2. An information center at the site gate, with maps, directives, ... etc. was planned to supply the visitors with information about the site and orient them to its monuments.
  3. For the visitors convenience they are to be routed to a tower erected at a point overlooking the entire site to have an overall view of its antiquities.
  4. From there (2 above) a network of pass ways is to be set to lead the visitors to the details of the site without getting in each other's way.
  5. At the end of the tour, visitors are to be channeled to a visitors center where they can get their needs (drinks, souvenirs ,etc.) and proceed through the village gardens to the river Nile (c.1km).
  6. Future plans for the site needs, such as electric facilities, site museum, ... etc.) are underway.
- ❖ All constructions will be compatible with features of the site and its surroundings.

## **THE FINDS**

During our work in the site, it became passible, through the finds, to link each spoil heap to the tomb it came from. As Reisner had little time to excavate the cemetery, he kept heaping up the dirt from every tomb right infront of it. That was a fortune ! Not only this but it was also

noticed that the stratigraphy of the heap was reversed during Reisner's excavation. In its formation every spoil mound was heaped up in successive layers. The lower layers of the spoil mound are those of the upper portion of the burial. i.e. the superstructure. While the upper layers of the spoil mound are those of the bottom portion of the burial. i.e. the substructure. This was judged first from the finds, as the small finds (pottery, beads, fiancé objects, ..etc.) were concentrated in the top, while the large finds (fragments of sandstone blocks) were confined to the bottom.

The heap was removed in care (see above). The stone fragments, shaped or otherwise, count in thousands, were moved and arranged in a mastaba shape, laid in four groups for future reuse. the sifting revealed about 13000 fragments of potsherds together with fragments of shabtis, beads and bone (fig 13) waiting for detailed analyses.



**(fig 13)**



Sample of charcoal (for C-14 dating) and potsherds (for SEM and XRF) were sent abroad for further analyses.

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**The mission team**