

# **REPORT ON THE SPANISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION AT HERAKLEOPOLIS MAGNA (IHNASYA EL MEDINA), BENI SUEF.**

## **SEASON 2016**

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The 2016 campaign in Herakleopolis Magna, (Ihnasya el Medina, Beni Suef) took place from 7 until 31 March. This excavation is a Project of the Egyptian Department of National Archaeological Museum in Madrid under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, and was carried out with the collaboration of the Spanish Embassy in Cairo and with the help of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and its office in Beni Suef<sup>1</sup>. The sponsors of this year were: Spanish Ministerio de Educacion Cultura and Deportes, Fundación Gaselec, Empty SL.

According to the permission of the SUPREME COUNCIL OF ANTIQUITIES we worked on:

### **I.- THE HERYSHEF TEMPLE**

During the season of 2016 the following works have been undertaken:

#### **A.-CLEANING**

Cleaning of the archaeological area at the beginning of the season. The 2016 campaign in the Temple began with the removal of the weeds and plants accumulated since 2015 (fig.1)

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<sup>1</sup> The team members were: M. Carmen Pérez Die, Director. Gema Garrido, Antonio Gómez and Jose Javier Martinez, Archaeologist. Antonio Guio Gómez, Draughtsman. M<sup>a</sup> Antonia Moreno, Restorer, Mahmud Awad, Hoda Abdallah, and Sheimad Ibrahim from the Antiquities Service from Beni Suef



Fig. 1

## **B.- EXCAVATION**

Essentially, we worked on some parts of the Temple: The Entrance, the Peristyle Courtyard, and the North of the Temple.

### **Aa.-Squares 134 and 135 (entrance to the Temple of Heryshef)**

During this campaign we decided to work in Square 134 and 135 because we have news of the possible existence of building blocks or parts of the temenos or the colossus located close by. This is because some years ago in the process of building an electrical line some stones were found in this zone. In the upper strata we found only remnants of Roman and late Roman pottery, with plenty of common pottery, cups and storage vessels such as amphorae, or jars, as well as some forms of ceramic table ware, plates and bowls made in the tradition of Terra Sigillata (Egyptian Red Slip, African Red Slip).(fig.2).



fig.2

After the first days of work and at a level of 5.89 m the first stone blocks appeared. They make up a double row and overlaid each other, using blocks of 95x50x40 cm, which are clearly *in situ*. To the north and to the south of these stones a platform of mud bricks began to appear with a size of 30 x 15 cm. On its northern side of about a thickness of 1.5 meters, but which we could not determine the original depth as it is completely destroyed (fig. 3).

The initial hypothesis is that the enclosure or temenos wall of the temple, because it is composed of several rows of mud bricks, and may perhaps have a core of stone.

After cleaning, photographic and planimetric documentation it was necessary to cover it again because the exposure of the electric wires is dangerous for the movement of people.



Fig.3

**Ab.- Square 57** We proceeded to clean the square 57 to define clearly if there were any slabs and stone (fig.4) .



Fig. 4

**Ac.- Squares 37-38 v 29-30**

We cleaned and made sections all around the temple in order to get a clear idea of the stratigraphy all around the temple. This was done in order to study the different phases of occupation, abandonment and removal of stones.

This year the dewatering project is working some days and the water table was very much lower than in previous campaigns. For this reason some more slabs of the floor have been discovered (fig.5). Perhaps they belong to the foundations of the Temple.



Fig.5

We are continuing in the east perimeter wall of the Temple (fig. 6) trying to find the north east corner of the Temple. But until now we did not find it



Fig.6



**Ad.-Squares 25, 26.**

Works on the Sections and cleaning of the Temple (fig. 7).



Fig.7

**Ae.- Squares 105, 113 y121.** Works on the Sections and stratigraphically analysis of the intact sequence preserved in the North West corner of the Temple.

**Af.- Square 8 y 170.** Excavations of a sounding to relocate the colossal seated statue of Rammesses II.

We use a a system of high resolution digital photogrammetry to generate the plans and the elevations of the excavated squares and we also used the same process for the sculptures: the colossal statue and the triad (fig.8).

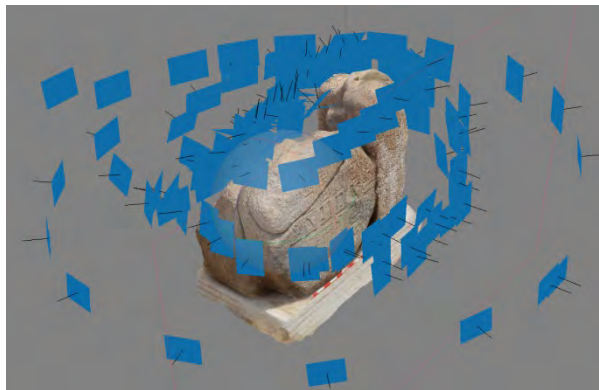


Fig 8.

**B.- OPEN AIR MUSEUM IN THE TEMPLE of HERYSHEF**

Last year we constructed some mastabas to put on it the most important blocks, inscriptions and also the sculpture, in order to be protected from the water table and to create an Open Air Museum in the Temple which could be opened for tourism

To make this work, we needed the help of the Luxor team, directed by the Reis Gamal Abdel Gasab. Many big stone were fallen down and it was necessary to move them.

We put on the mastaba:

- The 6 architraves of the portico (fig 9).
- One of the triads found by Petrie. It has been possible to join three fragments together (fig 10).
- One big block with Heryshef and Hahtor
- One small block with Inscriptions
- The colossus seated statue of Ramesses II and his shoulder found this year (fig.11).



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11

## **II: AREA R. SOUNDING IN THE NORTH EAST OF THE BAHR EL-YUSUF AND TO THE WEST OF THE HERYSHEF TEMPLE**

The sounding demonstrated that this area belongs to a saltpeter installation set up in the 19th century AD. The survey was achieved with the help of aerial photography and high resolution digital photogrammetry. (fig 12).



Fig 12

## **III.- RESTORATION**

The work on restoration of this year has been:

- Revision of the mastabas built in 2015, and construction of two new mastabas for the colossal seated statue of Ramesses II and the new blocks found this year.
- Revision of the conservation of the supports builds in the portico in 2014. They were found to be very stable and without any movement.
- Cleaning of the salts of all the limestone blocks and the walls.
- Repainting of the blocks of the portico in order to unify all the colors for a harmonious appearance (Fig 13 a and 13 b)





Fig 13a



Fig.13b

- Cleaning of the architraves and all the new blocks with inscriptions
- Cleaning and desalination of a limestone block with relief
- Cleaning of little fragments of metal and pottery.
- Cleaning and desalination of a limestone block with relief (fig.14)
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Fig. 14



## IV.-STUDIES

### **A.-Pottery**

The focus of ceramic analysis in this season was on finishing the recording of the last few contexts of Sector 15 excavated in 2007 and 2008 derived from the necropolis of the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom (Fig. 15 and 16) .



Fig.15



Fig. 16

Now it is possible to see the development of the ceramic repertoire from the oldest contexts in this area to the later ones at a higher elevation, which will provide a key to the understanding of the sequence. The processing and recording of the ceramic material from Sector 19 (excavated in 2006) in the same necropolis also began. Because this material came from a disturbed level (level III burnt red) on a higher elevation than the tombs only the most typical and typologically important vessels were drawn and kept. Much more scrutiny was applied to the material that came out of Sector 23 that will elucidate the stratigraphy of the necropolis because it connects various parts of it. Processing was begun this year and a preliminary dating list provided. But more work is necessary to record and draw this important material.

The excavations at the Heryshef temple provided mostly late Roman material (ca 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century AD) that came from heavily relocated surface positions due to the previous archaeological work of Naville and Petrie early in the last century. For this reason we decided to create a general site corpus of vessel types appearing in the temple and thus to critically select and draw only the most diagnostic material to this end. Exceptions with a more encompassing recording plan, of course, are made for crucial deposits, such as the material from the sounding below the colossal seated statue of the king or the material from the stratified deposits on the western side of the temple in the rear part. The material below the statue is entirely late Roman) providing crucial evidence that it is currently not in its original position. The trench at the west-side of the temple produced a ground breaking discovery. In the lowermost trench of the wall SQUARE 113) in intact position only one sherd was discovered, and there can be no doubt that this sherd dates to the late Middle Kingdom or the Second Intermediate Period. Whilst this, of course, does not date the building of the wall it provides the first firm evidence since Flinders Petrie that a late Middle Kingdom Phase existed below the New kingdom

## **V.- DOCUMENTATION**

a.-Drawings and digitalization of the new excavated areas. Incorporation to the general Plan of the campaign of this season

b.- Photographical documentation of all the new excavated areas, and also the new inscriptions, and new stone found.