

Kunara 2012-2015 seasons

Three excavation seasons took place in 2012, 2013 and 2015. Five excavation areas were opened; one in the upper town (Area A) and four in the lower town (Areas B, C and D)

Area A (2012 and 2013, Christine Kepinski)

The main aim of this excavation area was to establish a stratigraphic sequence which could serve as a reference for the other areas. In the end, this excavation led to the discovery of two successive monumental buildings (levels 2 and 3), built on top of a platform. This platform was made from carefully prepared sand, and is at least 3.5m in height. A staircase 7m long and 90cm wide contained at least one landing and gave access to the buildings. To date, only the north-eastern end of the later building (level 2) has been excavated. This structure was built using the same floor plan as the earlier building. It contains a large open space measuring at least 100m², which is believed to be a courtyard. This was delimited to the north and east by two walls over 2.60m thick, which were built on solid stone foundations. The north wall displays an unusual construction method, comprised of alternating courses of mud bricks and cob or rammed earth, approximately 60cm in height. This building was deliberately filled in by a thick layer of material (level 1) but we do not know why or when. In its earlier phase (level 3), the narrower exterior wall contained redans. All of these structures attest to the great attention paid to their construction and to the evacuation of rain water (several pipes were excavated, including one found to be over 10m in length).

Area B (Aline Tenu)

The objective of this excavation area is to explore a monumental building identified by the geophysical survey. The most recent phase (Level 1) consists of stone foundations made up of only one or two courses. These were found close to the surface and were heavily damaged. This level was built directly upon the abandonment layers of the earlier building. Level 2 is mainly characterised by the remains visible on the magnetic survey. These comprise one or several buildings constructed at right angles to one another. The largest of these was identified as being over 30m in length. Its facade faces south-west and is lined by a footpath. One of the entrances was uncovered in 2015; it is marked by a stone doorstep over 1.70m long. The walls, approximately 1.60m thick, are built on a foundation of 2-3 courses of large stones (some of which are over 80cm long). The superstructure is made of cob, which has survived to a height of 1.8m in places. A stone ramp arrived at the doorstep from the south-east. Two or three buildings were located to the south and east of this edifice. Further work will show whether these structures were independent or if they belonged to the same complex. Among the most remarkable discoveries made in this area is the cylinder seal found in 2012.

Area C (Nordine Ouraghi)

Area C has revealed structures belonging to two main levels. The remains of the more recent phase (Level 1) consist for the most part of stone foundations. No floor levels or superstructures were preserved, so the precise function of these foundations has not yet been determined. Three buildings complete with floor levels and exterior features make up Level 2. One of these is unusual in that it was built below ground level. Preserved on the north side to its full height (almost 1.50m), its walls were built using very sophisticated techniques: the superstructure of some of them was made of cob, faced with fired bricks and topped with courses of mud bricks. A considerable collection of artefacts was found, including numerous storage jars (with one bearing an elaborate decoration of snakes and scorpions), a jar seal and eight cuneiform tablets which were heavily damaged by the fire which destroyed the building.

Area D (2013, Sébastien Rey)

Two excavation trenches (D1 and D2) were dug into the slopes of the lower town to establish whether a fortification system had protected the site, and to study the stratigraphic relationship with the upper town. No surrounding wall was found, but the two trenches revealed the first remains of domestic architecture found on this site which is otherwise dominated by monumental buildings. A beautiful flint arrowhead was also discovered here.

Area E (2015, Florine Marchand)

This excavation area is located on the north side of the lower town, and led to the discovery of a new monumental building which features a wall at least 13m long and 1.35m wide. This was built from earth (cob or rammed earth, in very regular layers) upon a foundation of large stone blocks. Only a very small part of the building was excavated, but various features were identified, which may have been narrower internal partition walls, or benches intended to organise and divide the space. A pebble floor was discovered, strewn with sherds of pottery, predominantly from large storage jars decorated with bitumen.