

THE 2018 WORKS IN KUNARA

In 2018, two operations were carried out as part of the French Archaeological Mission of Peramagron. The first is the study mission of the cuneiform tablets, from 23 May to 8 June at the General Directorate of Antiquities of Suleymaniyeh, the second is the excavation campaign that took place on the Kunara from 18 September to 25 October.

Study mission (A. Tenu, Ph. Clancier & J. Monerie)

The study mission was mainly devoted to cleaning and studying the 70 cuneiform tablets and tablet fragments discovered in 2017 on Area C. The tablet formats are more varied with a very small format, a large format with two columns and lenticular tablets. Six new toponyms, all fragmentary, have been identified, as well as three personal names, at least one of which is Akkadian. Kunara's political hierarchy now appears more clearly with the mention of an ENSI (a king or governor), a SUKKAL (a high-ranking dignitary) and a vassal.

Excavation campaign

Excavation of the three Areas B, C and E continued in 2018.

Area B (Aline Tenu)

Two sectors have been opened on site B. In the first, to the south-east of the main building (B. 712), a vast courtyard was discovered, opening onto which all the rooms already excavated were opened. It is 27 m long and conveyed many sherds and wildlife remains (see below). In addition, a layer of fire destruction was identified for the first time. Exploration of another building to the southeast (B. 714) continued eastward. It is at least 15 m long and had a stone pipe running through it.

Area E (Florine Marchand)

The excavation of the monumental building (B. 659) began this year, revealing 3 rooms of about 10 m² each. The superstructure of the massive earth walls has been preserved, attesting to various techniques within the building itself. In one of the rooms were discovered cuneiform tablets and a rich ceramic assemblage. The northern and western boundaries of the building that was burned down are not yet known, but the south facade whose clearance has continued has been recognized over 10 m.

Area C (Barbara Chiti)

It is mainly the western part of the Area C that was explored in 2018. In particular, the excavations made it possible to identify the continuation and immediate surroundings of building B. 517 identified in 2015. The north room was thus recognized along its entire length and to the south two rooms and a kind of paved basin could be fully excavated. Hundreds of ceramic sherds have been found, some with animal decorations. Several unusual shapes are

documented. An elaborate network of stone pipes has been identified. The whole thing was sealed by a thick layer of fire destruction.

Archaeozoological study (Michael Seigle)

About half of the bones collected in Kunara since 2012 have been studied. They belong to 31 different species, mostly domestic (mainly beef, pork and goats, but also horses, donkeys and chickens), which were probably not raised in Kunara itself. The food was supplemented by hunting, but hunting was certainly also a prestigious activity because lion, bear and panther were found. In addition to information on Kunara's subsistence economy, the wildlife remains reveal its more or less distant "horizon" with species living in the mountains (bears, panthers) or in the steppe (lion and gazelle).

The GUR of Šubartu (Philippe Clancier)

Only one of the tablets discovered in 2018 on site E could be deciphered on the basis of its photograph. It is an administrative document, which records very large quantities of a product, probably grain, in a unit of capacity never before seen, the GUR of Šubartu. The term Šubartu refers to the north in a very broad sense and from the 22nd century onwards, the standard GUR is the Akkad GUR, which corresponds to approximately 300 litres. Kunara is located in a region that the rulers of southern Mesopotamia have sought to conquer and the use of this northern GUR therefore has very important political and/or cultural implications.

Pottery Analysis (Cécile Verdellet)

We resume the typo-chronological study of the ceramic batches from Area A. Hence we have been able to refine the chronology and to establish equivalences between the occupation levels of the upper and lower towns.

Level 2 of Area A, dated to the end of the 3rd millennium BC. (ca. 2200-2100 BC) is contemporary with levels 2 of Area B, 3 of Area C and 1 of Area E. The assemblage dated to level 3 from Area A, slightly older (ca. 2500-2200 BC), has no equivalent in the lower city for the moment.

In addition to this study, the material from the ongoing excavations has been analysed in a functional perspective in order to get clues about the functions of the different buildings.

The study of the heap of ceramics thrown into building 517 (Area C) revealed the presence of a large number of particular shapes whose function, always discussed, seems to be linked to the practice of worship. This assemblage is composed notably of complex Internal Handled Bowl, small globular pots decorated with handles and spouts, pouring spouts in the shape of ram heads (or mouflon) or containers decorated with relief motifs of scorpions and snakes.

The large pierced-bottomed jars found in Building 659 (Area E) reflect the practice of a specific activity that could be related to the evaluation of quantities for redistribution.

Finally, the coherent but fragmentary assemblage found in the vast courtyard of Building 712 (Area B) supports the hypothesis of a building dedicated to reception.

Page written by Aline Tenu and Cécile Verdellet (pottery), November 2018, review September 2019.