

TECHNICAL REPORT

January 22, 2011 – February 3, 2011

“Conservation of the Shunet el-Zebib, Abydos”

David O’ Connor, Director
Matthew Douglas Adams, Associate Director/Field Director

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Technical Report on the 2011 Fieldwork Undertaken by the EAC-Supported Sub-project “Conservation of King Khasekhemwy’s Funerary Monument at Abydos”

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Introduction

The 2011 fieldwork of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University at the funerary cult enclosure of king Khasekhemwy at Abydos was made possible by support from the Egyptian Antiquities Conservation (EAC) grant program of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE). On-site period was 22 January – 3 February 2011. The 2011 field season was closed early due to the recall of the project team by New York University as a consequence of events in Egypt at that time. Consequently, the program of work was greatly abbreviated. Planned excavation work was started, but no architectural conservation work was undertaken, as the team was evacuated before the planned arrival of the architectural conservation team.

Team members in the field were as follows:

Dr. Matthew Adams, Associate Director/Field Director

Kay Barnett – architectural illustration

Raina Chao – archaeological conservator

Christina Chavez – surveyor

Jerrie Clarke – senior archaeological collections manager

Julia DeVere – archaeological collections management

Shanna Diederichs – architectural illustration

Doha Fathy – archaeological collections management

Walter Gusciora – photographer

Salima Ikram – artifact documentation and study

Mária Iván – artifact illustration

Hiroko Kariya – senior archaeological conservator

Jennifer Lavris – archaeologist

Gregory Maka – photographer

Alexander Makovics – surveyor

Michelle Marlar – Assistant Field Director

Gaea McGahee – surveyor

Tara Prakash – archaeologist

Patrick Salland – assistant to the photographers

Ileana Selejan – digital assets manager

Danielle Sheptow – architectural illustration

Lucy Skinner – archaeological conservator

Magdalena Włodarska – archaeologist

Jo Anne Young – architectural illustration

The project was greatly assisted, during both the on-site work and the difficult and sudden close down, by SCA inspector Mr. Samir Ahmed Abdelatif.

Excavation at the Shunet el-Zebib

Excavation in 2011 focused on three areas (Figure 1):

- (i) the exterior side of the southeast perimeter wall,
- (ii) the southeast perimeter corridor,
- (iii) the east corner gateway.

(i) Two excavations units were located on the exterior side of the southeast perimeter wall. Operation 164 was opened during the Expedition's spring 2010 field season, and work continued in 2011 (Figure 2). Operation 176, located east of Operation 164, was a new excavation unit in 2011 (Figure 3). The archaeological situation in both units is the same. In antiquity a large sand dune accumulated along the exterior side of the Shunet el-Zebib, and this dune appears to have been relatively stable since its original accumulation, with the implication that original Dynasty 2 features should be well preserved under it. From the upper part of the dune small fragments of what was originally a large limestone stela were recovered. Fragments found in 2010 bore the name of king Horemheb of Dynasty 18. In 2011 only one fragment with an *n*-sign was recovered that could have been part of this king's name. A few fragments have elements in shallow raised relief that may represent parts of human figures. Some of these have traces of red paint. Two fragments show parts of uraei and thus appear to depict parts of the king's crown or headdress. In one instance the king's headdress appears to have been originally covered in gold leaf, of which small traces still adhere to the relief. At present no joins between fragments have been found. Operation 176 also produced scattered human bones and small fragments of painted wood and cartonnage, probably the remains of one or more looted burials of the Third Intermediate Period. Given its relatively sheltered position on the leeward side of the south walls of the Shuneh, the dune may have been a convenient location for ancient looters in breaking up bodies in the search for valuables included in their wrappings. At the close of work in Operation 176 two human burials, likely of Middle Kingdom date, were identified in situ adjacent to the perimeter wall (Figures 4, 5). Time constraints did not permit them to be excavated at the time.

(ii) The southeast perimeter corridor, which was excavated nearly to original floor level in 2010 as Operations 161, 163, and 165, was emptied of the 2010 season backfill, and work commenced on defining the original floor of the corridor (Figure 6). The niching of the exterior façade of the main enclosure is extraordinarily well preserved in this area, and the perimeter wall is preserved higher here than in any other part of the monument. The south corridor gives a sense of both the original scale of the architecture and the original formality of the finished surfaces of the walls. On the interior side of the perimeter wall images of boats can be identified, incised into the original plaster finish of the wall, presumably in late antiquity when the monument was occupied by an early Christian monastic community. A number of cuts through the deposits immediately above the floor of the corridor and the floor surface itself could be identified, although time did not permit these to be defined fully. In the

north and east corridors similar cuts have been found that likely were the result of the work of E. Ayrton, who worked with Petrie at Abydos at the beginning of the 20th Century.

(iii) Work commenced in a new excavation unit Operation 177, situated at the east corner gateway (Figure 7). In addition, Operation 12, a unit just outside the gateway and opened originally in 1997, was reopened. Excavation did not reach the original floor level of the Shuneh in either unit before the end of work. The excavation in Operation 12 revealed preserved original wall plaster on the gateway opening through the perimeter wall.

Architectural Documentation

Detailed architectural documentation work continued at the north gateway of the main enclosure, originally excavated as part of Operation 107 (Figure 1), preparatory to the final stabilization interventions around the gateway (Figure 8). A detailed plan of the L-shaped wall defining the gateway chamber was completed in 2009, and in 2011 work commenced on detailed drawings of the walls of the chamber in elevation (Figure 9), to record both the top of existing original fabric and preserved surface treatments. Due to the limited time on-site in 2011, this work was not completed.

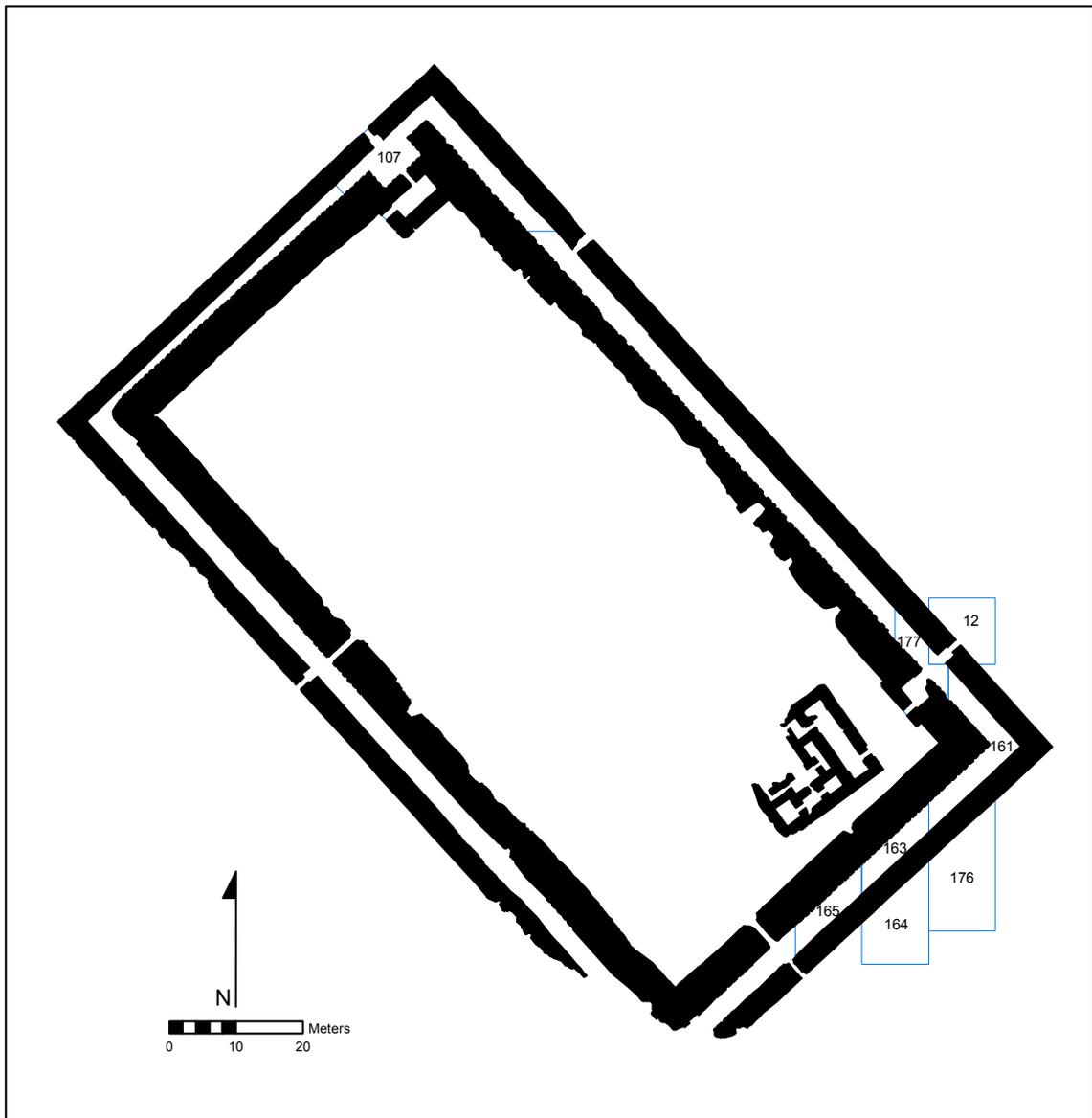


Figure 1 – Plan of the *Shunet el-Zebib*, showing the location of excavation units opened during the foreshortened 2011 field season.



Figure 2 – Operation 164, located on the exterior side of the southeastern perimeter wall of the Shunet el-Zebib, at the close of excavation. Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.



Figure 3 – Operation 176, also located on the exterior side of the southeastern perimeter wall of the Shuneh. Two burials are visible near the wall. Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.



Figure 4 – Remains of a burial of Middle Kingdom date on the exterior side of the south perimeter wall of the Shuneh in Operation 176. The body had been wrapped in a mat. Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.



Figure 5 – Remains of a wooden coffin on the exterior side of the south perimeter wall of the Shuneh in Operation 176. Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

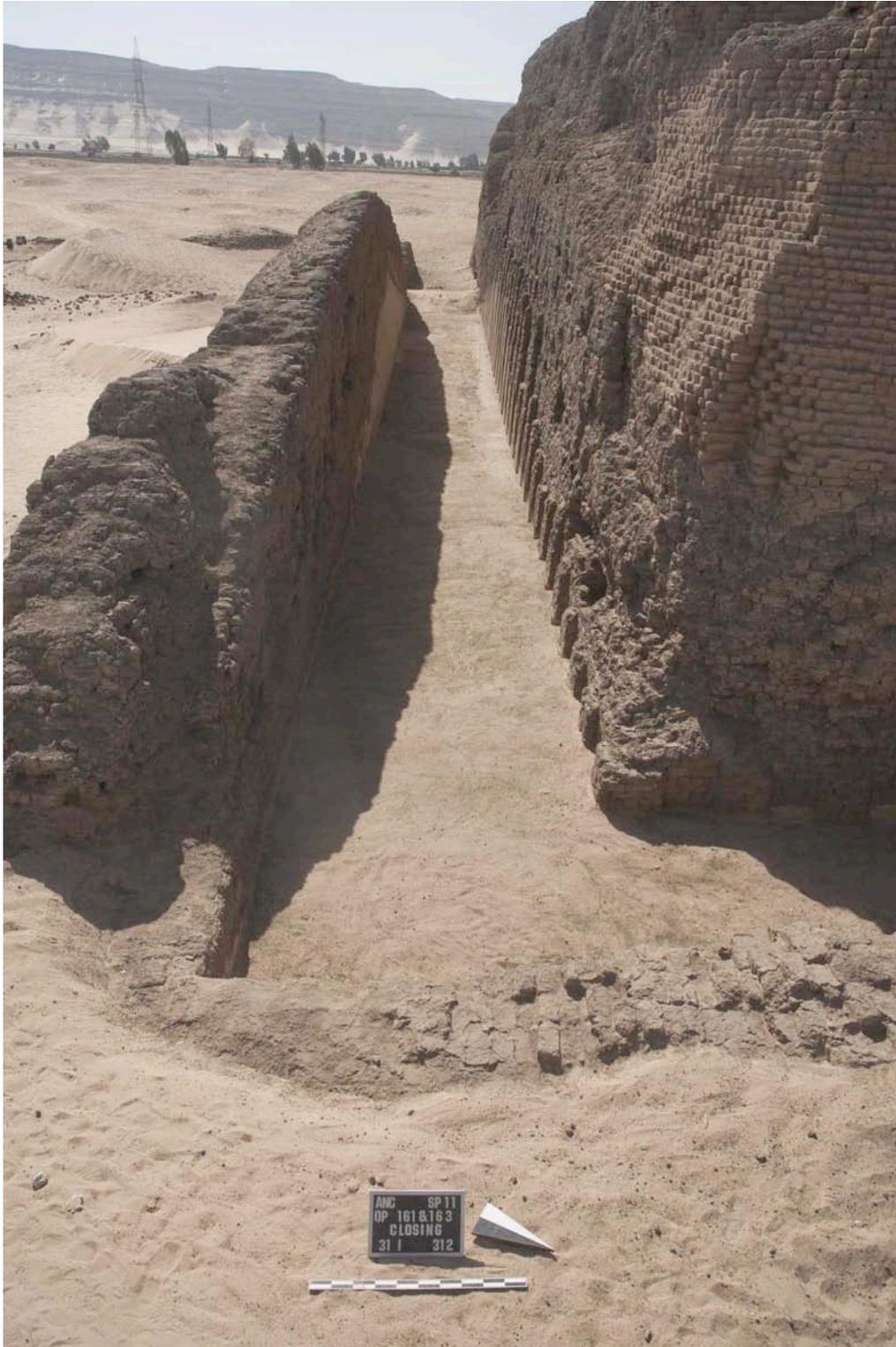


Figure 6 – The southeast perimeter corridor of the Shunet el-Zebib, after the removal of the backfill from the 2010 excavations. This area was excavated as Operations 161 (foreground), 163 (middle distance), and 165 (nearer the south gateway). Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.



Figure 7 – Operations 12, along the exterior side of the east perimeter wall and covering the gateway opening through the perimeter wall, and 177, in the east perimeter corridor between the two enclosure walls, at the east corner gateway of the Shunet el-Zebib. Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.



Figure 8 – Architectural documentation in 2011 focused on the north gateway chamber of the main enclosure, originally excavated as part of Operation 107. Photo by Gregory Maka for the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.



Figure 9 – Architectural documentation in 2011 included detailed elevation drawings of the walls of the north gateway chamber, to capture both the profile of the surviving original masonry, but also all preserved original plaster finishes.