

**Archaeological Investigation at Seglamen (Aksum) of University of Naples
"L'Orientale," Naples (Italy) and Aksum University**

Field Season 2013

Preliminary Report

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In November/December 2013, the Archaeological Expedition at Aksum of University of Naples "L'Orientale" (UNO), Naples (Italy), conducted the 4th season of investigation at the Pre-Aksumite site of Seglamen, about 15 km to the SW of Aksum (Tigray, Northern Ethiopia), under the direction of Prof. Rodolfo Fattovich. The field work at Seglamen has been conducted in collaboration with Aksum University (AkU), Aksum (Ethiopia), represented by Mr. Samuel Walker, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Management. As for the previous seasons, one goal of the expedition was to provide undergraduate students in archaeology of AU with a training on archaeological excavation procedures and laboratory analysis. The collaboration is part of a formal agreement between UNO and AkU established in 2008 and aimed at conducting joint research programs and at supporting the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Management of AU with theoretical training and practical field work.

Members of the expedition were Professor Rodolfo Fattovich, Research director, Dr Luisa Sernicola, archaeologist and field director, Mr. Marco Barbarino, surface surveyor, Mss. Michela Gaudiello, ceramic analyst, Mr. Diego Capra, assistant archaeologist, University of Naples "L'Orientale", Italy, Dr Laurel Phillipson, UK, lithic analyst, Mr. Bar Kribus, assistant archaeologist, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. Zinash Kefyalew from the Department of Archaeology of Addis Ababa University joined the team for a training on lithics recording and analysis. The ARCCCH was represented by Woizero Astir Kebede; the TCTA, Mekelle, by Gidey Gebreegziabher.

In 2013, research activities included archaeological survey and excavations.

Systematic archaeological survey was conducted at three major sites (SG 3, SG 4 and MDG 1 in the areas of Seglamen and Medogwe) already recorded in 2010 and 2013. Random sampling and systematic observations were performed at the sites in order to better assess their extension, chronological/cultural affiliation and function.

Archaeological excavations concentrated at site SG 1, in the modern village of Seglamen, where the remains of a Pre-Aksumite settlement characterized by three major occupational phases, and associated cemetery were brought to the light at Amda Tsion and Mogareb respectively during the past field seasons. In 2013 the investigations focused both in the area of Amda Tsion and Mogareb.

At Amda Tsion 2 excavations units 10 m x 10 m in size (Seg IX and Seg X) were opened in order to reconstruct the general layout and function of the structures recorded between 2010 and 2012. The excavation allowed to reconstruct the complete plan of the buildings related to the earlier and later architectural phases (Phase I and Phase III) and to increase our knowledge about the intermediate phase (Phase II).

The earliest phase is represented by walls directly constructed on the bedrock and is characterized by a rectangular structure SW/NE oriented with 4 rooms, a back-yard and a possible front-yard. To the west of the building, outside the structure, a fire-place associated to a cluster of ashy soil has been recorded. The age of this building is still uncertain but the ceramics suggest a dating to the 7th century BC.

The intermediate phase (Phase II) is characterized by three external fire-places or furnaces and the remains of a circular dwelling never attested before.

The third phase of occupation (Phase III) is represented by a quadrangular building, 12 m x 12 m in area, with massive walls about 1.20 m thick. Eight rooms of various size have been detected; 2 rooms have been entirely excavated. In Room 1, in the northeastern corner, a quadrangular stone feature 1.40 m x 1.40 m erected on a massive wall in the center of the room, possibly a base of a pillar, has been uncovered.

At Mogareb, a 10 m x 10 m excavation unit was established in the area where 2 tombs were investigated in 2010 and 2011. Excavation, mainly conducted by the students of AU under the supervision of Samuel Walker, brought to the light at least 4 graves with complete and almost complete bowls, jars and biconical vessels forming the grave good. Two sandstone stelae were found, one directly associated to a burial, the other related to a grave where a small stela was buried. Small holes with votive objects (mainly miniatures of ceramic and a zoomorphic clay figurine) were recorded around the burials.

Ceramics, lithics, stone objects, beads and metal artifacts as well as human and animal bones, charcoal, soil and rock samples collected during the excavation are presently stored in the store rooms of the Archaeological Museum of Aksum.

The members of the expedition are very grateful to Dr Yonas Desta, Head, General Director, ARCCCH, Addis Ababa, Ato Dessalegn Abebaw, Director, Cultural Heritage Research Directorate, ARCCCH, Addis Ababa, Ato Aley Woldeselasia, Head, Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Central Zone, Aksum, the President and Vice President, Aksum University, Aksum, and to all the students, farmers and workers involved in the excavation.

