Old Dongola Community Engagement Project: Preliminary report from the first season

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Introduction

The Meroitic royal title, Kandake, 'the queen mother of Kush', was used in April 2019 to refer to a young female protester, Alaa Salah, who had wrapped herself in a traditional white *toob,* and other women who participated in the demonstration in Khartoum, protesting against the thirty-year regime, the uprising initially triggered by the price hike of bread and fuel in December 2018. The term quickly spread across social media, and she became an icon of the strength and rights of Sudanese women, the commitment of the people to change their society, and Sudanese identity embedded in the long history of the country. It reminded Fushiya of a conversation with a Sudanese woman serving tea on a Khartoum street some years ago. The lady asked her 'Did you see my grandfathers?' in reference to the ancient statues at the National Museum in Khartoum. How has archaeology responded or contributed to relationships that the diverse peoples of Sudan develop with the past? Ali Osman pointed out over three decades ago that one of the theoretical shortcomings in Sudan archaeology was 'the treatment of the archaeological cultures as being the cultures of *past* Sudanese' (Osman 1992, 229).[1] A sense of continuity between the past and the present is not well articulated in Sudanese archaeological discourses.

A new research project was instigated in February 2019 at Old Dongola and its neighbouring modern town, el-Ghaddar, to explore and improve the relationship between archaeology and local communities. This article introduces the new community engagement research project and the preliminary findings from its first fieldwork. The relationship between archaeology and members of contemporary society is increasingly discussed in different parts of the world (e.g. Okamura and Mastuda 2011) through dissemination of concepts and practices of public archaeology. The field evolved mainly in North America (McGimsey 1972) and in the UK (Merriman 2004; Schadla-Hall 2006). In countries where archaeology developed in parallel to colonisation, the issue is more critical. The discipline developed without the involvement of peoples who have social, historical, cultural and/or geographical associations with what archaeologists study. Typically, local involvement was limited to excavation labourers who received little acknowledgement of their contributions (Adams 1981; Shepherd 2003; Posnansky 2017). They, and their knowledge, were marginalised from

its practices, interpretations and access to sites, which consequently left a distance between archaeology and communities after the independence of the countries (Pwiti and Ndoro 1999; Chirikure *et al.* 2010; Pikirayi and Schmidt 2016). The colonial legacy in archaeology has been increasingly challenged, and community participation and collaboration is a way forward to incorporate peoples, their knowledge, questions and methods into archaeological practices (Greer *et al.* 2002; Atalay 2006; 2012; Chirikure and Pwiti 2008; Schmidt 2014; Colwel 2016; Pikirayi 2016).

The question of the social relevance of archaeological practices and, in practice, engagement programmes to improve the situation, have only recently drawn scholarly attention and practice in Sudan (Tully 2014). The archaeologists' experience from salvage excavations at the 4th and 5th Cataracts posed the question of the role of archaeology and international expeditions (Kleinitz and Näser 2011; 2013; Hafsaas-Tsakos 2011), while the extensive study by Bradshaw (2017; 2018) highlights differing values and meanings of ancient monuments and archaeology among peoples living around Bejaraweiya, and charges archaeologists active in Sudan with the responsibility to assess and distribute a fair economic benefit to local workers.

At more practical level, over the last five years, the QSAP (the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project) inspired a number of archaeological missions to consider and undertake engagement with the public. Among many engagement activities, community-based resources were created through interactions with communities living near archaeological sites. For instance, the picture book, *Hwida and Maawia Investigate Meroe's Iron* (Humphris 2017), was delivered by a team who conducted a wide range of community activities and research in the area (Humphris and Bradshaw 2017). *Discovering Mograt Island Together* (Tully and Näser 2016) was conceived through extensive interviews and communications with the local community (Tully 2014; 2015; Näser and Tully 2019). Following the locally well-received book, *Amara West: Living in Egyptian Nubia* (Spencer, Stevens and Binder 2014), two additional books, *Life in the Heart of Nubia: Abri, Amara East and Ernetta Island* (Fushiya *et al.* 2017)[2] and *Nubia Past and Present: Agriculture, Crops and Food* (Ryan 2018),[3] were produced in collaboration with local people at Amara West, and incorporated local knowledge and perspectives for heritage and archaeology. These recent examples highlight a shift beyond providing archaeological information to the general public: to working *for* and *with* modern communities living near archaeological sites in Sudan.

The local community and archaeological expedition

Old Dongola was the capital of Makuria, and one of the

most important centres of medieval Nubia, which extended from the 3rd to 5th Cataracts. The national importance of the site is recognised by its inclusion on the tentative list of the UNESCO World Heritage programme. The settlement at Old Dongola was established below a prominent fortification on a hill – the citadel – at the end of the 5th century or the early 6th century (Godlewski *et al.* 2018, 11). Many churches continued to be built northwards from the fortification, while the construction of the royal residence and church was within the citadel, and major monastic complexes were built in the western outskirts of the town (Godlewski 2013). Architectural features and polychrome wall paintings in churches and monasteries show Byzantine influences, and the wealth and long-distance trading contacts of the kingdom, which flourished between the 9th and 11th centuries. Old Dongola remained a regional centre after the end of Makuria in the 14th century, receiving Islamic holy men in the subsequent centuries (Edwards 2004, 253).

Polish archaeologists began excavating at Old Dongola in 1964, following the salvage excavation of Faras at the 2nd Cataract. After uncovering a granite columned church in the first season, the long-term work at the site has revealed the history of cultural, political, and economic developments of the Makurian capital over a period of eight centuries. In addition to excavation, they ensured the conservation of important wall paintings and textual records. While the previous decades focused on the period when the site functioned as the medieval capital until its decline, this season marked the beginning of a new research project, 'UMMA' focusing on the transitional period from medieval capital city to Islamic city-state from around the 14th century.[4]

Given the history of extensive research at Old Dongola since the 1960s, this engagement project is certainly not the first that the Polish expedition has undertaken with the local community. The archaeologists' engagement with local people living in the vicinity of the Old Dongola site – Ghaddar, Bukibol and beyond – has taken place in different forms, at both formal and informal levels. For instance, the expedition has lived in the town of Ghaddar throughout their excavation history. The current house has been the expedition-base for over 20 years, which was occupied after the team stayed in the first base: a house a slightly further into the modern community. It has the closest access route to the site from the town and was modified for the archaeologists' use. The Ghaddar residents have been the neighbours of the archaeologists, and involved in the research as excavation workers throughout the history of the Polish excavations. Besides neighbourly relations, oral histories relating to Old Dongola have previously been collected in the local area 'to support archaeological work… and analysis' (Bashir 2003, 519). This field season also saw a research-based engagement, as Maciej Wyżgoł and Mohamed Nasreldeen Babiker investigated local knowledge and sociocultural

associations with archaeological findings for their respective studies. The Polish expedition also developed a community project in 2008 as part of the Polish Aid programme that focused on conservation and renovation of the mosque, to raise awareness of local and regional history as well as preparation of the building for tourism (Obluski *et al.* 2013).[5] Not limited to archaeology, our communications with Ghaddar residents this season revealed that there has been some efforts to support local schools in the past by the former director, Stefan Jakobielski. There is also a Thursday afternoon tradition when the expedition team visit neighbours for coffee, and the expedition expressed its desire to feel a part of the community. This community engagement project is, thus, not a new isolated effort but will build upon the existing relationship between the expedition and community, analyse the construct, and improve it.

'The local community' in this project is the community of Ghaddar. A community is often comprised of complex and overlapping identities, including but not limited to genders, ages, occupations, educational backgrounds and economic situations. It is not a homogenous bundle (Marshall 2002; Waterton and Smith 2010; Pyburn 2011). Furthermore, an individual or group can belong to more than one 'community' within or without a community, that is to say there are multiple communities within and beyond a community (Pyburn 2011). In this project, the local community was defined by the researchers based on geographical proximity and the location where the expedition is based during the excavation. In other words, it does not mean that the people who live within have a single collective identity as a community, nor that they regard this category as the most suitable for them to be identified with, i.e. as a local community of Old Dongola.

El-Ghaddar is located *c.* 350km north of Khartoum, on the right bank of the Nile. It is bordered on the southeast by the Old Dongola site. The modern town is one of the twelve towns/villages in the modern administrative division, the Old Dongola Unit, a part of Goulid County in the Northern State. The administrative offices of the Unit, local court, hospital, *souq*, four primary schools and one girls' secondary school are located in it, with a population of *c.* 6000. Though a better picture of the population requires further investigation, we met Dongolawi speakers and descendants of Arab tribes during the first season. Most private houses, small shops and schools are surrounded by palm groves and grassland along the river, but more recent settlement and cultivation areas extend towards the desert. Archaeological sites located in Ghaddar – Hambukol and a tumuli cemetery near Jebel Ghaddar – have previously been excavated (Grzymski 1987; El Tayeb 1994).

Jebel Ghaddar is a landmark of the community and is considered 'an eye of a crocodile', with other neighbouring villages acting as the 'head', 'back' and 'tail', according to

Plate 1. *The mosque at Old Dongola, painted by a local artist and retired teacher for the project logo design.*

of the project was defined therefore as 'dialogues' between archaeologists and local residents, which is coincidentally the funding programme name. The project plan involves multifaceted – archaeological, economic, and social – dialogues. Revitalising the relationship, thus, between the expedition and the community through increasing human interaction that includes understanding the perspectives and knowledge of the local residents is essential. The main tangible output is to produce a book together that integrates at least two different narratives of Old Dongola: of the community and archaeologists.

Within the two-year project, it seeks research and practical outcomes that will lay the foundations for future community archaeology through three research components. This approach follows the principles of community archaeology that underlie collaboration and partnership between the community and archaeologists (Atalay 2012, 55-59). It is a method used to seek reciprocal benefits for archaeologists and the community via community-based practices. The important aspect of applying this approach is that the research method departs from a colonial attitude of seeing the community as a mere subject of research (on and about the community) and a top-down, one-way approach (*ibid.*). Instead the research seeks to benefit the community and to work together. It recognises and respects different sets of knowledge and interpretations about the past that exist among local peoples and archaeologists. In this method, it is important that the community participation begins by setting research aims and methods. However, as mentioned above, the project was formed based on archaeologists' motivations and a self-critical reflection to past engagement with the community. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the local community is interested in participating in a project with archaeologists about archaeology and heritage at all. This two-year project will test the water before embarking on collaborative work with the community, and may discover a need to take a different approach. This preparation phase is an important and necessary step to identify potential problems along the way. As Chirikure and Pwiti (2008) indicated, based on their own experiences with communities, working with the community can cause more problems than it solves.

The primary objective is set: first, to understand and revitalise the relationship between the expedition and local community through formal and informal interactions including interviews, focus-group discussions, outreach and collaborative programmes. Understanding the different threads of previous and ongoing engagements between the two is crucial, as it implicitly or explicitly demonstrates how,

the local understanding of the landscape. Some of the Ghaddar residents once lived in the southern part of the archaeological site at a so-called 'Abandoned village'. Families of the former residents return to the village during the celebrations of *Eids* and the *Mawlid al Nabi*. During these festivities, Ghaddar residents also visit ancestral graves and *qubbas* in the Muslim cemetery. The first prayer of the *Eids* is still held near the mosque at the Old Dongola site, which was converted from the royal throne hall in AD 1317. The mosque is the oldest surviving mosque in Sudan and was the only building in use until its closure in 1969, with some interruptions, from the mid-9th century (Żurawski 2001). The importance of the building for the community is evident from a painting presented by a retired teacher for the creation of the engagement project logo (Plate 1).

Old Dongola Community Engagement Project[6]

This project developed from an observation by the current director, Artur Obluski, about the community-expedition relationship at Old Dongola. He was also interested in best practice in the narration of Christianity and medieval history to the community, all of whom are Muslim, and exploring ways of contributing to community development. Incorporating these concerns together, the core concept

by what aspect and to what degree the expedition and the community has interacted (or not) to this date. During the course of the various interactions, local values and meanings of the Old Dongola archaeological site among the local community will be explored to determine the storyline for the site. Here, '[t]he fact that the present-day northern Sudanese are muslims [*sic*] was taken as a reference point where all things old stopped' (Osman 1992, 294)[7] is to be investigated.

Secondly, the project also provides an opportunity for university-level students to build capacity in community archaeology and values-based heritage management. Field training for archaeology students in Sudan is an area that should be better addressed by international expeditions as one of the potential benefits they could offer. While it will not include excavation skills and methods because of the nature of the project, the programme intends to look at an archaeological site, beyond its archaeological/scientific value (Mason 2002), involving theoretical and practical training in the field tailored for the particular case of Old Dongola. It is expected to be an opportunity for young students to discuss together the future of archaeological sites and heritage unique to local, regional, national or international communities. They will participate in the development process of a book with other community members and archaeologists.

The project is unique in that it explores a potential way of contributing to local development through heritage, not necessarily relying on tourism. The third objective is to identify and assess community needs, skills and possible actions for local development through heritage (Burtenshaw 2014). An economic contribution by hiring local men as excavation workers is not only insufficient (Bradshaw 2018), but also overlooks the gap in distributing other forms of benefits generated by the excavations for archaeologists such as obtaining degrees, career advancement and jobs.[8] This last aspect, local development, was expanded in the course of the development phase of the project proposal. The idea initially started from looking into local handicraft and food production to seek ways to enhance the value of heritage[9] through direct socioeconomic benefits. The project will assess the potential for developing community-based businesses through looking at quality and re-designing, and exploring the market including, but not limited to site-based tourism, involving business and marketing consultants. In addition, the development component will be further extended in due course to formulate a local development plan, led by Peter Larsen. A series of discussions and workshops will be held

with other stakeholders at local, national and international levels to determine issues and priorities concerning development in the locality and how heritage could be utilised for this.

From the point of view of heritage management, especially of World Heritage sites, the community engagement effort at Old Dongola could also contribute to developing the World Heritage nomination and management process in Sudan, culminating in a more socially inclusive perspective, with respect for and participation of local communities. The Old Dongola site has been on the tentative list of the UNESCO World Heritage programme since 1994. Community participation in management planning and practices has gained importance over the last two decades, recognising the social relevance of heritage (Logan 2004; Jokilehto 2009), as it opens a way to develop management practices that prioritise a local context – giving sensitivity to local needs, concerns, characteristics of heritage and management systems (Chirikure *et al.* 2010; Williams 2018). *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, after its revision in 2005, now promotes community participation, although it is not unusual for it to be treated as a popular 'buzzword', and it is still poorly reflected in practice and on nomination dossiers and management plans (Brumann 2015; van den Dries 2015). In the context of former colonised countries, community participation is key to depart from a colonial, Eurocentric concept surrounding heritage (Smith 2006; Winter 2014), and for the decolonisation of heritage, including its concepts, access, research and methods of conservation and management (Chirikure *et al.* 2010).

The previous two World Cultural Heritage nomination dossiers for Sudan understated the relevance that the World Heritage places on contemporary Sudanese society and its relationship with local communities.[10] The nomination process of Old Dongola has to be, of course, undertaken by the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM). This engagement project could contribute to the preparations for the nomination by exploring the local value of Old Dongola, highlighting how the local residents would like to take the initiative to preserve and utilise the heritage for local cultural and social benefits. The narratives emerging as a result of the collaborative book proposed may also contribute to writing a statement of significance for the nomination that is sensitive to inclusion, equity and sustainability.

Progress in the first season

Four main activities were conducted in February 2019: local representative and partner meetings, two outreach programmes, a local social environment and heritage value study (interviews, tourism[11] and community surveys),

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[7] See also the study by Ahmed el Shahi (1988) about Sudanese perceptions about the history of Christianity.

[8] As Randi Håland pointed out in an interview (van der Linde and van den Dries 2012).

[9] Heritage here means not limited to the archaeological site and artefact yields from it but includes other tangible and intangible heritage – that is what the local people identify as their heritage, which is often associated with sense of place, identity, pride and artistic aspirations of the community. It can be objects, buildings, languages, oral histories, technologies and other knowledge.

[10] For instance, considerations of social inclusion, potential positive and negative impact on local communities by site management measures are not integrated in the nomination dossiers.

[11] The tourism survey is an ongoing study that includes surveys of international visitors and tour guides.

and local craft study. This work also included informal conversations and interactions over tea and coffee, and participation in local school and family events. Observations of a selection of the activities are reported here. The primary objective of the first fieldwork was to meet people – residents of Ghaddar and members of the archaeological expedition – and to start exploring and (re-)vitalising the relationship between the expedition and the local community. This was especially important for Fushiya and Radziwiłko who travelled to Old Dongola for the first time in February 2019. It was necessary to gain knowledge of the nature of the community-expedition relationship and become acquainted with potential local partners, while improving understanding of the heritage, history, culture and social environment of Ghaddar.

Since the project will mostly take place within the community's everyday evironment, the fieldwork was initiated by organising a series of meetings. They played a crucial first step in face-to-face introductions with potential key partners about the project, and making sure that the local community knows who is working in their community, with what motivations and purpose, and what sort of data is being collected. Questions, opinions and ideas from the community were also heard and discussed. It was also an important opportunity for us to understand how much communication with the expedition was expected and valued by the local residents. It was encouraging to learn that there are community-based initiatives that respond to local needs and how well organised they are. The first meeting was held at the office of the head of the Old Dongola Unit, attended by 10 local representatives including local administration: offices of security, tourist police, education, tourism, and public councils as well as local teachers. This was followed by discussions with local schoolteachers, the Ghaddar Women's Union and Magauda volunteer group. Each meeting was attended by 40-50 local men and women. Several people approached us after the meetings and invited us to their houses, or recommended whom we should interview about local heritage and handicrafts.

Two outreach activities were organised to introduce the site history, featuring tours around significant remains and buildings, to raise awareness about the archaeological site among the community, and create an opportunity for the expedition to interact with local people. 'Outreach' also indicates that the programmes were created without any input or reflection of local interests, but have content designed by the archaeologists (Pyburn 2011). One of them, the poster workshop, was a two-day workshop to visit and create illustrated advertisements for Old Dongola. 21 local students (11-13 years old; boys and girls) and two


Plate 2. A group of students from Ghaddar visited the site guided by the Polish archaeologists.

teachers from four schools in Ghaddar participated. After the workshop introduction, the students were divided into four gender-mixed groups with a group leader, and visited the site guided by the Polish archaeologist, Agata Deptuła, who prepared an interactive tour for the students (Plate 2). Each group had a compact camera and was assigned to photograph what they found beautiful, interesting, or important at the site. On the second day, each group created a poster, using their images from the previous day. All student groups completed unique posters of the Old Dongola archaeological site using the information learned from the archaeologists and visiting the site (Plates 3 and 4). At the end of the workshop, the students gave a presentation in front of the head of the tourist police, staff from the tourist office, local schoolteachers and the expedition director (Plates 5 and 6). Each group showed

Plate 3. In the corridor of the school, students created a poster to introduce Old Dongola in their group.
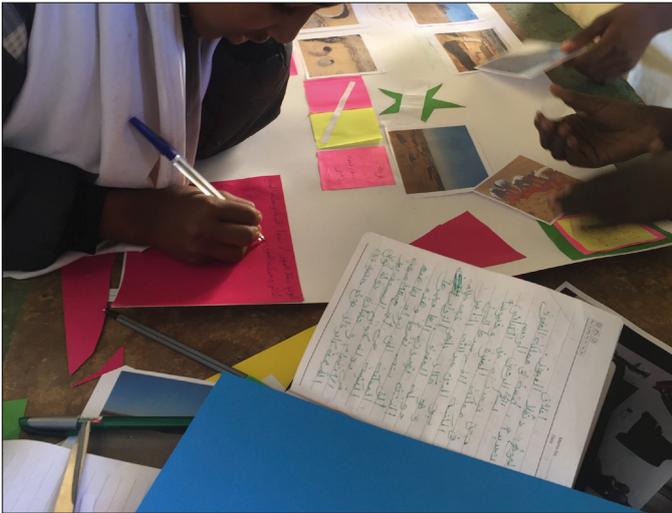
Plate 4. A student made extensive notes in her notebook to remember what she learned from the site visit and copied them onto the poster.

different information and messages for promotion of the site on their colourfully decorated posters. They also took many photographs of the landscape, monuments, and details of remains that they used effectively in their posters. Monumental and familiar household features, such as the granite columns of the church, and a doorway and fireplace drew most of their attentions. The tour included an excavation experience to uncover walls of the 17th century remains by brushing, which was unexpectedly hard work for them.

According to the workshop evaluation, all of the participants including the teachers enjoyed the activity, while 10 out of 23 answered that they did not expect it to be as it was. Perhaps because education in Sudan is largely a one-way teaching approach based on textbooks and with no art class, this type of interactive and creative method of learning and working with their hands may have been a new experience. Overall,

Plate 5. Each group completed a unique poster and presented them to the guest audience and their schoolmates.

it highlighted that the workshop raised awareness about the importance of preserving the site and stimulated the curiosity of the students towards the site and archaeology. The exposure to archaeology and excavation was an important aspect, and was a surprise for the students during the workshop, as reported by the participants: 'archaeologists work hard, their work is very hard' and 'modern tools can be used in digging excavations'. Although the excavation workers are from the community and it could be presumed that their experiences might be shared with their family and neighbours, how archaeologists work and excavate structures and objects are not familiar topics for local students. It also suggested that the site is seen as 'local heritage', which is reflected in some of their comments about site protection such as 'archaeological remains are our history and we should protect and know more details about them'; '(message) for archaeologists, please protect this heritage'. What we learned in this workshop is that it would be important to consider a storyline that includes Old Dongola as local heritage and to

Plate 6. The students presentations spoke of the characters and importance of the site and the invitation to visit the site.

address how local people or even children could contribute to heritage protection.

A single-day Site Open Day was organised as the second outreach programme for all Ghaddar residents. The archaeologists welcomed them to the site from 10am to 1pm and a tour was led by the director of the expedition, Artur Obluski (Plate 7). The main goal of the open day was to introduce them to the Old Dongola archaeological site. During the tour, the visitors heard about the history, archaeological work and importance of heritage protection for future generations. Most of the participants had never seen an archaeological excavation. It was a good learning opportunity for us to understand the community's interests and preferences for a site visit, tour duration, and means of transportation and announcement methods. The programme was advertsied during meetings of the Magauda volunteer group, the Ghaddar Women's Union, the student workshop,

Plate 7. Many women and children participated in the guided tour during the Site Open Day.

interviews and through the tourism office. A welcome message at the information centre and brief interpretations were posted at the entrance of the Royal Church and Mosque. Fifty-two (28 women; 21 children; 3 men) people from Ghaddar, including five participants from the Poster Workshop, showed up and joined a tour. The participants traversed the site by foot or vehicles. Most people arrived after breakfast time (around 10-11am), between 12 and 1pm, though the first arrival was at 10am. Some women who joined the tour returned to the on-site information space where the tour started, and a seating area was created. The tour involved too much walking up the hills on sand for some women, while the other women waited at the information space until the tour reached the mosque. This is because the mosque is usually closed to local residents and visitors, so some of them had never seen the interior. The number of women who participated far exceeded the men, partly because there was a rumour among the community that the event was only for women. One man later remarked that he would have liked to join. Our inspector also pointed out that many men went to the *souq*, as it was the Ghaddar *souq* day (Saturday). He suggested making an announcement next time at mosques, *nadis* and *souq* to invite more men.

A community survey was also conducted in Ghaddar. The data was collected via a questionnaire prepared in English,

translated into Arabic, and distributed in public places: schools, local government offices, the site, streets, and the market in town. 120 respondents (123 forms were collected, 3 incomplete responses omitted) completed the questionnaire. The survey was intended to determine the community's social environment, understanding and experiences of the site, and its relation to their concept of heritage at the beginning of the project, and will be compared to another survey at the end of the project.

All of the respondents either live or work in Ghaddar. The gender of the respondents is evenly distributed (Female 62; Male 43; No answer 11), and the ages between 18 and 69. The average educational levels were secondary and university (undergraduate) levels, which was reflected in their occupations. Many respondents were teachers and public administration employees. The rest were mostly workers with lower level educational backgrounds (primary or incomplete primary levels). Varying degrees of literacy in Arabic were observed. Not all residents were able to participate in the survey, and occasionally he/she completed the form with the help of other people.

The survey shows that Ghaddar residents enjoy living in their current social environment (over 90% of respondents). Many feel safe and are not afraid of anyone in the town. Over half of the respondents think that life in Ghaddar is not

39.2%	I agree
56.7%	I do not agree
1.6%	I do not know
2.5%	No answer

Table 1. A question asking whether residents feel their life is hard and wish to move to another place.

difficult and would not move (Table 1). It is perhaps because they feel that education is satisfactory (78.0%) and they can count on families and friends in difficult times (93.0%). However, they also stated there is not enough access to water and there is a lack of job opportunities.

The study showed that a significant proportion of the respondents had heard (85.0%) about the expedition and have been to the Old Dongola archaeological site (80.8%). Generally, the respondents are satisfied with the fact that excavations have been carried out at Old Dongola, although the long-term archaeological work is clearly not enhancing their knowledge as most of them assessed their knowledge about archaeology in Old Dongola as fragmentary (Table 2).

Tourism could be a potential development as a result of archaeological excavations. The respondents generally see it as good news and having a positive impact on the local community and region. Their expectations for tourism are very high. They think it will bring job opportunities, improve

25.0%	I know well
30.0%	I know some
38.4%	I know a little
5.8%	I know nothing
0.8%	No answer

Table 2. The respondents' self-assessment of their knowledge of the Old Dongola site.

local infrastructure, bring more government attention, generally improve their life, and raise more awareness about their cultures (Table 3). Some of the respondents even indicated that they are not afraid of lifestyle changes and losing the unique character of the region, although it appears that they are not very aware of the potential negative impact that the industry (Throsby 2001) could have on their environment (Table 4). The result clearly shows that raising awareness of the local community regarding the positive and negative aspects of tourism is important.

The study showed that 'heritage (*turath*)' has an important place in the community's life. It is a source of pride in their community (95.8%) and is important to preserve (96.7%). At the same time, most of them (72.6%) are aware that it is under threat as fewer people are aware of the inherited heritage from their ancestors. In the questionnaire, what 'heritage' constitutes for the local community needs to be investigated to support raising a continued awareness.

I agree	19.2%
I do not agree	57.5%
I do not know	21.7%
No answer	1.6%

Table 4. Whether they agree that tourism development would result in the surrounding area losing its unique character.

Towards the next seasons

Working with the community is not always straightforward and has to respect its rhythms. Being conscious of and sensitive to local agency about heritage issues is also necessary. Overall, the first three-week period of fieldwork was a positive start to the dialogue with different residents and potential partners in the community. We need to keep the enthusiasm they expressed for interaction and activities with the expedition – which has been a long-term neighbour of the community – during the forthcoming fieldwork. Some issues to consider also emerged. One is the different views about history and heritage amongst the heterogeneous community. While we have already started sharing archaeological interpretations of

	Job opportunities	Road conditions	Government attention	General improvements in life	The local area to be internationally known
I agree	90.0%	84.2%	75.8%	65.8%	85.0%
I do not agree	0.8%	1.6%	6.7%	12.5%	5.0%
I do not know	5.8%	9.2%	14.2%	20.0%	6.7%
No answer	3.4%	5.0%	3.3%	1.7%	3.3%

Table 3. The local community's expectations of tourism development.

the site through the outreach programmes, how to narrate the site along with the historical and cultural perspectives and relevant knowledge that exists in the local community is important to the project. Different views may be present between genders, generations and cultural and/or historical backgrounds. We met a few elderly men in the community who were knowledgeable about local heritage. For instance, an engineer from the town now living in Khartoum had published a book about the history of Kush and Sudan, *al-Kushr* (Ghailli 2016), based on his knowledge of the language (Dongolawi), traditional games and the *Quran*. Schoolteachers requested archaeological information about the site, especially history teachers. At the same time, one teacher expressed how important Islamic history is for student education. Traditional interpretations of archaeological structures and landscape are valuable for understanding local perceptions, while how to balance archaeological interpretation and other views (e.g. non-Dongolawi people) will be challenging. Women's and young people's views to heritage and history also need to be explored.

We should also be aware of the gap in territorial coverage of 'the community'. In one of the meetings, the extent of 'the community' the local community wished us to work with was pointed out. The unit of 'the community' from the local community perspective covers a much larger area than the one we defined for the project. It was to include the entire Old Dongola Unit – the twelve towns/villages – rather than focusing on only one of them, Ghaddar. The project resources are insufficient to cover the whole area of the local municipality. Although it is important to remember this gap to try to alleviate other parts of Old Dongola who feel marginalised and unequally treated, it is not always possible to fulfil community needs and concerns in one short-term project. What these tell us is that we need to continue and expand our interactions and discussions with the residents in Ghaddar and beyond in future seasons.

Acknowledgements

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