

Africa Dig Day 4
By Jack Wooldridge

Today, when I arrived at the dig, everything was already taken out of the hole. It was time to set up the museum! I was in charge of setting up the level three table. We decided to order the level three artifacts so that they were in (roughly) the same order as they were in the dig. It was hard to read some of the maps, but I managed to get it all done. The skulls were fun to put together, as the parts fitted together like a strange jigsaw puzzle. It was hard to figure out where the spoons fit, though.

When everyone had finished setting up the museum, Big Dog called us all over and began to draw from us a story of what probably happened here. I'll start with level one. What were these animal statues and human statues symbolizing? Based on what we know of the African peoples and time period this dig is from (from roughly the time when the deserts were drying up), we can probably say this was a ceremony to bring the animal herds back. As the deserts were drying up, the animals were changing their migration patterns to where they could find food and water. The people were saying "Hang on, come back!" And so they performed a ceremony so that they could speak to the spirits of their ancestors, who would, if pleased, ask the animal spirits if they would help the people by bringing the animals back. Did it really work? It only had to work some of the time, and when it didn't work, the people assumed they had done something wrong.

Now on to level two. In this level, we see much of the same thing, only done differently. The animal masks, with figurines of people between, were probably used in a ceremony to bring the animals back. But the difference here was it was done much more simply. The masks, although beautiful, were not as complex as the animal statues in level one. And we know it probably didn't work this time. How? Because they did it again, in level one, in a much more complex way. Perhaps they felt the ancestors wanted more to make them happy.

Level three is the final level of our dig. The center point of level three is two enormous head and shoulder statues of a man and women. They were obviously very important people. We know that because of the broken insignia staffs, a sign of power being passed on, around them. Were they the people passing on the power, or the ones receiving it? We don't know, but there are several other things we can draw from this commemoration of power being passed on. Why do Africans hold these leaders in such high respect? Because they choose many important things about the ceremonies, such as the timing, how complex or simple it's going to be, and how it's going to take place. Basically, they are important because they choose how much energy is going to go into the ceremonies. So, these people, whoever they are, are definitely connected with the ceremonies from the higher levels.

After we had finished setting up the museum, we played games and had a pot-luck.