

**State Board of Antiquities & Heritage
Iraq**

**WORLD HERITAGE SITES
Ashur
(Qalat Sherqat)**

State of Conservation Report



In Response to World Heritage Committee

Decision WHC-13/37.COM/7A

World Heritage Commission of Iraq

Jan.,2014

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(Qalat Sherqat)
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1-Committee Decisions

COM 7A.2437

Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) (Iraq) (C 1130)

The World Heritage Committee.

1- Having examined Document WHC-13/37.COM/7A

2-Recalling Decision 36 COM 7A.21 , adopted at its 36th session (Saint-Petersburg, (2012

3-Welcomes the announcement by the State Party of the cancellation of the Makhool Dam project.

4-Requests the State Party to submit, in accordance to Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines , the details of all on-going or planned interventions at the site, including the construction of the protective shelter at the Royal Cemetery

5-Reiterates its invitation to the State Party to submit a request for International Assistance to the World Heritage Fund to support the preparation of the requested conservation and management plans.

6-Reiterates its request to the State Party to develop, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, proposals for corrective measures and for the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, together with a proposed timeframe, and to finalize the

retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th session in 2014.

7-Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2014 , an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th session in 2014.

8-Decides to retain Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) (Iraq) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

2-Periodic Reports, **Objectives**

According to Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, Article 199,200,201 periodic reports serves in many ways and the state parties are request to submit reports to the UNESCO General Conference through the World Heritage Committee on the legislative and administrative provisions they have adopted and other actions which they have taken for the application of the Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage Properties located on their territories .

The periodic reports serves four main purposes;

- To provide an assessment of the application of the world heritage convention by the state party;
- To provide an assessment as to whether the Outstanding Universal Value of the properties inscribed on the world heritage list is being maintained over time;
- To provide up-dated information about the world heritage properties to record the changing circumstances and state conservation of the properties;
- To provide mechanism for regional cooperation and exchange of information and experiences between State Parties concerning the implementation of the convention and world heritage conservation.

So periodic reports is important for more effective long term conservation of the properties inscribed, as well as to strength the credibility of the implementation of the convention.

3- Report Outline

1-	State Party	Iraq	
2-	Name of the World Heritage Property	Ashur (Qalat Sherqat)	
3-	Geographical coordinates to the nearest second	N 35 27 32. 004 E 43 15 34 922	
4-	Date of Inscription on the World Heritage List /in danger	2003	
5-	Organization responsible for the preparation of the report	State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, World Heritage Commission of Iraq	
6-	Date of the report	28/1/2014	
7-	Criteria	(iii)(iv)	
8-	Rev.	C1130	

Table 1 General Background of the Site
(Source; World Heritage Centre)

4-Site History Outline :

The site of the ancient city of Ashur modern (Qalat Sherqat) is located 390 km north of Baghdad.

The settlement was founded on the western bank of river Tigris, on uneven bedrock; within its walls it covers the area of about 65 ha.

The excavated remains consist of numerous superimposed stratigraphic levels of archaeological deposits.

The earliest of them date to the Sumerian Early Dynastic period of the early 3rd millennium BC.

After the Akkadian and Ur III period ,which are present at some points, follow the old, middle and neo Assyrian periods, the later one ending at the middle-first millennium BC.

The major features of the city which are presently visible on-site consist of architectural remains(some of them partly resorted) ; the ziggurat and the great temple of the god Ashur, the double-temple of Anu and Adad, the temple of Ishtar, the Sumerian goddess of love and war, the old palace with its royal tombs and several living quarters in many part of the city.

Some parts of the Parthian palace are visible at the border between old and new city. The majority of the buildings of the city were built with sundried mud bricks with foundation of quarry stones or dressed stone, depending on the period.

As an independent city state Ashur became capital of Assyria and the Assyrian during the 2nd millennium b stating with the old-Assyrian rulers.

Ashur remained political capital until the reign of the neo- Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) who moved it to Kalhu (modern Nimrud). After that Ashur continued to be an important religious and provisional Assyrian centre even though it had lost its function as national capital.

5- Introduction;

The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq has turned to UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC) by adoption World Heritage as a new concept, so Iraq endorsed the convention of protection world cultural, natural heritage in 1974, and from that time its sites inscribed on world heritage list, (Hatra;1985,Ashur,2003,Samarra,2007).

For management regime the area of the ancient city of Ashur has been the property of the state of Iraq since 1935 .

in the past, the site was protected under the Law of Antiquities of 1936 ,and its further amendments.

Currently, the site and its buffer zone are protected under the recently revised Law of Antiquities and Heritage,No.55,dated October 2002.

The protection and management of the site is the responsibility of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage .

Locally, the archaeological site is under the responsibility of the Inspector of Antiquities in the province of Salah-ed-Deen.

Excavations are conducted by the Department of Excavations and Archaeological Investigation in the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

The site of Ashur has been abandoned for nearly two millennium, major incursions have come only from archaeological excavations.

In 1903- 1914, the German expedition carried out excavations particularly in the northern section of the site and on the defense walls.

The state board of antiquities and heritage of Iraq began the first work in the site in 1978 in the late 1979s the State Board of Antiquates and Heritage resumed archaeological excavation and carried out some restoration to maintain and strength what has been exposed so far, such as city wall, the Tabira Gate, some private houses, the temple of Anu and Adad ,the old palace and the royal burial.

A large part of the town still remains unexcavated.

Iraq prepared a plan to implement extensive agricultural and economic project, which involve the construction of a large dam on the Tigris river some 30-40 km downstream from the archaeological site of Ashur.

The construction of the dam is expected to be completed in 2006, and the level of water would then cover the lower parts of the archaeological site of Ashur and its surroundings.

Many organizations such as ICOMOS, World Heritage Centre express their deep concerns about the probable impact of the dam on the city of Ashur and after negotiation and consultation, Ministry of Irrigation of Iraq has canceled the project after they found the area rich with sulfur material and can be economically invested.

6-Authenticity and Integrity

The site of Ashur had been abandoned at the end of the Parthian period (2nd century) and, contrary to many other sites in the region, there was no further occupation.

Therefore, the authenticity of the remains is high.

There are two structures built in the 19th and 20th centuries such as Ottoman military barracks at the north-eastern edge of the site.

The Mesopotamian region is a cradle of civilization, where several cultures had followed one another and built on each others achievement, including the Sumerian, Akkadian, the third dynasty of Ur, Ashur was one of the four capitals of the Assyrians and the first of these.

It is considered the only example of an urban site where continuity and change of the Assyrian civilization pertaining to religious, public, and domestic architecture, artistic production, urban planning, religious and political systems is revealed by the archaeological and textual evidence throughout the recorded archaeological periods.

In the terms of historic importance and cultural impact, Ashur can be compared with ancient capitals such as Babylon, Ur, Thebes, as well as Susa, and Persepolis.

No sites representing the Assyrian civilization have been inscribed on the world heritage list so far.

The closest reference is Tegeh Zanbil (World Heritage 1979), in western Iran, the sacred city of Elam, founded ca. 1250 BC.

7-Factors Affecting the Property:

Threats and Risks

- Ongoing erosion of fragile and exposed mud brick structures due to weathering and natural factors;
- Poor site conditions and lack of site drainage.
- Lack of preventive conservation activities and maintenance ;
- Lack of a multi disciplinary site management unit to ensure coordination between management and conservation activities as excavation and research, preventive conservation and maintenance, documentation and monitoring, presentation and development of the property;
- Lack of a comprehensive management plan in place to ensure conservation and development of the site;
- Lack of comprehensive conservation plan;
- Lack of documentation and monitoring activities.

8- Corrective Measures 2013;

Response to World Heritage Committee decision this season we began with preventive procedure for the most important monument in the city ,the Royal Cemetery ,situated south west of ziggurat , It was discovered by German expedition (1903-1914) and belong to middle Assyrian era 1500-912 B.C erected by mud brick and covered from the inside with brick and included five graves.

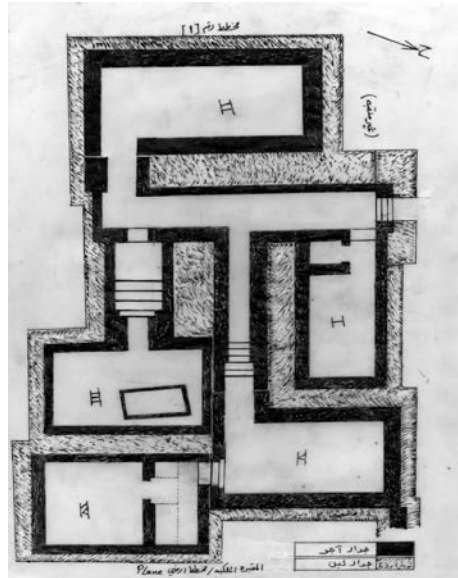


FIG.1 Royal cemetery plan

(Source; Department of antiquities of Sherqat,2012)

From the study for the remains of the cemetery it looks contain the graves for the Assyrian kings as follow;

- 1-Ashur Be l Cala -1074-1057 BC
- 2-Ashur Naser Bal,the second -883-859 BC
- 3-Sgamshi Adad the fifth 823-811 BC



FIG.2 Royal cemetery preparing for work(fixing new shelter)

(Source; Department of antiquities of Sherqat,2012)

Due to its place in the depressed area and each season flooded by rain so our department put a design executed this year as the protective shelter at the Royal Cemetery to protected it from rain and weathering and natural factors.

shelter made of an iron plate and poles with its shape a rectangular(40 X31) m and that the outer diameter of the cemetery,
 The protective shelter covered entirely the cemetery, from the pictures enclosed you can have a comprehensive sight for this shelter,
 It compose an iron bridges of square iron poles standing on the bases out of diameter of the cemetery with out any stands in side cemetery.
 And all these (14) bridges were connected each other with square iron poles then the roof will cover with resistant glass plates.



FIG.3 Protective shelter during the work
 (Source; Department of antiquities of Sherqat,2013)

from the outer diameter there are three staircases will fix on its outer lines
 (Southern, Eastern and Western)



FIG.4 Protective shelter from south-west corner
 (Source; Department of antiquities of Sherqat,2013)

For the purpose of future work we erected a large gate in its southern direction so we can go into to inspect ,monitoring and so on, and the protective shelter entirely completed and we are going to paint it with light yellow color .

in conclusion our report we can say that world heritage sites in Iraq ,particularly on the list of danger such as Ashur and Samarra, have more considerations in the field of protecting ,management and conservation.

Due to fragile situation of security limit our intervention , and we hope to expand our work toward to remove the city from the world heritage list in danger.



FIG.5 Final shape of protective shelter

(Source; Department of antiquities of Sherqat,2013)

The problem of erosion of mud structures will stay as a major factor of threats we face it in the site ,so were going to put a plan for comprehension intervention including all the monument in the site.