

DISCOVERING EDOM

Polish archaeological activity in southern Jordan



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edited by
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Polish archaeological contribution to the research and protection of Middle Eastern cultural heritage. Remarks on the last decades

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Abstract: Polish archaeological and conservational research and activities have a long history, full of successes and significant discoveries. Major Polish academic centres have been conducting research and conservation works for over 100 years, protecting the heritage of the Middle East and expanding our knowledge about the history of this crucially important region. In particular, in recent decades many research projects in such countries as Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been conducted and met with recognition of the international scientific society. The Polish research contribution and legacy of working in the Middle East cannot fail to be noticed and constitute a recognizable mark of the Polish scientific and conservation brand.

Keywords: Middle East, cultural heritage, Polish archaeology, Jagiellonian University, Warsaw University, Polish science

Over the last 20 years Polish scientists have contributed greatly to the many aspects of studies on the history of mankind as well as to the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the Middle East. Over recent decades Polish research teams have been very successful in investigating archaeological sites in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon.

This scientific work has been coordinated with carefully planned and well-performed (given the local conditions) activities aimed at the popularisation and promotion of Polish science, and also of the region which played a crucial role in the history of humankind. Supported by numerous exhibitions, meetings, open lectures, and coverage in the media, Polish archaeological discoveries concerning Middle East and its history have become an excellent showcase of Polish humanities at the turn of the 21st century.

The Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw (PCMA)¹ is without doubt the most important Polish institution involved in Middle Eastern and north African research, and it can also boast of its achievements in popularising Polish science and discoveries. It is dedicated to organising and coordinating Polish archaeological research (excavations and study works), conservation works and reconstruction projects in north-eastern Africa, in the Middle East, and in Cyprus, i.e. in the territories of such countries as Egypt, Sudan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Kuwait. The projects organised and/or supported by the PCMA include archaeological sites representing a broad chronological range, from the dawn of civilisation (pre-historic times), through all the historic periods of ancient Mediterranean civilisations, up to Late Antiquity and early Arab period. It is the only institution whose works are led by Polish scholars representing a wide range of Polish research institutions (universities in Kraków, Poznań, Toruń etc.), often in collaboration with foreign research centres. The Centre's tasks also include comprehensive documentation of the finds, archive management, and the production of quality books and periodicals that record the results of the research and greatly popularise it internationally. The PCMA also makes efforts to popularise the results of archaeological excavation and conservation projects among the Polish public by organising events like exhibitions and symposia, and through its intensive publishing activity. The PCMA administers the Research Centre in Cairo, which ensures efficient management of the Polish archaeological and conservation effort in Egypt and represents Polish scholars in their relations with the authorities responsible for antiquities and heritage protection in Egypt.

The above-mentioned Polish Research Centre in Cairo, founded in 1959 by the renowned archaeologist Kazimierz Michałowski, is a very important part of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the Warsaw University. The Cairo centre was established to perform logistical and administrative supervision of the research carried out in Egypt, as well as to represent Polish investigators to the Egyptian authorities and other archaeological centres in Cairo, and to just be their home, their research base in Egypt. It also performs the function of a research unit with its own library, organizing regular lectures presenting the latest Polish archaeological discoveries.

The first attempts to mark the role of Polish archaeologists in Egypt and more generally in Middle East took place in 1937, when Kazimierz Michałowski began excavations in Edfu, conducted by University of Warsaw in cooperation with the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in Cairo. After three seasons of research and a 3-year hiatus

¹ Visit www.pcma.uw.edu.pl for more information about most recent activities of PCMA.



Fig. 1. Kom el-Dikka (Egypt – Alexandria) – ancient theater and ruins of the city unearthed by Polish archaeologists (photo by Robert Słaboński)

caused by the Second World War, two decades later, in 1959, the Polish Research Centre in Cairo, located at 14 Baron Empain Street, was opened. It is worth emphasizing that the Polish Research Institute has been operating since 1957, but using private houses. Establishment of a permanent research institution acting next to renowned archaeological institutes was a testament to the achievements of Polish archaeology along the Nile and the whole Middle East. Kazimierz Michałowski became the head of the institution bearing the official name of the Polish Mediterranean Archaeology Station of Warsaw University in Cairo, and he held the office until his death in 1981. The official opening ceremony of the Cairo station took place in April 1960, and it was even not disturbed by a huge *chamsin* wind storm, described by many as ‘the worst of all’. After opening of offices in Cairo, Polish excavations in Egypt and the Middle East expanded very quickly. In 1959 a Polish team began a research project in Palmyra (Syria), and in 1960 at Kom el-Dikka (Egypt – Alexandria; Fig. 1) and in the area of the temple of Hatshepsut (Egypt – Deir el-Bahari). As well, Polish researchers took part in the rescue of the Nubian temples as part of the UNESCO project of relocation of Abu Simbel temple. During the UNESCO activity many interesting discoveries, significant for archaeology, were made in Sudan at the site of Faras. In subsequent years research in Cyprus (Nea Paphos) as well as on Egyptian sites like Tell Atrib, Cairo (Mosque of Emir Qurqumas),

Qasr Ibrim, Valley of the Kings (tomb of Ramses IV), Abu Simbel, and Sudanese sites in Dongola and Kadero was successfully conducted. Every year the number of sites surveyed by Polish scientists was growing (Lipińska 2007: 19–30).

Since the death of Kazimierz Michałowski in January 1981 the PCMA has been managed by his disciples: Zofia Sztetyllo (1981), Waldemar Chmielewski (1982), Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski (1982–1991), Michał Gawlikowski (1991–2005), Piotr Bieliński (2005–2014) and Tomasz Waliszewski (since 2014). Since 2007, according to the regulations of the Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University, the Director of the Research Station in Cairo has been appointed on the basis of the results of an open competition. At present, the station in Cairo also employs persons reporting directly to the director of the station, working on, among others, administrative, economic and technical support of research teams.

It is worth mentioning that the increasing number of expeditions involving activity on several new sites (e.g. Naqlun Marina El-Alamein, Marea, Pelusium, Saqqara, and Dahleh Oasis and Tell el-Retaba) has resulted in the need for organizational change of the administrative structures of the Cairo station. In 1986 the supervising Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw was established, directed by Kazimierz Michałowski. Based in Warsaw, it also manages the station in Cairo and several terrain missions. In 1994 the Centre opened a new headquarters in Cairo, purchased through the Foundation for Polish Science. Since the 1960s the activity of Polish archaeologists in Egypt has tremendously increased (see e.g. Laskowska-Kusztal 2007). The Centre has also launched research in other Middle Eastern countries such as at Tell Arbid, Tell Qaramel, Hawarte (Syria), Chhîm and Jiyeh (Lebanon) and in Sudan (El-Zuma, Banganarti, Selib, Ghazali, etc.). Every year dozens of Polish researchers, including archaeologists, conservators, anthropologists and architects are involved in research in Egypt and other countries in the region². Polish specialists have established numerous contacts with Egyptian scholars, officials, inspectors and workers. Many sites investigated by Polish scientists have taken primary positions in the history of Egyptology and excavations in Egypt. The Temple of Hatshepsut and the Temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari have become examples of excellent maintenance projects, while Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria is a fine example of a superior tourist attraction. Tell el-Farcha site (explored by the Polish Archaeological Expedition to the Eastern Nile Delta, see below) has in recent years become a symbol of crucial discoveries for the archaeology and early history of Egypt.

² Many of the Polish activities conducted in the Middle East is described in: K. Michałowski, M. L. Bernhard (eds.), *Od Nilu do Eufratu – polska archeologia śródziemnomorska 1981–1994*, Warszawa 1995.

One of the most important and significant Polish works supervised by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology was conducted since 1959 on the Syrian site of Palmyra (Gawlikowski 2010, see also the journal *Studia Palmyreńskie*). As a result of this activity, important achievements in the study of architecture and sepulchral sculpture have been implemented under the direction of Anna Sadurska, Barbara Filarska and Michał Gawlikowski. On that basis the scientific journal *Studia Palmyreńskie* was established. The journal, published by The Polish Centre of Mediterranean archaeology, is presenting the archaeology of both the city and the region of Palmyra. It is open to all specialists interested in Palmyrean issues, covering a broad range of themes concerning all aspects of Palmyra's civilization, from the earliest period until Arab times. The scope of the journal covers not only archaeological discoveries, but also the history of Palmyra, its religion, art and epigraphy. It is obvious that Polish researchers who left Syria after the outbreak of civil war are today looking towards this place with special attention and concern.

Very important Polish archaeological works are also being conducted under the aegis of the PCMA in Lebanon. In Chhîm a research project was developed from 1996 to 2008 jointly with the Lebanese Direction Générale des Antiquités. The excavations were led by Tomasz Waliszewski, who is also the present director of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. Excavations were finally completed in 2008. On this site, traces of human activity from the Bronze Age to the Early Islamic era were identified. The most interesting discoveries are a Roman sanctuary from the 1st–2nd century AD, oil compressors also from Roman times, and a Christian basilica with a floor mosaic from the 5th century AD (see Waliszewski et al. 2002: 5–104). Another important site is Jiyeh (ancient Porphyreon) where excavations have been conducted by the PCMA together with the Lebanese Direction Générale des Antiquités since 2003. They are also directed by Tomasz Waliszewski. Many important discoveries have been revealed on this site, such as a centre of ceramics production, an early-Roman necropolis, and a Late Antique and Christian basilica, with a mosaic floor dated back to the 5–6th century AD (Waliszewski 2005: 419–422).

The latest research project is being conducted in Lebanon under the direction of Zuzanna Wygnańska, in Akkar Province in the northern part of Lebanon. This is one of the most important areas connecting Syria and Mesopotamia with the Mediterranean coast. This province is mentioned in the written sources from the late Bronze Age as a territory of rivalry between Egypt and the Hittite Empire. The aim of the PCMA project is to document traces of settlement in the plateau area. During the

archaeological reconnaissance carried out in 2018, the team from PCMA localized 29 sites, including several megalithic graves and two large-sized 'broad room' buildings with apses, dated to Early Bronze I (second half of the 4th millennium BC). The most sensational discovery was the connection of these buildings with boulders decorated with engravings with a snake motif, suggesting a cult purpose, perhaps related to a funeral cult. In addition, defensive buildings, a quarry, a sanctuary and remains of residential architecture of periods from the beginning of our era until the eighteenth century were identified (PCMA 2018a).

More distant areas of the Middle Eastern region also fall within the interests of Polish researchers. In cooperation with Kuwait's Department of Antiquities and Museum of the National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NACCAL), Polish explorers from the PCMA are exploring archaeological sites of different ages, identifying pottery workshops, ancient farms, camel, sheep and goat pens, as well as desert wells. This is a part of several Kuwaiti-Polish archaeological missions working continually for over 10 years. As the leaders of the team underlined, there is a strong and urgent need for an implementation of a rescue program for many archaeological sites in Kuwait. This type of activity and motivation is specially beloved by Polish researchers, who are usually very sensitive towards heritage protection and rescue actions.

Extremely important findings were provided by studies conducted by Piotr Bieliński and Agnieszka Pieńkowska on sites of Bahra 1 and Kharaib ed-Desht on Fajlaka Island. On the first of them, among others, the largest Ubaid culture settlement on the Arabian Gulf was discovered, a workshop producing tubular beads from the *Conomurex persicus* shell and a rich set of local ceramics (the so-called Coarse Red Ware) imported from Mesopotamia (Bieliński 2018). On the second site, in turn, there were discovered: a fishing village with residential buildings and fishing installations (nearly one hundred stoves for fish processing), a large stone structure with internal buttresses, fishing structures located along the shores of Kharaib el-Desht Bay and a rich set of imported glass bracelets (see e.g. Pieńkowska 2017). During the recently completed excavation campaign on Bahra 1 site, archaeologists from the University of Warsaw studied an architectural complex different from those constructions hitherto known on this site. According to them many indications suggest that this building had a cult function, combining local tradition with concepts borrowed from the Ubaid culture. That would make it the oldest cult building not only in Kuwait, but also in the whole region (PCMA 2018b).

One of the other teams working in Kuwait, headed by Łukasz Rutkowski, searched archaeological sites in As-Sabiya Desert over seven seasons, focusing mostly on tumuli graves and other stone constructions. As a result of this activity eight stone structures

were explored in Muheita and Nahdin. The team also excavated a cluster of five structures, including two tumuli (mounds of earth and stones raised over graves) and another one partially pulled down in the past. These discoveries were preliminarily dated to the Bronze Age, and more exactly between the 2nd part of the III millennium B.C. and the 1st half of the II millennium B.C. (see e.g. Rutkowski 2014: 431–461; Pawlicki 2014: 462–470).

All leaders and members of Polish research teams conducting excavations at the Egyptian and Levantine archaeological sites are used to enjoying the hospitality of the Research Centre in Cairo. One of the most important examples of PCMA activity is certainly an annual conference entitled *The Poles on the Nile and The Poles in the Middle East* which presents the results of the works currently conducted by the Polish archaeologists in the areas of Egypt and Sudan as well as on the sites located in the Levantine part of the region. One should also mention the annual journal *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* (PAM; Fig 2) which provides up-to date reports on current fieldwork carried out by Polish scholars in the Mediterranean. Also until recently, an excellent example of promotional activity of the scholars associated with the PCMA were the works conducted in recent decades on the Tell Abrid site in Syria. A superb website, press releases and other media activity made it possible to disseminate knowledge about ancient north-eastern Syria and the Chabur River basin to a wide variety of audiences. Unfortunately, the outbreak of civil war interrupted the promising activity of this team.



Fig. 2. PAM journal published by Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw since 1990

It should also be noted that Polish researchers are among the most active in obtaining research grants focused on the Middle Eastern areas. In recent years dozens of such grants have been implemented in various Polish scientific institutions. In 2017, the European Research Council awarded an ERC Starting Grant for the project *UMMA – Urban Metamorphosis of the community of a Medieval African capital city*, which is processed under the direction of Artur Obłuski at the above-described Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology. The UMMA research project has an interdisciplinary character. Its scientific team plans to use the most modern research methods combining such fields as archaeology, physics, biology and chemistry. Geophysical investigations and stable isotope studies will be also used, to provide most precise data contributing to our knowledge on the history of mankind.

The Polish Archaeological Expedition to the Eastern Nile Delta, led by the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and the Archaeological Museum in Poznań, is another excellent example of Polish scientific activity performed in Egypt and related with the broader area of the Middle East. For more than 20 years the expedition has been conducting field works, which currently are among the most important and widely recognized excavations in Egypt (Fig. 3–7). Extraordinary, sensational discoveries of the world's oldest brewery, rich burials, golden statues of previously unknown rulers, and



Fig. 3. Tell el-Farkha (Egypt – Nile Delta) – trade factory from the predynastic and archaic period. One of the most important archaeological sites excavated by Polish archaeologists (photo by Robert Staboński)



Fig. 4a. Tell el-Farkha (Egypt – Nile Delta) – Western Kom: deposit of 62 objects discovered by Polish scientists and presently exhibited in Egyptian Museum in Cairo (photo by Robert Staboński)

Fig. 4b. Tell el-Farkha (Egypt – Nile Delta) – Eastern Kom: one of the two golden figurines discovered in 2006 (photo by Robert Staboński)

enigmatic figures of deities have garnered much interest in the worldwide media and have revolutionised the studies on the origins of ancient Egypt. These finds have immediately become quoted in handbooks of ancient Egyptian culture, and many of the artefacts uncovered by Poles belong to the greatest attractions of the famous Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Chłodnicki 2011: 65–81).

Tell el-Farkha is one of the most important archaeological sites currently being excavated in Egypt (Fig. 8–9). The





Fig. 5. Tell el-Farkha (Egypt – Nile Delta) – Western Kom: exploration of early Egyptian brewery complex (photo by Robert Słaboński)

discoveries made there over the last several years have vastly influenced the picture of the Nile Delta in the period of the Pharaonic state formation. The site is situated in the north-east of the Delta, about 120 km from Cairo, 10 km from the contemporary city of Simbillawin and about 15 km from ancient Mendes, which once played a crucial role in the history of the decline of Tell el-Farkha. The site is formed by three hills (koms) totalling approx. 4500 m² in area, which are elevated no more than 5 m over the surrounding farmlands. The southern and eastern boundaries of the site are marked by the contemporary village of Ghazala. In 1998, Polish archaeologists from the Polish Archaeological Expedition to the Eastern Nile Delta started investigations under the supervision of Krzysztof Ciałowicz from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Marek Chłodnicki from the Archaeological Museum in Poznań³. On the Western Kom, a structure serving as a residence or temple was uncovered, and its youngest layer yielded a deposit of objects interpreted as offerings. Nearby, in the older layers, a complex of breweries was discovered, which is the second-oldest structure of this kind in Egypt. The oldest layer revealed the relics of a large structure linked with the Lower Egyptian culture, which provided evidence for the

³ Complete information concerning first 10 years of excavations is available in: K. Ciałowicz, M. Chłodnicki, A. Mączyńska, *Tell el-Farkha I*, Poznań 2012.



Fig. 6. Tell el-Farkha (Egypt – Nile Delta) – Eastern Kom: exploration of predynastic cemetery (photo by Robert Słaboński)

development of local architectural traditions in the Nile Delta before the appearance of the Naqadians (Ciałowicz 2012: 149–162). In the Central Kom, numerous dwellings and household buildings were discovered, their function confirmed by a large number of tools, animal bones and domestic refuse (Chłodnicki, Gemming 2012: 89–105). The Eastern Kom, however, remained a puzzle for the researchers until 2001, when the trenches opened in that place revealed graves, the majority of which had not been looted in antiquity. Thus far, the works conducted on the cemetery have resulted in the discovery and exploration of more than 120 graves dated to the times of Dynasties 0, I and II, i.e. to the period crucial for the beginnings of Egyptian history. The burials are richly furnished and only some of them have been looted. In 2003, the oldest grave in the *mastaba* type was discovered in the Eastern Kom; such graves usually belonged to high-ranking officials from the period of the Egyptian state formation. The tomb is still under exploration (Dębowska-Ludwin 2012: 53–77). The site at Tell el-Farkha offers a unique opportunity to thoroughly investigate a settlement complex whose chronology spans from the local Lower Egyptian culture, through the stages linked with the Naqadian population, up to the rule of the first dynasties and the beginning of the pyramid period, as well as its connections with the Levantine settlement. From a scholarly point of view the works conducted at Tell el-Farkha are perhaps the most important studies of the formative



Fig. 7. Polish Archaeological Expedition to the Eastern Nile Delta in 2013 (photo by Robert Słaboński)

period in Egypt ever conducted (Kołodziejczyk 2005: 149–157). This magnificent site remains a field for theoretical studies and analyses, resulting every year in new publications and scientific ideas (see e.g. Ciałowicz, Czarnowicz, Chłodnicki eds. 2018).

The potential of these excavations for promotion and popularisation has also been well-exploited by the project leaders. Thus far, several exhibitions presenting the photographs from Tell el-Farcha have been organised. They were shown in the years 2001–2013 in several cities in Poland and abroad (e.g. Kraków, Poznań, Katowice, Cairo). Between 2000 and 2013 more than 100 publications about the excavations and discoveries made at Tell el-Farcha appeared in the daily press and in popular science journals (including *National Geographic*). Several years of popularisation and promotional activities not only made the results of the excavations widely known in Polish society, but they also helped to gain important support from many institutions and have been rated highly among the most important Polish research achievements of recent years in rankings published by scientific institutions and in the press (see e.g. Kołodziejczyk 2015).

In recent years the area of Israel and Jordan has also become an important workplace for Polish researchers. In this context it is worth underlining two projects carried out by archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University



Fig. 8. Polish conservators working on the objects from votive deposit from Tell el-Farkha, in the laboratory of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (photo by Robert Słaboński)



Fig. 9. Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Museum showcases fulfilled with objects discovered by Polish archaeologists in Egypt (photo by Robert Słaboński)



Fig. 10. Polish excavations at Tel Erani in Israel (photo by Agnieszka Ochał-Czarnowicz)



Fig. 11. Tel Erani (Israel). One of the Bronze Age jars discovered during the 2013 season (photo by Marcin Czarnowicz)

in Kraków. The first project, on Tel Erani site in Israel, started in 2013 (Fig. 10–11). The main goal of the project is to determine the course of trade routes connecting Egypt to the Middle East during the Early Bronze I, i.e. in the fourth millennium BC. Excavations conducted at Tel Erani near Kiryat Gat are exploring one of the most important prehistoric sites in the northern Negev. During several seasons of excavations a part of a city wall was uncovered. The site is considered by experts to be the key to understanding the so-called early Egyptian colonization in the area of the Levant (Ciałowicz, Yekutieli, Czarnowicz eds. 2016). So far, evidence of such relations has been observed at the other end of the route, while conducting Polish research at Tell el-Farcha in the Nile Delta, where a number of imports from Southern Levant were discovered by the Polish team (Czarnowicz, Pasternak, Ochał-Czarnowicz, Skłucki 2014: 235–244).

One effect of the recent research seasons was the discovery of structures confirming that during the Early Bronze Age on the Tel Erani site the oldest defensive walls in this area were built. It was a part of an extensive settlement founded, at least partially, by Egyptian settlers. Excavations are carried out with the cooperation and participation of archaeologists from Ben Gurion University of the Negev. This is the only excavation project currently being carried out by Polish archaeologists in Israel.

Regarding the current unstable situation in the region, Jordan seems to be the only country offering favourable conditions for scientific research, and it is becoming increasingly popular among scientists. Polish institutions are focusing their interest on the Hashemite Kingdom as well. The Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw has in recent years been conducting a research program in Beit Ras in Jordan, which covers the ancient city of Capitolias. The archaeological team working on this site is a cooperative group developed on the basis of an agreement between the PCMA and the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The site is very important and was described by Claudius Ptolemy, a geographer of the 2nd century AD, as a part of the Decapolis, that is, a group of ten Graeco-Roman cities in eastern Palestine⁴. During the excavations the Polish team, directed by Jolanta Młynarczyk, examined the alignment of walls, which was registered in an electro-resistive scan, and it seems to concur with that of the streets of the Roman-period Capitolias. Many artefacts were collected during the first seasons, including fragments of roof tiles, tesserae (mosaic cubes) and several coins, as well as lumps of 'raw glass', slag, and production waste which point to the existence of glass-production workshops in the area of the excavated part of the city (see e.g. Młynarczyk 2017; Burdajewicz 2017).

⁴ Among them were also modern capitals, such as Damascus in Syria and Philadelphia (Amman) in Jordan, as well as Scythopolis (Beth Shean) and Hippos (both in today's Israel) and Jerash and Gadara (in Jordan).

Furthermore, archaeologists from Kraków have in recent years been carrying out a new Polish research project in southern Jordan. Archaeologists and students from Kraków began survey exploration of Wadi Mashra area in the At-Tafila Directorate (Fig. 12). The project is directed by Piotr Kołodziejczyk from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Since 2014, Polish archaeologists in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities have been looking for traces of human activity from the Stone Age to the Medieval times. The area of the survey is located in the vicinity of important archaeological sites such as the capital of the Edomites – Bosra (now the city of Buseira) and the rock-cut Sela refugium, often interpreted as an important cult place and arena of great events from the Iron Age. After five years of research, scientists are sure that this region played an important role in prehistoric times. This view is evidenced by many finds – e.g. pottery, flint tools, glass items, etc. – which are now the subject of further analysis. Archaeologists from Kraków are especially interested in finds from the Bronze Age which may help to answer many questions related to human presence in the area of Edom in that period (Kołodziejczyk 2014: 245–252). Another important research problem is the role of the southern Jordan in the Nabatean and Roman periods and its relationship with trade routes and other major centres of the northern part of the Edom plateau. The second team, headed by Jarosław Bodzek, Kamil Kopij and Łukasz Misk is conducting exploration of Dajaniyeh Roman military fortress and the city of Tuwaneh (see Bodzek et al., in this volume). A long-term research topic for the Kraków archaeologists is primarily a reconstruction of transportation routes in southern Jordan and the role of environmental conditions in transformations of human activity in this area. Some of the conducted projects will also be the beginning of thematically and methodologically integrated field works and analyses devoted to the role of environment and landscape in archaeology. A late pre-historical project (HLC Project – see Kołodziejczyk et al., in this volume) related to the at-Tafleh region will also help in understanding the processes of cultural change and locate them in the context of nature and landscape, and will popularize customs and traditions in modern Jordan. Exploration carried out during recent years was conducted in very difficult mountainous terrain. The Polish team made a documentation of more than 70 areas with artefacts which may be described after further analysis as archaeological sites or landscapes. This activity is also a departure point for a much larger presence of the Jagiellonian University team in southern Jordan⁵. The research group started regular excavations on selected sites in cooperation with Jordanian scholars and

⁵ Visit www.hlcproject.org for more and current information.



Fig. 12. Polish scientific project in southern Jordan. Artifacts discovered during 2015 season and area of the project (photo by Piotr Kołodziejczyk)

antiquity protectors. It is also worth mentioning that the activities of the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Jordan starting in 2013/2014 was the first Polish independent research project in this area. Its implementation was possible thanks to the kind support provided by an Italian team of archaeologists from the University of Florence, working for many years in the area of southern Jordan, under the direction of Professor Guido Vannini. While both research groups operate independently, they remain in very friendly cooperation. This cooperation continues in the context of a third Kraków project conducted in southern Jordan. A team headed by Przemysław Nocuń and Agnieszka Ochał-Czarnowicz is exploring the castle of Qasr ed-Deir in the vicinity of At-Tafila city. After the initial seasons we may assume that Qasr ed-Deir should be seen as a compact, multiphase complex and its origins should be most probably dated to the Roman-Byzantine Period. The complex was developed and reconstructed more than once and the last great alterations should be dated to the

Mamluk periods. Future analysis of the stratigraphy of masonry elements combined with analysis of the archaeological material should yield more precise results (as the archaeological excavations are hopefully to be continued in the following years).

The presence of Polish archaeologists and conservators in the Middle East has led to great contributions to the study and protection of cultural heritage on a globally significant scale. It is worth noting that Polish scientists are conducting their research in places that are not only particularly important for understanding the history of civilization, but are also threatened by conflict, economic development, and environmental factors. The important achievements of Polish archaeologists have put them at the forefront of the global scientific community, making archaeology the ideal showcase for Polish science. The changes taking place in the Middle East and the problems arising over the past few years have unfortunately hampered the work in several places, but at the same time they have prompted Polish archaeologists to explore new areas and directions in their research and activities.

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