

Editorial

Within the broader field of Near and Middle Eastern archaeology, the archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian (Arabian) Gulf had represented a notably less extensively investigated subject until the last half century. The exceptions were the northern regions of Arabia, those, however, mainly linked to other research fields (e.g. Mesopotamian, Nabataean and Biblical archaeology). While this situation began to change in around the late 1950s, when a Danish expedition started archaeological works in the Gulf and the American Foundation for the Study of Man undertook research in Yemen and the Dhofar governorate in the Sultanate of Oman, a dramatic increase in the number of field projects has occurred over the last c. 15 years, for concomitant reasons. On the one hand, political turmoil has considerably limited or even cancelled investigations in Syria, as well as in Yemen, with missions looking (first) to south-east Arabia to relocate their projects. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's unprecedented drive towards knowledge and preservation of its past has opened the way to a remarkable number of research initiatives.

Reflecting this perception of Arabian archaeology as a peripheral field compared to the more traditional geographic limits of Near and Middle Eastern archaeology, very few scholarly journals are focused on this subject or have at least dedicated sections (e.g. *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, *Proceeding of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie*). The area has, likewise, been rarely discussed in *Études et Travaux* itself, despite the growing interest in the region by archaeologists from Polish academic and research institutes.

Given this situation, we deemed it appropriate to devote this volume of *Études et Travaux* to the presentation of the recent results of international projects in Arabia. Admittedly, the number and variety of the originally proposed papers had, finally, to be reduced due to unmet requirements and time constraints. But we hope that at least some of these papers can find their place in the subsequent volume(s) of *Études et Travaux*. Therefore, finally, six contributions form the first thematic section on Arabian archaeology. While the geographical scope of the papers turned out to be limited to south-east Arabia (the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE), the chronological scope remains ample. The papers collected in this volume cover the most recent outcomes of research in the Neolithic period along the southern coastal area of Oman (Wādī Ṣayy) and the investigation of the Bronze and Iron

Age funerary landscape in the central areas of the Emirate of Sharjah (al Khudairah, UAE). This issue also includes a detailed reanalysis of the evidence for metalworking at the Iron Age site of Masafi-1 (Fujairah, UAE); a discussion of the ephemeral remains of the Late Antique and Islamic period at Sumhuram and in the area of Khor Rori (Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman); a new architectural analyses of the seventh–eight century church on Sir Bani Yas Island (Abu Dhabi, UAE); and a study of the architecture and architectural decoration of the early Islamic site of Jumeriah (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

In geographical and chronological terms, the thematic section of the current volume reflects the dynamically developing involvement of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences (the publisher of *Études et Travaux*), and especially the Divisions for the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East and the Islamic Archaeology Research Unit in investigations on the Arabian Peninsula. Starting with the first Polish field project in the Gulf in 2007, members of the Institute – Dorota Bielińska, Dominika Majchrzak, Zuzanna Wygnańska (the last of these a guest editor of the present volume) as well as Maciej Makowski (editor in chief of the journal) – joined University of Warsaw projects at the Ubaid-period settlement at Bahra 1 and the burial mounds – mainly of a Bronze Age date – in the Al-Subiyah region in Kuwait. Bielińska and Makowski also took part in another project of the University of Warsaw devoted to investigation of the Iron Age settlement and Umm an-Nar tombs in the Qumayrah Valley, northern Oman. Involvement of the Institute’s researchers in the fieldwork in the Arabian Peninsula was broadened with a project at the Iron Age site of Saruq al-Hadid in Dubai (UAE), where works were conducted by Karol Juchniewicz and Wygnańska. Furthermore, Juchniewicz has directed research at the late antique and Islamic sites of Aynuna and Jeddah Al Balad (Saudi Arabia), and Jumeirah (Dubai, UAE). To the list one should also add Agnieszka Lic’s studies on architecture and architectural decoration in the Gulf region in Late Antiquity and the Islamic period, as well as Urszula Iwaszczuk’s analysis of animal remains from Jeddah. Michele Degli Esposti’s move (the subject editor of this volume) to our Institute also brought with it a renewed impulse towards Arabian and Gulf research, with the involvement in projects dedicated to Tell Abraq in a very broad chronological framework (from the Bronze Age until late pre-Islamic period) and Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period on Sīnīya Island (Umm al-Quwain, UAE), as well as to the diachronic human occupation at Salūt (central Oman) from the Bronze Age to the Islamic period.

We very much hope that the thematic section in this volume, which could not have come into being without the support of a great number of specialists – authors and reviewers – from the international community, is merely the first in a series and will accelerate the process of making *Études et Travaux* a space for sharing and exchange of results of the most recent research and analyses related to the Arabian Peninsula.

The current volume also includes the results of important studies that fit the more traditional scope of the journal: analysis of potmarks on the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom bread moulds from settlement contexts at Tell el-Murra (Egypt), and a discussion of the Gebelein region (also Egypt) in the Third Intermediate and Late periods.

In 2023, one of our eminent colleagues at the Institute, Professor Zsolt Kiss, passed away. Several obituaries underlined his remarkable research achievements and a list of his publications released up to 2012 is available in the twenty-fifth volume of this journal, dedicated to Professor Kiss. Here, we would like, however, to remember his less-known merits as an editorial assistant and later editor of a dozen volumes of *Études et Travaux* between the 1970s and 1990s. With this volume, we would like to honour the memory of our dear colleague.

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