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# PRESERVATION AND PRESENTATION OF NEOLITHIC SITES: A CASE STUDY AT SHKARAT MSAIED, SOUTHERN JORDAN

*Moritz Kinzel*

## *Abstract*

*Hitherto the preservation and presentation of Neolithic sites in Jordan was an often ignored field and more or less neglected. Famous sites like Beidha and Basta were left after excavation and massive degradation took place in the following years. The archaeological remains were endangered by visitors stepping on the walls, balks and other fragile features. In the last years the awareness for the preservation and presentation of these sites arose, and preliminary considerations on this topic were done by various teams. This contribution discusses general possibilities for site preservation and presentation concepts and will focus on the case study of the early Neolithic site of Shkarat Msaied, Southern Jordan in the framework of a regional concept of site presentation. Shkarat Msaied will be, together with other Neolithic sites like Ghwair, Beidha, Ba'ja and Basta, part of the planned 'Neolithic Heritage Trail'.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years, very extensive fieldwork was done on the Neolithic in the Southern Levant. At the same time the question arose: 'How to preserve these sites for the future?'. For a long time there were no answers to that question. Even today there are only a few answers. Most of the projects were aware of the problems of conservation. Site presentation has been a concern for post-excavation work up to now. Presenting an archaeological project from the very early beginnings to the public is a relatively new procedure and therefore we need different new ways of site management. In this contribution I will focus on the preservation and presentation of Neolithic sites in the Greater Petra Area, Southern Jordan.

## 2. GENERAL THOUGHTS ON SITE PRESERVATION

Site preservation is a controversial topic. On the one hand there is usually no clear date of closing of archaeological on-site investigations (e.g., unexpected discoveries result in further excavation work) and on the other hand it is impossible to plan all investigations on a site already during the preparation of the project. It is hard to say, whether any further excavation work needs to be done on a given excavation site or whether conservation or preservation work can already be started. Therefore we have to distinguish between

- a. preservation work parallel to excavation and fieldwork, and
- b. post-excavation conservation work. In general there are the following strategies for the preservation of archaeological sites, whether during excavation or after the excavation work has been concluded:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>According to the ICOMOS charter from 1990, archaeological site maintenance and conservation should contain the following aspects: 'Article 6. The overall objective of archaeological heritage management should be the preservation of monuments and sites in situ, including proper long-term conservation and curation of all related records and collections, etc.

1. *Backfill*: if at all possible, backfill is the most efficient way of preserving the excavated remains. To backfill at least sensitive parts, e.g., to avoid the collapsing of walls or balks, and to protect wall foundations and other sensitive finds/features might be a good viable solution to the common lack of restoration or conservation financing.
2. *Consolidation of wall tops*: a consolidation or conservation of wall tops, can avoid wall collapse and in the context of Neolithic architecture relatively simple methods can be employed to achieve this end. In general, there are some aesthetic problems with wall top conservation within the context of site presentation, but this is another story. There are at least four ways:
  - a. Cleaning the stones including the joints to a certain depth. Filling the joints with a 'new' mortar based on the analyses of the original one.
  - b. Covering the wall top with a layer of local soils (best after salt and mineral analyses).
  - c. Leaving preserved mortar/plaster remains in situ on the wall tops, when there is no longer any other relevant data to expect. This method/guideline '*preserve features to protect other features*' might be problematic in terms of archaeological research, but in terms of heritage conservation it is a very practical and useable one.

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Any transfer of elements of the heritage to new locations represents a violation of the principle of preserving the heritage in its original context. This principle stresses the need for proper maintenance, conservation and management. It also asserts the principle that the archaeological heritage should not be exposed by excavation or left exposed after excavation if provision for its proper maintenance and management after excavation cannot be guaranteed. Local commitment and participation should be actively sought and encouraged as a means of promoting the maintenance of the archaeological heritage. This principle is especially important when dealing with the heritage of indigenous peoples or local cultural groups. In some cases it may be appropriate to entrust responsibility for the protection and management of sites and monuments to indigenous peoples. Owing to the inevitable limitations of available resources, active maintenance will have to be carried out on a selective basis. It should therefore be applied to a sample of the diversity of sites and monuments, based upon a scientific assessment of their significance and representative character, and not confined to the more notable and visually attractive monuments' (ICOMOS 2004a).

- d. Provisory shelters. All methods need a maintenance schedule.
3. *Protection and consolidation of walls and wall foundations*: even more important than the consolidation of the wall tops is the protection and consolidation of the walls themselves and their foundations. Neglected care on this issue results in wall collapse and massive degradation of the archaeological remains. The state and the condition of the preserved remains should be under observation and a periodical inspection should be part of a conservation concept. A simple method to prevent the destruction of foundations is to backfill to a certain height of the wall. Furthermore, structural additions, if really necessary, could help to fix and support the foundations, and/or refilling of joints with a mortar mixed with specific ingredients according to the conditions of the site. All these additions have to be reversible according to the general guidelines of heritage conservation (Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz 1996, ICOMOS 2004b).
  4. *Protection of the trenches and balk profiles*: a drainage system might be helpful, but a row of stones along the trenches is normally very efficient. ‘Self-guided’ trails for visitors to keep them out of the sensitive areas of work and features are a successful way to prevent erosion and dilapidation processes. Additionally, some temporal signs: ‘Do not step on the walls and balks’, are needed as well. There are other methods with chemical injection into a profile for stabilisation, but this could affect the results or findings in later investigations.
  5. *Shelter*: a frequently used way of protection and preservation of a site is to build a shelter over the most exciting/important find-spot. Shelters can provide a good solution for many conservation problems. Using a shelter needs a more advanced drainage system to avoid gully systems created by the shelter-collected water. The construction of a shelter on an archaeological site always adds a new dominant component to the site, even the ‘lightest’ structure changes the character and/or perception of the site. If possible we should avoid the use of shelters, because an important aspect of the Neolithic sites is their landscape location.
  6. *Fence*: an easy and nowadays regularly used way of protecting a site in general is to build a fence around it. A fence can be useful to prevent damage through both animals and people. In addition to the fence there should be a guard around who looks after the site from time to time to prevent a dismantling of the fence, e.g., as observed on sites like ‘Ain Jammam near Ras an-Naqb, where only the posts are still on-site, whereas the fence is gone.

For each site an individual ‘cocktail’ from the above mentioned possibilities should be mixed. There is not the one and only method for the preservation of a site. The planning for preservation and conservation work should already be started during the excavation. If that is the case it is important to ask the question: ‘When to stop an excavation and how to leave the site?’. Preservation works, like backfilling and provisory wall top consolidation, can already be begun during the excavation as part of the fieldwork. Here

might be a key for new ways of fund raising. We should see preservation work as an integral part of the excavation fieldwork and archaeological research (e.g., results from archaeological analyses of plaster, mortar and soils can also be used for the conservation work). In this context of general site protection and preservation we have to think about the ways of site presentation through site preservation. What do we wish and/or can we preserve/conservate to present it to visitors on site?

### 3. GENERAL THOUGHTS ON SITE PRESENTATION

There are a lot of possible strategies for presenting a site. Usually each team chooses a different concept of public relation work. Site presentation should start very early, right at the beginning of an archaeological project. There should be a concept for a continuing development for the presentation of archaeological research. This includes the work and the results of a survey, the excavation fieldwork and the work of the different laboratories involved in the analysis and the processing of the material from the excavation. Here are some general site presentation strategies:

1. *Publication*: ‘classical’ (preliminary) reports on the project work in journals and/or newsletters providing information to colleagues and a limited public. Popular publications in newspapers and/or journals, like *National Geographic* or *GEO*. The final publication plays a major role for the site presentation as it is the major outcome of archaeological research. For a wider public there should be also some more popular publications, like (paperback) guidebooks, flyer, brochures, postcards with motives related to the site (e.g., important finds, characteristic features, site setting, etc.), etc. (Pedersen 2002).
2. *On-site presentation*:
  - a. ‘*All inclusive*’ model: there is a site-museum with a visitor centre, all the necessary facilities are available, including shop, toilets, storage rooms, research laboratories, paved trails, parking lots, and an ‘easy access for the elderly people’ to the archaeological remains.
  - b. ‘*Minimal*’ model: on site no information is provided to the visitor. A path (probably illegal?) guides the visitor around or into the excavation area. The remains have to talk for themselves.
  - c. ‘*Combination/Compromise*’ model: on site should be a (clear) trail and information system, but there should be only the absolutely minimal additions necessary to the site in terms of buildings, shelters, information panels, etc.
3. *Regional Visitor Centre*: a regional concept of site presentation allows joining the forces of all participating projects. For a regional visitor centre concept it is more realistic to find a long-term financial basis and to run it as a community-embedded heritage project (Bachich 2007a). In contrast, on-site visitor centres often just get some money at one point to be planned and built. Even the wages for local guards and/or guides are seldom calculated into on-site presentations. Addi-

tionally, a regional visitor centre reduces the need for on-site facilities. On the sites it is then possible to concentrate on-site specific topics and features. Whenever available, already existing buildings and/or facilities should be used for this purpose.

4. *Network of sites*: sites and projects should be presented in a network of other sites from the same period in the region. This allows one to focus on specific topics of a period and to concentrate on common features and unique finds of the sites themselves. A cooperation/network of different projects could be very efficient in joining financial resources for a regional visitor centre.
5. *Exhibition*: an exhibition is often a good way to present results, finds and the working process to the public. There are a lot of possible concepts for exhibitions on archaeological research. One option would be a photo gallery with fieldwork pictures, or one could offer a presentation of the most spectacular finds or a reconstruction of the period with different aspects and viewpoints concerning a given topic. Here some interactive elements could be used to explain the interpretation of the presented 'news from the past'. An exhibition can present a site and the related questions to the public all over the world without interfering directly with the on-site work.
6. *Internet Platform*: a Web site could be a good vehicle for the presentation of the site during the fieldwork. It can be used for an ongoing process of site interpretation and the exchange of data with colleagues. A Web site can be presented as an online exhibition. However, a Web site could also create some problems concerning publication and copy rights of archaeological data. This is especially true when finds and/or features are published on the Web without an interpretation or description directly after they have been uncovered.
7. *Film/Play/Fiction*: a (in terms of inaccuracy and speculation) problematic, but widely recognized way of presenting a site to the public is in the context of a film, a play or a fiction book. Whether presented in a more scientific documentation, or in the framework of a feature film and/or report, films can be helpful for the understanding of a site and its temporal order in the context of a museum or visitor centre. Plays or fiction can reach a completely different audience. With all these media it is possible to develop different forms of imaginative 'interpretation' of the results of on-site interpretation.

What is true for the preservation of archaeological sites also applies to the presentation of an archaeological site. Does really each and every site need an on-site presentation? It is open to doubt whether every site is presentable or attractive for the public, nor does every site need a visitor centre with all 'UNESCO World Heritage'-facilities. Thus, quite often a regional concept of site presentation is a good and realistic choice. Therefore a regional visitor centre or museum can present information about the sites in their specific contexts better than it would be possible to do on each site itself. In a regional visitor centre a site could be presented by thematic posters, models and finds.

In general, on-site presentation should be as unobtrusive

as possible. The archaeological remains should be still the most important and dominant component of the site. To guide visitors through an excavation it is important to define clear borders and trails (or paths) to walk on. These trails make it possible to visit an excavation during the fieldwork without disturbing the working process and the documentation work. Creating 'self-guided' trails is both part of the site preservation as well as part of the site presentation. Along these trails some information points with signs or boards can be installed according to the features and their context. At a specific viewpoint and/or the entrance to the site should be a board with a top plan of the site or the excavation areas. Probably it would be helpful to have a panel like a building-siteboard, where one can find all important information on who is excavating what and since when. This could be installed as soon as the excavation starts. Thematic information desks/signs can give some information on specific results or discoveries. If there is a more regional presentation concept, we have to decide which facilities are really needed for the excavators, the presentation and the visitors.

The guideline for presentation and preservation should be to do only what is absolutely necessary, neither more nor less. Is a 1:1 reconstruction of an architectural structure necessary for a visitor centre? Is it necessary to have a reconstruction for presenting the site? If it is necessary, it should always be a scientific reconstruction based on the results of the research done on the architectural remains. For some detailed information, locals could be trained as 'tourist guides' and additionally there should be a small guidebook on each site or one for all sites, which could be sold by the local guides. There are many other merchandising and marketing opportunities with respect to an archaeological site, but this contribution cannot cover all these aspects. In what follows I will offer some scenarios for the preservation and presentation of archaeological results in the case of the Neolithic site of Shkarat Msaied in Southern Jordan.

#### 4. CASE STUDY:

##### THE PRESERVATION AND PRESENTATION OF NEOLITHIC SHKARAT MSAIED AND OTHER NEOLITHIC SITES IN THE GREATER PETRA AREA

###### 4.1. History and development of the preservation and presentation of Neolithic sites in Southern Jordan

The Neolithic is a prominent period in Southern Jordan. The first excavated PPNB site here was Beidha.<sup>2</sup> Beidha was excavated by Diane Kirkbride between 1958 and 1983 (Kirkbride 1966, Byrd 2005). After the last excavation in

<sup>2</sup> The Neolithic site of Beidha was excavated in eight seasons by Diane Kirkbride from 1958 to 1983 (Kirkbride 1966). Kirkbride excavated a settlement with several occupation layers. The Neolithic occupation started with semi-subterranean roundhouses with a wooden scaffold followed by curvilinear structures to finally rectangular (corridor-) houses. In 2005 the final publication on the architecture was published by Brian Byrd (Byrd 2005). Since 2002 a sensitive, but limited, conservation work started and a concept for the site presentation was developed by Samantha Dennis (Dennis 2002, Dennis 2003).

1984 the site has in most parts been neglected. Many of the uncovered houses have since become damaged, with a loss of original stones and mortar. The archaeological remains were endangered by visitors stepping on the walls, because there were no pathways or trails to lead visitors through the site.

Basta is another important site dating to the PPNB. The excavation of Neolithic Basta uncovered a spectacularly well preserved architecture. Immediately the question of how to preserve this architecture arose. The Department of Antiquities of Jordan carried out a test conservation on some walls (Gebel 2004). The chosen mortar was not compatible with the original and created additional problems for the conservation of the formerly well preserved structures. Nothing happened after this test, because of a lack of interest and financial resources.

During the fieldwork of the Ba'ja Neolithic Project, under the directorship of Hans Georg Gebel, concepts of preserving and presenting a Neolithic site were discussed for the first time within the team in 1997. The site offers spectacularly well preserved architecture. The difficult access results in limited transport capacities for tools and materials. Therefore only 'low-tech & low-cost' solutions were considered for the preservation of the archaeological remains of Ba'ja. Under the supervision of Boris Borowski different kinds of mortar were tested and an exemplary consolidation of wall tops and wall faces was done in 2001. The unique and spectacular setting of Ba'ja makes it very attractive for visitors. For the site itself this interest could become very problematic, because of the limited space on the excavation area and the extended use of the very sensitive environment of the Siq al-Ba'ja. Therefore Borowski also developed a preliminary concept of how the site of Ba'ja could be presented, today and after the excavation work will be finished (Borowski 2007).

Meanwhile Samantha Dennis started her project on the conservation and presentation of the Neolithic site of Beidha (Dennis 2002, Dennis 2003). This includes some experimental structures used for scientific research on early Neolithic architecture as well as a small visitor centre (Dennis 2004, Dennis and Finlayson 2005) At the same time the excavation area was cleaned up and self-guided trails for tourists were created. As a first step limited conservation and restoration work was also done on the excavated remains.

Also during the fieldwork of Shkarat Msaied Neolithic Project, directed by Ingolf Thuesen since 1999, different and controversial concepts for site preservation and presentation were discussed with the Department of Antiquities.

In 2004 or 2005 the local tourist agencies thought about a 'Neolithic trail' to keep the tourists one or two more days in the Petra region. The tourists would go to Beidha, where they would participate in a Neolithic workshop, e.g., grinding cereals or producing flint tools. The locals could be trained in flint technologies to produce flint tools as souvenirs. Included in that 'Neolithic trail' was a walk to Ba'ja and finally a nice dinner out in Shkarat Msaied. Because the area north of Petra was included in the Petra Archaeological Park, all archaeological missions working on the Neolithic period in the region agreed on a cooperation for

a *Neolithic Heritage Trail* (Finlayson *et al.* 2007, Bachich 2007b). This 'Trail' will connect the Neolithic sites between Basta and Ghwair. The project started to work on a general concept which was handed in as a project proposal to the Department of Antiquities in 2007. The aims are to pay more attention to this important part of the heritage of Jordan and of human culture, to present the sites in a similar way and to join forces for their preservation and site management.

#### 4.2. Preservation and presentation of the Neolithic site of Shkarat Msaied

The Neolithic site of Shkarat Msaied is under excavation since 1999 by a Danish team of the Carsten Niebuhr Institute, University of Copenhagen directed by Ingolf Thuesen (Rehloff Kaliszan *et al.* 2002, Jensen *et al.* 2005, Hermansen *et al.* 2006). Shkarat Msaied is located on a small plateau on a saddle 1000 m above sea level between two peaks and Wadi systems some 13 km north of Petra / Wadi Musa (Figs 1, 2: A). On the site at least 16 well preserved Roundhouses dated to the E/MPPNB (~ 7000 BC) were excavated. The houses are 3 to 6.5 m in diameter and walls were preserved up to a height of 0.2 m to 1.6 m (Hermansen *et al.* 2006). Hitherto Shkarat Msaied seemed to be similar to Beidha phase A (Byrd 2005), but over the years it became clear that Shkarat Msaied can contribute specific features thus enhancing our knowledge and understanding of architecture (Kinzel 2004, Kinzel 2005) and burial practices in the Neolithic period.

For the preservation and presentation of the site we discussed several scenarios according to the above mentioned ones (Fig. 3). In the case of Shkarat Msaied we never concentrated on one issue alone. All aspects of both issues were discussed at the same time, because the ways of preservation have a direct influence on the presentation. Which concepts are possible for the Neolithic site of Shkarat Msaied? Here are some of the discussed possibilities:

1. *Backfill of the complete excavation area:* for the preservation of the archaeological remains this is surely the best solution. Underlying idea of this suggestion: there is no need for an on-site presentation afterwards.
2. *Required backfill and consolidation:* this seems to be a very useful and practical solution. Parts of the excavated areas will be backfilled to prevent a collapse of walls and foundations. In addition, the consolidation of wall tops can complete this preventive concept. Conservation should be seen as a continuous process. This will be an ongoing task that will require routine and regular maintenance (Fig. 2: B).
3. *Additional Shelter:* for the most significant building units in Shkarat Msaied, Unit F and K, a shelter could be a practical solution. Individual shelters covering only the single units are problematic for the protection of the surrounding structures. A shelter covering the complete excavation area could protect the site and preserve the archaeological remains, but shelters often create new water drainage systems resulting in gully erosion and destruction of walls and archaeological remains. As mentioned above, a shelter adds a very dominant component to the site which 'negates' the archaeological remains themselves. 'Spectacular-de-

signed' shelter constructions can provide an aspect of identification for visitors and/or tourists into the landscape, but in the case of Shkarat Msaied this component is not really needed. The place itself contributes a beautiful setting with its majestic sandstone formations nearby. Fig. 2: C shows a possible shelter for the whole excavation area inspired by the shelter built for the Neolithic site of *Tenta* in Cyprus (Todd 1998).

4. *Additionally a visitor centre*: in addition to the conservation work and the presentation of the excavation area, an on-site visitor centre can give more detailed information on the results of archaeological research. For Shkarat Msaied there would be additional information on e.g., the architecture, burial practices, flint and greenstone industries, palaeobotany and palaeozoology, etc. However, a visitor centre on site would be a massive intervention into the site and its surroundings. A visitor centre needs several facilities, e.g., a parking lot, a shop, toilets, a café, etc. Especially the site of Shkarat Msaied offers the temptation to build a recreation area with picnic places, parking, etc., because it is placed right in the middle of the tour from Wadi Faynan (and Wadi Araba) to Wadi Musa / Petra.
5. *Addition to the visitor centre*: reconstructions could be part of an informal visitor centre as an archaeological experiment. Reconstructions should not stand alone as a visitor centre, because it is very difficult to understand a reconstruction and the experiments without any explanations. So there is a need for continuous monitoring and regular maintenance of the visitor facilities and the information posters/panels.
6. *Final steps toward an 'archaeological park'*: there is an option to include the near surroundings in the concept of site presentation. A walkway or path can lead through the amazing scenery of the landscape. This trail could be equipped with information panels on e.g., the biotic and abiotic resources today and during the Neolithic. This should include information on both the past landscape and the present environment. In such a combination of the visitor centre with the surroundings there could be some places for experimental activities for the visitors.

In principle, all above mentioned scenarios would be possible, but not all of them are practical and desirable for Shkarat Msaied. For this site we chose the following strategies.

#### 4.3. Concepts practiced and/or planned in/for Shkarat Msaied

A first step for the protection of the trench profiles was done during the excavation fieldwork with stone rows along the trenches, and a simple drainage system for slope surface runoff water was installed in 2004 (Fig. 4). Two low walls were erected in traditional dry stone masonry to define a clear border between the excavation area and its surrounding and the road (Fig. 5). These walls turned out to be a very efficient 'tool' to keep tourists/visitors out of the actual excavation trench during the fieldwork. The Department of Antiquities decided in 2005 to build a fence around the site as a reaction to damage caused by animals and illegal diggings. Parts of the excavation area were backfilled to protect the foundations, walls and findings/finds (Figs 4-5).

For the backfill the sieved soil from the excavation dumps was used. For further investigations we agreed to follow the guideline of the *Neolithic Heritage Trail-Project*: all areas which are not needed for the site presentation should be backfilled completely or to a certain height.

In 2004 a 'self-guided' trail was created around the excavation area to keep visitors off the actual remains (Figs 5-6). The clearly marked trail is leading to some significant spots of the excavation. There is already a limited presentation of some heavy and big grinders near the trench where they were discovered (Fig. 5). In addition we established a Web site with preliminary excavation reports ([www.neolithic-shkaratmsaied.hum.ku.dk](http://www.neolithic-shkaratmsaied.hum.ku.dk)).

It is planned to equip the site with information panels. These panels will be designed for all *Neolithic Heritage Trail*-sites in the same way. This will enable the visitor to recognize that they belong to the same period and they are part of the heritage trail. In Shkarat Msaied one information point should be at the entrance to the site and another one could be on the so-called 'Tell' (Fig. 5). The information panels will present specific information on the site and the Neolithic period in general, e.g., preservation conditions (visitors should be aware of how fragile the site is and how important it is to protect the site!), reconstruction of the architecture, burial practices, flint and greenstone industries, palaeobotany and palaeozoology, etc.

Furthermore it is planned to introduce a system of monitoring to ensure that conservation can be undertaken as required. In Shkarat Msaied no conservation or restoration was done so far. In 2004 we already planned some consolidation work together with the Department of Antiquities and the CARIP (Conservation and Restoration Centre in Petra). Different concepts of wall top consolidation and mortar exchanges were discussed. We think that consolidation and conservation should be undertaken only where it is required (Fig. 4). There is still an ongoing discussion on which mortar materials should be used. One possible solution could be an individually mixed restoration mortar, which was tested and analysed by Djum'a Gublan from the CARIP in 2004. Another solution was suggested by Bernhard Lucke (Lucke and Bäumler 2007) during his stay in Ba'ja, where he analysed the local soils and deposits. His field test revealed that the local sandy soils harden without further additives. Soaking the soils in water and drying them out in the sun produced solid, very hard lumps. The local soils seem to be very suitable for all plaster and mortar purposes. This approach in local resource analysis provides us with an important insight: for the conservation of all mortar-relevant issues, we can use the local soils, if they have the same characteristics as the Ba'ja soils. There seems to be no need for 'special mortar' mixed in a laboratory. For Shkarat Msaied we are planning to work with this 'low-tech' concept for the conservation of the wall tops and walls themselves. It is clear that this way of conservation and restoration needs regular maintenance. There will also be a need for a periodical clearance of the excavation area. In Shkarat Msaied it is not necessary to build a temporary shelter, even if this might be a solution for the conservation of Unit K and its significant stairs, or for Unit F with its unique burial cluster. Neither is there a need for an on-site reconstruction of one of the houses, since we have the ex-

perimental structures in Beidha, which also will be part of the *Neolithic Heritage Trail* (NHT). Shkarat Msaied could be presented in the NHT-visitor centre with a model and some virtual reality models in the framework of an interactive ‘the Neolithic period in the Petra region’-platform.

## 5. PERSPECTIVES

We advocate a network of the Neolithic sites in the Petra region, with different concepts for specific conservation problems and needs, but with an underlying general concept of site presentation in the framework of a regional concept on a local basis. It is planned to introduce a regional ‘visitor centre’ on the Neolithic period in the Petra region. The Neolithic sites will be promoted in the context of the *Neolithic Heritage Trail*, including the sites of Basta, Ba’ja, Beidha, Shkarat Msaied, Ghuwayr 1 and Wadi Faynan 16. It is planned to publish a guidebook presenting the sites along the trail, the past landscape and the present environment, and the local communities. In addition there will be some flyers or brochures.

There are plans for the continuation of the excavation in Shkarat Msaied. Already during these concluding excavation seasons some of the above mentioned conservation works will be undertaken as an integral part of the fieldwork. Not until the end of the excavation the on-site presentation will be established completely. To present the results of the archaeological research to a wider public there are some plans for an exhibition about the site. Not only the virtual reconstruction of the architecture and the past landscape should be included, rather the reconstruction of the Neolithic ‘*sound- and sense-scape*’ should be part of this exhibition (pers. comm. Bo Dahl Hermansen). This approach of site presentation could offer new perspectives for the interpretation of archaeological remains and findings. The preservation and presentation of an archaeological site is a complex matter. First steps are done, but now we have to go much further than this one step. We have to find a way between our ideal solution and a practical and realistic one. We have to be aware of the different interests of all so-called stakeholders. We should know the limits and possibilities of site preservation and presentation, to avoid taking measures that could prove irreversible. We should only do *what is absolutely necessary, neither more nor less*, to protect, to preserve and to present an archaeological site.

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#### INTERNET LINKS

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[www.neolithic-shkaratmsaied.hum.ku.dk](http://www.neolithic-shkaratmsaied.hum.ku.dk)

#### NOTE

All photos, sketches and drawings are by Moritz Kinzel, Shkarat Msaied Neolithic Project.

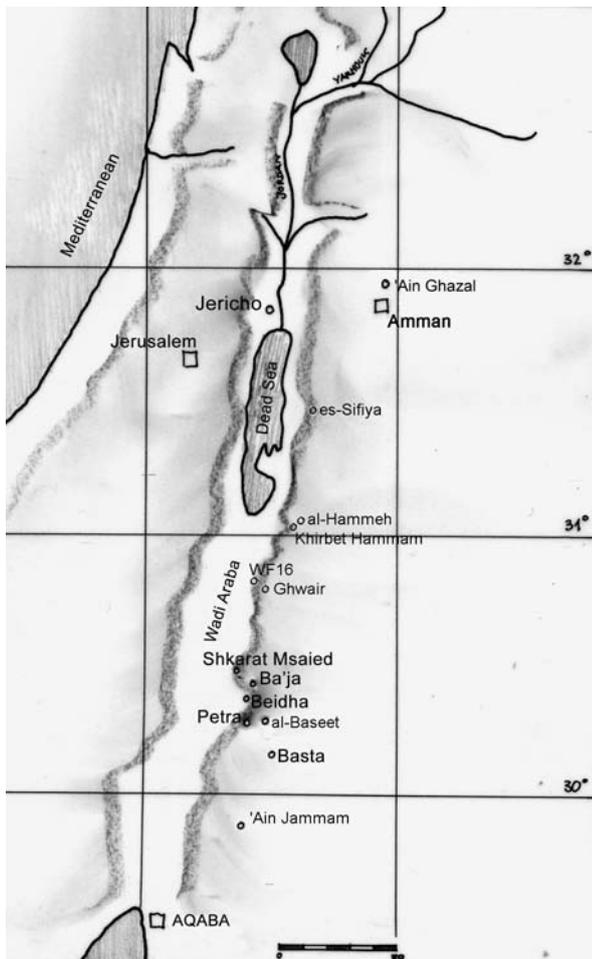


Fig. 1 - Map with Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Sites in the Southern Levant.

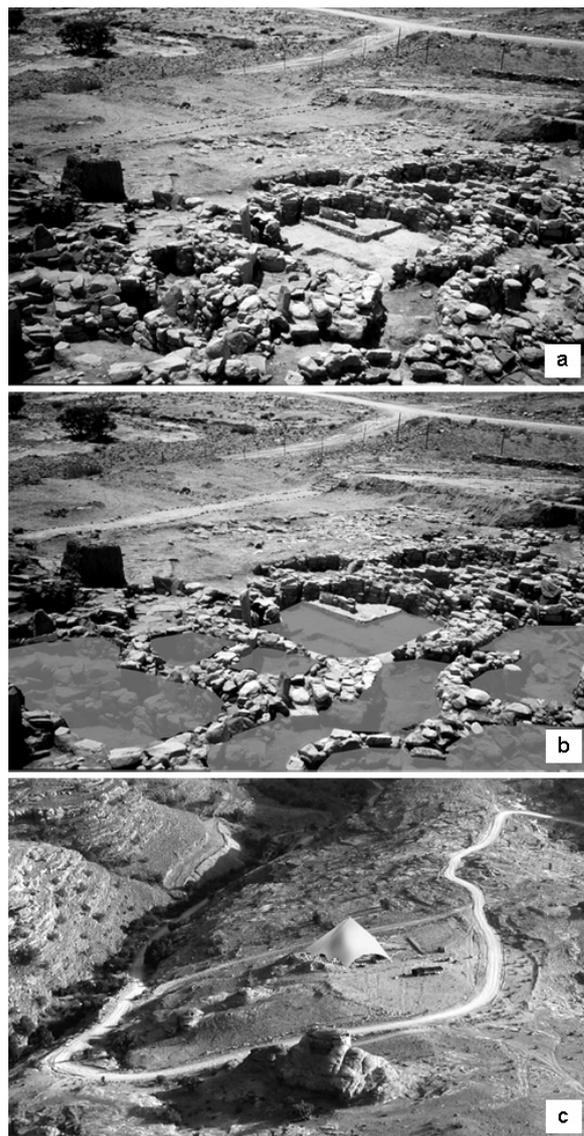


Fig. 2 - Site preservation strategies for Shkarat Msaied:  
A) Present-day situation (end of 2005 excavation).  
B) Required partial backfill (shaded in grey).  
C) Shelter (inspired by Tenta/Cyprus).

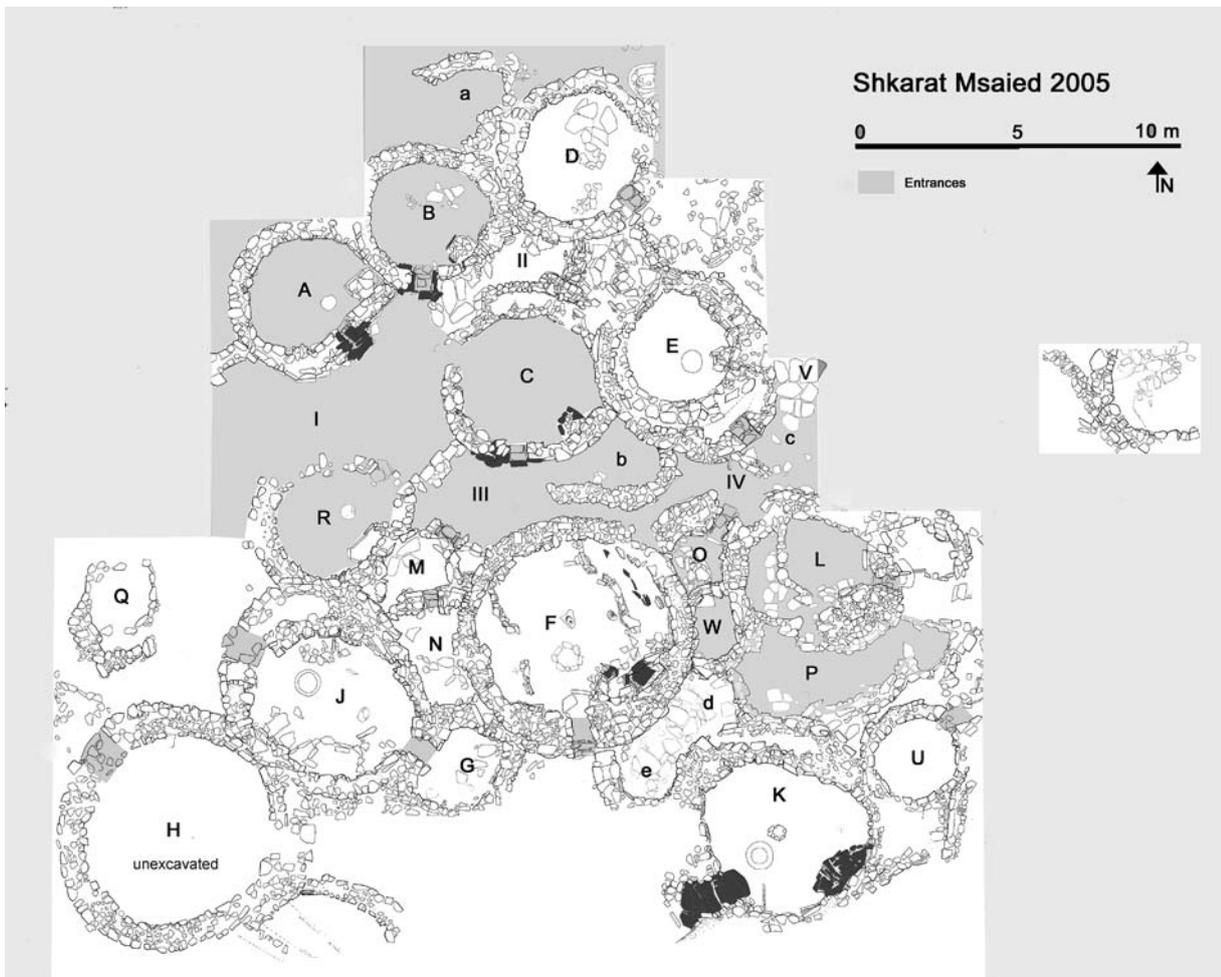


Fig. 3 - Shkarat Msaied: preservation concept: top plan with mapping of required and planned backfill (shaded in grey), wall top consolidation/conservation (white) and other restoration work (dark grey).



Fig. 4 - Protection of excavation trench against surface runoff water with stones.

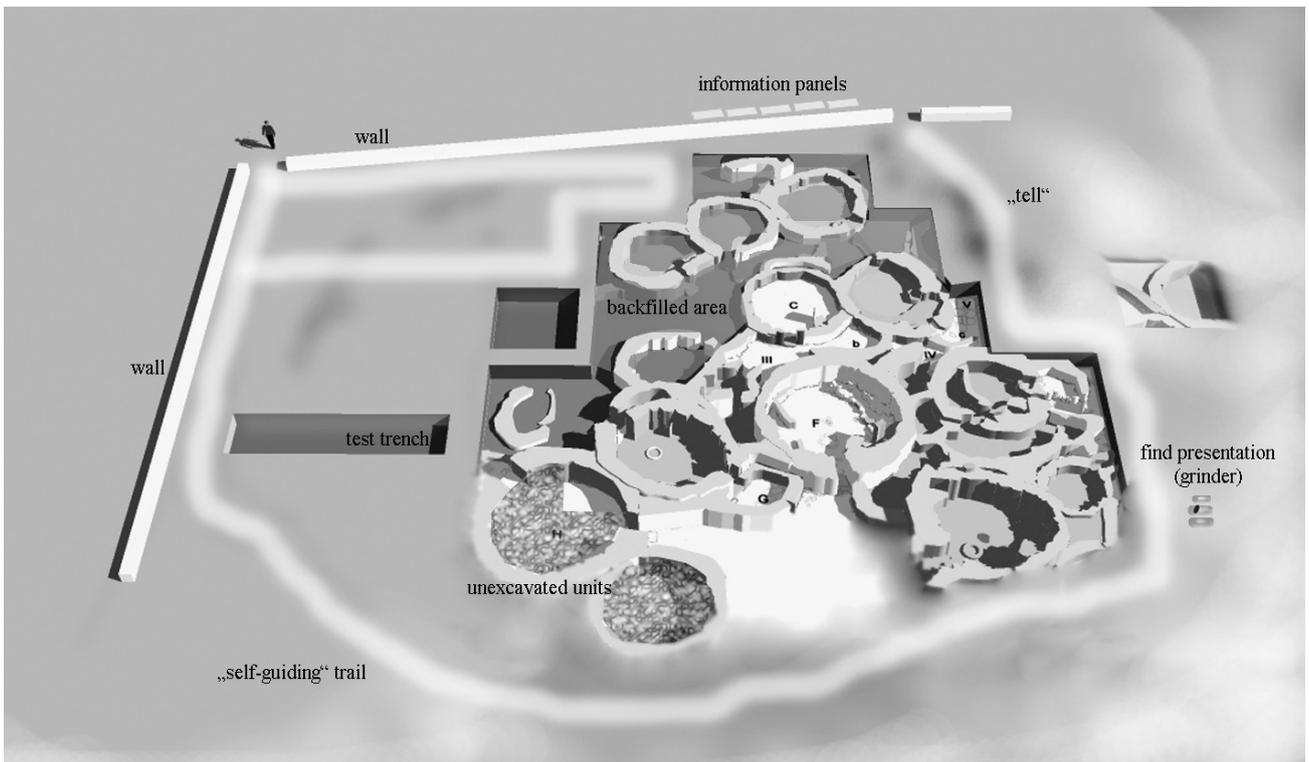


Fig. 5 - Preservation and presentation concept: 3D model simulation.



Fig. 6 - Shkarat Msaied: 'self-guided' trail around the excavation area.