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Refereed Proceedings of the First Conference on the Archaeology and Tourism of the Maan Governorate, 3rd- 4th October, 2017

Petra- Jordan

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PREFACE

It is our pleasure to introduce this volume of papers presented at the First Conference on the Archaeology and Tourism of the Maan Governorate which was held in Petra between October 3rd and 4th 2017.

This Conference was organized by the UNESCO Chair on Heritage and Sustainable Tourism at al-Hussein Bin Talal University. This Chair is concerned with the promotion and safeguarding of cultural heritage and its preservation and sustainability for the generations to come. It aims to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation in the fields of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism that contribute to the protection and promotion of cultural diversity and re-affirm the link between culture and sustainable development. It serves as a means of facilitating collaboration between high-level, internationally recognized researchers and teaching staff of al-Hussein Bin Talal University and other institutions in Jordan and elsewhere in Arab states region, as well as in other regions of the world. The activities of the Chair contribute to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals and to the objectives of UNESCO's Programmes relevant to the theme of the Chair.

The aim of this Conference, which will be held every three years, is to shed more lights on the latest archaeological discoveries and to present new researches on the tourism and archaeology of the Maan region. It is hoped that this series will provide a platform where scholars, researchers and students can share knowledge, ideas and experiences.



We are deeply grateful to Professor Ali al-Qaisi, former President of al-Hussein Bin Talal University for his unlimited support and encouragement. We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr. Fawzi Abudanah, Dean of the Petra College for Tourism and Archaeology for everything he has done to make this gathering possible. In addition, we convey our gratitude to the staff of the college for their enormous and valuable assistance. Special thanks are due to Mr. Fawwaz Hasanat and Mr. Mohammad Twaissi for their help in providing accommodation for the participants.

This conference has been the fruit of a constructive cooperation between the UNESCO Chair, the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) and the Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project (SCHEP). It would not have been possible without the strong and valuable support, assistance and cooperation of SCHEP, a USAID funded project implemented by ACOR. We would like to offer our special thanks to Dr. Barbara Porter, Director of the Center, Dr. Glenn Corbett the former Associate Director of the Center and to Mr. Nizar Al Adarbeh the Chief of Party for USAID-SCHEP. We are appreciative for their continuous support, cooperation and assistance and we thank them for their generous funding in making this event both a reality and a success.

We thank the staff of the USAID-SCHEP, especially Shatha, Abdulrahman and Fareed, for all of the behind-the-scenes work they did to make this event a success.

The Editors,

NEOLITHIC SHKĀRAT MSAIED - LATEST RESULTS

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Abstract

The Neolithic site of Shkārat Msaied is under excavation since 1999 by a Danish team of the University of Copenhagen. During the last seasons we have focused on building unit F and its surroundings. Unit F contains a series of burials offering striking insights into the PPNB mortuary practices. The contribution presents the fieldwork and research carried out at the site in recent years. Shkārat Msaied is one of the PPNB sites in the Petra area showing the transition from round to rectangular buildings and the use of the “vertical” space highlighting the long building tradition in the region.

Introduction

The Early-/Middle-Pre-Pottery Neolithic B site of Shkārat Msaied (ca. 0.1 ha) is located approximately 16 km north of Petra/Wadi Musa in southern Jordan and is in close proximity to other well-known Early Neolithic sites such as Ba’ja and Beidha. Excavations at the site began in 1999; from 1999 to 2001 as a field school project of the Carsten Niebuhr Institute (Kalizan et al. 2001) and later on as a research excavation project (2002 to 2005, and from 2010 onwards) by the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen in close co-operation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Carlsberg Foundation (Jensen et al. 2005; Hermansen et al. 2006; Kinzel et al. 2011, 2015, 2017).

In the thirteen seasons of excavation approximately 600 m² of early Neolithic architecture from six phases of occupation were exposed (Kinzel 2013). Phase 0 describes the occupation pre-dating the stone buildings at the site, lacking so far secure dates. According to 14C-dates Phases I to III span the first half of the Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (hereafter MPPNB, ca. 8250 to 7950 calBCE,

Jensen et al. 2005, 116; Hermansen et al. 2006; cf. <http://shkaratmsaied.tors.ku.dk/>). Phase IV is dated to the Late Neolithic and Phase V represents the Nabatean / Roman Period (Kinzel 2013).

In the MPPNB Shkārāt Msaied is characterized by circular buildings of various sizes; between 5 m² and 27 m² (Fig.1). More than 25 circular buildings have been identified and provide evidence of complex and long lasting use histories (Jensen et al. 2005; Kinzel 2013).

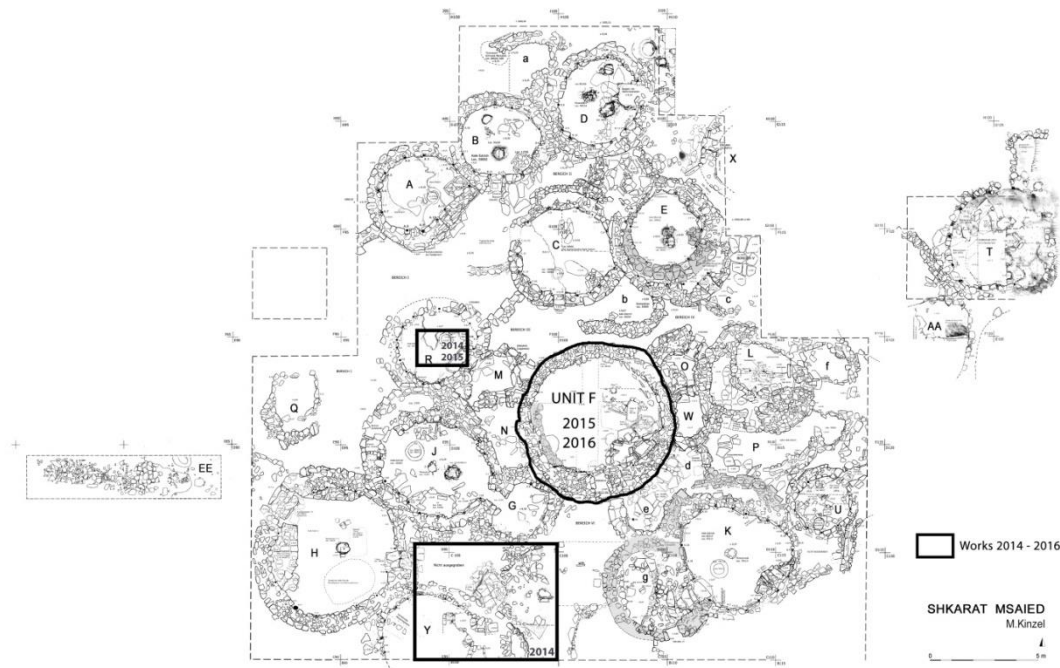


Fig. 1 Shkārāt Msaied site plan with 2014 - 2016 work areas marked (University of Copenhagen/M.Kinzel).

The main objective in the last three excavation seasons was to consolidate the exposed architecture which had been affected by heavy winter rains and damaged by illicit diggings and vandalism reported in 2013. One of the looting pits in Unit R was used to investigate the earliest occupation and the beginnings of the settlement (Architectural Phase 0, cf. Kinzel 2013) by investigations the occupation deposits below the known architecture. Excavation continued as well in Unit F which served as a communal burial ground (cf. Hermansen et al. 2006; Kinzel et al. 2010; Kinzel et al. 2017). Other investigations concerned the excavation of the southern area to clarify the functional and spatial relations of the area south of Unit F (Kinzel et al. 2015). In 2015 we returned to Unit F for further investigations. We continued excavating the interior of the unit removing

later floors, walls and fill-material to expose fully an earlier plaster floor (Loc. 120.120) to identify remaining, additional burials. This was also meant to clarify the stratigraphic context in the building.



Fig. 2 Shkārat Msaied 2016, Unit F: 3D-model with Locus-numbers. Hatching:= misplaced stones; QR-code link to 3D-model (prepared by M.Kinzel).

Unit F

The complex stratigraphy of Unit F (Fig.2) reflects its long use history. The building shows traces of at least four main building phases within a number of modifications and repairs were carried out. This makes it almost impossible to define sub-phases. However, we can describe the stratigraphy of Unit F in a condensed way as follows (cf. Kinzel 2013; Kinzel et al. forthc.):

1) Unit F is built as a freestanding round house structure comprising a single space. The entrance (Loc. 120.134) is oriented towards SE. A lime plaster floor (Loc. 120.120) covers the entire interior of the building; a plaster “basin” (Loc. 110.130) is located in line with the doorway. Into this plaster floor some of the larger burial cists are inserted. It is not possible to say when the burial cists were built.

2) On the plaster floor (Loc. 120.120) we find the remains of a collapsed roof (Loci 110.137/138) covering some articulated placed animal remains as well as ground stones. The layer is very densely packed.

3) The roof collapse material is covered by hard packed “fill” material which also runs over the cut exterior wall (Loc. 110.111) of Unit F in the western part of the building.

4) A plaster floor (Loc. 90105/110.119) is placed on the hard compacted fill material and covers the entire house interior (covering also the earlier plaster feature). In the floor most of the child burials are interred. The relationship to the larger burial cists is unclear as the burials are mainly covered by a multi-layered and disturbed pavement (Loc. 90109/110) which is partly embedded or over-laid by this floor. On this floor the wall (Loc. 110.107/70209) was erected closing off the earlier entrance (Loc. 120.134).

5) Several layers of various plaster surfaces and repairs (Loc. 60114; 60110) underlying the plaster floor (Loc. 60100/-104/-105/80203).

6) Course plaster floor (Loc. 60100/-104/-105/80203) of a late phase of Unit F. The floor is related to the doorway oriented towards south (Loc. 120.133). It shows also a plaster feature (Loc. 80202) with a raised rim and a shallow basin.

7) A layer of mixed fill material, most probably stemming from a roof collapse.

8) Hard packed mud floor (Loc. 50109) covering most of the interior of unit F. On the rim of the plaster feature (Loc. 80202) stones are placed to mark a later fire place (Loc. 50103/50110). The Interior of the late Unit F is divided into three spaces by low partition walls (Loci. 50124/125 and 50123) transforming the central area into a rectangular space. In the floor some larger ground stones were embedded.

The investigation in Unit F revealed a number of primary, secondary and tertiary burials as well as new information on the earlier use phases of Unit F and the

remains of an older building (as partly explained above). East of the entrance to Unit F (Loc. 120.134) a stone cist (Loc. 110.108) containing three skulls (Fig.3) was recovered at the bottom of wall Loc. 70.209 (Kinzel et al. 2016). This feature is very similar to skull caches from other Neolithic sites such as) Tell Ramad (Ferembach 1969), Jericho (Kenyon & Holland 1981:77), 'Ain Ghazal (Griffin et al. 1998, or Yiftahel (Slon et al. 2014). But the skulls from Shkārat Msaied do not show any traces of plastering or modifications. The plaster floor (Loc. 90105/110.119) was cut in order to build the stone cist. South of the skull deposit (Loc. 110.108) another stone feature (Loc. 110.109) was discovered which contained the remains of at least two foxes (*Vulpes sp*) and might indicate a very close relationship between human and animal remains. Animal bones (although mostly goats, i.e. *Capra aegagrus* or *Capra ibex*) were often found in close association with human remains, or were deposited along the wall of Unit F.



Fig. 3 Shkārat Msaied, Unit F: Skull from skull cache (Loc. 110.108) found in 2015.

An entrance (Loc. 120.134); approximately 65 cm wide; of an earlier use phase of Unit F was identified just east of the later entrance (Loc. 120.133) after wall Loc. 110.107 (same as Loc. 70209) was removed. As wall Loc. 110.107 was built this entrance became blocked and integrated into a niche-like feature (Loc. 2261). The lime plaster floor (Loc. 110.138/120.120), which was exposed throughout the unit is obviously related to this earlier building phase. A plaster “basin” (Loc. 110.130) - as common for most (domestic) buildings at Shkārat Msaied - was found in the axis of the former entrance (see as well Hermansen & Jensen 2002). The plaster basin was filled by a white-greyish powdery chalky material (Loc. 110.132) without showing traces of charcoal or charred material. A flint cache (Loc. 110.133) was found in the basin (Fig.8). The cache consists of seven bidirectional blades and is the first flint cache found at Shkārat Msaied. Three of the blades were tooled into Jericho-points (Fig 9). All the blades and projectiles were manufactured from two flint types (FRMG 6 and FRMG 2), which are not attested within the geological environment of the Greater Petra Region (Purschwitz 2013, in prep b) but are commonly used for core reduction at Shkārat Msaied and at the contemporary site of Beidha (Purschwitz 2017a, 2017b; Mortensen 1988; cf. Barzilai 2010). The plaster basin (Loc. 110.130) and the flint cache were sealed with clayish mortar material (Loc. 110.131) at a later point. This took place before the roof collapsed and fill material was compacted to establish the next layer of plaster floor (Loc. 90105/110.119). In the southern part of the room roof collapse (Loc. 120.104/ 110.137) was found on the earlier floor level (Loc. 120.120) and confirmed the materials and construction methods attested by the roofs in other buildings (e.g. Unit K) at the site. Two pestles and a hammer stone were found in situ on the floor surface, indicating perhaps some normal day-to-day processing of food.

A wall, which belongs to an earlier building (W Loc. 110.111) was exposed in the western part of Unit F. Although it seems to form a bench-like feature/platform; it can be seen as the remains of an early building phase of Unit F with a slightly smaller size. The earlier building might have been demolished and the exterior wall was cut down to the preserved height. All the larger burial cists were cut into the earlier plaster floor (Loc. 110.138=Loc. 120.120) and covered by the pavement in the eastern part of the building (Loc. 90109/90110). Most of the

child burials seem to be associated with a later plaster floor (Loc. 90105/110.119) but the burials may still have been contemporary.



Fig.4 Unit R and the looter's pit under excavation in 2015 (University of Copenhagen/ M.Kinzel).

Below Unit R

Unit R is a “domestic” building in the western part of the trench (Fig.4). In 2010 a child burial was exposed just north of a stone box feature. It seems to be interred when the building already was abandoned and in disrepair. Located north of Unit J and west of Unit M it formed the southern limits of the open space “area I”. The walls of Unit R are badly preserved and only a few stones of the wall base are still demarcating the limits of the interior.

In 2013 an illicit pit was dug in the south-eastern part of Unit R cutting the stone cist and partly undercutting the building’s exterior wall. The looting pit was dug about 1.5 m into the occupational deposits below Unit R. The back-dirt of the pit showed an extraordinary density and richness of artefacts and “ecofacts”. Among others abundant land snails, few marine mollusc shells (Abu-Laban, pers. Comm.), flint artefacts and tools (e.g. some Jericho-points), worked and

unworked bones as well as sandstone beads in various stages of production were found. The majority of animal bones are from goats (both *Capra aegagrus* and *Capra ibex*), but also bones of fox (*Vulpes* sp.) and bird bones are well represented (Nielsen in prep.). Among the bird bones the third phalanges (talons) of raptors are particularly numerous and may indicate that these parts of birds may have had some ritual significance at Shkārat Msaied.

The section of the cleaned looting pit showed in its upper part a sequence at least five, probably six, plaster floors, which alternate with occupational deposits (Fig. 2-3) and illustrate the complex and long lasting use history of Unit R. The lower sequence, which appears to predate Unit R, is characterized by a sequence of deposits that are generally ashier, often with spots of charcoal and burnt lumps of clay, and are marked by a high density of finds. A series of light brownish-reddish hard packed surfaces could be traced between the various layers of heterogenic roof (?) collapse material. In the lower sequence of the stratigraphy a dense concentration of land snails and (a few) marine mollusc shells was found embedded in a greyish-white ashy layer (see also Abu-Laban 2014).

Conclusion

Since the excavation at Shkārat Msaied have started in 1999 the site has contributed significantly to our knowledge about the early Neolithic. The finds and findings at Shkārat Msaied have challenged results from Beidha and other sites in the Petra region in many ways, but at the same time widened our perception of the Neolithic world. The PPNB-buildings at Shkārat Msaied are exceptional examples for the regional development of orthogonal concepts in architecture. With its unique burials found in unit F the site contributes to our understanding of mortuary practices during the PPNB and the formation of group identities as well as the emergence of religion and ritual spaces in the Petra-region.

In preparation of a final publication, covering the work since 1999, additional fieldwork is planned for 2018/19 to fully excavate Unit F. In 2015 the team was joined by the Greenlandic artist Nuka Godtfredsen to produce visuals of research results in the form of (graphic novel) scenarios to discuss findings and contexts. In 2017 we received two grants by the Danish Ministry for Education and

Research as well as of the Danish Institute in Damascus to support this initiative to disseminate our research results. Project data is made available through our website <http://shkaratmsaied.tors.ku.dk/>; including 3D recordings of buildings, time-lapse recordings of excavation works, and reports. In addition to the presentation of scientific results it is planned to undertake further preservation measures and to prepare the site for visitors in the context of the Neolithic Heritage Trail.

Acknowledgments

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