



Kuwaiti-Polish Research on Failaka Island

The first Kuwaiti-Polish archaeological project on the Failaka Island was the excavation of a fragment of a large Nestorian settlement at the site of al-Qusur. It was followed by a survey along large parts of the island's north and south shorelines. As a result of this survey, the site of Kharaib el-Desht on the northern coast of the island was chosen for excavations, which are continued until now.

Work at this site generated yet another common research project: underwater investigations along the island's shore. Its main aim is the search for ports, harbors and fishing facilities that must have been used at various stages of Failaka's history. The first result of this work was the discovery of several fish traps alongside the northern coast of the island, including one in the vicinity of Kharaib el-Desht, and of one harbor, the date of which still needs to be investigated.

The KUWAITI-POLISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION was formed in 2007, as a cooperation between the National Council of Culture Arts and Letters of the State of Kuwait and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw. It started work in Northern Kuwait in the fall of the same year, beginning with excavations of tumuli graves (2007-08), then expanding into several sub-projects, including the excavation of desert wells (2008-11) and a survey of burials and other structures in the Al-Subiyah region (2009-12), the excavation of the Bahra 1 settlement (since 2009). Further projects were initiated on Failaka Island: excavations of a part of the Qusur site (2011-13), a survey (2012) and excavations at Kharaib el-Desh, combined with an underwater survey (since 2013).

POLISH CENTRE OF MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW coordinates Polish archaeological research in the Eastern Mediterranean since 1959 (since 1990 under the present name). In recent years it has broadened its scope of interest to include the Arabian Peninsula and the Caucasus. Currently it runs about 30 projects in Egypt, Sudan, Cyprus, Lebanon, Iraqi Kurdistan, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Armenia and Georgia. It also manages a Research Center in Cairo.

For more information on the PCMA UW go to: www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/; www.facebook.com/pcma.uw/

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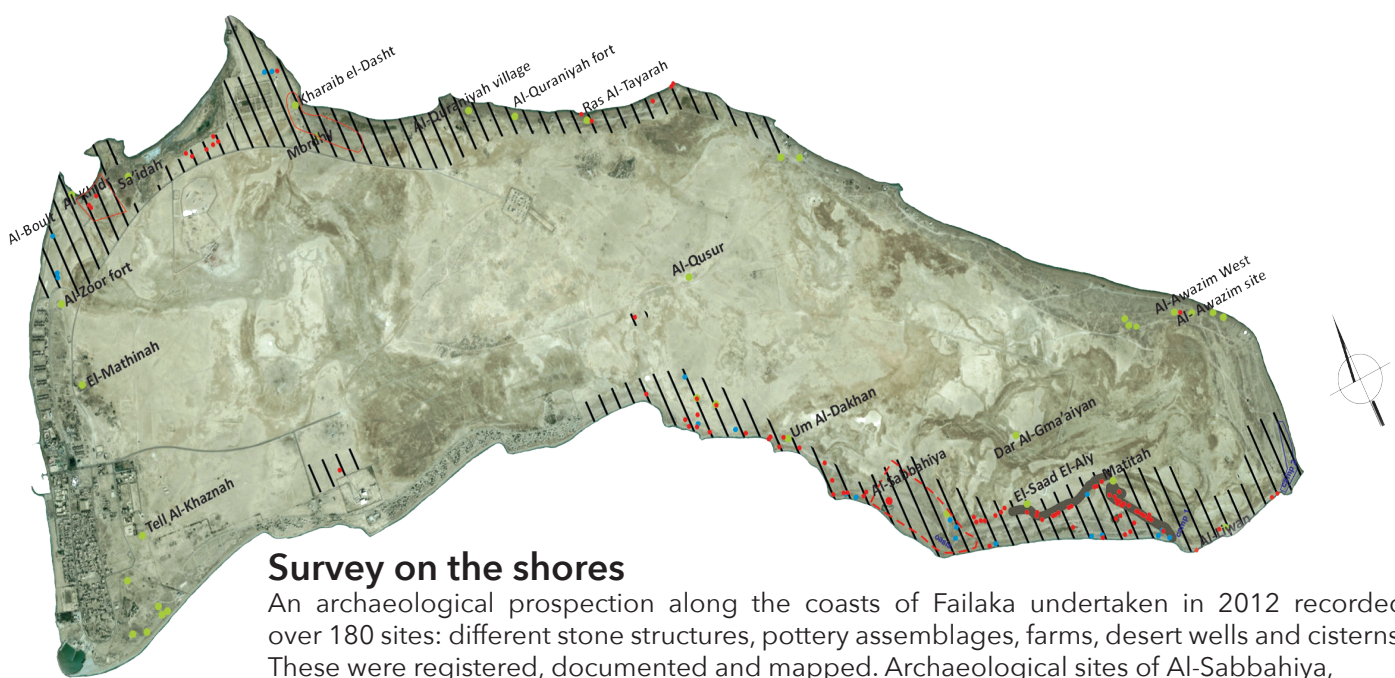
المجلس
الوطني
للثقافة
والفنون
والآداب



Al-Subiyah

KUWAITI-POLISH

Archaeological Mission



Survey on the shores

An archaeological prospection along the coasts of Failaka undertaken in 2012 recorded over 180 sites: different stone structures, pottery assemblages, farms, desert wells and cisterns. These were registered, documented and mapped. Archaeological sites of Al-Sabbahiya, Um al-Dakhan, Matitah, Kharab el-Desht with a density of different historical structures dating from the mid- and late Islamic period are to be found in the southern regions of Failaka.

Excavations in Kharab el-Desht

The settlement remains of Kharab el-Desht stretch along the coast in a long and narrow strip. Several structures explored so far included typical single-room fishermen's houses, with the trade of their inhabitants confirmed by finds of weights for fishing nets.



In a separate area numerous small stoves were found. A building with relatively thick stone walls, with an internal buttress was uncovered in an elevated area of the site, as well as another one with a semicircular tower(?) at a corner. Not a typical residential building, it may be a watch tower in a string of fortifications including the forts of Zor and Quraniya on the northern coast of Failaka. The settlement dates from the late Islamic period (late 17th-late 19th century), as attested by pottery evidence.

Although the range and variety of vessels is limited, they reflect the trade exchange in the the Gulf, with local wares from Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman or Persia, and singular fragments of luxury table ware from Southeast Asia or China all present in the small village's cupboards.



Waterfront and underwater archaeology

The project aims to find and document archaeological sites on and off the Island's seashore. The first step was to investigate the small bay opposite the site of Kharab el-Desht with a group of features recognized as fishing farms installations or "fish traps". Another discovery was a long stone pier or breakwater. Interviews with local fishermen revealed that fish traps have been in use since living memory. This makes them difficult to date, as they rarely yield any chronologically enlightening archeological finds.

Excavations at al-Qusur

Investigations of the al-Qusur complex in the center of Failaka started with a magnetic prospection of the site. Of the nine architectural units in the north part of the site three were investigated. Stone enclosures and small houses with white mortar floors were discovered and dated to the late pre-Islamic and early Islamic period. Then the settlement was abandoned after having been cleared of objects of any value, leaving behind just some refuse pottery. Yet, the houses were relatively large and complex, though the varying building techniques and materials indicate that they may have been constructed by their inhabitants themselves.

