

As-Sabbiya (also known as As-Sabiyah or Al-Subiyah) is a coastal region of Northern Kuwait. It stretches out for around 60 km to the east of Al-Jahra city. It is bordered on the east by the the Khor As-Sabiyah, a tidal channel separating the mainland from the Bubiyan Island, on the north by the Jal Az-Zor escarpment, and on the south by the Kuwait Bay. Such a localization made As-Sabbiya a part of the natural overland route along the shores of the Arabian Gulf, both in the ancient past (connecting Mesopotamia and Dilmun) and nowadays (Iraq – southern Gulf countries). The land consists of a desert plateau covered by open sandy areas and rocky outcrops, and a flat coastal plain separated from the interior by cliffs and terraces.



*Map of Northern Kuwait.
Red outline marks the zone where
the Kuwaiti-Polish Archaeological
Mission operated in 2007–2010.*



Landscape of Mugheira close to the edge of the main cliff separating the plateau from the coastal lowland. Contrary to common belief, the desert is not a void. Many people go there to enjoy tent camping in As-Sabbiya.



View over the plain of Muheita; the tent of our team close to the SM 12 well site is visible in the background. Some regular piles of stones (so-called 'cairns') are erected on the desert as landmarks. One of them is visible here in the foreground. They seem to be quite modern constructions, however, it seems certain that the custom of erecting such piles in the desert (most likely for route marking) is a long-standing tradition.

The fieldwork activities of the KPAM have so far been carried out in the eastern sector of the As-Sabbiya plateau. This area is traditionally divided into several regions: Bahra (the largest of them, where our team started to excavate an Ubaid settlement site, Bahra 1, in 2009, and a concentration of tumuli in 2010), Muheita (the area, where a remarkable desert well site, SM 12, was excavated in 2008–2010), Mugheira (the scene of the first investigations of the mission in 2007; among others, tumuli graves SMQ 30 and SMQ 49 were excavated there), and Dubai (where excavations of another well site, SB-23, began in 2010). Thus, the investigated zone is extended slightly over 10 km, as measured in a straight line. Two more regions, Nahdin and Radha, have been prospected during the KPAM archaeological survey.

