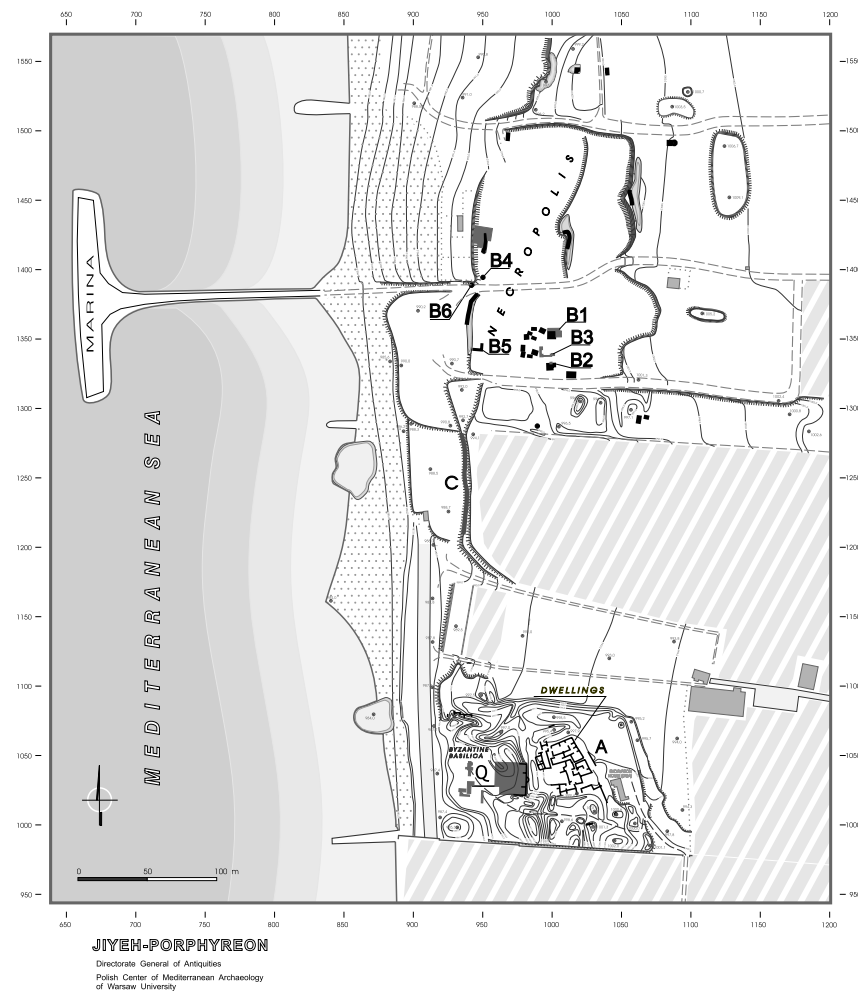


Jiyeh

Jiyeh, Nabi Younes and the site of ancient Porphyreon

The modern town of Jiyeh lies on the sea coast approximately 30 km south of Beirut and 20 km north of Saida. The archaeological site situated within the boundaries of the town was identified by several scholars as the Graeco-Roman Porphyreon, the name of which most likely refers to the purple pigment commonly produced on the Phoenician coast. Porphyreon was said to have been a Hellenistic town, established perhaps by the Ptolemies in the 3rd century BC. In Late Antiquity, it seems to have been little more than a big village. The site must have declined after that and may even have been abandoned for some centuries before the village of Jiyeh was raised on its ruins. The population of Jiyeh cherishes a local tradition connected with the prophet Jonah in the village mosque. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries there was also a khan in Jiyeh, where travellers on the road from Beirut to Saida would stop to quench their thirst. The present site is reduced to a portion of land measuring just 100 x 150 m and incorporates the Byzantine basilica and residential district excavated in 1975. The ancient necropolis was located to the north of this site, and was eradicated by modern development.



Late Roman residential district

This site was excavated by Roger Saidah on behalf of the Directorate General of Antiquities during one short season between May and September 1975. He cleared a considerable section of the residential district dating from the Late Antique period (4th to the early 7th century), situated to the east of basilica. The area excavated encompassed 100 rooms of the residential complex. They were built of local sandstone (ramleh) and lined narrow, winding, irregularly laid out streets. House ground-plans, including particular walls, do not adhere to a single pattern, but there are some common features, such as a room with a mosaic floor being the principal and most elegant one in the house, smaller mortar-floored rooms, and presumably also open courtyards paved with stone slabs, being located around it. In some houses, Greek inscriptions painted in red were found on the walls – mostly quotations from Psalms. Remains of staircases evidence the existence of an upper storey or storeys in at least some of the houses, whilst the remains of sewage canals both in the streets and beneath the paving of the aforementioned courtyards point to the existence of a simple but extensive sewage canal system in the town.



Byzantine basilica

To the west of the residential district and around 5 m below its surface level lie the remains of an extensive Byzantine church, undoubtedly the largest building at this site. Its east wall, featuring a small apse, supported an accumulation of structures, on top of which stand the ruins of the residential complex. The church's west wall, where the entrances were located, overlooked the sea, which is currently only about 25 m away from the basilica.

The church in Jiyeh (Porphyreon) was indubitably one of the largest of the currently known Byzantine churches in Phoenicia Maritima. The length measured along the south wall is at least 39 m, the width about 22.60 m. Unfortunately, the only sources to record anything about its chronology are two inscriptions, now in the collection of the Beiteddine Palace Museum. One of these is dated to AD 506 and commemorates the laying of a mosaic floor in the narthex of the basilica during the tenure of Bishop Kyrillos, the other comes from the baptistery and is dated to AD 595.

Mosaics in the church

It seems that the basilica floor was entirely covered with polychrome mosaics made up of geometric patterns filled with figures of lions, bulls, sheep and birds. As there was a risk that the mosaics would be totally destroyed it was decided in 1988 to remove them and take them to the Beiteddine Palace Museum, where they remain to this day.



Late Hellenistic and Early Roman pottery production area

Reconnaissance in the area of the present Jiyeh Marina Resort, conducted in 2003 and 2004, revealed large concentrations of fairly standard pottery fragments alongside many damaged tombs. A number of misfired pieces and other wasters dated to the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods (late 2nd century BC – 1st century AD) showed that an important pottery production centre had operated in the vicinity.

Late Roman necropolis

The ancient necropolis (3rd–6th century AD) occupying terraces another 200 m to the north of the residential district became the site of a modern building development in 2002, prompting a geophysical survey of the endangered area, coupled with an investigation of the site of the basilica and its neighbourhood. Twenty two tombs in the form of free-standing surface structures or hypogea were recorded. Destruction had affected all of the tombs, apart from a very limited few preserved in the present structure of Jiyeh Marina Resort.



Oil lamps from Jiyeh (6th - 7th century AD).



Roman tomb at Jiyeh.



Archaeological survey in the Iqlim el Kharroub region

Excavations at Chhîm prompted interest in gaining a better understanding of the ancient village, hence plans were put forward in 1999 for an archaeological field survey covering the entire Iqlim el Kharroub region. This Lebanese province, encompassing mountains and stretches of the Mediterranean coast, is divided into five districts. During the course of extensive work carried out in recent years, the survey project directed by Mahmoud el-Tayeb (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw) yielded numerous interesting results: the discovery of over thirty archaeological sites, including ancient villages and tombs. This information has enabled the ruins being excavated at Chhîm to be assessed in the wider historical context of the whole region. The project also produced some equally interesting ethnoarchaeological observations revealing the continuation of regional building traditions over the past two millennia.

Archaeological survey in the River Awali valley

Field surveys were conducted in the valley of the River Awali from 2004 to 2008. The aim of this work was to examine archaeological remains in the outlying areas that would have supplied one of Phoenicia's major cities – Sidon. At the exit of the valley, on the sea edge, lies one of Lebanon's most important archaeological sites – the shrine of the god Eshmun, who is identified with the Greek Asclepios and the Roman Aesculapius.

This work revealed numerous remains of rural settlements confirming that the area had been exploited intensively in Antiquity. It would appear that this process reached its peak in the 4th century AD and endured until the end of Antiquity.

In addition to evidence of habitation, the most significant indications of the valley's use are found in the form of burial sites located alongside most settlements. These are characteristic in that all of the tombs were rock hewn and featured multiple niches for sarcophagi. Like the majority of the villages, these burials also date from the Roman and Late Roman periods (1st–4th century AD).

