



Fig. 13. Findspot SUQ 476. Overview, rock shelter in the survey area of the Yarmouk Forest Reserve (photo courtesy of DAI Orient-Department/Hartl-Reiter)

## GADARA/UMM QEIS HINTERLAND SURVEY

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The Gadara/Umm Qeis Hinterland Survey was initiated in 2010 by the German Archeological Institute. The project focuses on a systematic survey and reevaluation of archaeological and historical sites in the hinterland of ancient Gadara, ranging from Palaeolithic to recent times (Bührig 2015). The survey area is approximately 40 km<sup>2</sup> and bounded by the Yarmouk valley in the north and the Wādī al-'Arab in the south. In the west, the survey area extends to the plateau Ard al-'Alā and to al-Mansūra in the east. The north-eastern survey area is part of the Yarmouk Nature Reserve, established by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) in 2012.

The survey deals with questions of settlement topography, landscape use and subsistence strategies. Around 530 sites have been surveyed to date. The main goal of the investigation is to set the ancient city complex of Gadara in relation to the environment and resources in its hinterland. Settlement dynamics and changes in climate of the region from Palaeolithic to modern times are also being clarified.

The first field campaigns produced evidence of Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Hellenistic-Roman and Islamic settlement traces as well as significant new findings on traffic routes, water management systems, quarries, agriculture and economic land use as well as the sacral significance of the settlement catchment area.

The 2016 and 2017 campaigns were concerned with the processing of material, documentation, and short site visits. Fieldwork centered on the analyses of the stone tools. The survey yielded a huge amount of lithic artifacts deriving from several hundred open-air sites and caves. Based on typological criteria, the artifacts date to different periods within the Palaeolithic.

In 2016/17 we evaluated the stone tools from the survey. The first assessment of the lithic material was that settlement in the surrounding area of Gadara/Umm Qeis began in the Early Palaeolithic and continued probably into the Neolithic. The main purpose of assessing the lithics from the survey was to identify artifact types and their chronological depth and to determine the potential for further artifact analysis.

Selected studies in cooperation with the Natural Sciences Department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) serve to clarify methodological approaches to climate research and environmental archaeology with particular emphasis on anthropogenic influences. The dendrochronological investigations carried out by Karl-Uwe Heußner in the surrounding oak forests not only documented their growth curves, but also resulted in an age determination of the recent Tabor oaks within a range of 120 to 250 years. Reinder Neef and Harald Kierschner carried out the first floristic vegetation surveys in the Gadara/Umm Qeis region and the Yarmouk Forest Reserve.

#### REFERENCE:

Bührig, C. "Gadara, Jordanien: Forschung und Capacity Building. Die Arbeiten der Jahre 2012 bis 2014." *e-Forschungsberichte 2015 des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts*. [www.dainst.org](http://www.dainst.org).

Project website: [www.dainst.org/projekt/-/project-display/115540](http://www.dainst.org/projekt/-/project-display/115540)



Fig. 14. Stone artifacts from the 'Gadara/Umm Qeis Hinterland Survey'. a. backed bladelet (medial fragment), findspot SUQ 38; b. pointed blade with bilateral retouch, findspot SUQ 38 (© DAI Orient-Department/Hartl-Reiter).