Water in Nea Paphos. The study of the water infrastructure from the residential quarter (Maloutena) of the Hellenistic-Roman capital of Cyprus.

In the course of over 50 years of work of the Polish Archaeological Mission of the University of Warsaw in the residential district of the Hellenistic-Roman capital of Cyprus - Nea Paphos (modern Paphos), richly decorated residences were discovered, including the famous Villa of Theseus - the supposed palace of the Roman Proconsul, the so-called Hellenistic House, the Early Roman House, the Roman House and House of Aion. An impressive number of water installations, such as underground cisterns, drainage channels under the streets, terracotta pipelines, swimming pools of various functions and bathroom complexes, have also been found within these buildings. Such a large number of them proves the existence of an advanced water system in this area, reflecting the high level of hydrotechnical knowledge of ancient builders, as well as the significant role of water in the city functioning and the life of its citizens.

The aim of this project is to answer the following questions: how water was collected, stored and distributed in the research area; how it was used; what was its meaning and role in the daily life of the inhabitants; how the water system and the use of water was changing over time; what were the causes of these changes; and above all, what image of the inhabitants and their daily life may emerge from the research on the water infrastructure.

A comprehensive research effort will be required to answer these questions. The first task will be the completion of a catalogue of water installations based on the analysis of archival field documentation and a library query. The next stage will be fieldwork at the Nea Paphos site, aimed at detailed and innovate descriptive, drawing and photographic documentation of water installations using an iPad. On the basis of photographic documentation (terrestrial and aerial) and with use of specialized computer software, 3D photogrammetric models will be made for further analysis and 3D reconstructions. The data obtained and processed in this way will be systematized within the digital database and will become the basis for the preliminary interpretation of the investigated installations regarding their age and functions. In the next stage, advanced comparative studies will be conducted in order to find well-interpreted and dated analogies. In the final stage, studies in the broader context will be carried out, including environmental, socio-cultural and historical conditions, in which these installations were created and functioned. This will allow a better understanding the factors determining the shape of water system and its transformations.

Undertaking of this study is especially important as it will be the first synthetic approach to the water installations in Nea Paphos. While the study focuses primarily on the material from the limited area of the Maloutena district, its conclusions could contribute to a broader discussion on the water infrastructure of the entire Nea Paphos and its place in the history of hydrotechnology of the Greco-Roman classical world. Transformations in the water infrastructure and use can help to identify important caesuras for Nea Paphos and its inhabitants, perhaps linked to environmental processes or historical events such as imperial donation, climate changes or earthquakes. Ultimately, it will also allow us to trace how Roman cultural and technological models have been adapted to provincial cities and how they itself were influenced and transformed. All these data will contribute to the better understanding of the history of the ancient city of Nea Paphos.