

The project addresses the dynamics of the *longue durée* relationship of the hinterland/periphery with a city in Central Transjordan, in “the land of the children of Ammon” (Judges 11.13). This generally refers to the Amman Plateau (in more recent times also known as the Belqa), a territory inhabited by a semi-nomadic people that became an independent tribal kingdom of Ammonites at the turn of the 2nd millennium BC. From the later 8th century BC on, this region belonged in turns to the empires of Assyria (as its vassal kingdom), Babylonia and Persia, the Ptolemies, Seleucids, Hasmoneans, the Romans, and Byzantines, until its conquest by the Muslims in AD 636. The political, administrative, religious, and cultural centre was established on the mighty citadel of Jebel Qala’a, inhabited since the Middle Bronze Age, which retained its leading role throughout the history of the region. Originally, the city was known as Rabbath Ammon, in the Greco-Roman period as Philadelphia (part of the Decapolis), and from the Islamic conquest on – as Amman.

The political history and cultural landscape of ancient Amman are fairly well known due to numerous archaeological projects and historical research. Unfortunately, its hinterland/periphery has not been systematically and comprehensively investigated so far. Consequently, the temporal and spatial patterns of the settlements remain largely unknown and there is a considerable gap in systematic studies of the city–hinterland/periphery relations. Meanwhile, the early travellers' reports and interpretations of old aerial photographs demonstrate that still around the early 20th century, the hinterland/periphery of Amman was densely covered with ruins of small towns, villages, farmsteads, mansions, rural churches, burial places, and the network of roads, most of them dating back to the Greco-Roman times. The vast majority of them do not exist anymore, absorbed by the rapidly expanding Amman agglomeration.

The project will be based on investigations at Khirbat as-Sar (Sara), against the background of historical and cultural development of Amman, covering the period from the Iron Age to the Middle Islamic period (c. 8th century BC–14th century AD). Khirbat as-Sar (thereafter Kh. Sar) is situated at the western outskirts of contemporary Amman (c. 12 km from the Roman forum). The choice of Kh. Sar as a case study to investigate the city–hinterland/periphery relations is justified by several factors. The location on the western edge of the plateau, gave this site a considerable strategic potential, commanding access to Amman both from the west (Jordan valley) and the south (the land of Moab). The most prominent part of the site is occupied by architectural relics consisting of a monumental “tower” (*qasr*) considered to be typical of the Ammonite Iron Age period, transformed into a temple with an Ionic architectural order, and an arcaded courtyard added in the Roman period. Numerous poorly built walls scattered on the southern and eastern slopes of the site are testimony to the rather modest habitation of the Middle Islamic period. Despite the spectacular remains visible on the surface, the site remained unexplored. In 2018–2019, a team from the University of Warsaw carried out two short reconnaissance seasons to determine the research potential of the site. The preliminary scientific results and the conditions for field research proved to be exceptionally promising. This allowed for the setting of the main scientific goals and implementation of the first, long-term, systematic and multidisciplinary research project for Kh. Sar.

The method employed in the project will, first of all, be archaeological excavations in those parts of the site that are considered vital for the understanding of the nature and chronological development of the site. In addition to archaeologists and an experienced architect, the research team includes specialists in history, geology, bio-archaeology, and dating methods. The integration of data pulled from various scientific disciplines is crucial for developing a holistic biography of Kh. Sar, providing a diachronic and nuanced picture of a single periphery site. Only such a biography, shaped through a multidisciplinary approach, can be used back to explore the dynamics of the city–hinterland/periphery relationship in the time scale of *longue durée*. However, the originality of the project lies not only in the holistic approach to Kh. Sar but also in an attempt to put the site in a broader context of the parallel history of Rabbath Ammon/Philadelphia/Amman, the main political, administrative, and cultural focus of the country. The long history of the settlement will allow tracing the Kh. Sar–Amman relations from the 8th century BC to c. 14th century AD). This long timeframe creates a unique opportunity to answer the question of how the relationship between the city and its hinterland was developing against the background of changing political, social and cultural conditions in the Belqa land: from the independent tribal kingdom of Ammon throughout the thriving Greco-Roman *chora* of Philadelphia, and finally of minor importance town of Amman within the military district Jund al-Urdun of the Bilad es-Sham province.

Zooming in on case studies such as Kh. Sar that can be investigated through a multidisciplinary approach, and then scaling up, by comparison of the results with the regional and global-scale historical, social and cultural processes, should provide not only new archaeological data and answers to pending questions but also set new research goals. The outcome of such a methodologically innovative project (a series of articles and book) should inspire other scholars to undertake similar research related to other parts of the southern Levant.