

NEWS: Sites & Archaeological Excavations

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Tell Kamid el-Loz

After a break of more than 15 years, excavations in Tell Kamid el-Loz re-started in the summer of 1997. Under the direction of the German archaeologist Professor M. Heinz of the Albert-Ludwigs University, Freiburg, a team of Lebanese and German students began their research in July 1997. The excavation was made possible through the co-operation between Dr. Camille Asmar Director of the Department of Antiquities and the Albert-Ludwigs University. A 5-week research program was thus undertaken with the assistance and support of local workmen and the villagers of Kamid el-Loz.

The aim of the first season was to gather as much information on the current state of the site and on the places where future work ought to be concentrated. Early results look very promising and the German-Lebanese team now has plans to visit the site on a regular basis in the next few years. On the surface of the ancient site parts of a Roman settlement have been found including houses, *tannours* (ovens) and a paved walk-way. When the inhabitants of this settlement relocated nearby, they used their former living-area as a cemetery. Fifteen Roman graves have been discovered so far.

West of this Roman settlement excavations continued in the so called "temple-area". Here unfortunately, the destruction was extensive. The team of archaeologists spent the whole season clearing the site of rubble whilst searching for signs of earlier settlements. By the end of the season their efforts were successful. Undisturbed architectural stone walls were discovered. As it promises to reveal information about aspects of religion in ancient settlements of the 2nd millennium B.C., the site will be one of the major digging areas in the near future.

What are the general aims of the excavation in Kamid el-Loz? Professor Heinz is mainly interested in the development of settlement structures, settlement systems, ancient economies and trade and the development of cities. Previous excavations under Professor Dr. R. Hachmann of the University of Saarbrücken (1963-1981) showed that Kamid el-Loz was prominent during the Second and First Millenniums B.C., where people from neighbouring Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and Cyprus met.

What was the reason behind the development of Kamid as a meeting place? Had it been a "port of trade"? Had it been a centre of economy? Had it been deliberately situated at the crossroads of the main trade-routes that run through the Beqa'a? How did people in ancient Kamid el-Loz live? What was the layout of the settlements? Which amenities had been placed where? More information is needed about the ancient palace and temple, such as whether or not they had store-houses for holding trade goods. Had there been an administrative centre and where did the early inhabitants of Kamid live? What kind of houses did they build and how did the people earn their living?

Answers to these and many other unknown aspects on the organization of an ancient city will be the goal in Professor Heinz's forthcoming excavations throughout the summer of 1998 in Kamid el-Loz. Additionally, geo-magnetic field-surveys of the immediate surrounding tells will provide a clearer idea of the size and extent of the ancient settlement without actually involving any further digging. The team is looking forward to go back to Lebanon in summer 1998.