

# | Andrzej Reiche

(7 February 1951 – 8 May 2022)

Andrzej Reiche began his adventure with archaeology in 1968 as a first-year student of Mediterranean archaeology at the University of Warsaw. It was then that he developed his fascination with the ancient cultures of the Near East, in no small part due to the magnetic personality of Professor Rudolf Ranoszek, who taught the subject at that time. Influenced by the professor, Reiche concurrently began to study ancient Mesopotamian philology, which he completed earning an absolutorium certificate. Though never attaining a master's degree in that area of study, he would remain interested in cuneiform epigraphy for the rest of his life. In 1974, having yet to complete his archaeology studies, Reiche landed a job in the Ancient Art Department of Warsaw's National Museum, which for an archaeology student was a major success at the time. He maintained professional ties with the institution until his retirement, and emotional ties even longer. Reiche's career progressed on two parallel tracks comprising his work at the museum and his activity as an archaeologist in the field, which he would remain dedicated to for life. On his archaeology work I can say a bit more, since fate happened to see his path intertwine with my own for more than a decade.

Andrzej Reiche's first taste of excavation work occurred in the Near East in 1978, when, as a scholarship-holder of the University of Warsaw's Mediterranean Archaeology Station, he joined the mission at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. His dream of digging in Mesopotamia came true only two years later following a decision on Poland's participation in the international study campaign in Iraq intended to rescue artefacts prior to the construction of dams on the country's major rivers. In the spring of 1980, Andrzej joined an expedition led by Prof. Stefan Karol Kozłowski carrying out a salvage operation at Tell Saadiya in northern Iraq. Excavated there was a chalcolithic Ubaid culture settlement (6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC). That research played a very significant role in Andrzej's professional life. It was the first time that he participated not as an intern but a full-fledged team member. On top of that, the work at the prehistoric site demanded familiarity with a wide range of field documentation types and exploration methods, of which he had had only purely theoretical knowledge up to that point. He approached the learning curve methodically and calmly, making a good impression on Prof. Kozłowski and setting himself up for future work with him. On that mission, Andrzej demonstrated his ability to improvise in difficult field conditions, which he would later come to be known for in our profession, and his good-naturedness. It was also then that his talent for photography became apparent. From that point on, for many years, he was essentially the full-time photographer in every expedition he was part of. For me personally, that first season in the field together was also the beginning of a friendship that lasted more than forty years.

After Tell Saadiya came another site in Iraq, namely the island of Bijan in the middle of the Euphrates, where for a few seasons Andrzej participated in the excavation of remains from the Neo-Assyrian and Parthian periods led by Prof. Michał Gawlikowski, and later by Dr. Maria Krogulska. He returned to northern Iraq in 1984 to take part in another salvage research campaign, this time on the Upper Tigris, where a Polish team was working two archaeological sites: Tell Rijim and Tell Raffaan. That was the adventure of our lives, because, at first, the whole expedition was just the two of us, and also, that we had to function there in spartan conditions was a massive understatement. If not for Andrzej's aforementioned

talent for improvisation, we probably would have called it quits within a week or so; neither we nor the growing team would ever have had the satisfaction of unearthing the Ninevite 5 culture graves at Tell Rijim in the following seasons, or the remains of 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium BC settlements or the Neo-Assyrian settlement. I must add that when we were forced to end the research and leave our village because of the rising water level in the Tigris, Andrzej stayed to the very end overseeing the evacuation of the boxes with artefacts and documentation. His conscientiousness and meticulousness as a researcher led to Prof. Kozłowski inviting him to join his expedition of Polish prehistorians studying the later famous settlement of Nemrik, also located in northern Iraq, relatively close to the previous ones. At Nemrik, Andrzej was entrusted with remains that were very closely connected with his main academic interest, meaning a fragment of a Middle-Assyrian settlement.

In the second half of the 1980s, Polish archaeologists interested in older Near Eastern cultures moved from Iraq to northern Syria, to the Khabur River basin, in connection with another international salvage research operation. Of course, Andrzej had to be there. He was a member of teams that hurriedly studied the small sites of Tell Djassa el-Gharbi and Tell Abu Hafur before the artificial lakes were filled in, and later (this time not rushing) Tell Rad Shaqrah. This generally interesting but small settlement from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC was the last site to be studied by the Polish expedition in a salvage capacity. In accordance with the official agreement, the moveable findings (excluding one-of-a-kind artefacts) were to go to the Polish research team. It was obvious that our wish list could only be made by Andrzej, even more so because the artefacts acquired that way were to join the collection of the Department of Ancient Art at the National Museum in Warsaw. The division of artefacts itself was a difficult matter but a small set of objects did make it to Warsaw, where they were catalogued by who else – Andrzej Reiche.

Yet, our excavation work in Syria did not end when the salvage research ended, as our hosts, recognising our value, invited us to conduct regular excavation research at the much larger site of Tell Arbid, a site of continued settlement from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC all the way to the Hellenistic period. When we began our research at Tell Arbid in 1996, Andrzej was a fully developed and independent researcher with substantial field experience. It also turned out that he was a terrific teacher, able not only to pass on the archaeological craft to students but also to instil in them a fascination with the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. For more than a decade digging at Tell Arbid, Andrzej Reiche was a pillar of the expedition. He oversaw work on two important sectors of the expansive site, at the same time sharing his knowledge with colleagues in other sectors. Moreover, while he was part of the Tell Arbid dig, he was “loaned” for a season by Prof. Ryszard Mazurowski to work at Tell Qaramel (also in Syria), which alongside very important neolithic remains also contained remains from later historical periods, whose study Andrzej was put in charge of.

After the 2010 campaign, Polish archaeological research in Syria was suspended due to the political situation in the country and remains so to date. By no means did this mean an interruption in field work for Andrzej Reiche, as already in 2007 Polish archaeologists had been conducting research in the desert of northern Kuwait on invitation of that country’s archaeology officials. Initially, Andrzej was involved in excavating graves from the protohistoric period, after which, in 2009, he moved on to the protohistoric Bahra 1 settlement of the Ubaid culture in the desert of the Subiya region. There, he explored the very centre of the settlement, determining its stratigraphy and overseeing the documentation, as well as writing up the small findings. But the Polish archaeologists’ presence in the Arabian Peninsula was not limited to just Kuwait, as in 2012 they were invited by the authorities of Oman for some brief reconnaissance work.

Andrzej was part of a four-person team that went out into the field to familiarise themselves with the proposals from the Oman side, choosing as the object of further study the region of the town of Qumayrah in the north of the country, where they located ruins and graves from the Bronze and Iron Ages. Regular research there began three years ago and continues to this day.

In his free time, Andrzej took part in a long excavation season at Saruq Al Hadid in Dubai, where he studied the remains of ceremonial grounds of Iron-Age nomads. He also did archaeological research in southern Iraq. A long bout with illness and a slow recovery thereafter kept him from making longer trips to excavation sites. When he was feeling better, in March 2022 he went on a month-long research trip near Qumayrah. He was in good shape, spirited and full of plans for the future. At the time, none of us could have suspected that that would be his last trip into the field, that it would be his last time as expedition photographer, that the lurking illness would attack so suddenly. Andrzej died within a month of our return.

Andrzej Reiche's life was all about archaeology. Few Polish archaeologists could boast of a field record in the Near East as impressive as his, of such versatility, or of the kind of passion for research that he had. Whenever presented with the chance, he really enjoyed excavating small sites in northern Mesopotamia, mainly ones from the Mitanni or Assyrian periods. Their size allowed him to discover more details, being that thoroughness and studiousness were his strong suits.

We cannot forget, however, that Andrzej did more than just dig – he also published reports from the excavation sites and papers on the material he discovered. In his approximately 30-article-deep academic resume, occupying an important place are papers presenting the results of the research on Bijan Island (Iraq), Nemrik (Iraq), Tell Arbid and Tell Rad Shaqrah (Syria), and the more recent excavation work at the sites in Kuwait. He published both abroad<sup>1</sup> and in domestic academic periodicals,<sup>2</sup> including the *NMW Journal*.<sup>3</sup> I am not a museologist

<sup>1</sup> I.a.: Andrzej Reiche, "Early Islamic Glass from Bijan Island (Iraq)," in *Continuity and Change in Northern Mesopotamia from the Hellenistic to the Early Islamic Period*, Karen Bartl & Stefan R. Hauser, eds (Berlin, 1996), pp. 195–217; id., "Tell Abu Hafur, East: neuassyrische Besiedlung in der Umgebung von Hasake (Nord-Ost-Syrien)," in *Assyrier im Wandel der Zeiten*, Hartmut Waetzoldt, Harald Hauptmann, eds (Heidelberg, 1997), pp. 355–64; id., "Iron Age pottery from Tell Rad Shaqrah (North-East Syria)," in *Iron Age pottery in Northern Mesopotamia, Northern Syria and South-Eastern Anatolia. Papers presented at the meetings of the international "table ronde" at Heidelberg (1995) and Nieborów (1997) and other contributions*, Arnulf Hausleiter and Andrzej Reiche, eds (Münster, 1999), pp. 213–95. *Altertumskunde des vorderen Orients*, vol. 10; Maria Krogulska, Andrzej Reiche, "The Parthians on Bijan Island," in *Studia Euphratica. Le moyen Euphrat iraquien révélé par les fouilles préventives de Haditha (Travaux de la Maison René-Ginouvès 3)*, Christine Kepinski, Olivier Lecomte, Aline Tenu, eds (Paris, 2006), pp. 339–65; Rafał Koliński, Andrzej Reiche, "After the Fall of Assyria," in *Fundstellen. Gesammelte Schriften zur Archäologie und Geschichte Alt Vorderasiens ad honorem Hartmut Kühn*, Dominik Bonatz, Rainer M. Czihon, F. Janosha Kreppner, eds (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 51–59; Andrzej Reiche, "Tell Abu Hafur 'East', Tell Arbid (North-Eastern Syria) and Nemrik (Northern Iraq) as Examples of Small-Scale Rural Settlements in Upper Mesopotamia in the Mittani Period," in *The Archaeology of Spaces. The Upper Mesopotamian Piedmont in the Second Millennium BCE*, Dominik Bonatz, ed. (Berlin–Boston, 2014), pp. 43–59. *Topoi Berlin Studies of the Ancient World*, 12; id., "Isin-Larsa and Sasanian graves from the site of el-Saadiya in the Hamrin region, Iraq," in *Stories Told Around the Fountain. Papers Offered to Piotr Bieliński on the Occasion of His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Agnieszka Pieńkowska, Dariusz Szelaż, Iwona Zych, eds (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 583–97.

<sup>2</sup> Andrzej Reiche, Anna Smogorzewska, "Ninevite 5 Kitchen from Tell Arbid (Area W)," *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, 22 (2013), pp. 371–86; Andrzej Reiche, "Tumulus grave SMQ 30 in As-Sabbiya – Mugheira (northern Kuwait). A report on the 2007–2008 investigations," *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, 22 (2013), pp. 528–41.

<sup>3</sup> Monika Dolińska et al., "The Collection of Ancient and East Christian Art and Archaeological Excavations of the National Museum in Warsaw," *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie / Journal of the National Museum in Warsaw*, 2(38) (2013), pp. 30–55; Andrzej Reiche, "Kuwaiti-Polish Archaeological Research in Northern Kuwait in 2007–2012," *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie / Journal of the National Museum in Warsaw*, 3(39) (2014), pp. 85–110.

so I am not familiar with the details of his work in the Department of Ancient Art and in the later Collection of Ancient and Early-Christian Art, but I can say that as the caretaker of the Collection of Ancient Near Eastern Art, he always found time to show his colleagues and students around the warehouse. In that regard, his talent as an educator also shone through.

Andrzej Reiche had many interests and passions, and not only ones related to archaeology and museum work. To name just some, there was his involvement in the “first” Solidarity movement, his love for visiting every possible art gallery in Europe, and his regular trips to the Koło antique market in Warsaw. To me, though, he was the closest friend I’ve ever lost, loyal, full of warmth and with a wonderful sense of humour.

Piotr Bieliński

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