



Recording and Preserving Cultural Heritage in the Middle East. Aerial Archaeology in Jordan, 1997-2008

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Aerial archaeology plays a crucial role in Western Europe in finding, recording, monitoring and presenting cultural heritage. In the Middle East, however, although it was pioneered almost a century ago, it has subsequently played a slight role in cultural heritage management. Since 1997 there has again been aerial reconnaissance for archaeology in Jordan and now that project has begun to be funded on a scale that will permit it to undertake a far more systematic role. This is of crucial importance anywhere in the Middle East where population rises have been especially high and impacted on landscapes and archaeology. Jordan has probably the highest rate of increase anywhere in the region – c. 1800% since 1943 – so that there, more than anywhere else, a cost-effective tool like Aerial Archaeology is of vital importance. There have been over 160 hours of flying undertaken since 1997 with some 20,000 photographs of hundreds of sites. Jordan remains the only country in the Middle East with such a programme but recent Workshops in Aerial Archaeology in Jordan were opened to archaeologists from neighbouring countries and played a role in raising awareness of the potential of the technique.