

Archaeologists are still investigating the ideological, ritual and communicative meanings behind the repetition of the same scenes in (at least) thirteen different points along the canal.

At present, it is thought that the panels record and celebrate significant events that took place along the canal – for instance, its initial construction and subsequent repeated reopenings after the canal had been periodically dredged.

The panels were designed to evoke a scene comparable to cultic performances in the temples, where statues of the king were set up on the right and left sides of a deity to ensure its perpetual adoration. The veneration scenes carved along the canal course were transported from the secluded temple environment into the open countryside with the aim of commemorating the construction of the new irrigation landscape created by the king in his role as mediator between heaven and earth and promoter of local fertility and abundance.

The royal and divine figures carved in the bedrock represent the imperial seal on the ideological transformation of the region's natural and cultural landscape accomplished by the Assyrian kings through the construction of impressive irrigation networks. By means of these reliefs, royal power made the transformed landscape sacred and legitimised its authority in the eyes of its subjects who lived there.



Faida Archaeological Park

An extraordinary canal and rock art complex in the Duhok Governorate

The Faida archaeological complex used to be a seriously endangered site. Weathering, karst phenomena, the expansion of local productive activities, vandalism and illegal excavation represented the major threats to this monumental complex.

Since September 2019, the Kurdish-Italian Archaeological Project (KIFAP) of Udine University and the Duhok Directorate of Antiquities has been carrying out a comprehensive operation aimed at protecting and safeguarding this unique archaeological site and displaying it to the public.

KIFAP is supported by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG – Iraq), the Directorate General of Antiquities of the KRG, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, ALIPH Foundation, Gerda Henkel Stiftung, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Government, the Friuli Banking Foundation, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, 3D Target, 3DFlow, LabGis of RomaTre University and the Politecnico di Milano.



The Faida archaeological complex is a unique site that comprises a large Assyrian irrigation canal and a series of monumental rock reliefs sculpted on its inner rock bank.

The Faida canal, which rounds the western spur of Mount Çiya Daka, is cut into the limestone of the hill and was fed by a series of karst springs situated in several small wadis along the mountain's northern flank. The canal was over 10 km long, had an average width of 4 m and today is filled with earth and stone debris eroded from the mountain.

The canal was constructed by King Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) or possibly already by his father, Sargon II (721-705 BCE), whilst the rock reliefs were carved by Sennacherib and his successor(s). However, the identity of the king(s) represented in the sculpted panels is still debated.

Since its beginning in 2019, the Kurdish-Italian Faida Archaeological Project, conducted by the Duhok Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage and the University of Udine, has aimed at the comprehensive investigation, documentation and protection of this archaeological complex. The recording was carried out using state-of-the-art methods and techniques, including remote sensing and photointerpretation, laser scanning, photogrammetry and drone technology. In addition, a wide-range of conservation activities is still ongoing.



The Faida reliefs portray a series of statues of seven of the main Assyrian deities standing on podia in the shape of striding animals in the presence of the king – who is depicted twice, at both the left and right ends of each panel.

The figures are shown in profile facing left and thus looking in the same direction as the current flowing in the canal. The deities can be identified as **Ashur**, the main Assyrian god, on a dragon or a horned lion, his wife **Mullissu** sitting on a decorated throne supported by a lion, the moon god **Sin** on a horned lion, the god of wisdom **Nabu** on a dragon, the sun god **Shamash** on a horse, the weather god **Adad** on a horned lion and a bull, and **Ishtar**, the goddess of love and war, on a lion.

