

The Anastasius Edict Project

Introduction

(Ignacio Arce, Detlev Kreikenbom and Thomas Maria Weber)

The Discovery and Restoration of the al-Ḥallābāt Inscriptions

The masonry of Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt preserves fragments of a document of outstanding importance embedded in its walls (FIG. 1). More than 160 reused basalt blocks are inscribed with fragments of a Greek text, originally arranged in more than 300 lines and organized into about 70 chapters, relating to the military organization of the eastern border of the Byzantine empire: the *limes orientalis*. The origin of this legal text from the council of the imperial court at Constantinople—during the reign of Emperor Anastasius I (491 - 518 AD) was determined by a group of American scholars from the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria headed by Howard Crosby Butler in the early

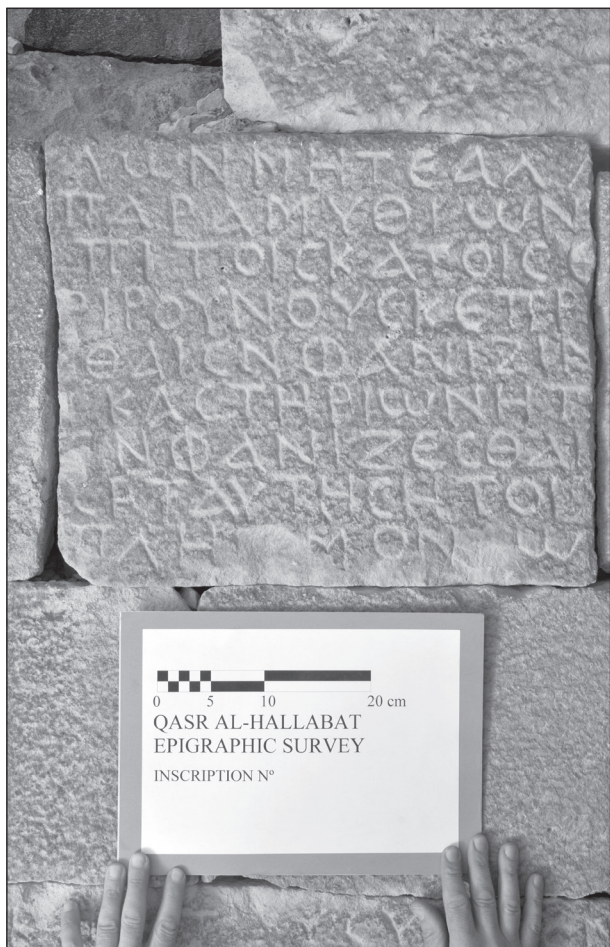
20th century (PPUAES II.A: 70-77; PPUAES III.A: 221-42), who recorded and identified the first fragments at Ḥallābāt, many of which have since been lost⁵. At that time it was not possible to recover the full text, other than some fragments, since the majority of the inscribed stones were hidden under the fallen ashlar of the destroyed *qaṣr*.

A large number of new inscribed blocks came to light when the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, under the direction of Dr Ghazi Bisheh, undertook clearance and excavation work at Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt between 1979 and 1984. The decipherment of these new documents was undertaken at that time by the French scholar Jean Marcillet-Jaubert, who published an expanded reading of the Greek text of the Anastasius edict.

A new impetus to proceed with the reconstruction of the text was given by the excavation, restoration and museum project

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4. Lecturer with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Archaeology. Faculty of Archaeology and Tourism, University of Jordan, Amman.
5. The inscriptions at Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt were first reported by the epigraphic team of the Princeton University Archaeological

Expedition to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909, and were published as Division II, Section A, Part 2 by Enno Littmann, David Magie Jr and Duane Reed Stuart in 1910. Prior to this, similar inscriptions had been reported at Imtan, Bosra, Salkhad and Umm aj-Jimāl. The 1909 mission uncovered two blocks with the nomenclature of Anastasius I (Αυτοκράτωρ Καισαρ Αναστασιος Ευσεβης...), identifying some of the blocks as a part of an edict issued by this Byzantine emperor at the begin of the 6th century AD. The analogous blocks from the aforementioned southern Syrian cities belong to similar official texts, which clearly regulate the defence of the eastern border of Arabia by allied foederati under the command of the *dux orientalis*.



1. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt, basalt stone block inscribed with a fragment of the Anastasius edict embedded in the wall (photo by Dr. Arce).

of the Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex directed by Dr Ignacio Arce, Director of the Spanish Archaeological Mission to Jordan, and funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECID), which took place from 2002 to 2013. This project has provided for the systematic collection of all remaining inscribed stones from this long inscription and their proper display in a new *lapidarium*⁶ at the site museum (FIG. 2), thereby preventing further looting of the inscribed fragments.

The catalogue of new inscriptions from Ḥallābāt found and displayed by Dr Arce now

contains 57 new inscribed blocks. These can be added to the corpus published by the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition, giving a total of 125 inscribed blocks⁷.

Marcillet-Jaubert's reconstruction of the edict was enabled by the survival of such a large number of inscribed blocks. Several blocks are however missing⁸. His large fragment on six blocks is entirely preserved at Ḥallābāt.

A couple of inscribed blocks were found amongst the rubble surrounding the monument by a group of Jordanian students during a field course run by Th. M. Weber in November 2013. Since then, others have been found in private collections, institutions and museums in Jordan. Two inscribed blocks made their way into the collection of Yarmouk University and are today on display in front of the museum⁹. Three further blocks from Ḥallābāt were found in the Amman Citadel Museum, one of them Nr 53 of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition. Another inscription, today in the Mu'tah University Museum, is Nr 55 of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition (see Meimaris, Mahasneh and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2007). One of the four blocks known from Umm aj-Jimāl has been shown to belong to the same inscription as those found at Ḥallābāt, as it fills a gap in the Ḥallābāt series (for these fragments see Bader 2009). A further block was identified at the residence of HRH Prince Ali bin Hussein, who kindly allowed the team to study and make a silicon cast of the fragment for an envisaged replica. New fragments have recently been found at the RJAF base at Marka, which are in the process of being studied and copied / casted.

Aims and Goals of the Project

The importance of the edict itself, as well

6. The stones were inserted randomly to reinforce the idea that the fragments of this imperial inscription, which was originally located elsewhere, had been brought to the site as spolia. Reconstruction of the whole inscription was impossible as some of the fragments were still embedded in the walls of the monument or were missing.

7. One block does not belong to the Anastasius edict: QH-11-55 is

a funerary epitaph. Two other blocks (QH-11-13.20) are highly questionable owing to the layout of the Greek letters.

8. In the preliminary reconstruction drawing by Dr Weber, the missing blocks were redrawn from the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition publication or from photos published in the two articles by Marcillet-Jaubert.

9. One of them is Marcillet-Jaubert's Nr 80-25.



2. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt. Lapidarium at the site Museum/Visitors' Centre with the inscribed blocks of the Anastasius edict retrieved from the debris (photo by Dr. Arce).

as questions about the original location of the inscription and its reuse at Ḥallābāt, led Dr Arce to establish the Anastasius Edict Project as part of the main project which he has directed at the Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex over the past decade. It aimed to achieve collaboration between specialists in Greek epigraphy and other disciplines in order to clarify the contents and contexts of the original inscription.

The project was established with three main goals in mind. First, to recover the original text and then translate and interpret it (*exegesis*). Second, to study the original location of the inscription and the reasons for its reuse at al-Ḥallābāt in the 6th century AD (understanding and making sense of the successive physical, architectural and historical contexts of the inscription). Third, to produce several replicas that will allow not only the proper presentation of such an important epigraphic document

on the history of Jordan to the general public (at the Jordan Museum and Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt site museum), but also their use as a valuable resource for teaching Greek epigraphy to new generations of students at the University of Jordan.

Dr Arce sought collaboration with renowned epigraphists to carry out the textual and physical reconstruction of the Anastasius edict. This is being carried out by Professor Dr Denis Feissel (Paris) in the context of the Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie Project¹⁰, in cooperation with Professor Dr Thomas M. Weber (German Academic Exchange Service [DAAD], Amman). Collaboration with Spanish experts in infography and petrography are further enriching the multi- and interdisciplinary approach of the project.

The edict gives an important account of the military defence of the *limes orientalis* prior

10. Project run by the Institut Français du Proche-Orient and financed by CNRS.

to the Arab conquest. It regulates the duties of Byzantine officials ruling in the *dioecesis orientis*. As well as reconstructing an impressive inscribed monument that is part of Jordanian cultural heritage, the text recovered by Dr Denis Feissel and Dr Th. M. Weber will contribute towards a clearer understanding of the history of the region within the broader context of the Roman east. This epigraphic research, together with the research conducted by Dr Arce on the original location of the inscription, its architectural context and historical vicissitudes, will allow a better understanding of that transitional period which witnessed the end of Byzantine rule and the advent of Islam.

The Replica

The third goal of the project (see above) is aimed at disseminating the results of the scientific research, presenting a proper reconstruction of the text and an explanation of its significance to visitors and the local community. The abovementioned circumstances (missing fragments; others still embedded in the walls of the monument; yet more scattered amongst different museums and collections) do not allow for reconstruction using the original elements, so the construction of a replica is the best alternative.

In collaboration with its Jordanian, Spanish and French partners, the Cultural Heritage Preservation Program of the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany has agreed to fund a series of replicas of this edict for future public display at the site museum at al-Ḥallābāt, the Jordan National Museum and the campus of the University of Jordan. The conservation and moulding work was carried out in autumn 2013 by Ms Inga Vollmer of the Römisch - Germanisches Zentralmuseum, in cooperation with Johannes Gutenberg University at Mainz. The work was picked up in February 2014 by Jordanian conservators Ms

Khairiyeh Khokhon and Ms Myriam Abu Taher. To date, they have completed copies of the first nine rows of blocks making up the Anastasius edict. The painstaking efforts of these German and Jordanian conservators in producing the copies, despite various obstacles, is gratefully acknowledged and appreciated. The direction and logistical management of this project was shared between Dr Ignacio Arce and his German partners, Dr Detlev Kreikenbom (Mainz) and Dr Thomas M. Weber (Amman).

This restoration will not only enable the proper presentation of such an important epigraphic document in the history of Jordan to the public in general, but will also be a unique didactic tool for younger generations of Jordanian students learning Greek epigraphy.

Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt - from Late Antiquity to the Advent of Islam: the Excavation, Restoration and Museum Project (2002 - 2013)

(Ignacio Arce)

Introduction

The excavation and restoration of the Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex has allowed for the recovery of one of the most outstanding monuments of the transitional period between late Antiquity and the Umayyad caliphate in the Levant. This project, funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECID) and carried out by the Spanish Archaeological Mission in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities under the scientific and technical direction of Dr Ignacio Arce, has involved twelve years' continuous work leading to the full excavation and restoration of the major components of the complex, *viz.* the *qaṣr* (a reused Roman fort; FIG. 3), the mosque (FIG. 4) and the bathhouse at Hammam as-Sarrah (FIG. 5), as well as the creation of a site museum (FIG. 6) and visitors' centre. It is one of the most important and



3. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex. Aerial view of the Qaṣr, a former Roman Fort refurbished in the 6th and the 7-8th C AD (photo courtesy of Dr. David Kennedy -APAAME).



4. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex. The Umayyad Mosque after restoration (photo by Dr. Arce).



5. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex. The Umayyad bath-house of Hammam as-Sarraḥ, after restoration (photo by Dr. Arce).



6a, b. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt Complex. Site Museum /Visitors' Centre. Interior & Exterior (photo by Dr. Arce).

ambitious projects focused on the restoration of early Islamic architecture in the Levant. Its goals have been the excavation, restoration and presentation to the public of the complex, not merely as an academic endeavour, but as a way to generate public awareness with the aim of engaging with the collective memory of the local community and fostering the economic development of the region and its inhabitants through promotion of cultural tourism. The project has sought to strengthen the ties of the local population with the site, encouraging the adoption of the monuments by them as a way of (1) reinforcing their identity, (2) safeguarding

the preservation of the site and sustainability of the intervention, and (3) encouraging their social and economic development.

Public Outreach

We strongly believe that the social value of archaeology relies on its capacity to communicate the results of scientific research, whilst promoting public awareness and dissemination of the values embodied in cultural heritage. In order to present these values, the history of the site and links with the local population to visitors and the local community, a visitors' centre and site museum with indoor and outdoor

displays have been devised and built. We believe that museums are not just for the storage of beautiful artefacts, but are tools with which to transform information into true knowledge to be conveyed to present and future generations. Thus, the results of scientific research at the site have been presented using state-of-the-art museological techniques, including an electronic finds catalogue, three-dimensional virtual reconstructions and didactic videos to facilitate understanding of the site on the part of the general public. These videos, that present virtual reconstructions of the site throughout its history, give the visitor a better understanding of the appearance and significance of the site without attempting reconstructions for which there is no evidence. Actually, *anastylosis* (restoration using original elements) has only been carried out on architectural elements whose original configuration we were certain about, without compromising the authenticity of the site. In this regard, stratigraphic analysis of the entire complex, which allowed the phasing of the structures and changes in their use to be reconstructed, has been used as a tool with which to preserve their documentary and historical value.

Historical Sequence of the Monument

The Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex is more than a remarkable monument; it is a unique built document, which embodies in its walls and in the material evidence retrieved the record of its own history and that of the region, especially during the transition from the end of Roman rule to the arrival of Islam, thereby allowing us to better understand this key period of history. The research conducted by this project presents a renewed view of the period, using the architectural remains as evidence to elucidate and better understand the social and political context that characterised this key transformation. The latter, which is usually neglected as an academic ‘no-man’s-land’ straddling the scholarly boundary between

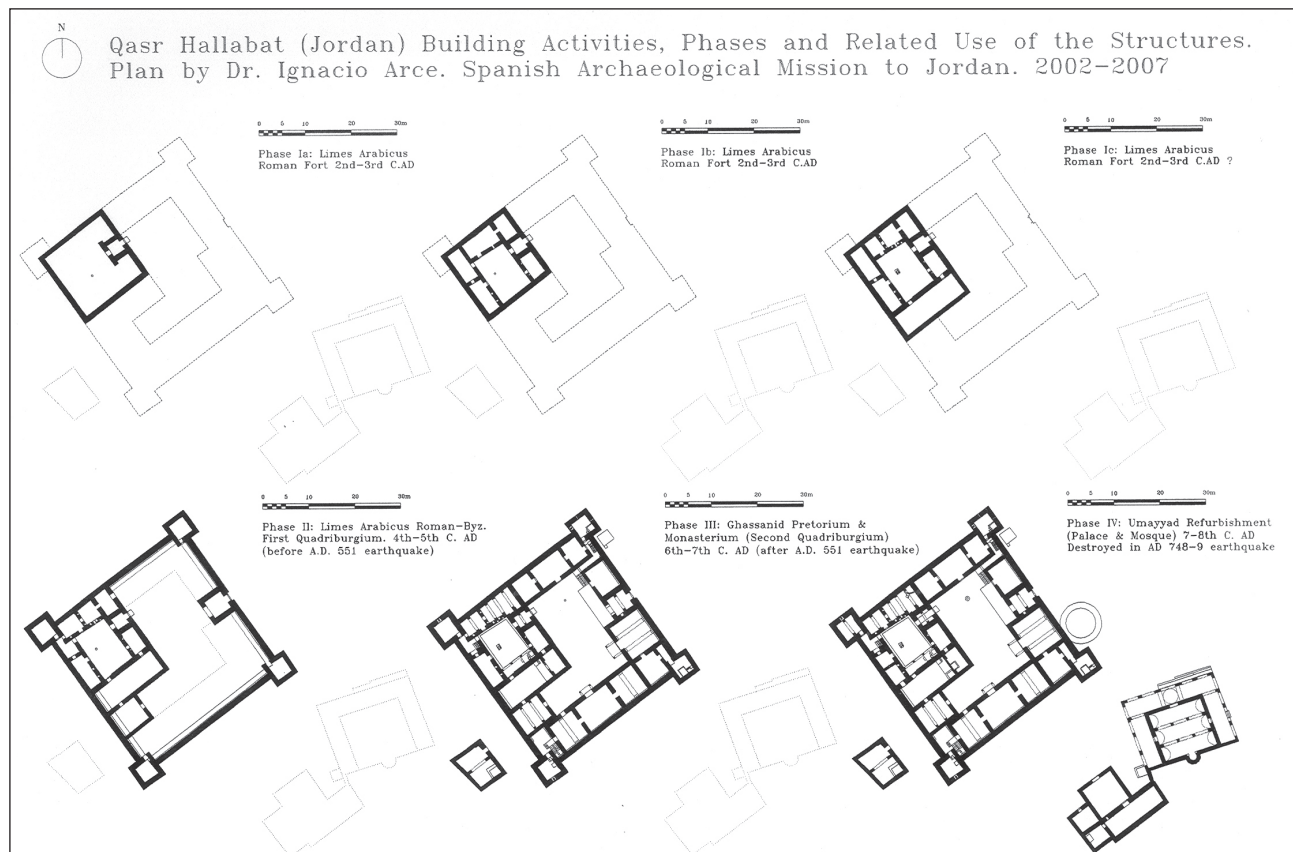
classical and Islamic studies, is now becoming an increasingly relevant area of research. The results achieved by this project not only offer new perspectives on early Islamic art and architecture, but also on the history of this transitional period between Rome and Islam, offering a revealing insight into the role played by Arab elites in the transition.

The complex had previously been partially excavated and studied by Dr Ghazi Bisheh, who demonstrated that its last phase of use corresponded to the Umayyad period. However, more recent research at Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt has provided extensive evidence for the transformation of this former Roman fort on the *limes arabicus* (the Arabian frontier) into a palatine and monastic complex in the 6th century AD by the Ghassanid *phylarchs*, prior to its final refurbishment as an Umayyad *qaṣr* in the 7th - 8th centuries AD and its ultimate destruction and abandonment in 749 AD. Detailed analyses of the material evidence have provided not only accurate sequences of use, building activity and building techniques, but also the decorative elements and their patterns (mural paintings, carved stucco, marble linings, floor mosaics *etc.*). This research has been carried out diachronically, linking the physical transformation of the architecture to the changes in use that took place from the late Antique to Umayyad periods.

Historic Significance of the Site

Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt is perhaps one of the most representative and important sites through which to understand the socio-political and cultural changes that took place in the Levant during the transitional period from late Antiquity to early Islam. The research conducted has given us an understanding of the historical sequence of the site within a general regional context (FIG. 7).

Originally, al-Ḥallābāt was a small Roman fort built on top of a Nabatean outpost during the Severan period, in order to protect the lands of Provincia Arabia after the annexation



7. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt complex. Sequence of transformations and phases of use (plan by Dr. Arce).

of the Nabatean kingdom in 106 AD. This fort was part of the *limes arabicus* that had been established to protect the cities and agricultural lands to the west from the double threat of Persian armies and raids by nomads. As a result of increasing insecurity from the 3rd century AD onwards, this small fort was enlarged and transformed into a *quadriburgium* (fort with four corner towers) in the Tetrarchic period (4th century AD), most probably under Diocletian. It was manned by *limitanei* (troops defending the frontier or *limes*, mainly auxiliary cavalry units). The fort was apparently abandoned and then heavily damaged by the devastating earthquake that hit the region in 551 AD, being transformed afterwards into a monastery and a palace.

At the beginning of the 6th century AD, a major change was introduced to the defensive strategy of the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire to cope with the new threat posed by the light cavalry of the Lakhmids (Arab vassals

of the Persians, who had started to raid the Roman provinces using guerrilla tactics). These changes would affect all structures along the *limes arabicus*, especially Ḥallābāt. Emperors Anastasius (first) and Justinian (later) realised the need for a new strategy that would replace the *limitanei* troops garrisoned in the forts of the *limes arabicus*, who had proved unable to repel the attacks of such mobile adversaries. They understood the need to face this threat with a similarly mobile army, which could only be provided by allied (*foederati*) Christian Arabs using the same strategy and tactics employed by their enemies. Accordingly, the role of the Christianised Arab elites in the defence of the frontier started to be crucial: firstly the Tanukh, afterwards the Salih and finally the Ghassanids were entrusted with the task of defending the border. They did not need to garrison troops in forts: as a mobile army they needed only reliable logistic support, which in many cases was provided by the monasteries which they

both patronised and defended from the Persian raids. As a result, regular Roman army troops were withdrawn from these forts, which in many cases went on to be occupied by monastic communities who were active in the conversion of the pastoralist inhabitants of the dry-steppe or *badiya* (the nearby agricultural exploitation of which seems to date to this period). These monastic communities took advantage of the strategic location of the forts (near crossroads, water sources or other places where semi-nomadic populations used to gather) to spread the Christian faith (and, in many cases, to proffer the aforementioned logistical support required by the *foederati* troops). The monasteries enjoyed the support of the Ghassanids, federate Christian Arabs who held the effective military command of the area in the 6th century AD, as they were intended as instruments through which to spread Monophysite Christianity. Their increasing military and political importance was recognised in an agreement (*foedus*) signed in 530 AD with the Emperor Justinian that recognised the Ghassanid rulers as *archiphylarchs* (“primary leaders of tribes”) and *basileis* (“kings”) of these Christian Arab *foederati* (who, unlike the Palmyrenes and the Nabataeans, were not citizens of the Roman Empire). This new ‘royal’ status for the Ghassanids meant that they needed seats of power within which to play out their new role. In many cases, as at al-Ḥallābāt, they chose some of the abandoned forts that had been transformed into monasteries in which to place their audience halls. Here they delivered a clientele policy aimed at those inhabitants of the *badiya* whose political and military support they intended to win over, whilst at the same time achieving their conversion to the Monophysite faith. The importance of al-Ḥallābāt actually relied on the fact that the fort was divided and used simultaneously as a Monophysite monastery and a palace, a clear expression of the political and religious agenda of the Ghassanid *phylarchs*. Despite

being vassals of the Byzantine Emperor, their increasing autonomy in military, political and religious affairs gave rise to a mutual distrust that was the source of many conflicts and was one of the reasons behind the breakdown of the alliance and final withdrawal of Ghassanid support. The latter was apparently related, first, to the success of the Persian invasion in 614 AD and, second, to the defeat of the Byzantine armies by the Muslims in 636 AD at the battle of Yarmouk (after Emperor Heraclius had defeated the Persians and regained the land lost a decade earlier).

In many respects the Ghassanids can be seen as forerunners of the Umayyads, especially with regard to the building activity they patronised. This was directly related to their political and religious agendas, different in scale and objectives, but following very similar strategies based on a clientele policy towards the inhabitants of the *badiya* in order to gain their political and military support. Additionally, Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt stands as witness and material evidence through which we can learn about the historical role of this region and the populations who lived there. It was not only a border between mighty rival empires and a place of political and military confrontation, but was also the stage for fruitful cultural and commercial exchange. This region consisted of two different landscapes in which two different groups of people, with contrasting lifestyles, coexisted and lived side-by-side. On the one hand, there were settled people living in villages and towns, mainly farmers (*fellahin*) who cultivated the narrow strip of fertile land to the west. On the other hand, there were semi-nomadic pastoralists (*bedouin*) who grazed their flocks of camels, goats and sheep in the neighbouring steppe to the east of the agricultural land, who took advantage of their ability to roam across the steppe and desert in order to control the long distance trade of the region, thereby facilitating exchange. The relationship between these two different ways

of life alternated between fruitful coexistence and occasional conflict whenever crisis or famine occurred. The political frontier was superimposed almost exactly over the natural, social and cultural fault-line between these two different cultural landscapes, which were essentially defined by different lifestyles and environs. This fact is crucial in understanding the history of the region and the material manifestation of this socio-cultural intercourse at al-Ḥallābāt, making the site of paramount importance in the history of Islam.

Umm aj-Jimāl: The Original Location of the Anastasius Edict?

(Ignacio Arce and Thomas M. Weber)

The Anastasius Edict at al-Ḥallābāt: Why and When?

The fragments of the Anastasius edict inscription at al-Ḥallābāt represent one of the most valuable cultural resources of this monumental complex, as it is probably one of the most important imperial edicts of late Antiquity. This unusual location poses interesting questions about its original location and the reasons for the reuse of its *spolia* at al-Ḥallābāt. It is clear that the dozens of inscribed blocks making up this imperial edict, which describes the administrative reorganisation of the defence of the *limes arabicus*, could not originally have been displayed in a small fort like al-Ḥallābāt. It should have been located at a more important place. Therefore, what was the original location of the edict? And when and why was it transported to and reused at al-Ḥallābāt? The first researchers at Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt thought that reuse of the *spolia* from such an important imperial inscription dating to the beginning of the 6th century AD could only have occurred in the Umayyad period, following the passage of some time after it was first issued and displayed. This idea led to the assumption that the refurbishment of the Roman fort in which the basalt blocks were reused (when the

inscription fragments were incorporated into the walls of the building) should date to the early Islamic period. Somewhat surprisingly, the stratigraphic research conducted by Dr Arce concluded that the reconstruction using these basalt blocks (including the inscription fragments) had actually taken place in the 6th century AD, after the abandonment of the Roman fort and the earthquake that devastated the region in 551 AD. The fragments of the inscription (along with hundreds of other uninscribed basalt blocks) were brought from some distance away, presumably from a structure that collapsed in the same earthquake, and were reused in the reconstruction and transformation of the fort into a monastery and palace by the Ghassanid *phylarchs* during the second half of the 6th century AD. The origin of these basalt blocks is therefore likely to have been an important city in the nearby volcanic area of the Hauran (classical *Auranitis*), where the effects of the 551 AD earthquake were as devastating as at al-Ḥallābāt. The most likely candidate is Umm aj-Jimāl, owing to its proximity to al-Ḥallābāt (just 20 km away), its relative importance and the fact that several blocks of the same inscription are still to be found there, having been reused as *spolia* in later walls (just as at Ḥallābāt).

It was not clear why so many basalt blocks were painstakingly brought from 20 km away, when the best quality limestone in all Jordan is available at al-Ḥallābāt itself. Clearly, there must have been a good reason for such a *tour de force*, to say nothing of the expense and logistical difficulty.

The solution to this puzzle emerged from research carried out by Dr Arce and Mr I. Moscoso on the reconstruction of the palace in the Ghassanid period, which demonstrated that the construction (and decoration) of this palatine and monastic Ghassanid complex aimed for a deliberately bichromatic effect (black and white) through the application of white plaster decoration over a black basalt background

(FIG. 8). Furthermore, this bichromatic scheme had been devised for the construction of the external walls of the structure, including complete rows of black basalt blocks within the otherwise white fabric constructed of local limestone. Parallels for both the building and decorative traditions can be found, not only in the Hauran region (which was under Ghassanid control), but also in Yemen, whence the Ghassanids came to the Levant in the late 5th century AD¹¹.

As a result of this research, we can conclude that the Ghassanids relied not only on Byzantine imagery, but also (and mainly) on their own Arab traditions (of south Arabian

/Yemeni origin), when they attempted to create a visual culture of their own for use in their new palatine bases in Bilad ash-Sham, which were in turn aimed at supporting their new status and political agenda. This can be demonstrated, not only at al-Ḥallābāt, but also at other sites and cities of the Hauran like Umm aj-Jimāl, Bosra and the dozens of fortified monasteries that they built in the heartland of their new domain in Bilad al-Sham (such as Mallah, Buraq *etc.*, now in southern Syria). A deliberate attempt to reproduce, to a certain extent, south Arabian visual culture and architectural imagery would therefore appear to be the motivation for the reuse of the black basalt blocks brought from



8. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt. View of the courtyard of the Qaṣr. A: in the 6th C AD with its characteristic and singular bi-chromatic (B&W) decoration; B: in the 7th-8th C AD with the new Umayyad decoration applied on top of the previous one (Image by Dr. Arce & Mr. Moscoso).

11. The preliminary results of this research were presented by Dr Arce at the 9th International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan, held in Washington in 2007, and at the 7th International Conference on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near

East (7ICAANE), held at the British Museum in April 2010, in the 'Light and Colour in Architecture' session. However, owing constraints of space, the publication of the latter focused on the Umayyad period.

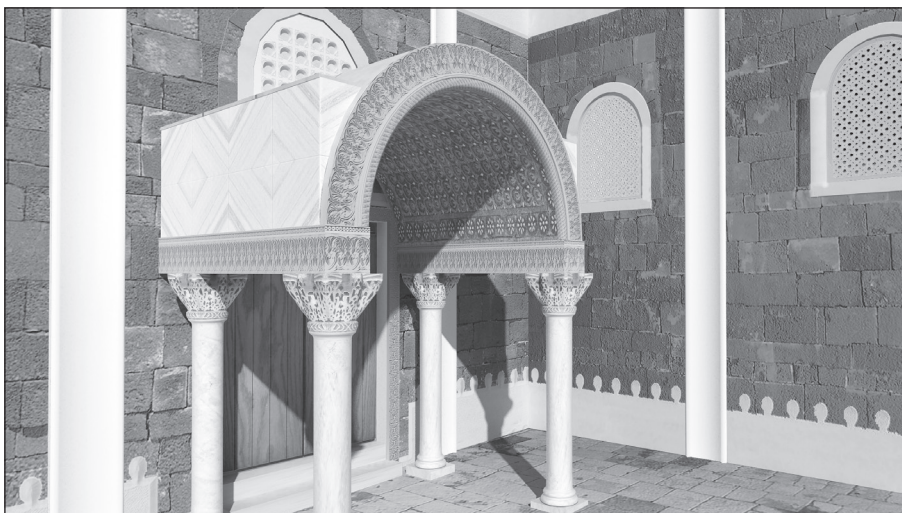
the nearby Hauran region. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt thus becomes a clear example of the creation of a visual culture for political and religious propaganda aims, which can be demonstrated in two successive periods of the site's history, *i.e.* under the Ghassanid Phylarchs (FIG. 9) and Umayyad Caliphs (FIG. 10). Accordingly, colour combined with decorative patterns, as well as an increasingly complex catalogue of formal architectural resources, defined specific visual cultures aimed at affirming a political identity and conveying a political and religious message with a clear propaganda aim.

Increasing control over the use of light (both natural and artificial) to enhance the visual resources provided by the architectural elements and decorative linings of these palatine and religious venues represents a further step in this direction. This has been demonstrated through

the excavation, analysis and restoration of the monument, thereby offering new insights into the history of pre-Islamic and early Islamic art and architecture in Bilad ash-Sham. In many aspects, the Umayyads, no longer vassals but rulers of a new empire of their own, followed in the footsteps of the Ghassanids by building a new culture drawing on the cultures of the two empires they'd defeated, *viz.* the Persian Sassanians and Byzantium. Umayyad culture was also based on a strong sense of Arab identity, shared with and already affirmed in this region by the Ghassanids. It is no coincidence that many of the 'Umayyad palaces' were built on earlier Ghassanid settlements (as at al-Ḥallābāt, Qaṣr al-Ḥīr al-Gharbī, Qastal, Djabal Says, Burqu *etc.*). In our case, their intervention at the *qaṣr* was aimed at reuse of the palatine halls, maintaining their function, and transforming



9. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt. View of one of the canopies in the courtyard of the Qaṣr in the 6th C AD with its characteristic and singular bi-chromatic (B&W) decoration (Image by Dr. Arce & Mr. Moscoso).



10. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt. View of one of the canopies in the courtyard of the Qaṣr in the 6th C AD with the new Umayyad decoration applied on top of the previous one (Image by Dr. Arce & Mr. Moscoso).

the monastic dependencies into stores for the palace. Umayyad building activity consisted mainly of removing any decoration bearing a political or religious meaning linked to the previous Christian overlords. New mosaics, mural paintings and stucco friezes were applied to the floors and walls of the audience halls, conveying a new message to the observer. Interestingly, a mosque was built outside the existing premises. It didn't reuse the humble setting of the internal monastic chapel, but was placed on a prominent, commanding location so that it could be seen from a distance. This dual intervention (refurbishment and reuse of the Ghassanid palace and construction of an extramural mosque), which saw both the political and religious significance of the site replaced, is extremely important. It demonstrates the dual seizure, political and religious, that took place, as well as the ascendant political and religious influence exercised over the pastoral population that used to graze their flocks in these locations. Once more, they would be the main source of support for the new rulers.

The Umm aj-Jimāl Hypothesis

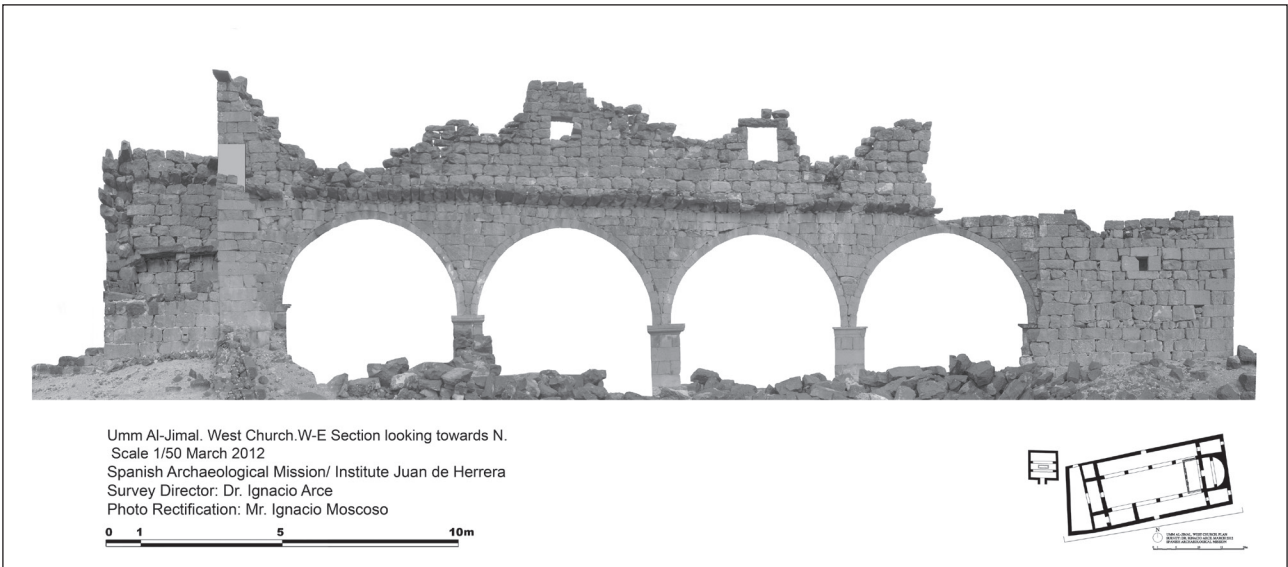
The historical and cultural context outlined above gives even greater relevance and importance to the fragments of the Anastasius edict inscription, as these are closely related to the final stages of Roman rule and, more specifically, to the administration of the defence of the Roman frontier, the latter being the main focus of the inscription. Circumstantial evidence points to Umm aj-Jimāl as the most probable candidate for the original site of this inscription. This assumption is supported by the presence of four inscribed blocks of similar appearance to those at al-Ḥallābāt (FIG. 10a-c). These not only correspond in terms of the size and style of the chiselling, but also in terms of the shapes of the letters and their arrangement in multiple lines. According to a preliminary reading by Denis Feissel, three of these blocks fit together and preserve a coherent text fragment.

The fourth block would hypothetically join without a gap to a stone in the last row of the al-Ḥallābāt inscription (see FIGS. 16a-c and 21). This preliminary evidence supports the hypothesis that Umm aj-Jimāl was the original location of the al-Ḥallābāt Anastasius edict. However, it is still unclear which building at Umm aj-Jimāl might have displayed it; two main hypotheses have been put forward.

The first favours the West Church (FIGS. 12 and 13): a part-demolished extramural martyrial church, located on the crossroads where the branch road leading to the Umm aj-Jimāl city gate forks off from the *via militaris* which ran east-west beside the town. The huge north wall of the church (today collapsed and looted) that faced this access road would have been an ideal location for the inscription, as it offers an ideal location for displaying this monumental document.

The second hypothesis favours the perimeter wall of the so called *praetorium* (FIGS. 14 and 15), arguing that this is the only public building which offered enough surface area and public space in front of it to display and allow for the reading of such an important document.

Umm aj-Jimāl was lyrically praised as a 'gem of the black desert' by the British traveller Gertude Bell. The ancient name of the site remains obscure, as H. C. Butler's proposal that it be identified as Thantia of the Tabula Peutingeriana has been convincingly rejected by E. A. Knauf. A proposal by H. MacAdam that it be identified as Surratha, a north Arabian town in Ptolemy's Geography, also remains no more than a possibility. The period of greatest prosperity, however, came after the reign of the Roman emperors in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, as at that time Umm aj-Jimāl consisted of a fortified outpost and agricultural hamlet a few miles east of a major trade route: the *Via Trajana Nova*. The site was occupied for 700 years from the 1st to the 8th centuries AD, and again in the early 20th century. The ruins, which cover a considerable area, are located at the southern



11. Umm Aj-Jimal West Church. W-E Section looking towards North (Image by Dr. Arce & Mr. Moscoso).



12. Umm Aj-Jimal West Church (photo by Dr. Arce).



13a. Umm Aj-Jimal "Praetorium". Main hall (Image by Dr. Arce & Mr. Moscoso).

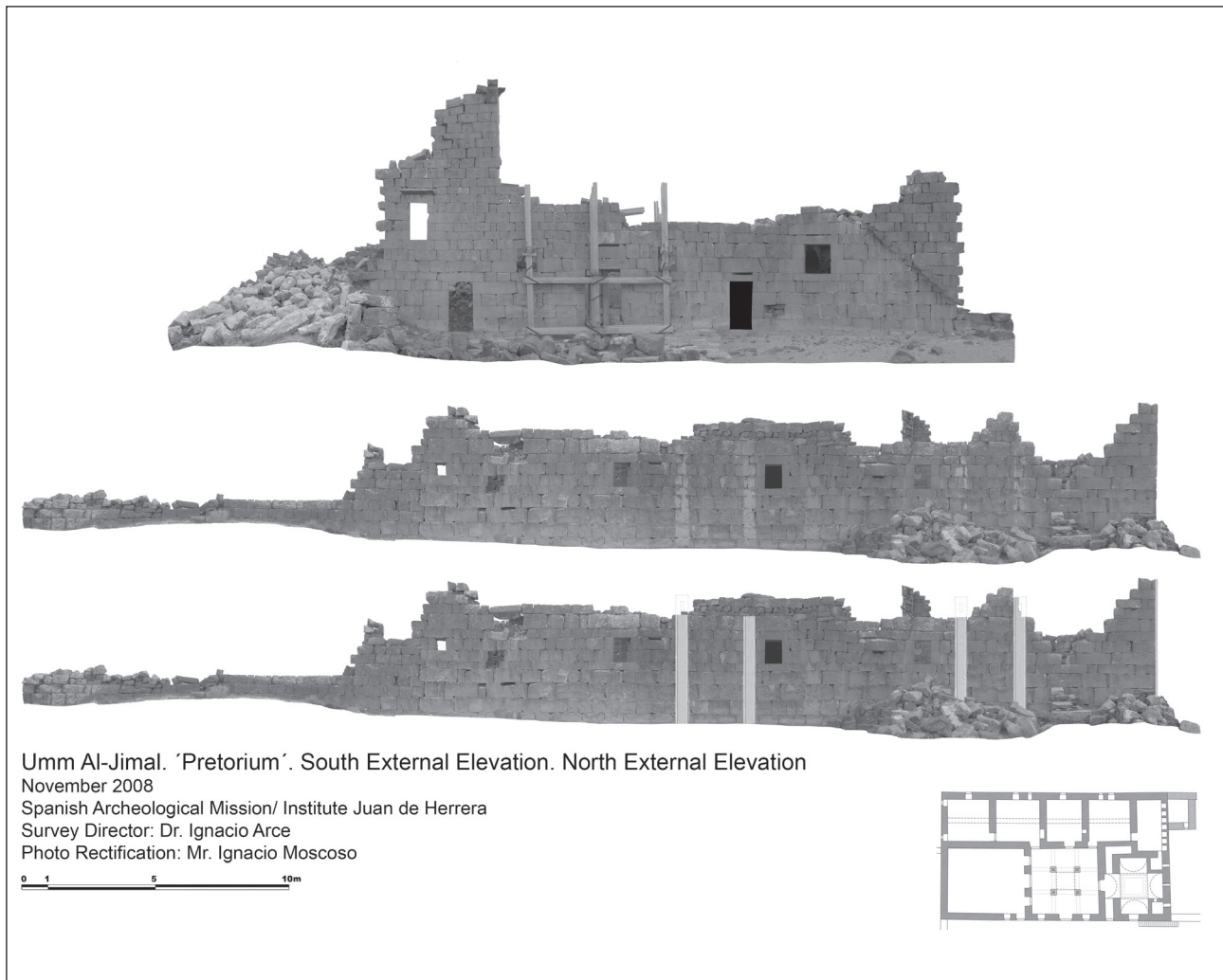


13b. Umm Aj-Jimal "Praetorium" in 1905 (Photo by Princeton University).

limit of the south Syrian basalt plateau. In contrast to al-Ḥallābāt, dark black-blue volcanic rock predominates. Umm aj-Jimāl is not far from 'Azraq oasis and the entrance to Wadi Sirhan, the latter being one of the main trade routes up from the central Arabian peninsula and Gulf littoral. Today, the site still offers pleasant grazing after winter rain. In antiquity it would have been a favourable resting place for camels; its role as a caravan station may be reflected in its Arabic name ('mother of the camels'). Various tomb inscriptions testify to the strong influence of Nabataean traders from the 1st century BC onwards. In contrast to the Hellenised cities of southern Syria, Arabia and Palestine, Umm aj-Jimāl's has preserved its irregular indigenous layout, with no straight, central streets and no subdivision

into rectangular *insulae* for housing. Instead, a chaotic agglomeration of large and small buildings, both public and private, has survived within the present-day ruins.

A large *castellum* was constructed in the north-eastern part of the town during the years of the Tetrarchy (end of the 3rd - beginning of the 4th centuries AD). During the course of the 5th century this was replaced by smaller quarters, namely a Byzantine fortress only 20% the size of its Tetrachic predecessor (probably used as a fortified monastery). The first Roman garrison was likely established some time after 106 AD. A late Roman administrative office, the so-called *praetorium* (which was later converted into a domestic dwelling), still survives at the site. The military unit at Umm aj-Jimāl was from *Legio III Cyrenaica*, which



14. Umm Aj-Jimal "Pretorium". Ortho-rectification of N & S elevations (Images by Dr. Arce & Mr. Moscoso).

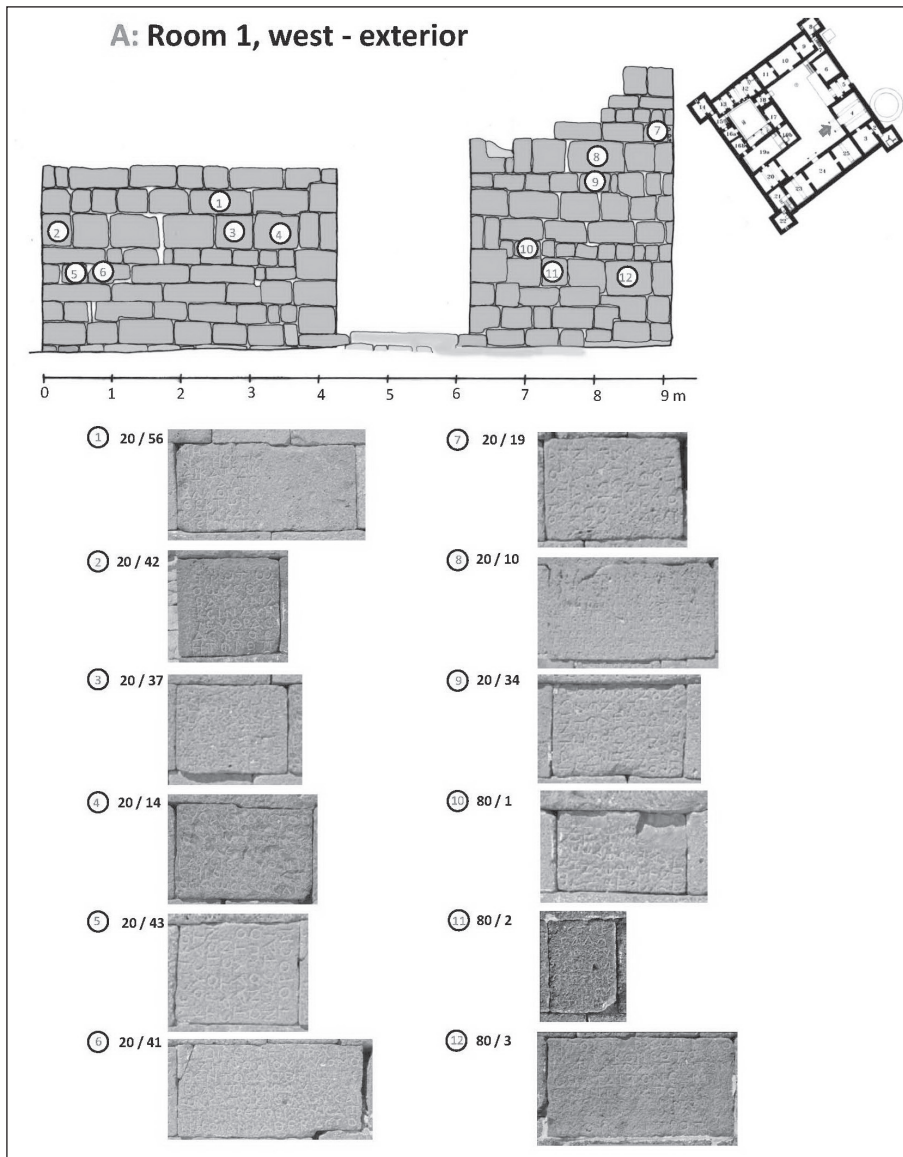
was established in the north-west Egyptian oasis of Siwa in the early 2nd century AD.

Further Interdisciplinary Research

In addition to the abovementioned, admittedly hypothetical, evidence regarding the possible original location of the inscription, petrographic analysis has also been carried out on the basalt stone that was used. A team of petrologists led by Prof. Rafael Fort from the National Council for Scientific Research and Complutense University of Madrid (*Grupo de Petrología aplicada a la Conservación del Patrimonio Departamento de Geomateriales Instituto de Geociencias - CSIC-UCM*) was invited to join the project. Their role is to analyse and compare the composition of the basalt from the inscribed blocks with those of

the buildings upon which it might originally have been located and with nearby quarries. The nature of the basalt necessitated x-ray diffraction analysis, which has been combined with research on the mortars, and other tests and scientific analyses (including diachronic study of building techniques).

At the same time, Dr Arce is working with an infographic reconstruction specialist from the Spanish Archaeological Mission (Mr Ignacio Moscoso) on a reconstruction of the inscription in its original form and location, paying particular attention to building techniques of the period and thereby testing the two abovementioned hypotheses. This work aims not only to identify the original location of the inscription with greater certainty, but also to shed light on the organisation of the sections



15. Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt. Location of inscribed stones in the wall of the main courtyard outside Room #4 (image by Dr. Weber).

of the edict itself, following their translation. The location of the blocks within the fabric of the building, taking into account the norms of the building techniques employed and the shapes and dressing of the blocks, is providing information on their relative location and thus on the organisation and sequence of the sections of the text, the exact order of which would be otherwise have remained unclear.

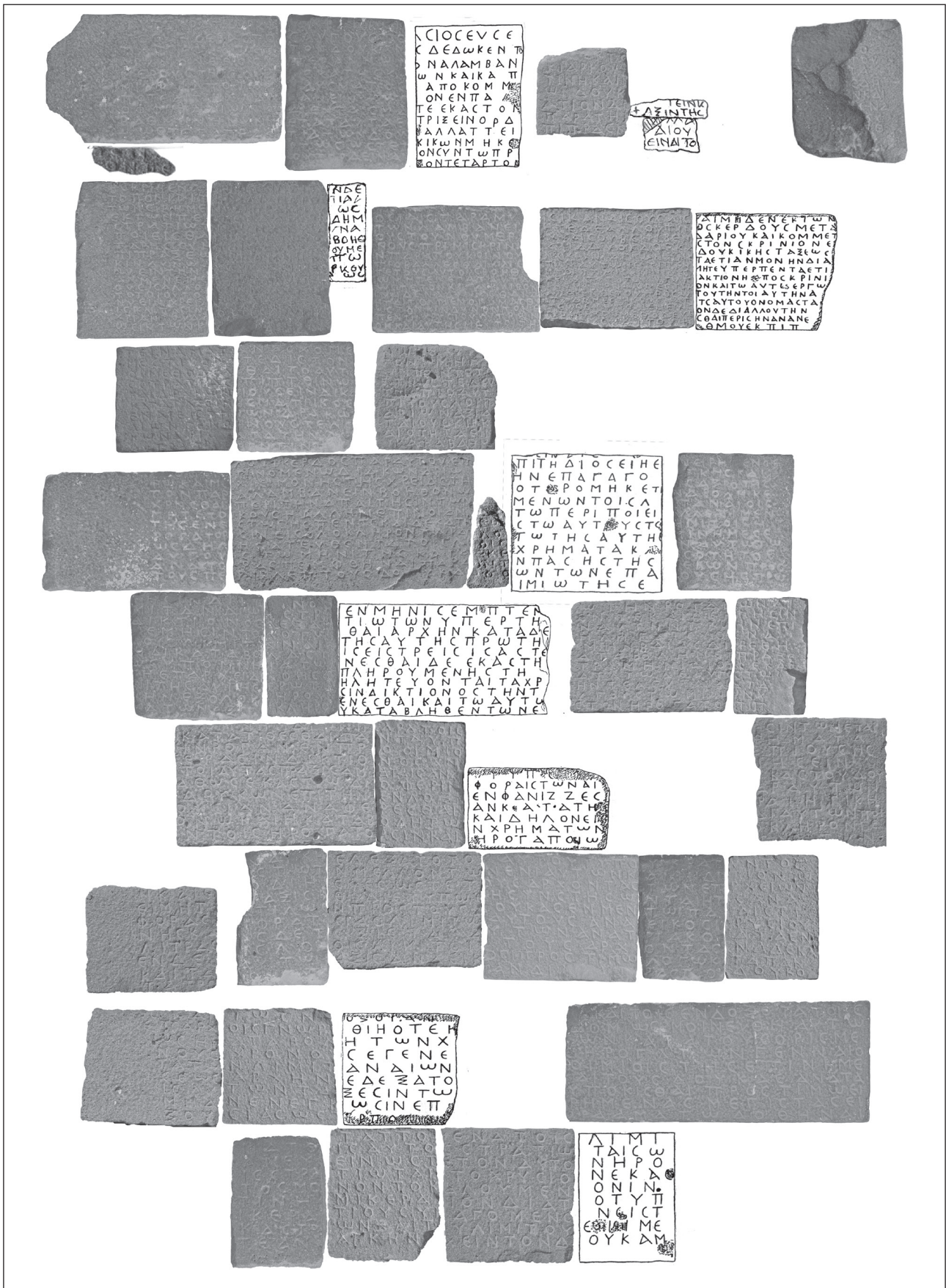
The pioneering interdisciplinary approach of the project is thus yielding significant results whilst promoting new trends in archaeological research. This has mutually enriched the work of specialists with different areas of expertise and offers new and exciting insights into the history of this transitional period.

Preservation and Reconstruction

(Thomas M. Weber)

The Location and Original Arrangement of the Inscribed Blocks

The main clue for recognising the long text of the edict was the reuse of its blocks in the rebuilding of Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt. It is clear that this occurred after the text had lost its original intrinsic value. A disastrous earthquake hit the region in 551 AD; it can be assumed that the rebuilding activities at al-Ḥallābāt were a response to this event. The same catastrophe may also give a clue to the fate of the structure upon which the inscription was originally displayed. After its collapse, the ashlar of the



16. Anastasius Edict Part I (lines 1-100). Infographic restitution by Mr. Ignacio Moscoso.

wall in question would have provided building material for new projects. They could easily have been collected on the spot and transported by beasts of burden to their future location. The nearby *Via Nova Traiana* would have played an essential role in this endeavour.

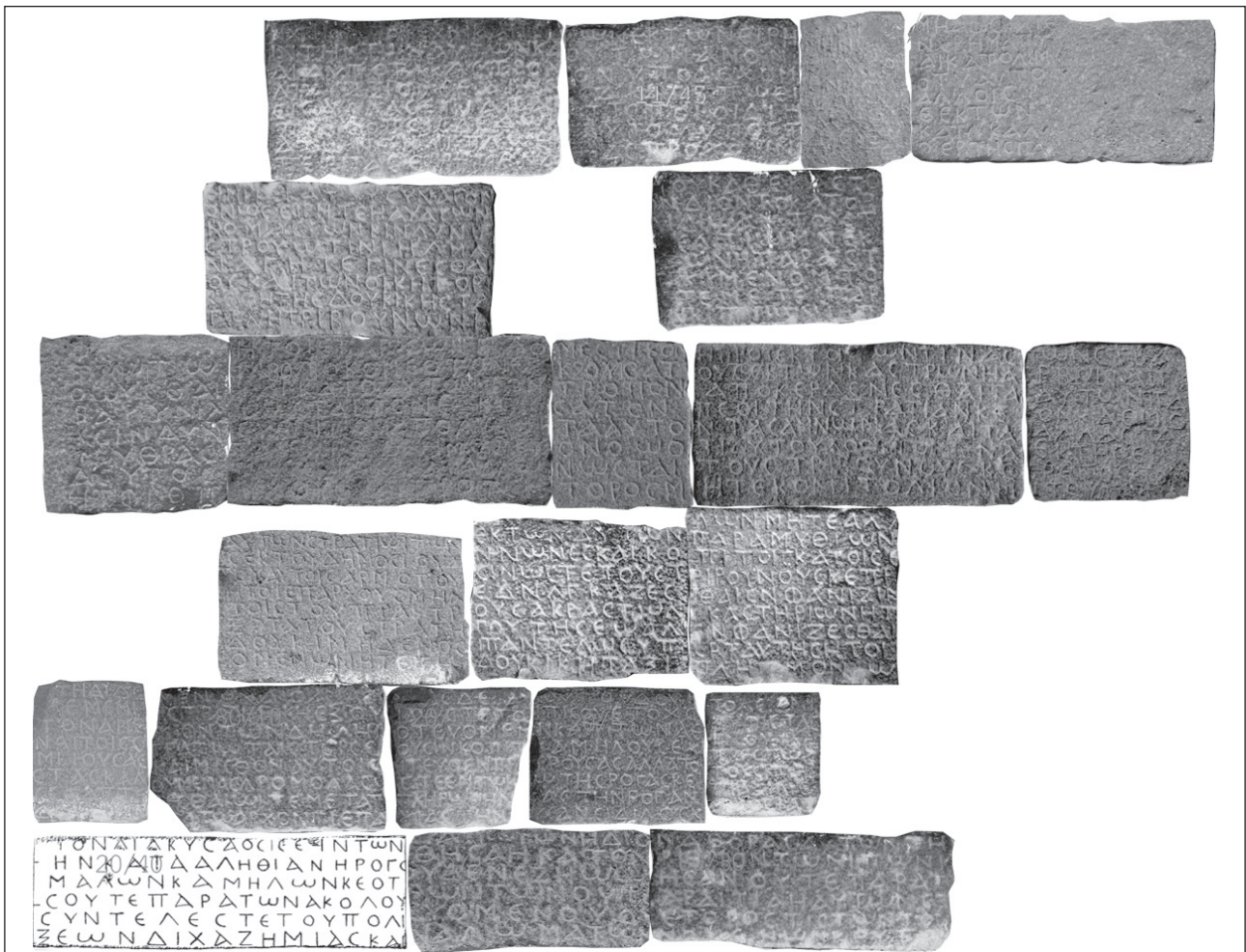
The masons and stone-workers at al-Ḥallābāt recut and partly smashed the blocks with disregard for the Greek inscription and letters, with the aim of including them within the new masonry. This is the reason why some blocks from the same vertical setting are smaller than their neighbours. In addition, the outer faces of the blocks were partially covered with plaster, of which traces still remain. Several chipped pieces with single letters have been found, but only a few could be attributed to their original location. The blocks that were integrated within the masonry are concentrated in the interior of the *qasr*, especially the four rooms in the north-eastern corner of the late antique *quadriburgium*. Their setting is irregular; sometimes the blocks were fitted upside down. The possibility that the inscribed faces of the ashlar face into the core of the wall (which would make them invisible today) can be excluded with certainty on the basis of the ancient masonry construction methods in the Syrian and Jordanian basalt zones of the Hauran. The walls do not consist of fully shaped blocks, in that only the exterior faces of the ashlar were dressed. In the core of the wall, the stones remained as raw broken wedges, locked in to each other and cast in a massive pour of concrete. The smooth, rectangular- or square-cut surfaces into which the inscription was chiselled thus form the exterior elevations. A large number of inscribed stones that were reused in the lower courses of the masonry are still *in situ* (FIG. 17a-b). However, most of the upper courses have fallen with the destruction and progressive decay of the castle over the centuries. Many of the fallen inscribed blocks were found within the rubble and were hidden by accumulated stone and sand (FIG. 19). For this reason, the early investigators of the Princeton

University Archaeological Expedition to Syria only reported on the blocks that were then accessible. Clearance and excavation work from the 1970s onwards recovered these hidden documents step-by-step as isolated blocks. As early as the British mandate-period, individual blocks were removed from the site and found their way into public and private collections in Jordan. Several are preserved today in the archaeological museums of Yarmouk and Mu'tah Universities and in the gardens of RJAF Prince Faysal Technical College at Marka airport. One of four very similar blocks found at Umm aj-Jimāl filled a gap in the al-Ḥallābāt text. This confirmed earlier suggestions that the original location of the inscription was most probably Umm aj-Jimāl.

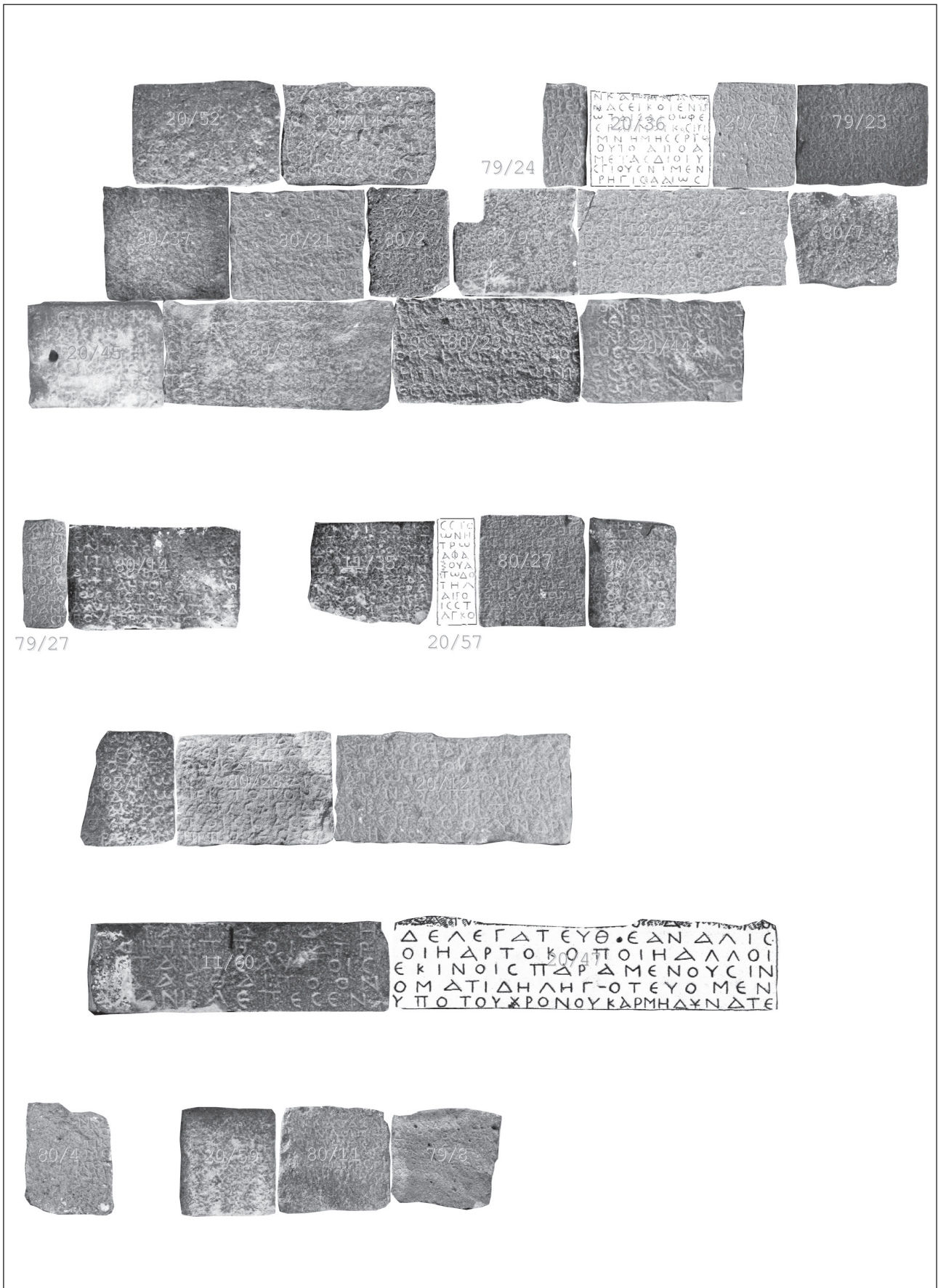
Unfortunately, some of the al-Ḥallābāt blocks were lost after their discovery. In total, the missing pieces are thought to represent less than 20% of the complete original document. The work by the Spanish Archaeological Mission under the direction of Dr Ignacio Arce was decisive. Through clearance and restoration activity, he managed to put together a relatively complete version of the document. These isolated blocks from the fallen debris were carefully collected and exhibited in a *lapidarium* at the site's visitors' centre (FIG. 18). This assemblage was supplemented by stray finds in November 2013, recorded by University of Jordan students visiting the site, and by other fragments which have come to light at different locations in Jordan (RJAF Marka; various Jordanian universities and museums; private collections *etc.*). These have all been recorded and added to the corpus of material. The present arrangement of the original document was necessarily done in a rather arbitrary manner, as a number of blocks needed for the reconstruction remained in the ancient walls or were not available on-site. As a result, the idea of producing exact copies at a scale of 1: 1 emerged, in order to organise the blocks into their original sequence and layout.



17. Anastasius Edict Part I (lines 101-137). Working restitution by Dr. Weber.



18. Anastasius Edict Part II. Working restitution by Dr. Weber.



19. Anastasius Edict Part III to VII (a,b,c,d respectively). Working restitution by Dr. Weber.

The process of copying would offer a further advantage, in that a number of replicas could be produced for exhibition to wider audiences at other locations.

The Jordan Museum, being the main location for presentation of the Kingdom's cultural heritage, was chosen as the first location. Another replica will be erected on the Jordan University campus for the benefit of future generations.

The inscribed blocks of this long text provide an excellent medium for teaching ancient Greek language and epigraphy. Two other copies of the reconstructed epigram are envisaged for the archaeological sites of al-Ḥallābāt and Umm aj-Jimāl, in order to increase their attraction for tourists and visiting academics.

The reconstructed arrangement of the copied blocks is based on the scholarly reading of each document by Dr Denis Feissel¹². It was through his generosity and cooperation that this result could be achieved. Research on the text, however, is still in progress. To date, seven parts of the text have been recovered, of which the first (FIGS. 20 and 21) is the longest and most complete. These parts cannot yet be connected with each other and thus stand as isolated fragments of the whole edict. Their textual sequence can, however, be determined by their context. Part one starts with the preamble "*Emperor Anastasius gave the following orders...*" to which the following chapters are grammatically related by the consecutive "*that*". This first part comprises 135 lines of text organised into 21 chapters. Part VII (FIG. 27) probably represents the end of the edict. Having said that, small details provided by new finds may lead to slight modifications to this reconstruction.

Fortunately, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany was convinced of the value of the Anastasius edict for cultural cooperation with Jordan. The Cultural Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to sponsor



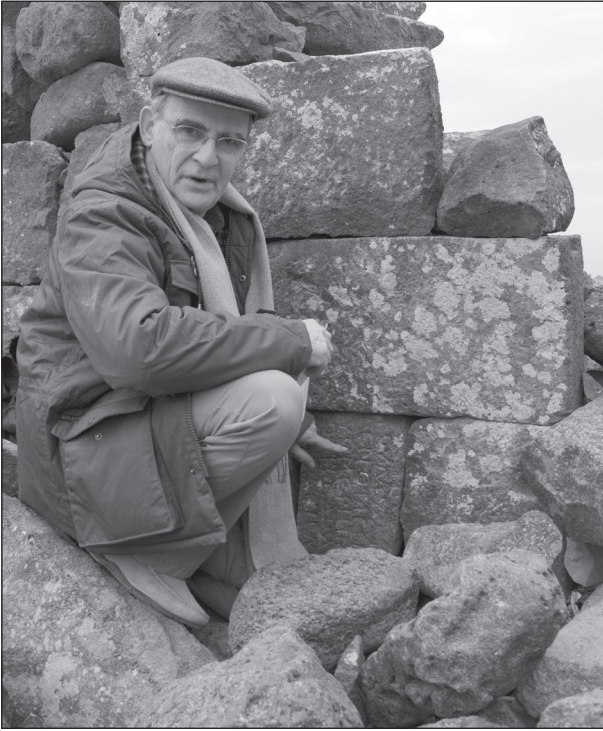
20. Works of casting the silicon molds to make the replica of the Anastasius Edict (Photo by Dr. Arce).

two seasons of work in November - December 2013 and February - May 2014. The results of this initial phase of work were presented on 11 May 2014 at the Jordan Museum, in the context of the 'German week' organized by the German Embassy at Amman. This display is preliminary.

As well as the physical replica now displayed in the Jordan Museum, the project yielded a number of other benefits, such as training two Jordanian conservators in techniques of silicon copying and gypsum acrylic casting, and raising awareness of the document amongst Jordanian students researching the military history of their country.

Further work is required to achieve the final goal of reconstructing the full-length of the inscription and providing two further copies:

¹². Full publication of the exegesis of the text, including commentaries, will be prepared by Dr Denis Feissel.



21. Dr. Denis Feissel at Umm aj-Jimal, with one of the fragments of the Edict reused as spolia on the walls of the stables near House VI. This fragment fits in one of the gaps of the sequence of fragments retrieved at Ḥallābāt, supporting the hypothesis that the basalt blocks (including those inscribed with the edict) reused at Ḥallābāt, came from Umm Aj-Jimal (Photo by Dr. Arce).

one each for the Jordan University campus and the visitors' centre at al-Ḥallābāt. Taking into account our experience in previous seasons, two to three years will be needed to implement this plan.

The Reconstructed Text: A Unique Document on Military Administration in the Late Roman East

(Denis Feissel)

Following an antique tradition, the laws of late Roman emperors could be inscribed in stone until the 6th century, not only in order to be accessible to contemporary readers, but also to be transmitted to future generations. Under the reign of Anastasius I (491 - 518 AD), who thoroughly reorganised the fiscal system, imperial law aimed particularly at controlling the heavy expenses devoted to the army, even in peace-time. As well as the code of Justinian, (published 534 AD), who reinforced much of the military legislation of his predecessor, two long juristic inscriptions covering this topic have been discovered in distant parts of the empire: the first in Libya, where three copies of



22. Inauguration of the first Section of the replica of the Anastasius Edict displayed at the Jordan Museum, 11th May 2014 (Photo by University of Jordan).

the same text are still extant, and the second in the Near East, where four copies of another law have been discovered, including two in southern Syria (Bostra; Imtan) and one at Jerusalem. The great inscription which we suspect comes from Umm aj-Jimāl, and which was then reused at Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt, is by far the best-preserved of them all.

However, although the majority of copies were found in the Roman province of Arabia, this law applied to all provinces along the eastern border of the empire, the so-called ‘*limes*’, which extended from Mesopotamia in the north to Palaestina in the south, as special provisions for some of these provinces make clear. Only one place in Jordan has been singled out, and that in rather a surprising way, namely the city of Pella where a church of Saint Sergius had to be subsidised from military funds. The heading of the inscription (FIGS. 20 and 28) leaves no doubt about the authorship of this law, by attributing all following provisions to Anastasius I. More exact dating within the period of his reign remains ambiguous, since references to a first fiscal year (the so-called *indiction*) based on a 15-year cycle could correspond either to 492 or 507 AD. Although some chapters of the law have been entirely lost (likely less than 20%), we are now in a position to reconstruct its first part without interruption for 135 lines, amounting to some 1,400 words. The two following parts, though not directly adjoining each other, still amount to 47 and 23 lines respectively, whereas four shorter disconnected sections total only 30 lines. The entire text is clearly divided into chapters. Although they are not numbered, which would have made the reconstruction an easy task, every chapter begins with the same phrasing: “*We order that*”...; more than 40 chapters can thus be identified. Though their concatenation does not appear to be entirely logical, we will attempt to briefly summarise their content in the way that they follow each other. As a whole, the common purpose of these many rules was

to (re)organise the public financing of military administration on the one hand and the frontier troops, the so-called ‘*limitanei*’, on the other.

Part I chapter 1 (lines 3-7; FIGS. 20 and 28) confirms older regulations about the salaries of the dukes (military governors) of the oriental provinces. Special provisions were made in favour of two of them, the duke of Mesopotamia and the duke of Palestine, who were entitled to an additional income derived from commercial taxes.

Chapters 2-10 (lines 7-43; FIGS. 20 and 28) extensively describe the hierarchy of office-holders who assisted the duke and the rules of nomination and promotion (by seniority only) in the various branches of the military administration. There were five departmental heads in each province, each bearing a title of Latin origin: *subadiuva*, *adiutor*, *commentariensis* (in charge of the judicial branch), *subscribendarius* and *numerarius* (in charge of the financial branch). Three of them had two assistants to help them, who could not stay in charge for more than five years. Lower office-holders also followed a well-defined career, though chapters 8-10 are too poorly preserved to make every detail clear.

Chapter 11, still in part I (lines 43-75; FIGS. 20 and 28), is the longest of the whole edict and sets out a very detailed calendar for the fiscal year (beginning on 1st September), dealing with the levying of taxes on one hand, and the payment of soldiers on the other. The key person responsible for both was the so-called *erogator* (literally ‘distributor’), whose duty it was to receive money from the tax-payers in three instalments, ending in August each year so as to be able to start to pay the soldiers immediately in September. Various reports (*cf.* FIG. 29) needed to be produced at different stages of this process, first from the ‘*erogator*’ to the civil governor of his province, then from the civil governor to the duke, and finally from the duke to the military headquarters in Constantinople.

Chapters 12-13 (lines 75-90; FIG. 20) make

provision for heavy fines against civil governors or dukes who failed to draw up these reports and send them out correctly.

Chapters 14-19 (lines 91-124; FIGS. 20 and 21) contain additional provisions about the duties of the *'erogator'*, in order to protect the soldiers against all kinds of malversation. At the same time, soldiers who were unfit would receive no money at all (lines 110-121; FIG. 21).

The nine chapters of part II (FIG. 23) mainly deal with the rights and duties of officers and soldiers. Chapters 4-6 prevent officers from taking advantage of soldiers when granting them leave. Chapters 8-9 set out special provisions relating to horses and dromedaries belonging to some soldiers. As for the pay of the soldiers themselves, reports showing the numbers of horses and dromedaries had to be sent to the civil governor and the duke.

The five chapters of part III (FIG. 24) are more of a miscellany. Chapter 1 deals with the public grants provided to some churches and monasteries, notably the church of Saint Sergius at Pella. The emperor confirmed that the value of such grants had to remain undiminished from that specified in former regulations. This money was not to be used for military expenses. Chapter 2 set a low level of judicial fees whenever a soldier was brought before a court. Chapters 3-5 deal with the need for correct book-keeping within every military unit, which had to be audited by local officers on a four-monthly basis.

The two chapters of part IV (FIG. 25) once again aimed to protect soldiers from any extortion. No fee was to be required from them on promotion. There was to be no special charge when the duke and his retinue visited their camp. Various evidence supports the assumption that part VII forms the end of the text, *e.g.* the large empty space below the last line of the text.

As mentioned above, research on the entire corpus of the inscription will go on. For the sake of their own cultural heritage, its preservation

and scholarly interpretation for the future generations, any information from the people of Jordan on hitherto unknown or lost blocks from the Anastasius edict will be very precious.

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