

MOSAIC OF JORDAN DOCUMENTATION PROJECT: PHASE I NORTH WEST JORDAN (2011-2013)

Ana Silkatcheva

Introduction

The mosaics of Jordan were last synthesised by Michele Piccirillo in 1993, and many new discoveries have been made in the intervening twenty-odd years. Between 2011 and 2013, the author undertook the first stage of a renewed synthesis of the decorated mosaics of Jordan, to form the basis of an MA (Res.) dissertation at the University of Sydney (Silkatcheva 2014)¹. Constraints on length necessitated that the scope of this first stage be limited to mosaics in one part of the country only; the north-west region of Jordan was selected as the focus for this first stage of research. While new finds have spanned the country, the greatest number of new discoveries have been concentrated here. Between 1993 and 2013², 52 more buildings with mosaic pavements were discovered in north-west Jordan alone, in addition to the 45 buildings with mosaics from this region that were already known when Piccirillo published *Mosaics of Jordan* in 1993 (Fig.1). While the majority of these new discoveries have been published either in this journal or elsewhere, a relatively large number remain unknown, their existence evidenced only by unpublished excavation reports and photographs in the archives of the Department of Antiquities. The present article constitutes a summary report on the data collection phase of the research project, with a particular focus on the previously unknown mosaics, in order to bring to light the material that has remained unpublished until now. A full catalogue of

mosaics from north-west Jordan may be found in the author's dissertation (Silkatcheva 2014) and in a forthcoming extensive publication (Silkatcheva, in preparation). New additions, which have been added to the corpus since 2013, will be published in later reports in this journal.

Goals and Objectives

Beyond the synthesis of all discoveries, a broader study of the mosaics of Jordan involves an analysis of the ornamental programs of the mosaics, especially with regard to geometric motifs and patterns, previously been neglected in studies, which concentrated on figural representations. The over-arching goal of the project is to trace the works and movements of mosaicists and their workshops across the wider region, which incorporates the late Antique provinces of *Arabia* and the *Tres Palaestinae*. This involves a focus on the distribution of geometric motifs and patterns, assisted by epigraphically and archaeologically established dates. The results of the analytical phases of the project will be published elsewhere.

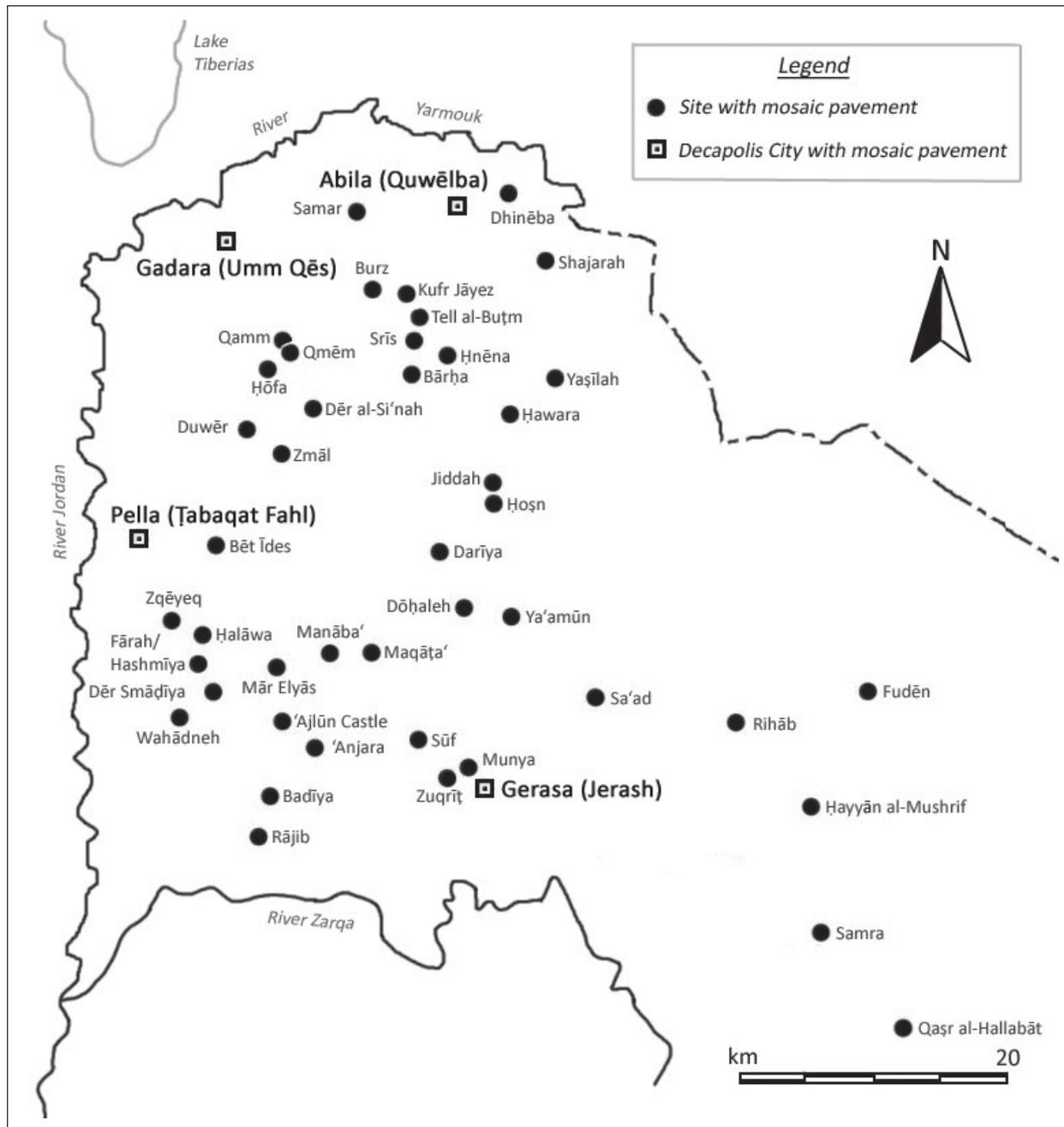
While the study of mosaics in north-west Jordan is now complete, the Mosaics of Jordan Documentation Project continues, with the goal of documenting, presenting and analysing all of Jordan's mosaics. Subsequent phases will focus on mosaics found in other parts of the country.

Delineating 'North-West Jordan'

As the first phase of the Mosaics of Jordan

1. The author is grateful to the Australian Federal Government for the Australian Endeavour Research Fellowship, which allowed her to spend extensive time in Jordan in order to undertake this research.

2. The author's research permit and funding period expired in 2012, while 2013 marked the beginning of a brief hiatus in publication of this journal, and therefore a cessation of ready access to information about new discoveries.



1. Map Showing Sites with Mosaics in North-West Jordan. (Plan: Ana Silkatcheva).

Documentation Project formed the basis of a dissertation, limits of size and scope demanded the delineation of a small region for a focused study. Its boundaries were not chosen arbitrarily; north-west Jordan has long been recognised as a micro-region with its own specific climate, culture and settlement patterns (Kennedy 2006). It is bounded by the Rivers Jordan, Yarmūk and Zarqa in the west, north and south respectively, and by the Eastern Desert.

Methodology

The starting point for a list of sites with mosaics was naturally Piccirillo’s *Mosaics of Jordan*, which presented all the mosaics that had been discovered up to the publication date of 1993. Consultation of excavation reports published in the *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (ADAJ)* since 1993, along with the annual supplement, *Munjazat* (which first appeared in the 2000s) provided more site names.

The list was further expanded by searching for ‘mosaic’ as a site element on the MEGA-Jordan system, concentrating on the four governorates of northern Jordan; Irbid, al-Mafraq, ‘Ajlūn, and Jarash. At the time of research, this database (a substantial upgrade to the older JADIS system) had just been launched, which meant that many newer discoveries had not yet been referenced, and some older discoveries that had been imported from JADIS required clarification. Some sites suggested by the system were eliminated as possible sites for the corpus when it became clear they referred to mosaics which had either been destroyed long ago³, were present only as traces (i.e. loose tesserae)⁴ or were composed entirely of white tesserae⁵, which were not of interest for this project. Two sites in the search results apparently had polychromatic mosaics, but no documentation could be located⁶.

Finally, to complete the list, the names of a number of unpublished sites were gleaned from personal consultations in the field with Department of Antiquities (DoA) officials, former staff, and associates.

Other site names were encountered along the way, but either the mosaics there were long gone⁷, or no information, published or unpublished, could be recovered⁸; these are therefore excluded from the corpus⁹. It must be recognised that this corpus of known and extant mosaics is as exhaustive as has been possible at the given time and with the given means, but a complete corpus with full documentation may not be possible to

accomplish at all. At times, discoveries have not been recorded; documentation is presumed missing, or mosaics have been illegally lifted for the antiquities trade before archaeologists could be alerted to their existence. Local and foreign professionals in the country agree that a much greater number of mosaics have been exposed in Jordan than the documentation suggests¹⁰.

Archival photographs and plans were the target of the data collection stage, supplemented by photographs taken by the author of mosaics *in situ* or on display in museums, and formed the complete catalogue which is published in Silkatcheva 2014.

Mosaics of North-West Jordan

All mosaics known up to 2013 are presented here in three sections: those known and published by Piccirillo in 1993; those discovered and published by various authors between 1993 and 2013; and those that have been discovered between 1993 and 2013, but have remained unpublished. In the interests of brevity for this journal, and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of material, the mosaics which have already been published are merely listed with identifying details, and no photographs are provided. Interested readers may refer to the citations provided, or the detailed, extensively illustrated catalogue of the entire corpus (A. Silkatcheva 2014). In contrast, mosaics which are hitherto unknown and unpublished are treated in greater detail, with photographs included.

3. “Marhaba” and “Bishra” (pers. comm. Dayr Abu Said Antiquities Directorate staff, Dayr Abu Sa’id, Jordan, May 2011).

4. “Umm al-Sarab”, “Ṣabḥā”, “Sama”, “Umm al-Quttayn” and “Saba’ Sīr” (King *et al.* 1987); “Khatla”, “Sahari” and “Mudawwar” (pers. comm. Abdel-Qader al-Housan, Al-Mafraq Antiquities Office Director, Al-Mafraq, Jordan, August 2011).

5. “Zir’ah” (=Tell Zira’a, pers. comm. Dieter Vieweger, December 2010), “Abu al-Hummus” and “Khirbat Kadadeh” (pers. comm. Mohammad Abu Abieleh, Ajlūn Antiquities Office director, ‘Ajlūn, July 2011); “Saal” (pers. comm. Dr. Wajjih Karasneh, DoA Consultant, Irbid, Jordan, May 2012, and Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat, Antiquities Inspector, Irbid Antiquities Directorate, Irbid, Jordan, May 2012).

6. “Rasūn Church” (pers. comm. Dayr Abu Sa’id Antiquities Directorate staff, Dayr Abu Sa’id, Jordan, May 2011, and Mohammad Abu Abieleh, Ajlūn Antiquities Office Director, July 2011, ‘Ajlūn, Jordan) Umm al-Jimāl (pers. comm. Bert de Vries,

Director of Excavations at Umm al-Jimāl, November 2011).

7. “Tubna” (Dayr Abu Sa’id Antiquities Directorate staff, pers. comm. Dayr Abu Sa’id, Jordan, May 2011).

8. “Buwayḍa” (pers. comm. Catreena Hamarneh, Assistant to the Director-General of Antiquities, Amman, Jordan, April 2011 and Al-Mafraq Antiquities Directorate staff, Al-Mafraq, Jordan, August 2011).

9. Piccirillo (1981: 104-117) published a comprehensive list of sites where mere traces of mosaics had been found. Michel (2001: 419-425) presented a similar and updated list in regards to the presence of churches, noting also traces of mosaics where these had been seen. There are traces of mosaics in the churches of Umm al-Jimal but these have not been published.

10. At Umm Qays in 2011 the author witnessed mosaics visible beneath a shallow cover of soil, but this area is yet to be excavated; the Borders of Arabia and Palaestina Project, headed by Dr Kate da Costa at the University of Sydney, discovered an unexcavated mosaic at Khirbat Duwayr (Kufr Abil).

Previously Published Mosaics

Mosaics Published by Piccirillo in 1993

Abila (also known as Quwayliba; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2762, “quweilbeh”), the “**Area D Church**” or “Umm al-‘Amad” (Michel 2001: 111-120; Piccirillo 1993: 332; Mare 1991; Mare 1988).

Dayr Şmādiyyah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 10460, “dayr el-simadiyyeh esh-shimali”) (Piccirillo 1993: 338; Piccirillo 1981: 17-18).

Fārah (also known as Hāshmiyyah; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 9127, “Hāshmiyyah \fara”) (Piccirillo 1993: 338; Piccirillo 1981: 18, plates 10-11).

Gadara (also known as Umm Qays; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2654, “Umm Qays”), the **Baths of Herakleides** (Michel 2001: 128-132; Weber 1990; Piccirillo 1993: 328f.; 1981: 29-31; Lux 1966).

Jarash (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 58418, “jerash”), the **Villa of the Muses and the Poets**, the **Macellum portico**, the **Civic Complex** (578 A.D.), the **Glass Court**, the **chapels** in the southwest and northwest corners of the **Church of St Theodore** (c. 494 A.D.), the **Church of the Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs** (c. 464 A.D.), the **Church of Sts Cosmas and Damianos** (533 A.D.), the **Church of St John the Baptist** (531 A.D.), the **Church of St George** (529 A.D.), the **Synagogue**, the **Synagogue Church** (530 A.D.), the **Church of Sts Peter and Paul**, the **Procopius Church** (526 A.D.), the **Church of Bishop Isaiah**, the **Church of Elias, Maria and Soreg**, the **Propylaea Church** (565 A.D.), the **Mortuary Chapel**, and the **Chapel of Bishop Marianos** (570 A.D.). (Syntheses in Michel 2001: 224-274; Piccirillo 1993: 282-298).

Manābi‘ (also known as Umm al-Yanābī‘; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 11422, “Umm el-manabi”) (Piccirillo 1993: 341; Piccirillo 1981: 21f.; Augustinovich and Bagatti 1952; Glueck 1951: 229-230).

Maqāṭi‘ (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 5850, “maqati”; 482 A.D.) (Piccirillo 1993: 341; Piccirillo 1981: 21f.; Van Elderen 1972).

Munya (also known as ‘Aşfür; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 6636, “munya”) (Michel 2001: 274f.; Piccirillo 1993: 299, 1983).

Pella (also known as Ṭabaqat Faḥl; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2705, “pella”), the **Central Ecclesiastical Complex** (Michel 2001: 120-128; Piccirillo 1993: 330f., 1981: 15f.; MacNicoll 1992; MacNicoll *et al.* 1982; Smith 1973).

Qaşr al-Ḥallābāt (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: “hallabat”, 7597) (Bisheh 1993; Piccirillo 1993: 350f.).

Qmaim (also known as Qamm; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2867, “qumeim”) (Michel 2001: 132; Piccirillo 1993: 340; Tarawneh 1990).

Rihāb (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 7506, “rihab”), the **Church of St Basil** (594 A.D.), the **Church of St Mary** (533 A.D., renovated in 582/3 A.D.), the **Church of St Menas** (635 A.D.); **Church of St Paul** (595 A.D.), the **Church of St Peter** (623 A.D.), and the **Church of St Sophia** (605 A.D.). (Michel 2001: 212-222; Piccirillo 1993: 310-313, 1981: 49-80, 1980a, 1980b; Housan 1992, n.d.; Lux 1967; Avi-Yonah 1948).

as-Samrā (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2659, “samra/mafraq”), the **Church of St John the Baptist** (“Church 95”; 639 A.D.), **Church of St George** (“Church 79”; 637 A.D.), **Church of St Peter** (“Church 78”), the **Egumen Church** (“Church 82”), the **Chapel of Anastasios** (“Church 81”); the **North-East Chapel** (“Church 20”); and the **Roman Fortress Chapel** (“Church 29”). (Michel 2001: 192-206; Humbert and Desreumaux 1998, 1981; Piccirillo 1993: 304-309; Desreumaux and Humbert 1982).

Shajarah (also known as Khirbat Mājid; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 6745, “shejerah”) (Piccirillo 1993: 341; Shraydeh and Karasneh 1987).

al-Wahādinah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 10419, “wahadne”) (Piccirillo 1993: 339, 1981: 18-20).

Yaşilah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2766, “yasileh”), the **Western Church** (Nassar and Muheisen 2010; Muheisen 2009, 1991, 1990; Michel 2001: 164f.; Piccirillo 1993: 341).

Mosaics Published Between 1993 and 2013

‘Ajlūn Castle (also known as Qal‘at ar-Rabaḍ; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2678, “ajloun castle”) (Abu-Abieleh 2007; Piccirillo and Qudah 2003: 315f.).

Badiyyah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2680, “bediye”), the **North-Eastern Church** (640 A.D.) and the **South-Eastern Church** (also known as the Rās ad-Dayr Church / Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, c. 601 A.D.) (Muheisen 2006; Piccirillo 2005a).

Bayt ‘Īdis (also known as KHALLET ‘ĪSA; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3123, “beit eedis”; c. 529 A.D.) (Melhem 2002, 2001a).

Burz (also known as Sama ar-Rusān; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2812, “burz”) (Puech 2003: 321f.; Michel 2001: 137f.; Khasawneh 1994).

Dariyā (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 12621, “dariya”; 624 A.D.) (Piccirillo 2005b; Michel 2001: 135-137; Karasneh 1997).

Dayr as-Si‘nah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 11503, “Dayr sa‘aneh”) (Puech 2003: 319-321; Fiyaaḍ 1996).

Dhnaibah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3205, “dhuneibeh church”) (Nuqrish 2003).

Dūḥalah (also known as Dūḥalat an-Nu‘aymah; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2816, “dohaleh el-na‘ymeh”) (Sari 1992, 1991).

Duwayr (also known as Jinīn al-Safa; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3145, “khirbet adware”) (Melhem 2003, 1998a, 1998b).

al-Lufdayn (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 58436, “al-fudaien”) (Housan 2002; Michel 2001: 224; Piccirillo 1993: 315 (architecture only); Humbert 1986 (architecture only)).

Gadara (also known as Umm Qays; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2654, “Umm qays”), the **Five-Aisled Basilica** (Michel 2001: 128-132; Daire 2001; Weber 1998, n.d.).

Ḥūfā (also known as Ḥōfa al-Wasaṭiyyah; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2763, “haufa el-wastiyyeh”) (Michel 2001: 134f.; Abu Dalo 1994; Shraydeh and Abu Dalo 1992).

Ḥuwwāra (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2809, “hawara”) (Karasneh and Zibdah 1998).

Ḥayyān al-Mushrif (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 7505, “hayyan al-mishref”), the **Middle Church**, the **Basilica**, the **North-Eastern Church**, and the **Monastery** (Michel 2001: 206-212; Muheisen 1997a, 1997b; Muheisen and Tarrier 1995; Piccirillo 1981: 99f.).

Ḥuṣun (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3184, “al-sarj”; 535 A.D.) (Muheisen and Tarrier 1997).

Jarash (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 58418, “Jerash”), the **Church of Bishop Genesios** (Hamarneh and Majali 2009).

Jiddah (also known as Ḥuṣn; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 6728, “Husn/kh. El Jidda”) (Michel 2001: 222; Melhem and Khasawneh 1994).

Pella (also known as Ṭabaqat Faḥl; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2705, “pella”), a **building of unknown function in Area XXXVIII** (da Costa 2012).

Qamm (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 10636, “Qamm”) (Puech 2003: 322-324; Michel 2001: 132f.; Ta‘ani 1997).

Rājib (also known as Dayr Mismār; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 58195, “dare mesmar”), the **Southern Chapel** and the **Northern Chapel** (Qudah 2005; Puech 2003: 317-319; Piccirillo and Qudah 2003; Rabadi 1997).

Rihāb (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 7506, “rihab”), the **Church of St George** (530 A.D.), the **Church of St John the Baptist** (620 A.D.), **Church of St Constantinos** (623 A.D.), the

Church of St Sergios (691 A.D.), the **Church of St Philemon** (662 A.D.), the “**Syriac Church**”, the **Umayyad Monastery** (720 A.D.), (Housan 2006, 2002, 2001, n.d.).

Ṣa‘ad (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3248, “saad”; 572 A.D.) (Rose and Burke 2004; Michel 2001: 222-224; Sari 1995).

Samar (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 5977, “samar”) (Karasneh 2010).

Sūf (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 5858, “suf”) (Piccirillo and Hazim 2005; Hazim 2004a).

Ya‘amūn (also known as Al-Nu‘ēma; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2823, “ya’amun”) (Nassar and Turshan 2012, 2011a, 2011b; Najjar 2011, 2001; Turshan 2010; Najjar *et al.* 2001; Khasawneh 1999).

Yaşīlah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2766, “yasileh”), the **Northern Church** (518/9 A.D.) (Muheisen and Nassar 2012).

Zmāl (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3189, “khirbat zmal”) (Melhem 2001b, 1997).

Zughrīt (also known as Zaghriṭ, the Church of St Sophia, 542 A.D.; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 3577, “zeqrit”) (Hazim 2004b).

Previously Unpublished Mosaics

Abila (also known as Quwayliba; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2762, “quweilbeh”), the “**Area E Church**”.

Coordinates: UTME 7691, UTMN 36198.

Location: Irbid Governorate, 15km northwest of the city of Irbid.

Unpublished Reports: pers. comm. David Vila, John Brown University, and Robert Smith of Mid-Atlantic Christian University (Abila, Jordan, July 2012). Publication of results for the excavations is forthcoming.

Excavations at Abila continue under the directorship of David Vila of John Brown University. In addition to the churches already known from the site (including the Area E church with mosaics, see above), a cruciform, tri-apsidal basilica with three aisles is under excavation. Known as the “Area E Church”,

it features a large atrium to the west, which is connected to a small chapel in the south-west corner of the complex. The basilica is paved with mosaics, while the floor of the adjoining chapel was laid in opus sectile. Only geometric motifs appeared within the basilica.

‘Anjara (also known as Abu Hātūn; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 11433, “anjara”).

Coordinates: UTME 7592, UTMN 35777.

Location: ‘Ajlūn Governorate, 2km south-west of the town of ‘Ajlūn.

Unpublished Reports: Balawneh 2008 (**Fig .2**).

In mid-2008, the ‘Ajlūn Office of the Department of Antiquities was alerted to illicit digging activity in the vicinity, and the mosaic is the result of the subsequent investigation. The building had an ecclesiastical function, as evidenced by a partial mosaic inscription, which makes reference to *μαρτυρίου, πρεσβυ(ε)ρος* and *ἀγία ἐ(κ)κλησία*. Only a single geometric panel, with a geometric border, is still extant. According to Moḥammad al-Balawneh, Inspector of the ‘Ajlun Office at the time, there was evidence that the mosaic had been larger, but had been destroyed by construction work prior to its excavation. All surviving elements of the mosaic were removed for conservation. The six panels which formed the carpet of geometric motifs are on display at the ‘Ajlūn Castle Museum, while the inscription panel is in the ‘Ajlūn Antiquities Directorate office.

Bārḥa (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: not referenced).

Coordinates: UTME 7658, UTMN 36065.

Location: Irbid Governorate, 2km west of the city centre.



2. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at ‘Anjara. (Mohammad Balawneh: 2008).

Unpublished reports: Tbeishat 2008 (Figs. 3-5).

The mosaic was discovered by accident when digging the foundation for a house. Once alerted by the local police, the Inspector from the Irbid office of the Department of Antiquities began a formal archaeological excavation in January, 2008. Although the whole building has not survived, an extant mosaic composed of linear panels, all of which have geometric designs framed by a border, suggests it once paved the aisles and intercolumniations of a small church. No inscriptions were found. The mosaic was removed in panels and conserved by the Bayt Rās Antiquities Office, and is currently stored at the Dar as-Saraya Museum in Irbid.

Ḥalāwa (also known as Al-Ṭantōr; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 9128, “halawa”)

Coordinates: UTME 7504, UTMN 35861

Location: ‘Ajlūn Governorate, 9.5km north-west of the town of ‘Ajlūn.



3. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Bārḥa. (Ibrahim al-Zou'bi: 2008).



4. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Bārḥa. (Ibrahim al-Zou'bi: 2008).



5. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Bārḥa. (Ibrahim al-Zou'bi: 2008).

Unpublished reports: Abu-Abieleh 1998 (Fig. 6).

Having been alerted by the police to illegal excavation activity near the town of Ḥalāwa, the Minister of Tourism and Director-General of the Department of Antiquities organised the ‘Ajlūn Antiquities Office to launch official excavations. These lasted for several months in 1997-8, and resulted in the discovery of a double church connected by their west/east walls. The ecclesiastical context is confirmed



6. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Ḥalāwa. (Mohammad Abu-Abieleh: 1998).

by inscriptions, which mention the “ἐκ(κ)λησία”; they also mention that the village of the church was known as *Καλωα*. The mosaics were composed entirely of geometric panels. A dedicatory inscription was found at the eastern end of each church; dated 625 and 642 A.D. Another season of excavations was expected, in order to reveal more of the church, but apparently did not eventuate. Thus, the mosaics are likely to be preserved *in situ*.

Ḥunaynah (MEGA-Jordan identifiers:3153, “huneinah”)

Coordinates: UTME 7685, UTMN 36080.

Location: Irbid Governorate, in the northern suburbs of Irbid.

Unpublished Reports: no excavation reports were located. Pers. comm. with ‘Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat, Inspector for the Irbid Antiquities Directorate (May 2012, Irbid, Jordan). (Figs. 7-8).

A mosaic was uncovered in the town of Ḥnēna in 2006, following either civic works or illicit digging. A rescue excavation was launched by the Irbid Antiquities Office during December of that year. Rescue excavations focused only on the mosaic, in order to remove it for preservation. There was no exploration of the architectural elements of the building which housed the mosaic. The mosaics featured at least three different geometric motifs, although their relative position to each other is not clear from the excavation photographs.

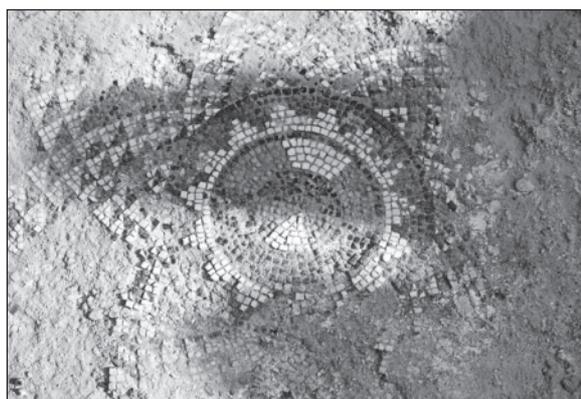
Kufr Jāyiz (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2820, “kufr jayiz”).

Coordinates: UTME 7652, UTMN 36126.

Location: Irbid Governorate, 3km west of Bayt Rās.

Unpublished Reports: no excavation report was located. Pers. comm. Mohammad al-Shalabi, Irbid Antiquities Office (June 2012, Irbid, Jordan). (Fig. 9).

Agricultural works prior to 2010 revealed the remnants of a mosaic; the Irbid Antiquities Directorate then excavated the site. A small church with a single apse and three aisles was discovered, of which only the nave and the north aisle were preserved at the time of excavation. All preserved parts of the church were paved with mosaics; a single motif continued across



7. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Ḥunaynah. (Ibrahim al-Zou’bi: 2006).



8. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Ḥunaynah. (Ibrahim al-Zou’bi: 2006).

the nave and the north aisle.

Mār ’Ilyās (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 2679, “mar ilyas”).

Coordinates: UTME 7561, UTMN 35838.

Location: ‘Ajlūn Governorate, 3.5km north-west of the town of ‘Ajlūn.

Unpublished reports: Balawneh and Fayyad 2002. Khouri (1999) published a non-academic article on the discovery. (Figs. 10-12).



9. Mosaic of *Kufr Jāyīz* on Display in the Dar al-Saraya Museum. (Ana Silkatcheva: 2011).

A two month excavation undertaken by the Ajlun Antiquities Office, under the direction of Inspector Mohammad Abu Abieleh, revealed one of the largest churches known in Jordan. The church has a triple apsed (exedrae) cruciform plan (east, north, south). It is part of a much larger complex on several levels, including an atrium and narthex, and a small chapel below. Only the church itself is paved with mosaics, not including the apses. Only approximately one third of the mosaics are preserved, comprised solely of geometric motifs. Despite the poor state of preservation, this church features the greatest number of motifs found in a single building in the whole



10. Mosaic in Situ at Mār 'Ilyās. (Ana Silkatcheva: 2012).



11. Mosaic in Situ at Mār 'Ilyās. (Ana Silkatcheva: 2012).



12. Mosaic in Situ at Mār 'Ilyās. (Ana Silkatcheva: 2012).

of north-west Jordan. A dated inscription was found in the south-west corner of the church; in Greek, it dates the mosaic to 623 A.D., and mentions the name Saint Elijah. The region in which the site is located, Listib, is associated with Tishbe, the birthplace of the prophet with the same name. The mosaics are preserved *in situ*, open for viewing by visitors and pilgrims.

Qirmil (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: not referenced).

Coordinates: unknown.

Location: Jarash Governorate.

Unpublished Reports: news of the discovery appeared informally in a non-academic article by Forster (2013).

The Jarash Office of the Department of Antiquities was alerted to the existence of a mosaic by looters in 2013. Excavation revealed a very well preserved mosaic floor, untouched by iconoclastic activity, which featured an unusual scene of men climbing trees to escape from attacking bears and lions. According to the news article, the mosaic inscription featured

the name of the patron and provided a date of 589-90 A.D.

Rihāb (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 7506, “rihab”), the **Church of St Procopios** and a **second basilica**.

Coordinates: UTME 2264, UTMN 35803.

Location: Al-Mafraq Governorate, located on the Jarash-Mafraq road, 26km to the east of Jarash.

Unpublished Reports: no reports located, but pers. comm. with ‘Abd al-Qader al-Housan, Director of the Al-Mafraq Antiquities Directorate (May-June 2011: Al-Mafraq, Jordan).

Part of a double-church complex with the **Church of St John**, the **Church of St Procopius** had a single apse, a nave and two aisles (Figs. 13-14). The north aisle featured geometric panels with an ivy leaf border, while the south aisle depicted at least one tall tree which spread across the length of the aisle. During the author’s inspection, the nave was covered, and in the absence of publications, it



13. Mosaic in Situ at the Church of St Procopios, Rihāb. (Ana Silkatcheva: 2011).



14. Mosaic in Situ at the Church of St Procopios, Rihāb. (Ana Silkatcheva: 2011).

is not possible to comment on the contents of the mosaic in the nave. The Greek inscription indicates that the mosaic was laid in 598 A.D.

Another building referred to by the excavator as the “**second basilica**” was also excavated (Figs. 15 -16); a tri-apsidal church which was not paved with mosaics. In the absence of plans or photographs of the entire building, no comment can be made on the architectural form of this second church. Mosaics which are documented feature geometric motifs and a vine scroll.

Srīs (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 5967, “sris”).

Coordinates: UTME 7659, UTMN 36090.

Location: Irbid Governorate, on the northern outskirts of the city of Irbid.

Unpublished Reports: no excavation reports located. Pers. comm. with ‘Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat, Inspector at the Irbid Antiquities Office (May 2012, Irbid, Jordan) (Figs. 17-18).

After earthworks for the foundation of a



15. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic in the “Second Basilica” at Rihāb. (‘Abd al-Qader al-Housan: Undated).



16. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic in the “Second Basilica” at Rihāb. (‘Abd al-Qader al-Housan: Undated).



17. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Srīs. (Ibrahim al-Zou'bi: 2006).

private domestic building revealed parts of a mosaic floor in 2006, the Irbid Antiquities Office launched salvage excavations, which uncovered part of what may have been the aisle of a church. Although no walls were uncovered, the orientation of the mosaic panel and its border indicates it may once have paved the aisle of a church. Traces of another border motif adjacent to the extant border strengthens this possibility. All areas of the extant mosaic featured geometric motifs.

Tall al-Buṭum (also known as ‘Aṭarūz; MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 11578, “butm”).

Coordinates: UTME 7663, UTMN 36109.

Location: Irbid Governorate, 3km west of Bayt Rās.

Unpublished Reports: Tbeishat 2000 (Figs. 19-22).

Upon receiving news of the existence of archaeological remains on private land, the Irbid Office of the Department of Antiquities launched a survey and subsequently an excavation which lasted three months in 2000, resulting in the discovery of a single-



18. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Srīs. (Ibrahim al-Zou'bi: 2006).



19. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Tall al-Buṭum. ('Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat: 2000).



20. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Tall al-Buṭum. ('Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat: 2000).



21. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Tall al-Buṭm. ('Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat: 2000).



22. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Tall al-Buṭm. ('Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat: 2000).

apsed church with three aisles, paved with mosaics. The mosaics were composed mostly of large panels bearing a variety of geometric patterns, some also including individual birds and vegetal motifs. In the apse, two figures, possibly peacocks, once flanked an amphora, which were badly damaged. Considering the excellent state of preservation of the geometric mosaics, it is possible that this damage was deliberate, performed by iconoclasts.

Zuqayq (MEGA-Jordan identifiers: 10474, “zqeq”).

Coordinates: UTME 7484, UTMN 35870.

Location: Ajlun Governorate, 13km north-west of the town of ‘Ajlūn.

Unpublished Reports: no excavation report located. Pers. comm. with Ziad Ghneimat, Director of Dayr Abu Sa‘īd Antiquities Directorate (formerly the inspector of the Ajlun Antiquities Office) (October 2011, Irbid, Jordan), and Yousef Zou‘bi, Photographer, Department of Archaeology, University of Yarmouk (April 2012, Irbid, Jordan). (Fig. 23).



23. Excavation Photograph of the Mosaic at Zqēyeq (Zakaria al-Qudah: Undated).

Excavated by the Ajlun Antiquities Office under the directorship of Zakariah al-Qudah. A rectangular room was discovered, paved with mosaics. Brief inscriptions mention the names of three deacons, indicating that this was an ecclesiastical building, likely a small chapel. A large panel of a single geometric motif fills the room, framed by another geometric motif and featuring isolated geometric motifs around the edges. The inscriptions are located within the plain white border along the perimeter of the geometric panel.

Next Stages of Research

The mosaics of Jordan are many in number, and concentrated in a relatively small geographic context. Many have dates that are epigraphically attested, and almost all present a large and varied repertoire of geometric motifs and patterns. The co-occurrence of all these features means that the corpus of mosaics in Jordan is prime material for historical inquiry into the development and evolution of mosaic art in the region. Analytical phases of the broader project are already either under way or complete and will be published in depth elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the Mosaics of Jordan Documentation Project continues, and updates and reports on mosaics in other parts of Jordan will appear in subsequent issues of this journal.

Acknowledgements

The research presented briefly in this article and more extensively in Silkatcheva 2014 would not have been possible without the assistance of a great number of people, most of them in Jordan. I extend my thanks to Dr. Ziad al-

Sa'ad, Director-General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, for granting and extending my research permit. Thanks are also due to Catreena Hamarneh, Khalil Hamdan, Hussein Saleh, Jihad Haroun, Qamer Fakhouri, Dr Wajih Karasneh, Ziad Ghneimat, Dr. 'Abd al-Qader al-Housan, Dr. Ismael Melhem, Nasser Khasawneh, Dr. Mohammed Abu Abieleh, Ahmad Shami, 'Abd al-Raouf Tbeishat, Mohammad Shalabi, Ibrahim al-Zou'bi, Nizar, Ahmad, Rakan and Abu 'Ali at the office in Dayr Abu Sa'id. Also to Mohammad al-Khalidi, Woroud Samareh, 'Amer Shloul, Mohammad al-Shiyyab, Dr. Saleh Sari, Dr. Zeidoun Muheisen, Dr. Nihad Shabbar, Yousef al-Zou'bi, Hussein Debajeh, 'Ali 'Omari, Samar Hababeh, Dr. Thomas Weber, Dr. Jerome Rose, Dr. David Vila, Dr. Bob Smith, Dr. Carol Palmer, and my research supervisors at the University of Sydney, Dr. Kate da Costa and Dr. Ted Robinson. In 2011, the author was an Australian Endeavour Research Fellow funded by the Australian Federal Government; this research could not have been completed without this award.

Ana Silkatcheva
University of Sydney, Australia
ana.silkatcheva@sydney.edu.au

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