

BAYT RĀS TOMB PROJECT

Jehad Haron, Ahmad Lash, Amjad Al-Bataineh and Nizar Al-Adarbeh

Historical Background

The town of Bayt Rās, located in northern Jordan, stands atop ancient Capitolias, one of the ten cities of the Decapolis league listed by Pliny the Elder. The human occupation of the city started in the first century BC (Lenzen 1988) and continued to flourish from the Roman era until modern times. According to numismatic data, the city was founded in 97/98 AD (Bowsher 2011). Many explorers and travelers have documented Bayt Rās over the years, including Seetzen (1806), Burckhardt (1812), Merrill (1885), Buckingham (1816), Schumacher (1878-79) and Glueck (1951). Salvage excavations were conducted by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in 1960 (Bowsher 2011), with surveys and excavations being carried out by Mittman in 1970, Vibert-Guigue in 1981 and Lenzen and McQuitty in 1988; excavations in different parts of the city were conducted by Lenzen between 1985 and 1987. Regular excavations have been

carried out by the Department of Antiquities from 2002 onward (al-Shami 2002). The name of Bayt Rās is mentioned in many early Arabic sources, especially from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, likely due to its reputation for producing wine (1983 البكري). In the Umayyad period, Caliph Yazid II lived in Bayt Rās (Lenzen 1992).

Discovery

In 1973 a painted tomb was discovered in the courtyard of the town's secondary school (Zayadine 1976). Close to the same school, another painted tomb was accidentally discovered in November 2016 during mechanical digging work to expand a waste-water sanitation network in the city (**Fig. 1**). The Department of Antiquities took the initiative to preserve this Roman-age hypogeum in cooperation with the USAID SCHEP¹, which provided financial and technical support. An international consortium



1. Site location (Google Maps).

1. SCHEP (Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project), implemented by ACOR (The American

Center of Oriental Research) in Amman and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

was formed to document and preserve this important discovery in the eastern part of the Capitolias necropolis. The consortium includes the DoA, USAID SCHEP and partners from Italy (ISCR [Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro]; ISPRA [Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale]) and France (CNRS [the French National Center for Scientific Research]; Ifpo [Institut français du Proche-Orient]). The consortium began fieldwork at the site in April 2017.

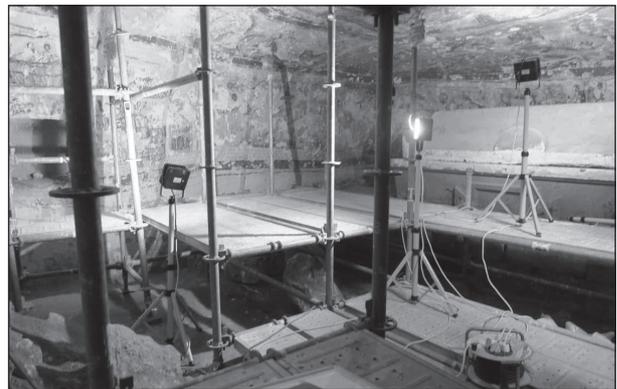
Site Management and Preventive Conservation

Owing to the accidental discovery of the tomb, it was necessary to take protective and preventive measures to safeguard it from changes to its microclimate after it was opened. The project adhered strictly to international best practice, following guidelines including the ICOMOS Principles for the Preservation and Conservation-Restoration of Wall Paintings (2003) [Ratified by the ICOMOS 14th General Assembly in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in 2003] and the Guidelines and Recommendations for the Conservation and Maintenance of Mural Paintings In Subterranean Environments (2015) [Adopted at the UNESCO Expert Workshop on Conservation of Mural Paintings: Access, Research, Conservation, jointly organized by the World Heritage Centre and Rathgen Forschungslabor in close co-operation with the Museum für Asiatische Kunst Berlin and ICOMOS Germany (Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, 2-4 June 2015)]. The project focused its early efforts on establishing good on-site work conditions for the consortium team members, combined with preventive conservation measures inside and outside the tomb area to ensure effective control and monitoring. The tomb was reopened by assigned DoA team members via the same opening caused by the infrastructure works that had led to its discovery. At the same time, a horizontal metal gate was installed to secure the tomb. As a result of its challenging location in the middle of a street, in front of a school gate, site security was a high priority. The DoA secured two caravans and six guards to safeguard the site and ensure proper monitoring, in addition to erecting fencing.

During the first part of the work in 2017, it

was necessary to conduct a structural assessment and diagnostic survey inside the tomb to assess the situation of some observed cracks. This assessment was carried out mainly by Dr. Soizik Bechetoille-Kaczorowski (Conservation Architect, Ifpo); an initial report showed that the cracks were the result of different factors, but that these wouldn't prevent work in the tomb. As a result of this survey and assessment by CNRS, the DoA and ISCR, it was necessary to plan for the installation of a work platform and scaffolding inside the tomb, to protect any mural fragments on the ground until future excavation could be planned. The scaffolding was designed by Dr. Bechetoille-Kaczorowski in partnership with Dr. Mohammad el-Khalili (Conservation Architect, Hashemite University) and Amjad al-Bataineh (Director, DoA Directorate in Irbid). The DoA-assigned team members installed the galvanized scaffolding elements inside the tomb and mounted the platform as it was designed (**Fig. 2**), thereby enhancing accessibility inside the tomb. In addition, the project installed humidity- and heat-monitoring devices to ensure proper monitoring of microclimatic conditions and reported them regularly to the conservation team.

In a later stage the project took additional mitigation measures, including closure of the school gate in co-operation with the Ministry of Education, to overcome the problem of cars passing over the hypogeum. The DoA also supported the installation of a surveillance system to enhance full monitoring and control. Based on a recommendation from the ISCR conservation experts, a light metal preventive shelter was installed to enhance control of humidity that could cause inappropriate microclimatic



2. Installation of scaffolding, July 2017 (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).

conditions, deterioration and biological attacks, especially during the missions' work periods. The cover was designed by DoA staff with SCHEP-team involvement.

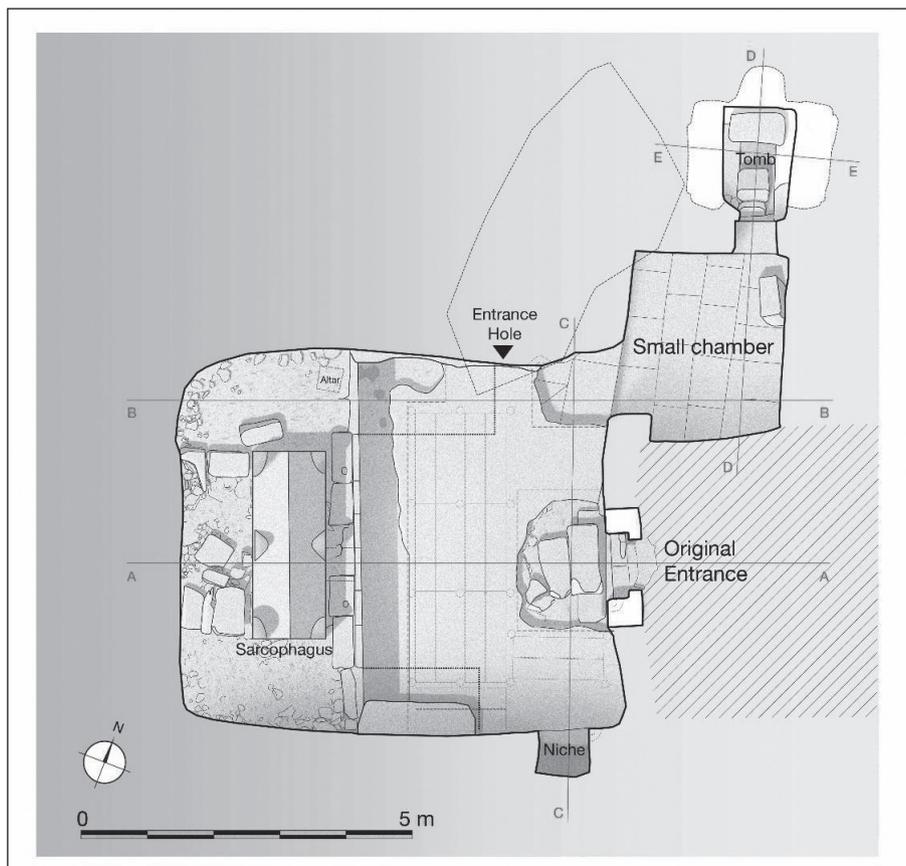
Architectural Description of the Hypogeum Plan

The hypogeum is carved into limestone bedrock, oriented approximately to the cardinal points (**Fig. 3**). It is in three parts. First, a painted room (I) which measures *ca* 6.7×5.7m. The floor is covered with an archaeological deposit composed of silty soil (mostly infiltrated by rain water) and stone elements, but likely also containing several smaller fragments of the wall paintings which have fallen from the ceiling over time, as well as other archaeological items connected with the use of this structure. A huge basalt sarcophagus was installed in the western part of the hypogeum, surrounded by masonry preserved as a platform. Here, some wall-painting fragments, pottery sherds (a kind of clepsydra) and an altar were carefully recorded. At its highest point, the ceiling rises *ca* 2.5m above this archaeological fill. Second, a narrow opening in the northeast corner of the

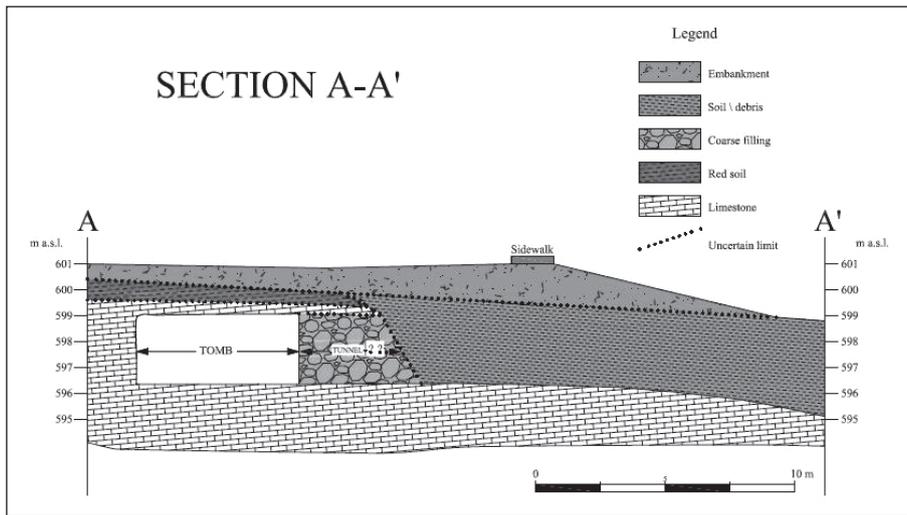
painted room (I) leads to a smaller, square-plan room (II). Less high, it is covered with white plaster. Third, the north wall presents an opening giving access to a burial space (III). Rough masonry is employed for the door jambs and a larger hewn stone forms the lintel. Another stone is placed upon this element to close the gap between the lintel and the upper edge of the opening.

Geological Formation and Stability

Geophysical and geotechnical surveys were conducted by ISPRA [Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale, special thanks to Eng. Giuseppe Delmonaco for the study] in two distinct phases of work. The area of the tomb and surrounding sites (particularly the nearby elementary school and Roman theatre) were investigated. A geophysical investigation - coupled with ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and geotechnical non-destructive techniques - was initiated in order to: (a) detect potential underground structures around the recently discovered cavity and in neighboring areas; (b) reconstruct the geological and geotechnical characteristics of the site; (c) establish



3. Plan of the hypogeum (Ifpo).



4. Geological section A-A' of the tomb and surrounding areas, oriented SW-NE (ISPRA).

a stability model of the tomb structure; (d) provide recommendations and advice to local authorities for the safe conservation of the tomb (Fig. 4).

Excavation inside the Hypogeum

From the moment of discovery, it was agreed to protect the wall paintings inside the tomb from any potentially destructive human or natural factors. Despite the importance of starting immediate archaeological rescue excavations, the decision was made to postpone any activities inside the hypogeum until the documentation and first-aid conservation missions were completed. The first part of the excavation was carried out in September 2018 by an Ifpo team [Ifpo (Institut français du Proche-Orient), thanks to Dr. Dominique Pieri, Dr. Jean-Sylvain Caillou, Eng. Soizik Bechetoille-Kaczorowski, Dr. Chiara Fornace, Dr. Joyce Nassar, Dr. Lucie Bidouze, Aven Al-Qatameen and Lucie Duvignac].

Three trenches were excavated in Room No I during this mission (Fig. 5). The first trench focused on the main entrance, the second trench was placed in front of the south part of the masonry wall, and the third by the north part of the same wall, in order to find the rest of the benches and original floor of the first phase. The main excavation targeted Rooms No II and III. As noted above, a small passage in the north wall of Room No II leads to a burial room (Room No III [arcosolia and pit tombs]). Here three depositions were observed (Graves 1 to 3): in the northeastern arcosolium (Grave 1), in the southwest arcosolium (Grave 3) and within

the space between these arcosolia (Grave 2).

Grave 1

The fragmentary remains of six individuals were found scattered inside the burial, mixed with rock fragments that fell from the ceiling:

Individual 1 (perinatal, 10 lunar months) represented by the bones of the cranium, the mandible, a fragment of the right scapula, the right humerus, the right ischium, the left neural arches of the atlas and axis, some thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, and some right and left ribs (might belong to either Individual 1 or 2).

Individual 2 (perinatal, 11.1 lunar months) represented by one bone of the base of the cranium, some cervical vertebrae, the left and right clavicles, the left and right humeri, the left ulna, the left and right pubis.

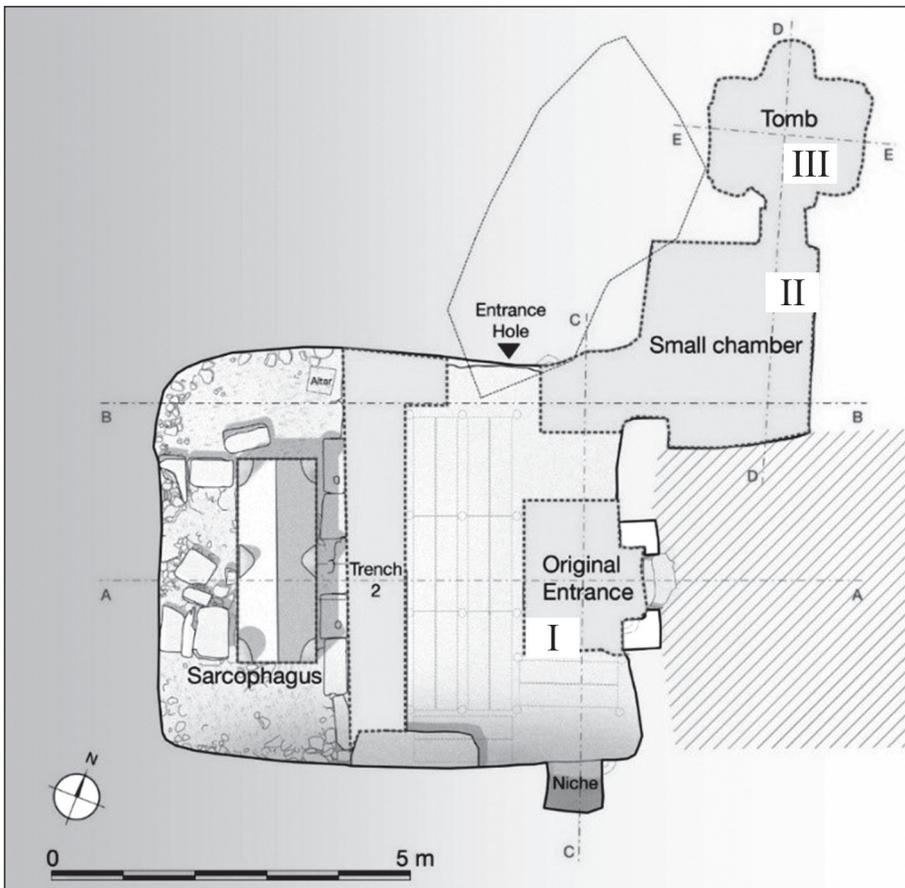
Individual 3 (infant) represented by a fragment of the atlas, the axis and the zygomatic.

Individual 4 (child, age category [1-4], [5-9]) represented by a fragment of the left radius.

Individual 5 (adult) represented by a fragment of the mandible, fragments of the left and right radii, some carpal bones, the 2nd right metacarpal and phalanges of the hands, a fragment of the right fibula, the right navicular bone, and the 3rd right metatarsal and some phalanges of the feet.

Individual 6 (child, age category [5-9], older than Individual 4) represented by some right carpals and the distal epiphysis of the right radius.

A bronze coin and 152 small iron nails were found with the burial remains. The small size of these nails (1cm long; head diameter between 5



5. Plan showing location of the trenches (Ifpo).

and 7mm) suggests that they came from shoes belonging to at least one of the deceased.

Grave 2

The platform between the two arcosolia revealed elements of the remains of four individuals (Fig. 6). These were covered by plaster fragments fallen from the ceiling. A terracotta oil lamp and three fragments of a small bone bracelet (most probably belonging to a child) were found with the bones.

Individual 1 (perinatal, 10 lunar months) represented by some cervical, thoracic and sacral vertebrae, and the left and right ischia.

Individual 2 (perinatal, 10 lunar months)

represented by some vertebrae, the ribs and the right ischium.

Individual 3 (young child, age category [0]) represented by the left temporal bone.

Individual 4 (young adult under 30 years of age) represented by the left clavicle, two thoracic vertebrae and a 5th right metatarsal.

The Sarcophagus: Anthropological Methodology with Biological Study

The basalt sarcophagus found inside the tomb was studied in detail, drawn and partly documented by photogrammetry. It is distinguished from other contemporary examples by its huge dimensions (284cm long × 108cm



6. View of Grave 2.

wide × 113cm high; the cover is 283cm long × ca 110cm wide × 56cm high). The front side of the sarcophagus bears a decoration. Two lion heads are carved in high relief at each end, each holding a ring. A non-inscribed tabula ansata is partially visible in the center. Mouldings are cut on the upper edge and base of the sarcophagus. The other sides are not so well executed. The short sides are roughly carved; pick marks are still apparent. Most of the lower part of the sarcophagus is not apparent but we may posit that, behind, a long panel is carved in relief on the upper part - just under the mouldings - that continues slightly onto the short sides. The cover has the usual gabled form with four acroteria in quarter-round shape at each corner.

The excavation of the sarcophagus began with recording the state of the deposit (Fig. 7), which consisted almost exclusively of scattered and comingled human remains. Each bone was identified and numbered, with the information corresponding to each bone being recorded on anthropological sheets. All of the other remains - rocks, plaster fragments *etc.* - were gathered and described. Samples were collected from the bottom of the sarcophagus where the remains of fabric and possibly wood were identified (Fig. 8). Each level and zone was documented by photogrammetry.

The small bone elements, microfauna and small artifacts were then isolated. A second inventory of all the bones extracted from the sarcophagus was conducted. The bones were sorted and the minimum number of individuals in each deposit was determined. Different

elements were matched to isolate the remains of individuals, and one bone from each individual was sampled for C14 analysis to date each different deposition. Additionally, one petrous bone from each individual was isolated for DNA extraction.

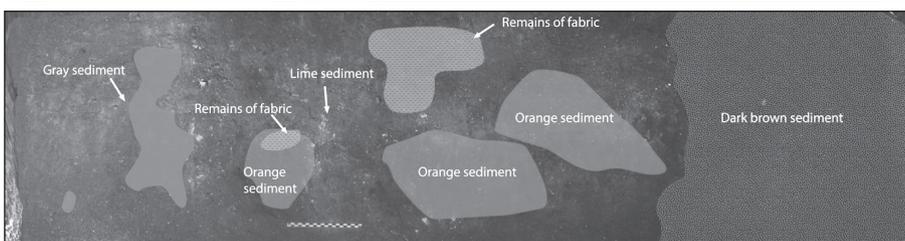
Osteology²

The remains of at least 24 individuals were recovered from the Bayt Rās hypogeum; ten individuals were found inside the sarcophagus of Room No I and 14 individuals in the small tomb (Room No III) opening off Room No II. All age groups are represented except teenagers, and both female and male remains are present. The high degree of disturbance observed within the burials prevented the team from fully analyzing the contents of the deposits and the funerary rites and items that accompanied the dead. In the small tomb (Room No III), the presence of ornamental artefacts (small bracelets and a ring) and clothing items (the remains of small shoes) show that the deceased - especially the younger ones - were adorned for their burials. In the sarcophagus, the remains of fabric indicate the probable use of a shroud or clothing for at least one of the deceased. A detailed analysis of fabric samples and the orange sediment around them will help to determine their characteristics. As for the dark brown sediment, an archaeoentomological analysis will help in determining its nature and whether it is evidence of a funerary installation made of a perishable material like wood.

Both the sarcophagus and small tomb are



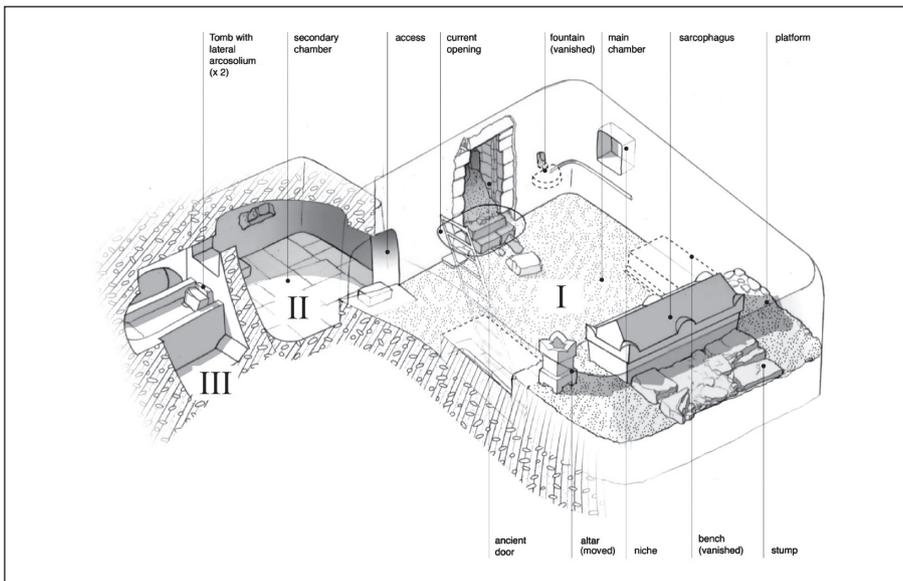
7. Overhead view of the space inside the sarcophagus (Layer 1) with three divisions.



8. Layer 5 showing the different sediments in the bottom of the sarcophagus.

2. The osteology study was carried out by Dr. Joyce Nassar and

Dr. Lucie Bidouze, with the help of Aven Qattamen.



9. Isometric plan of the hypogeum's interior elements (Ifpo).

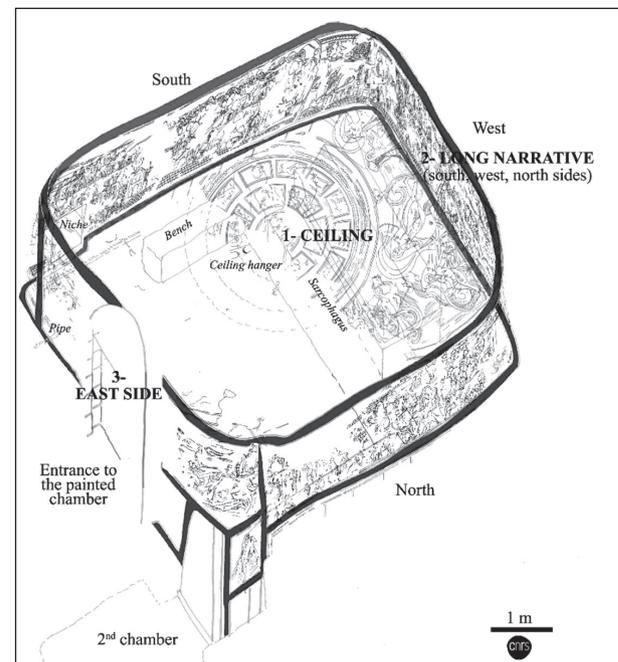
comingled cases displaying a high proportion of breakage. Thus, re-association of bones to distinct individuals was very challenging, making it difficult to complete a biological analysis to understand the profile of the Bayt Rās population and to study possible familial relationships between the deceased. Since dating of the deposits was impossible through archaeological indicators, C₁₄ dating will help to determine the timeframe within which the different depositions were placed in the tomb.

Based on the initial results of the excavation, the Ifpo team created an isometric plan of the hypogeum interior in order to show the main elements of the tomb (Fig. 9).

Mural Paintings

CNRS [the French National Center for Scientific Research, with thanks to Dr. Claude Vibert-Guigue] has been leading the documentation of the fragile wall paintings within the tomb, which are in urgent need of intervention to document them in their context, including details at different scales as well as the iconography and inscriptions accompanying them. Photographs and drawings were made first to prepare for the description, analysis and finally interpretation of the wall paintings; close to 3,000 photographs have been taken during four work seasons (2017-2018). Many hand-colored drawings were completed to help analyze around 15 topics and 127 scenes, including almost 270 figures (Fig. 10). The ceiling depicts the signs of the zodiac and planets in

a circular composition surrounded by Nereids on sea monsters, and putti (Fig. 11). The central medallion shows a frontal quadriga. A long, lively narrative composition (17m x 1.10m) runs along the three walls facing the entrance (featuring 152 figures, 66 divinities and 24 animals). A three-dimensional wall (enclosure wall), segments of walls and facades build character to the narrative where many trees and plants appear (Fig. 10). The long frieze shows a variety of human activities, in which Roman



10. Axonometric view showing the main parts of the paintings, which have to be understood as a whole work of art made up of individual features (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).

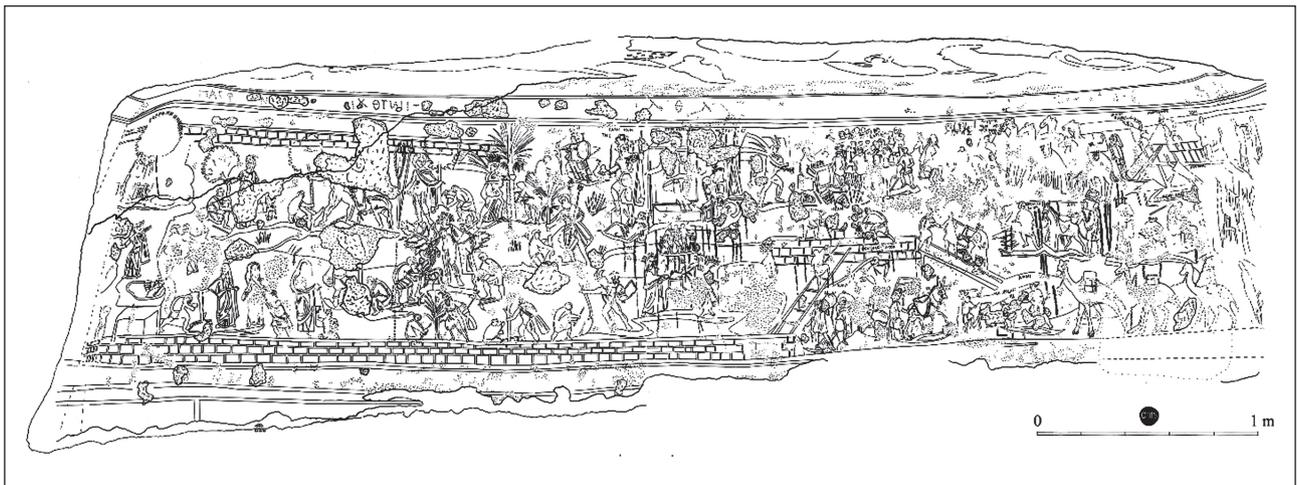
divinities or heroes take part. The side entrance (east) presents mainly Nilotic iconography and features connected to different functions (from left to right): a narrow passage to Room No II (here stands a servant holding a kind of caul-



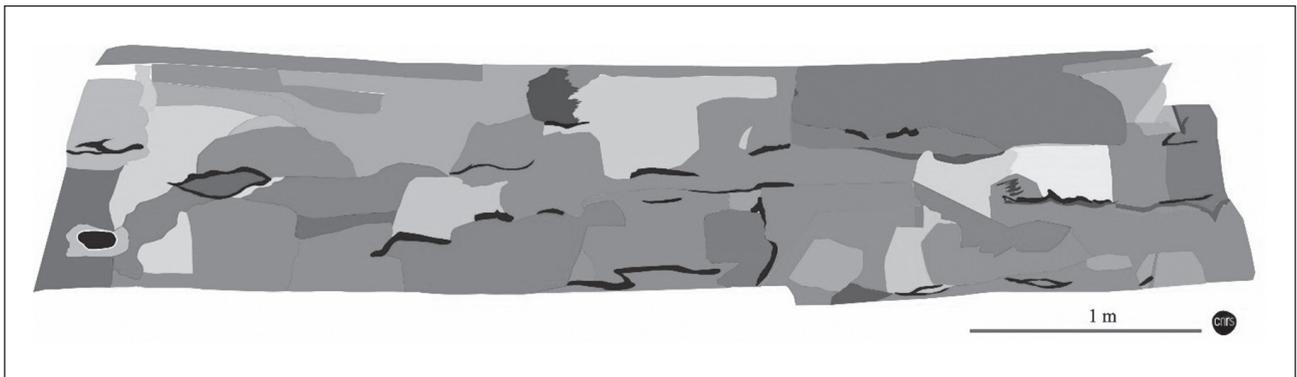
11. Detail of the ceiling with Nereids (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).

dron), the tomb entrance and a lead pipe passing under a Nile god representation.

Hand line drawings are elaborated (Fig. 12). The decor is very spectacular and includes painted elements of a type never seen before. For example, the background is made up of a patchwork of colors, which includes ground lines and water elements, giving the impression of a landscape with reliefs (Fig. 13). Building scenes reveal the painters' way of representing workers in action (Fig. 14). Two facades and one tower seem to be landmarks, as if the depiction was meant to be topographical. A series of color drawings were done using digital applications, beginning with the inscriptions, in order to represent their calligraphic aspect. A systematic inventory of the wall paintings will record and number all of the scenes, figures and labels. A catalogue will be produced which will present a picture, drawing and short description for each scene (Fig. 15).



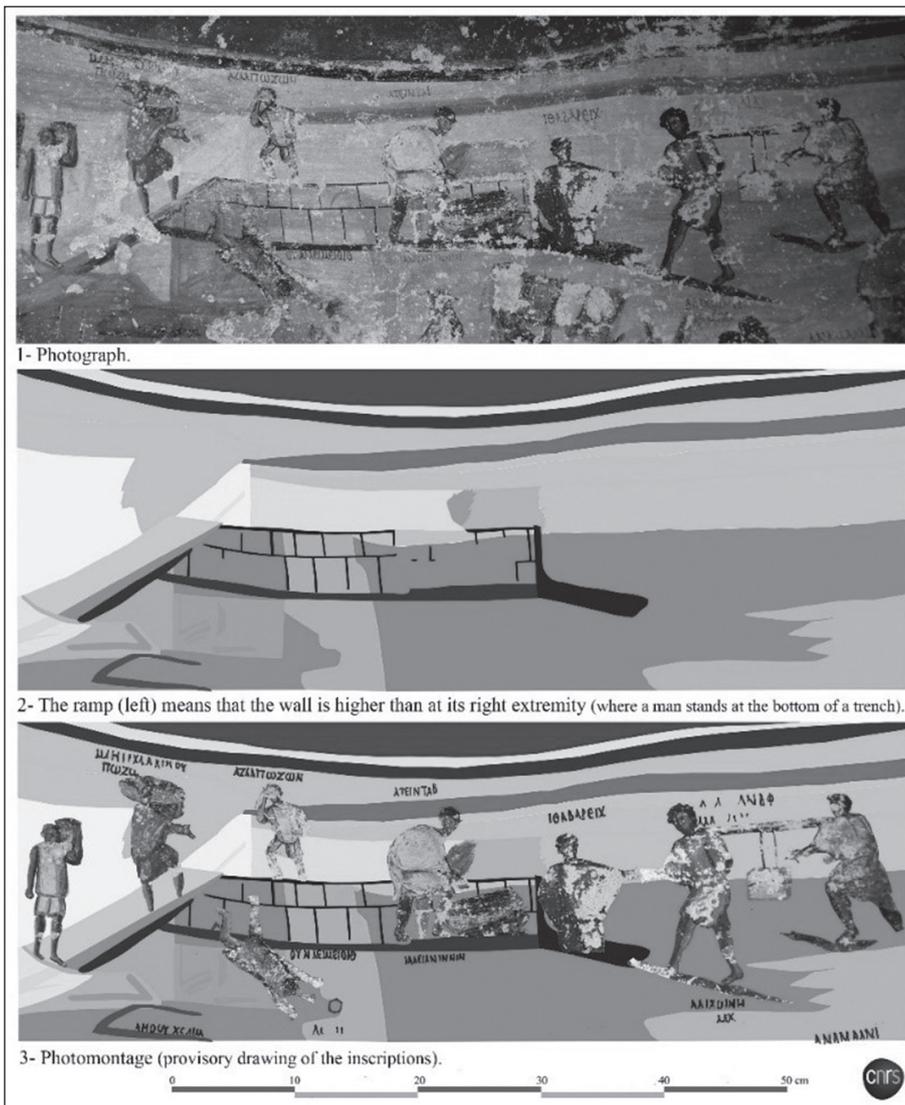
12. Preliminary line drawing of the west side (2017), overlaying the decor and state of conservation of the plaster. Elaborated with one orthophotograph (S. Bechetoille-Kaczorowski, Ifpo) and photographs of details focusing on the iconography (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).



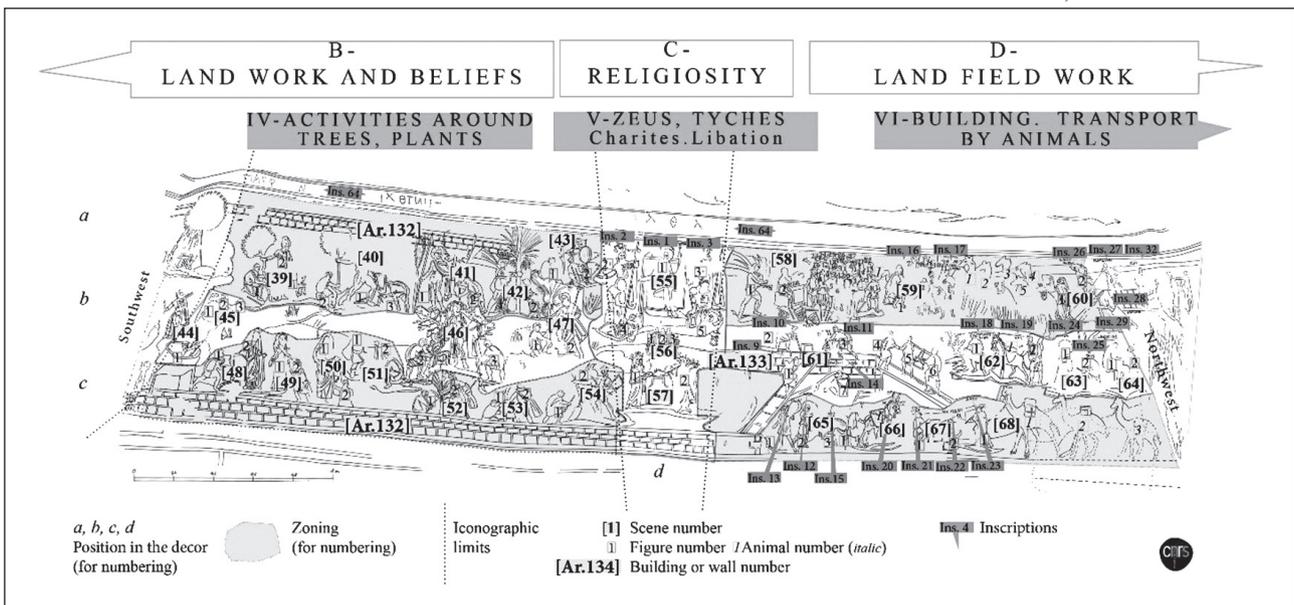
13. The colored background characterizing the narrative (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).

3. The epigraphic survey was conducted by Prof. P.-L. Gatier, Dr. Julien Aliquot and Prof. Jean-Baptist Yon (HiSoMA,

IGLS Project, Greek and Latin Inscriptions in Jordan, Lyon University, CNRS, UMR 5189).



14. The transparency between the background and masonry shows how the painter gave more importance to the hard work of the builders than to the masonry (provisional copy of the inscriptions) (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).



15. Numbering of the elements will help in the preparation of a complete detailed catalogue, which will pave the way for further interpretation (C. Vibert-Guigue, CNRS-ENS-PSL).

Epigraphy³

The 65 inscriptions found on the painted wall are written in Greek and in a Greco-Aramaic language, but transcribed with Greek letters. This well-known phenomenon, known as ‘allography’, is exemplified in the Near East by the use of the Syriac alphabet to transcribe Arabic within Christian communities of Lebanon. This so-called *Garshuni* [Arabic writing using the Syriac alphabet] is explained as a way for Arabic-speaking communities to preserve their own culture and to keep their identity via their own self-defining script. The paintings can be divided into six panels (I-VI), which will help us to identify the link between these inscriptions. They trace the foundation of the Greco-Roman city of Capitolias, ancient Bayt Rās, at the end of the first century AD. The gods of Olympus, who preside over this process, come to help mere mortals, from whom tributes are received in return. The two panels on the south wall show the gods at a banquet (I), then a series of images of rural life that evoke an estate that preceded the city (II). On the west wall, the gods help men to cut down trees in order to clear the site of the future city (III). Three deities identified by Greek inscriptions are enthroned in the middle of the same wall (IV): Zeus Kapitoliος (Jupiter Capitolinus), who gave his name to Capitolias; to his right the great Tyche (Fortune), guardian goddess of the city; and to his left the specific Tyche of Caesarea Maritima, the capital city of the province of Judaea (**Fig. 16**). Details of the panel IV deities follow below:

1. On the left, a woman (Tyche = Fortune of the city) is standing, with her right foot on a stone and her left foot on a reclining, half-naked girl (the nymph of the water spring).



16. Zeus Kapitoliος between the civic Fortunes of Capitolias and Caesarea Maritima (CNRS HiSoMA).

Tyche holds a spear in her left hand, while in her right hand she bears what could be interpreted as the bust of an emperor. Letters above and on either side of her head. Height of the figure: 53cm. Letters 2cm.

Μεγάλη Τύχη
τῆς [πό]-
[λε]ως

Translation: “Great Fortune of the city”.

2. A bearded god with a scepter in his left hand is seated in the middle. Height of the figure: 48cm. Letters: 1-2cm.

Ζεὺς Καπιτώ[λιος]

Translation: “Zeus Capitolinus”.

3. On the right, a woman (Tyche = Fortune of Caesarea Maritima, the capital city of the Roman province of Judaea/Palaestina) is standing, with her right foot resting on a prow and her left foot on a swimming man personifying the harbor of Caesarea, called Sebastos. She holds a spear in her left hand. Height of the figure: 48 cm. Letters: 2cm.

Τύχη Καισα-
ρείας.

Translation: “Fortune of Caesarea (Maritima)”.

On the northwest corner and adjacent walls, the estate and the building of the city wall are shown in detail (V). Numerous images depict not only the carving of stones (**Fig. 17**), transport of materials on camels and mules, and architects and foremen at work, but also scenes of fights, accidents and even the payment of hauliers. There are quotes of sentences spoken by the characters, mostly in little scenes with two or more characters talking to each other. The narrative ends with a last panel showing the assembly of the gods and goddesses of the city (V).



17. Two stone cutters at work (CNRS HiSoMA).

The use of the Aramaic language transcribed in Greek letters raises questions that are both linguistic and historical. Did the builder of the tomb choose to use the language that he was speaking (or that was spoken in the area) without being able to write it? It could be that this particular dialect of Aramaic did not have a written tradition, in contrast to other dialects (e.g. Nabataean, Hawrani forms of Aramaic *etc.*). The Greek alphabet may also have been used because it was the written language of power.

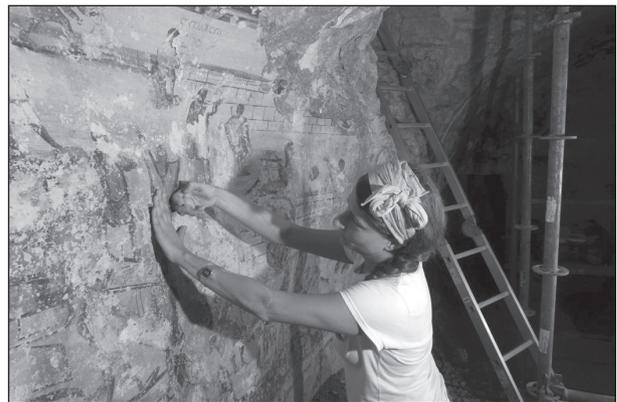
Mural-Painting Conservation (First Aid)⁴

Owing to the rarity and fragility of the mural paintings, the need for a rapid assessment of their condition was essential to evaluate their overall situation. Based on the results of this assessment, a responsive action plan was designed. Controlling the environment inside the hypogeum prior to any intervention was challenging. Starting in July 2017, three missions were carried out by ISCR in order to begin the process of preserving the mural paintings. The aim of the first intervention was to save and stabilize the wall paintings, in order to allow subsequent operations to take place inside the hypogeum according to a schedule. For this reason, the cleaning of the wall paintings' surfaces was undertaken only where necessary, to ensure the cohesion and adhesion of the materials (without fixing the salts). The cleaning of the surface has therefore been limited to cases of necessity; aesthetic preservation was not performed in this first campaign. During the initial phase of graphic documentation, a detailed photographic campaign was conducted, with the aim of defining the specific themes to make them recognizable and uniquely identified. The graphic documentation allowed for the immediate visualization and localization of technical data and conservation status, especially to assess the extent and location of conservation problems; conservation data sheets were completed. The methods of intervention and the materials to be used in the restoration work were carefully selected according to the particular conditions of temperature and humidity in the hypogeum. The use of organic substances (alcohols, natural resins *etc.*) was restricted be-

cause they could encourage the growth of biodegenerators, since they are a source of carbon that can be metabolized (Fig. 18).

The paintings have two preparatory layers. The first, that which is in contact with the support, has a dark color; its thickness varies from 1 to 2cm and it presents a limestone matrix. The second layer, where paint is embedded, has a light color and is a few millimeters thick. This layer also has a limestone matrix. From observation of the superimposition of plaster layers it was possible to determine the order in which the paintings were executed. The vault was painted first, followed in succession by the north, east, south and west walls. The technique that was used most often was that of 'buon fresco', but it is often matched with areas or figures realised through 'a calce' (lime) technique or on an 'intonaco stanco' (tired plaster). In more than one area, mainly where the plaster layers join, superimposed painted layers can be found. A palimpsest - that is to say superimpositions of painted plaster - of second thoughts and preparatory drawings were found in the north-east corner of the north wall. These show a contextual reworking of the painting's execution, probably due to a change of mind on the part of the artist, while the wall's painting was being finished. The preparatory layer of this 'remake' is very subtle and for this portion, considering the degradation of the painted layer, 'a calce' (lime) technique was probably used.

As already observed during the work carried out in 2017, the current state of the tomb is the result of considerable stress, due primarily - in all likelihood - to the use of mechanical means



18. Checking of the adhesion of the preparatory layers.

4. The work was carried out by ISCR (Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro) under the guidance of Giorgio

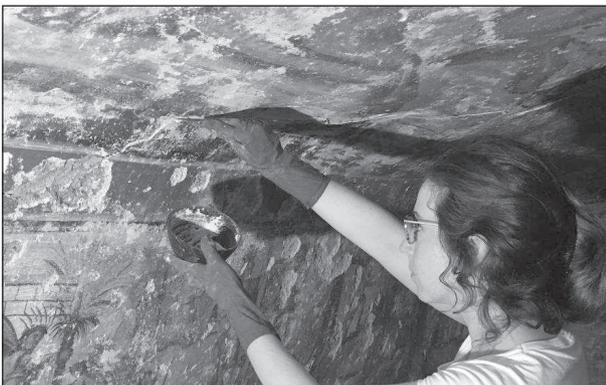
Sobrà, helped by Marie José Mano; special thanks to Giovanna De Palma.

during the roadworks. Cracks are particularly extensive and generally affect all layers, from structure to painting. The plaster has come off in many areas, especially the vault which lacks its eastern portion entirely. Many are the lacunae and losses of the thin painted layer, because of sub-efflorescence and because of the execution technique used. During the intervention, micro-fills of some fractures and cracks was carried out to avoid leakage of the hydraulic premix injected. The edges of the plaster were also filled (Fig. 19).

Site Presentation and Public Awareness

Owing to the fragile nature of the site and the impossibility of public access, the project worked to provide different venues and tools for the public and professional community to learn about the results, and to give them a chance to see some scenes of the marvelous mural painting from the tomb. The project transformed one of the on-site caravans into a gallery equipped with a screen to present videos related to the history of the site and posters showing the progress of the work. Furthermore, SCHEP worked with a local company to design and produce a 3D panoramic tour using virtual reality (VR) technology. This panoramic tour is available at the gallery and at ACOR.

In an effort to spread public awareness about the importance of the tomb discovery and Bayt Rās as one of the cities of the Decapolis, the project conducted several awareness activities targeting two local schools for boys and girls. The activities focused on topics aimed at stimulating the pupils' ability to learn in an interactive way, in order to realize the importance of their heritage, and also created awareness man-



19. Filling the cracks.

uals for schools covering aspects of the archaeology, history, geography and burial practices of the Bayt Rās tomb (Fig.20).

Conclusion

The name of the city of Capitolias was related to the supreme deity of the Roman pantheon, Jupiter Capitolinus. It is therefore no surprise to find this god seated on a throne in the center of the scene, surrounded by personifications of both the city itself and the capital of the province in which it was located, Caesarea Maritima and Judaea/Palaestina respectively. Like Jupiter-Zeus, the Fortune of Capitolias appears on the coinage of the city.

It is important to emphasize that there are three peculiarities that make the new Bayt Rās tomb exceptional, compared to other Roman tombs discovered in the Decapolis and the whole Near East. First, the abundance of representations: nearly 260 figures are accompanied by numerous scenes that compose a narrative arranged on three walls, on either side of the central painting where a sacrifice was offered by a priest to the deities of the city (Jupiter Capitolinus; the Fortune of Capitolias) and the provincial capital of Judaea (the Fortune of Caesarea Maritima). Second, the cohabitation and combination of Greek and Aramaic, the two main languages of the Roman Near East, are very rare phenomena. Here, the Aramaic language written in Greek quite naturally includes vowels, which is not offered by texts from the same period written in Aramaic characters. The inscriptions from the Bayt Rās tomb will thus provide a wide range of material for studies on this language and its evolution. Third, the historical analysis of the iconographic program



20. Students from the local school coloring scenes from the tomb mural painting (CNRS, SCHEP).

compared to the Greek and Aramaic texts lead us to see in the Bayt Rās hypogeum the illustration of the foundation myth of the city at the end of the first century AD. This is a very unusual theme in ancient iconography. Although the main divinity of Capitolias was none other than Jupiter of Rome's Capitol, the new city was of Greek type, like the neighboring cities of the Decapolis. For all these reasons, the painted tomb of Bayt Rās is an extraordinary record of religious, political and social history, as well as an open window on to cultural interactions in a Greek city of the Roman Near East.

The information that can be obtained through analysis of the inscriptions and images will contribute to a deeper understanding of Roman urban planning and construction in the Levant and their origins during the first and second centuries AD, as well as providing insights into the identity of the local people who lived in northern Jordan under Roman rule. The initial architectural analysis of the hypogeum identified multiple historical phases. Future publications will reveal more about the site chronology and original functionality of the hypogeum.

Acknowledgments

The co-authors would like to thank all the consortium members for their contributions; the former Director General of the Department of Antiquities, Dr. Monther Jamhawi, and Mr. Yazid Elayan, the Director General, for their support to the project; and Fareed Shishani, former Capacity Building Coordinator at USAID SCHEP, and Anas Ta'ani, SCHEP site Steward. Also, our sincere thanks to Dr. Barbra Porter [Director of the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR)], Dr. Jack Green [Associate Director of the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR)] and Mrs. Hanadi Al Taher [Institutional Development Lead at USAID SCHEP] for revising this article.

Bibliography

- Aliquot, J. and Gatier, P.-L.
2018 Bulletin épigraphique : Syrie, Phénicie, Palestine, Arabie. *Revue des études grecques* 131: 673-682.
- al-Shami, A.
2005 A New Discovery at Beyt Ras/Capitolias, *Irbid. ADAJ* 49: 509-519.
- Bader, N. and Yon, J.-B.
2018 Une inscription du théâtre de Bayt Ras/Capitolias. *Syria* 95: 155-168.
- Barbet, A. and Vibert-Guigue Cl.,
1988 Les peintures des nécropoles romaines d'Abila et du Nord de la Jordanie. *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique CXXX.*
- Bowsher, J.
2011 The Foundation of Roman Capitolias: A Hypothesis. *ARAM* 23: 35-62.
- Lenzen C. J.
1992 Irbid and Beit Ras, Interconnected Settlements Between c. A.D 100-900. *SHAJ* 4: 299-301.
1995 From Public to Private Space: Changes in the Urban Plan of Bayt Ras/Capitolias. *SHAJ* 5: 235-239.
2003 Ethnic Identity at Beit Ras/Capitolias and Umm Al-Jimāl. *Mediterranean Archaeology* 16: 73-87.
- Lenzen, C. J. and Knauf, E. A.
1987 Beit Ras/Capitolias. A Preliminary Evaluation of the Archaeological and Textual Evidence. *Syria* 64(1-2): 21-46.
- Lenzen, C. J. and McQuitty, A. M.
1988 The 1984 Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region. *ADAJ* 32: 265-274.
- McCown, C. C.
1932 Two Greek Inscriptions from Beit Rās. *BASOR* 46: 13-15.
1936 A Rock Cutting from Beit Ras in Transjordan. *BASOR* 64: 21-23.
- Shraideh, S. and Lenzen, C. J.
1985 A Preliminary Survey of the Irbid - Beit Ras Region, North Western Jordan (archaeological notes and news). *ADAJ* 29: 151-159.
- Vibert-Guigue, C. and Barbet, A.
1982 Tombeaux peints du Nord de la Jordanie à l'époque romaine. *ADAJ* 26: 67-83.
- Yon, J.-B.
2007 De l'araméen en grec. *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 60: 381-429.
- Zayadine, F.
1976 Une Tombe peinte de Beit-Ras. *Studia Hierosolymitana* 1: 285-294.

المراجع العربية

- عبد الله بن عبد العزيز البكري الأندلسي
1983 معجم ما استعجم من أسماء البلاد والمواضع، تحقيق مصطفى السقا، بيروت: عالم الكتب.