

Achim Lichtenberger
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster
Institut für Klassische Archäologie und
Christliche Archäologie/Archäologisches
Museum
lichtenb@uni-muenster.de

Rubina Raja
Centre for Urban Network Evolutions /
Department of Classical Studies and History,
Aarhus University
rubina.raja@cas.au.dk

**Achim Lichtenberger
and Rubina Raja**

Archaeological Work at Gerasa/Jerash: New Perspectives on the City on the Gold River. The Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project 2011–2017

The Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project's Archaeological Work 2011–2017

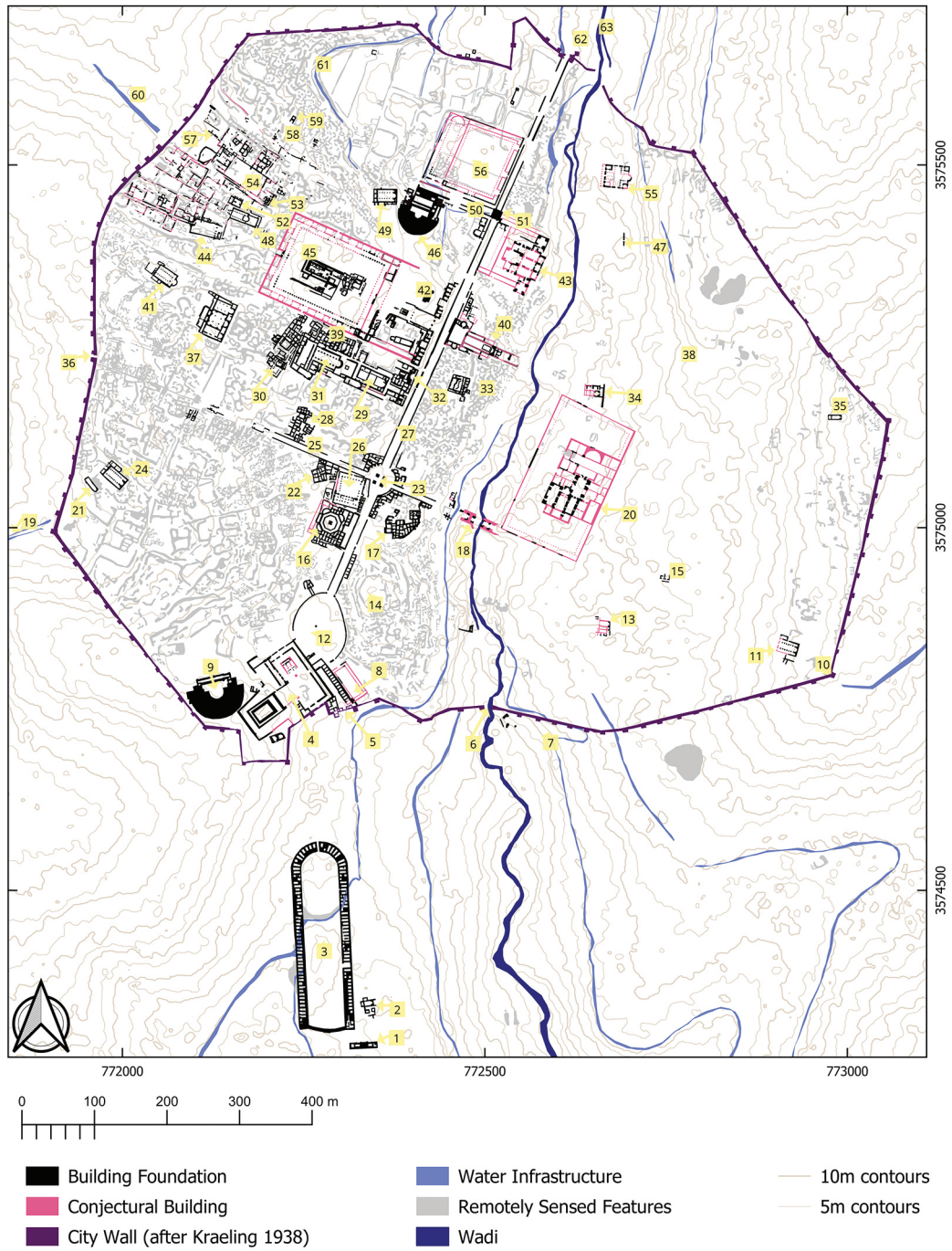
The Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project was a joint project between the universities of Aarhus and Bochum, later Münster. It dealt with a hitherto unexplored part of the Decapolis city Gerasa in Northern Jordan. The aim was to investigate and document the settlement history of the Northwest Quarter and understand the area in a diachronic and comparative perspective, drawing on already published data from the city and the region in general in order to contextualise the findings as firmly as possible within the city's and region's archaeological and historical context (FIG. 1).¹ The Northwest Quarter is the highest area within the walled city and covers an

approximately 4-ha large area (FIG. 2).² A survey campaign was undertaken in the summer of 2011 (Kalaitzoglou *et al.* 2012; Lichtenberger and Raja 2019c) followed by five excavation campaigns, each of about six weeks duration (2012–2016, trenches A–X) and one shorter study campaign of two weeks in 2017.³ The areas of excavation (trenches A–X) were chosen on the basis of research questions pertaining to the general development of the site, the urban layout, the chronology of the buildings and structures, the earliest use of the Northwest Quarter, water-management strategies over time, the impact of the earthquake of AD 749,

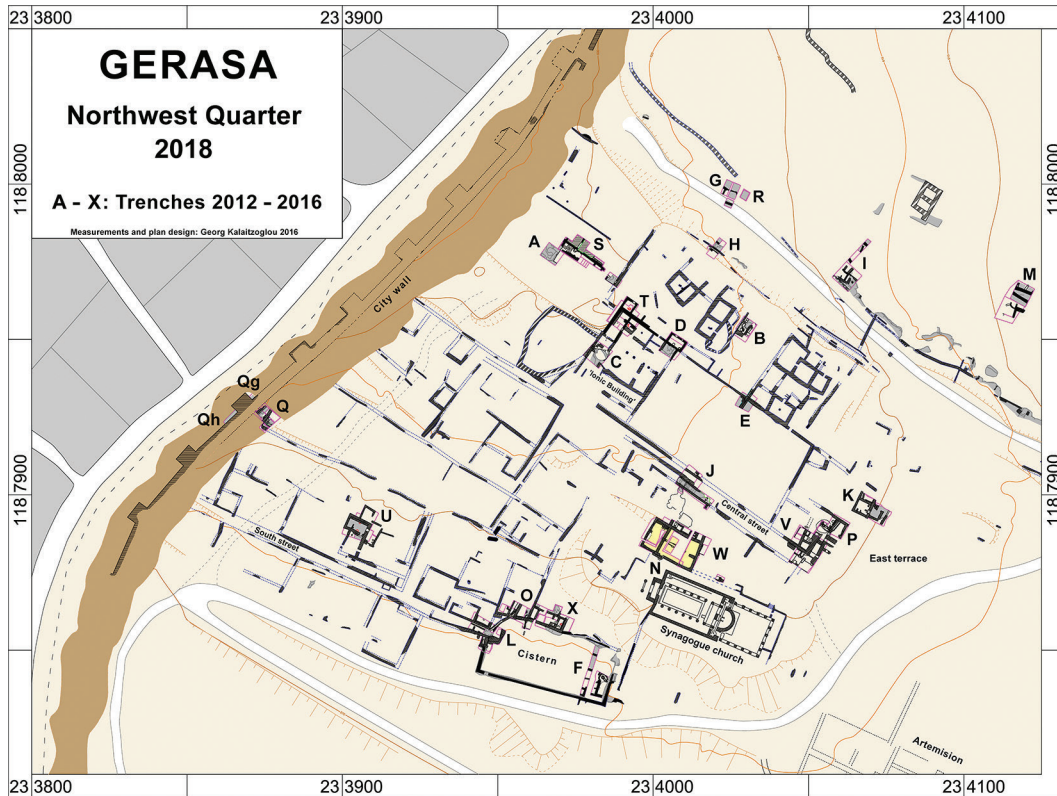
² See website for more information: <https://projects.au.dk/internationaljerashexcavation>.

³ 2011 campaign: Lichtenberger and Raja 2012. 2012 campaign: Kalaitzoglou *et al.* 2013; Lichtenberger *et al.* 2013. 2013 campaign: Kalaitzoglou *et al.* 2014; Lichtenberger *et al.* 2014. 2014 campaign: Kalaitzoglou *et al.* 2015; Lichtenberger *et al.* 2015. 2015 campaign: Kalaitzoglou *et al.* 2022a. 2016 campaign: Kalaitzoglou *et al.* 2022b.

¹ This contribution is based on our elaborate introduction to our final publications in volume 1 (Lichtenberger and Raja 2020a).



1. Map of Gerasa. © Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project.



2. Map of the Northwest Quarter. © Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project.

as well as the nature of the Middle Islamic settlement. The Northwest Quarter had only received little attention prior to the work of the Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project.⁴ This is partly due to the fact that no noticeable structures were visible on the surface apart from the church, until recently called the Synagogue-Church (now Church of the Electi Justiniani), excavated by the Anglo-American team in the 1920s.⁵ The most significant result of the project is the overview we have gained of

the settlement history of this prominent area with little activity in the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, the area's role in the water infrastructure of the city, the late-antique expansion, the gap of settlement after the AD 749 earthquake as well as the moderate resettlement during the Middle Islamic period. Some observations such as the investigation of the western extension of the North Decumanus have considerable impact on our understanding of the overall urban history of Gerasa. The project's work has been characterised by the implementation of high-definition methods drawn from the natural sciences. They have been integrated in the analyses of the project's material on all levels and have served, on the one hand, to create basic research baselines (e.g., for pottery, metal, and glass), and on the other

⁴ Clark and Bowsher 1986 for a short report on the soundings undertaken in the area during the Jerash Archaeological Project.

⁵ Haensch *et al.* 2016; Lichtenberger and Raja 2018b. For the excavation reports relating to the so-called Synagogue-Church: Crowfoot 1929; 1931; 1938: 234–41; Crowfoot and Hamilton 1929.

hand, for understanding research questions focussing on, for example, much wider issues such as urban recycling and pollution.

Numerous of our findings from the excavations have been published over the years, and currently our final publications are well under way and will be published both in print and as e-books in order to make them as widely available as possible.⁶ Since 2012, more than 100 publications have been published connected directly to the works of the Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project. A full bibliography listing all of these publications can be found at the end of this contribution. Since no comprehensive publication on Gerasa has been published since the volume edited by Kraeling in 1938, we have deemed it important to give open access to our raw data, and therefore we have emphasised publishing our material in open-access publications as well as sharing our data in online repositories.⁷ Publications and results stemming from other missions' archaeological work have been incorporated and addressed within the framework of the project.⁸ However, the work we have done has also shown the extreme challenges when working archaeologically in Jerash; one chal-

lenge is the fact that only few other archaeological projects have produced and published final publications. This remains a serious constraint and detriment to the further understanding of the site's development.

With the project we hope to have shown that highly important insights into the overall development of a site can be gained through focussed archaeological work done on a fairly small area, but through the application of the right methods and analyses as well as full quantification of the finds found in the excavations.

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⁶ Lichtenberger and Raja 2020 and forthcoming. Further volumes include a monograph on the Middle Islamic ceramics (Peterson in preparation) as well as one on the Hellenistic to Early Islamic ceramics (Möller in preparation) and a final volume on the stratigraphy (Lichtenberger, Philippsen, and Raja in preparation). Also see a full bibliography from the project at the end of the contribution. An updated list of publications can always be found here: doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.12116286.

⁷ Barfod *et al.* 2015; 2018; Lichtenberger and Raja 2015; 2017b; 2019b; 2019c; 2020c; Lichtenberger *et al.* 2015; 2019; Holdridge *et al.* 2017; Cresswell *et al.* 2018; Stott *et al.* 2018; Birch *et al.* 2019; Lichtenberger, Raja, and Stott 2019; Ting, Lichtenberger, and Raja 2019. Figshare data: data from the 2015 unfolding of silver scroll: doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.12136380.v1; data from the 2020 unfolding of silver scroll: doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.12145236.v1; geomagnetic data from the 2011 survey: doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.8277248.v1.

⁸ Lichtenberger and Raja 2017a; 2018a; 2018c; 2019a; 2020b.

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