

**CBRL 2020**

**Bulletin of the  
Council for British Research  
in the Levant**



## About the Council

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*Dr Robert Bewley (elected November 2020)*

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*Gerasimos Tsourapas (Acting Honorary Treasurer, March – September 2020)*

*John Shakeshaft (elected November 2020; co-opted, September – November 2020)*

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*Monographs Editor and Chair of Publications Committee – Dr Jo Clarke (retired Nov 2020)*

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*Deputy Director of CBRL and Director of the Kenyon Institute, Jerusalem – Dr Toufic Haddad*

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*Contemporary Levant Assistant Editor – Kirsty Bennett*

## About the Council for British Research in the Levant

The Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) is the UK's academic hub for the study of the Middle Eastern countries of Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, across the social sciences and humanities.

Affiliated to the British Academy, CBRL is an independent, not-for-profit charity that conducts, supports and promotes world-class research ranging from Palaeolithic archaeology to contemporary social science. CBRL's activity started in 1919 with the founding of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. Today, CBRL has an administrative office in London and two regional research institutes: the CBRL Kenyon Institute in East Jerusalem and CBRL Amman, as well as projects and strong networks across the countries of the Levant. CBRL's two institutes are the home of British research and intellectual life in the region, serving both international and local academic communities.

CBRL's purpose remains as it was in 1919: to support research on, and increase understanding of the Levant, its people, cultures, and societies, past, present, and future.

## Donors in 2020

CBRL are grateful to the following individuals for their generous support over the financial years 2019-2020: Peter Brown, Heather Crowley, Andrew Garrard, Sam Lieu, Louise Martin, David Mudd, Nellie Phoca-Cosmetatou, Joan Porter MacIver, Gerasimos Tsourapas, Elian Weizman, John Winterburn. CBRL would like to thank the British Academy for their continued support as well as the Altajir Trust and the Barakat Trust for their ongoing support in funding our Jerusalem library.

CBRL would also like to thank the following people and organisations for their generous book donations to CBRL's libraries in 2019-20: Ashraf Abdullah Al-Dabaeen, Raouf Abu Jaber, Khawla Al-Goussous, Ziad Al-Salameen, Khaled Ismaiel Ali, the American Center of Research (ACOR), Firas Bqa'in, Farouk Fawzy, Fatima Marii, Majid Nasser Al-Hassanat, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, Hind Ghassan Abu Al-Shaer, Grove Press, Hani Hayajneh, Hurst Publishers, the Kazakhstan Embassy in Jordan, Ina Kehrberg-Ostrasz, Hisham Khatib, Christopher Knüsel, the MacDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée-Jean Pouilloux, Alison McQuitty, Ministry of Culture (Jordan), Steven Mithen, Muhannad Mobaideen, Oxford University Press, Carol Palmer, Barbara A. Porter, Joan Porter-MacIver, the Royal Hashemite Documentation Center, St. Johns College (Oxford University), Thomas Weber-Karyotakis and Ammar Khammash, and Noor Ziadat.

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## Chairman's foreword

“ 2020 has seen both exceptional challenges and a remarkable response by CBRL's directors and staff, supported wholeheartedly by the trustees. ”

**James Watt, Chairman**

We started the year by welcoming Dr Toufic Haddad as the new Director of the Kenyon Institute, with the additional role of Deputy Director of CBRL. He succeeded Dr Mandy Turner after her distinguished eight years as Director of the Kenyon Institute and who is now Professor of Conflict, Peace and Humanitarian Affairs at Manchester University. Dr Carol Palmer became the Director of CBRL, as well as continuing as Director of the British Institute in Amman. For the first time for some years there are now no deputy/assistant directors at either institute in Amman or Jerusalem, a measure forced on us by the need to find savings in our budget. The structure of having a single CBRL director brings us in line with our fellow British International Research Institutes (BIRIs), and Dr Palmer has been closely engaged with her counterparts to increase cooperation.

We have also seen several other staff changes. In London, our highly valued Executive Officer, Rachel Telfer, left us at the end of 2019 to a more senior post elsewhere. Her much appreciated colleague, Kendall Livingstone, CBRL's Outreach and Administrative Coordinator, did likewise in September 2020. CBRL's Communications, Development and Programmes Manager, Maggie McNulty, stepped in to provide an outstanding degree of thought leadership and effective action during 2020, and departed on maternity leave in October. Meanwhile, we were fortunate to acquire the excellent services of Miranda Ludden in the new post of Financial Controller, Claire Halliday as Executive Assistant, and Max Slaughter as Development Officer maternity leave cover for Maggie. Most recently, Silvia Ferreri has replaced Kendall as the new Outreach and Administrative Coordinator. In Jerusalem, we marked the departure of Hussein Ghaith (Abu Hani) as the Kenyon Institute's librarian, thanking him warmly for his 17 years of committed work. In Jordan, CBRL's remaining staff in Wadi Faynan, Jouma Ali Zanoon (Abu Ibrahim), also retired.

As CBRL Director, Dr Palmer has made a huge contribution to the far-reaching changes brought in during the year, well supported by the Deputy Director, Dr Haddad. Together they have led a transformative strategy process; professionalised governance and staff management; adapted to the online world and modernised our information technology (IT) and library management – work that is ongoing. Dr Haddad has pushed ahead with new thinking, improvements and refurbishment at the Kenyon Institute which bode well for its future.

Among the trustees, I should highlight the invaluable work of Pat Sucher, the Honorary Treasurer to March 2020, which she continued in an advisory capacity for the rest of the year. I should also acknowledge Dr Jo Clarke for her chairing of the publications committee, and Dr Matt Jones for his chairing of the research committee through challenging times. All the trustees have earned our warm thanks. The annual general meeting in November confirmed the Honorary Secretary, Dr Elian Weizman, having until then been acting in the post, and it appointed as Honorary Treasurer John Shakeshaft. CBRL is grateful to Dr Gerasimos Tsourapas for kindly supporting in the role of Acting Honorary Treasurer since March until September.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March was, of course, a major challenge for CBRL. Travel became restricted, suspending much of our work. Jordan closed its border and airport for nearly six months. In Jerusalem, there were strict controls and quite a degree of risk from the virus.

Our hostels closed at both institutes. In the United Kingdom, we were also strictly controlled. Our researchers were unable to travel for fieldwork. In-person meetings and conferences had to be cancelled or moved online. We had to leave our office in the basement of the British Academy and work from home. Our board meetings moved online. Our events also moved online which



The 'No Future Without Past' Exhibition in London, January 2020, part of the Cultural Corridors of Peace project. Left to right (in view): HRH Princess Badiya bint El Hassan representing her father, HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal; Jourma' Ali Zanoon from Wadi Faynan, a Jordanian Bedouin representative; and Khadija Al Fageer, CBRL Project Officer, pointing to one of the exhibition photos. (Credit – Firas Bqa'in).



Asariyah watermill, one of the many late Ottoman period mills surviving on the Jawz River in northern Lebanon. (Credit - Stephen McPhillips).



Attendees at Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan's (MaDiH) webinar on 'Identifying datasets on Jordanian cultural heritage', October 2020.

proved successful and drew larger audiences than we had ever hoped to achieve. I think all our researchers as well as our staff found the enforced immobility beneficial for pushing ahead with implementing change programmes and writing, where possible. Onerous though the restrictions have been for our personal lives, there does seem to have been a silver lining: 2020 feels very much like a landmark year for re-founding, modernising and re-strategising the work of CBRL.

It has also been a year of continuing uncertainty with regards to funding. The combination of Brexit and the pandemic have led to an even greater degree of paralysis than before in the allocation of government funding. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) were unable to confirm the annual grant to the British Academy or the BIRIs before the financial year began in April, and this silence continued through the year. We were simply told to keep spending on the same basis as the previous year's budget. However, we at the same time feel fortunate to have maintained our primary funding administered by the British Academy whose team have been keeping us updated as much as possible. There has been a small uplift of one and a half per cent, which has been welcome. Yet, this does still effectively mean reduced funding since the Brexit vote in 2016 as pound sterling crashed, and the currency continues to be extremely volatile. Inevitably we have had to achieve economies, and I pay tribute to the two directors as well as to Pat Sucher and Miranda Ludden for their success in doing this while maintaining the essential work of CBRL. The investment made meanwhile in modern IT processes and in professionalised staff management, as well as in strategic planning, puts CBRL in a strong position to face future challenges. It is not at all clear that the budgetary promises made in the Brexit context can be respected in the light of the huge fiscal deficit caused by the pandemic. Fundraising from other sources has also become immeasurably more challenging. The detailed results of the Comprehensive Spending Review announced in November's budget are not yet fully known.

It remains only for me to thank all colleagues, past and present, for giving me the opportunity to chair CBRL's trustees for the past four years. It has been an experience rich in friendships and in learning, for which I am truly grateful. Though I have now stepped down at the end of the year, I shall stay in close touch with CBRL and its future and offer as much encouragement as I can. Dr Robert Bewley, most recently Director of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project based at Oxford University, has succeeded me as chair, and I wish him all the best in his role.

**James Watt,**  
Chairman





## Report from Amman

2020 started with three highly memorable events before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, events that hold an even stronger place in memory in light of what followed. Linking all three events was an exploration of connections – past, present, and future – which we hope to return to and benefit from again in the near future.

The first event was the 'Arab Bedouin: No Future Without Past' exhibition in London, on 14 January, reuniting organisers and Lebanese, Palestinian and Jordanian representatives from the Cultural Corridor of Peace Project's 'Regional Bedouin Gathering' held in Wadi Rum, Jordan, in October 2019. This was quickly followed by a return to Jordan for the long-planned British Academy-CBRL Knowledge Frontiers Symposium for early career researchers from the UK and the Levant held in Amman, between 26 and 28 January, on the theme of 'Belonging'. The final of the three events was an international workshop in the West Beka'a, Lebanon, in late February, on 'Heritage for Global Challenges' organised by the University of Leeds's 'Praxis: Arts and Humanities for Global Challenges' project team.

While the threat of a new coronavirus had been looming in news channels since the start of 2020, it was on the return from the workshop in Lebanon to Amman in February that the pandemic's arrival started to feel very real and imminent. Testing stations were being set up on arrival back at Queen Alia International Airport in Amman. By 17 March, the airport was closed, remaining so for almost five months until 10 September. Jordan immediately went into one of the world's most stringent lockdowns; until August, the caseload per thousand remained remarkably low, with the then Minister of Health achieving local celebrity status. However, by October, the cases per thousand rose dramatically and matched that of the UK by November. Still, a change of government followed by national elections went ahead on 10 November, rapidly followed by measures to curb the virus's further



*Participants at the British Academy-CBRL UK-Levant (al-Mashriq) Knowledge Frontiers Symposium on 'Belonging', Amman, 26-28 January 2020. (Credit: Khadija Al Fageer).*



*Jordanian Bedouin representatives at the 'Cultural Corridors of Peace' regional gathering preparing coffee, Wadi Rum, October 2019. (Credit: Khadija Al Fageer).*



*HRH Prince Hassan speaks during a meeting with bedouin communities from the Levant as part Cultural Corridors of Peace project's Regional Gathering held in Wadi Rum and Humayma, Jordan, October 2019. [Credit – Firas Bqa'in].*

spread, albeit significantly less strict than the earlier actions which had caused widespread economic hardship in a series of what were called 'smart' lockdown measures. Schools and universities remained mainly closed throughout, with teaching online.

The Amman Institute closed to the public on 15 March and remained closed for the rest of the year. Through the year, staff have combined home and office-based working. When the situation eased after Ramadan, private appointments for library visitors took place alongside a library stock take. The hostel remained closed due to caution over maintaining the safety of all.

CBRL-partnered project work continued, with some elements requiring visits from UK partners remaining on hold. Fieldwork stopped and tourism, such a vital economic force for Jordan, collapsed. Petra, which saw visitor numbers attain one million in 2019, was suddenly deserted at the very start of the peak spring tourist season in 2020.

An IT upgrade to Microsoft 365 across CBRL, led from Amman, has served to unite all CBRL offices digitally with new emails under the 'cbrl.ac.uk' domain. It has been a tremendous boon to facilitate cross-organisational communication and particularly advantageous in the pandemic context. The ability to message, meet, and share documents easily have been vital to keeping the team together, albeit virtually.

Moving our events online as webinars has opened up new opportunities for engagement and enhanced collaboration more broadly, bringing together speakers and audiences across continents. Though most of the events

we hosted were webinars, CBRL also facilitated a workshop for the Mapping Digital Heritage in Jordan (MaDiH) project with our project partners, in October 2020.

We have very much missed our visiting researchers at the institute. However, we have taken the valuable time it has given us to consider our strategy, governance and future in an ever-changing world of transformations that COVID-19 is serving to hasten. As well as offering opportunities for our events, increased virtual connectivity has brought greater possibilities for consultation with a wide range of people in these considerations. Following a membership review in the summer, a review of CBRL's library, both in Amman and Jerusalem, was at the heart of autumn's activities. We were delighted that the American Center of Research (ACOR) in Amman took the commission to review our library's future and are encouraged by the recommendations to build for the future.

2020 was the second year for the Newton-Khalidi Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development initiatives two-year programmes. CBRL is a partner on four projects, with two research staff employed at the institute in 2020, for the MaDiH project, with King's College London and the Hashemite University, and the Our Past, Our Future, All Together in Faynan (OPOF) project with the University of Reading. A second Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-sponsored project linked to OPOF, Archaeology to Business in Faynan (ABIF), began in February to establish a women's co-operative to produce handicrafts inspired by heritage of the Faynan community. While both projects faced delays due to COVID-19, they were able to continue. Moreover, in November, we were delighted when the OPOF project won the Newton Prize to further develop social enterprise in the Faynan area in 2021/22 with Petra University and the Jordanian non-governmental organisation, Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities.

We have immensely appreciated the ability to connect with our community online which has, on at least one occasion, also included our patron in Jordan, HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal. We continue to be very grateful for HRH's support for our operations in Jordan, and that of his daughter, HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, President of the Royal Scientific Society. The support of the staff of the Ministry of Culture and Department of Antiquities continues to be fundamental to our work.

This has been my first year as CBRL Director, and it has been a pleasure to work with trustees and colleagues, and welcome new team members in this capacity. We hope that conditions for face-to-face meetings and travel will improve in 2021, but in the meantime, have been grateful for the activities we have shared in 2020 in person and digitally.

**Carol Palmer,**

CBRL and Amman Institute Director





## Report from Jerusalem

Another year has come and gone, and what a year it has been.

In January 2020, I took up the role of directing CBRL's Kenyon Institute (KI) in East Jerusalem, taking over from previous KI Director Dr Mandy Turner's eight-year tenure.

Though I was familiar with the position and its responsibilities, having assumed the role of Acting Director the previous year during Mandy's sabbatical, little could have prepared me for the turn of events ushered in by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, where the KI is located, consistently featured in the 'red zone' within the country's main pandemic epicenter – Jerusalem. This made it impossible for any staff, except myself, to access the site.

Shutting our doors to the public like the rest of Jerusalem, 2020 was a year where we endured three severe lockdowns – amongst the longest and most stringent the world has seen throughout the pandemic.

Terrible in its human toll, and exceptionally frustrating and disruptive – the pandemic had a silver lining to it for the organisation. Together with CBRL's Board of Trustees and CBRL Director Dr Carol Palmer in Amman, we used the new circumstances to assess how to adapt to the pandemic while evaluating wider elements of our organisational practice in a manner we could not have done were we locked in to the demands of 'business as usual'.

This process of evaluation dovetailed well with my own attempts as a new director to reflect on how I intended to move the KI forward during my tenure.

2020 was a year of tackling the complex web of our organisational practice and history together with the portfolio of offerings we provide to the scholarly community in the UK and locally. This by necessity would also include a strategic evaluation of the political and scholarly environment we operate in, our facility infrastructure and staffing, and the broader institutional landscape across Jerusalem, as we attempted to better clarify CBRL's role for the near and distant future, and how the KI fit into these plans.

Time was well spent. On an organisational level, CBRL would embark on a process of updating our strategic programmes, policies, procedures, facilities, and grant and management structures, in an effort to realise a vision for CBRL as the UK's preeminent post-doctoral research hub across the Levant.



*Entrance to the Kenyon Institute.*



*Abu Hani, the Kenyon Institute librarian, who retired in March 2020.*

Locally in Jerusalem, we engaged in significant and much needed infrastructure upgrades, painting the entire interior of the KI facility and undertaking considerable garden works that included cutting trees and harvesting wood for the winter.

COVID's restrictions also created conditions for operating increasingly transnationally, between London, Amman and Jerusalem, thanks in part to upgrades to our IT and software capabilities.

We also devised new ways to engage with the public, becoming early producers of webinars, be these book launches or around topical themes.

The webinars were a marked success. Notable events included Hicham Safiedeen's (King's College London) book launch (Banking on the State: The Financial Foundations of Lebanon (Stanford University Press, 2019) - conducted a week after the horrific port explosion in Beirut, and; a conversation with Prof. Avi Shlaim (St. Anthony's College, Oxford) on the topic of "The Spectre of [Israeli] Annexation."

Impressive numbers would attend these virtual events – sometimes in the thousands – raising our profile. Collectively, the webinars would come to represent the most significant public achievement of 2020.





Less visible to the public eye were internal changes taking place on the level of our library. In March 2020, KI librarian Mr. Hussein Gheith (known locally as Abu Hani) finally retired after 17 years of service to CBRL.

Abu Hani had been an invaluable asset to the KI team over the years, aiding countless numbers of researchers who passed through, given his knowledge of the KI collection and the scholarly resources and networks of Jerusalem. He also provided institutional continuity across the span of no less than four KI directorships.

Abu Hani's place at CBRL had always been generously supported by the Barakat and Al Tajir Trusts, and would leave a lasting impression on those who knew him and on the organisation as a whole. It was indeed sad to see him go.

With that said, we were fortunate to incorporate Abu Hani in one last set of tasks revolving around the devising of CBRL's future library aspirations. In September 2020, we commissioned an independent review of our library collection (both the collections in Amman and Jerusalem), attempting to examine possible reconfigurations of our library model to better utilise existing collections, space, visibility, accessibility and sustainability.

The consultant's final report was produced in December, and provides key information and lessons for how to better utilise this invaluable institutional asset.

All in all, 2020 was a difficult albeit historic year. While the demoralising circumstances of the pandemic challenged us all personally and professionally, they also engendered important institutional, political and social dynamics for the world and CBRL to consider. Though the set of challenges these circumstances created are indeed formidable, I am optimistic that CBRL and the KI are well positioned to meet these challenges head on, building upon the formidable legacy of those who came before us. I look forward to updating our members and supporters on these developments as they roll out, hopefully in a not so distant post-pandemic world.

**Toufic Haddad,**

Kenyon Institute Director



*Wadi Araba: Stamos Abatis for Cultural Corridors of Peace*



## News from CBRL's research committee

CBRL's research activities are not exempt from the impact of COVID-19. Restrictions on travel within and between the Levant and the UK, and continued uncertainties about the length of the pandemic and the knock-on impact on the other activities undertaken by our researchers, have led to an abnormal research year.

But this year has allowed for time and space for reflection on CBRL's research portfolio. We have been thinking carefully about our research strategy, the grants we provide and how we assess them, and are looking forward to launching a slightly different CBRL research collection in 2021. In parallel with wider global concerns, highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement, we have been carefully considering the inclusivity of our research activities and the place of institutions such as ourselves in the international research landscape.

We continue to be extremely grateful to our donors who have enabled us to continue to provide travel grants to postgraduate researchers and to award undergraduate and master's dissertation prizes. The committee would particularly like to acknowledge Sam Lieu and the late Rosemary Hollis, who sadly passed away in June 2020, for their contributions, respectively, to these schemes. We would like to open equivalents to both these schemes for young researchers from the Levant and would be particularly grateful for any donations that would help enable that this year.

We had the pleasure of reviewing an exciting and competitive set of grant proposals in the spring and continue to receive a broad and high level of applications to our grant schemes across the social sciences, humanities, and related disciplines.

In 2020, CBRL continued to partner with the AHRC funded Nahrein Network in supporting two Lebanese scholars to visit the UK for training and research opportunities. We remain hopeful that both fellowships can be taken up soon.

I was fortunate to represent CBRL (along with Dr Sana'a Al-Zyoud, from Al al-Bayt University) at the initial meetings of the British International Research Institutes (BIRI) Water Network in Ankara and Edinburgh. This was a great opportunity to meet with the other BIRIs on a common research challenge, and CBRL thanks the British Institute at Ankara and its director Lut Vandeput for facilitating these meetings. This is hopefully the start of more cross-BIRI research activity in the future.

**Matt Jones,**

Chair of the Research Committee



## 2019 and 2020 dissertation prize winners

### 2019

In 2019, we launched our first master's dissertation prize, inviting UK based heads of departments and chairs of departmental examination boards to nominate one first class dissertation in Levantine archaeology, history or contemporary studies. Our first prize winner was Jonathan Gordon, who graduated with an MSc in Environmental Archaeology from University College London. Jonathan's dissertation entitled, 'Investigating avian palaeoecologies in the northern Jordan Valley in the Epipalaeolithic and Early Neolithic: a structural and quantitative analysis of archaeological avifaunal assemblages alongside extant avifaunal communities in the southern Levant', was found to be "thorough and innovative, promising wider implications for research in the region" by the prize evaluating committee made up of CBRL trustees.



*Recipient of the 2019 master's dissertation prize: Jonathan Gordon.*

We had three prize winners in 2019 for the best undergraduate dissertations in Levantine studies: Nastia van der Meer who graduated from the University of Warwick with a degree in History and Politics; Marie Middleton who graduated from University College London with a degree in Archaeology and Anthropology; and Gabriela Szymanska who graduated from the University of East Anglia with a degree in Archaeology, Anthropology and Art History. Nastia's dissertation, which compared the non-violent resistance methods used by indigenous populations to resist settler colonial oppression in apartheid South Africa and modern-day Israel-Palestine, won the prize for contemporary Levantine studies. Maria and Gabriela both won the prize for Levantine archaeology or history. Maria's dissertation focused on the medieval occupation at the site of Khirbet Sheikh 'Isa and the impact of the introduction of the lucrative sugar industry on the city in the 12th century, while Gabriela's provided an analysis of how the contemporary 'gender fluidity' theory could open new avenues to understanding Cypriot dual-sexed figurines.



*Recipient of the 2019 undergraduate dissertation prize: Marie Middleton*

### 2020

In 2020, our undergraduate dissertation prize winner for contemporary Levantine studies was Alice Chancellor, who graduated from the University of Bristol with a degree in Politics and International Relations. Our prize winner for Levantine archaeology or history was Lucie Collett, who graduated from the University of Reading with a degree in Ancient History and Archaeology. Alice's dissertation utilised a feminist post-structural lens to examine the ways in which Syrian female journalists are able to challenge the gender discourse of the Bashar al-Assad regime, while Lucie designed a unique, multi-angled approach – combining visual spatial analyses, quantitative data, and theories of phenomenology – to analyse the specific use of three third millennium temple complexes at the site of Tell Brak for her dissertation.



*Recipient of the 2019 undergraduate dissertation prize: Nastia van de Meer*

We thank all of the students whose dissertations were nominated for the prizes, congratulate the winners of the 2019 and 2020 prizes and wish them all the best for the future.



*Recipient of the 2020 undergraduate dissertation prize: Alice Chancellor*



*Recipient of the 2020 undergraduate dissertation prize: Lucie Collett.*



*Recipient of the 2019 undergraduate dissertation prize: Gabriela Szymanska*



## News from CBRL's Publications Committee

Things have been much quieter for the publications committee this year. The new Editor-in-Chief of *Contemporary Levant*, Sarah Irving, has continued Michelle Obeid's excellent work after she stepped down in 2019. Sarah has already put her own stamp on things, having had great success with a bumper crop of articles in the latest two issues.

### CBRL monographs

Our work to make CBRL's past monographs with Oxbow Books available digitally is ongoing, as we continue to explore where best to host them. We are in discussion with the digital library JSTOR to host all our monographs, making them more easily accessible and searchable online.

### Graham Philip departs as Editor-in-Chief of *Levant* and we welcome Caroline Middleton

It is after more than a decade in the role of Editor-in-Chief of *Levant* that we said goodbye to Graham Philip in December 2020. Under Graham's leadership, *Levant* has gone from strength to strength, becoming a highly respected international journal with a wide readership. Graham's focus from the outset was increasing *Levant*'s international profile by ensuring articles were more than simply the presentation of results of excavations. This strategy has made *Levant* one of the leading journals in old world archaeology. We wish Graham all the best, and we welcome our new Editor-in-Chief, Caroline Middleton. Caroline has been working with CBRL for many years as *Levant*'s Editorial Assistant and Production Editor for CBRL monographs. She is also a Near Eastern prehistorian specialising in zooarchaeology and stable isotopes. Her expertise on both sides of the editorial board will be invaluable for *Levant* going forward.

Finally, I also stepped down as Chair of Publications at the end of 2020, with Graeme Barker taking my place. I have very much enjoyed being a trustee of the CBRL board and Chair of the Publications Committee. I will remain an Associate Editor of *Levant*.

#### Jo Clarke

Chair of the Publications Committee

### Contemporary Levant

In the autumn of 2019, I took over from Michelle Obeid as Editor-in-Chief of *Contemporary Levant*. Michelle was a hard act to follow, having over the previous four years established *Contemporary Levant* as a respected new journal on the history, politics, society and culture of the region and its diasporas. Articles often racked up download numbers into four figures, plus increasing numbers of citations. She also instituted the journal's annual article prize, which was already attracting some excellent entries. Michelle's vision, professionalism and wide networks laid a groundwork for *Contemporary Levant* that many incoming journal editors could only dream of.

The first edition of the journal to come out under my editorship was the Levantine chronotopes special issue of spring 2020. Based on a workshop at the University of Oslo, the collection of articles took up the challenge of using Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope – ways in which configurations of time and space are represented in language and discourse – to illuminate aspects of Levantine history, from Ottoman political ideas to history textbooks in Mandatory Palestine, to the present day self-fashioning of Beirut's Harari tomb and nightclub quarter. This issue was also the first to benefit from *Contemporary Levant*'s new presence on Twitter – @ContempLevant – which increasingly helps authors to publicise their articles and engage with readers, as well as attracting new contributors.

This new social media presence came into its own in publicising the 2020 article award. Despite the impacts of COVID-19 – on our ability to talk to people at academic events, and on scholars' ability to research and write – we received the highest ever number of entries. The panel awarded the 2020 prize to Dr Anne Irfan's essay 'Petitioning for Palestine: refugee appeals to international authorities', with an honourable mention for Dr Muna Dajani's 'Thirsty water carriers': the production of uneven waterscapes in Sahl al-Battuf'. Dr Irfan was praised by the judges for pushing past the parameters of a well-examined subject area to find a unique approach, as well as spotlighting wider histories of petitioning, while Dr Dajani's work was noted for its empirically rich analysis and insight into struggles over water.

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with regional hardships such as the war in Syria and the Beirut port explosion, have affected many people connected to *Contemporary Levant*, as well as impacting on the journal itself in terms of submissions and reviewer availability. I'd therefore like to close this first of my editor's reports by thanking everyone whose steadfast support and hard work has allowed us to keep publishing research of the highest quality, and to send heartfelt best wishes to those affected by this very difficult year.

Sarah Irving

#### Editor-in-Chief,

*Contemporary Levant*



Dr Anne Irfan, the winner of *Contemporary Levant*'s best paper award for 2020.





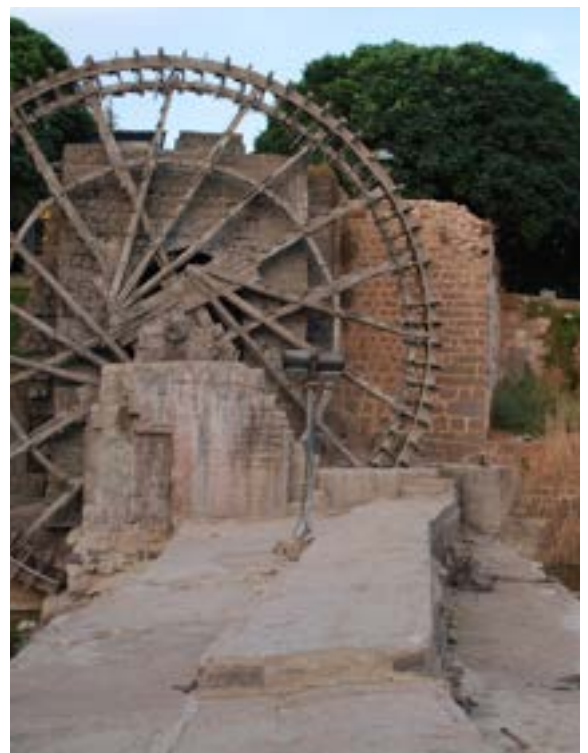
Late Byzantine bridges as markers of imagined landscapes. (Credit: Galina Fingarova).

## Levant

There were some delays to publication of *Levant* in 2019, as a result of two special issues both of which have taken rather longer than expected to assemble. This explains why we have several papers that have been published online but have not yet been assigned to the issues, and why there is a delay in sending out printed copies. Despite this, for 2019, we were pleased to note that *Levant* ranked at number 40 out of 328 journals categorised under 'Arts and humanities – archaeology' in the Scimago Journal and Country Rank (SJR).

The first of our new special issues – *Ottoman waterscapes: new archaeological, anthropological and historical studies in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1500 to the present day*, guest edited by Stephen McPhillips, Astrid Meier and Annika Rabo, is published as 51/2, while the final issue of 2019 (51/3) will appear early in 2021. The papers in the Ottoman issue take us beyond the traditional range of *Levant* to include material from the Aegean and the Balkans, as well as case studies from Syria and Lebanon. These articles make an important archaeological contribution to understanding the economic and political landscapes of the relatively recent past and help make sense of what are often now the fragmentary remains of once critical hydraulic infrastructure.

The other two issues include a range of papers spanning prehistory to the Medieval period. These include two important contributions to chronology, one methodological, and one that confirms that the transitions between the main periods of the Early Bronze Age, were not synchronous across the southern Levant. Other articles contain important new evidence – the first presentation of a new Late Bronze Age cult structure at Lachish (Garfinkel), confirmation of the large-scale usage of wells by Chalcolithic communities on the coastal plain of Israel (van den Brink), and a reconsideration of the date of Neolithic buildings at Kalavassos-*Tenta* in Cyprus (Clarke). Ceramic studies are well-represented and include the archaeometric characterisation of material produced in an Achaemenid period ceramic workshop in southern Turkey (Lehmann), and an examination of the implications for commercial contacts of late Byzantine-early Islamic ceramic amphorae recovered from a shipwreck located on the coast south of Haifa (Creisher).



Hama, Noria (Credit: Stephen McPhillips).

**Graham Philip**  
Editor, *Levant*



## Finance

### Our people

I took over as Acting Honorary Treasurer for CBRL in March 2020, replacing Pat Sucher until John Shakeshaft's election in November. Many thanks to Pat for the tremendous job she did in her time with CBRL since 2018, overseeing various IT and staff transitions and being a back-bone of the finance function. The following report will include some information on how CBRL is funded and our current financial position, for those who would like more specific information, please take a look at the annual report and financial statements for 2019 and 2020 on the Charity Commission website.

### Our funding

Our funding continues to be well supported by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and administered by the British Academy, with their annual grant similar to the previous year, and the welcome contribution to individual infrastructure projects in the form of the Business Development Fund grant. We also obtain funding from donations, such as members who donate towards our provision of travel grants to students and grants for specific academic prizes. We received one new grant for research this year and continue with some exciting grant-funded partnerships with UK and overseas universities. Up to 21 March 2020, we were receiving income from our hostels in Amman and East Jerusalem, but sadly this has had to pause while COVID-19 travel restrictions prevent members from visiting. We look forward to when the institutes will re-open and we can welcome members again.

### Current position

The year to 31 March 2020 recorded a surplus to our general fund of £70,390. This positive result reflects the careful financial management of expenditure over all three sites. However, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the teams at each site have had to adapt to a new environment and way of working. With help from the Business Development Fund, we have enhanced our London, Amman and Jerusalem IT systems and ability to work remotely and improved the building infrastructure in Jerusalem, which was in much need of repairs, taking advantage of a period where no visitors are allowed due to travel restrictions. We are not complacent to the continuing risks around working with foreign currency fluctuations and the status of the Universities Superannuation Scheme. Still, with these on-going improvements, we are hopeful that we will emerge from the other side of the pandemic as a stronger and more efficient organisation.

### Gerasimos Tsourapas

*Acting Honorary Treasurer*



*Wadi Rum: Stamos Abatis for Cultural Corridors of Peace*



## Summaries of all CBRL funded and affiliated research

*These awards are intended to enable post-doctoral scholars to undertake initial exploratory work or a feasibility study prior to making applications for major funding. In addition, CBRL may assist such feasibility studies in establishing local contacts.*

### Pilot awards

**Geoffrey Hughes (University of Exeter) – The value of moderation: language, emotion, and Islam in Jordan:** Please see the feature article on page 36.

**Jeanine Treffers-Daller (University of Reading) – Multilingualism and identity styles in Cyprus**

This project looked at the relationship between sociocultural identity and language on both sides of the Greek-Turkish border in Cyprus. This issue is particularly complex in Cyprus because of the conflictual relationship between the Greek and Turkish speaking communities. Language is a prime indicator of identity for both groups. The key aim of the project was to investigate in more detail how Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots map their identity profiles onto the languages they use in daily life. The project worked with 40 participants in each language group.

The project found that Cypriots from both communities who tend to blend different elements from each culture (the hybrid identity style) were more likely to produce hybrid sentences containing words from different languages. By contrast, those who try to keep both identities separate and alternate between different identities (the alternating identity style) were more likely to switch *between* sentences, and less often *within* sentences. We also found that the Turkish Cypriots were more likely to switch between different identities in everyday interactions than the Greek Cypriots. We hope that the findings of this project can be used to inform further theory development in cross-cultural psychology and multilingualism and will contribute to furthering mutual understanding between the two communities in Cyprus.

### Team-based projects

*CBRL has a strong record of team-based field research and supports strategic projects that enhance the profile of UK research in the Levant, and that work to develop sustainable collaborations with local institutions.*

**Paul Carling (University of Southampton) – Alluvial fans as indicators of past climate change in the Levant**

Alluvial fans (triangle-shaped sediment deposits) are a widespread, yet under-utilised, source of climate change information in the Levant. Extensive large alluvial fans in the Eastern Desert of Egypt and in Jordan are now largely incised and inactive but may have been built during more pluvial periods. Episodes of fan-building and incision reflect shifts in regional hydrology and sediment supply, which we date using cosmogenic nuclides and optically-stimulated luminescence.

This project reconstructs the past 25,000 years of landscape change and possibly significantly longer within the Quaternary period. Field surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020 mapped incised fan surfaces, logged sedimentary sections and provided datable rock samples. The elevations of recent flood debris in channels upstream of fans were surveyed and used to model the size and frequency of recent floods. This latter data reflects modern hydrological processes and provides a benchmark to evaluate the estimates of palaeoflood discharges of Holocene or late Pleistocene ages. As well as explaining past geomorphological evolution of the region, the study has broader implications related to defining wet periods when early humans may have migrated past the Red Sea. As urbanisation and irrigation agriculture becomes increasingly dependent on coastal aquifers, there is a pressing need to define the past and present recharge potential of the aquifers. In contrast, floods from the fans may reach the coast causing damage and loss of life. A better understanding of fan-related flood hydrology will assist in urban planning. A paper on the modern hydrology of the Eastern Desert has been published: Abbas *et al.*, 2020, *Journal of Arid Environments*, Vol. 178, Article 104170. A further paper in revision considers evidence that a Jordanian desert lakeshore hosted human occupation on a corridor for human dispersal out of Africa.



*View, from Wadi Qattar to the west, of the granite domes and spires that constitute the Jebel Qattar massive in the Egyptian Eastern Desert. These mountains harboured Christian hermits avoiding Roman persecution in the first few centuries CE. (Credit: Paul Carling).*





*Taking a sediment core in the Akrotiri Marsh using a Russian Peat Corer. The retrieved sediment core was then analysed in the lab for pollen, diatoms and geochemistry. (Credit: R. Hocking).*

### **Matthew Pound (Northumbria University) – Providing the palaeoenvironmental context to the boom and bust of prehistorical Cypriot societies**

Cyprus has a rich archaeological record of Bronze Age societies. This project set out to investigate the palaeoenvironment of the Bronze Age and the consequences of prehistoric climate change events in Cyprus. After our field reconnaissance identified multiple palaeoenvironmental archives on the island, we selected the Akrotiri Marsh as our first study site. In the spring of 2018 and 2019, sediment cores were extracted from the Akrotiri Marsh and radiocarbon dating identified a peat layer that corresponded to the Bronze Age. Pollen analysis demonstrated that the marsh has been present for the last 5,000 years but has contracted and expanded in response to climate – particularly evident around known Bronze Age climate change events. Diatom (siliceous algae) analysis also showed that the marsh had suffered an interval of reduced freshwater input at 3,200 years before present in response to climate change. Finally, trace metal analysis showed a clear enrichment of copper in the sediment during the Prehistoric Bronze Age and showed increasing pollution in response to metalworking. After the COVID-19 pandemic, we intend to take sediment cores from other locations in Cyprus to provide greater detail to our palaeoenvironmental knowledge. These will include sites at altitude to explore any human impacts on the environment in the Troodos Mountains.

Data collected so far provides the first 5,000-year record of palaeoenvironments in Cyprus, including sections sampled at a 10-year resolution to aid connection to societal relevant timescales. It shows environmental change in response to fluctuations in water availability and documents pollution associated with prehistoric copper extraction.

### **Project completion**

**Kay Prag (University of Manchester) – Shu'aib/Hisban project:** Please see the feature article on page 44.





## Travel grants

CBRL travel grants support scholars in fieldwork investigation. Where these grants are awarded to postgraduate scholars, they are entirely funded through donations and intended to support scholars in gaining practical experience of fieldwork investigation, develop specific research interest in the region and to meet a variety of researchers.

### **Mazen Iwaisi (Queen's University Belfast) – Landscape archaeology as politicised space in Palestine**

This research project, which forms part of my PhD thesis, analysed the concept of politicising space as it applies to landscape archaeology in the occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank, from 1993-2019. The purpose was to identify structural mechanisms of selection that influence decision-making of state and non-state actors on matters of archaeological activity in Palestine. The PhD project evolved following work for more than a decade at Al-Mashhad – the Palestinian Institution for Cultural Landscape Studies (PICLS) in Ramallah – when I was part of a multi-disciplinary team in landscape studies. The PICLS team carried out several archaeology surveys across the West Bank, which aimed to investigate the modern human impact over the landscape, archaeological sites, and traditional buildings.

One of the main outcomes of this research in general, and fieldwork in particular, is the evidence of the Israeli structural destruction of Palestinian landscape and archaeology. This could be seen, for example, by building the separation wall which destroyed or confiscated many archaeology sites.



*The site at Et Tell is located beside the modern village of Deir Dibwan and about three kilometres east of Beitin (Bethel), atop a watershed plateau overlooking the Jordan Valley. (Credit: Mazen Iwaisi).*



*Excavation at Et-Tell. (Credit: Mazen Iwaisi).*



### **Carly Krakow (London School of Economics and Political Science) – The role of international law for protecting the human rights of people impacted by environmental crimes in contexts of statelessness, displacement, and armed conflict**

This on-going research project began by asking questions about how international law acts, and fails to act, as a guarantor of fundamental rights in contexts of environmental injustice. In addressing these questions during later stages of fieldwork, the focus on practices of Palestinian resistance to environmental injustice was richly informed through site visits and interviews.

Building on my previous research in the West Bank that focused on water access and water quality, the CBRL grant enabled me to travel to meet with residents of rural West Bank communities and Aida and Dheisheh refugee camps.

During this trip, I encountered individuals and organisations who powerfully engage in resisting injustice and occupation through practices including: protection of land in the face of annexation, preservation of vital resources, organic farming despite lack of water and limited electricity, research about the safety and quality of air and water and the health effects of near-constant exposure to tear gas, and education about the history and future of the environment in Palestine for the youngest generations. To quote a recent article resulting from this research: 'just as the occupation has controlled Palestinian lives by consistently invading and controlling every aspect of basic daily living, the people doing this work are often resisting by reclaiming autonomy over the fundamentals of life and community-building: starting with the food they eat and the land they inhabit.'

Recent publications on this work include articles in the journal *Water* and in the media outlet *openDemocracy*.



*Om Sleiman organic farm in Bili'in in the West Bank, Palestine. (Credit: Carly Krakow).*

### **Christos Papadopoulos (University of Wales, Trinity Saint David) – A biological distance analysis of the Cyprus population from Chalcolithic to Bronze Age - Sam Lieu Travel Grant recipient**

This research was based on the recording and the evaluation of the presence/absence of non-metric dental traits in Cypriot samples from the Chalcolithic period until the end of the Late Bronze Age (LBA). The dental morphology, being under strong genetic control, was used as a proxy for genetic data to evaluate the biological continuity of the Cypriot population. Given the key feature of the discontinuity in Cypriot prehistory during the transitional phases (abandonment of settlements, new architecture forms, advances in technology, different mortuary practices, changes in material culture) the study aimed to test the hypothesis of the arrival of new populations from the neighbouring Anatolia, Levant and Aegean areas.

The examination of the skeletal remains was followed by a robust statistical analysis to use the frequencies of the recorded dental traits. The results indicated an overall continuity of the population and pointed to a stable and unchanged composition of the Cyprus population from the Chalcolithic until the end of the LBA. Therefore, the outcome excluded the possibility of a mass migration event in this period.

It is necessary to stress the issue for caution in this interpretation. The inability of tooth morphology to provide an accurate reconstruction of the exact genetic relationships between populations, within the same broad region as common ancestry, may obscure people movements. However, the data showed strong similarities between the Cypriot samples sharing common frequencies of presence in most dental traits and a small variation when comparing with published results from neighbouring East Mediterranean populations.



*Inside the Stress, Trauma, and Related Conditions lab at the Cyprus Institute.*



*Studying the maxilla and the mandible of an individual who lived in the Late Helladic period. The location is the Museum of Chora where the human remains from the Pylos excavation are stored. (Credit: Christos Papadopoulos, June 2019).*





### **Alice Stefanelli (Durham University) – Excesses of modernity: the politics of everyday mobility in Lebanon**

1950s Lebanon was famously known as the 'Switzerland of the Orient', a modern yet fascinating country where wealthy tourists could ski in the mountains and bathe in the Mediterranean in the same day. These images and practices were partly enabled by the introduction of cars – a global epitome of modern life – which covered longer distances in a short time, making the country feel smaller and more intimate.

Yet, decades of increased car use and poor transport policies have plunged the country into chronic congestion, impeding mobility, polluting the environment, and radically changing local perceptions of the national space-time.

This project builds on previous doctoral research on the protection of green public space in Beirut and examines how intense automobility is affecting life in the city. Thanks to the CBRL travel grant, I conducted follow-up interviews with traffic activists in Beirut and consulted the archives and cartothèque of the Institut Français du Proche-Orient.

Findings show that while cars are still objects of desire, the exhausting experience of navigating traffic hinders rather than enables modern urban living, encouraging commuters to dream of more public transport instead of more cars, such as the rehabilitation of the long-halted railways. Modernity, it seems, is changing shape, at least on the road.

Preliminary results were presented at the Centre for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies at the American University of Beirut, within the 'Assembling the Middle East: Materiality, Infrastructure and Ecology' lecture series, also thanks to the CBRL award.

### **John Winterburn (University of Oxford) – The Khatt Shebib landscape project**

The Khatt Shebib is an extensive, linear, stone feature with several side-arms, or branches. It runs from the Ras en Naqb escarpment, 40 kilometres south of Petra, in southern Jordan, to the Wadi el Hasa – a total of 150 kilometres in length. The southern section was first recorded by the British diplomat Alex Kirkbride in 1948 when flying over the area, and other field workers and aerial archaeologists have found the central and northern parts.

Its function and date are unknown. It has been speculated that it may be a boundary between settled and nomadic peoples, a line marking the eastern limit of permanent water points or possibly even a defensive structure. The date of the Khatt Shebib is uncertain, but some researchers have proposed prehistoric dates by association with adjacent structures. Recent, limited scientific dating supports this proposal with a date of 400 BCE. Except for pioneering fieldwork carried out by Dr Fawzi Abudanh, there has been little specific field walking and evaluation of the structure.

The project, supported by the CBRL travel grant, set out to investigate the southern Khatt Shebib to understand better the different construction techniques used and its relationship to the broader landscape. Data gathered from field walking and the rapid recording of associated features will be evaluated and used to develop a project proposal for further work to field walk and record the entire feature, adjacent archaeology and the immediate landscape. This will enable possible theories for its function to be developed.



*Buses, mopeds and cars caught in rush hour traffic in Hamra, central Beirut. (Credit: Alice Stefanelli).*



*The Khatt Shebib near Ail, southern Jordan. (Credit: John Winterburn).*



*A section of the Khatt Shebib with orthostats (standing stones along the feature) Near Ail, southern Jordan. (Credit: John Winterburn).*



## Fellowships

*CBRL Postdoctoral Fellowships and Visiting Research Fellowships enable early career postdoctoral candidates and established scholars in university posts to spend time in the Levant region to conduct primary research, develop contacts, give lectures and write-up project results/publications derived from a thesis/research.*

### Postdoctoral Fellowships

#### **Dr Michel de Vreeze (Durham University) – Alternative trajectories towards complexity: the enigma of the Lebanese coast**

The goal of this research stay was to explore the Early Bronze (EB) I to EB II (ca. 3,200/3,100 BC) transition in the northern Levant, by looking at changes in ceramic styles and by comparing Lebanese data with the better-known record from the southern Levant.

Ceramic evidence was gathered from Lebanese sites such as Koubba, Fadous, Sidon, Byblos, and Tell Shuna (Jordan). Understanding this EB I-II transition is crucial since it heralds the first 'urban' societies in the Levant, making a lasting mark on the Levantine landscape and culture, and the novel use of a standardised ceramic collection (metallic ware) associated with intensive olive and grape cultivation. This new set of ceramics is associated with what can be considered an 'industrial revolution' permanently altering Levantine societies and use of landscape.

New research on the ceramic transition in Lebanon, particularly on the coast, now starts to show that it might have been particularly abrupt here. The impetus came from further south in a core area from the northern Jordan Valley to perhaps the southern Biq'a Valley. Early dynastic Egypt was likely an important player in this core area. Importantly though, different communities throughout the Levant seem to have adopted this new way of life at different points in time, sometimes extremely abruptly.

Continuing research will explore in detail how on the Lebanese coast, particularly at Byblos, this intensification amalgamated with an already ancient system of maritime (gift) exchange with Egypt, which developed into particularly successful and long-lasting institutionalised structures continuing into later Bronze Age periods.

### Visiting Research Fellowships

**Alex Henley (University of Oxford) – A genealogy of Islamic religious leadership in post-Ottoman states:** Please see the feature article on page 34.

**Roberto Roccu (Kings College London) – A global political economy of the 'missing middle'**

This research project investigates whether, and to what extent, integration in global markets has exacerbated patterns of economic and social dualisation in Tunisia, Egypt and Palestine. The research seeks to address the neglect of global entanglements that limits even the most perceptive literature on crony capitalism in these countries, that has enabled international organisations and donors to present integration in global markets as the way of modernising and upgrading the region.

The project developed on two levels: first, in the tradition of historical sociology, I looked for continuities and differences in the patterns of economic, social and political dualisation in the Arab region by comparing the two most recent phases of economic globalisation, that of the colonial era and the current neoliberal one; second, at the intersection of political economy and sociology, I analysed how neoliberal economic reforms affected small and medium enterprises and the middle class in resource-scarce Arab states and territories. Insofar as it moves beyond methodological nationalism and towards a genuinely global approach to the political economy of the region, this project matters both analytically, as it highlights the structuring influence of the global connections that makes economic integration in the region inherently dis-equalising, and politically, because it enables us to better capture the globally situated limits and possibilities of economic and political transformation in the Arab world.



*During the EB I-II transition, Byblos rapidly incorporated the novel ceramic style and associated economic lifestyle which catapulted it to urban proportions.*



*Early EB II platter bowls from Koubba. Platter bowls at Koubba I are part of a novel set of metallic ware vessels focusing on communal consumption. (Credit: Michel de Vreeze).*





## Honorary Fellowships and affiliated research projects

### Honorary Fellowships

#### **John Marcel Robert Elias (St Catherine's College, Cambridge University) – Power dynamics between Christians and Muslims in Medieval European literature and culture**

East-West relations have long been examined from the perspective of power, most influentially by Edward Said. He focused his analysis on Western images of Arabs and Muslims from the late 18th through 20th centuries, when Europe was establishing and consolidating colonial rule in the Middle East.

While Said himself acknowledges that 'Islam dominated both East and West' during the eighth to the 16th century, the tremendous impact of the superior geopolitical power of the Islamic East on premodern European literature and culture has been sparsely explored.

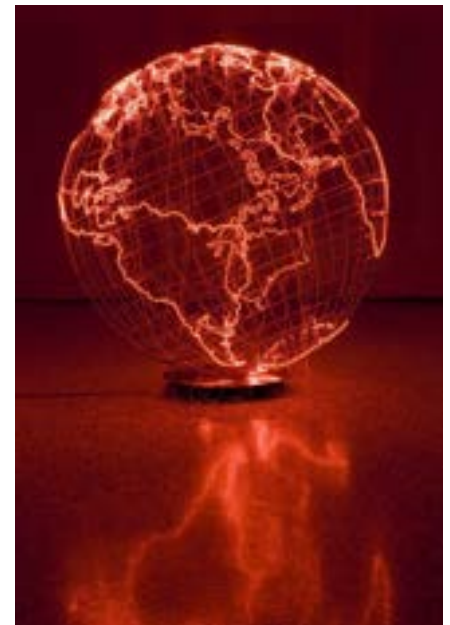
My monograph in progress, entitled *The Superior Enemy: Muslims in Medieval European Literature and Culture* and supported by a CBRL Honorary Fellowship, argues that Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman (re)conquests during the late 12th through 15th centuries prompted a crisis in the European collective consciousness, manifested in sustained interrogation and critique of prevailing philosophical beliefs and cultural practices, and increasing attraction to Islam's (perceived or actual) cultural, political, and religious characteristics. It focuses on the evidence supplied by many fascinating yet little-known writings in English, French, Occitan, Italian, German, and Latin.

#### **Nadine Hassouneh (University of Leeds, University of Helsinki) – The Syrian Desk: hidden precarities in humanitarian remoteness**

Recent research in geography and related disciplines has called for a focus on the everyday lived precarities in the study of humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. Critical geographies of humanitarian economies and humanitarian labour, in particular, have argued for the political salience of the work of bodies, knowledges and affects in humanitarian spaces.

In a dialogue with this body of work, this research, supported by a CBRL Honorary Fellowship and in collaboration with Elisa Pascucci from the University of Helsinki, takes a critical look at the normalisation of humanitarian remote management, namely the delivery of aid from a distance through remote sensing and other technologies.

We draw on interviews with Arabic-speaking, locally recruited aid workers employed by international non-governmental organisations in the coordination and delivery of aid within Syria and its neighbouring countries. We argue that humanitarian remoteness, far from being a space of automation and techno-logistical efficiency, as it is often characterised in existing literature, is a space of intense embodied labour. Precarity refers here not only to uninsured working conditions, but also to the intertwining of life and labour as experienced by aid workers who share a social and biographical background with the displaced and the victimised. We take a closer look at three articulations of these precarities: technological intimacies and affective labour, (im)mobilities and racialisation, and disqualified knowledges in an age of data-driven humanitarianism.



*Mona Hatoum's Hot Spot III (2009). The title Hot Spot refers to the term 'hot spot' meaning a place of military or civil unrest. Using delicate red neon to outline the contours of the continents, this sculpture presents the entire globe as a danger zone – what Hatoum describes as a 'world continually caught up in conflict and unrest'. (Credit: Agostino Osio).*



*A panoramic view of Amman from the same location in two different times (pre-1920 and 2013). (Credit: Unknown and Amman Heritage Houses Project).*



One of the Royal Film Commission buildings, and Books@Cafe, a coffee shop, formerly Al Qsous House, in 1950's Jabal Amman. [Credit: Shatha Mubaideen, 2019].

**Dana Salameen (Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA)) Shatha Mubaideen (CBRL, Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan) and Rudaina Al Momani (CBRL) – The documentation of Amman heritage houses using EAMENA's methodology project**

The modern history of Amman began at the end of the 19th century where settlements started in the Amman valley, near the water resources, and later expanded towards the seven hills of Amman. In the mid-20th century, the city architecture and its typical urban elements, what architects call typo-morphology, flourished. The residential architecture built around that time holds distinct architectural, historical and socio-economic values. Nevertheless, rapid urbanisation, population growth, and lack of documentation have resulted in a need for proper protection through the mapping and documentation of these houses.

Amman is a city of openness and diversity. The constant fear of the loss of the city essence, along with the architectural traces of this significant era, has urged an interdisciplinary team of an architect, an archaeologist, and a geomatics engineer to begin documenting its architectural heritage. That is how the Amman Heritage Houses (AHH) project started. Funded by the Global Heritage Fund and affiliated with CBRL, we carried out this project to record, document and assess the architectural heritage of Amman during the 20th century using the EAMENA recording and condition assessment methodology, as the start of a comprehensive record of Amman heritage houses.

The project studied Jabal Amman and Jabal Al-Weibdeh neighbourhoods, with a focus on the houses from the 1920s to the 1960s, due to their distinctive architectural values. As soon as we started to collect preliminary data from published resources, reports, photographs, and official institutions working in the field of cultural heritage protection, we were surprised with the level of artistic and architectural detail of those buildings.



Issa Ammari House, Jabal Al Weibdeh, built in the 1920s. [Credit: Shatha Mubaideen, 2019].

Despite the historic nature of these buildings and the community's appreciation of their history, few written resources were available. We had to look for secondary resources to build upon the literature to answer the following questions: what is the current condition of these houses; where are the houses located; how old are they; and what are they currently used for?

The local community is an essential partner in this project, as the heritage houses cannot be identified by only looking at satellite imagery. Informal walks, visits, and stories and memories shared by current and former residents were a vital source of information. Moreover, social media platforms such as Facebook provided us with photographs and personal interpretations which were hugely valuable: the Facebook page managed by the project team had more than 1,000 followers in less than six months. This represents the interest of the community in sharing the stories of their houses.

Talking to the community, reading books and articles, exploring photographic collections, meeting former residents, and investigating the logic behind the architecture of some of the houses, Fawwaz Muhanna, the first architect of Amman Municipality, supported us in capturing past lifestyles and how house space functioned at that time. A walk with a woman



whose grandparents lived in Jabal Al Weibdeh, for example, made us realise how directly architectural details are linked to her memories: drinking coffee on the balcony, the sound of the water fountain, the smell of jasmine, and the laughs at family gatherings in the living room. It was an emotional experience for us!



'Archaeology into business in Faynan' (ABIF) and OPOF project posters.

Though the project duration was only six months, we managed to record 108 houses on the EAMENA database, along with condition assessments, threats, disturbances, photos, and other published resources. The documented units are only a part of the total, but they form a representative sample. The sample at this phase was originally family houses, but the properties are now currently used for cultural, educational, commercial and residential purposes.

On the one hand, several houses have been adapted to become art and cultural centres, schools, or cafes and restaurants. Cultural values have been preserved and presented to grab the attention of the younger generation, such as at the Abd Al Hameed Shoman Foundation, Arwa bint Al-Harith Elementary School for Girls, Wild Jordan Centre, Kabariti Village, Books@

Cafe, Sufra restaurant, Romero restaurant, and many other examples. On the other hand, some houses are under threat due to abandonment or are rented to tenants with no regular maintenance, which leads to dilapidation and structural damage.

Documentation is the first step for protection. Several approaches to conserve, interpret, and present the values of these houses to create living heritage sites that integrate everyday activities within the ancient values of a place would support their transfer to future generations.

We hope to expand our initiative in the future and enrich our documentation with the intangible values of the architectural heritage of Amman to be a model that can be adapted to other Jordanian cities and towns.

## CBRL partnered projects

### Nebras Maslamani – Our past, our future, all together in Faynan (OPOF): Promoting women's economic empowerment, eco-tourism and education in southern Jordan

Wadi Faynan is in southern Jordan, 52 kilometres from one of the seven wonders of the world: Petra. More than 800 Bedouin families live in the villages of Faynan and Greigra in Wadi Faynan and the region is considered an economically deprived area, with pastoralism and irrigation-based farming providing livelihoods for members of the five Bedouin tribes who live there. The valley has an accumulation of human history from 500,000 years ago to the present day. Tourism in this distinctive desert region has increased in recent years, reaching more than 8,000 visitors in 2019.

CBRL has been involved in archaeological and community research projects in the Faynan region for more than 30 years. In March 2019, as part of the Faynan Heritage initiative led by the University of Reading – in partnership with the Department of Antiquities in Jordan (DoA), the University of Leeds, Queen Mary University of London, the University of Jordan, the University of Petra, and CBRL – the OPOF project was launched. Funded by the Newton-Khalidi Fund, administered through the UK's AHRC, the project returns the knowledge gained from previous and ongoing research on Faynan's cultural heritage to the communities who live there.

The opening of the Faynan Museum in March 2018, and CBRL's previous project in partnership with the University of Reading 'Discovering Wadi Faynan 16 and Faynan heritage', funded by the AHRC, helped to develop exhibits for the museum. Community engagement is needed for the region's people to deepen their understanding of this heritage and to promote eco-tourism.

#### The OPOF project consists of six main activities:

1. The creation of four panels within the Faynan Museum that include information on the present day community over the last 100 years of Faynan's history.
2. The production of a craft-based participatory community map with the women of Faynan and Greigra, to enable them to tell their stories in their own way to be displayed within the Faynan Museum.
3. The development of a programme of activities, resources, and facilities to support the six schools surrounding Wadi Faynan, through a teacher training resource and educational kit on Faynan heritage.
4. The establishment of the Faynan heritage trail – a walking route around some of the key archaeological sites in Faynan – to connect the museum to the landscape. The project also provides the Faynan Museum with cases to display artefacts from Faynan.
5. The development of a Faynan heritage website and the digitisation of archaeological sites to make these accessible to those who cannot visit or access the sites in remote areas. This includes 3D models of some Faynan heritage sites and artefacts.
6. The development of participatory designs with undergraduate architecture students to enable the museum to become a community hub.





*Women during interviews as part of the ABIF project.*

During the first meeting of the project with communities in Faynan and Greigra, local women expressed their desire and need for livelihood opportunities, as they face employment challenges in the region. In the following months, I began collecting photographs of products women currently make and discussed the possibilities for a collaborative project. This was also inspired by Professor Robin Coningham from Durham University who was working on a project in Beidha, near Petra in summer 2019 supported by CBRL. Led again by the University of Reading, the idea for the 'Archaeology into business in Faynan' (ABIF) project was developed to address these needs through establishing a social business inspired by Faynan's rich heritage.

The ABIF project is a collaboration between the University of Reading, Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities and CBRL. With new funding, after becoming a winner of the Newton Prize in 2020, the project will focus on empowering 50 women from the five tribes living in Faynan and Greigra to develop their economic independence, security, and social cohesion.

The project team are delivering training sessions to the women so they can manufacture high-quality handicrafts, inspired by the art discovered during excavations at the Neolithic site of Wadi Faynan 16, and sell them to tourists. The aim is to improve the women's socio-economic status and enhance the region's attractiveness to tourists.

ABIF is also establishing the Faynan Heritage Women's Association to preserve the copyrights of the products established, to ensure that the income goes directly to the

women themselves, and to support other women to join the association once the project is complete. "When a woman feels she is productive in a larger scale around her surrounding environment; her ambitions rise to give more, and this is how we feel in the 'Archaeology into business in Faynan' project," said one member of the Faynan Heritage Women's Association.

The ABIF and OPOF projects could have a remarkable impact on the people of Wadi Faynan and Jordan as a whole. They are contributing to women's sustainable economic empowerment, providing quality education, developing social cohesion, and promoting eco-tourism.

*Other team members: Professor Steven Mithen (principal investigator), Dr Fatima Al-Nammari (University of Petra), Dr Arwa Badran (University of Durham), Dr Jessica Jacobs (Queen Mary College), Elaine Jamieson (University of Reading), Sarah Lambert-Gates (University of Reading), Dr Fatma Marii (University of Jordan), Dr Carol Palmer (CBRL), Dr Gehan Selim (University of Leeds).*

### **Pascal Flohr, Alessandra Esposito, Shatha Mubaideen – Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan (MaDiH) Project**

The MaDiH project is a Jordanian-UK collaboration between King's Digital Lab (KDL) at King's College London, the Hashemite University, CBRL, the Department of Antiquities (DoA), the Jordan Open Source Organisation (JOSA) and the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East & North Africa (EAMENA) project. The interdisciplinary team members come from a wide array of fields including archaeology, digital humanities, computer science, and architecture. The first phase of the project runs from 2019 to 2021 and is funded by the Newton-Khalidi Fund administered through the AHRC. Jordan is the ideal location for this project as, besides having its rich cultural heritage, it has been a regional leader in developing, adopting and utilising information and communication technology.

Every cultural heritage project collects a considerable amount of data. To give a typical example, an archaeological excavation yields field reports, photos, plans and drawings, stratigraphic information and a wide array of post-excavation information, including on the ceramics, lithics, bones, and botanical assemblages. And then there are surveys, photograph collections, oral history interviews and much more. In recent decades, the number of cultural heritage projects producing digital datasets has grown substantially. Overviews have been attempted but tend to be restricted to a certain type of data, for example the Middle Eastern Geodatabase for Antiquities-Jordan (MEGA-Jordan), the geographic information system designed to catalogue data on Jordan's archaeological sites. So how can we – researchers, heritage professionals, students or anyone else interested in or working with heritage broadly – find and access all of the relevant data? This was the topical question Dr Andrea de Silva Zerbini and several of us had wondered about, and at the 2018 AHRC-Newton workshop in Amman on cultural heritage and sustainable development, the MaDiH project was born.

The main aim of the MaDiH project (phase one) is to establish what kind of Jordanian cultural heritage data exists and how this could be made available in the future. To this end, we are conducting research into what kind of datasets on Jordanian cultural heritage already exist and how these can be best catalogued in online digital form. To elicit user requirements and possible IT solutions, we are bringing cultural heritage professionals and researchers as well as digital humanities and computer scientists together in a series of four workshops.





Most of our time so far has been spent on identifying and documenting datasets that include Jordanian cultural heritage, including tangible and intangible heritage. We see this as an essential first step: we need to know what we are dealing with before developing the project idea further. We document what the datasets record (type of data, provenance, period); who collected them and who is currently responsible for them; where they are held and in what language; what format they are in, if they are digital or analogue, online or offline, publicly available or restricted and more. We have completed this part of the process (at least for this phase of MaDiH) and have recorded 315 datasets. These are certainly not all the datasets on Jordanian heritage, but they give us a good overview of the existing variety.

Well over half of the datasets that we recorded are currently held outside Jordan (59 per cent), showing the need for data repatriation – that is, making the data digitally available to Jordanians. The latter is already the case in many instances, as the large majority are online (72 per cent) and digital (91 per cent). However, our dataset might well be skewed towards these more easily visible and findable datasets. We expect that many more datasets exist offline and in analogue form, and we encourage researchers to contact us if they have such a dataset so that we can document their existence.

We recorded datasets from both before 1750 (archaeology, or *athar*, 49 per cent) and after 1750 ('heritage', *turath*, 60 per cent), noting this distinction in line with Jordanian law. The types of datasets are diverse: there are site and monument gazetteers, archaeological excavation datasets, photo archives, museum databases and inventories of old houses. They can be fully-fledged heritage databases, like MEGA-Jordan or EAMENA, spreadsheets, written paper records or audio tapes. We are currently writing up the results, so more details and insights will be available soon!



*Introduction to the public lecture at CBRL in Amman.*

scientists and decision-makers. From the first group, we wanted to know what is needed for heritage documentation, protection and research. In addition, the wide range of participants, from museums, archives, heritage organisations, cultural institutes, non-governmental organisations and the wider heritage community was key to the identification of existing datasets. From the second group, we wanted to know what is possible from a technical and development perspective. We believe it is key to bring these groups, who are well represented in Jordan but are often not in contact with each other, together to discuss the future of cultural heritage documentation.

We are presenting our outcomes on our website, through social media, as a series of technical papers, through academic conferences, as well as two white papers with recommendations (one on policy and one on the technical aspect) and finally through a series of research papers. In addition, the CKAN repository is open to all; we hope this will enable research and encourage collaborations between projects.

We hope to continue our project with future phases to improve and properly build a national repository for cultural heritage datasets.

*Other team members: James Smithies (UK principal investigator (PI)), Fadi Bala'awi (Jordan PI), Carol Palmer, Sahar Idwan, Arzaq Yousef, Raya Sharbain, Issa Mahasneh, Samia Khouri (until June 2020) and Mariam Ibrahim (from June 2020), Shaher Rababeh, and the late Andrea de Silva Zerbini.*



*The team and workshop participants at our second workshop at CBRL in Amman, October 2019.*

A second, related, part of the project deals with the technical aspect: how can we best document these resources, and, in the future, make them more directly available? With the help of the KDL technical team, a Comprehensive Knowledge Archive Network (CKAN) online repository was set up. We established a controlled vocabulary, based on existing vocabularies. Limited budget and therefore limited customisation was available at this stage, but what is important to us was to know what the requirements are for a fully funded, ideally national, repository. We are testing the repository continuously by using it ourselves for data entry and analyses, inviting users to test it, and we have planned a live user testing session during our third workshop.

A third, but crucial part of the project are the workshops. In four workshops we have been able to bring together cultural heritage professionals and researchers from a wide range of backgrounds (archaeologists, architects, etc.) as well as digital humanities specialists, computer



### Carol Palmer – ‘Cultural Corridors of Peace’ and a regional Bedouin gathering

CBRL joined the Cultural Corridors of Peace (CCP) Project led by York Archaeological Trust’s (YAT) Institute for Heritage and Sustainable Human Development (Inherit) in partnership with the American University of Beirut (AUB) from April 2019 until the end of January 2020. The CCP project is funded by the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund (CPF), in partnership with the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport. Inherit and AUB’s original and primary focus is with Bedouin communities from the Bekaa in Lebanon to document, archive, and safeguard their living memory and tangible heritage. In 2019, the project expanded to include collaboration with another CPF-funded project led by Coventry University’s Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations designed to protect Bedouin lived cultural heritage in the occupied Palestinian territories through engagement with young people from the South Hebron Hills. The new phase’s purpose was to organise a ‘regional Bedouin gathering’ in Jordan to include Lebanese, Palestinian and Jordanian representatives. CBRL joined as a partner to host partner meetings in preparation for the gathering, oversee local management in Jordan for the event itself, and, through its networks, invite Jordanian Bedouin to participate.

During the last 100 years, nations and borders have come into existence that have disrupted the traditional mobile pastoral lifeway of the Bedouin, alongside sedentarisation, the impacts of conflicts, and massive economic transformations. The regional gathering was conceived to support Bedouin communities divided by borders today to come together to document and celebrate their cultural heritage. Significantly, the CCP’s broader aim is to ‘enable the Bedouin to voice to say who they are and the type of future they seek for their children, as well as for the children and grandchildren of Bedouin who no longer live the lifeway of their forebears, to connect with their heritage and to work for social justice and equal opportunities for these communities.’

The regional gathering took place over three days in Wadi Rum in October 2019. CBRL was extremely honoured and appreciative for the patronage of HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal, CBRL Amman’s long-term patron in Jordan, in supporting the regional gathering, inviting the Bedouin first to his home on Jabal Raghadan, Amman, as part of initial visits and discussions. During the event itself, the Prince hosted a magnificent evening dinner and activities, including star-gazing, with specially invited guests at the archaeological and historic site of Humayma, to the north of Wadi Rum.

Activities across the rest of the three days included erecting a Bedouin tent, preparing traditional food and coffee, and exchanging songs, stories, poems, as well as dancing together. Topics discussed included desert survival, how their ancestors moved across landscapes at night guided by the stars, hospitality, identity, customary law, and the role of women and men in Bedouin society. The specific concerns of the Bedouin from the different locations were explored. In Lebanon, the Bedouin face challenges of political discrimination and financial hardship; in Jordan, the Bedouin are concerned most about maintaining pastoral lifeways under difficult economic circumstances; and the primary concern of the Palestinian group are the constant challenges of and resistance to the Israeli occupation.



*Cultural Corridors of Peace Bedouin Regional Gathering – Evening invitation from HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal in Humayma, Jordan. [Credit – Firas Bqa’in]*

An exhibition to celebrate Bedouin cultural heritage following the regional gathering had been planned to take place in the Levant, but political uncertainties meant the the exhibition was transferred to London, with Bedouin representatives invited to attend from all three groups. The exhibition, ‘No Future Without Past,’ took place at the Bargehouse, Oxo Tower Wharf, London, over 10 days in January 2020, with an opening with all in attendance the day before. Covering all the floors of the venue, through art, photography, film and audio the exhibition was designed as an interactive experience to celebrate contemporary Bedouin tangible and intangible cultural heritage and raise awareness of their concerns.

HRH Princess Badiya bint El Hassan represented her father at the exhibition opening in London, which was wonderful for the Jordanian Bedouin in particular. It was very special also to invite CBRL friends and colleagues, some of whom knew the Jordanian representatives from Beidha and Wadi Faynan personally through time spent in Jordan.

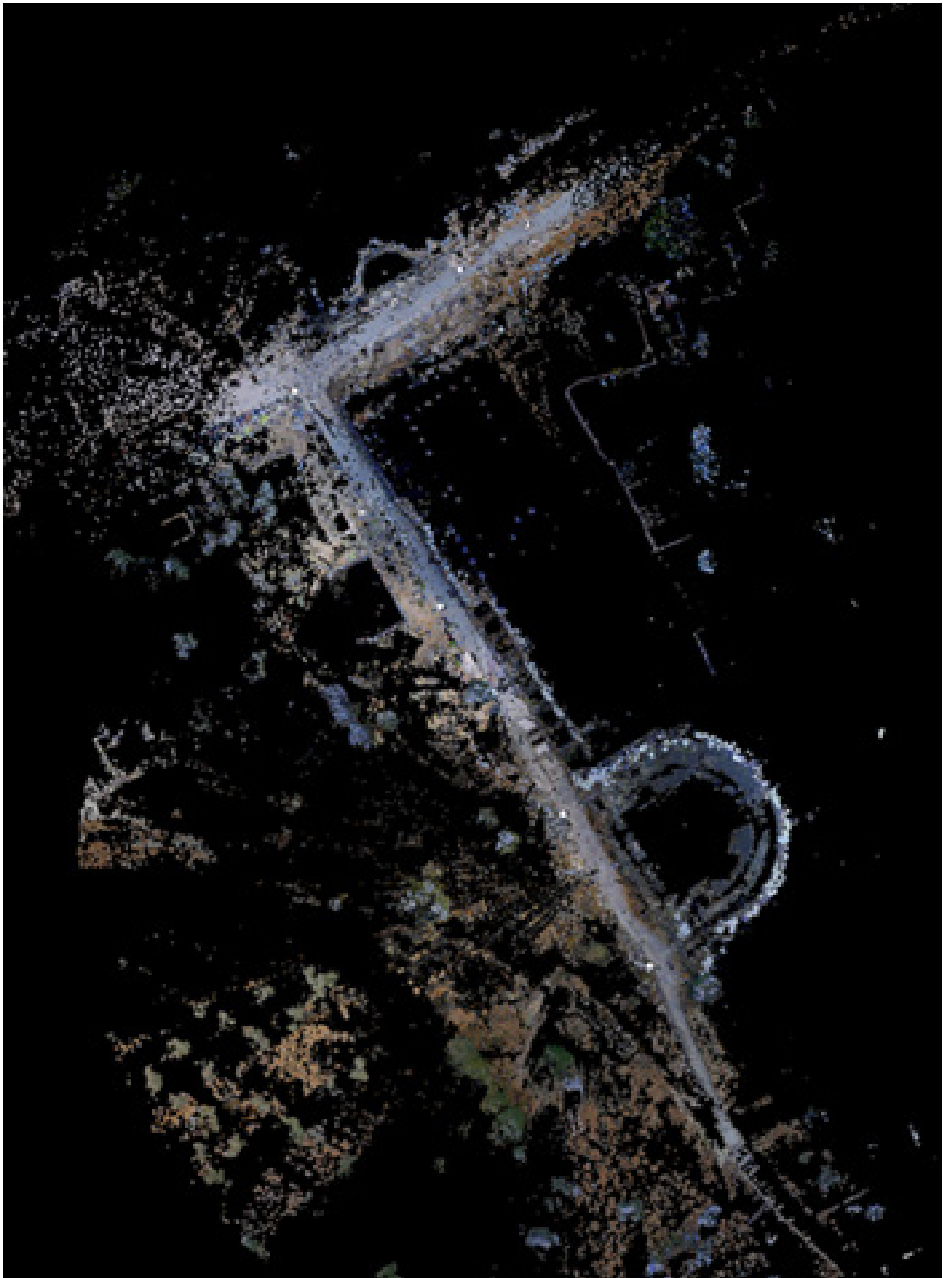
The Cultural Corridors of Peace projects provides a timely opportunity to address the heritage and needs of contemporary Bedouin whose lives have been vastly altered by the geopolitical changes of recent history. An online archive of photographs, film, interviews and further information is available at the project website: [culturalcorridors.net](http://culturalcorridors.net).

Other team members: All the participating Bedouin from Lebanon, Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories, Aphrodite Sorotou (project lead, Inherit), Dr Chris Dalglish (Inherit), Sana Mezoughi (Inherit), Prof. Rami Zurayk (AUB), Dr Tariq Tell (AUB), Amhez Houda El Nour (AUB), Kimberly Green (AUB), Skye Walker McAlpine (YAT), Ben Reeves (YAT), Dr Marwan Darweish (Coventry University), Dr Patricia Sellick (Coventry University), Dr Mahmoud Soliman (Coventry University), Firas Bqa’in (CBRL), and Khadija Al Fageer (CBRL). Creative team: Stamos Abatis, Stefatou Olga, Nikitas Grypos, with team members. The exhibition in London was curated by Aphrodite Sorotou, Stamos Abatis, Nikitas Grypos, Hamda Abou Eid and Nour El Houda Amhez.





*Cooking at the gathering, Olga Stéfatu for Cultural Corridors of Peace*



*High-tech virtual reality modelling of Umm Qais. (Credit: Umm Qais Heritage).*





*Workshop in Umm Qais with community participants and early career researchers. (Credit: Umm Qais Heritage).*

### **Dr Gehan Selim (University of Leeds) – The Living Museum of Umm Qais: Sustainable preservation, analysis and virtual reconstruction of Gadara’s ancient site and village**

The Living Museum Umm Qais is a Newton-Khlaidi project in Jordan, led by Dr Gehan Selim. The project is part of an effort to rebuild the connections between the local community and both the remains of the Ottoman village and the archaeological remains of the ancient city that it was built on. We aim to revitalise the community’s sense of place and interest in their heritage and, in doing so, support sustainable heritage approaches that benefit the economy and ensure protection for all aspects of Umm Qais’ past.

The project brings together an international cross-disciplinary team of experts, students and volunteers from architecture, archaeology, cultural heritage projection and management, digital arts, computer science, governance and education. We are utilising this breadth of experience and knowledge to engage with young people and early career heritage professionals, building capacity in the latest 3D digital approaches for cultural heritage within the community, universities and enterprise.

We support this collaborative partnership to co-design and co-produce digital platforms and approaches that can record, promote and present Umm Qais and its heritage. In turn, this capacity building develops a resource of cultural heritage expertise within the community that can support sustainable economic development of the economy linked to heritage protection.

*Other team members: Dr Monther Jamhawi (Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST)), Dr He Wang (University of Leeds), Professor Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem (Nottingham Trent University), Professor Robin Conningham (Durham University), Dr Shatha Abu Khafajah (Hashemite University), Samia Khouri (Department of Antiquities, Jordan), Dr Shouib Nouh Ma'bdeh (JUST), and Dr Carol Palmer (CBRL).*



## CBRL affiliated projects

**Robin Skeates (Durham University) – Learning from multicultural Amman: Engaging Jordan's youth:** Please see the feature article on page 47.

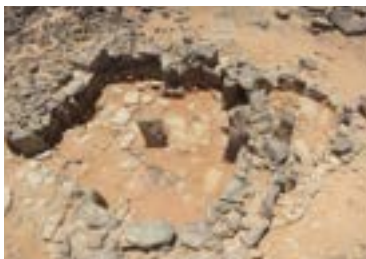


*Flocks of sheep in Bani Hamida, Jordan. (Credit: Alison McQuitty).*

### **Alison McQuitty (CBRL) – Khirbat Faris: Ethnography, land-use and environmental studies**

Ethnographic and environmental evidence, as well as the more mainstream archaeological and historical analysis, are vital in producing a well-rounded picture of rural settlement. The support of CBRL allowed this goal to be realised by enabling the final analysis and synthesis of the data, collected during the fieldwork stage of the Khirbat Faris Project (1988-1994), that explored the temporal and spatial occupational fluctuations at the site of Khirbat Faris in southern Jordan and the stories of the communities that lived there. The project covers the period from the Nabatean (first century A.D.) to the late 20th century A.D. The stratigraphy, architecture and small-finds volume has recently been published and the current CBRL-supported work will lead to a second volume.

Scholars from many institutions are involved in the interpretation of this material, which is directed at producing a narrative, in all its complexity, of the land-use related to the settlement. Environmental data comes from the excavated areas; from botanical survey and excavation in the fields surrounding the site; from analysis of aerial photos and satellite imagery; and from extensive collection of first-person accounts of the relations between pastoralism and agriculture between tribe and state. These accounts lie at the centre of the ethnographic report which also records disappearing 'ways-of-life', local interpretations of 19th century history on the Kerak Plateau and anthropological analysis of how a tribal society works.



*Structure W80, Wisad Pools, eastern Jordan. (Credit: Eastern Badia Archaeological Project).*

### **Alex Wasse (Yeditepe University) – Eastern Badia Archaeological Project**

The Eastern Badia Archaeological Project (EBAP) focuses on the later prehistory of the southern 'panhandle' of eastern Jordan and its relationships with regions further afield, now including Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula.

Since 2008, surveys and excavations by EBAP have provided abundant evidence for semi-permanent occupation during the Late Neolithic (LN [ca 6,500-5,000 cal BC]) of areas that are now arid. The sites are affiliated with what we have recently defined as the Black Desert Neolithic (BDN) cultural complex, and are characterised by the presence of substantial stone-built structures with a wide range of stone-built and plaster installations. Although the precise nature of climatic and environmental conditions in the Eastern Badia at the time these sites were occupied remains to be determined, converging strands of evidence indicate the presence of park woodland, marsh and bodies of standing water in some localities.

An overarching goal of EBAP is to integrate the archaeological dataset with the expanding suite of well-dated palaeoenvironmental and palaeoclimatic proxies to better understand human utilisation of, and impacts on, the study area during the early to mid-Holocene. The project is particularly interested in: the potential role of hunting and nascent herding networks as vectors of late prehistoric 'globalisation'; the impact on the BDN of the longer 8.2 kiloyear climate event; and how the collapse of the BDN might relate to the appearance of fortified hilltop sites in and around the study area during the fifth millennium cal BC.



*Umm Qassa Nabataean village. (Credit: Robert Bewley, Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East).*

### **Micaela Sinibaldi (Cardiff University) – Islamic Bayda Project**

The Islamic Bayda Project is part of the broader Late Petra Project that aims to reconstruct the post-urban history of Petra and its region, which were inhabited after the Nabataean period without significant chronological gaps. The project focuses on a middle to late Islamic-period rural village located in Bayda, north of Petra, which holds what is today the most substantial and accessible evidence in the region of a settlement during the Islamic period.

Launched in 2014, the project has now conducted six continuous seasons, and it has investigated one habitation and two mosques – rare features in the Petra region – and the first mosques so far excavated in the area.

The goals of the project include: recording and reconstructing the architecture and building style of the structures; and understanding daily life at the village and framing it within the broader context of the other sites in the region, including Petra itself, during the Islamic period. The project encompasses the synergic use of the different components: study of the local, modern material culture, to better understand the archaeological record; fieldwork training to Jordanian and international archaeologists; and community engagement through the training of local staff and activities with schools of the Petra region.

**Claudine Dauphin (University of Wales, Trinity Saint David) – The Fallahin and Nomads Project:** Please see the feature article on page 30.



## Resurrecting the agricultural landscape of Byzantine and Umayyad Mefaa (Umm ar-Rasas), Jordan

Claudine Dauphin (University of Wales, Trinity Saint David) and Mohamed Ben Jeddou, (Orient et Méditerranée)

*In memory of Thomas Peter Williams (1934–2019), formerly Head of Geography, The King's School, Chester, who converted C. Dauphin to "new geography", leading her to adopt landscape archaeology and adapt geographic information system to Byzantine archaeology.*



Figure 1: Umm ar-Rasas: territorial boundaries of the lands of Byzantine and Umayyad Mefaa. [Credit: Mohamed Ben Jeddou and Claudine Dauphin].

Convinced by our work of the importance to preserve the fossil Byzantine and Umayyad agricultural landscape surrounding the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Umm ar-Rasas in semi-arid southern Jordan, the Department of Antiquities (DoA) took the unprecedented step in 2018 to declare it a 'protected ancient landscape' (Fig. 1) – the first in Jordan, the Middle East and Mediterranean lands. But why?



Figure 2: Umm ar-Rasas: mosaic vignettes of Kastron Mefaa: in northern intercolumnar space in the sixth century Church of the Lions (l); in southern intercolumnar space in the Church of St Stephen, AD 718-756 (r). [Credit: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem].

A major aim of our CBRL-affiliated project 'Fallahin and nomads in the southern Levant from Byzantium to the Mamluks: population dynamics and artistic expression' (Dauphin, Ben Jeddou and Castex 2012; 2015) is the reconstruction of model landscapes of specific historical periods in southern Jordan.

On the edge of the desert, Kastron Mefaa (modern Umm ar-Rasas) was an ideal candidate. Founded in the Iron Age and comprising few Nabatean remains, it was the military base of a cavalry unit, which protected the villages near the desert frontier (Limes Arabicus) from Bedouin raids in the late third and early fourth centuries AD. From 529, it was replaced by the Christianised Ghassanid Bedouins who forged an alliance with Byzantium. Mefaa reached its peak in the fifth to seventh centuries and prospered under Umayyad rule (seventh to ninth centuries).

Under the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Madaba, a double settlement developed in the sixth century: houses and churches filled the abandoned fort (Greek Kastron); attached to it on the north, the walled town (Greek kômè) of Mefaa consisted of streets, paths, courtyard houses and churches around a forum with a central column topped by a cross (Fig. 2).



Figure 3: Umm ar-Rasas, destroyed box-type lateral wall of cultivated wadi. [Credit: J.M. Castex, spring 2017].



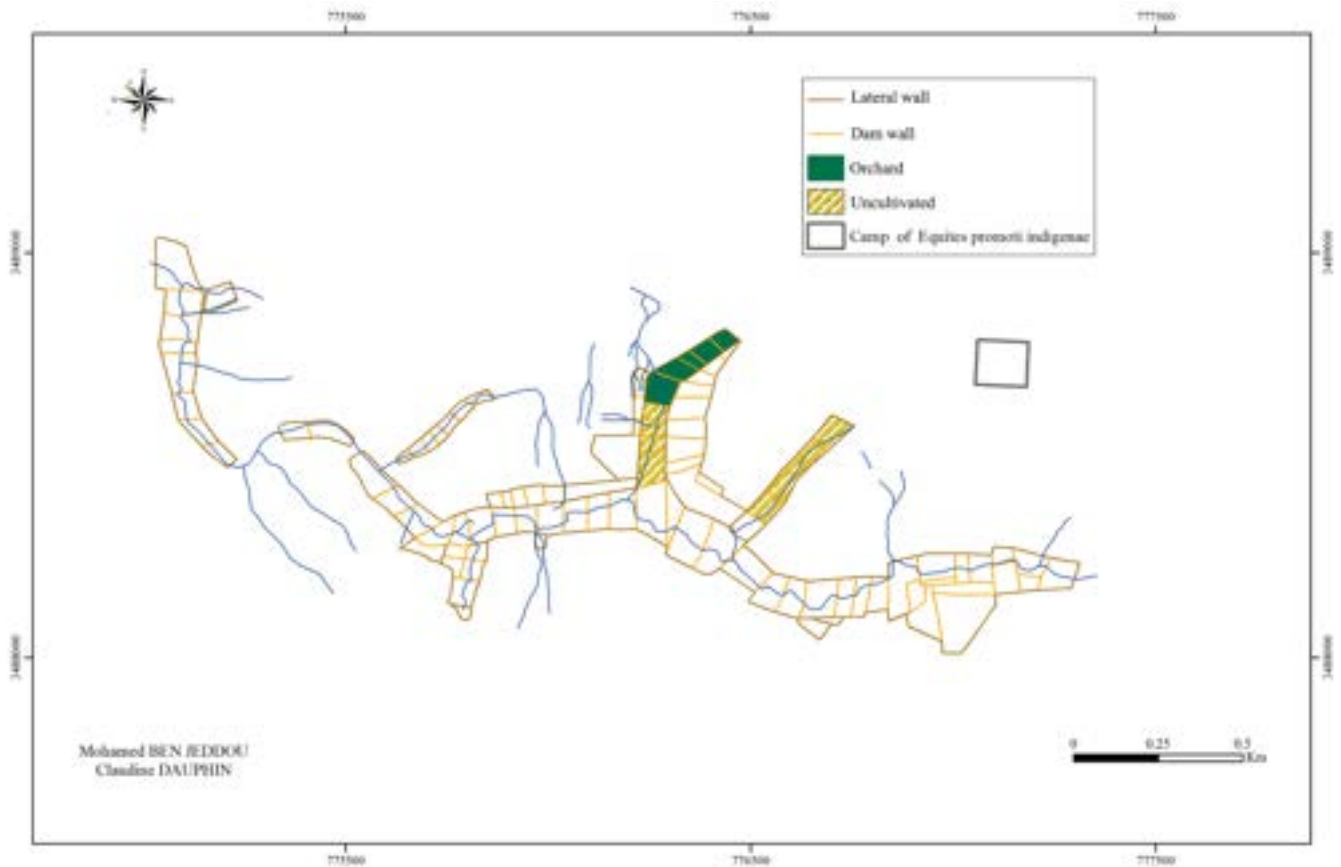


Figure 4: Umm ar-Rasas: modern reuse of ancient, cultivated wadi. [Credit: Mohamed Ben Jeddou and Claudine Dauphin].

### **Kastron, Kômè, pilgrimage centre, and UNESCO World Heritage site**

Surveyed between 1987 and 2000 by the Swiss Archaeological Mission to Jordan, Kastron Mefaa enclosed twin churches dating back to the first half of the sixth century. In Mefaa, Fr Piccirillo and Fr Alliata of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (Jerusalem) identified 16 churches and chapels, of which they excavated 13, ranging from the late sixth to the mid-eighth century (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994). The presence of a stylite monk atop a tower serviced by a basilica turned Mefaa Kastron and town into a pilgrimage centre comparable to Qal'at Sim'ân in northern Syria. How did such a populous town survive economically in semi-arid conditions?

The lands of Umm er-Rasas (with an altitude of 767m) belong to the highlands of the dissected limestone plateau of central Jordan, between Madaba and al-Karak, between the Desert Road in the east and the territory of Dhiban, which overlooks the *Ghôr*, in the west. Plateaux gently slope from the south-east to the north-west. Umm ar-Rasas is a watershed for streams running towards major boundary lines, Wadi ath-Thamad to the north and Wadi al-Mujib to the south.

The climate at Umm ar-Rasas suffers from low rainfall (180mm per year). Arid brown alluvial soils give way to a steppe with a sparse vegetation of *Artemisia* bushes.

### **Turning back the clock**

In March 2017, we corrected the preliminary drawings of features detected on Google Earth and took GPS points and photographs in the field. The 1953 British Royal Air Force (RAF) aerial photograph of Umm ar-Rasas, obtained from the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre with the official permission of the DoA, proved precious.

The *wadi* network at Umm ar-Rasas consisted of four main wadis, with tributaries intensively cultivated between the fourth and ninth centuries. The system of irrigated plots in the bottom of *wadis* on gentle slopes is well-known from Byzantine agriculture in the Negev desert (Mayerson, 1960). These plots (dubbed 'internal') were limited by lateral walls 0.60 centimetres to one metre thick (Fig. 3), sometimes tagged onto which were plots (dubbed 'external') and dam walls bridging the *wadis*. Water from the *wadis* overflowing in the rainy season, as well as from the run-off on the slopes above it and from small tributaries, flowed from upper to lower plots through a central spillway in the dam wall, and by lateral diversion channels. Dam walls retained the concentrated product of winter rains necessary for the growing of wheat while inhabitants harvested barley in the spring.

The abandonment of Mefaa in the ninth century under Abbassid rule resulted in the degradation of the landscape, notably by erosion. From the mid-1950s, the system was reused by the sedentarised Al-Mor *bedu* (Banu Sakhr), who came from the Nadj in Northern Arabia (Lewis 1987, 124-147). Minimum effort and no upkeep, however, resulted in low yields of barley and the absence of orchards (Fig. 4).

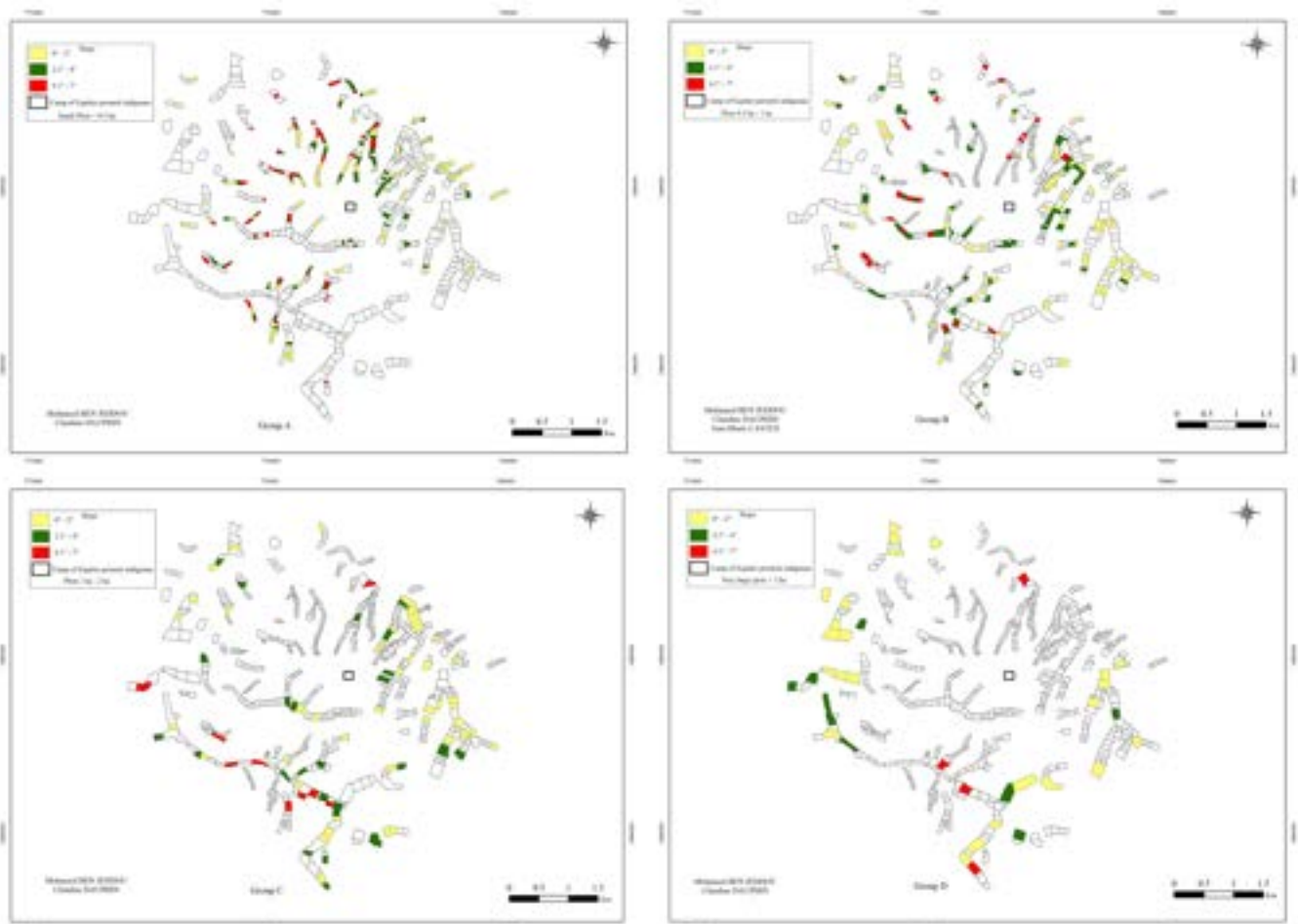


Figure 5: Umm ar-Rasas agricultural wadis: surface and slope analysis. (Credit: Mohamed Ben Jeddou and Claudine Dauphin).

### The agricultural territory of Byzantine Mefaa

The agricultural lands of Byzantine Mefaa covered an area of 3,850 hectares (Territory 1), whose boundaries coincided with *wadis*. Over a maximum distance of five kilometres to the north, was a belt (Territory 2) of 4,680 hectares dotted with farms and small monasteries (*metochia*) next to the branches or sections of cultivated *wadis* (Fig. 1). Beyond Territory 2, was grazing land devoid of human habitation. 'Protected ancient landscape' status applies to both territories.

Did the size of plots vary and were there patterns in plot sizes, which could be interpreted in sociological terms? Why were parts of a *wadi* used for agriculture and not others? To answer these questions, we studied the data from the fields of the agricultural *wadis* by employing geographic information system (GIS) statistical and spatial analyses: slope or incline; aspect [exposure of slope towards a direction]; elevation/digital elevation model; area; area and geology; area and pedology; area and slope.

A basic question was whether we should treat the 658 internal plots and the 68 external plots together or separately. The results of the slope analysis were similar for external and internal plots: the steepest slopes were north of Umm ar-Rasas.

Slopes orientated south-west/north-east were more exposed to sunshine, which confirms the instructions given in a Byzantine manuscript of fiscal geometry: 'But you must also recognise well the directions, the east, the west, the north and the south. Verily, the east always faces the summit, and you must take into consideration the fact that the upper part of the (rectangular) plot faces eastwards. But if the plot lies in a plane, one must consider that the east is at the lowest point of the plot, towards which the water runs down.' (Lefort and Cheynet 1991, 48-49, MS II, § 21).

The parallelism in the results of the slope and aspect analyses conducted on external and internal plots provided us with the possibility of either adding together the plots in and along *wadis*, or of processing solely internal plots. We chose the latter.

Within the Byzantine-Umayyad relative chronological framework, small plots were cultivated 500 metres north of Mefaa, and subsequently medium-sized plots at 700 metres; further and later, large plots at one kilometre; then, very large plots on the outer periphery of Mefaa at two kilometres. Finally, we detected a return to smaller plots on the boundaries of Mefaa's Territory 1 next to Jumeil to the south-west, and beyond Territory 1.

The combined surface and slope analysis (Fig. 5) confirmed that most of the agricultural plots were in valley bottoms. But who owned them?

Defining the type of ownership of the agricultural *wadi* plots of Late Roman Kastron Mefaa and of Byzantine Mefaa is challenging and will only be possible when we have scrutinised Territory 2 with the same methods combining aerial photographs with satellite imagery. Besides the size and patterns of plots aggregated together in specific parts of one or the other *wadi*, the archaeological evidence for farms has survived. Two complexes, each including a chapel, may be interpreted as small rural monasteries (*metochia*) or hermitages.

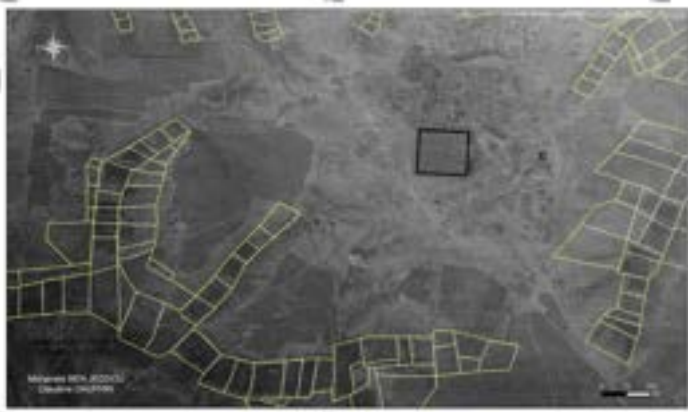


Figure 6: Aerial photograph of Umm ar-Rasas by the British Royal Air Force (1953). In between cultivated wadis drawn in yellow, the large black patches of ancient vineyards (Courtesy: Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre, Amman. Credit: Mohamed Ben Jeddou and Claudine Dauphin).

### Mefaa at the centre of a wine production network

Studying the 1953 RAF photograph of the site, we were attracted by large black patches beyond and in between the wadis (Fig. 6), reminiscent of the parallel rows of *tuleilat al-anab*, the stone heaps for vines, creating dark patches in the landscape of Byzantine Sobaita, modern Shivta, in the Negev desert. The location of these patches on slopes above wadi beds as in Shivta, a large winepress excavated in Mefaa and the double vats of ancient winepresses which we spotted on Google Earth, as well as the vintaging iconographic repertoire on the mosaics of the churches of Umm ar-Rasas, led us to hypothesise extensive vineyards.

Thus, the agricultural landscape included large tracts of vineyards accessed by paths leading to winepresses in open areas between vineyards. The productivity of the wide expanses of vine-covered gentle slopes required trading outlets, hence the spider-web system of roads which we traced – connecting Mefaa with neighbouring villages and

towns, particularly Madaba on the land route to the markets of the cities of the Decapolis and of Jerusalem across the River Jordan. The wine of Moab was also transported across the Dead Sea in *amphorae* on rowing boats.

Umm ar-Rasas was abandoned in the late eighth or early ninth century when the Abbasids outlawed wine drinking and the vineyard economy collapsed. Originally crossed by the main north-south Byzantine road and subsequently by a west-east Islamic, Crusader and Mamluk road, Mefaa was bypassed by the Medieval road of the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca and subsequently by the Ottoman *Hajj* road (Dauphin, Ben Jeddou and Castex 2015).

### Beyond landscape protection, nurturing the bond to the land

Official protection of the ancient landscape of Umm ar-Rasas ensures state control by the DoA of development, access and modified use of the land. The key to acceptance by the sedentarised *bedu* of the al-Mor tribe, who owned or rented land since the 1860s, resides in nurturing in local schoolchildren their bond to the land by outings to the agricultural wadis, and by involving all generations in small-scale restorations of the system, in sowing, planting and reaping the long-term economic benefits. With the help of Tarek al-Mor, headmaster of the primary school, whose family owns all the land of Umm ar-Rasas, and following in the footsteps of Fr Michele Piccirillo, Mefaa's most famous excavator, we aim to bridge the past and the future.

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### Islamic authorities and mosques in Jordan during the corona crisis

#### Alex Henley (University of Oxford)

I have been following developments in Jordan during the coronavirus pandemic, having spent four months of last year at the CBRL institute in Amman as a Visiting Fellow. My research focuses on official religious institutions, which over the past century have come to define Islam to an unprecedented extent. I am also fascinated by the changing and contested ways in which modern people conceive religion as an aspect of life distinct from non-religious aspects.

The coronavirus pandemic has presented challenges for Islamic practice. Is it permissible to close off mosques for communal prayers? Who has the authority to make such decisions, and on what basis? Varied responses to these two questions around the world have cast into relief the different ways in which Islam is organised, and how people understand the place and function of religion in Muslim societies. In what follows, I will outline some of the issues around the closure of mosques and then the position of Islamic authorities more broadly.





## Closure of mosques



Community life as usual after Friday prayers at al-'Assaf Mosque in the Tla' al-'Ali neighbourhood of Amman, close to the CBRL Amman institute. [Credit: Alex Henley].



Interior of Amman's towering King Hussein bin Talal Mosque built in 2005 during the reign of King Abdullah II as the largest mosque in Jordan. [Credit: Alex Henley].

Jordan's government, like so many others, ordered a comprehensive lockdown beginning in March 2020 to combat the spread of coronavirus. Lockdown included a closure of mosques that lasted throughout the month of Ramadan and the Eid al-Fitr holiday, when mosques are usually at their busiest. During this time, the call to prayer was still issued five times a day from loudspeakers atop mosques all over the country, but it had an added line: 'Pray in your homes!'

Friday and Eid prayers during lockdown were broadcast from the grand King Hussein bin Talal Mosque in Amman. The congregation on screen consists of a few solitary-looking figures standing the prescribed two metres apart while modelling a new uniform of masks and gloves. None of the familiar jostling to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, children weaving between the lines, hearty kisses on cheeks, or banknotes quietly slipped into the hands of the needy. Instead, people watching the Facebook livestream type pious responses of 'ameen' into chat while a river of emojis floats by as the only reminder of the invisible congregation.

Closing mosques was a relatively simple exercise in Jordan, where every one of the 8,000 or so mosques in the country is officially licensed and every imam is an employee of the Ministry of Islamic Endowments. Elsewhere it has been considerably more difficult to persuade local imams and management committees to follow government guidance. Even in Jordan the decision proved controversial, with impromptu prayers taking place in front of some locked mosques. Security forces were called upon to disperse such gatherings.

While mosques are a ubiquitous sight across Jordan today, this is the result of a recent boom in privately funded development that has over-stretched the state's ability to monitor and staff them. There were only 3,000 mosques around the country 20 years ago, and about 400 just 50 years before that. On the other hand, the place of the mosque in social life has slowly shrunk. In the past it served as a multi-purpose community space that could be used for teaching, reading, celebrating special occasions, organising charitable works, political mobilisation, sheltering the homeless or just having a nap. Today such activities and gatherings are tightly controlled or prohibited, and many mosques are locked between prayer times.

Responses to the closure of Jordan's mosques have ranged widely. Many citizens support the lockdown as prudent public health policy, citing medical evidence and the Shari'a principle of protecting life, as well as precedents from the Prophet Muhammad's own time. Some assert that religious obligations trump all others or cite Islamic sources to argue that Muslims would be safe from harm in the houses of God. According to one post on social media, for instance, 'There is no point not going to mosques, for they are the refuge from crises.' Another post on the same site, however, was dismissive: 'The mosques were deserted before the pandemic, so there is no call for being dramatic and hypocritical now!' Perhaps it proved easy to shut down Jordan's mosques – with near-total compliance – partly because they in fact play a minimal role in people's daily lives.

## Islamic authorities in the spotlight

In some countries, the lockdown debate has revolved around questions of jurisdiction. Should political authorities have any right to determine what happens in religious spaces?

Islamic Sheikhs from Sudan to Pakistan have viewed their governments' commands to close mosques as attempts to encroach on their own sacrosanct sphere of authority. Some even accused governments of using (or manufacturing) the coronavirus crisis as an excuse to pursue an authoritarian clamp-down on free speech from the rival platform of the pulpit.

This issue of jurisdiction has been marginal to the debate in Jordan. On the one hand, this is because the Islamic religious establishment is largely aligned with the regime. Most prominent Sheikhs are employed by the Ministry of Islamic Endowments, the Fatwa Department (headed by Jordan's Grand Mufti), the Shari'a court system or public Shari'a colleges. In Jordan it was therefore these Sheikhs themselves who were involved in making and promulgating government policy. All major Islamic institutions at the national level were created by the Hashemite monarchy or with its sponsorship, and they represent the harmonised vision encapsulated in Jordan's official motto: 'God, country, king'.

On the other hand, Jordan's mosques are generally not the locus of religious authority, civil society or political opposition. Their closure does not significantly threaten any important individuals or groups. In this, Jordan differs from countries in which mosque-madrasa networks provide the institutional home for various Islamic authorities and Islamist organisations.

The Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups do have a strong role in social and political life, but ever since the 1980s they have gradually been pushed out of mosques and national religious institutions, finding other spaces in which to mobilise. Salafi movements have a somewhat greater presence in Jordanian mosques, partly due to government efforts to promote quietist Salafism as a rival to the Brotherhood's more activist politics, but this current has also fallen out of favour under the 'war on terror' policies of the past two decades.

Nor is the mosque pulpit a rival platform for public speech, at least not nearly to the same extent in Jordan as in many other countries. Imams and other preachers are recruited and trained by the Ministry of Islamic Endowments, so risk dismissal or even



a permanent ban. A number of preachers were sacked last year for using the pulpit to support school teachers' strikes.

Over the past six years, the ministry has also implemented a 'unified Friday sermon', mandating the topics to be covered by preachers each week. The move in March 2020 to broadcasting a single sermon – given by the minister during prayers at the King Hussein Mosque – was therefore a relatively small additional step.

Still, some Jordanians did object, proposing instead that preachers be allowed to give their own takes on the 'unified' sermon to the neighbourhood via mosque loudspeakers. As it stands, these loudspeakers are only supposed to be used to amplify a 'unified' call to prayer issued on national radio.



Friday prayers broadcast on national television from the King Hussein Mosque during the coronavirus lockdown in April 2020, showing public officials wearing masks and observing the rules on social distancing. (Credit: Alex Henley).

Nevertheless, there has been opposition to the government line on lockdown. While recent surveys suggest higher levels of trust in official religious institutions among Jordanians than most other Muslim populations, some remain suspicious both of regime-aligned Sheikhs and of the Hashemite monarchy's professed role as defender of the faith. Resorting to social media, they argue that the enforced closure of mosques is merely the latest phase in a policy of creeping secularisation, intended to alienate pious Jordanians from their religion. While it is difficult to generalise about public debate on social media, such opposition was taken seriously enough for the Grand Mufti and Minister of Islamic Endowments to respond with a series of statements condemning unofficial fatwas (Islamic pronouncements). Such rogue fatwas,

they say, 'represent only one opinion that may not be appropriate to the reality in which we live'. They emphasise official Sheikhs' specialised knowledge both of Islamic sources and of the circumstances faced by the country, as well as stressing the need for national unity, 'unifying opinion' and 'closing ranks' in the face of a common threat.

### Locating religion in private practice and public symbol

Islam in Jordan seems, on the face of it, to be a very public affair. Mosques dominate every neighbourhood; turbaned Sheikhs sit in government offices and have their own shows on national TV and radio; Shari'a courts govern family life; and religious education is a core part of the school curriculum. The royal family regularly underscores their descent from the Prophet Muhammad and historic roles as protectors first of Mecca and now of Jerusalem. During the lockdown, the Minister of Islamic Endowments led televised prayers at the King Hussein Mosque.

Yet these public representations often serve a regulating function, standing as unifying outward symbols of an Islam that is primarily located in the private sphere of home, family, women and children. The king is presented with his wife and children as a model of the Muslim family unit, the otherwise invisible pillar of Jordan's Arab-Islamic nationalism. Official Sheikhs administer a clearly circumscribed religious sector, promoting Islamic family values and containing any encroachments of dangerous religious opinions into the public realm. A turbaned minister is shown praying on TV not as imam of the nation but simply, he says, 'to preserve the ritual'.

If Friday prayers are understood as a symbolic ritual that can meaningfully be maintained by a handful of officials on behalf of ten million citizens, then maybe it is no wonder that Jordan's mosques could be closed during peak time without causing too much upset. Of course, Ramadan in lockdown is not much fun wherever you are, but perhaps Jordan is a context in which Muslims are less reliant on the mosque to find religion.



Facebook livestream of Friday prayers at the King Hussein Mosque in April 2020, showing audience responses in the form of emojis and likes. (Credit: Alex Henley).

## Searching for the value of moderation with Jordan's Muslims

### Geoffrey Hughes (University of Exeter)

It is the summer of 2019 and I am in the midst of my CBRL-funded research on the value of 'moderation' in contemporary Jordan. I have made my way to Amman's old downtown, which is well-known for its lively trade in books. The sellers have got to know me over previous weeks as both a customer and an enthusiastic conversation partner. I beg off generous offers of tea as one of my favourite interlocutors (who I will call Ahmed) sets out his newest wares. Our conversation weaves between the events of the day (both foreign and domestic) and longstanding theological debates as he shows me what he has found since our last meeting.

With some pride, Ahmed hands me a recent acquisition that was printed in Germany: an intellectual history of the concept of 'adl entitled *arba'un hadithan fi 'adl* (Forty Hadiths on Justice) by Dr Samir Katani. Today, the word 'adl has come to be synonymous with 'justice'—a *crie de coeur* of protesters in city squares and a common component in the names of modern political parties of all stripes. Yet the importance of the book for my research on moderation is immediately apparent to me since 'adl shares a root with one of the most common words for 'moderation' in Arabic: 'itidal.

These words have undergone subtle but important shifts in meaning over the past thousand-plus years. While they have always retained their most literal senses of 'straightness' and 'balance', they have increasingly taken on ethical, moral, then administrative dimensions that weave together the personal and the political. Katani argues that this is most obvious in the 'mirrors for princes' genre that would later influence European statecraft, according to which a just ruler must first manage himself, then his household, and ultimately his whole realm.



The ever-mutating meanings of these words as they move freely across national frontiers and domains of experience strike at the heart of my research: if extremism is a hotly contested term, what of moderation? What does it mean to different groups living in the contemporary Muslim world to be moderate and how do they argue and reason about the diverging views present within the Islamic tradition?

### Why study moderation?

As interest in the Middle East has become increasingly militarised and geostrategic in nature in recent years, the concepts of 'extremism' and 'moderation' have become ubiquitous in both talk about the region and in the region itself. For outside observers, understanding political and theological debates in the Middle East has increasingly come to hinge on differentiating the 'moderates' from the 'extremists.' Similarly, Arabic-language political and theological discourse is now liberally peppered with talk of tatarifa [extremism] and 'itidal or wasitiyya [moderation]. Especially since the September 11 terror attacks of 2001, Jordan's King Abdullah II has sought to put his kingdom at the forefront of efforts to organise a 'moderate' ideological response to what he termed in his Amman Message of 2004 'extremism'. Moreover, through training initiatives, mass media, and other educational outreach efforts, the Jordanian government has sought to promote moderation in cooperation with allied governments like Britain, Germany and the US, and a whole host of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).



Figure 1: A book stall in Amman's Old Downtown. (Credit: Geoffrey Hughes).

Yet while the concept of extremism has been hotly contested and subject to intensive focus, moderation has largely avoided such sweeping attention. As the political scientist Jillian Schwedler (2011) has shown at length, the notion of moderation is often taken to be self-evident when Western commentators discuss politics in the Muslim world, despite the fact that they often use the term in mutually incompatible ways. And if the concept of moderation has come in for more thoughtful and careful study among Muslims, this has not led to any clear consensus there either.

As governments and INGOs continue to invest in countering violent extremism and workshops and trainings on moderation proliferate around the globe, it is increasingly urgent that those involved have some confidence that they are

talking about the same thing. This is all the more essential to the degree that those committed to political Islam, Anglo-American style liberal democracy and everything in between all feel confident that they in fact embody moderation. If different intellectual traditions are to be sutured together, then there will need to be more open debate about the gaps as well as the overlaps. While I encountered plenty of cynicism about the abuses to which the concept of moderation might be subject, every single one of the hundreds of people I spoke with about my research agreed that moderation was a good thing and an essential aspect of Islam.

### Clarifying our terms

Arabic language equivalents for moderation share with their English language counterparts the typical conceptual creep that follows the abstraction of a more concrete idea. I have already mentioned how one common contemporary synonym for the English word 'moderation' emerged from the idea of 'straightness' or 'balance', but the other common contemporary synonym, wasitiyya, shares with its English counterpart the notion of being in the middle. To take a now oft-repeated verse from the Qur'an (2:143) that is commonly cited as scriptural grounding for modern notions of Islamic moderation: ja'alnakum ummatan wasatan.



Figure 2: Many booksellers offer a fully globalised marketplace of ideas, from Che Guevara to Steve Jobs and Islamic Eschatology. (Credit: Geoffrey Hughes).

At its most concrete, this means that 'we created you a middling people' or 'a people of the middle [way]'. Yet the popular Sahih International translation translates it as 'a just people' while other common English language translations translate the words as 'just', 'justly balanced' and 'upright'. Suffice to say, though, that there is something relatively consistent here despite the shifting vocabulary and that vocabulary's shifting meanings. Some of my interlocutors even saw moderation as predating Islam, sometimes directly tying it to Aristotelean virtue ethics' doctrine of the mean, according to which all good behavior is a balance or mid-point between deficiency and excess (a suspicion I shared but was often weary of bringing up first).

The idea of mapping morality onto such spatial metaphors finds further precedence in the rise of a distinctly Sunni Islam and its various deviations. In fact, past schisms were a constant touchstone in conversations with interlocutors like Ahmed. Like many I spoke with, he followed Jordan's King Abdullah in denouncing the so-called 'Islamic State' (ISIS) as modern day Kharijites. In doing so, research participants likened the group to the zealots who first supported the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law Ali in his claim to the Caliphate during Islam's first fitna, or civil war, but ultimately assassinated

him. Similarly, with the Mu'tazilites (a group influenced by Greek philosophy known as 'those who withdraw'), this sense of 'exiting' or 'withdrawing' from the larger Islamic community has been a recurring theme in the history of Islamic political and theological debates.





### A modern twist on a classic tension

Before I began my research, I had expected a certain amount of snide intimation that I was just some clueless American hopelessly trapped in a fundamentally Western set of problematics – in fact, I probably deserved far more of that than I received. Instead, most people seemed to think it was only natural that a Westerner interested in moderation would study Islam. Rather,



Figure 3: Alongside more orthodox spiritual support, there is also a brisk trade in protective charms. [Credit: Geoffrey Hughes].



Figure 4: Men gather for Friday prayers at the Al-Hussein Mosque in Amman. [Credit: Geoffrey Hughes].

the more cynical commentators pointed to something more subtle and recent as the true wellspring of the discourse of moderation that I had identified: the Society of Muslim Brothers.

Long before the ‘war on terror’, ISIS, Al Qaeda and the like became household names in the West, there was the Muslim Brotherhood splinter group ‘The Society of Muslims’, known by detractors as *takfir wa hijra* or ‘excommunication and retreat from the world’. The group became infamous for encouraging young people to elope and live on the margins of society, eventually reaching even wider notoriety with their assassination of a former head of Egypt’s Ministry of Religious Endowments in 1977. Somewhat horrified by the group’s actions, leading lights of the Brotherhood in Jordan and elsewhere would increasingly develop a new language of moderation to police the boundaries of acceptable Islam at a time of both rapid growth and increasing state repression.

As Yusef Qaradawi would write in the introduction to his classic 1987 book *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism*, ‘I shall not indulge here in discussing the recent events which... involved serious and bloody confrontation between the youth and the authorities.’ Attributing his reticence both to his desire to not further inflame the matter but also to a desire to ‘cater to the whole Muslim Ummah’ (nation), he sought to allay suspicions that the then current talk of moderation was a scheme by governments to crush the nascent Islamic awakening. In fact, he seems to have been so successful that the concept of moderation was cited by several of my more liberal interlocutors as one that has been wielded to great effect by the Muslim Brotherhood – both to rein in their own supporters but also to paint their opponents as either unreasonably Western (rejectionists) or mired in religious obscurantism (extremists).

As this current iteration of polemics around the concept of moderation has progressed, however, it has taken on all manner of connotations, from more easily recognisable qualities of aggression, violence, anger, and a lack of conviviality to more surprising ones. For instance, I was surprised by how consistently research participants referenced beards, with the seventh century Arabian sartorial preferences of the Salafi movement a particular target of scorn. This could lead to amusing results, however. For instance, a well-travelled friend, who I will call Tariq, reported greatly enjoying the consternation his ‘hipster’ beard was causing his more parochial Jordanian family and employers upon his return from the United Arab Emirates. While his mother had repeatedly urged him to get rid of it for the sake of the family reputation he reported, ‘I’m still having fun with it.’

### Concluding thoughts on moderation

The debates around moderation that continue to rage in contemporary Jordan have their own idiosyncrasies, but they also speak to more enduring tensions in human affairs, perhaps most notably the relationship between the individual and society. My Jordanian interlocutors like Ahmed and Tariq draw freely from globally circulating discourses but also feel comfortable reaching deeply into their own traditions, finding inspiration in Islamic debates from long ago as well as the demands of the current moment. The concept of moderation acknowledges all of these inherent tensions between old and new, between individual desire and the needs of the group and between localism and universalism. At the same time, moderation need not resolve any of these tensions and it is perfectly easy for people with radically different worldviews to acknowledge these tensions while continuing to disagree on much else. Rather than offering a single, supposedly ‘correct’, view of moderation, I hope I have shown some of the animating dynamics that bring people from diverse walks of life back, again and again, to the value of moderation.

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## Searching for evidence of past water availability in the eastern Badia

Matt Jones (University of Nottingham)



Sampling the *qa* sediments downstream of the Wisad Pools. (Credit: Matt Jones).

People's need for water, directly and for agriculture, is a topic that is regularly discussed in present day Jordan, with a current reliance on groundwater resources, often pumped significant distances to major occupation centres such as Amman.

Water availability has likely been an important factor for enabling human occupation and survival in the region for millennia. In the eastern Badia, today's dryland environments make this requirement for water clear, but also raise interesting questions about how past societies, evidence for whom can be found across the area, maintained themselves without the technological possibilities of bringing water from substantial depths underground.

This is one of the foci of the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project (EBAP), directed by Gary Rollefson, Yorke Rowan and Alex Wasse, and the focus of our work kindly funded by a CBRL team-based award. The wider project is excavating structures at two sites, Wisad Pools and the Wadi Qataffi in south east Jordan. The work aimed to provide an environmental context for the archaeology, with a particular objective to reconstruct past levels of water availability.

This is a problem that needs multiple approaches to solve in environments like the *badia*. Natural archives, such as lake sediments and speleothems (cave carbonate deposits), that can produce continuous time series of past climatic and environmental conditions, and that have provided important similar information elsewhere in southwest Asia, do not exist in the *badia*, so alternative approaches to environmental reconstruction have to be taken. The amount of previous environmental research in this part of the region is also limited such that we have been starting from scratch with many of our investigations away from the archaeological sites themselves.

At both sites there are basins which, although in the present day do not contain lakes, hold water for small periods of the year following winter rains that collect in the *qa* (the local name for playa, or dry lake basins). Sometimes water from these rains has travelled substantial distances through the normally dry wadi systems. These basins do contain sediment and as part of our work we have been dating these for the first time and evaluating their potential to provide a palaeoenvironmental story.

The material filling the basins has changed little over time, but we have found pollen preserved within it that suggests the regional environments have changed. Pollen transport and preservation to such basins is complicated, such that any results will have to be interpreted carefully. But this could be an important finding from our initial analyses given that vegetation in general could play an important part in fully understanding how the environments of the badia have changed in time.

The *qa* basins contain up to three metres of sediment, and this in itself is an interesting observation in understanding landscape change. Our initial dating of the sediments suggests there was substantially less sediment in the basins during the early-mid Holocene (6,000-9,000 years ago) when the archaeological sites were being used.



This leads to a number of follow-on questions: where did the material that now fills the basins come from; were the basins empty before this sediment arrived, and if so for how long; and where did any previous sediment go? On the other hand, if the basins contained less sediment in the past could they have held more water, and if they could, would climatic conditions have allowed that water to stay in the basins for longer than it does today?

This is clearly one of the key questions in understanding past water availability at the site. Understanding climatic conditions for the early-mid Holocene period for the eastern *badia* is complicated with the lack of the natural climatic archives. Drawing conclusions on this from records elsewhere in the region is also not straightforward as climatic gradients are likely to have existed then, as they do now, even though they may well have been different to the present day. Higher rainfall has been suggested for this period from Turkey and North Africa, but due to changes in different climate systems, and to the south east Indian monsoon dynamics which may have also impacted the *badia* climate. How these three systems interacted, if at all, in the early Holocene is still unknown.

Given all this we have to take a broader environmental approach to understanding water availability at our study sites, trying to build a picture that combines the interconnected variables of climate, vegetation and sediment. The relationship between these variables is also important; more rainfall, for example, could lead to potentially more vegetation growth, but only if there is a landscape sufficiently stable for those plants to put down roots. The more roots, the more stable the landscape can be, and the more water it can hold, leading to more vegetation growth, and so on.

To understand these interactions in the past, and link water availability with people, we are collating as much data as we can from our fieldwork including the age and depth of the *qa* sediments, the shape of the drainage channels, and the hints of regional vegetation available for the pollen and the plant remains from the archaeological excavations, and putting it all into models. These, for now, will allow us to create projections of water availability based on our new data, and different scenarios for climate at the time. As the models are run, and more data collected, we can narrow down the possible scenarios for the environment of the region in the early-mid Holocene, and better understand how people used this landscape to support themselves.

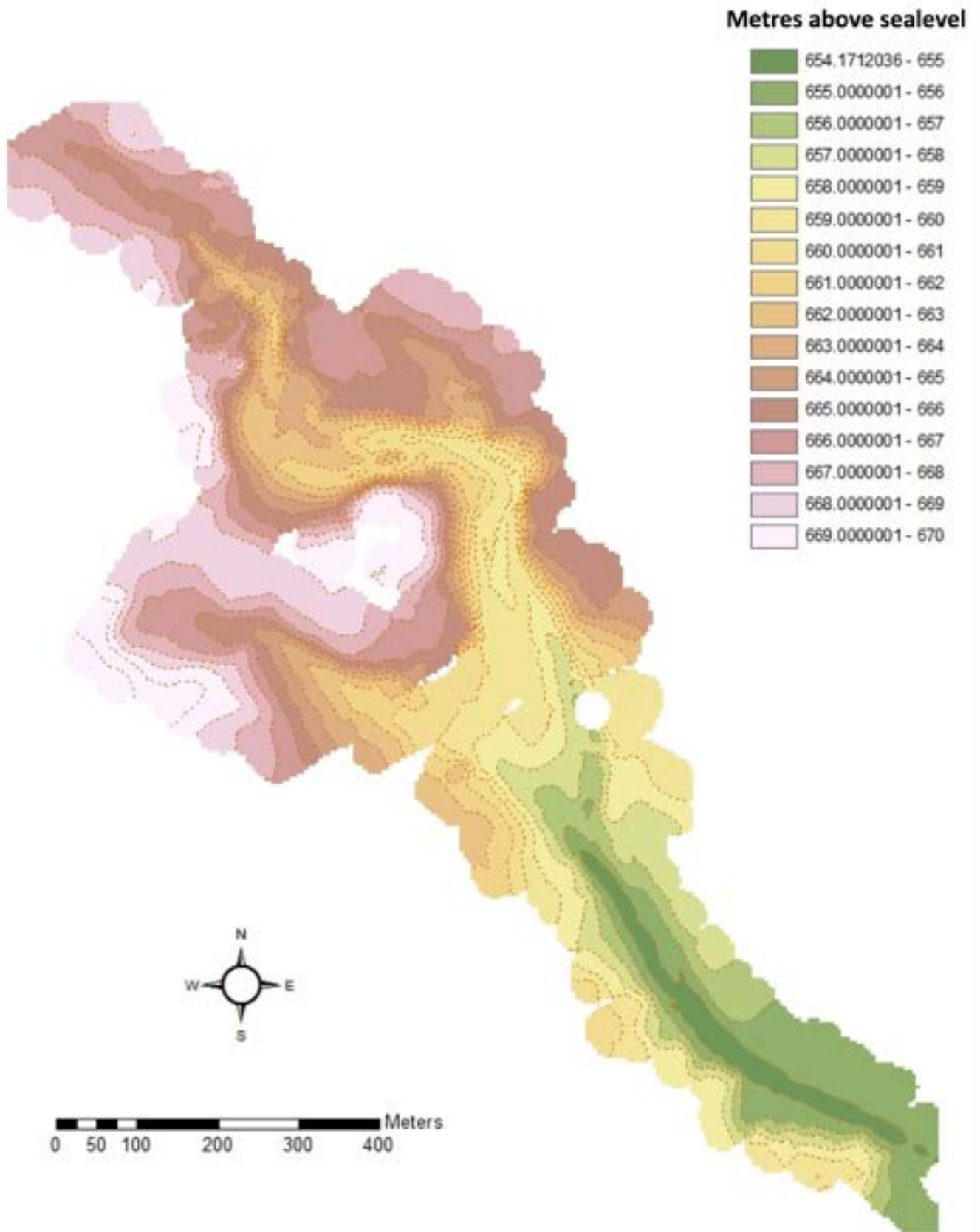
My thanks to the Director General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and Department Representative Wesam Esaid, the EBAP directors and field teams I have worked with at these sites.

*For further reading on the challenges of reconstructing water availability in the region please see the open access paper: 20,000 years of societal vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in southwest Asia in WIREs Water.*



*Looking across the Wadi Qataffi, with the project camp in view. (Credit: Matt Jones).*





Topographic map of the Wisad Pools. (Credit: Matt Jones).



## Standard Oil in the Levant, 1864-1928

**Andrew Patrick (Tennessee State University)**

In 1913, three inexperienced oil prospectors, employed by the Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY), clandestinely wandered Palestine looking for signs of subsurface petroleum.

Somewhere south of Hebron/Al Khalil, the chief of the crew, who also happened to be the least enthusiastic traveller, saw a range of hills further south and said, "That's where we will begin drilling operations." Afterwards, the chief raced back to his comfortable accommodation in Jerusalem and left his two underlings to explore these hills. The amateurish nature of his pronouncement yielded predictable results. SOCONY found no oil in the hills around Kurnub/Mamshit, nor did it find any elsewhere in Palestine.

This episode was one of Standard Oil's initial explorations for petroleum in the Middle East. It was not, however, the start of the company's presence in the region. American oil companies, dominated by Standard Oil, had been selling petroleum products in the Ottoman lands for about 50 years by 1913. This part of Standard Oil's history remains little studied and there are two main reasons for this. First, oil historians generally study the battle for global oil resources and spend less time on the competition for oil markets. Second, the ExxonMobil Historical Collection at the University of Texas, which contains papers from its predecessor Standard Oil, has only minimal records on this era. Historians who want to study this topic are left with United States (US) government documents, occasional memoirs, newspaper reports, and probably more that has yet to be found in Middle Eastern archives.

I have been gathering materials on this topic for several years. This article is a preview of my research and provides a narrative of Standard Oil's first phase of development in the Middle East, with a focus on the Levant.

### American oil enters the Levant, then falters

In the 1860s, there was a glut of oil in the US and American companies began scouting the globe for new markets. According to State Department documents, American kerosene started arriving in the Ottoman lands in 1865 and its economic impact was swift. It quickly overtook olive oil as the primary lighting fuel in the region because, according to the US consul at Beirut, "of its superior quality and cheapness."

By 1871, the consul in Palestine reported that "Petroleum has to a great extent superseded olive oil for illuminating purposes," and the same was conveyed from Aleppo. In 1872, the consul in Beirut proudly reported that "American oil is burned in the lamps which are suspended before and over the tomb of Mohammed at Mecca," apparently unaware that Muhammad is buried at Medina. He also noted that much more olive oil had become available for export because the local market for it as an illuminant had collapsed.

Standard Oil, which formed in 1870, dominated the Levantine market but soon had rivals. Competitively priced petroleum from the Galician fields in the Austro-Hungarian Empire arrived in Ottoman ports during the 1870s but it did not dislodge the pre-eminence of American oil. In the 1880s, Russian oil provided a stiffer challenge when it arrived from the nearby fields of Baku in the middle of the decade. The Russian companies employed some rather comically brazen marketing, with their packaging copying "every detail of the prominent American brands" including "placing English labels on them," according to one US consul. It was also priced lower than its American rival and quickly took over the Ottoman market. In 1886, for example, the US consul at Damascus noted that the demand for American oil subsided because Russian petroleum was about 20 per cent cheaper and that it was of comparable quality to the American product, giving off "a better light," despite having "a little more offensive smell."

By the late 1880s, Standard Oil's product represented at best 15 per cent of imported petroleum in ports around the Ottoman Empire. In Beirut, for example, Standard Oil had imported nearly 2,000,000 gallons of oil in 1883. This dropped to 116,000 gallons by 1893. The turnaround was so rapid that a Standard Oil executive sought help from the State Department in 1886, lamenting that US petroleum was being "unfairly menaced" in the region by the commercial practices of Russian interests. It was clear that the Nobels and the Rothschilds, who had major holdings in the Russian oil industry, were now beating Standard Oil at its own game.

### Standard Oil redoubles its efforts

In the early years of the 20th century, Standard Oil's sales remained sluggish in the empire. In Aleppo, for example, American oil accounted for about nine per cent of total sales in 1912, with Russian oil taking up 42 per cent of the market and German-backed Romanian oil taking 48 per cent. Standard Oil was also facing prosecution by the US government in this era and was eventually ordered to divide into many companies in 1911. After this split, SOCONY and Vacuum Oil, another Standard Oil subsidiary which was dominating the Egyptian market, both had oil for sale in the Levant.

Despite their lack of success in the Ottoman market, Standard Oil offshoots continued to eye the Ottoman lands for opportunities. Around 1911, SOCONY and Vacuum started bolstering their distribution efforts in the region. On the eve of the First World War,



*Southern Palestine, a scene at Kurnub. (Credit: American Colony [Jerusalem]).*



*A Jerusalem porter carrying fifty empty petrol tins on his back. [Between 1914 and 1918]. (Retrieved from the Library of Congress).*

Ayyub, Suleiman Bey Nassif, and Ismail al-Husseini). It also surveyed lands in the Yarmouk River valley, which had many bituminous surface rocks. In the summer of 1914, drilling equipment for SOCONY's Palestine holding was on its way to the region and the company had contracted locals to build a road to its land. With the outbreak of the war, the ships carrying the equipment stopped in Alexandria and the gear stayed there throughout the war. In autumn 1914, Standard Oil was in varying states of exploration and negotiation for prospecting rights and concessions throughout the Ottoman Empire. It did its best not to let the war stall progress.

### **Wartime activities**

As the Ottomans entered the war in late October 1914, SOCONY continued negotiating for prospecting permits and concessions. In March 1915, it applied for permits in the Yarmouk River valley and in October of the same year, SOCONY and Ottoman officials toured the region north of Damascus (the villages of Maaraba, Al Tall, Mneen, and Halbun), talking to local mukhtars (village chiefs) and determining whose permission they needed to begin prospecting. Throughout 1915, and even into 1916, it expanded its Palestine holdings by acquiring permits for most of Palestine south of Jerusalem, west of the Dead Sea, and north of the Negev desert.

Attempts to gather more holdings ended in 1916, with a Standard Oil official noting that prospecting and further permitting were finally "interrupted by the war." It is remarkable that these efforts carried on as long as they did.

Standard Oil officials in the Ottoman lands had an eventful war beyond these activities. In the wake of the international banking system's collapse, they became an impromptu bank, supplying emergency funds to Zionist colonies and American missionary establishments. At the end of the war, several incidents concerning oil sources caused great acrimony, with Standard Oil and the American diplomatic corps coming into confrontation with the British and French, who were now occupiers of large parts of the region. In August 1918, for example, British officials angered SOCONY when they forced Nassif and al-Husseini to show them the maps of their Palestine plots. SOCONY leaders then sent geologists to resume surveying their Palestine concessions in the late summer of 1919, but the British denied them access to the land. After a protracted diplomatic squabble, the British government finally allowed Standard Oil to do a full survey in 1922.

The potential oil of Mosul caused the rivalry between Royal Dutch Shell, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and Jersey Standard (the largest Standard Oil offshoot) to intensify and then de-escalate when they agreed that sharing the oil of the ex-Ottoman lands would be more profitable than battling over it. This led to the famed Red Line Agreement of 1928, which created an international oil cartel that dominated the Middle East and cemented the presence of American oil companies in the region.

### **Conclusion**

Sources for Standard Oil's first phase of business development in the Middle East remain scant, but I think the basic narrative is becoming clear. Its pre-Red Line time in the region was characterised by 50 years of success, failure, expensive recommitment, and then cartelisation.

When the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, the region lost its most coherent and powerful advocate for getting at least semi-fair deals from foreign companies. The empire was replaced with either new and generally weak governments or occupying powers intent on dominating the region's resources to the detriment of the local population. Because Standard Oil had been in the region prior to this, it had experience in local diplomacy and markets. It also had claims to land within the empire and people with experience in these lands. Instead of being shut out of the region's oil, it was willing to battle the British and French governments, along with Royal Dutch Shell and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, to maintain its presence.

The cartelisation of Middle Eastern oil left little room for sharing profits with local governments, at least until after World War II. Although the rest of this story is well known, studying the era in which oil companies battled for the Ottoman market illuminates the origins of the international oil industry's entry into the Middle East.





## Air Photography at Tell Iktanu

### Kay Prag (Honorary Academic Fellow, Manchester Museum)

In 1964 I was just starting out on my doctoral thesis, studying the Intermediate Bronze Age (IBA) period of the Levant (also known as the Early Bronze IV). At that time, my priority was to excavate a settlement site of the later third millennium in Jordan. I was keen to gather some much-needed stratigraphic information, as so much of the evidence at that time derived from the excavation of cemeteries. But first I had to find a suitable site.

To do this, I used Nelson Glueck's survey from the 1930s and 1940s to identify possibilities (Glueck 1951). Then in 1965, as the Senior Scholar of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, I visited many of the then-known IBA sites in Transjordan (Prag 1974). This eventually led me to a site which seemed ideal: Tell Iktanu. Located in the south-eastern Jordan Valley, Glueck had visited this site rather hurriedly in the final stages of his work. It had, however, been well described by Mallon back in the 1920s (Mallon 1929).

Iktanu had many advantages. It was accessible, and potentially inexpensive to excavate as the remains of settlement walls were clearly visible on the surface. Moreover, the copious pottery on the surface all dated to the IBA, and, I presumed, would date the walls to that period. The only worry was whether the site would prove to be too shallow for a well-preserved stratigraphic sequence. With the help of Basil Hennessy, then Director of the Jerusalem school, and the generosity of the Palestine Exploration Fund, I raised sufficient funding for a small excavation. This took place in April–May 1966, with the kind permission of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The archaeologist Crystal Bennett most generously let me use her cottage at Jericho as a base for the work. It was in a lovely setting in the Jericho oasis, and just a 20-minute drive from Iktanu by the Abdullah Bridge over the Jordan River.

### The importance of a landscape perspective

Thanks to Glueck's survey, by the time I visited Iktanu I had already acquired an extensive knowledge of the landscape setting of IBA sites, and what this might tell us about the economy and choices of the people who had lived there. For example – was it a defensible location, or an open setting? From this, you can infer whether they felt the need for security. The nature of land exploitation is also of interest: was there cultivable land in the vicinity of the site, or was the land only fit for pasture? Another crucial aspect was whether the water source was seasonal or perennial. Many sites, located along river valleys, emphasised pastoralism. So how did Iktanu fit into this picture?

Iktanu lies in an area of great biodiversity. It is a very complex area, climatically, geologically, and ecologically. It has warm winters with low rainfall, and very hot, dry summers, but is fed by perennial and seasonal streams. Geologically there are the limestones and sandstones exposed on the edge of the Rift Valley, and the lacustrine deposits of the ancient Dead Sea. Volcanic and seismic activity left behind basalt flows and bitumen. Millennia of erosion left deep deposits of rich alluvium as well as clay, gravels, conglomerates and travertines. In the modern era this landscape provided both for agriculture and for patterns of pastoral transhumance.

Excavation confirmed the importance of the pastoralism to the economy of ancient Iktanu, as illustrated by the animal bone recovered from the site, which told us that the inhabitants kept herds of sheep, goats and cattle. However, the location of Iktanu on the edge of the fertile sedimentary soils of the Jordan Valley also suggested it would suit cultivation; this is an area of low rainfall, so it probably would have required irrigation. Our discoveries of silos, many querns and mortars, and the type of plant remains recovered from the site all worked together to support our suspicions that agricultural activity was important to the Bronze Age economy. The site had no major defences, and the focus was on a subsistence economy. All this serves to remind us how crucial the placement of a site in its surrounding landscape is to a society. The surrounding land was, after all, the basis of their subsistence. To see how the situation at Iktanu related to contemporary IBA settlements, see Prag 2014.

### Landscapes from the air

While excavation gives us so much detail about the activities on a site, air photography is an important tool in the wider study of its landscape and location. At Iktanu, thanks to David Kennedy and the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre, we were fortunate in having access to a useful set of aerial photographs, known as the Hunting Series.

Commissioned in 1953, these provided views of the Jordanian landscape at a time before the rapid developments of the second half of the 20th century had taken place (Kennedy 2004). This series lets us identify the irrigated field systems that were then in use, suggesting how more ancient systems might have worked, using gravity flow. In September/October 1995, I used these photographs to do some 'ground testing' of sites in the region of Iktanu. Together with Phillip Freeman, I conducted a small field survey to check on their nature and date and explore their possible relationship to ancient Iktanu.

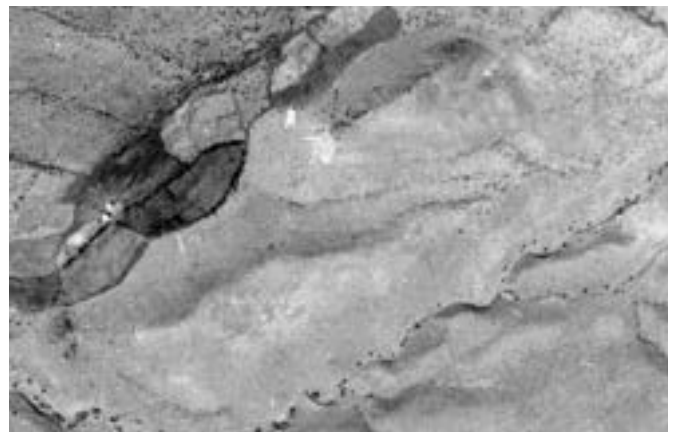


Fig. 1. Tell Iktanu from slightly south. Detail from Hunting Air Photograph 46.010, showing the two tells before the cutting of the Dead Sea Highway, and adjacent irrigated fields to the west. [Credit: the Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East (APAAME)].



Kay Prag with a Royal Jordanian Airforce helicopter, 1990.

Today much of the landscape is covered by polythene tunnels and the spread of buildings. The advent of the JCB and vast modern gravel quarrying has also had a significant impact on the ancient remains.

In the 1989 season at Iktanu we tried using a kite for overhead photos, but failed dismally, as the normal west winds were too light to keep the camera in the air, and the eastern gales too strong. Then, in the 1990 season, thanks to the Department of Antiquities and the Royal Jordanian Air Force, and with the greatly appreciated help of Alison McQuitty (then Director of the British Institute of Archaeology and History in Amman), I had the opportunity to take a relatively low-level series of air photographs of Iktanu. These have provided much more detail of the site itself and showed the changes which had taken place in the intervening 37 years since the Hunting Series of aerial photographs. They proved invaluable, adding to

information from our ground survey by revealing additional walls and elements of the layout that were not clearly visible from ground level.

I was able to use one additional resource. In 1966, I was told that Dr George E. Mendenhall at the American School in Jerusalem (now the Albright Institute) was planning a project of infra-red air photographs of some Jordanian sites. When asked, he kindly agreed to include Iktanu in his work. He subsequently sent me a rather fuzzy black and white print, which appeared to show cabins belonging to the men working on the construction of the then-new Dead Sea Highway.

During our more recent work at the site, I began to wonder if some of the damage to the ancient walls at Iktanu could be connected to the siting of these cabins, but to my dismay was unable to find the print in question. So, in 2015, I wrote to Dr Mendenhall to see if he could provide another copy — but received no reply. Sometime later I heard the sad news that he had passed away the following year. I had thought the information lost to me — but with the help of Barbara Porter at the American Centre of Oriental Research and Dr David Graf in Miami, and the kindness and generosity of Professor Gary A. Herion and Dr Mendenhall's family, I have recently received three very fine high-level photographs of the site. It turns out these were taken during the first season of excavation in 1966, for in them I can see my trenches, site tent and Land Rover, but no trace of the construction workers' cabins on the site.

So now I am in the fortunate position of having *three* series of air photographs of Iktanu to work with, dating from 1953, 1966 and 1990. Only my own 1990 series of photographs is at sufficiently low level to show many of the ancient walls. Their visibility was a matter of luck, for although we could choose the time of day, the date of the flight had to be fixed in advance, and of course the weather was completely out of our hands. We had hoped that the sunrise would provide some shadow or at least colour definition for the low walls crossing the site, but the early morning was cloudy, scuppering our plans. It was thanks to the experience of the Jordanian pilot that we were able to compensate for this by flying at a usefully low height.

The 1953 series shows the site before the Dead Sea Highway was built, the 1966 images show the site at the time of the first excavation, when the highway was being cut through between the two hills, and the 1990 shots show the extent of modern disturbance and change. All three series are valuable for showing changes in the agricultural exploitation of the area, in particular the layout of the ancient field systems. These may well date back to at least the Iron Age, although I suspect the farmers of Iktanu were already using crop irrigation as far back as the mid- to late-fourth millennium BC, when the site was first occupied.

In conclusion, what have I learnt from my ground and air investigations of Iktanu? While excavation gives us essential information about a site, and the people who lived there, it is still a restricted view. It is only when you widen your perspective, to consider how a site functioned within its surrounding landscape, that you get to fully understand that site, in all its complexity.

### Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the late Dr Mendenhall, his family and academic colleagues for what proved to be quite a search through Dr Mendenhall's archive. I am also reminded of all the pleasure I have derived over the years from the friendships and co-operations between the various archaeological schools then in East Jerusalem (British, American, French, Spanish) and the many eminent scholars I met there — archaeologists, epigraphists, historians and theologians — who have added so much to our explorations of the very rich heritage of Jordan.

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*Low level view of the excavations and walls on the south hill at Iktanu, 1990. (Credit: Kay Prag).*



*Detail in 1966 showing the two hills at Tell Iktanu, from the south-east, with the new Dead Sea Highway running between the two. (Credit: Dr George E. Mendenhall).*





## Reinvigorating museum education in Jordan

**Robin Skeates (Durham University), Shatha Abu-Khafajah (Hashemite University) and Arwa Badran (Durham University)**

“The project is different from any other project we have seen, it is changing the way people are thinking about Jordanian museums. A lot of people are getting motivated, they saw hope and felt they had someone on their side working to improve practice, strategies and procedures in the sector.” Lena Bakkar (Director of Archaeological Sites Management Directorate, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan).

### Critical heritage

Heritage and heritage studies are becoming increasingly critical. On the one hand, scholars have developed a radical critique of professional heritage management practice and organisations, especially from a post-Western perspective. On the other hand, they are addressing critical issues facing the world today: ‘global challenges’ and ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ that include protecting cultural heritage, providing quality education (including an appreciation of cultural diversity), empowering women and girls, and strengthening worldwide partnerships.

From both perspectives, the future of heritage and related cultural identities throughout the Arab world is arguably under threat, because young people (from school-age children to university students) are increasingly alienated from their rich and diverse cultural patrimonies, and poorly engaged in learning about them through state-funded museums. In Jordan, this problem is particularly pressing, and matters not simply because of the value of this cultural resource to the tourist industry but also because public awareness is key to its sustainable protection.

### The spark that ignited a collaborative project

Back in 2018, Arwa Badran, who has been working and researching in and around the Jordanian heritage sector for over two decades, decided to tackle this problem. She approached Shatha Abu-Khafajah and Robin Skeates to lead a consortium of academics and heritage professionals based in Jordan and the UK, and to apply for a research and development grant offered by the Newton-Khalidi Fund, administered by the UK’s AHRC. Arwa’s ambitious idea, which our enthusiastic partners in Jordan enhanced, was to use the funding to reinvigorate Jordanian museum education, particularly for the benefit of local communities.

Shatha recognised this as a chance to expand both her own and her architecture students’ knowledge and experience of working with cultural heritage, and to capitalise on that to establish a sustainable approach to heritage management in Jordan. For Robin, who had read and written widely on museum and heritage studies, this was also an exciting opportunity to put theory into practice. We were fortunate to be awarded funding for a two-year project. CBRL, which is helping to publicise our work, has since granted our project formal affiliated status. We were also shortlisted for the Newton Prize 2020.

As a ‘development’ project, we have set ourselves five goals to help reinvigorate museum education in Jordan: to identify existing good practice for engaging young people in learning about the past through partnerships between museums, schools, and universities; to deliver a training programme on museum education for professionals and academics; to develop and evaluate a set of educational events, led by trained museum staff in collaboration with schools and universities; to engage young learners; to create and disseminate guidelines on museum education; and then to use these to advocate to policy makers the educational benefits of museums. In all of these, we have consciously placed Jordanian interests foremost.

### Researching museum education in Jordan

At the same time, our project is research-led. We are therefore using rigorous social science research methods, rarely used in museum studies in the Middle East, to gather new information on museum education in Jordan, with reference to three research questions.

(1) *What is good practice in using Jordanian museums to engage young people in learning about their pasts?*

The answers reveal the need to tackle some fundamental, deep-rooted problems in Jordan (and the wider Arab region): ranging from reworking displays to make them accessible to diverse learners, to establishing a dedicated educational space with hands-on learning activities in every museum.

(2) *What constitutes successful partnerships between museums, schools and universities?*

Here again, the answers might be regarded as relatively uncontentious and achievable: including museum staff building on relationships with educators, to demonstrate museums’ educational potential and resources.

(3) *How can this good practice be adopted, adapted and sustained in Jordan?*

This is where the answers present some thought-provoking, even controversial, challenges to Jordan’s top-down, bureaucratic tradition of decision-making, and some more Jordan-specific solutions: ranging from streamlining Antiquities Department approval procedures for making changes to museum displays and education programmes, through to establishing a Jordanian Museums Association, to represent and train museum professionals.

### Making a difference

Since its inception, our project has sought not simply to identify these problems and potential solutions, but also to demonstrate how they can be overcome and achieved in practice, using and adapting existing infrastructures. We have already begun to make a difference in Jordan, in the first year of our project, in four different areas.



### Training staff

Translating our research into good practice, we have helped to strengthen Jordanian museum institutions through staff training. We began, in July 2019, by providing an unprecedented four-day training programme in Jordan for museum staff on museum communication and education, hosted by four museums. 45 participants attended, from 20 cultural institutions across Jordan.

Our evaluation confirmed that trainees gained a range of benefits and, in follow-up evaluation three months on, most respondents confirmed they had implemented small changes in their museums as a consequence of the training. As one of our trainees wrote: "From the interactions of the WhatsApp group, I would say that the training triggered several initiatives, especially in the Department of Antiquities museums."



Training session led by Jihad Kafafi at Salt Historical Museum. (Credit: Learning from Multicultural Amman project).

Durham's Oriental Museum consequently adopted a more nurturing and holistic approach with schools and will promote it to other museums. On the other hand, our Jordanian trainees took away the powerful memory of witnessing a museum educator handing a group of five-year-olds a 4000-year-old Egyptian statue to examine, draw and describe (in liberating contrast to the 'do not touch' regulation that most museums are associated with).

### Building partnerships

Another essential building block has been the creation of successful and sustainable partnerships within the cultural sector, which includes but is not restricted to museums, heritage sites and libraries. Specifically, we have established an ever-expanding, informal and open network of professionals across Jordan, while also reaching out to schools, universities and government agencies.

Initially, we encountered numerous challenges to partnership working. Systemic inertia stems from perpetuating colonial-era museum governance structures, characterised by slow, bureaucratic, top-down decision-making, and from under-funding of state-run museums, combined with an economic dependency on foreign 'aid'. It has consequently been a cathartic experience for our participating heritage professionals to acknowledge these challenges, and a positive one to identify and experiment with four new forms of partnership working.

First, we have helped to develop partnerships between museums, with, for example, staff visiting and evaluating each other's museums and heritage sites, and sharing news via social media — building on contacts and friendships strengthened during our training programme.

Second, we have encouraged the development of partnerships between museums and education providers, with, for example, museum staff capitalising on personal relationships with teachers to explain how museum collections and displays can be used to support their teaching, and encouraging enthusiastic university students to visit and volunteer in museums.

Third, we have developed new kinds of partnerships working between Jordanian museum professionals and international experts, characterised by working in a context-specific manner, which places Jordanian interests foremost and adapts international standards pragmatically to local circumstances and solutions, and where partnership-building is a constant dynamic process.

### Education events

Our partner museums are now experimenting with delivering quality education events, for the benefit of schools and university groups.

The first took place at the Jordan Archaeological Museum in November 2019. This was planned and led by the museum's staff, supported by our project partners in Jordan, collaborating with school and university educators, and assisted by 30 architectural heritage students from the

More specifically, the training had a powerful impact on one trainee, as described by their colleague: "[S/he] went straight away to meet the activity coordinators of all three schools, obtained the school curricula and asked me to draft together a new programme of activities tied to curricula to propose to schools. [S/he] has got the preliminary approval".

Subsequently, in October 2019, we provided a wide-ranging and customised training programme in northeast England on museum education and research for 24 staff from 17 Jordanian Antiquities Department museums and private museums, over eight days. The benefits of this training were two-way. For example, our visiting Jordanian trainees noted that UK teaching on world cultures is too formal and underutilises archaeological collections;



Jordanian trainees visiting Durham Cathedral. (Credit: Learning from Multicultural Amman project).



Hashemite University (who have subsequently begun to think about extending their training in heritage institutions). The event enabled 30 11 to 12-year-old pupils from the local Balqis Primary School to participate in educational activities focused on Amman's citadel and its multicultural history.

Afterwards, their teacher wrote to us: "The best part of the museum visit is the great welcome and learning wonderful historical information using a simple approach. Pupils keep on asking us when are we going to visit the museum again." Similarly, one of the university students commented, "This experience was the most satisfying since I started learning architecture because I got to be an architect, a teacher, and a heritage expert at the same time, interacting with the pupils today widened my horizon. I want to do this again and do it better."



*Discussions between a Hashemite University student and pupils from Balqis Primary School about a statue of Tyche in the Amman Citadel Museum. (Credit: Learning from Multicultural Amman project).*

### Gender equality

Women, and their rights to employment and inheritance, continue to be marginalised in the complex political, cultural and religious context of Jordan. Our project is carefully negotiating these sensitivities, with an absolute commitment to practicing and promoting gender equality through our own work, and to empowering our female Jordanian project partners and participants, particularly as decision-makers. We have sought to provide opportunities for all of our participants, irrespective of gender or any other perceived differences, but what is particularly striking is the way in which so many of our women have selflessly used what leadership, influence and power they do have to help us achieve our shared goals.

### Conclusion



*Discussions led by project partners and chaired by Arwa Badran at the Jordan Museum. (Credit: Learning from Multicultural Amman project).*

Looking back and recalling what our partners have said to us, we are convinced that this project is changing the way Jordanian museum, heritage and library staff are thinking about their institutions and collections, with a new sense of motivation, hope and support in working to re-establish Jordanian museums as centres of culture, education and learning.

Key to our success is being inclusive and responsive to the heritage and education sector in Jordan: a process which began by listening to a wide range of people involved with museums, defining the problems faced by them, and then proposing context-specific solutions to these. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly impacted our work, notably with international travel restrictions and successive lockdowns in Jordan leading to the postponement of more museum education events.

Looking to the future, we now plan to support: additional training, with a new emphasis on digital technologies and skills (especially in the COVID-19 context, where digital access to museum collections has significant educational potential); a new career development protocol for museum staff (including museum educators) employed by the Department of Antiquities; and the creation of new educational resources, ranging from novel education spaces in museums to tailor-made online museum education activities. Our goal, however, remains the same: to engage and inspire young people in Jordan with their rich and diverse cultural heritage.

### Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of our project partners: Ross Wilkinson, Durham University Library and Collections; Maria Elena Ronza, Sela for Training and Protection of Cultural Heritage; Fatma Marii, University of Jordan; Lina Bakkar and Arwa Massadeh, Department of Antiquities; Mohammad Al-Qaisi, Jihad Kafafi and Falah Sharaiaah, Jordan Museum; Rasha Dababneh (children's author and museum learning specialist).



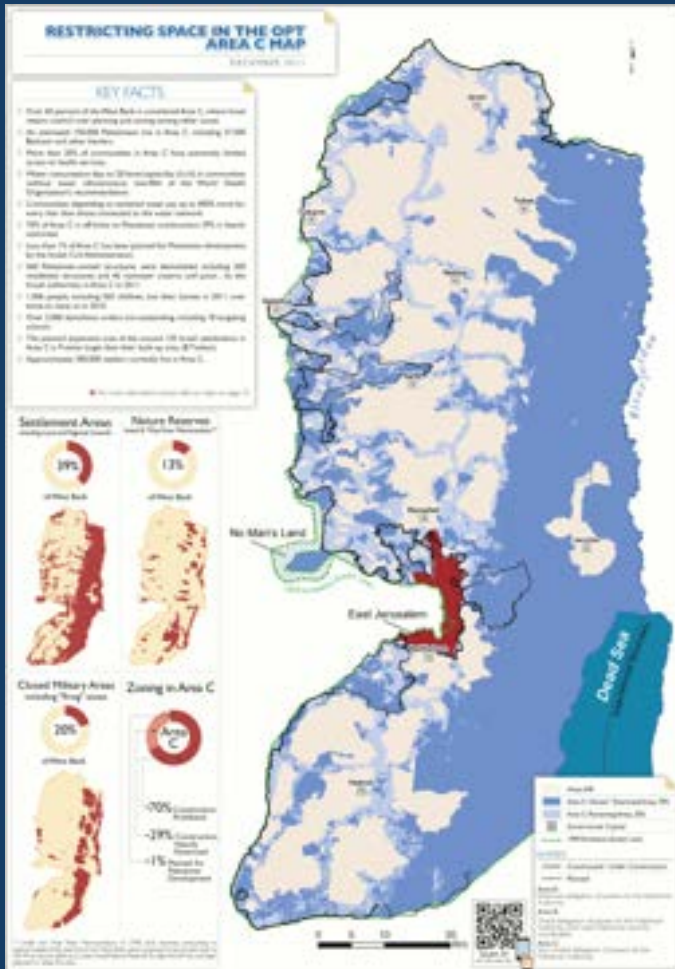


## CBRL activities and events 2020

### CBRL Amman, 2018

#### Adapting to an online world

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, CBRL's events all moved online. Since May 2020, we have organised a programme of webinars, featuring the latest leading research on the Levant, incorporating both historical and contemporary issues in the region. Although this ended in-person connections, we were able to reach more people online than we could have imagined, with our webinars transcending travel restrictions and connecting people from across the world.



Restricted space in the West Bank, Area C. [Credit - UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs].

#### The spectre of annexation: a conversation with Professor Avi Shlaim

One of our most popular webinars featured a conversation with Professor Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Fellow of St Antony's College and a leading scholar of Israel's relationship with the Arab world, who explored the roots and implications of Israel's plans to annex up to a third of the occupied West Bank. Professor Shlaim unpacked a manoeuvre seen by many to represent a paradigm shift in the character of how the Israel-Palestine conflict will unfold, but also noted that "There has been a creeping annexation ever since the end of the 1967 War, so annexation will only formalise something that has been going on for the last 53 years."

#### Was Jordan's Black Desert green during the late Neolithic?

Today, Jordan's Black Desert is an area of volcanic rocks that lie above the limestones of the Transjordan plateau stretching from Jebel Druze, south-east of Damascus, across eastern Jordan and into northern Saudi Arabia. In another of our most popular webinars, Alexander Wasse, Gary Rollefson, Matthew Jones and Yorke Rowan – all part of the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project (EBAP) – discussed their research of this underexplored area, which suggests that the climate and vegetation of Jordan's Black Desert was once very different to what is found there today.

#### Looking ahead

Our webinars have proved hugely successful over the last year and in an online world they are clearly here to stay. In future, we hope to have a mixture of webinars and in-person events so we can continue offering online access to research on the Levant to everyone, regardless of where they are in the world, while reestablishing the valuable connections and networking opportunities that in-person events provide. We hope that we can see many of you over the coming year.

To watch our previous webinars, visit our YouTube channel (search CBRL Video on YouTube) and stay tuned to our website for our upcoming events in 2021.



Restricted space in the West Bank, Area C. [Credit - UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs].



## CBRL UK

15 January 2020: *Arab Bedouin: No Future Without Past* – Bedouin exhibition in partnership with the Cultural Protection Fund (British Council) and Coventry University (INHERIT).

16 January 2020: *Robert Bewley (EAMENA, University of Oxford)* – Discovery, documentation and the destruction of cultural heritage in the Middle East and North Africa region. Joint event with King's College London's Department of Digital Humanities.

31 January 2020: *Sarah Elliott (Bournemouth University, CBRL)* – Enviro-ethnoarchaeology and archaeology. Joint event with the University of Cambridge's McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

28 February 2020: *Salman Abu Sitta (Palestine Land Society)* – 1871 survey of western Palestine revisited: the visible and the hidden. Joint lecture with the Palestine Exploration Fund and the Centre for Palestine Studies at SOAS, University of London.

## CBRL Jerusalem

16 March 2020: *Dr Bashir Bashir and Dr Amos Goldberg* – Book launch: 'The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History'.

## CBRL Amman

26-28 January 2020: *Knowledge Frontiers Symposium* – In partnership with the British Academy

13-14 October 2020: *Mapping Digital Heritage in Jordan (MaDiH)* – Identifying datasets on Jordanian cultural heritage: a user feedback webinar (two-day webinar).

## CBRL webinars

11 May 2020: *Professor Rashid Khalidi (Columbia University) and Dr Rana Barakat (Birzeit University)* – The hundred years' war on Palestine.

21 May 2020: *Zahed Tajeddin and Diana Darke* – The Battle for home inside Syria – two perspectives.

28 May 2020: *Professor Gilbert Achcar (SOAS, University of London)* – Covid, Neoliberalism and the 'Arab Spring'.

03 June 2020: *Andrew Patrick (Tennessee State University)* – How British spies ruled Mandatory Palestine.

18 June 2020: *Arwa Badran (Durham University), Shatha Abu-Khafajah (Hashemite University) and Robin Skeates (Durham University)* – Reinventing partnership: reinvigorating museum education in Jordan.

01 July 2020: *Geoffrey Hughes (University of Exeter)* – What are we talking about when we talk about moderation in contemporary Jordan?

15 July 2020: *Elizabeth F. Thompson (American University, Washington, DC) and Eugene Rogan (University of Oxford)* – How the West stole democracy from the Arabs.

22 July 2020: *Professor Avi Shlaim (St Antony's College)* – The spectre of annexation: a conversation with Professor Avi Shlaim.

05 August 2020: *Guy Burton (Vesalius College and Lancaster University)* – China and Middle East conflicts: responding to war and rivalry from the Cold War to the present.

18 August 2020: *Hicham Safieddine (King's College London)* – Roots of Lebanon's financial crisis.

26 August 2020: *Gabriel Varghese and Kristin Flade* – Book launch: 'Palestinian theatre in the West Bank: our human faces'.

09 September 2020: *Alexander Wasse (Yeditepe University), Gary Rollefson (Whitham College and San Diego State University), Matthew Jones (University of Nottingham) and Yorke Rowan (University of Chicago)* – Was Jordan's Black Desert green during the late Neolithic?

30 September 2020: *Dr Daniel Marwecki (Hong Kong University)* – Book launch: Germany and Israel: Whitewashing and Statebuilding.

07 October 2020: *Diana Darke, Venetia Porter (British Museum) and Scott Redford (SOAS, University of London)* – Stealing from the Saracens: How Islamic Architecture Shaped Europe.

04 November 2020: *Simon Mills (Newcastle University) and Marina Rustow (Princeton University)* – A Commerce of Knowledge: Trade, Religion, and Scholarship between England and the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1760.

18 November 2020: *Gerasimos Tsourapas (University of Birmingham)* – Migration diplomacy in the Levant: Lessons from the Syrian refugee crisis.

2 December 2020: *Pierre Doumet (Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM)), Joelle Baraket (APJM), Jennie Bradbury (Bryn Mawr College) and Stephen McPhillips (consultant)* – Jabal Moussa: Archaeology and heritage in the Lebanese mountains.



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