Buried History

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Editorial

The most observant will have noticed that the Institute has a new address. As this volume is published a building at LaTrobe University is being renovated in readiness for the Institute to move in later this year. It will be the first time in its history that the Institute has been able to bring all its assets together in one building.

The association with LaTrobe University promises to be a stimulating one. Many of the objects in the Institute's care have not been seriously studied and we expect that the facilities available to us will allow that to be remedied.

This volume of *Buried History* begins with a tribute to a long time supporter of the Institute, Mary Dolan, who died in 2004 while travelling to a conference as the Institute's representative. We are pleased that Professor Greg Horsley, a colleague of Mary's at the University of New England, was able to provide the tribute. Mary was a remarkable woman of extraordinary energy; our condolences go to her family.

The volume ends with a paper by Mary that she was preparing at the time of her death. We are indebted to Bill Leng who prepared the paper for publication. He retained Mary's writing character while completing unfinished portions, adding introductions and conclusions and finalising references. Again the observant will have noted that Bill has recently joined the Institute's Council. We thank him for his contribution.

Continuing the tradition started in the last volume we publish Professor Alan Millard's 2004 Petrie Oration. The Institute was delighted to have Alan and his wife Margaret as visitors during the year. Alan worked on the Institute's cuneiform material and we expect that the next volume of *Buried History* will include a paper reporting on some of that work.

Dr Gillian Bowen has provided a report on the work she has undertaken at the Dahkleh Oasis in Egypt with a Monash University team. She acknowledges that excavations within the Christian cemetery are directed by Dr J. E. Molto, formerly of Lakehead University, Ontario, Canada, while overall direction of excavation for the Dakhleh Oasis Project is by Dr Colin A. Hope, Centre for Archaeology & Ancient History, School of Historical Studies, Monash University. We are delighted to have her contribution. For those who are interested, their excavation team re-inters skeletal material after analysis is complete.

Professor Sue Balderstone's paper on early Christian churches was presented at a conference a couple of years ago and we are pleased that she has decided to publish it in *Buried History*. Sue has recently retired as a conservation architect with Heritage Victoria and has been working on early ecclesiastical architecture in Jordan for over twenty-five years.

Christopher J Davey
January 2005

The Building at LaTrobe University where the Institute will be located from 2005

Mary Dolan

(2 December 1931 - 2 April 2004)

When Mary Dolan's funeral was held at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Armidale, NSW on 7 April this year, the building was filled to overflowing. People were standing inside and outside. Present were family and friends from near and far, colleagues, members of probably every local church, and members of none. It was explicitly a service to give thanks for the life of one who had loving service of others and of her Master as her first priority. Mary had died suddenly in Sydney while on Australian Institute of Archaeology business; and it is her longstanding link with the Institute which makes it right to record her passing in *Buried History*.

Born in Adelaide in the middle of the Depression to Mervyn and Elizabeth Margaret Neely who had migrated from County Armagh, Mary Boyd Woodburn Neely gave an early sign of her intellectual potential by becoming dux of her primary school in the suburb of Prospect. Likewise she was dux of Seymour College, a Presbyterian Secondary School for Girls in Adelaide. Matriculation from high school in 1949 saw her proceed to complete a BA at the University of Adelaide. After starting in the Sciences, the lure of archaeology and history won her across to the Arts Faculty. The offer of a teaching position at Methodist Ladies' College in Melbourne brought her to that city where two interlocking influences proved seminal for her life direction. While undertaking a DipEd at Melbourne to equip herself for school teaching, Mary also attended an Honours seminar on Pacific (including Australian) Prehistory given by Professor John Mulvaney, the doyen of the subject. The second matter of consequence was that Mary came into contact with the Australian Institute of Archaeology, and was employed by Mr Beasley in the late 1950s as the Institute's education officer. After making several contributions to the Institute's initial journal, *Ancient Times: A Quarterly Review of Biblical Archaeology*,[1] Mary was given responsibility to get *Buried History* under way in March 1958 as a bi-monthly archaeological news bulletin for senior school students; but its readership focus broadened once it succeeded *Ancient Times* (the latter ran for five volumes from mid-1956 to mid-1961). Already in her contributions to these journals the signs were in evidence of her deep fascination for the Ancient Near East, and especially the Assyrian Empire.

In 1960 another interstate transfer occurred with Mary's appointment as tutor in (Ancient) History at the University of New England in Armidale. Isabel McBryde, who had already started teaching in that Department in 1958 and then left for study at Cambridge, returned to UNE to teach Ancient History and Prehistory (the latter with an emphasis on Australian archaeology); and the two shared a study at the university, teaching Ancient History there together.

They had already met a little before at an excavation led by John Mulvaney at Glen Ayre near Cape Otway in Victoria. The lifelong friendship they enjoyed began here. In the early 1960s Mary also began an MA on the history of archaeology in Israel, under Mulvaney's supervision; but she gave so much of her energy to the archaeology of the New England region that she did not complete the thesis.

In their five years teaching together, Mary's Ancient Near Eastern interests (especially her deep knowledge of Egypt and Mesopotamia) complemented Isabel's focus on Iron Age Europe, Roman Britain and the new field of Aboriginal Australia. This range of archaeological expertise made possible the development of an Ancient History course at UNE different from most offered at the time. It situated the Classical civilizations of Greece and Rome in the wider contexts of ancient Europe and the Mediterranean. This allowed new perspectives on the ancient Mediterranean world to emerge. Mary also contributed substantially to the program directed by Isabel of regional fieldwork on the New England region's Aboriginal past. These surveys and excavations were conducted in the Clarence Valley, the Tablelands and far north-western NSW. Isabel remembers Mary's participation as generous, always energetic, focussed and capable. Her sense of fun balanced her professional approach to the work.

Mary left her History tutorship at UNE upon her marriage in May 1964 to her Medieval History colleague Dr James (Jimmy) Dolan, who had been widowed the year before. She suddenly became a mother to five children aged one to nine. In 1969, Mary resumed teaching, this time at the Armidale Teachers' College, the first non-metropolitan teachers' college in Australia (est. 1928), and older than the university by a decade. She remained there during the ATC's transformation into a College of Advanced Education; and when tertiary institutions were amalgamated across Australia in the late 1980s, Mary returned to UNE to teach in the Faculty of Education until she retired—well past the official retirement age—in

Mary Dolan excavating at Hazor in Israel, 2000 (photo: courtesy of the Dolan family)

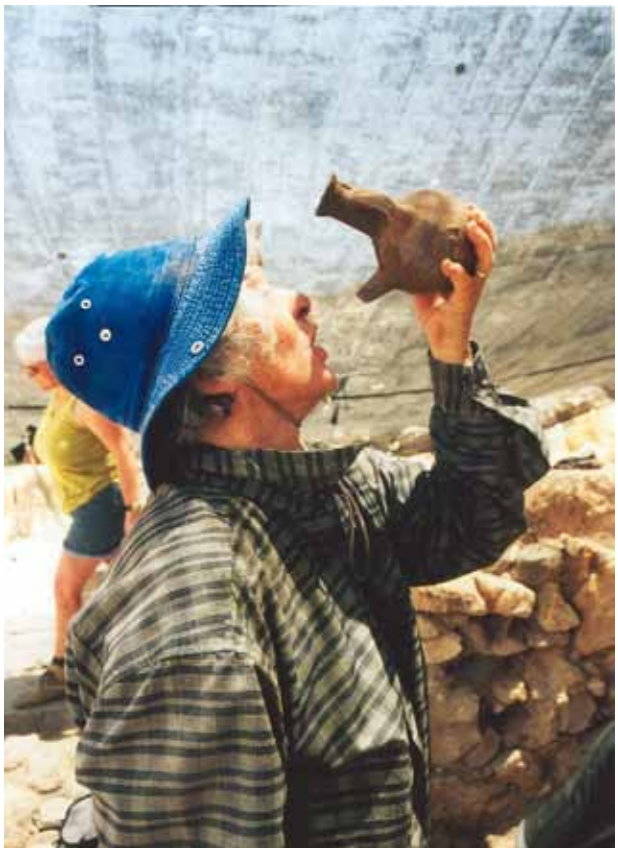
2003. Here she taught future teachers of Ancient History (including Aboriginal Prehistory), Medieval and English History, and Studies in Religion as part of the DipEd program. She also participated in the Egyptian History unit offered through the Classics and Ancient History Department.

In all her work career teaching was to the fore: Mary was not primarily a researcher. To teach with enthusiasm in any and every context—children, students, the community, congregations—gave her great satisfaction. And the energy with which she went about it bubbled out to her audiences. This endeared her to many, made her memorable, and instilled in those she taught a love of the ancient world as well as respect for other religious traditions. 'Mrs Dolan is SO COOL!' wrote one school student recently in the visitors' book at the University's Museum of Antiquities after Mary had just given them a hands-on session with her own collection of ancient lamps and other artefacts.

It was a natural extension of her passion for Ancient History that she served for several years on the NSW Ancient History Higher School Certificate Examination Committee, where her brief was particularly for the Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Following her retirement from the University, Mary took on the role of providing liaison between the Australian Institute of Arcaeology and NSW secondary teachers of Ancient History in order to build among the latter awareness of the Institute's resources available to teachers. She was in Sydney to represent the Institute at an Ancient History Teachers' conference when she died so suddenly. Mary maintained an active link with the Institute for almost fifty years: when she could, she travelled (by bus!) from Armidale to Melbourne for the Institute's AGM.

At the time of her death, Mary was getting ready to return to Israel for another season of archaeological digging at Hazor. Over the previous nearly twenty years she had travelled extensively in Mediterranean countries: Syria, Jordan, Greece, Turkey. In that period she participated in over twenty digs in Israel, sometimes two at separate times of the year. Those sites where she worked included Tel Dor, Jezreel, Megiddo, Ein Gedi and (her personal favourite) Hazor, where she worked for her largest number of seasons under the Director, Professor Amnon Ben-Tor.[2] Even in years of great unrest in Israel, she still went for the digging season because she knew that foreign participation would be down. Injuries she sustained from tent pegs and falls may have occasioned knee operations back in Australia, but did not dampen her enthusiasm to return the next season. Mary was a 'savvy' traveller, and knew how to be the 'innocent elderly lady' if she wanted to see a site to which a taxi driver was reluctant to take her.

In her archaeological work, as in her teaching, Mary was an unpretentious 'doer'. She expected to get her hands dirty. The first to help with student advising or to be present at the Museum of Antiquities for Open days, she did not trumpet her contribution. Not one for pietism, hers was



Mary taking refreshment from an ancient beer jug, Hazor excavations 2001 (photo: courtesy of the Dolan family)

a practical faith, firmly grounded in reality. This enabled her to be generous-spirited to others, never disapproving. And she knew how to laugh, particularly—a special gift, this—at herself.

Yet Mary certainly recognised that life was serious; and if laughter made up one side of the see-saw, a deep sense of responsibility to others balanced it on the other. She was a loyal Presbyterian, but unabashedly committed to ecumenism. To some at the time it must have seemed a paradox that this Irish Presbyterian should marry a Scottish Catholic. Mary's marriage to Jimmy in 1964, a year after the death of his wife, Kate, had a major impact on her life. She left work to focus on the five young children: Judith, Martin, Stephen, Kath, and Jo. Perhaps when the final balance is weighed, this least public of roles was her most significant one. Jimmy died suddenly at work in 1978, and Mary's care for the children continued unwavering. At her funeral her stepson Martin spoke of Mary's acceptance of difference, her strong sense of fairness, of how she was always in such haste with whatever she did, and of how she revelled in learning and helping others to learn. Mary, who almost died herself in 1977, had 14 years' of marriage with Jimmy. They had no children but, in Martin's words, she was 'mother in all but name' to the five of them.

Endearing, generous, memorable, hilarious, a helper ... Mary Dolan was all these things, and more. For she

did not take her eyes off the Master she served, and her commitment to him was unspokenly evident in how she treated others and lived herself. If no trumpets blew for Mary in her life—she gave short shrift to any who attempted to do so!—they certainly did in the Celestial City when 'Mrs Standfast' passed over the river that has been 'a terror to many'.

G.H.R. Horsley
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November 2004

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Acknowledgements

This short appreciation draws on comments made at Mary's funeral by Martin Dolan and by her long-time friend and colleague at the Armidale Teachers' College and the University of New England, John Harris. Mary's stepdaughter Jo Philp helped with some family information, and provided the photos of Mary. Another longstanding friend, Isabel McBryde, also provided substantial help both with details and broader perspectives. The initial portrait of Mary Dolan was taken at a recent graduation at the University of New England.

Endnotes

1 'The transfer of a birthright', vol. 2.1 (1957) 9-10; 'The Exodus from Egypt', 2.2 (1957) 13-15; 'Recent discoveries at Jericho', 2.3 (1958) 11-14; 'Ezion Geber', 2.4 (1958) 6-7; 'The fall of Lachish', ibid., 12-15; 'The destruction of Hazor', 3.1 (1958) 11-14; 'Through the Transjordan', 3.2 (1958) 7-9; 'The Canaanites: the depths of religious corruption', 3.3 (1959) 13-15; 'The bloodthirsty Anat', 3.4 (1959) 8-10; etc.

2 See her article, 'Digging up Hazor: a personal perspective', *Buried History* 36 (2000) 4-12.

Half a Pot is Better than No Pot at All: The Role of Accident in Archaeology

Alan Millard

DOI: https://doi.org/10.62614/3c5zaj51

Abstract: The paper illustrates how archaeology has often advanced with discoveries made in serendipitous circumstances and how the remains themselves have regularly been the result of ancient accidents. The objects are commonly fragmentary and while they themselves may not be precious, the information they and their context may provide can be invaluable. Some of these discoveries have been at odds with accepted wisdom and they caution those who may be inclined to be conclusive about what has not been discovered.

Flinders Petrie had amazing energy and perception! In 1879 he went as usual for his season's work in Egypt, that year at Kahun and Gurob. He spent much of next February and March ill in Egypt, then travelled to Palestine in April. The Palestine Exploration Fund had invited him to conduct an excavation there for them. After obtaining the necessary permit from the Turkish authorities, Petrie examined some sites in the south west and settled on one, Tell el-Hesi (Figure 1). The *tell*, the mound of débris and ruins left by the ancient town, was like many others in the Near East, but a winter stream had undercut the east side of the mound, revealing a cross-section of its contents. Petrie observed that there were successive layers of earth, with walls and floors in them, and therefore an outline of the history of the place could be obtained, from the earliest material at the bottom to the most recent at the top. By keeping the objects found separate, level by level, Petrie could sketch the cultural development, or otherwise, of the inhabitants. Although he measured the levels from a datum and did not recognize the full implications of following the strata, he was able to set up a sequence of pottery which became the basis for most archaeology in Palestine.

Figure 1: *A nineteenth Century lithograph of Tell el-Hesi*

A stipulation in the excavation permit was the presence of a Turkish representative during the excavations. One of the man's main tasks was to ensure that all notable finds should go to Istanbul. As is now expected at excavations in the Near East, what was found was mostly broken pottery. The representative was only interested in complete pots; he regarded broken sherds as quite useless. Thus Petrie was left, effectively, with the most significant material. He stated, 'Once settle the pottery of the country, and the key is in our hands for all future explorations' (Drower 1985:166).

In some circumstances knowledge of the pottery could have far-reaching effects. At the Egyptian site of Gurob Petrie unearthed some distinctive pottery, quite different from the local wares. Made of finely prepared buff clay, it is decorated with concentric bands of red-brown paint and occurs with Egyptian material that can be dated between 1,400 and 1,200 B.C. Petrie knew that similar pottery had been discovered in much greater quantities in Greece, at Mycenae and other places, where scholars placed it vaguely in the early part of the first millennium B.C. From his observations, Petrie was able to provide a firm basis for the chronology of the Mycenaean culture in Greece and his thesis was rapidly adopted (Petrie 1890:271-77; 1891:199-205).

Apart from vessels purposely placed in tombs or foundation deposits, all the pottery archaeologists dig up survives

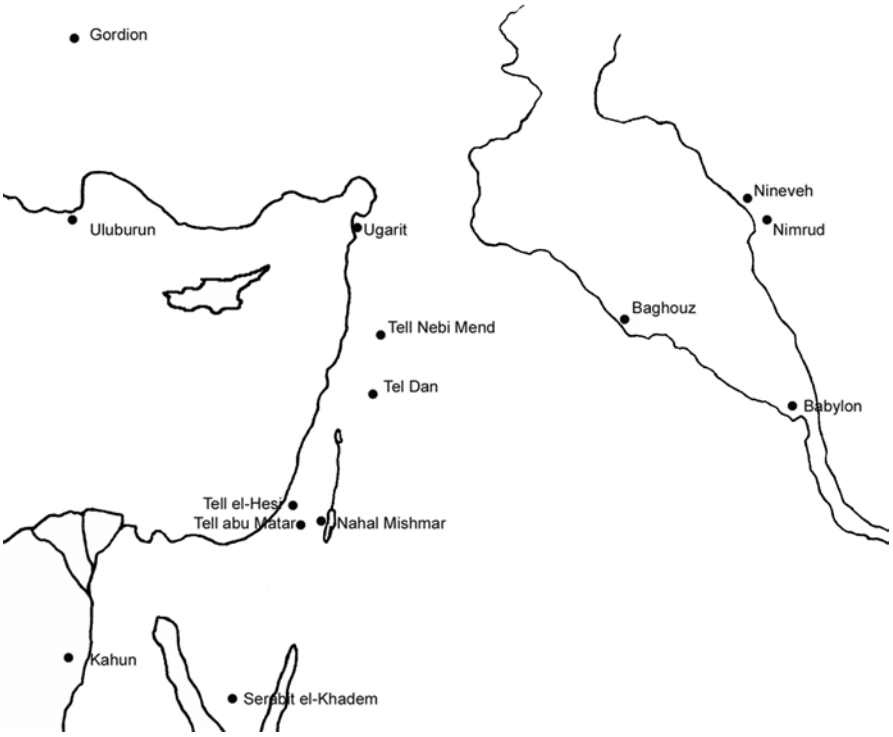

Figure 2: *Map of some sites referred to in the paper.*

by accident. No ancient Greek or Canaanite, Egyptian or Babylonian deliberately buried their pots and pans intending them to be exhumed and examined millennia later. They either lost them by accident, for example, dropping them into a well, or threw them away, often when they were broken. To find a whole pot is relatively rare, finding potsherds at any site occupied after about 8,000 B.C. is normal. To-day careful excavators keep and sort all the sherds they find, whereas in the past most discarded the featureless ones.

The amount of information pottery can give is very varied, we cannot expand on it here. In a mass of homogeneous, local, often dull ware, the vessels of daily life, an occasional 'foreigner' may appear. Thus on first visiting Tell Nebi Mend in Syria (Figure 3), the ancient Qadesh where the Egyptians and Hittites fought each other about 1274 B.C.,

Figure 3: *Pits in the side of Tell Nebi Mend prior to archaeological excavation. (Photo: the author, 1975)*

I pulled a piece of that typical Mycenaean pottery from the side of a cut the villagers had made in the mound. That pointed more clearly to the Late Bronze Age date of the stratum than the ordinary pottery around it could do because the local wares were virtually unknown at that time. That was a happy find; had the sherd not caught my eye, the work would have proceeded with less certainty.

Occasionally clay vessels can point to the existence of more precious ones. At the Assyrian city of Nimrud, ancient Kalah, in northern Iraq, there was found in a tomb in a private house, a pottery rhyton, a drinking vessel shaped like an animal's head (Mallowan 1966:190-3 & n.12). Such things can be seen on Assyrian reliefs in royal court situations where they were unlikely to be made of terra-cotta and now bronze examples have been uncovered in a Phrygian tomb at Gordion in Turkey and silver ones have been found in Iran.

Sometimes ancient written texts describe or ancient pictures portray objects which are otherwise unknown until a surprising discovery is made. In 1988, as the Iraqi State Organisation for Antiquities was carrying out restoration work in the palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud, it was decided to level uneven bricks in the floor of a small room. A workman lifted one and revealed a vaulted chamber, a tomb for a queen of Assyria. In that and in others opened afterwards lay a treasure of Assyrian gold-work and many other objects such as had never been seen in modern times. There was a variety of opulent jewellery and several gold bowls (Damerji & Kamil 1998). Now the reality of the precious things listed in texts or carved on reliefs can be appreciated. Earlier explorers had walked through that room, unaware of the hoard beneath their feet! In that case, an accident of discovery gave substance to the contents of Assyrian texts, which no-one had really doubted, but no-one had tried to envisage.

The role of accident is an element which deserves to be given a place in all discussions of archaeological evidence; often it should inject an element of the tentative into conclusions. An example which seems to me to be especially instructive, I have cited it more than once, concerns the use of copper tools in Palestine about 3,000 B.C. In 1979 there was published, posthumously, the fourth edition of Kathleen Kenyon's textbook, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*. In the chapter on the Chalcolithic Ghassulian culture, she

***Figure 4**: Copper objects from Judaean Desert Treasure, Nahal Mishmar, Chalcolithic per., 2nd half of 4th mill. BCE. (Collection of Israel Antiquities Authority, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem)*

described the site of Tell Abu Matar, near Beersheba, where, in subterranean chambers, people smelted copper ore for manufacturing. She wrote, '...the evidence shows that the use of metal had not yet become a dominant factor. The tools and implements of the inhabitants of Tell Abu Matar were still of flint. The manufactured copper objects found were mace-heads (which probably had a ceremonial rather than a warlike significance), pins, rings, ornamental cylinders, and handles. The metal was still regarded as far too precious for rough, everyday use'.

Those words were carried unchanged from the first edition of the book, (Kenyon 1960:80) but by the time Kenyon was preparing the fourth edition she knew about the remarkable 'treasure' Israeli archaeologists had found in a cave in Nahal Mishmar in the Judaean desert (Figure 4). She gave a brief account of it, mentioning the 'most exciting objects were in copper, with in addition to many maceheads, chisels, and axes, objects which most certainly can be identified as ceremonial...' (Kenyon 1979: 61-62). The chisels and axes were almost certainly not ceremonial but utilitarian, although probably offered as gifts at a shrine where the treasure had originally been stored. Other examples of such axes have since come to light on other sites. Kathleen Kenyon's earlier verdict that 'the metal was still regarded as far too precious for rough, everyday use' is seen to be mistaken, the result of the accidents of discovery. Roger Moorey observed of this hoard, 'It spectacularly illustrates the recurrent restriction of the surviving material record as evidence for ancient metallurgy and dramatically reinforces the dangers of assuming, for any material so readily recycled, that poverty of evidence is evidence of poverty of production, even at an early stage of metalworking' (Moorey 1988:171).

It is by accident that some significant inscriptions have become available. The now famous, fragmentary, Tel Dan stele was only recovered because a member of the expedition saw the incised strokes of the letters on a broken stone lit up momentarily by the setting sun (Figure 5). The largest recovered piece of the stele had been re-used as a stone in a wall. Had it been laid facing the other way, it would have escaped notice - so a modern controversy would have been avoided! (Biran & Naveh 1993:81-98; 1995:1-18) We may wonder how many pieces of ancient monuments are built into later structures, turned so their nature is concealed. It is worth recalling the discovery of stone stelae of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon (555 -539 B.C.), placed face down as paving stones in the great mosque at Harran (Gadd 1958: 35-92).

Ancient people frequently cleared the rubbish out of their houses as we do to-day. In describing the palace of the 9th century B.C. Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud, the excavator, Mallowan, commented on 'the extraordinary paucity of business documents of the ninth century in Assyria. It seems astonishing that we possess no collection of accounts such as we might have expected during the prosperous reigns of Assur-nasir-pal and Shalmaneser III'. Having just discovered some wax-covered ivory writing boards, he continued, ' It is therefore difficult to avoid the conclusion that this hiatus may be accounted for by an extensive use at the time of wood, wax and perhaps other equally perishable materials to record the normal business transactions of the day.' (Mallowan 1954:102)

***Figure 5**: The "House of David" Inscribed on a Victory stele, Tell Dan, Israelite period, 9th c. BCE. (Collection of Israel Antiquities Authority, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem).*

Figure 6*: An Assyrian cuneiform tablet from Nimrud recording the sale of an estate 8th century BC From the Collection of the Australian Institute of Archaeology IA5.046 (ND 204)*

However, Mallowan had overlooked an interesting archaeological fact: on any site the majority of the finds made will belong to the last decades of any period of occupation. If the occupants left their homes peacefully, they will have taken everything that was useful or valuable with them. If the place has been violently destroyed, by an enemy, by an accidental fire, or, as at Pompeii and Herculaneum, by a natural disaster, many of the inhabitants' possessions might still lie in the ruins.

In palaces and houses across the Fertile Crescent archives of cuneiform tablets provide dates for periods of occupation. The tablets rarely cover more than a century, often a shorter span. Older documents may be present, retained for their legal value, e.g. deeds certifying ownership of property. The archives from the Assyrian palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud illustrate this very well (Figure 6). Both places flourished from 900 B.C. onwards, yet the majority of the tablets were written late in the eighth and in the seventh century, before the Babylonians and the Medes destroyed the cities in 612 B.C. Although there are monumental royal inscriptions, very few cuneiform tablets have been found from earlier years (Millard 1997:207-15).

Mallowan's suggestion about the extensive use of perishable writing materials in ninth century B.C. Assyria was wrong, but it brings the question of the survival of perishable materials to the fore. Natural fibres, leather and skin and wood decay rapidly when buried in the damp soil of many sites, leaving little or no trace. Occasionally a local water-supply will have dried up and the abandoned site become desiccated, so perishable objects may remain. A prime case is the Graeco-Roman towns of the Faiyum depression in Egypt, prospering while watered from a branch of the Nile, but deserted after the irrigation system declined. They existed from about 250 B.C. to about 350 A.D. From the rubbish dumps of the towns all sorts of household goods were recovered and large quantities of waste paper. Of course, it is those written documents which have stolen the limelight; we shall return to them.

Ancient wooden furniture is rarely preserved outside Egypt. Tombs of the Middle Bronze Age, which Kathleen Kenyon opened at Jericho, yielded some examples, recognizable, although warped and broken and others of the same period were found in tombs at Baghouz on the mid-Euphrates. Those are all relatively simple pieces, for the houses of the well-to-do, not the wealthiest, the joiners' skill being most evident in the small collapsible tables from Baghouz. One thousand years later, the contents of rich burials at Gordion in Anatolia reveal an amazing quality of carving, joining and inlaying wooden furniture for the highest levels of Phrygian society (Parr 1996:41-48; Simpson 1996:187-209). These survivors 'may serve to indicate the magnitude of the loss of wooden furniture from the archaeological record'(Simpson 1996: 209 n.12).

Woven fabric is just as rare. Another extraordinary discovery was made in a cave in Nahal Hemar near the south end of the Dead Sea in 1983. Almost nine thousand years ago people had left all sorts of things in the cave, perhaps seeking refuge from enemies. There were pieces of basketry and elementary forms of fabric woven from linen yarn, one 'napkin' had its edges bound with a 'buttonhole' stitch. As well as the fabrics, there were specimens of wooden tools and wooden beads, some painted (Bar-Yosef 1985; 1988; Stern 1993:1082-84). That creations of this sort should survive from so early a time was beyond anyone's expectations. Many thousands of years later in date are the fragments of clothing found in other caves near the Dead Sea, left by Jewish refugees hiding from the Roman army during the Second Revolt, A.D. 132-35. They also had wooden bowls and their iron knives and keys had wooden handles, things which are hardly ever found in other circumstances - waterlogged sites may preserve them. Carefully placed in a basket was a prized possession, a glass plate. Roman glassware is plentiful, usually attractively decaying in opalescent tints. This plate is in such good condition that you might think it had been made recently!

Those refugees took with them written documents that were important to them. An old skin bottle contained a number of legal deeds about a widow and her estates; there were letters, too, and biblical scrolls. Although the reason for these things being in the caves is clear, they were deliberately concealed there, their owners obviously hoped to recover them. The fact that they did not, they were killed by the Romans, enables us to examine them to-day.

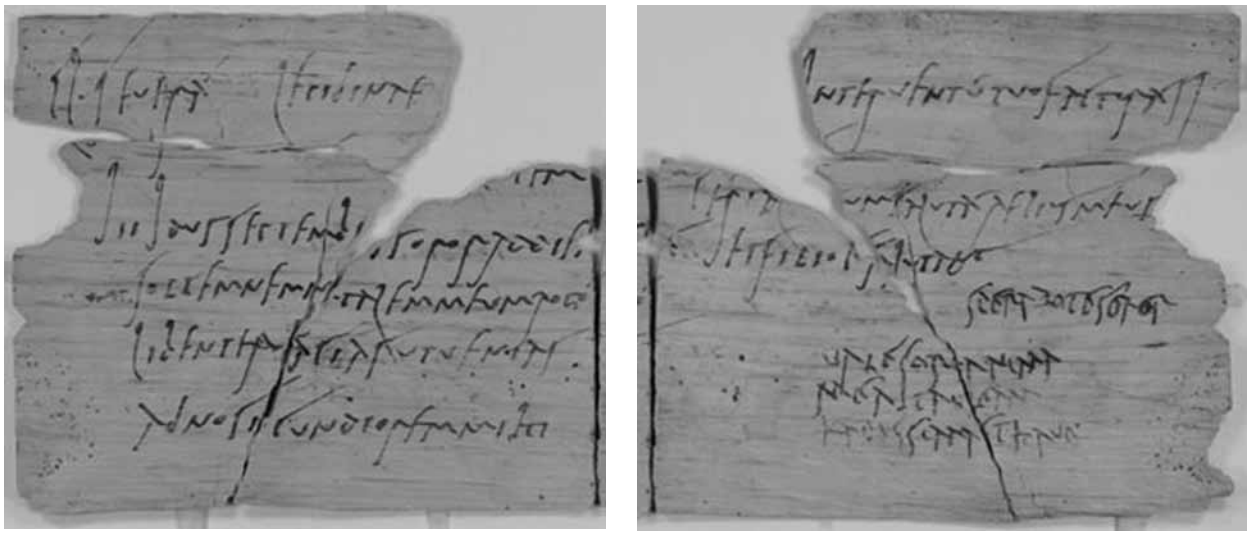

***Figure 7**: A birthday invitation sent by Claudia Severa to Sulpicia Lepidina. This is one of many documents written in ink on postcard sized pieces of wood found at Vindolanda in northern England and dating to the late First Century AD. Vindolanda Site Inventory No 85.057. (Photo, TVII Tablet 291, from http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/)*

Legal deeds like these are not to be found anywhere else in first or second century Palestine; the papyrus would simply not last if buried in the ruins of a town or village in the hills, in Galilee or on the coast. Indeed, there are very few places in the whole of the Roman Empire which yield documents like these.

It is a surprise to some people to realize that there are no original legal or administrative records from the city of Rome itself for the whole period of the Empire, that is, some four hundred years. There are still remains of the municipal archive building, but its contents were burnt or otherwise destroyed long ago. No census returns, assessments of taxes or their payments, no lists of tributes paid by client kings, like Herod of Judaea, no accounts for building works like the Colosseum, or expenditure on military campaigns, payments to soldiers or craftsmen. And that is true across the Empire, from the Euphrates to Hadrian's Wall.

In a few places unusual conditions have preserved documents. There are collections of several hundred wooden tablets from Herculaneum and from a site in north Africa, as well as scattered examples from other sites in Europe and Britain, surviving because they have either been dehydrated, or the reverse, left in damp but oxygen-free deposits. The most remarkable find was made at Vindolanda on the Roman Wall in northern Britain (Bowman 1994). There were found not only pieces of the well-known type of wooden tablet, the inner surface once covered with wax, but very thin slats of birch or alder wood, like strips of veneer (Figure 7). They may be up to 20 cms long and 9 cms wide, perhaps 2 mm thick. The texts of messages were written in ink across the inner surface and the two halves were folded face to face. Notches cut in the edges held cords that closed the tablets and they may have been sealed. Administrative lists were written across the width of tablets which were folded in concertina fashion. The scores of examples from Vindolanda belong to the years 95 to 110, but since they have been recognized, others have been reported from different places and a wider range of dates. Part of one lay among the papyri left by the Jewish refugees already mentioned, a letter in Aramaic. Here is evidence for a type of writing material previously unknown to modern scholars, yet evidently in wide use in Roman times, a reminder of the ways new discoveries can change the picture of aspects of antiquity.

The Vindolanda tablets are a further vivid reminder of the variety and extent of writing that was current in a remote part of the Roman Empire. It is striking that the letters concern many different correspondents, from the highest officers, through the ranks of the garrison, to slaves, and that many different hands are recognizable. The skills of reading and writing were not confined to the commandant's office, nor used only by administrators for their business. And the situation revealed on this northern frontier would apparently be true wherever units of the army were stationed.

Tattered papyri from Masada by the Dead Sea disclose similar activities in the garrison placed there after Titus' forces captured it in A.D. 73/74. Beside the thousands of papyrus documents from Egypt, these are paltry remains, but their value lies in the very fact of their existence, demonstrating that there was no great difference between the clerical activities in the Roman army from place to place. That permits the assumption that other aspects of writing attested in Graeco-Roman Egypt also obtained wherever Rome ruled. Letters from schoolboys, tax registers and receipts, textbooks and classic texts, the poems of Homer, the plays of Euripides and others, could be found on many bookshelves. The classical authors do give that impression to modern readers, but the human mind has difficulty in accepting a situation without visible evidence. Now there is more than is usually realized.

***Figure 8**: Caves 4 and 5 at Qumran. (Photo: the editor, 1974)*

The major surprise for anyone interested in ancient manuscripts during the last half of the 20th century was the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1939 a leading authority on the history of the biblical text, Sir Frederick Kenyon, thought it beyond probability that copies of books of the Hebrew from the first century or earlier would ever be found (1939:48). He lived to see his conviction overturned, dying in 1952. Again, it was the peculiarly arid atmospheric environment that helped to preserve the Scrolls, although it should be noted that the majority are fragmentary and dampness and the activities of birds and bats have harmed them. Every book of the Hebrew Bible is represented among the Scrolls, except the book of Esther. Who the owners of the Scrolls may have been is much discussed.

The strongest argument favours their identification with the Essenes, a very strict Jewish movement, disagreeing with other parties over the calendar and so unable to celebrate their festivals in the Temple. The Dead Sea Scrolls are not a single library and they were not all written in the building at Qumran, near the caves where they were hidden (Figure 8). Beside the biblical books there are numerous others, books of the Apocrypha or deutero-canonical books, commentaries, so-called pseudepigraphical compositions, like the Book of Enoch, collections of hymns, prayers, rules and visions of the future. Most of the non-biblical books had not been seen for almost two thousand years. People came to join the community from within Judaea and beyond and some will have brought their books with them. The historian Josephus reports that there were groups of Essenes in towns and villages across the country, so we may assume that some among them also had copies of biblical books and perhaps other works.

The Scrolls belonged to one element in first century Judaism, maybe an unusually literate element, yet surely not the only religious group that read and copied the Scriptures. The Scrolls, therefore, are isolated witnesses to the existence and use of books in first century Palestine. Prior to their discovery no contemporary examples were known. They attest books in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, which other evidence indicates were the languages current at that time. They also testify to a readiness to write down religious teachings, a possibility which, on the basis of later rabbinic sources, had previously been dismissed. Building on the facts the Scrolls present, I have argued that reading and writing could be accessible to any inhabitant of first century Palestine and so that people who heard and saw the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth could have written down what they observed. Without the Scrolls and certain texts among them, that thesis would be very hard to sustain (Millard 2000). The Bedouin who found the first of the Scrolls, hidden in jars in a cave, when, the story says, he was hunting for a lost goat, precipitated a whole new arena of scholarship!

Flinders Petrie's energetic explorations took him to the Sinai peninsula in 1904-05, notably to the copper and turquoise mines at Serâbît el-Khâdem. There he found Egyptian inscriptions and others in an unknown script

***Figure 9**: The sphinx from Serabit el-Khadim, Sinai, inscribed in an early alphabetic script referring to the goddess Ba'alat. 15th Century BC. BM41748 (Photo: the editor and printed with the permission of the British Museum)*

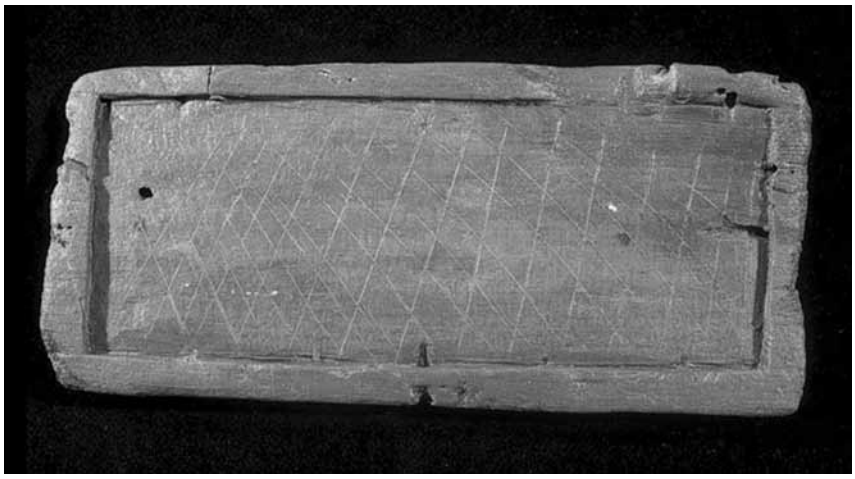

***Figure 10**: A wooden writing tablet from Uluburun Wreck on the southern coastline of Turkey.*
(Photo # KW-12461 from http://ina.tamu.edu/ub_main.htm and used with permission of Cemal Pulak, Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University)

(Figure 9). He was not able to decipher them, but the Egyptologist, Alan Gardiner, managed to move far enough to argue that they are a forerunner of our alphabet.

Those 'Proto-Sinaitic' inscriptions were scratched on rocks and other stone objects in the middle of the second millennium B.C. at a place far from the centres of culture and trade. That points to groups of people travelling from the towns to work at the mines, under Egyptian control. Some of the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions stand in parallel with Egyptian inscriptions at the site and, in a few cases, can be understood as Semitic translations of Egyptian phrases, such as 'Beloved of the Lady', the Lady being the goddess Hathor. Regrettably, the texts have suffered a lot of damage and many of them are very short. All are scratched on stone and so the signs may be rather irregular and poorly formed. From Canaan itself comes a motley collection of similar pieces of writing, again scratched on stone or on pottery or incised on metal. These, too, are brief and often incomplete. They do exhibit the same basic script.[1] From their provenances and other traits, they can be dated at different times from about 1,800 to 1,200 B.C. At that time, the Babylonian and Egyptian scripts were practiced by scribes in the towns of Canaan, for communication with other regions, for local administration and Egyptian for royal monuments (Millard 1999:317-26). Egyptian texts were usually written, of course, on papyrus or leather, and so will not survive.

The scribes did not always use those manufactured writing materials. For unimportant notes they picked up pieces of broken pottery and scribbled on them. The potsherds, the scribbling paper of ancient times, sometimes survive where the more important documents have perished. This is significant for assessing the extent of writing in Canaan whence no books have reached us. Far to the north stood the wealthy merchant city of Ugarit where local scribes were trained in Babylonian traditions to write on clay tablets. (If they wrote Egyptian, we do not know; some Egyptian stone vases and other objects bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions have been dug up there, but whether or not local scribes read and wrote Egyptian regularly is not clear.)

The language of Ugarit was closer to Phoenician and Hebrew than to Babylonian and the Babylonian cuneiform writing system was not well suited for recording it, so the scribes of Ugarit formed their own script suitable for writing on clay. It is a cuneiform alphabet, with a sign for each major sound of the language. There can be no doubt that it was an imitation of the Canaanite script known to us from the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions and the few specimens from Canaan itself. That system did not have signs for vowel sounds because, I believe, its inventor based the signs on the names of simple things and no word in the West Semitic languages began with a vowel. The structure of those languages means they can be written and read intelligibly without marking the vowels, as is still the case with Arabic and Hebrew. The Ugaritic scribes found it necessary to add signs to render vowels when they came to write a quite separate language, Hurrian. At Ugarit scribes wrote every sort of text in this script. There are letters and legal deeds, accounts and tax lists, censuses, divinatory texts, treaty texts, instructions for treating sick horses, magic spells, religious rituals and myths and legends. They show the range of writing was not restricted, although it was the work of secretaries and scribes, of specialists.

Ugarit was not part of Canaan. The material culture of Ugarit was, however, very similar to the culture further south and I believe it is legitimate to make an analogy between the two regions in the matter of writing. Clearly the Canaanite alphabet was invented for writing with ink on a smooth surface, not for imprinting on clay or engraving on stone or metal. That means it was invented for writing on papyrus, or on leather, or perhaps on wax-covered wooden tablets. All three materials were in use in the second millennium B.C. All three materials decay rapidly when buried, unless the environment is unusually favourable. That was the case for the wooden writing tablets found in the Uluburun shipwreck off the south coast of Turkey. The ship sank about 1,300 B.C., taking an assortment of goods to the sea-bed, a cargo of copper, tin and glass ingots, pottery and metalwork. The writing tablets may have carried the ship's manifest (Figure10). Alas, the sea water has destroyed the wax that bore the text!

Accordingly, we may assume that there were scribes in Canaan writing in Canaanite for the local kings in

Jerusalem, Megiddo, Shechem and other towns. Beside the run-of-the-mill deeds and documents, they could have written works of literature, hymns and prayers and magic spells, just as their counterparts in Ugarit were doing. Their work is invisible to-day because of their writing materials. The comparison is strengthened when the Ugaritic texts that are not written on clay tablets are introduced. There are not many of them. They are short, names and titles on seals, a few dedications on metal tools, two gravestones, a few inscriptions written on pottery vessels before they were baked and one painted on a pot. Although not identical in type, these are comparable with the short examples of the Canaanite alphabet found in Canaan, on stone, metal and pottery. In one respect the Canaanite alphabet had an advantage, it was easier to write on any surface than the cuneiform of Ugarit and that may have made it more readily available to anyone who wanted to learn and use it.

'Half a pot is better than no pot at all.' These various examples illustrate our title. Where there is no pot at all it is hard to persuade people that there once was one, without strong circumstantial evidence. Often the absence of evidence is misused as evidence of absence. The demonstration that most of the material an archaeologist excavates will date from the last decades of life at a site, or in a particular period at a site, should never be forgotten. If it is, the deduction may be made that products or actions evident only in the last levels did not exist in the earlier ones, which overlooks the human tendency to throw away anything that has lost its value or its usefulness. 'Half a pot is better than no pot at all', but even if there is no pot, remember, there may have been one!

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Endnotes

1 For all these texts, see B. Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and its Development in the Second Millennium B.C., Agypten und Altes Testament* 13, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (1988).

Aspects of Christian Burial Practice

Gillian E. Bowen

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Abstract: Few early Christian cemeteries have been excavated in Egypt and consequently insufficient is known of the burial practices adopted by Christians in the late third and fourth centuries.[1] The cemeteries at Ismant el-Kharab, ancient Kellis, in Dakhleh Oasis are an exception. To date, at least 560 graves in a large Christian cemetery have been excavated and their archaeology and the pathology of those interred well recorded. Christians established separate cemeteries from their pagan neighbours and were buried in simple pits aligned on a north-west axis, head to the west and without grave goods. During the 2000 to 2002 field seasons two large pagan mausolea were excavated: North Tombs 1 and 2. The remains of 35 individuals were retrieved from North Tomb 1 and at least 20 could be identified with confidence as Christian. The neighbouring North Tomb 2 preserved the remains of 34 bodies; none exhibited the burial traits that would identify them as Christian. This seemingly anomalous phenomenon of Christian burials in one pagan mausoleum but not its neighbour raised several questions relative to early Christian burial practices. In the 2003/4 field season, excavation was undertaken in a further six mausolea within the North Tomb Group; a major component of the research programme was to determine whether it was common practice for Christians to reuse pagan tombs for the burial of their dead and to consider the implications of the results. The results were conclusive; of the six tombs excavated, Christian burials were confined to North Tomb 1.

Introduction

Ancient Kellis, in Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt, was an agricultural village that developed in the late Ptolemaic Period and was abandoned at the end of the fourth century CE (Hope 2001).[2] As such, the community spanned the transitional period from paganism to Christianity. By the end of the fourth century the village had been Christianized. This is attested by: the abandonment of the pagan temple; the erection of three churches, a large, purpose-built basilica, another, a smaller converted structure, and what is now identified as a cemetery church (Hope 2001: 43-59; Bowen 2004); the development of separate cemeteries, one of which was associated with the cemetery church and located within the confines of the village (Bowen 2004: 175-77; Hope 2004:244-52). Documentary evidence retrieved from the fourth-century structures provides invaluable evidence for the nature and activities of certain members of the Kellis Christian community, which include Manichaeans and, to use an anachronistic identification, Copts (Worp 1995; Gardner et al. 1999).

Current research project

The study of burial practices is one of several research projects being undertaken in relation to the Christian community of ancient Kellis. As the excavations at Ismant el-Kharab are still underway, the results of the study are very much work in progress. The current project arose from the discovery of intrusive Christian burials within the largest of the monumental mud-brick tombs that flank the north-east of the village (North Tomb1). This was unexpected, especially as the larger Christian community made a conscious effort to distinguish itself from its pagan neighbours, or forebears, by adopting different burial customs and segregating its members in death by establishing a separate cemetery some distance from the traditional rock-cut tombs and the monumental mausolea used by the pagan community. The excavation of a second mausoleum, adjacent to the first, provided ample evidence of secondary burials, but not for reuse by Christians. This raised several questions:

1. Was burial in select pagan tombs a common Christian practice in the village?
2. If so, were these family tombs and had those interred chosen burial with family over religious affiliation in death?
3. If not, who were the group that had opted for burial in the largest and most elaborate of all the mud-brick tombs, and why did they take this course of action?

In order to address the first research question it was necessary to excavate further mausolea within the North Tomb Group to determine patterns of reuse. The second question is facilitated, in part, by co-operation with Dr J. Eldon Molto, who co-ordinates the work of the physical anthropologists examining the human remains, and whose research has the potential to identify family groups. The third question will prove difficult, if not impossible, to answer. In order to place the current project within context, an overview of what is known of Christian and pagan burial practice at Kellis is included. This is essential in order to identify traits that are common to both groups. The discussion is arranged, as far as possible, in chronological order of excavation.

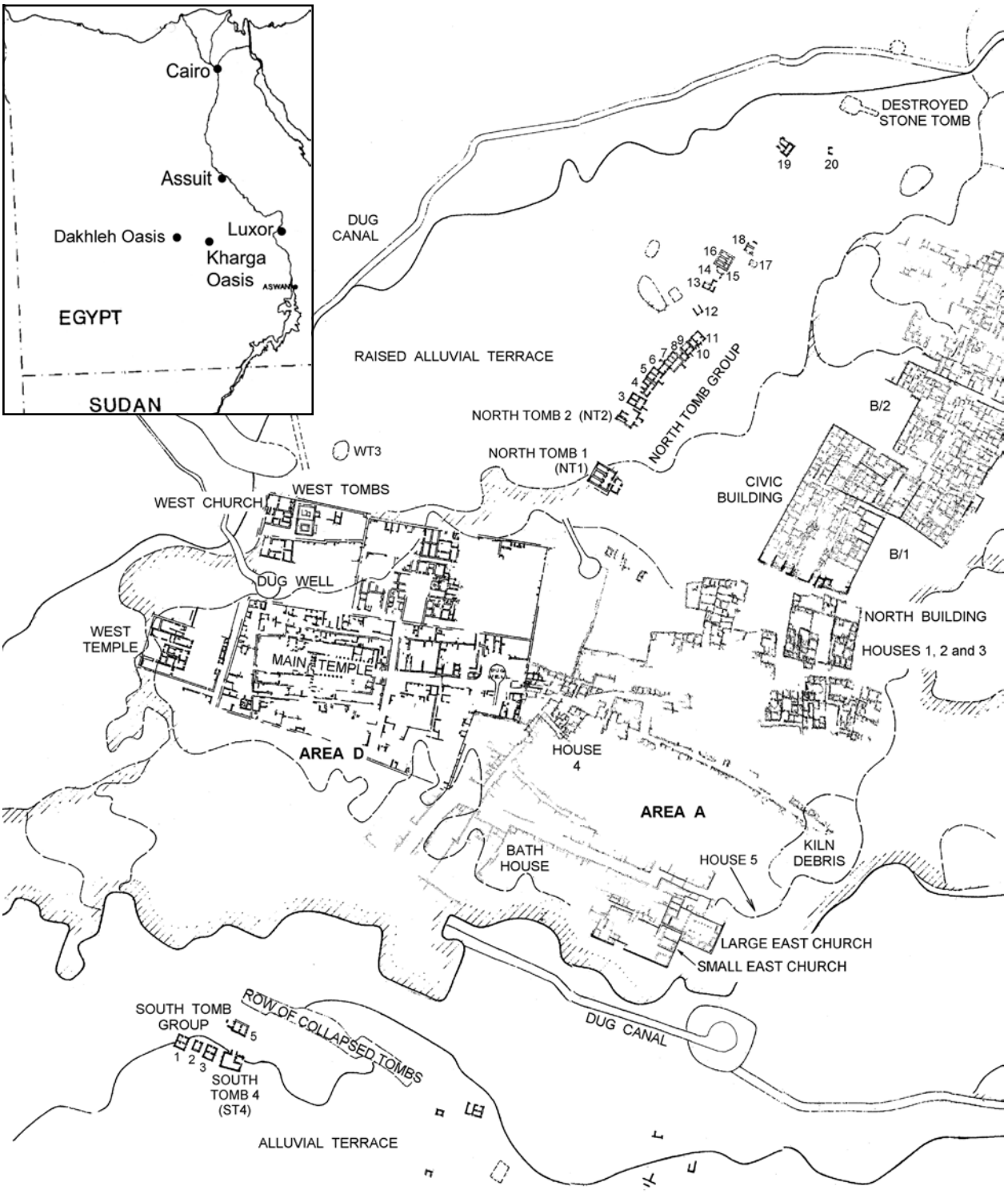

Figure 1: *Ismant el-Kharab: plan of the western half of the village (original drawing by J.E. Knudstad supplemented by J. Dobrowolski and B. Rowney and compiled by B. Parr).*

Christian burials in Kellis 2 cemetery

The principal Christian cemetery, Kellis 2 (31/420-C5-2), is located to the north-east of the settlement; excavation commenced there in 1992 and is ongoing. The cemetery is estimated to contain some 3,000 - 4,000 burials (Molto 2002: 241), and to date 565 graves have been excavated (Stewart et al 2004) [3] (Figure 2). All graves follow a uniform plan. They are simple rectangular pits, aligned on a west-east axis, with minor deviations that reflect the position of the rising sun at the time the grave was dug. The pits are cut into bedrock to accommodate a single interment; consequently, the dimensions differ according to the age and stature of the deceased. There is some variation in design and five distinct types of grave have

been recorded. In the most elaborate, the pit was lined with mud bricks, placed on edge, and finished with a subterranean mud-brick vault. Rubble fill was placed over the vault and the grave was then covered with a mud-brick mastaba superstructure. Type 2 is a variation of type 1 but in these graves, the lower 0.35 m of the pit was not bricked but narrowed to form a ledge to support the mud-brick vault (Birrell 1999:40). This type was also covered with a mud-brick, mastaba. The body interred within these graves was protected from the rubble fill by the vault. The third type is a pit that narrows towards the base. The body was placed in the grave and covered directly with rubble fill; a mud-brick floor was laid at surface level and finished with the typical mastaba. The fourth type is a pit with the mastaba built directly above the rubble. The superstructures have eroded and so the original height cannot be determined. The fifth type consists of a simple pit into which the body was placed and covered directly with rubble; there is no superstructure. This is the most common type in the cemetery. The depth of the pit varies according to the grave type. The average depth for types 1 and 2 graves is 1.35 m; the simple type 5 grave is shallower, reaching an average depth of between 0.80 m to one metre. There is no evidence to determine whether or not these graves were marked at the surface to enable the identification of the occupant.[4]

The cemetery also contained numerous infant and foetal burials.[5] These bodies were interred in shallow pits, which on average reach a depth of 0.35 – 0.40 m. The burials were located between those of adults or cut just beneath the superstructures of graves. As with adults and children, infant and foetal burials followed the traditional west-east alignment.

Figure 2: *Ismant el-Kharab: plan of the excavated section of Kellis 2 cemetery with Tombs 1 and 2 on the western extremity (compiled by L. Cartmell).*

There are a number of small tombs within the Kellis 2 cemetery. Two (Tombs 1 and 2), located two meters apart, were excavated in 1992 (Birrell 1999:38, 40; Bowen 2004:167-8) (Figure 2).[6] They are single-room structures with dimensions of 3.5 and 4 m square respectively. The remains of a door pivot in the eastern wall of Tomb 2 indicate that these were closed off. Tomb 1 contained four burials: three adults and a child. One grave was of type 1, the mastaba was preserved to a height of 0.60 m; no superstructures were recorded for the remaining graves. Tomb 2 contained six burials but only three were excavated; two, Graves 3 and 5, were intrusive burials of infants placed in simple shallow pits. The third, Grave 8, although badly eroded, was of type 2.

Many of the graves have been desecrated; there are sufficient intact examples, however, to determine that the bodies were not mummified[7] but wrapped in a linen shroud, which was secured by woven linen bindings. The quantity of linen used is difficult to assess as much of it had disintegrated. The wrappings of infants and foetuses were usually better preserved; these bodies were placed in a single linen shroud, which was wrapped around the body and secured, in a criss-cross fashion, either with narrow binding or two-ply linen cord. The bodies were placed in the grave with their head to the west; there have been no exceptions found to this rule, for even where the body has been desecrated, some of the bones were left *in situ* and attest the practice. The rationale behind this conformity is that the body would rise on the day of resurrection to face the Son of Man who would appear in the east (Davies 1999:199). Such an alignment seems to have been a standard practice amongst many Christian communities at this time, irrespective of the geographical location

Plate 1: *Ismant el-Kharab: Christian graves built against the outer east wall of the West Church.*

(Bowen 2004:171). Further examples within Egypt are the pit graves cut between the mausolea in the cemetery of el-Bagawat, Kharga (Lithgoe 1908:205-7; Hauser 1932:50), and the Christian cemetery at Apa Jeremiah, Saqqara (Martin 1974:19-21; Jeffreys and Strouhal 1980:28-34), both of which date to the fourth-century. In the well-recorded, fourth-century Poundbury cemetery, in Dorset, England, which contains some 4,000 Christian pit graves, the alignment is the same (Farwell 1993).

The bodies in the Kellis 2 cemetery were laid on their backs, supine, legs together, with hands either to the sides or over the pelvic region. The placement of the hands was not dependent upon the sex of the interred. By and large, the graves were devoid of goods although some had sherds from large pots, or even complete vessels, placed over the body, and occasionally, a ceramic vessel was found in the grave (Birrell 1999:41). One body had been provided with a re-used glass vessel (Marchini; 1999:81-2) and two bodies have been recorded with items of jewellery: the first was a string of glass beads (Birrell 1999:41; Marchini 1999:81-2) and the second, a string of faience beads, discovered in the 2003 field season. Funerary bouquets were also placed in many of the graves. These comprised sprays of myrtle, rosemary and olive (Thanheiser personal communication).

Pagan burials in Kellis 1 cemetery

Burial practices in Kellis 2 cemetery differ markedly from those in the pagan cemetery Kellis 1 (Bowen

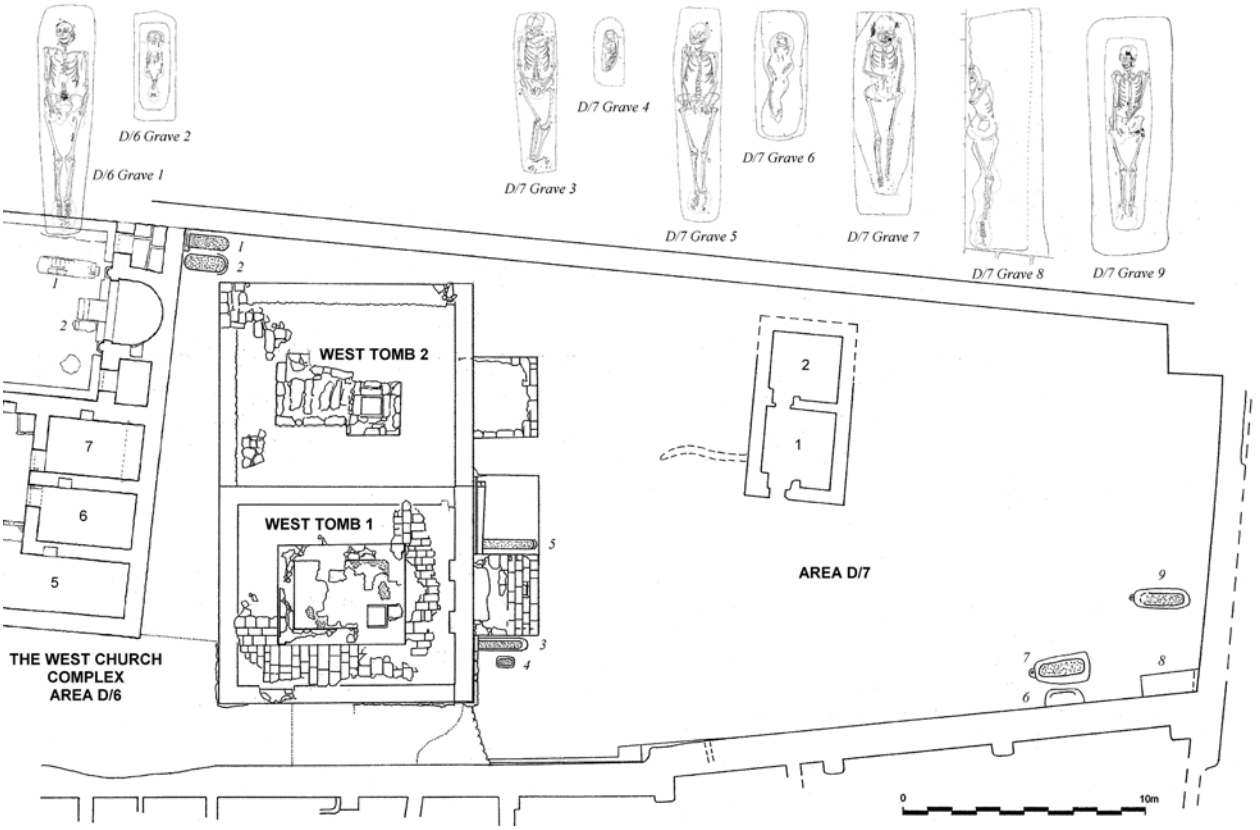

Figure 3: *Ismant el-Kharab: plan of the eastern part of Enclosure 4 showing location of the West Tombs and Graves 1-9, and the West Church, with Graves 1 and 2 (drawing by J.E. Knudstad supplemented by B. Rowney and D. Tuck; compiled by B. Parr). Scale of details of graves 1:50.*

2003:78). Kellis 1 cemetery (31/420-C5-1) lies some distance from Kellis 2, to the north-west of the village. The cemetery comprises a series of small, single-chamber tombs cut into a low sandstone and shale plateau; the tombs are approached by a short passageway. Excavations were undertaken in these tombs between 1990 and 1997. Each tomb contained multiple burials; the maximum number discovered in a single tomb to date is 42 bodies, which were found in Tomb 2 (Birrell 1999:33). The tombs were used over a lengthy period of time with the latest individuals placed either on top of earlier ones, or the earlier interments were simply pushed aside to make way for others (Birrell 1999:33). No attention was given to orientation and bodies, which were lain on the floor, side by side, head to toe, or against the walls. There is no evidence to indicate that the tombs were reserved for specific families or that people were buried in separate tombs according to wealth or social stratification. A number of bodies in each of the tombs were mummified and some were equipped with gilded and painted cartonnage body coverings, whilst other bodies were untreated other than being wrapped and left to desiccate (Aufderheide et al 2004:142). The mummified bodies were wrapped in several, purpose-made linen shrouds of varying quality; these often included a shroud that had been impregnated with red ochre. The shrouds covering those whose remains had simply been wrapped were fewer and, in many cases, comprised patched linen taken from garments that had been used in everyday life. Some of the bodies were secured to a palm-rib frame before being wrapped. During the unwrapping of the bodies for study, it was noted that some were a composite with parts taken from several corpses (Aufderheide et al. 2004:149 and plate 5). The mortuary goods that remained are representative of the traditional pharaonic repertoire such as *ba* birds, mourner figurines, and offering tables, as well as ceramic vessels. Sprays of rosemary were also found with the dead (Birrell 1999:38). The period of use for the Kellis 1 cemetery, based upon the evidence available to date, is Ptolemaic to third century CE (Hope 2001:55-6; Schweitzer 2002:279). The stark contrast in the burial practices adopted within the two cemeteries is itself indicative of a dramatic change in mortuary customs. Such a change can only be attributed to the Christianization of the villagers.

Plate 2: *Ismant el-Kharab: Christian graves following removal of the mud-plaster.*

Burials within the settlement

During the 1992 excavation season two monumental stone tombs were discovered to the immediate east of the West Church: West Tombs 1 and 2 (Hope and McKenzie 1999) (Figure 1). These tombs, which were built within the classical tradition, are unlike any others to survive thus far in Egypt; their date of construction is uncertain, but Hope tentatively suggests that they were erected by the mid-third century, and perhaps as early as the second (Hope and McKenzie 1999:61). Eleven burials were found in West Tomb 1; West Tomb 2 had been robbed and the contained only a few human remains. The eleven bodies: five adults, and six juveniles, had been treated artificially and then wrapped in a number of natural linen shrouds, which were secured with narrow bands of linen, and placed on the floor of the tomb. The bodies lay in an east-west direction; the heads of all but two lay to the east when discovered, although whether this was their original orientation cannot be verified as the tomb had been disturbed (Hope and McKenzie 1999:55-6). Grave goods were present and included ceramics, a basket, several glass vessels, a pair of lead sandals and a funerary bed. One body had three finger rings another had two, and a sixth ring was found against the north wall of the tomb. There may well have been other funerary goods taken by the robbers. An examination of the grave goods indicated a date for the burials towards the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century CE (Hope and McKenzie 1999:60). The interments, therefore, were not those for whom the tomb was constructed (Hope and McKenzie 1999:61). There is no indication that the people buried within this tomb were Christian although this cannot be ruled out; Christian practices in the formative period of the religion are poorly understood.

In the 1995 field season two graves were discovered in the north-western corner of Enclosure 4, against the outer east

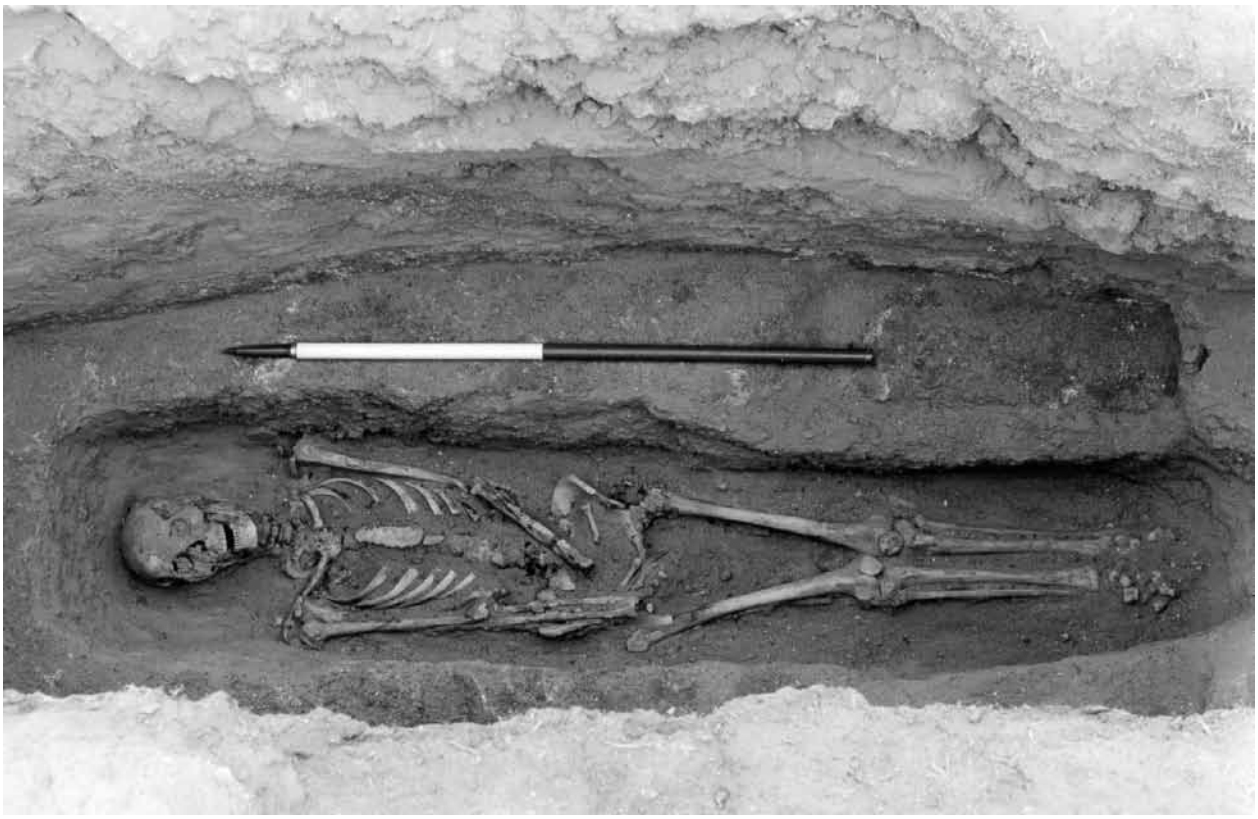

Plate 3: *Ismant el-Kharab: Christian burial, Grave 9, Enclosure 4.*

wall of the West Church and in close proximity to West Tomb 2 (Hope 1995:57) (Figure 3). The graves were simple pits, of the type 3 variety; they were undisturbed and their superstructures intact (Plate 2). The superstructure of the larger grave was constructed of seven courses of brick, each of which was laid in such a manner that the structure narrowed towards the top (Plate 3). The lower five courses formed a rectangle above the mouth of the pit and the core was filled with sand; the subsequent courses were solid. The smaller of the superstructures comprised six courses. The superstructures were covered with a layer of mud plaster. The dimensions of the larger superstructure were 1.96 x 0.82 narrowing at the top to 0.30 at the top; the height was 0. 80 m. The smaller superstructure was 1.47 x 0.74 narrowing to 0.22 m. The dimensions of the pits are: 1.63 x 0.32 x 0.0.85 m and 1.47 x 0.32 x 0.80 m respectively

The graves contained the bodies of two females, who lay supine at the bottom of the pit, with their heads to the west, with hands across the pelvis. The bodies were skeletonised and there were minute scraps of fabric that suggests that they had been wrapped. There were no grave goods. The burials are characteristic of those in Kellis 2 cemetery and that fact, combined with the location of the graves: against the east wall of the church, identifies them as Christian.

In 2002 seven more burials were found within Enclosure 4: two males, three females, an infant and a foetus or perinate (Molto et al 2004:345-47) (Figure 3). The discovery of these graves went some way to explaining the purpose of the enclosure: to delineate a small Christian cemetery located within the confines of the village (Bowen 2004:175-6; Hope 2004:244-5, 252). This innovative practice was unique to Christianity and is attested in Rome from the late fourth century (Davis 1999:193). Pagan cemeteries were located outside the settlements to separate the dead from the living. Deceased Christians, however, were regarded as sleeping, or lying in wait for the day of resurrection and so it was appropriate to include them in the world of the living (Davies 1999:193). West Tombs 1 and 2 were outside the confines of the village until the building of Enclosure 4. The church was an integral part of Christian burial practices and was built contemporary with the enclosure. The incorporation of the tombs into a select Christian compound indicates the importance of these structures to the Christian community. Their importance is further confirmed by the placement of three of the graves (Graves 3 – 5), which were dug on either side of the stairway to West Tomb 1 (Bowen 2003:82-4; Hope 2004:241-4). The function of the West Tombs within a Christian context is speculative: they could have served as martyria or they could have been family mausolea, belonging to the forebears of those buried within the related cemetery. Numismatic evidence, together with our knowledge of Christian practice, indicates that the church and the enclosure were erected sometime after the mid-fourth century (Bowen 2002: 83) and the cemetery was probably developed at the same time. Two more graves were found cut into the floor of the church either side of the apse (Bowen 2003:82-4; Hope 2004:244) (Figure 3). Their location, in front of the apse, indicates that they were interred after the erection of the church. Why they should

be singled out for burial in what might be considered a prestigious place cannot be determined.

All the burials within this cemetery were undisturbed allowing an unparalleled opportunity to study this select group of Christians. Although it might be assumed that those buried within the church and its associated cemetery represented an elite group, the burials themselves were simple and followed the same practice as that in the principal Christian cemetery. The graves were dug to a depth of between 0.80 m – 1.00 m and those interred were placed on the floor of the pit (Plate 3) and covered by rubble fill, which was sealed with a single layer of mud bricks; no superstructures have survived and it is uncertain whether these were ever present. The church burials (a male and an infant) were placed in simple pit graves, which were closed with a single course of mud bricks at surface level and the mud floor of the church was laid above. The infants and foetus all retained their linen wrappings but in the case of adults only scraps of fabric remained. There were no funerary goods placed within any of these graves. One interesting practice observed, and one that is not recorded elsewhere at Kellis, is the presence of two small bowls, one placed within the other and set into the ground at the west end of Grave 9. The lower bowl contained pieces of charcoal and the upper contained burnt remains; the impression for a similar bowl/s was found at the head of Grave 7 (Bowen 2003:82-4; Hope 2004:241-4). Whether or not this was associated with the eucharist cannot be determined. A small two-room building is the only other structure to be built within Enclosure 4 (Bowen 2003:82; Hope 2004:252); its purpose is unknown.

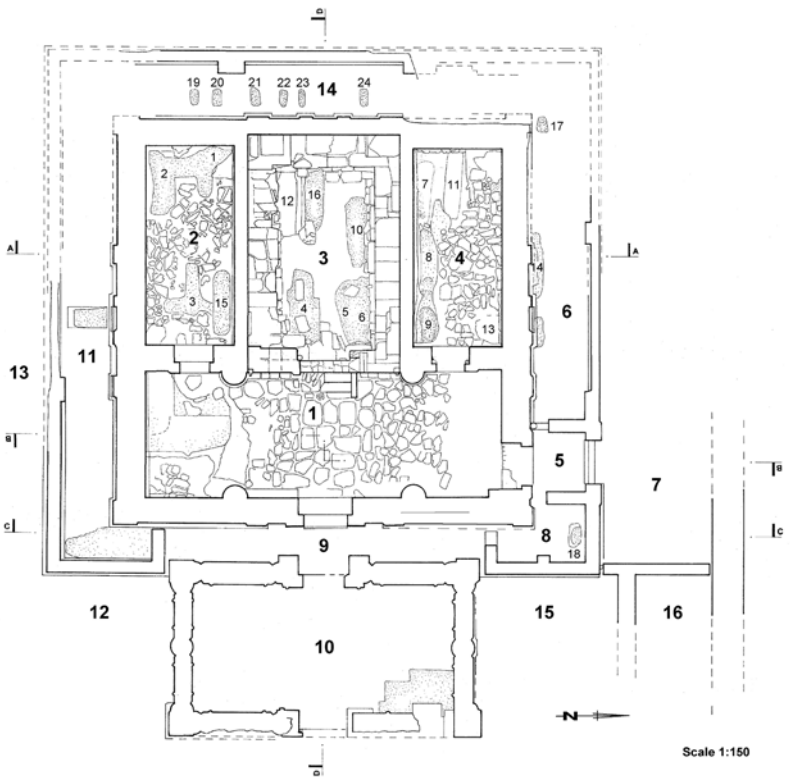

Figure 4: *Ismant el-Kharab: plan of North Tomb 1 showing location of rooms and Christian graves (drawing B. Rowney, adapted by B. Parr).*

The identity of this group in terms of their Christian affiliation, Manichaean or Coptic, cannot be determined. A study of the bodies, undertaken by Eldon Molto and his team, however, revealed a rare genetic trait in three individuals: the male buried in the church (Body 10) and two females (Bodies 3 and 5) (Molto et al 2004:362)[8] and evidence of spina bifida occulta was present in all three males; these occurrences suggest a family group (Bowen 2003:85; Molto 2004: 362).

Plate 4: *Ismant el-Kharab: North Tomb 1.*

North Tomb 1

A series of large mud-brick mausolea is located on the north-western edge of the village (Figure 1); this is known as the North Tomb Group (Knudstad and Frey 1999:208-11; Hope 2004:252). The tombs, which were probably erected between the first to third centuries CE, were undoubtedly built for the pagan community. Excavation commenced on the two southernmost of these mausolea, North Tombs 1 and 2, in 2000 and continued in the following field season. North Tomb 1 is the largest and most elaborate of these tombs (Figure 4, Plate 4). Hope's architectural description of the rooms is reproduced here in full for a better appreciation of the plan, the only modification being the omission of some plates and his plate numbers.

> *North Tomb 1 consists of a free-standing entrance porch (Room 10) on the east that leads into a transverse hall (Room 1) off which open three similarly-sized chambers to the west (Rooms 2-4); the core of the tomb is about 12 m square and stood about five metres in height (Hope 2004:252-7). Around the tomb is an inner corridor comprising three spaces (Rooms 6, 11 and 14) that could originally be accessed only from a small room (5) at the east end of the northern corridor (6). This room also provides a point of entry to the tomb through a door in the northern wall of Room 1, while another small room (8) at the north-eastern exterior corner of the tomb is reached via Room 5 also. None of these side rooms communicates with the corridor (9) separating the porch from the tomb. The whole complex appears to be set within a wall some five metres from the tomb. This wall can be traced on the north and extends for a considerable distance to the east of the actual tomb, approximately 37 m, at which point it appears to turn through 90 degrees to the south, but its full length on the east could not be determined and there is no clear trace of it on the south or west of the tomb. There is a semblance of a* dromos *leading to the porch that again awaits definition. The area between the porch and exterior enclosure wall is subdivided into at least two spaces (15-16) that block access to the northern entrance system into the tomb, via space 7, from this direction.*

The tomb had been robbed in antiquity and the original occupants could not be identified amongst the skeletal remains that were found in profusion. Intrusive pit graves had, however, been cut into the floor (Figure 4). Although many of the interments had been disturbed, it was clear that the intrusive graves, cut on a west-east alignment, were for the express use of Christians. This was unexpected as other Christian burials at Kellis were segregated from those of the pagan community. In those graves that contained skeletal remains, the body had been placed in the pit with its head to the west; there were no grave goods, although a gypsum sealing with a *crux ansata* symbol on the seal was retrieved from the fill of Grave 3, in Room 2 (Hope 2004:264). The *crux ansata* is an adaptation of the Egyptian *ankh*, the symbol of life, and was used by early Christians in Egypt in both ecclesiastical and funerary contexts (Fakhry 1951; Bowen 2002:72). The human remains retrieved represented 35 individuals: 20 adults and juveniles and 15 infants and foetuses/perinates. Only 24 graves were found, which suggests that some of the skeletal remains belonged to the original interments (Hope 2004:264). The earliest interments were presumably placed on a funerary bed or on the floor. The graves were distributed accordingly: Room 2, 4 burials (Graves 1-3, 15); Room 3, 6 burials (Graves 4-6, 10, 12, 16); Room 4, 5 burials (Graves 7-9, 11, 13); Room 6, 2 burials (Graves 4, 17); Room 8, one burial (Grave 18); Room 14, 6 burials (Graves 19-24). Not all of the human remains from this tomb have yet been studied but a demographic profile is possible for those that were retrieved from the graves: three burials from Room 2 were juveniles; those from Room 3 were adults; Room 4 contained four adults and a perinate; a juvenile and an infant were buried in Room 6; an infant in Room 8, and two foetuses (third trimester), three perinates and two infants were in the corridor designated Room 16 (Dupras and Tocheri 2004:188). Again, burial practice followed the same formula as was encountered in Kellis 2, and the cemetery in Enclosure 4: the bodies were placed directly into the pit, which was cut on average at a depth of 0.75 - 0.80 m for adults, the rubble fill thrown on top; with the exception of the child buried in Room 6, there was no mud-brick cover over the graves, and no superstructure. All bodies retrieved from the graves displayed evidence of having been wrapped; the shrouds of the adults had disintegrated but those of the foetuses, perinates and infants were complete. Whether this phenomenon is due to the depth of burial and the fact that the infants are usually covered with sand, rather than rubble, is uncertain.

Of particular interest in relation to North Tomb 1 is that the central chamber (Room 3) was sandstone lined, gypsum coated and decorated with traditional pharaonic mortuary scenes (Hope 2004:254-7; Kaper 2004:323-30). Kaper (2004:239) refers to it as a cult chamber. Although the decoration is no longer preserved, Olaf Kaper (2002) has been able to reconstruct, on paper, some of the decoration from photographs taken by Winlock in 1908 and from the comprehensive record by B. Moritz, who undertook excavation in the tomb in 1900.[9] The photographs, together with Moritz's description, indicate that the pharaonic iconography had not been desecrated by the Christians who reused the mausoleum.

North Tomb 2

North Tomb 2, located 25 m to the north of Tomb 1, is also multi-chambered but is smaller and less elaborate than its neighbour (Figure 1). It consists of three mud-brick chambers on the west which open off a transverse hall; the hall is accessed via an entrance porch on the east (Hope 2004: 272). The tomb had been looted in antiquity and two rooms (2 and 3) had suffered extensive fire damage

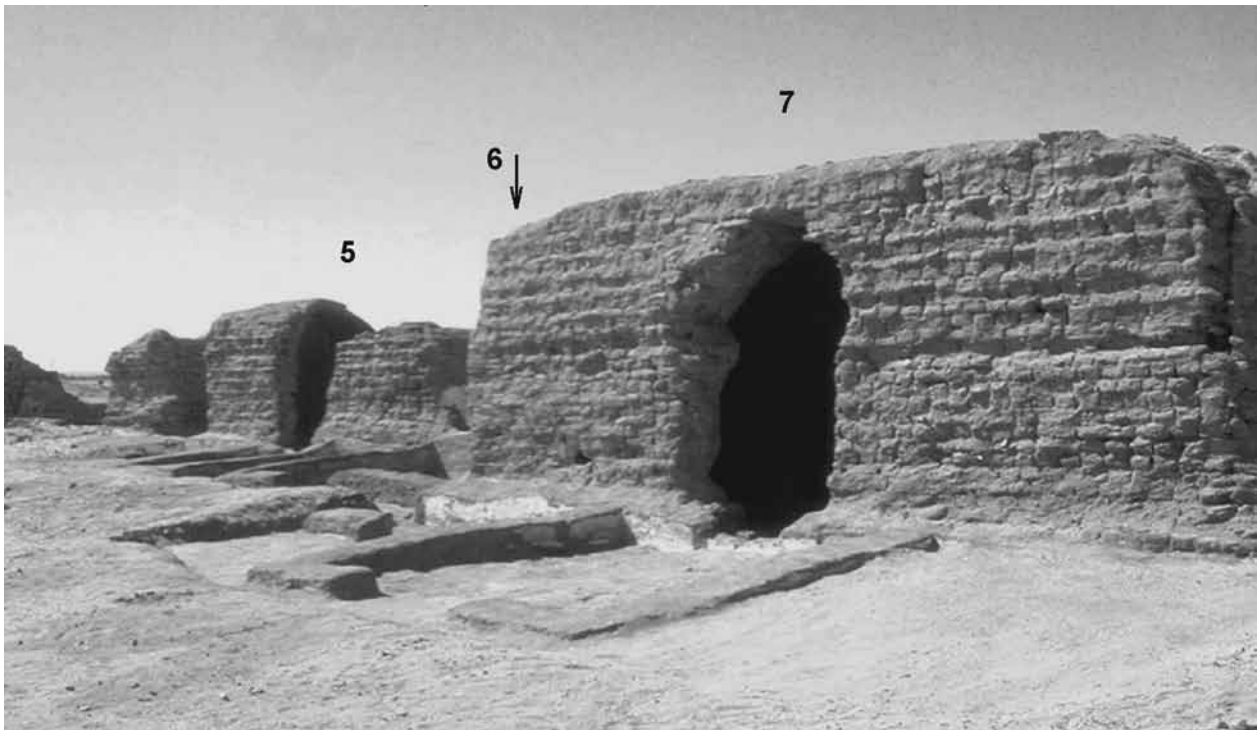

Plate 5: *Ismant el-Kharab: North Tombs 5 – 7.*

(Hope 2004:264, 272). This tomb was used exclusively for pagan burials. From the fragmentary remains of the burial assemblage found in the tomb, it would appear that after mummification the original occupants were either placed directly onto the floor or on funerary beds in the rear chambers.[10] Intrusive graves were found in Room 4, the transverse hall; they comprised shallow pits cut into the foundation trenches against the northern, southern and western walls (Hope 2004:266, 277). Each grave contained a single ceramic coffin. The burial on the west was intact and preserved the mummified body of a woman (Hope 2004: 77-82).[11] The grave pits were shallow with just sufficient room to take the coffin, the lid of which was just below the surface; the paving stones from the floor had been replaced directly above the grave.

The remains of 34 individuals were found in North Tomb 2 and of these, 22 were adults and 12 were juveniles (Dupras and Tocheri 2004:188). The estimated median age of the juveniles ranged between 3 years and 15.5 years; only two individuals were under the age of 10 at death (Dupras and Tocheri 2004:191). The demographic profile of the bodies from North Tomb 2 and North Tomb 1 illustrates the different attitudes towards the burial of infants and foetuses/ perinates by pagans and Christians. The burials in Kellis 1 cemetery confirm this conclusion (Marlow 1999:106; Dupras, personal communication, 2001; Aufderheide et al 2004).

The careful burial of these foetuses and infants appears to be peculiar to Christians and implies an expected resurrection. This has implications for early Christian beliefs concerning the nature of the soul.

South Tomb 4

Mention should be made at this point of another series of mud-brick mausolea located at the south-west of the village: the South Tomb Group (Knudstad and Frey 1999:211-3) (Figure 1). Only one of these tombs has been investigated, South Tomb 4, where excavation was undertaken in the 2000 field season. This tomb was plundered and although some disarticulated human remains were retrieved, there were no graves found in this structure (Hope 2004:282-4). This precludes re-use for burial by Christians, assuming the accumulated evidence for their practices was uniform throughout Kellis. **The 2004 research project and field season**

The 2004 field season at Ismant el-Kharab focused upon the excavation of a further six tombs within the North Tomb Group (Figures 1 and 5). The purpose was to record their architecture and attempt to determine their date of construction, but particular emphasis, as far as the current project is concerned, was on the possible reuse of these pagan tombs by members of the Christian community. The tombs excavated were Tombs 5-7 and 16, a fifth was a single chamber of a sandstone tomb, located slightly apart from, and to the north of the North Tomb Group, in the direction of the Kellis 2 cemetery, the sixth lies to the south of the main group of mausolea in the North Tomb Group and north of the West Tombs: the former was given the designation North Stone Tomb and the latter West Tomb 3 (Hope in press). Only the outer chamber of the North Stone Tomb was cleared. Tombs 5-7 and 16 all contained bodies, most of which had been disturbed but both the chamber of the North Stone Tomb and West Tomb 3 had

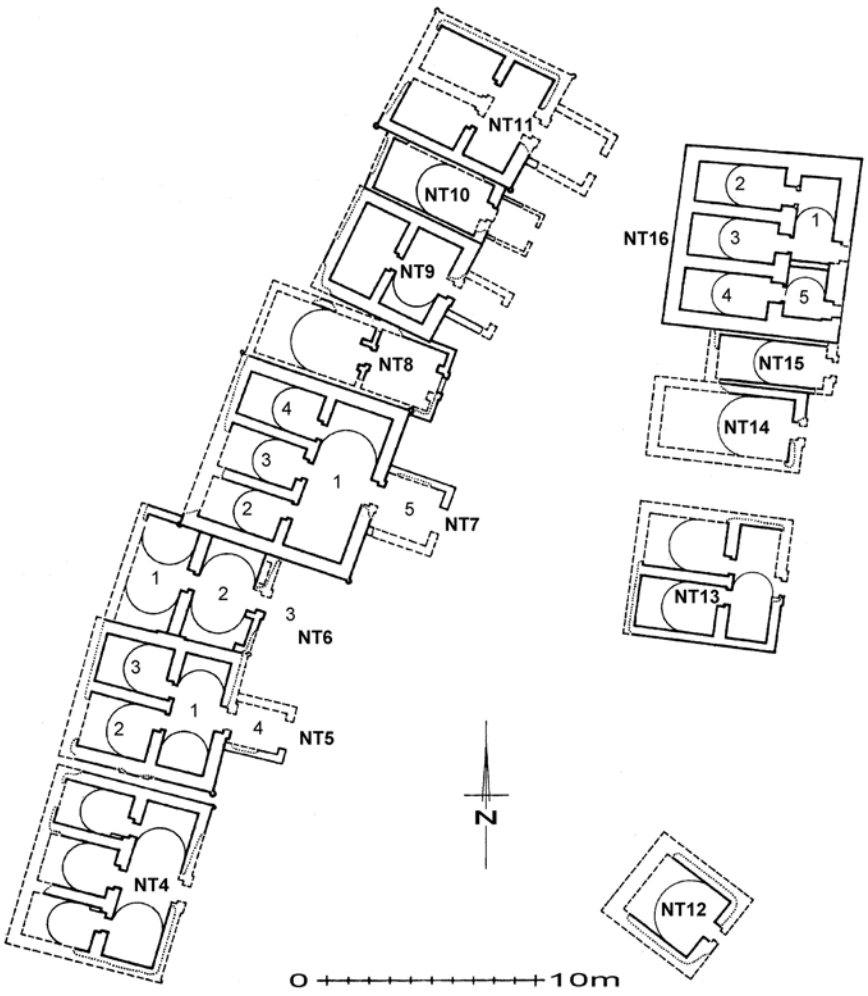

Figure 5: *Ismant el-Kharab: plan of North Tomb Group (Tombs 4 – 11 and 12 – 16), see Figure 1 for correct positioning (original drawing by J.E. Knudstad, supplemented by B. Rowney.*

been completely robbed and neither contained any human remains or graves.

North Tombs 5, 6, 7 (Plate 5) and 16 had all been robbed; all contained remains of intrusive burials, most of which had been violated, but none could be identified as Christian. Several of the intrusive burials were *in situ* and consequently, add to our knowledge of pagan burials amongst what might conceivably be the poorer social classes; this allows further comparison with Christian burials. The architecture and the human remains from these tombs have been described in detail by Hope (in press).

North Tomb 5

Tomb 5 is a small mud-brick structure, which comprises an entrance portico, a transverse hall and two rear chambers (Figure 5, Plate 5). Three intrusive mummified bodies were recovered from Room 1: one adult and two juveniles, as well as quantities of human bones. One juvenile and the adult lay supine in the fill, the wrappings torn from their bodies; the second juvenile was found in a shallow pit, oriented north-south (Hope in press). Although human bones and quantities of textiles were retrieved from the other rooms, no intact bodies or graves were found. Artefactual remains retrieved span the first to fourth centuries CE (Hope in press).

North Tomb 6

North Tomb 6, a small, three-room, mud-brick structure, was inserted between Tombs 5 and 7 at some later date (Knudstad and Frey 1999:211; Hope in press) (Figure 5, Plate 5). This tomb had been utterly violated and the disarticulated remains of numerous individuals were found throughout the fill in Rooms 1 and 2. In Room 1 there were twelve skulls, as well as quantities of linen shrouds, which had been torn from the bodies; these skulls and disarticulated bones lay on a straw-rich deposit some 0.50 m above the floor (Hope in press). There were no graves cut into the floor. In Room 2 there was again an abundance of disarticulated human remains as well as intact bodies. These remains were found on two horizons: those in collapsed mud brick and windblown sand, some 0.50 m above the level of the floor, and those which were found on the floor itself (Hope in press). Nine pits were cut into the floor of Room 2, aligned with the walls and oriented north-south and east-west. The pits themselves are shallow and range in depth between 0.20 – 0.40 m, which provides no more than a bare covering for the body, if that. Five bodies were found lying supine in these shallow graves; two individuals had been placed in a single pit, head to toe, another lay with the head to the north, one to the east and one to the west (Hope in press, (Plate 6). There was no evidence that the bodies had been wrapped or that they had been provided with grave goods (Hope in press). One had its legs tied together with palm-fibre rope. Fragments from ceramic coffins and items of funerary equipment were found amongst the debris. As Hope (in press) notes, the disturbed nature of the context makes it difficult to distinguish the sequence of usage but concludes that the graves are probably secondary. The date of these interments is difficult to establish; Hope (in press) has identified parallels between the ceramic assemblage in the tomb with that in the houses from Area A, which date to the late third and fourth centuries; others fit into an early third or late second-century timeframe.

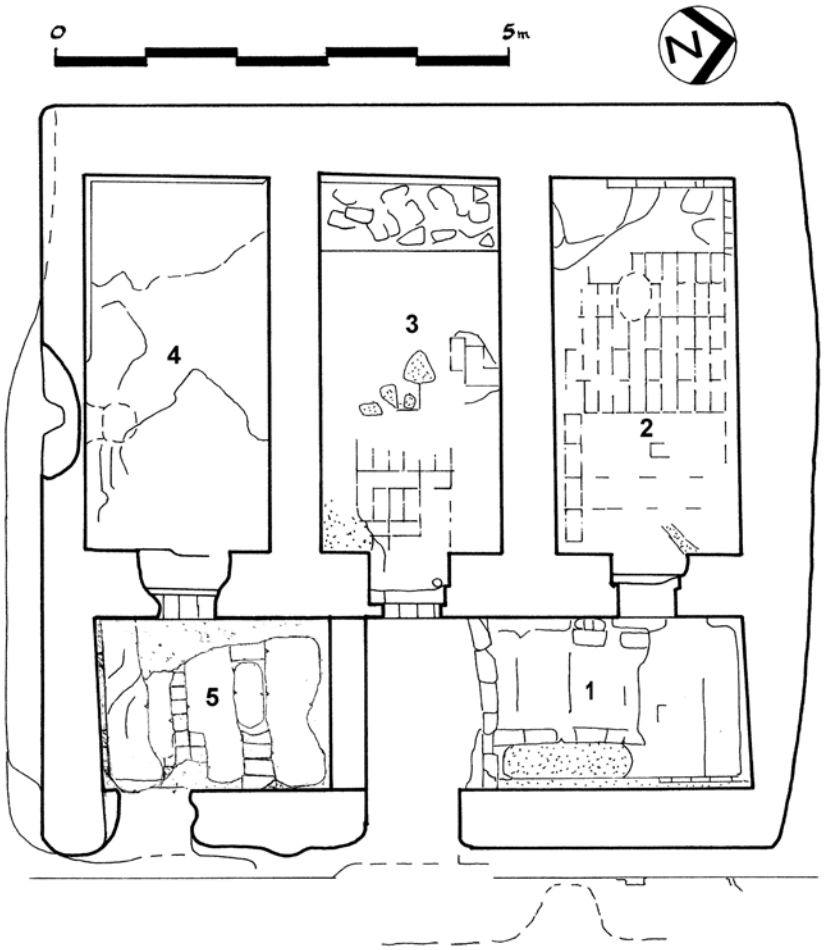

Figure 6: *Ismant el-Kharab: plan of North Tomb 16 showing the position of the grave in Room 1 and the depressions in Room 5 (drawing by B. Rowney).*

North Tomb 7

North Tomb 7 has five chambers and is similar in plan to Tomb 2 but without the stone-lined central chamber (Figure 5, Plate 5). The intrusive burial of a young juvenile placed in an irregular-shaped shallow pit in Room 1 was all by way of human remains found in this tomb; there were no graves (Hope in press).

North Tomb 16

North Tomb 16 lies some distance to the north of the other group (Figure 5); it is of a comparable size and design to North Tomb 7 but has no entrance portico (Hope in press). Room 1 had been subdivided by a narrow, low wall, one brick thick, laid parallel to the south wall. Six complete individuals, three adults and three children, were found *in situ* in this tomb, all in the northern part of Room 1 (Figure 6, Plate 7). Yet again, they were not the original occupants of the tomb but represent secondary usage. Four bodies lay upon the partially-disturbed floor: two adults against the north and west walls, one child to the south of the former and the other at right angles to the centre of the low south wall. The two remaining bodies, a young juvenile and an adult, were buried in a grave cut against the east wall. These burials were undisturbed. The grave, which measured 1.70 x 0.40 x 0.30, was cut to take the body of the adult; he lay supine with his head to the south, his torso had been covered with a coarse linen tunic and rubble placed on top (Hope in press). There was no evidence of wrapping of the body and no grave goods accompanied the corpse. The juvenile's body lay on compacted rubble above that of the adult. The juvenile's grave was delineated by the south wall and a single row of bricks preserved to two courses, on the west. The lower course appeared to be part of the original mud-brick floor of the room. The body, which retained its wrappings, was placed with its head to the south.

Copious quantities of linen were found in this tomb; they had been taken from the bodies and disposed of in one of the rear chambers; some was impregnated with red ochre. The ceramics found within the tomb were dated by Hope (in press) to the first to third centuries.

Room 5 was originally part of Room 1 and was created when the latter was subdivided by an east-west wall (Figure 6). The dimensions are 2.46 m north-south x 1.88 m east-west. No bodies were found in this room; however, four shallow cuts had been made through the mud-brick floor on an east-west axis and were probably intended as graves (Figure 6). The excavator reports that human hair was found in the east end of the smallest depression. Their alignment provides the closest parallel with Christian graves and consequently it is vital that they be considered in some detail. Three of the cuts could comfortably accommodate an adult body: their dimensions are 1.60 x 0.44 x 0.15, 1.50 x 0.45 x 0.08 and 1.80 x 0.50-64 x 0.10 m; the fourth was probably cut for a child: 0.70 x 0.32 x 0.08 m. The graves are extremely shallow and this is not compatible with Christian burial practice. For Christians it was essential for the body to be preserved to join in the resurrection. To this end, it would appear that the villagers buried adult bodies at a depth of at least 0.80 m to ensure protection. This is uniform in all graves excavated in Kellis 2, those in Enclosure 4, the West Church and North Tomb 1. One could argue that the graves were intended for Christians but were unfinished or, alternatively, that they were were intended to take the bodies of pagans and were cut on east-west axis to maximize the space within the room. One depression, cut against the south wall, occupies the entire width of the room, that located parallel to the north wall has a mere 0.20

m between it and the west wall. The maximum area left for a grave to be cut against either the east or west walls is 1.40, which is too short to accommodate an adult body. Intrusive pagan burials in graves found within Tombs 2, 5 and 6 indicate that they were usually shallow and the body close to the surface (Plate 6). An exception was the double burial in Tomb 16, Room 1 and the coffin burials in Tomb 2: the original grave in the former was cut to a depth of 0.30m and that in North Tomb 2 was similar.

Plate 6: *Ismant el-Kharab: pagan burials in Room 2, North Tomb 6.*

Conclusions based upon the results of the 2004 field season

Despite the limited sample, some tentative conclusions can be drawn. First, it should be reiterated that all Christian burials identified at Ismant el-Kharab to date conform to the same pattern: single interments in deep, pit graves aligned on a west-east axis, head invariably placed to the west with few, if any, grave goods. Foetus, perinate and infant burials were placed amongst those of adults and juveniles and were similarly aligned. The practice differs substantially from pagan practices.

Taking this as a yardstick, one can only conclude that it was not a common practice for the Christians at Kellis to re-use pagan tombs for the burial of their dead. There is no evidence for Christian burials in any tomb other than North Tomb 1. Why this group chose burial in this monument requires consideration.

There is nothing to distinguish the individuals buried in North Tomb 1, by way of status or sectarian affiliation, from other Christian burials at Kellis. One hypothesis to test is that it represents a family group. Familial relationship is difficult to determine; however Molto (2004:348, 362) has identified unusual pathology in two bodies found in Room 3. These individuals, both male, had chronic disease of the feet with sequel ankylosis of many foot bones plus osteoporosis of the lower limb, which caused severe debilitation; the younger man lost the use of his legs and was forced to propel himself while in a sitting position by using his arms (Molto 2004:362). This is the first evidence for such in the Kellis sample and could indicate a family link. Of further interest is Molto's (2004:362) identification of what he terms 'a rare, unique morphological trait, the suprescapular neurovascular canal' in two bodies. One was from North Tomb 1 and the other from the cemetery in Enclosure 4. Molto (2004:362) regards this as possible evidence that the two groups are genetically linked. If this is so, it can perhaps be assumed that the burials in North Tomb 1 are contemporary with those within Enclosure 4; that is, from the mid-fourth century.

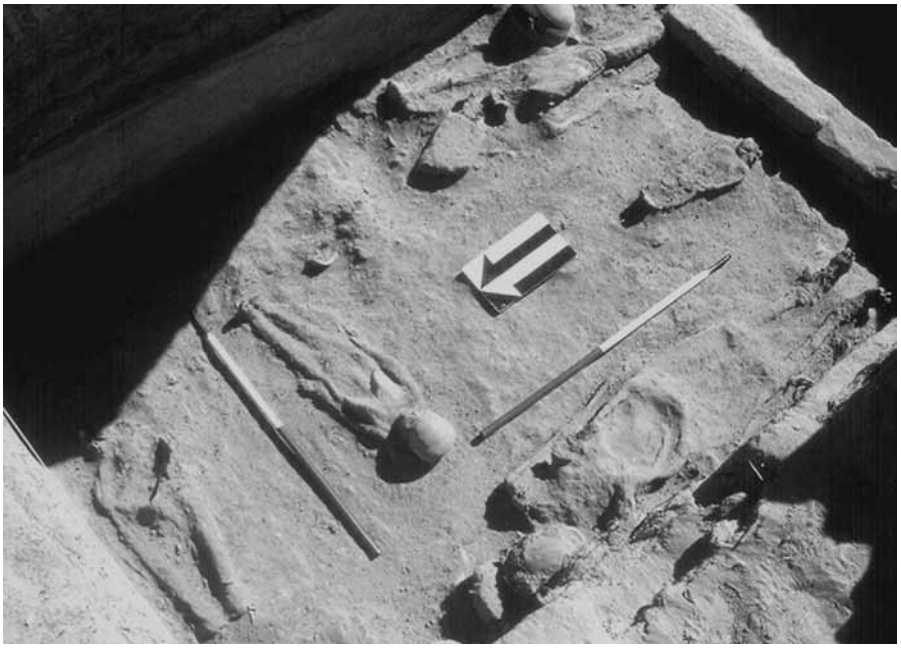

Plate 7: *Ismant el-Kharab: pagan burials in Room 1, North Tomb 16.*

The burials in North Tomb 1 raise more questions than they provide answers. Whether or not this is a family group, the question to be raised is why they chose this particular tomb for burial. There is no way of determining whether or not it was the ancestral tomb and so other possible reasons for use must be addressed. Was there something exceptional about this tomb? North Tomb 1 is the largest and most elaborate of the group and, with the exception of the North Stone Tomb, is the only one to preserve pharaonic funerary iconography in a cult room. Was this the attraction? Were these people still attached to traditional beliefs, in spite of professing Christianity; did they believe that their chances in the afterlife would be enhanced by burial within both traditions? A further point of interest is that the ratio of foetus/perinates and infants burials to that of juveniles and adults is high: 3:4. This far exceeds that in Kellis 2 or in the burials in Enclosure 4. To date, no explanation can be given for the placement of these foetal/perinatal burials, which were segregated from the adults and, with one exception, were in the corridor (Room 16) immediately to the west of the main burial chambers. Although it is unlikely that these questions can be answered, perhaps the current project would benefit from further excavation in the North Stone Tomb to determine whether the pharaonic mortuary iconography played a role in the re-use of pagan tombs for Christian burial.

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Endnotes

[1] Details of the archaeology and dating criteria of the Fag el-Gamous cemetery excavated by C. Wilfred Griggs, have not been published and his claims to have a first-century Christian cemetery (Griggs et al: 2001: 8) cannot be substantiated.

[2] Excavations are carried out for the Dakhleh Oasis Project under the directorship of Dr Colin A. Hope, Centre for Archaeology & Ancient History, School of Historical Studies, Monash University.

[3] Excavation within the Christian cemetery is carried out on behalf of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, under the direction of Dr J. E. Molto, formerly of Lakehead University, Ontario, Canada. The number quoted by Stewart et al was 450 graves. Since that time, further excavation has been undertaken, with the current estimate being 565.

[4] Several of the Christian pit graves in the cemetery at Bagawat had small stelae with the name of the occupant (Hauser 1932: 38-50).

[5] An infant, as defined by the physical anthropologists, is under six months of age. Individuals aged between seven months and 16 years are classified as juveniles (Dupras and Tocheri 2004: 192-3).

[6] A third tomb was excavated by the physical anthropologists at the end of 2003 but a description was not available at the time of writing this paper.

[7] In the 2003 field season a powder-like substance was found with some bodies and is awaiting analysis.

[8] Molto et al (2004: 362) describe this as 'precondylar tubercle, a rare and highly genetic trait…'

[9] Winlock's photographs were reproduced by Hope (2004: 249-52, plates 36-40) and Kaper (2004: 324-5, plates 2 and 3).

[10] Fragments of cartonnage and elements from funerary beds were found amongst the debris (Hope 2004: 272, figures 22-23; plates 64-5).

[11] The grave had been disturbed, the coffin lid broken but subsequently repaired (Hope 2004: 277-82). The head was disarticulated.

Architectural expression of liturgy and doctrine in the Eastern churches of the fourth to sixth centuries: towards a theologically contextual typology.

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Abstract: Many scholars of Byzantine architecture have theorised about the reasons for church form and structure, with most relating them to sources in pagan architecture or local traditional construction methods (Krautheimer, Crowfoot, Ward-Perkins, Mango and Hill); to aspects of provincialism, regional independence or location peripheral to empire (Megaw, Delvoye, Wharton), or to environmental constraints such as frequent earthquakes (Curcic). But just as the wording of the various creeds and ecumenical statements responded to aspects of contemporary non-orthodox beliefs or "heresies", so did the theological debate inform the liturgical practices and consequently church planning. It could be expected that these responses would also be reflected in the architectural approach to form and symbolism. Thus a contextual typological framework is proposed, based on the association of different architectural approaches to church planning and form in the 4th to the 6th centuries with the contemporary doctrinal disputes over the true nature of Christ.

Introduction

Analysis of the archaeological evidence of a number of churches in the eastern Mediterranean region in relation to the theological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries suggests a link between certain church builder bishops and their architects and the particular architectural forms of the churches they founded. It is possible that the particular architectural forms used were chosen because they were considered to provide a symbolic expression of the theological position of the relevant bishop in relation to the ongoing Trinitarian and Christological debates of the period. It would follow that specific architectural forms then came to be accepted as the formulaic expression of the doctrinal positions adopted by the various Christian communities.

The objective of the analysis is to contribute to the establishment of a typological framework based on the theological context for the large number of archaeological remains of early Christian churches found in the countries bordering the Eastern Mediterranean. These range from small, seemingly isolated chapels to large complexes including monastic establishments, parish churches, commemorative churches at centres of pilgrimage, cathedral churches at major settlements and palace churches at the major administrative capitals of the Byzantine world.

For the cultural heritage site manager trying to decide protection, conservation and presentation priorities in the face of scarce funding and resources, these sites need interpretation by archaeologists and historians. Which are the most significant sites and why? How does a particular site demonstrate its place in the history of Christianity in its region, or indeed internationally? How important is it to the local, regional and/or world community now, as a place of pilgrimage or as a tourist site? The extensive survey of early Christian and Byzantine architecture undertaken by Krautheimer in the 1960s and subsequently updated to 1979 (Krautheimer 1979) is a good starting point, with a large number of plans and descriptions. However it does not deal with the theological context including the Trinitarian and Christological debates in relation to evolving liturgical practices. More evidence of these is now available through translations of early sources, and recent excavations have revealed new information.

This analysis is based primarily on the circumstantial evidence provided by excavated remains and their associations. There is little documentary evidence of the thought behind church design in the 4th to the 6th centuries. The "one short document" on how to build a church found in a Syriac version of the *Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi* and discussed by Crowfoot in relation to the Jerash churches (Crowfoot 1938:175-184) prescribes the location of the various elements of the church (diakonikon, baptistery, throne, altar etc,) but gives no direction on the architectural expression of Christian theology. The various *ekphraseis* discussed by Ruth Webb (Webb 1999:59-74) are

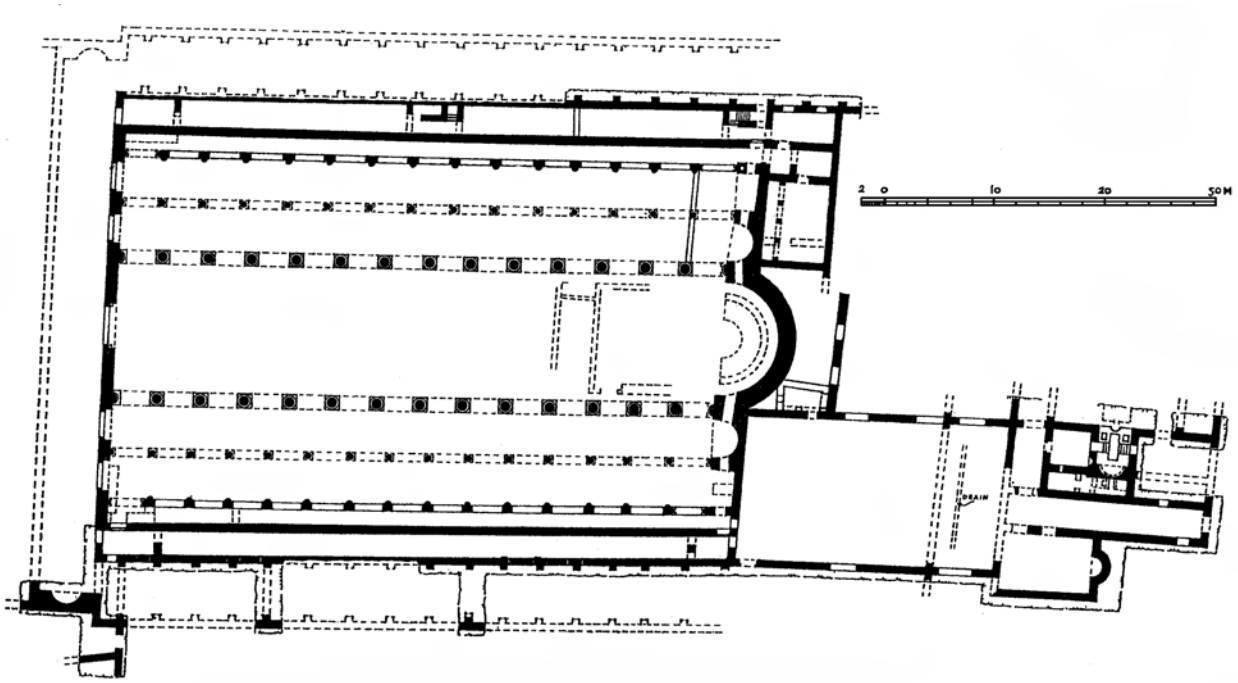

Figure 1: *Restored Plan of the Basilica of St. Epiphanius (from Megaw 1974: figure A).*

not helpful as they put the authors' interpretations rather than the founder church builders' intentions, and do not necessarily reflect those.

However in respect of the church founders' architectural intentions a few clues can be gleaned from the writings of some key bishops, in particular Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis/Constantia in Cyprus from 367 to his death in 402, and Gregory of Nyssa who began his episcopate in Asia Minor c. 371 and died c.395.

Epiphanius

Epiphanius was a key participant in the great theological debate of the fourth century (Englezakis 1995:39). He was recognised along with Athanasius of Alexandria and Paulinus of Antioch as a father of orthodoxy who refused to compromise his essential understanding of Christianity by bending to any influences from Graeco-Roman antiquity. His writings are valued for the information they provide on the religious history of the fourth century, both through his own observations and from the documents transcribed by him that are no longer extant (Saltet 1999). He travelled widely through the region - to Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine. He visited Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople and Rome, some several times (Englezakis 1995:33). His writings were widely read in the Christian world (Young 1983:141), and include the *Ancoratus* ('The Well-anchored') of 374, which sets out his own position of strong opposition to the Arian and Origenist heresies. In terms of Trinitarian theology he "speaks of three hypostases in the Trinity, whereas the Latins and Paulicians of Antioch speak of one hypostasis in three persons" and "clearly teaches that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son" (Saltet 1999). In his second, much larger work, the *Panarion* ('Medicine Chest'- a stock of remedies against the poison of heresy) completed in 377, he collected eighty heresies. His categorisation of these and numbered ordering reflects a preoccupation with numbers further demonstrated in his *De Mensuribus et Ponderibus* ('Of Weights and Measures') c.390, where amongst other matters he meditates on particular numbers including the number three (Epiphanius, trans. Esbroeck). Young suggests that his straightforward Greek and appeal to the classic Trinitarian proofs, such as the threefold *Sanctus,* was the basis of his popularity (Young 1983:134).

It is therefore not surprising that the sanctuary of the large basilica he founded at Salamis-Constantia (where he was buried in 403) comprises three apses (see figure 1). It is an obvious and easily read architectural expression of Epiphanius' position on the Trinity - three entities expressed by three apses in a line across the east end of the sanctuary. This is also the form of the church at Soli (also within the see of Epiphanius) of similar date, and later in the fifth century at Carpasia (Megaw 1974: figures A, B &C). But clearly the triple-apsed form was not universally acceptable as an expression of orthodoxy. It could be argued that in fact the triple-apsed form denied the 'God in three persons' position in that it emphasised the three rather than the one in three. The Alexandrian theological position as argued by Athanasius at Nicaea (Atiya 1991:300) - one hypostasis, but with coequality between Father, Son and Holy Spirit - perhaps explains the development of the triconch version of basilica sanctuary in Egypt, such as that of the monastery church founded by Shenute dating from the first half of the fifth century - the White Monastery[1]. The triconch sanctuary, where the three apses are arranged at right angles to each other around three sides of a domed central square can more easily be read as one in three (see figure 2). Similarly in Jerusalem in the same period, the sanctuary of the church of St. John the Baptist sponsored

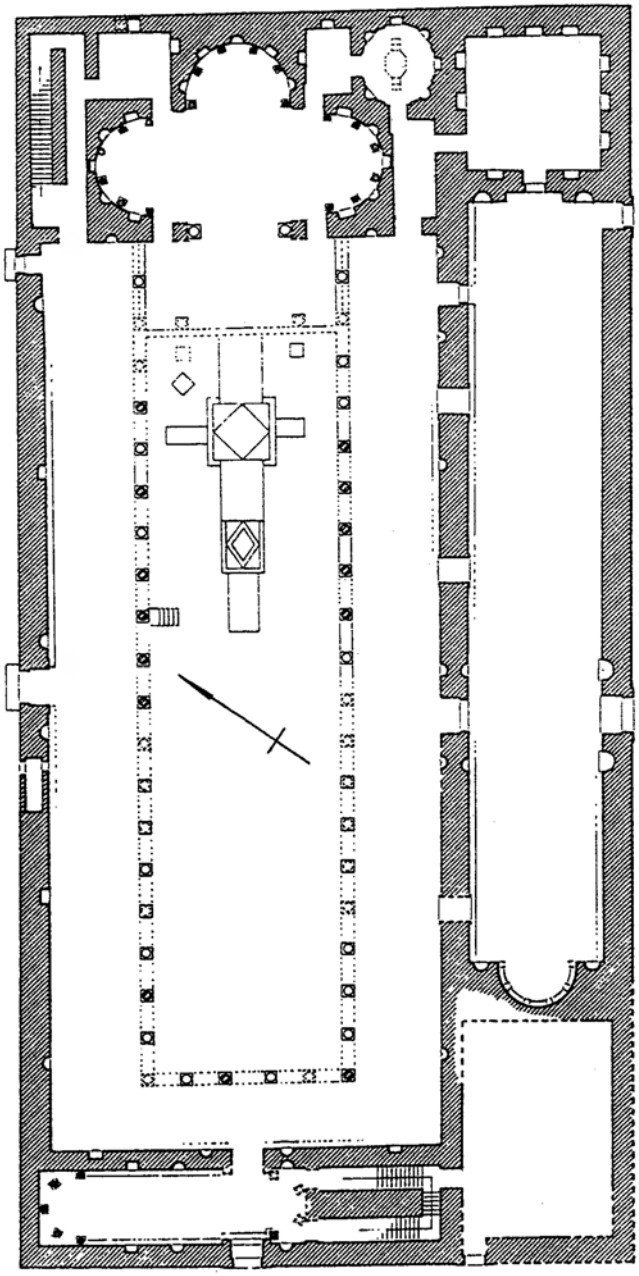

Figure 2 : *Plan of the church at Dayr Anba Shinudah by Peter Grossmann (from Aziz 1991:768).*

by Athenais/Eudocia (wife of Emperor Theodosius II), which survives still as a crypt has the triconch form, as did that of the church of St. Stephen, which she founded (and where she was buried) near the northern gate of the city (Join-Lambert, trans. Haldane 1958:134-6)[2].

Support for the idea that the triple-apsed sanctuary was an attempt to express symbolically the theological understanding of the consubstantiality of Christ can be drawn from the fact that the different architectural forms associated with the various positions in the theological debate are chronologically paralleled by the different versions of the Creed. Just as there was debate over the wording used to express orthodox belief, it can be expected that similar debate would have occurred about what architectural form best expressed and symbolised that belief. It has been argued that the Apostles' Creed dating from the first or second century focused on the true humanity, including the material body of Jesus, since the contemporary Gnostic, Marcionite and Manichean heretics denied that Jesus was truly Man. On the other hand, the Nicene Creed of 325 strongly affirmed the deity of Christ through an emphasis on the consubstantiality of the Trinity because it was directed against the Arians, who denied that Christ was fully God (Kiefer: Christia online resources accessed 19/04/2002).

Two creeds were appended to the end of Epiphanius' *Ancoratus.* One was the baptismal creed of the Church of Constantia, and the other is supposed to have been his own personal expression of belief. The former was adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It is considered to be a reworking of the Baptismal creed of the Church of Jerusalem, which itself was a reworking of the Nicene Creed. It essentially represents a version of the Nicene Creed expanded by the addition of the Filioque clause stating that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son,* an assertion of their coequality as a response to Arianism (Fortescue 1907:381).

The debate over the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son informed the change in liturgical practices and its reflection in architectural form. This is demonstrated by the fact that by the end of the fourth century the eastern orthodox liturgy required a tripartite sanctuary for the Eucharistic liturgy. As Baldwin Smith pointed out, the layout derived from the description in the *Testamentum* does not preclude the location of the chamber for receiving the offerings being adjacent to the central apse (Baldwin Smith 1950:151, note 57)[3]. The deacons conveyed the Eucharistic offerings from there to the altar table in front of the central apse. As Dix has described, the historical differences in the understanding of the consecration of the Eucharist, and the need for the traditional Syrian liturgies to accommodate consecration by the Holy Spirit in addition to their traditional concept of consecration by the Son, determined the eastern orthodox liturgy (Dix 1964:268-302). He suggested that the Trinitarian doctrine articulated at Nicaea was superimposed on the traditional liturgical action, so that the consecration had to be understood as a metaphorical representation of the resurrection, the Eucharistic offering having already become the body and blood of Christ at the offertory. Hence the development of an elaborate procession of the offering to the altar: the deacons were in fact bearing the body and blood of Christ, and their progress needed to be accompanied by appropriate awe and adoration. Dix quotes Theodore's (of Mopsuestia) early fifth century exposition of the liturgical action in *Catecheses* v and vi, describing the spreading of linens on the altar by the deacons, and their agitation of the air with fans (Dix 1964:282-284).

For the church builder/architect commissioned to accommodate this liturgy and at the same time to interpret the theological position of those who followed the teaching of Epiphanius, the basilica with triapsidal sanctuary as

constructed in the late fourth century at Salamis, Soli, Baalbek and Gethsemane was the solution. The form followed the traditional layout of Paulinus' Tyre basilica archetype, but modified the sanctuary to accommodate the new development in the liturgy and express the Trinity. In the period before the development of the great and little entry processions, a small passage between the central and side apses as demonstrated by the remains of the triple-apsed sanctuaries excavated in Cyprus at Salamis, Soli and Carpasia, would have facilitated the liturgical action.

Long basilica churches with triple-apsed or triconch sanctuary forms were quite different from the great domed church on an octagonal plan at Antioch, in which the traditional martyrium 'dome of heaven' used over Christ's tomb in the Anastasis at Jerusalem was adopted as an appropriate form for Constantine's palace church. This was begun in 337 under Constantine and completed by his son Constantius in 362. Downey (1961:414) notes that since the exile of the orthodox bishop Eustathius c. 330, the Christians of Antioch had been under the control of a series of bishops with Arian tendencies. The building of the Golden Dome was delegated to the Arian Count Gorgonius (Baldwin Smith 1950:26). The use of an all-encompassing dome in this church and at S. Lorenzo in Milan, founded by the Arian Emperor Auxentius c.378 (Krautheimer 1979:86), can be explained as a means of expressing architecturally the Arian focus on the absolute nature of God. The triple-apsed sanctuary can then be seen to respond to this by emphasising the Trinity and thus the consubstantiality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the same way that the Nicene Creed responded to Arianism by emphasising their consubstantiality. The use of this form at places strategically important to the Church under Theodosius I would have emphasised the imperially-sanctioned theological position. At Baalbek the triple-apsed basilica inserted in the destroyed Jupiter temple temenos represented the triumph of the Church over paganism; at Gethsemane the triple-apsed basilica commemorated an important place of Christian pilgrimage.

This is not to say that Arians would have worshipped only in circular/octagonal, domed churches as it is clear from the letter from S.Ambrose to his sister in 386 that the Arians in Milan wanted to take over his new, (cruciform) (Krautheimer 1979:86)[4] basilica inside the walls (Ambrose, trans. Beyenka:60). And it is clear that not all bishops conceptualised their theology in a way that enabled them to give direction as to church form. Mark the Deacon relates that Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza was at a loss as to what form his new church to be built on the site of the former pagan temple to Marnas, should take. The discussion that took place c. 403 is illuminating: "Some then counselled that it should be built after the fashion of the temple of the idol; for the shape of it was round, being set about with two porticoes (colonnades), one within the other; but in the midst of it was a dome spread out and stretching high" (Mark the Deacon, trans. Hill 1913:75). However Porphyry had doubts about this and prayed for divine instruction. He was greatly relieved when Eudocia, wife of the Emperor Arcadius who had been persuaded to fund the construction, sent Porphyry a plan to follow. He then obtained the services of "a certain Rufinus, an architect of Antioch, a believer and well skilled, by whom the whole building was accomplished" (Mark the Deacon, trans. Hill 1913:78). The plan was cruciform and the church was dedicated in 407. It was known initially as the Eudoxiana. It is likely that the plan was similar to that of S.Babylas at Antioch begun c. 379 (Baldwin Smith 1950:110)[5]. This story illustrates a number of points: not only did the bishop find the idea of copying the form of the pagan temple unacceptable, the form of an important church did not depend on available local building skills - these could be brought in from elsewhere when necessary.

Gregory of Nyssa

The use of the cruciform plan for churches in regular use needs some explanation as it was not intrinsically functional for the Eucharistic liturgy. Krautheimer saw the choice of the cruciform plan for churches in regular liturgical use, like the choice of the dome for the Great Church at Antioch, as a translation of a traditional martyrium form (Krautheimer 1979:86) in the context of preoccupation with holy relics as the basis for founding a church. However the cross form could be read in many ways. Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-395), unlike Epiphanius was an admirer of Origen (Leclerq 1999). He saw the cross as an appropriate symbol for the Godhead in that its four spatial directions represented the whole universe, and expressed the idea that the One who died on the Cross harmonised the whole universe through the form of His death (Ladner 1955:88-89)[6]. Ladner

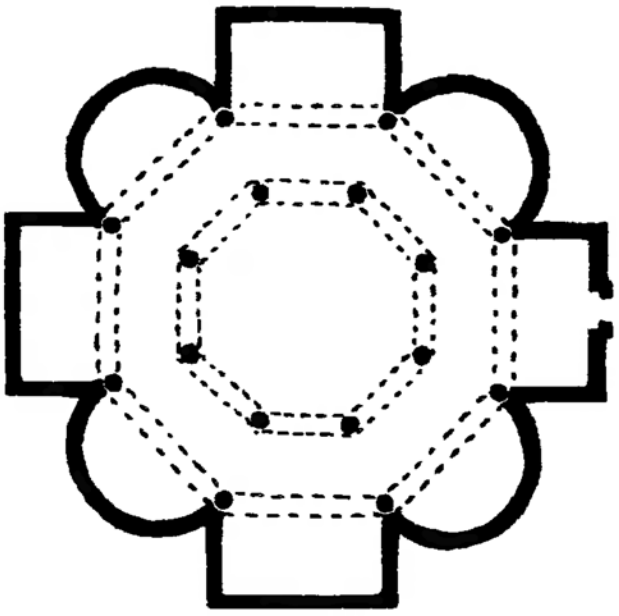

Figure 3: *Plan of the church at Nyssa, from S.Gregory's description (from Lethaby 1912:85, figure 45.).*

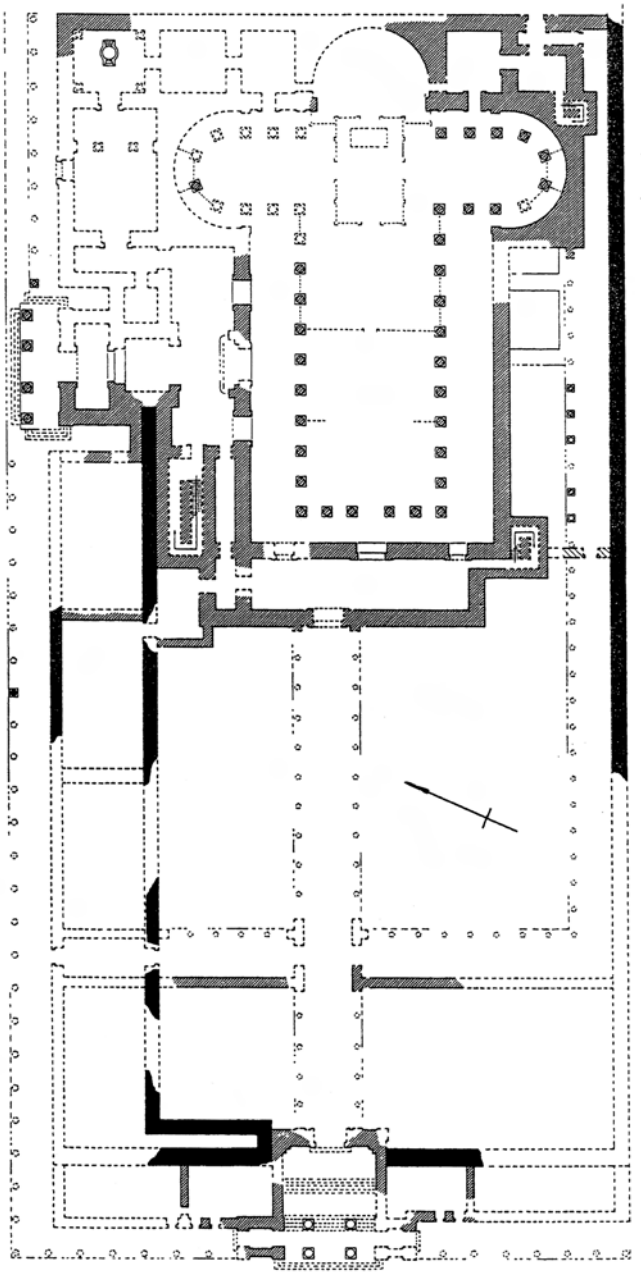

***Figure 4**: Plan of the church at Al Ashmunayn by Peter Grossman (from Aziz 1991:286).*

referred to the background of fascination with the mystery of numbers that informed Gregory's interpretation (Ladner 1955:94). He proposed that for Gregory the role of Christ as unifier had to be demonstrated through the visible shape of the Cross. Gregory's description in his late 4th C letter to Amphilochius of his proposed martyrium at Nyssa is translated by Lethaby to indicate a colonnaded octagon developed from the cross-in-square plan, with four exedrae diagonally opposite each other (Lethaby 1912:85). Thus the cross had generated the plan, but could not now be easily read in the form so created see (figure 3). It was a mystery to be contemplated. On the other hand the cross contained in the transept basilica form such as the fifth century cathedral at Al Ashmunayn, one of the largest and richest churches in Egypt at a once strong pagan centre (Hermopolis Magna)[7] could be easily read and understood as a symbol of the crucified Christ, while the semi-circular ends of the transept plus the elongated sanctuary apse retain the Trinitarian symbolism (see figure 4). The use of the transept form at this important location can be seen as an expression of imperial-sanctioned orthodoxy in the face of the revival of the dispute about the nature of God.

The Emperor Zeno

The variety of architectural forms used for churches in the latter half of the fifth century follows the condemnation of Nestorius by the Council of Ephesus in 431, the reassertion of orthodox doctrine at Chalcedon in 451 and subsequent attempts by the Emperor Zeno (474 -91) to conciliate the Monophysites. The various church forms can be explained as architectural expressions of the different theological positions, but some require more analysis due to the fact that they contain various forms representing different stages of construction. For example at St Simeon Stylites in northern Syria c. 480-90 (Krautheimer 1979:156-157) the triple-apsed form was used for the eastern arm of the cruciform-plan church (see figure 5), but the dates of the various parts of this complex are not clear. The cross-in-square plan of the Church of the Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs at Jerash of 464-465 had three conched niches in the wall of the apse according to Schumacher, although these are not indicated in the plan reproduced by Crowfoot (Crowfoot 1941:87 and figure 8). The use of the cruciform plan in this later period appears to coincide with the addition by Apollinarian sympathisers of the reference to the crucifixion in the liturgical acclamation known as the Trisagion, which according to Henry Chadwick was passed into use under a Monophysite patriarch in Antioch c. 460 (Chadwick 1967:208). This was not accepted by those following the imperial orthodox line asserted at Chalcedon, who interpreted the Trisagion as referring to the Trinity rather than to Christ. Perhaps this explains the combination of the cruciform plan with three apses or niches.

By the middle of the fifth century the bulk of the people in Egypt and Syria rejected Chalcedon and favoured the Monophysite position (Fortescue 1999), although this may have had more to do with nationalism and reaction against rule from Constantinople than with an involvement in the theological argument. The Emperor Zeno, although obliged to follow the Chalcedonian or Melkite line sympathised personally with the Monophysites. He founded the octagonal Theotokos Church at Garizim (see figure 6), which can be seen as a revival of the form of Constantine's Great Church at Antioch, and as such an architectural expression of the absolute nature of God as distinct from the cruciform, triconch and triple-apsed forms that expressed the consubstantial Trinity. It can be seen to reflect the Arian and Origenist aspects of Monophysism.

So in relation to the desire of Late Roman/Early Byzantine archaeologists to be able to distinguish between the archaeological remains of the churches of the various religious groups (Tsafrir 1999), it seems that architectural form is the key at least to the identity of the founding

***Figure 5**: The triple-apsed sanctuary of the eastern arm of St Simeon Stylites (Photo: the author, 1980).*

faction, if not to the faction of subsequent users. The proposed contextual typological framework is a work in progress by this author, but at this stage can be defined by certain particular examples as outlined below.

Outline of typological framework

The triple-apsed basilica developed in Cyprus at the end of the fourth century and was strongly associated with the orthodoxy of Epiphanius. The cruciform plan came to be associated with the theology of Gregory of Nyssa and perhaps too closely with Origenism for some. The basilica with triconch sanctuary appears to derive from Athanasius' version of orthodoxy, and was favoured by certain bishops and other influential church founders such as Athenais/ Eudocia in the first half of the fifth century. The domed octagon /circular/tetraconch plan was associated with the influence of Arianism in the fourth century and with the Monophysites in the fifth century. In the early sixth century the Church of St. Polyeuktos enlarged and rebuilt by Princess Ancina Juliana during the reign of Justin I following the healing of the schism with Rome (519) seems to have taken the form of a transept basilica (Mango and Sevcenko 1961:243-246). The sculptural decoration of the surviving column capitals has been recognised as similar to Egyptian examples, in particular at the White Monastery and at Al Ashmunayn (McKenzie 1996:140-142). This example can be seen to represent a revival of the transept form as emphasising the reunification of the Church. However during the reign of Justinian, the influence of Monophysism resurfaced. The domed church of SS.Sergius and Bacchus built for a community of Monophysite refugees by Justinian and Theodora at Constantinople (Bardill, 1999:9-10 and see note 65) develops the Gregory of Nyssa plan with the addition of an apse to accommodate the Eucharistic liturgy. The use of an elongated version of this form for the great dome of S. Sophia in Constantinople may have been due to the influence of the Monophysites with the Empress Theodora.

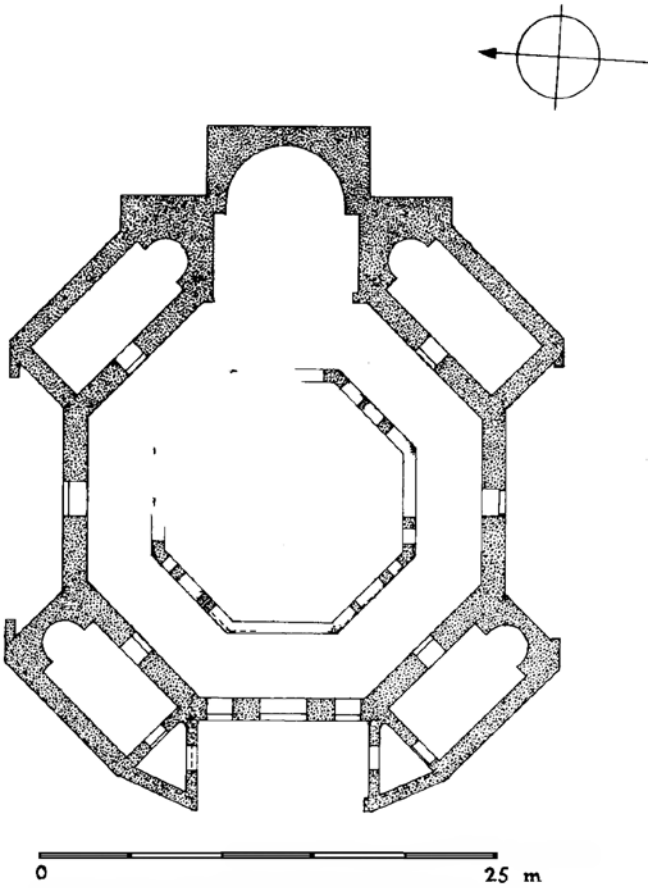

***Figure 6**: Plan of the Theotokos Church at Garizim (Wilkinson 1981:165).*

Figure 7: *Pella: view from the upper church down the Wadi Jirm al-Moz to the Jordan Valley (Photo: the author, 1978).*

In contrast with and perhaps in response to this Monophysite influence, the orthodox bishops/church builders at Jerash and throughout Jordan in the sixth century revived the triple-apsed basilica as the form appropriate for the architectural expression of eastern catholic doctrine (Balderstone 2000). In Cyprus the triple-apsed form continued to be used in the fifth and sixth centuries. Examples include the Basilica de la Campanopetra at Salamis (Delvoye 1978:327, figure 18), and churches at Carpasia (Megaw 1974: figure C), Ayia Trias and Peyia (Megaw 1974: figures D and E). On the other hand, it is recorded that at Edessa in the sixth century the Melkite cathedral was described as vaulted, with a "lofty cupola" supported on broad arches, all constructed entirely of stone (Segal 1970:189). The hymn from which this description was taken is believed to have been composed at the time of the dedication of the church after its Justinian reconstruction 543-554, and is one of the few pieces of literary evidence of architectural expression in church building (McVey 1993:183), albeit as interpreted by the hymn's author. McVey's analysis of the hymn suggests that the church may have taken the form of a cubic triconch with central dome (McVey 1993:194-Str. 12). If that is the case it would indicate a reversion to the early fifth century Egyptian formula for orthodox expression used at the sanctuary of the White Monastery. The use of this triconch sanctuary form was continued in Egypt in the sixth century at Dandarah, Dayr Abu Matta , Dayr Anbar Dakhum, and Dayr Anbar Bishoi (Suhaj) (Grossmann 1991:691, 706, 731, 740).

The implication of this contextual typological framework can be demonstrated by application to the church sites at Pella, east of the Jordan River, known in Graeco-Roman times as one of the cities of the Decapolis.

Application to Pella

Located opposite the junction of the route of the ancient armies from the coast through the vale of Esdraelon with the Jordan Valley, Pella presents a scene of pastoral tranquillity (see figure 7). The perennial streamlets from the ancient spring which feeds the Wadi Jirm al-Moz flow through a green delta, sporadically populated by herds of goats or sheep and their accompanying shepherds and donkeys. The presence of this eternal spring is the reason for the long period of occupation of the site, going back several thousand years. The ruins that punctuate this scene have excited pilgrims and other travellers to the Holy Land since at least the time of the Crusades, particularly those who accepted the identification of the site as the place to which the persecuted Christians fled from Jerusalem during the first Jewish Revolt (66-70 AD). The story of the first Christians at Pella derives from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, written in the first half of the fourth century, and was later recorded by Epiphanius (Epiphanius, trans. Esbroeck 1984: xv).

Although nothing can be proved one way or another about the presence of Christians in the first century, and the identification of the site referred to by Eusebius and Epiphanius with this Pella is disputed (Watson 2000:118), the extant archaeological remains are certain evidence of a later period of Christian occupation of the site. The remains of three churches have been excavated; all are aisled basilicas with atriums in a form that can be related to Eusebius' description of Paulinus' church at Tyre. However the sanctuaries differ from that description in that they comprise three apses, although the first phase of the Civic Church had no apse at all. The first phase was dated by Smith on the basis of coins found in a sounding beneath

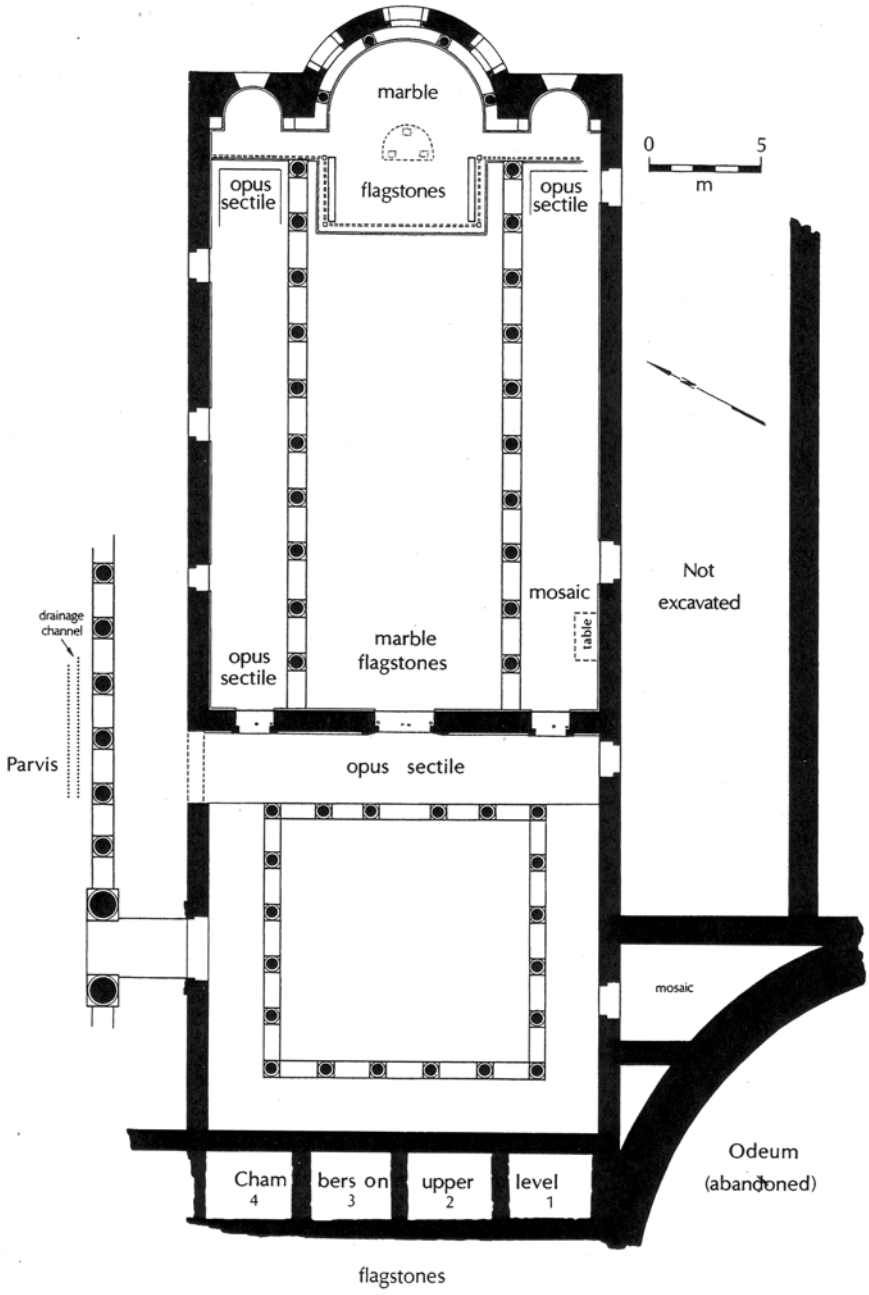

***Figure 8**: Pella: reconstructed plan of the Civic Church in phase 2 (from Smith 1989: 87, figure 25).*

the church to around 400 or slightly earlier (McNicoll 1992:159). The sounding yielded no evidence of an earlier building beneath this phase. Smith suggested that the second (triple-apsed) phase of the church should be dated to the first half of the sixth century, although he gave no archaeological evidence for that date. The other two triple-apsed churches were dated to the late fifth or early sixth century (McNicoll 1992:159) and the sixth (Smith 1973).

There are some aspects of the remains that raise questions about these dates. At the East Church a reliquary was found sealed into floor of sanctuary. The reliquary casket contained a silver fistula and remains of what microscopic analysis indicated might be calcified bread (McNicoll 1992:159). The casket was dated to the fourth or fifth century. If the relic is indeed bread, it might perhaps be a relic of the custom described by Father Gregory Dix of dispatching the *fermentum*, a fragment from the Breads consecrated by the bishop of the patriarchal see at the Eucharist of the whole church, to be placed in the chalice at every parish Eucharist (Dix 1964:21). He quotes Ignatius, *Epistle to Smyrnaeans,* viii, I, on the need for a valid Eucharist to be "under the bishop". However Dix later noted that the *fermentum* was abandoned in the East by the fourth century (Dix 1964:285).

A factor that raises questions about the date of the Civic Church is an inscription found in the debris of the Civic Complex, on a stone used as a paver in a later phase. This was identified as possibly referring to Theodosius I, Emperor from 379 to 395 (McNicoll et al 1982:109-110). It may have formed part of the dedication of the first phase of the church, which would put it up to twenty years before 400. Alternatively it could possibly refer to the second phase of construction, when the sanctuary was remodelled into its triple-apsed form, if in fact this occurred earlier than proposed by Smith (see figure 8).

In the light of the contemporary theological debate, the evolving liturgical practices at the time, and the evidence provided by extant archaeological remains in other places that are connected to crucial players in the theological debate in the latter half of the fourth century as outlined above, it seems that the remodelling of this church into a triple-apsed form could well be dated to the time of Theodosius I. If so, the importance of Pella as an early Christian site is considerably enhanced, as it demonstrates early imperial recognition, which in turn indicates that in the fourth century the place was considered to have some importance. This may have been because at that time it was believed that this Pella was the place of refuge for the persecuted Christians of the first century whose flight was recorded by Eusebius and Epiphanius.

Conclusion

Clearly further survey and analysis of a larger number of published church sites of the period is needed to develop and refine the contextual framework. However it can be seen that a theologically contextual typological framework would be a useful tool for interpretative purposes at early Christian church sites and ultimately could contribute to the dating of newly surveyed or excavated sites and their interpretation.

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Endnotes

1 The plan by P. Grossmann is included in *The Coptic Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 3, 768.

2 A plan of St. John the Baptist is given by Baldwin Smith, E. 1950. *The Dome,* figure 189.

3 The plans of the church at Farfirtin and the cathedral at Brad (Butler, *Churches of Northern Syria,* 34 – 35) demonstrate this.

4 Now incorporated into S. Nazaro. Its form was based on Constantine's Apostolion at Constantinople.

5 A plan of S. Babylas is given by Krautheimer, 1979: 79, Fig. 34.

6 Ladner quotes Gregory's Christi resurrectionem oratio I, Pat. Gr., XLVI, 624B.

7 The plan by P. Grossmann is included in the *Coptic Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 1, 286.

Jezebel: A Hebrew Disaster

Mary Dolan

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Abstract: The Phoenician princess Jezebel who married Ahab the king of the northern kingdom of Israel had a significant effect on the religious life of the nation in her day and beyond. In the world of the ancient Near East she was one of a number of women who attained such positions of power. Her promotion of the worship of the Canaanite deities Baal and Asherah was aided by the fact that Israel has shown a propensity toward these gods even before entry into Canaan. Jezebel's goal and determination led to a confrontation with Elijah who was equally committed to the worship of Yahweh. The extent to which the worship of Baal and Asherah affected Israel's understanding of Yahweh is seen in the inscriptions found at Kuntillet Ajrud. Jezebel was not fully responsible for the ongoing worship of Canaanite deities in Israel and Judah but her reign gave legitimacy to the long held tendency.

It isn't very difficult to find disasters in Hebrew history. The Hebrew scriptures are full of them - the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt, the destruction of Shiloh (an important pre-monarchy religious centre and the capture of the ark by the Philistines in the period of the Judges - 1 Sam. 4:10-11) and the defeat of the Israelite army under Saul by the Philistines at Mt Gilboa, with Saul's suicide (1 Samuel 31). There was the division of the Israelite kingdom under Rehoboam (1 Kings 12) and the fall of the northern kingdom of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722 BCE (2 Kgs 17:5-6). This was followed by the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonians in 587 BCE (2 Kgs 25:8-11) with the deportation of the cream of the population of Judah to sing songs (or fail to) by the waters of Babylon, the hellenising that gave rise to the Maccabean Revolt, the sack of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70CE and the Masada mass suicide in 73CE. Quite a collection of disasters and a bit baffling for choice!

But not all these were unmitigated disasters. From the Egyptian interlude we got Joseph's "Technicolour Dreamcoat" and Cecil B de Mille's "Ten Commandments" and of course the Jewish religious festivals of Passover, Yom Kippur and Succoth. While from the sack of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles we got Bony M's "By the Waters of Babylon" and the religious rethinking and later editing of the Scriptures that formed the basis of modern Judaism. From Josephus' account of the siege and capture of Masada, and the mass suicide of its 960 defenders rather than fall into Roman hands (whether we are happy with the account or not) we have an example that has inspired the Israeli military to hold in the ruins the swearing-in ceremony of their Tank Corps with the vow "Masada shall not fall again". It also has given us a TV series and those beautiful catapults that tourists photograph at the bottom of the Roman ramp, wondering at their preservation.

What about the people that we find in the Scriptures? After all no-one could say that Samson was an overwhelming success (even though as Samson Agonistes he tricked the Philistines with his death - Jdg. 17:30), and Eli at the time of young Samuel (1 Sam. 3:12-14) was hardly the strong religious leader needed to hold together the highly individualistic and quarrelsome tribes in the pre-monarchic period. Saul's career as the first king of Israel ended in disaster (1 Samuel 31), while Solomon wasn't an overwhelming success, despite his tremendous building projects at Dor, Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer and Jerusalem (including the Temple). His numerous and wayward harem and his own apostasy certainly earned a reprimand by the writer of Kings while his obstinate and insensitive son Rehoboam was unable to make the concessions necessary to hold the tribal groups to a united kingdom. Thereafter you can take your pick. In the northern Kingdom of Israel we have the two Jeroboams and Ahab, with at the very end Pekah (threatening attack on Judah with Syria - 2 Kgs 16:6) and Hoshea (rebelling against Assyria - 2 Kgs 17:4-5). In Judah we have Rehoboam, Athaliah (attempting to wipe out the House of David - 1 Kgs 11:1-9), Ahaz (instrumental in bringing down the Assyrians to put an end to the northern kingdom - 2 Kings 17), Manasseh, an apostate ruler (2 Kgs 21:2-9), and Zedekiah who brought down Nebuchadnezzar's army to raze Jerusalem (2 Kings 25). If you like, you could brush aside the fact that Herod was only half Jewish and include him too.

There's plenty from which to choose, but perhaps we need to focus on a disaster with a difference, a non-military one, the most disastrous marriage in those disastrous times! And the Ahab-Jezebel disaster has got to be the greatest. After all, what wife, however unpleasant, ends up as a dinner that even the dogs were unable to finish (2 Kgs 9:35-37)? I have excavated at Jezreel (1992-94) with the Tel Aviv University under David Ussishkin and I can testify that though many of us were on the lookout for the skull, feet and palms of the hands that the writer of Kings tells us were all that remained after the local dogs had had their fill at that city where Jezebel met her end, no such souvenirs turned up. Perhaps one day …!

For the northern kingdom of Israel, the advent of Jezebel was a catastrophe of monumental proportions. The arrival

of a meek-spirited reasonably self-effacing Phoenician princess to seal the trade links between the kingdom of Tyre and Sidon and that of Israel could have been a non-event other than being of great economic usefulness to both countries. After all it was only half a century since the northern kingdom had severed its links with the south and without the religious advantages of Jerusalem and the temple and the prestige of the Davidic house had decided to go it alone. And already there had been four dynasties, three assassinations and civil war. If ever a nation needed stability Israel did!

Israel's position in the international field was equally bleak. Its instability had enabled Ben-hadad of Syria, the adjoining kingdom to the north, to ravage northern Galilee, seize Israelite towns close to the border and territory in the Transjordan, and extract concessions for Syrian traders in Israelite cities (1 Kgs 20:34). Moab had been a vassal of Israel at the time of Ahab's very able but short reigning father, Omri, but was taking advantage of Israel's preoccupation with Assyria to start to slip out from it in the reign of his son. The famous Moabite Stone (Figure 1) found in Dhiban in Jordan records:

"As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years… And his son followed him… but I have triumphed over him and his house… Omri had occupied the land of Medeba, and (Israel) dwelt there in his time and half the time of his son (Ahab), forty years; but Chemosh (god) dwelt there in my time" (Pritchard 1969:320).

But beyond and above all else, to the northeast was the rising power of Assyria, expanding westward to the Mediterranean to acquire agricultural produce, soldiers for her army and a corner on the lucrative Mediterranean trade, hitherto a Phoenician monopoly. Already armies under Ashurnasirpal II (883-859/8 BCE) had ploughed their way through the gaggle of Aramean states to the north of Israel, creating panic in the area. One of his inscriptions records:

"*I… crossed the Euphrates… by means of inflated goatskin… I crossed the Orontes… I conquered the other towns... defeating their inhabitants in many bloody battles. I destroyed... tore down... burned with fire; I caught the survivors and impaled… on stakes in front of their towns. At that time I seized the entire extent of the Lebanon… The tribute of the seacoast - from the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, Byblos,… Amurru and of Arvad which is (an island) in the sea… I received"* (Pritchard 1969:276).

To whom could Israel turn for help? Relations with Judah were still tense after the separation, so an alliance there wasn't obvious. The most promising ally was Phoenicia, the scatter of coastal trading cities, of which Tyre, Sidon and Byblos were the most important (Tyre indeed would go on in 814 BCE to found Carthage). At the time of Omri and Ahab, Tyre and Sidon were ruled by Ittobaal/Ethbaal, and Omri secured an alliance, apparently sealing it with the marriage of his son, Ahab, to Ittobaal's daughter, Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31). This alliance would give Israel a chance to upgrade her economy, for surplus Israelite agricultural products could be sold to Phoenicia in return for luxury trade goods, and probably Tyrian purple from the murex shellfish. Israel too got a possible ally against Syrian expansionism – hopefully at least the alliance would cause Syria to hesitate to provoke too extensively a nation with such an influential ally.

Queens of the Ancient Near East

Women were not completely powerless in the ancient world, though there were limitations. Religion, as indeed in the European Middle Ages, could enable women to exert power. So, too could social status and queens could become prominent in their society. This was particularly so in Egypt, however mostly in periods well before Jezebel, though we can never know what stories may have been passed down, and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age had significant relations with the Levant. Still, what motivated some women in the past could be similar to what impelled Jezebel! In the foundation period of the New Kingdom there was a group of powerful queens - Tetisheri (whose grandchildren, King Ahmose and his sister-wife Ahmose-Nefertari built a pyramid-chapel to honour her at Abydos and who may have been regent for Ahmose), Ahhotep (whose son, Ahmose proclaimed on a funerary stela that she had rallied the Egyptian military and prevented civil unrest

Figure 1: *Replica of the Moabite Stone held by the Australian Institute of Archaeology.*

and who may have been regent for him) and Ahmose-Nefertari (queen and "God's Wife", spouse of the God Amun) who helped in the foundation of the XVIIIth dynasty through the Hyksos expulsion.

The New Kingdom's indomitable Queen Hatshepsut ruled as pharaoh after the death of her husband Thutmose II, even though there was a male offspring of her husband by a concubine Mutnofret (Tyldesley 1994:221) and even when that offspring, the later great Thutmose III, reached an age when he could rule. We don't know her motivation, but she was certainly successful and the creation of her mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri with paintings of important events of her reign still captivates visitors today (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *A view of Deir el Bahri at sunrise (Photo: CJ Davey 1976).*

Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III is credited with great influence on her husband, who certainly seems to have regarded her highly and went out of his way to proclaim his marriage to one who was not of royal blood on a celebratory scarab and boasted of the lake he had made for her. She was deeply involved in politics and corresponded with the Hittite king (Callender 1993:204) and a Ugaritic queen (Gruber 1999:139). Her influence, as a worshipper of the god Aten on her son, the young Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, will always be a matter of speculation.

Likewise Akhenaten's wife, the beautiful but controversial Nefertiti, whose sculpted head is the pride of the Egyptian Museum in Charlottenberg, Berlin, was another who achieved prominence and power despite her sex. She has been depicted often with her husband and their daughters and perhaps even played an important part in his promotion of Atenism and move to Akhetaten, where she is portrayed as a priestess of the Aten, taking part in religious ceremonies with and without him. There are even those scholars (e.g., J.R. Harris and J. Samson) who believe that after her husband's death she had her name changed to Smenkhare and ruled as a male pharaoh! (Samson 1972).

In the 19th dynasty Queen Twosret ("daughter of Re, beloved of Amen") rescued Egypt during a period of instability, the turbulence of the period leaving little in the way of documentation besides a title of "Mistress of all the Land" in her tomb. We don't even know whether she married her stepson, Siptah, though she is depicted with him in a wifely pose on a bracelet. She ruled as a male pharaoh after his death and has inscriptions in the Delta, the Sinai turquoise mines and even Palestine and an unfinished funerary temple in the West Bank of the Nile (Callender 1993:267-268).

In Mesopotamia, too, there were early examples of outstanding royal female figures. Queen Puabi/Shubad, by virtue of her rich grave-goods, would seem to have been powerful, but we have nothing more than the tomb objects. Sargon of Akkad's daughter Enheduanna is, however, one about whom we know quite a lot. She lived some time round 2350 BCE, certainly a long time before Jezebel. Sargon appointed her as high priestess of Nannar the moon god of Ur. Hallo in his work, *The Exaltation of Inanna,* looks on her as "a kind of systematic theologian" adapting traditional Sumerian beliefs to the conquering Akkadian culture of Sargon - no mean task! We know about her through the forty-two or so temple hymns which she composed and from portrayals of her. It is a tribute to her reputation that, when Sargon's empire started to disintegrate in his old age and she, with symbols of Akkadian conquest was expelled, she was eventually reinstated and her commanding position filled by royal princesses of the ruling powers until the time of Nabonidus (Nemet-Nejat 1999:100). Enheduanna was a virgin, something we know Jezebel was not. Nor do we know that Jezebel knew of such religious change as Enheduanna might have effected, but perhaps she was trying to influence the religion of Israel in a similar way!

Enheduanna of Ur wasn't alone as a woman wielding religious power in the ancient Middle East. In Ebla (Tel Mardikh), a fascinating site in present day Syria, Italian excavators under Paolo Matthiae have found an inscription of Sanib-Dulum, the sister of King Ibrium of Ebla (about the same time as Enheduanna), being given a valuable gift of cattle on her installation as 'Lady of a Deity' in Luban, one of his cities (Gruber 1999:126). Was she a "plant"? Was this Jezebel's function? Such activity was certainly too early to have any direct influence, but the idea of control through religion might still have been there in her time.

Information about queens in the Levant at the time of Jezebel is sparse and there is little that we know of any contemporary who could have been a role model. However excavations at the city of Ugarit/Ras Shamra (which flourished from ca.1400-1180 BCE and is our source of the Baal stories) show an interesting practice which we can see in Israel. Gruber (1999:138-139) points out that the wives of the king in Ugarit are not addressed as "queen", only "wife of" (Jezebel is similarly described in 1 Kgs 16:31). However, once the wife's son was on the throne, she was addressed as 'queen mother' which may have been, as in Israel and Judah, a formal position and there are documents showing her considerable power. In Judah we see King Asa on his accession formally deposing his grandmother Maacah: "he even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole" (1 Kgs 15:13).

Mayer Gruber writes:

"The kings of Ugarit habitually kept the queen mother informed concerning the affairs of state. Moreover queen mothers were from time to time sent on diplomatic missions on behalf of the state. In personal letters recovered from both Ras Shamra and Ras Ibn Hani, sons of the queen express their obedience to her by using the same formula that a subject king or queen of a levantine city-state would use in addressing an emperor or empress: 'Seven times I bow down from afar at the feet of my sovereign lady"'(1999:139).

This is interesting when we look at Jezebel's devastation at the death of her sons. Her status, even if Jehu hadn't stepped in to alter it permanently, would have changed considerably.

Gruber records very interesting evidence of the power of queens (titular or real) in two letters, the correspondence of Queen Pudu-Heba (the wife of King Ammishtamru of Ugarit) and the Egyptian Queen Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III (1403-1364) (1999:139). In it Queen Pudu-Heba greets Tiye as her sovereign, thanks her for an unspecified gift, and promises to send her a gift of balsam.

There are records of two Ugaritic queens, both called Pizidqi, handling property negotiations and one, Queen Ahatmilki, who ruled in her own right after the death of her husband, until her son was old enough to reign. Gruber reports her as having been involved in arbitrating a dispute between two of her sons and their brother who was king and goes on to point out that "On at least one occasion an Assyrian envoy to the Ugaritic court was directed to read to Queen Ahatmilki the letter he had received from Assur" (1999:139).

Queen Jezebel

The marriage treaty probably had a clause in it agreeing to let Jezebel have the comfort of her own religion. This would have been a reasonable concession for a young woman uprooted from her own people and her gods and all

***Figure 3**: Replicas of Asherah and Baal images.*

that had been familiar and despatched to a foreign country whose gods were not hers, whose code of ethics prohibited many activities to which she was used, and whose mate was a boorish and weak prince, Ahab, all no doubt without consultation. The Israelites were not strangers to such religious accommodations. Hadn't the great king Solomon done as much for his wives and built temples for their gods and worshipped them himself? (1 Kgs 11:1-8).

What they were all probably taken aback by was the scale of the religious support that Jezebel brought with her. The writer of Kings claims (1 Kings 18) that 400 prophets of Baal and 450 of the goddess Asherah "ate at her table" (probably indicating her support). (The statement may reflect the Hebrew use of parallelism and they may have been fewer in number, though both were important Canaanite deities). Such concessions would have included the inevitable temple to Baal built at Samaria (1 Kgs 16:32ff) which Omri had chosen as the capital and Ahab had continued building. (So successful was this that Israel thereafter was called by the name of the capital as Aram/ Syria was often called by the name of its capital Damascus). And there was an asherah (1 Kgs 16:33), about which we are less clear, but which was probably a wooden pillar symbolising the goddess.

Such wide scale prominence given to Canaanite gods in a population that may well have been mixed in its religious allegiance (the wide scale conquests of David and Solomon bringing in those who were not originally Yahweh worshippers) was disastrous to the religion of the new nation. The reaction of Jeroboam, the first king, to the loss of the Jerusalem temple and its religious memorabilia and hierarchy had been to set up two golden calves (at least

connected, albeit discreditably, with the Hebrew's past) at Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:28-29) and perhaps to solve some unemployment problem by drafting such people into the newly formed priesthood (1 Kgs 12:31). What they could teach and what religious leadership they could provide no doubt accounted for the gradual drift away from Yahwism. The choice of calves had been unfortunate as the bull was the symbol of the god Baal, and though Jeroboam probably intended that the calves should serve as nothing more than the cherubim in the Jerusalem temple - a resting place for the presence of the invisible god and a tangible reminder to the people of his presence, there were no doubt many who worshipped the calves or even the Canaanite god Baal shown at times riding on a bull (Pritchard 1958:illustration 140) or described as "Bull El*"* in the Ugarit documents. Indeed Bright (2000:245) suggests that Ahab was as willing as his subjects to go along with such a potential for syncretism as a suitable ideological "glue" for such a diverse population as was his.

What do we know of the gods Baal and Asherah, whom Jezebel worshipped? From the Hebrew writings we know that Baal was a god and Asherah both a god to be worshipped (1 Kgs 15:13; 18:19; 2 Kgs 21:7; 23:4,7), and an object (a wooden pillar?) which could be chopped down and burnt (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:5; 12:3; Jdg. 6:25; 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:14; 1 Kgs 14:15, 23; 15:13; 16:23; 2 Kgs 17:10, 16; 2 Kgs 21:3; 23:15).

Excavations at Ugarit from 1928 onwards and in 1975 at Ras Ibn Hani (to Syria's credit this site, discovered when foundations were being laid for a five star hotel, was protected and the hotel moved) have told us more than the scant information in the Hebrew writings (more in the order of who worshipped Baal and Asherah). Both sites are near Latakia on the Mediterranean coast of Syria, though today the shore is over 100 metres away from Ugarit, as the area has silted up since its heyday in the 2nd millennium BCE.

Tablets and depictions found at Ugarit deal with gods and goddesses which we know to be Canaanite, but we cannot say for certain that Ugarit was Canaanite (though most scholars claim this was the case). Ugarit is only one particular site, and that site is in the northernmost part of the Syria-Palestine region. When, however, the Ugarit documents are compared with the very few religious texts we have from indisputably Canaanite areas, and the record we have of Canaanite beliefs and practices in the OT, they do seem to reflect similar beliefs, so that even if the people of Ugarit were not actually Canaanite, the materials found there are similar enough to cast light on our other information about these people. There is no possibility that such information came directly from Ugarit. The city-state was destroyed by the "Sea People" in about 1190 BCE before the Hebrews were properly established in Palestine. However religious tradition tends to be passed on carefully and we can trace some of the elements found in the Jezebel story to Ugarit information.

One of the most famous of the temples found at Ugarit was that of Baal (40 x 20 metres), built on the acropolis (Figure 4). It had a small outer courtyard, with an altar (2.2 x 2 metres), a smaller court opening from it, and an inner sanctuary, doubtless holding the cult statue. As Baal was the effective head of the pantheon we would expect this temple to be special - and it did not disappoint. In a scribal school and library adjoining the temple was a real prize - twenty tablets of mythological poems telling the stories of the gods as well as stelae and fragments of stelae, one with a depiction of the god. (Perhaps this was the kind of monument called in the OT "pillar of the Baal" - 2 Kgs 3:2).

Unlike the river-dependent civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, most of Syria-Palestine got its water from rain storms, much to the surprise of the Egyptians, who were disparaging about those whose "Nile was in the sky". The prevailing winds blew the clouds across from the west (Atlantic and Mediterranean) to be caught by the north-south mountain ranges of the Levant, and condense as dew and seasonal rains. These not only made agriculture possible, but percolated down through the porous limestone rock to collect in caves and appear as springs. All of this had its effect on the religion, and we find the storm god assuming great significance.

In the Ugarit texts the storm god was known as Baal (Dagon, the son of the grain god), and it is under this name that we meet him in the Hebrew records. The word actually means "lord", but from an early date it came to refer to the Semitic storm god Hadad whose voice was heard in the thunder. He was a cosmic god but seems to have been worshipped in local forms as the Hebrew records indicate - Baal-zephon, Baal peor, Baal-hazor etc. He was the god who revealed himself in the rains and autumn and winter thunderstorms, and of course brought about plant growth - obviously a very important god. There was also uncertainty attached to such dependence on the rain, and both the Ugarit records and the OT tell of droughts - as of course we find in the story of Jezebel.

Figure 4*: Temple of Baal at Ras Shamra (Photo: CJ Davey, 1977).*

Baal rose to the active leadership of the Ugaritic pantheon by refusing to be handed over to Prince Sea, and with two clubs made by Kothar-wa-Hasis, the craftsman of the gods, he defeated the forces of chaos - Sea and Death. The goddess Astarte lauded him: "Hail Baal the conqueror, hail rider on the clouds". Asherah also prophesied that when Baal was given a house: "Baal will begin the rainy season, the season of wadis in flood: and he will sound his voice in the clouds, flash his lightning to the earth".

Baal was killed by Mot (death/sterility) and he was mourned by several of the gods. In a manner similar to the actions of the prophets of Baal in their clash with Elijah (1 Kgs 18:28) we read that:

"(El) sat on the ground: he strewed straw of mourning on his head, dust in which a man wallows on his pate: he tore the clothing of his folded loincloth;... he gashed his two cheeks and his chin, thrice harrowed the upper part of his arm, ploughed his chest like a garden, thrice harrowed his belly like a vale. He lifted up his voice and cried: Baal is dead. What will become of the people of Dagon's son, what of the multitudes belonging to Baal?" (Pritchard 1969:139).

Against this background, Jezebel's position allows for several interpretations. It is possible that she was naive enough to believe that her religion could be accommodated within Yahwism in the easy way that deities came and went in polytheism - and there were obviously those within Israel, her husband included, for whom this may not have been a problem. Or she may have been a devout worshipper of the Canaanite deities and even, as Bright (2000:245) suggests, have seen herself as a missionary of the Tyrian Baal, Melkart. On either score she had reckoned without the prophets of Yahweh, Elijah in particular, and the relationship of the two was to prove disastrous for both, though in the final count the prophet won despite having to flee to the desert to escape her wrath. His end was an ascent to God in a whirlwind sent for the purpose (2 Kgs 2:11), hers an ignominious throwing from a window by eunuchs expressly assigned to protect her, and a meal for the dogs after she hit the ground (2 Kings 9:30-37).

The whole course of her ill-fated marriage could point to her spirited protest at what was happening to her - her uprooting from family and friends, her marriage to such an unpromising husband as Ahab, the restrictions of the religion which surrounded her, the naming of her two sons after a god that was not hers - Ahaziah and Jehoram. Her promotion of Baal may have been her protest as she smothered in Israel's hostile environment. We've seen the same reaction in people today - the desperate clinging to Irish culture and Catholicism as the expression of antagonism to England's treatment, the aggressive Catholicism which expressed Poland's national identity when they were almost submerged in Communism.

And even at the end when she had lost her husband in battle with the Syrians (1 Kings 22) she could still make her presence felt, though widowhood seems to have cramped her style somewhat. Still, she had her sons but the loss of them, her elder son in a fatal fall and her younger son in a coup led by Jehu, must have made her more and more desperate. But it didn't break her spirit, and at the end we are grudgingly told of how she met her death, accosting the usurping Jehu as he came from the murder of her son Joram/Jehoram. The scene is reminiscent of the stance of the famous ivory plaque, "woman at the window" found in the remains of Ahab's "ivory palace" at Samaria (1 Kgs 22:39).

"When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and adorned her head, and looked out of the window. And as Jehu entered the gate, she said, 'Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?' and he lifted up his face to the window, and said, 'Who is on my side? Who?' Two or three eunuchs looked out at him. He said 'Throw her down'. So they threw her down; and some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, and they trampled on her. Then he went in and ate and drank; and he said, 'See now to this accursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter'. But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands" (2 Kgs 9:30-35).

It is interesting to note that although her sons were named after Yahweh, they were not ignorant of their mother's religion, and the elder may even have been a devotee, for when Ahaziah had his fall he sent to Baal-zebub ("Lord of the Flies"), at the earlier Philistine/Phoenician centre of Ekron, rather than to Yahweh or his prophets. For this he received a stinging rebuke from Elijah:

"... he arose and went down... to the king, and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord, "Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron - is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word? - therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.'"(2 Kgs 1: 15-16).

The younger son certainly was not a follower of Baal (perhaps his brother's early demise by the prophet's prediction affected him), for we're told that when he came to the throne he had the asherah that his father Ahab had erected, cut down.)

And what of the princess Athaliah? Was she the sister of Ahab, as 2 Kgs 8:26 and 2 Chron. 22:2 might suggest, (obscure in the NRSV and NIV as the translators have her as Omri's "granddaughter" rather than "daughter" on the grounds of the ambiguity of the Hebrew) or his daughter as 2 Kgs 8:18 and 2 Chron.21:6 declare. If daughter is correct, was Jezebel her mother or stepmother? We're told that Ahab had other wives (1 Kgs 20:5) and certainly Jezebel could not have produced the seventy sons recorded of him in 2 Kgs 10:1! She seems to have been the favourite/dominant wife, however, and it is her sons who become kings of Israel. Some historians (eg Bright 2000:242) think that the marriage between Ahab and Jezebel could not have produced a daughter of marriageable age in time for a marriage alliance to have been made by Jehoshaphat, the

king of Judah (2 Chron. 18:1) with Ahab for the marriage of Athaliah to the crown prince Jehoram of Judah. We are not told however when the marriage was consummated, and the alliance sealed by this marriage could have taken place when Athaliah was very young. Athaliah is never referred to as Jezebel's daughter, though by the time Chronicles would have received its final editing, this may well have been a thing of shame. Athaliah's Hebrewness may have been in question if she were Jezebel's daughter. She certainly has all the traits of a spirited mother, though if she were a step-niece fostered by Jezebel after Omri's death, she might well have taken Jezebel as her role model! When Athaliah's son, Ahaziah, was killed, Athaliah slew as many of the Davidic house as she could find. She ruled as sole monarch for seven years till challenged by seven year old Joash, who had been rescued from the massacre by his aunt, the daughter of the high priest, and hidden in the temple quarters until he was of a suitable age to rally support.

What of the marriage from Ahab's point of view? After all he too was caught in an arranged marriage, and probably with little consultation. However as a man he was in a stronger position, for if he didn't like a wife she could be safely ensconced in the harem and ignored - and we've seen Ahab had other wives and many other children, so Jezebel needn't have loomed large in Israelite history. But she did! Jezebel is held responsible, presumably through her influence on Ahab, for Israel's apostasizing, and the drought that was its punishment. The murder of Naboth is also sheeted home to her, though it was done under Ahab's seal (1 Kgs 21:8). Women in Israel could transact business and women's seals were not uncommon. Gruber reports seals with the Hebrew script dating from the 8th to the 6th centuries BCE (1999:147). Even more significant, we have what is probably Jezebel's own seal, in red jasper, displayed in the Israel Museum. Jezebel obviously knew what she was doing in using Ahab's!

Ahab is presented as very much under Jezebel's influence, which may well mean he was infatuated with her: "There was no one who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab whom Jezebel his wife incited" (1 Kgs 21:25).

Certainly she was different from other royal wives as we hear nothing much of them. The disaster of Ahab's marriage was that he was in a position of leadership of a nation where the religious traditions were held in honour by at least some.

Office carried responsibilities and Hebrew kingship was exercised under God, and though the monarchy had no priestly connotations the king had religious duties (as had all Hebrews) and was expected to give the lead in Yahweh's worship. (The accounts of Kings and Chronicles judge the ruler's relation to Yahweh and his acquittal of the responsibilities and duties of his office against Yahweh's criteria). Ahab's father, Omri, seems to have been an able monarch by human standards. The Assyrians long after his death were calling Israel Beit Humria (house of Omri), evidenced in the records of Tiglath-Pileser III over a century after his death. And Shalmaneser III thought the usurping Jehu was of "the House of Omri". The Moabite Stone, a record put up by Mesha king of Moab when he had finally shaken off Israelite suzerainty, also testifies to the ability of Omri: "Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years". But all we get in Kings about Omri is eight verses and the dismissal of the value of his rule as: "Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did more evil than all who were before him' (1 Kgs 16:25).

And yet Omri had done wonders for the nascent kingdom of Israel. The Jezebel-Ahab marriage had benefited Israel's economy and frightened off Syria from further inroads into Israelite territory (no mean achievement), Judah's friendship had been secured by the Jehoram-Athaliah marriage, and the establishment of Samaria, on virgin territory and untainted by previous bloodshed, as his capital was a stroke of genius. In an historical summary of his reign he deserved better. But Kings, though history, is theological history, and the events and lives featuring in it are presented and assessed in terms of other than historical criteria. (It would be wonderful to get hold of the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah" which we are told contained the "deeds" of these kings, but so far they have disappeared, presumably there being less incentive to preserve merely historical records than the works and judgements of Yahweh as in Kings and Chronicles).

Ahab was up against the same judgement. The selection of incidents that the writer/s of Kings preserves indicates the way he was regarded by later Hebrews. He is recorded, not as continuing his father's inspired building programme at Samaria (Mazar 1990:406), nor as expanding and fortifying Hazor (Mazar 1990:382-384), Megiddo (Mazar 1990:414), Jezreel (Mazar 1990:410), and the port of Dor (Stern 2001:67) but as building a temple for Baal and making an asherah. This is all presented in the context of disapproval of the marriage:

"And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him" (1 Kgs 16:31).

Yahweh brought a drought on the land because of this worship of Baal and we next meet Ahab concerned over the effects on his stock and the need to find pasturage, something of which no Australian needs to be reminded.

The very real architectural achievements are only hinted at in 1 Kgs 22:39. The strategic significance of the winter palace at Jezreel became clear when I was excavating there with Tel Aviv University under David Ussishkin. In 1991, for one nightmarish day, Jezreel became the headquarters of the northern division of the Israeli army simulating a recapture of the Golan Heights from a foreign power. The commander-in-chief was helicoptered in and out, as were his scouts, deluging us with dust, while army lorries full of soldiers were parked all around the excavations!

We find Elijah challenging Ahab over his and his people's Baal worship and demanding and orchestrating the Mt Carmel confrontation (with which Ahab seems to agree) between the prophets of the storm and fertility god, Baal, depicted with the thunderbolt in his hand, and Yahweh's prophet Elijah. A knowledge of Baal's attributes is important for a full appreciation of the significance of the drought recorded as occurring when Israel worshipped that god, and the theological implications (and irony) of the test of the "god that answers by fire". This whole episode has definite Canaanite overtones. Excavations in the Canaanite archives at Ugarit have produced many of the legends of Baal (Pritchard 1969:129-142) and it is interesting to read the account in Kings with this background.

After Elijah had seen to the slaughter of the Baal priests (again without hindrance from Ahab) and presumably the people had accepted the implications of the demonstration of Yahweh's power and his vindication of his servant, the drought broke. Ahab, we are told, immediately reported the event to Jezebel who seems to have been in his confidence regarding matters of state. Jezebel certainly recognised a worthy opponent in Elijah and started her pursuit of him, forcing him to flee for his life to the desert.

The selective nature of the account of Ahab's reign is seen in the failure of the author/s to mention Ahab's astute move in joining a consortium of kings of the eastern Mediterranean littoral to halt the Assyrian advance into that area. Shalmaneser III in 853 BCE was opposed at Karara in Syria by a coalition of twelve kings from whom the major contributions were:

"1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalrymen, 20,000 foot soldiers of Adad-'idri [Hadadezer] of Damascus, 700 chariots, 700 cavalrymen, 10,000 foot soldiers of Irhuleni from Hamath, 2,000chariots, 10,000 foot soldiers of Ahab, the Israelite" (Pritchard 1969:278-279).

A sizable contribution! And it seems to have been successful, despite the Assyrian claim of victory. Shalmaneser did not venture again into the area during Ahab's lifetime. That the writer/s of Kings fails to mention it may well point to a victory. Ahab was not the writer's/s' most popular monarch and a defeat may well have been hailed as Yahweh's punishment for apostasy!

Instead the writer/s of Kings chose to report a series of minor wars between Ben-hadad of Syria and Ahab where the Syrian demanded his silver and gold, fairest wives and children (1 Kgs 20:3) to which Ahab agreed (we might wonder what Jezebel thought of that). Israelite resistance was successful but even this wasn't attributed to Ahab's military prowess. An obscure prophet is recorded as foretelling victory and advising on the tactics to be used. After the escape of Ben-hadad, the prophet warned him of further Syrian retaliation. Again Ahab was successful, but Kings attributes this success to Yahweh punishing the Syrian mocking of Yahweh's power, not Ahab's leadership. Ahab's restoration of the captured Ben-hadad in return for trade concessions in Damascus was rebuked by the prophet, whereupon he was recorded as sulking: "And the king of Israel went to his house resentful and sullen" (1 Kgs 20:43).

The author's selection of the Naboth's vineyard affair was also meant to show Ahab as being under his wife's control. Naboth had a vineyard at Jezreel near Ahab's palace and Ahab wanted it to extend the palace domain. Naboth refused to part with it for money or exchange it on the grounds that it was "the inheritance of my fathers" (1 Kgs 21:3). Ahab is then recorded as sulking: "and he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food" (1 Kgs 21:4). Jezebel's concern for her husband would indicate that there might even have been some love in the marriage and after discovering the cause takes over: "and Jezebel, his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" (1 Kgs 21:7). Under cover of Ahab's seal she had a fast proclaimed and at the height of the religious fervour had Naboth arraigned for treason and blasphemy. (No-one seems to have been surprised by Ahab's sudden burst of enthusiasm for Yahweh). The result was a foregone conclusion. Naboth was stoned to death and Ahab got the vineyard!

This too has Canaanite overtones and is certainly told to discredit Ahab and Jezebel. One of the Ugarit legends tells of the goddess Anat who coveted a bow belonging to the hero Aqhat. Like Naboth, Aqhat would not surrender it and Anat had him killed to obtain it (Pritchard 1969:149-155).

The advent of Jezebel was certainly disastrous for the prophets of Yahweh. These would have been the spokespeople for Yahweh, and they seem to have been reasonably strong in Israel, where we have already seen religious leadership was weak. It seems that they worked in groups, for one of Ahab's chief stewards, Obadiah, a Yahweh worshipper, hid groups of fifty to escape Jezebel's pogrom: "Now Obadiah revered the Lord greatly and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord., Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and fed them with bread and water" (1 Kgs 18:3-4). The Elisha cycle of stories (2 Kings 2, 4, 6 and 9) suggests, too, that they lived communally.

Elijah was the focus of Jezebel's attacks on the prophets and though he was persecuted he is shown as finally winning. Under her sons' reigns she seems to have had a less free reign, and we are not told of any confrontation or attack on the prophets or Elijah or Elisha after Ahab died. Perhaps her sons realised the public backlash that such an attack would bring, or indeed, given who had won in the end, the futility and even danger of it. And, of course, we've seen Jezebel's unpleasant end!

Elijah suffered considerably from Jezebel's attentions. It is clear that Jezebel regarded him as the leader of the Yahweh party and the frustrater of her plans for the promotion of the Canaanite gods, especially after Ahab had told her of the massacre of the Baal priests after their Mt Carmel debacle! It's interesting that Kings stresses that he told Jezebel about what had happened):

"Then Jezebel sent a message to Elijah, saying: 'So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow'. Then he was afraid, and he went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah ... and he asked that he might die" (1 Kgs 19:2-4).

Elijah took Jezebel's threat seriously! Yahweh did not grant the request and after some food and encouragement and a special vision of God, he returned to continue his denunciation of the royal pair, confronting and challenging Ahab over the Naboth affair. Finally, Yahweh sent him to confront Ahab and deliver his rebuke and punishment:

"'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.' And of Jezebel the Lord also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel. Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat'" (1 Kgs 21:19, 23-24).

Ahab, we're told repented, and the evil was prophesied for his son's days, an occurrence which doesn't seem to have disturbed him. We've seen the record in Kings of the fulfilment of this, firstly in the end of Ahab: "And they washed the chariot [in which Ahab had bled to death] by the pool of Samaria and the dogs licked the blood" (1 Kgs 22:38) and then in the end of his son:

"And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced to his heart, and he sank in his chariot. And Jehu said to Bidkar his aide, 'Take him up and cast him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I rode side by side behind Ahab his father, how the Lord uttered this oracle against him: "... the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons - says the Lord - I will requite you on this plot of ground". Now therefore take him'" (2 Kgs 9:24-26).

The last picture we have of Ahab is of his sally against Damascus to retake some of his territory with the help of Jehoshaphat of Judah, Athaliah's husband. The prophet Micaiah warned against the venture, but Ahab was more encouraged by the false prophets who promised victory, though he did disguise himself, presumably to thwart the prophecy. This proved to be of no avail and he was seriously wounded, but with great courage he stayed with the battle till he bled to death, leaving Jezebel a widow for twelve years.

Jezebel, too, met her end bravely. She is recorded as painting herself, braiding her hair and challenging her killer (2 Kgs 9:30-32) before suffering her end, which we've seen already. Jehu's words were recorded as a fitting epitaph:

"This is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, 'In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the corpse of Jezebel shall be of dung upon the face of the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, "This is Jezebel"'" (2 Kgs 9:36-37).

Can Jezebel (and her daughter/step-daughter/niece Athaliah) be held totally responsible for Israel and Judah's apostasy? We've seen that well before their time Baal had been worshipped by the Hebrews. Even at the time of Moses in the wilderness wanderings some of the people worshipped Baal (Numbers 25). In Judges 2 we're told that after the death of Joshua the Israelites served Baal and Ashtoreth. Judges 6 records that Gideon's father, Joash (a Yahweh name), had an altar to Baal and Gideon who was a Yahweh worshipper had at least tolerated his father's shrine. He was told to cut down the asherah pole (6:26) and burn a sacrifice to God with the wood. This he did to the consternation of the "men of the town" (v28-31) so it wasn't just Joash's aberration! At the time of Jephthah we have the same situation (Judges 10).

Just before Samuel's victory at Mizpah he ordered the Israelites: "'rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only'… So the people put away their Baals and Ashtoreths" (1 Sam 7:3-4). Solomon was recorded as following Ashtoreth, a Sidonian goddess (1 Kgs 11:5), so there was a very real potential for apostasy, even among the leadership! And we've seen Maacah, a Judaean queen mother worshipping Asherah (1 Kgs 15:11). Even in Jehu's purge of Baal worship he left the asherah pole in Samaria (2 Kgs 13:6).

This is interesting in the light of Zev Meshel's excavations at Kuntillet Ajrud in the Negev desert. The site was very small, two buildings on a flat-topped hill with wells at the foot, but its contents sent shock waves round the world of OT scholarship. The contents date from the mid 9th to the mid 8th century BCE and analysis of the pottery (Barkay 1992:328) shows that it came from Israel, Judah and the coast, but the pithoi from the Jerusalem area. This was obviously a time when the two kingdoms were at peace, indeed it could have been established at the time when Jezebel and Athaliah were powerful. Its position in the eastern Sinai on an important road could have made it a way station for travellers into the Sinai or to Eziongeber (where there seems to have been an attempt to get sea transport established (1 Kgs 22:49). Mazar even suggests pilgrims to Mount Horeb/Sinai may have travelled that way (1990:449).

Before its discovery scholars believed that though one might find Israelites who worshipped Canaanite gods (the OT is full of polemics by the prophets against what was in fact a very tempting religion), nowhere did you find Israelites copying pagan practices by depicting Yahweh or following pagan tradition in attributing a consort to him. (It is possible that the naked figure is not Yahweh, but there is no ambiguity in the way in which the inscriptions can be regarded.)

The discoveries took the form of paintings on the plaster of the walls - some even on the lintels of doors (see Deut. 6:9) - and inscriptions and depictions of what may well be Yahweh and a consort on pithoi, the depiction of the

god Bes, and a procession of five male figures with their arms lifted as if in prayer (interesting in itself). They were exhibited in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem where I was fortunate to see them in 1986 and 1987 before they were returned to Egypt as part of the Camp David Accord.

The really remarkable inscriptions proclaim (according to the captions at the Israel Museum): "I bless you by Yahweh of Shomron (Samaria) and by his Asherah" and "Amarya says, "say to my lord the King: I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by his Asherah. May he bless you and guard you and may (God) be with my lord'".

These inscriptions show two things. One is the linking of Yahweh with a consort (and a Canaanite one at that!) in a way that abrogates the first commandment - and the second commandment too, if the depictions are those of Yahweh - but also the fact that Yahweh has taken on almost tribal or cult centre attributions. Meshel believes that the site was not only a trading centre (there was little connection with the surrounding Negev in the pottery sherds found there, though the pithoi on scientific analysis prove to have come from Jerusalem), but also the station of a group of northern priests (noting the reference to Samaria) who blessed traders and travellers (for a price?). This was at a time when there was peace between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and there was Israelite trade through Eziongeber and the Red Sea - perhaps at the time of the Jehoshaphat-Ahab alliance (I Kgs 22:49), a view held by Mazar (1990:449). It could however be an Israelite outpost established after king Jehoash of Israel had defeated king Amaziah of Judah (2 Kgs 14:11-16). Less than 100 years separate the two possibilities, and the pottery isn't indicative enough to pin it down more precisely. The real issue for Meshel is to attribute it to the northern kingdom of Israel, and here the mention of Samaria is useful, and to show, therefore, that though Israel was capable of such heresy, Judah wasn't! He also uses it to show the justice of the prophets' denunciations of northern apostasy, perhaps the result of Jezebel's influence?

But could such foreign influence have been lasting? We've seen the tendency to worship Baal and the Canaanite deities well before Jezebel. And with the overthrow of Jezebel, the House of Omri, and Athaliah, it could be expected that this would have been eradicated if they alone were to blame! To sheet home the responsibility to Jezebel overlooks the fact that despite purges by Hezekiah and Josiah, it was still endemic in Judah at the time of Jeremiah, who rebuked the people of Judah for following "other gods" (Jer. 7:6), burning incense to Baal (7:9) and the women for making cakes to offer to the "queen of heaven" Indeed he threatened them with drought (8:13) and the destruction of Jerusalem and their land by the Babylonians.

In summing up the impact of Jezebel we observe the strength of her commitment to the worship of Baal and Asherah. If it had not been for Elijah her impact would have been far greater. It is clear however that she was not fully responsible for the adoption of these gods in the northern kingdom in particular as Israel had been attracted to Canaanite religion even before entering the land of Canaan. On the other hand, it is equally apparent that her reign and that of Athaliah gave legitimacy to this tendency which led ultimately to the political and spiritual demise of both kingdoms

It would be an ironic addendum if it could be proved that the economic wealth that resulted from the Phoenicia-Israel alliance was what attracted the Assyrians to the area and brought their attacks on the Phoenician cities and the end of the northern kingdom of Israel as an independent nation.

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