

Latest News on Excavations in the Lebanon

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I. BEIRUT

A NEWLY DISCOVERED ROMAN
INSCRIPTION (FIG. 1)

A stone votive altar with 13 lines of

Roman inscription was found while new foundation work was being carried out at the corner of Allembey Street and Weygand Street, south of the Bey 064 site. The same location explored by Hans Curvers had already produced a variety of fragments from Corinthian columns and capitals. The stone altar, however, is undoubtedly the most interesting of the finds and will be further described when Mr. Curvers publishes his discovery. According to Chaker Ghadbane, archaeologist with the DGA, the text represents a roman centurion's eulogy to his superior officer who had held high office in several different roman legions. The inscribed altar is the fourth of its kind similar to two others that had in the past been found by Jean Lauffray (fig. 2). Another stone altar due to be published in *BAAL* 1, 1996 by Kevin Butcher (fig. 3) and dedicated to «Julia Domna» was found by Helga Seeden.

THE CZECH ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEAM

A news conference was held at the DGA on the 22nd of June 1996 to report on the latest work being carried out by the Czech team. In the presence of the Czech ambassador, H.E. Mr. Piotr Skalnik, the team's leader, Professor Bozek, outlined the results of their excavations at Martyr's Square which began on 16th May 1996. The finds made at the site dated back to the third and second centuries AD.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE DOWN-TOWN BEIRUT EXCAVATIONS

-Helga Seeden's excavations along Omari Street established the existence of roman baths which were unearthed throughout the month of August (fig. 4-6).

-At Martyr's Square, work is continuing under Marlies Heinz and Karin Bartel of the Universities of Freiburg and Berlin.

-In September the Lebanese-German team led by Uwe Finkbeiner and Hélène Sader resumed work at the Rivoli location for its third consecutive field operation.

II. BAALBECK (Beqa' valley)

In June 96, three stone sarcophagi

were discovered when foundation work was being carried out by the Department of Post Telephone & Telegraph for the installation of a telephone network one kilometre south of the Baalbeck ruins. A team from the Directorate General of Antiquities was put to work unearthing the sarcophagi, only one of which still had all of its contents. Found inside, along with the human remains, was a funerary head-dress made of several fine sheets of gold probably intended to be worn over the face of the deceased. Also found, was a necklace made of 53 gold leaves, a bronze ring and a series of small vases, bottles and *unguentariums*, all in remarkably good condition. The primary dating of the sarcophagi's contents by the archaeologists places them at around the 3rd century AD (fig. 7).

III. MOUNT-LEBANON (Chouf, Chhim)

IKLIM AL-KHARROUB (fig. 8-10)

In July 96, a team of archaeologists began work at Chhim, a site previously excavated in the 1950's. The team included Renata Ortalli Tarazi (DGA), working in collaboration with Levon Nordiguian (IFAPO) and a group of Polish archaeologists from the University of Warsaw (led by Thomas Waliszewski). A Byzantine basilica was unearthed with its central nave, two lateral aisles and a 23-metre long mosaic depicting geometric and animal patterns. The 6th century basilica was clearly dateable from the inscriptions found within. Additionally, the roman temple previously unearthed and restored by the DGA, revealed succeeding phases in its construction. Subject to further investigation, preliminary signs suggest that the roman temple was built on a much earlier cistern. Close to the temple, ten olive oil presses were also found, along with bronze vats, balances and counter-balances.

IV. TYRE PROPER

THE BASILICA (FIG. 11-15)

The remains of a Christian basilica were recently found during construction work being carried out between two buildings. The archaeologist Ali Badaoui was in charge of excavating a section of the sanctuary

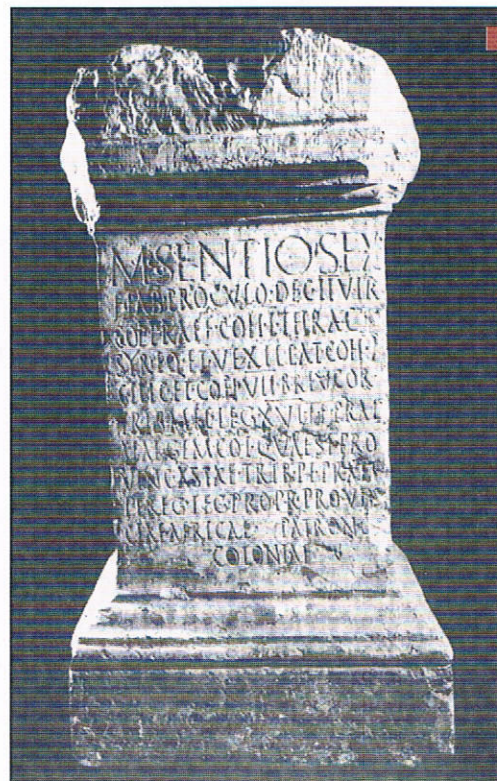
where a number of marble fragments still bear traces of an important fire. The church is built along the lines of a basilica with two choirs extending into the central nave. This type of double-choir church is particular it would seem to the Phoenician coast. F. Alpi and

L. Nordiguian have moreover established a link with churches of an identical style, notably those of Khan-Khaldé, Khaldé-Choueifat, Boustan ech-Cheikh and

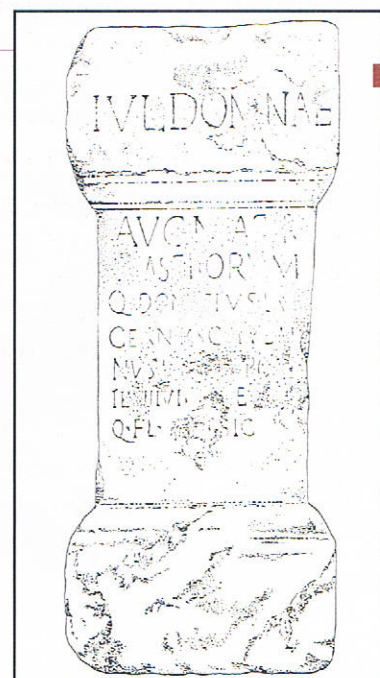
Qasr Hira. A sculpted balustrade borders the western edge of the upper choir which rises 60 cm above the central nave. The sculptures are of foliage decorated with vine leaves and bunches of grapes overflowing from a vase. It is worth noting that the choir's platform is embedded with tombs. The lower choir is an extension of the higher one. The largest part of the balustrade normally surrounding three sides of the lower choir is also decorated with sculptures in animal and plant motifs. Traces of circular and squared marble paving can still be seen in places.



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2



3

1. Beirut, stone altar discovered by Hans Curvers (photo Renata Ortalli Tarazi DGA).
2. Beirut, stone altar found by Jean Lauffray.
3. Beirut, stone altar dedicated to Julia Domna due to be published by Kevin Butcher.

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THE SARCOPHAGI (FIG. 16-17)

New sarcophagi found during work on the principal avenue in Tyre's roman necropolis were unearthed by Ali Badaoui. It would seem that

they belong to the same abundant group of sarcophagi in the necropolis which are made of the white marble from Proconnesus on the island of Marmara. This type of sarcophagus with its rather severe design is characterised by "a simple pattern of garlands hung from animal's heads with rosettes or masks placed concentrically above the garlands and bunches of grapes hanging below" on its long lateral surface. On some, like on the newly discovered sarcophagi, one of the shorter sides has a *tabella ansata* (dedication panel) with an inscription. "...The Proconnesian form that is most widely distributed in the eastern Mediterranean is the garland sarcophagus which is found along the whole eastern coast from Constantinople to Alexandria"(1). These Proconnesian sarcophagi were dated by Ward-Perkins (2) to around the first half of the 3rd century AD.

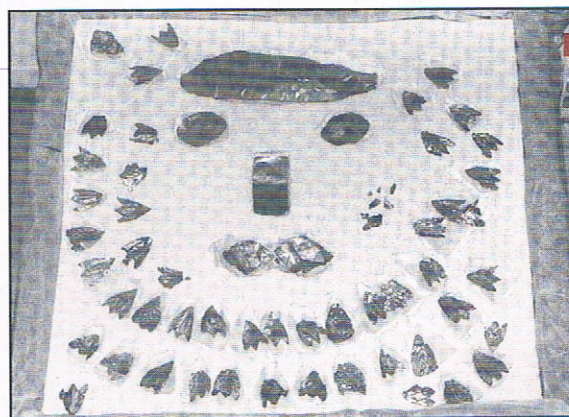
TOMBS OF AL-ABBASSIYA

On the 22nd July 1996, the Directorate General of Antiquities halted construction work in the "al-Abbassiya" area. Rows of white limestone tombs facing north to south were found. The fifteen tombs contained fragments of glass and terracotta objects as well as human remains.



1. J.B. Ward-Perkins, «The Imported Sarcophagi of Roman Tyre», *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, XXII, 1969, p.109-145.

2. *Supra.*, p.134-136, 139.

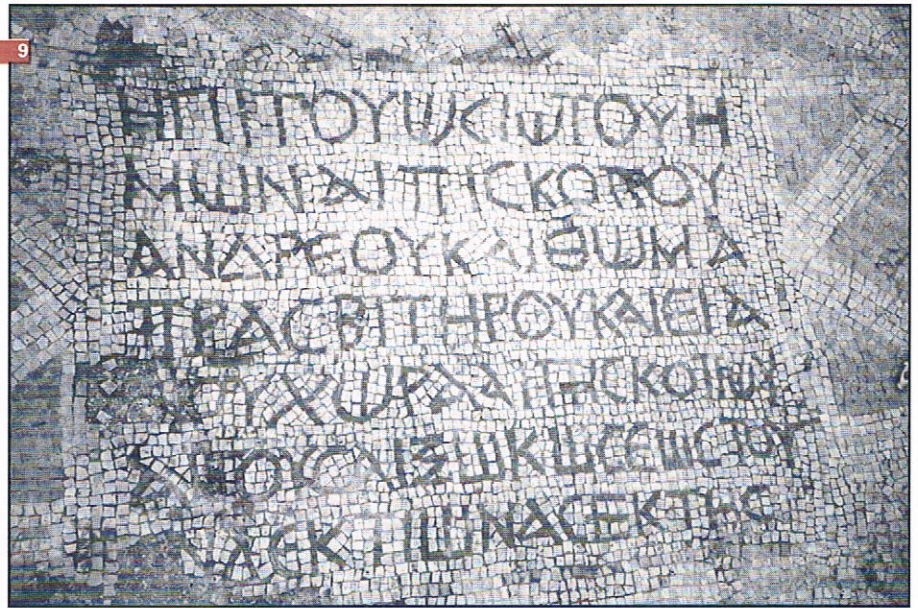


4. Roman baths excavated along Omari street.

5. Pillars from some of the baths.

6. The site after the removal of the Roman baths.

7. Baalbeck, parts of gold leaf ornaments found in an undisturbed sarcophagus and probably intended to be worn over the face of the deceased (headband, eye patches, nose and mouth patches) and necklace.



8. Iklim al-Kharroub, mosaics being unearthed.

9. Iklim al-Kharroub, inscription found by Polish archaeologists who appointed Frederic Alpi to publish their find.

10. Iklim al-Kharroub, mosaic depicting two birds on either side of a vase.

11. Tyre, tombs on the choir's platform.

12. Tyre, the basilica during excavation.

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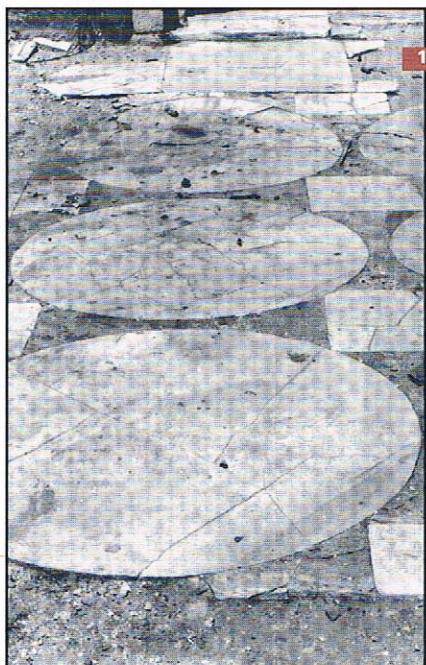
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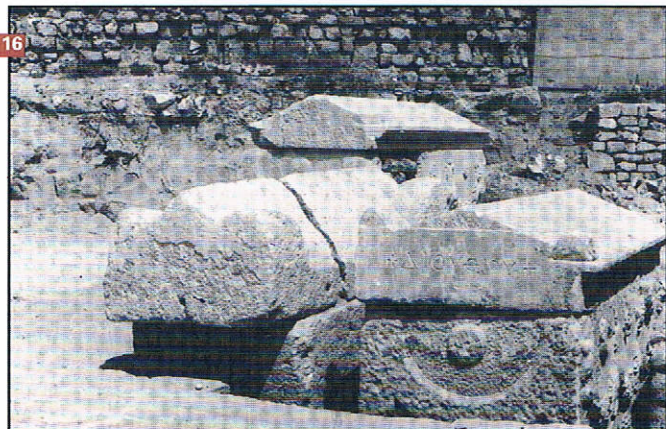
13. Embedded *cipollino* columns.

14. Vine leaves and grapes overflowing from a vase.

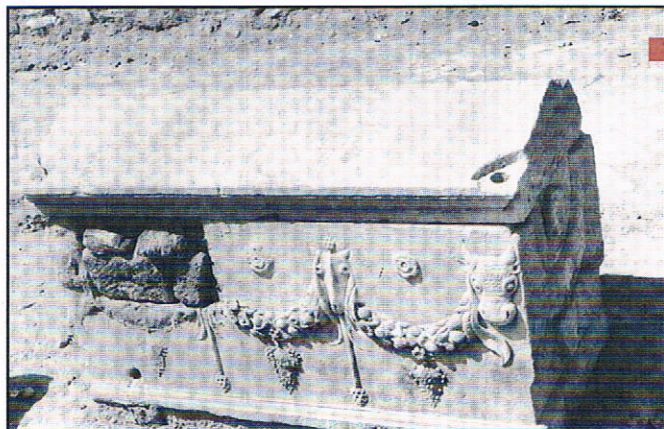
15. Circular marble paving.

16. Tyre, sarcophagi being uncovered.

17. Tyre, sarcophagus with a decoration of garlands hung from animal's heads.



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