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A BYZANTINE CHAPEL IN THE YĀJŪZ REGION OF AMMAN, JORDAN

Abstract: In autumn 2017, the Department of Antiquities undertook a rescue excavation in Areas A and D, located at the northern periphery of the Yājūz district within the Shafā Badrān region, north of Amman. The excavation aimed to elucidate the nature of architectural remains partially exposed above the surface, with the objective of characterising the site and its settlement dynamics. Special emphasis was placed on an ecclesiastical monument discovered during the fieldwork. The study entailed a detailed analysis of the chapel's architectural plan, the surrounding residential structures, their architectural elements and associated material culture. Comparative assessments were conducted with analogous chapels within Yājūz, focusing on similarities in spatial organisation, construction materials and mosaic decoration. These results were situated within the broader historical context of Christian communities in the region during the Byzantine era and the subsequent transition to Islamic governance. Chronological attribution of the chapel's construction was inferred from its architectural features and material assemblages, with ceramic typology and architectural parallels collectively indicating a sixth-century CE date.

Keywords: Byzantine chapel architecture, ecclesiastical archaeology in Jordan, Yājūz site excavation, Late Antique Christianity, rescue excavations in the Levant, Umayyad reuse of sacred spaces

The archaeological site

The University of Jordan has played a leading and sustained role in advancing archaeological knowledge of the Yājūz site through a series of methodologically rigorous excavations and surveys. Conducted primarily by the Department of Archaeology, these investigations have been instrumental in reconstructing the spatial organisation and cultural stratigraphy of the settlement, with a particular focus on identifying and documenting ecclesiastical architecture from the Byzantine period. Early surface surveys and geophysical reconnaissance initiated by the University laid the essential foundation for subsequent excavation campaigns, which uncovered a range of significant structural remains, including chapels and adjacent domestic complexes (Khalil 1998).

Among the most notable contributions of the University's fieldwork is the clarification of the architectural typology and construction techniques employed by early Christian communities in central Jordan. The discovery of a sixth-century chapel exhibiting a distinct rectangular basilica layout, complete with mosaic pavements, has provided critical comparative data for understanding regional variants of Byzantine church architecture (Khalil 1998). These architectural features demonstrate continuity with contemporary developments at other major sites, such as Umm ar-Raṣāṣ and Wādī al-Kharrār, underscoring Yājūz's integration into broader patterns of ecclesiastical construction during late antiquity (Piccirillo 2002a; Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003).

In addition to architectural insights, the University of Jordan's excavations have yielded important data on the long-term occupation and transformation of the site across the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. Stratigraphic analysis has revealed a sequence of occupation layers that attest to the persistence of Christian communities and their adaptation to new sociopolitical realities following Islamic rule. The associated material culture – particularly pottery assemblages and evidence of architectural modification – illustrates the complex dynamics between Byzantine traditions and Umayyad innovations, contributing meaningfully to broader scholarly debates on cultural continuity, resilience and transformation in late antique and early Islamic Jordan (D. L. Kennedy 1982; Magness 1993).

The ruins of ancient Yājūz are situated approximately 10 km north of Amman, immediately north of the Shafā Badrān Cemetery, atop a prominent archaeological tell known as Ṭalʿat Nimr, located about 1 km north of the main Ṣuwayliḥ-Zarqāʾ road (Pl. 1: 1). The site is characterised by varied topography,

comprising hills, plateaus, valleys and fertile agricultural land. It is also surrounded by several natural water sources, notably the Yājūz Spring, approximately 500 m southwest of the site, and the Al-Farāʿa Spring, situated roughly 1 km away.

The Central Jordan region has undergone substantial cultural development, as demonstrated by the extensive architectural remains and diverse material culture dating from the Iron Age through to the early Ottoman period, with no evident hiatus in settlement (H. Kennedy 1982, 134). This prolonged continuity of habitation provides critical insights into the evolving interactions between human communities and their surrounding natural environment. Early settlers strategically selected the site due to its abundant resources and favourable climatic conditions, exhibiting a sophisticated adaptation to its unique geographical characteristics and effective utilisation of available raw materials. Moreover, the site's strategic position along key commercial corridors, notably the *via nova Traiana*, substantially facilitated its development during the Roman period. Settlements situated along this route experienced enhanced trade and economic exchanges (Rostovtzeff 1932, 13). Accordingly, the site contained critical resources essential for the stability of its inhabitants and contributed significantly to the socio-economic advancement of the region across multiple historical epochs.

The 2017 church excavation

The excavation at the site constitutes a component of the Department of Antiquities' extensive and ongoing endeavours to investigate and preserve Jordan's cultural heritage. The existence of a Byzantine church at this location had previously been verified through surface surveys and archaeological reconnaissance conducted by the University of Jordan.

The rescue excavation was conducted from 9 to 22 November 2017 and was confined to the northern boundary of the site, which represents a natural geographical extension of the Yājūz district. The excavation area was systematically subdivided into four sectors – Areas A, B, C and D – using a grid framework comprising squares measuring 5×5 metres, thereby ensuring comprehensive coverage of the site. The investigation concentrated primarily on Areas A and D, where the majority of the chapel's wall remains were located. In total, 20 grid squares were excavated, including 17 in Area A and 3 in Area D.

Stratigraphic analysis revealed seven successive layers across the excavated squares:

- Layer 1: A topsoil stratum covering the entire excavation surface, with a thickness of 0.20-0.40 m. This dark brown, compact layer contained large- and medium-sized stones, dried vegetation and plant roots. Artefacts recovered included pottery sherds from storage jars, juglets, bowls and plates, as well as mosaic tesserae of varying sizes.
- Layer 2: A light brown layer, 0.25-0.45 m thick, composed of flint and limestone fragments likely derived from architectural collapse. Numerous pottery sherds from storage vessels were retrieved.
- Layer 3: A rammed earth deposit, approximately 0.30-0.55 m thick, with a creamy-yellow soil matrix. This layer was ubiquitous across all squares and yielded a diverse assemblage, including sherds from juglets, bowls, plates and oil lamps, in addition to grinding stones and iron nails. Notably, a fragment of a stone reliquary was recovered.
- Layer 4: A fireplace layer identified in Area A, with a thickness ranging from 0.20-0.40 m. Associated finds included basalt grinding stones, cooking vessels and bowls.
- Layer 5: A partially preserved mosaic floor, particularly evident in the northern side chambers, as well as the stone bases of arches flanking the central nave's northern and southern walls.
- Layer 6: A mortar layer underlying the mosaic pavement, interpreted as its foundation or bedding layer.
- Layer 7: A naturally uneven bedrock layer, shaped by the variable surface morphology of the site.

The Byzantine Chapel (Figs. Pl. 1: 2, 2: 1)

The chapel is a rectangular structure with right-angled corners, measuring approximately 22.5 m along the east-west axis and 8.5 m along the north-south axis, excluding the northern annex comprising Rooms 5 to 7. Its construction features two courses of medium-sized, semi-dressed limestone blocks, with the intervening gaps filled by smaller rubble and mortar. The external walls exhibit an average thickness of approximately 0.80 m. The chapel's superstructure has been entirely destroyed, with only the lowest masonry courses remaining *in situ*.

The chapel consists of a sanctuary at its eastern end, a central nave devoid of lateral aisles, a narthex located at the western extremity and a series of north-

ern service chambers (Rooms 5-7) (see Pl. 1: 2, 2: 1). The sanctuary comprises a semicircular apse, a chancel and a chancel screen that separates the apse from the nave. Within the apse, four ascending tiers – presumably constituting a synthronon for the presbyters – are present (Pl. 2: 2, 3: 1). No evidence of plaster coating was identified on the internal walls of the apse. The tiers are primarily constructed from well-dressed stone blocks, although certain sections along the southern side use rubble masonry.

The presbytery floor within the apse is covered by a substantial layer of lime plaster and is elevated approximately 0.20 m above the nave floor level (see Pl. 2: 2). The internal diameter of the apse, measured from the chord to the western face of the apse wall, is approximately 3.30 m, while the external diameter measures approximately 5.80 m.

The chancel screen – of which only four well-cut limestone blocks of varying sizes remain *in situ* as foundational elements – measures approximately 3.80 m (north-south) by 0.50 m (east-west) (see Pl. 1: 2, 2: 1). No evidence of an altar was identified within the chancel area, despite its customary placement immediately west of the apse chord in Byzantine churches. Similarly, grooves and postholes that would have supported a balustrade enclosing the altar – features commonly present at the western end of the chancel in Byzantine churches throughout Jordan – are notably absent. This absence may be attributed to the intentional removal of these elements during a subsequent phase of church reuse in the Umayyad period. Supporting this interpretation is the presence of a wall (Wall 8), likely dating to the Umayyad period, constructed directly west of the former chancel screen. Wall 8 extends approximately 6.35 m along the north-south axis, has a preserved height of 0.95 m and is built directly on the bedrock (see Pl. 3: 1).

Several lines of evidence strongly suggest that Wall 8 was not part of the original architectural plan of the church but was instead constructed during a later phase, likely associated with the reuse of the building for a different function. Firstly, the mortar floor of the central nave extends beneath the wall eastwards towards the chancel, indicating that the wall was added after the original pavement was laid. Secondly, Wall 8 lacks an integrated doorway connecting the central nave with the apse, which would be expected if it were part of the original liturgical layout. Thirdly, the wall's construction technique – using rubble set on rammed earth – differs significantly from the more refined masonry seen in the primary church structure. Fourthly, Umayyad-period pottery sherds were found in close proximity to the wall, reinforcing a post-Byzantine date for

its construction. Fifthly, the wall extends southward beyond the original church limits, running between the final two arch bases, further indicating its intrusive nature (see Figs. 4-5). Finally, the presence of a transverse wall separating the sanctuary from the nave is atypical in standard Byzantine church architecture, further supporting the conclusion that Wall 8 represents a later, non-liturgical modification.

The central nave measures approximately 10 m in length, extending from the eastern wall of the narthex (Wall 7) to the chancel screen, and spans roughly 6.40 m along the north-south axis (see Pl. 3: 1). Along both the northern and southern walls of the nave, five arch bases were identified, originally intended to support a barrel-vaulted roof (see Pl. 3: 1). These bases are constructed from well-dressed limestone blocks and are positioned at irregular intervals ranging from 1.75 and 1.90 m. All ten arch bases were found *in situ* and are composed of blocks measuring approximately 0.70 × 0.80 m, with preserved heights varying from 0.45 to 0.85 m above the bedrock surface.

The nave was paved with a layer of plaster that served as a bedding for a mosaic floor, remnants of which are still visible in several areas adjacent to Walls 1 and 5 (Pl. 3: 2). Additionally, numerous polychrome tesserae were recovered from this locus, further indicating the presence of decorative mosaic flooring.

The narthex, positioned at the westernmost extremity of the church, measures approximately 4.40 m (north-south) by 7.15 m (east-west) and was originally paved with a mosaic floor. Regrettably, only fragments of the mortar foundation have survived, as the majority of the plaster pavement has been extensively damaged (see Pl. 3: 1). The principal entrance to the church, measuring 1.75 m in width, was situated on the western façade (Wall 6), providing direct access to the narthex. Notably, unlike many Byzantine churches, this entrance did not open onto an open-air colonnaded courtyard (atrium).

Two arch bases, placed at regular intervals approximately 2 m apart, were identified along the northern and southern walls of the narthex and were likely intended to support a barrel-vaulted ceiling (see Pl. 3: 1). Of particular note is the presence of an irregularly shaped clay tabun, approximately 1.40 m in diameter, situated adjacent to the eastern wall of the narthex (Wall 7). The surrounding area contained significant concentrations of ash and charcoal. Moreover, ceramic evidence – including fragments of a cooking pot and two jugs – was found *in situ* near Wall 3, close to the doorway connecting the narthex to Room 7. These finds are dated to the Late Byzantine/Early Umayyad period.

The debris within the majority of excavation squares corresponding to the creamy yellowish third layer yielded iron nails, along with stone and clay roof tiles measuring between 2 and 3.5 cm in thickness and 20 to 25 cm in width. The church was originally roofed with a vaulted barrel structure, supported by arches – a roofing system commonly employed in the region during this period – overlaid with the aforementioned stone and clay tiles.

The interior of the chapel was originally accessible via multiple entryways leading to the service rooms within the northern annex. The narthex provided access to Room 7 through a doorway measuring 0.85 m in width, centrally located in Wall 3. A stone threshold, composed of quarried limestone blocks, was installed at the door sill. Room 7 measures 4.25 m in length and 2.60 m in width, with walls preserved to a height of 1.80 m. The floor level of this room is uneven and differs from that of adjacent rooms, as it consists of natural bedrock. Evidence of burning is apparent in the centre of the room, with ashes covering the damaged mosaic floor. The majority of pottery sherds recovered from this context date to the Umayyad period. Notably, Rooms 7 and 6 are not interconnected internally, as no doorway was opened in the common wall designated Wall 10 (Pl. 4: 1).

The narthex leads into the central nave through a doorway measuring 1 m in width, situated in their shared boundary, identified as Wall 7 (see Pl. 1: 2). The central nave provides access to Room 6, which measures 4.20 × 2.60 m, via a doorway 0.80 m wide located centrally within the common wall. A threshold constructed from well-cut limestone is positioned at the entrance. The floor level of Room 6 is elevated approximately 0.24 m above that of the central nave, aligning it closely with the level of the presbytery. The walls of Room 6 preserve remnants of a plaster layer, while its floor is finely paved with large mosaic cubes. Although some sections of the mosaic pavement remain intact, particularly adjacent to the northern wall (Wall 11), a small preserved patch depicts a bird with a four-feathered tail enclosed within a circular band measuring 0.45 m in diameter. This image is rendered in small mosaic tesserae in hues of yellow, burgundy, white and black (Pl. 4: 2). The bird is flanked on three sides by three grape leaves composed of red cubes: two positioned near the legs and one above the back. Each leaf consists of four branches or lobes intersecting centrally to form a cross-like pattern.

Room 5 is a large rectangular chamber, measuring 12.30 m in length from Wall 9 to the terminus of Wall 1 and 2.70 m in width from Wall 1 to Wall 11 (see Pl. 4: 1). The floor level of Room 5 is elevated approximately 0.53 m above

that of Room 6. No entryway has been identified in the common wall, Wall 9, which may indicate that this wall was constructed during a later phase of reuse or remodelling. This suggests that access to Room 5 may have been from its eastern end; however, this could not be confirmed due to the demolition of the eastern portion. Evidence of a mosaic pavement during the ecclesiastical phase is indicated by the mortar foundation and surviving mosaic fragments adjacent to the room's walls. The northern annex (Rooms 5-7) may have functioned as sacristies, as is typical in Byzantine churches. Nevertheless, the precise function of these rooms remains uncertain due to the lack of associated artefacts.

To the south of the church, a minimum of four rooms (Rooms 1-4) have been excavated (Pl. 5). Their domestic function is inferred from the assemblages of everyday artefacts recovered from various loci inside the rooms, as well as from their planimetric configuration and architectural installations. Similar to the church, only the substructures of these dwellings remain preserved. The material culture uncovered within these rooms comprises a mixture of Byzantine and Umayyad-period artefacts, including grinding tools, pottery vessels such as juglets, candle holders, oil lamps, cooking pots, bronze coins, copper objects and limestone sculptures.

Date of the Chapel

Several noteworthy finds were recovered from the chapel at Yājūz, contributing to the understanding of its liturgical function and occupational chronology. Among the artefacts discovered in the central nave were a distorted stone head of a bird and the lower part of a stone statue representing an animal, both found at a depth of 0.55 m beneath the topsoil and tentatively dated to the Byzantine period. These sculptural fragments, though lacking close parallels in the regional corpus and not illustrated, may have held symbolic or decorative significance within the ecclesiastical setting. Ceramic material retrieved from the narthex includes a fragmentary cooking pot, with only the base preserved, manufactured from pinkish fine ware and dated to the Late Byzantine or Early Umayyad period. Of particular typological interest is a pair of spouted juglets: the first preserved in profile and the second fragmentarily found inside the former. These vessels feature bulbous bodies, cylindrical necks and strap handles extending from rim to shoulder, each equipped with a narrow spout for pouring.

Their form and fabric, characterised by pinkish fine ware, find close parallels in assemblages from Madaba (Alliata 1982, Figs. 10-12), Mount Nebo (Schneider 1950, Fig. 11.4; Bagatti 1985, Fig. 4.16), ʿAyūn Mūsá (Alliata 1990, Fig. 3.39) and Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (Alliata 1991, Fig. 6.13). Additionally, a group of heavily corroded iron nails was found in Layer 3 and attributed to the Byzantine phase of occupation, though no direct parallels could be established for these items, which remain unpublished. Collectively, these finds offer valuable insights into the material culture, chronology and functional dynamics of the chapel space during its primary and subsequent phases of use.

Due to the absence of dedicatory inscriptions that could provide a precise construction date for the church, chronological assessment must rely on a comparative analysis of the architectural layout, mosaic floor patterns and associated material culture. However, extensive and irreversible damage to the structural walls and mosaic pavements has significantly hindered efforts to establish a definitive date for the building's construction or any subsequent remodelling phases. Furthermore, the site lacks diagnostic architectural or decorative features that might allow for a more accurate chronological attribution.

Architecturally, a significant parallel can be drawn with the chapel uncovered in Yājūz, Area B, which has been securely dated to 508 CE on the basis of a dedicatory inscription. This modest chapel, which lacks side aisles and closely resembles the structure under discussion, was excavated within the same general vicinity (Khalil 1998, 457-472). Additional comparable examples include a chapel excavated at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, which features a northern service room and was designated by the excavator as the "Chapel of the Peacocks", named for the prominent peacock motifs adorning its mosaic floor. This structure has been dated to the sixth century CE (Piccirillo 2002b, 549-555; Figs. 14-15). Likewise, ecclesiastical remains – including a small chapel similar in form to the Yājūz example – were identified at Wādī al-Kharrār and similarly attributed to the same chronological horizon (Mkhjian and Kanellopoulos 2003, 15-16; Figs. 15-18).

The mosaic motif depicting a bird in Room 6 closely corresponds – albeit with slight stylistic variations – to decorative elements identified in contemporary chapels and basilicas throughout Jordan. Noteworthy parallels include the Church of Bishop Genesius in Jerash, dated to the sixth century CE (Hamarneh and Mjalli 2009, 29, Fig. 7), as well as the ecclesiastical complex at Yaʿmūn, located approximately 25 km south of Irbid (El-Najjar *et al.* 2001, 413-416; Figs. 3-5).

Regarding material culture, the ceramic assemblage recovered from the chapel and its adjacent residential structures corresponds to widely recognised typologies dated between the fifth and eighth centuries CE. Byzantine and Umayyad-period artefacts were predominantly concentrated in the central nave and narthex. Among these, the spouted juglets recovered from the narthex are representative of Fine Byzantine Ware (FBW), also referred to as Palestinian Fine Ware, and date from the mid-sixth to the early eighth centuries CE (Walmsley 2022, 102, Fig. 4.73). Although the cooking pot uncovered in the narthex was fragmentary – preserved only by its base – it is tentatively attributed to the same FBW tradition based on its fabric and archaeological context. A similar chronological framework is proposed for other artefacts composed of various materials, all of which were retrieved from the same stratigraphic layer.

The presence of Umayyad pottery sherds near Wall 8 and within the ash layer of Room 7 corroborates the existence of an Umayyad settlement phase at the site. Furthermore, the fireplace layer (Layer 4) and associated charred vessels, dating to the Umayyad period, may signify the cessation of the church's ecclesiastical function at the transition from the Byzantine to the early Islamic era. The dense accumulation of fallen masonry from the superstructure across the excavation area supports evidence of a destructive event.

In conclusion, the typology of excavated artefacts, encompassing diverse materials and stratigraphic contexts within both the church and adjacent domestic dwellings to the south, suggests initial construction in the sixth century CE, possibly as early as the fifth century CE, with subsequent reuse during the Umayyad period in the seventh and eighth centuries CE.

Conclusions

The ecclesiastical architecture of Jordan during the Byzantine and early Umayyad periods (fifth-eighth centuries CE) reflects a remarkable expansion of Christian religious infrastructure across both urban and rural settings. More than 300 churches and chapels have been documented throughout the provinces of Arabia and Palaestina during this era, attesting to the entrenchment of Christianity and the development of regionally distinct architectural traditions (Michel 2001, 45-60). This proliferation was accompanied by the refinement of standardised church plans that, while adhering to typological norms, remained responsive to local contexts, resources and liturgical requirements.

The Yājūz church is situated among contemporaneous ecclesiastical structures at the site, sharing a similar chronological framework and architectural layout characteristic of regional typologies prevalent during the Byzantine period. Located near an urban centre and alongside comparable church complexes, its construction technique – utilising well-quarried ashlar limestone blocks combined with smaller rubble and lime mortar – aligns with practices commonly observed in chapels and basilicas across Jordan (Michel 2001, 117-135; Qaqīsh 2007, 45-58).

Architectural remains of the chapel comprise a central nave, sanctuary with synthronon, narthex and a northern annex of service rooms (Rooms 5-7), indicative of a modest yet liturgically functional religious structure consistent with sixth-century CE church-building traditions (Michel 2001; Qaqīsh 2007). Despite lacking dedicatory inscriptions and suffering significant structural damage that limits precise architectural sequencing, comparative analysis with well-dated nearby chapels – such as those at Yājūz (Area B), Umm ar-Raṣāṣ and Wādī al-Kharrār – supports attribution of the chapel's initial construction to the mid-Byzantine period (fifth-sixth centuries CE). Surviving mosaic fragments, including a polychrome floor with animal, floral and geometric motifs and a distinctive bird motif in Room 6, align iconographically with contemporaneous sixth-century churches in Jerash (Bishop Genesius's church) and Yaʿmūn, reflecting shared liturgical and artistic traditions throughout the Levant (Hamarneh and Mjalli 2009; El-Najjar *et al.* 2001).

Stratigraphic evidence demonstrates two principal occupational phases: the initial Byzantine construction followed by architectural modifications and settlement activities during the Umayyad period (seventh-eighth centuries CE). The Byzantine phase marks the *terminus ante quem* for the church's establishment, while the Umayyad phase, which includes the construction of Wall 8 west of the chancel, corresponds to the *terminus post quem* for its abandonment – likely occurring by the eighth century and potentially linked to seismic destruction associated with the earthquake of 749 CE (Brizzi *et al.* 2010). Post-ecclesiastical reuse is suggested by features such as the clay tabun in the narthex, ash deposits in Room 7, ceramic cooking pots and the absence of column capitals, indicating a shift in the building's function after the cessation of liturgical use.

The northern annex's function aligns with sacristies, storage or baptismal purposes observed in other regional churches, such as Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, Madaba and Rihab (Qaqīsh 2007). Archaeological evidence from Room 7 – including Umayyad-period pottery and the absence of internal doorways – further indi-

cates post-liturgical repurposing, consistent with broader patterns of continuity and adaptation documented across Jordanian ecclesiastical sites.

Adjacent domestic structures and associated material culture – including a mixed ceramic assemblage typified by Fine Byzantine Ware juglets, cooking vessels, roof tiles, iron nails and stone reliquaries – testify to a vibrant settlement extending into the early Islamic period. The discovery of food preparation implements such as basins, basalt grinding stones and pestles, alongside a substantial accumulation of charred olive remains, supports the interpretation of these buildings as private dwellings engaged in a prosperous agricultural economy sustained through Byzantine and Umayyad times.

Beyond architectural and material typologies, recent scholarship challenges earlier assumptions of ecclesiastical decline following Islamic rule. Instead, studies by Michel (2001), Qaqīsh (2007) and Schick (1995) demonstrate the sustained use, adaptation and even renovation of Christian sacred architecture into the Umayyad period. This is evidenced by dated inscriptions and material culture from churches across Jordan – including the Church of Saint Stephen at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (dated AD 785) – affirming an active ecclesiastical presence into the late eighth century. The Yājūz chapel fits this model, with stratigraphic and architectural data confirming two major occupational phases and modifications from the Umayyad period.

Schick (1995) interprets such continuity as indicative of a broader religious tolerance under early Islamic rule, particularly in rural settings where Christian communities retained cohesion and autonomy. Churches remained in active use, often adapted to meet evolving liturgical or communal needs. The Yājūz chapel – with its preserved liturgical elements and Umayyad alterations – thus provides crucial evidence for understanding the resilience and transformation of Christian institutions in early Islamic Transjordan.

In summary, the chapel at Yājūz exemplifies the architectural simplicity and liturgical functionality characteristic of rural Byzantine churches in Jordan. Its continuity into the Umayyad period, alongside architectural parallels regionally, reinforces its importance within the wider ecclesiastical landscape of late antique Arabia. The Yājūz excavation underscores the site's integral role within a broader ecclesiastical and settlement network spanning Byzantine and Umayyad Jordan. The stratified material culture and architectural remains offer valuable insights into the persistence of Christian communities through a critical juncture marked by continuity, adaptation and transformation in Levantine history. Moreover, the sustained use of the church into the early Islamic period

highlights the prevailing religious tolerance and coexistence extended to Christian populations during this era (Piccirillo 1984, 333). Continued archaeological investigation and preservation of such sites remain imperative for reconstructing the complex religious, architectural and socio-economic dynamics shaping late antique and early Islamic Jordan.

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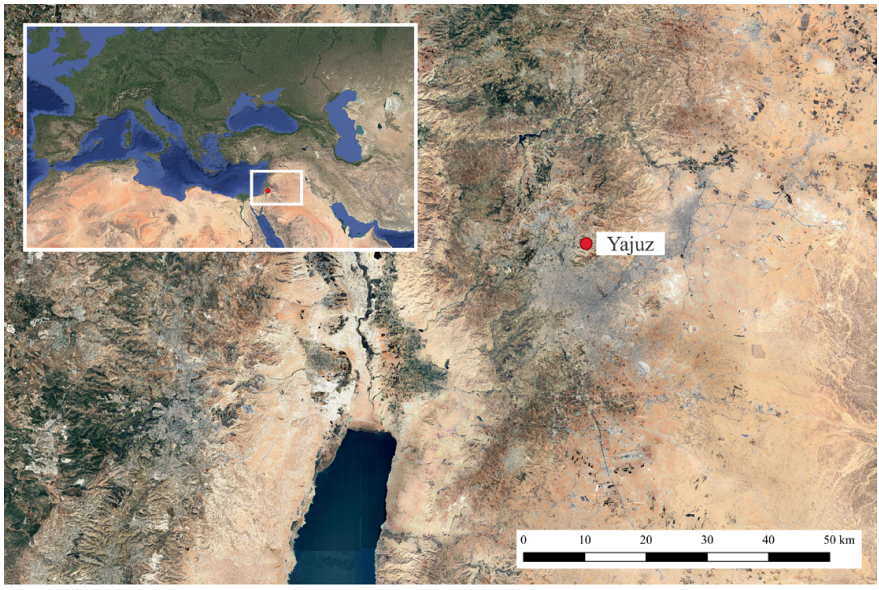
PLATE 1



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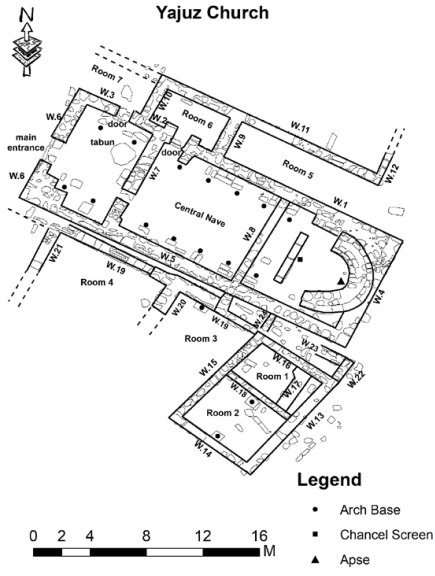

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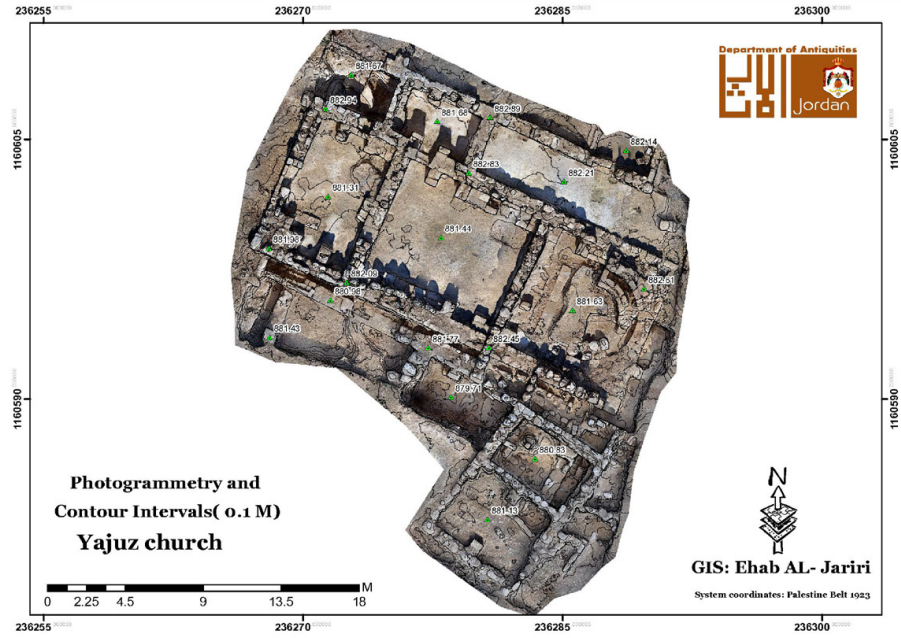
Pl. 1: 1 – Map showing the location of Yājūz

Pl. 1: 2 – Layout of the church and residential dwellings to the south (by Hashem Khries)

PLATE 2



1

2

Pl. 2: 1 – Layout of the church and residential dwellings to the south with the material of construction (by DoA)

Pl. 2: 2 – General view of the chapel of Yājūz, looking west (by Taher al-Gonmeen)

PLATE 3

1

2

Pl. 3: 1 – The narthex and central nave of the chapel of Yājūz (by Taher al-Gonmeen)

Pl. 3: 2 – Part of a mosaic floor in the central nave adjacent to Wall 5 to the south (by Taher al-Gonmeen)

PLATE 4

1

2

Pl. 4: 1 – General view of the chapel of Yājūz showing the narthex, central nave, northern chambers and southern dwellings, looking east (by Taher al-Gonmeen)

Pl. 4: 2 – Patch of a mosaic floor in Room 6 depicting a bird in a circular frame (by Taher al-Gonmeen)

PLATE 5

Pl. 5 – The southern private rooms, looking northwest (by Taher al-Gonmeen)