

Account of works undertaken

Research trip to Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, Aix-en-Provence

Introduction

In October 2018 I was awarded £980 from the Society for Libyan Studies Travel Grant Scheme to survey the archives of Prof. Rebuffat's excavation in Bu Njem held at MMHS, as part of my work on the Roman fort and settlement. The trip was undertaken between 4th and 11th November 2018, consisting of 5 days spent in the archives of Centre Camille Jullian, under the care of Dr. Veronique Blanc-Bijon. The focus of the work was to investigate social uses of the Bu Njem *principia* building with a particular reference to circulation of movement and graffiti within the building, only some of which were reproduced in the original excavation reports. The secondary objective is to assess the potential of the archive to underpin an application for a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship to produce a monograph on Bu Njem. The envisaged output for Libyan Studies was aimed at bringing the work on the *principia* building to publication stage, discussing the processes of place-making, assigning meaning to build space through forms of individual and collective activity within the building. The project built on my previous work on the epigraphy of Roman army in Tripolitania (published in 2015).

Results of the research trip

What follows is the account of work undertaken during the research trip and the work to date towards achieving the outputs specified in the grant application. The work was carried out according to the work plan and all planned sources of evidence were surveyed. The scope for in depth work was assessed, revealing promising areas for further detailed work. The relevant holdings consisted of three groups of data: a) folders with research notes and draft plans, b) rolls with graffiti, and c) archive of photographs from the excavation. Five large folders with drawings and research notes were inspected.



Fig. 1 The colour slide archive

These consisted of field notes, draft versions of plans that subsequently reproduced in the Bu Njem interim reports in Libya Antiqua, and hand drawn quick field sketches. Around 80 rolls of tracing paper with 1:1 copies of graffiti primarily from the bathhouse, the *principia* building,

battiment aux niches and other commercial building in the vicus were also found and indexed. The survey of the data revealed that there are over 300 individual graffiti in the collection, far more than originally anticipated and more than could be published in one article.

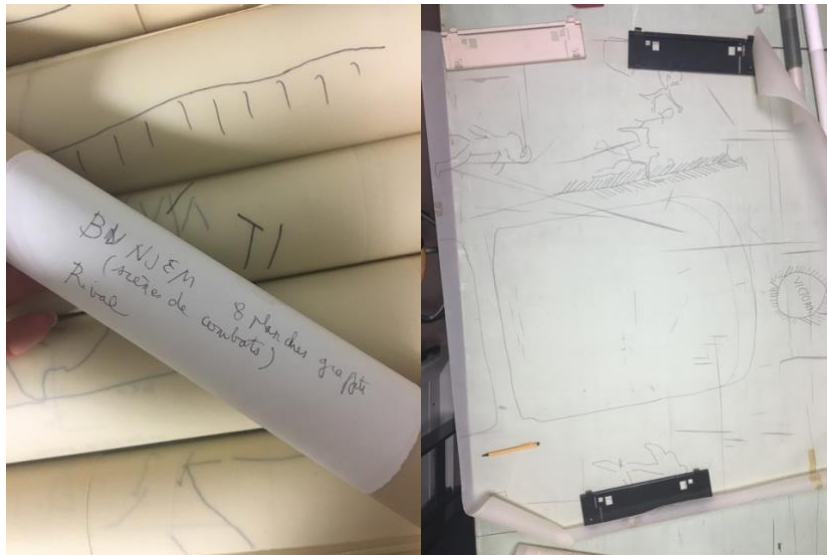


Fig. 2 A sample of the graffiti rolls, including graffiti from the principia building

A second fortunate and surprising discovery was made in relation to the extent of the photograph archive, including circa 350 colour photographs of Bu Njem from Prof. Rebuffat's excavations, and additional 1000 black and white slides. In addition to objectives set out in the original application, the trip produced other, unexpected outcomes. The expertise and connections gained from the in-person visit have been of particular value to expanding my research and cultural horizons, creating new platforms for exchange of information and introducing me to an entirely new network of scholars.



Fig. 3 A sample of material from folders with research notes, including photos of tombstones and newspaper clippings.

The following is the account of the progress towards achieving the objectives specified in the grant application:

Objective 1 - article publication:

- a) Locating the archive of tracing paper copies of graffiti from the *principia* building, especially board games (referred to in original publication) to study the spatial mapping and likely chronology of the graffiti. Key rolls with graffiti were scanned thanks to the kindness of CCJ.
- b) Investigation of detailed plans and unpublished photographs in order to understand the circulation of movement within the building, particularly the tribunal area, room fixtures (such as writing desks in the *scriptorium*) and alterations to the original plan. The work was completed and enabled a better understanding of the circulation pattern and sequence of alterations in the north range of the rooms.

Objective – 2 Evaluation the usability of the unpublished material for a monograph:

- a) It was established that no additional plans of areas in between buildings in addition to what was published in the interim reports were available at CCJ.
- b) Collection of data pertaining to features and buildings outside the fort walls, in the immediate environment of the fort was completed. The plans contained some additional detail that was not captured on the earlier published plans.
- c) Collection and scanning of detailed plans, epigraphy and finds record from two temples north of and two east of the main fort was successful.
- d) Assessing whether the finds assemblage could lend itself to a meaningful finds distribution analysis was not possible as no records in relation to the finds were held at the archive.
- e) Assessing usability of the record of the stratigraphy of midden outside the walls to support the study of the finds deposited in it was not possible, as no record of the stratigraphy of the midden was held at the archive.
- f) Explore if any potential data in relation to the unpublished associated cemetery is stored in the archive was only very partially successful, a small number of photographs of tombstones were available.
- g) Obtaining scans of unpublished plans, photographs, drawings of graffiti in relation to the bath house was successful. The building was reported to have had dozens of graffiti, but which were not reproduced in the publication.

Challenges identified

The key challenges identified was carrying out an in-depth survey of a large amount of material. However, all holdings were surveyed and the content of all appropriate folders (5 large folders with research notes, photographs and newspaper clippings) were photographed and indexed. A survey of the content of the rolls was fully completed, with an index of the content of all of the rolls of graffiti created. The large size of the rolls (A0) meant that only a small sample of the rolls with graffiti could be scanned during the trip, but the newly established connection between me and the CCJ will facilitate further remote scanning as necessary. A further challenge encountered was a by-product of the large size of the photograph archive. The colour slides were provisionally photographed to retain a record of

what each slide contains. However, it was not possible to scan these slides as each colour slide was placed within a glass case. The glass on the case prevented the existing equipment at CCJ from being able to scan the slides as the light of the scanner reflected from the glass casings. Scanning and detailed work on the colour photographs (all from Prof. Rebuffat's excavations) is contingent on the purchase of an appropriate scanner capable of scanning through the glass cases on the slides. The black and white photo archive was not possible to survey due to the large volume of the photographs. All photographs held in the archive are stored in one cupboard, these consist of photographs from numerous excavations of different sites. These are all mixed in together and so it was not possible to quickly pick the slides relevant to Bu Njem only. As the black and white slide archive is not catalogued and archived it was impossible to access slides from Bu Njem without first undertaking a thorough indexing of all the slides. To make this possible further dedicated time and archiving of all of the slides in the cupboard will be necessary. If scanned, these would provide a useful resource for many researchers. I was informed that a personal archive of Prof. Rebuffat might still be at his house. Thanks to the connections made at CCJ, an attempt to make contact with his widow was made in the form of a written letter, but I received no response.

Next Steps

Thanks to a large volume of information retrieved from the archive and large volume of new research since the publication of Bu Njem interim reports in 1970s-1980s, an article utilising evidence from the *principia* building, the fort and the settlement in the context of movement lines is being prepared for submission to Libyan Studies. A contract with Archaeopress for a popular book on the site as part of series edited by Prof. Breeze was possible thanks to the results of this research trip. I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the Society for Libyan Studies for its support in the form of the grant.

Anna Walas – 27.09.2019

Addendum: work undertaken since 2019

The 2019 application to the Leverhulme Trust for an Early Career Fellowship was unsuccessful. The project was later repurposed towards an MSCA application, which in 2020 ranked on the reserve list. 2021 submission was not successful, but I will reapply for an MSCA fellowship again in 2022. The archival materials discovered and connections made through the Travel Grant will provide material for future applications. This year, I plan to submit to British Academy Small Grant scheme in order to facilitate the purchase of a scanner that is needed in order to be able to scan the photographic archive. Separately from this, I am supporting my MSCA mentor as a co-I on a prospective grant to ANR in relation to archives and the work of Frontiers of Roman Empire World Heritage Site designation (planned submission in Sept 2022). In terms of outputs, a research article (10,000 words) entitled 'New perspectives on the Roman military base at Bu Njem' was submitted to the editor of Libyan Studies in December 2021 and is currently under review. A paper on board games in Bu Njem arising from the discovery of graffiti of game boards in the archive is due to be submitted later this spring and to be featured in an edited volume on archaeology of board games (ed. V. Dasen). The material discovered during the trip will also serve to underpin at least further two articles on Bu Njem, including one specifically about graffiti and another about cult activity in Bu Njem.