

## HUQOQ ELEPHANT PANEL UPDATE

*This page intends to provide the latest news about the Huqoq elephant panel and discussions of it beyond that already provided in the lengthy editorial preface penned by J. H. Humphrey and K. Bolonnikova to JRA Supplement 106.*

1. The *JRA*-appointed referee for S106 made extended comments and suggestions, following which the authors stated that they "plan to take into consideration the important suggestions by the referee in their future work on the elephant panel." In the referee's words, the interpretations outlined or alluded to in the present work may not be the only possible ones. Instead of starting the inquiry by looking for an appropriate incident in Jewish/Hellenistic history and then trying to make the mosaic fit, one could approach it from the opposite angle. In particular, one should not necessarily expect an image to fit exactly our surviving written sources or those which were attracting attention in the late 4th/early 5th c. A.D. That opposite approach would mean trying first to read what is actually on the mosaic. In that case the dominant element should be the young men standing triumphantly under the arcade, above the dead bodies of their enemies. This in turn could have implications for the order in which the registers of the panel are to be read. The upper register could then be the events leading up to the triumph, the antecedents of the battle, with the young men drawing their swords. The dead soldiers and animals in the bottom register are undoubtedly the same as those shown in the top register. A re-interpretation along such lines could also have implications for the meaning of the lamps on top of the arcade and for the brownish substance which the old white-haired leader in the top register appears to be holding in his hand.

2. A short article on the mosaic has just appeared in *Le Monde de la Bible* 223 (Décembre 2017/Janvier/Février 2018) pages 91-94. Written by Estelle Villeneuve, it summarizes the views of Magness, Britt and Boustan and provides colour images of the mosaic (images which are also now published in *JRA Supplement 106*). This article was authorized by the project director Jodi Magness and Estelle Villeneuve had full access to the interpretations of Magness, Britt and Boustan.

3. The unauthorized article about the mosaic written by Asher Ovadiah and a colleague, which was submitted to *Liber Annuus* and widely circulated in pdf form before the editor removed it from vol. 66 of that journal, continues to be available as Ovadiah shifts it from website to website. In view of the fact that the official publication of the mosaic has now occurred in *JRA Supplement 106*, we may refer to its current home: [https://en-arts.tau.ac.il/sites/personal.tau.ac.il/files/media\\_server/901/15\\_Ovadiah-Pierr%C3%99%5B1%5D-new%5B1%5D.pdf](https://en-arts.tau.ac.il/sites/personal.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/901/15_Ovadiah-Pierr%C3%99%5B1%5D-new%5B1%5D.pdf)

4. Meir Ben Shahr (Tel Aviv University) will speak about the mosaic panel at the Association for Jewish Studies meeting in Washington, D.C. on Sunday December 17, 2017, with a paper entitled "Mosaics and warriors: war and redemption in late antique Palestinian synagogues".

5. The *Journal of Roman Archaeology* has received from a pair of scholars a new interpretation of the mosaic as a classic story from the Hebrew Bible. This interpretation was not one of those considered by Britt and Boustán. The article is currently under review for publication in *JRA* 31 (2018).

2. Two book reviews for publication in *JRA* 31 (2018) print and online hosted by Cambridge Core will be posted here as soon as they have been edited for publication.