

**Paturel, Simone Eid. *Baalbek-Heliopolis, the Bekaa, and Berytus from 100 BCE to 400 CE: a Landscape Transformed*. Mnemosyne Supplements. History and Archaeology of Classical Antiquity, volume 426. Leiden: Brill, 2019. Pp. xiv + 343; 68 figures and illustrations, 6 tables. ISBN 9789004400580. €160,00.**

Simone Paturel has written a much-needed book that synthesizes the archaeological research carried out in two regions: Berytus, with its satellite sanctuary of Deir el-Qalaa, and Baalbek-Heliopolis in the Bekaa Valley with the two relatively close sanctuary sites of Niha and Hosn Niha. On no level was this an easy book to write, given the state of civil unrest in the country of Lebanon and the diversity of prior methodological approaches to the archaeology of the region. As a trained archaeologist from Lebanon, Paturel brings unique insights to her revised doctoral dissertation on Baalbek written at the University of Newcastle in 2014. The addition of the material on Berytus (modern Beirut) makes this a “must-read” for anyone wishing to learn about both Roman colonies.

Paturel asks: “to what extent [was] the landscape of Roman Berytus and the Bekaa valley... a product of colonial transformation following the foundation of Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Berytus in 15 BCE”? Was the colony “an intrusive Latin element” or did “the development of Berytus, the Bekaa valley, and the major sanctuary complex at Baalbek-Heliopolis reflect elements of the pre-Roman past...?” (p. 1) The book concludes in the year 400 CE when the last major temple was built at Baalbek and when Late Antique Berytus rose to prominence. In the volume, Paturel balances the narratives of Polybius, Livy, Josephus, Tacitus, Herodian, Eunapius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Eusebius, Lucian’s *De Dea Syria*, and Macrobius’s *Saturnalia* with the evidence of archaeological finds. Paturel, like most modern scholars, discards the theories of syncretism and *Interpretatio Romana* which conflate ancient religious deities from different cultures. Paturel embraces the postprocessual approach to the archaeology of religious ritual, uses a limited phenomenological approach, and is influenced by theories of sacred landscapes, especially in the examination of Baalbek-Heliopolis.

In the pre-Hellenistic and Hellenistic eras, the Itureans, repeatedly described as “bandits” (Strabo, Josephus), emerged as key players who were then replaced by the family of Herod the Great and then ultimately by the Romans. The original territory of the Roman colony of Berytus (300 square kilometers) included the area around Baalbek-Heliopolis; the latter was ultimately designated as a separate *Colonia* by Septimius Severus.

The BCD [Beirut Central District] Infrastructure Archaeology Project that began in the mid-1990s as a rescue effort by the United Nations has revealed much through the 167 projects listed in Appendix A, “Location Tables for Beirut Excavations”. This invaluable list, combined with the excellent bibliography, leads the reader to the full publication information on various sites, much of which is new since my own book

published fifteen years ago.<sup>1</sup> In an excellent synthesis, Paturel paints a portrait of Roman Berytus ornamented by a tetraklion at the intersection of major streets, a cryptoporticus, temples to Poseidon and the Tyche of Berytus, a theater, bathhouses, a hippodrome, a nymphaeum, sports club buildings, an aqueduct, the law school *auditoria*, shops, workshops, a large pottery and glass-production site, streets lined by imported gray and rose columns, and a huge aqueduct. Burial practices in Roman Berytus involved inhumation in lead or ceramic coffins, placement in shared tombs, rock-cut chambers, and stone sarcophagi.

Deir el-Qalaa, a cult site less than 10 km from Berytus, featured Temple A (the Great Temple) dedicated to Jupiter Balmarcod and a second and smaller Temple B dedicated to Juno. A monumental arch inscribed to Trajan connects the two temples and probably marked out a processional route. Nearby ruins suggest a smaller Temple C, but of greater interest are inscriptions to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Balmarcodi (over 30), Juno Regina, Juno Sima, Caelestis Sohemia, IOMH (Jupiter Heliopolitanus), and to Mater Matuta, an obscure Roman goddess. Remains of a cistern, an aqueduct, a colonnaded street, and a large bath complex reveal Roman civic features. Occupation in the post-Roman period is shown by houses, an oil press, a possible water tank with a nymphaeum, *spolia* taken from the Great Temple, and a Late Antique basilica church with a central nave and two aisles separated by columns.

The sanctuaries of Niha and Hosn Niha in the Bekaa Valley may have belonged to either Berytus or Heliopolis. At both sites the construction of an “ante” temple in the first century preceded the subsequent building of a Great Temple in the second or third century. Nearby springs and streams probably had a cult usage. The larger temples were constructed at right angles to the earlier temples, had adytums on a raised level, and had staircases to the upper levels. Inscriptions, half in Latin and half in Greek as well as a bilingual one, reveal a population with mixed identities of Roman and Semitic names. Niha seems to have been a regional center of worship for Hadaranes and Atargatis.

Archaeological excavations at Baalbek have revealed continuous habitation for over 8000 years. The Ancient Tell of Baalbek dates to the late Hellenistic era and the early Roman era. The use of drafted-margin masonry signals Herodian workmanship in the construction of the so-called “Hellenistic” temple podium. Renewed excavations at Baalbek-Heliopolis, beginning in the 2000s, reveals more about the massive Sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus and its Great Court, the smaller Temple of the Muses, the Temple of Bacchus (which may be in reality a second temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus), the now overbuilt Temple of Mercury, and the Monumental Staircase. Paturel concludes that the initial architecture was of Roman design, but subsequent modifications were in a Syrian style. Private euergetism embellished the buildings, but the sheer scale of the main temple strongly suggests imperial support: the Temple of Heliopolitan Jupiter with its large forecourt shows close

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Jones Hall, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2004).

correspondence to the Forum of Augustus in Rome with the Temple of Mars Ultor. Other structures at the site include a large bath complex, a banqueting hall, an odeon, two public buildings, the so-called Temple of Venus, a possible theater (a model has been found), a monumental gateway, and colonnaded streets. Numerous burials found in the area bear similarities to some found in Berytus.

Drawing on a close examination of the 323 inscriptions from the area of Heliopolis published by Rey-Coquais in 1967 (*IGLS VI*), Pasturel graphs the languages in the inscriptions (predominantly Latin and then Greek), the identity of dedicatee rulers and deities, and finally the names and status of the dedicators. There is some hazard in the dependency on one publication, no matter how major, but the results do lead to some persuasive conclusions. Pasturel wisely rejects the long-popular hypothesis of a “Heliopolitan triad” consisting of Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury, and replaces it with the idea of a “Heliopolitan constellation” in which Jupiter always appears. Most of the rulers who took an interest in Heliopolis belonged to the Severan dynasty. The dedicators range from slaves to senators with a heavy presence of veterans as well.

This book is an indispensable resource for understanding Roman Berytus and Heliopolis. I know of no other publication that so successfully synthesizes the archaeological finds in these two cities.

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