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ÉTABLIE AU COUVENT DOMINICAIN SAINT-ÉTIENNE DE JÉRUSALEM

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“THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER
SHALL BE BROKEN”¹:

THE MATERIAL CULTURE FROM A BURIAL CAVE
AT ST. ÉTIENNE’S MONASTERY, JERUSALEM

by

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is the material culture from a repository in one of the burial caves of the monastery of St. Stephen in Jerusalem. An inventory of 202 items including pottery sherds, glass, fragments of clay oil lamps, jewelry, and a devotional object are presented herein. Viewed in concert with the che-

¹ Ps 2:9.

mical analyses, osteological evidence, and textual record, this rather sparse collection helps corroborate a Byzantine placement for the skeletal remains interred in repository 6 of cave complex 1 at St. Stephen's monastery.

SOMMAIRE

L'étude présente la documentation anthropologique de l'ossuaire d'un hypogée du couvent St Étienne à Jérusalem. L'inventaire de 202 objets comprend : tessons, verre, fragments de lampes à huile, bijoux et un objet de piété. Ce modeste échantillon, confronté au contexte des analyses chimiques, des données ostéologiques et des sources anciennes, étaye la datation byzantine des ossements de l'ossuaire n° 6 de l'hypogée n° 1 de St Étienne.

INTRODUCTION

Analysis of the skeletal remains from a burial cave of the Couvent Saint-Étienne/École Biblique et Archéologique Française began under the direction of the fourth author in 1995 as part of a biocultural reconstruction of life at the site during the Byzantine era (specifically, 5th-7th centuries).² Numerous non-osteological items were retrieved in the course of exhuming the human remains. We present here a survey of the material culture from this ossilegium, with attention to those items which especially illumine date and context.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Historical Setting

The burial cave complex under investigation is located in Jerusalem, on the grounds of the Couvent St. Étienne/École Biblique et Archéologique Française, approximately 250 meters north of the Damascus Gate and east of Nablus Road. The site is generally accepted as that of the 5th-7th century monastery of St. Stephen, whose church was built by Empress Eudocia beginning in 438 CE.³ In the words of one Byzantine

² See S. SHERIDAN, "'New Life The Dead Receive': The Relationship between Human Remains and the Cultural Record for Byzantine St. Stephen's," *RB* 106 (1999), 574-611.

³ This determination was first argued formally by M.-J. LAGRANGE in *Saint Étienne et Son Sanctuaire à Jérusalem* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1894), 139-55. An institution linked to the memory of St. Stephen is well attested in the literature of the Byzantine period, such as: JOHN RUFUS, *Petrus der Iberer: Ein Charakterbild zur Kirchen-und Sittengeschichte des Fünften Jah-*