Ritual Landscapes

Dr Jaimie Lovell (CBRL)

Project design:
The Ritual Landscapes Project aims to locate Late Prehistoric cave sites in Jordan. Such sites are becoming well known in Israel and Palestine owing to the rapid pace of modern development. Here Chalcolithic (4000-3600 BC) burials are often found in karstic caves located in thick beds of Upper Cretaceous limestone. The geographical focus of the Project is the equivalent Wadi as-Sir limestone formation in two areas of western Jordan: the Ajlun Highlands and the Wadi Mujib.

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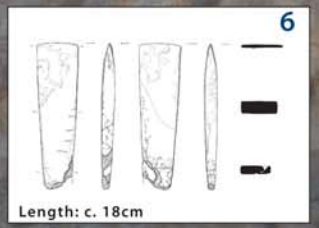
Results of 2006 and 2007 seasons:

- 302 caves surveyed
- 47 caves with associated archaeological remains
- 12 caves with Chalcolithic material
- 2 caves with Late Neolithic material
- Cache of bronze axes found more than 70 metres inside cave in Wadi Rayyan
- Speleothems from 6 caves sampled for palaeoclimatic data
- Test excavations at 2 caves planned for 2009



Photos:

1. Access to cave RL31 in Wadi Mujib by rope from top right
2. Surveying Late Prehistoric burial cairns in Wadi Mujib
3. Constricted access to cache of bronze axes in cave RL53, Wadi Rayyan
4. Surveying cave RL53
5. Plan of cave RL5 near Zoubia produced with Laser Ace survey equipment loaned by MD Ltd
6. One of the bronze axes from cave RL53
7. Field director, Dr Alex Wasse, examines Iron II jars from cave RL5
8. Iona McRae planning and recording underground
9. Drs Wasse, Black and Robinson collecting geological samples from cave RL54 near Rasun
10. Henry Rockliff abseils to caves in outcrop RL25 in Wadi Kufrinja

Acknowledgements:

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- University of Reading
- British Cave Research Association
- Dept of Antiquities, Jordan

Website:
cbrl.org.uk/research/ritual.shtm