During the several years of the rescue excavations in the Jiyeh Marina resort few very interesting painted decorated tombs were brought to light. The tombs discovered here were most probably originally situated along the northern outskirts of the settlement; the limits of the necropolis were located east from the sea shore and west from the first abrupt slopes which form a relatively broad shelf overlooking the site. Both necropolis and settlement are the location of the Polish-Lebanese excavations led by Dr. Tomasz Waliszewski. The site was opened on the basis of a long lasting erosion process as well as human activity. An area of the more recent cemetery was used in the Hellenistic times as an industrial site which then was completely abandoned involving further devastation. It should be noticed that the necropolis itself consisted of several different phases of growth. What is significant is that not only new tomb structures appeared but also old constructions were still in use at the same time. The final phase on the site is associated with the industrial activity which took place on the former necropolis. Several pottery kilns were functioning there, as well as other kinds of manufacturing activity.

The necropolis discovered during the excavations show that aside from the daily routine, eternal life was also very important to the community living in Jiyeh. This is manifest especially in the painting decorations which originally ornamented the tombs or in the architectonic decorations of the tombs.

In Jiyeh Marina there are several such decorated tomb structures. Each of them represents a variety of artistic motifs on the walls. The garland decorations found in a tomb which was located in the central part of the necropolis (fig. 1) deserve attention. The motif and especially the type of garland decoration were finished with precision and very good use of colours. In a very characteristic way the contours of the picture were painted on white tomb walls and then filled with pigment thus finishing the decoration. The garlands were painted on the upper parts of the walls just below the ceiling of the rock-cut chamber grave. Complete arrangements indicate that the skilled artists who were decorating this tomb were familiar with the popular trends in style in the Levant during the Roman period.

Other very characteristic motifs of the tomb decorations discovered in the Jiyeh Marina necropolis are long black lines. These parallel elements are observed on the uppermost parts of the walls. The lines were painted horizontally. In several places weak traces of palm leaves painted with green and red pigments are visible between both lines (figs. 2, 3 and 4).
In some places similar decorations were painted vertically. The lines formed a kind of panel and maintain an outward appearance of the space between two burial places situated next to one another. These architectonic decorative elements were probably painted in the tomb to give it a more embellished aspect. The horizontal elements were imitations of architraves and the vertical ones imitated the pilasters present in the monumental architecture.

Almost the whole vaulted ceiling of the grave, where original decoration still survives was decorated with numerous red dots painted regularly on the whole surface. Some of these ornaments are similar to flower buds (poppies?) which is understandable in view of the tombs (fig. 5). The flowers are usually associated with the process of oblivion and the passing to eternal life. So if the interpretation of the painted elements on the tomb ceiling is correct, the symbolism of the decorative theme is very clear and is subordinated to the beliefs associated with transposing from this world to the netherworld. Thus the poppies would make this process easier, at least in a symbolic way certainly.

In the same tomb traces of wall paintings in various colours were found. The lower parts of the wall up to the sarcophagi rims were painted red. This ornamentation seems similar to the red pigment very often used in the paintings from Pompeii 3. This solution divided the wall decorations into two main elements: the red lower part and the white painted upper part. It cannot be excluded that the floor was also painted red, but traces of the pigment did not survive in enough quantity to confirm this theory. Moreover, traces of red paint are visible vertically along the niches where the sarcophagi were placed. We do not have enough data to confirm that the arcosolia were painted red along their rims – the state of the tomb preservation makes this impossible.

Another very intriguing rock-cut tomb with traces of painted decoration was found in the same central part of the Jiyeh necropolis. This second painted tomb was discovered just several meters from the above-described structure. Due to the fact that this rock-cut tomb was badly damaged, and only about half of the original structure survived, it is difficult to fully examine the theme of its painting decoration. Similarly to the rest of the sepulchers in the necropolis this one was also most probably the place of eternal rest for several members of one family. What deserves attention is the palmettos red decoration which was also painted between two red horizontal lines. The upper line is much thinner than the lower one which forms the base for the row of palmettos.

The most characteristic element of the tomb decoration is a painted representation of a chariot led by two black or dark brown horses (fig. 6). The charioteer was probably a representation of the man interred in the nearby burial. Despite its poor state of preservation, the painting is one of the most characteristic and unique in the Jiyeh necropolis. The first interpretation of this painted decoration is that it is linked to the possible profession of the buried person. In Late Antiquity chariots races were very popular
Fig 1: Traces of the garland decorations and other painted elements (T. Waliszewski).

Fig. 2: Horizontal lines painted on the white plaster wall (T. Waliszewski).
amongst people on the Levantine coast. Circuses were common in almost all important oriental towns and cities. In Lebanon, the hippodrome of Tyre and Berytos are known of from historical sources. This indicates that we can assume that the person who was buried in the grave was a charioteer representing Jiyeh during the competitions. There is also another more spiritual explanation for the chariot picture in the tomb. It can be also associated with a symbolic process of traveling to the other side. It could be linked with a dynamic process of a passage from one place to another – from the world of living to the world of the dead. The dynamism of the whole scene, especially the “flying gallop” of the horses, also underlines the impetuosity of the picture and shows the skills of the painter who decorated the tomb.

There is another fragmentary and badly recognizable painting which was originally a part of the burial place decoration of this rock cut tomb. The contour of the composition is hard to identify: one can suppose that a type of ship with additional elements was represented here. If we assume that it is indeed a ship we can also propose two different interpretations of its presence on the tomb wall. The first option posits that a man buried in the grave could have been a sailor, sailing merchant etc. The ship could also symbolize the last trip to the underworld, or might even represent a conveyance for souls.

The localization of the above-mentioned graves, which were above averagely finished, suggests that the most important and/or relatively wealthy members of Jiyeh community were originally buried here.

The general problem with all of the above-presented tomb paintings is their proper dating. The only materials we have came from the latest rescue excavations. Pottery sherds found in the graves are dated back to the 4th-5th centuries AD. These finds are not enough to satisfactorily date the tombs. The paintings should probably be dated earlier, and the material which was excavated probably represent the latest phase of the tombs function. The only other criteria which can be used for dating are the decoration style and the painting technique, but these tools are very imprecise, unfortunately. In other words, the paintings which decorated the two burial chambers discovered in the central part of the Jiyeh necropolis can only in general date to the Roman period. Only very tentatively can the decorations be dated to the 2nd or 3rd centuries AD. We cannot forget however that a similar tradition of wall painting in tombs is generally much older.

This last described burial place was located in the western part of the necropolis at a distance of 150-200 meters from the modern seashore. Unfortunately the grave was damaged by bulldozers which made elements of the original decoration theme impossible to recognize. The only picture found in the burial context is a red painted cross with two letters, namely alpha and omega, flanking the centrally located symbol. The shape of the cross which is similar to the Maltese cross, and the graphic form of the letters indicate that the final decoration of this tomb can be dated to
Fig. 3 :  
Horizontal lines. A close view of the painted detail (T. Waliszewski).

Fig. 4 :  
Interior of the tomb (T. Waliszewski).
the late 5th or better still to the 6th century AD (fig. 7). The tomb was most probably repainted in white, and used for Christian burials. The earlier decorations disappeared under the more recent paint as the more modest Christian ceremonial traditions rather avoid anything other than crosses in its decorative elements.

Our knowledge of the Jiye necropolis is still fragmentary. Considering the character of the site and the town functioning, the graveyard seems to reflect aspects of everyday life. The painting decorations are similar to others known from the Levantine coast. In Tyre, for instance, decorated graves dated to the Roman period were also brought to light. In other words, the micro region of Jiye which is squeezed between the big Levantine urban centres Berytus, Sidon and Tyre reflects on a local scale the splendor of life in the great city organism. At the same time a rich local tradition surely intermingled with new trends and new cultural influences on which the people of the Levant were always broadly open to.

Fig 5:
Painted decoration of the tomb ceiling (T. Waliszewski).
Fig. 6: Painted decoration of the tomb with a chariot and a ship representation (T. Waliszewski).

Fig. 7: Cross painted on a white plastered wall inside a badly damaged rock-cut tomb (O. Wasilewska).
### Notes


### Bibliography


