**Conspicuous Construction: New Light on Funerary Architecture in Rural Early Roman Judea from Horvat Midras, Israel**

Review comments

Dear

Your article outlines the excavation results, proposed reconstruction and subsequent interpretation of the archaeological evidence regarding a funerary marker connected to a burial cave complex in rural early Roman Judea, and the exploration of a population of rural elites and how they constructed this and similar monuments as status markers.

Some significant findings are explored, in particular connected to the proposed reconstruction of the monument as a striking and significant structure embedded in the rural landscape as a signifier of elite status and difference.

You have requested a focus on structure and the strength of your arguments, and on how the word count might be reduced. Specific comments and suggestions regarding these elements are given in the text of the article, as well as a general summary and some matters to do with specific aspects of BASOR requirements below.

Structure and word count

Overall, the article is structured logically, with well-defined main sections that include nicely detailed headings. At certain points throughout the article, I have suggested where you might like to insert a further sub-heading (BASOR allows two levels of heading). This is mainly to separate a new and significant idea, or to create a better flow between paragraphs and sections.

The sections flow logically in terms of topic and theme.

One point I would like to draw your attention to is the introduction of some new content into the conclusion (the passage on Doric friezes in tombs). It is not normally appropriate to introduce a completely new element like this in a conclusion, so you may want to consider moving this passage to another section, or even deleting it completely (even though it is very interesting).

Deleting this passage would address one of your other concerns as well—the word count. BASOR asks that articles be no longer than 12,000 words, and this includes all the text. Currently your article sits at around 12,600 words, and deleting this passage would remove 262 words. I have reduced some of the word count through light editing of the text (removing redundancies in particular). Further revision by you, and further editing, would be needed to reduce the word count some more. In addition, you also need to include an abstract of around 200 words. There is a certain level of repetition across sections, between the introduction and the first main section for instance, and this is to be expected, but some of the repetition (and thus the word count) could be addressed with a heavier edit and a tighter focus at some points.

Strength of arguments

The argumentation across the article is quite strong already, with the conclusions drawn from the evidence all being valid and well supported. Most of my comments in the article that relate to the arguments are to do with clarity of expression, which is an important aspect of an argument’s strength. Again, I have addressed some points of ambiguity with light editing, and have drawn your attention to some passages that might need some more attention.

One aspect to focus on in particular is the terminology used for both the pyramidal structure and the burial cave. As I note in a comment about this, several terms are used for each of these elements, and this may become confusing for readers who are not familiar with the topic or the types of tombs and structures you are excavating and interpreting. There are a few ways to address this: by only using one term for each element, but this could become a bit tedious in your article; or inserting an explanatory footnote to explain which terms are interchangeable, and then being consistent within this.

The terminology about ‘elites’ is similarly problematic, as it is not clearly defined (and this is common in archaeological literature) – and of course this is something that you are attempting to do in your interpretation, to develop a way to define the rural elite in particular. You might need to think of how to make this a little clearer in the introduction—how elite in itself can be a problematic ‘catch-all’ term in archaeological literature, and is rarely problematised in itself. Working this into your own exploration would be a useful approach.

Please note that BASOR requires the following sections for submitted articles:

Title

Abstract (<200 words)

Text

Acknowledgements

Notes

References

Tables

Figure and Table captions.

The current formatting of your article does adhere to BASOR guidelines with the exception of the reference list. I have left this as-is at the moment, as you may need to add more entries after you have reviewed the article and made any updates or additions.