

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY AT TALL HISBAN

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Abstract

This article introduces community archaeology as an emerging perspective on the role and responsibility of archaeologists in relation to the communities where they do their fieldwork. It then offers examples of specific ways in which the leaders of the original Heshbon Expedition (1968–1996) paved the way for the pioneering work in community archaeology of the Tall Hisban Cultural Heritage Project (1996–present). It also includes highlights of community archaeology related activities during recent field seasons and concludes by describing current efforts to provide for ongoing maintenance and protection of the archaeological site in perpetuity.

Keywords: archaeology, anthropology, community archaeology, Tall Hisban, Heshbon Expedition

Community Archaeology

While the discipline of archaeology has been in existence for more than one hundred and fifty years, community archaeology is a relatively new way of approaching the work of archaeologists vis-à-vis the communities near the archaeological site. Although most archaeological projects rely, to varying extents, on collaborative arrangements of various sorts with the people who live nearby, North American and Australian archaeologists who worked with native or indigenous populations were among the first to explicitly give voice to and engage the local community as a key partner in helping to interpret and present the archaeological record of a particular local community.¹ Significantly, ethnoarchaeology—the ethnographic study of the material correlates of contemporary cultural practices—played a key role in crystallizing a vision and way forward for community or public archaeology in both of these regions.

Gemma Tully has noted and commented on signs that the field of community or public archaeology is maturing in terms of “general method and standards of practice.”² Well-known examples from the Near East

¹Ruth Kirk and Richard D. Daugherty, *Hunters of the Whale: An Adventure of Northwest Coast Archaeology* (New York: Morrow, 1974), 31; Colin Pardoe, “Sharing the Past: Aboriginal Influence on Archaeological Practice, A Case Study from New South Wales,” *Aboriginal History* 14 (1990): 208–223; Kenneth M. Ames, “The Place of Ozette in Northwest Coast Archaeology,” *Ozette Archaeological Project Research Reports* 101 (2005): 9–24; Yvonne Marshall, “What Is Community Archaeology?” *World Archaeology* 34 (2002): 212.

²Gemma Tully, “Community Archaeology: General Methods and Standards of Practice,” *Public Archaeology* 6 (2007): 155–187; Gabriel Moshenska, “Community Archaeology from Below: A Response to Tully,” *Public Archaeology* 7 (2008): 51–52.

region are the Community Archaeology Project Quseir in Egypt³ and the Çatalhöyük Research Project in Turkey.⁴ In Jordan, the Madaba Plains Project (MPP) at Tall Hisban⁵ has a five-decade-long history of engagement and collaboration with the local community. Lessons learned through the community archaeology initiatives led by Andrews University at Tall Hisban helped pave the way for the establishment of community archaeology in Jordan at places like Umm el Jamal⁶ (Bert de Vries) and the Temple of the Winged Lion Project in Petra (Maria Elena Ronza),⁷ where veterans of the Hisban campaigns led the way. Community archaeology has also become an important priority of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan—the government agency responsible for supervising archaeological projects in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. A recent grant from the United States Agency for International Development to the American Center for Oriental Research in Amman is notable for its mission-inspired name: Sustainable Cultural Heritage through Engagement of Local Communities Project (SCHEP).⁸

³Stephanie Moser et al., “Transforming Archaeology through Practice: Strategies for Collaborative Archaeology and the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt,” *World Archaeology* 34 (2002): 220–248.

⁴Ian Hodder, “Archaeological Reflexivity and the ‘Local’ Voice,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 76 (2003): 55–69; Sonya Atalay, “We Don’t Talk about Çatalhöyük, We Live It’: Sustainable Archaeological Practice through Community-Based Participatory Research,” *World Archaeology* 42 (2010): 418–429; idem, *Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1–276.

⁵When the project originally began in 1968, the English name of the Tall Hisban site was spelled as “Hesban.” The Jordanian government later changed the English spelling to “Hisban.” The biblical spelling for Tall Hisban is “Heshbon,” which explains why the beginning project was called the “Heshbon Expedition.”

⁶Bert de Vries, “Archaeology and Community in Jordan and Greater Syria: Traditional Patterns and New Directions,” *NEA* 76 (2013): 132–141.

⁷Christopher A. Tuttle, “Preserving Petra Sustainably (One Step at a Time): The Temple of the Winged Lions Cultural Resource Management Initiative as a Step Forward,” *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies* 1 (2013): 1–23.

⁸Maria Elena Ronza, “Building Awareness: The Challenge of Cultural Community Engagement in Petra—the Temple of the Winged Lions Cultural Resource Management Initiative,” *SHAJ* 12 (2016): 617–624. The SCHEP homepage explains as follows: “The SCHEP project is a four year project to engage and employ local people throughout Jordan and improve cultural heritage management skills in communities, the government, and the tourism sector” (American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR), “SCHEP,” <http://www.sustainablepreservation.org/schep/>). The project was inspired by the success of ACOR’s Temple of the Winged Lion Project in training and hiring local women to assist with archaeological reconstruction and research. The person who led out in the work with these women was Elena Maria Ronza, current co-director of the Hisban Cultural Heritage Project. It should be noted that Bert de Vries, along with other founding members of the MPP, worked on a detailed plan in 1976 for engaging local volunteers, such as local school teachers, who would be tasked with becoming guides, etc., which has finally come to fruition.

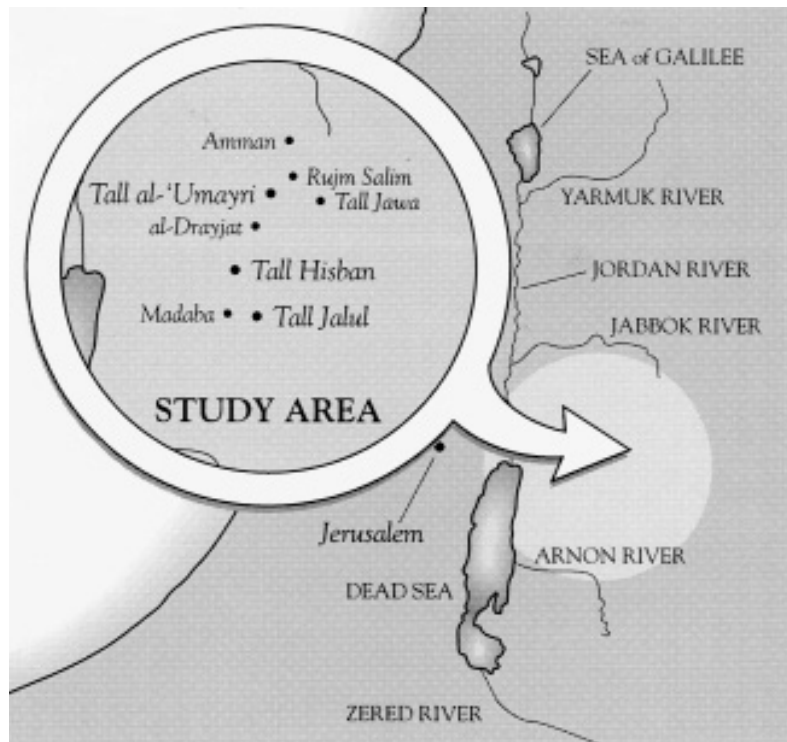


Figure 1. The Madaba Plains Project (1982–present) was a spin-off of the original Heshbon Expedition (1968–1976). The MPP consists of three closely coordinated but separate excavations at Tall Hisban, Tall Jalul, and Tall al-'Umayri. They also conduct surveys and satellite excavations in the hinterlands of each of these three major sites (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

Community archaeology is thus a rapidly emerging, new type of archaeology that seeks to involve and engage the people living nearby particular archaeological sites in collaborative partnerships with local antiquities authorities and professional archaeologists in order to interpret, present, preserve, and protect such sites. It has come into its own as a sub-specialty in part as a result of the influence of the post-colonial critique of orientalist approaches to archaeology;⁹ the embrace of ethnoarchaeology as an integral part of archaeological practice;¹⁰ and increasing awareness of the

⁹Tully, “Community Archaeology,” 155–187; Moshenska, “Community Archaeology from Below,” 51–52.

¹⁰Marshall, “What Is Community Archaeology?” 211–219.

threats to architecture that is in situ and installations exposed by excavations to damage and destruction caused by environmental and human agencies.¹¹



Figure 2. Aerial Photo of Tall Hisban (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

By nature, archaeology is a destructive undertaking, producing large and unsightly holes and trenches that are unsafe for local residents, especially children, even when the excavation has been carried out with great care. Excavations also expose architectural remains to the ravages of the elements, looters, and vandalism. What makes community archaeology especially urgent is the challenge of finding a sustainable way forward for caring for the large quantity of archaeological sites uncovered by archaeologists since the pioneering days of the profession. Community archaeology thus presents a timely solution to this problem because it harnesses the time and skills of those living closest to the site, training them as custodians and presenters of the archaeological heritage in their backyards. In many cases, becoming involved benefits local residents and businesses both economically and socially.

¹¹Gill Chitty and David Baker, eds., *Managing Historic Sites and Buildings: Reconciling Presentation and Preservation*, vol. 2 of *Issues in Heritage Management* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 41; Hamdan Taha, "The Current State of Archaeology in Palestine," *Present Pasts* 2 (2010): 16–25.



Figure 3. The first season of fieldwork at Tall Hisban was organized and led by Siegfried H. Horn (right) of Andrews University in Michigan, Roger Boraas (center) of Uppsala College in New Jersey, and Lawrence T. Geraty (left), then PhD candidate at Harvard University (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

The Legacy of the Original Heshbon Expedition

During the seventies, the leaders of the original MPP¹² excavations at Tall Hisban—namely Siegfried H. Horn, Lawrence T. Geraty, and Roger S. Boraas—laid an important foundation for the community archaeology approach. Although the principle reason for choosing this site had been—as

¹²In 1984, a new initiative took shape under Geraty's leadership—in collaboration with Larry Herr, Øystein LaBianca, and later Randall Younker and Douglas Clark—called the Madaba Plains Project, which retroactively encompassed the Hisban project and simultaneously opened a new one at Tall al-'Umayri.

indicated by the project name, “Heshbon Expedition”—to find archaeological proof for the Israelite conquest and rebuilding of Heshbon (see for example Num 21:21–31), these leaders did not let this quest for a particular biblical past bias their approach toward digging what turned out to be a multi-layered, multi-millennial archaeological mound. Rather, they made careful, systematic excavation and rigorous separation of successive occupational layers their top priority, thus producing for the archaeology of Jordan a baseline not only for the study of the biblical (Iron Age) times, but also for the study of Greco-Roman times and the until-then largely ignored and neglected Islamic centuries.¹³ This focus on what is sometimes referred to by historians as *la longue durée*¹⁴ is one of the important legacies of the original Heshbon Expedition and was a key factor in the eventual crystallization of a community archaeology emphasis by the project.¹⁵

¹³See Roger S. Borass and Lawrence T. Geraty, “The Long Life of Tell Hesbân, Jordan,” *Arch* 32 (1979): 10–20; Siegfried H. Horn, *Heshbon in the Bible and Archaeology*, Occasional Papers of the Horn Archaeological Museum 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: The Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, 1982), 1–26; idem, “My Life in Archeology and the Early History of the Heshbon Archaeological Expedition,” in *Hesban after 25 Years*, ed. David Merling and Lawrence T. Geraty (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Siegfried Horn Archaeological Museum, 1994), 1–13; Roger S. Boraas, “Hesban and Field Method—How We Dug, and Why,” in *ibid.*, 15–23; and Lawrence T. Geraty, “Why We Dug at Tell Hesban,” in *ibid.*, 39–53.

¹⁴Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 31–33.

¹⁵The Heshbon Expedition is also well known for having introduced to Syro-Palestinian archaeology the food system concept and the related notions of intensification and abatement to interpret and make sense of various lines of archaeological data from Tall Hisban (William G. Dever, “Syro-Palestinian Archaeology ‘Comes of Age’: The Inaugural Volume of the Hesban Series: A Review Article,” *BASOR* 290/291 [1993]: 127–30; Alexander H. Joffe, “New Archaeology,” in *OEANE*, 4:134–138; Piotr Bienkowski, review of *The Madaba Plains Project: Forty Years of Archaeological Research into Jordan’s Past*, ed. Douglas R. Clark, Larry G. Herr, Øystein S. LaBianca, and Randall W. Younker, *BASOR* 367 [2012]: 90–92). More recently, the notions of abatement and intensification have been adopted by researchers seeking a *longue durée* perspective on the history of the wider Mediterranean and Western Europe (Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2000], 545; Mark Whittow, “Decline and Fall? Studying Long-term Change in the East,” in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. Luke A. Lavan and William Bowden, vol. 1 of *Late Antique Archaeology* [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 404–423; Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 19, 451–458).



Figure 4. James Sauer, then a doctoral student at Harvard University, was the ceramics expert on the original Heshbon Expedition. His studies of the Islamic pottery corpus at Tall Hisban helped lay the foundations for Islamic archaeology in Jordan (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).



Figure 5. The 1968 Archaeological Team (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

The original Heshbon Expedition also engaged the local community by hiring and befriending local workmen and their families. Workmen were hired from the very first field season, in 1968, with the express purpose of making sure that workman wages would benefit each of the five clans that made up the population of the then village of Hisban. Such was not ordinary practice among archaeologists at the time, but it proved to be a major advantage in generating goodwill toward the project. Many of these same workmen were able to learn and improve their English as a result of working on the expedition, which, in turn, expanded their employment opportunities in the government, business, and higher education sectors, both in Jordan and abroad. Some of the friendships that were formed between foreigners and local families nearly fifty years ago continue to the present.



Figure 6. Siegfried H. Horn and local elders distributing payroll to local workmen (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

As was the case in Australia and North America (as mentioned earlier), the embrace of ethnoarchaeology by the original Heshbon Expedition played a key role in paving the way for community archaeology. Interviews were conducted in the local village, especially with women, which yielded a great deal of information and understanding about the daily lives and material culture of the local population.¹⁶ These activities led to the crystallization

¹⁶Øystein S. LaBianca, “Objectives, Procedures, and Findings of Ethnoarchaeological Research in the Vicinity of Hesban in Jordan,” *ADAJ* 28 (1984): 269–287; Øystein S. LaBianca et al., *Sedentarization and Nomadization: Food System Cycles at Hesban and Vicinity in Transjordan*, Hesban 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1990), 1–30; idem, “Indigenous Hardiness Structures and State Formation in Jordan: Towards a History of Jordan’s Resident Arab Population” (paper presented at the Third Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies: Ethnic Encounter and Culture Change, Joensuu, Finland, 19–22 June 1995), 143–157.

of the food systems research agenda, which made studying changes over the long-term in the lives of ordinary people a central objective of the project, as opposed to emphasizing only biblical connections or the history of the ruling elites—those who showed off their power by building monuments on the summit of the tell. By studying present-day practices for providing food, water, and security, hypotheses could be generated that aided interpretation of archaeological remains from particular periods in the past.¹⁷ Such hypotheses, in turn, could then be tested by means of comparative analysis of changes over time in, for example, the composition of bone fragments of domestic and wild animals and analysis of the carbonized remains of ancient cultivated plants from different layers.¹⁸ Insights gained from such an approach have also advanced our understanding of the influence of tribalism in shaping the royal ideologies and social relations of the Ammonites, Edomites, Israelites, and Moabites.¹⁹



Figure 7. Jim Sauer (left), Lawrence Geraty (center), and G. Ernest Wright (right), 1974 Season, Tall Hisban (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

¹⁷LaBianca et al., *Sedentarization and Nomadization*, 107–134.

¹⁸Patricia Crawford, Øystein Sakala LaBianca, and Larry Lacelle, *Environmental Foundations: Studies of Climatological, Geological, Hydrological, and Phytological Conditions in Hesban and Vicinity*, Hesbon 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1986), 123–146; Joachim Boessneck et al., *Faunal Remains: Taphonomical and Zooarchaeological Studies of the Animal Remains from Tell Hesban and Vicinity*, Hesbon 13 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1995), 1–216.

¹⁹Øystein S. LaBianca and Randall W. Younker, “The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom: The Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze,” in *In the Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (London: Equinox, 1995), 399–415; Øystein Sakala LaBianca, “Salient Features of Iron Age Tribal Kingdoms,” *Ancient Ammon* 17 (1999): 19.



Figure 8. His Majesty King Hussein (right) visited Tall Hisban in 1976 accompanied by King Constantine II of Greece (left) (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).



Figure 9. Ethnoarchaeology was introduced on the original Heshbon Expedition in 1973 as a means to learn more about the daily life practices of shepherds and farmers in Hisban (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

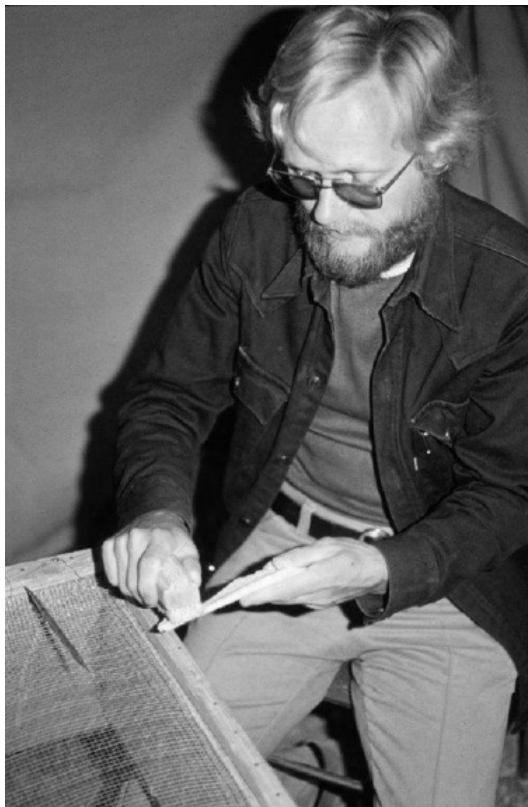


Figure 11. Øystein S. LaBianca, then a graduate student at Brandeis University, introduced zooarchaeology, the study of animal bones, to the Heshbon Expedition. This led to his interest in learning more about present-day agricultural practices and food ways in the village of Hisban (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

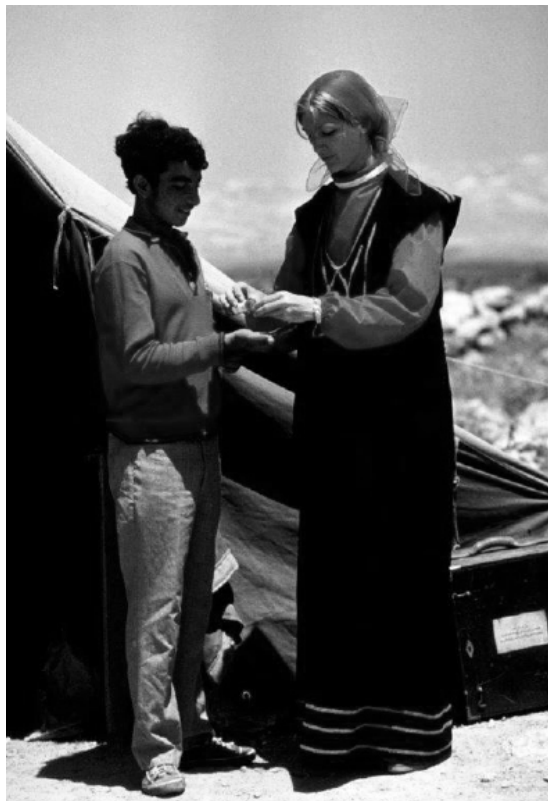


Figure 10. Shirley Finneman, nurse and ethnographer (Photo Credit: Hisban Photo Archive).

The Hisban Cultural Heritage Project

Following a hiatus of twenty years since the last campaign of the original Heshbon Expedition, a second phase of fieldwork was started at Tall Hisban in 1996 in which collaboration with the local community was an explicit objective.²⁰ To this end, the project was renamed the Hisban Cultural

²⁰Andrews University and the University of Bonn (Germany) are the primary sponsoring institutions of the Hisban Cultural Heritage Project. Their most recent field season was 15 May to 1 June 2016. Senior director, Øystein S. LaBianca (Andrews University), and, as of 2016, director of excavations, Bethany J. Walker (University of Bonn and Missouri State University), led a team of thirty-five students and staff, along with sixteen workmen from the village of Hisban. Abdullah Lababdeh and Husam Hijazeen were our representatives from the Department of Antiquities and Maria Elena Ronza (American Center for Oriental Research) served as our agent. Operating costs were budgeted at 36,388 JOD. Areas of the site examined in 2016 included Field B, the Iron Age reservoir and a Mamluk era structure built over the ruins of a Byzantine house; Field M, a narrow,

Heritage Project and among its goals were to foster active participation with local residents, businesses, and the local municipality in helping to make Tall Hisban into an archaeological park complete with a well-signed interpretive path, viewing platforms, and restored archaeological features representing different eras of history in the site.²¹ A local ironsmith made all signage and a local schoolteacher wrote the text in Arabic and English on each sign. Both continue to help maintain the signs.

As a means to organize and give voice to local stakeholders in the expedition, a local non-governmental organization, the Hisban Cultural Association, was established and registered with the government of Jordan in 2010. The association includes representatives from the various local families, the foreign expedition, the Department of Antiquities, and the local municipality. In addition to providing advice to the archaeological project leaders in planning for a visitor center and archaeological park in Hisban, the association also organizes heritage-focused celebrations and educational events in the local village.

Another important component of the community archaeology approach has been the Jordan Field School, which was also launched in 2010. This field school, led by faculty of Andrews University, allows various academic disciplines to collaborate in mounting a variety of community development related learning activities and research initiatives in connection with the digs at Hisban. Students and faculty representing various campus departments and disciplines—including agriculture, anthropology, archaeology, architecture, art and design, communication, international and community development, history, landscape design, and religion—participate as part of the team. All of these disciplines have contributed valuable knowledge and skills that have been essential to developing and implementing plans for an archaeological park and adjacent visitor center at Tall Hisban. Students, who perform much of the work, receive the largest benefits, earning hands-on experience working on projects related to their field of study. Both faculty and students also benefitted from being able to collaborate on planning and design workshops

barrel-vaulted chamber below the southeastern corner of the summit enclosure wall built during the Mamluk period; Field O, Abbasid and Mamluk domestic structures on the west slope of the site; Field P, a large late Byzantine-early Umayyad farmhouse that was reoccupied during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. A hinterland survey was also undertaken, including the use of drones for aerial photography to create 3D modeling of structures and their interrelations and GIS mapping of Hisban's extensive subterranean features. Site presentation activities included a general cleaning of the site, developing and refreshing interpretive paths and signs, and repurposing the Welcome Garden as an area for community gatherings to celebrate their culture and heritage. The project organized two cultural events at this garden area during the 2016 season to celebrate Jordan's Independence Day and the 'Thawra. Members of the municipality and local families, along with project members, attended.

²¹In 2005, our project received a grant from the United States Department of State Ambassador Fund for Heritage Preservation that enabled significant improvements to be made to the site, including raising several columns in the Byzantine church, and the restoration and consolidation of several other key features in the summit. Maria Elena Ronza supervised this work.

with architecture students and faculties from the nearby German Jordanian University and from the University of Jordan.²²



Figure 12. The Hisban Cultural Association was registered with the government of Jordan as a local NGO in 2010. It has given voice to and opportunities for participation of local community members in planning for the future development of the archaeological park and a visitor center in Hisban.

²²This past season, for example, art students Yarleth Gomez and Cassnette-Jade Cooper (supervised by Stefanie Elkins-Bates) learned how to make artistic renderings of partially excavated buildings; archaeology students Jessica Bates, Peter Mazza, and Paul Roschman (mentored by Jeff Hudon and Robert Bates) experienced excavating and being part of an archaeological dig team; cultural anthropology students Chrystal Wedderburn and Elizabeth Bates (with supervision from the author) engaged in participant-observation ethnography; and international agriculture student Connor Smith collaborated with community and international development majors Anna Kim and Noël Harris to install experimental green roof gardens in two different Hisban schools (under the supervision of Kelsey Curnutt).



Figure 13. The Hisban Cultural Association has requested that the Jordan Field School offer instruction in English as a second language for local school children. The demand for this among girls from the village was particularly evident in 2016 (Photo Credit: Kelsey Curnutt).

Crystallizing a More Inclusive Narrative

The community archaeology emphasis of the Hisban Cultural Heritage Project has led not only to local participation in looking after and caring for the archaeological site and in planning for its future, it has also significantly impacted efforts to crystallize a more inclusive narrative of Tall Hisban's history. Building on the foundations laid by the original Heshbon Expedition for a more comprehensive history of Tall Hisban, a key objective of the renewed excavations has been to deepen understanding of the forces that have shaped cultural production at Hisban and its vicinity over the long-term. In other words, the aim has been to narrate the *longue durée* history of the site as a multi-millennial temporal whole—from prehistoric times to the present.²³

²³For an idea of the evolution of the research agenda of our work at Tall Hisban, see Øystein and Asta Sakala LaBianca, "The Anthropological Work," *AUSS* 13.2 (1975): 235–247; Øystein S. LaBianca, "The Village of Hesban: An Ethnographic Preliminary Report," *AUSS* 14.1 (1976): 189–200; idem, "Man, Animals, and Habitat at Hesban—An Integrated Overview," *AUSS* 16.1 (1978): 229–257; idem, "Objectives, Procedures, and Findings," 269–287; Lawrence T. Geraty and Øystein S. LaBianca, "The Local Environment and Human Food-Procuring Strategies in Jordan: The Case of Tell Hesban and its Surrounding Region," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan II*, ed. Adnan Hadidi (Amman: Department of Antiquities, 1985), 323–330; LaBianca et al., *Sedentarization and*

Thus, while the biblical connections of the site continue to be the story that attracts the most tourists to the site, the biblical story is today embedded in a much larger story—namely, a story about the comings and goings of empires and the remarkable ways in which the local host community adapted to and survived these successive waves of foreign peoples and rulers.

From the textual and archaeological evidence, we now know that over the past four millennia the site of Tall Hisban was home to a rural community that, in various ways, was influenced or ruled by a long succession of external powers, including the New Kingdom Egyptians; the Israelite monarchies of Solomon and David; Ammonites and Moabites; Assyrians; Neo-Babylonians; Greeks; Romans; Byzantines; Umayyads; Abbasids; Fatimids; Franks (Crusaders); Ayyubids; Mamluks; Ottomans; British; and most recently, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. These are what I have called elsewhere the “Great Traditions” that have interacted and partially shaped the lives and ways of the local population of Hisban over time.²⁴

As important—indeed even more important than the “Great Traditions”—are the “Little Traditions” that have enabled the local host communities to adapt and cope despite the comings and goings of external political powers.²⁵ Examples of these include their many clever ways of

Nomadization, 1–300; Øystein S. LaBianca, “The Journey from Heshbon to Hesban: An Account of the Evolution of the Heshbon Expedition’s Scope of Research,” in *Hesban after 25 Years*, ed. David Merling and Lawrence T. Geraty (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Siegfried Horn Archaeological Museum, 1994), 25–37; idem, “Everyday Life at Hesban Through the Centuries,” in *ibid.*, 197–209; Øystein S. LaBianca and Lawrence T. Geraty, “The Heshbon Expedition: Retrospects and Prospects,” in *ibid.*, 301–313; Øystein S. LaBianca, “On-Site Water Retention Strategies: Solutions from the Past for Dealing with Jordan’s Present Water Crisis,” in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan V*, ed. Khairieh ‘Amr, Fawzi Zayadine, and Muna Zaghoul (Amman: Department of Antiquities, 1995), 771–776; idem, “Tells, Empires, and Civilizations: Investigating Historical Landscapes in the Ancient Near East,” *NEA* 69 (2006): 4–11; idem, “Thinking Globally and also Locally: Anthropology, History and Archaeology in the Study of Jordan’s Past,” in *Crossing Jordan: North American Contributions to the Archaeology of Jordan*, ed. Thomas E. Levy et al. (London: Equinox, 2007), 3–11; Øystein S. LaBianca and Bethany Walker, “Tall Hisban: Palimpsest of Great and Little Traditions of Transjordan and the Ancient Near East,” in *ibid.*, 111–120; Øystein S. LaBianca, “Great and Little Traditions: A Framework for Studying Cultural Interaction through the Ages in Jordan,” in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan IX*, ed. Fawwaz al-Khraysheh (Amman: Department of Antiquities, 2007), 275–289; idem, “Tall Hisban: Palimpsest of Great and Little Traditions,” in *The Madaba Plains Project: Forty Years of Archaeological Research into Jordan’s Past*, ed. Douglas R. Clark et al. (Sheffield: Equinox, 2011), 9–27.

²⁴Idem, “Great and Little Traditions,” 275–289.

²⁵Øystein S. LaBianca and Kristen Witzel, “Nomads, Empires and Civilizations: Great and Little Traditions and the Historical Landscape of the Southern Levant,” in *On the Fringe of Society: Archaeological and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives on Pastoral and Agricultural Societies*, ed. Benjamin A. Saidel and Eveline J. van der Steen, BAR International Series 1657 (London: Archaeopress Publishers of British Archaeological Reports, 2007), 63–84.

harvesting and storing rainwater; flexible combining of cereal production with the herding of sheep and goats; ability to live in various types of shelters, such as a stone house, cave, or tent; hospitality; self-policing through codes of honor and shame; and most importantly, perhaps, their reliance on a tribal form of social organization as a means to forming new families, protection, cooperation, control of resources, and prestige. By means of these “Little Traditions” the host communities of Hisban have survived for millennia, and they continue to resonate and be important in the local host community to this day.²⁶

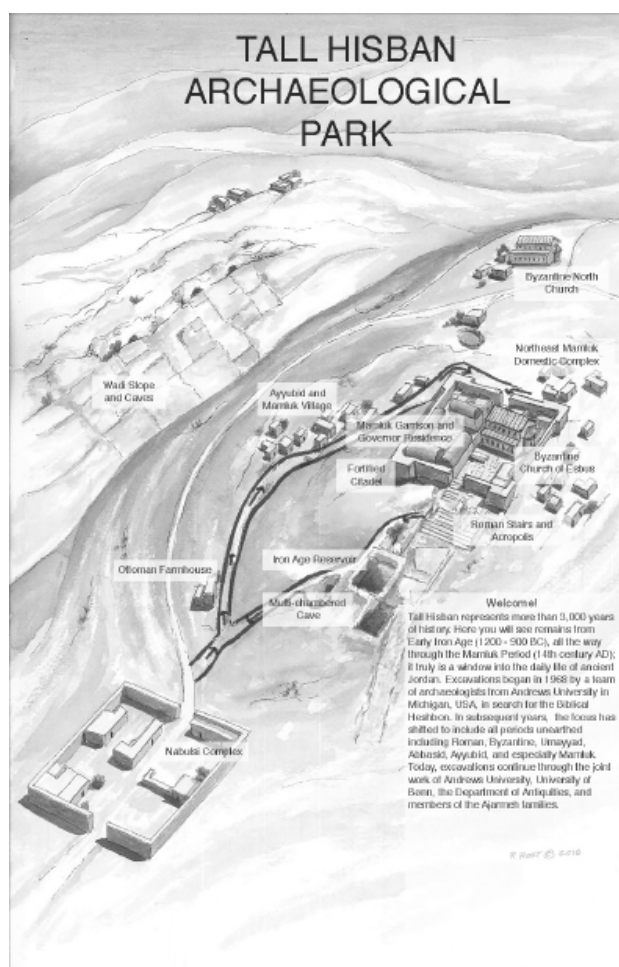


Figure 14. Rhonda Root, a professor of art at Andrews University, prepared this rendering of key archaeological features in Tall Hisban Archaeological Park.

²⁶See the detailed discussions of this anthropological concept in *ibid.*, 63–74.

When taking visitors through the site, two stories are told—the story of great empires marching through the region and the story of the daily life of the local population through the ages. Examples of imperial influences at the site include remains of a thriving market town from the time of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians; large quantities of amphora jars containing tiny fish bones attesting strong local demand for *garum*—a fermented fish sauce condiment that was an essential flavor in ancient Greek and Roman cooking; the expertly shaped masonry foundations of a Roman public building—possibly a temple dedicated to the Sarapis Cult;²⁷ the apse, pillar foundations and partial sections of several mosaic floor panels of two Byzantine basilica churches; and the private residence and bath (hammam) of a Mamluk governor of this part of Jordan during the fourteenth century CE. And, as already mentioned, just as important are evidences of daily life through the ages attested in the large quantity of pots used for storing and preparing food; the thousands of skeletal fragments of sheep, goats, cattle, horses, mules, poultry, and even fish; and the use and re-use of domestic buildings, courtyards, water channels, and cisterns.²⁸



Figure 15. Enjoying Jordanian hospitality at the home of Abdallah Al-Mashale (2016).

²⁷I am grateful to Vivian Laughlin, a doctoral student here at the Institute of Archaeology, for her research that led to this suggestion.

²⁸In 2010, a video where these two stories are told was produced on location (see Øystein S. LaBianca, “Deep Time at Tall Hisban” [Stronger than Fiction Studios, 2010], YouTube video, 14:10, posted by “strongerthanfict,” 4 January 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2kUMkjmRF8>).



Figure 16. 2016 Village Celebration of the partnership with the Madaba Plains Project.

This effort to elucidate cultural practices that have enabled the local population to survive and remain resilient in the face of millennia of external predation is well reflected in the fieldwork priorities of the renewed excavations. For example, over the past several field seasons our excavations have mostly been on the slopes below the summit, uncovering architectural remains that include several farmhouses. These dwellings of ordinary families and their animals give a picture of daily living during Byzantine, Islamic, and early modern times in Jordan. A reconstruction is underway for the floor plans of their homes and their manufacture and use of stone tools, pottery, and various everyday objects, such as spindle whorls, belt buckles, and jewelry. Indeed, this focus on the rural landscape in the hinterlands of imperial epicenters has made our current expedition a much sought after training ground for master's and doctoral students from around the world who are seeking to overcome the urban bias that predominates much historical writing about the social world of Late Antique and medieval/Islamic times in the Eastern Mediterranean. This training opportunity is available, in part, due to the partnership with the doctoral program in Islamic history and archaeology at the University of Bonn in Germany, which is headed by my colleague and, as of 2016, director of excavations, Bethany Walker.²⁹

²⁹Bethany J. Walker, "Militarization to Nomadization: The Middle and Late Islamic Period," *NEA* 62 (1999): 202–232; idem, "Mamluk Investment in Southern Bilād Al-Shām in the Eighth/Fourteenth Century: The Case of Hisbān," *JNES* 62 (2003): 241–261; LaBianca and Walker, "Great and Little Traditions," 111–120; Bethany J. Walker, *Jordan in the Late Middle Ages: Transformation of the Mamluk Frontier*, Chicago Studies on the Middle East 8 (Chicago: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2011), 1–338; idem, "Ottoman Archaeology: Localizing the Imperial,"

Planning for the Future

The 2016 field season of the Hisban Cultural Heritage Project was particularly important with regard to planning for future collaboration with the local community. Especially constructive in this regard were discussions with members of the Hisban Cultural Association about their hopes and aspirations for the Association. Their appreciation for our work and hopes for the future of our partnership and the archaeological site were also presented publically in a celebratory event organized in the site's welcome area by Association members. The Association also hosted a marvelous evening of poetry and story-telling centered on the archaeological mound and its meaning to the local community.³⁰ Perhaps most important of all was the discussion and agreement on a vision and strategic plan for future initiatives by the Hisban Cultural Heritage Project.³¹ The conversations also included a proposal for marking the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of Andrews University-led archaeological campaigns at Tall Hisban during July of 2018.³²

in *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, 5642–5653; idem, “Planned Villages and Rural Resilience on the Mamluk Frontier: A Preliminary Report on the 2013 Excavation Season at Tall Hisban,” in *History and Society during the Mamluk Period (1250–1517)*, ed. Stephan Conermann, Studies of the Annemarie Schimmel Research College I (Goettingen: V&R unipress, Bonn University Press, 2014), 157–192; Øystein S. LaBianca and Bethany J. Walker, “Tall Hisban,” in *Crossing Jordan: North American Contributions to the Archaeology of Jordan*, ed. Thomas E. Levy et al. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 111; Bethany J. Walker, “The Legacy of Tall Hisban,” in *The Madaba Plains Project: Forty Years of Archaeological Research into Jordan's Past*, ed. Douglas R. Clark et al. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 183–196.

³⁰The event was entirely a production of the Association, including funding for renting a tent, chairs, loud speakers, and recruitment of speakers and local entertainers.

³¹The following is an excerpt from this plan: “The goal of the Hisban Cultural Heritage Project is to incubate a heritage economy in the town of Hisban through engaging the local community as partners with the Department of Antiquities and Andrews University in caring for and attracting visitors to the Tall Hisban Archaeological Park. To this end, the project will develop capacity in the Hisban Cultural Association to become an active partner in managing activities related to protecting, preserving, and presenting the site to local residents, K–12 teachers, university students and professors, and tour guides representing various constituencies. Activities toward this goal will include (1) completing a site management plan in Arabic and English; (2) instituting an on-going program of upkeep and updating of interpretive paths and signage; (3) producing a Guide for Guides and a site map, both in Arabic and English; (4) producing a video in Arabic and English; (5) establishing a festival featuring the Mamluk story in Hisban in Arabic and English; (6) developing and implementing a training program for conservation which includes training in conservation of the Mamluk and Ottoman farmhouses; and (7) training of site stewards in social media and outreach activities.”

³²The 1968 campaign consisted of a team of about two-dozen faculty and students. It was organized and led by Siegfried H. Horn of Andrews University in Michigan and Roger Boraas of Uppsala College in New Jersey. Field supervisors for that first season included Dewey Beegle of Wesley Theological Seminary; Phyllis Bird, then at Harvard University and later professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological

The Lawrence T. Geraty Community Archaeology Endowment, which is being established in collaboration with the American Schools of Oriental Research, is one aspect of the plan for funding the ongoing work of looking after and caring for the archaeological park at Tall Hisban.³³ Earnings from the endowment will fund community-initiated projects that develop local capacity to care for and present archaeological sites. In this way, present and future generations of local school children and residents, as well as the Jordanian public and foreign tourists, will be able to visit and enjoy the site in perpetuity.³⁴ The endowment will also serve as a model and demonstration of ways that archaeologists might partner with local communities for their mutual benefit.³⁵ The negative consequence of failing with this undertaking is that sites such as this that have provided so many valuable stories and insights from the past will be obliterated and lost to both the world of scholarship and to the world of heritage tourism on which so much of Jordan's economy

Seminary; Henry Thompson, then at New York Theological Seminary, later Professor at the Unification Theological Seminary; Bastiaan Van Elderen of Calvin College in Michigan; and Lawrence T. Geraty, then a doctoral student at Harvard University, who served as an Associate Field Supervisor.

³³The American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), founded in 1900 and currently located at Boston University, is the preeminent organization of archaeologists, historians, linguists, and cultural heritage professionals who initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the cultures and history of the Near East and wider Mediterranean. Its membership includes professional archaeologists, university professors, and graduate students, as well as individuals whose professional expertise lies elsewhere than in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean world, but who have a special interest in the cultures and peoples of this region. In addition to facilitating professional development of archaeologists, archaeological field work, and publishing, ASOR has recently become a major player in helping to protect the at-risk cultural heritage sites and landscape of the Near East and wider Mediterranean. ASOR thus has the professional expertise and experience to assure that best practices are followed in all lines of archaeological work in the region, not the least where community archaeology is concerned.

³⁴We are grateful to have Sela for Vocational Training and Protection of Cultural Heritage—a non-profit based in Jordan organized by a group of five members of the Temple of Winged Lions Cultural Resources Management Initiative in Petra—as our partner for the purposes of supervising site stewards and their activities. Its mission is to raise awareness and increase the sense of ownership towards cultural heritage and to create sustainable local capacities for the protection of cultural heritage. Sela provides hands-on vocational training in conservation and restoration and is specifically geared towards women and youth.

³⁵The Lawrence T. Geraty Community Archaeology Endowment will be distributed in small grants or awards as guided by ASOR's Investment and Spending Policies and will have as its initial focus community archaeology endeavors at the sites excavated by the MPP. Other sites in the immediate region and beyond will be able to apply for funding under the Endowment as the fund grows. As previously mentioned, the most important benefit of this Endowment is that it will provide archaeologists in the Near East and wider Mediterranean region and beyond with a template for community partnership.

depends. The Lawrence T. Geraty Community Archaeology Endowment is being established precisely as a means to mitigate such a future for the site.

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