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The Institute of Archaeology & the Horn
Archaeological Museum Newsletter

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Archaeological Museum

Fall 2000

Institute of Archaeology & Horn Archaeological Museum Newsletter Volume 21.4

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Table of Contents

	Page
<i>Tall Umayri 2000</i>	1
<i>Jalul 2000</i>	2
<i>Rendsburg at AU</i>	2
<i>Beaulieu Studies Tablets</i>	3
<i>Madaba Plains Project 4</i>	3
<i>Random Survey</i>	4

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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Tall Umayri 2000

Excavations at Tall al-Umayri have uncovered three new towns that date to times when settlements in Jordan were rare. Located near the Amman National Park on the Airport Highway south of Amman, the site has already produced impressive towns from more highly populated periods in Jordan, finding over 20 superimposed towns since 1984.

The most impressive new discoveries include the remains of a building from about 1300 B.C. which still stands 3.5 meters high. There appears to have been a mudbrick second story, the collapse of which preserved the high stone walls of the ground floor. This season the floor of the building was finally reached. Evidence of trade was reflected in the three pieces of Greek pottery (Mycenean ware). The Late Bronze Age, when this building was used, is a time when very few settlements existed on the Jordanian plateau. The structure was at the highest part of the site in its time and its walls are so massive that it may be a governor's palace.

The tall has produced the best-preserved town from the early Iron Age in Jordan. The walls of several houses stand two meters high and pillar bases indicate that the roofs were supported by wooden posts. One of the houses, a typical "four-room house" has been partially restored with wooden posts and a portion of the second floor made of bricks. This season, excavators worked their way through the massive destruction of this town to the south of the restored house. The debris was made up of burned bricks and roofing materials such as mud, wooden beams, and reeds. After the bricky destruction was removed a major building consisting of four rooms was visible. The walls were made of stone topped by bricks and may have stood only one story high. But this building has a unique plan with three wide rooms and a fourth, smaller room to the south in which seven curious stones were found lying down. They may have been used in some cultic

(continued on p. 2)



Umayri 2000 Excavation Team.

(Umayri cont'd)

fashion in antiquity. A large plastered area dating to the 11th-10th centuries B.C., a time period which has been rare at the site, was found. On excavated surfaces many smashed pots were found, including a cult stand with two curious standing figures with masculine heads, but one breast each.

A minor settlement at the site also took place during the late Hellenistic period (ca 150-50 BC) when a few residents constructed a small farmstead on the southern edge of the site. The small farm may have produced wine on the hill-sides surrounding Umayri. In the courtyard of the building the team found small lamps, pottery juglets and food-producing implements reflecting the daily activities of the family living there.

Among the small finds were several seals including one made by the Hyksos rulers of Egypt.

The results of the excavation help to fill the gaps in Jordan's history. In future seasons they hope to uncover more of the settlements from the early Iron Age, Late Bronze Age, and Middle Bronze Age. (Larry Herr, modified by Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



Jalul 2000

Excavations were conducted at Tall Jalul 5 kilometers east of Madaba by Andrews University from April 24 to May 4, 2000. Randall W. Younker and David Merling were codirectors and Reem Samed al-Shqour was the Jordanian Department of Antiquities Representative. Paul Ray served as Field Supervisor and architect/draftsperson. Paul Bucchheim was the geologist. Jiri Moskala was the Educational Director. Some 23 students and volunteers from Andrews University participated in the excavations.

Our goal this season was twofold. Educationally, we intended to provide in-field archaeological training for Andrews University students. Archaeologically, our goal was to open a trench in a new

field of the tall in order to gain a more complete picture of the occupational history of the site. This new field, located on the east side of the tall, between Field B to the east and Field A to the north, was designated Field E. Four squares were opened in Field E along a west-east axis.

Excavations in this brief field season exposed only three phases of activity: (1) recent surface debris accumulation dating to the last few decades; (2) a possible terrace wall, probably dating to sometime earlier in the 19th century; (3) a phase of burial activity dating from one to two centuries ago.

The burials that were uncovered this season were identical in nature to those found in previous seasons in both Fields A and B. Virtually no grave goods were found with the buried individuals. Wealthy and more important people were apparently interred on the acropolis, the highest part of the tall.

Beneath the burials in Field E, our team began to penetrate dark-gray earth loci that contained abundant Iron Age pottery, although the lack of time precluded continued excavation of these loci for this season. The forms included pottery from both Iron I and Iron II. A few Persian, Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic sherds were found in disturbed loci. A possible wall of uncertain age was partially uncovered along the north side of Square E1.

A number of objects were found on the surface in or near Field E; a number of other objects were found during the course of excavation. The objects included a number of spindle whorls, flints, an Iron II arrowhead, an Iron Age bronze fibula, an Iron II female figurine head, and two Iron II seals; one was of a four-petal floral design incised on a bright blue stone; the other seal was white and possessed Egyptian hieroglyphs which we are now deciphering.

(Randall W. Younker and David Merling)



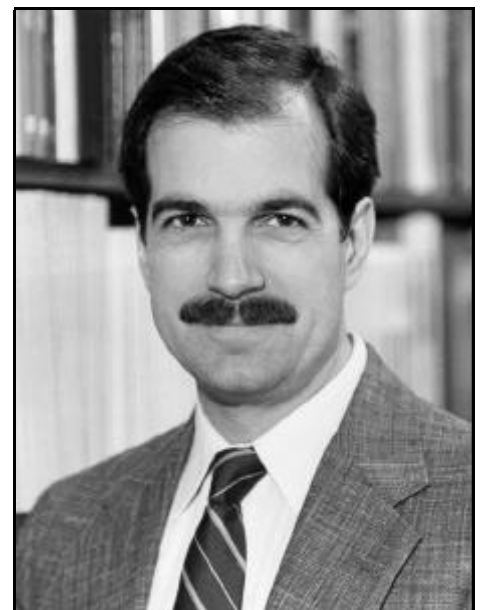
Rendsburg at AU

On May 9, 2000 Gary Rendsburg of Cornell University presented *Reading the Abraham Story*, a lecture focusing on literary techniques applied to the biblical narrative. Dr. Rendsburg stresses the conflict created by the promise of a son and the barrenness of Sarah. The essence of literature is drama that needs to be played out, the narrative inviting the reader to see how conflict is resolved.

In Gen 12 Abraham is called by God and moves, but Sarah does not. Biblical narrative, according to Rendsburg, often dispenses with chronological sequence. This is evident in chaps. 16-22 where 13 years pass without notice. Then, in Gen 17 the sequence of events slows to focus on the building drama.

Stage presentation is crucial for understanding Gen 21. Up until this point, there are one main (Abraham) and four minor (Isaac, Hagar, Ishmael, and Sarah) characters. Narrative can't have too many people on stage at the same time or the scene becomes too crowded. Thus, chap. 21 reduces Ishmael's status and excludes both Hagar and Ishmael from the scene.

In Gen 22 a new literary twist occurs. God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son. Rendsburg suggests that this story



Gary Rendsburg

can only be understood from the various angles presented in biblical literature to heighten the drama of the narrative. The primary angle is Abraham as the central character. As he builds an altar and prepares to sacrifice, the story becomes filled with details that force the reader to follow his every action. The drama builds until he is holding the knife in his hand and is about to sacrifice Isaac.

Focus is a key to understanding the binding of Isaac. At the outset, the reader thinks that Abraham is going to kill Isaac. But a careful analysis of vs. 1 reveals that God instead intends to test Abraham. Now the reader knows what the real characters do not; the focus is on Abraham, not Isaac. This foreshadowing prevents the reader from being overwhelmed by

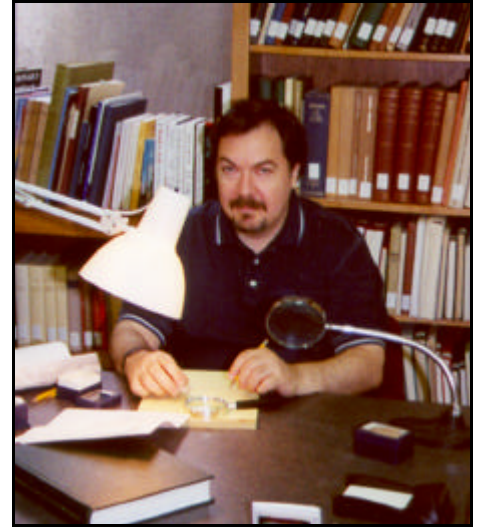
the surprises of the story. (Moise Isaac)

Beaulieu Studies Tablets

Paul-Alain Beaulieu, assistant professor of Assyriology of the Department of Near Eastern Languages at Harvard University, was at the Horn Archaeological Museum from July 9 to 29, 2000 studying its Neo-Babylonian Tablets. The particular tablets that Dr. Beaulieu studied were originally part of a private archive of Itti-Shamash-balatu and his son Arad-Shamash from the city of Larsa and are dated to the 6th century B.C. Beaulieu eventually plans to publish these tablets

along with others from the same archive at Yale and Princeton Universities.

(Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



Paul Beaulieu.

Madaba Plains Project 4

The Archaeological Publications Department at the Institute of Archaeology of Andrews University is pleased to announce the publication of the fourth volume of the Madaba Plains Project series entitled *Madaba Plains Project C 'Umayri 4: The 1992 Season at Tall al-'Umayri and Subsequent Studies*. It is edited by Larry G. Herr, Douglas R. Clark, Lawrence T. Geraty, Øystein S. LaBianca, Randall W. Younker and includes contributions by Douglas R. Clark, Buguslav Dabrowski, Malgorzata Daszkiewicz, Timothy P. Harrison, Larry G. Herr, Jacek Jelitto, John I. Lawlor, Russanne D. Low and Elizabeth E. Pratt.

This volume is dedicated to His Royal Highness Prince El-Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan whose long-standing support of archaeology in Jordan has earned both admiration and deep respect.

The field reports examine the Iron II/Persian Administrative Complex (Ch. 3), Western Defense System (Ch. 4), the Lower Southern Terrace (Ch. 5) and the Eastern Shelf (Ch. 6). These include stratigraphic information, section drawings and pottery plates. Detailed photographs and line drawings make the identification of the excavation phases clear. The pottery discussion compares the 'Umayri ceramics with other similar forms from MB II to Late Iron II/Persian found elsewhere in the Levant. The variety of objects found at 'Umayri show the diversity of human activity throughout the periods represented. These objects are presented in the preliminary report, along with other articles on the clay figurines, the reexamination of Cylinder Seal No. 3021 and two unique inscriptions. Also included are 50 figures, 85 plates, 22 tables, 2 maps, 30 pottery plates and index.

Madaba Plains Project C 'Umayri 4: The 1992 Season at Tall al-'Umayri and Subsequent Studies. Edited by Larry G. Herr, Douglas Clark, Lawrence T. Geraty, Øystein S. LaBianca, Randall W. Younker.

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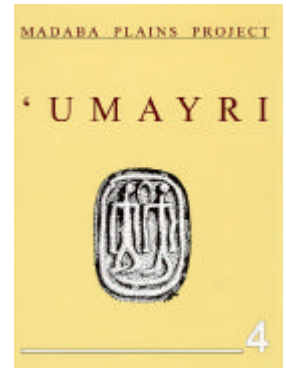
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Madaba Plains Project vols. 1-3 (1984, 1987 and 1989 seasons respectively) can also be purchased for \$79.99 each.



RANDOM SURVEY

GPS Upgrade:

As of midnight May 1, 2000 the US removed selective availability (SA) on the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) units. Originally developed by the Dept. of Defense as a military system, GPS has been used more recently in civil, commercial and scientific (including archaeological survey) applications worldwide. It operates through the use of 24 satellites orbiting the earth, broadcasting extremely accurate signals. With SA, users were subject to errors of up to 100 m. With its removal, it is 10 times more accurate with errors of less than 10 m.

Madaba Plains Project 2001:

Interested in participating in the thrill of doing archaeology? Join Øystein LaBianca and his team at Tall Hisban, Jordan from May 24-June 29, 2001. Application and Security form deadlines are March 15, 2001. Apply early!

To discover more about archaeology, the Institute, and the Museum, contact us at:

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MPP Ethnomusicology:

In the summer of 1999 Dick Dorsett and friends spent their evenings, after a hard day at Jalul, recording the folk music of Jordan. The result was the CD *Music from the Madaba Plains, Jordan*, which is available from the Horn Archaeological Museum for a donation of at least \$20 to cover costs and promote future recording. Some of these funds were used this year on the Umayri dig, resulting in a new CD entitled *Traditional Music of Jordan C 2000*.

New Inscription Found:

After 11 years of excavating at Hegmataneh (Hamadan; cf. Ezra 6.2), the ancient Median capital, and later one of the capitals of the Achaemenid Dynasty, which ruled Ancient Persia from 553-330 B.C., archaeologists have found a capital inscribed in cuneiform. While the inscription is not yet deciphered, it does lend important evidence to the existence of the palaces of the ruling kings at this time.

Persian Gallery Reopens:

The Oriental Institute has recently reopened its Persian Gallery. It houses the nation's premier archaeological collection of artifacts from civilizations which once flourished in Iran.

N E W S L E T T E R



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