



CENTER FOR
NEAR EASTERN
ARCHAEOLOGY
LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

La Sierra Digs

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La Sierra Homecoming 2021

For the first time ever, La Sierra mounted an entire Alumni Homecoming Weekend online. Hats off to the Advancement Office for making it happen, even embedding some catchy social gaming to get people together virtually. The contribution of CNEA to the 2021 Homecoming Weekend involved three components, all part of a one-and-one-half hour interactive online program. Drawing 30–40 people on Zoom and Facebook Live, the lineup included a fine joint presentation on ancient coins, many of which are housed in the CNEA collection; an illustrated update on the latest CNEA initiatives; and the awarding of CNEA Archaeology Awards.

Terri Shaw, JD (retired) and long-time volunteer at CNEA, along with Kent Bramlett, PhD and professor of archaeology and ancient history at La Sierra, joined forces to present “Shifting Images on Ancient Coins: From Roman Pagan to Byzantine Christian.” Blending historical context of the period between the 4th and 7th centuries AD with illustrations of contemporary coins which reflected over time the addition of Christian symbols to previously used Roman pagan images made for an enjoyable and informative experience. At times subtle, even if clear to the discerning viewer, these changes captured religious shifts through several tumultuous centuries as reflected on the coin of the realm.

New initiatives at CNEA include an enhanced presence on the major social media outlets and recently installed features on the CNEA website which include an updated page on next

November’s Archaeology Discovery Weekend on Southwest Turkey, several recorded presentations and lectures, CNEA projects/excavations, and nearly the full listing of episodes of “Excavating the Bible” produced over three years at LLBN in Loma Linda, CA and now available via the website on YouTube. The report also paid tribute to Norma Kershaw for the donation of her library and slide collection, largely on art history.

Archaeology awards were presented to Gary and Suha Huffer and to Vera Kopecky, following illustrated histories of their work in archaeology and involvement at CNEA. They each gave a short live response, all of which reflected in moving ways how and why they came into the CNEA orbit.

To see the entire program, visit: <https://www.youtu.be/g4u9iGC1RHY>.



Numismatics at the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology

**Shifting Images on Ancient Coins:
From Roman Pagan to Byzantine Christian**

Terri Shaw and Kent Bramlett

Saturday
April 17, 2021

**RECENT
INITIATIVES
@CNEA**

CNEA
ARCHAEOLOGY
AWARDS
2020/21

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Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2021

November 2021 promises the 13th annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend, sponsored this year by the Versacare Foundation of Riverside, CA. Planned for both ONSITE and ONLINE venues, the program will feature a part of the world important to people of the three major monotheistic religions: southwest Turkey. Because visitors can access the program on 13–14 November 2021 both on-campus and online, the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology (CNEA) can return to regular events on this annual tradition at La Sierra: in-person lectures with world-class scholars, a Middle Eastern banquet with a Turkish flare, CNEA's genuine Bedouin Tent, artifact displays, the kids dig, and other family-friendly exhibits and hands-on activities. But this year also provides the opportunity to engage interactively a global audience in the presentations as well as in virtual tours and exhibits. Please put this on your calendar for 13–14 November and visit the CNEA website often for updates: <https://lasierra.edu/cnea/discovery-weekend/>.

The Limits of Archaeology:



Reflections from a class research project

Shaun Eccles (MA candidate)

The archaeological record does not lie. Archaeologists spend large amounts of time and energy getting down to the relevant layers and know that what they have is the most honest and unbiased context possible. It is exciting to think about. The frustrating part about this, however, is that it is not the full story. Difficulties that arise for site interpretation often stem from

the limits of archaeology to actually get into the heads of these ancient peoples to know exactly what they were thinking. The worldview of the ancient people being studied is not always immediately apparent from the material remains and unless these people could tell us what they were thinking, it is very likely that we would just never know.

An example of this comes from examining the sites relating to ancient Israelite religion. When it comes to temple architecture, the Israelite temple complexes (plural, because cult sites have been found in more places than just Jerusalem) all follow a similar template that seems to be more or less uniform throughout the Levant, with perhaps its most notable analogy at 'Ain Dara (unfortunately, now mostly destroyed by ISIS). Mostly because of the modern religious biases that people have, there is an expectation that one would be able to find something unique in ancient Israelite cult practice, something unique that cannot be said about ancient Israel's neighbors. Proponents of the view that Israelite beliefs were entirely unique would say that any similarities were just superficial and that the reality of their worldview was fundamentally different. This may be true, but it is impossible to know for sure from the archaeological record alone.

In cases like this, it really helps to have written sources contemporaneous with the archaeological record. After all, the only way we could be sure to know what someone is thinking is if they tell us, right? Wrong. It is not so clear. What we are usually dealing with when it comes to an ancient written record is something that will more likely reflect the views of the literate elite, and even then it is often prescribed and not necessarily described. Unfortunately for our research, the vast majority of people were not a part of this literate elite, and so the written record is not as telling about average people and what they may have thought as we might hope. Thus, despite getting down to the levels where these average people lived by excavating their homes, and maybe their villages, we can never really get closer! And without knowing what they thought of their world, we are still so far away.

New Donation—Norma Kershaw's Extensive Slide Collection *Douglas Clark*

As announced in the lead cover story of the Winter 2021 issue of *La Sierra Digs*, Norma Kershaw of Mission Viejo, CA, donated her library of 600 volumes (mostly on art history and religion) to the Lawrence T. Geraty Library at CNEA. Also noted in that article was the decision of Norma's two daughters, Barbara



Rosenthal and Janet McLennan, to donate to CNEA Norma's vast collection of 35 mm slides that she used for presentations and classes. The slides were handed over to Dawn Acevedo in March, who brought them to CNEA and inventoried them.

The basics:

1. Slides (27 sets) covering art history and travel from 18 mostly Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Turkey, Jordan, Cyprus, Italy, Egypt, Greece, Israel, and Iraq. Also, some from Russia, Bulgaria, India, Afghanistan, Iran, and Yemen.
2. In addition, thirteen sets of slides were used to illustrate lectures on subjects like the Dead Sea Scrolls, Kings of Israel, Queens of ancient Egypt, Women in ancient Israel, Egyptian mummification, and others.
3. There is a total of 9,139 slides in the collection.
4. Also in the donation were three carousel slide trays and one slide projector: these we may need to display as artifacts sometime soon!
5. Next steps include a search for funding to archive these and other slide collections at CNEA according to best practices.

Our sincere thanks to Barbara and Janet for donating these fine resources to CNEA on behalf of Norma!

Virtual Tours of Madaba, Jordan--Launch Date on International Museums Day 2021

Douglas Clark

One of La Sierra's major projects at the moment is the international (American, Italian, Jordanian) endeavor to establish a new regional archaeological museum in Madaba, Jordan, border town between ancient Ammon and Moab. *La Sierra Digs* has reported on this major undertaking in "community archaeology," which by treating cultural heritage as a public asset, stands the best chance to preserve ancient history and culture while at the same time providing economic benefits to the local community. This combination is what makes it sustainable, protecting the past and the present.

One of the main COVID-era success stories of the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project (MRAMP) involves virtual tours of archaeological locations in Madaba. On the 18th of May, International Museums Day, the official launch will take place, announced on international social media platforms. The project is funded by a US Ambassador's Fund for

Cultural Preservation/Cultural Antiquities Task Force (AFCP/CATF) grant to Gannon and La Sierra universities, originating in the US Department of State. Three teams of local Jordanians were trained in capturing 3D photographic data, tour-guiding online visitors through locations in Madaba, and telling stories of growing up among ancient ruins.

It is with a great deal of pride and enthusiasm that we celebrate the achievement of this milestone and invite readers to visit the website and find their way around and through Madaba's Church of St. George (the Map Church), the Burnt Palace, and the Hippolytus Hall/Church of the Virgin Mary. While COVID has prevented us from working in Jordan to build a new museum, MRAMP has been busy creating virtual Madaba which is becoming more widely accessible by a global online audience than could ever travel to the Middle East.

The virtual tours website—<https://cyark.org/projects/madaba/overview>—is in Beta version until the launch date. It will also be available on the MRAMP website under Exhibitions>Virtual Tours at: <http://www.madabamuseum.org/en>

By Snail-mail or Email?

Given the costs of printing and posting *La Sierra Digs*, the environmental impact of using so much paper, and the limits of distributing the newsletter primarily to North America, we have decided to focus on digital distribution. While CNEA will continue to print some copies, our plan is to shift as much as possible to electronic versions. If you are receiving this issue of *La Sierra Digs* in print format and would be OK with an emailed link to the online version each autumn, winter, and spring, please send a message to this effect to: archaeology@lasierra.edu, with your name and email address. Thank you.

To help you make this decision, interactive CNEA word puzzles (and answer keys) will only be accessible online. In order to test your archaeological knowledge, you will need to visit <https://lasierra.edu/cnea/la-sierra-digs-newsletter/> and click on "Digs Word Puzzles."

Display Case

Dawn Acevedo

When one hears talk of ancient Egypt, many images may come to mind—pyramids, mummies, hieroglyphs, luxury and abundance, plagues, and famine. Artfactually, we tend to think of the many grave goods that accompanied rich burials including jewelry, weapons, furniture, and vessels. But what about the small artifacts? Ushabtis, also called shabtis or shawabtis, were small, inscribed figurines, typically made of faience, clay, stone, or sometimes wood, which accompanied the dead as servants for the afterlife. These figurines date from the end of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1800 BC) to the Ptolemaic Period (ca. 330 BC). Ushabtis range in size from about an inch to more than 20 inches tall. The body of the figure is typically in the form of a mummy, and many hold tools in their hands for the afterlife tasks assigned to them. The ushabtis are mentioned in the Egyptian

Book of the Dead, in which "the Shabti Figure replieth: I will do

it, verily I am here [when] thou call-est" (https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Books/Papyrus_Ani.html).

Pictured here are ushabtis from the Shirley Macaulay Collection at CNEA.



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Editors: Douglas Clark & Dawn Acevedo
Layout: Monique Vincent
Photographs: CNEA, Dawn Acevedo,
APAAME

Center for Near Eastern Archaeology
HMS Richards Divinity School
La Sierra University
4500 Riverwalk Parkway
(951) 785-2632 (CNEA)
archaeology@lasierra.edu
www.lasierra.edu/archaeology
www.facebook.com/lasierracnea

La Sierra University
Center for Near Eastern Archaeology
4500 Riverwalk Parkway
Riverside, CA 92505



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2021 Calendar of Events

18 May 2021

Official launch of new Madaba, Jordan
virtual tours website

16–30 June 2021

Balu'a Study Season at La Sierra U.

5–19 July 2021

Ataruz Excavations/Study Season in Jordan

Autumn Quarter

Class on the preservation of archaeological
sites by Fulbright fellow, Dr. Ziad al-Saad

13–14 November 2021

Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2021:
Southwest Turkey: Famous Cities, Church-
es, and Synagogues

Centennial Holy Lands Tour

17 March–10 April 2022

La Sierra University Church and the univer-
sity Alumni Association Centennial Tour
of the Land of the Bible, with Pastor Chris
Oberg and Professors Lawrence Geraty
and Kent Bramlett. Contact Shirley Gregg
at sgregg@lasierra.edu or 951 205-7016.

SUPPORT CNEA!

As this issue of *La Sierra Digs* makes clear, the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University is on the move! And it needs your support for student travel scholarships, the new university museum, and ongoing operations. Please go online at <https://lasierra.edu/donate> and click on "Center for Near Eastern Archaeology" to make your contribution. Or contact the Office of University Advancement at (951) 785-2500. Thank you!

Recent Discoveries

Assembled by Dawn Acevedo

The Pharaohs' Golden Parade

With the completion of Egypt's new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, it was necessary to securely transfer the mummies of twenty-two of the most famous pharaohs to their new resting place. Rather than doing so quietly, Egyptian authorities opted to promote Egyptian tourism, history, and pride by producing a 'lavish' parade for the pharaohs through the streets of Cairo. To read more about the festivities or to watch the recording of the parade, visit: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-egypt-parade-22-ancient-pharaohs-through-streets-cairo-180977430/>.

Lost Golden City of Luxor

In September 2020, archaeologists began excavating what would later be hailed as "an Egyptian version of Pompeii." The massive 18th-dynasty (ca. 1350 BC) city, still under excavation, dates to the reign of Amenhotep III. Well-preserved mudbrick walls stand roughly nine feet high in some areas. While excavations have revealed four distinct occupation layers, the most significant seems to be that under Amenhotep III and his son Akhenaten. The finds reveal tremendous amounts of data regarding everyday life in ancient Egypt. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/lost-golden-city-luxor-discovered-archaeologists-egypt>

Alphabetic "Missing Link"

An inscription found on a small sherd of a Cypriot milk bowl was discovered in Israel at Tel Lachish. The find has been dated to the 15th century BC, and researchers think it "may provide a 'missing link' in the history of the alphabet." The inscription, analyzed with radiocarbon dating, is the earliest "securely dated" inscription found in the Southern Levant to date. <https://www.livescience.com/alphabet-missing-link-israel.html> (Here you can also find the link to the academic paper published in *Antiquity*.)