

La Sierra University

La Sierra Digs

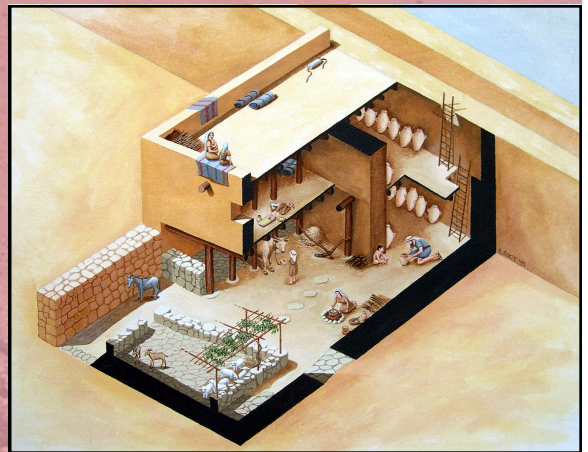
Newsletter of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology | HMS Richards Divinity School | La Sierra University | Vol 3:1 Spring 2015

Dem bones

La Sierra University excavations have produced bones, lots of bones. Hundreds of thousands of bones. Since excavations began at Tall al-'Umayri, Jordan in 1984, the project has dug up and analyzed all animal and human skeletal remains found on site and in nearby tombs.

Among the human bones found at the site, some derive from later time periods (one an Islamic interment as determined by its position on its side, facing Mecca); others from the Iron Age II (1000-500 BC); the remains of four individuals from around 1200 BC (Early Iron I); Middle Bronze Age tombs (ca. 1600 BC); and, the earliest bones found at 'Umayri, an Early Bronze Age (ca. 3,000 BC) dolmen burial tomb.

photos at left), consists of around 20 individuals and associated objects. Dolmens appear by the thousands from southern Jordan to as far away as the British Isles, but only a handful contain remains. These are currently being studied for 14C dating and ancient DNA profiles.



The second set currently under investigation includes the four persons who were violently killed in the four-room house (see Rhonda Root's painting at the right); their burned, fragmented bones were found in the back storage room.



Two sets of human remains have captured the attention of a collaboration of scholars at La Sierra and several University of California campuses, promising exciting results which will be presented in lectures and published in scholarly journals.



While not quite resurrected, like "dem bones" in Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, these two collections will tell us a good deal about the people who lived during important periods of history. The first set, from the dolmen burial (see

A diverse team has been assembled for this research: Kent Bramlett, Doug Clark, and Kristina Reed of La Sierra; Lee Greer and Erv Taylor from UC Irvine; Christian Anderson from UC San Diego; and Sang-Hee Lee and Karimah Richardson from UC Riverside.

Watch for results from this research in the coming weeks. We hope to understand better ancient family and tribal ties.

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New student archaeology club

The Student Archaeology Club at La Sierra University has just recently been created. Our Club wants to share the great passion and knowledge that surrounds the field of archaeology with our fellow students. Favoring a more social approach of the subject, we want to make the student body better acquainted with what archaeology is really all about.



The Club plans to participate in a variety of events, on and off campus, including visiting archaeological exhibitions, hiking to archaeological sites in southern California, watching some great cinematographic classics, and maybe even cooking some amazing ancient recipes.

Officers of the new club are Andressa Stori Pujol (President), Nicquelle Godfrey (Vice President), Laura Kosch (Secretary), Marvin Amen (Treasurer), and Luana Pinheiro (V.P. of Marketing). Sponsors: Kent Bramlett and Doug Clark.

The photo shows Andressa Pujol, Doug Clark, and Nikki Godfrey at a campus-sponsored competitive event at which the new club won first place and \$250.

Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2015

The seventh annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend, 14-15 November, 2015, will focus on **SYRIA**, its vast archaeological wealth and, given current political circumstances, the huge risks facing its cultural heritage. Contributors will include archaeologists who have worked in Syria, members of a US State Department-funded team tasked by the American Schools of Oriental Research with assessing the damage to archaeological remains, and others directly connected to the country. This major event belongs on your calendar!

On the Trail of Ancient Ammonites and Moabites

The Center for Near Eastern Archaeology has just been awarded a generous grant from the Versacare Foundation, the first of three years of proposed funding, for a project named, "On the Trail of Ancient Ammonites and Moabites."

Our primary objective is to develop further the scientific and archaeological capacity to understand ancient Ammonites and Moabites through 1) broad-based research (historical, biblical, scientific), 2) the use of enhanced technology, and 3) continued, more focused excavations at Tall al-`Umayri (Ammonite) and Khirbat Balu`a (Moabite) in Jordan. This proposal envisions a holistic project which would extend the research at `Umayri (1984 to the present) and at Khirbat Balu`a (1986 to the present) and coalesce their findings into a narrative on the relationship between the Ammonites and the Moabites in the Iron II Period, the time of the kings in the two states.

In order to utilize the latest approaches in this endeavor, the project involves the acquisition and further development of sophisticated technologies like a Structure-from-Motion processor, Reflectance Transformation Imaging dome, CIDOC-CRM software for international data harmonization, online resources like opendig.org which is an open-source, online database of all Tall al-`Umayri excavation data back to its beginning, GPS, and GPR. More computing power is also needed, as are analytical processes in the fields of ancient DNA, 14C, and botanical and floral studies. In addition to the ongoing archaeological research into the Ammonites and Moabites, historical and biblical studies are central to our work, as is a modern component: ethnographic analysis of local friends from the nearby village of Bunayat who for two generations have provided local labor for our work.

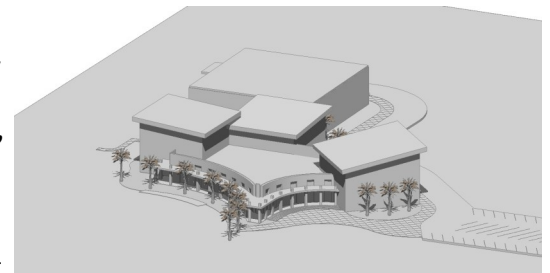
Principle investigators are Douglas Clark, Kent Bramlett, and Larry Geraty (La Sierra); Friedbert Ninow (Friedensau University, Germany); Matt Vincent (Murcia University, Spain); and Monique Vincent (University of Chicago). Secondary investigators are Jillian Logee (University of Calgary, Canada) and Carolyn Waldron (Ridgefield, WA).

New university museum envisioned

The Center for Near Eastern Archaeology, the World Museum of Natural History, and the Stahl Center Museum have combined forces and begun to plan for the construction and operation of a new campus museum. With a massive archaeological collection unlike any elsewhere in the country, a natural history collection of Smithsonian-quality animals and gems, and with hundreds of ethnographic collections in the Stahl Center holdings, a university museum to store, curate, study, and display artifacts from all three has become necessary.

As the architect's rendition indicates, the museum boasts a central common area for various functions to introduce visitors to the sciences of archaeology, biology, and ethnography and provide a small amphitheater. The three modules comprising several thousand square feet each will house major exhibits. Storage and lab facilities will occupy a lower level.

At present, a university museum board is nearly complete, with representatives



from all three areas. The group should be meeting for the first time within weeks. While fund-raising efforts have already begun, the establishment of the board will hasten the process and pave the way for a major new addition to the campus with tremendous potential for the campus and community.

Ataruz dig season

Chang Ho Ji of the School of Education is director of the Khirbat Ataruz excavations in south-central Jordan. Along with colleagues Bob Bates from Andrews University and Ralph Hawkins of Averett University in Danville, Virginia, Chang Ho is mounting a full season at this extremely important Moabite site, famous for its religious artifacts and architecture. Watch for a full report in the autumn issue of *La Sierra Digs*.

Biblical garden and grove

For several months members of the Archaeology Planning Committee, with special input from Suha Huffaker (member) and Scott Anderson (Physical Plant), have been studying the feasibility of designing and constructing a “biblical garden and grove” in the spaces around CNEA. A local landscape consultant, also involved in these discussions, has produced a preliminary proposal which would lead visitors on a pathway around the buildings, following a biblical narrative and taking them through the varied landscapes of the Holy Land and its environs. Wild and domesticated trees, shrubs, herbs, grains, and vegetables will be arranged in a variety of settings, including a water feature.

What’s new at CNEA?

The Center for Near Eastern Archaeology continues to expand its technological capacity to analyze and interpret the virtual avalanche of data retrieved from La Sierra’s excavations. Given the availability of ever more sophisticated equipment and software, archaeologists absolutely must take advantage of these innovations in order to learn the most from archaeological finds. Dominating the CNEA Geraty Library and Confer-

ence Room is a recently installed 3D, nine-screen C.A.V.E. (Cave Automatic Virtual Environment) system, used for viewing artifacts and architecture immersively and in three dimensions.

Vincent update



Matthew and Monique Vincent, long-time members of the La Sierra excavation team whose first encounter happened during the 2004 season

and who both are studying in doctoral degree programs in archaeology, are currently living in Murcia, Spain. Matthew is pursuing a PhD in Digital Cultural Heritage at the University of Murcia, as part of an EU-wide training network. For this program, he spends time at the various member institutes learning about and interacting with their specific projects. This has taken the Vincents to such exotic locales as Germany, Crete, and Cyprus, and will include Italy and France this spring. Monique is completing her dissertation for the University of Chicago and plans to wrap up writing this summer. She has particularly appreciated the archaeological inspiration of Knossos Palace and the Temple of Aphrodite (photo on Cyprus, the birthplace of Aphrodite), and looks forward to Pompeii.

Display Case

By Kristina Reed

Ledge handle jars originated in Palestine and were prevalent throughout the Early Bronze Age (3300-2200 BC). They were first excavated by Sir Flinders Petrie at Tell el-Hesi who named them for their distinct horizontal “ledge” handles. Finding their origins in late Chalcolithic pottery forms, these handles developed during the entire Early Bronze Age. Ledge handle styles vary and change over time and include plain, wavy, thumb-indented, pushed-up, folded, vestigial, scalloped, and pinched. Made of coarse clay, these vessels, used mainly to carry and store food, consist of a tournet-made rim and neck, hand-formed body, and applied handles. The horizontal handles were useful when carrying the jars, especially on one’s head! Jars were undecorated, red slipped, or adorned with painted or punctated designs. Ledge handle jars have been found in Egypt and throughout the Levant. At Tall al-‘Umayri, ledge handle jars have been excavated from both the Field D residence (EB III-IV) and Field K dolmen (EB IB). One of these ledge handle jars (pictured here) is proudly displayed at the new Jordan National Museum in Amman.



La Sierra Digs

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Calendar of Events — 2015

- Mondays & (some) Tuesdays — Labs open for volunteers
- June (TBD) — The Challenge of Writing an Archaeological History of Ancient Israel by William Dever
- October (TBD) — Rami Khouri on Syria
- 14-15 November — 7th annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend — Syria's Cultural Heritage at Risk
- 15 November — Archaeology Advisory Council

OCCASIONALLY/OFTEN

- *Archaeology Adventures*
- Visit www.lasierra.edu/cnea for updates and future program details

SUPPORT CNEA!

If you would like to support the work of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology — ongoing operations, student travel scholarships, the new Museum, etc. — contact the Office of University Advancement at 951 785-2500 or click on “Center for Near Eastern Archaeology” at <https://lasierra.edu/donate/>.

Recent Discoveries

Assembled by Monique Vincent

More Dead Sea Scrolls

Are you looking forward to seeing the new Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition that has opened recently in Los Angeles? If so, you'll want to catch up on the news of nine recently re-discovered Dead Sea Scrolls, overlooked in the initial excavation inventories. These tiny scrolls were contained in phylacteries, or small leather cases attached to the head during prayer, and attest to the long tradition of phylactery use. Read more on how these and the other Dead Sea Scrolls are being digitized and preserved for the future at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/nine-tiny-new-dead-sea-scrolls-come-to-light/> For more information on the new exhibit, see <http://californiasciencecenter.org/exhibits/dead-sea-scrolls-the-exhibition>

Cave Hoard from the time of Alexander the Great

A new hoard of coins and jewelry was found in Israel by a group of spelunkers, one coin featuring the face of the empire builder himself. They reported the find and archaeologists are now exploring the contents of a cave that contains the hidden goods of people throughout the millennia. The most recent hoard may have been stashed during the political uncertainties following the death of Alexander, meant to be retrieved in better times. Read more with photos at <http://news.discovery.com/history/archaeology/coins-and-jewelry-from-alexander-the-great-era-found-in-israeli-cave-150309.htm>