

# NEWSLETTER

## The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



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### INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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## Tall Hisban 2007

Tall Hisban is a multiperiod, fortified hilltop on the edge of the Madaba Plains, some 25 km south of Amman. The architectural remains on the summit include the remnants of a perimeter wall that may go as far back as the Iron Age, a Roman-period monumental building, and a Byzantine-period basilica. The majority of the standing structures, however, belong to a 14th-century AD complex that included a military garrison, bathhouse, and residence of the Governor of the Balqa, when Hisban served as an important military, administrative, and economic center for the Mamluk Sultanate based in Cairo. The 2007 excavation, which took place from 18 June through 18 July under the sponsorship of Andrews University, was designed to better understand the history of the fortifications and village occupation, particularly during the Islamic period.

Excavations in Field Q, at the southern entrance to the summit, documented the transformation of the tell from a place of worship to a militarized citadel. During the Byzantine period the summit was entered through two entrances on the south side, approached by stairs descending to the former Roman-period plaza below. It was dominated by an Early Byzantine-period basilica, which was built directly on the remains of a Roman-period structure, perhaps a temple. The summit was transformed into a fortified citadel during the Islamic period. Excavations this season revealed that the bathhouse, originally dated to the Mamluk period, may have been an Umayyad-period (8th century AD) construction built on top of the basilica, associated with an administrative center and semiofficial residence, much in the pattern established by the Umayyads on the Amman Citadel.

(con'd. on p. 2)



Interior Face of the Northeast Tower.

This summer's fieldwork provided evidence for three phases of rebuilding in the Mamluk period, with the construction of a modified four-iwan residence and a series of storage facilities in the early fourteenth century and subsequent restructuring of these domestic areas into fortified space within the century. Two towers on the southwestern side of the tell may have been filled in as part of this effort.

Excavation of the southeastern and northeastern towers provided evidence of extensive rebuilding and refortification of the summit during the Roman, Byzantine, and Mamluk periods. Clearing the wall faces in Field M clarified the construction style of the original fortification which consisted of alternating courses of large boulders and chink stones, with parallels to sections of the Amman Citadel wall, and the Burj al-Rufuf at the Department of Antiquities in Amman, both dating to the Iron Age.

Exploration of the western slope of the tell in Field C identified two monumental buildings: a large Early Byzantine-period farmhouse with high walls and well-preserved arched doorway, reused in the Mamluk period, and a complex of what appears to be three, or perhaps four, casemate rooms fronted by a fortified wall. Two of these rooms were built in the Early Byzantine period and reused in the Mamluk era, one for storage, as the fragments of restorable vessels indicate, and one as domestic space. This latter room was of special interest for its evidence of warfare, as wall collapse and extensive burning associated with a major conflagration was associated with large quantities of corroded metal, including large cross-bow bolts, the first evidence of medieval military accouterments found to date at Hisban. The room dates to the fourteenth century.

Excavation of what is believed to be the foundations of the modern village of Hisban, on and below the southeastern slopes of the tell in Field O, continued this season, with the uncovering of a complex of houses around a cistern.

These single-room houses, of meter-thick walls and stone-vaulted ceilings, are late Ottoman (late 19th century AD) in date, and were built into and over the ruins of a Byzantine-period building, likely a farmhouse.

Because of the excellent preservation of the citadel and its historical and religious significance, plans are ongoing to present the site to the public. Each season the project has engaged in consolidation of standing remains. (Bethany J. Walker)



## Yunker Lecture

**D**r. Randall Yunker, director of the Institute of Archaeology and Professor of Old Testament and Archaeology at Andrews University, lectured on "Adventist Contributions to Archaeology" on Feb. 8, 2007 for the Museum Lecture Series.

When Adventism was just beginning in the 19th century there was a battle going on against historical criticism. The main areas that were in dispute were the Flood (Pentateuch), the emergence of Israel (Joshua-Judges), and the United Monarchy (Samuel-Kings). It was also around this time that archaeology began to be used to defend both sides of the issue. There were major discoveries in Mesopotamia used by proponents of historical criticism. This led George Rawlinson to defend the Bible with archaeology in 1860.

However, it wasn't until the early 1900s that Adventists began using archaeology. In 1910 Frederick Griggs published an article about Sargon II and the Hittites to defend the Bible. Later, in 1935, F.D. Nichol picked up on some of the ideas of Griggs and along with some musings of his own used archaeology to champion the Bible. He did so with considerable confidence; however, he greatly overstated his case. W.W. Prescott was the first Adventist to publish a book on archaeology. His book *The Spade and the*



Randall Yunker.

*Bible: Archaeological Discoveries Support the Old Book* was published in 1933, but neither Prescott nor any other Adventist up to this time had been trained in archaeology. This fact changed with Lynn Wood, who received a M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and was also a Jastrow Fellow at ASOR in Jerusalem. While there, he excavated with Nelson Glueck and traveled throughout the Near East, later establishing the Archaeology and History of Antiquities Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary, which was then in Washington, DC. Edwin Thiele was a professor in the Religion Department at Andrews in the 1960s and wrote the book *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* in which he proposed that there were two different dating schemes (one used by the Northern Kingdom and another by the Southern Kingdom) that are reflected in the Bible. This book is still used to this day and many current scholars are in favor of it, among them William Hallo and Anson Rainey.

Siegfried Horn became the first Adventist field archaeologist. He studied under W.F. Albright and then went to the University of Chicago to finish his studies after Albright said he had no more to teach him. He was very interested in the Exodus problem and so the site of Hesban in Jordan (possibly biblical



Heshbon) was suggested to him. He began digging there in 1968. Although the site yielded no evidence of the Exodus, remains from the time of Solomon were found. Horn was quick to publish the results of the excavations and was honest with what was found. The scholarly world was impressed with both of these facts. The doors that Horn opened have led to Adventists becoming major players in the world of Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Recently Adventists have held the top five posts in *ASOR* and are digging at three sites in Jordan. (Owen Chesnut)



## LaBianca Lecture

**D**r. Øystein LaBianca, director of the Tall Hisban excavations and professor of Anthropology at Andrews University, presented a lecture entitled “Anthropology and Biblical Archaeology: The View from Tall Hisban” on Feb. 26, 2007 at Andrews University.

LaBianca began his presentation by defining anthropology as the study of culture, and described how cultures are created, how they differ from one another, and how they persist and change over time. He explained how archaeology can aid in the study of anthropology by identifying material aspects of a particular culture. He then went on to discuss the Madaba Plains Project, and its predecessor the Heshbon Expedition, giving an overview of its history and goals, and how the interests of the project changed over time from a narrow focus on the Exodus question to a broader understanding of indigenous culture. It was the Food Systems Model which led to a wider perspective of how foreign groups interact with local people (including the concepts of intensification

and abatement, civilization and empire, and great and little traditions).

LaBianca then focused on the concept of great and little traditions. He views Jordan as a crossroads of civilizations and an excellent place to study this concept. The former is reflected in the material culture and ideas of the dominant or ruling people and the latter by the remains of the indigenous culture. An example of this can be seen during the Roman period when aqueducts were used to provide water at the site of Jerash (great tradition), while at the site of Hesban they used cisterns (little tradition). Parochialization occurs when parts of a great tradition are appropriated by local peoples. LaBianca sees this happening throughout the Ancient Near East. Examples of parochialization (and how it effects periods of intensity and abatement) include local water management, mixed agropastoralism, residential flexibility, fluid landlord territories, hospitality, and tribalism. Specific examples from the MPP project area include the 6th-century BC Baalis seal, found at Tall al-‘Umayri, that borrowed elements from Egypt and Phoenicia, and locally made kitchen ware with an inscription which imitates the better made Egyptian variety during Mamluk period Hisban.

The concept of great and little traditions has implications for Biblical Archaeology according to LaBianca. It is evident that great traditions leave persistent residues (ruins, remains, writing) while little traditions are less quantifiable. The periods of the Patriarchs, the Judges, and even the tribal kingdoms (Israelites, Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites) mentioned in the Bible are represented by little traditions. The Patriarchal narratives, for example, are filled with little traditions whether it be water harvesting/agropastoralism (Gen 13), hos-



Øystein LaBianca.

pitality (Gen 18), or honor and shame (Gen 35). Biblical archaeology can be done in a different way. While finding temples, palaces, or inscriptions can indeed yield remains that support the historicity of the Bible, other less high-profile remains are also illustrative. Little tradition-type remains that support the historicity of the Bible have been found at all of the Madaba Plains Project sites. Collared-rim storage jars, and the so-called Manasseh bowls, have been found at Hisban, ‘Umayri and Jalul. This pottery is thought to represent the presence of the tribe of Reuben. Isaiah 5 mentions vineyards with watchtowers, of which more than three dozen have been found in the MPP project area.

This focus should help reveal more about the Israelites because their history is one of struggle against being obliterated by a succession of civilizations (great traditions). So when little traditions are revealed archaeologically, through the aid of anthropology, more light on the backgrounds of the Old Testament and its peoples is also revealed. (Owen Chesnut)



### Errata and Addendum:

In the article on the triennial Jordan Archaeological Conference in *Newsletter* 28.4 HM King Abdullah II was mistakenly said to be the patron of the conference, when in fact it was HRH Prince al-Hassan Bin Talal. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Barbara A. Porter, Douglas R. Clark and the *American Center of Oriental Research* for the organization of the event. We regret the foregoing error and oversight.

# RANDOM SURVEY

## *Intact Egyptian Tomb:*

Archaeologists from Leuven Catholic University have discovered the intact tomb of a courtier and real estate manager named Henu, who lived during the First Intermediate period (2181 to 1991 B.C.) in the Deir Al-Barsha necropolis in El Minya, ca. 241 km south of Cairo. The mummy of Henu himself was wrapped in linen and placed in a large, wooden coffin, which was decorated with hieroglyphics. A cache of painted statuettes of people at work, such as women making beer and men making mud bricks was also found.

## *Scythian Town Found:*

An archeological expedition to Lake Issyk Kul, in the Kyrgyz mountains of Russia, has discovered the walls of a city covering several sq. km. Eroded Scythian burial mounds, and artifacts including battleaxes, arrowheads, daggers, casting molds, and a faceted gold bar were found.

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## *Queen's Mansion Located:*

Israeli archaeologists have uncovered a 2,000-year-old mansion believed to have been home to Queen Helene of Adiabene, who ruled a people who lived in a region which is now in Iraq. The building, which includes storerooms, living quarters and ritual baths, is by far the largest and most elaborate structure in the City of David area, which was home almost exclusively to the city's poor at the time. Ceramic pieces and coins dating to the time of the first Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66-70) were also located in the ruins of the building.

## *Nebo-Sarsekim found in Cuneiform Tablet:*

Recently, an assyriologist was analyzing undeciphered texts in the British Museum when he came across a tablet from the city of Sippar that notes a 1.5 pound gold donation to a temple made by the chief eunuch, Nebo-Sarsekim. Not only is the title "chief eunuch," rare in the sources, but the text is close chronologically to an episode narrated in the Bible in Jer. 39 in which Nebo-Sarsekim is mentioned. The spelling of the name in the two sources is the same.

## *Etruscan City Found?*

Archaeologists believe they have found the city of Fanum Voltumnae, which is known from the Roman historian Livy as a religious shrine and meeting place for the 12-member Etruscan League. A sanctuary, an altar and other buildings have been found so far.

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