



INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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Ethnography: Light on the Past

The tent's dim light revealed a woman's smooth face as she sang:

*Oh tent, pitched so beautifully,
Under you, my loves lies sleeping.*

These poetic words rolled from her tongue as Dorothy Irvin, staff ethnographer for the Madaba Plains Project (MPP), committed them to paper—paper that will offer these words and images to a thousand other cultures. Ethnography is an important element in the overall archaeological process.


Øystein S. LaBianca, Andrews University anthropologist and the MPP director who is responsible for hinterland surveys, describes ethnographic research as the recording of current cultural activities.

Ethnography has been an integral part of the MPP methodological design since the second season of the Tell Hesban Expedition. Since then, it has involved many aspects of Transjordanian culture. In that first year, 1971, research focused on sheep and goat butchering practices.

The next season (1973) it expanded to include the study of local herding practices. By 1976, the team was studying how animals die (taphonomy) and the social organization of the modern village of Hisban—in addition to butchering and herding.

The Tell el-^cUmeiri dig offered new ethnographic subjects to understand. In 1984, the team investigated tent and cave dwellings. Ceramic technologist

Gloria London joined the team in 1987 and conducted a survey of Jordanian potters. D. Irvin continues to study textile tools (such as spindle whorls and loom weights) and bread ovens (*tabuns*)—still commonly used in villages. It was while D. Irvin and Hana Azer (of the Department of Antiquities) were searching for additional ethnological materials that they discovered the Safaitic graffiti in a cave near the village of Rufeisah which was mentioned in the last newsletter.

Studying such apparently disparate subjects like butchering methods, pottery manufacture, and cave dwellings links ethnography with ethnoarchaeology—that is, how people live today with how people lived in the past. Although the present is not the same as the past, ethnography can give archaeologists an idea of how a society works in the present, and therefore, insights into how similar societies may have functioned in similar settings in the past. Ethnography is not an "end-all," but when combined with historical studies and dirt excavation, it is an essential part of the archaeological endeavor: that of shedding "light on the past." (Jennifer Groves) 



Ethnographer Dorothy Irvin poses with two local bedu.

Advice from a Dig Widow

by Ann Fisher

There is, on the campus of Andrews University—as well as other notable sites of advanced learning (so I'm told), a curious breed of humanity unlike the normal, sane human beings you and I are accustomed to associating with. Though a few erratic females have been known to belong to this company of eccentric mortals, for the most part the society is made up of unorthodox males. Since this peculiar breed is not always discernible from a mere superficial acquaintance, I feel it my moral duty to point out the bizarre idiosyncracies which are characteristic of this eccentric company of intellectuals—commonly known as *archaeologists*—as a warning to any unsuspecting female who might be tempted to develop more than a superficial acquaintance with one of these aberrations of society, and thus, spare her the ultimate doom of "dig-widowhood."

You'll recognize an archaeologist easily enough. All archaeologists look alike. They grow beards, have gorgeous suntans, and carry passports in the back pockets of their khaki pants. Don't be lured by appearance. That magnificent suntan (that every genuine archaeologist sports in the fall) is not the result of afternoons spent leisurely basking in the summer sun at Waikiki. Oh, no! He acquired that well-baked appearance through persistent, back-breaking toil in the hot, Middle Eastern desert sun. And that passport? Don't allow yourself to indulge romantic illusions about sailing off into the sunset on the *Love Boat*. No, that passport will mean just one thing for you—abandonment. Don't be fooled, or you will soon find yourself standing at the airport with other teary-eyed, dejected dig-widows

straining for a last glimpse of your archaeologist as he blissfully disappears into the eastern sky.

The archaeologist is a glutton for punishment. He despises the comforts of home, preferring the environment of some distant continent where luxuries are as scarce as clouds in the desert sky. Just give him space to lay his sleeping bag on the hard cement floor, a squat toilet down the hall, a hose draped over a toilet stall with cold running water, and he's in ecstasy. For meals, he prefers to eat



Author Ann Fisher.

falafels, cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelon, tomatoes, cucumbers, and *falafels* with watermelon for dessert. But most of all, he looks forward to the melodious sound of the rising bell at 4 o'clock every morning when, at last, he can realize his ultimate ambition—the *dig*!

Archaeologists are really overgrown children who have miraculously sprouted beards, but have never outgrown their attachment to the sandbox. They love dirt! They use their tiny picks to dig in it. They use miniature toy brushes to sweep it. They carry it out of their holes and sift it. By the end of the day, they are plastered with it.

But there's more to the *dig* than dirt—though that is a significant part of it. The main aspiration of every archaeologist is to unearth a treasure from antiquity, buried for millennia beneath the layers of ancient civilizations. For this coveted prize, an archaeologist will stubbornly endure the scorching heat as he pours each guffah full of dirt into the sifter—carefully sorting out the bones, broken potsherds, arrow heads, and any solid pieces of matter that remotely resemble artifacts. These fragments of ancient civilizations are then carried in carefully-labeled buckets back to headquarters to be "read."

Pottery reading sessions are what separate the *bone fide* archaeologists from the mere volunteer slaves, who have somehow been lured into forsaking their families, friends, and summer vacations to scrub pottery sherds in the desert heat. While the peons are given a scrubbing brush and myriad buckets of pottery sherds to scrub, the inner circle of genuine archaeologists seclude themselves in the warehouse where all dig treasures are stored, layout the day's cache, and begin "reading" pottery—a mysterious exercise practiced by select members of the cult.

There are other rituals practiced by archaeologists too numerous and shocking to recount. I won't tell you about the secret inscriptions they find in caves, or the peculiar phobia they have of leaving their footprints in the sand. Their passion for the ancient has driven them mad. Beware! If you're a young maiden who covets a life of ease, abhors bleak, lonely summers, despises *falafels*, and still believes in cleanliness, heed the voice of experience. Take my advice: **Don't** fall in love with an archaeologist!

(Editor's note: Ann Fisher is administrative assistant to the dean of the School of Business at Andrews University. As wife of Jim Fisher, MPP staff archaeologist, she writes from personal experience.)

Why Tell Jalul?

The Madaba Plains Project, long known for its work at Tell el-^cUmeiri and vicinity, expanded in 1992 to include new excavations at Tell Jalul. Recently, we asked site director Randall Younker about the tell and why digging it is important to the MPP research.

Q. What and where is Tell Jalul?

A. This is an ancient city mound in the gently rolling plains due east of Madaba—about 20 minutes drive south of Amman. Its 18.5 acres are surrounded by small farms: wheat fields and orchards.

Q. Why dig at Tell Jalul?

A. Well, for several reasons. This high plains region surrounding Madaba has long been recognized as an economic and cultural unit. Our regional approach to studying the plain requires that we recognize the importance of sites which dominate

the region in which they are found. In anthropology, this is called "central place theory." Certainly, Tell Jalul is one of the most important ancient sites in the area.

Another reason (building on this "regional" idea) comes from the fact that we have done and continue work at other major sites in the area: Tell Hesban and Tell el-^cUmeiri, each with extensive surrounding surveys. With Tell Jalul, we hope to further reveal what was going on in the region in the ancient past, especially during the biblical periods. And of course, it's own ancient identity and role in the region's political history will be interesting to ascertain.

Q. Who went this first season?

A. We had about a dozen staff plus local workers. The staff were generally archaeology students and volunteers. Of course, we were fully integrated with the rest of the MPP team: sharing housing, work-space,

technical staff, etc.

Q. So, what did you find?


A. Our first goal was to establish a time-frame for the site: when was it occupied and when was it abandoned. (Here, we were building on our earlier survey work.) The site was occupied in the last century (AD 1800s), then there was a gap all the way back to the 600s BC! Serious ancient occupation ended in the 700s BC, and our task was to see how far back before that the site was used.

We were very excited to find two superimposed, paved approach ramps leading into the city. These ramps date to the 800s and 900s BC (about the time when the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah were going strong across the Jordan and King Mesha was ruling in Moab), and are built on fills that have sherds dated to roughly 1200 BC and slightly earlier (before the time of Solomon and David). Of course we recovered some interesting "small finds:" a few items of jewelry—in particular, a unique miniature hammer made of bone (perhaps used as a pendant).

Q. And what of future plans?

A. In the summer of 1994, we want to follow those ramps since they may lead us to city gate—important because the gate was a center of business and military activity in ancient cities. We would like to sink a trench in order to slice more effectively through the layers of city-upon-city. There appears to be a major water installation. That needs attention if we're to understand how they got and stored water in this very dry region. We would like to open a field in the middle of the city in order to expose the dwellings of the common folk.


Q. This sounds extensive. How large a team will you need?

A. Well, it depends largely on the number of new volunteers we have for the MPP, but we would like to triple the size of the Tell Jalul team. (So we welcome inquiries by anyone interested in being a part of the MPP in 1994.) (Ralph E. Hendrix) 

Museum Receives MHC Grant

The last week in October brought welcomed news that the Michigan Humanities Council (MHC) approved the Horn Museum request for nearly \$12,000 in funding. "James Fisher did an excellent job as the director of the Office of Scholarly Research writing the proposal," said museum curator, David Merling. These monies will provide about 40% of the Hesban 25th anniversary symposium budget, the balance of which is funded by Andrews University through the Museum.

"We hope March 20-21 will be a type of homecoming for all the past Hesban participants and those interested in Adventist archaeology," Merling noted. This grant will allow a much-expanded program providing student study/activity packets for community schools (grades K-12), a Tell Hesban slide set and booklet, more advertising (newsletters, *BA*, *BAR*, *BASOR*), travel assistance assuring broader participation, and much more. In addition to these direct benefits, the grant frees other monies for use in publishing the symposium papers in the form of a popular book geared for educated non-specialists.

"But the Hesban homecoming will be much more than just a reunion," Merling added. "Our target area is really the local community." Teachers will have new resources for their humanities and social sciences curricula, the participating specialists will be available for speaking to area service groups and organizations, local residents will have the opportunity to see what doing archaeology actually entails—all of this is could never have been planned without the MHC grant. (Ralph E. Hendrix) 

ANNOUNCING:



Heshbon Expedition XXVth Anniversary: 1968-1993

March 20-21, 1993
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

*"TELL HESBAN AFTER 25 YEARS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE ON THE MADABA
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Excavation by Andrews University"*

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Bert de Vries
Calvin College
James R. Fisher
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Lawrence T. Geraty
Atlantic Union College
Siegfried H. Horn
Andrews University (emeritus)
Robert D. Ibach, Jr.
Dallas Theological Seminary
Øystein S. LaBianca
Andrews University
John I. Lawlor
Baptist Bible Seminary
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Andrews University

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Adventist Health Systems, West
Elizabeth E. Platt
University of Dubuque
James A. Sauer
Harvard University
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Hieroglyphic Book

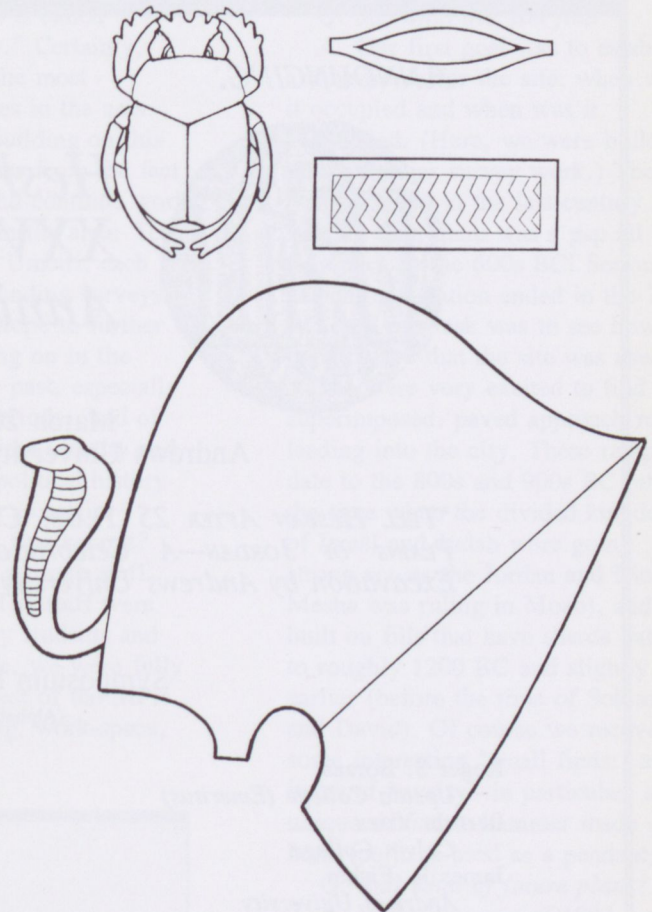
Have you struggled finding just the right gift for the archaeologically-motivated youngster in your life? Search no further! The *Hieroglyphic Coloring Book* by Grant Schar may be just the thing.

This 48-page, large-format (8.5x11) book, contains all the information needed to get started coloring (or even writing) the ancient formal Egyptian script. Three charts are inside the covers: one illustrating 25 basic signs of the alphabet, another giving 20 consonant-cluster "sound" signs, and a third with 42 "sense" signs. These provide ready references for the budding linguist. A two-page spread gives a quick introduction to reading, transliteration/pronunciation, grouping/direction of writing (all in technically-correct, but non-complex language). The next 45 pages then present vocabulary, one-word-per-page, giving one word for each sign in the first two charts (alphabetic and "sound" signs). Each page has the basic sign, the vocabulary word (which includes both the basic sign and others), and the transliteration/pronunciation/meaning of the word.

The graphics are simple and engaging throughout. Using the one-word-per-page format allows the introduction of a small vocabulary while providing plenty of space for the business of coloring. Enough detail is included to capture interest, but not too much to make coloring frustrating. My only complaint is that the graphics are protected by copyright, and therefore may not be directly copied by graphic artists and such older "youngsters" who yearn (in these "cut-and-paste" times) for the ancient days.

Hieroglyphic Coloring Book by Grant Schar. ISBN 0-912057-57-2. 48 pp; paperback. \$4.95. See below for order information.

(Ralph E. Hendrix) 



Transliteration
HPRS

Pronunciation
KHEPERESH

Meaning
BLUE CROWN

AL-MAKTÁBA

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RANDOM SURVEY

Central Jordan Network

Edited by Ø. LaBianca and G. Mattingly, *CJN* is a newsletter dedicated to research in central Jordan (between Greater Amman and the Wadi el-Hesi), from prehistoric through Ottoman times. Approved by the Department of Antiquities and encouraged by ACOR, it announces publications, research, museum displays, conferences, etc. It is published quarterly with an annual subscription of \$3.00 (to North American addresses) and \$4.00 or its foreign equivalent (for overseas subscribers). Contact G. Mattingly, 7900 Johnson Drive, Knoxville, TN 37998.

Now you can reach us by

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It is not too early to plan on joining us for the 1994 MPP field season. Call 616-471-3273 for information.

Focus Magazine, Andrews University's alumni publication, recently included a "Campus Update" recounting the recent MPP cave inscription discovery. Their "Student View" column was written by Charity Netteburg, Ø. LaBianca's student assistant, recounting her recent trip to Russia.

Institute and MPP personnel gave reports and conducted business during the recent meetings of scholarly societies in San Francisco. Younker, Merling, and LaBianca from the Institute; Geraty, Herr, Clark, Hopkins, Trenchard, and Willis from MPP; and AU PhD candidate Ziese.

Recently completing a trip to Holland, Norway, and Sweden, Ø. LaBianca submitted this report: Prof. Henk Franken of the University of Leiden has agreed to include some unpublished cave data with that of the recent MPP find. At a meeting with Prof. Gerret van der Kooij, the subject of including some of his students in the MPP ethnographic survey team next season was discussed. Consultations in Norway were geared toward seeking aid from that government to help restore ancient water-collection systems in the project area. Additional meetings in Sweden yielded suggestions on including that government and the World Bank in the water restoration project. At the Nordic Middle East Society, LaBianca presided over a session on the city in the middle east, and read a paper. Overall, the eleven days resulted in much increase in interest for the MPP projects, greater understanding of their importance, a willingness to participate in the research (both in terms of personnel and funding), and mutual exchange of goodwill.

NEWSLETTER



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