Seger Lectures at Andrews University


At the evening presentation, Seger detailed the excavations at Tell Halif conducted during field seasons from 1976 to the present. The excavations have yielded a long, but interrupted, sequence of occupation from the Late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze I transition to the modern Arab periods. Highlighted during the presentation were the earliest dwellings of the inhabitants of Tell Halif. These dwellings were in caves situated northeast of the tell. These were abandoned at the beginning of the Early Bronze I period and settlement continued on the tell itself in the form of mud-brick houses.

During his brief visit, Seger also had the opportunity to meet with Institute personnel to discuss future strategies for archaeological publications and the role of ASOR. Outlining the ongoing efforts of ASOR to encourage and facilitate publications as well as the current publication efforts of the Lahav Research Project, Seger was bright on the inevitability of the electronic medium while acknowledging the reality that all ASOR members are not yet prepared for full-scale electronic publishing.

In order to jump-start the process, it was suggested by Institute personnel that ASOR redefine its role in the archaeological arena, positioning itself as a clearing-house for the dig databases of its affiliated excavation projects—at once providing a valuable service (allowing members access to field data within weeks of the closing of an excavation season) and establishing ASOR at the crossroads of electronic publication. It was suggested that ASOR could play a strong role in outlining a “top-down” starting point for establishing the technical parameters of a combined database which all projects would adopt prior to receiving ASOR approval. This approach would insure greater access to more consistently-reported data in a shorter time frame.

Undoubtedly, the role of ASOR will be the subject of many discussions in the future and Institute personnel were pleased for the opportunity to voice their ideas during Seger’s visit.

Seger, a past president of the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, is currently the Director of the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University, where he is Professor of Religion and Anthropology and Middle Eastern Archaeology as well as Acting Head of the Department of Philosophy and Religion. Since 1975, he has been Director of the Lahav Research Project Excavations at Tell Halif, Israel. The Lahav Research Project is the umbrella name for the consortium of American scholars and institutions which participate in the excavations.
Gane Lectures on Nineveh

On March 4, 1996, Connie Gane presented an illustrated lecture for the Horn Archaeological Museum Lecture Series entitled “Nineveh’s Last Stand: Assyrian Bones and the Gate of Doom.” Lecturing on the 1989 and 1990 seasons at Nineveh, Gane highlighted the spectacular finds found near one of the city gates. Excavators unearthed an inscription on one of the blocks which identified its builder as Sennacherib, king of Assyria (705-681 BC). Other evidence included a large ash layer and numerous skeletons which attested to the city’s last stand against the combined forces of Babylon and Media in 612 BC.

Gane has studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and has excavated at Tell Dor and Tell Dan in Israel. She received a M.A. in Mesopotamian Archaeology from the University of California, Berkeley, and has taught at Pacific Union College. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)

Ancient Pottery Symposium

A symposium on ancient ceramics was held at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington, in March. Douglas R. Clark, professor of Biblical Studies at Walla Walla College and field supervisor at Tell el-‘Umeiri, presided over the symposium at which other specialists, including Gloria London, ceramics technologist for the Madaba Plains Project, and Larry Herr, co-director of the Madaba Plains Project, participated. The symposium provided the opportunity for local people to visit and see sherds of approximately 40-50 storage jars found at Tell el-‘Umeiri and which have been brought to the US for reconstruction and analysis. Researchers and volunteers will spend the next few years restoring the broken vessels. (Philip R. Drey)

Archiving

Responding to a recent editorial pertaining to electronic publications, Jim Ford, Curator of the Adventist Heritage Center of the James White Library at AU, raised some important issues regarding the archivist’s challenging task of maintaining a historical collection. Ford notes that ever-changing computer technology demands constant upgrading. From the archivist’s point of view, producing a hardcopy along with the electronic version is the best solution.

For the publisher, however, hardcopy itself is the problem: printing costs, limited approaches to the data, etc. Duplicate formats would only worsen the problem. It is also true that more sophisticated software includes the ability to access many previous software versions. It seems as with any new technology, there is bitter and sweet. (Ralph E. Hendrix)

Merling Continues Black Ware Research

David Merling visited Arizona State University in January to continue his research on ceramics. In cooperation with Barry Wilkens, director of Ion-beam analysis at the Center for Solid State Science, Merling analyzed a corpus of black ware from Tell el-‘Umeiri and Tell Jalul.

According to Merling, the greatest advantage of ion-beam analysis is that it is not necessarily intrusive or destructive to the piece of pottery. However, to because inclusions in the clay may cause improper readings, a very small piece of is broken off of a sherd and pulverized. The crushed specimen is then bombarded with the ion beam producing data. From the resulting data, a researcher may be able to discern the elemental configuration of the clay of the pottery piece. Investigation of these configurations may lead archaeologists to discover the geological and geographical origin of clay as well as perhaps a new system of dating by which the make up of the clay would determine the date of the vessel. (Philip R. Drey)
Pottery Book Takes Positive Tangent

Work continues on the pottery book which has been highlighted in previous IA/Ham Newsletters. Responses from the international group of project consultants has been extremely helpful. The concept of publishing a manual for introducing the study of pottery to archaeology students was roundly applauded. However, their suggestions have underscored the need for something more akin to a text than to flashcards.

The initial idea to produce a tool for pottery study was provided by our archaeological colleague J. Bjørnar Storfjell. At the time, the tool was conceived of as "pottery flashcards," however, printing cost estimates quickly ruled out laminated flashcards sets. Also, as the breadth of the introductory booklet grew, it became obvious that the scope of the project was changing. Finally, the encouraging response of the project consultants prompted the move from the original flashcard study tool concept towards an introductory text concept.

Beginning with the basic research done by Philip R. Drey in gathering pottery examples for the project, Ralph E. Hendrix began systematizing and broadening the introduction materials into chapters: an introduction to studying pottery, the basics of vessel and vessel part identification, the form-based paradigm for objectively describing pottery, a summary of ancient chronology, and greatly enlarged period characterizations. Drey worked through the evaluations seeking material to balance the coverage of the growing book while Hendrix wrote the text and began developing the many illustrative graphics.

The "upside" is that the resultant book will be a much more versatile study tool than the original flashcards would have been. The "downside" is that the expected publication date of early 1996 must be postponed until post-dig summer 1996. We hope this delay will be offset by a more excellent product.

(Ralph E. Hendrix) © 92

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Zeljko Gregor, PhD student at the Institute of Archaeology, recently published an article describing the second season of excavations at Tell Jalul in the Croatian journal *Biblijski pogledi*.

We apologize for the tardiness of this volume of the HAM Newsletter.

Digitalization and archaeology are further brought together as Scholars Press and Emory University Libraries are experimenting with distributing computerized versions of four journals:
- *Biblical Archaeologist*
- *Critical Review of Books in Religion*
- *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
- *Semeia*

The SELA Journals Project will provide free access to subscribers to the journals during the three year study project. Journal articles may be found on the World Wide Web starting later this summer. Also, there exists the possibility of the generation of electronic formats of these journals (i.e., CD-ROM or tape) which would be issued at the end of each publishing year.

Hester Thomsen-Chilson, pottery registrar for Hesban and Tell el-'Umeiri, is aiding in the restoration of the collared pithoi from the 1994 season at Tell el-'Umeiri. (Douglas R. Clark)

After experimenting with a larger format in the previous newsletter (vol. 16), the proceeding volume (17) will return to its 4-page size pending the assessment of the data gathered during the experiment.

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