



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

THE NEAR EASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY FOUNDATION BULLETIN

NUMBER 54

November 2010



Westward Ho!

A Near Eastern Archaeologist on Andros

by Wendy Reade

Who hasn't dreamt of visiting a Greek island at least once in their lives? Even a Near Eastern archaeologist is not immune to such thoughts. They say not to wish too hard or you just might get what you want. I must have wished too hard because when archaeologists Beatrice McLoughlin and Stavros Paspalas needed a conservator to work on material from the site of Zagora on Andros, they asked me.

Andros is a mountainous Greek island in the idyllic Cyclades and the settlement site of Zagora is situated on a rocky peninsula on the southwest coast of this island (*the site is shown above*). The University of Sydney excavation of Zagora, which came to a close in 1974, was conducted by a team directed by Alexander Cambitoglou, under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society.

Beatrice and Stavros, whom I have come to know from working at CCANESA, are currently preparing the results of the last three excavation seasons at Zagora (1971, 1973 and 1974). Their new evaluation of the site will throw the light of increased knowledge, attained over the last forty years, on the Early Iron Age Aegean. No other excavated single period site in the Greek world can rival the insights

offered into the social organization of a central Aegean settlement of the eighth century BCE, preserving as it does a sacred area, domestic architecture, storage provisions for agricultural produce and fortification works, undisturbed by later occupation.

Having worked in the Middle East for thirty years on a range of fascinating sites from Egypt to the Gulf to the Levant, my job is most often that of conservator, preserving and repairing artefacts that have more or less survived the rigours of burial and time. Before Beatrice and Stavros can study the ceramics for their forthcoming publication, the broken sherds must be reconstructed into the elegant vessels produced by the Geometric Greeks. (I developed an enthusiasm for Geometric pottery many years ago when I reconstructed the mighty Dipylon krater in the Nicholson Museum).

And so this Near Eastern archaeologist set out to work considerably west of her usual haunts. I arrive, after the long journey from home, at the modern Greek port of Rafina, where I must board one of the monstrous multi-decked ferries which ply the sometimes treacherous seas between



the islands. I consume a welcome lunch of fresh calamari with a small jug of Greek rosé that sparkles jewel pink in the spring sunshine. As I watch the ferries disgorge and reload, their engines reverberate incessantly as if impatient to set sail again, always on the go, never resting. The trip southwards along the sweeping coast of Euboea to Andros is surprisingly swift, and the bus trip from the Andean port of Gavrión across the island to the Chora or main town, is equally surprising in its winding length. I arrive after dark and am greeted by my two Australian colleagues who welcome me with excellent home-cooked fare, Greek style. One of the aims of this project is to establish the contribution of Zagora to the phenomenon of feasting, an ancient social practice we modern visitors do our best to emulate.

In the morning I discover to my delight that our apartments overlook an idyllic green valley with groves of lemon, olive, cypress and mulberry trees delineated by the peculiar walkways of Andros, walled by flat stones stood on end. Plentiful water from steady streams flows to the beach not far away; there is a beach on either side of the promontory where the Chora sits in medieval majesty. This is just about the most water this Near Eastern fish out of the proverbial has encountered, a very different scenario from floating saltily on the Dead Sea or shuddering in the rather sparse and hurried showers of less well irrigated digs.

Our daily walk to the Archaeological Museum leads us past colourfully painted houses and pleasant flowering gardens to the marble paved main street of the Chora where sleepy shops sell irresistible sweet treats and delicious local produce. We hurriedly purchase provisions for the night's meal. Beatrice, it transpires, is more than happy to cook and Stavros and I are equally happy to consume and to share the washing up. We all like wine. We are going to get along very well.

The museum, built principally to display the material from Zagora, sits on the edge of the picturesque town square, dotted with shady plane trees branching over inviting little tables and chairs where people gather and disperse all day long. The pottery we are working on is housed in the cluttered basement, a cavernous room littered with pot sherds and marble fragments in various stages of repair. As the museum opening hours are limited from 9 AM til 3 PM, we work swiftly with only a break at eleven to dash out to purchase a local delicacy for morning tea. We take a late lunch at four o'clock and then fill a few hours with book work until dinner time at a fashionable and even later hour.

The days pass happily immersed in pottery reconstruction: the excitement of seeing a large hydria for the first time since it was broken nearly three thousand years ago, the challenge of balancing several pieces of delicate ceramic while applying adhesive and supporting them just so while the adhesive sets, the frustration as they fall apart again when I lift them, the discovery of delicate painted decoration on a worn sherd, and of the quirky names given to individual pots by the archaeologists who excavated them – “Tribal”, “Poozle” and “Alice”. As I work, I imagine the easy laughter that must have accompanied the nicknaming of each pot and we echo that laughter with our own as we exchange witty banter, funny stories and humorous silliness.

On our day off we take the short drive to Zagora for a most splendid view of the site capping the end of its promontory, high above the Aegean Sea. A strategic fortification wall spans the narrow neck of this knob of land, restricting access to the town. We slowly wind our way down the hill side from the road along the rugged stone path, stopping once in a while, ostensibly to take in the magnificent view while those of us unused to the effort also take in a few deep relieving breaths. The walk takes over an hour. My respect for the stamina of the archaeologists who dug here grows as I envisage them making this walk with donkeys down to the site in the morning, laden with the day's supplies, toiling all day, sometimes in howling wind, and then wending their way back up the hill at the end of the day, carrying bags of pottery and other finds. I congratulate myself on choosing a gentler occupation: I work in comparative comfort in my makeshift labs.

My concentrated two weeks working on Zagora material all too soon comes to an end and I must make my way home again, leaving the others to continue. As Zagora has long been recognized both by archaeologists and historians as a key site in the study the Early Iron Age Aegean, I wish Beatrice and Stavros luck in their endeavour to bring the study of Zagora up to date. Frequent use has been made of the excavation material published so far in reconstructions of social and political history in eighth-century Greece, but it is not often noted in these secondary studies that less than half of the excavated material has been made known to the wider research community. My colleagues have their work cut out for them and I am happy to have played a small part in it.

My thanks go to Stavros and Beatrice for their permission to write this article, for teaching me about Zagora and for inviting me to be part of it.

Pella in Jordan 2009

Urban Origins, a Bronze Age Palatial Residence and Hellenistic Husn

by Stephen J. Bourke,
Director, Pella Excavations

Introduction

Archaeologists from Sydney University and an ever-expanding group of associated Australian institutions, along with 32 NEAF-sponsored volunteers, and 50 local labourers, completed another successful six-week season of excavations at Pella in Jordan between 11 January and 19 February 2009.

Excavations on the main mound concentrated within and adjacent to the large Bronze-Age 'Fortress' temple, although pilot explorations returned to the southeastern corner of the mound after an absence of 15 years. Two trenches continued work within the later stone-walled temple *cella*, exploring the earliest Middle Bronze Age (MBA; c. 2000–1900 BCE) temple deposits, while three trenches worked on the Iron Age through Late Bronze Age sequence (LBA; c. 1400 BCE–800 BCE) west of the temple. As well, work in one trench continued to explore the early pre-temple horizons of the Chalcolithic and Neolithic periods (c. 5500–4000 BCE), while a small probe searched for Early Bronze Age (EBA; c. 3000 BCE) occupational deposits inside the eastern circuit wall—last dug in 1992.

Work also continued on nearby Tell Husn. On the east summit, after a decade-long layoff, excavations resumed investigating the massive EBA (c. 3200–2800 BCE) fortifications on the eastern summit, with one trench in the gatehouse and one in pre-fortification deposits. On the west summit, the exciting Early Hellenistic (c. 250–200 BCE) discoveries of 2007 were expanded to the west and north of the original exposure, while small EBA probes below the Hellenistic destruction were further explored towards the end of the season.

We will discuss the 2009 discoveries chronologically, moving from the earliest Neolithic discoveries on the main mound, through to the Early Roman materials unearthed on Tell Husn.

Further work on Neolithic and Chalcolithic beginnings (c. 5200–4200 BCE)

When excavations halted in trench XXXIIG in 2007, two inter-twinning phases of large rectilinear stone and mudbrick walled Late Chalcolithic period (c. 4200 BCE) structures had been uncovered but not excavated. In 2009 excavations explored these two phases of architecture, which featured extensive use of thick yellow mudplastered basins and deep mudbrick-lined and plaster sealed rectilinear storage bins. As well, several baby burials were located in room corners under early floor levels.

Below the rectilinear Late Chalcolithic structures,



View of the Late Bronze Age excavations on the main mound.



Chalcolithic Badarian (?) import from the main mound.



Late Bronze Age ringed kernos from the main mound.

at least one phase of earlier Chalcolithic (c. 4500 BCE) semi-subterranean ovoid architecture was uncovered. This proved very similar to the richly endowed structures encountered in a nearby trench in 2007, although the 2009 structure was disappointingly clean. However, an enigmatic tulip-form red and black burnished pottery vessel, recovered nearly intact from an associated pit, might just be the earliest Badarian (?) period import from Egypt thus far known.

A series of deep pits, variously stone-filled or plaster lined, dating to the Late Neolithic period, were the earliest remains encountered in the trench. These were often cut deeply into the red stony gravels which lay at the base of the sequence. A large collection of distinctive coarse-textured Neolithic ceramics, along with stone and bone tools, were recovered from the pits, as were some very early olive remains, currently under study.

Probing the earliest city wall on the main mound (c. 3200–2800 BCE)

When excavations ceased in the main eastern exposure (Area III) in 1994, two massive fortification walls had been exposed. The earliest, a two-metre wide stone and mudbrick wall, dated to the Early Bronze Age (c. 3200–3000 BCE). Unfortunately, the EBA wall was flanked on both sides by massive Middle Bronze Age (c. 1800 BCE) wall lines, which had the effect of cutting the EBA fortification wall off from all its associated deposits to the west. This meant we were unable to learn much about the EBA city associated with the early wall.

Recent work in Jordan Valley settlements north and west of the river by Yitzak Paz drawing attention to the probable early dating of the earliest EBA walled townships, has been thrown into sharp focus by our own discoveries on Tell Husn, which largely support Paz's still controversial ideas. This, in turn, has forced us to reconsider the dating evidence for the earliest wall on the main mound, and try to gain additional evidence that bears on this issue. This prompted us to open up a small 3 x 3 m probe against the one small section of the inner face of the EBA city wall which was potentially unencumbered by later structures.

The probe trench duly came down upon the western

inner face of the wall, only to discover small east/west walls running off its inner face, filled with sterile rubble. Although the probe is small, it seems likely that it has uncovered evidence for the presence of a casemate system of EBA fortification walling in this eastern area of the site.

Exploring pre-temple deposits below the temple (c. 4000–2000 BCE)

In 2007, two main exposures were exploring what seemed likely to be the earliest of a series of small mud-brick temples beneath the massive stone Fortress temple excavated in earlier years. One trench penetrated below the early MBA (c. 1900 BCE) 'Green-brick Temple' floors quickly, and produced our first surprise, an earlier phase of domestic MBA I (c. 2000 BCE) architecture. We had always assumed that the first temple would be contemporary with the earliest settlement, but this does not seem to be the case.

When the early MBA architecture was removed, several shallow deposits of Early Bronze Age wall stubs and pits (c. 3000–2800 BCE) were uncovered. Here as elsewhere around the temple, the EBA remains have been very poor, probably because the earliest MBA builders levelled off significant deposits of the exposed (and largely degraded?) EBA horizons; fallow for perhaps 700 years. The final horizon reached dates to the later Chalcolithic period (c. 4000 BCE) and features much of a two-metre wide unusually regular circular pit, which had cut through a hard-packed off-white surface.

Excavations in the western temple probe in 2009 was limited to a small 2 x 2 m sounding below the 'Green-brick Temple' floor to confirm the broad sequence being exposed in the more extensive eastern trench. A similar sequence of domestic early MBA, scrappy EBA, and more substantial Late Chalcolithic deposits were encountered.

Four trenches to the west of the temple explored the Late Bronze Age through Iron Age II deposits (c. 1500–800 BCE). One 'new' trench, a 4 x 6 m exposure located on the northeastern edge of the area, uncovered the familiar sequence of Umayyad (c. 750 CE), Byzantine (c. 500–650 CE) and Late Hellenistic (c. 150 BCE) deposits were encountered before the Iron Age II (c. 850 BCE) strata were

reached. This trench aimed to explore the northeast corner (we hoped) of the Iron Age Civic Structure, exposed over the last five seasons immediately west of the stone Fortress Temple. Parts of two neatly built rooms were uncovered directly below Byzantine deposits (as in other trenches); one built of brown mud-bricks, one of small field stones. But alas, the northeast corner of the building remains elusive, as the structure continued off into the north baulk of the area. This means the Civic Structure is at least 30 m square, and probably larger, underlining its importance in understanding Iron Age Pella.

In the central excavation area the season began by removing a series of deep inter-cut Iron Age I (c. 1100–1000 BCE) pits which dominated the central portion of the trench. From these, a series of interesting rustic figurines, along with several carnelian and gold beads were recovered. Below the pits, the first Late Bronze Age (c. 1200 BCE) architecture emerged. This would be directly contemporary with the ‘Pillared Cella’ phase of the Fortress Temple. We had always aimed to expose a reasonable area of occupation outside the temple itself, but this had largely been frustrated by the tell’s slope to the south, and the modern cemetery to the north and east. Finally, we are beginning to open a window on life contemporary with the main phases of the temple’s use.

The first phase of LBA architecture revealed a large well built pebble-paved piazza, running south from the massive stone-paved building first detected in the northern baulk region in 2007. This neatly constructed piazza probably had a series of small rooms along its south perimeter. Initially it seemed these small rooms were purely domestic/storage in function. However, a cultic deposit (a delicately molded and painted ring kernos, and large parts of what is probably a red-slipped and incised krater, were found amongst a burnt offering deposit almost completely made up of olives) in one of the rooms has cast doubt on this. It seems probable this is a ‘first-fruits’ harvest offering deposit, suggesting that at least some of the activity taking place in the south piazza region, some 15 m west of the west temple wall, was non-domestic in nature.

Towards the end of the season, an earlier (c. 1400–1300 BCE) phase of Late Bronze Age architecture, probably contemporary with the earliest phases of the Late Bronze Age ‘Pillared Cella Temple’, was exposed across much of the trench. This has revealed perhaps the finest Late Bronze Age architecture exposed at Pella. Well-built stone and mud-brick walls, and thickly plastered (indeed many times re-plastered) variously coloured floors stretch across a large (roofed?) courtyard area.



View of the Early Bronze Age excavations on Husn showing (in middle) several phases of gateways flanked by the stone foundations of massive towers (foreground and distant). The standing walls to left date to the Byzantine period.

So far these floor surfaces seem to have been kept scrupulously clean. The best parallels for this architectural layout are with the Late Bronze Age palatial residences at nearby Megiddo and Kabri. It seems probable that we have finally found the Late Bronze Age palace of the Amarna period princes of Pella. This is not so unexpected, as the Palatial residences are generally located close by the main city temples.

Urban origins on the east Husn summit (c. 3500–2800 BCE).

The first investigation of extensive Early Bronze Age remains on the eastern slopes of Tell Husn occurred in 1994/95, when a series of massive stone and rubble terrace platforms, 15 x 15 m in extent and in places over 5 m thick, were uncovered in a line along the eastern summit of Husn. As well, a small stone-paved gateway had been exposed on the southeast corner of the summit.

We returned to the investigation of the early urban period in 2009, to explore the ‘pre-terrace’ EBA deposits (c. 3500–3200 BCE). One trench was opened over the gateway area and quickly exposed an earlier, slightly narrower gateway, immediately below the first. It seems the gate exposed in 1994/95 was only the latest of a series of entrance ways. The gateway, and the road immediately outside the gate was stone paved. Excavations traced more than 6 m of the roadway, before it was cut by modern slope erosion. Even so, enough evidence remains to suggest that the main road access up into the Husn complex wound its way up along the southern side of Tell Husn, before describing a sharp 90 degree turn around and between the solid towers flanking the gateway. By the end of the season, probes were just coming into contact with a third phase of constructions, although their nature could not be determined.

Further to the north, and immediately to the west of the northernmost platform, a series of deep (but small) probes in 1995 had suggested that there was earlier ‘pre-terrace’ occupation below the stone platforms. As the date and cultural context of these massive constructions was a critical unresolved element in the Husn story, we aimed to further investigate this matter of origins in 2009. First the entire area was cleaned and a large slot trench was placed in the southern region of the trench: beside the northernmost platform and against the bedrock.

What it revealed was a surprising depth of deposits, stretching back to the beginning of urban life at Pella (c. 3500 BCE), and an unexpected sophistication of architecture. At least two (and possibly three) phases of neatly constructed stone and mud-brick architecture was revealed, featuring stone-paved installations, stone column bases, and carefully constructed stone and mud-brick terrace walls, positioned flush against the extensively re-modelled bedrock. This had the effect of creating rooms neatly terraced into the originally sharply sloping bedrock. By the end of the season bedrock had been reached across most of the sounding, but an enigmatic,



Neolithic and Chalcolithic remains on the main mound.

a stone-paved feature (perhaps a staircase?) was detected running northeast from the corner of the summit: perhaps a pathway off the hillside.

Hellenistic and Roman remains (and earlier EBA) on the west Husn summit (c. 3000 BCE–200 CE)

The western summit region of Husn is the most prominent spot in the Pella countryside. It is therefore not surprising that the Romans built something monumental on this exact spot and that the earliest Hellenistic settlement was located nearby.

Earlier work had detected the edge of an early Imperial Roman street (c. 50–100 CE), apparently unpaved but colonnaded, set beside a large paved courtyard area which contained collapsed entablature blocks, including pedimental stone, suggesting the presence of a small (but elaborate) gateway into a colonnaded piazza. Below this structure patches of a hitherto unsuspected Early Hellenistic destruction layer (earlier than 200 BCE) and patches of Early Bronze Age occupation (c. 3200–2900 BCE) cut into the bedrock were detected in narrow probes.

In 2009 the trench was expanded to the north and the east. The northern trench quickly discovered the northern side of the 3 m wide street, and traces of two walls of a large building running north from the street. Below this Imperial Roman material, further (alas small) patches of the Early Hellenistic destruction were recovered, but enough pottery and coinage was recovered to confirm the Ptolemaic date. The destruction debris contained a number of restorable vessels, including a splendid net-burnished ‘Abydos’ type jug.

Conclusion

The quality of the LBA architecture west of the Fortress temple on the main mound, the long and surprisingly early EBA sequence on the northeast Husn summit, and the new Greco-Roman discoveries on the Husn west summit are highlights. We aim to return to the field in 2011 to follow up these discoveries, while opening up new areas of research. If 2011 is as successful as 2009, we’ll be well satisfied. ■

Qaleh Kali 2009

More news from the Royal Road

By Amanda Dusting
& Kat McRae

From 5 January–1 February 2009 a successful (how ever chaotic) third season of excavations was undertaken at the Achaemenid (c. 539–330 BCE) site of Qaleh Kali (aka Jin Jun, aka Tappeh Servan) in the modern province of Fars, south-western Iran. A small Australian team comprised of Sydney University students joined Iranian colleagues from ICAR (the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research) and the Shiraz and Tehran Universities to brave the Iranian winter and embark on the next stage of excavations of the site. The dig house, in the nearby town of Nurabad (a quick 30 min bus ride to site, and an even faster 15 min taxi ride!), was shared with old friends Dr Cameron Petrie (Cambridge University) and Dr Lloyd Weeks (University of Nottingham) and their teams from the UK who were undertaking the further excavation of the nearby tell site Tol-e Nurabad.

Site background

The site of Qaleh Kali was first documented in 1924 by German explorer, Ernst Herzfeld, when he observed two column bases (of Achaemenid type) within a ruined mudbrick fortress on the outskirts of the village of Jin Jun. Herzfeld identified the column bases as possibly associated with a “royal” structure, due to their size, decorative motifs, high quality of craftsmanship and comparanda with column bases from the royal palaces of Persepolis. Sir Aurel Stein also visited the area in 1935, however it was not until 1959, with the University of Tokyo excavations, that the potential of this structure was realised. After only five days of excavation the site was backfilled and remained untouched, though not forgotten. In 2003 a survey of the area carried out as part of the Mamasani Archaeological Project (a joint ARC funded University of Sydney and ICAR) re-identified the site. As part of this collaborative project Professor Dan Potts and Dr Alireza Askari Chaverdi targeted the site with exploratory excavations commencing in 2007.

This first season of fieldwork (*NEAF Bulletin* 51: 4–5) resulted in the re-excavation and extension of the Japanese trenches, the identification of early mudbrick walls and the recovery of quantities of ceramics of the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid periods, along with fragments of fine stone vessels and glass also known from Persepolis. The following season, in 2008, concentrated on a broader



The site of Qaleh Kali and its many local workmen.

exposure of the site, and by the end of the season three column bases had been exposed, along with an associated limestone portico 34 m in length, complete with a parapet and three sets of stairs. Trenches sunk beyond the portico revealed a series of massive walls 2.7 m in width of mudbrick with a stone foundation lying parallel with the portico. The style of the architectural pieces supported an identification of the Achaemenid period and royal association.

Back to the trenches, or, my dig budget for a village...

Our objectives for the 2009 season seemed simple enough: concentrate our efforts on trying to expose more of the ground plan, further our understanding of the stratigraphy and chronology of the “royal” structure lurking beneath the surface: simple!

Work started pretty much after landing in Nurabad, considering the girls had been bumped up to business class for the Sydney–Abu Dhabi leg of the flight, the task didn't seem so daunting. Little did we know! Our trouble began as soon as we stepped off the mini-bus and into the remote village of Jin Jun (the last of a string of villages nestled in the fertile Mamasani). Half the village wanted to work for us, and half the village had been hired! After some quick calculations we realised that with such a tight budget, and such a large work force, we could only feasibly work for...two weeks?! Of course, this was only half the trouble. While most of the village of Jin Jun were happy for us to continue our excavations, one man took issue. One man, who happened to own quite a sizable portion of our precious site! And so for three days, Alireza and the village of Jin Jun (pretty much half whom seemed to be named Ali Sharifi) debated where we could work, and how many of the villagers would have to be laid off.

And so, our team took some time out for site seeing, to gather our thoughts and to sort out our budget. When

excavation did start (with 25 workmen and access to only half the site) our priorities had shifted somewhat. With less time and money than anticipated we needed to be seriously strategic. With a little help from David Redhouse (easily lured away from Team Nurabad with a little bribe of chocolate) and an Iranian colleague, Balbak Aminpour (Persepolis) we were able to survey the site with the aid of scientific gizmos—resistivity and magnetometry—just like on *Time Team*: illuminating hitherto unknown elements of the site.

The results of these surveys (in conjunction with information from our previous excavations) allowed us to position our trenches strategically across the site, where we were successful in revealing more Achaemenid walls, a post-Achaemenid buttress walling system and absolutely bucket loads of ceramics. These surveys also highlighted the fact (often speculated) that our building did not exist in isolation and hinted at the possibility of another structure in an adjacent field of similar orientation and size.

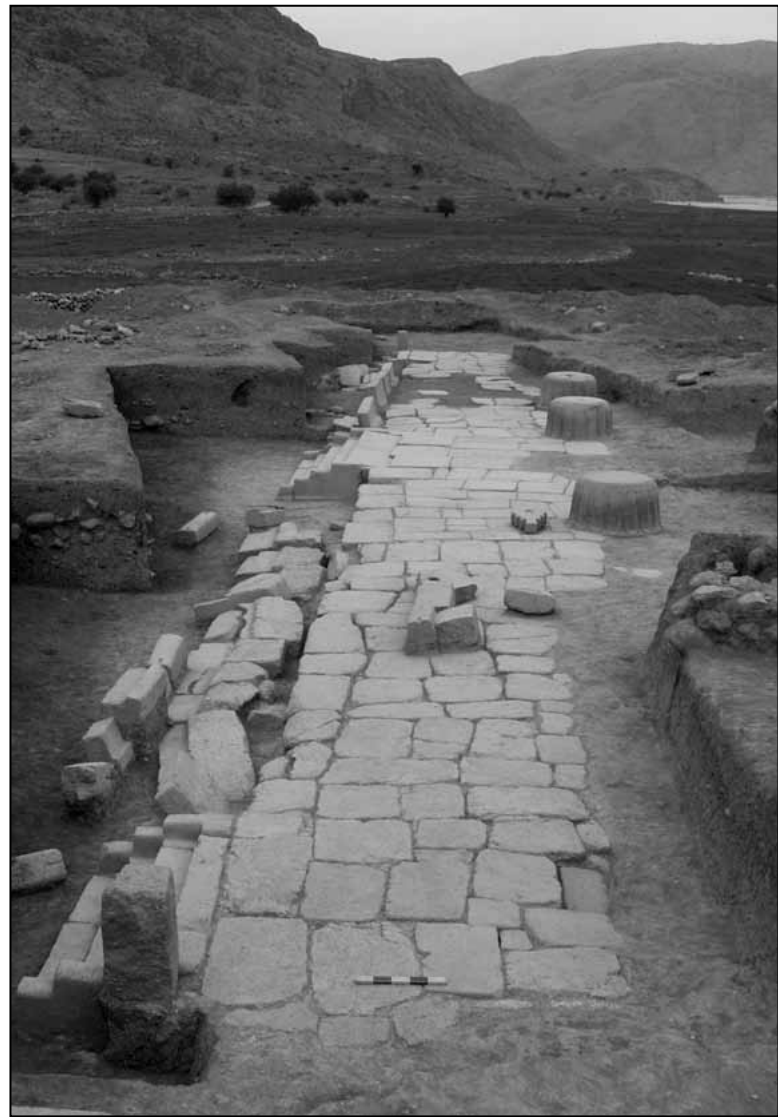
From Nurabad to Bollywood

When we weren't working (and considering our days begun at 6 AM and ended when we collapsed into bed sometime close to midnight, this wasn't often), there was plenty to occupy us both, in, and out of the dig house. There was New Years (no one made it to midnight), the invention of our own card game (Empress/Boron) and quite a number of birthdays (including a somewhat subdued 21st). One of the more notable birthdays was for Zahara, one of our Iranian colleagues and a resident of Nurabad. Following a sumptuous feast, the girls were hustled away into a back room and dressed in traditional Luristan (wedding) dresses (which are pretty much comprised of a lurid coloured skirt, approximately 5x larger than the average person. This is bunched around the waist with a larger, even brighter, robe fitted over the top. Gold jewellery is then pretty much attached wherever you can, including safety-pinned under the neck). The girls were then paraded around the room and sent to pose in front of the large flat screen TV, much to the annoyance of the men trying to watch soccer in the background...

Much of the season was spent eagerly awaiting the arrival of "zie Germans": a German film crew (led by Daniel Gerlach) filming a documentary on the life of Ernst Herzfeld. Of course they arrived at the tail of the season while we were in the process of wrapping up the excavation, completing documentation, drawing sections, planning AND backfilling.

"We won't be in your way, I promise, what ever time you have for us"

However, Daniel was so charismatic, that before we knew it we were all back on site and half the village had been re-hired in order to 're-create' our excavations (including the discovery of the portico, something that occurred in 2007). I hasten to add that archaeologists are no actors, especially when on such a tight time frame, but Daniel had an uncanny ability of finding the thespian in each of us.



View to the west showing the portico as exposed in the 2008 season.

Until next time

No matter how much forward planning, we still managed to run a little tight on the budget. In our final week the work force was retired (although, many of our workers came to watch the show all the same), the mini-bus was replaced with a taxi (surprisingly cheaper), some of the team banished to the house, our cook replaced with the wife of our 'hired-help' Rayhan (interestingly his name translates to Basil, considering the striking resemblance of our dig house to *Fawlty Towers* we found this particularly amusing).

Despite the limited funding, and the strict control regarding where we could excavate, the season produced tremendous results that even we couldn't have anticipated and answered a number of previously posed questions; particularly concerning the complex nature of the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid settlements of the site (which is now recognized as far more extensive than originally presumed).

Even with these wonderful results we found ourselves wondering, "if only we could just excavate over there..." and left, dreaming of a return trip. ■

The Kazakly-yatkan Wall Paintings

New perspectives on the art of the ancient Iranian world

by Fiona Kidd

Some of the best preserved early Iranian mural art is currently being excavated by the Karakalpak-Australian Expedition to Chorasnia, in modern Uzbekistan. Dating to the end of the first millennium BCE, and perhaps an early forerunner to the flourishing early medieval mural art traditions of central Asia, the paintings demonstrate an unprecedented diversity of colour, style and imagery; they provide critical new perspectives on both the foreign relations of the ancient Chorasnian oasis and the visual art of the ancient Iranian world.

Chorasnia forms an agricultural wedge in the delta region of the Amu Darya where it flows into the Aral Sea. Located between the agricultural world to the south and the vast steppe region to the north, Chorasnia's location is important in understanding its role as a 'contact zone' in the wider Iranian world. The region is perhaps best known as the northeastern buffer of the Achaemenid Empire. Despite ceding early from the Empire—probably around the end of the 5th century BCE—recent research demonstrates a distinct Near Eastern heritage in Chorasnian visual art.

The wall paintings from the monumental site of Kazakly-yatkan in the eastern Chorasnian oasis reflect clear links with its sedentary and nomadic neighbours, providing a rare snapshot of a thriving and syncretic local visual art culture in the little known eastern Iranian world. Built in the late 3rd or early 2nd century BCE, Kazakly-yatkan is the largest site in Chorasnia during this period and a possible regional ruling centre. The most impressive structure at the site to date is the KY10 monumental building complex which comprises a central building apparently surrounded by a corridor on all sides and a series of rooms and circulation spaces around this. Although its exact function is unclear, the building was characterized by a diverse program of display. Monumental mural art is just one element of this program which included moulded copper alloy, and gold leaf architectural ornamentation, painted sculpture, painted columns and perhaps even decorated ceilings.

One of the most impressive preserved sections of the paintings is an image gallery in the western corridor surrounding the central building. Dating to the end of the first millennium BCE, the images in the gallery provide for the first time in pre-Islamic Iranian mural art an extensively preserved group of individually framed, almost life-size bust 'portraits': though this term is loosely applied as these schematic images do not represent a 'likeness' as such. At least 36 personages can be identified from over one hundred fragments found in the fill of the corridor.



Example of a bird protome headdress from Kazakly-yatkan.

The busts are shown frontally, while the profile head of each personage faces either right or left. The physiognomy of the personages appears to be the same: full, red lips, strong nose, unique eyes with stylised eye lashes, and red ears with the details of the cartilage clearly defined.

Although no fragments of the portraits were found in situ in the corridor, several large fragments preserving multiple portraits provide an indication of the original structure of the gallery. One panel shows a column of three framed portraits, suggesting that they were painted in three tiers across the wall face. The location of the fragments in the fill of the corridor indicates that only the eastern side of the wall was painted. Given that the gallery is less than 2 m wide, these images were clearly not made for a large, public audience. Who was the intended audience of the gallery?



Face in three quarter profile with grapes and a vine leaf in the background.

Perhaps the most vexing question about the portraits is their identity. All of the personages wear a spiral torque with zoomorphic terminals: a clear indication of elite identity. Other elements of the costume—such as the headdress and the colour and patterning of the dress—are almost certainly gender, ethnic and other status indicators, but these signifiers are not yet understood. The absence of facial hair on the portraits compounds the gender issue. Fragments of painted text found in the corridor mention the word ‘king’ in the ancient Chorasmian language. This has led to speculation that the images comprise a portrait gallery of royal ancestors. Other interpretations are possible. Spiral torques are unknown in the archaeological record of Chorasmia; they find their best parallels in steppe burials and on ruler portraits on Parthian coins. A steppe identity for at least some of those portrayed in the gallery cannot be ruled out and may also hint at a political function of the KY10 complex. A steppe identity is further supported by comparative evidence of the unique bird protome headdresses shown on some of the portraits. The closest parallels to date for these headdresses come from nomad ‘warrior’ burials in the Pazyryk region of the Altai Mountains dated generally to the second half of the first millennium BCE.

In addition to a steppe connection, other fragments underline the Near Eastern heritage of at least some of the visual art at Kazakly-yatkan. A fragment of wall painting from a circulation space to the west of the central building shows a face with grapes and a vine leaf. In close proximity to this fragment was another one, showing what appears to be a tendril. The best parallels for this combined grape,



Digitised tracing of one of the mural fragments.

vine leaf and tendril motif come from the Parthian site of Old Nisa, where a spectacular horde of ivory rhytons was found. A similar motif combining the grapes, leaves and tendrils was used as part of a frieze on some of the rhytons. An as yet unpublished magnificent carved ivory furniture element from the central building finds remarkable parallels with Parthian and Achaemenid throne legs. Also unpublished is an ornamental pattern comprising at least three decorated concentric circles. This motif can be traced back to the Achaemenid and Assyrian empires.

A painting fragment showing a ‘crowd scene’ from the centre of the buildings finds its best parallels in an image from the site of Kuh-i Khwaja in Sistan, almost certainly dated to the early centuries CE if not later. These linkages raise further critical questions. From a political perspective, what was the nature of the relations between Chorasmia and the ruling Iranian heartland, and the steppe world? What was the direction of the spread of these influences? From a more art historic perspective, who were the designers, artists and craftspeople involved in the construction of the building? Where were they trained?

In the absence of any targeted study of Chorasmian—or even eastern Iranian/central Asian—art, the rich corpus from Kazakly-yatkan will play an intrinsic role in understanding broader developments in the visual art of the ancient Iranian world. Is the syncretic style exhibited at Kazakly-yatkan representative of Chorasmian art? Equally as significant is the idea that the Kazakly-yatkan mural art does not blatantly copy images and designs from surrounding regions: designers of the Kazakly-yatkan display program were certainly influenced by surrounding cultures, but their interpretations of these influences were unique. Ongoing research at Kazakly-yatkan will surely continue to provide rich insights on the visual art of the ancient Iranian world.

This article was first published in the September 2010 issue of the TAASA Review, the quarterly journal of The Asian Arts Society of Australia.

The Karakalpak-Australian Expedition to Chorasmia is directed by V.N. Yagodin and A. Betts. The project has received substantial support from the Australian Research Council as well as National Geographic and many volunteers. C14 analyses were largely funded by support from ANSTO.

The Housing Insula at Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates

by Heather Jackson, Honorary Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne

Jebel Khalid is a large, heavily fortified site on the west bank on the Euphrates, founded early in the Hellenistic Seleucid period (c. 300 BCE) to guard the river. It was abandoned c. 75 BCE and not re-settled by the Romans.

One of the sites excavated by the Australian team from ANU and Melbourne University has been the Housing Insula, situated on the southern slope of the lower of two hills, facing the Acropolis Palace. This was a classic position for Greek housing, as recommended by Xenophon and Aristotle. In 1987, a small sondage, excavated by the late Peter Connor, found what turned out to be the southeastern corner of a block of houses. The extent of the insula was eventually discovered to be 90 m north/south and 35 m east/west and to contain within its perimeter walls at least seven houses. The houses were built of limestone from the nearby quarries. No mudbrick structures were found but it is possible that an upper storey was built of mudbrick. One staircase has been found, so at least one house had an upper storey. Roofs were tiled in the Greek style, which helped to collect water draining into courtyards. Unlike many other Greek sites, where every house had its own cistern, only two houses had rock-cut cisterns, each c. 5.0 m deep, to store water. Many people and pack-animals must have been employed to bring water up from the Euphrates in the long dry summers.

The houses are spacious and, in their original form, seem prosperous. Four similarly-sized house in the north of the insula had an average dimension of 332 m², discounting any upper storey. In the south the houses were more irregularly-sized, due to the take-over tactics of the large House of the Painted Frieze, which took up a huge 772 m². All the houses had, as their circulation space and source of light and air, a large central courtyard in the Mediterranean style, surrounded by rooms. While every house was different, a common pattern was for the important family or reception room to be at the north of the courtyard, flanked by two private rooms, one on either side. The service rooms were either to the south of the courtyard or along its sides.

The House of the Painted Frieze is a good example of this arrangement and of the inhabitants' desire for privacy and security, who, after all, were settlers in an alien landscape. The house had the grandest street door in the whole insula, with a recessed and paved porch, which led (as in several other houses) into an entry room, which acted as a buffer between the street and the courtyard. Here a visitor could either go ahead via another door, into the lower courtyard which housed the cistern and various domestic activities, or turn right to climb steps





The House of the Painted Frieze and a reconstruction of the frieze to right.

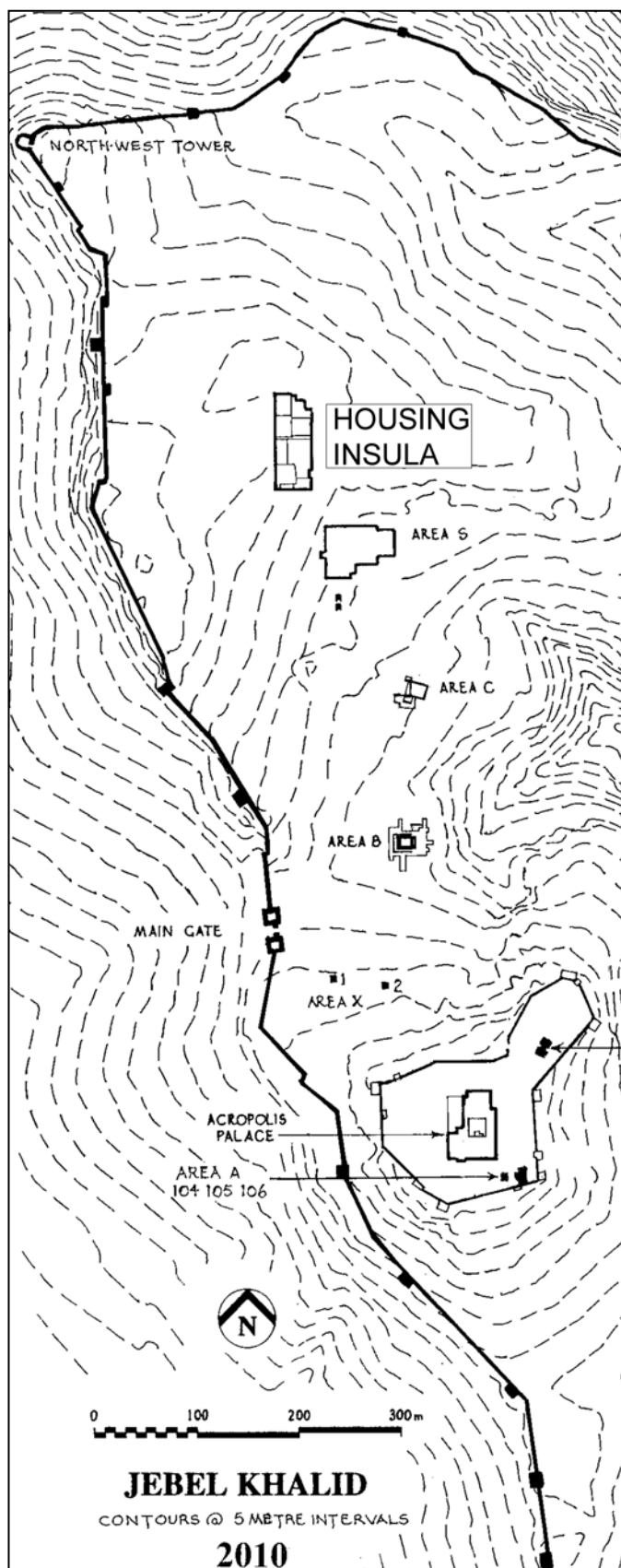


into another ante-room and finally enter the grander courtyard, at the north of which was the reception room or oikos. This room was 7 x 10.5 m, the largest in the whole insula and just falling short of needing the support of internal columns. It faced south over a wide verandah or pastas, which overlooked the courtyard. It accessed not one but two rooms on either side, which must have been very private. Flanking the courtyard were, on the east, three spacious rooms of some elegance to judge by the remains of their yellow stucco decoration, and on the west by a series of smaller rooms housing ovens, obviously service rooms for a large household. In the style of a few, rich houses on the island of Delos (visited by many Syrian traders), it had not one but three doors opening south, the central one very wide and the other two quite narrow. So this room would have been full of light when the doors were open, and the painted frieze, which gives the house its name, would have been on brilliant display. The stucco frieze itself was not found *in situ*, but the lower panels of the plastered wall were, painted in yellow, black and red. The fragments of patterned mouldings and of the frieze itself were found on the floor near the back wall. The patterns included egg-and-dart, meander, wave and one called the Lesbian cymation, all familiar from Greek housing at Delos and elsewhere. But quite special were the few fragments of a figured frieze showing little Erotes (Cupids) driving lively goat chariots. These could not be physically pieced together but months of research enabled us to reconstruct what the whole wall may have looked like, on the lines of comparanda from the few Hellenistic sites where figured friezes occurred, which was only in large and prosperous houses.

Such painting would be expensive, not only in the use of pigments but also in the employment of a suitable Greek-trained artist. This is quite an extraordinary find on the banks of the Euphrates. The owner of the house wanted to be seen as educated in Hellenistic taste.

It is clear that this was the house of an important person, perhaps an army officer in the military settlement, or a rich businessman if this was not a military area. Yet, like all the other houses excavated, it has no bathroom and no latrine. It is possible that there were communal facilities elsewhere on site, or that all the necessary containers were portable, such as washing basins and convenient pots.

Not all houses in the insula were so elite. Several others had far more evidence of storage and equipment for



processing agricultural produce such as basalt grinders, olive press fragments and of course loomweights. In most of them, rooms seem to have been multi-functional. In none of them is there evidence of the seclusion of women, but women's presence was manifest in the form of jewellery and beads, as well as figurine fragments. The total insula, its architecture, prolific pottery and artefact assemblages provides a valuable picture of several different households in the 2nd century BCE. ■

Diary of a 21st Century Archaeologist

by Alison Betts

You may think that being an archaeologist today is much the same as it always has been but things have changed a great deal since Max Mallowan and Agatha Christie set off along the Euphrates to explore Mesopotamia. Some things have changed a great deal, that is, but others remain rather as they were all those years ago. One thing that changes regularly over the decades is the range of countries where archaeologists can operate. In the early 20th century, after the end of the First World War, the Middle East was removed from Ottoman control and, under the British and French mandates, it became easier territory for research and exploration. As the various Arab countries obtained their independence, access has varied, depending on whether they are at war or not. Central Asia, on the other hand, was completely locked away under Communist control. The Russians valued historical research and encouraged their own scholars to study the past, but in China such work was very limited. Russian Central Asia drew back the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s but it has taken a little longer for Xinjiang, Chinese Central Asia, to open its doors more freely than in the past.

Now things are quite different. I have been working quietly in Xinjiang for four or five years, not quite excavating and yet operating with the support and encouragement of the Beijing Institute of Archaeology. The Chinese need time to get to know you and learn to trust you so that most archaeologists who want to work in the country need to serve this kind of 'apprenticeship'. This year my colleague Dr Peter Jia and I were rewarded by an invitation as one of a small group of foreigners to attend the 60th Anniversary celebrations of the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Until now we have been studying the infiltration of influences in the Bronze Age from the Eurasian steppes into China via Xinjiang. Now we want to push this back into the past, to explore the introduction of wheat from the Middle East, probably at some time in the Late Neolithic or Chalcolithic periods. I gave a paper outlining this proposal and later was warmly encouraged by Director Wang Wei. We hope that the doors will swing open a little wider now. There was a wide range of nationalities at the Conference including Americans, Canadians, British, Australians, French, Russians, Mongolians, Japanese and Koreans. At the closing banquet, warmed by a little wine, the Japanese treated us to a Karaoke choir, the Mongol delegate sang a melancholy ballad about a horse and my colleague Peter revealed a hidden talent for traditional Chinese melody delivered in a splendid baritone voice.

Not infrequently archaeology finds itself a tool of the soft arm of diplomacy and so it is in China today. Australian universities are increasingly seeking to establish a foothold in China and this activity is encouraged by government policy that sees these links as beneficial to the



Alison Betts (centre back) with some of her team members and locals in Uzbekistan.

wider interests of the nation. The University of Sydney has established the China Studies Centre to foster academic links with China and I am a member of the Executive Committee. The Department of Archaeology will be offering Units of Study for an MA in China Studies and we hope that we may have Chinese graduates studying for PhDs in the future.

Leaving China, I headed west to my second Central Asian project in Uzbekistan. Compared to China, the situation is very different in Central Asia of the former Soviet Union. Uzbekistan is not regarded as a strategic economic or political partner. It languishes in a post-independence slumber, suffering shortages of many daily needs including electricity, water and fuel. Arriving at the airport with 35 kilos of extra luggage, much of it basic materials unobtainable in the country, I had to wait an hour for the visa official to arrive. In fact I had to cross illegally through the by now unmanned immigration barrier to attract the attention of officials and get him

sent for. The airport has no lifts and all luggage has to be manhandled up endless flights of stairs to Departures. Luckily, free enterprise supplies hopeful young men with purloined luggage trolleys who will help for a small, highly negotiable fee. We have been working here for over fifteen years and things have only improved slightly over that time. We live in a lovely rural location and our neighbours have been supplying our labour force since we arrived. We are on the second generation of several families. Nowadays we get invited to weddings and when our volunteers arrive we go on a round of visits to the village, learning about broom manufacture and how to build a house out of mud, and handing out small gifts to the local school in exchange for vast bunches of fragrant flowers.

This year the problem is petrol. Electricity is supplied from a hydro-electric plant on the Amu-Darya river and at the end of summer when the river is very low, supplies are often short. This year the river is in flood following the heavy rains that also caused so much havoc and disaster in Pakistan. Mysteriously, this has not improved the electricity supply which only operates sporadically for about 12 hours in 24. After many years of this I lost patience and bought a back-up generator which is just holding its own against the unequal odds of polluted petrol and poor quality oil. Water supply to the house has been good but the over-supply in the river has caused a new problem. The road to our nearest main town, Urgench, crosses the Amu-Darya by means of a broken down, rusting pontoon bridge, maintained on a 24 hour basis by a motley crew of welders, pump mechanics and constructors of mud ramps easing the transition from one pontoon to the next. The pontoons cannot withstand the floods and break away constantly. An aged ferry boat has been transporting foot passengers but since a woman fell off and drowned, the police have banned this means of crossing. Further downstream a post-Soviet car ferry has been floating vehicles across at a safer crossing but the wharf is only accessible by means of a rutted unmade track.

Still, back at our Dig House, we have created a small haven of comfort. We boast the best excavation cook in

Uzbekistan, a lovely Korean lady by the name of Valya, who supplies an endless groaning table of carefully prepared treats. The fruits are in season and here they are the most delicious to be found anywhere. Sun-ripened plums, peaches, nectarines, grapes, apricots: all small but sweet and bursting with juicy flavour. Our house is spacious with high ceilings and cool white-washed interior. We have hot showers—a real treat—and beer supplied by our neighbour Gulshad who has started a small shop to serve our needs. Our team is an eclectic mix of languages and nationalities. We speak English, French, Russian and Turkic in a blend of cross-translation that seems to work adequately if rather simplistically. We are working on the recovery of wall paintings from the site of Kazakly-yatkan, once a regional capital around 2000 years ago. The paintings come from an elaborate building which probably served as a place of royal ritual. Many of them are highly coloured in shades of red, orange and grey but tantalisingly only offer fragments that give no idea of the whole. We do have some though that show portraits of beardless people wearing coloured robes, with rich necklaces and earrings. This year we have a piece lying face down in the rubble of a collapsed wall. It is over 4 metres long and at least 2 metres wide. We are holding our breath to see what might be revealed when we finally lift it and turn it over.

Uzbekistan, and specifically Karakalpakstan, the semi-autonomous region in which we work, does have some plans for development. Tourism is one of the key suppliers of hard currency. To this end a bridge is slowly being built across the Amu-Darya to permit tourist buses access to this last corner of the country.

Today, I am awaiting a visit from UNESCO representatives who propose to discuss the possible construction of a Visitor's Centre at our house. It is six o'clock in the evening as I write this and they have still not appeared. Such uncertainties are part of the rhythm of life here so instead of being concerned, I will go across the farmyard and lay on some cold beer for the team when they return from the field. ■



Director Wang Wei of the Beijing Institute of Archaeology (left) and Alison Betts.

Man-hunting in the desert

The mysterious disappearance of the Palmer Sinai Expedition

by Jamie Fraser

Earlier this year I found a great opportunity to tuck myself away in the Palestine Exploration Fund and research a lecture on “Spies and Archaeology” for the Nicholson Museum. I couldn’t believe my luck when I happened upon the intriguing but little-known story of Professor Edward Palmer, an early archaeologist-spy who went missing with £3000 of gold sovereigns while on expedition in the Sinai desert.

When the ill-fated Palmer Sinai Expedition set out from Suez disguised as a Bedouin caravan in August 1882, it was clear that it was not like any other archaeological campaign. Unfortunately, it was also clear that it was not like any other Bedouin caravan. If its leader, Abdullah Effendi, looked a little out of place, it was because this small, bearded, curiously pale man was really Professor Edward Palmer, an orientalist, linguist and archaeologist from the University of Cambridge; and if his two Bedouin companions seemed to ride their camels like Englishmen, it was because they were really Lieut. Harold Charrington of the Royal Navy and Capt. John Gill of the Royal Engineers. Even their choice of servants was peculiar, as few desert caravans rode with a Bedouin guide, a Syrian-Christian manservant and a Jewish cook.

If challenged, Palmer would claim to be an archaeologist looking for traces of the Israelite Exodus in the desert: a perfectly reasonable explanation as Palmer had actually led such an expedition 13 years before. It would fail, however, to account for the £3000 of gold sovereigns hidden in his saddlebags, or explain his curious decision to set out in the blistering heat of mid-summer. Yet the most intriguing thing of all was that the departure of this extraordinary expedition was the last time that Palmer, his officers, their servants and the gold would ever be seen again.

The background to the expedition

In truth, Palmer was one of the earliest spies working in Near Eastern archaeology. His first expedition to the Sinai in 1869 had been partly a search for the ancient Israelites, but primarily a covert topographic survey of the Ottoman-controlled peninsula, which was considered vital for the defence of the newly opened Suez Canal. Near Eastern archaeology is famous for those scholars who followed in Palmer’s clandestine footsteps, including David Hogarth, Aurel Stein and Gertrude Bell; Leonard Woolley and T.E. Lawrence followed more literally when, on the eve of war in 1914, they found themselves in the Sinai on the express orders of Lord Kitchener to fill in the blanks on Palmer’s maps in preparation for an anticipated Turkish offensive against the canal. (“We are obviously only meant as red herrings”, Lawrence wrote to his father, “to give archaeological colour to a political job”).



Professor Edward Palmer.

The canal’s security lay at the heart of Palmer’s doomed expedition in 1882 as well. Palmer’s return was part of a hastily conceived response to the Urabi Revolt, an uprising of Arab militia against the Egyptian Viceroy, or Khedive. Ever since Egypt had sold its share of the canal to the UK in 1875, Britain and France had effectively gained financial control of the entire country, reducing the Khedive to little more than a colonial puppet. The resulting unrest reached crisis point when the European powers imposed a hugely unpopular tax to reclaim Egyptian debt. In 1881, Colonel Ahmed Urabi, better known as the notorious Urabi Pasha, harnessed enough of the enmity to depose the Khedive and set up a nationalist government committed to democratic reform.

Britain was petrified that the canal—its “highway to India”—was in peril, and responded by bombarding and occupying Alexandria on the pretext of a peacekeeping mission in June, 1882. A tense stand-off followed, whereby the British in Alexandria and the Egyptian nationalists in Cairo and Suez marshalled their forces for war. The storm finally broke in September, and Urabi Pasha was soon beaten at the Battle of Tell el-Kebir and exiled to Ceylon.

Professor Palmer ventured into the Sinai in August, in the middle of this escalating political crisis. The Sinai was under Ottoman control, and the Turkish Sultan had sealed the desert to European travellers. However, Britain feared—correctly, as it turned out—that Urabi Pasha would try to ferment revolt amongst the Bedouin of the Sinai to directly threaten the Suez Canal itself. The British High Command desperately cast around for someone they could send to buy-off the Bedouin sheiks and prevent them joining the nationalist rebels. Professor Palmer was an obvious choice.

The Palmer Sinai Expedition

Palmer was an extraordinary man with a flair for languages. He spoke fluent Arabic, Hindustani and Persian, as well as most European and Scandinavian languages, including Gypsy Romany. He was only 31 years old when appointed Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, and his linguistic publications include an English translation of the Koran, and an Arabic translation of the New Testament. Drawing on his work with the Palestine Exploration Fund, Palmer also published several archaeo-historical books, including *The History of Jerusalem* and *The History of the Jewish Nation*. He was renowned as an accomplished artist and poet, a superb raconteur, a successful hypnotist, and even a journalist for *The Times*. Above all, Palmer was a man with a tremendous sense of his own character and he was well aware, as a colleague once put it, of the “strange, weird charm that he held”.

Palmer was supremely confident in his ability to manage any number of Bedouins, friendly or hostile. He claimed not only to speak as an Arab, but to think as one as well; he even boasted that during his travels he had successfully masqueraded as a great sheik of the Lehewat tribe. We don't know what the two military officers thought when they secretly rendezvoused with Palmer in Suez, which was held by Urabi's forces, but Palmer was no doubt optimistic that he could successfully traverse the desert under the noses of the Ottoman Turks and the Arab rebels, and buy off the Bedouin sheiks.

Unfortunately for Palmer, the very sheiks whose allegiance he sought were sympathetic to Urabi's cause and already in his pay. More significantly, so was his Bedouin guide. Perhaps Palmer's alarm bells should have started ringing when his guide failed to produce the armed escort of 20 men that he had requested, and turned up with his teenage nephew instead. Oblivious to the fact that his expedition had been rumbled before it had even started, Palmer decided, escort or not, to set out on 6th August, 1882. Four days later he was dead.

The expedition was shadowed from the very beginning. Their camel herders deserted on the second night, and many of the camels were stolen on the third. The next day the beleaguered party entered the Wadi Sadr, the main artery leading to the fortress at Nackl, Palmer's destination in the centre of the peninsula. The guide, who had been in constant communication with the expedition's observers, would not have seemed surprised when 12 armed men suddenly surrounded the party and stripped the Englishmen of their Bedouin robes, leaving them standing naked and white in the sun. The attackers then ransacked the saddle-bags until they found exactly what they were looking for: the three chests that each contained £1000 of gold sovereigns. The Englishmen and their Syrian manservant and Hebrew cook were then forced to walk a mile up a camel path until they reached the edge of a small cliff. After a quick discussion to determine a fair distribution of victims between the represented tribes, Professor Palmer, Lieutenant Charrington, Captain Gill

and their two servants were stabbed and pushed into the narrow gully below.

The Palmer Search Expedition

The story doesn't end there. Rumours filtered back to Alexandria that Palmer was lost or kidnapped or killed. A concerned Admiralty in London commanded Colonel Charles Warren to lead a rescue mission to find the missing party, a first-hand account of which was published by one of Warren's lieutenants, A.E. Haynes, under the magnificent title *Man-hunting in the Desert: An Account of the Palmer Search Expedition*.

A military career man in the Royal Engineers, Warren was just as charismatic as Palmer. Like Palmer, Warren had led several archaeological campaigns for the Palestine Exploration Fund, including an excavation in Jerusalem where he found a major water tunnel attributed to King David, and which is still known as “Warren's Shaft” today.

Warren had previously reported on the Bedouin situation in respect to the security of the canal, and his nose was firmly out of joint that a mere academic had been selected to secure the Sinai over himself.

Warren's much larger expedition was even easier to shadow than Palmer's, and anyone remotely connected with the ambush kept well out of its way. For over a month Warren fruitlessly crisscrossed the peninsula, chasing ghosts in what he called in his exasperation a “land of whispers”. His luck changed when, in mid-October, he came upon a spring owned by one of the murderers. Although the murderer had fled, he had left behind an elderly man who tended his date palms. Lieut. Charrington's tobacco pouch and silver pencil case were quickly discovered, the first solid lead Warren had found, and on interrogation the palm-keeper admitted that he had overheard his master arranging Palmer's ambush in the remote Wadi Sadr.

This was the vital piece of information Warren needed. He soon located the ambush site, strewn with the ransacked debris from the saddlebags, and followed the camel path to the nearby cliff. With grim foreboding Warren and his men were lowered down the side. A macabre sight awaited them at the bottom.

The legacy of the expedition

Thousands attended Palmer's state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral, although only those lucky enough to squeeze into the crypt witnessed the unveiling of a bronze plaque that states, with a keen sense of Victorian melodrama, “in memory of three brave men... who... were treacherously and cruelly slain”.

Yet the bones of five brave men lie in the tomb beneath the plaque, as Palmer, Charrington and Gill were interred with their Syrian servant and Hebrew cook as well. This was the first time that Arab, Jew and Christian had been buried together in this bastion of British Protestantism, although this was probably because no one was quite sure just whose remains were whose. ■

East meets West

The New Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia.

by Wendy Reade

The old space formerly occupied by the Geosciences Library on the fourth floor of the university's Madsen Building has been beautifully refurbished to house an exciting new collaborative venture. The Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia (CCANESA) is now the home of several entities whose common interest is the study of the ancient Near Eastern and Classical worlds. The Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens (AAIA), research interests and projects from both the Departments of Archaeology and of Classics and Ancient History, the publisher Mediterranean Archaeology and the Near Eastern Archaeology Foundation (NEAF), no less, have worked together with the university to create this brilliant space which has brought all of us together in one place.

This might seem a logical and unremarkable combination of interested parties, but previously these various groups were scattered around the university, never having a common space in which to interact, build relationships or pool resources. As part of its core objective, CCANESA provides the remedy for the disadvantages of separate existence by bringing these groups together in a co-operative, dynamic and productive exchange of ideas and knowledge that comes of working closely in a mutually supportive environment. The associated interests of all of these groups, revolving around the study of the ancient Mediterranean world and the lands which border it, are undeniably enriched by their interaction with each other. This makes CCANESA a national and international Centre for the study of the languages, literature, history, archaeology, and philosophy of the ancient Greek, Roman and Near Eastern worlds.

Part of the collaborative nature of this centre is seen in the large library of approximately fifteen thousand volumes, not including several forthcoming bequests. This collection combines the libraries of the Department of Classics and Ancient History, the AAIA and NEAF. NEAF's library has until now been stored in boxes, as we lacked an accessible library space. An important part of the ongoing work at CCANESA includes the shelving, cataloguing and mending, where necessary, of all the books and journals in this unique collection, making it an important research and teaching resource. The library contains an archival space where the records of various excavations are held and there is an impressively large display of the most recent publications by the individuals who comprise CCANESA, a testament to their enormous research strength. A large reading room forms part of the library space and in it is an iMac computer, donated by NEAF, for use by researchers. CCANESA's facilities also include offices for visiting scholars and post-doctoral fellows, a board room and a meeting room with kitchen.



The elegant display case which meets the visitor at the entrance to CCANESA, currently exhibits a collection of ceramics from the Pella in Jordan Excavations, a key NEAF project. The display marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Australian excavations, and was set up as the inaugural exhibition to coincide with the opening of CCANESA in December 2009. CCANESA was formally accorded the status of a University Centre by the Provost earlier that year with the importance of this event being marked by the attendance at the launch of the Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO and with addresses by Mr David Malouf, AC and the Inaugural Director, for the period 2009-2010, Prof. Peter Wilson, the William Ritchie Professor of Classics. Every two years the directorship of CCANESA will rotate between the member partners which will see a NEAF director in due course.

This multi-purpose space hosts conferences, special lectures, postgraduate/staff research seminars, meetings and visiting scholars of international repute. Our Centre is unique in Australia and the region, providing the opportunity to improve conditions for postgraduate study and teaching, to enhance the University of Sydney's international reputation for world-class research and to form effective collaborative research projects. The Centre also encourages community engagement, a key aim of both the AAIA and NEAF.

We believe that the study of the ancient world can only reach its full potential with the pooling and sharing of the wide range of knowledge and experience that is needed to understand these complex and hugely influential cultures. Indeed, many of us find that our interests and expertise are varied and are enhanced by the cross-pollination that a combined existence such as this allows. My own engagement with NEAF and the Centre mirrors the nature of these kinds of relationships, where I find my long standing work for NEAF, the Archaeology Department, and various excavation projects combines productively with my more recent position as Research Administrator at CCANESA, for the Dept. of Classics and Ancient History. In all, CCANESA promises to provide a truly satisfying and enriching blend of people, specialisations and resources in the multi-disciplinary field that is modern Archaeology.

For more information visit: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/ccanesa>

Berlin Museums

by Maree Browne

Museuminsel

One of the greatest cultural enclaves in Europe is Museuminsel (Museum Island) in Berlin. Here a cluster of museums house some of the world's most famous antiquities.

Of the museums that are on the island, there are three that will have particular appeal to those interested in archaeology. The Altes Museum houses an amazing collection of Classical antiquities. The Pergamon Museum, named after the great altar from Pergamon displayed here, has several other wonderful collections within it. These include the Islamic Art Collection, the Near Eastern Collection with the Ishtar Gate and associated finds from Babylon, and the Classical Collection which includes the massive Roman market gate from Miletus and much else. But recently re-opened and not yet covered in many of the guide books is the Neues Museum. For that reason, is a brief description and critique of this museum follows.

The Neues Museum

The Neues Museum was re-opened in 2009 after extension and restoration. This museum now houses a large Egyptian collection as well as Cypriot, Classical and Prehistoric collections.

The restoration has been a triumph of the incorporation of the old with the new. The results of this are wonderful. The rebuilding of the museum was called a 'careful reconstruction' by its architect, David Chipperfield. It is like a wonderfully restored pot with the ancient and preserved sherds carefully held together by modern materials and techniques while still preserving its original shape, purpose and remaining decoration; the new and the old clearly obvious but in harmony. An example are the frescoes of the Egyptian Court which are masterpieces of 19th century Orientalist art but today they sit on the bare brick walls of the original fabric of the building. They are viewed from a modern and minimalist balcony. This incorporation continues throughout the building. The use of lighting throughout the building is stunning. There are few shadows cast across the objects but at the same time every detail is clearly visible and there is little reflection across the display cases.

The Highlights

The icon of the collection is the head of Nefertiti found at Amarna in the early 20th Century. She reigns—the only word to describe her presence here—in a room of her own and is wonderfully displayed. This piece is the only one in the museum which cannot be photographed. In the 'flesh' she is more striking than any photo can convey.

Nefertiti is one piece of a large and comprehensive collection from Amarna. Each piece is displayed in a glass cube, mounted on a stone base and brilliantly lit. The gilded head of Queen Tiy in many ways rivals that



The Egyptian Court at the Neues Museum.

of Nefertiti but these are just two treasures among many. While much of this section relies on the sheer beauty of the pieces for their impact, in other parts of the museum remarkable pieces are integrated in thematic displays which give context and meaning to them. Again it is the incorporation of two philosophies of artefact display, the artistic worth or the contextual value of a piece, that are evident here. In the Neues Museum both philosophies sit comfortably together. One of my favourites is the collection of small bronze statues of the Egyptian deities that are placed along a simplified map of the Nile Valley. The centre of worship of these deities is clearly shown by their presence on the map. There is a fine collection of Middle Kingdom models including granaries, boats and figurines; these are all in wonderful condition as are the more prosaic everyday objects such as shoes, sickles and ploughs as well as games, cosmetics and plant material.

Other collections

Among the other treasures of the museum is Schliemann's gold hoard from Troy. This collection of jewellery, so often shown adorning Schliemann's wife, is on display along with much else from the Troy excavations. Here the context is more obvious with story boards and photos.

Another section is devoted to the history of excavation and there are displays of dig books, diaries, miscellanea and the occasional artefact.

The Classical collection includes the stunning Xanten bronze boy (Roman) as well as sarcophagi, colossal statues of Helios and his goddess and smaller artefacts. In the Cyprus collection the bronze Kition kettle trolley (Late Bronze Age) and the Aphrodite of Idalium are the stars.

Tips for visiting

- You must book a time slot and this can be done on line at www.smb.museum/neuesmuseum or at one of the other museums in Berlin. Three day passes for the museums can be bought at a number of outlets.
- The museum is open Sunday to Wednesday 10 AM to 6 PM, Thursday to Saturday 10 AM to 8 PM. Try to avoid the weekend if possible as it is crowded.
- There is great café within the museum but it can be a little crowded. If you share, however, you will find how welcoming and friendly the Berliners are.

Books for Christmas

Below are a few reads that might be good on the beach, sailing down the Nile or on a wet and windy night at Pella.

The Mistress of Abha

William Newton, Bloomsbury Press 2010

This book is the delightful story of Ivor Willoughby, a young Arabist, who embarks on a journey to find his father, an officer abroad with the British Army in Arabia. In all of Ivor's life, his father, Robert, has only returned to England once and that is in a bedraggled state with tales of As'ir, a land of Sheikhs and white-turbaned bandits where he fights alongside Captain Lawrence and is known by the name of Ullobi.

After that single encounter, which left such an impression on Ivor, Robert is never heard of again. So ten years later, Ivor sets out to find what has become of him. Travelling to Cairo to join the Locust Bureau, then circuitously to Abba, Yemen and along the Red Sea coast, Ivor searches never endingly for clues that will lead him to Ullobi.

At first he draws a blank, but then he hears whispers of a woman warrior called Naëma who was once a slave, but whose story is tantalisingly connected with his fathers. So Ivor finds himself in the misty heights of Ayinah looking for an Abyssinian seer who was carried on the same slave ship as Naëma in 1914 and who might unlock the mystery of Ullobi.

Newton brings out all the romance and allure of Arabia in this enchanting book: one that you won't be able to put down until Ullobi is finally found. Or is he?

Recommended and reviewed by Fiona Richards

Greenmantle

John Buchan

On Secret Service East of Constantinople

Peter Hopkirk

This is the perfect combination for those who like good old-fashioned spy stories. The first is *Greenmantle*. It is fast-paced with fictional heroes of the likes of Richard Hannay, Ludovick (Sandy) Arbuthnot—who wanders the world from the Yemen to Samarkand, and from Lhasa to Albania—and Sir Walter Bullivant of Whitehall. Join them as they race across Turkey from Constantinople to Erzerum in a clandestine effort to stop the German attempt to start a Holy War in the Middle East and India at the onset of the First World War. There are large 'nootrals' from Ohio, gypsies, Cossacks on horseback and then there's *Greenmantle*. It's a great read more than 90 years after it was written by John Buchan. The story and the language have a very contemporary sense to them. There are elements in the book that do clash with our modern sensibilities but it is a tale of its time which still has strong resonance in today's world.

The story is based on the truth. Germany did try to start a Holy War in the east with the aim of capturing large parts of the British Empire east of Constantinople with the final trophy to be India, the Jewel in the Crown. The true account is found in *On Secret Service East of Constantinople* by Peter Hopkirk, which reveals Germany's plan to stir up a religious revolt in the east. This is a continuation of the tale so well told in Hopkirk's *The Great Game*. The book reads very easily for a story so rich in characters and incidents all happening at the outbreak of war in Europe. Here, though, the story ranges far more widely. It travels along the old Silk Route from Constantinople to Afghanistan to China, through Persia and into India. Hopkirk's style reads more like a novel than a dry history but then at the end you have an amazing list of the sources he has used, resources that can be accessed to gain an even more detailed knowledge of this fascinating chapter in world history. What these two books show is how often the Middle East and Central Asia have been the theatre for a struggle between European powers. They tell the story of how the local populations of these countries often pay the price for a conflict planned in London, Berlin, Paris or Moscow.

Recommended and reviewed by Maree Browne

The Egyptologist

Arthur Phillips

In many ways *The Egyptologist* sets out to send up books written by the likes of John Buchan, but in a good-humoured way and with a degree of homage. There is one tale told in the book the perennial story of the search for the lost tomb of a lost pharaoh. It is also the story of duplicity, self aggrandisement, erotic ancient poetry, and cynical review. The story unfolds through two sources. The first is through the writings of Ralph Trilpush, the archaeologist who learned of the tomb's existence while serving in Egypt in World War I. The second perspective on the story is through the work of Harold Ferral. Ferral is a retired private detective living out his days in the Bayview Nursing Home in Sydney. Trilpush is not exactly a shining advertisement for the profession and the archaeology is somewhat hazy. Ferral belongs to the hard-bitten Philip Marlowe class of detective. The book moves through many landscapes: pre-WWI Sydney, the deserts of Egypt, East Coast USA and Oxford. Lacking the pace of a true thriller, it is more of a 'dig to be excavated and interpreted'. Phillips is American, does not have an archaeological background, and has barely visited Egypt—his own admission. Allowing for this it is a good read, rather fun though predictable.

Recommended by John Tidmarsh, reviewed by Maree Browne



NEAF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURS

NEAF, in conjunction with the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), run several Study Tours a year to places that would be of interest to all people interested in archaeology and history. To give the flavour of our tours, some recent tour reports follow. NEAF has several tours in the pipeline for 2011/2012. Please refer to the NEAF website or contact Lissa Sharp at 9036 4766 (The Centre for Continuing Education: lsharp@usyd.edu.au).

Crossroads of Civilisations

Syria—Jordan April 2009

This is now the fifth time that NEAF has run a tour to the Levant and the popularity of this region for NEAF tourists shows no sign of waning. Indeed, Syria and Jordan lie at the heart of the Near East with quite a few members of the NEAF Board involved in on-going field work in these two countries. As well, many current members of NEAF have received their first introduction to the region as paying volunteers at the University of Sydney's excavations at Pella in Jordan.

The region has a remarkable wealth of antiquities to visit and its ancient remains give us a superb overview of Near Eastern history. From incomparable sites such as Petra, walks in the Jordanian wilderness and the mighty cities of Aleppo and Damascus this tour was both an education and a delight for all. For many of our group, however, the abiding memory was the sunset view at Palmyra from the Ayyubid castle of Qalaat Shirkuh watching the colonnades and sanctuaries of the city to the east take on a soft pink glow before finally vanishing into the inky blackness of another desert night.

John Tidmarsh



Hannibal's Homeland

Tunisia—Libya March 2010

Eighteen NEAF members took North Africa by storm, or at least survived the early storms in Carthage and the jackhammers rearranging the Bardo Museum (spectacular, if a tad noisy). In Tunisia, among a lot more, we ventured north into the verdant breadbasket of the Roman empire, featuring the beautifully preserved underground mosaics of Roman Bella Regis and the sublime theatre, temples and tombs of the splendidly preserved Roman Imperial Dougga. Following Tunisia we immersed ourselves within the magnificent Roman ruins of Libya: Tripoli, Sabratha and Lepcis Magna. The surprise was to have each site virtually to ourselves in the warm early spring weather. Flying off to Cyrenaica to explore Greek North Africa was a change of pace. If Ptolemais on the coast was strangely Australian in its feel (eucalyptus everywhere on a golden afternoon), the temples, palaces and deep underground cisterns reminded us of where we weren't. Then there is Cyrene: there may be a more beautiful site than Cyrene, but I haven't seen it!

We hope to repeat the tour in 2012, when we might try and explore a bit more of Punic Tunisia and the Neolithic rock art of the southern Libyan deserts.

Stephen Bourke



The Near Eastern Archaeology Foundation was established at the University of Sydney in 1986 to promote research into the archaeology of the Middle East and North Africa. Activities include the annual production of the NEAF Bulletin, a lecture program and study tours. Support for research is through travel grants, fellowships, publication subsidies and field program finance.

Editor & Layout: Mr Ben Churcher © The University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.



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SYDNEY

NEAF, SOPHI, A14 University of Sydney, NSW 2006 (sophi.neaf@usyd.edu.au)

www.acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/neaf