



La Sierra Digs

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Archaeology Masters Growing at La Sierra

La Sierra University's new Near Eastern Archaeology Master of Arts degree program is rapidly growing and attracting interesting and committed, aspiring archaeologists. Here we introduce four of our current MA students:



Nicole Gonzalez

Nicole was born and raised in Topeka, Kansas. She earned a B.A. in Classical Languages at the University of Kansas in 2013 and an M.A. in Archaeology and Biblical History at Trinity Southwest University in 2014. She is now pursuing an M.A. in Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University and will graduate in June 2017. She has excavated in several different places: Manhattan, Kansas; Gournia, Crete, Greece; and Tall al-Hammam, Jordan. She notes, "A summer trip with my Spanish class to Italy fueled my love and passion for experiencing other cultures and since then I have traveled to nearly 30 different countries. Jordan is by far my favorite country and I love their traditional dish, *mansaf*. I love learning new languages, and mastering Arabic and Spanish are next on the list of accomplishments after graduation. I am a major Kansas Jayhawk and KC Royals fan!"



Kristy Swartz

Three years ago, Kristy made one of the most significant and life-changing decisions of her career. After working and raising two beautiful children, she decided it was time to finish her B.A. in Anthropology at Washington State University. She recounts, "With the support of my family and friends, I endured and was awarded my degree with honors. That said, even though I adore Anthropology, I have always been especially intrigued by other people's 'rubbish' as well as an affinity for getting dirty! The perfect recipe for a career in archaeology! The seal on the deal came after field school, a variety of digs in different regions, and finally the 2016 excavations at Tall al-'Umayri. All of that brings me to this fabulous place in my life and my new home at La Sierra University. I am both honored and very excited to be a part of this new program and I am hopeful that I will be able to make notable contributions to the university, this department, and its team."



Betty Adams

Betty Adams happily worked in broadcasting and public relations for 20 years, until producing a three-part documentary on an archaeological site in SE Washington State derailed her career. She never left the site, and has spent the past four years learning excavation, stratigraphy, and preservation while moonlighting at a "normal" job. After excavating at Tall al-'Umayri last summer, she enrolled in the M.A. program at La Sierra, and currently commutes from Washington to California.



Dawn Acevedo

Dawn is a Texan girl, born and raised. She came to SoCal after marrying her husband Gabriel in 2015. Through archaeology she seeks to illuminate the historical and cultural backgrounds of the Bible, increasing understanding for those who may never have the chance to experience the Holy Land firsthand. She loves coffee, cooking, traveling, being in nature, and watching videos of baby animals.

LLBN Update	2
La Sierra University Museum	2
AIA Lecture	2
Versacare Grant	3
MRAMP Update	3
Display Case	3
Recent Discoveries	4



Excavating the Bible on LLBN

by Larry Geraty

For the last two and a half years Doug Clark and Larry Geraty, more recently with the addition of Kent Bramlett, have provided Loma Linda Broadcasting Network (LLBN-TV) with a new program each week called "Excavating the Bible." They have taped a range of archaeology programs and have now completed broadcasts on the Old Testament, book by book, with slides, conversation, and the display of pertinent artifacts from the collections of CNEA. The program's purpose is to inform our viewers to better understand and appreciate the context, historical setting, meaning, and messages of every book as helped by archaeological discovery. Each of these programs runs every day at different times of the day for a week before the TV station goes on to the next program. Recently these three archaeologists (occasionally with other expert guests), using material primarily researched by Doug Clark and artifacts chosen by Kristina Reed from CNEA, have begun to do programming for the books of the New Testament as well. For those who may not have seen these programs, they can be found at the LLBN-TV website (<http://www.llbn.tv>) or searching for Excavating the Bible on YouTube (www.youtube.com).

Progress toward New La Sierra University Museum

by Larry Geraty

La Sierra's Campus Master Plan designates a spot at the front of the campus for a brand new University Museum with plans, developed over the last three years, to combine three unique collections of artifacts and biofacts. One is called the "World Museum of Natural History" that started with Billy Hankins bringing home from overseas specimens of rare birds, mammals, and reptiles—eventually freeze-dried for permanent preservation and display. To these have been added many more donations of animals, shells, minerals, and gems—the latter two carefully curated by Virchel Wood.

A second collection began with missionaries and donors through the years bringing back to campus exotic artifacts collected from the Amazon, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, first organized by John Elick who taught anthropology. These have been "inherited" and added to by Charles Teel who founded the Center named for Anna and Fernando Stahl. They wonderfully illustrate the great variety of ethnographic and cultural artifacts housed on campus.

The third collection is said to be the largest assemblage of biblical-era artifacts from the Jerusalem area in the United States. These items currently stored at CNEA are well-known to the readers of this newsletter because they form the basis for much of the research going on in our undergraduate and graduate archaeology degree programs.

The plan is to bring these three major collections together under "one new roof," along with a lecture hall and gift shop that will better serve research on campus but also attract visitors from off campus. Early proposals suggest a \$20M structure, about a third of it having been committed so far. The University's Advancement Department is currently soliciting support from University alumni, donors, and friends with the hope that gifts and commitments will be in hand during 2017. In the meantime, a University Museum Board has been formed, including several committees to facilitate the work that will soon bring about a long-needed facility to enhance research, education, and display of these resources unique to La Sierra. Should you be interested in contributing additional items, financial support, or suggestions for our consideration, please write Larry Geraty at lgeraty@lasierra.edu.

Bramlett Delivers AIA-Orange County Lecture

By Kristina Reed

Associate Professor of Archaeology and the History of Antiquity at La Sierra, Dr. Kent Bramlett, presented a well-attended lecture, "Ethnicity in the Archaeological Record: A View from Tall al-'Umayri, Jordan and Other Recent Excavations" at Concordia University, Irvine, for the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA)—Orange County March event.

Kent began by exploring the history of how archaeology, anthropology, material culture, and culture-historical studies have all contributed to our understanding of the connection between physical remains and ethnic identity. He examined the ethnicity of the North American Mound Builders and Thomas Jefferson's conclusion that the material remains and burial practices were similar to current Native Americans; therefore, they were the same ethnicity. He then considered beveled-rim bowls, pottery unique to the Uruk culture, and how their presence in non-Uruk settlements indicated other groups were influenced by Uruk culture, not hosting Uruk citizens.

Taking this knowledge of the relationship between material culture and ethnicity, he used Tall al-'Umayri to discuss what the excavated material remains can tell us about the ethnicity of the inhabitants. The remains from various strata have shown that they were Canaanite in the Late Bronze Age and Ammonite in the Iron Age. These ethnicities were determined through well-known identifiers such as pottery styles, collared-rim storage jars, terraces, cisterns, faunal remains, four-room houses, cultic artifacts, inscriptions, and seals.

Kent recognized that ethnicity can be complex to reconstruct but with diligence, it may be possible to make educated "most probable" identifications of ethnicity. The subject of ethnicity, and just what can be determined from the archaeological record with regards to it, can be a sensitive subject to explore but he did so with careful analysis.



CNEA Granted Versacare Award

by Douglas Clark

The Versacare Foundation just awarded CNEA the third of three major grants for an archaeological project in Jordan, called "On the Trail of Ancient Ammonites and Moabites." Funding this year will support the August expedition to Khirbat Balu'a (pictured here) in south-central Jordan, one of the largest settlements in the territory of the ancient Moabites. For more information, visit: <http://versacare.org/la-sierra-university-archaeology-madaba-plains/>



MRAMP Update

by Douglas Clark

The Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project (MRAMP), co-sponsored by La Sierra University, Gannon University (Erie, PA), Perugia University (Perugia, Italy), and Sapienza University (Rome, Italy), is well underway. With funding from USAID, through SCHEP (the Sustainable Cultural Heritage Engagement of Local Communities Project), we have hired several people from the Madaba community to clean the area of the new museum and to enter artifact data into a database. We are currently planning a major city-wide launch event on site in Madaba the early evening of 17 May.

MRAMP in the news! Check out these links for recent press:

Pacific Union Conference *Recorder* article on USAID/SCHEP grant to MRAMP: go to page 29 at https://issuu.com/pacificunionrecorder/docs/2017-03_issuu

ASOR Blog on lessons learned from MRAMP initiative: <http://asorblog.org/2017/02/20/new-collaborative-archaeological-adventure/>

Display Case

by Kristina Reed

A fine-grained translucent stone, alabaster has been prized for millennia in the Near East. Alabaster comes from two different minerals, gypsum and calcite, and is mined in Italy and Egypt. Egyptian alabaster is calcite and has been prized since ancient times for its swirling bands of white and cream. The name alabaster is derived from either the Egyptian "*a-labaste*," which refers to carved alabaster vessels dedicated to the cat goddess Bast, or it was named for Alabastron, Egypt, the location where the stone was quarried in ancient times.

Alabaster degrades over time when exposed to water, causing it to become dull and opaque, which is why it is made primarily into household items. With a Mohs hardness of 3, alabaster is easy to carve with simple stone or metal tools and lends itself well to intricate details. In ancient times, alabaster was highly esteemed for making perfume bottles, cosmetic palettes or jars, ointment vases (*alabastra*), canopic jars, cups and bowls, and sacred objects.

Alabaster was a luxury, high-status material in Ancient Egypt. Some of the most beautiful alabaster vessels from Egypt were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. The sarcophagus of 19th Dynasty Pharaoh Seti I, found in Thebes, was carved from a single block of translucent calcite alabaster. Egyptian alabaster was brought to the Ancient Near East via trade routes and only the elite of a village or town would own these luxury items. In the New Testament, Mary's gift of an alabaster box of perfume, which she broke to anoint Jesus, upset the disciples who saw her gift as wasteful because it was so expensive. The alabaster box is estimated to have cost Mary around 300 denarii, about a year's wages at the time. In 1994, fragments of an alabaster jug were found at Tall al-'Umayri. While not complete, the jug was typical of the Egyptian style of the Late Bronze Age and attests to the connections of a rural village.



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Calendar of Events — 2017

21-23 April—Alumni Homecoming:

Friday, 21 April at 1:30-2:30 pm

Saving the Culture of the Bible: La Sierra
University Archaeologists to the Rescue!

Douglas Clark, with Larry Geraty, Friedbert
Ninow, Chang Ho Ji, and Kent Bramlett - an
illustrated lecture at CNEA.

Saturday, 22 April at 2:00-4:00 pm

CNEA Open House

Saturday, 22 April at 2:00-4:00 pm

Bedouin Hospitality Tent at CNEA

2-25 July—Jesus & Judges Study Tour to
Israel/Palestine and Jordan lasierra.edu/jesus&judges/

6-25 August—Excavations at Khirbat Balua
www.madabaplains.org/balua

11-12 November—Archaeology Discovery
Weekend: Herod the Great www.lasierra.edu/archaeology

SUPPORT CNEA!

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

Recent Discoveries

Assembled by Monique Vincent

Excavating Early Christianity

A cache of Byzantine-era (early 7th century) coins was recently found in excavations of a Christian village near Jerusalem. The coins were found in the walls of a building, possibly hidden by their owner as a safeguard against loss. During this time, foreign armies were invading the area and destroying Christian churches and communities. These nine small pieces of the past are only part of a larger collection of antiquities unearthed in the Holy Land that help us better understand everyday life for Early Christians. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/how-did-jesus-live-this-new-israeli-excavation-could-provide-some-clues/2017/03/20/a94bd0d4-0d6a-11e7-b2bb-417e331877d9_story.html?utm_term=.1f7765922519

Ancient Art

Dolmens are prolific, but until now, have been found unadorned. These monumental Bronze Age structures were built with large stone slabs and are found throughout Europe and Asia, including at Tall al-'Umayri. A dolmen recently discovered in the Galilee had lines engraved on its ceiling, adding to the mystery of these fascinating structures! <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/4000-year-old-structure-with-mysterious-engravings-discovered-in-Galilee-483256>

Arkyology

An archaeological team is set to open excavations at an Iron Age Judahite site near Jerusalem known in the Bible as Kiriath Jearim. For those familiar with the stories surrounding this town, the name is recognizable as one of the resting places of the Ark of the Covenant before its establishment in Jerusalem. The team hopes to discover an Iron Age shrine or temple on the site, based on the site's association with cultic activities in the narratives, and to better understand life in Iron Age Judah. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/archaeologists-to-break-ground-at-biblical-site-where-ark-of-the-covenant-stood/>