



CENTER FOR  
NEAR EASTERN  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

# La Sierra Digs

Newsletter of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology | HMS Richards Divinity School | La Sierra University | Vol. 8:3 Autumn 2020

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend • Nov 14, 2020

## A Passion for Preserving the Past: Showcasing Archaeology at La Sierra University

### Presentation Topics

La Sierra University has been actively engaged in the archaeology of the Middle East for several decades. Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2020 will focus on various projects and programs now under the umbrella of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology (CNEA). Brief presentations included in our online-only, three-hour event, along with interactive Q&A, will focus on our four excavation projects in Jordan exploring ancient Ammonites and Moabites, coins in the CNEA collection, the latest technology we are using, virtual tours of CNEA and a new museum project in Madaba, Jordan, and the proposed new La Sierra University museum.

### Online Event

November 14, 2020  
3:00 - 6:00 P.M. (PST)

Find out more at  
[lasierra.edu/archaeology](https://lasierra.edu/archaeology)

p: 951 785-2632 (CNEA)  
e: [archaeology@lasierra.edu](mailto:archaeology@lasierra.edu)

### Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2020

By Douglas Clark

The global COVID crisis has generated challenges unimagined before it hit at the end of 2019. On the other hand, it has forced us to adapt in new and creative ways to maintain and even enhance previous community events. Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2020, an on-campus CNEA staple every mid-November, is going digital for the first time; it will be entirely online this year. While this pivot brought with it a good deal of anxiety, CNEA planners have designed a rich and engaging program which we hope appeals to an even wider audience than was previously possible. Whereas in past years only those living within driving distance of La Sierra and a few other brave souls from farther afield attended, we can now invite people from around the world to join us for illustrated presentations, live discussions, and virtual tours.

The program highlights the breadth and depth of archaeology available at La Sierra University, with welcomes by La Sierra University President, Joy Fehr, and CNEA director, Douglas Clark; illustrated excavation updates/reports on Tall al-'Umayri, Balu'a, Ataruz and the Madaba Museum; and virtual tours and reports on CNEA research and news. Find the complete program online.

Join the **free Zoom webinar** by registering in advance at: <https://lasierra.edu/cnea/discovery-week-end/>. Registrants will receive the Zoom webinar link via email just before the event.

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### Memorable Discovery by La Sierra MA Alumnus

By Douglas Clark

Jehad Haron, 2016 La Sierra MA graduate in Near Eastern Archaeology continues to amaze. He worked for years in the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, rising to second in command. Also in 2016, Jehad became project lead for SCHEP (Sustainable Cultural Heritage through the Engagement of Local Communities Project) which is funded by USAID and implemented at ACOR (American Center of Research) in Amman, Jordan. He is currently deputy chief of party at SCHEP.

In November 2016 an important discovery was made in the northern Jordan town of Bayt Ras, known in Greek and Roman times as Capitolias, part of the famed Decapolis or league of ten cities. A construction bulldozer cut into a Roman-period tomb, revealing stellar chambers with wall frescoes depicting ancient life from 2,000 years ago. It is so spectacular that it has been featured in video and print media around the world. And Jehad is the person directing this project. One never knows where a La Sierra degree might take them!



### Fulbright Fellow, Dr. Ziad Al-Saad, to Teach at CNEA

By Douglas Clark

As reported earlier in *La Sierra Digs*, Dr. Ziad Al-Saad will teach a course in archaeological site preservation at La Sierra. Originally planned for autumn quarter 2020, the class was pushed by COVID into the Winter 2021 quarter when we hope we can offer this class by a world expert in cultural heritage preservation on campus. Dr. Ziad (use of the first name following a title is standard practice in Jordan) has experience in international research, university teaching and administration (even as acting president of Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan), and was director general of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The course will have graduate and undergraduate components and we hope to interest students across the campus in a unique exploration on how to preserve the past in the Middle East.



### New Grant Awarded Madaba Project

By Douglas Clark

The US Embassy in Jordan recently announced the award of an additional \$25,900 (beyond an earlier grant of \$188,950) to the MRAMP project from the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Protection/the Cultural Antiquities Task Force of the US Department of State. This comes in support of a new multiple-partner initiative to create virtual tours of archaeological locations in Madaba and virtual exhibitions which will allow visitors, during the COVID crisis and afterward, to visit Madaba remotely and experience its history and archaeology online.

### Update on COVID-19 on campus

by Dawn Acevedo

As we enter into our eighth month of campus closures, La Sierra is actively working toward implementing safety protocols for when we are allowed to be together again here in Riverside. And while everyone – faculty, staff, students, volunteers, and would-be visitors – looks forward to the time when we can resume normal campus operations, we here at CNEA want to assure you that we carry on, mostly off-campus, to bring about quality education, local and global engagement, responsible conservation, and continued research to foster interest in the ancient Near East. With the help and permission of our university's provost, we are on campus once a week to continue with artifact conservation, research, cataloging, and 3D-scanning.

Thank you for your continued interest and investment in and interaction with the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology. You make it possible for us to do what we do.

### Maintaining the Momentum

By Douglas Clark

Organizations, like people, can be overtaken by inertia or motivated to maintain and even build momentum. If at CNEA we hope to continue our research, maintain the Center and its functions for students, faculty, and the wider community, and continue to grow in capacity and accomplishment, we will need to keep our budget in positive numbers. This has been a challenge, due in part to COVID-19.

We look to you, our *La Sierra Digs* readers, to support the work of CNEA. Our annual budget of \$100,000 is always a challenge to meet, but that's what friends of archaeology do, they meet challenges! We turn to you to help us reach this goal before the end of 2020. Donors can give online by visiting <https://lasierra.edu/donate/> and then finding "Center for Near Eastern Archaeology" among the listed options. Thank you for your generosity. Gifts can also be sent via regular mail by making checks out to "La Sierra University/CNEA" and sending to: Center for Near Eastern Archaeology, La Sierra University, 4500 Riverwalk Parkway, Riverside, CA 92505. If you have questions, please call us at 951 785-2632 or email at [archaeology@lasierra.edu](mailto:archaeology@lasierra.edu).

A new innovation developed this year by the Advancement office at La Sierra will be "Giving Day" on 9 December. Please watch for developing announcements about this and about how you can help.



**Balu'a Regional Archaeological Project (BRAP), 2021***By Monique Vincent*

Khirbat al-Balu'a, under the direction of Kent Bramlett, Monique Vincent, and Friedbert Ninow, is planning to return to the field this summer for another exciting season of excavation! Balu'a is a multi-period site in central Jordan, north of Karak, stretching over approximately 50 acres. Balu'a is located near the Wadi Mujib, where its occupants were able to control a major north-south route over the millennia.

The most extensive period of occupation at Balu'a dates to the Iron II period (1000–550 B.C.), when the city expanded to include a large, walled lower settlement. The Iron II settlement is impressive, with building walls preserved to over 6 feet in height and doorways with stone lintels still intact. The site is located in what is traditionally known as the Moabite region of Jordan in the Iron Age. This season we will continue to excavate the Iron II domestic structure, the fortification system, and the area around the monumental Qasr building.

**Dates of the Dig:** June 21 – July 28, 2021**Application Due (Absolute Deadline):** March 1, 2021**For more information and updates:** [www.BRAPJordan.org](http://www.BRAPJordan.org)

**Balu'a Regional  
Archaeological Project**

**Khirbat Ataruz, 2021***By Chang Ho Ji*

Ataruz is mentioned in both biblical and historical sources. It has been associated with the ancient city of Ataroth in Numbers 34:32. The site also appears in the Mesha Inscription, which mentions the Gadites and Omri, king of Israel, who built a city there.

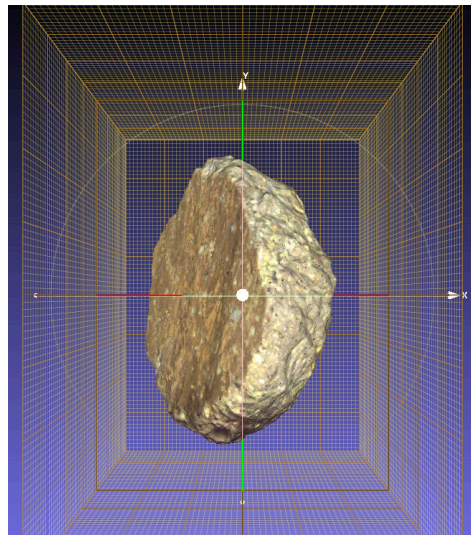
The consortium project, under the direction of Chang-ho Ji (La Sierra University) and Aaron Schade (Brigham Young University), will focus on exploring the outer courtyard of the Iron Age temple on the acropolis and its relation to the monumental staircase on the east slope of the mound. Also, geologists from Brigham Young University will conduct ground-penetrating radar (GPR) at the site in order to image and map underlying archaeological features of unexcavated areas.

**Dates of the Dig:** June 21 – July 22, 2021**Application Due (Absolute Deadline):** February 1, 2021




**Accommodations:** The accommodations are at the Mariam Hotel in Madaba, with double-occupancy, A/C, private bathrooms, and full board (4 meals a day, including late breakfast in the field). Vegetarian meals are available. Transport to the site and the excursions are included.

**Display Case***By Dawn Acevedo*

In the world affected by COVID-19, many museums are taking their collections online, including the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology! Using our 3D-scanning equipment, 360° camera, various open source software options, and other licensed software programs, we are hard at work to create digital display cases and other interactive material for our friends like you all over the world. For now, you can find such content on our various social media outlets, and be on the lookout for more on our website – coming soon!

**Missing us? We miss you, too!**

But did you know that there are lots of ways to stay connected to CNEA? You can:

- Follow our Facebook page ([CenterforNearEasternArchaeology](https://www.facebook.com/CenterforNearEasternArchaeology)) 
- Follow us on Instagram ([@lasierra\\_cnea](https://www.instagram.com/lasierra_cnea)) 
- Follow us on Twitter ([@lasierra\\_cnea](https://twitter.com/lasierra_cnea)) 
- Send us an email ([archaeology@lasierra.edu](mailto:archaeology@lasierra.edu))
- Write us a letter:  
CNEA  
4500 Riverwalk Pkwy  
Riverside CA 92505
- Give us a call: (951) 785–2632

### *La Sierra Digs*

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### Calendar of Events

2020 - 2021

- 14 November, 2020**  
Archaeology Discovery Weekend
- 9 December, 2020**  
Giving Day
- 16-18 April, 2021**  
Homecoming
- Summer 2021 Excavations**  
Ataruz – 21 June – 22 July  
Balu'a – 21 June – 28 July

### SUPPORT CNEA!

As this issue of *La Sierra Digs* makes clear, the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University is still on the move! And it needs your support for student travel scholarships, the new university museum, and ongoing operations. Please go online at <https://lasierra.edu/donate> and click on "Center for Near Eastern Archaeology" to make your contribution. Or contact the Office of University Advancement at (951) 785-2500. Thank you!

### Recent Discoveries

*Assembled by Dawn Acevedo*

#### Literacy in 7th-century BC Judah

A recent collaboration between Tel Aviv University and local police forensics has examined handwriting from 7th-century BC tablets from Arad to determine literacy levels among ancient Judahites. This remarkable study reveals that there was a high rate of literacy at the small Arad outpost (as many as 12 of the 20-30 persons stationed there) which suggests widespread literacy throughout the region. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/police-forensics-joins-ai-algorithms-to-track-down-who-wrote-the-bible-and-when/>

#### Unopened coffins discovered at Saqqara

At least 13 coffins dating back 2,500 years were discovered in a shaft at Saqqara. These coffins were found stacked in the 36-foot-deep shaft, completely "intact and sealed." Archaeologists believe that further research will unveil the identities and titles of those interred in the shaft. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/9/40/379451/Heritage/Ancient-Egypt/Cache-of-sealed-coffins-unearthed-in-Saqqara-Egypt.aspx>

#### 12th century BC Egyptian-Canaanite fortress found

An Egyptian-style fortress built 3,200 years ago and used as a Canaanite defense against "the newly arrived Philistines" has been uncovered roughly 40 miles south of Jerusalem. The Canaanites, who were under Egyptian control at this time, used this 194 sq. ft. fortress to defend their territory in the midst of the extensive social migration and upheaval of the Late Bronze Age. <https://www.livescience.com/ancient-egyptian-philistine-fortress-discovered.html>