

La Sierra University

La Sierra Digs

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Douglas Clark | Monther Jamhawi, Director DoA | Raouf Abujaber, land owner | Ghazi Bisheh, former Director DoA | HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, long-time friend of 'Umayri project | Akel Biltaji, Mayor GAM | Gary Rollefson, archaeologist | Morag Kersel, archaeologist | Barbara Porter, Director ACOR



Douglas Clark, presenting

Saving Tall al-'Umayri

Jordan Museum | Amman | 28 January 2014



Maysoon Al-Nahar, Dean of Archaeology at Jordan University and Audience

Inside

- Saving Tall al-'Umayri **2**
- More on "Saving Tall al-'Umayri" **3**
- Display Case **3**
- Calendar of events **4**
- Recent Discoveries **4**

Because of long standing land-ownership issues at Tall al-'Umayri, site of the La Sierra University excavations in the Madaba Plains region of central Jordan, Sharifa Nofa Nasser, director of the Jordan Museum, and Douglas Clark, director of the excavations, co-organized a major event involving the key decision-making stakeholders. These included the royal family, represented by HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan; the government; the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities; the Department of Antiquities; the mayor of the Greater Amman Municipality; members of the Friends of Archaeology of Jordan; academics and institutes involved in archaeology in Jordan; and other friends. What follows is the concluding address by HRH Princess Sumaya.

**5,000 Years of Jordan's Cultural Heritage at Risk: Saving Tall al-'Umayri
Jordan National Museum**

January 28th, 2014

HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is a particularly poignant time in which to consider the security and sanctity of our endangered archaeological heritage. For, as the humanitarian crisis across our not-too-distant border continues to take a terrible toll on our shared human heritage, we must determine to redouble our own efforts at preservation. Indeed, what is happening today at a terribly rapid rate in Syria, may happen more slowly, but inexorably, in our own country in a time of peace – unless we act quickly.

As our neighbours suffer ongoing misery and threats to life and limb, we are mindful that their cultural heritage is in the firing line, yet what excuse have we for not safeguarding our own share of mankind's historical bounty? I hope I can say that we are all united in the belief that cultural heritage must not become a casualty of war OR of ill-planned progress. Indeed, in our heightened political and economic context, we must determine that the protection of our share of man's cultural heritage is neither forgotten nor ignored.

Safeguarding our nation's archaeological heritage provides us with invaluable resources to strengthen communities and identities, to remember ancient cultural roots, and to restore our lost links with the environment. As the city of Amman spreads ever closer to Tall al'Umayri, and the Airport Highway carries its traffic in such close proximity, we must consider the transience of what we consider progress. And we must not let complacency to deprive current and future generations of the remnants of their timelessly layered identity.

Tall al'Umayri, like all of our cultural heritage, is a non-renewable resource that we must guard well. It is a vital part of our fragile heritage endowment and an asset that can generate both economic and social value, but only if properly managed. It is in this context that we must battle to save it. We cannot underestimate the urgency of acting now to save Tall al-'Umayri from damage and destruction as Amman spreads inexorably southwards. And we must ask ourselves, how harshly will our descendants judge us if we fail to secure the imprint of so many millennia of history?

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we all share a common anxiety over our threatened environment, our dwindling resources and our population growth, we should pause to remember that even the greatest civilisations can fall to the ravages of climate, conflict and economic greed. History and archaeology may not seem relevant to some when considering the pressing existential challenges that face us today. But, we would be foolish to ignore what archaeology can teach us – by learning the stories that come with the stones. This is what an invaluable resource like the archaeology of the Madaba Plains can provide for us –

It can unlock lost local knowledge systems, community wisdom, and cultural values that can do much to enrich our own lives. Indeed, discovering their secrets may help us to live in harmony with our environment and, indeed, with each other.

It is vital that we raise awareness now about Tall al-'Umayri and its rich cultural heritage, for both local and foreign visitors. We owe it not only to ourselves to preserve this great historical resource, but also to the world. For this is a treasure that we act as custodians of for the benefit of all mankind. Of course, a vital part of this essential process is to work with landowners and other stakeholders to ensure that they see that their interests are linked to ours. I believe that we can develop between us a range of solutions to ensure that all concerned parties are unified and satisfied that the correct procedures are being developed to protect all our interests. Indeed, the crucial lands of immediate concern are relatively small – just 10 hectares for the entire Tall occupation system, or two hectares for the acropolis alone.

[continued next page]



Our ultimate goal should be the creation and protection of an archaeological park that would be of international significance. Such a facility would provide an unprecedented opportunity for educational facilities for Jordanians and visitors who often know little about our Bronze and Iron Age heritage. This is a heritage that belongs to all humanity. However, it is our privilege to have custodianship over it.

The preservation of Tall al-`Umayri requires action and it demands the committed intervention of decision-makers, government officials and concerned citizens. Our ultimate goal is to obtain the site by agreement, and to present it by deed to the Department of Antiquities. This would enable the Madaba Plains Project to develop Tall al-`Umayri into the Raouf Abujaber Archaeological Park which would protect the site, maintain ongoing archaeological research, and present the site appropriately to visitors and researchers. To facilitate this would be a mark of our own civilization in acknowledging and preserving the civilizations of the past.

We must never take for granted the archaeological heritage that we have inherited in Jordan. For we live in an area of the world where humans have achieved great things over many millennia, and have left much material evidence to prove it. Great civilisations have blossomed and withered with staggering regularity and we have sometimes been blinded to the value of their archaeology remnants. As our own, modern civilisation in the wider Middle East is tested by conflict, corruption and social unrest, we must be careful not to ignore the achievements and warnings of past ages. We share our territory with the physical remnants of human ingenuity, of creativity and of a dogged determination to survive. But these abundant material remains of lost and faded communities are

also impressive reminders to us that we occupy our part of the earth, not as outright owners, but as custodians.

I would like to thank Douglas Clark, Director of the MPP-`Umayri excavation project, Sharifa Nofa Nasser, Director of the Jordan National Museum, and Monther Jamhawi, Director General of the Department of Antiquities, and Barbara Porter, Director of the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, for their dedication to this vital mission to save Tall al-`Umayri. I commend you all for your dedication to preserving and securing our national and global heritage. We must unite to ensure that we all become a small part of this site's long history, and not recorders of its demise.

More on "Saving Tall al-`Umayri"

At the end of the Jordan National Museum event, the two land owners, Dr. Raouf Abujaber and Mr. Jebriil Abu Aisha, each publically pledged JD500,000 (US\$700,000) worth of their land toward a joint effort to put the tell into the hands of the Department of Antiquities — owner donations, government land swaps, contributions. This represents about one tenth of the value of the land.

For a recent blog post on the website of the American Schools of Oriental Research, "Who Owns This Part of the Past? The Cultural Heritage of Tall al-`Umayri, Jordan in Jeopardy," visit: <http://asorblog.org/?p=6461>

For a recent article by La Sierra University publicist, Darla Martin-Tucker, "Jordan Museum Meeting Opens Door for Saving La Sierra Dig Site," visit: <http://www.lasierra.edu/article/jordan-museum-meeting-opens-door-for-saving-la-sierra-dig-site/>

Display Case

By Monique Vincent

The "Torpedo" Jar

This particular type of storage jar was known for heading off to sea! The "torpedo" jar – named for its shape – is found in the Iron IIB Period (8th century BC) primarily along the coastal areas of Israel and Lebanon. The jars were made predominantly by the Phoenicians, whose city-states – such as Tyre – controlled much of the maritime shipping at the time. Two shipwrecks held nearly 400 "torpedo" jars each, the uniquely-shaped jars efficiently fitting in the cargo hold. Tests on the jars showed that they contained wine, probably bound for Egypt. Some archaeologists have argued that the standardized jars were specially made so that traders could easily determine the volume of a jar by taking simple measurements based on the Egyptian cubit – an indication of the market to which the vessels were headed!



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Editor: Douglas Clark, Director CNEA
Contributor: Monique Vincent
Photographers: Mohammad Aadi &
Monique Vincent

Center for Near Eastern Archaeology
of the HMS Richards Divinity School
La Sierra University
951 785-2632 (CNEA)
archaeology@lasierra.edu
www.lasierra.edu/archaeology
www.facebook.com/CNEAatLSU

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Calendar of Events — 2014

- Mondays & Tuesdays — Labs open for volunteers
- AIA Riverside lectures at CNEA at 2 pm:
 - 30 March — Laws protecting Native American burials
 - 27 April — Imperial Cult at Corinth
 - 25 May — Aerial photography of the American Southwest
- 27 April — Archaeology Advisory Com.
- 14 May — Lecture on fakes and forgeries by Getty Villa/UCLA specialist
- 25 June-30 July — Excavations in Jordan
- 15-16 November — 6th annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend — Maritime Archaeology

OCCASIONALLY

- *Archaeology Adventures*
- *Archaeology Lectures*
- Check www.lasierra.edu/cnea for updates and future program details

To support the work of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology, contact the Office of University Advancement at 951 785-2500 or click on “Archaeology” at <https://www.lasierraconnect.org/give-now>

Recent Discoveries

Assembled by Monique Vincent

Pigs in the Past – A recent research project on the origins of pigs in Ancient Israel allocates them to the infamous Philistines. Pig remains tested today link genetically to European pig stock, unlike pigs in the rest of the Middle East. Archaeologists are interested in the intertwined history of pig husbandry and ethnic identity in the Iron Age, especially between the Philistines and Israelites. Read more at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/05/world/middleeast/pigs-in-israel-originated-in-europe-researchers-say.html>

Wine in Canaan – Last summer at Tel Kabri in Israel, archaeologists unearthed a wine cellar nearly 4000 years old. Located in a palace, the cellar contained 40 large jars. Tested on-site by a specialist in organic residues, the jars were found to have held a wine mixture that was closely followed in 38 of the jars. Ancient texts do record wine recipes, and with this modern analysis, this particular recipe may be reproducible. Read more at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/23/science/in-ruins-of-palace-a-wine-with-hints-of-cinnamon-and-top-notes-of-antiquity.html?_r=0

Moabites & Mesha – The CNEA’s own Chang-Ho Ji recently excavated a pedestal from his Iron Age site in Jordan, Khirbat Ataruz. This linked website provides a preliminary description of the pedestal and its inscription, with some background on previous Moabite inscriptions: <http://www.rollstonepigraphy.com/?p=631>