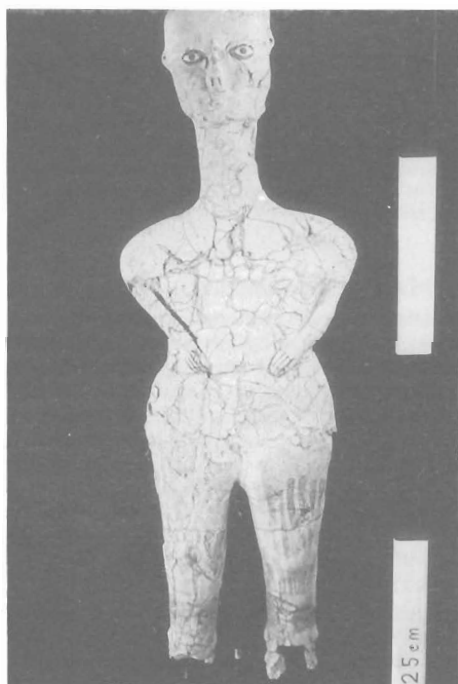


The American Center of Oriental Research in Jordan



9,000 year old plaster statue from 'Ain Ghazal,
Photo courtesy of Gary Rollefson.

Archaeology: Modern Lessons from Ancient Man

Throughout the world, archaeology can contribute to the balanced and humane development of contemporary societies by teaching us relevant lessons about the people, monuments and social systems of ancient civilizations. It is at once a scholarly discipline, a lynchpin of modern tourism development, and an ongoing chronicle of the glory, the technology and the ordinary daily habits of our ancestors. Archaeology has a particularly rich tale to recount in the Middle East, where human beings first farmed, domesticated animals, established villages, developed alphabets, smelted mineral ores to forge metal tools and implements, worshipped powerful gods and codified systems of law and morality which have endured for thousands of years. By documenting human development in the land of Jordan from the prehistoric and early historic periods, through the Classical era and into the Islamic Age, archaeology helps modern man appreciate his place in the human continuum.



Excavation of the North Theatre in Jerash. Photo courtesy of David McCreery.



Physical Anthropologist Michael Finnegan at work. Photo courtesy of Walter Rast and Thomas Schaub

The past two decades have seen Jordanian archaeology and ACOR mature in tandem, to assume respected positions in the world of ancient Near Eastern and Islamic scholarship. ACOR is the only purpose-built research center in the Arab World meeting the varied needs of archaeologists and other specialists from ASOR's 150 member institutions. In fact, what started primarily as an American-oriented center in Amman has expanded into a truly international endeavor: along with its core American and Jordanian efforts, ACOR regularly has funding, resident scholars, lecturers, project leaders and participants in public activities from over a score of countries in the Arab World, North America and Western Europe. Since the mid-1980s, the ACOR facilities have been used annually by scholars from an average of 50 American, 25 international and 10 Jordanian institutions.

ACOR Meets a Special Need

The scholarship, excitement and contemporary relevance of archaeology are nurtured by interaction among international archaeologists and other scholars, the public, and official and private sector institutions. The American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman, Jordan, was founded in 1968 as an offshoot of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) to address the needs of Jordanians and Americans who recognized the rich, largely untapped potential of Jordan's archaeological remains. Both people appreciated the possibilities of bringing together a new generation of trained Jordanian scholars with ASOR's established reputation in fieldwork, research and publication.

The founding of ACOR provided a base for American archaeologists in Jordan and other Arab states, and a focal point for cooperation among Jordanian, American and international archaeologists, historians, epigraphists and other scholars. Teams of American and Jordanian specialists, often with the cooperation of other nationals, regularly join forces on survey, excavation, conservation and reconstruction and other basic research projects in Jordan and neighboring Arab countries.

Sharing the Fruits of Research

ACOR's new building, on a hilltop opposite the University of Jordan, is among the most advanced and comprehensive archaeological research centers in the Middle East. It was inaugurated in July 1986 with three main aims: 1. to offer a base for visiting and resident scholars conducting research in Jordan and neighboring countries; 2. to provide technical resources, library facilities and public information programs which bring together Jordanian, American and international scholars on a year-round basis; and 3. to provide a forum for sharing the fruits of archaeological and historical research with a wider audience of scholars, students, official authorities and the public at large.

ACOR serves as a vital liaison between the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and international scholars interested in working in the Arab region, providing advice, coordination, supplies, equipment and a congenial, efficient meeting place for scholars and interested laymen from east and west. ACOR hosts youth groups from North America and Western Europe, and helps coordinate youth and student exchange programs involving Jordanian and North American students.

Facilities, Services and Activities

The five-storey ACOR building includes the following facilities: hostel rooms and apartments to accommodate 24 persons; a specialized archaeological library of 3,000 volumes and 3,200 volumes of 350 different periodicals, permanently open to the public for free and equipped with copy and stencil machines, reading and work areas and IBM, Apple and Wang personal computers; private offices for resident scholars (of whom there are an average of four/five in permanent residence at any time); facilities for drawing and drafting; a purpose-built, 90-seat lecture hall/seminar room with projection facilities; six laboratories/workshops for processing, analyzing and conserving archaeological/anthropological artifacts (space is designated for a permanent conservation/teaching lab, which awaits funding to be equipped); a fully equipped photographic dark-room; storage space for excavated artifacts; and a small permanent archaeological exhibition in glass display cases. Equipment available for rental by archaeological expeditions in Jordan includes jeeps and pick-up trucks, camping gear, excavation materials, and surveying, mapping, photography and video equipment.

In addition to pursuing their own research, the ACOR Director, Annual Professor, Shell Fellow, NEH Fellows and other resident scholars teach short courses and workshops, organise small exhibitions, and give public lectures at ACOR; lecture and teach at the University of Jordan and Yarmouk University; and lead fieldtrips in Jordan and throughout the region. Since 1985, ACOR has used equipment donated by USIA to document new archaeological excavations in Jordan on video film; it has built up a substantial video library of training and documentary materials which will serve students and archaeologists for many years to come.



Youth Exchange & Yarmouk University students at Abu Thuwab. Photo courtesy of Zeidan Kafafi.

Redressing the Research Balance

ACOR is actively helping to promote a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of ancient Middle Eastern cultures by focusing special attention on two periods in Jordan that had,

until recently, been insufficiently addressed by international scholars: the Islamic and the Prehistoric eras. Jordan has a rich material and architectural record of Prehistoric cultures dating back nearly a million years, which is being pieced together through surveys and excavations throughout the country. The development of semi-arid desert economies, agricultural villages, the birth of urbanism and the rise of civilization, are all aspects of research projects in which ACOR has participated, covering the Bronze, Iron, Persian, Greco-Roman, Nabataean and Byzantine periods. ACOR scholars have conducted surveys of pre-Islamic Thamudic and Safaitic inscriptions, and worked on projects at several major Islamic sites such as Kharana Castle, Umm el-Jimal, Aqaba, Ayyubid-Mamluke sugar mill sites in the Jordan Rift Valley, and the Mamluke iron mines in the Ajlun Mountains.



Sharing the thrill of discovery with local youngsters. Photo courtesy of Moawiyah Ibrahim.

Archaeology and Modern Jordan

Archaeological studies can often be directly relevant to modern development, given the fact that both ancient and contemporary inhabitants of Jordan have had to address recurring issues of land use, water conservation, ecological balance and appropriate construction techniques. ACOR scholars often volunteer for emergency excavations of antiquities which are frequently unearthed during construction work. Archaeological sites which are excavated and restored are an important economic asset; they form the heart of the tourism industry, which is one of Jordan's most important foreign exchange earners.

On another level, the information gleaned from the ancient inhabitants of the land can help promote rational and sustainable development policies in today's world. Archaeologists have shown, for example, how a 5,000-year-old water catchment system can be reconstructed for use in the arid basalt desert of east Jordan. Archaeo-botanists have shown that some crops which were cultivated and exported in antiquity can be exploited again today, while archaeo-metallurgists have documented ancient copper and iron mining activity which may once again generate export earnings for Jordan. Examination

of earthquake damage in antiquity, and of the construction techniques which ancient people used to strengthen their dwellings and public buildings, has provided valuable information for engineers designing modern structures, such as bridges and dams.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan and Prince Raad visiting ACOR.
Photo courtesy of Lawrence Geraty.

A Question of Time

Brisk development and widespread construction throughout the Middle East are putting tremendous pressure on archaeological sites which are accidentally unearthed all the time. It is a constant race to excavate threatened sites and recover their cultural artifacts for future study. ACOR is actively involved in salvage excavations and the field training of young Jordanians and other Arab and foreign nationals who appreciate the value of non-renewable cultural resources. ACOR recently published a booklet, in Arabic and English, outlining the compatibility of modern development with the study of ancient remains, and how the two processes can go hand-in-hand for the collective benefit of scholars, national authorities and commercial contractors. Training, education and public service are among the most important on-going activities at ACOR, and perhaps the most satisfying and visible manner in which Jordanians, Americans and others work together on a daily basis to glean a better understanding of our common cultural and material heritage.

The latest endeavor in this field was a Cultural Resources Management Project launched in late 1987 in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities and with funding from the United States Agency for International Development. It seeks to develop closer coordination among archaeologists, private contractors, government agencies, the media and schools -- to heighten awareness of Jordan's antiquities, study and preserve as many as possible of the sites which are accidentally unearthed during construction work, and enhance public understanding of Jordan's ancient heritage by developing linkages among archaeological fieldwork, scholars, the media and primary and secondary schools.

How You Can Help

ACOR is a private, non-profit research and educational institution which depends heavily on contributions from foundations, corporations, government agencies, members and individuals. Over 50% of annual operating expenses come from private contributions, and all the funds for the construction and equipping of the new ACOR building have been raised from contributors in the United States, Jordan, Great Britain and Canada. Nearly \$2 million in contributions have been raised for the new center, but another \$1 million are needed to complete the furnishings, endow new research fellowships and liquidate construction loans.

By contributing to ACOR's efforts, you can help assure the continuation of ACOR's quality work, the promotion of fruitful American-Jordanian cooperation, and the safeguarding of irreplaceable remains of ancient human development in the Middle East.

In Jordan, ACOR is registered as a non-profit society, and gifts within Jordan are tax deductible. In the United States, ACOR is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) organization, and donations can be deducted as charitable contributions under federal law. Unrestricted gifts are particularly valuable for both current programs and future projects, though you can also contribute to specific projects or facilities.

To make gifts of cash or securities, or for additional information, write:

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Student volunteers from Yarmouk University & ACOR working on rescue project. Photo courtesy of Zeidan Kafafi.