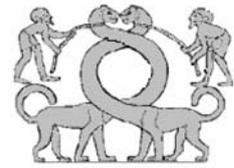




Online Edition



Damqātum

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**Centro de Estudios
de Historia del
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(CEHAO)**

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Faculty of Philosophy
and Arts
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Argentina

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scientific organization

Director

Roxana Flammini

Secretary

Santiago Rostom
Maderna

Damqātum

Editor

Juan Manuel Tebes

Co-Editors

Virginia Laporta

Romina Della Casa

Collaborators

Graciela Gestoso Singer

Eugenia Minolli

Francisco Céntola

Jorge Cano

Julieta Beccar

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Address:

Av. Alicia Moreau de
Justo 1500 P.B.

C1107AFD Buenos Aires
Argentina

Tel: (54-11) 4349-0200
ext. 1189

Website:

www.uca.edu.ar/cehao

Email:

cehao_uca@yahoo.com.ar

Those interested in sending
articles and news please mail to:
cehao_uca@yahoo.com.ar

Top Article:

Discovering and Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Interview with Émile Puech

By Virginia Laporta & Eugenia Minolli

For more than 30 years, Émile Puech, a world expert in Qumran paleography and CNRS senior researcher, has been sorting, identifying, assembling and editing thousands of fragments of scrolls. He is the main co-editor of the Cave 4 scrolls and directs the journal *Revue de Qumran*. Last year he came to Buenos Aires to present the new edition of Dead Sea Scrolls (in Spanish). It was a great pleasure to receive him in the CEHAO and had the opportunity to do this interview.

Taking into account that your academic formation was based not only on history of religion but also on theology, we wonder why you chose both of them, which seem rather alike.

When I began my studies in theology, I believed that I needed to know as much as possible the ancient texts, and the inscriptions that were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and in many others Semitic languages. So this was why I studied the ancient languages.

Also, understanding these ancient periods, their ideas and beliefs requires knowing



Émile Puech, Roxana Flammini and Santiago Rostom Maderna in the CEHAO

about the surroundings and the history of the land in which the books of the Bible (Old and New Testament) were written. And, in order to do that, I needed to know history of religion, first. After knowing the languages, the history of the place and of the religion, you can begin some reflection on theology.

I was sent with a scholarship to the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem to work on the third part of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* that Ernest Renan (1823-1892) started in the nineteenth century. I began that and after

two years in Jerusalem I was asked to do something else, to help to decipher the manuscripts of Qumran. This was not in my previous program, but, still, I became director of many things in this field and director of the *Revue de Qumran*, the review on these studies with its center in France. Taking into account that one researcher cannot stay in only one team, I compromised with different fields of study beyond the *Corpus*, epigraphy, archaeology, biblical studies and ancient history.

Would you tell us how the
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discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was? How did they come to light in the first place?

The discovery began in the spring of 1947. It was an occasional finding by Bedouins Ta'amireh living in that area. But, some months later, the war between Arabs and Jews began there and this stopped, of course, many things. After that, with the end of the British mandate, in 1948, the UN created two separate states, Israel and Palestine, but Palestine never became a reality. During a period of no fighting, the Bedouins sold their discoveries to an "antiquarian" in Bethlehem who bought the manuscripts. And, when the first ones were deciphered, in the 1950s, Professor Eleazar Sukenik (1889-1953) of the Hebrew University said: "these might belong to the Essenes;" which became something new, because the Essenes were then only known by Flavius Josephus and some other ancient authors.

That was how the interest for the scrolls began. After that, the Bedouins tried to do more discoveries because they became famous and that was important for their profit. They were looking for more caves south and they found caves in Murabba'ât wadi in 1951. Having excavated Cave One in February 1949, the École Biblique went to dig the Caves found by the Bedouins at Murabba'ât. During this time in January 1952, Bedouins came back to the Qumran area and found Cave Two, which the École excavated just after. With that excavation, the École found Cave Three with the Copper scrolls, some more fragments, and other caves but without manuscripts all along the cliffs. In the meantime, Bedouins found more manuscripts near En Gedi, in the South, and they brought them to the market in July 1952. At the end of August, Bedouins came to Jerusalem with more fragments of manuscripts to sell them. The École asked them where the manuscripts came from and they said that they were from a Cave in the marl terrace, not in the main hills. When the École excavated that Cave Four, they found more manuscripts and also discovered Cave Five, thinking that it was all done. But more manuscripts came to the Jerusalem market from the Bedouins who knew that they were coming from another Cave, Six. Each winter, since 1952, the École spent time in Qumran digging the ruins, not far away from the caves. It is the only period when you can excavate because it is not too hot neither too cold, in the middle of nowhere. In the winter of 1955, Roland de Vaux (1903-1971) found Cave Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten, with some remains. In the winter of 1956, an earthquake happened, as always in that area, but harsher this time and opened a cave that was not explored, yet containing jars with scrolls. So, de Vaux went again to excavate it and name this cave as Cave Eleven, the last one in the area. This is the story of the discovery, Bedouins and excavators, all together.

How did the scrolls survive for so many years?

It was because the area is very dry and the scrolls were, at

least some of them, in Caves One and Eleven, in jars. Except that the permeability of the walls caused some scrolls to be rotten by humidity. The ones that were not in the jars were much more disintegrated, especially those in Caves Four, Five, Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten. They were in the marl terrace; the earth from the roof and from the walls fell down and there was nothing to protect them from humidity and from insects, which consumed them. That is why they were more destroyed, and more fragmented.

The discovery of the twentieth century is the third one known by sources: the first one was done in the third century AD, during the time of the Roman Emperor Caracalla and the great philosopher and exegete Origen from Alexandria and Caesarea, who copied some of them in his books, the Hexapla. The second one was in the end of the eighth century when many fragments from scrolls were found in the area of Jericho. We know that from the Syriac letter of Patriarch Timotheus I to his Metropolitte Serge from Elam, who said that scrolls were found in a cave in the mountains near Jericho. And copies of these manuscripts were found in 1892 in the Karaite synagogue of Cairo. This group of Jews maintained that all the commandments handed down to Moses were recorded in the written Torah at Mount Sinai, without any additional Oral Law or explanation. As a result, Karaite Jews do not accept as binding the written collections of the oral tradition in the Mishnah and Talmud. They originally came from Baghdad but then, some of them came to Jerusalem and went to Cairo. The third discovery is that of the twentieth century. Nowadays, we have the labs, where we can tell for instance that we are not the first ones to do some excavation and findings in the caves, which is interesting.

Why was the École Biblique et Archéologique Française of Jerusalem one of the first groups that were allowed to study the Dead Sea Scrolls? How did the scrolls end up there?

It is easy because the French school was the main scholarly school in biblical archaeology in Jerusalem at that time. And after 1948, it belonged to East Jerusalem in the occupied territories to which belongs also the site of Qumran. It is why the Department of Archaeology of Amman asked the École to do the excavations of the site and of the caves.

Nowadays there are other schools that study the Scrolls. When did the original situation change?

In the beginning, in the First Cave, the scrolls found by the Bedouins and sold in the market were in many pieces. When they opened the jars and took out the linen, some fragments of the seven scrolls fell down and were forgotten by the Bedouins. When the École excavated the cave, these fragments were found. Professor Dominique Barthélemy and Josef Milik published the remains of 74 manuscripts. They spent two or three years finishing the publication and could prove the provenience of the scrolls. During this time, with Roland de Vaux they participated also in the excavations of the caves discovered by the Bedouins, finding Cave Three,

which they dug, so they had to stop the publication of Cave One. They always had something else to do, and many things at the same time. The Palestine Archaeological Museum did the infrared photographs of the material but there were dozens of thousand of fragments. That is why De Vaux tried to organize an inter-confessional team to study them. Because the fragments were sold by the Bedouins in the market, they became more and more expensive. And when the Department of Antiquities of Jordan had no more money for that purpose, other scientific institutions were asked for help to buy the scrolls. That is the reason why the Vatican Library and schools in Oxford, Manchester, Heidelberg and others countries gave money in exchange of sending a young scholar to work. That was how the international and inter-confessional team was built and why it was composed by three French scholars, two Americans, two English and one German.

Was there any strange theory about them? And if so, what was its repercussion to the scientific research of the scrolls?

In that period, in the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, when the manuscripts were better known, many theories appeared, each one trying to achieve something different, trying to find the "last solution". It was a kind of a competition between scholars. One English scholar called John Allegro did a lot of lectures in England with the BBC. He did also a quick and bad publication of the fragments he was in charge of, and as a result, he even wrote that Jesus was crucified on a mushroom in a shape of a cross and that the Christians were hallucinating. Afterwards, he was left aside by his team and refuted also by his colleagues. But, in that time, he sold well his book because it was something new. People are always interested in new and strange things.

Lot of marketing...

Yes, of course. I am not looking for any other profit that finding the truth about the scrolls. In the 1990s, people said that the manuscripts had nothing to do with the Essenes, that it was something of the Middle Ages, and came from the antiquities market, that it was not important. So, more theories began to arise. There are, at least, sixteen or seventeen theories about the Qumran settlement. But the one proposed in the beginning by de Vaux and his team is still the best one. I think we have some proofs now with the excavations and texts.

People look always for something new and scholars need something new to sell. So they look for it. They look for a title. It is a way of selling papers. It becomes sometimes a business.

Do you think that the content of the scrolls is important for non-scholar Christians?

Of course, because the scrolls that were found there are the remains of most of the books of the Bible, and also others that we did not know except partly from translations and translations of translations. Many of them are special

compositions by the Essenes but all the compositions are from the time before Jesus. I think the last one is from around 50 B.C. The only one, the copper scroll, is from 68 A.D., but it has nothing to do with religion. It mentions items that were hidden in caves at the time when the Romans came to destroy Jerusalem.

The scrolls are very important because they are the only manuscripts we have that come from the third, second and first century B.C. With them, we can know something about the cultural background, language and beliefs, from a society that is not mentioned in the Biblical books.

Now we know better the way of life among the Essenes in this country at that time and we can better understand what the expectations of the people living at that time were, when Jesus was speaking to people, to the crowds, etc., what he was teaching them. We can compare and see what is new in his message. Besides, the manuscripts can let us know what life was like by the time Jesus lived.

And this, of course, is unique because there is no distortion by modern people or modern theories. We have 'original' texts, destroyed, but still with some remains. I think it is very important because nowadays the people want to know, to touch History and they do not want theories, they want to know. Believe or not believe, that is something of faith. This is something else. With these discoveries, we have no contradiction and we cannot say that we have nothing. We have something. You can escape, you can put part of our history aside but you are not being fair because it exists.

In your opinion, what is the best way to reach the non-scholar Christians?

I think that we have first to finish publishing the scrolls and studying them better. But, now, what we have to do is to translate them into modern languages, Hebrew, Arabic, etc. Sometimes, we can restore some scrolls by overlapping parts, and better understand a fragmentary text. Actually, we have a complete biblical codex, the *Leningrad Codex*, of 1009 A.D., that is the basis of our Bibles. But now, with the scrolls, we have remains of texts from the first and second century B.C. So, at least a thousand years separate the *Codex* from the scrolls and we have seen that there are some differences in the transcript between them. Before having these copies of biblical book, we were unable to compare them and judge the transmission of the codex.

For instance, when Matthew or Luke refer to the Old Testament, you go to the Hebrew or Greek translations and you cannot always find what they are referring to, thinking that it is perhaps because they have changed some words. Nowadays, we can prove that this was not exactly what it happened. Different texts are a possibility. Because we have sometimes differences in Hebrew or Greek copies at the same time in the same country, which can be explained by different

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scribal schools, transmissions, etc. And this means that Matthew or Luke were more precise and faithful than we suspected. Now we can show and prove that there were different copies in Palestine and Alexandria. The Gospels were not invented by people who knew nothing. They knew not only by hard but also in a good way. Now we can answer some of the questions by the exegetes and textual criticism. We have matter to think now. We have to study more and do theology. What was not done or possible in the past, we now have to do it. It is very interesting and exciting.

Do you think that this kind of mistakes or these new findings can endanger the faith?

No. That is always a question. They cannot endanger. On the contrary, these new findings enforce the history and the beliefs. This discovery is important. Faith cannot be endangered because these documents belong to a time before Jesus Christ. There are many copies that are not well preserved or with orthographic variants or even more important ones. The most important is to have

testimonies of the existence of this kind of books; before we had nothing. So, it is a matter that science did not invalidate faith.

It is clear that you have enjoyed your work on the scrolls up until now. Do you have any plans for future work?

There are too many and I am sure that I will not be able to fulfill all of them. My plan in the near future is to do the official publication of the Aramaic fragments of the *Book of Enoch*. Many manuscripts of the last centuries in Ethiopic language have been preserved, sometime with some differences and these are copies of translations from the Greek version which was, at the same time, a translation of the Aramaic text. Now, with the Qumran scrolls, we have at least remains of nine copies in Aramaic, but only very fragmentary. So, my work now is to publish these fragments in an academic way, because the person who was in charge, and published some of them, died years ago and some fragments were not properly published.

Then, I want to work on pieces of much earlier inscriptions, in Jordan. This is

something quite different, dated from the eighth century BC. We are also preparing a *Lexicon*, a Hebrew-Aramaic dictionary of Qumran texts with a German team. After that, I plan to write some commentaries about these texts. You have to change your mind when you are working with Semitic languages, to try to know how the way the people were thinking, their way of life, their beliefs, etc. And, in that way, you can understand better the language.

Is this one of the most amazing points?

Yes, because if you do not think about that, you are quickly lost. It seems to be almost nothing, but it is very important to know where I am and where the civilizations in that period were, in all the Middle East. That is the way. And in that way you can try to understand where they were, what they were looking for, what were they hoping for, and so on. If not, what to do with fragments? Doing so, you try to complete something for the research and the knowledge of the past and of our history ■

Revision: Émile Puech, Juan Manuel Tebes.

Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections



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News from the CEHAO Members

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

ASOR (American Schools of Oriental Research) Annual Meeting, New Orleans-LA, 18th – 22nd November 2009.



Dr. Roxana Flammini, the Director of the *Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente* (CEHAO) UCA attended the ASOR Annual Meeting. The annual meeting is ASOR's and its affiliated research centers focal event of the year. Approximately 750 scholars, students, and interested members of the public came together for 3 intensive days of academic lectures, poster presentations, business meetings, evening receptions, and general conversation. If you are interested in the latest news from excavations and historical research in the eastern Mediterranean, this is the event to attend. Last November, Dr. Flammini integrated in the comision about "Egypt and Canaán I". Her dissertation was titled "The Egyptianizing Features of the Middle Bronze II Byblian Dynasty as Elite Emulation Practice".

Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting New Orleans-LA, 21st – 24th November 2009.

The Director of the CEHAO, Dr. Roxana Flammini, was in the SBL Annual Meeting, where free online publication of **Monografías sobre el Antiguo Oriente/Ancient Near East Monographs** was inaugurated. The focus of this ambitious series is on the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel and its literature, from the early Neolithic to the early Hellenistic eras.

This series is the ideal place to publish for authors and editors who wish their work to be widely read. Works published in the series are (and will remain permanently) open access. This ensures the widest possible readership for these works. Multiple author and edited volumes as well as monographs are accepted. Proposals and manuscripts may be submitted in either English or Spanish. Manuscripts are peer reviewed by at least two scholars in the area before acceptance. Published volumes will be held to the high scholarly standards of the SBL and the Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente. The partnership between the SBL and the Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente was initiated under the auspices of SBL's International Cooperation Initiative (ICI) and represents the type of international scholarly exchange that is the goal of ICI.

Please contact General Co-editors: Ehud Ben Zvi (ehud.ben.zvi@ualberta.ca), Roxana Flammini (roxflamm@yahoo.com.ar), or Billie Jean Collins (billie.collins@sbl-site.org).



THESIS DEFENSES

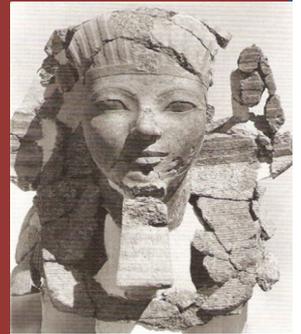
VIRGINIA LAPORTA

Considerations on the Legitimacy of the Royal Figure of Hatshepsut (ca. 1479-1425 BC)

(Original language: Spanish). Thesis, Licenciature in History. Approved and defended orally at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina-History Department, on 9th November 2009. Director: Dr. Roxana Flammini

Summary

This study analyses different aspects of legitimacy in the royal figure of the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut (Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1550-1295 BC) and her role in the wider spectrum of the whole dynasty. The reasons behind the enthronement of this queen as a legitimate “King” of Egypt were approached from different aspects. This thesis especially added to the analysis an anthropological and symbolic bias. Thus, and first of all, it started from considering the Egyptian way of thought; the particular situation of the court during that period (i.e. the lack of a male and adult heir to the throne; the increasing role of the “chief wife of the King;” and the emergence of the Thutmoseidic dynastic line); and the role of Egyptian queens who were predecessors of Hatshepsut. As a result, three ontological changes in the figure of the queen are distinguished, clearly related to the particular historical situation of the Eighteenth Dynasty: first, her divine birth as “son of Amun-Re;” second, her coronation as “Maat-ka-Re;” and finally, the erasing of her memory as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt.”



ROMINA DELLA CASA

A Symbolic Interpretation of Space in Hittite Myth, Treaties, and Instructions (ca. 1450-1300 BC.)

(Original language: Spanish). Thesis, Licenciature in History. Approved and defended orally at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina-History Department, on 14th May 2010. Director: Dr. Roxana Flammini

Summary.

Last May 14th, at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina, Romina Della Casa defended her graduate Thesis on Ancient History. In order to undertake *A Symbolic Interpretation of Space in Hittite Myth, Treaties, and Instructions (ca. 1450-1300 BC.)*, Della Casa made a selection of Hittite documents: three versions of the *Telipinu Myth (CTH 324)*, the *Treaties between Šuppiluliuma I of Hatti and Niqmaddu II of Ugarit*, and between *Šuppiluliuma I of Hatti and Aziru of Amurru (CTH 46 and CTH 49)*, and the *Instructions to Provincial Governor (CTH 261)*. Such documents were analyzed within the creation of a theoretical framework centered on the different contributions by the History of Comparative Religion, Human Geography, Symbolic Hermeneutic, and Symbolic Anthropology. Moreover, during her defense, and after having considered two particular historic and sociological situations of the analyzed period of time, during which these documents were put down into writing (Arnuwanda I's kingship, ca. 1400–1370 B. C. and Šuppiluliuma I's kingship, ca. 1350–1322 B.C.), Della Casa concluded that: the *Telipinu Myth* evokes a spatial symbolism very frequently associated with the destruction and construction of sacred spaces; and that the Hittites used these sacred narratives to solve sociological and historical situations during which Hatti's territory suffered significant modification (by expansion or decrease). Furthermore, she pointed out that the *Instructions to Provincial Governor* reveal an understanding of the Northern border with the Kaška societies as a threshold space (or *liminar*); and, finally, that the Hittite *treaties* with the kings of Ugarit and Amurru show the symbolic integration of such entities (considered as symbolically ordered territories) into the Hittite cosmic space.



The Uluburun shipwreck and the exchange system in the Eastern Mediterranean

The wreck at Uluburun (near Kas, in Turkey) represents the greatest hoard of artifacts from the Late Bronze period. The ship's cargo comprised raw materials and manufactured goods from the Levant. The shipwreck near Uluburun is a microcosm of the new "exchange system of long distance" in the Eastern Mediterranean. Archaeological finds relating to the sinking ship at Uluburun (Kas) (Turkey) prove the existence of different circuits of exchange of metals (copper and tin ingots and bronze weights) and prestige goods (aromatic resins and scented oils) who linked Crete and Mycenae (in the Aegean world), Ura and Uluburun (in Anatolia), Enkomi and Kition (in Cyprus), Ugarit and Byblos (in Syria), Ashkelon and Ashdod (in Canaan) and ports of the Nile Delta (in Egypt) during the XIV century BCE. Dr. Graciela Gestoso Singer spoke about the ship, its chronology, its route, the nationality of the ship, its crew, its cargo, and the circuits of exchange of prestige goods and raw materials.



El Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente (CEHAO) de la UCA invita a la conferencia sobre:

El barco naufragado en Uluburun y el sistema de intercambios en el Mediterráneo Oriental

Dra. Graciela Gestoso Singer (UCA/Unesco)

La entrada es libre y gratuita

Lunes 8 de marzo, 16 horas

Para mayor información:
cehao_uca@yahoo.com.ar
filosofia_evo@uca.edu.ar
Tel: 4338 - 0789

Universidad Católica Argentina
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras—Departamento de Historia
Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente (CEHAO)
Edificio San Alberto Magno
Alicia M. de Justo 1500, 1er. Piso (esq. Chile).
Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires



THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
IN THE 12th-10th CENTURIES BCE: CULTURE AND HISTORY
2010 INTERNATIONAL MEETING



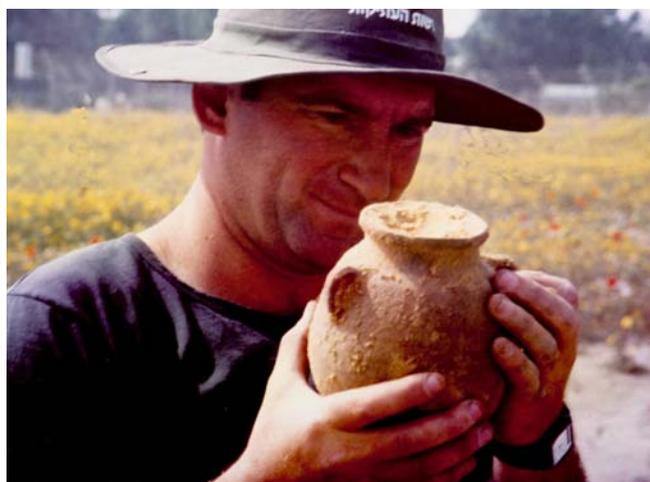
University of Haifa, 2-5 May 2010

Organizing committee: Prof. Gershon Galil (chair), Prof. Aren Maeir, Dr. Ayelet Gilboa, Dr. Dan'el Kahn

Profiles

Amir Gorzalczany

Israeli archaeologist, born in Argentina. Studied Archaeology and History of the Land of Israel in the Avshalom Institute of Tel Aviv; BA in Archaeology, Biblical History and Art in Ancient Near East (Ben Gurion University of the Negev); MA in Archaeology (Tel Aviv University); currently PhD studies in Archaeology (Tel Aviv University); Excavator and Researcher at Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA); Academic Supervisor at the Central District of IAA; Member of the Editorial Board of *Antiguo Oriente* (Publication of CEHAO, Argentine Catholic University); Member of the Committee of the Millennium Scientific Initiative of the Planning Ministry of Chile; Member of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Association of Israel (MEISAI); Former Researcher at the Excavations and Surveys Branch of IAA; Former Tel Aviv District Archaeologist; Former Antiquities Inspector of the Tel Aviv District and Rehovot Sub-district; Director of more than 50 salvage archaeological excavations on behalf of IAA.



Research Interests

Archaeology of Israel and adjacent areas in the Bronze and Iron Ages; Technology of pottery industry and pottery kilns; Islamic Archaeology (Early Islamic Period in Israel); Funerary customs (Islamic period); Archaeology of Ramla; Aqueducts; Stone quarries; Burial customs (Chalcolithic Period); Petrographic analysis of pottery.

Main past projects

Excavations at Tel Michal (1996); Sarafand el-Khareb (1995); Hellenistic site of Tel Qasileh (1995; 1997; 1999); The Gezer - Ramla Aqueduct (2001; 2006); Chalcolithic cemetery of Palmahim (2005); 'Ein Tut (2005); Matzliah (Ramla South 2004-2008); Jaffa (2003-2004; 2006); Horbat Gilan (2002-2003); Landscape Archaeology Project in Regavim (2002-2003); Baqa el-Gharabbiah Area (Cross Israel Road Project) (2002-2003); Lod Mosaic (2009).

Ongoing projects

Report of the excavations in the area of Matzliah (Ramla South); Petrographic analysis of coarse pottery from the Persian Period in Israel; Industry (glass, pottery, metallurgy, dye, and oil) in the Early Islamic Period in Israel.

Links in Internet

http://www.antiquities.org.il/personal_cv_eng.asp?id=7 (CV)

http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/index_eng.asp (Publications)

Graciela Gestoso Singer

Treasures of Ancient Syria – Qatna Kingdom Exhibition

For the first time in Europe, Landesmuseum Württemberg in Stuttgart stages a major exhibition of treasures from the forgotten kingdom of Qatna, the modern Tell el-Mishrife, an archaeological site in the Wadi il-Aswad, a tributary of the Orontes, 18 km northeast of the Syrian central city Homs, Syria. It consists in a tell occupying 1 km², which makes it one of the largest Bronze Age towns in western Syria.

Tell-el-Mishrife was excavated between 1924–1927 and 1929 by Robert du Mesnil du Boisson while Syria was a French protectorate. He uncovered parts of the Bronze Age Royal palace, three gates and tombs on the slope between the upper and lower town. The Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities excavated on the central hill and the gates. In 1999 excavations have been resumed by the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities, the National Museum of Damascus, the University of Udine and the University of Tübingen.

The excavation of the palace created a sensation in 2002: a 40-m-long corridor leading downwards from the ceremonial hall gave access to an intact royal burial chamber containing over 2000 artifacts: weapons, garment trimmings, furniture ornaments and gold jewelry with precious stones, fabrics decorated with purple, cylinder seals and other precious findings from the royal tomb.

The remains of the palace contained Cypriot imported ceramics dating from the Middle Bronze Age. The find of a 12th Dynasty Egyptian sphinx belonging to Princess Ita, daughter of Amenemhat II (1875–1840 BCE) shows early Egyptian influence, although it is not clear at what time the sphinx got to Qatna (the sphinx was found within the debris of the Late Bronze Age palace). The new excavations have yielded locally made ceramics from the Old Syrian (2000–1550 BCE) and Middle Syrian (1550–1200 BCE) period.

In 2002, a basalt statue was found in a Late Bronze Age I rubbish pit (1600–1400 BCE). It wears the typical 'Syrian coat' with thick borders that is normally taken as a sign of Royalty and might thus represent a yet nameless king of Qatna.

In a subterranean corridor under the 'Hall of the Throne', 63 cuneiform tablets have been discovered in 2002. They were covered by the burned remains of several roof beams. Maybe they were hidden during the Hittite invasion. The texts probably belong to the archive of King Idanda and contain both intelligence reports on the (desperate) political situation in northern Syria, the Hittite threat and domestic and administrative texts. The texts are written in a mixture of the Akkadian and Hurrian languages.



© Photo: Günther Mirsch (website, University of Tübingen)

The excavation team working under archaeologist Prof. Dr. Peter Pfälzner (IANES, University of Tübingen) has just discovered a new burial chamber containing spectacular new artifacts in Qatna (pers. comm. congress, Stuttgart, October 2009).

Adornment with two duck heads and a Hathor mask (Qatna, Royal Tomb). National Museum of Damascus.
© Photo: Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart.



With great effort it was possible to retrieve these treasures, which have been undiscovered in the ground for over 3000 years and are now on display from 17 October 2009 to 14 March 2010 in an excellent and sophisticated presentation with modern media and reconstructions occupying an exhibition area of over 1000 m².

For further information:

<http://www.landmuseum-stuttgart.de/qatna/index.php> (Exhibition)

<http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/uni/qvo/highlights/h23-syrien.html> (German mission, University of Tübingen).

<http://www.qatna.org/> (Italian Archeological Expedition, University of Udine).

Graciela Gestoso Singer