

NEWSLETTER

The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum

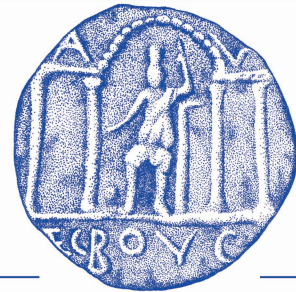


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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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Ataruz Lecture

On Nov 13, 2019, Drs. Chang-Ho Ji and Stefanie Elkins-Bates presented important data and finds from the site of Khirbet Ataruz in an illustrated lecture for the Horn Museum Lectureship Series entitled “Khirbet Ataruz, Omri, Mesha, Temples and Wars.”

The site of Khirbet Ataruz is located where a number of ancient roads crossed, on the western slope of the Jabal Hamidah ridge, 13 km NW of Dibon and 0.8 km NE of Machaerus. While the site is steep on the east side, it was nevertheless originally approached on this same side. Khirbet Ataruz is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as Ataroth in Num 32:3, 34, and is also a prominently mentioned site in Lines 10-14 of the Mesha Inscription (ca. 845-40 BC). There it is noted that the Israelite tribe of Gad had lived in the land for a long time, with the king of Israel rebuilding the city, before it was taken in battle by the Moabites, who killed its population, and brought the hearth of *DWD* before Kemosh, their God.

After 20 years of excavation at the site, a tentative stratigraphy of eight strata from the early Iron Age IIA to modern times is suggested, with Stratum 7 (late Iron Age IIA from the 9th-8th century BC) and Stratum 6 (transitional Iron Age IIA/B from the 8th century BC) the focus of this lecture. Excavation at the site has revealed that the Omrides constructed several public buildings including temples and palaces, typical of the architecture style used at sites in Cis-jordan, when they had control of the city. The site is surrounded by either a city, or possibly a “temenos,” wall, with a dry moat around the entire site. There is a temple in Field A on the acropolis, containing a platform and standing stone, with a small sanctuary and outer courtyard in Field E, to its east. The city gate was probably located on the east side, possibly near a “monumental” staircase in Field G, below the acropolis temple.

(cont'd on p. 2)



Dr. Chang-Ho Ji.

Dr. Ji has separated out three phases of the Temple Complex: 1) is a pre-Omride (Gadite) phase dating to the late 10th- early 9th centuries BC, 2) an early-mid 9th century BC, Omride phase, which was the zenith of building activities, when the entire site was possibly rebuilt as a temple. This temple was later destroyed by fire, leaving a ca. 15 cm layer of ash, and 3) a Moabite phase dating to the late 9th- early 8th centuries BC.

A standing stone on top of a pedestal in the cultic niche in the sanctuary room was a main feature of the Phase I temple complex.

In Phase II of the temple complex a number of cultic installations and artifacts have been found, including a terracotta four-horned altar and a storage jar with bulls heads from the main sanctuary room, a room with two altars, another room with a hearth and benches or offer-tory tables, two high places (eastern and western), reached by five and four steps respectively, five altars in the inner courtyard, a bull statue in the rectangular room, as well as a cistern with a bull figure with sun disc between his horns, molded near the opening. On the perimeter (Field E) of the temple complex, another sanctuary with a low platform and an altar on top, was found. A single step leads up to the platform, with a small column on either side, on which one bore an inscription. In the courtyard in front of the platform three small offering tables were found as well as a hearth. Two adjacent rooms served as a niche room and kitchen, the latter with store jars, cooking pots, animal bones and ash on its four beaten earth floors.

Phase III consisted of a smaller area within the sanctuary in Field E. Its builders reused the platform and the offering tables and fireplace of its courtyard. In addition, portable altars and other cultic objects, including a cup and saucer stand, a kernos, and a five-spouted lamp were found in this non-monumental, broad-room sanctuary. An incense burner and an inscribed altar with two inscriptions were also located in the sanctuary. Inscription A has 3 lines and lists two



Model Shrines and Bull Jar discussed in the article.

quantities (8 and 2 = 10) of bronze taken as plunder. Inscription B has 4 lines and says:

“4 + 60 from the Hebrews ... and 4,000 foreign men were scattered and abandoned in great number from the desolate city ... which ... a burnt offering/incense altar acquired/acquiring land ...”

The square-rim Moabite-style cooking pots and the Moabite script on the two short inscriptions indicate that the city was under Moabite control at this time. Based on Inscription B, it would seem that the Phase III Moabite sanctuary was a “victory shrine” that commemorated their defeat over the city of Ataruz, as reflected in Lines 10-14 of the Mesha Inscription.

In summary, based on the numerous public structures and cultic remains, it would appear that Ataruz was a “Holy City” focusing on two main deities, represented by the bull and the sun disc.

The second part of this lecture was by Dr. Stefanie Elkins-Bates, who noted that eight architectural models have been found in the sanctuary complex in Field A, at Ataruz. These models represent miniature buildings or structures such as temples, towers, or houses, all of which have at least one architectural element, such as a doorway, window, cornice, or

façade that can be identified. These models can be divided into two sub-categories consisting of a model shrine or a cult stand. Some scholars also include incense stands because they can have architectural features as well. Appearing for the first time in the Late Bronze Age, these models seem to have flourished in Iron Age II. These Iron Age IIA architectural models have considerable variety. Some are rather plain, but others are painted in red, and they range in size from about six inches to as high as two-three feet.

Another architectural model, dating to the mid-ninth century BC (Iron Age IIA), is a model shrine capped with a four-horned altar. With three extant horns, and at ca. .60 cm high, it is the largest of its kind so far found in Jordan. It also has the most iconography of any model found in the country, with the façade being covered by applied incised and painted figures. Two male figures, each holding an animal, and one with a knife, flank the “entranceway” of the cultic stand. The decorative molding border around the model, below the altar, depicts a bird with outstretched wings. Other motifs include rectangles with dots.

In conclusion, most of the architectural models at Khirbet Ataruz were located on the main offer-tory platform and hence had a religious function, consisting

of communication between the viewer and the deity. While there is no iconography of a deity on the models themselves, presumably priests and perhaps rulers were involved. In addition, these models were built by trained artisans with considerable skill. While the Gadites/Israelites may have been the worshippers at the Phase II Temple at Ataruz, the cultic motifs are from the common repertoire of the Near East in general, with Egyptian and Phoenician influences. In other words, these architectural models incorporated aspects of all the religions of the Near East. (Paul J. Ray, Jr)



Dr. Stefanie Elkins-Bates.

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RANDOM SURVEY

Mummies Found:

Archaeologists have recently discovered some Old Kingdom (2686–2181 BC) mummies at Saqqara, Egypt. In a complex dating to the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties (2494–2181 BC), the tomb of a man named Hekashepes was found at the bottom of a 15.25 m (50 ft) shaft. Within the tomb, a sealed limestone sarcophagus was found, with the mummified remains of the man, covered with gold leaf. Also within the complex, the tomb of Khnumdjedef, who was a priest of the pyramid complex of the Fifth Dynasty Pharaoh Unas, was found.

Ship Found:

A 22.75 m (75 ft) Greek trading vessel, dating to ca. 400 BC, has recently been found in a “ship graveyard” in the Black Sea off the coast of Bulgaria. Found at more than 2.09 km (1.3 miles) below the surface, the water is anoxic (oxygen free), preserving the ship intact, including its mast, rowing benches and rudders.

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Palace Found:

A team of British and Iraqi archaeologists, in collaboration with the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, have recently discovered a 4,500-year-old Sumerian mud brick palace at the ancient site of Girsu, near Tello, in southern Iraq. Over 200 cuneiform tablets, containing administrative records, have also been found. The main temple of the city was dedicated to the Sumerian god Ningirsu. The site was discovered 140 years ago but has since been the target by looters and illegal excavations prior to the current expedition.

Public Building Found:

Archaeologists have discovered the remains of a public building, dating to ca. 10,000 BC, at the site of Boncuklu Tarla, in SE Turkey. The ca. 2.5-hectare site dates from the Epipalaeolithic to the Late Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period. Temples and domestic structures have also been excavated at the site. The recently discovered public building is reminiscent of those at Göbeklitepe, located 300 km to the west, but appears to date 1,000 years earlier.

Tomb Found:

A rock-cut shaft and chamber tomb with a complete skeleton and ceramic urns, with the cremated ashes of other burials, has been found at Tarxien, on Malta. The tomb, sealed with a slab, was completely intact, and dates to the Punic period (264–146 BC).

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