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## **Symposium: Exploring a Shared Past in the Modern Middle East**

Neil Asher Silberman

This symposium will bring together scholars from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, and Lebanon to discuss some of the most pressing challenges facing archaeologists in this region in the coming decades. After more than a half-century of open warfare and intellectual fragmentation between the State of Israel and its neighbours, certain cultural boundaries are falling, even if full political normalisation of relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority remains to be achieved. The formal peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and Jordan offer a legal basis for co-operation in tourism and archaeological administration. In addition the large-scale reconstruction of central Beirut offers a model for urban salvage archaeology - and public interpretation - in coming decades. This symposium will concentrate on several basic themes shared by scholars and professionals in all nations of the region:

- Public Administration of Archaeology
- Archaeology and Education
- New Research Methodologies and Strategies
- Presenting the Past to the Public
- Museums and National Consciousness

The program will be divided into two parts: a morning session with the presentation of short, formal papers and an afternoon workshop in which themes brought up by the speakers can be discussed and debated at greater length.

### ***The protection of cultural heritage in Palestine: The revitalisation of Ramallah Old Town***

Suad Amiry

This paper addresses challenges facing the protection of the Cultural Heritage in Palestine. Recent political developments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have had a tremendous impact on the built-environment, both modern and traditional. As a result, Palestinian towns and villages were transformed and their architectural features were altered in an unprecedented and alarming manner. After the great loss of historic buildings in the last two years and the change of the built-fabric of most towns and villages, the situation is gaining some balance. The public sector seems to be more in control. The powering of the private sector funds seems to be seized and the euphoria of political and economic transformation settled.

The main objective of the Rehabilitation of Ramallah Old Town is to develop conservation planning policies and thereafter a Conservation Master Plan for the Historic Centre in the city of Ramallah. The main task is to look for mechanisms that help revitalise the traditional old parts, both economically as well as socially, so as to integrate them into the rapidly growing new sections of the city.

### ***Urban archaeology in Beirut: Excavations, problems and solutions***

Leila Badre

Seventeen years of civil war in Lebanon ravaged much of its cities the worst of which was the Central District of Beirut (BCD), the heart of the Lebanese capital. Continuously inhabited for 5,000 years the site of the BCD has been home to Canaanite, Phoenician, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk and Ottoman civilisations. A Master Plan was worked out for the revival of this Central District, it is a prestigious and challenging one where the urban planners sought to give form to a city centre "that balances old and new, enhances its heritage and creates an Ancient City of the Future." Because the whole underground of BCD is an archaeological one, a large archaeological excavation project was planned by the Lebanese Department of Antiquities, the Council of Development and Reconstruction and UNESCO. Excavations began in 1993. Today, 126 sites, scattered all over downtown, have been opened by multi-national teams. Dr. Leila Badre, one of first three teams, and the discoverer of the Canaanite- Phoenician Beirut will present the archaeological results and the fate of this heritage in the future plan of reconstruction.

***Case studies in the conservation and presentation of archaeological sites***

Pierre Bikai

Over the last six years, the American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR) has been involved in three major projects with both conservation and presentation components. During the implementation of these projects, ACOR faced policy and other issues that provide a caution to archaeologists of the 21st century. Excavation, conservation and presentation can be very expensive, particularly when dealing with major monuments of the classical period when frescoes and mosaics may be uncovered. Archaeologists must bear the responsibility for uncovering such materials and must be aware that such projects must include conservators, historical architects and engineers. These sites were preserved for centuries under the accumulated debris of occupation and natural deposition. At minimum, archaeologists must back-fill their sites to partially re-create the environment that allowed preservation.

There is, however, a larger problem: even if the archaeologists do all the conservation needed at or just after the excavation project, how will the site be managed and monitored over the long term? If such management and monitoring (including necessary interventions) cannot be guaranteed, then there is an ethical question as to whether excavation should be permitted at all.

***Presenting the past to the public in Israel: Unrepresented peoples of the past***

Ann E. Killebrew

The archaeology of the Middle East is extremely rich, with material remains often spanning millennia. However the presentation of the past has often been selective, emphasising the history and archaeological remnants of certain periods and peoples while ignoring, or even in some cases, destroying the physical remains of others. This paper presents several case studies in Israel, which illustrate forgotten peoples and neglected historical periods - and some of the reasons for their absence from the conventional archaeological narrative. The paper will further suggest possible approaches through which these neglected stories can be presented to the public and can influence the modern understanding of Israel's past. Special emphasis will be placed on the use of new, non-intrusive methods of site presentation and their integration with new interpretative techniques.

***Israel's identity: Between 'hinterland antiquity' and 'Mediterranean reality'***

Irad Malkin

The Israeli imagination, regardless of political shade, relies heavily on images of antiquity. The discourse of modern Jewish presence in the land is that of a "return." However, the demographic reality of Israel, except for Jerusalem, is mostly coastal and Mediterranean. It is basically the reverse of what it was in "Biblical" antiquity, when the coastal areas were inhabited by Philistines and Phoenicians. Today, the Mediterranean reality of Israel, as well as what appears to be its political future, implies also a possible and feasible new direction of both lifestyle and collective identity, less constrained by notions of sacred lands. The talk is aimed at elucidating this phenomenon and assessing the changes of Israeli attitudes in relation to the past.

***Steps toward a Middle Eastern archaeology: The case of Israel***

Emanuel Marx

All the countries in the Middle East have pressed archaeology into the service of nationalist projects. This resulted in elitist, ethnocentric, a-historical archaeologies. Numerous archaeologists have suggested ways to combat these tendencies. I believe that a reform will concentrate on the following points:

1. Every archaeological study should be grounded in regional history. Each dig should add to our knowledge of the ancient world.
2. In practice this means that archaeologists must give equal weight to every stratum in a dig.
3. Archaeologists should take greater interest in the daily lives of a variety of men and women. This quest requires input from a large number of specialists.
4. Archaeologists should be lured out of their digs, to seek out trade routes, sites of agricultural and pastoral production, relations between various patterns of settlement, markets and government centres.
5. Instead of extracting valuable finds and exhibiting them in museums, they will be concerned with the conservation of sites and preservation of data they contain. They will develop virtual techniques for the presentation of the diverse material found in different strata.

Some of these practices have been applied to the study of pastoral nomads in Israel's Negev, with interesting results.

*Departments of Antiquities in the Middle East: New challenges in the next century, Jordan as a study case*

Mohammed Najjar

With the exception of Syria and Lebanon, most of the antiquities laws and Departments of Antiquities in different countries of the Middle East were established, or, at least, were greatly influenced by the British Mandate authorities back in the twenties of this century. These laws have been modified to meet the new needs of cultural heritage preservation in these countries, but their main structure has remained the same. This paper will discuss the need for reconsidering the role of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, as an example, and its relationship with the private and academic sectors. Issues like expropriation policies, scientific, supervisory, and enforcement functions of the DAJ will also be addressed in light of ever-increasing responsibilities and ever-decreasing public funds.

*The problem of excavating tombs in a multi-religious city*

Ronny Reich

The State of Israel in general, and the city of Jerusalem in particular, have been considered "Holy" for the great part of mankind (Jews, Christians, and Muslims), for a long period of time. As the city was one of the main and most populous cities in the area for the greater part of the last 3000 years, a large number of burials and tombs were left behind by its inhabitants. The state and the city are in the process of development, which presents a real hazard for antiquities sites. In these activities, burials are encountered on a regular basis. The Israel Antiquities Authority is staffed and equipped to tackle this problem. However, digging burials arouses objections from different circles of the population, which are driven by emotional, religious, quasi-religious, and nationalistic views. The presenter has the experience of 30 years of excavating in Jerusalem, in which he has excavated Jewish, Christian, and Muslim burials, in rescue digs. Some of these digs turned into clashes with religious opponents and some ended in court. The paper will present a few examples, including religious argumentation, pro and con; the administrative procedure maintained in Israel to deal with human bones encountered in digs; and the scientific (historic, anthropological, and even religious) lessons learned by the findings of the excavated tombs.