The Organization of the Expedition

Siegfried H. Horn

Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hisban-excavations-1968-publications

Part of the History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons

Recommended Citation

http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hisban-excavations-1968-publications/3

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by the 1968 Season at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.
The
Organization
of the
Expedition

By SIEGFRIED H. HORN

IN THE early days archeological expeditions had a staff consisting of from one to three members and a working force of hundreds of laborers. At Gezer in Palestine, which was excavated between 1902 and 1909, a large number of local workmen were employed. R. A. S. Macalister, the expedition director and only archeologist, was usually also registrar of finds, business manager, physician, surveyor, photographer, and supervisor of all labor performed. During the excavations at Shechem in 1913 and 1914, Ernst Sellin, working with a labor force of 150 local men and women, but having C. Praschniker as architect and supervisor to assist him, was somewhat better off than Macalister.

Modern archeological expeditions are complex organizations, and their staffs are so large that the ratio of laborers to staff members ranges between three to one and five to one. Andrews University's Heshbon expedition, the largest archeological expedition ever to work in Transjordan, had a staff of 42 foreign and five Jordanian members and about 140 local workmen. In fact, it would now be impossible for an expedition that is inadequately staffed with professionals to obtain a government permit to excavate an ancient site.

First of all, an expedition needs qualified archeologists, who, in addition to an academic training in archeology, have field experience in excavations. Furthermore, an expedition must have on its staff architects, surveyors, photographers, and pottery experts, plus enough personnel to guarantee adequate supervision of all workmen and of all phases of operations.

An adequately trained staff is necessary because an archeological expedition is bound to destroy much of the remains of ancient times that it excavates. Unless these remains are expertly dealt with and interpreted, and written, photographic, and architectural records are made, important evidence that can never be restored may be lost. Hence much study must be given to the building of an organization so that the best possible results are guaranteed.

The Organization of the Heshbon Expedition

Because of these requisites, the Heshbon expedition's staff was large and consisted of members who represented a variety of skills and professional backgrounds and who could perform various duties.

The writer served as director. He formulated the aims to be reached and chose the areas to be excavated. He dealt with the Jordan Government and was in charge of the overall work and all financial transactions of the expedition. He was the first staff member to arrive in Amman. He needed to purchase equipment, set up living and working quarters, and obtain the necessary local working force. He was also the last expedition member to leave Amman. He had to see to it that all preliminary recording was either accomplished or its completion assured.

He also had to obtain a "division of finds" to be made by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the necessary permits to export the antiquities allotted to the expedition and those loaned for further studies, which, in the division of finds, had been retained by the Government representative. Furthermore, he could leave only after the headquarters building in Amman had been cleared and cleaned so that it could again fulfill its original function as a school building.

The Archeologists

Dr. Roger Boraas, of Uppsala College, East Orange, New Jersey, was the expedition's chief archeologist. He gave instructions in methods and techniques of excavation to those who had joined the expedition in order to obtain training in field archeology. He also watched over all archeological procedures to assure that the aims of the expedition would be reached and the best scientific methods applied.

The four areas on the mound in which excavations were carried out were supervised by four archeologists: Area A, on top of the mound, was under the supervision of Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, of Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Area B, on the southern slope, was under Dr. Dewey Beegle, of Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.; Area C, on the western slope, was under Dr. Henry Thompson, of Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York; and Area D, on the southern slope of the acropolis, was under Phyllis Bird, of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. These scholars were responsible in their respective areas for all operations carried out under the guidance of the director and chief archeologist.

With each of these four archeologists was an associate to assist in the field recordings and drawings of plans and balks, so that the area supervisor could be left free as much as possible to direct his attention to the actual work in his area. The associates were Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, of Andrews University, in Area A; Dr. Ed. Grohman, of Knoxville College, Knoxville, Tennessee, in Area B; Dr. Douglas Waterhouse, of Andrews University, in Area C; and Larry Geraty, of Harvard University, in Area D.

A large number of staff members consisting of college teachers and students (mostly graduate students) and their wives joined the expedition to obtain firsthand training in all phases of archeological field work. Each of them spent most of his time...
The staff views the terrain surrounding Heshbon from the road in front of the mound.

The staff of the Andrews University Heshbon archeological expedition made its headquarters at the Adventist school at Amman.

supervising digging operations in the subdivisions of the various areas called "squares." Hence they had the title "square supervisors." However, they also spent a considerable amount of time learning to identify pottery, to draw profiles of characteristic pieces of pottery, to assist in the pottery recording, to keep records of the loci excavated, and to draw plans of loci and balks. Among them were professors from Walla Walla College, Columbia Union College, and Middle East College; and students from Andrews University and Loma Linda University.

The surveying staff, ably assisted by square supervisors, consisted of Dr. Bert DeVries, Architect Paul Belton, and Draftsman Philip Evans. Their task was to stake out the areas to be excavated, to make top plans of all architectural features and ascertain elevations where required, to establish levels in terms of altitudes in meters above sea levels of all excavated features, and to make a contour map of the whole mound.

Only a Beginning

Because of lack of time, only a beginning could be made with regard to the last-mentioned task. The survey of the top of the mound, which we called acropolis, was completed, but only the base line of the whole mound was mapped when the excavations ended. The area between the acropolis and the base of the mound must still be surveyed in coming seasons, as well as the surrounding areas of the mound, some of which show remains of ancient graves and tombs.

The chief photographer was Avery Dick, of Mountain View College, Philippines. He was assisted by George Unger, of the Beirut Overseas School. Paul Bergsma, a square supervisor, acted as part-time photographer for color work. The photographers made a complete photographic record of all archeological operations and shot numerous pictures of general interest, but also photographed every architectural or other feature as uncovered and every object found. They were so efficient that complete sets of prints and publishable enlargements had been made of all photographs by the time the expedition completed its work.

Robert Little, of the University of Indiana, served as the expedition's anthropologist. He registered and analyzed thousands of bones, unearthed two articulate skeletons, one a headless large cat, perhaps a lynx, the other a mutilated skeleton of a female adult of Roman times. After the close of the expedition more than 300 pounds of bones were shipped to America for further study.

Hester Thomsen, of Greater New York Academy, was in charge of all pottery registration and pottery drawing in the headquarters. This was an exacting task, considering that about 10,000 pieces of pottery were registered during the campaign, and about 1,300 pounds of potsherds will be shipped to America for further study as soon as an export permit is issued by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. Sara Grohman was in charge of the washing of pottery and bones. She also typed the registry lists. She was assisted by three Jordanian pottery washers.

Marion Beegle was registrar of finds. She cleaned the coins and all other objects as they were discovered, entered all data in the registry book and on cards, and drew them to scale.

The camp director was Vivolyn Van Elderen. She was in charge of the cooking and meals, the purchasing of supplies and groceries, and the cleaning of the headquarters. A camp boy, a cook, and four assistants worked under her supervision. Anita, the daughter of the Van Elderens, served as messenger girl between areas on the mound and ran other errands.

Mustafa Tawfiq, of Balatah (Shechem), now a refugee in Amman, was foreman. He had in past years been foreman for the Shechem expeditions, and we were very fortunate to have such an able man on our staff at Heshbon. He handled all local labor problems, was in charge of tools and equipment in the field,
and helped efficiently in matters of purchasing and obtaining of material and supplies.

The Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan assigned three of its officials as representatives: Fawzi Zayadin, an experienced archeologist in his own right; Ghazi Besha, the curator of the Madaba regional museum; and Mohammed Odeh, a restorer of antiquities, whose skills were put to good use when we discovered mosaics in the ruins of a church on the mound. He removed these mosaics from their original beddings and restored them in new reinforced concrete beds for permanent preservation.

The first season at Heshbon lasted seven weeks, from July 15 to August 30. Work was carried out on the mound five days every week, from Monday to Friday. Weekends were left free so that staff members could rest or make excursions to historical sites such as Petra, Jerash, and Ma'arabur.

The working day began when the bell rang at 3:45 A.M. followed by the first breakfast at 4:00. By 4:25 the last car had usually left the gate of the school compound at Amman for Heshbon, and at 5:00 A.M. the whistle of the foreman marked the beginning of work on the mound. From eight-thirty to nine o'clock we had our second breakfast, which was prepared and eaten on the mound under a canvas spread out within the walls of a ruined building of Turkish times called by the locals qar, “castle.”

Another interruption of the work came at 11:15 A.M. for 15 minutes, which was called tea time. At that time all staff members gathered in different areas to listen to the respective area supervisors give discourses on the progress of work in their areas, so that all staff members had an opportunity of following the excavations even in areas in which they did not work. The work on the mound stopped at 1:30 P.M., when the carvan of cars left for Amman, loaded with a dusty group of archeologists and a large number of buckets filled with pottery recovered during the day.

At 2:30 P.M. lunch was served, which was followed by a period of rest until 5:15. From 5:15 to 6:15 “pottery reading” took place when the pottery of the previous day, which in the meantime had been washed and dried, was analyzed and the results of the analysis entered into the records of the various loci from which the pottery came. Some staff members drew pottery during this time. The evening meal, served at six-thirty, was usually followed by lectures on various topics of archeological interest or by staff meetings.

This rigorous program was willingly and ungrudgingly entered into and maintained by all staff members. All—professionals, teachers, and students alike—were serious in their efforts to make the most of the few weeks that we had, in order to obtain the greatest possible results from our work. I have never worked in an archeological expedition with a finer group of people than with the staff members of the first Heshbon expedition. All appreciated the comfortable accommodations we enjoyed in the school in Amman, the good meals our cook served, and the fine Christian spirit that prevailed among us.

The health of the group could be reported as having been quite good, although most staff members were plagued at one time or another by expected intestinal troubles that befall Europeans or Americans in the Near East before they become immune to the germs of that part of the world. No serious sickness or accidents interfered with our work. One area supervisor fell from a high wall but luckily sprained only a wrist, which healed nicely in a cast; another staff member, who was thrown out of a car when its door sprang open in a swerving movement to avoid hitting some people on the road, suffered only slight abrasions and some stiffness. The Lord certainly held His hand over us.

(Continued next week)

A Story

FOR THE YOUNGER SET

Trust and a Rope

By MARGERY WILSON

ARTHUR tossed his huge shears aside as his helper lifted the fleece and the big sheep disappeared behind the gate as his helper lifted the fleece and the big sheep disappeared behind the gate with a plaintive bleat.

"You've sheared all the sheep in that pen. Now take these empty water jugs up to the well and fill them for us," suggested Mr. Wilbur.

"Good idea," said Arthur, wiping the sweat from his face and neck with a grimy handkerchief. "A hot day and a hot job like this make a man drink three times as much water as usual."

Arthur enjoyed the long walk up the hill to the house, and was soon beyond the urging shouts of the other men to hurry back, as they were hot and thirsty too.

"I'm—not afraid," the four-year-old boy refused. "I'm not afraid. I wouldn't be a bit afraid to go down into the well, Daddy," whispered Carl. "I wouldn't be a bit afraid to go down in that well if daddy held the rope." Carl was on the verge of tears, as he felt that he was too much of a man to be accused of being afraid.

Arthur explained his idea to Mrs. Wilbur, and together they tried to persuade the little boy to agree. A second sheep shearer arrived on the scene, hot and especially thirsty. Together, the two men tried to convince the tiny lad that he would be perfectly safe with both of them there to hold the rope.

"Are you afraid?" asked Arthur.

"I'm—not afraid," said Arthur. "I'm not afraid. I wouldn't be a bit afraid to go down in that well if daddy held the rope." Carl was on the verge of tears, as he felt that he was too much of a man to be accused of being afraid.

"Why, I'm twice as strong as your daddy," Arthur said. "I've got another big tall man here to help me hold the rope, and he is bigger than your daddy!"

But Carl only shook his head, and he stood behind his mother.

"Well, there's only one thing to do," said Arthur as he ran down the hill toward the sheds where they were shearing the sheep. Quickly he found Mr. Wilbur, and together they hurried back to the well.

Mr. Wilbur smiled at his son's brave offer to go down into the well, and quietly he made a sturdy rope harness. He checked and double-checked every knot to make sure the little boy would not fall into the water.

As Mr. Wilbur let him down into the dark well, Carl gave him a confident smile.

"I hope you will always trust God as much as you trusted me today," "I hope you will always trust God as much as you trusted me today," Mr. Wilbur said.

Everyone smiled at the triumph on the tiny face as Carl and the shiny bucket came up into the sunlight. Arthur quickly tied the bucket to the rope and began drawing water. Mr. Wilbur untied Carl's harness and gave him a special hug.

"I wasn't afraid with you holding the rope, Daddy," whispered Carl.

"I know you weren't," smiled Mr. Wilbur. "I know you weren't."