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Chapter One

Antioch on the Orontes 2.0. New Stories from an Ancient City
Antioch on the Orontes 2.0. New Stories from an Ancient City

By: Andrea U. De Giorgi

Constantine the Great’s elevation of a hitherto unassuming city on the Bosphorus to the highest imperial rank in the fourth century CE altered the course of history in fundamental ways. It also accelerated the process of Rome’s eastward tilting that had put Antioch on the Orontes center stage for more than two centuries.
Laid out as a heady fusion of Mesopotamian and Hellenistic designs by Seleukos Nikator in 302 BCE, Antioch straddled a vast and challenging landscape that had witnessed millennia of human occupation. In the founder’s mind, the city was to be but one of the many colonies that secured North Syria in Seleucid hands, perhaps modeled after the grand capital Seleucia on the Tigris, inaugurated only a few years earlier. Antioch’s setting, however, could not have been more unpromising; the vexations caused by seasonal runoff from Mt. Silpius and Mt. Staurin, in tandem with the course fluctuations of the Orontes, took a hefty toll from the very onset. Nor was being located on an active seismic belt of better auspice, for during the course of history Antioch suffered from a staggering sequence of earthquakes.
Nevertheless, within a few generations after its foundation, Antioch began a rise to political prominence that was to last for centuries, marked by a string of political designations and titles. In the classical, Byzantine and Islamic sources we encounter Antioch successively as Seleucid capital, Roman provincial capital, virtual capital of the Roman orient, host to a vibrant intellectual community and the earliest Christian congregation, seat of a Patriarch and the count of the east, and hub of the Islamic thughūr, to name but its few accomplishments.

More subtly, though, Antioch’s growth brought a shift in the way space in antiquity was perceived and experienced. By sewing together Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, the city forged a new Greco-Roman oikoumene (inhabited world), one that gradually swung its fulcrum away from the Italian peninsula. Roads led to Antioch from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Asia; Byzantine chroniclers narrated the whole history of the world from the banks of the Orontes.

For all the fame of the city and its once magnificent architecture, however, the physical fabric of ancient and early medieval Antioch is still poorly documented. This is in part due to recent urbanization of the area.
Antioch’s modern reincarnation Antakya (Hatay province, southeast Turkey) grows by the day at the expense of its ancient predecessor. The city walls, hippodrome, and temple on the island are the last witnesses of Antioch’s heyday. What is more, the archaeological exploration of the relatively undisturbed site of Antioch in the 1930s, unfortunately, produced modest results. In the intervening years, it seemed that the goal of a coherent understanding of the topography and architecture of the ancient metropolis had reached an impasse.

A recent, unprecedented constellation of archaeological surveys as well as Turkish salvage excavations -hopefully to be published soon- is changing this state of affairs. A flurry of field initiatives coincided with the establishment of the *New Committee for the Excavations of Antioch and its Vicinity* at the Princeton University Art Museum, as well as the *Lexicon Topographicum Project* (a catalog of Antiochene antiquities based on the literary sources and compiled by Catherine Saliou), and the long-awaited publication of the immense historical geography, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, on Syria. All these projects share an interest in redefining the essence and evolution of the city’s built environment.

But it was through the work of the Amuq Valley Regional Project of the University of Chicago (AVRP) and the survey of Mt. Silpius and Mt. Staurin by the University of Halle-Wittenberg that a heightened understanding of the city’s layout and the urban system was achieved. These projects inserted the city and its territory into local ecosystems, illustrating the changing relationships between its physical fabric and a complicated landscape, so characteristic of Antioch’s history.

Foiled by a city plan that remained substantially unchanged from the late Hellenistic period until the dawn of the Islamic era, Antioch underwent rounds of extensive construction that extended far beyond its city walls and led to the formation of what Peter Brown aptly described as an “ebullient countryside.” Ultimately, by the early first century CE the territory of Antioch comprised vast swaths of land from the Mediterranean shore all the way to the heights of Syria’s *Massif Calcaire*. The so-called *villae* dotting this landscape from Daphne to Imma with their stunning, exuberant visual repertoire are the best-known byproduct of these dynamics.
More importantly, these developments are essential to comprehend the mutability and periodic overhauls of the city’s built environment. From the early days of Antiochos IV Epiphanes (215-164 BCE) to the initiatives under the patriarch Ephraem in the sixth century CE, Antioch and its territory underwent relentless manipulation of landscape and mobilization of communities. Rivers were diverted, canals we excavated, mountains were pierced to deliver fresh water, and a mesh of roads were laid out, all designed to serve Antioch’s needs.

The city walls were also transformed, as attested by at least eight different types of construction techniques. Each of these signals a different imperial agency and the inclusion of urban developments, as in the case of the elusive borough of Epiphaneia and the island on the Orontes. And with their network of urban baths, pagan shrines, synagogues, and churches, the suburbs at Daphne, Narlica, Pagrae, and Gephyra, in particular, reflect the cultural tensions and religious orientations that shaped the city’s architectural landscape, while serving their role of outlets for the city, which by the fifth century Theodoret of Cyrrhus described as “suffocating.”

Changes in the physical and social fabric of Antioch echoed throughout its landscape, channeled as it were by the city’s main axis of traffic, a colonnaded boulevard that cemented the symbiotic relationship of Antioch’s town and country. More importantly, it
formed the backbone of a huge territory, the spine that connected the Syrian highlands to the sea.

This constantly evolving architecture also contributed to a unique fusion of ethnicities and languages. Through its colonnaded streets and plazas, the city instilled a sense of camaraderie and belonging in its citizenry, as the orations of the fourth century CE rhetorician Libanius make plain. At the same time, Antioch was no city of brotherly love. For all its splendor and virtues it had a penchant for indiscriminate riots and acts of collective disturbance, as shown time and again during the third and fourth centuries CE. Antioch’s repeated pitting of civic pride against the imperial authorities, in particular, must be kept in mind.

Many of these threads are now being taken up by new scholarship. An Antioch session now regularly scheduled at ASOR meetings, and upcoming monographs on the city of the Orontes bear witness of the healthy state of the field and will no doubt energize the discussion on this remarkable city.

_Andrea U. De Giorgi is the assistant professor of classics at the Florida State University. He co-directs the Cosa Excavations in Italy._

_Further Readings_


Chapter Two

Seeing Colors Beyond the Naked Eye: Spectral RTI, a New Tool for Imaging Artifacts
Photography has long been an essential tool for archaeology. But photographers often struggled to capture texture, such as cuneiform writing, or a stone inscription, or a stamped coin. In these cases, the primary meaning is not conveyed through contrast of light and dark materials or between different colors, which are the strengths of photography. A photograph of an inscription with diffuse lighting would show only stone. The best photographs relied on light raking from a low angle to show the texture through highlights and shadows. This could work well for at least part of the image, but often not the whole image. As a result, it was common for editors to offer line drawings that attempted to express in black and white the shapes expressed as texture in the original artifact. In this era there was no need to argue that a photographic edition was no substitute for first-hand inspection.

In the past decade a new technology revolutionized archaeological photography. Texture imaging was originally developed at Hewlett Packard Labs for use in 3D environments. This technology, called Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), captures the texture of every pixel in the image. The texture maps are derived from measuring the light reflected from forty or so different angles. Once the texture is digitized, the technology can predict how light coming from any angle would be reflected. Furthermore, the RTI images can be enhanced to show texture more dramatically.

This technology has been brought to the study of material culture by Cultural Heritage Imaging and especially by the West Semitic Research Project (WSRP) at the University of Southern California. Led by Bruce Zuckerman, WSRP, created a massive library of images of coins, cuneiform writings, and inscriptions in stone and other materials. The InscriptiFact Digital Image Library is free with registration, certain requirements for ports open through the firewall ,and the ability to download and install Java appli-
cations. For more casual users, the Institute of Science and Information Technology at the National Research Council of Italy created a way to embed interactive RTI images in any webpage. RTI alone is not 3D, but describing the texture of a plane and how it responds to light is an essential part of 3D imaging. Together these technologies have revolutionized archaeological study and publication.

Recently the National Endowment for the Humanities has funded the Jubilees Palimpsest Project at St. Mary’s University to take RTI to the next level through the integration of spectral imaging. This integrated Spectral RTI has all the advantages of RTI, but also adds the key advantages of spectral imaging. First, spectral imaging uses higher resolution sensors without the distorting filters that plague even the most expensive DSLR cameras by Canon and Nikon. The fifty-megapixel sensor of a MegaVision E7 allows capture of a frame as large as 14.5 by 9.7 inches at 600 dots per inch (or a smaller area at higher resolution). The result is that we can see texture much finer than the surface of cuneiform and coins, down to paint strokes, the grain of the parchment, and even the outline of a letter where now-missing ink once corroded the surface. The second key advantage of spectral imaging is that it utilizes a wider range of the electromagnetic spectrum, including ultraviolet and infrared light that human eyes cannot see. The third advantage is that it resolves color more finely than the human eye. Browns that are indistinguishable to the eye can be easily differentiated by spectral imaging because it resolves eleven to sixteen wavelengths, far more than the three color receptors of the eye.

All these data can be processed to render color more accurately than conventional photography (which uses red, green, and blue sensors that only roughly approximate the receptors in the eye). Color accuracy without subjective color matching also means that images can be compared reliably across time and space. Extended Spectrum processing squeezes the wider color range into the human visible range, such that ultraviolet light looks blue and infrared light looks red (rather than invisible). A third technique uses a statistical technique called Principal Component Analysis to find the greatest contrasts and render them into colors we easily distinguish. This process least resembles reality but successfully makes the brown blob of an erased manuscript readable in bright reds, greens, and blues.
The 2013–2014 startup phase developed the technology using test objects of varying depths of texture. The deepest texture was a terracotta figurine from the USC Archaeological Research Collection. The figurine found in Egypt is believed to celebrate the victory of Hadrian over Jewish militants (note the curved knife or sicar definitive of the Sicarii described by Josephus, see further). The image above has zoom controls to utilize the high resolution images. By clicking the “light bulb” icon and clicking or dragging in the frame users can change the light position. The interactivity and the various light positions make clear the texture of the artifact, both the deliberate form and the imperfections in manufacture. The enhanced color images make it easier to see traces of paint and other materials.

Spectral RTI images of the encaustic mummy mask from Roman period Egypt (USC Archaeological Research Collection) can be similarly manipulated to show the brush stroke of the original artist and the conservation concerns of chipped paint. Although the Extended Spectrum (not shown, see here) cannot be called more accurate as a representation of the artifact today, it may be suggestive of the original appearance by sunlight two millennia ago (note the white of the eye). In the Pseudocolor it is easy to notice a slight error in the artist’s technique. The painted background and the wood surface are rendered yellow and light blue, respectively. Zooming in on the light blue streak
along the left chin shows that the artist missed a spot and did not paint the background all the way to the face. In the accurate color image, the shortcut is understandable as there is almost no natural color contrast. However, in Pseudocolor materials do not look the same unless they are the same.

The startup phase also experimented with the very fine texture of an erased manuscript, or palimpsest. The writing is illegible in real life and in accurate color. In the Pseudocolor some contrasts are visible thanks to principal component analysis of all captured bands. Other portions are still not legible, however, unless one utilizes the moving light of RTI. At very high resolution it is possible to read the outline of letters in the texture as one moves the light. Note that there is no one magic angle that makes the entire page legible. It is the variability and interactivity that allows us to recover the text.

The next phase of the project will take us to Milan, Italy to work at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana. In particular, we will work on the Jubilees Palimpsest, which includes the only copy of the book of Jubilees in Latin (the Dead Sea Scroll fragments are in Hebrew and the nearly complete copies are in Ethiopic), along with the only copies of the Testament of Moses and the Arian Commentary on Luke. In the following year we will introduce the open image repository to scholars and build scholarly content. In the third year we will offer manuals, training, and free software to institutions considering adopting Spectral RTI technology for their own projects. It is our hope that these tools will serve many projects when conventional digitization does not suffice. Not only will new excavations benefit from the technology, but artifacts already studied by the human eye in museums and libraries can be rediscovered by the global community of scholars and enthusiasts.

**Todd R. Hanneken, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Theology and Early Jewish Literature at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio. He is the director of the Jubilees Palimpsest Project.**
Chapter Three

Ask a Near Eastern Professional: Cuneiform Scripts in Assyria and Babylonia
Paul Howles asks: “If I understand correctly, the cuneiform scripts used in Assyria and Babylonia in the 1st millennium BC (Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods) were different. How different were these signs? Approximately what percentage of the signs were identical?”

By: Susanne Paulus

Babylonia and Assyria were two of the most important powers in Mesopotamia in the 1st millennium BC. They shared a common language, Akkadian, and a common script, cuneiform. While scribes in both cultures used the same signs, they wrote nearly all the signs differently. Some sign forms are rather similar to each other: for example, the sign AN. Others signs, like LUGAL, are noticeably different in many respects. Often, these differences can be found in the usage of different sign elements within one sign. The sign KA shows typical differences: While the Assyrian sign has only horizontal and vertical wedges, the Babylonian sign usually has one wedge called a winckelhaken (circled in red).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Neo-Assyrian</th>
<th>Neo-Babylonian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AN</td>
<td>variant 1</td>
<td>variant 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>variant 2</td>
<td>variant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>variant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA</td>
<td>variant 1</td>
<td>variant 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>variant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>variant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUGAL</td>
<td>variant 1</td>
<td>variant 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>variant 2</td>
<td>variant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>variant 3</td>
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Figure: 1) Table of selected Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian sign variants. Signs from Labat, René. Manuel d’Épigraphie Akkadienne (Signes, syllabaire, idéogrammes). Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1995.
Because cuneiform was always written by hand, signs were never uniform. The form of a sign might depend on the city in which the text was written, the time period of the text, and the individual hand of the scribe. Other differences can also be seen between the cursive script written on clay tablets and the monumental script, which is used for inscriptions on stone. Consequently, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian signs can be nearly identical (variant 1 of AN), slightly different (variant 2 of AN), or very different (variant 3 of AN).

These differences have historic origins. When the cuneiform writing system was invented at the end of the 4th millennium BC in Uruk, a city in southern Mesopotamia, the signs were originally line drawings representing pictures. For example, the sign KA (figure 2) represents a head, with the mouth area highlighted by strokes. In the following period, the sign was turned 90°. Furthermore, it was impressed into clay with a stylus instead of being drawn, resulting in the emergence of cuneiform’s eponymous wedges.

In the 3rd millennium, cuneiform developed even further, and the signs were simplified. Around 2000 BC, a regional split occurred. The script in the northern part of Mesopotamia (Assyria) and the script in the south (Babylonia) started to evolve independently. Around 1500 BC, the split between the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia reinforced this development.

Normal scribes would either write Babylonian or Assyrian, depending on the region in which they lived (figure 3), but trained scribes were able to read both. This was especially important when letters were exchanged between the royal courts.

In the library of the famous Assyrian king Assurbanipal (7th century BC), tablets in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian scripts were found together. Jeannette Fincke, who studied the paleography of these scribes, discovered that the famous scholars who wrote the tablets...
had mastered both scripts. But their knowledge was not limited to the first millennium sign forms; sign lists (figure 4) prove that they also studied the earliest sign forms written more than 2,500 years ago. This shows the impressive continuity of Mesopotamian culture!

Susanne Paulus is Assistant Professor of Assyriology at the University of Chicago.

For Further Reading

Chapter Four

Nimrud Update: New Photos of the Site
Nimrud Update: New Photos of the Site

Since our inception, the *Ancient Near East Today* has covered the fate of archaeological and heritage sites under ISIS control. Now, thanks to Layla Salih of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities & Heritage, we present a series of images from the site of Nimrud, newly liberated from ISIS. The images show some of the devastation wrought by ISIS on the Northwest Palace area of Nimrud. While the destruction of archaeological sites cannot compare to ISIS’ human toll, the loss to science is immense.
Chapter Five

Why the Arameans?
Why the Arameans?

By: K. Lawson Younger, Jr.

With the publication of my new book, *A Political History of the Arameans*, people have asked, “why a book on the Arameans?” It is not always easy answering this question. In some confessional circles if I say, “the Arameans were an important people group mentioned in the Bible,” I get smiles and approving nods. If I say much more, there is a sliding scale of facial expression: starting with bewilderment and quickly moving to disinterest. Sometimes the question is “why a book on the Armenians?!” which, of course, requires an explanation regarding these ancient/modern people, why they are important, and how they are different from the subject of my book.

Yet, the Arameans were a remarkable group of linguistically related entities who played a very significant role in the history and culture of the ancient Near East. Emerging across a wide swath of Syria and northern Iraq after the collapse of Late Bronze Age kingdoms, their greatest legacy was undoubtedly the West Semitic Aramaic language—the lingua franca of the late Neo-Assyrian Empire and then the Near East until the arrival of Greek.

But Arameans contributed in many other ways to Iron Age civilization. Aramean political history sees a bewildering number of states at war with neighbors, including the Luwian polities of northwest Syria, the Israelites under David and Solomon, and most consequentially, the Neo-Assyrian Empire. But unlike their better-known neighbors, and because of their complexity, the Arameans remain poorly appreciated.

Politically, the Arameans were characterized by wide ranging diversity, dictated in part by the geographic areas where they resided or moved, from the steppe regions east of Damascus to the irrigation agriculture zones of southern Mesopotamia. Neighboring peoples also dramatically impacted the Arameans. The fact that the Arameans adapted to their various geographic and cultural environments makes study of their history both intriguing and challenging.
In my book, I explore this amazing people and their political structures, from the earliest origins in the Bronze Age to the demise of the last independent polities. While earlier histories of the Arameans tended to concentrate on their states, I have attempted a more detailed study of all levels of Aramean social entities, including tribes, their constituent clans and, above them, confederations. These social groups nested within one another, and split off and recombined as circumstances dictated. Genealogy was key: the dead were included in the community of the living, providing the links, real and imagined, between Aramean communities.

One of the best ways to engage Arameans is through a regional approach. I have investigated the various Aramean polities by examining four regions: the region of the Jezirah of northern Mesopotamia (where Assyrian power and influence was a particular challenge); Anatolian/North Syrian (where in the Iron I and II there was cultural symbiosis between the Arameans and the local Indo-European speaking Luwians); the Levant (central and southern Syria—a region that is still obscure in many ways); and finally, southern Mesopotamian (where the indigenous Babylonians and Chaldean groups—along with the geography—combined to create a very different environment for Arameans). Some Aramean entities opted to remain simply individual clan or tribal groups, others chose to configure tribal confederations, and still others set up tribal kingdoms.

A more sophisticated, anthropologically nuanced approach to tribal structures builds on analogies from the earlier Amorite entities, in addition to a more robust study of the vocabulary that describes these tribal political structures (taking particular advantage of recently discovered texts). Examining these aspects yields a more comprehensive understanding the flexibility of Aramean political structures and how they functioned. The great complexity in the Arameans’ political arrangements was partially due to the fluidity of their tribal structures, as well as their movements over time.

Aramean migrations were necessitated or stimulated by many push and pull factors, including traditional pastoral nomadic migration routes, and relationships with other
nomadic groups that had previously moved to different parts of Mesopotamia and Syria. Geography and environment played a vital role in the development of the Aramean polities, and I have paid close attention to the regional issues they encountered in the Jezirah, north Syria, south Syria, and southern Mesopotamia.

What makes study of the Arameans even more interesting - and demanding - is all the new archaeological and textual data that have come to light in the last fifteen years. Two examples must suffice. First, archaeological work in the middle Euphrates region has revealed a fort system from the Middle Assyrian period (ca. 1200–1050 BCE), along with new Middle Assyrian texts. These necessitate a new historical synthesis of Assyrian-Aramean interrelationships during this formative period. The decline of Middle Assyrian control after ca. 1050 BCE was one of the factors that permitted the Arameans to both move east and to create their own polities, and which in turn, stimulated the emergence of the Neo-Assyrian kingdom.

Second, new inscriptions have changed our understanding of the political extent of Aramean kingdoms. For example, a horse frontlet and horse blinker (booty from Hazael’s campaign against the kingdom of ‘Umq) engraved with the same inscription have demonstrated that, contrary to early scholarly opinions, this ninth century king of Aram-Damascus expanded his kingdom northward. A stela fragment recently excavated at Tell Afis (ancient Ḥaḏrak) seems to preserve the name of Hazael, and confirms this assessment. These finds complement both older discoveries, such as the Tel Dan inscription, and the biblical accounts of Hazael’s battles against Israel and Judah.

The prime markers for the Aramean groups were twofold. First and foremost was the
Aramaic language. The second was the abundant use of ethnicons or ethnic terms by many peoples, including the Arameans themselves, which describe their identity: designating that someone was a member of a socially constructed Aramean group was central.

Much of their complexity and history is known from the Arameans’ interactions with other peoples, particularly the Assyrians and the Hebrew kingdoms. Yet some of the richest insights derive, of course, from their own inscriptions. The consistent, incredible ability of these Aramean groups to acculturate is a hallmark of their willingness to adapt to diverse regional influences, such as those of the Syro-Hittites. The only exception was the Aramean entities of southern Mesopotamia, who apparently maintained both social and cultural separation from the indigenous Babylonian culture.

The Assyrians and their imperial expansion had an unparalleled impact on the Arameans. The process began with Aššur-dān II in 934–912 BCE, followed by the ninth century conquests of Aššurnaṣirpal II and Shalmaneser III, who conquered all of the Jezirah and much of the
northern Levant. Although Shalmaneser III claimed victory over a coalition that included Aramean and Israelite troops at the battle of Qarqar in 853, he was not actually able to defeat this coalition until 841, when it dissolved due to usurpations in Damascus and Samaria.

Those Aramean polities further away from the Assyrian heartland developed tribal kingdoms that provide us with some of the best information (e.g., Aram-Damascus, Arpad, Hamath and Luğath, and Samʿal). Unfortunately, just as these kingdoms blossomed, they were cut down by the conquests of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE).
Yet while the Assyrians effectively crushed the Arameans, there are three ironies. First, it was the Arameans who impacted the Middle Assyrian kingdom, playing an important role in its demise and thus in the creation of the Neo-Assyrian kingdom. Second, while subdued and absorbed by the Assyrians, the Aramaic language gradually became the *lingua franca* of the late Neo-Assyrian Empire and beyond. Thus, while throughout the period of the existence of the Aramean polities, the Aramaic language served as a prime marker of the Aramean groups, after the disappearance of these entities, it became their greatest legacy. Finally, as the Assyriologist A. Leo Oppenheim observed, due to their language and multifaceted migrations, the “ubiquitous Arameans” ultimately served as the conduit of intercommunication that transmitted knowledge throughout the ancient Near East and ultimately to the West.

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Alex Joffe is the editor of the *Ancient Near East Today*. The publication features contributions from diverse academics, a forum featuring debates of current developments from the field, and links to news and resources. The ANE Today covers the entire Near East, and each issue presents discussions ranging from the state of biblical archaeology to archaeology after the Arab Spring.

Kaitlynn Anderson is ASOR’s Digital Media Specialist, using social media, videos, and podcasts to help ASOR’s mission to initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the history and cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean world, from the earliest times.
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