



Where are they Now ?

Following Pots into archives, educational institutions, and museum vitrines



Morag M. Kersel DePaul University (mkersel@depaul.edu) , Marly Prom DePaul University (marlymprom@gmail.com), Meredith S. Chesson University of Notre Dame (Meredith.Chesson.3@nd.edu) and the students of ANT 256: Chrissy Butler, Mireya Casas, Cheyenne Danforth, Erin Dillett, Jonatan Gonzalez, Emily Grutz, Ebitu Hailu, Jennifer Lascon, Anastasija Malisic, Lauren Minga, Nicole Nitti, Christina Sanchez, Charlie Walker, Lily Zenger

It began with a single pot

In the mid-1960s Paul Lapp, then director of the W. F. Albright Institute in Jerusalem, was shown a pot with an unusual decoration on the rim. Following this single pot led Paul to Bab adh-Dhra', an Early Bronze Age (c. 3600-2000 BCE) cemetery and town on the eastern side of the Dead Sea in Jordan. Between 1965 and 1967 under the auspices of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) Lapp and his team, including Susan Culp, Howard Jamieson, Nancy Lapp, Walter Rast, R. Thomas Schaub, Marilyn Schaub, and Fouad Zogbi, carried out salvage excavations of tombs and charnel houses.



The Early Bronze Age pot shown to Paul Lapp in 1965

1000s of pots

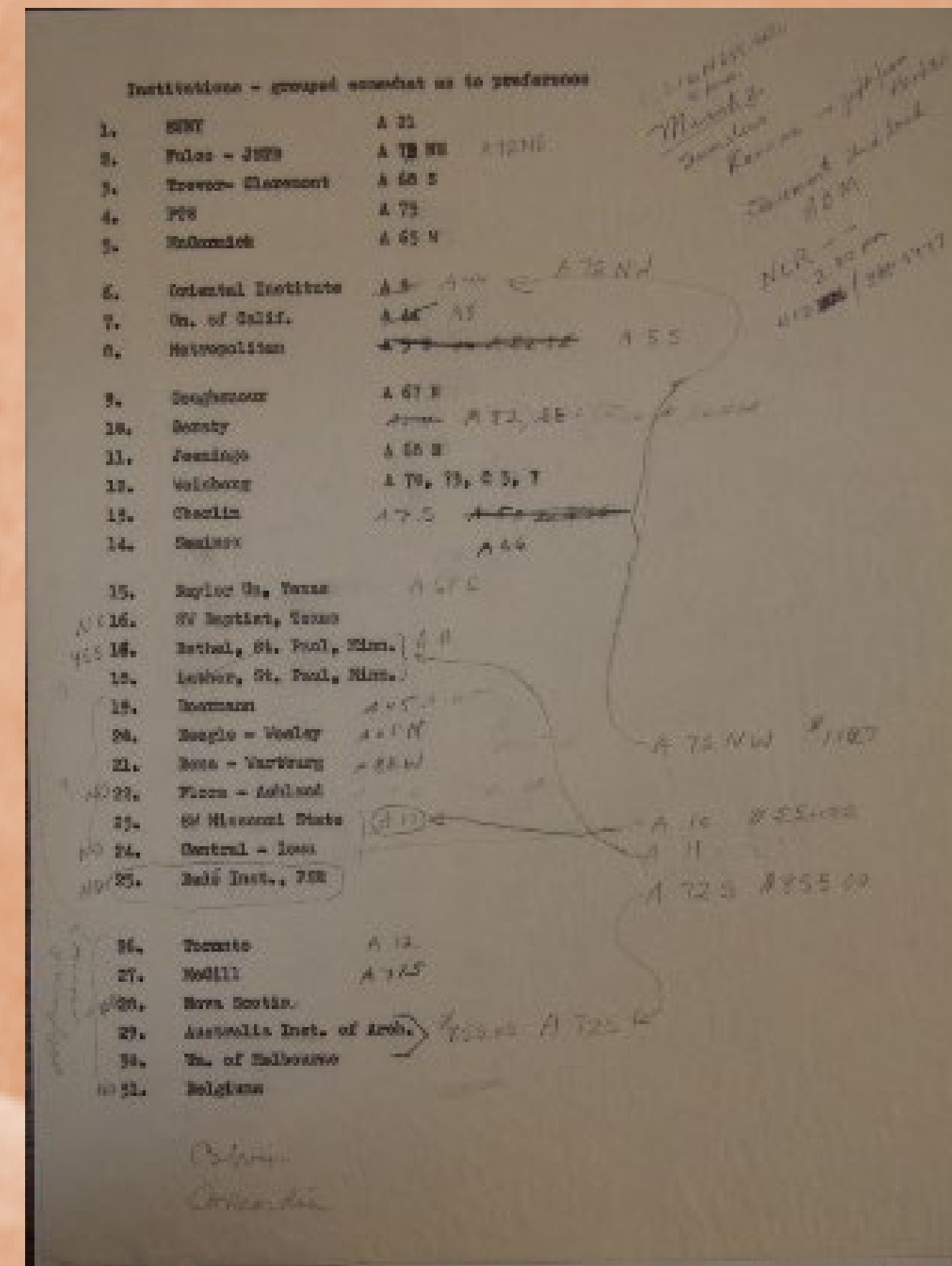
During the two field seasons, Lapp and his team excavated 1000s of pots and artifacts from the various shaft tombs and charnel houses. In 1970 Paul died in a tragic swimming accident, leaving behind his family and the unstudied and unpublished pots from the Bab adh-Dhra'. This unfortunate incident left the numerous excavated tomb groups in limbo in Jordanian storage facilities. Jordan was running out of places to house the pots. What was to become of the pots?



Susan Culp and excavated pots from Bab adh-Dhra', 1965

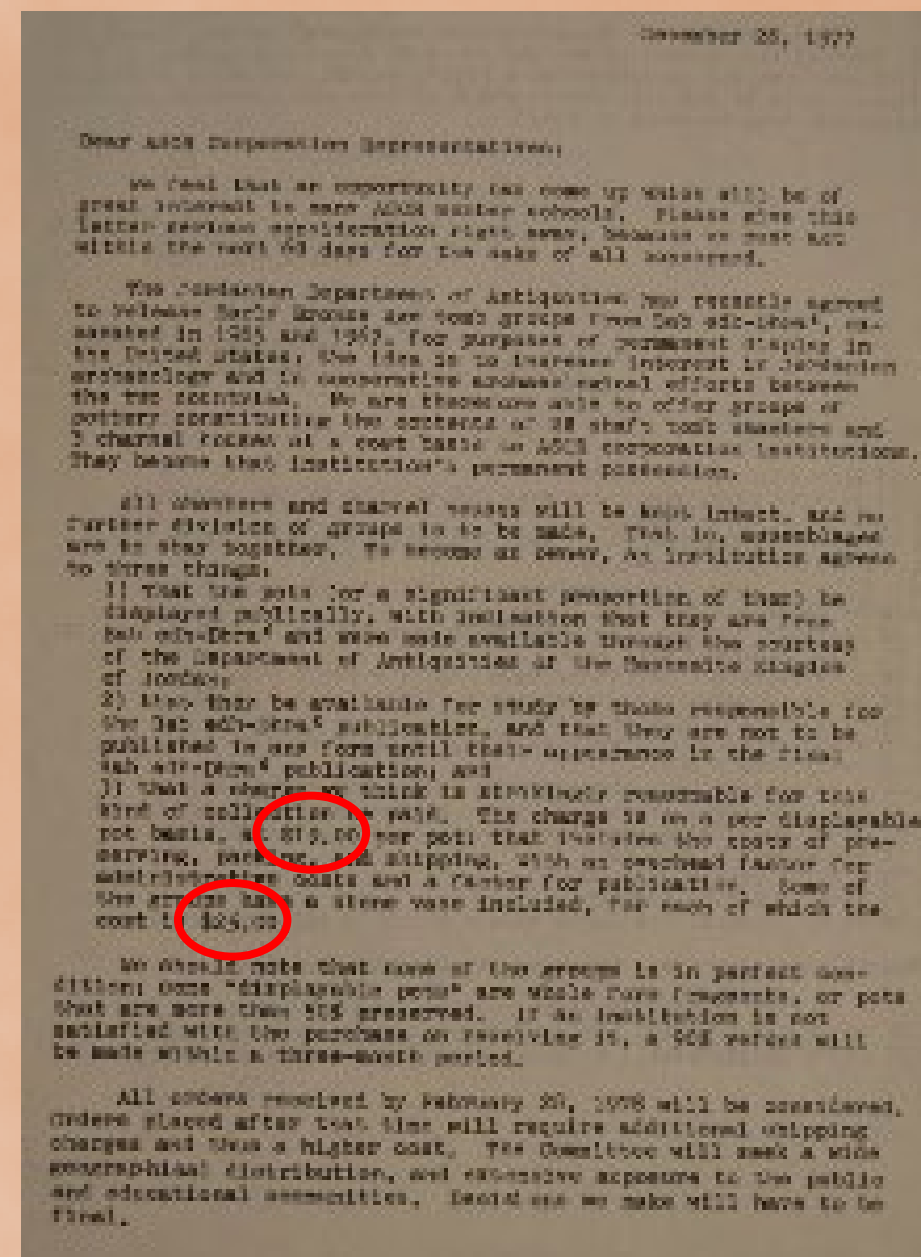


Pots in storage at the Citadel Museum, Amman



Original annotated list of ASOR member institutions and the assigned Bab adh-Dhra' tomb group (Nancy Lapp Archives)

The Early Bronze Age storage dilemma led the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and ASOR (the Lapp excavation sponsors) to propose an innovative initiative. Tomb groups would be distributed to interested ASOR member institutions for the purposes of display, research, and education. The objects would act as ambassadors of Jordan – when people saw the pots they would want to visit or to start excavations in the country in cooperation with Jordanian colleagues. The pots would also be available to R. Thomas Schaub and Walter Rast charged with the publication of the Lapp excavations.



Letter to eligible ASOR member institutions



A 44 and A 72 NW from the Oriental Institute on display, May 2017



www.followthepotsproject.org

Too many pots?

Pot Detectives

Each student in ANT 256: *Old World Material Culture* (DePaul University) was assigned a tomb group. Following up on Nancy Lapp's 1981 inquiries, the students contacted the institutions to assess current locations to determine if the artifacts were on display, and if they are used in teaching or for research purposes. The results are mapped below and on tomb group information sheets, which will be added to the *Follow the Pots* website. With an ASOR Study Collection Fellowship, Kersel also tracked tomb groups.

Basic information: Tomb # A 68N

- A 68 Found while another tomb group was being excavated
- A 68 was a charnel house
- 5 parts of A 68, including A 68N
- 23 pots and one vase, 5462 (Lapp, 1977)
- Sold to Anderson School (Now Anderson University)
- On display/Current Location: Yes, at Gustav Jeeninga Museum of Bible and Near Eastern Studies, Anderson University
- Educational purposes: Yes

Website format:

The A 68 N tomb group is made up of 23 pots and one basalt vase. It was excavated as a part of the larger A 68 tomb group, which was discovered when another tomb group was being cataloged. A 68 in itself was a unique charnel house due to the fact that attached to its shaft, there were 5 tombs, the greatest number of tombs attached to single shaft found in any of the Lapp excavations. One of the five tombs in the A 68 tomb group was tomb A 68N. A 68N contained human bones in the center of the tomb, including long bones, phalanges, and scapula fragments. There is evidence that multiple bodies were placed in the tomb, as one scapula fragment was believed to be from a child of 10-12 years old and another was believed to belong to the scapula of an adult. To the left of the human remains, in a line, were 23 pots plus a basalt bowl placed in the center of the pots.¹

Figure 53. Plan of shaft and five chambers of Tomb A 68.
(Figure 1. Diagram of A 68 from Bab adh-Dhra': Excavation in the Cemetery Directed by Paul W. Lapp p.99)

¹ Correspondence from Nancy Lapp to ASOR Corporation Representatives 1977, 058 Lapp-ASOR December 1977, ASOR Archival, Department of Anthropology, DePaul University, Chicago IL.
² Thomas R. Schaub and Walter E. Rast, Bab adh-Dhra' Excavation in the Cemetery Directed by Paul W. Lapp (Winona Lake: American School of Oriental Research, 1969) (p. 95-99)

Sample of tomb group research carried out by DePaul ANT 256 student Nicole Nitti

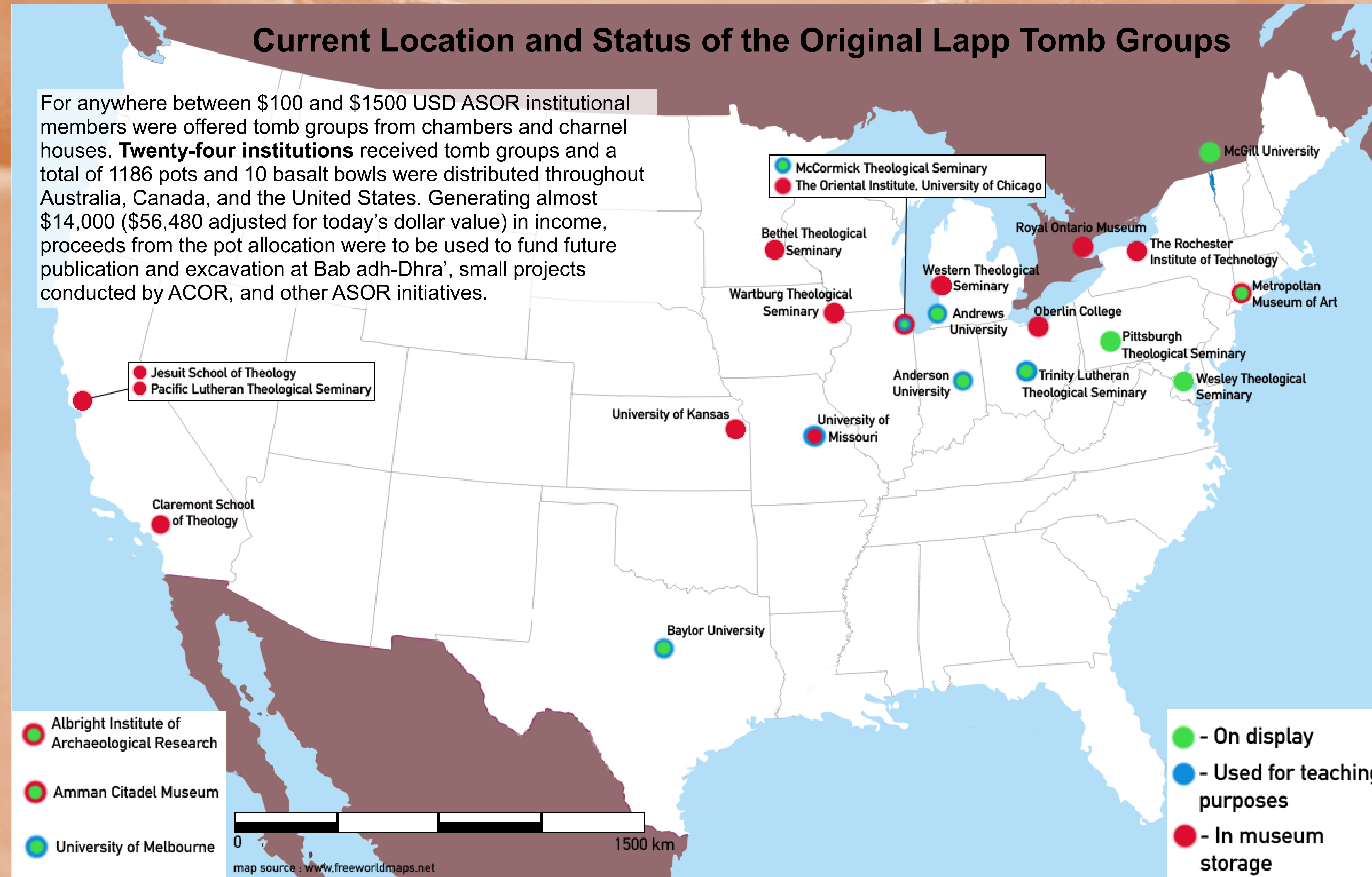
Why follow pots?

The controlled distribution of tomb groups allowed the Jordanians to decide how and where their cultural heritage was displayed in the public domain. The ability for educational institutions to curate this material responsibly, at a reasonable cost, with the imprimatur of the Jordanian government might also decrease the demand for archaeological artifacts from the market (legal or illegal). While the original impetus for the tomb group circulation was educational and scholarly engagement, some additional positive results were the curation of threatened collections and the freeing up of Jordanian storage facilities. Could an initiative like this be a solution to overcrowded storage areas and at the same satisfy the demand for archaeological material in educational institutions?

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the Department of Antiquities in Jordan. We are beholden to Nancy Lapp, Paul Lapp, Walt Rast, Tom Schaub, and Marilyn Schaub, for providing archival records, background information, and endless support of this research. Funding was provided by an ASOR Study Collection Fellowship, DePaul University Undergraduate Research Assistant Program, the University of Notre Dame, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, and The Wenner-Gren Foundation. We are indebted to the many ASOR member institutions who answered countless emails and telephone calls, and provided information, archival documents, and images on their tomb groups. We dedicate this poster to Marilyn Schaub, we will miss her wit, guidance, inspiration and her archaeological expertise.

Images © Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain and Follow the Pots Projects Archival documents courtesy of the ASOR Archives and the Nancy Lapp Archives For the tomb group case study see M.M. Kersel (2015) Storage Wars. Solving the Archaeological Curation Crisis? *JEMAHS* 3(1): 42-55.



One of the provisions in the original distribution required that the tomb groups should remain intact and without further divisions. In 1981 Nancy Lapp followed up with the various institutions confirming the locations and conditions. As an element of the interdisciplinary *Follow the Pots* project we continue to track these pots (and others). Today, 23 of 24 tomb groups remain in their original institutions. In 1989 Tomb Group A 66 was transferred from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (Christ Seminary-Seminex) to the Badè Museum of Biblical Archaeology at the Pacific School of Religion after the Christ Seminary-Seminex closed. We are also recording if the pots are on display and used for educational purposes.