

Bulletin of the Archaeological Museum of the “Studium Biblicum Franciscanum”

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News:

The experiences of two Italian volunteers

Massimo Tassi comes from the city of Reggio Emilia in Italy, and this is the fourth year he has decided to spend two weeks of his vacation in Jerusalem as a volunteer at the archaeological museum of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*. His interest in the archaeology of the Holy Places began during his theology classes and took concrete form during his participation in an archaeological expedition to the Sinai led by Professor Anati. Accompanying him is his friend Alessandro Nicoletti, a deacon in the Sant'Anna Parish in Bologna with a great love for the Holy Land. The two volunteers are engaged in reorganizing and arranging some of the museum's archeological collections as well as taking numerous photos, a preliminary work of great importance for the next stage of cataloguing the finds made by archaeologists.

The specific objects of their work have been prehistoric flints and numerous plaster fragments from the archaeological site at Capernaum, and archaeological discoveries from the necropolis at *Dominus Flevit* dating from the Jebusite period.



Scientific Activities:

Study of the finds from the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo

Following his study of ceramic Bronze Age containers which are on display in the room dedicated to Palestinian ceramics, the archaeologist Davide Bianchi has now begun working on cataloguing and studying the archaeological finds from the excavations carried out in the Memorial Church of Moses on Mount Nebo in Jordan. This is an important archaeological site both for its historical importance linked to the veneration of the prophet Moses, a figure of great importance for the three monotheistic religions, and because it was the first large excavation site of the archaeologists of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*. The excavations, carried out by Father Sylvester Saller, began in 1933 and were continued over the years under the direction of Fathers Virgilio Corbo and Michele Piccirillo, the latter of whom was responsible for the discovery of the marvelous mosaics.



The sanctuary at *Siyagha* on the summit of the mountain was built around the ruins of a *cella trichora* by the Christians of the region in the 4th century AD, to commemorate the last moments of Moses' life (Deut 34:6). In August of 530/31 AD the *diaconicon* on the north side of the sanctuary was restored and paved with mosaics by Soelo, Kaiomo and Elia.

In the second half of the 6th century the earlier structures of the sanctuary were torn down and a new church with a narthex was built. The works were

completed in 597/98 AD, during the time of Sergius (Bishop of Madaba) and Abbot Martyrius, with the construction of a long *diaconicon* to the north and a new baptistery on the south wall. In the 7th century, at the time of Bishop Leontius of Madaba and Abbot Theodore, the chapel of the *Theotokos* was added, and around the sanctuary a large monastery was built on the sides of the mountain.

To better understand the various phases and the relations among the different areas within the structure, several survey excavations were carried out at the site during the month of September under the direction of Father Eugenio Alliata and with the scientific collaboration of Davide Bianchi.

The excavations focused primarily on the *cella trichora* and the area lying beneath the *synthronon*, which up to now has not been investigated. The excavations have provided a better understanding of the development and reconstruction of this part of the structure, which for the faithful represents the sanctuary and the heart of the church.

Among the materials that have come to light, and are now the subject of careful study, are ceramic fragments from the Roman to the Umayyad periods, and pieces of white marble with Greek inscriptions probably belonging to the Byzantine-period altar.

The work at the museum will involve a study of the materials preserved in the windows and the creation of a better, and more easily understood, arrangement within the room dedicated to excavations from Jordan.



Digitizing ancient liturgical codices

The period 10 to 30 October 2012 saw an intense campaign to photographically document the liturgical codices held by the Museum. The work was carried out by Alfonso Bussolin, who for some time has been carrying out a similar project for the larger collection held by the Franciscan



Center for Christian Oriental Studies in Cairo (Mouski). The codices, dating from the 13th to the 17th centuries, include missals, breviaries, psalters, graduals, kyriales and antiphonaries that had formed part of the endowment of the ancient Franciscan monastery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The friars remained in this monastery for more than two hundred years, from 1332 to 1551, when they were obliged to abandon the location and find new accommodation within the walls of the city. The codices were at that point transferred to the new St. Saviour's Monastery where they were still used for a period of time. The treasures of this collection are three antiphonaries donated, according to the note in the margin of the first page of one of the

codices, by King Henry IV of England around the year 1400 in memory of his father John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster.

