

**ASOR Executive Director's Report for December Board Meeting  
December 6, 2020**

**1. Staying focused on our mission—we can emerge from the pandemic stronger**

Thanks to our remarkable members and donors—led by our Trustees—ASOR is expanding our mission and outreach in the pandemic. This is truly amazing, and you as trustees deserve much thanks. Last May, some people thought that we had too far to go to reach our Annual Fund goal of \$125,000. We actually exceeded it by \$20,000—and that enabled us to have a near break-even budget. If it had not been for some adjusting journal entries to correct an overstatement in prior fiscal years, we would have had a slight surplus. All of those details and data are found in the Finance Committee Report and in the notes to the Budget to Actual—I won't repeat them here. I do need to say *thank you* again, and again though.

When the pandemic occurred last March, ASOR almost immediately undertook efforts to increase our online resources. As first, we increased our online collections for teaching using webpages and links that had been developed by the Early Career Scholars Committee and by a special session at the 2019 Annual Meeting. When it became clear that working remotely would continue past a few weeks, we allocated increased staff capacity made possible by our PPP forgivable loan to dramatically ramp up our resources online. Rather than just pay existing staff, we used the PPP funds to hire furloughed workers and to increase the level of effort of current staff (i.e., moved one part-time staff member to fulltime, and increased hours of another staff member. Please see the section below for more on these collections.)

While we want to pivot to online resources and better serve our members, we could not have predicted how much things would change and how great the need was and would be. As it turns out, the effort for increased online collections could not be addressed in just an 8–10 week period—that was a good start, but we should and can do more. As outlined in the Finance Committee Memo, we have a stable financial position to think and plan for the long-term. At a time with many other societies and non-profits are tightening their operations, we need to find ways to continue to expand our reach and programs.

Our membership is at its all-time high, and the new initiatives through the Friends of ASOR Program are reaching more new, public members than ever before. Yes, there will be revenue challenges in 2020 and 2021 as outlined in the Finance Committee Report; however, we are well-positioned to keep our eyes looking forward and plan for how ASOR will operate and thrive when we emerge from this global pandemic.

In the following sections, I will outline some of the challenges and financial forecasts, and I will outline some recommendations for how we proceed.

**2. Virtual Annual Meeting—The Success and the Unfavorable Financial Outcome**

I think that everyone that participated in the Virtual Annual Meeting thought that it was a success. One of the handouts on the hidden Board Page contains a breakdown of the registrations and the attendance at the Annual Meeting. It is truly outstanding that we had more paid registrants than in San Diego. We also had attendees from 39 countries and six continents. About 25% of the attendees were from outside North America—actually slightly lower than we expected for Boston.

We have almost 500 paper presentations, posters, and workshop recordings on the Virtual Annual Meeting webpage portal, and these will be available through June 2020.

With all of this success, many people have asked why we had to charge for the Virtual Meeting at all, and **why the Virtual Meeting was unfavorable from a financial standpoint**. I want to outline the figures in some detail, because these are crucial as we plan for the future...

The following is a summary of revenue and expenses from the San Diego and the VAM:

Revenue	San Diego (2019)	Virtual Meeting (2020)
-Registrations, commission, exhibitors	\$205,000	\$156,000
-All other revenue (mostly in/out)	\$21,000	\$0.00
-Gifts and misc.	\$10,000	\$0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$246,000</b>	<b>\$156,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
-Direct Expenses	-\$89,000	-\$30,000
-Salaries (per audit '19; est. '20)	-\$161,000	-\$210,000
-Other including overhead	-\$24,000	-\$3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-\$274,000</b>	<b>-\$243,000</b>
<b>NET PROFIT (LOSS)</b>	<b>(\$28,000)</b>	<b>(\$87,000)</b>

I should stress that the estimated salaries for 2020 may vary from the actual by the end of Fiscal Year 2021. For example, I have estimated Jared Koller's salary at being allocated 50% towards the VAM and Annual Meeting next year. Arlene is working 100% on the Annual Meetings. These amounts could go down depending on tasks in the spring, but Jared has already spent the majority of his time the on Annual Meeting tasks for almost half the Fiscal Year, so I don't think that the estimate will go down much. Other increases in staff time involved additional time spent by Marta, Meagan, and Britta on refunds and credits from people who registered for Boston.

Another important factor is that most the staff would have had their salaries covered by other program areas. Additional salaries for the overall budget were experienced when Jared moved from a part-time hourly employee to a fulltime salaried employee, and William Berkery increased his hours with the VAM. We will need to maintain this increased level of effort to meet the demand for online resources and a Virtual Component for 2021.

Also, I should point that revenue is reduced for the 2020 VAM because we lowered the registration rates by about 50%. Many of our members (about 520 of them) allowed ASOR to use the higher registration rates that they paid for Boston, and that was favorable in terms of revenue. The unfavorable bottom line would have been much more pronounced if not for the generosity of our members.

One might ask if the decision to lower online registration by 50% was a mistake. In hindsight, it is hard to say. The decision was made because many of our members were hurting financially, and there was the perception that a Virtual Meeting should be free. The budget

numbers above show that the VAM is not free, but that was and is the perception. We also made the decision to meet 100% of scholarship requests for current members to attend the VAM, and I think that decision was a huge success. We not only built good will, but the FOA webinars and direct gifts have supported these registration fees. We plan to continue the scholarship program for both memberships and Annual Meeting registration into 2021.

Even though revenues for the VAM are lower than we budgeted for the Boston Meeting, I think that the decisions to lower revenues for the VAM by 50% and to offer scholarships were the right ones. Other societies experienced harsh criticism from members over social media and over email discussion because they did not lower their fees nor offer scholarships to anyone that asked. I think that ASOR built much good will, and I also do not think that we would have seen the strong registration interest—especially by non-members—if we had had a higher rate.

As explained below, I think that we will have a different situation in 2021 (Chicago), but I feel very good about our decision to lower rates and to offer scholarships in 2020 (VAM).

In summary, the 2020 ASOR Virtual Annual Meeting was a success. Arlene, Jared, and the rest of the ASOR staff are to be congratulated. We rapidly increased staff capacity and purchased an online portal (OpenWater) to ensure that we could deliver a good product for our members. We accomplished that goal, and we are poised to continue growing our Annual Meeting (whether in-person or virtually) in the future.

### 3. Do we need to be virtual for 2021 (Chicago) and beyond?

I participated in the ACLS fall meeting for the Conference of Executive Officers mid-October. Operations of learned societies (in general) and Annual Meetings were big topics, and I was surprised how many societies are operating in a reactionary mode. ASOR is one of the few societies that is growing in membership, and we are one of the few actively exploring new revenue streams and moving aggressively to increase member benefits. My observations at the ACLS meeting reinforced my previous conclusion that now is the time to be bold and plan for future. **I think that ASOR can emerge from this pandemic stronger than we were before**, but we need to focus on our members and how we can serve them in a changing environment. The Annual Meeting post-pandemic will be one of our most important programs.

*First, I think that ASOR will face increasing pressure to provide a virtual component to our Annual Meeting.* While many of our members will value ASOR's in-person meeting more than ever once the pandemic has subsided, quite a few of our members are also going to think more about travel and the expenses associated with that travel. It seems that every week bring a new story about departments closing, and even some universities are reducing faculty or closing. For many of our international participants, the VAM enabled them to participate for the first-time in a conference list ASOR's Meeting.

As we think more and more about diversity, equity, and inclusion, I think that we need to consider how we can continue to provide a virtual component for our Annual Meeting. We need to think about what ASOR will look like in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and not just reacting to the challenges of 2021 or 2022. **It is my assessment (and that of Arlene Press) that ASOR members will desire (and maybe even demand) a virtual component for our meetings in the future.**

We (Arlene and I) think that a virtual component is going to be a necessity within the next five years. We discussed this assessment with the Program Committee co-chairs, and I think that there is general agreement that providing some sort of virtual component must be explored and provided for at least the next few years.

As we look towards Chicago and 2021, some people have suggested that we plan a concurrent, hybrid meeting—have an in-person meeting that is streamed live all over the world

*Logistical problems with a hybrid meeting.*

While I want to avoid saying “never” for any option, there are a number of logistical and financial challenges facing a true hybrid meeting. By “hybrid,” I mean a concurrent meeting where some people are in-person, and others are participating in real time (synchronously) from another location. At the present, the biggest challenge facing a hybrid session is the outrageous internet fees that are charged by the hotels / PSAV. These fees would easily be in the tens of thousands of dollars, and they could go over \$100,000. We simply cannot afford the hotel internet charges with our current pricing model.

Additionally, concurrent participation by remote attendees is complicated by other factors: time zones, power outages around the world, connectivity of multiple participants on different continents, and latency issues. Last but not least, we have a bandwidth issue in terms of staff capacity. An in-person meeting takes up all of our energy, and we (Arlene and I) do not see how we could support the complexities and added communication without greatly increasing our staff.

*In summary for hybrid meetings:* it is our assessment (Andy’s and Arlene’s) that a truly hybrid meeting is not feasible for the 2021–2023 timeframe.

*Practical issues facing our call of papers, 2021:*

*Session proposals.* ASOR typically issues a call for session proposals in November, and we have had deadlines for session proposals on or about December 15th. The Program Committee decided to push the deadlines back and announce the call for session proposals around December 15, 2020. Decisions will be made in January. The problem is getting people to submit proposals when travel in 2021 is uncertain—even with a vaccine in sight.

*Call for papers.* Just like the session proposals, the Program (and Arlene and I) fear that people may be hesitant to submit paper proposals until the situation with the pandemic and the vaccine is clearer. Maintaining our strong membership numbers relies on people making session and paper proposals, so we need to maintain the enthusiasm that we experienced coming out of the Virtual Annual Meeting. We are also concerned that people will wait to propose or register because they don’t want to pay a higher registration fee (like they did in Boston).

*The draw of Chicago.* Past experience has shown us that an Annual Meeting venue in a city like Chicago or Boston is one of our biggest drivers for registrations. For example, we had about 920 registrations in San Diego, and we anticipated hitting 1300 in Boston. Those registrations impact our bottom line for the Annual Meeting, but the registrations are also a huge factor for membership. We need to come up with a method to maintain enthusiasm for Chicago while factoring in people’s hesitancy to travel.

*Contractual obligations:*

We have signed a contract in good faith with the Hilton Chicago for our 2021 meeting. We are obligated to fill the contracted rooms, and we are obligated to operate in good faith to hold the in-person meeting. We have a block of rooms with 400 rooms on the peak night(s). If we don't fulfill our obligations, we are liable for \$317,595.00 (complete cancelation). The total is calculated by the total rooms and our minimum Food and Beverage (\$40,000).

We have several review dates with the Hilton to examine our meeting block. For example, we can reduce the rooms by up to 50 rooms per night on the review dates, and we have an economic downturn review that might permit us to reduce the room block by another 10%. The Hilton Chicago is currently closed, and their corporate office has agreed to let us postpone the next review date until January 29, 2021. Right now, our attrition is 70% of the booked rooms, but we may ask for a higher attrition rate. If we exercise all of our reductions, that would translate to somewhere between 220–245 rooms per night to avoid the cancelation penalty mentioned above.

In addition to contractual obligation, our members want us to hold an in-person meeting. If we can safely meet in person, an Annual Meeting in Chicago is what our members desire. Such a meeting is also what will advance ASOR and our mission.

**4. The Solution that the Program Committee has approved—have our cake and eat it too.**

As announced during the Members' Meeting, we are planning *both in-person and virtual components in 2021*: We will have an in-person meeting in Chicago (Nov. 17–20, 2021), and a virtual meeting in December (Dec. 9–12). There will be one (non-reduced) registration fee for both components.

*Allow participant choice for presentations.* Just as schools and universities are allowing students to choose in-person or remote learning, we would allow our members to make an in-person paper proposal or a virtual paper proposal. They may even propose both. We will have one registration for both components to our Annual Meeting. People can attend both components whether or not they are presenting in the other component.

We intend to continue our commitment to meeting 100% of scholarship requests from current members. The only difference is that we will offer 25%, 50%, and 100% scholarships—people can choose what they need.

If the pandemic prevents us from meeting in person, we can pivot more easily to a virtual meeting. The availability of the vaccine makes the in-person meeting more likely, but ASOR will be ready if the pandemic makes meeting in person impossible. There would not be a need for resubmit proposals, and our members are already comfortable with the online platform.

*Why start with two types of proposals / two components to the Annual Meeting?* We cannot shift to a virtual only meeting right now because of our contract and good faith agreement with the hotel. Moreover, our members want an in-person meeting. Yet, our concern is that we will not see the level of proposals that we need to make the Annual Meeting successful if we start with an in-person meeting only. We need to build on the excitement for a meeting in Chicago, but we need to let our members know that we are not going to force them to do anything that is not safe. We also think that we have an opportunity to recruit new members and new proposals that will strengthen our meeting and ASOR in general. We have heard that we have members who attend

SBL that cannot present at ASOR—this dual-component meeting will be an opportunity for those members to make a proposal for a virtual paper. The same is true for members that attend MESA and AAA. The dual-component Meeting would not be a hybrid meeting, but this type of meeting would accomplish many of the inclusivity goals.

*Do we allow people to shift types of proposals (i.e., from in-person to virtual)?* We think that we would have to allow people who proposed in-person papers or sessions to shift to virtual if they do not feel safe. We do not see how we can in good faith tell someone who does not feel safe that they cannot change.

*Why are the prices the same?* The short answer is that virtual meetings are not free or cheap (see the budget analysis above). True, people can hold Zoom gatherings on their own, but ASOR Meeting provides two things that individuals cannot provide: 1) peer review; and 2) a structure and oversight provided by the Program Committee and the ASOR staff.

*Can we commit to meeting 100% of scholarship requests?* We will need to fundraise to carry out this goal, but we can make this commitment. We will increase our FOA webinars, and we are planning a “webinarathon” in April. We are also planning a Virtual Auction and other activities. Based on our successes to date, I’m confident that we can meet the need.

*Carbon Neutrality—how important is it?*

It is my assessment that becoming carbon neutral by 2025 will be just as important as including some sort of virtual components in our Annual Meetings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Of course, virtual and carbon neutral are related. Not only is this the right thing to do, but I’m convinced that this is the smart thing to do. Our members are engaged with protecting the cultural heritage of the world, and protecting the physical environment is related.

As I stated above, I think that now is the time to be bold and to think in visionary ways. ASOR can set itself apart by being one of the first learned societies, if not the first, to make this type of commitment. Preliminary analysis leads us to conclude that this is a goal that can be accomplished with a combination of meeting in hub cities, partnering with hotels on carbon neutral initiatives, and purchasing carbon offsets.

## **5. Online Resources—Another critical effort for ASOR to thrive post-pandemic**

As mentioned briefly above and in the Finance Committee Report, ASOR has greatly increased the number of webpages dedicated to online collections. All of these resources are crowd-sourced, so we are grateful to our members for donating their images and time. We plan to continue this effort throughout 2021 and beyond, and it will entail a significant amount of staff time even though the images are donated from members.

The two largest sections that have been added to the website are Educational Resources (<http://www.asor.org/resources/educational-materials/>) and the Photo / Map / Archaeological Site Collections (<http://www.asor.org/resources/photo-collection>).

**Educational Resources:** We made a lot of progress on these pages with PPP funding. We have some designated funding to make further progress for collections that focus on teachers and BIPOC scholars, but we will need additional gift or grant funding to advance education resources.

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

**EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS** ^

**K-5**

- ACTIVITIES**
- LESSON PLANS**
- RESOURCES**

**6-12**

- ACTIVITIES**
- LESSON PLANS**
- RESOURCES**

**POSTSECONDARY**


- SYLLABI**
- LECTURES AND VIDEOS**
- RESOURCES**

**PHOTO COLLECTION** v

**MEMBER RESOURCES**

**ASOR ARCHIVES**


**FRIENDS OF ASOR** v




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Over the past month, the / teaching. We encourage yo the public. Please email M offers to volunteer in helpi to all of you who have alre

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**Photo Collection (including maps and sites):** Our members have reported that one of their biggest needs is for images that can be used for teaching and presentations without the need to write to dozens of image owners for copyright permission. Thus, we have a crowd-sourced a collection of images available under a Creative Commons 4.0 license. The image quality is good for PPT presentations, but not for print publications. The permissions require that users ask permission from the person who submitted an image for print publication use, but users do not need to ask further permission to use in teaching or for non-commercial presentations. We currently have uploaded 495 photos, and other 45 images have been submitted but not uploaded.



## Browse by Country

Armenia | Cyprus | Egypt | Ethiopia | Georgia | Greece | Iraq | Israel | Jerusalem | Jordan | Lebanon | Libya | Syria | Tunisia | Turkey | West Bank

### ARMENIA

ARARAT PLAIN ▾

ARENI CAVE ▾

EREBUNI ▾

MARGAHOVIT AREA ▾

NORAVANK MONASTERY ▾

SEVAN ▾

^ Top of Browse by Country

Users can search by time period, category, or browse by country. The image above shows the countries currently included. In addition to the almost 550 submitted photos, we are getting more donated submissions every week. We hope to add staff capacity to keep up with these submissions.

### TURKEY

Includes Kurdish regions

#### ANI ^



Ani, Turkey: Bridge over Araxes



Ani, Turkey: Church of Saint Gregory of Abughamrentz



Ani, Turkey: Citadel Walls



Ani, Turkey: Citadel Walls 02



Ani, Turkey: Holy Redeemer Church



Ani, Turkey: Houses



Ani, Turkey: Mosque of Manuchihr



Ani, Turkey: View of Araxes from Ani



Ani, Turkey: View of Araxes from Ani 02

#### ANTALYA ^



Antalya, Turkey: Date Palms

#### ANTAKYA (ANTIOCH) ^



Antakya (Antioch), Turkey: Mosaic From the House of the Drunken Dionysus

#### CAPPADOCIA ^



Cappadocia, Turkey: Walls and Road

#### EPHESUS ^



Ephesus, Turkey: Pipes Used For Bringing Drinking Water From Aqueduct

As seen in the screen shot on the left, some locations have many photos, and some have only one photo. We are working on add more photos that are significant for teaching and public presentations by site, and we anticipate that we will need to recruit “Country Editors” to help the ASOR staff with solicitation of the most needed images and with weeding out ones that are not as important.

One big advantage of these collections is that ASOR is able to assemble images from across North Africa and the Middle East. There are barriers for some scholars accessing images from countries like Iraq or Lebanon, and other scholars have barriers for images from Israel. ASOR can be the neutral partner to assemble images from across the regions.



## Museum pages:

One of the greatest needs for our members is to be able to use images from museum collections around the world. Many museums allow online users to acquire images for lectures without paying a fee or asking for specific permission, but many museums do not. Our pro bono attorney (Arnold and Porter) has informed us that ASOR members who have taken photos at museums around the world can share those images as their creative property.

We only have a prototype webpage on the ASOR website right now. We also want to contact some of our professional members who are also museum professionals for their counsel on how best to construct these pages so that they are seen as welcome by the various museums. I should stress that we only make available for download images that are suitable for PPT presentations and not for print publication. We do not intend to share the higher-resolution images until we receive further feedback and input.

We see these museum pages as another way that ASOR members can help each other. Some people have been able to visit museums in Istanbul and Tunisia, but not in Israel. Other members have been to Iraq or Georgia, and they can share images that many members might not have access to. Example: <http://www.asor.org/asor-photo-collection/tunisia/bardo-museum>



ONLINE RESOURCES

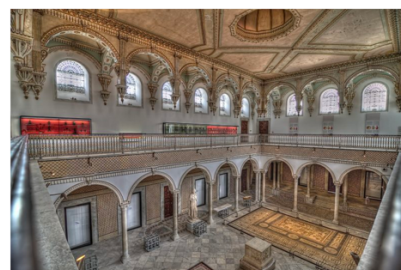
## ASOR Photo Collections

### Bardo Museum Photo Collection

**Description:** The Bardo National Museum is located in Tunis, Tunisia and is the largest museum in Tunisia. The museum is located in Mhammed Bey's palace which was built between 1859 and 1864 and its collections showcase all periods of Tunisia's history. The Bardo houses the largest collection of mosaics in the world as well as collections from the World Heritage sites of Carthage, Dougga, El Djem, Kairouan, Sousse, and Tunis. One of the highlights of the collection is a Roman ship cargo of Hellenistic Greek art: bronze pieces, marble sculptures, and furniture. The ship was wrecked off the coast of Cape Africa, near the town of Mahdia.

The Bardo Museum started as the Alaoui Museum in 1885. The Tunisian Prime Minister, Kheireddine Pacha, sought to provide a national home for antiquities which might otherwise be part of private collections. The French Protectorate undertook conservation work on the Bardo palace and transformed the interior into exhibition halls intended to host national archaeological, historical, and ethnological collections. With Tunisian independence in 1956, the name changed to the Bardo Museum after the fortified city of Bardo.

The Museum underwent a series of renovations in the 2000s and introduced new departments in Prehistory, the Phoenician-Punic civilization, the Numidian world, the underwater Mahdia collection, Late Antiquity, and Islamic civilization. Today, the museum's mission is the preservation of collections as a public service to ensure equal access to education and culture. ([The Bardo Museum](#))



(Wikimedia Commons/Whalid Mahfoudh)



### Image Collection

[BORJ HELLAL](#) ▾

[MAHDIA](#) ▾

[SOUSSE](#) ▾

## Map Pages:

This is another area where our members can help each other. For the time being, all of the maps that have been donated have come from one person—who also was the creator of the maps. We currently have about 50 maps uploaded.

We hope to broaden this resource by making it possible for ASOR members to request InDesign or other editable copies of the maps. Our intention is to develop a growing crowd-sourced map collection that would help people with their research and publication needs. The hope is to allow researchers to use an editable version of maps with the express commitment that the researcher (or the designer that they hire) will share the newly created and editable version of the map with ASOR's Map Collection. Many scholars apply for grants to create maps for books or articles. The ASOR resource would grow organically and be available to all current members who agree to share the edited maps with the ASOR collection.



## ONLINE RESOURCES

# ASOR Photo Collections: Maps

## Maps by Region

### AEGEAN ^



Map: Abasid Period Near East



Map: Kingdoms and Regions of the Hellenistic Ancient Near East



Map: Kingdoms and Regions of the Hellenistic Greece and Anatolia



Map : Major Fault Lines in the Near East

### ANATOLIA v

### ARABIAN PENINSULA v

### CAUCASUS v

### EGYPT ^



Map: Abasid Period Near East



Map: Iron Age III Empires



Map: Iron Age IIIv2 Empires



Map: Kingdoms and Regions of the Hellenistic Ancient Near East



Map: Kingdoms and Regions of the Hellenistic Levant and Mesopotamia



Map : Major Fault Lines in the Near East

Further Examples of maps:

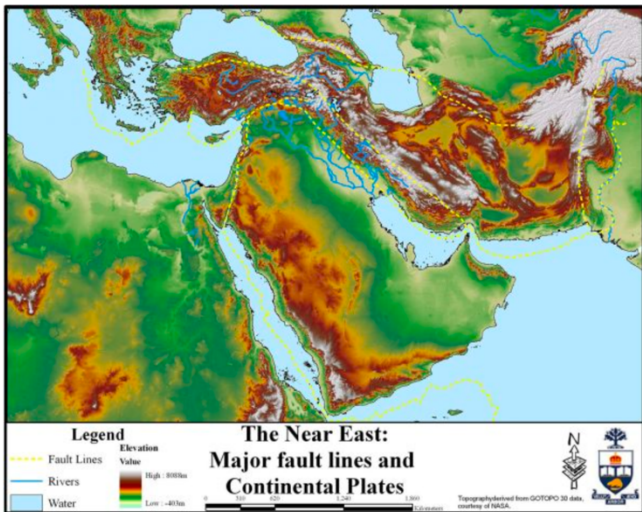


Photo ID: PID000502 - [Download Image](#)

**Map: Major Fault Lines in the Near East**

**Region:** Aegean, Anatolia, Caucasus, Levant, Mesopotamia, Arabian Peninsula, Egypt

**Description:** Topographical map of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East with major fault lines noted with yellow dashed lines

**Category:** Maps

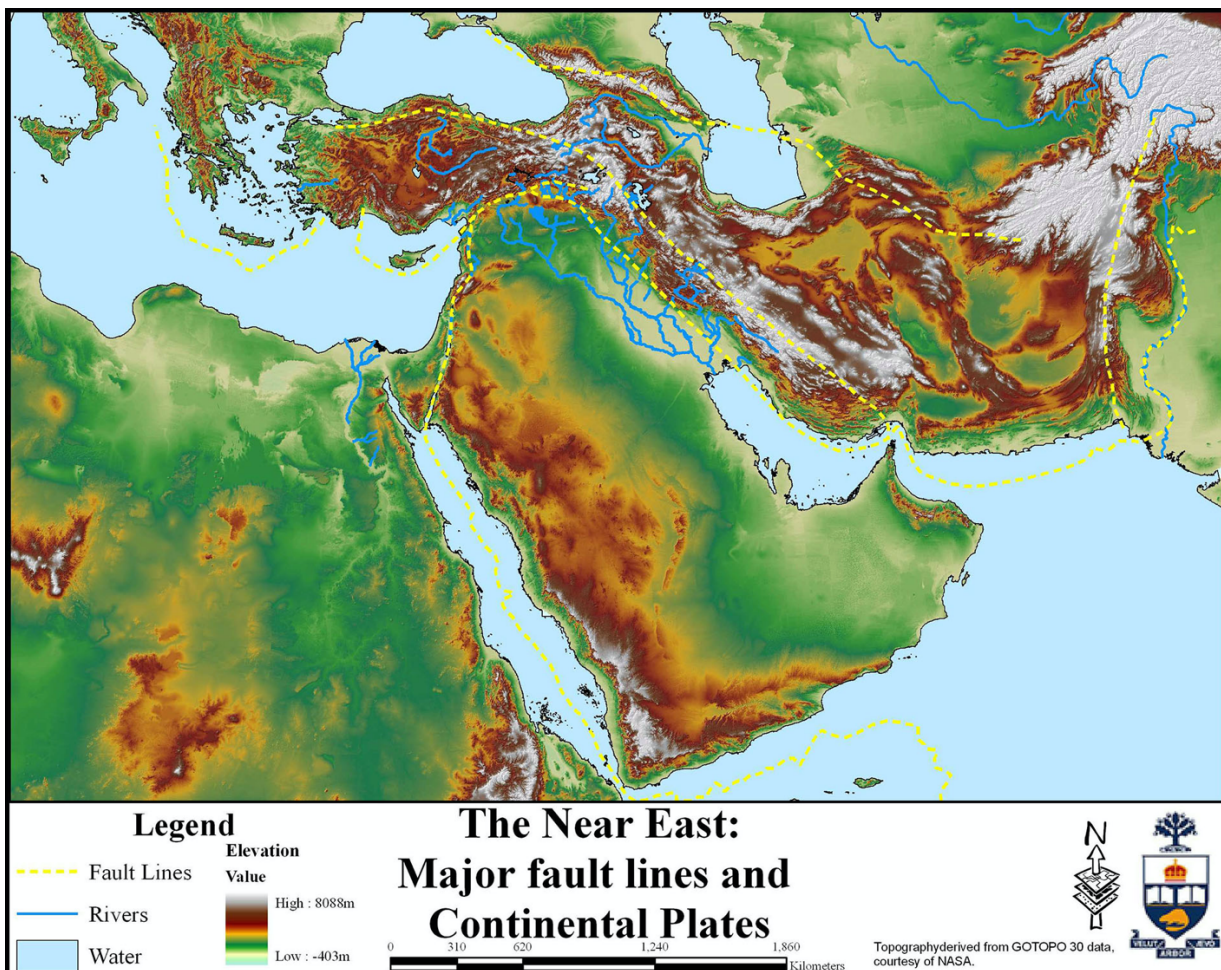
**Type:** Topographic Maps

**Period:** Modern

**Date:** 2005

**Credit:** Stephen Batiuk, September 2005

[Back to Browsing Maps](#)

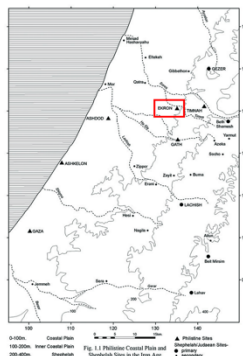


## Site specific webpage: (Ekron is a prototype of the design)

### Ekron (Tel Miqne) Photo Collection

**Description:** Tel Miqne (Khirbet el-Muqanna'), 22 miles southwest of Jerusalem (map reference 1356.1315), identified with biblical Ekron, one of the capitals of the Philistine Pentapolis. Located on western edge of Inner Coastal Plain—frontier zone that separated Philistia and Judah—tell overlooks ancient network of highways leading northeast from Ashdod to Gezer. One of the largest Iron Age sites excavated in Israel, it comprises a 40-acre lower city (which expanded to more than 75 acres in the late Iron Age I) and a 10-acre upper city on the Northeast Acropolis. A joint project of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 14 excavation seasons were conducted between 1981 and 1996 under the direction of Professors Trude Dothan and Seymour Gitin. (Provided by Seymour Gitin)

**Chronology:** MBIB fortifications in upper and lower cities. Stratum XI (17th c.–first half of 16th c., LBI-II), unfortified Strata X–VIII (2nd half 16th century–1st quarter 12th c.) only in upper city. Last Canaanite city Stratum VIII destroyed. Iron Age I, fortified city, Stratum VII–IV (2nd quarter 12th c.–1st quarter 10th c.), upper and lower cities. Stratum VII, characterized by Philistine 1 (previously designated Mycenaean IIIc.1) pottery; Strata VI–V city characterized by Philistine 2 (Bichrome) pottery; and Stratum IV by Philistine 3 (debased) pottery and red-slipped and burnished ware. Iron I city destroyed and lower city abandoned. Upper city refortified in Strata III–II (10th–8th c.). Ekron became Assyrian vassal city-state in Stratum I (7th c.), which contained largest ancient olive oil production center excavated to date. Ekron Royal Dedicatory Inscription found in elite zone. Iron II city destroyed during 604 BCE campaign of the Neo-Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Site only partially resettled (1st quarter 6th c.). Ekron had limited Persian/Hellenistic, Roman/Byzantine, and Islamic phases.



Some dig directors have donated images, drawings, plans, etc., that other ASOR members may use for teaching and for presentations. We plan to limit these sites to ASOR-affiliated projects. To date, Sy Gitin and Eric and Carol Meyers (separate sites of course) have donated these images. The following is a prototype of Ekron (Miqne). We envision these site-specific pages to include a brief summary and chronology written by the excavator.

### Image Collection

GENERAL SITE ▾

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE IIB (STRATUM XI) ▾

LATE BRONZE AGE I-II (STRATA X-VII) ▾

IRON AGE I (STRATA VII-IV) ▾

IRON AGE II (STRATA III-I) ▾

### Image Collection

GENERAL SITE ▲



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Aerial Color Photo

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE IIB (STRATUM XI) ▾

LATE BRONZE AGE I-II (STRATA X-VII) ▾

IRON AGE I (STRATA VII-IV) ▲



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Building 350 Strata VC-IVA



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Building 352 Strata VIIA-VC



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Conical Loomweights



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Iron Knife with Ivory Handle



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Phoenician-Style Bowls, Chalices, and Juglets



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Sherds

IRON AGE II (STRATA III-I) ▲



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Aerial Photo, Field IV



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Ekron Royal Dedicatory Inscription



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Four-Horned Incense Altar Set into a Niche in Olive Oil Factory



Israel, Tel Miqne-Ekron: Olive Oil Industrial Zone

## 6. Diversity Initiatives—including cultural heritage

While the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force has just started its work, ASOR has been carrying out some initiatives that we will want to integrate with the work of the DEI Task Force. As they move forward with their work, I look forward to better coordinating our current efforts with the DEI Task Force in 2021. Many of the activities described below were already in process at the beginning of the fiscal year.

### A. Project in cooperation with Archaeology in the Community (AITC).

Trustees may remember that ASOR applied for a NEH CARES Grant to support hiring furloughed humanities specialists to develop online and teaching resources. This NEH grant would have greatly advanced the online collections for teaching described above. ASOR applied for the NEH grant in partnership with AITC—an organization who has specialized in serving under-served students in Maryland and DC through archaeology programs. The Executive Director of AITC is a Howard University alumna who is on their adjunct faculty.

ASOR received a designated gift of \$9,000 to carry out part of the work that had been proposed in the above-mentioned NEH grant. The focused grant will support four videos that feature scholars who are BIPOC, and the videos and accompanying lesson plans will support a specific requirement in the Common Core or Standard of Learning (used in VA) for high school world history classes.

One goal of this project is to reinforce for secondary school students that BIPOC scholars are successful archaeologists and scholars in our related disciplines. A second goal is to provide secondary school teaching resources with the aim of expanding ASOR's membership reach to secondary school educators.

### B. Creation of at least two summer stipends for undergraduates who are BIPOC

This scholarship initiative arose out of conversations between the CAP chair (Steve Falconer), the chair of the scholarship committee (Kate Grossman), and the chair of the DEI Task Force (Erin Darby). CAP decided to forego awarding dig scholarships this summer (2021) because of the global pandemic. Rather, ASOR will award 20 summer stipends to student to conduct a research project for an ASOR-affiliated excavation project. Two of these stipends will be designated for BIPOC students (maybe undergraduates), and they will work with an ASOR member who is the PI of an excavation project. The goal is to involve more students from under-represented groups in ASOR.

ASOR needs to raise funds (\$3600) to support these two summer stipends, and the development committee will work with CAP and me on that goal.

### C. Fundraising with the Development Committee.

Conversations have just begun in the Development Committee about raising funds to establish an endowment (maybe \$200,000) that can generate \$10,000 per year to be used for scholarships or stipends to support student involvement by BIPOC in ASOR or in ASOR-related research projects. The concept is similar to #B, but the goal is to endow funds to promote increased involvement in ASOR by under-represented groups. The Development Committee has

determined that this is a desideratum, and we are exploring if a donor or donors might be interested in giving a challenge gift to support this initiative.

#### D. ASOR's Cultural Heritage work continues

I'm pleased to report that ASOR has received two new grants and one amendment (increase) from the U.S. Embassy to Libya. The total of all grants (4 in total) is approximately \$300,000. Two of the grants are AFCP (Ambassador's Fund) and two are embassy grants.

ASOR hopes to complete the amended embassy grant (totaling about \$105,000) by the end of December. This grant focuses on antitrafficking efforts and capacity building of local law enforcement.

The two AFCP grants focus on education and stewardship programs that undertake outreach training and education of children and youth, with the goal of promoting the understanding of cultural heritage as something that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries. These programs have brought new members into ASOR, and they have increased ASOR's visibility in Libya and in neighboring countries as well.

The fourth (current) grant supported membership in ASOR and participation in the ASOR Annual Meeting by 10 Libyan scholars. All but one of these scholars became introduced to ASOR through the grants mentioned above. These Libyan colleagues presented 8 papers and posters in the VAM last month. ASOR pioneered participation by Arabic speakers with consecutive translation in order to facilitate involvement by in-country stakeholders would not be able to interact with ASOR members otherwise.

In addition to these grants, ASOR awarded membership and VAM scholarships to 20+ participants from Lebanon, 3 people from Iran, and 5+ from Oman. All of these efforts are increasing diversity and participation in ASOR. Based on the success of the VAM participation, we plan to seek more grant funding or donations to wider the participation in 2021.

## 7. Development Efforts:

### A. *Annual Fund and Stewardship—the core of ASOR's development*

Each year the core of ASOR's fundraising effort consists of our Annual Appeal letters and stewardship (thanking and staying in touch with our donors) efforts. For more than a decade, we have had a general schedule of sending out letters and thank you notes. When we follow that schedule—while giving our supporters options for giving in addition to unrestricted giving—we tend to bring in more financial support.

Because of the pandemic, ASOR decided to utilize an external printer and mailer for our 2020 Annual Appeal letter. This vendor (a printer from Worcester, MA that we have used several times) produced letterhead and return envelopes that used "ASOR" and avoided "Oriental." The vendor sent out about 1500 first-class letters in mid-September. Shortly after that mailing, members of the Development Committee wrote to about 15 people each (our most generous donors) to highlight that the Annual Appeal letter had been sent. The Development Committee members wrote to all donors who have given for 10 years consecutively, or gave over \$2500 the prior year.

The second round of our Annual Fund schedule is to send out notes to all donors who gave the prior year (FY20) or two years prior (FY19), but not so far this year (FY21). Last Friday, we sent out 441 emails to this group of donors. To date, 27 people have responded with a gift or pledge totaling \$7,131. The development committee will start writing to people individually next week to encourage past donors to consider a gift by the end of the calendar year. We will send out one member-wide email blast in mid-December encouraging members and Friends to think of ASOR. In past years we have contacted prior-year donors by a hard-copy notecard, but we opted for email this year because we are working mostly remotely during the pandemic.

Moving into 2021, we will continue to follow our prior year pattern for solicitations—Fellowship Madness in March (in 2021, it will be for membership and Annual Meeting scholarships), and then end-of-the-fiscal-year emails and snail-mail letters in May and June.

If you have not already done so, I encourage you to join me in making a pledge or new gift before the end of the calendar year.

#### *B. Stewardship letters from Development Committee members*

I am very grateful to Lynn Dodd and the development committee for their stewardship work. Our supporters hear from me and the ASOR staff frequently, but they prefer to hear from their peers about how financial support of ASOR is important and transformative. Starting in April, development committee members began writing hand-written letters and note cards to our most generous friends. I think that most or all trustees have received at least one letter so far. While we can never sufficiently thank our members and donors, I think that these efforts are a great start. Thank you to everyone who have written several dozen letters. **If any other trustees would be willing to help us in Fiscal Year 2021, we would be grateful to have more people help with these letters.**

#### *C. Legacy Circle Recruitment*

Growth in the Legacy Circle (people who have made a planned gift or a legacy gift) has been another goal for Development Committee this year. Currently, there are 32 members of this Circle, and we had a goal of reaching 40 members by the time of the Annual Meeting. With thanks to Richard Coffman for helping Lynn Dodd and me draft an excellent letter to encourage some of our longest and most general donors to consider joining this Circle, members of the Development Committee volunteered to contact people on this list to consider a planned gift. I have to admit that I have been the reason for the delay because I haven't sent out the letters—I was waiting for the Annual Fund letter to go out, and then I was focused on the Annual Meeting. Lynn has already sent me her electronic signature, and I plan to send the letters out in the next few weeks. Committee members will then follow up with personal contacts.

Recent Legacy Gifts from Tom and Marilyn Schaub, P. E. MacAllister, and Norma Kershaw remind us all how transformative this type of support for ASOR can be. See <http://www.asor.org/donate/legacy-circle> for a list of current members. If you have made a planned gift, or would like more information about the Circle, please contact me.

#### D. Friends of ASOR Outreach and Fundraising Initiatives

The FOA Webinar Program is one of the most encouraging new initiatives that ASOR has launched in 2020. We attempted a webinar program about six years ago, but the technology was not adequate—at least what we could afford. With the advent of a Zoom, both lecturers and attendees have gained basic proficiency with virtual meeting and webinar technology. By the time of the Board Meeting next week, we will have held four webinars.

The FOA Webinars are fundraisers. Registration is complimentary for sustaining members, \$5 for members, and \$10 for non-members. We also have sponsorships (tax-deductible) available. To date, the webinars have generated almost \$5,000 in revenue, all of which has been used to fund membership and Annual Meeting scholarships. As of December 8, we have awarded more scholarships than we have received from the webinars. We anticipate that the revenue received from the December 13 (Eric Meyers) webinar will put us back in the black for those scholarships.

These webinars have been extremely successful in several ways. Not only have we raised scholarship funds, but the webinars have brought about 500 new people into contact with ASOR—and they now receive the *Ancient Near East Today* weekly. About 50 of these new contacts have joined with an associate (or higher) membership. This has been a very effective way to engage new, public members. As we move into 2021, we hope to expand the webinars to include museum tours and panel discussions. We would like to move to twice a month, but that is contingent on staff bandwidth.

How can you help with the webinars? We need your partnership by working with Felice Herman ([membership@asor.org](mailto:membership@asor.org)) to advertise the webinars. We also need ideas for tours, panel discussions, and lectures. We also need volunteers to give presentations. Finally, please consider being a sponsor for one of the webinars. Questions? Please e-mail Felice.

#### Concluding Comments:

It has become cliché to say that 2020 has been a year like no other. For ASOR, I hope that we will look back on 2020 and say that it was a year where we boldly planned for what we want ASOR to be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are still five years away, but we need to continue thinking strategically so that we can be stronger as we exit the global pandemic.

We will face some financial pressures during 2021, and maybe during 2022. Yet, we can be forward-looking as we meet our members' needs with more and more online resources in an environment that will be more and more globally diverse.

The selection of a new name, while maintaining our historical and well-known acronym ASOR, is well-timed. I think that the new name—which allows to move into the future in a number of ways—puts us in a good position to continually re-envision ourselves while maintaining our strong connections to the past and our historical mission. I urge us to use this moment to determine which programs are the most important so that everything that ASOR does will be sustainable in the future.

Finally, but certainly not least, I want to thank the ASOR staff for working so hard and well over the last nine months. They have been amazing, and they have transitioned to working mostly from home without complaint. I hope that you'll reach out to them and express your appreciation as well.