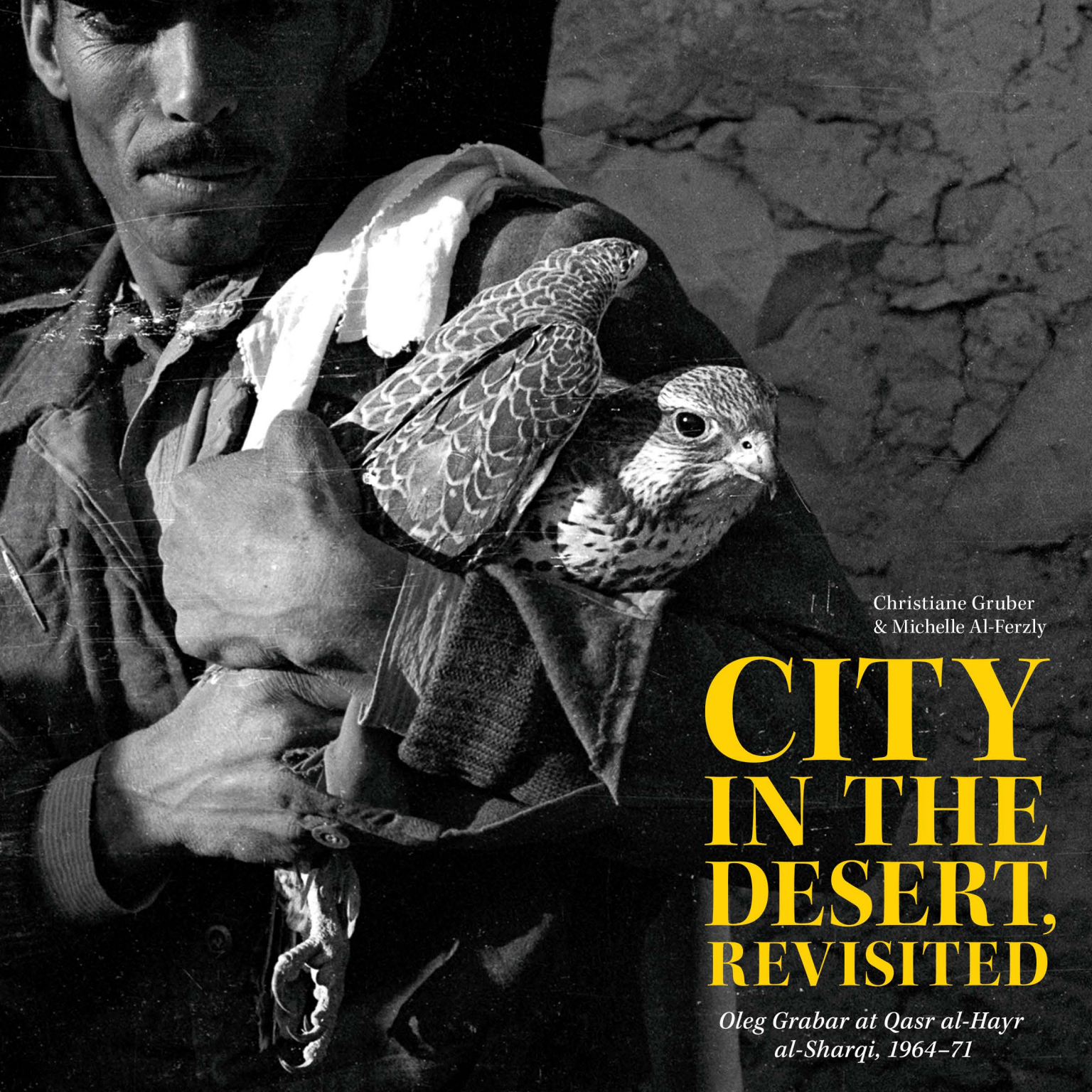

Christiane Gruber
& Michelle Al-Ferzly

CITY IN THE DESERT, REVISITED

Oleg Grabar at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, 1964–71

CITY IN THE DESERT, REVISITED

Front Cover Image
A Bedouin workman holding a falcon, 1964 season.
1964b_13P01, Roll 1964b, Box 27, File 6, 1964.

Back Cover Image
View of the entrance of the Small Enclosure, 1966 season.
1964b_13P01, Roll 1964b, Box 27, File 6, Box of Negatives 1964–1966, Sheet 1966g.

ISBN 978-1-7330504-0-1

Published by
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology
434 South State Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1390

Edited by Leslie Schramer, with assistance from Joseph V. Frankl
Cover Design by Eric Campbell

Distributed by
ISD
70 Enterprise Drive, Suite 2
Bristol, CT 06010 USA
orders@isdistribution.com

This book is available for free download at
lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/publications

Printed by Sheridan Books in Chelsea, Michigan.

♾ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO
Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper)

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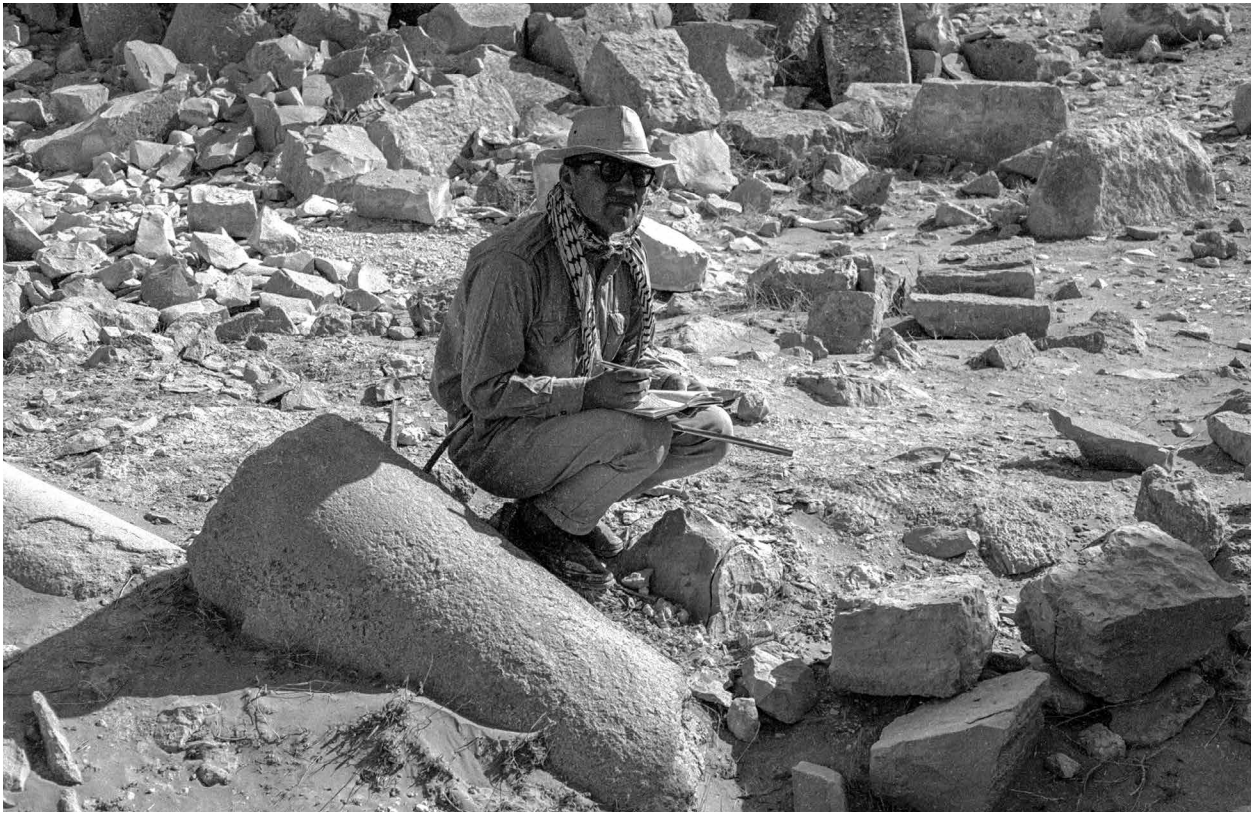
Oleg Grabar at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, 1964–71

CHRISTIANE GRUBER
AND MICHELLE AL-FERZLY

WITH A FOREWORD BY
RENATA HOLOD

Kelsey Museum Publication 17
Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2021

In honor of the life and work of Khalid al-Asʿad.



الخَيْلُ وَاللّيْلُ وَالبَيْداءُ تَعرِفُني وَالسّيفُ وَالرّمحُ والقرْطاسُ وَالقَلَمْ

The steed, the night, and the desert all know me,
As do the sword, the spear, the paper, and the pen.

— Abu Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (d. 965 CE)

Contents

Acknowledgments

This publication showcases the contents of the Qasr al-Hayr excavation archive held at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This book, which started as a seminar project, would not have been possible without the help of Sebastián Encina, Kelsey Museum collections manager, who graciously provided access and guidance to the archives over the course of nearly three years of research. For further information about the archives, see "Qasr al-Hayr, Syria," https://lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/research/past-field-projects/qasr-al-hayr-syria.html.

At the Kelsey Museum, we are also thankful to Leslie Schramer for having copyedited this book manuscript and shepherding it through publication, as well as to Terry Wilfong, former director, and Nicola Terrenato, current director, for their enthusiastic support of our project.

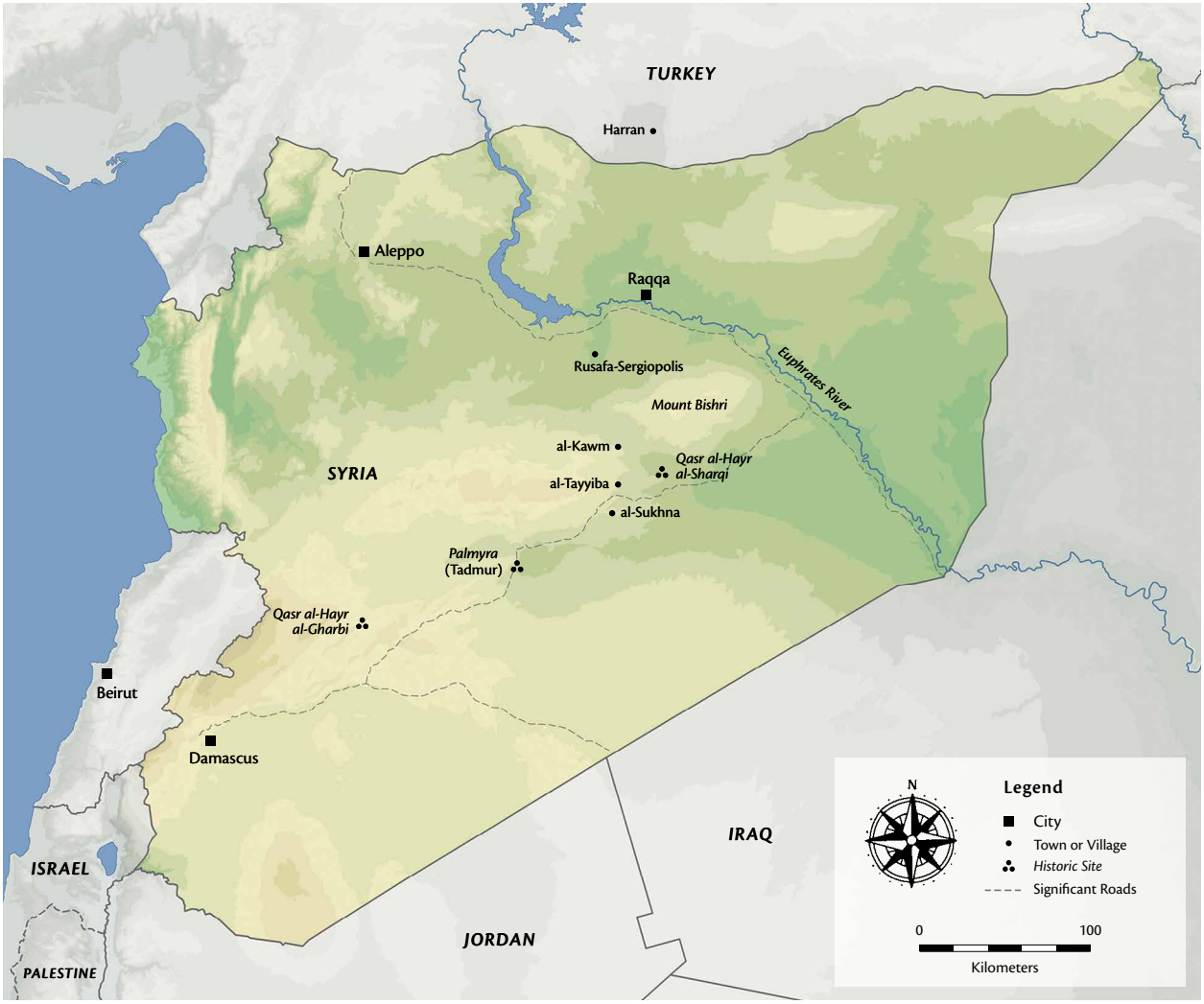
Many thanks go to the staff at the History of Art Department's Visual Resources Collection, especially Sally Bjork, photographer and digital imaging specialist; Cathy Pense Rayos, head of Visual Resources Collections; and Matthew Quirk, multimedia specialist. The digitization of the photographs and letters included in this volume are a result of their efforts.

A warm thank you is also due to Erin Fitzpatrick, who created a 230-page descriptive concordance of Oleg Grabar's Qasr al-Hayr archives, as well as to Ani Kalousdian, who spearheaded the monumental effort of cataloguing over one thousand photographs from the archive and who contributed five catalogue entries to this book. We also are grateful to Bihter Esener and Nicola Barham, who lent their expertise to the photograph entries, and to Renata Holod, who spent several days

speaking with us, in Ann Arbor and Philadelphia, about her experiences at Qasr al-Hayr, and kindly contributed the Preface to this volume.

We also extend our thanks to the volume's external reviewers, whose comments and suggestions allowed us to improve the prose and chisel the contents of our two essays in particular. And last but not least, we thank the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan for having provided a publication subvention to support the inclusion of images in this volume.

Map of Syria


TURKEY
Harran
Aleppo
Raqqa
Rusafa-Sergiopolis
Euphrates River
Mount Bishri
al-Kawm
Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi
SYRIA
al-Tayyiba
al-Sukhna
Palmyra (Tadmur)
Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi
Beirut
Damascus
ISRAEL
PALESTINE
JORDAN
IRAQ
N
Legend
City
Town or Village
Historic Site
Significant Roads
0
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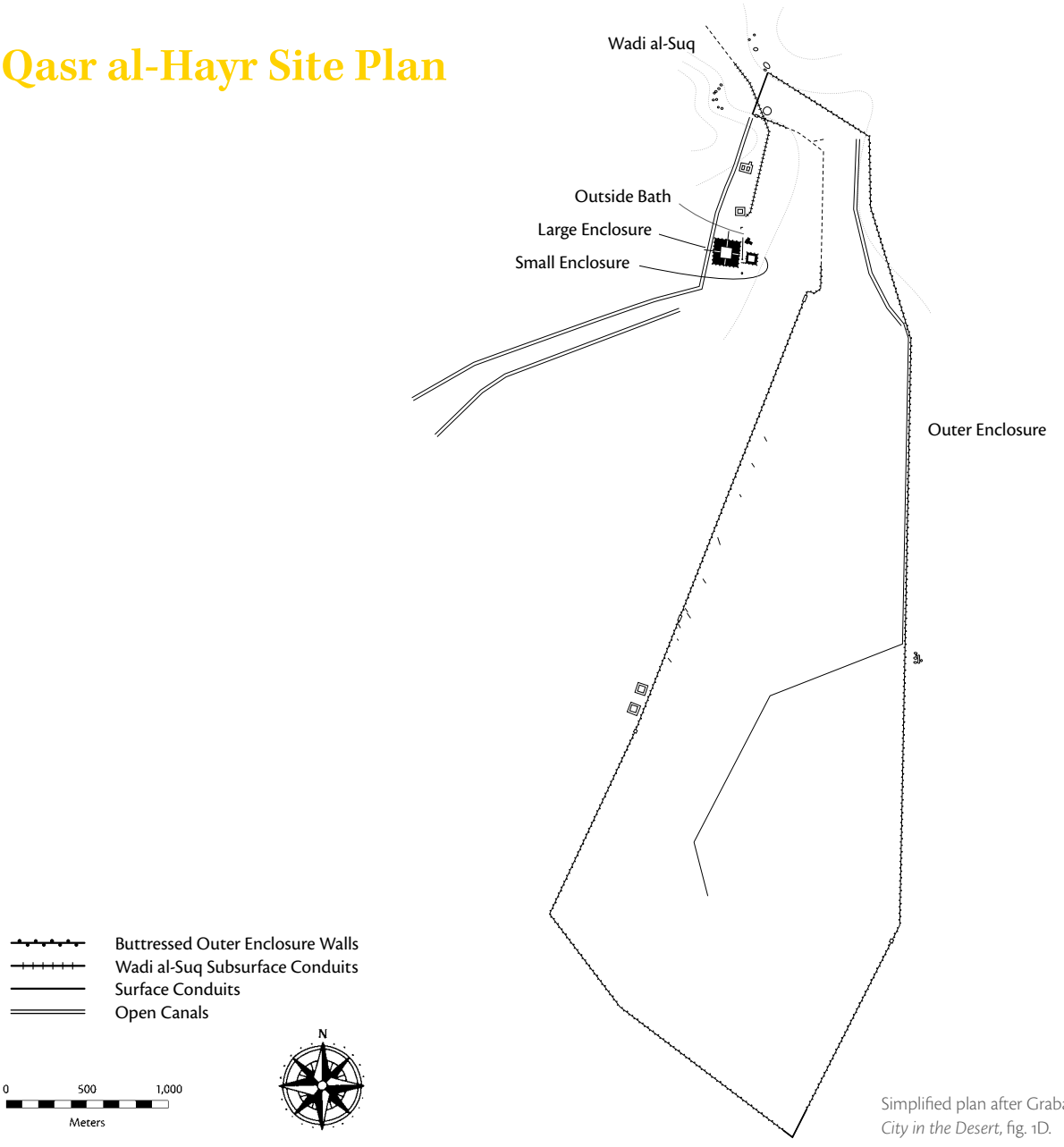
Kilometers

Qasr al-Hayr Site Plan



Simplified plan after Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, fig. 1D.

Excavation Timeline

1956	George Forsyth leads a reconnaissance mission through Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa in search of ancient sites to excavate. Oleg Grabar accompanies Forsyth and visits Qasr al-Hayr for the first time.
1962	Grabar begins preparation for the Qasr al-Hayr excavation.
1964	First excavation season (September and October); cut short due to a hepatitis outbreak. Excavation team: Adil Ayyash, Selçuk Batur, Luke Gjurasic, Oleg Grabar, Robert Hamilton, Doğan Kuban, Peter Pick, William Trousdale.
1966	Second excavation season (April, May, June). Excavation team: Selçuk Batur, Douglas Braidwood, Oleg Grabar, Robert Hamilton, Renata Holod, Neil MacKenzie, Peter Pick, Linda Rhodes, William Trousdale. *See photograph 33 for group photo.*
1967–1968	The third excavation season is suspended due to the cutting of diplomatic ties between the United States and Syria as a result of the Six-Day War (June 5–10, 1967). Selçuk Batur, Oleg Grabar, and William Trousdale made a short trip to the site in June 1968.
1969	Excavation resumes; fourth season (April, May, June). Excavation team: Fred Anderegg, Ülkü Bates, Selçuk Batur, Oleg Grabar, Renata Holod, James Knudstad, Hayat Salam, Priscilla Soucek, William Trousdale.
1970	Fifth excavation season (April, May, June). Discovery of the Outside Bath marks a turning point in the expedition. Excavation team: Robert McCormick Adams, Fred Anderegg, Oleg Grabar, Renata Holod, James Knudstad, Laura Schneider, William Trousdale. *See figures 1 and 2.3 for group photos.*
1971	Sixth and final excavation season (April, May, June). Excavation team: Fred Anderegg, Oleg Grabar, Heleni Hadzantoni, Renata Holod, James Knudstad, William Trousdale.
1978	The official excavation monograph, *City in the Desert*, is published.

Preface

Renata Holod

It is an honor and a pleasure to write a few words as a preface to a volume that harkens back to the time when I first arrived in the area of the Near and Middle East. It was 1966 and I had just finished my master's work at the University of Michigan under Oleg Grabar's supervision, when he asked me to join the team excavating Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. Located to the east of Palmyra in the Syrian steppe, this site had been paired with another "castle of the protected enclosure" (*qasr al-hayr*), the one west of Palmyra: Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi. I accepted his invitation.

Although I had studied the Arabic and Turkish languages during my four undergraduate years at the University of Toronto, experiencing them as they are used in daily life was very different. In Damascus, I was confronted with the formal, bureaucratic Arabic of the Department of Antiquities as well as the everyday Arabic of the market (*suq*). Different still were the vocabularies, pronunciations, and turns of phrase I encountered at Tadmur/Palmyra and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, whose local workmen were either residents of the nearby villages al-Tayyiba and al-Sukhna or Bedouins from the Sbaʿa tribe. This tribe still maintained the age-old pattern of seasonal migration, moving their flocks of camels north to their summer pastures beyond the Euphrates River, leaving a few members to hold place at their winter pastures near Qasr al-Hayr and its immediate environs.

I had been asked to join the expedition as the married chaperone to Linda Rhodes, a single woman who had been hired as site photographer. While Linda stayed only for that single season, I was fortunate to take part in the excavations for the remainder of the project (**fig. 1**). No matter how I got onto the team, I managed to work my way up from chaperone to co-author of the final report, entitled *City in*

Figure 1. Qasr al-Hayr team, 1970 season (left to right): Fred Anderegg, the photographer; 'Umar Fa'ur, the driver; William Trousdale, assistant director; Renata Holod, member of the team; Laura Schneider, member of the team; James Knudstad, expedition architect; Oleg Grabar, director; Qaydi, house watchman; Khalid al-As'ad, representative of the Syrian Department of Antiquities and director of the Palmyra Museum; Robert Adams, archaeologist from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago; and Ahmad Zubi, medical orderly for the dig. (See also figure 2.3.)

the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East (1978). In order to succeed, I learned to communicate with the local workmen, diligently catalogued the finds (the ceramics in particular), and took on increasing responsibilities at the site. This included overseeing the excavation of a painted wall I had discovered, which turned out to be part of the so-called Outside Bath, to the north of the Small and Large Enclosures. Moreover, under the instruction of archaeologist Robert McCormick Adams, I investigated by stratified random sampling the expansive Outer Enclosure with its barrage across the Wadi al-Suq and its water adduction and drainage systems. This taught me how to read the terrain and find traces of human use on it. These skills would come in handy in my future projects, whether on the island of Jerba in Tunisia or on the Pontic Steppe of Ukraine.

Days on the excavation began at sunrise. We were on site by six A.M. and work continued until one P.M., with a short break midway for a "second breakfast." Then, in the afternoon after lunch and a rest, there was work at the expedition house—on the finds, the drawings, the architectural plans—and lively discussions with team members. The day ended with drinks and supper. Thursday was a half-day of work

and Friday was a day of rest. Midway through the season, the team would go off on forays, to Rusafa-Sergiopolis, for example, or to Raqqa on the Euphrates River.

What were the most surprising results of the expedition, one could ask? To my mind, there were several. Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi was unlike several other Umayyad sites that were well known at the time of its excavation: Khirbat al-Mafjar, Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, Qusayr ʿAmra. It had little in the way of decoration, either on exterior or interior locations. No mosaics, no large painted walls, no program of relief sculpture. So, initially, Oleg Grabar was quite disappointed, having as a young scholar cut his teeth (so to speak) on Khirbat al-Mafjar. Still, the ambitious scale of buildings, enclosures, and waterworks at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi showed that there had clearly been an investment of considerable effort and finances. Was its construction connected with the rising importance of the Euphrates and Tigris River valleys and a turn to the east and south? The successors to the Umayyads, the Abbasids, would establish their capital in the newly conceived, perfectly round circle of Madinat al-Salam (modern Baghdad).

Also notable is that, unlike many other Umayyad sites, Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi enjoyed a revival of sorts after an abandonment lasting two centuries. During Ayyubid and early Mamluk times, a village emerged within the ruined walls of the Small and Large Enclosures, with crooked, narrow streets and small houses built of reused stones. It appears to have had close ties to Raqqa, if one is to judge from the ceramic record. However, by the late thirteenth–early fourteenth century, settled life had once again disappeared. Only the Bedu continued to use the old site as their winter encampment, with its still extant water channels and outer enclosure. By the middle of the twentieth century, even the Bedu had started to settle in the nearby villages of al-Tayyiba and al-Sukhna.

1

"In That They Only Live By Cliques"

Digging Below the Surface of Archaeological Photography at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi

Christiane Gruber

In 1964, Oleg Grabar prepared for the first season of archaeological excavation at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, an Umayyad-period urban settlement located in the semiarid Syrian steppe (*badiya*).[1] He had identified the site during a 1956 exploratory campaign in the Middle East organized by George Forsyth, then-chairman of the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan. As a young professor of Islamic art at Michigan, Grabar turned to Forsyth for help in securing logistical support and financial resources under the sponsorship of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, of which Forsyth was director from 1961 to 1969. Although Grabar personally identified and recruited members of his excavation team, the eventual hire of an official archaeological photographer was prompted by Forsyth, who considered the Kelsey's photographer Fred Anderegg (d. 2011) to be ideal for the task.[2] Fred—or "Freddo," as he was affectionately known—had earned Forsyth's esteem for his photographic work at the Michigan–Princeton expeditions to St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai a few years prior. Adding to his international renown, Anderegg's photographs of the icons and mosaics at the Eastern Orthodox church complex were published that very same year in *National Geographic* magazine.[3] Grabar, however, responded to Forsyth's suggestion with initial reluctance:

> About the photographer, I don't feel as strongly as you on Freddo, because I am not as excited about beautiful photographs, as the whole department knows by now. We can always rely on intellectual reconstructions if the photography is mediocre, but I simply don't have the money for a good photographer and don't want to use up what I have. Photographers are as curious a race as artists, in that they only live by cliques.[4]

Grabar's lukewarm response points to several concerns. Besides his worry about the cost of photography, which rises exponentially with every "clique" of the camera,[5] the biggest anxiety detectable here is what we might call the "problem of the pretty"—namely, that an object of pulchritude cannot be an object of intellection. This attractiveness stereotype, wherein an aesthetically pleasurable item or image is deemed unsatisfactory at the cerebral level, was not limited to Grabar, however. Going back to the 1950s, scholarly debates unfolded on how an "archaeological photograph, produced in a scientific context, could also manifest artistic and aesthetically pleasing qualities"[6] thanks to compositional balance and centering, leading lines, tonal and textural effects, and the use of filters. Positing "truth" against "artistry," Grabar—like other archaeologists of his generation—worried about the loss of informational accuracy and analytical rigor to the lure of pretty.[7]

And yet Anderegg indeed joined the Qasr al-Hayr team, shooting thousands of photographs of the excavation, its structural features and remains, and its small finds such as ceramics and coins. These photos display technical skill and they are informational in their contents; sometimes they also happen to be beautiful, evocative, or even eerie. Not limiting himself to archaeological photography alone, Anderegg also took many shots of Grabar and his colleagues at work and rest, engaging professionally and socially with Syrian colleagues and field personnel, and embarking on road trips, including to nearby Palmyra. His photos transcend a purely "machinic eye"[8] to reveal his deep interest in the humans living and laboring at the site, forging friendships, and solving logistical and intellectual challenges along the way. His voracious photographic activity provides us with a visual record of life on the dig, which acts as both archive and witness to an archaeological moment of encounter between a historical past and the lived present.

Anderegg's photographic oeuvre activates multiple historical stratigraphies. His black-and-white photographs carry the evidentiary force deemed necessary for the type of archaeology that, by the mid-twentieth century, was considered processual and hence more "objective." Based on scientific data, engaged with model testing, and propelled by deductive argumentation and logical conclusion, processual archaeology of the 1960s replaced the Orientalist antiquarian endeavors of old.[9] Conversely, some of Anderegg's more informal snapshots of the Qasr al-Hayr team are gleefully subjective, propelling us into an emotive—rather than academic—field. Whether evidentiary or subjective, taken altogether these photographs of the site, its buildings, and its people offer a reminder that archaeological photographs are "as much about the diggers as things dug."[10]

The Qasr al-Hayr photographic corpus at the Kelsey Museum acts, above all, as an archaeological site per se: it preserves, in material and visual form, the remains of places and people both come and gone. Such photographs capture what is often left unrecorded and unspoken. Yet looming behind each shot is a story, a thought, an emotion, a conversation, a labor, a laugh, even a strand of hair cut and strewn to the wind (**fig. 1.1**). Such ephemeral acts, exchanges, and instants cannot be severed from the scientific process itself. Moreover, beyond the photographic image, focusing the lens on this human element of archaeological work must rely on participant interviews as well; for these reasons, this essay will weave into its narrative the voice of Renata Holod, professor emerita at the University of Pennsylvania, a former PhD student of Oleg Grabar, a key member of the dig team, and my own "Doktormutter." Her explanations of life and work on the dig—and of what we see (and just as importantly, what we do not see) captured in photographs—enable a fuller understanding of scientific processes and tools, work logistics and environment, and general living conditions at Qasr al-Hayr from 1964 to 1971. While this type of photo-ethnographic reconstruction does not offer a remedy to the destructive character of archaeological work, or give proper agency to the local Syrian workers, it nevertheless can re-enliven a social and historical landscape in Syria that is today largely beyond our reach.

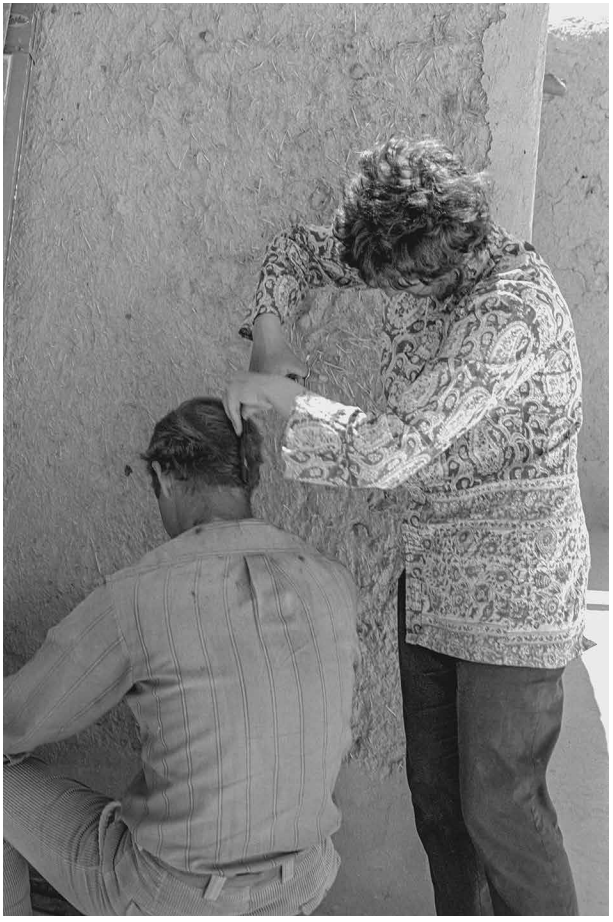


Figure 1.1. Renata Holod cutting Jim Knudstad's hair, 1970 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1970, Sheet #73).

Photo-Measures: From Stick Back to Man

Fred Anderegg was considered by some "a genius with film."[11] Obsessed with achieving the highest possible quality in terms of clarity of composition and tonal

balance, he erred on the side of excessive quantity. He was not just a shutter-happy cameraman, however. His ultimate aim was to capture those rare and precious photographic diamonds in the rough, so he did not hesitate to discard shots that he considered less than perfect. Photos that he deemed not crisp enough were swiftly cast aside as mere "fuzzygraphs."[12] Anderegg himself admitted in 1971, after years of experience on the ground, that he disliked "mushy" images and for this reason preferred the Nikon over the Leica camera.[13]

Besides proper technological equipment, Anderegg understood that the best moments for site photography were the early morning and late afternoon, when the raking light of the rising and setting sun illuminates the contours of sculptural ornamentation and architectonic details as well as the topography of the surrounding landscape.[14] When not endeavoring outdoors, he kept busy shooting photographs of the excavation's small finds and developing film in a darkroom on site. His tools and strategies can be detected in numerous photographs, including of the dig's ceramic finds (**fig. 1.2**). He and other photographers on the dig often arranged sherds artfully (for example, in an arch formation), their curvatures adding depth and dimension to the composition. The fragments' edges are chiseled and

Figure 1.2. A sample of ceramic sherds, 1964 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1964–1966).

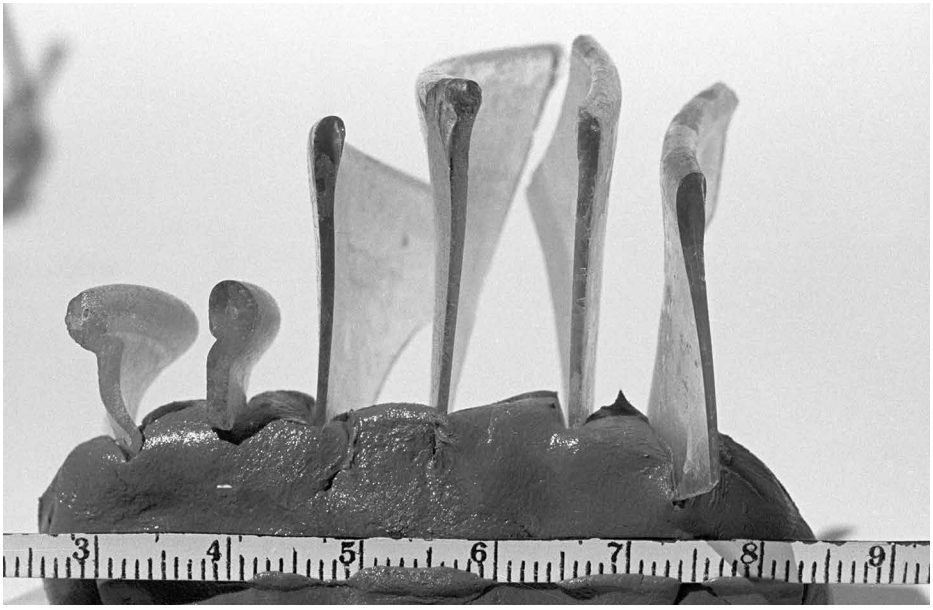


Figure 1.3. A selection of glass sherds, 1969 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1969, 1–44).

their angles sharp: the calculated emphasis on these jagged diagonals endows the photograph with a materially propelled dynamism. The luminescence of the objects and their painted decoration are likewise accentuated thanks to a strong light and black background. This sharp, somewhat ethereal luster is a hallmark technique in the field of art photography, as is an emphasis on the pellucid, aeriform outline of glass rims (**fig. 1.3**).[15] From ceramics to glasswares, Anderegg achieved dazzling visual effects by means of a very simple implement: a foldable background outfitted with dark fabric on one side and foil to catch light on the other. His artful, do-it-yourself pragmatism no doubt compensated for the limited resources available at Qasr al-Hayr.

Beyond aesthetic concerns, Anderegg's photographs at the excavation had to convey scientific information, above all the accurate size of buildings and objects. As can be seen here in figures 1.2 and 1.3, an unfurled tape measure in the foreground offers a relative scale in centimeters. This graduated device embedded within the photograph could in turn confirm or correct data recorded in the dig's written archives and published reports. Anderegg's aesthetic mise-en-scène yielded a

Figure 1.4. A ceramic water pipe, 1969 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1969, 1–44).

photo-assemblage that bolstered an objective correlative, an integrated praxis that quieted Grabar's initial contrariness positing beauty versus truth.

Besides the measuring tape, between 1950 and 1980 the rod scale served as a material stand-in for the professionalized discipline of archaeology.[16] This object symbol engaged in a "scientific visual aesthetics," in part precipitated by four key publications of the 1950s and 1960s: Cookson's "Photography in Archaeology" (1951) and *Photography for Archaeologists* (1954); Matthews' *Photography in Archaeology and Art* (1968); and Simmons' *Archaeological Photography* (1969). Writing in 1954, Cookson encouraged excavation teams to hire a professional, as "site photography is a full-time task for one person," who must record scientific evidence in the most clean, uncluttered, and organized fashion possible.[17] As he took on duties as Qasr al-Hayr's full-time photographer, Anderegg no doubt was familiar with contemporary discourses about both archaeology and photography, two interconnected fields that Simmons described in 1969 as "siblings that grew together. [Indeed,] As techniques in the former developed, more and better photography has been demanded; and better photography has contributed to improved archaeology."[18] Such photo-archaeological endeavors were nothing if not co-emergent and co-constitutive.

As Anderegg's photographic work at Qasr al-Hayr evolved, so too did the team's interpretation of the site. For example, many of the ceramic water pipes, especially those found in the Large Enclosure, suggested a complex underground system that transported water throughout the site (see photograph 11). In his photographs of these pipes, Anderegg arranged the requisite rod scale as new scientific methods dictated (**fig. 1.4**). However, in selecting his lighting source, he opted for raking sunlight in order to draw attention to the pipes' deep grooves, which, depending on their lateral or longitudinal layout, could either slow down or accelerate water flow.[19] In addition, shadows cast in such light could stress empty areas, such as the round hole on the left of the pipe in figure 1.4. This hollow element, emphasized via shadow relief, could help formulate hypotheses or raise questions, including why some pipe openings were filled with ceramic plugs. While a clear answer remains elusive, the photographic data can offer a reliable reservoir of information for future scholars who access the Qasr al-Hayr archives held in the Kelsey Museum.

As the rod scale became "an integral feature in the visual grammar of archaeological illustration,"[20] the human body and intellect continued to tend to the task of uncovering historical materials and inferring meaning from evidence. On the one hand, the insistence on individual presence and labor reasserts archaeology as a social science and humanistic discipline; on the other, it helps to animate the scientific process, which is itself populated by many actors, from scholars to workmen, cooks, and drivers.[21] Oftentimes in his photographs, Anderegg emphatically asserts the centrality of the human being, above and beyond the rod scale (**fig. 1.5**). Not merely stick figures falling into line, the protagonists in these "scientific"

Figure 1.5. A workman holding a measuring stick against a wall, 1969 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1969, 1–44, Sheet #18).

images have tales to tell, inviting "both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others."[22]

This feeling of intimacy betrays an impenetrable distance, leaving us to wonder what has become of the young workmen of Qasr al-Hayr who wore checkerboard *kufiyya*s on their heads as protection from the desert sun. How did they experience the excavation? Are some of them still alive in Syria today? One wonders how their memories of the dig could variegate the authoritative narratives put forth by scholars, including the one presented here, and a photographic corpus that—in its own alienated and institutionalized form of participation—retains echoes of their past lives. While their voices and memories are sadly not available to us at the present moment, it is to their daily work on the dig that we turn next.

"*Oh Lord, Make Things Easy*": Working from the Ground Up

The Qasr al-Hayr scholars and excavators are quite well known, their publications leaving a track record and their epistolary acts suffusing the archival record. The local Syrian workmen, however, prove a different story. As is often the case with history told from above, their experiences and viewpoints largely pass unnoticed. Offering somewhat of a corrective, Anderegg's photographs provide a "grassroots" visual history thanks to his keen interest in portrait photography. Indeed, it appears that he was especially drawn to the field personnel, while recollections of their particular communities and characters are preserved by team members such as Renata Holod. Conjoining memory with photography—in a duo that we might call the "mnemo-photo"—can prove one means of telling world histories from below,[23] of capturing a lifeworld by slightly chipping away at a top-down account. In regard to Qasr al-Hayr and other excavation practices, mnemo-photos reveal that "archaeology is not just about the past, but is as much about the people, ideas, and networks which allow the past to be recovered."[24] In other words, they provide an alternative terrain for excavation and reimagination.

While a handwritten note from the 1971 season records the workmen at Qasr al-Hayr as numbering around fifty,[25] Holod recalls as many as one hundred and fifty on the ground.[26] These varying numbers suggest that the work force could grow and contract over the years. Some of the workers commuted from the nearby towns of al-Tayyiba, al-Sukhna, and Tadmur (Palmyra); others were camel-herding Bedouins (Bedu) of the Sbaʿa tribe who migrated across the Euphrates for summer pastures.[27] While the latter lived close to the site in temporary tents, the village of

Figure 1.6. Workmen running with tools and implements, date unknown (Box 7, Binder of Photographs entitled "People and Other Places").

al-Tayyiba—whose name means "The Good One" or "Water Source"—was home to recently settled, well-nourished men. Of larger and stronger disposition than the transhumant Bedouins, they were selected by Syrian representatives, in coordination with Grabar, as the site's pickmen. This line of work required not only muscle power but also attention to detail, so as to not destroy important elements uncovered at the excavation site. For their part, the Sbaʿa Bedouins were tasked with various duties, such as removing debris, transporting supplies, and holding scale rods for Anderegg's site photography; they thus were not as well remunerated as the more able-bodied locals.[28]

Despite this hierarchical division of labor,[29] the Bedouin, local villagers, Syrian representatives, and foreign scholars often shared responsibilities and food, including at the bimonthly communal meal (*mansaf*; see photograph 8). Other moments at the excavation are captured in various photographs, among them the ringing in of the workday and celebrations of payday (**fig. 1.6**). Packing a bang, these impromptu photographs capture the emotion of joy and the dynamism of sound. As they channel exclamations of the human voice, the stomping of feet in the desert

sand, and the clanging of work tools, they capture an entire archaeo-sensorium—a soundscape that forms an indelible yet often overlooked element of work on ground.

Beyond their obvious uses for digging, carrying, and cleaning, workers' tools functioned as heraldic devices of sorts. Many photographs capture men wielding their implements as if they were coats of arms or objects of individual expression.[30] In some ways, these objects are symbolic replacements for the swords, knives, and rifles that were forcibly taken from the Bedu during the French occupation of Syria (1923–43). The Bedu's power and independence in the steppe became increasingly curtailed under the Independent Syrian Republic (1946–63) and Baʿthist Regime (1963–today). Working at the excavation site allowed many of these recently settled Bedouins to earn income—to carry on living as a community—in the wake of the country's development-induced displacement that threatened their traditional livelihoods and desert cultures.[31] When one thus looks back at Qasr al-Hayr with the clarity of time elapsed, it becomes clear that the dig catalyzed a seasonal place of settlement for the Sbaʿa tribesmen at a critical moment in their history.

Figure 1.7. Qaydi (on the left) and another worker holding rod scales, date unknown (Box 7, Binder of Photographs entitled "People and Other Places").

Among the workmen, one individual shines bright in Holod's memory and in the Kelsey Museum's photographic archives. That individual is Qaydi, an adopted member of the Sbaʿa tribe whose name means "born in the middle of the summer (*qayd*)." Standing less than 1.5 meters tall, the diminutive Qaydi was hired as the expedition house guardian, but he also tended to various odds and ends, including cleaning ceramic sherds and holding the rod scale when the need arose (**fig. 1.7**). He was loved by many on the site, especially Grabar and Holod, who were able to communicate with him in Levantine Arabic (*shami*). Grabar's friend and colleage Khalid al-Asʿad, the director of the nearby Palmyra Museum and proxy of the Syrian Antiquities office at Qasr al-Hayr, was particularly fond and protective of him.

When not tending to his duties, Qaydi passed the days by singing Bedouin songs and praying toward Mecca (**fig. 1.8**). For the latter, Holod recalls, he built a *mihrab* (niche) with stones that he gathered on site.[32] With no permanent mosque structure nearby, he turned his own self and Qasr al-Hayr's archaeological remains into a makeshift prayer edifice. The soil under feet acted as a *masjid* (mosque) in terra firma: a place of prostration that, in this case and others occurring outdoors or in a natural environment, embodies the Prophet Muhammad's statement that "all the earth is a mosque."[33] As for Qaydi's songs, they grew in number and expanded in content to include serenades composed for Holod, whom he called "Nara" (based on a misheard Midwestern American English pronunciation of Renata, her first name). In retrospect, Holod has expressed sadness that the *badawi* tunes sung by Qaydi and the Qasr al-Hayr workmen were not recorded: as in other nomadic, steppe, and desert-dwelling cultures, they preserved a rich oral tradition

Figure 1.8. Qaydi speaking or singing as he raises his hands, date unknown (Box 7, Binder of Photographs entitled "People and Other Places").

Figure 1.9. A workman holding a bunny, 1966 (Box 27, File #6, Negative Files 1964–1966, Sheet entitled "1966X").

that has largely disappeared.[34] These prayers and songs inspirited the excavating experience, leaving memory traces in individuals. Without photographic hints and ethnographic work, such lifeworlds remain secreted away in archival folders or else are left to linger in the fields of the forgotten.

In some ways, the workers' contributions provide the uppermost stratum of the Qasr al-Hayr excavation. Rather than pushing it aside—in a move that echoes, in decades prior, the hasty clearing of Islamic occupation levels to reach Graeco-Roman remains at sites in the Middle East—it is worth pausing to take stock of what happened on the ground.

The dig was nothing if not tough, grueling work: the desert sun scorched the body, the sand abraded skin, the dust irritated eyes, the work of carrying heavy debris required brawn and energy, and water was hard to come by. In point of fact, the contaminated water caused an outbreak of hepatitis during the second season, and amoebic dysentery regularly broke out among team members. Some of the fauna also proved inhospitable. A scorpion once stung Grabar on heel of his foot, the callus thickened by his subpar footwear providing him with the only available antidote to the arachnid's venom.[35] Other animals on site were not so adversarial. A Bedouin workman caught a falcon that was roosting in one of the towers and then trained it for the hunt (see cover image); another individual, with protective goggles removed while taking a cigarette break, found a bunny and cradled it in his hands for the camera (**fig. 1.9**). Here, one imagines that the baby animal was extracted from its burrow as if a delightful archaeological find.

The workmen sweated through thick and thin, hauling excavation debris and heavy stones from the trenches and into a dump truck to be transported

Figure 1.10. Workmen loading debris onto a dump truck, 1966 (Box 27, File #6, Negative Files 1964–1966, Sheet entitled "1966Z").

away from the site (**fig. 1.10**; see also photograph 15). Standing in line formation (*saff*) made the task speedier and more manageable. The workers' coping strategies included wearing head coverings, loose clothing, and retreating to the shade during the afternoon hours; they also could have included oral beginning-of-work formulas (like the *bismillah*) or petitions (*du'as*) for ease. One of these—known in short as the *rabb yassir* ("Oh Lord, make it easy") prayer—ornaments the dump truck's door as a calligraphic roundel.[36] The full petition goes as follows: *rabb yassir wa la tu'assir wa tammim bi'l-khayr* ("O Lord, make it easy, do not make it difficult. O Lord, make it end well"). Although the *rabb yassir* prayer is extra-Qur'anic, others, such as "Oh Lord, […] ease my task for me," put to devotional use Qur'anic verses (Q 20:25–26). Like rain prayers that aim to secure agricultural fertility and abundance, the *rabb yassir* petition belongs to a larger corpus of Islamic invocations that help individuals sustain vegetal and animal life as well as to find strength in challenge and comfort in adversity.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

Like the local workers, the team of foreign scholar-excavators also sought out coolness during the afternoon hours and evenings. They retreated to the dig house, known as Bayt Michigan (Michigan House)—a structure built with locally available materials, including adobe and wooden beams (fig. 1.11).[37] The individual rooms were essentially beehive huts, a type of vernacular architecture that resembles a primordial canopy. Pervasive throughout the region, including at the centuries-old Upper Mesopotamian city of Harran (fig. 1.12), these domical homes are not only environmentally sensitive but, through their tapered form and mud walls, also provide an effective cooling system for their dwellers. Grabar and his colleagues must have favored this historical building tradition at Qasr al-Hayr for a number of reasons, above all its ease of construction and moderate cost. One should not fail to spotlight their eco-friendly attributes as well: erected one day, these structures can be unbuilt the next, leaving no unsightly concrete, steel, aluminum, glass, or plastic rubble in their wake.

Figure 1.11. The dig house, known as Bayt Michigan, 1966 (Box 7, Binder of Photographs entitled "People and Other Places").

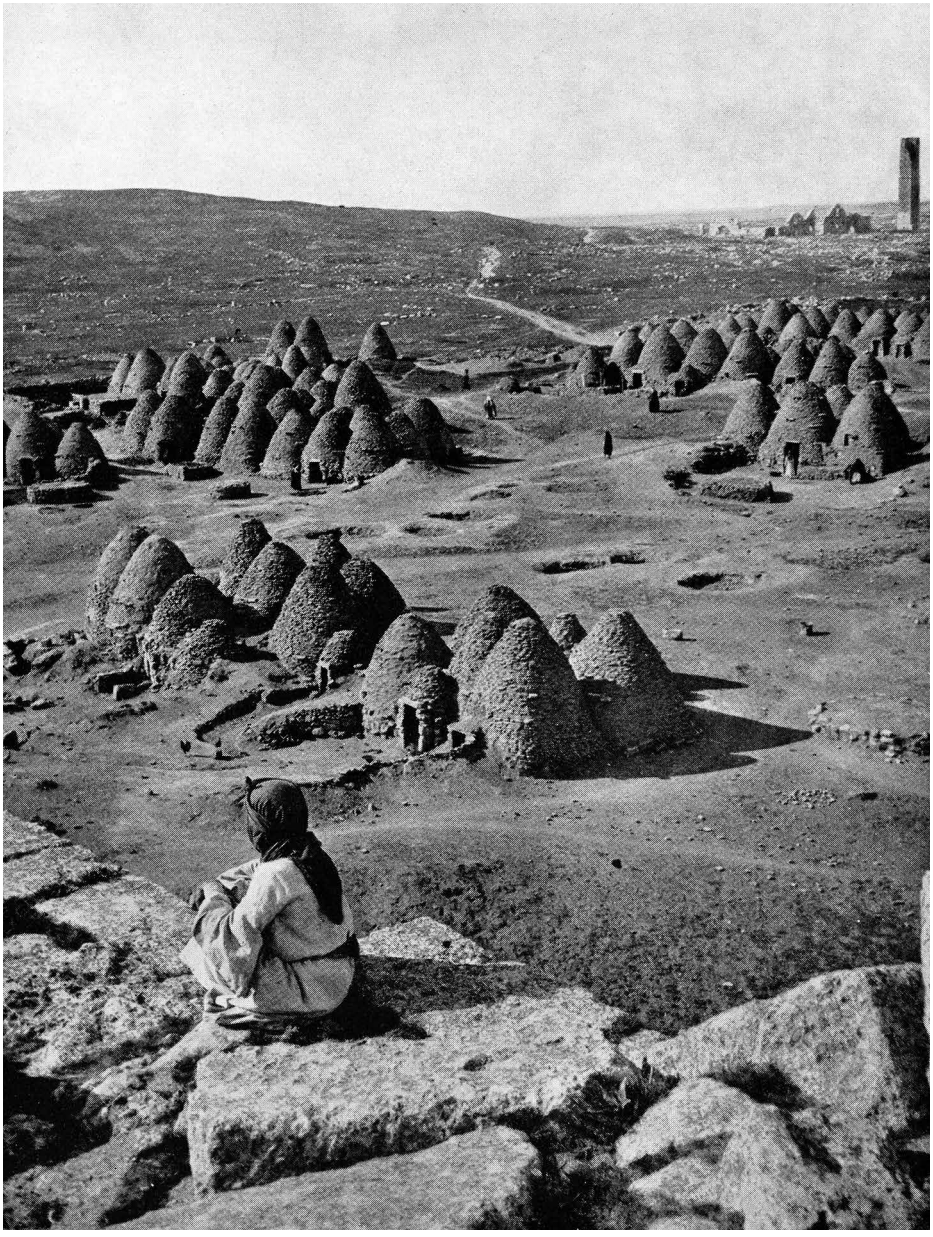


Figure 1.12. The beehive huts of Harran, Turkey, ca. 1914 (Alamy stock photo / SOTK2011).

Figure 1.13. Two Bedouin tents and the pebbled outline of a mosque just beyond the limits of the site; 1970 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1970, Sheet #74).

While beehive homes are an indigenous form of architecture for relatively sedentarized communities, tents are the nomad's abode par excellence.[38] Carried by camel or donkey, they can be pitched and unpitched swiftly and easily as individuals, family units, and tribes migrate from one place to the next, or between summer and winter pastures. The Sbaʿa tribesmen who worked at Qasr al-Hayr erected their tents close to the dig site (**fig. 1.13**). Figure 1.13 shows the two types of tent used by the Bedu: dark-colored wool tents for the winter season and light-colored wool-cotton blend tents for the spring and summer.[39]

What appears in the photo's foreground, however, piques one's interest. Here, a rectangular structure is outlined in stones cobbled together outside of the ruined

walls of the archaeological site, with an open entryway that leads axially to a well-articulated niche. Those who have studied the basics of Islamic architecture will be quick to decipher the key elements of a mosque, in particular the *mihrab* concavity marking the *qibla* wall that guides worshipers in congregational prayer toward Mecca. For their part, the upright stones at the four corners of the rectangular outline allude to minarets, while the entryway's lateral stones index a monumental entrance. This lapidary frame thus sketches an architectonic space of gathering for the Muslim community working—and praying—together at Qasr al-Hayr.

Much like the nearby tents, this eco-mosque could be dismantled at the end of an excavation season—or at will—by simply scattering its stones hither and yon. While one might assume a primarily Bedouin agency or use, the workmen from the villages also used this primordial structure to carry out their daily devotions. Indeed, the midday congregational prayer (*salah*) formed part of a break in the work day that stretched from eleven A.M. to four P.M. and included lunch and afternoon rest.[40] But on Thursday evenings, the local workmen returned to their villages for the weekend (i.e., Friday and Saturday). The Bedouin remained and it is they who gathered in the mosque for the Friday noontime communal prayer (*salat al-jumu'a*), transforming the humble ground plan into a fully fledged Friday mosque (*jami'*). Not merely an open space for prayer or a prayer-station, the pebbled *jami'* at Qasr al-Hayr catalyzes a host of questions about the religious architecture of Islam, including what types of structures allow people to pray together, especially when they are on the move.[41] In its form and materials, this short, thickset "edifice" highlights the leveraging of stopgap measures in architectural practice, one of whose outcomes could be called the "makeshift mosque."

Like Bayt Michigan, the woolen tents, and the makeshift mosque, Qasr al-Hayr's summer weather came and went. The *badiya* hosted not only burning temperatures, stingy scorpions, and cute bunnies but also the most awesome of climactic events in the shape of the *'asifa* dust storm (**fig. 1.14**).[42] In a May 1966 letter to Forsyth, Grabar describes the *'asifa* with these powerful words: "We have just been subjected to one of the most frightening and spectacular sights of desert life: a huge dust storm which simply changed day into night for a few hours and literally engulfed us."[43] Almost four decades later, Holod describes her dramatic memories of the *'asifa* as follows:

> You could see it in the distance as a wall—a wall that literally goes up and blocks out the sun. It becomes completely dark in the middle of the day. It blew down

Figure 1.14. Grabar standing with co-workers next to a tent as he looks back on the approaching *'asifa* dust storm, 1966 (Box 7, Binder of Photographs entitled "People and Other Places").

> every single tent, everything was covered in red dust. It could last an entire day, causing total panic as the middle of the day turned into night.[44]

Holod goes on to say that while she, Grabar, and others would run to seek shelter in the dig house whenever a storm came their way, Anderegg, the intrepid "storm chaser," sprinted in the opposite direction, camera in hand. It is this photographic *punctum*,[45] which shows Grabar standing next to two workers and a white tent as he looks back to the pinkish dust wall rolling their way, that is immortalized in one of the most dramatic images in the Qasr al-Hayr archives. Acting as a "prosthetic sensory device,"[46] the picture is aesthetically breathtaking as well as redolent with a nostalgia yet to set in.

Mnemo-Clicks

Digging below the archaeological photography at Qasr al-Hayr uncovers the beauties and difficulties of life and work on one particular dig that brought together a miscellany of individuals in the *badiya* during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this moment in time, Bedouin life carried on in new ways as tribes like the Sbaʿa started to disperse, settle, and integrate into the villages and cities of Syria. Foreign scholars, including Grabar and Holod, also embraced the rhythm of transhumance, shifting their summer labors to the arid lands of the Middle East. Brought together under the occasional circumstance of excavation work, a new community emerged, unearthing a historical site and creating its own habitus along the way. Unlike the material remains of the dig, the short-lived culture of the Qasr al-Hayr expedition carries on embedded in memories and ennobled in Anderegg's photographs. Visually freezing a moment and place in time, these images in turn craft their own "archaeologizing effect."[47]

Scholars and workers labored, pondered, laughed, argued, got stung, contracted illnesses, and sang songs in this Umayyad "urban entity" located "between the desert and the sown."[48] The Kelsey Museum's photographs capture these interwoven peoples and places, offering us a window into a lifeworld that has since vanished (**fig. 1.15**). Each image, however, is not merely a momentary light exposure developed in a darkroom. Beneath its surface are layers of "sedimented meanings"[49] that require digging, exhuming, and explaining—in other words, archaeological labor itself. As an alternative site for understanding the past, both remote and recent, the photos of Qasr al-Hayr remind us that, even in the midst of a scientific endeavor, man remains

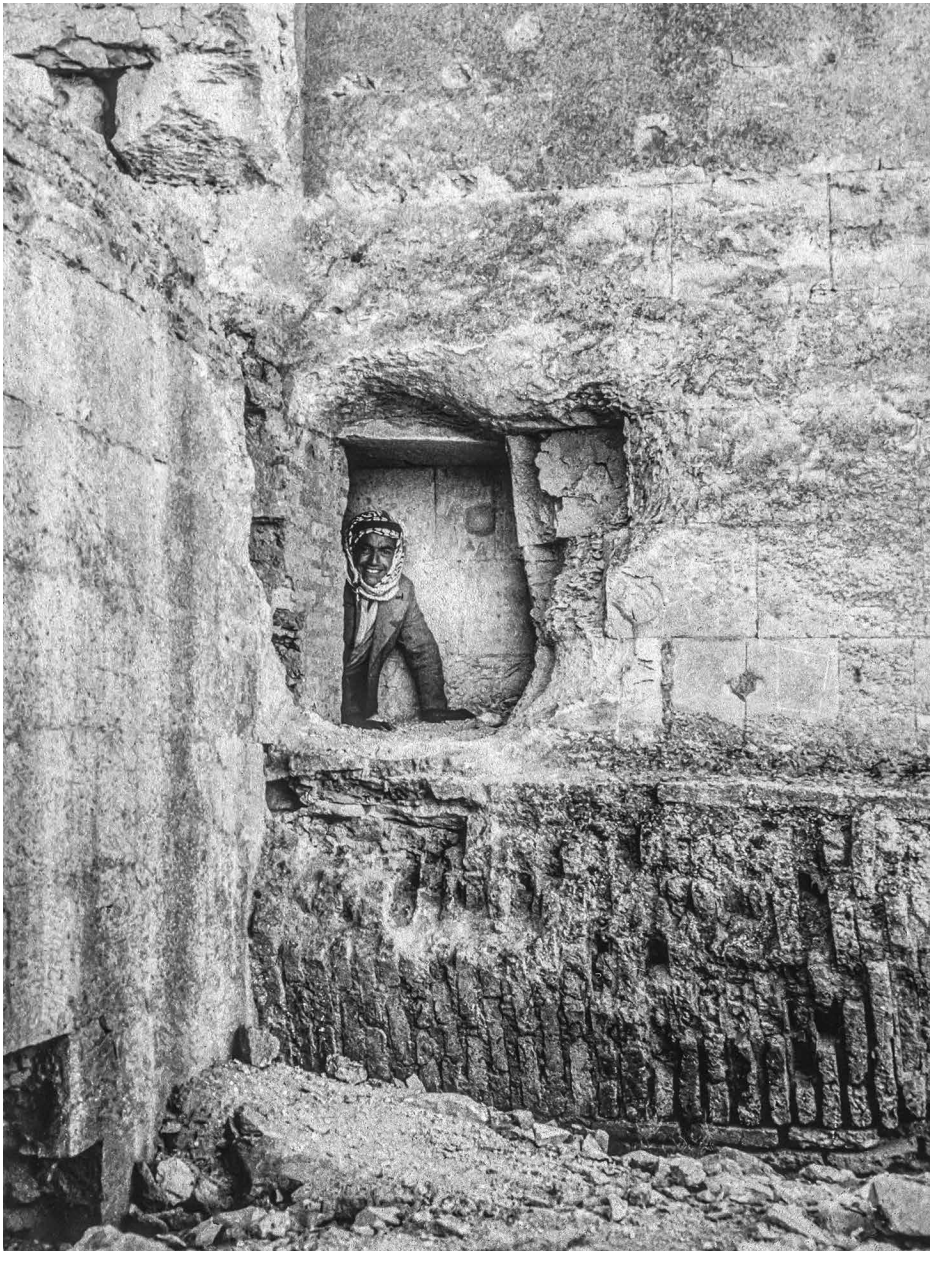


Figure 1.15. A smiling workman standing within a window-like opening, 1964 (Box 27, File #6, Box of Negatives 1964–1966, Sheet 1964b).

the measure of all things. Perhaps, then, a thousand clicks are precisely what was needed, though Grabar knew not at first.

Notes

1. On the *badiya*, see Elisséeff, "Bādiya"; Davis, *The Arid Lands*, 171.
2. For further information about Fred Anderegg's life and career, see his memoir at https://newsletters.kelsey.lsa.umich.edu/fall2001/fred.html.
3. Weitzmann and Anderegg, "Mount Sinai's Holy Treasures."
4. Letter from Oleg Grabar to George Forsyth, September 9, 1964. Box 1, Folder 1c.
5. Documentation in the Kelsey Museum shows that Anderegg charged equipment and printing costs to the museum, and those fees were then charged to Grabar's excavation account housed within the museum. This routing of payment appears to have caused some bureaucratic problems. Moreover, Grabar paid Anderegg a salary for the summers he spent working at the site (see the letter from Anderegg to Grabar, March 24, 1971, Box 1, Folder 1j). Another letter from Anderegg to Grabar, dated July 22, 1971 (Box 1, Folder 1j), gives an impression of costs related to photography. For example, at the time, the rental of two Nikon cameras and a Micro-Nikon lens for one month cost $102, while fifty contact sheets and approximately 3,200 photo enlargements amounted to approximately $215.
6. Carter, "The Development of the Scientific Aesthetic," 3.
7. Simmons, *Archaeological Photography*, 3–4.
8. Shanks, "Photography and Archaeology," 74.
9. Carter, "The Development of the Scientific Aesthetic," 2.
10. Bohrer, "Photography and Archaeology," 189.
11. Easton Kelsey, in a letter to Oleg Grabar, April 8, 1975. Box 1, Folder 1d.
12. Letter from Fred Anderegg to Oleg Grabar, June 3, 1972. Box 1, Folder 1k.
13. Letter from Fred Anderegg to Oleg Grabar, July 31, 1971. Box 1, Folder 1j.
14. Aerial photography is also best taken during the first two hours after sunrise, as ground features stand out in relief most at this time; see Vernoit, "The Rise of Islamic Archaeology," 6.
15. In his 2008 study, Denis Genequand argues that, along with glazed wares, stables, storage installations, and bread ovens, such glasswares suggest that Qasr al-Hayr must have been a larger agricultural settlement that enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity; see his "The New Urban Settlement at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi," 266.
16. Carter, "The Development of the Scientific Aesthetic," 2.
17. Cookson, *Photography for Archaeologists*, esp. 11, 13, 52, and 58. For the 1966 season, Grabar employed Linda Rhodes, an American draftswoman and photographer, to take photographs at the excavation site. She could be recruited for lower travel costs since she was based in Turkey. However, it appears that the increasing professionalization in archeological photography prompted Grabar to hire Anderegg as the sole expert dedicated to this task. Anderegg was site photographer for the fourth, fifth, and sixth seasons (1969–1971).
18. Simmons, *Archaeological Photography*, 2.
19. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 179.
20. Carter, "The Development of the Scientific Aesthetic," 4.
21. For a study of archaeological work at the University of Pennsylvania's 1915 dig at Memphis, see Doyon, "On Archaeological Labor in Modern Egypt."
22. Sontag, "The Image-World," 359.
23. On this approach as it pertains to anti-Colonial efforts and protests, see the essays in Ballantyne and Burton, *World Histories from Below*.
24. Shanks, "Photography and Archaeology," 100.

25. Handwritten list in Arabic, "Site Management Information and Personnel," Box 3, Folder 3kkk. I wish to thank Michelle Al-Ferzly for bringing this document to my attention.
26. Email communication with Renata Holod, May 26, 2020.
27. On the Sbaʿa tribe, see Suwaed, *Historical Dictionary of the Bedouins*, 219; and Chatty, "The Bedouin in Contemporary Syria."
28. Email communication with Renata Holod, May 26, 2020.
29. For a discussion and critique of the "local worker" model of labor used in nineteenth- and twentieth-century excavations in the Middle East, see, among others: Çelik, *About Antiquities* (on the "landscape of labor"); Mickel, "Essential Excavation Experts" (a Marxist approach to the "alienation" of production); Shankland, "Villagers and the Distant Past" (on archaeological labor and its interaction with the past); Starzmann, "Archaeological Fieldwork in the Middle East" (on labor politics and neo-Colonialism); and C. Steele, "Who Has Not Eaten Cherries with the Devil?" (on archaeology, labor, and human rights).
30. On personal toolkits as individual expression in archaeological work, see Bateman, "Wearing Juninho's Shirt," 195.
31. Dukhan, "'They Talk to Us But Never Listen to Us'."
32. Holod, "Approaching the Mosque," 14.
33. Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, Chapter 4 (*The Book on the Mosques and the Congregations*), Hadith 11, https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/4/11.
34. See Cole, "Where Have the Bedouin Gone?"; and for archaeological songs of the Nile Delta, see Poppe, "Scribing Work Songs at an Archaeological Dig in Egypt."
35. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.
36. For Pakistani trucks decorated with Qur'anic or prayerful inscriptions as well as apotropaic imagery, see Elias, *On Wings of Diesel*.
37. For a comparative discussion of vernacular structures and the use of "indigenous" materials in modernist Egyptian spheres, above all the work of Hassan Fathy, see J. Steele, *An Architecture for People*.
38. For a general overview of Islamic tentage traditions, see Andrews, *Felt Tents and Pavilions*.
39. Email communication with Renata Holod, May 26, 2020.
40. Email communication with Renata Holod, May 26, 2020.
41. For some related discussions of these topics, see Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together*; and Gruber, *Islamic Architecture on the Move*.
42. For 2018 footage of such a dust storm threatening refugee camps in Syria, see the BBC video at https://youtu.be/-00XtokoCtY.
43. Letter from Oleg Grabar to George Forsyth, May 15, 1966. Box 1, Folder 1e.
44. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.
45. For Roland Barthes' use of the term *punctum* to describe a point of sudden or strong emotion in both photography and film, see his *Camera Lucida*, 40–60.
46. Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulous, and Ifantidis, "Postcards from the Edge of Time," 286. Also see Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics," 33.
47. Bohrer, "Photography and Archaeology," 183.
48. Holod-Tretiak, "Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi: A Mediaeval Town in Syria," 221.
49. Shanks, "Photography and Archaeology," 73.

2

"A Familiar Foreign Place"

An Archival Excavation of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi

Michelle Al-Ferzly

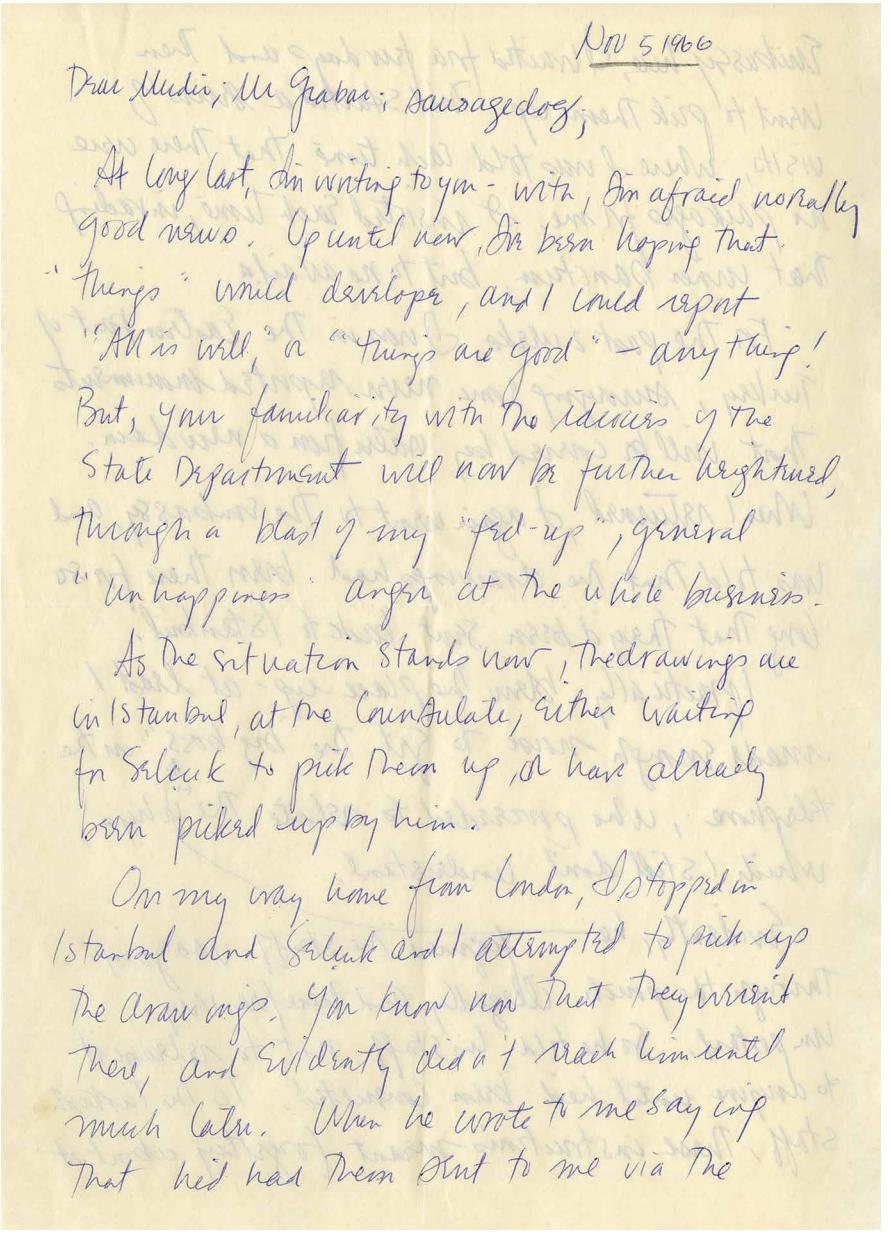
In a nondescript gray folder held in the archives of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, a yellowing letter written by draftswoman and photographer Linda Rhodes to Oleg Grabar opens with the following lines (**fig. 2.1**):

> Dear Mudir; Mr. Grabar; sausagedog,
>
> At long last, I'm writing to you – with, I'm afraid no really good news. Up until now, I've been hoping that "things" would develop, and I could report "All is well," or, "things are good" – anything! But, your familiarity with the idiocies of the State Department will now be further heightened, through a blast of my "fed-up," general "unhappiness" anger at the whole business. As the situation stands now, the [archaeological] drawings are in Istanbul, at the Consulate [...][1]

This spirited passage from a letter dating from November 1966 forms part of Oleg Grabar's voluminous correspondence about his near decade-long archaeological expedition at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, begun during his tenure as a professor of Islamic art at the University of Michigan. Besides the honorific and even canine epithets (about which more later), Rhodes' letter speaks to the many issues permeating Grabar's papers, including the importance of diplomatic negotiation, securing resources to undertake an excavation, recruiting qualified staff, and the interpretation of archaeological findings.[2]

The excavations at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, also known as Qasr al-Hayr East, took place over the course of six seasons between 1964 and 1971. Led by Grabar with the support of the Kelsey Museum, the archaeological mission in northeastern Syria constituted the University of Michigan's first foray into the field of Islamic archaeology. The aim of the excavation was to uncover the history and the function of Qasr

Figure 2.1. Letter from Linda Rhodes to Oleg Grabar, November 5, 1966 (Box 1, Folder e).



Nov 5 1966

Dear Medi; Mr Grabar; Sausagedog;

At long last, I'm writing to you - with, I'm afraid not really good news. Up until now, I've been hoping that "things" would develope, and I could report "All is well," or "Things are good" - anything! But, your familiarity with the idiocies of the State Department will now be further heightened, through a blast of my "fed-up", general "unhappiness" anger at the whole business.

As the situation stands now, the drawings are in Istanbul, at the Consulate, either waiting for Selcuk to pick them up, or have already been picked up by him.

On my way home from London, I stopped in Istanbul and Selcuk and I attempted to pick up the drawings. You know now that they weren't there, and evidently didn't reach him until much later. When he wrote to me saying that he'd had them sent to me via the

al-Hayr, which was then identified as a desert palace complex built in the Umayyad period (661–750). This interpretation was in keeping with the typology of other well-known examples of Levantine palatial sites excavated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[3]

While official reports of the expedition appeared regularly in academic journals, and later in the 1978 excavation publication entitled *City in the Desert*, little scholarly attention has been paid to the debates that took place during the excavation. Indeed, the scholarly discussions that emerged during the dig at Qasr al-Hayr would have lasting reverberations in the fields of Islamic art, architecture, and urbanism. The most important argument to emerge was that Qasr al-Hayr was not a palace or "desert castle" for the Umayyad elite as previously described.[4] Rather, Grabar and his colleagues—who included prominent Islamic art historians and archaeologists such as Renata Holod, Robert McCormick Adams, James Knudstad, William Trousdale, and Robert Hamilton—posited that Qasr al-Hayr functioned as a "city" with a permanent residential quarter and accommodations for traveling merchants.[5]

In this essay I argue that, in proposing a new interpretation of Qasr al-Hayr, the excavation team questioned and expanded the received scholarly definition of the "Islamic city." This revision was significant, as the study of Islamic urbanism constituted an early foundation of the discipline of Islamic art history.[6] The Qasr al-Hayr team's radical intervention was achieved by establishing a thorough stratigraphic sequence at the site and by recording measurements, building materials, and architectural decoration. Such a rigorous approach formed the basis for an interdisciplinary methodology that combined archaeology and art history, text and context, then a novel contribution in the subfield of Islamic art.[7]

Grabar and his team's attempt to advance a new understanding of early Islamic medieval settlements—one that was not uniquely tied to royal patronage—was rejected by some and continues to be debated in scholarly circles to this day. While interpretation continues to evolve in light of new archaeological findings at Qasr al-Hayr, [8] Grabar's trove of letters, photographs, and other documents related to the first archaeological mission provides an opportunity to re-excavate the social, financial, logistical, and intellectual workings of the site.[9] These reveal a community of individuals laboring and socializing together, elements essential to the archaeological process itself.

"A Very Personal World": The Makings of a Dig

The Qasr al-Hayr archives at the Kelsey Museum comprise a variety of materials: correspondence between various key players involved in the excavation, financial records, over twenty thousand photographs and site drawings, and diaries of the excavation members. The earliest documents, dating from 1962, outline Grabar's initial strategizing through tentative correspondence with Syrian officials and archaeologist colleagues. These early efforts were in large part encouraged by George Forsyth, then director of the Kelsey Museum. In 1956, Grabar had accompanied Forsyth on a reconnaissance mission through Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Libya, and the Sinai Peninsula.[10] The mission was organized with the goal of identifying an Islamic site to excavate, as the University of Michigan, the first American institution to create a position for an Islamic art historian, was then unique in the United States in its commitment to the study of the Muslim world.[11] It was during this trip that Qasr al-Hayr was visited and chosen for excavation. After some hurdles were cleared, Grabar successfully obtained a permit from the recently instituted Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.[12]

In the fall of 1964, Grabar—despite having little archaeological training—departed for Qasr al-Hayr's inaugural excavation season accompanied by a small team of architects and archaeologists.[13] A preliminary survey of the site established the complex's main components to be two extant buildings, thereafter known as the Large and Small Enclosures, which were within a larger walled area referred to by Grabar and his team as the Outer Enclosure (**fig. 2.2**). The team also noticed traces of settlement to the north of the two enclosures. The identification of a congregational mosque within the Large Enclosure strengthened the team's early interpretation of the site as an urban entity. A foundation inscription, discovered at the site in 1808, provided another piece of supporting evidence. The inscription identified the site as a *madina*, or city, constructed in AH 110/728–729 CE by order of the Umayyad caliph Hisham ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–743).[14] This epigraphic evidence of royal patronage suggested to Grabar and his colleagues the possibility that the Small Enclosure was built as one of Hisham's palatial residences.[15]

The 1964 season was cut short by a hepatitis outbreak,[16] but the difficult physical and environmental conditions in which the dig took place did not deter Grabar from preparing to return to Qasr al-Hayr. Bolstered by the findings of the first season, Grabar invited a larger team to take part in the second season, in 1966 (see photograph 33). This group included some of Grabar's students as well as Linda Rhodes, an American architect based in Turkey.[17] However, the presence of a young,

Figure 2.2. View of the Small Enclosure at the left and the Large Enclosure at the right, year unknown (Box 5, File 1, Binder "Outer Enclosure").

unmarried woman on the male-dominated site prompted Grabar to also recruit his married student Renata Holod as a chaperone.[18] Although originally framed as a matter of practicality and propriety, Holod's participation in the dig would prove pivotal for the discoveries made at the excavation. She went on to participate in nearly every other excavation season, eventually co-authoring the official excavation report, *City in the Desert*.

Several of the participants in this large 1966 season, including Holod, would become the core group of archaeologists and art historians who returned to the site every season. Grabar, of course, acted as director throughout the campaign. Freer and Sackler researcher William Trousdale served as Grabar's assistant director for all six seasons. Selçuk Batur, a Turkish national, served as site architect during the first

Figure 2.3. Khalid al-As'ad, third from right, inspects a ceramic vessel, 1970 (Box 27, File 7, Negative Files 1970, Sheet 81). (For the names of those pictured, see figure 1 of the Preface.)

four seasons. Batur's wife was a student of the noted Islamic architectural historian Doğan Kuban, who had taken part in the first season.[19]

Over the years, the Qasr al-Hayr team was also joined by a rotating cast of members. Douglas Braidwood, son of the archaeologist Robert Braidwood who was reportedly the inspiration for Indiana Jones, took part in the 1966 season. Archaeologist Robert McCormick Adams, who had previously conducted excavations in Iraq, participated in the fifth season, in 1970.[20] After hiring Holod and Rhodes in 1966, Grabar recruited other women in later seasons, including Michigan graduate students Hayat Salam and Ülkü Bates,[21] Helen Hadzantoni, Laura Schneider, and Priscilla Soucek, who later became the John L. Loeb Professor of History of Art at New York University.

The mid-1960s saw increasingly antagonistic political relations between Syria and Turkey, and Syrian officials protested the participation of Turkish nationals at Qasr al-Hayr.[22] The Six-Day War erupted in the summer of 1967, severing diplomatic relations between the United States and Syria and halting the work at Qasr al-Hayr. The Directorate General of Antiquities promptly informed Grabar that his excavation permit was revoked.[23] Moreover, one early team member, former Palestine Director of Excavations Robert Hamilton, was barred from returning to Syria under suspicion by the local authorities of being a CIA agent. Grabar had intended to return to Qasr al-Hayr for a third season in 1967, but by the fall of that year it seemed unlikely the team would ever return to Syria.[24] Despite Grabar's repeated entreaties to the Syrian government throughout 1967, he was advised to wait until relationships between the United States and Syria became less hostile.[25] The situation assessed by a US State Department official is as follows:

> It looks like a classic case of culture conflict and clash of values. Syria today seems to reflect the working of deep-seated anarchical tendencies in Arab Culture, such as those that eventually led to the downfall of the Umayyad Caliphate.[26]

Despite this grim and ahistorical prognosis, Grabar, Trousdale, and Batur were eventually granted permission to return to Syria for a very short trip in June 1968, and Grabar began making plans for a fourth season, to be held in the spring of 1969.[27] His efforts were met with success thanks to his connections to Syrian officials, especially his friend and noted Palmyrene archaeologist Khalid al-Asʿad, the director of the Palmyra Museum and proxy of the Syrian Antiquities office at Qasr al-Hayr. Grabar's voluminous correspondence with al-Asʿad provides a testament to their

Figure 2.4. Sitting at the shade of nearby vehicle, al-As'ad and Grabar enjoy a game of backgammon (*tawila*) among onlookers, year unknown (Box 7, File 2, Binder "People and Other Places).

close personal relationship. Over the course of the six seasons of excavation at Qasr al-Hayr, al-As'ad stayed with the team on site, lending expertise to the dig's findings while also supervising the excavation in his capacity as an Antiquities official.

Visual and material traces of al-As'ad's life and career pervade the archive's photographs, letters, and postcards (**figs. 2.3, 2.4**; photographs 6, 9, 10, 28, 31, 33, 34). Such traces are made all the more poignant in light of his tragic assassination in 2015 at the hands of ISIS militants, when he reportedly refused to reveal to them the location of certain Palmyrene antiquities.[28] Additionally, the numerous visits by Grabar and his team to nearby Palmyra are captured in the archives. They provide a vivid record of the site and its museum before their destruction by ISIS (photographs 26–30).

But the Qasr al-Hayr photographic record provides snapshots of happier times. These images, many taken by Fred Anderegg, capture al-As'ad and others playing games of backgammon (*tawila*) and gathering at the dig house to enjoy evenings smoking cigarettes and sipping tea, coffee, and drinks of a more spirited kind. They also capture scenes from the bimonthly paydays, when the team celebrated with the

Figure 2.5. From left to right: (standing) Fred Anderegg, Ülkü Bates, William Trousdale, Oleg Grabar, and Hayat Salam; (seated) Renata Holod, 'Ali Taha, 'Umar Fa'ur (the driver), and Selçuk Batur. 1969 (Box 7, File 2, Binder "People and Other Places").

Figure 2.6. Workmen assemble under the watchful eye of Oleg Grabar, who stands behind a group of men holding shovels, to the right, year unknown (Box 7, File 2, Binder "People and Other Places").

local workmen, who not only provided the vast majority of the manpower needed in the trenches but also were employed as cooks, water suppliers, and drivers (photographs 21–25).[29] This group of individuals, ranging from junior to senior American and regional archaeologists, Syrian government officials and archaeologists, and local Bedouins and villagers, worked and lived together over the period of weeks, sometimes months (**figs. 2.5, 2.6**).[30] William Trousdale waxed poetic about the Qasr al-Hayr community in a letter to Grabar in 1969, stating that, "One becomes involved in that very personal world, and, in time, almost like a narcotic, one begins to crave it."[31]

This close-knit atmosphere fostered friendship, intimacy, and banter among the dig participants over the years. One example of such jocularity is Grabar's nickname "sausagedog," mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Reportedly, Grabar would sneak through the rooms of Bayt Michigan early in the morning to wake his staff for the day's work. This lead Holod to compare the director to a hunting hound or Dachshund flushing team members from their nightly burrows.[32] Although Grabar did not appear to take offense at the canine moniker, he nevertheless preferred the more dignified appellation, *Mudir*, the Arabic term for director.[33]

A "Scientific Touch": New Findings at the Small Enclosure

It is in the midst of the rich interpersonal relationships between archaeologists, researchers, workers, and government officials that the analysis and interpretation of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi took place. The reception of these conclusions within scholarly circles, however, was nothing short of controversial.[34] The contention stemmed from previous scholarly interpretations of the site as an Umayyad royal residence, similar to its counterpart to the west of Palmyra, Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, as well as Khirbat al-Mafjar, just north of the Dead Sea, near Jericho; both these sites had been excavated in the early twentieth century.[35] In addition to the formal similarities between the three sites—including their remote locations and their prominent physical appearances as fortified complexes—they were all likely built during the reign of the caliph Hisham, with construction dates beginning in 724 for Khirbat al-Mafjar and ending in 728 with Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi preceding the latter by only a year). A significant point of early interest in these sites was the evidence of their royal patronage, which, in the case of Khirbat al-Mafjar and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi included luxurious architectural decoration such as mosaic floors, frescoes, and carved stucco.

Interest was further bolstered by Umayyad-era royal decorations acquired by various museums. Elaborate stucco panels from Qasr Mshatta had been on display at the Museum for Islamic Art in Berlin since the early twentieth century;[36] in the 1940s, the National Museum of Damascus integrated the carved stucco portal from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi into the very design of its structure (see photograph 5); and architectural fragments from Khirbat al-Mafjar were relocated to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in the mid-twentieth century.[37]

In selecting Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi for excavation, Grabar hoped to find the elaborate stucco work, mosaic programs, and frescoes present at coeval sites.[38] His first explorations therefore focused on the Small Enclosure, conjectured to be the caliphal palace.[39] The enclosure's strong fortification walls and the presence of carved stucco arches at its single entrance and surrounding walls (photograph 20) were, according to previous scholarship, sure signs of a royal residence.[40] The adjacent Large Enclosure was identified as the city constructed to support the residence due to its size as well as the epigraphic evidence calling it a *madina* ("city").[41]

The founding inscription naming Qasr al-Hayr as Hisham's *madina*, however, had been lost since its discovery by French Orientalist Jean-Baptiste Rousseau in 1808 during his travels through the Syrian steppe. Apart from a reported sighting in the 1920s, it has never been seen since.[42] Subsequent scholars, such as architectural historians K. A. C. Creswell and Jean Sauvaget, nonetheless based their analyses of the site on the absent textual record and interpreted Qasr al-Hayr as a center of Umayyad caliphal activity that included a palatial residence (the Small Enclosure) located adjacent to sites devoted to hunting and agricultural enterprise (the Outer Enclosure).[43]

While these interpretations of Qasr al-Hayr placed the site squarely within a typology of Umayyad princely desert settlement (*badiya*), Grabar's multi-season excavation at Qasr al-Hayr yielded results that forced a departure from his predecessors' interpretations.[44] Most saliently, Grabar's work was marked by his use of archaeology as the *primary* method for investigating the site, alongside textual and art historical analysis.

The Kelsey archives reveal the two features of the excavation that generated the lion's share of discussion and debate: the Small Enclosure and the Outside Bath. The Small Enclosure had originally been interpreted as a caliphal palace. Although the site yielded a number of stucco fragments from column capitals, frieze borders, and other fragments of architectural decoration (see photograph 49), their sum total paled in comparison to amount of stucco found at Khirbat al-Mafjar and

Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi.[45] While this difference could be partially attributed to Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi's long history of destruction and reoccupation, the absence of copious stucco decoration cast the initial shadow of doubt over previous readings of the Small Enclosure as princely residence. Examination of the structure's plan also revealed that it lacked the features common to Umayyad palaces, namely rooms of varying size that would have served as private apartments. Instead, the two levels of the Small Enclosure were divided into small rooms of equal dimensions. Nearly every room opened to the portico, which in turn encircled a central courtyard containing a cistern in its center—another feature atypical of palatial architecture. Furthermore, while some sections of the Small Enclosure's façade were embellished with brick,

Figure 2.7. Wide view of the Outside Bath after excavation, year unknown (Box 5, File 1, Binder "Bath").

stone, and stucco decoration, extensive investigation of the masonry revealed that the walls were constructed of the same local limestone employed for the Large Enclosure. This discovery further weakened previous arguments for a hierarchy of status between these two architectural structures.[46] Finally, Grabar and his team of excavators also determined that the Small Enclosure was accessed by a single large entrance, in lieu of the small, private entrances typically observed in Umayyad castles.

While the Small and Large Enclosures' formal similarities may have originally suggested a palatial function, the archaeological discoveries prompted new interpretations about the site within the context of its vast territorial expanse. This larger contextual process on inquiry was accelerated by the fortuitous discovery, in 1970, of a bath located just to the north of the two enclosures (**fig. 2.7**).[47] The bath was found by Renata Holod during a walking survey of the site she conducted under the guidance of Robert McCormick Adams.[48] Five years earlier, Adams had published a survey of the Diyala Plains, located near Baghdad, Iraq, which he had conducted by walking through the region and investigating settlement patterns.[49] Publication of *Land Behind Baghdad* was a watershed moment for Middle Eastern archaeology, at a time when walking surveys were rarely conducted. The use of the walking survey as an archaeological method thus marked a critical turning point for the Qasr al-Hayr excavation.

The unearthing of the bath would radically upend previous interpretations of Qasr al-Hayr, including Grabar's. At first, the presence of the bath seemed to confirm the site's caliphal patronage, and Grabar excitedly reported the bath's painted frescoes and sculpted decorations to the press and the excavation's funders.[50] Comparisons were made to the bath at the early eighth-century site of Qusayr 'Amra in modern-day Jordan, whose walls include a painted depiction of six earthly kings.[51] However, Qasr al-Hayr's bath did not exhibit the same princely iconography, nor did it contain any painted figural decoration or sculpture like those found at Qusayr 'Amra and Khirbat al-Mafjar.[52]

The bath at Qasr al-Hayr was a modest structure with small rooms. It did not have a large reception hall with a throne area or apses, as found at Mafjar and Qusayr 'Amra, or luxurious fountains.[53] Furthermore, analysis of the complex's plan revealed that the two entrances were oriented toward the settlements to the north as well as the Large and Small Enclosures, and that the structure was designed for easy circulation from all doorways, and not divided into private and public sections, as seen at Khirbat al-Mafjar.[54] These features strongly suggested to Grabar that the bath

was a public space designed to serve the needs of the inhabitants of Qasr al-Hayr, rather than a site cordoned off for exclusive caliphal activity.

This interpretation of the bath as a public building served to further alter the original reading of Qasr al-Hayr—particularly the Small Enclosure—as a courtly complex. Indeed, if the site had been a princely residence, then why situate a public bath at equal distance to the "palace" and its larger, so-called "urban" counterpart? And why did the Small Enclosure and the Outside Bath lack the luxurious decoration and princely features observed at other caliphal complexes?[55]

Grabar and his team offered some, albeit hypothetical, answers to these two interrelated questions. In their view, the plan of the Small Enclosure and its structural components (e.g., its masonry, lack of architectural decoration, and cistern) indicated that it was in fact a caravansary, a type of roadside inn for traveling merchants.[56] The small cellular units of equal dimensions, the long hallways organized around a central portico, and the sizable entrances were features known from other caravansarys of the period. The non-royal character of the Small Enclosure and its proximity to public bathing facilities strengthened this hypothesis.

That the Small Enclosure was occupied into the fourteenth century also distinguishes it from other excavated Umayyad caliphal residences, none of which show signs of continued use.[57] Although stratigraphic analysis revealed significant deterioration of the enclosure from the eighth century onward, interventions in its walls suggest careful repairs over the centuries. This material evidence indicated to the excavation team that the site remained significant—or, at the very least, worthy of settlement—beyond the end of the Umayyad period, thus fulfilling a function unbound by caliphal presence and patronage.

The conclusion that Qasr al-Hayr was a non-royal, city-like settlement was reached in large part due to the scientific approach adopted by Grabar and his teammates from the dig's early stages. This included careful interpretation of archaeological evidence, such as the crafting of a ceramic sequence, the cataloguing of small finds, and the stratigraphic analysis over the course of six seasons of thorough work and detailed study. In 1970, Robert Adams joined the dig, proposing an addendum to the team's archaeological method by introducing the walking survey. Indeed, when Adams joined the dig, William Trousdale wrote Grabar a celebratory letter, in which he noted: "[…] He will lend to our expedition that respectable 'scientific' touch so fashionable in this phoney [*sic*] era."[58] By proposing the walking survey as an additional method of analysis, the Qasr al-Hayr team uncovered data that led them to propose hypotheses for the site's function that contrasted sharply

with previous interpretations of the site, thus altering the trajectory of the field of Islamic art and architecture for years to come.

A Medieval "City" in the Desert: Radical Revisions, Conflicting Views

Grabar and his team's historically informed and archaeologically driven investigation led to the conclusion that the entire complex was designed as an urban outpost located on the major trade route connecting Damascus to the Euphrates Valley. The importance of cross-regional commerce to Qasr al-Hayr's existence would justify the inclusion of a caravansary within Hisham's *madina*.[59] Moreover, according to Grabar, Qasr al-Hayr's urbanity was further proven by its mosque, seat of government (*dar al-'imara*), and public bath.[60] The identification of these three institutions as essential to the urban makeup was in keeping with an established definition of the "Islamic city" put forth by previous scholars.[61]

The notion of an "Islamic city" had emerged from Orientalist considerations of Islam as an inherently urban religion.[62] The distinctive nature of the Islamic city also was stressed by its sharp rupture with the model of the classical city. Instead of the arcaded colonnades and grid-like city plans prevalent in the Classical and Late Antique periods, the Islamic city conjured images of winding streets, crowded markets, and cramped residential quarters.[63] Despite conceptualizing Islamic urbanism as tantamount to metropolitan disarray, scholars nevertheless maintained that an Islamic city had to include four major architectural components: a mosque, a seat of government, a network of markets, and a public bath.[64]

In their analysis of Qasr al-Hayr's urban characteristics, Grabar's excavation team was undoubtedly in dialogue with these preceding scholarly definitions of Islamic urban space. However, their identification of the site's urban typology also pushed back against these preexisting definitions by combining literary analysis with the recently uncovered archaeological remains. While Grabar described the architectural composition of those typically "urban" structures such as the mosque, the seat of government, and the neighboring apartments as "remarkable in their lack of originality," he nevertheless highlighted the distinctive aspect of the site's overall plan.[65] To Grabar and his colleagues, the placement of the residential units and the mosque around a central porticoed area was a rare occurrence in the history of Islamic urbanism, with the possible exception of Baghdad.[66] Like the Large Enclosure at Qasr al-Hayr, Abbasid-period Baghdad included a centrally located mosque-palace complex with residential quarters located on its circular perimeter.[67]

According to medieval textual sources, a *madina* could also denote a small, fortified unit composed of a limited number of municipal institutions, such as a mosque or bath.[68] Although lacking some of the formal features identified in previous scholars' definition of an Islamic urban entity, this definition of the term *madina* could nevertheless apply to Qasr al-Hayr. In the later medieval period, Qasr al-Hayr grew into a larger urban entity. The excavation team confirmed this urban expansion through stratigraphic analysis, finding evidence for the installation of another bath as well as more apartments.[69]

The interpretation of Qasr al-Hayr as a *madina* and not just a desert castle catalyzed a number of scholarly responses. For example, the prominent archaeologist George Scanlon noted that,

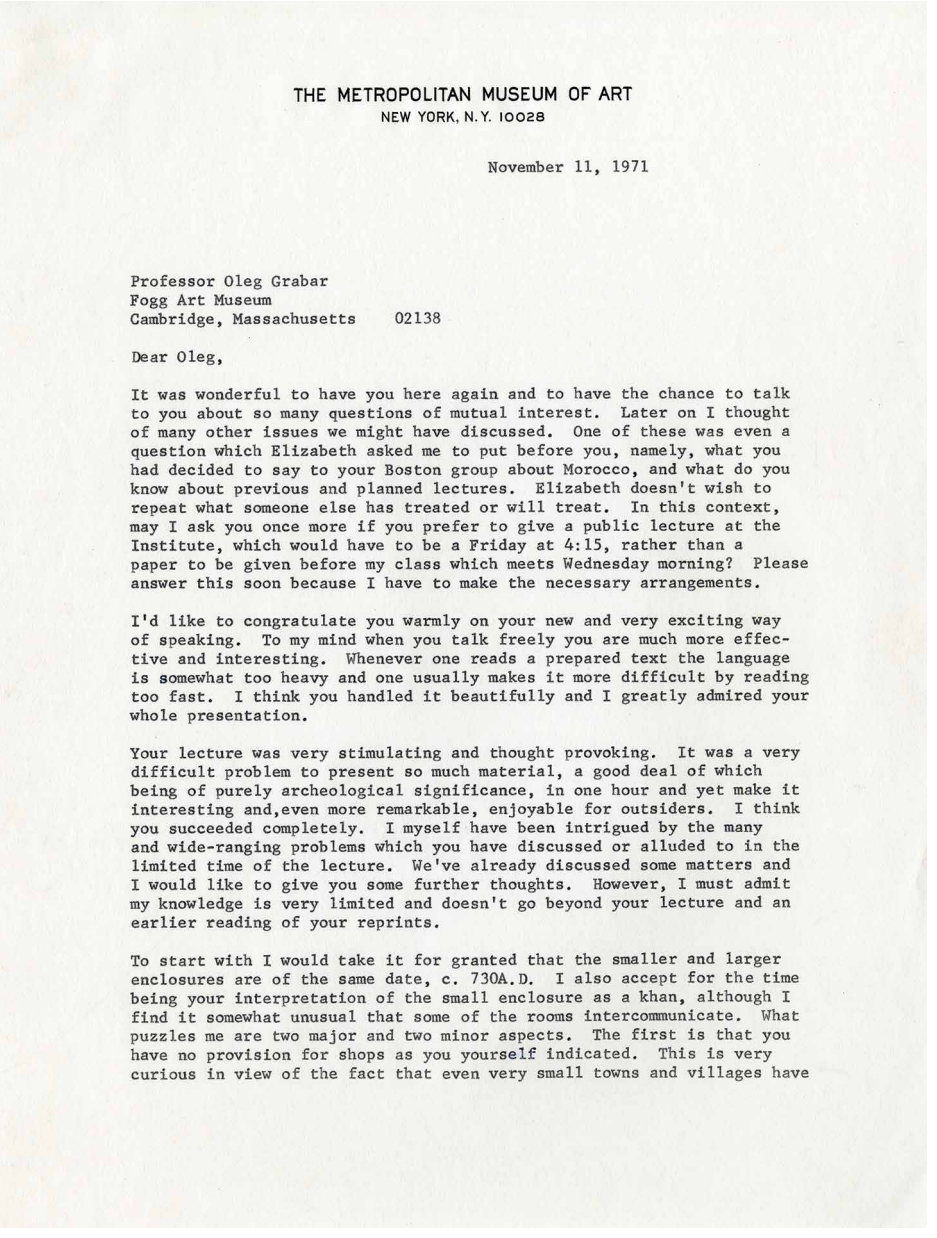
> When and if the work is completed and published in a manner and scope commensurate with its value, it will be seen that this fundamental aspect of early Islamic architecture (the Umayyad desert "palaces") will have to be radically revised in interpretation, such revision dictating the re-excavation or the re-analysis of all other examples of the genre known to us.[70]

Not partaking in Scanlon's enthusiasm, Richard Ettinghausen, then professor of Islamic art at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York City, presented the following query to Grabar (**fig. 2.8**):

> I also accept for the time being your interpretation of the small enclosure as a khan, although I find it somewhat unusual that some of the rooms intercommunicate. […] I can't recall a single case of a khan next to a town. […] All of this makes me wonder if your "medieval city in the desert" is really a city. But if it's not a city, how could one explain it?[71]

Grabar's senior by nearly three decades, Ettinghausen was an established expert of Islamic art by the early 1970s. Grabar, in contrast, had just secured his position as professor of Islamic art at Harvard University, and was still a few years away from publishing *The Formation of Islamic Art*, a landmark text for the discipline of Islamic art history. His juniority may in part have caused the onslaught of criticism Grabar continued to receive from his older colleagues, including the architectural historian K. A. C. Creswell, who observed in his seminal volume *Early Muslim Architecture* that Grabar "had the nerve" to identify Qasr al-Hayr as an urban settlement rather than as site of seasonal caliphal residence.[72] While Grabar's archives do not contain his response to Ettinghausen, his other correspondence nevertheless indicates that he was well aware of Creswell's rancor. Either out of anger or jealousy (or both), Creswell

Figure 2.8. Letter from Richard Ettinghausen to Oleg Grabar, November 11, 1971 (Box 1, Folder J).



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10028

November 11, 1971

Professor Oleg Grabar
Fogg Art Museum
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Dear Oleg,

It was wonderful to have you here again and to have the chance to talk to you about so many questions of mutual interest. Later on I thought of many other issues we might have discussed. One of these was even a question which Elizabeth asked me to put before you, namely, what you had decided to say to your Boston group about Morocco, and what do you know about previous and planned lectures. Elizabeth doesn't wish to repeat what someone else has treated or will treat. In this context, may I ask you once more if you prefer to give a public lecture at the Institute, which would have to be a Friday at 4:15, rather than a paper to be given before my class which meets Wednesday morning? Please answer this soon because I have to make the necessary arrangements.

I'd like to congratulate you warmly on your new and very exciting way of speaking. To my mind when you talk freely you are much more effective and interesting. Whenever one reads a prepared text the language is somewhat too heavy and one usually makes it more difficult by reading too fast. I think you handled it beautifully and I greatly admired your whole presentation.

Your lecture was very stimulating and thought provoking. It was a very difficult problem to present so much material, a good deal of which being of purely archeological significance, in one hour and yet make it interesting and,even more remarkable, enjoyable for outsiders. I think you succeeded completely. I myself have been intrigued by the many and wide-ranging problems which you have discussed or alluded to in the limited time of the lecture. We've already discussed some matters and I would like to give you some further thoughts. However, I must admit my knowledge is very limited and doesn't go beyond your lecture and an earlier reading of your reprints.

To start with I would take it for granted that the smaller and larger enclosures are of the same date, c. 730A.D. I also accept for the time being your interpretation of the small enclosure as a khan, although I find it somewhat unusual that some of the rooms intercommunicate. What puzzles me are two major and two minor aspects. The first is that you have no provision for shops as you yourself indicated. This is very curious in view of the fact that even very small towns and villages have

such mercantile facilities. The second point is that I can't recall a single case of a khan next to a town. A khan either would be in open transit country (although it may of course happen that a village grew up later near a khan), or it would be within the city, as we know from many examples. The minor points are first, that I find it confusing that the mosque in your planned town is tucked away in a corner analogous to the latrines in the smaller enclosure; secondly, that the bath is outside the town walls. I would have thought that the mosque in a "planned town" would be more centrally located, as for instance in Baghdad and elsewhere. All this makes me wonder if your "medieval city in the desert" is really a city. But if it's not a city, how could one explain it?

I think a possible answer is that we have two basic entities of different functions and social status. For the "public sector" there is the khan which is provided for the transient traders. On the other hand, we would have three installations for an " estate" in the"private sector:" 1) the large enclosed plantation which provided the agrarian products, including the raw material for the oil presses; this would mean that your site which is now in the desert wasn't in such barren country at the time when the place was functioning as a living entity. 2) The plantation headquarters in the large enclosure. This would include the apartments for the various officials and overseers, the mosque which served also for the farm workers, and a bath outside the walls just as the bathing features of Khirbat al-Mafjar are outside the main establishment. Due to the brevity of time you couldn't elaborate much about the character of the seven units within the large enclosure. I would assume that a close analysis of their characteristics, similar to your analysis of Sarvistan, would possibly lead to some further conclusions. I would find it difficult to understand how a city could operate for just seven families even if some retainers are included. 3) We finally have the rather poor quarters for the farm workers outside the enclosure. These are just about as miserable as those of present day for migrant workers. As to the later settlements, these reminded me of the haphazard housing of squatters. These buildings do not support the idea of an organized city, and we would again have the problem if one could speak in the true sense of the word of a "city." But, be that as it may, you have somehow found the first bidonville of the Arab world.

I am, of course, not familiar with the vast amount of pottery and glass sherds that you have found. I do not know, for instance, if you have some of the "busy" lustre types as commonly found at Samarra. What you showed could all be eighth century, but you may have other and different pieces.

All this is of course the maverick opinion of an outsider. But, I know that you would like a discussion or dialogue and in view of the esoteric character of the problems involved there are not too many people who could probably qualify. Therefore, I hope you will have no objection to get these points which I have thought about during the last few days.

Always, yours,

Richard

Richard Ettinghausen

appealed to the Syrian authorities to have Grabar's excavation permit revoked and given to himself instead.[73]

Professional grudges aside, these comments—both published and unpublished—illuminate the questions and problems occupying the field of Islamic art history during the second half of the twentieth century. As Ettinghausen's comments above demonstrate, these new interpretations were hardly welcome. His reservations were echoed in reviews of *City in the Desert*, authored by other prominent scholars. While these reviewers pointed to the provocative nature of Grabar's hypotheses, they were quick to dismiss them as "sketchy," "scanting," deserving of further questioning, and containing inner contradiction.[74]

Pending further excavation and analysis, it remains unclear whose interpretation of Qasr al-Hayr will hold in future years. What remain clear, however, are the stakes of this interpretative debate, which can be tracked in non-academic circles. Grabar's correspondence shows that the Syrian authorities were particularly resistant to not identifying Qasr al-Hayr's Small Enclosure as a palace, which led Grabar to lament in a 1970 letter that the antiquities authorities persisted in referring to the entire complex as a "palace."[75] Government officials' reluctance to accept Grabar's conclusions was not limited to nomenclature only. Although none of the documents in the archive preserve the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities response to *City in the Desert*, contemporary evidence suggests that they sidestepped its conclusions entirely. In the brief description of Qasr al-Hayr on the Syrian Ministry of Tourism website, Qasr al-Hayr is still described as one of the most prominent caliphal palaces built by Caliph Hisham.[76] Similarly, in a 2019 article in the newspaper *al-Watan*, Qasr al-Hayr is described as a seasonal residence of for the caliph, citing Gabriel's 1932 article as evidence.[77] Likewise, the Damascus Directorate General of Antiquities report to UNESCO describes Qasr al-Hayr's lengthy caliphal occupation, observing that the complex contains some of the best-preserved palatial architecture in the region.[78] Curiously, this brief text is entitled "Un Château du désert" (Castle of the Desert), echoing, if also contradicting, Grabar's chosen title of *City in the Desert*.

Although these brief snapshots of recent official descriptions of Qasr al-Hayr may not necessarily reflect a widespread rejection of Grabar's *madina* and caravansary theory, the Syrian government's emphasis on the complex's Umayyad origins should come as no surprise. Interest in this type of archaeological site is intertwined with the rise of a type of Syrian nationalism that seeks to lay claim to early Arab Islamic history and royal narratives.[79] According to the tenets of Syrian Arabism, the Umayyads, whose capital was at Damascus, are heralded as the

Figure 2.9. View of the entrance to the Small Enclosure, taken in 2010. Credit: Judith McKenzie/Manar al-Athar. http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk/copyright.html, see Qasr al-Hayr ash-Sharqi (East).

founding figures of the modern Syrian state. The celebration of the Umayyads as dynastic symbols of an Islamic golden age also occurs beyond the Syrian borders. In Palestine, the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage has endorsed the name "Qasr Hisham" for Khirbat al-Mafjar, thereby also appropriating Umayyad legacy as an indication of modern-day political success.[80]

This return to the Umayyad palace explanation is perhaps also reflected in the results of the most recent archaeological excavations at Qasr al-Hayr, conducted by a Syrian–Swiss team in the early 2000s. The published analysis of the new finds comment, in passing, upon the palatial nature of the Small Enclosure and the bath in particular (**fig. 2.9**).[81] Furthermore, the discovery of carved stucco images of a falconer and a standing figure in armor in the northern settlements could possibly—but not definitively—muddle Grabar's argument against Qasr al-Hayr as a caliphal residence.[82] These recent findings suggest that Qasr al-Hayr may have been a small

urban settlement devised primarily for caliphal or aristocratic residence in the hopes of future metropolitan expansion.[83] In the end, such novel interpretations build upon yet revise Grabar's original hypotheses, further expanding the definitions of the *madina* by attempting to understand the circumstances of medieval urban planning and foundation in Islamic lands.[84]

"A Familiar Foreign Place": Archive as Excavation

In his seminal 1973 survey of the field, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, Grabar referred to Qasr al-Hayr as a "still unsolved curiosity."[85] Indeed, the exact identification of the site remains elusive today, despite a century of scholarship on the Syrian complex. What does emerge from this recounting of the excavation, however, is the ebb and flow of the various waves of scholarly interpretation according to the historiographic, historical, and political forces that have shaped the field of Islamic art from its inception.

Nevertheless, it is possible to surmise from the archival and the published material that Grabar's prescient attempts at contextualizing the historical, geographical, architectural, and material aspects of Qasr al-Hayr constituted a novel approach in the field of Islamic art, which had until that juncture relied on close visual descriptions of Islamic sites and sorting them into formal typologies. By addressing the site's broader context and proposing new functions for its architectural structures, Grabar and his colleagues transcended the strict demarcations of Islamic archaeology, architecture, urbanism, and art history to arrive at a holistic hypothesis about Qasr al-Hayr's social, historical, and cultural milieu. Theirs was nothing if not groundbreaking work.

Their pluri-disciplinary methodology caused a seismic paradigmatic shift to the study of the "Islamic city" and "Islamic palace." In venturing beyond the summary identification of the city's formal features and looking closely at its larger geographic context and material culture, Grabar and his team of collaborators challenged and revised the categories of the *madina* and the *qasr*. While it is difficult to assess the full nature of these debates from the materials preserved in the archives, it is clear that Qasr al-Hayr was both professionally productive and personally memorable for all those who took part in its excavation. As the staff was preparing for its two final missions in the early 1970s, Trousdale wrote the following to Grabar:

> I am beginning to understand why it is that some archaeologists devote their lives to a single site. In time it does become a sort of symbol of escape (in spite of its own isolated and special unpleasantnesses [*sic*] which are different from those of the real world) from just about everything. This produced a sort of comfort in the soul, knowing that every year one can just chuck everything and return to a familiar foreign place, a sort of private microcosm, each succeeding year more highly personalized.[86]

Well-recorded and yet poorly understood, Qasr al-Hayr remains a "familiar foreign place." The Syrian–Swiss archaeological expedition at the site was cut short in 2011 due to the eruption of the Syrian civil war. Unlike Grabar's brief hiatus in 1967–68, a return to Syria has been impossible for nearly a decade. As a result, Qasr al-Hayr is now only accessible to us through its archives—through an excavation of the history of the site from the vantage point of documentary fragments. Grabar's archive emerges with greater sharpness since its creation in the 1960s. It contains the traces of personal and professional investment at this Umayyad desert site that, for now, remain once more beyond the reach of a new generation of scholars.

Notes

1. Correspondence between Oleg Grabar and Linda Rhodes, November 5, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1e.
2. The documents cited in this essay and throughout this volume belong to the Qasr al-Hayr archive, located at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Donated by Oleg Grabar to the University in 2002, the dig's archive is primarily composed of Grabar's correspondence, Anderegg and others' photographs, and a wide variety of plans, drawings, and catalogues presumably executed by the dig's excavation members. The archive is available for consultation at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.
3. The most important among such sites are Khirbat al-Mafjar, Qusayr 'Amra, and Qasr Mshatta. These so-called desert palaces were thought to have been constructed as Umayyad aristocratic settlements. See, among others, Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*; Fowden, *Quṣayr 'Amra*; and Troelenberg, *Mshatta in Berlin*. For the role of these and other sites in the field of Islamic archaeology, see Milwright, *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*, 34–43. Note that the Hamilton who joined Grabar at Qasr al-Hayr was not the same Hamilton who authored the monograph on Khirbat al-Mafjar.
4. For earlier interpretations of Qasr al-Hayr, see Rousseau, *Voyage de Bagdad à Alep*, 149–62; Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 111–23; Seyrig, "Les jardins de Kasr el-Heir" and "Retour aux jardins de Kasr el-Heir"; Gabriel, "A propos de Kasr al-Heir."
5. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 148–57.
6. One of the earliest arguments for the essentialist relationship between the "Islamic" city and Islam was formulated by William Marçais in his "L'Islamisme et la vie urbaine." Subsequent scholarship on urbanism in Islamic lands that responds to Marçais' thesis includes, among others, Gardet, *La cité musulmane*; von Grunebaum, "The Structure of the Muslim Town"; Lapidus, *Middle Eastern Cities*; Hourani and Stern, *The Islamic City*; Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City"; Raymond, "Islamic City, Arab City"; and most recently, Holod et al., *The City in the Islamic World*.
7. For a historiographic account of the contributions of archaeology to Islamic art history, see Rabbat, "Islamic Art at a Crossroads?" and Necipoğlu, "The Concept of Islamic Art."
8. Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi," "Two Possible Caliphal Representations," and *Les établissements des élites omeyyades en Palmyrène et au Proche-Orient*.
9. Doyon, "On Archaeological Labor," 152.
10. Correspondence between Grabar and Forsyth, June 26, 1964, Box 1, Folder 1c. The reconnaissance mission also led to the Sinai Expedition at the Monastery of St. Catherine, which Forsyth led in conjunction with Princeton Byzantinist Kurt Weitzmann.
11. The first faculty of Islamic art history at the University of Michigan and in the United States was Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu; see Simavi, "Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu."
12. The Directorate established their antiquities law in 1962. It required that all excavations acquire a permit from the Antiquities authority and bequeath all archaeological finds to the Syrian offices. Some small finds nevertheless made their way to the Kelsey Museum. As documented in the archives, their presence at the University of Michigan is due to a late 1960s Syrian law that allowed findings at a dig site subject to flooding (as Qasr al-Hayr was) to be taken away by excavators. For a historical overview of Syrian archaeology from the colonial period to the establishment of the General Directorate

of Antiquities and antiquities law, see Gillot, "Towards a Socio-Political History of Archaeology in the Middle East."

13. Grabar's archaeological method appears to have been somewhat questioned by his peers and the *City in the Desert* reviewers: See Fehérvári, "Review of *City in the Desert*," esp. 369, for critiques of Grabar's method and archaeological conclusions; and Watson, "Review of *City in the Desert*."

14. Rousseau, *Voyage de Bagdad à Alep*, 148–56; Grabar, "Three Seasons of Excavations," 79–80; Holod-Tretiak, "A Medieval Town in Syria," 228; Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 191; Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 263, 270–71, 285. The full inscription reads: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. There is no God but God, One without associate. Muhammad is the prophet of God. Has ordered the construction of this town [*madina*] the serve of God Hisham, Commander of the Faithful, and this was done by the inhabitants of Homs under the direction of Sulayman ibn 'Ubayd in the year [one hundred and] ten [AH] (728–729 CE)."

15. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Islamic Architecture*, 111–23; Sauvaget, "Châteaux omeyyades de Syrie," 27–28; Grabar, "The Umayyad Palace."

16. Grabar himself was infected. Among his numerous well-wishers was Edwin Kennedy, the American Cultural Affairs Officer based in Damascus, who wrote: "I hope that you have recovered from the hepatitis without any complication and that you are storing up your energy for your next assault on the desert." Correspondence between Kennedy and Grabar, February 8, 1965, Box 1, Folder 1d.

17. Correspondence between Grabar and Linda Rhodes, November 14, 1965, Box 1, Folder 1d, and February 7, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1e.

18. Interviews with Renata Holod, March 5, 2019, and December 14, 2019.

19. Interviews with Renata Holod, March 5, 2019, and December 14, 2019.

20. Schranz, "Obituary: Robert and Linda Braidwood"; letter from Grabar to Forsyth, July 1, 1968, Box 1, Folder 1g; Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*; and Adams, *Land Behind Baghdad*.

21. Interviews with Renata Holod, March 5, 2019, and December 14, 2019. Both Salam and Bates joined in 1969. Salam was based in Lebanon, and she helped Grabar secure American University of Beirut resources, including a driver and a car. The driver in question was 'Umar Fa'ur, who was Lebanese. See correspondence between Salam and Grabar, January 9, 1969, Box 3, Folder 3dd.

22. Correspondence between the Director of l'Institut français d'études arabes de Damas and Grabar, December 29, 1965, Box 1, Folder 1d.

23. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, vii; Correspondence between Grabar and Erica Dodd (Cultural Studies Program, American University of Beirut), September 25, 1967, Box 1, Folder 1f.

24. Correspondence between Grabar and Director of l'Institut français d'archéologie, September 27, 1967, Box 1, Folder 1f: "Comme vous le savez, les relations diplomatiques sont rompues. Dans ces conditions, et tant qu'il n'a pas de changement, une demande n'aurait aucune chance d'aboutir."

25. Correspondence between Grabar and Director of l'Institut français d'archéologie, September 27, 1967, Box 1, Folder 1f.

26. Correspondence between Harold Glidden, senior advisor on Arab regional affairs, Department of State, and Grabar, July 10, 1967, Box 1, Folder 1f.

27. Correspondence between Grabar and Abu al-Faraj al-'Ush, Director of the Syrian Department of Antiquities, November 27, 1967, Box 1, Folder 1f.

28. Hubbard, "Syrian Expert [...] Meets Grisly Death."

29. The practice of hiring local workers to do the majority of the manual labor under the supervision of foreign archaeologists,

primarily from Western countries, had been an established fieldwork model since the nineteenth century. On this historical context, see Mickel, "Essential Excavation Experts." While the photographs taken at Qasr al-Hayr illustrate the camaraderie that emerged between Grabar's team and the local workers, it is also pertinent to highlight that this workplace model relied on paying the workers low wages and essentially alienating them from the intellectual labor at hand. This hierarchical system is based on colonial, and now, neo-colonial legacies. For critiques of archaeologist/worker relationships, see C. Steele, "Who Has Not Eaten Cherries with the Devil?," 50–52; Starzmann, "Archaeological Fieldwork in the Middle East"; and Çelik, *About Antiquities*, 135–74.

30. Correspondence between Trousdale and Grabar, November 24, 1969, Box 1, Folder 1h.

31. The tripartite labor composition of the Qasr al-Hayr excavation, divided between foreign archaeologists, governmental antiquities officials, and local workers, was likely a holdover from the Ottoman period. Because Ottoman bureaucrats lived on site during the duration of the dig and were knowledgeable about the tribal and ethnic makeup of the region, they were tasked with surveying relationships and potential tensions between workers, and acted as liaisons between the local workers and foreign archaeologists. These bureaucrats were also responsible for ensuring that the workers did not illegally smuggle objects to the European antiquities market. Thus Ottoman-era digs were designed according to a hierarchy proceeding from Ottoman government officials to foreign archaeologists to local workers. A similar power dynamic existed at Qasr al-Hayr. See Çelik, *About Antiquities*, 152–53.

32. Interviews with Renata Holod, March 5, 2019, and December 14, 2019.

33. Letter from Selçuk Batur (writing as *mühendis*, "engineer") to the *Mudir* (aka Grabar), February 19, 1969, Box 1, Folder 1h.

34. For a brief dive into the reception of *City in the Desert* and critiques of Grabar and his team's interpretations, see Watson, "Review of *City in the Desert*"; Peters, "Review of *City in the Desert*"; and, most recently, Genequand, "From 'Desert Castle' to Medieval Town." Holod described the publication as landing like a "lead balloon"; interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

35. Schlumberger, *Les fouilles de Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi*; Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*.

36. Troelenberg, *Mshatta in Berlin*.

37. Watenpaugh, "Museums and the Construction of National History," 196; Khirbat al-Mafjar holdings at the Israel Museum: https://www.imj.org.il/en/search/site/mafjar.

38. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019. Grabar had contributed a study of the fresco paintings at Khirbat al-Mafjar to Hamilton's 1959 monograph on the subject; see Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, 122–52, 294–324, 327–39. These observations were based on Grabar's 1956 visit to the site, which was his first foray into the region.

39. Excavation Plans, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1; correspondence between Grabar and Howard Hines, division director, Social Sciences, National Science Foundation, February 11, 1965, Box 1, Folder 1d; and Grabar, "Three Seasons of Excavations," 70.

40. Seyrig, "Les jardins de Kasr el-Heir" and "Retour aux jardins de Kasr el-Heir"; Gabriel, "A propos de Kasr al-Heir."

41. Rousseau, *Voyage de Bagdad à Alep*, 145–52; Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 12; Genequand "The New Urban Settlement," 263, 270–71, 285; see note 14 for the full translation.

42. Gabriel, "A propos de Kasr al-Heir," 320.

43. Creswell and Gautier-van Berchem, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 1:330–49; Sauvaget, "Châteaux omeyyades de Syrie."

44. For a definition of the *badiya*, see Elisséeff, "Bâdiya."

45. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 175–78.

46. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 18–19, 29, 41–42. Alastair Northedge notes that the Small Enclosure was constructed of ashlar masonry and fired brick. While the façade was composed of these materials, it is important to note that fired brick was used in the interiors of both the Large and Small Enclosures, and as a result little can be determined about these enclosures' functions by surveying only construction materials. See Northedge, "Archaeology and New Urban Settlement," 236–37.

47. Newspaper clipping from the *New York Times*, September 19, 1969. Kelsey archives; Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 90–97; Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 264.

48. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

49. Adams, *Land Behind Baghdad*; and Yoffee, "Robert McCormick Adams," 404–05.

50. Grabar to T. V. Buttrey, June 29, 1970, Box 1, Folder 1h. In his brief message, Grabar writes "As you may have heard, it was a particularly exciting season with the discovery of a large bath with paintings and sculpted decoration." His invocation of the bath to Buttrey, then chair of the Classics Department at the University of Michigan and director of the Kelsey Museum, was also an accomplishment that could pave the way to secure further funds for his excavation work.

51. Grabar investigated these frescoes earlier in his career; see Grabar, "The Painting of the Six Kings"; see also Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra*.

52. For a discussion of bath sculpture at Khirbat al-Mafjar, see Soucek, "Solomon's Throne/Solomon's Bath"; see also Natif, "Painters Will Be Punished." On the Qasr al-Hayr bath, see Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 95–97.

53. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 96.

54. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 95–97.

55. Note that another, smaller bath was found within the Large Enclosure, although it was so badly preserved that it yielded little information. See Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 56–57.

56. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 32.

57. The chronology of this occupation is not contentious: it is divided into Period I (eighth to tenth centuries) and Period II (twelfth to fourteenth centuries). It remains unclear what caused the lengthy interruptions in habitation. See Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 33, 38–39.

58. Correspondence between Trousdale and Grabar, November 24, 1969, Box 1, Folder 1h.

59. This conclusion was also based on the ceramic finds at Qasr al-Hayr, which displayed connections with prominent metropolises in the Levant; see Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 110–37.

60. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 79–84 and 156–57.

61. For these early definitions of the Islamic city, see Marçais, "L'islamisme et la vie urbaine"; Lapidus, *Middle Eastern Cities*; Hourani and Stern, *The Islamic City*; and Gardet, *La cité musulmane*. For a historiographic review of the field and subsequent responses, see Al-Sayyad, "The Study of Islamic Urbanism"; Raymond, "Islamic City, Arab City"; Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City"; and Holod et al., *The City in the Islamic World*, i–xx.

62. Marçais, "L'islamisme et la vie urbaine," 87–88; Johansen, "The All-Embracing Town and Its Mosques"; Hourani "The Islamic City in Light of Recent Research."

63. Kennedy, "Islam," 229–30, in Bowersock, Brown, and Grabar, *Late Antiquity*.

64. Al-Sayyad, "The Study of Islamic Urbanism."

65. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 79–80.

66. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 80; and Al-Sayyad, *Cities and Caliphs*, 115–31.

67. Micheau, "Baghdad in the Abbasid Era," 224–26.

68. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 80.

69. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 81.

70. Correspondence between George T. Scanlon and Theodore V. Buttrey (acting director of the Kelsey Museum and chair of the Classics Department), October 27, 1969. Scanlon also briefly replaced Grabar as professor of Islamic art at the University of Michigan following Grabar's departure for Harvard University in 1969. Like Grabar, Scanlon had directed his own excavation at Fustat (old Cairo); see Scanlon, *Fustat Expedition Final Report*.

71. Letter from Richard Ettinghausen to Oleg Grabar, November 11, 1971, Box 1, Folder J. Note that Ettinghausen uses the word "khan" here rather than "caravansary," which is the term that Grabar and his co-authors employ in the *City in the Desert* publication. However, most Umayyad-era caravansarys are referred to as khans, which, in the Arab context, denotes a small inn located near settlements and offering an enclosed courtyard for animals to graze as well as accommodations for wayward travelers. However, a certain level of ambiguity persists as to this nomenclature, and khan and caravansary are often used interchangeably. See Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 331–50, for a full discussion regarding vocabulary. See the discussion of Khan al-Zbib, for example, *City in the Desert*, 31–32. See also Genequand on the khan at Qasr al-Hayr West in "Some Thoughts on Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi."

72. Creswell and Gautier-van Berchem, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 528; Grabar, "Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, Part I."

73. Correspondence between the director of l'Institut français d'études arabes de Damas and Grabar, December 29, 1965, Box 1, Folder 1d.

74. Watson, "Review of *City in the Desert*," 130; Peters, "Review of *City in the Desert*," 384; Fehérvári, "Review of *City in the Desert*," 371.

75. Grabar correspondence with Buttrey, June 29, 1970, Folder 1h, Box 1.

76. "Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi," Syrian Ministry of Tourism website, http://www.syriatourism.org/ar/page73/قصر_الحير_الغربي.

77. Al-Mobayed, "The Umayyad Palaces Are Evidence of the Greatness of Arab Architecture"; Gabriel, "A propos de Kasr el-Heir."

78. Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syrian Arab Republic, "Un château du désert."

79. Munawar, "Competing Heritage," 145–46; Zisser, "Who's Afraid of Syrian Nationalism?," 182, 186.

80. Whitcomb and Taha, "Khirbat al-Mafjar," 63.

81. Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 262–64.

82. Genequand, "Two Possible Caliphal Representations," 153–71.

83. Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 272–73.

84. Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 273.

85. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 15.

86. Correspondence between Trousdale and Grabar, November 24, 1969, Box 1, Folder 1h.

Photographs

I. Site Pictures

1. Two Enclosures, Wide View

Taken from a corner of the Large Enclosure, this photograph shows the expansive area occupied by the settlement at Qasr al-Hayr. Seen at a wide angle are the arch remains from the mosque, which originally abutted the fortified walls of the Large Enclosure. To the left, one can spot the extant fortifications of the Small Enclosure, which remains significantly more intact than its larger counterpart.

The depressions pockmarking the landscape were likely created by looters seeking valuable artifacts to sell on the antiquities market, a long-standing phenomenon at archaeological sites in Syria.[1] Despite these ongoing illegal activities, the extant structures at Qasr al-Hayr have remained largely unchanged since their "rediscovery" in the early nineteenth century, when French Orientalist Jean-Baptiste Rousseau described them as "two ancient structures […] of a solid, sturdy, and simple architecture."[2] Other buildings, such as the Outside Bath, were eventually found over the course of Oleg Grabar's excavation, but the Large and Small Enclosures nevertheless continued to form the most essential and visible components of the site. **MF**

1. Casana, "Satellite Imagery-Based Analysis."
2. Rousseau, *Voyage de Bagdad à Alep*, 150.

190264_Binder-Outer-Encl_43P01

2. Boots

Although Fred Anderegg was tasked with producing "scientific" photographs of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, his training as an art photographer meant that his approach could at times veer toward the formal and aesthetic. In this color shot, Anderegg captures the Large and Small Enclosures in the background—ostensibly for their informational value. The main visual subjects of his "clique," however, include archaeological detritus in the middle ground, strewn across the dry sands and rugged vegetation. In the foreground, a pair of desert boots (known as chukkas) are carefully centered, one placed upright and the other tipped over to display a horseshoe-like metal sole. The boots' material constituents—that is, leather and metal—enter into poetic synergy, capturing a fine balance between pelting and metallurgy. For its part, the small desert bush seems to sprout forth from the two boots, which collectively act as a vase or planter for the photographic close-up. This particular mis-en-scène inches close to installation or "detritus" art, adopting some of the techniques found in illustrations in *National Geographic* magazine, in which Anderegg published his photographs of Mount Sinai's structures, mosaics, and icons.[1] **CG**

1. See Weitzmann and Anderegg, "Mount Sinai's Holy Treasures"; on detritus, see the correspondence between Grabar and Forsyth, September 9, 1964, Box 1, Folder 1c.

190264_Binder-Outer-Encl_05P01

3. Small Enclosure

Constructed over bedrock, the Small Enclosure's walls measure eleven meters in height. They are made out of thirty-three courses of limestone quarried from the slopes of Mount Bishri, part of the Palmyrene belt in central Syria.[1] In more recent centuries, local inhabitants from the nearby village of al-Tayyiba used the enclosure's walls as a source of *prima materia* to build their houses. For this reason, the lower courses are now denuded of their stone facing, the interior rubble masonry visible to the naked eye. The back of the enclosure does not include an entrance or gate; a single ingress allowed the enclosure to be more carefully controlled and protected from enemy storming, thus serving as a fortification when need arose. While the corner towers project outward for defensive purposes, the two half-towers located in the structure's center served above all in a buttressing capacity. CG

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 18.

1969-12_13P01

4. Bath

During the fifth season of excavation, in 1970, Grabar and his team stumbled upon a bath structure. The discovery was a surprise. Renata Holod and archaeologist Robert McCormick Adams uncovered a wall during a walking survey between and to the north of the two enclosures. At first they believed it to be a small watchtower;[1] excavation revealed a six-room bathhouse comprised of pools, latrines, and a furnace.

Although Grabar had hoped to concentrate on uncovering the two enclosures, the discovery of the Outside Bath radically altered the trajectory of the archaeological mission.[2] Over the course of the final two seasons (1970, 1971), a close study of the bath's structure and location, detached from a private residence, revealed that it was a public urban amenity rather than a site of exclusive princely activity. Unlike Khirbat al-Mafjar and Qusayr ʿAmra, Umayyad "desert palaces" that also included bathhouses, Qasr al-Hayr was a locus of public civic activity. As a result of this discovery, Grabar and his colleagues determined that the site functioned as a city rather than a royal residence, disrupting the category of the so-called desert castles and introducing new hypotheses about eighth-century settlements in the Syrian steppe. **MF**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 90. The survey method was also used by Adams, as described in his seminal publication, *Land Behind Baghdad*.
2. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

190257_Binder-Bath_37P01

5. Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi

The site of Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi ("castle enclosure west") is situated, as its name indicates, to the west of Palmyra and is a sister site to Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi ("castle enclosure east"). It was a royally commissioned complex complete with a bathhouse, governmental headquarters, and a caravansary. Excavated in the 1930s by French archaeologist Daniel Schlumberger, the structures at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi featured ornate façades of carved stucco and figural sculptures.

In selecting Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi as a site for exploration, Grabar was undoubtedly keen to uncover similarly elaborate architectural decoration.[1] Such embellishments would have been a clear sign of royal patronage, elevating the site's importance in Islamic art historical scholarship. Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, however, did not yield any such decorative programs, to Grabar's initial disappointment.

The Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi portal, with its intricate stuccowork, is now installed at the National Museum in Damascus. Construction to incorporate the façade began in 1939 but could not be completed until after the Second World War.[2] Like other encyclopedic museums of the period, the insertion of a large-scale architectural element was intended to showcase masterpiece findings at a time of intense archaeological work in the region.[3] In the Damascus museum, the portal dominates a large gallery space that also features a central fountain surrounded by a garden, echoing the luxurious landscapes of eighth-century princely residences. **MF**

1. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.
2. Watenpaugh, "Museums and the Construction of National History," 196.
3. Ibid., 196; Troelenberg, *Mshatta in Berlin*, 61–85.

1969-44_29P01

II. Oleg Grabar & Khalid al-Asʿad

6. Palmyra Museum Meeting

Oleg Grabar and the excavation team made regular visits to Palmyra, 110 kilometers to the southwest of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. They often brought finds from the site to be stored at the National Museum of Palmyra in the hope of future display. The team's archaeologist colleague and official government liaison there was Khalid al-Asʿad, director of the museum from 1963 to 2003.

In this photograph, al-Asʿad's cousin ʿAli Taha stands next to the seated Grabar, who turns to look at the paperwork he holds. Taha is flanked on his other side by a museum staff member. Next to Grabar, Renata Holod, Bill Trousdale, and al-Asʿad sit in chairs against the wall, all wearing appropriate desert attire. According to Holod, these "Safari suits" were purchased at Abercrombie & Fitch before departure for Syria.[1] They were favored wear thanks to their many pockets, into which could be stashed a host of objects and tools. They also were purchased on the larger side, thus acting as outerwear that could accommodate a layering of other vestments, including wool sweaters. During such meetings at the museum, excavation logistics and finds were discussed—per the rules of *politesse oblige*—over cigarettes, coffee, and tea. In this shot, Trousdale holds a lit cigarette in his uplifted hand; a burn in the photograph, which obscures his eyes, may offer a material reminder and relic of the social "lighting up" activities at the site and elsewhere. **CG**

1. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

QasralHayr_22P016

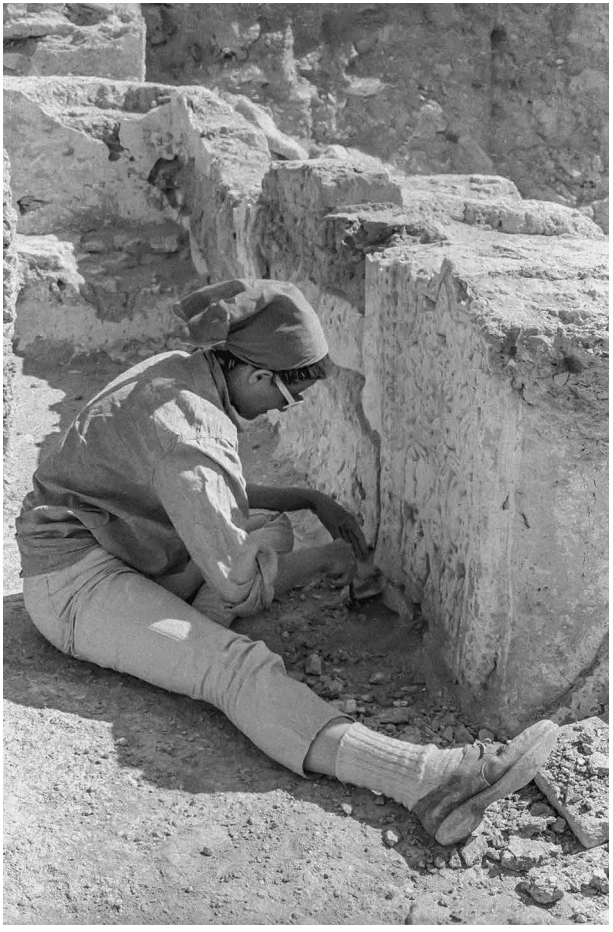
7. Holod and Grabar Cleaning Stucco Panels

In 1966, Renata Holod had just completed her master's degree in the history of art at the University Michigan under Oleg Grabar's direction. About to begin her doctoral studies at Harvard University,[1] she was invited by Grabar to join the second season of his excavation at Qasr al-Hayr, both as one of his graduate students and as a married chaperone for Linda Rhodes, a single woman participating in the dig as photographer.

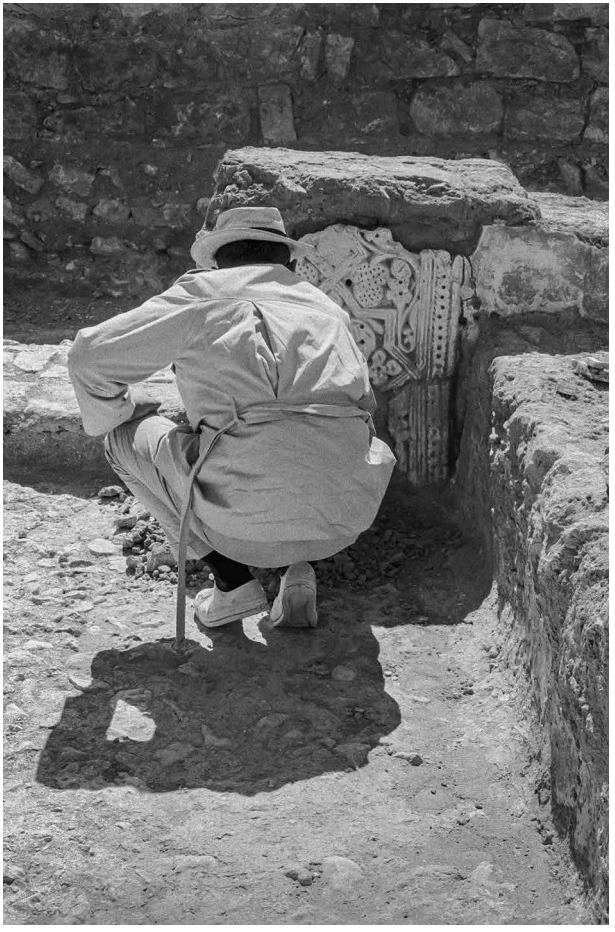
In these two photographs, Holod and Grabar clear panels of carved stucco, a hallmark of Islamic architectural decoration and a subject of great scholarly interest to Grabar.[2] Although still a student at the time, Holod was a driving force behind many of the discoveries at the site, above all the large bath complex just to the north of the Large and Small Enclosures.[3] The existence of a public bathhouse prompted the reconsideration of the site as a city rather than a palatial residential complex.

Holod and Grabar's collaboration extended well past the conclusion of the excavations at Qasr al-Hayr. After his 1969 departure for Harvard University, Grabar co-advised Holod's doctoral dissertation on the medieval architecture of the Iranian city of Yazd, completed in 1972. Holod was also a key contributor to the 1978 excavation publication, *City in the Desert*, which launched her long and distinguished career in the fields of Islamic art, architecture, and archaeology. **AK**

1. See Holod's 1966 letter to Grabar, in which she writes about applying exclusively to doctoral programs at East Coast schools, March 9, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1e. For a further biography of Holod, see the preface in Roxburgh, *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture*.
2. Interview with Renata Holod, March 5, 2019.
3. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 90–97.



1966Q_cap_31P01



1966Q_cap_30P01

8. Grabar Sitting in a Bedouin's Tent

Grabar's foray into Islamic archaeology was somewhat of an ambitious endeavor. Although he had completed a dissertation on Umayyad court culture prior to beginning his teaching career at the University of Michigan, he had never worked in the field in any official capacity, apart from his brief participation at Khirbat al-Mafjar under the direction of British archaeologist Robert Hamilton.[1] The opportunity to dig at Qasr al-Hayr arose after he took part in a 1956 University of Michigan–sponsored reconnaissance expedition through Egypt and the Levant under the direction of George Forsyth. The purpose of the trip was to survey archaeological sites in the Near East for potential excavation; Qasr al-Hayr was one of the sites on the itinerary. A few years later, when Forsyth was director of the Kelsey Museum at the University of Michigan, he encouraged Grabar to lead an excavation at Qasr al-Hayr under the museum's auspices, in part to expand and strengthen the university's already well-established position as a center for research in Islamic art.[2]

As the dig neared its conclusion, Grabar expressed a desire to never direct an archaeological expedition again. While archaeology undoubtedly excited him, the overwhelming work caused by administrative matters and "legalistic points" would deter him from taking up a similar leadership role for the remainder of his career.[3] Nevertheless, his correspondence and the photographs in the Qasr al-Hayr archives illustrate the close personal friendships he formed at the dig. These relationships were bolstered by leisurely social activities, including the bimonthly *mansaf*, pictured here, at which time laborers would collect their two-weeks' pay and partake in a group meal with the staff.[4] **MF**

1. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, 122–52.
2. Simavi, "Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu."
3. For example, see the letter from Grabar to Robert Adams, December 12, 1969, Box 3, Folder 3hhh.
4. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

190258_Binder-People-etc_64P01

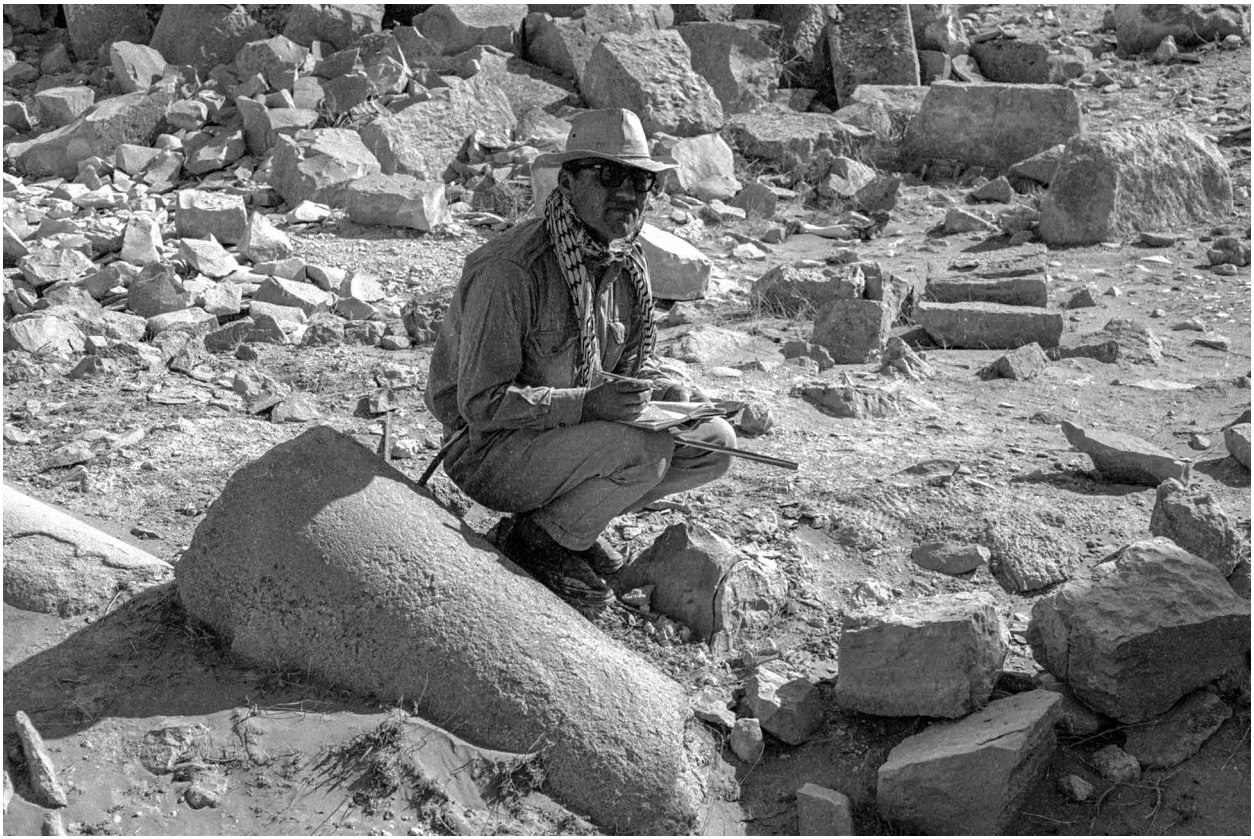
9. Al-Asʿad Crouching on Site

Following his 1963 appointment as director of Antiquities and curator of the Palmyra Museum, Khalid al-Asʿad was tasked with the supervision of ongoing excavation sites and missions in the region, which included Qasr al-Hayr.[1] Born in 1934 near Palmyra (Tadmur in Arabic), al-Asʿad lived close to the site throughout his life. He devoted his career to the exploration and conservation of the famed ancient city.

As a trained archaeologist, he also leveraged his position in the Syrian bureaucracy to establish relationships with both local and foreign scholars who expressed interest in Syrian archaeology, forming close personal and professional relationships that would sustain his own seminal contributions to the field. A close friend of Grabar's, al-Asʿad was at Qasr al-Hayr during the entire duration of the dig. He can be seen in many photographs, socializing with the team as well as engaging in his own study of the site.[2]

In May 2015, ISIS militants took over Palmyra. Despite repeated entreaties from friends and family, al-Asʿad refused to leave the city, citing his wish to remain in his hometown. A mere three months later, he was subjected to horrific torture inside the Palmyra Museum at the hands of ISIS and beheaded in Tadmur's public square. He was 82 years old. Despite his brutal murder, his memory lives on at Palmyra, where members of his family still reside. His life story also endures in the many photographs and letters preserved in the Qasr al-Hayr archives. **MF**

1. Al-Asaad, "A Tribute to the Late Khalid al-Asaad, Martyr of Palmyra," 20.
2. Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syrian Arab Republic, "The Martyr of Palmyra: Khaled al-Asaad."



1964Y_cap_11P01

10. Nighttime Gathering

Members of the excavation team rose early, generally by five A.M., to begin the morning work shift, which lasted from six A.M. to one P.M. and included a mid-morning break. After lunch (the major meal of the day), they would rest or engage in light work such as the examination of finds, the counting and drawing of ceramic sherds, and the development of black-and-white photographs like this one. As the days petered to a close, team members relaxed and socialized in the coolness of the evening air before turning in for the night by ten P.M.

In this photo from 1969, team members—among them Renata Holod (raising her hands to the back of her head), Oleg Grabar (smiling at the camera), Khalid al-Asʿad (wearing dark glasses) and his cousin ʿAli, William Trousdale (in the upper right corner), ʿUmar Faʾur (the driver, at right, wearing a white shirt), and Ülkü Bates (resting her cheek on one hand)—gather in a circle (*majlis*) as they sit on wooden stools with seats made of woven plastic or rope ribbons. One such stool functions as a squat table for a dish filled with raisins and nuts—a sweet and savory "trail mix" befitting a desert location. Cups of sugary tea and coffee can be spotted on the ground, as well as the team's favored nighttime libations: Scotch, Cinzano, Campari, gin, and Polish vodka.[1] Nicely composed in the round and shot from a top-down perspective, this photograph captures a restful and light-hearted moment on the dig. **CG**

1. See William Trousdale's correspondence with Renata Holod in Box 3, Folder 3jjj. The section is entitled "sin" and the four Polish vodka bottles are earmarked for James Knudstad exclusively.

QasralHayr_25P011

III. Large Enclosure

11. Water Pipes in the Large Enclosure

Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi was supported by a sophisticated and ambitious system of water distribution.[1] Individuals who settled at the site and who cultivated the lands in its environs relied on systems of water collection, delivery, and irrigation, which included cisterns and channels. During excavation, the longest course of pipe sections was found beneath a street in the Large Enclosure, captured in this black-and-white photograph. This particular pipe may have served to drain rainwater along the side of the street, whose colonnade is attested to by the column bases, capitals, and carved lintels lining its course. These ceramic pipes had an internal diameter of ca. 12.5 cm and lateral or longitudinal grooves on their interiors that allowed for the regulation of water flow. They were pieced together and stabilized with a coarse-grained lime mortar. Additionally, a number of ceramic and stone pipe plugs were also found, although their exact purposes remain unknown.[2] **CG**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 73–79.
2. Ibid., 74 and 179.

1968E_cap_10P01

12. Wide View of the Mosque and Large Enclosure

This photograph shows a wide view of the Large Enclosure as seen from the vantage point of the mosque. The intact walls of the Small Enclosure loom in the background, contrasting with the ruins of its larger neighbor. While it is still unclear why the Large Enclosure suffered such extensive damage, it may be linked to its expansive area, which is six times larger than that of the Small Enclosure.

The Large Enclosure's best-preserved structure is the mosque, whose arched piers are partially truncated by the right edge of the photograph. Excavation in the Large Enclosure uncovered a series of private residences, a public bathhouse, and an olive press, all of which would have relied on the complex waterway and irrigation system that was only partially uncovered. Like the Small Enclosure, the stratigraphic evidence in the Large Enclosure points to a longer settlement history that extended beyond the late medieval period.

Interpretations of the Large Enclosure remain speculative. Grabar and his colleagues suggested that it was originally a *madina*: not a city in the strict translation of the Arabic word, but rather a fortified settlement designed for five or six families.[1] According to Grabar, this explanation, based on a rarely used definition of the term *madina*, could shed light on early Islamic urbanism. In his estimation, smaller settlements were often referred to as *madinas* in the early Islamic period, before their eventual expansion into full-size metropolises, the latter prompting an evolution of the term's use in textual sources.[2] The publication of this hypothesis in 1978 caused reverberations in scholarship concerned with Islamic urban form and history that continue today. **MF**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 80.
2. Ibid., 80.

1966t_36P01

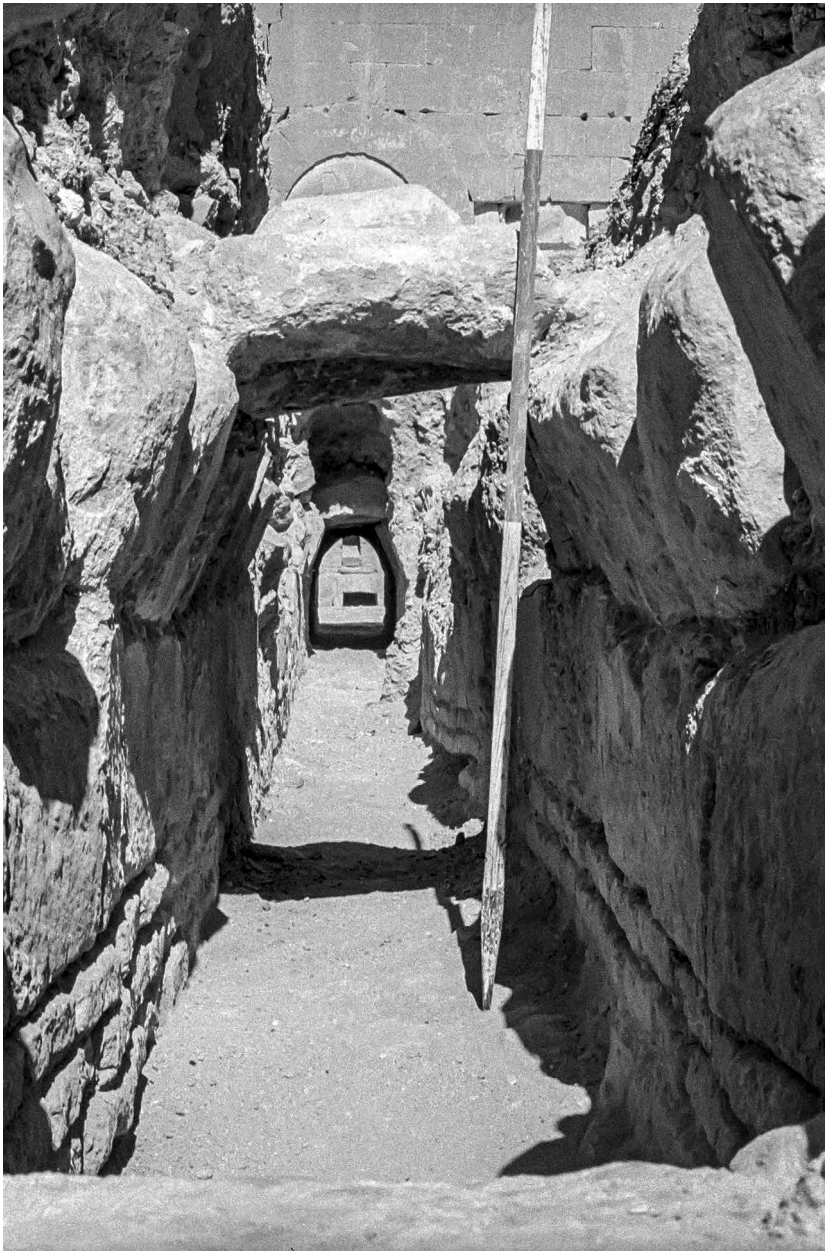
13. Underground Canal between Small and Large Enclosures

One of the enduring mysteries of Qasr al-Hayr, which is located in an arid region with little natural rainfall, is its water supply.[1] The archaeologists hypothesized that the founders of the site engineered a complex irrigation and hydraulic system to supply the settlement with water. Although this system was never fully uncovered, evidence indicates the existence of a large network of water canals, sluices, and cisterns to harness rainwater and bring springwater from afar.

One of these water alimentation components is shown in this photograph: an underground canal connecting the Small and Large Enclosures. It was one of many such channels designed to carry rainwater to a series of cisterns where it could be stored. The excavation team also detected a *qanat* (underground aqueduct) running through the Wadi al-Suq (valley of the market) to the northwest. This canal was part of a system of under- and overground channels that delivered a constant supply of springwater 25 kilometers from near the village of al-Kawm to Qasr al-Hayr.[2]

Over a millennium later, the archaeological team also encountered difficulties with water supply to the site. Since the dig house did not have running water, they had to rely on a team of water carriers who, almost daily, hauled tanks of water from nearby sources to replenish the supplies of water for drinking, cooking, and bathing. **MF**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 106.
2. Ibid., 107; Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 268.



1969-30_18P01

14. Fallen Masonry

The archives of Qasr al-Hayr's six excavation seasons include over twenty thousand photographs of varying subjects, including close detail of trenches and various architectural structures. These photographs were presumably taken to facilitate the study of the site outside the field season, and to create a sizable corpus of images to illustrate the many publications and reports discussing the expedition. This shot appears to document fallen masonry, likely following the event of a collapse. A bicolor rod scale lies on the ground in the center: it was inserted into the frame to provide measured scale, in following with the methods of archaeological photography first introduced in the mid-twentieth century.[1] The nearly transparent strings, drawn in parallel lines and barely visible in the fore- and backgrounds, were used to define the trench limits.

Archaeological photographs like this one often include small details that attest to manual labor, in this instance the demarcation of an archaeological area set apart for scientific investigation. In the background of this photograph is a *quffa*, or tire basket, filled with debris from the trench. A number of other baskets are scattered at the edge of the photograph's frame. The latter were likely assembled before being transported out of the trench by workers whose presence is palpable through a line of feet sporting boots, sandals, or left completely bare, in the upper left. **MF**

1. For a discussion of the introduction of the rod scale in archaeological photography around 1950, see Carter, "The Development of the Scientific Aesthetic."

1970-71_01P01

15. Work Line

In the strict codes of archaeological photography, which stress a more scientific approach, the inclusion of equipment and workers vitiates the recording process.[1] Shedding this restrictive notion of the objective, in this color shot Fred Anderegg captures a highly dynamic moment—a moment of "brute force"[2]—that includes human labor, collective action, and the use of heavy equipment. Here, workmen in both the foreground and the background line up to haul detritus from the residential quarters of the Large Enclosure. They hoist materials to the dump truck (visible in the upper left corner) to be carted off elsewhere.

While this action shot includes an energetic dimension, it does not immediately capture the surround sound of this group undertaking. The aural dimension of this scene, however, is retrievable through participant interviews. According to Renata Holod, the foreman ʿAli would blow his whistle to call the workers to attention and order them to form a work line (*ʿamal saff*); the workers would then holler, *Yallah!* (Let's go!) and, *Shil al-quffa!* (Take the basket!). The Bedouin workers among the group would sing Bedu tunes, which could serve to accelerate the work tempo. Different groups of Bedouin workers also tried to out-sing—and hence out-perform—each other. As we look to the Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi photographic record, we are confronted with the larger soundscape of a dig filled with clamorous banter, whistling, imperative orders, exclamations of encouragement, and antiphonal Bedouin repartee—all of which, here and elsewhere, participate in the rich social relations that undergird the scientific processes of archaeology. **CG**

1. Bateman, "Wearing Juninho's Shirt," 194.
2. Bohrer, "Photography and Archaeology," 181, citing Auguste Salzmann.

190266_Binder-Large-Encl_45P01

IV. Small Enclosure

16. Workers Pulling Columns

Marble columns, bases, and capitals were found in the Small Enclosure. Originally, the columns must have been part of a colonnaded walkway or courtyard, their luxury material demarcating a more important area of the enclosure. Since marble was not locally available, it is likely that the columns and capitals were spoliated from pre-Islamic sites in Syria, possibly Palmyra or Rusafa-Sergiopolis, the latter having served also as a residence for the Umayyad caliph Hisham ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–743 CE). The capitals include acanthus leaves and volutes, both elements typical of Graeco-Roman architecture.[1]

Strewn at various angles, perhaps due to collapse during an earthquake, the disjointed columns were recorded and numbered before being cleared away. Here, a dozen workers are photographed in the throes of dislodging one of the columns: one individual pushes at the base while the others pull it forward with a rope. Once at the edge of the trench, the column would be lifted with pullies, placed in a debris-hauling truck, and transported to the National Museum of Palmyra for storage. **CG**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 177.

190265_Binder-Small-Encl_11P01

17. Wide View of Small Enclosure

At the time of the Michigan expedition in the 1960s and early 1970s, Qasr al-Hayr was the only Islamic-era site being excavated in Syria.[1] The Syrian government was eager for archaeologists to shed light on the site's history; they wished to eventually restore the Small Enclosure and invite visitors to experience an Umayyad "palace." However, gradual investigations by members of the archaeological team led them to develop a suspicion that the enclosure was, in fact, not a courtly building.

The question about the nature of the Small Enclosure was first posed in 1966, but the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967 and worsening relations between the United States and Syria prevented the team from returning to Qasr al-Hayr to test their hypothesis. Thanks to Grabar's repeated entreaties to foreign diplomatic missions and the Syrian government, a three-person team (Grabar, Trousdale, and Batur) was permitted to return to Syria for a short season in 1968.[2]

Grabar and his team gradually edged closer to the conclusion that the Small Enclosure was not a palatial structure, and published their conclusion in the final excavation report in 1978. Syrian officials have nevertheless held on to the building's earlier classification.[3] The Small Enclosure was never fully excavated and its function is still debated within scholarly communities today. **MF**

1. Letter from Grabar to Robert Adams, November 2, 1969, Box 3, Folder 3hhh.
2. Letter from Grabar to Abu'l Faraj Al-'Ush, director of the Syrian Department of Antiquities, December 26, 1967, Box 1, Folder 1f.
3. Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syrian Arab Republic, "Un Château du désert."

190265_Binder-Small-Encl_31P01

18. Room 20 from Above

Photographing the various components of the massive enclosures at Qasr al-Hayr was no small task. With each wall of the Small Enclosure measuring approximately 70 meters in length, the area within was extensive and difficult to capture in one frame without the aid of expensive techniques such as aerial photography, for which Grabar was unable to secure funds. This photograph, which records Room 20 within the Small Enclosure, was taken from a wall or other high perch.

The Small Enclosure was of great interest to Grabar and his colleagues. In contrast to its larger counterpart, the Small Enclosure's walls and entrance were almost completely extant, and they included carved stucco decoration that so often adorned the entryways to Umayyad palatial structures. As a result, the team first assumed that this structure had been a palace for its founder, the Umayyad caliph Hisham, and that the Large Enclosure was constructed as a residential city.

Extensive investigation within the site later revealed that these assumptions were erroneous. The excavation of room 20, pictured here, provided the first clue for this reinterpretation. It evidently had been occupied well past the Umayyad period. Upon further investigation, archaeologists determined that the Small Enclosure lacked many of the features common to Umayyad palaces, namely rooms of varying size and copious architectural decoration. Instead, Qasr al-Hayr's Small Enclosure featured little decoration outside of the main gateway, leading the team to conclude that it was designed to be a mercantile facility or caravansary. According to Grabar, this function might explain its long settlement history since it was likely used throughout the medieval period as trade routes continued to expand from the ninth century onward. **MF**

190265_Binder-Small-Encl_73P01

19. Entrance of the Small Enclosure

The Small Enclosure's only entrance is located at the center of the western wall and is flanked by two half-towers. These bastions—one of which (on the left) includes an arrow slit—served a defensive purpose, the latter further strengthened by the machicolations from which stones, burning oil, or other objects could be dropped on attackers attempting to the storm the stronghold. At the top of the towers, blind arcades of brick and stucco add a decorative touch to the upper façade, from which guards kept watch from the inner parapet.[1]

Two other features of the Small Enclosure's entrance gate are noteworthy. First, the spandrel immediately above the door may have been designed to include an inscription;[2] and second, two niches flanking the spandrel may have housed figural statuary or some other ornamental element. A tall, rectangular tower built of reused stones, visible at the right edge of the photo, is located between the Small and Large Enclosures. It may have served as a watchtower or the minaret for a mosque built sometime during the Ayyubid period (twelfth–thirteenth centuries), at which time the Small Enclosure at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (then known then as 'Urd) was re-inhabited until about 1350 CE. Alternatively, it may have been constructed as late as the eighteenth century, when the site was used as a stopover for caravans.[3] **CG**

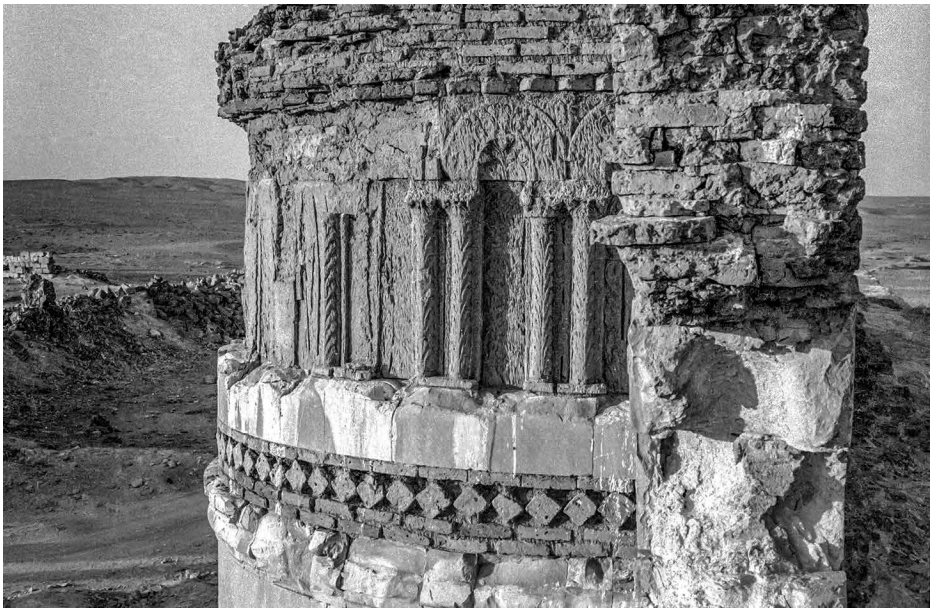
1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 20.
2. In the early nineteenth century, Rousseau recorded an Arabic inscription written in red pigment, but it was half-erased and thus impossible to decipher. Rousseau, *Voyage de Bagdad à Alep*, 151–52: "Au dessus de cette porte, à l'intérieur, se remarque une inscription arabe en caractères rouges, à moitié effacée et que je ne pus déchiffrer."
3. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 108.

190265_Binder-Small-Encl_05P01

20. Brickwork of the Small Enclosure

The exterior walls of the Small Enclosure are built of stones laid horizontally around what is conjectured to be a rubble core. The enclosure's single entrance gate is flanked by two half-towers and surmounted by machicolations on three stone brackets, above which runs a course of blind arcades marking an inner walkway from which guards would have stood in watch. The upper portion of the structure includes decorative elements made of brick and plaster, expanding Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi's material repertoire. The fired bricks are placed in horizontal, pointed, and flat formations, creating a series of geometric motifs, among them a course of zigzag or diamond patterns as well as halos of radial pointing.[1] For their part, the blind arches are made of stucco, their colonnettes ornamented with chevrons and capitals that were likely undecorated impost blocks. This blind arcade made of stucco was applied to panels reinforced by reeds and topped by five courses of horizontally laid brickwork. The decorative brickwork technique seen here is common in medieval Islamic architecture and is known in Persian as *hazarbaf*, or "thousand weaves,"[2] because of its knotlike, modular aesthetic. Similar brickwork motifs have been discovered in more recent excavations of the site as well.[3] **CG**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 21.
2. Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," 34–35.
3. Genequand, "Two Possible Caliphal Representations."



1964b_03Po1

1964b_cap_27P01

V. Workers

21. Qaydi Pointing

A man of diminutive size, Qaydi (whose name signifies that he was born in the middle of summer) stood less than 1.5 meters tall. Orphaned at a young age when his own clan died out, he was adopted by the Sbaʿa tribe, whose winter quarters were located near Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. Members of the tribe served as workers on the excavation. Qaydi, petite of frame and advanced in age, tended to less physically laborious duties such as guarding the dig house, keeping an eye on equipment, cleaning ceramic sherds, running errands, and other ad hoc requests. A much beloved "mascot"[1] of the site, Qaydi also was of photographic interest to Fred Anderegg, who appears to have been drawn to his broad smile, pearly white teeth set against the bronze hue of his skin, and idiosyncratic *kufiyya*, whose ends Qaydi upturned and tucked on either side of his headband, creating a delightful lop-eared effect. In this shot, Qaydi wears his typical cotton robe, over which he has layered a blazer and wool jacket; both items were likely given to him by members of the excavation team. He points one hand to Anderegg, as if captured in the midst of a conversation, while the other hand appears to hold a wooden peg, which he may have used to tether the tent that lies, stretched out and unfolded, on the ground beneath him. CG

1. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

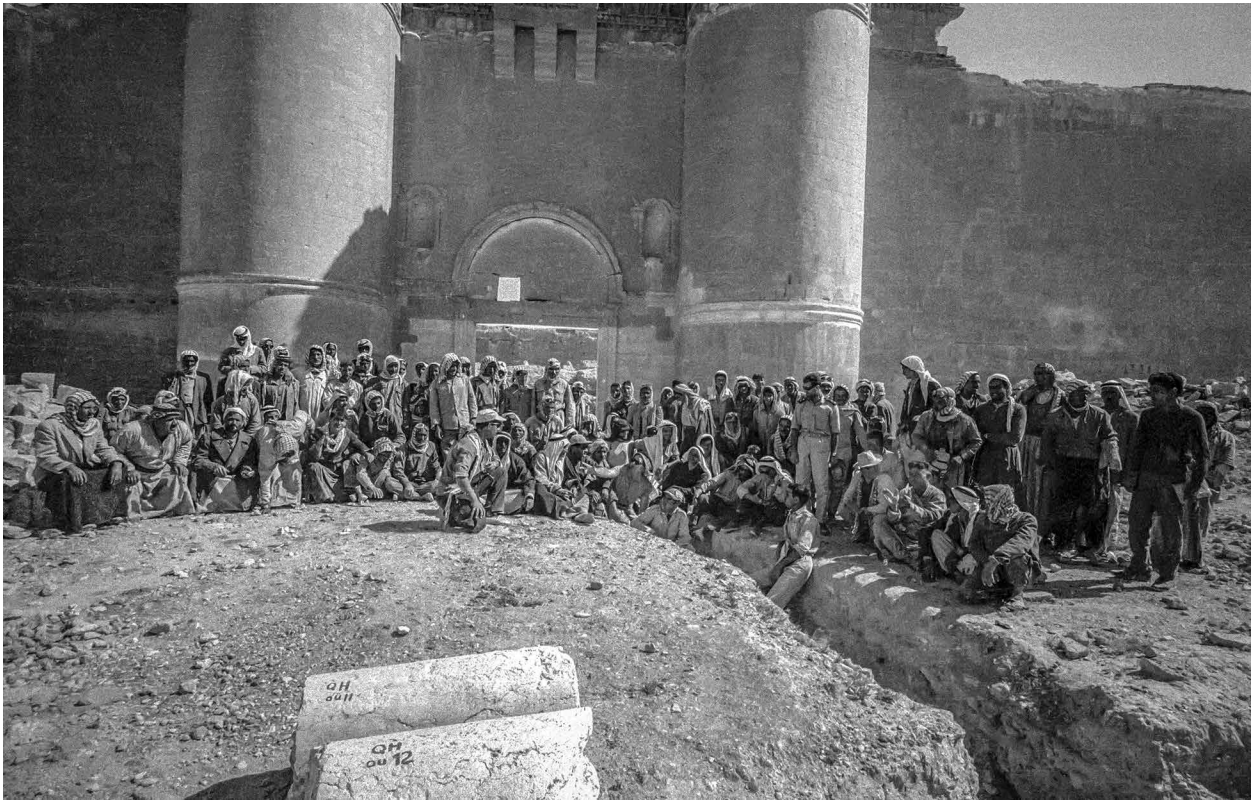
QasralHayr_27P018

22. Workers Posing in Front of Gate

While Grabar first planned to hire approximately forty workers to assist the archaeological team, this number swelled to over one hundred and fifty as the expedition began to explore larger sections of Qasr al-Hayr.[1] Taken during the first excavation season, in 1964, this photograph captures the group when it was still relatively small.

The group is composed entirely of men. Their places of origin can be discerned through the types of clothing they wear: local villagers from al-Tayyiba and al-Sukhna often opted for Western clothing, while the Bedouins wore *abaya*s (robes) and *kufiyya*s (headdresses) made of white cotton or linen.[2] The workers were placed under the direction of an experienced foreman by the name of ʿAli, who had assisted other foreign archaeological expeditions in Syria. He can be seen in the center of this photograph, crouching in the direction of his men and sporting a baseball cap. The group is posing in front of the entrance to the Small Enclosure, the primary site of investigation during the 1964 season.[3] **MF**

1. Letter from Grabar to ʿAbdul-Haqq, director of the Syrian Department of Antiquities and Museums, October 21, 1963, Box 1, Folder 1b. Letter from Grabar to ʿAbdul Hamid Darkal, director of the Syrian Department of Antiquities and Museums, October 3, 1968. Box 1, Folder 1g.
2. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.
3. Grabar, "Three Seasons of Excavation," 70.



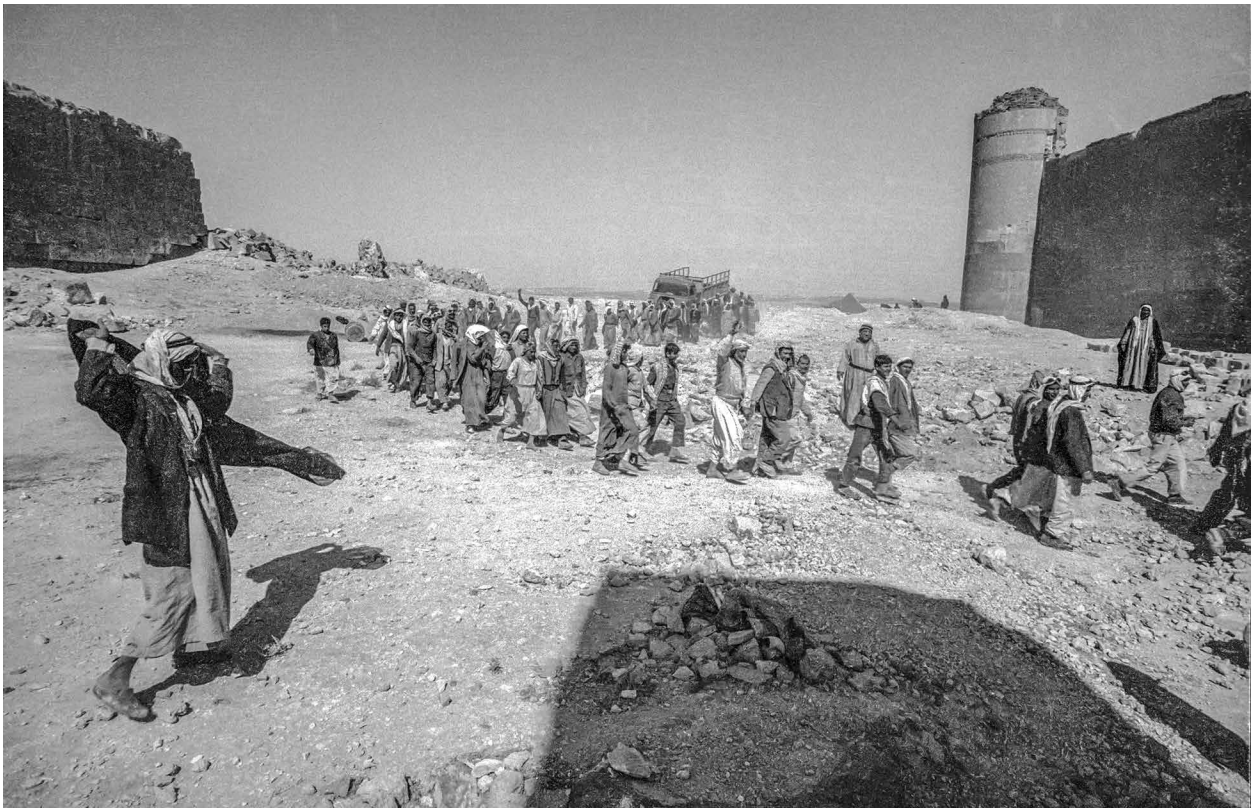
1964M_cap_21P01

23. Staging a Dramatic Entrance

The Qasr al-Hayr expedition archives are replete with photographs recording large groups of local workers. They were recruited to assist with the manual labor of the excavation, such as digging, removing debris, helping with transportation, and washing small finds. Many of the workers stayed on site during each season, likely sleeping in tents provided by the dig. Alternatively, they may have commuted from the villages of al-Tayyiba and al-Sukhna, a thirty-minutes' drive away.[1]

These workers likely had previous experience providing support for archaeological excavations; they may have worked at Palmyra, which hosted continuous archaeological expeditions over the course of the mid-twentieth century. While at first glance this photograph seems to depict workers proceeding toward the site at the start of their workday, other documents in the Qasr al-Hayr archives indicate that this scene was staged, perhaps to provide a record of the season's events. **MF**

1. Correspondence between Grabar and Klaus Brisch of the German Archaeological Institute, 1963, Box 1.



1964M_cap_18P01

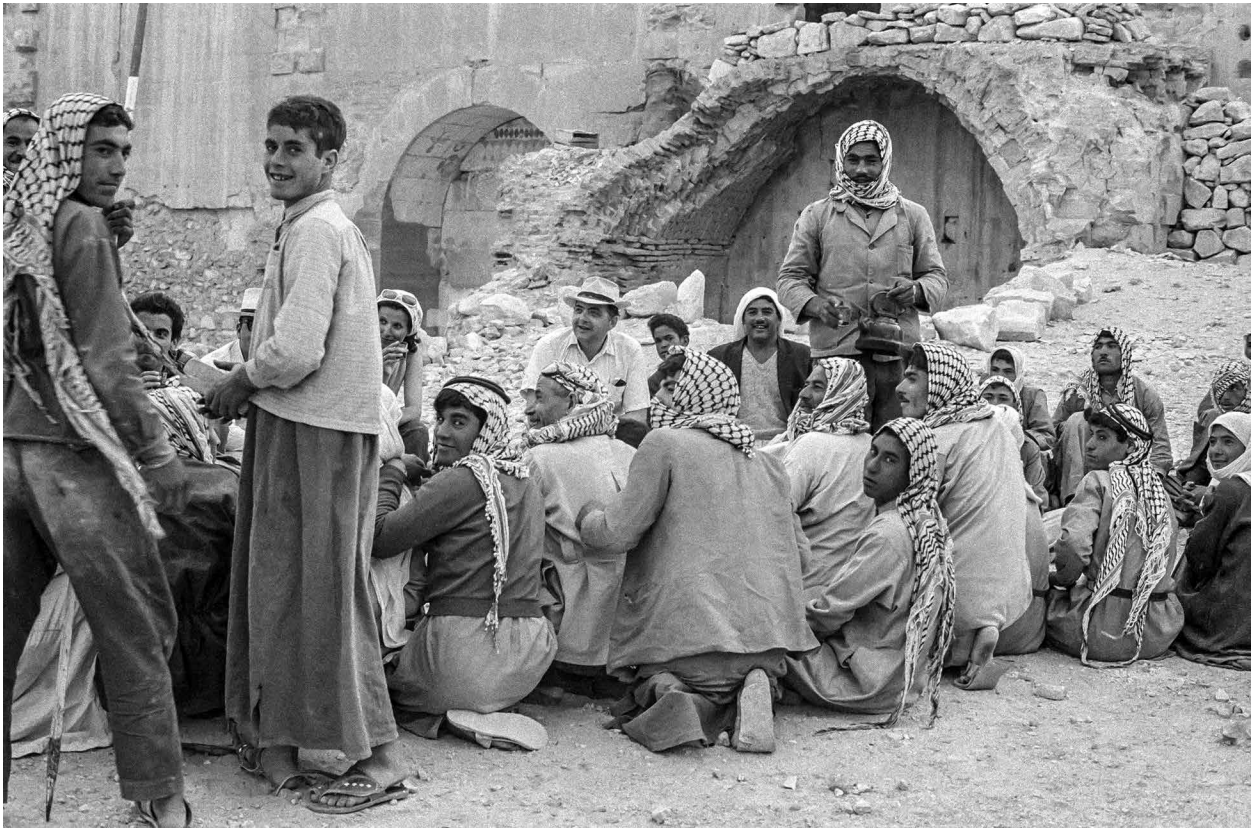
24. Grabar and Workers

During initial preparations for the dig at Qasr al-Hayr in the early 1960s, Grabar was extremely concerned with securing labor, food, and water in such a remote location.[1] His correspondence is replete with requests and inquiries to colleagues in the field as well as to Syrian officials, asking where he might find the requisite personnel and resources and, in particular, how to ensure their availability given his own distant location in Ann Arbor.

According to official instructions by the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities, workers were to be paid five or six Syrian pounds daily, at the time equivalent to approximately $1.50.[2] While the archaeological mission was not responsible for feeding the workers, it was required to provide them with other staples, such as water and some tents, for the duration of the expedition.[3]

As a result of living and working in close quarters, Grabar and his team of archaeologists developed fond relationships with the local workers, who were either from the nearby villages of al-Tayyiba and al-Sukhna or belonged to local Bedouin communities. Communicating with the workers sometimes posed a challenge as not all the expedition members spoke the local Levantine (*shami*) Arabic dialect. However, both Grabar, pictured here at the center, and Renata Holod, partially visible at center left, were fluent enough to engage in conversation and provide instructions to the many workers on site. **MF**

1. Correspondence between Grabar and Brisch of the German Archaeological Institute, and Grabar and Abdul-Haqq, director of the Syrian Department of Antiquities, 1962 and 1963, Box 1, Folders 1a and 1b.
2. Correspondence between Grabar and Abdul-Haqq, December 10, 1963, Box 1, Folder 1a.
3. Letter from Abdul-Haqq to Grabar, April 15, 1962, Folder 1a, Box 1.



1966L_cap_24P01

25. Roll Call or Payday

Seasonal workers at the excavations at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi numbered between fifty and one hundred and fifty individuals. They included the local inhabitants of nearby villages as well as members of the Bedouin Sbaʿa tribe. According to Renata Holod, the villagers tended to be better nourished and thus stronger, while the Bedouin were of a frailer build due to their more limited access to regular nutrition.[1] Because of their strength, villagers from al-Tayyiba served as pickmen on the dig. Pickmen were the highest-paid workers since they were responsible for the toughest as well as the most delicate labor: While chiseling away with their pickaxes they had to be careful not to destroy any elements of the site.

All workers were paid every two weeks in cash. This color photograph records the foreman ʿAli, standing in a green jacket among a group of seated workers, taking morning attendance. While the workers' *kufiyya*s may have indicated particular clan or tribal affiliation, they also protected them from the dust and sun that engulfed the Syrian steppe in late spring and early summer. **CG**

1. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.

190258_Binder-People-etc_03P01

VI. Palmyra

26. Portrait Busts

The Palmyrene relief portrait busts captured in this photograph were displayed in the *hypogea* (large underground family burials) and in the iconic tower tombs of Palmyra from the first century BCE to the third century CE.[1] They were used to seal the bodies of the deceased into the individual burial places (*loculi*) set into the tomb walls. The effect was, over time, to create walls composed of the portrait busts of ancestors, who would look down upon visitors to the tomb. Something of this effect is recreated in this display of portraits of Palmyrene men and women upon the walls of the National Museum of Palmyra during the 1960s.

The men are portrayed with their curly hair exposed and their right arms caught up in the folds of the Greek *himation* (cloak) they each wear. The women wear a dress and a cloak swept up as a veil that is similar to the Roman *palla* but is set atop the towering headdress of wound fabric that was popular in the region; this composite headdress seems to foreshadow the *tantur* headdress traditional in more recent centuries in part of the Middle East. The women's gestures of a hand clutching the veil, or set upon the chin in a sign of sorrow, were employed in funerary sculpture across the Graeco-Roman world.

The off-center shot of these five funerary reliefs, with one slightly cut off at the right edge of the frame and another almost wholly obscured, is suggestive of rapid shooting to capture the whole collection in as few sessions as possible. Like other reliefs held in the Palmyra Museum, these sculptures form part of the collection that was badly damaged by ISIS in 2016. **NB**

1. These and other portrait busts are described in the museum catalogue of 1994; see Sadurska and Bounni, *Les sculptures funéraires de Palmyre*.

1964j_04P01

27. Funerary Banquet Relief

Funerary banquet reliefs like this one formed the visual centerpiece in many Palmyrene family tombs. Indeed, such banquet scenes endured as a popular theme in funerary art across the ancient world.[1] In Palmyra, these reliefs typically represented the man who commissioned the tomb alongside his immediate family, with portraits of other clan members and generations often added later, as here beneath the funerary couch on which the man reclines.

In this instance, instead of the Greek dress seen in many Palmyrene portraits, the main figure wears the long, pleated trousers that were popular in the Parthian Empire: a reminder of Palmyra's precarious position set along the fault lines of the Roman and Parthian political worlds. The cylindrical hat of a priest in the local Palmyrene cult surmounts his head, as well as those of the smaller male figures (presumably his descendants) who are pictured below.[2] He is accompanied by his wife, who sits with dignity at his feet, and is flanked by a group of male and female figures whose slightly smaller scale identify them as their children. This relief would originally have been brightly painted (as was typical of ancient sculpture) but only the black pigment marking the eyes of two of the children remained by the time of its excavation.

This photograph provides an important record of the relief as displayed in the Palmyra Museum some five decades ago, especially since the figures' heads suffered iconoclasm at the hands of ISIS in 2016.[3] **NB**

1. Draycott and Stamatopoulou, *Dining and Death*.
2. Raja, "You Can Leave Your Hat On."
3. The now-damaged relief can be seen at Karam, "Grim New Details," photo 2 of the slideshow.

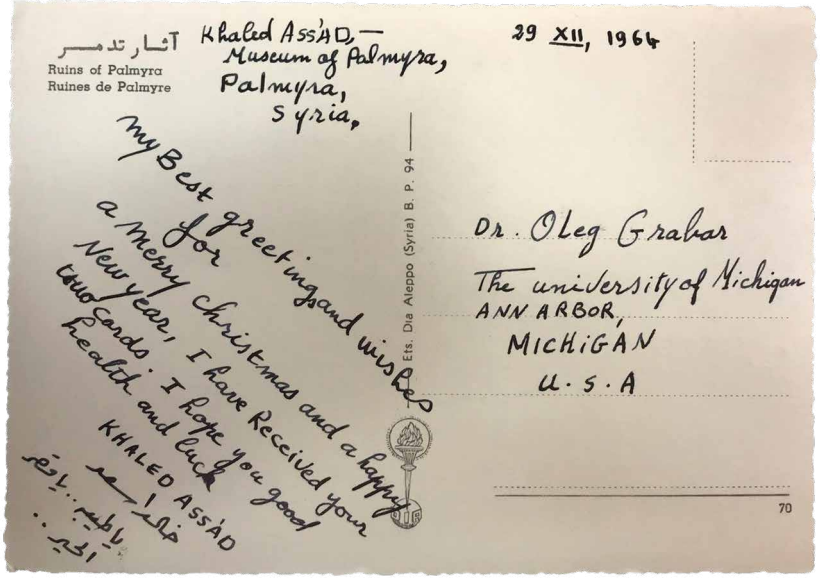
1964i_34P01

28. Postcard from Palmyra

Khalid al-Asʿad corresponded frequently with Oleg Grabar, as attested by the many letters and postcards in the Kelsey Museum archives. His postcards often illustrate Palmyrene vistas, such as the ruins of the Temple of the Mesopotamian deity Bel, shown here. Built in the first century CE, the temple was converted four centuries later into a church, and then used as a neighborhood mosque until the 1930s.[1] While little remains of the structure following the 2015–2017 ISIS occupation and destruction, the temple is well documented in drawings and photographs made by archaeologists and visiting travelers.[2]

Over the course of the dig's six seasons, Grabar and al-Asʿad often wrote to each other in the off-season. They discussed matters of excavation administration as well as other affairs, such as connecting al-Asʿad with US–based funding bodies and museum institutions. As a close friend and peer based at Palmyra, al-Asʿad helped Grabar with most excavation logistics, including recruiting local workers, building the dig house, and renting equipment. As a high-ranking local government official, furthermore, al-Asʿad also had intimate knowledge of the resources available to conduct archaeological research in the region. He remained a steadfast colleague to Grabar despite worsening diplomatic relations between the United States and Syria from the late 1960s onward. **MF**

1. Gawlikowski, "Bel and Baalshamin," 56.
2. Ibid., 56.



Postcard from al-As'ad to Grabar, December 29, 1964.
Box 1, Folder 1c, File 1.

29. Outside View of the Palmyra Museum

Situated within walking distance from the ancient city of Palmyra was the site's national archaeological museum, a modernist structure founded under the directorship of Khalid al-Asʿad in the early 1960s.[1] Under al-Asʿad's tenure (1963–2003), the museum's collections were reinstalled and expanded in tandem with the discoveries of ongoing archaeological missions at the site.[2] With the exception of a few artifacts held at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology in Ann Arbor, most of the small finds from the Qasr al-Hayr excavations were deposited at the Palmyra Museum, in accordance with Syrian antiquities laws.[3]

ISIS militants inflicted terrific damage to the archaeological site and the museum during the group's two occupations of Palmyra between 2015 and 2017. Although Asʿad's sons were able to remove many valuable artifacts to safety in Damascus just before the arrival of ISIS, the objects that were left behind suffered significant damage.[4] As of late 2019, the Syrian government announced plans to restore the Palmyra Museum with the help of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, the National Museum of Oman, as well as other stakeholders.[5] **MF**

1. Al-Asaad, "A Tribute to the Late Khaled al-Asaad, Martyr of Palmyra," 20.
2. Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syrian Arab Republic, "The Martyr of Palmyra: Khaled Al Asaad."
3. "Réglements sur les antiquités en Syrie, Decret Legislatif n. 89 du 30 juin 1947," Box 1, Folder 1d; and Grabar, "Preliminary Report on the Fifth Season of Excavations at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi," 1–10, Qasr al-Hayr archives, Box 1, Folder 1k, File 2.
4. Cascone, "Nearly Destroyed by ISIS"; Ketz, "Son Begins Quest."
5. Stewart, "The Russian Government Will Work with Syria."

1964j_08P01

30. Monumental Arch and Medieval Fortress

This photograph records the Monumental Arch of Palmyra, built in the second century as a link between the city's colonnaded main street and the Temple of Bel. The arch has been one of Palmyra's primary attractions since the early nineteenth century, and innumerable travelers to the city have captured it in photographs and drawings. The arch was destroyed by ISIS militants in 2015.

Palmyra's long history of urban settlement began in the third century BCE and extends into the modern era.[1] Located in an oasis on prominent trade routes linking the eastern Mediterranean coast to the Euphrates Valley and the Jazira (Upper Mesopotamia), Palmyra served as a major stopping point for caravans crossing the Syrian steppe.[2]

On a distant hilltop, framed by the central arch, are the ruins of the medieval fortress Qalaʿat Shirkuh, sometimes referred to as Qalaʿat Ibn Maʿan. The fortress was built in the thirteenth century as part of a larger campaign of fortification projects during the Crusader period (eleventh–thirteenth centuries).[3] Although Qasr al-Hayr, located 110 kilometers northeast of Palmyra, is largely discussed as an Umayyad site, it was also occupied in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, during which time it was known as ʻUrd.[4] **MF**

1. The Temple of Bel was used as a mosque until the 1930s, at which time the site was transformed into an archaeological park. See Bacharach, "Marwanid Building Activities," 31; Gawlikowski, "Bel and Baalshamin," 56. For general information about Palmyra, see Aruz, *Palmyra*; Delplace, *Palmyre*; Bounni and Al-Asad, *Palmyra*.
2. Bacharach, "Marwanid Building Activities," 31.
3. Bylinski, "Qal'at Shirkuh at Palmyra."
4. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 11.

1968J_cap_03P01

VII. Expedition Team

31. Team Holding *Qufaf*

In this informal snapshot from the 1970 season, Fred Anderegg captures members of the Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi team as they prepare to take their positions for a group photograph. From left to right stand ʻUmar Fa'ur (the driver), William Trousdale, Renata Holod (in a red shirt), Laura Schneider, James Knudstad, Oleg Grabar, Qaydi, Khalid al-Asʻad, Robert McC. Adams, and Ahmad Zubi (medical orderly). They chat and laugh as they protect their eyes from the sun and press down their hair from the disheveling gusts of wind. They also hold their signature baskets (*qufaf*, sing. *quffa*) made out of the recycled inner tubes of discarded rubber tires.[1] Here, the *qufaf*, as well as the ceramic jar in the hands of al-Asʻad, function as material stand-ins for the archaeological process and its most felicitous finds. Toward the center of the group, Grabar and al-Asʻad turn toward Qaydi; the trio appears to burst aloud at some levity or joke. As Holod notes, Qaydi was beloved by one and all on the dig—above all Khalid al-Asʻad, who acted as a protective figure—his helpfulness and sense of humor as memorable as his simplicity of dress: a robe made from a simple white cotton sheet and the ends of his *kufiyya* creatively upturned and folded sideways into his headband. CG

1. For a comparative discussion of "basket-carriers" in Egyptian archaeological work, see Doyon, "On Archaeological Labor," 146.

190258_Binder-People-etc_87P01

32. Holod Working on Plaster

In 1966, at the age of twenty-two, Renata Holod joined the second season of the Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi excavations as Oleg Grabar's PhD student. That year, Holod and the photographer Linda Rhodes were the only two women on the expedition. Rhodes did not return after that season, but Holod took part in every subsequent season, taking on ever more responsibilities as the mission continued and assuming a leading role in the archaeological work and site interpretation. She would go on to write several scholarly articles about Qasr al-Hayr,[1] and co-authored the final excavation report, *City in the Desert.*

Not one to shy away from the hardships of physical labor, Holod believed strongly in learning the tools of the trade by getting one's hands dirty. Here, the photograph captures precisely this type of *in medias res* moment: shot from a sharply downturned angle, the photo captures Holod crouching on the ground as she uses a trowel to release fragments of painted plaster lining the side of one of the doors in the Large Enclosure. Several stucco pieces are placed in a linear fashion below two brushes that were used for dusting and cleaning. Through its bird's-eye perspective, this photo also highlights the paisley-patterned kerchief protecting Holod's hair from the elements—be they the scorching sun or the pervasive sand. Above all, the shot places the prime on the depth of the picture plane, whose modulated surfaces and human contours take on a sculptural effect. **CG**

1. See in particular her "A Medieval Town in Syria" and "On Forts and Towns."

1966J_cap_27P01

33. Group Shot with al-As'ad and Waterpipe

At nine members, the team of scholars recruited to take part in the second season of excavation at Qasr al-Hayr was the largest of the eventual six seasons. Grabar invited a number of students, including Renata Holod and Neil MacKenzie, to join the excavation team, which also included several American scholars based in the region, such as Linda Rhodes, an architect working out of Istanbul, and Peter Pick, a transient archaeologist then based in Iran.

Here, the archaeologists and the house staff pose for the yearly group picture. The foreign members of the team sport *abayas*, the comfortable robelike garments commonly worn in the region. William Trousdale, Douglas Braidwood, and Robert Hamilton, seated in the foreground, also wear sun-protective *kufiyya*s (headdresses), perhaps in imitation of the locals. The scene's central protagonist is a jovial Khalid al-As'ad, who appears to be smoking a waterpipe (*nargila*). Al-As'ad was known for his appreciation of the finer things in life, such as smoking and playing *tawila*.

The outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967 and the rupture of official diplomatic relations between the United States and Syria rendered it impossible for a large team to travel to Syria in subsequent seasons. Despite the geopolitical obstacles, Grabar and his colleagues were determined to maintain the friendly environment created in the early seasons of the dig, captured poignantly in this photograph. **MF**

1966J_cap_27P01

1966 excavation campaign led by Oleg Grabar: archaeology team and house team.
Top row, from left to right: Mahmud (kitchen help), Selçuk Batur, Renata Holod, Muhammad Abu Sa'id (head cook), Peter Pick, the driver, the head cook's helper, Neil MacKenzie.
Seated center: Khalid al-As'ad (director of the Palmyra Museum).
Bottom row, from left to right: William Trousdale, Robert Hamilton, Oleg Grabar, Linda Rhodes, and Douglas Braidwood.

34. An Evening Gathering

Days spent digging at Qasr al-Hayr were grueling. To avoid the blazing heat of the daytime hours, work on the site began at six A.M. In the predawn darkness of the dig house, team members would often find themselves shaken out of their slumber by Grabar as he crept from room to room. This habit of flushing his teammates out of bed like a Dachshund earned him the nickname "sausage dog."

Work in the trenches concluded at one P.M., when the staff convened for lunch. Afternoons were dedicated to individual study, such as working on architectural drawings, sorting through small finds, or writing reports; after dinner, evenings were largely devoted to social gatherings. The team took care to stock up on alcoholic beverages before arriving at Qasr al-Hayr, perhaps to help enliven long evenings set aglow by kerosene lamps and candles.

In this photograph of one such gathering, Oleg Grabar sits in the center, gesticulating dynamically to illustrate a point. Renata Holod (at Grabar's left), Khalid al-Asʿad (in sunglasses), William Trousdale (with cowboy hat), and ʿUmar Faʾur (far left) listen, amused. On the right, Ülkü Bates appears to be in conversation with another, unidentified participant. These gatherings took place in the courtyard of the dig house. While the days in the desert were hot, the evenings could be quite cold, as evidenced by Grabar's white scarf and the thick sweaters worn by his companions. **MF**

QasralHayr_27P002

35. Dinner at the Italian Embassy

Following the Six-Day War in June 1967, Syria severed diplomatic relations with the United States. The Italian Embassy subsequently handled all US–related affairs, including managing the excavation at Qasr al-Hayr. The partnership between the Italian diplomatic mission and Grabar's American expedition began in early 1968, after the team was first denied reentry into Syria in the aftermath of the war. Although Grabar suspended the excavation at Qasr al-Hayr, at the encouragement of the Italian ambassador he maintained contact with Syrian officials and scholars in his circle.

By staying abreast of the political situation and maintaining steady correspondence with the Syrian Department of Antiquities, a small contingent of the Qasr al-Hayr team was able to return for a brief season in June 1968. Operations then resumed fully for the final three seasons, from 1969 to 1971. At that time, the Italian Embassy was an official sponsor of the dig, even organizing a visit for an Italian embassy delegation to the site in 1969. The team visited the embassy in Damascus on many occasions, including for the dinner photographed here. Taken at the close of the 1969 season, the team members are shown here prior to their respective departures via the Damascus airport. At the head of the table is Grabar, who appears in mid-conversation with assistant director William Trousdale, along with his students Renata Holod and Hayat Salam to his right; ʿAli Taha and Ülkü Bates are at his left. **MF**

1969-44_33P01

VIII. Small Finds & Site Details

36. Chess Pieces

Originating in northern India, chess (*shataranj*) spread to Arab lands, where it has thrived as a highly popular game from the medieval period until today. Members of the ruling elite as well as other classes of society played the game using pieces made of rock crystal, ceramic, stone, glass, ivory, or—as can be seen in these two small finds from Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi—wood.[1] The two wooden pieces shown here are decorated with linear and circular designs inlaid with small bone inserts. Their rectangular bases and inverted wedges at top suggest that they represent the chariot (*rukh*),[2] which is equivalent to the castle or rook (the English term "rook" derives from *rukh*). While these exemplars appear quite geometric in shape, other medieval Islamic chess pieces tended toward more overt figuration, emulating the shape of standing humans, elephants, and horses.[3] Thus, while scholarship at times has explained the abstract aesthetic of such game pieces as a nod to an Islamic form of aniconism, the archaeological finds and textual sources suggest a more flexible attitudinal approach toward the legality of both figuration and gaming in Islamic traditions. **CG**

1. For a general discussion of chess pieces, see Contadini, "Islamic Ivory Chess Pieces, Draughtmen and Dice."
2. Kenney, "Chess Set," 113.
3. Touati, "Le régime des images figuratives dans la culture islamique médiévale," 16–17.

1969-23_26P01

37. Coin

Qasr al-Hayr served as a commercial center and meeting point for traveling merchants, as borne out by the archaeological and material evidence found at the site. The Michigan excavation team uncovered a diverse numismatic corpus comprised of about 300 Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Mamluk, and Ottoman coins.[1] These coins could be indicative of an array of individuals who stopped at Qasr al-Hayr while en route to Palmyra or the Euphrates Valley; they also attest to the site's use and inhabitation over several centuries.

The Islamic coins, such as the one captured here, are typically epigraphic. They tend to include inscriptions such as "Muhammad is the Messenger of God" on one side and the name of the reigning caliph, date, and mint on the other. The latter information allows scholars to date and locate the coin's manufacture. This particular coin, which does not include a date but was likely made during the Umayyad period, includes the full *shahada*, or proclamation of the faith, reading in full, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

While many of the coins were discovered among debris and were in poor condition, those considered salvageable were photographed with the rest of the small finds by Fred Anderegg. Objects such as this coin were carefully lit and recorded, so that their minute details could be studied at a later date. Moreover, these scientific images also show the small finds against a plain background with a measuring tape in the foreground, thus blending a minimalist aesthetic with a drive for maximum accuracy. **AK**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 189–90.

1970-73_09P01

38. Graffiti

The graffiti carved on this column read:

> God's forgiveness of Muhammad ibn Ahmad
> God's forgiveness on Ahmad ibn Marwan

Although not shown in this photograph, the inscription continues with the inclusion of the names of 'Abdallah, a certain Hasan ibn 'Ali the carpenter, and another individual by the name of 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad.[1] The remaining lines are indecipherable.

The column in question, which was found in the Small Enclosure, is no longer standing, and the date of the inscription is unclear. However, it is likely that these brief requests for God's forgiveness were inscribed upon the stone surface sometime between the eighth and the tenth centuries, while the column was still standing in its original location.

Inscriptions featuring petitions for God's forgiveness were common in the early Islamic period.[2] Along with the *shahada* (the Islamic creedal proclamation) and prayers asking for protection against evil, inscribed demands for God's pardon are scattered across the Levant and constitute an important trace of early Muslim popular piety in the public sphere. For the Qasr al-Hayr archaeologists, these abridged mentions of former occupants or visitors also offered a glimpse into the site's life stories and added a human dimension to the architectural and material remains. **MF**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 191.
2. Sourdel-Thomine, "Inscriptions et graffiti arabes d'époque umayyade."

1964b_10P01

39. Ceramic Sherds, Type 16

Photographed against a plain black background, these two ceramic sherds are displayed in order to highlight their key visual and material characteristics. These features were identified as belonging to "Type 16," as recorded in the label. They are fritwares, a type of ceramic made from ground glass frit and clay, and belong to the "black and blue on white" type based on their color scheme.

According to standard archaeological method, ceramic sherds were washed, carefully sorted, classified, and photographed, as befitted their importance. These deceptively humble objects were fundamental instruments in determining the relative chronology of different sections of the site, as well as the types of settlement that may have occupied it. These particular sherds are the remnants of luxury vessels typical of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries; their discovery led archaeologists to the conclusion that Qasr al-Hayr was occupied well after its foundation in the early eighth century.[1]

Team members—in particular Renata Holod—spent many afternoon hours at the dig house cleaning, sorting, drawing, and cataloguing the sherds that had been transported from the trenches. By categorizing the sherds by key features such as shape, body material, and decoration, they established a definitive typology for the large corpus of ceramic finds.[2] Once recorded and taxonomized, the vast majority of the sherds (and other small finds) were transferred to the Palmyra Museum for safekeeping. According to Syrian antiquities law, all objects found at the site fell under the purview of the Syrian government. **MF**

1. Luxury wares are also an indication of trading activity; see Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 121–27.
2. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 110.

1969-20_22P01

40. Mirror

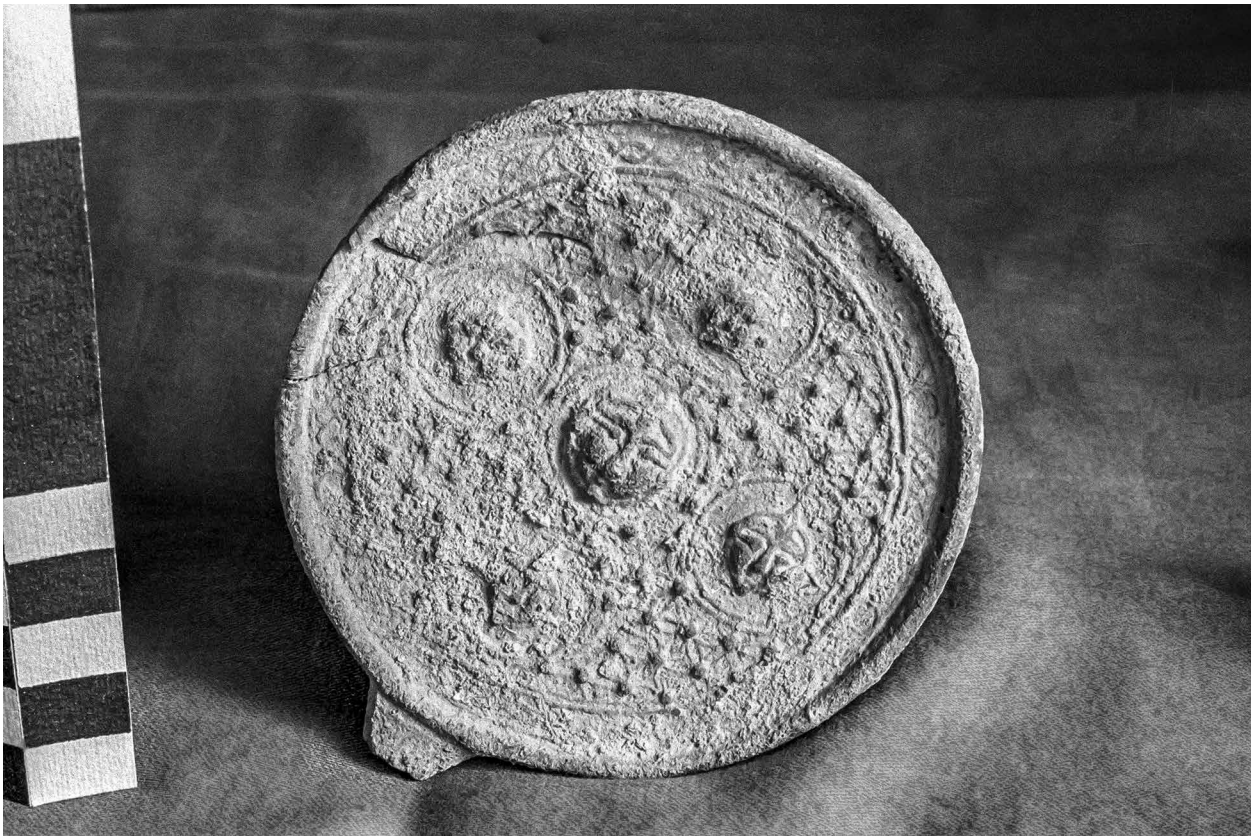
Among the metal objects found at Qasr al-Hayr is a rare bronze mirror from a late occupational level of the Large Enclosure. This once highly polished cast bronze mirror, whose handle is now broken, includes five helmeted heads, each framed in a circular medallion.

An exact match of this bronze mirror—well-preserved and with a complete handle—is held in the David Collection in Copenhagen (inv. 3/1966). In both examples, the puffy-cheeked faces wear bowl-shaped helmets with a spike at the top, a headgear commonly associated with Central Asia. This iconography distinguishes the Qasr al-Hayr mirror and its counterpart in Copenhagen from other extant examples.

The mirror's background, displaying six-pointed stars and interlaced lines on the outer band, may signify the sky, a rainbow, and the moon. If interpreted as larger cosmological diagram, then the five faces floating against this celestial background may represent five itinerant planets. A similar depiction can be found in the fourteenth-century *Kitab al-Bulhan* (The Book of Wonders), which includes astrological treatises, among other topics.[1]

Eight small circles positioned equally along the interlaced lines may symbolize the phases of the moon. Taken altogether, these astrological references suggest that this object may have been used as a magic mirror to help its owner "see" into the future based on astral or cosmic signs. **BE**

1. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Bodl. Or. 133, fol. 34v. For a comprehensive study of the Oxford copy of *Kitab al-Bulhan*, see Stefano Carboni, *Il Kitab al-Bulhan di Oxford*. For a comparative analysis of a bronze mirror with crowned heads at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Qasr al-Hayr mirror, see Carboni, "Narcissism or Catoptromancy?"



1969-23-28P01

IX. Life at the Site

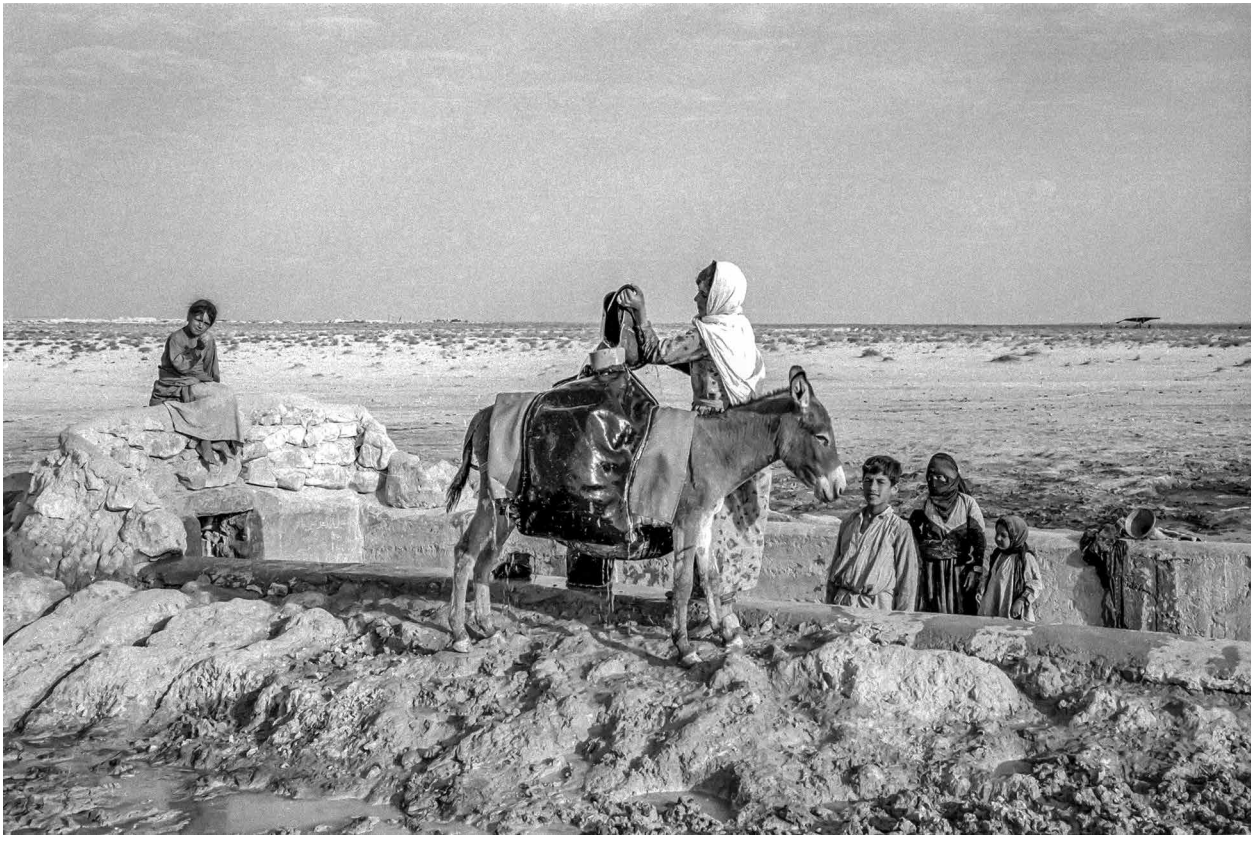
41. Villagers at the Well

The workers and archaeologists at Qasr al-Hayr were closely connected to the nearby villages of al-Tayyiba and al-Sukhna. Most of the workmen had homes there, and the excavation team relied on these villages for their regular supply of water, food, and fresh vegetables.

In this photograph, a family from one of the villages visits a well. Children play in the water while a woman pours water into a bag made from old inner tubes that is strapped to a donkey. Fetching water was the duty of women and older children. As Holod notes, the expedition provided water for all the workers on site, and every team had a designated "waterboy" who made sure there was water nearby.[1]

While Qasr al-Hayr may have been long abandoned, many locals of the region, some of them recently resettled Bedouins, still lived in proximity to the archaeological site. Maintaining good personal and working relationships with local communities was essential to the dig's operation and serves as a reminder of the bilateral relations and mutual goodwill necessary to optimize the results of a collective endeavor. Indeed, today more than ever, if not conducted properly and with respect, archaeology is critiqued as "extractive," harming the land and its local residents and custodians. Photographs from expedition to Qasr al-Hayr illustrate the close personal relationships among the local workers and foreign archaeologists. Grabar, in coordination with al-As'ad, ensured that local workers were carefully recruited and properly remunerated.[2] **AK**

1. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.
2. See Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, vii. For worker compensation and al-As'ad's role in the matter, see letters from Grabar to al-As'ad, February 21, 1966, Box 3, Folder 3ww, and July 10, 1972, Box 1, Folder 1k.



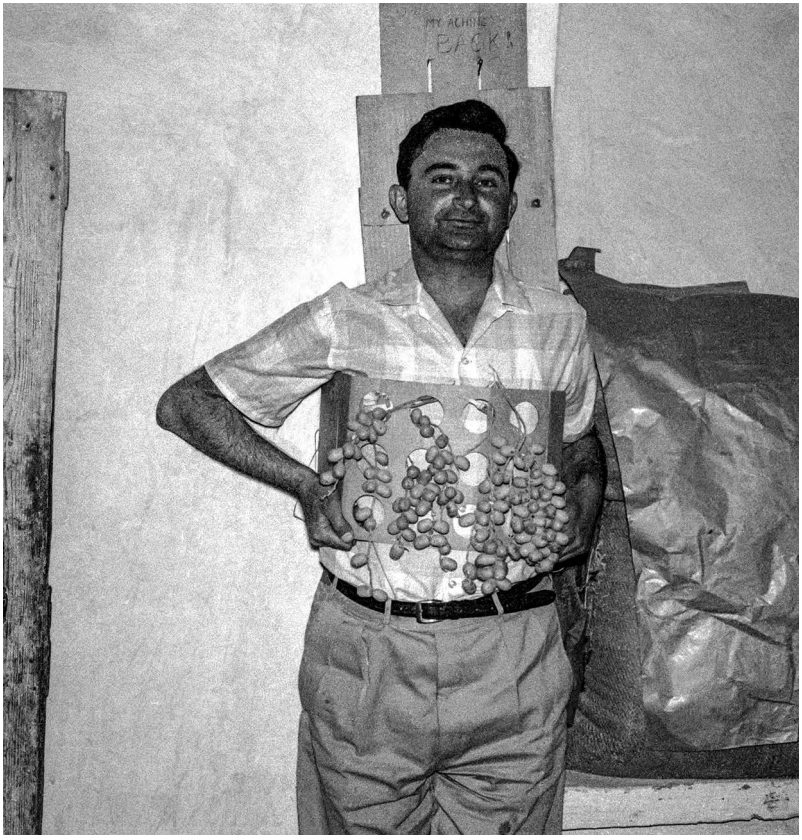
1964e_18P01

42. Kuban as Artemis

The archaeologists and workmen at the Qasr al-Hayr excavation spent a significant amount of time away from home, geographically isolated in the Syrian steppe. This intense setting fostered close (and sometimes lifelong) relationships as well as a lighthearted atmosphere on the dig.

Here, for example, Doğan Kuban, a Turkish architect and architectural historian who participated in the first season of the excavation, holds several bunches of dates against his torso. The photo was taken on the eve of the team's departure from the site at the end of the 1964 season; this playful farewell seems to be Kuban's embodied tribute to Artemis of Ephesus, whose cult statue shows the goddess of fertility studded with globular pendants that scholars have interpreted as representing breasts, bull testicles, eggs, or grape clusters. Kuban was no doubt familiar with such representations, given his knowledge of the history and archaeology of Turkey.

The playfulness captured here may have been a ludic antidote to the challenges the team faced. The first season at Qasr al-Hayr was beset with logistical problems: The dig lacked an experienced archaeologist, the Syrian government was at times unhelpful, and funds proved wanting. Despite these initial roadblocks, the dig went on, discoveries were made, and friendships were forged through collective work, intellect, and good humor in tough times. **AK**



1964L_cap_35P01

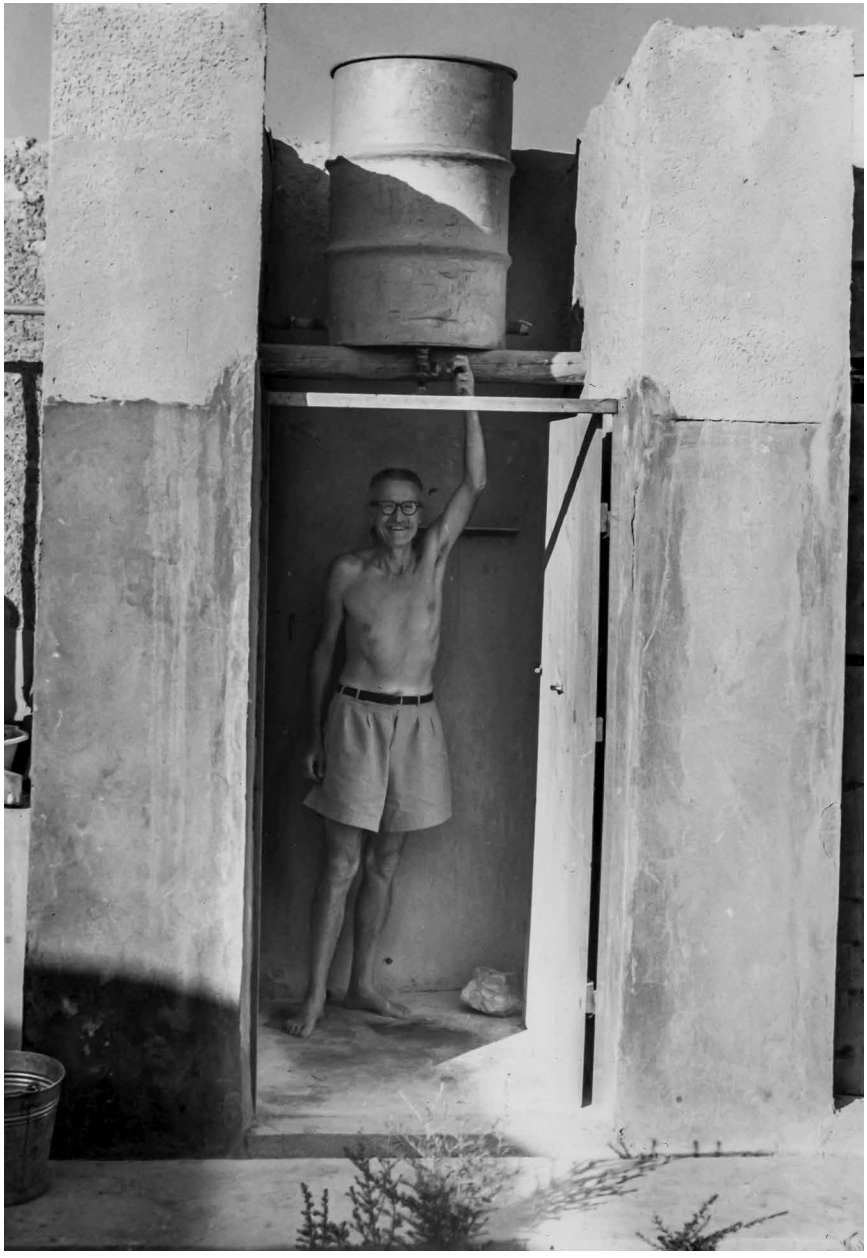
Alabaster and bronze sculpture of Artemis of Ephesus, 2nd century BCE (with some modern restoration). Naples National Archaeological Museum, Farnese Collection, inv. 6278 (photo: Marie-Lan Nguyen/Creative Commons).

43. Anderegg in a Makeshift Shower

Bayt Michigan (Michigan House), as it was known by the archaeological staff, was built in 1965–66 to accommodate the growing expedition and ensure ease of access to the site. During the first excavation season at Qasr al-Hayr, the team lived in a rented a house in the village of al-Tayyiba, 14 kilometers away. Grabar convinced the University of Michigan to provide funds for the construction of a permanent structure at walking distance from the excavation. Having an expedition house on site eliminated the morning and evening commutes over unpaved desert roads. It also facilitated the study and temporary storage of the excavation's small finds within specific areas of the house designed for this purpose.[1]

Living conditions at Bayt Michigan were rustic. The house did not have electricity or running water. In this photograph, Fred Anderegg demonstrates one of the makeshift "barrel" showers, which were created using a simple tin barrel equipped with a faucet (*barmil* in Arabic). The barrel was filled by a pump from tanks of water brought by truck from al-Tayyiba.[2] The dig's supply of drinking water for the nearly two hundred workers and staff members was stored in similar barrels. **MF**

1. Letter from Grabar to ʿAbd al-Haqq, July 13, 1964, Box 1, Folder 1c.
2. Letter from Grabar to Khalid al-Asʿad, December 16, 1958, Box 3, Folder 3fff.



QasralHayr_27P008-1

44. Cook with Food Supplies

Due to Qasr al-Hayr's remote location, fresh food such as vegetables were brought from al-Tayyiba or al-Sukhna, villages a thirty-minute drive away. Non-perishables, including canned meat and other American products (such as peanut butter), were purchased in Damascus or Beirut at the beginning of each season.[1] The excavation season began in late spring and typically lasted into the first weeks of June. Access to other fresh produce was limited, and the staff would rely on canned goods. On each payday, the cook would prepare a *mansaf*, a large celebratory meal composed of rice and meat, which was shared among staff and workers (see photograph 8).

Despite the fairly rugged living conditions in which the dig took place, a full-time cook and a cook's helper were employed for each season. The cook, after 1967 hired from one of the embassies in Damascus, was tasked with preparing daily meals and boiling the well water brought daily from al-Tayyiba.[2] Selecting a cook appeared to concern Grabar: many of his letters to friends and colleagues recount a particularly difficult season during which he had employed a mediocre cook.[3] **MF**

1. Letter from Grabar to Abdul-Haqq, October 21, 1963, Box 1, Folder 1b. Inventories, Box 3, Folder jjj.
2. Letter from Grabar to Luigi Conte from the Italian Embassy, December 12, 1968, Box 1, Folder 1g. The cook's name from the 1966 season is Muhammad Abu Sa'id. Grabar was pleased with him and so wanted him to return the following season. In 1968, however, he recruited a "bad" cook; see Grabar to Forsyth, July 1, 1968, Box 1, Folder 1g.
3. Grabar to Forsyth, July 1, 1968, Box 1, Folder 1g.

QasralHayr_23P006

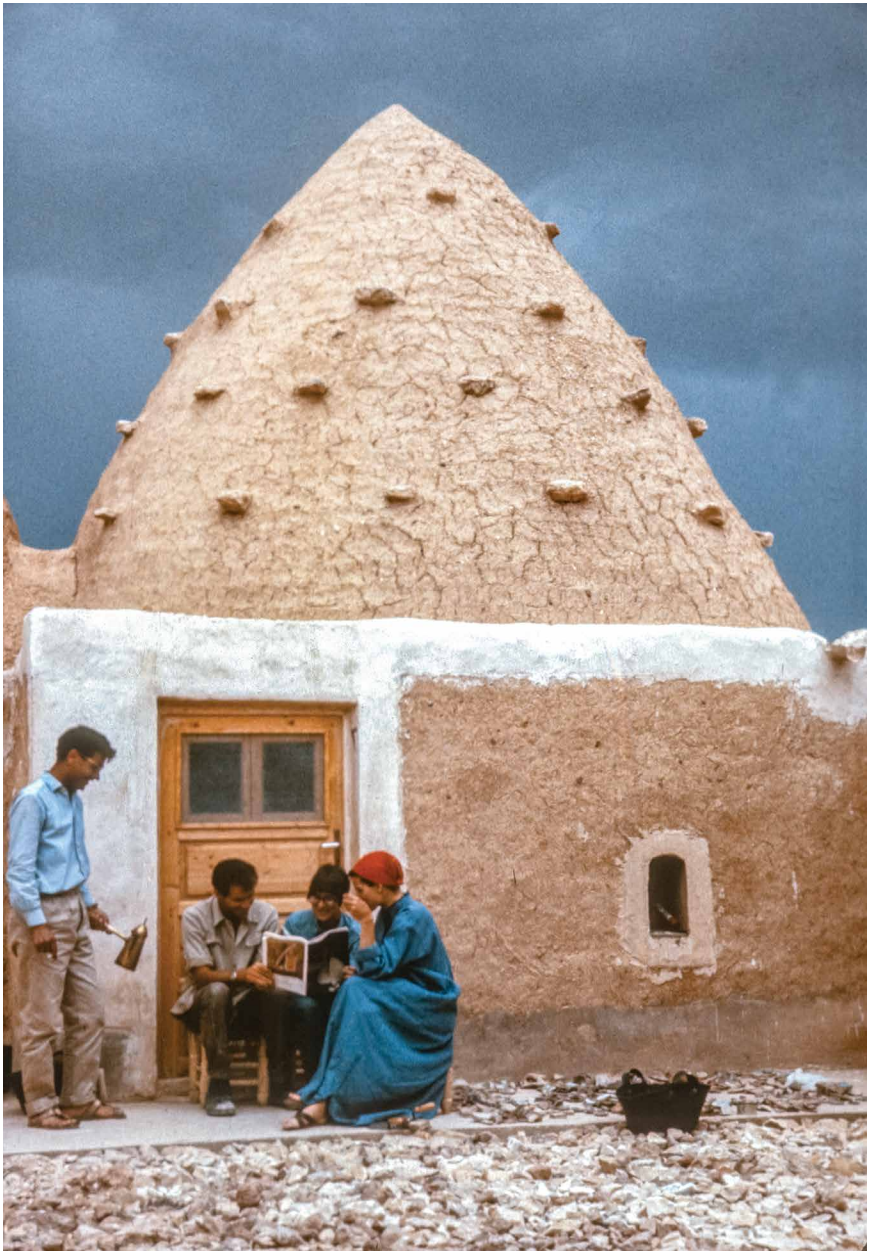
45. Bayt Michigan

In this color photograph, Renata Holod, dressed in a comfortable blue robe (locally called an *abaya*), relaxes as she sips coffee and looks over a magazine held open by Linda Rhodes and Neil MacKenzie. Next to the trio stands an expedition member holding a coffee pot, his outline emphasized by the white-painted trim on the hut's exterior wall. With the black rubber basket (*quffa*) set aside, this moment is one of rest and relaxation at the entrance of one of the dig house rooms.

Functioning as a domestic "tent," each unit of the dig house, which was nicknamed Bayt Michigan (Michigan House), is conical in shape, built out of mudbrick mixed with rubble and finished with a coat of mud plaster. Many such simple dwellings, known as beehive houses, are found across the world, including in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia, most notably in the southeastern Turkish city of Harran (see **fig. 1.12**). They are highly practical for a host of reasons: their construction is quick, flexible, and based on local and reused materials. They are also energy efficient: their thick mud walls trap cool air and provide climate comfort without the need for air conditioning, and their natural ventilation provides a healthy living environment.[1] To keep the inner chamber climate-controlled, such houses typically include only one window. Each room at Bayt Michigan included a diminutive arched window as well as a wooden door with a glass window and screen netting to keep pesky critters at bay. Holod reports a particularly memorable occasion when a scorpion stung Oleg Grabar on the heel while he was standing outside.[2]

Ownership of Bayt Michigan was transferred to the Syrian authorities after the conclusion of dig; its current condition remains unknown. **CG**

1. On beehive houses, especially those in Harran, see Baran and Yılmaz, "A Study of Local Environment of Harran Historical Domed Houses"; and Özdeniz et al., "Vernacular Domed Houses of Harran, Turkey."
2. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.



190258_Binder-People-etc_48P01

X. Archaeological Methods

46. Holod Organizing Sherds

In this shot, a miscellany of color patterns—the rounded black contours of the rubber baskets (*qufaf*), the topaz blue of Holod's long-sleeve shirt, the red burst of the handkerchief cinching her wicker hat, and the craquelure patterns of the mud wall in the background—seem to have captured photographer Fred Anderegg's eyes and attention.

Besides its artful aesthetic, the scene also proves of informational value since it records some of the in situ practices of processing the excavation's ceramic finds. Here, Holod sits on the ground as she removes glazed and unglazed ceramic sherds from the tagged baskets; these sherds had been washed on site by a worker who tended to such duties before they were brought to the house. Holod sorted them according to the white lines on the ground, which designated the finds' location, trench by trench and level by level. This large, open-air layout effectively sketched out a depositional history for the ceramic finds, whose typologies were further finessed according to body type, glaze, and decoration.[1] While a kiln was indeed found on site, it was used to bake bricks. Luxury and glazed ceramics themselves were imported from Samarra and Raqqa. Raqqa, on the Euphrates River, was well known for its production of lusterware and other kinds of fritware during the Ayyubid period.[2] After the sherds were organized, processed, catalogued, drawn, and photographed, they were placed in cloth bags; these were then tagged and put into wooden crates (such as the one lining the back wall) to be shipped to the National Museum in Palmyra for storage and safekeeping. **CG**

1. On the site's ceramic finds, types, decorative motifs, and possible places of manufacture, see Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 110–27.
2. For a later study of Raqqa wares, see Jenkins, *Raqqa Revisited*.

190258_Binder-People-etc_65P01

47. Anderegg on Truck

Fred Anderegg thrived at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. Ever the "showman,"[1] he welcomed a host of challenges, from chasing the brutal *'asifa* sandstorm to contriving makeshift aerial shots of the site's trenches. Armed with the limited equipment available on hand, Anderegg employed the dig's dump truck—normally used for transporting barrels of water to the site and archaeological detritus away from it—as a stepladder or crane. Perched on the canopy of the inclined dump bed, his elevated position proved most ideal for capturing the largest possible swath of the trenches below, especially since the excavation did not benefit from aerial photography (either by plane or balloon).

The team member who took this color snapshot of Anderegg must have found his feat daring enough to record. Its industrial aesthetic and playful character also recall some of the photographs of intrepid workers building the skyscrapers of New York City during the 1920s and 1930s while dangling in mid-air from steel beams. Anderegg's photoworks therefore partake in the daredevil documentary drive that propelled "highrise" photography over the course of the twentieth century.[2] **CG**

1. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019.
2. For a discussion of the themes in twentieth-century photography (including industrial and documentary photography), see Hart, "Photography in the 20th Century."

190258_Binder-People-etc_50P01

48. Trench with Pipe

The title of Oleg Grabar and his team's publication, *City in the Desert*, points to the extremely arid nature of the region in which Qasr al-Hayr is located. Despite its desolate setting, the initial plan for the settlement was very ambitious, and included the necessary elements for a *madina*: a mosque, governmental headquarters, public markets, bath(s), and a permanent water supply.

This photograph provides a glimpse of the sprawling system necessary for water management at the site. Water was harvested form an aquifer, likely located near the village of al-Kawm, and then brought to Qasr al-Hayr by a *qanat*, or underground channel, whose access shafts are visible along the Wadi al-Suq northwest of the site.

During their investigations south of the Large and Small Enclosures, within the area known as the Outer Enclosure, the team discovered a complex system of sluices.[1] These gate-like structures allowed floodwater to enter Outer Enclosure and soak into the ground, possibly for agricultural purposes.[2] However, the archaeological team never entirely understood the full working of this water system, largely due to lack of time.

Today, the pipes do not lead to any clear water sources, such as Wadi al-Suq or the nearby villages of al-Sukhna and al-Tayyiba. **AK**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 100–01.
2. Interview with Renata Holod, December 14, 2019; Genequand, "The New Urban Settlement," 268–69.

1969-12_02P01

49. Stucco Panel

Over four thousand fragments of carved stucco were uncovered during the six seasons of excavation at Qasr al-Hayr. This piece may have originally adorned a column capital. The Umayyad builders transported many pre-Islamic capitals from nearby sites for reuse in the Small and Large Enclosures. Heavily damaged capitals were repaired with a coating of stucco, which was carved with decorative motifs.[1]

Photographs of small finds were taken on site utilizing the scientific and aesthetic methods of archaeological photography. Such methods included the insertion of a tape measure to indicate the object's size as well as a dark background to emphasize its form and ornamentation.[2] Many of these photographs were likely taken by Kelsey Museum photographer Fred Anderegg, well known for his masterful photographs of St. Catherine's Monastery and icons at Mount Sinai, which garnered national attention.[3] Besides his evocative portrait photography, Anderegg also became a seasoned expert in the methods of archaeological photography by the 1960s.

Initially, Grabar had opposed Anderegg's participation in the Qasr al-Hayr expedition on the basis of Anderegg's penchant for taking photographs that Grabar deemed "too beautiful" and insufficiently scientific.[4] Once he saw the film being developed at the dig house, however, Grabar quickly changed his mind. As other photographs in this collection demonstrate, Anderegg was adept at capturing excellent shots—using, for example, the truck stand in photograph 47.

While the Qasr al-Hayr archives are replete with portrait photographs of staff, workers, and locals, Anderegg's photographs of both small finds and the site, which were developed at Qasr al-Hayr itself, still serve as vital visual documentation of the site. **MF**

1. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 177.
2. Carter, "The Development of the Scientific Aesthetic."
3. See Fred Anderegg's staff memoir at https://newsletters.kelsey.lsa.umich.edu/fall2001/fred.html.
4. Letter from Grabar to George Forsyth, September 9, 1964, Box 1, Folder 1c.

1966Z_cap_14P01

50. Batur with Total Station

While planning the first season of excavations, Oleg Grabar had at his disposal $20,000 from the University of Michigan to secure equipment, pay salaries, and ensure the delivery of provisions to the site.[1] However, strict Office of Antiquities regulations rendered it nearly impossible to bring archaeological equipment from outside Syria.[2] The theodolite pictured here, borrowed from the Kelsey Museum, was the exception.[3] Also known as a total station, theodolites are surveying instruments that measure distances and heights; archaeologists use them to determine the precise locations of artifacts and structures.

Seen here peering through the total station against the backdrop of the Large Enclosure is architect Selçuk Batur. A Turkish national, Batur was recruited to work at Qasr al-Hayr by the prominent Ottoman art and architectural historian Doğan Kuban, who participated in the first season of excavation and whose student Afife was Batur's wife. Often referred to by the title *mühendis*, or "architect" in Turkish (and other Islamic languages), Batur designed the team's dig house and served as the expedition's architect for the 1964, 1966, 1968, and 1969 seasons.[4] **MF**

1. Correspondence between Grabar and Brisch, 1963, Box 1, Folders 1a and 1b.
2. Correspondence between Abdul-Haqq and Grabar, July 13, 1964, Box 1, Folder 1c.
3. Correspondence between Grabar and Anderegg, February 18, 1970, Box 3, Folder 3hhh.
4. Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, vi.

QasralHayr_25P004

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Index

Contributors' Biographies

Nicola Barham (NB) is an assistant professor of ancient art in the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan and assistant curator at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. Her work focuses on overlooked aesthetic concepts of the Roman world that subvert our understanding of classical art; she is also interested in the overlooked biographies of visual works from the Roman Middle East.

Bihter Esener (BE) was a Freer Visiting Graduate Student Fellow in the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan, and a PhD candidate in History of Art at Koç University, Istanbul. Her dissertation focuses on Islamic bronze mirrors within the lives of the inhabitants of medieval Anatolia.

Christiane Gruber, Renata Holod, and Michelle Al-Ferzly outside the White Dog Cafe in Philadelphia, December 14, 2019.

Michelle Al-Ferzly (MF) is a doctoral candidate in Islamic art history working under the direction of Professor Christiane Gruber. Her dissertation examines medieval Islamic tableware and dining culture between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. In 2018, she worked as a curatorial assistant for the Aga Khan Museum's exhibition *The Moon: A Voyage Through Time*; she is also a contributor to the exhibition's catalogue.

Christiane Gruber (CG) is a professor of Islamic art in the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her fields of interest include Islamic ascension texts and images, depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, books arts, codicology, paleography, architecture, and visual and material culture from the medieval period to today. Her most recent publications include her third book, *The Praiseworthy One: The Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Texts and Images,* and her edited volume *The Image Debate: Figural Representation in Islam and Across the World,* both published in 2019.

Renata Holod (RH) is College of Women Class of 1963 professor emerita in the Humanities, History of Art Department, and curator, Near East Section, Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania. Over the course of her career, she conducted architectural and archaeological fieldwork in Syria, Iran, Tunisia, Spain, and steppe Ukraine. She served as Convener, Steering Committee Member, and Master Jury Chair, Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Her co-authored publications include *City in the Desert: Archaeological Expedition to Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi* (1978), *Architecture and Community: Building in the Islamic World Today* (1983), *Modern Turkish Architecture* (1984), *The Mosque and the Modern World* (1997), and *An Island Through Time: Jerba* (2009).

Ani Kalousdian (AK) is an undergraduate student majoring in the history of art at the University of Michigan, with a focus on Islamic art, particularly medieval Persian and Anatolian art. She also serves as the social media manager for Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online. She intends to pursue graduate studies in Islamic art in order to explore a curatorial career in the field.

Between 1964 and 1971, renowned Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar directed a large-scale archaeological excavation at the site of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. Drawn to the remote eighth-century complex in the hopes of uncovering a princely Umayyad palace, Grabar and his team instead stumbled upon a new type of urban settlement in the Syrian steppe. A rich lifeworld emerged in the midst of their discoveries, and over the course of the excavation's six seasons, close relationships formed between the American and Syrian archaeologists, historians, and workers who labored and lived at the site.

Featuring previously unpublished documents and illustrating over fifty photographs from the Qasr al-Hayr dig, *City in the Desert, Revisited* recounts the personal experiences and professional endeavors that shaped the fields of Islamic archaeology, art, and architectural history during their rise in the U.S. academy.