



Project
funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION



**ENPI
CBCMED**
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



MEDINA
PHOENICIAN and NABATAEAN
INSCRIPTIONS

MEDINA

MEDITERRANEAN NETWORK FOR THE VALORIZATION AND FRUITION OF INSCRIPTIONS PRESERVED IN MUSEUMS

OCTOBER 2012

Thousands of years ago, the Phoenician and Nabataean civilizations asserted themselves as a people of remarkable cultural sophistication, developing alphabets that spread across the region and generating an important epigraphic and artistic wealth. Today, their surviving texts date back to the end of the second millennium BCE and portray mysterious alphabets from languages that have not been spoken for thousands of years. Time is slowly corroding such inheritance, however, and these Phoenician and Nabataean treasures are often neglected by the populations that now inhabit their homes in Lebanon and Jordan.



Photo: Phoenician inscription from the Sarcophagus of King Ahiram

Between 2012 and 2014, the MEDINA project will bring these ancient texts back to life in museums in Jordan and Lebanon through a series of research, education, and dissemination activities. Funded by the European Union's Mediterranean cross-border cooperation programme, ENPI CBC MED, MEDINA will use the expertise of an international team of partners to promote knowledge and understanding of these inscriptions particularly within Lebanese and Jordanian populations.

The MEDINA team believes that there is much to gain from a better understanding of these ancient cultures. Unfortunately, a lack of available information and of interest in epigraphy have made it hard for people, especially younger generations, to develop an appreciation for this cultural heritage. MEDINA will strive to overcome these challenges by making information more widely available and presenting it in a way that allows people to find connections between these ancient cultures and their own.

MEDINA considers museums to be an integral part of cultural heritage conservation as places of presentation and explanation of artefacts. It therefore aims to improve their communication means on the subject. Through innovative and thematic museum exhibits, MEDINA will present the inscriptions in a way that helps young people and adults relate to the cultures and understand how these ancient languages have shaped their own. By raising awareness and generating interest in these texts, MEDINA hopes to encourage an effort within communities to preserve these valuable pieces of heritage.

Courses for students, researchers and museum personnel, as well as educational activities for school children in Lebanon and Jordan will be provided as part of the training and education plan. All activities will make use of the project's online resources, including the Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (DASI), which is the University of Pisa's existing online epigraphy database, the MEDINA project website, and an online virtual museum, which will highlight the collections of the Beirut National Museum and the Museum of Jordanian Heritage. Through these online resources, both experts and the general public will be able to access the texts in an interactive way.

The cross-border cooperation dimension of MEDINA is supported by a consortium of five partners across four different countries: The University of Pisa (Italy), Yarmouk University (Jordan), GAIA Heritage (Lebanon), the Institute of Ancient Near East Studies (IPOA) at the University of Barcelona and MAGO Production (Spain). Together, these partners provide expertise in archaeology and research, cultural heritage development, and design.

For more information on the ENPI CBC MED programme, please see <http://www.enpicbcmmed.eu/>



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The University of Pisa, Italy

The University of Pisa is the Lead Partner of the MEDINA project. Founded in 1343, it is one of the most ancient and prestigious universities in Europe. Today, it boasts eleven faculties and fifty-seven departments, with high-level research centres in agriculture, astrophysics, computer science, history, engineering and medicine. The University has always been characterised by a strong international vocation and the ability to draw students, teachers and researchers from abroad. Now, more than ever, the University seeks to encourage staff mobility at an international level and the development of international research projects.

MEDINA is the most recent project in a thirteen-year effort by the University of Pisa to create an extensive database of epigraphic texts. The Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions (CSAI) was created in 1999, and it has since been expanded through projects supported by the European Union. Today, the database serves as a valuable resource of South Arabian, Nabataean and Phoenician inscriptions. The website will receive a significant addition of catalogued inscriptions through the digitalization of Lebanese and Jordanian texts in MEDINA. Ultimately, the University of Pisa aims to digitalize all the pre-Islamic inscriptions from the entire Arabian Peninsula in the Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (DASI).

For more information about CSAI and its subsequent projects, please see

<http://csai.humnet.unipi.it/csai/html/>

<http://www.dasiproject.eu/>

<http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=994>



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of Pisa



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The University of Pisa, Italy

Professor *Alessandra Avanzini*, whose expertise in epigraphy and project management led to the creation of the epigraphy database, represents the University of Pisa in the MEDINA project. In addition to managing the project's activities and progress, the University will use its expertise in epigraphy to oversee many technical aspects of the project. It will supervise the cataloguing of the inscriptions in Jordan and Lebanon, and will catalogue the South Arabian texts found in the Museo d'Arte Orientale of Rome. During the first year of the project, Professor Avanzini and her team will travel to Lebanon and Jordan to train students for the DASI database.

THE FIRST TRAINING COURSES WILL BEGIN IN JORDAN IN OCTOBER. THE PROGRAM WILL RUN FROM 14TH TO 18TH OCTOBER AND WILL PROVIDE 20 JORDANIAN STUDENTS WITH INTENSIVE TRAINING AND PRACTICE IN THE DIGITALIZATION AND INSERTION OF INSCRIPTIONS INTO THE DASI DATABASE.

For more information about the University of Pisa, please see <http://www.unipi.it/>



South Arabian inscription from the DASI database.



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GAIA-heritage, Lebanon

GAIA-heritage is a private service company based in Beirut and Paris that specializes in the management and economics of culture and heritage. Principal Georges S. Zouain has overseen a variety of cultural and heritage projects in the Mediterranean and abroad. He has participated in European Union projects, including several funded by Euromed Heritage, the EU programme dedicated to heritage and conservation in the Mediterranean region.

As the project partner in Lebanon, the GAIA-heritage team is responsible for cataloguing the ancient Phoenician epigraphy works in Lebanon, as well as organizing and seeing through the various training programs and workshops taking place there. GAIA will use its experience in project dissemination to promote the project results in Lebanon and abroad.

The inscriptions in Lebanon will be catalogued with the cooperation of the Beirut National Museum and the Directorate General of Antiquities. The National Museum is Lebanon's primary museum of archaeology. It houses objects dating back to prehistoric times and up to the Mamluk period. The museum's Phoenician epigraphy collection features many notable inscriptions, including the Sarcophagus of King Ahiram, which dates back to the 10th Century BCE and is the oldest known evidence of the Phoenician alphabet.

The Phoenician language is a Semitic language spoken in ancient times on the coast of Syria and Palestine in Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and neighbouring towns and in other areas of the Mediterranean colonized by Phoenicians. Phoenician is very close to Hebrew and Moabite, with which it forms the Canaanite subgroup of the Northern Central Semitic languages. The earliest Phoenician inscription probably dates from the 11th century BCE; the latest inscription from Phoenicia proper is from the 1st century BCE, when the language was already being superseded by Aramaic.

In addition to being used in Phoenicia, the language spread to many of its colonies. In one, the North African city of Carthage, a later stage of the language, known as Punic, became the language of the Carthaginian Empire. Punic was influenced throughout its history by the Amazigh language and continued to be used by North African peasants until the 6th century. Phoenician words are found in Classical Greek and Latin literature as well as in writings in the Egyptian, Akkadian, and Hebrew languages. The language is written with a 22-character alphabet that does not indicate vowels. The Phoenician writing system survived in the *tifinagh* script of the Tuareg, who live in the southern Sahara.

GAIA will be working closely with senior specialists such as archaeologists Dr. Suzy Hakimian and Dr. Helen Sader to locate and catalogue epigraphy works found in the National Museum and elsewhere. Both professors have worked with the University of Pisa on the CSAI database.

For more information about GAIA-heritage, please see <http://gaiaheritage.com/>



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Yarmouk University, Jordan

The Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology (FAA) at Yarmouk University is the Jordanian partner in the MEDINA project. FAA was founded to promote the study, interpretation, preservation and utilization of Jordan's cultural heritage, and it is recognized as Jordan's centre of excellence for cultural heritage education and research. FAA is a well-established institution with recognized undergraduate and graduate teaching and research programmes in archaeology, anthropology, epigraphy and conservation of cultural heritage.

The Museum of Jordanian Heritage at Yarmouk University will serve as the project's target museum in Jordan. The museum boasts an impressive collection of Nabataean artefacts and inscriptions, demonstrating three major themes in Nabataean culture: development of Nabataean scripts, Nabataean innovative pottery, and Nabataean decorative art. Nabataean writing is an important origin of Arabic script. In the first millennium BCE, Aramaic was the international language and script of trade, and the Nabataeans adopted it as their written language. Gradually, the Nabataean's variant of the Aramaic script evolved from the angular shape of the original to a more cursive style with ample use of ligatures to join the letters of words together. The Nabataean script is considered an important Aramaic offshoot, which eventually evolved into the Arabic script, replacing older scripts of Arabia such as South Arabian and Thamudic.

FAA is represented by professors *Dr. Nabil Bader* and *Dr. Ziad Al Saad*. The role of FAA in the project includes the documentation, analysis, presentation and promotion of Nabataean inscriptions and artefacts found in Jordan. Yarmouk University will also host several training programs throughout the project duration. The first training courses, which will train students and researchers in the digitalization of inscriptions into the University of Pisa database, will begin in mid October 2012.

For more information about Yarmouk University and the Museum of Jordanian heritage, please see <http://www.yu.edu.jo/en/>



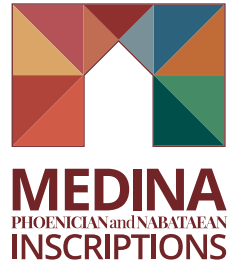
The Nabataean display in the Museum of Jordanian Heritage.



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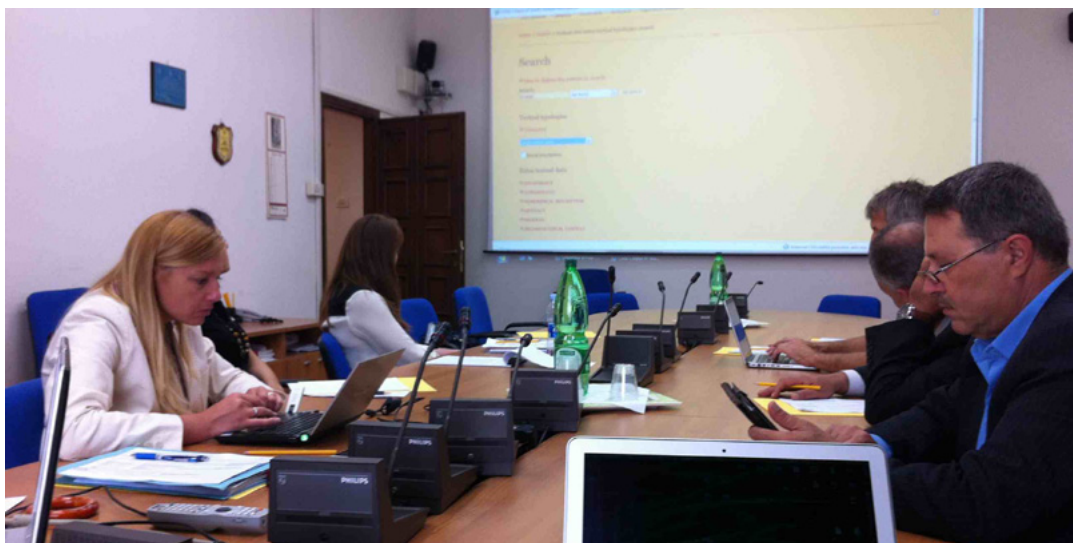
Institute of Ancient Near East Studies (IPOA) at University of Barcelona, Spain

The Institute of Ancient Near East Studies is an inter-university research institute for the departments of Semitic Languages, Classical Languages, Ancient History, Linguistics, and Theoretical Philosophy. IPOA uses its high levels of language and cultural expertise to provide specialized research and courses for the University of Barcelona and participating universities.

For the MEDINA project, IPOA will make a handbook of Nabataean inscriptions, paying particular attention to the comparative linguistic analysis. Epigraphic texts written in Nabataean Aramaic dialect come from various periods and countries, and they belong to different textual genres. The aim of IPOA, therefore, is to classify the epigraphic materials by the periods and countries to which they belong.

The methodology will consist of verifying and establishing the reading of every text in the transcription system followed by an English translation. The terms, expressions and formulae will be analyzed in the light of Semitic linguistics. The concrete model for each inscription entry will be the following: a general description of the piece, bibliography, photo or line drawing of the text, transcription, translation, philological-linguistic analysis of the terms, expressions and formulae. Entries will be complemented with several indexes of names, toponyms, a matter index, and a lexicon with etymological references of the Nabataean words. The Handbook will aim to contextualize the epigraphic pieces through an introductory chapter on the language and the history of the Nabataeans.

For more information about IPOA, please see http://www.ub.edu/web/ub/en/recerca_innovacio/recerca_a_la_UB/instituts/institutspropis/ipoa.html



Kick-Off meeting in Pisa



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MAGO PRODUCTION

Magoproduction, *Spain*

Magoproduction is a production company based in Barcelona. Series, animation, motion graphics, documentaries, music videos, content for broadcasters, among others, are the multimedia and entertainment activities done by a versatile group of professionals who are able to meet the most demanding creative ambitions of the market.

Magoproduction will be responsible for all the audiovisual activities, the design and the preparation of the communication package. These include the creation of the thematic portal in the museums in Jordan and Lebanon and the creation of brochures, catalogues and newsletters.

Magoproduction's first task was the creation of the logo for the MEDINA project. Communication, conservation, diversity and community are the main concepts of MEDINA. The museums are the places of heritage conservation and communication. Using this information as the starting point, Magoproduction chose the letter M, of MEDINA, Museum, Mediterranean and Mathaf (museum in Arabic) to create an image that could contain and express the aims of the project. At the same time, the M represents an entrance, the portal of the museum, and the door to the heart of cultural heritage conservation. The triangles in the M are symbolizing the stability of this passageway to the past. The multiple use of colours represents the cultural diversity: the colours of the Arabic desert, of the sandstones of the city of Petra, the capital of the Nabataean civilization and of the Murex (sea snail) colorant and bronze and gold artefacts of the Phoenicians.

To learn more about Magoproduction, please see <http://magoproduction.com/>



Nabataean inscription from the Museum of Jordanian Heritage.

