

OCTOBER 2013 MEDINA

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



TRAINING COURSES IN LEBANON

“Conservation and museology for archaeological collections with special reference to epigraphy”



The Third MEDINA training program took place from October 9-11 at Saint Joseph University (USJ), Beirut, Lebanon. Thirteen Lebanese students in archaeology, museography and museology, as well as museum personnel, attended the training entitled: **‘Conservation and museology for archaeological collections with special reference to epigraphy’**. Gael de GUICHEN, main consultant to the Director General of ICCROM (International Centre for the study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) and present director general of the **International Centre for the Study of the Preservation**, travelled to Beirut to host the sessions.

During two and a half days, participants became acquainted with means to conserve, organize exhibitions and promote archaeological collections or objects. They were introduced to the concept of “message of the object” instead of “value of the object”. In groups, they identified the different elements that constitute an archeological collection and hazards that threatened it.

“It gave me a new perspective on objects at museums”

“It was very helpful, it gave me an idea on how to, from chaos, reach an organized museum reserve”

“We used to conserve the object for its material, now we found a better way to save the object for its message”

“The creation of a museography event was inspiring and loaded with information”

“I have learned a lot of basic things, useful for my work”

“Excellent session that provided me with necessary information for the career I want to pursue”

“I am an archaeologist working in Beirut. We have some ideas and expertise but Dr. de GUICHEN gave us the best storage methodology and techniques.”

“It is interesting to learn about the damages caused on objects by humans themselves and how careless we can be even though it is our field.”

“Perfect subjects. I got great advantages for my knowledge and work, since I have already finished restoring and ancient museum and willing to exhibit different objects from old ages in it.”



DASI ARCHIVE IS FINALLY ONLINE!

The **“Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (DASI)”** is ONLINE

DASI is the results of a five-year project funded by the European Community within the Seventh Framework Programme “Ideas”, Specific Programme “ERC – Advanced Grant”. It aims at gathering all known pre-Islamic Arabian epigraphic material into a comprehensive online database which can be freely accessed by scholars from all over the world.

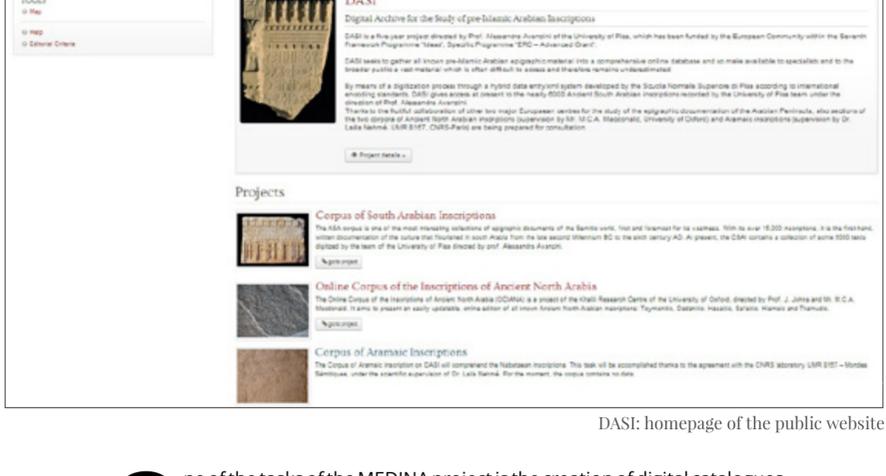
DASI consists in an improvement of the existing CSAI - “Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions” both in terms of methodology and content. North Arabian and Aramaic inscriptions and South Arabian inscriptions were digitized this year were added to the archive. DASI also provides indices and other tools, such as word lists, textual searches and maps, that ease content exploration. For the first time, the rich cultural heritage of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula can be studied in a holistic manner and fill an important gap in the history of the ancient Near East.

DASI IS FREELY AVAILABLE HERE!!



Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions in DASI public website

CATALOGUING AND DIGITIZATION WITH DASI



DASI: homepage of the public website

One of the tasks of the MEDINA project is the creation of digital catalogues of the Phoenician collection of the National Museum of Beirut, the Nabataean collection of the Yarmouk University Museum and of the South Arabian collection of the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale of Rome. On the basis of the surveys carried out in the inventories and deposits of the above mentioned museums, three mixed groups of both inscriptions and objects have been selected. Those valuable artifacts include a fair amount of architectural decorations, statues, sarcophagi, stelae, thrones, reliefs, pottery vessels, jewellery, seals and coins, in addition to the Nabataean, Phoenician and South Arabian inscriptions.

DASI is the IT platform chosen by the MEDINA team to digitize inscriptions and catalogue archaeological objects.

DASI is a web-based, relational database, which ensures uniform and secure cataloguing, archiving and indexing of data. It was developed by researchers of the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa, in collaboration with the University of Pisa, within the EU ERC-Advanced Grant funded project “Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions”. Its data model links inscriptions and objects to entities that complete their description: the support of the text, its translation, its related bibliography, the archaeological site where the inscription/ object was made or found, images and, finally, the corpora/ collections, which allows to group artefacts according to variable criteria, such as the language and the deposit.

The data entry system allows users to edit, delete and relate each of these pieces of information. The insertion and modification of data is facilitated by the means of a dictionary of controlled terms that can be expanded by users and verified by administrators. Data entry is provided with a specific module for the transcription and the encoding of inscriptions using a standard XML language (TEI/Epidoc), in order to analyze information concerning the structure, the onomastics, the grammatical phenomena of the text, and to indicate the editorial interventions. The text of the inscription is transliterated according to the Unicode Standard and a push-button panel is available with characters of Latin transliteration included in set UTF-8.

By virtue of its scalability, DASI allows data sharing among multiple users via the web and, at the same time, assures a secure access to data by means of different levels of authorizations depending on the role each participant plays in the project. This allows a rapid, but controlled, growth of the community of participants, which includes MEDINA members and enriches the collection of epigraphs and archaeological objects.

Under the supervision of the University of Pisa and after a training course focused on the best practices in the field of digital cataloguing, a number of students and researchers from the American University of Beirut and the Yarmouk University are currently engaged in the digitization of the inscriptions and cataloguing of the archaeological objects foreseen by the MEDINA project. The aim of this activity is to educate a younger generation of scholars, in order to create a common understanding in the field of digital documentation of the movable cultural heritage within the Mediterranean area.



Card of the inscription as-Sawda' 16 from the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale