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THE FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITIES (IN HEB. נאמני עתיקות): THE STORY OF AN ISRAELI VOLUNTEER GROUP AND COMPARATIVE REMARKS

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1. BACKGROUND

When the state of Israel was established in 1948 it had almost no resources for maintaining its archaeological sites and historical monuments. The Palestine Archaeological Museum (“Rockefeller Museum”), with its rich collections and administrative archives, became part of East Jerusalem and was held by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. All Israelis were refused access to the Museum by Jordan; even the one Israeli representative on the international body that managed the Museum was denied access. Israel’s feeble efforts to find some compromise or even to divide the Museum assets through either the British Government or UNESCO failed (Kletter 2006:174-192). Although relatively few local, small Museums and archaeological collections dating from the British Mandate Period existed in the area that eventually became Israel in 1948, some of those that were suffered badly through the 1948 war, acts of looting, and vandalism that occurred in Caesarea, Megiddo, Jerusalem and other places (Kletter 2006:19-33). The Hebrew University of Jerusalem was the only institute of Higher Education with a Department of Archaeology. Thus the number of academic positions for archaeologists in Israel was very limited.

Almost from scratch the State established a new “Antiquities Unit” that was affiliated first to the Public Works Department and to the Ministry of Education since 1949. In 1955 it became the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM for short; for convenience sake, I shall use this term also for the period before 1955). The IDAM started with barely 15 workers. Most of them came from the former British Mandatory Department of Antiquities. They occupied a few rooms and shared a library that numbered about one hundred books. Even the manager of the new unit, Shmuel Yeivin ([see picture 1](#)) had no separate room for himself at first. Only three supervisors were responsible for the preservation of all the archaeological sites and historical monuments in the area of the State. Many sites, especially near the borders, were either under military rule at the time or could not be reached by public transport. Moreover, inspectors lacked cars. In 1953 a “guards’ battalion,” numbering 20 guards at its height, was established. . They all lacked formal archaeological education. Most of them were placed as stationary guards, but one guard alone could not adequately

protect large sites such as Megiddo or Ashkelon (Kletter 2006:117-132). For example, the antiquities guard stationed at Atlit (a large Crusader fortress south of Haifa) had to travel each week by public transport to Hadera to fetch foodstuffs and to receive his salary; he lacked official documents to prove his position and was dependent upon the goodwill of the authorities of the Atlit military base. In 1957 the army occupied most of the ancient site, eliminating the need for an antiquities guard. Yeivin tried for years to secure a legal basis for the guards. Without it, as stated clearly in an official legal advice, guards could neither detain persons caught in the act of robbing antiquities nor demand the return of the looted antiquities. All a guard could do was to ask politely for the person's name and address, information the later was not obliged to give (Kletter 2006:130). The situation of ancient sites in Israel was aggravated by two processes over which the fledgling IDAM had little influence. First, there was the process of destruction associated with war and its aftermath. All wars damage human archaeological heritage sites and the 1948 war in Palestine/Israel was not different (Kletter 2006:1-30). Moreover, considerable damage to ancient sites was caused by the destruction of many deserted Arab villages and urban quarters (even in cities of a mixed Arab-Jewish population, such as Tiberias): many of these places were situated upon ancient sites or incorporated ancient remains (Kletter 2006:42-64). In addition, the need the State of Israel had to maintain a large army ready for battle forced the building of many new army bases and border fortifications, as well as space for training units, which at times occurred at the expense of ancient sites. Jean Perrot was almost targeted by such a training unit once while excavating a site in the Negev. Some large coastal sites (that naturally occupied the few natural harbors) were occupied by the army—including Dor, Appolonia-Arsuf and Atlit. A border post facing Syria was built on the ancient city of Susita, east of the Sea of Galilee (Kletter 2006:37-40). Development was the second process that damaged human archaeological heritage sites in Israel during the early years of the State. Between 1948 and 1953 a million new immigrants arrived in Israel, more than doubling the pre-war Jewish population of 600,000. The massive development this caused included—not only the foundation of new settlements and towns and the enlarging of existing ones, but also an unprecedented number of development projects that changed the landscape completely (roads, factories, plantation of forests, development of agricultural fields; Kletter 2006:64-81). Economic reality, which rendered many unemployed, forced the creation of a welfare system. Indeed, the large excavations of the 1950s and early 1960s in Israel were all carried out and made possible by the existence of 'cheap' welfare workers (Kletter 2006:133-149). The pressures of development were such that there were a considerable number of official bodies dealing with the creation of new villages and *kibbutzim*, and some that did not always work 'by the rules'. In some cases new temporary camps for immigrants (*ma'abarot*) were built right on ancient tells. IDAM protested once this was discovered but its protests were mainly ignored (Kletter 2006:66-68)

2. THE CREATION OF THE FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITIES

Given this background, the idea to use volunteers to help preserve Israel's archaeological heritage is not surprising. We find the idea first expressed even before the State was established. On December 16, 1947 senior Hebrew archaeologists met to discuss the future of archaeology in Palestine. This was at a time when the creation of two states was envisioned- one Jewish and one Arab—in which some basic services would be shared and cooperation maintained. According to detailed minutes and a short report (GL44868/7, Kletter 2006:1-2) the participants recommended that the future Department of Antiquities of the Hebrew state would maintain close contacts with the general public and engage in education for the safekeeping of antiquities through a body called *Hever Shoharey 'Atiqot* (“Band of Antiquities Enthusiasts”). However, no action was possible in the first half of 1948 to fulfill this recommendation since the conditions at the time were so difficult. Also, it is not known who conceived of the idea in the first place.

Shmuel Yeivin realized from the first days of the IDAM that its workforce was extremely limited and started to prepare a body of volunteers. The history of the first decade of the volunteers is documented mainly by file GL.444866/3 of the Israel State Archive, which consists mostly of correspondence within the IDAM (as a result, many of these documents were not numbered and one can refer to them only by the general file number and by date). Another major source about the early history of the volunteers is the IDAM's newsletter in Hebrew - the “Alon” - of which six volumes appeared between 1949 and 1957.

Yeivin began to create the body of volunteers in the second half of 1948. He did this mainly by approaching people whom he met while touring the country or in work meetings in the IDAM premises, mainly in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv. He would explain the roles of the future body and ask them to join it as members. It was never meant to be a large-scale body, open to the general public. On the contrary, the concept was to nominate one volunteer at each village or Kibbutz who would be responsible for the surrounding region as well. In large cities, four or five volunteers would be selected. The term coined for these volunteers was “Friends of Antiquities” (נאמני עתיקות, hereafter, mainly “Friends”). They would be the unofficial and unpaid “eyes and ears” of the IDAM, appointed from among local amateurs interested in archaeology. In close contact with the IDAM, they were supposed to notify it about new discoveries or sites in danger. The “Friends” would also help to run local collections, arrange exhibitions and assist in educating the general public (Alon I:3-4; IEJ 1:248).

Initially the body envisioned was called “Band of Enthusiasts of Antiquities” (e.g., in the meeting of December 1947). Soon after the term “Friends of Antiquities” was coined for the volunteers. For a short while both terms were used by Yeivin. But, in fact, only the “Friends of Antiquities” existed. The “Band” never materialized, and later this term was never mentioned.

The first practical act in the creation of the body of volunteers took place in early August 1948. Still using the “enthusiasts,” the IDAM sent a “memorandum” to those considered candidates for the new body. :

Letter of Memorandum Sent to Antiquities Enthusiasts

To Mr.

At [These details were to be filled by hand].

D[ear] S[ir],

I am glad to inform you that an Antiquity Unit has been established in the state of Israel. It is the wish of this unit to closely cooperate with all parts of the nation. For that [aim], we are going to organize a “band of antiquities enthusiasts” and we will be happy if you agree to be a representative of this band at [Place to be filled by hand].

This position of honor is related to certain acts, which we hope that you will not find too difficult to fulfill, such as: to be interested in the state of antiquities in your settlement and the near surroundings; to gather news about new finds or discoveries and inform the IDAM; to make suggestions about keeping and saving antiquities, etc.

Explicit directions will be sent to you after we shall have your agreement [to join the new body].

Respectfully yours,

Head of the IDAM (copies in GL44889/3, No. 1171a).

In the course of the 1950's and 1960's this type of application form underwent a few, minor changes. Not everybody was enthusiastic about becoming an enthusiast. Pesach Bar-Adon, then at Kibbutz Merhavia and considered to be a ‘type’ (sort of ‘bohemian’ or ‘eccentric’) answered thus:

To: Mr. Sh. Yeivin, Manager of the Antiquities Unit in the State of Israel.

Dear Sir,

In answering your undated form, which I have received this week, I hereby announce that I do not accept any position of honor, until further notices... (GL44889/3)

Yeivin explained in the first IAA newsletter (Alon) from 1949 that:

This trial is new in our land. Its planners and participants do not know yet the right way to choose for it to flourish... We hope that daily work and practical experience will teach the faithfuls and us what to do, what to beware of, and what to avoid. For that reason, we also publish this newsletter (Alon 1:3).

The first newsletter included explicit instructions, admittedly of a tentative nature, for the activity of the new volunteers. They were defined as the eyes and ears of the IDAM, expected to:

Keep what survives and be aware of what is found... The Land of Israel, a land with a past of many generations, is rich in events, full of historical remains and antiquities on each and every step. The current activities of war, fortification works, defensive digging, bombing and removal of ruins may expose graves, remains of walls and buildings or detached antiquities... (Alon 1:4).

The “Friends” were instructed to arrive with great haste to any endangered site and try to persuade owners of property or managers of development works to temporarily stop the work. However, the “Friends” lacked official authority and could not order the cessation of work. They were advised to promise those in power that the IDAM did not intend to disturb the work, but only wished to check the antiquities, and not to “grasp treasures.” Another way to persuade contractors or landowners was to tempt them by national arguments: to explain to them that antiquities are a direct link between “our present and our past.” Such arguments were based on the high nationalistic sentiments of that period.

The “Friends” were asked to report a discovery by submitting a descriptive report of the find as soon as possible, preferably written shortly upon discovery and including drawings, photographs, and a description of the grounds, walls, pottery, etc. Since “only experts can excavate properly,” “Friends” were not allowed to dig independently in order not to damage antiquities. “Friends” were allowed to remove antiquities from a site only in cases of emergency when the antiquities faced immediate danger; in such cases they were required to notify the IDAM immediately. Since few phones and cars existed in Israel in those years, notification was usually made by letters- even by scraps and pieces of paper (*Zetlach* in Yiddish). Telegrams could be used in cases of emergency, but the IDAM did not encourage this method, because of the cost it incurred (Alon I:3-5, 18-21).

New members were appointed by recommendation of existing “Friends” or IDAM workers. Some people applied on their own accord, but not everyone was admitted. Yeivin insisted that dealers and private collectors of antiquities could not serve as “Friends,” even if they were reliable and were highly knowledgeable in their area (GL44844/8, No. 2 of 9.10.48). (However, later this rule was not strictly applied for owners of minor collections). Extant rejection letters reveal various reasons. For example, an applicant was deemed too young or lacking sufficient knowledge. One woman was rejected because she reputedly travelled too often, rendering her unavailable for safekeeping sites near her home. In another case recorded in September 1952, a doctor from Tel-Aviv was rejected because “there are already a considerable number of “Friends” from Tel-Aviv, so we can not appoint more.”

News about the new body spread in 1949 through several newspapers (e.g., a letter by Eli Rothschild kept in GL1430/14 No. 6703; and the Jerusalem Post from 7.7.1949). Ha’aretz newspaper published the story how

“Friends” discovered a mosaic floor near a temporary camp of immigrants in 1949 at Sha’ar ha-Aliyah, south of Haifa. Until the creation of the *Ma’abarot* this camp was cramped with immigrants. Living conditions there were very hard (cf. Segev 1984:129):

The speedy action of the “Friends” can prevent damage... an example can be given by the discovery of a mosaic floor opposite of the Sha’ar ha-Aliyah camp near Haifa. A driver of a bulldozer brought up a stone that looked to him ancient. It was noticed by one of the “Friends” at Haifa - an owner of a *delicatessen* shop by profession and an amateur archaeologist by tendency. He went to the place together with another “Friend,” a police sergeant by profession, and both began to excavate carefully, till they reached the mosaic floor. Immediately, they photographed the site and notified the IDAM in Jerusalem (Ha’aretz 8.4.1951).

The mosaic floor, which was part of a monastery, was excavated and published by Dothan (1951). However, not everybody was aware of the new body of volunteers. In July 1949, a certain Franz Hichenberg from Tel-Aviv who applied to the IDAM, suggested the establishment of an association of amateur archaeologists “in towns and villages;” he was apparently unaware that a similar body already existed. Hichenberg himself became a dedicated “Friend.”

The IDAM started to activate new “Friends.” The young and very energetic Ruth Amiran, then Supervisor of the Northern district, wrote on 21.12.1948 to the appointed “Friend” from Kibbutz Manara, Y. Goldman:

Since in your letter of August 8th, 1948, you have taken the role of a member on behalf of the “Band of Antiquities Enthusiasts” at your place; I apply to you in the following request... In my tour of the Galilee a week after it was conquered I saw a few ancient places while passing near Manara, one of which is Sheikh ‘Ubeid.... I ask you to visit this place and collect sherds and in due course send them to the IDAM GL44866/3). Amiran assumed that Goldman could find the said site and knew how to collect relevant sherds. Other “Friends” were in need of some education and training before would be able to perform such tasks.

3. HEADACHES OF ORGANIZATION

By the early 1950s the IDAM had gathered a body of faithful members, but it required constant administration. Members changed their names into Hebrew, moved from place to place, or stopped volunteering without notice. In one case a woman wrote to the IDAM that the Alon newsletter arrived at the Kibbutz, but the appointed “Friend” was on a mission, so she volunteered to replace him. Another wrote that he was happy to accept the position of “Friends” and will be free for activities “at home before 8:00 and after 20:00, as well as on weekends.” Yet another sent a letter asking for a recommendation to the police in order to acquire a pistol. Franz Hichenberg from Mapu St., Tel-Aviv (whom we have already met) became Peretz Tura of Patai Street, Giva’atim (a neighboring city). He did receive a letter from the IDAM, which was sent to his old address. However, on

1.8.1956 he asked the IDAM to register new details- apparently not for the first time:

Subject: your letter of 29.7.56, no. 1687.

1. I hereby acknowledge receipt of your said letter- It seems to me you have made archaeological excavations in your drawers and on that occasion found some letters of mine that survived so far unanswered. Since you are busy, probably, in surveying your correspondence, I ask you to register immediately my new accurate address. -Thanks to the blessed Giva'taim municipality, which was kind enough to name the street where we live (formerly, having no other alternative, it was named after the nearby street); it even gave a number to our house.

2. As for your questions:

“Friend” of the Department—I am ready to continue to carry this title- though no sites as yet were discovered in Giv’ataim. Even the “ancient city of Giv’ataim,” that is, the neighborhood of Kiryat Yoseph, also called Khap neighborhood, lacks important antiquities [he was unaware of Chalcolithic burials discovered in the 1930s in Giv’ataim, later excavated by V. Sussman and S. Ben-Arieh].

Association of “Friends” abroad—the difficulties related to this plan [of mine] are not as great as you assume. I believe that there is interest among Jews and Gentiles in this field. The land of Israel can also give something to the big world, not just send employees to raise funds... I think it is possible to issue short, precise booklets and use the same photos [that are published in Israel] in English... The market available for such leaflets abroad, and for enlisting volunteers to the IDAM, exists among Rabbis, schoolteachers, Priests, etc. Nice drawings and short, factual descriptions will win the hearts and will also furnish cultural relations between Israel and abroad (GL44866/3).

At first the IDAM management (Yeivin and Ben-Dor) dealt with the “Friends” on a personal basis. Later the growth of the IDAM did not allow them to continue this personal mode of contact. During the 1960s, the connection between the “Friends” and the IDAM was maintained by district inspectors, each in his/her specific district. For example, Ram Gophna, working as an IDAM supervisor in the central district, reported on 7.1.1963:

Subject: “Friends” at Kibbutz Hazerim.

About three years ago the “Friend” at this place, Y. Meshorer, quit, and we have lost connection [with him]. Recently, there has been an awakening among some of the older members of the Kibbutz... I recommend nominating member G. El’ad as a faithful of antiquities at this place (GL44866/3)

The activities of the “Friends” had to be financed by IDAM funds, which were severely constrained (Kletter 2006:41, 279, 262, 303-304, 312 Table 6). However the costs were low, at least during the 1950s: no more than 1000

Israeli Liras per year. IDAM's sponsorship of "Friends" was minimal at this stage: "Friends" received the Newsletter (Alon) for free and some of their discoveries were published in it. More expensive activities, such as general conferences for "Friends," were developed only later (see below).

The large majority of "Friends" were not professional archaeologists. There is, of course, no sharp line of division between professional and amateur archaeology; the boundaries also vary for each period and country. For the present article, professional archaeology can be defined roughly as that performed by academics (holding a BA degree or higher) related to institutes of higher education, the IEJ, the museums, or the IDAM. Although "Friends" could report a new or a damaged site, they could not always identify the period or understand whether a find was common or rare. In 1952 Ruth Amiran saw a leaflet published by the Institute of Archaeology at the University of London which outlined its membership details. Established in 1936-7, this London-based association required that its members pay one guinea per year; in turn a member would be permitted to use the facilities, such as the institute library. Amiran sent the page to Yeivin and suggested that the "Friends" be organized on similar grounds:

Perhaps we should move the friends to a structure of an association which pays something and gets something in return.... Really, why must we do everything free of charge?(GL44889/3).

Yeivin did not like this suggestion and marked on the edge of her proposal: "It is completely unreasonable and the two cases bear no similarity at all."

In 1949 the "Friends," who were not numerous at the time, received maps which were made on a scale of 1:20,000; these were to be marked with new discoveries (GL44889/3 No. 481). Ben-Dor, Deputy Director of the IDAM, sent one map to Shlomoh Kamai from Tarbikha-Shomeriya in the Galilee on 28.9.1949, explaining to him:

You ought to fix clear signs for each type of antiquities, for example: U – cave, * – Tell, O – pit, # – ancient building remains... In due course we will send you more signs (GL44889/3). Such cartographic equipment led to the surprising arrest of Dr. Y. Kaplan, the famous pioneer of archaeology in the Tel-Aviv area. In early 1950, Kaplan, armed with this IAA map and an aerial photo (rare gadgets usually not held by Israeli civilians in those years), was surveying an area near an army camp. Walking with such a map (All 1:20,000 maps were considered confidential) and an aerial photo, looking carefully at the ground as if searching for something, Kaplan was clearly not strolling for fresh air. Finding his activity suspicious, soldiers arrested Kaplan. Almost certainly Kaplan was walking near a large army base at Ramat Gan, looking for a fortress that he (later) identified as part of a Hellenistic period line of fortifications of King Alexander Yanneus (Kaplan 1993:1455). Yeivin wrote to Yigael Yadin, then Chief of Staff of the army:

I must explain that Mr. Kaplan surveyed the area looking for remains of a large building- perhaps a fortress- on the ground. He seemed to identify its remains from the aerial photo. Mr. Kaplan told me that he

showed the officer who arrested him the copy of the IDAM letter, nominating him as a “Friend”... Therefore, on behalf of the IDAM, I wish to ask you two things:

A. In relation to the case of Mr. Kaplan, I’d ask that both the map and the aerial photo taken from him at the time of his arrest will be returned; for it is difficult to get new maps now, and completely impossible to receive a new British aerial photo.

B. Can a general order be issued to the army, to take into consideration letters of nomination of “Friends” on behalf of the Band of Antiquities Enthusiasts? Where there is no real reason to doubt the intention of a certain person, this letter of nomination can be considered sufficient justification; so that holders of such letters can stay and explore antiquities... (GL44875/10 No. 2562).

A decade later the IDAM was requested to surrender the same 1:20,000 maps for security reasons. On 12.3.59 Y. Landau, the IDAM archivist, wrote to the manpower division of teaching at the Ministry of Education asking to locate an address of one “Friend,” a teacher with which the IDAM, “had relations in 1950-51. We wrote him about the map twice on 30.12.57 and 20.1.58, but received no answer” (GL44889/3 No. 1100).

Ruth Amiran wondered about criteria for the “Friends”:

A. On nominating the “Friends”: We ought to set certain rules in nominating and choosing “Friends” that will allow us to somehow “test” a nominee, of course without his knowledge.

For example: 1. As a first step, suggest to the nominee to correspond with the IDAM about antiquities in his area. With time, he will widen his scope of knowledge and enterprise, and the amount of time he is ready to sacrifice to the goal. 2. Only later and after consultations, to suggest nomination [to him/her] (GL44889/3, letter 8.7.1949).

4. THE “FRIENDS” GROW

Lists of “Friends” were published in the newsletter of the IDAM (*Alon*) during the 1950’s. In January 1949 there were 10 “Friends” on army service and 27 civilians (*Alon* 1). The numbers rose fast, reaching 61 civilians and just 3 army men in March 1950 (*Alon* 2:3, inner back page). These statistics signify a return to civilian life, a result of the release from duty of the 1948 soldiers. In 1953 there were 76 civilians and 7 army members (*Alon* 4:back cover). By 1955 the “Friends” consisted of about one hundred in 85 settlements (Yeivin 1955b:3). In 1957 there were 125 civilians and 3 army “Friends.” Around 1958, about a decade after the body was created, there were 173 “Friends” in 140 towns and settlements (*Alon* 5-6: back cover; Yeivin 1960:2). A slightly lower number appears in another source (128 “Friends” in 102 settlements, Yeivin, GL44883/12 report p. 2). In the same year the IDAM had only 60 employees including the antiquities guards. The establishment of the body of volunteers was a success by all counts, a fact that contributed greatly to the very limited manpower of the IDAM.

Attention should be paid to the very low number of soldier “Friends” throughout the 1950s. Soldiers, mostly young persons, did not join this body, or were not considered desirable candidates. . This was before some army generals developed a habit of collecting antiquities as status symbols. This did occur later, largely under the influence of General Moshe Dayan (Kletter 2004). Naturally, such activities completely negated the values of the “Friends.” However, it seems that during the 1950’s the Israeli army remained largely outside the so-called “cult of antiquities,” unlike the politicians.

After 1958 the Alon ceased to exist, and lists of “Friends” were no longer published. Yet the body continued to grow and to flourish, reaching its zenith during the 1960s. A letter written in June 1962 mentions that there were about 180 “Friends.” Part of this growth can be attributed to the growing survey activity of that period. When Aharoni conducted his Galilee survey in 1956 he used volunteers from the area, and some were asked to join the “Friends.” When the Association for Survey (Hebrew *Agudah le-Sefer*) was established in 1962, with the (explicit) aim of surveying the entire country, volunteers on the survey teams were also asked to join the “Friends.” Many “Friends” came from *kibbutzim* and from communal circles among whom the concept of “knowledge of the land” (*Yedi’at Ha’Aretz*) flourished. This situation also reflected the high status of members of *kibbutzim* during the period: they were considered an elite group in Israel. Practical reasons also played a part: the kibbutz allocated “cultural days” for members of kibbutzim, which they could employ for cultural activities such as archaeology (Y. Porat, interview 12.11.02). Individual working people, such as those living in cities, did not have free “culture days.”

Yeivin expressed the wish to organize a conference of “Friends” in 1948, but hoped that their legal position could be sorted out beforehand. In 1952 a few “Friends” were invited to attend a seminar held for IDAM archaeologists (GL44866/3, 14.11.1951). A high-school education was required in order to attend. The IDAM even supplied free accommodation in Jerusalem, in return for commitment for future work in excavations for at least one summer month (when “Friends” could take a leave from their jobs). The seminar lasted from January to March 1952, with 130 hours of study. Joe Shadur, a “Friend” from Kibbutz Nirim, participated in two small “Friends” meetings in Jerusalem in the 1950s (pers. comm. 2004). One such meeting was mentioned in the press (Ha’aretz, 24.12.55, by A. Haimi).

At least five general conferences were organized for “Friends” in the following years:

1. The first general conference of “Friends” was held in March 1958, but very little is known about it. Yeivin estimated (letters, GL.1430/14) that eighty “Friends” would participate. The cost was about four hundred Israeli Liras (IL 1.80 = US \$ 1.00 in 1954, IL 3.00 = US \$ 1.00 in 1962), including bed and breakfast for two nights in a youth hostel, presumably only for lecturers.

2. A second conference was organized four years later, in April 22-24, 1962 (during the Easter holiday). B. Mazar lectured about the Israelite [=Iron Age] period and the “Friends” visited the IDAM museum. The conference was opened by a lecture given by Avraham Biran (the IDAM manager 1962-1974) who said: “In the “Friends” I see the conscience of those who like antiquities. They indeed are those who stand guard... They are the ones who should alert us to action and to salvage” (HA 3:1). Biran stressed that antiquities are not a private property of the IDAM, but a cultural, national property, which is only entrusted to the IDAM for safekeeping (HA 3, 1962:1-2).

3. A third conference was carried out in 1963 in the IDAM premises, Jerusalem, with more than a hundred “Friends” in attendance (HA 6, 1963:28-29). Abba Eban, then Minister of Education and Culture, sealed the lectures. File GL44868/6 still contains some un-used breakfast coupons for *Nakhsion* club, Ben Yehuda Street 4, Jerusalem, courtesy of the IDAM. Presumably they belonged to “Friends” who were late on arrival or who had to cancel their attendance. One of them was Shimon Dar, later a Professor at Bar-Ilan University. “Friends” were also invited to attend the annual archaeological conference of the IES in 1965.

4. The next general conference took place in July 3-5th, 1966, in what was the new Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Excavations and surveys were the main topic. More than a hundred and fifty “Friends” attended this conference (HA 20, 1966:25). Biran described the new draft of the law of antiquities, Binyamin Mazar spoke on surveying, and Joshua Praver gave the final lecture.

5. Yet another general conference of “Friends” was held after the 1967 war on 25-26 March 1968 at the Rockefeller building.. The general topic was the survey of the new (occupied) territories.

Clearly, Biran continued Yeivin’s policy in trying to maintain and develop the “Friends” during the 1960s. Later—perhaps because of the large numbers of “Friends” and the rising costs—only smaller regional meetings were held for “Friends,” aimed at strengthening the relations between various IDAM districts and the “Friends” associated with them.

5. THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE VOLUNTEERS

The lack of legal status for the “Friends” was a perennial problem for the IDAM throughout these years ([see picture 2](#)). In 1949 some “Friends” asked for a document that would indicate their official status and give them some authority in dealing with those who damage sites. However, since they had no official status, all they received was a general letter of support that mentioned their title. A letter between Emmanuel Ben-Dor (IDAM’s deputy) and Yeivin, dated 17.2.1949, documents an early case of a “Friend” who requested a letter of nomination to help him to fulfill his role. Ben Dor wrote to Yeivin:

As you remember, [Avraham] Frankel of Haifa sat in the office when you gave Ruth [Amiran] your answer about documents for the members of the Band [of Enthusiasts]. Probably, you did not notice that he was

sitting right there, or else, surely you would not have given the answer in such an upset tone... [Unfortunately, this answer is not specified further]. Anyway, he [Frankel] was very offended and wanted to resign from the band (and he is one of the very best!). Ruth pleaded with him [to stay] and asked him to wait. I suggest giving him a certificate and later draw a line [meaning not to give to others], on the excuse that we received orders from above. The certificate can be worded as follows:

Member Avraham Frankel is a "Friend" on behalf of the Band of Enthusiasts of Antiquities under the IDAM, in the area of Haifa and the Carmel Mountain. Mr. Frankel is allowed to visit all the ancient places in his area and to make photos. The authorities and the public are asked to help him in fulfilling his role (GL44889/3).

While an official certificate was discussed in this case, we do not know if it was finally issued; even if so, it was an exception and not the norm. The only case, to the best of my knowledge, in which an official certificate of a sort was issued for a "Friend" in those early years concerned Emil Rosener-Modigliani. He was at the time a resident of Gedera, south of Tel Aviv, who was appointed as a "Friend" on 11.12.50 following the recommendation of Mrs. Cassuto.¹ Mr. Rosener-Modigliani brought ancient lamps from Qatra (a former Arab village) to the IDAM.²

It was agreed that Mr. Rosener-Modigliani could keep architectonic parts at his home until the IDAM could take them to Jerusalem. He also asked for and received a 1:20,000 Map. Some time later he moved to Rome. The IDAM sent him a certificate on 20.3.1955, probably in response to a request. It is the only such certificate that exists in English:

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that Mr. Emil Rosener is a member of the "Friends" affiliated to the IDAM in Israel, and as such a corresponding member of that body in his place of residence.

The "Friends" greatly help the work of the IDAM throughout Israel, and foster close co-operation between the IDAM and the public in the preservation and care of cultural heritage in this country.

(Signed) S. Yeivin GL44866/3).

Apparently it was not sufficient and Mr. Rosener replied thus:

¹ Bice Cassuto, the wife of the famous scholar Umberto Cassuto (1883-1951). Their eldest daughter, Dr. Milka Cassuto, served as librarian in the Rockefeller Museum and later in the IDAM. I did not find other documentation regarding Emil Rosener, nor on his relationship to the Jewish Italian family Modigliani, famous for the painter Amadeo Modigliani.

² Qatra was occupied first by "Yugoslavian [Jewish] immigrants, but most of them moved elsewhere and Yemenite [Jews] took their place... In the mosque of the village, under the plaster, one sees capitals and there are granite and marble columns in the village..." (GL44866/3).

Via Saint Bon 9, Rome, 25th April 1955

To: Direction, Department of Antiquities, Jerusalem

Sehr geehrter Herr Director Jewin,

Von einer Reise zurückgekehrt finde ich Ihr Schreiben von 20. März und danke Ihnen für Ihren freundlichen Begleitbrief. Beiliegend sende ich das "Certificat" zurück. Das Department bestatigt mir die Mitgliedschaft zu einem privaten Verein, dessen Mitglied ich in Wirklichkeit gar nicht bin. Die Definition eines Neeman lautet: "Ehrenamtlicher Mitarbeiter des Department of Antiquities, der in seinem Wohnsitz die Funktion eines Inspektors ausübt..." (GL44866/3 No. 6488).

Mr. Roesener apparently believed that his activities as a "Friend" were not a private matter, and that he enjoyed a status similar to that of an employee of the IDAM who fulfills the position of an inspector of antiquities. Yeivin sent him the following reply on 2.5.1955:

I am sorry that the certificate which I gave you in my last letter could not, so it seems, help you to achieve your goal. I do not know whence you have taken the definition of the role of the "Friends." In the nomination document, which we issue to the "Friends," it is said explicitly that they represent the "Band of Antiquities Enthusiasts" affiliated to the Department.... Naturally, it is only a role of honor. The IDAM has often expressed its gratitude to the "Friends" for their kind and dedicated help, but nobody ever thought of placing them as inspectors of antiquities... Inspectors are given certain authorities according to the Antiquities Ordinance; these authorities can be vested only in official employees of the government, whose scientific training and practical experience of work enable them to be employed in such duties. You surely would agree that such conditions do not apply to the "Friends" GL44866/3 No. 6488a).

Personal documents (on green papers) were issued to the "Friends" in 1962 for the first time. Legend has it that the first 'green card' was given to Sh. Avidan, the famous commander of Giv'ati Brigade from Kibbutz Ein ha-Shofet (see Jackier and Dagan 1995:199-200; Alon 5-6:48, no. 39). The drafts for the cards survived, dated May 1962.

Still, the "Friends" lacked a legal position. The IDAM intended to include the "Friends" in future antiquities legislation, but the legislation was constantly postponed. Although Yeivin had commenced work on a general Antiquities Law in 1949, it was not until 1978 that one was finally passed. In 1959 regulations that arranged the status and duties of the antiquities guards were issued (file GL1430/12 is dedicated to these regulations). However, the "Friends" remained outside the scope of these regulations. In June 1962, before the green certificates for the "Friends" were issued, the IDAM asked Ruth Staner, the legal advisor to the Ministry of Education, for a legal opinion. On 13.6.1962 Staner replied:

The term “Friend” is not recognized by Law, neither in the Ordinance of 1929 or that of 1935... The 1935 Ordinance knows a “policeman” (called then *Noter*), whose authorities are also defined in the 1959 regulations [but this relates to the guards, not to the “Friends”].

I do not see it as a good idea to nominate people to positions, which do not exist by Law, although it is done out of the best intentions. I fear even more giving documents that lend such people special positions, unrecognized by Law. The very request for such documents comes in order to “show off” [*le-nafnef*] with them, in front of other citizens (GL44889/3 No. 990).

Biran suggested a postponement of the legal discussions, and a continuation of certificate distribution nevertheless (GL44889/3), and so was it. In a letter dated 4.4.1966 to a “Friend” from Kefar Rupin, Ina Pomerantz (then secretary of the IDAM) promised that while the British Mandatory Law did not recognize “Friends,” a proper section was being prepared for them in the proposal for a new Antiquities Law, which was currently under preparation (GL44889/3 No. 2685). This Law finally passed in 1978. However, the “Friends” were not mentioned in it, or in the IAA law of 1989, perhaps because by that time they were no longer considered important.

6. DETERIORATION AND CESSATION OF ACTIVITY

During the 1980s the “Friends” experienced a period of rapid deterioration in their activity. In this period their numbers dwindled to a few dozens at the most. Documentation of this deterioration is hard to find, because the documents of this period are not yet opened for research (in Israel state archive documents are closed for 30 years), or have not yet been deposited in the State Archive. Perhaps people tend to stress (and to document) more successes than failures. With the establishment of the IAA in 1989, and after forty years of archeological interest and work, the “Friends” ceased their operations.

It seems that questions revolving around insurance and responsibility for damage that might be caused by “Friends” had made an impact. In one case in the late 1980’s, a grandfather who was a “Friend” and a child from a *kibbutz* in the north of the country were killed when a cave collapsed as they were looking for antiquities (Y. Porat, interview 12.11.03; I did not find written data about this case). The IDAM was also embarrassed by the fact that some “Friends” developed the habit of collecting antiquities, as well as excavating without proper authorization. One archeologist, who asked to remain anonymous, reports that a “Friend” made an excavation at Tell Kedesh in Galilee without the consent of the IDAM, “for the sake of educating schoolchildren.” On another occasion in the 1980’s, a “Friend” reputedly became so excited, that he started a fire to weed out thorns in order to gain a better view of “the mystery of Roman Tiberias,” which resulted in a wild fire alarm. During the 1950s, in view of the hard conditions and lack of employees, collecting or even small-scale “cleaning digs” by “Friends” were not always condemned. The IDAM was aware that

some “Friends” also collected antiquities, and at least tried to stop this habit (letters in GL44866/3). On 11.1.1950 Yeivin summarized a visit he had made to Tiberias with N. Zori and N. Mardinger. The last was a “Friend”:

It was spoken with him about a complete prohibition to carry excavations; he said and stressed that he does not excavate, only collects and registers what lies on ground. Even in the cave that he wrote us about entering, he did not excavate, but collected what was lying there. I stressed again the need not to move any object which is not lying on the surface, and to register exactly the place [of each object] (GL44866/3).

Joe Shadur from Kibbutz Nirim in the Negev (interview, December 2003) remembered that there was a clear rule in the 1950s that “Friends” should not excavate. However, when the “Friends” discovered the mosaic floor of the synagogue at Nirim they could not restrain themselves and started to expose it. Often, when the IDAM learned about the existence of antiquities somewhere, a “Friend” was appointed in order to register and supervise them. Dr. E. Yannai of the IAA started his archaeological career as a “Friend” with a collection that he managed in his locality (pers. comm. 2003). Often the “Friends” did not report, (or were late in reporting) damage caused by their own settlements. Y. Porat, who started to work as a member of the IDAM in 1969, remembered the years when the “Friends” were no longer considered a prestigious group. They did not have much spare time, as most of them were working people; they were not professional archaeologists; and they did not receive sufficient financial support from the IDAM. (pers. comm., 2003). By the 1980s illicit diggings and collecting by “Friends” became unbearable in the eyes of the IDAM. The times were changing: the public obsession with antiquities and archaeology was declining in Israel, as well as the desire to volunteer. With the creation of more academic institutions and increasing demand for formal academic degrees for excavations archaeology became a more professionalized vocation.

7. OTHER VOLUNTEERS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Amateur archaeologists preceded professional archaeology and remained alongside even after the later was born. Still today amateur archaeologists remain common. The lines between amateurs and professionals are not always clear-cut, but discussion of this issue deserves a separate article; what follows here is but a tentative and brief review.

In the history of archaeology one can easily discern the period of ‘learned societies’ that spanned mainly from the second half of the 19th to the early 20th centuries CE. A few examples of such societies include the *Palestine Exploration Fund* (PEF), the *Egypt Exploration Fund* (EEF), the *Deutsche Verein zur Erforschung Palästinas* (DPV), and the *Israel Exploration Society* (IES). Lists of such societies, history pages of many of them and criteria for definition can be found in the Scholarly Societies Project presently available at www.scholarly-societies.org/archaeol_soc.html.

The histories and the activities of many of these learned societies are well documented. Such societies were usually based on voluntarily

membership; open to the public in general; and members normally paid dues. The societies' main aims are to promote a certain academic field by holding conferences, joining and promoting academic research, publishing journals, working for education of the community, etc. Many such societies were formed before the establishment of official, government-related Departments of Antiquities. Although some of their duties have been assumed by the later, many societies continue to exist and are crucial for the development and maintenance of connections between professional archaeology/state archaeology and the public.

In Jordan a voluntarily society called "Friends of Antiquities of Jordan" has been in existence since 1958. In cooperation with the authorities, universities and other bodies, it aims to protect and preserves sites and promote awareness of heritage in the community (<http://www.foa.com.jo>). Membership is free and members pay dues; hence the nature of this body is similar to that of learned societies, but dissimilar to the "Friends" in Israel. Groups of archeological volunteers exist in various countries without necessarily forming a strict "learned society." One example is the organization of Dutch volunteers that combines several earlier separate organizations (Erfgoed Nederland, <http://www.erfgoednederland.nl>). Archaeological societies exist in many countries today, e. g. India (the Indian Archaeological Society), Germany (Deutscher Archäologen Verband), Canada (the Canadian Archaeological Association, the Ontario Archaeological Society), The United Kingdom (The British Archaeological Association, founded 1843), the United States (Society for American Archaeology), and France (Société Française d'Archéologie, founded 1834). To the best of my knowledge the "Friends" in Israel are unique in that they were created by, and are affiliated with an official state agency in spite of being a voluntary body. Membership was not open to all: It was conditional on appointment by the IDAM, but no membership fees were imposed. In some societies membership is also not open to all. For example, in the Society of Antiquities of London (established 1751), fellows are elected by secret ballot. Only existing fellows can propose new ones, who must win four 'yes' to every 'no'. Candidates have to be "excelling in the knowledge of antiquities and history of this and other nations" (see www.sal.org.uk). Yet, fellows pay annual fees and are not elected by a state body. Thus, the position of the "Friends" was not similar to that usually associated with members of 'learned societies.'

It is perhaps better to compare the "Friends" in Israel with other cultural, volunteer groups that evolved at times of "national awakening," Archaeology often occupies a major part in national 'awakenings' (Anderson 1983; Smith 1991; Gellner 1983; for archaeological aspects see Shenan 1989; Kohl and Fawcett 1995), however, often there are no official and professional bodies to take care of archeological finds. One example is the period of "national awakening" in Estonia at the end of the 19th century, in which archaeological amateurs were engaged in the first general inventory of sites. Jaan Jung (himself not a professional archaeologist) created this first inventory with the help of a network of local

“correspondents,” who sent him data about ancient sites (Jung 1898; 1899; 1910). By 1896 Jung had received 428 such messages about antiquities. A second inventory of sites, carried out in the 1920s when Estonia was independent, was performed with the help of students of archaeology. A third inventory (in the 1960s) was made by professional archaeologists (T’vauri 2006:248, 259; Lang 2006:27). Similar stages of development can be seen in Israel. In both countries the national awakening and the first years of independence were marked by strong national feelings and a heightened awareness of the status of archaeology (Kletter 2006:314-319)

8. IN SUM

The “Friends” in Israel were unique in that, to the best of my knowledge, despite being a voluntarily body, it was nevertheless created by and affiliated with an official state agency. Unlike most learned societies membership was not free; it was conditional on appointment by the IDAM, and no membership fees applied. Thus, the position of the “Friends” was not similar to that of members of ‘learned societies.’ In the first two decades of Israel’s nationhood, when IDAM consisted of too few workers, the “Friends” were crucial in reporting endangered or damaged sites. “Friends” have discovered important sites and reported damage to sites that later proved to be important. A few examples include: the discovery and retracing of the course of the Islamic aqueduct to Ramla (Y. Zelinger, pers. comm. 2003); the site of the Nirim Synagogue in the Negev (Joe Shadur, interview 17.11.03; Levi 1960:77); and a Byzantine monastery near Haifa (Dothan 1951); and they also reported General Dayan’s theft of antiquities (see [picture 3](#)). However, part of this activity remains unpublished (Kletter 2004).

The Israeli “Friends” were not related to the concept of foreign volunteers who joined archaeological excavations in Israel. Before the 1960’s initiatives to encourage foreign volunteers were mostly unsuccessful due to the availability of cheap, local welfare workers who were operative during the 1950’s. The situation changed in the 1960’s, when more foreign volunteers workers came to Israel.

At its height the “Friends” numbered several hundred members. Many “Friends” were distinguished individuals and later became well-known professional archaeologists. A number of notable figures include Rafael Frankel (later of Haifa University, ancient agriculture specialist); Shmuel Avitzur (history of technology in Israel); Y. Braslevski (leader of youth tours and collector of folk tales); Mordechai Gichon (intelligence officer, later classical archaeologist, Tel Aviv University); Rehavam Ze’evi (a general, Head of the Eretz Israel Museum, later a Minister); Claire Epstein (famous for her work on the Chalcolithic period in the Golan Heights); Ya’acov Meshorer (numismatist, curator of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem); Zecharia Kallai (Professor of Historical Geography, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem); Elisha Linder (a founder of underwater archaeology in Israel); Raphael Giveon (Egyptologist, Tel Aviv University); Shmaryahu Gutman (excavator of Gamla); Ya’acov Kaplan (affiliated to Tel Aviv municipality,

excavating many sites in its area); and Sh. Avidan (commander of the Giv'ati brigade in 1948).

An important contribution the “Friends” made was the publication of the IDAM newsletter (Alon). This was the sole archaeological publication of the IDAM during its first eight years, except for some very minor site guidebooks. The newsletter set the format for the later journal *Hadasbot Archaeologiyot* (HA or “Excavations and Surveys in Israel”), which appeared in 1963 and is still published today.

The contribution of the “Friends” was important especially in the first years of modern Israeli nationhood. This being the case, it is surprising that nothing has been written about the “Friends” to date. Their existence is almost unknown outside Israel. In November 2002, the IAA decided to renew the activity of “Friends,” and about 300 applications were received by late 2003. Some members of parliament were given the status of “Friends,” in hopes that they will serve as an archaeological lobby. The role of these new volunteers is still unclear, however the connection to the wide public is vital for the IAA, and for Israeli archaeology in general. If the new volunteers will carry the old tradition with pride, in another fifty years they too will deserve a written history of their own.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in the subject began when I worked in the IAA, at a time when the renewal of the body of volunteers was considered. I was sent to locate archival material in the Israel state archive, and as a result wrote a short summary, published in Hebrew (Kletter 2004). I wish to thank the IAA, as well as the workers of the reading room at Israel State Archive, Jerusalem, for their help. The present paper is also based on material collected later in conversations with former “Friends” and archaeologists. I wish to thank Tsvika Gal, Yosef (Sefi) Porat, Ram Gophna, Y. Zelinger, Eli Yannai, Margaret Steiner, Evelyn van den Steen and the late Joe Shadur, who discussed with me several points and contributed from their time and knowledge. Hebrew documents were translated as faithfully as possible, with few (mainly stylistic) modifications, and for the sake of convenience the acronym IDAM and abbreviated “Friends” were used also in the translations of documents. Since nothing has been published so far on the “Friends” the list of references (below) is not long. I hope that following the publication of this article more data about the “Friends” may come to light.

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