

Archaeological Excavations-investigations at the Northern Ancient Harbor at Tyre - 2019

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The following summarizes the 2019 field season of the archaeological excavation and investigations of the Ancient Northern Harbour at Tyre. The full results of 2018 and 2019 field seasons will be published in Bulletin d'archéologie et d'architecture libanaises (BAAL). This project is a joint project between the University of Perpignan – CRESEM/ARESMAR - France, and DGA - Lebanon and the team comprised both Lebanese and French members.

The Excavation at the northern harbour at Tyre generously funded by the Honor Frost Foundation consisted of 13 divers including professional maritime archaeologists, and students. This Project location is at the northern side of Tyre, on the old submerged breakwater. With a length of about 80 m and a constant width of 12.7 m, this breakwater consisted of large headers laid across. During the 2019 season, the team worked at the inner area of the pier-tip, where the north wall and the east “closing wall” meet. A trench just over 4.5 m thick, and about 11 m wide was excavated into the sediment. The work took place from September 8 to October 6, 2019. With a team reinforced by experienced divers, the project allowed mainly Lebanese and some French students to train and familiarize themselves with the use of the underwater dredging machine, lifting bags, and all the equipment for measuring and surveying etc. A significant number of dives were carried out totalling 248 dives and 303 hours of underwater work.

The results of the 2019 field season are significant: new quarrying marks have been noted and a seventh course of the jetty has been confirmed i.e. over 4 meters of the wall's façade was exposed yet, due to a very consuming excavation work, neither base of the wall or the bedrock were reached. Numerous stones were present over the entire area of the excavation trench in the fill between the walls of the jetty, mixed in bulk with sediment. These stones, essentially are of the same nature as the “ramleh” blocks that constituted the mole, are in all shapes and sizes; some blocks are well cut and even bear marks. Sediment samples were analyzed near where the ceramics were collected in lower levels of the excavation trench to perceive and confirm that the level is intact. The ceramics are from the mid 7th century to the mid 8th century BC. So far, at least 7 courses constituting the North wall of the mole have been identified, but we cannot so far determine for certain, either the presence of a deeper course or the exact nature of the substrate on which the blocks rest. A detailed publication of the recent excavations will be published at the DGA publication (BAAL).

Presently, we are aiming to strategize operations to perceive the substrate on which the walls are built upon, and investigate a large structure found adjacent to the present mole and could have a direct relationship with it. Pursuing of the mole's excavation and the study of the new structure will shed light on its nature and would allow a better understanding of the history of the ancient port of Tyre.

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