

**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY**

The technique of taking photographs from an aircraft high above ground. Aerial photography is used in archaeology to find subtle patterns in the growth of vegetation that may indicate the existence of ruins below ground.

AES GRAVE

Circular and heavy early bronze coinage of Rome and Italy.

AES RUDE

Shapeless lump of bronze used as currency in Italy before the appearance of coins.

AES SIGNATUM

Often applied to the metal “bricks” issued by the Roman mint in antiquity, but properly applying to any aes marked with a design (see **TYPE**).

AGRAPHA

A saying of Jesus Christ not recorded in the four canonical Gospels, e.g., Acts 20.35.

AIRLIFT

A method of removing sediments under water.

ALABASTRON

Small jar for perfume or ointment, usually with narrow mouth and no handles.

AMANUENSIS

A person employed to take dictation or copy manuscripts.

AMORITES

A Semitic people who rose to power in areas of Mesopotamia and Syria around 2000 BC.

AMURRU

(Egyptian term.) Region of the Ammorites.

ANTITHESIS

The second idea in a Hegelian dialectic that opposes the **THESIS** and is “resolved” in a **SYNTHESIS**.

APOCALYPSE

Lit.: unveiling, revelation. Usually referring to the unveiling of Christ in the Second Coming; often used to refer to any cataclysmic event or to a literary work about such an event.

APOCALYPTIC

Adj.: Cataclysmic, pertaining to the Second Coming of Christ or some other world shaking event brought about in divine judgment.

APOCALYPTICISM

A theological perspective that includes belief in a cataclysmic resolution of what is wrong with the world.

APOCRYPHA

(1) Books written in biblical times and included in the Roman Catholic Bible, but not considered inspired. (2) Books written in biblical times or shortly thereafter, and on biblical themes, but not deemed worthy of inclusion in the Bible.

APODYTERIUM

The dressing room of a Roman bathhouse.

AQUEDUCT

An elevated conduit trough, built to carry water from springs in the countryside to the city.

ARABIA DESERTA

Classical antiquity’s designation for the desert region of northern Arabia.

ARABIA FELIX

Classical antiquity’s designation for the better watered southern region of Arabia.

ARABIA PETRAEA

Classical antiquity’s designation for the rocky region of northwestern Arabia that included the Sinai and present-day Jordan.

ARCHAEOLOGY

(Alt. spelling Archeology) Archaeology can be described as the “past tense of cultural anthropology” (Renfrew). It is the study of mankind by the careful recovery of artifacts and other material remains of antiquity.

ARCHELAUS, ETHNARCH OF JUDEA

Son of Herod the Great by Malthace, the Samaritan. Fear of Archelaus kept Joseph and Mary from resettling in Judea upon their return from Egypt.

ARCHITRAVE

Main beam resting directly upon multiple columns.

ARCOSOLIUM

Inside a tomb, the arched recess for a coffin or body.

AS

A bronze Roman coin originally corresponding in weight to the pound.

AUREUS

Roman gold coin and monetary unit from Caesar to Constantine.

AUTOGRAPH

The manuscript actually penned by the author or his **AMANUENSIS**.

Glossary



BACTRIAN CAMEL

Camelus bactrianus, is the two-humped camel of Central Asia, believed to be the type domesticated before the dromedary.

BAR-TWISTED

A type of jewelry element made by twisting a thin gold bar.

BASTINADO

A wooden torture instrument used to beat the soles of the feet.

BEDDING TRENCH

A trench used as the base for vertical posts.

BIFACE

Stone tool, such as an axe head, made by flaking material from both sides or faces of the raw stone. See: Celt.

BIGATUS

A coin upon which appears the design of a two-horse chariot.

BISQUEWARE

Fired but unglazed clay vessel.

CADUCEUS

Also CADUCEUM. A wand entwined by two serpents and belonging Mercury. An emblem of peace.

CALDARIUM

The hot room in a Roman bathhouse.

CANONICAL

Part of an officially accepted or endorsed collection—as are any of the 66 books of the Bible.

CANOPIC VESSELS

Large jars in which are placed the viscera of a mummy.

CANTING TYPE or SYMBOL

A design or symbol incorporating a pun in order to designate the person or state to which it refers.

CARBON 14

See radiocarbon dating.

CARNIX SERARUM

Roman official in charge of execution.

CARTONNAGE

Used papyri shaped and glued into mummy cases.

CARTOUCHE

The oval surrounding hieroglyphic royal names.

CELADON

A type of earthenware characterized by a translucent blue-green glaze.

CELT

A biface used as an axe.

CENACLE (from *cenaculum* = top story)

The historic church building maintained on the site of the upper room referred to in Acts 1.

CLASSICAL CIVILIZATION

Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations between roughly 600 B.C. and A.D. 300, in which many of the political, philosophical, and artistic traditions of Western civilization began.

COFFERDAM

A wall constructed to isolate a submerged site.

COPTIC

Hybrid Egyptian-Greek language used in Egypt in the early Christian era. Also, the native Christian culture of Egypt and Ethiopia.

CORBELING

Successive courses of masonry in which each course extends farther out from the vertical of the wall than the course below. Corbeling can span a narrow space with a false arch.

COUNTERMARK

A mark added to a coin after minting.

CRUSADERS

Christian nobles, soldiers, and adventurers from Western Europe who invaded the Holy Land during the Middle Ages to rescue the Tomb of Christ from Moslem rule.

CUNEIFORM

An ancient system of writing, using reeds to make patterns of triangular-shaped marks in soft clay tablets.

CYCLOPEAN

Built of gigantic stones.

DAMPING OUT

Humidifying ancient papyri in the restoration process.

DEMIURGE

An emanation from God; a lesser, created god.

DENARIUS

Silver coin originally equal to ten asses.

DEUS EX MACHINA

Lat.: *god out of the machine*. A phrase describing a solution as conveniently appearing out of nowhere as the gods did from the theater machines in ancient dramas.



DIALECTIC

A way of thinking or arguing that involves opposing ideas and their resolution.

DRACHM

A division of the stater, usually one half, sometimes one third.

DROMEDARY

Camelus dromedarius, is the one-humped camel, the long-legged “ship of the desert” employed in the Sahara and Near East.

DROMOS

A long corridor cut into a hillside to form the approach to an underground tomb.

DUPONDIUS

Coin equivalent to two asses.

ELECTRUM

Alloy of gold or silver with a silver content of more than 20%.

ENTABLATURE

Horizontal structure resting upon columns and comprised of the architrave, frieze and cornice.

EPIGRAPHY

The study of inscriptions, particularly those inscribed in stone and marble.

ESPLANADE

A flat, open pavement as in a courtyard.

ESTRANGELO

A Syriac alphabet used from approximately the first to fourth centuries AD.

EXCAVATION

The process of digging up an archaeological site to discover what it contains.

EXCRETION TEXT

Names of enemies or their cities written on pottery for the voodoo-like ritual of smashing the vessel in the mystical pursuit of the enemies’ destruction.

EXERGUE

Space on the reverse of a coin, below the design, where the date a mint mark appears.

FABLE

A fictitious tale, often intended to instill some wise principle.

FABRIC

In numismatics, the external shape and appearance of a coin determined by the minting mechanism as opposed to the design artist.

FAIENCE

Colorfully glazed pottery.

FELLAH, pl. Fellaheen

Peasant farmer in Egypt.

FIBULA

Highly ornamented, safety pin-like, metal clasps.

FIELD

In numismatics, the surface of a coin within the border, but not occupied by the design.

FLAGELLUM

Short-handled whip of thongs.

FLAN or BLANK

Piece of metal intended to be made into a coin by having a design impressed upon it.

FORTIFICATIONS

Walls, towers, fortresses, or other structures designed to protect a community and make it easier to defend if attacked.

FOUNDATION

A structure of stones, built below ground level, to support the weight of a wall or a building which is built on top of it.

FRIEZE

The often ornamented horizontal structure resting upon the architrave and beneath the cornice of an entablature.

FRIGIDARIUM

The cool room in a Roman bathhouse.

GENIZA (Genizah)

Synagogue lumber room or closet, sometimes serving as the temporary repository of worn out scrolls or other unusable sacred materials.

GNOSTIC

A belief system in which special knowledge is the key to salvation.

GORGON

The snake-wreathed head of Medusa purported to have the power of turning humans to stone.

GOSPEL

(1) Proclamation of good news; (2) a literary document setting forth the primary acts of Jesus Christ and/or his primary teachings; (3) one of the four canonical gospels: *Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*.

GREENWARE

Clay vessel before firing.

GREYWACKE (see SCHIST)

Glossary



HASMONEAN

Name of the priestly-political dynasty of Jewish rulers in Palestine which lasted from 134 BC until the Roman conquest in 63 BC. Named for Asamonaeus, the great grandfather of Mattathias, they were all

successors of John Hyrcanus. Herod claimed right to the kingship by virtue of descent from the Hasmoneans.

HATTUSAS

The Hittite capital, now Boghazköy in central Turkey.

HEGEL, GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH

(1770-1831) German philosopher who developed a dialectical logic that combines **THESIS** and **ANTITHESIS** to produce a **SYNTHESIS**.

HELIACAL RISING

Immediately pre-sunrise appearance of a heavenly body above the horizon.

HIERATIC

Cursive Egyptian script used for writing on papyrus.

HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

A system of writing first used in ancient Egypt, in which simple pictures represent ideas, words, or sounds.

HOLY VERNICLE

St. Veronica's "napkin" with which she supposedly wiped Christ's brow as he struggled up the Via Dolorosa, and upon which an imprint of Christ's face magically appeared.

HYPOCAUST SYSTEM

System of under floor heating used in hot rooms of Roman baths.

HYPOGEUM

An underground chamber, such as a burial chamber.

INSCRIPTION

A piece of written information, usually carved into some solid material, such as wood, metal, or stone.

INSHUSHINAK

Patron deity of Elamite Susa.

INSULA

- (1) A walled enclosure.
- (2) A distinct group of private houses.
- (3) An edifice surrounded by a free space.

IPSISSIMA VERBA JESU

Jesus' very own words.

KEEL

The primary beam that runs lengthwise along the bottom of a boat's hull, "the spine" to which the hull's ribs attach.

KERYGMA

Proclamation; pertaining more to the proclamation than to the content of the Gospel.

KHIRBET

(Arabic) Ruin.

KOUSTODIA

A Roman guard consisting of 4 to 16 men.

LEECHCRAFT

Antiquated term for medical science.

LEECHDOM

A medicine or remedy.

LEGEND

A wonderful story passed down by generations, but not verifiable by historical record. Compare **MYTH** and **FABLE**.

LEVANT

The geographical area lying between Egypt and Mesopotamia, that consists today primarily of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel.

LMLK JARS

Four-handled pottery storage jars used for the collection of taxes-in-kind, and probably made by the royal potter.

LOCULUS (-i)

Niche for holding a body, coffin or **OSSUARY** in a tomb.

LOCUS (-i)

A particular three-dimensional feature in an archaeological dig.

LOGOGRAM

Sumerian sign/character used to denote a single word or idea.

MAGNETOMETER SURVEY

A method of scanning below ground surface for magnetic anomalies indicating pottery concentrations.

MAHAYUGA

Hindu eon or cycle of time lasting hundreds of thousands of years.

MANDYLION

A sacred cloth of Edessa that disappeared from Constantinople in AD 1204.



MANUSCRIPT

A handwritten document.

MASORETIC TEXT

The traditional version of the Hebrew Old Testament, predated only by Qumran texts.

MASTABA

(Arabic for “bench.”) Type of large Egyptian tomb made of mud bricks. It is flat-topped with sloping sides.

MESHWESH

A tribal people from the coast of Libya.

METATHESIS

Accidental transposition of letters, sounds or syllables within a word, or of words within a line.

METOPE

A decorated rectangular panel between the beam ends of a frieze on a Greek temple. The term is also used to indicate sectors of decoration found on certain pottery vases.

MIDDEN

A garbage heap or accumulation.

MIDRASH

Medieval Rabbinic commentaries.

MIHRAB

A niche or small room in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca.

MOSAIC

A design or decoration, usually quite large, covering the ceiling, walls, or floors of a building and made with large numbers of small colored stone, glass, brick or frit cubes, set in a cementing material.

MUMMIFY

To prepare a corpse for burial so that it will not decompose. In ancient Egypt this was concluded by wrapping the body in strips of linen.

MUTATIO

According to John C. H. Laughlin (see BAR 9309, p. 57), this word is used for the swimming pool in a Roman bathhouse.

MYRRHOPHORES

Ointment bearers, as in the women who went to Christ’s tomb to anoint his body.

MYTH (Gk. μῦθος)

(1) A legendary **FABLE** or story with little or no connection to real history, often involving magical events.

(2) A non-historical story intended to convey true ideas, usually of a religious nature.

MYTHOLOGY

(1) The collective body of myths belonging to a culture.

(2) They study of myths.

NEGEV

The hilly desert south of Judea.

NOMARCH

Ruler of an Egyptian nome.

NOME

A province of ancient Egypt.

OBVERSE

Side of the coin that received its design from the lower die.

ODEON

Small theater or assembly hall.

ONOMASTICA

(Gk. ὀνομαστικός) The set of proper names in a given language or subject.

ORTHOGRAPHY

Study of the correct spelling of words.

OSTRACA

Inscribed potsherds once used as ballots in the Athenian vote on banishment or ostracism.

OSSUARY

A stone box used in antiquity by Middle-Easterners for the “second burial” of a loved-one’s bones after the soft tissues of the body had disintegrated in the tomb.

OSTRICHICON

Inscribed ostrich shell, usually with Arabic.

PALAESTRA

Open area for training or exercise.

PALEOGRAPHY

Study of ancient writing, particularly of the form and slant of the letters, for the purpose of deciphering, dating and placing ancient documents, ostraca, graffiti and other inscriptions. Compare **EPIGRAPHY**.

PALIMPSEST

(From Gk. παλιψεστος, “rubbed smooth again.”) A papyrus or parchment manuscript upon which an incompletely erased earlier writing can be detected.

PAPYROLOGY

The study of papyrus manuscripts; also the study of all ancient texts written on soft materials (and ostraca) as opposed to inscriptions in stone. See: Epigraphy.

Glossary



PARCHMENT

Writing surface made from animal skin.

PATERAE

A metal drinking cup with a handle, and shaped not unlike a modern dry-measure measuring cup.

PATIBULUM

Horizontal beam of a cross.

PATINA

The thin layer of corrosion (chemical alteration by natural elements) on the surface of ancient objects.

PILASTER

A square pillar partly embedded in a wall.

PIRIFORM

Having the shape of a pear.

PIRKA

Uncoursed and unworked fieldstones laid with mud mortar.

PITHOS

Large, wide-mouthed earthenware jar for storing liquids or grain. Sometimes used to bury dead.

POTSHERDS

The broken fragments of pottery, normally found in large numbers on archaeological sites.

PREHISTORIC

From a period of human history before the appearance of written records.

PRENOMEN (pl. Prenomina)

Name given a pharaoh upon coronation.

PROPYLAEUM

Vestibule or entryway at the front of a building.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

A collection of Jewish/Christian religious literature dating from c. 200 BC to AD 200.

PYLON

(Gk. for gate) The twin towers flanking the entrance to an Egyptian temple.

PYRAMIDION

Capstone placed at the apex of a pyramid.

PYXIS

A cosmetic container, often lidded.

QUADRANS

Coin equivalent to one fourth of an as.

QUADRIGATUS

Coin bearing the symbol of a four-horse chariot.

QUINARIUS

Silver coin originally equal to 5 asses or half a denarius.

QUIRE

In bookmaking, a section of sequential pages usually formed by folding and trimming.

RADIOCARBON DATING

A method of dating ancient objects by measuring the amount of radioactive carbon, or carbon 14, that remains in a once-living material, such as wood or leather.

RE

Egyptian sun-god.

RECTO

Front or main side of a document, or right-hand page of a book. (Cf. verso.)

RELIEF

A picture in which the design (figures, objects, etc.) is carved into a flat surface, such as a wall.

REREDOS

(1) A wall or screen behind a church altar or, (2) an open hearth.

REVERSE

In numismatics, the side of a coin impressed by the upper die. In paleography, the side of a tablet or document upon which the writing follows after that on the obverse.

REVTMENT

Stone facing shoring up an embankment.

ROOFCOMB

A facade added to the front or middle of a roof.

SCHIST (also Greywacke)

Gray-black, fine-grained stone used in Egyptian sculpture.

SEALS

Small carved objects, usually of stone, used in ancient times to stamp a personal mark or design of the materials used to fasten ancient writings.

SEDILE

Small seat attached to the front of a cross.

SEMI-ENGAGED COLUMN

Column in a wall face serving as decoration, not support, as in Petra facades.

SEMIS

Coin equivalent to one half of an **AS**.



SEPTUAGINT (abbr. LXX)

Greek translation of the Old Testament, produced in the 3rd century BC and in common use in the time of Christ. (From Latin for seventy, referring to the traditional number of translators.)

SEQUENCE DATING

Method of determining the order in which different versions of a certain object were made or used over as long span of time.

SERRATUS

Coin with serrated or notched edges.

SESTERTIUS

Silver coin equivalent to one fourth a denarius, or a brass coin of Augustus equivalent to 4 asses.

SEXTANS

Coin equivalent to one sixth of an as.

SHEPHELAH

The region of ancient Israel that divided the coastal plain of Philistia from the central hill region of Judah.

SHEPHELAH

The low-foothill country of southern Israel lying between the coast and the Judean mountains.

SILLYBOS (or sittybos, pl. sillyboi)

The tag glued to a literary scroll and upon which the title and author of the scroll was recorded.

SINDONOLOGIST

Someone who studies the Shroud (Gk. *shroud*) of Turin.

SITE

A particular place of interest to archaeologists, usually because it was used or inhabited by people in the distant past.

SONAR

A device for locating objects under water, similar to radar but using sound waves instead of an electronic beam.

SONDA

(Yugoslav) An excavation unit.

SPHINX

A mythical beast of the ancient world, usually having the body of a lion and the head of a man. In ancient Egypt, many large statues of sphinxes were erected, the most famous of which is several stories high.

SPILL

A splinter, or roll of paper used to light a lamp or pipe.

STATER

The unit coin in any monetary system.

STELE (pl. Stela)

An "upright stone," usually with an inscription or sculpture in relief.

STICHOMETRY

The division of a text into lines of fixed length or the calculating of the average number of letters per such line.

STRATA

Layers of material deposited in a place where people have lived a long time.

STRIP-TWISTED

Method of twisting golden strips.

STYLOBATE

The pavement or foundation upon which columns stand.

SUPPEDANEUM

Foot support attached to a cross.

SURVEY

In archaeology, the process of thoroughly examining a site and its surrounding countryside before beginning to excavate.

SYMBOL

An additional and subsidiary type on a coin. (See: type.)

SYNTHESIS

The resolution of the **THESIS** and **ANTITHESIS** in a Hegelian **DIALECTIC**.

TEL (Arabic: "Tell")

A gently sloping, flat-topped mound composed of the ruins and rubbish of successive ancient settlements.

TEMENOS

(From Gk. *temnein*.) Sacred precinct.

TEPIDARIUM

The tepid room in a Roman Bathhouse.

TERMINUS POST QUEM

The date after which an event must have occurred.

TETRASTYLE

Having four columns or pillars as in a tetrastyle facade.

THESIS

The beginning idea in a Hegelian dialectic, that is opposed by an **ANTITHESIS**.

TITULUS

Wooden placard upon which was written the name of the crucifixion victim and the charge against him.

Glossary



TOMB

An elaborate grave, often a permanent structure built in advance and intended for a whole family.

TRENCH

A long, narrow and deep ditch used to prepare foundations for walls and buildings or to partially excavate an archaeology site.

TRESSIS

Coin equivalent to three asses.

TUMULUS (pl. Tumuli)

Burial mound.

TYPE

In numismatics, the primary design on a coin.

UDRU

Akkadian term for the Bactrian camel. Possibly related to the suffix “ustra,” as in Zarathustra.

UNCIA

One twelfth of an **AS**.

URSCHRIFT

Original writing or version.

VARNISH

A natural accretion of minerals, together with organic matter metabolized by bacterial action, on the surface of ancient objects.

VEIL OF THE TEMPLE

The veil of the Jerusalem Temple separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. The Mishnah, *Shekalim* 7.5, describes the veil as 40 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and a handbreadth thick.

VERSO

Reverse or secondary side of a document, or left-hand page of a book. (Cf. recto.)

VICTORIATUS

Silver coin equivalent to 3/4 of a denarius.

VOLUTE

Spiral ornament often employed in column capitals.

WALL-ROOT

A foundation or section of wall below ground level.

WEST SEMITIC

The language group that includes Hebrew, Canaanite and Ugaritic.

WITCH BOTTLE

A narrow-necked glass or earthenware bottle used to hold items expected to work as a talisman.

WORLDVIEW

A person’s basic set of ideas that dictates his or her approach to life and understanding of the universe.

ZAMBEELS

Baskets made from old tires and used for clearing excavation debris.

ZIGGURAT

(“pinnacle”) A pyramid-like stepped tower, used in ancient Mesopotamia for religious worship.

ZOOMORPHIC

Having the shape of an animal.