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Obituary

IN MEMORY OF DANIEL LADIRAY

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Daniel Ladiray passed away in November 2015 nearly three years after the death of Jean Perrot. Daniel was one of the most imaginative personalities at the French center of research in Israel. He was, for almost three decades, a central character in all the scientific and social activities of the French center. He was an artist, field surveyor, draftsman and archaeologist who devoted nearly 40 years of his life to archeology and archeological records in Israel and Iran. He was well known not only to archaeologists and researchers who were in direct contact with the “French delegation” that later became “the French Research Center in Jerusalem”, but almost to all researchers of prehistory in Israel.

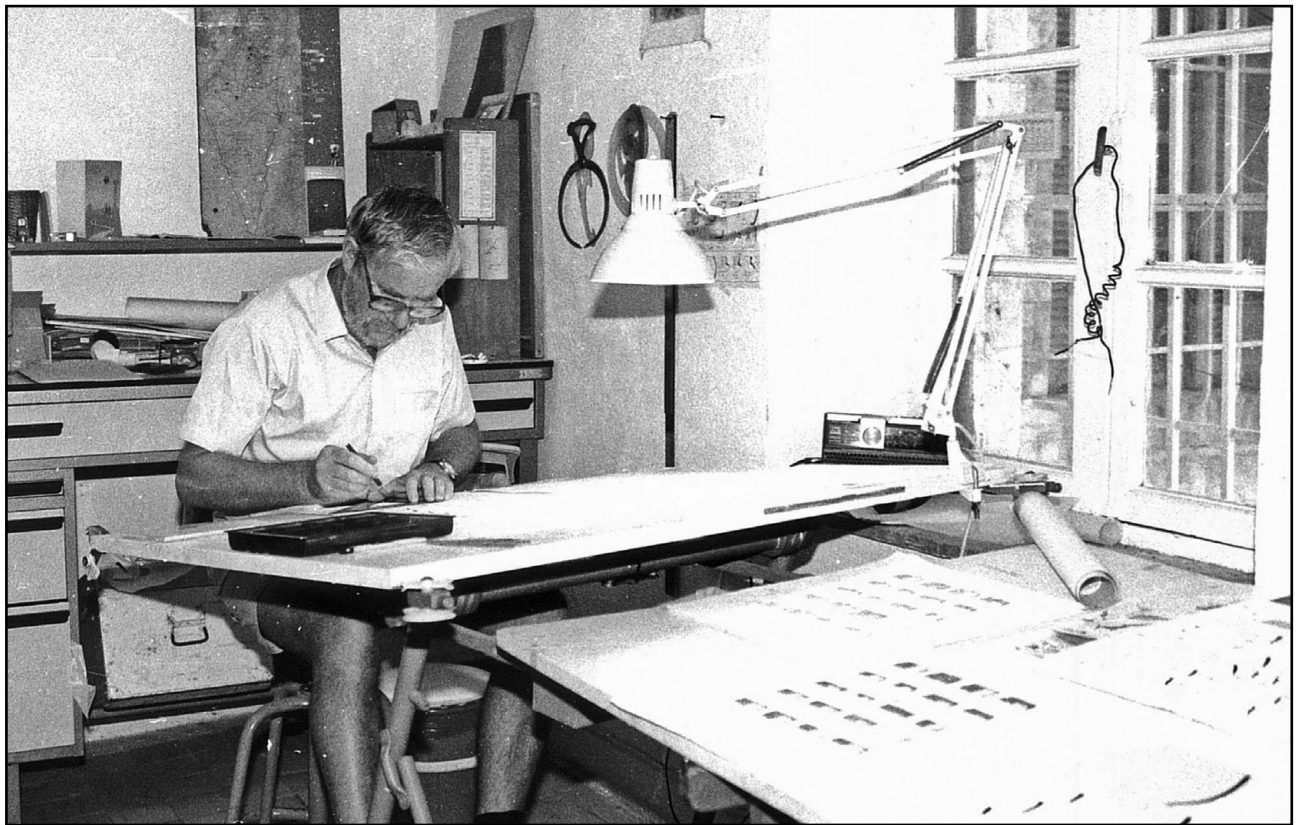
My acquaintance with Daniel began in the mid-eighties of the last century directly after I graduated in prehistoric archaeology and started to work at the French center for the publication of the Chalcolithic excavations in Beer Sheva. I got to know him very well and our tightened relationship continued until his retirement in 1997. We spent many days together in the laboratories of the French delegation in Emmaus monastery – the monumental building north of Highway 1, near the Latrun junction.

He had a colorful personality, seen especially his contradictions. For example, on one hand he adored the peace of the countryside, on the other he could not live without the city life. This is reflected also in his personal behavior; he wanted to preserve the “French” lifestyle but preferred the Oriental style, especially the Jerusalem combination, where he lived and raised his family until a few years ago. I kept in touch with him long after this retirement but, unfortunately, this stopped after his move to Bat-Yam.

During 40 years of his life in Israel, Daniel was devoted to archaeology and archaeological documentation. His abilities found expression in artifact drawing and draftsmanship of complex plans, all done through the eyes of a true artist. With his artistic sense and architectural vision, Daniel was able to so vividly supplement the meager archaeological remains that his colleagues added his name to their publications in recognition of his work and ability to bring archaeological artefacts to life by visualizing them as living three-dimensional creations; all this years before digitized graphic imaging that enables 3-D reconstructions. Daniel was inseparable from the social landscape of Emmaus, always sitting in front of a giant drawing table, a mechanical pencil lodged atop his ear, a cigarette in his mouth and a handy drink nearby. You were always greeted by a timid smile and an invitation for a drink, followed by a series of questions revolving around the same subjects: current events, art and archaeology, all expressed in excellent Hebrew.

Daniel was born in 1923 to a modest family in Normandy, France, where he was educated and, at an early age found himself attracted to art and drawing. After finishing high school he moved to Paris where, while working at various odd jobs, he continued his studies at the famed Estienne College. Leaving Paris after several years, Daniel went to the small village of Drôme where he continued to draw and do editorial work for publishers in Paris. Daniel loved picturesque Drôme and dreamed of returning there for his retirement.

Daniel's ties to the world of archaeology began in 1963 when he responded to a small advertisement posted by Jean Perrot, who was seeking a draftsman and artefact illustrator for his excavation at Munhata in the Jordan valley. A short time after joining Perrot, and in light of his excellent work, Daniel received a formal position as professional surveyor and illustrator at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and became part of the team headed by Jean Perrot at Jerusalem. He moved to live in Jerusalem and stayed there until relocating to assisted living a few years



ago. On the day of his retirement in 1997, he received the prestigious award for his work and supportive contribution to archaeological research.

Daniel was involved as a surveyor and illustrator in numerous excavations that the French team directed or collaborated with such as at 'Eynan, Beisamoun, the Hayonim cave and terrace, Nahal Gerar, Netiv Hagdud, Tel Yarmuth and others. In addition, he was responsible for preparation of illustrative material for the publications of the French center and not surprisingly, together with Jean Perrot, he was credited as one of the authors publishing the Chalcolithic burials from Ben Shemen and the interments at 'Eynan.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important chapters in Daniel's professional career is connected to the excavations of the French expedition in the palace of Darius at Susa in Iran. He joined the team in 1969 and took part in almost all the excavation seasons until the Islamic revolution in 1980. Daniel was an active partner in the excavations, the processing of the finds and in the "Publications of the French Expedition of Iran" (DAFI) that saw light in several volumes.

In addition to his diverse activities, we should also remember Daniel's contribution to teaching aspiring young artists who came to him from all over the world to learn the art of archaeological illustration. With great patience and charm, Daniel instilled the art of archaeological drawing, deftly escorting his students through theory and practice until they became fully masterful themselves. Several of them he recommended as illustrators for other excavation teams in France and the Levant. Some of the best-known flint drawers in Israel studied under Daniel and owe him their professionalism.

Daniel was a humble man, a lover of peace and always an artist at heart. He often had a different perspective on material culture objects from many of his colleagues. This is evident in many of his creations which were published in several books and scientific periodicals, gaining wide recognition and acclaim. Daniel has passed away, as do many of our own memories, yet his creations will remain as an enduring monument to an artist who came but for a short visit, fell in love and stayed.

May his memory be eternally with us...