

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is a recommendation letter for Mr. Richard HOLMGREN, which specifies his qualities as an archaeologist and a scholar. This letter may also be used in support of his applications for the doctoral program, or for education-supporting grant. It is with a particular pleasure that I am writing this letter. I know Mr. Holmgren since 1998, through our collaboration and contact, and I am thus able to say a definite word about him.

Mr. Holmgren has been participating in the Finnish Jabal Haroun Project (FJHP) since 1998, as a senior member of the archaeological staff and as an architect and draftsman. The Finnish Jabal Haroun Project is a comprehensive archaeological investigation, which is concerned with the excavation, conservation and protection of the site of the Byzantine monastic/pilgrimage centre dedicated to St. Aaron. The site is located near the ancient city of Petra in southern Jordan, and it includes the monastery dated to the 5th through the early 8th century AD., as well as some earlier remains, including a monumental structure dated to the Nabataean-Roman period (ca 1st-3rd century AD).

Before mentioning his specific qualities let me state that Mr. Holmgren is definitely one of the best professional field archaeologists that I have encountered during more than 20 years of my career in archaeology. He possesses two fundamental qualities which make a good archaeologist - knowledge and intuition. He obtained the first quality through extensive readings, travels and educational process. As for the intuition, Mr. Holmgren has refined it through his extensive fieldwork experience. During our joint participation in the FJHP, I was able to note on many occasions how Mr. Holmgren was able to deal with difficult fieldwork problems: from correct stratigraphic analysis through insightful observations on uncovered architecture and historical phasing to solving practical problems at the site. There is little doubt that the continuing success of the FJHP is also due to the participation of Mr. Holmgren in this project.

During his FJHP experience Mr. Holmgren has been charged with the supervision of several large excavation units. His duties included not only the routine supervision of work in progress but also training of young archaeology students, carrying out full documentation of the trench, been always and the final analysis of the fieldwork results. Due to his experience and intuition, he was able to accomplish these duties most successfully. I am particularly appreciative of his help in the overall assessment of the excavated units and the reconstruction of the history of the site as a whole. Not only, Mr. Holmgren possesses a fine eye for significant detail but he is extremely skilful in seeing a larger perspective of an archaeological fieldwork, i.e., he is capable of visualizing and verbalizing the phases of the history of the entire site, as based on the available evidence, general knowledge and common sense. This ability to go from a detailed analysis to a realistic and meaningful synthesis of data in archaeology is definitely the strongest point of Mr. Holmgren's experience in archaeology.

In addition to his supervisory duties, Mr. Holmgren is also involved in drawing architectural plans and artefacts. Although the FJHP utilizes a fully electronic recording system and a computerized database, conventional, large-scale drawings of top-plans and sections of excavated entities are integral parts of the overall recording. Again, it is necessary to point out that thanks to his exceptional skills, the documentation produced by Mr. Holmgren is of the highest quality. He possesses an excellent three-dimensional visualization of the architectural entities uncovered at the site, and his devotion to detail makes his artefact drawings realistic and useful in further analysis.

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It would have been an incomplete recommendation letter without mentioning the extensive knowledge that Mr. Holmgren possesses. In addition to his professional interests, which concentrate around the archaeology and history of the Mediterranean during the Classical period, he is equally widely read in other aspects of archaeology, ancient and modern cultures, and time-periods. Mr. Holmgren is well acquainted with theory and practical issues in cultural anthropology, and he is knowledgeable in human geography, osteology, history of religion and other natural sciences. Doubtless, he is able to quickly absorb knowledge and then properly utilize it in right direction. I am acquainted with several articles published by Mr. Holmgren in scholarly periodicals. These articles concerned his own excavation project dealing with Byzantine monasteries at the Lisan Peninsula in Jordan. Their articles were of very high scholarly quality; characterized by the depth of knowledge, insightful analysis and judicious synthesis.

Finally, I should comment on the social skills of Mr. Holmgren. He is an extremely easy-going, friendly, cheerful and helpful person. These qualities are particularly important during archaeological fieldwork conducted in a foreign country, within different cultural parameters and in difficult living conditions. Mr. Holmgren is not only a substantial asset for any archaeological project but also a person that can be depended upon.

Concluding, I should like to wholeheartedly recommend Richard Holmgren for any educational or research institution and to support his application for any kind of support which will enhance his further research and advancement in archaeology. There is no doubt in my mind that any investment in Mr. Holmgren's career is fully justified and worth it.

Please feel free to contact me for any further information.

Sincerely,

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