

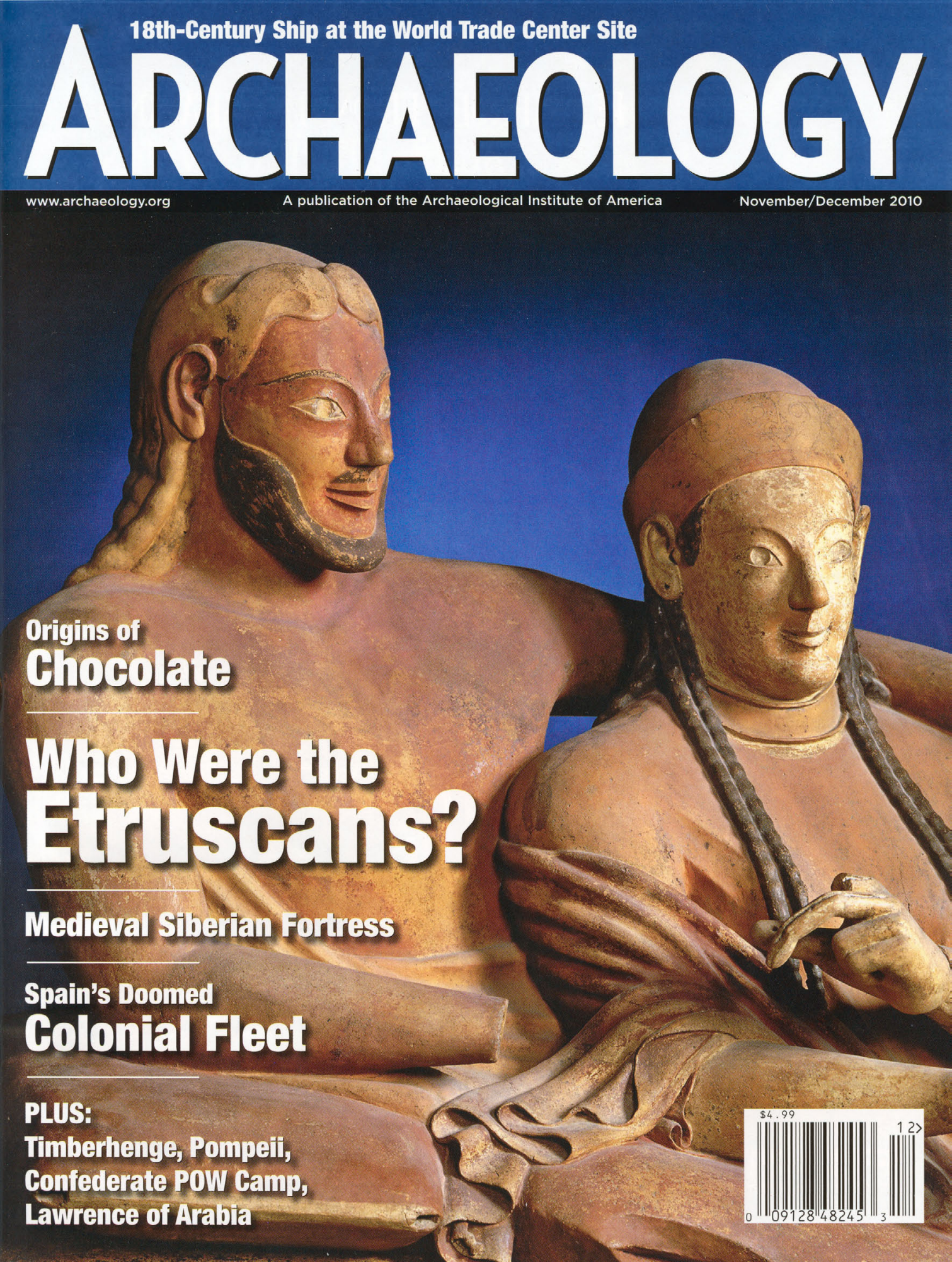
18th-Century Ship at the World Trade Center Site

# ARCHAEOLOGY

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November/December 2010



Origins of  
**Chocolate**

Who Were the  
**Etruscans?**

Medieval Siberian Fortress

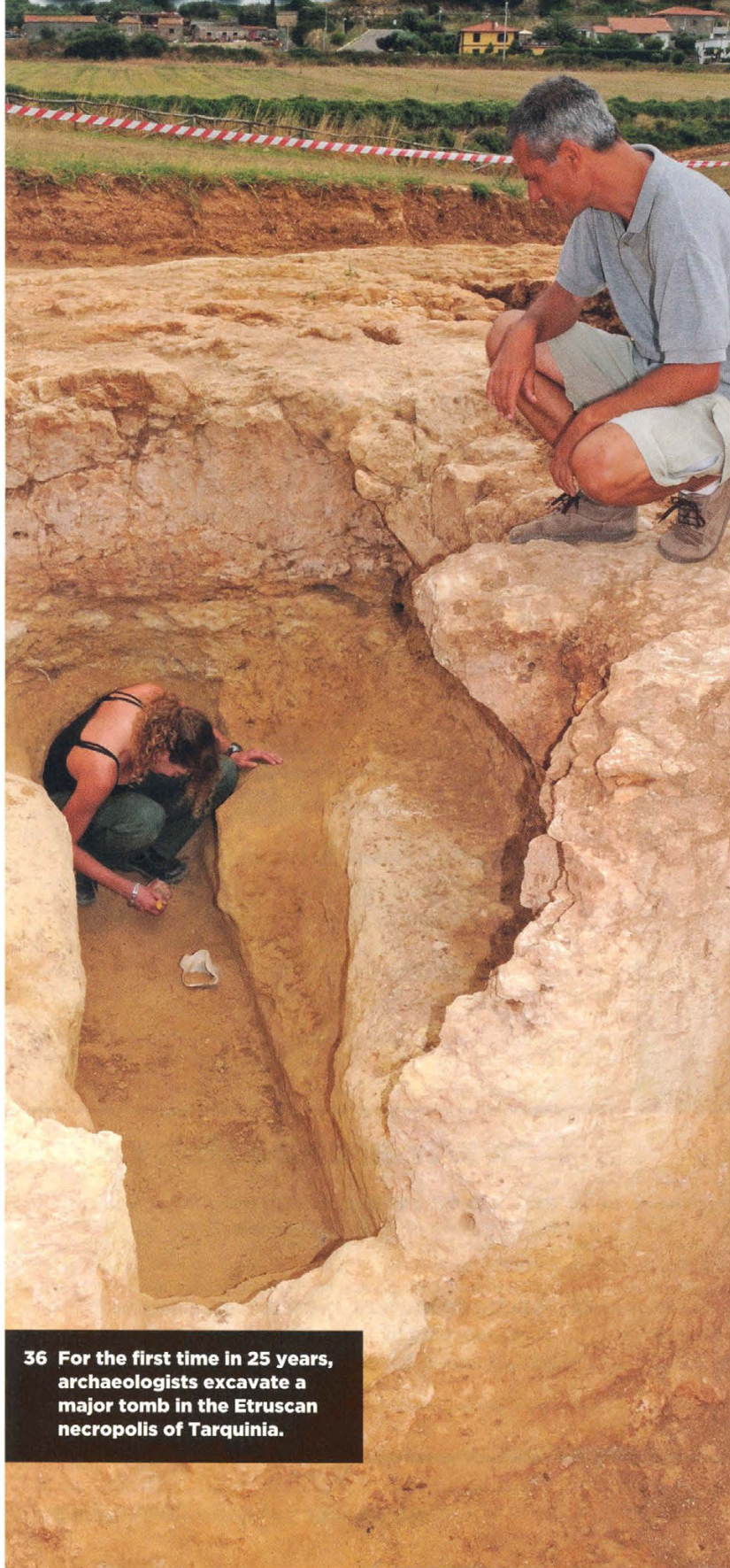
Spain's Doomed  
**Colonial Fleet**

**PLUS:**  
Timberhenge, Pompeii,  
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Lawrence of Arabia





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# Education and Preservation at Umm el-Jimal

An AIA Site Preservation Grant supports an innovative project in Jordan

ULTIMATELY, THE LONG-TERM PRESERVATION of archaeological heritage can be achieved only with the involvement of modern local communities. If people are aware of the historical and economic significance of ancient sites, they will be more willing to invest in their care and protection. This principle is now being put to use at Umm el-Jimal in northeastern Jordan.

Umm el-Jimal is an exceptional example of a prosperous agricultural town on the frontier of the successive Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic empires. Its ruins include more than 150 structures (some intact for up to six stories), a Roman city wall and *praetorium* (an official governor's residence), and a remarkable system of water channels and reservoirs that extend up to three miles into the surrounding countryside. The site also has a wealth of inscriptions in Nabataean, Greek, Latin, and Arabic. Today, a modern village inhabited by about 6,000 MESA'ID Bedouin has grown in and around the ancient site.

Although development of Umm el-Jimal as a destination is a major component in plans by Jordan's Department of Antiquities and Min-



At Umm el-Jimal, an ancient agricultural town in Jordan, mangers in House 119 have been restored and will be used as the site's museum. Plans call for Umm el-Jimal to be developed into a tourist destination.

istry of Tourism to increase travel to this part of the country, the site faces several critical threats. Key among these is the lack of awareness of its significance among the modern residents of the region. Also, because it is so remote, the site suffers from neglect—and looting is a constant concern. A combination of education

and development efforts are fundamental to the preservation of the site.

To address this need, the Umm el-Jimal Project, directed by Bert de Vries of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, partnered with Open Hand Studios, a Chicago-based nonprofit that helps developing communities protect and share their cultural heritage. Together, they applied for and were awarded a grant from AIA's Site Preservation Program.

The objectives of their innovative project are threefold. The first part is the creation of a digital museum that will provide an immersive virtual tour of Umm el-Jimal that includes 360-degree panoramic photos, audio, video, and still imagery. A comprehensive online exhibit of inscriptions, architectural elements, ceramics, and other artifacts recovered from the site will complement the tour.

The second aspect of the project is the creation of a two-part educational curriculum and teacher's reference manual. The Arabic version will be developed in partnership with Jor-

## Umm el-Jimal's Deep History

Originally settled by Nabataeans in the first century A.D., Umm el-Jimal was later occupied by Romans. After the decline of Roman imperial power, the site was a prosperous rural farming and trading town from the fifth to eighth centuries. While Umm el-Jimal was under Byzantine control, there was a conversion to Christianity and 15 churches were built. But in the seventh century the town was conquered by Muslims under the Umayyad caliphs. After an earthquake hit the town in A.D. 749, it dwindled and lay deserted for more than 1,100 years. Umm el-Jimal was reoccupied only in the early twentieth century by Druze (an Islamic sect) refugees from Syria and later by Lebanese Druze. During that time virtually every building was reused or reconstructed. The site was abandoned by the Druze in 1935 and occupied by the MESA'ID Bedouin tribe, who reused the buildings, pitched tents in front of them, and educated their children in schoolrooms adapted from Byzantine structures. The Department of Antiquities ended the use of the ancient structures in this manner and fenced off the archaeological remains in 1975.

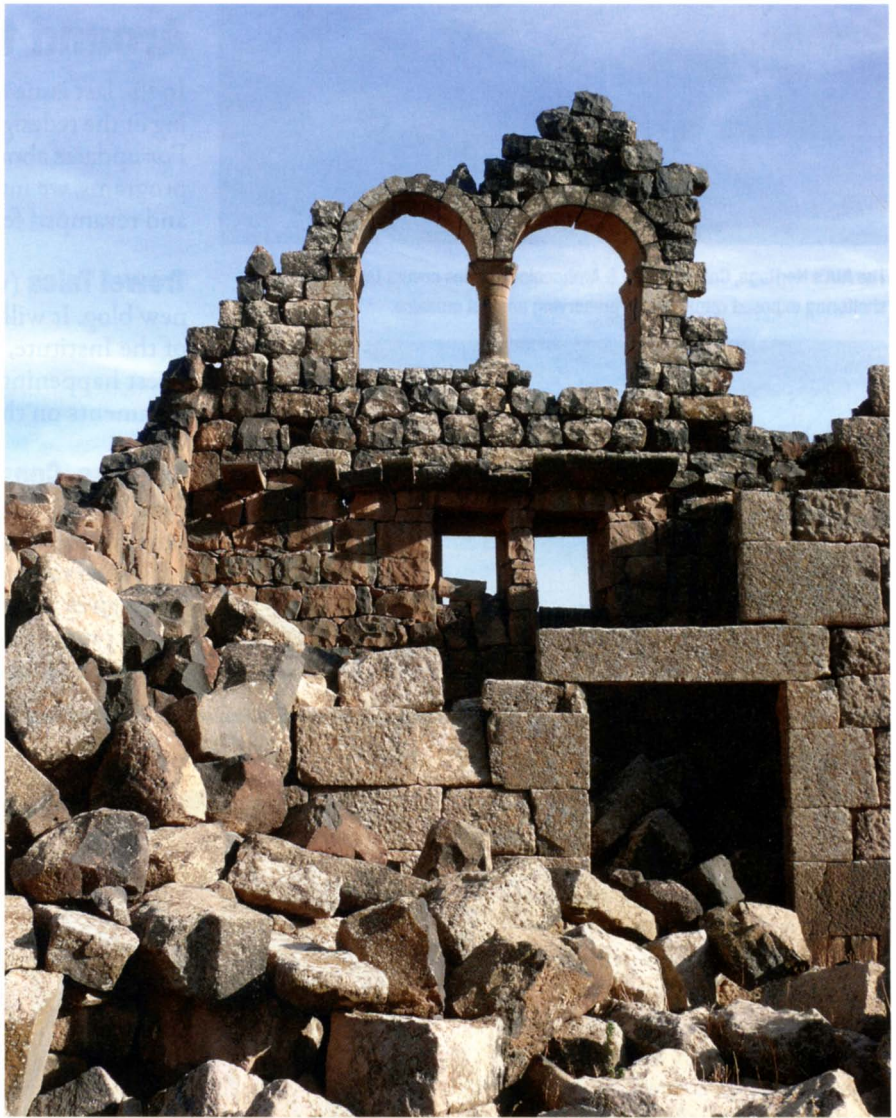


dan's Ministry of Education, to be used in the nation's government-run schools. An English manual will be made available to American teachers, beginning with schools in Grand Rapids and Chicago.

Finally, the project will facilitate and encourage the use of the virtual tour and the educational curriculum by making a variety of complementary information available online. This will include video interviews that will create an oral-history archive, information about the site's twentieth-century history and modern reoccupation, and a series of interactive modules focusing on other sites in the vicinity to place Umm el-Jimal in a wider context and to promote heritage tourism elsewhere in the region.

In combining conservation with outreach, education, and local community involvement and development, the Umm el-Jimal Project exemplifies the AIA's approach to site preservation. For more about this and other projects, see [www.archaeological.org/sitepreservation](http://www.archaeological.org/sitepreservation).

*The Umm el-Jimal Project is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) and works in conjunction with Jordan's Department of Antiquities and Ministry of Education, the municipality and people of Umm el-Jimal, and Open Hand Studios.*



A double-arched window still stands at House XVIII, a major domestic complex at Umm el-Jimal.



## Archaeology Fairs

AIA-sponsored Archaeology Fairs feature programs and activities for the whole family presented by archaeologists, educators, and other specialists. This is your chance to dig into archaeology and uncover the past! Visit [www.archaeological.org/events/fairs](http://www.archaeological.org/events/fairs) to read more about past and upcoming Archaeology Fairs.

The 11th Annual Archaeology Fair at our Annual Meeting will be held in San Antonio, Texas, on January 7 and 8, 2011, in partnership with the Witte Museum. The Fair will showcase local presenters and feature activities exploring both Native American and Texas history.

The AIA-Milwaukee Society and Milwaukee Public Museum will present their second Archaeology Fair on March 11 and 12, 2011. Last year's event was a huge success.

The AIA-Staten Island Society has taken on the challenge of organizing and hosting a fair. Their event is scheduled for April 3, 2011.