Jericho and Jerusalem are two of the oldest cities in the world; both sites are archaeologically, historically and culturally important. The exhibition features terracotta figurines, loom weights, spindle whorls and many pottery vessels from tombs at Jericho, excavated by British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon from 1952–54, and from Kenyon’s 1967 excavations at Jerusalem. The domestic and cultic objects reveal insights into the daily life and death at these two ancient cities.

The finds were allocated to the University of Melbourne as a teaching collection in return for the financial support for Kenyon’s excavations provided by the University’s Middle Eastern Studies department. Over 100 remarkable early ceramics will be on display from Kenyon’s excavations; including selected key items from several Bronze Age tombs at Jericho, and the large Iron Age deposit from Cave 1 in Jerusalem.

Curator Dr Andrew Jamieson, says as well as presenting important archaeological objects from two of the world’s oldest continuously inhabited sites, the exhibition tells the story of Kenyon’s significant contribution to Near Eastern archaeology. “Dame Kathleen Kenyon made significant contributions in the field of stratigraphic excavation techniques which she perfected at Jericho. She also introduced innovative approaches in ceramic methodology. Best known for her excavations at Jericho and Jerusalem, she helped train a whole generation of archaeologists, including Australian scholar Basil Hennessey, who went on to become Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Sydney. Kathleen Kenyon published extensively on the topic of archaeology in the Holy Land; her publications include Digging up Jericho (1957), Archaeology in the Holy Land (1960), Excavations at Jericho (vol. 1, 1960; Vol. 2, 1965), Amorites and Canaanites (1966), Royal Cities of the Old Testament (1970), and Digging up Jerusalem (1974).

The exhibition was officially opened on Tuesday 22 October by Associate Professor Louise Hitchcock of the University’s Classics and Archaeology programme. Associate Professor Hitchcock is currently co-directing an archaeological excavation in Israel at Tell es-Safi/Gath, which provides fieldwork and training opportunities for students at the University of Melbourne.

The archaeological objects featured in the Jericho to Jerusalem exhibition from the University of Melbourne’s Classics and Archaeology Collection are supplemented with material from the holdings of the Australian Institute of Archaeology. The Australian Institute of Archaeology has been instrumental in providing this material for display in the Jericho to Jerusalem exhibition.