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# News & Notes

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ON THE COVER: Scenery surrounding the historical cave in Kandahar, featured in the article on page 18.

## OI News & Notes Update

COVID-19 restrictions stemming from office closure have led to the decision to transition the bulk of OI print material to online-only formats. We will no longer mail print copies of *News & Notes*. We will continue to publish *News & Notes* each quarter in a digital format available to our members. Moving away from printed editions will ensure that every dollar of your membership donation now fully supports the current work and scholarship of the Oriental Institute.

In this issue, OI professor Theo van den Hout examines Hittite Plague Prayers and we explore the OI's continuing work in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Oriental Institute is grateful for your continued support during these challenging times.

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# ANNOUNCING THE HOWARD E. HALLENGREN PROFESSORSHIP OF ARABIAN PENINSULA & GULF STATES ARCHAEOLOGY



The OI is very pleased to announce the establishment of a new endowed professorship in the field of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States archaeology. Howard E. Hallengren, life member of the Advisory Council and one of the OI's most generous donors, recently made a new gift commitment to create this faculty position. Howard was the recipient of the James Henry Breasted Medallion at the OI Centennial Gala in September 2019. At this same event, he also was revealed to be "Gilgamesh," the affectionate pseudonym the OI used for many years to refer to the principal benefactor of the Gallery Enhancements Project, the multi-year museum reinstallation that was formally "unveiled" during the Centennial Gala's opening reception.

When explaining the motivation for his exceptional gift, Howard referenced his long career in international banking and real estate investments, along with his extensive personal travel experiences, which often took him to countries in the Middle East. "During my travels to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Dubai, and other Gulf States, I often met local people who were very interested in learning more about their own country's history and heritage." As an active volunteer leader and committed supporter for more than forty-five years, he observed that "the OI has not paid a lot of scholarly attention to these countries in the region—they may not have the well-known large monuments and archaeological site (of other neighboring nations), but they have the history and the culture that are so important to study and understand."

During a very productive trip by OI Director Christopher Woods and OI Deputy Director Jean Evans to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in January 2020, their meetings with local academic, museum, and business leaders affirmed great interest in developing archaeological research partnerships with the OI. Conversations among Howard, Chris, and Jean following this trip began to envision a potential new faculty position to lead these expanded research efforts. Howard's longstanding commitment to the OI, his great personal interests and experiences in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States, and his generous philanthropic spirit culminated in his new gift to endow the Hallengren Professorship.

The entire community of scholars, students, and supporters of the OI is pleased and excited about this new major gift from Howard, especially during this exceedingly difficult period of financial and fundraising challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the OI—and at nearly every higher education institution across the country—endowments are the surest means of sustaining the institute's mission and extending its research. In addition, an endowed named professorship is the highest academic honor that can be bestowed on an accomplished faculty member and provides a highly effective means to recruit and retain the most qualified scholar for this position.

The Hallengren Professorship represents an expansion of the OI into a region that was a critically important commercial and cultural crossroads in antiquity, and that remains so today. It has been a while since the OI has sustained long-term fieldwork in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States. This is a burgeoning and exciting field of scholarship that ties together a vast region, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. The OI can therefore expect this professorship to serve as a focal point for scholarly activities, connecting OI faculty and researchers who represent a wide range of specializations. Moreover, expanding the OI's research into the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States allows for greater diversification and stability for archaeological fieldwork, an important consideration given the socio-political unpredictability that challenges the OI's capacity to maintain long-term projects in much of the Middle East.

The OI intends to launch the search for the Howard E. Hallengren Professorship of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology in the 2021–22 academic year, with plans for an inaugural academic appointment by the start of the 2022 autumn quarter. The entire OI community is grateful to Howard for his extraordinary generosity over the years and for this most recent major gift that fundamentally transforms the OI's scholarly mission. By endowing this professorship in perpetuity, Howard is ensuring that there will always be active field projects, research, and teaching at the OI devoted to this critically important region of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States.

# DARB ZUBAYDA

## TRAVERSING THE ARABIAN PENINSULA WITH DONALD WHITCOMB

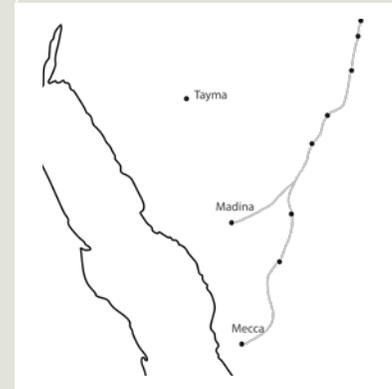
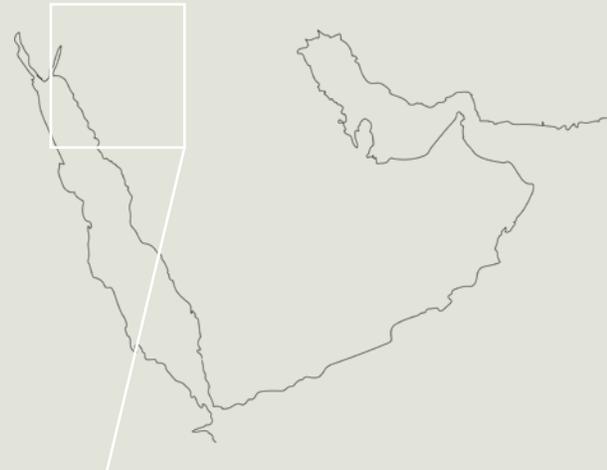
ARABIA is well known for its natural resources, namely frankincense and myrrh, which were the main items traded on the incense route from Arabia to the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. Frankincense trees grow in southern Arabia, and the Nabataeans (third century BCE–106 CE), took advantage of the riches from this route and built a prosperous empire in the beginning of the first millennium CE.

While Petra may be the most famous of Nabataean cities, one should not forget another city, that of Mada'in Saleh in Saudi Arabia, which was the empire's second-largest, city and which like Petra has many rock-cut tombs. It became Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008.

Prior to this period, the region was also known for its natural resources, attracting the attention of the ancient Egyptians. Cartouches of Ramses III have been discovered in the last ten years in the vicinity of Tayma. Tayma is not known for having deposits of copper or gold, which were frequently exploited by ancient Egyptians, but it is possible they were looking for them in the region or perhaps looking for incense. In addition, Tayma was the retreat for the last Neo-Babylonian ruler, Nabonidus, who spent about ten years there. While there, he received embassies from different countries, including Egypt. Several inscriptions in the oasis, written in Taymanitic (a form of ancient North Arabian), mention Nabonidus by name or can be associated with his time in the oasis. In addition, a cuneiform stela has also been discovered in the excavations at Tayma by the Oriental Department of the German Archaeological Institute, the Saudi Arabian Department of Antiquities, and the Department of Archeology and Epigraphy at King Saud University in Riyadh.

While the incense route declined at the end of the Roman period, the Islamic period brought new life to these old routes. One of the pillars of Islam is to perform the Hajj, or pilgrimage of Mecca to the Kaaba, which is a building that contains the Black Stone, a revered Islamic relic. There were three main routes: Egyptian route (pilgrims from Egypt, northern Africa, and western Africa), Syrian route (pilgrims from Syria and Anatolia), and Iraqi route (pilgrims from Iraq, Iran, Central Asia, etc.).

The Black Stone was stolen by the Ismaili Qarmatians, who were a Shi'ite sect based in eastern Arabia who sacked Mecca in 930 CE. They held the Black Stone for ransom and finally returned it for a large sum in 952. The Qarmatians have sometimes been called the world's first communists because of their emphasis on communal property, abolishment of money, and equality among members of the sect. Nevertheless, the sect enslaved some thirty thousand Africans to work on their agricultural estates in Bahrain, according to the Persian traveler Nasir-i Khusraw, who visited in 1051.



The main route from Iraq was known as the Darb Zubayda, named for Zubayda (766–831), whose name means “little butter ball,” wife of the ‘Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid (reigned 786–809 CE), who sponsored the facilities such as way stations and water storage, built along this route in the ninth century CE. The route was some nine hundred miles from Kufa in Iraq to Mecca, and it allowed pilgrims to go on the Hajj safely. It had originally been a trans-Arabian caravan route prior to the Islamic period and was then developed into a pilgrimage route.

Donald Whitcomb wrote an overview of what was known about the archaeology of the Darb Zubayda in 1996, contributing to the special volume of the journal *Aram*, which focused on the trade routes in the Near East and cultural interchange in Arabia. More recent work on the Hajj routes include 'Ali Ghabban's publication of the Syrian and Egyptian routes in northwest

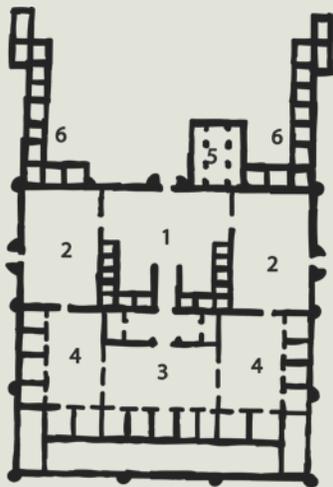
Saudi Arabia (2011), Andrew Petersen's work on the Hajj routes in Jordan, and Venetia Porter's edited books on different aspects of the Hajj. There has also been Saudi work surveying the region, as well as surveying and excavating the site of Faid on the Darb Zubayda. An excerpt from Don Whitcomb's 1996 publication follows below.

# THE DARB ZUBAYDA AS A SETTLEMENT SYSTEM IN ARABIA

*excerpts from an article by Donald Whitcomb*

The intensive recording of stations along the Darb Zubayda by the Comprehensive Survey of Saudi Arabia has produced a record of eighty-six architectural structures over a distance of 870 miles. A preliminary examination of this corpus reveals a pattern of reservoirs (extensively discussed by al-Rashid) and "palaces," that is, official administrative buildings. These are large buildings with semicircular buttresses, gate towers, and other features that identify them as early Abbasid. The problem of settlement in marginal areas, supported by governmental patronage, is a matter of the intention to shift functions from specialized facilities to more developed urban settlements.

The use of "palace" implies the accommodation of caliphs, princes, military elites, and their entourages. Careful examination of eleven of these stations shows that a template or master plan must have been used; an approximation of this plan is illustrated as a "generalizing plan." The architectural elements are:



"Generalizing plan" of Darb Zubayda after Whitcomb, figure 2.

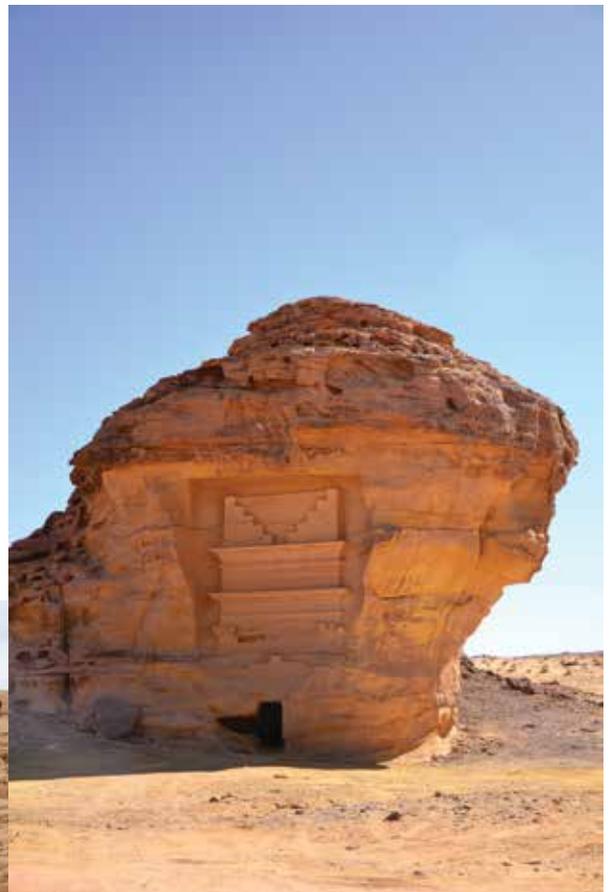
1. The central yard entered from the axial gate (usually from the north). There is some indication of small rooms around the periphery and a vestibule or hall leading to the second court.
2. A pair of flanking yards, each entered from its own gate. These yards and the central yard form the north half of the station.
- 3 and 4. A secondary axial yard and pair of flanking yards; these yards have a series of small rooms opening directly onto the yards. Most of the stations have at least twenty of these rooms, their most consistent architectural element. The southern row of rooms is consistently separated from the exterior wall by long corridors or rooms.
5. Built against the exterior of the station, next to (and usually east of) the main gate was a small mosque. These mosques were generally 15–20 m on a side and supported by four columns or pillars.
6. There seems to be a tendency to expand the station to the north, in the form of two antae, freestanding rows of rooms. These grow from the north corners of the station.

The structure of these stations is essentially that of an elaborate khan or caravanserai.

The significance of the Darb Zubayda derives from the extent to which this route not only facilitated the Hajj but stimulated commerce with Iraq. This interchange opened Arabia to products and settlement from Iraq and Iran in the Abbasid period. . . . The Darb Zubayda was conceived as a system of settlements across the desert, each a planned community supported by external resources. Continuing transformations to the structural template, observed in the architectural plans recorded, suggest use and modification in successful settlements during subsequent periods. One hypothesis, which this evidence seems to support, is that the administrative (palatial) functions, combined with religious (mosques) and commercial (khan) aspects, indicate the intention of an urban entity for each element of this settlement system. Excerpted from *ARAM* 8 (1996): 25–32.

**THE SITE OF MADA'IN SALEH** was known as Hegra by the Nabateans and located at the southern part of their kingdom. The site is best known for its more than one hundred well-preserved monumental rock-cut tombs built into sandstone outcrops, which closely resemble those found at Petra. One difference, however, is that at Mada'in Saleh many of the tombs have inscriptions, which is rare at Petra. There are also a large number of tombs built into the ground at Mada'in Saleh in addition to the rock outcrops that served for the elaborate tombs of the elites at Hegra. In 106 CE, it became part of the Roman province of Arabia when the Romans annexed the Nabataean kingdom. A joint Saudi-French mission has been conducting excavations at the site since 2001.

The site continued to be occupied in the Roman period and became a pilgrimage station in the early Islamic period. It is not clear precisely when people ceased to occupy the site, although it is mentioned by the



ABOVE: Tomb in outcrop at Mada'in Saleh (source: Sammy Six, Wikimedia Commons). LEFT: Tombs at Mada'in Saleh (source: Wikimedia Commons). BELOW: Tomb at Mada'in Saleh (source: Ahmad Alhasanat, Wikimedia Commons).

fourteenth-century traveler Ibn Battuta, who comments that its rock tombs are so well preserved that most people would think they were recent. He does not mention anyone living in them, however. In the early eighteenth century, the Ottomans built a fort at the site and by the late nineteenth century, Western travelers started visiting. In the twentieth century, the site was on the Hajaz railway route built by the Ottomans to connect Damascus and Jerusalem to Mecca and Medina.



# HITTITE PLAGUE PRAYERS

by Theo van den Hout

## IT ALL BEGINS AROUND 1324 . . .

The kingdom of the Hittites, or Hatti-Land as they called it, was no stranger to calamities and crises. In the Hittite world view, anything happening out of the ordinary, from a sudden thunderstorm to a devastating flood, an earthquake, a drought, a fire, or an epidemic, was a sign that some god was offended by something they had done. Since the gods didn't provide any details, it was up to humans to find out who was angry, why, and what they could do to appease the deity and to bring balance back into their world. The first step in this process was to search their conscience for possible missteps in their past and then to query the gods which misstep it was. The way to find out was through oracles. Several techniques existed. One method consisted of cutting open a sheep, and an expert priest would inspect its liver and entrails for signs. In another one, a priestess could question the gods by

manipulating tokens, or a bird watcher would search the sky for birds, and their number and kind, flight direction, movements, and cries would reveal divine answers. Or the gods could present themselves in dreams and tell the king or a priest what was going on. Once the identity of the responsible deity was known, the healing process could start. Offerings could be made, rituals carried out, and temples and statues promised, and life would hopefully resume.

The many rituals aimed at epidemics show that these were relatively common. The rituals on clay tablets were deliberately collected so that they could be consulted and pulled off the shelf in the royal tablet collections and put to work when the need arose.



KUB 14.8 obverse (left) with the first part of Mursili II's Second Plague Prayer and reverse (right) with the second part of Mursili II's Second Plague Prayer (source: HethitologiePortal Mainz <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de>).



# WHO WERE THE HITTITES?

The Hittites were the main political power in ancient Anatolia, modern-day Turkey, between 1650 and 1200 BCE. Their capital Hattusa was located in central Anatolia, some one hundred miles due east of the current Turkish capital, Ankara. Speaking an Indo-European language, the Hittites probably arrived in Anatolia sometime in the later third millennium BCE. They adopted and adapted the Mesopotamian cuneiform script but also developed a “hieroglyphic” script of their own for purposes of public display. In their heyday they were one of the superpowers in the ancient Middle East, together with Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and the Hurrians. They also had diplomatic relations with the Mycenaean Greeks in the west. Around 1200 their kingdom disintegrated and disappeared.



A Hittite person portrayed on the sherd of a relief vase, Anatolia sixteenth century BCE (Oriental Institute Museum).

Sometime in the 1330s BCE, one such epidemic spread through the ancient Middle East. It may have originated on the Levantine coast, in present-day Lebanon. In our modern world, information travels at the speed of light, and people travel daily between all continents. So does COVID-19, and as a consequence it's literally a pan-demic, a disease affecting “all populations.” Technically, the epidemic of the fourteenth century may not have been one, but the ancient Middle East was the world to the people living there, and the disease must have felt like a pandemic. Besides some hints in contemporary Egyptian sources, the bulk of our information about this disease comes from the Hittite kingdom. Its clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform script tell us of a pandemic causing death and destruction for a period of some twenty years and claiming the lives of two successive kings and countless unnamed civilians.

For the Hittites, it all began around 1324 BCE. The end of the summer, the end of the fighting season, was near. Suppiluliuma I was great king of the Hittite Kingdom in Anatolia and was busy putting the crown on his conquest of northern Syria.

The final touch was the incorporation of the city and fortress of Karkamish. The city lay on the green banks of the Euphrates and was the ideal location to be the nerve center from where the Hittites aspired to control all comings and goings from and to the east. With Karkamish as the capstone of his Syrian campaign, Suppiluliuma gave the Hittite kingdom its largest extension ever. It would encompass all of central Anatolia with some of its neighboring western areas, and toward the east it would extend to the Caucasus Mountains in the north and stretch southward through the upper reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris in Mesopotamia all the way down into Syria.

The Hittite army had surrounded Karkamish and was eagerly awaiting the order to attack and breach the walls. The soldiers expected considerable plunder, particularly from the upper fortress, where the temples of the city's patron deities were located. Meanwhile, to feed his army, Suppiluliuma had sent two of his generals with some of their units into the countryside of neighboring Amka, the area south of Karkamish. In his father's biography, Suppiluliuma's son Mursili described the situation as follows:

While my father was down in the land of Karkamish, he sent out Lupakki and Tarhuntazalma and thereupon they attacked Amka and brought back to my father people, cattle and sheep.

Amka was part to the Egyptian sphere of influence, and by invading the area, Suppiluliuma signaled that he no longer respected existing borders. Unknowingly, he also brought about his own downfall.

At this point in time, the Hittites were at the peak of their power, while Egypt went through a vulnerable period. The great pharaoh Akhenaten had been succeeded by the “boy king” Tutankhamun, but he had unexpectedly died at the age of nineteen and left behind a young widow. Given the “global world” that the ancient Middle East then was, it may well be that the Hittite king knew this and therefore didn’t worry about this breach of international relations. So, it’s no wonder that, in Mursili’s words, “when the Egyptians heard of the attack on Amka, they became afraid.”

Resting in his tent, with the siege of Karkamish ongoing, Suppiluliuma was visited by a colorful embassy from Egypt with a message from King Tut’s widow. In elaborate diplomatic prose, it said:

I have become a widow . . . let our two great countries become one! You will have them bring me your gifts and I will rejoice about them. Likewise, I will have them bring my gifts to you and you will rejoice about those. I will rejoice when I send you gifts through my envoys and you will rejoice when you send me gifts through your envoys.

Somewhere in that message there was a highly surprising request. That part of the letter is now lost to us, but, fortunately, Mursili quotes from the same message:

My husband has died, and I don’t have a son. But people say you have many sons. So, if you give me one son of yours, he may become my husband. I don’t want to pick a subject of mine and make him my husband. I’m afraid!

The laconic style in Mursili’s rendering seems to clash with the flowery language of the queen’s version. Did he, in spite of the seemingly direct quote, just want to give the reader the gist of the message and paraphrase it? Or did the queen simply get down to business at some point? Whatever the case, according to Mursili, Suppiluliuma was taken aback:

When my father heard that message, he summoned his closest advisers and said: “Such a thing has never ever before happened in my life!” So, thereupon he sent his chamberlain Hattusazidi to Egypt, saying: “Go, bring me back a reliable report! Perhaps they’re setting a trap for me. Perhaps they do have a son of their lord. So, bring me back a reliable report!”

By now, the reader is eager to hear the continuation of the story, which has all the ingredients that modern tabloids would

“BY NOW, THE READER IS EAGER TO HEAR THE CONTINUATION OF THE STORY, WHICH HAS ALL THE INGREDIENTS THAT MODERN TABLOIDS WOULD GLADLY EXPLOIT:



LEFT: The figure at Hattusa’s King’s Gate. Although it’s not certain that this is a king rather than a god, it shows what a king could look like.

CENTER: Map of Hittite Empire.

RIGHT: Suppiluliuma (I?) as portrayed in the so-called Kammer 2 in the Südburg at Hattusa.

THE SUDDEN AND TRAGIC DEATH OF A YOUNG MONARCH, A BEAUTIFUL AND GRIEVING YOUNG WIDOW, PALACE INTRIGUE, AND FOREIGN COURTS...”



gladly exploit: the sudden and tragic death of a young monarch, a beautiful and grieving young widow, palace intrigue, and foreign courts. But at this point Mursili continues with the siege of Karkamish as a cliffhanger:

After this, my father conquered the city of Karkamish. He had it encircled for seven days and on the eighth day he gave it battle for one whole day. He took it in a horrific battle on that eighth day, in one day. However, because my father was a god-fearing man, when he had conquered it, he didn't let anybody near the upper citadel of the deities Kubaba and Lamma, and he didn't touch a single one of the temples. On the contrary, he prostrated himself and gave offerings. The lower city he did capture with its people, silver, gold, and bronze inventory, and he carried it off to Hattusa. The people he brought to the royal storehouses numbered 3330. The ones whom the Hittite army brought home weren't counted. Then, he left behind his son Sarrikusuh: he gave him the land of Karkamish and the city of Karkamish to govern and made him viceroy.

In the end, the soldiers still got what they came for, and Suppiluliuma returned home to Hattusa to spend the winter. Winters in Anatolia are cold, with lots of snow, making travel very difficult. As a consequence, it is already spring of the following year when Hattusazidi returns from Egypt and we finally get to hear how the story of the queen of Egypt and the Hittite prince continued. Hattusazidi returned accompanied by the Egyptian ambassador by the name of Hani. He was one of the most high-ranking diplomats whom we know from several other missions in Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. He delivered a second letter from his queen, and Mursili goes on with his account:

When my father had sent Hattusazidi to Egypt (because he had given him the following orders: "Perhaps they do have a son of their Lord and they are deceiving me and they don't request my son for kingship") the queen of Egypt again wrote to my father as follows: "Why did you speak to me like that: 'They're deceiving me!' If I had had a son, would I have written about my personal and my country's humiliation to another country? But you didn't believe me and spoke to me like that! He who was my husband died, I don't have a son and I don't want to pick a subject of mine and make him my husband. To no other country have I written, only to you. They say that you have many sons, so give me one son of yours: he will be my husband and king in Egypt."

After the queen's second letter had been read out to him, Suppiluliuma still wasn't quite convinced and confronted the Egyptian ambassador Hani. He tried to defend his invasion of Syria by accusing the Egyptians of luring away Hittite vassals to their side, and he put pressure on the ambassador. Mursili quotes his father as saying:

When I heard this, I became angry and dispatched my troops, chariots, and commanders, and so they came and attacked your territory Amka and when they attacked some settlement of yours, you, Egyptians, became afraid, and therefore you keep asking me for a son, but he might somehow end up as a hostage and you may not make him king!

Hani, however, assured Suppiluliuma of the sincerity of their intentions:

My lord, that whole affair is a humiliation for our country. If we had had a son, would we have come to another country and kept asking for a lord for ourselves? Nibhururiya (i.e., king Tut) who was our lord, has died! He had no son and his spouse, our queen, is without children, so we are asking a son of you, our lord, for kingship in Egypt, and for the woman, our queen, we are asking him as a husband. What's more, we have gone to no other country whatsoever. We have come only here. Please, our lord, give us your son!

Hani's clever switching from "my lord" to "our lord" in addressing Suppiluliuma may have been just what he needed. Mursili describes how his father was now convinced and ordered to be read out loud to all assembled the text of an old treaty with Egypt:

When the tablet had been read out loud to them, my father spoke to them as follows: "In the past Hatti-Land and Egypt were friends with each other and now this, too, has happened between us: Hatti-Land and Egypt will be friends with each other for evermore!"

The Egyptian intelligence service was well informed. The Hittite king did indeed have many sons: we know of at least five, of whom Mursili may have been the youngest. The son Suppiluliuma picked to become the next pharaoh in Egypt was called Zannanza. He must have been sent off with some pomp and circumstance, and because the distance between Hattusa, the Hittite capital, and Egypt was roughly 1,500 miles, the journey must have taken at least two months, if not more. When news finally arrived, it wasn't good:

They brought a tablet and spoke as follows: "They killed your son! . . . Zannanza died" . . . When my father heard of the murder of Zannanza, he burst out in tears and kept saying to the gods: "I didn't

WHEN MY FATHER HAD SENT HATTUSAZIDI TO EGYPT (BECAUSE HE HAD GIVEN HIM THE FOLLOWING ORDERS: "PERHAPS THEY DO HAVE A SON OF THEIR LORD AND THEY ARE DECEIVING ME AND THEY DON'T REQUEST MY SON FOR KINGSHIP") THE QUEEN OF EGYPT AGAIN WROTE TO MY FATHER AS FOLLOWS: "WHY DID YOU SPEAK TO ME LIKE THAT: 'THEY'RE DECEIVING ME!' IF I HAD HAD A SON, WOULD I HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT MY PERSONAL AND MY COUNTRY'S HUMILIATION TO ANOTHER COUNTRY? BUT YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE ME AND SPOKE TO ME LIKE THAT! HE WHO WAS MY HUSBAND DIED, I DON'T HAVE A SON AND I DON'T WANT TO PICK A SUBJECT OF MINE AND MAKE HIM MY HUSBAND. TO NO OTHER COUNTRY HAVE I WRITTEN, ONLY TO YOU. THEY SAY THAT YOU HAVE MANY SONS, SO GIVE ME ONE SON OF YOURS: HE WILL BE MY HUSBAND AND KING IN EGYPT."

harm them in any way, but the people of Egypt have . . ."

Of course, this amounted to a major crisis in the international politics of the time, and murder of a member of a royal house was sufficient grounds for war. How and how soon this terrible tidings reached the Hittite capital is difficult to say, but it must at least have been well into summer if not already autumn. At some point an official message from the new Egyptian pharaoh Ay arrived, and it was again Hani who had the unpleasant task of delivering it. That message has been lost, but we do have Suppiluliuma's answer in the form of a draft or a copy for the internal Hittite administration, found at Hattusa. It also contains several quotes from Ay's letter. In spite of its fragmentarily preserved status, the general tenor of the two missives is clear. First of all, the new pharaoh is hardly apologetic: his tone is almost defiant. He touts his new status as "king of Egypt" and expresses some surprise: didn't the Hittites know that a new pharaoh had already ascended the throne? What's more, he denies any responsibility, saying: "Your son has died, but I didn't harm him in any way." Boasting the size of his army, he even adds: "If you come lust- ing for revenge, I'll teach you revenge. But if you write to me in brotherhood, I'll make a deal." In his answer Suppiluliuma follows much the same strategy. First, he proudly recounts his recent military achievements, including his capture of Karkamish. And then,



KBo 28.51, the second letter of the Egyptian Queen widow, brought to Hattusa by her ambassador Hani.

“I was willing to give my son for kingship in Egypt and I didn’t know that you had already ascended the throne . . . If you had, you could have sent my son back home! . . . You keep boasting about your troops and chariots, but I will praise mine, all that I have! For me, the Storm God, my lord, king of the lands, and the Sungoddess of Arinna, my lady, queen of the lands, will come and the Storm God, my lord, and the Sungoddess of Arinna, my lady, will pass judgment! . . . The falcon may have caught one chick, but one falcon will not chase away an entire army!”

The “falcon” was a clear allusion to person of the pharaoh and his alleged predatory character. And the passing of judgment expressed the Hittite view of war as a lawsuit between two parties, with the gods as judges and jurors.

Now, given the distance between the two countries, a military invasion of Egypt was hardly realistic, but for the prestige of the Hittite state, Suppiluliuma had to do something. So, he sent Arnuwanda, another son of his, to that same Amka in Syria on a punitive raid, to save face. The Egyptians may have put up some token resistance, and Arnuwanda returned victorious — how could he not? — with plenty of prisoners of war, cattle, and sheep as triumphant booty. But this turned out to be a costly victory, as Mursili tells us:

When my father had given them (that is, the Egyptians) a son of his and when they had escorted him away, they killed him! My father burst out in rage, he went to Egypt, attacked it and destroyed Egypt’s troops and chariots. Even then, the Storm God of Hatti, my lord, let my father prevail in the lawsuit: he defeated Egypt’s troops and chariots and destroyed them. When they brought back home to Hatti-Land the prisoners of war that they had captured, a plague developed among the prisoners and they began to die.

This last passage comes from Mursili’s so-called Second Plague Prayer, one of a series of desperate appeals to his gods to tell him what had so displeased them that they had visited this calamity on the Hittite lands, and he begs them to put an end to it.

Storm God of Hatti, my lord, and you, Gods of Hatti, my lords, . . . what have you done? You have allowed a plague into Hatti-Land and Hatti-Land has been very heavily oppressed by the plague. In the time of my father (Suppiluliuma) and brother (Arnuwanda, Suppiluliuma’s first successor) people started to die, and even now that I (Mursili) became priest to the Gods (that is, became king), people continue to die in my days! This is now the twentieth year, that dying continues in Hatti-Land, and still the plague has not lifted from Hatti-Land. I cannot overcome the agony in my heart, nor can I overcome any longer the anguish in my body!

Despite his appeals, the plague would go on for twenty years.

After decades of ongoing suffering, Mursili is desperate and emotional. He doesn’t know anymore what to do; he has tried everything possible:

When I celebrated the festivals, I went back and forth to all the gods, not a single temple did I skip. Because of the plague I made pleas to all the gods, making vows to them (saying): “Now you, O Gods, my lords, listen to me and ban the plague from Hatti-Land. . . . Why Hatti-Land keeps dying, let it either be determined by oracle or let me see it through a dream or let a prophet tell it!” But the gods did not listen to me and the plague in Hatti-Land did not stop, and Hatti-Land was very heavily oppressed.

So, he starts another round of oracle investigations, yielding new results:

Also, those few, that were left of the ones who offer bread and wine to the gods, started to die. Then the matter of [ . . . ] started to weigh on me again and I made the gods’ anger the subject of an oracle inquiry. Two old tablets I found. One tablet about an offering to the River Mala: . . . former kings had brought the offering to the River Mala, but now,



“THE MANY RITUALS AIMED AT EPIDEMICS SHOW THAT THESE WERE RELATIVELY COMMON. THE RITUALS ON CLAY TABLETS WERE DELIBERATELY COLLECTED SO THAT THEY COULD BE CONSULTED AND PULLED OFF THE SHELF IN THE ROYAL TABLET COLLECTIONS AND PUT TO WORK WHEN THE NEED AROSE.”

Detail of the frieze on the Silver Stag Vessel (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) with a person pouring a libation before the Protective Deity of the Countryside, standing on a deer.

as long as people have been dying in Hatti-Land since the days of my father, we had never made the offering to the River Mala.

The second tablet was about a past agreement between the Hittites and Egyptians, both sworn to uphold it under the watchful eye of the Storm God:

The second tablet is . . . how the Storm God of Hatti made a treaty for them with the people of Hatti and how they were then put under oath by the Storm God of Hatti. Now that the people of Hatti and Egypt were put under oath by the Storm God, it happened that the people of Hatti turned away and suddenly broke the divine oath: my father sent troops and chariots and they attacked Egyptian territory, the land of Amka, and again he sent them and again they attacked. When the Egyptians became frightened, they came and even asked my father for a son of his for kingship!

The repeated border invasion of Amka constituted a clear violation of the treaty with Egypt, and Mursili expresses surprise at how the gods nevertheless still supported his father. They even seemed to have egged him on, and Mursili presents it as a kind

of divine entrapment. The gods were well aware of the breach Suppiluliuma had committed, and yet they made it seem as if they favored him over the Egyptians, only to hit him even harder afterward with his own death, that of his son Arnuwanda, and a large part of the Anatolian population.

Now, when I had found that tablet about Egypt, I made it the object of an oracle inquiry: “Concerning that thing done by the Storm God of Hatti, if it has become a reason for anger for the Storm God of Hatti, my lord, that the people of Egypt and the people of Hatti are under oath . . . but that it was the people of Hatti who suddenly broke it.” That was indeed confirmed.

Also, I made an oracle inquiry concerning the plague about the offering to the River Mala and in that case, too, it was determined for me to present myself to the Storm God of Hatti, my lord. So, here it is, I confessed my sin to the Storm God: it is true, we have done it. That it did not happen in my days, that it happened in my father’s days, . . . I know all too well. . . .

In his confession Mursili doesn't go all the way. He talks of "we" and immediately emphasizes that the really guilty party was his father. In his First Plague Prayer, he adds a third possible reason for the gods' anger, likewise something from his father's days: apparently, Suppiluliuma had been responsible for the death of his predecessor, Tuthaliya the Younger, whom he and others in the ruling elite had sworn an oath of loyalty:

Since dying continues in Hatti-Land on a large scale, the affair of Tuthaliya the Younger, son of Tuthaliya, started to weigh on me and so I conducted an oracle investigation through the god, and the affair of Tuthaliya the Younger was confirmed also by the god. Since for Hatti-Land Tuthaliya the Younger was their lord, Hattusa's princes, commanders, chiefs-of-thousand, officers (and) officials as well as troops and chariots, everybody had sworn an oath to him. My father too had sworn an oath to him.

But when my father punished Tuthaliya, Hattusa's princes, commanders, chiefs-of-thousand and officers, all of them joined my father and the Oath Deities seized Tuthaliya and they killed Tuthaliya!

Back to the Second Plague Prayer, Mursili now becomes philosophical but still refuses to take full responsibility and continues to point to his father:

Storm God of Hatti, my lord, Gods, my lords, as it happens, people sin. My father too sinned. He broke (his) word to the Storm God of Hatti. I, on the other hand, did not sin at all, but as it happens, a father's sin passes down to his son. To me, too, my father's sin passed down. So now before the Storm God of Hatti, my lord, and before the Gods, my lords, I have confessed it: it is true, we have done it. Since I have confessed my father's sin, let the Storm God, my lord's, and the Gods, my lords', their mind be satisfied again. Have mercy on me again and ban the plague from Hatti-Land. Do not let those few remaining, who take care of the bread offerings and libations, die on me!

With his last remark on the people who feed the gods with bread and wine, Mursili puts psychological pressure on the gods: if they continue this way there may be nobody left to take care of them! Having mentioned these temple servants, he now reflects on his own relation to the gods:

To the Storm God, my lord, I make a plea now because of the plague: listen to me, O Storm God of Hatti, my lord and save me! I give you the following to consider: a bird seeks refuge in its cage and the cage saves it. Or if something weighs heavily on a servant, he will make a plea to his lord, his lord will listen to him and will have mercy on him. Whatever weighed on him, he will set it right for him. Or if

some servant has sinned, but confesses it as a sin to his lord, his lord will have his way with him as he wishes, but since he confesses to his lord, the lord's mind will be satisfied, and his lord will not punish that servant. Now it is me confessing my father's sin: it is true, I did it. If there are amends to be made: the many things that earlier too through that plague Hatti-Land paid, that is, the deportees from Egypt, the prisoners of war they brought home and the deportees they ..., that which Hattusa has paid through the plague, it is thus happening twenty-fold already, and yet the mind of the Storm God of Hatti, my lord, and of the Gods, my lords, is not satisfied! Or if on me, however, you separately impose some kind of amends, tell it to me in a dream and I will give it to you.

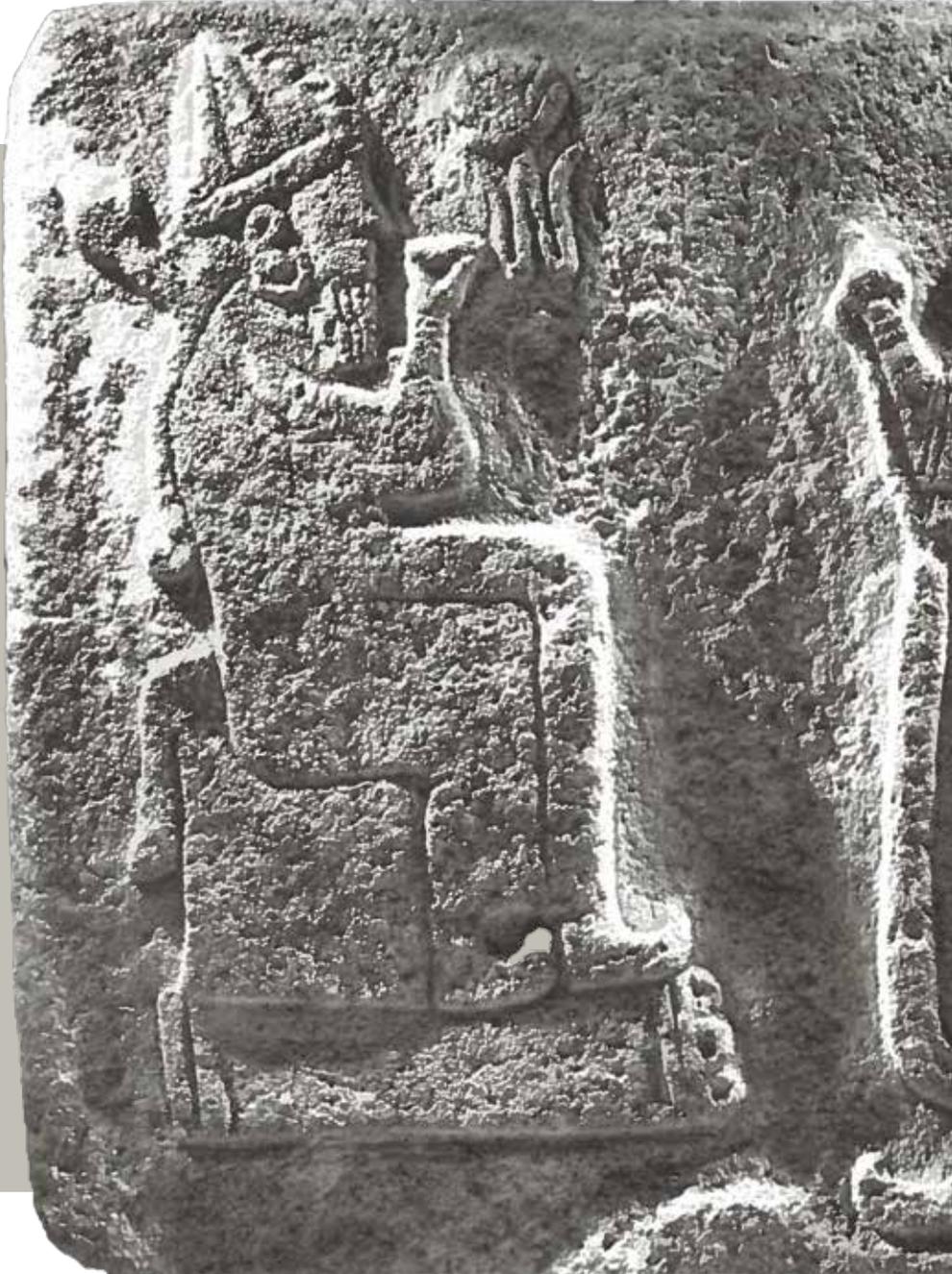
Finally, Mursili has brought himself to the point where he unreservedly accepts full responsibility: "I did it." But he has raised the pressure a notch: if the gods are fair masters, they should forgive him. Of course, they can do what they like, they're gods after all, but his voluntary confession should be rewarded with forgiveness. The prayer ends as follows:

Now I keep pleading with you, Storm God of Hatti, my lord: save me! If for this reason perhaps people are dying, then don't let those remaining of the people who take care of the gods' bread offerings and libations, die any longer, until I start setting it straight again. If, furthermore, for some other reason people keep dying, let me either see it in a dream or let it be ascertained through an oracle or let a prophet tell it or priests will sleep holily concerning that which I ordered all of them. O Storm God of Hatti, my lord, save me! And let the gods, my lords, show their guidance and let someone then see it in a dream. It must be found out, why people keep dying, so that we can defuse the situation. Storm God of Hatti, save me and lift the plague off Hatti-Land again!

After twenty years Mursili is still in the dark as to what deity caused the pandemic. Since this is the last we read about it in the Hittite sources, we may assume that it plateaued, and perhaps some kind of herd immunity had finally built up.

What is interesting to see is how the Hittite approach didn't differ that much from ours. They knew exactly where this plague came from and who brought it into Hatti-Land. We can be sure that once they had identified infected people, they isolated them and practiced forms of social distancing. One only needs to think of leper colonies in history. But this knowledge and the practical measures taken didn't exclude the ritual and religious approach. I'm certain that now too, all faiths in the world turn to their gods, begging them to make the pandemic stop, using their own prayers and rituals. What we have in addition that the Hittites didn't have is modern science. Hopefully, therefore, we don't have to sit it out for twenty years.

STORM GOD OF HATTI, MY LORD, GODS, MY LORDS, AS IT HAPPENS, PEOPLE SIN. MY FATHER TOO SINNED. HE BROKE (HIS) WORD TO THE STORM GOD OF HATTI. I, ON THE OTHER HAND, DID NOT SIN AT ALL, BUT AS IT HAPPENS, A FATHER'S SIN PASSES DOWN TO HIS SON. TO ME, TOO, MY FATHER'S SIN PASSED DOWN. SO NOW BEFORE THE STORM GOD OF HATTI, MY LORD, AND BEFORE THE GODS, MY LORDS, I HAVE CONFESSED IT: IT IS TRUE, WE HAVE DONE IT. SINCE I HAVE CONFESSED MY FATHER'S SIN, LET THE STORM GOD, MY LORD'S, AND THE GODS, MY LORDS', THEIR MIND BE SATISFIED AGAIN. HAVE MERCY ON ME AGAIN AND BAN THE PLAGUE FROM HATTI-LAND. DO NOT LET THOSE FEW REMAINING, WHO TAKE CARE OF THE BREAD OFFERINGS AND LIBATIONS, DIE ON ME!



A Hittite king (right) standing in front of the Storm God (left) on his throne at Alaca Höyük.

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# RETURN TO SHAMSHIR GHAR

## A RECENT VISIT TO THE HISTORICAL CAVE IN KANDAHAR

by Alejandro Gallego

In early November 2019, as the Oriental Institute's field director in Afghanistan, I traveled to the city of Kandahar as part of the National Museum of Afghanistan Outreach Initiative, also known as the "Mobile Museum Project." The Mobile Museum Project—developed through the partnership between the OI and the National Museum of Afghanistan (NMA) and supported by grants from the US Department of State through the American Embassy in Kabul—is the first national-scale outreach program to raise awareness about the significance and importance of the National Museum, accomplished through presentations at local schools and learning centers across the country. Once I landed in the ancient Alexandrian site of Arachosia, the first capital of Afghanistan, I was presented with the opportunity of exploring the outstanding monuments and archaeological sites of the Kandahar region, names and places that had become so well known to me through my years of working with the great number of artifacts at the National Museum of Afghanistan.

I could not miss the opportunity to explore the ancient citadel (Naranj Palace), Chilzina, and the Ahamad Shah Durrani Mausoleum. Yet among these great sites, there was one ancient place that had always drawn my attention, raising my interest more than the others: Shamshir Ghar, "Cave of the Sword." Excavated by American archaeologist Louis Dupree in 1950, Shamshir Ghar has remained almost untouched since. The cave is located about fifteen miles west of the urban area of Kandahar, at the Panjwai district, with natural yet limited accessibility. The Soviet-Afghan War, the civil conflict, and the recent Taliban control of the region between 2005 and 2010 have prevented anyone, curious traveler and scholar alike, from visiting the cave for decades.

The instability of the region had thus all but wiped away my dreams of ever visiting the site. However, on the morning of our second day in Kandahar, my colleague Ahmad Bilal told me that we were heading to this very cave. I understood then and there that everything is possible in Afghanistan with the right

words and proper contacts. Bilal, who knew of my wishes to visit Shamshir Ghar from previous conversations, had worked with the director of the Cultural Department of Hekmatullah, Hikmat Afghan, who kindly arranged the logistics necessary to make our visit a reality. Bilal, too, admitted his own great curiosity to see this place after hearing so many stories about it.

The knowledge and memory of the existence of Shamshir Ghar is not alien to most Afghans interested in the archaeology of Kandahar. The publication of the archaeological report by L. Dupree, *Shamshir Ghar: Historic Cave Site in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan* (1958), includes objects that are exhibited today at the National Museum of Afghanistan. Nonetheless, this knowledge is not on par with the ability to locate the cave accurately. A number of people are aware that it is somewhere east of the Arghandab River, past the small settlement of Badwan, but they are not able to be any more precise. Accordingly, the project of locating the site was no easy task, but I fully trusted Bilal and Hekmatullah Afghan. Louis Dupree himself tells us in his archaeological report that it took his team no less than two days to find the exact location.

Determined to find the spot, we left our housing at dawn in several off-road vehicles. The cold of the first morning hours kept us company. After leaving Kandahar's urban center, we were soon able to discern the distinctive landscape of the Panjwai district. The earth is an ochre-colored soil, and the foothills slowly turn into a fertile strip that is first yellow and then green and covers the plains that are crossed by the course of the Arghandab River, which leaves the desert sand at the opposite bank. The vegetation, the water course, and the grape and pomegranate crops attest to there being much more than desert in Kandahar. When flying over the region, if one leans out of the plane window, it is possible to observe with surprising definition the line that demarcates the Desert of Registan. It is an overwhelming sight that helps provide understanding of the relevance of geographical boundaries both now and in ancient times.

We were escorted into Panjway, the ideological nucleus of the Taliban movement, by the district commander's guard. We started to encounter fewer and fewer vehicles on the road. In Afghanistan it is best not to take anything for granted. Your circumstances may change in the blink of an eye.

Before we started our hike toward the cavern, we made a stop at the closest village, where we met one of their elders, the only person who remembered the location of Shamshir Ghar well. Leaving an adobe structure, he took us 100 yards farther up, and soon, at the foot of the mountain, the historical place awaited us. We followed the unrelenting elderly gentleman up thirty minutes of steep incline. Finally, we were able to catch our breath and raise our eyes and see there before us Shamshir Ghar, standing the test of history and time. We thanked and profusely congratulated the elder for his successful guidance—even he wasn't certain of the altitude at which the cave was to be found. Our companions, including Hekmat Afghan, were surprised, claiming that it was likely that no Western or local archaeologist had visited the location since the archaeological work of L. Dupree.

The elder told us the recurring story of great treasure that lies inside the cave. Upon hearing, I immediately thought of L. Dupree, recalling a certain legend of Baba Wali in an article published in 1957, "Shamshir Ghar, a Cave in Afghanistan" (*Archaeology* 10). Baba Wali mentioned that the treasures that filled the shelter were guarded by four rotating swords that blocked its entrance. Just as the American archaeologists did, we made sure that our heads were free from impending danger before we entered. The access was framed by modern graffiti, indicating that the existence and maybe even the use of the rock shelter has not been completely forgotten.

Even the foul odor of bat excrements could not prevent me from accessing the interior. I soon realized how difficult life must have been in such an extreme location. Upon accessing the first chamber, I gazed at the roof, observing the karstic formations and the culprits of the unpleasant smell in their upside-down slumber. While surveying the floor, to my surprise, I discovered the stratigraphic surveys performed by L. Dupree, preserved just as I remembered them by the black-and-white photographs in his report. In our determined advance into the hollow, we had to be vigilant, as the site is expectedly full of uneven sections that can be lethal if overlooked. We approached a second gallery, deeper than the previous one. I searched, determined to find the ancient wall paintings documented and drawn by L. Dupree, in what he calls chamber 5. We managed to find the second trench of the American archaeologist, but were not able to reach the end of the gallery as we began to notice the lack of breathable air. We looked at each other, deciding to exit carefully.

While exiting the site and recovering from the lack of air in my lungs, I wondered how it is possible that anyone was ever able to live in the rock shelter for a long period of time. I remembered then that L. Dupree had considered this archaeological site more of a temporary refuge than anything else. The view from the opening over the valley is majestic. The colors of the crops, the ground, the river, and the desert reminded me of the wheat and corn fields in so many impressionist paintings.

After bidding goodbye to the cave until our next occasion, we hiked carefully down the mountain. We were satisfied that we had found and visited such a paradigmatic spot in Kandahar, and, by extension, in Afghanistan. After one last glance and a few more photographs of the landscape, we jumped into the vehicles

OPPOSITE: Cave in Kandahar.  
BELOW: Scenery surrounding the cave.



and made our way back to Panjwai's commander post. Honoring the hospitality referred to in the Pashtunwali—the Pashtun code of honor—that has kept us company ever since our arrival to Kandahar, we were offered a typical Afghan meal consisting of potatoes with tomato, vegetables, meat, and bread. I spoke to the extent that my level of Pashtu and Dari allowed me, which is to say, very little. I let Bilal and Hekmatullah Afghan translate and communicate our conversation; they talked about the situation of Kandahar and Panjwai in particular and showed our appreciation for the circumstances that had allowed all of us to visit Shamshir Ghar for the first time.

We returned to our quarters just past noon. I looked at the sights through a window and couldn't help but reflect on the hardships and vicissitudes that L. Dupree must have encountered in order to work in that place under such strenuous circumstances, with little light and such a rough landscape. Undoubtedly, the goal of excavating the site must have weighed heavily on him.

Dupree reveals in his archaeological report that with his work at Shamshir Ghar he intended to “establish a site chronology for Afghanistan and surrounding countries, extending from about the birth of Christ to the Mongol invasion.” However, Dupree stated that he had not found anything prior to the Christian Age at Shamshir Ghar, pointing to the Late Kushan and Sassanian pe-

riods as the earliest. The interpretation of the excavated materials, even more so than the findings themselves, led Dupree to overlook the earliest documented period of the cave, the Late Bronze period, dated to the second millennium BCE. Painted pottery with parallels to other archaeological sites in Kandahar, such as Mundigak and Deh Morasi Ghundai, as well as stamp seals with elaborate figurative motifs, led us to reconsider the stratigraphic sequence that Dupree proposed for Shamshir Ghar. During 2015, Michael Fisher and I were able to study the archaeological remains from Shamshir Ghar at the National Museum while including them in the NMA-OI digital inventory; it was then that we realized the contradictory dating of the site.

Pictured: our delegation's trek to the cave and surrounding scenery.



Later that same day, we visited additional sites and monuments in Kandahar, some of them also in the Panjwai district, such as Deh Morasi Ghundai, a Bronze Age settlement also excavated by L. Dupree. We visited the ancient citadel of Kandahar and its ancient walls. Among all of the wonderful spots, Shamshir Ghar reserves a special place in my memory. The historic significance, the remote location, and the kindness of our hosts leading us will remain with me.

Until further visits, the cave of Shamshir Ghar will remain majestic within the mountain slopes of Badwan, looking out at the beautiful plains of the Arghandab River, while preserving the memory of the people and civilizations that inhabited ancient Kandahar.





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# PROGRAMS & EVENTS **AUTUMN 2020**



# VIRTUAL MEMBERS' LECTURES 2020/21 SEASON



While the OI galleries re-open to limited visitors, COVID-19 social distancing guidelines inhibit us from presenting in person lectures or gatherings in Breasted Hall. For the 2020-2021 academic year, we are transitioning all of our Members' Lectures online, in a format available to all, for free, through YouTube. We have found that while a Breasted Hall lecture can attract two hundred participants, an online lecture attracts thousands, globally. Our 2020-2021 online lectures allow us to bring the OI and contemporary scholarship of the ancient Middle East into the homes of our members and patrons, no matter where you live.

Scheduling online lectures has also made it possible for us to reach out to professionals who would not normally be able to travel to Chicago due to citizenship in "no-fly" countries, or conflicting schedules with field seasons overseas. This season, along with some OI favorites, we bring you cutting edge voices from scholars and artists across the globe.

Each lecture will premiere live on YouTube at 7:00pm CST on the first Wednesday\* of each month, October through June, with the exception of January. The lecture will remain up for you to watch at your convenience. Subscribe to our OI YouTube channel at for up-to-date notification on both our Members' Lectures and all of our OI videos. We will also include lecture links in our monthly e-Tablets and on social media in the week prior to the lecture going live.

**The Public Display of Things from the Holy Land**  
**October 7** | Morag Kersel, DePaul University

**In the Wake of the Phoenicians**  
**November 4** | David Schloen, OI

**A Survey of Archaeological Sites and Recent Fieldwork in the Southern Mesopotamian Marshes of Iraq**

**December 2** | Abdulamir Hamdani, Minister of Culture, Iraq, Stony Brook University

**The Sphinx**  
**February 3** | Mark Lehner, Director of the Ancient Egypt Research Associates, and the Giza Plateau Mapping Project

**Ancient Ethiopia, Facebook, and Social Networks**  
**March 3** | Michael Harrower, Johns Hopkins

**OI Contemporary Art Lecture**  
**April 7** | Michael Rackowitz

**Four Years in Uruk**  
**May 5** | Margarete van Ess, German Archaeological Institute

**An American Mummy Tale**  
**June 2** | Robert Ritner, OI



## The Public Display of Things from the Holy Land

**October 7** | Morag Kersel, DePaul University

When museums place items on display, they take on multiple roles as custodians of sacred relics, shapers of public interpretation, fiduciary institutions, and educational establishments. The public counts on the museum to tell the truth, to act ethically, and to be responsible and transparent in the presentation of the past – they place their trust in the organization. This lecture will examine the differing strands of attachment to objects and the consequences created by the desire to “own”, interpret, and display the material remains from the Holy Land. A survey of exhibitions of artifacts from the Holy Land at institutions like the Royal Ontario Museum, The Israel Museum, and the Museum of the Bible allow for the consideration of truth and consequences in these museums.

## In the Wake of the Phoenicians

**November 4** | David Schloen, OI

Join the OI's David Schloen as he opens up the world of the Phoenicians. David explores the impact that the culture had as they traveled water routes and settled in lands stretching across the Mediterranean. In addition to examining the lasting influences that the Phoenicians had on ancient and modern culture, David looks his recent work with the OI at Tel Keisan, Israel, and opens up a discussion on his proposed future excavations on the coast of Spain. This lecture has been rescheduled from April, 2020

## A Survey of Archaeological Sites and Recent Fieldwork in the Southern Mesopotamian Marshes of Iraq

**December 2** | Abdulmir Hamdani, Minister of Culture, Iraq, Stony Brook University

The OI is pleased to welcome Abdulmir Hamdani, the Minister of Culture of Iraq, for an in depth look at national and international excavations and survey projects currently underway in Iraq. This lecture takes you on site to explore Mosul heritage with updates on work currently occurring in sights such as Nineveh and Nimrud, while providing a look at the future of UNESCO classification. While exploring the recent efforts of restoring stolen antiquities and protecting sites, Hamdani maps out the future of the Iraqi Museum and the country's relationship with international institutions, including the OI.

## The Sphinx

**February 3** | Mark Lehner, Director of the Ancient Egypt Research Associates, and the Giza Plateau Mapping Project

The Sphynx has long occupied human imagination, commanding awe and inspiring mysticism. OI favorite, Mark Lehner, joins us for a comprehensive look at his life-long career working at the Giza Plateau on this colossal monument. Mark charts his changing perceptions and uncovers decades of findings while looking forward to the next stage in his storied career.

## Ancient Ethiopia, Facebook, and Social Networks

**March 3** | Michael Harrower, Johns Hopkins

The Aksumite Empire was one of the ancient world's most powerful and influential civilizations, but it is also one of the least widely known. Today our modern world is dramatically shaped by social networks, but archaeologists have recently begun to recognize that vast networks of social interaction also connected large numbers of people over long distances in ancient times. Professor Michael Harrower discusses the history of the Aksumite Empire, including his team's discovery and excavation of the ancient town of Beta Samati. He examines what Aksumite civilization reveals about human interaction, including the transformational spread of early Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. He concludes with a brief discussion of the role of Facebook in the world and in Ethiopia today.

## OI Contemporary Art Lecture

**April 7** | Michael Rackowitz

For the OI Centennial, artist Michael Rakowitz created a site-specific installation for the OI Museum as part of his series *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist*. Join us for an opportunity to hear one of the world's premiere artists during this very special Members' Lecture.

## Four Years in Uruk

**May 5** | Margarete van Ess, German Archaeological Institute

Founded at the end of the fifth millennium BC, Uruk, near present-day Baghdad, was the main force for urbanization in what has come to be called the Uruk period. The site of development for proto-cuneiform script—the earliest known form of writing—and the home of the mythical Gilgamesh, Uruk has captured the scholarly imagination since its discovery over a century ago.

Margarete van Ess joins us to discuss the results and direction of fieldwork at this legendary site during the last four years, while providing insight into its scientific relevance.

## An American Mummy Tale

**June 2** | Robert Ritner, OI

In the 1830s Joseph Smith acquired and translated ancient Egyptian texts that he used while founding the Mormon religion. The OI's Robert Ritner explores Smith's translation, examining inconsistencies and discussing errors in the papyri, research that Ritner explored in his 2012 book.

### \*dates subject to change

We invite you to visit our OI YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/c/TheOrientalInstitute](http://www.youtube.com/c/TheOrientalInstitute) (or search for “The Oriental Institute”). Our YouTube channel is filled with new and archived Members' Lectures, youth and family classes, recent podcasts, talks about the collections, and more. Hit [subscribe](#) on OI YouTube and to gain first notice of all of our new videos.

# COURSES | ONLINE

## Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs | 8 weeks

**Mondays, October 5–November 30, 7:00–9:00pm** (class will not meet November 23)

**Foy Scalf** | PhD, head of the OI Research Archives, and research associate

Experience the thrill of decipherment by learning to read the “sacred carvings” of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs is designed as a step-by-step guide for beginners toward unraveling the mysteries of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic script and the structure of its language. Students will be introduced to the basics of ancient Egyptian grammar and learn to read texts commonly found on museum objects, including examples drawn from our own OI collections. By the end of the class, students should expect to be able to understand a variety of short Egyptian inscriptions and grasp the basic fundamentals of grammar and vocabulary necessary to continue their study of the “words of the gods.”

Textbook: Mark Collier and Bill Manley, *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, revised edition (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

*\$392 (nonmembers), \$314 (members), \$157 (docents/volunteers/Egypt tour), \$98 (UChicago/Lab School students)*

## Nubian Queens | 4 weeks

Lectures will post **Mondays, November 2–30, 9:00am** | live Zoom discussion (which will also be recorded)  
**Thursdays, November 5–December 3, 6:00–7:00pm**  
(class does not meet the week of Thanksgiving, November 23)

**Tasha Vorderstrasse** | University and Continuing Education program coordinator

Nubian queens played a unique role among queens in the ancient world. They had powerful positions and were considered critical in determining the succession of the king and sometimes became rulers in their own right. This class will look at the different queens known in Nubian history and archaeology, examining queens and the development of queenship in the Kushite (744–656 BC in Egypt), Napatan (700–300 BC), and Meroitic periods (300 BC–AD 400).

*\$196 (nonmembers), \$157 (members), \$78 (docents/volunteers), \$49 (University of Chicago/Lab School students)*

## Put Me on a Good Path: Travelers of Ancient Egypt | 8 weeks

Prerecorded class lectures post **Mondays, December 7–February 8, 9:00am** | class discussion on Zoom  
**Thursdays, December 10–February 11, 6:00–7:00pm**  
(class does not meet the weeks of December 21 and 28)

**Rebecca Wang** | NELC PhD student

Over the course of this class, we will seek to reconstruct the journeys of ancient Egyptian expedition leaders, traders, tourists, diplomats, soldiers, fugitives, criminals, and prisoners of war utilizing textual and archaeological evidence. Students will learn about different modes of transport, obstacles that hindered travel, and technological innovations that facilitated and expedited travel. We will investigate the various challenges and hazards faced by the ancient Egyptian travelers on the road and what measures they adopted to tackle those problems. Another goal is to assess the topographical awareness of the Egyptians, as well as how their travel experiences shaped their conceptualization of their own country vis-à-vis the outside world.

*\$392 (nonmembers), \$314 (members), \$157 (docents/volunteers/Egypt tour), \$98 (UChicago/Lab School students)*

All classes are currently online via Zoom and recorded (times are CST). Please register via Eventbrite.

*Not yet a member? Become a member today and save! <https://oi.uchicago.edu/join-and-give/become-member> or add on a membership when you register for this class.*

# YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAMS | ONLINE

## VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS

Enjoy a live virtual facilitated field trip program or guided tour of the OI Museum! Free tours and programs are available this fall for K-12 classrooms of up to thirty students, with at least one educator present. Registration with two weeks' advanced notice is required.

Visit [oi.uchicago.edu/visit/tours](https://oi.uchicago.edu/visit/tours) for more information and to register

### Highlights of the Collection Tour

recommended for grades 4-12

Take a virtual tour through the OI Museum guided by a docent, focusing on some of the highlights of the collection, which showcase the history, art, and archaeology of the Ancient Near East. Students will have the opportunity to respond and ask questions in this interactive tour.

### Artifact Analysis Program

recommended for grades 5-12

Students engage their deductive reasoning skills in a 45-minute workshop, examining artifacts to draw conclusions about the people who created and used them while gaining insight into the science and philosophy behind archaeology.

### Myths and Magic Program

recommended for grades 2-5

Students explore ancient myths and magic through stories, artifacts, and an activity to learn how ancient people understood and made sense of their world.

### Secret of the Mummies Program

recommended for grades 2-5

Students discover the myths, creation, and science of ancient Egyptian mummies while following along to make their own mini-mummy.

## VIRTUAL FAMILY PROGRAMS

### Cool Coins & Tools of the Trade

**Saturday, October 10, 1:00-1:45pm**

ages 5-12

Open your screens as a family and delve into ancient trading practices, make your own money, and create your own cool coins in this collaborative family day with the OI Museum and Smart Museum of Art! For this minds-open hands-on trade-stravaganza, OI Education and Smart Scholar Katerina Stefanescu will take you on a virtual tour of the OI Museum and Smart Museum's collections of coins and trading tools. Then, you'll use your new knowledge to craft your own coins to trade within your own household! Have a pencil, piece of paper, scissors, and aluminum foil at the ready to create brand new coins of your very own!

*Free (registration required for Zoom link)*

### Virtual Mummies Night

**Saturday, October 31, 4:00-7:00pm, live on Zoom**

ages 4 and up, accompanied by an adult

Put on your costume and join in all evening for a mummy celebration that can't be missed! We may not be able to get together in the OI galleries for our annual Halloween party, but that won't stop our mummy madness! Help us virtually mummify our simulated mummy, take a mummy tour, or hear a mummy tale. Make mummy crafts, compete in our mummy trivia, and play a game many a mummy has taken to their own tomb—Senet. Dance to our spooky playlist and search for mummies with our scavenger hunt!

*Suggested donation of \$5 per device (registration required for Zoom link and program materials)*



DIG DEEPER WITH  
OI PUBLICATIONS  
BOOK SPECIALS

*Daily Life Ornamented:  
The Medieval Persian City of Rayy*

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*Town and Country in  
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Spread of Islam: Archaeological Perspectives*

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Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press

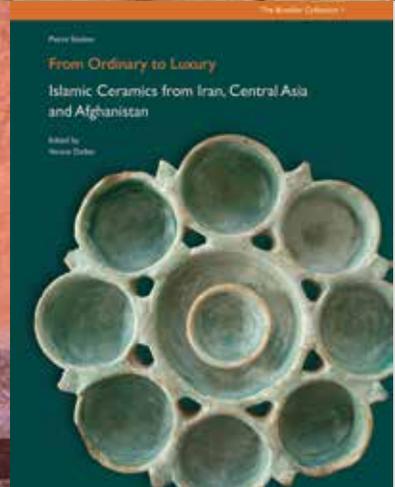
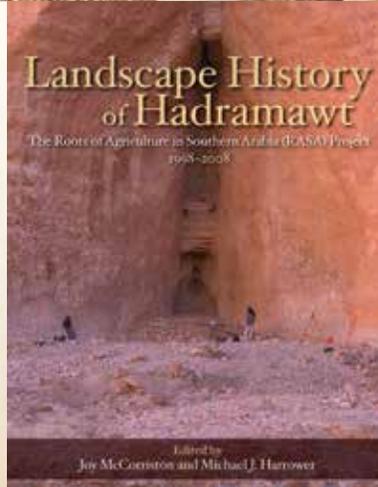
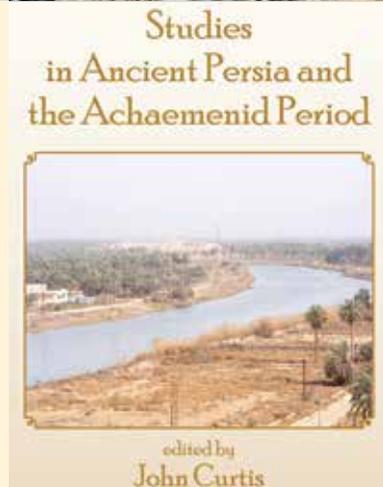
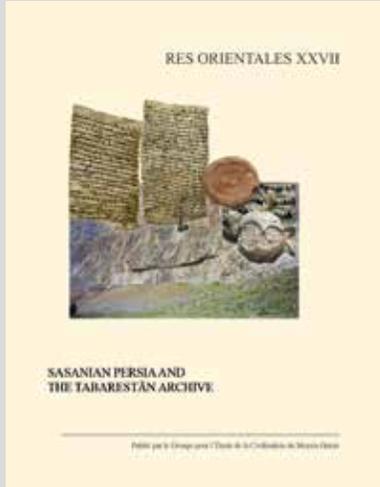
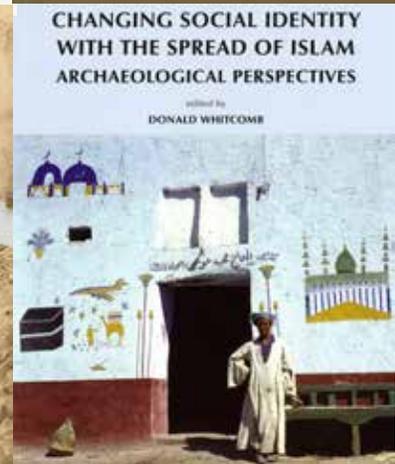
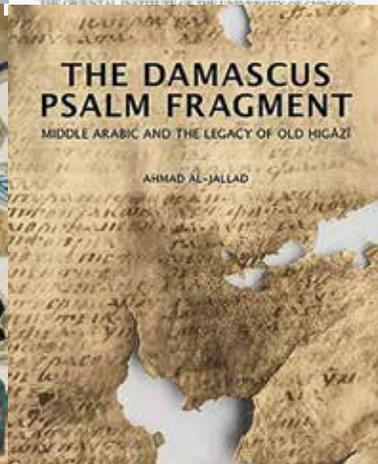
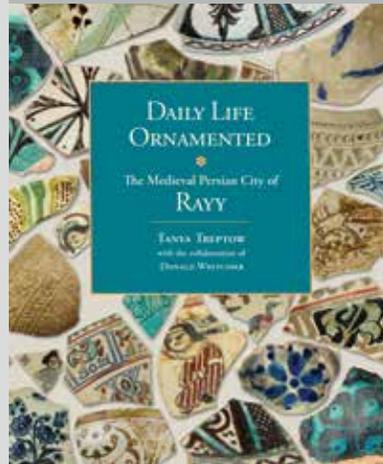
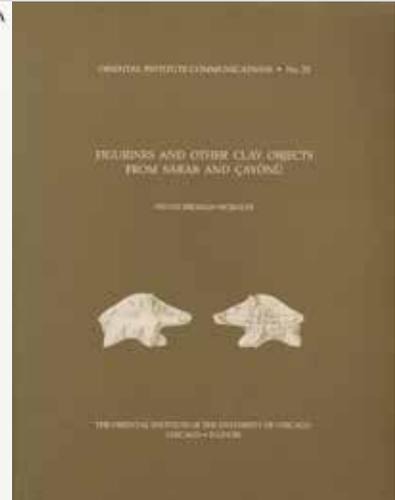
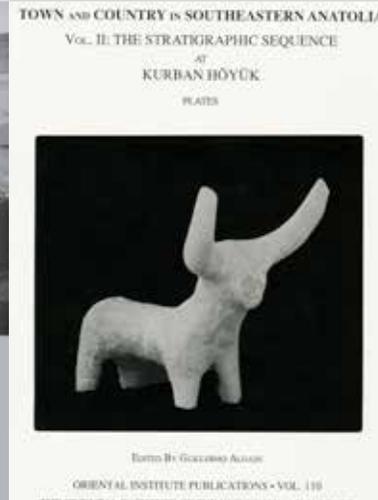
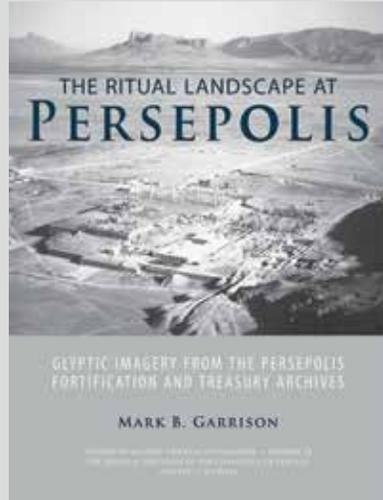
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# ORIENTAL INSTITUTE PIONEERS

We are pleased to offer this and future articles in a continuous series intended to honor the contributions of archaeologists to Iranian art and archaeology. Future featured archaeologists will include Robert McAdams, Pinhas Delougaz, and Helene J. Kantor.

## OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAN *by Abbas Alizadeh*

For a long time, Islamic archaeology was limited to standing monuments and art-historical interpretations of Islamic art and architecture. Donald Whitcomb is a pioneer OI archaeologist who developed field methods and a theoretical foundation for field archaeology, drawing heavily from his graduate training in Near Eastern archaeology. Whitcomb also single-handedly developed a pertinent curriculum for teaching Islamic archaeology at the OI.

Donald Whitcomb's interest in Islamic archaeology began when he came to the Department of Anthropology in 1972 to study with Robert McC. Adams. Spurred by Adams, Whitcomb secured a grant and went to the Kazerun region of Fars to look for proto-Elamite settlements. Failing to find any such settlement, but finding numerous Sasanian and Islamic sites, he returned to Chicago. Whitcomb subsequently used his survey material for his 1979 doctoral thesis. Since then, Whitcomb has made major contributions to Islamic archaeology of Iran with a focus on the development of Islamic urbanism.

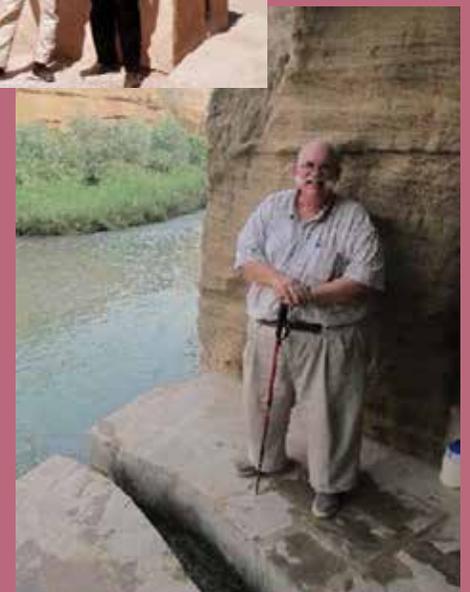
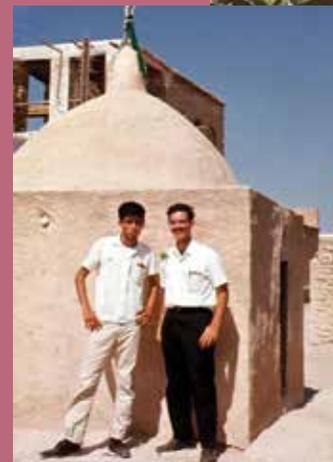
Donald Whitcomb was born in 1944 in Elizabeth, NJ, to Scot Whitcomb and Carmela Previtly. In his early teens, his family moved to Atlanta, GA, where he attended Emory University. While at Emory, Whitcomb had a summer fellowship to study Iranian archaeology with Robert Dyson, who at that time was teaching and finishing his PhD at Harvard University. Upon his graduation, Whitcomb was accepted to the University of Chicago without funding. He then joined the Peace Corps in 1966 and was stationed in Bushire on the Persian Gulf to teach English.

In 1968, Whitcomb joined the Asia Institute in Shiraz (now Shiraz University). While there, Whitcomb participated in several archaeological excavations including Chogha Mish, Hasanlu, Godin, and Siraf. He returned to the United States and attended Georgia University for graduate study with Joseph Caldwell, a graduate from the University of Chicago's Department of Anthropology. Because Caldwell inherited the materials and records of Donald McCown's excavations at Tall-e Geser, Whitcomb was encouraged to write his MA thesis on the proto-Elamite period at that site.

After graduating from Georgia University, Whitcomb moved to Chicago to study with Adams. His training in Chicago made him aware of the importance of site morphology and urbanism in a much wider regional context than isolated buildings and art-historical concerns, the focus of Islamic studies at that time. Most of Whitcomb's contributions to Islamic archaeology of the Middle East, and particularly of Iran, focus on the issue of Islamic urbanism in a wide regional context. He also was the first to introduce, describe, and date a class of unglazed painted pottery of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries known as "pseudo-prehistoric" and "Arab geometric ware" that was found in southern and southwestern Iran.

Since his graduation, Donald Whitcomb was very much interested in the continuation of the Oriental Institute's excavations at the important Sasanian/early Islamic city of Estakhr, near Persepolis. Since 2004, he traveled several times to Iran to secure a permit, but geopolitical problems interfered, though he has not lost hope.

## DONALD S. WHITCOMB



Whitcomb as a research fellow at Pahlavi Institute, Shiraz, 1969. MIDDLE: Don Whitcomb (right) in Bushire with a local, 1967. BOTTOM: Donald Whitcomb at Shushtar, Khuzestan, 2015 (photo by A. Alizadeh).

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## NANCY BAUM

*interviewed by Shirlee Hoffman*

**How did you become interested in volunteering at the Oriental Institute? How long have you been a volunteer?**

I became interested in volunteering at the OI one year when I was planning a sabbatical leave from teaching at the City Colleges where I was a French and Spanish teacher. I have been a docent for around thirty years, with time off when the OI was being renovated, and another brief period when I was chair of the Foreign Language Department.

**Did you have any interests or training in the ancient Near East?**

Before becoming a docent, my experience with the Middle East was limited. In college I met some people from Iran and from Morocco and other Middle Eastern countries, and I had Palestinian and Israeli students, but I had never traveled to that part of the world, although I did serve in the Peace Corps in Gabon, where the muezzin called the faithful out to prayer several times a day. Other than learning some Greek architecture and reading numerous plays in French based on Greek mythology, I knew very little about the Middle East.

**What have you done at the OI since you became a volunteer? What do you do now?**

Since becoming a docent, I have led visitor tours and served as an “Ask Me” docent. In the early days we chose a specific day to be available; I was in the Thursday evening group. In recent years, we have come in for scheduled tours. Now I am looking forward to learning to do virtual tours. I participate in the OI book group, led by Sue Geshwender. We meet—now via Zoom—to discuss books that I would never think of reading on my own. A member of the OI faculty is always involved, giving us the opportunity to get to know the faculty better. I have had a chance to enhance my knowledge of the Middle East by taking tours visiting Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and Israel.



**What do you particularly like about being a volunteer?**

I enjoy meeting children of different ages, both from schools around the area and from farther off. Most of our student groups arrive well prepared by their teachers. Often the parents who chaperone tell us they are enchanted by the tours. I look at each tour as a chance for a dialogue. All the docents love it when the students can answer our questions—What are you studying? Can you find Egypt on the map? Have you heard of Gilgamesh? Megiddo? And of course King Tut!—and when they ask questions on their own. I particularly enjoy chatting with the other docents before and after tours. Over the years I have worked with many docents, but I especially remember my first mentors, Elizabeth Spiegel, Daila Hefner, and Anne Schumacher. Anne and I once collaborated on a tour in French.

**What has surprised you?**

What surprised me in the beginning was realizing how much the early archeology was tied to trying to dig up evidence of Bible stories. I also was surprised to learn about the many courses available to members and docents alike and have taken quite a few, most recently Egyptian Hieroglyphs with Foy Scalf. Unfortunately I have a poor aptitude for hieroglyphs, but I enjoyed the attempt at learning. One year I was delighted when the Louvre Museum sent someone to make a cast of our lamassu to use to complete their Khorsabad collection. Now I especially enjoy the movies that appear in the galleries and the computerized story of Meresamun, and I am thrilled with the new Islamic exhibit.

**What would you say to someone who is thinking of volunteering at the OI?**

I would encourage them! While being a volunteer is challenging and requires taking responsibility, it is a rewarding experience. Not only do you help expand the knowledge of the museum’s visitors but it is a chance to be part of a very distinguished intellectual community.



1155 East 58th Street  
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## INFORMATION

### MEMBERSHIP

#### YOUR PARTNERSHIP MATTERS!

The Oriental Institute depends upon members of all levels to support the learning and enrichment programs that make our Institute an important—and free—international resource.

As a member, you'll find many unique ways to get closer to the ancient Middle East—including free admission to the museum and Research Archives, invitations to special events, discounts on programs and tours, and discounts at the institute gift shop.

**\$50 ANNUAL / \$40 SENIOR (65+) INDIVIDUAL**  
**\$75 ANNUAL / \$65 SENIOR (65+) FAMILY**

#### HOW TO JOIN OR RENEW

**ONLINE:** [oi.uchicago.edu/member](http://oi.uchicago.edu/member)  
**BY PHONE:** 773.702.9513

### GENERAL ADMISSION

Free with suggested donation:  
\$10 (adults)  
\$5 (children 12 & under)

### MUSEUM & GIFT SHOP HOURS\*

Tue, Thu, Sat: 11am–3pm

*\*Limited attendance by reservation only. Visit: [oi100.uchicago.edu/visit-museum](http://oi100.uchicago.edu/visit-museum)*

#### THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED

January 1  
July 4  
Thanksgiving Day  
December 25

### ACCESSIBILITY

The museum is fully wheelchair and stroller accessible. The University Avenue west entrance is accessible by ramp and electronic doors.

### PARKING

FREE parking half a block south of the museum on University Avenue, after 4pm daily and all day on Saturday and Sunday.

### GROUP VISITS

For information about group visits, please go to:  
[oi.uchicago.edu/visit/tours](http://oi.uchicago.edu/visit/tours)

