

Theo van den Hout

On July 1, 2008, **Theo van den Hout** took over from Peter Dorman the chairmanship of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Of course, this task along with the editorship of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary (see separate report) dominated his time. There was nevertheless some time also for personal research. During the summer he traveled to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara, where he collated some 250 Hittite fragments in preparation for a volume of hand copies. He wrote a detailed entry on “Schreiber” for the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, and submitted two articles. One is entitled “A Century of Hittite Text Dating and Theories on the dating of the Hittite Cuneiform Script” for a thematic issue of the Italian journal *Incontri Linguistici*, and (together with Cem Karasu) “A Note on Hittite Envelopes and HKM 86” for the festschrift of a colleague. Clay envelopes as they can be seen in the Oriental Institute’s Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery were a well-known way of transporting documents in the ancient Near East. Such covers were not yet known from Anatolia except for one possible example. Collation of the original in Ankara has now shown that this is not an envelope either. If the Hittites transported clay tablets they may have done so in, for instance, leather bags, but there is still no evidence for envelopes made of clay.

At a “brown-bag” lunch at the Oriental Institute, Theo presented his new ideas on Hittite text dating and the rise of literacy in Hittite society. It has been traditionally assumed that Hittites started to write their own language around 1650 B.C., immediately after having acquired the cuneiform script, but according to him this did not start until the beginning of the fifteenth century and literacy correspondingly developed later and much more gradually.

Theo delivered three outside lectures: “Scribes and Literacy in the Hittite Kingdom and Empire,” during the 5^{es} Journées de l’Orient, Entre Mer de Chine et Mer du Nord: Migrations des savoirs, transfert des connaissances, transmissions des sagesses; De l’antiquité à nos jours, in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, 11–13 March; “Some Thoughts on Hittite Writing and Administration in the Hittite Kingdom and Empire,” at a conference devoted to Archivi, Depositi, Magazzini: Nuovi materiali e nuove ricerche sulle procedure di conservazione dei beni e di registrazione dei dati presso gli Ittiti, in Pavia, Italy, held on June 18; and “Die Frage der

Donald Whitcomb

After a quiet summer, the year began in a most unusual way with two visitors. The first was Kristoffer Damgaard, an advanced doctoral student from Copenhagen, whom I had met at several conferences. He is now pursuing his dissertation subject on the Early Islamic cityscape, the archaeology of Aqaba (Ayla). This is a subject of great interest to me; indeed, we had intentionally left one quadrant of the site for the future. It appears that the future has arrived and is most welcome. Kristoffer and I spent the next two months reviewing the excavation seasons at Aqaba, the recording systems, and the artifacts in the Oriental Institute. Kristoffer has made extensive copies and photographs and the result should be a seamless transition to his new excavations. Alas, I fear that he will find approaches differing from what I might suggest but the result will be fascinating regardless. He has already offered a perspective on the role of this port in the cultural history of the Red Sea which greatly enhances my earlier suggestions.

My second visitor was Katia Cytryn-Silverman, from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I was familiar with her research on Islamic archaeology of the north Sinai, and more directly as a reader for her dissertation, which she took *summa cum laude*. She came to Chicago with a new project, an idea for the location of the Congregational mosque (the *masjid jam'a*) in Tiberias. The site of Tiberias (Islamic al-Tabariya) has suffered through many excavations and salvage projects. Katia suggested a large covered market was actually the mosque, an idea we debated and she has now proven. Not to get too far ahead of my story, but since her return to Jerusalem, she has conducted excavations which prove her ideas, received a large multi-year grant to continue the research, and, most wonderful, received a tenure-track position in Islamic archaeology at Hebrew University.

I decided to find a common denominator between these guests and the interests of my students in Islamic archaeology. This was a seminar on “The Archaeology of Travel.” This would begin with a focus on “travel” in Islamic cultures, which would turn on four concepts: *hijra*, an idea of movement for a new religious life; *hajj*, the idea of pilgrimage found also in Christianity and Judaism; *rihla*, the idea of travel in search of knowledge and dispersion of scholarship; and *tijara*, another kind of profit, that of mercantile commerce which came to bind the entire Islamic world. This last aspect of travel may be the most susceptible to archaeological research. Commercial practice would seem to bind together the Red Sea ports for Kristoffer with the “road khans” or caravanserais which were the subject of Katia’s dissertation.