

Donald Whitcomb

The academic year began for **Donald Whitcomb** with teaching a very stimulating seminar on Islamic Pottery as Historical Evidence, with students interested in the new discoveries and interpretations from our Khirbet al-Mafjar excavations, balanced by two young archaeologists preparing a corpus of Islamic pottery from Armenia. I was invited to present the Mafjar discoveries to the biennial symposium of the Historians of Islamic Art Association in New York.

In early January, we arrived in Jerusalem during a heavy snowfall, more than we had experienced in Chicago. We descended into the Jordan valley to Jericho, where they had endured heavy rain. Once again our luck held and we lost only two days to rain in the next six weeks. Our third season of excavations for the Jericho Mafjar Project began with some noise; a bulldozer and three large trucks removed the massive mounds of the 1960s excavations and we had literally a new site to dig. The direction of this season was more interesting with the presence of seven Palestinian students, as described in the Jericho Mafjar Project report in this volume. Once again we enjoyed the assistance of Silvia Krapiwko and Alegre Savariego in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, and as a final treat, we toured similar sites of Sinnabra (Khirbet Karak), Khirbet al-Minya, and Tiberias with Tawfiq Da'adli, an archaeologist from Jerusalem who also worked with us. In the meantime, I co-wrote an article with Hamdan Taha, "Khirbet al-Mafjar and Its Place in the Archaeological Heritage of Palestine," which appears in the *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 1 (2013): 54–65. The article may be downloaded from the "news" on our website (www.jerichomafjarproject.org), with the permission of the Pennsylvania State University Press.

I returned to Chicago just in time for the Oriental Institute Seminar on Household Archaeology, where I chaired some sessions but really wanted to discuss our Abbasid House at Mafjar. For Spring quarter I offered the course Introduction to Islamic Archaeology, in which I changed the content with new sites and information reflecting the rapid progression of this field. During this time, I slipped away to New York City again, this time to chair a session for the conference on The Archaeology of Sasanian Politics, held at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University. One of its unexpected pleasures was meeting an Italian archaeologist working on the Islamic city of Istakhr near Persepolis. She reports that my hypothesis on building behind the mosque has proven correct (it's nice to be right after so many years).

The end of the year saw the completion of Tanya Treptow's dissertation on the development of Islamic archaeology in Egypt. She focuses on the excavations at Fustat, then known as Old Cairo, and has inspired a brief report in the archaeology of Islamic cities in this volume. The celebrations for Tanya were soon followed by the sad news of the death of

Constantine Baramki, the son of the first excavator at Mafjar, whom we visited last year. I am pleased that plans are underway to renew the Hisham's Palace Museum, which means we will install a new panel testifying to Dimitri Baramki's remarkable discovery and his understanding of Qasr Hisham in the 1930s.
