

RELIVING THE LEGEND: THE EXPEDITION TO ALALAKH, 2003

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Many archaeologists secretly aspire to find the oldest, the largest, or the most spectacular ancient site. Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana) in the Amuq Valley of southern Turkey is none of these. During the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (ca. 2000–1200 BC) it was the capital of a kingdom called Mukish that encompassed the valley. But Mukish was a minor power, a vassal state within larger empires, and its capital at Alalakh was by no means the largest or most impressive city of the period. Yet Alalakh and the Amuq region as a whole have proved to be uniquely informative about a number of important cultural developments over the long span of history from the Neolithic to the medieval period. This site and its hinterland have yielded a host of clues concerning innovations in agriculture, trade, metallurgy, and political organization in what was for millennia a prime zone of settlement and a crucial corridor of communication between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea.

The first archaeological survey of the Amuq Valley — the Plain of Antioch in classical times — was conducted by Robert Braidwood in the

1930s on behalf of the Oriental Institute. Braidwood's site number 136 was Tell Atchana, which was subsequently excavated by the noted British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley, who identified it as ancient Alalakh. Woolley dug large areas of the site between 1936 and 1949, with a five-year hiatus during the Second World War. On the north end of the mound he found a stunning sequence of temples and palaces complete with Akkadian cuneiform ar-

chives, Minoan-style frescoes, Egyptian artifacts, Hittite reliefs, and Syro-Mesopotamian sculptures. The eclectic nature of these cultural remains and their intrinsic historical and artistic value have marked Alalakh as a place of special interest. But Woolley failed to record or publish many details of interest to archaeologists and historians, and archaeological methods have improved enormously in the past fifty years. For this reason a team led by Professor Aslihan Yener returned to Braidwood's site 136 in the summer of 2000 to investigate Alalakh as part of the Amuq Valley Regional Projects.

During the three field seasons from 2000 to 2002, our expedition prepared for renewed excavation of the site. We conducted an intensive surface survey, produced detailed topographic maps, and inventoried the finds from previous excavations stored in the Hatay Archaeological Museum. In 2003 we conducted our first full season of excavation, digging from September 1st to October 17th with an international staff of thirty-nine archaeologists and stu-

dents and seventy-two hired workers from the local villages (see the list of acknowledgments below). Our dig headquarters, long on the drawing board, are now successfully established in the village of Tayfur Sökmen, two miles from the site. Three large, colorful (red and yellow) prefabricated buildings — a dormi-

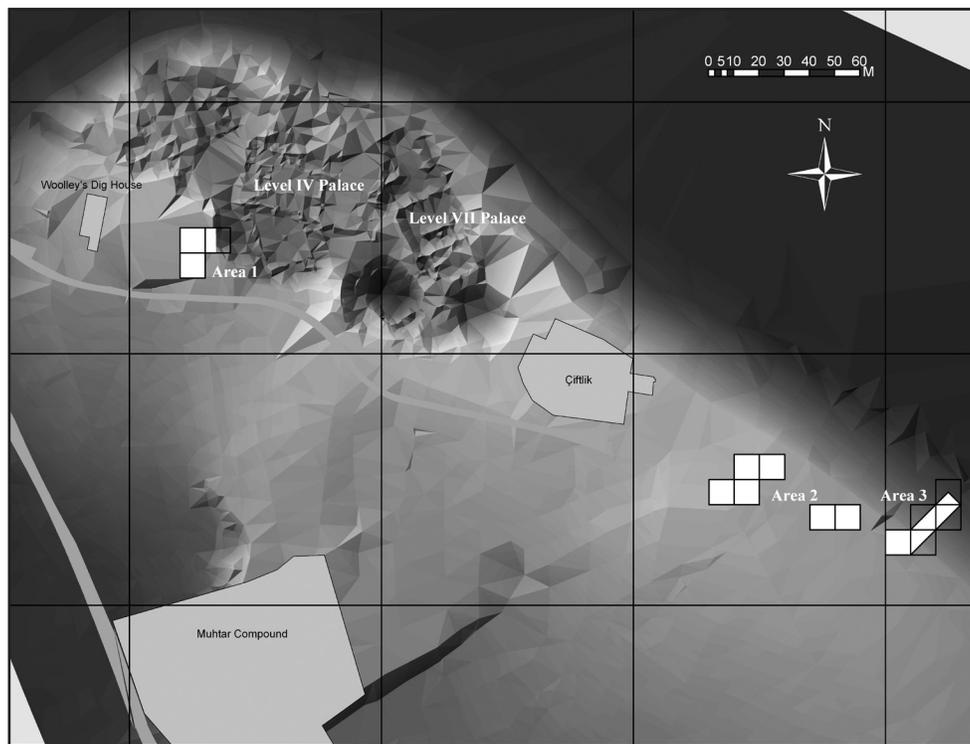


Figure 1. The northern part of Tell Atchana (ancient Alalakh). This plan shows the three areas excavated during the 2003 season. Plan by Aaron Burke

(continued on page 3)

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S STUDY

When most people think about the work of the Oriental Institute, the images that come to mind are either archaeological fieldwork — excavation and survey — or the painstaking analyses of texts to reconstruct the history and ideology of ancient Near Eastern cultures. Certainly these activities are central to the Institute's mission. However, a third crucial aspect of our work needs to be emphasized as well: the preservation, recording, and conservation of the archaeological and textual record of the Near East.

Conservation and preservation are probably the most pressing archaeological needs of our time. The destruction of the material remains of the ancient Near East is proceeding at a horrifying rate. Hundreds of settlement mounds on the Har-ran Plain of Turkey, or the Susiana region of southwest Iran have been bulldozed flat — eradicated in order to make these fertile agricultural areas more suitable for large-scale mechanized irrigation agriculture. Enormous hydroelectric dams on the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates rivers have flooded vast areas crucial for our understanding of the early civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia. Although the governments of these countries have in most cases initiated international archaeological salvage projects, the constraints of time and funding permitted rescue excavations at only a few dozen sites out of the literally hundreds of mounds in each dam reservoir. At the same time, illicit excavations are decimating large numbers of sites — most notably in Iraq, as looters mine the ancient urban centers of that country for artifacts to sell on the international illicit art market. Tragically, this wave of destruction has even overtaken Nippur, the focus of Oriental Institute fieldwork for many decades.

I am proud to say that Oriental Institute researchers are engaged in a variety of conservation projects that are quite literally saving the past for the future. Laura D'Alessandro and her colleagues Alison Whyte and Vanessa Muros preserve and stabilize the artifacts in our own museum, while training the next generation of conservators, such as our Getty Intern Sarah Barack. Laura is developing a proposal for a long-term program to train conservation interns from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, as a means to strengthen the local conservation infrastructure in these areas of greatest need.

Other crucial preservation and conservation work focuses on manuscripts. The Oriental Institute's Syriac Manuscript Initiative, under the direction of Drs. Stuart Creason and Abdul Masih Sa'adi, has started to visit monastery libraries in Turkey and Syria to collect digital images of key texts in this important Aramaic dialect.

But the largest scale and longest term preservation/conservation project of the Oriental Institute is undoubtedly the Epigraphic Survey, based at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt. By the early years of the twentieth century, James Henry Breasted, the founder of the Oriental Institute, saw the urgent need to preserve the most important monuments of ancient Egypt by recording their reliefs and inscriptions. That need has only increased in the last few decades, as air pollution, salinization, and groundwater changes have begun to threaten these monuments as never before.

I was fortunate enough to be able to visit Chicago House this winter, to see firsthand the work that Epigraphic Survey Director Dr. Ray Johnson and his colleagues are doing at Luxor Temple and at the smaller Amun Temple at Medinet Habu. It is extraordinary. At Medinet Habu, a dedicated staff of epigraphers, photographers, artists, and conservators are stabilizing and recording the remarkably complex temple reliefs, cleaning the accumulated soot and grime to rediscover the traces of the original paint on the carvings. At Luxor Temple, Ray and his colleagues have constructed numerous water-proof "mastabas" or platforms, to raise the hundreds of thousands of inscribed stone block fragments off the ground, where water and salinity have been eating away the inscriptions and artwork. Their ultimate goal is to reassemble as much as possible of these inscriptions, and whenever possible, restore them to their original locations. Preservation activities of this sort are now considered one of the highest priorities by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities. Fortunately, our own government, through USAID, also recognizes the importance of conservation and has been generously supporting the work of Chicago House.

These few examples of the different kinds of preservation and conservation work by the Oriental Institute are heartening in showing what can be done to save these irreplaceable remnants of ancient Near Eastern civilizations for future study. These artifacts, manuscripts, and monuments are the patrimony of world culture. It is our responsibility to do everything we can to protect them. Every small victory in that struggle is to be treasured.



Gil J. Stein

tory, dining hall/laboratory, and office — were erected over the summer thanks to the extraordinary efforts of senior field supervisor Amir Sumaka'i Fink and his co-workers. Remarkably, the dig house compound, started in mid-July, was completed by the end of August with running water, electricity, and all necessary furnishings, ready for the arriving team. We rented two additional houses in the village of Tayfur Sökmen and another in the nearby city of Antakya (ancient Antioch) to serve as extra dormitories and storage depots. Three other projects — the University of Toronto's Tell Tayinat project, directed by Professor Timothy Harrison (University of Chicago, Ph.D. 1995); the Tell Kurdu Project; and the Amuq Valley Survey — are partners with us in this new "archaeological village." We are now open for serious archaeological business!

Alalakh is located near the Orontes (Asi) River, about 12 miles east of Antakya (Antioch). The site measures 750 × 325 meters, with a total area of about 22 hectares (54 acres). After clearing the weeds and brush, we laid out fourteen 10 × 10 meter excavation squares in three areas unexcavated by Woolley (fig. 1). In our excavations we are not depending on Woolley's analysis but are developing our own fine-grained stratigraphy, which we can later compare to Woolley's strata. In our first season we have already identified several phases of architecture (named Local Phase 1, 2, etc.). These are tentatively dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age. The latest phase may even belong to the early Iron Age, although we need to do further analyses of the pottery and stratigraphy and obtain dates for our radiocarbon samples before we can be sure.

Gabrielle Novacek, the supervisor of Area 1, oversaw three of the 10 × 10 squares. Eudora Bernsen and Adam Miglio served as square supervisors in this area (all three are graduate students at the University of Chicago). Area 1 is in the palace-temple zone on the north end of the site, in a spot where Woolley had left several hundred square meters of earth unexcavated next to his dig house. We suspected that we might find here the southwest wing of the "Hittite fortress" that



Figure 2. The excavation squares of Area 1 are at the bottom left. The Level VII gate and Level IV palace, excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley in the 1930s and 1940s, are at the top right. Photograph by Nita Lee Roberts

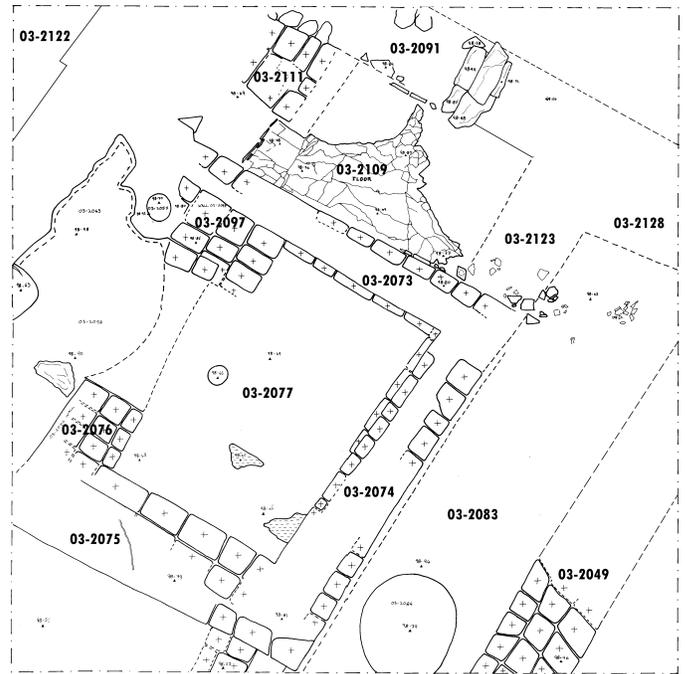
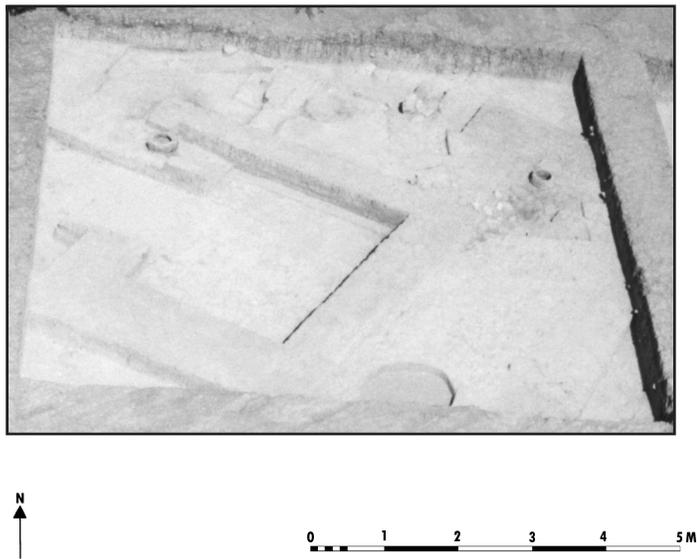
Woolley assigned to his Level II/III period (fourteenth century BC), and we were not disappointed. After several weeks of digging, we finally exposed the eroded tops of thick mudbrick walls encasing rectangular chambers that we will excavate in the future (fig. 2). These walls and chambers line up with Woolley's plan of the Level II/III fortress, whose massive walls are reminiscent of Hittite monumental architecture, reflecting Hittite suzerainty over Alalakh during the last two centuries of its existence.

As expected, many of our initial finds in this area came from thick deposits of highly disturbed topsoil that covered the monumental building and thus have no contextual provenance. Of particular interest are the abundant copper-based metallurgical residues and indications of iron-working. After some initial puzzlement we deduced that Woolley had used this area as a sherd yard where his pottery was sorted, which explains the striking concentrations of diagnostic potsherds we unearthed in the topsoil of Area 1, having in effect sifted through Woolley's trash. Unfortunately this pottery had long since been removed from its original context and thus is of little value archaeologically.

Found in this area out of its original context, a beautiful cylinder seal was analyzed by Dr. Dominique Collon of the British Museum, who is a member of our expedition. The seal is made of glass, a precious material at the time, and is in a quite deteriorated condition. The top scene shows a bearded sphinx with a horned cap and the lower scene presents two kilted and bearded men with Mittanni caps facing one another, clutching the Tree of Life. It is likely that the partial cuneiform inscription gave the name of the seal's owner.

Excavations in Area 2, in the east-central part of the site, were supervised by Amir Sumaka'i Fink. Six 10 × 10 squares were laid out in this area just south of a cluster of "private houses" exposed by Woolley in the 1930s and 1940s, not far from the northeastern slope of the mound. The square supervi-

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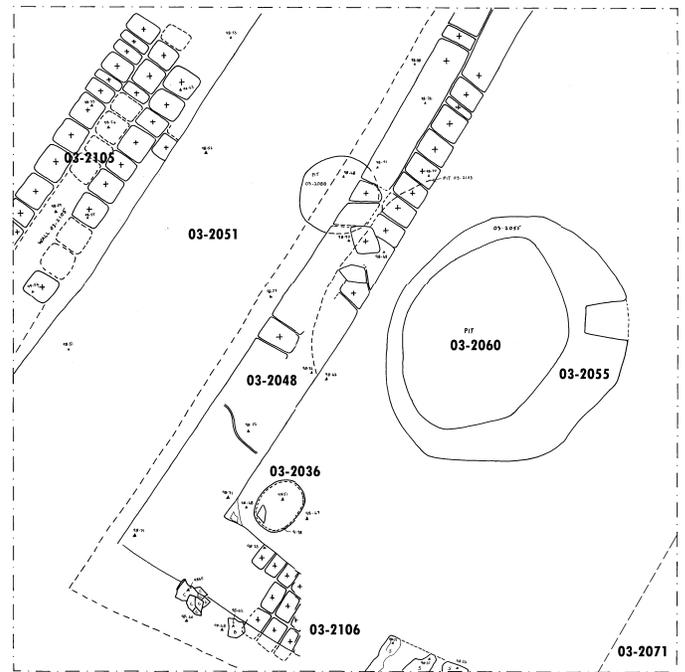
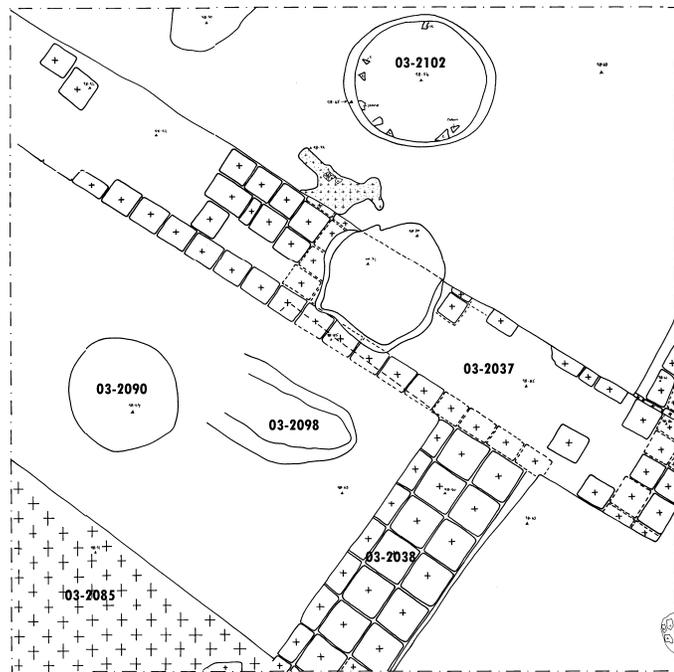


Figure 3. Plan shows two buildings in Area 2 separated by a street. The buildings belong to Local Phase 2. The northernmost excavation square is also shown in the inset photograph (not to scale). Plan by Brenda Craddock and Can Ercan. Photograph by Nita Lee Roberts

sors in Area 2 were Katherine Strange Burke, Glenn (Joey) Corbett, Leann Pace, and Bike Yazıcıoğlu (all graduate students at the University of Chicago), as well as Murat Akar (a graduate student at Middle East Technical University in Ankara) and Sarah Miglio (a graduate student at Wheaton College).

We detected two phases of settlement in Area 2 very close to the modern surface. The lower, earlier phase was probably inhabited at the close of the Late Bronze Age (Woolley's Level I), just before the great political and economic collapse that put

an end to both the Hittite empire and the city of Alalakh. In this phase we exposed two large, multi-roomed mudbrick houses separated by a street (fig. 3). In one of the houses we came across a plastered bathroom, a luxury that was enjoyed by many households in Late Bronze Age Alalakh, as Woolley's excavations showed.

Cautiously comparing our architectural phases to Woolley's, we can say that our finds in the upper, later phase in Area 2 shed light on Woolley's topmost and ephemeral "Level

0.” This was understood by him to represent a brief period of occupation during the twelfth century BC, after the collapse of the ruling dynasty; however, Woolley found no architecture to go with this phase, only burials. Using a slower and more controlled excavation method than he employed we were able to detect a badly preserved, but nonetheless coherent architectural phase just below the modern surface. The buildings in this phase are quite different from the phase before it and may well belong to the post-collapse period, that is, the early Iron Age. One of the most interesting discoveries in this final phase is a multichambered pottery kiln. We are now in the process of analyzing the ceramic assemblage and other materials in Area 2 in order to elucidate this last, post-Hittite settlement of Alalakh, of which very little was known before.



Figure 4. A clay goddess figurine unearthed in Area 3. Photograph by Nita Lee Roberts

Area 3, straddling the top of the slope along the eastern edge of the site, was supervised by Aaron Burke, assisted by square supervisors Jacob Lauinger and Edward Stratford (all three are University of Chicago graduate students). Our excavations in this area were designed to expose the sequence of fortifications of the city. A 10 × 10 square was laid out on the crest of the slope but, to our surprise, we found here not a city wall but a large kitchen or workshop with vessels for preparing and serving food lying next to a horseshoe-shaped ceramic hearth. This hearth or oven was extremely well preserved and sat intact upon the floor. Other fragmentary hearths were found in the area, indicating a large scale of production. Preserved on the floor were several clay andirons, four basalt grinding bowls, flint debitage, and twenty-four intact or restorable ceramic vessels. The repeated relining of the intact hearth with successive layers of clay indicates that this workshop continued in use for a substantial length of time.

In excavation squares farther downslope in Area 3 we did find evidence of fortifications in the form of a large mudbrick wall, but this wall is much lower and more deeply buried than we expected and is probably to be dated to the Middle Bronze Age. In the fill above this wall a terra-cotta figurine was found (fig. 4). According to our conservator, Franca Cole, this nude female “Astarte”-type figurine had lead-lined eye sockets that would have given its inlaid glass eyes (now lost) a distinct sparkle.

In Area 3 we did not find Late Bronze Age fortifications from the latest period of occupation at Alalakh, contrary to our expectations. But we did find ten burials and evidence of many more eroded or disturbed burials on the slope, possibly indicating the presence of a cemetery in this area during the last few centuries of the city’s existence. This would have important implications for the size of Alalakh in the Hittite period.

Of the burials in Area 3 one stood out as special: a tomb with multiple individuals and special grave goods. This tomb has a plastered superstructure on a cobblestone foundation. On

the top of the tomb were two columns of baked clay tile headstones stacked four high and a row of cobblestones. Within the plastered superstructure, which may once have encased a wooden coffin, four individuals were laid tête-bêche, each separated from the other by fragments of broken plaster (fig. 5). Individual number 2 was buried with many gold, carnelian, ivory, and amber beads (fig. 6). A number of gold appliqués decorated with raised rosettes were found around individual number 3, probably from a now disintegrated cloth or headdress placed over the head. Some beads and appliqués came from around the torso, which suggests an elaborately beaded and gold garment or headdress. There was a gold ring still on the finger of number 3 and gold sheet earrings or hair rings by the skull. A number of copper-based toggle pins were found as well as a silver one, all used to fasten the burial garments. Some of the pottery came in pairs: two Cypriot base ring jugs, two red lustrous ware spindle flasks, and two trefoil-mouth buff jars. In addition, a leg of cattle and numerous bird bones were found in the tomb. The spindle flasks would have contained beer or wine and the jars would have held other liquids. It seems that these individuals were buried with all the sustenance they needed in the afterlife.

When one thinks of Alalakh one thinks about cuneiform tablets. We found two fragments of a single tablet in Area 2. The first fragment was found in topsoil on the first day of excavation



Figure 5. Professor Aslihan Yener and members of the Tell Atchana expedition carefully excavate a unique plastered tomb that contained four skeletons. Photograph by Nita Lee Roberts

and was registered as object number 1 in our catalog of small finds. The second fragment was found two weeks later. Our epigrapher Jacob Lauinger immediately identified this tablet as a lexical text containing a Sumerian bird list. Another tablet found in Area 1 is an economic text. Rounding out our corpus of inscriptions from the first excavation season are two clay envelope fragments and two Hittite hieroglyphic stamp seals.

The renewed excavation of Alalakh has generated considerable interest among those aware of the importance of this site and the potential for fascinating new discoveries. In our 2003 season we had busloads of visitors from academic institutions in Israel and Germany. We were also visited by Turkish friends

and colleagues from Istanbul, Ankara, and Antakya, including a group of faculty members from Mustafa Kemal University, the local university of the state of Hatay. The state governor also paid us a visit, together with members of the local press. During the last week of excavations we hosted a documentary film crew from public television station WTTW in Chicago. WTTW is producing a film about the Oriental Institute and chose to visit Alalakh and the Epigraphic Survey (Chicago House) in Egypt. The film crew was guided by Sel Yackley, chairwoman of the Chicago Amuq Committee and a longtime supporter of the Amuq Valley Regional Projects.



Figure 6. Gold, carnelian, ivory, and amber jewelry was found in Area 3 inside the plastered tomb. Photograph by Nita Lee Roberts

Our exploration of Alalakh will continue in a second field season from August 15th to October 15th, 2004. We eagerly anticipate a visit by the Oriental Institute tour group that will be led by Gil J. Stein, Director of the Oriental Institute, as well as several other visitors who have told us of their interest in traveling to Alalakh. In the coming season we will complete the analysis of the large quantity of excavated material collected in 2003 and undertake additional excavations to connect Area 2 with Area 3, in order to solve some pressing stratigraphic problems. A project is also in the works to renovate the famous Woolley dig house, which still stands on the site and was recently declared a historical heritage site. Once the dig house is renovated, it will make an ideal visitor's center, complete with restroom facilities, a watchman's residence, an exhibit area, and an on-site depot.

All in all, our first season was a resounding success. Alalakh lived up to its reputation in terms of compelling finds, and we were delighted that we were able to operate on a large scale with a diverse team who lived and worked together very efficiently and with good cheer. Congratulations to all who participated and made this a special excavation!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the authors, the 2003 Tell Atchana/Alalakh staff consisted of the following people: Eudora Bernsen, Aaron Burke, Katherine Strange Burke, Glenn (Joey) Corbett, Jacob Lauinger, Adam Miglio, Gabrielle Novacek, Leann Pace, Samantha Stewart, Edward Stratford, and Bike Yazıcıoğlu (University of Chicago); Hatice Pamir, Tülin Arslanoğlu, Mustafa Baltalı, Sedat Biçer, Can Ercan, Bilge Gürkan, Murat İvecan, Adem Öncü, and Ahmet Ünal (Mustafa Kemal University); Amy Gansell and Stine Rossel (Harvard University); Susan Helft (University of Pennsylvania); Fazıl Açıkgöz (Niğde Museum); Nita Lee Roberts (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University); Murat Akar (Middle East Technical, Ankara); Katrin Hieke (Tübingen University); Joseph Keller; Sarah Miglio (Wheaton College); Dominique Collon (British Museum, London); and Brenda Craddock, Franca Cole, and Phil Andrews (U.K.).

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J. David Schloen is Associate Professor of Syro-Palestinian Archaeology in the Oriental Institute and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Before joining the Tell Atchana project he excavated for twelve years at the site of Ashkelon in Israel. His research focuses on the society and economy of the Bronze Age Levant.

Amir Sumaka'i Fink is a Research Project Professional at the Oriental Institute, contributing to the study and publication of the Tell Atchana excavations. Having earned an M.A. in Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Chicago, he is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Tel Aviv University, where he is preparing a dissertation on the Late Bronze Age period at Tell Atchana.

BISMAYA 1903: THE FIRST MESOPOTAMIAN EXCAVATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LILIAN CROPSEY AND PEGGY GRANT

The history of the first University of Chicago excavation in Mesopotamia in 1903 is filled with intrigue. The story involves heroes, villains, and corrupt officials and ends in scandal rooted in nineteenth century regional politics. However, the University of Chicago's excavation was not the first American one.¹



Figure 1. Edgar James Banks

The first major American excavation in Mesopotamia was begun in 1888 under the auspices of the Babylonian Exploration Fund (BEF), a consortium of Biblical scholars, explorers, and financiers. The first two seasons were led by John Punnett Peters, a renowned Old Testament scholar and archaeologist.² The BEF applied to the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople — for Mesopotamia was then part of the Ottoman Empire — for permission to excavate at Nippur. To facilitate the project, the BEF signed a contract with the University of Pennsylvania that stipulated that the university would provide a suitable museum building for the housing of the artifacts that the expedition hoped to recover.

From 1888 until 1900 the BEF worked at Nippur. Robert Francis Harper, then Professor of Assyriology at Yale and the younger brother of the first president of the new University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper, was part of the team during the first season as was H. V. Hilprecht of the University of Pennsylvania. The excavation did much to elevate the status of the University of Pennsylvania in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies. Not only did it offer academic programs in the discipline, but the artifacts from Nippur displayed in its museum created additional interest and excitement.

Edgar James Banks (fig. 1), a young American Assyriologist, was also interested and excited about the possibility of excavating in the “Bible lands.” In 1898 he was successful in obtaining a consular position in Baghdad in the hope of discovering sites that could be excavated. The Ottoman government had emended and enforced an 1887 law that consular officials would not be able to obtain permission to excavate. So in 1899 Banks resigned from his consular position and returned to New York in time to help form a new “private” committee.

The committee was established in New York in 1899 to raise funds to explore Ur, the legendary home of Abraham and Sarah. The president of the committee was William Rainey Harper.³ Other influential members included Peters (the archaeologist who excavated at Nippur), President Henry Morton of the Stevens Institute, philanthropist Isidor Straus, and other distinguished scholars. The committee was anxious to compete with the University of Pennsylvania in the search for discoveries that would shed new light on the history of the ancient Near East as well as to bring back artifacts to display to interested donors.

This committee appointed Edgar James Banks as field director. The committee raised enough money for Banks to return to Constantinople in 1900 to get permission to excavate Ur in a very short time.

The “very short time” dragged on for three years during which time the chairman of the committee, President Henry Morton, died and the committee disbanded. Banks still persevered in his efforts to obtain permission to dig at Ur. He supported himself by teaching history at Roberts College in Constantinople. His friendship with J. Frank Leishman, the wealthy minister to Turkey, led to an offer of financial support if an excavation permit was obtained. Banks tried to obtain a permit to excavate other sites in addition to Ur, including the little known site at Bismaya in an inhospitable part of the Mesopotamian desert.

William Rainey Harper was anxious for the new University of Chicago to participate in the exploration of the “Bible lands.” He was successful in obtaining funds from Rockefeller. President Harper arrived in Constantinople in 1903 to apply for permission to excavate Larsa (Sankera) on behalf of the university.

He offered Banks the position of field director for whatever site a permit might be granted. Banks gladly accepted.

Banks recalls the event:

"In 1900 I was sent by a private committee to Constantinople to obtain permission to excavate in Babylonia. For three years I was unsuccessful, but finally obtained permission to excavate at Bismaya. The permission was obtained at a cost to the committee and myself of several thousand dollars, and was issued in my own name. However, the committee, discouraged by the delay, disorganized, but Mr. Leishman, then Minister to Turkey, offered to defray the expenses of the expedition to the extent of \$25,000. Instead, President Harper came to Constantinople about that time to obtain permission to excavate in Babylonia, and an arrangement was made that

I be taken onto the staff of the university, and that I use the *iradé* [permission] for its benefit. R. F. Harper was to be the home director, and I was to have full charge of the work in the field. President Harper assured me that I should have full credit for my work, and that his brother would be just and honorable in his dealings."⁴



Figure 2. Statue of Da-udu. Bismaya. Limestone. Istanbul Eski Şark Museum 3235

An excavation permit might never have been granted if American gunboats did not arrive in Beirut. Because of a misunderstood cable message, it was reported that a consular officer had been killed. This turned out to be false but the Navy was in transit before the mistake was noted. Under pressure from Leishman to avoid further diplomatic embarrassment, the Ottoman government finally issued a permit to excavate the little-known site at Bismaya (ancient Adab). Although the permission was

issued in Banks's name rather than in the name of the university, in 1903 the first expedition of the University of Chicago was ready to begin.

The *firman* (the official written permit) stated that all antiquities were the property of the museum in Constantinople, that work should commence within three months or the permission would be withdrawn, and that the permit was valid for two years. The expedition was to fund the salary and traveling expenses of a commissioner appointed by the museum in Constantinople to assure that all provisions of the *firman* were followed.

The Ottoman museum in Constantinople appointed a young man, Haider Bey, as commissioner to oversee the work. Mr. Leishman insisted that Banks take with him a *kavass*,⁵ Ahmed, who would serve as porter, major domo, and bodyguard. Ahmed had been the *kavass* at the legation and would become Banks's most trusted ally and friend. The three men began the arduous trip to Bismaya, first by train to Beirut and then to Damascus to

arrange for a carriage to cross the desert to Baghdad, and from there to Bismaya.

Banks sent a report every week to his director, Robert Francis Harper, describing the progress, the frustrations, and the successes of the excavation.⁶ After twenty-eight days traveling by horse-drawn carriage, Banks reached Baghdad, presented his letters of introduction to the proper authorities, and made the necessary purchases. In his first report from Baghdad, Banks assured Harper that he had arranged with the American consul at Baghdad, Rudolph Hurner,⁷ "to receive any goods which I may wish to send to the University of Chicago and to forward them with carpets to his agents in New York ... I shall take all necessary precautions here and of course the arrival of such objects should in no way be made public" (Report 4).

By December 1903, Banks reached Bismaya (approximately 50 km southeast of Nippur) with supplies, housing construction materials, and a promise from the sheik of the El Bedier Arabs to supply workmen and protection. Fortunately water was found in the waterless mounds of Bismaya by digging wells in the bed of an old canal. The excavations started on the 25th of December — the first week of excavation surpassed Banks's expectations. He found no glazed pottery on the surface of the mounds, from which he concluded that the site had not been inhabited since Babylonian times. Despite sandstorms, rain, and the inexperienced El Bedier workmen, Banks proudly reported finding a gold leaf with inscription, ten palaces (or eight palaces and two temples), inscribed bricks of at least five varieties, a cemetery, a mudbrick tomb, and fragments of marble and terra-cotta vases, among many other artifacts.

The work was continuously interrupted by the arrival of various marauding tribes who brandished rifles and insisted that since Bismaya was in their district, Banks must employ their men on the dig and dismiss the El Bedier. Their sheiks would, of course, receive one third or one half of the pay of their workmen. However, Banks had promised the El Bedier tribe that they would have the exclusive right to the jobs at the excavation. In order to avoid tribal warfare, the El Bedier agreed that some workmen from other tribes could be employed.

By the middle of January, Banks was hoping that an engineer would soon arrive to make surveys and plans of the temple mound and to photograph artifacts and the excavation. He also wrote, "I believe that the ruin contains large marble statues and other objects of great value, and a proper time to discover them will arrive" (Report 7).

That time arrived on January 26, 1904. As Banks described the discovery ten years later in his book, a workman, working in the trench containing the "dump," whispered to Banks that a statue was embedded in the dirt. Banks quickly covered the exposed area, calmed the men, sent them to another trench, and in

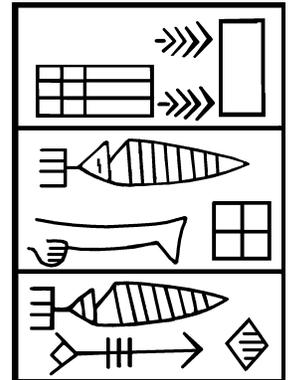


Figure 3. Sumerian inscription of Da-udu. Bismaya

the evening, returned to uncover a headless “marble” statue.⁸ With the help of the commissioner and a guard, he wrapped it and brought it into the house to clean and study it. Banks translated the early Sumerian cuneiform inscription on its arm which identified the statue as a king named Da-udu, of the city of Adab, and the temple from which the statue had been toppled as Esar or Emach (figs. 2–3).

About a month later, more excitement and celebration occurred when a round object covered in clay turned out to be the head of the statue. The total height of the statue now reached 78 cm, about two and a half feet. Banks claimed to have discovered the “oldest statue in the world.” An article with this title appeared in *the American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* and, shortly afterwards, an article entitled “Statue of the Sumerian King David” appeared in *Scientific American*.⁹ The discovery of this statue played an important role in the fate of the excavation.

Every week Banks reported finds to the younger Harper. The temple “dump” also revealed a fragment of a “peculiar blue sandstone vase.” It was “richly engraved in high relief, representing six perfect and two less than perfect grotesque figures ... The eyes, hair, bracelets and dresses were originally inlaid with some other material” (Report 10; fig. 4).



Figure 4. (top) Fragment of inlaid vessel depicting a group of musicians. Chlorite and limestone or marble. (bottom) Sketch of design. Bismaya. Early Dynastic I period, ca. 2800 BC. OIM A 195A–C

Many parts of other statues were uncovered. The heads showed the typical Sumerian round shape with large eyes and eyebrows incised but with the inlays missing. An exciting find from a later period was a perfectly preserved head in an entirely different style that Banks called “a bearded, alabaster head of a Semite”¹⁰ (fig. 5).

As the weather became increasingly hot, basketfuls of vase fragments, seals, sealings, and inscribed tablets (some in fragments and some complete) were collected, and the weekly reports contained long lists of the daily finds. Sandstorms were frequent, as was the necessity of driving off bands of marauders. On April 22, Banks wrote, “On account of the insecurity I deem it advisable to ship the most valuable objects as soon as possible” (Report 16).

Banks did not forget his obligation to supply objects to the Haskell Oriental Museum in Chicago. He concealed some of the most valuable objects from the commissioner Haider Bey, who was known for accepting bribes. In one letter, Banks asked for a Smith and Wesson revolver to be shipped to him as a present for Haider Bey. He is an ideal commissioner,” wrote Banks, “and rather than change it may be advisable, if necessary, to make him a present more substantial than a bottle of arak. He is very anxious to have a Smith and Wesson revolver, No. 38, made of gun metal and of the latest pattern, with a leather case and cartridge belt. Should you deem it advisable to have this present sent to him as a gift coming from the University it would be of material service to the expedition” (Report 12).

Enclosed in Report 8 was a “private” letter to President Harper:

Bismaya, Feb. 4, 1904

Dear Pres. Harper,

I have been able to obtain the greater part of the good objects which have been found, and have placed them in safety to send to the University of Chicago. The Commissioner knows nothing of these objects, and when I have secured enough to fill a date box I will ship them. It will be very essential that no extensive publicity be given to these objects for several years. I’m sending designs or descriptions of all the objects which I have secreted, I will mark each one with a blue pencil and it will be understood that such objects should not be published at present. If the designs are not marked it will be understood that the Commissioner has seen them and that publicity can cause no damage. However, I hope to be able to take all good objects to Chicago in time, either by satisfying the Commissioner or by special *iradé* of the Sultan. To secrete large objects now is impossible; they can be obtained by *iradé*. The gold leaf should have been marked with a blue pencil, and although the Commissioner knows of the colored vase and cylinder, I shall be able to get them both a little later. I now have also about 30 tablets, all perfect, ready to ship.

I am each day congratulating myself on the selection of this ruin which is proving to be the best yet excavated in Babylonia.

Very Sincerely,

Edgar James Banks¹¹

Despite the intolerably hot weather, with temperatures often reaching over 100 degrees, more inscribed tablets were found, many of them in perfect condition. Banks called the writing “ancient, apparently from the third millennium BC” (Report 18). By May, he reported that a total of 1,860 tablets had been uncovered. Banks worried about the expense of extra workmen needed and soldiers to guard the site. He wrote to R. F. Harper: “An increase of workmen would decrease the dangers to which we are exposed. To prolong the work here after two years ... seems an unnecessary expense of life and health, for there is no part of Mesopotamia more inhospitable than this ... I believe it is for the best interests of the University to complete the work here while we have the *iradé*” (Report 14). But the hot weather caused the men to lag and to leave for cooler areas. Banks decided to spend the summer in Baghdad, transcribing tablets, writing the final report on the temple and, with the help of Mr. Hurner, sending off the antiquities that had not been registered as property of the museum in Constantinople.

Before leaving Bismaya for Baghdad, Banks wrote “I am storing all the objects in the bathroom and am bricking it up, and also I am bricking up the antiquity room and the windows of the house” (Report 22). At the beginning of July in Baghdad, Banks enclosed in his report a bill of lading for two boxes “stated to contain honey and manna. This mistake will have to be corrected in the Chicago custom house.” He also listed the contents of the two cases and promised that a small box of the six best cylinder seals would follow “as soon as opportunity offers” (Report 25).

But what became of Banks’s most exciting discovery — the “oldest statue in the world?” The commissioner, Haider Bey, was well aware of its presence at Bismaya. The news of its discovery had greatly interested the museum director in Constantinople, as well as the authorities in Chicago. The Harpers could undoubtedly visualize its place of honor in the Haskell Oriental Museum. Worried about the safety of the stored antiquities when he received a report of heavy tribal fighting in and around Bismaya, Banks sent his trusted *kavass*, Ahmed, to be sure that all was secure. With him went Hussein, the *kavass* of Hurner, the acting American consul in Baghdad. Banks’s instructions to the men were to rescue the statue and send it to Baghdad if there seemed to be any potential for looting.

The men arrived back in Baghdad, bringing the statue and news of the fighting. Tribal warfare was expected, and Banks was convinced the excavations would have to stop until the danger was over. Ahmed and Hussein, wrote Banks,

“were of the opinion that the situation justified them in taking it [the statue] away. Evidently it would have been stolen or broken up sooner or later. It is now boxed and sealed and stored in a small bedroom in Mr. Hurner’s house. I might have sent it from the country by this boat but before doing so I wish to see what action the authorities at Constantinople will take. If there is trouble it may be necessary to cause it to be found, but if the loss is attributed to the Saadum [an Arab tribe], as it is almost certain to be, we may send it away when all danger is over” (Report 31).

Banks’s optimism that the loss of the statue would be attributed to the Saadum was irrelevant. The authorities in Constantinople were determined to close the American excavation. Boxes were seized and examined to see if antiquities were being shipped away. These boxes proved to contain only the excavation engineer’s curios and belongings. After putting his wife on a boat at Basra bound for Marseille, Banks arrived at Bismaya on September 18 with a caravan of twenty-two mules and supplies for the season. When the commissioner, Haider Bey, arrived on September 20, he found that the house had been robbed and that the statue was missing. Haider Bey may have believed that the statue had been taken during tribal warfare, but he demanded a large sum of money, threatening to “make trouble” for Banks. Banks rejected Bey’s threat (Report 33).

Constantinople ordered the excavation to be temporarily closed. Banks packed up, dismissed the men, and returned to Baghdad. Other accusations of theft were manufactured but were discredited. Banks expected that the excavations would be resumed as soon as the tribal warfare ended, and he added in the same report to R. F. Harper “If by any chance we should not settle this matter as we hope and it be shown that blame rests

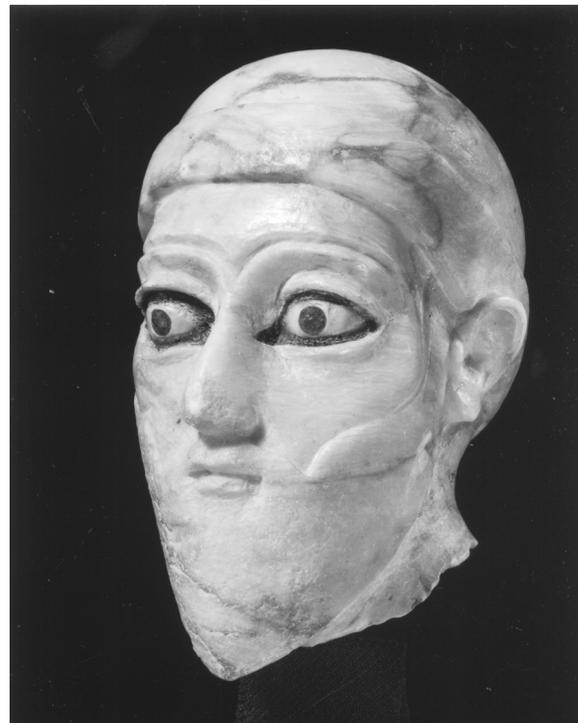


Figure 5. “Bismaya Head,” from male statuette. Ivory, bitumen, modern blue fill. Bismaya. Dynasty of Akkad, ca. 2334–2184 BC. OIM A 173

upon me, I sincerely trust that you will have no knowledge of the affair and will place all responsibility on me.”

While Banks waited for the permission to resume the excavation, he received word from R. F. Harper that he had gone to London to “arrange about the honey and the manna” as the

(continued on page 18)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 2004

- | | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|
| | | 22 Thursday | Life in Ancient Israel (cont.) |
| 4 Sunday | Movie: Saving the Sphinx
See page 16 for additional information | 24 Saturday | The Amarna Letters (cont.) |
| 11 Sunday | Movie: Nefertari: The Search for Eternal Life
See page 16 for additional information | 25 Sunday | Movie: Children of the Sun
See page 16 for additional information |
| 14 Wednesday | Cultures of the Silk Road
Ilya Yakubovich
Adult Education Course
Oriental Institute
Wednesdays
April 14–June 2
7:00 PM–9:00 PM
See page 15 for additional information | 28 Wednesday | Cultures of the Silk Road (cont.) |
| | Members Lecture: “Working in the Shadow of the Step Pyramid: Insights into Burial Practices in Middle Kingdom Saqqara”
David P. Silverman
8:00 PM, Breasted Hall
Light Refreshments to follow
See page 13 for additional information | 29 Thursday | Life in Ancient Israel (cont.) |
| 15 Thursday | Life in Ancient Israel
Aaron A. Burke
Adult Education Course
Oriental Institute
Thursdays
April 15–June 3
7:00 PM–9:00 PM
See page 15 for additional information | 1 Saturday | Travel Program: Milwaukee
See page 21 for additional information |
| 17 Saturday | The Amarna Letters: Diplomatic Correspondence and Foreign Intrigue in the Ancient Near East
Dennis Campbell
Adult Education Course
Oriental Institute
Saturdays
April 17–June 12
10:00 AM–12:00 NOON
See page 16 for additional information | 2 Sunday | Movie: Alexander the Great and the Battle of Issus
See page 13 for additional information |
| 18 Sunday | Movie: Mesopotamia: I Have Conquered the River
See page 16 for additional information | 5 Wednesday | Cultures of the Silk Road (cont.) |
| 21 Wednesday | Cultures of the Silk Road (cont.) | 6 Thursday | Life in Ancient Israel (cont.) |
| | | 8 Saturday | The Amarna Letters (cont.) |
| | | 9 Sunday | HAPPY MUMMIES DAY!
Family Event
Oriental Institute
1:30–3:30 PM
See page 17 for additional information |
| | | 12 Wednesday | Cultures of the Silk Road (cont.) |
| | | 13 Thursday | Life in Ancient Israel (cont.) |
| | | 15 Saturday | The Amarna Letters (cont.) |
| | | 16 Sunday | Lecture: King Sargon’s Palace
Laura D’Alessandro
Oriental Institute
1:30 PM
See page 13 for additional information |

MAY 2004

19 Wednesday	Cultures of the Silk Road (cont.)		The Amarna Letters (cont.)
20 Thursday	Oriental Institute Gala Annual Dinner at the Drake Hotel See page 19 for additional information	6 Sunday	Hyde Park/University of Chicago Arts Fest Treasure hunt, gallery activities, and festival of tales for families 12:00 NOON–4:00 PM See page 17 for additional information
20 Thursday	Life in Ancient Israel (cont.)		
22 Saturday	The Amarna Letters (cont.)	12 Saturday	The Amarna Letters (ends)
23 Sunday	Movie: Islam: Empire of Faith, Part I See page 13 for additional information	13 Sunday	Movie: The Dead Sea Scrolls: Secrets of the Caves See page 13 for additional information
26 Wednesday	Cultures of the Silk Road (cont.)		
27 Thursday	Life in Ancient Israel (cont.)		
29 Saturday	The Amarna Letters: NO CLASS MEETING		
30 Sunday	Movie: Islam: Empire of Faith, Part II See page 13 for additional information		

ALL PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

JUNE 2004

2 Wednesday	Film Premiere: Persepolis: A New Perspective Oriental Institute, Breasted Hall 8:00 PM Produced for the Iran Cultural Heritage Organization, 2003 See page 17 for additional information
	Cultures of the Silk Road (ends)
3 Thursday	Life in Ancient Israel (ends)
5 Saturday	Hyde Park/University of Chicago Arts Fest Oriental Institute Gallery Tours, Documentary Films 10:00 AM–4:00 PM See page 17 for additional information

WTTW11**THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE FEATURED ON WTTW, CHANNEL 11!**

Watch your television listings for a new hour-long special on the work of the Oriental Institute, and a half-hour segment of "Chicago Stories," entitled "Pioneer to the Past: James Henry Breasted," that will be broadcast in late May. These new programs, produced by WTTW Chicago, were funded by generous grants from ComEd, An Exelon Company, and LaSalle Bank.

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LECTURES

MEMBERS LECTURE

WORKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE STEP PYRAMID: INSIGHTS INTO BURIAL PRACTICES IN MIDDLE KINGDOM SAQQARA

David P. Silverman

Wednesday, April 14

8:00 PM, Breasted Hall

Light Refreshments Follow

For more than a decade, the Egyptian Section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum has been working in the shadow of the Step Pyramid at Saqqara under the direction of Dr. David Silverman. Dr. Silverman will present an illustrated lecture on the results of this work and discuss how the analysis of the tomb plans, the program of decoration, and the orientation of the structures reveal the motivations of tomb builders.

David P. Silverman is the Eckley Brinton Coxe, Jr. Professor of Egyptology in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Curator-in-Charge of the Egyptian Collection in the University of Pennsylvania Museum, University of Pennsylvania; and Field Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum's Expedition to the Middle Kingdom Cemetery in the vicinity of the pyramid of King Teti at Saqqara.

KING SARGON'S PALACE

Laura D'Alessandro

Sunday, May 16

1:30 PM

Oriental Institute

Free

Pre-registration not required

Join Laura D'Alessandro, Head of the Oriental Institute Conservation Laboratory, for a richly illustrated slide lecture previewing our second major installation of colossal reliefs from the palace of King Sargon II at Khorsabad. Soon to go on view in the Institute's completely renovated East Wing, this new display of Khorsabad reliefs features scenes from the private living quarters of the king's palace, with views of grand banquets, hunting scenes in palace parklands, and the gifts and tribute brought to the king from conquered lands, all of which add a new dimension to the life and times of a monarch who called himself "king of the universe." Learn how the Institute's conservation staff undertook the monumental task of conserving, moving, and reinstalling these reliefs.

SUNDAY FILMS

Each Sunday afternoon at 1:30 PM, unless otherwise noted, you can enjoy the best in documentary films on the ancient Near East at the Oriental Institute. Showings generally run 30–50 minutes. Admission is free. Following the films, docents are available in the galleries to answer your questions.

In April we celebrate Earth Month with documentaries that explore efforts to preserve ancient sites and the impact of the natural world on ancient and contemporary Near Eastern cultures. (See p. 16 for additional information on the April films.)

April 4 *Saving the Sphinx*

April 11 *Nefertari: The Search for Eternal Life*

April 18 *Mesopotamia: I Have Conquered the River*

April 25 *Children of the Sun*

May 2 *Alexander the Great and the Battle of Issus* This film from the A&E series "The Great Commanders" highlights the famed military encounter that took place in 334 BC between the forces of Alexander and the mighty Persian army.

May 9 *Mummies Made in Egypt*. This animated and live action movie from the award-winning Reading Rainbow series stars

LeVar Burton of "Star Trek: The Next Generation." This film is being shown as part of *Happy Mummies Day!*, a special program for families (see p. 17 for additional information).

May 16 No Film. Lecture: *King Sargon's Palace*. (See above for additional information.)

May 23 *Islam: Empire of Faith, Part I*

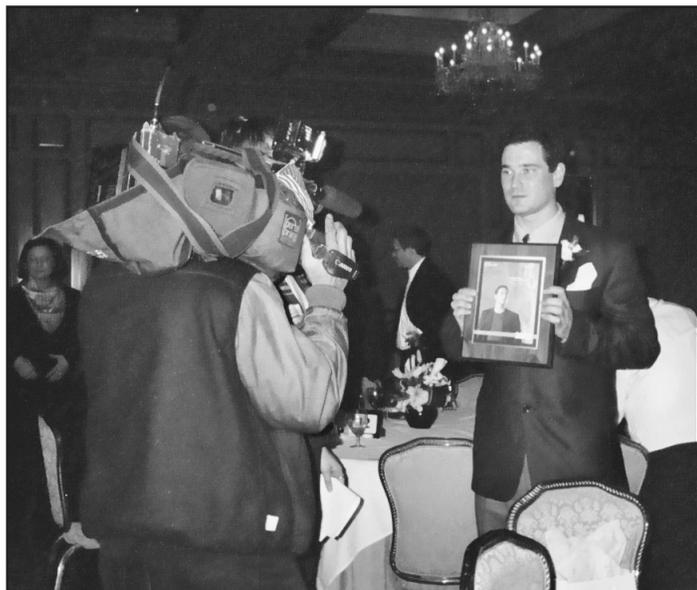
May 30 *Islam: Empire of Faith, Part II*

This acclaimed, two-part, PBS series tells the story of Islam's first thousand years, showing how it sustained the intellectual legacies of Greece, Egypt, and China, and how it brought immeasurable advances in science, medicine, and the arts to Europe in the Middle Ages.

June 6 No Film. Hyde Park/University of Chicago Arts Fest. (See p. 17 for additional information.)

June 13 *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Secrets of the Caves*. This film tells the remarkable story of the discovery and acquisition of the thousands of fragments and manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

CLEMENS REICHEL HONORED BY CHICAGO MAGAZINE



Clemens Reichel, Research Associate (Mesopotamian archaeology), was recently named one of seven “Chicagoans of the Year” by *Chicago Magazine* in recognition of his development of the Oriental Institute’s web site that documents artifacts which may have been looted from the Iraq Museum. In addition to a profile in the January 2004 issue of the magazine, he, along with the other honorees, was recognized at a banquet at the Four Seasons Hotel. We congratulate Clemens and the many other members of the faculty and staff who participated in the development of the site.

EDUCATION OFFICE REGISTRATION FORM

	Members	Non-members	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultures of the Silk Road	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$195	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Life in Ancient Israel	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$195	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> The Amarna Letters	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$195	<input type="checkbox"/>
	TOTAL		<input type="checkbox"/>

I would like to become a member of the Oriental Institute. Enclosed is \$50 for an annual membership, \$40 for seniors, UC/UCH Faculty and Staff, and National Associates (persons living more than 100 miles from Chicago within the USA). Memberships may be in two names at the same address. **Please send a separate check for membership donation.**

I prefer to pay by Check Money order MasterCard Visa

Account number: _____ Expiration date: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Daytime phone: _____

Send to: The Oriental Institute Education Office, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637

ADULT EDUCATION REGISTRATION AND REFUND POLICY

For multi-session courses, a full refund will be granted to anyone who notifies us about his/her cancellation before the first class meeting. A student who cancels after the first class meeting, but before the second class meeting, will receive a full refund minus a \$50 cancellation fee. After the second class meeting, no refunds will be given unless the course is canceled by the Education Office. Those who are not registered may not attend classes. The Education Office reserves the right to refuse to retain any student in any course at any time. Failure to attend a course does not entitle a registrant to a refund. No credits are issued. All schedules are subject to change. Some courses may be subject to a small materials fee, which will be announced at the first class meeting.

ADULT EDUCATION COURSES

The following three courses are co-sponsored by the Graham School of General Studies. Each course offers Teacher Recertification CPDUs from the Illinois State Board of Education. For more information call Museum Education at (773) 702-9507.

CULTURES OF THE SILK ROAD

Ilya Yakubovich

Wednesdays, April 14–June 2

7:00 PM–9:00 PM

Oriental Institute

The Silk Road is most well known as a network of trade routes that connected the Near East with China in the first millennium AD. But far more than caravans filled with luxury goods traveled along the many routes of the Silk Road. These routes were pathways for linguistic expansion, itineraries for wandering missionaries, and venues for cultural exchange between East and West.

This course focuses on the civilizations that flourished along the Silk Road from their earliest mention in written sources in the sixth century BC to the introduction of Islam in the area during the seventh to eleventh centuries AD. A number of specific sites are explored in depth, revealing the manifold cultural currents along the trade routes. Special attention is paid to the discoveries of the last two decades, which shed light on such problems in Central Asian studies as the early spread of Buddhism from India to China, and the history of Turkic migrations. Lectures feature slides from the instructor's private collection, as well as video documents showing the journeys of recent visitors to the area.

Instructor Ilya Yakubovich is a graduate student in the University of Chicago's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and the author of several scholarly publications dealing with the languages, history, and culture of ancient Central Asia. He has participated in linguistic and archeological expeditions to Silk Road sites, and he collaborated in the Silk Road Digital Database Project organized at the University of California, Berkeley.

The class meets at the Oriental Institute from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM on Wednesday evenings beginning April 14 and continuing through June 2, 2004. Pre-registration is required.

CPDUs: 16

Required Text

Life Along the Silk Road. Susan Whitfield. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

LIFE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

Aaron A. Burke

Thursdays, April 15–June 3

7:00 PM–9:00 PM

Oriental Institute

Enter the world of the ancient Israelites in this course that sheds new light on life in the land of the Bible. Learn how the most recent discoveries in biblical archaeology and the latest studies of biblical texts enable scholars to present a multi-dimensional picture of everyday life from the fields of the farmers to the streets of the cities to the courts of the kings. Discussion covers such topics as home and family, feasts and festivals, making a living, travel and trade, and literacy and education. Exploration of religious practices includes a review of cultic practices, sacred sites, and temple architecture. Special references are made to biblical passages where new understandings reveal fascinating details on ancient Israelite life and culture.

Instructor Aaron A. Burke is a Ph.D. candidate in Syro-Palestinian Archaeology in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. He has worked on excavations in Israel with Harvard University and the Oriental Institute, and he is currently a staff member of the Oriental Institute's expedition to Alalakh in Turkey.

This class meets at the Oriental Institute from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM on Thursday evenings beginning April 15 and continuing through June 3, 2004. Pre-registration is required.

CPDUs: 16

Required Texts

Life in Biblical Israel. Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Who Were the Israelites and Where Did They Come From? William G. Dever. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

THE AMARNA LETTERS: DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE AND FOREIGN INTRIGUE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Dennis Campbell

Saturdays, April 17–June 12

10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON

Oriental Institute

In the 1870s an amazing discovery was made among the ruins of the Egyptian site of Tell el-Amarna, the ancient capital founded by the pharaoh Akhenaten in the fourteenth century BC. Archaeologists unearthed a cache of more than 350 letters that were written in cuneiform on clay tablets. These letters — one of the most significant finds of cuneiform tablets ever made — document approximately thirty years of diplomatic correspondence (ca. 1360s–1330s BC) between foreign rulers and the Egyptian king. In the letters, Egyptian vassal states vie for power while great kings of independent lands, such as Babylon, Assyria, and Hatti, attempt to gain the favor (and the gold) of their “brother” Akhenaten.

This course begins with an overview that covers the history leading up to the period and the various kingdoms involved. Discussion focuses on the Amarna letters and the rich information — both explicit and implicit — that can be gleaned from them. The class also visits the Oriental Institute Museum’s galleries, where exhibits from the time of the Amarna letters showcase the wealth and resources of this cosmopolitan era in the ancient Near East.

Instructor Dennis Campbell is a graduate student in Hittitology in the University of Chicago’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. In addition to Hittite, he works with Hurrian and Akkadian materials.

The class meets at the Oriental Institute from 10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON on Saturdays, beginning April 17 and continuing through June 12, 2004. There is no class on Saturday, May 29. Pre-registration is required.

CPDUs: 16

Required Text

The Amarna Letters. William Moran. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

FILM SERIES

FILM SHOWINGS IN CELEBRATION OF EARTH MONTH

Sundays, April 4, 11, 18, and 25

1:30 PM

Oriental Institute

Free. No pre-registration required.

Preservation of ancient sites and the impact of the natural world on both ancient and contemporary cultures are explored in this special Earth Month film series in April that features some of the finest documentaries on the Near East.

April 4 *Saving the Sphinx*. A Learning Channel production, this film shows how pollution, wind erosion, tourist traffic, and misguided restoration attempts have threatened the very existence of the Sphinx, and how artists, engineers, and scientists have joined forces to save the world’s oldest colossal statue.

April 11 *Nefertari: The Search for Eternal Life*. Consort of Ramesses the Great, Nefertari was the beloved queen of one of ancient Egypt’s most influential and celebrated rulers. Her special status is confirmed by depictions of her on monuments throughout Egypt, but nowhere is it more evident than in her magnificent tomb in the Valley of the Queens.

This film reveals the brilliant images in the tomb, and the efforts that have been made to preserve them from the ravages of time, nature, and humankind. Shown courtesy the Getty Conservation Institute.

April 18 *Mesopotamia: I Have Conquered the River*. Literally “the land between the rivers,” Mesopotamia — today’s Iraq — was home to one of the world’s earliest and most powerful civilizations. Shot on location along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, this film combines the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, engineering, and climatology to explore the vital role of waterways in both ancient and contemporary Iraq. A remarkable 3-D computer recreation of the ancient city of Ur offers a glimpse of life along the Euphrates more than 4,000 years ago.

April 25 *Children of the Sun*. The total solar eclipse that took place in Iran in 1999 inspired Mansoor Saboori, an Iranian filmmaker then living in Chicago, to return home and explore the meaning of the sun in both contemporary and ancient Iranian culture. The documentary she produced contains spectacular views of modern and ancient sites as well as fascinating commentary by University of Chicago scholars, including several from the Oriental Institute.

FAMILY EVENTS

HAPPY MUMMIES DAY!

Sunday, May 9

1:30–3:30 PM

Free

No pre-registration required

The Oriental Institute Museum invites the whole family to our second annual celebration of Mother's Day. This free event highlights some of our most fascinating artifacts from ancient Egypt. Discover mummies from thousands of years ago, encounter a colossal statue of King Tut, and get acquainted with some parents and children who once lived, worked, and played in the land of the pharaohs. Enjoy gallery games, hands-on activities, the movie *Mummies Made in Egypt*, and more — including a gift from the Suq, the Oriental Institute Shop, for the first 100 mothers who visit the mummies in our museum.

This program is supported by the Regents Park/University of Chicago Fine Arts Partnership.

HYDE PARK/UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO ARTS FEST

Saturday, June 5

10:00 AM–4:00 PM

and

Sunday, June 6

12:00 NOON–4:00 PM

Free

No pre-registration required

Join us as we take part in the Hyde Park/University of Chicago Arts Fest, a free, two-day celebration of the arts during the weekend of the 57th Street Art Fair. On Saturday, June 5, the Oriental Institute offers a full day of free tours of the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery, the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, the Persian Gallery, and screenings of outstanding documentary films* on the ancient Near East. Then bring the whole family on Sunday, June 6 for free treasure hunts, hands-on activities, and a festival of tales and stories by the Chicago Storytelling Guild.

*For more information about the films to be shown, call the Museum Education Office, (773) 702-9507.

FILM PREMIERE

“PERSEPOLIS: A NEW PERSPECTIVE”

Directed by Farzin Rezaeian

Produced for the Iran Cultural Heritage Organization, 2003

Running time 40 minutes

Wednesday, June 2

8:00 PM Breasted Hall

Introductory remarks by Matthew W. Stolper, John A. Wilson Professor of Assyriology

Free

No pre-registration required

This new production traces the history and function of the great Achaemenid palaces at Persepolis that were excavated by the Oriental Institute in the 1930s. The film features spectacular reconstructions of the palaces and explains their function in connection with the Persian New Year festival.

Farzin Rezaeian, an Iranian documentary filmmaker who specializes in the art and architecture of ancient Iran, will discuss and answer questions about the production following the film. Copies of the film and the companion book, authored by Mr. Rezaeian, will be available for sale after the screening.

BISMAYA 1903, *Cropsey and Grant (cont.)*

boxes with the antiquities had been stopped in London customs (Report 35). While in London, Harper received word from the Legation in Constantinople that the authorities were anxious to terminate the excavation permanently because of the alleged thefts and that it would be helpful if Harper would come to Constantinople.

Banks sounded a discouraged note in his letter to Harper in early January 1905. "The statements which Haider Bey is making publicly, strongly suggest that he has succeeded in stopping the excavations and driving me out of the country as he had been instructed to do before leaving Constantinople. He also intimated that Hamdy Bey, whatever he may have promised now, will not permit the excavations to be renewed" (Report 37). Banks had also sensed the opposition of the influential Hilprecht.

R. F. Harper arrived in Constantinople that January, hoping to persuade the authorities to allow the Bismaya excavations to continue. He received permission to reopen the excavations only if Banks were to resign and leave the country. Harper telegraphed Banks and received the requested resignation. The excavations were allowed to continue under the leadership of a new engineer, Victor Persons. Banks wrote a final letter from Baghdad to Harper to inform him that he planned to leave on the first of February "unless stopped by the authorities."¹²

In the meantime, the statue remained hidden in the home of Hurner, the consul in Baghdad. The longtime friendship that existed between Banks and the American minister in Constantinople, Leishman, led Banks to write a detailed letter to his friend. He explained his part in the disappearance of the statue and informed him of its whereabouts. This letter was not found in the State Department archives but Leishman's answer, dated May 15, 1905, was among Banks's papers. Leishman expressed his regrets that Banks had to sacrifice "more than salary" and had been made the scapegoat.¹³

Banks received the letter in Vermont while on his way to Chicago to give lectures and to fulfill the terms of his three-year contract. He wrote to Leishman from Chicago in September 1905 that "although I did not think so formerly, I now believe that he [Hurner] instructed his *kavass* to take the statue, and that he intended to dispose of it to his advantage. While I was in Baghdad he proposed that we sell it and share the proceeds."¹⁴

The American Minister in Constantinople insisted that the regulations be followed. Hurner was instructed to send the statue to Constantinople, which he did with great reluctance. The statue is still part of the permanent exhibit in the archaeological museum, although King Da-udu, as Banks referred to it, made a visit to the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 2003 in connection with the exhibit entitled "The Art of the First Cities."¹⁵

Under the leadership of Victor Persons, the Bismaya excavations were short lived. Although Persons mapped the temple mound, drew plans of the temple, and took many photographs — he was not an archaeologist. When he fell ill, a new director was not appointed and the excavations ceased. The Rockefeller

donation was transferred to James Henry Breasted for the first epigraphic expedition in Egypt.

In January 1906, William Rainey Harper died. Robert Francis Harper did not honor the agreement reached between Banks and the late president, W. R. Harper. Instead, he attempted to discredit Banks's work at Bismaya and to take credit for all accomplishments at the site. Five years later, the bitterness that Banks felt still remained. He wrote to Henry P. Judson, President of the University of Chicago, asking for his approval and support for the publication of a popular account of the Bismaya excavation. He promised that he would make no disparaging statements about his treatment at the hands of R. F. Harper, but he could not resist summarizing his complaints.

"Upon my return from America, when President Harper was ill I was surprised to find that my work, which had been highly praised by President Harper and by others, was belittled by Professor Harper who sought to obtain the entire credit for the work. He tried to secure possession of my notebooks and keep them. He prevented me from obtaining a position in the University of California ... I gave public lectures, but his disparaging remarks and influence kept me from obtaining many valuable appointments. He accused me of smuggling antiquities from Turkey against his orders, but I have his written instructions to do so, the only instructions he ever gave me."¹⁶

Banks's appeal to Judson was successful and the book *Bismaya or The Lost City of Adab* was published by Putnam in 1912 with a brief introductory recommendation by Judson. It is a popular and exciting story of adventure and exploration.

The Bismaya excavation is still remembered. The antiquities that Banks sent to the Haskell Oriental Museum as "honey and manna" are now in the Oriental Institute Museum collection. Banks's reports, photographs, maps, and temple diagrams made by Victor Persons in the final days of the Bismaya excavations, have been recently studied by Karen L. Wilson, former Director of the Oriental Institute Museum. One of the chapters in her forthcoming book on Bismaya has already been printed in the festschrift for Donald Hansen,¹⁷ where she has brilliantly reconstructed the stratigraphy and the temple architecture of the Bismaya "Temple Mound."

Photo Credits

Figures 2, 3, and 4 (bottom) taken from Edgar James Banks, *Bismaya or the Lost City of Adab* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 191 (fig. 2), 196 (fig. 3), and 268 (fig. 4 [bottom]).

Notes

¹ This brief history of the Bismaya excavation is based on research carried on for several years by Lilian Cropsey, using the Banks papers deposited at the Oriental Institute in 1997, and the archival material in the University of Chicago Library, the State Department, the Rockefeller Archive Center, and of course, the archives of the Oriental Institute. The authors extend their thanks to John Larson, Oriental Institute Archivist, for his help and advice.

² See John P. Peters, *Nippur, or Explorations and Adventures on the Euphrates* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897).

³ William Rainey Harper was Professor of Semitic Languages at Yale. He brought with him to the University of Chicago the nineteenth century enthusiasm for the exploration of the ancient Near East, the so-called "Bible lands." See Bruce Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Harper persuaded Mrs. Caroline Haskell to fund a museum building for the new university, and in 1896 the Haskell Oriental Museum was completed. Harper then convinced John D. Rockefeller of the importance of research, exploration, and excavation in the Bible lands and in 1903 the Oriental Exploration Fund was established.

⁴ Presidential Papers, University of Chicago Archives.

⁵ A uniformed guard stationed at the entrance of a diplomatic legation or government agency.

⁶ These reports, carefully numbered by Banks, were donated to the Oriental Institute in 1946 by a Harper descendant.

⁷ The acting American Consul in Baghdad, Rudolph Hurner, a Swiss national, helped and advised Banks. He collected and sold antiques and played a questionable role in the final debacle.

⁸ Edgar James Banks, *Bismya or the Lost City of Adab* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 186ff.

⁹ "The Oldest Statue in the World," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 21 (October 1904), pp. 62-63; "Statue of the Sumerian King David," *Scientific American* 93 (August 5, 1905), p. 99.

¹⁰ Banks, *Bismya*, p. 256.

¹¹ University of Chicago Archives. Presidential Papers.

¹² Letter dated January 28, 1905. Oriental Institute Archives.

¹³ Banks papers. Oriental Institute Archives.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ In the catalog of that exhibit, the name of the statue is read "Dalu."

¹⁶ Presidential Papers. University of Chicago Library.

¹⁷ "The Temple Mound at Bismaya," in *Leaving No Stone Unturned*, edited by Erica Ehrenberg, pp. 279-86 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

Lilian Cropsey became an Oriental Institute docent in 1978 and since that time has undertaken many projects for the volunteer program. As a volunteer for John Larson, Museum Archivist, she was introduced to the Banks letters which led to her extensive research in this period of archaeological history.

Peggy Grant has been a volunteer at the Oriental Institute for over thirty years and is a member of the Visiting Committee. She is the James Henry Breasted Society Medal 2004 honoree in recognition of her commitment to the Oriental Institute.

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CAMEL LABORATORY INVESTIGATES THE LANDSCAPE OF ASSYRIA FROM SPACE

JASON UR



Figure 1. Workmen clean Sennacherib's inscription on the north face of the aqueduct at Jerwan

In 1932 the Oriental Institute excavated the city of Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad), the capital of the Assyrian Empire under King Sargon II (721–705 BC) and the original home of the magnificent reliefs on display in the Museum's new Yelda Khorsabad Court. During the excavation, a workman relayed stories of stone blocks inscribed with cuneiform writing reused in the houses of a village to the north. Oriental Institute epigrapher Thorkild Jacobsen was intrigued by the workman's tale and accompanied him to the village the next day, where he found that the reused blocks, inscribed with the name of Sennacherib, son of Sargon (ruled 704–688 BC), had been stripped out of a huge "dam," against which the village of Jerwan had been built. The next year, Jacobsen and archaeologist Seton Lloyd spent four weeks excavating this feature, which turned out not to be a dam but rather an aqueduct (fig. 1). Ultimately they were able to reconstruct the 100 km course of the canal from a dam in the Kurdish mountains all the way to Sennacherib's new capital at Nineveh on the Tigris River (opposite modern Mosul). This brief but fantastically productive "side project" (published as Thorkild Jacobsen and Seton Lloyd, *Sennacherib's Aqueduct at Jerwan*, Oriental Institute Publications 24, 1935) is one of the Oriental Institute's least recognized undertakings, although Lloyd's archaeological descriptions and Jacobsen's textual interpretations are the basis for all current reconstructions of Assyrian irrigation.

Jacobsen and Lloyd were thus pioneers of landscape archaeology, the investigation of the world beyond the site, including canals, roads, and other non-settlement traces of ancient human activity. The Oriental Institute's Center for the Archaeology of the Middle Eastern Landscape (CAMEL Laboratory) has recently turned its attention back to the Assyrian landscape. In July 2003, four Oriental Institute archaeologists presented new research on Assyrian settlement, canals, and roads at the 49th

annual meeting of the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at the British Museum in London, in a session organized by Tony Wilkinson, the founder of CAMEL.

My own contribution was a reassessment of Jacobsen and Lloyd's reconstruction of the course of Sennacherib's canal. They had been limited to ground observation and testimony from local residents, but I have been able to use aerial photography and declassified American intelligence satellite imagery from the 1960s and early 1970s (the CORONA program) to map the traces in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computer program (fig. 2). In addition to the Jerwan canal, this research has identified and mapped over 60 km of other canals across a wide swath of Assyria (fig. 3), some of which had not been recognized on the ground before.

The unexpected extent of Sennacherib's canals must be understood within the context of his other actions. Upon the death

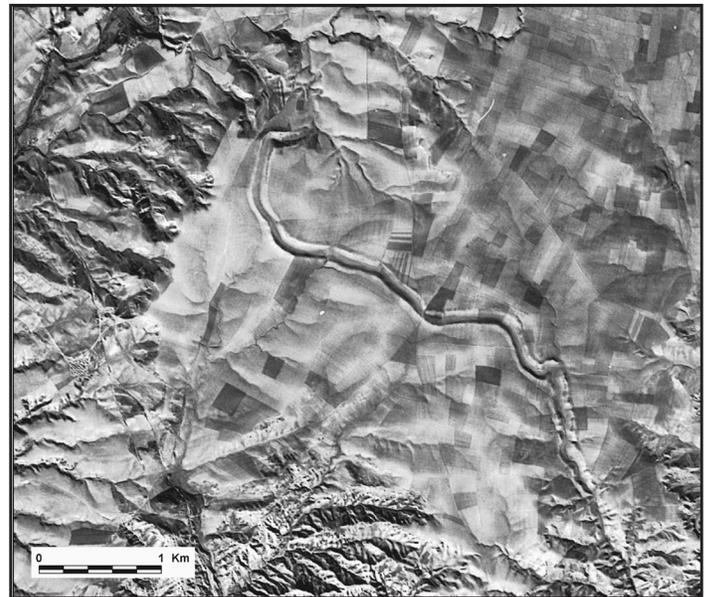


Figure 2. CORONA satellite photograph of the canal near Bandwai. Sennacherib's engineers had to excavate an 80 m wide, 20 m deep canal to take water through a watershed between river basins

of his father, he moved the capital to the newly expanded city of Nineveh. As known from the Bible and his own inscriptions, he was a very prolific deporter of conquered populations; many of them were settled in his new capital, but many others filled in the productive agricultural hinterland of the capital. It appears that the canals were part of a grand scheme to remake the demography of Assyria: a new capital was constructed and populated, labor was imported, and an agricultural infrastructure was created to support it. Not all of the water went to mundane agriculture; Sennacherib's inscriptions also describe elaborate parks and gardens designed to emulate the wetter landscapes of

Anatolia and Babylonia, which were undoubtedly fed by his canal network.

The combined work of the CAMEL researchers on the archaeology of the Assyrian landscape is being prepared as a journal article by Tony Wilkinson, and with sections by Eleanor Barbanes, Mark Altaweel, and myself. My own study, entitled "Sennacherib's Northern Assyrian Canals: New Insights from Satellite Imagery and Aerial Photography," has been submitted to the journal *Iraq*.

Jason Ur is a Ph.D. candidate in Mesopotamian Archaeology at the Oriental Institute. He is finalizing his dissertation entitled "Urbanism and Society in the Third Millennium BC Upper Khabur Basin, Northeastern Syria." His research focuses on landscape archaeology and the use of remote sensing data (aerial photographs and satellite imagery) in archaeology.

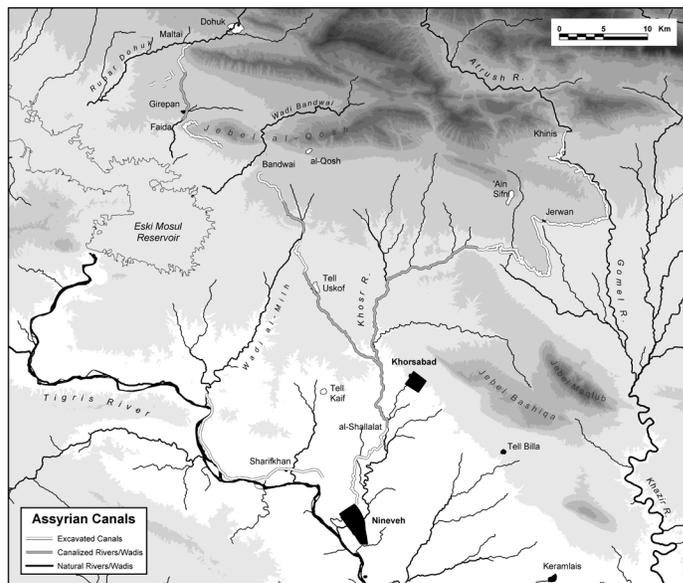


Figure 3. Map of Sennacherib's canals in northern Assyria

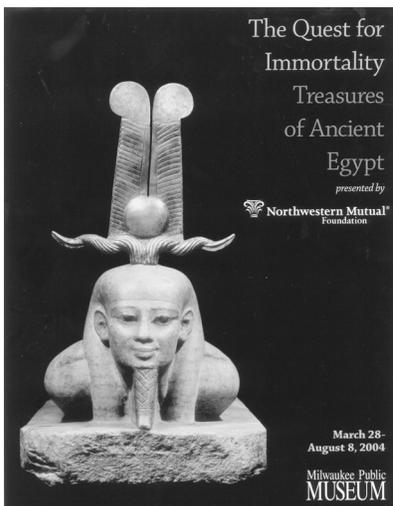
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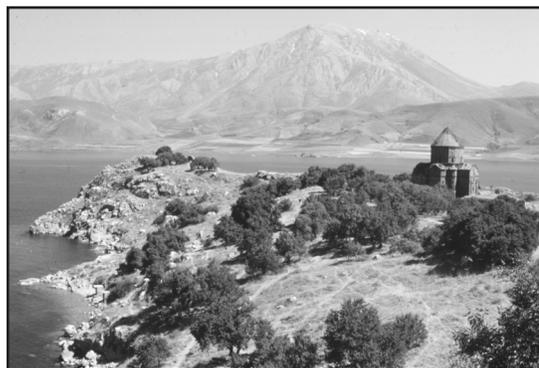
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THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE RESPONDS TO THE CULTURAL HERITAGE CRISIS IN IRAQ

WEB-BASED RESOURCES

In response to the looting of the Iraq Museum in April 2003, scholars at the Oriental Institute launched "Lost Treasures of Iraq" (<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/iraq.html>) as a new component of the Oriental Institute's website. This site includes a database of objects from the Iraq Museum; a bibliography of objects, manuscripts from Iraq's museums, libraries, and archives, and an email list for news items relating to antiquities (archaeological sites and objects) and manuscripts from Iraq.



Alabaster vase from Warka, ca. 3000 BC. Pre-war photo (left), as returned to the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, in June 2003 (right)

VISUALIZATION

The Iraq Museum Database: An illustrated database of objects from Iraq's museum collections, sorted by object categories

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/Iraqdatabasehome.htm>

The Oriental Institute is also host to the web presence of:

Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries: <http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html>

The MELA Executive Board convened the Committee on Iraqi Libraries to coordinate the organization's response to the damage and destruction suffered by libraries in Iraq during and after the war in March and April 2003. The committee is a small task force of MELA members who have firsthand knowledge, experience, or strong interest in matters related to libraries in Iraq who will be able to field questions, play the role of contact, and suggest ways to assist in rebuilding efforts.

The Iraq Working Group of the Oriental Institute expresses its willingness to cooperate with international efforts to recover looted Iraqi antiquities, manuscripts, books, and other cultural properties, and to assist our Iraqi colleagues.

All sites linked from the home-page of the Oriental Institute: <http://www-oi.uchicago.edu>

COMMUNICATION

IraqCrisis: A moderated list for communicating substantive information on cultural property damaged, destroyed, or lost from libraries and museums in Iraq during and after the war in April 2003, and on the worldwide response to the crisis.

<https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/iraqcrisis.html>

DOCUMENTATION

Preliminary bibliographies of books documenting the contents of the Iraq Museum, the National Library and Archives, and the manuscript collection of the Ministry of Religious Endowments — all in Baghdad — as well as of other damaged or destroyed collections in Baghdad or elsewhere in Iraq including Mosul, Basrah, Suleimaniyeh, etc.

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/IraqIraqBibs.html>



Alabaster head from Warka, ca. 3000 BC. Stolen in April 2003, returned in October 2003

DISCOVER MAGAZINE HONORS ORIENTAL INSTITUTE RESEARCH

The January 2004 issue of *Discover Magazine* listed the top 100 science stories of 2003. Two of these stories dealt with Oriental Institute research: McGuire Gibson's work on preserving the heritage of Iraq, and Jason Ur and Tony Wilkinson's work on the use of satellite images in archaeology. Congratulations to them and to the members of their teams!

NEW PUBLICATIONS

NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS IN THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE COLLECTION

David B. Weisberg

Oriental Institute Publications 122

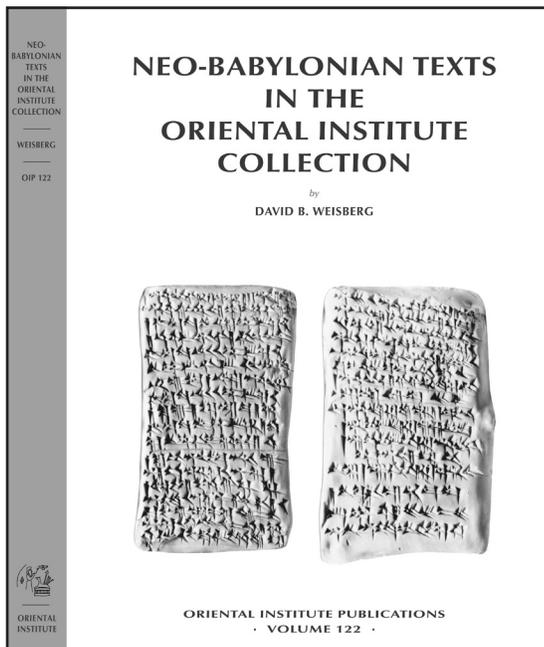
Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2003

Pp. xxiv + 258; 72 plates. Case-bound 9.00" x 11.75"

ISBN 1-885923-28-7

\$100

The 173 Neo-Babylonian texts contained in this volume were acquired by the Oriental Institute Tablet Collection over a long period of years from various sources. Most of the texts in the collection are from the Eanna temple archive in Uruk. Some are from Nippur, Babylon, and Larsa. The texts date from the beginning of the seventh to the last quarter of the fourth century BC. The genres of the texts include legal, administrative, and epistolary material, plus fragments of a commentary, a lexical tablet, and a religious text or commentary. Transliterations, translations, and comments are provided for all the texts. Hand copies or photographs of casts are provided for each tablet. Drawings and descriptions are given for the seal impressions. Full indices, including a key word index, are supplied.



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TEMPLE OF KHONSU, VOLUME 3. THE GRAFFITI ON THE KHONSU TEMPLE ROOF AT KARNAK: A MANIFESTATION OF PERSONAL PIETY

Helen Jacquet-Gordon

Oriental Institute Publications 123

Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2003

Pp. xxiv + 120; 5 figures, 126 plates. Case-bound 12" x 16"

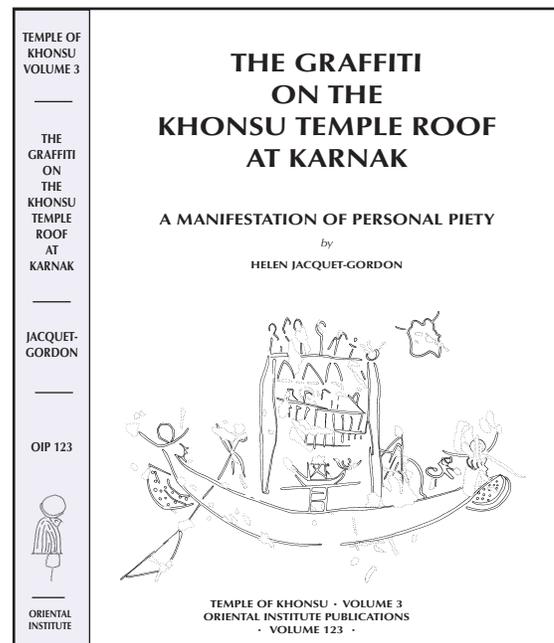
ISBN 1-885923-26-0

\$180

Graffiti incised on the roof blocks of the temple of Khonsu at Karnak, written in the hieroglyphic, hieratic, and Demotic scripts and accompanied by the outlines of pairs of feet, caught the eye of Champollion and other early voyagers who succeeded in clambering up onto that part of the roof still remaining over the colonnade of the first court. Such graffiti have usually been interpreted as mementos left by ancient visitors passing through Thebes. A complete survey of all the graffiti on the roof and a detailed study of the inscriptions have revealed the unexpected fact that far from being casual tourists, it was mostly the priestly personnel of the temple itself whose graffiti have been preserved there.

Other objects depicted among the graffiti are "portrait" heads, sacred barks, animals, birds, and architectural elements, almost all having some connection with the temple itself or with the cult of the god Khonsu. Several small crosses give witness to the reuse of the temple in Christian times as a church.

The 334 graffiti recorded in the volume are richly illustrated by photographs and facsimile drawings. Transliterations, translations, line notes, and commentaries are provided. The text concludes with general, name, epithet, and title indices.



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