



# News & Notes

No. 86 March 1983

*Issued confidentially to members and friends**Not for publication*

## Sinai South and Sinai North

February 4, 1983

Dear Friends:

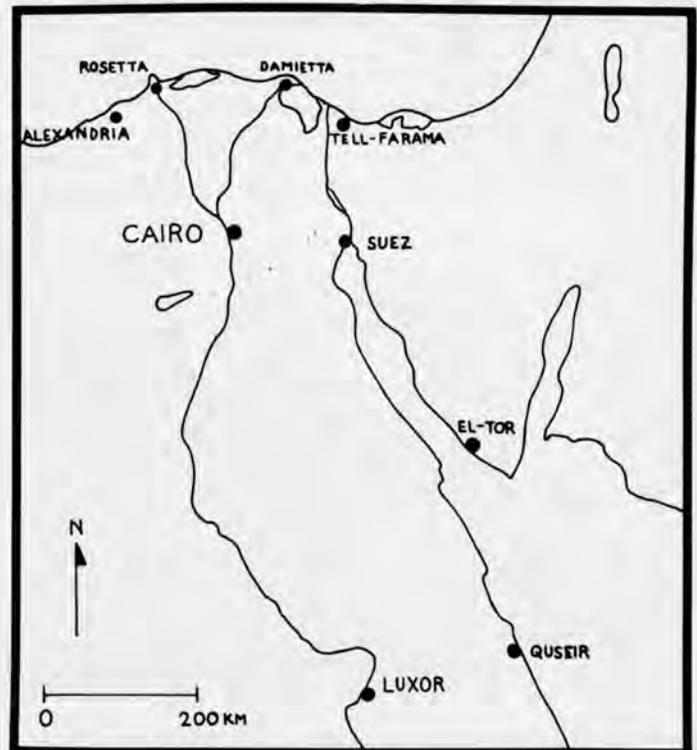
I entered the Sinai almost surreptitiously, from underground—that is, driving through the long tunnel which passes beneath the Suez canal just north of Suez. Then a pleasant drive south on a new asphalt highway through colorful “badlands”, past the oil ports of Abu Zenima and Abu Rudais, past the turn-off which climbs to the Mount of Moses and St. Catharine’s monastery, and on to the port of El-Tor. El-Tor is not often visited, since most travelers coming this far don’t stop but continue on to Sharm el-Sheikh for diving among the beautiful coral reefs. This neglect is—or will be—undeserved, as a new modern city is rapidly growing, the future capital of south Sinai. Certainly it is no longer simply a dusty little port of call for Red Sea steamers and quarantine for pilgrims.

El-Tor is the first object of this winter’s study of “Quseir and its archaeological environment.” This is obviously not an environmental study as usually described in archaeology; nor is the present “survey” more than a series of brief visits to this environment. The site of Quseir al-Qadim, where Jan Johnson and I have conducted three seasons of excavations (1978, 1980, 1982) for the Oriental Institute, is unique in Egyptian archaeology. Not that other ports did not exist for Egypt in the Roman and medieval periods, but, other than an early excavation at Suez, there has been no careful study of such ports. Thus, there is little with which to compare our results from Quseir; the present survey seeks to identify the remains of other ports on the Red Sea and Mediterranean coasts of Egypt. (Just as some persons are considered insular, others worldly, I find myself considered somewhat portly.)

El-Tor seemed a good place to begin, since, when Quseir declined in the late 14th century, El-Tor replaced it in the commercial history of the Red Sea. In both cases, the Ottomans built a fort some kilometers south of the old port. The modern town grew up around the fort at Quseir. What happened at El-Tor? The chief of police, Aziz Habib Girgis, was rather startled, “There are no antiquities here; you want St. Catharine’s or Serabit el-Khadim.” A small young man in his office, a local named Mohammad Gebely (Mohammad of the Mountain) started squirming and tried to interrupt. At this the chief, rather good-naturedly, suggested that we would all go exploring the next day.

As we were leaving I asked where the old harbor might be and was shown a forlorn clump of houses on the beach. We found that the main building on the south edge was actually a large church dedicated to St. George (peeking into the locked building we saw the most beautiful icons staring darkly back at us). Walking around to the beach I saw that the

houses were perched on a long mound about 4m in height, with the church and a few inhabited houses at one end and abandoned buildings and bare mound on the other. I then recalled that some 19th century maps show twin villages, Balad al-Nasara (village of the Christians) and Shattiya, the Moslem village. We began to pick up pottery, which pointed out the history; there were late Mamluk wares (exactly like those of Quseir) and a full range of Ottoman wares (including a great number of Chinese blue and white porcelains—would that John Carswell had been there!) The most exciting part was to see the thread of archaeological history, which we began unraveling at Quseir, continued at El-Tor right up to the ethnographic present.



The next day proved just as interesting, beginning with Coptic monks' cells, a hillock with palaeolithic flints, and a large caravanserai. This last site was constructed of limestone, with some arches preserved only a meter above the current ground level, indicating parts of this building (some 80 x 80m) will be preserved to roof height. The pottery here indicated an Ayyubid date (again with parallels to Quseir) and the structure seemed similar to other stations created by Saladin (Salah ed-Din), as pointed out by my inspector, Mohammad Fahmy. This young archaeologist aroused my interest when he showed knowledge and excitement over our Ottoman materials; the reason for this rare attitude became clear when he became my companion and guide to northern Sinai.

As Jan and I have written in previous *News and Notes* articles, the Toyota truck which we use has the peculiar habit of refusing to start when we first set off on a project. I had therefore been puzzled at its good behavior during my trip to south Sinai. But it returned to true form on my next venture, the north Sinai. I crossed the northern part of the Suez canal on a ferry, after which the Toyota refused to start, leaving me with visions of spending the day going back and forth across the canal. Fortunately, the reluctant vehicle attracted a swarm of friendly policemen and truckers who pushed and prodded, fiddled and cleaned until finally I was on my way to Qantara East. Here, there is a new regional inspectorate, where, under the leadership of Ahmad Higazi and Abd el Hafiz Diab, a group of young inspectors are surveying and investigating the antiquities of the Canal area and the Sinai. Mohammad Fahmy showed me a map which he is compiling, locating a startling number of Islamic sites. I later saw their excavations at Qatia, an important station on the road to Palestine and Syria during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, and realized the source of his interest in the comparative materials from El-Tor.

The next day we drove out to Baluza, a small town on the El-Arish road, then north along a causeway to the site of Tell Farama. This was the city of Pelusium in antiquity and stood near the mouth of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. It had a dual function as an important Mediterranean port and as the first city on the ancient road to Palestine and Syria. It now appeared to us as an island in the midst of mud-flats and standing water, about 5 km from the sea. Recent rains had made the ground muddy--this was the only aspect which detracted from an immediate comparison with the vast abandoned cities of the Fayum, to which it is comparable in size (being some 3 km long and almost a kilometer wide), and preservation, consisting of Roman buildings preserved to their roof vaulting. The structures were made of red baked bricks with gypsum mortar (evidently the rains and ground water were always a problem here, unlike the dry Fayum).



(r. to l.) Don Whitcomb, Inspector Mohammad Fahmy, Mohammad Gebely (local), and Ahmad Ibrahim, Assistant in Tourism Office.

Most intriguing was the fortress (400 x 200m in size) in the center of the town. Historical sources mention a fortification of Farama in the mid-9th century; later this was attacked by the crusaders and finally abandoned in the mid-12th century. We rather impiously neglected the fallen columns of temples on the east and west sides of the city and concentrated on the Islamic materials, which have not been studied. Again the ceramics pleasantly confirmed the historical sources with beautiful Fatimid lustre and other wares as well as earlier unglazed pottery. The architecture was a puzzle; was it late Roman or Islamic? This puzzle suggests an archaeological importance for Tell Farama, the study of the transition, and indeed the historical development, from late Roman into early Islamic times. As such, the occupation of Tell Farama rather neatly fills the thousand year gap between the Roman and Ayyubid/Mamluk occupations at Quseir, with an interesting Mediterranean, rather than Red Sea, orientation.

Driving back, the wind, which had been gusty, began to pick up the sand, diminishing visibility. Then it began to rain (literally mud, for a short time). After growing quite dark, with the strange colors peculiar to sandstorms, it began to lighten near Qantara East. In the desert were the shadowy remains of burnt-out tanks dotting the landscape, silent witnesses to more recent tragic years. Above Qantara loomed a grey shadow which moved across the horizon--a ship passing through the canal, rather ghostly in the strange light. The next day it was windy and clear, but far too muddy to continue work on the coast. Mohammad took me inland, up and down sand dunes and through tiny oases of palms (some being buried, disappearing entirely into the giant moving dunes). In this setting we saw ruins of Islamic settlements, testifying to the vigorous contacts with Palestine, and passed similar sites showing the continuity of this trade from the more ancient past.

After this brief look at the ports of Sinai, I will visit the great Mediterranean ports of Damietta and Rosetta. Both of these ports are still large cities and one wonders if some trace of their early Islamic (or older) history might still be preserved. Will their archaeological sites be totally obliterated, like the ruins of Tell Clyzma, the ancient and medieval Suez? As the friendly chief of police in El-Tor said, maybe we should just have a look to see.

Yours sincerely,  
Don Whitcomb



(l. to r.) Don Whitcomb with Inspector Mohammad Fahmy at Tell Farama

## Harran, City of Sin, To Be Explored

The Oriental Institute has a new archaeological project, an expedition to the ancient site of Harran in southeastern Turkey, with Lawrence E. Stager as director. The American contingent of the expedition's staff will be drawn mainly from scholars and students in the Oriental Institute. The expedition is projected as a five-year joint Turkish-American one, with the first season to begin in the fall of 1983, when the Harran Plain will be surveyed. Ancient sites over the plain will be located and mapped, and artifacts collected from their surfaces. The area extends from Harran to the south to Urfa in the north, as far as the Tektek Dagh mountains in the east, to the Top Dagh mountains in the west.

Located at the very crossroads between Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and northern Syria, the city of Harran played an important role in the ancient political and economic life of the Near East. There are numerous ancient and biblical references to the city. Its most notable feature throughout history was the temple of the moon god Sin. Babylonians, Assyrians, and Mitannians invoked the god Sin in their treaties. The mother of the 6th century B.C. Neo-Babylonian King Nabonidus lived in Harran, where she was a priestess in the temple of Sin.

Three stelae from the time of Nabonidus were found on the mound of Harran itself, and other stelae depicting the symbol of the moon god were found at nearby sites.

The next issue of *News and Notes* will give a history of Harran, which despite its importance has had very little archaeological investigation. T. E. Lawrence visited Harran in 1911 and discovered a large finely carved basalt lion orthostat partially protruding from the ground. A large fragment of a similar orthostat was discovered by Seton Lloyd and William Brice in their brief work at the site in 1950. One deep but extremely limited sounding was placed in the central mound in 1959 by David Rice and produced materials which dated predominantly to the late 3rd millennium B.C.

On May 9, 1983, the annual dinner sponsored by the Visiting Committee of the Oriental Institute will be given for the new Harran expedition. Invitations to *Harran, City of Sin* will be mailed by the end of March.

## Museum Prints Two New Posters



In the course of refurbishing the second floor student lounge in the Oriental Institute, Curator John Carswell had occasion to examine more closely a 1930-vintage poster that had long been a fixture in the lounge. He discovered to his surprise that the framed poster was not a print, but the artist's original water-color! He immediately had the valuable original removed to safety in the Museum Office storage. Subsequent research by museum archivist John Larson turned up several printed copies of the poster, along with some information about how the poster came to be made.

In 1932, in anticipation of the coming Century of Progress International Exhibition, the Trustees of the University of Chicago commissioned William P. Welsh to create a poster publicizing the University. Welsh, a noted illustrator whose work had appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and other national magazines, submitted a final design in the then popular Art Deco style. It featured prominently two ancient art works from the University's Oriental Institute Museum: a bust of the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti (mother-in-law of the famous pharaoh Tutankamun) and a monumental relief sculpture of an Assyrian winged bull-man. The Assyrian piece, discovered at Khorsabad in Iraq, had at the time just been added to the Museum collection. The Nefertiti bust, then on display in the Museum, was one of a limited number of casts made from the original in the Aegyptische Museum in Berlin (now West Berlin). The completed posters, printed by R. R. Donnelley of Chicago, were distributed city-wide for display in hotels, stores, and on streetcars to lure the World's Fair-goers to the southside campus. Of the initial run of 1350 posters, only a handful of printed copies, along with Welsh's original water color, still exist.

Now, just over fifty years later, the Oriental Institute Museum is reissuing the Welsh poster in a new printing. In response to numerous enquiries about obtaining a copy of the old version and with the generous financial assistance of Mr. Arnold Flegenheimer of New York, a long-standing member of the Institute; the Museum has undertaken to reprint a limited edition of 1000 posters. These will be in the original colors (blue, brown, orange, black and white) on archive-quality paper in faithful reproduction of Welsh's water-color original.

The Museum has also produced another poster of modern design. In conjunction with the new exhibit "Quest for Prehistory", the Museum is offering an exhibit poster, based on the original presently displayed in the Notice Board outside the Museum main entrance.

Both posters are available from the Museum Office. Costs for the posters are: Nefertiti \$20.00, Prehistoric Exhibit \$5.00. Mail orders to Illinois addresses, please remit 7% state tax. Postage for all mail orders and packing fees are as follows: 3rd class \$3.00; 1st class \$4.00; oversea airmail \$5.50. All orders must be pre-paid. For information, contact the Museum Office, 753-2475 or 962-9520.

## THE SUQ



Authentic reproductions of Oriental Institute cylinder seals handmade in Sterling Silver by Leslie Meyer.

- 51. Original of orange agate, Tell Asmar, Akkadian period. \$85.00
- 52. Original of lapis lazuli, private house in Khafajeh. \$85.00
- 53. Original of black limestone, Tell Asmar, Isin-Larsa period. \$85.00
- 54. Original of lapis lazuli, Tell Asmar, Akkadian period. \$65.00

Members 10% discount.  
Postage: \$1.25 IL Res.: 7% tax.  
SUQ Catalogue: .50.

## Complete your plans for travel abroad NOW

Archaeological tour of Sicily leaves April 22 and returns May 7, under the leadership of Prof. Paolo Cherchi, Department of Romance Languages and Literature, University of Chicago. Cities visited will include Palermo, Agrigento, Armerina, Siracusa, Taormina, Reggio Calabria, Paestum, and Naples. Cost from Chicago is \$2581.50 (single supplement \$225), plus \$350 tax deductible contribution to the Oriental Institute.

China tour to ancient capitals of Beijing, Luoyang, Xian, Hangzhou, plus Shanghai, leaves June 8 and returns June 25, with Yang Zhi, graduate student in Assyriology at the Oriental Institute, as the leader. Arrangements may be made to spend time in Japan on the return trip. Cost from Chicago is \$3634, plus a tax deductible contribution of \$350, to the Oriental Institute.

Deadline time for signing will soon be upon us, so for more information call or write Membership Secretary, The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, Telephone (312) 723-2389.

---

### FREE SUNDAY FILMS; MARCH AND APRIL 1983

All films are shown at 2PM in Breasted Hall, The Oriental Institute.

March 6	The Archaeologist and How He Works
March 13	Iran: Landmarks in the Desert
March 20	The Egyptologists
March 27	Preserving Egypt's Past
April 3	The Archaeologist and How He Works
April 10	Rivers of Time
April 17	Megiddo: City of Destruction
April 24	Egypt: Gift of the Nile

In conjunction with the Quest for Prehistory exhibit, the film *The Archaeologist and How He Works* will be shown on the first Sunday of each month through June, 1983.

---

### Special Interest Museum Tours

Saturday, March 5	1PM	"Quest for Prehistory"
Saturday, April 2	1PM	"Art of Mesopotamia"

Meet in Museum Lobby \*No Charge\* Each tour lasts 30-40 minutes.

---

### SPRING MEMBERS' COURSE

"From Jericho to Gaugamela: An Introduction to the Archaeology and History of the Ancient Near East from the Origins of Agriculture to the Conquests of Alexander the Great"

By around 8,000 B.C. Jericho in the Jordan Valley had become a prehistoric town of remarkable size standing on the threshold of the "Neolithic Revolution." In 331 B.C. the Battle of Gaugamela on a desolate plain east of the Tigris River sealed the fate of the Achaemenid Empire and opened the way to India to the armies of Alexander.

The intervening eight millennia witnessed the stunning development and equally spectacular decline and fall of a succession of enduring human cultures and more ephemeral political empires across the Near East, a region stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.

The course will present a comprehensive picture of these successive cultures from the beginnings of food production to the advent of Hellenism in the wake of Alexander the Great. The framework of the course will be chronological rather than topical or geographic, in order to emphasize the cultural, political and economic interconnections that tied together major culture areas (Egypt and Mesopotamia) and adjacent regions (the Levant, Anatolia, the Aegean, Iran and Arabia) of the Ancient Near East.

Lecturer: Joseph Greene

The course will begin Saturday, April 9 and will run for eight weeks. The course will meet at The Oriental Institute from 10 to noon; tuition is \$50 for members.

---

### REGISTRATION FORM

Please register me for the course **From Jericho to Gaugamela**.

- I am a member and enclose a check for \$50.  
 I am not a member, but enclose an additional **SEPARATE** check for \$20 to cover a one year Oriental Institute membership.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make all checks payable to THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE.  
 Please register by Wednesday, April 6. Mail to: Membership Secretary,  
 The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

## INSTITUTE OFFERS SPECIAL NON-CREDIT COURSE IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY

**Archaeological Chemistry.** This course, taught by Dr. Susan V. Meschel, will consist of eight two-hour sessions. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the course, several academic and professional areas might benefit from these discussions. Geologists, for example, use geochronology for dating rocks, anthropologists are concerned with archaeological as well as geological dating processes. Conservators need to be acquainted with the modern physical and chemical techniques to maintain and restore museum artifacts and also to judge forgeries. Forensic science, as well as institutions concerned with general testing for fakes and forgeries use the same kinds of scientific techniques as archaeological chemistry. Dr. Meschel intends to discuss most of the major dating processes with a critical evaluation.

The course will also cover some of the most frequently used physicochemical methods which are useful to seek information concerning geographical origin, authenticity and conservation of artifacts. These topics are usually not covered in traditional university courses either in the physical sciences or in archaeology. At the end of the term, there might be a special session to discuss new results concerning the authenticity of the controversial Turin shroud, or to cover new developments in the area of underwater archaeology.

The course will run from 6PM to 8PM on Monday nights, starting April 4, 1983 through May 23, and will be given in Room S-124 of the Regenstein Library on the University of Chicago Campus, 1100 East 57th Street. Free parking is available on the east side of the building after 5PM (enter lot from 56th Street). The fee for the course is \$70., but students registered with any institution and Oriental Institute members may take the course for \$45. We must have reservations by March 28. For information call 753-2389.

---

### REGISTRATION FORM

Please register me for Archaeological Chemistry.

- I enclose \$70.
- I am a registered student and enclose \$45. with a photocopy of my valid student I.D.
- I am an Oriental Institute member and enclose \$45.
- I am not yet an Oriental Institute member, but enclose a **SEPARATE** check of \$20. to cover a one-year membership.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make all checks payable to THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE.  
Register by Monday, March 28. Mail to: Membership Office, The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

---

### Time To Change Telephone Numbers

As part of The University of Chicago's improvement of its telephone services, all of the telephone numbers in the Oriental Institute will change around mid-March.

Recorded Museum Announcement	962-9521
Museum Office	962-9520
Suq Office	962-9509
Suq Store, Lobby	962-9510
Publication Sales	962-9508
Museum Education Programs	962-9507
Volunteer Guide Office	962-9507
Membership Office	962-9513
Research Archives	962-9537

---

### Non-Membership Lecture of Interest

Dr. Hugo Brandenburg, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Munster, will speak in Breasted Hall on Friday, March 25, at 8PM on **The Origin and Development of Catacomb Construction in Rome.**

---

**A SPECIAL MUSEUM-MEMBERSHIP LECTURE**

C. E. Bosworth, Professor of Arabic Studies at the University of Manchester in England, will present an illustrated lecture entitled **The Medieval Islamic Underworld** on Wednesday, April 6, at 8PM in Breasted Hall at the Oriental Institute.

**Nina Davies' Painting  
Appears on U.K. Stamp**

The design on a new British 15½-pence postage stamp is based on a painting of Egyptian hieroglyphs by the late Nina Davies, an artist on the Institute staff during the 1920's. The stamp is part of a set of stamps with the theme "Information Technology". In addition to the Egyptian hieroglyphs, it also has scenes depicting a 19th century library and a word-processor computer terminal.

The painting is of an inscription in ornamental hieroglyphs from the tomb of Amenemhat, who lived in Thebes during the reign of Tuthmoses III. It was reproduced in an Oriental Institute publication Ancient Egyptian Paintings, Vol. 1(1936).

The hieroglyphs, roughly translated, refer to taking recreation "shooting the small animals of the desert by the (man) beloved of his lord, the steward of the vizier, the scribe of the grain-reckoning (of Amenemhat)".

The Suq has postcard reproductions of the stamp for sale at .30 cents each.



**The Oriental Institute**  
The University of Chicago  
1155 East 58th Street . Chicago, Illinois . 60637

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BULK RATE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
PERMIT NO. 1504

Dated Material

MAR 4 1994  
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO