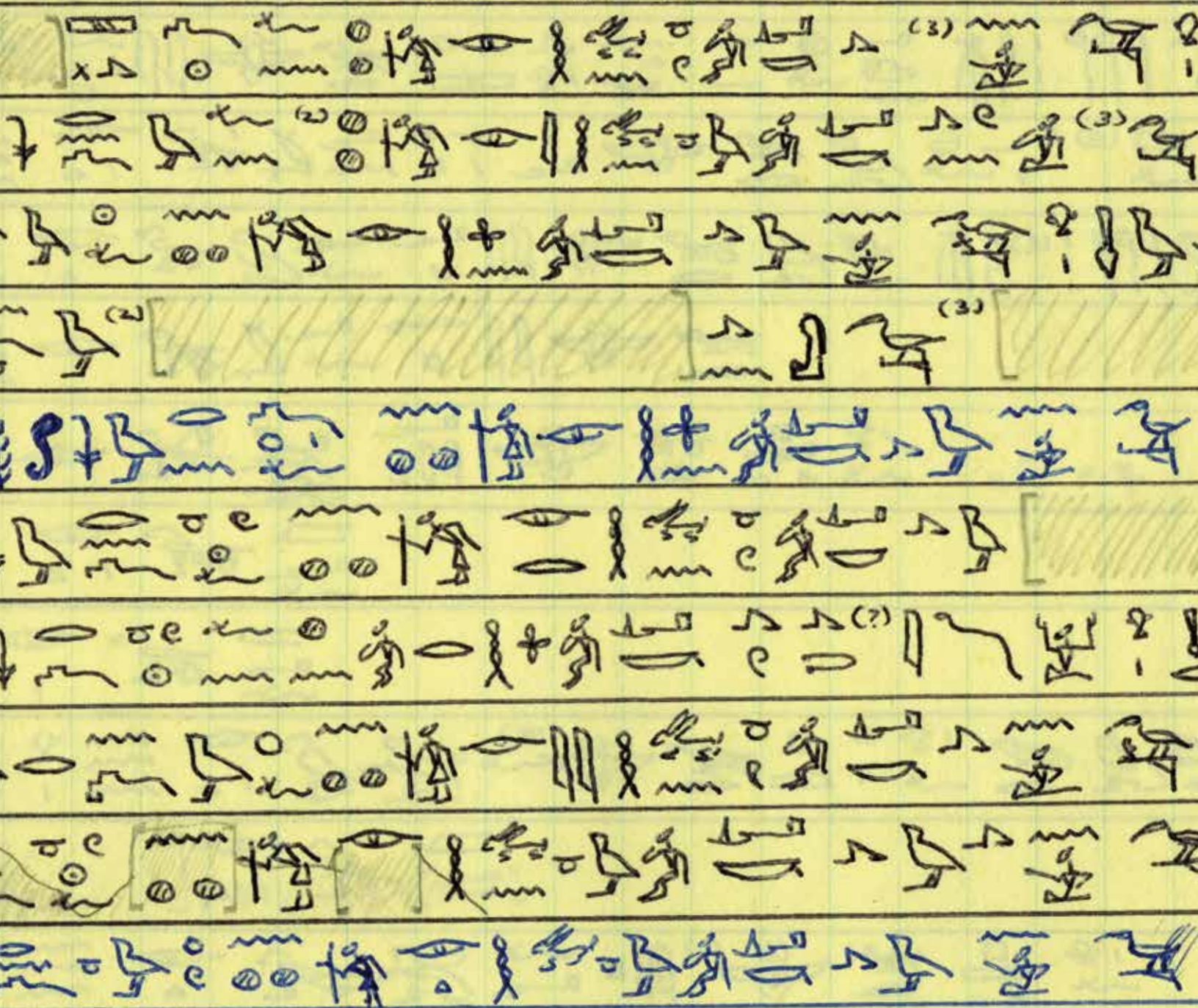


# News & Notes

MEMBERS' MAGAZINE

ISSUE 252 | AUTUMN 2022



ORIENTAL INSTITUTE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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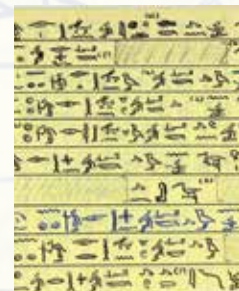
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On the cover: Portion of score transcription by Robert Ritner (see page 14)



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The latest issue of *News & Notes*, here before you, is dedicated to our colleague Robert Ritner, who passed away a little over a year ago. Although he was a master in many aspects of Egyptology, his focus was on magic and religion. We reprint here, as an example of Robert's work, an article originally published in 1992 titled "Egyptian Magic: Questions of Legitimacy, Religious Orthodoxy, and Social Deviance." It is preceded by an article, likewise on magic, by Foy Scalf, one of Robert's foremost students.

This issue is rather a sad one, since the Volunteer Spotlight this time is on Norma van der Meulen, who died just a couple months ago. We all know her from her many years working in the Suq and as a designer of beautiful jewelry, often on display there. Also, this issue includes a farewell to Ray Johnson, who was director of the Epigraphic Survey at Chicago House for a record twenty-five years and who had an unprecedented total career span there of more than forty years. We wish him all the best in retirement, and many more productive years of exciting scholarship.

On a more cheerful note, and in sync with 2022 as the centennial of King Tut, I recommend Emily Teeter's fascinating article about the circumstances surrounding the discovery of Tutankhamum's tomb in November 1922. It is the first of two articles, the second of which will appear in the next issue. Emily offers a glimpse behind the scenes, so to speak, of what probably was the most famous archaeological find of the twentieth century. It beautifully illustrates the politics and characters of the major players in Egyptology in the early 1920s.

Finally, at the start of this new academic year, we are readying ourselves for some big changes. In January we will welcome our new Sumerologist, Dr. Jana Matuszak, and our new chief curator and head of the Oriental Institute Museum, Dr. Marc Maillot. You will certainly get to know them in the pages of *News & Notes*! Another big change concerns the name of our institute. As already announced on our website (<https://oi.uchicago.edu/about>), "we are taking actions that will ultimately result in the renaming of the institution." We expect this change to be completed by the end of the academic year, and we will keep you updated in the coming months.

THEO VAN DEN HOUT  
Director



# MEMBERS' LECTURES

**2022-23 SEASON** We are excited to announce our upcoming OI Members' Lecture series! This academic year, each lecture will take place in person in Breasted Hall and also stream live online on the OI YouTube channel. Links to the live stream will be available on the OI's YouTube and social media channels on the day of each event. Please visit <https://oi.uchicago.edu/programs-events/events> to reserve your free seats.



**Museum Special Exhibition Opening Lecture  
Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI**

October 15, 2022, 4 p.m. | Kiersten Neumann, OI; Roko Rumora, UChicago

**Archaeology and Myth: Some Reflections**

November 2, 2022, 7 p.m. | Jonathan Hall, UChicago

**Egyptians in Athens: Following the Trails of Words**

December 7, 2022, 7 p.m. | Sofia Torallas-Tovar, UChicago

**Cuneiform Inscriptions in Late Antique and Early Medieval Armenia**

February 1, 2023, 7 p.m. | Felipe Rojas Silva, Brown University  
(rescheduled from 2022)

**The Braidwood Visiting Scholar Lecture**

March 1, 2023, 7 p.m. | Douglas Baird, University of Liverpool  
(rescheduled from 2022)

**Do You Believe in Thoth? My Life with an Amiable Ancient Egyptian God**

April 4, 2023, 7 p.m. | Richard Jasnow, Johns Hopkins University

**The Sumner Memorial Lecture**

May 3, 2023, 7 p.m. | Augusta McMahon, OI

**Visualizing the Pyramids: Old Digs, New Technologies**

June 7, 2023, 7 p.m. | Peter Der Manuelian, Harvard University  
(rescheduled from 2022)



## THE OI CELEBRATES THE RETIREMENT OF RAY JOHNSON

The OI congratulates W. Raymond Johnson, director of the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute, on his recent retirement. Founded in 1924 and based at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt, the Epigraphic Survey is a long-standing field project with a mission to produce photographs and precise line drawings of the inscriptions and relief scenes on major temples and tombs at Luxor for publication. More recently the Survey has expanded its program to include conservation, restoration, site management, and conservation training.

After beginning his career as an epigraphic artist in 1979, Ray became the director of the Epigraphic Survey and Chicago House in 1997 and held this position for twenty-five years. During his tenure, two Epigraphic Survey publications were released, and a third will appear soon. Ray has also authored dozens of articles, most of them concentrating on the Amarna Period.

For forty-three years, Ray successfully contributed to and led the effort to fulfill Breasted's vision for Chicago House: to record all the texts that survive in Egypt for integration into the scientific record. Among his many accomplishments, Ray successfully secured USAID funding that has been critical to the work of the Epigraphic Survey. Under his directorship, the Epigraphic Survey entered the digital era. With the support of the World Monuments Fund, Chicago House provided protected storage of 50,000 inscribed stone fragments in the Luxor Temple blockyard, two groups of which were restored to their original walls. The digital photography project in the Luxor Temple blockyard provides critical documentation of tens of thousands of inscribed blocks and fragments, preserving significant data that will be accessible outside Egypt for generations to come.



# THE OI AND 100 YEARS OF TUTANKHAMUN PART I

by Emily Teeter



The year 2022 marks the centennial of the discovery of the tomb of King Tutankhamun, making it an appropriate time to recall the Oriental Institute's important contributions to the study of the king, his tomb, and its treasures.

The tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon on November 4, 1922. That year, James Henry Breasted, founder of the Oriental Institute, was on his way from Luxor to Aswan with his family. He had missed a letter from Lord Carnarvon sent to him in Luxor inviting him to be present for the opening of the first sealed door of the tomb on November 26. But Carnarvon expressed the hope that Breasted would return to Luxor soon: "Still there is another sealed door to be opened, and I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you there."

As Charles Breasted related in his biography of his father, *Pioneer to the Past* (p. 344), Carnarvon asked Breasted "to make translations of the seals on the shrines and chests, and so far as possible of the inscriptions on the furniture and other objects which might possibly yield immediate information regarding Tutenkhamon's death and burial and perhaps his reign." He also "formally requested" Breasted "to do all the

historical work involved in the discovery and its eventual publication." Breasted commented, "Although this was a staggering assignment, I agreed to undertake it. He [Carnarvon] appeared to be quite pleased and relieved—reactions which I told him frankly I could not share!" He noted that Carter repeated the request and confirmed the arrangement in writing. Of special interest were the eight different seal impressions on the blocked doors, for it was hoped that they would clarify the chronology of the resealing of the tomb.

But according to the carefully researched biography of Howard Carter by T. G. H. James (*Howard Carter: The Path to Tutankhamun*, p. 236), the picture may have been slightly different, because James claims that Breasted contacted Howard Carter to offer his services to work on the door sealings. The situation was further complicated by Carnarvon, who on December 18 asked British Egyptologist Alan

Gardiner, and then, several weeks later, Breasted, to do essentially the same work. According to Carter's diaries and journals (online at the Griffith Institute, Oxford), Breasted examined the impressions on the doorways on December 18 and 19, while Gardiner examined texts on the objects in the antechamber for the two days following his arrival in Luxor on January 2, 1923. On January 25, the two scholars were at the tomb together, apparently studying the sealings on the burial shrines. Breasted returned to study the sealings again on February 14, 15, and 17. Breasted's greatest contribution was alerting Carter in December 1922 to the fact that none of the seal impressions dated later than the Eighteenth Dynasty, indicating that the tomb was robbed and restored shortly after Tut's death rather than several centuries later as Carter had assumed.

Ironically, neither Breasted's nor Gardiner's work was published. Breasted sent his notes to Carter on March 16, 1923, so that they could be included in the planned academic account of the tomb—a publication that never appeared. In fact, Carter gave Breasted little credit for his work. In volume 1 of *The Tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen* (1923, pp. xiv–xvi), he briefly thanks Breasted, who "gave his valued advice and enlightened me on the historical data and evidence of the seal-impressions of the four doorways," and in volume 3 (1933, p. 100) Breasted shares credit with Gardiner, who "spent several days studying them [the seal impressions] under somewhat difficult circumstances during the early stages of the discovery."

It is difficult to determine whether this less-than-effusive thanks is a reflection of the scale of Breasted's actual contribution or was typical of Carter, about whom Breasted cautioned Harold Nelson, the field director of Chicago House, when Carter asked him to translate texts on the gold bands that adorned the mummy: "A word of warning regarding what you may expect when you have finished whatever you may be able to hand Carter in the way of copies of translations. When you have finished and he has got all he can out of you, he will turn his back on you" (OI director's correspondence, December 27, 1925).

Breasted used his special access to the tomb to burnish his credentials, to promote the new Oriental Institute, and to keep John D. Rockefeller Jr.—who was being courted to fund the Epigraphic Survey and other projects—engaged. As a result, Breasted's own involvement was occasionally embellished. He wrote, "[W]e opened the doors of the third and fourth shrines and beheld the massive stone sarcophagus within. . . . For the first time, I stood in the silence of the tomb and felt the majesty of the Pharaoh's presence" (OI director's correspondence, February 2, 1924). Yet Carter's diary for January 3, 1924, the day the third shrine was opened, mentions nine people in attendance at that event, but not Breasted (who did not arrive in Luxor until almost two weeks later), and on February 4 Breasted was at the tomb in the afternoon, whereas Carter had opened the fourth shrine in the morning. Charles Breasted also played up his father's role in the interpretation of the tomb, relating that his father, though



ill in Luxor, “was permitted to get up only when Carter urgently required his presence at the tomb for consultations” (*Pioneer to the Past*, p. 357), and he made an even less plausible claim: “On reaching Egypt, he [Breasted] went at once to Luxor at Carter’s request, to assist him again in an advisory capacity in the many complex problems involved with the removal of the shrines from the burial chamber” (*Pioneer to the Past*, p. 354). The role of Arthur Callender and Arthur Mace, who served Carter as engineers in clearing the tomb, is well documented.

Breasted recognized that his access to the tomb was an important part of keeping Rockefeller engaged with his work in Egypt. On December 24, 1922, he wrote to him:

You perhaps have seen the press, which has been giving a good deal of attention to . . . the extraordinary discovery of a royal tomb at Thebes (Luxor), in Upper Egypt. The discovery is so remarkable, that after three successive visits to the place, I can not forbear sending to you and Mrs. Rockefeller a more adequate story of the find than the press has been able to secure.

At the end of that letter, he introduced the possibility of Rockefeller and his wife visiting the tomb:

It occurs to me as I write this that you and Mrs. Rockefeller might want to make the journey in this way, in your own chartered boat—just dropping out of the world, as it were, for a few idyllic weeks on this marvelous old river with all its wonders. If you ever think of it, I need hardly say that it would give me the greatest gratification if I could be of any service in making your preliminary arrangements completely anonymous, or afterward in aiding you to see the monuments and make the journey in the quiet and privacy which you would desire.

By the following August, with Carter’s approval, Breasted extended an invitation not just to the tomb but to the opening of the sarcophagus, again assuring the magnate of complete privacy and anonymity. Breasted spent months making travel arrangements, coordinating with Rockefeller’s office about transatlantic crossings and even chartering a steamer in his own name, forestalling the agency’s repeated requests for the passenger list and going so far as to issue code words for the departure date.

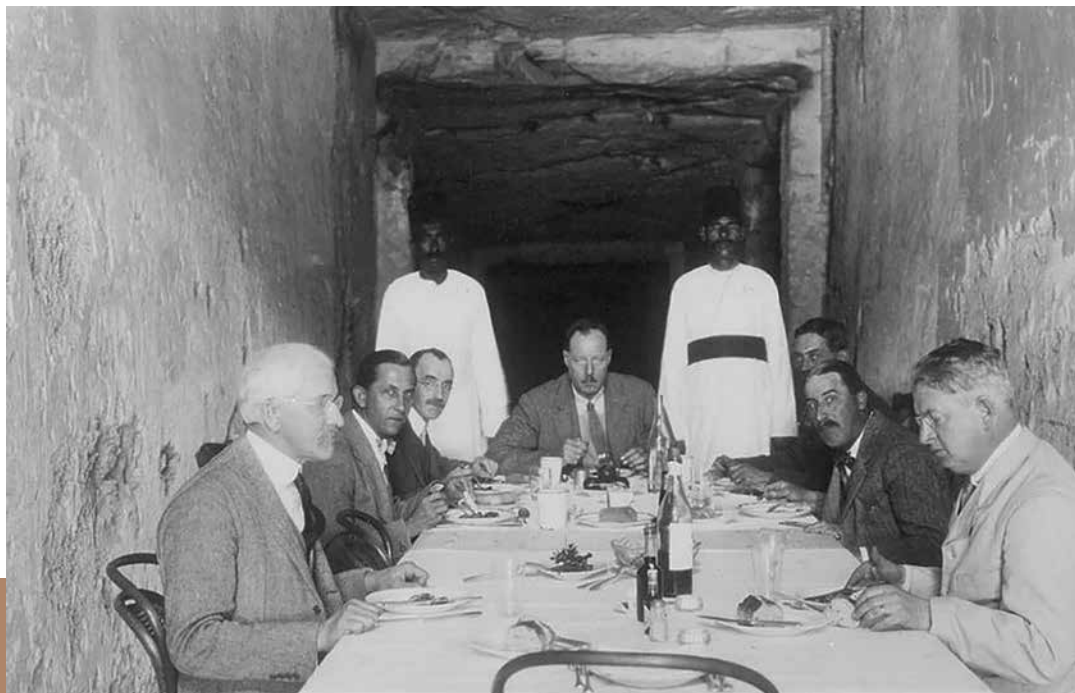
To his colleagues, Breasted was quite clear about his motivation to facilitate Rockefeller’s visit to the tomb. In September 1923, he wrote to Carter, “I want to thank you for your cooperation in extending the invitation, which has greatly aided me in getting him to undertake the Nile voyage. In my judgment all this means much for the future support of the studies we are interested in along the Nile.” And on October 27, 1923, he wrote to Gardiner:

There is every reason to look for greatly increased resources for the support of the studies to which you and I are devoting our lives, as a result of this visit of our friend in Egypt. He has so much money that he now has several men engaged solely in looking for the most useful and beneficial places to put his means into. He himself very much wants to find places for it. There is no reason why Egypt and the Near East should not be one of these. . . . I believe that I have crossed the first bridge in having induced our friend to make the Nile voyage. It now remains to secure the largest possible results from this first success, and I am counting on your cooperation.

But alas, the trip fell through. In a letter to Breasted on October 18, 1923, after detailing what the family preferred to eat for breakfast, Rockefeller oddly described the trip as “not being wise for Mrs.

OPPOSITE: Colossal statue of Tutankhamun currently in the Oriental Institute Museum. © Oriental Institute E14088, photograph D. 15824.

RIGHT: Breasted (far left) and colleagues having lunch in the tomb of Ramesses XI, February 1923. Breasted’s colleagues from left to right: Harry Burton, Alfred Lucas, Arthur Callender, Arthur Mace, Howard Carter, Alan Gardiner.



Rockefeller and me” because of the arrangements they would have to make for their children in their absence. Breasted countered that “the trip would prove of interest to your daughter, and possibly to your eldest son. I do not believe that they would find the Nile voyage at all dull.” But on November 15, Rockefeller informed Breasted that they could not travel, softening the blow with the comment:

To accept Mr. Carter’s invitation we have realized is an opportunity the like of which will never come again in our lives, but more eager have we been to make this trip because of the great pleasure and marvelous opportunity of making it under your personal guidance and tutelage. It is the latter privilege which we have found it especially hard to renounce.

The next year brought Breasted even deeper into the Tutankhamun orbit. As the unprecedented splendor and sheer number of objects in the tomb were recognized, a dispute arose between the excavators and the Egyptian government about whether there would be a division of the finds. Carter and Lord Carnarvon’s estate argued that they should receive at least duplicates—of which there were many—because their contract stipulated a division of the finds if the tomb was not intact (i.e., robbed). The government argued that the entire contents of the tomb should stay in Egypt because, by their legal terms, a tomb robbed in antiquity was still “intact.” Breasted, who was collecting for his own museum in Chicago, was sympathetic to Carter and Carnarvon’s claim to a share of the artifacts. On January 17, 1924, Carter recorded that Breasted visited him and “professes to be ready to back me in Gov. disputes.” Later that month, tensions grew as the government began regulating who would be permitted to visit the tomb. Things came to a head on February 13 when Carter was informed that his colleagues’ wives could not visit the tomb unless they were accredited journalists. Carter met with Breasted, Gardiner, and Egyptologist Percy Newberry, and “it was agreed that in view of the Government’s repeated interferences of which this was the culminating example, the staff should refuse to carry on work until things were put on a more satisfactory footing. A statement to this effect was drawn up” (diary of Arthur Mace, February 13, 1924, Griffith Institute, Oxford). As Charles Breasted recalled:



Carter, fuming and pacing nervously up and down my room, dictated while I typed at least a score of different versions of his proposed announcement of the closing of the tomb, each one, as his anger ebbed, a shade less vitriolic than its predecessor, until under the pacific influence of my father and the group of eight or ten American and English scientists who had gradually joined us, the following finally met his approval” (*Pioneer to the Past*, p. 366).

The “Notice” from Carter declared: “Owing to the impossible restrictions and discourtesies on the part of the Public Works Department and its Antiquities Service . . . immediately after the press view of the tomb this morning between 10 A.M. and noon the tomb will be closed and no further work can be carried out.” The provocative notice was prominently posted on bulletin boards around Luxor. In response, the government revoked Carter’s permission to work and changed the locks on the tomb, and Carnarvon’s estate then sued the Egyptian government.

Breasted played an important role in the following events. In early March, he received “a summons to Cairo to act as mediator in this unfortunate law suit which Carter has brought against the Egyptian Government.” Although Breasted was apparently trusted by both parties, he was an odd choice considering that he had already declared his support for Carter’s position. It was also ironic that he served as an “impartial” party because he was in the midst of planning a secret proposal to King Fuad (referred to in correspondence only as “the Great Idea” or “the Scheme”) for Rockefeller to fund and build an entirely new Egyptian Museum. That project called for European control over the museum and Egypt’s cultural heritage, the same principle that underlay the Egyptian government’s suit against Carter. In May 1924, Breasted bowed out of the controversy about the ownership of the objects from the tomb, remarking that he had “spent five weeks on this thankless task . . . after having been kicked effectively by both sides” (J. Abt, *American Egyptologist*, p. 314).



ABOVE: Breasted and Gardiner, ca. 1926. OI photo.

TOP CENTER: Rendering from Breasted’s proposal for a new Egyptian Museum, 1925.

OPPOSITE: Egyptologist Pierre Lacau.





**Pierre L. Lacau** (1873–1963), a French Egyptologist, was the director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service from 1915 to 1936. As head of the committee that approved all excavations in Egypt, Lacau was one of the most important figures in Egyptology in the first half of the twentieth century, and central to the history of the tomb of Tutankhamun and the work of the Oriental Institute. He is frequently mentioned in letters in the Oriental Institute archive from 1922, when he collaborated with Breasted on the Coffin Texts Project.

Lacau was an early advocate of training young Egyptians in archaeological methods, giving them opportunities to recover and preserve their own cultural heritage. He also insisted that expeditions promptly publish their results as a condition for further work permits.

In the 1924 dispute between the Egyptian government and the estate of Lord Carnarvon, Lacau argued for the government's position that all the objects from Tutankhamun's tomb should stay in Egypt, and he worked with Breasted on a possible solution to the impasse.

The Oriental Institute was dependent on Lacau for his official permission to construct both the old (1924) and new (1931) Chicago Houses at Luxor and for its annual permits to work at Medinet Habu. In October 1927, Lacau gave the Institute permission to excavate at the site where its colossal statue of Tutankhamun was later found, and in March 1933 he presided over the official division of the finds that awarded more than 4,000 objects to Chicago, including the statue. In 1930, the Oriental Institute applied for two further permits, one to document six mastaba tombs at Saqqara and another to work at Karnak. The Saqqara request was initially denied, in part because Lacau wanted Egyptians (and other nationalities) to work there. The Karnak request also met with resistance because no final publications for Medinet Habu had yet been issued. As Breasted wrote to Nelson on November 20, 1930, "the attitude of Lacau toward us . . . is becoming distinctly more hostile and unfavorable. We Americans are very much in the way." But ultimately both permits were granted, and in 1935, Lacau generously approved the export of 4,500 ostraca excavated at Medinet Habu to Chicago for translation.

Lacau's policies of restricting who received permits and not automatically allowing excavators to export their finds were irritating to American and European Egyptologists who were used to little oversight, but these policies guided the gradual Egyptianization of work in Egypt and formed the basis for today's regulations.

Charles Breasted notes that several times in the course of the legal wrangling, the Egyptian government asked Breasted to take over work in Tutankhamun's tomb, an offer that he considered for unstated reasons to be "utterly unthinkable" (*Pioneer to the Past*, p. 371).

Charles Breasted, too, was swept up in Tut. He visited the tomb several times, and in June 1924 he started filing "daily cable-dispatches" from the field that appeared in *The Chicago Daily News* and *The Christian Science Monitor* under the byline George Waller Mecham. This insider information circumvented the monopoly that Carnarvon had established with *The Times* of London.

Beyond the lawsuit, Breasted had his own issues with the Antiquities Service and its head, Pierre Lacau (see sidebar). In 1924, with Rockefeller funding, Breasted founded the Epigraphic Survey headquartered at Chicago House on the west bank at Luxor. He encountered resistance from Lacau about issuing permits to build the house. On June 30, 1924, he wrote field director Harold Nelson:

You will be interested to know that the permit to build on eminent domain land, sent me by Lacau, was so grotesquely impossible, that I did not think it wise to invest Oriental Institute funds in a building over which we would have very slight control; which might be taken from us at any moment, and which, in any case, would be the property of the government at the end of a year, if they saw fit to terminate our work. We have, therefore, bought . . . land just north of the Colossi, and the house is being erected on our own territory. The government will be unable to interfere with you in any way, and . . . you will be free from any annoyance at the hands of Mon. Lacau (OI director's correspondence, June 30, 1924).

This testy relationship with Lacau was to color future events.

EMILY TEETER is an Egyptologist, now retired from the OI Museum. She thanks Anne Flannery, the OI's museum archivist, for access to the OI director's correspondence.



THE STORY CONTINUES next issue in Part II, which will explore Tut in Chicago.



# WHO IS ROBERT K. RITNER?

Many *News & Notes* readers will be familiar with Robert Ritner from listening to his lectures in person or online, reading his publications, or having known him personally. To mark the one-year anniversary of his passing, we are highlighting the importance of Robert and his work on Egyptian magic and ritual with two issues of *News & Notes* published in his honor. This installment contains a piece written by Robert and one written by Egyptologist Foy Scalf. Our next issue will feature articles by University of Chicago faculty members working in disciplines outside Egyptology to highlight the impact that magic and ritual continue to have on current scholarship.

Robert K. Ritner (1953–2021) was a professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago from 1996. One of his proudest achievements was becoming the inaugural Rowe Professor of Egyptology in 2019. Robert published on a wide variety of topics, from Third Intermediate period inscriptions (*The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period*) to Late Period papyri (*The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition*). But it is for his work on ancient Egyptian magic that Robert is best known.



Robert's book *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, published in 1993 and based on his University of Chicago PhD dissertation, completely transformed our understanding of ancient magic and how we approach it. His conclusions revolutionized the study of magic and promoted it to the forefront of scholarly attention, where it would no longer be ignored but rather would form a new subdiscipline worthy of detailed and careful analysis. Countless studies have built on his trendsetting work, and thanks to his efforts we now have a much better understanding and appreciation of ancient Egyptian magical practice. Robert's groundbreaking monograph launched a remarkable career during which he continued to apply his penetrating insights, publishing well over a hundred articles on the cultures of the ancient world. This issue of *News & Notes* honors his singular vision.



OPPOSITE TOP: Figure 1. Egyptian. Magical relief, 305–30 BCE. Limestone, 31 ½ × 25 ½ × 5 in., 238 lb. (80 × 64.8 × 12.7 cm, 107.96 kg). Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.229. Creative Commons-BY (Photo: Brooklyn Museum).

OPPOSITE BOTTOM AND THIS PAGE: Figure 2. Composite of a Horus on the Crocodiles cippus currently in the Oriental Institute Museum and inscribed on the top, sides, back, and bottom with "Text B." © Oriental Institute E16881, photograph D. 9259. Photo by Anna R. Ressman. On display in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery. For a 3D-rotation version, visit [bit.ly/HorusOI3D](http://bit.ly/HorusOI3D).



# “YOU WILL TRAMPLE THE GREAT LION AND THE SERPENT”

THE HEALING POWERS OF HORUS ON THE CROCODILES THROUGH THE EYES OF ROBERT K. RITNER by Foy Scalf

“You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.’” (Psalm 91:13–14)

Using the lion and the snake, Psalm 91 alludes to the powerful forces of the natural environment as symbols of potential danger, obstruction, and malice. Here, the “Lord” rewards with protection the faithful supplicant who seeks prevention or relief from such threats. Of course, lions and snakes are appropriate avatars specifically because they posed very real hazards to people in the ancient world. As such, cultural artifacts from across the Middle East demonstrate how diverse practices developed through which anxiety of these risks was assuaged, either for prophylactic deterrence or for curative treatment. Examples par excellence of this wider apotropaic (i.e., harm-averting) phenomenon derive from ancient Egypt, where stelae and wall reliefs dating from the late New Kingdom to the Roman era show various deities in the very pose suggested by Psalm 91: trampling upon the lion, cobra, snakes, scorpions, and many other symbols of peril.

A stela now in the Brooklyn Museum (fig. 1) shows a composite god with four arms, four wings, a falcon’s tail, and nine heads trampling a lion, scorpion, turtle, and a group of bound prisoners, two of whom are shown prostrated face-down at the deity’s feet. On the shoulders is the head of Bes, and from his headdress appears an ogdoad—a group of eight deities—that symbolizes the all-encompassing power of the god. Similar images have been labeled in ancient papyri as “Bes with nine heads” (P. Brooklyn 47.218.156). Like the “Lord” from Psalm 91, it was thought that this god had the power to cast harm in the direction of evildoers or to protect his believers from such harm. The ambivalent nature of this power is embedded in the scene itself; on the one hand, the figure tramples a lion, while on the other hand, a lion head emanates from his crown as one of the eight gods and goddesses. Such iconography demonstrates how these “magical” powers cut both ways, imbued with both latent protection and potential threat.

Widespread recognition of the ambivalence intrinsic to the ancient Egyptians’ own approach to what we today call magical practices can be largely attributed to the scholarly legacy of one person: the OI’s own Robert K. Ritner, who served as the inaugural Rowe Professor of Egyptology prior to his untimely death in July 2021. Robert’s magnum opus was his *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, where he elaborated on the concept of “magic” (*hk3*) in the ancient Egyptian cultural lexicon. The book remains an OI bestseller, and thanks to it, Robert helped immensely to popularize an emic approach to magic by which he sought to understand the ancients



in their own words—to empathize with them as much as possible to see how they comprehended their own world. For Robert, referring to the abovementioned god “Bes with nine heads” as “pantheos” or “pantheistic” was acceptable because the emanations of the god formed the other deities and even the natural world. (Other scholars, such as Joachim Quack, have argued for what they see as a more neutral term, “polymorphic.”) Robert spent decades studying these images, as shown by his presentation “A Healing Statue of Bes Pantheos in the Brooklyn Museum” at the 2000 annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, his 2016 article “Pantheistic Figures in Ancient Egypt” published in an honorary volume for Mark Smith, and his article “Jubilating Baboons and the Bes Pantheos” that will appear posthumously in a 2022 volume honoring Richard Jasnow.

Robert’s sustained attention to gods with “pantheistic” qualities trampling and throttling symbols of wild and hostile forces goes all the way back to his student days at the very beginning of his career. One of the magical practices he investigated for his 1987 dissertation was the use of texts on so-called healing statues. These statues could take on various manifestations in ancient Egyptian material culture. One of the most common was the so-called Horus cippus (fig. 2). These small, hand-held stelae showed Horus-the-child grasping and controlling snakes, scorpions, lions, and gazelles, all while standing upon crocodiles, with the head of Bes above him (fig. 3). It has become common—standard, in fact—to refer to these images as “Horus on the Crocodiles,” for obvious reasons. One of the earliest articles Robert published was “Horus on the Crocodiles: A Juncture of Religion and Magic in Late Dynastic Egypt” in 1989, which treated images and texts of Horus on the Crocodiles in detail and remains a well-cited classic providing the background and context for the production and use of Horus on the Crocodiles imagery on cippi and stelae. The iconography was often accompanied by elaborate texts inscribed over every surface (fig. 2). By dunking the cippus in it, a liquid would be magically charged with the healing powers of the hieroglyphic texts. Consuming the potion was thought to ward off or promote healing from scorpion stings and snake bites, as the associated texts recounted the story of Horus’s recovery from just such an attack. Just as Horus was healed, so did the patient seek the same. In Robert’s words, “By identifying the terrestrial scorpions, crocodiles, and serpents with demons, the spells guarantee their defeat; by identifying the fate of the wounded patient with that of the victorious god, the spells guarantee a cure.”

In that early article of 1989, Robert promised to deliver a publication of a once-spectacular stela acquired by the Field Museum in Chicago in 1899 (fig. 4). From his notes and correspondence, it is clear that he intended to incorporate a full edition into the article itself, but due to space and time constraints, it was postponed. He referenced the Field Museum stela once again in his treatment of the Horus cippi texts in 2009 for *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period*. Unfortunately, the project was left unfinished at Robert’s premature passing on July 25, 2021. However, we are currently in the process of cataloging the Papers of Robert K. Ritner for the OI Museum Archives ([bit.ly/R\\_Ritner](https://bit.ly/R_Ritner)). Among his papers are extensive notes, hieroglyphic transcriptions, and translations for his project to publish the Field Museum stela in full. In fact, the project he had embarked on was far more massive than the texts





from this single stela.

The stela itself was once an impressive monument. It showed Horus-the-child stepping out from a stela-shaped back pillar covered in depictions of gods and goddesses. As is standard, Horus treads upon crocodiles and clutches wild animals. Beneath the ledge where Horus stands is a relief of Horus-Shed, or “Horus-the-savior,” riding in a chariot while launching arrows at beasts of the desert. It is covered in hieroglyphic texts on every surface. The stela seems to have stood as a public monument for consultation, much like the figures of Djedhor whose statue base is in the OI (fig. 5). Erected in communal spaces, such shrines could be approached by people who pursued cures or soothed their worries about what might happen should they encounter a venomous creature.

Although its looks are lackluster today, the Field Museum stela remains impressive. It had been smashed to bits in antiquity, and all traces of the owner’s name were chiseled out of the hieroglyphic inscriptions. Yet, remaining traces of the owner’s titles indicate that he was a priest. Therefore, we find ourselves in a curious predicament: a priest erected a statue for the public good of the devout, only to have his name erased and the image destroyed despite his seemingly good intentions. For what reason did this iconoclasm take place? We may never know, but we can speculate on some of the circumstances.

That the object was vandalized in ancient times is suggested by the fact that the broken fragments of stone were reunited prior to their purchase by Edward Ayer and his donation of the reconstructed stela to the Field Museum in 1899. Although Robert suggested that the smashing of the central relief may have been due to later reactions in Christian or Islamic Egypt, the careful eradication of the name in the hieroglyphic texts clearly indicates someone who could read the script. Furthermore, who would carefully excise the name and titles of a person they did not know? From that perspective, it seems most likely that the *damnatio memoriae* occurred within the extended lifespan of the stela itself when it was still being used and understood by the Egyptian faithful. Such stelae could potentially be revered for centuries, so we no longer know when the destruction took place. Could the violent reaction have been in response to a cure that did not work? Or worse, a remedy that harmed? Could the priest have defiled the divine offerings for the gods? Could he have roused the anger of pharaoh?

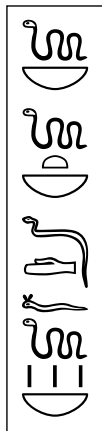
Although the motivating factors behind the defacement will likely never be known, Robert worked assiduously for years on the difficult and fragmentary texts of the Field Museum stela, seeking answers about this enigmatic object. He produced dozens of pages of an elaborate hieroglyphic score transcription of a collection of

OPPOSITE TOP: Figure 3. Drawing of a Horus on the Crocodiles cippus showing the god Heka to the left of the side lock of hair on Horus’s head. From the slide collection of Robert K. Ritner. Oriental Institute Museum Archives, Papers of Robert K. Ritner. Digitized photograph of John Gardiner Wilkinson, *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, volume 3 (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1878), p. 153, pl. XXXIII.

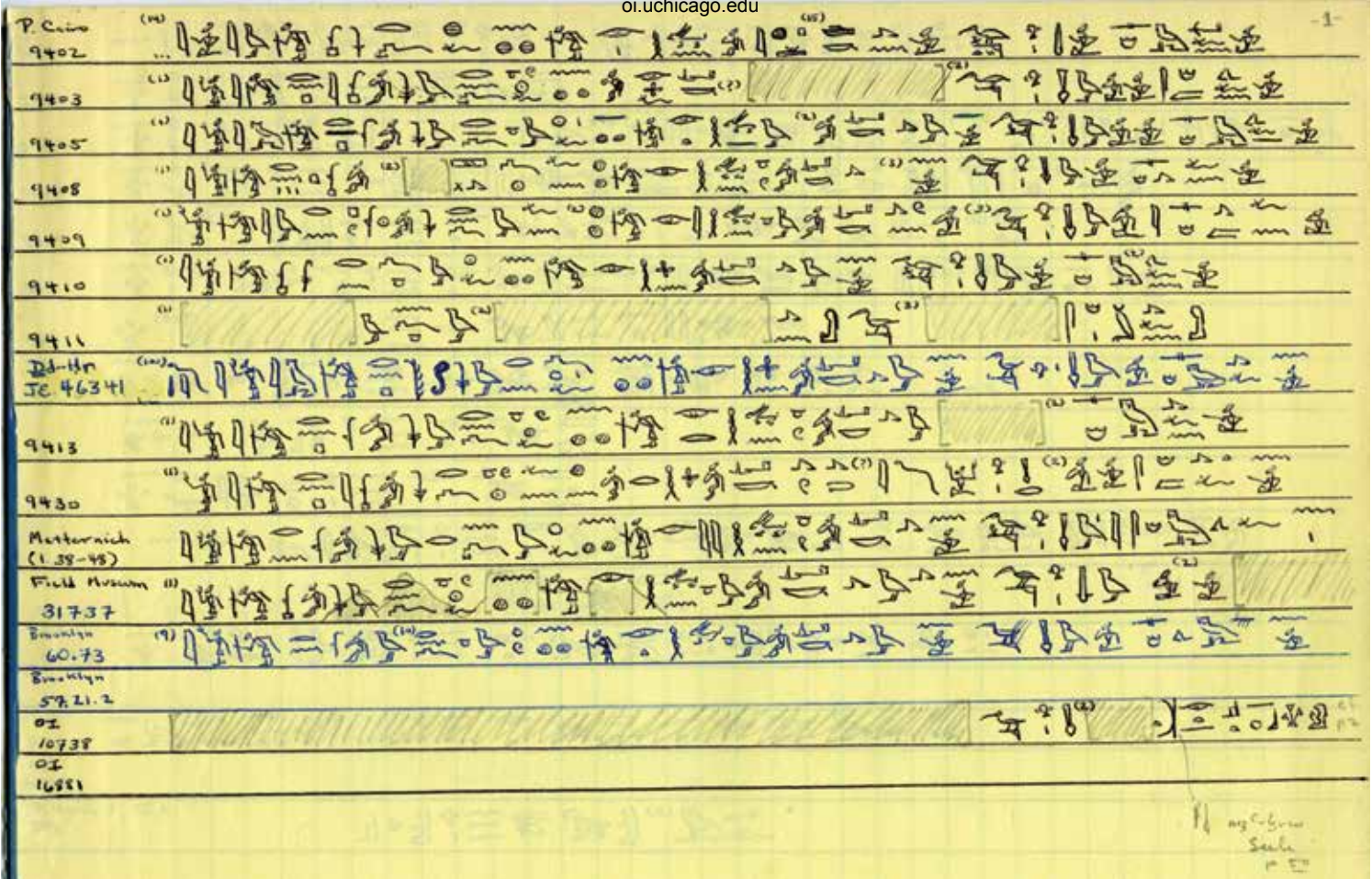
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Figure 4. A stela currently in the Field Museum of Natural History showing an effaced relief of Horus on the Crocodiles at the center of a plethora of divine imagery and texts. © The Field Museum, Image No. A108382, Cat. No. 31737, Photographer Ron Testa.

RIGHT: Figure 5. Statue base of Djedhor (OIM E10589) where the names of various snakes, from which supplicants approaching the statue wanted protection, can be seen in the fourth vertical column from the left (white rectangle) of the inscription on the facing side. Photo by Jean Grant. On display in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery.

DETAIL OF INSCRIPTION: “every male snake, every female snake, and all serpents.”

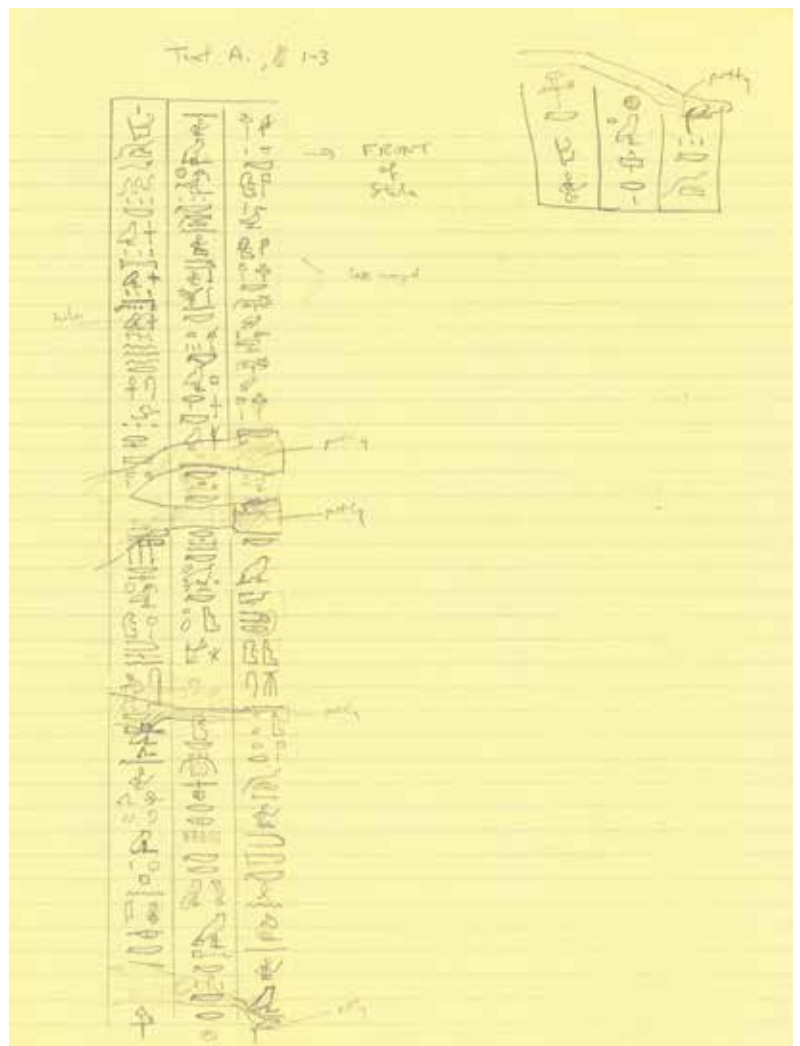






ABOVE: Figure 6. A so-called score transcription by Robert K. Ritner of selected primary sources for what has been called “Text B” from the Horus on the Crocodiles cippi and healing statues. Oriental Institute Museum Archives, Papers of Robert K. Ritner.

RIGHT: Figure 7. The working notes of Robert K. Ritner in preparation for his edition of the Field Museum stela, showing his preliminary transcription of “Text A” from the upper edge of the stela. These notes were made between 1983 and 1989. Oriental Institute Museum Archives, Papers of Robert K. Ritner.





primary sources (figs. 6 and 7) to which he could compare the Field Museum stela's texts. Based on these parallels, he thought the stela was likely made in the Late Period, rather than the Ptolemaic Period as indicated in the museum's records. In the stela's inscriptions, he found references to the "pantheistic" union of the gods depicted on the stela. One of the texts (known as "Text B") is a hymn to, in Robert's translation, "the aged god who rejuvenates himself at his season, the old man who becomes a youth" (fig. 6; the text also appears on OIM E16881 in fig. 2). Like the multiheaded Bes—Bes Pantheos, as Robert liked to call him—referred to at the beginning of this article, Robert suggested that these descriptions were of the combined gods of the stela: Bes and Horus-the-child, "the old man" and the "youth," a syncretic form of the primordial creator from whom all divinity emanates.

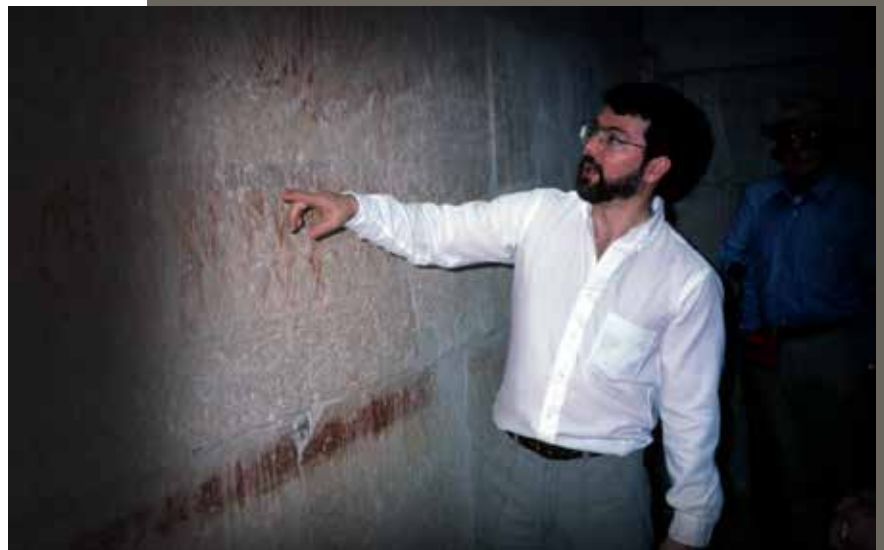
In addition to this score transcription, Robert examined the stela in person and requested that nearly three dozen photos be taken of every surface. Through this work, he was able to reconstruct much of the stela and its texts. His transcription of a hymn to Horus (known as "Text A") shows his copy of the hieroglyphs on the upper edge of the stela and his notes on where the pieces have been joined together with "putty" (fig. 7). This hymn is very common on the Horus cippi and healing statues. It addresses Horus with "Hail to you, god, son of a god! Hail to you, heir, son of an heir! Hail to you, bull, son of a bull, born of the divine womb! Hail to you, Horus, who came from Osiris, born of Isis!" The purpose of the inscription is revealed further on in the text, where Robert translated: "May you repel for me every lion on the desert, every crocodile on the river, every mouth

that bites in their holes. . . . May you extract for me the poison that is in any limb."

Robert spent much of his life studying ancient Egypt, and for his last forty years he was consumed with elucidating the nature of magic, religion, "pantheistic" deities, and Horus on the Crocodiles on stelae like that in the Field Museum. The academic papers he leaves behind reveal an enormous labor of love and obsession—a passion for detailed investigation and "getting things right." He worked for several years on the texts of the Field Museum stela, what he called an "epigraphic nightmare" due to the difficulty caused by their heavily marred condition. Although he published several discussions of this stela, his complete edition never appeared in print, and he always intended to return to it. Unlike the owner of the Field Museum stela, whose public monument was ultimately despoiled and forgotten, we are working to organize and catalog Robert's scholarly archives to preserve them indefinitely for the use of future scholars. We hope such scholars will make use of this rich corpus to pursue the many intriguing questions that remain to be answered. In the interim, we have taken up Robert's project on the Field Museum stela with the aim of bringing his edition of the text to publication as an honor to his life, work, and legacy. Like Robert's effort to reassemble the shattered stela in the Field Museum, we want the product of his meticulous labor to be a fitting tribute to our former adviser, colleague, and friend. We can do no better than invoke the very words found on the stela to which he dedicated so much time and energy: "God is summoned in your likeness by calling your name today!"

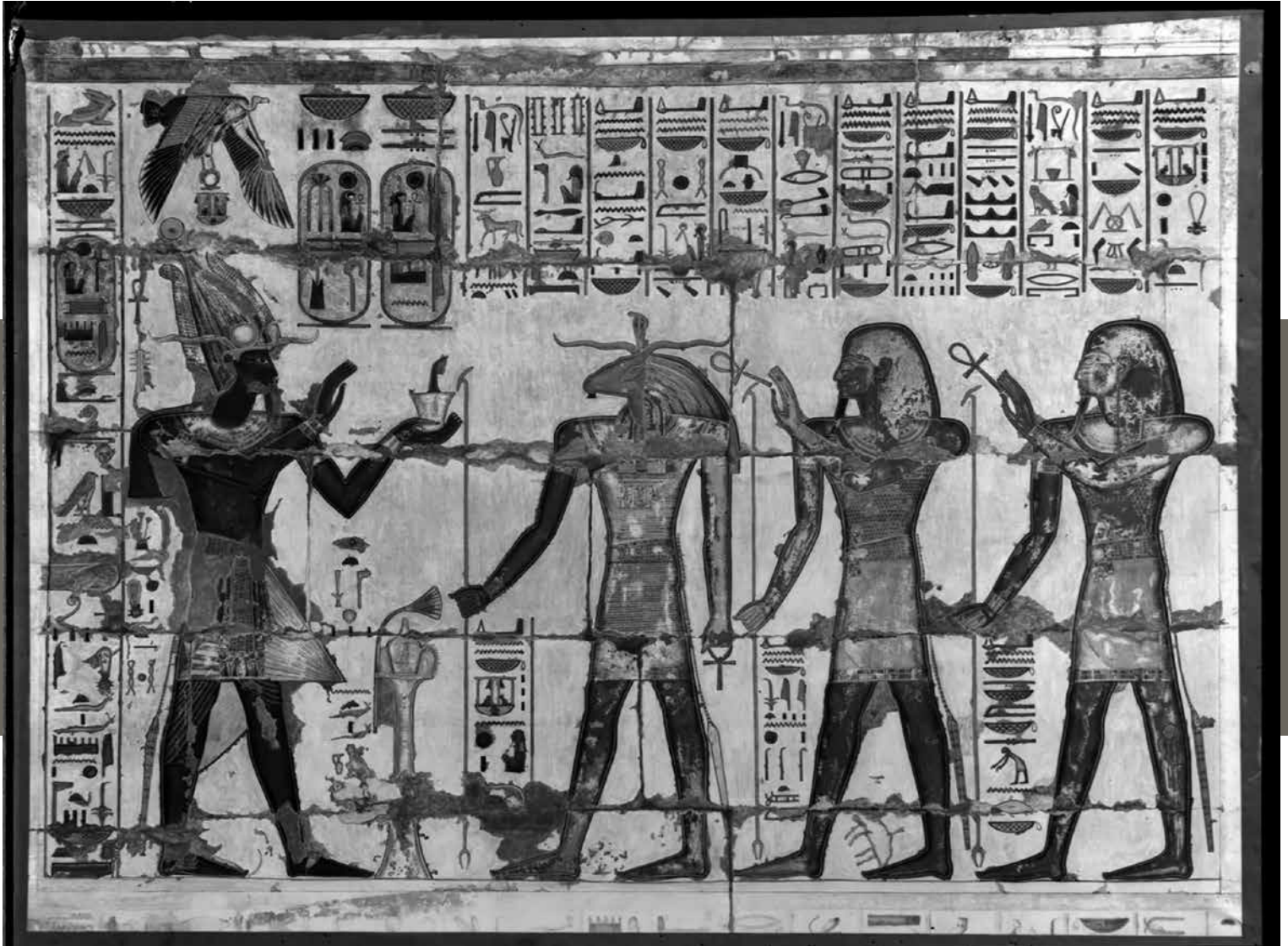
## A FESTSCHRIFT FOR ROBERT K. RITNER

On his sixty-eighth birthday—May 5, 2021—Robert K. Ritner was presented with a draft copy of the *Festschrift* honoring him and his career. *Festschrift* is a German word that means "celebratory writing." It is traditional in academia for colleagues and students to contribute articles to honor someone who has made a particularly noteworthy impact on their field of study. *A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner Presented on His Sixty-Eighth Birthday* brings together nearly thirty new contributions to the study of ancient Egypt. It is in the final phases of editing and will be published in the near future by the OI's publications office.



# EGYPTIAN MAGIC QUESTIONS OF LEGITIMACY, RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY, AND SOCIAL DEVIANCE

by Robert K. Ritner



Prē'-Harakhty said to Khnum: "You should fashion a wife for Bata, so that he might not dwell alone." Then Khnum made for him a companion who was more beautiful in her limbs than any woman in the entire land, for [the fluid of] every god was in her.

P. D'Orbiney, col. 9/6-8

"Well," said Math, "we two shall seek by means of our magic and our enchantment, to charm a wife for him out of flowers." . . . So they took the flowers of oak, broom, and meadow sweet, and from these they created the fairest and most beautiful maiden anyone ever saw.

Math, son of Mathonwy

ABOVE: Figure 1. Ramses III makes an offering of incense to the god Khnum. Medinet Habu (Epigraphic Survey Negative 3996).



In both Egyptian and Welsh mythology, “supernatural” force is employed to create a companion for a lonely hero. Ultimately, the divine gift proves no blessing, for each wife betrays her husband and conspires in his death. Though greatly separated in time, geography, and culture, these tales invite comparison—not only in the “folklore motifs” of their episodes, but in the methodology of their actors. Math and Khnum (fig. 1) are deities; if Math uses “magic” and “enchantment,” should the same be said of Khnum? Should the English term “magic” be employed to describe both Egyptian and Celtic concepts and practices? A recent vogue for “universal theories of magic” suggests that a clearly defined category of “magic” does exist, applicable to all cultures and at all times. Ironically, however, in most of these theories neither the work of Khnum nor that of Math would qualify as “magic.”

Consider a recent advertisement for a volume entitled *Religion, Science, and Magic*:

Every culture makes the distinction between “true religion” and magic. A particular action and its result may be termed “miraculous” while another is rejected as the work of the devil.

The implications of this sweeping declaration are transparent: every society contrasts religion and magic, and religion produces miracles while magic is the work of a devil. Gods like Khnum may create miracles, but they do not practice inferior “magic.” While it is hardly fair to hold advertising copy to the critical standards of scholarship, the statement does express—quite succinctly—the traditional assumptions surrounding the concept of “magic” and those of the volume’s editors. In scholarly discussions, just these assumptions have been held explicitly, or more often implicitly, since Sir James G. Frazer’s *Golden Bough* of 1910. What is most clear, however, in this statement and its underlying assumptions is its Western bias (Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian), assuming distinctions between magic and religion because we *in the West* have made such a distinction, and even dragging the specifically Judeo-Christian devil into the picture. In the following tribute to Professor Griffiths and his incisive studies of Egyptian religion, I wish to confront such “general theories of magic” with the explicit evidence of Egypt, and see to what extent one may reasonably espouse universal definitions of magic.

At the outset, a definition of “magic” is critical for any discussion of the problem since we find that there is no consensus on the meaning of the term *in English*, leaving aside the wider problem of concepts equated with “magic” in other cultures. Most often, the English term is bandied about as if an implicit consensus existed, yet this can easily be proved to be false, not only by widespread contemporary scholarly disagreement on the topic but by the unstandardized ways in which the term has been used historically. Thus, the Romans prosecuted the early Christians for practicing magic. In turn, the politically secure Catholic Church prosecuted pagan Romans for magic, only to be charged again with magic by schismatic Protestant critics during the Reformation. Are we to believe that all these groups were accused of performing the same acts? Certainly not. The later Protestants thought the Catholics openly performed rites before idols, which is exactly what would have exonerated them from the charge of magic in the eyes of the Romans. Magic here is

simply the religious practices of one group viewed with disdain by another. As in the quoted advertisement, the concept “magic” serves to distinguish “us” from “them,” but it has no universal content. Your religion is my magic, and thus in English, Africa has no priests but “witchdoctors.” Any understanding of the *Western* concept of magic must acknowledge this inherent negative connotation and trace it to its roots: the Greek terms *mageia* (practitioner *magos*) and *goetia* (practitioner *goes*).

The latter term, *goetia*, which originally may have described native priestly or shamanistic practices among the earliest Greeks, is consistently employed in historical periods to express “trickery, fraud, hucksterism,” or “evil sorcery.” At odds with contemporary cult, *goetia* was no longer religion, whatever its origins. By contrast, the term *mageia* (English “magic”) originally designated the alien religious practices of Median priests, the Magi. By the third century BCE, however, Aristotle uses *mageia* and *goetia* as comparable expressions, and, though the original meaning as “Persian religion” survives, *mageia* had been popularly stigmatized as alien “non-religion,” or “magic.” In post-Socratic philosophical circles, *mageia* was held to make use of good *daimones* (spirits lower than the gods of religion), while *goetia* utilized evil *daimones*, thus producing the categories of good and evil (white and black) magic. In Roman society, the cognate Latin category of *magia* underwent the same “demonization” as the Greek *mageia*, and subsumed as well the evil overtones of *goetia*. Bequeathed to the Judeo-Christian world, these terms were readily serviceable, since all paganism was “non-religion” in the service of demons, not god. As a label for unacceptable or outmoded pseudo-religion, “magic” was equally useful for Reformation Protestants and early ethnographers. Modern Western terms for “magic” are all dependent upon this stemma of meanings and function primarily as designations for that which we as a society do not accept, and which has overtones of the supernatural or the demonic (but not of the divine). It is important to stress that this pejorative connotation has not been grafted onto the notion of magic as the result of any recent theoretical fancy but is inherent in Western terminology virtually from its beginning. It constitutes *the essential core* of the Western concept of magic.

Despite this underlying bond between Western terms, however, in actual practice it has often proved difficult (if not impossible) to make clear determinations of magic in specific cases, even from the perspective of Western society. Depending upon an individual’s predilection, the same text or act may be classified as “magical,” “religious,” or (most evasively) “magico-religious.” The problem, especially for secular scholars, has been to determine just what factors should constitute the unacceptable “non-us,” the necessary and sufficient quotient that separates magic from religion, medicine, and science. In my own volume on Egyptian magical techniques, I adopted a specific working definition of magic from the Western perspective as comprising “any activity which seeks to obtain its goal by methods outside the simple laws of cause and effect.” This definition of “magic” is serviceable for analyzing elements of our own and other cultures *from our cultural perspective*; it does not, however, make any pretense of being universally valid from the perspectives of those other cultures. This is in direct contrast to most designations of magic, which proclaim universal applicability at all times and in all places.

The oldest, and most common, nineteenth-century “universal” definition of magic was obtained by generalizing (Protestant) Judeo-Christian theological assumptions about piety vs. rote ritual, seen as a contrast between “higher” ethics vs. “lower” mechanistic practices. Best summarized by W. J. Goode in 1949, this approach distinguishes “religion” by the pious attitude of its practitioner, the humble supplications of its prayers, and the noble, all-inclusive world view of its rituals and theology. In contrast, “magic” demanded *hybris* and blasphemy of its devotees, its spells (not called prayers) did not beg but threatened, and its goals were immediate, limited, and personal. This view still has its devotees and is cited with approval in David E. Aune’s 1980 discussion of “Magic in Early Christianity.” As we shall see with regard to Egypt, problems with this definition are legion, not least because it requires the investigator to intuit subjectively the attitude of the ancient practitioner. This is not often easy or even possible. This approach is also of limited scholarly value as a descriptive tool, since it usually merely demonstrates that non-Judeo-Christian societies function in ways non-Judeo-Christian. In any case, the posed dichotomy is clear: magic is outside of religion; it is inherently unorthodox.

An alternate, sociological approach to defining a “universal” concept of magic is to be found in the early theories of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, who generalize Latin legal codes and thus stigmatize magic as anti-social and illegal behavior. Seizing upon the latter characteristic, Jonathan Z. Smith, Peter Brown, and Morton Smith have argued that illegality is “the one universal characteristic” of magic. On the other hand, the notion of anti-social behavior was selected by David Aune, who views magic within the framework of recent studies on “social deviance.” Aune considers magic to be “universally regarded as a form of deviant behavior,” that is to say “conduct that departs significantly from the norms set for people in their social statuses.” A similar distinction is assumed by Jacob Neusner, who opposes religion and magic as “what is normative and what is aberrational in religious situations.” Unlike the absolute theological categories posited by Goode, such theories do acknowledge the varying content of magic according to cultural bias (“what I do is a miracle, but what you do is magic”). Like the previous theory, however, they assume that the *distinction* between magic and religion is itself

universal. Again the dichotomies are clear; magic is not legal and not socially normative.

One final set of theories should be mentioned before addressing the Egyptian evidence, and those are the varying anthropological approaches. At base indistinguishable from theological approaches (higher piety vs. lower mechanics), the early work of Frazer focused on its sympathetic character, adding the distinctions of homoeopathic magic (like makes like) and contagious magic (items in contact form permanent bonds; i.e., act as relics). All magic was reduced to these terms, and, once designated, there was nothing more to be said about it. In response to this reductionism, E. E. Evans-Pritchard devised a new vocabulary sensitive to cultural distinctions based upon and devised for a single culture: the Zande of the Sudan. From Zande concepts Evans-Pritchard distinguished two forms of hostile magic: (1) the conscious performance of illegal rites and spells, and (2) *mangu*, an innate psychic emanation from an internal bodily substance which produces injury. The former he called “sorcery,” the latter “witchcraft.” Though expressly designed as a reaction against general theories of magic, Evans-Pritchard’s terms have now been granted universal validity by his successors, and this ironic turn of events has produced the only “universal” theory of magic based on African preconceptions, rather than Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian ones. Under the guise of “witchcraft,” *mangu* is now sought in Europe, the Middle East, and ancient Egypt.

Armed with this plethora of theories, it is to Egypt that we may at last turn. Fortunately for studies of Egyptian magic, a native term and concept are readily at hand, since in the Coptic Christian period *magia* and its biblical cognates were equated with Coptic  $\chi\iota\kappa$ , as can be demonstrated by a representative passage from the “Martyrdom of Saint George”: “This man is a magician (‘a man who does  $\chi\iota\kappa$ ’) because by means of his  $\mu\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha$  he set demons before us.” Coptic  $\chi\iota\kappa$  derives from Pharaonic *hk3*, and about “pagan” *Hk3* we are very well informed indeed. At the beginning of time, before the creation of the world, the creator conceived in his heart the force of *hk3*, at once creative *logos* and source of all cosmic dynamics. Reminiscent of the Christian *Logos* (with capital *L*) of the Gospel of John, *hk3* became embodied as a divine personality, Heka, and the recipient of a cult in his capacity as first emanation (*ba*) from the creator (fig. 2). All



LEFT: Figure 2. The god Heka as a sphinx by Prisse d’Avennes (courtesy of New York Public Library), which served as a model for the decorative image of Heka above the OI’s entrance.

OPPOSITE: Figure 3. Illustration from a composition known as the Book of the Heavenly Cow, where the sun god states: “Behold Heka himself is in them.”



subsequent creation (the universe with its gods and men) was subject to this first-born son. As Heka himself states in an address to the gods in Coffin Text Spell 261:

I am he whom the Unique Lord made before duality had yet come into being. . . . I am the son of Him who gave birth to the universe. . . . I am the protection of that which the Unique Lord has ordained. . . . I am he who gave life to the Ennead of gods. . . . I have come to take my position that I may receive my dignity; for to me belonged the universe before you gods had come into being. Down, you who have come afterward. I am Heka.

The threatening posture that Heka adopts in his final remarks is characteristic; for as a Berlin hymn declares: “Everyone trembles when his [*scil.* ‘the creator’s’] *ba* comes into being, Heka who has power over the gods.” As Heka, “magic” is accorded primary divine status with which subsequent deities identify by means of the epithet *wr-hk3(w)* “great of magic.” A similar identification motivated the Coffin Text passage quoted above, which was to be recited by a private individual who thereby *became* the god Heka and controlled the gods. To understand Egyptian “magic,” one must understand the nature of Heka.

Later speculation explained the name Heka as “The First Work,” but the original significance of *hk3* seems rather to be “The One who Consecrates Imagery” (< *hwy-k3*). As the creator called the world into being by word and deed, it was the force of *hk3* that empowered his actions, translating divine “ideal” speech and action into its “tangible” reflection here below. Every temple ritual that re-enacts or supports these actions entails the “real presence” of *hk3*, and consequently that of the creator of whom *hk3* is an emanation. Thus in discussing spells (*r3.w*), the sun god Rē’ states (fig. 3): “Behold Heka himself is in them. As for him who swallows/knows them, there am I.”

This statement contains within itself an example of the “imagistic” nature of the magical process; for the Egyptian word ‘*m*’ “to swallow” comes to mean “to know.” Thus, by the act of swallowing the dissolved ink of a text one acquires the reflex of the action, innate knowledge of the text’s content. If the force of *hk3* is to be understood as functioning through “consecrated imagery,” then it would represent the fundamental principle underlying all orthodox temple cult, indeed all ritual—whether state or private, public or clandestine. The same force would be felt to animate both beneficent and hostile “magic” as well. Gods and demons both use *hk3*; the term “magician” (*hk3y*) is morally neutral, equally applicable to heroes and villains, Egyptians and foreigners. It is significant that Rē’'s acknowledgement of the true efficacy of spells appears within a context describing the work of hostile “magicians.” There is no distinction here of authentic “miracle” vs. debased or fraudulent “magic.”

The “imagistic” process is shown repeatedly on Egyptian temple reliefs in which the king’s ritual presentation of food, diadems, and prisoners is a *reflection* of the god’s granting of life, prosperity, and victory, each object offered being a tangible image of its abstract counterpart (fig. 4). The essential unity of the divine and royal actor is concretely embodied in the person of the Pharaoh, who is at once god and living image, expressed theologically in such names as *Twt-nh-Imn*, *Shm-nh-Imn*, or *Tit-nh-R’*, “The living image of Amun/

Rē’.” Obviously, Pharaoh cannot perform every rite in all temples, and thus these were performed by *his* image, the priest. It is the priesthood that composed, collected, and performed rites and spells for both public and private ceremonies, not merely imitating gods, but becoming them. By an intricate series of consciously elaborated imagery, men may exploit the powers of the primordial gods.

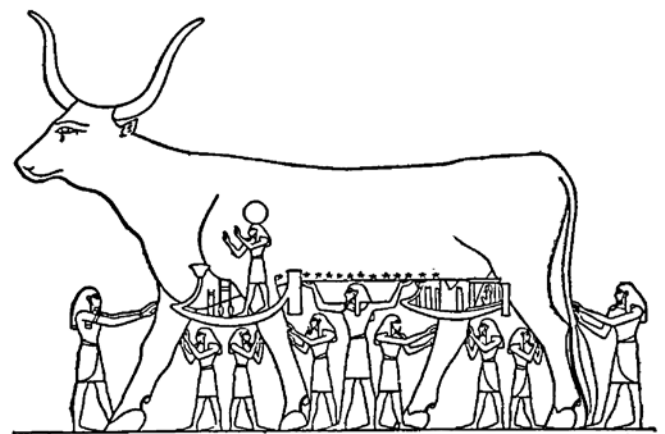
The very notions of divinity and imagery are conjoined in Egyptian thought; the conventional term for “god” (*ntr*) has as its root meaning “image,” as is revealed by an Old Kingdom relief from the tomb of Neferma’at that is now in the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago. Gods, men, animals, objects, actions, and words are all part of a fluid continuum of projected divine images without sharp divisions. Men in particular were formed from the creator’s tears, are instructed to confront “the god who is within you,” regularly become gods at death, and in exceptional cases during life. By virtue of the “Great Chain of Being,” men are justified in equating themselves with one, several, or all of the gods, and, following divine prototypes, may *or must* threaten other gods during ritual performance. This practice is without *hubris* (a specifically Greek cultural notion), and in complete orthodoxy. Such “magic” was the express gift of the creator, and a list of god’s benefactions for mankind concludes the mention of the creation of heaven, earth, air, food, and government by stating:

It was in order to be weapons to ward off the blow of events that He (God) made magic for them (mankind).

Consider the implications of this weapon in Pyramid Text Spell 539:

Every God who will not build this stairway of the king for him . . . will have no offering bread, will have no sunshade . . . It is not the king who says this against you O gods, it is Heka who says this against you O gods.

In this same light should be understood the common greeting formula of New Kingdom letters: “I say to all the gods: ‘Make you healthy!’” using the imperative. Such religious practices provided a ready source of confusion and scandal to late, contemporary Greek theologians whose religious norms and expectations were quite alien. As our modern theological preconceptions are largely derived from Greek categories, it is hardly surprising that contemporary theory is equally ill at ease with a system incorporating ritualized divinization,



RIGHT: Figure 4. A Roman emperor offering before the god Heka the child, from the temple at Esna (photo by Robert K. Ritner).

blessing, and cursing: a *single system* for gods, men, and “devils,” cultural “insiders” and “outsiders” (both “us” and “them”).

All of these complexities are entailed in the concept of *hkꜥ*, and notions of “sympathetic magic,” piety vs. ritual, or unorthodoxy are either woefully inadequate to describe the situation, or simply wrong. Heka cannot be opposed to Egyptian religion, since it is the force which animates Egyptian religion. The techniques of *hkꜥ* are in every case those of temple ritual, serving for both public and private concerns. General calendrical rituals and personal “crisis rites” overlap and should not be contrasted. Nor is there a real distinction between public and private practitioner; for Egypt had no itinerant magicians who acted outside of orthodox religion, no witches or warlocks on the social fringe. With literacy restricted to 1 percent of the population, only the scribally trained priesthood could compose and use the complex magical texts. Like “religious” hymns and prayers, “magical” recitations of healing and cursing were drafted, compiled, edited, and stored in the temple scriptorium (*pr-nḥ*). Thus it is intrinsically logical that the literate lector-priest (*hry-hbt*) should be the most commonly designated magical practitioner in ancient Egypt. As priests served in the temples in rotation, it was the off-duty priest who acted as community magician and guardian of temple secrets. The complete kit of one such priest has been found from the eighteenth–seventeenth centuries BCE labelled with his title *hry-sšꜥ* “Chief of Mysteries.” The “mysteries” are the spells themselves, the property of the temple scriptorium.

From the foregoing remarks, it should be clear that “magic” (as either *hkꜥ* or as “activity not based on the simple laws of cause and effect”) was by no means illegal or socially deviant in Egypt. Even hostile magic was not inherently illegal. Using images of wax and clay, priests regularly performed rites for cursing gods, men, and demons with perfect legality, and the famous execration texts of the third and second millennia BCE include sections for Egyptians as well as foreigners. One fourth-century BCE temple ritual contains provisions for cursing personal enemies, declaring: “If this spell is recited against any enemy of NN, evil will happen to him for 7 days.” Unlike traditional Western concepts, Egyptian magic was amoral, not immoral. No term distinguished hostile from good magic, black vs. white. There was no devil for one, and god for another. The same principle was invoked; all was *hkꜥ*. Only when this weapon was directed against King Ramesses III in a harem conspiracy (twelfth century BCE) do we have what has been called a “trial for sorcery,” but this was not a trial against sorcery *per se*, but a trial for treason. Had a sword been used as the weapon rather than wax dolls, the trial would have occurred nonetheless. The magical rite was hardly illegal in itself, since the culprit, a disaffected priest, was said to have acquired it from the royal archives. That the priest should practice such a rite entails no “social deviance,” no activity outside expected social norms. Act and actor are typical; it is only the recipient of the curse that distinguishes this case—the name consciously inserted in the standard text.

From the perspective of modern theories of “witchcraft,” this conscious nature of Egyptian hostile magic is significant. In 1980, a decade after appearing in Mesopotamian studies, Evans-Pritchard’s



Zande-inspired terminology was introduced to Egyptology to little purpose. Though Heka, like *mangu* or “witchcraft,” can be said to reside within the body, it is activated by special words, acts, and ingredients. Only the late and presumably imported notion of the “Evil Eye” approximates to the innate evil of Zande *mangu*; otherwise “Egyptian witchcraft” is a category without content.

As hostile magic need not be the “work of the Devil,” so “miracle” need not be contrasted with “magic.” Indeed, the “magician” Heka is equally the patron of the closest Egyptian lexical approximations to the English term “miracle.” In an Esna litany, the god is hymned as *nb šmw nb biꜥ sr hpr* “lord of oracles, lord of miracles/wonders, who predicts what will happen.” While the term *biꜥ* is generally rendered as “miracle” or “wonder,” *šmw* is the unrecognized ancestor of Coptic ⲪⲚⲙ “sign/oracle/wonder,” and from *hpr* derives the common Coptic Ⲫⲡⲏⲣⲉ “sign/wonder/miracle.” If native terms of “magic” and “miracle” are thus easily associated within pre-Christian religious texts, it is readily apparent that their Coptic descendants are used quite differently. Within Coptic literature, a sharp division does appear in the usage of Ⲫⲡⲏⲣⲉ “miracle” and ⲪⲚⲙ “magic,” with “miracles” being the work of God, Jesus, angels, and saints, while “magic” is demonic or “pagan.” How, then, did this new dichotomy arise?

The answer to this question is best illustrated by the fate of the official, “miraculous omens” or “oracles” said to be sanctioned by Heka (fig. 5). While oracles may have been associated with temple cult from the earliest times, their significance and popularity increase, especially in the form of revelations known by the name *ph-*





*ntr* or “petitioning the god.” Conducted privately with priestly aid via lamps, bowls, and images, or publicly during regular processions of statues, these divine confrontations (literally, “reaching god”) are a regular feature of Egyptian religious life from the New Kingdom onward. The manifestation of the god was addressed directly, and by appropriate signs or documents an oracular response was granted.

Like other facets of Egyptian “magic,” the *ph-ntr* was morally neutral. Thus, while the harem conspiracy against Ramesses III was furthered by means of a *ph-ntr*, royal workers under Ramesses IX could be excused from work to attend a *ph-ntr*, and the ceremonies increasingly became standard arbiters of justice, fully equivalent to a court of law. Magic is here not only legal, but the very author of legality. With the conquest of Egypt by Rome, however, a very different attitude prevailed, and the history of the *ph-ntr*, like *hk3* itself, takes a new turn.

Rome long had a suspicious attitude toward foreign religious practices, as is evident from its well-known restrictions upon the imported cults of the Magna Mater, Isis, and Christianity. Attempts to expel Egyptian religion from Rome were made in 59, 58, 53, and 48 BCE, and it was inevitable that Roman preconceptions would clash with Egyptian practice. The most direct expression of this cultural conflict is found in a decree of Q. Aemilius Saturninus, prefect of Egypt under Septimius Severus in 199 CE:

[Since I have come across many people] who consider themselves to be beguiled by the means of divination [I quickly considered it necessary,] in order that

no danger should ensue upon their foolishness, clearly herein to enjoin all people to abstain from this hazardous (or “misleading”) superstition. Therefore, let no man through oracles, that is, by means of written documents supposedly granted in the presence of the deity, nor by means of the procession of cult images or suchlike charlatanry, pretend to have knowledge of the supernatural, or profess to know the obscurity of future events. Nor let any man put himself at the disposal of those who enquire about this nor answer in any way whatsoever. If any person is detected adhering to this profession, let him be sure that he will be handed over for capital punishment . . . .

Apparently promulgated only within Egypt, this prohibition of oracles was aimed unmistakably at the techniques of the traditional *ph-ntr*, here dismissed as non-religious “charlatanry”—despite its fundamental role in later Egyptian religion. Without any change in action or actors, a pious, religious arbiter of legality has become illegal superstition. The change is entirely one of cultural perspective. As in Rome itself, the prohibition was unsuccessful; for in 359 an Egyptian oracle (of Bes at Abydos) again troubled Roman authority, prompting Constantius to decree a general abolition of oracles throughout the Empire. Coptic evidence shows that even this attempt was without success. At the Theban temple of Luxor, the processional ceremony continues even today in the annual festival of the Moslem saint Abu el-Hagag.

Nonetheless, official Roman condemnation of these activities did produce a significant change. What had constituted public religion was now driven underground, becoming exclusively private practice. Though still of priestly origin, all Demotic examples of the *ph-ntr* (as well as the related Greek *σύστασις* and *αὐτόπορς*) are for private use only, performed secretly in secluded quarters. *Only now* could the practice be termed “magic” in the Western sense (i.e., “illegal” and “clandestine”) and *then only from the Roman perspective*.

Egyptian reaction to the Roman prohibition is epitomized in the second-century Greek tale of Thessalus, a physician from Asia Minor who travelled to Upper Egypt to supplement his philosophical studies. Having sought out priests in Thebes, Thessalus asked them if anything remained of Egyptian magical power (*τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας*) to conduct an audience with the gods or the dead. Although most appeared scandalized (*φερόντων*) by the question, one old priest agreed to conduct the rite with the aid of a bowl filled with water. After preparations and fasting, Thessalus was led to a secluded (temple?) room where in a vision he confronted Asclepius/Imhotep, who answered his questions. The techniques of this procedure (bowl, fasting, seclusion) accord perfectly with those in contemporary “private” Demotic (and Greek) papyri.

Traditionally, the priests’ initial shock at the question of Thessalus has been interpreted in light of Roman prohibitions of magic that entailed capital punishment for both performer and teacher. Jonathan Z. Smith, however, has argued that it is rather an indication of their disbelief in the efficacy of magical power. This reinterpretation is unconvincing, given (1) the centrality of *hk3* to Egyptian religion even in the latest periods (which would entail priests professing disbelief in the religion which they serve), (2) the severity of

Roman punishment for magic, and (3) the fact that Thessalus was a stranger to the priests, and a foreign Greek stranger at that. The most likely interpretation would be that the priests were unwilling to risk capital punishment for imparting secret (and sacred) knowledge to a foreigner who could not be trusted, and who should be excluded from such knowledge in any case.

Smith's suggestion of priestly disbelief was intended to bolster his contention that the epiphany in this text represents a reversal of the traditional priestly/temple context in favor of "temporary sacrality sanctified by a magician's power." This is not correct. The rite may well have taken place in a temple, and the magician responsible for the vision was definitely not Thessalus, but the traditional Egyptian priest trained in traditional temple practice. Fear of Roman punishment for *magia* may have made the priests wary and the rite secretive, but the *ph-ntr* experienced by Thessalus was still administered by an Egyptian *priest* as an orthodox religious rite.

Despite imperial sanctions, Egyptian and Roman conceptions of "magic" did not merge until the Coptic period, when Christian hostility stigmatized all pagan practices—Roman as well as Egyptian—with the derogatory *magia*. With the abandonment of its native religion, Egypt might maintain its religious vocabulary, but not its religious perspective. The cultural gulf that separates *hk3* from  $\chi\kappa$  is paralleled by that which divides Egyptian *Imntt*, the abode of Osiris and the blessed dead, from Coptic  $\alpha\mu\epsilon\eta\tau\epsilon$ , the Devil's Hell. Stripped of its ancient theological significance, Coptic  $\chi\kappa$  was now reduced to a designation for *alien and demonic* religion, at once illegal, unorthodox, and socially deviant.

The irony of this designation, and its innate limitations, could not be clearer. By regularly casting disparate concepts together as an expression for "non-us," the label of "magic" tells us far more about the cultural biases of the society which applies it than it does about the practices to which it is applied. To the Egyptian author of P. D'Orbiney, Khnum's feat was not alien, illegal "magic." To the Christian redactor of the Mabinogion, however, Math's similar feat was unquestionably "magic." There can be no universal concept of magic precisely because "magic" is a Western concept, laden with "our" innate value judgments. As a term for defining what we do not accept, it can be useful, but the content of magic, that which comprises "what it is we do not accept," cannot be generalized to other cultures. Egyptian *hk3* was a most complex theological concept; only the superimposition of Christian theology demoted it to "magical." Magic and *hk3* are fundamentally incompatible notions. *Hk3* is a category of inclusion, defined by specific, invariable content. The transfer of a blessing of water is always *hk3*. Magic is a category of exclusion, defined by what it does *not* contain: piety, legality, and so on. The transfer of blessing by water is sometimes magic, sometimes "baptism." The Demotic magical papyri were illegal, socially deviant, impious documents in the eyes of the Romans; they were illegal but perfectly pious in the eyes of their users, and their antecedents had been both pious and legal.

One must always be on guard against the underlying social biases of classification lest we, in the words of the sixteenth-century philosopher Giordano Bruno, "in vain attempt to contain water in nets and catch fish with a shovel." Bruno had attempted to defend Egyptian religion from the charges of "superstition" and "magic"; his recommendation went unheeded. Bruno himself was burned for

heresy, the conceptual stepchild of "magic," connoting illegality, unorthodoxy, and social deviance.

*Editorial note:* This article by Robert K. Ritner was originally published as "Egyptian Magic: Questions of Legitimacy, Religious Orthodoxy and Social Deviance," in *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, edited by Alan B. Lloyd, pp. 189–200. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1992. It appears here courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society. Footnotes in the original have been removed, illustrations have been added, and minor textual emendations have been made.

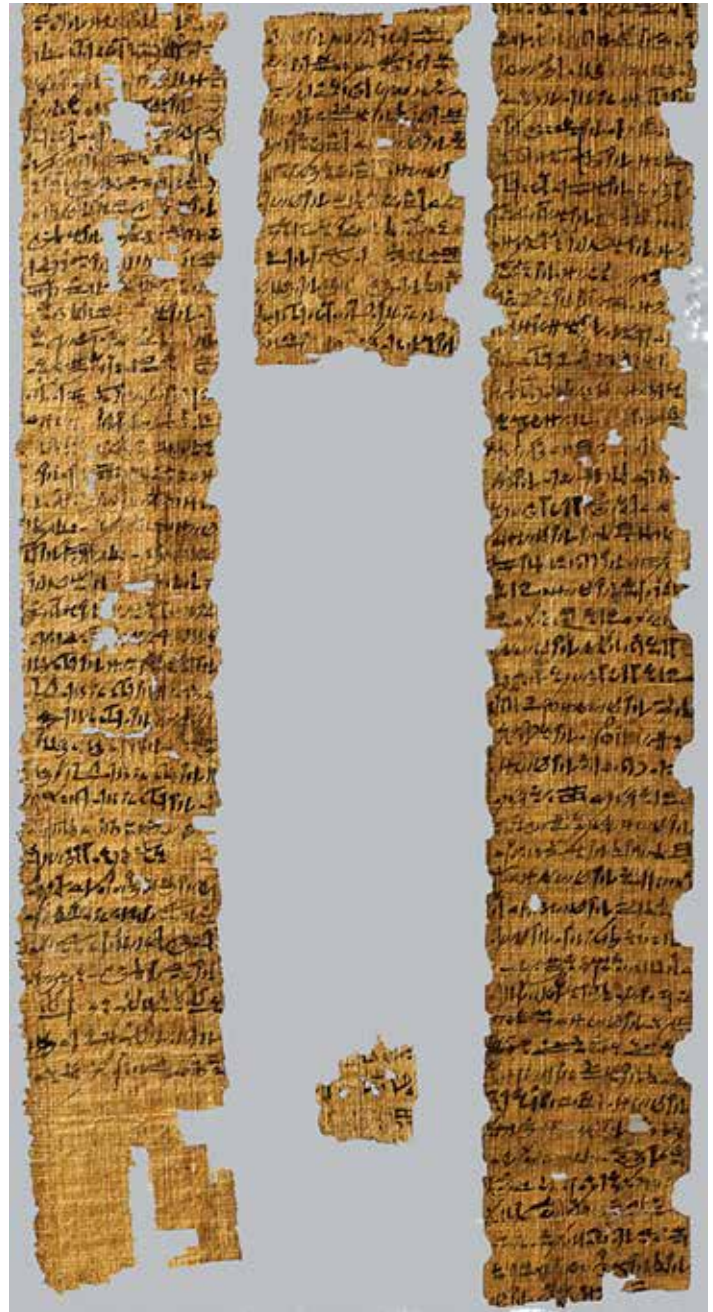


Figure 5. OIM E25622A-D / D. 32221, an oracular amulet recording an oracle of the goddess Nekhbet that includes protection against "every evil eye" and "all foreign magic."



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## IN MEMORY OF NORMA VAN DER MEULEN

The OI celebrates the life and contributions of longtime OI member and volunteer Norma van der Meulen, who passed away on August 15, 2022.

A docent since 1978, Norma had recently worked closely with the OI gift shop, the Suq, where she was a regular and welcoming presence at the register. Over the years, Norma designed countless pieces of custom jewelry that we have proudly featured in our Suq cases. Many of us at the OI will fondly remember Norma working on her jewelry in the basement while listening to classical music, her table filled with open books on Egyptian, Persian, Mesopotamian, Bedouin, and Turkmen jewelry.

In Norma's memory, we are reprinting her 2013 Volunteer Voice feature below.

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT | WINTER 2013 | NORMA VAN DER MEULEN

by Cathy Dueñas and Terry Friedman

Meet Norma van der Meulen, our featured volunteer in this issue of *News & Notes*. Norma has been a loyal Oriental Institute volunteer since 1978. While swimming laps in the Ida Noyes pool, her friend Peggy Grant, head of the Docent Program at that time, casually asked if she would like to volunteer at the Oriental Institute. What seemed like an interesting offer at the time has developed into decades of devoted service to the Oriental Institute as a Suq volunteer.

Norma was born in a small town in northern Ohio. She graduated from the College of Wooster and earned her master's degree from Northwestern University in Spanish language and literature. One of her first positions was teaching Spanish at Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

Norma moved to Chicago and married John van der Meulen, an architect who drew inspiration from the Bauhaus school of design. John taught architecture for the Chicago Institute of Design, which is now part of the Illinois Institute of Technology. Soon after moving to Chicago, Norma and her husband were off to Europe, where they would live for three years. John, along with architect and business partner Ralph Rapson, had been commissioned by the State Department to design embassies in Europe. Over the course of the next three years, Norma and John would live in The Hague, Stockholm, and Sweden, and ultimately finish their work in Paris.

When they returned to Chicago, Norma was busy raising their three children, Susan, Anne, and Peter, as well as working as a pre-law advisor for social science students in the College at the University of Chicago.

But Norma's travel days were far from over. The family was to spend another four years living outside the United States. This time they would settle in the Virgin Islands while John worked on designs for college buildings in St. Croix.

Denise Browning, Suq manager, said, "The OI students who worked at the Suq during her forty-some years wanted to grow up and be like Norma. She had a huge influence on their lives."

Norma is survived by three children, jeweler Anne (Dav-ey) Cunningham, architect Susan van der Meulen, and architect Peter (Sharron) van der Meulen; two grandchildren, Jasper (Jandra) Phillips and Ella van der Meulen; and three great-grandchildren, Kiri, Kai and Kelani.

The OI is thankful for Norma's passion and dedication. She will be missed.

In recent years, Norma has lived a more sedentary life as a Hyde Parker. She is a devotee of the Art Institute and the Chicago Symphony. She enjoys walking and riding her bicycle around Hyde Park and is an avid chamber musician.

For nearly thirty-five years, Norma has been a loyal Suq volunteer. She loves meeting the customers and engaging them in conversation. Her beautiful smile and friendly demeanor naturally draw people to her. Through her work in the Suq, Norma has also been able to express her artistic and creative side by producing unique jewelry designs. Her innate skills help to bring the merchandise alive with new interpretations of ancient themes. If you are looking for the perfect gift, consider Norma's one-of-a-kind necklaces she produces exclusively for the Suq.

Norma's philosophy of life is to enjoy what you do as a volunteer. That certainly holds true for her volunteer service to the Oriental Institute. Its world-class collection and sense of history are awe inspiring. The great sense of camaraderie and shared interest among the volunteer corps continues to provide a sense of community and accomplishment for her.

Denise Browning, Suq manager, has worked with Norma for over thirty years. She admires her energetic spirit and enormous creativity. Perhaps Denise summarized it best when she stated, "We all want to grow up to be like Norma."



# OI MUSEUM



## THE OI WELCOMES MARC MAILLOT NEW OI MUSEUM CHIEF CURATOR AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Marc Maillot, director of the French Archaeological Unit in Khartoum, Sudan, has accepted the position of OI Museum chief curator and associate director. He will begin his tenure at the OI on January 17, 2023.

Marc joins the OI from the Sudan National Museum, where he has held the position of director of the French Archaeological Unit on behalf of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He received his PhD from the Sorbonne University in Paris. Since 2020, Marc has been director of excavations at the site of Damboya in Sudan. He has also been involved in the organization of several exhibitions, as well as in cultural heritage preservation efforts.

Marc considers this appointment “a motivating challenge to bring a long-term vision to one of the best collections in my discipline.”

With a background in Nubian studies and archaeology, Marc looks forward to guiding the OI Museum while connecting the collections to the latest state-of-the-art research in Nubia and reinforcing OI partnerships at an international level.

“The OI Museum staff did an amazing job in renovating the galleries,” Maillot said, “and I intend to rely on their expertise to bring some of the best, though not necessarily well-known, artifacts to the academic and public scene.”

“It is necessarily a collective and long-term program, but I can say briefly that I would like to launch a series of exhibitions focused on a thematic approach that will shed light on certain parts of the collection not so often presented and allow a cross-department involvement. The idea is to make the museum a familiar, grounded, and open institution that becomes in time a cultural reflex, like a dictionary, for the constituents of the city.”

When asked about moving to Chicago from the Sudan and Paris, Marc called it “a thrilling experience, and not only for professional reasons. I am eager to dive into a cosmopolitan city with a proud, multicultural identity. I grew up in the suburbs of Paris, and Chicago was a reference for us in the fields of contemporary art, architecture, jazz, and hip-hop.”

Please join all of us in welcoming Marc to the OI.

## OI MUSEUM SPECIAL EXHIBITION MAKING SENSE OF MARBLES: ROMAN SCULPTURE AT THE OI

Our newest special exhibition brings together a group of Roman sculptures from the OI’s collection, including two life-sized marble statues, and presents them on view as a group for the first time.

Visit the OI Museum during regular opening hours to discover how we can make sense of marbles with divergent histories while examining the fundamental importance of archaeological context in telling an object’s story.

For more information, visit: [oi.uchicago.edu/marbles](https://oi.uchicago.edu/marbles).





# PROGRAMS & EVENTS

We are adding more in-person events! Check the OI website, OI emails, and OI social media for updates throughout the fall.



## Haunted Halloween at the Museum

**Saturday, October 29, 3:00–9:30pm** | OI Museum and Breasted Hall

Join us for our annual Halloween family celebration! Enjoy crafts, tours, scavenger hunts, and candy during the day and a screening of the classic Disney film *Hocus Pocus* at 8:00pm. Free for OI members, fee for the general public. To register: [bit.ly/HauntedOI](https://bit.ly/HauntedOI). For film tickets: [bit.ly/HauntedFilm](https://bit.ly/HauntedFilm)

## MEMBERS' LECTURE

### Archaeology and Myth: Some Reflections

**November 2, Wednesday, 7:00pm** | Breasted Hall and streaming live on OI YouTube

Presented by Jonathan Hall, Department of Classics, University of Chicago. Free. To register: [bit.ly/NovLecture](https://bit.ly/NovLecture)

## Film Night: *Black Panther*

**Saturday, November 5, 7:00pm** | In person at the OI

Cosplay! Tours! Talks! We kick off our Looking for Heroes series with a celebration of the 2018 Marvel film *Black Panther*. This event looks at the North African and Middle Eastern influences on Black Panther and DC's Black Adam. Free. To register: [bit.ly/PantherHero](https://bit.ly/PantherHero)

## 100 Years of King Tut Discovery!

**Saturday, November 12, 4:00pm** | OI galleries and Breasted Hall

Celebrate the impact and fascination surrounding the discovery of King Tut's tomb in November 1922 as we explore the OI galleries in the context of the ancient world during Tut's time. Emily Teeter and Egyptologists from the Chicago chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt join us for this special members-only exploration. Free and open to current OI members. To register: [bit.ly/MembersTut](https://bit.ly/MembersTut)

## Junior Archaeologists

**Saturday, November 19, 1:00–3:00pm** | In person at the OI

Use real archaeological site data to understand sites, history, and the archaeological process in context. For youth ages 8–12. Free for OI members, fee for the general public. Registration available on the OI website soon!

## OI EXPLORERS LECTURE

### Creating Nubia: How Colonialism, Tourism, and Archaeology Made a Region, a Past, and a People

**Monday, December 5, 6:00pm** | Breasted Hall and streaming live on OI YouTube

Presented by William Carruthers, University of East Anglia. Free. To register for in-person attendance: [bit.ly/ExplorersNubia](https://bit.ly/ExplorersNubia)

## MEMBERS' LECTURE

### Egyptians in Athens: Following the Trails of Words

**Wednesday, December 7, 7:00pm** | Breasted Hall and streaming live on OI YouTube

Presented by Sofía Torallas-Tovar, Department of Classics, University of Chicago. Free. To register for in-person attendance, visit: [bit.ly/DecLecture](https://bit.ly/DecLecture)

## ONLINE CLASS

### Community Archaeology

Thursdays, December 1–15, 5:00–7:00pm Central. Recordings of the live class sessions will be available to watch online later.

Fees: \$118 (OI members), \$147 (non-OI members), \$37 (UChicago/Lab School students).

Instructors: Tasha Vorderstrasse, university and continuing education programming coordinator, and TBD.

Current practice favors a model where archaeology is performed in conjunction with the active participation of the local community in which the fieldwork occurs. The exact way community archaeology happens varies from one project to another, but the idea is for local communities to be involved in what is happening at each step, including but not limited to helping to determine the research priorities of archaeological projects, helping with the interpretation of archaeological sites, participating in archaeological projects, and collaborating with signage and museums at archaeological sites. This class examines various case studies to better understand the way community archaeology is practiced in Africa and the Middle East.

To register: [bit.ly/OIComArch](https://bit.ly/OIComArch)

# ORIENTAL INSTITUTE PIONEERS

We are pleased to offer the last in a series of articles intended to honor the contributions of archaeologists to Iranian art and archaeology. Our deep thanks go to Abbas Alizadeh for contributing this series of articles, beginning with the Spring 2019 issue of *News & Notes!*

## OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAN

The current director of the Oriental Institute Iranian Prehistoric Project and interim director of the Nippur archaeological project, Alizadeh was born in Tehran in 1951. He attended Iranshahr High School. After serving two years of compulsory military service in Sanandaj (Kurdistan) and Tehran, he went to Tehran University and earned his BA in Iranian archaeology and art history in 1975. The following year, he came to the United States and attended two English-language schools in Dallas, Texas, and Los Angeles, California. He then applied to the University of Chicago, and while waiting for his acceptance he attended Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania. Alizadeh received his MA in 1982 and his PhD in 1988 with high honors from the University of Chicago's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. His doctoral thesis, "Mobile Pastoralism and the Development of Complex Societies in Highland Iran," won the Best Dissertation Award from the Center for Iranian Studies in Philadelphia the following year. In 2012, his book *The Origins of State Organizations in Prehistoric Highland Fars* (OIP 128) won the Farabi International Award, and in 2018 his *Ancient Settlement Systems and Cultures in the Ram Hormuz Plain, Southwestern Iran* (OIP 140) was selected as a candidate for the best archaeological work in Iran.

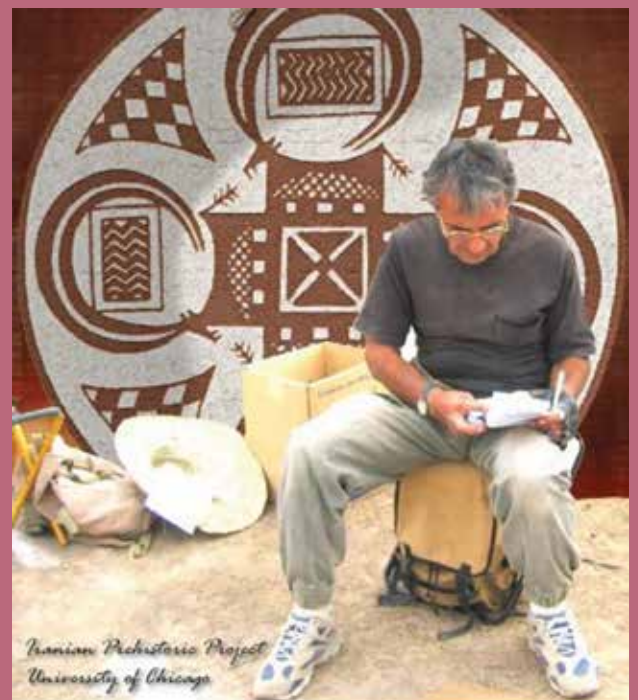
From 1988 to 1991, Alizadeh was associate curator of the Semitic Museum and assistant professor at Harvard University. From 1990 to 1991, he was also associate director of the Ashkelon Expedition and the director of the Ashkelon archaeological lab at the Albright Institute. In 1991, when Helene Kantor retired, William Sumner, then director of the Oriental Institute, offered Alizadeh a senior research associate position to direct the decades-old Iranian Prehistoric Project.

The political turmoil that surrounded the Iranian revolution in 1978 made foreign archaeological research in Iran impossible. This situation was a blessing in disguise for many archaeologists who had worked in Iran for many years but failed to publish the results of their labors. Like many others, Alizadeh systematically began to publish the results of all the Iranian Prehistoric Project fieldworks conducted by Alexander Langsdorff, Donald McCown, Erich Schmidt, Helene Kantor, and Pinhas Delougaz at Tall-e Bakun A and B, Tall-e Geser, Chogha Mish, and Chogha Bonut.

Beginning with his doctoral thesis, Alizadeh was the first archaeologist to formulate an alternative model for the development of early state organizations in south and southwestern Iran. This model focuses on the role of ancient nomads of southwestern Iran and their interactions with settled farmers as key factors in the formation of the early state in the region. Spurred by his model, many Iranian archaeologists conducted field research that focused on

## ABBAS ALIZADEH

by Abbas Alizadeh



ABOVE: Alizadeh at the prehistoric site of Abu Fanduweh, southwestern Iran, 2006.

BELOW: Alizadeh with the crew of the Pottery Bank project, 2001, Iran National Museum.

OPPOSITE TOP: Alizadeh working with students in Iran National Museum storage, Tehran 2015.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Alizadeh and the crew of the Susa Archaeological Research Center project, Susa 2014.





finding archaeological evidence of the existence of ancient nomads in both highlands and lowlands of western and southwestern Iran.

When, in 1995, archaeological research again became possible in Iran, Alizadeh seized the opportunity to find archaeological evidence for his nomadic model and conducted his first field survey in Fars. This was followed in 1996 by excavations at Chogha Bonut, where the technique of wet sieving to retrieve carbonized seeds was employed and introduced to Iranian students. In 2000 Alizadeh, with Nick Kouchoukos of the University of Chicago's Department of Anthropology and Tony Wilkinson of the Oriental Institute, conducted a series of archaeological and geomorphological surveys in Khuzestan and excavations at the prehistoric site of Dar Khazineh. During that season, the director of the Iran National Museum asked Alizadeh to establish a pottery research center at the museum using the masses of unpublished potsherds that had been collected during various surveys by both foreign and Iranian archaeologists for decades prior to 1978. Completed in April 2001, this Pottery Bank developed into a major research and education center for Iranian archaeologists and students.

Since 2001, supported by grants from the Oriental Institute and the National Science Foundation, Alizadeh excavated many prehistoric archaeological sites in Iran including Chogha Do Sar, Beladieh, and Abu Fanduweh in Khuzestan, and Tall-e Bakun A and B, Tall-e Jari A and B, and Tall-e Mushki in Fars. The Fars expedition provided the much-needed absolute (radiocarbon) dates and fauna and flora material for those five important sites in the plain of Persepolis/Marv Dasht. Alizadeh also participated in a number of field projects in Jordan, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurdistan.

From 2013 to 2014, Alizadeh was invited by the Susa Archaeological Base at the French Chateau at Susa (Khuzestan) to rescue, classify, and organize huge archaeological collections in the Chateau's immense storerooms that had been deposited by French archaeologists since the 1930s. Those archaeological collections are now available to researchers at the newly established Susa Archaeological Research Center at Susa.

In 2015, the National Museum of Iran again invited Alizadeh to rescue, study, and classify large unpublished collections of archaeological objects and pottery sherds from hundreds of excavations in Iran stored in the warehouses of the Museum since the 1940s. This year-long project culminated in the establishment of another research center at the Iran National Museum.

All of these field and museum projects were conducted as part of the Iranian Prehistoric Project and with complete or partial financial and administrative support from the Oriental Institute.





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## OI MUSEUM

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