

# News & Notes

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## PINHAS PIERRE DELOUGAZ

1901-1975

Oriental Institute Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Archeology

Curator Emeritus of the Oriental Institute Museum

Professor of Archaeology in Residence, University of California at Los Angeles

Director, the Museum of Cultural History at the University of California at Los Angeles

With P. P. Delougaz we have lost one of the giants of archeology, a scholar of unique range. Born in the Ukraine, he spent his earliest years in a country setting which must have laid the basis for that deep understanding of nature and animals so characteristic of him. He was educated at home by tutors and from childhood shared in a double cultural heritage of European Russia and of Hebrew thought and literature. In 1913 came a major turning point when he was sent to school in Palestine. With the outbreak of the First World War he himself made the decision to remain in Palestine instead of accepting a Red Cross offer of being returned to the relative security of his family. With the disruption first of the war and then of the Russian Revolution, communications and funds from home were cut off, and he thus had at a very young age to become extremely self-reliant. His brilliance in mathematics and science manifested itself very early and his teachers at Gymnasium Herzlia in Tel-Aviv anticipated for him an outstanding career in that direction. The years in Palestine from 1913 to 1922 bridged the period from Turkish rule through the turmoil of the war to the British Mandate, and he was responsive to this many-faceted milieu. He acquired an intimate knowledge and understanding of the Near East and its life, having close Arab friends and learning Arabic while also being one of the young leaders in the development of Hebrew as a modern language into which books on science could be translated.

During four years spent in Paris, 1922-1926, he studied mathematics and physics at the Sorbonne, although his interest in architecture and art was eventually to dominate and lead him into archeology. He brought to it from his scientific background not only detailed knowledge of mathematics and the physical sciences but also an understanding of scientific approach and problems. Hence he derived his facility in disciplined analysis and his ability to judge the value of specific scientific procedures. For example, when the radiocarbon method of dating was introduced he pointed out to his colleagues its limitations before they became a subject of general discussion. He made wide-ranging practical applications of his scientific knowledge, developing methods in the field for baking clay tablets or setting up a laboratory for the treatment of antiquities, and later in Chicago using his knowledge of optics to design lighting systems for the Oriental Institute Museum. With these scientific and technical abilities he combined a deep humanistic approach based on the mastery of many languages, an extreme sensitivity for form—whether in nature, the arts, or language—a delicacy of perception, and a vivid sense of human aspiration and development. It is no wonder that for him archeology was never just “digging” but rather a complex expression of historical discipline.

Delougaz's long career as a field archeologist extended from his participation in the Harvard-Baghdad School Expedition to Nuzi, Iraq (1928-29) until March 29, 1975, when he was struck down by a heart attack at Chogha Mish in Iran. His association with the Oriental Institute began in 1929, when he joined Edmund Chiera, director of the new Iraq Expedition at Khorsabad and was left at the end of the season with the epic task of transporting the huge blocks of an Assyrian winged bull and reliefs from the site to the river bank to start their long voyage to America. The next season saw the beginning of a fruitful collaboration and a deep friendship when he and Henri Frankfort, the new field director of the Iraq Expedition, met for the first time in Jerusalem. In their discussions together at Khorsabad the plan for the Oriental Institute's main efforts in Iraq crystallized as an ambitious regional program for the Diyala area, not merely the excavation of a single site. From 1931 on, Delougaz directed the excavations at Khafaje,



2 which after the cessation of the Oriental Institute's Iraq Excavations he carried on for one more season (1937-38) on behalf of the University of Pennsylvania and the American Schools of Oriental Research. In 1937, with the permission of Sir Leonard Woolley, he had brought off a brilliant tour de force by demonstrating in four days that the famous temple at Al Ubaid was really the core of a temple oval analogous to that which he had revealed at Khafaje.

After the long interruption of the Second World War, Delougaz planned to return to the field to investigate problems of the development of the earliest civilization of western Asia and chose the Susiana plain as a particularly fruitful area. In 1947 he obtained from the government of Iran a general concession to a major part of the modern province of Khuzestan. When circumstances prevented him from going out himself, the concession was used by D. McCown for work at Tall i-Ghasir in eastern Khuzestan. Delougaz's actual return to the field was in 1952, when as Director of the Oriental Institute's Israel Expedition he excavated a Byzantine church at Beth Yerah (Khirbat al-Kerak), one of the largest sites in northern Israel. With his customary precision he dealt there with materials much later than those of his primary concern with the result that, in addition to the important church, he obtained a sorely-needed stratified sequence of Byzantine and Early Islamic ceramics. The occupation of Beth Yerah goes back to that period of early civilization which was of special interest to Delougaz, so that he returned to the site during the '60's for two additional seasons devoted to the early periods, and also to excavate tombs at the nearby site of Nahal Tavor (Wadi Bira) at the request of the Department of Antiquities of Israel. In 1961, he led the Oriental Institute Archeological Reconnaissance Expedition across Turkey to Iran for the purpose of gaining information to aid in formulating plans for Oriental Institute fieldwork. This trip, together with information supplied by the 1959-60 survey of R. McC. Adams, led to the revival of Delougaz's project of the '40's and the inauguration of excavations at Chogha Mish in north-central Khuzestan, conducted at intervals from 1961-1967. With his move to the University of California at Los Angeles in 1967 the work continued as a Joint Iranian Expedition of the Oriental Institute and UCLA.

In the field Delougaz with his minute perception of surface features and understanding of their meaning had a seemingly uncanny ability to see into the ground. From hopeless levels riddled with robbers' pits he retrieved significant temple plans through his understanding of architecture and his mastery of the difficult but essential technique of mud-brick excavation, which Seton Lloyd, his colleague from the years of the Diyala excavations, has eloquently described:\*

. . . his arrival marked the beginning of our seven years' experimenting and discovery in the realm of excavating technique. In fact, . . . much of the effective work referred to in the remainder of this chapter (i.e., the excavations at the Institute's Diyala sites) must be credited to Delougaz' insight and initiative.

. . . he demonstrated to us for the first time the process . . . whereby one scrapes away the surface soil over a wide area, until the face of the wall reveals itself as a thin line of plaster, and on either side of it the texture of the mud brick can then be distinguished from that of the filling.

Speaking of mounds in the Diyala region, Lloyd writes:

Of these sites Khafaje was undoubtedly the most remarkable archaeologically and also the most productive. One feels in retrospect that, during his operations there, Delougaz was faced with and brilliantly solved almost every problem which could face the excavator of a Sumerian mound.

The excavation of the Sin Temple at Khafaje set a standard of technical proficiency for all times.

Insofar as the methodology of excavation goes, most important of all—and what he most emphasized—was his organic system of work. The most appropriate areas for excavation should be selected by careful consideration of the terrain and its many specific surface indications. The areas should be dug organically without being confined to any predetermined geometric limits or cut up by the retention of baulks at set intervals. His organic method called also for constant adaptation to the innumerable individual circumstances of the work, such as varying weather conditions and the differing abilities of workmen. His own excavations were conducted with constant fluidity, always skillfully orchestrated toward achieving the goals of the dig. Seton Lloyd writes of the excavation of the Temple Oval at Khafaje:

. . . it has sometimes occurred to one to wonder how the more rigid disciplinarians of the Roman-British school would have regarded the sight of a trench without regulation 'balks'—wandering in an irregular meander across an archaeological horizon.

For Delougaz, fieldwork was the prelude to the interpretation and publication of the finds, to which his summers were devoted during the excavation years of the Iraq Expedition. After his move to America in 1938, and the interruption of fieldwork by the Second World War, for a number of years the bulk of his time was spent on publication. In Chicago the harmonious collaboration among Frankfort, Delougaz and Jacobsen, begun in the field, continued; the discussions concerning the form of the Diyala publica-

\*In *Mounds of the Near East* (Edinburgh University Press, 1963).



tions were implemented as the volumes began to appear; Delougaz was particularly proud of the organization of the series. The program called for some individual volumes to cover specific architectural complexes whereas in others the various classes of finds were to be systematically presented in a way that would have been impossible if the plan followed in the first Diyala volume, *The Gimilsin Temple*, in which the publication of small finds was combined with that of the architecture, had been continued. Now each individual Diyala volume is a "chapter" in one "book," the parts of which are thoroughly unified by a carefully thought out system of locus denominations and other cross references.

The Oriental Institute's Diyala excavations established the chronology and the cultural development of Mesopotamia in the early historical periods on a sound basis. In this great contribution to history it is not always possible to distinguish the contributions of individual collaborators, but a great share of the burdensome task of dealing with the stratigraphic minutiae basic for the historical synthesis and the preparation of the Diyala volumes fell to Delougaz, even in cases when he was not himself the author. It was borne by him without complaint although his essential concern was always the reconstruction and understanding of the development and significance of the past. It was for this reason that he was particularly interested in that phase of history in which for the first time an elaborate civilization in its great multiplicity was developed. His introduction of the chronological term "Protoliterate" for the range of development in southern Mesopotamia previously called "Uruk" and "Jemdet Nasr" was a major advance in the understanding of Mesopotamian culture in the later part of the fourth millennium B.C.: "Uruk" and "Jemdet Nasr" were not separate periods late in the prehistoric cultural sequence but represent the crucial beginning of the immensely influential civilization of Mesopotamia. To characterize the intense originality and vitality of the period, Delougaz took a name from the single most significant invention of the time—namely that of writing.

Delougaz's volume on the Diyala pottery illustrates his use of specific details to build a system of general significance. In an amazing display of virtuosity he works out a classification of one hundred basic shapes within which the innumerable variety of vessels can be accommodated and referred to by shape numbers. After a little practice these can be speedily assigned and constitute a kind of computer without apparatus. The imagination which made possible this achievement and the sensitivity to form were allied to Delougaz's deep interest in essential cultural and aesthetic problems such as the correlations between visual and linguistic attitudes or the question of symmetry. Unfortunately his plans for detailed work on these subjects were frustrated by pressing daily tasks.

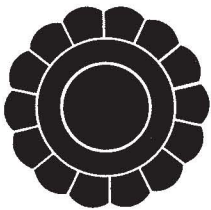
Both at Chicago and at the University of California at Los Angeles much of Delougaz's time was taken by teaching and museum work. He taught his students in a Socratic fashion, stressing the need for assembling specific data without losing sight of the historical framework or the once living human beings whose lives can be reconstructed in depth only by the mutually dependent archeological and linguistic evidence. This, too, was his aim in his museums, whose exhibitions he regarded as a kind of publication devoted to the presentation of man's past. He was able to embody this ideal explicitly when he was made Director of the Collection of Ethnic Arts at UCLA in 1971 and worked out for it a major new program indicated by a new name, The Museum of Cultural History. At the Oriental Institute he was Curator of the Museum from 1944 to 1967; his activity there is too long a story to tell in detail. Though always hampered by stringent budgets and limited museum staff, he completely reorganized in a logical fashion the museum storage areas and exhibition halls. He exhibited the antiquities so that they would tell their own story of development. This entailed very subtle organization as well as the provision, against great odds, of settings at once pleasant and unobtrusive. The drab ochre walls of the Museum were repainted in colors carefully chosen to fit the culture in question and to be in harmonious contrast to the objects themselves. His long-term plans, worked out in considerable detail, for the enlargement of the Museum and the moving of the Assyrian bull and reliefs so as to partially reconstruct the Khorsabad gate unfortunately remained unimplemented. Nonetheless, he left the Museum immensely richer than he had found it, both by what he accomplished with the objects already in the collection and by the acquisition of many new ones—at the expense of much labor and often by long negotiations with other institutions for exchanges.

As a teacher, colleague, and friend deep understanding, loyalty, devotion, and a sense of justice characterized Delougaz. This was shown in innumerable ways. For example, few of his colleagues knew of his great efforts during the '40's on behalf both of those condemned by the holocaust in Europe and also of the nascent state of Israel. His understanding for his workmen and their point of view, his quiet unobtrusive interest and concern for them, as well as the medical aid which he so skillfully gave, created in them strong attachment. On the scholarly side his devotion to the Oriental Institute was never limited to his own personal scholarly interests. Whether it was the needs of the Oriental Institute Library or the cause

4 of archeology and of students of archeology on the campus he gave freely of his energy and his experience. He insisted that it was essential for the Institute to resume fieldwork in Iraq after the Second World War and instigated its renewal of the excavations at Nippur. When the building of the new Aswan Dam created a crisis for Nubian antiquities, for their sake and for that of the future of the Institute's work in Egypt he led the discussion which resulted in the Institute's participation in the salvage program and, to the incredulity of some colleagues, raised the possibility of obtaining U. S. government counterpoint funds as support. Likewise after he left the Oriental Institute for UCLA, he energetically fostered the development of that institution in the field of archeology, being the initiating force leading to the setting up of an Archaeological Institute there and creating the ambitious program of the Museum of Cultural History.

Delougaz was cut off suddenly while still full of plans for research and publication; though now, sadly, he is no longer here to bring these to fruition, his achievements and inspiration remain with us.

Helene J. Kantor



The Oriental Institute

The University of Chicago

1155 East 58th Street · Chicago, Illinois · 60637