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CHAIR OF COUNCIL'S INTRODUCTION

This Newsletter marks ten years since we became the British Institute for the Study of Iraq. The loss of government funding for the British School of Archaeology in Iraq offered an opportunity to broaden our academic coverage so that it now ranges from antiquity to the contemporary. Thanks to your support, the Institute has been able to maintain a proud tradition - some 85 years - of research, publication, public education and, fundamentally, collaborating with Iraqi colleagues on the interpretation of their history, society and cultures.

Such collaboration has been very evident over the last year as the Institute joined with others around the globe to offer support in the rebuilding, preserving and understanding of Iraq's cultural heritage, especially in northern and western Iraq. In February, for example, I joined our President, John Curtis, at a conference in Paris organised jointly by UNESCO and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH). The discussions around a coordinating committee to plan for the future brought home the enormous scale of destruction and the terrible impact this has had on people's lives. Our plan to digitise and release online the BSAI's excavation documentation from Nimrud was very warmly welcomed; I am delighted to report that thanks to a generous anonymous grant we have been able to move forward with this and the work is now underway.



Ancient artefacts discovered under the destroyed Nabi Yunus Shrine Photo: Layla Salih

The site of Nimrud has, of course, a long association with BSAI/BISI and in April our previous Chair of Council and current editor of IRAQ, Eleanor Robson, was able to visit the site as well as Nebi Yunus (Nineveh) to make a preliminary assessment of the damage; she has passed her findings to UNESCO Iraq. These visits were made possible thanks to Layla Salih, one of our past Visiting Scholars who was at the time the representative of the SBAH for the Nineveh region. The Visiting Iraqi Scholarship programme, established in 2005, has developed into one of the Institute's most important and successful activities. Designed to re-train and re-equip Iraqi academics and heritage professionals with the skills and knowledge to protect and further historical and cultural research on their country, we have awarded over 30 scholarships to-date to support research as well as other training opportunities. This remains a fundamental way of encouraging academic engagement and collaboration and continues to be at the heart of the Institute's activities. Here I must thank Sabah Zangana for not only sponsoring the November 2016 lecture in honour of his father-in-law but also for his support of Visiting Scholars. Over the coming year our fundraising efforts will be focused on the programme to try and ensure that it continues. If you are able to help with this vital work in any way, including around building our membership, please do get in touch.

Our partnerships within Iraq itself continue to develop. As reported in the last Newsletter, BISI has been helping to support the establishment of a new museum in Basrah. This important undertaking has been led in the UK by the Friends of Basrah Museum (FoBM) and I congratulate them on being awarded a government Cultural Protection Fund grant to complete the installation of the three remaining galleries and to assist with museum staff training and related activities. BISI will continue to work closely with the FoBM and Basrah Museum's Director, Mr Qahtan Al-Abeed. Indeed, Basrah Museum will be one of the research hubs, along with the University of Baghdad and the University of Kurdistan Hewler, in a major initiative funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. Led by Eleanor Robson with Saad Eskander (previous director of the Iraq National Library and Archive) and myself, the project aims to help develop the capacity of Middle Eastern universities, museums, archives and heritage sites to enable cultural and economic growth in the region. BISI will play a key role in facilitating training, mentoring and peer-group support for Iraqi visiting researchers.



Basrah Museum opened in September 2016 and work to complete the installation of three galleries as well as museum staff training is ongoing.

The BISI London office continues to be the centre of all we do and happily at the end of last year our Development Co-ordinator, Ali Khadr, was appointed as Administrator, a role he will combine with his previous responsibilities. There have been a few other changes: we welcome Jennifer Griggs as our new Visiting Iraqi Scholars Coordinator, and Nelida Fuccaro has been appointed to an exciting lecturing position in Abu Dhabi, and has therefore stepped down from Council. I am pleased to let you know that Joan Porter MacIver has been elected to replace Nelida as Vice-Chair.

We have a busy year ahead, not least an exciting series of lectures and other activities at which I very much look forward to seeing you.

Dr Paul Collins



Dr Paul Collins and Professor Graeme Barker at February's Annual Mallowan Lecture

ACADEMIC GRANT REPORTS

Ur Region Archaeology Project 2017

A fifth and final season of excavations took place at Tell Khaiber, near Ur, in spring 2017. We completed the plan of the Sealand Period Public Building by surface scraping the remainder of its northern half, and excavated sample areas there. In the southern half, we completed work on the block where tablets have been encountered, found the entrances to the underlying vaults, and excavated in the courtyard and 'reception' room as well. We conducted soundings and limited excavations on other parts of the mound to help us understand the history of its formation.

History of occupation of Tell Khaiber

The first clearly demonstrable occupation of the site dates from the early third millennium BC, notwithstanding the occasional encounter with a sherd or two of the Uruk and possibly 'Ubaid periods.' Surface scraping in 2016 to the west of the Public Building confirmed, as suggested by Henry Wright's 1965 survey, the presence of a production area for pottery of the first part of the Early Dynastic period. Large quantities of such material were used for levelling in the construction of the nearby Sealand Public Building 1,500 years later. This year excavation 70 m SW of its edge revealed for the first-time actual walls of Early Dynastic date, associated with very numerous deep conical bowls typical of Early Dynastic 1, as well as a damaged cylinder seal with geometric pattern, and a figurine of a cow with horns. We now know that the southern skirt of the mound has ED remains on the surface a short distance from the Public Building, so no Sealand occupation is present in this area.

To the north of the building, surface scraping revealed occasional slightly elevated small humps, in which were sherds of a late second millennium date, and seem to represent all that is left of any Kassite period occupation. A deep brick-lined tomb excavated this year to the east of the Public Building dates to a period now eroded, but as it was robbed in antiquity we cannot be more specific.

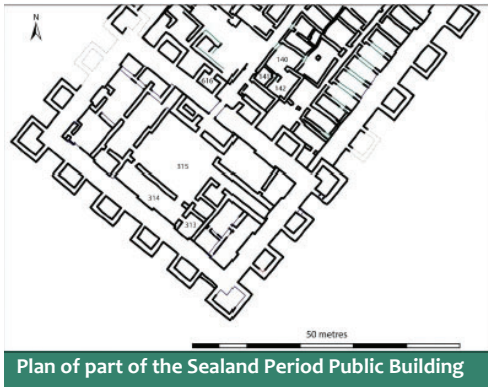


Left ED Conical bowl (TK694). Ht. 132 mm; Right: Kassite Long-neck flask (6178.01) Ext. ht. 310 mm.
Photo:URAP

The Sealand Period Public Building

The intriguing fortified Public Building, with a date to the reign of King Ayardaragalama, has been the focus of our research at Tell Khaiber. It divides, as stated previously, into two unequal halves. Excavation to date has concentrated mainly on the smaller, southern part, particularly on the recovery of the cuneiform tablets there. This year we completed the mapping of the extant remains by surface-scraping a further 950 sq m in the northern part. Erosion has deprived us of the main entrance, also the northern wall, but we were able to recover elements of the plan of its corner towers, which suggested a façade similar to those on the other sides. We can

now see a complex internal arrangement of rooms and corridors for this northern part. A predominant feature is a main central corridor, running from the presumed external entrance right through to the doorway into the southern part. It is 2m wide and 45m long, and provides access to suites of 2 and 3-roomed units. Part of the corridor was excavated by our SBAH colleagues, who discovered successive layers of compacted surfaces, mingled in with ash thrown out of the tannurs from nearby rooms, showing that this was an enduring feature in the lifetime of the building.



We also investigated an area (Area 616) that began as a tower on the original external façade of the building, then became a room inside the northern half when this was built on. Excavation showed that it had been partly filled in with several courses of mud-bricks to raise the internal floor level, and then had a doorway inserted to provide access from the narrow passage that now lay outside it. Along the southwestern side of the main corridor a suite of rooms (Areas 140-142) was excavated, revealing evidence for several phases of use. One floor was completely covered with the remains of reed matting.

In the southern part of the building we excavated the eastern half of the courtyard (Area 315), the largest enclosed space in the building, covering 150 sq m. The surfaces of this area were uneven,

with a distinct slope down towards a large central cavity, stopping at its edge. This unusual feature caused much speculation, and we incline towards the suggestion that it was where a tree, perhaps a date-palm, might have been planted. When the floors were re-laid and levelled up, care was taken to leave an area around the tree to ensure its survival. The busiest area of the courtyard was against the NE wall, where a succession of brick benches and ovens were located. Against the southern wall three brick plinths were found, as well as a large and very strange faceted limestone pillar with a cone-shaped depression in the top.

Excavation of the reception suite (Areas 313 and 314) showed that the main room (Area 314) was a later insertion. Originally the courtyard had been larger (Phase 1), running up to the southern wall of the building. Two arches in the eastern wall marked the limit of the series of vaults that we found last year when we excavated below the archive rooms, and which puzzled us so. It is now clear that the vaults were left open on the courtyard side and would have supported raised floors or platforms covering an area of c. 166 sq m. These results strengthen our previous suggestion that the vaults provided ventilation for grain storage above them, the collection and re-distribution of grain being a function of the building as evidenced from the tablets. Excavation of Area 313 completed our investigation of the block where tablets were found. Its only doorway leads into Area 314, so there is no communication with other rooms in the block, and it is definitely part of the 'reception suite' accessed from the courtyard. The absence of tablets in it therefore supports our assumption that the cuneiform documents really did belong in the rooms where they were found: had they been part of an infilling operation, they would have been distributed through all the rooms in the block.



The arched entrances to the sub-floor vaults. Photo:URAP

Our ceramic assemblage, securely dated to the Sealand Period, is a significant addition to knowledge of Mesopotamian pottery. Work in the northern part of the building provided some type-groupings that were new to us (such as a larger number of cooking vessels), and a few new shapes, including several examples of ‘kakallu’, beer-brewing vessels. Among several copper finds this year were two substantial items, a crushed bowl and a socketed adze with the tip broken off, possibly intended for melting down for re-use.



Socketed adze TK708. Ext Length: 169 mm
Photo:URAP

As no further tablets with inscriptions were found in 2017, the archive is now complete. Professor Eleanor Robson therefore spent her time in Iraq at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, rather than at Ur, to continue her study of the Tell Khaiber tablets, which are being made available online on ORACC.

Further research and publication

This last season marks the final annual field operation at Tell Khaiber, which BISI has supported throughout, right from our tentative exploratory visit in 2012. The mound still keeps some of its secrets, and there are inevitable unresolved puzzles, but the essential nature of the place has been demonstrated, and we have now reached a point where continued excavation is no longer a resource-effective means of researching it. Further study, especially of the tablets, will no doubt produce new insights and refine or change our conclusions. From being one of only two international expeditions actually on the ground in Iraq when we started, we finished as one of at least six in Thi Qar Province alone, with interest increasing all the time.

Our interim report for Iraq is at proof stage, and we hope it will appear during the coming year. A report on Tell Khaiber 2, the nearby Kassite mound which we sampled in 2015, has been accepted for publication by Sumer. Work now begins on the final report, which will be published online and as print-on-demand.

*Dr Jane Moon, Honorary Fellow, Ludwig-Maximillan University,
Munich, Co-Director of the Ur Region Archaeology Project*

¹ A list of all our supporters appears on our website, www.urarchaeology.org. We would like to record our particular debt of gratitude for the constant and very generous support of Baron Lorne Thyssen-Bornemisza at the Augustus Foundation.

² Campbell, S. et al, (forthcoming) Tell Khaiber: an administrative centre of the Sealand period

³ Campbell, Stuart, Jane Moon and Robert Killick (forthcoming) A Kassite Settlement in southern Babylonia: Investigations at Tell Khaiber 2

Archaeological Work at Abu Salabikh



Professor Postgate and Professor Al-Hussainy
surveying the discard pit

Background

In May 1990, the house on the north-east side of the Main Mound at Abu Salabikh was closed at the end of the excavation season, containing much animal and human bone, potsherds, and other small finds which had not been assigned an AbS number and accordingly sent to the Iraq Museum. Although this material was not suitable for exhibition in a museum, it had scientific value and was stored in the house. Unfortunately, the political disruptions of 1990 and subsequent years prevented our team from returning to the site, and at some time around 1991 or 1992 the house was ransacked. The robbers removed items such as the cooking stove and the refrigerator. We do not think they were interested in any of the archaeological material, but the metal and wooden shelving on which it had been stored was also removed, with the result that the finds were thrown on the floor and trodden on.

The guards of Abu Salabikh (until 1995 Bedr Abbas, thereafter his nephew Salman Wasikh) did their best to rectify the damage by blocking up doors and windows. As a result, when

I paid a short visit to the site in 2002 we were not able to enter the rooms, but it was possible to see that a substantial amount of archaeological material remained inside. With improving conditions in the south of the country I was able to take part in the opening ceremony of the new Basrah Museum in August 2016, and with the assistance of Prof. Abbas al-Hussainy I took the opportunity to pay a visit to Abu Salabikh. I was dismayed to see that because of the collapse of one roof, and new holes in some of the walls, the remaining finds were in much worse condition than before. It seemed to me that action was urgently required to rescue what remained of the stored antiquities, and the report below describes what we have achieved.

Aims and methods

All the antiquities were originally stored with one or more labels, or a numbered bag, or with numbers inked directly on the object. If no find number or unit number survives in association with a find, it has lost its provenance and we consider it no longer useful for study. Such items have been discarded (see below). If the find's provenance, and preferably also its unique find number, survive, we keep it, and ideally record the number. Over 1000 items were logged in this way, but, because of shortage of time, recording the number has not always been possible, and in this case the find is stored with others whose numbers will be recorded eventually. When time allowed, old polythene bags were replaced by new ones, and this was always done when the bag was punctured or otherwise unserviceable. Again, when time permitted, new indestructible labels were written and new wire closures applied. For transport to Diwaniyah and subsequent storage there all finds were gathered into sacks or plastic crates. I was assisted in the work throughout the 10 days by Mr Ahmed Flayih Abbas of the

Diwaniyah Directorate and Mr Ahmed Ali Jasim of the Somer Inspectorate. Their contribution was essential, and because my co-worker Dr Steele was unable to secure her visa in time, I would not have been able to complete the work in the time available. Also very helpful was Mr Ahmed Kerim Abid, and in the final three days we had the assistance of two relatives of the site guard, Salim Mehdi Wasikh and Abdullah Salman Wasikh. They proved to be excellent workers.



Sorting through the debris Photo: J. N. Postgate

Results

The dig house on the site consists of three remaining rooms, which were numbered A, B and C for the purpose of recording the provenance of the antiquities. Reflecting how the finds had been stored when the site was left in 1990, the oldest room (A) contained small finds (e.g. clay cones), and some stone, Room B was almost entirely full of pottery in sacks, with a little bone and some soil samples, and Room C was principally full of bones, with some stone.

The primary purpose of the work was to identify all the archaeological material which still had its provenance and deposit it in a secure place.

This we hope we have achieved. The secondary purpose was to record the find numbers of all the retrieved material. Because of shortage of time, and because the amount of recoverable material was much greater than we expected, we were only able to list less than half the numbers.

The materials transferred from the site of Abu Salabikh to storage in Diwaniyah on 14/04/2017 consist of 57 crates and 176 sacks comprising the following:

from Room A: Crates A1-A19 containing principally stone and clay items, also some animal bone. The individual bags and items in these crates are not listed.

from Room B1: Sacks 1-23 containing potsherds from Room B1. The contents of these have been listed (319 numbered items).
Sacks 154-157 potsherds, not recorded
Sacks 162-169 potsherds, not recorded
Black plastic crates containing mixed items:
Crates B1-2 (99 numbered items), B21 (un-recorded)
Crates containing bones B1-B3

from Room B2: Crates B3-7, 9-14, potsherds, not recorded.

Crate B8, pottery with numbers written on the sherd. Some 20 of these have been recorded, others not.

Sacks 24-153 containing potsherds and some soil samples (22 sacks), not recorded

Sacks 158-161, potsherds, not recorded

Sacks 170-176, potsherds, not recorded

from Room C: Crates C1-8 are bones from Room C and have been recorded (789 numbered items).

Crates C9-20 are un-recorded, but contain further animal and human bone (and some stone from the 1990 season on the Uruk Mound).

Transfer to Diwaniyah

This took place on 14th April. Two outsize pickups were engaged for us and the transfer was completed in two goes, i.e. four loads. The crates and sacks were delivered to the premises of the Diwaniyah Antiquities Inspectorate. There they have been stored in a metal clad shed, with space for anyone who needs to work on the materials.



Before, in dig housepot burial Photo: J. N. Postgate



After, in Diwaniyah Mufettushiyeh Photo: J. N. Postgate

Conclusion

Thanks to the generosity of the BISI and the Cary Robertson fund (of Trinity College Cambridge) we have been able to salvage a large body of excavated material. In principle, this means that it should be possible in future to compare published material with the originals, and to prepare an account of any materials which are not yet studied or published, among which the animal bone is the principal category. Moreover, the more negative result that we saw no sign of unstudied whole pots from one of the graves (No. 263) means that the long-delayed publication of the two Early Dynastic houses (ASE 5) can now be completed.

Sincere thanks to the State Board for Antiquities and Heritage, to its Director Mr. Qais Rashid assisted by Mrs Saba Omari, Director of Relations. This report cannot close without a final word of immense gratitude to Prof. Dr Abbas Al-Hussainy, Al-Qadisiyyah University, without whom this rescue work could not have been accomplished.

Professor J.N. Postgate

Central Zagros Archaeological Project: Excavations at the Early Neolithic Site of Bestansur

Introduction

A seventh season of excavations was conducted at the Early Neolithic site of Bestansur, Sulaimaniyah Province, between 8th April and 14th May 2017. We are very grateful to Sulaimaniyah Directorate of Antiquities for all their support, in particular to the Director, Kamal Rasheed Raheem, the Director of the Museum, Hashim Hama Abdullah, and our government representatives, Kamal Rouf Aziz and Parween Yawar Manda, who helped us in many ways and contributed greatly to the success of the season. The excavation team was co-directed by Professor Roger Matthews and Dr Wendy Matthews, with Dr Sam Walsh (oste archaeologist), Dr Amy Richardson (small finds and data-base manager), Dr Ingrid Iversen, (micro archaeologist), Dr Marta Portillo (EU H2020 MASCA Fellow animal ethno archaeology), Julie Unruh (conservator), and students from the University of Reading (Kayce Herrick, Samira Idriss, Maria Rabbani, Mubariz Rabbani). Throughout the season we benefited from the expertise and hard work of local assistants, including Halala Hamid Salih of Sulaimaniyah Directorate of Antiquities and residents of Bestansur village, to all of whom we are very grateful. The excavations were financially supported by grants from the National Geographic Society and the British Institute for the Study of Iraq. We are very thankful to these bodies for their kind support.

Neolithic excavations at Bestansur

Excavations of Early Neolithic levels at Bestansur focused on Trench 10 (Figure 1). There were

two main aims for the Trench 10 excavations this season. Firstly, we intended to clarify the plan of Building 5 and adjacent structures. Secondly, we aimed to make further progress in excavating the numerous human remains located within Space 50 of Building 5.



Figure 1. View of Bestansur to show location of Trench 10 (Credit: Lynn Welton)

Figure 2 shows a complete plan of Building 5, which demonstrates the large scale of the architecture and the importance of Space 50. Building 5 is constructed of reddish brown silty clay mudbricks with white calcitic inclusions set in a greyish brown mortar, coated with grey plaster and white-wash on the interior wall faces. We have previously dated Building 5 to ca. 7700 BC. Through excavation of deposits to the west of Building 5, we developed our understanding of the plan of Building 5 and its relationship to contemporary and earlier buildings, as illustrated in Figure 3. We recovered most of the plan of Building 8, which underlies Building 5, by excavating the packing between Buildings 8 and 5. Building 8 is constructed of ‘boat-shaped’ mudbricks set in mortar. Several of the Building 8 wall faces have multiple layers of plaster.

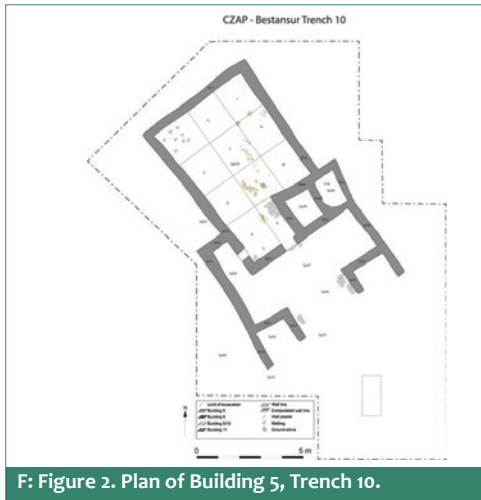


Figure 2. Plan of Building 5, Trench 10.

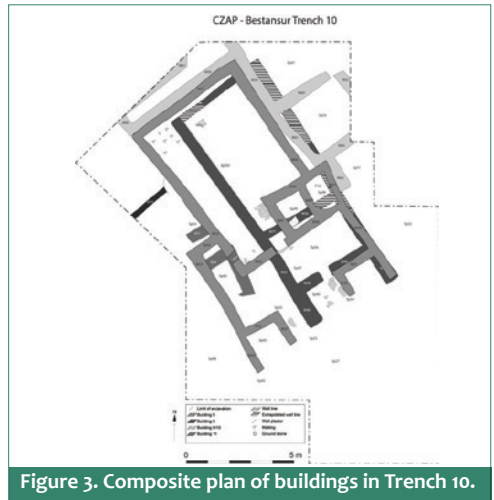


Figure 3. Composite plan of buildings in Trench 10.

We excavated more of the exceptional number of human remains buried within Space 50 of Building 5. A minimum of 17 individuals were excavated this season, with a further six skulls and a group of long bones left for future excavation. In addition to human remains excavated in previous seasons, this results in a minimum number of 65 excavated individuals with at least six more adults and additional infant remains not yet excavated. The individuals excavated this season included more adults than in previous years, but the overall ratio of juveniles to adults is still high (Figure 4). Most of the burials were disarticulated, except for two articulated juvenile skeletons in Context 1868 (Figure 5). We will continue excavation of this extraordinary deposit of human remains and associated buildings in future seasons, and of at least three newly discovered burial cuts exposed below floors in the north-west of Space 50. These pits were identified after excavation of >1m room fill comprising collapsed walls of mudbrick and wall-plaster, and the underlying plaster floors. Traces of split-reed matting were revealed on several of the plaster floor surfaces.

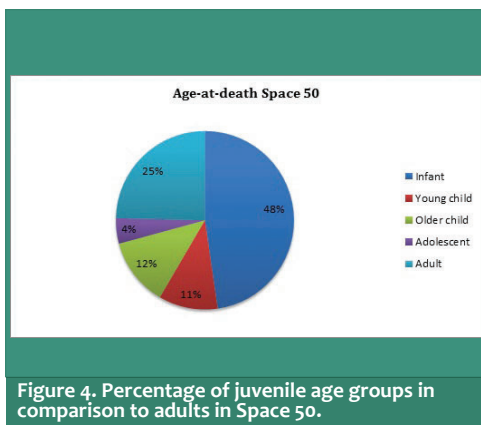


Figure 4. Percentage of juvenile age groups in comparison to adults in Space 50.



Figure 5. Context 1868, showing two articulated juvenile skeletons (front left and middle).
Photo: Roger Matthews

Small finds

104 small finds or groups of small finds were recorded. These include a total of 162 beads of stone and shell, plotted across the burial deposits in Building 5 and recovered in groups through heavy residue analysis. Forty-eight percent of the beads recovered over the course of the season were made from perforated river molluscs (*Theodoxus jordani*). A further forty-eight percent of the beads are small (3mm diameter) red cylinder or red and white disc beads, made from calcium carbonate, possibly in the form of fossilised crinoids recovered from the abundant limestone deposits in the region. The remaining six beads include a pair of shell beads, made from shells otherwise unseen across the site, possibly marine in source. A small green chalk bead and a crab-claw bead find parallels in the material from previous seasons. One small, beautifully worked translucent carnelian flat-bead and one large, partially worked, red-brown chalcedony flat-bead complete the assemblage and highlight the extensive distances from which materials were transported to Bestansur (Figure 6).



Figure 6. SF660 and SF722, carnelian and chalcedony flat-beads. Photo: Roger Matthews

Fourteen clay small finds demonstrate extensive pre-pottery clay-working at the site. Conservator J. Unruh provided guidance on successful extraction and preservation of the clay objects, many of which are fragmentary. Within the assemblage, there is evidence for the production of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shapes, as well as engagement with the token repertoires that extended across Southwest Asia.

Small fragments of marble in external areas to the west of Building 5 and a small piece of

worked obsidian demonstrate highly skilled stone working in order to make bowls and possibly bracelets. The use of red pigments in Space 50 is further evidenced by fire-treated soft stone and traces of pigment on matting. Finally, three ground stones were incorporated into the Small Finds catalogue, two of which were found in association with burials cut through the floors of Space 50.

Flotation and heavy residue processing

A total of 74 flotation samples were collected and processed during the season. The 56 samples from Trench 10, amounting to 1335 litres, have been sorted and the average sample size was 24 litres. Just under half of the samples were collected from contexts associated with burials (26 samples) and these samples were fully sorted in both the 4mm and 2mm size fractions to ensure full recovery of beads and small bones. The majority of beads recovered from heavy residue were found in the smaller 2mm size fraction. The remaining samples have been fully sorted in the 4mm size fraction and a least 50% of the 2mm size fraction was sorted. Eighteen samples, totalling 302 litres, were collected from Trench 14 and were floated but the heavy residue has not been sorted.

Outreach

We continued a programme of outreach activities, including engagement with media and TV companies, including KurdSat TV who are preparing a documentary on our work at Bestansur. We are especially delighted that, following its nomination by the Iraqi government, the site of Bestansur has recently been accepted onto the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6172/>

Roger Matthews
Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology,
University of Reading

Civil Society Activism in Iraq: Between a fragmented Nationhood, the Collapse of the State and Global Interferences



Violinist Photo: Zahra Ali

Throughout this research project, my aim was to explore civil society activism in Iraq, by focusing on both women and youth. My starting point was the popular and massive protests Harak al-Sha'bi that emerged in Iraq late July 2015 demanding deep change in the post-2003 regime such as the end of the ethno-sectarian quota political system, and denouncing the systemic corruption and mismanagement of the new political elite. Prior to going on fieldwork, I intended to expand the feminist intersectional analysis that I had applied in my doctoral research on women's rights activism that I had analysed through the study of the interaction between issues of gender, nationhood, state and religion. My in-depth fieldwork within the women's movement was focused on Baghdad primarily, and the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah secondarily, and mainly concerned middle class, middle aged women involved in women's organizations, mostly NGOs, funded by UN and international donors. This time, first, I wanted to look at forms of activism that are less formally organized and composed of young activists, especially in Baghdad. I also wanted to analyse the interactions between women's organisations

I have known through my doctoral research and al-Harak al-Sha'bi. Secondly, I intended to explore the south of Iraq, and forms of activism, social and political life that are not necessarily connected to the capital. My starting questions were the following: what characterizes the social and political consciousness of the individuals that composed the protest movement? What kind of social and political consciousness and senses of belonging exist among young Iraqis (generation born in the 1990s) involved in the protest movement or any form of non-formally organized civil society activism? How do they experience the post-2003 regime, the state, issues of nationhood and citizenship, as well as religion?

Thanks to BISI's grant I managed to conduct intense fieldwork through which I met and interviewed 30 activists from different backgrounds and contexts: women's rights activists, young civil society activists, as well as individuals involved in human rights and environmental activism in Baghdad, Nasiriyah, Chibaish, Karbala and Najaf-Koufa. I conducted the fieldwork in two trips:

The first fieldwork trip was conducted in Baghdad and Najaf. In Baghdad, I met women's rights activists and some of the young individuals that took a very important role in the Harak al-Sha'bi. Through my interviews with activists and observations in Tahrir square or Al-Mutannabi street that are spaces of socialization for them, I managed to get a sense of the interaction between women and minorities' rights activists involved in NGOs and the movement of protest. I also tried to analyse the background of the "ordinary citizens" involved in the protests, as well as the ones with former experience of political activism. We discussed their projects, ideas, political imaginaries and their opinion regarding the involvement of the Sadrist movement in the protests. In Najaf-Koufa, I met activists from Moja, a youth social movement dedicated to the defence of freedom of thinking

and speech, raising social and cultural awareness around women and minorities rights, secularism and peace-building.



Books for sale at Al Mutannabi street Photo: of Zahra Ali

The second fieldwork trip has been conducted in Baghdad, Nasiriyah, Chibaish, Karbala and Najaf-Koufa. During this trip, I interviewed even more activists in Baghdad than during the previous one and spent a lot of time observing their work and activism; some were part of groups such as Mustamarun or Madenyun, coalitions of activists launched after the July 2015 protests, others such as poets, intellectuals and artists were not part of any group and involved as individuals. In Nasiriyah I met activists (young and older) and academics involved in the protests such as the Thi Qar Youth Coalition. In Chibaish, I met environmental activists, and had the chance to visit the Marshes and observe social and cultural life away from the capital. In Karbala, I met young women involved in social and political activism, as well as women's rights activists. In Najaf-Koufa, I met again the young activists of Moja, as well as young women involved in different forms of social activism as well as individuals gravitating around the very famous NGO Al-Amel association.



Child on a Zawraq Photo: Zahra Ali



Poets near Qishla Tower Photo: Zahra Ali

Thanks to this grant, I am preparing two major academic publications, one dedicated to women's rights activism in the context of the protest movement as part of the project "Women Creating Change" directed by Lila Abu-Lughod in the Centre for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University. I will be presenting my research paper at the international workshop "Religion and the Global Framing Gender Violence" at Columbia University's Global Center in Amman, Jordan, on September 11 and 12, 2017. The second major academic publication I am preparing will concern youth activism, senses of belonging and political culture in post-invasion Iraq and I am planning to submit it to the academic journal Comparative Studies of South Asia, African and the Middle East. I also intend to write several pieces dedicated to wider audiences in websites such as Open Democracy or Jadaliyya.

Zahra Ali

Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Chester

VISITING IRAQI SCHOLARSHIPS

Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Regions of Armed Conflict: Iraq

Omar Jassam of the University of Mosul spent one month working with Dr Emma Cunliffe, Research Associate in the Department of Archaeology, at the University of Durham and a member of the EAMENA (Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa) team on his PhD thesis on the *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Regions of Armed Conflict: Iraq*.

EAMENA was established in 2015 to respond to the increasing threats to archaeological sites in the Middle East and North Africa. This project uses satellite imagery to rapidly record and make available information about archaeological sites and landscapes which are under threat. EAMENA also works with relevant authorities on the ground to limit likely damage, share information and skills, strengthen networks and raise awareness.

During his scholarship, Omar was provided with access to key books and articles, an introduction to media information verifications, basic introduction to satellite imagery and damage assessment, and a clearer understanding of damage assessment.



Omar Jassam and BISI Trustee Dr Gareth Brereton at the British Museum

OUTREACH GRANT REPORTS

Iraq +100

In November 2013, Comma Press received funding from the BISI to commission Hassan Blasim to edit an anthology of short fictions by Iraqi authors set in the year 2103 - a century after the British- and American-led invasion. Comma had already worked with Blasim extensively, having first published him in English in its anthology *Madinah* (2008), and then in two subsequent, award-winning collections, *The Madman of Freedom Square* (2009) and *The Iraqi Christ* (2013); Comma has also been central to getting Blasim published in other languages and territories around the world (23 at the last count).

The aim of this new anthology, titled *Iraq+100*, was two-fold: to give something back to the wider Iraqi literary community, that is to say to share some of the attention Blasim has been afforded; and to offer Iraqi authors an opportunity to write about their contemporary concerns (most of which stem from the 2003 invasion) in the uninhibited space provided by a future setting. As is often the case in literary science fiction, the future offers an allegorical canvas for exploring themes that are very much rooted in the present they're written in (Orwell's 1984, for example, is more about 1948, than the actual year 1984). There was also a notable dearth in science fiction from the Arabic world, which Blasim and I were keen to explore why this might be so. **Indeed, long before the results of this commission were published, journalists began writing about the concept of the book, and speculating as to why there had been so little SF in Arabic.**⁴

In early 2014, Comma received an English PEN grant to cover the translation costs of *Iraq+100*,

and stories began to come – both from an open call out and from specially invited authors. However, in June that year, the city of Mosul fell to the recently formed ISIS, an event which cast into doubt the very existence of Iraq, as nation, in the future. Iraq's near future, let alone its distant future, changed very suddenly; and many of the stories already gathered for this anthology were in danger of being 'what the future used to look like'.

For this reason, the project was delayed until additional stories could be commissioned that responded to the threat of ISIS. This had its obvious challenges; writers based in conflict zones, or with relatives in conflict zones, clearly didn't want to draw attention to their criticism of the occupiers' ideology. Eventually a small number of authors were willing to do this, including one author who, writing under the pseudonym Anoud, used the brief to write a satire about a technology-hating caliphate, and trials of a woman forcibly betrothed to its leader. This story, titled 'Kahramana' after the character from *The Arabian Nights*, wasn't the only story to reach back to that classic text for inspiration (Zhraa Alhaboby's 'Baghdad Syndrom', for instance, revolves around a statue of Scheherazade in the centre of Baghdad and a mysterious cult that emerges to preserve it after its repeatedly damaged during various 21st century invasions). Many authors also reached back to distant past – in particular the time of the *Madinat al-Salam*, and the House of Wisdom – for their inspiration in imagining a technologically-rejuvenated Iraq, one that has recovered its medieval identity as the scientific capital of the world. Blasim's Foreword, invokes this identity in particular, and calls for a national repossession of that scientifically-centred identity.

⁴ 'Arabic Fiction Faces up to the Future', Aawsat, Nov 2014.

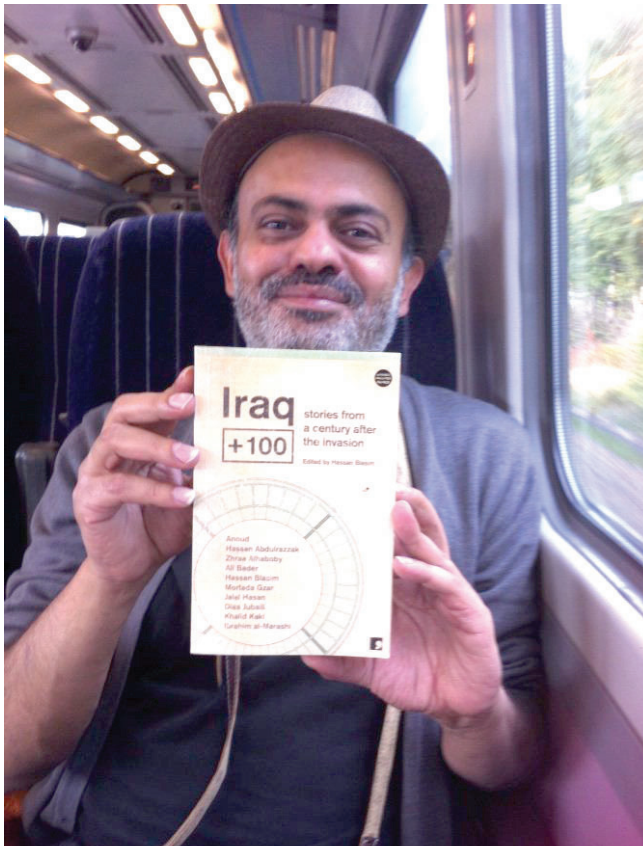
<http://english.aawsat.com/2014/11/article55338205/arabic-fiction-faces-up-to-the-future>

'Beyond One Thousand and One Nights: Science Fiction & Fantasy, 2015-2016', Publishers Weekly, Oct 2, 2015,

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/new-titles/adult-announcements/article/68256-beyond-one-thousand-and-one-nights-science-fiction-fantasy-2015-2016.html>

Comma published the resulting anthology in October 2016, and hosted a preview event at Ilkley Literature Festival, followed by a launch proper at London's South Bank Centre (hosted by Ted Hodgkinson, and featuring Hassan Blasim, Zhraa Alhaboby and translator Jonathan Wright). This latter event was sold out, and saw the coming together of many authors, critics, translators and specialists in Iraqi and Arabic fiction from all over London. A host of interviews were arranged around this event, including several BBC interviews, blogger features, and so forth. The book was later named as one of The Guardian's 'Best SF and Fantasy Books of 2016'. And, perhaps most rewardingly, a simple tweet showing Blasim holding a copy of the book and announcing it as 'the first collection of science fiction from Iraq ever', went viral in a single day, receiving over 2000 likes and over 1000 retweets around the world. Such is the interest, and indeed the need, for alternative narratives about Iraq.

*Ra Page
Founder, Comma Press*



**Iraq +100, the first ever anthology of science fiction from Iraq,
with Editor of Iraq +100 Hassan Blasim Photo: Comma Press**

⁵ For a full list of press and online coverage, go to: <http://commapress.co.uk/books/iraq-100>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/30/best-sf-and-fantasy-books-2016-adam-roberts>

Shubbak 2017 - Shubbak Literature Programme



Shubbak 2017 was our largest and most expansive festival to date. It included over 130 artists, originating from over 18 Arab countries, across more than 70 events in over 30 venues, performing to a total audience of over 50,000. The festival programme covered a deliberately wide and diverse range of works, from an opera premiere to the latest electronic music talents, from artistic interventions in Dalston and Shepherd's Bush to the Great Court of the British Museum, from a rich film programme to a densely packed literature festival at the British Library, which was held with support from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq.

This was the fourth edition of Shubbak, the UK's largest biennale of contemporary Arab culture, and our most ambitious programme to date. Along with a programme with many UK and world premieres, we also presented a number of new initiatives. For the first time we presented new work in locations across London in partnership with key festival partners in the Arab world; we hosted world premieres of new performances as part of the Creative Europe supported programme Performance(s) Between 2 Shores; we brought more artists from across the Arab world to London

than ever before; and we presented some of the finest writers, filmmakers and music from across the region.

We also developed new collaborations in the field of literature:

- **Modern Poetry in Translation:** Modern Poetry in Translation's summer issue 'A Blossom Shroud' focuses on poets and translators associated with this year's Shubbak and it publishes a selection of new translations of poets appearing at the festival: Mona Kareem, Dunya Mikhail, and a new long sequence of poems by Golan Haji, translated by Stephen Watts. The focus also includes a conversation between Alice Guthrie, Shubbak's literary producer, and poet, translator and activist Mona Kareem. Also featured are new translations of Hisham Bustani, Najwan Darwish and Syrian actor and activist Fadwa Souleiman. The magazine is available from the Modern Poetry in Translation website: <http://modernpoetryintranslation.com/>
- **Words Without Borders:** Digital magazine Words Without Borders has published newly translated works including political nonfiction from Egyptian Basma Abdel Aziz; an extract of Nadia Alkokabany's new novel about the Yemeni revolution; an extract of Mohamed Abdelnabi's International Prize for Arabic Fiction-shortlisted gay Egyptian novel; and a short play by seminal Libyan playwright Mansour Bushnaf. This special feature is now live on wordswithoutborders.org.

Literature Programme at the British Library

We were delighted to return to the British Library for a packed weekend of events, featuring a diverse schedule that included literary discussions and readings, and children's poetry workshops, as well as a number of

creative collaborations with writers, translators and literary magazines. Once again, the Shubbak literature programme was co-curated with Alice Guthrie.

Over 25 writers from across the Arab world participated, with discussions ranging from the current issues of contemporary writing in the Arab world, to recent queer narratives in the region.

Recordings of all sessions are now available online here: <https://soundcloud.com/the-british-library/sets/shubbak-literature-festival-2>

Shubbak was delighted to partners with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq to ensure Iraqi voices were present on two key events within our literature programme:

Writing Against the Grain (featuring Ali Badr)

This opening session explored questions including: What do we mean by Arabic writing against the grain in 2017? What are the inspirations, and the challenges, for the engaged Arab writer today? How do the wider global context, regional events, national regimes, personal stories, and the myriad of other artistic influences shape their work? And what does it mean to be a literary activist?

Novelist, poet and playwright **Ali Badr** participated in the panel with support from BISI, alongside Mona Kareem and Ghazi Gheblawi. The panel was chaired by Syrian British writer **Robin Yassin-Kassab**.

Ali Badr was born in Baghdad. The recipient of several awards for his novels, his work has been translated into English (notably *The Tobacco Keeper* and *Papa Sartre*). Currently editor-in-chief of Marseille-based Arabic press Alca Books, he has extensive experience of contemporary Arabic literary publishing.

Keepers of the Flame (featuring Dunya Mikhail)

Our closing session on the first day of literature events focused on the contemporary poetry scenes of the Arab world. Iraqi-American **Dunya Mikhail** took part in this vibrant event, featuring poets Golan Haji, Al-Saddiq Al-Raddi and Mona Kareem. Celebrated British poet and multi-disciplinary artist **Malika Booker** compered the event, a celebration of the work of a diverse group of poets keeping the fragile flame of poetry alive in 2017.

Dunya Mikhail is the author of *The Iraqi Nights*, *Diary of A Wave Outside the Sea*, and *The War Works Hard*. Her honours include the Kresge fellowship, the Arab American Book Award and the United Nations Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing.



Keepers of the Flame Panel featuring Author Dunya Mikhail Photo: Shubbak

Zaha Hadid Exhibition



Over the winter the Serpentine presented work by the late Zaha Hadid and American artist Lucy Raven alongside the conclusion of the 2016 Magazine Sessions and a significant programme of Serpentine Cinema, off-site with partners but also uniquely within the Serpentine Gallery itself; the North Gallery was transformed into a cinema with tiered seating for the duration of the season.

Through a deep investigation of film, Raven explored the marginal space between frames and attempted to demystify the post-production special effects used by Hollywood. It was her first show in a public institution in the UK. The Zaha Hadid exhibition was more of a homecoming, with the architect and artist having great ties with the Serpentine, this was a n opportunity to explore the work from a pre-digital age at the very start of her career.

The following report provides an overview of Zaha Hadid the artist, the exhibition and touches upon the parallel exhibition and wider programme in context. Having the support of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq gave both academic value and financial assistance to the production and promotion of *Zaha Hadid: Early Paintings and Drawings*.

Artist Overview – Zaha Hadid

Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1950, Hadid studied mathematics at the American University of Beirut before moving to London in 1972 to attend the Architectural Association (AA) School where she was awarded the Diploma Prize in 1977. Hadid founded Zaha Hadid Architects in 1979 and completed her first building, the Vitra Fire Station, Germany in 1993.

She was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2004 and is internationally known for her built, theoretical and academic work. The MAXXI: Italian National Museum of 21st Century Arts in Rome, the London Aquatics Centre for the 2012 Olympic Games and the Heydar Aliyev Centre in Baku are built manifestos of Hadid's quest for complex, fluid space.

The Exhibition Zaha Hadid: Early Painting and Drawings

As part of the Winter Season, the Serpentine presented an exhibition of paintings and the rarely seen drawings of Zaha Hadid. The exhibition took place in the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, an extension completed in 2013 and one of Zaha Hadid Architects' first permanent buildings in central London.

Zaha Hadid is widely regarded as a pioneering and visionary architect whose contribution to the world of architecture was ground-breaking and innovative. The Serpentine presentation, first conceived with Hadid herself, revealed her as an artist with drawing at the very heart of her work and included the architect's calligraphic drawings and rarely seen private notebooks with sketches that revealed her complex thoughts about architectural forms and their relationships. The show focused on Hadid's early works before her first building was erected in 1993 (Vitra Fire Station in Germany) and presented her paintings and drawings from the 1970s to the early 1990s.

Drawing and painting were fundamental to Hadid's practice. Influenced by Malevich,

Tatlin and Rodchenko, she used calligraphic drawings as the main method for visualising her architectural ideas. For Hadid, painting was a design tool, and abstraction an investigative structure for imagining architecture and its relationship to the world we live in. These works on paper and canvas unravel an architecture that Hadid was determined to realise in built structures and is seen in the characteristic lightness and weightlessness of her buildings. Conceived as Hadid's manifesto of a utopian world, the show reveals her all-encompassing visions of arranging space and interpreting realities.

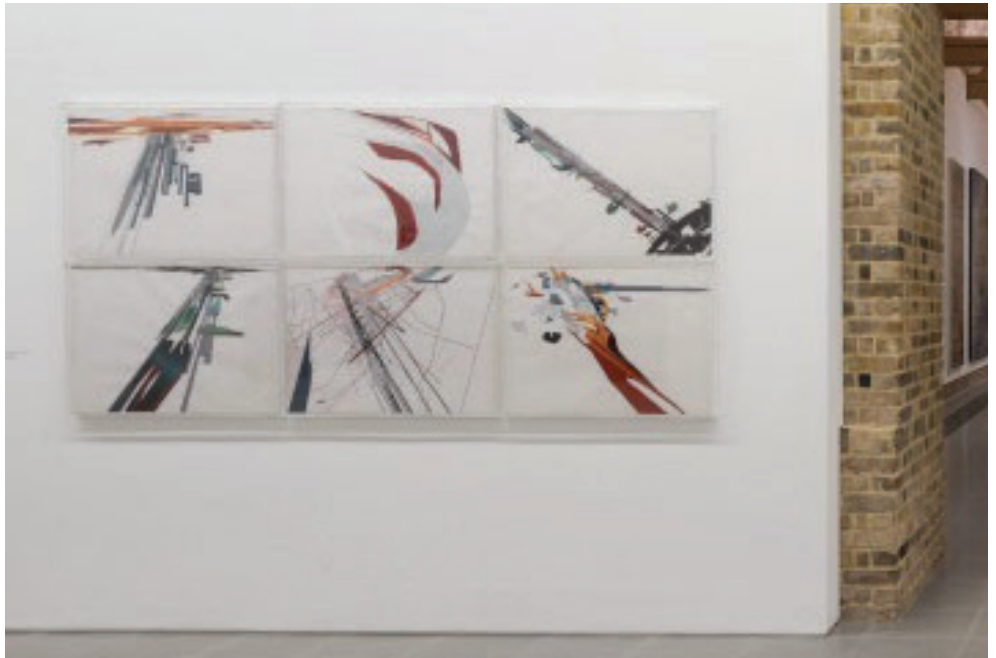
Many of Hadid's paintings pre-empt the potential of digital and virtual reality. Technology and innovation has always been central to the work of Zaha Hadid Architects: as Patrik Schumacher, Director, Zaha Hadid Architects said, "It was Zaha Hadid who went first and furthest in exploring this way of innovating in architecture -without, as well as with, the support of advanced software."

Virtual Reality Experiences

On the occasion of the exhibition *Zaha Hadid: Early Paintings and Drawings* a series of experimental virtual reality experiences were specially developed with Zaha Hadid Reality Group in partnership with Google Arts & Culture. The installations offered a dynamic and immersive insight into the workings of Hadid's paintings and was available to experience in the gallery throughout the exhibition.

There were four individual elements available in the virtual simulation of the Gallery environment, each developed from the paintings: Tatlin Tower and Tectronic “Worldwind”, 1992-93; *The Peak: Blue Slabs*, 1983; and *Leicester Square: Blue and Green Scrapers*, 1990.

This was the first time the Serpentine had a virtual reality experience in the Gallery and it was the first time Zaha Hadid Architects have created virtual reality within an exhibition context.



Zaha Hadid, *Early Paintings and Drawings*, Installation view. Serpentine Sackler Gallery (8 December 2016 – 12 February 2017). © Ian Gavan, Getty Images

FUTURE BISI LECTURES – SAVE THE DATES

Dr Lamia al-Galiani Werr

A Museum in Baghdad

Wednesday 22 November 2017, 6.00pm at the British Academy

The Story of the Iraq Museum in the First Half of the Twentieth Century.

Dr Franco D'Agostino and Dr Licia Romano

Italian Archaeological Mission at Abu Tbeirah in Southern Iraq.

Wednesday 14 February 2018, 6.00pm at the British Academy

Annual Mallowan Lecture

All of the above events are free of charge. BISI members will be notified as soon as bookings open.

Audio recordings of past BISI events can be listened to at:

<http://www.bisi.ac.uk/>



BISI GRANTS & PRIZES

BISI offers a range of annual grants to assist academic work and education on Iraq.

BISI OUTREACH GRANTS (normally up to £1,000 per grant)

BISI Outreach Grants support public engagement projects that promote a greater understanding of Iraq's history, society and culture. Past activities sponsored through the scheme have ranged from lectures and publications to arts projects. Applicants should normally be residents of the UK. Preference is given to activities taking place in the UK or Iraq.

Annual Deadline: 1 October.

BISI ACADEMIC GRANTS Research and Conference Grants (normally up to £4,000 per grant)

BISI provides funding to support Research and Conferences that concentrate principally on the lands and peoples of Iraq. We welcome applications from the full range of arts, humanities and social sciences subjects, and topics can cover any time period from prehistory to the medieval period to the present day.

Annual Deadline: 1 February.



BISI Research Grant-Holder Zahra Ali at Sahat al Tahrir, Baghdad in April 2016

Annual Pilot Project Grant (up to £8,000)

BISI's Pilot Project Grant scheme is designed to support a short period of preliminary research - up to one year - that has the potential to grow into a longer-term, larger-scale project supported by a Research Council or other large funding body. Only one project per year will be funded under this scheme. **Annual Deadline:** 1 February.

To be eligible for BISI Academic Grants, applicants should normally be employed by or have an official connection with a UK Higher Education Institution.

VISITING IRAQI SCHOLARSHIPS

BISI offers two to three Visiting Iraqi Scholarships each year to enable Iraqi scholars and cultural heritage professionals to engage in research, training and collaborative projects in the UK. We welcome applications from Iraq-based scholars involved in the following fields: anthropology, archaeology, history, geography, languages and other areas in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Applicants must be able to converse and understand English to a working level to ensure that visits are a success. **Annual Deadline:** 1 February.

BISI SUPPORTERS 2016

BISI is very grateful for donations, both large and small.
Here we would like to thank all those who donated to us in 2017.

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Volunteers 2017

The following have volunteered their time to help BISI this year, and we are sincerely grateful for their support:

Mirjam Brusius
Manar Habib
Agnes Henriksen
Eva Miller
Helene Maloigne
Fatime al-Badri

DONATION FORM

The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) is the UK's only institution dedicated to advancing research and public education on Iraq, with an exclusive focus on Iraq's cultural heritage.

At BISI, we know that the fate of Iraq's extraordinary cultural heritage cannot be separated from its current human tragedy. It is this heritage that we seek to preserve and rehabilitate, in a variety of ways, in order to shape Iraq's future.

But we can't do it alone.

With your support, we can continue the vital work of protecting and rehabilitating Iraq's history and heritage, in order to help rebuild its future. We can work towards a public understanding and celebration of Iraq, both within the country and internationally, which goes beyond the newspaper headlines to reach the thousands of real, human stories Iraq holds.

Any donation, no matter how small, makes a huge difference to the work we are able to do.

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If you would like to discuss your donation, please contact us
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