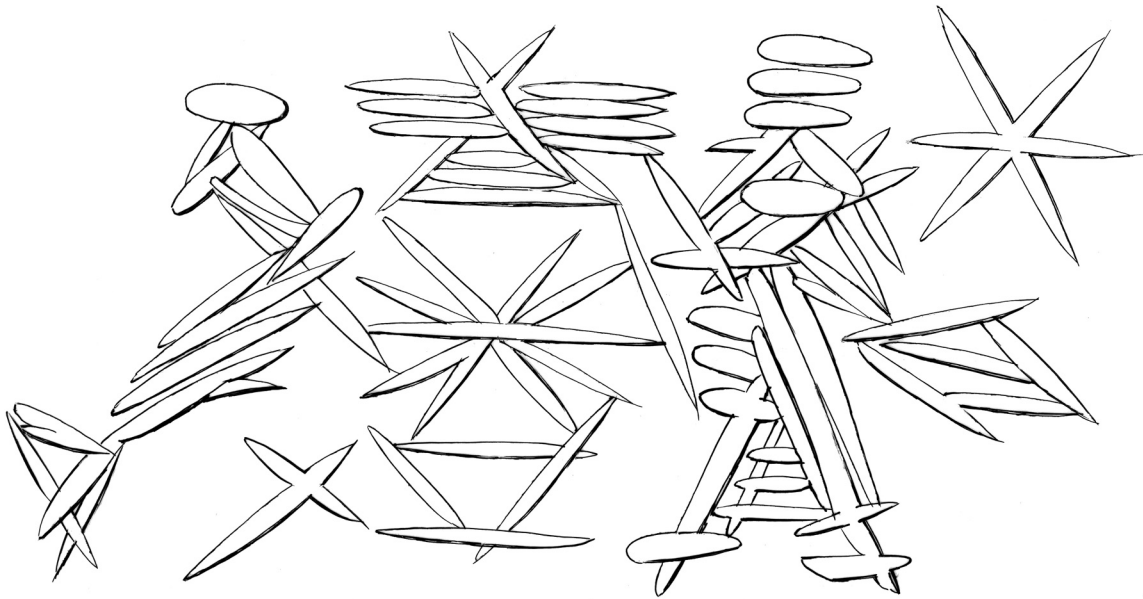


**BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
IN IRAQ**

**NEWSLETTER NO. 19**

**May 2007**



**BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ  
(GERTRUDE BELL MEMORIAL)**

**REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 219948**

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The next BSAI Newsletter will be published in November 2007 and brief contributions are welcomed on recent research, publications and events. All contributions should be sent to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, United Kingdom or via e-mail to: [bsai@britac.ac.uk](mailto:bsai@britac.ac.uk) or fax 44+(0)20 7969 5401 to arrive by October 15, 2007. Joan Porter MacIver edits the BSAI Newsletter.

**BSAI RESEARCH GRANTS**

The School considers applications for individual research and travel grants twice a year, in spring and autumn, and all applications must be received by 15<sup>th</sup> April or 15<sup>th</sup> October in any given year. The School's academic coverage includes archaeology, history, anthropology, geography, language and other related domains from the earliest times until the present. Awards will normally fall within a limit of £1,000, though more substantial awards may be made in exceptional cases.

Grantees will be required to provide a written report of their work, and abstracts from grantee's reports will be published in future issues of the BSAI Newsletter (published May & November). Grantees must provide a statement of accounts with supporting documents/receipts, as soon as possible and in any case within six months of the work for which the grant was awarded being completed.

Applicants must be residents of the UK or Commonwealth citizens and will be informed of the decision of Council concerning their grant application by early July and early January respectively. The BSAI Fieldwork & Research Committee can be contacted via the Secretary.

N.B. Individuals may not apply to the BSAI and the British Academy for the same research projects under current British Academy guidelines.

Application forms are available from the Secretary or on the BSAI Web-site: <http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/iraq/>  
Tel. + 44 (0) 20 7969 5274  
Fax. + 44 (0) 20 7969 5401  
**e-mail: [bsai@britac.ac.uk](mailto:bsai@britac.ac.uk)**

Cover Drawings: Late 7th Century BC seal impression from the BSAI Nimrud Excavations 1955-58. 'Winged disc flanked by a fish man, *apkalle*, on the left and a genius on the right'. Drawing by Tessa Rickards

This is my first newsletter editorial as Chairman of the BSAI. I am very honoured to have been elected to this role. At the time our last Newsletter went to print we had just heard the difficult funding news from the British Academy, under its new Learned Societies Programme, to the effect that our funding had been halved and would cease altogether after two years. Not surprisingly, this announcement caused alarm within the BSAI Council and its membership and the wider community at large (more on this below). There were other changes within the Council membership in December as our long serving Chairman, Dr Harriet Crawford, and Vice-Chairman, Professor Alan Millard, both stepped down along with Dr Augusta McMahon. The School and its membership owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Crawford for her hard work and dedication to the School over the past six years as our Chairman. She has left a substantive legacy in the recent British Academy publication of *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt – From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, which she edited. This book arises from the conference organised by the BSAI with the British Academy in 2004 of which Dr Crawford was the academic organiser. She is continuing to assist the School as Acting Chairman of the Appeal Committee. Professor Millard will continue his ties with the BSAI as he has plans for a BSAI study day in Liverpool in the next few years. Dr McMahon is currently in Syria as the Field Director of the Tell Brak excavations, which are sponsored by the BSAI. Due to our funding cuts we will be unable to continue to provide major funding for this project but hope to keep our close ties to these very important excavations, which are under the overall direction of Dr Joan Oates.

At the AGM, members elected Professor Nicholas Postgate FBA from the University of Cambridge, Dr Venetia Porter from the British Museum, and Professor Emilie Savage-Smith from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, to Council. These new trustees will provide a broader range of coverage including Islamic art and science, in addition to providing continuity in the BSAI's past strong remit of Mesopotamian studies (Professor Postgate was a former BSAI Chairman and Director in Baghdad). At our March Council meeting, Council members elected Dr Eleanor Robson to serve as our Vice-Chair, and I very much look forward to working with her.

With a new Council in place, we have established a working group to discuss the future of the BSAI. Council had already taken the decision to broaden the BSAI's remit and brief to encompass a wider range of disciplines and last year we determined that we should move into the modern era – something that was difficult to do under the former regime in Iraq. This all means that we need input from membership and scholars who concentrate on work in Iraq in the humanities and social sciences. This process takes some time, which is why we were disappointed to have our funding cut by the British Academy on the basis that we were 'predominantly narrower in geographical and disciplinary reach....[which] puts BSAI increasingly outwith the Academy's strategic funding objectives for institutes and societies'. The British Academy has

subsequently assured us that they will continue to support the BSAI's work, with facilities for the School's London base and we may apply to the Academy for support under specific funding schemes. In addition, the British Academy is supporting our approaches to other government departments for funding and I am appreciative of the support from Dr Robin Jackson and Baroness O'Neill in this regard. When the news was public, we received considerable support from our members and academics throughout the world. Professor Lord Colin Renfrew has played an invaluable role to the School in seeking help for the BSAI both within the Academy and in other areas of government. The International Association for Assyriology (IAA) has put together a statement of concern regarding our funding cut, which was signed by hundreds of academics, organised by its treasurer, Jeannette C. Fincke with the support of its president, Jack M Sasson, and secretary, Wilfred H. van Soldt. This situation may provide the BSAI with an opportunity to decide where it should be going forward. I welcome the input of members on this matter. We have been encouraged by the overwhelming support but our funding situation remains acute especially in future years and difficult decisions will be required.

On a more positive note it is wonderful that the *Languages of Iraq, Ancient and Modern* edited by Professor Postgate will be published in the near future. We have received a generous subvention from The Charlotte Bonham-Carter Trust, who also helped sponsor the original Study Day in 2003, along with the British Council IRAQ office.

We sponsored the visits of the former Chairman of the State Board of Heritage and Antiquities (SBAH), Dr Donny George, and the current Chairman, Dr Abbas Al Husseiny, to attend the Archaeology in Conflict Conference that took place at UCL last November under the auspices of the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology. This provided a unique opportunity for them to meet and to discuss the present problems and future prospects for archaeology in Iraq with each other and other conference attendees. The scope of the three-day conference also included case studies from Lebanon, Palestine and Afghanistan and led to an in-depth discussion with an aim to develop frameworks for archaeological site management in conflict and post-conflict states in the Middle East. Dr. Crawford was also able to describe in detail the work undertaken by the School to help its colleagues in Iraq. The BSAI was very pleased we could provide the opportunity for the SBAH Chairman to participate in this conference. We also set up visits with other scholars and useful contacts in the UK.

As this goes to press, we welcome Professor Khalid Salim Isma'el, Head of Department of Cuneiform Studies at the University of Mosul, who will be working with Professor Postgate in Cambridge. Arrangements will also be made for him to visit other academic contacts in the UK. He has been invited to be a Visiting Scholar at Wolfson College, Cambridge during his stay and we are grateful to the College and Dr Gordon Johnson for these arrangements. Mrs

Nadja Qaisi, administrator of the Council for the British Research in the Levant, has been extremely helpful in organizing all these visits, as all Iraqi visitors must obtain their UK visas in Amman and have been able to stay at CBRL – a form of collaboration amongst BASIS institutes that we are extremely grateful for. This time in particular there have been considerable difficulties in obtaining a UK visa for our Professor Khalid, who also had to obtain the new G Series Iraqi passport at considerable cost even before leaving for Amman. We trust we may be able to find a better solution for smoothing the visa situation for future visits. Dr Bill Finlayson, CBRL Director, has also been instrumental in assisting our scholar in Amman with this difficult and forbidding visa process as have other individuals. We can't thank the CBRL sufficiently for their help and wish our scholar all the best for his time in the UK. If you wish to contact him, please get in touch with the BSAI Secretary.

I was our last (or should I say 'most recent'?) Director in Baghdad and I am convinced that it is very important to ensure that the British School of Archaeology in Iraq continues to play a major role in promoting our understanding of Iraq's past, as well as fostering future work on its present and recent history. I look forward to working with you all in making this possible.

*Roger Matthews*

## **BSAI APPEAL**

Thanks to the generosity of the School's many friends our appeal has now reached £120,000 — a remarkable achievement in just over 18 months for such a small group of people! You have already heard about some of the people who have benefited: for example, the two scholars who came to study here last autumn have both now returned to Baghdad, where we hope that all is well with them in spite of the present appalling situation.

A decision was taken by the Appeal committee to widen the field of applicants for the scholarships to include scholars from outside Baghdad. We are therefore delighted that our next Fellow comes from the University of Mosul and will be arriving in May to study in Cambridge for two months. The archaeological chemist from Sulaymaniyah has, so far, been unable to get his new G series passport, but we hope to see him during the summer, and a third scholar from the University of Baghdad will be arriving in the autumn if all goes according to plan.

A most interesting and stimulating lecture was given on May 3<sup>rd</sup> by Dr Rosemary Hollis, Director of Research at Chatham House, in memory of Sir Stephen Egerton KCMG, which was attended by a large number of his friends both from the School and from the wider community. We were forced to house an overflow audience in the British Academy's Council room due to the popularity of the event and the speaker! We are extremely grateful to **ArmorGroup** for its sponsorship of this event and for its support of the BSAI

Appeal. We are also very grateful to Lady Egerton for having the retiring collection at Sir Stephen's memorial service at St Martin-in-the-Fields in December donated to the BSAI.

The Appeal committee also decided at its December meeting that it would be helpful to have some new members and a new chairman to give the appeal fresh momentum. In order to find the right people, who should ideally have excellent connections in the business and financial worlds as well as a real interest in Iraq, we need your help. Please do rack your brains and let me, <h.crawford@ucl.ac.uk> or our secretary <bsaiappeal@britac.ac.uk> know of any suggestions that you may have.

*Harriet Crawford, Acting Chairman of the Appeal*

A teaching website in the making

**Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire**

<http://cdl.museum.upenn.edu/hea/>

In the 7th century BCE Assyria was by far the most powerful empire of the Mediterranean and Middle East. Its territories stretched across modern-day Iraq into Iran, Turkey, right down the eastern Mediterranean coast, and often deep into Egypt. The ideology of empire centred on the symbiotic relationship between the king and the great god Ashur: military conquest was both an act of devotion and confirmation of Ashur's support.

But Assyrian kingship depended not solely on piety and military might: A retinue of scholarly advisors guided royal decision-making through the observation and analysis of omens and the performance of appropriate rituals. Some 1300 letters and reports to king Esarhaddon (680–669 bce) and his heir Assurbanipal (669–627 bce) show scholars advising the Assyrian royal family on matters ominous, astrological and medical, often with direct impact on political affairs. They give an extraordinary vivid insight into the actual practice of scholarship in the context of the first well-documented courtly patronage of scientific activity in world history.

This project brings together on a single website translations and transliterations of all those letters and reports, and materials from our undergraduate lectures and seminars at UCL and Cambridge, to support our own teaching and to provide resources for those who do not have access to specialist libraries. The website also includes extensive reference lists of technical terms, the names of people, gods, and places, and a long bibliography.

The translations and transliterations are those of the standard editions in the series "State Archives of Assyria":

- I. Starr, *Queries to the Sun-god: divination and politics in Sargonid Assyria* (State Archives of Assyria 4), Helsinki 1990;

- H. Hunger, *Astrological reports to Assyrian kings* (State Archives of Assyria 8), Helsinki 1992;
- S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian scholars* (State Archives of Assyria 10), Helsinki 1993.

The authors and copyright holders have kindly given their permission to make the material available online and the Helsinki Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project has generously provided us with the ASCII files used to produce the original volumes (two of which are now out of print). Steve Tinney, Director of the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary project, converted them to standards-based XML files and wrote the software that allows them to be viewed and searched online. The rest of the site was designed and implemented by Ruth Horry of the Whipple Museum of the History of Science at Cambridge. We are very grateful to the Higher Education Academy's Philosophy and Religious Studies subject centre and the University of Cambridge's Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities for their funding and encouragement. The website will be completed in June 2007.

*Karen Radner*  
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### **The Origins and Uses of Writing in the Near East**

On 26th January a BSAI day school was staged at the University of Birmingham on the theme of "The Origins and Uses of Writing in the Near East". Talks given by Roger Matthews, Marc van de Mierop, Alan Millard, Emilie Savage-Smith and Sarah Collins took us on a 5000 year journey from the very origins of writing, through its many different forms and uses among the cultures of the Near East region, right up to the present day and the issues raised by the current situation in Iraq. The day was rounded off with a series of practical activities, including an artefact handling session with Phil Watson of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, a performance by ZIPANG story-teller Fran Hazelton, and a cuneiform writing session guided by Alasdair Livingstone and Jon Taylor.

In connection with this event, the University of Birmingham's archivists constructed a new display of artefacts in their collections relating to writing (from tablets to illustrated manuscripts). This display remains on show in the university library. The event was very well attended, attracting twice as many people as expected. The organisers received many expressions of appreciation from the audience, and it is hoped that another event will be staged in Birmingham in the near future.

*Jon Taylor*

## **The Frontiers of the Ottoman World:**

### ***Fortifications, trade, pilgrimage and slavery***

An international workshop held at the British Academy -15 & 16 February 2007

#### *Abstract*

The Frontiers of the Ottoman World workshop was supported by the British Academy and organised by the British Institute at Ankara, the British Institute in Eastern Africa, the British School at Athens, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, the Council for British Research in the Levant, the Egypt Exploration Society and the Society for Libyan Studies. It was administered by the British Institute at Ankara.

Recent or ongoing research supported by the British Academy-sponsored schools and institutes has focused on Ottoman frontiers and their fortifications in different parts of the empire and its successor states from the Ukraine to the Sudan. However, hitherto there has been no attempt to consider how the research findings of individual schools and institutes relate to one another. Furthermore, archaeological work has only rarely been related to textual evidence and to the more general historical context.

The workshop brought together archaeologists, historians and specialists in archival research to assess the nature of the Ottoman Empire's frontiers, with special reference to the roles of fortifications, trade (especially the slave trade) and pilgrimage routes in frontier society. It also examined how garrisons as representatives of the Ottoman state interacted with the local population, and the nature of their relationship with the government in Istanbul, giving an insight into the dynamics of Ottoman power on a local level and the effectiveness of its governance. The workshop was organised by the following panels: frontier fortifications; slavery and the slave trade on the Ottoman frontier; the maritime frontier; sources and archives; the administration of the frontier; garrisons and frontier warfare; rulers and ruled; resistance and revolt.

As well as assessing the current state of research, the workshop aimed to lay the foundations for a larger, longer-term research initiative that can explore such issues in greater depth. Such an initiative is currently being developed with the intention that research will be focused on the comparison of a number of sites at a range of points along the frontier, and based on the inter-disciplinary methodology employed at Akkerman in the Ukraine. The research will have contemporary relevance focused on the legacy of the frontier and its significance for the modern world.

A total of 33 papers were presented by scholars from Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Israel, Sudan, Turkey, UK, Ukraine and USA. UK-based scholars came from the universities of Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, Hull, Leicester, Lampeter, London, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sheffield, UCL, Ulster, York. Including speakers, a total of 92 individuals attended the workshop.



### *Publication and dissemination*

The British Academy has agreed to publish the proceedings of the workshop. The selection of articles is currently being overseen by the Editor, Dr Andrew Peacock, and publication is expected in 2008. A workshop website was set-up in summer 2006 at <http://www.biaa.ac.uk/workshop.html> and remains active. A booklet of abstracts was produced for the workshop and the abstracts remain available via the workshop website.

*Andrew Peacock*

## **BSAI GRANT REPORTS**

### **Chemical Study of Clays and Pottery from Northern Oman**

This study set out to examine the provenance of pottery collected by the Al Hajar Project in the Bisya-Bahla-Al Hamra area in the interior foothills of the Jebel Akhdar, Oman. The potsherds were mainly 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium, but also included some 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium and late Islamic sherds for comparison.

A geochemical approach was used, in which the major and trace elements of sherds, and potential clay sources from which they may have been derived, were analyzed and compared. In order to determine all of the potential clay precursors to this pottery, a comprehensive geological and geochemical review of the clays found in Northern Oman was undertaken. The environment of the Oman Mountains is geologically complex, and includes modern (unlithified) aeolian-fluvial sediments, Eocene limestone and marl complexes, Permo-Cretaceous marine carbonates, deep-ocean sediments, volcanic and mantle rocks. Each of these weathers to produce its own distinctive clay products. In addition to these source areas, two clays used in the modern pottery industry were also sampled. The chemical and physical properties of all of these clays are described in detail in the first paper of this study, which is currently being edited. Altogether 18 different clay types were sampled, as being representative of all the pottery source options available in Northern Oman. After preliminary analysis four of these were discarded as being either essential duplicates or of being impossible sources for ceramic manufacture. The chemical parameters of the remaining 14 clays comprised: SiO<sub>2</sub>, Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, MnO, MgO, CaO, Na<sub>2</sub>O, K<sub>2</sub>O, TiO<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, SO<sub>3</sub>, LOI, Sr, Zn, Cu, Ni and Cr.

Of the 25 sherds collected, 11 were selected as being typical. These were processed to remove any ornament or other surface features which could have given rise to chemical anomalies. Each sample was powdered, homogenized and fused for analysis by X-ray fluorescence.

This multi-parameter comparison of clay and sherd chemistry was not expected to provide a perfect match because there is a natural geochemical variation, even between superficially uniform clay deposits, and because the firing process tends to deplete the pottery in volatile or 'fugitive' elements. Nevertheless, there were sufficient refractory and immobile elements in the analysis to provide a

sound basis for similarity or distinctive difference between clays and sherds to be established.

The methodology used was a 'normalization procedure' in which each clay bin turn was used as a reference, with each of the sherd chemistries being plotted as a ratio of sherd to clay reference. In this way a range of histograms was prepared to facilitate visual comparison. Flat histograms with ratios of close to 1.00 indicated close similarity of sherd to clay, whilst a jagged histogram indicated elemental enrichment or depletion of the sherd relative to the clay. The latter indicated that the sherd was not chemically related to the clay.

Several conclusions were deduced from these histograms. Most importantly, there was a close match between sherds and the widespread aeolian-fluvial clays in the low-lying recent sedimentary basins. That is, ancient pottery was made from clays that were close to hand and easily extractable, despite better quality ceramic clays being available from more localized sources in the mountains. There was no evidence of experimentation with the many other available clays of different origin, but as the statistical sample was small, the small-scale use of other clays cannot be ruled out.

From this study's perspective the advantage of using aeolian-fluvial clay is that it is a reasonably homogeneous and therefore easily recognized source, having an average composition of weathered products of the Oman mountain lithologies. Consequently, sherds prepared from this source should reflect the unusual geochemistry of the mountains, such as low  $\text{TiO}_2$  and high Ni and Cr.

From the potter's perspective, the disadvantage of this source is the 'polluting' admixture of co-deposited carbonate dust, which needs to be separated from the clay either by acidification or by differential settlement from a thin slurry. Phosphate concentrations in the sherds were nearly all greater than in the clays, which could be explained either by animal urine to flocculate the clays during clay-carbonate separation, or by the addition of crushed bone as a clay filler. Copper was also invariably more concentrated in the sherds than in the clays, which is suggestive of copper tools being used either to crush the dry clay, or to excavate it.

One sherd was anomalously high in  $\text{TiO}_2$ , whilst three sherds were anomalously low in Cr. These are difficult to explain in terms of local clay origin, and are therefore suggestive of a provenance beyond the Oman mountain area. A more detailed discussion of the sherd chemistry is given in the second paper, also in the editing stage of preparation.

The overall picture is that of an unsophisticated pottery industry, conservative in its processes, and apparently not curious about alternative sources of clay. Essentially the same clay sources were used in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennium sherds, and indeed, this is not much different from most of the clays used in the modern pottery industry. The reddish brown to almost black ornamental work found on some sherds is an impure manganese oxide of the kind that is found locally, in small quantities, in the deep ocean sediments which form much of the foothills south of the Oman mountains.

More detailed work is required to determine whether the sherds with anomalous compositions are indeed a chemically distinctive subset, of distant origin. In this respect, a detailed chemical analysis of sherds from around the region is in preparation. These samples will include 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> millennium sherds from Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Afghanistan, other sites in Oman, and other areas as availability dictates. It is hoped that this will be reported upon in a third paper, in due course.

*Gordon Stanger  
Adelaide, Australia*

### **The *Shifting Boundaries* conference held in Amman, 2 - 3 February 2007**

Organised by the *Council for British Research in the Levant* and the *Royal Institute of Inter-Faith Studies*, the conference was held at the headquarters of *CBRL*.

The aim was to explore the impact of the construction of the East/West dichotomy on research around the Mediterranean, also to document and understand more complex relationships and cultural realities between the political geographies in the region. The regional and chronological breadth of the conference challenged many perceptions and pointed to the recurrence of common motifs down the centuries. Above all, it demonstrated the importance of understanding the past for interpreting the future.

Some fifteen scholars presented papers that spanned some three and a half thousand years, from the Late Bronze Age to the present. After the opening by Bill Finlayson (Director of *CBRL*, Amman), the morning session consisted of scholarly papers. Steven Snape, “Different people, different paradigm? Egypt and beyond in the Late Bronze Age” investigated the regional interaction between Egypt and south-west Asia in the second millennium BCE. The focus shifted to Greek settlement in the Levant with Tamar Hodos, “A Phoenician past and present”. Likewise, Phoroze Vasunia, “Hellenism, Orientalism, Imperialism” addressed Greek representations of Egypt, before moving on to query how modern discussions of Hellenism are still shaped by ancient configurations. Mark Whittow, “Pirenne, Muhammed and Bohemond: before Orientalism” tackled the impact of Islam and the Crusades on the creation of European identities.

Papers in the afternoon session included Andrew Peacock, “Cultural identity and assimilation in a Christian-Muslim frontier society: the case of medieval Islam's Caucasian marchlands”, which focussed on Georgia, showing the complexity of Christian-Muslim relations. Muslim-Christian relations were the topic of Erica Hunter, “Inter-faith dialogues in the Abbassid period”, which discussed the two-day debate between the Caliph al-Mahdi and Timothy I, Patriarch of the Church of the East. John Bintliff, “The Ottomans in Greece – an archaeological

perspective” employed the Ottoman Imperial archives and archaeological evidence to re-appraise the imprint of the Ottoman era. Bringing us into the modern era of tourist perceptions of the Middle East was the evening keynote lecture by Mike Robinson, “Tourism and Inter-cultural Dialogue: Translation, Transformation and Spaces of Belonging”.

On the second day, we returned to the Ottoman period when Ben Fortna, “The notion of 'divide' between East and West in the late Ottoman context” critically evaluated late Ottoman society concluding that it was able to assimilate political, social and cultural influences to a much greater degree than has been accredited. After the paper by Martina Rieker, “Geographic Inscriptions”, which concentrated on the urban neighbourhoods of modern Cairo, we were treated to a talk by HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal who addressed the wider issues of shifting boundaries, religious tolerance and the prospects facing the Middle East. It was a great privilege to hear his thoughts and be able to enter into discussion with him on a variety of topics. Many of these became the subject of lively discussion in the afternoon and closing session.

My sincere gratitude is extended to the *BSAI* without whose assistance I would have been unable to attend this very stimulating event. Many thanks are due to both *CBRL* and the *Royal Inter-faith Alliance of Jordan* for all their hospitality which included a visit one evening to the impressive headquarters of the *American Oriental Institute* in Amman where we were graciously entertained by its new Director, Barbara Porter. An excursion on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February took us to Jerash and to Pella where the Australian team were digging. After an unpromising start in the morning (heavy rain), in the afternoon we were able to view the site in sunshine.

*Erica C.D. Hunter*

### ***Christianity in Iraq IV Seminar Day, 5 May, 2007, Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London***

The historical and archaeological contexts of monasticism in Iraq was explored as well as the current situation at the IV Christianity in Iraq Seminar Day held under the aegis of the Department for the Study of Religions at SOAS.

Prof. Paul Gifford opened the day on behalf of the Department for the Study of Religions. Mrs. Joan Porter MacIver, Secretary of the *British School of Archaeology in Iraq*, addressed its interests in Iraq, which span both the historic and modern, as well as drawing attention to the programme of bringing Iraqi scholars to England for training and the current fund-raising campaign. Rev. William Taylor, Chairman of the *Anglican and Eastern Churches Association*, outlined the society’s involvement with Eastern Christian churches represented in Iraq.

The morning session of papers commenced with a paper by Dr. Sebastian Brock (University of Oxford), 'The monastic heritage of Iraq', that focused on the monastic contribution to the dissemination of knowledge from the sixth century. The rivalry between the Syrian Orthodox and the Church of the East monastic institutions was the subject of the talk by Dr. Florence Jullien (College de France, Paris), 'The 'Great Monastery at Mt. Izla and the defence of the East Syrian identity'. Moving into Central Asia, Dr. Alexei Savchenko (The Sogdian Archaeological Expedition, Kiev) gave an illustrated lecture about his excavations in a paper entitled 'The Church of the East monastery at Urgut (Uzbekistan): in the footsteps of Iraqi monks and travellers'. The final paper was by Prof. Herman Teule (University of Nijmegen), 'West-Syrian Monastic life in Iraq in the period of the Syriac Renaissance (12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries)', which focused on the Gregory bar 'Ebroyo's usage of Al-Ghazzali in his works on monastic life, 'Ethikon' and 'The Book of the Dove'.

The afternoon session commenced with the launch of the Centre of Eastern and Orthodox Christianity that will be based in the Department for the Study of Religions at SOAS. The centre, which uniquely focuses both on the churches adhering to the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon (451) and on those which have remained without, aims to promote research as well as providing an in-house base for lectures and other events open to the public. Sir Harold Walker took the chair for the session on the current situation of the Christian communities in Iraq. Dr. Hunter read a statement from His Grace Luis Sako, the Chaldaean Archbishop of Kirkuk, which told of the critical conditions facing Christians in Iraq, and particularly Baghdad where Islamic fundamentalism is rife, leading to the wholesale expulsion of communities on the pain of death. His Grace's concerns were reiterated in person by Saidna Toma Daoud, Syrian Orthodox Bishop of the UK and Ireland and in a paper prepared by Rev. Habib Naufali from the Chaldaean Church, who was unable to attend due to parish engagements. Much valuable information was imparted about their communities who, having traditionally enjoyed cordial relations with the Muslims in Iraq, have now entered a very critical stage. This was reiterated by Dr. Laila al-Roomi, who spoke on behalf of the Mandaean community: current numbers have plummeted from an estimated 50,000 to between 3,000 and 5,000 persons.

On a more optimistic note, Dr. Suha Rassam and Dr. Erica Hunter gave 'An illustrated talk on the Syrian Catholic monastery of Mar Behnam, near Mosul' which is still functioning, albeit under reduced circumstances. Sir Harold Walker, the last representative of the British government in Baghdad before the 1990 Gulf War, concluded the day. The interest generated by the Seminar Day, which was attended by approximately ninety people, including many Iraqis as well as representatives of the Foreign Office and media professionals, was most gratifying.

The grants by *The British School of Archaeology in Iraq* and *The Anglican and Eastern Churches Association* have helped considerably to defray the

considerable costs involved in organizing this day and made its success possible. The annual Christianity in Iraq Seminar Day is now well established and the 2008 event, the fifth in the series, is planned for 27 April 2008.

Erica C.D. Hunter  
*Teaching Fellow in Eastern Christianity*  
Dept. for the Study of Religion, SOAS

## **FORTHCOMING BSAI PUBLICATION**

### ***Languages of Iraq, ancient and modern***

For all five thousand years of its history Iraq has been home to a mixture of languages, spoken and written, and the same is true today. In November 2003, to celebrate the country's rich diversity and long history as a centre of civilization the British School presented a series of talks by experts on each of the major languages of Iraq and their history, and this illustrated volume brings these now to a wider public.

Iraq's languages come from different linguistic families - Semitic, Indo-European, and agglutinative languages like Sumerian, Hurrian and Turkish. Some, although long dead, have a prime place in the history of the Old World: Sumerian, probably the first language to be written and the vehicle of cuneiform scholarship for more than two millennia, and Akkadian, the language of Hammurapi and the Epic of Gilgamesh, and used across the Near East for administration and diplomacy. The history of Aramaic is even longer, stretching back to overlap with Akkadian before 1000 BC. It survives, precariously, in both written and spoken forms, being one of four languages spoken in Iraq today. Of these Arabic as a major world language has often been described, but here we have an account of the vernacular Iraqi Arabic dialects, and the descriptions of Iraqi Kurdish and Turkman are unique, detailed and authoritative.

Contents: Nicholas Postgate (Editor), *Introduction*; Jeremy Black(†), *Sumerian*; Andrew George, *Babylonian and Assyrian: A history of Akkadian*; David Hawkins, *Hurrian*; Alan Millard, *Early Aramaic*; Geoffrey Khan, *Aramaic in the medieval and modern periods*; Eleanor Coghill, *Fieldwork in Neo-Aramaic*; Clive Holes, *Colloquial Iraqi Arabic*; Christine Allison, *Kurdish in Iraq*; Christiane Bulut, *Iraqi Turkman*.

Pp. viii, 187. 32 maps and illustrations.

ISBN 978-0-903472-21-0 (Price £15)

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## NEW BRITISH ACADEMY PUBLICATION

### *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt – From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein* Harriet Crawford (Editor)

(Proceedings of the British Academy No. 126)

The manner in which government practices and personnel survive the violent disruption of regime change is an issue of current relevance, yet is a subject which has rarely been ignored by modern scholarship. These essays, covering more than four thousand years of history, discuss the continuity of administration and royal iconography in successful changes of regime in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Iran. Recurring patterns are identified in ten case studies, ranging from third millennium Mesopotamia to early Islamic Egypt. A summary of the recent history of Iraq suggests that these regularities have lessons for the modern geopolitics of today. This volume arises from a conference jointly sponsored by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq and the British Academy.

248 pages, 30 figures, OUP/British Academy, ISBN-13: 978-0-19-726390-7

Special **40% launch discount** (£21 instead of £35) when ordering directly via OUP with a flyer available on the BSAI website under publications – offer available until 30 June 2007.

## DONATIONS TO THE BSAI LIBRARY

- *When Writing Met Art – From Symbol to Story*, by Denise Schmandt-Besserat – University of Texas Press, Austin. ISBN-13: 978-0-292-71334-5 [www.utexaspress.com](http://www.utexaspress.com) (tel. USA 800 252 3206)
- *Altbabylonische Zeichenliste der sumerisch-literarischen Texte*, by Catherine Mittermayer (unter Mitarbeit von Pascal Attinger) Academic Press Fribourg and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Sonderband). ISBN-13: 978-3-7278-1551-5
- *A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East- The Veil in the Looking Glass* by Ann Chamberlain, The Haworth Press Inc. ISBN-13: 978-0-7890-2984-3 [www.HaworthPress.com](http://www.HaworthPress.com)

The BSAI does not include book reviews in its Journal *IRAQ*. We are pleased to accept donations of books for our library collection. A mention of the donation will be noted in our newsletter.

## BOOKS TO IRAQ

A shipment of books to Iraq will be sent off shortly. The cost of the shipment has been sponsored in part by the AEGIS Foundation. We wish to thank members who have donated books from their libraries. Penny Butler and John MacGinnis have recently provided books in addition to the boxes of books assembled by Ben Morris, a student at the University of Cambridge, in 2006.

## **WEB NOTICE**

The 217th meetings of the American Oriental Society took place in wonderful San Antonio (with the magical River Walk) from March 16-19, 2007. Gonzalo Rubio, Shawkat Toorawa, and Joel Brereton were among those who helped shaped the program nicely. A resolution was passed on safeguarding archaeological sites in Iraq:

### **RESOLUTION ON PROTECTING LOOTING**

This year's special panel "Where Have all the Tablets Gone" was organized by Robert Englund and included panelists Jerrold Cooper, Steven Garfinkle and Micah Garen. Among the news that was generated by the presentation was the information that a relatively modest outlay of funds (about 5 million) could help protect the more aggressively looted sites (Umma among them). After some discussion and debate a resolution was formulated that was presented at the business meeting to the membership. The resolution was one vote shy of unanimous passage. It will be posted as a petition on the AOS website where it will accept signatories.

"Whereas the looting of ancient sites in Iraq continues in our day with little sign of abatement, leading to incalculable loss of historical and cultural knowledge;  
And Whereas diverse archaeological and journalistic organizations have already compiled a register of such affected sites;

And Whereas responsible opinion and evaluation, based on established precedence, have suggested that a relatively modest numbers of guards can discourage if not stop looting at the most distressed archaeological sites in Iraq;

And Whereas the funding of cohorts of guards at Iraqi archaeological sites requires, in present dollars, a relatively modest sum of money;

Therefore, be it Resolved that the American Oriental Society, in meeting assembled at San Antonio, Texas, on March 18th, 2007, calls on and urges the Congress of the United States of America to legislate with dispatch a program to fund the systematic safeguarding of distressed sites until such time as the proper Iraqi authorities are ready to bring such a program under its own control."

This resolution will be posted at the AOS website. All those agreeing with it are invited to communicate its sentiments to their senators and congressional representatives.

<http://www.umich.edu/~aos/lootingres2007.html>



## **BSAI LECTURES & FUTURE EVENTS**

**3 May 2007** – BSAI Lecture by **Dr Rosemary Hollis**, Director of Research at Chatham House, "**Europe and the Middle East: Repercussions from the Iraq War**" in memory of **Sir Stephen Egerton KCMG (1932-2006)** sponsored by the **ArmorGroup** at the British Academy.

**5 May 2007** – **CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ IV - A seminar day on the monastic heritage of Iraq** sponsored by Dept for the Study of Religions, SOAS, University of London in conjunction with BSAI & The Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, to be held at The Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental and African Studies. Organiser: Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter <http://www.easternchristianity.com/>

**14 June 2007** – 5.30 p.m. BSAI Bonham Carter Forum and Lecture "**Music of an ancient land - The art music of Iraq: Performance spaces in the 20th century Baghdad**" by **Scheherazade Hassan** at The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1.

**12 December 2007** – **BSAI AGM** and Lecture by Professor Roger Matthews to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BSAI (venue and title tbc).

### **2008 EVENTS**

**Saturday 2 February 2008** – **The Sumerians: Iraq's First Civilization**  
Sumer was the birthplace of the world's first cities and earliest writing. Archaeology and cuneiform inscriptions reveal sophisticated cities such as Uruk and Ur in the period 3500-2000 BC. In Ur's Royal Cemetery retinues of over 60 attendants and rich grave goods attest to elaborate funerary practices. This joint Birkbeck and British School of Archaeology in Iraq study day is the third in the Mesopotamia series. Organised and chaired by Dr Frances Reynolds, University of Oxford. Speakers to be announced.

Enrolment opens at Birkbeck in July 2007. Places are limited so early enrolment is recommended. Enquires about these courses are welcome. Please contact the Archaeology Desk on: FCE Archaeology, Birkbeck College, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ; tel: 020 7631 6627; e-mail: [archaeology@fce.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:archaeology@fce.bbk.ac.uk). To order your FCE prospectus which will confirm times, fees, venues and details about how to enrol, please ring 0845 601 0174 or email [info@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:info@bbk.ac.uk). Please make sure you ask for a FCE pre-degree/short course prospectus for 2007/8.

**6 March 2008** – BSAI Lecture by Dr Charles Tripp (title tbc).

**18-19 April 2008** – "**What has the Middle East done for us?**" A two-day conference at SOAS, London, Organised by BRISMES in collaboration with BSAI and other learned societies. More details will be circulated soon.

# **BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ**

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## BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ

### MEMBERSHIP

Associate Membership: £10 per annum  
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Members receive the Journal *IRAQ*, the Annual Report and Accounts, two Newsletters per annum and are entitled to a 20% discount on all School publications. All publications other than the Journal *IRAQ* are available through OXBOW Books ([www.oxbowbooks.com](http://www.oxbowbooks.com)). Members receive invitations to at least three lectures a year, held in London. Associate members are entitled to all the same benefits, except receipt of the Journal *IRAQ* and the right to vote at the AGM.

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