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CONTENTS PAGE

Professor Eleanor Robson, *Chair of Council's Introduction* pp. 3-4

Academic Grant Reports

Dr Jane Moon, *Excavations at Tell Khaiber, Thi Qar Province, 2013* pp. 5-7

Dr Mariam Rosser-Owen and Dr Rosalind Wade Haddon,
V&A Samarra Finds Project pp. 8-9

Zoe Holman, *Diaspora Contributions to Democratisation and Social-political
Development* pp. 10-11

Nussaibah Younis, *To What Extent have Conditions of State Weakness Shaped Iraqi
Foreign Policy 2003-2012?* p.12

Flavia Ravaioli, *Sustainable Materials for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage:
Researching Appropriate Conservation Methods in Iraqi Kurdistan* pp. 13-14

Outreach Grant Reports

Dina Mousawi, *RETURN* p. 15

Miles Lester-Pearson, *The Annual Meeting of Post-graduates in Ancient Literature
Conference 2013, St. Andrews University* pp. 16-17

Visiting Iraqi Scholars Programme 2014 pp.18-19

Other

BISI Lectures 2013 – 2014 p. 20

BISI Grant Notices and Deadlines p. 21

BISI Supporters 2014 p. 22

BISI Development Plans and Donation Form pp. 23 - 26

BISI Team p. 27

CHAIR OF COUNCIL'S INTRODUCTION

This past summer has been a terrible time for Iraq. As I write, at the very end of July, Mosul and its surroundings have been under IS(IS) occupation for some six weeks. The consequences for the people of the region, and their religious and cultural heritage, have been dire in the extreme. Many of us feel helpless in the face of such ruthless destruction, but BISI has been doing what little it can to support our Iraqi colleagues at this time:

- Many of BISI's former Visiting Iraqi Scholars are from Mosul or Qaraqosh. Lamia Al-Gailani has been in regular touch with them, despite the difficulties of phone and email communication, to exchange news and convey our support. There has been a lot of unhelpful rumour and misinformation about the extent of the damage to mosques, shrines and churches so direct, expert testimony from our colleagues has been very helpful.
- BISI has awarded an emergency grant to help to protect the archaeological site of Nimrud, south of Mosul. Nimrud was our predecessor BSAI's flagship fieldwork project from 1948 to 1962 and publication work is still ongoing.
- As Chair of BISI's Council, I have continued to work with the UK Committee of the Blue Shield to lobby the UK Government to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Event of Armed Conflict. There is the will on all political sides for this, and strong support from the armed forces, but somehow there is never enough parliamentary time to introduce a Bill. Do write to your MP and add your voice to the clamour!
- As soon as possible after the invasion BISI Council members reviewed our current and planned in-country activities. I am happy to report that none of our projects in Iraq needs to be curtailed at this time, though we keep all of them under regular, thorough risk review.

In particular, I am delighted to report that plans to run a museology training course in Karbala are progressing well. If all goes to schedule, Dr Alaa Dheyauldeen, Director of the Museum of the Holy Shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, will host a small team from the Victoria and Albert Museum in early 2015 who will offer training to museum staff from all over Iraq. This is, we hope, the first step in a long-term collaboration between BISI, the Iraqi shrines, and international experts in Shia material culture. Read more about Dr Dheyauldeen's most recent visit on page 18.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter, you can read about some of the other projects we have funded in recent years through our academic and outreach grant schemes. We hope that you enjoy reading the selection of grant holder reports presented here. Although the Newsletter is now only produced annually, in the meantime you can find full coverage of the research and educational activities supported by BISI on the Projects pages of www.bisi.ac.uk. Don't forget you can also follow BISI on Facebook and Twitter for all the latest news, thanks to our energetic Social Media Assistant Jen Hicks.

The AGM in February saw the election of three new Council members, all of whom are renewing their association with the Institute in different ways. I am particularly delighted to welcome Dr Ellen McAdam, now Director of Birmingham Museums and Galleries but formerly a most valuable member of various archaeological projects in Iraq, supported by BSAI in the 1980s. Joan Porter MacIver and Professor Emilie Savage-Smith have not been away from us for quite so long but it is a delight to have their expertise, commitment and energy back on Council. We say a regretful farewell to Dr Teresa Bernheimer and Professor Hugh Kennedy, wishing them both well in future endeavours. Dr Adam Stone has also resigned from Council on his appointment as our new Development Co-ordinator. Find out how you can support him in our development work on pages 23-26.

It has been all change on the vice-presidential front too. I am thrilled that H.E. Faik Nerweyi, Iraq's first ambassador to the UK for several years, has become our first Iraqi Honorary Vice President. He has already made it much, much easier for BISI-sponsored researchers to travel to Iraq. I say an equally heartfelt thank you to Ambassador Simon Collis as he steps down from his post as UK Ambassador to Iraq (and thus from our vice-presidency) and wish him a more tranquil subsequent posting. He has been of great practical help to BISI and BISI-sponsored projects in Baghdad. Simon's successor in the Baghdad embassy, Frank Baker, has kindly accepted to succeed him too at BISI. Lauren Mulvee and I met with him recently to wish him a warm welcome to the Institute.

So despite the very real difficulties that Iraq is facing at the moment, I feel that BISI is in a very good position to offer the support that Iraqi cultural heritage professionals need at this time of crisis, and to continue our regular programmes of research, publication and education. Thank you for your continued involvement in our work.

Eleanor Robson, Chair of Council

ACADEMIC GRANT REPORTS

Excavations at Tell Khaiber, Thi Qar Province, 2013

The Ur Region Archaeology Project undertook a preliminary season of excavation at Tell Khaiber in spring 2013. The two mounds at this site were chosen for a combination of pragmatic and research reasons, the current situation in Iraq being such that international archaeological teams can only work in certain areas, and one of these is the region around Ur itself. As this region was so important in antiquity and has been so little investigated in recent decades, it was not a hard choice. The team consisted of six British archaeologists and four from the State Board for Antiquities and Heritage. Eleanor Robson was able to join us for a brief visit. Founder donors, whose generosity made the venture possible, were Baron Lorne Thyssen-Bornemisza at the Augustus Foundation, BISI, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, and Gulfsands Petroleum.¹

This area was the focus of a field survey by Henry Wright in 1965,² which included the south mound (Khaiber 1),³ showing occupation of early third millennium date, with some pottery from the early second millennium too. It has also formed part of more recent and broader studies by Abdul Amir Hamdani and by Elizabeth Stone of Stony Brook, making extensive use of the satellite images now available for southern Iraq – something unthinkable under the previous regime. Images kindly provided by Hamdani showed the presence of large buildings on both

mounds, which were visited by the authors in 2012, supported by a travel grant from BISI. The mounds lie 20km NW of the Ur ziggurat, about 1km apart. Initial inspection confirmed Wright's dating of Tell Khaiber 1, while the date of Khaiber 2 remained more enigmatic – there is very little pottery on it. In 2013 the Ur Region Archaeology Project was granted a permit by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to investigate both sites, initially for a period of five years.

The goal of the first season was to undertake a preliminary assessment of Khaiber 1 which would then inform our future strategy. To this end, the mound was contour mapped and a programme of geophysical prospection completed using a fluxgate gradiometer. A second objective was to test our digital recording systems, from on-site recording straight to computer through to the compilation of a site Geographical Information System, which, when migrated to the web, will enable the swift online dissemination of results.

The excavation objective was to locate the main building visible on the satellite photograph on the ground, to establish its date and to gain some idea of the state of preservation. As shown on the image, it appears to measure some 50 x 80m, with its longest side aligned SW to NE. In the southern half, rows of rooms running round three sides are visible.

The southern wall of the building showed up particularly clearly. We were able to locate this wall by surface scraping along a strip that

¹A full list of team and supporters can be found on our website, www.urarchaeology.org

²Wright, H. T., *apud* Adams, R. McC., 1981, *Heartland of Cities*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

³Wright refers to the south mound as Ishan Khaiber. Some local people call this one Tell Malzoom, and the north mound Tell Khaiber. To avoid confusion, we are using 'Tell Khaiber 1' for the south mound, 'Tell Khaiber 2' for the north one.

bisected its line. It is over three metres wide, built of densely packed mud bricks. It was traced for a distance of 30m, from the southern corner towards the western. Cross walls belonging to rooms were found on both sides so, although this is clearly the main wall of the building, it does not represent its outer limits. Limited excavation here uncovered elements of three rooms.

Forty metres to the NE, we could see on the surface a differentiation in colour that we thought indicated an even larger wall belonging to the same building. However, this turned out to be a plaster floor lying just below the modern mound surface. The limits of the associated room have yet to be defined, but it appears to belong to the same large building. The room is over 3m wide, with an alcove on one side, and is at least 13m long. The floor treatment as well as the size suggests it was an important room, its function still to be determined. Parts of three adjacent rooms, two with well-laid brick pavements, were also found.

Although there is plentiful pottery of the early third millennium, it has so far only been found mixed in with later deposits, even in a small sounding that went down to the water-table 2.5m below the modern surface. Occupation of this date will therefore remain inaccessible, at least on this part of the mound. Sporadic sherds of painted pottery of Ubaid date indicate even earlier prehistoric deposits at the site. The final period of occupation dates to the first part of the second millennium. Finds from within the building itself include, in post-building deposits, fragments of Old Babylonian tablets. These provide a terminal date for the use of the building, though at the moment we cannot rule out the possibility that the date of construction might be earlier.

The main building at Tell Khaiber 1 covers some 4,000sq m of a site with a visible extent of only 7 ha. At this early stage of our investigations we cannot say with any certainty what its function was. However, it does show some similarity to excavated buildings at Umma and Zabalam, 50 and 60km respectively to the north, both interpreted as Old Babylonian temples. If our building is a temple, then it was built and functioned in a non-urban context, which represents, as far as we are aware, a type of establishment not previously investigated for this period.

The tablet fragments mention orchards and palm groves, and one has a list of Akkadian – not Amorite – personal names. Other finds included three delightful clay plaques with human figures, a model animal with an inscription to the healing goddess Gula, pieces of alabaster bowls cut down into possible gaming pieces, and tools of copper, flint and stone. The predominant pottery type was drinking goblets with parallels in both Old Babylonian and Isin/Larsa levels at other sites. Preservation was reasonable, with less salination than we had feared. Next season, now that we have a good grasp of what to expect, we will venture into more rooms and this time penetrate with confidence down to floor levels.

We collected preliminary samples for analysis of flora and fauna, but encountered

bureaucratic difficulties in exporting them for examination. Providing physical evidence from occupation to complement the thesis proposed by Hritz *et al*⁴ that southern Babylonian settlements were more dependent on natural marshland resources than previously assumed is one of our overall objectives, and we are optimistic that a solution to this hitch is at hand.

Accommodation was kindly provided by the State Board for Antiquities and Heritage, in a house inside the perimeter fence of Ur. Security precautions were punctilious, and there was less opportunity to explore our non-immediate surroundings than we would have liked. In compensation, we were able to explore Ur at leisure, and we did get to Eridu, al-'Ubaid, and the re-flooded marsh area near Nasiriyah. We record our great debt to Ali Kadhim Ghanim, Head of Ur, and his colleagues, for making all domestic arrangements, including transport, and for his tireless contribution to both the archaeological and logistical requirements of the expedition. We also benefited from good advice and loans of various items from the teams from Stony Brook and Roma La Sapienza, who could not have been kinder to us as newcomers to the still very small band of researchers excavating in Babylonia.

Dr Jane Moon
Project Co-director of the Ur Region Archaeology Project



The excavation team take breakfast together
Photo: Ur Region Archaeology Project

⁴ Hritz, C., Pournelle, J., and Smith, J., 2012, Revisiting the Sealands: report of preliminary ground reconnaissance in the Hammar District, Dhi Qar and Basra Governorates, Iraq. In *Iraq LXXIV* pp. 37-49

V&A Samarra Finds Pilot Project, March 2013 - March 2014

All of the V&A's share (278 items) of the Herzfeld Samarra finds are stored in the Museum's storage facility at Blythe House, Olympia, with the exception of seven carved plaster fragments on display in the Jameel Gallery, and all the glass pieces which are displayed in a drawer in the Glass Gallery. The core of this project has been to research, catalogue and photograph the entire collection, to make it accessible to the international public through the museum's online catalogue. Images have been taken of both the fronts and backs of objects, which is especially important for the painted plaster, carved plaster and ceramics, allowing one to see better how these objects were made. These images will assist future researchers when studying these pieces virtually. The ceramics records will also include scale drawings of pottery profiles for diagnostic pieces.

While these are all fragmentary archaeological finds we feel that through the expertise and cooperation of the Museum's technical staff we have been able to extract considerable additional information that shines a new light on the abilities of the 9th-century craftsmen who constructed and decorated the then capital of the Islamic empire. We would especially like to thank senior furniture conservator Dana Melchar, who with the cooperation of Dr Peter Gasson at the Jodrell Laboratory, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, identified the two pieces of wood analysed as a species of teak from South or South-east Asia, thus confirming the contemporary historical accounts. This analysis was also able to distinguish between

different densities of wood, and in combination with the studies of the pigments carried out by Dr Lucia Burgio, using Raman microscopy, this demonstrated that the carpenters were quite familiar with the characteristics of this imported wood: the denser wood did not have a priming layer for the painting and the pigments were applied directly to the surface; while the less dense wood, being easier to carve, was selected for carving architectonic elements.

Senior sculpture conservator, Victor Borges, cleaned and closely studied one carved gypsum plaster fragment and was able to extract a wealth of information from it. Although he was unable to identify any coloured pigments on this particular piece he demonstrated its production method, and the fact that it had been whitewashed on at least five separate occasions. It had also suffered from termite activity. In addition he undertook a close assessment of all the remaining plaster objects in the V&A's collection and confirmed that all the Samarra plaster was made from gypsum, whereas several fragments from al-Hira in the Museum's collection (a site to the south of Baghdad) used lime plaster, demonstrating that the craftsmen made use of local materials. He positively identified the marble, alabaster and steatite pieces, and confirmed that all the three-dimensional plaster elements were carved rather than moulded.

During the course of this study it was apparent that some of the ceramic fragments fitted together and others had been restored in the field and were in need of modern conservation techniques. This was carried out by Senior Conservator, Ceramics and Glass Conservation, Fiona Jordan. Some of the Chinese imitation wares, along with actual imports, had already been analysed in the Research Laboratory for

Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford University by Chris Doherty and Nigel Wood and all their information has been included in the online catalogue entries; as has material from various other researchers' published work.

Going forward from this first phase of the project, we hope that in the second phase, which will concentrate on the British Museum's considerably larger share of the collection, it will be possible to continue with these material studies. Contact and visits to both the Museum for Islamic Art in Berlin and the Louvre, Paris have been made and we are working closely with colleagues in both institutions. We are extremely grateful to BISI for making it possible to initiate this project and look forward to reporting on our future progress.

*Dr Mariam Rosser - Owen, Victoria and Albert Museum
Dr Rosalind Wade Haddon, Independent Scholar*



Wall Painting from Samarra, V&A, A.30-1922

Diaspora Contributions to Democratisation and Socio-Political Development

The project to which this grant relates is a doctoral thesis examining the contribution of Arab diasporas to political change and socio-economic development in their countries of origin following the 2003 Iraq war. In particular, the study seeks to document the perspectives of exiles and expatriates on UK foreign policy interventions in the four case study countries – Iraq, Libya, Syria and Bahrain – and how views have been influenced by the legacy of the US-sponsored regime change in Iraq. As one of the most vocal and visible diasporas from the region, the mobilisation of individuals and groups from Iraqi Kurdistan was arguably crucial to the development of the Coalition intervention to remove Saddam Hussein. It was therefore of primacy to examine the experiences of Iraqi Kurds who had returned to the newly-autonomous region since the war, and their various reflections on the course that Kurdistan and the Iraqi nation have taken in the intervening years.

A series of preliminary fieldwork interviews was conducted throughout 2012-13 with activists, exiles, politicians and other community leaders from Kurdistan and wider Iraq in the UK – many of whom had travelled between Britain and the region over the decade since the war. Through these connections and independent initiatives, I was able to establish links with others from the diaspora, now based in the region, with whom I met during the course of my fortnight's fieldwork in Kurdistan. (It had been hoped that conditions might be secure enough to enable travel to parts of Central and Southern Iraq, but unfortunately, the reigniting of armed conflict at the time, particularly around Kirkuk, was not conducive to this). My research was based primarily in Erbil, where I met with a range of individuals of Kurdish origin, including NGO

workers, university professors, journalists and politicians, with additional travel to Sulaimaniyah and Halabja. The majority of those interviewed had left the country as a result of political or civil-society activities during the reign of Saddam Hussein, and had spent extended periods living in Europe and the US. I was also fortunate enough to have access to university students from a range of Kurdish and other Iraqi or Arab backgrounds – many of them the children of exiles. Extremely diverse, articulate and cosmopolitan, young people in Kurdistan presented an intriguing cross-section of cultures and ideologies and their views, as expressed in a series of classroom discussions, provided a fascinating contrast to those of the 'old-guard' of Kurdish activists and exiles.

The perspectives expressed in fieldwork discussions were as complex and varied as the life-experiences of the interviewees, providing a rich and thought-provoking context for analysis. From the outset, there was a strong sense of national pride and accomplishment, particularly on the part of those in official or political roles, about the hard-won achievements of Kurds since independence – namely, economic and infrastructural development. There was also a natural gratitude for the relative security and prosperity currently enjoyed by most Kurds, most especially against the backdrop of ongoing violence in greater Iraq. This optimism notwithstanding, it was also difficult to overlook the bewilderment, and often dismay many expressed about the trajectory of socio-political development in Kurdistan, alongside continuing country-wide conflict. Despite the bold geo-strategic and economic ambitions of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), on a domestic level, there appeared to be a sense that the strong values that had facilitated Kurdish resilience over previous decades were being supplanted by a new culture of elitism and materialism. Many articulated their despair at the corruption, nepotism and increasingly authoritarian-style rule

that have become the modus operandi of governing politics in Kurdistan. So too, it was suggested that new ideals around the accumulation of economic capital and individual wealth were coming to define Kurdish society in place of its former emphasis on cultural identity and political engagement. This was especially the case amongst those involved in political, academic, artistic or media-related activities, where the curtailment of civic freedoms under the new government was felt most strongly. As one Sulaimaniyah-based journalist, a former exile who had faced imprisonment under both the Ba’athist and KRG governments noted: “we’ve had two problems with freedom of speech in Kurdistan. Before, if you said what you thought about politics, Saddam would execute you or throw you in jail. Now, if you say what you think, there is nobody who cares enough to listen.” Such statements reflected the sense among many from the diaspora that their contribution to the development of Kurdistan was hampered or indeed stymied by new cultural and political obstacles, set in place even in the aftermath of Saddam.

Detailed discussions were also had about the perceived relationship of Kurdistan to the wider Iraqi nation. Many interviewees had been raised or educated between Kurdistan and other parts of the country, and recounted their affinity with a more inclusive notion of Iraqi identity. Indeed, some expressed their sadness at the fragmentation of

Iraq into sectarian enclaves – what was perceived as an irreversible trend, reinforced by the spiral of neighbouring Syria into sectarian violence. Testament to this forecast, I was struck by the strength of a dominant sense amongst young and older generations of Kurds that their region was not part of Iraq. Indeed, many expressed their frustration at having to hold an Iraqi passport and identified the next struggle for Kurds as full independence. This view was particularly prevalent amongst young Kurds who, despite having peers from a range of Arab and non-Kurdish backgrounds, expressed no identification with or attachment to the notion of the Iraqi nation.

Against the backdrop of the brutal disintegration of neighbouring Syria, as well as the resurgence of country-wide violence in Iraq, this was a fascinating, if decidedly bleak time at which to visit Kurdistan. Fieldwork interviews were extremely complex, inspiring and often poignant, and served to challenge many of my former suppositions about the role of diaspora groups, as well as the legacy of the 2003 Coalition intervention for Iraq. I felt privileged to have met with such a range of impressive and interesting individuals and the outcomes of our discussions provided a strong foundation on which to premise my subsequent case studies of Libya, Bahrain and in particular, Syria.

Zoe Holman
Visiting Doctoral Researcher, SOAS



Mural in Sulaimaniyah Photo: Zoe Holman

To What Extent Have Conditions of State Weakness Shaped Iraqi Foreign Policy 2003-2012?

Thanks to the generous support offered to me by BISI, I was able to conduct dozens of high level interviews in Erbil, Sulaimaniyah, Amman, Washington DC and London as part of my PhD thesis on post-war Iraqi foreign policy.

My PhD argues that the existing foreign policy analysis literature fails to account for foreign policy making processes in internally weak states, and takes Iraq as its case study. The thesis traces the relationship between Iraqi foreign policy production and the changing levels of Iraqi state weakness in the ten years after the invasion. It argues that: a) state weakness enables sub-state actors to challenge the foreign policy authority of the central government, b) that state weakness leads governments to prioritise the pursuit of regime survival over the national interest, and c) that state weakness reduces the central government's capacity to effectively execute its own foreign policies.

Thanks to BISI, I was able to conduct the in-depth interviews with top Iraqi, British, American, and other Arab foreign policy makers and politicians that have formed the backbone of my thesis. I was able to interview Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, Former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, Former Deputy Iraqi Prime Minister Barham Salih, in addition to scores of other senior Iraqi politicians. These interviews gave me a deep insight into the questions raised by my thesis and have helped me challenge the assumptions made in much of the existing literature on foreign policy analysis.

Through these extensive interviews I have also been able to use my PhD to make a significant empirical contribution to the literature on post-war Iraqi politics and foreign policy. The foreign policy issues I tackle include Iraq's relationship with the Arab World, Iran's intervention in the Iraqi civil war, Kurdish and Iraqi competition over Turkey, and the Iraqi role in the Syrian civil war.

*Nussaibah Younis
PhD Candidate
Durham University*

Sustainable Materials for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Researching Appropriate Conservation Methods in Iraqi Kurdistan

In Spring 2013 I was awarded a BISI grant in support of my research on sustainable strategies for cultural heritage preservation. This allowed me to travel to the Sulaimaniyah district in Iraqi Kurdistan, where I spent twelve days carrying out conservation work on two newly excavated sites.

The multi period tell of Gurga Ciya and the adjacent, Bronze age mound Tepe Marani are currently being investigated by the Shahrizor Prehistory Project, led by Professor David Wengrow, Professor Karen Radner and Dr Mark Altaweel. A three way collaboration between UCL, UCL Qatar and the Sulaimaniyah Board of Antiquities in Iraq, the project aims to shed light on the socio-economic development of the vast Shahrizor plain. I joined the team in the course of the first excavation season in May 2013, with the aim of carrying out essential preliminary activities necessary to develop a sustainable conservation plan for the sites.

In the course of the previous year I had been researching issues of sustainability in cultural heritage preservation as part of my Masters degree at UCL. In particular, I was looking at how heritage practitioners choose the materials they employ in their daily work; from the adhesives necessary to piece together artefacts on archaeological sites to the storage materials used to ensure long term preservation of museum collections. I developed a methodology for sourcing and testing locally

available products in contexts in which ‘conservation grade’ materials are not readily accessible.

My interest in the topic of ‘non conventional’ conservation strategies comes from the awareness of the fact that while practitioners in the West are setting increasingly high standards for the products they employ, the pressures on funding make these standards unrealistic for most heritage institutions around the world. This disempowers local communities and lessens their role as stewards of their own heritage. Thus, the choice of sustainable, locally available materials is essential to an engaged conservation practice that aims to make a positive socio-economic contribution to local development.

Through my collaboration with the Shahrizor Prehistory Project I aimed to give a practical outcome to my research, implementing a conservation strategy based on inexpensive, locally available materials. Another important objective of my visit was to initiate a collaboration with local museums and with the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage in Erbil.

I began by researching the local availability of resources and defining various possible conservation options. As there are no specific suppliers for conservation in the area, I contacted Kurdish colleagues to ask for advice on locally accessible materials. A major obstacle came from the fact that the possibilities of travelling around the country to look for specific products were limited due to security reasons. This also meant that materials which were usually imported from Baghdad were not available in the region at

that time. I reviewed the available options, testing the suitability of products and comparing costs. I collected samples of local materials that were recommended to me, and later took them to the UK for more extensive testing. All materials passed accelerated ageing and other tests with good results.

With guidance from Renata Peters (UCL Lecturer in Conservation of Archaeological Artefacts) and the invaluable assistance of local colleagues I set up a basic lab and put in place measures for the care and appropriate storage of the artefacts. I agreed a protocol with the rest of the team for packaging in view of the end-of-season transport of finds to Sulaimaniyah, and for storage in the museum over the course of the following year.

The results of my research will help to define the long term conservation plan for the site. They also formed part of my MSc dissertation, of which the Shahrizor Prehistory Project was a main case study. I would like to take the opportunity to thank BISI for supporting my initiative.

Flavia Ravaoli
 UCL IoA Alumna
 Centro di Conservazione Archeologica - Roma



The multi period tell of Gurga Ciya, in the Shahrizor Plain Photo: Flavia Ravaoli



Samples of packaging materials were collected from local markets and taken to the UK for extensive testing Photo: Flavia Ravaoli

OUTREACH GRANT REPORTS

RETURN



Dina Mousawi in a still from the trailer of RETURN Photo: David Hewitt

RETURN is an original verbatim theatre piece. A personal response about the female experience of war and occupation, looking at the social and political changes to the lives of Iraqi women.

I wanted to examine how we as a nation deal with our intrinsic involvement with Iraq, on a global and political level. Between 2010-11, I travelled to Syria, Iraq and Jordan to talk to Iraqi women about what it really means to live under Western occupation; RETURN brings their stories together to the stage.

The show is an innovative collision of compelling poetic images and verbatim text from my filmed interviews, emails, video diaries and Facebook entries. My personal experiences of living in Baghdad under Saddam, my recent journey back home and the material I gathered became fuel. Working together with 3Fates Theatre company, we focused creative energies into tackling received ideas and preconceptions about the Arab world, culture, women and 'the other'.

To date RETURN has been showcased in various stages of its development at the Aat International Festival, Amman, The Yard Theatre, London and

at the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival. This piece connects an Arabic speaking audience with a mainstream British one, opening discussions whilst promoting a greater understanding of life in Iraq.

With a grant awarded by BISI and the Arab British Centre, I was able to work with 3Fates Theatre Company to complete another phase of development workshops and test it in front of a live audience. We conducted a week of workshops with the full cast and creatives, working on new video projections and script. This culminated in two sold out performances, totalling a capacity of 200, at Rich Mix in February 2014.

Audience feedback:

"Excellent. Return brings Iraq to UK like nothing else I've seen." (Iraqi male, 34)

This opportunity, supported by BISI has been an important step in the show's development and exposure. It has led to a mainstream theatre offering support, with the aim of producing a fully realised piece in the not too distant future.

Dina Mousawi
 Researcher, producer and actor in RETURN

The Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient Literature at St Andrews University *'Discovering The Unreal: Ghosts, Gods and Gorgons In Ancient Literature'*

The Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient Literature 2013, held at the University of St Andrews over the weekend of 7-9 June, proved to be a considerable success. There were thirty-nine speakers overall, spanning three days.

The committee were immensely grateful for the generous grant of £400 from BISI, which was instrumental for the running of the event. Thanks to the grant, we were able to draw Near Eastern speakers from across the country, with representatives from England and Wales as well as Scotland. As well as hosting a panel of three speakers on the general topic of the Ancient Near East, we were also able to host a second keynote speaker to speak on a Near Eastern theme alongside one of our very own lecturers, Jason Koenig, who started the conference in exactly the right vein with an enjoyable exploration of landscape imagery in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

The Near Eastern panel was held on the Saturday afternoon, and drew a positive crowd of approximately fifteen people. The first paper was presented by David Zakarian, a first year PhD student from St Anthony's College Oxford, who presented on the representation of Queen P'aranjem, a fourth century A.D. queen of Armenia, in early Armenian literature. David proceeded to highlight the qualities desired from an Armenian ruler; p'ark' (glory), baxt (fortune), and k'ajut'iwn (bravery), drawing from literary, iconographic and numismatic evidence, and concluding that the qualities were inherently masculine, but noting that female rulers were a vital aspect of Armenian royalty despite lacking supernatural authority. The ensuing discussion from the question and answer session, fired in particular by the numismatic contingent in the audience, had to be cut short and continued in the later coffee break, but proved a vibrant and energetic start to the panel.

John Russell Holton, a final year PhD student from Edinburgh University, gave a wide-ranging presentation on the birth myth of Seleucus Nicator. The myth is told in Appian and Justin that Seleucus dropped an anchor signet ring in the river Euphrates, signifying his kingship over the area. John convincingly showed that the myth had followed traditions of Greek history as well as Mesopotamian, by exploring the relevant literature of both cultures (Herodotus, Plato and the epic of Gilgamesh amongst others). As such, Seleucus intended to create a kingship mythology combining tenets of both the east and west.

The final speaker was David Bagot, a final year PhD student from St Andrews, in the neighbouring Medieval department. David talked about the role of the supernatural in the

war between Bahram Chubin and the Sasanid Persians, as described in the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, and the historian Tabari. The god Soroush transported Khusrow to the top of a mountain, to escape the pursuing Bahram, and prophesied his successful future reign. David argued that the episode reveals an attempt by Khusrow and the Sasanian house to reassert their legitimacy, through literary and iconographic means. This resulted in the manifest display of divine favour returning to Sasanid rule, to ensure the continuance of the Sasanid dynasty which Bahram came close to destroying.

Dr Kyle Erickson, from Trinity St David University, gave the keynote speech on the Saturday evening. As a successful young scholar whom I had met at a past conference, I felt Kyle was the ideal person to address a postgraduate conference, as a model of success in early academia. His research is primarily based on the Seleucid kingdom, with a focus on political and cultural interactions between the Greek world and the Near East, with numerous articles and edited volumes on topics such as the Alexander Romance and Antiochus I's Babylonian policy. Kyle gave a wonderful paper, at times serious, and other times flippant, on the elephant in the Hellenistic world, to an audience of over fifty people. Kyle suggested that the reason elephants remain a creature of mystery in the Greco-Roman sources, despite having been seen in person by Alexander and his successors, was their location at the ends of the known world. As such, the historiographic tradition was attempting to continue an idea of the 'other,' and part of the power of the Hellenistic kings was their ability to control the 'other' in an all-encompassing cosmic kingship. Kyle's speech produced a considerable number of questions, and made for lively discussion.

*Miles Lester-Pearson
PhD Student and Postgraduate Tutor
St Andrews University*



Participants at the Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient Literature Conference, from left-right: David Zakarian, John Russell Holton, David Bagot, Miles Lester-Pearson

VISITING IRAQI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME 2014

**Dr Alaa Dheyauldeen,
Director of the Museum of the
Holy Shrine of Imam Hussein,
Karbala
21-28 February 2014**

BISI invited Dr Alaa Dheyauldeen to London for a week of museum visits and meetings. He was taken on guided tours of the Islamic galleries and collections at the Ashmolean Museum, British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum. He was also given the chance to speak to experts about methods of conservation, cataloguing, storage and the public display of objects.

The visit marked the beginning of a new partnership between BISI and the Imam Hussein Holy Shrine. We hope to provide support and training to the Dr Dheyauldeen's staff as the museum prepares for a new phase in its development.



Dr Alaa Dheyauldeen meets with conservators at the Fitzwilliam Museum

**Dr Nabeel Nooruldeen Hussein,
College Of Archaeology,
Mosul University
1 March-1 April 2014**

Dr Nabeel Nooruldeen Hussein is a Lecturer in Archaeology at Mosul University and the Chief of Excavations at Nineveh. Through his BISI visiting scholarship, he was able to survey the British Museum's public and private collections of Assyrian reliefs and to see how they connect to the finds recently unearthed by his team at King Assurbanipal's Palace.

During the visit Dr Hussein was able to meet with UK academics in his area of expertise and to access the libraries at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL and SOAS.

"It was a great pleasure to meet Dr Hussein and a great thrill to see his photographs of Assyrian reliefs being uncovered at Nineveh and then trying to match them with those in the British Museum."
Dr Paul Collins, Ashmolean Museum



Dr Nabeel Nooruldeen Hussein on a day out in Westminster

**Father Behnam Sony,
Saint Ephrem's Seminary,
Qaraqosh
8 April – 29 May 2014**

Father Behnam Sony is a Priest and Lecturer at Saint Ephrem's Seminary in Qaraqosh, and a distinguished scholar of Syriac.

He has accumulated a large collection of documents and books from monasteries and churches, especially from the area of Qaraqosh, as part of his project to research and preserve the manuscripts of the Syriac Catholic Church in Iraq. His BISI scholarship enabled him to come to London to take part

in an excellent programme arranged by Daniel Lowe and Sarah Reading at the British Library. He learned how to care for, conserve and create a digital catalogue of his manuscript collection. With a British Library Reading Card, he was also able to access documents relating to the patology of Qaraqosh, which he had never seen before and so greatly contributed to his history of the area.

Dr Erica D. Hunter of SOAS acted as Father Sony's academic mentor, kindly offering guidance and help during his time in London. She held a workshop in his honour, where he had the opportunity to meet with fellow scholars and to share his experiences of living as a Christian in Iraq.



Father Behnam Sony with Dr Erica D.Hunter at the Dr Williams's Library

The Visiting Iraqi Scholarship Programme relies heavily on the goodwill of volunteers who not only assist with academic activities, but also ensure that our visitors from Iraq feel welcome and part of a community. We would like to credit everyone who has helped this year:

Riadh Alkhalisi, Dr Mark Altaweel (UCL), Dr Moya Carey (V&A), Dr Paul Collins (Ashmolean Museum), Dr Tao-Tao Chang (Fitzwilliam Museum), Dr Vesta Curtis (British Museum), Dr Lamia al-Gailani Werr, Professor Andrew George (SOAS), Dr Erica D. Hunter (SOAS), Jennifer Hicks (UCL), Rana Ibrahim, Dr Francesca Leoni (Ashmolean Museum), Dr Stuart Laidlaw (UCL), Daniel Lowe (British Library), Mark Norman (Ashmolean Museum), Ali Mehdi, Dr Stella Panayotova (Fitzwilliam Museum), Dr Adi Popescu (Fitzwilliam Museum), Dr Venetia Porter (British Museum), Dr Julian Reade (British Museum), Sarah Reading (British Library), Kristine Rose (Fitzwilliam Museum), Dr Tim Stanley (V&A), Dr Nigel Tallis (British Museum), Father John Whooley and Reem Zako.

RECENT LECTURES 2013-2014

Mike Laird *Mudhifs in the Marshes: Preserving Cultural Identity*

20 June 2013 at the British Academy

Gertrude Bell and Iraq – A Life and Legacy Conference organised in partnership with the British Academy, and in association with the Gertrude Bell Archive at Newcastle University

11-13 September 2013 at the British Academy and the Royal Society

Amira Edan and Qahtan Al Abeer
Presentations on the New Basrah Museum and The Iraq Museum

10 October 2013 at the British Academy

Dr John MacGinnis *Excavating a provincial capital of the Assyrian Empire: The Ziyaret Tepe Archaeological Project*

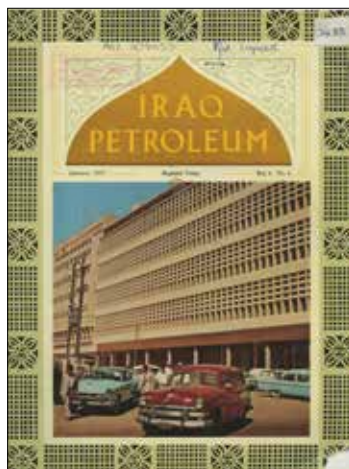
20 November 2013 at the British Academy

Dr Mariam Rosser-Owen and Dr Rosalind Wade Haddon *A New Look at Samarra: Small Finds from the Herzfeld Excavation in the Victoria and Albert Museum*

27 February 2014 at the British Academy

Dr Nelida Fuccaro *Oil Cultures in Iraq under the Monarchy*

19 June 2014 at the British Academy



Dr Nelida Fuccaro's lecture presented contrasting aspects of oil lives and cultures, with a focus on the Iraq Petroleum Company, before the 1958 Revolution
Image reproduced from the BP Archive

Audio recordings of the events above can be listened to at

<http://www.bisi.ac.uk/content/events-archive>

THE NEXT BISI LECTURE

Dr Jane Moon *Back to Babylonia: recent excavations at Tell Khaiber*

Thursday 20 November 2014, doors open 6.00pm

Tickets free, but pre-registration is required at www.bisi.ac.uk or call **020 7969 5274**

Location: The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH

BISI GRANTS

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

BISI OUTREACH GRANTS (normally up to £500 per grant)

BISI Outreach Grants are offered to support public engagement events and projects such as lectures, study days, and popular publications that promote a greater understanding of the history, culture and society of Iraq. Applicants should normally be residents of the UK. Preference is given to activities taking place in the UK or in 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, not covered by the British Academy's BASIS-sponsored institutions. 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.

Pilot Project Grants (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 a BISI Academic Grant, applicants must be employed by or have an official connection with a UK Higher Education Institution.

VISITING IRAQI SCHOLARSHIPS

BISI offers two Visiting Iraqi Scholarships each year to enable Iraqi scholars and cultural heritage professionals to engage in research, training and collaborative projects in the UK.

Iraqi scholars in the field of pre-modern Iraq may also choose to apply for the joint BISI and the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft Visiting Iraqi Scholarship.

All scholars must be able to converse and understand English to a working level to ensure the placement is a success. **Annual Deadline:** 1 February.



BISI's Outreach Grant Programme provided funding for Art Role's 3rd International Women's Conference, which took place across three cities - Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Kirkuk - in November 2013. Photo: Mark Terry



One of the images displayed at The Christians of Kurdistan talk and exhibition organised by Gulan in October 2013 that was supported by a BISI Outreach Grant. Photo from the Dominican Community Archive

BISI SUPPORTERS 2014

BISI is very grateful for donations, both large and small. Here we would like to thank all those who have donated to us in 2014. You can read about our current Development Plans and how you can support them on pp.23 -26.

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UNDERSTANDING IRAQ'S PAST – SHAPING ITS FUTURE

“21st October 2012. I was standing less than 20 kilometres from the ancient site of Nippur, in southern Iraq, giving a lecture on Babylonian mathematics, Sumerian literature and scribal schooling in ancient Nippur to local academics and researchers. In itself the content was normal; it was the context that made me very uncomfortable. Here I was, a British academic, an expert on a site that I was visiting in person for the very first time, lecturing Iraqis on their local history, communicating in English via translators, using very simple language and concepts to ensure understanding, and unable to offer any further reading on the subject that didn't require an Internet connection or that was in Arabic and therefore understandable to my audience.”

Eleanor Robson, BISI Chair of Council

The past few decades have been unremittingly tough for Iraqi academics and cultural heritage professionals. They are still very cut off from international colleagues, while their institutions are still recovering from long-term internal repression and looting. On their own, they struggle to overcome systemic lack of resources and access to up-to-date teaching and research methods. Opportunities for public education are meagre. Not surprisingly, many individuals and organisations are looking for international co-operation and partnerships.

In response to such requests, BISI has developed a carefully phased and costed strategy for the coming five years to facilitate British-Iraqi collaborations in the interpretation of the histories, cultures and social identities of Iraq and to assist in the protection of Iraq's cultural heritage.

The often terrible news from Iraq suggests that this might not be the time to consider investing in the country. But now is precisely the moment when we should offer hope and support to Iraq, and assist Iraqi efforts to build a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future. Moreover, as our Iraqi colleagues attest, large parts of the country are stable and safe places in which to work.

While there is current investment in technology, engineering, medicine and the sciences in Iraq, the vital role that the arts, humanities, and social sciences can play in creating identities and social cohesion has been largely overlooked by national and international agencies. By investing in Iraq now, we can change public perceptions and enable Iraqi institutions and individuals to harness the resources at their disposal. In this way we can help the country reach its potential as a thriving, forward-looking nation with a sense of the variety and power of its history, culture and identity.

BISI's fresh approach has four priority themes:

1. Partnerships:

By establishing a co-ordinator in Iraq, BISI can carry out a full review of potential Iraqi research and educational partners across the arts, humanities and social sciences, and successfully develop and manage this network, which is vital to the planning and delivery of collaborative projects.

2. Capacity Building and Education:

BISI needs to help Iraqi researchers, educators and institutional partners to rebuild Iraq's professional infrastructure and to develop the tools and techniques they need to create a sustainable, lively future.

3. Research and Fieldwork:

We also want to develop our own collaborative projects, a number of which are already in progress, alongside initiating a programme of responsive funding for important new projects that arise over the coming years.

4. Public Engagement:

Finally, it is also essential to engage support for our mission, whether with government decision makers, fellow academics, or the children who form our collective future. BISI can increase wider understanding of Iraq by involving the public in our work.

“If we do not know ourselves, who are we reconstructing this country for? If we cannot look back, we have no memory, we have no identity and we cannot move forward.”

**Dr Saad Eskander,
Director of the Iraq National
Library and Archive**

DONATION FORM

To support our new strategy we are now identifying visionary partners in the UK and Iraq who will fund and catalyse innovation, provide resources, and partner with us to revolutionise knowledge and learning about the country.

You can get involved in this exciting new venture in a number of ways:

Make a one-off payment

By completing and returning the form below to: 'The British Institute for the Study of Iraq, The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH.' If you would like to explore ways of Regular Giving on an annual or monthly basis please contact the Development Co-ordinator.

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