

THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR
THE STUDY OF IRAQ
(GERTRUDE BELL MEMORIAL)

المعهد البريطاني لدراسة العراق

NEWSLETTER NO. 36
2018



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CHAIR OF COUNCIL'S INTRODUCTION



One of the most important roles for the Institute is encouraging a public understanding of Iraq's extraordinary rich cultures, from antiquity to the present, and as the only organization in the UK devoted to this work, we are often the first point of call for journalists seeking comment and clarification. Last year, however, our own history made the news through Mary Shepperson's wonderful blog series *The Past and the Curious* in the Guardian newspaper. If you haven't had a chance to read this yet it can still be found online: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/jul/17/british-school-archaeology-iraq-nimrud-agatha-christie>.

As you will read in this Newsletter, we continue to promote the understanding and appreciation of Iraq through a kaleidoscope of activities, from art installations and theatre productions to workshops and conferences, both in the UK and Iraq. Our Outreach Committee have been managing this programme for many years but more recently it has become apparent that we needed to adapt some of our approaches to

respond to the rapid growth of social media and changing patterns of participation at events. This is especially necessary for reaching new audiences across all ages who might not currently appreciate the range of our interests. Moving forward, therefore, there will be a focus on developing our website as a more informative resource. Alongside this we are initiating a project called 'University Engagement'. A small team, led by our recently appointed Trustee Dr Erica Hunter, will work with student societies in universities across the UK to develop a network of activities that cross subjects in the arts, humanities and social sciences wherever they focus on Iraq. This will be an important means of advertising the Institute nationally and encouraging new members, especially among the next generation of scholars. This doesn't mean, however, that we will be abandoning our existing programme of talks, film shows and conferences and I look forward to seeing members at our regular February, June and November lectures.

Our other main focus is, of course, to support academic research on Iraq's past and one of the Institute's most important legacies in this area is the extraordinary work undertaken by our predecessor organisation, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. You will have read in previous Newsletters how we have been undertaking an archiving project to locate all the records of the School's archaeological work undertaken across some sixty years, and now scattered within a large number of institutions, with the aim of future publication. Although the British Academy generously provides us with desk and meeting spaces, we have nowhere where this archive might be stored. Discussions are now underway, however, to provide these records with a permanent home where they can be properly managed and made available to future researchers as an important repository of national significance.

Looking ahead to next year, planning for our international conference *The Jews of Iraq - Engagement with Modernities* (16-18 September 2019) is well underway with a call for papers having produced an incredible response. Iraqi Jews constituted one of the world's largest and most historically significant Jewish communities and were in Iraq for over 2,500 years. The conference, organised in collaboration with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago and the Department of History, Religions and Philosophies at SOAS, promises to be an important and timely event.

Research and engagement are brought together in our programme of publications. Over the next twelve months we will be producing Volume VI of the *Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud* series edited by Professor Nicholas Postgate, as well as the proceedings of the 2016 Basrah Museum conference (the latter in Arabic and English). For a younger reader, a book on the Sumerians for 7-11 year olds will be published jointly by BISI, the Ashmolean Museum, and Dangoor Education. I am immensely grateful to David Dangoor for sponsoring this book, which will be available in both English and Arabic versions to support the UK National Curriculum as well as distributed to booksellers in Iraq.

It probably needs no reminder that one of Iraq's most famous ancient civilizations will get top billing at the British Museum this November. Our Trustee Dr Gareth Brereton is curating *I am Ashurbanipal king of the world, king of Assyria*. An exhibition not to miss! It will be accompanied by a programme of events including talks by Gareth and other members of BISI.

The BISI London office, run by our Executive Officer Ali Khadr, remains at the heart of our work. He works closely with the Visiting Iraqi Scholars Coordinator, who manages the programme of our colleagues from Iraq while they are in the UK. I must record here my thanks to Jennifer Griggs, who stepped down as Coordinator in March, for her sterling work. I'm pleased to say that Isobel Ransome was appointed to replace Jennifer and she is doing a terrific job in supporting the first of our BISI-Nahrein Visiting Scholars.

Please do get in contact with Ali if you have any questions about our programme of events. He is also the key contact if you are interested in helping with our fundraising campaigns to support Visiting Iraqi Scholars and the development of the BISI library at the Basrah Museum. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr Paul Collins
Chair of Council

In Memory of Lynn Ritchie and the Gertrude Bell Archive

Lynn English Ritchie (1943 – 2018)

From Joan Porter MacIver (BISI Vice-Chair & Co-ordinator of the 2013 BISI and British Academy conference - Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy)

I remember visiting my dear cousin Lynn Ritchie in Newcastle in her little office with a folder bulging with Gertrude Bell's original letters, which she was transcribing as part of a new project. The handwriting was difficult but she seemed to read it with ease. She also had the opportunity to meet many of Gertrude Bell's family members during the course of her work. As you can read from Mark Jackson's write up that was the beginning of an amazing project started by Stephen Hill.

Lynn graduated from Wellesley College in Massachusetts and in 1965 she came to live with our family in Beirut and to work. She met a geology professor from AUB, John Roberts, and they married in our house, the US Ambassador's residence in Yarze. Lynn and John moved to Newcastle travelling via land as one could in those days through Syria, Iran and Turkey. She made her home in Newcastle and stayed on with her two daughters after her divorce. After her time with the archive she re-trained and became a computer consultant. She has been living for many years in Hexham with her second husband Chris Potter (a long and wonderful marriage – he sadly predeceased her in April). Lynn was a member of the BISI for a number of years. She will be missed by her family and many friends. The following tributes show some of her outstanding qualities and contributions.

From: Dr Mark Jackson, co-curator and guardian of the Gertrude Bell Photographic Archive at Newcastle University (<http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/>)

At the 2013 conference on Gertrude Bell in Iraq: A Life and Legacy hosted by BISI at the British Academy, Lynn talked about her pioneering work on the Gertrude Bell Archive. In the late 1970s, she was one of two researchers who, with Stephen Hill and two photographic technicians, carried out the very first projects on the Gertrude Bell Archive in the Dept. of Archaeology, Newcastle University. They unpacked, catalogued, preserved and reprinted over 6,000 photographs and carried out the first conservation of the original negatives.

In 1985, Lynn was co-author with Stephen Hill of *The Catalogue of the Gertrude Bell Photographic Archive* and until 1987 she created the first typed copy of Bell's diaries and thousands of letters. Deciphering Bell's very difficult handwriting, Lynn completed the transcription initially using a manual type-writer and then as the project developed Newcastle University's main frame computer via a modem!

The team of researchers responsible for the digitisation of the original archive for the internet in the 1990s benefited enormously from those earlier works. Over the past twenty years the reach of the archive online has gradually grown so that now it receives well over half a million hits annually. Lynn continued to offer her expertise and memorably came back to the university to help with research for the *Extraordinary Gertrude Bell*, a major exhibition hosted in Newcastle in 2016. Most recently she acted as Archival Documents Producer for the film *Letters from Baghdad*.

In 2018 The Gertrude Bell Archive in Newcastle was formally recognised by UNESCO as an International Memory of the World. We can be thankful that Lynn had heard about this news before she died because her work to conserve and to research the Gertrude Bell Archive when it was almost unknown helped to make possible this and so many other projects that have happened subsequently.

From: Zeva Oelbaum and Sabine Krayenbühl – Directors of the documentary film *Letters from Baghdad* (<http://lettersfrombaghdad.com/>)

From the moment we met Lynn Ritchie at the international conference on Gertrude Bell, sponsored by BISI in September 2013, she became an integral part of our film team. It was a privilege to work so closely with Lynn and enjoy her warm support. Her insights, knowledge and unflagging generosity enhanced our film in a dozen different ways.

Lynn was always on the lookout for material for us and sent us her own unpublished manuscript on Gertrude Bell. She frequently pointed out interesting tidbits and letters she thought might get overlooked in the massive archive. One of those written by Sgt. Frank Stafford, became an important element in our film's narrative. Lynn even took a detour on one trip to the US in order to hand deliver Gertrude Bell's silver cigarette case, owned by Jan Long, to us in New York for

our shoot. She picked up photographs for us held in private UK collections. But most memorable, in all of our conversations during the five years we worked together on *Letters From Baghdad*, Lynn was delightful. Each Skype call with her put us in a better mood, because she lit up the computer screen with her beautiful smile and ready laugh.



Lynn Ritchie holding Gertrude Bell's cigarette case at the participants' conference dinner at the British Academy in September 2013 (Photo: Jan Long)

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ACADEMIC GRANT REPORTS

SONGS ABOUT OLD BATTLES, LOVES AND RECENT CONFLICTS



Rugged Mountain Range in Kurdistan (Photo: Rolf Killius)

Kurdish song lyrics are about old battles, love stories, hero worship, descriptions of landscape and religious topics, but also about recent combats of the Peshmerga¹.

In August and September 2018, I had the great fortune to spend one month in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in order to conduct research on traditional Kurdish music. The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) and the British Library Traditional Music Section supported the research. This project was based on a short preliminary visit in 2016² and will be continued in the near future. In the region the fieldwork was supported by musicians and musicologists mainly based in the two largest cities, Erbil and Suleymani.

The fieldwork in KRI, an autonomous region within the Republic of Iraq, occurred during a politically very exciting time preceding the independence referendum on 25/09/2017. Virtually all Kurdish musicians and cultural activists are politically interested, especially as some belong to the Peshmerga or have had at least one relative who is part of this military force. The aims of the main project were: 1) to make high quality digital audio recordings including vocal, instrumental,

dance-music styles, 2) to provide detailed documentation of the performers and cultural contexts within which musical activities take place, and 3) to make “special recordings” to be used for publication.

All these aims have been achieved; the digital audio recordings are accompanied by written documentation and both of which have been deposited in the archive of the British Library (BL), where the general public can consult it. In Suleymani I was invited to visit the Kurdish Heritage Institute (KHI), the only audio-visual archive in the KRI. We decided that they would receive the digital copies on my next visit.



The Heiran singers Mahyidin Sherwani and Mohamed Mohamed Gardi Ismail (Photo: Rolf Killius)

Kurdish music, together with dance and language, forms possibly the single-most important factor for preserving a Kurdish identity. The traditional singer from Qarachokh, Mr Mahyadin Sherwani, for instance explains, how the rugged countryside of Kurdistan is described in the heiran song genre³. On my tour I visited remote and urban areas and recorded amateur and professional musicians (for instance the internationally known folk music group Lur).



Lur Music Group (Photo: Rolf Killius)

The main musical instrument is the voice. Secondary to the voice the Kurds use musical instruments. Most prominent are the string instruments kamancheh (bowed), saz (plucked), and tar (plucked lute), the wind instrument balaban (single-reed), and the percussion instruments daf (frame drum) and the dehol (double headed circular frame drum). String instruments derived from the Arabic music culture such as oud, qanun and the violin are widely used. The zarb (or zarb-Kurdi), a single-headed goblet drum, is also widely used in Iran. Often dance and music go together, and a sequence of different songs can be played to support one dance.

All the recordings – during public events and specially organised – were always taken in collaboration and with the consent of the musicians. In addition, I benefited from my visits

and the support of the Music Department at the University of Suleymani (Music Department) and the KHI.



Balaban player Jwanro Balaban (Photo: Rolf Killius)

Many recordings show the close relationship of the Kurdish to the Arabic and other minority cultures. For instance, I attended the traditional East Syrian or Chaldean Church Vesper Service within the Mar Gorgis (St. George church was founded in 1903) in Ankawa, Erbil. In Laliche, the most important sacred shrine of the Yezidi community, I met a group of Kurdish Yezidi musicians from Germany. They performed songs related to the Yezidi history and religion. One traditional Kurdish music group had a singer from the pre-Islamic Kakai community. Another singer from the Makmour Province performed in the Kurdish heiran and lavook song genres and sung some of the songs in the Arabic language.

I would like to conclude that, foremost, the rich traditional music tradition in KRI is still very much alive and there exists a broad variety of musical genres and styles based on different regional and religious traditions.

Apart from weddings and traditional practices of the people still living in rural areas, there are fewer possibilities to perform music in the important new urban areas. As an exception in



Shrines in Laliche Photo: Rolf Killius

Suleymani, there are a few new music clubs and restaurants, where (mainly!) young people attend traditional music performances.

In respect to the archival collections one needs to mention the brilliant audio-visual collection at the Kurdish Heritage Institute (KHI), which definitely has the potential to be of wider use to the people. In addition, several private ‘archives’ of musicians, aficionados and at least two audio shops in Erbil and Suleymani possess rich collections of digital recordings, commercial cassettes and reel-to-reel tapes.

The director of the KHI, the University of Suleymani, music lovers and musicians encouraged me to continue my work on research and documenting traditional Kurdish Music and therefore invited me for third and much longer stay.



Participants from both workshops proudly displaying their felted panels (Photo: Rolf Killius)

*Rolf Killius
British Library, World and Traditional Music*

¹ The military forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

² See my blog on the British Library site: <http://blogs.bl.uk/sound-and-vision/2016/08/passionate-music-from-a-hot-country-a-musical-visit-to-iraq-kurdistan.html>

³ A specific musical genre based on the voice

Charax Spasinou 2017

Following our pilot investigations at Charax Spasinou in 2016, we obtained a grant from the UK Cultural Protection Fund UK for a three-year programme of further work. During 2017 we spent more than three months at Charax, expanding the regional survey as well as working on the geophysical survey of the city. The latter was supplemented by a series of evaluation trenches to check the results. An additional 45 hectares of the city were mapped, by two teams working simultaneously with fluxgate gradiometers.

Most of the gradiometer survey took place adjacent to the area mapped in 2016 (Area A). This lies in the southern part of the city close to a palaeo riverbed of the Karun River. Here the grid of the original Hellenistic city has survived even though the extant surface remains date to the later Arsacid period. Elements of at least ten residential blocks are visible, each one covering c.13,000 square metres. Their estimated length (between 158 and 162 m) and width (between 85 and 90 m) suggests they may have been built to an exact measurement of 550 x 300 Attic Ionic feet (i.e. 161.15 x 87.90 m). If so, they would count among the largest known in the ancient world. In the southern part the layout becomes more diffuse: the orientation of buildings and streets remain the same but individual blocks are more difficult to detect; within all the blocks, however, there is a dense concentration of houses.

An evaluation trench across one of the block boundaries reproduced the same results as in 2016, i.e. rows of large jars place upside down along one edge. This year, however, we found evidence for no less than three rows of jars one above the other.

Since we have found the same pattern in two completely separate locations, it seems reasonable to consider that this arrangement may be typical, in which case many thousands of vessels may be placed throughout the city along one side of these linear features. While interpretation will require further work, they seem to represent part of an elaborate drainage system that underlay routeways, one way of dealing with a city that flooded frequently and disastrously.

Several areas showed up in the geophysics plot as devoid of any archaeological features. This was confirmed by the evaluation trenches, which showed a sequence of single or multiple successive flooding events. Further erosion of the ancient city has clearly taken place around the outside bend of the palaeo riverbed where flooding has cut into some of the city blocks, and to the west where an evaluation trench in agricultural fields also produced no archaeological deposits.

An area close to the eastern rampart was also surveyed (Area B). It includes industrial buildings and spaces, with 13 kilns. Several are adjacent to and aligned with a 20 m wide roadway, but two kilns actually sit in this roadway, suggesting a chronological sequence that will require further investigation.

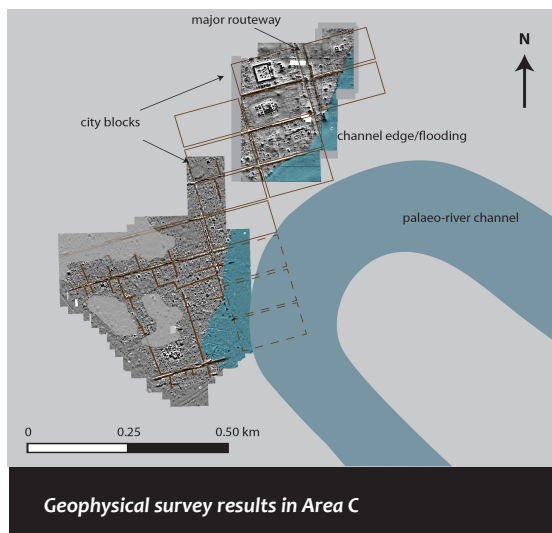
Finally, bulldozer damage and looting pits closer to the northern rampart required immediate attention. Here the geophysical survey revealed the outline of a single building covering more than 10,000 square metres (Area C). It has a central peristyle, 20 m square, with the individual column placements clearly visible in the geophysics plot. This and other features are reminiscent of the so-called Little Palace at Nippur, dating to the Arsacid period.

The collection of artefacts over the surface of Charax Spasinou resulted in a total of 3,627 pottery sherds, of which about sixty per cent were from large storage vessels. All shapes fall within the range Arsacid-Sasanian, and provisionally we can say that the date is most consistent with a range of 1st to 3rd century AD.

After pottery, the commonest find was bronze coins, 182 altogether. These cover the 1st century BC into the 4th century AD. A minimum of 85 belong to the locally produced coinage of the kings of Mesene, some showing the known features of kings such as Attambelos IV. Most known Mesene coins are silver tetradrachms, but many from Charax Spasinou are otherwise unknown smaller denominations in bronze, opening a new chapter in Arsacid numismatics.

The regional survey included visits to known sites (for which we are particularly grateful to Qahtan Al-Abeed for access to his maps) and 20 km of walked transects. Drone flights were used to map all sites and landscape features, and pottery from the surface collected to identify periods of occupation. Three additional days were devoted to the nearby large site of Forat, the successor city to Charax. The successful gradiometer trial there was carried out, with our technical support, by our two team members from the Basra office of SBAH, Ahmed Abdullah al-Mamouri and Abdul Razak Kadhim. Having worked extremely hard with us and participated fully throughout the season, they are now able to do gradiometer survey, including basic data processing of results, by themselves. This we consider one of our most important results.

Dr Robert Killick
Honorary Fellow, Manchester University



¹ We are grateful for additional support from Baron Lorne Thyssen-Bornemisza at the Augustus Foundation, to the State Board for Antiquities and Heritage in Basra, and The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI).

Early Islamic Period Metalwork of the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids and Fāṭimids

My PhD research necessitated travel to Germany for the study of Early Islamic Period (7th-12th centuries CE) metalwork in the collections of Senator Manfred Bumiller in the Universitätsmuseum für Islamische Kunst at Bamberg and Museum für Islamische Kunst in the Staatliche Museen at Berlin, which was undertaken during the period of 28 March – 11 April 2016. This was an extremely successful trip and could not have been undertaken without the generous financial support in the form of a research grant from The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). The Bumiller Collection, although not well known, is perhaps the largest in the world for Early Islamic Period metalwork datable to the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids and Saldjuks, with over 6,000 objects mostly in metal (Fig. 1). The collection also consists of material attributed to the Fāṭimids, other semi-autonomous dynasties under the 'Abbāsids and from the later Islamic world. The Museum für Islamische Kunst houses one of the earliest collections of Islamic art, covering a wide range of material, including metalwork, amassed from the breadth of the Islamic world. The metalwork, mostly held in the museum store, reflects the Early Islamic Period dynasties of the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids, Fāṭimids, Saldjuks and others (Fig. 2).



Fig.1 Room displaying various metal vessels including bottles, jars and mortars of the Bumiller Collection in the Universitätsmuseum für Islamische Kunst at Bamberg. The museum catalogues and my workspace are visible on the left. (Photo: G Bilotto)



Fig. 2 A study of several Early Islamic Period metal objects in the store of the Museum für Islamische Kunst in the Staatliche Museen at Berlin, with Dr Gisela Helmecke (Photo: by G Bilotto)

My PhD research covers Early Islamic Period metalwork, particularly of the Fāṭimids (909-1172 CE), a dynasty that ruled over mediaeval Bilād al-Shām (the Levant), Ifrīkiya (central North Africa) and Misr (Egypt). The first part of my research involved the determination of an exact identification for metalwork datable to the Fāṭimids, which required the study of earlier dynastic metal objects, particularly of the Umayyads and 'Abbāsids in Bilād ar-Rāfidayn (Mesopotamia). Most metalwork is difficult to distinguish between the Umayyad, 'Abbāsid and Fāṭimid caliphal periods and thus has often been overlooked in scholarship. Metalwork is also both easily portable and valuable. An example would be a metal object produced in the Abbāsid capital Baghdād, then transported

across their territory to Fustāt, later a Fāṭimid city, making the future origin and identification of the object difficult. A closer examination of the objects' similarities and differences for categorisation was therefore necessary to determine an accurate attribution.

A second aspect of my research concerned the relationship between metalwork production of the three different dynasties in the Early Islamic Period and the styles, themes and actual techniques of manufacture. The metal object, again produced in Baghdād and exported to Fustāt, might influence the development of metalwork produced under the succeeding Fāṭimid dynasty. The influences each of the three dynasties had on their own metalwork production and the extent these objects influenced metalwork production in successive dynasties is an area of study not addressed in current scholarship. The examination of various metal objects from these periods was therefore essential for the collection of data to answer these two research questions.

My time with the Bumiller Collection was invaluable, allowing for the examination, photographing and recording of measurements and weights of numerous metal objects from the Umayyads and 'Abbāsids in Bilād ar-Rāfidayn, Khurāsān (part of Iran, Central Asia and Afghānistān) and Mā warā al-Nahr (Transoxiana or Central Asia). Data was collected on bottles, bowls, figural objects, jars, utensils and other vessels, which will be used in comparison with metalwork from other collections. The major importance of the Bumiller Collection stems from the type and quantity of metalwork, which collectively form an academic collection, rather than one common in a large state museum. The array of utilitarian objects and quantity of each type represent a complete assemblage of each particular object, allowing for information on the manufacture, use and range of styles. This important information is seldom available in a large state museum, which usually hold masterworks. Masterworks can be a disadvantage since they are less representative of an entire culture. Often produced for the elite or court, they are therefore not utilitarian objects or reflective of items used on a daily basis.

My research at the Bumiller Collection was facilitated by Senator Manfred Bumiller, collector and chairman of the museum foundation, Professor Dr Lorenz Korn from Universität Bamberg and Dr Monika Dahncke, former curator of the museum (Fig. 3). Through their generous help and support, access to all of the museum's collection was possible. Unknown at the time of the BISI research grant application, there is a branch museum for the Bumiller Collection in Berlin. After arrival in Berlin, for the second part of the trip, a visit to the branch museum was arranged through Jill Bumiller, head of the museum foundation, for the study of additional objects. The possibility for future collaboration with the museum on an exhibition project remains high. This opportunity and the study of objects in the museum for my PhD research would again not have been possible without the financial support from BISI.

Finally, my research was advanced after study in the store of the Museum für Islamische Kunst in the Staatliche Museen at Berlin, with the curator of Islamic art, Dr Gisela Helmecke. The museum contains a large number of metal objects from the Early Islamic Period including many from the 'Abbāsids and Fāṭimids. Dr Helmecke provided access to the store and assisted in my examination and photographing of bowls, lampstands, lids, pots and utensils. Although, many of these metal

objects were previously published, firsthand examination revealed many details not noted in publication, including obscured designs and inscriptions. Much more information was gained from handling the metal objects since most of these details usually are absent from museum catalogues. The occasion to meet with the former curator of Islamic art, Dr Jens Kröger, and discuss my research was also very helpful.



Fig. 3 Senator Manfred Bumiller examines an object from the Bumiller Collection in the Universitätsmuseum für Islamische Kunst at Bamberg. (Photo: by G Bilotto)

My future plans entail the publication of my PhD thesis, to expand current knowledge on the identification and influences of Early Islamic Period metalwork from the Umayyads, ‘Abbāsids and especially of the Fāṭimids. At this time, preparation has begun for an academic article to be submitted for publication consideration within a multivolume book from the University of Oxford on the concept of academic collecting, with the Bumiller Collection serving as the model. The significance of the collection both as the largest source for Early Islamic Period metalwork and the enormous quantity of each utilitarian object, provide an extremely unique and specialised source for research. The hope is that the lesser known collection will become better recognized for its importance. In the planned publications, BISI will be equally acknowledged for its substantial financial support.

Gregory Bilotto
PhD Candidate, SOAS

VISITING IRAQI SCHOLARSHIPS

BISI - DANGOOR SCHOLARS

With the help of a generous donation from Dangoor Education, through David Dangoor, we hosted two scholars from Iraq.

Dr Nawrast Sabah, a Lecturer at the Department of Geology, College of Science, University of Basrah, spent 2 months working with Prof Charles French in the Charles McBurney Laboratory for Geoarchaeology at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. Dr Sabah's scholarship was awarded to help with her study into *Stratigraphy and Climate Changes Record of Mesopotamia Marshland and some Archaeological Sites during Quaternary*.

Dr Saba Sami Al Ali, Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture, College of Engineering, Al Nahrain University, spent 1 month working with Dr Ian Jackson of the School of Architecture, University of Liverpool. Dr Sami's scholarship was awarded to assist with research into the *Collection of Archival Material available in the UK for the Documentation and Preservation of Infrastructure and Prestigious Buildings built during British Colonial Rule in Iraq*.



Dr Nawrast Sabah visiting the British Museum



Dr Nawrast Sabah attending a BISI Lecture at the British Academy. From left to right: Dr Jennifer Griggs, BISI Vice-Chair Joan porter MacIver, Dr Nawrast Sabah

BISI - Dangoor Visiting Iraqi Scholarships

Collection of Archival Material available in the UK for the Documentation and Preservation of Prestigious Infrastructure built during British Colonial Rule

The Scholarship was granted by the BISI on the 28 February 2017 and was taken up in the period 15 November 2017 - 15 December 2017.

The two main aims of the project were:

- Initiating a local digital archive of the modern movement architecture in Iraq, starting with early modernity of the 20th century. This archive would provide indispensable material for writing comprehensive historiography of any of these buildings, and make it available to Iraqi researchers as well as interested individuals. A main beneficiary would be the DOCOMOMO¹ Iraqi organisation.¹⁾
 - Preparation for public exhibition of this architecture to raise public and institutional interest towards the value of these buildings as national heritage worthy of attention, preservation and appropriate revival.
- Contact was made with Professor Iain Jackson at the School of Architecture in the University of Liverpool, who encouraged the project and provided his advice.

A second visit to the UK was also made, within the multi entry visa permission acquired in the first visit. This was during the period 2 - 18 February 2018. The aim was to acquire items that were stored off-site, and could not be provided within the duration of the first visit, specifically from the library of the Institution of Civil Engineers and from the Wilson & Mason Architects, as will be explained below.

Activities taken during both visits:

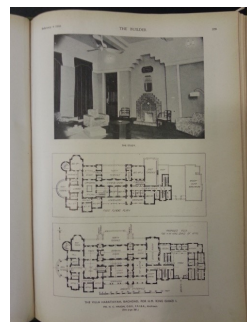
The scholarship visit was marked by a full schedule of visits to the libraries and viewing as much material as possible, the second visit had particular targets, as mentioned above with more free time.

Main Project Activities:

These included visiting the main libraries of relevance as advised by Dr. Jackson:

- 1.The British Library
- 2.The National Archives
- 3.The RIBA Library
- 4.The Library at the Institution of Civil Engineers
5. The archive of the architectural firm of Wilson & Mason Architects

A considerable amount of archival material has been viewed and examined during these visits. Most of them were of the Colonial Office and War Office correspondences in the early 19th century and later the Foreign Office. Then selection of material of relevance to architecture and buildings' undertakings was done. Some were photographed personally, especially those of minor size, while others, such as large maps, were ordered to be scanned by the library and provided as digital copies. Ordering and scanning fees' payment were done with the help of BISI coordinator, Dr. Jennifer Griggs.



Examining archival materials

The Outcome of the visits

- Collection of sets of rare maps of Basra Baghdad, mostly of the years 1919, 1936-1939. In addition to maps of other Iraqi cities like Mosul, Kirkuk and Babylon of the year 1919. Most of these maps are not yet published.
- Photographing correspondences concerning building undertakings during the period of interest.

¹ The Iraq Chapter of the international organization of the Documentation and Conservation of buildings and sites of the Modern Movement was initiated in September 2016

BISI - Dangoor Visiting Iraqi Scholarships

- Photographing the annual report of the Public Work Department in Iraq of the years: 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927. This book was purchased and located online then acquired in the second visit to the UK, at the library of the ICE, as it was not available during the first visit.
- Acquisition of sets of digitised archival photographs of the colored drawings of Wilson & Mason for their buildings in Iraq and the Middle East, in addition to what has been published about these buildings in British Architectural Journals of the early 20th century, which show these buildings in their original status.

Through emails exchanged with the Wilson & Mason architects, some important items were mentioned to be preserved at the firm's archive, off-site. These archival boxes were arranged to be brought for viewing in the office during the second visit to the UK. Unfortunately, the boxes did not contain what was anticipated.

Importance of the Acquired Material

Although none of the original architectural drawings of colonial buildings were found, except for the master plan of the (Al Il Beit University in Baghdad) held by the National Archives, the material acquired is of importance in several ways:

- The maps of Baghdad and Basra will help researchers, urban planners and designers, to build comprehensive views of the growth and development of the urban form and infrastructure of these cities and reveal memorable spots of the city. All this basic information will be of use in the academic teaching courses of urban planning and design as well as for practitioners who are involved in planning and development of both cities.
- On the other hand, these maps and other types of materials listed above will help verify the history of buildings and landmarks, and write a historiography of these buildings as part of the documentation needed of all architectural heritage.

- It is also hoped that this experience will trigger other similar ideas for archival material in Turkey and Germany, and perhaps other places, which are of relevance to Iraq.



Dr Saba Sami at Wilson & Mason Architects

Steps to be taken to activate the benefit from the archival material

The subject of the scholarship is attracting interest of individuals, and requests to use this material are already raised. The deanery at the College of Engineering at Al Nahrain University are keen to show the importance of this subject.

- A symposium is to be held at the Department of Architecture in Al-Nahrain university (hopefully on the 18th of March) to speak about this scholarship and the experience of dealing with archival material.
- A Catalogue book is on the process of being prepared for publishing and to be distributed to all institutions (academic or not) to achieve awareness of this material. This process includes classifying the material, and working on the improvement of some photographs as well as re-composing fragmented maps in total wholes, then to illustrate everything with description and proper citation.
- A public exhibition is to be held for the items acquired, such as the: Aerial photography of Baghdad 1919, the water colour drawings of Wilson and Mason, and the old photos of the buildings as when completed. This activity, as stated before, aims to attract people and institutions involved in dealing with heritage architecture to support claims

BISI - Dangoor Visiting Iraqi Scholarships

for the preservation and revival of these buildings, and of the landmarks and sites of the old cities.

- The exhibition might even include computer reconstructed films of areas in old Baghdad.

Other activities undertaken during both visits

My BISI-Dangoor scholarship afforded great opportunities at a professional level. Being an architect and a teacher of the history of architecture, one of my main concerns is to visit and experience urban places and the architecture of cities. Cities like London which are rooted in the past and yet continue their dialogue with the present, are sources of knowledge, entertainment and inspiration to any visitor. While in London I attended several cultural events and visited important monuments in the capital. These included:

- Attending two of the BISI events. The first was the lecture by Dr Lamia Al-Gailani Werr: The Story of a Museum, which was about the National Iraqi Museum. The other was the film: Remember Baghdad, which was about the life of the Jews of Iraq in the 19th century. The receptions after both events were a good opportunity to meet people interested and involved in Iraq's past and present culture.
- Visiting the place of work of the Project of Qatar Digital Library at the British Library with Dr Mark Hobbs who is a member of the project's team. Dr Hobbs explained the work undertaken in this project and the material that is being made available online.
- Visiting the British Museum, with Dr Griggs. The Assyrian and Egyptian halls were the main places we visited. A return to the museum was made on the second visit.
- A tour in London with the architect and urban planner Paul Fineberg. This tour took a whole day, and was conducted professionally with generous explanations from Mr Fineberg about the growth of the city and the transformations of its quarters and original aspects. Dr Griggs also participated in this tour.



A tour in London. From left to right: Mr Paul Fineberg, Dr Jennifer Griggs, Dr Saba Sami

- Visiting the V&A Museum
- Visiting the Museum of London
- Visiting Sir John Soane's Museum, with Paul Fineberg
- Visiting the National Gallery
- Visits to Cambridge University Campus, and the University of Sheffield/School of Art and Architecture - done in the company of Iraqi friends
- Visiting the O2 plaza



From left to right: Dr Saba Sami, David Dangoor of Dangoor Education, BISI Vice-Chair Joan Porter MacIver, BISI Chair Dr Paul Collins

- A nice opportunity was also achieved during the second visit. On 9 February, I delivered a lecture at the University of Coventry on "the Architecture of Ancient Mesopotamia: Past Glory and Present Inspirations." This lecture was delivered to the undergraduate students, following the lecture a discussion in the design studio with second year students took place. This visit to the University of Coventry came in accordance with the cooperation of Al Nahrain University with Coventry University at different academic levels, but would not have been achieved without the multi-entry visa granted in the first visit.

BISI - Dangoor Visiting Iraqi Scholarships



Dr Saba Sami Al Ali delivering a lecture at the University of Coventry

Meeting new People - Introducing new Scopes:

The scholarship was a great opportunity for meeting new people introduced by Council members of BISI, who shared interest and more means and ideas for support to culture and education in Iraq.

1. Joan Porter MacIver introduced architect and urban designer Paul Fineberg Director of the practice "Design Research: Cities". Considering his professional resume, it is hoped that he would give a talk or more to our students in Al Nahrain University about issues in architecture and urban design. Hopefully this will be arranged for April or early May 2018.

2. Daniel Lowe, Curator of the Arabic collection at the British Library arranged meetings with:

- Gwendoline Webber, Architecture Program Manager at the British Council. Webber offered cooperation to support academic activities, like workshops or lecture or any other form of activities that may be joined with British academics or professionals.
- Professor Eleanor Robson, Director of the Nahrein Network. Professor Robson explained the project of the Nahrein Network, and scope of ideas the network may support.



Dr Saba Sami Al Ali delivering a seminar at the University of Coventry

Report by Dr Saba Sami Al Ali

Assistant Professor, Al Nahrain University, Baghdad

OUTREACH GRANT REPORTS

'Felt an Iraqi Object' Workshops

On 16th and 17th August 2018, textile artist, Karin Celestine and British-Iraqi archaeologist, Dr Zena Kamash, ran two workshops at Cheney School, Oxford as part of the 'Rematerialising Mosul Museum' project. At these workshops participants were invited to make a felted panel inspired by an object from Iraq. Karin demonstrated how the wet-felting technique works and Zena was on hand to talk about the objects and cultural heritage of Iraq. For inspiration, we had a large bundle of images of objects from all periods across Iraq, including drawings created for the BISI-funded 'Ancient Objects for Modern Dilemmas' project. Zena also brought in some of her own heirlooms and gifts from her family.

The workshops were open to anyone with an interest in Iraq and its culture. A wide range of people came to both workshops, including Iraqis now living in the UK, people learning Arabic who wanted to find out more about Iraq's culture, and crafting enthusiasts who were keen to learn a new skill. One of the most touching parts of the workshops was watching all these people of different backgrounds, experiences and ages sharing their stories and finding common ground through crafting and engaging with Iraq's heritage. People who knew very little about Iraq came away knowing more with some getting in touch afterwards to say that they had gone on to read more about the country's politics and to visit museums to see more objects as a consequence of being at the workshop. For Iraqis who came the workshops offered a chance to shape their own heritage and explore how it relates to their identity; this resulted, for example, in a lamassu made in West Ham United colours!

Using textiles and wet-felting in the workshops tapped into the long tradition of textile production in Iraq and in so doing opened up the range of cultural heritage from the purely archaeological to include, for example, flowers. The textile focus also meant that the workshops were a preliminary exploration into using heritage for healing through crafts, as there is a growing body of evidence that crafting, especially with textiles, promotes well-being and can be used to complement the treatment of trauma. This relates to Zena's current research into whether there are more effective alternatives to traditional cultural heritage reconstruction in post-conflict contexts, especially in Syria and Iraq. It was clear from the wide array of creativity in the final pieces that giving people the freedom to make their own heritage resulted in a host of different responses, in some cases even to the same object. This served as an important reminder that there is no single, correct way to relate to the past. People's connections with the past are intricate and individual; as such we need to find more ways to embrace that multivocality and give space for those intimate interactions.



Participants from both workshops proudly displaying their felted panels Photo: Zena Kamash

The grant from The British Institute for the Study of Iraq made it possible to explore alternative ways of responding to heritage and to promote a more positive narrative about Iraq and its heritage. Without the grant and the workshops, it is unlikely that these groups of people would have found themselves in a room together to share their experiences, laugh and enjoy each other's company. The grant and the workshops will also, hopefully, provoke more conversations about the roles of heritage in post-conflict contexts and broaden the voices that are heard in those conversations.

The project has plans to continue and will be back at Cheney School for its Museum Celebration Festival on 27th March 2019. If you would like to get involved in the project by making a felted panel, please contact Zena for a free starter pack: Zena.Kamash@rhul.ac.uk Full instructions on how to do the wet-felting process are available online, together with a gallery of what was made in the workshops: <https://notallarchaeologists shave beards.wordpress.com/2018/08/20/felt-an-iraqi-object-workshops-cheney-school-gallery/>

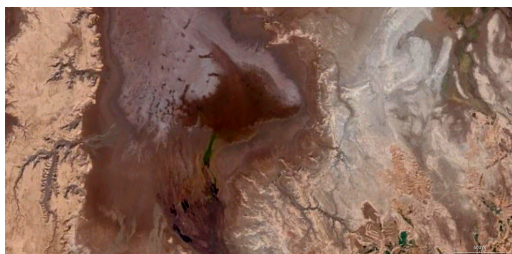
Zena Kamash

Senior Lecturer, Royal Holloway



Participants from both workshops proudly displaying their felted panels
Photo: Zena Kamash

The Archive and the Contested Landscape (From Basra to Cambridge and back)



Recent satellite image showing the original site of one of the borings, put down by the Iraq Petroleum Company in the 1930s, where the fossils were collected. (Image courtesy of Artists Activists, 2016)

From Basra to Cambridge and Back is an ongoing art-geology research project, by Kelcy Davenport¹ and Nawrast Sabah Abd Alwahab². Together they are exploring artefacts, originating from Iraq and currently residing in the University of Cambridge Museums, via an open-ended and experimental research collaboration.

On 22nd March 2018 an Outreach Grant from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq funded The Archive and the Contested Landscape symposium, organised by Kelcy and Nawrast, at the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences and the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge.

The evening began with a tour of the museum by Collections Assistant of Paleontology, Matt Riley, and a discussion around two drawers of fossils, from al-Hammer Marshes in Southern Iraq, which had come to reside at the museum in Cambridge in 1966. These tiny samples, thought to be up to 12,000 years old (Holocene era), had been obtained via boring put down by the, then, British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company and donated by the Geologist William A. MacFayden. This was the first collection of 'artefacts from Iraq' which Nawrast and Kelcy had researched in 2016, producing a presentation and essay on the findings as part of the Iconference. During the museum visit it was agreed for a copy of Nawrast's paper, with an introduction by Kelcy, to be included in the museum's archive. Matt told us that until this project began these fossils had not been researched since arriving at the Sedgwick more than half a century ago.

The museum tour and viewing session was followed by a symposium and drinks reception at the Department of Archaeology. This was attended by academics from geology, archaeology, art, English literature, heritage and museum studies, and photography, as well as students, local artists, and members of the wider public.

The symposium event introduced The Archive and the Contested Landscape as a theme and announced an Open Call for Creative Works by way of response towards a forthcoming exhibition. Speakers Jananne Al Ani³ and Sarah Nankivell⁴ presented their recent research in relation to the theme with a particular focus, at this event, on the archive of the 'Mesopotamian Plains'. Kelcy and Nawrast concluded the event with a discussion on certain terms relating to both Art and Geology. These were: 'Time & Matter', 'Process & Change' and 'The Archive and the Contested Landscape', by way of exploring common ground between their individual research practice. During this discussion two slideshows played on-screen simultaneously: one showing Nawrast on a field trip to Al-Hammar Marshes, one showing the fossils being researched in the museum through the lens of the microscope. Following this two further slideshows played: one showing Nawrast at work in the geoarchaeology lab in Cambridge, one showing the original sites of the borings put down in the 1930s (when the fossils were extracted) via satellite images taken in 2016 using the European Space Agency Sentinel platform.



Speakers (left to right): Sarah Nankivell, Jananne Al Ani, Kelcy Davenport, Nawrast Sabah Abd Alwahab. (Image courtesy of James W Norton)

The Archive and the Contested Landscape exhibition and programme of events will take place as part of the 11th Cambridge Festival of Ideas across Anglia Ruskin University Cambridge campus, Zion Baptist Church Crypt, and Gallery 9, from 22nd - 28th October 2018.

The work of fifty practitioners, across: archaeology, architecture, documentary and experimental film, fine art, geology, illustration, literature, music, performance, philosophy, and photography, has been brought together to explore (individually and collectively) the dynamic material interplay between archives and contested landscapes.

This project aims to:

- generate new work, thoughts and critical debate about the interplay between archives and contested landscapes,
- create a new cross-disciplinary network of practitioners exploring the theme and illuminating prospects for future collaborations,
- open up access to education, the theme, and this process of creative knowledge production by attracting participation by those who may not usually consider including their work in either an arts forum or a higher education setting.

The Cambridge exhibition will be curated by artists, Kelcy Davenport and James W Norton. The Basra exhibition will be curated by Geologist, Nawrast Abd Alwahab.

Thanks to initial support from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, for the introductory symposium, this project has secured further funding and support from StoryLab Research Institute, Fine Art Research Unit, the Cambridge School of Art, and the Anglia Ruskin University Arts Council. Following the exhibition a legacy website will be created, formed of critical commentaries by participating practitioners and curators, plus audience feedback, reflecting on the different works in relation to archives and contested landscapes, and in this way, working to contribute to knowledge on the theme.

Kelcy Davenport

Associate Lecturer, Anglia Ruskin University

<https://thearchiveandthecontestedlandscape.wordpress.com/>

* With thanks to Artists Activists for satellite images and images and James W Norton for photographs taken at the symposium



The Archive and the Contested Landscape symposium in the South Lecture Room, Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge. (Image courtesy of James W Norton)



Viewing the collection of fossils from Al-Hammer Marshes with Collections Assistant of Paleaontology, Matt Riley, at the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences. (Image courtesy of James W Norton)

1 Kelcy Davenport is an Artist, PhD Candidate, and Associate Lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University, whose research explores how art functions as resistance today, via a creative practice of reworking, and re-purposing institutions of theatre, geographical mapping, and education - a relation that becomes interaction.

2 Dr Nawrast Sabah abd Alwahab is a Geologist and Sedimentology Lecturer at the University of Basrah, whose current research is focused on the stratigraphy and climate change record, of the Mesopotamian marshland and certain archaeological sites, during the Quaternary Period, with a special interest in moving beyond scientific paradigms to philosophical enquiry.

3 Jannane Al Ani is an Artist and Senior Research Fellow at the University of the Arts, London. Working with photography, film and video, she has an ongoing interest in the documentary tradition, through intimate recollections and more official accounts. Her work also engages with the landscape of the Middle East, its archaeology and its visual representation with recent work referencing the use of lens-based technologies in modern warfare and surveillance. Her work is in the collections of the Tate (London,), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), and Darat al Funun (Amman).

4 Sarah Nankiyell holds an MPhil. in Archaeological Heritage and Museums from the University of Cambridge, where her research focused on the destruction of heritage sites in conflict and the discursive representation of these events through the media. Sarah is currently the Programme Manager of Forensic Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. She also recently co-curated, together with Dr. Dacia Viejo-Rose, the exhibition *Restoring truth to ruins?* (Cambridge, 2017) investigating the relationship between heritage and truth by asking what we can learn from the process of reproducing the past.

FUTURE BISI LECTURES – SAVE THE DATES

Rashad Salim

The Ark Re-imagined: Navigating Iraqi Cultural Heritage on the Edge of Extinction

Wednesday 14 November 2018, 6.00pm at the British Academy

Dr Robert Killick

From Alexander to al-Tabari: Recent Investigations at Charax Spasinou, Southern Iraq

Wednesday 27 February 2019, 6.00pm at the British Academy
Annual Mallowan Lecture

Dr Noorah Al-Gailani

A Sufi Shrine in Baghdad: The Challenges of Changing Time

Wednesday 12 June 2019, 6.00pm at the British Academy
Annual Bonham-Carter Lecture

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

Audio recordings of past BISI events can be listened to at: **<http://www.bisi.ac.uk/content/events-archive>**



BISI GRANTS & PRIZES

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

BISI OUTREACH GRANTS

BISI is currently developing an exciting new approach for supporting public engagement projects that promote a greater understanding of Iraq's history, society and culture. As a result, our Outreach Grants will not be available for 2018/2019. Details about the new arrangements will be made available as soon as possible.

BISI ACADEMIC GRANTS

Research and Conference Grants

(normally up to £4,000 per grant)

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

Annual Deadline: 1 February.



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

Annual Pilot Project Grant

(up to £8,000)

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

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

VISITING IRAQI SCHOLARSHIPS

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Nahrein Network will be financially supporting BISI's Visiting Iraqi Scholarships over the next three years, with a total of twenty scholars expected by 2020. BISI and the Nahrein Network will be offering four to six Visiting Iraqi Scholarships each year to enable academics, cultural heritage professionals, and NGO workers from Iraq to visit the UK for 1-2 months for training and research. We welcome applications from Iraq-based scholars if their project relates to one or more of the Nahrein Network's five aims. Applicants must currently reside in Iraq and be able to converse and understand English to a working level to ensure that visits are a success. **Annual Deadlines:** 15 February and 15 August

On an exception basis, BISI may consider funding a separate Visiting Scholar whose research is not covered by the Nahrein Network's aim. Only exceptional applications with developed research proposals and pre-established links to a UK academic sponsor or university will be assessed.

Please consult www.bisi.ac.uk for information on eligibility and how to apply for all BISI grants, or contact the Executive Officer for further assistance on **E: bisi@britac.ac.uk** or **T: 020 7969 5274**

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BISI is very grateful for donations, both large and small.
Here we would like to thank all those who donated to us in 2018

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Volunteers 2018

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

Eva Miller
Helene Maloigne
Alan Sandall
Ayad Abdulahad
Lauren Mulveen
Zainab Mehdi



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