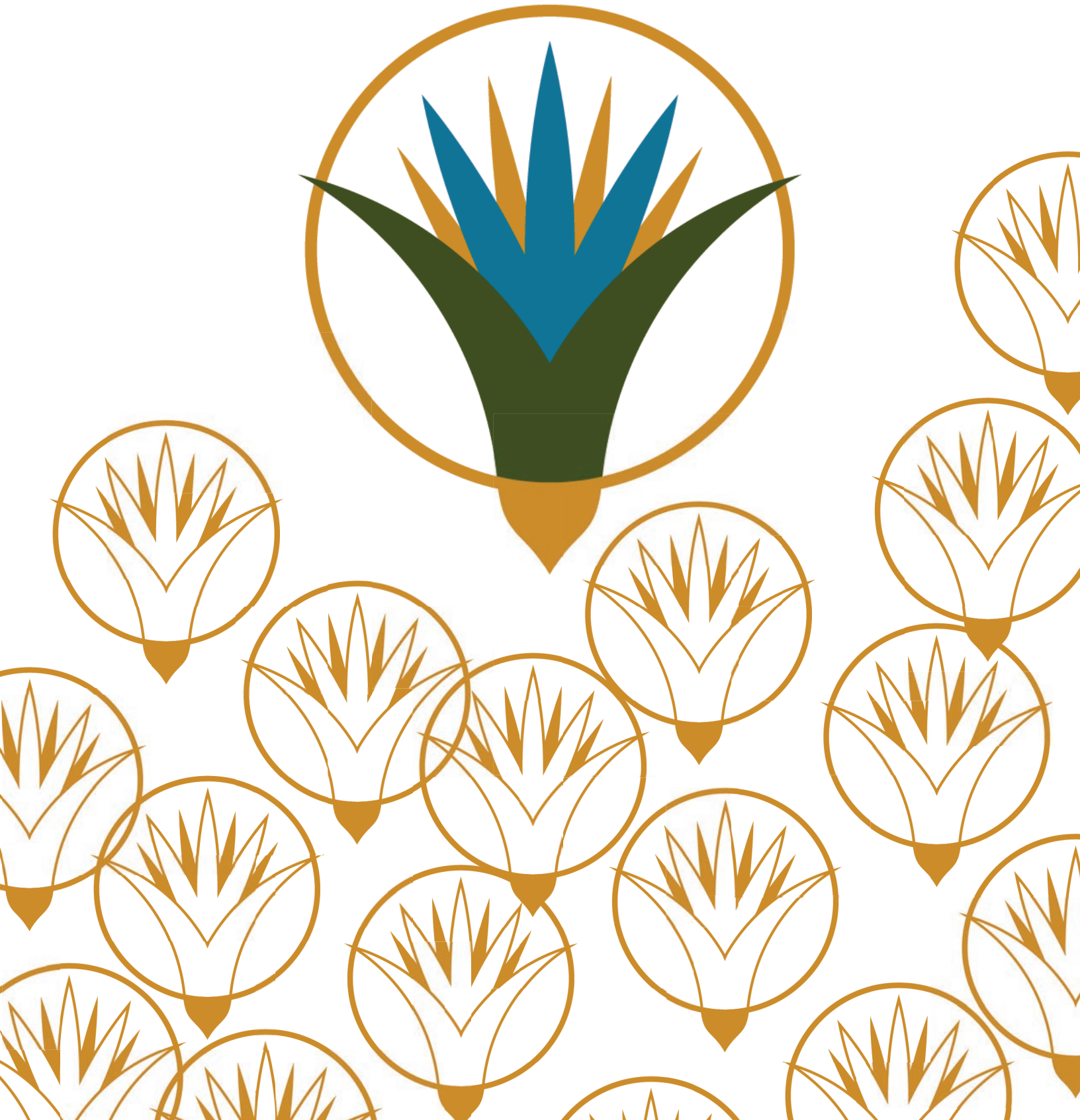


# News & Notes

MEMBERS' MAGAZINE

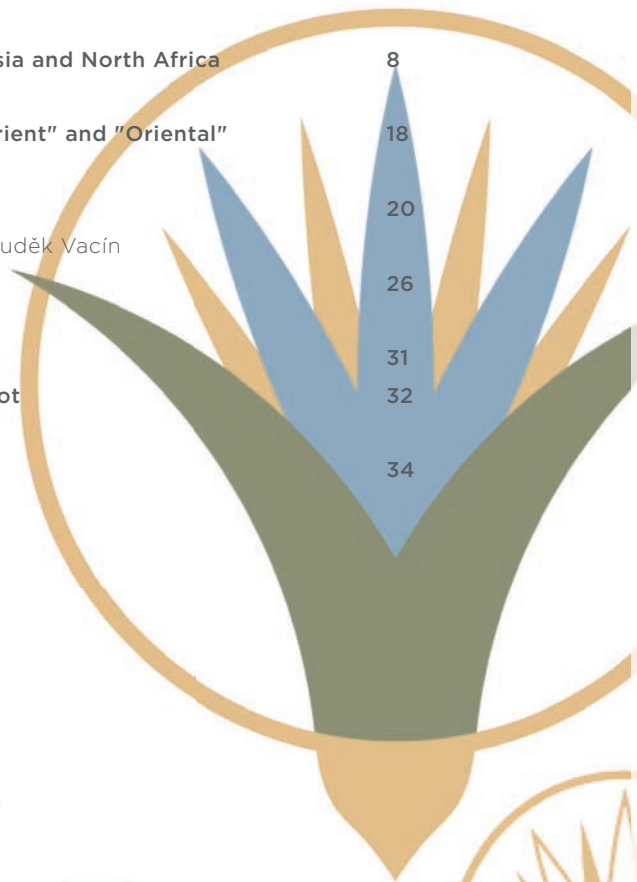
ISSUE 254 | SPRING/SUMMER 2023



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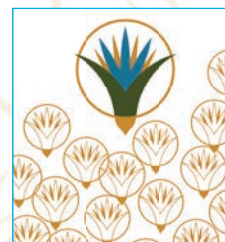
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*News & Notes* is a quarterly publication of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, printed exclusively as one of the privileges of membership.

ON THE COVER: The ISAC logo





## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The issue of *News & Notes* before you is almost completely dedicated to the name change: we're the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures—West Asia & North Africa now, no longer the familiar Oriental Institute. The name change was a true community effort, a team project, that took a good two years to reach its climax on April 4, 2023, when we announced our new name and logo to the world. The photo gallery on the following pages shows you some of the festive atmosphere on that day!

You will read an article by Kiersten Neumann on the lotus flower as an iconographic motif found in all parts of "West Asia and North Africa" and visible throughout our building as well. We are extremely grateful to Laurie Buman from UChicago Creative for having been inspired by the ubiquitous lotus and creating this beautiful logo for us. Tasha Vorderstrasse contributes a historical overview of how the term "Oriental" evolved in the English language and especially in this country, giving some background and history to our name change.

Peter Raulwing and Luděk Vacín share a wonderful biographical sketch of the famous Assyriologist Benno Landsberger, who taught and researched at what was then still the Oriental Institute from 1948 until his death in 1968. There is also a brief look at the retirement party for Jan Johnson and Don Whitcomb on May 24 of this year. Finally, our in-house interviewer, Shirlee Hoffman, concludes this issue with a conversation she had with our new chief curator and associate director of the ISAC Museum, Marc Maillot.

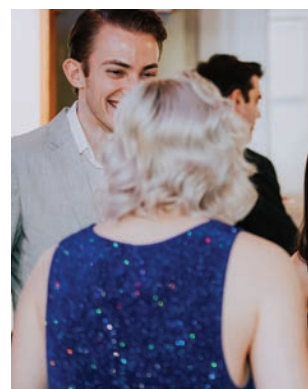
This is the last issue of *News & Notes* of my interim directorship that I have the honor and privilege to write an introduction for. I want to express first of all my sincere gratitude to Matt Welton and Becca Cain, who produce and lay out these issues every quarter with great regularity and creativity. Secondly, I want to thank Drew Baumann, our managing editor of publications, and all the authors who over the past years have filled these pages. And thirdly, I thank you, our members, for your loyal interest in our work and our mission to spread the word of the fascinating cultures of West Asia and North Africa, to which we owe so much in the modern world.

THEO VAN DEN HOUT  
Interim Director

# ISAC NAME CHANGE RECEPTION

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2023

WITH COMMENTS BY  
PAUL ALIVISATOS, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESIDENT  
KATHERINE BAICKER, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PROVOST  
THEO VAN DEN HOUT, INTERIM DIRECTOR





PHOTOS BY CHARISSA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY





## A NEW NAME FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

by Theo van den Hout



On May 2, 1919, John D. Rockefeller sent James Henry Breasted a famous letter, in which he confessed to be “greatly interested” in Breasted’s “plan for the organization of an Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.” In a parallel letter dated the very same day to University of Chicago President Harry Pratt Judson, Rockefeller pledged the sum of \$100,000 over five years to support the “project.” Within weeks, the University’s board of trustees followed suit, and on May 19 the Oriental Institute was a fact.

At that point in time, calling the new institute “Oriental” was entirely appropriate. *Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language* of 1934, for instance, defined “Orient” as “The East; eastern countries, . . . esp. the countries east of the Mediterranean . . . ; also, the countries of Asia generally.” The word thus encompassed the whole of Asia, from Japan and China all the way to Mesopotamia and Turkey, a view that persisted into the 1960s. It was not until 1966, for instance, that the University of Chicago’s Department of Oriental Languages and Civilizations was divided into the now-separate Departments of East Asian, South Asian, and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (EALC, SALC, and NELC, respectively). In fact, when Breasted started his Oriental Museum in Haskell Hall (the Haskell Oriental Museum), one could find the statue of a sitting Buddha right next to a Neo-Assyrian relief. Additionally, the capital *A* that precedes all Oriental Institute Museum registration numbers for objects not coming from Egypt (which all start with an *E*) from the very beginning stood and still stands for “Asian.”

But meanings change. Many a visitor to the OI was surprised to find a collection that focuses exclusively on the ancient *Middle East*. Buddha statues no longer grace our collections. Meanings sometimes also change for the worse. If “Oriental” may have been a purely geographical term when Breasted named his institute, it has since taken on an often derogatory connotation. On May 20, 2016, almost exactly ninety-seven years after the founding of the OI, President Barack Obama signed a new bill, unanimously passed in Congress, amending two federal acts and banning, among other terms, the use of the word “Oriental” as insensitive and outdated.

These two considerations—the general association of the word “Oriental” with the Far East and its negative connotation—prompted the OI faculty in June 2020 to decide to “change the name of the OI and enter into a discussion to find a suitable name.” To lead that discussion, a committee was formed on March 25, 2021, to explore the various issues surrounding such a momentous change, to consult all major stakeholders, and possibly to “provide several options for a new name.” The committee was chaired by associate professor Hervé Reculeau and was probably the broadest the OI had ever seen, with no fewer than thirteen representatives from the

OI, NELC, and Center for Middle Eastern Studies faculty; OI staff; OI advisory council members; and PhD students. The committee submitted its findings on December 15, 2021. Among them was the suggestion to rename the OI as the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, or ISAC, followed by a tagline defining the area of ancient cultures that we study: West Asia and North Africa. “West Asia” is a non-Eurocentric designation that brings us at least as far as Iran. “North Africa” includes Egypt, Sudan, and Libya. In their meeting on June 29, 2022, the faculty of the OI voted to adopt this name.

Ever since that June meeting, we have been preparing for all possible implications of the name change, be they legal, financial, or related to information technology, social media, signage inside and outside our building, communications, or publications. We formed a working group of faculty and staff that discussed and guided all these issues. The group consisted of Brendan Bulger (associate director of administration and finance), Logan Conley (IT user support specialist), Bill Cospser (director of development), Kiersten Neumann (OI Museum curator), Mehrnoush Soroush (OI faculty member), Josh Tulisaki (manager of exhibition design and production), Theo van den Hout (OI faculty member and interim OI director), and Matt Welton (associate director of membership programming, marketing, and communications).

One of the challenges for the group was the development of a logo to go with the new name. We started with a poll on October 7, 2022, asking the entire OI community for “suggestions that may evoke, relate to, and represent the full breadth of the mission and history of the Oriental Institute,” and walked through the museum with the UChicago Creative team for further inspiration. A clear favorite was a floral element, the lotus flower, that can be seen throughout our building, both in the original 1929–30 architecture and in the OI Museum. After several sessions with the OI working group, Laurie Buman of UChicago Creative designed a new logo that adheres to the standards imposed on all University of Chicago units.

Changing our name after almost 104 years is a huge step. Thanks to the rigorous and often revolutionary research of past generations, “OI” became a brand, a mark of the highest quality in scholarship. Giving up that brand is not easy, but we have to keep up with modern developments. As an institute, we are devoted to history: as Leo Oppenheim, the longtime editor-in-chief of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, once said, “Only millennia matter here.” But we study history for the future. Standing on the shoulders of our predecessors, we pass on knowledge about our deep past to the generations to come, convinced that the past matters to all of us. Just as the ancient cultures we study changed through the millennia, we are changing as well and adding another page to the history of our institute. It’s up to us to make “ISAC” into the new brand.





THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

**INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY  
OF ANCIENT CULTURES**

West Asia & North Africa



**ISAC**



# THE LOTUS ACROSS WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA

by Kiersten Neumann

In April 2023, the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures—West Asia & North Africa (ISAC) launched a new logo alongside its new name (see Theo van den Hout’s article “A New Name for the Next Century,” page 6 in this issue). The design process for this ambitious graphic endeavor started in fall 2022. Inspiration was drawn first from the veritable diversity of the regions and cultures studied by ISAC and the artifacts that make up the ISAC Museum collections. The decorative motifs and design elements that mark the very skin of ISAC’s neo-Gothic building provided complementary motivation. Ultimately, we embraced the lotus as the graphic mark for ISAC’s new logo (fig. 1).

Artisans and craftsmen across West Asia and North Africa employed decorative floral motifs on an assortment of materials, ranging from monumental architectural decoration to portable luxury items and modest furnishings of the third millennium BCE through the first millennium CE. Inspiration was no doubt drawn from the variety of vegetation supported by such life-giving bodies of water as the Nile, Euphrates, and Tigris Rivers. Many of these floral renderings continue to generate both curiosity and uncertainty regarding their precise botanical identity and/or cultural significance and meaning. While imagery of the flowering aquatic lily commonly known as the lotus (of the *Nymphaea* species) is easier to identify botanically, its meaning is not always clear. Drawing on both iconographic and textual evidence, we can recognize with relative certainty representations of the lotus—a flower with blue or white outer petals and a yellow center radiating stamens; this center is revealed when the flower is open during the day and hidden when it closes at night. The lotus motif is broadly representative of abundance, fertility, and nature throughout West Asia and North Africa, yet some renderings and references reveal that it also symbolized individual deities, mythological elements, and powerful concepts such as creation, rebirth, eternity, and kingship. What is more, the form of the lotus varied considerably. Reproduced as either a stylized open blossom or a closed bud—or as the combined bud-and-blossom motif—as well as in assorted color schemes, the lotus was often connected to carefully articulated stems, tendrils, disks, palmettes, and pillars.

Lotus imagery is attested in ancient Egypt throughout the pharaonic period and beyond, as are textual references to this plant, making it one of the most ubiquitous for the region (fig. 2). One version of the Egyptian creation myth tells of the sun god rising from a lotus

blossom that bloomed from the primeval mound emerging from the waters of chaos, after which the rest of creation ensued. The plant’s yellow center was thought to symbolize this first (and subsequently daily) act, while the combination of lotus and solar imagery reiterate this relationship iconographically. The lotus blossom was also personified as the god Nefertem, who was principally depicted as a young man with a lotus headdress; the blossom could also be combined with the *ankh* sign, meaning “life,” thereby aligning it with concepts of eternity. The Pyramid Texts of Unas, preserved in the burial chamber of his Old Kingdom pyramid at Saqqara, speak of the king himself as both the lotus and the god Nefertem (utterance 249). This association is evoked in a wooden sculpture of the young King Tutankhamun, whose head is shown emerging from a lotus flower—in the guise of the god Nefertem—that rises from the primeval waters, symbolized by the sculpture’s blue base (fig. 3). Apart from its mythological and divine symbolism, the lotus was also valued for its olfactory, medicinal, and nutritional properties owing to its sweet fragrance, pain-relieving (and possibly psychoactive) qualities, and seeds (which were used in bread making), respectively (fig. 4). Of course, Egypt was not the only Nilotic culture whose visual materials included lotus imagery; this distinctive motif also appeared farther south in Nubia. Stylized lotus motifs often appear, for example, amid the unique and playful designs of Meroitic ceramics, rendered in red and black (fig. 5). Interestingly, another type of lotus that originated to the east, *Nelumbo nucifera* (commonly referred to as Indian lotus, Chinese water lily, and sacred lotus), was likely introduced into North Africa when the region was under the control of the Achaemenid Empire (sixth to fifth centuries BCE), though it is no longer attested in the area today. While this botanical specimen traveled westward, Egyptian lotus imagery itself moved in the opposite direction, in much earlier periods, the plant’s stylized form and life-giving symbolism making its way up through the Levant and beyond.

Excavations of eastern Mediterranean sites have uncovered an assortment of carved ivory inlays—which once decorated wooden furnishings—whose motifs and styles attest to a multidirectional exchange of materials, craftsmanship, and artistic traditions connecting North Africa and West Asia, especially during the Late Bronze Age (the “international period,” sixteenth to twelfth centuries BCE) and continuing into the Iron Age. ISAC’s excavations at Megiddo, for example, found many twelfth-century ivories of an Egyptianizing style,





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5b

Figure 1. ISAC's new logo.

Figure 2. Lotus flower inlay. Faience. Egypt, Amarna (Akhetaten). New Kingdom, Amarna period (1353-1336 BCE). Purchased, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (26.7967).

Figure 3. Sculpture of a head emerging from a lotus. Wood, stucco, paint. New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty (fourteenth century BCE). Egypt, Thebes, tomb of Tutankhamun (KV 62). Excavated by Howard Carter in 1924. Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 60723).

Figure 4. Painting of a scene from the tomb of Djehuty, Thebes (fifteenth century BCE), showing Djehuty, who smells a lotus blossom, and his mother, who holds and wears lotus blossoms, receiving offerings. Norman de Garis Davies, 1907-8. Rogers Fund, 1915. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (15.5.8).

Figure 5. (a) Bowl with a band of lotus flowers. Baked clay, paint. Meroitic period (first to third century CE). Sudan, Meroë. Excavated in 1909-10. Musée du Louvre (AF 12840). © 2003 Musée du Louvre / Christian Décamps. (b) Cup with alternating lotus blossoms and buds. Baked clay, paint. Meroitic period (first to third century CE). Egypt, Ballana. Excavated by ISAC, 1963-64. ISAC Museum (E22909).



their designs often including a lotus motif; the surface of this example—with lotus-and-palmette motifs and now in the ISAC Museum collections—also preserves black and blue paint (fig. 6). Similar lotus-bearing ivories were excavated at other Levantine sites, including Ugarit and Byblos, as well as farther north at Hadātu (modern Arslan Tash), where Iron Age examples were found.

Wall painting fragments showing lotus blossoms from Tell Sakka near Damascus—and interestingly much farther west, at Triana on the island of Rhodes—attest to the use of this Egyptianizing motif in large-scale form already in the Middle Bronze Age (National Museum, Damascus, 8290; Archaeological Museum of Rhodes, 864), while stone sculpture from the Levant shows its continued use during the Late Bronze Age. Such Late Bronze Age examples include King Ahiram's stone sarcophagus from Byblos and King Kilamuwa's stela from Sam'al (modern Zincirli), dated to the tenth century and ninth century BCE, respectively, both of which show the figure of the king holding lotus flowers in one hand (fig. 7). Cypriot visual culture also confirms the continued popularity of the lotus motif into the Iron Age, with both glyptic scenes and Bichrome Ware vessels including stylized lotus blossoms in their visual repertoire (figs. 8–9).

A fourteenth-century BCE lotus-flower ornament from Shapinwa (modern Ortaköy), a major Hittite religious and administrative center east of the Hittite capital of Hattusa, attests to the comparable circulation of Egyptianizing lotus imagery farther north, moving into Central Anatolia, during the Late Bronze Age (Çorum Museum, 28-1874-90). Here, too, the floral motif continues in use into the Iron Age. A well-preserved monumental example is the Neo-Hittite carved orthostat relief from Guzana (modern Tell Halaf): the scene shows a seated, robed figure holding a lotus flower to his nose, preceded by mythological figures and a winged disk (fig. 10).

As we move eastward, we encounter lotus imagery in the visual repertoire of additional prominent cultures dating from the second half of the second millennium BCE onward, whose peoples would have no doubt been familiar with Mesopotamian creation myths that, as in Egypt, included primeval plants and concepts of aquatic vegetation as being life-giving and regenerative. Wall paintings preserved at both the Mitanni site of Nuzi (in the fifteenth-century BCE governor's palace) and the Middle Assyrian site of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (decorating the thirteenth-century BCE palace terrace of Tukulti Ninurta I)—include stylized lotus blossoms that echo the forms previously discussed; yet those of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta are repeated in bands, alternating with palmettes and rosettes (fig. 11). This patterned rendering gains notable popularity in the first millennium BCE.



6

Figure 6. Inlay with lotus and palmette motif. Ivory, paint. Late Bronze Age (twelfth century BCE). Israel, Megiddo. Excavated by ISAC, 1936–37. ISAC Museum (A22215).

Figure 7. Relief carving from the sarcophagus of Ahiram showing the king holding a lotus flower. Limestone. Lebanon, Byblos. Iron Age (ninth century BCE). National Museum of Beirut (KA11). Wikimedia Commons, Elisa Ziade.

Figure 8. Cylinder seal and modern impression showing a procession of two male figures carrying vegetation, the first a large lotus. Stone. Early Iron Age (ca. 1000–800 BCE). Cyprus, Enkomi. Excavated in 1949. Musée du Louvre (AM 2358). © 2010 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux.

Figure 9. Cypriot Bichrome Ware tripod krater with animal handles decorated with geometric motifs and stylized lotus blossoms. Baked clay, paint. Cypro-Archaic I (ca. 850–600 BCE). Cyprus. Purchased in 1890. Musée du Louvre (AM 230). © 2021 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Sylvie Chan-Liat.

Figure 10. Carved orthostat relief with seated figure holding a lotus flower. Basalt. Neo-Hittite (late tenth to ninth century BCE). Syria, Guzana. Rogers Fund, 1943. Walters Art Museum (43.135.1).





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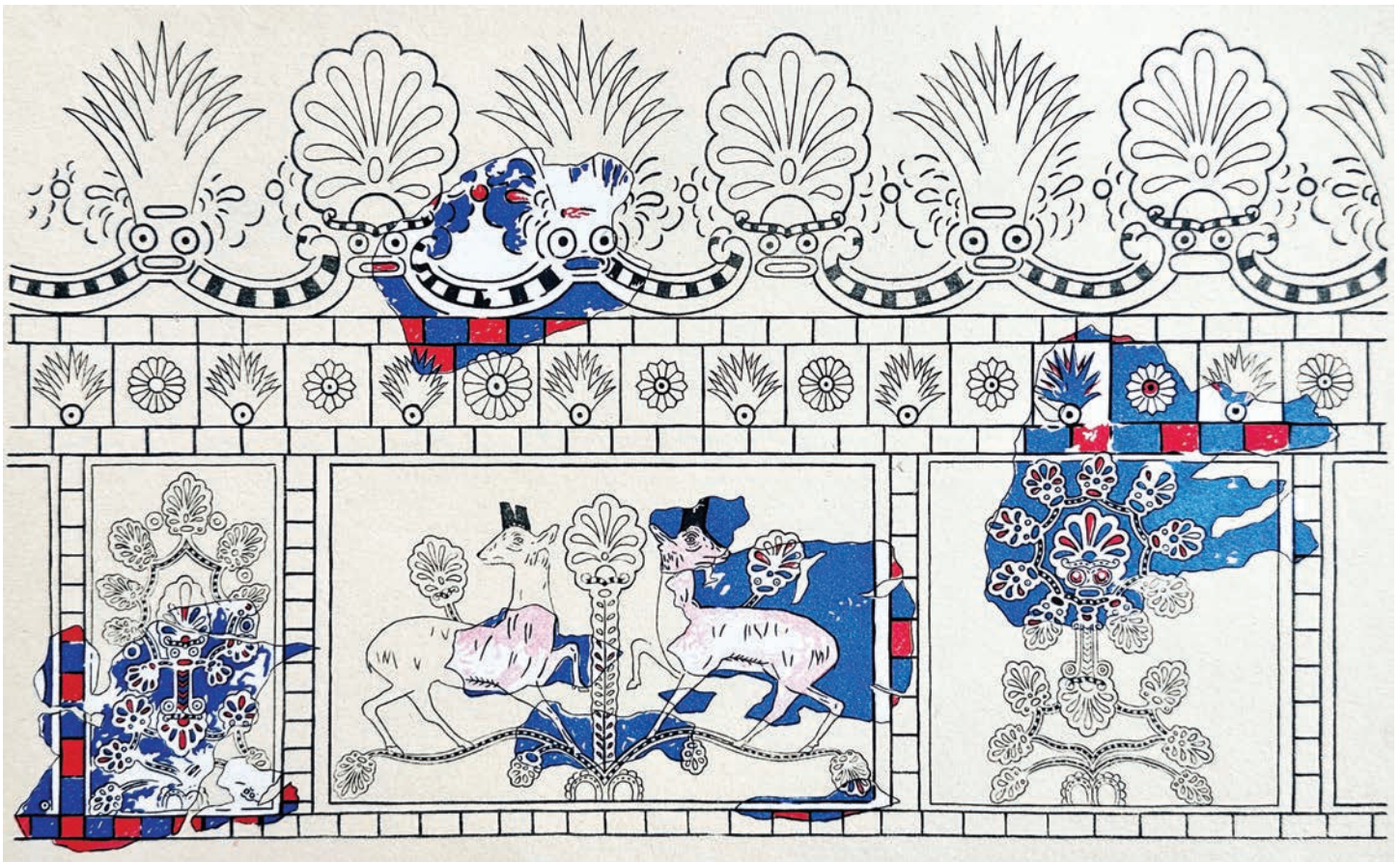


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12a



12b

Figure 11. Reconstruction of a Middle Assyrian wall painting at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, Iraq, showing animals and floral motifs (thirteenth century BCE). From Walter Andrae, *Coloured Ceramics from Ashur* (1925).

Figure 12. (a) Reconstruction of a Neo-Assyrian wall painting from Til Barsip, Iraq, showing winged figures and floral motifs (eighth century BCE). Musée du Louvre (AO 25067 B). © 2005 Musée du Louvre / Martine Beck-Coppola; (b) Wall painting fragment showing a winged figure with lotus in hand. Painted plaster. Iraq, Til Barsip. Neo-Assyrian period (850-650 BCE). Excavated in 1929-31. Musée du Louvre (AO 23009). © 2008 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux.

Figure 13. Relief panels from Sargon II's royal palace at Dur-Sharrukin. Gypsum. Neo-Assyrian period (721-705 BCE). (a) Excavated in 1843-44. Musée du Louvre (AO 19872). © 2012 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Thierry Ollivier. (b) Excavated by ISAC, 1929. ISAC Museum (A7359).





13a



13b

Kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (ninth to seventh centuries BCE) were the first to cover the walls of their palaces with monumental stone orthostats carved in relief and painted, displaying scenes of both a royal and mythological nature, as well as inscriptions of an idealized and repetitive form. Complementing these reliefs were vibrant wall paintings and glazed-brick panels. The Assyrian “plant of life” (*sammu balāṭi*) is evoked across these media, taking on various forms and styles; the lotus motif ought to be counted among this broad category. Wall paintings from an Assyrian palace at Til Barsip (modern Tall Ahmar in Syria) included bands repeating the lotus bud-and-blossom motif (fig. 12). The relief panels from King Sargon II’s palace at Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad, northern Iraq)—excavated by the French expedition in the mid-nineteenth century and ISAC’s expedition in the first half of the twentieth century—show the king and court officials with variations of the lotus in hand (fig. 13). Portable luxury items recovered from Assyrian sites were similarly decorated with lotus imagery, including colorful glazed ceramics, cylinder seals, and carved ivory inlays of the same

type as the Late Bronze Age examples discussed above (figs. 14–16a). In addition to examples crafted in typical Assyrian style, some ivories show influences from neighboring cultures, including an inlay executed in a Phoenician style that was excavated in the Northwest Palace at the Assyrian capital of Kalhu (modern Nimrud, northern Iraq) (fig. 16b).

The lotus’s visual appeal, alongside its life-giving symbolic associations, is also evident during the first millennium BCE to the northeast in Urartu and northwestern Iran broadly, to the south in Babylonia, and to the west in Persia, being employed similarly as an isolated form and as a repetitive motif for decorative bands. A gold plaque with repoussé designs—stylistically similar to material from Assyria, Syria, Urartu, and Scythia and reputedly from the village of Ziwiye in northwestern Iran—exhibits a series of stylized trees that include lotus blossoms and buds (fig. 17). Of a grander scale is the throne-room facade of Nebuchadnezzar II’s Southern Palace at Babylon, which was decorated with glazed bricks showing a stylized garden scene: rosettes and palmettes dominate much of the design,



framing a row of striding lions at the bottom and a series of abstract palm trees higher up, yet linking the tops of the trees are tendrils connected to stylized lotus blossoms (fig. 18). The lotus similarly marks Achaemenid state-sponsored architecture—appearing in the hands of officials and kings in the sculptural program of Persepolis, for example—in addition to serving as a decorative motif for portable materials, including metalwork (figs. 19–20). The motif continues in popularity in the Parthian and Sasanian periods. Worth noting is that in this eastern region of West Asia, both the western lotus (*Nymphaea* species, or water lily) and the eastern lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) ought to be considered as botanical inspirations for the lotus motif. The native range of the latter reaches into present-day Iran, and, as noted above, it was even introduced into Egypt during the Achaemenid period. Concurrently, the Achaemenid dynasty employed the visual traditions of the cultures within its imperial reach in its own art and architecture and thus is known to have also drawn on imagery that was inspired by the western lotus.

While by no means geographically or temporally exhaustive, the discussion and examples presented here showcase the veritable breadth of distribution, forms, uses, and meaning of lotus imagery across West Asia and North Africa. Its exact symbolism remains

something of a mystery for many cultures, yet it suffices to say that this aquatic plant was valued, having both culturally unique and shared symbolism. Similarly, we will never pinpoint the exact reasons for where and when it appeared or its modes of circulation, understandably being a mix of independent creativity and cultural diffusion and contact.

What about ISAC's building, the second inspiration for ISAC's new logo? Conceived of by the Symbolism Committee—presided by James Henry Breasted and Professor John S. Shapley, head of the University of Chicago's art department, and realized by architects Oscar Harold Murray and F. Hardie Phillip and sculptor Ulric Ellerhusen—the design details of the 1931 building are similarly grounded in visual imagery of the ancient world and early publications of such materials (fig. 21). Yet, in this building these ancient elements were embellished with an Art Deco flair, inspired by the displays of the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris (figs. 22–23). So, the next time you walk through the galleries of the ISAC Museum, take a moment to appreciate your many encounters with the lotus—a motif that decorates both the artifacts and the modern built environment.

Figure 14. Paintings of glazed vessels from Aššur, Iraq, showing the lotus bud-and-blossom motif. From Walter Andrae, *Coloured Ceramics from Ashur* (1925).



14

Figure 15. Cylinder seal and modern impression showing a stylized tree and winged disk flanked by a worshipper and a royal stela, as well as an unfinished goat and two lotus motifs. Iraq, Dur-Sharrukin. Neo-Assyrian period (721–705 BCE). Excavated in 1849. British Museum (BM 89502). © The Trustees of the British Museum.



15

Figure 16. (a) Carved plaque showing the lotus bud-and-blossom motif. Ivory. Iraq, Dur-Sharrukin. Neo-Assyrian period (721–705 BCE). Excavated by ISAC, 1935. ISAC Museum (A17586A). (b) Carved plaque showing a lioness biting a male figure with rows of lotus and papyrus flowers. Ivory, gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian. Iraq, Kalhu. Excavated in 1954. British Museum (BM 127412). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 17. Plaque with bands of striding mythological creatures and stylized trees. Gold. Iran. Iron Age (eighth to seventh century BCE). Ann and George Blumenthal Fund, 1954. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (54.3.5).

Figure 18. Partial reconstruction of the throne room facade from the Southern Palace, Babylon, showing floral designs and fitters' marks on the glazed bricks, by Walter Andrae. Watercolor on paper. Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, Berlin (ArDOG V.28.18). © Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, Archiv; Photo: Olaf M. Teßmer.



16a

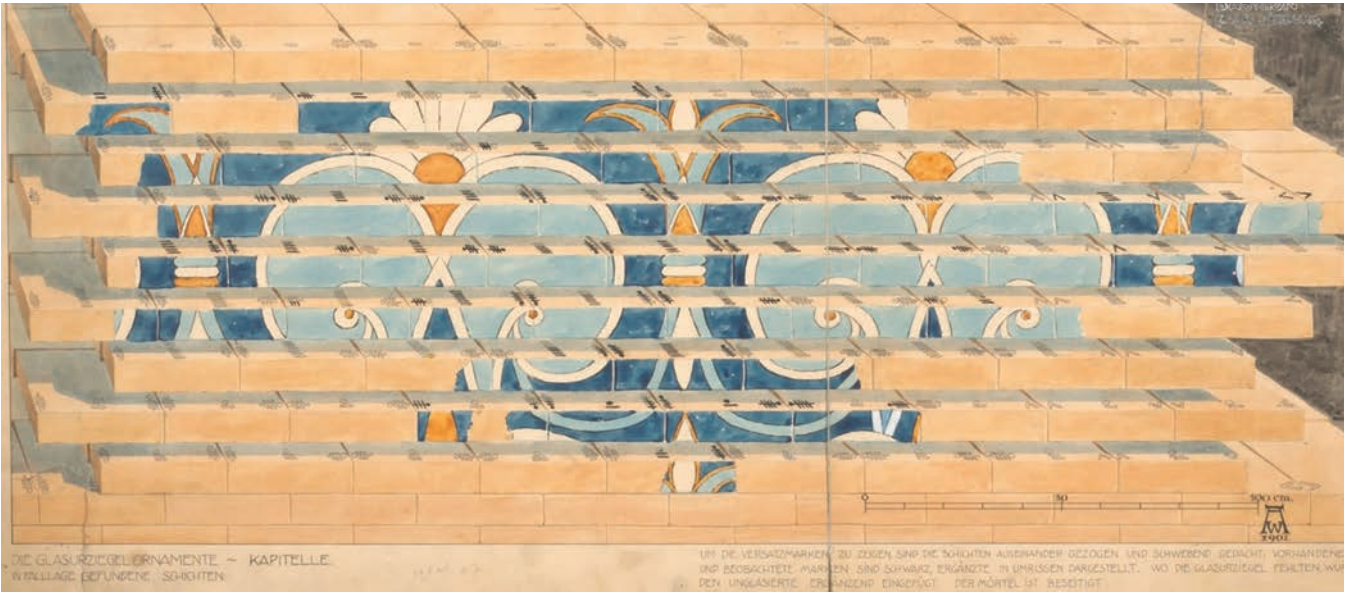
16b

Figure 19. Relief panel showing the king and crown prince holding lotus flowers. Persepolis, Iran. Achaemenid period (ca. 522–465 BCE). Excavated by ISAC, 1933–34. ISAC Museum Archives (P. 57121).





17



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DIE GLASURZICKELORNAMENTE - KAPITELLE.  
 IN VOLLIGE BEFUNDENE - SCHICHTEN.

UM DIE VERSATZMARKEN ZU ZEIGEN SIND DIE SCHICHTEN AUSEINANDER GEZOGEN UND SCHWERERE GESEHT. VORHANDENE  
 UND BEOBSACHTETE MARKEN SIND SCHWARZ ERGÄNZT. IN UMRISSEN DARGESTELLT. WO DIE GLASURZICKEL FEHLTEN WURDEN  
 DEN UNGLASIERTE ERGÄNZEND EINGEFÜGT. DER MÖRTEL IST BESESTIGT.



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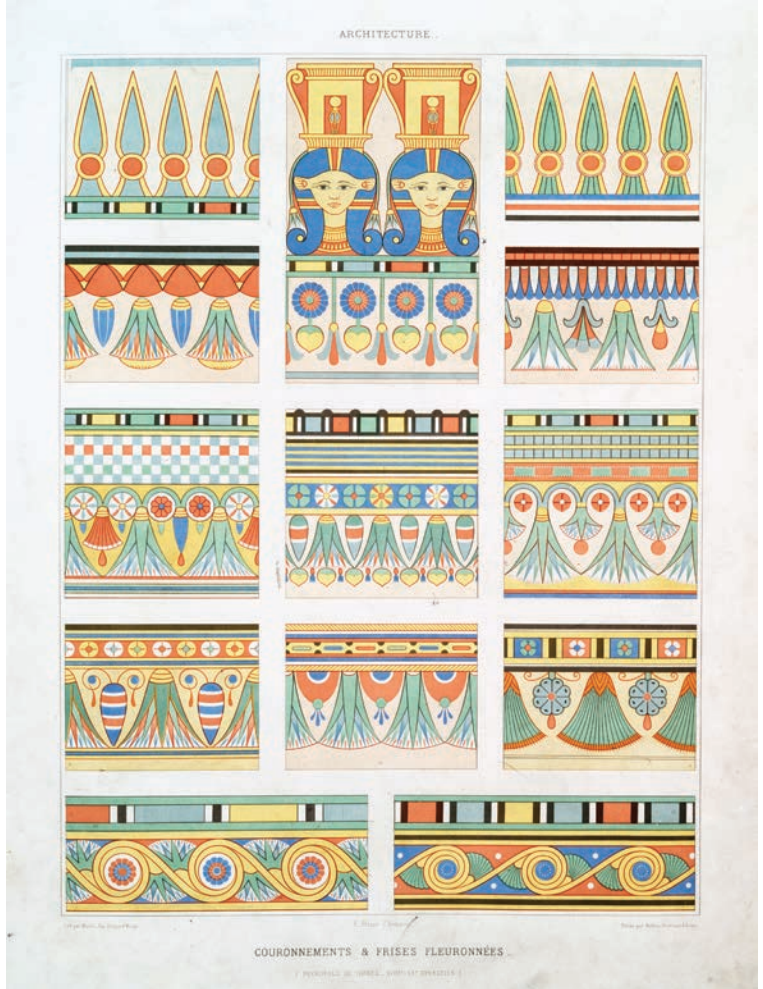




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Figure 20. Bowl with lotus motifs. Silver. Iran, Luristan. Achaemenid period (550–330 BCE). Purchased in 1981. Musée du Louvre (AO 13921). © 2015 Musée du Louvre/ Antiquités orientales.

Figure 21. Plate from Émile Prisse d’Avennes et al., *Histoire de l’art égyptien d’après les monuments* (1878).

Figure 22. Models for the ISAC building by architecture firm Mayers, Murray & Phillip, 1931. University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-05498r, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Figure 23. Entrance to the ISAC Museum galleries, 1931, showing floral motifs on the bronze gates and stenciled ceiling beams. University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-05444, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.



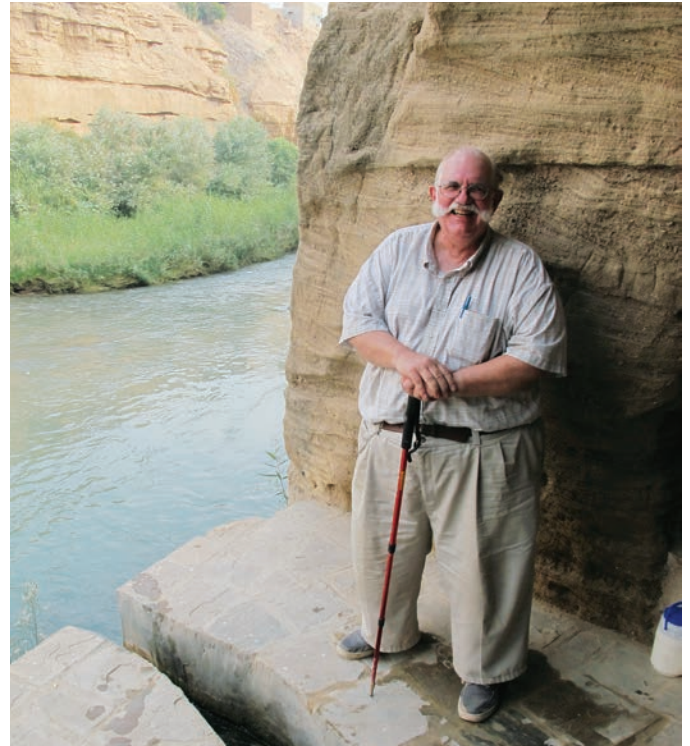
# ISAC CELEBRATES THE CAREERS AND RETIREMENT OF JAN JOHNSON AND DON WHITCOMB

On Thursday, May 24, 2023, ISAC celebrated the careers of Donald Whitcomb, Research Associate (Associate Professor), Islamic and Medieval Archaeology, and Janet Johnson, Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor of Egyptology. Retiring at the end of June this year, both have had a profound impact on their fields of study over their more than fifty years of service at ISAC. Both received their PhDs from the University of Chicago, Jan in 1972 and Don in 1979. Most of us at ISAC do not remember an Institute without Jan and Don.

Don's work transformed the field of Islamic archaeology, which he has worked tirelessly over the years to promote as a subject worthy of study. This has meant conducting excavations throughout West Asia and North Africa, publishing important articles on the subject of Islamic archaeology, and mentoring generations of students. He made the University of Chicago a center of Islamic archaeology, one of the few in the world, and ensured that future generations of scholars would continue to study and teach the subject.

Jan's work in Egyptology has been equally important. She wrote the essential grammar on the Demotic phase of ancient Egyptian, helping to bring attention to this stage of the language and its importance. As a result of her publications and the many students she has mentored, Demotic studies has flourished as a field. A pioneer in digital humanities when it was a barely realized idea, she has worked for years on the Chicago Demotic Dictionary, which was made available online even when it was in preliminary form so that it could be used by scholars all over the world.

The halls at 1155 East 58th Street will not be the same without Jan and Don around. All of us at ISAC extend our well wishes as they embark on the next stages of two monumental careers.



# EXPLAINING THE MEANING OF THE WORDS "ORIENT" AND "ORIENTAL"

by Tasha Vorderstrasse

Words matter. Although it may seem an obvious aphorism, the words we use and the words we choose make a difference in how we as people and the institutions we work for are perceived.

But words are also mutable. The spelling and meaning of words can change over time. As their meaning alters, so does our reaction to those words. Since words can elicit different responses in people, it is sometimes difficult to judge how the words will be received.

Words and their meanings changed over time in antiquity, too. In ancient Egypt, for instance, different words were used to describe enslaved people. Initially, the words *hem* and *bak* meant “servant” but were also used to refer to an enslaved person. By the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE), the word *hem* was associated primarily with enslaved people and therefore took on a negative connotation in some contexts. The meaning of the word *hem* changed, and people starting using *bak* as the primary word for “servant” in the Third Intermediate Period. The word then changed again, this time to another word entirely: *khel*, meaning “child” in Demotic Egyptian (1069–664 BCE). It seems that people’s discomfort with regard to enslaved individuals led them to change the meaning of words, and even the words themselves, over time. This process took hundreds of years. In modern times, instantaneous communication leads to words changing their meanings quickly, or indeed to new words or phrases being invented, such as Oxford Dictionaries’ word of the year for 2022, *goblin mode*.

People who were not familiar with the Oriental Institute often concluded from its name that its work and collections focus on the cultures of East Asia, rather than on the ancient cultures of West Asia and North Africa. But why did they think that? And why was the name “Oriental Institute” chosen by James Henry Breasted in 1919? As a result of the choice of the word *Oriental*, not only visitors but also people who work and volunteer here can become confused about what precisely it is that we do. It comes down, once again, to how words change over time. The origins of the word *Oriental* go back to 314 CE, when the Romans reorganized the provinces of West Asia and North Africa as the Diocese of Oriens (Diocesis Orientis). The word *oriens* meant “East”—that is, “East of Rome.” According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is the present participle of the word *oriri*, “to rise,” since the sun rises in the East. The area changed over time as certain parts, such as Egypt, were organized into their own dioceses by the fifth century CE. The word *orient* then appears in Old French and enters English via Anglo-Norman and Middle French, first appearing in English in the fourteenth century in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. The term *Oriental* first appears in the fifteenth century in John Lydgate’s *Troyes Book* and Guy de Chauliac’s *Grande Chirurgie*, both circa 1425. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Oriental studies and Oriental languages included Aramaic, Hebrew, Arabic, and even Armenian and Ethiopic, but not Chinese or Indian languages and cultures. It was not until the eighteenth century that the terms *Orient* and *Oriental* encompassed all of Asia, including countries such as India and China.

The words *Orient* and *Oriental* started to refer to East Asia and people of East Asian origin in the United States by the late nineteenth century. The term was used primarily to describe individuals of Chinese or Japanese descent and appeared frequently in the popular media of the time, especially newspapers and magazines that were under the control of media tycoons such as William Randolph Hearst. Because this usage and meaning were not universal, however, Breasted considered the term *Oriental* as appropriate for his institute. Yet, at the same time, it is clear that the word was often not being used in a positive way. For instance, in 1909, an author wrote in one of Hearst’s magazines, *Cosmopolitan* (now a women’s fashion magazine), “It is a shock to the law-abiding people of this country to learn that in nearly all our great cities there are settlements of Orientals who are with us but not of us. . . . The Chinese are a great problem.” Other contemporary writings made similar claims. The *San Francisco Examiner* referred to the presence of Chinese in the United States as “Oriental contamination” (1909) and to Japan’s growing imperialist ambitions as “Orientalist Irritants” in an article of the same name (1919). Hearst made his prejudices clear in 1924 when he wrote, “I am strongly in favor of Japanese exclusion, to prevent these Orientals swarming into the country and absolutely overrunning it. . . . This is not race prejudice. It is race preservation” (all quotes from Denham 2022). It is clear that in the early twentieth century, the word *Oriental* increasingly became a term that was used to describe people of East Asian descent, namely Chinese and Japanese, in a racist way.



Photograph taken in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China, April 12, 1909, in the *yámen* of the provincial treasurer during a visit by Ernest DeWitt Burton and Thomas C. Chamberlin, members of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Educational Commission. University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf1-02370, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.



By the time Breasted chose the term, *Oriental* was already going out of fashion at the University of Chicago, at least in certain departments, as a way to describe West Asia and North Africa. The term mainly seems to have taken on a narrower definition, meaning East Asia only, in the Department of Sociology, which had been founded in 1892 as the first sociology department in the United States. As early as 1908, William I. Thomas used the word *Orient* to describe China and Japan in his article “The Significance of the Orient for the Occident,” published in the *American Journal of Sociology*. Interestingly, this limited geographical scope was criticized in a response to the paper by Asakawa Kan'ichi, curator of the East Asian collection at Yale University, because it did not include India, and Asakawa thought it likely that Thomas “has not completely freed himself from the dogma that the Orient is a unit” because he made little distinction between China and Japan itself (something that Thomas denied in his response to Asakawa). In addition, in 1908–9, Ernest DeWitt Burton (1856–1925), University of Chicago professor at the Divinity School and future University of Chicago president, led the “Oriental Educational Commission” to China. Funded by John D. Rockefeller Jr., the trip was meant to explore the possibility of establishing higher-educational institutions there.

Between 1924 and 1960, starting under University of Chicago sociologist Robert E. Park (1864–1944), a study was made of what was termed the “Oriental Problem.” Park, who taught at the University of Chicago between 1914 and 1933, was interested in the question why, in the view of sociologists, Americans of Chinese and Japanese descent were not assimilated into American society. Park was also the research director of the Survey of Race Relations on the Pacific Coast, a sociological study that examined the lives of individuals of Chinese and Japanese descent and how they related to Americans and Canadians. Starting in 1923, the study was commissioned by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, which was funded by John D. Rockefeller Jr., who also funded the Oriental Institute and the Oriental Educational Commission.

At the same time, the University of Chicago's Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures covered the entirety of Asia and North Africa until 1966, when it split into three departments covering West Asia and North Africa, East Asia, and South Asia. Even though its professors were in the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, which included East and South Asia, until then, the Oriental Institute ceased to have South and East Asian objects in its museum collection after it moved to its current location in 1931. The fact that the term *Oriental* meant so many different things during these years shows its lack of specificity at this time. It was clearly a word that meant vastly different things to different scholars, even on the University of Chicago campus, and whose meaning depended largely on context.

In 1908, Paul Reinsch of the University of Wisconsin could confidently declare, “Now we may consider ourselves tolerably free from race prejudice as against the oriental.” Other scholars, however, profoundly disagreed. One of the most famous was Edward Said, whose enormously influential book *Orientalism* (1978) has often been cited as the reason the term *Oriental* is now seen in a negative light. As has been observed above, however, the term was already used in a pejorative sense decades earlier, so while Said has contributed to the way we view the term, he is not the original source for the word being used negatively. As he explains it, orientalism describes how people from the West saw individuals living in West Asia and North

Africa and “othered” them, comparing people from this region unfavorably to those living in Europe. The book has had a profound impact on how we describe the way individuals from Europe and North America have looked at these regions in scholarship, artistic expression, and indigenous responses, among many other long-lasting effects. Said's book is one of the most important works of the twentieth century in terms of the effect it has had on scholarship.

The way in which the terms *Orient* and *Oriental* are used has changed through time, and so have the words' connotations in the United States. In 2016, the American government replaced derogatory ethnic terms for minorities, such as *Oriental*, with *Asian American* when Congress unanimously passed and President Obama signed HR 4328, which became Public Law 114-157. The American experience of the word is different from that of people living outside the United States, and even within this country some people find the word offensive while others do not. The way the term has been used, what it has meant, and the responses it has elicited in different people have varied to the point where different people at the University of Chicago felt that the term meant different things. As we remove this word, it is important to acknowledge and understand how and why we got to this point, why we decided we needed to move on, and why it is essential to explain to current and future generations of students, scholars, and the public why we no longer use the term.

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# BENNO LANDSBERGER

## AN ASSYRIOLOGIST AND *HOMME DE LETTRES* IN THE MIRROR OF HIS CORRESPONDENCE

by Peter Raulwing and Luděk Vacín

### THE SCHOLAR AND *MENSCH* BENNO LANDSBERGER

The Hittitologist Hans Gustav Güterbock (1908–2000), a former student of Landsberger, reflected in the obituary he wrote for his teacher in 1968 (*Archiv für Orientforschung* 22, 1968/69, 203–6):

As the one of his students who had the good fortune to live near him for forty years [as a student in Leipzig, then in Ankara and Chicago as colleagues], I would like to conclude with a few remarks that apply to Benno Landsberger the *Mensch*. He was a man in the fullest sense of the word, of tremendous vitality, who did everything he did entirely. He was musically highly gifted, a regular and critical attendee of symphony concerts. Probably only a few people knew that he liked to play [piano] four hands [e.g., with Güterbock's wife, Frances] and did it well. During the period of emigration, he was actively engaged in the safety of his fellow emigrants, both in the inner circle in Ankara and in cooperation with international committees. In the United States, whose citizenship he proudly acquired immediately after the minimum period, he felt gratefully attached to his new *Heimat* [homeland] and followed political events with lively interest. His scholarly achievement determined by the striving for whole knowledge cannot be separated from the personality living life in full.

### EMIGRATION TO ANKARA IN 1935 AND CHICAGO IN 1948

Landsberger emigrated to Chicago after his contract at Ankara University, where he had taught since 1935, was not renewed because of alleged—though baseless—political agitation. Other scholars, among them Güterbock, faced the same fate in the summer of 1948. With the help of colleagues in the United States and the faculty of ISAC, Güterbock became visiting associate professor of Hittitology. He and his family arrived in New York a year after Landsberger, in October 1949, immigrating from Sweden, where Güterbock had lec-

Benno Landsberger (1890–1968) was the leading Assyriologist of his generation. Through his research and teaching, he significantly influenced the development of the discipline of Assyriology in the twentieth century. Landsberger is best known for his lexicographical studies on Sumero-Akkadian vocabularies and his approach to identify, structure, and resolve grammatical problems in ancient Near Eastern languages, particularly Akkadian. His most-quoted work is probably his *Eigenbegrifflichkeit der babylonischen Welt* (“The Conceptual Autonomy of the Babylonian World”), a “programmatical essay” (as he later called it) presented in 1925 at his inaugural lecture in Leipzig. Landsberger is the “founding father” of the so-called Leipzig School or Landsberger School, which also includes scholars of ancient Near Eastern legal history. It was Landsberger and his colleague Paul Koschaker (1879–1951) who broke new ground in ancient Near Eastern studies at Leipzig University.

Landsberger arrived in Chicago in the autumn of 1948, having been appointed full professor at the Oriental Institute (now ISAC), where he focused mainly on lexicographical studies for the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD). However, his connection with ISAC goes back to his Leipzig days, when he compiled—supported by his former students Lubor Matouš (1908–84) and Hans-Siegfried Schuster (1910–2002)—several Sumero-Akkadian vocabularies for the CAD project.



tured at Uppsala University for a year thanks to the sponsorship of the archaeologist Axel W. Persson (1888–1951).

It was the second time Landsberger (being Jewish) and Güterbock (being half-Jewish) had to emigrate. In 1935 Landsberger was forced to leave Leipzig University after Nazi Germany dismissed all Jewish and politically unreliable “Aryan” faculty members, applying the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service that had been ratified in April 1933. Both helped found the study of ancient Near Eastern languages and cultures in the new Faculty for Languages, History, and Geography in Ankara, which trained a generation of influential Turkish philologists and archaeologists.

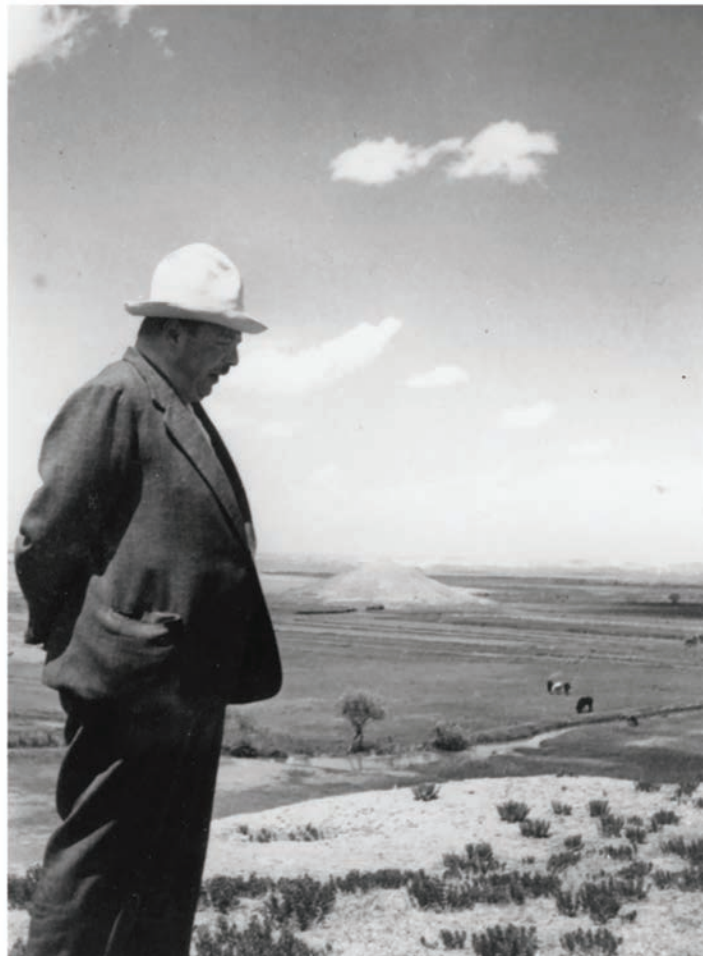
## THE *HOMME DE LETTRES* BENNO LANDSBERGER AND HIS CORRESPONDENCE

Landsberger was a true *homme de lettres*. Until his death he corresponded with colleagues, former students, relatives, and friends alike, nurturing and enlarging his vast network in the scholarly community and beyond. The letters and notes available to us contain countless Assyriological ideas and theories, from the tasks of Assyriology in general to transcriptions of cuneiform texts and precise interpretations of certain passages and words. In addition, Landsberger’s correspondence is characterized by a specific literary quality and can be considered an important source for the history of Assyriology in Europe, Turkey, and the United States. Furthermore, his correspondence reveals the inner thoughts of a humanist scholar whose life and career were considerably affected by the political and historical events of the twentieth century. As Erica Reiner (1924–2005) recalled in *An Adventure of Great Dimension: The Launching of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002), Landsberger “once said to the then young Assyriologist Paul Garelli [1924–2006], who passed this remark on to me, ‘Every educated person knows Akkadian, just as he does Greek or Latin.’” From his letters, we also learn a great deal about appointments to vacant Assyriological chairs, as Landsberger not only was often at the top of the list but also, when he declined an offer, was influential regarding the appointment.

## ARCHIVES

To date, Landsberger’s letters have only rarely been used as historical sources. A considerable portion of Landsberger’s huge correspondence is preserved in various archives, libraries, and private collections, the locations depending on where the addressees lived or worked; for example, the Leiden University Library houses more than nine hundred letters Landsberger exchanged between 1937 and 1968 with his former student Fritz Rudolf Kraus (1910–91), who was a professor in Leiden. The Papers of Benno Landsberger in the archives of ISAC, which include notes, drafts, and varied correspondence, as well as the Albrecht Goetze Papers in the archives of Yale University, which consist of Landsberger’s correspondence with Goetze, contain a substantial number of letters from the 1920s onward. The Leipzig University Library archives letters from Landsberger to his teacher Heinrich Zimmern, and the National Museum in Prague has letters to Bedřich Hrozný (1879–1952), who famously proved in 1915 that Hittite was an Indo-European language.

Equipped with photographs and scans of the Landsberger documents accessible to us, we embarked on a long-term project to edit and publish the entire correspondence between Benno Landsberger and his numerous correspondence partners. The approach is staggered, as the publications will appear one archive or collection at a time. Each part will contain notes or comments on the history of scholarship in Assyriology—contemporaneous history as well as information on the persons, places, and institutions mentioned—in order to place these sources in their historical context for specialists and non-Assyriologists alike. For scholars of ancient Near Eastern studies, and complementing Landsberger’s own numerous published lexicographical contributions, the more extensive installments will provide indexes of the words and passages discussed. The aim of publishing this set of sources is to support further research on the history of scholarship in the wider field of ancient Near Eastern studies in general and Assyriology in particular.



OPPOSITE: Landsberger studying a cuneiform tablet in 1949. “I spent September in Philadelphia, where I worked in the museum. I was honored and pampered and given work of all kinds.” © Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center. [bit.ly/BennoTemple](https://bit.ly/BennoTemple).

ABOVE: Benno Landsberger on a trip during his time in Turkey. Courtesy of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East, Leiden.



## THE EDITION OF THE LANDSBERGER CORRESPONDENCE

The first edited set of Landsberger's correspondence are the letters connected personally, geographically, or professionally to his old *Heimat*. They will be published in the proceedings of the 2021 Göttingen workshop "Semitic Scholarship? Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in the 'Third Reich.'"

The publication of these letters, compiled from various archives and private collections chiefly in the Czech Republic, will not only supplement the description of some important events in Landsberger's life and academic career published by Luděk Vacín in 2018 and 2020 but also provide a representative cross-section of the diverse sources available worldwide and spread out temporally between 1915 and 1968. Furthermore, it will also allow us to publish recently discovered and valuable material on Landsberger's family history in its contemporaneous historical context. This material consists primarily of photographs of family members from the town of Náchod in northeastern Bohemia, where Landsberger regularly stayed on trips from Leipzig to visit his parents in Friedek and back. Náchod had been the residence of his mother's family since 1866. His grandparents—Hermann Hitschmann (1832–1918), who spoke seven languages, and Mathilde, née Pollatschek (1848–1907), daughter of a highly educated rabbi—moved to Náchod from their native Polná to establish a flourishing textile business at this crossroads of several trade routes.

Landsberger fought in World War I, was wounded in 1916, and was later decorated. On August 12, 1918, he wrote to his teacher Heinrich Zimmern (1862–1931) from his hometown of Friedek:

My manuscript about the New Year Festival—[it] is in the drawer of the glass case in the Institute—is of course at the disposal of H[err] *Geheimrat* [privy councillor; i.e., Zimmern]. Unfortunately, I have been away from all these things for more than three years now, which I find very hard, although I personally did not manage badly. I arrived in the Ukraine right after the invasion of our troops and am currently in Odessa. . . . I am no longer eligible for front-line service. . . . Unfortunately, my vacation was too short to visit Leipzig again, because in the next few days I will be going to the Ukraine again.

Letters from 1922—for example, those to Bedřich Hrozný—reveal, in Landsberger's own words, his ultimately failed attempts to be appointed to the vacant *Extraordinariat* (associate professorship) for Semitic philology at the German University of Prague. It was Hrozný who advised him to accept the professorship in Ankara, as a 1935 letter from Landsberger to the Czech scholar attests (see photo).

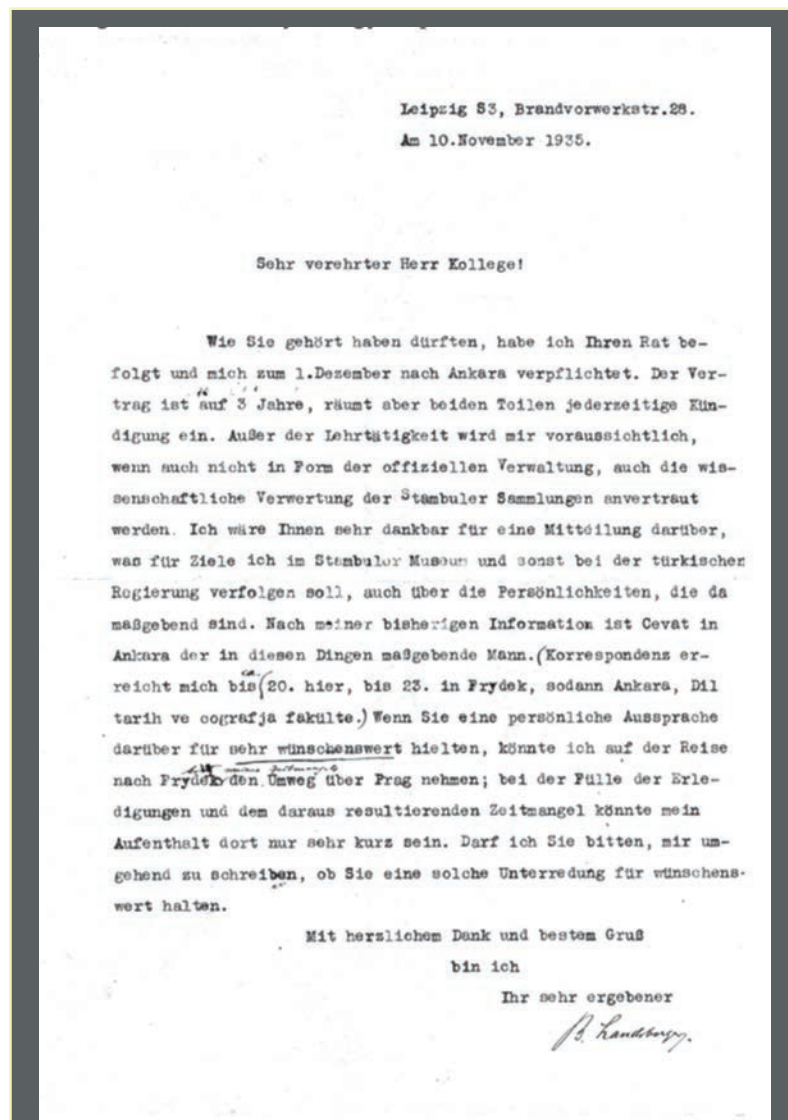
The modest number of letters that Landsberger exchanged with his former student Lubor Matouš, professor of Assyriology at Charles University in Prague, preserved in the archives of ISAC and other institutions, shows the collaboration between the two Assyriologists not only in the 1930s but also in the times of the Iron Curtain.

As mentioned, the Archief Kraus in Leiden contains more than nine hundred letters from Fritz Rudolf Kraus to Landsberger and vice versa—over four hundred of them unpublished. Among them, the letters written in the first decade after World War II are of partic-

ular interest for the history of Assyriology because they cover Landsberger's first years at ISAC and the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary. A competing project was the *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* initiated after the war by his former student Wolfram von Soden (1908–96), who later became the doyen of Assyriology in Germany, and the letters attest to von Soden's difficulty in being reinstated as a tenured professor at Göttingen University after 1945 due to his activities in the "Third Reich."

Although Landsberger attested in his *Habilitationsgutachten* (postdoctoral thesis evaluation) in April 1934 that von Soden had embraced national socialism early on in order to protect him from being attacked for having earned his PhD from a Jewish teacher, the years after the war were particularly difficult for Landsberger. During World War II Landsberger not only collaborated with refugee organizations helping immigrants but also lost many family members in the Holocaust, among them his beloved mother, who was murdered in a gas chamber at Treblinka in October 1942. In letters to Kraus written in the later 1940s, Landsberger clearly voiced resentment against his former student von Soden, even though he regarded the latter as the most gifted Assyriologist of his generation.

It was this correspondence between Landsberger and Kraus that led us to analyze the "teacher-pupil relationship" between Landsberger and von Soden in more detail. We discovered that this relationship was even more complex than the narrative laid out in the obituary for von Soden written by Rykle Borger (1929–2010),





which revealed that Landsberger had sent a short recommendation to the University of Göttingen vouching for his former student in 1952. Landsberger emphasized that von Soden's "political mistakes" (*politische Entgleisungen*) were "trifles" (*Bagatellen*) compared to his academic merits. Perhaps because he did not know about von Soden's activities as a member of the *Sturmabteilung* (Nazi storm troopers) in Göttingen in the second half of the 1930s, Landsberger overcame his animosity about von Soden's character and personality, and in 1950 accepted von Soden's dedication to him in the groundbreaking Akkadian grammar that von Soden published in 1952:

I accepted the dedication of v. S.'s grammar (and called it almost too great an honor for me) because one must not reject repentant sinners, even if one doubts the sincerity of the repentance, and because some of those who now play the first fiddle in Germany are worse in my eyes than the narrow-minded doctrinaire v. S.

Later, Landsberger openly strove to help von Soden increase his chances of being appointed as a full professor in Göttingen, where Adam Falkenstein had vacated the chair in 1949. When Kraus asked Landsberger in 1954 who his successor in Vienna should be (Kraus had been appointed full professor at Leiden University), Landsberger wrote back unequivocally:

Only von Soden! To be presented as outstanding! One-time chance! Between us, he will not come [to Vienna], but he will regain his position in Göttingen. . . . I ask you to consider this "advice" as an emphatic personal request from me.

About three dozen letters from von Soden to Landsberger, written between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s and contained among the papers of Erica Reiner at ISAC, show a collegial tenor and deal mostly with discussions of Akkadian technical terms, publications, and news about appointments to Assyriological chairs within the scientific community.

In sum, Landsberger's correspondence with Kraus clearly reveals that his support of von Soden, especially in the early 1950s, was based on a decision to put aside his personal animosities for the greater good of "his" discipline, Assyriology. Disagreeing with his teacher's decision, Kraus—unhappy with von Soden's rise after World War II as a "star" (as Borger put it)—replied to Landsberger in November 1950: "Just now I see again in your letter: 'repentant sinner,' said about Wolfi [von Soden], is a tragic mistake on your part." In August 1951 Kraus reported to his mentor about the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale conference he had attended in Paris that summer. It was the first time he had seen von Soden since the 1930s:

OPPOSITE: Letter in which Landsberger thanks Bedřich Hrozný for his advice to accept the offer from Ankara University. Courtesy of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African, and American Cultures, Prague.

THIS PAGE: Benno Landsberger with his father Leopold (1853–1926), shortly after 1900. Courtesy of Eva Kučerová-Landsbergrová, Frýdek-Místek, Czech Republic.



Von Soden seemed generally repulsive as a human being but was recognized as a scholar. The beast [*die Bestie*] has a new, though not innovative, tactic: he quotes you in every sentence. It seems to be a cheap trick of the Nazis to prove themselves democrats now through "philosemitism." Of course, in von Soden's case, there is another calculation involved when he acts as your successor.

Interestingly, the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv* (Secret State Archive) in Berlin contains two sets of personal evaluations of von Soden related to his *Habilitation* (postdoctoral thesis) in Göttingen in 1934 and the then-mandatory passing of a thorough political evaluation by the *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Dozentenbund* (National Socialist German Lecturers League). The Göttingen representative of the NSDDB summarized:

Von Soden is by far one of the most capable Assyriologists of the younger generation and already receives strong regard in the scientific community. After the removal of the Jew Landsberger–Leipzig [*Abbau des Juden Landsberger–Leipzig*], von Soden is really the only one who can overcome the once all-overshadowing influence of Landsberger and establish a truly German Assyriology. From an ideological and political point of view, there are no objections.

We have to leave it at these glimpses into the edition of the Benno Landsberger correspondence, but we might add that the *Mensch* Landsberger was also known as a brilliant raconteur and generous bon vivant who enjoyed good food and drink and has accordingly been the subject of many anecdotes until this day. The sometimes larger-than-life Landsberger lived by the principle that an Assyriologist should not be married, as he must dedicate his whole life to the field. The history of Assyriology has shown, however, that this is not the only path to a successful academic career in the discipline.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank the ISAC professors emeriti Robert Biggs, John A. Brinkman, Gene Gragg, and McGuire Gibson; Samuel Greengus at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and his wife Lesha; and the late Johannes Renger at the Freie Universität Berlin for sharing their personal memories of Benno Landsberger in Chicago in the 1960s. Thanks to the efforts of Semra Dalkılıç and the kindness of Esin Çiğ, to this group of emeriti could be added an emerita from Landsberger's and Güterbock's years in Ankara: Muazzez Çiğ, who was one of their first students in the 1930s and 1940s. Professor Çiğ, who turned 109 on June 20, 2023, vividly recalled her early years in Mesopotamian and Anatolian philology under Landsberger and Güterbock during a Zoom call in the spring of 2022—certainly one of those once-in-a-lifetime events in the research of intellectual history.



Landsberger in his early seventies during a visit with the family of Samuel Greengus in Chicago. Prof. Greengus earned an MA in Judaic studies and a PhD in Assyriology at ISAC and is professor emeritus at the Hebrew Union College. Courtesy of Samuel and Lesha Greengus, Cincinnati

## BENNO LANDSBERGER: A BIOGRAPHICAL TIMELINE

- 1890 Born April 21 to textile manufacturer Leopold Landsberger (1853–1926) and Hedwig, née Hitschmann (1868–1942) in Friedek (now Frýdek-Místek) in what was then the duchy of Silesia in the kingdom of Bohemia (now the Czech Republic)
- 1908–13 Studied ancient Near Eastern philology in Leipzig
- 1915 PhD in Leipzig under Heinrich Zimmern (1862–1931)
- 1915 Military service in World War I
- 1916 Severely wounded on the Eastern Front and awarded the Golden Cross of Merit
- 1920 Habilitation in Leipzig for Semitic philology
- 1920–25 Lecturer in Leipzig
- 1925–28 Associate professor in Leipzig; inaugural lecture on the *Eigenbegrifflichkeit der babylonischen Welt* (Conceptual Autonomy of the Babylonian World)
- 1928 Full professor of Semitic philology and Oriental history and director of the Oriental and Indo-European Seminar in Marburg, succeeding Peter Jensen (1861–1936)
- 1929 Full professor in Leipzig as successor to Heinrich Zimmern
- 1935 Dismissal due to the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (having been granted an additional year due to his service during World War I), then full professor in Ankara
- 1948 Dismissal in Ankara; full professor at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
- 1955 Professor emeritus at ISAC
- 1968 Died April 26 in Chicago



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Director, Galilee Prehistory Project and Eastern Badia Archaeological Project



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# ARTIFACTS ALSO DIE

## AN EXHIBITION OF RUINS AND RENEWAL

by Kiersten Neumann

Curating an exhibition of contemporary art comes with the incredible opportunity of collaborating with living artists to realize together how to give voice and vision to their work. *Artifacts Also Die*, the latest special exhibition at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) Museum, provided me with such an opportunity—a most memorable and inspiring one at that! For this exhibition, I had the distinctive fortune to work with internationally acclaimed Iraqi-British artist and academic Dr. Hanaa Malallah in curating a discrete iteration of her larger collaborative project *Ruins, Rubble, and Renewal: Co-existent Ruins—Exploring Iraq’s Mesopotamian Past through Contemporary Art*. Both Hanaa and I saw this exhibition as a truly singular opportunity to bring a selection of artworks from *Ruins, Rubble, and Renewal* into conversation with artifacts and archival documents from the ISAC Museum collections, and with the history, aspirations, and audiences of ISAC more generally. Notably, *Artifacts Also Die* is the first special exhibition to take place under the institute’s new name (formerly *Oriental Institute*), situating this provocative installation within an enlivened period of institutional reflection and transition.

*Artifacts Also Die* opened to the public on April 5, 2023, bringing Hanaa’s timely and thought-provoking work to the University of Chicago campus and the city of Chicago. As noted, the exhibition is part of the larger ongoing research project *Ruins, Rubble, and Renewal* and features videos, photographs, and drawings created by Hanaa and other Iraqi artists, including Reyah Abd Al-Redah, Mohammed Abd Alwasi, Fatimah Jawdet, Betoul Mahdey, and Rozghar Mustafa (figs. 1–5).

“Ruins” and “rubble” have been something of a constant in Hanaa’s life—they are not only a pair of nouns but also concepts that describe both the physical landscape she experienced during her years in Iraq and the motivations behind much of her past and ongoing work. Hanaa was born in the southeastern province of Dhi Qar—on the outskirts of the archaeological site of Ur—and was raised in the city of Baghdad, where she later worked and taught. Two types of ruined landscapes mark her decades-long experience in Iraq: Mesopotamian archaeological sites and cities devastated by war and conflict. Her first solo exhibition, *Documents of Archaeological Museum Visits*, was held at the Baghdad Museum of Modern Art (named the Saddam Hussein Art Center at the time) in 1991—a year when much of the city was reduced to rubble. When Hanaa fled Iraq—moving first to Paris in 2006 for an artist residency at the Institut du Monde Arab and then to London in 2008—she was afforded a new perspective on these landscapes, and with this came a sense of renewal and its related artistic inspiration.

In 2016—while creating the video “Drone Hits the Ziggurat of Ur” (fig. 3, second from left)—Hanaa was inspired to foster a group research project through which she would bring together Iraqi artists to collectively explore new ways of reengaging with archaeological sites and local museums in post-conflict Iraq. Artistic drive and curiosity motivated her to attempt to answer the question: What does a local interpretation of Iraq’s heritage and history look like? The title of the project that resulted from this initiative perfectly captures its disparate yet complementary sentiments—ruins, rubble, and renewal. The project, Hanaa says, “engages with ancient heritage as a reciprocal relationship with the unbroken continuity of its history; where ruins and its attendant rubble enable creative responses, where past and present merge into new possibilities, as renewal.” Here, Mesopotamian ruins are presented as a life-giving force, monuments and materials that emote a positive and transformative energy and that contrast with the undertone of disintegration of modern urban landscapes upended by recent wars and conflicts. Through an assortment of media (videos, photographs, and drawings), research papers, workshops, exhibitions, and site performances, Hanaa and her team recontextualize these ancient Mesopotamian sites, offering new interpretations and visual expressions through innovative and distinctive artistic responses.

Babylon, Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), Nuffar (ancient Nippur), and Ur are the four archaeological sites that inspired the media exhibited in *Artifacts Also Die*. Additional content connects with the collections of the Iraq Museum as well as a Victorian painting (the *Portrait of Lady Layard*) that includes a depiction of a jewelry collection crafted of Mesopotamian seals. For example, drone footage, a symbol of the present digital age, captures Reyah Abd Al-Redah praying on the summit of the ziggurat at Ur, a third-millennium BCE monument excavated in the 1920s and restored in the 1960s (fig. 6). Through photography taken inside ISAC’s excavation dig house at Nuffar, Fatimah Jawdat assimilates her own identity and embodied experience as a local inhabitant into this site’s complex history (fig. 7). Another photograph shows Mohammed Abd Alwasi wearing assorted headgear (a military helmet, an aristocrat’s hat, and traditional Iraqi headgear), mimicking a scene in a 1917 archival film in which British troops, upon entering Babylon, wave their military helmets, while the Iraqi site guard next to them could not (fig. 8).

Alongside these artworks, *Artifacts Also Die* uniquely presents artifacts and archival documents connected with ISAC’s archaeological excavations and research in Iraq, dating from the 1920s to the present. Accompanying the installation on Nimrud, for example, is





TOP TO BOTTOM: Figures 1-5. Installation photographs of *Artifacts Also Die*, 2023.



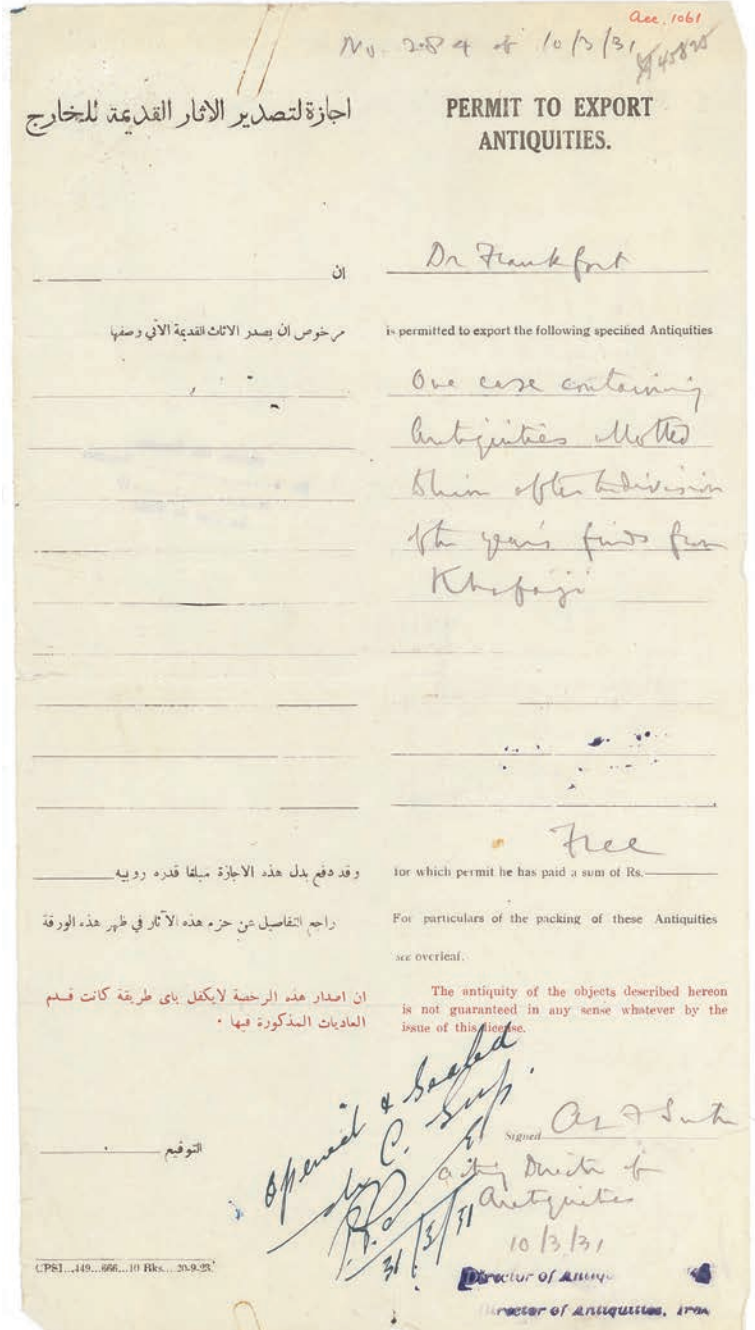
an inscribed Assyrian wall relief fragment from Khorsabad (ancient Dur-Sharrukin) (fig. 9): this artifact resonates with the damaged, inscribed relief panel of an *apkallu* (mythological figure) shown in the video “Walking the Path” by Rozghar Mustafa (fig. 2, right of center). The installation “Archaeological Archival Coding,” which includes photographs of artifacts from the Iraq Museum with registration numbers, also displays a group of numbered objects and archival documents (e.g., an export permit and customs form) from the ISAC Museum (fig. 10); these documents speak to the movement of these artifacts from Iraq to Chicago between the 1930s and 1950s as part of the division of finds from ISAC’s Iraq Expedition. The installation of the *Portrait of Lady Layard* includes Hanaa’s edited version of the painting, which shows Lady Layard wearing the “Bomb Wreck Jewelry” made by Dutch jewelers in collaboration with Dutch visual artist Jonas Staal and created from the wreckage of two car bombs that exploded on Al-Mutanabbi Street in Baghdad on March 5, 2007 (fig. 11, left). Helping to visually articulate these works are cylinder and stamp seals from the ISAC Museum that are arranged in the shape of the painted necklace; an additional pair of seals have gold suspension loops of modern origin (added prior to the seals’ acquisition by ISAC), similar to the gold settings of the seals for Lady Layard’s jewelry (fig. 11, right).

An additional part of *Artifacts Also Die* is displayed in the ISAC Museum’s orientation area: an installation focused on the fourth-millennium BCE alabaster Warka Vase (fig. 12). Named after the archaeological site where it was excavated in the early twentieth century, the vase is one of the earliest preserved examples of sculptured narrative works from Mesopotamia. Here, visitors experience two large-scale banners of the vase, a video showing the vase falling to pieces, and replica fragments of the vase (3D printed and to scale) scattered across a large print of the archaeological site. Through these works, Hanaa interrogates our relationship with the planet, both emphasizing the vase’s depiction of the Mesopotamian ecosystem and symbolic renewal and challenging the present disregard and destruction of the planet’s natural system.

The beginnings of the discipline of Mesopotamian archaeology cannot be divorced from European and American colonialism. Colonial frames of reference and Western-centric viewpoints have therefore often led the conversation and presentation of the history of this region. *Artifacts Also Die* seeks to shift this tradition by offering different, renewed, and reengaged perspectives of this heritage through the work of local Iraqi artists and researchers, both in Iraq and in the diaspora. On view to the public exactly twenty years after the United States–led invasion of Iraq, this exhibition connects visitors not only with the Mesopotamian past but also with the present and future of Iraq and its people. Hanaa explains: “Our artistic explorations therefore allow another relation to time, one where we can imagine a future in which our past always intervenes and mobilizes us. Our Mesopotamian ruins now allow us to time-travel and imagine different futures.”

For additional content and visitor information, visit the special exhibition webpage: [isac.uchicago.edu/artifacts](https://isac.uchicago.edu/artifacts).





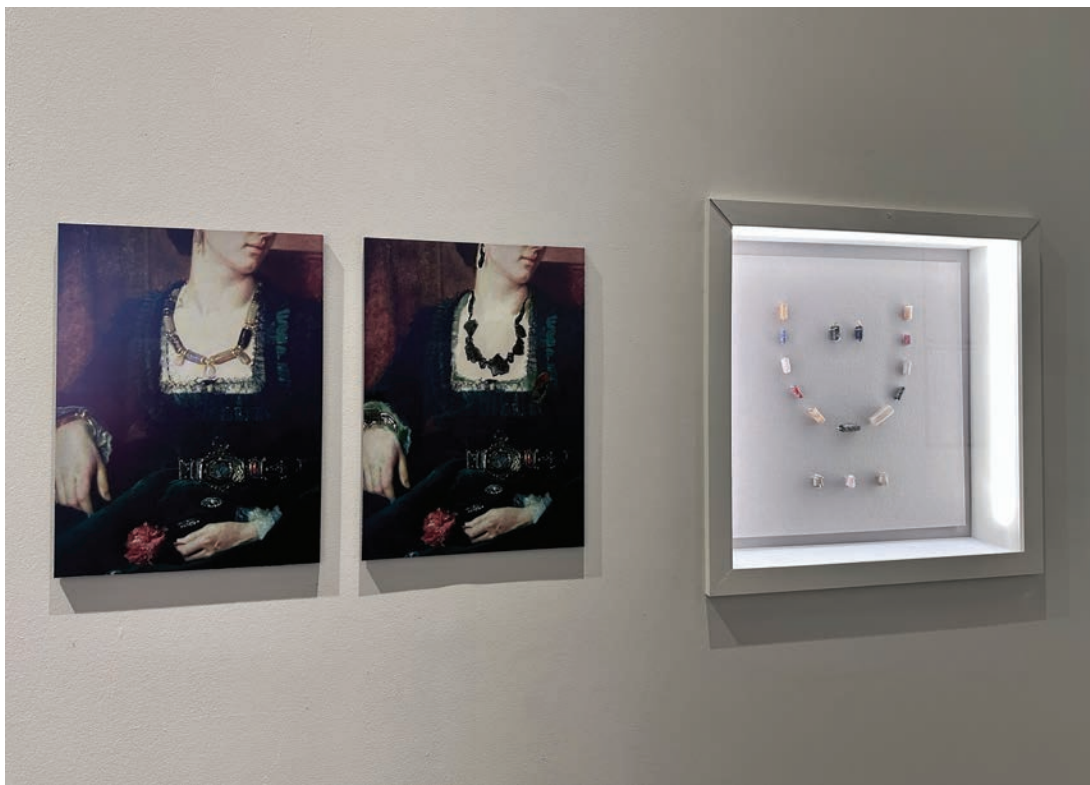
OPPOSITE TOP: Figure 6. Screenshot from the video "Drone Circumambulation." Reyah Abd Al-Redah, 2019.

OPPOSITE MIDDLE: Figure 7. "Dig House at Nuffar." Fatimah Jawdat, 2018.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Figure 8. "Accumulated Headgear." Mohammad Abd Alwasi, 2017.

ABOVE TOP LEFT: Figure 9. Inscribed relief fragment from Khorsabad. ISAC Museum (A58018).

ABOVE BOTTOM LEFT AND ABOVE RIGHT: Figure 10. (a) Gypsum sculpture fragment from Khafajah. ISAC Museum (A12431). (b) Permit to Export Antiquities excavated at Khafajah, 1931.



TOP: Figure 11. Installation of the *Portrait of Lady Layard* by Vicente Palmaroli y González, 1870 (© The Trustees of the British Museum, BM 16,1-12-1980) and the version edited by Hanaa Malallah to include the “Bomb Wreck Jewelry,” 2021, alongside cylinder and stamp seals from the ISAC Museum.

BOTTOM: Figure 12. Warka Vase installation.



# ISAC SUMMER EVENTS & SCREENINGS

## Children's Intro to Hieroglyphs

**Saturday, July 15, 1pm**

Learn the about the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system, then take your skills to the galleries and translate actual texts on real artifacts! By the end of this workshop, you will understand some of the principles of reading Egyptian hieroglyphs as well as be able to recognize key hieroglyphs and phrases that show up on Egyptian artifacts in many museums. This program is for children ages 8-12.

ISAC Youth and Family Program recommended for ages 8 and up.

Free for ISAC members, \$5 for the public

To register, visit: [bit.ly/ISACHiero](https://bit.ly/ISACHiero)

## Youth and Family Astronomy Friday

**Friday, July 21, 5:30pm** | ISAC

Join us at the ISAC Museum to learn all about ancient astronomy! Have you ever been curious about where zodiacs came from? Or how ancient people interpreted the stars? Come and learn at different stations within the galleries to interact directly with our artifacts and educators!



Free

To register, visit: [bit.ly/3PKzU4F](https://bit.ly/3PKzU4F)

## Screening of *Letters From Baghdad*, followed by a viewing of the ISAC special exhibition *Artifacts Also Die*

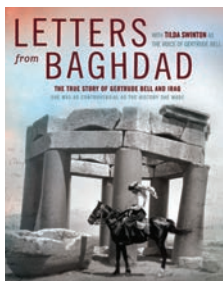
**Thursday, July 27, 7pm** | Breasted Hall

Join us for a screening of *Letters from Baghdad*, the extraordinary story of Gertrude Bell, sometimes called the “female Lawrence of Arabia.” This documentary, narrated by Tilda Swinton, tells the dramatic story of the British spy, explorer, and political powerhouse as she traveled in Arabia before being recruited by British military intelligence to help draw the borders of Iraq after World War I and establish the Iraq Museum.

Before the screening we will host an after-hours viewing of our current special exhibition *Artifacts Also Die*.

Free

To register, visit: [bit.ly/ISACLetters](https://bit.ly/ISACLetters)



## Summer Member Appreciation Day

**Saturday, August 12, 4-8pm** | ISAC galleries

Join us as we kick off the new academic year of member programming with our summer Member Appreciation Day, featuring extended gallery hours, food and drinks, and a talk previewing our upcoming special exhibit, *Back to School in Babylonia*, by the exhibit's curator and ISAC faculty member Dr. Susanne Paulus.

Free for all ISAC members

## Screening of *Mustang*

**Friday, August 18, 7pm** | Breasted Hall

Join ISAC for a screening of Deniz Gamze Ergüven's 2015 film, *Mustang*. Five sisters living in a remote village in Turkey are treated like prisoners by their strict adult guardians, who suspect them of immoral behavior. They are soon forced to find husbands, but the siblings fight back and attempt to reclaim their freedom.

Free for ISAC members, \$7 for the public

To register, visit: [bit.ly/ISACMustang](https://bit.ly/ISACMustang)



## ISAC Adult Education Course

### Exploring the Dead Sea Scrolls

**Thursdays, August 10-September 28 (8 weeks)**

**Online, 6-8pm Central**

Instructor: Tine Rassalle, PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in remote caves in the Judaeen desert in the 1940s, have changed our understanding of ancient Judaism forever. They contain texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek and include some of the oldest-known manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. This course explores the range of texts that make up the Dead Sea Scrolls and look at the archaeology of the Qumran site and its link to the Essenes. It examines the convoluted research history of the scrolls and the problems surrounding the looting and trafficking of antiquities in general. And it sheds light on ancient Judaism and the development of religious and philosophical thought in later Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.

Members receive a discount on this and all ISAC courses.

To register, visit: [bit.ly/ISACDSS](https://bit.ly/ISACDSS)

# AN INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF CURATOR MARC MAILLOT

Interview by Shirlee Hoffman

This past January, Marc Maillot began his tenure as ISAC Museum associate director and chief curator. Previously, Marc held the position of director of the French Archaeological Unit on behalf of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Sudan National Museum in Khartoum. From 2020, Marc was director of excavations at the site of Damboya in Sudan. He was also involved in the organization of several exhibitions, as well as in cultural heritage preservation efforts.

**When you received your doctorate from the Sorbonne in 2013, what were your thoughts about having a career both in archaeological excavation and museum administration?**

I was one of the lucky few who benefited from a double training during my PhD—that is, five years at the archaeological site of Muweis, Sudan, and at the same time a training in museum collection management under the umbrella of the Louvre Museum and Sorbonne University. When the PhD was defended, it was a natural trajectory for me to integrate the French archaeological unit in Khartoum, an institution that combines both aspects. The more I grew in the discipline, the clearer it became that the separation that currently exists between archaeological research on-site and curatorial management of the collections is mostly a social distinction, linked to the history of institutions. But I am deeply convinced that a good curator must be up to date on the latest state-of-the-art in fundamental research, and an archaeological mission director should be proficient in artifacts management. Indeed, bringing fundamental research to a wider audience is one of the major parts of our job, and the important effort it requires to synthesize the contextualization of the artifacts to the public is better performed by scholars proficient in both fields. Popularization is not simplification, and the scientists in my field that I admire the most are the ones who are able to foster the most complex ideas in a comprehensive manner. This is the ideal that I try to reach every day.

**What do you think will be the biggest difference between your work at the Sudan National Museum and here at ISAC? Do the two museums require a different philosophy or different approach?**

For me there is no difference at all. Both the French Archaeological Unit at the Sudan National Museum and ISAC share a beautiful hybrid structure—namely, a world-recognized research institution combined with a museum that hosts a collection of paramount importance. I think our main mission remains the same, bringing to the public the knowledge coming from research with a comparative approach based on collections.

I worked extensively with my Sudanese colleagues on the outreach of the Sudan National Museum collection among youth and teenagers, trying to bring them back to the museum. I noticed there that in a complex situation, cultural heritage was one of the few things, if not the best, able to bring people from various communities together, thanks to a craving need for a shared common memory, that could help foster a feeling of belonging around a cultural hub, the Museum. I arrived in Chicago recently, but I think that this philosophy is relevant for the constituents of the city.

You've said that you consider this appointment "a motivating challenge to bring a long-term vision to one of the best collections in my discipline." One specific example you have expressed (logical, given your background) is to connect "the collections to the latest state-of-the-art research in Nubia and reinforcing partnerships at an international level." When you think about the ISAC Museum's 350,000-item collection, which other aspects of that collection might be first in your desire "to bring some of the best, though not necessarily well-known, artifacts to the academic and public scene?"

It is necessarily a collective and long-term approach, but I can say briefly that I would like to launch a series of exhibitions focused on a thematic approach that will shed light on the materiality and common use of the artifacts in the collection and allow a cross-department involvement. To give a few examples, an exhibition on divine symbols, cultural traits in architecture, or even ceremonial costume would be an opportunity to present to a wide audience a technological panorama of the geographical areas covered by the ISAC Museum. It is also an excellent vector for at-





tracting a broader audience to the Museum, by anchoring the collection into the daily life of the Chicago communities through a comparative approach. What was the equivalent of a baker in ancient Mesopotamia? What was his reality? Was it so different from mine? There is often an opposition between story-driven exhibits and object-focused shows. I think we can approach the collection on both fronts at the same time, through the physicality of the object. In a few words, it is a question of reappropriation of the artifacts in the mental sphere of the spectator. In that regard, our current special exhibition, *Artifacts Also Die* curated by Hanaa Malallah and Kiersten Neumann, and the fall exhibit, *Back to School in Babylonia* curated by Susanne Paulus, are perfect examples of that approach. To avoid any spoilers, I would just recommend that you attend these shows.

Now that you're here in Chicago, what specific challenges do you see in achieving your goal of making the ISAC Museum "a familiar, grounded, and open institution that becomes in time a cultural reflex, like a dictionary, for the constituents of the city"?

I see three major challenges that the Museum needs to address in the short term. First, in a post-pandemic era, we need to create a welcoming environment that will motivate Chicago's constituents to return for in-person tours, events, and lectures. A virtual collection will be a necessary feature for any museum in the future, provided that the physicality and the context of the objects are fully understood by the audience. The creed would be the following: eye before phone. Second, keeping people coming back regularly will be something to work on. Human beings live on habits, and providing scheduled cultural rituals is necessary. That will imply consistency and planning on our side, and ISAC is currently working on that aspect of offering engaging pro-

gramming. Third, breaking down the barrier between the north and south sides of Chicago. It reminds me of my Sudanese experience where, for pragmatic reasons such as distance, weather, and familiarity with the neighborhood, the Sudan National Museum faced a challenge in reaching out to the greater Khartoum. We need to think as a city, meaning that connections with other museums and research institutions should be reinforced concretely.

We understand that you are a film buff and a former musician. Now that you're in Chicago, do you have any plans for taking advantage of those offerings in contemporary art, architecture, jazz, and hip-hop that were a reference for you when you grew up in the suburbs of Paris?

Definitely yes. I just need to find the time to actually start scouting. I am a strong supporter of movie theaters, and I try as much as I can to go to the movies in person. As I said, rituals are important, and movies are supposed to be a gathering where the spectator has an active role.

The French Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse recently gave you the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes académiques for your work in Sudan. Hearty congratulations! Are there any practical implications of this honor that you can share with us?

No practical implications apart from wearing the "Palmes" medal for official events. It is an immense honor that was not at all a given when you consider where I come from, and in that regard the French Embassy in Sudan and the Ambassador of France, Her Excellency Raja Rabia, deserve all my gratitude. Most of all, it means that I need to keep up to the task here at ISAC, making sure that the title remains meaningful in the long term. Consistency is a daily job, as my grandfather used to say.

اللقى ايضاً تَمُوتُ  
ARTIFACTS  
ALSO  
DIE

A SPECIAL EXHIBIT

APRIL 5 – AUGUST 27, 2023



# THE KIOSK PROJECT

## A VIRTUAL EXPANSION OF THE PERMANENT GALLERIES

by Marc Maillot

After half a year in Chicago, I was confirmed in my impression that ISAC is a unique institution. Indeed, I saw how deeply linked fundamental research and the museum collection are, a characteristic that reminds me of the French Archaeological Unit in Sudan. Both share a beautiful hybrid structure—namely, a world-recognized research institution combined with a museum collection of paramount importance. To expand on that remark, of the more than 350,000 artifacts in ISAC's inventory, fewer than 2 percent are on display. Along with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and the Penn Museum at the University of Pennsylvania, ISAC is one of only three institutions in the United States that have adopted such a model, which for me is particularly efficient. One question remains, though: How do we expand on that very aspect of ISAC? How can we present our mission in a more comprehensive manner? This is one of the main objectives of a new project that will make our collection more accessible. As mentioned in the interview on the preceding pages, the best way to accomplish this objective is a reinforced contextualization of artifacts, including features that one cannot see either because the artifact is too fragile or because one exceptional feature competes with others in the same object. Choices must be made; it is the essence of museum curation. A few years ago, a solution emerged that allows the more hidden characteristics of objects to be shared with the public.

Museums across the world have been using touchscreen kiosks to better engage a broader range of audiences. Gallery kiosks would support one of the main goals of our mission: to present our collection to the constituents of our city, and to the public at large, in a way that fosters more accessible interaction with elements of the ancient past. One of my primary objectives is to upgrade our permanent gallery with interactive displays. Indeed, most museums use interactive displays to create engaging and immersive learning experiences for their visitors. Touchscreens provide a unique opportunity for visitors to learn about artifacts on display in depth rather than merely admiring them from afar. These interactive displays can provide videos, 3D models, archival material, and gallery maps that permit visitors to explore the exhibition deeply, understanding its detail and significance through more active engagement. They encourage people to connect with artifacts on an emotional level, creating a memorable experience that they won't soon forget. They can also help progressively draw unfamiliar visitors to the extended written case labels, which will remain the main context provider for the artifacts. Finally, they can allow the ISAC Museum team to provide complementary information about certain artifacts, such as CT scans for mummified persons or 3D modeling of relief pieces not fully available to the public for conservation reasons. Thanks to this initiative, ADA compliance will also be met for certain artifacts that are currently not completely accessible to museum attendees.

Apart from these obvious improvements, the kiosks will also be a wonderful tool for international or non-English-speaking audiences, as a Spanish-language option will be a priority in the touchscreens' main menu. They can also expand our capacity to create educational programs, both for our adult constituents and for our younger explorers, that are integrated directly into the main galleries through these kiosks. Interactive scavenger hunts and restoration tours are a couple of examples. The kiosks would be implemented in a discreet and minimalist fashion, to make sure the artifacts remain the focal point. The list of highlights envisioned includes a variety of illustrative artifacts, such as the lamassu (Iraq, ISACM A7369), the monumental head of a ruler (Turkey, ISACM A27861A), the statue of Tutankhamun (Egypt, ISACM E14088), a Book of the Dead (Egypt, ISACM E10486), and the colossal bull head (Iran, ISACM A24065). The list includes a representative overview of the geographical areas covered by ISAC, as well as a meaningful chronological frame. The last entry, the ISAC Museum lobby, will be targeted to the history of our institution, with exceptional photos related to the foundation of the Institute in 1919 and explanations of its different names. Thus we will immediately draw attention to the latest news of our institution—namely, the name change to ISAC that happened in April.

The idea behind this project is simple: to create a welcoming environment that motivates Chicago's constituents to return to the museum in person. In a post-COVID era, it is a necessary effort to bring the Museum to its rightful place at the intersection of the academic and local communities. As we update the didactics in the main galleries and expand our event programming on Friday evenings during extended Museum opening hours, kiosks will fit perfectly into that approach and hopefully create vocations and raise curiosity among our constituents.

To make this project happen, we need the support of the ISAC family. We must fundraise part of the cost, ideally \$50,000, for the highlighted areas mentioned above. The touchscreens will help us foster a better feeling of accessibility, channel curiosity to encourage people to return to the Museum, and expand our outreach. The screens will complete the history and context of these artifacts, focus on their subtle but no less remarkable features, and integrate them into more interactive and recurrent programming. On-demand Museum gallery maps, Spanish translations, and ADA compliance are among the priorities, while preserving the focus of the strategy's core: a grounded and familiar collection for the constituents of Chicago. No contribution is too small, and we would appreciate ISAC members' support to make the project a reality. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this approach to grade K–12 school tours, as it will connect them to the latest state-of-the-art and fundamental research based on our collection's masterpieces.





ABOVE: Lamassu from Court VIII of Sargon II's palace at Dur-Sharrukin, Iraq (Neo-Assyrian period, 721-705 BCE; ISACM A7369).

BELOW LEFT: Statue of Tutankhamun from Medinet Habu, Egypt (New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, 1336-1327 BCE; ISACM E14088).

BELOW RIGHT: Coffin of Ipi-ha-ishetef from Saqqara, Egypt (First Intermediate Period, 2160-2025 BCE; ISACM E12072A-B) and mummy of Meresamun from Medinet Habu, Egypt (Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 22, 945-715 BCE; ISACM E10797).



Please let us know if you are interested in helping us take this next step in making our collection accessible to all. Email [isac-development@uchicago.edu](mailto:isac-development@uchicago.edu) for more information.



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