



ISAC

ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024



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ISBN: 978-1-61491-122-7

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Printed in the United States of America.

Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago

Editor: Timothy P. Harrison

Managing editor: Andrew J. Baumann

Cover: Andrew J. Baumann

Layout: PerfectType, Nashville, TN

On the cover: Drone image of the Surezha prehistoric
high mound (see Surezha Excavations project report).

This paper meets the requirements
of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992
(Permanence of Paper).

C O N T E N T S

5 INTRODUCTION

Timothy P. Harrison

7 IN MEMORIAM

9 PROJECT REPORTS

- 11 CHICAGO DEMOTIC DICTIONARY. *Brian P. Muhs*
- 13 CHICAGO HITTITE DICTIONARY. *Theo van den Hout*
- 15 CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN CENTRAL ASIA.
Gil J. Stein
- 23 EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY. *J. Brett McClain*
- 33 GIZA PLATEAU MAPPING PROJECT. *Mark Lehner | Ancient Egypt
Research Associates*
- 41 KITES IN CONTEXT. *Yorke M. Rowan*
- 43 NINEVEH SHAMASH GATE PROJECT. *Timothy P. Harrison
and Khaled Abu Janyab*
- 51 NIPPUR. *Augusta McMahon*
- 53 NUBIAN EXPEDITION PUBLICATION PROJECT. *Lisa A. Heidorn
and Bruce Beyer Williams*
- 61 PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION ARCHIVE PROJECT. *Mark B. Garrison
and Wouter F. M. Henkelman*
- 67 SUHAR PROJECT. *Derek Kennet*
- 71 SUREZHA EXCAVATIONS. *Gil J. Stein and Michael T. Fisher*
- 85 TABLET COLLECTION AND NIPPUR TABLET PROJECT.
*Susanne Paulus, with Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon,
Danielle Levy, Madeline Ouimet, and Ryan Winters*

93 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

115 RESEARCH SUPPORT

- 117 CENTER FOR ANCIENT MIDDLE EASTERN LANDSCAPES.
Mehrnoush Soroush
- 121 JOURNAL OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES. *Seth Richardson*
- 123 PUBLICATIONS. *Andrew Baumann*
- 129 RESEARCH ARCHIVES. *Foy Scalf*

135 MUSEUM

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND MUSEUM SHOP, INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH, SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS, EXHIBITION DESIGN AND PRODUCTION, CONSERVATION, REGISTRATION, ARCHIVES, AND ISAC MUSEUM/FIELD MUSEUM POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARSHIP. *Susan Allison, Robert Bain, Denise Browning, Laura D'Alessandro, Anne Flannery, Kea Johnston, Marc Maillot, Helen McDonald, Kiersten Neumann, Josh Tulisiak, and Alison Whyte*

159 PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

ADULT EDUCATION, YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAM, AND VOLUNTEER AND DOCENT PROGRAM. *Matthew Welton, Tasha Vorderstrasse, and Katherine Hodge*

167 DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT, MEMBER PROGRAMMING, ADVISORY COUNCIL, AND HONOR ROLL OF DONORS AND MEMBERS. *Bill Cosper, Brad Lenz, and Emily Smith*

187 FACULTY, ASSOCIATES, AND STAFF

195 INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

TIMOTHY P. HARRISON

I am pleased to be writing this introduction to the 2023–24 annual report as the new director of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC). I am honored to return to the Institute, where I completed my doctoral studies in 1995, almost thirty years ago. It is a particularly fortuitous time to be joining ISAC and the University of Chicago. As the academic community emerges from the pandemic and grapples with its place and role within our broader society, the relevance of humanistic scholarship is increasingly questioned and marginalized. The importance of the Institute's commitment to foundational research and interdisciplinary scholarship that contributes meaningful insight and understanding to issues of deep contemporary concern, whether they be climate change and the environment or profoundly complex social issues such as inequality and conflict, has never been greater.

Faculty renewal and staffing are vitally important to this research mission. Earlier in 2023, we welcomed Marc Maillot as the director and chief curator of the ISAC Museum, and in September, Sheheryar Hasnain took up the critical administrative leadership post of director of administration and finance vacated by Brendan Bulger. Continuing the recent trend of faculty hires in 2023–24 that began with Jana Matuszak as assistant professor of Sumerology in January 2023, Margaret Geoga joined ISAC as assistant professor of Egyptology in July 2023, and in January 2024 we welcomed Derek Kennet as the inaugural Howard E. Hallengren Professor of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology. This past year also witnessed two new faculty searches. The first, in Egyptian archaeology, has been filled with the appointment of Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek, while the second search, in ancient Near Eastern art (the Rita T. Picken Professorship), continues.

Other important transitions also took place in 2023–24, most notably the retirement of Theo van den Hout, the Arthur and Joann Rasmussen Professor of Hittite and Anatolian Languages. Theo's many years of dedicated service and scholarship were celebrated on October 12, 2023. This past year we also welcomed Kiana Ashtiani and Marilyn Murray as new ISAC Advisory Council members, and we said farewell to two valued staff members: executive assistant Mariana Perlinac, who retired after thirty-five years of service at the University (seventeen years with ISAC), and Youth and Family Program manager Kate Hodge, who started a new role in the Provost's Office. The Institute's new name (adopted officially on April 4, 2023), the ongoing renewal of its faculty, and the addition of new staff reflect the remarkable transformation underway at ISAC, while attesting to the University's continuing commitment to ISAC and its mission.

This past year also provided an opportunity to reflect on ISAC's core research mission and its legacy of more than a century as one of the world's most important and renowned centers for archaeological and philological research, teaching, fieldwork, and museum/collections study of ancient West/Central Asia and North Africa. An extensive (and intensive) program of consultations, both within ISAC and across the broader University and academic community, affirmed the continuing importance of ISAC's historic commitment to foundational research and scholarship in the study of the ancient Near East. However, these consultations also identified important new challenges and strategic priorities, encouraging (indeed urging) ISAC to (1) participate more actively in interdisciplinary research that tackles the complex issues of our day, (2) engage and participate more actively in cultural heritage preservation, and (3) commit to greater community engagement, both locally and internationally, and especially with Middle Eastern partners. ISAC is uniquely positioned to address these strategic priorities. The combination of evolving conditions in the areas studied and the potential and need for utilizing thousands of years of human history, knowledge, and

INTRODUCTION

data to inform solutions to modern challenges—as well as the timing for addressing them—could not be more suited to the distinctive (and distinguished) capabilities and strengths of the Institute.

This year's annual report reflects the active, post-pandemic resumption of ISAC field research, with projects such as the Nippur Expedition returning to the field, but also the launch of new research initiatives, notably the Suhar Project in Oman, and newly affiliated ISAC projects, such as the Nineveh East Archaeological Project represented in this year's report by the Shamash Gate Project. These projects will be joined in the coming year by newly affiliated ISAC field projects in Turkey (Türkmen Karahöyük Archaeological Project and Tayinat Archaeological Project), Spain (Cerro del Villar), and Egypt (Beni Hassan). Meanwhile, long-running expeditions, such as the Epigraphic Survey of Egypt, the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project in Jordan, the Surezha excavations in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the Zincirli Expedition in Turkey, continued their foundational research.

This expanding field research was matched by ISAC's ongoing scholarly output. ISAC faculty and staff continued their study and editing of texts, development of research tools, delivery of conference presentations, and organization of exhibits. The past year witnessed the publication of four ISAC monographs, including the monumental *Medinet Habu X*, the first volume in ISAC's new flagship publication series (ISAC Publications). ISAC researchers also published or contributed to numerous monographs and edited volumes, including the production of no less than forty articles. The ISAC Museum produced two highly successful special exhibitions, *Back to School in Babylonia*, curated by Susanne Paulus, ISAC associate professor of Assyriology, and *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, which was curated by landscape archaeologist and ISAC postdoctoral scholar Marie-Laure Chambrade and celebrated a century of ISAC's pioneering work in this pivotal field of archaeological exploration. The Museum also continued its active support of research on the Institute's collections, as well as its loan and conservation programs, the latter including, excitingly after a fifteen-year hiatus, resumption of the restoration of the glazed-brick facade from the Sin Temple at Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad, Iraq.

The consultations held over the past year also laid the groundwork for a number of important forthcoming research initiatives. As we enter the new academic year, I am especially pleased to report that ISAC is poised to launch the creation of a data research center (DRC) that will seek to harness cutting-edge computational technologies and recent advances in data science in the study of ancient cultures. Building on more than a century as a pioneering force in archaeological, philological, geospatial, and cultural heritage research and preservation, the DRC will help position ISAC as a global leader in the integration of data science with the study of ancient cultures. By leveraging state-of-the-art technologies, computational methods, and approaches, the DRC promises to help revolutionize the ways in which we analyze, investigate, share, and preserve information about ancient cultures. Look for future reports on this developing and exciting focus of ISAC research.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the passing of Don Whitcomb and Al Liventals, two longtime members of the ISAC community. A research associate professor of Islamic archaeology, Don was an inspiring presence; a wonderful colleague, friend, and teacher; and a valued member of the Institute for more than fifty years. He was also a true pioneer, incorporating the contribution of mundane material culture (especially pottery) and stratigraphic excavation that moved the study of Islamic culture beyond the aesthetics of its monuments, art, and architecture. Al Liventals was a dedicated member of ISAC's Advisory Council and a stalwart supporter of the Jericho Mafjar Project, ISAC's Islamic collection, and the Tablet Collection. May each of them be of blessed memory.

I am deeply grateful for the generous support provided by our members, donors, and partners, which makes ISAC's foundational research and groundbreaking scholarship possible and undergirds all our work toward our mission to enhance scholarly understanding and public awareness of the places, peoples, and heritages we study.

IN MEMORIAM

ALDIS V. LIVENTALS

A long-standing friend and supporter of ISAC, Al Liventals passed away in autumn 2023. Al joined our Advisory Council in 2015 and was especially dedicated to the Jericho Mafjar Project, our Islamic collection, and our Tablet Collection.

Born in Riga, Latvia, Al immigrated to the United States after World War II and grew up in the Midwest. He graduated from Northwestern University with a bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering and a master of business administration degree in quantitative methods. He joined Mobil Corporation (now ExxonMobil) and held numerous roles worldwide in that organization, including posts in Saudi Arabia and Singapore and responsibility for Mobil's interests in China, East Africa, and Latin America. Al transitioned from field operative to industry theoretician and retired as the head of Mobil's strategic planning unit in Fairfax, Virginia. Throughout his career, Al enjoyed the local history, archaeology, and traditional arts of the regions he worked in. His assignment in Saudi Arabia inspired a particular appreciation for Middle Eastern history, Bedouin culture, and what he described as a "serious addiction" to tribal rugs. Al is survived by his wife, Malda; a daughter; and a son and his family.



DONALD S. WHITCOMB

Donald Scott Whitcomb, a research associate professor at ISAC and in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC) of the University of Chicago, passed away in February 2024 at the age of seventy-nine.

A pioneering scholar in the field of Islamic archaeology, Don excavated at numerous sites throughout the Middle East, including Quseir al-Qadim on the Egyptian Red Sea coast, Luxor on the east bank of the Nile in Upper Egypt, the port of Aqaba in Jordan, and Khirbet al-Mafjar in Jericho in the Palestine territories. His 1992 discovery in Aqaba of a hoard of thirty-two rare gold coins made headlines around the world.

Don's groundbreaking scholarship helped develop basic theoretical and methodological standards for the field, demonstrated that Islamic material culture is an essential part of medieval studies, and provided evidence for the development of Islamic societies and economies by unearthing and studying artifacts that can be compared with relevant text sources. Don published eight books and many articles on topics ranging from his excavations to theoretical research on the implications of particular sites for the history and culture of Islam. He was a trusted mentor who created master's and doctoral programs in Islamic archaeology at the University of Chicago that were based on the breadth of his fieldwork geographically and temporally and provided practical field training for generations of students. As his former student A. Asa Eger noted, "Rare is the publication [in Islamic archaeology] that does not reference him" (*Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 11, no. 1 [2024]: 1–2). In 2018, Don received the Middle East Medievalists' Lifetime Achievement Award for his transformative work in historic Islamic archaeology.



IN MEMORIAM

Don was born in 1944 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. After graduating from Emory University with a bachelor's degree in art history in 1966, he joined the Peace Corps and taught English in Bushire, Iran. After returning to the United States, he earned a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Georgia in 1971 and a doctorate in Islamic archaeology from the University of Chicago's Department of Anthropology in 1979.

From 1981 to 2024, Don was a research associate at ISAC and an associate professor in NELC. In addition to his teaching and fieldwork throughout much of the Middle East, incorporating and developing the latest survey and excavation techniques, he also served as a research fellow at the American Center of Research in Amman, Jordan; the American Research Center in Egypt in Cairo; the Smithsonian Institution; the Field Museum of Natural History; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. From the beginning, he was especially active in the illumination of ports, international trade, and the development of Islamic urbanism. He enjoyed mentoring young scholars, several of whom are now established academics in the field of Islamic archaeology. He was proud to work with both Palestinian and Israeli students and colleagues and to excavate in both areas.

According to Don's family, he loved to explore and be outdoors. He enjoyed riding tractors, barbecuing at his family farm in Indiana, and Saturday morning soccer games. He liked reading, especially sitting in the garden with a good book.

Don is survived by his wife of forty-eight years, Janet H. Johnson, the Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor Emerita of Egyptology in NELC, and his two children, John and Felicia.



PROJECT REPORTS

OVERLEAF: Detail of plate 241 from *Medinet Habu X—The Eighteenth Dynasty Temple, Part II: The Façade, Pillars, and Architrave Inscriptions of the Thutmosid Peripteros*, published in June 2024 (see Epigraphic Survey report).

CHICAGO DEMOTIC DICTIONARY

BRIAN P. MUHS

Progress continued to be made on the Chicago Demotic Dictionary (CDD) from July 2023 to June 2024, thanks to CDD research assistants Brendan Hainline and Rolland Long and to Sandy Schloen and Miller Prosser at the University of Chicago's Forum for Digital Culture.

During the past year, Hainline and Long largely completed work on the letter and number files. These files contain individual entries for each of the Demotic words and numbers treated in the dictionary, organized among twenty-four letters and three kinds of numbers ("regular" numbers, months, and days). Each entry consists of a lemma and definitions; examples of different meanings, usages, and writings; and images depicting the different writings (fig. 1).

Hainline and Long transferred the last three letter files (İ, W, and D) from the word-processing software Microsoft Word to the publication software InDesign, reformatted them, and linked the digital images of Demotic words to the correct places in the reformatted files, thereby completing a process that began in 2015 with the conversion of the Microsoft Word files to Unicode. The letter and number files now need to be checked to correct errors and inconsistencies that have arisen during the transfer and to replace some images that have degraded over time as a result of automatic image compression in Microsoft Word files.

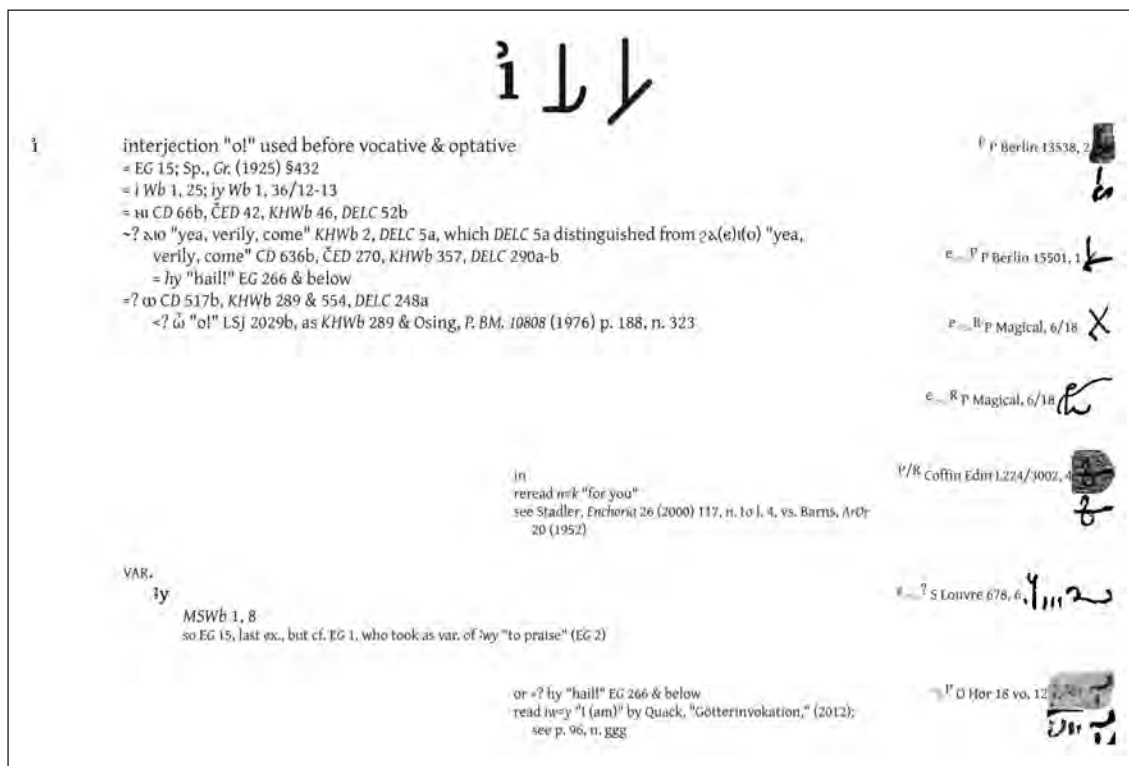


Figure 1. First part of the first entry in the letter file İ.

Also in the past year, Schloen and Prosser worked on the preliminaries and the “problem” files. The preliminaries include the table of contents, lists and explanations of abbreviations, and the bibliography, and are intended to precede the letter and number files. The problem files contain entries for signs and words whose reading, meaning, and placement in the dictionary are disputed; they are intended to follow the letter and number files. Schloen and Prosser kindly converted the preliminaries and the problem files to Unicode, as they did for the letter and number files. The files now need to be transferred to InDesign, to be reformatted, and (in the case of the problem files) to have their images linked, as was done for the letter and number files. Then they, too, will need to be checked to correct errors and inconsistencies and to replace degraded images. Fortunately, there are fewer files and images than in the letter and number files, so the process should not take as long.

After all the files have been transferred and corrected, the first goal is to publish an updated version of the CDD both in print and as PDFs on the ISAC website, replacing the “work-in-progress” PDFs posted there in 2001. Once the updated version is published, the second and longer-term goal will be to create an interactive online database using the text and images from the updated version. This database will allow for live updates and links to other online resources for Demotic.

CHICAGO HITTITE DICTIONARY

THEO VAN DEN HOUT

The next volume of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary (CHD) to be published will cover the letters T and D (which are not systematically kept distinct from one another in the Hittite cuneiform script at the beginning of a word). Most of the entries have already been written, but many were written twenty or more years ago. Some twenty-five volumes of new Hittite texts have been published in the meantime (in pen-and-ink copies of the original cuneiform on clay tablets). Junior editor Richard Beal has gone through these texts looking for new words, new usages of already-known words, new spellings or grammatical forms, and words newly attested for a particular time period. Many new editions and translations have also been published, some in print and some online, among which several are the result of a number of European Union-funded projects.

However, there were also words for which entries had not yet been written. Beal wrote first drafts of most of them, and he completed some that had not been finished. Other drafts needed critiquing or rethinking as a result of new information. Almost all of them needed additions, corrections, or other changes.

An important part of Beal's work was to go through two forthcoming volumes by former CHD research associate Oğuz Soysal that present new texts from the pre-World War I German excavations at Boğazköy, the modern-day site of the former Hittite capital Hattusa, and to pull out all the T/D words. These two volumes will soon be published by ISAC in its CHD Supplements series. Similarly, Beal went through volumes of newly excavated texts from Boğazköy and Kayalıpınar. This task now completed, he has started work on updating two very lengthy articles on words that begin with *ti-*. The *ta-* words, when published, will probably occupy some 350–400 pages, split into two fascicles.

Besides her heavy teaching and University of Chicago service schedule, senior editor Petra Goedegebuure continued work on the pilot project of revising the entries for the letter L, the very first installment of the CHD published in 1980. The revision involves not only incorporating L words from texts published since 1980 and updating the secondary literature but also bringing the volume up to the standard the CHD has developed over the years. One small but important example is the marking of morpheme boundaries. The L and M volumes contain such phonological words as *nuwarankan*. As of the N volume, however, all phonological words have been provided with morpheme boundary markers, replacing forms such as *nuwarankan* with *nu=war=an=kan*. This standard needs to be applied to the L and M volumes as well. The project envisages an electronic update of this publication, now already more than forty years old, which may also serve as a possible model for the future dissemination of our dictionary. Goedegebuure also continued her work on the conjunction *ta* “and”; reference checking; and rewriting select entries, such as the culturally important entry *Tawananna*, title of the ruling queen and the personal name of several queens throughout Hittite history.

Our former student and graduate Robert Marineau continued his work on the verb *tarna-* “to let, allow.”

My retirement in October 2023 means that I am now able to spend more time on CHD work in my role as chief editor. Most of my time has been spent on the gigantic entry of the verb *dā-* “to take,” which will probably occupy 20–30 printed pages. More recently, I have begun writing the entry *-ta* “you” as direct object (as in “I see you”), indirect object (“I give something to you” or “I do something for you”), or as a complement with verbs of taking (“I take this from you”).

We again enjoyed a series of talks in our Anatolian Circle wonderfully organized by graduate student Naomi Harris, who also started working for the CHD. And as always, we thank our donors, particularly Walter and Susan Guterbock, for their generous support.

CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

GIL J. STEIN

The fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Sufi mosque of Langar Ota is located in a mountainous region of Uzbekistan, 104 km southwest of Samarkand, historically one of the most important cities of the Silk Road. Although Sufi shrines, mosques, mausolea, and lodges are known and preserved in urban centers of Central Asia and the Silk Road such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Shahrissabz, the Langar Ota mosque is one of the few rural Sufi mosques in Uzbekistan that has survived mostly intact since the fifteenth century, when it was built during the reign of the Timurid dynasty as a *khanaqah* (lodge) by the Ishqiyyah Sufi order. The mosque housed three important Islamic relics: a collection of very early Qur'ans, the *shajjara* (genealogy) of the sheikhs (spiritual leaders) of the Ishqiyyah order, and the *khirqah* (cloak) of the Prophet Muhammad. Even though these relics are no longer kept in Langar Ota, the mosque and the mausoleum of Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq are still important centers for pilgrimage. More than 1,000 pilgrims per month visit the mausoleum and mosque of Langar Ota (fig. 1).

The Langar Ota mosque itself is also remarkable for its beautiful cut-tile mosaic decoration, which has survived for 600 years. The mosque consists of a simple, undecorated west prayer room built in 1424 and an east prayer room built in the early sixteenth century (ca. 1502) with elaborate interior ornamentation (fig. 2). In the east prayer room, five carved wooden columns—each made from a single tree—support a well-preserved roof with painted wooden beams. The room is adorned with decorative panels of beautiful, cut glazed tile. The complex, elaborate design of the room's mosaics and the presence on them of gold-leaf decoration show the importance of this rural mosque and reflect the wealth and power of its patrons in the Ishqiyyah Sufi order.

Two registers of designs—an upper, calligraphic one and a lower, geometric one—extend around all four walls and come together at the south wall in the *mihrab* niche, showing the direction of prayer toward Mecca. The upper calligraphic register consists of verses from the Qur'an. All are from Surah 48, called



Figure 1. The mosque (left) and mausoleum (right) of Langar Ota.

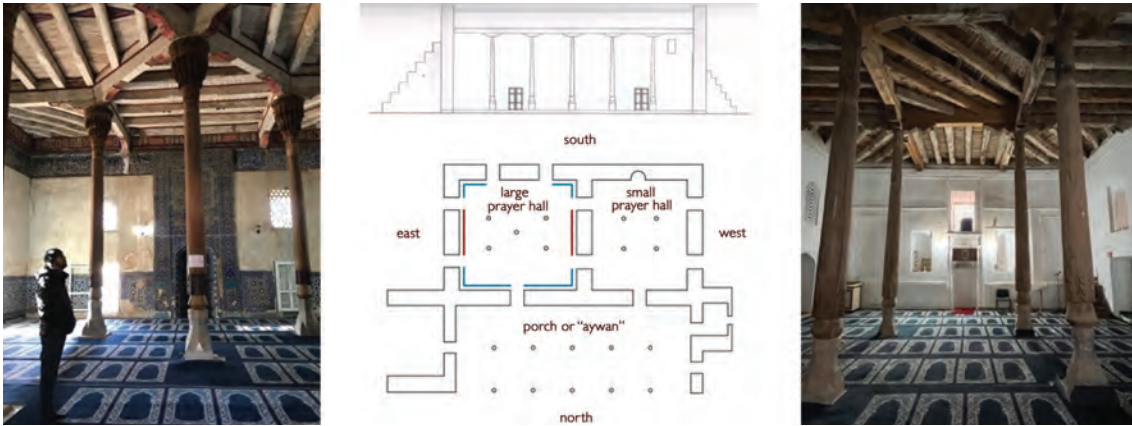


Figure 2. Plan of the Langar Ota mosque (center), with east (left) and west (right) prayer rooms.

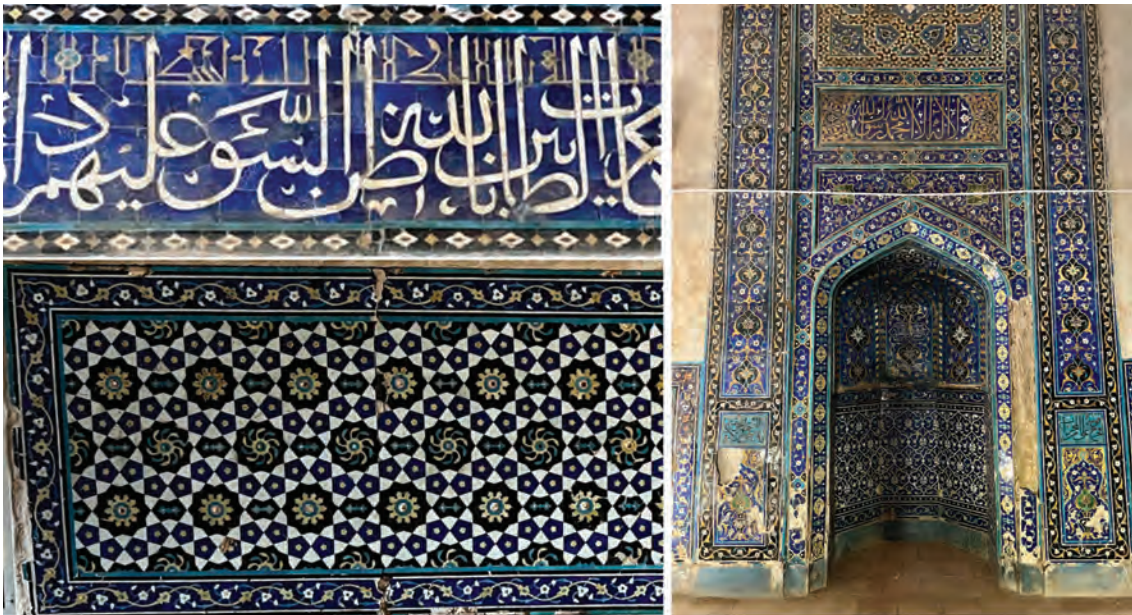


Figure 3. Calligraphic tile register (upper left) and geometric tile register (lower left); *mihrab* (right).

al-Fath (“The Victory”), which tells Muslims that in times of trouble or uncertainty they must stand together and have faith in Allah. The lower geometric register has elaborate designs with two kinds of sunbursts. The panels on the east and west walls are mirror images of each other. The *mihrab* and the tile panels enclosing it are masterpieces that have the most complex and beautiful tile mosaic decoration in the mosque (fig. 3).

Cut-tile mosaic work (*koshinborush* in Uzbek) is one of the most distinctive forms of Timurid art and architectural ornamentation on public religious architecture in Central Asian Silk Road cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Shahrisabz, and Herat. Cut-tile mosaics are complex forms of decorative art that require the skill of a master craftsman to design, produce, and install. They are made by cutting a still-drying square clay tile into separate pieces that together form a design. After being glazed in different colors and fired, the pieces are reassembled and set into plaster in a block, which is then mounted on a wall (fig. 4). Multiple blocks are combined to make a single large, elaborate panel. Because each piece of cut tile is fired separately

Figure 4. Stages in the production of glazed cut-tile mosaics (left); cut-tile mosaic technique used for calligraphic (top right), geometric (center right), and floral (bottom right) designs.



to avoid the accidental mixing and blurring of different glazes, the colors of the tilework stand out so sharply that they can be seen clearly even from a distance.

At Langar Ota, the elaborate cut-tile mosaic work was used in an incredible variety of design forms and motifs—most notably complex geometric panels of multiplying sunburst motifs built according to mathematical formulae, detailed calligraphic inscriptions in which each letter of the Arabic alphabet is built from several pieces, and floral or plant-related decorations. In some cases, the floral designs were ornamented even further by the addition of gold foil, which was attached and sealed with different resins.

Langar Ota is a rare cultural treasure that must be preserved for future generations. In 2022, the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation at ISAC was given permission from the Uzbekistan Cultural Heritage Agency to begin a program of conservation at the Langar Ota mosque. This project is supported by a grant from the US Department of State's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, administered through the US Embassy Tashkent. In November 2022, our team, consisting of preservation architects Bill Remsen and Shukhrat Zairov, head conservator Fabio Colombo, and wood-architecture specialist Ian Stewart, conducted a joint site assessment of the mosque and wrote a detailed report specifying the highest-priority areas for conservation. Water damage to the upper calligraphic register, the walls, and the lower geometric register has weakened the mosaic panels and, in some cases, led to the partial collapse of the register panels (fig. 5). These problems require urgent conservation efforts to stabilize the tilework and the building itself.

Our single most important priority was to preserve the structural integrity of the mosque building. Much of the water damage is recent, especially that caused by the Soviet-era corrugated tin roof, which had poor drainage and many leaks that allowed rain water to penetrate and weaken the walls of the mosque. We urgently needed to replace the tin roof to stop the water damage that was slowly destroying the walls and the mosque's interior. Our first step was to remove the old, leaking tin roof and replace it with a new steel roof and an effective water drainage system. In November 2023, we removed the corrugated tin roof and supporting wooden beams down to the original fifteenth- to sixteenth-century packed-clay roof of the mosque

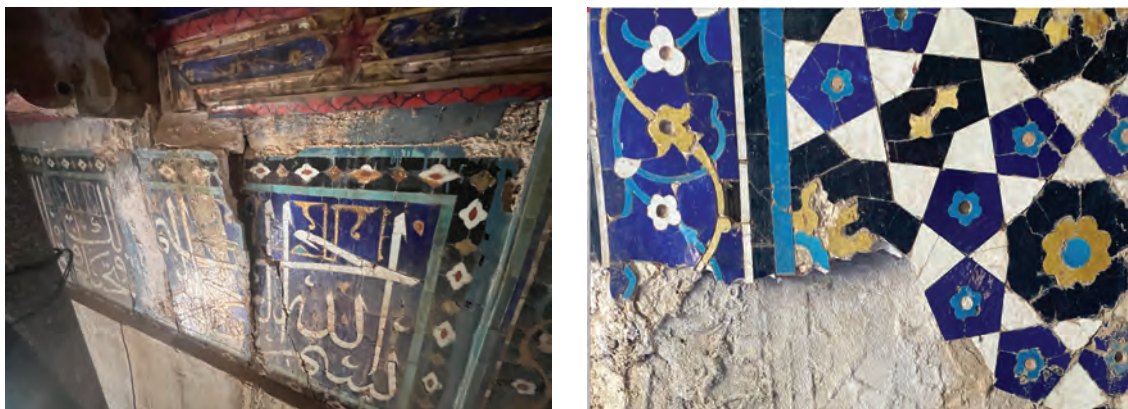


Figure 5. Panels and pieces of tile detaching from the walls, and in some cases partially collapsing, due to water damage to the calligraphic and geometric registers.



Figure 6. Installation of the new steel roof, steel-sheathed gutters, and drainpipes with extenders to carry water away from the mosque's stone foundations.

overlying the timbered ceiling. We then constructed new wooden roof beams and installed new roof panels made of steel (fig. 6).

The roof was designed by team preservation architect Zairov, who also supervised the roof installation process. In December 2023, we completed the installation of the new steel roof and steel-lined rain gutters. In the final step, we installed downspouts and extenders to carry rainwater away from the mosque and its stone foundation platform. With the new steel roof, improved drains, and metal rain caps on the wall buttresses, rain damage has now been stopped and the mosque walls are dry (fig. 7). Our hope is that this conservation intervention will protect and extend the integrity of the mosque building for at least several more decades.

Our next priority was to stabilize the cut-tile mosaics in the mosque's interior. Head conservator Colombo and assistant conservator Elisa Pannunzio set up a field conservation lab and installed scaffolding so they could stabilize both the upper and lower cut-tile mosaic registers. In a program of emergency stabilization, Colombo and Pannunzio installed wooden support "patches" on the upper calligraphy register to



Figure 7. The Langar Ota mosque with its new steel roof, drains, and metal rain caps on the buttresses.

prevent the cut-tile mosaic panels from detaching and falling off the wall. The wooden panel patches on all four walls of the mosque stabilized the seven areas of calligraphic tile that were at the greatest risk of collapse. The conservation team photographed and mapped the water damage to the tile panels to determine which areas were in most urgent need of stabilization. They then cleaned and stabilized the parts of the lower geometric register that were in danger of collapsing.

As part of our conservation work, we also trained Uzbek conservators Malika Beknazarova and Nargiza Kalandarova in methods for the preservation of cut-tile mosaics (fig. 8). Beknazarova cleaned the tile registers as well as the glazed tile pieces that had fallen from the geometric mosaic panel. Kalandarova cleaned tilework and inserted mortar made from traditional building materials into damaged areas. One of the most difficult aspects of the conservation work on the geometric tile register resulted from the fact that water damage and downward pressure from the roof beams had caused the tile panels to bulge out from the walls, creating a large, empty space or void behind the tiles so that they had no support and were in great danger of collapsing. To stabilize these sections of tile, the conservators filled the empty space with sponges to support the tilework and absorb vibrations, then sealed the now-filled area with mortar made from traditional building materials (fig. 9). At the end of our field season, Colombo and his colleagues reattached four blocks of fallen tile mosaic around the edge of the *mibrab* (fig. 10).

Looking forward, the condition of the walls and decorative elements of the Langar Ota mosque will require careful monitoring to prevent further deterioration. Preservation architect Ian Stewart installed crack monitors along the main fissures in the mosque's walls to determine whether the cracks are stable or expanding. If they continue to expand over the next two years, further conservation work will be necessary to preserve the structure of the Langar Ota mosque.



Figure 8. Uzbek conservators Malika Beknazarova cleaning individual cut-tile pieces (left) and Nargiza Kalandarova mixing mortar from traditional building materials and inserting it to repair the geometric tile register (center and right).



Figure 9. Stabilization of sections of loosened tilework by infilling the voids behind them with sponges soaked in consolidants, then sealing them with mortar made from traditional building materials.

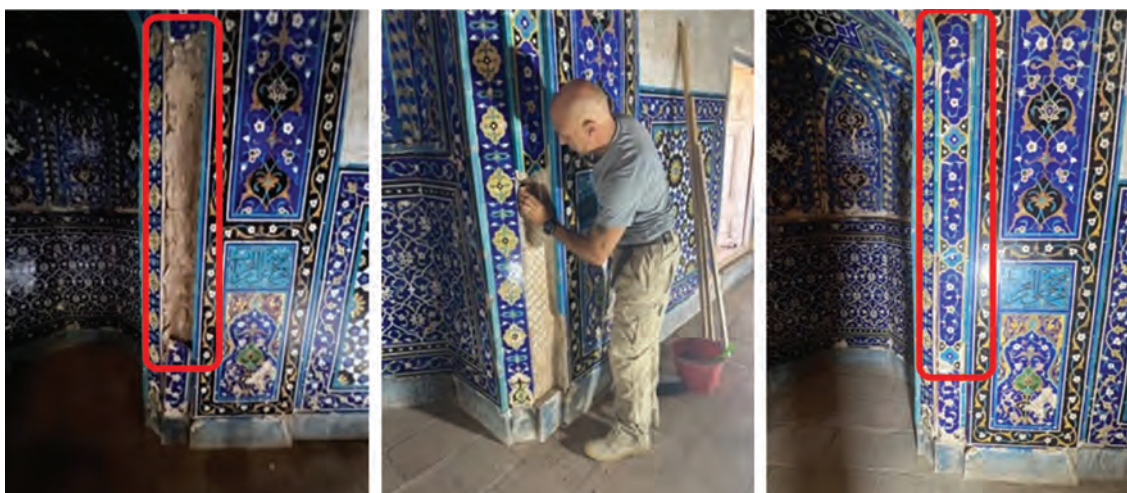


Figure 10. Reattachment of collapsed cut-tile mosaic blocks to the *mihrab* prayer niche of the Langar Ota mosque.



Figure 11. Video interview with one of the elders of Langar Ota village.

Finally, in parallel with our conservation work, we also conducted video interviews with village elders and the imam at Langar Ota to learn more about the significance of the Langar Ota mosque and its history over the past thirty-five years (fig. 11).

Overall, from 2022 to 2024, our project has been able to conserve the main parts of the Langar Ota mosque that were at the greatest risk of collapse. However, we recognize that much more work remains to be done. We hope to complete the most urgent stabilization tasks remaining at Langar Ota by the end of December 2024.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Langar Ota conservation project was supported by the US Department of State's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, administered through the US Embassy Tashkent, with additional funding from the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation and ISAC at the University of Chicago. We thank the Uzbekistan Cultural Heritage Agency for permission to carry out this project. We appreciate the administrative support provided by Sarah Talalay at the US Embassy Tashkent, as well as Laura Tedesco and Jaqueline Viselli at the US Department of State's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. We also thank Otabek Aripdjanov of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences for his advice and administrative assistance, and Matthew Perley at ISAC for his support in grant management and logistics.

EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY

J. BRETT McCLAIN

This year's field season of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt took place from October 15, 2023, through April 15, 2024. Based at Chicago House in Luxor, our team continued an array of documentation, conservation, and restoration projects at the sites of Medinet Habu, Luxor Temple, and Khonsu Temple in Karnak, along with the excavation and documentation of Theban Tomb 107. Our work on each of these sites, carried out with permission from the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), is summarized below.

MEDINET HABU

At Medinet Habu, our staff continued the epigraphic documentation of inscribed material in various parts of the temple complex. In the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Amun, we focused on facsimile drawing and collation of scenes to be published in *Medinet Habu* XI, including inscriptions of the Twentieth, Twenty-First, and Twenty-Ninth Dynasties on the exterior of the monument (fig. 1), as well as drawings for *Medinet Habu* XII, the New Kingdom and Ptolemaic reliefs in the central bark shrine. Another area of focus was the north annex of the temple, constructed during the Ptolemaic period, where we carried out documentation and multispectral imaging of graffiti and paintings on the interior walls of this chamber (fig. 2). Concurrently, our staff photographers produced large-format photographs for each of these components of our publication series, with a focus this year on the four polyhedral pillars, consisting of reused Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasty column drums, added to the Thutmosid ambulatory during the Twenty-Ninth Dynasty (fig. 3). On the west side of the Medinet Habu enclosure, we also continued the photographic and epigraphic recording of blocks from the destroyed Western High Gate of Ramesses III.

During the winter and spring, our staff worked with the ISAC publications office to finalize and print our latest folio volume, *Medinet Habu* X: *The Eighteenth Dynasty Temple, Part II: The Façade, Pillars, and Architrave Inscriptions of the Thutmosid Peripteros* (fig. 4). A milestone in our long-term program to record and publish the Small Temple of Amun *Djeser-set*, this volume presents the reliefs, inscriptions, and graffiti from the facade and peripteral ambulatory of the Eighteenth Dynasty monument in photographs, facsimile drawings, and



Figure 1. Jennifer Kimpton (left) and Emmanuelle Arnaudès (right) collating an inscription of the high priest Painedjem on the north side of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple. Photo by Susan Lezon.



Figure 2. Painted inscription of Mut on the Achoris lintel in normal light (left) and with visible light-induced luminescence (right). Photos by Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede.



Figure 3. Amanda Tetreault photographing with a large-format camera in the ambulatory of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.

color illustrations, accompanied by complete translations and detailed epigraphic commentary. *Medinet Habu X* was released in both print and online formats in June 2024.

Also at Medinet Habu, the Survey's conservation and restoration teams continued our USAID-funded site management and development program within the temple precinct. Final adjustments were made to the restored Twentieth Dynasty stone pavement surrounding the mortuary temple of Ramesses III, along with the adjoining mudbrick structures, completing the visitor circuit around the central monument of the complex. To the north of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple, our stonemasonry team continued the restoration of the Taharqa Gate, also part of our USAID grant program (fig. 5). Reconstruction of this sandstone monument is nearly complete and will be finalized in 2025. Final cleaning and conservation measures were carried out at the Claudius Gate, located at the southeast exterior corner of the temple enclosure (fig. 6). Our conservation and restoration teams also initiated a new project this year: expansion of the open-air museum surrounding the Medinet Habu blockyard (figs. 7 and 8). An additional component of our USAID-supported site management plan, enhancement of this facility will permit the assembly of numerous fragments and joined fragment groups for public display, with visitor access pathways and explanatory signage, to be completed next year. In conjunction with each of these restoration projects, we continued our training program for early-career Egyptian conservation professionals, providing instruction and hands-on practical experience in a wide range of conservation methods and techniques (fig. 9). We will continue this annual training program, now in its twentieth year, as a core component of our field operations next season and in the years to come.

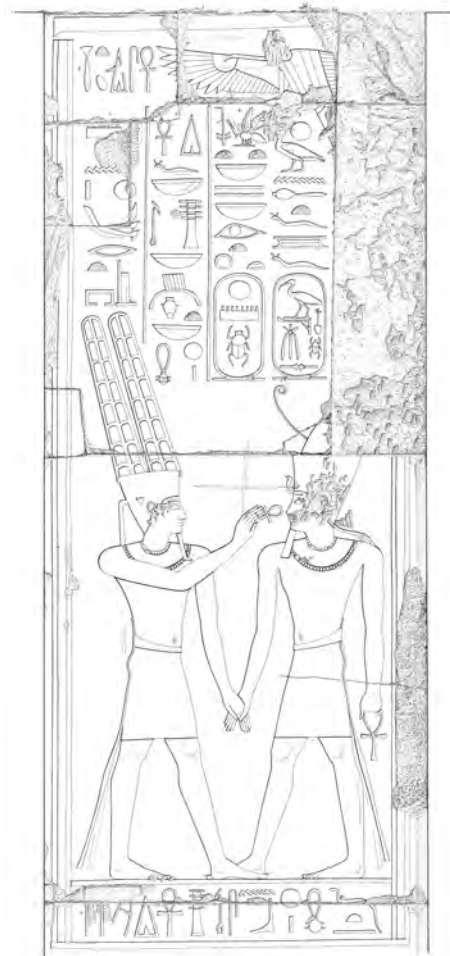
LUXOR TEMPLE

On the east side of the Nile, we continued our long-term conservation and epigraphic documentation programs at Luxor Temple (fig. 10). Tagging, registration, and preliminary photography of the decorated and



Photograph by Lanka and Lezon

A



Drawing by De Jong and Schenck

B

THUTMOSE III GIVEN LIFE BY AMUN-RE
FACADE, NORTH JAMB OF ENTRANCE

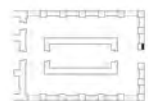


Figure 4. *Medinet Habu* X, plate 159, published in June 2024. Photo by Danny Lanka and Susan Lezon; drawing by Margaret De Jong and Will Schenck.

PROJECT REPORTS | EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



Figure 5. Stonemasonry team rebuilding the jambs of the Taharqa Gate. Photo by Frank Helmholz.



Figure 6. Conservation team finalizing restoration of the Claudius Gate. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.



Figure 7. Rais Badawy Mohammed Abd el-Rahman and temple workmen moving an inscribed block into position in the Medinet Habu open-air museum. Photo by Brett McClain.



Figure 8. Conservators Hala Ali Handaqa (left) and Magda Hassan Abu el-Haggag (right) testing samples in the Medinet Habu blockyard. Photo by Mohammed Abo el-Makarem.

architectural fragments in the temple blockyards continued this year, with nearly 23,000 blocks now entered into our ever-growing database (fig. 11). As this information is generated in the field, it is incorporated into our electronic archives at Chicago House, along with photographic and epigraphic documentation of individual blocks and joined groups. Our conservation team resumed condition monitoring and assessment of core elements of the corpus, including two large joined groups that were reassembled in situ on the walls of the Colonnade Hall and the Sun Court of Amenhotep III more than twenty years ago. During February and March, our team initiated a series of enhancements to the Luxor Temple blockyard open-air museum.

Figure 9. Conservation training program participants assessing and treating inscribed fragments at Medinet Habu. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.



Figure 10. ISAC visit to Luxor Temple, November 2023. Foreground, left to right: Essam el-Sayed, Sheheryar Hasnain, Bill Cosper, Brett McClain, Gina Salama, and ISAC director Tim Harrison. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.

Inaugurated in 2010 with support from the World Monuments Fund, the installation is being refurbished and expanded, with new signage and additional fragment groups added to the display platforms, and will be finalized in fall 2024 (fig. 12). Inside Luxor Temple itself, we carried out targeted photographic and epigraphic recording of the Amenhotep III-era reliefs as part of our comprehensive publication plan for the Eighteenth Dynasty portions of the monument. The late Roman imperial frescos in the central chamber,



Figure 11. SCA inspector Esraa Ahmed el-Taher (left) and blockyard assistant Hala Mohammed Ahmed (right) registering fragments at Luxor Temple. Photo by Brett McClain.



Figure 12. Left to right: Rais Badawy Mohammed Abd el-Rahman, Mustafa Mohammed, and Mohammed Selim installing a new fragment group in the Luxor Temple open-air museum. Photo by Hiroko Kariya.

now fully recorded in photographs and facsimile drawings, will be the focus of our next publication, *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple 3*.

KHONSU TEMPLE

At the temple of Khonsu in Karnak, we resumed our documentation of the inscribed blocks and fragments from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties that were reused within the structure of the Twentieth Dynasty monument. A collaboration with the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), our documentation program is part of a larger USAID-funded conservation and restoration initiative for the temple site. Existing cracks in the walls and ceilings of the temple, which allow access to the decorated surfaces of hundreds of blocks taken from older monuments by Ramesses III's stonemasons, will be filled in as part of the restoration plan, so it is essential that we copy the inscribed material before it is permanently hidden from view. During our field season, we recorded more than thirty of these fragments using the foil-impression method, which is the most effective approach to capturing the relief decoration on these hidden stones (fig. 13). We will continue our cooperative research effort with ARCE in 2024–25, and our publication of the rich and heterogeneous corpus of reused blocks from Khonsu Temple is planned for inclusion as a volume in our *Temple of Khonsu* series.

Figure 13. Dominique Navarro tracing reliefs from a reused block at Khonsu Temple. Photo by Nicholas Warner.





Figure 14. Brett McClain checking a facsimile drawing at TT 107. Photo by Susan Osgood.

THEBAN TOMB 107

During January and February, we resumed the archaeological clearance of TT 107, the tomb of the Eighteenth Dynasty official Nefersekheru, in ongoing collaboration with our colleagues from Macquarie University, Sydney. The Australian team expanded the excavation of the tomb's interior, which remains mostly full of flood debris, and a large number of new ceramics and other finds were retrieved from the stratified layers inside the broad pillared hall. Newly recovered fragments of inscribed limestone from the tomb's facade were conserved, photographed, and drawn by Epigraphic Survey staff, and we also continued our epigraphic documentation of the in situ funerary scenes, with several drawings finalized this year (fig. 14). We plan to continue the excavation and recording of this beautifully decorated but badly damaged tomb next season, with full clearance and publication as our long-term objectives.

CHICAGO HOUSE

Our research facility and residence at Chicago House provide the base of operations for all our field projects during the annual six-month season. The day-to-day management of the facility is overseen by our capable administration and finance team, our experienced house manager and technicians, and our permanent cadre of skilled workmen. Our library and archives offer comprehensive research resources for the local archaeological community, including members of the MoTA and SCA, scholars and students from local universities, and researchers from the many foreign expeditions that work in the region of Luxor each fall and winter. Our library staff not only organize and maintain the collections but also provide assistance to patrons when needed, and our photographic archives staff oversee and curate our ever-growing collection of large-format film negatives, digital and 3D images, and other documents, providing essential research



Figure 15. Mahmoud Abdellahi (center) discussing historic photographs with Brett McClain (left) and Alain and Emmanuelle Arnaudès (right) at Chicago House. Photo by Susan Lezon.

assistance to many colleagues each year. In preparation for the Epigraphic Survey's centennial anniversary in November 2024, we contributed an extensive dossier of photographs and archival documents (fig. 15) for a history of our expedition by Emily Teeter, as well as material for a special exhibition in the ISAC Museum and other celebratory events taking place this fall.

STAFF AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Epigraphic Survey professional staff for 2023–24 consisted of J. Brett McClain as field director; epigraphers Jennifer L. Kimpton, Emmanuelle Arnaudès, and Aleksandra Hallmann; Egyptologist/house manager Christina Di Cerbo; senior artists Margaret De Jong and Susan Osgood; artists Krisztián Vértés, Keli Alberts, and Dominique Navarro; senior photographer Yarko Kobylecky; photographer/photo archivist Susan Lezon; assistant photographer/photo archivist Amanda Tetreault; digital archivist Alain Arnaudès; archaeologists Boyo Ockinga, Susanne Binder, and Kim McCorquodale (Macquarie University); project manager/data engineer Gina Salama; senior conservators Hiroko Kariya and Mohamed Abo el-Makarem; consultant conservators Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede; master stonemason Frank Helmholz; head librarian Anait Helmholz; assistant librarian Martina Roshdy Maher; finance manager Essam el-Sayed; administrator Samir Guindy; and assistant administrator Samwell Maher. Our team of forty full-time skilled workmen and several dozen seasonal workmen was supervised by our experienced foreman, Rais Badawy Mohammed Abd el-Rahman. We had the pleasure to welcome Catie Witt, a graduate student in the

University of Chicago's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, back to Chicago House as an intern for the second part of our field season.

We are very grateful to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Supreme Council of Antiquities, particularly to Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mr. Sherif Fathy; former Ministers of Tourism and Antiquities Mr. Ahmed Issa and Dr. Khaled el-Enany; SCA Secretary General Dr. Mohamed Ismail; former SCA Secretary General Dr. Mostafa Waziri; General Director of the Pharaonic Sector Dr. Ayman Ashmawy; General Director of Foreign Missions Dr. Nashwa Gaber; General Director of Antiquities in Luxor Dr. Fathy Yaseen; Gurna Inspectorate General Director Bahaa ed-Din; Gurna Inspectorate Assistant Director Ezz ed-Din Kamal en-Nouby; Gurna Inspectorate Director of Foreign Missions Ramadan Ahmed Ali; Luxor Temple Director Ahmed Araby; Karnak Temple Director Dr. Mustafa el-Saghir; Karnak Temple Director of Foreign Missions Mme. Ghada Ibrahim Fouad; and all our friends and colleagues in Egypt for another fruitful collaboration this year.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the many friends of ISAC and Chicago House whose generous support has funded our preservation programs in Luxor. We are grateful to USAID mission director Sean Jones, former USAID mission director Leslie Reed, and USAID representatives Steven Sunderland Jr., Theresa Youssef, Xavier Preciado, and Lydia Abebe; to Dr. Marjorie M. Fisher; David and Carlotta Maher†; Andrea Dudek; Kelley and Susan Anderson; Ward and Diane Zumsteg; Nassef Sawiris; Kitty Picken†; Ellen and Tom Granger; David and Allison Harley; Tom Van Eynde; Susan and Kevin Geschwender; Jan Johnson and Donald Whitcomb†; Marjorie B. Kiewit; Tom and Linda Heagy; Shafik Gabr, ARTOC Group, Cairo; Holly J. Mulvey; Judge and Mrs. Warren Siegel; Walter and Annette Vandaele; Barbara Breasted Whitesides and George Whitesides; Miriam Reitz Baer†; Beth Noujaim; James Lichtenstein; Priscilla (Peppy) Bath; Charlie Secchia; Emily Fine; Nan Ray; Anna White; Willard White; Janet and Karim Mostafa; Elisabeth R. French; Waheeb (Ricky) and Christine Kamil; Caroline Lynch; Polly Kelly; Louise Grunwald; Lowri Lee Sprung; Andrew Nourse and Patty Hardy; Kate Pitcairn; Dr. Lorna Straus; Dr. Ben Harer; Dr. Roxie Walker; Tony and Lawrie Dean; Kelley and Susan Anderson; and Charles L. Michod Jr. We also thank Dr. Louise Bertini, Mary Sadek, and Nicholas Warner of ARCE for their helpful collaboration. Most of all, we are very grateful to ISAC director Timothy P. Harrison and to all our colleagues at ISAC and the University of Chicago for their continuing support of our research program in Egypt.

Our enduring thanks go to USAID Egypt for support of our documentation, conservation, restoration, and site management programs at Medinet Habu. For more than two decades, USAID-sponsored grant programs have been vital to the success of our fieldwork in the monumental sites of ancient Thebes.

GIZA PLATEAU MAPPING PROJECT

MARK LEHNER | ANCIENT EGYPT RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

In 2023–24, Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA) worked with a team led by Dr. Søren Sindbæk of Aarhus University to survey the southern floor of the Great Pyramid with laser scanning. We also excavated at the Menkaure Valley Temple (MVT) and continued analysis in the AERA field lab, a Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) magazine near the Great Pyramid.

GREAT PYRAMID BUILDERS' MARKS—3D SCANNING

In 2015–16, we surveyed the bedrock surface on the east, west, and north sides of the Great Pyramid, documenting 2,898 postholes, lever sockets, and quarry channels that Khufu's builders cut into the bedrock (fig. 1). In 2021, the eastern wooden boat of Khufu was moved from the south side of the pyramid to the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). The boat had been on display in a museum built directly over the pit

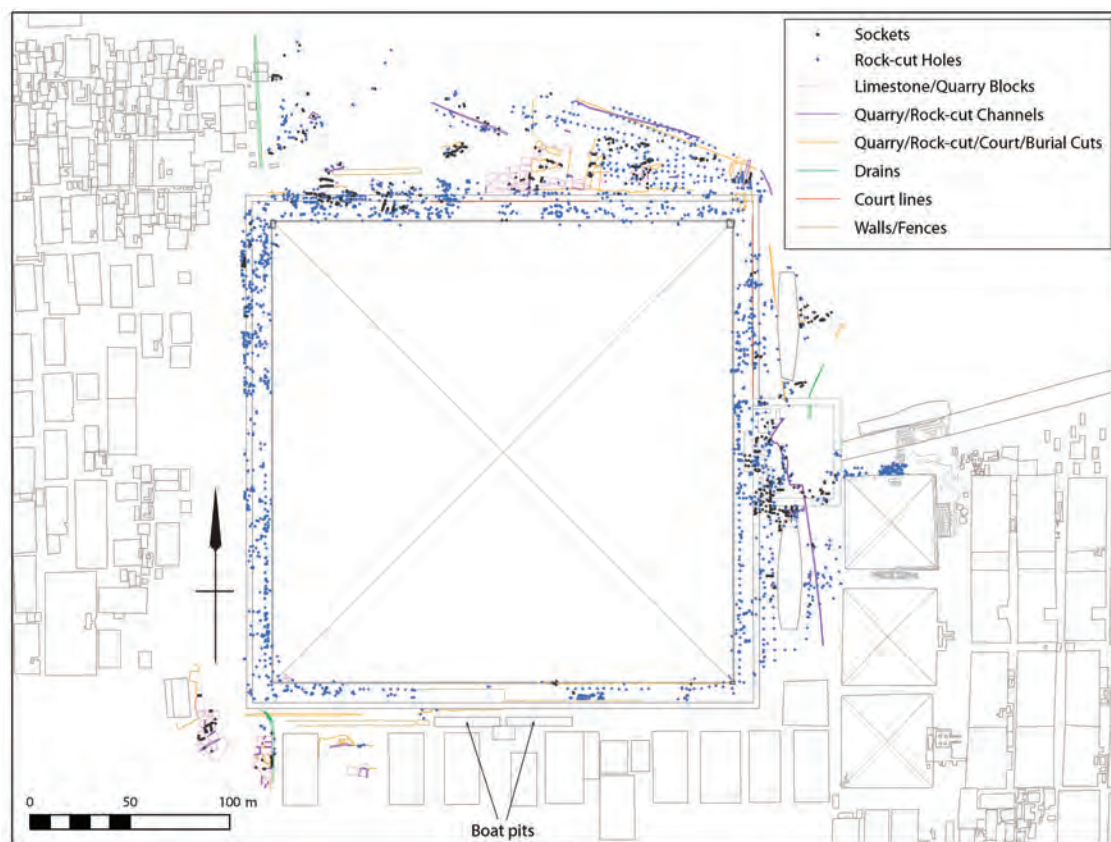


Figure 1. Plot of the holes and other features cut into the bedrock floor around the Great Pyramid, from a survey in 2015–16 by Ashraf Abd el-Aziz and Amer Zakaria. Map generated by Rebekah Miracle from AERA GIS.



Figure 2. View of the pavement on the south side of the Great Pyramid in 2018 showing the boat museum and, immediately to its right, the tentlike building covering the second boat pit where the Japanese team and MoTA conservators worked on the second boat.

where its pieces were found in 1954. From 2011 to 2021, a Japanese team conserved and extracted the wooden pieces of a second boat, in its pit immediately to the west. After both boats went to the GEM, the MoTA removed the boat museum and Japanese buildings (fig. 2), leaving exposed the southern bedrock surface, which had never been mapped in detail. A further 5,961 m² were now available for survey. Using a Trimble SX10 Scanning Total Station, the team produced a digital facsimile of this surface. Figure 3 provides a vector map extraction based on a scan of the Great Pyramid's southeast corner.

MENKAURE VALLEY TEMPLE EXCAVATIONS

This year we wanted to learn more about the foundations of the MVT. In our previous work, we found three major phases of building and occupation. Where Reisner saw his First and Second Temples, we see three. Two mudbrick temples were cut down and rebuilt. The First Temple was, as Reisner saw, the finishing in mudbrick of the temple Menkaure had started with limestone core blocks (our MVT0). People or natural forces truncated his First Temple (our MVT1). But this truncation was not the one that Reisner saw. People substantially rebuilt this Middle Temple (our MVT2), which functioned for about thirty years. This is the phase that a flood damaged, as Reisner saw, before people rebuilt the MVT a third time—Reisner's Second Temple, which is our Third Temple (MVT3).

MVT-West

We confirmed these four phases in most of our 2024 sondages (fig. 4). We excavated Sondages 144, 187, and 186 along the west side of the temple. Soudage 144 gave the clearest testimony of all four phases—a profile through 301 years of deposits, from the block foundation set by Menkaure (ca. 2551 BCE) to the

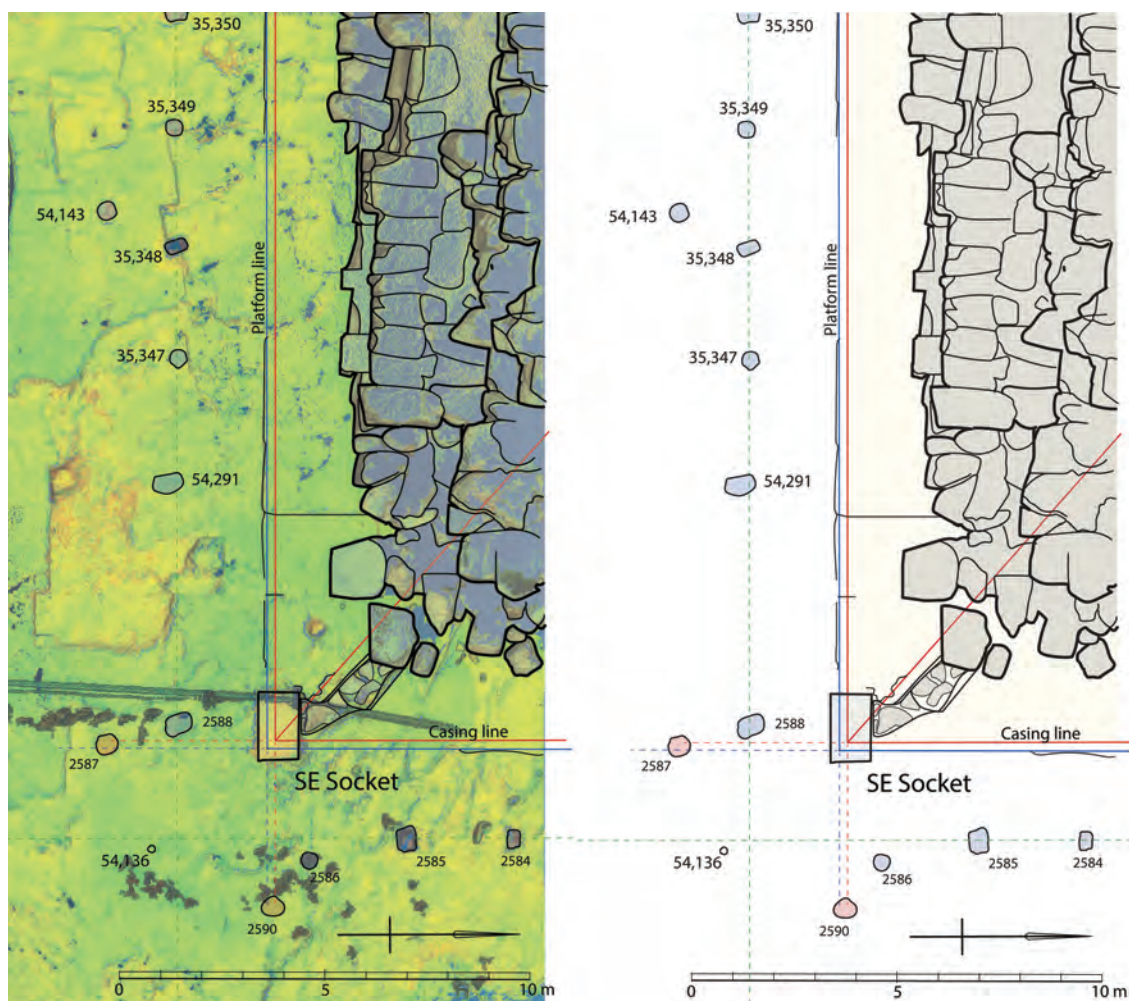


Figure 3. Left: Preliminary plot of the scan of the floor off the southeast corner of the Great Pyramid. Right: Plan of the holes and corner socket on the southeast floor of the Great Pyramid traced from the scan.

“Water Wall” glacis, built for flood protection at the end of the last MVT3 occupation, which probably corresponds to the end of the reign of Pepi II or maybe Merenre II (ca. 2250 BCE), after which the MVT seems to have been abandoned (fig. 5).

Most of the profile consists of intercalated aeolian sands and gravel, culminating in the heavy stone debris carried by a flood that broke through the temple’s west wall and across the causeway corridor. MVT3 builders placed their west wall directly on this debris. Under it we found a clay floor that extended over the trench, the exterior floor during MVT2 times. It was placed on stone-quarry debris (*dabsch* in Arabic) that the builders used to raise the level over an MVT1 floor. Underneath more *dabsch*, we exposed eight MVT0 core blocks. Some bore black and red grid patterns and lines, painted either in the quarry or during transport as guides for workers.

In Sondage 187 (fig. 6), we found the outlet of the limestone drain that Reisner had exposed inside the causeway corridor. Since we did not find the drain in Sondage 144, its purpose must have been to drain rain-water from inside the corridor (fig. 7)—curious, given that we have evidence the MVT2 builders covered this part of the corridor with a vaulted roof. The corridor roof and walls collapsed, and then gravel and sand filled the corridor along the west of the MVT, rendering it unusable, before the end of the MVT2. Under



Figure 4. Detailed plan of the Menkaure Valley Temple (MVT) showing our areas of work in spring 2024. Map generated by Rebekah Miracle from AERA GIS.

the floor with the drain outlet, we found *dabsch* as leveling, then the older MVT1 floor below this debris, and then MVT0 blocks.

In Sondage 186, we widened a cut that Reisner had made into the ruins around the southwest corner of the MVT. Here he left a testimonial column retaining the foundation that builders had cut for the south MVT3 wall, which they built flush with the south face of the old MVT1 and MVT2 south wall of the corridor. As Reisner recognized, by MVT2 (his Second Temple) times, the corridor was filled and buried. He left a sub trench that showed the foundation trench of the MVT1 south corridor wall, which builders cut into a *dabsch* foundation. All three major phases show in the south face of the south wall. Not finding the bottom of the *dabsch*, we found neither bedrock nor limestone foundation blocks.

Sondage 186 revealed how MVT1 people cut a channel into the truncated west corridor wall to conduct floodwaters around the southwest corner of the MVT. They saw the threat and tried to manage it. The channel filled with gravel and debris left by the flood that ended the MVT2 occupation.

MVT-East

In Sondages 128, 172, and 173, we expanded 2012 trenches to obtain a section across the east end of the causeway corridor, where it meets the southeast corner of the MVT.

Sondage 128 exposed an east-west mudbrick wall and surface that was cut down and leveled before builders made the causeway's north wall, which they abutted to the plastered face of the east wall of the MVT. Digging deeper, we found only *dabsch*, with tip lines showing that people dumped it from the south and east.



Figure 5. Foundation blocks appear as team members excavate below the First Temple floor in the corner between the north causeway wall and the west MVT wall. View to the east.

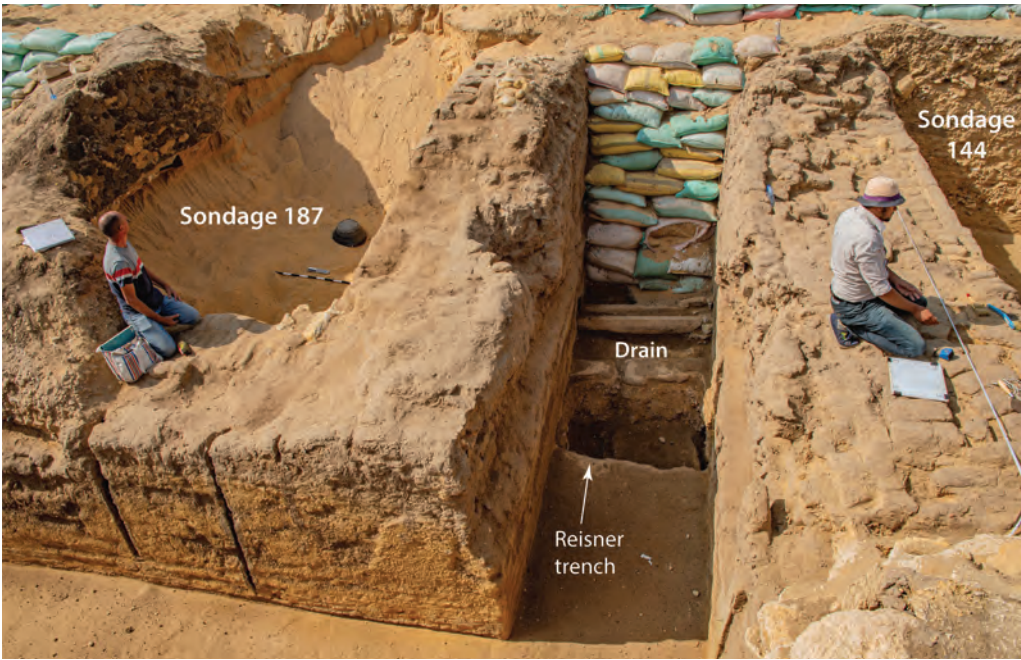


Figure 6. The causeway corridor during the 2021 season, showing the drain formed as a limestone trough and Reisner's trench below the floor. On the left is the sandy fill of Sondage 187. On the right, the top of the north causeway wall is being mapped. View to the west.



Figure 7. Top: The carved limestone outlet for the drain running from inside the causeway corridor through the south wall and into Sondage 187. Bottom: View of the limestone drain in the west causeway corridor. The drain extends through both the south wall of the corridor (at left, where it exits in Sondage 187) and the north wall (at right) but does not go all the way through.

In Sondage 172, people resurfaced the interior floor and walls many times. At one point, two thin perpendicular walls formed a small chamber (fig. 8). Two other walls blocked the corridor and show that the corridor was no longer functioning as a pathway to the west but had turned into a closeted space for a settlement of houses and silo granaries in the south end of the Ante-Temple, thus leaving open the question whether the south wall of the MVT ran east over the corridor, as Reisner believed. More likely, the east end of the corridor remained unburied but was compartmentalized as back spaces of the Ante-Temple settlement.

In Sondage 173, we found a layer of trash with beer jars, bread molds, and miniature votive pottery vessels not far from an opening in the causeway's south wall that gave access into the corridor, and thence to the Ante-Temple settlement. Underneath, we found the foundation trench for the south wall of MVT1, cut into *dabsch*. The oldest feature was a single course of mudbrick forming a corner and extending under the corridor wall. It lines up with the east wall of the MVT. It is possible this corner served as a guide for a temple plan that was modified during the construction of MVT1.

We expanded Sondage 114 eastward to examine the Ante-Temple in relation to the MVT proper, the extent of the terrace below it, and how the terrace was constructed. We revealed an intact limestone drain (fig. 9) and two floor surfaces that predated the diagonal pathway and corresponding floor of the courtyard (11,121 in fig. 4). Evidence suggests that the pathway and floor date to MVT2. The drain is formed with a lower course of blocks with a channel cut out of the middle and an upper course of capping blocks. The drain runs from below the temple threshold on the west on a decline toward the east, where it continues beyond



Figure 8. Our excavation in Sondage 172 in the east end of the MVT south causeway corridor. Left: Sondage 172 excavated to the phase of two thin mudbrick walls forming a chamber east of a limestone threshold. A round hole is probably a socket for a ceramic pot. Right: Under the floor with the mudbrick walls we found a clean, well-preserved marl (yellow desert clay) floor, the same kind of marl plaster as that on the corridor walls. This surface was one of a series of floors above the floor contemporary with the limestone threshold. View to the east.



Figure 9. Left: Drain discovered in the 2024 season, running under a limestone pavement and threshold of the Middle Temple, at the east entrance to the main MVT. Remains of mudbrick blocking screen the entrance. Right: The drain to the west, in the main south-central MVT courtyard, shows the same composition. Views to the west.

the limits of excavation. Mud packed around the drain made it into a crude pipe. Reisner found a drain leading from a basin in the main south-central MVT courtyard to the center pathway across that courtyard—doubtless the same drain running under the pathway, the columned vestibule, and the threshold of the main entrance.

We expanded Sondage 161 from a 2008–9 trench across the broad ramp leading to the north entrance of the Ante-Temple. Here we excavated several ramp surfaces, which overlay *dabsch* dumped against the north wall of the Ante-Temple to raise the ramp. We did not reach the bottom of the *dabsch*. We excavated the south part of Sondage 161 between the south wall of the ramp and the east wall of the Ante-Temple and came down onto a marl floor that continued east beyond our limits of excavation (fig. 10). We found that the east wall of the Ante-Temple was built after the southern ramp wall.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank our colleagues in the MoTA: Dr. Ahmed Issa, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities; Dr. Mohamed Ismail, General Director of the Supreme Council of Antiquities; Dr. Mostafa Waziri, former General Director of the Supreme Council of Antiquities; Dr. Nashwa Gaber, Director of the Department of Foreign Missions; Ashraf Mohedein, Director of Giza; and Tarek Barakat, Chief Inspector of the Pyramids Area. We thank Shaimaa Abd El-Raouf and Rasha Safan, MoTA inspectors for our work at the MVT, and Mohamed Salah, Inspector for the MoTA magazine.

Our 2024 work at the MVT site was made possible by a generous grant from Dr. Walter Gilbert. Special thanks to Charles Simonyi and Microsoft, and to Lee and Ramona Bass, for their sustained support. We are grateful to Brendan and Maria Kennedy for making possible our 2023 season at the Heit el-Ghurab site.

The AERA field team included Dr. Mark Lehner, project director; Dr. Mohsen Kamel, executive director of AERA–Egypt and archaeologist; Dan Jones, senior archaeologist; archaeologists Ben Bazely, Chris Clark, Sam Birchall, Jonathan Buttery, Leah Neiman, and Daphne Myhrvold; Manami Yahata, archivist and archaeologist; Rebekah Miracle, geographic information systems director; Sayed Salah Abd el-Hakim, overseer of the workers; and sixty workers from Abu Sir. Søren Sindbæk of Aarhus University led the Danish scanning team, which included Claus Feveile, Lene Feveile, Kirstine Haase, Sarah Croix, and Sarah Qvistgaard. We also thank Greg Veissman and Mathilde Prévost for their help with archiving our data from this season.

AERA field lab team members included Claire Malleson, lab director; Sarah Hitchens, assistant lab director; Emmy Malek, objects and assistant lab director; and specialists Anna Wodzińska (ceramics); Samar Mahmoud (lithics); Ali Witsell, Ellie Westfall, and Søren M. Sindbæk (sealings); Manami Yahata (plaster); Martin Odler and Jiří Kmošek (metals); and Amel Aweida (photography).

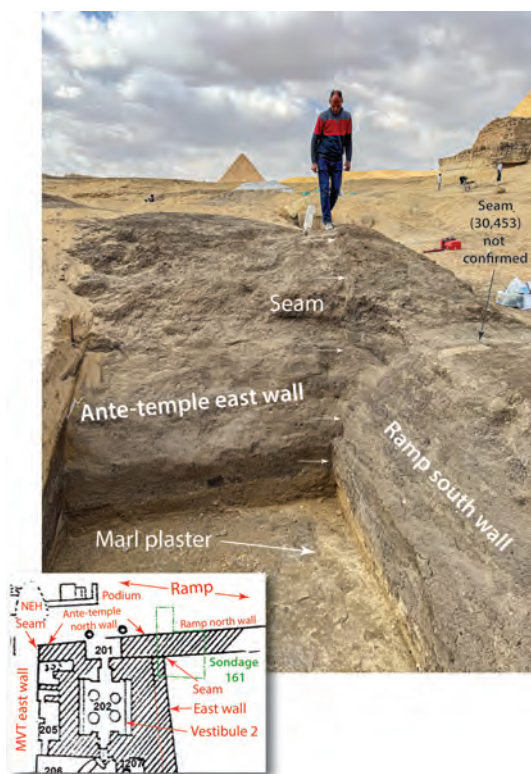


Figure 10. Inspecting a seam (arrows) marked by a thin line of marl plaster. Builders raised the ramp wall and plastered its south face before they built the east wall of the Ante-Temple. View to the west. Inset: Detail from Selim Hassan's map corrected with the newly found join between walls.

KITES IN CONTEXT

YORKE M. ROWAN

Although the Kites in Context project did not put a team in the field in spring 2024, research on materials and images continued during the study season. I (Yorke Rowan) visited Amman to import small finds and, while there, delivered a lecture, “The Rich World of the Black Desert, Jordan, during the Neolithic,” simultaneously translated into Arabic for the organization Jordanian Archaeology as Sustainable Industry. In Chicago, images and video from the Kites in Context project (and the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project) featured prominently in the ISAC Museum’s special exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert* (April 25–August 18, 2024), curated by Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellow Marie-Laure Chambrade. In addition, publications from the project have begun to appear. From the inaugural season (2022), in June 2024 the team published a preliminary account, “Kites in the Desert: Placing Animal Traps in Context,” in the open-access journal *Neo-Lithics* (22: 5–12). Also in 2024, and based on the dramatic rain and flooding the team experienced during the 2023 season in Jordan, members of the team and I published “Fieldwork in an Increasingly Variable Climate: The Kites in Context Project 2023 Field Season” in the *Journal of Field Archaeology* (49, no. 2: 1–17), the first photographic essay published by that journal. The project’s coprincipal investigator Austin “Chad” Hill and I coauthored “Desert Kites: Neolithic Infrastructure in the Margins,” published as chapter 8 in *Infrastructure in Archaeological Discourse: Framing Society in the Past*, edited by M. Grace Ellis, Carly M. DeSanto, and Meghan C. L. Howey (Routledge, 2024). Also in that volume, Hill and I joined the volume’s editors in coauthoring chapter 6, “Perspectives: Scale of Infrastructure.”

NINEVEH SHAMASH GATE PROJECT

TIMOTHY P. HARRISON AND KHALED ABU JAYYAB

A damage mitigation effort was initiated at the Shamash Gate during the 2020 season of the Joint Iraqi-Italian Expedition to East Nineveh (fig. 1). A strategically important entrance in the eastern fortifications of Nineveh, the Shamash Gate was converted into a defensive position during the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) occupation of Mosul in 2014–17. The construction of a network of tunnels cutting through the foundations and superstructure of the gate complex and the random destruction of freestanding portions of the gate, including the smashing of portions of the magnificent alabaster and limestone orthostats that once lined the inner gate system, caused extensive damage to this iconic landmark of East Mosul.

The Shamash Gate was first investigated by Henry Layard in the mid-nineteenth century. It was partially excavated by Tariq Madhloum on behalf of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities in the 1960s, and its impressive crenellated outer stone wall and massive inner mudbrick structure were subsequently restored and reconstructed. The published plan from these excavations indicate a projecting gate system, with the entrance through the outer wall flanked on each side by three parapets. Passage through the inner gate

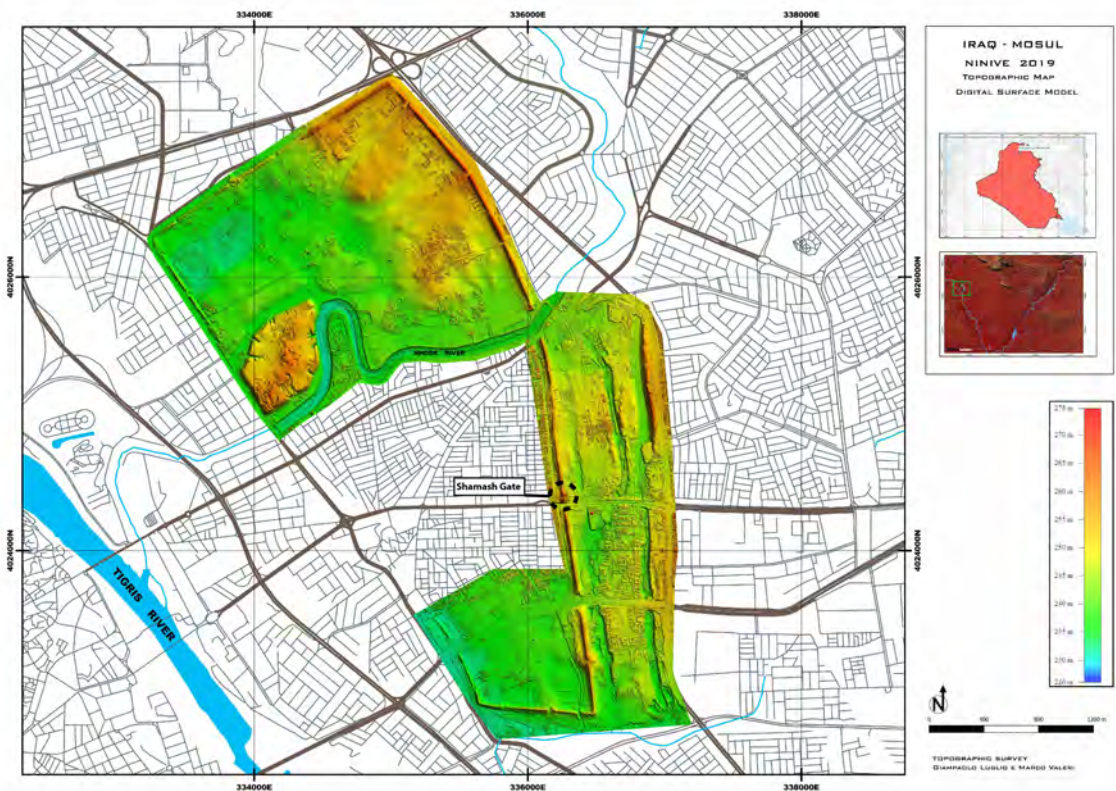


Figure 1. Digital surface model of Nineveh showing the location of the Shamash Gate. Photo: Joint Iraqi-Italian Expedition to East Nineveh.

system was restricted by a sequence of three or four sets of piers. The gate was approached from the east via the Erbil road, which crossed two bridges over a succession of moats or waterways before ascending along a causeway to the gate itself. The scale and magnitude of the Shamash Gate's construction indicate that it was one of the more important gates of Nineveh during the Neo-Assyrian period.

The 2020 preliminary investigation of the Shamash Gate not only revealed the considerable extent of the damage wreaked on this historic landmark during the period of ISIS control and the urgent need for action to stabilize its surviving remains but also confirmed that the core of the gate complex remains intact and would benefit greatly from a carefully planned and judiciously implemented conservation and restoration strategy. The importance of the Shamash Gate as a unifying symbol of Mosul's remarkable cultural legacy and its rebirth in the aftermath of the recent conflict adds critical importance to such an undertaking.

2023 FIELD SEASON

Following assessment, documentation, and structural stabilization of the gate complex in 2021 and 2022, preliminary exploratory excavations were initiated at the Shamash Gate during the 2023 season of the Joint Iraqi-Italian Expedition to East Nineveh directed by Nicolò Marchetti. The excavations were conducted over sixteen days between September 8 and October 25 and were directed by Timothy Harrison with the assistance of Khaled Abu Jayyab (field director), Elizabeth Gibbon (assistant field director), Stephen Batiuk (geophysics and mapping), Brynn Evans and William Reimer (field supervisors), Jacopo Monastero (geographic information systems and photography), Rula Shafiq (physical anthropology), and Alessandro Fonti (conservation). The project was assisted by Amal Mustafa Sharif, Liqa'a Abbas Farhan, and Tahani Younis Mohamad from the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) of Iraq (Nineveh District) and fourteen hired workers.

After a high density of debris—likely from the 612 BCE destruction of Nineveh—was identified at the west end of the gate, the main objective for the field season was to excavate these remains in a systematic manner. Since the erosional buildup, which contains the destruction debris, reaches 4 m above the final pebbled pavement, a second objective was to clear a stretch of the gate passage from the later deposition in preparation for future excavations. Finally, a third objective was to clarify the outlines of the tower chambers in the western portion of the gate. Accordingly, we opened seven operations (fig. 2)—operation 1, continuing a preliminary investigation of the destruction debris; operation 2 along the passageway of the gate; operation 3, a sounding in the space west of the gate; operations 4, 5, and 7 within the northwest and north-central towers; and operation 6 in the southwest tower (see fig. 3 for a composite plan of the gate structures excavated to date).

Operation 1

Operation 1 was a continuation of the 2022 soundings A and B in the western portion of the passageway within the gate system. This context proved to be fairly secure (fig. 4), producing a wide range of artifacts that included the fragments of a stela (fig. 5), bronze and iron arrowheads, ceramics, and a decorated bone button. The 2023 excavations also recovered the articulated remains of four human individuals: a child approximately 2.5–3.0 years old; an adolescent male with a bone-growth age of 18–20 years; an adult female aged 20–30 years (to judge from the degree of dental wear); and an adult of undetermined sex and an estimated age of 35–45 years (to judge from the degree of dental wear).

The earlier-phase pavement consisted of large stone blocks of different sizes, perhaps laid out as part of the gate's construction during the expansion of the city under Sennacherib (705–681 BCE). The composition of the upper pavement is less clear, as it is extremely patchy in operation 1, but it appears to have consisted of three layers. An initial layer of fine pebbles embedded in a hard clay matrix, which constituted the base of the pavement, was the most coherent and was better preserved than the upper layers. The second

Figure 2. Aerial photo of the Shamash Gate, with the seven operations undertaken in 2023 indicated.

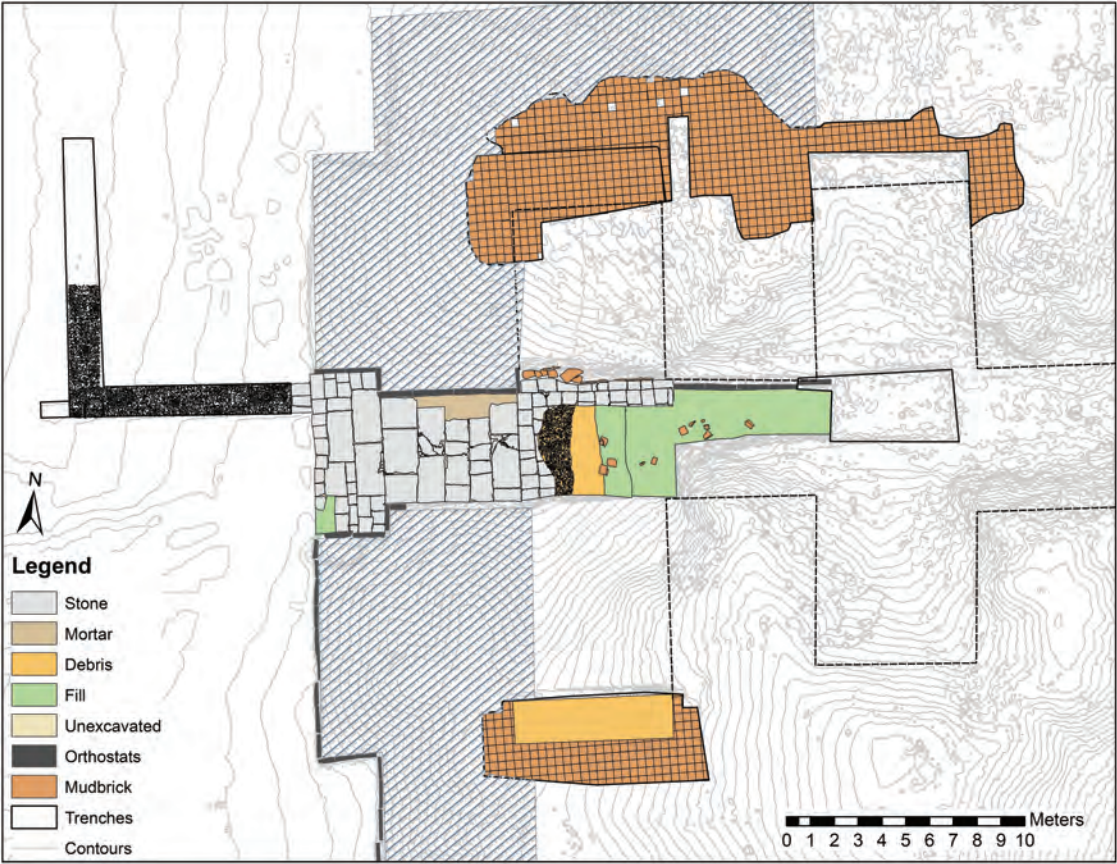


Figure 3. Composite plan of the gate structures excavated to date.



Figure 4. Close-up of the second pavement in operation 1, with objects in situ.

layer seems to have been composed of compact clay with interspersed pebbles and fragments of broken baked bricks. Immediately above and embedded within it were fragments of the stela, partially articulated human remains, and other artifacts. The floor of the second pavement, or third layer, was composed of baked bricks. Although we have yet to encounter baked bricks in situ in operation 1, their presence is not an unreasonable assumption given their clear use as pavement tiles in the north courtyard (visible in the section; fig. 6), as well as the large amount of complete or near-complete bricks that formed the debris attested in operation 1. The absence of a clear baked-brick floor in this area could be the result of bricks having become dislodged by the collapse of parts of the gate system superstructure. Evidence of a conflagration was manifested by pockets of ash and charcoal in the vicinity of the densely intermingled artifacts.

It is virtually certain that this destruction dates to the fall of Nineveh in 612 BCE. However, we cannot yet determine when or why the stone pavement was covered by the new pavement. Traces of cartwheel grooves could be seen in the earlier stone pavement, and parts of the pavement had clearly subsided, although it is not clear whether this subsidence took place during its time of use or after the gate collapsed, as a result of the weight of the debris. The repaving of the entrance could have been a solution to the problem of water pooling in the gate and the impact it had on the stone slabs. With its layers of pebbling and cobbling, the new pavement may have been laid with water drainage in mind.



Figure 5. Stela fragment recovered in operation 1.

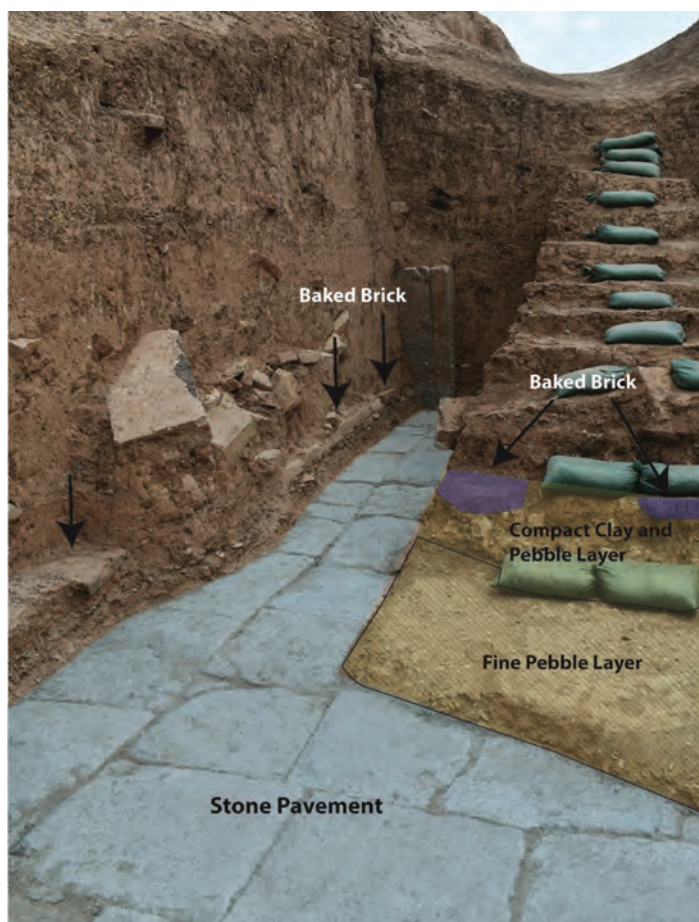


Figure 6. The pavements of the Shamash Gate in operation 1. The pavement in the section (left half of photo) is that of the room in the northwest tower.

Operation 2

Operation 2 was an eastern extension of operation 1 inside the passageway of the gate. The trench was rectangular in shape and extended from the edge of the innermost pier to just before the central pier at a length of 10.0 m and a width of 3.3 m. The trench was dug along the face of the northern towers but ran roughly 1.2 m north of the face of the southern towers. The position of the trench was determined in consideration of the difficulty of removing the thicker deposits along the southern portion of the passageway.

The primary objectives of this trench were to remove the slope wash from the area east of operation 1 and to reach the destruction levels seen in it. We brought the entire 10 m trench down to a depth of approximately 1 m. The season's excavations in this area were concluded when the orthostats lining the north side of the passageway were exposed at the level immediately above the destruction debris layer. This level contained fragments of trapezoidal baked bricks, possibly from the collapsed central arches of the gate complex.

Operation 3

Operation 3 formed an L-shaped probe designed to determine the remains and state of preservation immediately inside the gate. The probe uncovered two discrete surfaces. The lower one was likely composed of medium-sized river pebbles embedded in a clay matrix. We are unsure whether this surface was artificial or the natural geological composition at the time of use, compacted as a result of repeated pedestrian traffic. The upper surface was completely different; it was composed of clean, red clay with fragments of baked brick embedded within it. The remains of a partially articulated adult individual were uncovered on this surface.

Operations 4, 5, and 7

These operations constituted three contiguous excavation areas that were opened to outline the interiors of the chambers/courtyards of the northern tower system. The interiors of two towers, the northwest one (operations 4 and 5) and the north-central one (operation 7) were outlined. Overall, both towers suffered from heavy erosion, with water flows in primarily two directions. The first direction followed a flow from

the higher points of the tower walls into the presumably softer and lower fills of the rooms toward the south and into the passageway. The second flow took place along the thick, packed-mudbrick tower walls from the north-central tower toward the northwestern tower and further reduced the height of the presumably lower northwestern tower. The impact of the erosion could be seen in the different levels of preservation of the east and west walls of the tower, with the east wall preserved 4 m higher than the west wall. A similar condition prevailed in the southern tower system (operation 7).

Both the northwest and the north-central towers were constructed of fairly standard mudbricks ($35 \times 35 \times 12$ cm, on average). The bricks were tempered primarily with rounded river pebbles of various sizes, perhaps taken from the loose portions of the conglomerate found in the vicinity of Nineveh.

We could not determine definitively whether the northwest and north-central towers were built to a similar height or whether the tower system was stepped, with the north-central tower the highest one in the defensive system. The state of preservation suggests the second scenario is the more probable. The presence of collapsed baked brick from a vaulted arch in the upper portion of the fill toward the better-preserved east wall in the northwest tower suggests it was only slightly lower than the central tower. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the connecting north wall was level with the top of the east wall and dipped sharply (as a result of erosion) toward the west wall. Therefore, we suggest that the great discrepancy in the elevations of the east and west walls, and hence of the northwest and north-central towers, was likely a result of erosion rather than architectural design. This issue needs further exploration in future seasons, although it will require removal of the room fill in the towers (which in places reaches almost 8 m above the surface of the stone-paved floor) and further clarification of the outline and preservation of the chambers' walls.

Operation 6

Operation 6 was located in the southwest tower of the gate system. The operation's objectives were similar to those of the operations in the northwest tower—that is, understanding the outlines and the dimensions of the chambers/courtyards off the main gate passageway. The two westernmost towers were asymmetrical, with the northwest tower roughly 9 m wide and the southwest tower almost three times wider. These dimensions may indicate that there were two or three chambers in the southwest tower.

The northernmost room of the southern tower system was targeted for excavation to determine the room's back wall, as well as its west and east wall faces. This task proved to be more complicated than anticipated. The mudbricks in the southwest tower were completely different from those in the northwest one. The bricks were friable and sand tempered, and their dimensions varied. Two corners of the room also fell along deeply eroded gullies, and a large Sassanian pit cut along the face of the southern back wall of the room, distorting the connections between the east and west portions of the room. Finally, the remains of two exploded grenades were found in the trench. One had exploded in the vicinity of the room's southeast corner, the second on top of the west wall, cratering and damaging these parts of the tower chamber.

We were nevertheless able to determine that the room's dimensions match those of the main chamber of the northwest tower. This led us to assume, based on the topography and size of the chamber, that there are possibly two more rooms south of it. A similar arrangement has been observed at Nineveh's northern Adad Gate.

The differences seen between the bricks of the northeast and southeast towers in terms of their size, composition, color, and weight could indicate that one of the towers was reconstructed after its initial construction. Alternatively, the differences may reflect the organization of Assyrian labor, specifically *corvée*, imposed by the king on provincial districts, with the diverse composition of the bricks used in the construction of the towers and gate reflecting different labor groups drawing on different local clay sources.

Stela Remains and Preservation

To date, more than 100 fragments of a stela dating to the reign of Ashurbanipal have been recovered, although the stela's precise date remains uncertain. The stela was carved from a soft stone—probably a limestone with many inclusions, like breccia—and it had two carved faces, both inscribed in cuneiform. One of the two faces preserves a carved figure, most likely a representation of Ashurbanipal; an elbow, a decorated dress, and a mace or scepter have been discerned thus far. The stela's original size is unknown. Based on the evidence recovered so far, the stela likely stood at least 2 m in height, was 80–100 cm in width, and was 26 cm in depth. It appears to have been destroyed during the fall of Nineveh in 612 BCE.

Some of the stone's surfaces are severely corroded, and it is easily scratched, although some parts of the stone matrix are more compact. Traces of fire and burned organic remains (straw?) are evident on the surface of some of the fragments. The stone may also have become calcified during burning. Conservation and treatment of the stela fragments were complicated considerably by the presence of densely layered clay. The softer clay was removed by moistening it with a contact sponge. The more compact layers required the use of a low-ultrasonic scaler, finished with scalpel and probes (fig. 7). A third layer of clay formed a thin “skin” that had congealed over time directly onto the surfaces of some of the fragments, rendering the clay impossible to remove during this initial phase of treatment.



Figure 7. Conservation and treatment of the stela fragments.

2024 FIELD SEASON

An unscheduled intervention was conducted at the Shamash Gate in East Nineveh (Mosul) between April 22 and June 4, 2024, under the license of the Joint Iraqi-Italian Expedition to East Nineveh. The



Figure 8. Baked bricks protruding from the north wall, and secondary wall constructed to narrow the passageway.

intervention was necessary to clear large amounts of mudbrick collapse that had accumulated above the gate complex superstructure, which had become unstable as a result of intense winter rains.

The team comprised Timothy Harrison (project director), Khaled Abu Jayyab (field director), Stephen Batiuk (geophysics and mapping), and Serafino Rosso (senior archaeologist). The expedition was assisted by Rwaed Muafaq Mohammed, director of the SBAH Nineveh District, and three SBAH inspectors: Ghasan Sarhan, Ahmed Ali Abbas, and Saba Munthir. Eighteen workers were hired to assist with the clearing of the mudbrick collapse.

The spring intervention was successful in removing a substantial amount of the mudbrick collapse that seals the intact remains of the gate complex. More specifically, these excavations succeeded in delineating intact portions of the west and central piers of the north half of the Shamash Gate complex, including the framing orthostats of the central pier and part of an arch and springer anchored to this pier. The excavations also revealed a block of baked bricks inserted into the north wall, just to the east of the base of the arch, and in front of it, at a lower height, a poorly constructed and poorly preserved secondary wall, apparently inserted to narrow the passageway of the gate complex in its final phase of use (fig. 8).

NIPPUR

AUGUSTA McMAHON

The new five-year research plan for the excavations at Nippur was approved by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in summer 2023, and we are very grateful for this approval and excited for our renewed collaboration. Our next phase of research at Nippur will focus on the rapid expansion of this important city during two key historical periods: the late third millennium BCE (Ur III period) and the mid-second millennium BCE (Kassite period). In each of these historical periods, a state-organized expansion and/or reoccupation of the city took place, involving the building of new city walls and the extension or rebuilding of major temples, especially those dedicated to the gods Enlil and Inanna. These massive construction projects expanded into and affected the arrangement of neighborhoods adjacent to the temple complexes on the east mound, probably resulting in the displacement of these neighborhoods' residents to elsewhere within the city. The construction projects, with their associated administration and increased demand for materials and manufactured products, also created employment opportunities and probably led to immigration into the city by residents of the countryside and other settlements in the region.

This displacement and immigration had a particular impact on the occupation of Nippur's southern edge, and it is this area of the city that is our current research focus. Nippur was first established in the sixth or fifth millennium BCE Ubaid period, and the settlement expanded across the fourth to mid-third millennium BCE to form an approximately 80-hectare site symmetrically bisected by a channel of the Euphrates, the Shatt al-Nil. We know from Mac Gibson's excavations in the 1970s and 1980s that the southern area of the city was not occupied until the late third millennium BCE Ur III period, when houses and at least one large administrative building were established there on virgin soil. This new occupation contributed to the expansion of the settlement to approximately 135 hectares, and the area was encircled by a new city wall toward the end of the Ur III period. We assume that this part of the site was occupied both by displaced existing residents and by new immigrants. After the collapse of the Ur III state in about 2004 BCE, Nippur contracted in size as many of its inhabitants presumably left for other opportunities. The southern area was abandoned and then reoccupied only in the second half of the second millennium BCE, during the Kassite period, at which point the city regained the same 135-hectare extent. We assume the occupants of the southern area during this later period were largely new arrivals from elsewhere within Babylonia and beyond.

Our research questions assess and compare the occupational density of Nippur's southern area, and the demographic diversity and mobility of its inhabitants, during the late third and mid-second millennium BCE. In each period, was the southern area occupied by relatively poor workers, by wealthy "suburbanites," or by a mixed and diverse population? What kinds of households moved into this area in each distinct historical context: extended families committed to life in a new city, or small groups of unrelated young people opportunistically job hunting? Our methods involve the assessment of multiple variables, from traditional house sizes, plans, and contents to scientific analyses of individuals' and households' diet and foodways.

We went to Nippur in January 2024 with a strong international team of colleagues and students from the Universities of Chicago, Cambridge, Pennsylvania, Rome La Sapienza, Rutgers, and Winnipeg, and we were joined by five colleagues from the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. We began with several extended walks over the site so that the students in particular could become familiar with the site's topography and the locations of previous excavations. Figure 1 shows the first wave of the team standing in the 1951–52 Area TA excavation, in the approximate location of House F—the building where school



Figure 1. The Nippur team standing in Area TA, in the eroded infill above House F.



Figure 2. Surface clearing in one of our new trenches in Area WC, at the southern edge of Nippur.

texts were recovered that allowed the reconstruction of the process of Mesopotamian scribal education and that were featured in the 2023–24 ISAC Museum special exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*. We then established a new benchmark for mapping and began excavating two trenches along the city wall in the southern area of the site, in areas with Ur III and Kassite pottery at the surface. However, global political events created a specific security threat for the team that led to our (safe) evacuation from the site after less than a week of work. During that week, we had begun to expose the inner edge of the Kassite city wall and the areas immediately within this wall with the aim of examining the houses nearest to the city's boundary (fig. 2). Both trenches held huge promise and were the first of several that we had planned for this year. We are keeping in close contact with Iraqi colleagues, and the security situation appears to have improved; we plan to return in January 2025.

NUBIAN EXPEDITION PUBLICATION PROJECT

LISA A. HEIDORN AND BRUCE BEYER WILLIAMS

A high point in this year's activities was the completion and submission of the manuscript for the first volume presenting work carried out in 2007 and 2008 by the ISAC (then Oriental Institute) Nubian Expedition in the Fourth Cataract: *The Cemeteries at al-Widay*, by Lisa A. Heidorn and Bruce Beyer Williams, with contributions by Geoff Emberling, Megan Ingvolstad, Joanna Then-Obłuska, and Sarah Adcock. The two cemeteries at al-Widay have been discussed in previous annual reports, but a few features deserve mention here. First, the main cemetery of al-Widay I, belonging to the Old Kush period that was roughly contemporary with the Kerma culture in the Dongola Reach downstream, was the largest cemetery of the period in the cataract zone (fig. 1) that was completely excavated. This fact alone gave it special significance, as it documented a single community through roughly a century and a half, from about 1850 to 1600 BCE.

One of the chief findings of the rescue project in 2006–8 was the realization that the cultures of the Fourth Cataract were not identical to those found downstream. This discovery led to the use of a new label, Old Kush, to distinguish these unique cultures from the culture of ancient Kerma. The region was certainly

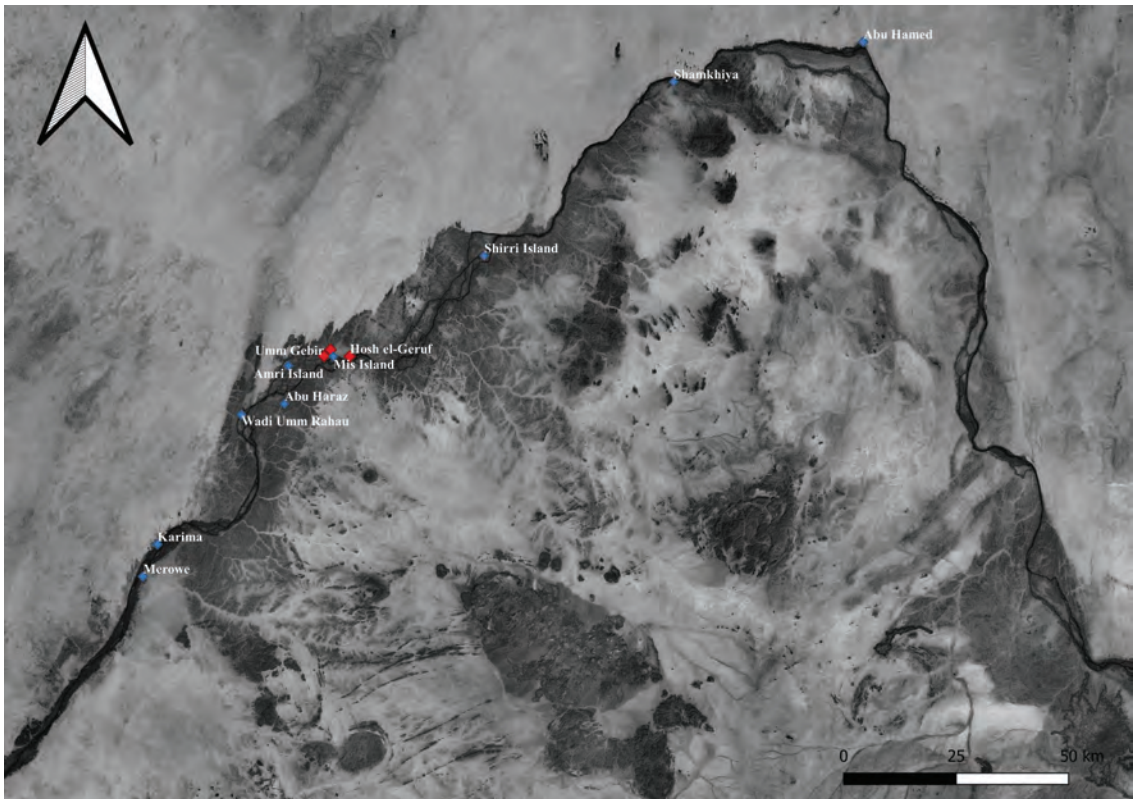


Figure 1. General map of the Fourth Cataract. ISAC Nubian Expedition sites are in red. Created by Adrian Chlebowski.

not fully a part of the Kerman kingdom of Kush but did combine elements of the many social groups from nearby regions. In fact, there is evidence of significant cultural interconnections that reach as far as Lower Nubia and Egypt to the north and almost to the Ethiopian border at the southeast.

The strongest of these relationships, in pottery vessels and grave architecture, are with the Pan Grave culture of Lower Nubia and Upper Egypt. This group can be identified with the Medjay, prominent in contemporary Egyptian hieroglyphic documents, especially the execration texts found at Elephantine and various sites in Nubia.

HOSH EL-GERUF

A manuscript on the gold-processing site of Hosh el-Geruf is in preparation. Work at the site consisted of surface collection units and excavation units distributed over the area (fig. 2). A site that large could not be completely excavated, especially in one season, though enough data was acquired to suggest its identification as a gold-processing site in various periods.

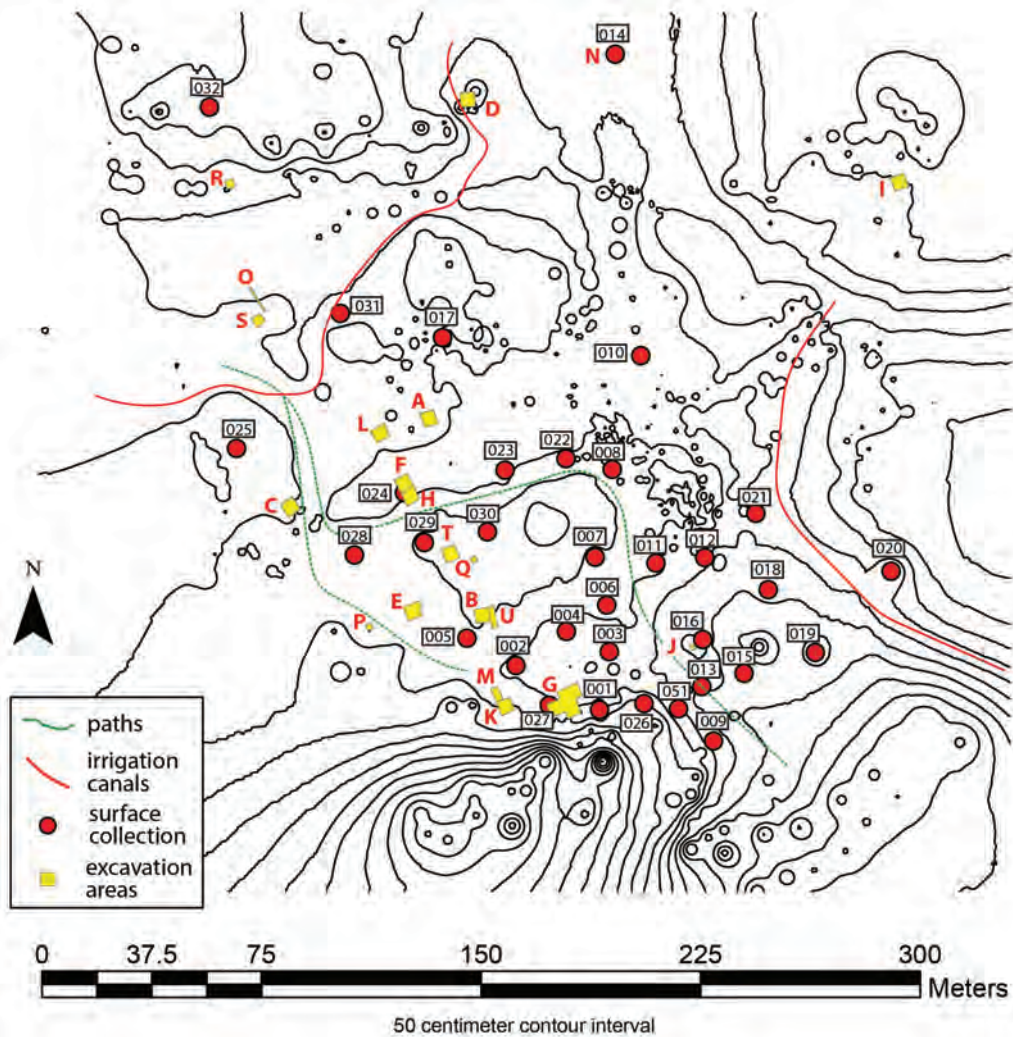


Figure 2. Plan of Hosh el-Geruf. Based on a plan by Adrian Chlebowsky.

Apart from equipment used to grind and pulverize fragments of ore, most of the finds were pottery sherds. Although bagged according to site and locus, these sherds were not entered into a registered database until Lisa Heidorn undertook the massive task in 2021–22 as an essential precursor to writing the report. At the same time and thereafter, she and Carol Meyer undertook a program of drawing pottery, which had not been done in the field, while Larry Lissak photographed the sherds. Some of the latter had been photographed in the field, but often in harsh light from uncontrolled angles. These projects were essential to writing the manuscript and preparing the plates, tasks now nearing completion. In the meantime, studies of the geology and the industrial equipment were prepared by James Harrell and Carol Meyer (fig. 3). As part of the general study of the site, which aroused considerable interest in the media (Wilford 2007), Bruce Williams participated in a lecture series of the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich; his lecture has now been published as an article in a volume on landscape and resource management in Bronze Age Nubia (Williams 2024).

Although of great importance, as attested by its inclusion in the lecture series, Hosh el-Geruf was a frustrating site to excavate. No real evidence of any coherent structure was found in any area excavated or surveyed. While there were concentrated deposits of stones and burned mud debris, none of it was organized in a recognizably intentional pattern despite the copious evidence of industrial activity (fig. 4). The nature of that activity was clear, however, and it was on a scale not found elsewhere in the Fourth Cataract region.

Figure 3. James Harrell and Carol Meyer at Hosh el-Geruf in 2007.



Figure 4. Area D with evidence of burning.



Three major phases of activity were found at Hosh el-Geruf. The earliest one, which predated the industry, belonged to the Late Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. Clear traces of it were the copious potsherds at the surface and in layers down to the bedrock (fig. 5). Numerous Neolithic bowls and other vessels were found, as well as a handful of objects (fig. 6).

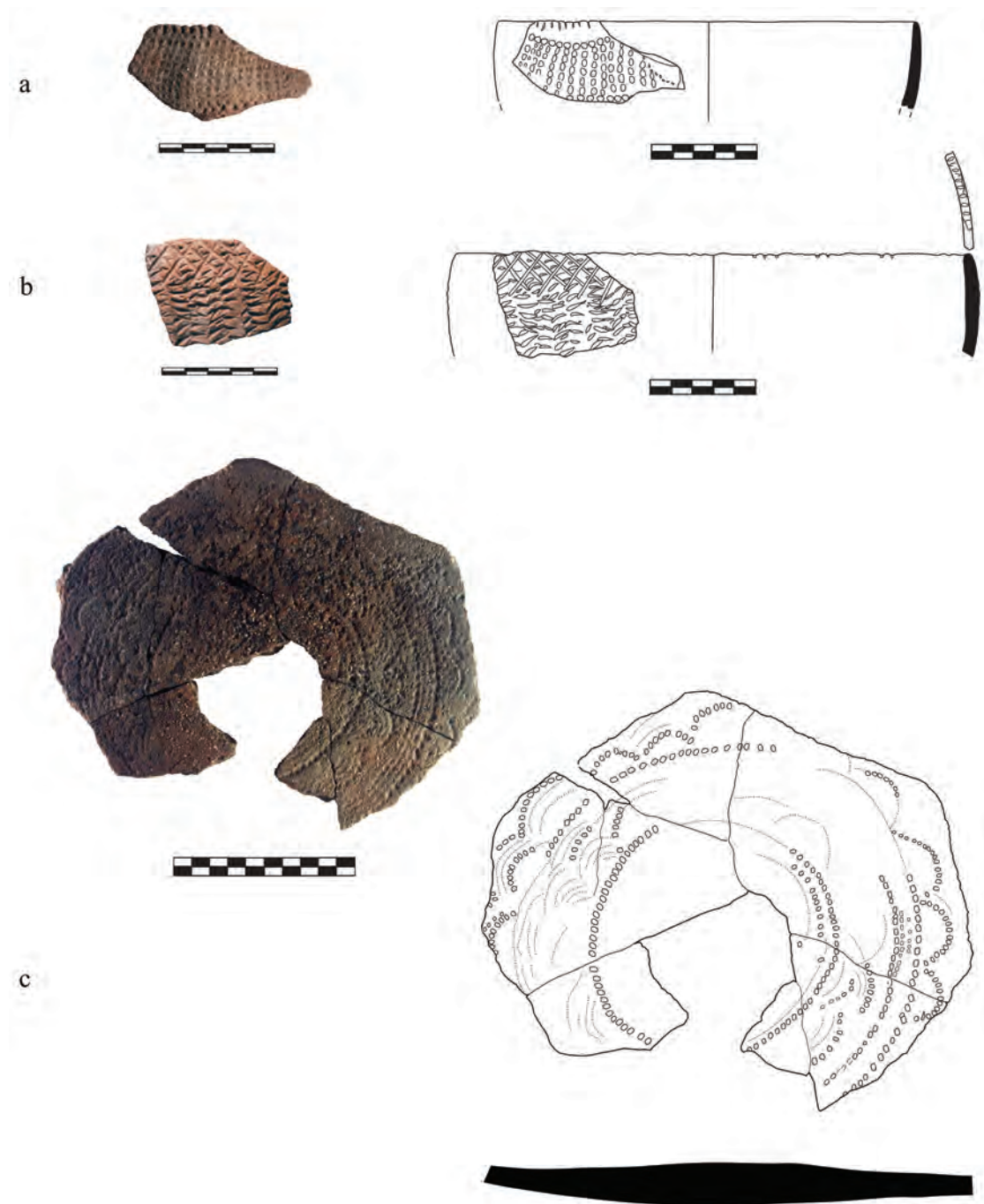


Figure 5. Late Mesolithic pottery: a, 2022.593a, SC004; b, 222.593b, SC004; c, 2022.533, B1.

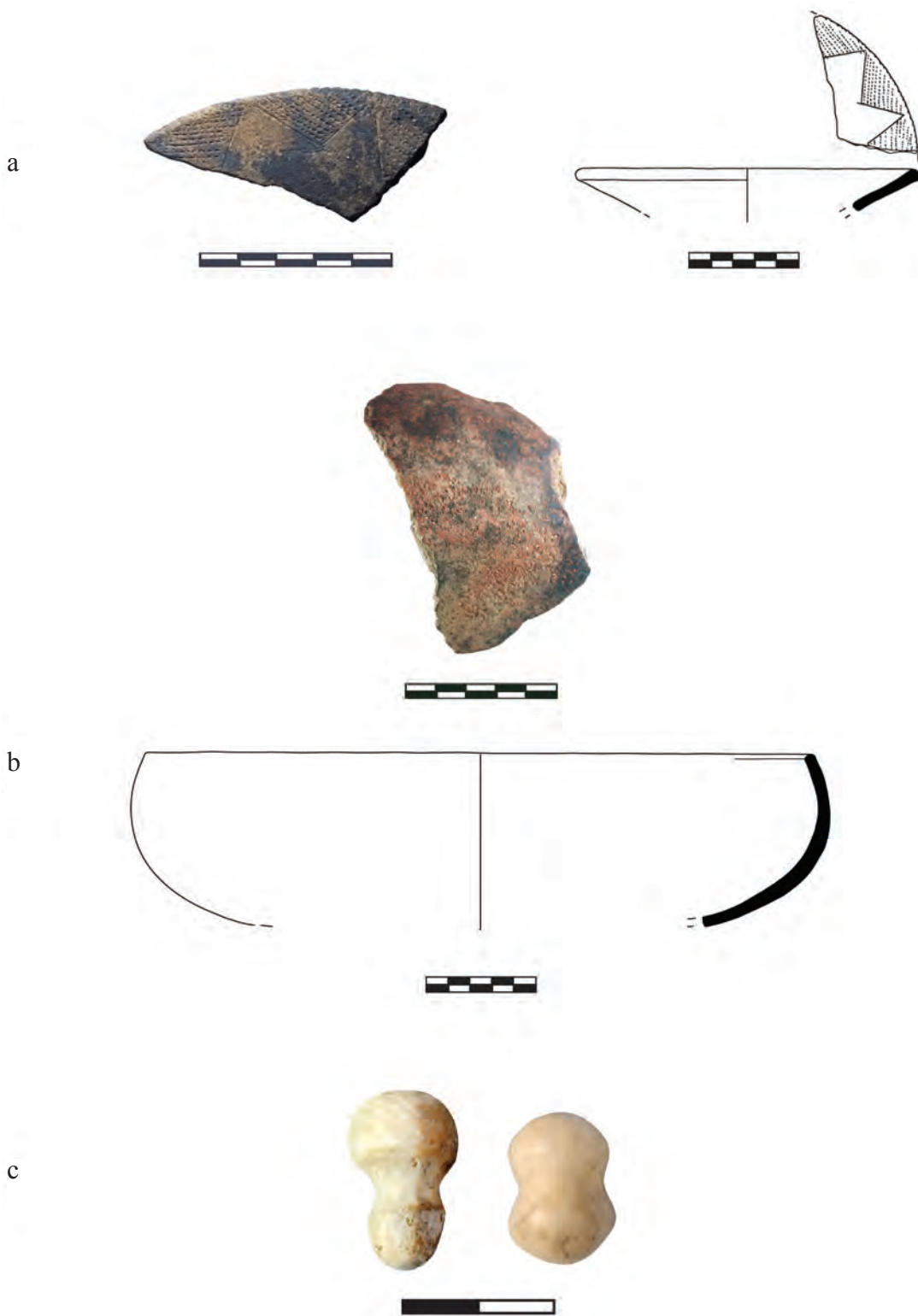


Figure 6. Neolithic pottery: a, 2022.092, G3; b, 2022.492, G3; c, stone jewelry studs from loci in Area G (2007.015, G1; 2007.014, G11).

OLD KUSH PERIOD AT HOSH EL-GERUF

After about 1800 BCE in the Old Kush period, pottery was deposited at the site, and numerous grindstone bases, upper stones, and round quartz pounders were also made and deposited there (fig. 7). This complex lasted for about 150 years. Remarkably, there is no sign of mining at the site, and none was detected nearby. Neither the long gashes made by hard-rock gold mining in the region nor systematic pitting in the areas between outcrops were found. Such pits were made to recover small pieces of gold-bearing quartz that are weathered and fractured out of the deposit as the granitic gneiss deteriorates. Although some pits were found in mudbanks on a nearby island, with no evidence for secure dating, they were not numerous enough to support such a large-scale industry as that found at Hosh el-Geruf. However, on the island of Sherari, much farther upstream in the cataract, an expedition from Humboldt University in Berlin found thousands of pits systematically filling spaces between outcrops. Nearby were two Old Kush cemeteries. Since no processing site comparable to Hosh el-Geruf was found anywhere else in the cataract region, it seems clear that gold-bearing quartz was mined at Sherari and shipped downstream in boats to Hosh el-Geruf to be ground and pulverized, and probably washed at the riverbank nearby. Figuring out why this processing was done separately from mining is a matter of surmise. It may have been that the logistics at Hosh el-Geruf were easier and that the site was also easier to secure, because gold was as highly valuable then as it is now. Only a little gold was found at sites in the cataract, including some simple beads from the cemetery at al-Widay I. Another challenging feature of the situation is that there is no archaeological sign of a state authority of the type so visible at contemporary Kerma. Burials at al-Widay reflect a certain prosperity, but not the monumental social and economic disparities found at Kerma. One is reminded, however, of the regional powers farther north that were mentioned in Old Kingdom records, notably such places as Irtjet and Wawat mentioned in the autobiography of Harkhuf. The latter, at least, was occupied by the C-Group culture, which likewise displayed no substantial disparities in wealth although Wawat had its own ruler.



Figure 7. Large, deep grinding stones.

About the same time the al-Widay cemetery ended, roughly 1600 BCE, Hosh el-Geruf was abandoned. Activity resumed eight or nine centuries later, however, and apparently as strongly as before, to judge from the amount of sherd material found (fig. 8). It was then under the control of the Kushite Twenty-Fifth Dynasty at Napata, and a sealing of Queen Khensa, sister-wife of King Piankhy, was deposited there. After a short time, the site was abandoned once more, and only a few sherds from later periods were found.

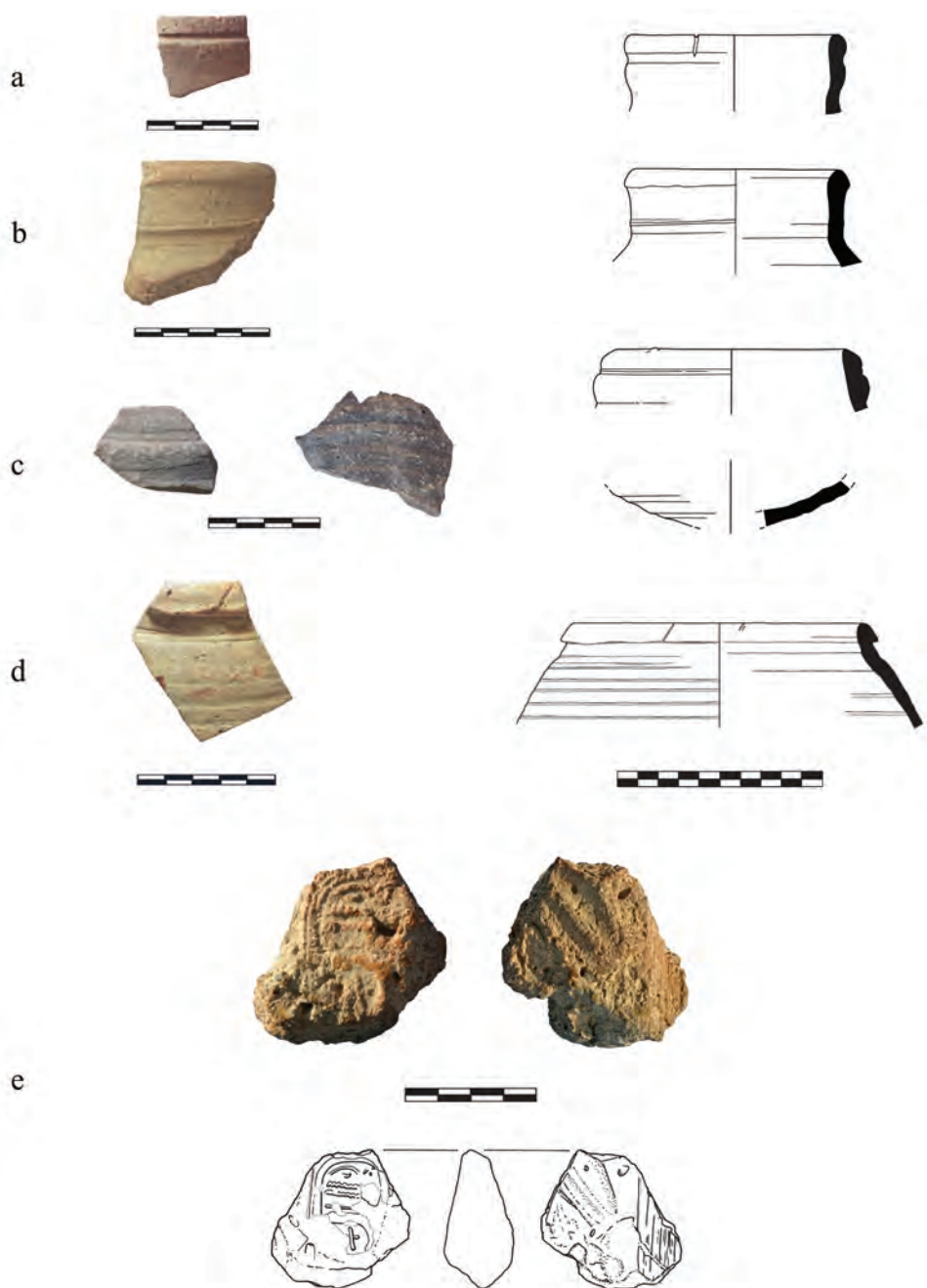


Figure 8. Napatan pottery and sealing of Queen Khensa: *a*, 2022.209, U1 (silt); *b*, 2022.988, SC051 (silt); *c*, 2022.165, M1 (burned marl); *d*, 2022.806, SC005 (marl); *e*, mud sealing of Khensa (2007.011, SC024).

The scale and complexity of the gold industry in the Fourth Cataract is something of an object lesson in understanding the complexity of human action from archaeological remains. We are often surprised in archaeology, especially when the results do not match widely recognized templates.

The Nubian Expedition volume on al-Widay was submitted to the ISAC publications office in June 2024 and is now being considered for possible external review. Meanwhile, we continue to work on the manuscript and plates for the Hosh el-Geruf publication. We tentatively expect to submit the Hosh el-Geruf volume to the publications office in 2025.

A significant contribution to the understanding of Christian-period Serra East, the volumes on which have been approved for publication by ISAC, is an article by Tasha Vorderstrasse in *Nubia Cristiana II*, edited by Magdalena Łaptaś and Stefan Jakobielsky, now available online. More details appear in Vorderstrasse's individual research contribution in this annual report.

The work of the ISAC Nubian Expedition Publication Project on the excavations in the Fourth Cataract has been generously supported by grants from the Shelby White and Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications and the National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Program.

Finally, we note with great sorrow the passing of Mahmoud el-Tayeb, who had a major career in Sudan and Warsaw as a scholar of Nubian archaeology and who was a leading participant in the Gdansk mission to the Fourth Cataract (Obluski 2024). He provided significant aid to the Nubian Expedition from Chicago during its years of fieldwork from 2006 to 2008. Most important, he was a great friend to us all.

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PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION ARCHIVE PROJECT

MARK B. GARRISON AND WOUTER F. M. HENKELMAN

On August 31, 2023, ISAC interim director Theo van den Hout, accompanied by Matthew W. Stolper and conservation laboratory head Laura D'Alessandro, handed over nine crates containing 3,506 Elamite and Aramaic tablets from the Persepolis Fortification Archive (PFA) to His Excellency Amir Saeid Iravani, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran at the United Nations in New York. Three weeks later, they arrived in Iran on board the presidential plane of the late Ebrahim Raisi, returning from the UN General Assembly. Iranian news outlets were quick to point out the significance of the returned artifacts: “They are very important sources of information revealing economic, social, and religious data about the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) and the larger Near Eastern region in the fifth century BC” (*Tehran Times*, September 21, 2023).

Of the 2,670 Elamite tablets included in the shipment, about 2,580 were read by Richard T. Hallock between 1937 and 1980. (Most of the remaining ones were read by Charles E. Jones.) Although only 33 were actually published (Hallock 1978), the unpublished editions of the others in the Hallock *Nachlaß* were shared with the editors of the *Elamisches Wörterbuch* (Hinz and Koch 1987); the author of the *Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes* volume on Elamite topo- and hydronyms (Vallat 1993); and various other scholars, such as David M. Lewis in Oxford and Theo Krispijn in Leiden, who used the material for reading groups in Achaemenid Elamite. Wouter Henkelman started processing these and other PFA texts in 1995, in what eventually would become the PFA Project database. About 500 of the 836 Aramaic tablets included in the 2023 shipment had previously been read by Raymond A. Bowman, whose unpublished manuscript was accessible to a small group of scholars. Therefore, the returned Aramaic and Elamite documents had already had their bearing on Achaemenid scholarship before the PFA team started working on them—creating high-resolution images, collated editions with commentary of the Elamite and Aramaic texts (Henkelman and Annalisa Azzoni, respectively; fig. 1), and seal identifications and analyses (Mark Garrison).

As an example of early impact, we cite Lewis’s 1980 note on Elamite tablet PF-NN 1809, which Hallock had allowed him to publish. Lewis recognized that the “Datiya” traveling to the king at Persepolis in the express service in January–February 494 BCE was the same as Datis the Mede, a Persian general in the 490 BCE Greek campaign. What Lewis realized, and what has since entered commentaries to Herodotus’s *Histories*, is that Datiya/Datis’s earlier mission likely related to the Persian counter-offensive at the time of the Ionian Revolt.



Figure 1. PFAT 0056, an Aramaic tablet reading “In year 23, the man of Gandhāra; he is the barber to the king; food, household flour.” Reading by Annalisa Azzoni; photo taken with polarizing and red filters, PFA Project.

Lewis's two-column note was the start of a series of further reflections, including John Hyland's reconstruction of a larger Elamite dossier relating to the revolt, that illustrated central Achaemenid planning, collaboration between satraps, and general connectivity (Hyland 2019). Along the same lines, Henkelman was able to identify Dayurisa in the PFA with Daurises, the commander during an earlier phase of the Persian counteroffensive (Henkelman 2023a). Lewis considered the recipient seal PFS 3059s (fig. 2), impressed on the reverse of the Datiya/Datis text, unassuming and thought that it more likely belonged to his travel guide. Its design is accomplished, however, and shows an interesting variation of what we call the Late Babylonian worship scene. It may therefore have belonged to Datiya/Datis himself. The Babylonianizing imagery on PFS 3059s may have stood out positively within the social circles Datis moved in (Garrison, in press).

A few days after the 3,506 Persepolis Fortification tablets had reached the National Museum in Tehran, its director, Jebrail Nokandeh, reached out to ISAC's new director, Timothy P. Harrison, and the PFA team to propose a celebratory exhibition and symposium in the spirit of international collaboration. Following opening statements by Nokandeh and Harrison, the online meeting that took place on December 20, 2023, included papers read by Sedigheh Piran, Abdul-Majid Arfaee, Parsa Daneshmand, Shahrokh Razmjou, and PFA Project members Azzoni, Garrison, Henkelman, and Stolper. As with the previous return of tablets in 2019, a catalog was prepared to accompany the ensuing exhibition, which opened in the National Museum of Iran on May 18, 2024, and featured 160 tablets of different categories.

"By the grace of God," Nokandeh wrote hopefully in his preface to the catalog, "the process of the restitution of this corpus is going at a higher speed" (Nokandeh et al. 2023, 75). Indeed, ISAC conservator D'Alessandro made an effort to have the next planned shipment ready for handover in August 2024. The 1,100 items, which she reviewed and carefully packed with the help of student assistant Aiyana Leigh, are all uninscribed tablets, a category important for the many seal impressions it contains.

Beyond the 1,100 tablets of the 2024 shipment, more than 2,300 additional uninscribed tablets are projected to return to Iran in 2025. For this purpose, Garrison and PFA glyptic editors Erin Daly and Delphine Poinot checked all photographic records. The glyptic evidence on the tablets has been reviewed three times, and a fourth round of review is underway by PFA glyptic editor Emma Petersen focusing on less well preserved seal impressions. During three visits to Chicago she studied 200 items, registering 250 new seals and making about 50 seal collations. Research on the seal images preserved in the archive continued on other fronts as well. Daly identified seals on 304 Elamite tablets in the summer of 2023. Garrison and PFA editor Elspeth Dusinberre, assisted by University of Colorado student Helen Donovan and PFA glyptic editor Christina Chandler, prepared drawings and photographs of many of the 703 seals that occur on the Aramaic tablets (now in Tehran). These seals will be published in an upcoming catalog by Dusinberre and Garrison. Currently, the PFA Project has documented 4,491 distinct and legible seals.

To stay with numbers, Henkelman added about 300 Elamite tablets, previously read by Stolper, to the corpus that is ready for publication; Stolper himself read 40 new texts, including 30 larger livestock



Figure 2. Collated drawing of PFS 3059s, perhaps the seal of Datiya/Datis, by Mark B. Garrison.

accounts, and continued his collation of other records in this category. PFA senior photographic editor Young Bok Kim joined the faculty of the College of Theology at Belmont University but kindly agreed to continue his work for the project, attacking a backlog of unprocessed polynomial texture mapping (PTM) images and photographing new tablets. He and Miller Prosser, project consultant at the University of Chicago's Forum for Digital Culture, also relocated and reinstalled the PFA photo lab facilities to ISAC room 306 and replaced the camera and lenses of the project's PTM setup. Prosser continued curating PFA Project data stored at the Digital Library Development Center at the University of Chicago library, to make sure images and other datasets are properly filed and labeled.

The data generated by the PFA Project now amount to about 100 terabytes (including 2.8 million image files), but that measure is just one way to quantify its output or the increasing weight the archive has in Achaemenid studies. This message is the one Daly and Henkelman tried to convey when they were interviewed on September 25, 2023, for a documentary film on Persepolis that, unusually for this type of production, allocated ample space to the archival sources and the life in the Achaemenid heartland they help reconstruct (Berland 2024).

Similar to Henkelman's interview, which took place in the ISAC Museum galleries with the Khorsabad sculptures in the background, Garrison held the 2024 Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg Memorial Lecture in front of a Roman-period Lower Nubian temple in the great hall of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden on February 29, 2024 (fig. 3). In attendance were Elena Sancisi, granddaughter of Heleen, and her coauthor Mehlika Alan, who had just submitted what would turn out to be a prizewinning high school graduation project on the Achaemenid road system. Also in Leiden, a few months later, the International Association of Assyriology awarded its annual subsidy for cuneiform studies to Hamaseh Golestaneh, who is preparing a doctoral dissertation on Indo-Iranian gods in the PFA.

PFA Project alumnus Rhyne King organized an inspiring workshop on "Quantification and the Persepolis Fortification Archive" at the University of St. Andrews on May 31, 2024, which featured papers on birth rates (Gian Pietro Basello and Filippo Pedron), the population of dependent laborers (King, Henkelman), animal husbandry (Stolper), poultry production (Yixin Lu), and connections with the Idumean ostraca (Mitchka Shahryari). Also in 2023–24, PFA Project members, alumni, and affiliates presented lectures on Achaemenid women in institutional documentation (Yazdan Safaee, in Paris, December 6, 2023), the building of Persepolis (Henkelman, in London, December 14, 2023), relations with the Indian subcontinent (King, at University of St. Andrews, January 19, 2024), the institutional landscape of ancient Pārsa (Henkelman, in Columbus, April 16, 2024), and satrapal houses (King, in Munich, June 5, 2024). Chandler, Henkelman, and King joined forces with brief PFA-related contributions to the "Centering Achaemenid Persian Imperialism" panel at



Figure 3. The PFA Project codirectors during the Q&A session in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden after Garrison gave the 2024 Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg Memorial Lecture.

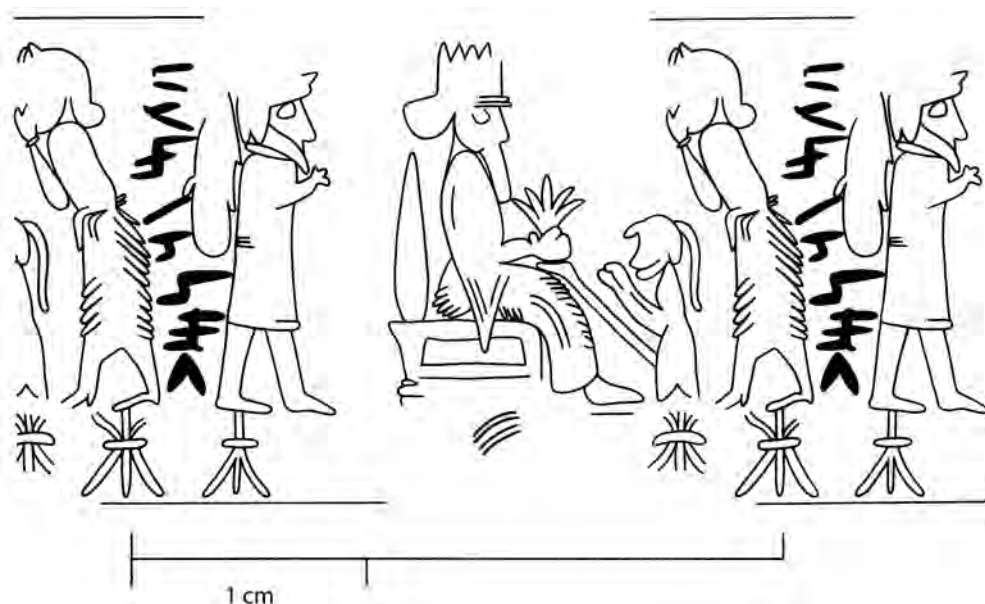


Figure 4. Collated drawing of PFUTS 0305*, a seal reflecting imagery from the central panels of the Apadana at Persepolis and from the rock-cut relief at Bisotūn, by Mark B. Garrison.

the joint Archaeological Institute of America / Society for Classical Studies meeting in Chicago on January 7, 2024.

Azzoni's new reading of the Aramaic epigraph on Elamite tablet PF 0999 (*ptp ʾšprt* "rations (for) female weavers") in turn allowed for the understanding of the long-enigmatic Elamite term *pašap* as "weavers," a fortunate insight elaborated in Safaee's study on the subject (Safaee 2024). By another stroke of luck, Henkelman was able to recognize the system governing ration categories among dependent workers (Henkelman 2023b). Yet another recent publication, by Garrison, discusses the contribution of the glyptic evidence from Persepolis (e.g., fig. 4) to analyses of Darius's famous relief at Bisotūn (Garrison 2023).

The past year also saw the appearance of two significantly PFA-informed collective volumes. The first, the proceedings of a hybrid conference organized at Persepolis by Soheil Delshad (Fadaei et al. 2024), includes contributions by Garrison (a glyptic workshop at Persepolis), King (royal camels on the road to Bactria), Adriano Rossi (multilingual administration), and Zohreh Zehbari (goldsmiths). The second, a Festschrift for Bruno Jacobs (Garrison and Henkelman 2023), contains papers on Achaemenid Kermān as evidenced in the archive (Daniel T. Potts), the winged symbol in Persepolitan glyptic (Garrison), and a group of recently edited Elamite tablets attesting to at least ten "chiliarchies" of 7,000 or more Babylonian stonecutters working at Persepolis (Henkelman).

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SUHAR PROJECT

DEREK KENNET

OMAN ON THE FRONT LINES AT A TURNING POINT IN GLOBAL HISTORY

The early centuries of Islam (seventh to ninth centuries CE) witnessed a huge increase in maritime trade across the Indian Ocean. For the first time in history, ships regularly sailed directly from Iraq to China and back. Commodities such as textiles, silk, spices, aromatics, ceramics, and many others, which had previously been traded in small quantities along the Silk Road, began to be moved by ship in large quantities. The economy of Asia was completely transformed. These developments represent the early roots of the modern “global economy.” The main protagonists in the trade were Muslim Arab sailors, many of whom were Omani—the Arabs best known for their seafaring experience.

This period was therefore an important turning point in human history. The Indian Ocean economy began to coalesce—Muslim merchants settled on the coast of China; the coast of East Africa underwent an economic transformation along with the first phase of “Swahilization” (the adoption of Islam and some Arabic); Arabic became the commercial *lingua franca* of the entire ocean; and commodities such as high-quality Chinese ceramics began to find their way to the Middle East as fashionable tablewares (broken sherds of which are still found today at coastal archaeological sites from Kenya to the Philippines).

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUHAR

In the western Indian Ocean, three key ports handled this trade: Basra (Iraq), Siraf (Iran), and Suhar on the Batinah coast of Oman. Suhar is mentioned in many historical sources of the ninth century (e.g., al-Tabari, al-Baladhuri, al-Muqaddasi) as the “gateway to China.” Suhar’s location gave it access to trade moving from China and India to Iraq, Iran, and Egypt—the three key areas of the early Islamic empire. That Suhar played a pivotal role in this trade marks it as an archaeological site of truly global significance. It certainly has the stature to become a sixth Omani UNESCO World Heritage site—a development that would chime perfectly with current Omani Ministry of Heritage and Tourism policy and would help develop both tourism and local education in the Northern Batinah Governorate.

But there is a problem: to be listed by UNESCO, Suhar would need to contain tangible archaeological monuments *related to the early Islamic period*. At present there is nothing. The fort, which is the main tourist attraction in the town today, dates to the sixteenth century and is 800 years too young. There are no archaeological remains of the early Islamic period presently exposed in the town that could be used to support a UNESCO listing (although many lie buried in the ground).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Investigating the archaeological history of Suhar and its engagement in maritime trade therefore presents us with a chance to answer many of the most difficult questions about this trade.

Previous excavations at the site, most importantly those of Monique Kervran in the early 1980s, succeeded in demonstrating that Suhar has a long and well-preserved archaeological record of trade, but there are some serious problems with this work. First, Kervran's proposed dating is now known to have an error of more than 200 years; second, her excavations did not incorporate modern archaeological techniques such as environmental sampling and quantified analysis; and third, Kervran succeeded in opening only three or four very small "keyhole" trenches. As a result, the story we can glean from this work is very limited indeed.

Further excavation is therefore needed. Here are some of the key questions we wish to answer:

1. When was Suhar founded, and when did it first begin to grow as a trading port? We hope to gain a precise chronology for these events based on C14 accelerator mass spectrometry dating.
2. What changes took place at Suhar and in its hinterland as the maritime trade economy began to affect the town? For example, can we see environmental, agricultural, and economic changes taking place? What effect did the presence of Suhar have on the inhabitants of the Northern Batinah area?
3. What actual evidence is there for maritime trade—in particular, ceramic evidence of trade with China—and how did the volume of that trade change through the main years of Suhar's activity?
4. When did maritime trade begin to decline, and when did the town begin to decline? Is there a link between the two?
5. What did the town of Suhar look like in the eighth to tenth centuries? Can we find buildings, streets, a mosque, shops, and/or workshops that can tell us something about life at Suhar during this time?

THE ISAC SUHAR PROJECT

The excavations of the current ISAC/University of Chicago Suhar Project aim to answer these questions. The project is a collaboration of ISAC/University of Chicago, the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and the Department of Archaeology at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Staff from other universities (Durham and Cardiff in the United Kingdom) are also involved. The excavations began in January 2024 and are slated to continue for at least seven more years. ISAC is funding the work. Further funding will be sought in the future (e.g., from the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and other organizations) to expand the scope of the work.

The project has four aims: (1) to investigate, using the latest archaeological methods, the history of early Islamic Indian Ocean trade and Suhar's role in that trade; (2) to work with the municipal administration of Suhar and with the North Batinah Governorate to expose buildings datable to the period of Suhar's greatest importance—the ultimate goal being to support a UNESCO bid; (3) to engage and educate the public on the history of Suhar; and (4) to train local Omani staff in archaeological and heritage skills.

During the first season (January–February 2024), excellent progress was made in all these areas. Archaeological investigation began by surveying surface finds (fig. 1) and starting to tackle the difficult technical challenge of excavating the largest archaeological mound of this type anywhere in the Arabian Peninsula. A series of deep archaeological probes has begun to draw out the pattern of the buried town. A strategy involving a combination of deep shafts requiring temporary protective shoring and more extensive exposure in shallower areas within the outer town offers a certain way forward for future investigation (figs. 2 and 3). The work is combined with cutting-edge strategies for paleoenvironmental recording, finds recovery, and scientific dating.

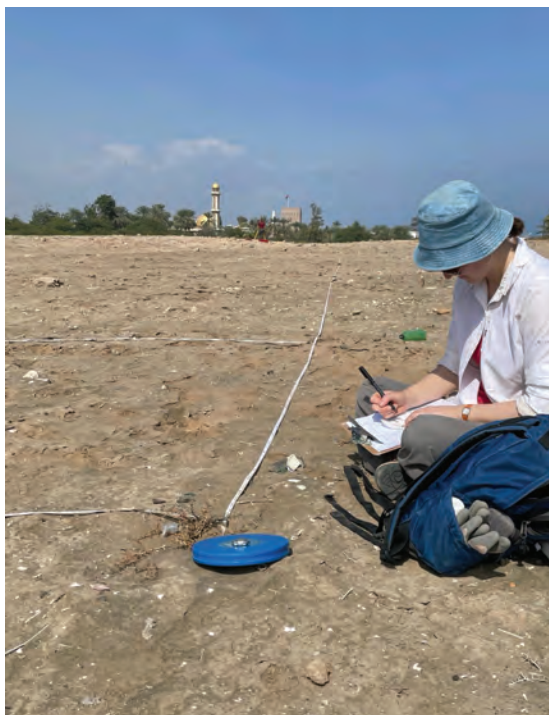


Figure 1. Field survey in an open area to the south of the town.



Figure 2. Test excavations next to the main mosque at Suhar.



Figure 3. Deep sounding to reach the lower buried levels. To make the sounding safe, metal shoring was required.

The aim of this project is to continue to expose both the scientific and historical significance of the site, its importance to the heritage of Oman, and its clear potential as a destination for international tourism. The excavations are expected to continue for at least seven seasons, during which further important discoveries will certainly come to light.

The team met with the wali (equivalent to a mayor), the director of the North Batinah municipality, as well as with governors of North Batinah, Musandam, and Dhofar. We offered training to Omani team members, delivered public lectures, and explained our work to hundreds of visitors, including groups from local schools. Meetings with His Excellency Eng. Ibrahim Said Al Kharusi, Undersecretary of Heritage Affairs at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, confirmed that there is strong ministry support for the Suhar Project's aims. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Omani colleagues for their support and collaboration.

We also, of course, take this chance to thank all ISAC donors whose generous support has made this work possible.

THE SUHAR PROJECT TEAM

The Suhar Project team this year comprised Prof. Derek Kennet, ISAC/University of Chicago; Prof. Nasser Al-Jahwari, Department of Archaeology, Sultan Qaboos University; Dr. Seth Priestman, Durham University, United Kingdom; and Dr. Eve MacDonald, Cardiff University, United Kingdom.

SUREZHA EXCAVATIONS

GIL J. STEIN AND MICHAEL T. FISHER

The 2023 excavations by ISAC of the University of Chicago at Tell Surezha on the Erbil Plain in the Kurdistan region of northeastern Iraq investigate the prehistoric roots of the earliest towns and later cities in northern Mesopotamia during the Chalcolithic period from roughly 5500 to 3500 BCE. Surezha is an ideal site for exploring the chronology, economy, and developmental sequence of the Erbil Plain in this period because the high mound at Surezha is largely prehistoric, with only limited later occupation from the Middle Assyrian period and the Iron Age. Located at the southwestern edge of the modern village of Gund-i Surezha, the ancient site of Surezha has three parts: (1) the prehistoric high mound, (2) the terrace, and (3) the Hellenistic through Islamic-period lower town. The cone-shaped high mound and terrace measure approximately 188 m from northwest to southeast and 150 m from southwest to northeast, with an area of approximately 2.8 hectares (fig. 1). The high mound rises to a height of 16 m above the terrace. The terrace surrounding the base of the high mound is about 2 m high and slopes gradually down over a distance of approximately 70 m to the lower town, which extends out from the terrace in all directions. Taken together, the archaeological deposits in these three areas total approximately 20 hectares.

In 2023, we signed an agreement with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) General Directorate of Antiquities to extend our excavation permit for five more years, from 2023 to 2027 (fig. 2). The



Figure 1. Drone image of the Surezha prehistoric high mound.

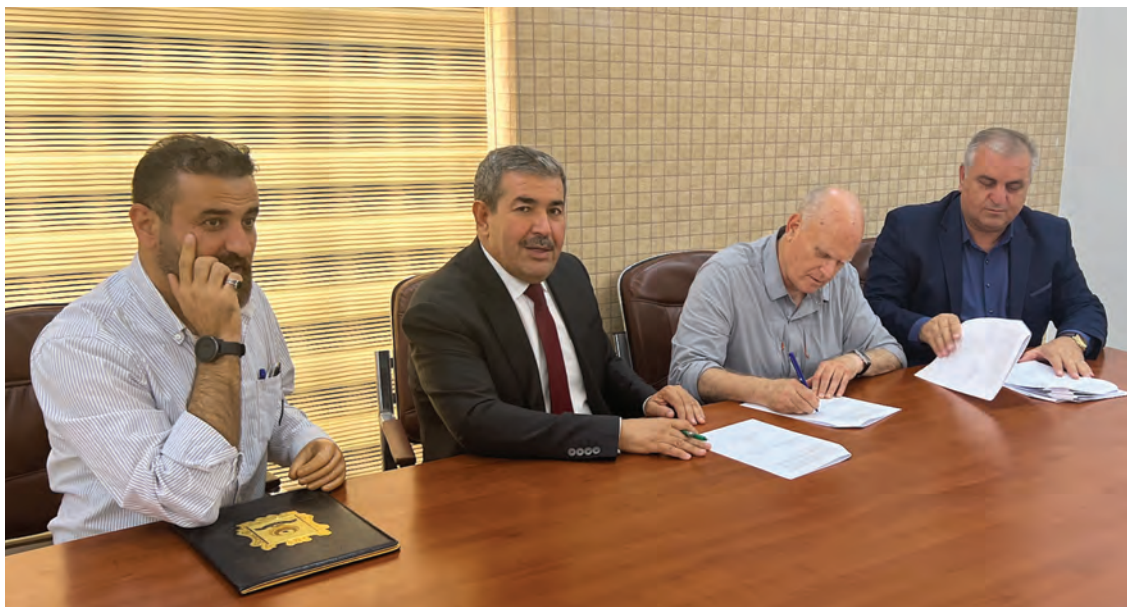


Figure 2. Signing ceremony for the five-year renewal of the Surezha excavations, 2023–27.

2023 field season took place from September 1 to September 30 and was codirected by Gil Stein and Michael Fisher; project staff members included Roonak Ahmadiniya, James Blundell, Christian Borgen, Joseph Harris, Isabella Lafreniere, Alejandro Gallego Lopez, Harrison Morin, Madeline Ouimet, and Lucas Proctor. Our government representatives were Rozhgar Rashid and Nader Babakr. Site excavations were carried out by eighteen workers from the Erbil Department of Antiquities and the village of Surezha. We are grateful to General Director of Antiquities Mr. Kayfi Ali and to Director of Antiquities for Erbil Governorate Mr. Nader Babakr for permission to excavate at Surezha and for the many ways in which they have facilitated our work. The 2023 excavations focused on four trenches: operation 15 in Area A on the north-western slope of the high mound, and operations 11, 12, and 14 in Area B on the southern slope and base of the high mound (fig. 3).

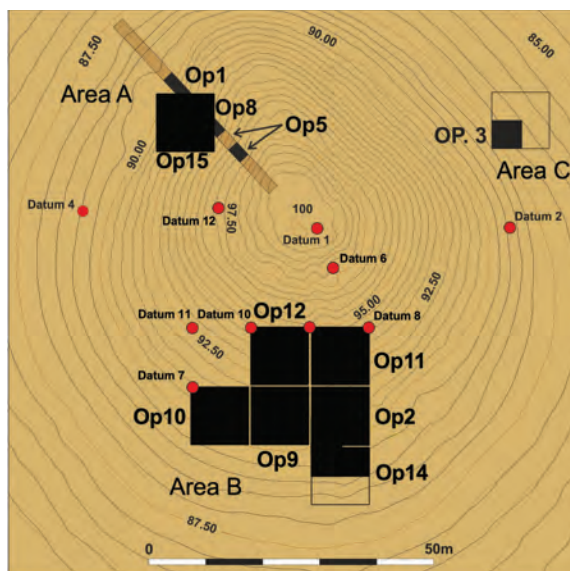


Figure 3. Topographic map of the Surezha high mound showing the main excavation areas.

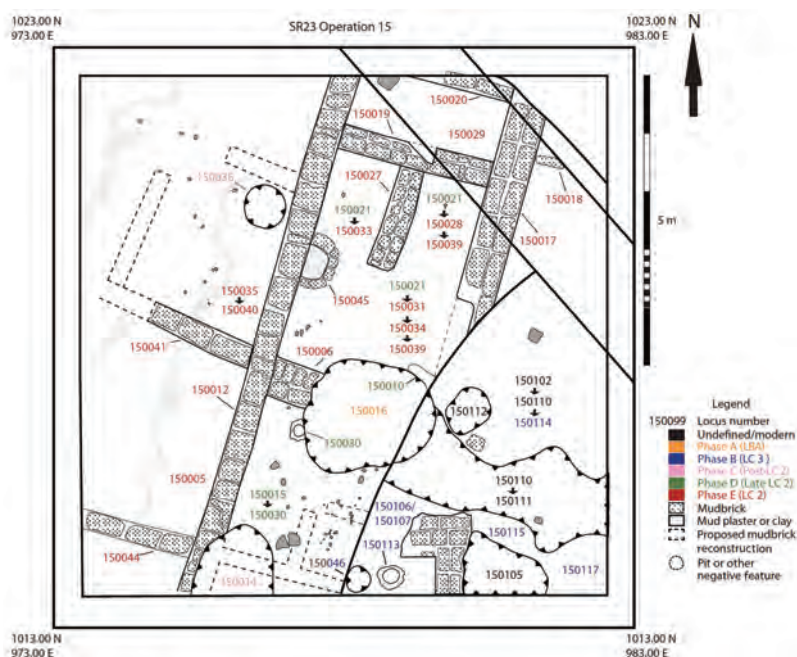
AREA A: OPERATION 15

Operation 15 is a 10 × 10 m trench in Area A. The trench was laid out to overlap with the adjacent operation 1 step trench in the area with the Late Chalcolithic (LC) 2 deposits (ca. 4500?–4200 BCE), thereby ensuring a reliable stratigraphic connection between the two trenches (fig. 4). Beneath the overlying deposits of the LC 3 period (ca. 4200–3700 BCE), excavations revealed a complex of LC 2 architecture with at least seven mudbrick rooms whose layout suggests a nondomestic function (fig. 5).

These rooms were linked stratigraphically to a well-preserved LC 2 room with complete storage vessels and a stamp-seal impression that had been initially excavated in the step trench operation 1 in 2013. The southern portion of the LC 2 architecture had been cut through by a large Middle Assyrian pit. In 2023, work focused on excavating the large 5 × 5 m area of LC 3 and later deposits that overlay the LC 2 architecture in the southeastern corner of operation 15. A majority of deposits excavated were wash layers and an erosional gully, which show that this area of the mound was abandoned for at least part of the LC 3 period. Beneath these erosion deposits, two small wall stubs and a surface with a basin belonged to an intact LC 3 deposit that dates to the beginning of the LC 3 occupation on the site, while later LC 3 occupational layers may



Figure 4. Drone image of Area A operation 15 showing its connection to the 2013-15 step trench (at top) and the LC 2 architecture exposed in 2022-23.



be present upslope. Future seasons promise to further delineate subphases within this phase. In the 2024 season, we hope to excavate the remaining 40 cm of LC 3 deposits overlying the LC 2 architecture that has been exposed in the northern and western portions of operation 15.

AREA B: OPERATIONS 11, 12, AND 14

In 2023, we continued our multiyear plan to expand the exposures in Area B at the southern base of the Surezha high mound in the two 10 × 10 m trenches designated as operations 11 and 12 (fig. 6).

Operation 11

Operation 11 is a 10 × 10 m trench at the eastern end of Area B, north of operation 2 and east of operation 12. The 2023 excavations started at the northern (upslope) half of the trench (fig. 6). Two main architectural features were excavated in this area: room 8, in the northwestern part of operation 11, and kiln 4, built nearby to the east in an open area along the sloping fifth-millennium southern surface of the high mound (fig. 7). Associated ceramics such as chaff-tempered “wide flower pot bowls” and internally beveled rim bowls date both installations to the LC 2 period.

Kiln 4 is a two-chambered updraft kiln composed of a lower fuel chamber with a central, plastered brick wall that originally supported the floor for an upper, probably domed chamber where the ceramic vessels would have been placed for firing (fig. 8). Unfortunately, the upper firing chamber no longer survives. The floor separating the two chambers would have been pierced with circular vent holes that allowed the heat from the burning charcoal in the fuel chamber to rise into the upper firing chamber. The kiln was located in the corner of a walled open area or courtyard that seems to have extended westward into the adjacent operation 12. Ceramics from contemporaneous trash deposits and outdoor surfaces in the courtyard date kiln 4 to the LC 2 period. The accumulation of sediments and the sequence of superimposed work surfaces built up against the outer walls of kiln 4 suggest that this installation was used for an extended period of time before falling out of use (see north baulk section, fig. 9). Overall, the excavated northern half



Figure 6. Drone image of Area B operations 11 (right) and 12 (left).

Figure 7. Operation 11 top plan.

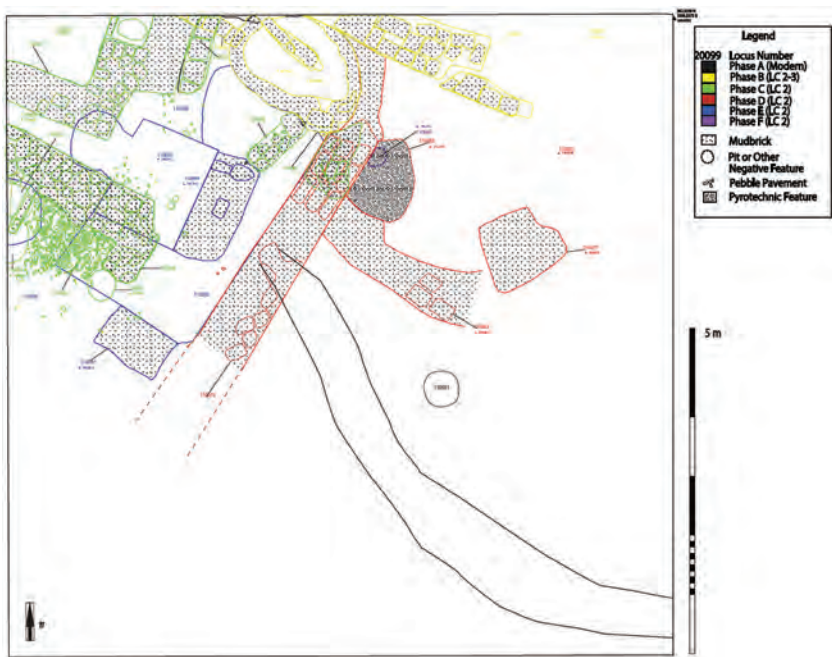


Figure 8. 3D scan of kiln 4 in the northwestern corner of operation 11—originally a two-chambered updraft kiln, of which only the lower fuel chamber survives. The kiln dates to the LC 2 period.

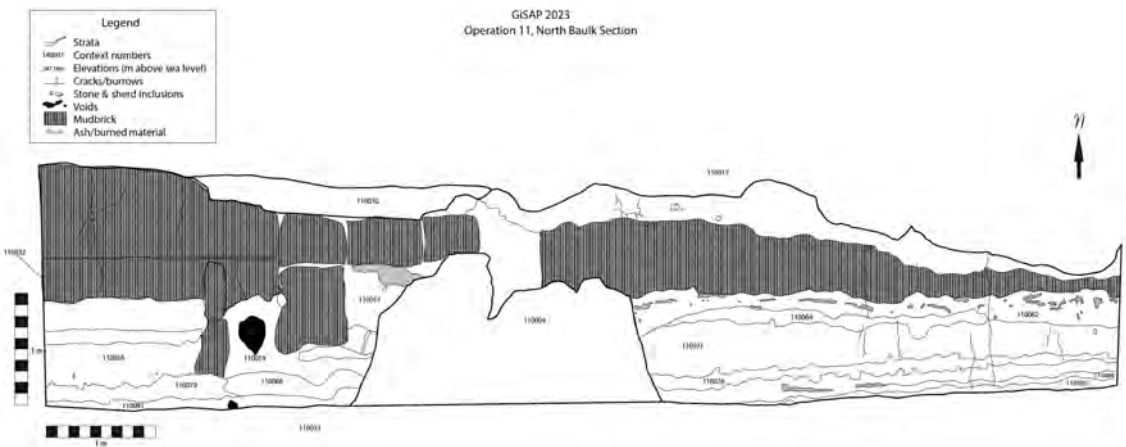
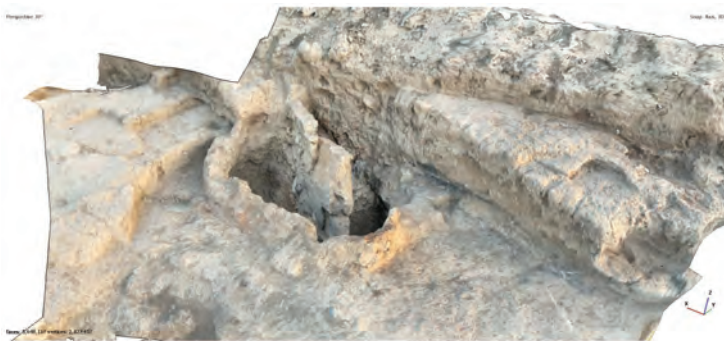


Figure 9. Operation 11 north baulk section. The shaded areas show mudbrick walls that sealed off the eroded kiln 4 (center) after its abandonment.

of operation 11 seems to have been an open-air industrial or craft production area in the LC 2 period, with little or no evidence for houses or domestic occupation.

Operation 12

Operation 12 is a 10 × 10 m trench located immediately west of operation 11 in Area B. Although the two adjacent excavated areas were contemporaneously occupied during the LC 2 period (fig. 10), they seem to have differed markedly in function. In contrast to the largely open courtyard area around the operation 11 kiln, the excavated area in the northwestern part of operation 12 comprised a series of three mud-brick rooms (fig. 11) that seem to have been domestic houses. After the houses were abandoned and filled in with erosional wash, the western part of operation 12 was used as a cemetery, with pits for at least seven child burials, often in ceramic pots (figs. 11 and 12), and one adult burial. Only one burial had grave goods; eight shell beads measuring 1–2 mm in diameter were excavated from child burial 108. Although most of the burial pits were dug after the houses were abandoned, room 2 in the northwestern part of operation 12 had at least two child burials (pits 151 and 159) that had been excavated into the floor just inside the doorway and sealed while the room was still being used for habitation. The 2023 exposures in operations 11 and 12 give good evidence that the southern slope of the Surezha high mound was occupied in several ways during the LC 2 period. At different stages, and in different parts of operations 11 and 12, there were houses, a burial area for children, and an industrial area for ceramic production.

Operation 14

In 2023 we continued work in operation 14, immediately south of operation 2, to expose more of the Ubaid-period occupation in Area B at the southern base of the high mound. Operation 14 expanded our exposure of Ubaid architecture from 5 × 5 m to 10 × 5 m immediately beneath the present-day ground surface (fig. 13). The 75 m² exposure in the southwestern part of operation 2 and the northern half of operation 14 shows that this area was densely occupied during the Ubaid period. We know from the area exposed in operation 2 that the Ubaid architecture lay immediately below LC 1 domestic architecture, with a great degree of continuity in the orientation and location of houses and walls between the two periods.

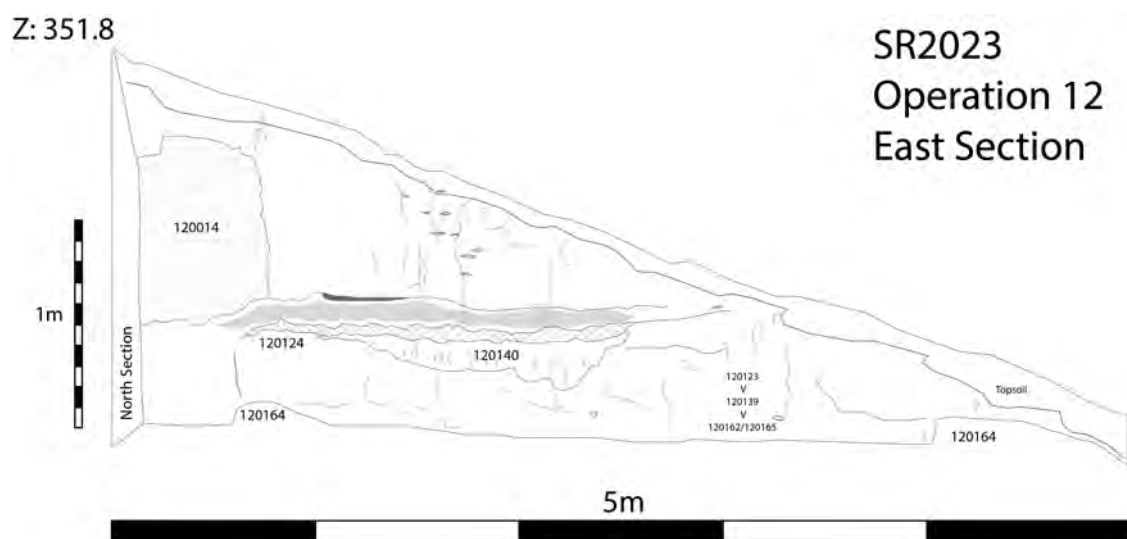
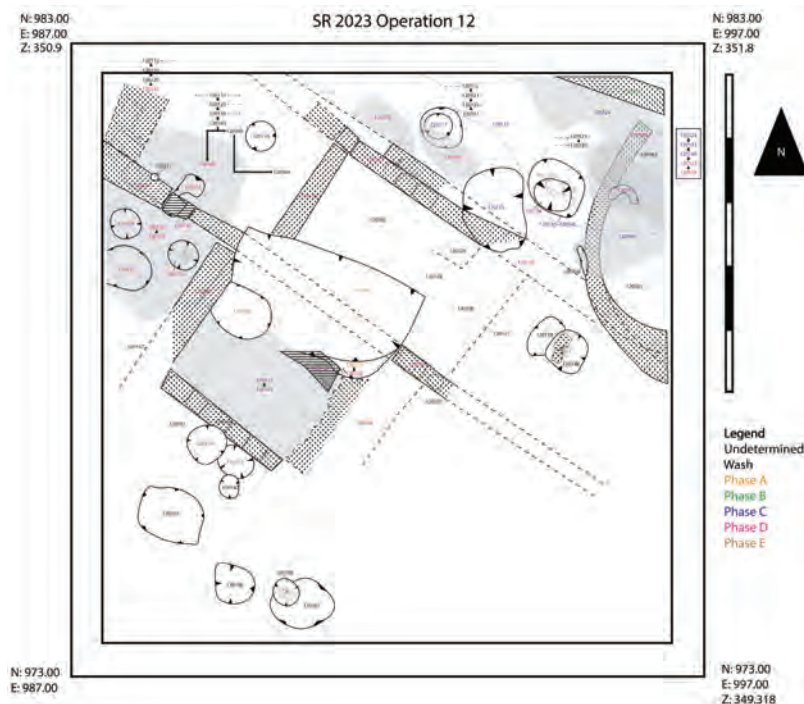


Figure 10. Operation 12 east baulk section.

Figure 11. Operation 12 top plan showing an area of domestic architecture that was abandoned and then used as a cemetery area with a series of pits containing child burials (often inside pots). The curved wall in the northeastern corner of the trench was part of the courtyard that extended into the adjacent operation 11 with its kiln (locus 4).



The final Ubaid mudbrick architecture exposed in operation 14 shows evidence for one house to the west of a narrow street or alley, oriented northwest–southeast, and one or possibly two contiguous houses on the eastern side of the street. The houses consist of small rooms and associated courtyards. The rooms often contained small, mudbrick storage bins. Because excavations did not reach the floors in these rooms, the room deposits recovered consisted mostly of mudbrick collapse and wash with Ubaid ceramics, but very few small finds. We hope to widen and deepen our exposure of the Ubaid levels in operation 14 in the 2024 field season.

SCIENTIFIC ANALYSES: FAUNA AND CERAMICS

Animal Bone Remains

Analysis of the Surezha animal bone remains is being conducted by project zooarchaeologist Dr. Max Price (Durham University, United Kingdom). Faunal remains from seven seasons at Tell Surezha (2013, 2016–19, 2022–23) are helping us reconstruct animal-herding practices in the Erbil Plain in



Figure 12. Operation 12 infant burial in a jar, dug into earlier, abandoned domestic architecture.



Figure 13. Composite image of Ubaid architecture in contiguous operations 2 (top left) and 14 (bottom).

the fifth and fourth millennia BCE. A total of 131 animal bone fragments from the 2023 season were identified to the genus level (a portion of the 2023 fauna remain in Erbil and were not analyzed). These data were added to the existing Tell Surezha database of fauna from all excavation seasons to date (table 1).

Our faunal samples from each phase are still small and need to be larger for greater reliability. However, the consistent rank-order pattern from the Ubaid through LC 3 shows that sheep (*Ovis*) and goats (*Capra*) occurred most frequently, with pigs (*Sus*) as the second most common animal and cattle (*Bos*) as the third most common taxon. The vast majority of the post-Halaf animal bones are those of domesticated animals. However, the presence of *Gazella* bones (especially in the LC 1 faunal remains) shows that hunting continued as a subsistence practice.

Ceramics

The 2023 excavations recovered 11,287 ceramic sherds from operations 11, 12, 14, and 15. Of these pieces, 1,585 were diagnostic sherds (rims, bases, handles, painted sherds, etc.), and the remainder were body sherds (table 2).

Table 1. Surezha faunal remains identified to the genus level.

Identified taxa	Halaf	Halaf–		Ubaid–		LC 1		LC 1–2	LC 1 or 2	LC 2	LC 2–3		LC 3	Middle Assyrian	Islamic
		Ubaid	Ubaid	LC 1	Ubaid	LC 1	LC 2				LC 2	LC 2			
<i>Ovis/Capra</i> , of which:	10	20	52	30	487	308	1	136	89	94	64	2			
<i>Ovis</i>	(2)		(4)	(3)	(69)	(29)		(13)		(9)	(5)				
<i>Capra</i>		(1)	(2)	(2)	(22)	(43)		(19)	(2)	(3)					
<i>Ovis/Capra/Gazella</i>		2	7	4	50	6	1	8	7	9	2	1			
<i>Sus</i>	1	7	36	35	351	42		5	14	80	10	1			
<i>Bos</i>	3	12	15	9	172	31		9	16	23	7				
<i>Canis</i>		2	2		98	6		1		1		1			
<i>Vulpes</i>					1	1		7							
<i>Equus</i>					1										
<i>Dama/Cervus</i>					2				1						
<i>Capreolus</i>					1										
Mustelid (cf. <i>Mustela</i>)					1						1				
<i>Gazella</i>	1		1		31	3		13	2	1	6				
<i>Lepus</i>	1							2							
Bivalve (Unionoida)		1			12	5		6	2	6	1				
<i>Potomon</i> sp.					2										
Bird			5	2	7			43*	1**	1	3				
Fish					1***			3							
Total	16	44	118	78	1,216	402	2	190	132	215	94	5			

*Identified birds include *Buteo* sp. and Columbidae ND (species not determined).
**Egg shell.
***Identified fish include Cyprinidae ND (species not determined).

Table 2. Ceramics collected in 2023.

Operation	Total sherds	Total diagnostics
11	2,946	582
12	2,256	451
14	1,480	172
15	4,605	380
Total	11,287	1,585

Analyses focused on using the pottery from operations 11 and 12 to improve our understanding of the LC 2 ceramic typology and chronology. Of this pottery, 177 LC 2 diagnostic ceramics were drawn and inked. Some of the most useful ceramic forms for recognizing deposits dating to the LC 2 period were “wide flower pot bowls,” double-rim jars, flat/plain internally beveled rim bowls, and globular or holemouth jars (figs. 14–17). Based on these analyses, we determined that the 2023 excavations had exposed occupation levels dating to the LC 2 period in operations 11 and 12—contemporaneous with the operation 15 exposure in area A.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the 2023 excavations at Surezha are giving us a better idea of the LC 3–LC 2 transition, the LC 2 occupation of the mound, and the Ubaid period at the site. In the 2024 field season, we plan to continue and expand these lines of research on the chronology and economic organization of the Erbil Plain and northeastern Mesopotamia during the fifth and fourth millennia BCE.

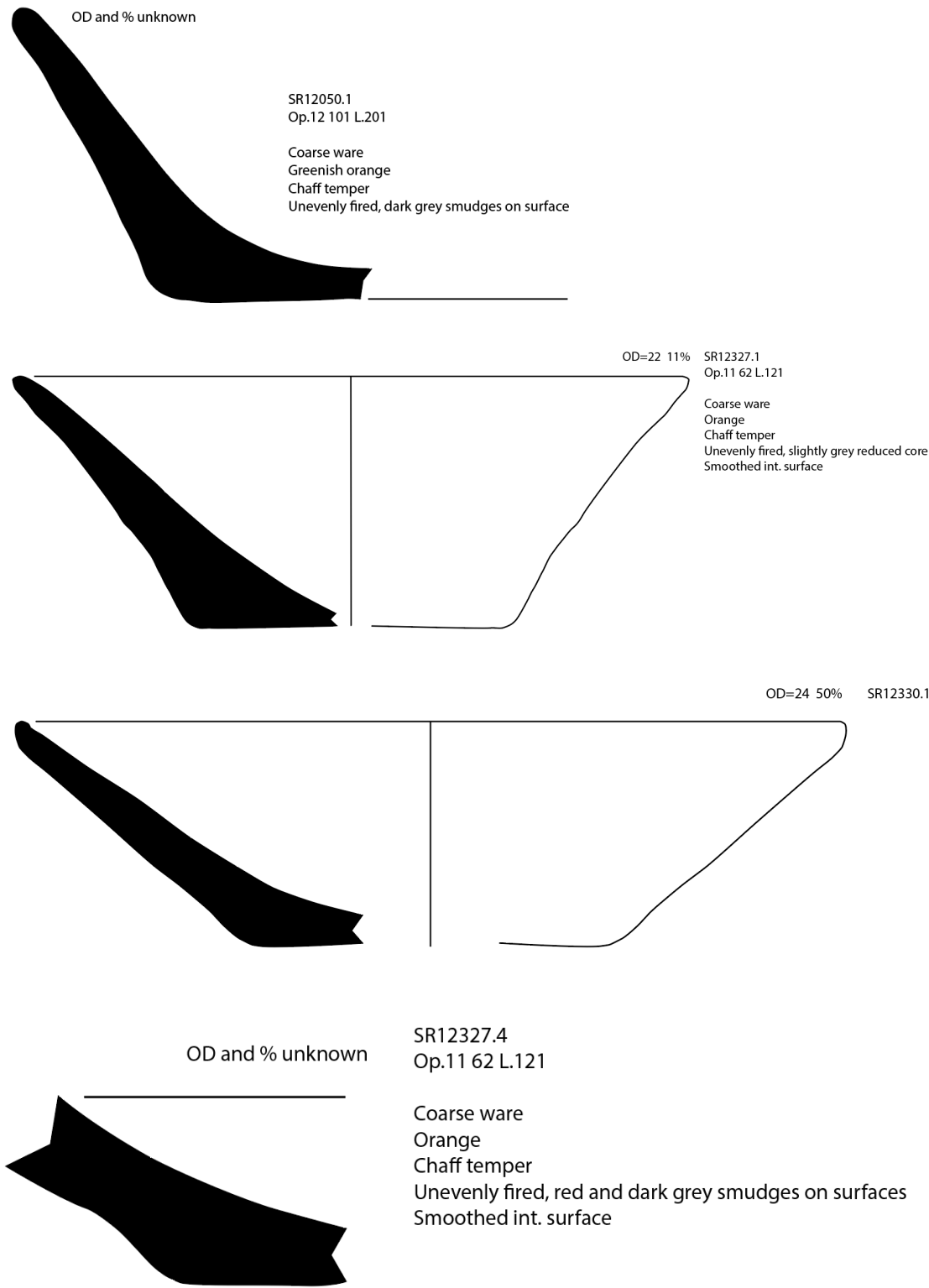


Figure 14. LC 2 ceramics from operation 11: “wide flower pot bowls.”

PROJECT REPORTS | SUREZHA EXCAVATIONS

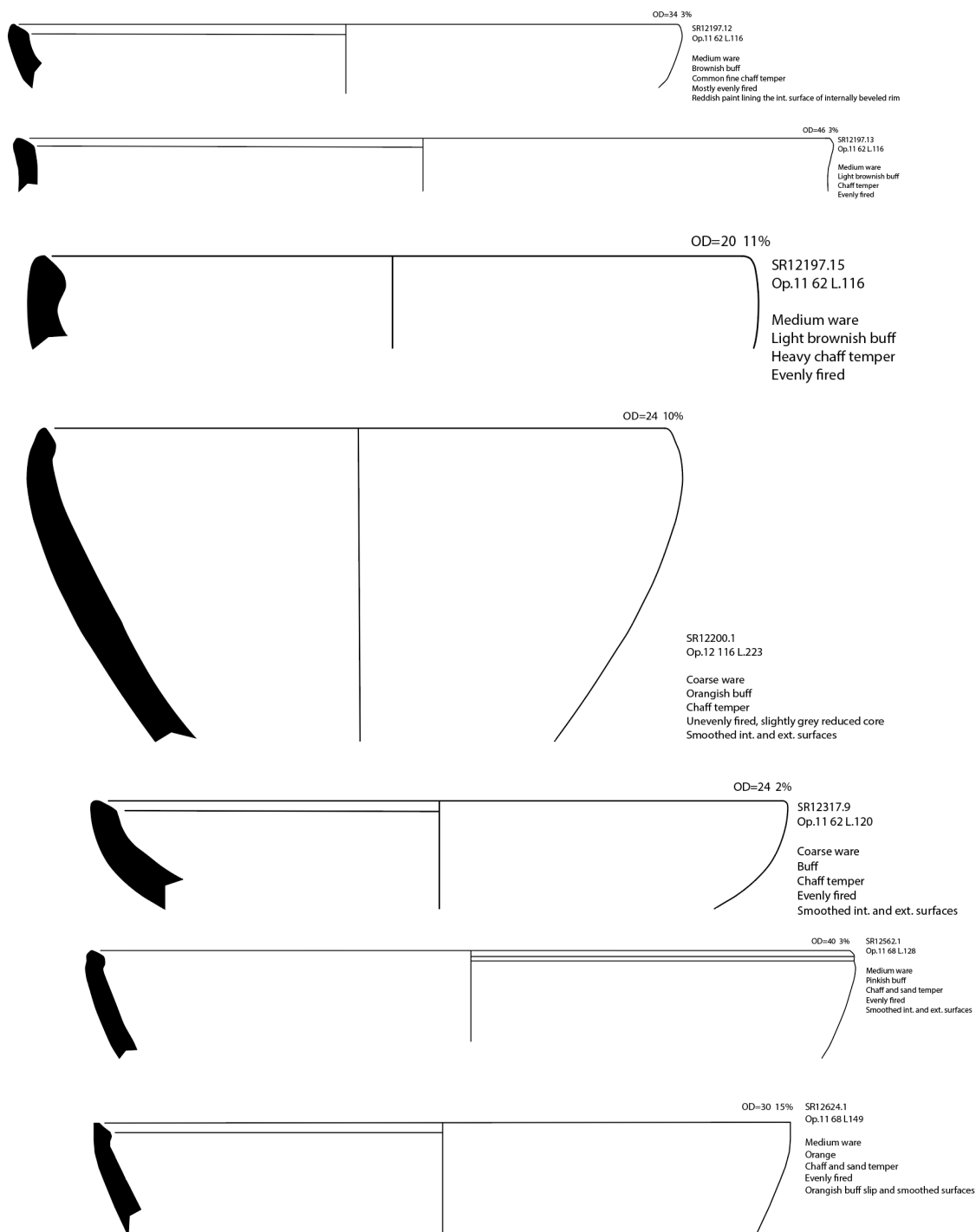


Figure 15. LC 2 ceramics from operation 11: flat and simple, internally beveled rim bowls.

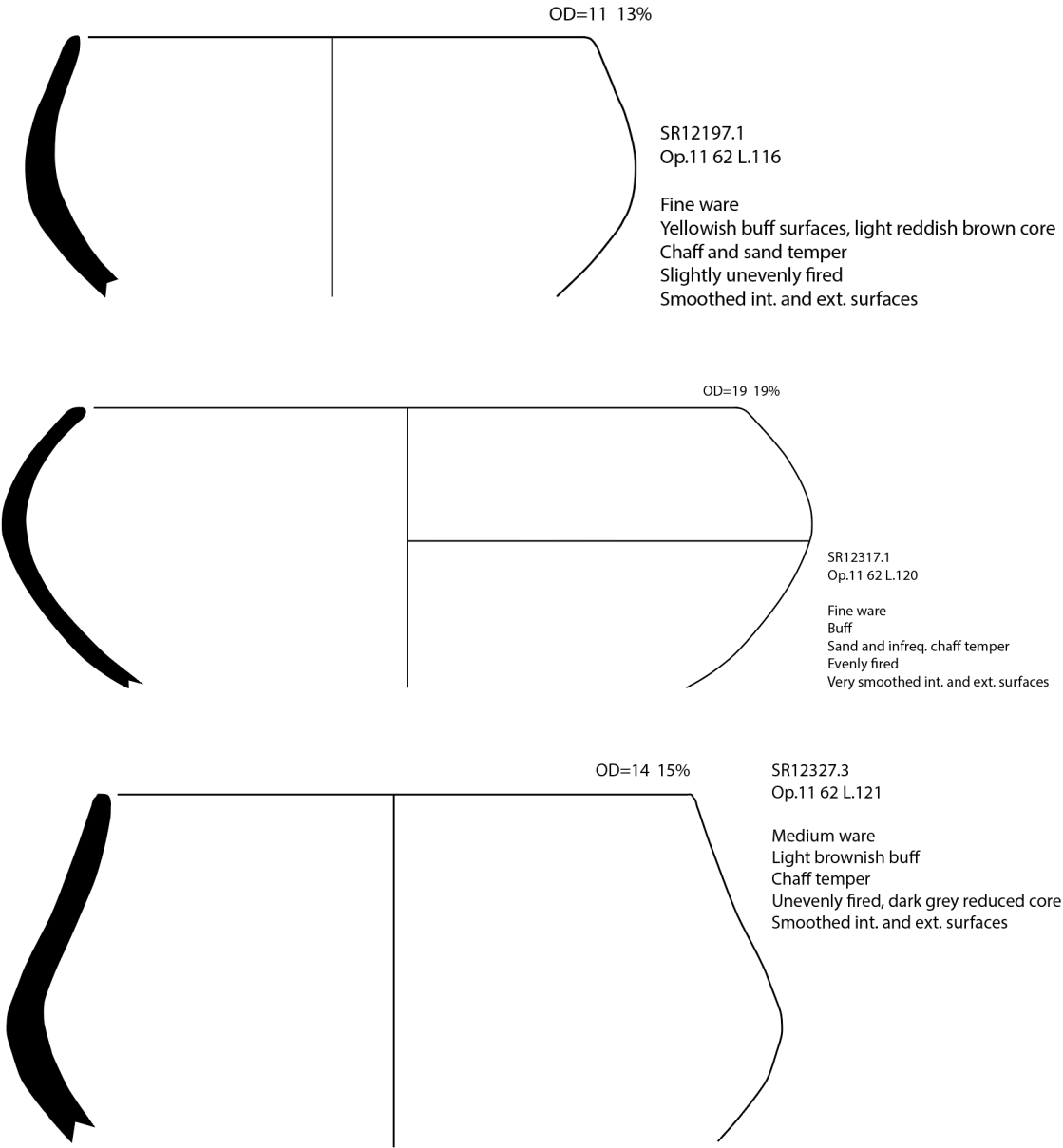


Figure 16. LC 2 ceramics from operation 11: globular vessels and holemouth jars.

PROJECT REPORTS | SUREZHA EXCAVATIONS

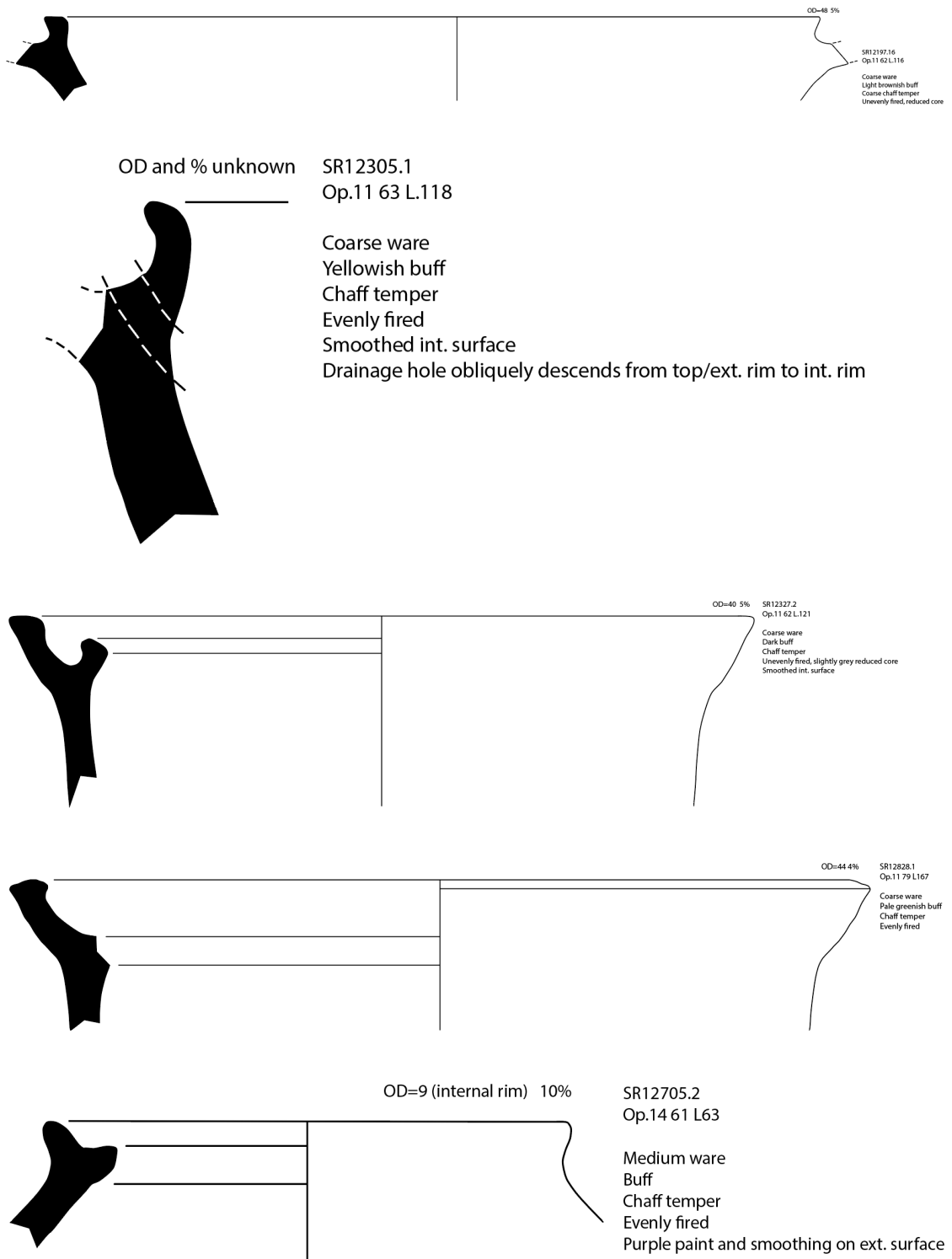


Figure 17. LC 2 ceramics from operation 11: double-rim jars.

TABLET COLLECTION AND NIPPUR TABLET PROJECT

SUSANNE PAULUS, WITH MARTA DÍAZ HERRERA,
JANE GORDON, DANIELLE LEVY, MADELINE OUIMET,
AND RYAN WINTERS

The Tablet Collection team would like to start this annual report by expressing its gratitude to its donors, especially Deborah and Philip Halpern, Malda and Aldis Liventals, and Catherine A. Novotny. The Tablet Collection also received generous support from the College Center for Research and Fellowships and UChicago Grad.

Four major elements dominated this year's research at the Tablet Collection and Nippur Tablet Project: the exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*, cataloging the main collection, the Nippur Tablet Project, and supporting research and education. Some of the work described here includes activities that occurred in 2022–23.

BACK TO SCHOOL IN BABYLONIA

The exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia* was the dominant project of the Tablet Collection team. The exhibition team included Marta Díaz Herrera (assistant curator, Nippur Tablet Project), Jane Gordon (graduate researcher), Danielle Levy (photographer), Madeline Ouimet (assistant curator), Colton Siegmund (former assistant curator), and Ryan D. Winters (postdoctoral researcher), as well as interns and former team members Pallas Eible Hargro, C Mikhail, Carter Rote, and Sarah M. Ware in close cooperation with the staff of the ISAC Museum and Archives, the Museum Shop, and the Research Archives (see Museum and Research Archives reports).

The goals of the exhibition were to tell the story of the education of Babylonian schoolchildren around 1750 BCE in Nippur and to highlight the work of the Tablet Collection and the Nippur Tablet Project. The exhibition and its related publications, merchandise, and events were extremely successful. The ISAC Museum experienced a 30 percent growth in visitors and a similar growth in sales in the Museum Shop, including many international sales. Both the exhibition catalog and the children's book were well received among the academic and broader communities.

In preparation for the exhibition, which opened in September 2023, the team selected 126 objects, including loans from the Penn Museum; worked on design, layout, displays, narrative, and annotations with the team of the ISAC Museum; and created interactive and multisensory features, such as a video highlighting the production and recycling of a cuneiform tablet, audio recordings of Sumerian debates using the translations of assistant professor of Sumerology Jana Matuszak, and 3D prints of selected objects that allowed visitors to explore clay tablets and cuneiform through touch (fig. 1).

As a companion to the exhibition, a 480-page catalog with twenty-five chapters comprehensively covering all aspects of Babylonian education was published with contributions by internationally renowned scholars and University of Chicago graduate students (fig. 2). A field-defining aspect of this publication was a new way of depicting cuneiform tablets through aesthetically pleasing high-resolution photography (by Levy) and making them accessible through annotations (by Díaz Herrera). In the five concluding chapters,



Figure 1. Danielle Levy using 3D-printed objects in the exhibition to explain cuneiform writing. Photo by Susanne Paulus.

the team members presented the displayed objects in a narrative way, allowing the reader to relive the story of the exhibition.

Not just for a younger audience, the children's activity book *The Adventures of Inanaka and Tuni* provides an introduction to the archaeology of Iraq, Babylonian scribal education, and life in the scribal quarters in Nippur. The beautiful and well-researched illustrations (by Ouimet; fig. 3) bring to life the story (by Gordon and Paulus) of the girl Inanaka and her dog, while activities allow readers to explore the cuneiform writing system in detail. The book was professionally typeset and designed by Ware, a University of Chicago College Center for Research and Fellowships summer intern.

The book and exhibition also influenced the Museum education course for K–12 students that the team developed in cooperation with Youth and Family Program manager Kate Hodge and her team. The class was taught to 308 students and informed two larger workshops in the fall and spring. Hodge commented, “Generally speaking, I think it was an excellent learning experience for myself and my students to really get to know cuneiform—it improved even general tours!” In addition, members of the Tablet Collection team filled two issues of the ISAC member magazine *News & Notes* with articles about various topics of scribal education.

Certainly contributing to the success of the exhibition was the continuous social media and



Figure 2. Contributing authors (from left to right) Susanne Paulus, Danielle Levy, Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon, Ryan Winters, and Madeline Ouimet celebrating the publication of the *Back to School in Babylonia* catalog. Photo by Danielle Levy.

outreach work of the team in cooperation with Continuing Education Program manager Tasha Vorderstrasse that included weekly posts from August to December 2023 and periodic posts from January to March 2024 written by team members, especially Rote and Gordon. These posts helped publicize the many outreach events organized in conjunction with the exhibition (fig. 4).

As for public programming, a broad monthly lecture program attracted a good audience with talks by Paulus on “The Aims of Babylonian Education”; Paul Delnero (Johns Hopkins) on “What Did You Learn in School Today?”; Matuszak on “Law and Morality in Sumerian Satirical Tales”; Eleanor Robson (University College London) on “Back to House F: Personal Reflections on 25 Years of Research on Old Babylonian Schooling”; and Gina Konstantopoulos (University of California at Los Angeles) on “Foremost among the Ghosts: The Role of Gilgamesh in Rituals and Incantations.” Each lecture was accompanied by a dedicated exhibition tour by one of the team members. Especially for families, we also organized a winter festival in cooperation with ISAC’s associate director of member programming Matt Welton featuring games, tours, and readings. A five-week adult education course taught by Díaz Herrera, Gordon, Ouimet,



Figure 3. Madeline Ouimet illustrating *The Adventures of Inanaka and Tunī*. Photo by Barbara Ouimet.

Figure 4. Sarah Ware, Danielle Levy, and Jane Gordon promoting the children’s book and Tuppi plushie during the Hyde Park Children’s Book Fair in October 2023. Photo by Susanne Paulus.



PROJECT REPORTS | TABLET COLLECTION AND NIPPUR TABLET PROJECT



Figure 5. Marta Díaz Herrera giving a tour of the exhibition. Photo by Susanne Paulus.

Figure 6. Jane Gordon giving a lecture about Gilgameš and the exhibition to College students. Photo by Susanne Paulus.



Paulus, and PhD candidate Barbora Wichterlová invited participants to dive deeper into many aspects of Babylonian education.

As a special highlight of outreach work, many team members gave tours of the special exhibition to diverse audiences (fig. 5), including to the general public, ISAC members and donors, adults, and children. The exhibition welcomed first-year undergraduate students from the University of Chicago's Humanities Core classes "Readings in World Literature" and "Human Being and Citizen" (fig. 6), as well as graduate student groups from the university and from Northwestern University's classics department. Other groups included students from the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools; members of the American Research Center in Egypt, Field Museum, and South Suburban Archaeological Society; and many more. Altogether, the tours strengthened the visibility and presence of ISAC and the Tablet Collection in the public and university communities.

A significant impact was made by the merchandise created by Levy with contributions from many other team members. Their goal was to create attractive, fun, and tasteful merchandise that would be available in the Museum Shop during the exhibition and afterward. The products included two T-shirts with cuneiform script, socks bearing a quotation from the famous King Šulgi the runner, bookmarks with selected Mesopotamian deities, and a mug based on a seal in the ISAC collection. The swag enjoyed great popularity, but none more so than the first-ever ISAC plushie, the cuneiform tablet Tuppi. Once introduced on social media via ISAC's most popular post to date, Tuppi quickly rose to worldwide fame and raised awareness for ISAC and cuneiform studies, all while being incredibly cute (fig. 7).

Last but certainly not least, the exhibition had an enduring academic impact on all members of the team. Undergraduates Levy and Ware presented their research on “Women and Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia through the Lens of Scribal Education” and “Tracing Literacy and the Literate: Scribal Education in Ancient Babylonia,” respectively, at the University of Chicago's College Summer Institute Symposium in August 2023. Levy additionally presented two well-received posters at the College Center for Research and Fellowships Undergraduate Research Symposium in 2023 and 2024 and was selected to serve as a Student Marshal, one of the highest honors the university awards to undergraduate students. In a joint session of the Ancient Societies Workshop, Interdisciplinary Archaeology Workshop, and Middle East History and Theory Workshop, Gordon, Levy, and Ouimet reflected on the challenges of curation and communication, while Paulus did the same in an interview with Jon Taylor (British Museum) for the “Thin End of the Wedge” podcast. Gordon and Levy were also interviewed about the exhibition by Digital Hammurabi (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxf3osuEUU>).

Several conference presentations (and likely future publications) grew out of the project. In cooperation with Matuszak, Paulus organized a well-attended panel at the American Society of Overseas Research annual meeting. Included among the fifteen presentations were Gordon's talk on “Literary Intertextuality in the Context of the Old Babylonian Scribal School” and Paulus's on “Back to School in Babylonia—School at the End of an Era.” Díaz Herrera presented her new finds on the composition of the lexical list Ea at the American Oriental Society's annual meeting and the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Helsinki in a paper titled “*a-ku-me-pap*: Building on Previous Knowledge in Old Babylonian Nippur Schools.” Ouimet wrote a groundbreaking master's thesis, “An Education in Clay: Technological Action and Embodied Knowledge in an Old Babylonian Scribal School,” which explores the making, handling, and recycling of clay tablets. And after defending his PhD in March 2023, Siegmund started a position as a postdoc at the Visual Interactions in Early Writing Systems project in Cambridge, United Kingdom.



Figure 7. Participants of the American Society of Overseas Research conference buying Tuppi at the Museum Shop. Photo by Susanne Paulus.

CATALOGING THE COLLECTION

During the year and a half he has worked as tablet cataloger, Winters has cataloged approximately 1,515 tablets, of which more than 90 percent are unpublished. Some shorter administrative tablets require as little as

five to ten minutes to catalog, while others—depending on their period, genre, and state of preservation—can require several hours of work.

At least 75 percent of the tablets cataloged date to the Neo-Sumerian or Ur III period (ca. 2100–2000 BCE). Except for those that are very poorly preserved, all tablets belonging to this period have been fully transliterated and provided with a detailed summary of their contents, physical characteristics (including sealings, if present), dating, and provenience. The provenience has been determined not merely on the basis of the use of a given month name (since different centers in the Ur III state employed different local calendars) but also on a qualitative basis using prosopography and content; in some cases, this method has resulted in the revision of a previously assigned provenience. Tablets from this period come primarily from ancient Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem), Umma (Tell Jokha), and Girsu (Telloh).

A beautiful example is A2666, a sealed tablet inscribed with an extensive and diverse list of food-stuffs expended for “the festival of the protective goddess of (the king) Šu-Sîn” (fig. 8). Some of the items listed are otherwise only rarely attested. The first five lines contain a “recipe” of ingredients to be used for “cakes”: fine flour, dates, other dried fruits, and oil. Other items listed include various kinds of flour, breads, beer, chickpeas and small peas or beans, spices, groats, apples, and figs on strings. The tablet was sealed by the governor of Umma.

About 10 percent of cataloged tablets date to the Old Babylonian period (2000–1550 BCE). Most of them have been likewise fully transliterated and summarized, sometimes including a full or partial translation. Provenience is often difficult to determine for tablets of this period; represented sites include Sippar, Kish, Larsa, and Uruk.

About 5 percent date to the Neo- or Late Babylonian period (ca. 1000–0 BCE), with roughly half of them consisting of legal tablets and the other half belonging to various nonadministrative and learned genres, including omens, astronomical texts, and other types. For the latter category, it is usually difficult to determine provenience and exact dating.

Less than 1 percent of the cataloged items consist of Middle or Neo-Assyrian tablets (1500–609 BCE); the earlier, Middle Assyrian period is represented mostly by a handful of small administrative tablets, while the Neo-Assyrian period is represented by substantial fragments from various genres, including some surprising finds. For example, one fragment of a multicolumned tablet of unknown original dimensions (A3512) is inscribed in Neo-Assyrian script with an incantation against witchcraft, similar to the antiwitchcraft incantation



Figure 8. Fat-cross with all sides of tablet A2666. Photo by Danielle Levy.

series *Maqlû* but not duplicating any known portion of this canonical composition. The preserved text mentions warlocks and witches, sorcerers and sorceresses, a smith, a carpenter (perhaps referring to a producer of figurines used in witchcraft), and a necromancer. Just before it breaks off, the text beseeches the sun god Šamaš against “my sorcerer” and “my conjurer.”

The meticulous cataloging of the collection allows researchers and the wider public to find objects of interest for their research, teaching, and exploration. Tablets cataloged by Winters are frequently featured on ISAC’s social media as well.

Additionally, Díaz Herrera worked with the support of Foy Scalf, head of ISAC’s Research Archives, on cross-referencing all tablets in the collection with the most common databases in the field: the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative and the Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts, both of which are already integrating our materials. An additional integration with the newer electronic Babylonian Library is in progress.

NIPPUR TABLET PROJECT

The goal of the Nippur Tablet Project is to catalog, digitize, and, wherever necessary, publish the cuneiform tablets excavated in their archaeological context by ISAC from 1948 onward. Nippur was the cultural and religious center of ancient Babylonia for thousands of years and has a rich textual culture spanning most periods of Mesopotamian history. Currently, Díaz Herrera is the assistant curator coordinating the project with the support of Levy for photography. In 2024, Gordon joined for editing, cataloging, and additional research.

During the 2022–24 period, Díaz Herrera undertook cataloging the first three seasons of excavations (1948–52). Work on the first season, which yielded only a few tablets, is complete; notable finds include a building inscription of the Old Babylonian king Lipit-Eštar commemorating the building of a temple in Isin (A31354) and a fragment with a royal inscription of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (A31355; fig. 9).

Cataloging the third season, where most tablets come from Nippur’s Scribal Quarter, was of major importance for the exhibition; 156 tablets were cataloged, and more than 100 of them were published with photos in the exhibition catalog. It is little known to the scholarly community that scribal education in this neighborhood was not limited to the Old Babylonian period. Currently, the team is researching the tablets from the preceding Ur III period, as well as those of the later Middle Babylonian period, with the aim of publishing them in their archaeological context. Work on the tablets from the second season is still in process, with 64 of the 143 tablets completed.

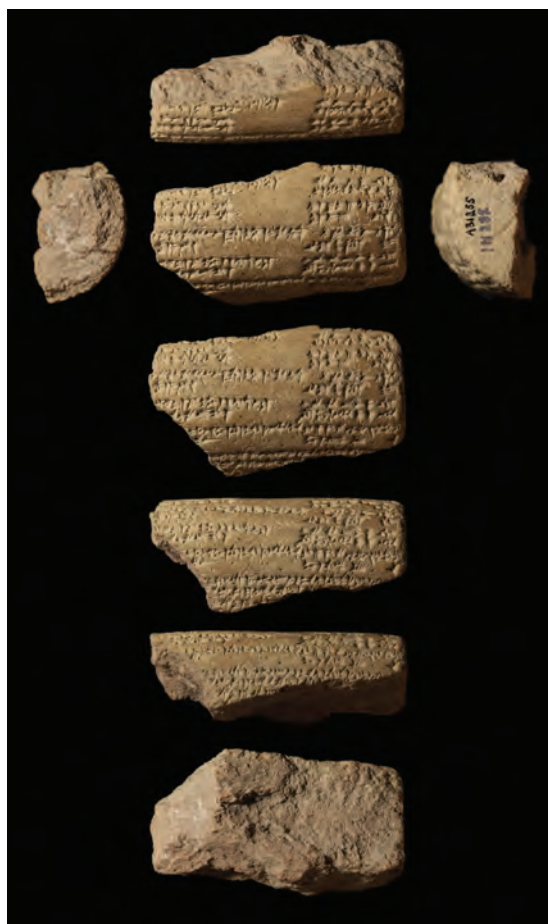


Figure 9. Fat-cross with all sides of the cylinder A31355. Photo by Danielle Levy.

While tablets from the Nippur excavations are divided among the Iraq Museum, Penn Museum, and ISAC, plaster casts of all excavated tablets are part of the ISAC collection. Cataloging and digitizing these casts is a further priority. While the material in the Penn Museum is well documented, the Tablet Collection is currently cooperating with the Cuneiform Artefacts of Iraq in Context project on digitizing the tablets in the Iraq Museum.

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Supporting research and educational efforts is a major priority of the Tablet Collection. Our assistant curators, Ouimet (since 2023) and Siegmund (until 2023), supported a total of forty-five researchers and their projects, as well as eight external visitors to the collections.

Faculty at ISAC used cuneiform tablets for their classes. Teachers and professors supported included Gordon, Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee, Matuszak, Ouimet, Paulus, Hervé Reculeau, Scalf, Mehrnoush Soroush, Vorderstrasse, and Winters. The ability to teach with cuneiform objects is widely acknowledged as one of the major draws of the program in Chicago, allowing students to experience and explore knowledge on real objects. The collection also welcomed students directly for practicing reading and line drawings.

We welcomed visitors studying various topics, from the size of cuneiform script (Chuck Bigelow, independent researcher) to tablets from ISAC's excavations in the Diyala (Clemens Reichel, Toronto), Nuzi (Faith Myrick, Johns Hopkins), and Khorsabad (Grant Frame, University of Pennsylvania) to Ur III sealings (Rudi Mayr, independent researcher), ritual tablets (Frank Simons, Trinity College Dublin), and lexical lists (Delnero, Johns Hopkins).

In addition, we provided high-resolution photographs (taken by Levy) and reflectance transformation images (by Ouimet) to scholars worldwide in support of their research. These scholars included Marine Béranger (Freie Universität Berlin), Carlos Gonçalves (Universidade de São Paulo), Christian Hess (Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique, France), Palmiro Notizia (University of Bologna), Walther Sallaberg (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich), Bernhard Schneider (University of Wrocław), and Niek Veldhuis (University of California, Berkeley).

As is undoubtedly apparent from this report, it has been an incredibly busy time for the Tablet Collection and the Nippur Tablet Project. Everything we have achieved was possible only through the support of our donors and the immense dedication and excellent work of our team members.



INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

OVERLEAF: Egyptian statue of Pashed.
Limestone, paint (with modern restoration).
Egypt, attributed to Deir el-Medina. New
Kingdom, Dynasty 19. ISACM E13700.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

During this academic year, **ROBERT BIGGS** published an article dealing with the Third Dynasty of Ur and also completed an article on Nippur in the mid-third millennium.

This year, **JOHN BRINKMAN**'s research concentrated primarily on legal practices and the activities of government officials in northern and northeastern Babylonia during the final century of the Kassite dynasty (1255–1155 BC). He has been studying and commenting on a series of unpublished documents from family archives excavated at Babylon by German archaeologists before World War I. He has also been preparing for publication two other texts: (1) a royal edict laying down rules for senior administrators of Ezida, the temple of the god Nabu; and (2) an inscription of a royal official on a large stone weight (ca. 60 pounds) found in central western Iran. The latter text takes on special significance because it offers the first contemporary evidence for the parentage of the reigning king, Shagarakti-Shuriash (1245–1233 BC).

FRED M. DONNER spent much of 2023–24 working slowly on editing projects, above all putting in order the papers from the conference “Industry and Industrialism in the Late Antique and Early Islamic Near East,” held just before the COVID-19 pandemic. He hopes to return to studying medieval Arabic papyrus documents when these tasks are completed. At the annual meeting of the International Qur’anic Studies Association in San Antonio in November, he delivered the presidential address, “A Historian’s View of Qur’anic Studies.” His article “Was Muhammad an Orphan?” appeared in a volume honoring the career of the French maritime historian Christophe Picard, and with Prof. Daniel Morgan of Santa Clara University he submitted to a journal for publication a jointly written article titled “The Development of the Concepts of *Dār al-Ḥarb* and *Dār al-Islām*,” dealing with the conceptualization of the world into two antagonistic realms, the “Domain of Islam” and “Domain of War,” in classical Islamic law.

FRANÇOIS GAUDARD completed his thirtieth year as a member of the ISAC scholarly community. Gaudard’s third article in his series dedicated to little-known aspects of the god Seth, in a Festschrift in honor of Robert Ritner, entered production with a scheduled publication date in the summer (see below). In this article dealing with Seth the Gleaming One, hitherto known only from a single attestation listed as  *Sth-tḥn* “der glänzende Seth” in Christian Leitz’s *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, Gaudard identified four new occurrences of this obscure deity from sources as varied as Pap. Berlin P. 8278, the Edfu Temple, the small Amun temple at Medinet Habu, and the mammisi of the Roman temple of Tutu at Kellis in Dakhleh Oasis. Among other things, this study shows that Seth the Gleaming One, in most cases depicted as a member of the Lesser Ennead, is a fighter, as indicated by his epithets “strong of arm, violent in the House of Fighting,” who, unlike the evil Seth, is perceived positively. Thus, the ancient

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

Egyptians apparently found a way to deal with Seth's ambiguous nature by splitting him into a good and an evil god.

Gaudard also continued to work on his various text edition projects, such as the publication of the ISAC Museum's Egyptian funerary shrouds. Some of the articles on which he has been working include:

- "Seth the Gleaming One." In *A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner Presented on the Occasion of His Sixty-Eighth Birthday*, edited by Foy D. Scalf and Brian P. Muhs, 73–85. Studies in Ancient Cultures 3. Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024.
- "Funerary Shrouds from Dendera in the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago. Part III: Shroud OIM E4787." To be published in a Festschrift in honor of a colleague.
- "Funerary Shrouds from Dendera in the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago. Part IV: Shroud OIM E4788 (= OIM E42046)." In preparation.
- "A Demotic Accounting Text from the Ptolemaic Period." In preparation.

MARGARET GEOGA joined the University of Chicago in July 2023 as assistant professor of Egyptology. Along with teaching and serving on several ISAC committees, her main focus this year was on writing a monograph exploring the transmission and reception of a popular ancient Egyptian poem, *The Teaching of Amenemhat*, unique for its depiction of the murder of a king. Geoga argues that through close examination of textual variation within the more than 250 surviving manuscript copies of this poem, and by resituating those manuscripts within their material and social contexts, it is possible to identify shifts in the poem's reception throughout its 1,000 years of circulation. These shifts allowed *Amenemhat's* diverse array of readers to interpret the poem so that it spoke to their particular contexts and concerns. This project was the basis of several publications and presentations in 2023–24: Geoga's article "Between Literature and History: Receptions of Poetry in Ancient Egypt" (*Middle Eastern Literatures* 25, nos. 2–3: 69–96) introduces *Amenemhat* and new approaches to studying ancient reception history to a broader literary-studies audience, while "New Kingdom Hieratic Documents in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston" (in *New Kingdom Hieratic Collections from around the World*, edited by Crossing Boundaries, 1:333–36 [Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2024]) examines an unpublished copy of *Amenemhat* within the context of the Museum of Fine Arts' excavation and collection practices. In addition, Geoga delivered four invited lectures and one conference paper on this project in 2023–24.

Geoga's other research activities explored ancient Egyptian literature and scribal culture. In the fall and winter, she edited papers for *Looking Beyond the Text: New Approaches to Scribal Culture and Practices in Ancient Egypt* (coedited with Aurore Motte and Judith Jurjens). The volume, which builds on a conference the editors organized in May 2023, was submitted to Brill in March 2024 (and accepted for publication in August). Geoga has also begun to explore a new project on the connections between poetry, scribal culture, and kingship—a topic she has developed in an invited lecture and a conference paper. This project is being undertaken in collaboration with a group of Egyptologists seeking to reevaluate approaches to kingship and is expected to lead to a workshop and multiple publications over the next few years.

This year was the first of Geoga's two-year junior fellowship with the Andrew W. Mellon Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography. As part of this fellowship, Geoga took two classes at the Rare Book School of the University of Virginia in 2023–24, one on the theory and practice of scholarly editing, and one on connected histories of texts that move across space and time.

McGUIRE GIBSON continues to work on excavation reports, some detailing investigations done forty years ago. In addition, this year he has been reworking the final two reports that he and Mark Altaweel translated and edited for Iraqi colleagues whose manuscripts were lost or damaged in the looting of the Iraq Museum in 2003. One of these final reports is by Hussein Ali Hamzi on a site called Muqdadiyah, located in the Diyala region on the key road from Baghdad to Iran. The site was, in ancient times, within the orbit of the city of Eshnunna, a large mound that was excavated extensively by the University of Chicago in the 1930s. A much larger report on Iraqi excavations at Eshnunna (modern Tell Asmar), which adds substantially to the information on the site, still needs a bit of final checking before the ISAC publications office can begin production on it. Gibson remains active on the boards of The Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TARII) and the American Institute for Yemeni Studies. Both organizations continue to provide fellowship and other assistance to scholars. Recently, TARII officially established a center in Baghdad, an accomplishment that has been many years in coming to fruition.

PETRA GOEDEGEBUURE's research this year was split between Luwian and Hittite. Her Luwian articles continued to move slowly through the publication process ("The One and Only Great King Hartapu and the Western Muška" for the journal *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, "Poldering" in 'Beyond-the-River': Revisiting the End of the Çineköy Inscription" for a Festschrift, and "The Luwian Word for 'city, town'" for the journal *Anatolian Studies*; for descriptions of these articles, see last year's annual report). Goedegebuure presented "The Phonetic Values of the Signs L.175 <la>, L.319 <la/i>, L.172 <lá/i> in Iron Age Luwian" on September 6, 2023, at the 12th International Congress of Hittitology in Istanbul and talked about the (in)famous Türkmen-Karahöyük inscription at a Breasted Salon in Chicago on December 13, 2023 ("Controversy and the Path to Academic Consensus: The Türkmenkarahöyük 1 Inscription") and in an Ancient Anatolia Day roundtable panel discussion in Oxford on June 17, 2024 ("Türkmen-Karahöyük and Its Implications").

Goedegebuure's Hittite research covered three areas of her very different interests: philology, linguistics, and religion. She submitted a purely philological article to a volume on ancient Near Eastern studies ("Don't marry a girl at a party!"); presented "Hittite Elliptic Genitives," a linguistic investigation, at a special panel on "New Linguistic Approaches to Texts in Ancient Indo-European Languages" at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society (AOS) in Chicago in March 2024; and proposed a new understanding of the Hittite dragon-slaying myth as a ritual of reversal, arguing that the myth is partly a comedy that functions in a carnival setting, in "The Illuyanka Myth: A Hittite Saturnalia?" at the East Coast Indo-European Conference at the University of Georgia in Athens on July 1, 2024.

Goedegebuure chaired the search committee for a postdoctoral researcher at the rank of instructor in Hittite, a two-year position, to assist with the teaching load of the Anatolian studies program after Theo van den Hout's retirement. ISAC was very fortunate to hire Timothy Leonard, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

In February 2024, Goedegebuure was appointed coeditor of the peer-reviewed *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* together with Seth Richardson (University of Chicago) and Paul Delnero (Johns Hopkins University). Other service to the field included peer-reviewing several articles and book manuscripts and organizing the ancient Near East program of the annual meeting of the AOS, held on March 22–25, 2024, in Chicago. This year was her last as section chair for the ancient Near East, having fulfilled this function for six years.

Goedegebuure's work for the Chicago Hittite Dictionary is described in the Project Reports section of this annual report.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

This academic year, **REBECCA HASSELBACH-ANDEE** was on research leave, which gave her the opportunity to work on various projects. The main project was an article on the development of feminine grammatical gender in Semitic. The article looks at how seemingly contradictory functions of the Semitic feminine marker might be derived from one another and how the morpheme became associated with feminine gender. A very similar development also happened in Indo-European, so the article attempts to find common pathways in the two language families. Now completed, the article is currently under review by colleagues working on Indo-European. Another project that ties in with Hasselbach-Andee's larger research project on third-millennium BCE Ebla is an article on language contact in the second-millennium BCE Levant. In particular, Hasselbach-Andee tries to find a linguistic model that can explain the features of local languages found in the Akkadian written in the Levant during this period. She argues that the best approach to analyzing these types of local features is understanding them as the product of second-language acquisition. That is, local scribes learned Akkadian as a second language, although not perfectly, and local influences are the result of imperfect learning rather than of direct or intense contact between Akkadian and local Levantine languages. This article has been submitted and accepted for publication in the journal *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*. The methodology and evidence worked out and collected in this article will provide the basis for the analysis of third-millennium BCE Eblaite. Lastly, Hasselbach-Andee continued working on an almost-finished, article-length project that investigates the alignment system of Neo-Aramaic (the Aramaic currently spoken in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq). The alignment of several Neo-Aramaic dialects is commonly described as "ergative." Hasselbach-Andee argues that Neo-Aramaic has no synchronic or diachronic traces of ergativity and that it is, instead, semantically aligned.

In addition to these projects, Hasselbach-Andee gave several lectures. She presented a first draft of the project on feminine gender at the International Conference on Historical Linguistics in Heidelberg (Germany) in September 2023, for which she had been invited to participate in a workshop on classifiers. A revised version of the talk was presented at the meeting of the American Oriental Society in Chicago in March 2024. Lastly, she was invited to give the Ullendorff Lecture in Semitic Philology at the University of Cambridge (United Kingdom) in May 2024.

Former Epigraphic Survey director **W. RAYMOND JOHNSON** has been making the most of retirement and total immersion in his Amarna *talatat* research. This past year, he was invited to be a visiting scholar at the Museo Egizio in Turin, where he spent three months in the fall and three months in the spring studying the Museo's Akhenaten *talatat* blocks and related objects from Karnak and Amarna in preparation for a comprehensive catalog of the material. On June 13, in the Museo Egizio's 2024 lecture series, he presented a lecture on his research at the museum titled "Windows into the Vanished World of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun: Amarna-Period *Talatat* Blocks in the Collection of the Museo Egizio" (<https://www.youtube.com/live/gZLoS-UxdBw>).

While in Turin, Johnson was able to travel to Great Britain for research in London and to Egypt for additional research in Alexandria and Cairo. He spent January and February in Cairo, Luxor, and Nubia with Jay Heidel and Margie Fisher doing more research. In November, Johnson joined the Memphis Hathor Temple Joint American-Egyptian Mission of the Houston Museum of Natural Science. In June, the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) invited him to join the SCA-sponsored Al-Ashmunein *Talatat* Project.

Also during this report year, Johnson saw the publication of "The Akhenaten and Kiya Duck-Throttling Scene" in *Amarna—City of the Sun God*, an exhibition catalog of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, 57–63 (Glyptoteket, 2023). He also published "An Enigmatic and Suggestive Amarna *Talatat* from Heropolis" in *Wonderful Things: Essays in Honor of C. Nicholas Reeves*, edited by Peter Lacovara, 75–81

(Lockwood, 2023). With Christian Bayer he coauthored “Attacking Amun: The Soleb Ram Case” for *Altering Images—Iconoclasm in Egypt*, edited by Vera E. Allen and Simon Connor (Aegyptiaca Leodiensia 14; Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2024). He also submitted “Helene J. Kantor and Fragmentary Wall-Relief Reconstruction: An Assessment of Certain Limestone *Talatat* Stored in the ‘Pennsylvania’ *Talatat* Magazine, Karnak” for publication in the forthcoming *Centennial Studies in Memory of Helene J. Kantor*, edited by Peter Lacovara. This spring also saw the long-awaited publication of the Epigraphic Survey’s *Medinet Habu X—The Eighteenth Dynasty Temple, Part 2: The Façade, Pillars, and Architrave Inscriptions of the Thutmosid Peripteros* (ISAC Publications 1; Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024)—the happy culmination of many years of collaborative work in Luxor.

KEA JOHNSTON is a postdoctoral scholar working jointly with the ISAC Museum and the Field Museum to develop new ways to use technology to reach scholars and museum visitors. Her PhD is in Egyptian art and archaeology, and as part of her own research she has been working on projects dealing with the craftsmanship of and use of text on ancient Egyptian coffins in the first millennium BCE.

First among these projects is a monograph based on her 2022 doctoral dissertation on coffin workshops at the Egyptian site of Akhmim. Akhmim was heavily looted in the 1880s, and its cemeteries have never been scientifically excavated. Everything from the site came from the antiquities market. Some pieces purchased by museums have owners with titles specific to Akhmim. Many of them seem to have been made by the same artists and scribes. Johnston has proposed that not only are these coffins from Akhmim, but their owners and the artists who painted them also had similar and distinctive ideas about how the coffin helped the deceased be successfully reborn. These ideas translated into art and text that make Akhmim coffins distinguishable from the better-studied Theban coffins. Johnston’s monograph will provide a new typology for coffins from Akhmim from the end of the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period.

In studying the texts on Akhmim coffins, it became apparent that retrograde text (where the characters face the end rather than the beginning of the text) was increasingly common on Akhmim coffins starting in the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. In a paper titled “Reading and Writing in Retrograde on Late Period Coffins from Akhmim,” submitted to the proceedings of Current Research in Egyptology for 2023, Johnston discusses the possible reasons for the use of retrograde text on coffins.

She is also working on a new version of the Book of the Dead in 3D website (<https://3dcoffins.berkeley.edu>), a project overseen by Rita Lucarelli at the University of California, Berkeley. The Book of the Dead in 3D aims to provide three-dimensional models of Egyptian coffins in smaller collections in the western United States that are annotated with translations and transliterations of the texts on the coffin. The new version of the site will focus on extensibility and a modern user interface so that users without programming knowledge can annotate coffins with translations. The goal is also to make it easier to translate all text into Arabic and to provide a more seamless experience for Arabic-speaking users.

Together with ISAC associate Austin “Chad” Hill and Jordanian Department of Antiquities representative Mohammad al-Zahrán, **MORAG KERSEL** carried out a field season of “Landscapes of the Dead,” a proposed research project whose primary objective is to assess (through drone photography and pedestrian survey) archaeological landscapes of the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3600–2000 BCE) at Bâb adh-Dhrâ‘ and Fifa, Jordan, to better understand landscape modification and change during the recent pandemic. Country-wide, COVID-19 mandates and procedures left sites vulnerable to illegal excavation. Drone data generated in the 2023 field season was compared with 2020–22 satellite data to provide a chronological assessment of

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

landscape modification. Ground truthing of the site during the drone flights confirmed new looting at the site of Fifa (figs. 1 and 2). From the systematic excavations carried out by R. Thomas Schaub and Walter Rast in 1989 and Mohammad Najjar in 2001, we know that each tomb has between 6 and 30 associated pots. Recent antiquities-market analysis establishes that each pot might sell for between \$30 and \$150 (on average) on the US market. We identified 119 new holes between 2020 and 2023, whose 714–3,570 vendible pots thus have the potential to realize a total financial gain from end-market sales in the United States in the range of \$21,420 to \$535,500. Using these findings, Kersel provided expert testimony before the US Department of State’s Cultural Property Advisory Committee in support of the extension of the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Jordan to protect against the illegal import and export of archaeological materials.



Figure 1. Digital elevation model of looting at Fifa.



Figure 2. Digital elevation model of looting at Fifa.



Figure 3. James Osborne at the now-empty Christopher Columbus statue plinth on the ASOR walking-tour workshop. A target of social-justice protests, the statue was removed and put in storage in 2020.

This year saw the publication of Kersel's guest-edited issue of the journal *Levant*. The special issue focused on archaeological ethics. With Matthew D. Howland, James F. Osborne, and Yorke M. Rowan, Kersel created a StoryMap based on a walking-tour workshop in Chicago at the November meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR): "(Re)visiting the Past in the Present: The Power of Place and the Malleability of Monuments" (fig. 3).

This year was **JANA MATUSZAK**'s first full academic year at the University of Chicago. Unlike the previous year, when she carried a full teaching load during her two quarters in residence, this year she could again devote time to research. Resulting publications on such diverse topics as pre-Sargonic mythology, women's mobility, and the legal framework of Sumerian morality tales will start appearing in the coming months. In the meantime, the following studies were published this year:

- "Notes on CUSAS 23, 205: Ama'ušumgal's death and return, with an excursus on ug₅ 'to kill someone (sg.)' and /u₃/- + imperfective in the 3rd millennium BCE" (coauthored with Pascal Attinger). *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires* 2024/1: 5–8.
- "What Did They Learn about Women?" In *Back to School in Babylonia*, edited by Susanne Paulus, 191–98. ISAC Museum Publications 1. Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2023.
- "Dialogue 1." In *Back to School in Babylonia*, edited by Susanne Paulus, 408–11. ISAC Museum Publications 1. Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2023.

In addition to pursuing her own projects, Matuszak did a substantial amount of editorial work. She continued to serve as coeditor of the journal *Altorientalische Forschungen* (De Gruyter) and is serving as guest editor for volume 86 of *Iraq* (Cambridge University Press), in which she and Prof. Mark Weeden (University College London) will publish the proceedings of the conference "Approaches to Cuneiform Literature," which they organized in London last spring. Moreover, Matuszak was recently invited to join the editorial board of the journal *Isin: For Archaeology, History and Ancient Languages*, published by the University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq.

Matuszak gave six papers at conferences in the United States (the annual meetings of the American Society of Overseas Research and the American Oriental Society), France ("Deviant Readings: Local and Communal Variation in the Sumerian Reading Tradition"), Italy ("The Female Voice in Philosophical Dialogues through the Ages"), and Iraq (the 5th International Scientific Conference of Mesopotamian Archaeology [online]), as well as four invited lectures, among them an ISAC members' lecture titled "Law and Morality in Sumerian Satirical Tales" (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Mm53Q4Wydo>).

Most importantly, perhaps, Matuszak received a Faculty Residential Fellowship at the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities for the academic year 2024–25. This fellowship will enable her to spend the 2024–25 academic year working on her second book project, provisionally titled *Sumerian Mock Hymns: Parodying Songs of Praise*.

AUGUSTA McMAHON's research focuses on ancient Mesopotamian urbanism, based in her current research project at Nippur in southern Iraq (see Nippur project report) and her previous excavations at Tell Brak in northeastern Syria. During the past year, two publications on northern Mesopotamian cities appeared: "Urban Heterogeneity in the Early Cities of Northern Mesopotamia" in the *Journal of Urban Archaeology* (open access: <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.JUA.5.135658>) and "Tell Brak and Northern

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

Mesopotamian Cities” in *The “City” across Time: Emergence, Developments, and Social, Economic, Political, Cultural and Health Impact*, edited by Marcella Frangipane, 161–78 (Atti dei Convegni Lincei 354; Rome: Bardi, 2023). Both publications derive from conference presentations in 2022 (in Copenhagen and Rome, respectively) and argue for the diversity of ancient cities and the contemporary but contrasting trajectories to urbanism in northern and southern Mesopotamia during the fourth millennium BCE.

Three additional publications returned to southern Mesopotamian cities: “Spacious or Empty? Making Courtyards in Mesopotamia,” in *Pomp, Circumstance, and the Performance of Politics: Acting Politically Correct in the Ancient World*, edited by Kathryn R. Morgan, 161–78 (ISAC Seminars 16; Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024) examines open spaces in late third-millennium BCE temples in terms of ritual activities’ visibility and audibility for audiences of varying sizes, arguing that these buildings deliberately captured extra space to generate a sense of awe in visitors and participants. Another conference paper that appeared in print this year celebrated a century since British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley commenced excavations at the important site of Ur. This study examined Woolley’s less well known excavations in the sixth- to fifth-millennium BCE levels at Ur and the nearby site of Tell al-Ubaid: “Tell al-Ubaid and the Ubaid Period at Ur,” in *Ur 1922–2022, Papers Marking the Centenary of Sir Leonard Woolley’s First Season of Excavations at Ur*, edited by J. Nicholas Postgate and David C. Thomas, 85–94 (London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2024). Finally, McMahon contributed “The Archaeology of Nippur’s House F and Its Neighborhood” to the ISAC Museum’s catalog for the *Back to School in Babylonia* special exhibition curated by Susanne Paulus (ISAC Museum Publications 1; Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2023).

In May, McMahon returned briefly to the United Kingdom to deliver “Third Places and Happiness: 15-Minute Cities in Ancient Mesopotamia” as the year’s Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture at Newnham College, University of Cambridge. She remains the coeditor of the journal *Iraq* and vice president of The Academic Research Institute in Iraq.

CAROL MEYER worked on two long-term publication projects this year. She finalized her chapter on gold-ore processing at Hosh el-Geruf at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile, in collaboration with James Harrell’s chapter on the local geology, for ISAC’s forthcoming publication of this site. Most of her time, however, was spent on the manuscript of *Islamic Glass from Aqaba*. Three chapters are now drafted: “Introduction and Background,” “Umayyad Glass,” and “Lamps,” including many maps, photographs, and figures (fig. 1). Meyer regrets the loss this year of Donald Whitcomb, a colleague, friend, and, as one of the principal excavators of Aqaba, someone who could have written the volume on the landscape, history, excavations, stratigraphy, and architecture of the site.

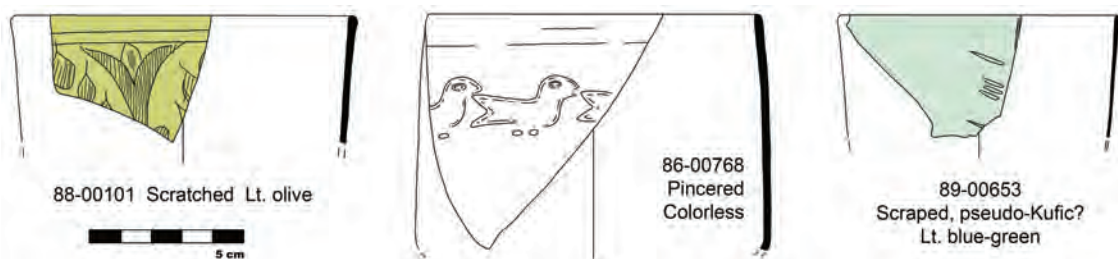


Figure 1. Abbasid bowls excavated at Aqaba. From chapter 4, on Abbasid glass, of *Islamic Glass from Aqaba* (forthcoming).

Nevertheless, the final typology of the Abbasid (ca. 750–969), Abbasid/Fatimid, and Fatimid (ca. 969–1125 and later) glass is in progress. The Abbasid material is particularly challenging. Umayyad glass is basically a continuation of Byzantine traditions, and Fatimid glass is well represented in the extensive though often shallow excavations at Aqaba, but good Abbasid loci are few and deeply buried, nor are there many good, dated parallels from other sites. That said, we can now begin to identify some distinctive forms and types of decoration. Gone are the stemmed Byzantine/Umayyad wine goblets, new are a series of deep bowls or beakers. Gone is the fine thread decoration, new are the elaborately scratched or engraved dishes and bowls. New are the entirely new pincer decorations made by squeezing the hot glass with patterned tongs, as well as a whole new kind of “scraped” decoration on vessels too thin to take deep cutting. We can even begin to track their distribution throughout the Near East and even into Spain. The Abbasid chapter, then, should be of especial value to excavators who need to identify and date their material.

Several of **BRIAN MUHS**’s publications appeared in 2023–24. They include “Patronage and Protection in Late Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Egypt,” in *Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the Third Lady Wallis Budge Symposium*, edited by Alexandre Loktionov, 196–204 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2023); “The Late Period: Introduction / The Egyptian Sources” and “Ptolemaic Egypt: The Egyptian Sources,” in *Slavery and Dependence in Ancient Egypt: Sources in Translation*, edited by Jane L. Rowlandson, Roger S. Bagnall, and Dorothy J. Thompson, 119–43 and 268–73 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024); “New Kingdom Hieratic Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute Museum (Chicago)” (coauthored with Foy D. Scaif), in *New Kingdom Hieratic Collections from Around the World*, edited by Crossing Boundaries, 1:337–51 (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2024); and a review of *The Origins of Money in the Iron Age Mediterranean World* by Elon D. Heymans, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 82, no. 2 (October 2023): 368–71.

Muhs completed and submitted for publication a sole-authored book manuscript, *Lending in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Demotic Loan-Account Papyri of Panas, Son of Espmetis*, as well as an article coauthored with Tasha Vorderstrasse for a Festschrift. He also presented three academic papers: “Late Pharaonic Wine from the Egyptian Oases” in November 2023 at the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research, held in Chicago; “Demotic Ostraca from the Kaufmann Collection” in April 2024 at the seventy-fifth annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, held in Pittsburgh; and “Institution and Individual in Ancient Egyptian Temple Economy” in May 2024 at the third Workshop on Temple Economy, held in Copenhagen.

KIERSTEN NEUMANN complemented her responsibilities as ISAC Museum curator with several pieces of original writing, invited talks, conference and committee participation, and collaborations related to her work on ancient West Asian material culture, museum practice, and cultural heritage preservation.

Included in *Dieux, rois et capitales dans le Proche-Orient ancien: Compte rendu de la LXV^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Paris, 8–12 juillet 2019)* (Peeters, 2023) is a chapter by Neumann titled “From Khorsabad to Chicago: (Re)telling the Story of the Assyrian Reliefs at the Oriental Institute.” This study traces the history of these reliefs from their excavation in 1929–30 to their present-day display, with both archival records and photographs figuring heavily into the discussion and represented by no fewer than fifteen figures. Neumann’s chapter “I Burn as Incense for You’: Censers in Assyria and Beyond” appeared in the edited volume *Holy Smoke: Censers across Cultures* (Hirmer, 2023), whose beautiful design (including its carbon-paper wrapping intended to evoke some of the sensorial aspects of this discrete object

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

type in antiquity) earned it recognition by Stiftung Buchkunst as one of the most beautiful German books of 2024. While focusing on first-millennium BCE Assyrian censers, Neumann draws on earlier and later Assyrian iterations and contemporaneous examples from neighboring regions, ultimately arguing—with the support of an abundance of figures—for a tripartite classification system for Assyrian censers: tall circular censers, short circular censers, and cubic censers (figs. 1 and 2).

Neumann also contributed articles to the spring/summer 2023 issue of ISAC's member magazine, *News & Notes*: “Artifacts Also Die: An Exhibition of Ruins and Renewal,” a spotlight on this special exhibition that featured the work of Iraqi-British artist and academic Hanaa Malallah and was curated by Neumann; and “The Lotus in West Asia and North Africa,” related to ISAC's new logo.

At the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) in Chicago in November 2023, Neumann presented “Not All Questions Have Answers: ISAC's Roman Sculpture Collection and the Opportunities It Presented as Exhibition.” She also continued to serve as ASOR program committee cochair, chair of the ASOR standing session “Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management,” and co-organizer of the Museum Professionals Working Group meeting. In January 2024, she was honored to join ASOR's board of trustees and concurrently its development committee. During the same month, Neumann presented a virtual talk, “Un(broken) Continuity: Counter-narratives of a Mesopotamian Past,” for the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, in connection with its exhibition *Through the Lens: Latif Al Ani's Visions of Ancient Iraq*, with thanks for the invitation to Roberta Casagrande-Kim, Bernard and Lisa Selz Director of Exhibitions and Gallery Curator. The following month she gave a Friends of ASOR webinar, “Contemporary Interventions: The Case for Contemporary



Figure 1. Stone censer from Nineveh. British Museum (BM 1930-5-8, 218). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

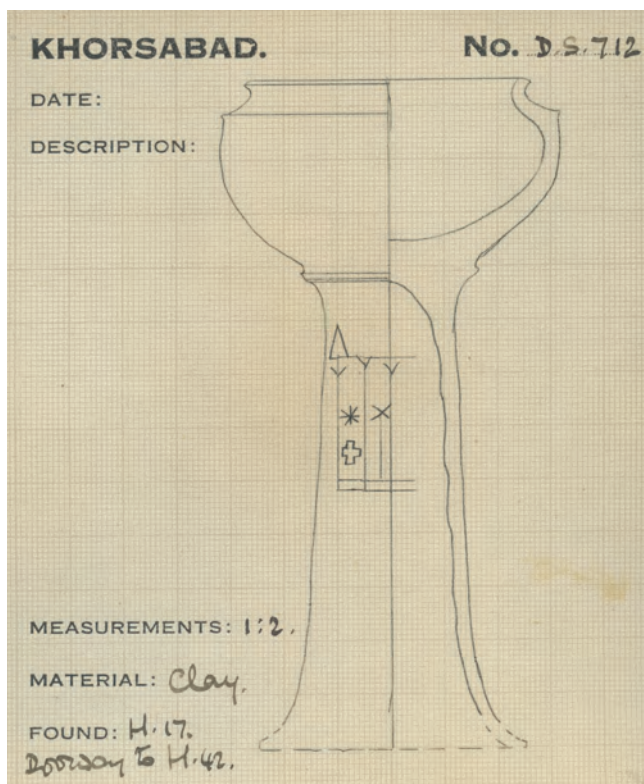


Figure 2. Ceramic censer from Dur-Šarrukin. Khorsabad Expedition catalog card DS 712, ISAC Museum Archives.

Art in Archaeological Museums.” In April 2024, Neumann presented “‘Sexless’ in the Middle East: The Reception and Legacy of Gertrude Bell” at the sixth Gender, Methodology, and the Near East workshop at the University of Malta. Finally, having become an American citizen in 2024, Neumann was able to accept an invitation to join the US Speaker Program, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State, and she continues to collaborate on international museum and art projects and exhibitions.

In winter 2024 Neumann taught a new undergraduate/graduate course, “Collecting the Ancient World: Museum Practice and Politics,” in the University of Chicago’s Department of Art History. She advised several students on their theses: as primary advisor for Xilin Liu (master’s thesis, “The Impact of University Legislation on Immunity from Seizure of Artworks: A Study of Museum-Loaned Artworks and Legal Dynamics”); as second reader for Natalie Rudin (master’s thesis, “Betwixt and Between: Cultic Personnel of Inana-Ištar”); and as coadvisor for Anna Seldon (bachelor’s thesis, “Dress to Transgress: Body, Dress, and Gender in the Material Culture of Lydia from the 7th to 5th Centuries BCE”). Seldon received both special honors from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the department’s Justin Palmer Prize for most outstanding undergraduate research project.

For **JAMES OSBORNE**, the 2023–24 academic year was highly rewarding in several respects. He was fortunate to have two writing projects appear in print, both of which had been in gestation for a long time. The first was an article in a volume by former ISAC postdoctoral fellow, and good friend and colleague, Kathryn Morgan. In 2019 Morgan organized a conference titled “Pomp, Circumstance, and the Performance of Politics,” with participants working on cross-cultural contexts around the world. Osborne was honored to participate in the conference—the first time he gave a paper in ISAC’s famous annual conference series. The subsequent edited volume of the same name, published in February 2024, promises to be a highly useful archaeological exploration of ancient politics, not just as presented by elites but as actually experienced by people in their daily lives. Osborne’s own paper addressed this topic in the Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex, an Iron Age culture of southeastern Anatolia, and questioned whether regular Iron Age people felt the effect of political activity in their lives at all. Osborne’s second publication, coauthored with Michele Massa (Bilkent University) and titled “Kızıldağ, Karadağ, and Sacred Peak Sites in Central Anatolia during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages,” appeared in the prestigious *American Journal of Archaeology* (128, no. 1 [January 2024]: 33–58). This article ties together their recent survey results from the spectacular Bronze–Iron Age mound of Türkmen-Karahöyük with the nearby stunning landscape monuments of Kızıldağ and Karadağ, arguing that Iron Age rulers who lived at the settlement mound incorporated those mountain peaks into an integrated sacred landscape, in emulation of their Late Bronze Age Hittite predecessors. The early 2024 publication was fortuitously timed given that, in spring 2024, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism formally notified them that their excavation permit for Türkmen-Karahöyük was granted and that, after years of planning, they would finally be able to start their excavation at the site in summer 2024. Finally, Osborne is highly grateful and honored to report that his 2021 monograph *The Syro-Anatolian City-States: An Iron Age Culture*, published by Oxford University Press, received the 2023 G. Ernest Wright Award of the American Society of Overseas Research for “most substantial book in the archaeology of the Near East and eastern Mediterranean.”

In 2023–24, **SUSANNE PAULUS** made scholarly contributions across various domains related to her expertise in Babylonian studies. In her multifaceted role as ISAC Tablet Collection curator and director of

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

the Nippur Tablet Project, she undertook significant activities culminating in the *Back to School in Babylonia* exhibition.

The exhibition was a pivotal and time-consuming project, with Paulus overseeing its curation with the team of the Tablet Collection and editing an accompanying catalog. This catalog featured two of her scholarly contributions: one reflecting on the “Aims of Babylonian Education,” a topic she also illuminated during a talk at the American Society of Overseas Research annual meeting in Chicago, a session co-organized with Jana Matuszak, and the second focused on “Practicing Law,” highlighting legal education.

Following the completion of exhibition-related tasks in the spring, Paulus used her leave to concentrate on her research into Kassite social, legal, and economic history. Her primary project during this period was preparing a monograph titled *Banking with Barley*, which explores how this essential staple influenced Babylonian economy and society. Additionally, she completed an extensive chapter on “Loans and Debts in Kassite Rural Babylonia,” set to be published in the *Gedenkschrift for Wilfred van Soldt*. Her ongoing research into Kassite archives from Babylon led to the presentation “A Broader View of the Kassite Archives of Babylon” at the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* in Leiden and a concise article titled “Hauskauf in Babylon im 13. Jahrhundert v. Chr.”

Beyond her primary research, Paulus engaged in two notable side projects. The first, in collaboration with Edward C. Williams, G. Sue, and others, resulted in an article on artificial intelligence and cuneiform sign recognition: “DeepScribe: Localization and Classification of Elamite Cuneiform Signs via Deep Learning.” The second project was a contribution to an upcoming exhibition in Budapest, *Mesopotamia: Kingdom of Gods and Demons*, for which she authored a piece titled “Babylonian Kudurrus: Gods, Their Symbols, and Divine Justice,” to be published in Hungarian and English.

HERVÉ RECULEAU published three new chapters/articles in 2023–24: “Old Babylonian Nippur in Its Environmental and Historical Settings,” in *Back to School in Babylonia*, edited by Susanne Paulus, 19–29 (ISAC Museum Publications 1; Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2023); “De l’influence des conditions météorologiques sur les communications en Haute Mésopotamie,” in *Entre les fleuves—III: On the Way in Upper Mesopotamia. Travels, Routes and Environment as a Basis for the Reconstruction of Historical Geography*, edited by Adelheid Otto and Nele Ziegler, 35–49 (Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 30; Gladbeck: Peter Werner, 2023); and “Entre mythe et histoire: écrire (sur) les origines en Mésopotamie ancienne,” in *La fabrique des sociétés*, edited by Catherine Courtet, Mireille Besson, Françoise Lavocat, and François Lecercle, 97–121 (Rencontres Recherches et Création 10; Paris: CNRS Editions, 2024).

In parallel, Reculeau started a project of publishing the Old Babylonian archival documents that are currently hosted in various North American museums, including ISAC’s own, as part of his long-standing collaboration with the French digital Assyriology project Archibab (<https://www.archibab.fr/>). The end goal is to make available, both in books and online, the hundreds of unpublished documents from the early second millennium BCE that were acquired from antiquities dealers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to regroup them into coherent archives via the Archibab database.

Reculeau also wrote documentary resources and gave a filmed interview for a forthcoming French television documentary on the Flood, to appear in the documentary series *Quand l’histoire fait dates* written, produced, and hosted by Patrick Boucheron (Collège de France), which will be broadcast in 2025 on the Franco-German television channel Arte. These materials will be expanded and presented to a general audience in a forthcoming book, expected to be published in 2025 in both French and English.

In addition to his usual teaching, mentoring, and academic service, Reculeau was instrumental in the spring 2024 campus visit of French Assyriologists Dominique Charpin (Collège de France) and Nele Ziegler (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique). Cosponsored by ISAC, the Collège de France, and

the France Chicago Center, this visit was initially planned to happen in 2020, the year Prof. Charpin was awarded an honorary degree from the University (which he received at the virtual convocation of 2021; see <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/university-chicago-award-six-honorary-degrees-2021-convocation>), but had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were delighted to have the two French scholars join our campus community, give lectures in Breasted Hall, and teach our students for two weeks.

SETH RICHARDSON spent much of his year completing nine new article manuscripts. These papers focused on difficult questions about Mesopotamian culture and literature. To give some examples, one new piece argues that Babylonian date-lists should be understood as literary-historical “annals” rather than mere chronographic tools. Another recontextualizes Sumerian proverbs as elements for structuring dialogue and debate rather than single, one-off bits of “wisdom.” A third (coauthored with Steven Garfinkle) questions the prevalence of violence in state and community contexts, advocating for an antiquity less steeped in blood than is often imagined. A fourth documents the high incidence of residential mobility in the Old Babylonian period, arguing against modern demographic models that assume fixed and traditional residence as the norm for the ancient world. In all, Richardson had eleven articles accepted and in press, including at the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, the Cambridge History of Rights series, and in various edited volumes and Festschriften.

Richardson had one essay, one article, and one note published during the past year. The essay was a response paper for Kathryn R. Morgan’s postdoctoral seminar proceedings volume *Pomp, Circumstance, and the Performance of Politics: Acting Politically Correct in the Ancient World*, published by ISAC in February 2024. The article, coauthored with Tracy Lemos and appearing in the *Cambridge World History of Genocide*, studied the topic of mass violence in Mesopotamia. The note, published in *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*, clarified that a sometimes-supposed etymological relationship between the Akkadian words *ardu* “slave” and *ārīttu* “downstream” or “brought down” is spurious; the words are unrelated, with revisionist consequences for understanding slaving as primarily an import market.

The balance of Richardson’s year was devoted to travel and workshops. He gave five different invited talks in Leiden, Würzburg, Munich, Prague, and Turin, and two more conference talks, one in Chicago at the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research and the other at Harvard University for the 50th annual meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians. A different sort of talk was his podcast interview for the *Journal of the History of International Law*’s “Voices of JHIL” hosted by the Max Planck Institute. He also gave a keynote address at the 69th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Helsinki in July 2024 on its theme “Politics, Peoples, and Politics in the Ancient Near East.”

Finally, Richardson took on the coeditorship of the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* together with Paul Delnero and Petra Goedegebuure, an adventure only at its beginning. He also continues in his role as managing editor for the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.

In addition to publications from the Kites in Context project, **YORKE ROWAN** and colleagues published an article from the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project titled “Not a Place for Respectable People, but the Ends of the Earth Converge There: Insights from Wisad Pools into the Nature and Context of Jordan’s Black Desert Neolithic” (*Levant* 56 [June 2024]: 1–32). Rowan coedited the volume *Shiqmim II: The Phase II Excavations at a Chalcolithic Settlement Center in the Northern Negev Desert, Israel (1987–1989, 1993)* with Thomas E. Levy and Marjorie M. Burton (BAR International Series 3134; Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2023). In that volume, he coauthored chapter 2, “The Settlement Center: Phase II Excavations in

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

the Shiqmim Village—Stratigraphy, Architecture, and Social Change.” He published “Canaanite Blades of the Chalcolithic” in *Through the Ages: Festschrift for Dieter Vieweger* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2023), as well as “Interpreting the Chalcolithic Steles of the Southern Levant” with David Ilan, in *“And in the length of days understanding” (Job 12:12): Essays on Archaeology in the Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond in Honor of Thomas E. Levy*, edited by Erez Ben-Yosef and Ian W. N. Jones, 191–204 (Cham: Springer, 2023).

With Marie-Laure Chambrade, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellow, Rowan presented “A 7th Millennium BCE Pioneer Front? Revisiting the Neolithic ‘Conquest’ of Near Eastern Arid Margins” at the colloquium “Frentes Pioneros: Conquista de territorios a través de los siglos,” in Veracruz Puerto, Mexico. In addition, he participated in “Visiting the Past in the Present: Monuments in Place,” an American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) workshop organized by ISAC research associate Morag M. Kersel that also included James Osborne. In Chicago, at ASOR’s annual meeting, Rowan, Kersel, and Austin “Chad” Hill presented “When the Margins Weren’t Marginal: Remote Sensing and Ground Truthing in the Black Desert, Jordan,” and in support of ASOR funding, Rowan presented a webinar, “The Neolithic Renaissance in the Black Desert of Jordan.” At the 2024 annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), also in Chicago, Rowan presented “Movement and Mobility of Late Neolithic Colonizers: Occupying the Black Desert of Jordan.” Finally, he presented “The Late Neolithic Presence in the Black Desert, Jordan” (with Hill, Kersel, Gary Rollefson, and Alex Wasse) at the 2024 annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in New Orleans.

In connection with the ISAC special exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, curated by Chambrade, Rowan presented a lecture titled “Beyond the Fertile Crescent: Late Prehistoric People of the Black Desert.” During the 2023–24 academic year, he was the AIA Kershaw speaker, delivering lectures to the Central Indiana Society at Butler University (Indianapolis), the University of Alberta (Edmonton), the Western Illinois Society at Monmouth College, Augustana College in Rock Island, the Central Illinois Society at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and the Vancouver AIA Society at the University of British Columbia. He also delivered the lectures “Prehistoric Infrastructure? Kites and Neolithic Villages” at the University of Copenhagen and “Landscape Archaeology and the Black Desert of Jordan” to the Chicago Archaeological Society.

FOY SCALF had a busy and productive 2023–24 as he continued to press ahead with publications, conferences, lectures, classes, and media requests, in addition to his responsibilities managing the Research Archives library and ISAC Integrated Database. His conference paper mentioned in last year’s annual report was published as “Assemblage Theory and Remix Culture in the Book of the Dead: A Case Study of Repeated Spells” in *Birmingham Egyptology Journal* 10 (2023–24): 1–21. He coauthored overviews of hieratic collections in Chicago and Los Angeles: “New Kingdom Hieratic Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute Museum (Chicago),” with Brian Muhs, and “Two New Kingdom Hieratic Manuscripts from the Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles,” with Sara Cole and Judith Barr, both published in *New Kingdom Hieratic Collections from around the World*, edited by Andrea Fanciulli et al., 1:337–61 (Aegyptiaca Leodiensia 13.1; Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2024). By the time this annual report appears, the Festschrift for Robert K. Ritner, coedited by Scalf with Brian Muhs, will have been published; titled *A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner Presented on the Occasion of His Sixty-Eighth Birthday* (Studies in Ancient Cultures 3; Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024), the Festschrift includes two contributions by Scalf: “Three Demotic Silver Accounts from the Oriental Institute Museum Collection,” coauthored with Jacqueline Jay, and “The Transmission of Magical Texts at Deir el-Medina: A Hieratic Copy of a Horus Cippi Text on

Ostrakon ISACM E17008,” coauthored with Muhs. Several additional articles by Scaif were submitted to or accepted for publication in the *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, and *Revue d'égyptologie*, to appear in the coming year.

Scaif gave four conference papers this year: “The Village Voice: Contexts for Ritual Recitations in Ancient Egypt from Households to Priesthoods” at the fifteenth Conference on Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World, Ada, Ohio, June 26, 2024; “Book of the Dead, Book of Magic: A New Hieratic Papyrus from the Third Intermediate Period” at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, Pittsburgh, April 20, 2024; “Intertextuality between Compilation and Application: A Demotic Spell for Compulsion and the So-Called Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies” at the annual meeting of the Society of Classical Studies, January 5, 2024; and “New Papyri from the Bab el Gasus: Identifying Provenience and Prosopography of HM 84123” at the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research, Chicago, November 17, 2023.

On November 4, 2023, he gave the keynote lecture for the opening symposium of the Book of the Dead exhibit at the J. Paul Getty Museum: “The Getty Book of the Dead.” The entire symposium can now be viewed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/0FoYR16C7yk>. On April 23, 2024, he gave a presentation at Chapin Library of Williams College, “All Around the World from London to MA: Repurposing the Oldest Books in Chapin Library at Williams College,” during a visit to conduct further research on the Egyptian manuscripts in the library’s collection.

Scaif gave six ISAC Community Scholars lectures, including “Revival Architecture and Its Ancient Derivations” for the Glencoe Public Library (June 20, 2024), the Egypt Exploration Organization of Southern California (May 11, 2024), and the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago (September 5, 2023); “*The Mummy* as Monster: Unraveling a Pop Culture Icon” for The Clare (October 24, 2023); “Printing God’s Words with the Devil’s Infernal Machine: The Hieroglyphic Printing Font in the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures” for The Clare (September 26, 2023); and “Building the Pyramids: New Evidence from the Earliest Papyri and Scans of Secret Corridors” for The Clare (July 18, 2023).

MEHRNOUSH SOROUSH spent her second year at ISAC on pedagogical development, research, and management of the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL) laboratory (see more details in the CAMEL annual report). She continued to revise the two-quarter course on ancient landscapes. The course attracts a diverse range of undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in learning geospatial skills for archaeological and environmental research. She was accepted into this year’s cohort of University of Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning pedagogy fellows to revise this course’s syllabus systematically while receiving intensive pedagogical mentorship and development.

Soroush submitted an article titled “Hydraulic Landscapes and the Imperial Paradigm in The West Asian Water History” for a handbook of rural and landscape archaeology in Western Asia to be published by Routledge. The article argues against the common view in Near Eastern studies that ancient states’ increasing involvement in the construction and management of irrigation canals led to the increasing extent and complexity of canal systems. In particular, it argues against the dominant narrative that the Sasanian Empire was more engaged in irrigation projects than preceding polities were. Soroush also submitted the proposal for her first book project, *The Long Life of Water: A History of the Shushtar Historic Hydraulic System*, planned for publication by the University of California at Los Angeles.

Soroush led two projects in her 2023 field research in Erbil, in the Kurdistan Regional Governorate of Iraq, under the umbrella of the Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey. The first project is a multi-institutional geophysical survey to test the application of seismic tomography—a way of 3D-scanning the earth’s inner structure through the recording of vibrations—to map deeply buried hydraulic remains, known as qanats.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

The aim of the second project, sponsored by the University of Chicago Women's Board, is the systematic analysis of understudied medieval-period pottery while creating career development opportunities for women who face cultural barriers that prevent them from participating in field research.

In 2023–24, **GIL STEIN** presented two conference papers and participated in one panel discussion deriving from his cultural heritage projects in Afghanistan and Central Asia:

- “University of Chicago Cultural Heritage Preservation Projects in Afghanistan, 2012–2021: Culture, Conflict, and Politics.” Paper presented at the conference “Politics and Archaeological Missions in Afghanistan: Japanese and International Research in Afghanistan and the Iranian Plateau,” University of Delaware, February 20–21, 2024.
- “The NMA-ISAC Hadda Project: Restoring Early Buddhist Stucco Art in the National Museum of Afghanistan” (with Alejandro Gallego Lopez). Paper presented at the international conference “Gandhāran Artists and Artisans: Representations of an Era of Religious Images,” University of Strasbourg (France), May 22–23, 2024.
- “Protecting Cultural Heritage under Siege.” Discussion panel at the workshop “Protecting International Cultural Heritage and Personnel under Siege: Problems and Prospects for US Organizations,” convened at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, DC, April 24–26, 2024.

As the principal investigator for two US State Department–sponsored cultural heritage grants, Stein continued his work in Uzbekistan on three ongoing projects. The first is a two-year grant from the US State Department's Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation for the project “Conservation and Restoration of the Langar Ota Timurid Mosque, Qashqadaryo Province, Uzbekistan.” As part of the second ongoing project, in 2023 Stein organized and implemented the second of two workshops for cultural heritage specialists from all five Central Asian republics in the multiyear training program grant in Uzbekistan called “CHED” (Cultural Heritage and Economic Development). Held in the southern city of Termez, the workshops focused on two key strategies for site preservation—their inscription as UNESCO World Heritage sites or their development as national archaeological parks. The CHED grant also supported the foundation of the Council of Central Asian National Museums, an international consortium of the National Museums of the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. At the consortium's second organizational meeting in Tashkent on December 14–15, 2023, the member museums signed the formal document establishing the council. It is hoped the national museum of Turkmenistan will join as the fifth member in the coming year.

In November 2023, Stein was awarded a third grant for work in Uzbekistan as the principal investigator on behalf of ISAC and the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation (C3HP): US State Department, US Embassy–Tashkent grant SUZ80023CA0081: “C5 Capstone Training Program for Central Asian Conservators” (CTPAC) (\$357,240). This two-year grant supports the completion of an earlier four-year C5 CTPAC grant by training conservators from all five Central Asian republics in eight essential areas of museum conservation science. The first of the two-week workshops will take place in October 2024 in Tashkent at the State Museum for the History of Uzbekistan.

In addition to this work, in September 2023 Stein continued his archaeological excavations at the prehistoric sixth- to fourth-millennium BCE site of Surezha in the Kurdistan region of northeastern Iraq. This excavation has been ongoing since 2013. He is also continuing his research and publication work on the manuscript of a forthcoming book, *Catalog of the Hadda Collections at the National Museum of Afghanistan*, coauthored with Alejandro Gallego Lopez and scheduled for completion in December 2024.

In tandem with his cultural heritage work, Stein published two preliminary reports in 2023–24:

- “Surezha Excavations” (with Michael T. Fisher and Nader Babakr). In *ISAC Annual Report 2022–2023*, edited by Theo van den Hout, 71–86 (Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2023).
- “Cultural Heritage Preservation Projects in Afghanistan and Central Asia.” In *ISAC Annual Report 2022–2023*, edited by Theo van den Hout, 17–25 (Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2023).

Finally, and most fun, in June 2024 Stein led a group of fifteen ISAC supporters on a seventeen-day tour of Central Asia (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) focused on the ancient and modern monuments, cities, and thriving traditional crafts of these countries along the Silk Road.

In September, **EMILY TEETER** submitted the manuscript for *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*, to ISAC publications, and after months of editorial work and checking, it was passed to the watchful eye of managing editor Andrew Baumann. With Ashley Arico, assistant curator of ancient art at the Art Institute of Chicago, Teeter finalized the text for the online catalog of the Art Institute’s Egyptian collection; after several stops and starts, it should appear in early 2025. She also continues as the editor of the *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*.

In June, Teeter received a five-year appointment as a research associate of the Negaunee Integrative Research Center at the Field Museum, Chicago, in connection with the development of its new galleries of African and Egyptian art, scheduled to open in 2028. She accepted a position as content consultant for those galleries.

With Brett McClain and Catherine Witt, Teeter served as cocurator of the ISAC special exhibition on the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey, which opened in September 2024, and she worked with Denise Browning in the Museum Shop on merchandise for the show.

In addition to reviewing papers for the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale*, *Journal of Egyptian History*, and *Journal of the Union of Arab Archaeologists*, Teeter attended the International Conference of Egyptologists in Leiden in August, the Comité international pour l’égyptologie (CIPEG) conference of the International Council of Museums in Luxor in November, and the annual American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) meeting in Pittsburgh in April. She continued to serve on the boards of the Society of Biblical Literature’s Writings of the Ancient World series and of CIPEG. After many years of service, she stepped down from ARCE’s finance committee, though she continues to be very involved with the local chapter of ARCE.

Teeter led the ISAC tour to Egypt in November and December 2023, and she enjoyed several weeks at Chicago House in Luxor finalizing the images for *Chicago on the Nile*.

In her last year as a faculty member of ISAC and the University of Chicago’s Departments of Classics and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, **SOFÍA TORALLAS TOVAR** is transitioning to emerita status. During the 2023–24 academic year she continued working on the project “Transmission of Magical Knowledge” together with her colleague in the Classics department, Christopher Faraone. In 2023, the volume of essays they edited, *The Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies: Libraries, Books and Individual Recipes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), received the Charles J. Goodwin Award of Merit from the Society for Classical Studies.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

The continued work on this corpus will result this year in the publication of two more volumes: *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies: Text and Translation, Volume 2*, which continues the work begun eight years ago on a new edition of the formularies; and another volume of essays, this time focusing on the Great Magic Codex of Paris, coordinated by Torallas Tovar and Faraone.

After stepping down as ISAC interim director on September 1, 2023, and then retiring in October, **THEO VAN DEN HOUT** returned to the Chicago Hittite Dictionary (see separate report) and his personal research. The latter concentrated on hunting in Anatolia in the time of the Hittite Kingdom (1650–1200 BCE) in preparation for the three-day workshop “L’iconographie cynégétique dans les mondes anciens,” held in Paris in April 2024. There, van den Hout gave a paper, “Warlords or Hunters? Hunting and War Imagery in Hittite Iconography,” to be published in the future proceedings. In Chicago, he spoke on the same general theme at the 234th Meeting of the American Oriental Society on March 23 and at a Breasted Salon at ISAC on May 15.

From June 23 to June 27, van den Hout was invited to teach in the Summer School on Anatolian Languages and Linguistics at Oxford University organized by Michele Bianconi. His lectures focused on Hittite literature and visual culture.

In addition, van den Hout published two articles in the past year: “Another Storm God ‘Jumping’ on His Vehicle? Remarks on the Sketch on KUB 20.76” in *Chariots in Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Joost Crouwel*, edited by Peter Raulwing, Stefan Burmeister, Gail Brownrigg, and Katheryn M. Linduff, 89–101 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2024), and “Hittite Foodways: The King as the Provider of His People” in *Eating and Drinking in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 67th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Turin, July 12–16, 2021*, edited by Stefano de Martino, Elena Devecchi, and Maurizio Viano, 25–42 (Münster: Zaphon, 2024). An online review of *Brill’s Companion to Bodyguards in the Ancient Mediterranean*, by Mark Hebblewhite and Conor Whately, appeared in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (<https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2024/2024.02.52/>).

TASHA VORDERSTRASSE, manager of ISAC’s continuing education program, facilitated and taught multiple adult education classes and provided University of Chicago and Laboratory School tours (see Public Programming—Adult Education in this annual report). She cotaught an adult education class with Alison Whyte, senior conservator at ISAC, titled “Color in Ancient Art.” The class was featured in the *University of Chicago Magazine* as the spring 2024 issue’s cover article, “Color Unearthed.” The article is available in print and online at <https://mag.uchicago.edu/university-news/color-unearthed>.

In November 2023, Vorderstrasse cochaired the “Archaeology of Islamic Society” session at the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) annual meeting in Chicago. She also gave several presentations in 2023–24: “Studying Interpretations of Nubia and Egypt: From Edmonia Lewis to Drusilla Dunjee Houston,” a virtual talk for the Annual Missouri Egyptological Symposium (#MOEgypt5) on Saturday, October 21, 2023; the workshop presentation “Defining Aksum: Northern Ethiopia (Tigray) and Eritrea in the 1st Millennium CE” and the talk “Connecting East Africa to the Mediterranean,” both for ASOR in November; and “Meroitic Bronze Bowls Depicting Cattle from Karanog” at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, held in Pittsburgh in April 2024. She also participated in the Early Career Scholars lunch at the ASOR annual meeting and is the University of Chicago representative for the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus.

Vorderstrasse conducted research at Princeton University, visiting there twice to work on the material from the Antioch excavations at the suburb of Daphne. At the ISAC Museum, she has been working on the Chinese and Ayla Aksum amphorae from the site of Aqaba and documenting the Mannheimer collection of some 5,000 coins, many of which remain unregistered.

Vorderstrasse submitted an article cowritten with Brian Muhs for a forthcoming Festschrift, and her article “The Art of Manuscript Illumination in Medieval Nubia” (in *Nubia Christiana II*, edited by Magdalena Łaptaś and Stefan Jakobielski, 81–118 [Warsaw: University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, 2020]) was made open access at https://wydawnictwo.uksw.edu.pl/img/cms/e-booki/Nubia%20ChristianaII_lekka.pdf.

KAREN L. WILSON is currently reviewing proofs of *Nippur VI: The Inanna Temple*, which was accepted for publication by ISAC Publications and will appear in the Nippur series edited by emeritus professor of Mesopotamian archaeology McGuire Gibson. The volume—coauthored by Wilson, Richard L. Zettler, Jean M. Evans, and Robert D. Biggs, with contributions by R. C. Haines, Donald P. Hansen, and Walther Sallaberger—will be the final publication of ISAC’s excavation of the Inanna Temple at the site of Nippur during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The ISAC publications office is currently preparing the volume(s) for publication.

Wilson also continued to serve as the Kish project coordinator and research associate at Chicago’s Field Museum, conducting research on the work of the Field Museum–Oxford University Joint Expedition to Kish in 1923–32.



RESEARCH SUPPORT

OVERLEAF: Aerial view of irrigated landscape in Fars, Iran, with the remains of many ancient weirs and canals. Image courtesy of the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes.

CENTER FOR ANCIENT MIDDLE EASTERN LANDSCAPES

MEHRNOUSH SOROUGH

In 2023–24—thanks to all the foundational work of the previous year—the administrative and intellectual potential of the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL) began to bloom. Except for me in my role as the director, CAMEL is a fully student-run lab. A cohort of undergraduate and graduate students collaborate on various projects, assist the community with various geographic information system (GIS) and landscape research needs, and, more importantly, mentor and support each other.

CAMEL's aim is to maintain and strengthen its reputation as a support center for the archaeological geospatial research community. We finished the CAMEL database search improvement project that had started the previous year and now allows spatial map-based searches of CAMEL's 10,000 digitized and geo-referenced historic maps and satellite images through the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Geoportal project (<https://geo.btaa.org/>). This initiative was carried out by Dominik Lukas and former staff assistant Murphy (Ruoyang) Tu, supported by Foy Scalf, the head of ISAC's Research Archives and its Integrated Database Project; Rose Pezzuti Dyer, a University of Chicago software developer; and Karen Majewicz, the BTAA Geoportal project manager. Christian Borgen and Ruijie Yao began a multiyear project of examining CAMEL's nonpublic records and adding additional records to CAMEL's digital database. Furthermore, in collaboration with Prof. James Osborne, Dominik Lukas and Jiayue Wang resumed work this year on CAMEL's Anatolian Atlas project (<https://isac.uchicago.edu/research/camel/anatolian-atlas>), aiming to update the database and redesign its public interface. CAMEL also officially started its paid digital cartography service, which assists researchers, authors, and producers with a variety of mapping, analysis, and digitization projects. Finally, Çağlayan Bal designed and developed an administrative system for official equipment requests and rentals, allowing CAMEL to act as the management center for the borrowing of ISAC field equipment by University of Chicago projects.

CAMEL tested a new program, the CAMEL Fellowship, aimed at focused GIS training, professional development, and public engagement. The program is open to all advanced PhD students and postgraduate scholars across campus and in the greater Chicago area. Anna Berlekamp was the 2023–24 CAMEL Fellow, with a project on movement analysis in south-central Anatolia that contributes to her PhD dissertation on territoriality in Middle Bronze Age Anatolia. As a part of this fellowship, she presented her work-in-progress at CAMEL's monthly brown-bag meetings and received feedback from the CAMEL community as well as from two specialists in movement analysis: Prof. Scott Branting, from the University of Central Florida, and Dr. Adrian Chase, postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago's Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation. CAMEL Fellows receive a modest monetary award for presenting their polished work at a relevant University of Chicago workshop and as a public talk at ISAC, as well as for writing up their results as a draft book or dissertation chapter or as a journal article.

In addition to providing research support, CAMEL strives to maintain its reputation for research innovation. One of the areas in which CAMEL has started to focus heavily is the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in archaeological mapping. While AI and deep learning have revolutionized many industries, they have not been systematically adopted in archaeology because of technical, infrastructural, and financial barriers. Despite many publications advocating the feasibility of this application of AI, archaeology and

cultural heritage management still rely heavily on the visual inspection and manual detection of remains on satellite and aerial imagery because teams in these fields typically lack the intricate skills required for integrating AI into their remote-sensing workflows.

To contribute to solving this problem, CAMEL launched a collaborative project, AI-Assisted Archaeological Remains Detection (A3RD), that aspires to create a breakthrough in the application of AI in everyday archaeological remote-sensing tasks. The project's present partners are the University of Chicago's Research and Computing Center (RCC); Rémi Cresson, a remote-sensing engineer from France's National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment; and Dr. Emad Khazraee, vice president of data science and AI at Xometry. Seed money from ISAC enabled us to implement the first phase of the project. Several workshops and hackathons were held at CAMEL to introduce student research assistants to machine-learning and deep-learning topics in preparation for a final hackathon between April 29 and May 6, 2024, which was taught and led by Cresson, supported by Khazraee and Parmanand Sinha of the RCC (figs. 1–3). The team succeeded in implementing a proof of concept for the project's long-term vision. We trained a simple AI model to detect Erbil Plain qanats (underground water extraction and transportation systems) on CORONA Mission 1039 images in a transparent, unbroken software workflow that integrated data annotation, model training, and model evaluation into the archaeological workflow using open-source data.

The success of these projects and of many other activities not described here is a testimony to the talent and dedication of the 2023–24 cohort of CAMEL research assistants, who go above and beyond my expectations every day. Three members of our staff continued to support CAMEL while taking their PhD candidacy exams and defending their proposals. I thank Dominik Lukas for his masterful supervision of the CAMEL lab's many projects; Çağlayan Bal for assisting Dominik in planning and programming, for her meticulous management of finances and equipment rentals, and for her laborious work in creating many



Figure 1. AI and machine-learning workshop taught by Emad Khazraee.



Figure 2. CAMEL's first deep-learning hackathon, led by Emad Khazraee (standing). Participants (left to right), front row: Parmanand Sinha (RCC staff), Yuwei Zhou, Jiayue Wang, Joseph Harris; back row: Dominik Lukas, Çağlayan Bal, Harrison Morin.

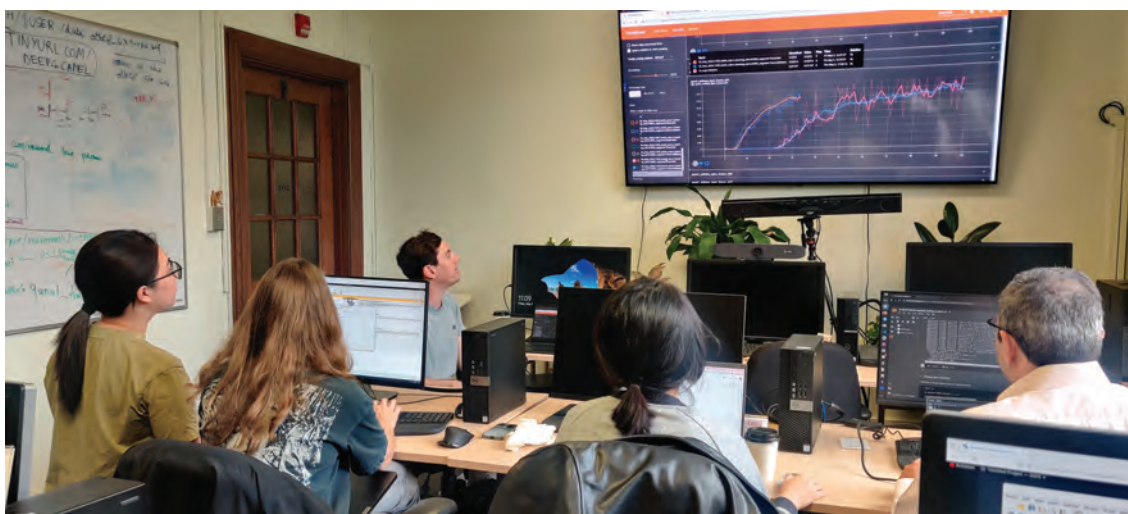


Figure 3. AI-assisted archaeological detection hackathon led and taught by Rémi Cresson. Participants (left to right): Yuwei Zhou, Breanna Maestas, Jiayue Wang, Emad Khazraee.

user manuals and other forms of documentation to make the lab's operation consistent and reliable; Yuwei Zhou for leading the AI detection project and for daring to be the first one to figure out many puzzling tasks; Harrison Morin for regularly lending his technical expertise to solve information technology (IT) and GIS problems and for cracking seemingly unsolvable research questions; Christian Borgen for bringing the remarkable patience and thoroughness of an Assyriologist to CAMEL database management tasks; Joseph Harris for his willingness to help with any project that needed support, as well as for designing all of CAMEL's visual and communication templates and content; Jiayue Wang for passionately bringing her computer science and GIS skills to several GIS research and database projects; and Breanna Maestas for her short but meaningful contribution to the AI initiative as a part of her Quad Undergraduate Research Scholars award.

As always, I would like to conclude by extending my gratitude to the generous individuals who helped us with their time, thoughts, and expertise. Special thanks go to ISAC's administration for funding and for providing immense administrative support—in particular, ISAC director Tim Harrison, Sheheryar Hasnain, Marianna Capeles, and Matt Perley; Josh Tulisiak for redesigning CAMEL's beautiful new logo; Vick Cruz and Logan Conley for logistics and IT support; and CAMEL's steering committee—James Osborne, Hervé Reculeau, and Yorke Rowan—for serving as a sounding board for CAMEL's strategic planning.

CAMEL's strength and vision are defined by its community. That community includes not only CAMEL's talented and dedicated staff but also all our supporters and collaborators within the University and internationally. If you would like to keep abreast of important CAMEL news, please email your contact information to us at camel@uchicago.edu to be added to our mailing list. If you are interested in receiving support for your project, collaborating with us, or funding one of our many projects, please write to me at mehrnoush@uchicago.edu. We would love for our community to grow, as our connections make us stronger.

JOURNAL OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

SETH RICHARDSON

The *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* remains one of the most widely read and distributed academic journals in the fields of ancient and medieval Near Eastern studies. With more than 750 paid institutional subscriptions and free or steeply discounted access available to more than 11,000 institutions in 125 countries, *JNES* continues to command a lively and diverse audience. The fifty most-accessed articles in calendar year 2023 gave us 46,752 readers worldwide through the University of Chicago Press and JSTOR portals alone.

From a publishing perspective, 2023–24 was another strong year for the journal. Our October and April issues (*JNES* 82/2 and 83/1, respectively) ran to more than 400 pages of articles, book reviews, review essays, and forum pieces. Our authors tackled everything from viticulture to phonology, from amulets to paleo-Arabic, from sectarian scholarship to seditious Seljuks. Contributions focused on the issue of reported speech and rhyme in the Qur'an; a forgotten fortress on the Euphrates and the rediscovered inscription of a Companion of Muhammad; historical problems in inscriptions of Samsuiluna of Babylon and Xerxes of Persia; Egyptian strategies for representing time and emotion; and forms of gambling with knucklebones. Our forum piece focused on evidence for the early orthographic and linguistic history of the ancient concept of what a “word” was; a review essay gave an overview of the study of economic history in Mesopotamia. Twenty-two book reviews rounded out these issues, assessing new scholarly work on everything from Hittite geography to medieval *nawāṣib* heresy to Early Dynastic ceramics. Page after page, the rich world of the ancient and medieval Near East rolled out in unexpected and wonderful ways.

The pace and volume of the journal's business is best told through the numbers. Seventy-one article manuscripts were received during the year July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. Thirty-five manuscripts underwent a full review process: twenty-seven with one round of review, seven through two rounds, and one through three—altogether, forty-four rounds of review. These articles came from authors in Austria, Belgium, Egypt, Germany (4), Hungary, Iran (2), Ireland (2), Israel (5), the Netherlands (2), Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United States (10).

Eighty reviewers engaged in these rounds of review (many of them twice), with an average of 2.25 reviewers per manuscript. Authors received feedback from as many as four colleagues through a double-blind peer-review process. The profile of reviewers completing written reviews was every bit as international as the authors: reviewers were based in Bulgaria, Canada (4), France (2), Germany (8), Hungary, Ireland, Israel (5), Italy (4), Jordan, Mauritius, the Netherlands (3), Russia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (12) in addition to thirty-five reviews completed by scholars based in the United States. We are immensely grateful, as always, for the (nearly) thankless work our reviewers do to maintain the high quality of our published articles.

The status of the seventy-one articles at year's end reflected our continuing effort to publish only the best scholarship available:

Decisions	9	Accept (12.6%)
	2	Revise minor
	2	Revise major
	12	Reject with review
	32	Reject without review

Other	1	Withdrawn
	2	New submissions
	11	Currently under review

Our process also continued to be as prompt as it was thorough: the average time-to-decision from the date of submission for this past year was sixty-two days—nine weeks from submission to decision. Articles are published within one year of their acceptance, making *JNES* one of the most efficient journals in the field. As selective as we are in what we publish, we consider our service to all authors to be the same: to procure the most helpful advice for revision toward the best possible work.

As always, we thank finally the departmental colleagues who helped with the all-important work of reviewing initial submissions: Helga Anetshofer, Simeon Chavel, Fred Donner, Ahmed El Shamsy, Adam Flowers, Petra Goedegebuure, Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee, Hakan Karateke, Jana Matuszak, Augusta McMahon, Brian Muhs, Cecilia Palombo, Martha Roth, Foy Scalf, Mehrnoush Soroush, Jeffrey Stackert, Sofía Torallas Tovar, and Theo van den Hout. James Osborne continued as editor, Seth Richardson as managing editor, Fred Donner as book review editor (modern), Mehrnoush Soroush as book review editor (ancient), and the indefatigable Jane Gordon as editorial assistant.

PUBLICATIONS

ANDREW BAUMANN

Four monographs were published during the 2023–24 report year (fig. 1):

- *Back to School in Babylonia*. Edited by Susanne Paulus with with Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon, Madeline Ouimet, Colton G. Siegmund, and Ryan D. Winters. ISAC Museum Publications 1. Published October 2023.
- *Pomp, Circumstance, and the Performance of Politics: Acting Politically Correct in the Ancient World*. Edited by Kathryn R. Morgan. ISAC Seminars 16. Published February 2024.
- *An Armenian Futūḥ Narrative: Lewond's Eighth-Century History of the Caliphate*. By Sergio La Porta and Alison M. Vacca. Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East (LAMINE) 4. Published March 2024.
- *Medinet Habu X: The Eighteenth Dynasty Temple, Part II: The Façade, Pillars, and Architrave Inscriptions of the Thutmosid Peripteros*. By the Epigraphic Survey. ISAC Publications 1. Published June 2024.

Back to School in Babylonia—the catalog accompanying the special exhibition of the same name that opened in September 2023—was the first title to employ a newly designed layout for ISAC Museum monographs. Related to this exhibition and to the following special exhibition that opened in April 2024, *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, the ISAC publications office also facilitated the production and printing of ISAC's first two children's activity books:

- *The Adventures of Inanaka and Tuni: Learning to Write in Ancient Babylonia*. By Jane Gordon and Susanne Paulus (text), Madeline Ouimet (illustrations), and Sarah M. Ware (layout and design). ISAC Miscellaneous Publications. Published September 2023.
- *Fly with Dana over the Past*. By Marie-Laure Chambrade and Kiersten Neumann (text) and Jérôme Agostini (illustrations), with the assistance of Marc Maillot and Thomas Boudier. ISAC Miscellaneous Publications. Published April 2024.

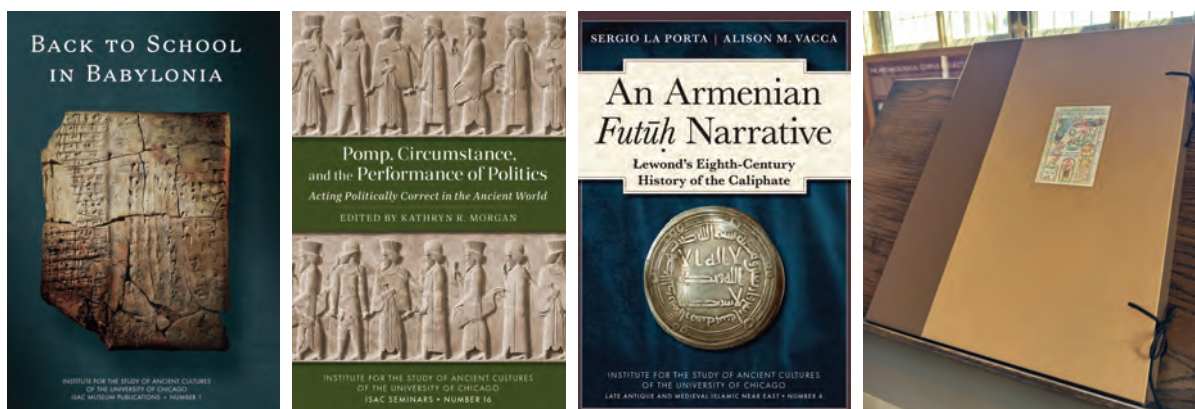


Figure 1. The four monographs published this year.

Upon its publication, one of the LAMINE series editors described *An Armenian Futūḥ Narrative* as “creating a new gold standard for editions/translations/commentary in the field.” It presents a diplomatic edition in Armenian and a new English translation of Lewond’s chronicle of eighth-century caliphal rule in Armenia. Detailed reading notes, in small type in the margin alongside the translation, aid readers who may be unfamiliar with the figures, places, and concepts mentioned; footnotes cite Armenian textual variants and parallels in biblical and other texts; extensive commentary provides detailed analysis; and three indexes offer a detailed and useful overview of the book’s contents.

The manufacturing of *Medinet Habu X* was a months-long, collaborative effort involving Epigraphic Survey staff, the ISAC publications office, and the team at M&G Graphics, the Chicago printer chosen to produce the volume. Materials were selected to match as closely as possible those used for the previous Epigraphic Survey volume (*Medinet Habu IX*, published in 2009), including the folio case’s cloth, buckram, embossing, and gold-foil stamping and the two types of paper used for the black-and-white and color plates inside. Of the volume’s 111 plates and plans, 87 are so large that they needed to be folded to fit inside the folio, many of them twice; the five largest plates, at 39 inches wide, necessitated that the Mohawk paper mill in upstate New York (which manufactures the Mohawk Superfine White paper used in the 2009 volume) provide extra-large rolls specifically for this publication. Most of the plates were printed digitally on M&G’s Fuji J-Press, allowing inspection of proofs in the ISAC publications office and by Epigraphic Survey photographer Sue Lezon at home. But the five largest plates were too big for the Fuji equipment and had to be printed offset, a process supervised during one full day at the M&G plant in February 2024. The outcome was a beautifully produced folio volume that matches its predecessors in quality—and an achievement that would not have been possible without M&G’s advice and tremendous patience as we made numerous adjustments to the contrast and color balance of the volume’s many photographs.

Also this year, the publications office produced the 2022–23 annual report and three issues (including two double issues) of the ISAC member magazine, *News & Notes*; copyedited and proofread the wall and case texts for the year’s two special exhibitions, as well as new case labels for the Robert F. Picken Family Nubian Gallery; and made progress on the production of several titles that will be published in 2024–25.

Four book manuscripts were submitted during this report year for possible publication by ISAC. Two of them were accepted, along with three others submitted during the previous report year; the other two submissions received this year were still being peer-reviewed at the close of the report period.

As of June 30, 2024, the following fifteen manuscripts, which include the five manuscripts accepted this year, constituted the backlog of monographs in production. Two of them (*A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness* and *Chicago on the Nile*) were sent to the printer in June, toward the end of the report year, and were slated to publish during the summer; most of the others had been copyedited or were being edited, and a couple of them had been typeset and were being proofread.

- *Nippur VI: The Inanna Temple*. By Richard L. Zettler and Karen L. Wilson, with contributions by Robert D. Biggs, Jean M. Evans, McGuire Gibson, Richard C. Haines, Donald P. Hansen, James Knudstad, Walther Sallaberger, and John C. Sanders. ISAC Publications.
- *Center and Periphery: The Archaeology of Politics at Ešnunna from the Ur III Period to the Old Babylonian Period*. By Clemens Reichel. Studies in Ancient Cultures.
- *Excavations at Serra East, Part 8*. By Bruce Williams et al. Nubian Expedition.
- *Excavations at Serra East, Part 9*. By Bruce Williams et al. Nubian Expedition.
- *Lowland Susiana in the Fourth Millennium*. By Abbas Alizadeh. ISAC Publications.
- *Iraqi Excavations in the Diyala Region: New Excavations at Tell Asmar (Ancient Ešnunna), 2001–2002, and Excavations at Tell Muqdadiya, 1980*. By Hussein Ali Hamza and Salah

Rmayidh, with contributions by Daniel Mahoney, Alexandra Witsel, and Hervé Reculeau. Translated and initially edited by Mark Altaaweel. Finally edited, with additional notes, by McGuire Gibson. ISAC Miscellaneous Publications.

- *Insights into Islamic Archaeology and Material Culture: A Conference in Jerusalem*. Edited by Katia Cytryn, Kristoffer Damgaard, and Donald Whitcomb. Studies in Ancient Cultures.
- *Ancient Iran in the ISAC Museum: From the Prehistoric to the Achaemenid Period*. By Abbas Alizadeh. ISAC Museum Publications.
- *A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner*. Edited by Foy D. Scalf and Brian P. Muhs. Studies in Ancient Cultures.
- *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 CE by Strategius of Mar Saba*. By Sean Anthony and Stephen Shoemaker. Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East.
- *Outward Appearance versus Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World*. Edited by Aleksandra Hallmann. ISAC Seminars.
- *Hattannaš: A Festschrift in Honor of Theo van den Hout on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Edited by Petra Goedegebuure and Joost Hazenbos, with the assistance of Emily Smith. Studies in Ancient Cultures.
- *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*. By Emily Teeter. ISAC Museum Publications.
- *Unpublished Bo-Fragments in Transliteration III (Bo 6087–Bo 6434)*. By Oğuz Soysal. Chicago Hittite Dictionary Supplements.
- *Unpublished Bo-Fragments in Transliteration IV (Bo 2689–Bo 5660)*. By Oğuz Soysal. Chicago Hittite Dictionary Supplements.

I gratefully acknowledge the production assistance this year of Connie Gundry Tappy and James Fraleigh (copyediting and proofreading), Kristin Goble and Susanne Wilhelm (typesetting), Josh Tulisiak and James Slate (cover designs), ISAC assistant editor Becca Cain (photo editing and *News & Notes* layout), and former ISAC editor and current independent contractor Leslie Schramer (*Nippur VI* project management).

ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

The ISAC publications office continued to make PDFs of new publications freely available online as soon as the print editions were released. To access the complete catalog of ISAC titles, which includes annual reports and *News & Notes*, please visit isac.uchicago.edu/research/catalog-publications.

SALES

Since January 1, 2019, ISD has been the exclusive distributor of ISAC publications. Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, ISD sold 1,254 print copies of ISAC publications—913 through its US warehouse and 341 through its agent in the United Kingdom—as well as 59 e-book copies to customers in the United States. In addition, select titles are sold in the ISAC Museum Shop.

Generally, newly published titles and special exhibition catalogs (both current and past) sell the most copies; table 1 shows this year's ten top sellers. ISAC's first-ever children's activity book, *The Adventures of Inanaka and Tuni*, was this year's best seller with 293 copies sold. In second place with 192 copies sold was *Back to School in Babylonia*, the catalog accompanying the ISAC special exhibition of the same name that ran from September 2023 to April 2024. *Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*, edited by

RESEARCH SUPPORT | PUBLICATIONS

Table 1. Best-selling ISAC publications—July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

Title	Author(s)	Year published	Print copies sold	E-book copies sold	Total copies sold
<i>The Adventures of Inanaka and Tuni</i> (children's activity book)	Jane Gordon, Susanne Paulus, Madeline Ouimet, and Sarah Ware	2023	293	N/A	293
<i>Back to School in Babylonia</i> (special exhibition catalog)	Susanne Paulus with Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon, Madeline Ouimet, Colton Siegmund, and Ryan Winters	2023	186	6	192
<i>Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt</i> (special exhibition catalog)	Foy Scalf (ed.)	2017	175	N/A	175
<i>Highlights of the Collections of the Oriental Institute Museum</i>	Jean Evans, Jack Green, and Emily Teeter	2017	135	N/A	135
<i>The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice</i>	Robert K. Ritner	1993	107	N/A	107
<i>Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis</i>	Betsy M. Bryan and Peter F. Dorman (eds.)	2023	68	8	76
<i>Embroidering Identities: A Century of Palestinian Clothing</i> (special exhibition catalog)	Iman Saca	2006	65	N/A	65
<i>Seen Not Heard: Composition, Iconicity, and the Classifier Systems of Logosyllabic Scripts</i>	Ilona Zsolnay (ed.)	2023	40	10	50
<i>Where Kingship Descended from Heaven: Studies on Ancient Kish</i>	Karen L. Wilson and Deborah Bekken, eds.	2023	35	9	44
<i>The Second Cataract Fortress of Dorginarti</i>	Lisa A. Heidorn	2023	33	5	38

Foy Scalf, sold 175 copies; published in 2017, this special exhibition catalog enjoyed fresh attention this year because of a widely publicized exhibition on the Book of the Dead at the Getty Villa in Los Angeles. A gallery guide published in 2017, *Highlights of the Collections of the Oriental Institute Museum*, continued to sell well through the ISAC Museum Shop. In fifth place, Robert K. Ritner's *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*—a perennial top seller first published more than thirty years ago and reprinted many times since then—remained popular.

For ordering information, please contact:

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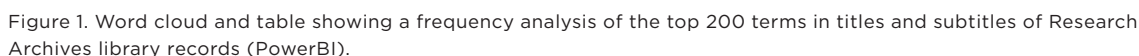
Email: orders@isdistribution.com

Website: www.isdistribution.com

Booksellers should contact ISD for all information on discounts. ISAC members receive a 20 percent discount on all titles; to receive the member discount, e-mail isac-membership@uchicago.edu and ask for the discount code.

FOY SCALF

In the coming years, we will pursue a host of data-mining methodologies to determine what conclusions might be drawn from the data about our collections. As a first foray, we have begun a comparative analysis of word frequencies found in the Research Archives library catalog (fig. 1). For this analysis, we can export the data from our EMu database and pass it through a Python program to tokenize the words, remove common stop words, and count the word frequencies. The resulting data can be visualized through tools such as PowerBI to create an interactive word cloud and a table that allow users to explore further what these frequencies imply about how information on ancient West Asia and North Africa is presented in our



scholarly research. Initial results have proven interesting (the data dashboard may be viewed at <https://isac.uchicago.edu/research/IDB/data-dashboard>), and our team will be working to pursue these and similar lines of research within our collections of Digital Humanities big data. Results and collaborations will be detailed in future reports, conference papers, and publications.

PATRONS AND USAGE

In 2023–24, the library ID card reader recorded 36,148 transactions—4,000 transactions more than last year; 2,665 unique patrons visited the library in person and swiped an ID card to enter. The vast majority of these patrons are students at the University of Chicago; the faculty, students, and staff of ISAC, along with visiting researchers, remain the most engaged users of the library and its collections. Over the course of the academic year, 250 volumes (27 journal volumes, 68 monographs, and 155 series volumes) circulated to offices throughout the ISAC building for the research needs of students, faculty, staff, and visiting scholars. These publications ranged in date from 1897 to 2024, reflecting the importance of access to reference data both new and old, although 106 of the volumes were published after 2010. The most common publishers represented among checked-out books include Peeters, Brill, Harrassowitz, and Oxford University Press, while the book most frequently checked out was *Judicial Decisions in the Ancient Near East*, by Sophie Démare-Lafon and Daniel E. Fleming (Writings from the Ancient World 43) (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023).

This year we had the pleasure of hosting many visiting researchers, including Sherif AbdelMoniem, Laura Alvarez, Traci Andrews, Ashley Arico, Judy Baxter, Gabrielle Choimet, Cameron Cross, Peter Dorman, Judson Faulconer, Bryan Ghalioungui, Francissca Kang, Bryan Kraemer, Megaera Lorenz, Maha Mansour, Eric McCann, Adam Miglio, Elaine Page and Jennifer Paliatka along with their Chicago's Great Libraries class, Cecilia Palombo and her Islamicate history class, Amber Mear, John Nielsen, Vincent Oeters, Ashok Rai, Camilla Raymond, Natalie Rudin, Stephen Smith, Dean Snyder, Ian Stevens, Oya Topcuoglu, and Shigeo Yamada. Additionally, the library provides space for researchers using materials from the Museum Archives, arranged in collaboration with archivist Anne Flannery. The Research Archives library offered orientation tours to new and prospective students, as well as workshops on Zotero and the ISAC collections. We participated in the Campus Digital Collections meet-up at ISAC in the fall. The library also hosted several filming requests from the University of Chicago president's and provost's offices, as well as from UChicago Creative and other media companies.

ACQUISITIONS

The Research Archives library realized an extremely productive acquisition effort in 2023–24 (table 1). A total of 1,315 volumes were acquired in 366 accession lots—on average, more than one accession lot every day of the year; 270 accession lots arrived through purchases, 72 through gifts, and 24 through exchanges of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* with other publishers and institutions. For the 270 accession-lot purchases, the Research Archives library expended more than \$55,000, plus shipping costs of more than \$5,200, or an average of approximately \$5,000 per month in direct acquisitions costs. The steadfast support of the Research Archive library by ISAC director Tim Harrison and director of finance and administration Sheheryar Hasnain has allowed us to continue this expansion and growth. Sales of duplicate books through the library and the ISAC Museum Shop with the help of Denise Browning supplemented the budget by more than \$2,000.

Table 1. Research Archives acquisitions, July 2023–June 2024.

Month	Number of accession lots	Volumes		
		Monographs, series, pamphlets	Journals	Total
July 2023	37	93	15	108
August 2023	43	59	55	114
September 2023	14	66	170	236
October 2023	35	139	52	191
November 2023	37	64	50	114
December 2023	28	79	39	118
January 2024	46	119	30	149
February 2024	28	38	25	63
March 2024	37	78	41	119
April 2024	15	64	28	92
May 2024	19	66	40	106
June 2024	27	84	13	97
Totals	366	824	491	1,315

ONLINE CATALOG

Research Archives staff added approximately 10,000 new records to the library’s catalog in the EMu collection management system this year (table 2; numbers are rounded up to the nearest hundred). Thanks and gratitude for entering this data into the institutional digital repository through Axiell’s EMu software are due almost entirely to the staff and volunteers of the Research Archives library (see Acknowledgments below). Records are available online for searching, sorting, and downloading in a variety of formats (<https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu>).

By the end of next year, the Research Archives library will reach 75,000 total volumes (table 3), nearly double the collection of 40,000 volumes that were transferred to the University of Chicago’s Regenstein

Table 2. Catalog records added.

Year	No. of catalog records added	Total no. of catalog records
2023–24	10,000	600,000
2022–23	12,500	590,000
2021–22	7,500	577,500
2020–21	5,000	570,000
2019–20	10,000	565,000
2018–19	10,000	555,000

Table 3. Research Archives analytics.

Type	Total no. of records
Total volumes	73,484
Monographs	18,108
Monograph sections	78,352
Series	2,086
Series volumes	23,670
Series volume sections	109,494
Journals	1,076
Journal volumes	30,622
Journal volume articles	335,133
Theses	1,084
Pamphlets	3,253
Reviews	125,124
Festschriften (volumes)	813
Digital invoice records	3,064
Digital cover-art records	20,296
Adobe PDFs	42,583

Library during consolidation in 1970. We have also now exceeded 600,000 records in our library catalog, adding 50 percent to the 400,000 catalog cards in 1970. In addition to our print materials, 137,068 records include a link to digital content—nearly 23 percent of the entire database. To that number can be added 42,583 records with directly linked PDF files. We have only just begun the long and tedious process of incorporating links to other general online resources, such as online dictionaries, grammars, text editions, websites, blogs, and other relevant media.

The online ISAC collections search (<https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu>), which includes the catalog of the Research Archives library, had over 16,500 users conducting more than 31,500 sessions. These users were from all over the world, the top countries represented being the United States, Canada, Turkey, Egypt, Australia, Iran, China, Brazil, and Japan; 71.7 percent of users accessed the site through a desktop computer, 26.9 percent used a mobile device, and 1.4 percent used a tablet (fig. 2). The most common browser was Chrome (60 percent), followed by Safari (27 percent), Edge (6 percent), and Firefox (6 percent).

Analytics recorded 325,551 total events, with an average of 20 events per active user, and 198,809

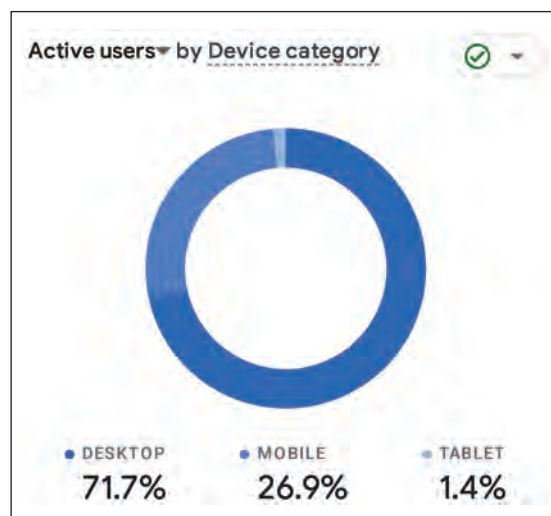


Figure 2. Users by device category (Google Analytics).

individual page views (fig. 3). Nearly 22,000 sessions by more than 11,500 users came from direct traffic, more than 7,000 sessions by 3,500 users came from online searches, and approximately 2,000 sessions by 850 users came from referral links. The record for the iconic *lammasu* (ISACM A7369) was viewed in 1,897 of the events, while 884 events showed users searching for objects on display in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery. During 371 events, the record for the sealing ISACM A917 was viewed; 338 events were used to find and view the Faiyum portrait (ISACM E2053). Like last year, the most popular record from the library was that for volume 1 of James P. Allen's *A New Concordance of the Pyramid Texts*. Users visited the "saved records" page 2,137 times to export records from the database for their research.



Figure 3. Page views for the Search Our Collections website from July 2023 to June 2024 (Google Analytics).

DONATIONS

The Research Archives continued to benefit greatly from generous donations of both funds and books. We thank the following for their thoughtful gifts (in alphabetical order): Susan Allison, Clarence Anderson, Alex and Tigran Areshian, Andrew Baumann and ISAC Publications, Bob Biggs, Denise Browning, the estate of Miguel Civil, Bill Cospers, Stuart Creason, Peggy Day, Margaret Donlan, Gregory Drake, Andrea Dudek, Anne Flannery, McGuire Gibson, the estate of Donald Hoffman, James Holland, the ISAC Museum image permissions staff, the ISAC Museum Shop, the ISAC volunteers' library, Cray Kennedy, Herbert Köhler, Marc Maillot, Brett McClain, Franklin Nussbaum, the estate of Miriam Reitz, Seth Richardson and the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Arnold Spinka, Stephen Szumowski, Emily Teeter, Linda Wheatley-Irving, Bruce Williams, the estate of Carol Yoshida, and Diane Yurco.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Research Archives library runs on teamwork. Our talented and steadfast staff help make the research and impact of ISAC possible. I sincerely thank, for all their efforts, Christian Borgen, Marta Díaz-Herrera, Courtney Doner, Tanya Olson, Catie Witt, and Amy Zillman. Likewise, I owe a debt of gratitude to our volunteers: Betty Bush, Kym Crawford, Claire Mokrauer-Madden, Hilarie Pozesky, Jeremy Walker, and Eric Whitacre. We also had the pleasure of hosting Naomi Blumberg for a University of Illinois practicum in the library over the spring and summer. Many thanks to all of you for your help!



MUSEUM

OVERLEAF: Obverse of teacher-student
exercise tablet with a teacher's model (left)
and the student's copy (right) partially erased
with the student's fingers. Clay. Iraq, Nippur.
Old Babylonian. ISACM A30276.

MUSEUM

SUSAN ALLISON, ROBERT BAIN, DENISE BROWNING,
LAURA D'ALESSANDRO, ANNE FLANNERY, KEA JOHNSTON,
MARC MAILLOT, HELEN McDONALD, KIERSTEN NEUMANN,
JOSH TULISIAK, AND ALISON WHYTE

In a postpandemic era, the main challenge of the ISAC Museum is to keep bringing the audience back in person to the galleries and for special exhibitions. As stated in the 2022–23 annual report, the Museum pursued the expansion of its activities throughout the year.

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND MUSEUM SHOP

Thanks to the dedicated team of the Museum and communications staff, guards, and volunteers, we were able not only to maintain our current opening hours but also to continue offering extended Friday evening hours until 8:00 p.m. The idea behind these expanded hours is simple: to allow after-work opening hours concurrent with consistent programming.

Between July 2023 and mid-June 2024, 34,562 visitors viewed the Museum's galleries—an increase of 30.28 percent over last year. Combined with the 6.37 percent increase in 2022–23, audience rates grew by 36.65 percent in less than two years' time. From April to December 2023, 1,201 visitors enjoyed the Friday evening hours in a calm and welcoming environment. Adding to this number the 788 Friday evening visitors from January to June 2024, a total of 1,989 individuals took advantage of the extended opening hours. By the end of 2024, we will more than double the number of evening visitors. Last year's annual report stated that fall 2023 would be a good test, and it showed a steady audience slowly but surely increasing.

As expected, attendance peaks on weekends easily exceeded more than 150 visitors, confirming that our policy and engagement were fruitful. This precious data was gathered thanks to the initiative of Kate Hodge, former Youth and Family Program coordinator, and Dan Bloom at the Visitor Services desk. Strengthened by the numbers and new staff members, we continued striving toward the main goal of the Museum team stated in the previous annual report: to reach and surpass pre-COVID-19 Museum attendance numbers, which during the best years averaged 58,000 visitors annually. Projecting the growth we measured this year, we could surpass this number within three to five years if our audience increases 20 percent per year.

It is pertinent to connect these numbers with ISAC Museum Shop sales. The pandemic disrupted Shop sales dramatically, especially in 2020–21. Those sales have been slowly but surely returning to pre-COVID-19 levels, which is consistent with the 6.37 percent increase in Museum audience rates in 2022–23 and the 30.28 percent increase in 2023–24. The Museum Shop generated \$135,000 this year—a 30 percent increase over last year. Prior to the pandemic, average annual sales were \$200,000, and new merchandising and product development make a return to this level quite reachable going forward.

The Museum Shop's strategy has been to leverage special exhibitions as opportunities to develop new merchandise for long-term sales. The Shop has offered child-oriented products (such as children's activity books) to draw attention to books and other items targeted at adults, made all the more appealing by the high publication standard we set last year for Museum catalogs and monographs. Since the COVID-19 years, the Shop has been open only half the time it used to be—an important point, since sales

MUSEUM

nevertheless reached 67 percent of the total sum the Shop had generated in 2018 and 73 percent of the amount it generated in 2019. Volunteers were brought back to the Shop in March 2024, helping reinforce our customer service.

To accompany this growth, we began working with ISAC's information technology staff and the administration and finance department to create an updated online Museum Shop on Shopify, as half of our customer base is international. We have no doubt that we will surpass pre-COVID-19 sales rapidly once an effective online shop is implemented on our website.

Docent- and curator-led tours of the Museum's galleries were offered, and we were particularly pleased to pursue, in partnership with the Communications department, refresher tours of the main galleries, led by Museum staff, for the docents. In May and June 2024, Marc Maillot and Kiersten Neumann offered in-person tours alongside our virtual options. Regarding the latter, special recognition should be given to Tasha Vorderstrasse for the high quality and consistency of the adult education courses based on our collection, particularly the Juneteenth tour focused on community scholars at the turn of the twentieth century.

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

ISAC is a world-renowned institution, and international outreach is therefore one of our priorities. This year we maintained our already strong relationship with the French Consulate in Chicago, as demonstrated by the French Cultural Service / Villa Albertine event held at ISAC in October 2023. In the frame of the annual Chicago Architecture Biennial, we hosted a panel discussion with the artist and architect Feda Wardak on sustainable development and endangered cultural heritage in Afghanistan. We also welcomed, multiple times, the Chicago chapter of the French-American Chamber of Commerce, most recently on March 12, 2024, with a group of entrepreneurs and businesses for gallery tours and conferences. The Museum also invited Prof. Claude Rilly, from Paris's Sorbonne University, in the frame of our monthly lecture series in Breasted Hall. He presented a talk on the decipherment of the Meroitic language, one of the oldest languages in sub-Saharan Africa. Along with complementary seminars, his lecture helped foster a strengthened network at a fundamental research level, based on artifacts in the ISAC Museum's Nubian section. This connection was particularly timely for ISAC in that it followed up the June 5, 2023, official launch of the International Research Center in Paris and on the University of Chicago campus. The Museum will have a role to play in this arena, as ISAC has been identified as a reference institution in the fields of art history, archaeology, and cultural-heritage management.

The stated intention of connecting our members and audience to the latest news in the field of cultural heritage management was perfectly illustrated by the screening of *Hadda: Rescuing Early Buddhist Art in Afghanistan* as part of Docent Day on March 18, 2024, in Breasted Hall. Prof. Gil Stein engaged with the docents on challenges faced by museums in conflict areas and the universal dimension of the institution in crisis times. The discussion allowed participants to confront experiences in a broad geographical sphere and reflect on the nature of the museum and its role in modern society. The same applies to the lecture delivered by Dr. Pavel Onderka, curator of Egyptian and Nubian art at Náprstek Museum in Prague, on May 20, 2024, on the monumental building program of King Natakamani and Queen Amanitoré at Wad Ben Naga, Sudan, and the challenges of maintaining scientific activity and outreach in conflict areas.

In mid-March 2024, a group of experts from Greece visited the Museum galleries thanks to the Museum of Contemporary Art's chief development officer and Bill Cospers, ISAC's development director. Kiersten Neumann led the tour, accompanied by ISAC director Tim Harrison, Cospers, and assistant director of development and membership Brad Lenz. Principal guests included Lina Mendoni, minister of culture, PhD in archaeology from the University of Athens; Nikolaos Stampolidis, director of the Acropolis Museum; NEON, a nonprofit art organization in Greece founded by Dimitris Daskalopoulos, a collector of contemporary art; Michael Rakowitz, an internationally acclaimed Iraqi-American artist whose "reappearance" of

a relief from the Northwest Palace of Kalhu is displayed in the Assyrian Gallery; and members of the consulate general of Greece in Chicago, including consul general Emmanuel Koubarakis. During the tour, they expressed interest in establishing more concrete cooperation with the ISAC Museum in 2025.

In April 2024, attendees of the annual meeting of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, held in Chicago, visited ISAC for a series of programs, beginning with tours of the special exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert* led by Marie-Laure Chambrade and of the Persian Gallery led by Kiersten Neumann; these tours were followed by presentations in Breasted Hall on ISAC's annual Nowruz celebration by Kate Hodge and on ISAC's Persepolis Fortification Archive Project by Wouter Henkelman, and the series concluded with a viewing of Farzin Rezaian's film *Persepolis Recreated*.

Loans and research requests are further evidence of the excellence of our reputation both domestically and abroad if we consider the increase in inquiries. The total number of research requests and visits this year—more than 115—represents a 20 percent increase over last year. The same applies to loans, as the Museum loaned objects to and borrowed others from several museums for special exhibitions—the Morgan Library & Museum, the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art, and the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Museum—and we have begun executing collaborations with the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Chicago's Joseph Regenstein Library, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection in Berlin.

ISAC's international engagement was also visible thanks to conservation training overseas and on-site conservation treatment. Alison Whyte went to Uzbekistan in September 2022 to participate in the fourth workshop of the Conservation Training Partnership in Artifact Conservation organized by Gil Stein, and we will further pursue conservation training of our overseas partner with the help of the Department of State and US Embassy in Tashkent in October 2024 (see Conservation below). In January and February 2024, Whyte also provided support to David Schloen's excavation of the Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar in Málaga, Spain, where she worked extensively on pottery, confirming our reputation of excellence in museum studies at an international level.

This reputation applies also to the ISAC Museum Archives, which worked with the Freie Universität Berlin, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Polytechnic University of Milan, University of Applied Arts Vienna, University College London, and University of Zurich. The Museum Archives continued its commitment to our campus community and with scholars beyond Chicago. This outreach included student engagement and exhibition curation (see Archives below). Indeed, a special exhibition is worth noting this year: the satellite exhibit *Sealing Practices in Ancient Mesopotamia*, located in the lobby of the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, was changed to a new one, *ISAC's "Fifty-Cent Men": How the Gold Reserve Act Altered the Business of Archaeology* (see Special Exhibitions below). This exhibition was curated by Anne Flannery, head of Museum Archives, and opened on May 6, 2024. The strategy here is to expand our footprint on campus while advertising the incoming fall 2024 exhibition on the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor.

On the long-term side, we continued to pursue the very demanding update of the entire collection database and nomenclature regarding our name change to ISAC and our software upgrade (see Registration below). Indeed, of the more than 350,000 artifacts in ISAC's inventory, fewer than 2 percent are on display, and each item requires an updated entry to maintain public access to it in our database by researchers and a general audience. The ISAC Museum was present in several news media this year, including the University of Chicago's "Inside the Lab" series (<https://news.uchicago.edu/inside-the-lab/conservation-lab>), which saw up to 230,000 views. The *Brain Scoop* YouTube channel was also a highlight of the year in terms of our outreach impact, with more than 150,000 views of a deep dive into the ISAC Museum collection and the cat figure in ancient Egyptian art (<https://www.youtube.com/user/thebrainscoop>). We also participated in a panel at the Art Institute of Chicago alongside the city's Field Museum on the challenges of displaying ancient Egyptian art in Chicago and the complementarity of the collections, soon to be aired on YouTube

(<https://www.youtube.com/@artinstitutechi>). Finally, the annual *Chicago Tribune* top-ten list of must-see museums ranked the ISAC Museum among the best collections in the city (<https://www.chicagotribune.com/2024/01/04/top-10-for-museums-for-winter-2024-plenty-worth-leaving-the-house-for/>).

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

The ISAC Museum's special exhibitions program hosted two shows this year that forefronted ISAC's long-standing contribution to understanding the cultures and history of West Asia broadly and the pivotal role the Museum's collections continue to play in this endeavor. On August 27, 2023, we closed the special exhibition *Artifacts Also Die*, transitioning the space for the fall exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*, which ran from September 21, 2023, through March 24, 2024 (<https://isac.uchicago.edu/backtoschool>) (fig. 1). Curated by Susanne Paulus, ISAC associate professor of Assyriology and Tablet Collection curator, with the assistance of Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon, Danielle Levy, Madeline Ouimet, Colton G. Siegmund, and Ryan D. Winters and with support from Pallas Eible Hargro, C Mikhail, Carter Rote, and Sarah M. Ware, the exhibition reunited for the first time since their excavation at Nippur objects now held in the ISAC Tablet Collection, the ISAC Museum, and the Penn Museum. Tablets in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, were represented by plaster casts. Complementing the display of more than 100 clay artifacts from this Mesopotamian city in present-day southern Iraq was a selection of original archival documents from the Nippur Expedition, including a page from a field catalog, field correspondence, a field notebook (the "Pot Book"), and video footage of the excavations (fig. 2).

The protagonist of the special exhibition narrative was the Edubba'a, a scribal school excavated in 1951–52 by the Joint Expedition to Nippur of ISAC and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (now Penn Museum). Within the mudbrick walls of these scribal quarters of the Old Babylonian period (2000–1595 BCE) the team excavated texts fundamental to our understanding of Babylonian education and culture, as well as objects that reflect school life. Visitors were invited to enter the Edubba'a, reimagined in the space of the special exhibition, by first passing through an arch that presented a most fitting riddle:



Figure 1 (this page and opposite). *Back to School in Babylonia*, which ran through March 24, 2024.





Figure 2. Archival documents, artifacts, and plaster casts on display in *Back to School in Babylonia*.

*What is a house, set upon a foundation like the heavens,
a house, covered with a cloth like a treasure chest,
a house, set upon a pedestal like a duck shaped weight;
one enters into it blind
and leaves it seeing?
The answer: the scribal school.*

Within, visitors could explore the school house and its objects, read the school materials, sit on a school bench, and listen to the disputes of Babylonian students, following them on their journey to become scribes, complete with their struggles and successes. Visitors discovered how pupils learned to read and write the complex cuneiform script, while more advanced students studied topics such as mathematics, religion, and law, the overall goal being to gain the knowledge, skills, and character traits necessary to become successful scribes. Ultimately, these skilled professionals worked for the king, temples, and local authorities and were responsible for writing most of the documents that survive from Babylonia.

An exclusive exhibition preview on September 20, 2023, marked the first in a series of programs celebrating *Back to School in Babylonia* (see “Member Programming” in the Development and Membership report). In October, Susanne Paulus delivered a hybrid lecture titled “Back to School in Babylonia: The Aims of Babylonian Education,” the first in a series on scribal education that subsequently included “What Did You Learn in School Today? A Day in the Life of a Mesopotamian Student,” with Paul Delnero in November; “Law and Morality in Sumerian Satirical Tales,” with Jana Matuszak in December; and “Back

to House F: Personal Reflections on 25 Years of Research on Old Babylonian Schooling,” with Eleanor Robson in January. In October, the whole family was invited to experience the exhibition through the family program “Come Learn Cuneiform,” and curious learners had the opportunity to sign up for the education class “Discover the Babylonian Curriculum from Lexical Lists to Literature.”

Two publications brought—and continue to bring—this show to an even wider audience: the exhibition catalog *Back to School in Babylonia* (ISAC Museum Publications 1), edited by Susanne Paulus with Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon, Madeline Ouimet, Colton G. Siegmund, and Ryan D. Winters; and the children’s activity book *The Adventures of Inanaka and Tuni: Learning to Write in Ancient Babylonia*, with text by Jane Gordon and Susanne Paulus, illustrations by Madeline Ouimet, and layout and design by Sarah M. Ware. Additional promotion of the exhibition included the remarkably popular plushie Tuppi (whose name means “my tablet”) (fig. 3), a mug, a shirt, bookmarks, and cuneiform socks, as well as coverage in several media outlets, including the University of Chicago Division of the Humanities’ online newsletter, the *Thin Edge of the Wedge* podcast, and the *Chicago Tribune*. The exhibition was supported by Deborah and Philip Halpern, Malda and Aldis Liventals, Catherine A. Novotny, ISAC Museum visitors, and ISAC members; it was organized by the ISAC Museum, with contributions by Erin Bliss and Judy Radovsky.

On April 27, 2024, we opened the special exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, celebrating a century of work in this pivotal field of archaeology (<https://isac.uchicago.edu/pioneers-sky>) (fig. 4). Curated by landscape archaeologist and ISAC postdoctoral scholar Marie-Laure Chambrade and on display through August 18, 2024, the exhibition began with the 1920s balloon photography of ISAC’s Megiddo Expedition and the 1930s Aerial Survey Expedition in Iran that was part of ISAC’s Persian Expedition. The 1990s saw exceptional advances in the field of aerial archaeology, including developments in GIS (geographic information systems) and remote-sensing techniques, as well as the declassification of Cold War–era satellite imagery and the founding of ISAC’s Center of Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL). The exhibition concluded with a look at aerial archaeology in the Black Desert of Jordan, featuring previously unpublished snapshots and video footage of this “archaeological paradise.” Visualizing this history of the discipline—alongside numerous digital reproductions of original negatives and digital prints—was a wealth of archival documents, including photographic prints, hand-tinted glass lantern slides, a field notebook, a hand-drawn map of flight routes, flight logs, a topographical map, CORONA negative film strips, and video footage from ISAC’s 1934 film *The Human Adventure*. Lending some three-dimensionality to the show were Erich Schmidt’s 1940 publication *Flights over Ancient Iran* and, from CAMEL’s collections, a 1910 W. & L. E. Gurley surveyor’s wye level and a 1960s KE-6e theodolite by Keuffel & Esser Co., Germany.

Programming held in connection with *Pioneers of the Sky* kicked off with the exclusive preview on April 24, 2024, followed by an exhibition opening lecture in May, “Flying under a Screen of Clouds: A Snapshot of Aerial Archaeology in West Asia,” with Marie-Laure Chambrade. Yorke Rowan followed up in June with a second lecture, titled “Beyond the Fertile Crescent: Late Prehistoric People of the Black Desert, Jordan.” Throughout the course of the exhibition, Tasha Vorderstrasse shared with our social media followers a remarkable variety of personal histories and groundbreaking studies tied to the field of aerial



Figure 3. The Tuppi plushie, from *Back to School in Babylonia*.

MUSEUM

archaeology and the exploration of the Black Desert of Jordan, including a Saturday series highlighting women pioneers in the field (see Public Programming report). Exhibition promotion included a children's activity book, *Fly with Dana over the Past*, by Marie-Laure Chambrade and Jérôme Agostini with the assistance of Marc Maillot, Kiersten Neumann, and Thomas Boudier (fig. 5), as well as stickers of the book's protagonist Dana and a large-scale photographic print of the Black Desert, available



Figure 4 (this page and opposite). The special exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert* opened on April 27, 2024.



for purchase through the ISAC Museum Shop. We also worked with colleagues at the University of Chicago's Joseph Regenstein Library on a series called "Museum Reads at the Library: Pioneers of the Sky." This collaboration entailed a curated selection of more than thirty books on the topics of aerial archaeology and the Black Desert on display in the library throughout the course of the exhibition and available for checkout by university faculty, students, and staff for a seven-day loan period.

Pioneers of the Sky was supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 101033178 (project MARGINS 2022–2025, CEPAM–CNRS UMR 7264), ISAC Museum visitors, and ISAC members and was organized by the ISAC Museum. Further adding to the rigorous narrative and visual impact of the exhibition were the media and support generously offered by the following scholars and projects: Alison V. G. Betts, University of Sydney; the Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East based in the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford, including Robert Bewley and David Kennedy; CAMEL, including Christian Borgen, Joseph Harris, Dominik Lukas, Harrison Morin, and Mehrnoush Soroush; the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project and Kites in Context, including Austin "Chad" Hill and Yorke Rowan; the Surezha Archaeological Project, including Gil J. Stein; and the Western Harra Survey, including Marie-Laure Chambrade and Stefan Smith. The fieldwork in the Black Desert and at Surezha featured in the exhibition was authorized by the Department of Antiquities of the Kingdom of Jordan and the General Directorate of Antiquities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, respectively.

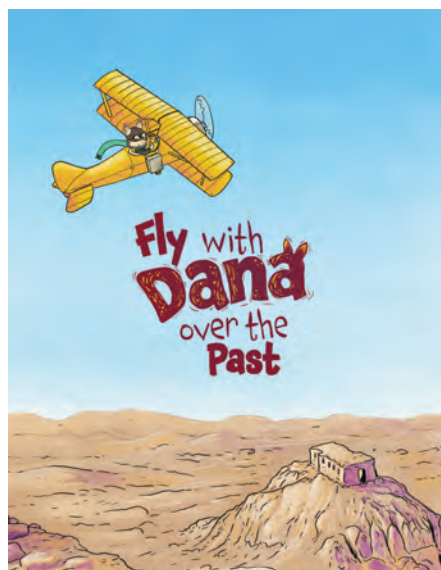


Figure 5. The children's activity book *Fly with Dana over the Past* from the exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky*.



Figure 6. The satellite exhibit ISAC's *"Fifty-Cent Men": How the Gold Reserve Act Altered the Business of Archaeology* at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business.

Finally, we opened a new satellite exhibit to the public in April 2024 in the lobby of the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business—somewhat of a teaser for the forthcoming fall 2024 ISAC Museum special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey*. Titled *ISAC's "Fifty-Cent Men": How the Gold Reserve Act Altered the Business of Archaeology* and curated by ISAC Museum Archives head Anne Flannery, the display-case exhibit tells the story of the United States' abandoning the gold standard by executive order in 1933 and the Gold Reserve Act of January 30, 1934, through their impact on ISAC's Epigraphic Survey in Luxor, Egypt (fig. 6). Although the act was intended to stabilize money supply in the United States—stemming deflation by devaluing the dollar—the law drastically affected markets at home and abroad, ultimately creating turmoil for the staff members of the Epigraphic Survey, whose livelihoods were thrown into question. Featured in the exhibition are a financial memorandum, letters, and telegrams revealing how this crisis played out in communications between Chicago and Luxor. Speaking to the role that gold played in this historical event are two objects from the ISAC Museum collections: a scaraboid inscribed with the cartouches of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III set in a modern gold ring (E25039) and a gold Rasulid coin mentioning the ruler and the profession of the Islamic faith (E13752).

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

In 2023–24, the Department of Exhibition Design and Production's primary projects were the design and production of the Museum's special exhibitions, *Back to School in Babylonia* and *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, as well as the updating of the permanent collection space.

In fall 2023, we opened the exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia* (see Special Exhibitions above). This exhibition involved the in-house design and fabrication of thirteen large display cases; dozens of custom

object mounts; several smaller wall vitrines, pedestals, and other furniture; and a large archway marking the entrance to the gallery. Paint colors were chosen to suggest the student's passage from the bright blue sky of the outside world through a high, arched doorway into the darkness of the schoolhouse. Since this exhibition was presenting the excavation of a school, we designed the large display cases to suggest the appearance of bookcases, full of the schoolwork of students learning to write in cuneiform on clay tablets. These tablets were presented alongside explanations and translations of the students' writing. There was a school bench where visitors using handheld audio players could sit and listen to translations of texts inscribed on some of the displayed tablets. One display case was even designed to resemble a clay-recycling bin, preserved in the scribal house and documented by archaeologists, where the students would deposit used tablets so the clay could be reused (see fig. 1).

The second exhibition opened in spring 2024: *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*. Set against dramatic black walls with several new display cases and video and audio elements, the exhibition focused on the historical and ongoing aerial archaeological work of ISAC. Custom display units were designed and constructed in-house to provide lightbox-like displays to present hand-tinted lantern slides and CORONA negative film strips properly. We worked with Anne Flannery, head of Museum Archives, to display all artifacts and documents provided by the Museum Archives safely, and with the CAMEL lab at ISAC to present some of the tools used in aerial archaeology, such as a surveyor's wye level from 1910 and a 1960 theodolite (see fig. 4).

While designing and building these special exhibitions, the Exhibition Design and Production team continued a number of other projects in the permanent galleries. They included the ongoing update of Museum graphics and didactics to accommodate our recently adopted name and identity, as well as the installation of redesigned exhibition cases, additional lighting tracks in the Museum's orientation area and special exhibitions gallery, and several new electrical access points in the galleries for a future project involving the implementation of interactive kiosks.

CONSERVATION

Sin Temple Facade Project

After a hiatus of nearly fifteen years, the Conservation laboratory's focus has once again returned to a major undertaking: the restoration of the glazed-brick facade from the Sin Temple at Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad, Iraq. Known as Dur Sharrukin (Sargon's Fortress), the eighth-century BCE site was first excavated by the French mission in the mid-nineteenth century. Victor Place, one of the directors of the excavation, produced artist's renditions of many of the architectural elements that were uncovered. Place's nineteenth-century watercolor of the Sin Temple facade reveals an amazing frieze of a plow, a tree, and animal and human figures (fig. 7). ISAC's Iraq Expedition began excavations at the site in 1929, and the Sin Temple facade was excavated during ISAC's 1932–33 season (fig. 8). Though badly damaged, the highly colored glazed surface of the bricks revealed by the excavation were promising enough to make the enormous task of carefully removing and packing the bricks a worthwhile endeavor. As part of the official division of finds by the Iraqi government, ISAC received the frieze to the left of the temple's entrance. The frieze to the right of the entrance was shipped to Baghdad.

Under the direction of the expedition's director, Gordon Loud, the 282 glazed bricks were meticulously packed in more than forty wooden crates and shipped to Chicago. The bricks arrived in Chicago in 1933 during the installation and restoration of the *lamassu* figure and large-scale gypsum (stone) reliefs from Sargon's palace. The significant amount of work that would be required to stabilize and recreate the temple facade was clearly recognized, and the crates of bricks were stored in the Museum's basement until the restoration of the facade could be addressed.

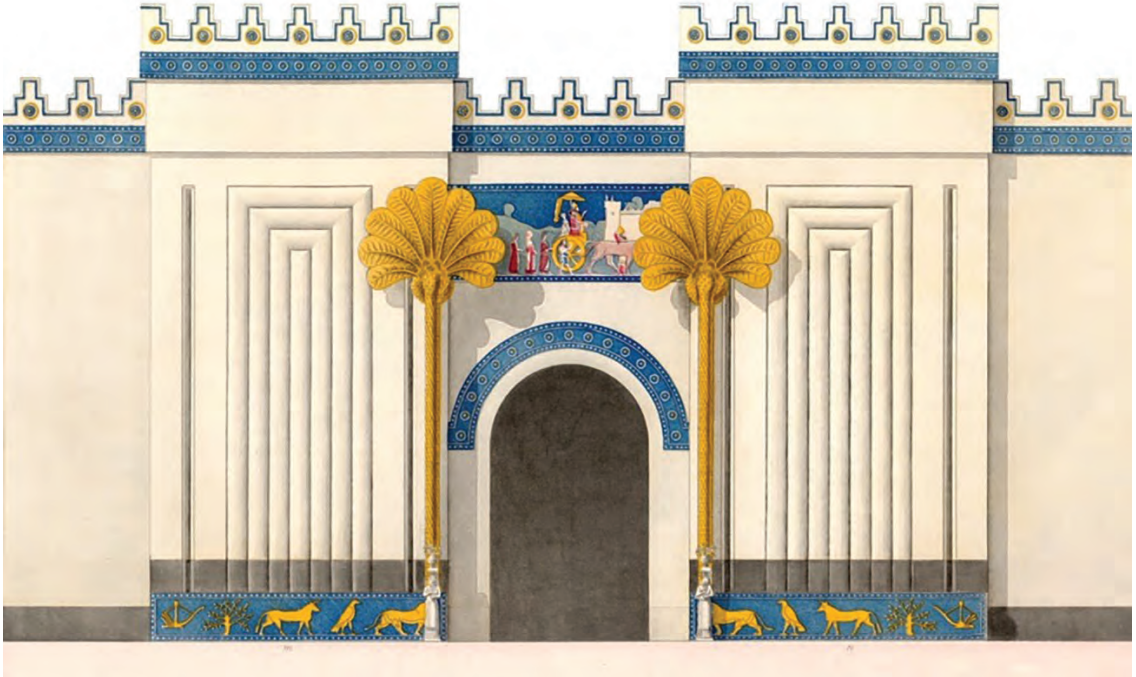


Figure 7. Reconstruction drawing of the Sin Temple at Khorsabad, with the glazed-brick facades visible on each side of the entrance (Victor Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie* [3 vols.; Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1867–70]).

The crates remained undisturbed until 1990, when Laura D'Alessandro, head of the Conservation laboratory, opened a single crate to assess the current state of the bricks. Field notes from the 1930s excavators indicated that a cellulose nitrate product had been applied to the fragile clay body and glaze during the excavation process to stabilize the material for packing and transport. It was recognized that the condition of the cellulose nitrate and its compatibility with modern consolidants would be a major factor in moving forward with the project to stabilize and recreate the eighth-century BCE frieze in the Museum's galleries. Compatibility tests with modern consolidants were carried out on several of the bricks in 1990, and the bricks were returned to storage.

It was not until 2000 that Conservation staff returned to the project. With the positive results from the 1990 tests as proof of concept, it was decided to uncrate and stabilize the seven bricks that made up the head of the bull. Access to each tightly packed brick was very restricted, and the fragile condition of the bricks and glaze meant that the process



Figure 8. The excavation of the threshold of the entrance to the Sin Temple at Khorsabad, with the glazed-brick facades visible on each side (P. 21764/N. 11660).



Figure 9. Glazed bricks A11810.266 (top) and A11810.265 (bottom) showing the clothing of one of the human figures.

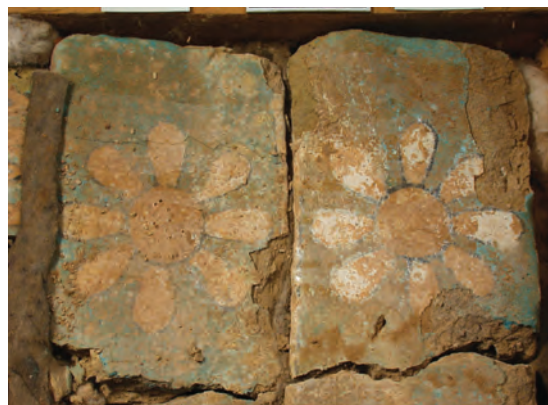


Figure 10. Glazed bricks A11810.271 and A11810.272 depicting rosettes, from the border of the facade.

was slow and painstaking. But the reward was tremendous. Adjacent bricks in the crates that were unpacked presented evidence for the viability of the entire project (figs. 9 and 10). The head of the bull was successfully recreated in the 2009 display *Temples at Dur-Sharrukin* in the newly installed Yelda Khorsabad Court gallery. Preliminary analytical work was carried out on the body and glazes of the bricks by Conservation staff during this period and published in 2004.

In 2023, under the direction of Marc Maillot, the decision was made to bring the Sin Temple facade project to completion. The recreation of the 7 m long and 1.5 m high facade will require skilled Conservation staff to remove the fragile glaze and clay bodies from the crates and stabilize them for display. While we seek funding to support additional Conservation staff for this purpose, efforts are taking a new direction to keep the project moving forward. JP Brown, a colleague at the Field Museum, proposed the idea of using photogrammetry to record the glazed surface of each brick while still in its packing crate. The result of incorporating this step will allow Conservation staff to focus on potential reconstruction possibilities and make accommodations for the more damaged bricks and their overall effect on the tableau both visually and structurally. Our colleague, Kea Johnston, who joined ISAC in spring 2024 as a postdoctoral scholar in a partnership with the Field Museum focusing on digital management of museum collections, will carry out the photogrammetry of each glazed surface and stitch the images of the bricks together to form an accurate digital reconstruction of the tableau. In preparation for this critical step, Alison Whyte, senior conservator, has been opening each crate and, using the field photographs and notations on the crates, identifying the bricks within. She then photographs each brick in detail before realigning loose fragments and removing any dust or debris from the surfaces of the bricks to make the designs as clear as possible (fig. 11).

This step also provides physical access to the entirety of the glazes while the bricks are still in their crates. An important component of the current work includes the resumption of investigations into the clay body and glazes (fig. 12). With this increased access to glazes in different conditions and stages of deterioration, we hope to be able to contribute further information to the current understanding of ancient glazes. Our colleagues in the international scientific community who study these glazes are anxious for us to proceed. We are grateful for their interest in our collection and their willingness to collaborate with us as the project moves forward.

The University of Chicago showed its support for the Sin Temple facade project by dedicating a segment of its series “Inside the Lab” showcasing the work of laboratories on campus. The UChicago Creative team created a dramatic testament to the work on the Sin Temple facade project that has attracted a wide audience (<https://news.uchicago.edu/inside-the-lab/conservation-lab>).



Figure 11. Alison Whyte (left) and Kea Johnston (right) examine an opened crate of glazed bricks from the Sin Temple at Khorsabad.



Figure 12. A cross-section sample from glazed brick A11810.225, mounted in epoxy and ready for analysis at the scanning electron microscope.

Researcher Visits, Loans, Exhibitions, and Teaching

While excitement over the uncovering of the glazed surfaces of the Sin Temple bricks continues, the regular activities of the lab—researcher visits, loans, and new exhibitions—continued. This year saw a dramatic number of research requests, along with an increase in the size of the collections studied, and the work generated by these visits had a significant impact on the workloads of the various Museum departments. One of the more notable loan requests involved our leather manuscript E10552, a tenth-century CE marriage contract. Last spring it was loaned to the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, for inclusion in their *Elephantine: Island*

of the *Millennia* exhibition. D'Alessandro carried out structural repairs on the manuscript before replacing its forty-year-old glass housing with museum-grade acrylic panels to allow its safe transport. Because of the fragile nature of the leather, very strict conditions were placed on its packing crate and shipping environment, and the manuscript traveled in a high-tech, environmentally controlled shipping container provided by the airline.

In preparation for the fall 2024 exhibition, *Chicago on the Nile*, Whyte treated three faience ushabtis (servant figurines deposited in ancient Egyptian tombs). Each of the objects had been repaired in the past, and the aging adhesive had discolored and become brittle. Whyte removed excess old adhesive and added modern adhesive to ensure that the joins would remain stable for the exhibition.

In January 2024, Whyte traveled to Málaga, Spain, to carry out conservation work on artifacts from the Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar, a joint excavation of the University of Chicago and the University of Málaga. Over the course of the two-week project, Whyte and Charles Wilson, a PhD candidate in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC) and a ceramics specialist, cleaned sherds discovered during the 2023 excavation season and reconstructed several large ceramic storage jars. Although none of the vessels are intact, enough joins were found to allow partial reconstructions, from which Wilson created profile drawings.

D'Alessandro presented a short segment on studying museum collections and conservation training in Kathryn Bandy's class "Approaches to the Ancient Near East." She also presented a session in Mehrnough Soroush's class on ancient empires discussing the conservation history of the Persepolis Fortification tablets and provided a brief discussion on analytical work being carried out on the clays by researchers.

The year 2023 marked a pause in the C5 Cultural Training Partnership in Artifact Conservation organized by Gil Stein, Rowe Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and director of the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation; however, a two-week workshop focusing on the conservation of stone, wood, bone, and ivory artifacts will take place in 2024. Whyte began preparing lectures and lab activities, for presentation in Tashkent in the fall.

In February 2024, Whyte led a gallery tour for students in Kiersten Neumann's class "Collecting the Ancient World: Museum Practice and Politics." Using examples from ISAC Museum exhibits, Whyte gave an overview of the history of conservation at ISAC and how attitudes toward restoration have evolved over time. Also in February, Whyte teamed up with Tasha Vorderstrasse, manager of ISAC's continuing education program, to teach "Color in Ancient Art." Whyte's lecture focused on how conservators find, analyze, and identify colorants used to decorate artifacts. She also explained the different strategies conservators use to preserve fragile ancient pigments. The class was the subject of the beautifully illustrated article "Color Unearthed," written by Chandler A. Calderon and published in the spring 2024 issue of *The University of Chicago Magazine*. We were especially honored to see E12072b, the coffin of Ipi-Ha-Ishutef, featured on the cover (fig. 13).



Figure 13. The cover of the spring 2024 issue of *The University of Chicago Magazine*, featuring E12072b, the coffin of Ipi-Ha-Ishutef.

MUSEUM

The return of the Persepolis Fortification tablets research collection to the National Museum of Iran in Tehran continued, as the next batch of completed tablets was prepared for shipment. We were very appreciative of this year's student assistant, Aiyana Leigh, a third-year geophysical sciences major at the University of Chicago who started working with the project in February. Her meticulous work and attention to detail on a project that requires a delicate touch were a perfect fit for the position.

REGISTRATION

This year, the post-COVID-19 increase in research visits and loans continued. The Museum's Registration staff responded to more than 100 requests this year. Museum staff, student helpers, and volunteers carried out more than 15,000 object movements. More than 2,000 objects were registered. Recently registered material included Iron Age potsherds from Alishar Höyük (Turkey) and flint tools from Palegawra and Gird Chai (Iraq).

Collections Research Grant Recipients and Other Researchers

Another of our 2019–20 Collections Research Grant recipients was able to carry out research at the Museum (delayed until now by the COVID-19 pandemic): Alice Williams (research fellow, University College London Institute of Archaeology) visited to study the Amarna House model in person and consult the archival records relating to the model.

Other research visits in 2023–24 were as follows: Tara Draper-Stumm (PhD student, University of Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom) studied four statues of the lioness-headed goddess Sekhmet in August. Amber Hood (Lund University, Sweden), E. Christiana Köhler (University of Vienna, director of the Abydos Project), and Mathilde Minotti (University of Vienna) studied and analyzed pottery from the tomb of Queen Meret-Neith, excavated by William Flinders Petrie at Tomb Y in Abydos. Lev Weitz (Catholic University of America) studied a selection of Arabic manuscripts. Laura Alvarez (Free University of Brussels Wiener Anspach Visiting Scholar, University of Cambridge College research associate) studied bronze mirrors from Mesopotamia. Joanna Then-Obluska (University of Warsaw) photographed the garnet beads that had been analyzed using LA-ICP-MS (laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry) at the Field Museum the previous year. Holly Winter (research affiliate, University of Sydney) took a brief look at some of the Amuq sherd material. Golan Shalvi (ISAC postdoctoral fellow) examined some Megiddo sherd material. Imane Achouche (PhD student, University of Liège) studied some of the statue fragments from the Diyala (Iraq). Naghme Mazounzadeh (PhD student, University of Vienna) spent a month studying the bronze and iron arrowheads from Persepolis, Iran (some 800 items). Ashley Arico (associate curator of ancient Egyptian art, Art Institute of Chicago) and Katherine Davis (University of Michigan) studied a variety of Egyptian trial pieces and plaques. Eugenio Nobile (PhD student, University of Tel Aviv), accompanied for a few days by Prof. Abraham Gopher, spent a month studying a selection of flint tools from Ain Ghazal (Jordan). Michele Maurici (PhD student, University of Naples "L'Orientale") studied C-group shells and shell objects from Adindan (Nubia, Egypt). Joseph Harris (PhD student, NELC) studied M'lefaat flint tools for a master's paper. Thomas Vachon (NELC student) photographed papyri from Khirbet el-Mird for study. Tasha Vorderstrasse (ISAC staff) was engaged in an ongoing study of coins from the Mannheimer collection.

Loans

A sizable loan of tablets from the Penn Museum came to ISAC for the *Back to School in Babylonia* special exhibition (September 2023–March 2024). Two objects—a piece of silver-coil money (A9543) and a stone tablet (A25412)—on loan to the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art for the *Metropol Drama*

exhibition were returned in February. One object, a censer (E16735), was returned by the Art Institute of Chicago. The Roman statue of a woman (E30992, excavated at Ptolemais, Libya) went out to the Art Institute in June 2024 for exhibition in The Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Art. This statue had been displayed in the ISAC Museum's special exhibition *Making Sense of Marbles* in 2022–23 and is considered to be a personification of the continent of Africa; the statue's head, which is in Libya, has an elephant headdress.

Class Use

In the fall quarter, James Osborne again taught the “Ceramic Technology” course. It included a selection of sherds for the classes, and each student chose a pot from the ISAC Museum collection on which to write a final paper. Also in the fall, a small selection of Arabic manuscripts was made available for a class on Islamic history taught by Cecilia Palombo. With the assistance of Conservation, a selection of clay sealings from the Nubian site of Serra were once again made available for a first-year Center for Middle Eastern Studies class taught by Kathryn Bandy, “Approaches to the Ancient Near East.” Bandy also used a few objects from the site of Deshasha (Egypt) for the “Art and Archaeology of Egyptian Funerary Traditions (Early Dynastic through Early New Kingdom)” course. Margaret Geoga used some scarabs for the “Introduction to Middle Egyptian Hieroglyphs I” course in October and a few inscribed statues and stelae for the “Middle Egyptian Texts I” course in the spring. In cooperation with Tasha Vorderstrasse, objects were provided for the following: Mehrnough Soroush's course on the Achaemenid Empire; Jordan Johansen's course “Queens in a Global Context” (Department of Classics); and Julia Phillips's course “On Objects” (Department of Visual Arts), in which students viewed a selection of objects related to religion.

Other Events

A selection of Egyptian objects relating to cats were brought out for the *Brain Scoop* video (see Public Programming report). The video included Emily Graslie's interview of Emily Teeter regarding the ancient Egyptians' obsession with cats (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74yeRmR2orw>).

Photo Permissions and Photography

More than 180 photo permission requests were processed this year, including external and internal requests for new photography. More than 1,700 images, new and existing, were added to the database. More than 110 objects were photographed, including both photography for publications and research photos. Forty-eight of those objects required new photography for the upcoming Persian Gallery highlights volume. In addition to the foregoing totals, another 9,400 digital-record shots were added to the Integrated Database (IDB) by our student helpers.

ISAC Integrated Database

We upgraded from version 5 to version 9 of our integrated database (EMu collections management system), which required testing the new version and troubleshooting any issues. As part of the IDB committee, associate registrar Susan Allison participated in several IDB demonstrations, given to ISAC staff as an introduction to the type of data we collect and how it can benefit other ISAC departments.

We would like to thank our University of Chicago student helpers and volunteers. Anthony Ray joined us in summer 2023 and continued for the following academic year. He took over 8,000 digital-record shots for inclusion in the IDB and registered a selection of materials, including flints from Paleogawra and relief fragments from Khorsabad (Iraq). Talia Garrido joined us in the fall and continued with the registration of Iron Age sherds from Alishar Höyük (Turkey). In the spring term, Joseph Harris joined us and registered the flint tools from Gird Chai (Iraqi Kurdistan). Our volunteer helpers Terry Friedman

MUSEUM

and Toni Smith continued to make a valuable contribution with inventory and labeling (more than 1,800 items inventoried).

ARCHIVES

In addition to the day-to-day work of acquiring new collections and providing access to researchers, in 2023–24 the Museum Archives expanded its efforts to promote its collections online and in person through curated exhibits, outreach, classes, and tours. Work continued on the ISAC Digital Archives with the preparation of curated and cataloged archival content; the Cultural Heritage Experiment finished another successful lending period during fall quarter; and significant progress was made in ongoing efforts to finalize and review updates to documentation and the IDB, which underwent a major upgrade in February. Additionally, the archivist provided administrative and logistical support to ISAC as a member of the newly formed IDB committee and by chairing the committee responsible for filling an ISAC senior staff position, which resulted in the successful recruitment of Sheheryar Hasnain as associate director of finance and administration.

New Acquisitions and Collection Processing

This year's acquisitions were extensive, expanding the existing collection through gifts on the part of donors from outside the University of Chicago, as well as ISAC faculty. Some examples include the papers of Jan Johnson and Donald Whitcomb, Tell Tayinat Expedition records, and correspondence between Joanne Brandford and Louis Žabkar. These collections will be important resources for future researchers. Some of these collections, in particular those of Johnson and Whitcomb, are still undergoing processing on account of their size and complexity.

Continuing to make photographic material more accessible to the public, summer Museum Archives assistant Xilin Liu (a recent graduate of the University of Chicago's Master of Arts Program in the Humanities) worked on creating a catalog of the ISAC Lantern Slide Collection, as well as cataloging Epigraphic Survey negatives from 2018–24 in the database. Additionally, volunteer Megan Sands spent the academic year 2023–24 creating a deaccession list of critically damaged and vinegar syndrome-impaired negatives. This list will help us document and scan these negatives before their official deaccessioning.

The Archives has been adding to its online collection of images, and during the past year more than 1,200 of John C. Trever's images of the Dead Sea Scrolls, formerly housed at the Claremont School of Theology, were made accessible online through the IDB. To improve future digital access, ISAC purchased a Zeutschel Zeta scanner for the Archives to jump-start a small-scale digitization program for documents. Once up and running, this small-scale program will increase the archivist's ability to digitize delicate paper documents quickly and gradually increase the visibility of unrestricted documents online.

One essential storage upgrade was made this year with the help of Museum preparator Robert Bain. Twentieth-century paintings under the purview of the Archives had lacked a proper home for years, but with some creative thinking and technical savvy, a new storage space was created to hang paintings in the Archives, making their long-term preservation possible (and the paintings more easily accessible) (fig. 14).

General Overview of Research Requests

The Archives fielded research requests both online and in person, assisting researchers from all around the globe. In addition to those from the University of Chicago, requests came from institutions as varied as Columbia University, Cornell University, Indiana University, Freie Universität Berlin, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Polytechnic University of Milan, University of Pennsylvania, University of

Applied Arts in Vienna, University College London Institute for Archaeology, Yale University, and University of Zurich.

Collections accessed included, but were not limited to, the ISAC Directors Correspondence; the Papers of Robert and Linda Braidwood, the Papers of James Henry Breasted, and the Papers of Joan Westenholz; and the Records of the Amuq Excavation, the Records of the Epigraphic Survey, the Records of the Korcutepe Excavation, the Records of the Megiddo Expedition, the Records of the Mendes Excavation, the Records of the Persepolis Excavation, and the Records of the Rayy Excavation.

To support the work of the Archives, it is sometimes necessary to conduct research visits at other archives holding documents that bear on the institutional history of ISAC. This year, the ISAC archivist did research at the Penn Museum Archives (fig. 15) with the help of its archivist, Alex Pezzati, to examine the Records of the Rayy Excavation. Documents concerning this joint excavation are housed at both ISAC and Penn, with the vast majority of them kept in Chicago. The archives at the Penn Museum illuminated correspondence missing from the ISAC archival record and uncovered photo index cards needed to complete the Penn Museum's archival record.

Spring 2024 saw the successful installation of ISAC's *"Fifty-Cent Men": How the Gold Reserve Act Altered the Business of Archaeology*, a special exhibit curated by the archivist and housed in the atrium of the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business (see fig. 6). This publicly accessible display presented a series of archival documents, objects, and images related to the economics of ISAC's foreign excavations at the height of the Great Depression. This exhibit forms an important component of the Archives' ongoing efforts to broaden the audience of the ISAC Museum through outreach and education.

Special Projects and Outreach

Beyond supporting the research projects of scholars outside the University of Chicago, the Museum Archives provided extensive support for the scholarly and curatorial work of ISAC's faculty and



Figure 14. Paintings storage in the Archives space.



Figure 15. The Penn Museum Archives.



Figure 16. Materials loaned to undergraduates during the 2023 Cultural Heritage Experiment.

staff. In its continuing support of the special exhibitions program, the Archives identified and provided original documents for the fall 2023 exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia* and the spring 2024 exhibition *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*.

Undergraduate engagement continued to be an area of emphasis this year, with the department's flagship program, the Cultural Heritage Experiment, enjoying robust student participation. Archival objects were loaned to thirty-five students for the duration of the fall quarter. Students took photographs of the objects in their homes throughout the quarter and participated in ISAC archival tours and a weekly trivia contest about the history of ISAC (fig. 16).

Finally, in response to substantial positive feedback from earlier courses, UChicago Grad solicited the archivist to teach a fall 2023 graduate student professional seminar titled "Managing the Past: Careers in Archives and Special Collections." This course surveyed the history of archives and introduced students to archival and museum practices, concepts, and contemporary challenges facing the preservation of archives in our world today.

ISAC MUSEUM/FIELD MUSEUM POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARSHIP

As the first joint postdoctoral researcher of the Field Museum and ISAC Museum, Kea Johnston has been working on developing a quick and accurate way to build 3D models of objects in the collections of both museums using structure-from-motion photogrammetry. This technique uses a collection of still photos to calculate points in space to build a 3D model. Models built from photogrammetry (as opposed to using a laser scanner) can have very fine textures. These textures are the photorealistic colors and patterns one sees when looking at a 3D model as opposed to the points in space that make up its geometry. Traditionally, photogrammetry is cheaper but also slower than laser scanning. Johnston is working on a set of automated



Figure 17. 3D model of Meroitic fine ware E22373, from the site of Ballana in Upper Egypt, along with a rollout of its surface decoration.

tools to make the creation of photogrammetric models fast and easy. To test this process and to make collections in storage available to the public, models are being built of the many pieces of decorated pottery dating from the Meroitic period in ISAC's collections. These artifacts were uncovered during ISAC's excavations in Upper Egypt and Sudan between 1960 and 1968. So far, more than thirty 3D models have been made and uploaded to the Museum's new Sketchfab page (<https://sketchfab.com/uchicagoisac>), as well as being made available on the Museum's collections website under the entry for each individual object. The models showcase the variety of patterns in use on this pottery and the creativity and skill of the artists. These ancient craftspeople decorated their fine cups and jugs with a menagerie of plants, animals, religious motifs, and geometric designs both painted and stamped.

As part of the creation of these models, 2D rollouts are being made of the decoration on the pottery so that viewers can compare the iconography on the pieces side by side and view it in full (fig. 17). With traditional methods, doing so would have required tracing the designs directly from the pottery—an activity that is both detrimental to the pottery and time-consuming for the artist. With a 3D model, it can be done in minutes.

Next year, Johnston will be organizing a conference on the use of digital technology in museums. This endeavor demonstrates one of the many ways in which the ISAC Museum is moving toward incorporating technology into its teaching, in addition to using digital tools to make it easier for scholars and students in Chicago and around the world to access ISAC's collections.



PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

OVERLEAF: Hittite plaque with divine, animal,
and human figures. Ivory. Israel, Megiddo. Late
Bronze Age IIB. ISACM A22292.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

MATTHEW WELTON, TASHA VORDERSTRASSE,
AND KATHERINE HODGE

At the end of the 2023–24 year, we said goodbye to our Youth and Family Program manager, Kate Hodge. Hodge had joined ISAC at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown and was instrumental in bringing back in-person school field trips and public family events after restrictions were lifted. Hodge's tenure at ISAC culminated with impressive attendance numbers for our annual Haunted Halloween event, proving that the public is excited to join us in person.

Overall, we have seen a steady increase in in-person attendance for public programming since pandemic restrictions were relaxed. During the pandemic, we had begun to offer public livestreaming of most ISAC lectures in real time, a practice that resulted in increased online presence and decreased in-person numbers. This year, to boost in-person attendance, we transitioned to a system in which our lectures were livestreamed exclusively for ISAC members, giving the public the option to watch them on our YouTube channel a few weeks later.

Public in-person events with no livestreaming option continued to perform very well. In addition to our annual Haunted Halloween and Nowruz events, we hosted a musical concert in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery with *qanun* player Firas Zreik that was filled to capacity, as well as successful screenings of the films *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Letters from Baghdad* that brought patrons into Breasted Hall. An ISAC Winter Festival focusing on ancient Babylonia inspired area families to explore our galleries, and a bread-making class kicked off what we hope will be a series of public graduate-student workshops in ISAC's downstairs LaSalle Bank room.

While the bulk of this year's programming centered on the two special exhibitions, *Back to School in Babylonia* and *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, our monthly ISAC lectures allowed for more variety. This year, we hosted the following guests for these free ISAC lectures:

- October: Susanne Paulus (ISAC), "Back to School in Babylonia: The Aims of Babylonian Education"
- November: Paul Delnero (Johns Hopkins University), "What Did You Learn in School Today? A Day in the Life of a Mesopotamian Student"
- December: Jana Matuszak (ISAC), "Law and Morality in Sumerian Satirical Tales"
- February: Carolina López-Ruiz (University of Chicago Divinity School and Department of Classics), "The Phoenicians Strike Back!"
- March: Claude Rilly (Sorbonne University), "The Decipherment of Meroitic"
- April: Jeffrey Stackert (University of Chicago Divinity School), "Judah in the Shadow of the Assyrian Empire"
- May: Korshi Dosoo (Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg), "Christian Egypt and Its 'Pagan' Past"
- June: Daniel Schwemer (Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg), "Living in a Precarious World: Magical Rituals from Ancient Mesopotamia"

In addition to our in-person public offerings at ISAC and our avenues of online engagement through social media and YouTube, we continued to run successful ISAC travel tours that brought members of the public around the world to explore the cultures of ancient West Asia and North Africa. We started this year

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

with an ISAC members' tour to Paris, France, that explored the city's fascination with all things Egyptian. Tour participants explored the Egyptian collection at the Louvre, learned about the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde from a member of the French Ministry of Culture's conservation team, visited the traveling Ramesses exhibition, and sampled the streets and cafes of Paris with ISAC's chief curator, Marc Maillot.

The fall saw a return to Egypt on a sold-out grand tour from Cairo to Abu Simbel, granting travelers one-of-a-kind access to the pyramids and sphinx at Giza, the newly opened Grand Egyptian Museum, and ISAC's work at Medinet Habu and Luxor Temple.

In the late spring, travelers had the opportunity to journey the Silk Road with Prof. Gil Stein on a tour of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Tour participants trekked across ancient landscapes and set out into the Fergana Valley to explore traditional crafts and the artisans that produce them, with many of the artisans using techniques that have been passed down from generation to generation.

ADULT EDUCATION

Classes, Lectures, and Book Signings

ISAC saw a strong uptake of adult education classes in 2023–24, particularly in the summer and fall. In summer 2023, Tine Rasalle (PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) taught the class “Exploring the Dead Sea Scrolls.” In fall 2023, University of Chicago Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations graduate student Didi el-Behaedi taught “Archaeology of Pharaonic Egypt,” which enrolled the largest number of students of any archaeology class ever taught in the program. ISAC Research Archives head Foy Scalf offered a three-class sequence on ancient Egyptian languages, starting with hieratic in fall 2023, followed by Late Egyptian in winter 2024 and Demotic in spring 2024—the first time the Adult Education program has tried a class bundle; the uptake was good enough that we plan to try it again next year with another series of language classes. In winter 2024, ISAC senior conservator Alison Whyte and Adult Education manager Tasha Vorderstrasse cotaught “Color in Ancient Art,” and University of Chicago undergraduate Dani Levy taught the free ISAC class “Tuppi Appreciation Class: Draw Your Own Tuppi!” In spring 2024, Vorderstrasse taught the free ISAC class “Edmonia Lewis: Creating the Death of Cleopatra.”

Vorderstrasse also helped facilitate University College London professor Eleanor Robson's Zoom lecture “Back to House F: Personal Reflections in Research” in January 2024; cosponsored, with the Chicago chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt, the “Neferura: The Pharaoh's Daughter” book talk and signing with author Malayna Evans in February; and organized the ISAC Armchair Travelers lecture “The Egyptian Book of the Dead at the Getty Museum,” presented in February by Scalf and Getty Museum assistant curator Sara Cole, and “Temples in the Farthest South: Natakamani and Amanitore at Wad Ben Naga, Sudan,” given by Czech archaeologist Pavel Onderka in May. Vorderstrasse also played her harp at the ISAC Winter Festival “Stories from Ancient Babylonia” in December 2023.

University and Other Tours

University tours continued to be popular during the year, again particularly in the fall because of University of Chicago Core Curriculum classes. Over 500 students took tours of the ISAC Museum led by Vorderstrasse, more than doubling the number of students served in 2022–23. A majority of students took the postcolonial tour of the ISAC Museum. In addition, staff from Registration and Tablet Collection curator Susanne Paulus facilitated object-based learning for some tours, and ISAC archaeologists Bruce Williams and Lisa Heidorn helped make Fourth Cataract pottery from the Sudan available to students to learn more about Nubia. The trend this year was toward more object-based learning activities in Registration and the Archaeology Labs. It remains to be seen whether this trend continues in 2024–25. The number of University of Chicago Laboratory School students also increased; in addition to

object-based learning activities for sixth-grade Lab School students in the ISAC Museum, an Ancient Math tour was developed for fourth-grade Lab School students, who also visited the special exhibitions on separate occasions.

A special Juneteenth tour was developed for the ISAC Museum app (fig. 1). The purpose of the tour was to raise awareness of Black artists', historians', and intellectuals' engagement with the ancient world. The idea for the tour came from the successful Black History Month posts that had been done over the past three years. The aim was to highlight certain objects in the gallery, then provide information about a particular individual and focus on the art, literature, or poetry that individual created. A brochure, put together to help promote the app tour, was funded by the University thanks to a grant from Juneteenth programming funds. It is hoped that the tour can be expanded next year and a small guidebook produced to accompany it.

Social Media

Social media continued to enjoy strong engagement across all our channels on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. ISAC also started a presence on Threads.

ISAC now has as many as 39,000 followers on Facebook and 12,900 on Instagram. One reason social-media engagement greatly increased had to do with Susanne Paulus's *Back to School in Babylonia* exhibition. Carter Rote (MA, Center for Middle Eastern Studies), Pallas Eible Hargro (University of Chicago undergraduate), and Sara Ware (University of Chicago undergraduate) wrote posts, and then Jane Gordon (PhD candidate, Assyriology) wrote posts related to the exhibition. The Tuppi-related posts were particularly popular, but so were the videos about the exhibition. Social-media engagement with Museum exhibitions continued during the *Pioneers of the Sky* exhibition, with Vorderstrasse writing posts at the suggestion of exhibition curator Marie-Laure Chambrade that focused on female pioneers of aerial photography. Tablet posts continued to be consistently popular with the social-media audience. Other media outreach included the participation of Maillot and retired ISAC curator Emily Teeter discussing ancient Egyptian cats on the *Brain Scoop* YouTube channel.



Figure 1. Juneteenth tour app.

YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAM

The Youth and Family Program grew this year, surpassing last year's attendance numbers.

Field Trip Highlights

From July 2023 to June 2024, a total of 2,707 people came to the ISAC Museum for seventy-one educational field trips. These programs were led and taught by a team of five museum educators—lead museum educator Sydney Ginsberg, museum education specialist Samantha Suppes, and museum educators Elena Tiedens, Anika Miro-Quesada, and Yunyi Xing—in addition to Youth and Family Program manager Hodge.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Six educational programs were offered, all of them standards aligned, engaging, and inquiry based. Three of the programs were standard field trips, one for each age group: Time Travelers (grades K–4), Artifact Analysis (grades 5–8), and Ancient Innovators (grades 9–12). Two field trips were newly added. One was based on this year’s special exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*. Called “Back to School in Mesopotamia,” this field trip was for grades 5–12. The second, developed in response to popular requests on evaluation forms, focused on the mummification process and was also for grades 5–12. Of the seventy-one educational field trips attended this year, three were Ancient Innovators, ten were Time Travelers, ten were Back to School in Mesopotamia, twenty-one were Mummification, and twenty-seven were Artifact Analysis.

For the second year, the Youth and Family Program had a pro bono budget to work with during the school year. Thanks to this budget, as well as to partnerships with Communities in Schools, Amplify, Neighborhood School Partnership, Project Exploration, and educators across campus, approximately 495 people in nine groups came for a Youth and Family educational program—a 98 percent increase compared with last year. We look forward to continuing to increase these numbers in the coming year.

Program Highlights

In addition to field trips, the Youth and Family Program offered weekend workshops and weekend events. Weekend workshops are purposefully designed to be small, intimate learning experiences on a niche subject for students and families with fewer than twenty-five attendees and lasting two hours. Weekend events are designed to be much larger (with more than 100 attendees) and longer (up to four hours) and are designed to be drop-in style with a lot of options. Haunted Halloween and Nowruz are two examples.

In 2023–24, we taught more than 1,666 people during these events. We focused on expanding our four annual weekend events—Haunted Halloween, Nowruz, Ancient Earth Day, and Ancient Game Day (fig. 2). We also continued the pattern of offering weekend workshops once a month on new topics—for example, on ancient languages. This new format was first tried in 2022–23 and, proven successful, was continued this year. As a result, we saw more returning families, as well as a large number of families visiting the ISAC Museum for the first time.



Figure 2. Haunted Halloween, Nowruz, and Ancient Earth Day posters designed by Josh Tulisiak.

Haunted Halloween hosted 1,113 attendees—our largest Halloween event to date. During this event, we offered our first-ever costume contest, engaging directly with guests, encouraging clever costumes, and taking great event photos. The winning family earned a free family membership to ISAC. We continued to offer a lesson on mummification; this updated offering was immensely successful, teaching hundreds of guests through an engaging format in Breasted Hall. We also continued popular activities newly introduced last year, including spooky tours, new craft options in the LaSalle Bank classroom, and the opportunity to help decorate a mural in the hallway.

Nowruz had around 250 attendees, many of them community members and new faces interested in learning about the holiday. We incorporated new activities and crafts, as well as opportunities catering to younger audience members. This year we also used Breasted Hall to screen a movie, and we hope to include a performance next year.

Ancient Earth Day—our second such event—had around 150 attendees. We were excited to engage with guests in the galleries using discovery carts and a new teaching methodology, as well as to help people learn about ancient plants while planting a sustainable garden to take home.

In addition to these four large annual events, the Youth and Family Program organized four weekend workshops. Three of them were brand-new lessons created in 2023–24: Ancient Languages, Ancient Oceans, and Learn Cuneiform. The Ancient Languages program used the Project Archaeology curriculum model to engage students in learning Meroitic, cuneiform, and hieroglyphs. This workshop hosted approximately fifteen students. In partnership with the Shedd Aquarium, the Ancient Oceans program welcomed approximately ten high-school students in a two-part program at ISAC and the Shedd to learn about ancient oceans and waterways. The Learn Cuneiform program was done in partnership with the special exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia* and taught approximately twenty-five students all about cuneiform. The fourth workshop, Ancient Egyptian Murals, continued an existing program that has been consistently popular and that taught approximately fifteen students.

Another new program taught in partnership with Vorderstrasse and the Adult/Continuing Education program was Astronomy Friday. This program used a discovery-cart methodology to engage with audience members of all ages on a Friday evening. Around seventy-five people came over the course of two hours to learn about ancient astronomy in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Islamic empire. In addition to Vorderstrasse and Hodge, Metcalf Program education intern Madeleine Roberts-Ganim taught at this new event.

VOLUNTEER AND DOCENT PROGRAM

ISAC's volunteers and docents remain strong and committed. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not been able to onboard as many new volunteers as we traditionally did, but the few we have welcomed, and all the volunteers who have stayed with us, are cherished and vital members of ISAC. The time each volunteer gives to highly specific projects is essential, as we make our research available to the public at no cost. The work our volunteers do ensures that future generations will have greater access to ISAC scholarship.

In May, the ISAC docents launched a weekly Discovery Tour program. These hour-long, docent-led tours of the ISAC Museum take place every Saturday at 1:30 p.m. The tours meet in Breasted Hall for a brief overview of ISAC's history and work, then head into the galleries to explore our collections. Meticulously planned and managed by two longtime ISAC docents, Marilyn Murray and Margaret Schmid, Discovery Tours have been a successful way to attract new visitors. Whereas most Discovery Tours cover general highlights of the ISAC Museum, a few tours have focused on specific ancient cultures or particular sections of the galleries. Each Discovery Tour has inspired ISAC patrons to explore the ancient cultures we represent a bit more deeply than they might do on their own.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Throughout the year, we also hosted Volunteer Days at ISAC—a chance for volunteers to get together over coffee and bagels and to meet with ISAC staff and faculty in Breasted Hall and the galleries. This year, highlights included tours of the Museum with chief curator Maillot, curator Kiersten Neumann, and Adult Education manager Vorderstrasse; a talk about cultural heritage with Prof. Gil Stein; special exhibition-related talks and tours; and a town hall with ISAC's new director, Timothy Harrison.



DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

OVERLEAF: Foundation figure with inscription
of Rim-Sin. Copper alloy. Iraq, attributed to Ur.
Old Babylonian period. ISACM A29804.

DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

BILL COSPER, BRAD LENZ, AND EMILY SMITH

The Development and Membership team manages ISAC’s fundraising, member programming, and special events. Together, these operations sustain and expand a base of partners and supporters committed to advancing ISAC’s mission and goals.

The Development team works closely with constituents from across the organization, including senior administrative leaders, faculty, researchers, program staff, the Advisory Council, and volunteers, as well as with the University of Chicago’s Alumni Relations and Development office. In the 2023–24 academic and fiscal year, the Development team comprised the following:

- Bill Cosper, director of development
- Brad Lenz, assistant director of development and membership
- Emily Smith, development and events associate

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

ISAC finished fiscal year 2023–24 in a strong financial position. The generous support of our members, donors, and partners was essential for every aspect of our operations, from field excavations, research initiatives, and cultural preservation projects to educational programs, the ISAC Museum, and more. The generosity of our Advisory Council, members, volunteers, and other donors continues to strengthen our standing as a prominent center for research and academic excellence.

Fundraising category	Fiscal year 2023–24 amount
Fundraising progress*	\$4,455,335
Expendable cash	\$2,735,625
Realized bequests	\$802,856
Payments on multiyear pledges	\$1,131,885
New pledge commitments	\$50,000
New deferred gifts and documented bequests	\$40,909

**Fundraising progress is the total combined dollar amount of all new gifts, memberships, multiyear pledges, and documented estate commitments received during the fiscal year.*

This year featured a number of milestone achievements. Among them was the appointment of Derek Kennet as the first Howard E. Hallengren Professor of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology, a position endowed by longtime ISAC supporter and Advisory Council member Howard Hallengren. Other highlights included the return to our historic work at Nippur, led by Augusta McMahon; expansion of the Jill Carlotta Maher Youth and Family Program; and preparations for James Osborne’s anticipated excavations at Turkmen-Karahöyük, among many others.

DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

Our fiscal year 2023–24 fundraising success was vital to all we accomplished in Chicago and at field sites and other locations. These accomplishments have laid a very solid foundation for even more success in fiscal year 2024–25. The following is just a sampling of the key initiatives our supporters will help bring to life:

- Celebrating the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey and Chicago House and readying them for their next hundred years
- Commencing new field projects and sustaining existing ones
- Presenting new Museum special exhibitions
- Continuing to grow our work with students and families both within and outside our walls
- Expanding the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation and its projects
- Publishing the Chicago Demotic Dictionary
- Implementing technology upgrades for the Museum collections and Registration, Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL) lab, and Research Archives

MEMBER PROGRAMMING

This year marked a postpandemic return to dynamic member programming. From behind-the-scenes access to ISAC's Museum and its faculty to tour and travel opportunities, these events provide members with great insight into our ancient past and what we can learn from it today.

A particular focus this year was on collaborative member programming with other local cultural organizations. We worked with the Field Museum, around its exhibition *First Kings of Europe*, on a two-part series of events for ISAC and Field Museum members. The first event took place at ISAC and featured four ISAC scholars—Joseph Harris, Marc Maillot, Kiersten Neumann, and Susanne Paulus—who gave rotating tours of the Museum collection based on the theme of hierarchy and inequality in human societies (fig. 1).



Figure 1. Curator Kiersten Neumann giving a tour to ISAC and Field Museum members in the ISAC Museum galleries.

The second event took place at the Field Museum and included a lecture by the cocurator of *First Kings of Europe*, William Parkinson, followed by the opportunity to see the exhibition after the museum closed to the public.

We also hosted a collaborative member event with the Renaissance Society to bring its exhibition with Dala Nasser, which centered on ancient Lebanon, into conversation with ISAC's ancient Mesopotamian collections. ISAC and Renaissance Society members met at the Renaissance Society for a tour of Nasser's exhibition (fig. 2) and then walked over to ISAC for a lecture by Kiersten Neumann that explored such topics as mythological conceptions and practices related to natural materials and intercultural aspects of divinity, followed by a reception in the Museum galleries.

This year we hosted two Member Appreciation Days, each of which featured programming and a buffet dinner. The summer Member Appreciation Day featured a talk by Susanne Paulus and docent-led tours of the Museum. ISAC's new director, Tim Harrison, gave a talk at our winter Member Appreciation Day, and ISAC scholars were present in the galleries to talk with members about their work. These scholars included Çağlayan Bal, Maggie Geoga, Joseph Harris, Morag Kersel, Dominik Lukas, Augusta McMahon, Hervé Reculeau, Yorke Rowan, and Mehrnoush Soroush.

In conjunction with our CAMEL lab's work on ancient landscapes, we presented a monthly film series titled *Movement and Landscape in Iranian Cinema*. Abbas Alizadeh kindly introduced many of the films, and Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi introduced one of the films, whose title was borrowed from a poem she translated and published.

For our two special exhibitions this year, we hosted members' previews the evening before their public opening. The preview for *Back to School in Babylonia* featured a panel with the curatorial team moderated by lead exhibition curator Susanne Paulus. At the preview for *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, members of ISAC's CAMEL lab shared techniques of landscape archaeology using monitors and laptops.

We hosted two popular behind-the-scenes tours of ISAC Registration, led by Helen McDonald. Additionally, Anne Flannery led members on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum Archives, followed by a special viewing of archival photography from ISAC's past expeditions to Persepolis. We screened a documentary about the Afghan Mobile Museum Outreach Project, which was followed by a conversational discussion with Gil Stein. We also launched a new series of virtual excavation reports, the first of which featured field director J. Brett McClain discussing the Epigraphic Survey's most recent season.

This year also marked the return to a full schedule of our Breasted Society Salons. These events, which are open to members at the Breasted Society level, feature an exclusive talk by an ISAC scholar and dinner in the ISAC director's office. This year our salons focused on Anatolia with speakers Petra Goedegebuure, Naomi Harris, Tim Harrison, James Osborne, Emily Smith, and Theo van den Hout.

We led two members' tours this year. In January, a group joined us for a special tour in Los Angeles. During the trip, we visited the Getty Villa for curator-led tours of the museum and behind-the-scenes tours



Figure 2. ISAC and Renaissance Society members enjoying a visit to the Dala Nasser exhibition at the Renaissance Society.

DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

of J. Paul Getty's house and the museum's conservation labs, and we also took a curator-led tour of the Norton Simon Museum. Advisory Council member Aimee Drolet Rossi and her husband Peter Rossi generously opened their home to us for a dinner and reception.

In June, ISAC members traveled with Maggie Geoga to New York. There, we visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum for curatorial tours of their Egyptian collections, and we visited the Morgan Library & Museum for a tour with its curator of ancient West Asian seals and tablets. ISAC member Andrew Peters generously arranged for us to visit the Explorers Club, and Maggie Geoga gave a lecture at the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce, which was attended by our travelers and New York-based University of Chicago alumni.

Over the past year, we published three issues of our member magazine, *News & Notes*, that included scholarly articles such as "Lexical Lists and the Decipherment of Cuneiform" by Marta Díaz Herrera and "Women, Gender, and Religion in Mesopotamia" by Danielle Levy.

Continuing our momentum from this year, the year ahead will feature a number of exclusive, engaging, and informative member events at ISAC and beyond. We are deeply grateful for all our members, whose support helps make our work possible.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Through their leadership and generosity, ISAC's Advisory Council members are a crucial part of our success, and we are immensely grateful for them. Members of the Advisory Council engage with ISAC in many ways, including supporting projects financially, serving as ambassadors for ISAC, participating in tours, and providing guidance and advice.

As of June 30, 2024, ISAC Advisory Council members included:

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**Life member*

We were very sorry to lose longtime Council member Aldis Liventals in fiscal year 2023–24 (see page 7). He was a generous and deeply engaged supporter of all our work, with a particular passion for Mesopotamia and the Tablet Collection.

HONOR ROLL OF DONORS AND MEMBERS

ISAC expresses our deepest gratitude to all the generous supporters who advanced ISAC's mission and influence by making a new contribution, documented pledge, or stated commitment of \$100 or more during fiscal year 2023–24 (the period from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024). We take great pleasure in acknowledging their dedication and publicly recognizing the profound impact of their generosity on all we do.

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