

Magnus Widell

Magnus Widell studied Assyriology in Uppsala, Vienna, and Changchun and his research focuses on socio-economic, environmental, and agricultural issues in Mesopotamia. For the past two and a half years he has been working as a Research Associate at the Oriental Institute within the project, Modeling Ancient Settlement Systems (MASS). This unique project funded by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) biocomplexity program, is working to create an interactive framework for modeling the social, agricultural, and economic systems of ancient city-states in the Near East. The results will be important for understanding the development of ancient societies, human-environment interactions, and early settlement geography. Hardly surprising, Widell devoted most of the past year on research and administrative/editorial commitments within the MASS project. Whenever he could find some spare time, he continued to work on an edition of the unpublished Ur III tablets kept nearby at the University of Notre Dame. Widell has just been appointed the new Head of the Research Archives of the Institute, and more or less all his energy is at present devoted to this new and exciting job (see separate report).

Widell wrote, or completed, four scholarly articles this year dealing with the administration, economy, agriculture, and animal management of the third and second millennium B.C. These articles will appear in *Ugarit-Forschungen*, *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, and the *Proceedings on the Ur III Period* from the 2003 Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale held in London. In addition to these papers, Widell was a co-author of two collaborative MASS publications that currently are under peer review for *American Anthropologist* and the *Proceedings of the Santa Fe Institute Studies in the Sciences of Complexity*. These rather substantial papers deal with urbanization and land use in Upper Mesopotamia during the Bronze Age.

The past year has also seen the appearance of several articles on Ur III exchange and administration in journals such as *Orient*, *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal*, *Medelhavsmuseet*, and our own *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Widell also published a review of a book dealing with verbal forms in Akkadian, and a more popular introduction to the reprint of the moldy-oldie *Babylonian Life and History* by Wallis Budge.

Widell gave several conference presentations or invited talks this year. He started off in October with a talk at the Oriental Institute on the MASS project. In the same month, he also delivered an invited paper in the interdisciplinary workshop, Modeling Long-Term Culture Change at the Santa Fe Institute. This paper, which was entitled "Reconstructing a Third Millennium B.C. City State in Upper Mesopotamia: The Landscape Framework for the Simulation Model," was co-authored with T. J. Wilkinson. In November, he presented "Exchange(s) in the Ur III Period (2112–2004 B.C.)" at the 2004 American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meeting in San Antonio, and in March this year, he gave the talk "Modeling Mesopotamia: Preliminary Findings from the Upper Khabur" at the 215th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society in Philadelphia. He continued straight from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., where he presented a poster entitled "Modeling Ancient Settlement Systems in a Dynamic Environment" at the Second Biocomplexity in the Environment Awardees Meeting hosted by the National Science Foundation.
