

Donald Whitcomb

This might be considered the “year of Aqaba,” beginning with last year’s *Annual Report* that featured Aqaba on the cover and as thematic illustrations. This research project, which was initiated by **Donald Whitcomb** in 1986, has continued quietly for some seven years until this new publicity. This attention set the stage for the 1993 season of excavations (see separate report). The 1993 season was the largest and longest since the initial discoveries of the 1987 season (some forty-five days of digging, from November 1 until after Christmas). The results of this season were the subject of a lecture to the Oriental Institute membership in mid-March.

Finally the Annual Dinner was held in honor of the Aqaba Project, for which the author briefly discussed "Aqaba and Islamic Archaeology at the Oriental Institute."

Beyond the Aqaba Project, Don attended the Fourth ARAM conference in Oxford on "Cultural Interchange in the Umayyad Era," where he gave a paper, "Were there amsar in Syria?" The Syrian context will be considered next year in Damascus when he will discuss "The Middle Islamic Period in the Archaeology of Bilad al-Sham" at the Bilad al-Sham conference. This context was reflected in his course, "Late Levant," which he taught during the winter quarter. Don continued to direct the Middle East Urbanism workshop, with the assistance of Tim Harrison. His lecture on the Arabian city resulted in an article, "Urbanism in Arabia." This was in turn a by-product of his article, "Out of Arabia: Early Islamic Aqaba in Its Regional Context," now submitted for publication by the French Institute in Cairo.

Work also progressed on *An Encyclopedia of Islamic Archaeology*, with the first articles already submitted. One of the major problems facing this project is to keep the subject limited, as correspondents suggest an ever-increasing range of subjects. Fortunately this complexity is matched by a wide enthusiasm for this much-needed tool for Islamic archaeologists and historians and a wider group of scholars. This encyclopedia will establish Islamic archaeology as a field of study, much as Breasted established the "Fertile Crescent" at the beginning of this century. The interest that the Aqaba Project has generated this year has been most gratifying; it is possibly more important to look at the broader context of the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Archaeology*, a deserving project in the tradition of Breasted and the Oriental Institute.
