



# News & Notes

Issued confidentially to members and friends

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## TOWNPLANNING IN AQABA, THEN AND NOW

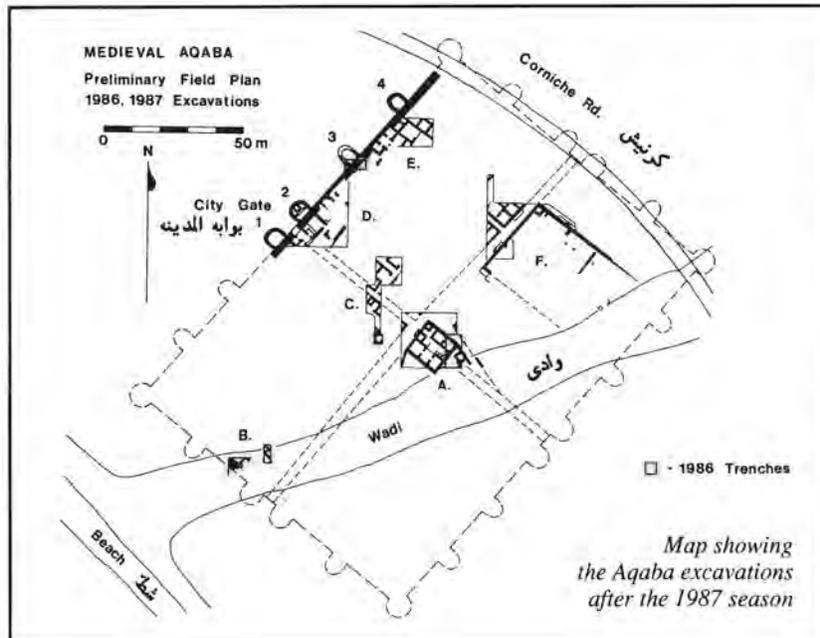
Donald Whitcomb

One of the greatest challenges in the excavation of a city is its complexity and variability. Accidents of the history of neighborhoods and buildings, combined with the large scale, make accurate prediction almost impossible. Thus, when it became apparent in 1986 that we had found the entire early Islamic town of Ayla (as Aqaba was then known), one of the first problems was how to begin this excavation. The amazing luck we enjoyed with the 1986 trial trenches allowed us

to formulate a series of hypotheses. We found indications of the city wall in two trenches and combining the fragment in trench B with the 6 meter contour line allowed us to predict the orientation of the walls, the size of the town and the position of the gates.

Our extensive excavations in 1987 fully confirmed these hypotheses (actually guesses); over 80 meters of the city wall were excavated, as well as four semi-circular towers. The northwest city gate (the Bab al-Misir or Egyptian Gate) was found within 10 meters of its predicted location. This gate, flanked by two towers, opened onto an axial street, which met another axial street at the center of the town. This success has led to further predictions which will be the basis for the 1988 season of excavations.

The entire eastern wall of Ayla is now drawn on the map as dotted lines, bravely predicting the location of the wall with its towers and an eastern gate (the Bab al-Hijaz or Arabian Gate). Most of this wall is south of the wadi or drainage channel which cuts through the site, within an area of barbed wire and British-built barracks used most recently by the Jordanian coast guard. Fortunately, the military has just moved to new quarters and I was



Map showing  
the Aqaba excavations  
after the 1987 season

able to visit this part of the site with Mr. Mo-hammad Balqar of the Aqaba Region Authority during a brief visit this March.

I was impressed by the height of preservation on this part of the mound, over 6 meters below the cement floors of the barracks. I walked to where the sea wall should cross the wadi and there, a line of granite stones was clearly visible. Encouraged, we walked along the predicted line of the eastern wall and I confidently pointed out the

location of the eastern gate. The southeast corner of the town had been cut away and is a parking area for the camp; even as we stood there a clear line of granite facing stones was still visible exactly where I had predicted it would be. Somewhat embarrassed by this display of foresight, I explained that this was possible only because the early Islamic townplanners were such good engineers. "Ah," said Mr. Balqar, "just like today!"

Indeed Aqaba is fortunate to have a large, modern planning commission, the Aqaba Region Authority (ARA). Under the direction of Gen. Kakish, the development of the port and its hinterland, from commercial aspects to residential and cultural areas, is subjected to careful planning. An awareness of the town's past is an active concern. It was the ARA's Dr. Dureid Mahasneh, academically a marine biologist, who first assisted me in the 1986 trenches. Before the 1987 season, engineer Mohammad al-Azab gridded the site for us. It now seems that the new cultural center planned for Aqaba may include a small museum, the core of which might be the exhibit currently on display in the Oriental Institute Museum.

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*Marble capital found on the beach at Aqaba, photo by D. Whitcomb.*

Mr. Balqar promised to remove the barracks, peg out the wall alignments and grid the eastern area in preparation for the excavations this Fall. While we traced the walls, we looked at a plan of the proposed new city marina. Happily we could now determine that the first phase of buildings for it would not conflict with the archaeological remains. The investors in the marina have recognized that this historical monument need not inhibit development but rather can enhance the character of this new usage of the area. The cooperation between these investors, the Aqaba Region Authority, and the Department of Antiquities promises to provide a model for the preservation of cultural heritage.

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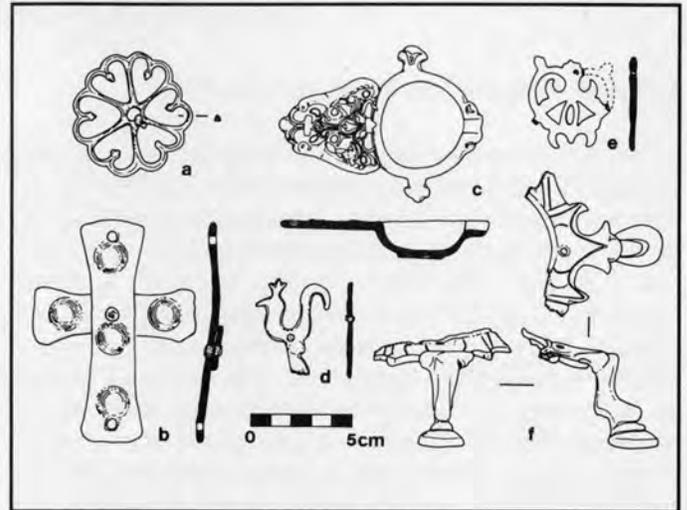
One of the dreams of every archaeologist is that, in some way, his (or her) site might excavate itself. Ayla, already almost an ideal site, has revealed important new artifacts during this winter. Storm waves can combine with a swell several meters in height when the wind comes from the south. Such waves this winter uncovered two large pieces of carved marble on the beach. The pieces are capitals, adorned with acanthus leaves, which would have fitted the tops of pilasters. Each has an opposing finished edge, indicating a matched set on either side of a monumental gateway. The backs have the remains of iron clamps for attachment. My first thought was the adornment of the Sea Gate (the



*Capital from the site of Jerash, photo by D. Whitcomb.*



Display of the Chinese ceramics in the Aqaba exhibition, photo by J. Richerson.



Metal artifacts from the 1987 season at Aqaba

The self-excavation of these capitals has a rewarding post-script. The guard on the site, Hajj 'Uthman, immediately telephoned the Department of Antiquities in Amman. They called Niyazi Sha'ban and Suleiman Farajat in Petra, the nearest inspectorate, who came and recorded the stones. The municipality of Aqaba sent a bulldozer to the site and the stones were lifted from the beach and placed by the guard's tent for safekeeping. Thus the capitals are recorded, safe, and on display for the public to see. Even more important than a self-excavating site, through the cooperation of the Department of Antiquities, Aqaba Region Authority, and the people of Aqaba, we now have a self-preserving site for the enhancement of Jordan.

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The Aqaba exhibit at the Oriental Institute will continue into the summer. In the fall it will move to Jordan.

Bab al-Bahr) of the town of Ayla, but a search for parallels indicates a more complex story may be involved.

A number of virtually identical capitals are found in the great site of Jerash, especially in the Forum and Temple of Dionysios (the Cathedral) along the main street (the Cardo) of this classical city in northern Jordan. Much of the decorative stone work at Jerash dates to the mid-second century. If this dating is correct for the pieces found on the beach, the capitals at Aqaba may belong, not to the Byzantine town or legionary camp of the fourth century, but to an earlier Roman town. We know that Trajan annexed the Nabataean kingdom in 106 A. D. and began construction of the *via nova Traiana*, the old "King's Highway," the southern end of which was anchored at Aqaba. If this dating is correct, these stones are the first architectural indication of the Nabataean/Roman port and suggest that this site cannot be far away.



General view of the Aqaba exhibition in the Oriental Institute, photo by J. Richerson.

## SPRING MEMBERS' COURSES

### Ptolemaic Egypt and the Hellenistic World

When Alexander of Macedon died in 323 B.C. his conquered lands were divided, with Egypt falling to his general Ptolemy. For three hundred years the Ptolemaic Dynasty governed Egypt, until the advance of the Romans brought the reign of Cleopatra to an end in 30 B.C. The history of Egypt under the Ptolemaic monarchs is a subject long ignored by Egyptologists, who have considered the period to be *jejune* — a subject scarcely worthy of mention at the back of a history book. The last twenty to thirty years, however, have seen a substantial increase in the publication of texts from this period, both in Greek, the language of the ruling Ptolemaic Dynasty and in Demotic, the script used by Egyptians of the late period to write their native language. Our picture of what life was actually like in Ptolemaic Egypt has been known, until recently, primarily from the work of Greek specialists using the large number of Greek texts recovered from Egypt. The Demotic documents are vital for shedding light on the everyday life of Egyptians, and the wealth of documents in both languages allows the social historian to construct a fairly detailed picture of what ordinary life was like in Egypt at this time — one of the few times in antiquity when one can study society in detail without relying exclusively on historical accounts written after the fact.

This course will examine Egypt in the Ptolemaic period in some depth both in regard to its internal social structure and to its relationship to the larger Hellenistic world. We will be interested especially in the relationship of Egyptian to Greek culture and the impact these two worlds had on each other. Ptolemaic Egypt will be seen to be a vital link between the old civilizations of the ancient Near East and the new cultures of the Hellenistic world after the conquest of Alexander. We will examine primary documents in translation wherever possible, supplemented by secondary historical analysis. Both Greek and Demotic sources will be used, including governmental texts as well as private family archives.

For those who would like to do advance reading, *The Hellenistic World* by F.W. Walbank, Harvard University Press, 1982, is recommended.

#### INSTRUCTOR:

Joseph Manning is a Ph. D. candidate at the Oriental Institute and is presently a Lecturer in Egyptology, teaching Demotic texts in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. His thesis topic deals with land and property transfer in Egypt in the Ptolemaic period.

Class will meet at the Oriental Institute from 10 a.m. until noon on Saturdays, beginning June 18 and continuing through August 13 (no class meeting July 2).

### Egyptian Hieroglyphic Calligraphy

Egyptian hieroglyphs are the writing system of Pharaonic Egypt, employed from about 3300 B.C. to about 250 A.D. to express in writing the language of ancient Egypt. It originated perhaps as a pictographic system, but under the pressures of developing literary forms and language needs of a technically advancing and complex culture, the writing system developed phonetic (phonogramic) writing, while still employing the pictorial script. Once the language script became partly phonetic, that is, signs stood for particular sounds, an alphabet could be discerned. This alphabet consisted of those phonograms that expressed a single sound value. This alphabet is the key that has unlocked the hieroglyphic script of ancient Egypt.

In this course, both the history and the mechanics of hieroglyphic writing will be explored. The aim is to familiarize the student with the alphabetic signs, the other phonogramic signs, the pictographs, and to demonstrate their usage. The course will also familiarize the student with hieroglyphic signlists and how to use them. These are found in good, complete Egyptian language grammar books, such as Sir Alan Gardiner's which we will use. The course will also introduce writing of the hieroglyphs and the acquisition of a good calligraphic hieroglyphic hand. Selected monuments in the Egyptian gallery of the Museum will be used to apply the skills taught in class. Exercises will also be assigned for each class to provide extra practice and a self-progress assignment.

This course will *not* teach participants to read ancient Egyptian; rather, it will focus on learning to recognize and draw the hieroglyphic signs and to understand how they functioned in writing the language. For those who may wish to study Egyptian grammar, this course will serve as a very basic introduction.

The required text will be *Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy* by Henry George Fischer, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979, which costs approximately \$10. Highly recommended is *Egyptian Grammar* by Alan H. Gardiner, 3rd ed. Oxford, 1957 and subsequent printings. The price of this book is \$49.95 and it is a necessary text for any serious student of ancient Egyptian grammar. However, for purposes of this course, copies of relevant sections may be duplicated for about \$10.

#### INSTRUCTOR:

Frank Yurco is a Ph. D. candidate at the Oriental Institute and has taught numerous classes in Egyptian language and history for both the Oriental Institute and the Field Museum.

Class will meet at the Oriental Institute from 10 a.m. until noon on Saturdays, beginning June 4 and continuing through July 23 (no class meeting July 2).

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Class sizes will be limited and early registration is recommended

**FURTHER INFORMATION 702-9507.**

Tuition is \$60 plus \$30 for annual membership in the Oriental Institute.

Please register me for the course

Ptolemaic Egypt

Calligraphy

I am a member and enclose a check for \$60

I am not a member but enclose a SEPARATE check for \$30 to cover a one year Oriental Institute membership

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Please make checks payable to:

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE. Mail to: EDUCATION OFFICE, The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637

## ORIENTAL INSTITUTE 1989 ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOUR TO EGYPT • MARCH 4-22, 1989

A repeat of the sold-out March 1988 tour, this 19 day trip will provide a fascinating look at the art, history and culture which originated in the Nile Valley over 5,000 years ago. Led by an Egyptologist from the Oriental Institute, the tour features a five-day Nile cruise on a Sheraton ship. Please telephone or write the Membership Office to be placed on the mailing list for the complete trip itinerary, which will become available in late summer. *Membership Office, The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637 • (312) 702-9513*

## SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS FOR CHILDREN

Special interest tours for children, ages 6-12, will be given in July and August on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. Each tour lasts about 30 minutes and will be followed by an optional pencil and paper gallery activity. Total program time is approximately one hour. There is no fee and no reservations are needed. Specific titles will be announced in the Summer Program brochure which will come to members in early June. For further information, call the Museum Education Office, 702-9507.



## NIPPUR EXHIBIT IN THE MUSEUM

A small exhibit about the excavations at Nippur, *Coming to Grips with an Ancient City: A Century of Excavations, 1888-1988*, will open in the Museum on May 17th and continue into the summer. 1988 marks the hundredth year of American excavations at Nippur, and the fortieth year of work at Nippur by the Oriental Institute. This special display commemorates the double anniversary with photographs, drawings, plans and artifacts. Those attending the dinner in the Museum for Nippur on May 16th will be treated to a preview of this exhibition, including the Aramaic incantation bowl pictured above.

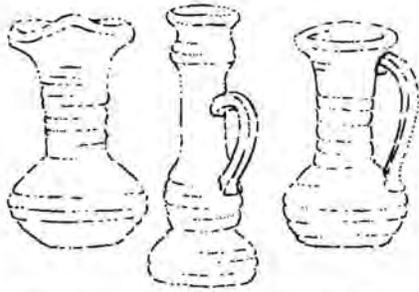
*Please call 702-9513 for information about the dinner.*

## FREE SUNDAY MOVIES AT THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

All films will be shown at 2 p.m. in Breasted Hall

- May 8** Megiddo: City of Destruction
- May 15** Preserving Egypt's Past
- May 22** Egypt's Pyramids: Houses of Eternity
- May 29** The Big Dig
- June 12** Champollion: Egyptian Hieroglyphs Deciphered
- June 19** Rivers of Time
- June 26** Myth of the Pharaohs/  
Ancient Mesopotamia

# THE SUQ سوق



**Hebron Glass** just arrived from Israel. This beautiful, clear glass in shades of cobalt blue, turquoise, purple and green is a trademark of Hebron. Each piece is hand blown, making it, therefore, one of a kind. Most are in the shape of vases.

Approx. 3" tall **\$4.50**      Members **\$4.05**  
Approx. 5" tall **\$6.00**      Members **\$5.40**

**Coming soon** a large shipment of new lapis and coin silver jewelry from Afghanistan. The best quality I've seen in a long time.



**Modern Egyptian Mummy Beads** are strung on these handmade gold filled hoops, forming a contemporary design very reminiscent of its ancient counterpart. The beads are subdued shades of beige and blue.

1" diameter **\$11.50**      Members **\$10.35**

Top quality **natural lapis chip necklace**. Beautiful, rich hues of blue and pyrite in this continuously strung lapis chip necklace.

32" length **\$46.00**      Members **\$41.40**

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Illinois residents please add 8% sales tax on all items ordered.*

## SUQ Inventory Sale • June 7-12



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