



News & Notes

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The Journal Of Near Eastern Studies Begins Its Hundredth Year

Robert D. Biggs

It may have seemed strange—especially to Europeans—to find that in the spring of 1884 a young teacher of Hebrew in the small town of Morgan Park, Illinois in the American West should launch a new journal boldly called *Hebraica*. This young American scholar was, of course, William Rainey Harper who was to become, only a few years later, the first president of the new University of Chicago. It was typical of his later fame as a bold mover that he started out with big ideas. On the first page of the first issue are the names of his two associate editors, Paul Haupt (who had been called to the recently founded Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore only a few years earlier) and Hermann Strack, professor of theology at the University of Berlin. In starting out in association with two German scholars, he explicitly gave recognition to the superiority of German scholarly work on the Semitic languages. After listing what he saw as desiderata in the American study of Semitic languages, he went on to say (vol. 1, p. 2), [*Hebraica*] will aim to serve as a means of intercommunication between scholars engaged in the various departments of Semitic work. It will particularly encourage original investigation. Its pages will be open to the discussion of all topics relating to the Semitic languages, literature, or history."

In this same first issue, Harper called attention to the founding of two other journals within the previous several



George G. Cameron, first editor of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* in a 1971 photograph, courtesy of Mrs. George G. Cameron

months, *Literatur-Blatt fuer Orientalische Philologie and Zeitschrift fuer Keilschriftforschung und Verwandte Gebiete* (the latter still being published under a slightly different name), reflecting on the excitement in Orientalist circles, particularly, in progress in understanding Assyrian (the language of Babylonia and Assyria, deciphered not many years before). As he put it, "... what department of study can show the institution of three such Journals within six months?"

With Harper's appointment at Yale, the new journal followed him to the East, only to return with him to Chicago, where the first issue to appear under the auspices of the University of Chicago Press appeared in October 1890, even before the university had opened its doors to students. In fact, the journal was the first to be published by the University of Chicago Press. During the intervening years, a subtitle had been added: "A Quarterly Journal in the Interests of Semitic Study." It was only a small step in 1895 to change the name of the journal to *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, a name fitting perfectly with the aims Harper had set out in the first issue in 1884.

This is not the place for a detailed history of the journal (which would surely involve work in the University Archives for the early years). Rather, I will try to recount (partly based on oral traditions within the Oriental Institute) some of the people, the crises, and some of the courageous acts which brought us almost to our centenary.

With President Harper's death in 1906, his younger brother, the Assyriologist Robert Francis Harper (1864-1914) became the editor, succeeded upon his death by John Merlin Powis Smith (1866-1932), a major Old Testament scholar of his day, but now little remembered. Smith, who had served under Breasted as administrator in the Department of Oriental Languages, was known as "Jumpy" Smith (from his initials J.M.P.). He died in 1932 and was succeeded by Martin Sprengling as editor.

With Martin Sprengling (1877-1959) we come to a man whom one of my colleagues called "quite a character," albeit a controversial one. A professional baseball player in his younger years, he was later the coach of the Oriental Institute baseball team. His field of scholarship lay mainly in Arabic, Persian, and Pehlevi. I think it is much to his credit that he expanded the scope of the journal to cover the entire Near East, not merely the Semitic languages. Thus, Sumerian, Hittite, and other non-Semitic languages were included, paving the way for the change in name that was to come later. He is the only editor of the journal ever to be forced to resign. The unpleasant circumstances behind this are now sufficiently remote in time that they can be told more explicitly than Sprengling himself did in 1940, when he wrote, "He now finds himself in sufficient disagreement with a sufficiently large majority of his colleagues to make it to the best interest of his Department, the Oriental Institute, the *Journal*, the Press, and the University that he relinquish to them editorial control of this *Journal* beginning with the next volume." He says himself that he had been accused of "anti-British bias" in comments

he had made about recent publications. In effect, he defends his right to make statements that might be considered anti-British (he was commenting in the context of the war in Europe). What was left unsaid (at least in public) was that another issue was his pro-German sentiments. (His wife was German, and she and the family remained in Germany during the war.) It would be unfair to belabor this issue, but I should add that though a number of people have mentioned his pro-German sentiments, I have never heard anyone say that he defended Nazism. In any case, what was clear at the time was that the journal had fallen into disrepute. At that point the Department of Oriental Languages asked for Sprengling's resignation.

The lesson in that bitter dispute has not been lost on subsequent editors. There has never since been a format for editorial comment. Entanglement in the controversies of the modern Middle East has been avoided by the fact that the coverage of the journal is largely limited to the academic areas included in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the sponsor of the journal; in practical terms, we cover the Near East from prehistory to the time of World War I.

George G. Cameron, a pupil of Sprengling in Iranian studies, was appointed as editor in 1941 with volume 58. He came to the editorship at a very difficult time when the journal was in sad shape. The quarterly subscription reports from the Press for the years 1934 through 1949 are preserved, and they show a very bleak picture: in January, 1941 there were only 121 subscribers, down from 166 a year earlier, and 233 the year before that. An important factor, of course, was the loss of almost all foreign subscriptions because of the war. Our budget files do not go back further than 1939, but it is obvious from the memos that subscriptions had not met expenses for quite some time. It is clear that the journal could be published only because of subsidies. The Oriental Institute was at that time paying one-quarter of the total costs. A special fund provided by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Swift further made up the deficits.

It can hardly have been a surprise that in these circumstances the university administration decided to cease publication of the journal. George Cameron has told me of his appealing directly to President Hutchins and the president's agreeing to let the journal continue if the number of subscribers could be increased by a hundred within a year. Only someone with George Cameron's drive and enthusiasm could have accepted such a challenge. First of all, the journal needed a new name, and *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* seemed ideal. He persuaded the Press to promote a special introductory reduced rate, \$3.00 a year or two years for \$5.00. He set about soliciting articles for the first volume so there would be something specific to tempt potential subscribers. Using various membership lists, the promotion was distributed. Cameron personally wrote to a great many former subscribers, pointing out, for example, that there would be more emphasis on archaeology with an increased use of photographs. Cameron succeeded in meeting President Hutchins' challenge, but it had been a close call!

When George Cameron resigned from the University of Chicago in 1948 to accept a position at the University of Michigan, the Egyptologist Keith C. Seele (1897-1971) was appointed editor. Many Institute members will probably recall his last lecture at the Institute and the enthusiasm with which he reported on his excavations in Nubia. The same drive characterized his work as editor. While, in principle, he could ask for help from the Departmental secretary, the arrangement did not work to his satisfaction, and he ended up doing nearly all the work himself, including such things as wrapping and sending out books for review.

It was during Seele's years as editor that costs at the University of Chicago printing department became prohibitive and it was found that typesetting could be done more cheaply in London. Thus it was that the firm of Clowes began to do

our typesetting. This meant earlier and earlier deadlines—and a certain risk (all the manuscripts for one issue were lost in the mail between Chicago and London). Seele was insistent about punctuality, and if the July issue was not delivered in July, the journal's production staff could expect a visit or a sharply worded memo. He was so well organized that he could be away in Egypt for months at a time, leaving in the hands of his wife, Diederika Seele, the task of reading and returning proofs, offprint orders, and such. Except for the time of the lost manuscripts, the journal was never substantially late until the last months of his final illness.

Keith Seele was often not on the best of terms with colleagues who were more or less his contemporaries, but he was generous in his support of younger colleagues and students. He took pride in furthering the careers of capable young scholars by publishing their articles or asking them to review books.

When Keith Seele died in 1971, the chairman of the Department, Edward Wente, and several other colleagues asked me to consider taking on the journal editorship. I agreed, provided the Department would at the same time consider a structural change that I thought was needed. As a consulting editor, Seele had indeed consulted me, but none of us had any notion of day-to-day operations or had even been to the Journals Department at the Press. I suggested appointment of an associate editor who would be thoroughly acquainted with the entire operation. Thus, for example, one or the other could be absent for field work for several months and everything could proceed without a hitch. At the same time, I suggested dropping the consulting editors in favor of a procedure whereby the editors consulted broadly within the Department with whatever faculty member seemed most appropriate. Thus I was appointed editor and Wilferd Madelung, Professor of Islamic History, was appointed associate editor and together we began meetings with staff at the Press to get the journal moving again and began consulting with colleagues to make decisions on the mountain of manuscripts that had accumulated.

I came to a job far removed from the crises of the 1940's. The journal was in sound financial condition and was one of many journals published by the Journals Division of the University of Chicago Press. Financial questions have to be discussed occasionally, and I receive monthly financial reports, but the editor no longer has to be involved in the day-to-day finances as Sprengling and Cameron did. We have had a salaried assistant editor, L. Paula Woods, for the past several years. I have had excellent relations with Mrs. Jean Sacks, head of the Journals Department. When I wanted to add a "books received" section to inform readers promptly about new publications, she readily agreed to the scheduling changes needed; when we have wanted extra pages for special issues, she has agreed. Thanks to her generosity in allowing complimentary subscriptions, the Research Archives of the Oriental Institute receives journals which are important for our work but which are not otherwise to be found in Chicago, and at the same time, colleagues in countries with severe currency restrictions have access to our journal.

There have been potential crises, such as the closing of Clowes' plant in London due to labor problems and the difficulty of finding another typesetter. The first quotes were all considered prohibitively expensive, and we were not very confident that the firms could successfully cope with our complicated needs. Our suggestion of the young company of Eisenbrauns in Indiana (which specializes in the ancient Near East) was followed up, and they are now doing our composition. They have other advantages besides proximity: they have all the special diacritical marks we need for Near Eastern languages, and while they cannot set Egyptian hieroglyphics (as Clowes could), they routinely set Hebrew type. So we enter our hundredth year with composition done in Indiana, printing and mailing in Vermont, but the journal is still published in Chicago by the University of Chicago Press.

Prehistoric Times Unfolded

The evening of the opening of the exhibit on The Quest for Prehistory at the Oriental Institute on November 15, left the visitor in eerie spaceless, timeless suspension as only a plunge from the hubbub of the University of Chicago Campus in 1982 A.D. into village life of 6700 B.C. could do. The three-hour program was in two parts:

First, there was the visit to the site in Jarmo, part of present-day Iraq, where Bob and Linda Braidwood began excavations in the late 1940s. They found a small settlement dated to about 6700 B.C., of some 150 farmers, who lived there year round and used domesticated grains and herd animals as their primary source of food.

In his Prehistoric Men, Bob Braidwood comments:

"Prehistory means the time before written history began. Actually, more than 99 percent of the human story is prehistory. ...Humans or at least human-like beings, have been around, we'll say, at least three million years. ...It is very hard to understand how long a time three million years really is. If we were to compare three million years to one day, we'd get something like this: The present time is midnight, and Jesus was born just fifty-seven seconds ago. Earliest written history began about two minutes, twenty seconds ago. Everything before 11:57 P.M. was prehistoric time."

This delineation of time makes for a vivid impression, but how can one visualize the day-to-day existence of those prehistoric human beings in Jarmo circa 6700 B.C.?

Curator John Carswell has devised incredibly unique ways of telling the story of Jarmo. He has planned an exhibit vertically, thus looking upward in time of 6700 years of prehistory. Months of long days and extra weekends were spent by the Museum staff and volunteers to build the exhibit that Mr. Carswell created and designed to fit in a miniature space of 25 feet wide, 80 feet long, and 20 feet high.

As the visitor walked through the entrance of the Museum's Palestinian hall, he turned left and began a climb of 20 stairs for 12 feet, using hard both mind and imagination as his head swiveled from left to right to see, covering the stairwell walls on both sides, photos of bone tools, jewelry, animal bones, stone tools, remains of mud-walled houses, clay figurines and vessels, with each photo accompanied by a poster on which explanatory narration was displayed.

Almost mesmerizing were colored photos of the countryside, and most eye-catching was a diorama deeply inset into the right wall midway up the stairwell.

Everyone took turns to stop on a platform 10 feet above the ground to listen, over speaker 'phones placed on a bench two feet above, to the story of prehistoric Jarmo. Looking down to the main floor below, one could see a full-scale model of a mud-walled house, based on ruins of a house excavated in Jarmo. The houses of Jarmo were only the size of a small



cottage by our standards, but each was provided with several rectangular rooms. The walls of the house were made of puddled mud. The village probably looked much like the simple farming village in the area today, with its mud-walled houses and low mud-on-brush roofs; and probably had no more than 20 houses at any one moment of its existence.

As the visitor descended 20 stairs on the opposite side of the exhibit, he could see that on the main floor there were 12 full cases of artifacts which could be examined very carefully (through glass, of course). Finally, tucked into a corner behind the hut was a miniature "movie house": By means of a hidden projector, one could see 80 slides flashing one by one on a screen to give the visitor some final impressions of Jarmo.

After leaving the Museum for a dinner out, everyone returned for the second part of the evening. An illustrated lecture on "Jarmo's Legacy: The Worldwide Search for Early Food Production", by Kent Flannery, Professor of Anthropology and Curator of the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan, further emphasized how history flowed from prehistory in the story of mankind.

Following the lecture was a surprise presentation by T. Cuyler Young, Jr. from the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, to Bob Braidwood of a Festschrift, The Hilly Flanks and Beyond: Essays on the Prehistory of Southwestern Asia. The volume includes 18 articles by colleagues, many of whom were at the Oriental Institute for the opening of the exhibit.

The excitement of the unveiling of this awesome slice of prehistory can happen just once, but the exhibit will be on display for six months. Don't miss it.

—Elda Maynard

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURS OF SICILY AND CHINA

There are still spaces available on our archaeological tours to Sicily and China. The Sicily tour will be led by Prof. Paolo Cherchi, Department of Romance Languages and Literature at The University of Chicago and leaves April 22, returning on May 7, 1983. The cost from Chicago is \$2581.50 (single supplement \$225) plus a \$350 tax deductible contribution to the Oriental Institute. Our China tour will be led by Yang Zhi, a graduate student in Assyriology here at the Oriental Institute. The tour will run from June 8 to June 25, and arrangements may be made to spend time in Japan on the return trip. The cost from Chicago is \$3634 plus a tax deductible contribution of \$350 to the Oriental Institute. A deposit payable to ARCH- AEOLOGICAL TOURS, INC. of \$300 per person for the Sicily trip and \$400 per person for the China trip will hold a place for you. For more information, itineraries or to send a deposit, see the October 1982 News and Notes or call or write the Membership Secretary, The Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637, (312) 753-2389.



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For complete list of books available: write the SUQ

FOR THE LONG WINTER NIGHTS

Peter Piccione's series of ten one-hour lectures on cassette tapes on THE LIFE OF THE COMMON MAN IN ANCIENT EGYPT is still available. The tapes come with a study guide and outline and cover all aspects of life in ancient Egypt (see October 1982 News and Notes). To order send check for \$85 payable to The Oriental Institute to the Membership Secretary, The Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637. If you are not a member, please enclose a separate check for \$20 for membership.

WINTER QUARTER MEMBERS' COURSES

The Fruits of Civilization-Sumer! A course covering the history of ancient Mesopotamia. This survey will explore the geographical context and its economic basis for settled life. It will explore Near Eastern chronology and then outline the history of archaeological excavations and surveys in Mesopotamia from the 19th century to the present, including the Oriental Institute's contribution. It will then focus on the prehistoric developments in Mesopotamia, proceed through the Sumerian civilization and Sumerian revival to the legacy of Sumer as it has influenced the further history of Mesopotamia. **Inst:** Guillermo Algaze

Ebla in the Syro-Canaanite World. A course focusing on Ebla in the 3rd millennium B.C. The course will survey the city, the palace and archives as well as its history, society and culture. Special emphasis will be placed on the writing and language especially the vocabulary with its peculiarities and importance. **Inst:** Lorenzo Vigano

All courses are held on Saturdays from 10:00 to noon in the Oriental Institute. The courses will start on January 29, 1983 and will last for eight week sessions. --- Tuition is \$50 for members or \$70 for non-members(which includes a membership in the Oriental Institute).

REGISTRATION FORM

Please register me for the following Members' Course.

- The Fruits of Civilization - Sumer!
- Ebla in the Syro-Canaanite World
- I am a member
- I am not a member, but enclose a separate check for \$20 to cover a one year membership

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Please make all checks payable to THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE. Please register by Thursday, January 27. **MAIL TO:** Membership Secretary, The Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.



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