News & Notes

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IN THIS ISSUE

ERRATUM

In the print version of this issue, the director's letter was incorrectly edited to say that ISIS retook Mosul. This online version has been corrected.

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ON THE COVER: Bull's head on glazed bricks from the Sin Temple at Khorsabad (see page 8).

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

ISAC researchers have resumed fieldwork since the pandemic with enthusiasm and gusto, with no less than twelve projects in the field in the past year alone. This resurgence has been especially notable in Iraq, highlighted by the resumption of excavations at Nippur and Neolithic Surezha in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as the newly launched Nineveh East Archaeological Project in East Mosul. ISAC researchers have been warmly received, indeed actively invited to reengage, by the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH). This encouragement has included discussions about returning to the Diyala region and the Institute's pioneering field projects in that historically significant area. ISAC's century-long commitment to the archaeological exploration and preservation of Iraq's ancient cultural heritage resonates deeply, and it carries important credibility amid the flurry of foreign expeditions seeking access to Iraq's rich cultural resources.

This cordial reception and engagement are perhaps best exemplified by the recent invitation to extend and expand the Institute's involvement in the exploration and preservation of the vast archaeological site of Nineveh, which experienced extensive damage and destruction during the period of control by ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and subsequent retaking of the city of Mosul. ISAC, in partnership with TARII (The Academic Research Institute in Iraq), has been invited to establish a permanent research center or facility—an expedition compound, if you will—adjacent to the site. The Nineveh Governorate and SBAH have committed a 3,000-square-meter plot of land as their contribution to this exciting and developing partnership. The new facility will provide support for the research team working at Nineveh (residential, laboratory, and storage facilities), as well as offices, a library, and meeting spaces for workshops and educational programs for the local community.

This issue of *News & Notes* further highlights some of the ongoing research at ISAC on ancient Mesopotamia. Laura D'Alessandro, senior conservator and head of ISAC's conservation laboratory, reports on an exciting project that has been literally ninety years in the making: the conservation of thirty-five crates of ornately decorated glazed bricks that once graced the facade of the Sin Temple at Khorsabad (ancient Dur-Sharrukin). The story of how these exceptional cultural artifacts came to Chicago, and why it has taken so long for Laura and her conservation team to finally be able to treat and restore them for display, is truly a remarkable one.

Continuing the ancient Mesopotamia theme, Augusta McMahon, professor of Mesopotamian archaeology and director of the Nippur Expedition, provides a field update on the resumption of excavations at Nippur, specifically in the southern suburbs of the Ur III (late third-millennium BCE) and Old Babylonian and Kassite (second-millennium BCE) city, which she anticipates will provide important insights into its residential neighborhoods during these periods. This issue's faculty profile, meanwhile, features Jana Matuszak, assistant professor of Sumerology. Jana joined ISAC's faculty in January 2023 from Tübingen University in Germany. Her PhD thesis and resulting first book, *"And You, You Are a Woman?!"* (De Gruyter, 2021), which presents the first edition of a disputation between two Sumerian housewives, has already begun to receive critical praise for its erudition. Jana is currently working on another challenging text that has long eluded scholars, *The Evil Mouth*—essentially a parody, and possibly one of the strangest and most complex Sumerian literary texts ever written. We look forward to learning more about this intriguing project. Finally, longtime ISAC docent and volunteer Margaret Schmid relates interesting connections she has enjoyed making over the years between various objects on display in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery. Enjoy!

TIMOTHY HARRISON
Director

STAGING THE EAST

ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY IN CHICAGO COLLECTIONS

by Marc Maillot

The ISAC Museum's spring 2025 special exhibition, *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections* (April 17–August 17, 2025) (fig. 1), explores the beginnings of archaeological photography and how early travelers transformed it into a popular retail enterprise. Chicago collections of early archaeological photographs are among the largest worldwide, and the ISAC Museum Archives cares for one of the best-documented series. In the exhibition, the bodies of work of prominent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographers represented in Chicago museums are displayed in a comparative approach. The exhibition concludes with the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, an event that was pivotal for the distribution of Orientalist imagery, the print sales of which had a significant impact on ISAC's mission at the turn of the twentieth century.

The term "Orientalism," referring to academic and artistic bodies of work that depict aspects of West Asia and North Africa (the "Orient"), acquired negative connotations over time because of its underlying colonial biases. Applied to photography, it describes images and prints of the region produced since the mid-nineteenth century. Thanks to Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), the meaning of the word has broadened from a strictly geographical definition to one that applies to depictions distinguishing a supposedly traditional "Orient" and a modernizing "West."

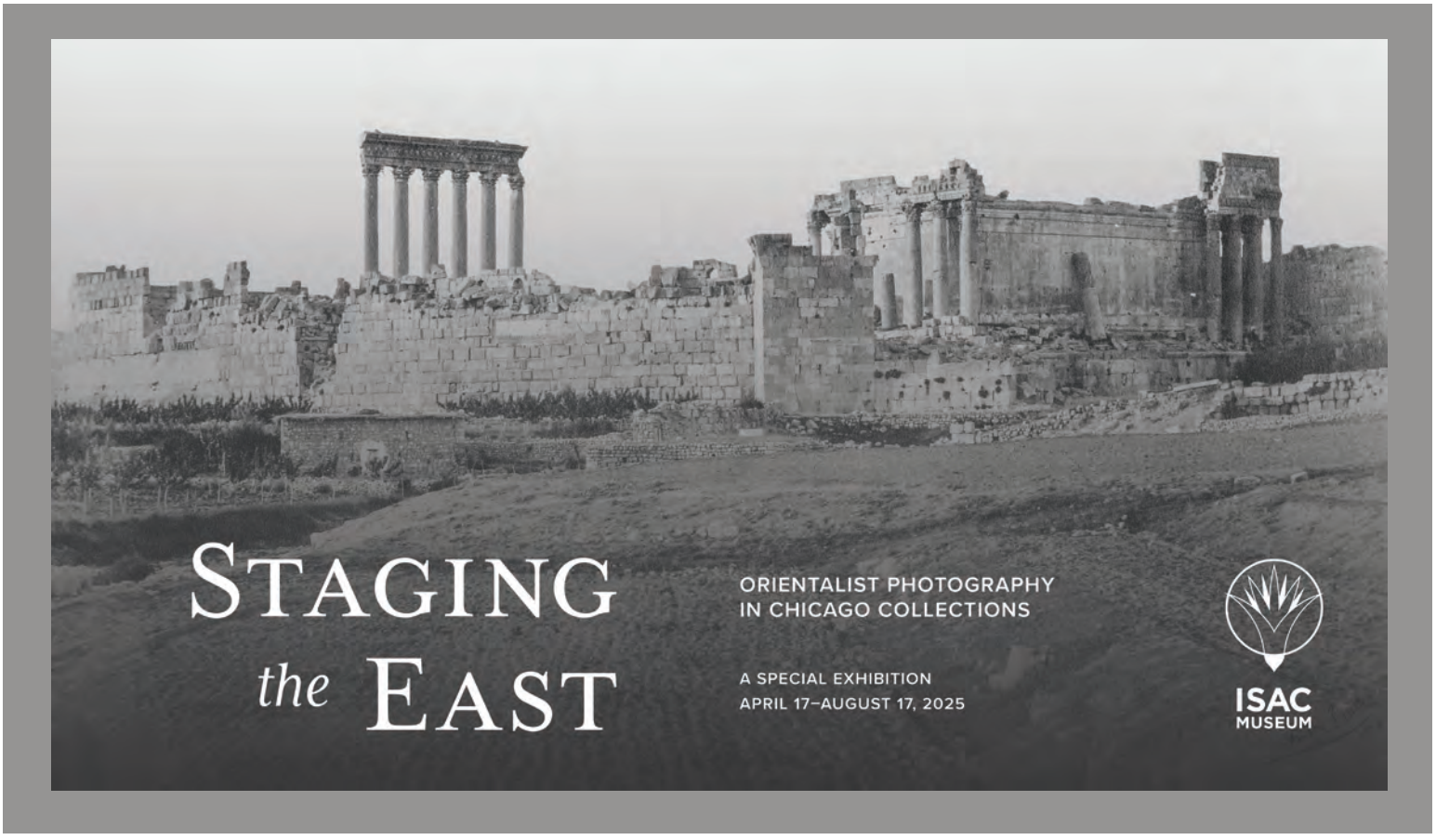


Figure 1. Exhibition promotional graphic. *Baalbec from the South* from the album *Egypt and Palestine: Photographed and Described*, Volume I, plate 16, by Francis Frith, 1858. ISAC Museum Archives.

ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY IN CHICAGO COLLECTIONS

Chicago museums house some of the most important collections of Orientalist photography in the world. The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago houses the Lester and Betty Guttman photography collection, which comprises 830 works of art. The Art Institute of Chicago's collection of prints and photographs was curated by Hugh Edwards to compete with that of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City (fig. 2). The Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures Museum Archives cares for one of the best-documented series, with more than 100,000 negatives recording ISAC's excavations in West Asia and North Africa.

The reason behind this substantial number of prints stems from the commercial ambitions of traveling photographers, who wanted to ensure popular success and governmental recognition. Selling prints became a fruitful business worldwide, particularly in the United States. That these photographs allowed families to own a piece of the "Orient" explains their abundance in public and private collections. Technical progress was also a factor in the mass production of prints, with breakthroughs such as the invention of the calotype process (coating a sheet of paper with silver nitrate to create a light-sensitive surface, exposing it in a camera, and then developing the image to produce a print) and reduced time exposures, which transformed photography into a mass medium for reproducing images of buildings, people, and objects of daily life. Studios opened across the Western world, producing affordable pictures and making photography a powerful tool for public outreach. Visual standards established earlier by watercolors and engravings were used as models for photography, calling into question the notion of realism pursued by the first photographers.

THE PRECURSOR OF ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY

Napoleon led a military campaign in Egypt from 1798 to 1801, bringing with him more than 150 scientists and artists to document and publish its findings. This effort resulted in the most ambitious encyclopedia of the time, *La Description de l'Égypte*, which sought to encompass all of Egypt in a multivolume series (fig. 3).

A comparison of early photographic standards with those used in the engravings of the *Description* reveals that the publication had a major influence on the choice of subjects and framing in photography. In the Napoleonic volumes, each monument was introduced by a map, a general view, and detailed drawings that broke the monument down into its core components, such as arches, vaults, and sculptures. From overviews to details, this vision of encompassing all Egypt in a series was later replicated in photo albums. It succeeded where engravings supposedly failed—bringing "the Orient" to a wider audience while improving the documentary quality of scholarly albums with the camera. Thanks to the support of the University of Chicago Library, the exhibition features one of the plate volumes from the second edition of *La Description de l'Égypte*.

Figure 2. *Gournah, les colosses, Thèbes*, by Maxime Du Camp. Salted paper print, 1849. Art Institute of Chicago, Photography Gallery Fund 1959.608.54.

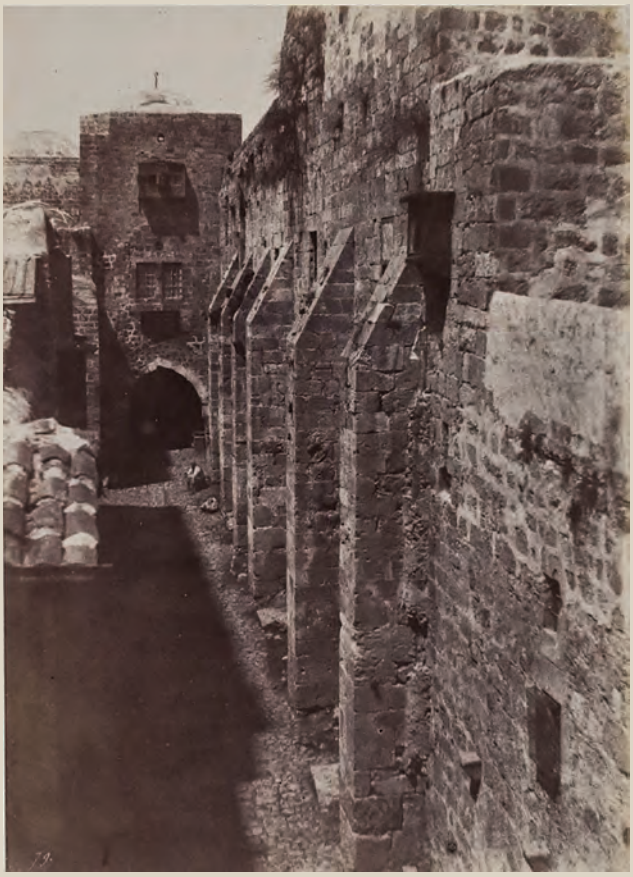
Figure 3. "Facsimile des monuments coloriés de l'Égypte," Commission des sciences et arts d'Egypte, 1825. *Description de l'Égypte, 2nd ed. Antiquités*, pl. 6. Library of Congress 2021669215.

LEFT: Figure 4. *The Suez Canal, Egypt*, by Hippolyte Arnoux. Albumen print, 1890. Victoria and Albert Museum 1207-1912.

PHOTO STUDIOS ON THE GROUND

By the 1870s, photography studios expanded worldwide and particularly in West Asia and North Africa, where more than 250 such operations, run mainly by professionals from the major colonial powers of France and Britain, thrived. With the opening of the Suez Canal (fig. 4), Egypt became a stop for merchants and soldiers on their way to India. Syrian, Greek, and Armenian photographers, such as Pascal Sébah, Abdullah Fréres, and Gabriel Lékégian, also established studios in Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey. The golden age of these studios ended around 1890, as the costly production of prints faced competition from the rise of postcards. Simplified and standardized, Orientalist imagery spread through popular books and newspapers.

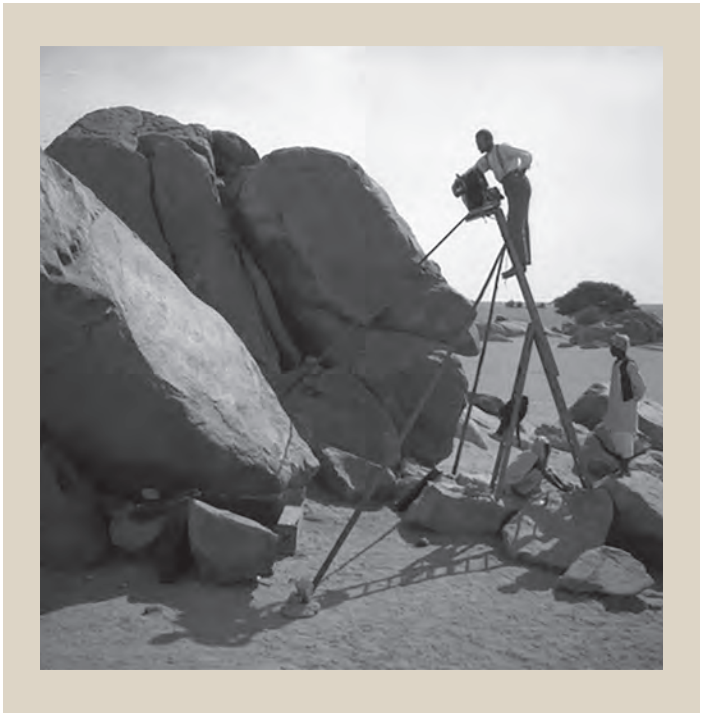
Photo studios catered to the growing interest sparked by scholarly travels. The studios displayed exceptional landscapes, such as the banks of the Nile, the Dead Sea, and the city of Jerusalem (fig. 5), alongside scenes of daily life. The exhibition presents various sets of these studio catalogs, mainly from the collections of the ISAC Museum Archives and the Smart Museum of Art.



RIGHT: Figure 5. *Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, West Side, Rue du Patriarche*, by Auguste Salzmann. Salted paper print, 1854. Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman. Smart Museum of Art 2014.693.

THE CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR OF 1893

World's fairs started in the nineteenth century with displays of industrial crafts and arts exhibitions. Replicas of city quarters and buildings were the main attractions. The World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago from May to October 1893, commemorated the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. Located in Jackson Park and on the Midway Plaisance, the latter only a couple of blocks away from the ISAC Museum, "Cairo Street"—a replica by George Pangalo—was the fair's most successful feature. Houses, shops, and a re-creation of the Temple of Luxor were erected (fig. 6), attracting 2,000,000 visitors. Shots of Cairo Street are reminiscent of early Orientalist photographs. Photographic prints had become so popular by the time of the Chicago fair that a hall dedicated to photography, like that at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, was unnecessary. Instead, photographs were exhibited across all the pavilions. The success of photographic print sales during the fair did not escape the notice of ISAC's founder, James Henry Breasted, who created a "stay-at-home" travel system with a stereoscope and 100 stereographs (two side-by-side photographs simulating a 3D image) of Egyptian and Nubian monuments (see below). One such stereoscope is displayed in the exhibition alongside Breasted's own camera.



UPPER RIGHT: Figure 6. *Egyptian Temple of Luksor (Luxor) at the World's Columbian Exposition*. Photographic print, 1893. Chicago History Museum ICHi-002432.

ABOVE: Figure 7. *Photographing the Great Stela of Thutmose I at Tumbos*, by James Henry Breasted. Copy from negative, 1907. ISAC Museum Archives N. 2699 / P. 6332.

MARC MAILLOT is the director and chief curator of the ISAC Museum.

ACADEMIC PHOTOGRAPHY AT ISAC

Scholarly photography remained an active pursuit beyond the nineteenth century. Prompted by the completion of the first Aswan Dam in 1902, several years later the University of Chicago sponsored Breasted's organization of an expedition to the region, and in 1905–6 he traveled twice to Egypt and Nubia to photograph the monuments and sites there. During his explorations Breasted captured a total of 1,200 negatives, of which a selection is displayed in the exhibition as prints (fig. 7).

Breasted's first trip started in Aswan, where he documented sites covering all historical periods, from prehistoric rock art to Christian churches. He then reached Abu Simbel, where he spent forty days. On his second trip he went south to Meroe, Naga, and the pyramids of Sudan. His seminal work culminated in the development of the Chicago House Method, which combines photography and drawing for the accurate recording of monuments. This method is still in use today by ISAC's Epigraphic Survey, based in Luxor since its establishment in 1924.

The popular success of Egyptian prints led Breasted to publish a travel guide accompanied by a stereoscope to offer readers a virtual tour of the Nile. Through 100 stereographs, *Egypt through the Stereoscope: A Journey through the Land of the Pharaohs* (1908) documented his travels. Breasted envisioned the stereoscope as a companion for exploring Egypt. His joining scholarly photography with public outreach through a unique tool for the first time illustrates the pioneering spirit that continues to preside over ISAC's research and projects today.

THE SIN TEMPLE FACADE FROM KHORSABAD

AN ALMOST FORGOTTEN EIGHTH-CENTURY BCE TREASURE

by Laura D'Alessandro

Deep in the basement storerooms of ISAC lie twenty-nine wooden crates. Part of an original shipment of thirty-five crates sent in 1933 from the ISAC excavation at Khorsabad in northern Iraq, the crates have been moved many times over the course of ninety years. In 1990, one of the crates was opened and the condition of its contents—glazed bricks from Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad—was assessed. The appearance of bright fragments of glaze was unexpected, but welcome, and led to an ongoing thirty-five-year effort to bring these bricks back to life. What follows is the backstory of those bricks, the long road we have traveled to remove them from their crates, and the work we are currently carrying out to allow this decorated temple facade to take its place among the highlights on display in the ISAC Museum galleries.

HISTORY OF THE GLAZED BRICKS FROM THE SIN TEMPLE AT KHORSABAD

In 717 BCE, the Assyrian king Sargon II began construction of a new capital city in northern Iraq called Dur-Sharrukin (present-day Khorsabad). The name means "the fortress of Sargon," and the approximately one-square-mile complex included a monumental palace, six temples, and large residences. Officially dedicated in 706 BCE, the complex was not quite finished in 705 BCE when Sargon II was killed during a military campaign. Sargon's son, Sennacherib, moved the capital to Nineveh, 15 kilometers south of Dur-Sharrukin, soon afterward. Sargon's city devolved into a minor administrative outpost, and within a century it was abandoned. Like other ancient cities of West Asia, Dur-Sharrukin lay buried for thousands of years. Although some of these cities were mentioned in the Bible and other religious texts, their locations (assuming the cities actually existed) were a topic of debate among modern scholars.

In the late eighteenth century, Napoleon Bonaparte traveled to Egypt with a military contingent and a team of 150 scholars and scientists, determined to document and publish some of the ancient monuments that were still visible there (fig. 1). Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt gained international attention and contributed to the public's fascination with the ancient world and its art. By the early nineteenth century, this interest had become so widespread that it even began to influence clothing and furniture trends in Europe. Soon the acquisition of antiquities acquired political overtones and became a matter of national prestige.

In the mid-nineteenth century, European interest in the forgotten cities of West Asia and North Africa was reaching its climax—particularly in France and England, the two major colonial powers. The Louvre Museum, inaugurated in 1793, was still a young institution and actively growing its collections. The British Museum, which had opened its doors to the public in 1759, was also actively acquiring artifacts for its collections. Between these two interests, a lively competition appears to have formed. There is evidence that archaeologists representing France and England also collaborated at times—for example, by agreeing to divide ancient sites between the two countries and sharing arrangements for the transport of finds. By the mid-nineteenth century, their expeditions (along with those of other countries) were dispersed across West Asia and North Africa and represented some of the earliest archaeological excavations in that part of the world. Many of the artifacts collected by these expeditions can be seen in the galleries of the Louvre and the British Museum today.

In the mid-nineteenth century, both institutions were carrying out expeditions in the area around Mosul in northern Iraq under the auspices of the Ottoman governor in Baghdad. In 1843, Paul-Émile Botta, a French consul stationed in Mosul, was searching for the city of Nineveh and moved his exploratory excavations to the nearby town of Khorsabad. At the time, Botta mistakenly believed that the remains he uncovered at Khorsabad were those of Nineveh. A member of Botta's earliest expedition, the French engineer Gabriel Tranchand, was one of the first people to use photography to record an excavation in the Middle East.

The French mission also brought in artists to record the site in great detail as architectural features were uncovered. Between 1843 and 1855, Botta and his successor, Victor Place, undertook excavations at Khorsabad and left a wealth of detailed drawings and records that are still used today to aid in understanding the site. Unfortunately, the twelve years of excavations culminated in what has been called the "Qurnah disaster." An armada consisting of a cargo ship and several large rafts left Khorsabad in 1855 laden with antiquities from several expeditions, but only a few of the rafts completed the trip. The action of pirates and hostile local sheikhs along the route between Khorsabad and the port at Basra resulted in the sinking of the cargo ship and most of the heavily loaded rafts near Qurnah at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The devastating loss of artifacts from excavations in the region, including hundreds of small finds and several guardian figures from Khorsabad, led the French mission to abandon its excavations at the site. Many of the details and registers of the shipment have been lost to time, and much confusion still exists as to an exact accounting of the artifacts that were lost. It would be another seventy years before excavations at Khorsabad were resumed, this time by an American expedition.

In 1928, the Iraqi government granted ISAC a permit to conduct excavations at Khorsabad. The site was reopened under the direction of a series of ISAC archaeologists—Edward Chiera, Henri Frankfort, and Gordon Loud—who, over the course of seven seasons, uncovered an amazing wealth of objects, some of which were assigned to ISAC by the Department of Antiquities of Iraq as part of the legal division of finds. The 1929 season saw the discovery of the forty-ton gypsum guardian figure (*lamassu*) that

Figure 1. Sphinx (partially excavated) and pyramids at Giza. Nineteenth-century albumen print from the photographic studio Maison Bonfils. Public domain image, Library of Congress.

stands today in the Yelda Khorsabad Court Gallery of the ISAC Museum. Large-scale gypsum reliefs from the palace walls, many still bearing their original pigments, were also uncovered during these excavations and are currently on display in the Dr. Norman Solhkhah Family Assyrian Empire Gallery. As ISAC's share of finds were shipped back to Chicago at the close of each season, the team of restorers at ISAC found themselves literally knee-deep in thousands of architectural stone fragments from Sargon's palace. For the new museum, built in 1930 and opened to the public in December 1931, the arrival of hundreds of fragments from the excavation must have been overwhelming. Led by master restorer Donato Bastiani, the restoration of these large-scale sculptures would require the entire team's undivided attention in those early years.

The ISAC excavators unearthed the Sin Temple at Khorsabad during the 1932–33 field season (fig. 2). Sin, whose name means "bright," was the moon god in Mesopotamian religion and one of six gods worshipped at Khorsabad. The decorated facade of the Sin Temple included, on each side of the main entrance, a frieze of glazed clay bricks depicting a series of figures—a plow, a tree, a bull, a bird, and a lion—leading to standing sculptures of Sargon II and his son, Sennacherib, at the entrance. The figures on each side faced each other and appeared to be striding toward the entrance of the temple (figs. 3a and 3b).

Each tableau was approximately 7 meters long and 1.6 meters high and consisted of fourteen rows or tiers of bricks. The dimensions of the bricks averaged 26 × 18 × 11.4 centimeters. When complete, each brick weighed more than 6 kilograms. In addition to the

Figure 2. The facade of the Sin Temple at Khorsabad. "In the foreground is the threshold of the doorway into the Sin Temple. The doorway is flanked by glazed brick tableaus, shown only partially cleared." From Gordon Loud, *Khorsabad, Part I: Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate*, Oriental Institute Publications 38 (Chicago, 1936), 91.

brightly colored and decorated glazed face, each brick had mason's marks on its top interior side. These symbols provided information about the bricks' placement during the construction of the facade and are still visible today (fig. 4).

The frieze to the right of the temple entrance was assigned to the national museum in Baghdad by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, while the one to the left was assigned to Chicago as part of the legal division of finds. It is generally understood from this division that the right-hand tableau was in better condition, as normally the more complete finds were held by the host country. According to field reports, the right-hand tableau was excavated, crated, and shipped to Baghdad. Unfortunately, there is no record of the shipment's arrival in Baghdad. Dr. Donny George Youkhanna, a former general director of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, and others both in Baghdad and Chicago were consulted over the years for any knowledge, even anecdotal, as to the final disposition of the crates of bricks from the right side of the Sin Temple facade—but no one knows what happened to the right-hand tableau. The bricks shipped to Chicago are currently the last remaining evidence of the Sin Temple's glazed-brick facade.

The ISAC excavators had access to Victor Place's 1870 publication, *Ninive et l'Assyrie*, with drawings by Félix Thomas that provided detailed renderings of the decorations as seen by the French mission when the site was first uncovered in the mid-nineteenth century. Gordon Loud's final report on ISAC's excavations at the palace (*Khorsabad, Part I: Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate*, Oriental Institute Publications 38), published in 1936, pays tribute to the drawings and accounts of earlier expeditions that informed Loud's efforts. Unfortunately, even allowing some artistic license in the recreation of details in Thomas's drawings, the ISAC archaeologists believed that the deterioration to the Sin Temple facade during the seventy years of exposure between the two expeditions was undoubtedly greater than that which took place during the 2,500 years the temple lay buried.

The ISAC excavators clearly understood the cultural significance of the Sin Temple's decorated facade and made a tremendous effort to pack the bricks safely for the trip to Chicago. Following what was then an established technique on expeditions, the team took large-format, black-and-white photographs of the facade and assigned numbers to the bricks. As each brick was removed from the wall, it was numbered to correspond with these field photographs. The bricks were in multiple fragments, and the decorative glaze was damaged but still present on most of them. The excavators recognized the fragile condition of the bricks' glazes and bodies and applied a cellulose nitrate–based product, Ambroid, as a consolidant to help stabilize them for the long trip to Chicago.

Using the same materials and techniques as for the large-scale sculptures packed on-site, each brick was then carefully placed in a wooden crate. Each crate contained a group of eight bricks separated by layers of felted material, with cotton wool used to fill empty spaces. Once each crate was filled, it was fitted with a lid and marked with the Chicago destination (fig. 5). The accompanying records stated that thirty-five crates containing approximately 282 bricks were shipped to Chicago. The exact number of bricks is an estimate because several spaces in the crates appear to contain fragments from multiple bricks. When the glazed bricks arrived in Chicago at the end of 1933, amid the massive restoration work taking place on the earlier finds, they were placed in storage until there was sufficient time to study them. The reports from the field made it clear that the unpacking and stabilization of the clay bodies and glazes would be a time-consuming project.

EARLY TESTS

In 1990, a visiting scientist was given permission to look inside one of the crates to examine the glazes on the bricks. The lid of the crate was pried open and the corner of the packing material carefully peeled back. When the fragile condition of the top surface of the first brick was revealed, the decision was quickly made to reclose the crate without further disturbing any of the bricks until substantial conservation interventions could be carried out. This brief glimpse provided me with my first view of an actual brick. Up to this point, I and others at ISAC had seen only the low-contrast, poor-resolution black-and-white field photographs on which the colors of the glaze were difficult to discern. Based on this preliminary evaluation, it seemed certain that the treatment of the bricks would be an immense job with an uncertain outcome. But this first view of the actual bricks and their glazes also marked a turning point in the perception of the Sin Temple facade: large areas of the glazed surface were still intact, and even more exciting, the color was still vibrant. With this knowledge, the conservation of the Sin Temple facade bricks became a viable project.

In preparation for tackling this important endeavor, it was necessary to determine the possible success of any modern treatment plan. Would the 1932 field application of cellulose nitrate interfere with modern techniques and chemicals? Would current techniques and chemicals be sufficient to stabilize the glaze and clay bodies of the bricks? The most effective way to answer these questions was to treat two of the bricks from the recently opened crate. With the help of ISAC's preparators, two bricks were removed very carefully from the crate. It was the first introduction to the difficulties involved with removing the bricks from their crates. The excavators had, early in the process, informed the restorers in Chicago that removing the bricks from their crates was likely to be much more difficult than packing them in the field had been. The tight packing of the bricks had been critical to their safe transport, but removing each brick from the crate then became its own undertaking. Two sides of the crate had to be removed to gain access to the two bricks, all while maintaining an even pressure on the remaining bricks to keep them from collapsing into their constituent pieces.

Once the two sample bricks were out of the crate, test treatments were carried out. In one, a very dilute acrylic resin was applied by brush to the glazed surface. In different areas of the clay body, more concentrated solutions of the acrylic resin were applied to the surface to evaluate the functional and aesthetic impacts. Injections of the more concentrated solution were also applied to the clay body, allowing capillary action to draw the consolidant inside. As a final step, an adhesive-strength version of the acrylic resin was used to join several of the fragments. The treatments were evaluated for any immediate signs of negative interactions. After two weeks, the appearance and condition of the bricks were evaluated. The preliminary test results were positive, and the bricks were returned to storage for long-term evaluation of the treatment.

Figure 3a. Drawing of the Sin Temple facade by Félix Thomas. From Victor Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie* (Paris, 1870), pl. 24.

Figure. 3b. Detail of the Sin Temple facade, right side of the temple entrance (reversed to reflect the orientation of ISAC's bricks), by Félix Thomas. From Victor Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie* (Paris, 1870), pl. 26.

DISPLAY OF THE FIRST EIGHT BRICKS: THE BULL'S HEAD

It would be another ten years before attention was again turned to the Sin Temple glazed bricks. In early 2000, the redesign of the ISAC Museum galleries was in its early stages after the construction of the museum's new wing and the installation of climate control. The idea of treating a small number of bricks to enable the exhibition of the head of one of the animal figures in the Mesopotamian gallery was proposed by ISAC's conservation department and approved. The two bricks that had been the subject of the 1990 tests were brought out of storage and evaluated. The results were even better than anticipated: the color and clarity of the glaze was slightly enhanced, and the clay body was structurally intact. There was no discoloration or yellowing of the glaze or body. The adhesive was successful in holding even large fragments together after ten years.

The decision was made to conserve the eight bricks making up the head of the bull figure. But instead of finding the needed bricks inside one crate, a total of five crates had to be unpacked. When the facade was dismantled in the field, the bricks were removed in a horizontal line, one course at a time, for packing. This meant that the bricks from a single design feature, such as the bull, would have been packed in a series of crates. The crates containing the bricks that made up the bull's head were thus the first ones to be fully unpacked, in a process that required four conservators. The glazed surfaces of the bricks were stabilized, and the bricks were treated and assembled in the ISAC Museum conservation laboratory (fig. 6). Finally, the eight bricks that constituted the bull's head were proudly placed on display in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, where they can be seen today.

Figure 4. Glazed brick from the bull figure, with the tip of the bull's horn visible in white at the right end of the brick's front face. The mason's marks on the top surface of the brick are also in white.

Figure 5. One of the wooden crates in which the glazed bricks were shipped to Chicago in 1933. Photo: ISAC conservation staff.

Figure 6. The treated glazed bricks of the bull's head are placed together in the ISAC conservation laboratory for the first time in more than ninety years. Photo: ISAC conservation staff.

Figure 7. Drawings by Félix Thomas of the lion and bull from the frieze on the Sin Temple facade (the bull figure has been reversed to match the orientation of ISAC's scene). From Victor Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie* (Paris, 1870), pls. 29–30.

Since many of the undecorated portions of the bricks were too badly deteriorated to be saved, the missing areas had to be recreated with modern plaster and Ethafoam (an inert hard foam) to enable the bricks to be stacked and displayed. This method of restoration was intended for stacking only a small number of bricks, the modest four courses that made up the bull's head. When the larger figures are reconstructed to their original height of fourteen tiers, a more robust and efficient system of replacing the missing portions of brick will need to be used. Photogrammetry, 3D scanning, and 3D printing are all techniques that will be pursued. Kea Johnston, a postdoctoral scholar working jointly with the ISAC Museum and the Chicago Field Museum, will be integral to the project in imaging the treated bricks to determine the most efficient method of replacing missing portions to ensure the structural stability of the reconstructed facade.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

In the following years, work resumed on the bricks but was continuously sidelined because of more urgent projects. Only recently have ISAC director Timothy Harrison and ISAC Museum director Marc Maillot been able to assign the highest conservation priority to the Sin Temple glazed-bricks project. This decision was necessitated by the knowledge that the wood of the packing crates, now ninety years old, has reached the end of its useful life. Despite the demands of other projects, the threat represented by the degrading wood—the only thing holding the brick fragments together—is indisputable. Unless the Sin Temple bricks are removed from their crates and stabilized, the facade will not be able to be saved.

For this reason, senior conservator Alison Whyte (who has been working on the Sin Temple glazed-bricks project since 2001, when work began on the bull's head) and conservator Elisheva Schlank (who joined the conservation lab in August 2024) have been working intensively on treating the bricks to keep the project moving forward. This process is very labor intensive and will require more conservation assistance in the future, as there are still twenty-nine crates of bricks waiting to be unpacked. Over the course of the past twenty years, more than half a dozen conservators have worked on the bricks. All the conservators who have taken part in the project deserve a great deal of credit for their hard work on a very painstaking project requiring a high degree of skill and dedication.

The glazed bricks also represent an important research collection. International colleagues have been studying the glazes and composition of the clay bodies of Neo-Assyrian bricks in their own collections for years. ISAC's conservation staff began analyzing the glazes on its bricks in 2001, but over the intervening twenty-four years the analytical capabilities available for such studies have grown significantly. Access to laboratories on campus was severely restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and only recently have we been able to obtain additional samples of the glazes and clay bodies that will allow the resumption of scientific studies in concert with our international colleagues.

We look forward to the future and the opportunity to use digital applications for the color enhancement of ancient artwork. Noninvasive techniques that allow museum visitors to experience a partial reconstruction of the facade are just one avenue. As technology continually evolves and improves, we anticipate the exciting potential of a truly interactive exhibition of this irreplaceable cultural heritage.

More than twenty-three years later, the head of the bull on display since 2002 serves as a testament to the success of the treatment plan. As work proceeds on treating and stabilizing the remaining 233 glazed bricks from Khorsabad, plans are being made for their eventual display in the permanent galleries. Because of the demanding nature of the work and the time required for each brick, we will need to focus on treating one figure in the facade at a time. Priority will be given to the glazed bricks representing one of the animals, which can then be put on display in the galleries as work continues on the remaining bricks.

The debate is ongoing: reunite the bull's body with the head already on display, or reconstruct the lion in full (fig. 7)? Either way, completing the first step in this project will mark a momentous occasion, as a full figure from the Sin Temple facade will be on display for the first time in millennia.

LAURA D'ALESSANDRO is the head of the ISAC conservation laboratory.

FIELD UPDATE
NIPPUR 2025

by Augusta McMahon

ISAC's excavations at Nippur, in southern Iraq, took place from January to late March 2025. The excavation team comprised students from the University of Chicago and University of Cambridge and colleagues from the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq, University of Chicago (including the Forum for Digital Culture), University of Pennsylvania, University of Winnipeg, and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Our focus this year was on Nippur's southern "suburbs," where we wanted to examine the city's edge and the nature of its neighborhoods and their inhabitants (fig. 1).

While Nippur's importance as a religious center and the occupation history of its main mounds are well known from excavations dating back to the 1890s, the occupation history of the southern suburbs was only outlined during excavations in the 1970s and 1980s. This area was initially occupied in the Ur III period (late third millennium BCE) with a neighbourhood of small houses. A city wall was built over these houses late in the Ur III period by King Ibbi-Sin, according to the name of his sixth year (Year: Ibbi-Sin, the king of Ur, built for Nippur and Ur their great walls). The area was abandoned during the early second millennium BCE and occupied again in the Kassite period (mid-second millennium BCE). Kassite Nippur is well known from the "Kassite map" tablet discovered in the 1890s (now in the Hilprecht Collection, Germany). This map labels areas within the city, including the Ekur (Enlil temple and ziggurat), the Shatt al-Nil watercourse through the city center, and "gardens in the city" in the southern suburbs. A large villa of the Kassite period was excavated in the 1970s and 1980s in Area WC-1. After the Kassite period, the southern area was abandoned again until the Neo-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian period in the first millennium BCE, when it saw a very diffused settlement of a few scattered buildings. The area was finally used for Parthian burials in the first millennium CE.

Our research questions examine the southern suburbs' density of occupation and diversity of inhabitants across time. In the Ur III and Kassite periods, government programs to expand Nippur and rebuild its temples may have caused internal displacement of city residents and drawn in new migrants in search of employment. Both groups may have settled in the southern suburbs. Urban-edge occupation may be low density, and the diversity of inhabitants may be strong, since there are fewer constraints from long-term land ownership.

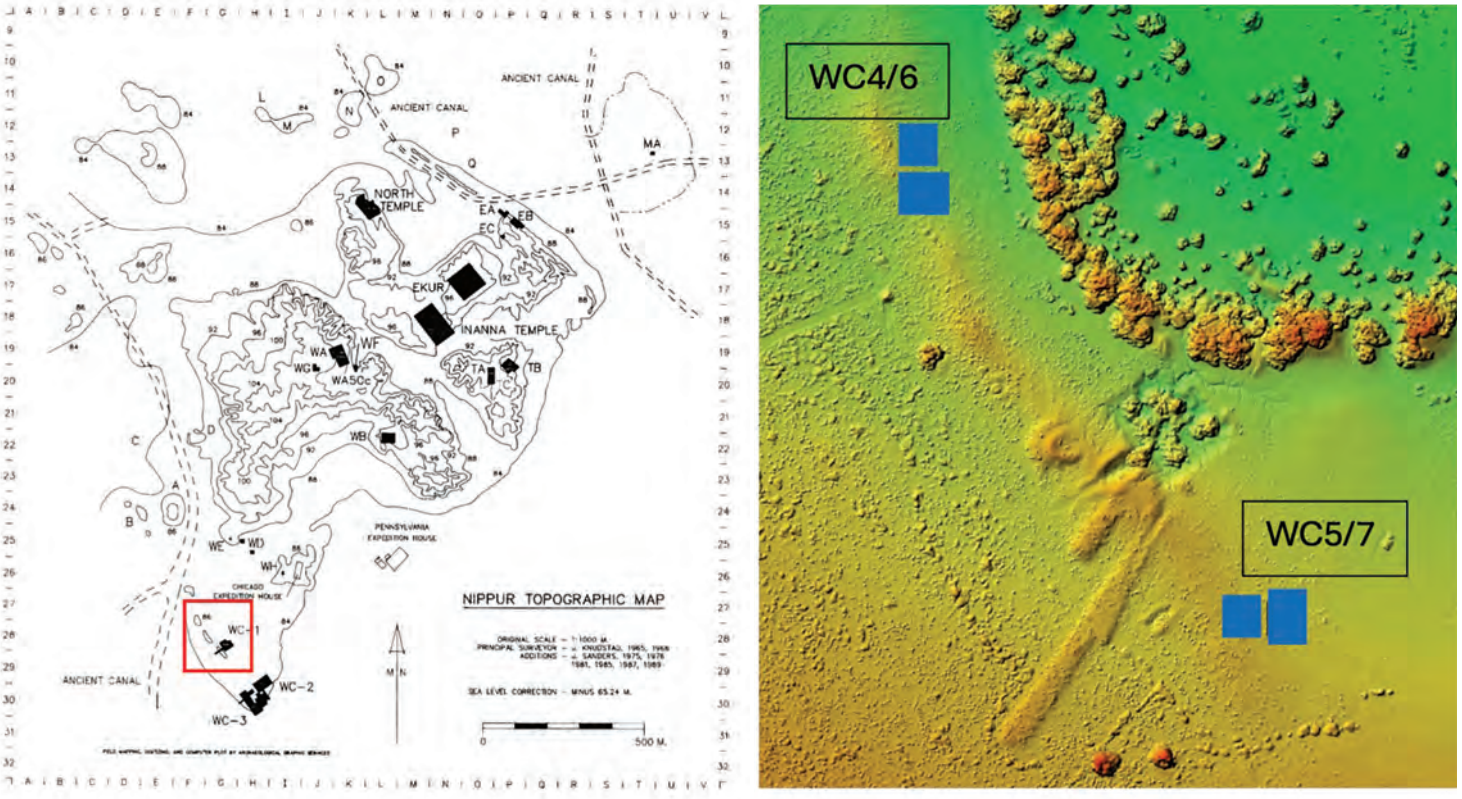


Figure 1. Topographic map of Nippur and detail of southern suburb with 2025 excavations.

CITY WALL, AREA WC-4/6

This area comprised two trenches, totalling 250 square meters. A segment of the Kassite city wall was revealed immediately below the surface. Made of small rectangular mudbricks laid in regular courses, the wall is approximately 3 meters wide and preserved up to 1.5 meters high. It runs northwest to southeast, with two right-angle turns constructed to stabilize the foundations across an area of earlier erosion (fig. 2). East of the city wall was the external wall of a Kassite building that extends farther to the east outside our trenches. This building will be examined in the future; it is probably a large house similar to the villa excavated in WC-1. To the west of the city wall is an ashy area with small buildings and bread ovens, probably for industrial and food-production activities outside the city. This area was also used to discard large quantities of pottery.

The Kassite city wall was built over the Ur III city wall. The earlier wall was also built entirely of mudbrick, in regular courses, but at a slightly different, more north-northwest to south-southeast alignment than the Kassite version. The Ur III city wall was also at least 3 meters wide; it may have been even wider, but its western face lies below the Kassite city wall. The area to the east of the Ur III city wall was open and used for the disposal of rubbish. Next year, we plan to expose more of the Ur III wall and any associated buildings.

Figure 2. Trenches WC-4/6 with Kassite and Ur III city walls.

FIRST-MILLENNIUM BCE HOUSE, AREA WC-5/7

This area also consisted of two trenches, totalling approximately 270 square meters. Excavations revealed a large first-millennium BCE house with at least twelve rooms. The plan included four central rectangular rooms in two parallel pairs, one probably roofed and the other unroofed (fig. 3). One room had a bread oven and ashy floors. These pairs of rooms may have been the core living and working spaces for two parts of a coresidential extended family (e.g., two brothers and their families). The rectangular rooms were surrounded by smaller rooms. We revealed the external wall of the house on the west, but its exterior walls to the north, east, and south lie beyond our trench limits and will be excavated in future years.

The house was particularly rich in artifacts, including animal figurines (fig. 4), stone pounders, spindle whorls, and other tools suggesting household manufacturing activities. Incense burners indicate that the inhabitants of the house were of high status, to have access to this rare and highly valued substance. One oval and two "bathtub" coffins were associated with the house and contained adult burials and glazed jars. The faunal remains reflect an elite diet; the residents consumed the usual domesticated animals (cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs) but also wild animals (turtles, carp, and deer). The area of the house, as currently excavated, is at least 200 square meters, a size that also supports the hypothesis of a high-status family.

To the west of the house is a street whose eastern side is defined by the first-millennium BCE city wall. This wall has a complex, double construction. The eastern, inner side has two parts—a broader foundation, about 2 meters wide, and a narrower upper wall, about 1 meter wide, of large rectangular bricks. Approximately 1 meter to the west of this wall is a second, parallel wall of mudbrick laid in regular courses. This outer wall appears to be the earlier Kassite city wall, since the brick sizes and construction are identical to those of the Kassite wall in WC-4/6. During the first millennium BCE, this Kassite wall was presumably cleared and reused, while a second wall was built just inside it. The two walls were then connected by a short pisé wall. The result is a "casemate" plan of parallel outer walls with narrow spaces between them.

MAGNETOMETRY AND DRONE SURVEY

To supplement our excavations, we used magnetic gradiometry and drone imagery to identify subsurface architecture. The magnetometry survey, which employed a Bartington magnetic gradiometer from ISAC's Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes, was particularly successful and allowed us to trace the alignment of the city wall north and south of our trenches and to define the canal immediately outside it. The canal is approximately 50 meters wide and was thus a significant watercourse, used for transportation as well as irrigation.

ZIGGURAT CONSERVATION PLAN

The team also began comprehensive documentation of the condition of the ziggurat, using methods that included photogrammetry, as preparation for a proposal to conserve the ziggurat and other buildings on-site and to enable access for tourists (fig. 5). We will develop a full site-management plan in partnership with our Iraqi colleagues and provincial officials. The ziggurat has been badly eroded by rain and sandstorms; over the past twenty years, as the effects of climate change have intensified, the rate of erosion has increased, making the need for a conservation program all the more urgent.

LEFT TOP: Figure 3. Drone photo of first-millennium BCE house in trenches WC-5/7, with the team standing along the edge of the excavation area.

LEFT BOTTOM: Figure 4. Animal figurines from WC-5/7.

ABOVE: Figure 5. The ziggurat at Nippur has shown increased evidence of erosion in recent decades due to climate change.

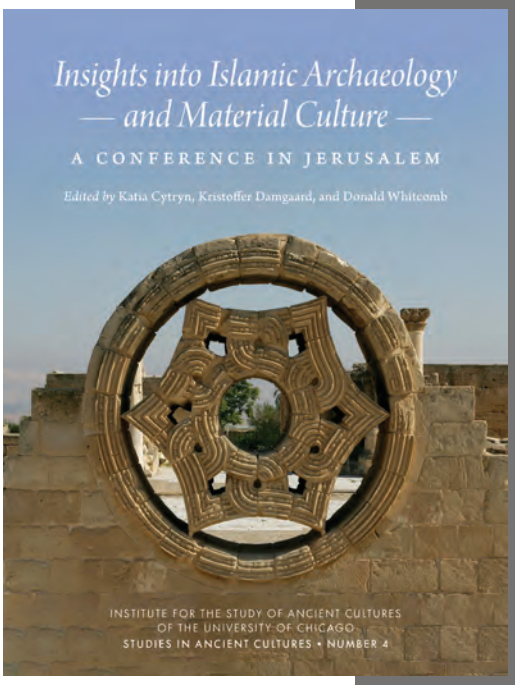
AUGUSTA MCMAHON is professor of Mesopotamian archaeology and the director of graduate studies for ancient fields in the University of Chicago's Department of Middle Eastern Studies.

NEW ISAC 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 4

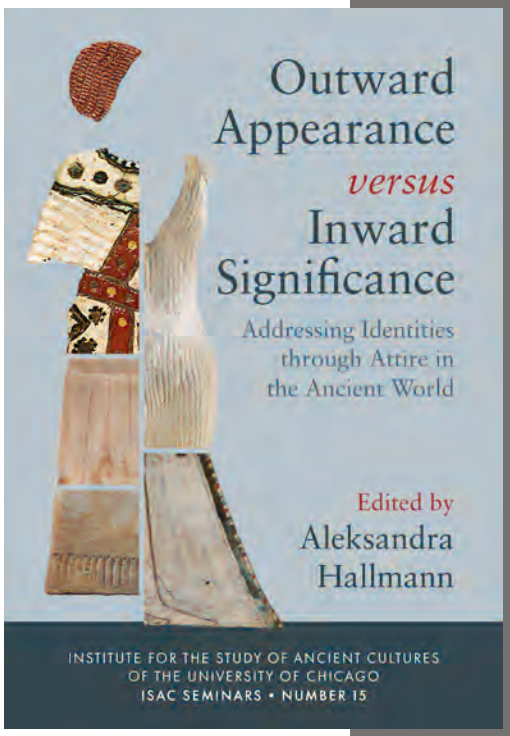


Insights into Islamic Archaeology and Material Culture explores the evolution of this dynamic field, highlighting new methodologies, interdisciplinary approaches, and shifting paradigms. Stemming from a 2013 seminar in Jerusalem, the volume critically examines whether the means and goals of Islamic archaeology have changed significantly from those that defined the discipline's major advances in the twentieth century. The book's fourteen contributors reassess long-held perspectives, emphasizing the need to move beyond orientalist interpretations and historiographic dependencies and instead foster a more neutral and analytical approach to early Islamic material culture. The collection showcases research on key sites such as Qusayr ʿAmra, Khirbat al-Mafjar, and al-Sinnabra and offers fresh views on settlement patterns, agricultural economies, and the sociopolitical functions of Umayyad palaces, among other topics.

Outward Appearance versus Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World

Edited by Aleksandra Hallmann

ISAC Seminars 15



This book takes a multidisciplinary and comparative approach to dress studies in the ancient world. Spanning a wide geographic spectrum, from the Near East and North Africa to the Mediterranean world and the Americas, it explores the cultural, social, and political significance of attire and engages the reader in a debate about the cross-culturally developed role of dress in construing and projecting various identities. Essays by experts from a range of disciplines, including art history, anthropology, archaeology, classics, Near Eastern studies, and conservation, approach the subject from different perspectives, apply varied methodologies, and draw on a diverse array of primary sources, including artifacts, iconography, and texts, to offer a nuanced understanding of the clothed self in ancient societies. This book will be of interest not only to experts in dress studies but to everyone interested in the cultural anthropology of dress and fashion.

FACULTY UPDATE
JANA MATUSZAK

Figure 1. Reading a Sumerian brick inscription in Nippur together with Dr. Hayder Alqaragholi from the University of Al-Qadisiyah. Shared with Dr. Hayder's permission. Photograph by Augusta McMahon

I joined the University of Chicago as assistant professor of Sumerology in January 2023, after training and holding various faculty positions in Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Perhaps it was my experience moving from one academic system to another—certainly the congenial and welcoming atmosphere at ISAC played a role—but after a few busy weeks, I felt as though I had always been here. It is a pleasure and privilege to be part of the vibrant Hyde Park community.

When I was about twelve, I decided that I wanted to become an archaeologist, and I was stubborn enough to stick with that idea, at least until my first few weeks at university. In Europe, students choose a specialization right after finishing high school. I picked archaeology of the Middle East, in part because it promised to transport me back to the "cradle of civilization" and in part because I knew practically nothing about ancient Iraq at the time. According to the degree requirements, I had to learn at least one cuneiform language. A few weeks into elementary Babylonian, I was hooked and switched my focus to Assyriology, keeping archaeology as a minor. My training was in old-school German philology, which has prepared me well for epigraphy and editing hitherto unknown texts, yet I have always had a love for literature and literary analysis. My work seeks to combine the more technical aspects of resurrecting Sumerian literature from fragmentary cuneiform tablets with connecting the contents to broader humanistic themes. Thus, I enjoy intricate problems of grammar, lexicography, and paleography just as much as thinking about humor, gender, law, poetry, and religion. While I see myself primarily as a philologist, joining ISAC has allowed me to fulfill my childhood dream of participating in an excavation in Iraq, and I am thrilled to be one of the epigraphists on the Nippur Expedition team.

My PhD thesis and resulting first book, *"Und du, du bist eine Frau?!" Editio princeps und Analyse des sumerischen Streitgesprächs 'Zwei Frauen B'* [*"And you, you are a woman?!" Principal Edition and Analysis of the Sumerian Debate 'Two Women B'*], (De Gruyter, 2021), present the first critical edition and in-depth linguistic and literary analysis of a 4,000-year-old Sumerian disputation between two housewives known by the less-than-evocative modern title *Two Women B*. It is the only substantial work of Mesopotamian literature that features nonelite female protagonists and thus presents unique insights into the daily life of "ordinary" women, who are underrepresented in the textual and archaeological record. However, as with most Sumerian literature of the early second millennium BCE,

the text was written by male literati for a predominantly male audience, and it therefore presents us with a decidedly male perspective on the role of women in society.

In an initially playful but increasingly heated rhetorical contest, two neighbors debate which one of them is the better woman. Through alternating speeches that abound in wordplay and often highly metaphorical insult, the two rivals accuse each other of doing everything wrong. The verbal duel stops abruptly when one woman calls the other a "whore"—a serious allegation for a married woman!—and the rest of the text presents the resolution of the conflict as a judicial trial about the false accusation of adultery. *Two Women B* hence provided ample learning opportunities for the scribal apprentices who memorized and copied the text: not only did they learn about the characteristics of an ideal woman and worthy future wife, but the text also allowed them to study procedural law, oratory, and the resolution of complex legal cases.

My research on this text is, incidentally, what brought me to Chicago for the first time; in summer 2014, I spent a few days in the ISAC Tablet Room studying two unpublished manuscripts of *Two Women B*, which were featured in the Museum's recent special exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*. Much to my delight, the ISAC Museum collection holds further little-known treasures: last November we discovered a small fragment of a hitherto unknown literary disputation between two male apprentice scribes, and I am currently preparing an edition of the text.

This academic year, I was awarded a residential fellowship at the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities to work on my next book project. It concerns yet another hitherto unrecognized Sumerian literary text, which I refer to, following Mesopotamian custom, by its opening words: ka hulu-a (English: *The Evil Mouth*). Possibly the strangest and most complex Sumerian text ever written, its main manuscript—a four-sided clay prism kept in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford—has baffled Sumerologists for more than a century. Having carefully studied all available manuscripts, including an unpublished cuneiform tablet that I identified in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums in 2019, I am preparing the first edition and translation of this text, as well as the (to my mind) first convincing interpretation of its peculiarity. Through comparison with established text types, I demonstrate that *The Evil Mouth* is a patchwork parody of diverse Sumerian texts and genres, ranging from proverbs and love songs to lamentations and magic spells. These snippets of subverted poetic conventions are inserted into the larger framework of a parody of a hymn to Inanna, the Sumerian goddess of sex and war. Inanna is ridiculed and teased but ultimately appeased by Nisaba, the Sumerian goddess of scribal arts. The preference for Nisaba firmly situates this erudite text in Babylonian academic circles of the early second millennium BCE.

My study of the text reception and composition practices among Old Babylonian literati shows that they did not, as is often believed, merely transmit and preserve Sumerian texts threatened by oblivion after Sumerian died out as a spoken language around 2,000 BCE. Rather, they developed a distinctly analytical approach to the corpus entrusted to their care. The same level of critical thought is also evident in the few cases where their study of Sumerian literature inspired them to compose new texts. *The Evil Mouth* is one such text. I argue that its patchwork parody of diverse texts and genres reveals exactly the genre characteristics and poetic conventions that it ostensibly subverts. Thus, it holds a key to much of Sumerian literature and helps us reconstruct elusive Mesopotamian poetics, for which no native metatexts or theoretical treatises exist. *The Evil Mouth* is hence a wonderful example of how critically, creatively, and humorously Babylonian scholar-poets engaged with the Sumerian legacy of bygone eras.

Looking ahead, I think of this project on the poetics-defining role of parody as part of a larger endeavor to better appreciate the intellectual world of Old Babylonian scholars and poets. How can their insights into Sumerian literature help us make sense of a corpus that was lost and forgotten for thousands of years? And how might a better understanding of the vast, diverse corpus of Sumerian literature shape our ideas about the meaning and roles of literature today?

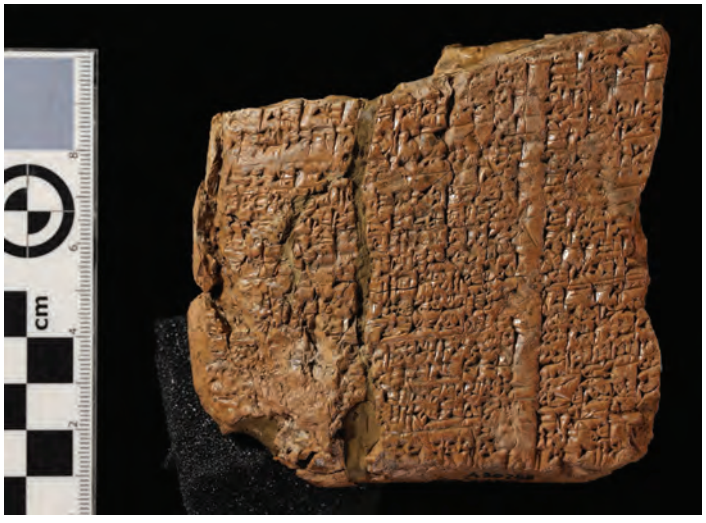


Figure 2. Old Babylonian tablet fragment from Nippur inscribed with an excerpt from *Two Women B*. ISACM A30208 (3NT-307). Photograph by Danielle Levy.

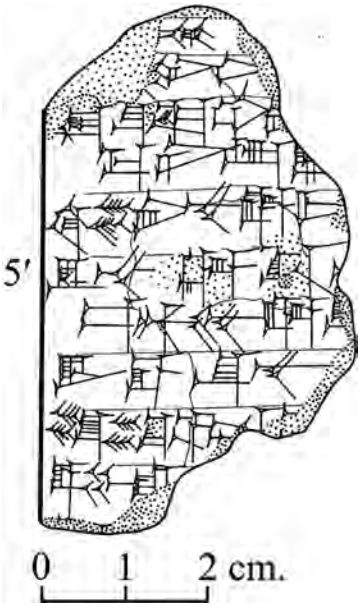


Figure 3. Old Babylonian tablet fragment from Nippur inscribed with an excerpt from *Two Women B*. ISACM A30300 (3NT-854). Line drawing by Jana Matuszak from *"Und du, du bist eine Frau?!" Editio princeps und Analyse des sumerischen Streitgesprächs 'Zwei Frauen B'* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 452.

JANA MATUSZAK is assistant professor of Sumerology at ISAC.

MY FAVORITE OBJECT
MESOPOTAMIAN TOMB

by Margaret Schmid

As a longtime ISAC docent, I have found lately that I especially enjoy making connections between various objects in the galleries. Here is one example.

When entering the ISAC Museum's Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, the visitor sees to the right a rather small case labeled "Mesopotamia: The Tomb" (fig. 1). Inside is the graphic outline of the body of a deceased child surrounded by grave goods, as excavated by ISAC archaeologists in the 1930s. Some of these objects are on display in the case: clay and metal vessels, beads of semiprecious stones, and metal weapons. The contents of the case provide a good opportunity to compare the Mesopotamian approach to death and the afterlife with that of the Egyptians. In contrast to Egypt, in Mesopotamia we find no mummification, only occasional sparse grave goods, fewer elaborate tombs, and a general belief in the afterlife as grim and gloomy. The display also informs viewers that the ancient Mesopotamians had strong beliefs about the dead, in particular the importance of family members' ensuring that burials were carried out properly because of their fear that the dead would otherwise come back as ghosts to haunt them.

Arriving at the *lamassu* in the Yelda Khorsabad Court Gallery

Figure 1. View of the display case "Mesopotamia: The Tomb" in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery.

(fig. 2) presents a perfect chance to recall the Mesopotamian belief in ghosts, which has been so wonderfully (and amusingly) described by British Museum curator Irving Finkel, notably in his 2021 book *The First Ghosts*. To the left is a wall relief with the somewhat-eroded image of Sargon II, the Neo-Assyrian king who built a magnificent palace at the then-new site of Dur-Sharrukin in about 710 BCE. The massive and impressive *lamassu*, one of several in his palace, was responsible, it was believed, for protecting him from evil people, evil spirits, and all kinds of harm—"to secure the path of the king who fashioned them," as one of his successors described. Sadly, the *lamassu*'s alleged powers failed and Sargon was killed in battle shortly after moving to Dur-Sharrukin. Even worse, it was impossible to retrieve his body and he was not given a proper burial.

Looking now at the series of reliefs to the right of the *lamassu* we see, first in line, Sennacherib, the crown prince (fig. 3). History tells us that Sennacherib thought his inability to give his father a proper burial was such a bad omen that, as the new king, he left this brand-new palace altogether and moved the administration to Nineveh. As I consider this abrupt relocation in comparison with the careful burial of the unknown Mesopotamian child, I cannot help but wonder whether Sennacherib—imbued, of course, with Mesopotamian beliefs—was worried about being haunted by his father's ghost.

On my tours, I always caution that Sennacherib did not leave us any clay tablets explaining his specific motivations, at least not any that have been found to date. So while there is no way to know for sure what his thought process was, thinking about ancient beliefs and how they likely influenced behavior helps make the ancient world alive and fascinating and can help us gain insights into our own world today.

Figures 2 and 3: Views of Assyrian sculpture from ancient Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad) in the Yelda Khorsabad Court.

MARGARET SCHMID is a longtime ISAC docent and volunteer.

MEMBER EVENT

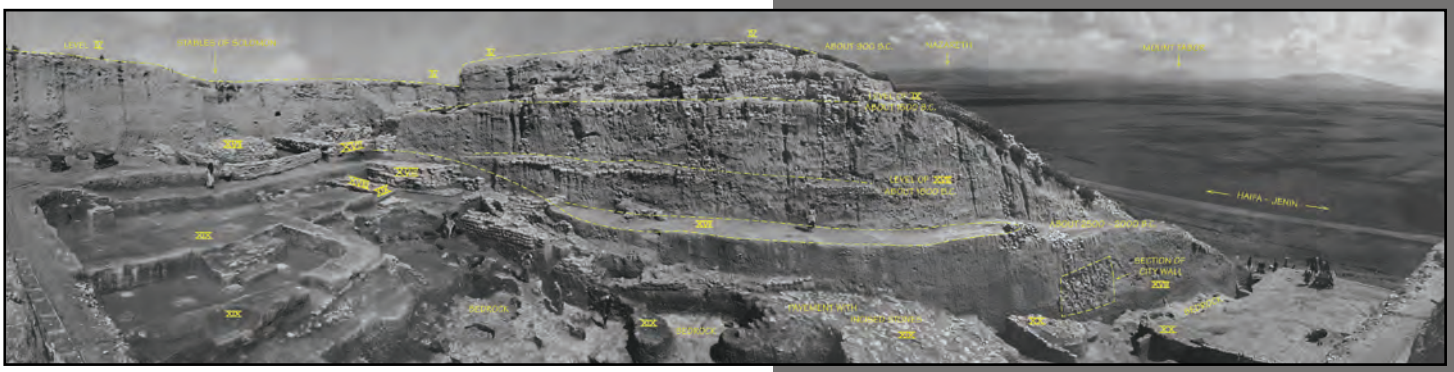
MEMBER EXHIBIT PREVIEW

Wednesday, September 17, 5:00–7:00 p.m. Central

ISAC

Join us for the member preview for our fall special exhibition commemorating the beginning of the Institute's Megiddo Expedition 100 years ago—the first of many ambitious, multiyear archaeological projects initiated by the Institute in the early twentieth century. The discoveries, meticulous recordings, and interpretations resulting from fourteen field seasons (1925–1939) at the site of Tell el-Mutesellim (ancient Megiddo)—a city strategically located on an important land route linking Egypt and the Mediterranean world with West Asia—laid the groundwork for modern archaeology in the southern Levant. ISAC's expedition ultimately recorded a sequence of twenty cities at Megiddo dating from the Neolithic through the Persian period, working stratum by stratum, monument by monument, object by object, from one area to the next, using innovative and scientifically grounded excavation methods to create a rigorous data-set for understanding the region's deep history. Featuring archaeological objects and archival records from ISAC's collections, as well as multimedia works, this exhibition will present fresh perspectives on this old material, shedding new light on the lesser-known histories, untold narratives, and individuals—both influential and overlooked—connected to ISAC's pioneering work at Megiddo.

Register at: https://bit.ly/ISACPreview



ABOVE: A panorama of ISAC's excavations at Megiddo highlighting some of the strata (stratigraphic layers), each of which represents a phase in the history of the site.

ADULT EDUCATION CLASS

COMMUNICATING ACROSS TIME

Instructors: Claudia Brittenham, Kate Hodge, Susanne Paulus, Foy Scalf, and Tasha Vorderstrasse

Tuesdays, July 8–August 26, 6:00–8:00 p.m. Central

Zoom and recorded, 8 weeks

Communication systems throughout history include everything from knots to petroglyphs and writing. It is interesting, when we think about why people communicate in the ways that they do, to look at different examples of communication from around the world. Written languages developed quite late in human history, and some cultures chose not to develop writing at all—thus, writing is clearly not necessary for communication and the storage of knowledge. Further, some cultures with writing systems also use other forms of nonwritten communication alongside these written languages. In this class, we will take the opportunity to explore such aspects of writing through examples from Africa, West Asia, the Americas, and the South Pacific to better understand the role of communication systems and the types of strategies employed by different individuals through time.

July 8 (week 1): Introduction (Vorderstrasse) and South Pacific stick charts (Hodge)

July 15 (week 2): Quipus (Hodge)

July 22 (week 3): Maya hieroglyphs (Brittenham)

July 29 (week 4): Nahuatl (Brittenham)

August 5 (week 5): Egyptian hieroglyphs (Scalf)

August 12 (week 6): Cuneiform (Paulus)

August 19 (week 7): Chinese (Vorderstrasse)

August 26 (week 8): Alphabets (Vorderstrasse)

Cost: $392 nonmembers, $314 members, $157 docents/volunteers/ISAC travelers, $98 UChicago Lab/charter school students, faculty, and staff.

Register at: https://bit.ly/ISACCommunicatingTime

Instructors: Claudia Brittenham, professor of Art History, Race, Diaspora, and Indigeneity, and the College and director of the Center for Latin American Studies; Kate Hodge, associate director, Office of the Provost; Susanne Paulus, associate professor of Assyriology, ISAC; Foy Scalf, head of the ISAC Research Archives and research associate; and Tasha Vorderstrasse, manager of the adult education program, ISAC.

LEFT: *Tsuki ni kumo zu* (*Moon amid Clouds*). Inscription by Seisetsu Shūcho and painting by Gekijō. Japan, early nineteenth century, Metropolitan Museum of Art 2020.396.11, Mary and Cheney Cowles Collection, Gift of Mary and Cheney Cowles, 2020.

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