

## INTRODUCTION

### Gil J. Stein

The 2002/2003 academic year has been a time of major change and progress for the Oriental Institute. At the same time, we saw the end of an era with the loss of the legendary archaeologists Robert and Linda Braidwood and of loyal friends such as Eleanor Swift, George Joseph, and William Boone.

I am delighted to announce the opening of the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, some of whose masterpieces are illustrated on the cover and chapter dividers of this *Annual Report*. With over 5,400 square feet of exhibit space and more than 1,300 artifacts on display, this is the largest of our galleries. Museum Director Karen Wilson and her colleagues on the Mesopotamian Gallery reinstallation committee can justifiably take great pride in having designed and constructed a superb setting to exhibit the Oriental Institute's world class collection of archaeological and textual materials from the earliest known urban society. We all owe Karen, McGuire Gibson, Dianne Hanau-Strain, Laura D'Alessandro, Markus Dohner, Carole Krucoff, Clemens Reichel, Jonathan Tenney, Tony Wilkinson, and the entire staff of the museum our heartfelt thanks for the tremendous effort they put into making this gallery a reality.

The installation is truly a group effort. Many members of the Oriental Institute faculty — notably Robert Biggs, John A. Brinkman, and Christopher Woods — provided advice on, read, and edited the labels and text panels, ensuring their accuracy and reliability. Finally, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the generous financial support of numerous individuals, foundations, and corporations such as Exelon Corporation, without whom the gallery could not have been completed.

Although the opening of the Jannotta Gallery is the most visible development in the building, it is important to emphasize that throughout the year, the Oriental Institute's main mission of research has continued unabated. We have ongoing projects in the field from Egypt across to Iran, and other research continuing here in Hyde Park.

We are fortunate to welcome two new promising young scholars to the faculty of the Oriental Institute and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Stephen Harvey specializes in the archaeology and art history of Egypt. Steve is conducting excavations and survey at Abydos, focusing on the pyramid complex of Ahmose, founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty. This exciting field project has already started to yield important insights into a crucial period in Egyptian history — the expulsion of the Hyksos and the origins of the New Kingdom. Seth Richardson is an ancient historian whose research examines such topics as the collapse of the Old Babylonian state. Seth's studies of hundreds of unpublished cuneiform texts in the British Museum are showing that the once-powerful Babylonian state, founded by the great king Hammurabi, fragmented in the sixteenth century B.C. due to internal causes such as financial crises and an out-of-control military, rather than the traditional explanation of a Hittite invasion.

In Turkey, Aslihan Yener is proceeding with her Atchana/Alalakh research project. This Middle and Late Bronze Age capital of the Amuq region is crucial for understanding the economic and political organization of the city-states of north Syria. The program of site mapping and documenting collections from the earlier excavations by Sir Leonard Woolley sets the stage for full-scale excavations, which are beginning in autumn 2003. This early excavation material was stored in the Hatay Museum in the modern city of Antakya (ancient Antioch) and in the Woolley dig house, which has miraculously survived intact for almost seventy years. We are ex-

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tremely grateful to Joseph and Jeanette Neubauer, whose generous support makes possible this new excavation phase of the project.

Perhaps the most exciting development in Oriental Institute research is our return to Iran after a hiatus of almost a quarter century. The Iranian Prehistoric Project, co-directed by Abbas Alizadeh from the Oriental Institute and Nicholas Kouchoukos of the University of Chicago Anthropology Department, is the first American archaeological project in Iran since the Revolution. Abbas, Nick, and Tony Wilkinson of the Oriental Institute conducted archaeological and geomorphological survey work focusing on the fourth millennium B.C. archaeological landscape of Khuzestan, that region of southwestern Iran immediately adjacent to Sumer, or southern Mesopotamia. After completing his fieldwork, Abbas spent most of the year in Tehran, working at the National Museum to organize and shelve their collections of survey pottery while also assembling a “sherd library” of diagnostic ceramics from all major regions and chronological periods in Iran. This reference collection will prove to be an indispensable resource for all future archaeological survey research in Iran. It also marks the beginning of a new era of cooperation and partnership between American and Iranian scholars.

In Egypt, the Epigraphic Survey continues work in the Medinet Habu small Amun temple of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. In addition to the ongoing process of recording, in 2002/2003 the Epigraphic Survey staff completed the digital scanning of all of the 17,099 large format photographs in the Chicago House archive. These images have now been copied onto CDs. One set now resides in the Oriental Institute archives, guaranteeing the preservation of this priceless visual record. The Epigraphic Survey also received a major grant of \$95,000 from the World Monument Fund to support the Epigraphic Survey’s conservation projects.

At home in Chicago, the Center for the Archaeology of the Middle Eastern Landscape (CAMEL) has continued its path-breaking work on the application of declassified satellite imagery to the reconstruction of archaeological landscapes in southeast Anatolia, north Syria, and Mesopotamia.

The three dictionary projects continue their steady progress. The Assyrian Dictionary is entering the final stretch. Three volumes are now in press, and the final volume is being written and edited. The projected completion date for this project is 2006. The completion of the Assyrian Dictionary, perhaps the single most important research tool for scholars of the ancient Mesopotamian textual record, will be marked and honored in 2005 by the convening in Chicago of the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*. The prototype of the electronic version of the Hittite Dictionary — the P volume — is on the verge of completion. The Hittite Dictionary received a major bridging grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the coming year. The Demotic Dictionary now has eleven letter files online, and four more are ready for posting. Janet Johnson, the head of the Demotic Dictionary Project, was appointed to the Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professorship in recognition of her tremendous intellectual contributions to Demotic studies.

The Oriental Institute’s Museum Education section has much to be proud of as well. In addition to their regular fare of educational programs, Carole Krucoff and her colleagues inspired and organized an extraordinary project — “Hip Hop Egypt” — in which students from the Kenwood Academy were given classes in Egyptian hieroglyphs, culture, and history as the background to use for their design and execution of a two part mural, titled “Ancient Egypt: A Hip Hop Perspective.” The project was made possible through support of the Regents Park/University of Chicago Fine Arts Partnership. The Museum Education section is also to be congratulated for securing grants from the Fry and Polk Foundations in support of their innovative programs.

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Finally, I am proud to highlight the active role that the Oriental Institute has played in responding to the looting and damage at the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad this past spring. McGuire Gibson has taken the lead in raising public awareness and in pressing the government of the United States to help track down and recover the stolen artifacts and help in the reconstruction efforts at the Museum. Clemens Reichel, aided by a dedicated group of volunteers, has established a website documenting the Iraq Museum holdings in general, and in particular, those 10,000 plus artifacts that can now be definitively established as stolen. We can only hope that this “cyber-alert” will help recover this lost Iraqi cultural patrimony.

Where are we going in the future? Karen Wilson and her colleagues are immediately starting on the installation of the East Wing of the Museum. This installation consists of three galleries: a gallery featuring the Assyrian reliefs from the private royal quarters at Khorsabad, the Herbolsheimer Syro-Anatolian Gallery, and the Haas Megiddo Gallery. At the same time, our research efforts in Egypt are expanding with Stephen Harvey’s Abydos project. Most important of all, we are initiating new surveys, excavations, and museum projects in Iran. We are on the threshold of a new era of discovery in the lands of Elam and the Iranian plateau. I look forward to presenting the results of these exciting developments in next year’s *Annual Report*.

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