

## Donald Whitcomb

This year began with teaching a seminar in Problems in Islamic Archaeology, though the few students available left the subject open. We settled on discussions on the origin of the mosque, which turned out to be very successful. The remainder of the quarter was devoted to organizing the fourth season at Khirbet al-Mafjar; this project requires extra care as we had invited Dr. Andrew Creekmore and his wife, Dr. Eleanor Moseman, to organize a remote-sensing survey over most of the site (see separate report). Even though this was a short (only eighteen days) and intense project, we found time for social activities: Ellie's birthday, visits to Jerusalem, and visits from Jerusalem by sixteen scholars and friends of the Albright Institute, and from Dr. Tawfiq Da'adli and his son, Walid.

A few days after my return to Chicago, I was on a plane to Paris, where I taught a course called Archaeology of Coptic and Islamic Egypt. This was part of the University of Chicago Study Abroad program. It was designed to be given in Cairo, but this was considered difficult, so we enjoyed the Chicago Center in Paris. The course would have included visits to Egyptian monuments and museums, but we happily substituted visits to the new Islamic galleries in the Louvre, which are quite amazing, and to the Institut du Monde Arabe. This latter museum is off the usual tourist path and, also newly re-installed, features wonderful exhibits of Egypt and the rest of the Middle East (not unlike a Parisian Oriental Institute, but with more Islamic objects).

The last news in my personal research for 2013–2014 was that plans for the new Qasr Hisham Museum at Khirbet al-Mafjar were underway, with agreement to have a panel testifying to the discovery and first excavations by Dimitri Baramki. I had visited his son, Constantine Hisham, in California the previous year and gained a real appreciation of his father as a person and scholar. He has since passed away and did not see the new panel dedicated to Dimitri Baramki in the new museum. Jack Green and I spent much of the summer and fall selecting ob-



*Hamdan Taha, Director of Antiquities (left), and Imad Doudeen, a mosaic specialist who has recreated a famous mosaic for the Qasr Hisham Museum*

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jects, designing cases, and writing panel copy for the new museum. It was not until the end of our 2014 season at Mafjar that I learned the funds had been approved and, four months later, I represented the Oriental Institute at a grand opening on May 28 with the Minister of Culture, the mayor of Jericho, and the Director of USAID in attendance.

In the spring there was a reading course on the Persian Gulf and writing some concluding comments for the Sasanian conference of last year; it was a pleasure to return to Iranian archaeology, however briefly. In June there was the 9th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, in which some fifty papers on Islamic topics were accepted. I offered our new results on the "Mosques of Mafjar." A good number of these papers were to be given by Iranian scholars and students, but only a fraction were able to participate, leaving a frustration on the part of those of us who wish to learn of their activities and new discoveries. Indeed, concern for archaeology in the Middle East was reflected in a student-organized symposium in Chicago called *Surveying the Field*. This was a well-balanced and informative set of presentation on problems of looting and fieldwork. I was proud to offer a few comments on Palestine and the Mafjar experience.

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