

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

Tony J. Wilkinson

As the world now seems to be engaged in a continuous cycle of wars, it is inevitable that the Oriental Institute's programs of fieldwork in the Near East will become ever more vulnerable to changes or cancellations than before. Despite the constant rumor of a war with Iraq, **Tony J. Wilkinson** managed to sneak in some brief spells of fieldwork in Turkey and Iran (in September/October 2002) and Yemen (in early 2003) before major conflict in Iraq took place during the spring of 2003. The seriousness of the war and its aftermath was made painfully obvious during a brief damage assessment trip he made to Iraq between May 8 and 17, 2003. The team, which included McGuire Gibson and Mark Altaweel of the Oriental Institute, was part of a larger group sponsored by the National Geographic Society which had as its primary objective the assessment of damage to archaeological sites as a result of the recent war. In contrast to the Baghdad of the 1980s, which was a vigorous and thriving city, in May 2003 we found that the sprawling metropolis was punctuated by burning or bombed out public buildings and ringed by numerous battlefields. Mosul, in the north of the country, on the other hand, was in a much better state with less damage and a commercial life well on the way to recovery. Nevertheless, the Assyrian capitals of Nimrud and Nineveh, as well as the Mosul Museum, had suffered significantly from looting. Although this was not as severe as in the south of Iraq where McGuire Gibson found that numerous sites bore the evidence of extensive plunder pits, the looting and damage to northern sites still represents a cause for considerable concern. During this visit we therefore placed emphasis not only on pinpointing where damage had occurred but also on suggesting where it was crucial for guards to be placed.

Because the war in Iraq and its aftermath resulted in a massive media blitz, the busy teaching spell of the spring quarter was made even more hectic than normal. Wilkinson, like other members of the Oriental Institute associated with Mesopotamian Archaeology, was involved in numerous TV and radio interviews. As a result of this he received the supreme accolade of modern life: his first hate mail!

With the award of a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation, the autumn of 2002 and 2003 witnessed a new phase in the development of the program of modeling ancient settlement systems. This award, which commenced in August 2002 for a five year term, will enable a team from the Oriental Institute, together with colleagues from the Department of Anthropology and the DIS division at the Argonne National Laboratory, to model the development of Bronze Age Mesopotamian cities and to determine how such cities might have developed in the face of a capricious physical and economic environment. The Oriental Institute team, comprises Tony Wilkinson and McGuire Gibson as senior principal investigators — in conjunction with David Schloen, Chris Woods, John Sanders, and Magnus Widell, a Modeling Ancient Settlement Systems (MASS) post-doctoral fellow, plus several graduate students. The research will mainly be concerned with assembling input data for the model, namely information on the agricultural production, families, and social relationships of third and second millennium B.C. communities. In addition, the Oriental Institute team will be bringing together information on the settlement landscape as it developed through the third and second millennium B.C. in both northern and southern Mesopotamia (see separate report, *CAMEL*).

This new spell of modeling activity is inevitably resulting in a flurry of conferences, workshops and meetings. In addition to the normal round of conferences and invited lectures, Wilkinson participated in a meeting on October 19, 2002, at George Mason University to present a paper entitled "Modeling complex settlement systems in the ancient Near East" and was also the co-organizer of a Workshop (with Nick Kouchoukos of the Department of Anthropology) on

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Landscape Archaeology in Greater Mesopotamia and Iran. This meeting brought in participants from many parts of the U.S. and featured splendid state of the art papers on remote sensing, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and satellite imagery by a number of senior graduate students from the Oriental Institute and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, as well as the Department of Anthropology. In addition, Wilkinson took the opportunity to organize a special session on the Landscapes of Nineveh at the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in London in July 2003. Papers in this session by Eleanor Barbanes, Jason Ur, Mark Altaweel, Tony Wilkinson, and Julian Reade discussed landscapes of settlement, irrigation systems, ancient roads, and the Assyrian economy.

Last but not least, the book *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East* is now in its production stages and is due to be published by the University of Arizona Press in November 2003, and a monograph on the archaeology of the Upper Lake Tabqa area (with a contribution by Clemens Reichel) will appear in the series Oriental Institute Publications (124).

After eleven productive and stimulating years at the Oriental Institute, Wilkinson is now preparing for a move to the University of Edinburgh, U.K., where he will take up a position teaching Near Eastern archaeology. Within the constraints of a new working environment, he will however be making several visits a year to Chicago in order to continue his involvement with various research and academic commitments.
