

## Seth Richardson

**Seth Richardson** arrived this past fall to take up a post teaching Ancient Near Eastern History, having most recently presented a conference paper at the London Rencontre in July on the origins of Babylonian liver omenology, and problems in its history as an observational science. He finished a study of an overlooked cuneiform tablet (listing tools used by Hammurabi's armies for the siege of the city of Eshnunna in the Fall of 1762 B.C.), and three book reviews: of a history of nineteenth–eighteenth century northern Babylonia, of the new *Helsinki Atlas of the Near East in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, and of a volume of cuneiform text-copies from collections in Berlin. A major portion of research effort has been advance preparation for two volumes of around 800 Babylonian texts in the holdings of the British Museum dating to the seventeenth century B.C.; this work has required the reanalysis of texts based on past collations, and reviews of other tablets. Also under way is a companion volume that provides an historical account of the factors leading to the collapse of the Babylonian dynasty in 1595 B.C., considering long-published texts together with these new tablets, in an effort to understand the event that ushered in Mesopotamia's longest Dark Age. Two papers delivered in different venues expanded on major features of this study. A January talk in the Franke Institute for the Humanities took a look at major social and political features of the age that existed below or alongside the dynastic state such as tribes, institutions, and fortresses. In March, Richardson gave a paper at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society which investigated the strange phenomenon of south-Babylonian people living in northern Babylonia in this time, an era when the south is already presumed to have been long-collapsed. Richardson was fortunate enough to arrive at the Oriental Institute in time to assist with the latter stages of the East Gallery's reinstallation, and undertook a revision of the narrative program for the continuing section of Khorsabad objects and reliefs. This project has resulted in some new understandings of familiar and important objects, some of which are discussed in *News & Notes* 183 (2004): 8–9. He has in the meantime continued the Oriental Institute's long-standing commitment to teaching history, offering courses in Ancient Near Eastern collapse, historiography, war and society, and historical survey. Richardson looks forward to several invited lectures, conference papers, and research trips in the coming year.

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