



News & Notes

Issued confidentially to members and friends

No.117 January-February, 1989

Not for publication

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

Karen L. Wilson

The day I arrived in Chicago to begin work the temperature was 99°—and the relative humidity probably about the same. Carrying a heavy suitcase, I climbed the stairs to an un-air-conditioned third-floor apartment, feeling that disintegration was imminent. But whereas human beings like myself can adjust, albeit less-than-happily, to such extreme environmental conditions, inanimate objects cannot, and the Oriental Institute's priceless collection was at that very moment suffering far more than I was.

The Oriental Institute building, completed in 1931, has never been provided with air conditioning, let alone the more sophisticated systems (standard in modern museums) necessary to control temperature and humidity fluctuations and the presence of noxious chemicals and airborne particles. As temperature and humidity rise and fall throughout the year, physical and chemical changes occurring in our objects are causing some literally to self-destruct. For example, as wooden pieces shrink when dry and expand when damp, they suffer irreversible warping and cracking. Painted surfaces, if they exist, begin to fall away (fig. 1) and are eventually

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Staff and workmen inspecting the formed, sun-dried mud cover over the burial.

NOTES FROM EASTERN TURKEY

Robert and Linda Braidwood

In recent years, each time we go to the field, we feel more and more how much Southwestern Asia has changed — no more cargo-bearing sail boats but many oil tankers; very few (if any) camels but many trucks, etc., etc. It is evident that Bob's indelible impressions of Southwest Asia were formed when he first went to Iraq in 1930. Alas, it's no longer the same. How fascinating it all was at that time, would be a tale of its own. On the other hand, in the post war years we've had the real challenge of being able to choose our very own research focus — that of trying to understand how a settled food-producing way of life came into being for the first time in history. This too, has deeply fascinated us.

Excavations at our early village-farming community site of Çayönü resumed again at the end of July. The Istanbul University team and the architectural colleagues from Karlsruhe University, plus our long time American field assistant, Mike Davis, were all on hand from the start. We, ourselves, postponed our arrival until the end of August, when the heat of the summer would have slackened off a bit. (Not that this summer's climate in Chicago was so great !)

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Fig. 1: Wooden coffin fragment (OIM 91), Egypt, Ptolemaic Period. This photograph was taken before the object was moved into the climate-controlled organics storage room. Fragments of the gesso ground and attached paint layer have flaked off the wooden coffin body as it expanded and contracted.



House foundation remains, a sun-dried mud oven-like structure (near upper right center) and (center, lower) a blocky inverted "L" of sun-dried mud, formed to cover a burial.

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Upon our arrival in Istanbul, we (the Braidwoods and Andrée Wood, our special volunteer assistant) were joined by two of the Institute's Visiting Committee — Carlotta Maher, and Diana Grodzins and husband Kelly — for the trip down to Çayönü. Our field companion of twenty-five years, Halet Çambel, and one of her bright young students, Ayşe Taşkıran, were also with us and we rented a small local bus so that everyone could see Anatolia at first hand — ground level with countryside, people, and activities (not by air at thirty thousand feet!). The trip took three days, plus a full day's stop in Ankara for a session with Jane Buikstra and Metin Özbek — both just back up from Çayönü, with more human skeletal material.

You may recall from our earlier letters the astounding yield of human skeletal remains that Çayönü has been producing over the last half dozen field seasons. These finds have been committed for study to Prof. Metin Özbek of Hacettepe University's Department of Anthropology, and this season Metin was scheduled to spend several weeks on Çayönü itself. Thanks to the warm interest of one of the expedition's friends, Prof. Jane Buikstra of Chicago's Anthropology Department, was able to come out to work with Metin. The collaboration was most successful. Jane hopes, as do we, to find a grant to bring Metin over to the States for research



Close-up of the formed sun-dried mud cover over the burial - note skull fragment center left.

participation in several human paleontological laboratories.

One very real problem that we face, with the human skeletal material of Çayönü, is how to fathom the cultural meanings of the different varieties of burial habits used by the Çayönü people. There is much more to be recovered and learned from the Çayönü burials than age and sex differentiation, diseases, and dietary clues, important as they are. What are the different burial habits trying to tell us of the different cultural perceptions, with respect to the dead, in this early society? This will not be easy to determine.

The architectural evidence continues to be impressive, but also puzzling. Should we be surprised to be confronted, in rough stratigraphic order, with at least six different plan types in about a six hundred year span of time? We now have over twenty radiocarbon age assays, ca. 7400 to 6850 B C (uncalibrated) for the time span of this main prehistoric period.* How shall we explain the succession of changes, and how did they relate to adaptations in an evidently increasingly successful food producing way of life?

To our way of thinking, there is only one really spectacular small object in the season's yield. It is also a puzzlement as to how it came to be preserved. This is the "ghost" of a finely woven piece of cloth, wrapped around the handle of a bone haft. The "ghost" has hardened, as if the threads had become fossilized — in any case, whatever the cause for preservation, the pattern of fine weaving is clearly visible.

At the end of the season, we received permission from the Turkish authorities to take samples for radiocarbon assays and pollen analysis for our colleagues in Holland, and in addition some more samples of worked copper for the University of Pennsylvania's MASCA laboratory for analyses. As usual, the samples were neatly boxed and wrapped by the staff in the Diyarbakir Museum, who also attached the impressive red seal and provided the descriptive papers that would allow us to take the samples through the Turkish customs, in case any questions were asked. But, as usual, our exit was completely uneventful.

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* The recent extension backwards of the recalibration based on tree rings and varves means that the 7000 B C uncalibrated assays we already have for Çayönü really indicate that the village was flourishing around 10,000 years ago.



Steps with stone-slab treads, rising up to the level of the tops of the rough stone wall foundations of a house. The walls above the foundations would have been of sun-dried mud brick.



Fig. 2:
Wooden Ba bird (OIM 113), Egypt,
Dynasty 26-30. This photograph was
taken before the object was moved
into the climate-controlled
organics storage room.
The wood shows severe damage
as the result of daily and
seasonal changes in relative
humidity in the storage environ-
ment. The warping and cracking
are irreversible and have caused
the originally painted surface to
be completely lost.

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completely lost (fig. 2). Combinations of moisture and the air-borne pollutants common in the Chicago environment infiltrate even closed exhibit and storage cases. There they initiate or speed up a variety of chemical reactions, most notably the corrosion of copper and bronze (fig. 3). And not only the ancient artifacts suffer from these conditions. Paper documents, books, photographs and negatives — all inherently impermanent to some degree — decay much more rapidly under conditions of fluctuating temperature and humidity. Even the building itself is suffering — moisture passing in and out of the stone around the windows has picked up soluble salts and deposited them near the surface, where they crystallize and gradually pulverize the stone.

The Oriental Institute has been aware of these problems for some time. In the past, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute for Museum Services have funded the installation in the basement of small, climate-controlled storage rooms for metals and organics. These were a vital stop-gap measure to care for objects not on exhibit until such time as overall climate control could be achieved.

Obtaining complete climate control for the building is now the top priority of the Museum staff, who are working with the Director toward that goal. This past year, using a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute contracted with a firm of energy consultants and design engineers to prepare cost estimates and specifications for upgrading the building with respect to climate control, fire suppression, security, and monitoring of mechanical failures.

Most of this work was completed by others before I became Curator. What we face now, as we plan for fund-raising and await the consultant's final specifications, is the necessity to prevent as much additional deterioration as possible. To this end, the museum's conservator, Laura D'Alessandro, and I are conducting a survey of objects on exhibit to determine which should be removed to climate-controlled storage for the next few years. Although damage has occurred in the past, I feel very positive that we are now moving in the right direction and are taking the steps necessary to preserve our unique and invaluable collection.

Installation of the new systems for climate control, security, and fire suppression can realistically be expected to take place four or five years from now. The work will entail major construction that will necessitate emptying the galleries to protect the objects from vibration, dust, workmen, and machinery. This will be the perfect time for a major renovation of the galleries, many of which are in desperate need of updating. We are beginning now to plan the numerous and complex stages leading to such renovation and will keep you posted on our progress.

Meanwhile, we are beginning a series of less radical — and less costly — renovations to make the galleries more attractive, more easily understood by the general public, more informative for the scholar, and more up-to-date in terms of the information they convey. We plan to begin with the Assyrian gallery, which is the most poorly organized and most confusing in terms of its juxtaposition of material from Syria, Anatolia, and Cyprus — as well as Assyria. The renovation will include not only new paint, newly arranged cases, and new labels and other didactic material, but also the exhibition of a few "Assyrian treasures" that have long been buried in the basement of the museum. Ivory inlay panels carved with winged sphinxes, bronze bands decorated with figures in relief, cylinder and stamp seals, royal inscription's, and everyday pottery will all be used to flesh out the picture of Assyrian culture now given solely by the monumental stone reliefs. After a few more weeks' work, we should know whether to aim for opening the rejuvenated gallery in the spring or fall. We will let you know what we decide. . . .



Fig. 3:
Copper alloy libation
vessel (A 12439), Khafajah,
Iraq (Sin Temple IX), Early
Dynastic II-III period. This
vessel had to be removed from
exhibit due to extensive corro-
sion (known as "bronze disease").

CHARLES FRANCIS NIMS

October 19, 1906 -

November 19, 1988

Charles Nims, professor emeritus of Egyptology at the Oriental Institute, died on November 19th at the age of 82. An obituary will appear in the next issue of *News & Notes*.

ADDED LECTURE

On February 22, 1989, Nanno Marinatos from the Swedish Institute in Athens will speak on *New Minoan Frescoes from Thera: a Puberty Rite for Girls*. This is a joint lecture with the Chicago Society of the A.I.A. and will be presented at 8 pm in Breasted Hall at the Oriental Institute.

CHILDREN'S WINTER WORKSHOPS

Four Saturday morning workshops combining gallery tours with creative and craft activities will be offered for children ages 7-12. Each workshop includes study time in the galleries, a snack, and a craft activity that results in an item to take home. Workshops meet in Breasted Hall from 10 a.m. till noon. There is a fee of \$6 for each workshop. Enrollment is limited and advance registration is required.

January 14 THE PYRAMIDS OF ANCIENT EGYPT

We will look at a scale model of the pyramid built for Pharaoh Sahure more than 4000 years ago as we learn about how and why pyramids were built, how they were alike and how they were different.

Craft: Each student will construct a cardboard replica of a pyramid and decorate its interior.

January 21 MUMMIES AND MUMMY CASES

We will look at the mummies, their beautifully decorated cases and coffins, canopic jars and other funerary objects as we learn about ancient Egyptian preparations for the afterlife.

Craft: Each student will make a sock doll replica of a mummy and decorate a cardboard mummy case to keep it in.

January 28 THE MYTHS OF OSIRIS, HORUS & SETH

After hearing these stories, students will see representations of gods and goddesses in the gallery and learn how these gods and goddesses were involved with the ancient Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife.

Craft: Each student will make a crown modeled after the crown of Osiris, king of the dead, or Horus, king of the living.

February 4 HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

We will look at hieroglyphic writing symbols and how they were used for everyday purposes as well as for state and religious writings. We will also talk about the Egyptians' belief in the magical aspects of the written word.

Craft: Each participant will make a "cartouche" containing the hieroglyphs that write his or her own name and an amulet in the shape of a hieroglyph.

Call 702-9507 for more information or to make reservations.

WINTER MEMBERS' COURSES

Two Winter Quarter courses, described in the last issue of *News & Notes*, begin on January 14. The topics are AKHENATEN AND HIS TIMES: THE AMARNA PERIOD IN EGYPT taught by Elizabeth Shannon and ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION taught by Frank Yurco.

If you are interested in either of these courses, please call the Education Office, 702-9507, to inquire if registration is still open.

SPRING MEMBERS' COURSE

THE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF MESOPOTAMIA, the first half of a two-quarter survey course, will begin April 1 and meet for eight Saturday mornings through May 20. The second quarter of the course will be given in the summer. The instructor will be James Armstrong, a Ph. D. candidate in Mesopotamian archaeology who has excavated for a number of seasons at the site of Nippur in Iraq.

The books recommended for this course are *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia* by Seton Lloyd and *Ancient Iraq* by Georges Roux.

A more complete description of the course will appear in the March-April *News & Notes*; however, an enrollment form is included below for those who may wish to ensure a place in the class by registering at this time

For more information about Members' courses, call the Education Office, 702-9507.

You must be an Oriental Institute member to take this course. Those who are not already members should enclose a separate \$30 check for annual membership.

Please register me for the following course:

- The History and Archaeology of Mesopotamia** (\$60)
 I am a member and enclose a check for tuition.
 I am not a member, but also enclose a SEPARATE check for \$30 to cover a one year Oriental Institute membership.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Daytime telephone _____

Please make checks payable to: THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE. Mail to: Education Office, The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637. (312) 702-9507.

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Lectures are presented at 8 pm in Breasted Hall at the Oriental Institute. Institute members may make dinner reservations at the Quadrangle Club, 1155 East 57th Street, 702-2550, before members' lectures. They will bill the Oriental Institute and we, in turn, will bill you. Please PRINT your name and address at the bottom of your dinner check, as well as signing it, so that we may know where to send your bill.

- February 15, 1989** Harvey Weiss, Yale University, *North Versus South at Tell Leilan, Syria.*
- February 22, 1989** Nanno Marinatos, Swedish Institute in Athens, *New Minoan Frescoes from Thera: a Puberty Rite for Girls.* A joint lecture with the Chicago Society of the A.I.A.
- March 8, 1989** John Baines, The Oriental Institute at Oxford University, *The Origins of Kingship in Egypt.*
- April 12, 1989** Norman Golb, The Oriental Institute, *The Autograph Memoirs of Obadiah the Proselyte: A Chapter in the History of the First Crusade.*
- April 26, 1989** Karen Rubinson, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Pazyrk: Frozen Portrait of Exchange and Influence.* A joint lecture with the Chicago Society of the A.I.A.
- May 15, 1989** Annual Oriental Institute Dinner in the Museum

COURSE FOR WEEKEND DOCENTS PLANNED FOR SPRING

The Volunteer Office will offer a course during the spring quarter to train volunteers as weekend museum guides. The course, which will run nine Saturdays will include films, lectures, readings and gallery workshops. After taking the course, volunteers will be asked to serve one-half day every other Saturday or Sunday.

Interviews are now being scheduled for those interested in taking the course. To arrange for an interview, or for further information, call Janet Helman in the Volunteer Office at 702-9507.

FREE SUNDAY MOVIES AT THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

All films will be shown at 2 p.m. in Breasted Hall

- January** 1 New Year's Day, **Museum Closed**
8 Preserving Egypt's Past
15 Turkey: Crossroads of the Ancient World
22 Champollion: Egyptian Hieroglyphs Deciphered
29 Rivers of Time: Civilizations of Mesopotamia
- February** 5 Myth of the Pharaohs/Ancient Mesopotamia
12 Iraq: Stairway to the Gods
19 Of Time, Tombs, and Treasure
26 Megiddo: City of Destruction
- March** 5 The Egyptologists
12 The Royal Archives of Ebla
19 Egypt: Gift of the Nile
26 Iran: Landmarks in the Desert

CONTINUING IN THE MUSEUM
THROUGH FEBRUARY, 1989

*DIGGING THE
ANCIENT NEAR EAST*



A special exhibition
featuring archaeological methods
and Oriental Institute
expeditions both past and present.

THE SUQ سوق

24 Hours in Chicago **Weekly Engagement Calendar** by the Fort Dearborn Chicago Camera Club

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Six of the photographs are by the Oriental Institute's photographer Jean Grant. 6 1/2" x 9 1/2"

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Kafiya

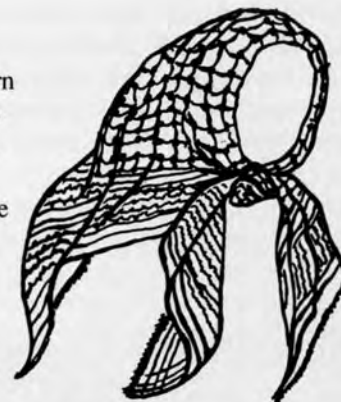
A traditional Middle Eastern headcovering which can be worn either as a shawl or a scarf. White with black machine stitching and white fringe on two sides.

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Drawing by N.W. Griffin



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