



# News & Notes

*Issued confidentially to members and friends*

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## TWO MORE GATES FOR AQABA

Donald Whitcomb

In the *News & Notes* for May-June of last year, I discussed the problem of townplanning in Aqaba and boldly predicted some of the results anticipated in our Fall excavations. "[While talking with Mohammad Balqar, of the Aqaba Region Authority] ... I confidently pointed out the location of the eastern gate. The southeast corner of the town had been cut away ... even as we stood there a clear line of granite stones was still visible exactly where I had predicted it would be." Well, ... I was both wrong and correct, but we now have a precise plan of the Islamic city. This season, as I described the new plan to Balqar, he threw up his hands in mock despair. "Each year you give us a *new* plan of the city," he said. I responded that each year I give him a *better* plan of these remains



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*Kurdi and Richerson working on Aqaba exhibit panels.*

## INSTITUTE'S AQABA EXHIBIT MOVES TO JORDAN



*Unloading the new exhibit cases at the Department of Antiquities.  
Photo by J. Richerson.*

The Oriental Institute's Aqaba exhibit, *Aqaba - "Port of Palestine on the China Sea,"* was dismantled in Chicago in the late summer of 1988, crated, and flown to Jordan. The Institute's exhibit designer, James Richerson, flew to Amman at the end of October to reinstall it there. After shopping for building materials in the *suqs* of Amman, Richerson transported these materials in an open dump truck to the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR). For the next three weeks the basement of this new building was transformed into a museum preparation area, not unlike that within the Oriental Institute. The new exhibit walls and cases were then moved to the Registration Center of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in Amman. Working together with his Jordanian counterpart Hanan Kurdi, Richerson installed the exhibit in the large, circular, central hall. Kurdi and Richerson also produced label copy for the exhibit in both Arabic and English. The installation was facilitated by Ghazi Bisheh, who had recently left the Aqaba excavations to become the new Director of Antiquities.

The Aqaba exhibit in Amman was the second in a series of archaeological exhibits sponsored by the Jordanian government. These exhibits are oriented towards educating the public, especially school children. A large central orientation area was added to the exhibition space where children could have hands-on experience with artifacts, pottery reconstructions, and tools used by archaeologists. There were also large panels explaining archaeology in general and a video tape of the excavations at the site of Aqaba. Another tape of both the exhibit and the excavations was made by Jordan Television (JTV) for broadcast as a news feature, and as part of a documentary on archaeology in Jordan.

In February, the exhibit was moved to its permanent home in the city of Aqaba, in a refurbished, historic house which is now being used as a museum.

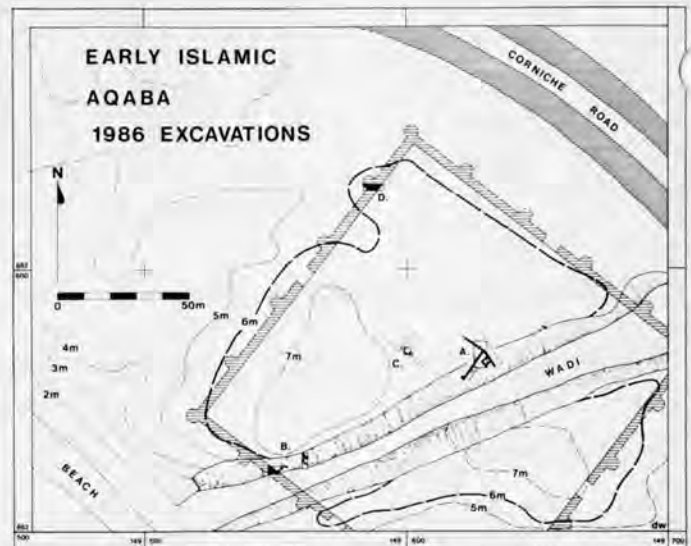
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To further this defense, I would like to review the three city plans which have developed, one after each season of excavation. The plans show the constantly increasing meters of excavated walls and towers (shown in bold black) and the conjectured completion of the city walls (drawn less boldly with dashed lines). The interaction of the excavated evidence and the form of the whole clearly illustrates the role of hypothesis (i.e., guess-work) in directing an excavation.

Our soundings in 1986 had uncovered two small pieces of the city wall, which I fantasized into a great town with towered walls and four gates (all drawn with dotted lines). While this idea was based on possible resemblances to other earlier towns in Jordan (Udhruh, Lejjun, Anjar, etc.), there was no certainty about this plan whatsoever. Balanced out on a limb, we started sawing on a large-scale in 1987, to prove or disprove this plan. First we found the semi-circular towers, then the northwest gate (the Egyptian gate) appeared only 10 meters away from its predicted location. So much for the positive side; on the other hand, the town turned out to be not square but rectangular. The northeast wall, which we pursued in several trenches, lies buried beneath the modern Corniche Road.

The second plan, with the blackened additions of the 1987 excavations, still had plentiful dotted lines but our level of confidence in those lines was much higher. I was still convinced that there were four gates, though there was still absolutely no actual evidence for three of them. I went ahead and drew (with dotted lines) four axial streets, each leading from a gate to a central point in front of the Pavilion building. The evidence needed to confirm this plan all converged on the section south of the wadi, where a few lines of stone seemed to justify the mass of dotted lines. This area, as I mentioned in last year's article, had been a Jordanian Coast guard camp, filled with British-built barracks. Most of the land beneath these buildings seemed the same as on the other side of the wadi; only the far south corner was cut away to the lower ground surface of the harbor facilities.

Armed with these hypotheses, we arrived in Aqaba at the beginning of last October to find the coast guard gone to another



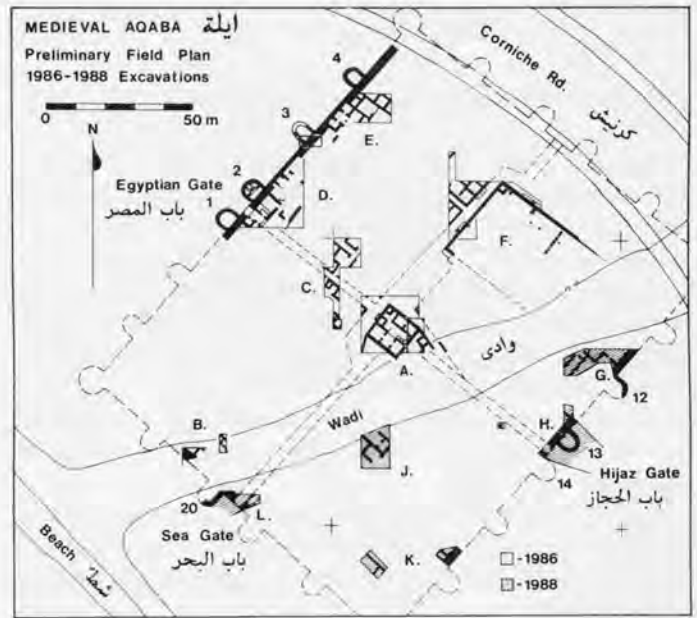
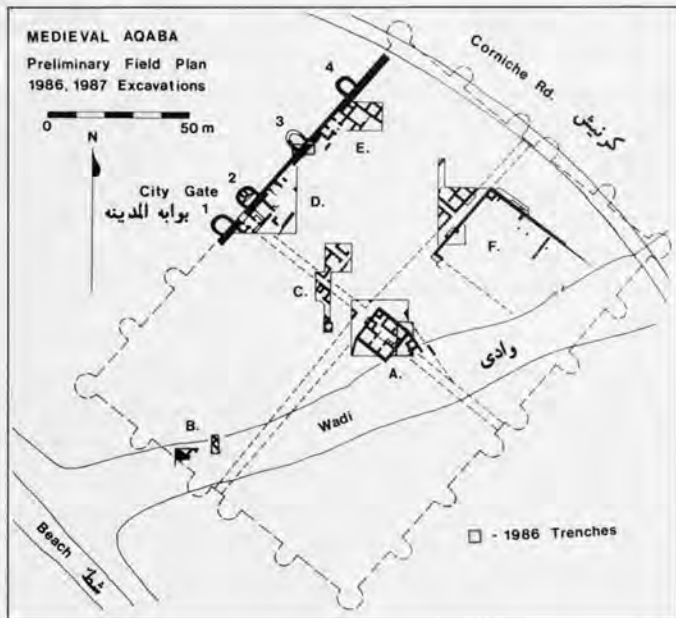
camp, most of the barracks removed, and construction well under way for The Royal Yacht Club of Jordan. Trucks rumbled, cranes whirled, steel was being cut, and huge cement slabs were being poured, as the old quay (once called Victoria pier) was being transformed into a modern marina facility. We were welcomed into this hive of activity by the manger of the Club, Hassan al-Aweideh, the chief engineer, Malcolm Ellis, and the director of the construction company, Michael Burgess. Each of these men, and numerous other personnel (especially Nasr, the foreman), not only showed interest in our research but helped in many practical ways. Our mutual goal was to find a way to develop the new marina and the archaeological remains together into one attraction for Aqaba.

We began excavating on October 4th. Robert Schick and Jennifer Kiely placed a trench over the line of stones I saw near the south corner of the city. Robin Brown and Ghazi Bisheh placed another trench over the measured/hypothesized location of the eastern gate. By the next day it was clear that Robert and Jen had early Islamic buildings but no trace of the city wall and Robin and Ghazi had the stone foundation of one of the barracks and clean sand. We borrowed a bulldozer! Slowly the driver cut a narrow trench into the sand — half a meter, one meter, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3 meters of clean wind-blown sand. At the bottom were early Islamic buildings but no trace of a gate. The next day the bulldozer produced more sand for us in other locations. Back to the drawing board (literally) in a quiet panic.

Fortunately the next day was Friday, the "weekend," and by Saturday I was ready with a fresh set of hypotheses. I began with the Pavilion building and the axial streets. What if these streets passed *through* the center of the building, instead of in front? I then measured the distance from the Egyptian gate to the center of the Pavilion, and replaced the southeast wall at the same distance. This would mean the city would be about 20 meters wider than I had expected. I moved Robert to a new trench, carefully measured from my new plan; he came down directly upon the city wall. More measurements and I was ready for the Eastern gate. The bulldozer was brought back and cut a narrow



Donald Whitcomb explaining the site of Aqaba for a Jordan Television (JTV) crew. Photo by J. Richerson.



trench along the presumed line of the city wall. This was so deep that by the time the sand was cleared the bulldozer had almost disappeared from sight. We were becoming used to this type of digging and found that the sand lay on dark brown soil, which in turn covered the stones of the city wall. The cut was so accurate that, although we were coming down immediately over the city wall, the bulldozer cut was narrower than the wall, and we could not see the inner or outer faces.

While we pondered this sand removal, I realized an important implication of the changed city plan. I had presumed the southwest gate or Sea Gate to be destroyed by the wadi; now its location was moved over 10 meters to the east. I set John Meloy and Jennifer to work in the place it should appear and there it was, less than a meter beneath the surface. It had a tree growing through it, which made the digging pleasantly shaded but somewhat difficult. Thus by the 6th day of digging we had found the city wall and two more city gates, the Sea gate, and the Hijaz (southeastern) gate; this was done with a bit of thought and a lot of enthusiastic hard work by the whole team.

The absence of sand near the wadi edge meant that this was the place for more stratigraphic information. Khairieh Amr found the city wall and a tower near the Corniche road (area G); she set to excavating the rooms behind the city wall and, as she had ably demonstrated in 1987, proved to have a feel for digging towers. Robin opened a new residential area (J) with plastered walls, hearths, and an excellent artifactual sequence. At this point Ghazi had to return to Amman where he was appointed the Director General of the Department of Antiquities; this apotheosis robbed us of a talented excavator and congenial member of the team. True to character, Ghazi remembered our problem and sent down a bulldozer for our full-time use.

The Sea gate had proven to have a fascinating history of changes, reconstructions very similar to those we had seen in the Egyptian gate in 1987. Now, down to our last few days of digging, the bulldozer cleared an area in front of the Hijaz (or eastern) gate and one of its flanking towers. Here was a shock, the unpredictable accosting us in the last minutes. This gate had been blocked

very early in its history, and a second skin of stone reinforced the blocked gate and tower. The area outside the former gate was plastered and, thanks to the sharp eyes of Robert Schick, numerous graves dug into the plaster were discovered. While there were no grave stones, the stratigraphy proves that this cemetery must date to within the first 50 years of the founding of the city, before 700 A.D. It is possible that this cemetery, located in the direction of Mecca and Medinah, might hold the remains of Companions of the Prophet. Another implication, and this will be the first hypothesis for next season, is that the Congregational mosque for the city may lie behind or near the blocked gate.

This hypothesis and others to follow (more dotted lines) are more than a game; they are a process of rediscovering the architectural principles for the first Islamic cities. This is the formation of Islamic culture in its material manifestations; these walls and stones tell an important story, and preservation of this monument is already underway. Soon this early Islamic city will be visible to tourists and visitors to Aqaba and will reflect the pride of this town, the Yacht Club, and all Jordanians.



*A bulldozer was used to remove over three meters of sand on top of the city wall (visible in the foreground). The location of the Hijaz gate is approximately behind the bulldozer. Photo by D. Whitcomb.*

## SPRING MEMBERS' COURSE

### The History and Archaeology of Mesopotamia

This course is the first half of a two-quarter-long introduction to the archaeology and history of Mesopotamia from earliest times to the rise of Islam. Within a chronological/historical framework, we will examine the significant archaeological discoveries at such sites as Ur, Nippur, Nineveh, and Babylon, and how they have enabled us to reconstruct the history and culture of this ancient land. We will also consider such topics as the relationship of the Mesopotamian people to their environment, the changing relations between the Mesopotamian states and their neighbors, and the Mesopotamian cultural legacy, artistic, literary, and intellectual.

In the spring quarter we will cover the period from earliest times to the end of the Old Babylonian kingdom (ca. 1600 B.C.). The summer quarter will be devoted to the period between the Kassites and the rise of Islam.

**Priority for enrollment in the summer quarter will be given to those participants who have completed the spring quarter course and new students will be admitted only as space permits.**

Readings will be assigned weekly from *Ancient Iraq* by Georges Roux and *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia* by Seton Lloyd. Additional selected readings will be distributed in class.

**Instructor:** James Armstrong is a Ph.D. candidate in Mesopotamian archaeology in the Department of Near Eastern Lan-

guages and Civilizations. He has just returned from a season of excavating at the site of Nippur in southern Iraq.

This class will meet at the Oriental Institute from 10 a.m. till noon beginning Saturday, April 1 and continuing through May 20. Tuition is \$60 plus \$30 for annual membership in the Oriental Institute if you are not already a member. Enrollment will be limited and early registration is recommended; if you are interested in this course, please call the Education Office at 702-9507 to see if enrollment is still open before mailing in your registration.

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.

## FREE SUNDAY MOVIES AT THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

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

MARCH	5	The Egyptologists
	12	The Royal Archives of Ebla
	19	Egypt: Gift of the Nile
APRIL	26	Iran: Landmarks in the Desert
	2	Egypt's Pyramids: Houses of Eternity
	9	The Big Dig
	16	Preserving Egypt's Past
	23	Of Time, Tombs, and Treasure
MAY	30	Champollion: Egyptian Hieroglyphs Deciphered
	7	Rivers of Time: Civilizations of Mesopotamia
	14	Myth of the Pharaohs/Ancient Mesopotamia
	21	Iraq: Stairway to the Gods
	28	Turkey: Crossroads of the Ancient World

## BREASTED WORK REISSUED

Long out of print, the important five volume work, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, by Oriental Institute founder James Henry Breasted, has been reprinted in California. For information, contact Michael Sanders, 7 Citidel, Irvine, California 92720, (714) 832-8550, identifying yourself as an Institute member.

## 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.

## ORIENTAL INSTITUTE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOUR TO EGYPT October 14-November 1, 1989



This 19 day trip will provide a fascinating look at the art, history, and culture which originated in the Nile Valley over 5,000 years ago. The tour will be led by Egyptologist, Lorelei Corcoran, Ph.D. Special features are a day-trip to Alexandria in the little-visited Delta area,

and the ever popular five-day Nile cruise on a Sheraton ship. A complete trip itinerary is available from the Membership Office. The cost of the trip from Chicago is:

Land arrangements	\$2890
Round trip air fare from Chicago (APEX)	\$1125
Single supplement, hotels only	\$350
Single supplement, hotels and ship	\$650

plus a \$350 tax-deductible contribution to the Oriental Institute. A \$400 deposit is required at the time of booking.

Arrangements may be made beforehand with the travel agent (Archaeological Tours, Inc) to travel in Europe or the Near East before or after the tour. Archaeological Tours will be glad to help you with these arrangements, but you will be responsible for any additional travel costs or surcharges.

Please enroll me/us in the Institute's 1989 tour to Egypt:  
October 14-November 1, 1989

Share room (with?)

- Single room, hotels  
 Single room, hotels and cruise  
 Send detailed itinerary

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$400 per person) as a deposit to hold my/our place(s), payable to:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURS, INC.

Mail to: Membership Office, The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637, (312) 702-9513.

## LECTURE SCHEDULE

Lectures are presented at 8 p.m. 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.

- 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

## FIRST MEMBERS' PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT CLOSES



The first Oriental Institute members' photography exhibition, *Travelers in Ancient Lands: Members' Photographs of the Middle East*, which was on exhibit in the Museum from November 15th until the end of January, was a great success. The work of fifty two members was displayed, totaling 126 photographs. The photos submitted were large and small, in both black and white and color, and all of them were interesting. The show drew a large, enthusiastic audience. We are thinking of doing a similar photo exhibit sometime in the next year or two, and hope that even more of you will participate.

# THE SUQ سوق

## Striding Lion Pin



A reproduction from our own collection. The original is an Achaemenid gold applique for textiles dating to the 5-4th century B.C. This one is gold plated with antiquing. Approx. 1" x 1 1/2"

**\$14.00**

Members **\$12.60**

Postage \$2.50

## New book titles from the Suq



*Memphis under the Ptolemies* by Dorothy J. Thompson, Princeton University Press. This book examines the city's economic life and the character of its multi-racial society in the era from Alexander to Augustus. It uses archaeological findings as well as Egyptian and Greek evidence. 344 pages.

**\$37.50** Members **\$33.75**

Postage \$2.50

*Monuments of Egypt The Napoleonic Edition.* A beautiful, 2 volume edition of the plates from Napoleon's campaign to Egypt.

**\$85.00** Members **\$76.50**

Postage \$4.00

**Illinois residents please add 8% sales tax.**



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