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News & Notes

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Conference Held in Beirut on Land Tenure

March 1, 1983

Dear Friends,

Beirut probably ranks near the bottom of most peoples' list of desirable places to visit these days, given the turmoil and trauma that it has gone through over the past eight years. While the city still has a long way to go before once again becoming a worthy rival of Palm Springs or Monte Carlo, however, it is encouraging to be able to report that there are some signs of stabilization. This became clear as I attended a conference on "Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Near East" held from February 14 to 18 at the American University of Beirut.

Perhaps the most surprising impression that came from attending the conference was the calm that prevailed in Beirut itself. The area from the airport south of the city to the northern suburbs is now under the control of the Lebanese army, backed by the joint Italian-French-American peace-keeping forces; the various militias have been disarmed and disbanded in these areas, and it is possible to walk the streets by day or night with no concern for one's safety. Most Beirutis seem to be pessimistic about the political future of Lebanon as a whole, but are profoundly relieved that the fighting is over, at least for them, and that they can once again lead normal lives. The talk of an eventual solution involving a "Greater Beirut" as a kind of independent city-state separate from other parts of Lebanon—which may remain under the control of the Phalange, of Syria, and of Israel or her proxy,

Sa'd Haddad—reflects, I think, both the difficulty most Beirutis foresee in getting these foreign or domestic powers to relinquish their control to a reconstituted Lebanese government, and the unwillingness of most Beirutis to return to the kind of factionalism that still grips the rest of the country. In any case, the order that has returned to Beirut has unleashed a flurry of reconstruction, funded both by the Lebanese authorities and by some civic-minded financiers who have hired especially the unemployed youth of the city, to keep them off the streets and out of trouble, and to help with the rebuilding process.

There is much to rebuild. Fortunately the Ras Beirut area, including the fashionable Hamra district and the A.U.B. campus, was hardly damaged by the long hostilities. Occasionally one turns a corner to find a pile of rubble where a building once stood, surrounded by essentially unscathed constructions. Some of these isolated targets were bombed by one or another faction during the years of civil war, such as the former Iraqi embassy on the south side of town; others were the target of Israeli bombs during the summer of 1982, such as an apartment house where a high-ranking PLO official had his residence, or the engineering tower of the Beirut Arab University. Still, the general impression one gets when walking around Ras Beirut is that little has changed. True, there are very few foreigners to be seen—very different from prewar Beirut—but the buildings are all more or less there, the stores are open, the flower shops have their bright displays spilling out onto the sidewalk, men peddle fruit from carts in the street, and there are too many cars.



The Coastal Hotel District (ca. 1970)



The Coastal Hotel District (Feb., 1983).



Apartment Damaged by Israeli Bombardment (Feb., 1983).

Some other areas of town, however, were much more heavily damaged than Ras Beirut, and the restored calm that permits hectic reconstruction efforts also permits casual visits to view the extent of the damage. Large areas of sprawling settlements near the sports arena south of the city, already damaged by shelling in 1975-76, were reduced to rubble by heavy Israeli bombardment in 1982. The sports arena itself is a mass of shattered concrete and twisted reinforcing rods. The area along the old "Green Line" that separated East from West Beirut, and running through the Burj, the old commercial and transportation center of the city, was very heavily damaged by continuous small-arms fire over eight years. Most of the buildings in this area are standing, but only as burned-out shells with facades pitted by projectiles, and marked by an occasional clean hole from a rocket, bazooka, or mortar round. Architecturally speaking, this is perhaps the saddest sight in all Beirut, for this area was the heart of the old city, and had a certain charm that will be difficult, if not impossible, to restore. The area along the waterfront east and west of the Burj, including the stretch of luxury hotels--the Hilton, Normandy, Holiday Inn, and St. Georges--was also the scene of savage fighting during the civil war, and was similarly damaged. The towering high-rise hotels built there during the early 1970s became the base of operations for snipers from various factions, and hence suffered heavily in consequence of their strategic importance. Worst of all is the fact that the visible physical damage is only a mute reflection of horrifying human agony: perhaps 60,000 Lebanese and Palestinians dead from civil war, and almost another 10,000 killed since last July.

Yet the destruction has a curiously local character in Beirut; one can go just a few blocks up the hill from the heavily damaged Riyad al-Sulh square to find the German Oriental Institute, tucked away on a back street in its elegant old building, completely unscathed. Much of Christian East Beirut, and a good part of the Muslim Basta district, like Ras Beirut, are essentially intact. So, though there is much to rebuild, there is also a good deal to build on. One can only hope that the Lebanese will be able to find some arrangement that brings peace and stability to their country once again. In the meantime, the calm in Beirut, even if limited to the city, is a positive sign, and it is nice to think that the conference at A.U.B. was a harbinger of a returning cultural and intellectual life in the city.

Thirty-one participants from the U.S., Canada, Germany, France, Italy, England, Lebanon, Jordan, and Qatar read papers on various aspects of land tenure from ancient to mod-

ern times. Of particular interest to members of the Oriental Institute were the papers in the ancient field. Mario Liverani (Rome), in his paper "Land Tenure and Inheritance in the Ancient Near East," proposed a theoretical distinction between two different modes of production, one palace-centered and one family-centered, and attempted to demonstrate how each of these evolved in ways that influenced the other. Carlo Zaccagnini (Bologna), in "Hereditary Transmission and Alienation of Land at Nuzi: a socio-economic appraisal," discussed the implications of the marutu system of "sale-adoption", in which someone adopts another person in order to transfer property to him. Mario Fales (Venice), in "An Overview of Land Sales in the Neo-Assyrian Period," discussed the evidence of land deeds and records of sales of land, focusing particularly on the apparent drop in productivity or extent of cultivation in the Assyrian countryside that appears to be reflected in these records. William Ward (A.U.B.), in "Some Aspects of Private Land-Ownership and Inheritance in Ancient Egypt, ca. 2500-1000 B.C.," adduced evidence to bolster the thesis that private lands could be directly inherited in ancient Egypt. Henry MacAdam (A.U.B.), in "Land Tenure and Village-City Relationships in Syria during the Roman Period," examined epigraphic and palaeographic materials to conclude that, by the end of the fifth century or beginning of the sixth century C.E., the villages of the Leja region of South Syria were making treaties with other powers besides Rome--probably local nomadic confederations.



Scene from A.U.B. Campus, looking North (Feb., 1983).

A number of papers relating to the early Islamic period were also presented. These included Lawrence Conrad (A.U.B.), "The Process of tamsir in Early Islamic Egypt and Iraq"; Gernot Rotter (Deutsche Orient-Institute Beirut), "Natural Disasters and their Socio-economic Consequences in the Second Civil War."; John Donahue (Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut), "Land Tenure in the Kitāb al-Wuzurā' of Hilāl al-Ṣābī'"; Tarif Khalidi (A.U.B.), "Problems of Land Tenure in Medieval Palestine"; Wilferd Madelung (Oxford), "Land Tenure and Land Tax in Northern Yemen, 3rd-5th century A.H."; Gladys Frantz (Loyola University), "Social Mobility and the Bureau of Land Tax in the Arabic Papyri from Egypt."; Michael Morony (U.C.L.A.), "Land Tenure and Social Change in 2nd century A.H. Iraq"; Albrecht Noth (Hamburg), "Nationalization of Conquered Lands during the Umayyad Period"; and my own paper on "Tribal Settlement in Basra (Iraq) in the Early Islamic Period". The remaining papers dealt with the later medieval and modern Near East. One of the most rewarding aspects of the conference, however, was the way in

Harran in the Near East

Harran lies high in the arc of the Fertile Crescent in the center of the broad, flat Jullab plain in southeastern Turkey. The plain is flanked by mountains on three sides and is extremely fertile. The ancient fertility of this area is well attested by the large number of high mounds (or tells) that dot the countryside every mile or so and which represent the remains of ancient civilizations long since passed from history. The flat plain is dissected by the dry river bed of the Jullab River. Although today the river is only seasonal, in antiquity it must have been more than adequate to supply the numerous villages and cities distributed along its banks. The water of the river is now drawn off for use by the modern inhabitants living upstream at the city of Urfa (classical Edessa).

Present day Harran is a small village located entirely within the lines of the ancient ramparts. The villagers are primarily Arabic speakers and they live in traditional high domed or



Beehive House Compound in Harran



Harran in its Near Eastern Context

Continued from page 2

which scholars specializing in different periods were repeatedly able to find illuminating continuities and parallels in one another's material. These ran the gamut from continuities in actual land tenure institutions and common concern for such pervasive social factors as the large-scale presence of pastoralists, to the technical terms for cultivation methods, some of which appear to have survived from the earliest historical periods right down to the twentieth century.

In sum, the conference was marked not only by the general excellence of its papers, but by the rich interchange that took place in the discussions following each paper--not to mention over lunch, dinner, and often into the small hours of the night. Those interested in seeing the papers in fuller form will be pleased to learn that the conference proceedings will be published by A.U.B. during the coming year.

Any visit to Beirut these days is bound to leave one with mixed feelings of relief, hope, and regret. Which of these will turn out in the long run to have been the most justified, only time will tell.

Sincerely,
Fred M. Donner

"beehive" house compounds. This architecture is quite common in northern Syria (the Syrian border is only about 20 miles south of the site). The villagers cultivate the surrounding plain and also raise sheep and goats. There are few trees in the plain and the main source of fuel for heating and cooking comes from dung "cakes" which are prepared and stacked outside the houses like firewood.

The most prominent ruins visible today are located at the southeastern corner of the site, where the impressive remains of a medieval Islamic fortress are partially preserved. The date of the foundation of the fortress is not known, but the construction date of the visible remains is generally put at the 11th century A.D. At one point the castle was surrounded by a moat. There is also evidence of rebuilding by the Crusaders who captured the city in A.D. 1098 and held it until 1146.

A clue to the importance and function of Harran in the economic life of the ancient world can be found in the name of the city itself. Harran means "journey or caravan," and its location at the crossroads of some of the most important ancient trade routes explains the frequent references to the city in sources that date from the third millennium to the first millennium B.C. The importance of the city as an economic power is underscored by the earliest reference (late 3rd millennium) to Harran in the recently discovered archives of Ebla in northern Syria. One of the Ebla tablets refers to the "merchant" (ba-da-lum) from Harran and records the import of textiles from Harran. The association of Harran with the trading of textiles continued down even into the prophet Ezekiel's day (593-573 B.C.). Ezekiel, in his lament for the city of Tyre (Ez. 27: 23-24) proclaims

Harran, Canneh, Eden, the traders of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad traded with you. These traded with you in choice garments, in clothes of blue and embroidered work, and in carpets of colored stuff, bound with cords and made secure; in these they traded with you.

Harran's location at the point where ancient Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia met assured its importance as a caravan city, and there is little doubt that it performed a major role in the commercial transactions of the day. The main trade route from Syria to Mesopotamia passed through Aleppo, forded the Euphrates river at Carchemish, and because of the mountainous topography of that area, continued eastward to Harran. At Harran the road split. The northernmost route cut across the northern reaches of the Khabur River and eventually led to the Tigris River and the heartland of Assyria. The southern route took a more southeasterly direction and followed the Euphrates River, passed Mari, and eventually reached Babylonia. The road from Assyria and Babylonia to Anatolia followed the same routes through Harran.

Clearly the site was in a strategic location for the conduct of commerce and warfare between the major ancient civilizations. This can even be illustrated by looking at Harran's later "classical" history. The classical name of the site was Carrhae. During the Roman period, the city was constantly fought over by the Romans from the west and the Parthians from the east. It was at Harran that Crassus was soundly defeated by the Parthian armies in 53 B.C., and the area later became the scene of major struggles between the Byzantine empire and the Sassanians.



Medieval Islamic Fortress on the Site of Harran

Despite the numerous textual references to Harran, the ancient site is almost unknown archaeologically. Harran consists of a high mound (about 20 m. high) located in the center of what was once a lower city. The limits of the lower city are presently marked by a large stone wall which completely surrounds the site and dates to the medieval Islamic period. The site is over 300 acres in area, and only one small sounding has ever been excavated on the high mound. This was done by David Rice in 1959, and he recovered pottery dating to the late third millennium B.C. Professor Rice exposed a small portion of a massive mudbrick structure which presumably dated to this period, but the area of the sounding (initially 6 x 15 m.) was too limited to determine the nature or function of the structure.

The next issue of *News and Notes* will have an article by the Expedition's Director, Professor Lawrence E. Stager, dealing with the importance of Harran in its Biblical context as well as its importance for the study of ancient Near Eastern religion.

Douglas Esse
Associate Director, The Harran Expedition



Parthian Statue Found at Harran

HARRAN



CITY
OF
SIN*

*MOON GOD

**The Annual Dinner for The Harran Expedition
May 9th, 1983**

By now you will have received your invitation to the annual dinner on May 9th for The Harran Expedition. We hope many of you will attend. Call the Membership Office for further information (753-2389 or 962-9513).

**A Workshop For Teachers entitled
"Cylinder Seals: Art Form and Tool" will be held
at the Oriental Institute on Saturday, April 9 at 1 p.m.**

The workshop will feature a slide presentation on the history of cylinder seals, a gallery tour, and an opportunity to create a seal of your own. The material presented will be appropriate for teachers of all age levels and can be used in conjunction with a variety of subjects such as social studies, humanities and art.

There is a fee of \$5.00 and advance registration is necessary; call 753-2573 (962-9507).

TEACHER'S DAY

A special Teacher's Day will be held at the Oriental Institute on Saturday, May 7 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

The purpose of the program is to acquaint teachers with the use of the Oriental Institute as an educational resource. The program will include tours of the galleries, films, sample gallery activities for use by visiting students, and a display of educational resource materials available through the Education Office and the Suq.

Call Education Office, 753-2573, for further information or to make reservations.

MUSEUM LECTURE

MEMBERSHIP LECTURES

Hermann Gasche, staff archaeologist with the Belgian Archaeological Expedition to Iraq will present an illustrated lecture entitled "Tell ed-Der: a Babylonian City 4000 years Ago" on Monday, April 18, at 8 p.m. in Breasted Hall. Professor Gasche was formerly with the French Mission to Susa in Iran.

G. W. Bowersock, Professor of Ancient History in the School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, will present an illustrated lecture entitled "Roman Arabia: Arabs in the Roman Empire" on Wednesday, May 4, at 8 p.m. in Breasted Hall. Professor Bowersock is a former Chairman of the Department of Classics at Harvard University.

FREE SUNDAY FILMS: APRIL AND MAY 1983

All films are shown at 2 p.m. in Breasted Hall, The Oriental Institute.

April 3	The Archaeologist and How He Works
April 10	Rivers of Time
April 17	Megiddo: City of Destruction
April 24	Egypt: Gift of the Nile
May 1	The Archaeologist and How He Works
May 8	Iraq: Stairway to the Gods
May 15	Iran: Landmarks in the Desert
May 22	Preserving Egypt's Past
May 29	Turkey: Crossroads of the Ancient World

In conjunction with the Quest for Prehistory exhibit, the film The Archaeologist and How He Works will be shown on the first Sunday of each month through June, 1983.

Robert J. Charleston, for many years Keeper of Ceramics and Glass at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London will present an illustrated lecture "Glass in 17th Century Safavid Persia" on Monday, May 2 at 8 p.m. in Breasted Hall.

Mr. Charleston is one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient and medieval glass.

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