ISAC

ANNUAL REPORT
2024–2025

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Front cover: Entrance to the residence of Chicago House, the headquarters of the Epigraphic Survey, which celebrated its centennial in November 2024 (see Epigraphic Survey report). Photo by Henry Leichter, 1931.

Back cover: View through the same archway toward the Nile and west bank. Photo by Henry Leichter, 1931.

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INTRODUCTION

TIMOTHY P. HARRISON

The past year was a year of milestones for ISAC. Most notable was the centennial celebration of the Epigraphic Survey and Chicago House in Luxor, which was marked by galas both on the University of Chicago campus in September and in the historic (and spectacular) gardens of the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor in November—the latter fittingly, as it is where James Henry Breasted signed the agreement that launched the expedition a century ago. The Luxor celebration also provided an opportunity to spend time with the team working at Medinet Habu and Luxor Temple under the direction of Brett McClain. It was inspiring to observe the multidisciplinary team of epigraphers, artists, photographers, and conservators working together to achieve the exacting documentation (using the so-called Chicago House Method) of the complex palimpsest of inscriptions that cover the walls and inner chambers of the Small Temple of Amun located within the vast grounds of Ramesses III's mortuary complex, and it was thrilling to witness the captivation and excitement of our members and supporters as the team explained the significance of each subtle epigraphic mark preserving the dynamic record of this ancient monument's rich theological history. The centennial was also celebrated through ISAC's lecture series, a special exhibition, and the publication of a history—Emily Teeter's *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*.

The vitality of ISAC's research program is reflected in the remarkable number of field and philological projects that were active in 2024–25. More than fifteen projects, ranging geographically from the southern coast of Spain in the west to Uzbekistan in Central Asia in the east, were active or in the field this year, and in keeping with ISAC's commitment to foundational disciplinary scholarship, this research was methodologically innovative and the results groundbreaking, as their reports reveal. Three "new" field projects—the Cerro del Villar excavations in Málaga, Spain, and the Tayinat Archaeological Project and Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project, both in Türkiye—formally joined the Institute's growing ledger of field expeditions, while preliminary groundwork was carried out at Beni Hassan and in the mastaba of Khentika at Saqqara in anticipation of new projects that will soon be launched at these sites under the direction of Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek, who joined ISAC in July 2024 as assistant professor of Egyptian archaeology. Further reflecting ISAC's continuing commitment to faculty renewal, faculty searches this year resulted in the appointments of James Burgin as assistant professor of Hittitology (effective October 1, 2025) and Amber Jacob as assistant professor of Egyptology (with her appointment to begin on July 1, 2026).

ISAC's active program of field and philological research projects was matched by the vigorous scholarly output of our faculty and research staff. Seven monographs were published this year in ISAC's publications series, and in June 2025 a monograph published in March 2024 in the Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East series—*An Armenian Futūḥ Narrative: Ełewond's Eighth-Century History of the Caliphate*, by Sergio La Porta and Alison M. Vacca—won the Mediterranean Seminar's Prize for Best Edition and Translation. In addition, two children's books were produced in conjunction with this year's two special exhibitions, *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt* (September 17, 2024–March 23, 2025) and *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections* (April 17–August 17, 2025). ISAC researchers also published three monographs with other publishers, coedited three volumes, and published more than fifty articles in journals or edited volumes, with numerous additional article- and

monograph-length manuscripts submitted for publication, while the Museum continued its active support of research on the Institute's collections, as well as its loan and conservation programs.

The past year also had its challenges, notably the dramatic developments in federal research funding. While there remains considerable uncertainty regarding the federal government's commitment to research funding in the broader world of higher education, the devastating impact of the shuttering of USAID (the US Agency for International Development), the principal federal agency that has funded cultural-heritage preservation projects in the Middle East over the past four decades, has been unequivocally clear. Documenting, conserving, and preserving the cultural heritages of the ancient sites and communities we study is at the heart of ISAC's research mission, and these activities will continue. Thanks to the visionary leadership of our own Gil Stein, the inaugural director of the recently launched Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation, ISAC is well positioned in this critical endeavor, and the Institute will continue its commitment to building partnerships with our Middle Eastern interlocutors, while engaging in the crucial effort to raise awareness—and support—in the face of this crisis.

On a more positive note, in spring 2025 ISAC launched an ambitious new initiative, the Data Research Center (DRC), which will bring data science, artificial intelligence, and the humanities together to transform how scholars study the ancient world. The DRC represents a major step forward in the Institute's century-long tradition of pioneering research on the civilizations of the ancient Middle East and North Africa. Under the inaugural directorship of Foy Scalf, the DRC will integrate ISAC's Research Archives library, Museum Archives, and data services, including the ISAC Integrated Database, into a unified center dedicated to supporting digital scholarship, open access, and computational research across all of ISAC's scholarly disciplines. This transformative step will equip ISAC researchers, students, and collaborators with tools to connect data across disciplines—from archaeology and philology to geoscience and computer science—redefining how we explore and study the human past.

ISAC experienced a number of important staffing transitions in 2024–25. In fall 2024, Matt Welton, ISAC's director of membership programming, marketing, and communications, departed for a leadership opportunity at the University of Chicago's Graham School, and in spring 2025 Anne Flannery, ISAC's longtime archivist, moved to eastern Pennsylvania. In fall 2024, we welcomed Elisheva Yardeni, who joined our Conservation department, and Madeleine Roberts-Ganim, who joined the Programs and Education department as Youth and Family Program coordinator. In early 2025, Kate Ayres, as assistant director for Programs and Education, assumed leadership of the ISAC Museum programs and education outreach portfolio.

The year 2024–25 witnessed the loss of several dearly beloved members of the ISAC community. I wish to acknowledge in particular the passing of Robert (Bob) Aliber, a longtime ISAC supporter; Epigraphic Survey artist Margaret De Jong; Howard E. Hallengren, an esteemed life member of ISAC's Advisory Council who supported ISAC for some fifty years, most recently endowing the newly established Professorship in Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology; Robert Helman, husband of ISAC Advisory Council life member Janet Helman and a distinguished leader in the Chicago legal and business community; Roger D. Isaacs, a World War II veteran and longtime member of the ISAC Advisory Council; Robert Smither, renowned physicist and husband of ISAC associate Carol Meyer; and Krisztián Vértes, brilliantly innovative and talented epigrapher for the Epigraphic Survey.

I am deeply grateful to all our members, donors, and partners for their generous support, which makes ISAC's groundbreaking research and scholarship possible and undergirds our commitment to the advancement of scholarly understanding and public awareness of the places, peoples, and heritages we study.

IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT ALIBER

A longtime supporter of ISAC, Robert Aliber passed away in June 2025 at the age of ninety-four. He was an internationally acclaimed emeritus professor of international economics and finance at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, where he contributed significantly to the development of the school's international business concentration. A renowned economist, Bob loved to travel and was fond of sports—especially flying his plane and glider. He and his late wife, Deborah, a longtime ISAC volunteer, were deeply dedicated supporters of ISAC's work and mission. Their generous contributions to many of our programs and projects over the years culminated in their gift to name the ISAC Museum's Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery.

MARGARET DE JONG

Epigraphic Survey artist Margaret De Jong grew up in Chicago's North Center neighborhood and earned a bachelor of fine arts degree at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1962. She held positions as a freelance artist and scientific illustrator with the California Academy of Sciences and Chicago's Field Museum before joining ISAC's Epigraphic Survey in Egypt in 1992. In Luxor, Margaret quickly mastered the Chicago House drawing method and excelled at capturing both the minute details and the distinctive style of pharaonic reliefs and inscriptions from a wide range of historical periods at Medinet Habu, Luxor Temple, and other monuments in the region. Dozens of her exquisite facsimiles have been published in *Medinet Habu* IX and *Medinet Habu* X, and many more await publication in forthcoming volumes. Margaret passed away in February 2025 at the age of eighty-five. Her memory will be revered in Luxor and beyond.

HOWARD E. HALLENGREN

One of ISAC's most dedicated supporters and a life member of the ISAC Advisory Council, Howard E. Hallengren passed away in October 2024 at the age of ninety-four. He came to ISAC through his close friendship with Carlotta Maher, who recruited him into our volunteer and donor ranks in the 1970s. Combining many decades of professional experience in finance, investment, and business in the Middle East with his personal and intellectual interests, Howard supported many aspects of our research and fieldwork with his immensely valuable insights and ideas. He was a generous financial supporter of many ISAC programs and activities over the course of fifty years. His most recent major gift, to endow our first-ever professorship in the archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States, has established a whole new frontier for our research. Howard's immense generosity and enthusiasm for ISAC will long stand as a permanent legacy to his memory.

ROBERT HELMAN

Robert Helman, husband of ISAC Advisory Council life member Janet Helman, was one of the Chicago legal and business community's most storied leaders. Bob practiced at Mayer Brown for almost six decades. During his years as the firm's chair, he oversaw its growth from 300 to 800 attorneys. Beyond his professional career in the legal and business worlds, Bob also generously offered his insights, energy, and leadership to a wide range of local and national organizations, exemplified in his service on the boards of the Brookings Institution, Council on Foreign Relations, and Aspen Institute. He was a generous benefactor of ISAC's work, both financially and through his support of Janet throughout all her years of invaluable service to our mission and programs. Bob passed away in October 2024 at the age of ninety.

ROGER D. ISAACS

Roger D. Isaacs, a member of the ISAC Advisory Council since 2013, died in February 2025 at the age of ninety-nine. A decorated veteran of World War II, he went on to a highly successful career of many decades in public relations. In addition to his professional career, Roger was for many years keenly interested in biblical scholarship and was an ardent supporter of ISAC. He loved spending time in the ISAC Research Archives, which he dubbed his "second home," and discussing his work with ISAC's faculty and staff. Roger's decades of inquiry led him to publish several volumes of his research and to create the online journal *Studies of Biblical Interest* (www.biblicaljournal.org), which will continue under the editorship of his grandson Adam Hemmings, a 2012 graduate of the College of the University of Chicago.

ROBERT SMITHER

Renowned physicist Robert Smither, husband of longtime ISAC associate and Chicago House staff member Carol Meyer, was a senior researcher and leader at Argonne National Laboratory for five decades. At Argonne, he led a wide range of research and development projects, including groundbreaking work on gamma rays, medical-imaging systems, astrophysics, and much more. A widely published author and researcher, he had a vast range of intellectual interests. Among his many exceptional accomplishments was building a silica-crystal mosaic gamma-ray diffraction lens used in the search for a supposedly lost Leonardo da Vinci fresco.

KRISZTIÁN VÉRTES

Krisztián Vértes, a native of Pécs, Hungary, was trained as an Egyptologist at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Already a talented and experienced field artist when he joined ISAC's Epigraphic Survey in 2005, he brought to the Chicago House method not only a keen eye and a skilled hand but also a deep processual knowledge of Egyptian wall relief and painting that enhanced the collective skill set of the Survey's documentation team. Starting in 2012, Krisztián revolutionized the way the Epigraphic Survey creates its facsimiles, introducing computerized tablets and drawing software in a dynamic approach that no one else could have conceptualized. Always keen for the next adventure, Krisztián became a legend in his own time. He passed away in May 2025 at the age of forty-nine.

PROJECT REPORTS

OVERLEAF: Aerial view of “wheels” in the eastern *badia* region of Jordan (see Kites in Context report). Photo by Austin Chad Hill.

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CERRO DEL VILLAR EXCAVATIONS

DAVID SCHLOEN AND CAROLINA LÓPEZ-RUIZ

From August 24 to September 21, 2024, we conducted our third season of excavations at the Iron Age Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar, located in a nature preserve on the outskirts of the modern city of Málaga on the southern coast of Spain (figs. 1–3). The University of Chicago excavation team consisted of forty-two people, including seventeen undergraduates and ten master's students, who did most of the digging; seven experienced PhD students, who trained and supervised the more junior students; and eight senior staff members and specialists.

The excavation is structured as a field school in which students learn archaeological methods, including the latest computerized recording and mapping methods, and have the option of earning academic course credit. The students dig on the site from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every weekday, Monday through Friday, and attend evening lectures given by the senior staff and specialists a few days each week. On the weekends, we take the students on field trips to sites and museums of interest in the region. There are many interesting places from a wide range of historical periods located only an hour or two from Málaga.

We previously conducted two excavations at Cerro del Villar, one in 2022 and one in 2023, each lasting four weeks. Now, after three seasons of excavation, we have exposed an area of 250 m^2 to a depth of 1–2 m, revealing several buildings and streets in a densely built town dating to the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (figs. 4–5). This town, which was about 8 ha (20 acres) in size, was founded by Phoenicians from the Levant on a small, uninhabited island in the mouth of the Guadalhorce River, which empties into the Mediterranean Sea a few miles west of Málaga.

The University of Chicago excavations at Cerro del Villar are part of a larger project conducted in collaboration with the University of Málaga and headed by Dr. José Suárez Padilla, a professor of archaeology

Figure 1. Map of the Mediterranean showing the location of Cerro del Villar in Spain in relation to the Phoenician homeland far to the east in the coastal Levant (the kingdom of Tyre).

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Figure 2. Map of southern Spain showing the location of Cerro del Villar on an island near the mouth of the Guadalhorce River.

Figure 3. Aerial view of the site of Cerro del Villar near the airport on the outskirts of the modern city of Málaga.

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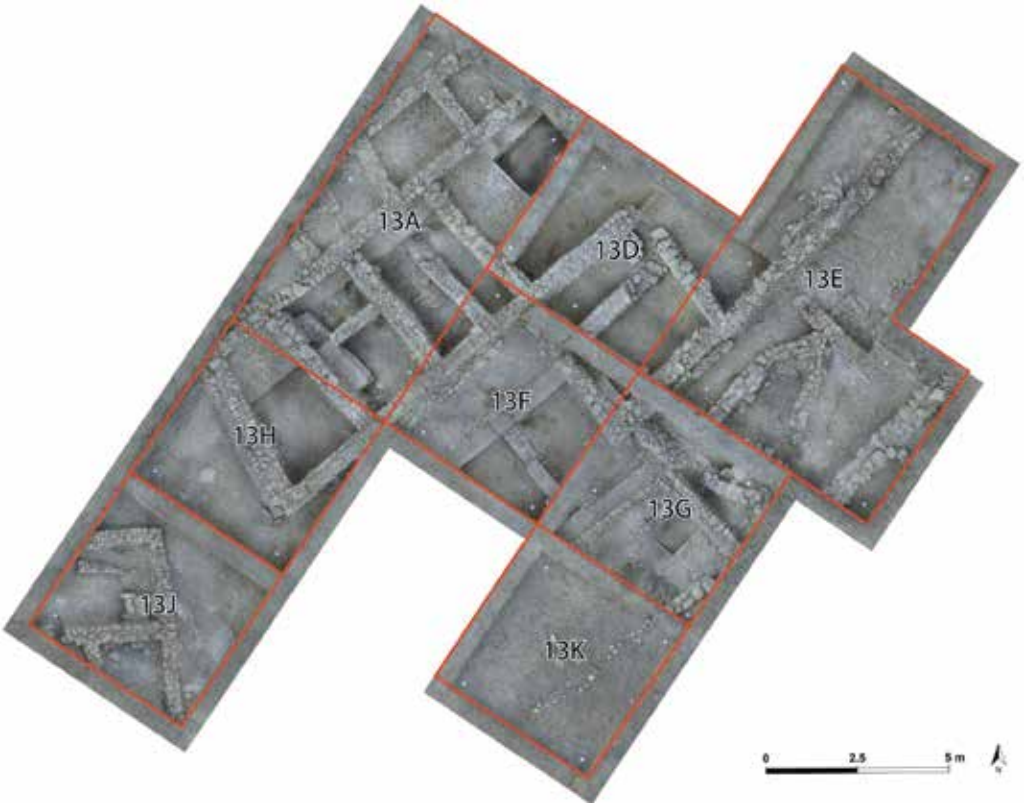

Figure 4. The University of Chicago's excavation area (sector 13) at Cerro del Villar.

Figure 5. Warehouse room excavated in sector 13 at Cerro del Villar, with smashed pottery storage jars found in situ on the floor.

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at that university, with the assistance of Dr. Manuel Álvarez Martí-Aguilar, a professor of history. The Chicago team has its own sector of the site and works independently, but we excavate at the same time each year as the Spanish team and cooperate with them on many aspects of the project. We are grateful to our Spanish colleagues for inviting us to work with them at this important site and for the warm and productive nature of the collaboration.

In June and July 2025, we conducted an eight-week "study season" with a small team to analyze and document our finds in a laboratory at the University of Málaga, including state-of-the-art 3D scanning of all the diagnostic pottery sherds, restored pottery vessels, and other artifacts. We plan to resume excavating in 2026, with a four-week excavation season occurring in each of the years 2026, 2027, and 2028, during which we will train large groups of students. Our goal is to expand our sector of the ancient town to 300 m^2 to encompass a coherent block of houses bounded by streets and alleys and to excavate all the way down to virgin soil so we can reconstruct the town's architectural, economic, and social development over two centuries, from its initial settlement shortly after 800 BCE until its inhabitants moved to higher ground on the mainland around 600 BCE, abandoning what had become an inhospitable, swampy location on a low-lying island that was prone to flooding.

No later town was built on this swampy site in subsequent eras to disturb the remains of the short-lived Iron Age town, which are accessible just under the surface. This circumstance makes the site an ideal location for exploring a Phoenician colony in Spain during its formative period, when thousands of settlers from the kingdom of Tyre in the Levant sailed 2,500 miles from the other end of the Mediterranean Sea to the Iberian peninsula, bringing with them their culture, language, and technology. Our research agenda includes addressing the larger historical question of why the Phoenicians migrated when they did—that is, what were the conditions back home in the Levant that led to this major and risky endeavor so far from home? We are also interested in knowing what political and cultural impact the Phoenician settlers had on the indigenous Iberian population. It has become increasingly clear from recent research that the Phoenician (and specifically Tyrian) colonization of Iberia began already in the ninth century BCE—much earlier than was previously thought—and was conducted on a larger scale than scholars had surmised. The impetus for colonization was not just a matter of establishing mercantile trading posts to obtain silver and other metals but also involved agricultural settlement—especially in the region of Málaga—and entailed the rather sudden transplantation of the eastern Mediterranean's entire cultural and technological "package" to the far west of the Mediterranean and to the Atlantic shores of Spain and Portugal.

Based on our preliminary results and the results of previous excavations nearby in the 1980s and 1990s, we believe we are excavating what was primarily a commercial and industrial district of the town not far from a sheltered harbor or anchorage on the leeward edge of the island. The area we are digging seems to have been occupied by warehouses for storing commodities—presumably brought up from ships moored nearby—and also featured an open-air workshop for metalworking (figs. 5–7). So far, we have found mainly ceramic shipping containers and storage vessels, with relatively little in the way of domestic pottery for cooking and serving food, and few botanical and faunal remains. However, firm conclusions must await full analysis of the excavated materials, and we are mindful that the function of this part of the town could have changed over time as a result of economic changes in the transition from the

Figure 6. Artist's reconstruction of Phoenician buildings along a street dating to the seventh century BCE that were excavated at Cerro del Villar.

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Figure 7. Copper-alloy bracelet found in sector 13 at Cerro del Villar in 2024.

eighth to the seventh century—developments that may be revealed as we dig more deeply in future seasons and expose earlier architectural phases.

We will combine the results obtained in our University of Chicago excavations with those realized concurrently by our collaborators from the University of Málaga and with the data from earlier excavations in various locations of the site. Doing so will give us a good picture of the overall organization of the town and the social and economic (and perhaps religious) practices of its inhabitants. Extensive urban excavations of this kind have only rarely been possible at Iron Age Phoenician sites in Spain and, indeed, in any part of the Mediterranean, including the Phoenicians' homeland in the Levant.

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CHICAGO DEMOTIC DICTIONARY

BRIAN P. MUHS

Work on the Chicago Demotic Dictionary (CDD) from July 2024 to June 2025 slowed compared to the previous year (2023–24) after CDD research assistants Brendan Hainline and Rolland Long left to pursue other projects. There are, however, plans to hire more student research assistants in fall 2025 to expedite the work.

The CDD consists of several preliminary files, twenty-four letter files, three number files, and the "problem" files. The preliminary files include the table of contents, lists, explanations of abbreviations, and a bibliography. The twenty-four letter files contain the entries for Demotic words beginning with each of the letters used to transliterate Demotic. The three number files contain examples of three kinds of numbers, because month and day numbers are written differently than other types of numbers. The problem files contain entries for words and signs whose reading, meaning, and placement in the dictionary are disputed.

These files will be published using InDesign, which, unlike Microsoft Word, does not automatically compress image files. The twenty-four letter and three number files were all transferred to InDesign before the CDD research assistants left. These files now await proofreading and the replacement of images degraded as a result of repeated compression. Meanwhile, the preliminary and problem files are being edited in preparation for their transfer to InDesign. Once all the files have been transferred and proofread, they will be published in print and as PDFs on the ISAC website. The text and images will then be used to create an interactive online database, with links to other online resources for Demotic.

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CHICAGO HITTITE DICTIONARY

THEO VAN DEN HOUT

The T volume of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary (CHD) is now well under way. I have edited more than forty entries of words starting in *ta-*, and senior editor Petra Goedegebuure has begun reviewing them and editing additional ones. Senior research associate Richard Beal, meanwhile, went through new and recent publications of Hittite texts (such as CHD Supplements 4 and 5 and Documenta Antiqua Asiae Minoris 1) to look for all words beginning with *t*. If he found a word that was new to the CHD, he wrote a new lemma; if it was a new example or spelling of a word already in the CHD, he integrated it into the existing lemma. He also did preliminary copyediting, which will save considerable time at the final copyediting stage after the senior editors are finished and reference checking is done. Beal completed this task up to early *tu*-words (though new texts and editions published in the future mean that such work is never entirely finished). He wrote several *tu*-word entries, most of which had not yet been written.

The 2024–25 year saw some important changes in dictionary project staff. Robert Marineau left us after having worked for the CHD for many years. We are most grateful for all the work he did and hope to stay in touch with him. Naomi Harris, our student assistant, continued working but also successfully defended her dissertation proposal in both Hittite and comparative literature, so she is now "ABD," as we call it—all but dissertation. Congratulations, Naomi!

This report year also saw the hiring of a new Hittitologist, my successor. The yearlong hiring process is intense. It starts with posting an ad, reading applications, inviting applicants to an online interview, making a short list of candidates, and bringing selected candidates to Chicago for in-person interviews, presentations, and model classes. Once a final candidate has been chosen, a report is written and a recommendation voted on by several academic and administrative bodies. Goedegebuure spearheaded this entire process—an enormous task. In the end, we are happy to welcome Dr. James Burgin as our new colleague. Burgin graduated from the University of Chicago in 2016, then left for a postdoctoral position in Germany, where he stayed with his young family for nine years and wrote three books. By the time you read this report, he will have joined us in person at ISAC. You are certain to get to know him.

As in every academic year, we held a series of talks for our Anatolian Circle, organized by Naomi Harris. Goedegebuure and I gave presentations in this series along with others by our students Kaichen Ying and Emily Smith and our postdoctoral researcher Tim Leonard. We also discussed recent studies in Hittite lexicography to assess their impact on *ta*-words that have already been written for the CHD. Kaichen will take over the organization of these always-stimulating events next year—we look forward to another exciting series!

Finally, our deep thanks go especially to Walter and Susan Guterbock for their ongoing and generous support.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

GIL J. STEIN

In 2024–25, activities undertaken by ISAC and the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation (C3HP) in Central Asia focused on three main areas: (1) the Cultural Training Partnership for Artifact Conservation (CTPAC) Capstone workshop for conservators from the national museums of the five Central Asian republics, (2) the inauguration of the Council of Central Asian National Museums as an organization for regional cooperation, and (3) preservation of the fourteenth-century Timurid mosque of Langar Ota.

CTPAC CAPSTONE WORKSHOP, TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN, OCTOBER 2024

The first of two planned training workshops in the CTPAC Capstone program for conservators from the national museums of the five Central Asian republics took place on October 1–11, 2024. The workshop was held at the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan with participants from four of the five republics (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan). University of Chicago staff present during the workshop included Gil Stein (project director and principal investigator), Matthew Perley (ISAC financial administrator), and our workshop instructors. The workshop was taught by a team of three professional conservators with decades of combined experience: Alison Whyte (ISAC senior conservator), Fabio Colombo (independent conservator), and Susanne Gänsicke (senior conservator and head of antiquities, Getty Museum).

Topics covered in this first workshop included the conservation of stone, bone, ivory, and wood. Using a combination of methods (lectures, discussions, and hands-on techniques), the workshop's instructors provided the participants with an overview of the conservation of cultural heritage objects and artifacts made from these materials (figs. 1–2). The sessions were conducted in English with translation into Russian as the shared language of the participants from the post-Soviet Central Asian republics. We also translated all informational materials and professional resources into Russian for the benefit of the participants. On October 11, US Ambassador Jonathan Henick attended the closing ceremony, where he awarded certificates of completion to the participants and spoke with them to learn more about the projects they worked on during the two-week course of the workshop (fig. 3).

COUNCIL OF CENTRAL ASIAN NATIONAL MUSEUMS MEETING, BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN, DECEMBER 2024

Cultural Heritage Site Preservation and Economic Development in the Central Asian Republics (CHED) is a partnership between the C3HP and the Uzbekistan Academy of Science's Fine Arts Institute. The CHED program organized a series of meetings with the directors of the national museums of the five Central Asian

Figure 1. Workshop instructor Fabio Colombo (kneeling) teaching participants the main methods of object photography.

Figure 2. Workshop participants comparing the efficacy of different solvent gels for the removal of paint from objects.

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Figure 3. US Ambassador Jonathan Henick talking with participants about the projects they worked on during the conservation workshop.

republics to establish a cooperative Council of Central Asian National Museums (CCANM) as a self-governing regional group aimed at sharing best practices in exhibition, conservation, curation, registration, professional training, heritage preservation, and other areas of shared concern.

The third meeting of the CCANM was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on December 9–10, 2024 (fig. 4). Intended to establish CCANM on a firm organizational foundation that would allow the council to function independently as a regional collective voice acting on behalf of the national museums of the Central Asian republics, the Bishkek meeting included discussions and working sessions focused on three areas: (1) articles of governance, (2) participation in international museum-focused organizations, and (3) discussions of priorities for initial cooperative projects, such as a joint publication highlighting Central Asian national museums.

The meeting took place at the State Museum for the History of the Kyrgyz Republic and was hosted by the museum director, Dr. Jyldyz Bakashova. As the project's principal investigator, I, along with ISAC financial administrator and project manager Matthew Perley, represented the C3HP in working with Dr. Bakashova to plan and organize logistical arrangements for the meeting. Mr. Sardor Gaziev from the US Embassy Tashkent and Mr. Jake Williams from the US Embassy Bishkek attended the meeting as observers.

The international significance of the CCANM meeting was highlighted by the presence of the ambassadors to Kyrgyzstan from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, along with US Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic Lesslie Viguerie, at the opening ceremony. Representatives from the leadership of all five national museums, including that of Turkmenistan, were present as observers, along with

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Figure 4. Delegates, participants, and guests at the third organizational meeting establishing the Council of Central Asian National Museums at the State Museum for the History of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Photo courtesy of the US Embassy Bishkek.

representatives of the four largest provincial museums in Kyrgyzstan. The meeting opened with remarks by Mr. Maksutov Altynbek Askarovich, the Kyrgyz Republic's minister of culture, information, sports, and youth policy. The vice speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic Parliament, Ms. Isayeva Jamilya Kubanychbekovna, then gave remarks on the importance of museums in Kyrgyzstan. On behalf of the US Embassy Bishkek, Ambassador Viguerie welcomed the participants with remarks emphasizing the importance of the council as a way to ensure the preservation of Central Asian cultural heritage at the regional level (fig. 5). State museum director Bakashova welcomed the participants and emphasized the potential of CCANM as a way to promote cooperation. I then summarized the general mission of the council and the specific goals for the Bishkek meeting.

One of our three main goals in this meeting was to encourage the council members to engage actively with the main international organizations that play a key role in advocating for and working with local and regional museums to develop best practices in museum conservation, curation, registration, exhibition development, and the fight against illicit antiquities trafficking. To highlight these issues, we invited two keynote speakers from the leading nongovernmental organizations in the domain of international museum collaboration and development—the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM)—to address the council meeting.

Ms. Sabira Soltongeldieva (head of the Kyrgyz Republic National Commission for UNESCO) spoke on the topic "UNESCO Conventions and Museums: Global Cooperation in Cultural Heritage Preservation and Popularization." In her talk, Ms. Soltongeldieva discussed the main UNESCO conventions that cover museums and the preservation of heritage, while also providing examples of the ways in which UNESCO can partner to assist Central Asian museums. Ms. Aida Alymova (ICOM's national representative in Kyrgyzstan) spoke on "The Role of the ICOM National Committee in the Development of Museums in the Kyrgyz Republic." Currently, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are the only Central Asian states

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Figure 5. Opening remarks by US Ambassador Lesslie Vigueri at the third organizational meeting for the establishment of the Council of Central Asian National Museums.

with membership in ICOM. In Kyrgyzstan, ICOM has supported international conferences on the role of Manas, the Kyrgyz cultural hero and founder of the Kyrgyz nation. Most recently, ICOM helped establish a new museum, the Center of Nomadic Civilization, which celebrates and educates citizens on the importance of nomadism in the very foundations of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The council also addressed our second major goal: the establishment of articles of governance to codify the organizational infrastructure of CCANM. In advance of the meeting, Dr. Otabek Aripdjanov, from the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, had developed a draft of the articles of governance and circulated it to the national museum directors for their review. At the Bishkek meeting, the leadership teams of the four national museums discussed and edited key elements of the draft document. On this basis, the revised articles of governance were brought to a vote and unanimously approved (fig. 6).

The third major goal was to have the council select a practicable project that would be carried out as the first joint enterprise of CCANM. The participants decided to focus on a two-track publication program. The first track will establish a digital journal that publishes articles on current field and museum research on the prehistory, history, and cultural heritage of Central Asia. The second track will develop a book for the general public, in both printed and online PDF formats, presenting 250 highlighted objects—50 objects from each of the Central Asian museums.

US EMBASSY TASHKENT ON-SITE CELEBRATION OF THE LANGAR OTA CONSERVATION GRANT, JUNE 2025

With support from an Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation grant in 2023–24, ISAC and the C3HP conducted a field project to conserve the historic Langar Ota Mosque / Sufi shrine, located 106 km south of

Figure 6. The national museum directors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan signing the articles of governance and the agreement to establish formally the Council of Central Asian National Museums.

Figure 7. Bilingual Uzbek-English plaque at the fifteenth-century Langar Ota mosque, commemorating the conservation work completed by ISAC and the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation.

Samarkand in the mountains of the Qashqadaryo province in southern Uzbekistan. The mosque was constructed in the fifteenth century during the rule of the descendants of Tamerlane, the Turco-Mongol conqueror who founded the Timurid dynasty. The mosque has played an active role in the religious life of the local and regional community as a Sufi shrine and major pilgrimage destination for the past six centuries. However, the mosque's condition has declined over the years, and ongoing problems of water leakage, significant cracking in the walls, damage to wooden columns and roof beams, and the slow collapse of the interior's beautiful cut-tile mosaic panels have reached the point where the shrine's survival is now threatened.

Over the two years of the grant, our project built a new steel roof and water drainage system to prevent further rainwater damage to the structural integrity of the mosque. The second main focus of our work was to stabilize, conserve, and clean the damaged areas of cut glazed-tile mosaics in the mosque's interior, where water damage had caused many areas of tilework to bulge and collapse to the floor. We also provided on-site, hands-on training for four Uzbek conservators in methods for the treatment of cut-tile mosaic work. The project ended on December 31, 2024.

On June 4, 2025, a ceremony organized by the US Embassy Tashkent took place at the Langar Ota mosque to celebrate the completion of the grant and the conservation work carried out at the mosque. In addition to remarks made by US Ambassador Jonathan Henick, the director of the Uzbekistan Cultural Heritage Agency, Bakhodur Abdikarimov, spoke about the significance of the mosque. The highlight of the ceremony was the unveiling by Ambassador Henick and Abdikarimov of a commemorative plaque outside the mosque's main entrance (fig. 7). As the project's principal investigator, I then gave the speakers a tour of the mosque to show the results of the conservation project (fig. 8).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the work undertaken by ISAC and the C3HP in Central Asia over the past year has contributed to preserving Central Asia's cultural heritage by (1) training conservators from across the region; (2) helping the national museums of Central Asia develop the first organization to build cooperation, standardize best practices, and act as a regional-level voice to advocate for heritage preservation and the fight against illicit antiquities; and (3) preserving monuments (the Langar Ota mosque).

Figure 8. Bakhodur Abdikarimov, director of the Uzbekistan Cultural Heritage Agency (far left) and US Ambassador Jonathan Henick (center right) touring the mosque, escorted by Gil Stein (center left), the project's principal investigator.

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EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY

J. BRETT McCLAIN

On November 18, 2024, the Epigraphic Survey marked the one hundredth anniversary of its fieldwork in Egypt, one century to the day since the expedition's first field director, Harold Nelson, cabled James Henry Breasted the news that the Survey's work at Medinet Habu had begun (fig. 1). At a gala reception in the Winter Palace garden in Luxor, our staff joined an illustrious gathering of colleagues, friends, and supporters in celebrating this auspicious occasion, and a keynote address by US Ambassador to Egypt Herro Mustafa, along with other tributes by distinguished guests, highlighted the Survey's longstanding mission and field-defining achievements in scientific documentation (fig. 2). This remarkable evening was the culmination of a series of events throughout the summer and fall of 2024 that included the ISAC Museum's special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile*, which commemorated the Survey's first century of fieldwork; a gala fundraising dinner and other events on campus in September; a series of public and ISAC member lectures; and a special excursion to Egypt for supporters of our expedition, including ISAC and University of Chicago leadership (fig. 3). We are truly grateful to all who took part in the centennial celebrations, as well as to the indefatigable ISAC staff whose planning and guidance made these events possible.

Figure 1. Harold Nelson and James Henry Breasted at Old Chicago House. Photo by Caroline Ransom Williams.

Now the Epigraphic Survey enters a new century. Although a hundred years of extraordinarily successful fieldwork, research, and publications are behind us, the amount of unpublished material contained in Luxor's monuments is vast, and decades of work remain to be done. Our core mission remains the same as that established by Breasted: the facsimile recording and publication of the hieroglyphic inscriptions and relief scenes in these monuments via accurate photographs, facsimile drawings, and critical editions of the texts, thereby preserving them for future generations. In the years to come, we will continue this epigraphic work within the areas of our current concession from the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) / Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA): Medinet Habu, Luxor Temple, the temple of Khonsu in Karnak, and the tomb of Nefersekheru (Theban Tomb 107). In addition, and to the

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Figure 2. ISAC director Timothy Harrison commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor on November 18, 2024.

extent that our resources allow, we will continue to conserve and restore these monuments as necessitated by ongoing physical deterioration.

During our 2024–25 field season in Luxor, alongside our numerous celebratory activities, the Survey staff continued to make progress toward these objectives. Current events, however, created a challenging environment for our work in Egypt. Particularly impactful has been the dissolution of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which provided significant funding for our conservation and restoration projects since the mid-1990s, with the result that we must now seek other sources of support to continue these programs. The political situation in the Middle East also remained challenging, and consequent operational headwinds included a delay in the renewal of our Government of Egypt security clearance, which prevented our staff from working on the antiquities sites from January through March 2025. As a result of this delay, we were obliged to reorient our efforts during the second half of our field season, with a focus on processing and organizing the results of on-site work from the last two months of 2024, as well as initiating significant new archival projects in the Chicago House library and photographic archives to maximize our field time while waiting for the bureaucratic obstacles to clear. Nevertheless, we were able to make substantial progress toward our core objectives, both at the temple sites and in the archives, during our six-month season. Our progress in each of these areas, carried out with permission from the MoTA/SCA, is summarized below.

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Figure 3. Jennifer Kimpton explaining the Chicago House method of epigraphic documentation to VIP tour participants at Medinet Habu. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.

MEDINET HABU

Since the publication of *Medinet Habu* X in June 2024, our epigraphic team has concentrated on the inscribed material added to the temple of Amun after the Eighteenth Dynasty, to be published in *Medinet Habu* XI. This group of scenes and texts includes partially cryptographic inscriptions of the high priest of Amun Painedjem added around the base of the temple at the beginning of the Twenty-First Dynasty (fig. 4), ritual panels carved on the hitherto-uninscribed exterior walls of the monument during the reign of Ramesses III (fig. 5), and architectural additions inscribed for Achoris during the Twenty-Ninth Dynasty. Our photographic record for *Medinet Habu* XI is now complete, and the images are being finalized for publication. In addition, we continued to collate and correct drawings of the multiphase ritual scenes and Ptolemaic theological texts in the interior of the central bark shrine, slated for publication in *Medinet Habu* XII (fig. 6). Also this season, after a two-year hiatus, we were permitted to resume our photographic survey of the Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasty tomb chapels of the god's wives of Amun (fig. 7). Our photographers were able to complete all the negatives for the chapel of Nitocris during this year's campaign (fig. 8), leaving only the chapels of Shepenwepet II and Mehetenweskhet to be recorded next year.

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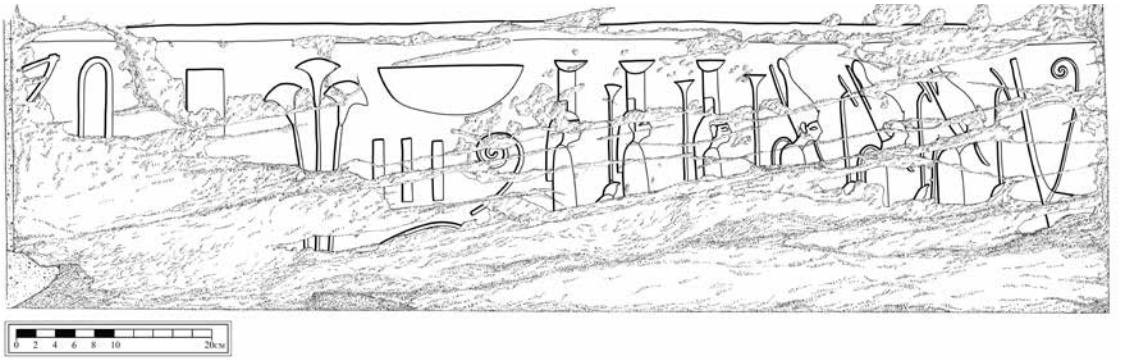

Figure 4. In-progress facsimile drawing of part of the inscription of the high priest Painedjem in the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Amun at Medinet Habu. Drawing by Keli Alberts.

In November and December 2024, we also continued to improve and expand the Medinet Habu blockyard, which houses more than 5,000 inscribed fragments originating from the temple complex and surrounding areas of the Theban necropolis. We initiated a much-needed revision and upgrade of our Medinet Habu fragment database, which had been in hiatus for several seasons, that included conducting a new survey and renumbering the fragments stored in the facility, as well as assigning numbers to new

Figure 5. Emmanuelle Arnaudiès collating a drawing in the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Amun at Medinet Habu from a foil impression. Photo by Susan Lezon.

Figure 6. Keli Alberts recording a Ptolemaic dedicatory text in the bark shrine of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Amun at Medinet Habu. Photo by Susan Lezon.

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Figure 7. Amanda Tetreault and Yarko Kobylecky preparing photographic equipment in the tomb chapel of the god's wife Nitocris at Medinet Habu. Photo by Susan Lezon.

Figure 8. Large-format photograph of relief scenes in the tomb chapel showing Nitocris offering to Anubis and Hathor. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky and Amanda Tetreault.

fragments recently added to the corpus (fig. 9). In concert with this registration project, we continued expanding the Medinet Habu blockyard open-air museum by adding three rows of new storage platforms outside the northeastern side of the enclosure (fig. 10). Our goal is to assemble the most significant rejoined fragment groups in an area outside the enclosed blockyard, accessible to the public and with designated pathways and explanatory signage, and we will continue this project during the 2025–26 season.

At the beginning of December 2024, we renewed our collaborative venture with the Zamani Project, a nonprofit organization affiliated with the University of Cape Town that specializes in 3D scanning and imaging of historic monuments. Since 2022, we have worked with the Zamani team

Figure 9. Pia Kobylecky measuring fragments in the Medinet Habu blockyard. Photo by Susan Lezon.

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Figure 10. Epigraphic Survey restoration team constructing new display platforms for the open-air museum at Medinet Habu. Photo by Brett McClain.

Figure 11. Zamani Project team members Christoph Held and Werner Stempfhuber conducting a 3D scan of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.

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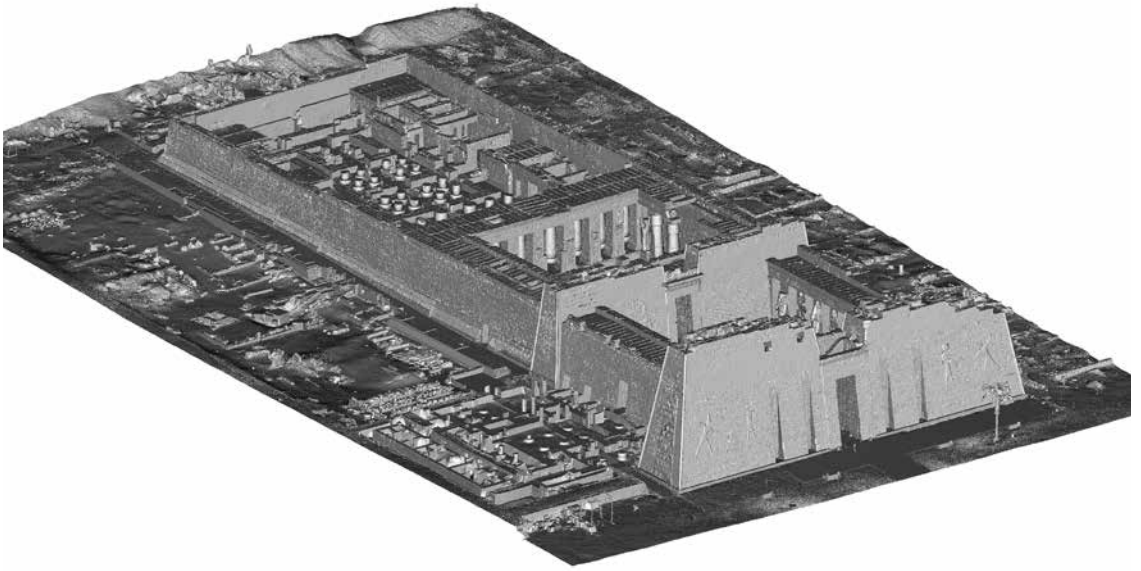

Figure 12. Preliminary 3D model of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. Image by the Zamani Project.

to produce high-resolution laser scans of the architectural features of Luxor Temple and Medinet Habu. During a one-week campaign, the Zamani specialists were able to complete their overall 3D model of the Luxor Temple precinct, begun two years earlier, and to initiate a total laser scan of the Medinet Habu enclosure (fig. 11). The available time was sufficient to complete the 3D model for the mortuary temple of Ramesses III, and we plan to continue the project in the fall of 2025 (fig. 12). Total 3D coverage of both sites will allow their architectural and landscape features to be mapped at an unprecedented level of detail and will provide a spatial framework to guide future conservation, site management, and archaeological research initiatives.

Alongside our epigraphic documentation program, we continued several conservation and restoration projects started during previous seasons. In December, our stonemasonry team completed the reconstruction of the Taharqa Gate, begun in 2019 with funding from USAID, and our conservation team began the final in situ treatment of the gate's stone blocks, to be completed next year (fig. 13). We also resumed our restoration of the King's Chamber in the Eighteenth Dynasty temple, where we made significant progress in treating the deteriorated lower walls and the floor's paving stones and completed a 3D photogrammetric survey that will assist in planning the consolidation measures required in future seasons (fig. 14). Our objective, as requested by the MoTA/SCA, is to prepare this

Figure 13. Epigraphic Survey restoration team completing the reconstruction of the Taharqa Gate at Medinet Habu. Photo by Frank Helmholz.

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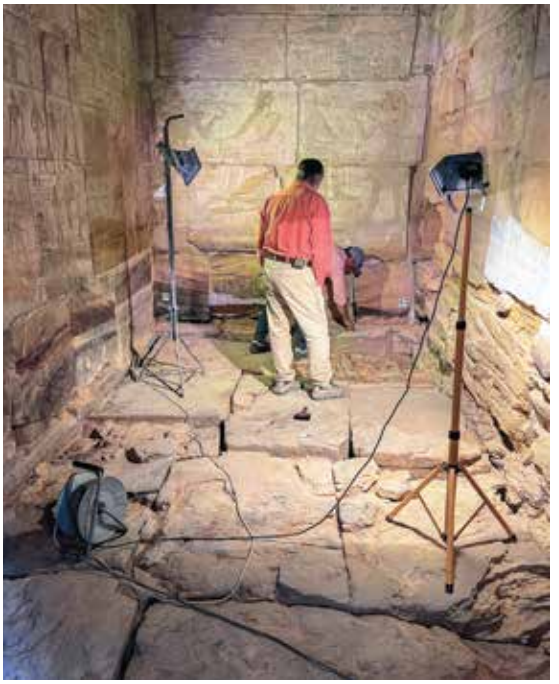

Figure 14. Frank Helmholz and Mahmoud Abd el-Haris assessing the condition of ancient floor blocks in the King's Chamber of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple at Medinet Habu. Photo by Ahmed Bozghol.

decorated chamber, with its well-preserved offering reliefs of Thutmose III, for public access. Aside from these discrete projects, our conservation team carried out regular sitewide cleaning and maintenance of at-risk areas throughout the Medinet Habu enclosure, as well as general site management measures where needed. All these conservation and restoration projects were undertaken in tandem with our annual training programs for early-career conservators and apprentice stonemasons; both programs engaged several new participants this year, imparting valuable knowledge and experience to the next generation of local professionals in the conservation and restoration sectors (fig. 15).

LUXOR TEMPLE

At Luxor Temple this season, our team concentrated on the main blockyard and open-air museum areas to the east of the temple (fig. 16). From October through the end of December 2024, we made significant progress in numbering, tagging, and registering the inscribed fragments stored on the

Figure 15. Conservation assistants Adel Ahmed Taya and Hala Ali Handaqa treating a fragment in the Medinet Habu blockyard. Photo by Susan Lezon.

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Figure 16. Luxor Temple blockyard and open-air museum in November 2024. Photo by Hiroko Kariya.

platforms in this sector; of the 149 platforms in the blockyard, 121 have now been completely registered and tagged, with each fragment photographed and entered into the Luxor Temple fragment database. More than 20,700 fragments have now been numbered and registered, and our preliminary documentation phase in the eastern blockyard is nearing completion. It has, however, been necessary to recheck our records from earlier seasons, in many cases painstakingly cross-examining our current information with old film photographs showing inscribed fragments that have subsequently deteriorated or been moved to other locations. Our long-term objective is to establish a complete and accurate database for all the fragments stored throughout the Luxor Temple enclosure, and we aim to complete our registry for the eastern blockyard in 2025–26 before expanding to the outlying storage areas in the western, northern, and northwestern sectors of the precinct. In the meantime, we continued to carry out focused research on a wide range of fragment groups identified in the Luxor Temple corpus (fig. 17).

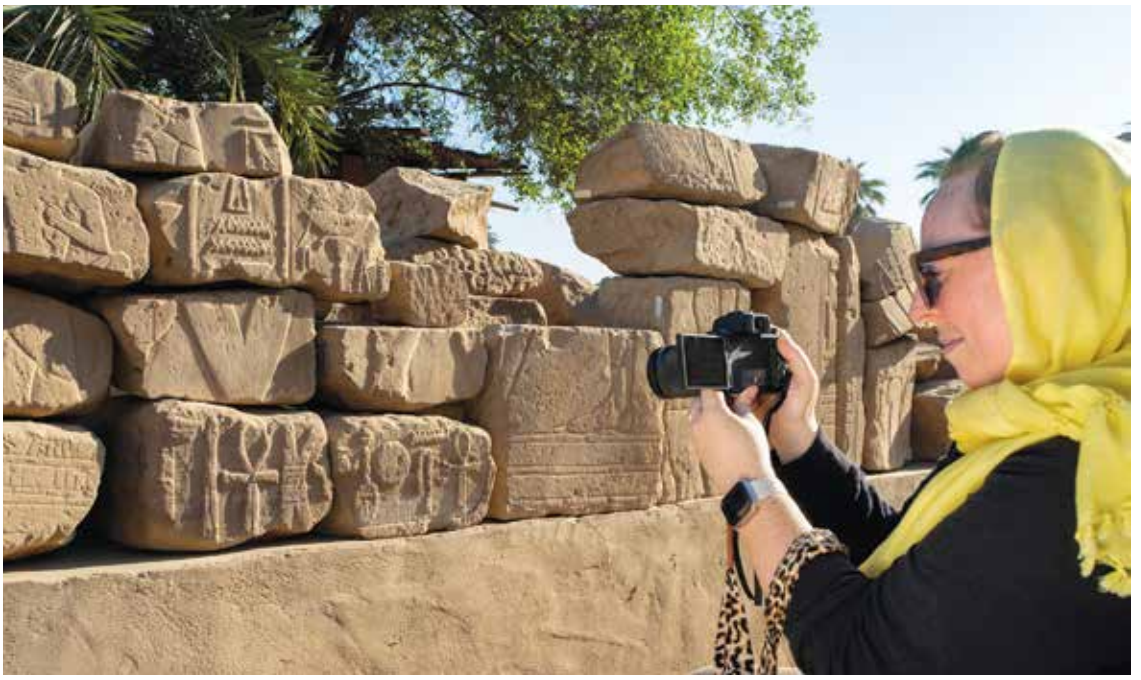

Figure 17. Catie Witt photographing Twenty-Sixth Dynasty fragments in the Luxor Temple blockyard. Photo by Susan Lezon.

Figure 18. Fragment group from the reign of Amenhotep III being assembled in the open-air museum at Luxor Temple. Photo by Hiroko Kariya.

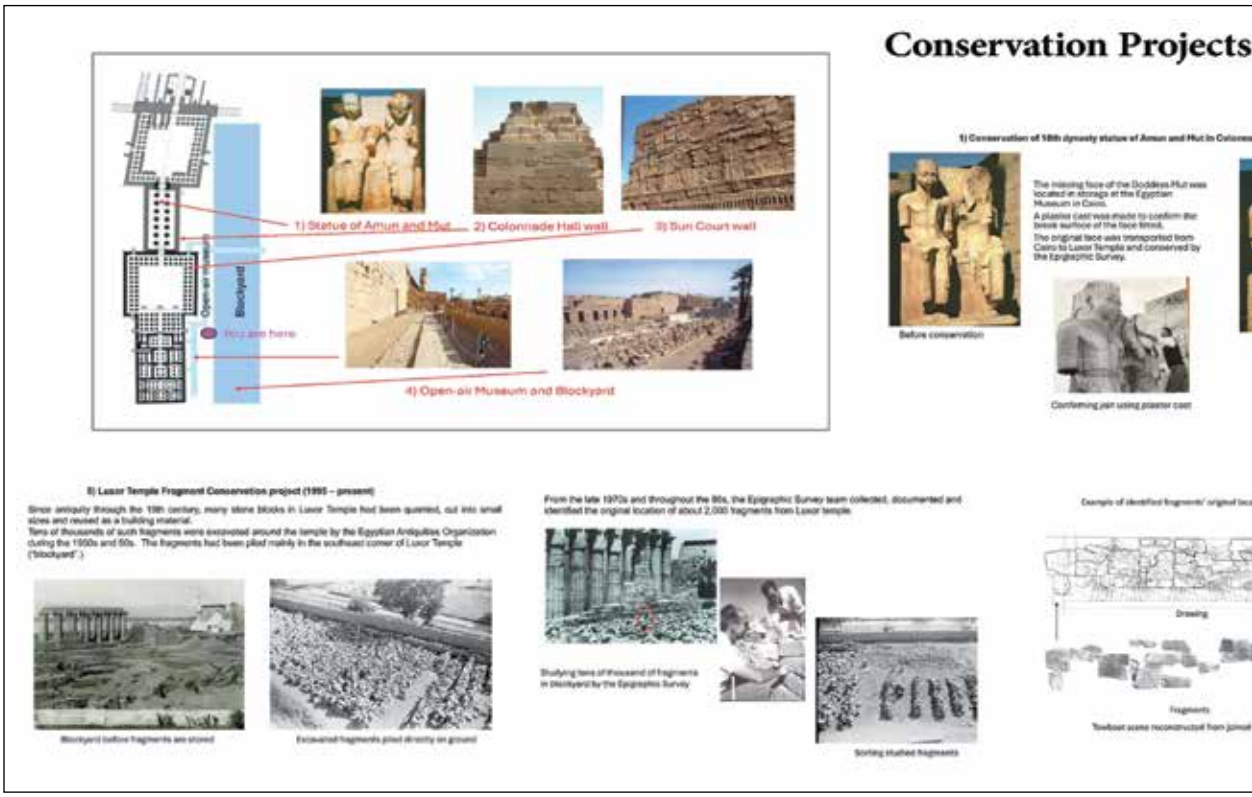

Figure 19. New panel installed in November 2024 explaining Epigraphic Survey conservation and restoration projects at Luxor Temple. Illustration by Hiroko Kariya, Gina Salama, and Catie Witt.

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In conjunction with the registration project, our conservation team continued long-term monitoring and assessment of deteriorating pieces in the fragment corpus. We now have condition and treatment records for a core group of several hundred fragments going back to the late 1990s, an almost-unprecedented time span for stone conservation techniques in this specific context, and we have begun the process of assembling, analyzing, and synthesizing this dataset for publication. Our team also undertook regular maintenance and improvement measures as needed in the Luxor Temple open-air museum, particularly in preparation for site visits by our colleagues and guests during the centennial events in November (fig. 18). Signage in the display areas is being upgraded, and several temporary signs and posters were added to present the history and content of the displays to our visitors (fig. 19). We plan to complete the open-air museum upgrades next season, as well as to continue and expand the conservation and treatment measures for the fragment groups in the collection.

We are also continuing with our long-standing commitment to record and publish the wall reliefs and decoration in Luxor Temple. Over the past decade, Epigraphic Survey artist Krisztián Vértes carefully recorded the late Roman frescoes in the Imperial Chamber, creating facsimile drawings to complement the Survey's color photographs of these historically significant polychrome tableaux (fig. 20). Since his untimely death in May 2025, we have had to move forward with the publication of these copies without the benefit of his unique insight into the frescoes' composition and details. These rare surviving examples of Roman imperial court painting adorned a chamber for the cult of the deified Tetrarchs that was an integral component of the legionary encampment constructed within and around Luxor Temple during Diocletian's reign. The frescoes will form the subject of our next volume to be published, part 1 of *Reliefs and Inscriptions at*

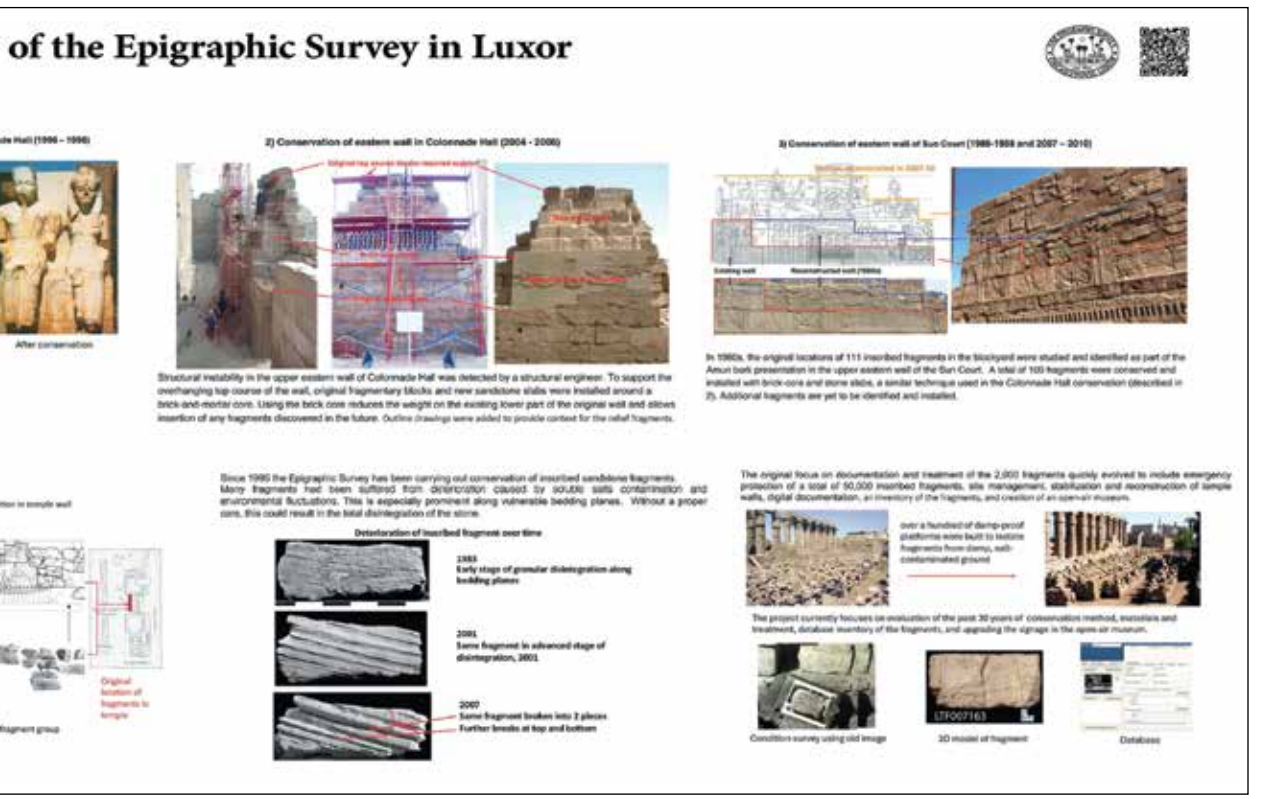

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Figure 20. Krisztián Vértes recording Roman frescoes in the Imperial Chamber at Luxor Temple in 2017. Photo by Susan Lezon.

Luxor Temple III, while the underlying reliefs from the reign of Amenhotep III, the epigraphic documentation of which is still in progress, will be presented as part 2 of the same volume.

THE TEMPLE OF KHONSU IN KARNAK

In November and December 2024, we resumed our cooperative program with the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) at the temple of Khonsu in Karnak. Since 2007, we have worked in tandem with the ARCE team, which is undertaking a major conservation, restoration, and site management program in and around the temple. This monument, built in the Twentieth Dynasty, was constructed primarily of sandstone blocks reused from dismantled older monuments, and the Epigraphic Survey's role is to provide facsimile documentation of the inscribed surfaces of these blocks as they are revealed in the cracks and interstices of the structure during the conservation process. With its limited time frame, the conservation work presents a brief opportunity for us to capture this information from each block before it is permanently hidden from view by new mortar infill, so we strive to ensure that no inscribed decoration is missed before it is covered over once more. In addition, several hundred loose fragments related to the temple of Khonsu are stored on platforms outside the monument, and we worked this season to create facsimile drawings of the inscriptions on them, including a group forming

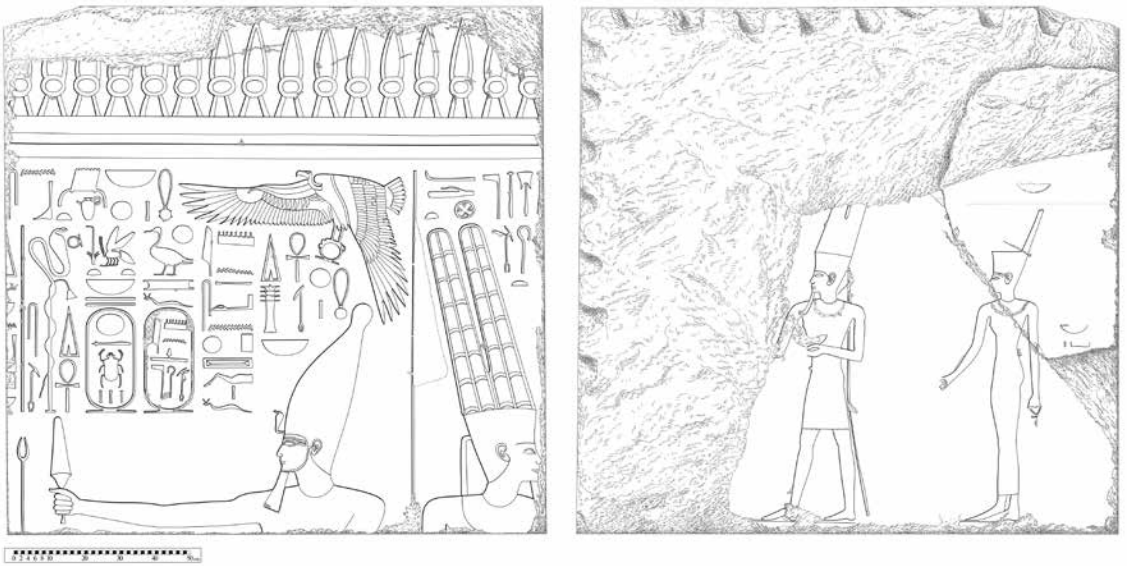

Figure 21. Two-sided granite bark shrine fragment showing decoration from the reigns of Amenhotep II (left) and Ramesses IV (right) from the temple of Khonsu in Karnak. Drawings by Dominique Navarro.

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part of a reused granite bark shrine of Amenhotep II, later inscribed for Ramesses IV (fig. 21). Both components of this collaborative project will be resumed when the ARCE and Epigraphic Survey teams return to Luxor in October 2025.

CHICAGO HOUSE

Our research headquarters and residence at Chicago House serve as the Epigraphic Survey's base of operations during our annual six-month season, with our administration and finance team, technicians, and skilled workmen being responsible for the day-to-day management of the facility. The library and archives are essential resources for the local archaeological community, including members of the MoTA/SCA, faculty and students from local universities, and researchers from the many international expeditions working in Upper Egypt each year. Our library staff maintain the collections and assist patrons with their research requirements, and our photographic archives staff oversee and curate our ever-growing collection of large-format film negatives, digital and 3D images, and other documents, making them available to our professional colleagues both in Egypt and abroad.

At the beginning of January 2025, our archives team initiated a new project related to the archive of Labib Habachi, the leading Egyptian archaeologist and Egyptologist of his generation (fig. 22). Dr. Habachi's career with the Egyptian Antiquities Service spanned a critical period from the 1930s through the 1970s, and his wide-ranging fieldwork and publications during this period made a profound contribution to our knowledge of antiquities sites from the Delta to Nubia, many of which were obscure or inaccessible to foreign researchers. From the 1950s, he worked closely with the Epigraphic Survey on a range of projects, and after his retirement he joined the expedition as a resident scholar who lived and worked with the team at Chicago House during its field season each year. When he died in 1984, his vast collection of papers, including a large quantity of unpublished field notes and other material, along with a priceless archive of

Figure 22. Labib Habachi in the 1960s. Photo from the Labib Habachi Archive.

Figure 23. Epigraphic Survey staff cataloging facsimile paintings of wall decoration from the tomb of ʾIp at El-Saff in the Labib Habachi Archive. Photo by Emmanuelle Arnaudiès.

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thousands of photographs, were left to Chicago House as a permanent bequest. Since that time, our staff have managed the Habachi Archive and frequently assisted researchers with access to the material on an ad hoc basis. Now, however, we have reached the point where complete digitization of the photographs and other records and a comprehensive catalog for this unique and valuable archive can be envisioned. Accordingly, from January through April 2025, our photographic archives team carried out a thorough assessment of the Habachi papers and photographs and formulated a long-term plan for developing this resource, with the goal of fully integrating the material into the larger Chicago House archival management system and ultimately making the archive available via ISAC's new Data Research Center (fig. 23). Our multiyear plan for the Habachi Archive represents a significant commitment for our photographic and digital archives staff in 2025–26 and beyond.

STAFF AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Epigraphic Survey professional staff for 2024–25 consisted of J. Brett McClain as field director; epigraphers Jennifer L. Kimpton, Emmanuelle Arnaudiès, and Aleksandra Hallmann; senior artists Margaret De Jong† and Susan Osgood; artists Krisztián Vértes†, Keli Alberts, and Dominique Navarro; senior photographer Yarko Kobylecky; photographer/photo archivist Susan Lezon; assistant photographer/photo archivist Amanda Tetreault; digital photographer Owen Murray; Medinet Habu blockyard assistant Pia Kobylecky; digital archivist Alain Arnaudiès; Luxor Temple project manager/data engineer Gina Salama; senior conservators Hiroko Kariya and Mohamed Abo el-Makarem; master stonemason Frank Helmholz; Zamani Project team members Heinz Rüther, Christoph Held, and Werner Stempfhuber; head librarian Anait Helmholz; assistant librarians Martina Roshdy Maher and Mira Salama; Chicago House general manager Essam el-Sayed; senior administrator Samir Guindy; and administrator Samwell Maher. Our team of forty-one skilled workmen and twenty-eight seasonal workmen was supervised by foreman Rais Badawy Mohammed Abd el-Rahman. University of Chicago graduate student Catie Witt also returned to Chicago House to continue her dissertation research at Luxor Temple during our field season.

We are very grateful to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Supreme Council of Antiquities, particularly to Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mr. Sherif Fathy Attiya; SCA Secretary General Dr. Mohamed Ismail Khaled; General Director of the Pharaonic Sector Dr. Ayman Ashmawy; General Director of Foreign Missions Dr. Hany Abdullah El-Tayeb; General Director of Antiquities in Luxor Dr. Abd el-Ghaffar Wagdy; Gurnah Inspectorate General Director Dr. Bahaa Gabr; Gurnah Inspectorate Assistant Director Dr. Mahmoud Moussa; Gurnah Inspectorate Director of Foreign Missions Mr. Ramadan Ahmed Ali; Gurnah South Area Director Mr. Ahmed Nazir; Medinet Habu Chief Inspectors Mrs. Fatma Ahmed Salem and Mr. Hassan Youssef Mohammed, as well as Luxor Temple Director Mr. Ahmed Araby; General Director of Karnak Dr. Abd el-Khalek; and Karnak Director of Foreign Missions Mrs. Ghada Ibrahim Fouad, along with all our other friends and colleagues in Egypt, for granting permission to work on the antiquities sites and for facilitating the work of our mission this year.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the many friends of ISAC and Chicago House whose generous contributions have made it possible to continue our research program during this centennial year. We are grateful to Dr. Marjorie M. Fisher; David and Carlotta Maher†; Andrea Dudek; Kelley and Susan Anderson; Ward and Diane Zumsteg; Nassef Sawiris; Kitty Picken; Ellen and Tom Granger; David and Allison Harley; Tom Van Eynde; Susan and Kevin Geschwender; Janet Johnson and Donald Whitcomb†; Marjorie B. Kiewit; Tom and Linda Heagy; Shafik Gabr, ARTOC Group, Cairo; Holly J. Mulvey; Judge and Mrs. Warren Siegel; Walter and Annette Vandaele; Barbara Breasted Whitesides and George Whitesides; Miriam Reitz Baer†; Beth Noujaim; James Lichtenstein; Priscilla (Peppy) Bath; Charlie Secchia; Emily Fine; Nan Ray; Anna White; Willard White; Janet and Karim Mostafa; Elisabeth R. French; Waheeb (Ricky) and

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Christine Kamil; Caroline Lynch; Polly Kelly; Louise Grunwald; Lowri Lee Sprung; Andrew Nourse and Patty Hardy; Kate Pitcairn; Dr. Lorna Straus; Dr. Ben Harer; Dr. Roxie Walker; Tony and Lawrie Dean; and Charles L. Michod Jr. We also thank Dr. Louise Bertini, Dr. Melinda Hartwig, Mrs. Mary Sadek, and Dr. Nicholas Warner of ARCE for their invaluable support and cooperation. Most of all, we are very grateful to ISAC director Timothy P. Harrison and to all our colleagues at ISAC and the University of Chicago for their continuing support of our fieldwork in Egypt.

Once again, we express our profound gratitude to USAID for supporting our documentation, conservation, restoration, and site management projects at Medinet Habu. For three decades, USAID-sponsored grant programs were vital to the success of our endeavors in preserving Egypt's heritage for future generations, and the impactful legacy of this cultural partnership between Egypt and the United States will long be remembered.

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GIZA PLATEAU MAPPING PROJECT

MARK LEHNER | ANCIENT EGYPT RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Following the successful start of a 3D laser scanning program on the Giza Plateau in 2023, Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA) continued work in two sessions in 2025 led with Dr. Søren Sindbæk of Aarhus University and his team from the Organization of Danish Museums. The goal was to survey the bedrock floor along the eastern, northern, and western sides of the Great Pyramid, along with the two Khufu boat pits on the pyramid's southern side. This work included scanning the cover blocks of the eastern boat pit still located at the pyramid, as well as those from both pits now on display at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). During a short fall 2024 season, we also continued analysis in the AERA field lab, a Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) magazine near the Great Pyramid, on the everyday material-culture remains retrieved by our excavations at the Giza Plateau.

GREAT PYRAMID BUILDERS' MARKS: 3D SCANNING

In 2023, the MoTA gave AERA permission to survey the floor to the south of the Great Pyramid (fig. 1). This area became available for study after the Khufu boat museum—built above the eastern pit in the 1970s to house the boat reconstructed from pieces interred in it—was removed from the site in 2021 and the boats themselves were moved to the GEM for permanent display. That survey complemented and completed our 2015–16 survey of more than 2,900 builders' marks and other features cut into the bedrock floor on

Figure 1. In-progress laser scanning survey of the southern pavement of the Great Pyramid in 2023. View to the west.

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the other three sides, an undertaking that was part of a collaboration between AERA and the Glen Dash Foundation Survey project.

In January 2024, the Danish team used a Trimble SX10 scanning total station to scan and compile a 3D record of millions of points on features of the southern floor related to the landscaping, leveling, and layout of the base of the Great Pyramid by Khufu's builders. These features include lever sockets, rock-cut holes, quarry channels, and emplacements for slabs fitted together in jigsaw patterns to pave a court encircling the pyramid on all sides, in addition to more modern features. The data preserve a facsimile of the features and enable us to visualize how the pyramid builders leveled and shaped the building site. The 2024 work showed the potential of the scanning to capture even barely visible features that are exposed to intense tourist traffic, sand and wind erosion, and maintenance operations at the plateau. The success of the 2024 scanning prompted our return to survey the floor on the pyramid's three other sides in February 2025 to enhance the record compiled in 2015–16. In advance of this endeavor, AERA's workers cleared sand and debris from the Great Pyramid's floor to the east, north, and west to expose the structure's foundation platform, remaining casing, pavement, and bedrock floor to a width of more than 10 m from the pyramid's baseline, taking in the court and the foundation of its enclosure wall (figs. 2–3).

In connection with the survey, a special effort was made to scan the so-called trial passages on the eastern side of the pyramid (fig. 4). These passages, cut in bedrock, are thought to have been carved as a test or model for the juncture of the ascending passages, horizontal passage, and grand gallery built in masonry in the interior of the pyramid. The trial passages exhibit cross-section dimensions, alignment, and angles exactly like the passages inside the pyramid. During our Great Pyramid Temple Project (2020–22), we surveyed these passages as part of our documentation of Khufu's pyramid complex. Our laser scan of the passages

Figure 2. Sayed Salah Abd el-Hakim and Sarah Qvistgaard preparing to scan. View to the south.

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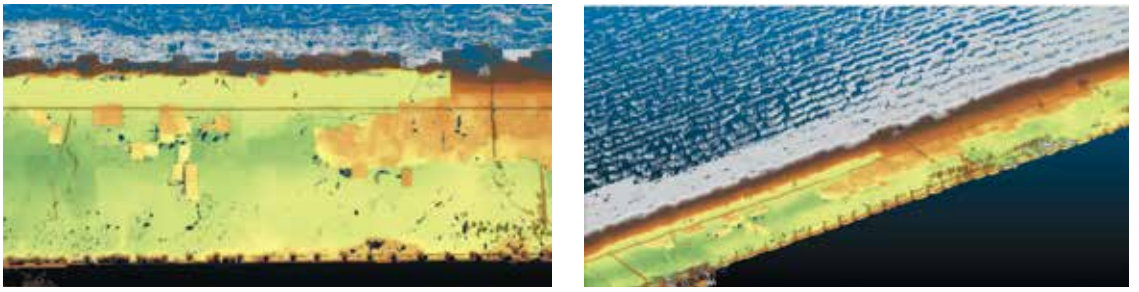

Figure 3. Left: A section at the middle of the western side of the Great Pyramid. The pavement is colorized to emphasize height differences between 59.5 m and 62.0 m above sea level (green and brown, respectively). This colorization highlights the subtle sculpting of the bedrock to drain rainwater toward the corners of the pyramid (deep green), as well as the level of individual slab sockets (light green) and surviving slabs (light brown) from the pavement. Unprocessed point cloud data. Right: Bird's-eye view of the middle section of the western side of the Great Pyramid. The pavement is colored as in the left image. Unprocessed point cloud data.

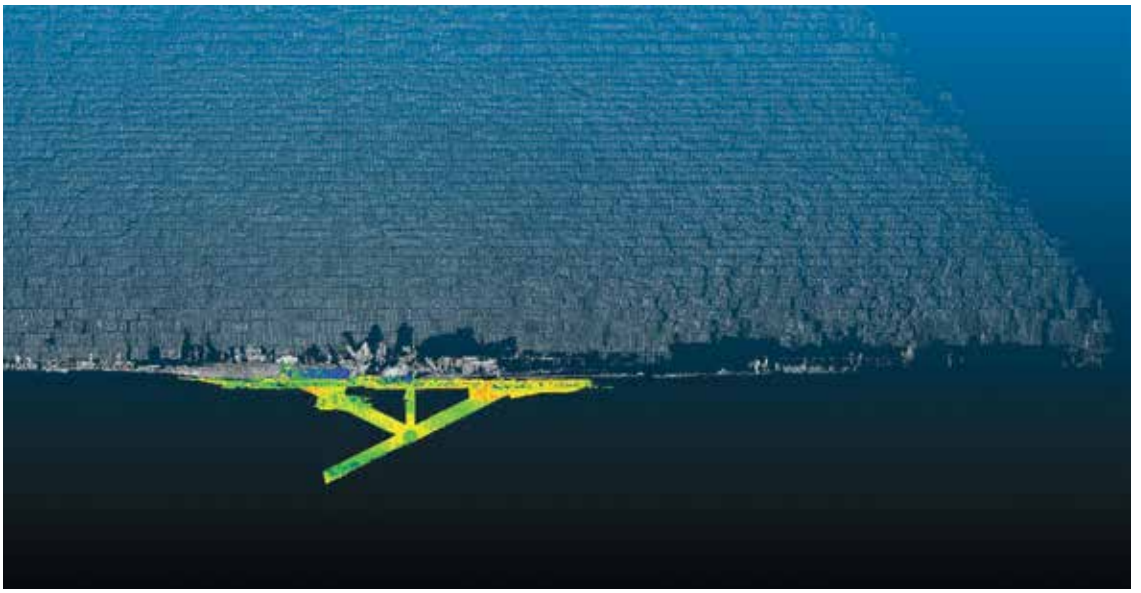

Figure 4. Scan of the subterranean "trial passage" on the eastern side of the Great Pyramid. Unprocessed point cloud data.

this season built on that work and, for the first time, resulted in a 3D view of these intriguing subterranean corridors—a model of ancient engineers' planning and procedure.

KHUFU BOAT PITS: 3D SCANNING

During a second period of work in May and June 2025, we returned for further scanning of Khufu's two boat pits and their cover blocks (figs. 5–7). These prominent features are located immediately outside the pyramid court and enclosure wall. An ancient, secondary wall of broken stone ran over the covered pit. AERA team members scanned these features in collaboration with Dr. Eissa Zidan, Director of MoTA Conservation, and Ms. Samar Mahmoud, Senior Archaeology Consultant at the GEM. The goal is to produce a 3D model of the boat pits and their cover blocks, as well as an animation that shows the blocks in

Figure 5. Khufu boat pit scanning team, June 2025. View to the west.

Figure 6. View of the two boat pits on the southern side of the Great Pyramid, June 2025.

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Figure 7. Location of the two boat pits and the eastern boat pit cover blocks stored at the plateau (some blocks are also still in situ over the pit, and some have been moved to the GEM for display). Image by Rebekah Miracle, AERA GIS.

their original positions (guided by ancient graffiti in red and black paint, some giving directions), for the display of the Khufu boats in a special GEM exhibit hall. Visitors will be able to see the original positions of the blocks, how they were removed, and how the boats were buried and uncovered.

After a thorough cleaning (fig. 8), we used a Trimble X9 laser scanner to map the pits and their cover blocks. The Trimble X9 is a high-speed laser scanning system operated remotely with a tablet that allows the subject scanned to be seen in real time. In addition to laser scanning, the machine also photographs the scan area. We completed scans of the cover blocks on display at the GEM as well (fig. 9).

KHUFU BOAT PITS: GRAFFITI AND BUILDERS' MARKS

As part of the boat pit work, Dr. Aurore Ciavatti (Institut français d'archéologie orientale) examined the builders' marks in the eastern boat pit and on its associated cover blocks. The discovery and exploration in 1954 of the eastern boat pit revealed numerous marks both on the faces of the cover stones and on the walls of the pit. These data were documented at the time of their discovery, and an extensive publication of them was initially planned, but much of the data remain unpublished; in 1971, Abdel Moneim Abubakr and Ahmed Youssef Mustafa published only nineteen of the builder's marks. Even though these marks are laconic, they provide valuable information about the logistical organization of the workers and the construction process of the pyramid complex. They also tell us about the chronology of the sealing of the pit, which took place at the same time as Khufu's funeral. These red and black inscriptions are extremely vulnerable to natural erosion. Many of the inscriptions on the cover stones have disappeared or become barely legible, so there was an urgent need to document the remaining inscriptions accurately to preserve the information

Figure 8. Our team cleaning the eastern boat pit, May 2025. View to the east.

Figure 9. Mohamed el-Sayed scanning the boat pit cover blocks on display at the GEM, June 2025. View to the north.

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Figure 10. Unpublished inscriptions on the underside of the cover blocks in the eastern boat pit.

Figure 11. Left: Cover stone E38 on display. Center: Image of cover stone E38 produced using DStretch software, which highlights pigments that are sometimes imperceptible to the naked eye. Right: Inscription on cover stone E38 as published by Abubakr and Mustafa in 1971 (*Beiträge zur ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde* 12, 11 fig. 6e).

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and ensure their publication in the future. The cover stones of the eastern boat pit are kept in three locations: the boat pit itself, on display nearby to the southeast, and at the GEM, where some blocks have been arranged above a tunnel so visitors can see the graffiti on the undersides (figs. 6–9).

We gathered all the published epigraphic data (facsimiles, photographs, and lists) so that the inscriptions could be identified on the cover stones and the original numbering of the stones reestablished, as twenty-eight of forty-one stones had been moved (twenty-three for display nearby and five to the GEM). We were able to establish the locations of only eight of the nineteen inscriptions that Abubakr and Mustafa published in 1971 (three of the eight have fully disappeared), in addition to ten triangular marks on the south wall of the pit. The inscriptions on the in situ cover stones (fig. 10) are all unpublished, and Dr. Ciavatti plans to issue a full epigraphic catalog in the future.

To complete this documentation, we first took photos of all the accessible stones to identify the faces likely to contain an inscription, even if imperceptible, by using DStretch software, which highlights pigments that cannot be seen by the naked eye (fig. 11). We then carried out a new photographic and photogrammetric survey of the potentially inscribed stones. Using photogrammetry and textured 3D scanning, technical indications painted on the pits' walls (triangular markers with measurements and guidelines) were also documented. This photogrammetry complements the textured 3D scan of the pits and cover stones.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank our colleagues in the MoTA: Dr. Mohammed Ismail, Chairman, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities; Ashraf Mohedein, Director of Giza; Tarek Barakat, Chief Inspector of the Pyramids Area; Dr. Hany El Tayeb, Director of the Department of Foreign Missions; Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ghoneim, Chief Executive Officer of the Grand Egyptian Museum; Dr. Eissa Zidan, Director of MoTA Conservation; and Ms. Samar Mahmoud, Senior Archaeology Consultant at the GEM. We also thank Shaimaa Mohamed Abd El-Rahman and Rasha Safan, MoTA inspectors for our work at the Great Pyramid, and Mohamed Salah, our MoTA inspector for the magazine.

Our 2024–25 work was made possible thanks to the generosity of Charles Simonyi and Microsoft, Lee and Ramona Bass, and Louise and Howard Phanstiel. We also thank Aarhus University, the Carlsberg Foundation, and the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Urban Network Evolution.

The AERA field team included Mark Lehner, project director; Mohsen Kamel, executive director of AERA–Egypt; Dan Jones, senior archaeologist; Aurore Ciavatti, builders' marks specialist; Mohamed el-Sayed, engineer from the Egyptian firm Schlambrogeni; Rebekah Miracle, geographic information systems specialist; and Sayed Salah Abd el-Hakim, archaeologist and foreman of our team of workers from Abusir. Søren Sindbæk of Aarhus University led the Danish scanning team, which during both seasons included Sarah Skytte Qvistgaard, Claus Feveile, and Maria Knudsen (all from Museum Vest in Ribe, Denmark), in addition to Lene Feveile, Kirstine Haase, and Sarah Croix.

AERA field lab team members who participated in the study season included Claire Malleson, lab director; Sarah Hitchens, assistant lab director; Emmy Malek, assistant lab director (and objects); Anna Wodzińska and Mahmoud el-Shafey (ceramics); Johanna Sigl and Mariam Adel (animal remains); Samar Mahmoud (lithics); Nisha Kumar (faience); and Manami Yahata (plaster). We also thank MoTA conservator Mohammed Kamal Sayed.

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KITES IN CONTEXT

YORKE M. ROWAN AND AUSTIN CHAD HILL

The Kites in Context project explores the relationship of Neolithic hunting and herding networks in the Black Desert of eastern Jordan. Our goal is to map the kites and their associated features with high precision and investigate kites and other structures through excavation, dating, and surface survey. We are specifically interested in (1) examining the collapse of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period in relation to the appearance of extensive networks of hunting traps (desert kites) for gazelle, (2) investigating the impact of the 8.2 kiloyear climate event on the study area, and (3) exploring potential links of the local Neolithic hunting and herding networks with regions farther away (e.g., Upper Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the western Levant/Palestine).

In early April 2025, we conducted a brief reconnaissance in an area known as Bakhita (fig. 1, 32°10′15.56″N, 37°54′51.86″E) to determine whether we could access the area and, if so, begin recording the area using drones. During this initial, successful reconnaissance visit, we examined structures for potential excavation and selected a large, undisturbed structure with very large basalt slabs, which we denoted as Building 1 (B-1).

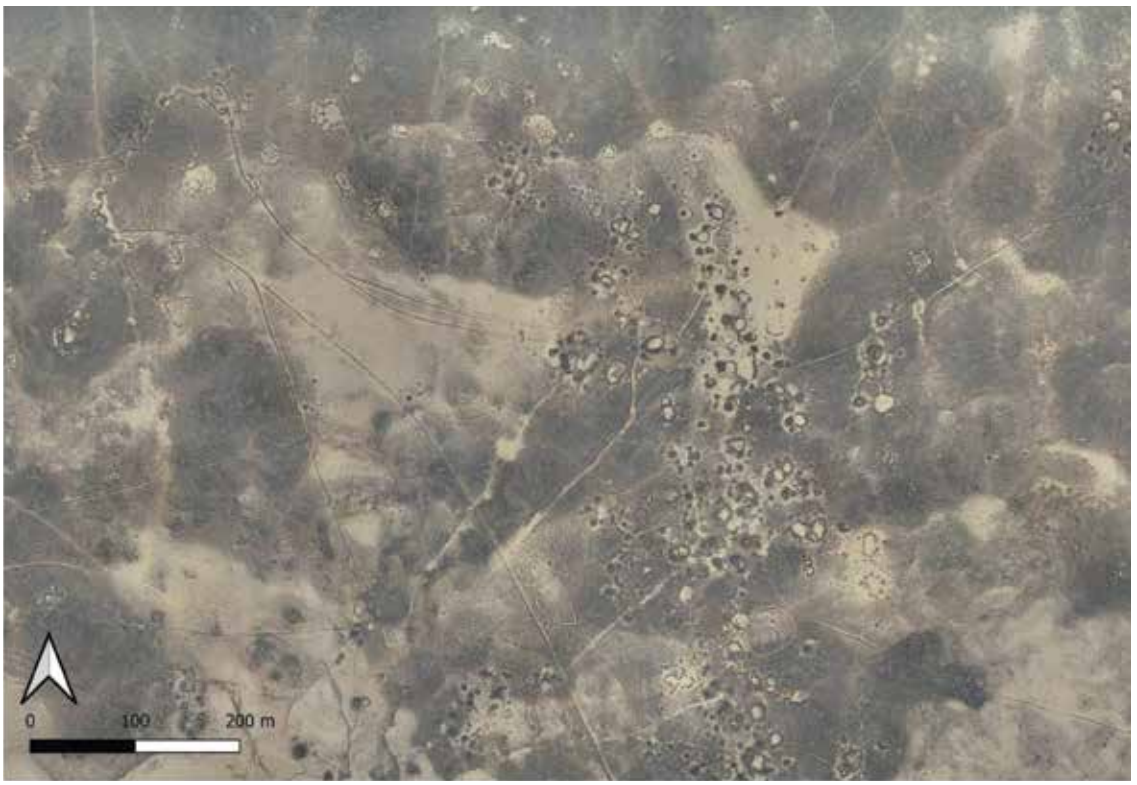

Figure 1. Orthophoto of the central area of Bakhita, with a desert kite in the upper left part of the image.

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Our third season of the Kites in Context project, which took place from May 16 to June 19, 2025, had two primary field goals. One major focus was mapping by means of drones (Phantom 4 RTK and DJI Mini Pro) in a wider area to build a database of 3D models, digital elevation data, and orthoimagery of sites and features in selected areas of the Black Desert to provide a contextual comparison with the extensive network of animal traps. The large volume of high-resolution data produced enables us to investigate the ways in which kites were constructed and functioned relative to local topography, wadi channels, and other geographic or human features. The second major goal of our season focused on survey and excavation, with a particular concentration on the kites and local Neolithic structures.

EXCAVATION OF BUILDING 1

Building 1 was selected for investigation for several reasons. First, it was large, with a thick layer of collapsed basalt stones covering the structure. This collapsed layer aids in the preservation of ancient features, sediment, and artifacts. Second, we could see two roughly circular features below the layer of collapsed stone that hinted at B-1's architectural integrity. Third, a feature attached to the northeastern side of the building seemed similar to one previously identified at Wisad Pools. And finally, the structure was within walking distance; the closest we could establish camp was 2 km away—a walk we made four times each day.

After taking overhead photography of the structures, we conducted a thorough surface collection of all material culture within 2 m around the building. We then removed loose stones and loose, windblown fill. It quickly became apparent that there was a second, smaller cell on the western side of the building. Over the course of the season, we exposed a more clearly constructed and articulated exterior wall than those found at buildings previously excavated. In places, this exterior wall still stood two or three courses high.

To the northeast of the main structure, an oval stone feature 3 m in diameter appeared to be attached. It was constructed of medium-sized, flat basalt slabs, with a perimeter defined by slightly larger slabs, and many fist-sized cobbles seemed to be placed (or tossed) atop the slabs as part of the construction. We termed this feature a "platform," comparable to one excavated at Wisad Pools (W66).

The upper construction of the western cell of B-1 was separated from the main cell by a massive, long slab clearly separating the circular wall construction of the main and western cells (fig. 2). A well-defined northeastern entryway to the main cell from the exterior of the building consisted of flat, upright slab stones along the northern wall of the entrance, with the southeastern wall of the entryway formed by the main cell wall (fig. 3). At each end of the entrance were threshold stones, one at the entrance to the interior of the main cell and the other at the outer limit of the threshold under the very edge of a stone that was a part of the eastern platform construction. This entryway was intentionally blocked in a later phase.

Figure 2. Middle-phase interior wall in the main cell, including massive, tumbled wall stone.

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Figure 3. Northeastern entryway, rectilinear feature, and southeastern pavers.

Figure 4. Lower hearth in main cell.

A noticeable drop-off in constructed features within the main cell was evident in the earliest phase. However, the southeastern edge of the eastern wall's interior was bordered by very well-fit pavers. To the west of the northern standing stone of the main cell wall was a hard-packed surface, which included a few small, flat stones separating the northern surface from the upper part of a hearth inside the main cell, directly in front of the western threshold.

Below the upper hearth, a continuous, hard-packed surface ran west of the northern upright and the bedrock stone in the center of the main cell's floor. The continuous surface in the western half of the main cell was cut by a hearth containing an enormous amount of charcoal, ash, and a flat layer of small, heat-cracked stones (fig. 4). Below the pavers in the southeastern corner, this surface continued in the corner of the main cell, with similar flat-lying artifacts and sediment. These earliest surfaces in the main cell represent the earliest occupational phase of the structure (fig. 5).

At the threshold of the western cell, small paving stones were found at levels similar to those inside the main cell. Throughout the layer, fragmented pieces of a thin, red-and-white layered material (see Material Culture section below) was found at multiple elevations in the cell, along with a fair amount of charcoal mixed into the sediment.

The early phase in the western cell is represented by two sequential layers: an upper, hard-packed surface confined to the area near the threshold with the main cell, and a lower lens of pure, light-gray ash derived from within a line of stones separating an alcove of the western cell (fig. 6). The limited amount of ash in the alcove feature is evidence of clearing the hearth feature.

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Figure 5. Orthophoto of Building 1. Platform (upper right), entrance, main cell, and western cell.

MATERIAL CULTURE

The material culture recovered included chipped-stone debitage and tools (particularly burin spalls and drills), flaked basalt tools, beads and bead blanks, and a few ground-stone items (primarily handstones). Only a few projectile points were recovered from excavations of the building (fig. 7), while a few others were collected from the vicinity; these items were all geolocated. An additional chipped-stone find was probably a projectile point in the process of production.

Bead production was a significant activity here. In addition to 122 beads, at least 62 blanks or "roughouts" were recovered; unmodified material for making beads (carnelian, dabba marble, and red limestone) was also found (fig. 8). This evidence, coupled with the ample presence of burin spalls and drills, indicates that the production of beads was an important undertaking, along with flint-tool production. A few pieces of mother-of-pearl were recovered, including a bead and a pendant (fig. 9). An unusual red, cone-shaped object, probably of ochre, was found directly below some paving stones that were removed (fig. 10).

Figure 6. Hearth and ash in alcove of western cell.

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Within the western cell, small patches of very thin, flat, white material were discovered with what may be red paint applied to only one side. Very fragile and much too thin to be plaster, the white flakes appeared to separate from the red-painted side very easily. These small patches were never more than 2–3 cm in size. This material should be analyzed with techniques such as X-ray fluorescence and Raman spectroscopy under high magnification.

GROUND SURVEY

In conjunction with the excavations and drone mapping, we recorded terrestrial-mapping data across the site using the Emlid RTK system. After establishing a base station near B-1 and setting up control points around the building, we built a database of features from the ground that could be quickly coded using the tools available in Emlid Flow, the native app. We recorded more than 4,000 points, resulting in a basic vector-data map of the site that can be further built out via digitization from the orthophoto. The database includes more than 120 buildings, more than 50 corrals, and more than 30 small "circular" features.

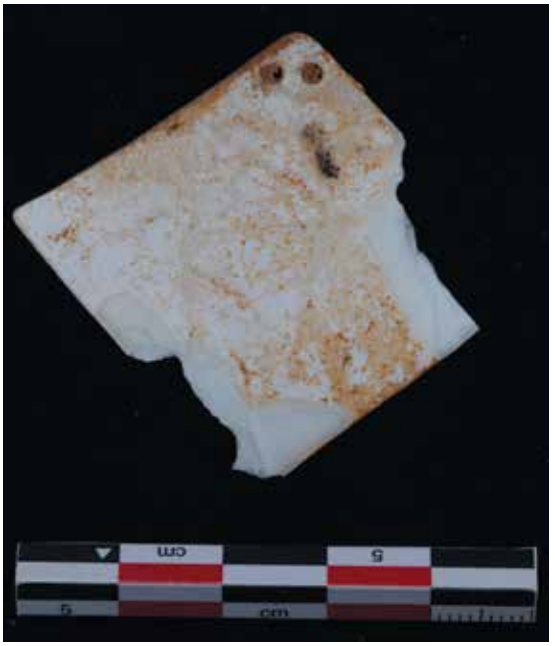

Figure 9. Mother-of-pearl pendant.

Figure 7. Projectile point.

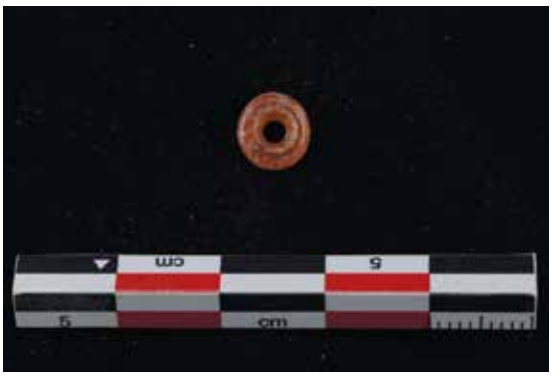

Figure 8. Carnelian(?) bead.

Figure 10. Red, cone-shaped object, probably of ochre, found under paving stones.

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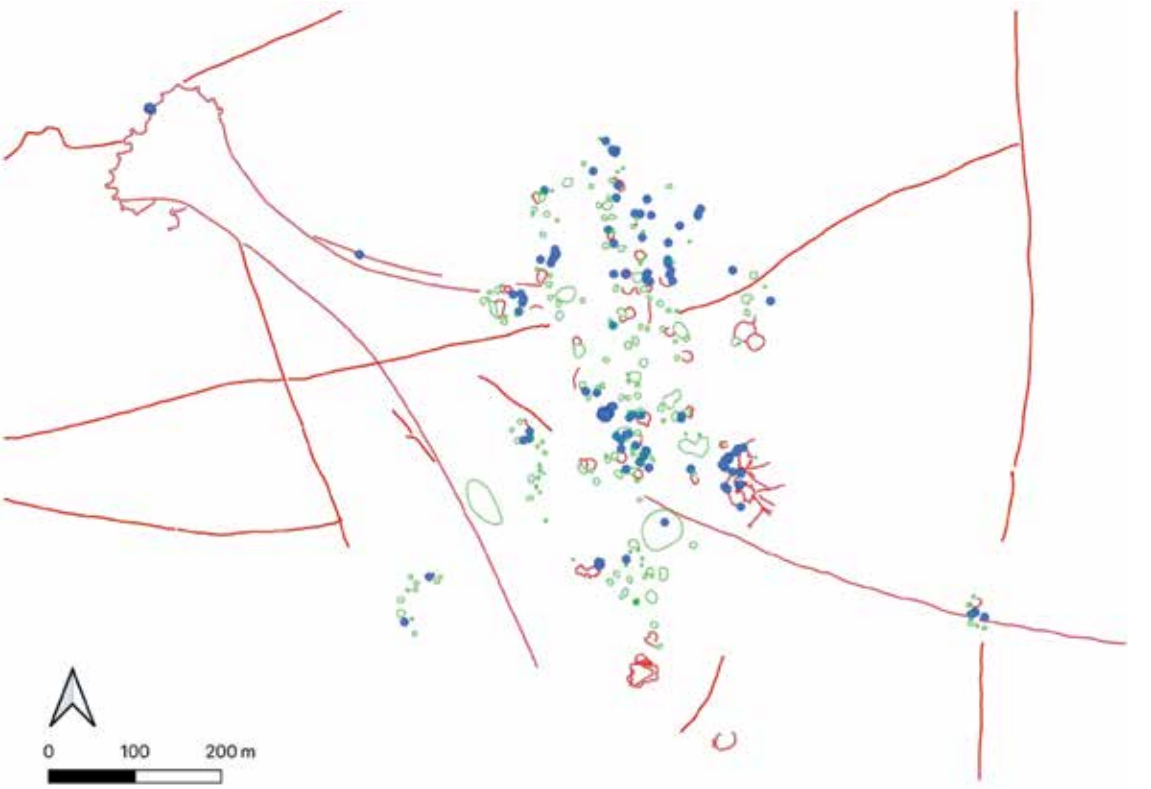

Figure 11. A simple vector map showing the locations of buildings, corrals, pens, cairns, kites, and circular features in the core area of Bakhita.

Figure 12. Oblique photo of a kite in the center of the *harra* between Safawi and Ruwaished.

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Figure 13. Oblique photo of a kite near Azraq.

DRONE SURVEY

The 2025 aerial survey builds on the work of our earlier surveys at Wadi al-Qattafi and Wisad Pools as part of the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project and the two previous seasons of the Kites in Context project. Our drone surveys build a database of landscape features associated with kites at a significantly higher resolution than comparable satellite imagery, and they simultaneously record topographic 3D data that are otherwise unavailable. This level of recording is ideal for investigating the smaller Neolithic and prehistoric features dominating the landscape.

In 2025, our primary goal was to document Bakhita and extend the kite mapping around Bakhita and comparable areas in other parts of eastern Jordan (fig. 11). We surveyed an area of approximately 4 km^2 around Bakhita to serve as a comprehensive base map and source of high-resolution mapping data for the site. Second, we mapped approximately fifteen kites in the chain passing through Bakhita, thereby significantly expanding the recording of kite chains on the eastern boundary of the *harra* (rocky basalt). Additionally, our permission to fly in other parts of the Black Desert allowed us to map a broad selection of kites in other areas. They included approximately six kites in the center of the *harra*, accessible along the highway; more than thirty kites clustered together east of Safawi (fig. 12); and seventeen kites on the edge of the Azraq wetlands (fig. 13). Including the preseason survey and the ten days of mapping during the season, we recorded some 18,500 images with the two drones. This massive collection of drone imagery allows robust comparison of kite variability.

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NINEVEH EAST ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

TIMOTHY P. HARRISON AND KHALED ABU JAYYAB

This report summarizes the inaugural seasons of excavation carried out at Nineveh by the Nineveh East Archaeological Project (NEAP) in fall 2024 and spring 2025. These seasons involved excavations in three areas—Areas C, V, and L, the latter being the Shamash Gate (fig. 1)—and preservation and restoration work at both the Shamash Gate and the Adad Gate. The Area C and Area V excavations, together with the restoration work at the Adad Gate, were conducted under the auspices of the University of Bologna, a NEAP consortium partner.

SHAMASH GATE EXCAVATIONS (AREA L)

Our main objectives for the fall 2024 and spring 2025 seasons were to continue systematically exposing the features of the Shamash Gate while simultaneously intensifying our efforts to protect and preserve its

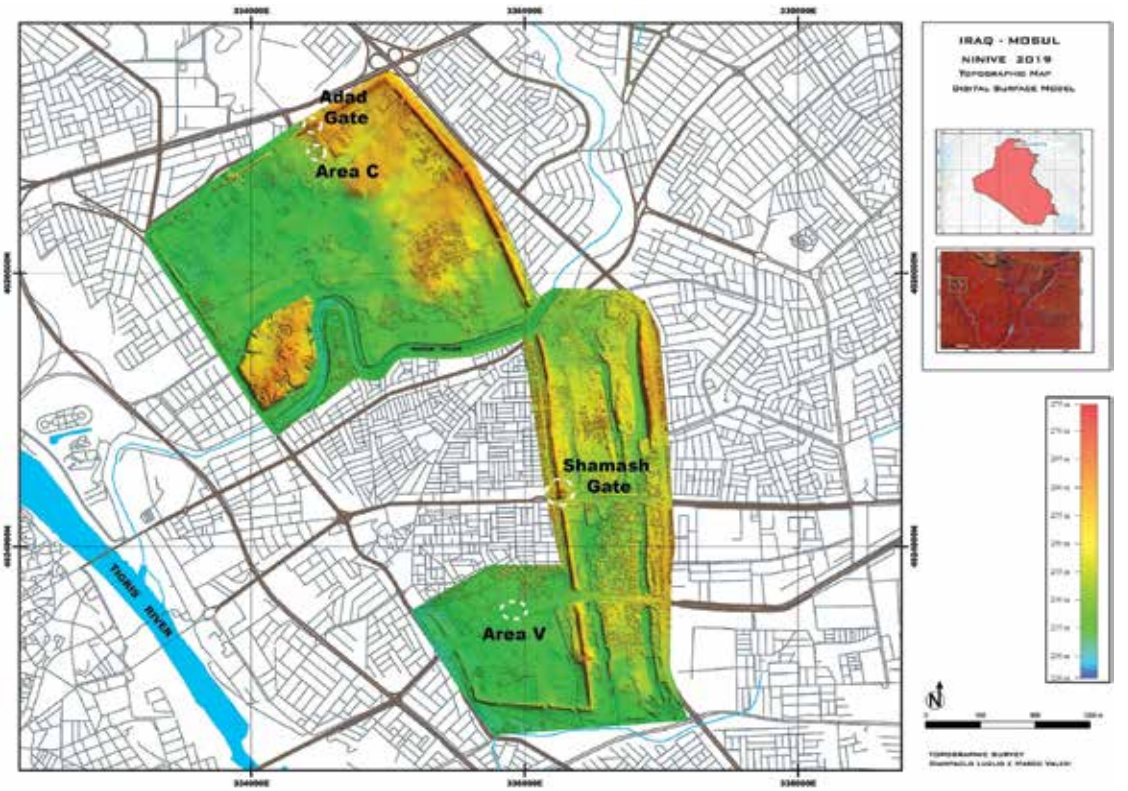

Figure 1. Map of Nineveh with the fall 2024 and spring 2025 excavation areas indicated.

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Figure 2. Aerial view of the Shamash Gate with excavation units. The dotted red lines indicate the location of tunnels in operations 7 and 8. Photo by S. Batiuk and K. Abu Jayyab.

remains. After we identified a high density of debris (which likely resulted from the 612 BCE destruction of Nineveh) at the western end of the gate, our main effort involved exposing the gate's central passageway (operation 1 in fig. 2). In 2024, this effort was accompanied by excavations in the chambers that we had begun exposing in 2023 (operations 4, 6, and 7) to clarify their outlines, and it expanded to include the south-central chamber (operation 8). In 2025, we further expanded our operations to include excavations in the eastern portion of the gate, specifically operations 11, 12, and 13 (fig. 3). Two additional operations initiated in 2025, operations 9 and 10 (fig. 3), were later abandoned because of the risk posed by the presence of previously undetected tunnels, possibly dug by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Finally, an important part of the work at the Shamash Gate focused on the preservation and reconstruction of exposed elements of the gate, including the plastering and covering of the exposed tower walls, the construction of a roof over the central passageway, and preparation work for the reconstruction of the eastern mudbrick towers.

Operation 1

Operation 1 is the central passageway of the Shamash Gate. The fall 2024 excavations continued a multiyear project to uncover the entire passageway. Previously, the team had reached the monumental paving stones (flagstones) at the western end of operation 1, the interior portion of the gate (fig. 4). The work carried out during previous seasons had also included a probe of substantial size along the northern balk of the trench in an attempt to clarify the stratigraphic situation. This probe was largely successful, since it allowed us to understand the repaving episodes that occurred after the monumental pavement's original construction, likely during the reign of Sennacherib.

During the fall 2024 season, the team uncovered one definite, and very likely two, repaving events that took place after the original flagstone construction (fig. 5). Mixed within the rubble and destruction layer of the later surface was a nearly intact human skeleton (fig. 6). In addition to the usual ceramic and bone

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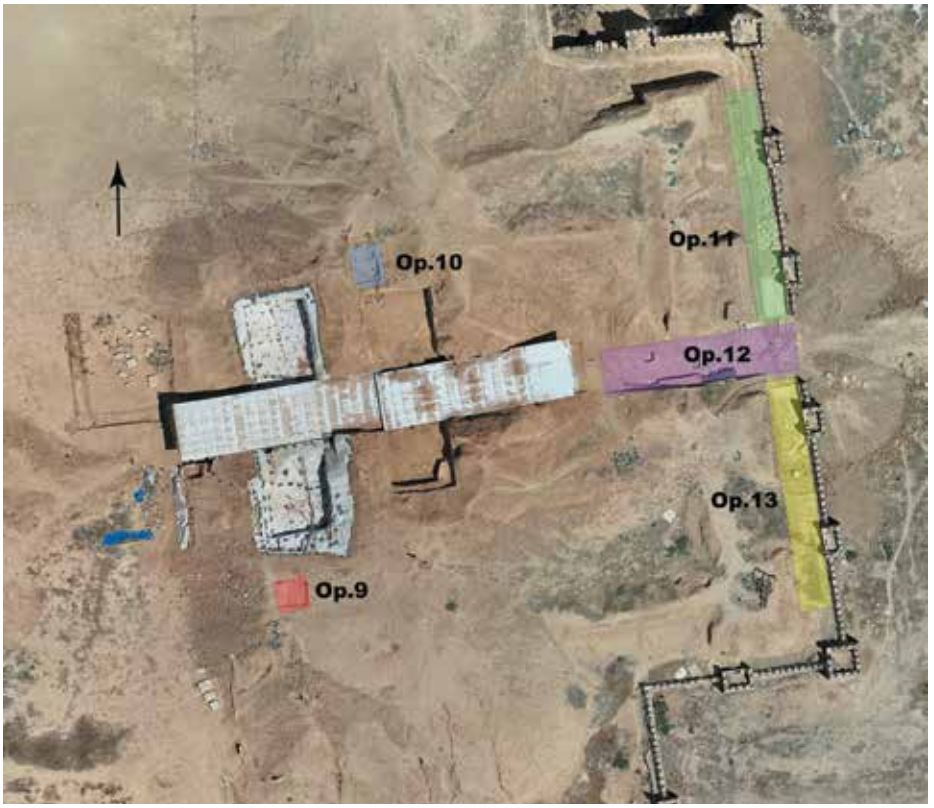

Figure 3. Orthophoto of the Shamash Gate showing operations 9 and 10. Photo by S. Batiuk and K. Abu Jayyab.

Figure 4. Loci designation in operation 1. Photo by S. Mooney.

Figure 5. Layers of the second pavement. Photo by N. Hnetka.

Figure 6. Human remains in operation 1. Photo by N. Hnetka.

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samples found across operation 1, numerous bronze objects, including three trilobate arrowheads, were recovered. Large deposits of charcoal were uncovered and sampled, including a partially carbonized beam.

A series of broken orthostats was discovered along the southern wall of the passageway. Since the debris of the orthostats was found within the destruction fill, they were likely destroyed during the sack of the city in 612 BCE.

Operation 4

Operation 4 represents the fill of the northwestern chamber, an 8 × 6 m area. Since the boundaries of this chamber had been exposed in 2023, the fall 2024 season's goal was to lower the level inside the chamber as much as possible (fig. 7). The fill in this area consisted of hard, mudbrick collapse with occasional baked bricks and random air pockets.

As Locus 7 was exposed to the elements over the course of the year, two features became apparent. First, a mudbrick formation running parallel to the eastern and western walls, about 1.5 m to the east of the western wall, was designated as Locus 10 (fig. 8). This mudbrick formation could be part of a staircase or a supporting buttress. We were able to follow the bricks running north–south for about 2 m. The formation may run farther south than is indicated in the photo, but it is increasingly disturbed.

The second feature may play a role in the disturbance of Locus 10. A large pit, which emerged in the middle of the square, overlapped to some extent the location where we would expect Locus 10 to continue south. The pit was designated as Locus 11 and the fill as Locus 12. These features were not completely excavated this season (fig. 8).

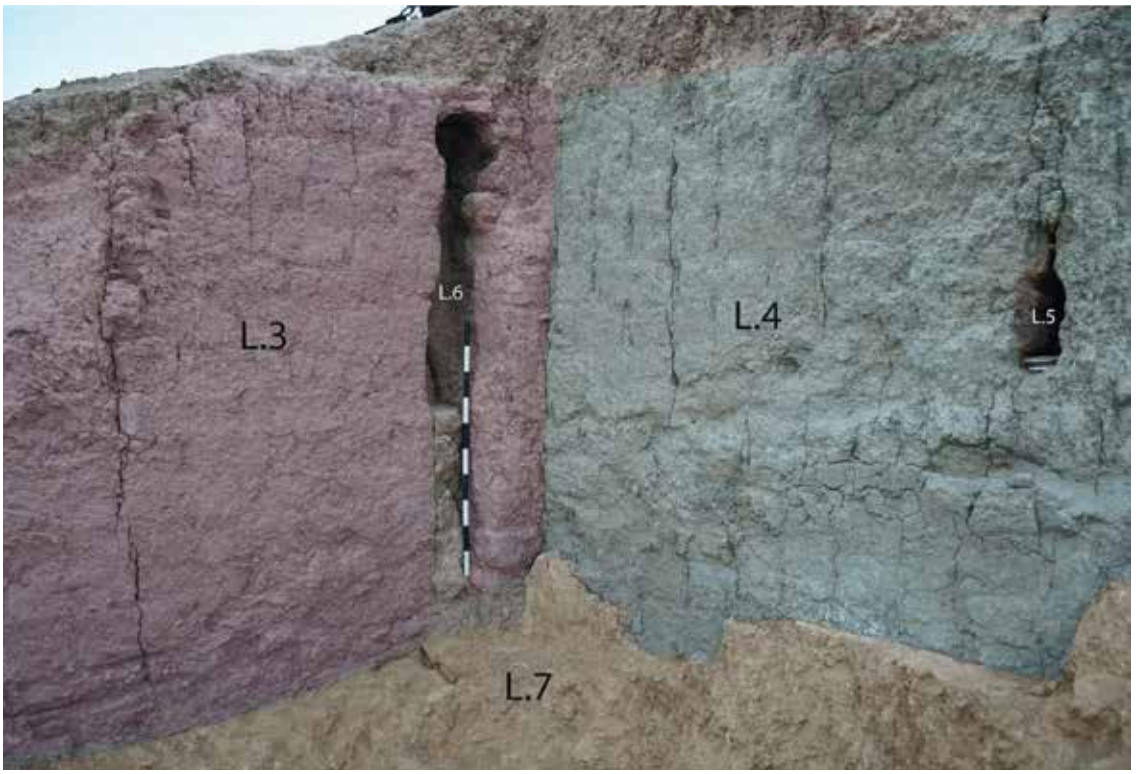

Figure 7. Northeastern corner of operation 4. Some of the original plastering on the eastern wall is still intact. Photo by N. Hnetka.

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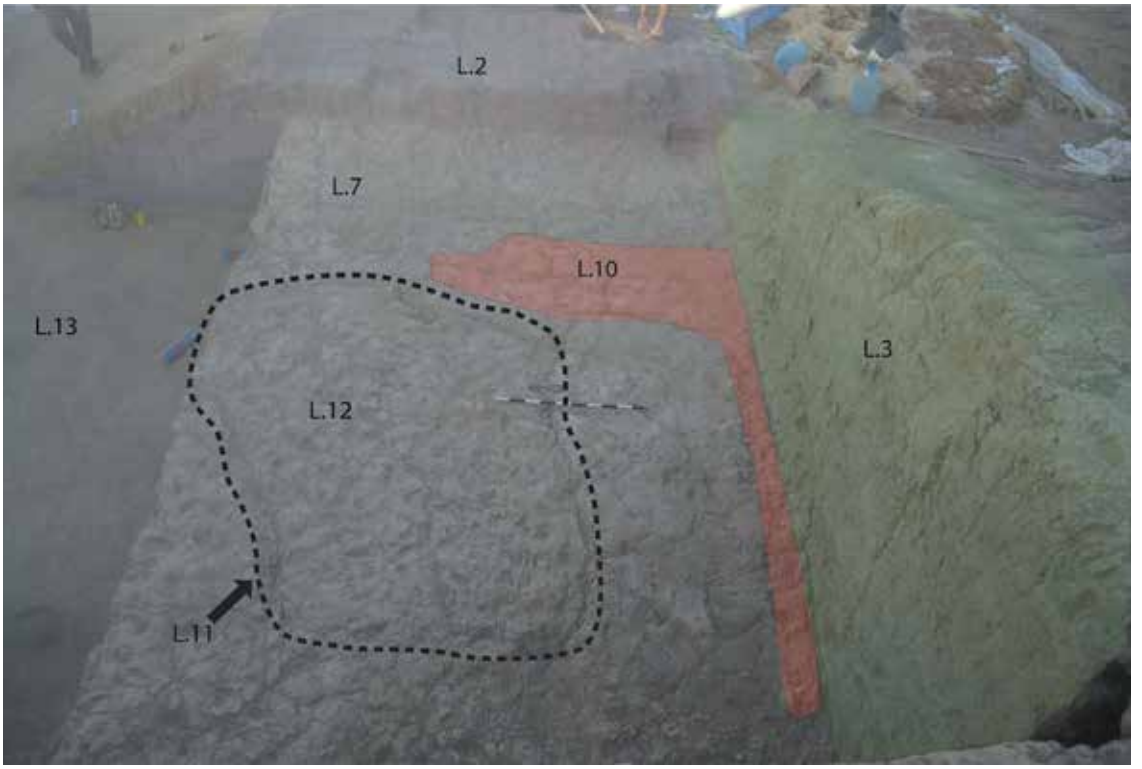

Figure 8. Operation 4 on October 24, 2024, facing west. Photo by N. Hnetka.

Operation 6

Operation 6 represents the excavation of the room fill of the southwestern tower. Its dimensions roughly matched those of the northwestern chamber (8 × 6 m). The objective for the fall 2024 season was to continue the work of the previous (2023) season to find the full boundary of the Shamash Gate's southwestern chamber (fig. 9). Previously, we were able to find conclusively the southern and eastern walls of the room (Loci 3 and 2, respectively), but the face of the western wall, though known and declared a locus, remained elusive. The eroded topography and significant disturbance from the battle to liberate Mosul made this task difficult. The fall 2024 and spring 2025 excavations also successfully defined most of the eastern and southern walls, and an exploratory trench was opened to find the face of the western wall (Locus 7), which was articulated despite the difficult conditions of the soil. Additionally, tunneling disturbance (Locus 14), uncovered the prior year, was fully excavated and defined. However, further excavation in this area will be challenging because of the existence of tunnels that pass through the entire square at a deeper level.

Operation 7

Operation 7 continued the previous year's excavations of the fill in the north-central chamber of the gate. The defining walls of the chamber had been identified during the fall 2023 season. The dimensions of the chamber are roughly 6 m (E–W) × 7 m (N–S). The fill in the chamber was composed of a mixture of collapsed and melted mudbrick, with baked bricks randomly distributed throughout. The fact that the deposits along the walls of the chamber were harder than the fill in the center of the room could be attributed to the heavier erosion that affected the center of the trench.

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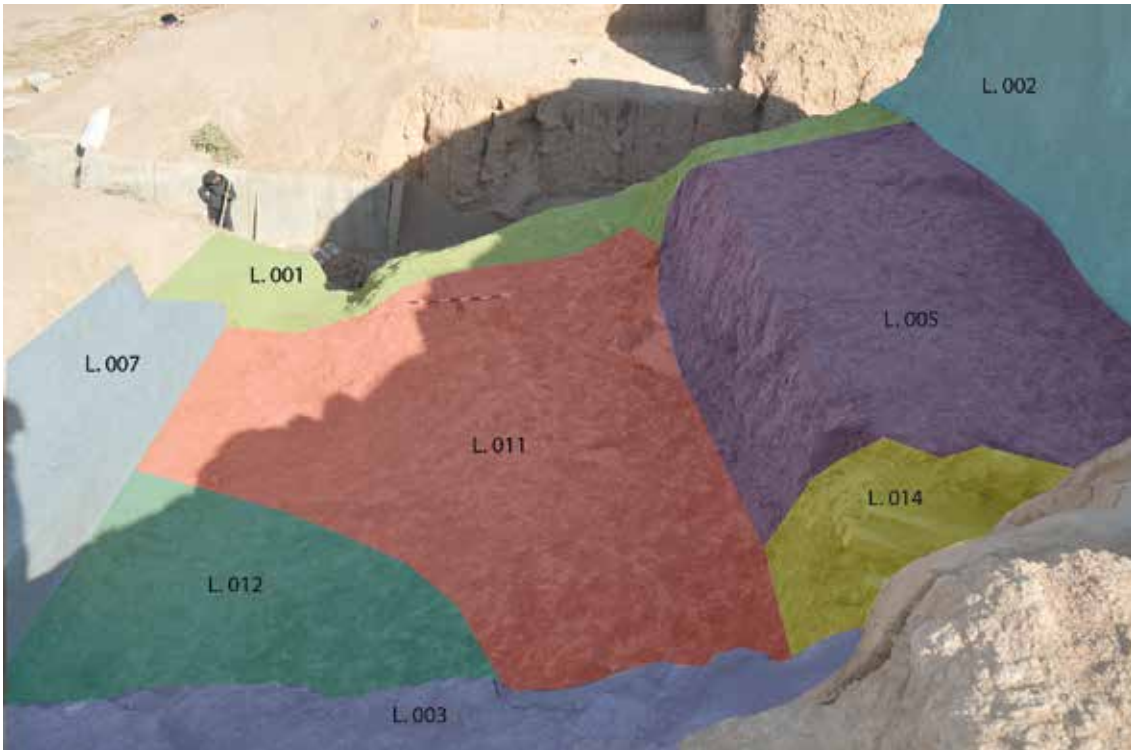

Figure 9. Loci of operation 6, viewed from the south. Photo by S. Mooney.

At a depth of roughly 2 m from the tops of the walls, we came across two tunnels that ran north–south under the northern wall of the chamber and continued partially beneath its fill (fig. 10). The nature and extent of these tunnels was difficult to determine; a first impression suggested they were either tunnels dug by ISIS, similar to others found across the site, or part of Austen Henry Layard's tunneling along the face of the orthostats in the 1840s. Alternatively, the tunnels could be ancient passageways through arches that held up a second floor in the chamber. These passageways could have run under the northern wall of the chamber to connect this hall to a second, adjacent room to the north (the abandoned operation 10).

The first possibility may be supported by the fact that the eastern tunnel appears to connect to an apparent ISIS tunnel seen in the cross section of the room visible in the passageway. Moreover, both tunnels align with tunnels on the other side of the passageway. Potentially ruling out the ISIS-tunnel hypothesis is the lack of a connection between the tunnels north and south of the passageway; that is, the tunneling seems to stop abruptly at the edges of the north-central and south-central chambers, respectively. This lack of connection leads us to think that these features were either tunnels dug by Layard, who followed the orthostats along the interiors of the chambers, or passageways through arches supporting a second floor of the chamber and providing access to other chambers in the central towers. The presence of bricks laid at an angle following an arch that corresponds to the angle of the bricks forming the top of the tunnel/arch in the hollow under the northern wall of operation 7 may support this ancient-passageway hypothesis.

We decided to halt excavations in this area because of the risk of collapse. As a final action, we packed the western tunnel with sandbags (the eastern tunnel already had a collapsed dirt fill) and shifted operations to the south-central chamber. In future seasons, we will aim to explore the hypotheses pertaining to the tunnels through excavations in the room to the north and clarification of the sections of the room along the passageway.

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Figure 10. Potential ISIS tunnels or ancient passageways running through the northern wall of the north-central chamber (operation 7), viewed from the south. Photo by S. Batiuk.

Operation 8

Operation 8 corresponds to the south-central chamber of the tower gate system (see fig. 2). This operation was the only new one we opened during the fall 2024 and spring 2025 seasons. It was deemed prudent to carry out excavations in this area before lowering the passageway further, since doing so would render this area more difficult to access. The fact that the south-central chamber is bounded to the south by the highest-preserved towers of the gate has caused severe erosion in the fill of the chamber, requiring that this area also be leveled to prevent continuous erosion and deposition into the central passageway of the gate.

Excavations in the erosional gully of the fill uncovered a large orthostat fragment that seemed to be completely out of place. Excavations in this area also recovered an unexploded mortar shell. Similar to the fills in other chambers, the fill here consisted of secondary deposition comprising a mixture of ancient remains and modern materials. The line of the chamber's southern wall remained unclear at the end of the fall 2024 season, but we believe that we located the face of the eastern wall. The western wall was not defined either. The difficulty in locating the faces of the walls stems from the same issues that have hindered the detection of the wall faces of the other chambers in the southern portion of the gate system (operation 6). First, the composition of the mudbricks differs from that in the northern part of the gate system, causing the bricks to blend into the erosional matrix of the southern chambers and become less discernable. Second, the fighting and bombardment during the liberation of the city appears to have affected the structural integrity of the southern half of the gate system more so than in the north, causing cratering and burning in this area of the gate complex. Third, the impact of this recent activity has increased the potential for erosion and gullying, further masking the features of the southern wing of the gate.

Operations 9 and 10

Operations 9 and 10 were initiated early in the spring 2025 season but were quickly abandoned. In the case of operation 10, we encountered what appears to be an undocumented ISIS tunnel, oriented east–west,

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that represented a safety risk to excavations in this area. In the case of operation 9, we decided that a more pertinent objective was to focus on the main, eastern entrance of the gate so that this area could be linked with the excavations to the west.

Operations 11, 12, and 13 (Eastern Area of the Shamash Gate)

The Shamash Gate excavations during the spring 2025 season (fig. 3) focused on the gate's eastern area, with the aim of detailing the main features of the eastern approach to the gate, in preparation for the restoration of the area's mudbrick towers (first restored by Tariq Madhloum in the 1960s) scheduled to commence during the fall 2025 season. The area was divided into three operations (fig. 11): the northern alleyway between the stone and mudbrick fortification walls (operation 11), the eastern portion of the central passageway (operation 12), and the southern alley between the stone and mudbrick fortification walls (operation 13).

In 1968, Madhloum identified two construction phases at the gate: a foundational phase that likely dated to Sennacherib's expansion of the city, and a later restoration of the gate. Madhloum based his conclusions primarily on the excavation of spaces between the stone and mudbrick walls, where he noted the presence of a flat and regular chalky stone pavement overlain by an irregular limestone pavement. We were able to expose these previously excavated areas and expand the excavations westward into the central gate passageway (fig. 11), and we have corroborated Madhloum's identification of two phases of gate construction (Harrison and Abu Jayyab 2024). Our current excavations in the passageway have allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the gate's phasing. Although past excavations revealed the presence of both a stone pavement (probably Sennacherib's original construction surface) and a packed-earth and pebble pavement, the reason for the repaving remained unclear. One possibility is that the stone pavement, made primarily of limestone and alabaster slabs, was vulnerable to erosion from rainfall and water runoff. Our recent excavations in the western portion of the central passageway, which revealed the existence of a drainage system that would have reduced surface runoff and surface erosion (see fig. 3), support this possibility, since a drainage system implies that managing water flow was a major concern when the floor of the passageway was renovated.

A final stage in the construction history of the gate became apparent with the excavation of added walls running along the northern and southern portions of the passageway. These walls were built on top of the second pavement, and they thus represent a later addition that postdated the repaving of the passageway. Traces of the walls were found in spring 2024 in the central portion of the gateway passage (Harrison and Abu Jayyab 2024, 50), but their true extent became clear only during this year's work (fig. 11). The walls were roughly 70 cm thick and seem to have covered the orthostats that lined the gate. They also seem to have blocked entrances to the towers from the passageway. The purpose of the walls was likely to restrict movement into the gate, perhaps as an added defensive measure. A similar narrowing of the central passageway has been observed at other gates at Nineveh, notably the Halzi Gate, and it has been suggested that this narrowing of the central passageways of Nineveh's gates coincided with the siege of the city prior to its final fall in 612 BCE.

Shamash Gate Conservation

Several steps were taken during the fall 2024 season to preserve and maintain the Shamash Gate's integrity. We plastered the exposed faces of the towers' mudbrick walls, including the preserved portion of one of the gate's central archways (fig. 12a). All exposed excavation areas were covered with heavy-duty tarps secured by sandbags and dirt (fig. 12b). A temporary roof shelter was then erected over the central passageway (figs. 3, 12c–d).

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Figure 11. Excavations in the eastern portion of the Shamash Gate. Photo by K. Abu Jayyab.

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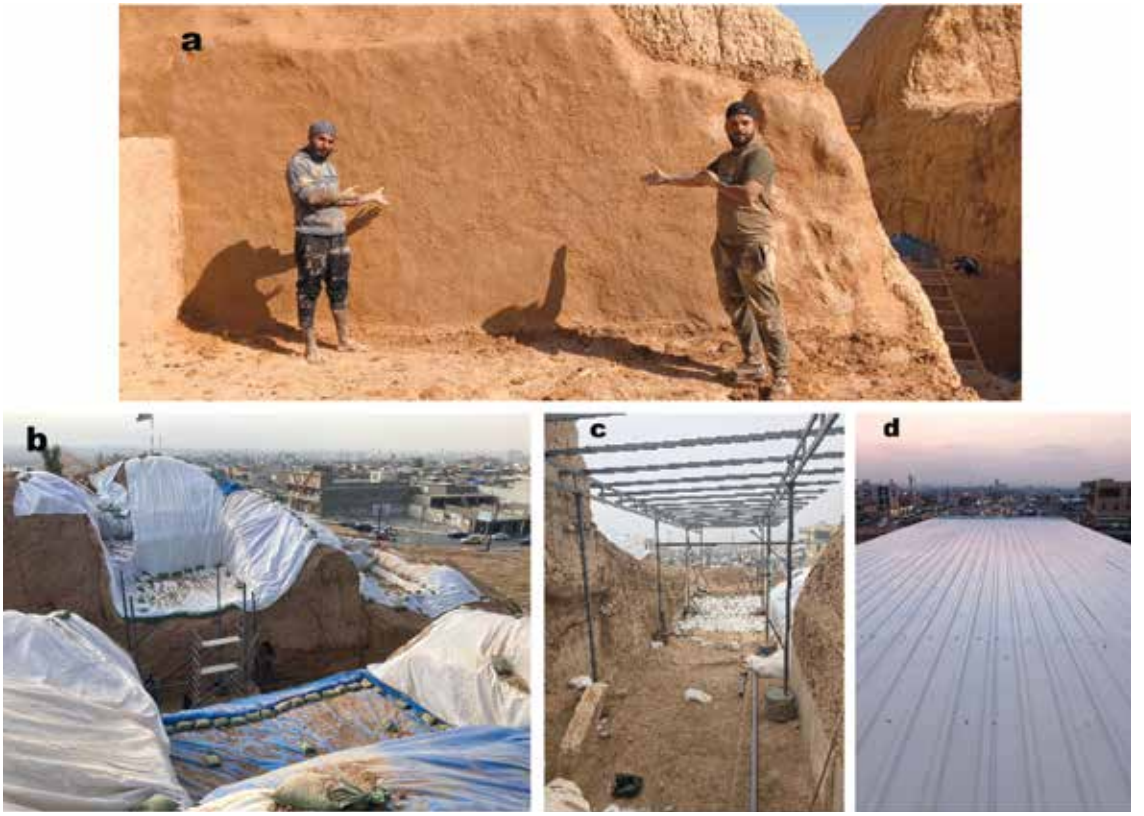

Figure 12. Plastering, covering, and roofing the Shamash Gate. Photos by K. Abu Jayyab.

ADAD GATE CONSERVATION

Further conservation and restoration was conducted at the Adad Gate (Area D; see fig. 1) under the supervision of Serafino Rosso. Numerous exposed sections of the ancient wall were replastered; the entrance ramp was repaired (fig. 13); and a new, more durable information panel was installed at the gate's entrance.

AREA C EXCAVATIONS

Area C (see fig. 1) lies between ISIS-dug Trenches 2 and 3, placed along the northern side of Trench 2. During the spring 2025 season, excavations in this area under the supervision of Eleonora Mariani were expanded northward and westward to clarify the extent and architectural plan of the structure, already partially exposed in the 2019–23 campaigns (fig. 14). The excavations focused on the building's northern rooms, which proved to be poorly preserved as a result of heavy modern disturbance.

AREA V EXCAVATIONS

Area V, located in southern Nineveh (see fig. 1), was excavated during the fall 2024 season under the supervision of Francesca Cavaliere. A 9 × 4 m extension was opened to the north to clarify the extent of the large courtyard and its relation to possible adjacent rooms excavated in this area in previous seasons. The

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Figure 13. The restored entrance ramp to the Adad Gate. Photo by S. Rosso.

remainder of the courtyard was exposed (fig. 15), along with thousands of pottery sherds, part of a destruction layer that sealed the courtyard.

Three doorways were uncovered along the courtyard's north side. The western and central doors were paved with baked bricks, while the eastern doorway had a beaten-earth threshold. The spring 2025 excavations also further delineated a drainage channel that continued northward out of the excavated area.

ARTIFACT CONSERVATION

During the fall 2024 and spring 2025 seasons, conservation efforts continued to focus on the cleaning and conservation of fragments of the Ashurbanipal stela recovered from the destruction debris above the floors of the Shamash Gate. The conservation and treatment of small finds included a series of cuneiform tablets recovered in previous seasons from Area C and a significant number of metal objects recovered in the course of the 2024 and 2025 seasons.

Conservation work was performed on eleven of the stela fragments found at the Shamash Gate (fig. 16). The fragments were cleaned using the same procedure established in previous seasons. Thick, mud accretions were reduced with a scalpel, after which detailed cleaning was performed with a dental scaler and wooden skewers. As needed, the stone was consolidated during cleaning with Conservare HCT, an aqueous hydroxylating nanolime consolidant. Photos of the cleaned text were sent to epigrapher Gianni Marchesi, who confirmed their legibility.

Figure 14. General view of the Area C excavations, from the southwest looking northeast. Photo by E. Mariani.

Figure 15. General view of Area V at the end of the spring 2025 season; the three doorways are visible to the right (north). Photo by F. Cavaliere.

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Figure 16. Stela fragment no. 801 before and after cleaning. Photo by J. Unruh.

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NIPPUR EXCAVATIONS

AUGUSTA McMAHON

The ISAC excavations at Nippur, Iraq, took place from January to March 2025. After the abrupt and early end to our 2024 excavations (see the 2023–24 annual report), we were grateful and relieved to have a full season without incident. The team included colleagues from the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, Autonomous University of Madrid, and University of Winnipeg, as well as students from the University of Chicago and University of Cambridge.

Our research questions scrutinize the nature of the urban edge zone and its changing functions and population over time. Thus our excavations were located in the southern portion of the site adjacent to the city wall. This southern area was occupied only episodically as the city expanded and contracted in response to political and climatic changes. As a result, the mound is much lower and physically less complex in this area; it was also excavated only occasionally in the 1970s and 1980s and does not have obtrusive soil dumps and deep holes like those left on the main mounds by the early nineteenth-century excavations. This situation allows us to examine very clear "slices" of the site's history, notably the late third-millennium BCE Ur III period, the mid- to late second-millennium BCE Kassite period, and the early first-millennium BCE Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian period. In each of these periods, Nippur was the target of conscious reoccupation or revitalization grounded in royally commissioned construction on the Enlil temple and ziggurat and other important religious buildings, such as the Inanna temple. Simultaneously with these royal projects, the city expanded in size, and we propose that this expansion occurred because residents were internally displaced by temple construction, administrators and other residents seized the opportunity afforded by social mobility to build grander houses, and migrants seeking employment opportunities arrived from the surrounding region. These diverse groups may have moved into the edge area of the southern city in each period, creating neighborhoods of different densities and degrees of wealth. However, in times of political disruption and climatic change, this southern area was the first to be abandoned as the population moved away or perhaps shifted to more easily defended areas on the main mounds.

Our 2025 excavations concentrated on two sets of trenches in the southern area, one along the city wall and a second just inside it (fig. 1). The city wall trenches (WC-4/6) targeted the long, linear mound that represents the eroded remains of the city wall; we were able to expose the Kassite-period city wall just below the surface. This wall was approximately 3 m wide and preserved up to 1.5 m high, and it was constructed of regular courses of mudbrick. It made a zigzag in the area of our trench in order to cross over an earlier erosion channel that may date to the early second millennium BCE (fig. 2). The wall of a Kassite building, perhaps a large house, lies immediately to the east of the city wall on the other side of an intervening space about 4.5 m wide—possibly a street running along the interior of the wall.

There were also some substantial structures outside the city wall, to its west, between the city wall and the edge of a large watercourse that parallels it. These structures had mudbrick walls on baked-brick foundations and were adjacent to a series of bread ovens (*tannur*s). Previous excavations in the 1970s and 1980s and magnetic gradiometry in 2025 in the area west of the wall (see below) suggest that the watercourse was up to 50 m wide; thus it would have been useful for transporting goods and people, as well as for irrigation. The structures outside the city wall (visible in the upper right corner of the trench in fig. 2, with team members standing at the approximate edge of the watercourse) may therefore relate to shipping or market functions. In future seasons, we hope to examine these structures more extensively and to take geological

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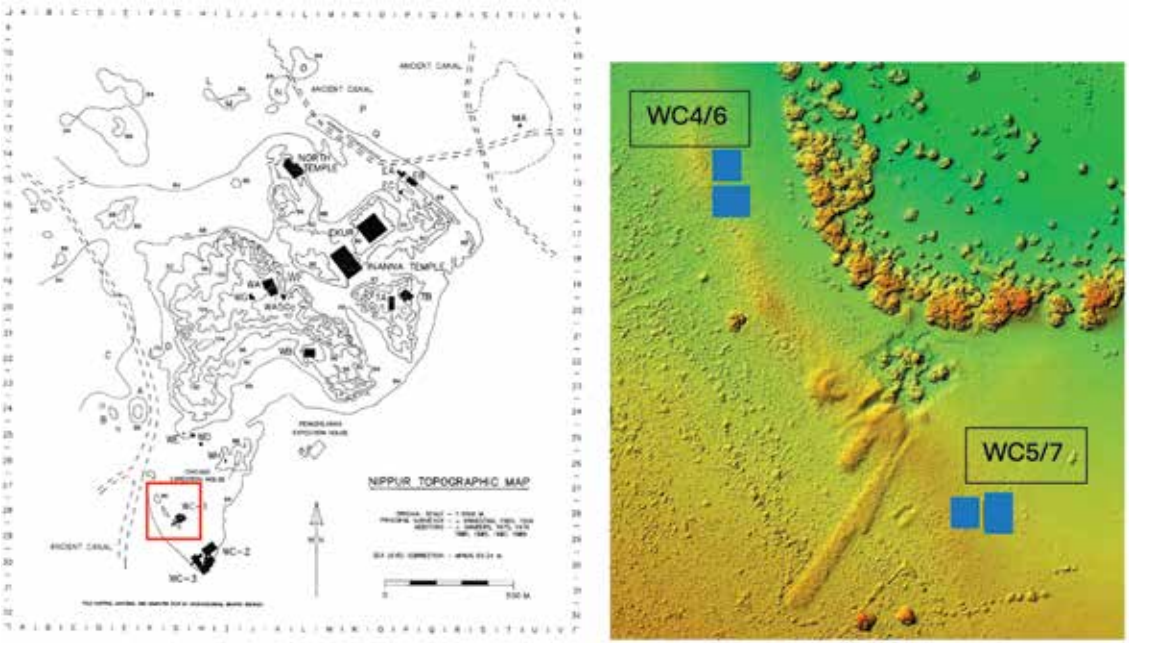

Figure 1. Topographic plan of Nippur with 2025 excavation trenches indicated.

Figure 2. Area WC-4/6, facing south, with Kassite and Ur III city walls.

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samples from the watercourse. The Kassite wall overlapped the Ur III city wall, which lies immediately below it but on a slightly different alignment. The top of the Ur III wall had been deliberately flattened for reuse as the foundation of the Kassite wall. The earlier city wall and any associated structures from the Ur III period will also be targeted in the coming years.

Our second area of excavation lies near the southern corner of the city and just inside the remains of the city wall in this location (WC-5/7). The main structure exposed in this area was a very large first-millennium BCE house. It had four large, rectangular central spaces that can be grouped into two pairs, each pair probably consisting of one roofed and one unroofed space (Rooms 1–2 and Rooms 3–4 in fig. 3). We interpret each of these pairs as consisting of a courtyard and a semipublic gathering space for two equal parts of an extended family (potentially headed by coresidential brothers). These central spaces were surrounded by multiple small rooms. Several graves are associated with the house, including two in "bathtub-shaped" coffins that also contained glazed ceramics (fig. 4). The house's contents, which included incense burners and evidence of a varied diet involving fish and both domesticated and wild animals, suggest that this house was the home of a wealthy family. Despite expanding our trenches several times during the season, we did not expose the entire house, whose area covers more than 200 m^2; the only exterior wall exposed was the western one.

To the west of that exterior wall of the house was a narrow alley and then the first-millennium BCE city wall (see fig. 3). The wall in this area is a complex construction that reused the Kassite city wall. This earlier wall must have been still visible in the seventh century BCE, when occupants returned to this southern area, cleaned up the Kassite wall, and built a second wall on a wide foundation just to its east. The narrow space between the two walls was divided by at least one pisé cross wall, possibly creating a system of casemates.

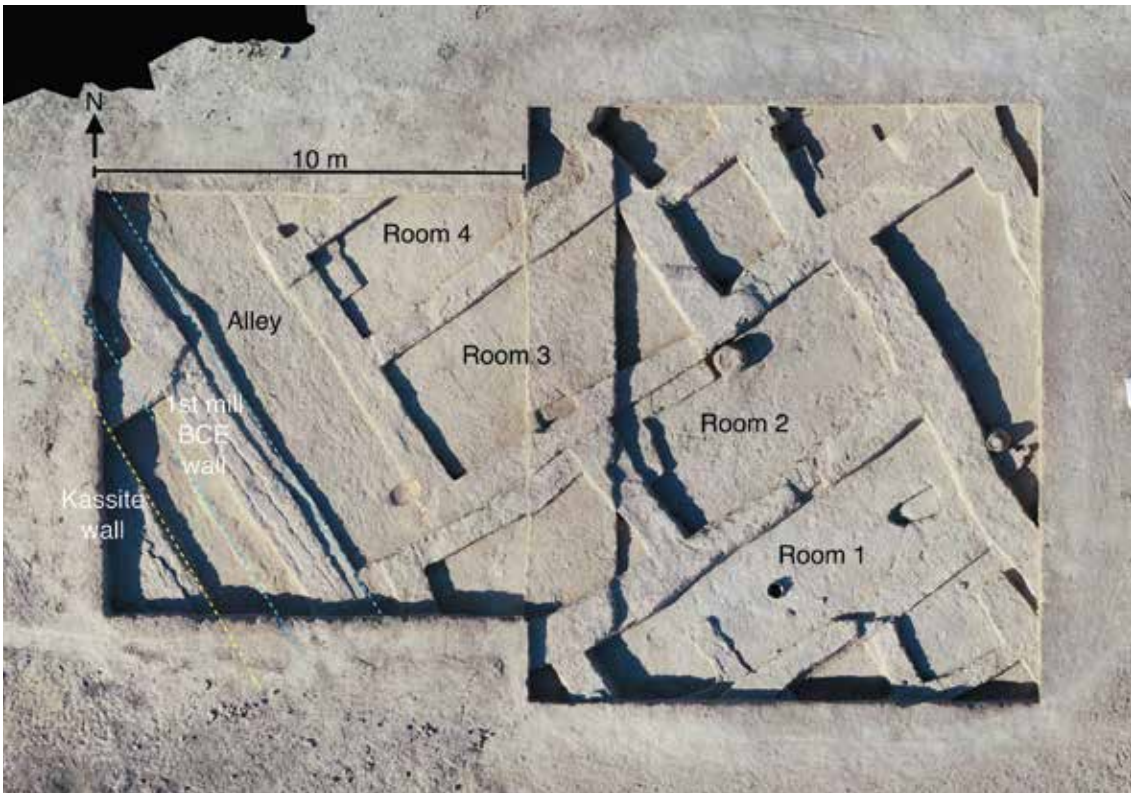

Figure 3. Drone image of Area WC-5/7 first-millennium BCE house and city wall.

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The recycling or reuse of an earlier wall is not unusual in Mesopotamian construction practices, but the length of the intervening time—approximately four centuries—implies that significant effort was expended to find, clear, and repair the earlier wall to recreate the same city boundary.

Figure 4. Glazed pottery from graves in WC-5/7 house.

The final use of the southern area was as a cemetery in the Parthian period of the first millennium CE. The Parthian city is located farther east on the main mounds, with the most significant structure being a fortress built around the ziggurat. Parthian houses are located across the West Mound, and a few small mounds covered with Parthian ceramics are scattered near the line of the city wall and just to the north of our new excavations; these small mounds may represent independent villas or farmsteads. The cemetery lies just to the south of them and was used for both adults and children, most of whom were buried with no or only minimal burial offerings, such as small strings of beads or single jars.

Finally, we were able to assess a large, unexcavated part of the southern area by magnetic gradiometry using a Bartington magnetometer borrowed from ISAC's Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes. This method allowed noninvasive assessment of the underlying architecture in this area. The data are still being processed but allow identification of the alignment of the city wall in the areas between and to the south of our trenches. And as mentioned above, the dimensions of the external western watercourse, approximately 50 m wide, are now clarified.

We thank ISAC for its financial support and all members of the Nippur team for their selfless contributions, through freezing temperatures and occasional rain. We are also very grateful to colleagues of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Baghdad and Diwaniyah for their support.

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NUBIAN EXPEDITION PUBLICATION PROJECT

LISA A. HEIDORN AND BRUCE BEYER WILLIAMS

AL-WIDAY I

The 2024–25 year was marked, first, by undertaking some revisions to the manuscript on the cemetery al-Widay I, which was resubmitted following external peer review. Nubia, including the Eastern Desert (Atbai), is a place of considerable distances and significant cultural, social, and political relationships that are often not easy to detect or defend. Therefore, al-Widay I's relationship with the Pan Grave culture of Lower Nubia and Egypt and with the southern Atbai was reexamined using significant scholarship by Julien Cooper and Andrea Manzo, who clarify comparisons that are clear and exclusive to the three cultural units. The relationship is particularly interesting, as all three major regions of this broad cultural grouping are distinct.

HOSH EL-GERUF

The major effort this year focused on Hosh el-Geruf, the gold-processing site. As the volume manuscript has developed, especially through the contributions by Carol Meyer and James Harrell, it has become clear that this site was the gold-processing center for materials from a wider area. Instead of hard-rock mining, a kind of extraction known as "wadi works" was practiced in the Fourth Cataract region. Granitoid gneiss breaks down into small, crumb-like fragments, progressively exposing veins of auriferous quartz. These quartz bits in turn break down into angular fragments, gradually reduced to the size of sand, which are found in areas near the basement rock exposures. Miners have long dug pits in this mix of sand and gravel to recover the quartz and ship it, probably by boat, to Hosh el-Geruf. There are fields of such pits among the rock outcrops from one end of the cataract, at Shirri Island, to the other, near the present-day dam, with some fields having hundreds or even thousands of pits (fig. 1). One such area, on Sherari Island at Shirri between two cemeteries of Old Kush date, was especially extensive (figs. 2–3). Thus the industry of grinding and washing gold at Hosh el-Geruf was not a local enterprise but a regional one.

As pointed out in previously published articles and annual reports, the two phases of gold-processing activity at Hosh el-Geruf took place in the Old Kush period, between roughly 1800 and 1500 BCE, and part of the Napatan period, corresponding to the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty of Egypt, between roughly 750 and 600 BCE. In the Old Kush phase the pottery is overwhelmingly local (fig. 4), with only a few imported vessels from either the Kerma region or farther afield, a situation that may reflect the general independence of the Fourth Cataract from the Kerma kingdom. In the Napatan period, on the other hand, most vessels are either the same as those found in the area of Napata near Gebel Barkal or are closely related to them (fig. 5), a relationship further evidenced by a sealing of Queen Khensa found at Hosh el-Geruf.

The fact that Hosh el-Geruf was the center of a regional industry raises the question of what form of social organization supported operations on such a scale. In a wide-ranging discussion of evidence about desert polities in northeastern Africa, Julien Cooper noted a strong tendency of scholars to downplay the

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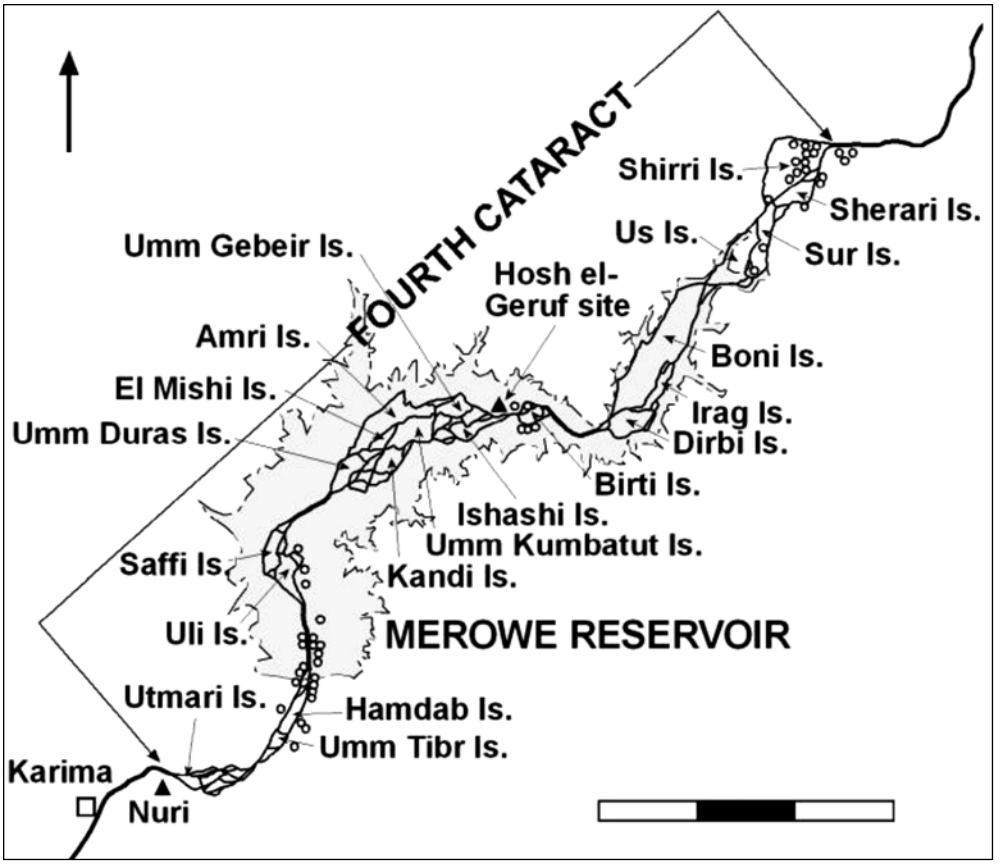

Figure 1. The Fourth Cataract. Map by James Harrell.

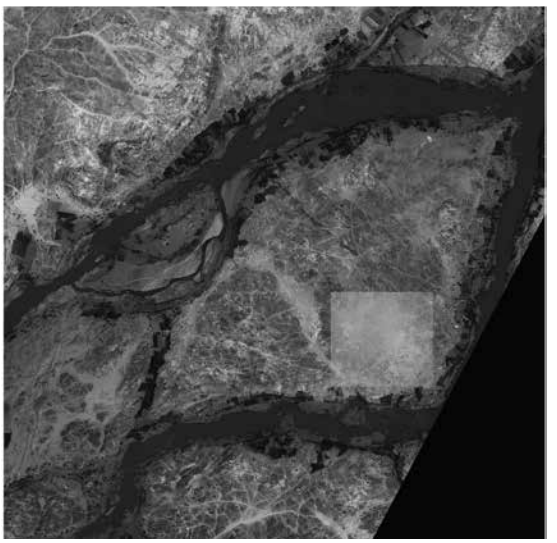

Figure 2. Satellite image of Sherari Island North, with inset showing the area of figure 3.

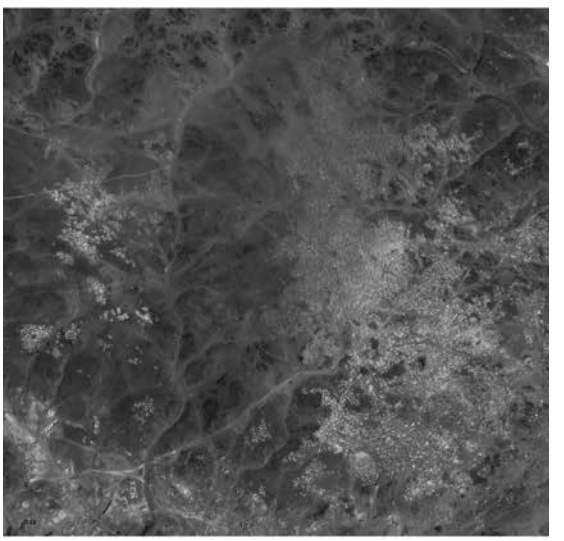

Figure 3. Detail of satellite image, showing Sherari Island's systematic wadi works.

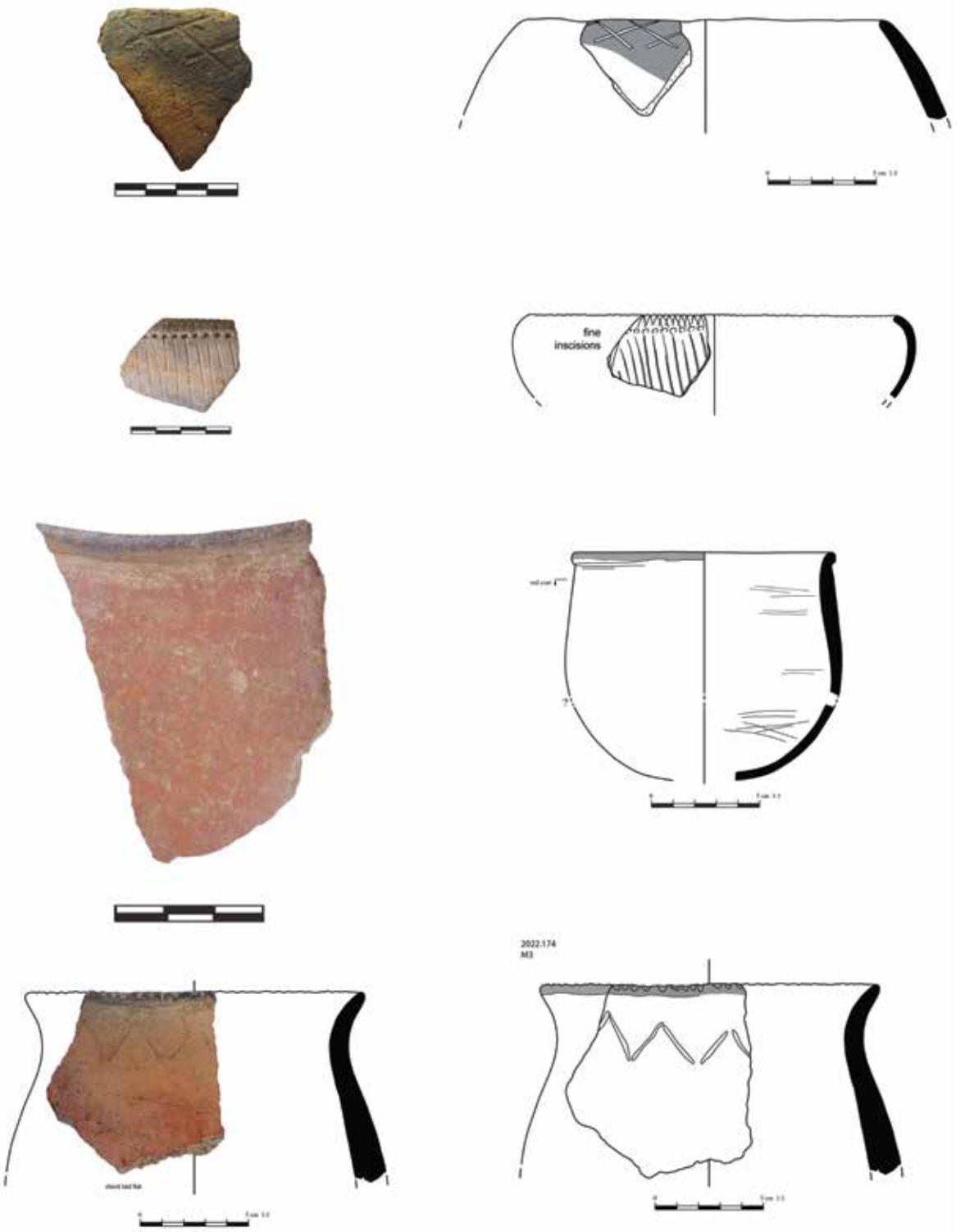

Figure 4. Old Kush pottery from Hosh el-Geruf made from local alluvium. Photographs by Larry Lissak. Drawings by Lisa Heidorn and Carol Meyer.

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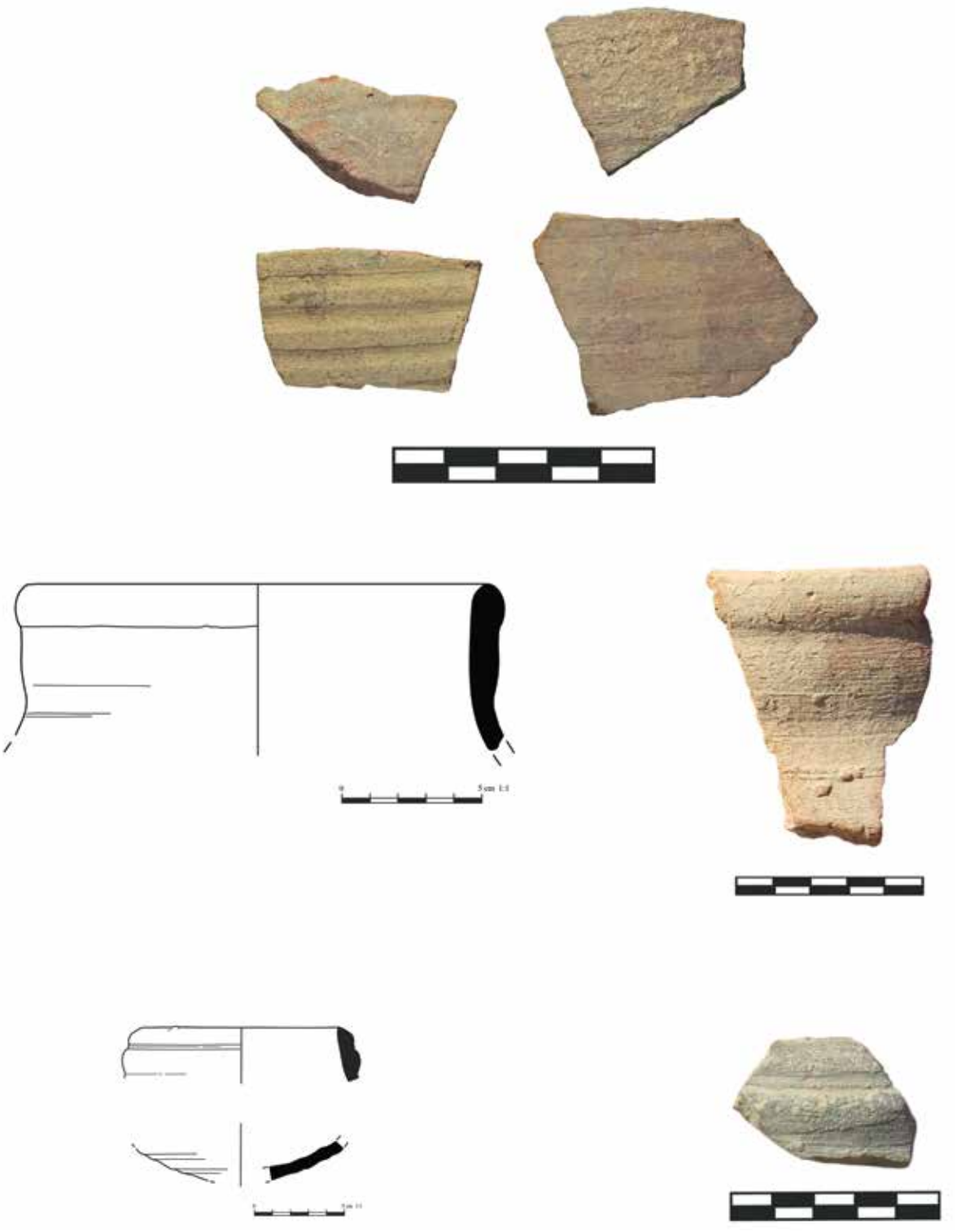

Figure 5. Napatan jars from Hosh el-Geruf: top and bottom fragments made from marl clays; middle fragment made from silt. Photographs by Larry Lissak and Bruce Williams. Drawings by Lisa Heidorn and Carol Meyer.

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complexity and scale of organization outside both Egypt and the later states. While the specifics he cited are not to be found directly in the Fourth Cataract region, rulers over wide areas in Nubia were specifically recorded from the late Old Kingdom for entities such as Irtjet, Setjau, and Wawat. Even though the archaeology in each of these regions does not reveal wide disparities in wealth or status, the texts indicate the emergence of rulers who claimed pharaonic royalty (Williams 2013). A regional rule along this line, as also evidenced in the Middle Kingdom Execration Texts, is thus a reasonable conclusion.

One of the major questions about the Fourth Cataract region is whether it was specifically recognized in the written records of the time. From the Old Kingdom onward, the major regions of northern Nubia were named, traversed, and sometimes occupied by Egypt. In the Middle Kingdom, countries not occupied were named in execration texts, including Kush, with its center at Kerma just above the Third Cataract; Sai (Shaat), a large island above the Second Cataract; and two major entities in the Eastern Desert populated by Medjay. Late in the Second Intermediate Period, a *dipinto* in the tomb of Sebeknakht at Elkab mentions a large-scale attack from the south led by Kush, with forces from Wawat, Lower Nubia, the Isles of Khenthennefer, Medjay, and Punt (Davies 2003). All these entities are known, and their general locations clear, except for Khenthennefer. Although there are concentrations of islands in the Second and Third Cataracts, they are subsumed under the names Wawat and Kush and not Khenthennefer.

Further information is gained from the biography of Ahmose, son of Ebana, who served in the Egyptian military from the end of the Second Intermediate Period into the early Eighteenth Dynasty. He recounts a campaign to Khenthennefer to "suppress violence in the highlands," in the course of which he showed "bravery in bad water" (i.e., rapids) and in the passage of the ship through a bend in the river (Breasted 1906–7, vol. 2, no. 80). This comment suggests that the Fourth Cataract, and possibly the entire region as far as Mograt Island, was at that time known as Khenthennefer. Further confirmation may be found much later, in the eighth century BCE, when the ruler of Upper Egypt, Osorkon (the first high priest Osorkon, who became Osorkon III of the Twenty-Third Dynasty) acquired "fine gold from Khenthennefer" (Breasted 1906–7, vol. 4, no. 770; Caminos 1958, 126, no. 196). As this time would correspond to the earliest phases of the Napatan dynasty, the observation offers another correspondence. If the identification is thus far only a proposal, it should be kept in mind that in these records there is only so much geographical space for named Nilotic entities, and the Fourth Cataract fits well with the records' contexts.

Although the dating and interpretation of materials from archaeological salvage excavations often march into unknown territory, they can yield surprises. When we went to Hosh el-Geruf, it was to study a site. What we found has changed our understanding of the economy, society, and associations of a region that may be that of the previously unknown area of Khenthennefer.

Finally, this year ISAC was visited for almost a month by a PhD student at the Sorbonne—Gabrielle Brugnacchi, who came to study the Middle Kingdom pottery from Serra East. A draft manuscript for the fortress's publication exists, but since the original study was completed many years ago and museum storage has in the meantime been reorganized, much new material has been registered since the original manuscript was written. Brugnacchi was thus able to study previously inaccessible material and, in the process, found new vessels that need to be documented for publication.

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PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION ARCHIVE PROJECT

MARK B. GARRISON AND WOUTER F. M. HENKELMAN

This year's report of the Persepolis Fortification Archive (PFA) Project starts with the news that Young Bok Kim, who operated the polynomial texture mapping (PTM) and BetterLight photo stations beginning in 2016 and became our senior project photographer, was hired as an assistant professor of biblical studies at Belmont University in Nashville. We warmly congratulate Kim, to whom we owe much, and not just in terms of photography. Though it is sad to see him go, we are grateful that he made time to train his successor, Peter Raulwing, who joined the project in late June 2025.

More unsettling news came from Tehran, where our dedicated colleagues at the National Museum of Iran had to evacuate all movable objects from the galleries and reinforce the remaining ones with sandbags on the eve of the extensive bombardments of the city on June 13–24, 2025 (fig. 1). In the same galleries, Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, opened a new PFA exhibition on October 8, 2024 (fig. 2); the small presentation, cocurated by the two of us as project directors, celebrated the fourth shipment of clay tablets to Iran since 2004. ISAC director Timothy P. Harrison, accompanied by conservation laboratory head Laura D'Alessandro and Wouter Henkelman, handed the 1,100 items to the Iranian legation to the United Nations in New York City on August 22, 2024.

All 1,100 items returned in 2024 were Persepolis Fortification Uninscribed Tablets, a category comprising a total of 3,463 cataloged items. Uninscribed tablets are mostly triangular or tongue shaped; they are formed around a knotted string and bear the impressions of one or several seals. Among other purposes, they may have functioned in tandem with Elamite memoranda, especially the unsealed Elamite documents in that category.

Figure 1. The statue of Darius I found at Susa in the National Museum of Iran before and after protective sandbags were placed around it. Photos courtesy of the National Museum of Iran.

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Figure 2. President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran (left) listens to the deputy minister for cultural heritage, Ali Darabi, at the opening of the third tablet exhibition at the National Museum of Iran on October 8, 2024. Photo courtesy of the *Tehran Times*.

While the precise administrative function of the uninscribed tablets remains uncertain, the seals applied to them have enormously enriched the corpus of glyptic imagery in the archive. Some 2,002 seals appear only on uninscribed tablets; many of them preserve scenes otherwise undocumented among the seals that occur on the Elamite and Aramaic documents. For instance, the fragmentarily preserved PFUTS 0603 may be the same seal as, or a replica of, the famous London Darius seal (fig. 3). PFUTS 1050 shows an unparalleled worship scene, in which a worshipper holds an amphora before a large, winged disk that hovers over another amphora or pitcher (fig. 4). One royal-name seal, PFUTS 0018* (fig. 5), occurs only on the uninscribed tablets.

After glyptic editors Erin Daly, Emma Petersen, and Mark Garrison checked database and photographic records for the 2,363 uninscribed tablets remaining in Chicago, the tablets were handed to ISAC conservator D'Alessandro and her assistant Aiyana Leigh, who reviewed and carefully packed all of them over the course of twelve months. Once the tablets are handed over to the Iranian authorities, the packing of the next category—materials deemed too fragmentary for cataloging and

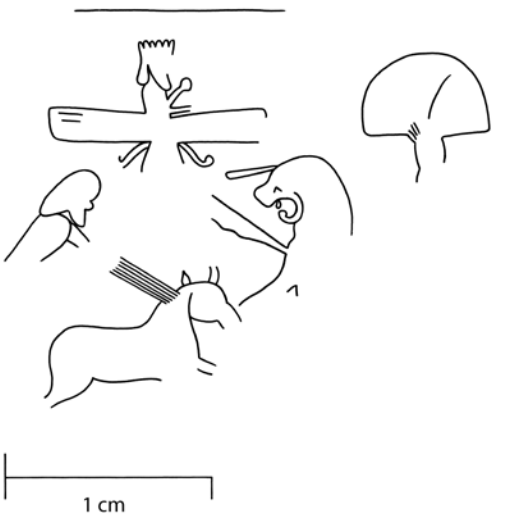

Figure 3. Collated line drawing of PFUTS 0603 by Mark Garrison.

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Figure 4. Collated line drawing of PFUTS 1050 by Mark Garrison.

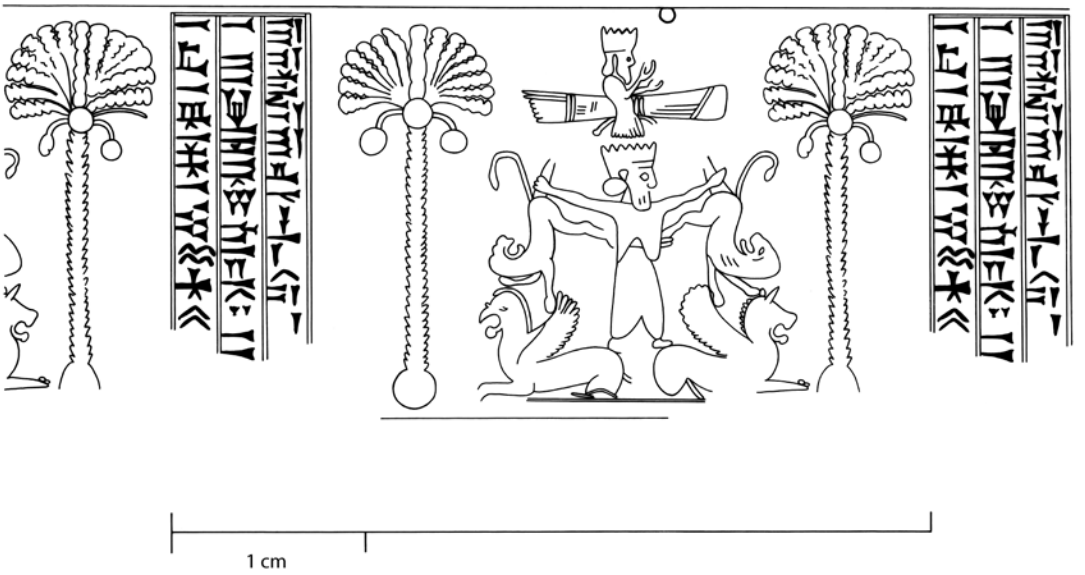

Figure 5. Collated line drawing of PFUTS 0018* by Mark Garrison.

study—will commence. All PFA tablets and fragments were originally packed in cardboard boxes, with descriptive labels in French made by or deriving from Ernst Herzfeld's excavation team. Replaced by plastic containers in the 1980s, the boxes have been mined by successive PFA Project editors, starting with Richard T. Hallock in the late 1930s. All removed items are numbered, put in individual containers, cataloged, photographed, studied, and entered into the project databases.

The PFA Project team has carried out several reviews over the past ten years of what remains in the plastic boxes, but to be on the safe side Garrison decided to do one last inventory in June 2025 with the help of Petersen. Although their main goal was to identify any additional impressions of important known seals and any new and interesting seals applied to Elamite texts, their secret hope was to find a new impression of PFS 2899*, the celebrated seal of Prince Iršama (Aršāma), son of Darius I. Garrison had previously discovered two tablets bearing impressions of this magnificent seal, which had otherwise been known only from impressions on bullae belonging to the so-called Aršāma Correspondence in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Garrison and Henkelman 2020). Since PFS 2899* is a large seal, none of the known impressions preserves a complete reading of the imagery and its inscription. As Garrison and Petersen laboriously

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Figure 6. Plastic box 2233 containing fragmentary tablets; the tablet with the Aršāma seal impression is in the middle. Photo by Mark Garrison.

Figure 7. PFS 2899*, the seal of Aršāma, impressed on tablet Fort. 2233-101. Photo by Peter Raulwing.

worked their way through more than 2,000 boxes, reviewing thousands of fragments, their hope dwindled until, predictably in one of the last containers they checked, a tablet bearing two beautiful impressions of PFS 2899* turned up (fig. 6). The new impressions preserve several letters of the Aramaic inscription not visible in other impressions.

The image shown in figure 7 of tablet Fort. 2233-101, with the impression of PFS 2899*, was one of the first produced by Raulwing, our new project photographer. Previously during the 2024–25 report year, Kim photographed 150 surfaces from 18 Elamite cuneiform tablets using PTM technology. In the same period, Henkelman collated about 200 Elamite tablets, mostly memoranda, while Matthew Stolper added readings of 30 Elamite texts, mostly complex livestock accounts in connection with his forthcoming book on livestock management. Petersen completed the final records on almost 100 uninscribed tablets, in the process identifying some 97 new seals. PFA editor Elspeth Dusinberre (University of Colorado) and Garrison, with the assistance of former University of Colorado student Helen Donovan and PFA glyptic editor Christina Chandler, continued editing the catalog of the 702 legible seals that occur on the 837 tablets that carry Aramaic text.

Three students (co)supervised by Henkelman defended doctoral dissertations directly relating to the Elamite materials from the PFA: Yazdan Safaee (November 15, 2024, on Achaemenid women), Marco Ferrari (January 23, 2025, on Phrygians and "Skudrians"), and Kiumars Alizadeh (June 13, 2025, on the Neo-Elamite courts). Henkelman also acted as advisor to Mitchka Shahryari's thesis on the Idumean ostraca, which engages extensively with the Aramaic and Elamite documents from Persepolis (defended on December 12, 2024).

The year 2025 saw the publication of Garrison's study of the Late Babylonian worship scene in Persepolitan glyptic, a work that traces the adoption and adaption of traditional Babylonian glyptic themes in the Achaemenid context (Garrison 2025). Henkelman's 2025 study of a fragmentary stone inscription of Artaxerxes II (repatriated to Iran in 2024) connects the Old Persian architectural term *tacara-*, referring to palatial constructions at Persepolis and elsewhere, to the word **tacarana-* found in Elamite transcription in PFA texts and possibly referring to a tent or movable structure (Henkelman 2025). Also published during the report period was Rhyne King's long-awaited monograph *The House of the Satrap: The Making of the Ancient Persian Empire* (King 2025) (fig. 8). Covering very diverse materials from the empire's wide expanse, this work contains an important chapter on Bakabaduš, satrap in Arachosia around 500 BCE. Known exclusively through the PFA, Bakabaduš held critical authority in organizing movement across the Iranian

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plateau. King lectured, with Alice Collet, on a related subject ("India" and Gandhāra in the earliest Iranian, South Asian, and Greek sources) at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in February 2025, and he presented a paper on social and economic transformations in Achaemenid Babylonia at the University of Toronto in November 2024.

Other members of the PFA team joined in promulgating discoveries from Persepolis. Petersen, lecturing on "The Banquet Scene in Achaemenid Glyptic" (Fowler Museum, University of California, Los Angeles, April 2025), presented preliminary results from her ongoing dissertation project. Garrison spoke on "The Emergence of an Achaemenid Court Style: Glyptic Imagery from the Persepolis Fortification Archive" at the 26th Journée Monde Iranien (Paris, April 2025); at the same event, Ferrari presented "La route des Skudriens: quelques réflexions sur les dynamiques migratoires entre l'Anatolie et le Fārs." Henkelman gave eleven PFA-related lectures at, among other venues, the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna, November 2024: "Chiliarchien in Persepolis"), the Musée du Louvre (Paris, December 2024: "Les tribus perses à l'époque de Darius I[er]"), and, with Margaux Spruyt (University of Clermont Auvergne), Heidelberg University (March 2025: "A Time for Drunken (Express) Horses: Wine Rations for Equids at Persepolis"). Henkelman was also the keynote speaker at Oxford University for its Journée Jean-Pierre Vernant (Maison Française, April 2025: "Hellenism before Hellenism: The Opening of the World under the Achaemenids"), with additional contributions by Rémi Bois ("The Persian Ruling Class and Its Multicultural Roots"), Ferrari ("The Formation of an Inter-Ethnic Ruling Class in Achaemenid Anatolia"), and Spruyt ("Horses in Persepolis"). Upon the invitation of Johannes Hackl at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Henkelman taught a course on the PFA as a guest teacher there in July 2024.

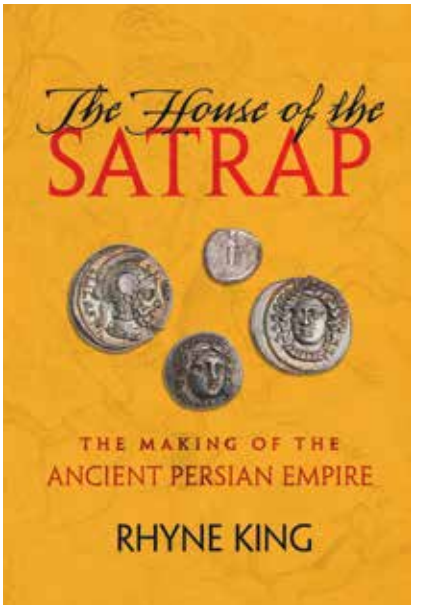

Figure 8. Cover of Rhyne King's monograph, which draws extensively on PFA materials. Image courtesy of the University of California Press.

We close this report by mentioning the festive inauguration of the Centre Sarikhani d'Études Élamites (CSEE) in the Grand Salon of the Sorbonne building in Paris on November 6, 2024 (fig. 9). Attended by more than 200 invitees, including the director and chief curator of the ISAC Museum, Marc Maillot, the ceremony featured lectures by Daniel T. Potts (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York) and Pierre Briant (emeritus, Collège de France). Although the mission of CSEE is to address all

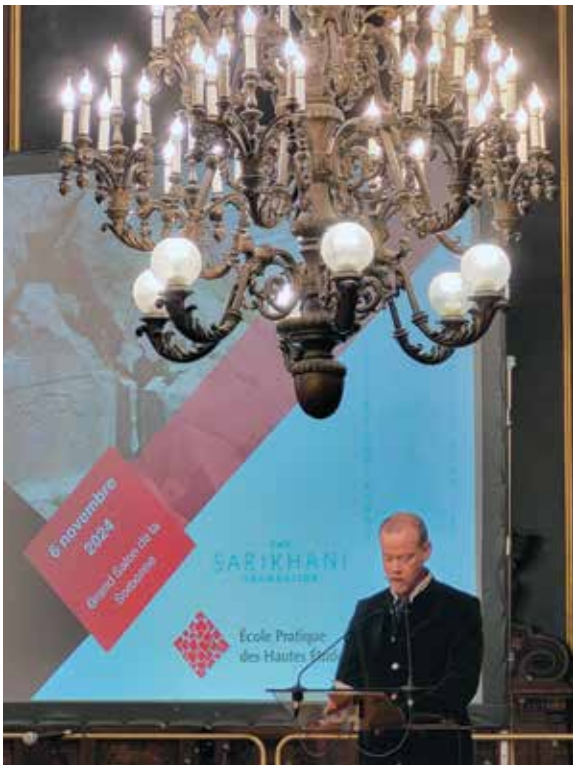

Figure 9. Wouter Henkelman speaking at the inauguration of the Centre Sarikhani d'Études Élamites in the Grand Salon of the Sorbonne, Paris. Photo by Marie-Pierre Lamotte.

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aspects of Elam and Elamite culture, it pays notable attention to the use of Elamite in Achaemenid contexts, as two of its currently five projects exemplify. The first, directed by Bois and CSEE director Henkelman, aims to produce a dictionary of Achaemenid Elamite, one that will profit from the glossaries produced by the PFA Project (exported and processed by CSEE team member Eric Whitacre). The second project envisions a new (re)edition with commentary of all tablets and fragments belonging to the Persepolis Treasury Archive in Persepolis, Tehran, and Chicago. Directed by Soheil Delshad, a CSEE postdoctoral researcher, this project convenes a team of specialists from the PFA stable: Chandler and Garrison (glyptic), Henkelman (Elamite), and King (historical significance).

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SUHAR PROJECT

DEREK KENNET AND SETH PRIESTMAN

The second season of the ISAC Suhar Project excavations took place during six weeks in January and February 2025. The research questions that lie behind the project were described in last year's annual report; in simple terms, the project is designed to investigate the notable boom in maritime trade that took place across the Indian Ocean during the eighth and ninth centuries CE (and possibly a century earlier, as we are now discovering). At this time, Muslim Arab sailors began sailing regularly to trade destinations around the ocean, from China to the coast of East Africa. Luxury commodities such as textiles, silk, spices, aromatics, and ceramics formed the core of this trade. The high trade volume appears to have had a significant effect on the economy of much of the Indian Ocean, driving new manufacturing in China (along with the settlement of Arab and Persian merchants there) while at the same time beginning the process of "Swahilization" (the spread of elements of the Arabic language, along with Islam and some elements of Middle Eastern culture) in East Africa. This period was, therefore, a hugely important and transformative one across much of Asia, and it arguably began the long march to the fully globalized economy we know today.

Suhar, a celebrated and historic port city located at the southeastern tip of Arabia, is ideally situated to investigate these developments (fig. 1). The aims of the Suhar Project are to gain a better understanding of the origins and development of this trade and to discern the details of its chronology.

Figure 1. The location of Suhar on the southeastern tip of Arabia, looking into the Gulf of Oman.

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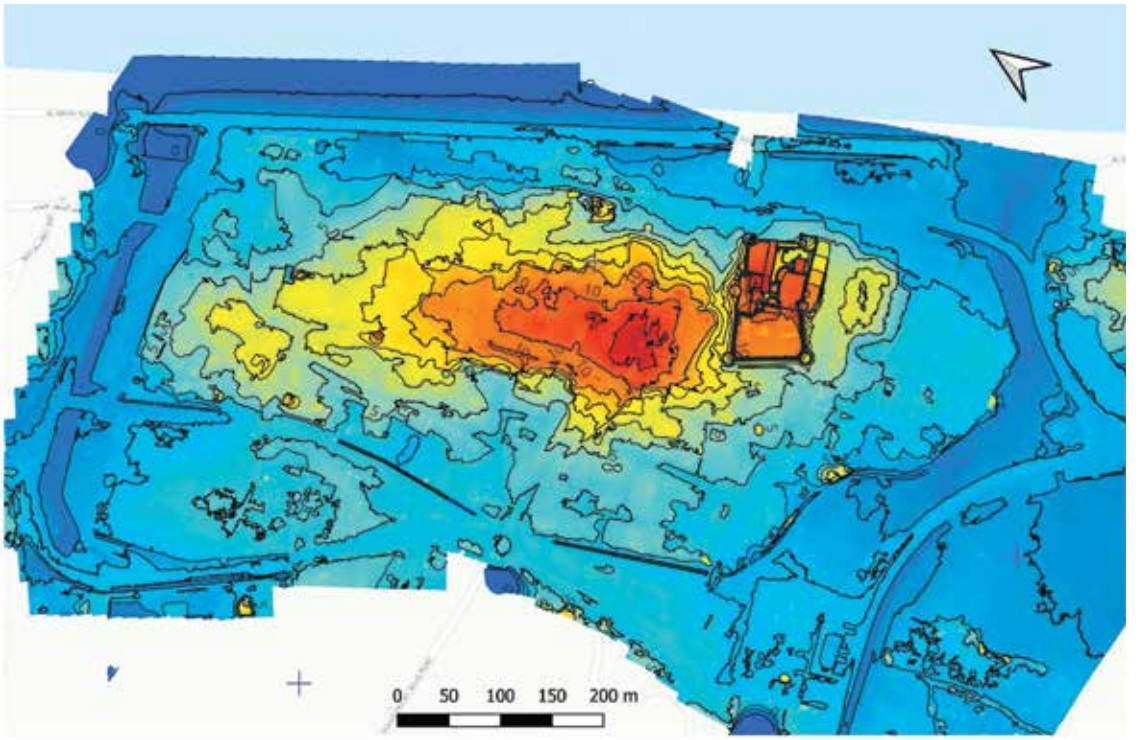

Figure 2. Contour plan of Suhar made by the project.

THE 2024 SEASON

The first season of the Suhar Project had been spent exploring and mapping the site in detail, recording its surface remains, and excavating small soundings to investigate the depth and nature of its stratigraphy. Suhar is a large and complex site: it is a "tell," or settlement mound, measuring about 800 × 200 m and comprising about 8 m of archaeological stratigraphy at its highest point (fig. 2). While this size would be relatively modest by Mesopotamian standards, it is the largest tell in southeastern Arabia and contains a lot of detailed archaeological evidence. It is important to take the time to understand a site properly before committing to its large-scale excavation, so our mapping of Suhar's surface remains—ceramics, bricks, and other evidence—was vital for gaining crucial information about the site's layout and the location of key areas of activity there. We also used ground-penetrating radar to explore much of the tell (fig. 3). This work, combined with soundings, made us confident of our grasp of Suhar's layout and the best strategy for excavating the mound, and thus ready for the start of the 2025 season.

Figure 3. Ground-penetrating radar survey in process.

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THE 2025 SEASON

For the 2025 season, we assembled a team of twenty-four leading specialists and students. The project was codirected by Derek Kennet (ISAC), Seth Priestman (ISAC research associate), and Nasser Al-Jahwari (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman). Other team members came from Oman, Chicago, and a number of other countries around the world. Excavation was undertaken in four locations, which had been discussed and agreed on with the Suhar Municipality and the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Deep Occupation Sequence (Trench SH10)

Taking advantage of an area of open Municipality gardens, a deep excavation was carried out close to the highest part of the mound (fig. 4). Here we aimed to excavate to the base of the sequence to ascertain the depth and nature of the stratigraphy and to establish the earliest date of occupation. We also sought to extract finds and environmental samples spanning the full range of the tell's occupation. Previous excavations in this area had reported a depth of around 8 m.

Excavation at such a depth poses significant logistical and safety issues. It must be undertaken carefully and within a single season so that the trench does not have to be left open for a year between seasons. A mixture of "stepping" and shoring was adopted in a 6 × 6 m trench, within which the central 2 × 2 m area was excavated to the bottom of the sequence (fig. 5). Natural sand was reached 8.4 m below ground surface.

Despite the excavation's limited area, there emerged a clear sequence of occupation, which has been subdivided into nine archaeological phases. A systematic series of samples of shell, animal bone, fish bone, charcoal, pottery, glass, beads, metal, and slag was retrieved. Further study and analysis of the associated finds are required before we can gain a clearer idea of the occupational chronology. But preliminary analysis of accelerator mass spectrometry dates from the bottom of the sequence suggests a foundation date in the late sixth or early seventh century CE, followed, a few meters higher, by ceramics indicating that occupation continued more or less continuously into at least the ninth century. The first historical description of Suhar

Figure 4. The location of trench SH10, the deep sequence excavation, near Suhar Fort on the highest part of the settlement mound.

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Figure 5. Stepping and shoring in trench SH10 to safely reach 8.4 m below ground surface.

as a trading port occurs in the early ninth century, so the archaeological evidence will provide a very different, longer, and more realistic picture of Suhar's development.

Multiple Phases of Mudbrick Architecture in Trench SH14 (al-Shizaw)

To the north of the main settlement mound, an area of low archaeological mounding spread over about 4 ha is undeveloped. Called al-Shizaw, this area is covered with a high concentration of archaeological finds, including fired-brick fragments, industrial-waste materials such as glass and metal slag, and quantities of ceramics from the early and late Islamic periods. Chinese ceramics are abundant and include some of the earliest imports so far attested in the region. Being close to Suhar Fort in an area accessible to visitors, al-Shizaw is well suited to the development of Suhar as a tourism site.

A 10 × 10 m trench (SH14) was opened in this area and revealed a number of phases of occupation (fig. 6), the earliest being 3.23 m below ground surface. The stratigraphy shows two major phases of mudbrick architecture interspersed with apparent periods of abandonment. It is possible that the final abandonment of the area was caused by violent overwash from the sea—possibly a tsunami. Suhar would have been susceptible to such events because of its flat, coastal location.

The results from Trench SH14 bode well on two counts. First, there is demonstrably a well-preserved sequence of occupation through the early Islamic period and into the later history of the site, a sequence that will allow us to reconstruct the history of Suhar. Second, the fact that there is mudbrick architecture from the early Islamic period that is in good condition and still standing more than 1 m in height confirms that it will be possible to expose any discoveries of Suhar's ancient monuments, which will testify to the city's important past, provide items of interest to tourists, and, in the future, help support a bid for the site's UNESCO World Heritage status—a status that Suhar's historical fame certainly merits.

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Figure 6. Multiple phases of mudbrick architecture in Trench SH14 at al-Shizaw.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again, the team worked closely with the Suhar Municipality, whose support was crucial to our work. We also liaised closely with colleagues from the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the governorate of the Northern Batinah region, mainly through our colleague Sultan Al-Meqbali, director of the Suhar Fort Museum. There is strong local support for the Suhar Project's aims, and we are deeply grateful to all our Omani colleagues in the Ministry and at Suhar for the generous help we received. We were able to offer training and work experience to Omani team members, we delivered public lectures in Suhar and Muscat, and we explained our work to hundreds of visitors, including tourists and especially groups of local schoolchildren, who were always full of questions and excitement (fig. 7). Most importantly, we thank all the ISAC donors whose kindness and generosity have made this work possible.

Figure 7. Schoolchildren visiting the Suhar excavations.

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SUREZHA EXCAVATIONS

GIL J. STEIN AND MICHAEL T. FISHER

Excavations by ISAC at Tell Surezha on the Erbil Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan investigate the prehistoric roots of the earliest towns, and later cities, in northern Mesopotamia during the Chalcolithic period from roughly 5500 to 3500 BCE. We are grateful to General Director of Antiquities Mr. Kayfi Ali and Director of Antiquities for the Erbil Governate Dr. Nader Babakr for permission to excavate at Surezha and for the many ways in which they have facilitated our work.

Surezha is an ideal site for exploring the chronology, economy, and developmental sequence of the Erbil Plain in this period because the high mound is largely prehistoric, with only limited later occupation from the Middle Assyrian period and Iron Age. Located at the southwestern edge of the modern village of Gund-i Surezha, the ancient site of Surezha has three parts: (1) the prehistoric high mound, (2) the terrace, and (3) the Hellenistic- through Islamic-period lower town. The conical-shaped high mound and terrace measure approximately 188 m from northwest to southeast and 150 m from southwest to northeast, with an area of approximately 2.8 ha (fig. 1). The high mound rises to a height of 16 m above the terrace. The terrace surrounding the base of the high mound is about 2 m high and slopes down gradually over a distance of approximately 70 m to the lower town, which extends out from the terrace in all directions. Altogether, the archaeological deposits in these three areas total approximately 20 ha.

The 2024 field season took place from September 1 to September 30, 2024, and was codirected by Gil Stein and Michael Fisher along with an international staff of fifteen archaeologists and laboratory specialists. Our government representatives were Mr. Rozhgar Rashid and Dr. Nader Babakr. Site excavations were carried out by twenty-one workers from the Erbil Department of Antiquities, the village of Gund-i Surezha, and other nearby villages. The excavations focused on five trenches: operation 15 in Area A on the northwestern slope of the high mound and operations 11, 12, 13, and 14 in Area B on the southern slope and base of the high mound (fig. 2).

Figure 1. Surezha high mound: overhead view showing excavation areas.

AREA A: OPERATION 15

Operation 15 is a 10 × 10 m trench in Area A. The trench was laid out to overlap with the adjacent operation 1

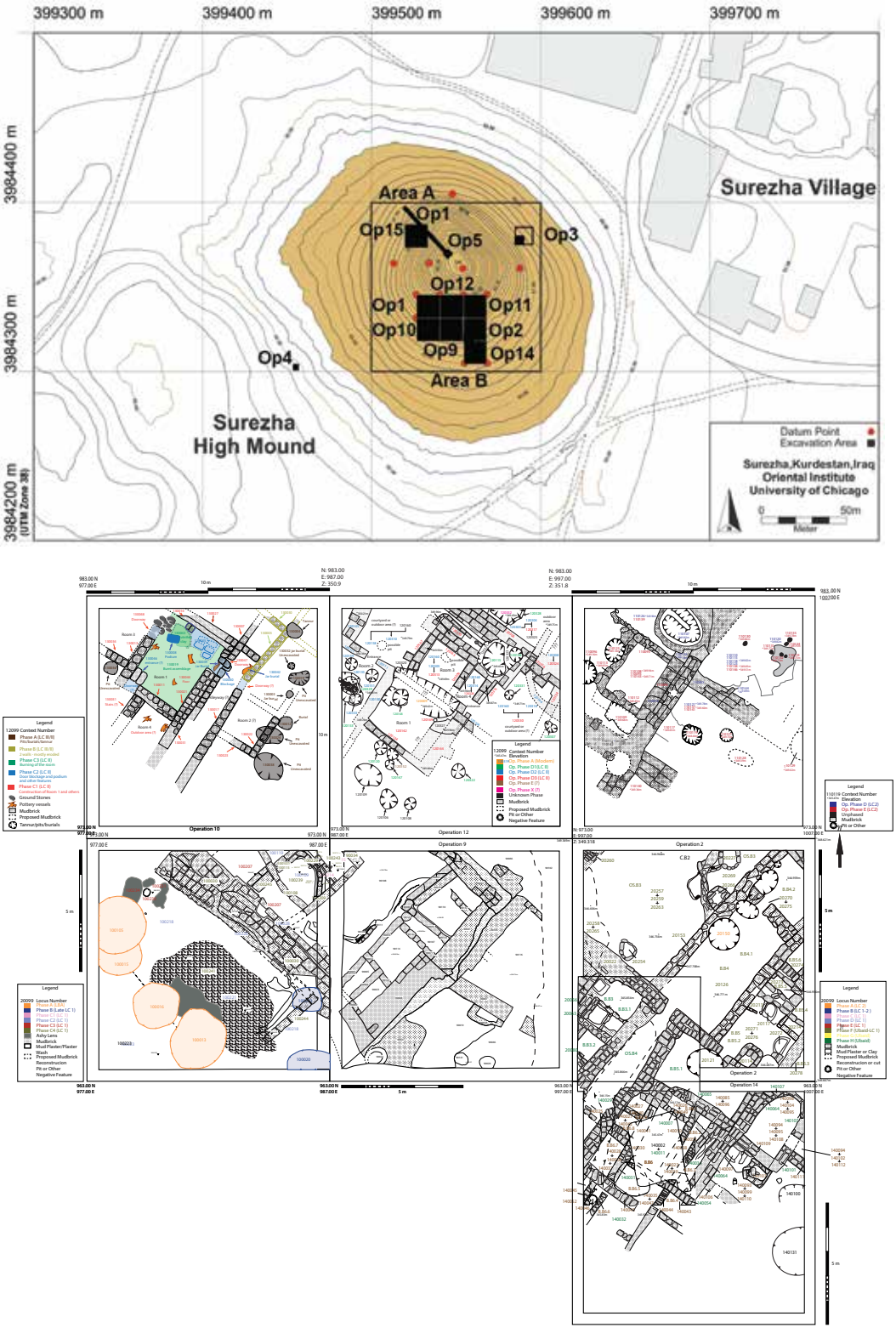

Figure 2. Top: Topographic map of the Surezha high mound. Bottom: Area B composite top plan.

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step trench in the area with Late Chalcolithic (LC) 2 deposits (ca. 4200–3800 BCE) to ensure a reliable stratigraphic connection between the two trenches. Beneath the overlying deposits of the LC 3 period (ca. 3800–3700 BCE) and cut through by a later pit dating to the Middle Assyrian period, excavations revealed a complex of LC 2 architecture with at least eight mudbrick rooms whose layout suggests a nondomestic function (fig. 3).

Figure 3. Area A operation 15 at the end of the 2024 excavations.

These rooms were linked stratigraphically to a well-preserved LC 2 room with complete storage vessels and a stamp-seal impression that had been initially excavated in the operation 1 step trench in 2013. The southern portion of the LC 2 architecture had been cut through by a large Middle Assyrian pit, locus 16 (fig. 3). In 2024, our excavations focused on excavating the large, 5 × 5 m area of LC 3 and later deposits that overlay the LC 2 architecture in the southeastern corner of operation 15. The majority of the deposits excavated were wash layers and a deep, erosional gully that show this area of the mound was abandoned for at least part of the LC 3 period. Beneath these erosion deposits, two small wall stubs and a surface with a basin belonged to an intact deposit that dates to the beginning of the LC 3 occupation on the site. That occupation had two significant features: a later LC 3 large jar burial (locus 119/150) of a subadult, 8–12 years old at death (fig. 4), and the lower portion of an earlier kiln (locus 120) with green vitrified walls indicating very high firing temperatures. The kiln had been cut through by the later Middle Assyrian pit (locus 16; see fig. 3). The LC 3 burial and kiln both cut into the underlying LC 2 architecture. Beneath this earliest LC 3 deposit, excavations in the eastern part of operation 15 exposed a northwest-to-southeast-oriented cross wall that defined two additional rooms in the LC 2 building. The lower portions of early LC 3 walls 126, 127, 129, 130, and 139 still remain to be excavated in the southeastern corner of operation 15. We plan to remove these remaining LC 3 walls to complete the exposure of the underlying LC 2 building complex across operation 15.

Figure 4. Operation 15: large LC 3 jar burial of subadult (8–12 years old).

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AREA B: OPERATIONS 11, 12, 13, AND 14

In 2024, we expanded the exposures in Area B on the southern slope of the Surezha high mound in the three 10 × 10 m trenches constituting operations 11, 12, and 14, while extending our excavations by opening a new 10 × 10 m trench, operation 13, to the west of operation 12 (see fig. 2).

Operation 11

The 2024 excavations in operation 11 focused on the northern portion of the trench, where the architecture and stratigraphy were better preserved than in the eroded area along the south balk (figs. 5–6).

Several contemporaneous architectural features and spaces were excavated in this area: (1) courtyard or large room 8 north of wall 83 in the northeastern part of operation 11; (2) kiln 4, built adjacent to the north balk section; (3) loci 121, 137, and 141 south of wall 83 in the southeastern quadrant of the trench; and (4) the northwestern quadrant of the trench, defined by mudbrick walls 74/98 and 114/142, which extended into the west balk of the trench. A smaller room, defined by

Figure 5. Operation 11: orthophoto.

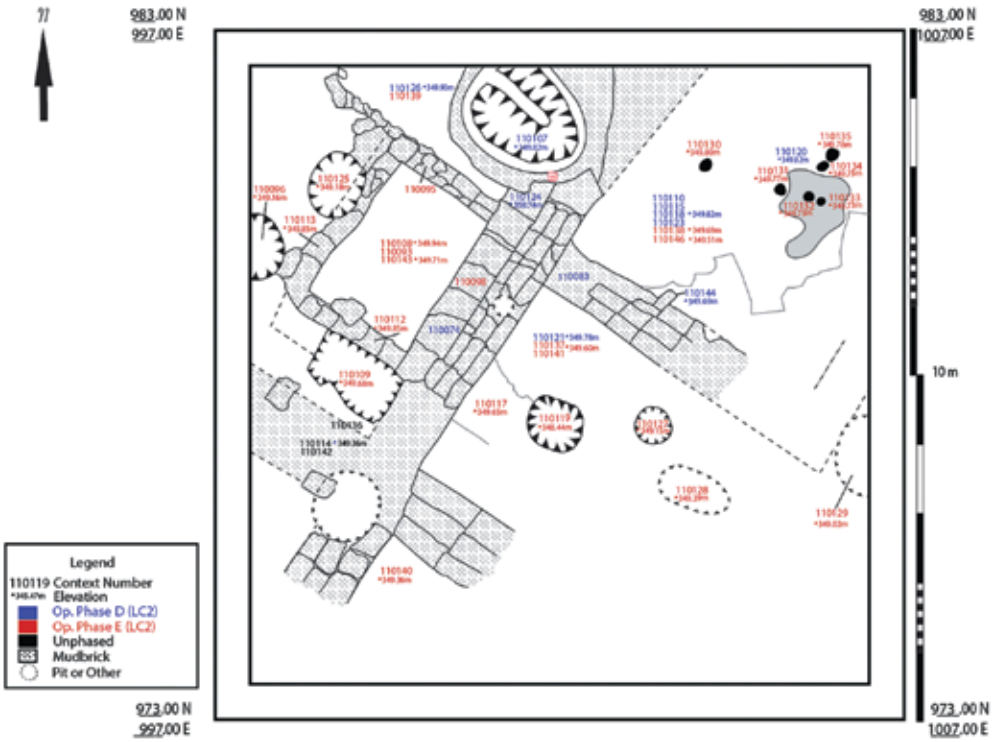

Figure 6. Operation 11: top plan.

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walls 95, 112, and 113 was built to the south of kiln 4 next to wall 74/98. Associated ceramics, such as chaff-tempered "wide flowerpot bowls" and internally beveled-rim bowls, date the building complex to the LC 2 period (ca. 4200–3800 BCE). The floor of the kiln seems to have been built first as an aboveground installation, followed by the walls, rooms, and courtyards. A series of pits were later cut into this building complex. Pit 119 was a trash pit more than 1.19 m deep, with large amounts of domestic refuse—LC 2 ceramics, animal bones, and chipped stone—and was sealed by an adult burial with stamp seal SR14623 (figs. 7–8). The pit's contents were 100 percent sieved, and carbon-14 and flotation samples were collected. Pit 96 yielded eight chaff-tempered, wide flowerpot bowls. This vessel type is a good diagnostic for the LC 2 period and matches the dating of ceramics from this level in other parts of operation 11.

Figure 7. Operation 11, pit 119: early LC 2 ceramics.

Figure 8. Operation 11, pit 119: stamp seal.

Operation 12

Area B operation 12 is a 10 × 10 m trench located immediately to the west of operation 11. Although the two adjacent excavated areas were contemporaneously occupied during the LC 2 period, they seem to have differed markedly in function. In contrast with the largely open courtyard area around the operation 11 kiln, the excavated area in operation 12 comprised a series of four mudbrick rooms that seem to have been domestic houses (fig. 9). After the houses were abandoned and filled in with erosional wash, the northwestern part of operation 12 was used as a cemetery, with pits for at least fifteen child burials discovered in 2023 and 2024—often in ceramic pots—along with one adult burial (fig. 10).

Although most of the burial pits were dug after the houses were abandoned, room 2, in the northwestern part of operation 12, had at least two child

Figure 9. Operation 12 at the end of the 2024 excavations.

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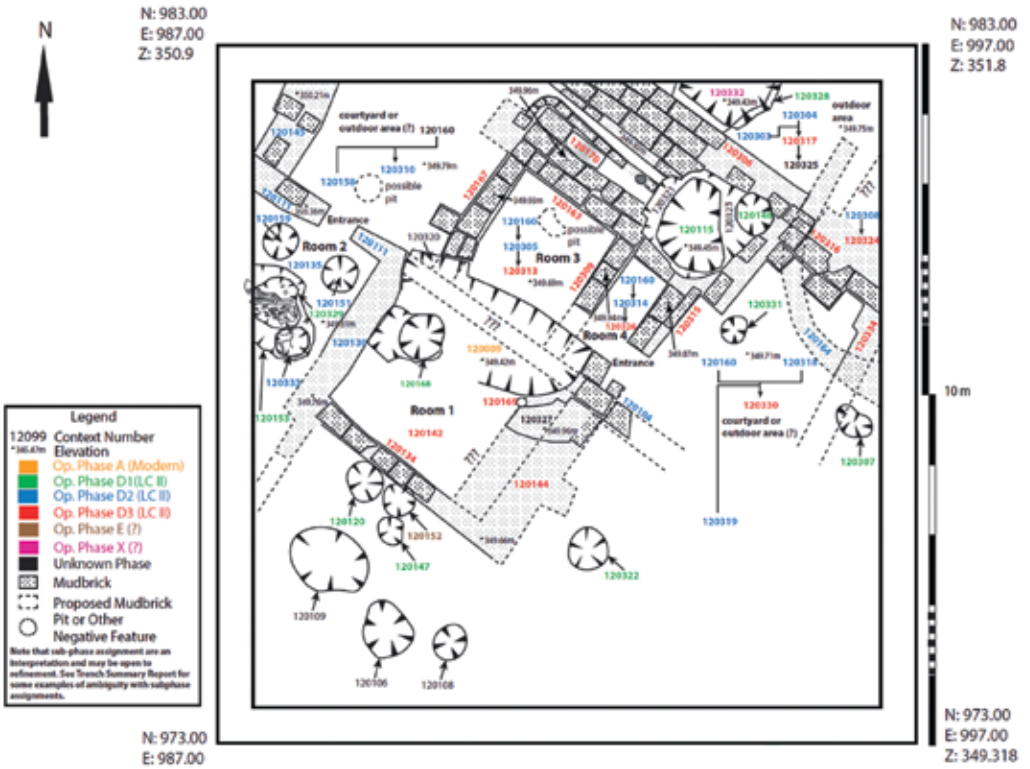

Figure 10. Operation 12: final top plan with phasing.

burials (pits 151 and 159) that had been excavated into the floor just inside the doorway and sealed while the room was still being used for habitation. The 2023 and 2024 exposures in operations 11 and 12 give good evidence that the southern slope of the Surezha high mound was occupied in several ways during the LC 2 period. At different stages, and in different parts of operations 11 and 12, there were houses, a burial area for children, and an industrial area for ceramic production.

The earliest LC 2 occupation level reached in 2024 was a pebble pavement with an ash and trash layer lying on top. This layer yielded a well-made obsidian blade, one gabled red-stone stamp seal (SR14703) decorated with drilled concentric circles (fig. 11), and a clay sealing (SR14655) showing the impression of a large stamp seal with the motif of a stag with antlers (fig. 12). The Surezha seal impression is comparable to an LC 2 gabled stamp seal with a stag motif from Tell Zeidan in Syria (https://www.asor.org/resources/photo-collection/pid000543).

Operation 13

Operation 13 is a 10 × 10 m unit in Area B, in the southwestern quadrant of the Surezha high mound immediately to the west of operation 12 (see figs. 1–2). It was opened as a new excavation in the 2024 field season. Because this part of the mound slopes down steeply to the southwest, the LC 3 and wash layers had eroded away, including the underlying LC 2 architecture in the southwestern corner of the trench, where the elevation is lowest. Fortunately, most of the early LC 2 building level in the northern part of the trench survived intact and was immediately accessible beneath the present-day ground surface (fig. 13).

Excavations exposed three superimposed LC 2 phases—the latest phase, A; B; and the earliest phase, C, which was the best preserved and consisted of subphases C1, C2, and C3.

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Figure 11. Operation 12, locus 321: LC 2 gabled red-stone stamp seal SR14703 with drilled decoration.

Figure 12. Operation 12, locus 321: LC 2 clay seal impression SR14655 with the motif of a stag with antlers (obverse and reverse).

Phase C was a coherent building level consisting of several rooms separated by an alleyway bounded by walls 17 and 21, which may have delineated two separate room complexes. The most striking discovery was burned room 1. The room, with interior dimensions of 2.3 m (northwest to southeast) × 3.5 m (northeast to southwest) was unusual in its architecture, room contents, and having been burned in a controlled, intense fire that incinerated only the room's interior, with no signs of fire in the adjacent rooms or alleyway. Room 1 originally had three doorways—two in the northwestern and northeastern corners, and one in the southwestern corner. The interior had two unusual, special-purpose features made of plastered mudbrick along the room's northern wall between the two doorways (fig. 14).

The first unusual feature was the 0.8 m tall, plastered mudbrick podium (locus 8; figs. 14–15) in front of the northwestern corner of room 1. The top of the podium was flat and had a raised edge so that it could hold vessels or other offerings. To the east of the podium was the second unusual installation—a low, rectangular mudbrick platform (locus 45) with plastered basins on top and attached to the northern wall

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of room 1. In the open space (locus 41) next to the podium in the northwestern corner of room 1 was a large, complete, basalt ring-base bowl measuring 40 cm in diameter (SR17765) alongside a stacked deposit of twelve large grinding stones for cereal processing (figs. 16–17). The close association of these objects with podium 8 and mudbrick platform-with-basins 45 is consistent with the use of room 1 for ritual purposes and communal feasting.

Figure 13. Operation 13: ash-filled and burned room 1 at the end of the 2024 field season.

After a long period of use, room 1 was carefully cleaned and then set on fire, causing the roof of wooden beams, reed mats, and mudbricks to collapse in the intense heat, thereby covering the floor, podium, platform with basins, grindstones, and basalt bowl SR17765 with ash and burned mudbricks from the roof, which filled the room with a rubble deposit more than 1 m deep. The fire was carefully limited to room 1; there is no trace of fire in any of the adjacent rooms, the alley, or the surrounding courtyards. Taken together, this evidence clearly suggests that room 1 was used for ritual purposes and, at a certain point, was burned in a special "closing ceremony" to recognize symbolically that its original function had ended. The practice of closing ceremonies for ritual spaces had been widely used since Neolithic times and is known from several other Neolithic and Chalcolithic sites, such as Hamoukar in Syria and Çatalhuyuk in Anatolia.

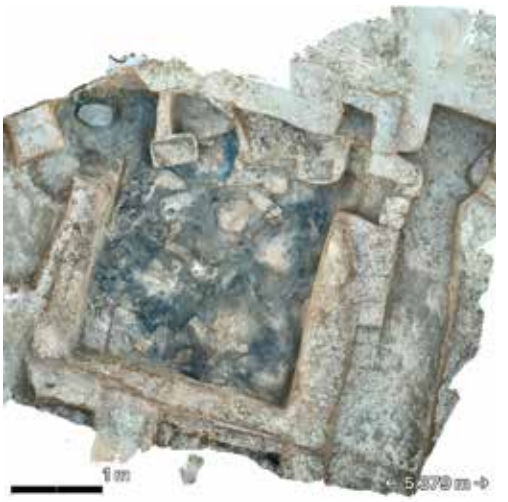

Figure 14. Operation 13, room 1: features and collapsed roof beams.

Figure 15. Podium 8 (left) and mudbrick platform-with-basins 45 (right).

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Figure 16. Operation 13: large basalt bowl SR17765 found next to podium 8.

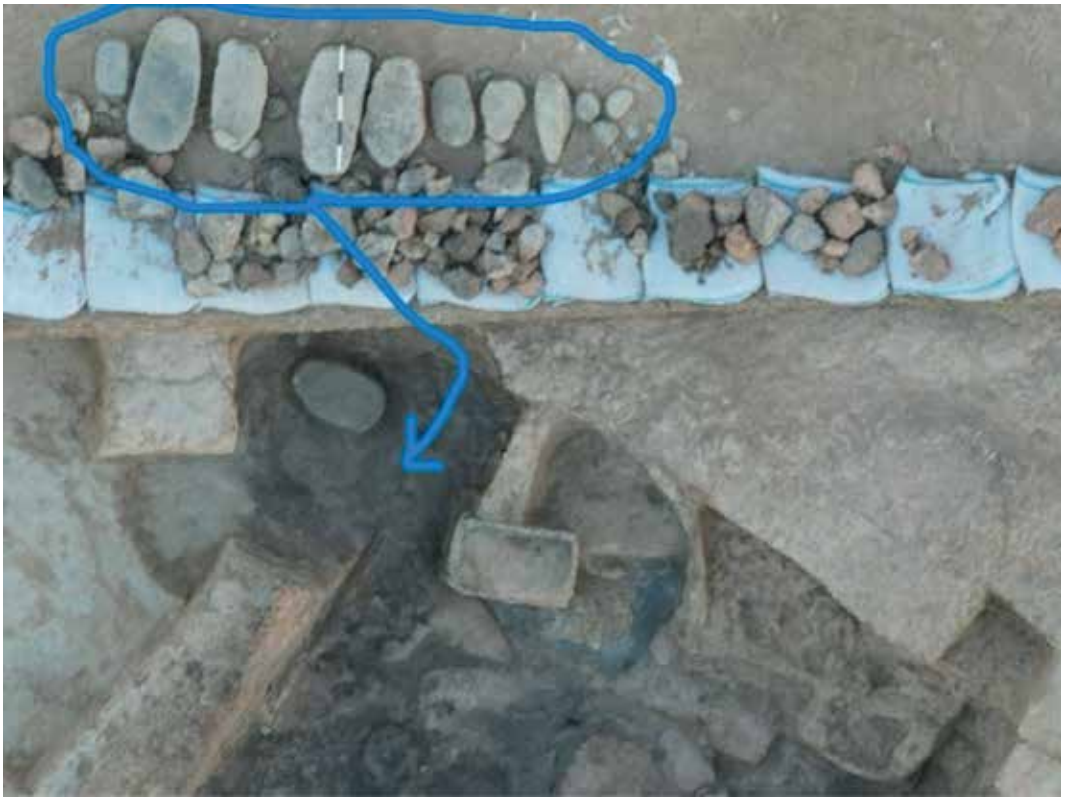

Figure 17. Twelve grindstones found next to the podium.

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Operation 14

In 2024, excavations continued work in operation 14, immediately to the south of operation 2, to expose more of the Ubaid-period occupation in Area B at the southern base of the high mound. In this part of Area B, intact Ubaid levels are easily accessible less than 1 m beneath the present-day ground surface. We expanded our exposure of Ubaid architecture from 10 × 5 m to 10 × 10 m (fig. 18).

Figure 18. Operation 14: exposed Ubaid architecture at the end of the 2024 field season.

The 100 m^2 exposure in operation 14, combined with the 25 m^2 previously exposed in the southwestern part of operation 2, shows that this area was densely occupied during the Ubaid period. The surviving Ubaid architecture lay immediately below LC 1 domestic architecture in the northern portion of the northern two-thirds of the trench, with a great degree of continuity in the orientation and location of houses and walls between the two periods. The southern third of operation 14 sloped down from north to south and had been significantly eroded in the past, cutting through the Ubaid architecture to the south of the two houses. More recently, the eroded area was filled in by three modern processes: sheet wash, excavation of an Iraqi army trash pit, and modern infilling by means of a bulldozer to level the ground surface (fig. 19).

The original Ubaid mudbrick architecture preserved in operation 14 shows evidence for one house to the west of a northwest-to-southeast-oriented narrow street or alley and two contiguous houses on the eastern side of the passageway. House 6 consisted of small rooms built around a courtyard. The rooms often contained small, mudbrick storage bins. The excavations continued in 2024 reached the floors of the courtyard and surrounding small rooms of Ubaid house 6 in the northwestern quadrant of the trench that had been originally exposed in 2022. Although the courtyard had been badly

Figure 19. Operation 14, east balk section: lidar scan showing sheet wash, modern Iraqi army pit (at right), and bulldozer infilling and leveling of the eroded mound slope in the southern third of the trench.

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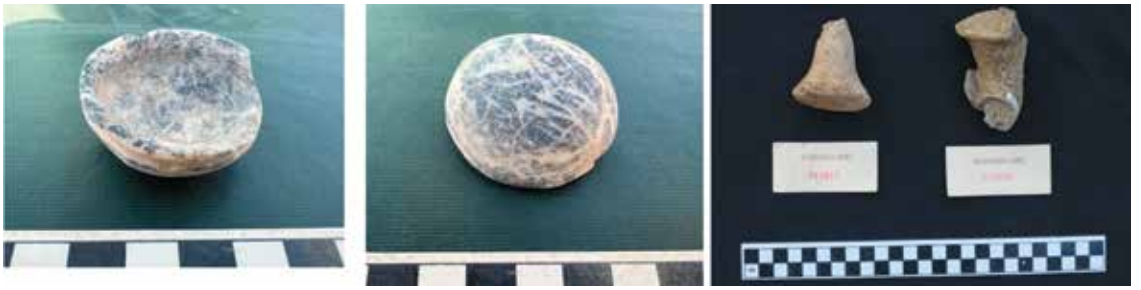

Figure 20. Operation 14 Ubaid objects. Left: two views of the ground and polished stone bowl; right: heads of two mullers.

cut through by a modern Iraqi army trash pit (loci 2 and 11), enough remained of the courtyard wall and small banks of surrounding rooms to suggest that this structure was probably a small Ubaid tripartite house. In the northeastern quadrant of operation 14, a second two-room house was discovered immediately to the east of tripartite house 6. The two houses shared contiguous exterior walls (see fig. 18). Both Ubaid houses seem to have been cleaned out and abandoned peacefully, leaving only small amounts of ceramics; a small, ground and polished stone bowl (SR13767); and the heads of two Ubaid mullers, one worn and chipped by use (SR13617), the other an overfired, partially melted and broken kiln waster that had been discarded unused (SR13600) (fig. 20).

ANIMAL BONE REMAINS

Analysis of the Surezha animal bone remains is being conducted by project zooarchaeologist Max Price (Durham University, United Kingdom). Faunal remains from eight field seasons at Tell Surezha (2013–24) are helping us reconstruct animal herding practices in the Erbil Plain in the fifth to fourth millennia BCE. Faunal material was recovered from operations 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 during the 2023 and 2024 seasons. Some 1,208 animal bone fragments were identified to the genus level. These data were added to the existing Surezha database of fauna from all field seasons to date (table 1).

Our faunal samples from each phase are still small and need to be expanded for greater reliability. However, the consistent rank-order pattern from the Ubaid through LC 3 periods shows that sheep (*Ovis*) and goats (*Capra*) occurred most frequently, with pigs (*Sus*) as the second most common animal and cattle (*Bos*) as the third most common taxon (fig. 21). The vast majority of the post-Halaf animal bones are those of domesticated animals. However, the presence of *Gazella* bones (especially in the faunal remains from the LC 1 period) shows that hunting continued as a subsistence practice to supplement the farming and herding economy.

PLANT REMAINS

Analysis of the Surezha plant remains is being conducted by project archaeobotanist Lucas Proctor (Utah State University). Systematic, comprehensive sediment sampling and analysis of carbonized plant remains from Surezha are providing important insights into village economies and land use on the Erbil Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan during the Northern Ubaid and LC 1–3 periods. More than 500 flotation samples have been collected from the site, of which more than 111 have been analyzed (table 2).

Currently available data suggest that, in the overall assemblage, the proportion of cereal taxa—such as wheat and barley—more than doubled from about 25 percent in the LC 1 period to more than 50 percent

Table 1. Surezha faunal remains identified to the genus level.

Identified taxa	Halaf	Halaf–Ubaid	Ubaid	Ubaid–LC 1	LC 1	LC 1–2	LC 1 or 2	LC 2	LC 2–3 and post–LC 2	LC 3	Middle Assyrian	Islamic
Ovis/Capra, of which:	10	20	52	30	487	308	1	136	89	94	64	2
Ovis	(2)		(4)	(3)	(69)	(29)		(13)		(9)	(5)	
Capra		(1)	(2)	(2)	(22)	(43)		(19)	(2)	(3)		
Ovis/Capra/Gazella		2	7	4	50	6	1	8	7	9	2	1
Sus	1	7	36	35	351	42		5	14	80	10	1
Bos	3	12	15	9	172	31		9	16	23	7	
Canis		2	2		98	6		1		1		1
Vulpes					1	1		7				
Equus					1							
Dama/Cervus					2				1			
Capreolus					1							
Mustelid (cf. *Mustela)*					1						1	
Gazella	1		1		31	3		13	2	1	6	
Lepus	1							2				
Bivalve (Unionoida)		1			12	5		6	2	6	1	
Potomon sp.					2							
Bird			5	2	7			43*	1**	1	3	
Fish					1***			3				
Total	**16**	**44**	**118**	**78**	**1,216**	**402**	**2**	**190**	**132**	**215**	**94**	**5**

*Identified birds include *Buteo* sp. and Columbidae ND (species not determined).
**Eggshell.
***Identified fish include Cyprinidae ND (species not determined).

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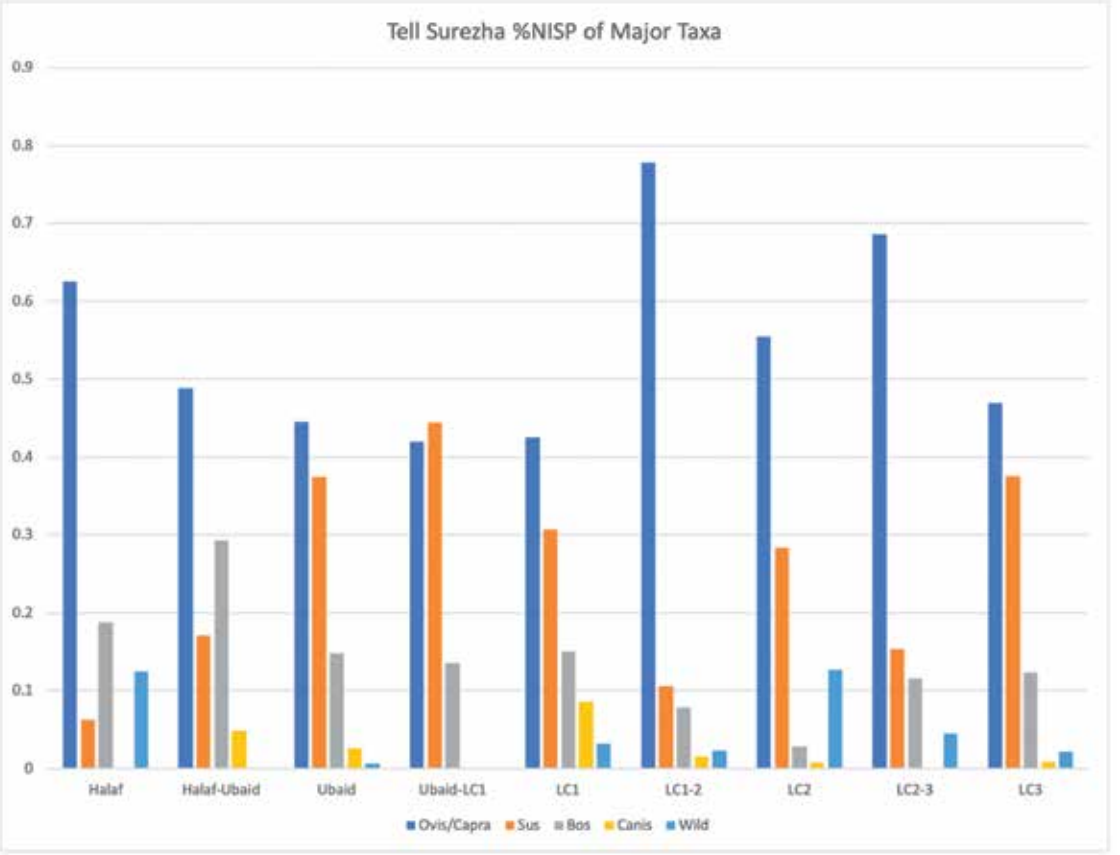

Figure 21. Relative percentages of main taxa (sheep/goats, pigs, cattle, dogs, wild species) over time.

Table 2. Summary of analyzed archaeobotanical data from Gird-i Surezha as of 2024: identified nonseed/crop-processing items such as dung fragments, wood, and gastropods (modern, noncarbonized material not included).

Period	Number of samples	Total items
Ubaid	11	992
"Post-Ubaid"	2	422
Ubaid–LC 1	7	1,662
LC 1	35	5,644
LC 1–2	22	6,097
LC 2	13	616
LC 2–3	3	205
LC 3	10	5,202
Late Bronze Age	6	1,686
Uncertain	2	501
Totals	**111**	**23,027**

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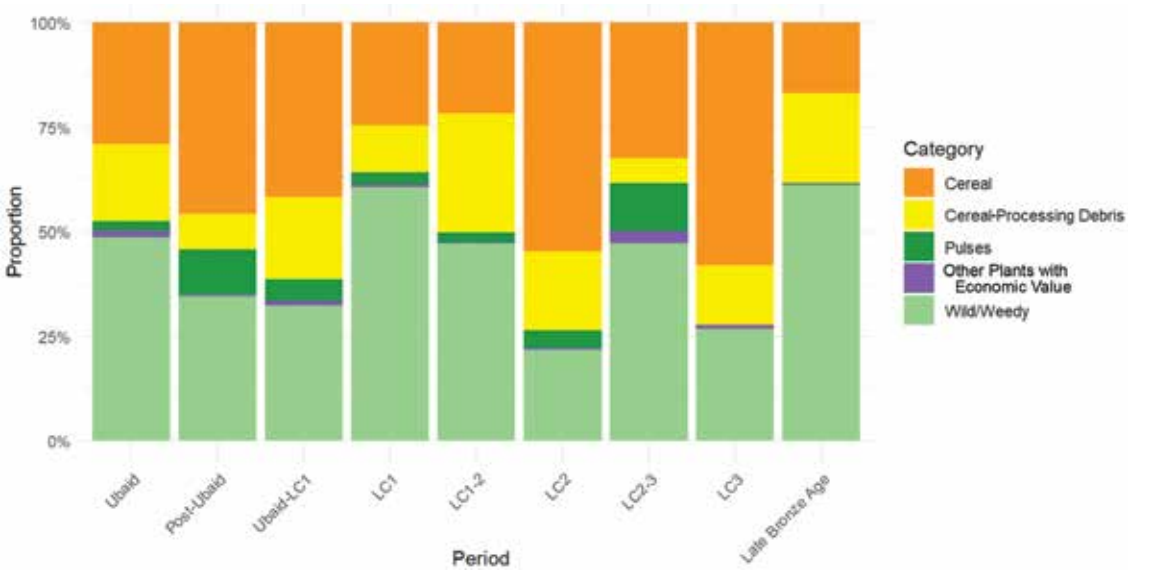

Figure 22. Proportion of major taxonomic categories in the Surezha carbonized-seed dataset, by period.

in the LC 3 period (fig. 22). If this trend is confirmed by further analyses, it may reflect agricultural intensification at Surezha in the LC 2 and LC 3 periods.

CERAMIC ANALYSES

Analyses of the ceramics found during the 2024 Surezha field season were conducted by Ludivine Audebert (Sorbonne University). One of the main aims of the 2024 season was to refine the Chalcolithic ceramic sequence—in particular, to identify chronological transitions such as the shift from the Ubaid to LC 1 and from the LC 2 period to LC 3. Excavations recovered 11,777 ceramic sherds, including 1,977 diagnostic sherds (rims, handles, bases, etc.) from operations 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 (table 3). To improve our understanding of the still ill-defined transitions from the Ubaid to LC 1 and from the LC 2 period to LC 3, we developed a set of fabric groups as an additional chronological proxy to complement the use of diagnostic ceramic vessel forms derived from the stratigraphic sequence (table 4).

Table 3. Counts and weights of ceramics collected in 2024, by operation.

Operation	Total sherd count	Total sherd weight (kg)	Total diagnostic sherd count
Operation 11	3,016	99.30	432
Operation 12	2,466	90.10	431
Operation 13	1,430	69.00	359
Operation 14	1,449	57.75	261
Operation 15	3,416	148.35	494
General total	**11,777**	**464.50**	**1,977**

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Table 4. Provisional fabric groups for Surezha Ubaid and LC 1–3 ceramics.

Group name	Description	Period of most common occurrence
HCT	Heavy-chaff-tempered fabric with light-green buff or light-orange buff / yellowish-brown buff matrix; mineral temper not visible. The ware can be coarse or medium / medium to fine.	LC 2–LC 3
MCT-FMT	Medium-chaff-tempered fabric showing evidence of white grains (believed to be calcite) and/or very thin shiny grains (interpreted as mica). This type is mostly represented by medium or coarse ware.	LC 1–LC 3
FCT-FMT	Light-chaff-tempered fabric with a small quantity of mineral temper found as well. The mineral temper often takes the shape of very thin black grains (potentially sand) or very thin shiny grains (interpreted as mica). The ware can be medium, medium to fine, or fine.	Ubaid–LC 3
MMT	Medium-mineral-tempered fabric showing heterogeneous inclusions, mostly gray and white, with a mix of round matte and shiny angular inclusions believed to be shell fragments.	LC 2–LC 3
GW-MMT	"Gray ware" with uniform colored surface and often a darker core. This fabric shows medium-mineral temper with large, matte, gray and white grains unevenly spread out on the surface and especially visible in section.	LC 3

Notes: HCT = heavy-chaff-tempered; MCT = medium-chaff-tempered; FMT = fewer-mineral-tempered; FCT = fewer-chaff-tempered; MMT = medium-mineral-tempered; GW = gray ware.

The traditional opposition between Ubaid wares, which have been characterized as mostly mineral tempered, and LC 1–3 wares, which have been considered mostly chaff tempered, is challenged by the presence of a more complex mix of fabric groups in the Ubaid and LC ceramic assemblages. The pottery from LC 2 and LC 3 levels belongs mainly to the HCT (heavy-chaff-tempered) fabric group. Pottery from potential LC 1 contexts represents a different trend, as the HCT group is definitely not dominant. At the other end of the chronology, levels assigned to the LC 3 period show sherds belonging to the GW-MMT (gray ware—medium-mineral-tempered), MMT (medium-mineral-tempered), or FCT-FMT (fewer-chaff-tempered or fewer-mineral-tempered) groups. Some mineral-temper-based fabric recipes seem to become increasingly common during the LC 3 period and possibly at the end of LC 2.

One additional fabric group, characterized by buff-green ware and a white mineral temper with coarse grains of 3–4 mm, appears mostly in levels identified as LC 1 and early LC 2 in operations 12 and 13. No sherd with these characteristics was found in the Ubaid levels of operation 14. On these grounds, it can be assumed that this fabric was restricted to the LC 1 or early LC 2. These hypotheses are preliminary observations and will be tested through analyses of the proposed fabric groups using twenty-five petrographic thin sections from the 2024 ceramics.

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CHIPPED STONE

Building on preliminary work conducted in 2017 by Bastien Varoutsikos, in 2024 Joseph Harris (University of Chicago) began analyzing chipped-stone materials from Surezha by conducting a preliminary analysis of 112 blades and bladelets from operations 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 (table 5).

Table 5. Surezha chipped stone analyzed in 2024.

Operation	Sample size	Period
11	12	LC 2
12	12	LC 2
13	19	Early LC 2
14	10	Terminal Ubaid
15	56	Early LC 3

This study found the Surezha assemblage to be characterized by intentionally snapped, bitumen-hafted, chert sickle blades with direct denticulation and silica micropolish from the exploitation of two-row barley and emmer wheat found in the archaeobotanical assemblage. The majority of blades/bladelets are simpler and variably modified and utilized. Most of the Surezha tool kit consists of locally produced, chert-flake tools manufactured from floodplain or riverbed cobbles and pebbles. This industry is informal, and core reduction techniques vary.

The fact that blade cores are rare suggests that many of these blades were imported to Surezha. Beginning in the LC 3 period, standardized, tan-colored, chert Canaanean blades appeared at the site (fig. 23). They were likely produced at chert sources in Iraqi Kurdistan using an advanced copper-tipped, crutch- or lever-pressure blade production technique. That Canaanean blades are found throughout the Fertile Crescent in the late fifth millennium BCE suggests the rapid spread of this technological style. These blades were used in ways that differed from those of non-Canaanean blades, but most were still intentionally snapped and bitumen hafted for sickle use. Drills, borers, and other tools are attested as well, but no projectile points have been identified to date.

Figure 23. Imported LC 3 Canaanean blades.

Figure 24. Obsidian tools imported from Nemrut Dağı (southeastern Türkiye).

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A complex obsidian industry was also identified at Surezha. It is largely microlithic, characterized by bladelets and piercers. However, large blades are present too, along with unused flakes and chunks of various sizes. The obsidian, identified by Varoutsikos as deriving from the Nemrut Dağı source in southeastern Türkiye, was scarcer than chert and highly valued (fig. 24). Thirty-six percent of the analyzed blades and bladelets are obsidian, while only 5–10 percent of debitage is. This fact suggests that obsidian arrived at Surezha in many shapes and sizes, perhaps as large flakes with some receiving further reduction. It is unclear whether the bladelets and piercers, which form most of the obsidian assemblage, were imported or produced on-site; only one possible bladelet core fragment was identified in the 2024 assemblage. The presence of unused debitage suggests some on-site reduction of large, imported flakes.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2024 excavations at Surezha have now exposed 400 m^2 of LC 2–period (4200–3900 BCE) deposits across the site. We reached these levels in both Areas A and B, in four of our five trenches. This work is giving us a better idea of the LC 2–period occupation of the mound, of the LC 2 to LC 3 transition, and of the Ubaid period at Surezha through our excavations in operation 14. At the same time, scientific analyses of animal bones, plant remains, ceramics, and chipped stone are providing important information on the chronology and development of herding and farming systems at Surezha, as well as more generally on the Erbil Plain. We plan to continue and expand these lines of research in the upcoming 2025 field season at Surezha.

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TABLET COLLECTION AND NIPPUR TABLET PROJECT

SUSANNE PAULUS, WITH MARTA DÍAZ HERRERA, JANE GORDON, AND MADELINE OUIMET

First and foremost, we wish to express our gratitude this year for the continued support of our donors, Malda and Larissa Liventals. Following the successful completion of the *Back to School in Babylonia* special exhibition and its accompanying publication, we shifted our focus to research, especially the Nippur Tablet Project, while continuing to support teaching and research alongside a flurry of external requests.

TEAM AND TRANSITIONS

The Tablet Collection team (fig. 1) consisted of Susanne Paulus (curator), Madeline Ouimet (assistant curator), Marta Díaz Herrera (assistant curator for the Nippur Tablet Project, and Jane Gordon (Nippur Tablet

Figure 1. Core team of the Tablet Collection in 2024–25. From left to right: Jane Gordon, Danielle Levy, Marta Díaz Herrera, Madeline Ouimet, Susanne Paulus, Bryce Hoenigman. Not pictured: Ryan Winters.

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Project and internal requests). Several transitions marked the year: undergraduate Danielle Levy, who created Tuppi (the first-ever ISAC plushie) and served as the team's photographer, completed her final year and will pursue a master of arts in religious studies at the University of Chicago. First-year undergraduate Bryce Hoenigman quickly became the core photographer and integrated herself into the team's daily work. Postdoctoral researcher Ryan Winters completed his appointment; an international search for his successor brought outstanding applications, and Nicholas Gill (PhD 2024, Johns Hopkins University) was selected to join in fall 2025 as the Nippur Tablet Project postdoc.

NIPPUR TABLET PROJECT

The Nippur Tablet Project remains focused on cataloging, digitizing, and ultimately publishing the tablets excavated by the University of Chicago at Nippur from 1948 onward and now housed at ISAC. These tablets are invaluable because they derive from securely excavated and documented findspots, unlike the thousands of tablets uncovered by the University of Pennsylvania's Babylonian Expedition at the site in the late nineteenth century.

Building on earlier progress with tablets found during the excavation's first and third seasons, this year the team completed work on those found during the second season, focusing on tablets from the scribal quarter excavated prior to the discovery of the famous "House F." Díaz Herrera cataloged sixty-three challenging fragments, with other team members and ISAC faculty helping identify difficult pieces. Highlights included identifying a fragment of a school text, *Syllable Alphabet* B (A29957; fig. 2), which Díaz Herrera will publish in a forthcoming note in *NABU: Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*. Gordon completed proofreading and updating eighty earlier catalog records to provide more information about the texts' content and layout and to reflect up-to-date bibliographic information, while Ouimet provided archaeological contexts.

The year also saw major progress in registering plaster casts created by the excavators to preserve records of tablets divided between institutions. Ouimet inventoried casts from Nippur, Nuzi, Abu Salabikh, and other sites and completed

Figure 2. Clay tablet ISACM A29957 inscribed with *Syllable Alphabet* B. Photo by Danielle Levy.

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registrations for tablets found during the first through seventh excavation seasons at Nippur. Toward the end of the academic year 2024–25, all team members began collaborative work on the Middle Babylonian tablets from the second and third seasons, a corpus offering new insights into the economic and scholarly life of private houses in Nippur.

WORK ON THE COLLECTION

Beyond the Nippur Tablet Project, Winters advanced the cataloging of the regular collection by bringing almost all tablet entries into scholarly catalog form for the first time. This work not only supports research but also enhances ISAC's public outreach by making information about the tablets more accessible for use in social media features. With the help of Foy Scalf and Díaz Herrera, the updated catalog was also integrated into the two main international databases of cuneiform tablets: the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative and the electronic Babylonian Library.

Photography and digital projects advanced as well. Under Gordon's guidance, Hoenigman began photographing the Neo-Assyrian prisms to create high-quality images of these many-sided textual objects and to support research on the early mass production of texts that occurred long before the printing press. Hoenigman presented this work at the UChicago Undergraduate Research Symposium in April 2025 under the title "Prisms of the Past: Preserving the Legacy of Ashurbanipal through Photography."

Additionally, Ouimet reintegrated materials from emeriti professors' offices into the collection to ensure they are properly cataloged and stored.

OUTREACH

Outreach remained central to the Tablet Collection's mission. Díaz Herrera developed a "presentation set" of original tablets representing the collection's chronological and thematic breadth; the set was first used in a presentation for researchers participating in the October 2024 Neubauer Collegium conference titled "Negotiating Identities, Constructing Territories: Pre-Roman Iberia, 900–200 BCE." These tablets have since served diverse audiences.

Other highlights included sold-out tours during Humanities Day, when the team showcased all aspects of our work; programs for the University of Chicago Laboratory School; and collaborations with the University of Chicago Library's Kim-Park Program for the Study of the Book. In partnership with Eric Slauter's Rare Book School course "An Environmental History of the Book," Paulus and Gordon introduced students to the Tablet Collection's highlights, thereby laying the groundwork for future collaborations.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING SUPPORT

The surge of external research requests this year kept Ouimet and the photographers busy. Scholars visiting the collection included Nicole Brisch (University of Hamburg), Grant Frame (University of Pennsylvania), Clemens Reichel (University of Toronto), Ishbel Russell (Johns Hopkins University), Walther Sallaberger (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, with Bob Biggs), and Mélanie Sorstein (École Pratique des Haute Études, Paris), among others. Compared to previous years, this year we supported a significantly larger number of student researchers working on their dissertation projects; their work included collating some of our tablets, undertaking traditional philological study, and even applying cutting-edge technological

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approaches to materiality, such as the use of reflectance transformation imaging (RTI) to study seal impressions. Of particular note, Faith Myrick (Johns Hopkins University) completed two extended stays digitizing Nuzi tablets and casts with RTI imaging.

In total, the team provided photographs and RTI images for seventeen researchers worldwide. The Tablet Collection also continued to be a vital teaching resource for ISAC faculty, including Susanne Paulus, Martha Roth, Foy Scalf, and Mehrnoush Soroush.

In sum, 2024–25 was a year of transition, growth, and deepened scholarship for the Tablet Collection. With the Nippur Tablet Project advancing steadily, the catalog in great shape, and new digital and photographic initiatives underway, the collection continues to strengthen its dual role as a foundation for cutting-edge research and a bridge to public engagement. These achievements position the team strongly for the 2025–26 year.

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TAYINAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

TIMOTHY P. HARRISON, ZEYNEP KUŞDIL SAK, ELIF DENEL, AND LYNN WELTON

The 2024 excavation season of the Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) was the first one following the devastating earthquakes of February 6, 2023, which caused widespread destruction and the death of thousands in southeastern Türkiye and northwestern Syria. The TAP expedition compound was also a casualty of these earthquakes. One of the primary objectives of the season, therefore, was the construction of a new facility (fig. 1), which was erected adjacent to the compound (*kazı evi*) of Koç University's Tell Kurdu Expedition thanks to the generous invitation of our colleague Prof. Dr. Rana Özbal, director of the ongoing excavations at Tell Kurdu, the site of ISAC excavations led by Robert Braidwood in the 1930s.

The 2024 season, conducted between June 27 and August 16, resumed the long-running investigations in Field 1 (primarily Early Bronze Age [EBA]) and Field 7 (Iron Age), with excavations in a total of nine discrete excavation units (or "squares"; fig. 2).

FIELD 1

Excavations were conducted in all four Field 1 squares (figs. 3–4) and focused on two primary season objectives:

1. Articulation of the architectural remains of Field Phase (FP) 8b (ca. 2300–2200 BCE, EB IVB) in Squares G4.56, G4.65, and G4.66
2. Investigation of the earlier FP10 (ca. 2500–2300 BCE, EB IVA), primarily in Square G4.55, stratigraphically sealed by FP8b architecture previously excavated in this area

Figure 1. Newly constructed Tayinat expedition compound.

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Square G4.55

The main objective in Square G4.55 was to examine the rooms associated with structures from FP10 (EB IVA) and, ideally, to locate the floors of these rooms.

The limited spatial extent of the rooms confined within the square restricted access to the FP10 remains. Although significant FP10 walls were identified, often measuring more than 1 m in thickness, the rooms extended beyond the perimeters of the excavation area. Despite the limited exposure possible, a significant amount of destruction debris, including roof collapse, had been identified in this area during the 2022 season.

Following removal of the remaining FP8 architectural features, the western half of an FP10 room was excavated, with a small sounding inside the room extending to a depth of more than 2 m (the sounding is visible in the upper left of fig. 3). The floor of the room was not reached, but substantial amounts of burned debris, including large amounts of wood charcoal, were uncovered in the room.

Square G4.56

The FP8b architectural remains in Square G4.56 had been excavated in previous seasons and the floors of rooms from this phase identified in several areas (fig. 4).

In the western part of the square, beneath the floors of one of these rooms, the upper sections of walls associated with FP10 had been identified in 2022. These walls extended westward and linked with architectural remains identified in Square G4.55. The goal of the 2024 season, therefore, was to identify and expose the floors of the remaining FP8b rooms and then to remove

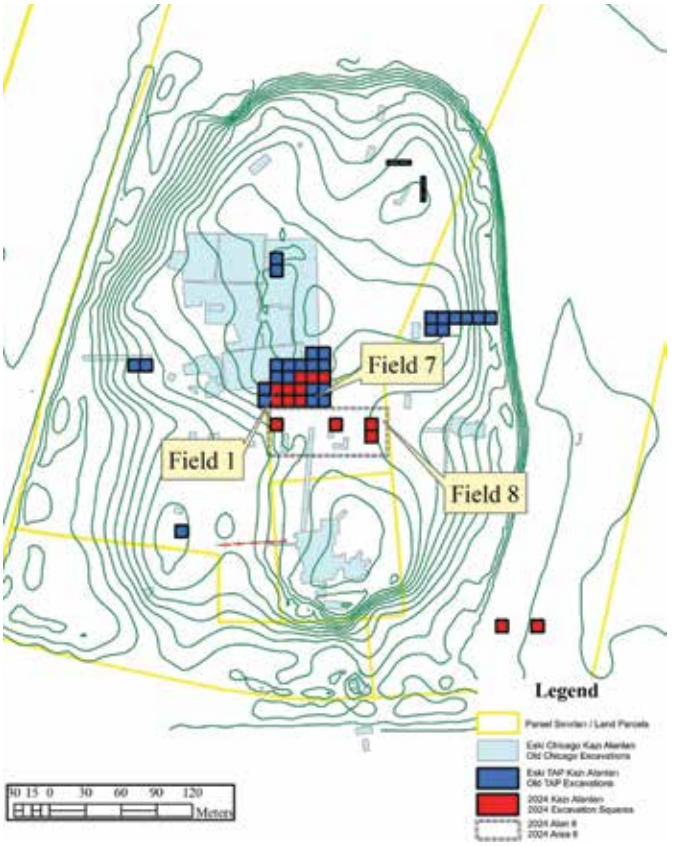

Figure 2. Site plan of Tayinat showing the principal excavation fields.

Figure 3. Aerial view of Field 1.

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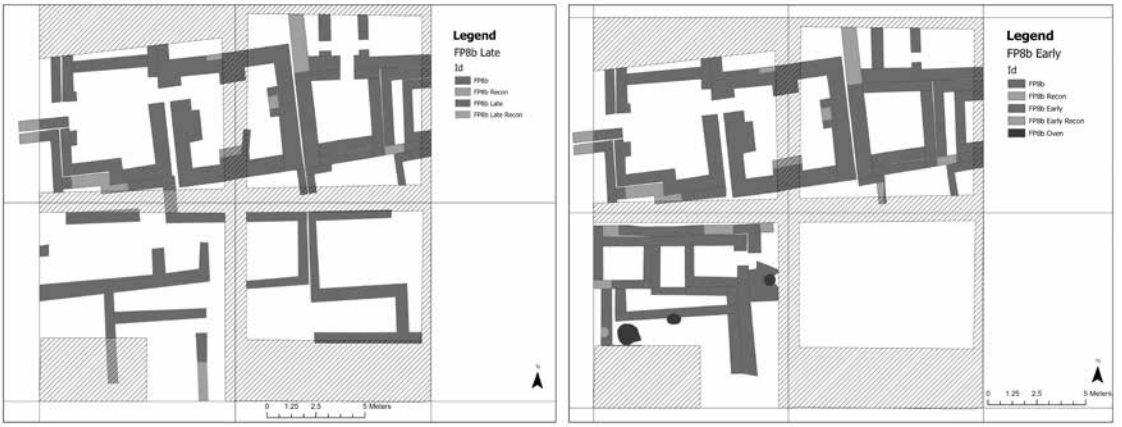

Figure 4. Plan of Field Phase 8b EB IVB architecture in Field 1.

the remains of this field phase to facilitate expanded excavations of the next phase in this area. This work was carried out using a technique that had been successfully implemented previously in Square G4.55. The EB IVB walls were first sectioned, permitting documentation of the construction techniques employed, and then systematically removed.

The walls and rooms discovered in Square G4.56 are believed to have been part of at least three large buildings that extended across the full extent of Field 1. Several additional rooms and floors were identified as the excavations progressed, and the sectioning of the walls associated with this field phase revealed a complicated sequence of construction and renovation throughout the complex.

Square G4.65

In contrast to Squares G4.55 and G4.56, where the FP8b architecture was preserved in one primary construction phase to a depth of roughly 1.5 m, the Square G4.65 investigations revealed a more complicated stratigraphy, with two architectural subphases associated with FP8b (fig. 4).

The latter, more ephemeral phase had already been removed in 2022. Consequently, the primary objectives of the 2024 field season were to (1) complete the excavation of the earlier subphase in the hope of resolving several remaining questions about the layout of the rooms from this subphase; (2) remove the fill from within the rooms; (3) identify their floors; and (4) delineate a plan of the subphase. Excavation of the structures associated with this earlier FP8b subphase indicated food preparation and cooking as the primary activities in this area, with several *tābûn*s (clay ovens) and other pyrotechnic installations uncovered.

Square G4.66

The Square G4.66 excavations were the first ones to be conducted in this area since the 2015 field season, which had uncovered early Iron Age I remains as well as a series of ephemeral walls tentatively dated to FP8b. As in Square G4.65, it was anticipated that this architecture formed part of the later subphase of FP8b (fig. 4), that this architectural phase would be relatively shallow in depth, and that it would be found to seal the earlier architectural subphase uncovered in the adjacent Square G4.65.

The primary objectives of the 2024 season, therefore, were to confirm the layout of the walls that had been tentatively identified in 2015 and to clarify the plan of the structures belonging to this subphase. A secondary goal was to determine whether evidence could be identified for an earlier subphase beneath these walls.

The season's excavations confirmed the existence of several rooms dating to the later FP8b subphase and, toward the end of the season, the existence of an earlier, and likely more substantial, FP8b subphase.

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The walls of this phase were also positively connected with the contemporary structures in Square G4.65 to the west.

Micromorphology and Phytolith Sampling

Soil samples were taken during the 2024 field season as part of a pilot study to conduct micromorphological and phytolith analyses of the EBA structures in Field 1. As part of this study, micromorphological blocks were extracted from several EBA contexts, with particular focus on storage features, such as pits and bins. Samples were simultaneously taken from these same contexts for phytolith analysis. These samples and their subsequent analysis will provide a better understanding of EBA food storage practices.

FIELD 7

Excavations were conducted in five squares in Field 7 during the 2024 field season (fig. 2). The Field 7 objectives were as follows:

1. To understand the stratigraphic layering associated with the Neo-Hittite–period statues (Suppiluliuma, female, lion, etc.) and to collect basalt from locations thought to be associated with these statues
2. To delineate the stratigraphy beneath Temple XVI and the context of the ceramic floors revealed during the 2022 season
3. To determine the southwestern and southeastern extents of the stone pavement (courtyard and street), which forms a significant part of the Iron Age complex

Square G4.47

A series of ceramic installations associated with ritual activities was excavated in Square G4.47. These installations were set within a mudbrick structure that included a large storage jar dated to the Iron II/III period. The easternmost ceramic installation was lined with large, EBA pithos fragments, likely for insulation and/or stabilization.

The westernmost ceramic installation was much smaller and not lined with EBA ceramic fragments. To the north, a third installation, partially visible in the balk, was similar in size to the western installation. Both the western and northern installations featured working surfaces with significant quantities of ash.

Following the abandonment of these installations, a small, north–south wall was built over the fills and working surfaces in this area. This wall intersected with a large, east–west enclosure wall.

Square G4.48

The Square G4.48 excavations uncovered a series of surfaces heavily lined with ceramic sherds and a room associated with a wall to the east (fig. 5). The finds from this area included cooking vessels, a basalt grinder, a basalt pedestal bowl, and numerous animal bones—all indicative of food preparation activity. The 2024 excavations identified a succession of three well-preserved, ceramic-lined surfaces and part of a fourth. A large quantity of bone fragments belonging to a wide variety of species—including cattle (a partial skull), sheep/goat, horse, and fish—were also associated with these surfaces. In some cases, the bone fragments were found placed between the ceramic remains, suggesting that this area may have been intensively used for ritual activities.

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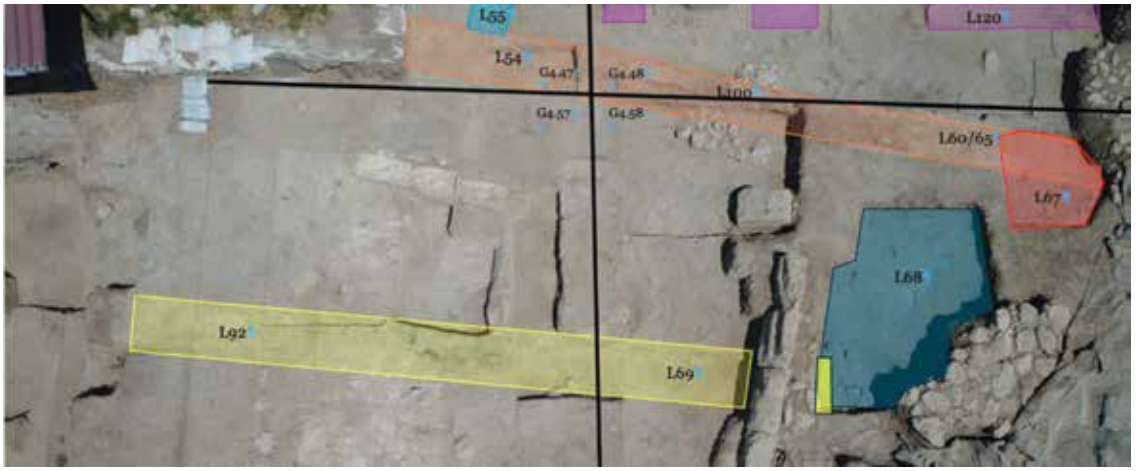

Figure 5. Features identified in Squares G4.47, G4.48, G4.57, and G4.58.

Square G4.57

A conglomerate surface with pebbles, first identified in 2022, was further delineated during the 2024 season. The Square G4.57 excavations also uncovered a series of large mudbrick walls, part of a large complex sealed by the later conglomerate layer (fig. 5); this mudbrick complex is believed to extend into Squares G4.58 and G4.47/G4.48. If these proposed connections are accurate, they may signal the presence of a very large building, possibly part of a temple complex, presumably dating to the late Iron I / early Iron II period.

Square G4.58

Excavations in Square G4.58 were initiated following the discovery of a large, east–west wall in the adjacent Square G4.57 that was part of the mudbrick complex described above. It was suspected that the eastern end of this wall extended into G4.58; subsequent excavation confirmed this extension.

Square G4.67

Square G4.67, originally opened in 2022 to trace and understand the extent of a large stone pavement, was fully exposed during the 2024 season. Although the stone pavement was found to have suffered damage during the early modern period, the 2024 excavations established that the conglomerate layer seen in Square G4.57 slopes downward as it extends south and continues beneath the stone pavement.

Basalt Reconstruction Project

The Basalt Reconstruction Project (BRP) is an ongoing effort to reconstruct the monumental basalt sculptures and sculptural material—including Hieroglyphic Luwian–inscribed stelae; the Suppililiuma, female, and lion statues; and six to eight as-yet-unidentified sculptures—at the Hatay Archaeology Museum laboratory. Due to post-earthquake work on the infrastructure of the Hatay Museum, the BRP was moved to a portable unit in the museum's garden under the guidance of the museum directorate. In 2024, the reconstruction effort focused primarily on the fragments with Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions because of space limitations in the portable unit. The 3D scanning of all basalt pieces started as part of an effort to make them accessible to team members located abroad, prioritizing fragments already joined or considered joinable (fig. 6). Eventually, this work will allow digital comparison for joins with fragments in the ISAC collections from excavations conducted at Tayinat in the 1930s.

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Figure 6. 3D scanning of Iron Age sculptural fragments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our gratitude to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Directorate General of Cultural Heritage and Museums for its support in ensuring the continuity of our research. We also thank the director of the Hatay Archaeology Museum, Mr. Ali Çelikay, for his assistance and support in many ways, as well as Mr. Mahmut Hazırlar, of the Hatay Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism. We further thank Mr. Mustafa Taşcı, from the Hatay Archaeology Museum, for his invaluable assistance as government representative. We especially thank Prof. Dr. Murat Akar, director of the Tell Atchana Expedition, for generously allowing us to maintain the Tayinat Depot on the grounds of the Atchana Expedition compound, and Prof. Dr. Rana Özbal, director of the Tell Kurdu Expedition, for very graciously inviting us to establish the Tayinat Archaeological Project compound adjacent to that expedition's compound at Tell Kurdu, as well as for her warm and collegial support throughout the season.

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TÜRKMEN-KARAHÖYÜK ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

MICHELE MASSA AND JAMES OSBORNE

After several seasons of survey (see previous annual reports on James Osborne's individual research), in July and August 2024 the large mound of Türkmen-Karahöyük witnessed the inaugural excavation season of the Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project (TKAP), ISAC's first excavation on the Anatolian plateau directed or codirected by an ISAC faculty member since the famous excavations of Alişar Höyük in the 1920s and 1930s. TKAP is a long-term excavation project codirected by ISAC faculty member James Osborne and Bilkent University faculty member Michele Massa. The site of Türkmen-Karahöyük (fig. 1) is located in the Konya Plain, one of Türkiye's most agriculturally productive regions due to the alluvium that formed from the Çarşamba River. Today the plain is most famous for the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Çatalhöyük, the Neolithic site that is so well known for its rich domestic symbolism at the dawn of agriculture. But as documented by Massa's survey (the Konya Regional Archaeological Survey Project, operational from 2017 to 2022), the plain hosts hundreds of archaeological sites from all periods, including the historical Bronze and Iron Ages. To date, these periods have been all but unexplored in this part of Türkiye.

As previous annual reports and publications have described, Türkmen-Karahöyük is a 30 ha, 35 m tall *höyük*, making it one of the largest mounds in Türkiye. In addition, there are indications of outer-town occupation during several periods. Surface collections indicate a more or less continuous occupation from the start of the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3000 BCE) until the Late Hellenistic period (ca. 50 BCE). This impressive sequence promises to make Türkmen-Karahöyük a "type site" for southern Anatolia, one that will complement the much more comprehensively understood archaeology of northern Anatolia. Anatolian archaeology has also grown deeply interested in the site thanks to our discovery during the survey in 2019 of the

Figure 1. The mound of Türkmen-Karahöyük, viewed from the west.

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inscription now known as TÜRKMEN-KARAHÖYÜK 1—a royal inscription composed in Hieroglyphic Luwian that was translated by ISAC colleagues Petra Goedegebuure and Theo van den Hout. In this text, the author, known as "Great King Hartapu," claims to have defeated the kingdom of Mushki (using the ancient Near Eastern term for the state better known as Phrygia), ruled in the late eighth century BCE by the famous King Midas. Hartapu, therefore, was the ruler of a hitherto unknown Iron Age kingdom, and Türkmen-Karahöyük appears to be a newly discovered Iron Age capital city—and was likely equally significant during periods of its occupation before and after the Iron Age.

With indicators of a large Hellenistic lower town underneath the modern village of Türkmenkarahüyük immediately south of the mound, it is actually during the Hellenistic period that the site seems to have reached its fullest extent. During this era, this part of Anatolia was known as Lycaonia, which, like southern Anatolia during the Bronze and Iron Ages, is almost completely unknown archaeologically. Here, too, Türkmen-Karahöyük promises to make significant contributions to the cultural history of Anatolia.

In 2024, the excavation license for Türkmen-Karahöyük was generously granted by Türkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and TKAP had its inaugural five-week excavation season in July and August. TKAP selected three main areas, or "fields," to excavate, each one chosen on the basis of its unique morphological positioning on the site (fig. 2). For example, the eastern side of the mound is characterized by deep erosional gulleys that have been created by millennia of winter rains gouging out the soft mudbrick detritus that forms the bulk of the mound's soil matrix. We placed Field 3, supervised by Nathan Lovejoy (Università Ca'Foscari Venezia), in the bottom of one of these gulleys as a methodological experiment that would allow us to learn more about gulley formation and the viability of excavating in these parts of the site; in theory, the gulleys' bottoms offer an opportunity to easily excavate the site's earliest periods of occupation without having to spend years carefully removing earlier levels. Unfortunately, we learned that erosional debris in the gulleys is much deeper than we anticipated, with very little preserved in situ until one moves up the slopes of the gulleys' edges. On these slopes, TKAP found fragments of a mid-second millennium BCE industrial area that was presumably on the city's outer edge, but the lack of associated contexts renders the area highly difficult to understand. Although learning about the nature of the gulleys' bottoms was valuable scientific information, it means that excavating in these parts of the site will always be a challenge.

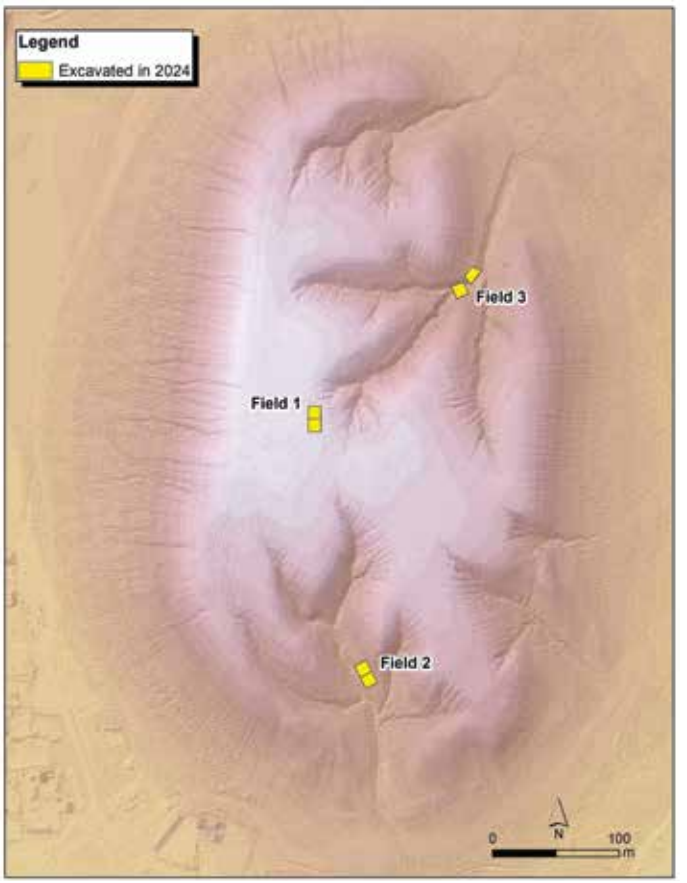

Figure 2. Map of the mound of Türkmen-Karahöyük showing TKAP's 2024 excavation areas.

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Field 2, supervised by Alvise Matessi (Universita di Verona), was placed on a terrace on the southern slopes of the mound, where surface ceramic collections indicated that Bronze Age remains would be right under the surface—unlike the site's uppermost layers, which date as late as the late Hellenistic period. This prediction proved correct when the Field 2 excavations promptly revealed well-preserved mudbrick buildings dated tentatively to the late Middle Bronze Age, roughly the eighteenth century BCE (fig. 3), a phase that was followed by pitting belonging to the early Late Bronze Age, roughly the seventeenth century BCE. These centuries are a critical turning point in Anatolian history, one that marks the plateau's transition from a city-state level of organization to the Hittite kingdom that politically controlled most of the plateau

Figure 3. TKAP excavation area Field 2: plan of buildings dating roughly to the end of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. eighteenth century BCE).

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Figure 4. Partially excavated Middle Bronze Age houses in Field 2.

and eventually evolved into a full-blown imperial formation. With just five weeks of excavation, most of these pits and the rooms of the buildings they cut into were not excavated to completion (fig. 4). Nevertheless, the discovery of stamps and sealings alongside large numbers of loom weights in these spaces hint at a larger-than-household level of administration over a political economy characterized by textile production.

Field 1, supervised by Nancy Highcock (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford), was placed at the mound's summit. This location was chosen for two reasons. First, a magnetometry survey had indicated that this area was occupied by large-scale public buildings lying immediately under the surface. Second, it is here that villagers described finding the TÜRKMEN-KARAHÖYÜK 1 inscription, suggesting the area might be characterized by public architecture during many consecutive levels of occupation. Our excavations confirmed the presence of the large building that magnetometry had predicted (fig. 5) and dated the remains to the late Hellenistic period, or early to mid-first century BCE. Most excitingly, underneath the walls of the uppermost

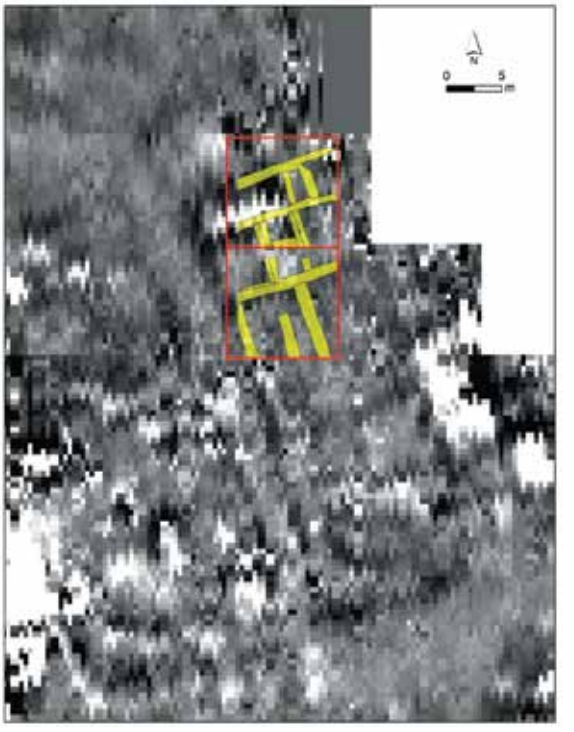

Figure 5. TKAP excavation area Field 1, with excavated architecture overlaid on previous results of a magnetometry survey.

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Figure 6. Hellenistic destruction layer discovered in Field 1, with highly burned soil deposits being fine-gridded.

building in Field 1 lies an earlier structure that experienced an intense conflagration, which baked its walls and filled its rooms with burned collapse, organic remains for radiocarbon dating and rich botanical analysis, and whole or reconstructible vessels (fig. 6). In this first season, TKAP exposed the destruction layer in only two small locations—and even in these areas, the floor level of the destroyed building was not reached. All these findings suggest that the 2025 excavations in Field 1 will be enormously rich in artifacts.

The 2024 TKAP excavations have begun exposing this archaeological site for the first time, in the process allowing us to understand the material record of southern Anatolia, with remains so far dating to the mid-second millennium and late first millennium BCE. There is much left to learn about Türkmen-Karahöyük. In fact, TKAP has yet to start exploring most periods of the site's occupation, including the early first millennium BCE—the Iron Age period when Hartapu reigned, and the era that drew us to the site in the first place. This work will begin in our 2025 season and, with a site as large as Türkmen-Karahöyük, will continue for many seasons thereafter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism for giving us permission to excavate Türkmen-Karahöyük and for providing support in all matters of bureaucracy and administration related to the project. We are grateful to the Ministry's representative Nedime Özçalık Yılmaz (Konya Museum) for her kindness and support during the field season.

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The 2024 TKAP excavation season was sponsored by the University of Chicago, Bilkent University, the British Institute at Ankara, the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, the Archaeological Institute of America's Richard C. MacDonald Iliad Endowment for Archaeological Research, and a generous contribution of Catherine Novotny.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

OVERLEAF: Egyptian funerary shroud. Linen, plaster, paint. Greco-Roman period. ISACM E4787. See François Gaudard individual research report.

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INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

With the assistance of Walther Sallaberger and Felix Rauchhaus of the University of Munich, **ROBERT BIGGS** worked on updating and finalizing his chapter on the mid-third-millennium cuneiform inscriptions from the Inanna Temple at Nippur for publication by ISAC—work he began at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad in 1972. In March 2025 he gave his draft manuscript on the cuneiform texts from the 1977 excavations at Umm al-Hafriyat, Iraq, to McGuire Gibson, who directed the excavations, so that cross-references could be added and locus numbers updated. In June 2025, his forty-page article on the Ur III texts in the W. H. Over Museum at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, was accepted for publication by the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative. A shorter article on two Ur III tablets in a private Detroit collection appeared in March 2025 in *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*.

JOHN BRINKMAN completed the text edition and historical discussion for the inscription of a Middle Babylonian royal official discovered in a village near Sar Pol-e Zahab in western Iran; the article, titled "An Inscribed Kassite Weight from Kermānšāh Province, Western Iran" and containing a description by archaeologists of the circumstances of the find, appeared in *Altorientalische Forschungen* 51, no. 2 (2024). Continuing his work on family archives from the late Kassite period excavated at Babylon, he provided extensive commentaries on a collection of legal texts (mercantile and real estate), now submitted for publication in the Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft series.

FRANÇOIS GAUDARD completed his thirty-first year as a member of the ISAC scholarly community. Among other projects, he continued to work on text editions of various mummy labels, of a Demotic accounting text from the Ptolemaic period, and of the ISAC Museum's Egyptian funerary shrouds from the Greco-Roman period. After shrouds OIM (ISACM) E4786 and OIM (ISACM) E4789, the third shroud to be published is OIM (ISACM) E4787 (see below). To judge by its style and the panel of colors used, it is likely to have been created by an artist or to have originated from a funerary workshop different from that of the other shrouds in the same lot. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that, in this case, the main text—which apparently consisted of two vertical columns in the center—was not written retrograde and that *wr.t* "the great one," an epithet of Isis, was written as instead of . Although very little of this text has been preserved, Gaudard was able to restore a large portion of the second column.

Shroud OIM (ISACM) E4787.

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Some of the articles on which Gaudard has been working include:

- "Funerary Shrouds from Dendera in the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago. Part III: Shroud OIM (ISACM) E4787," to be published in a Festschrift in honor of a colleague
- "Funerary Shrouds from Dendera in the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago. Part IV: Shroud OIM (ISACM) E4788 (= OIM [ISACM] E42046)," in preparation
- "A Demotic Accounting Text from the Ptolemaic Period," in preparation

In addition, Gaudard attended the following Egyptological conferences and workshops: "Les pratiques oraculaires dans les temples abydéniens: 1. L'oracle d'Ahmosis, 2. Les révélations de la tête d'Osiris à Abydos et autres témoignages tardifs," lectures delivered by Laurent Coulon at the University of Geneva, Switzerland (March 25–26, 2025); "Workshop on Pyramids," organized by the International Association of Egyptologists and held at the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo (April 12, 2025); "Journée en Hommage à Jean-Luc Chappaz," a day of lectures organized by the University of Geneva, the Société d'Égyptologie, and the Musée d'art et d'histoire and held at the Espace GamMAH in Geneva (May 3, 2025); and "Tagung über Athribis (Provinz Sohag): Der Pylon-Tempel im Zentrum der Kult- und Siedlungs-Topographie von Athribis," organized by the Institut für die Kulturen des Alten Orients der Universität Tübingen and held at Schloss Hohentübingen in Tübingen, Germany (June 11–12, 2025).

MARGARET GEOGA taught various courses in ancient Egyptian language and literature and served on several ISAC and Department of Middle Eastern Studies committees during the 2024–25 report year in addition to pursuing her main research focus: wrapping up her first monograph, which explores the transmission and reception of an unusual, and unusually popular, ancient Egyptian poem. This poem, *The Teaching of Amenemhat*, is famous for its depiction of the murder of a king. Geoga's monograph proposes a new approach to studying *Amenemhat*, one concentrating not on its unknown author (as is commonly done in studies of ancient Egyptian literature) but rather on the many readers who encountered the poem over the course of approximately 1,000 years (ca. 1550–500 BCE). The monograph asks how these readers' interpretations of the poem changed in response to various social, historical, and cultural contexts. Geoga focused in part on two particular readers of *Amenemhat*: the Kushite kings Pi(ankh)y and Taharqo, whose quotations of the poem in their monuments in Nubia in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE suggest not only that the poem enjoyed a vibrant afterlife outside Egypt but also that interpretations regarding the most fundamental question of the poem—was the king actually murdered, or did he survive a failed assassination attempt?—varied significantly among individual readers.

Beyond the monograph, Geoga's research on Taharqo's quotation of *Amenemhat*—in which he, like the king in the poem, claims to have made his enemies "do the dog-walk"—also informed an essay, for a forthcoming special-exhibition catalog, exploring the significance of dogs in ancient Nubian texts, art, and material culture. In addition, she gave three invited lectures relating to the *Amenemhat* project for the Franke Institute for the Humanities, ISAC Breasted Society, and Harvard Museums of Science and Culture.

Geoga's coedited volume *Looking Beyond the Text: New Approaches to Scribal Culture and Practices in Ancient Egypt* was published by Brill in February 2025. Her work in this area led her to co-organize a conference panel on scribal culture at the 2025 annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, where she also gave a paper questioning Egyptology's conventional approaches to assessing immersion, interruption, and their impacts on reading experiences.

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PETRA GOEDEGEBUURE's research this year was split between Luwian philology and Hittite linguistics. Two articles on Luwian were published ("The One and Only Great King Hartapu and the Western Muška," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 61: 451–73; "The Luwian Word for 'city, town,'" *Anatolian Studies* 74: 47–73); another one went to press ("'Poldering' in Beyond-the-River: Revisiting the End of the ÇİNEKÖY Inscription," for a Festschrift); and a fourth one was submitted ("The Phonetic Values of the Signs L.175 <la>, L.319 <la/i>, L.172 <lá/í> in Iron Age Luwian," for the *Proceedings of the 12th International Congress of Hittitology*).

Goedegebuure's Hittite work focused on linguistics. In "Zalpa Self-Destructs: A New Ending for Zalpa and the Zalpa Text" (accepted for the Gary Holland Gedenkschrift), Goedegebuure shows that Hittite has two types of extraclausal constituents—Hanging Topic and Left Dislocation—that are formally and functionally different. Applying this observation to the famous Zalpa text (in which a queen gives birth to thirty sons and thirty daughters), she was able to show that the destruction of Zalpa was at the hands of its own inhabitants, not the Hittites. As part of her work on contact linguistics, she presented papers titled "Bad Hittite, Good Hattian: Linguistic Interference in the Old Hittite Oracle KBo 18.151" (Thirty-Fifth Annual West Coast Indo-European Conference, Los Angeles, October 2024; to be published in the conference proceedings); "Hattian, Luwian, Palaic, and Hittite in Interaction: Contact-Linguistic Support for MBA–LBA Cultural Continuity in Anatolia" (American Society of Overseas Research, Boston, November 2024); and "'The people of Hatti often speak about my match!' Emic Evidence for Luwian as the Language of the Population in 13th Century BCE Anatolia" ("Interconnectivity and Communication: Cultural and Intellectual Transmission in Ancient Anatolia" conference, May 2025, Venice). She continued presenting her new understanding of the Hittite Illuyanka Tale, a dragon-slaying myth, as a comedic ritual of reversal (Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Reception Workshop, University of Chicago, and 235th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Boston, both April 2025).

The storm god slays the dragon. Malatya, Türkiye, twelfth to eleventh centuries BCE. Photo by Georges Jansoone, Wikimedia Commons, License CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2123385.

Goedegebuure chaired the University of Chicago search committee for a Hittitologist, at the rank of assistant professor, to fill the position left by Theo van den Hout's retirement. ISAC was very fortunate to hire James Burgin, a stellar philologist and scholar of Hittite economy, religion, and historiography. In addition to her regular committee work, Goedegebuure served as the director of undergraduate studies for the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. Her service to the field consisted of serving as a coeditor of the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, on the boards of several book series and journals, and as a peer reviewer for several articles, book manuscripts, and project proposals. She also taught six courses.

For Goedegebuure's work for the Chicago Hittite Dictionary, see the Project Reports section.

REBECCA HASSELBACH-ANDEE worked on several research projects during this academic year. She finished an article on alignment in Neo-Aramaic dialects (the Aramaic currently spoken in Türkiye, Iran, and Iraq), in which she argues that the traditional perception that these dialects reflect split-ergative alignment is incorrect and that the dialects should instead be analyzed as reflecting semantic alignment. She

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makes these arguments from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. The article was submitted to and accepted by the *Journal of Semitic Studies* and is currently in press.

Hasselbach-Andee also finished and submitted an article on the development of feminine gender in Semitic and Indo-European that is currently under review at the *Journal of Historical Linguistics*. Because the project on feminine gender turned out to be more complex than what can be covered in one article, she decided to continue her research on the topic and turn it into a new book project. For this purpose, she conducted research into other phenomena underlying the assignment of grammatical gender to inanimate nouns—that is, nouns not reflecting entities that have natural gender. She started this line of research based on Biblical Hebrew, which has numerous inanimate nouns that are grammatically construed as feminine but lack a grammatical feminine marker. She concluded that many of these nouns receive their grammatical gender from cultural concepts—for example, from the existence of female deities associated with certain natural phenomena or ideas. The Biblical Hebrew word *ʾēš* "fire," for instance, lacks a feminine marker but is construed as feminine not only in Hebrew but across Semitic. The concept of fire, which is not inherently feminine, is associated with a female deity called "Fire" that is attested as early as the second half of the third millennium BCE, in a lexical list found at Ebla. In this case, grammatical gender is thus clearly motivated by a religious concept. There are other examples of this kind in Biblical Hebrew; interestingly, the gender of some of these culturally motivated nouns changed from Biblical to Modern Hebrew. The second focus of Hasselbach-Andee's research was thus to trace changes in gender assignment between different periods of Hebrew. Hasselbach-Andee presented the results of this research—which, as mentioned, is part of a larger project—at an invited lecture at the University of Cambridge in February 2025.

Former Epigraphic Survey director **W. RAYMOND JOHNSON** continued his personal research on Amarna and Karnak *talatat* blocks in Italy, Egypt, and Mississippi, where he and Jay Heidel now reside. Johnson spent three additional months (October to December 2024) as a visiting scholar at the Museo Egizio in Turin, researching its collection of Akhenaten *talatat* and related objects for a comprehensive catalog of the material. On December 17, 2024, Johnson presented a lecture titled "The Epigraphic Survey/Chicago House: Helping to Take Care of Luxor Temple and Medinet Habu in Collaboration with the SCA and Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism" at the Museo Egizio's "Memory Is Our Future" international symposium.

At the beginning of December, Johnson joined the team of the Memphis Hathor Temple Project, a joint mission of the Houston Museum of Natural Science and Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, on site at ancient Memphis, where he served as epigraphic consultant. He and Heidel spent February 2025 in Cairo and Abu Simbel as part of the Royal Women of Ramesses II Project of Marjorie Fisher (University of Michigan). That month, Johnson and Heidel also inaugurated the Karnak Third Pylon Digital Documentation Project, which they are codirecting in collaboration with the French-Egyptian Centre for the Study of the Temples of Karnak in Luxor.

This year Johnson saw the publication of his article "An Assessment of Certain Limestone *Talatat* Blocks Stored in the Pennsylvania *Talatat* Magazine, Karnak" in *A Legacy of Learning in Near Eastern Archaeology: Studies Dedicated to Helene J. Kantor*, edited by Peter Lacovara, 40–48 (Archaeopress, 2025). He has prepared and submitted several other Festschrift articles that have yet to be published, so he is obliged to refrain from providing bibliographic references at this time.

Also this year, Johnson was invited to take up the position of William Kelly Simpson Visiting Professor of Egyptology at the American University in Cairo from late August until December 20, 2025.

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KEA JOHNSTON is a postdoctoral scholar working jointly with the Chicago Field Museum and ISAC. The ability to study objects at both institutions has enriched her personal research, which involves writing a new typology of coffins from the site of Akhmim on the east bank of the Nile River in Upper Egypt. Little archaeological work has been done at this ancient and important regional center since it was thoroughly plundered in the 1880s. The new typology will make sense of a large corpus of poorly provenienced pieces, grouping them by workshop and artist. Since Akhmim was not the only site where large amounts of first-millennium BCE funerary material were looted or unscientifically excavated in the nineteenth century, it is hoped that this typology will provide a useful reference and inspiration for future efforts to study regional traditions in funerary art during the first millennium BCE.

Johnston pursued several other, smaller projects this year as well. She continues to work on the University of California, Berkeley's Book of the Dead in 3D Project under Rita Lucarelli. This undertaking is evolving into a student-driven venture in which undergraduates and graduate students collaborate to publish and digitize Egyptian coffins in collections in the western United States. Johnston has also written a study on a group of Egyptian cartonnages with blue backgrounds, some of which may come from the late cemeteries at Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt. Based on a paper originally presented in February 2024 at the "Coffins in Context" conference held at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, the study will be published in the conference proceedings.

Finally, Johnston's translations of the inscriptions on the sarcophagi of the steward of the god's wife of Amun Pabasa, now in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, Scotland, will be published in a forthcoming volume by Egyptologist Aidan Dodson about the sarcophagi collected by Alexander Douglas Hamilton, 10th Duke of Hamilton. The volume will also include Johnston's translation of the Book of the Dead spells and glorification spells on the Ptolemaic sarcophagus of a woman named Irtyeru, now inaccessible because its nineteenth-century owner was buried in it.

DEREK KENNET completed his first academic year as a member of ISAC's faculty, having joined in January 2024 and begun teaching in the fall quarter. Adjusting to life in Chicago and at ISAC has been made extremely easy by supportive colleagues and an intellectually vibrant and convivial atmosphere.

Kennet published a new book in March 2025: *Southeast Arabia at the Dawn of the Second Millennium: The Bronze Age Collective Graves of Qarn al-Harf, Ras al-Khaimah (UAE)* (Oxford: Oxbow). This study is based on the rescue excavation of a Middle Bronze Age cemetery in the United Arab Emirates about ten years ago. The cemetery was used for some 200 years very early in the second millennium BCE. The architecture and grave goods of the eight large, monumental, collective tombs there reflect a social and cultural configuration that was struggling to hang on to traditional ways of life in the face of a regional decline in rainfall, possibly linked to the infamous 4.2 kiloyear event. The study throws interesting light on the nature of human resilience in the face of extremely difficult, hyperarid conditions. Much of the earlier part of Kennet's academic year was taken up with putting the final touches on this volume, copyediting it, and correcting the final proofs.

During January and February 2025, Kennet directed a second season of ISAC excavations at the early Islamic Indian Ocean port of Suhar on the Batinah Coast of Oman (see Suhar Project report). The excavations are throwing new light on the early development of the medieval maritime trading economy of the Indian Ocean, as ceramics uncovered during the excavations testify to routine contact with China, India, and East Africa.

In addition to the time-consuming tasks of organizing and running this large-scale excavation, completing the book described above, and sorting out new teaching, Kennet jointly authored three published papers—one each on Chinese ceramic production (in *World Archaeology*), Karstic aquifers and climate refugia in Arabia (in *Open Quaternary*), and the survey of a medieval town in Oman (in *Journal of Oman*

Studies). He is now working mainly toward the publication of two more papers, including a jointly authored one on Sasanian trade in the Indian Ocean (or the lack of it) with Rebecca Darley (University of Leeds), Seth Priestman (ISAC research associate), and Philip Wood (Aga Khan University); Kennet gave a well-attended invited presentation on this topic at the City University of New York's Circle for Late Antique and Medieval Studies forum in December 2024. The second paper underway summarizes the key results from the first two seasons of ISAC excavations at Suhar; Kennet gave presentations on the Suhar work at Pennsylvania's Shippensburg University in March 2025 and for the Chicago and St. Louis societies of the Archaeological Institute of America in October 2024 and May 2025.

MORAG KERSEL, together with fellow ISAC associate Austin Chad Hill and Jordanian Department of Antiquities representative Muntaha Aloshoosh, carried out another field season of Landscapes of the Dead, a project assessing landscape change in the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3600–2000 BCE) archaeological landscapes at the mortuary sites of Bâb adh-Dhrâʿ and Fifa, Jordan.

Comparisons of photogrammetry sets and oblique images obtained during the 2025 season with images taken during previous seasons allow for an assessment of change over time as a result of looting at the sites. Ground truthing of the site during drone flights indicated new looting at Fifa. Since the initial field season in 2011, they have been monitoring not only looting but also construction practices at the sites. Clearly, individuals are mining Fifa for the valuable cobbles and gravels for building works.

In the near future, they will undertake data analysis using deep-learning algorithms to analyze drone imagery for the purpose of identifying looting patterns and other cultural and natural interactions at the sites of Fifa and Bâb adh-Dhrâʿ. They will continue to work with local authorities, nongovernmental organizations, and community stakeholders to integrate drone data into broader conservation strategies. They hope that their work will result in improved site protection and monitoring. Their high-resolution data will contribute to a deeper understanding of looted landscapes and the dynamics of looting and construction activities.

Jordanian Department of Antiquities representative Muntaha Aloshoosh, military representative 1st Lt. Derar Bin Salem, and Austin Chad Hill preparing for the drone flyover at Fifa on April 9, 2025.

Mechanical digging at Fifa.

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This information will be compiled into a report for the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in support of their request for renewal of the bilateral agreement with the United States to protect against the import of illegally exported Jordanian cultural materials. Data from drones, databases, and archaeologists are being used to prove that looting is an ongoing concern and that looted artifacts are destined for the United States.

This year saw the publication of Kersel's guest-edited issue of the journal *Advances in Archaeological Practice* (vol. 13, no. 1, "Caring for Culture in the Twenty-First Century"), as well as an article, coauthored with Patty Gerstenblith (DePaul University), titled "Cultural Heritage and Security Policy" in *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*. In May 2025, Kersel participated in the "Frontiers and Emerging Challenges in Cultural Heritage Preservation" conference at the University of Chicago's John W. Boyer Center in Paris. The conference was cosponsored by the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation and the ISAC Museum.

JANA MATUSZAK spent the academic year 2024–25 as a residential fellow at the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities, where she worked on her second book project, tentatively titled *Sumerian Mock Hymns and the Poetics of Subversion: Parody, Pedagogy, and Performance in The Evil Mouth*. Based on an edition, translation, and in-depth analysis of *The Evil Mouth*, a previously unknown mock hymn to the goddess Inanna, she studies how parody can help us reconstruct the unstated poetic principles of Sumerian literature written around 1800 BCE. She briefly interrupted her research to join the Nippur expedition as one of its epigraphers, thereby realizing her lifelong dream of participating in an excavation in Iraq.

Matuszak also published several peer-reviewed articles:

- "Doing Gender in Babylon: The Construction of Ideal Womanhood in Sumerian Literature from the Early 2nd Millennium BCE." *Old World: Journal of Ancient Africa and Eurasia* 5, no. 2 (2025): 1–40. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/26670755-00502002 (open access); this article earned the 2025 *Old World* prize for best article on women of the premodern world (see the announcement at https://bnu-uicrchc.com/news/188.html)
- "Of Captive Storm Gods and Cunning Foxes: New Insights into Early Sumerian Mythology, with an Edition of Ni 12501." *Iraq* 86 (2025): 79–10. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/irq.2024.19; addenda et corrigenda: DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/irq.2025.4 (both open access; see media coverage at https://phys.org/news/2025-07-fragmentary-ancient-sumerian-myth-years.html and https://news.uchicago.edu/story/uchicago-sumerologist-translates-forgotten-4400-year-old-myth)
- "A Sargonic Exercise Tablet Listing 'Places of Inanna' and Personal Names," coauthored with Hanan A. Alessawe. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 76 (2024): 27–52. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/730480
- "Law, Morality, and Subversion in Sumerian Prose Miniatures." In *Wisdom between East and West: Mesopotamia, Greece and Beyond*, edited by Francesco Sironi and Maurizio Viano, 271– 96 (Venice: Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2024). DOI: https://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-776-0/014 (open access)

Matuszak's other academic writings included:

- A contribution to the Forum discussion for Shana Zaia's 2025 article "Humor as Pedagogy: Cases from Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BCE." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 84, no. 1: 149–50. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/735029

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- "Enheduana." In *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, digital edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.9150

Matuszak stepped down from her role as coeditor of the journal *Altorientalische Forschungen* with the publication of the January 2025 issue. For the publication of the proceedings of two workshops on "Approaches to Cuneiform Literature," which she co-organized with Mark Weeden (University College London) in 2021 and 2023, she joined Weeden as guest editor for the December 2024 issue of the journal *Iraq*. Matuszak continues to serve as a member of the editorial board of the *Isin Journal for Archaeology, History and Ancient Languages*, published by the University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq.

Matuszak gave invited lectures on the construction of gender in Sumerian literature at Wheaton College (Illinois) and online for Beijing Normal University in China. She participated in three academic conferences: at the November 2024 annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research in Boston, she presented "Establishing Guilt in Sumerian Model Court Cases and Related Texts"; in March 2025, at the Sixth International Conference of Mesopotamian Archaeology at the University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq, she presented "Enlil and the Fox: Nippurite Tales of Ambition, Trickery, and Deceit"; and in April 2025, at the "Wissenschaft, Literatur und Technik im Alten Orient / Science, Literature and Technology in the Ancient Near East" conference held at the University of Tübingen, Germany, she gave a paper titled "From Parody to Paradigm? (De)familiarization and Its Relevance for Emic Genre Concepts in Sumerian Literature."

AUGUSTA McMAHON's research focus this year was directing the ISAC excavations at Nippur, Iraq, which concentrated on the urban edge zone of this important early Mesopotamian city (see Nippur Excavations project report). Her publications during the year comprised research and analysis derived from her previous fieldwork at Tell Brak in Syria. In 2024, a chapter titled "Going to Brak in a Handbasket: Container Sealings and Urban Production Modes in 4th Millennium BC Northern Mesopotamia" appeared in *Archaeology from Every Angle: Papers in Honor of Richard L. Zettler*, edited by Katherine Blanchard, Yelena Rakic, and Paul Zimmerman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 2024). McMahon's contribution to the volume is a companion piece to her chapter "Pieces of String: Cordage in Late Chalcolithic Northern Mesopotamia" in *From Sherds to Landscapes: Studies on the Ancient Near East in Honor of McGuire Gibson*, edited by Mark Altaweel and Carrie Hritz (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 71; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2021). Both chapters examine the backs of clay container sealings from fourth-millennium BCE Tell Brak and focus on the negative impressions of the objects sealed (jars, bags, and baskets) rather than on the more traditional seal iconography. String, baskets, and other items of an organic nature are not preserved in Mesopotamian contexts, but impressions of these materials in clay preserve evidence for their structure and variety. McMahon's chapters address the skill and complexity of basic craft production in an increasingly urbanized and industrialized context.

In November 2024, McMahon presented a summary of her 2006–11 excavations at fourth-millennium BCE Tell Brak at the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) in Boston. And in February 2025, halfway through the excavation season at Nippur, she reported on the season's preliminary results at the Sixth International Conference of Mesopotamian Archaeology at the University of Al-Qadisiyah in Diwaniyah, Iraq. She serves on ASOR's Committee on Mesopotamian Civilization (Baghdad Committee) and Damascus Committee, the editorial board of the *Journal of Urban Archaeology*, and the scientific committee of *Paléorient*. She remains coeditor of the journal *Iraq*, published by the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, and is vice president of The Academic Research Institute in Iraq. Her service to the field this year also included multiple assessments and promotion/tenure

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recommendations for junior colleagues at other institutions, a time-consuming but exceptionally rewarding contribution.

At the very beginning of July 2024, **CAROL MEYER** traveled to Romont, Switzerland, for the Ernst Herzfeld Society's annual colloquium. Its theme, Islamic glass, afforded her a fine opportunity to present her ongoing work on the Aqaba glass corpus, meet colleagues from Europe and the Middle East, and learn about exciting new research from sites ranging from Spain to Bongol, Indonesia. During the rest of the year, Meyer made a great deal of progress on her publication of the glass corpus from Aqaba, recovered during an important excavation project of ISAC under the direction of Donald Whitcomb between 1986 and 1995 and Kristoffer Damgaard between 2010 and 2014. Some books take a long time to produce!

Very recently, the Aqaba glass database was uploaded to ISAC's server, where it is at long last available to glass researchers here and abroad. Another exciting development was the possibility of testing some of the glass. Although physical tests are not new, this opportunity was, and it could help disentangle many outstanding problems with the corpus. It is sorted by type and period—Umayyad (ca. 650–750), Abbasid (ca. 750–969), and Fatimid (ca. 969–1125)—and physical testing could help refine the dating. A major shift from natron- or mineral-based glass formulae to plant ash–based ones started about 800 in the Syro-Palestinian region and about fifty years later in Egypt. Therefore, separating the two basic glass types could help separate Fatimid glass from earlier glasses. Physical testing can also be used to trace the place of manufacture of the original, raw glass—whether Egypt, the Levant, or farther east—and hence the source of some of the glass vessels. Finally, it might even be possible to trace the region of origin of some puzzling glass items at Aqaba, including some that may have been manufactured in Iran. One little face medallion has parallels only from Iran; was it in fact manufactured in Isfahan, Siraf, or elsewhere in Iran? After all, Aqaba was a Red Sea port.

Glass face medallion found at Aqaba but of possible Iranian origin.

ANNA-LATIFA MOURAD-CIZEK joined the University of Chicago as assistant professor of Egyptian archaeology in July 2024. She continued her research into Egyptian-Levantine connectivities, completing a monograph preliminarily titled *Egypt and the Levant: Networks and Negotiations in the Bronze Age* for the Ancient Egypt in Context Cambridge Elements series, published by Cambridge University Press. At the end of report year 2024–25, the manuscript was under review. It offers an overview of the transforming networks linking Old to early New Kingdom Egypt with Early Bronze III to Late Bronze I communities in the Levant. Mourad-Cizek also submitted two invited book chapters: "Egypt and the Southern Levant from the Old Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period," to appear in the *Routledge Handbook of Egypt and the Bible*, edited by Bernd U. Schipper, Robert Kade, and Joseph Cross; and "Networks, Transformations and the Enigma of the Hyksos," for a special volume celebrating sixty years of excavations at Tell el-Dab'a, edited by Manfred Bietak and Silvia Prell. In addition, she published two articles: "A Transforming Ontology of Boundaries? What Is and What Is Not in the Early Middle Kingdom," in

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Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 110, nos. 1–3: 237–52, and a review of *Ancient Egyptian Prisoner Statues: Fragments of the Late Old Kingdom*, by Tara Prakash, in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 60, no. 1: 295–98.

Mourad-Cizek traveled to Egypt in January 2025, where she not only taught in the University of Chicago's undergraduate study-abroad program in Cairo but also worked on upcoming field projects. At the site of Beni Hassan and alongside other members of the Beni Hassan Project team, she preliminarily examined the architecture of tombs in the southern upper terrace and potential evidence of New Kingdom activity. These and other remains are planned for excavation and recording in January 2026. She also prepared for a new project that aims to record and reconstruct the Old Kingdom mastaba of Khentika at Saqqara. The Khentika project would be codirected with Egyptologist Naguib Kanawati (Macquarie University, Sydney).

Mourad-Cizek additionally presented five invited talks, including a lecture in March 2025 at ISAC related to the special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzMKNL-P_8M); a paper in May 2025 for "The Future of Ancient Near Eastern Art History" symposium, organized by the University of Chicago's Department of Art History and ISAC; and a lecture in June 2025 for the American Research Center in Egypt's Chicago chapter. She had great fun offering a class on ancient Egypt in the ISAC Museum for the University of Chicago Laboratory School's third-grade students and was quoted in online articles for *National Geographic* and *Live Science* on the discovery of a Second Intermediate Period royal tomb at Abydos, Egypt. Upon invitation, Mourad-Cizek also joined the advisory board of the Middle Kingdom Studies series of London's Golden House Publications, a series edited by Egyptologist Gianluca Miniaci (University of Pisa).

Several publications by **BRIAN MUHS** appeared in 2024–25. They include a volume coedited with Foy Scalf titled *A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner Presented on the Occasion of His Sixty-Eighth Birthday* (Studies in Ancient Cultures 3; Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024) and, in it, a chapter coauthored with Scalf, "The Transmission of Magical Texts at Deir El Medina: A Hieratic Copy of a Horus Cippi Text on Ostracon ISACM E17008"; "A Pair of Wooden Stick Shabtis and Their Coffins" in *From Objects to Histories: Studies in Honour of John H. Taylor*, edited by Nigel Strudwick and David A. Aston (Abercromby Press, 2024); and "Wearing Wealth: Cloth and Clothing as Currency in Ancient Egypt" and "Perspectives on Clothing and Identity in the Ancient World," both in *Outward Appearance versus Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World*, edited by Aleksandra Hallmann (ISAC Seminars 15; Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2025). Muhs's book manuscript "Lending in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Demotic Loan-Account Papyri of Panas, Son of Espmetis" went to press at the end of June 2025, with publication by Lockwood Press expected during the summer. He also completed an article titled "Demotic Literature, Scribes and Scholars in Ptolemaic Egypt," which he submitted for publication in *Advances in Ancient Biblical and Near Eastern Research*.

Muhs also presented several academic papers: "Scribes and Literature in Hellenistic Egypt" in September 2024 at the workshop "Scribes in Late Period Egypt, Babylonia, and Yehud/Judea" organized by the European Research Council project DEMBIB (Demotic Egyptian Papyri and the Formation of the Hebrew Bible) in Berlin; "Epigraphy and Conflict in the Napatan, Meroitic, and Aksumite Empires," with Tasha Vorderstrasse, in November 2024 at the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research in Boston; "Imprisonment in Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Egypt" in April 2025 at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt in San Francisco; and "Incarceration in Ptolemaic Egypt" in May 2025 at the conference "The Archaeology of Incarceration: An Interdisciplinary Approach" at the Carlsberg

Academy in Copenhagen. He also gave a lecture, "Prisons and Police in Ancient Egypt, and the Chicago Demotic Dictionary," in January 2025 for the ISAC Breasted Society Salon in Chicago.

KIERSTEN NEUMANN complemented her curatorial work at the ISAC Museum in 2024–25 with a broad range of original writing, invited talks, scholarly contributions, and professional service.

She was especially honored to contribute to the exhibition *Allspice: Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*—a collaboration between the Acropolis Museum and NEON, curated by Prof. Nikolaos Chr. Stampolidis, director general of the Acropolis Museum, and Elina Kountouri, director of NEON (May 13–October 31, 2025; https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/allspice-exhibition). Celebrating her longstanding relationship with artist Michael Rakowitz and their ongoing collaborations, in May Neumann delivered a lecture titled "Of Gods and Kings: The Material Legacy of Mesopotamia, Eternal yet Fragile," moderated by Paris-based journalist and public program advisor Rachel Donadio, in the Acropolis Museum's "Dimitrios Pantermalis" auditorium as part of the exhibition programming. She also contributed the essay "Artefacts, Ghosts, and Guardians: The Vulnerable Legacy of Assyrian Cultural Heritage" to the exhibition publication and authored entries for objects loaned by the ISAC Museum, which were featured in both the exhibition labels and catalog. Relatedly, she contributed label text for the display of Rakowitz's work in the Smart Museum of Art's *The 50th: An Anniversary Exhibition* (September 2024–March 2025) at the University of Chicago.

Neumann's scholarly writing in 2024–25 also included a review of Alexander Nagel's *Color and Meaning in the Art of Achaemenid Persia* (Cambridge University Press, 2023) that appeared in the October 2024 issue of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. In addition, she submitted several original works for publication in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. These works included research on the inscribed bronze roundel from Tell Tayinat, the ISAC Museum's collections from its Megiddo Expedition, representations of herpetofauna in Nubian material culture, and the classification and aesthetic appreciation of stones among cuneiform cultures.

Left: Kiersten Neumann delivering the lecture "Of Gods and Kings: The Material Legacy of Mesopotamia, Eternal yet Fragile." Photography © Natalia Tsoukala. Courtesy of NEON, the Acropolis Museum, and M. Rakowitz. Right: Neumann, Michael Rakowitz, and Rachel Donadio at the opening reception of the exhibition *Allspice: Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*. Photo courtesy of K. Neumann.

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Left to right: Prof. Nikolaos Chr. Stampolidis, director general of the Acropolis Museum; Elina Kountouri, director of NEON; Michael Rakowitz, artist. Standing male figure with clasped hands and inlaid eye (ISACM A12434) and standing female figure with clasped hands (ISACM A12412A–B). Michael Rakowitz, *The invisible enemy should not exist (Room H, Northwest Palace of Nimrud) H-21*, 2021. Middle Eastern food packaging and Arabic-English newspapers, with glue on panel. 229.9 × 187.6 × 10.3 cm. *Allspice | Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures,* 2025. Installation view. Photography © Natalia Tsoukala. Courtesy of NEON, the Acropolis Museum, and the artist.

Neumann was active in a range of speaking engagements, both scholarly and public facing. As a 2024–25 National Kershaw Lecturer in Near Eastern Archaeology for the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), she delivered lectures across the country: "Collecting the Ancient World: Early Explorations, Encyclopedic Museums, and World's Exhibitions" for the AIA Society Bozeman (November 2024) and the AIA Society Central Missouri (March 2025); "'Aššur accept! Aššur listen!' Connecting Assyria and Arabia through Incense and Olfaction" for the AIA Society Dallas/Fort Worth (February 2025); and "From Ancient Quarries to New Inquiries: Exhibiting the ISAC Museum's Roman Sculpture Collection in an Age of Greater Transparency" for the AIA Society Salem (February 2025). She was also invited to participate in the 2024 AlUla World Archaeology Symposium in Saudi Arabia hosted by the Royal Commission of AlUla at Maraya in October 2024. This year's convening focused on the future of archaeology and the heritage of nomadic societies. In spring 2025 she co-organized the April symposium "'Trees, Birds, and Funny Words': A Symposium in Honor of Professor Niek Veldhuis" at the University of California, Berkeley, where she presented the paper "What's in a Name? Classification and the Aesthetic Values of Stones." That same month, she took part in the panel "Curating Curiosity: Navigating Free Inquiry and Expression in Museum Exhibits," organized by the student advisory board of the University of Chicago's Forum for Free Inquiry and Expression, at the university's Smart Museum of Art. In May 2025, also at the University of Chicago, she presented in the workshop "The Future of Ancient Near Eastern Art History," held at the Franke Institute for the Humanities and the ISAC Museum.

At international and national scholarly conferences, Neumann presented papers that further explored her work on Assyrian material culture and museum interpretation. She spoke on "'A Star of Reddish Gold Adorned with Precious Stones': Deciphering the Assyrian Roundel from Tell Tayinat" at the 23rd Workshop of the Melammu Project in Wrocław, Poland (September 2024). At the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) in Boston, she presented both "The *Awe*some Original and the Uncanny-Valley Cast: A Case Study with Assyrian Art" and "Centennial Opportunities: The Past and Present at the ISAC Museum" (November 2024). At the 14th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Lyon, France, she delivered the paper "Something Old, Something New: Recontextualizing the Assyrian Roundel from Tell Tayinat" (June 2025). In addition to her scholarly contributions, Neumann played an active leadership role in ASOR: she continued to serve as cochair of the program committee, as a member of the board of trustees, and as organizer of the museum professionals working group. In January 2025, she was honored to join ASOR's executive committee and assume the role of cochair of the development committee.

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Participants and attendees of "'Trees, Birds, and Funny Words': A Symposium in Honor of Professor Niek Veldhuis" at the University of California, Berkeley, in April 2025.

At the University of Chicago, Neumann taught the winter quarter undergraduate/graduate course "Collecting the Ancient World: Museum Practice and Politics" in the Department of Art History. She also advised several students on their theses: as primary advisor for both Esha Patel ("Redefining Cultural Narratives: A Study on Art Repatriation and Museum Power Hierarchies," master of arts, Committee on International Relations) and Brittney Coelho ("Death and Life They Did Establish, The Day of Death They Did Not Reveal: A Reconstruction and Analysis of Denied Funerary Rites in Southern Mesopotamia," master of arts, Center for Middle Eastern Studies) and as second reader for Charlotte Gilmore ("Sculpting an Empire: Shifting Propagandic Priorities in Third-Century Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Naqsh-i Rustam," bachelor of arts, Center for Middle Eastern Studies).

In 2024–25, **SUSANNE PAULUS** started a new chapter in her work as an epigraphist at Nippur: for the first time, she was able to participate in the excavations at the site. In addition to daily field participation, she studied more than fifty brick inscriptions from the site and prepared for publication the season's most significant epigraphic find: a sherd of an inscribed vessel naming several gods. She also presented her research within the framework of the Nippur Tablet Project at the Sixth International Conference of Mesopotamian Archaeology at the University of Al-Qadisiyah in Iraq, thereby strengthening scholarly ties with Iraqi colleagues.

Her research on Kassite legal and economic history advanced with progress on two major book projects. The first one, *Banking with Barley: An Economic History of Late Bronze Age Babylonia*, reached new milestones through chapter drafts and invited lectures, including "Organizing Knowledge in Kassite Bookkeeping" ("Between Anarchy and Hierarchy" workshop, Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki) and "Fragments and Contexts—The Old and New(er) Excavations at Nippur" (Cuneiform Artefacts of Iraq in Context project, Munich). This work has also generated an article in preparation that reassesses archival and administrative materials from Nippur's pre- and postwar excavations. The second book project,

The Kassite Archives from Babylon, was further developed during research stays at the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin and showcased in Paulus's William Foxwell Albright Lecture at Johns Hopkins University titled "Trade in Late Bronze Age Babylonia."

Paulus also concluded several collaborative projects. With colleagues from the University of Chicago's Data Science Institute and Forum for Digital Culture, she coauthored "DeepScribe: Localization and Classification of Elamite Cuneiform Signs via Deep Learning" (*ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 18, no. 2: 1–32; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3716850). And she contributed to the exhibition *Mesopotamia: Kingdom of Gods and Demons* (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest), which closed with a successful workshop that included her presentation "Living in a World of Curses: Gods, Justice, and Kudurrus."

For her work as Tablet Collection curator, see the Tablet Collection and Nippur Tablet Project report.

As part of their project on editing the correspondence of Benno Landsberger (1890–1961), described in the spring/summer 2023 issue of ISAC's member magazine *New & Notes*, **PETER RAULWING** and Luděk Vacín published in early 2025 thirty-four letters and postcards from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and former Czechoslovakia. Their publication of the Landsberger correspondence used material from various archives, libraries, and private collections, including items held by the Landsberger family (Eva Kučerová-Landsbergrová in Frýdek-Místek, Czech Republic). Raulwing and Vacín's annotated edition also contains a letter—archived at ISAC—to Landsberger's former student Lubor Matouš (1908–84), who taught in Prague at the Charles University from 1952 until 1973. Their chapter "Zur Edition der Briefe Benno Landsbergers" appears in the now-published proceedings papers from a November 2021 workshop in Göttingen: *"Semitische Wissenschaften"? Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik im "Dritten Reich,"* edited by Heike Behlmer, Andreas Effland, Thomas L. Gertzen, Orell Witthuhn, and Anette Zgoll, 267–327 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2025).

In another chapter of the same volume ("Zum Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis zwischen Benno Landsberger und Wolfram von Soden," pp. 329–406), Raulwing and Vacín take a closer look at the teacher-student relationship between Landsberger and Wolfram von Soden (1908–96)—Landsberger's most talented student and, from the 1950s, the most influential Assyriologist in Germany—in the light of archival material: Landsberger's letters to and from Fritz Rudolf Kraus (housed in the Leiden University library), as well as documents from various archives (Göttingen University, Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, and others). A main focus of this study is Landsberger's time at ISAC (the former Oriental Institute) from 1948 to 1968 and von Soden's efforts to rehabilitate himself, given his role in Nazi Germany.

Also in this proceedings volume, Raulwing, together with Olaf Matthes, published an English translation of an article they wrote—"On the Expulsion of Jewish Members from the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft in 1938" (pp. 135–82)—the German text of which had been read at a colloquium celebrating the 125th anniversary of the DOG in summer 2023. One of the condemning replies addressed to the board of the DOG was drafted by Egyptologist T. George Allen (1885–1969), long-term editorial secretary of the Oriental Institute and assistant curator at Chicago's Field Museum.

On academic leave for 2024–25, **HERVÉ RECULEAU** was asked to give a keynote lecture at the seventh annual Graduate Symposium in Ancient Near Eastern Studies, held in the spring at Yale University, and was an invited professor at the Collège de France (Paris), where he presented his work on environment and societies in ancient Mesopotamia in a monthlong series of lectures:

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- "Making Clay Speak: In Search of the Ghost Landscapes of Mesopotamia" (https://youtu.be/9iCOL01ksHU)
- "Hydraulics and Societies: Water Control in Mesopotamia and Its Social Implications" (https://youtu.be/GcfLJxZSzG0)
- "The Mesopotamians and Climate: The Climate Paradigm and Its Critics" (https://youtu.be/LSeqzL2CXUo)
- "At the Sources of the Flood: Environmental Catastrophe as a Literary and Religious Motif in Mesopotamia" (https://youtu.be/l5sSladHwXY)

In addition, Reculeau wrote and submitted the proposal for his next book, which has been accepted for publication by Les Éditions du Seuil (Paris) and will be titled *Le Déluge: Écrire l'histoire d'un mythe*, with the initial French edition to be followed by an English version. Finally, he submitted the following articles, now published or in various phases of editing:

- "The Fluidity of Empire: Hydraulics of Neo-Assyrian Canal Systems in Relation to Their Possible Uses," with Alexis Stampoultzidis, Daniele Morandi Bonacossi, Ronald P. Van Nooijen, and Maurits W. Ertsen. *Water History* 16 (2024): 165–85
- "Environmental Aspects of the Neo-Assyrian Forced Migrations." In *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Exile and Forced Migrations*, edited by Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor and Mark W. Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- "Assessing the Role of Climate Change in the Neo-Assyrian to Neo-Babylonian Transition." In *Collapse from the Ground Floor: Approaching the Neo-Assyrian to Neo-Babylonian Transition from Below*, edited by Christopher W. Jones and Jonathan Gardner (Studia Chaburensia; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz)
- "A Hundred and Twenty Years since the Laws of Ḫammurabi: The Legacy of J.-V. Scheil in Old Babylonian Studies." In *The Spirit of Scholarship: The Roman Catholic Background of Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Studies and Its Legacy*, edited by Abraham Winitzer (Modern Catholicisms; Leiden: Brill)
- "Old Babylonian Sources and Historiography in the Early Years of Assyriology." In *Archives paléo-babyloniennes: 150 ans de publications et d'études (1872–2022)*, edited by Dominique Charpin and Antoine Jacquet (Archibab 6; Mémoires de NABU 24; Paris: SEPOA)

SETH RICHARDSON published ten articles this year. They include, in order of publication date (PR = peer-reviewed; OA = open access):

- "First Causes, Individual Focus: Displacement and Inequality, Babylon, 17th c. BCE." In *Crossroads IV: Migration and Mobility in the Ancient Near East and Egypt*, edited by Jana Mynářová et al., 165–90 (Prague: Charles University Press, September 2024). https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.22730452.14
- "'The Plans of the Gods Are Destroyed': Babylonian Doubts about the Gods and War." In *Religion and War from Antiquity to Early Modernity*, edited by Irene Polinskaya et al., 21–39 (London: Bloomsbury, November 2024)
- "Sargonic Points and Vectors: The Geographically Imagined Empire." In *Navigating the Worlds of History: Studies in Honor of Robert Rollinger on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, edited by Kai Ruffing et al., 2:773–802 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, November 2024)

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- "A *mīšarum* of Abi-ešuḫ: Relief, Abuse, and Petition for Redress." *Revue d'assyriologie* 118 (December 2024): 81–89 (PR)
- "Community and State Violence in Middle Bronze Age Mesopotamia," coauthored with Steven J. Garfinkle. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 68, nos. 1–2 (February 2025): 161–99. DOI: http://doi.org/10.1163/15685209-12341641 (PR, OA)
- "State Borders, Other Orders." *Forum Kritische Archäologie* 14 (James C. Scott memorial issue) (April 2025): 43–49. DOI: http://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-47049 (OA)
- "The Organization of Power in Babylonia: Problems and Prospects." In *Monarchies and the Organization of Power: Ancient Egypt and Babylonia Compared* (2100–1750 BC), coauthored with Juan Carlos Moreno García, 2–40 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, May 2025) (PR)
- "To Sneer, Scoff, Scorn, and Cluck: An Onomatopoetic Verbal Complex in R1-n-ṣ?" *Altorientalische Forschungen* 52, no. 1 (May 2025): 66–69. DOI: http://doi.org/10.1515/aofo-2025-2004 (PR, OA)
- "The Sumerian Proverb-Game: Rhetoric, Play, and Political Performance." *Rhetorica* 43, no. 2 (June 2025): 127–69 (PR)
- "Mesopotamian Words for 'Slave': Opacity and Mutability in Early Terms and Practice." *American Historical Review* 130, no. 2 (June 2025): 574–99 (PR)

At the close of the report year, another seven articles were in press and forthcoming.

Richardson presented four academic papers on Mesopotamian history. Three were by invitation: a keynote address on political life at the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Helsinki (July 2024), a roundtable paper on "archival silence" at the American Historical Association in New York City (January 2025), and a working paper on the early relationship between property and law in Tübingen (June 2025). He also presented a paper on toponyms in Old Akkadian royal inscriptions at the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) annual meeting in Boston (November 2024).

Richardson continued his position as coeditor of the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* and as managing editor of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. He acted as an external reviewer for those journals as well as for the European Research Council, the University College London Press, the *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History*, the *Bulletin of ASOR*, and ASOR's Mesopotamian Fellowship. He also acted as an advisor for projects related to methodologies in early-period history writing (for the *American Historical Review*) and on peace and conflict studies (for the Ancient Peace Studies Network, University of St Andrews).

In 2024–25, **YORKE ROWAN** presented papers with colleagues in various venues. In November 2024, at the University of the Côte d'Azur, France, he and Austin Chad Hill (University of Pennsylvania) presented a research paper titled "Deep Learning in the Margins: Kites, Wheels, and Other Features in the Black Desert, Jordan" at the symposium "The Black Desert in Context: Insights into Cross-Regional Connections in the Levant during Prehistory." And at the annual meeting of the American Society for Overseas Research in Boston, he and Hill, along with Emily Hammer, Kathleen Morrison, and Jordan Brown, presented "Contextualizing the Black Desert: Building a New Database from Old Imagery," and he, Hill, Blair Heidkamp (University of Texas at Austin), Gary Rollefson (Whitman College and San Diego State University), and Morag Kersel (DePaul University) presented "Neolithic Buildings at Wadi al-Madath: The Kites in Context Excavations, 2023."

At the first World Neolithic Congress held in Şanlıurfa, Türkiye, Rowan and Alexander Wasse (Yeditepe University, Istanbul) presented "Not a Place for Respectable People, but the Ends of the Earth

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Converge There: Transregional Networks and the Steppe during the Seventh and Sixth Millennia BC." Published in *Levant* 56, no. 1 (2024): 1–32, this study was awarded Best Paper by the Council for British Research in the Levant.

Rowan's other publications focused on his research projects in Jordan. His most recent publication, coauthored with Rollefson, Wasse, Wael Abu-Azizeh (Université Lumière Lyon), and Hill, is titled "The Multifaceted Site of Wisad Pools, Black Desert" and appeared in *Reframing the "Desert Frontier": Studies in the Ancient Near East and Northern Arabia in Honour of David Kennedy*, edited by Rebecca Repper, Robert Bewley, and Mike Bishop (Sydney University Press, 2025). Finally, in June 2025, the University of Chicago's International Institute of Research in Paris notified Rowan that he was awarded $5,000 in support of the project "Critical Margins: Neolithic Connections beyond the Fertile Crescent," a conference co-organized with Marie-Laure Chambrade, former Marie-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at ISAC, to be held in Nice, France.

FOY SCALF made significant progress on a range of milestones over the 2024–25 report year. In addition to being appointed interim director of the ISAC Data Research Center at the end of the year, continuing to serve as head of the Research Archives, managing ISAC's integrated database, and leading the implementation team for the ISAC website redesign, he completed a substantial number of publications; presented numerous conference talks, lectures, and classes; and responded to several media requests.

In May 2025, Scalf submitted his manuscript "The Getty Book of the Dead: Ancient Egyptian Manuscripts in the J. Paul Getty Museum" for publication by the Getty. Clocking in at more than 700 pages, the volume brings together introductory essays by Scalf, Yekaterina Barbash, Judith Barr, Sara Cole, and Erin Jue contextualizing the Getty's collection, its provenance, and its conservation treatments. The bulk of the book consists of complete editions of twenty-one manuscripts on papyrus and linen, including high-resolution photographs, hieroglyphic transcriptions, transliterations, translations, and commentaries. The volume will be available simultaneously as an open-access online publication and a printed book. It is scheduled for release in spring 2026.

Scalf's article "New Papyri from the Bab el Gasus? The Prosopography and Provenience of Papyrus HM 84123" appeared in the *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 125 (2025), 425–48. In the article, he hypothesized that the previously unrecognized owner of a papyrus in the Huntington Library (P. HM 84123) may have been the same woman who owned a papyrus in the Cairo Museum (S.R.VII.10242). An implication stemming from this argument required reassigning eight papyri to four individual ancient owners (whereas previous suggestions assigned them all to a single person). Two additional articles moved through the peer-review process and are slated to appear later in 2025, one in the *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* and the other in *The Special Grammar of Traditional Literature: Studies Building on Albert Lord's "Special Grammar"* in Brill's Mnemosyne Supplements / Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World series.

Scalf continued to make progress on several digital humanities projects, including two based on the University of Chicago's OCHRE (Online Cultural and Historical Research Environment) database: ISAC Museum Demotic Ostraca and Critical Editions for Digital Analysis and Research: Book of the Dead. Likewise, he has been working closely with Rita Lucarelli (University of California, Berkeley) and Kasia Szpakowska (formerly at Swansea University) to resurrect, revamp, and preserve the Demon Things: Ancient Egyptian Demonology project. Future annual reports will provide detailed updates on the substantial progress of bringing this project back to life.

Scalf gave presentations at a wide range of conferences and events. In August 2024, he presented "Archives and Sites: Integrating and Linking Data in EMu and Beyond" at Axiell Meetup Chicago, hosted

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by the Field Museum. On December 8, he gave the Barbara W. Herman Memorial Lecture for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, on "Everyday Magic: The Spellbinding Life of the Book of the Dead." On March 20, 2025, he participated with University of Chicago colleagues Adrian Johns (Department of History), Tamara Golan (Department of Art History), and Elizabeth Frengel (curator of rare books and director of the Kim-Park Program) for the inauguration of the Kim-Park Program for the Study of the Book at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library. He gave further public scholarship talks in and around Chicago for The Clare, The Admiral at the Lake, Glenside Public Library, and Glencoe Public Library.

Scalf taught five classes throughout the year, including "Introduction to Hieroglyphs" 1 and 2 (autumn 2024) and "Introduction to Coptic" 1 and 2 (winter and spring 2025) for ISAC and the eighth iteration of "History of the Text: Early Books and Manuscripts Up to the Age of the Printing Press" (spring 2025) for Dominican University. In spring 2025 he also guest lectured on "What Is, versus What Was, the Book of the Dead: Museum Exhibition as Critical Reflection" for the course "Religion of Ancient Egypt," taught by Rita Lucarelli at the University of California, Berkeley.

MEHRNOUSH SOROUSH dedicated a substantial part of her research time in 2024–25 to advancing and fundraising for A3RD (AI-Assisted Archaeological Remains Detection), a project of the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL), as well as planning and supervising other CAMEL projects (see more details in the CAMEL report). She also submitted several funding applications to secure a full sabbatical research leave and received a Franke Institute Fellowship (from the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities), which will allow her to dedicate the 2025–26 academic year to completing her monograph *The Long Life of Water: A History of the Shushtar Historic Hydraulic System*.

During the past year, Soroush continued her previous research on Near Eastern irrigation history and ventured into new topics. Her individual research and research collaborations resulted in one published study, "Dynamics of Agricultural Investment in al-Ahwaz in the Late Antique to Early Islamic Period," in *Land and Trade in Early Islam: The Economy of the Islamic Middle East 750–1050 CE*, edited by Hugh Kennedy and Fanny Bessard (Oxford University Press, 2025); a chapter titled "A Remote-Sensing Perspective on the Sasanian Hydraulic Projects: Re-examining the Irrigation Discourse," which has been accepted for publication in *The Sasanians in Context: Art, History, and Archaeology*, a forthcoming volume of the Smithsonian Institution; and two coauthored articles, "The Karez (Qanat) Landscape of the Erbil Plain" and "Site Suitability Analysis of Arsacid Period Sites in the Iranian Borderland Region of the Araxes River Valley," the first submitted to the journal *Iraq* and the second to the *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*. She also continued processing data from 2023 fieldwork in Erbil on new seismic methods for deep archaeological mapping, to be incorporated in two articles in progress.

In January 2025, Soroush joined the Suhar Project (see Suhar Project report), codirected by Derek Kennet (ISAC) and Seth Priestman (Durham University), to reinvestigate the archaeological landscape of subterranean irrigation (qanats, known locally as *aflāj*), which had been famously studied by CAMEL's founding director, the late Tony Wilkinson, in the 1980s. Soroush prepared for her fieldwork by undertaking extensive remote-sensing investigations of the Suhar landscape (assisted by CAMEL staff Harrison Morin and Ruijie Yao), which resulted in a complete reassessment of the state of landscape preservation and mapping of promising areas for future fieldwork, to be pursued by the Suhar Project in the coming years.

In 2024–25, **GIL STEIN** presented three conference papers deriving from his archaeological excavations at Surezha and cultural heritage projects in Afghanistan and Central Asia:

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- "Preserving the 15th–16th Century Timurid Period Sufi Mosque of Langar Ota, Uzbekistan: A Progress Report," with Fabio Colombo, at the First International Scientific and Practical Symposium "Topical Issues in the Study and Preservation of Material Cultural Heritage of the Silk Road," October 2–3, 2024, Samarkand, Uzbekistan
- "Tiptoeing across the Threshold: Early Copper Use and Inter-regional Interaction in Chalcolithic Greater Mesopotamia," at the Society for American Archaeology annual meeting, April 24, 2025, Denver, Colorado
- "Databases and Cultural Heritage in Conflict Zones: Case Studies of Preservation through Documentation," at the conference "Frontiers and Emerging Challenges in Cultural Heritage Preservation," May 19, 2025, University of Chicago Boyer Center, Paris, France

As the principal investigator for two US Department of State–sponsored cultural heritage grants, Stein continued his work in Uzbekistan (see Cultural Heritage Preservation in Central Asia project report). He completed a two-year grant from the US Department of State's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation for the project "Conservation and Restoration of the Langar Ota Timurid Mosque, Qashqadaryo Province, Uzbekistan," and in May 2025, he participated in the US Embassy Tashkent's on-site ceremony marking the completion of the Chicago preservation work at the Langar Ota mosque. In October 2024, he implemented the first of two workshops as part of the grant-funded Cultural Training Partnership for Artifact Conservation (CTPAC) to provide advanced training for conservators from the national museums of the five Central Asian republics (C5). This two-year grant supports the completion of an earlier four-year C5 CTPAC grant by training conservators from all five Central Asian republics in eight essential areas of museum conservation science. The first workshop was held in Tashkent at the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan.

In addition to this work, in September 2024 Stein continued his archaeological excavations at the prehistoric sixth- to fourth-millennium BCE site of Surezha in the Kurdistan region of northeastern Iraq (see Surezha Excavations project report). These excavations have been ongoing since 2013. He also continued his research and work on the manuscript of a forthcoming book, *Catalog of the Hadda Collections at the National Museum of Afghanistan*, coauthored with Alejandro Gallego López and rescheduled for completion in fall 2025.

In tandem with his cultural heritage work, Stein published two reports in 2024–25:

- "Surezha Excavations," with Michael T. Fisher. In *ISAC Annual Report 2023–2024*, edited by Timothy P. Harrison, 71–84 (Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024)
- "Cultural Heritage Preservation in Central Asia." In *ISAC Annual Report 2023–2024*, edited by Timothy P. Harrison, 15–21 (Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024)

EMILY TEETER continued to work with Chicago's Field Museum as the content provider (cocurator) of the Egyptian and Nubian sections of the new Africa galleries slated to open in spring 2028.

Her monograph *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago* (ISAC Museum Publications 2) appeared in September 2024. The publication was the focus of two ISAC book club meetings (with managing editor of ISAC publications Andrew Baumann) in January and also of a Breasted Society Salon in June.

A related exhibition—also titled *Chicago on the Nile* and curated by Teeter, J. Brett McClain, and Catherine Witt—opened at the ISAC Museum on September 16, 2024, and ran through March 23, 2025.

Teeter enjoyed working with Denise Browning, manager of the Museum Shop, to develop exhibition-related products, some of which will be sold in other museum shops.

Teeter's long-delayed *Ancient Egyptian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago*, coauthored with and edited by Ashley Arico, was finally released as an online catalog. This rich resource presents 110 objects with their cultural and technical contexts and is illustrated with open-access photography (https://doi.org/10.53269/9780865593213). It is the first extensive catalog of the Art Institute's collection since 1923, when *A Handbook of the Egyptian Collection*, by Oriental Institute Egyptologist T. G. Allen, appeared. Teeter also published a chapter titled "The Mummy and Coffin of Meresamun (Chicago OIM E10797)" in *From Objects to Histories: Studies in Honour of John H. Taylor*, edited by Nigel Strudwick and David A. Aston (Abercromby, 2024).

In July 2024, Teeter participated in a Study Day at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she spoke on cult statues as the museum curators prepared the exhibition *Divine Egypt*, opening in October 2025. She also contributed an essay to the show's catalog, and she reviewed manuscripts for the *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies*.

In September 2024, Teeter attended the annual meeting of the Comité international pour l'égyptologie (CIPEG) in Madrid, where she gave a paper on the Field Museum project, and in April 2025 she traveled to San Francisco to attend the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE). In November and December 2024, she led two ISAC tours to Egypt in celebration of the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey, and another in February 2025 operated by the Smithsonian for "friends and family." She served on the lecture team for another Smithsonian voyage to the Gulf.

Teeter continues to serve on the boards of Writings of the Ancient World, CIPEG, and the Chicago chapter of ARCE.

In addition to continuing his work on the Chicago Hittite Dictionary project (see separate report), **THEO VAN DEN HOUT** submitted several articles for publication in 2024–25, including a contribution to an April 2024 conference on hunting in the ancient world—"L'iconographie cynégétique dans les mondes anciens," held in Paris—and two articles for edited volumes honoring colleagues in the field of cuneiform studies. Van den Hout was invited to give the annual Veenhof Lecture at Leiden University in the Netherlands on November 21, 2024, where he spoke on "The Compassionate Master, or the Limits of Hittite Political Rhetoric." In the winter, he was interviewed for a podcast by Cameron Clark, a graduating fourth-year University of Chicago student majoring in classics and economics. The topic of the podcast, which constituted Clark's senior thesis, was the prevailing theory in Hittitology that the cemetery immediately north of the capital, Hattusa, and known by its Turkish name, Osmankayası, was used only for the lower classes of Hittite society. Clark convincingly questioned this theory and raised the possibility that the Hittite elite may also have found their last resting place there. On March 28, 2025, and together with ISAC research associate Peter Raulwing, van den Hout gave an online presentation organized by *Cheiron: The International Journal of Equine and Equestrian History* titled "The Kikkuli Text (CTH 284): A Brief Interdisciplinary History." The presentation was part of a current project of van den Hout's and Raulwing's on the Kikkuli text, a detailed and overall well-preserved Hittite-language training manual for horses (Kikkuli being the name of a horse trainer from Mittani). Van den Hout concluded the year by teaching a course on Hittite literature for ISAC members.

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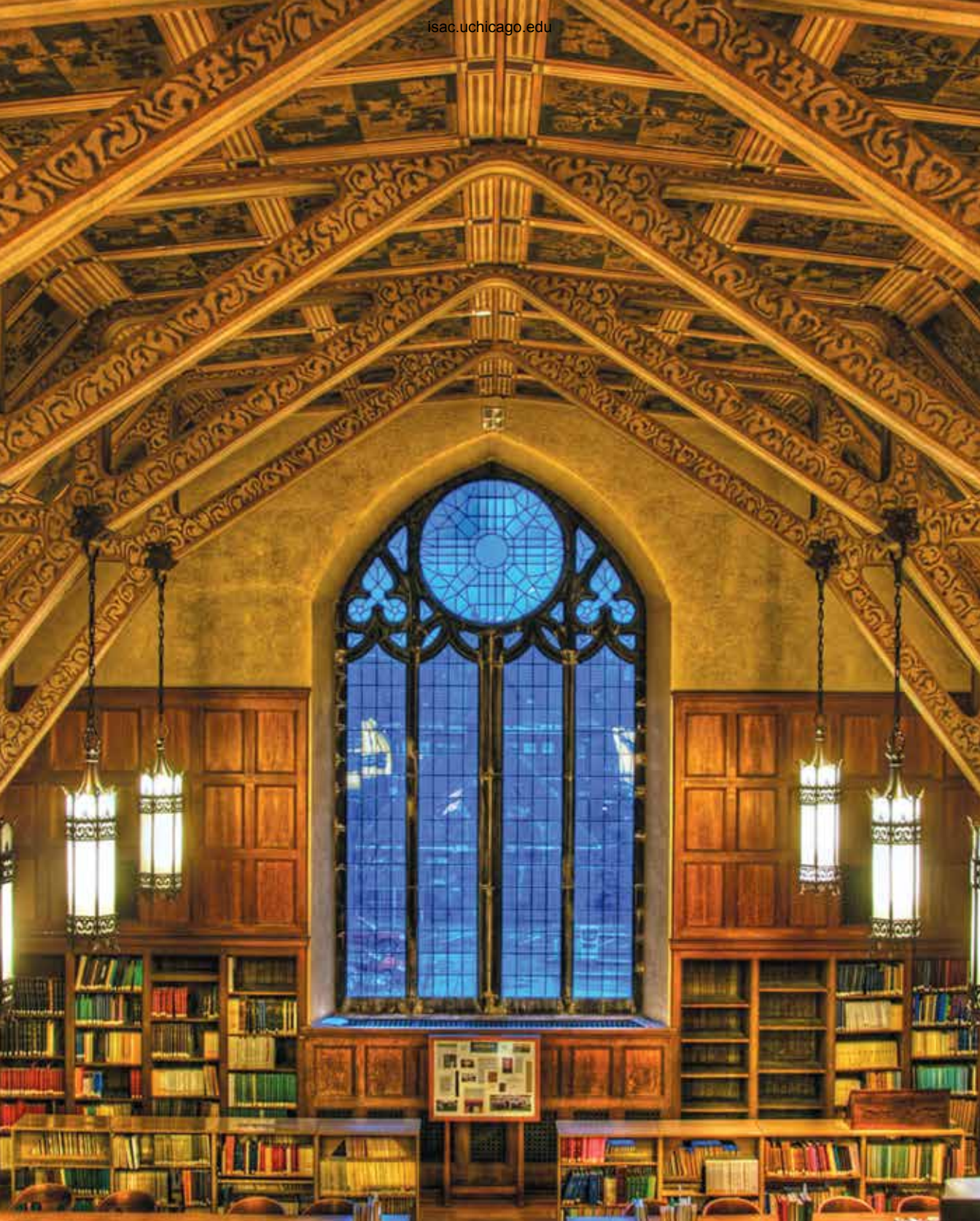
TASHA VORDERSTRASSE, manager of ISAC's continuing education program, facilitated and taught multiple adult education classes and provided University of Chicago and Laboratory School tours (see Programs and Education: Adult Education in the Museum report). She taught the following classes: "Exhibiting the East: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and 1933 Century of Progress" (four weeks); "Medieval Christian Art: Coptic Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia/Eritrea" (five weeks); and "Envisioning Ancient Landscapes: Robert Duncanson's Paintings of Antiquity and Ruins" (Juneteenth free class).

In November 2024, Vorderstrasse cochaired the Archaeology of Islamic Society sessions at the annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research in Boston. At the same conference, she presented "Stupas from Space: Investigating the Landscape of the Jalalabad Region" and copresented, with Brian Muhs, "Epigraphy and Conflict in the Napatan, Meroitic, and Aksumite Empires." In April 2025, at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, held in San Francisco, she presented "The Pyramid Tomb of Amanikhatashan of Meroe: Inscriptions and Material Culture." In June 2025, her article "Identity Based on Coptic Textile Terminology in Late Antique Egypt" appeared in *Outward Appearance versus Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World* (ISAC Seminars 15), edited by Aleksandra Hallmann, 457–82. She also submitted the article "Archaeology of Aksumite Coin Circulation in Ethiopia and Eritrea" for a Festschrift, as well as a copyedited version of her article "Imagining Balkh: The Chinese Perception of Central Asia during the Tang Dynasty," originally submitted in 2014, for the forthcoming volume *The City of Balkh: History and Culture of a Great Islamic Capital*, scheduled for publication by Bloomsbury Academic in 2026.

KAREN L. WILSON is currently reviewing the proofs of *Nippur VI: The Inanna Temple*, which was accepted for publication by ISAC and will appear in the Nippur series edited by McGuire Gibson. The volume—coauthored by Wilson, Richard L. Zettler, Jean M. Evans, and Robert D. Biggs, with the assistance of Felix Rauchhaus and Walther Sallaberger—will be the final publication of ISAC's excavation of the Inanna Temple at the site of Nippur in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The ISAC Publications office is currently editing and laying out the volume(s).

Wilson also continued to serve as the Kish project coordinator and research associate at the Chicago Field Museum, where she conducted research on the work of the 1923–32 Field Museum–Oxford University Joint Expedition to Kish.



RESEARCH SUPPORT

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OVERLEAF: The ISAC Research Archives.

CENTER FOR ANCIENT MIDDLE EASTERN LANDSCAPES

MEHRNOUSH SOROUSH

Building on last year's exploratory workshops, the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL) dedicated more resources in 2024–25 to our AI-Assisted Archaeological Remains Detection (A3RD) project, which aims to develop an open-source, artificial intelligence (AI)–based geospatial remote-sensing platform specifically designed to detect archaeological features on satellite imagery (for more information, see https://camelab.uchicago.edu/project/a3rd/). We focused our efforts on strengthening campus partnerships, expanding our collaboration with other institutions, and seeking funding to advance our project. These activities included deepening our partnership with the University of Chicago's Research and Computing Center (RCC); in addition to our long-term collaborator, Parmanand Sinha, new RCC staff members became involved in our work, assisting with grant applications in particular. We also launched an exciting collaboration with the university's Data Science Institute (DSI), welcoming to our core team DSI professor Nicholas Ross, who directs the University of Chicago's Data Science Clinic.

We applied for several internal and external grants to fund our ongoing research and to support the implementation of our ideas. As CAMEL director, I received a faculty grant from the University of Chicago's International Institute of Research in Paris to hold a weeklong workshop/hackathon at its John W. Boyer Center. On March 16–23, 2025, we worked closely with previous external collaborators Rémi Cresson, a remote-sensing engineer from France's National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment (INRAE), and Emad Khazraee, vice president of data science and AI at Xometry, as well as with new partners Andrew Wilson, professor of the archaeology of the Roman Empire at the University of Oxford and principal investigator of Oxford's Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East & North Africa (EAMENA) project, and Bijan Rouhani, EAMENA senior researcher and project manager. We introduced our project design concept and workflows to the EAMENA team, and together we tested a multicollaborator, Amazon Web Services–run cloud environment in which all participants independently tested our proof of concept. Finally, after receiving feedback on extensive documentation developed by the CAMEL A3RD team, we designed our platform architecture and prepared a roadmap for the subsequent phases (figs. 1–2).

In spring 2025, CAMEL partnered with ISAC's newly launched Data Research Center (DRC) in applying for a grant for an ISAC-led AI project. Our joint proposal, "New Frontiers in AI-Driven Knowledge Discovery of Human-Environment Interaction, History, Language, and Material Culture," submitted in June, was one of three preproposals from the university's Division of the Arts & Humanities advanced to the full-proposal stage. This proposal, which consumed much of the CAMEL team's time and resources in spring 2025, resulted in an ambitious and exciting plan that positions ISAC (CAMEL and the DRC) as a hub for cross-campus collaboration on *longue durée* human-environment history by deploying AI and other computational methodologies. Our proposal-development workshops included interested potential collaborators from many units and departments, including the Committee on Geography, Environment, and Urbanization; the RCC, Urban Theory Lab, DSI, and Center for Spatial Data Science; and the Departments of Art History and Geophysical Sciences.

Figure 1. CAMEL team and collaborators, with the John W. Boyer Center in the background. From left to right: Caglayan Bal, Jiayue Wang, Remi Cresson (INRAE), Mehrnoush Soroush, Dominik Lukas, Yuwei Zhou, Emad Khazraee (Xometry), Parmanand Sinha (RCC). Not pictured: Andrew Wilson and Bijan Rouhani (University of Oxford and EAMENA).

Figure 2. Workshop participants assessing the results of automated-detection tests. Standing: Andrew Wilson (University of Oxford and EAMENA).

During 2024–25, CAMEL also began a major initiative to digitize historical U-2 reconnaissance aerial photographs acquired by the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, now declassified and stored at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, Maryland. Although the U-2 collection is smaller than the better-known CORONA and HEXAGON archives, the collection's combination of early temporal coverage and high special resolution (0.5 m/pixel) makes it a valuable resource for archaeological research. Digitizing U-2 images is laborious and complex; it requires multiple trips to NARA to work with custom equipment during limited business hours. Although a few scholars have acquired images from the archive for their personal use, public access to it remains constrained. CAMEL's goal is to digitize and assess the U-2 imagery and, ultimately, to make our digitized images available to researchers (fig. 3). While previous acquisition efforts focused on Egypt, the Levant, and Mesopotamia, this year we began acquiring images of flights over Iran, which have never been systematically obtained. For this project, we explored using a different method than that used in previous efforts—namely, taking a slower but more selective approach using large-frame negative scanners.

In addition to these larger projects, several contract and collaborative research projects have been pursued and are near competition—most importantly, a pilot research project between CAMEL and scholars at the University of California, Berkeley, and in the University of Chicago's Department of Geophysical Sciences that investigates a new, noninvasive method for mapping deeply buried archaeological features. In 2024–25, we also welcomed three CAMEL scholars in residence as part of our early-career scholar support and mentorship program: Kate Rose (PhD Harvard, 2024), who investigates settlement patterns in North Sudan using the remote-sensing technologies of light detection and ranging, or LiDAR, and thermal imagery; Safa Mahmoudian (research scholar, Vienna University), who has a project on the early Islamic gardens of Samarra; and Henry Bacha (PhD student in anthropology, University of Chicago), who is working on landscapes of camelid movement in the Andes. These individuals bring an exciting range of new topics into CAMEL's community conversations through their research questions and brown-bag presentations.

Figure 3. Comparison of the resolution of historical images of the Sasanian fortress complex in the city of Kerman, Iran, on (a) U-2 aerial imagery, 1480 mission (1958); (b) CORONA satellite imagery, KH-4A mission (1970); and (c) HEXAGON, KH-9 mission (1984).

As always, I am indebted to the talent, dedication, and motivation of CAMEL's research staff and collaborators. The A3RD project included research assistants Dominik Lukas, Yuwei Zhou, Jiayue Wang, and Caglayan Bal.

Ruijie Yao spearheaded the U-2 digitization project. Harrison Morin supported and supervised multiple contract and collaborative projects, including the building of a remote-sensing database for northern Oman and standardizing our cartographic production. Ruijie Yao and Julian McCoy worked on the Oman remote-sensing project. Olivia Fiser continued the laborious work of organizing our map archives. And last but not least, CAMEL supervisor Dominik Lukas has been an indispensable contributor to the lab's successful operation by supporting me in coordinating and supervising all projects.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all of CAMEL's friends and supporters. Special thanks go to ISAC's administration for funding and invaluable administrative support, including ISAC director Tim Harrison, Sheheryar Hasnain, Marianna Capeles, and Matt Perley, as well as to Foy Scalf, whose masterful leadership of ISAC's Integrated Database Project and related software maintenance and improvement is crucial for our success. Write to CAMEL at camel@uchicago.edu or to me at mehrnoush@uchicago.edu if you would like to receive our newsletter, if you wonder whether CAMEL can support your research needs, if you need help organizing your spatial data or producing publication maps, or if you are interested in collaborating with us or funding one of our many projects. We love to hear from our community.

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JOURNAL OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

SETH RICHARDSON

The *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* published its eighty-fourth volume this year. Continuing the earlier journal titles *Hebraica* (1884–95) and *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* (1895–1941), *JNES* has now presented 141 years of scholarly work altogether. The topical range of the journal has expanded far beyond the original 1880s focus on Semitics and Hebrew (which at that time meant only Biblical Hebrew) and now engages work on dozens of ancient and medieval language cultures. Yet the seed of wider study was already present in William Rainey Harper's 1884 inaugural essay, "The Purpose of *Hebraica*" (*Hebraica* 1, no. 1: 1–5), conjuring up the image of overworked ministers and professors everywhere who needed more context and guidance than translation work alone could provide. The "men who occupy the Old Testament chairs of our theological seminaries," Harper wrote, "cannot be professors of language merely." Stepping ever so gently on the accelerator, the author of the very next essay in that first issue—Hermann Strack, in "The Higher Criticism" (pp. 5–10)—pressed the case for interpretive work and admonished those who viewed critical engagement with scriptural texts as "a danger to the faith, and consequently by principle stand aloof from all such work." He urged them to make space for further thought and to accept a practice of critical reflection on the texts—a remonstration radical enough for the day.

Thus began the long journey from a nineteenth-century quarterly bulletin filled with two-page notices on "The Intermediate Syllable" and reviews of Hebrew–German dictionaries all the way to our twenty-first-century glossy, biannual journal, which ranges across many topics—this year, for example, Mesopotamian rituals for dealing with evil dreams, the evolution of Ṣūfī brotherhood lodges, and the Syriac letters of quarreling bishops. Much of the journal's development tracks closely with the general history of the "Orientalist" disciplines as they grew in number and diversified in nature, from divinity schools to history departments, from dictionary projects to the postwar years of foreign-language studies (adding Ottoman Turkish, Uzbek, Armenian, and others). But the process was hardly passive. The journal worked toward change: consider its two changes of title and focus; its ever-expanding publication of work in languages as varied as Soqotran, Geʿez, and Judeo-Arabic; its topics as assorted as protohistoric political identity, the existential commitments of Assyrian verbs, and the social location of Egyptian slaves as indicated by their personal names; and its inclusion of contributions in art history, comparative literature, and social history—fields of study that Harper's time did not countenance as part of the academic pantheon. The living tradition of research embodied in the pages of *JNES* recognizes the ancient and medieval worlds as profoundly mobile, diverse, polyglot, heterodox, and multicultural—underlying realities of the human past that no facile chauvinism can alter or deny. As much as times have changed, we will remain, with Harper, not "professors of language merely."

This year's issues of *JNES*—83, no. 2 (October 2024), and 84, no. 1 (April 2025)—contained fifteen articles and nineteen book reviews comprising 341 pages of published scholarly work. In addition to some of the topics mentioned above, these issues featured research on Kassite-period burial practices; the reconstruction of two Assyrian rituals of protection—one against Lamaštu, a demon, another against *Šurpu*, "Burning"; the history of the Syriac church in the transition period from late Byzantine to early Islamic times; the discursive context of Egyptian mural art; the personified attributes of Mesopotamian ritual kettledrums; the linguistic strategies of Judean mercenaries stationed in Achaemenid Egypt; and the literary allusions of Genesis 11:1–9 to Babylonian literature. Our Forum piece in *JNES* 84, no. 1 focused attention

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on the role of humor in Mesopotamian schooling by tying literary varia about fart jokes and jesters' antics to issues of pedagogy and learning cognition in the Babylonian Eduba.

The journal received a slightly smaller set of submissions this year than it has in years past: sixty-seven new manuscripts were sent to us between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. Several of them went through multiple rounds of review. Thirty-four full rounds of external review were completed, with an average of 2.3 reviewers per manuscript. The following chart outlines the status of these sixty-seven submissions at the end of the year (a count that excludes several manuscripts submitted prior to report year 2024–25 that were still under review or being revised).

Submissions with external review process	27
Accepted	10
Returned to author for minor revisions	3
Returned for major revisions	4
Rejected	6
Currently under review	4
Desk rejected	38
Withdrawn by the author	2

Our acceptance rate this year was thus 14.9 percent. For comparison, 2022–23 gave us seventy-six manuscripts and an acceptance rate of 17.1 percent; 2023–24 brought us seventy-one manuscripts and a 12.6 percent acceptance rate. Our time-to-decision remained prompt: external reviews of manuscripts submitted in 2024–25 were completed in an average of 52.7 days (7.5 weeks). Most accepted manuscripts were published within six months of decision, and none after more than twelve months. With the benefit of scholarly review and revision, our authors publish their work better and faster in *JNES* than in the supposedly "easier" outlets of workshop volumes and Festschrifts, which often take years to reach publication.

As ever, the work of the journal becomes meaningful and even possible only through the contributions of diverse and international readers, authors, and manuscript reviewers. *JNES* is accessible and read in virtually every country in the world. In 2024 alone, our top fifty articles of the past decade were accessed online more than 13,000 times; our worldwide citation score as calculated by Scopus has doubled since 2019. The scholars publishing in *JNES* come from all over the world: among the authors of articles, book reviews, and Forum comments this year, twenty-two worked at institutions in the United States, while nineteen others were in Israel (5), Germany (4), Iraq (3), the United Kingdom (2), Ireland (2), Türkiye, Spain, and the Netherlands (1 each). We depended on a similarly wide array of expertise in obtaining external evaluations of submitted work. Of the sixty-one external reviewers who completed manuscript evaluations, just over half (33) were based at institutions in the United States, while twenty-eight were in other countries, including Germany (8), the United Kingdom (4), Canada and Spain (3 each), Israel and Switzerland (2 each), and Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Qatar, and Türkiye (1 each).

Lest those lists look "US heavy," it is worth emphasizing that about half of these colleagues working in the United States come from other countries, and conversely about half of those working in other countries come from the United States. The broad strength of reciprocity in authorship and evaluation is striking: our scholarship relies on an exchange of ideas made possible only through an extensive network of international cooperation and dialogue. Harm done to these systems of interconnection by exclusion—whether by visa denial, academic boycott, or funding cutoff—does damage not just to this or that article, to one review or another, but to whole projects, working groups, and lineages of scholarship built up over decades. (We might remember here, by way of further example, that Chicago's Assyrian Dictionary project mostly relied on editors who came to the United States from other countries—Germany especially, but also Hungary,

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Austria, Canada, Israel, Finland, the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark. "Americans" were in the minority.)

Our academic institutions, networks, and traditions are highly dependent on governments for support. We are uniquely vulnerable to recissions, restrictions, and censorship. We are also uniquely equipped to work together. Mobilizing the legacies and living practices of international cooperation is essential to maintain the level of excellent work on which our readers rely.

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PUBLICATIONS

ANDREW BAUMANN

Seven monographs were published during the 2024–25 report year (fig. 1):

- *Unpublished Bo-Fragments in Transliteration III (Bo 6087–Bo 6434)*, by Oğuz Soysal. Chicago Hittite Dictionary Supplements 4. Published August 2024.
- *A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner*, edited by Foy D. Scalf and Brian P. Muhs. Studies in Ancient Cultures 3. Published September 2024.
- *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*, by Emily Teeter. ISAC Museum Publications 2. Published September 2024.
- *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 CE by Strategius of Mar Saba*, by Sean W. Anthony and Stephen J. Shoemaker. Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East 5. Published January 2025.
- *Unpublished Bo-Fragments in Transliteration IV (Bo 2689–Bo 5660)*, by Oğuz Soysal. Chicago Hittite Dictionary Supplements 5. Published March 2025.
- *Insights into Islamic Archaeology and Material Culture: A Conference in Jerusalem*, edited by Katia Cytryn, Kristoffer Damgaard, and Donald Whitcomb. Studies in Ancient Cultures 4. Published June 2025.
- *Outward Appearance versus Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World*, edited by Aleksandra Hallmann. ISAC Seminars 15. Published June 2025.

Related to this year's two special exhibitions, *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt* (September 17, 2024–March 23, 2025) and *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections* (April 17–August 17, 2025), the ISAC publications office facilitated the production and printing of two children's activity books:

- *So You Want to Be an Epigrapher?* by Catherine Witt (text) and Joshua Tulisiak (illustrations), with J. Brett McClain. ISAC Miscellaneous Publications. Published September 2024.
- *A Day in the Life of a 19th Century Photographer*, by Marc Maillot (text) and Joshua Tulisiak (illustrations). ISAC Miscellaneous Publications. Published April 2025.

Also this year, the publications office produced the 2023–24 annual report and four issues of ISAC's member magazine, *News & Notes*; copyedited and proofread the wall and case texts for the year's two special exhibitions; and made progress on the production of several titles that will be published in 2025–26.

In June 2025, a monograph published in March 2024 in the Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East series—*An Armenian Futūḥ Narrative: Ełewond's Eighth-Century History of the Caliphate*, by Sergio La Porta and Alison M. Vacca—was awarded the Mediterranean Seminar's Prize for Best Edition and Translation. The prize announcement described La Porta and Vacca's edition and translation of this Armenian chronicle as "a model of scholarly rigor and style" (https://www.mediterraneanseminar.org/book-prize-2025).

Two book manuscripts submitted during this report year for possible publication by ISAC were still out for peer review at the end of the year; they included one manuscript that had been substantially revised

Figure 1. The seven monographs published this year.

in response to feedback received during a first round of peer review last year. Two other book manuscripts, submitted during the 2023–24 report year, were accepted this year: the latest installment of Oğuz Soysal's edition (in transliteration with text-critical notes) of unpublished Boğazköy tablets in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara, and the two-volume final report on ISAC's 2007–8 Nubian Expedition excavations at al-Widay. In addition, production started on a non-peer-reviewed volume that will accompany ISAC's spring 2026 special exhibition on animals in ancient Nubia.

As of June 30, 2025, the following twelve manuscripts—which include the two manuscripts accepted this year, as well as the forthcoming special-exhibition catalog—constituted the backlog of monographs in production. Most of them had been copyedited or were being edited, and several of them had been typeset and were being proofread.

- *Nippur VI: The Inanna Temple*, by Richard L. Zettler and Karen L. Wilson, with contributions by Robert D. Biggs, Jean M. Evans, McGuire Gibson, Richard C. Haines, Donald P. Hansen, James Knudstad, Walther Sallaberger, and John C. Sanders. ISAC Publications.
- *Center and Periphery: The Archaeology of Politics at Ešnunna from the Ur III Period to the Old Babylonian Period*, by Clemens Reichel. Studies in Ancient Cultures.
- *Excavations at Serra East, Part 8—Serre Matto: The Christian-Period Churches, Houses, Workshops, and Cemetery*, by Bruce Beyer Williams, with contributions by Nadejda Reshetnikova, Robin Seignobos, Alexandros Tsakos, and Dobrochna Zielińska. Nubian Expedition.

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- *Excavations at Serra East, Part 9—Serre Matto: The Christian-Period Pottery, Small Objects, Glass, and Texts*, by Bruce Beyer Williams, with contributions by Carol Meyer, Alexandros Tsakos, Tasha Vorderstrasse, and Donald Whitcomb. Nubian Expedition.
- *Lowland Susiana in the Fourth Millennium*, by Abbas Alizadeh. ISAC Publications.
- *Iraqi Excavations in the Diyala Region: New Excavations at Tell Asmar (Ancient Eshnunna), 2001–2002, and Excavations at Tell Muqdadiya, 1980*, by Hussein Ali Hamza and Salah Rmaiydh, with contributions by Daniel Mahoney, Alexandra Witsel, and Hervé Reculeau. Translated and initially edited by Mark Altaweel. Finally edited, with additional notes, by McGuire Gibson. ISAC Miscellaneous Publications.
- *Ancient Iran in the ISAC Museum: From Prehistory to the Achaemenid Period*, by Abbas Alizadeh. ISAC Museum Publications.
- *A Connecting Polemic in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Correspondence of Leo III and ʿUmar II*, edited and translated by Thomas E. Burman, Nuria de Castilla, Seonyoung Kim, Sergio La Porta, Jeremy Pearson, and Alison M. Vacca. Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East 6.
- *Ḫattannaš: A Festschrift in Honor of Theo van den Hout*, edited by Petra Goedegebuure and Joost Hazenbos, with the assistance of Emily Smith. Studies in Ancient Cultures 5.
- *Unpublished Bo-Fragments in Transliteration V (Bo 1398–Bo 6002)*, by Oğuz Soysal and Mine Çifci. Chicago Hittite Dictionary Supplements 6.
- *The Cemeteries at al-Widay: Text and Plates*, by Lisa A. Heidorn and Bruce Beyer Williams, with contributions by Geoff Emberling, Megan Ingvolstad, and Joanna Then-Obłuska. Nubian Expedition.
- *A Bestiary of Ancient Nubia*, edited by Marc Maillot. ISAC Museum Publications.

I gratefully acknowledge the production assistance this year of Connie Gundry Tappy (copyediting and proofreading), Alison Whyte (proofreading), Kristin Goble and Billie Jean Collins (typesetting), Kevin Quach and Joshua Tulisiak (cover design), Susanne Wilhelm (typesetting and cover design), ISAC assistant editor Becca Cain (*News & Notes* layout), and former ISAC editor and current independent contractor Leslie Schramer (*Nippur VI* layout and project management).

ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

The ISAC publications office continued to make PDFs of new publications freely available online as soon as the print editions were released. The complete catalog of ISAC titles—which includes annual reports, *News & Notes*, and the *Chicago House Bulletin*—can be viewed at https://isac.uchicago.edu/research/catalog-publications.

SALES

Since January 1, 2019, ISD has been the exclusive distributor of ISAC publications. Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, ISD sold 1,216 print copies of ISAC publications—952 through its US warehouse and 264 through its agent in the United Kingdom—as well as 33 e-book copies to customers in the United States. The ISAC Museum Shop also sells select titles it considers to be of potential interest to a general audience.

Generally, newly published titles, special-exhibition catalogs (both current and past), and books featuring ISAC Museum gallery highlights sell the most copies; table 1 shows this year's fifteen top sellers.

Emily Teeter's *Chicago on the Nile*, which appeared in mid-September 2024 to accompany ISAC's fall 2024 special exhibition of the same name, took first place with 236 total copies sold over the course of its first nine and a half months. In second place with 158 print copies sold—all of them through the ISAC Museum Shop—was the gallery guide *Highlights of the Collections of the Oriental Institute Museum*, originally published in 2017. In third place, Robert K. Ritner's *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*—a perennial top seller first published more than thirty years ago and reprinted many times since then—remained popular.

Table 1. Best-selling ISAC publications, July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

Title	Author(s)	Year published	Print copies sold	E-book copies sold	Total copies sold
Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago (special-exhibition catalog)	Emily Teeter	2024	230	6	236
Highlights of the Collections of the Oriental Institute Museum	Jean Evans, Jack Green, and Emily Teeter (eds.)	2017	158	N/A	158
The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice	Robert K. Ritner	1993	128	N/A	128
The Adventures of Inanaka and Tuni (children's activity book)	Jane Gordon, Susanne Paulus, Madeline Ouimet, and Sarah Ware	2023	124	N/A	124
Back to School in Babylonia (special-exhibition catalog)	Susanne Paulus, with Marta Díaz Herrera, Jane Gordon, Madeline Ouimet, Colton Siegmund, and Ryan Winters	2023	70	4	74
Embroidering Identities: A Century of Palestinian Clothing (special-exhibition catalog)	Iman Saca	2006	72	N/A	72
A Master of Secrets in the Chamber of Darkness: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Robert K. Ritner Presented on the Occasion of His Sixty-Eighth Birthday	Foy D. Scalf and Brian P. Muhs (eds.)	2024	69	2	71
Ancient Israel: Highlights from the Collections of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago	Gabrielle Novacek	2011	65	N/A	65

(continued)

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Title	Author(s)	Year published	Print copies sold	E-book copies sold	Total copies sold
Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt (special-exhibition catalog)	Foy Scalf (ed.)	2017	63	N/A	63
An Armenian Futūḥ Narrative: Łewond's Eighth-Century History of the Caliphate	Sergio La Porta and Alison M. Vacca	2024	42	9	51
The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 CE by Strategius of Mar Saba	Sean W. Anthony and Stephen J. Shoemaker	2024	50	0	50
Before the Pyramids: The Origins of Egyptian Civilization	Emily Teeter (ed.)	2011	43	N/A	43
So You Want to Be an Epigrapher? (children's activity book)	Catherine Witt and Joshua Tulisiak, with J. Brett McClain	2024	40	N/A	40
Fly with Dana over the Past (children's activity book)	Marie-Laure Chambrade and Jérôme Agostini, with Marc Maillot, Kiersten Neumann, and Thomas Boudier	2024	39	N/A	39
Ancient Egypt: Treasures from the Collection of the Oriental Institute	Emily Teeter	2003	35	N/A	35

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RESEARCH ARCHIVES

FOY SCALF

In many ways, the 2024–25 report year was fairly routine for the Research Archives library. We acquired books, continued to catalog our collections, and assisted patrons with their on-site research needs. However, in other ways, the year marked a major milestone, and in some respects a turning point, for the library. In the early days of the "Oriental Institute Library," our collections were managed as part of the central University of Chicago library system. After the consolidation into Regenstein Library in 1970, the Research Archives library was founded as a central pillar of ISAC's research prowess. From 1973 until 2025, our library functioned on its own, with its own budget and its own reporting line to the director of ISAC. Over the course of 2024–25, a series of wide-ranging discussions across the University of Chicago community resulted in a white-paper proposal to establish a Data Research Center (DRC) within ISAC that would complement the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes and the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation. At the heart of this proposal was the vision and motivation of ISAC director Tim Harrison, who astutely identified the vast resources of ISAC's digital data as one of our most important assets for the future.

ISAC DATA RESEARCH CENTER

At the end of academic year 2024–25, ISAC formally established the DRC as a new unit to support and advance digital scholarship, data stewardship, and research infrastructure across the organization. The DRC was created to centralize and coordinate services related to information science, digital project support, research data management, and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence–assisted scholarship and data enrichment. It is envisioned as a service-oriented hub aligning with ISAC's mission to foster cutting-edge interdisciplinary research in archaeology, philology, art history, and related fields.

As part of this institutional initiative, the Research Archives library is being integrated into the DRC along with the institutional archives and data services. This strategic alignment ensures that the deep bibliographic, archival, and textual expertise of the Research Archives remains central to ISAC's evolving research ecosystem. The integration supports expanded services in metadata modeling, research consultation, digital collections access, and data lifecycle management, while retaining the core functions of the library and its vital support for faculty, students, and visiting scholars. Our move to the DRC reflects the recognition that research libraries today must not only curate and provide access to materials but also serve as dynamic partners in digital project design and scholarly innovation. Under this new structure, the Research Archives will continue to provide individualized research support and maintain its stewardship of ISAC's world-class collection, while collaborating closely with the DRC's technical staff on projects that require data modeling, digital publication, and preservation planning. This transition positions the Research Archives at the heart of ISAC's future-facing research infrastructure, thereby ensuring its continued relevance and impact in a rapidly evolving scholarly landscape.

Future versions of this annual report will appear within the scope of the ISAC Data Research Center and its quickly burgeoning projects.

PATRONS AND USAGE

In 2024–25, the library ID card reader recorded 34,407 transactions; 3,216 unique patrons visited the library in person and swiped an ID card to enter, an increase of 600 visitors over last year. The vast majority of these patrons were students from the University of Chicago; ISAC faculty, students, and staff, along with visiting researchers, remain the most engaged users of the library and its collections.

Over the course of the academic year, 338 volumes (67 journal volumes, 83 monographs, and 188 series volumes) circulated to offices throughout the ISAC building to fill the research needs of students, faculty, staff, and visiting scholars. These publications ranged in date from 1910 to 2025, reflecting the continuing importance of access to reference data both new and old; 97 (28 percent) of the volumes were published in the past decade. The most common publishers represented among checked-out books included Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Eisenbrauns, Peeters, De Gruyter, Routledge, Brill, and Harrassowitz, while two books tied for the most frequently borrowed: Sophie Démare-Lafon and Daniel E. Fleming's *Judicial Decisions in the Ancient Near East* (Writings from the Ancient World 43; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023) and Rocío Da Riva's *The Twin Inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa (Wadi esh-Sharbin, Lebanon): A Historical and Philological Study* (Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft 32; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 2012).

This year the Research Archives library had the pleasure of hosting many visiting researchers, including Rheem Abbas, Solange Ashby, Daphne de Beistegui, Gabriele Biancalani, Sarah Derbew, Peter Dorman, Casey Foubert, Essie Hall, Debora Heard, Dottie Jeffries, Gwyneth Jelinek, Morag Kersel, Lori Livesay, Michelle Marlar, Rachael Maxon, Minh-Tam Trinh, Ashok Rai, Emily Teeter, and Tien Tienngern. We hosted Luke Joyner and Casey Breen-Edelstein for their library science classes and Seth Vanek, Andrea Twiss-Brooks, and Elaine Fetyko Page for Elmhurst University's Great Libraries class. The Research Archives library also hosted the November meeting of the University of Chicago's Reparative Description Interest Group, provided space for researchers using materials from the Museum Archives, and offered orientation tours to new students. Further, we hosted several filming requests from the offices of the University of Chicago's president and provost, as well as from UChicago Creative and other media companies.

ACQUISITIONS

The Research Archives library had an extremely productive acquisitioning program in 2024–25 (table 1). A total of 1,268 volumes were acquired for the library in 382 accession lots—an average of more than one accession lot every day of the year; 293 accession lots arrived through purchases, 54 through gifts, 25 through exchanges of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* with other publishers and institutions, and 10 as a result of image permissions granted. For the 293 accession lot purchases, the library expended more than $55,000, plus approximately $5,000 in shipping costs (thus approximately $5,000 per month in direct acquisitions costs). The steadfast support of the Research Archives library by ISAC director Tim Harrison and director of finance and administration Sheheryar Hasnain allowed us to continue this expansion and growth. Yet again, the sale of duplicate books through the library and the ISAC Museum Store with the help of Denise Browning supplemented the budget by more than $2,000.

ONLINE CATALOG

Research Archives staff added approximately 12,000 new records to the library's catalog in the EMu collection management system this year (table 2; numbers are rounded up to the nearest hundred). The staff and volunteers of the Research Archives library deserve bountiful thanks and gratitude for diligently entering

Table 1. Research Archives acquisitions, July 2024–June 2025.

Month	Number of accession lots	Volumes		
		Monographs, series, pamphlets	Journals	Total volumes
July 2024	31	68	24	92
August 2024	36	85	17	102
September 2024	21	63	23	86
October 2024	47	184	30	214
November 2024	32	106	83	189
December 2024	22	86	18	104
January 2025	42	69	35	104
February 2025	31	68	12	80
March 2025	22	53	20	73
April 2025	25	50	19	69
May 2025	38	70	16	86
June 2025	35	54	15	69
Totals	382	956	312	**1,268**

Table 2. Catalog records added.

Year	No. of catalog records added	Total no. of catalog records
2024–25	12,000	612,000
2023–24	10,000	600,000
2022–23	12,500	590,000
2021–22	7,500	577,500
2020–21	5,000	570,000

this data into the institutional digital repository through Axiell's EMu software (see Acknowledgments below). Records are available online for searching, sorting, and downloading in a variety of formats (https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu).

By the end of the report year on June 30, 2025, our library reached nearly 75,000 total volumes (table 3); analyzing the individually authored content of those volumes, we have surpassed 610,000 records in the library's catalog. In addition to our print materials, 144,940 records include a link to digital content—nearly 24 percent of the entire database. To that number can be added 44,170 records with directly linked PDF files. We are still only in the beginning stage of incorporating the ever-increasing and ever-changing links to other general online resources, such as online dictionaries, grammars, text editions, websites, blogs, and other relevant media.

Table 3. Research Archives analytics.

Type	Total no. of records
Total volumes	74,894
Monographs	18,495
Monograph sections	80,251
Series	2,199
Series volumes	24,140
Series volume sections	112,558
Journals	1,101
Journal volumes	31,160
Journal volume articles	341,025
Theses	1,099
Pamphlets	3375
Reviews	126,957
Festschriften (volumes)	825
Digital invoice records	3,308
Digital cover-art records	22,993
Adobe PDFs	44,170

The online collections search (https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu), which includes the catalog of the Research Archives library, saw over 19,296 users conduct more than 35,000 sessions. These users were from all over the world, the top countries represented being the United States, Canada, Singapore, Egypt, Türkiye, Hong Kong, and Australia; 72.3 percent of users accessed the site through a desktop, 26.0 percent used a mobile device, and 1.7 percent used a tablet. The most common browser used was Chrome (58.2 percent), followed by Safari (25.6 percent), Firefox (7.5 percent), and Edge (5.2 percent).

Analytics recorded 359,742 total events (up from 325,551 last year), with an average of 19 events per active user, and 218,755 individual page views (up from 198,809 last year). More than 22,000 sessions by over 13,000 users came from direct traffic, nearly 10,000 sessions by 5,200 users came from online searches, and approximately 1,600 sessions by 933 users came from referral links. Some 1,971 events were related to viewing the record for the iconic *lammasu* (ISACM A7369); 533 events showed users searching for objects on display in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery; during 337 events, the record for the seal ISACM A27903 was viewed; and users employed 837 events to find and view a cuneiform tablet (ISACM A3160). Once again, the most popular record sought from the library was volume 1 of James P. Allen's *A New Concordance of the Pyramid Texts* (https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu/id/b154b937-6036-43f4-a28d-3c92adc04aab). Users visited the "saved records" page 2,685 times to export records from the database for their own research.

DONATIONS

The Research Archives continued to benefit greatly from generous donations of both funds and books. For their thoughtful gifts, we thank the following individuals (listed in alphabetical order): Susan Allison, Melissa Anderson, Alex and Tigran Areshian, Andrew Baumann and ISAC Publications, Bob Biggs,

Gretel Braidwood, Denise Browning, Bill Cosper, Fred Donner, Richard Gibson, James Holland, the ISAC Museum image permissions staff, the ISAC Museum Shop, the ISAC volunteers' library, Janet Johnson, Cray Kennedy, Marc Maillot, Catherine Mardikes, Brett McClain, Carol Meyer, Judy Parillo, Seth Richardson and the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Kavin Sampson, Emily Smith, Emily Teeter, Ray Tindel, Felicia Whitcomb, Bruce Williams, Catie Witt, and Beth Yelda.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To provide the extremely high level of service, research support, and digital resources we offer, the Research Archives library requires the effort of a large team of individuals, as well as close collaboration and integration with virtually all ISAC units, faculty, staff, and students; visiting researchers; and other units around the university. Behind the scenes are nearly two dozen part-time employees and volunteers working hard to make sure the Research Archives library remains unparalleled. Everyone who encounters ISAC or its virtual avatars owes a huge debt of gratitude to the wonderful members of our team, who put in the sweat equity so that we can have such amazing resources at our disposal. A massive thank-you to the following people (listed in alphabetical order): Yasmin Ali, Christian Borgen, Betty Bush, Lucy Clarke, Jane Clinkert-White, Marta Díaz-Herrera, Aiko Hamamoto, Rick Hutchinson, Xilin Liu, Cora Miller, Maria Moreno, Harrison Morin, Lydia Osborn, Erynn Overfield, Luke Ruff, Margaret Schmid, Bri Stellini, Jeremy Walker, Eric Whitacre, Emma Yeager, and Amy Zillman.

MUSEUM

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OVERLEAF: Bull's head on glazed bricks from the Sin Temple at Khorsabad (see Conservation section of Museum report).

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MUSEUM

SUSAN ALLISON, KATE AYRES, ROBERT BAIN, DENISE BROWNING, LAURA D'ALESSANDRO, ANNE FLANNERY, KEA JOHNSTON, MARC MAILLOT, HELEN McDONALD, KIERSTEN NEUMANN, MADELEINE ROBERTS-GANIM, JOSH TULISIAK, TASHA VORDERSTRASSE, ALISON WHYTE, AND ELISHEVA YARDENI

The main challenge of the ISAC Museum is to keep bringing the audience back in person to the galleries and for special exhibitions. To that end, the Museum continued its strategy of the past couple of years in pursuing the expansion of its activities throughout this report year.

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND MUSEUM SHOP

Thanks to the Museum's dedicated staff, guards, and volunteers, we were able not only to maintain our current opening hours but also to continue offering extended Friday evening hours until 8:00 p.m. The idea behind these expanded hours is to allow after-work visits concurrent with consistent programming.

Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, 41,028 visitors viewed the Museum's galleries—an increase of 18.71 percent over last year. Combined with the 6.37 percent increase in 2022–23 and the 30.28 percent increase in 2023–24, audience rates grew by 65.17 percent in three years' time. During the same twelve-month period, 1,483 visitors enjoyed the Friday evening hours in a calm and welcoming environment.

Attendance peaks on weekends exceeded 200 visitors (some 50 more than last year), confirming that our policies and engagement were fruitful. This valuable data was gathered thanks to Madeleine Roberts-Ganim, our Youth and Family Program coordinator; Dan Bloom, former Visitor Services desk manager; and Issac Muhammad, current Visitor Services desk manager. Strengthened by the numbers and new staff members—including Kate Ayres, assistant director of Programs and Education, and Elisheva Yardeni, conservator—we continued striving toward the main goal of the Museum team: to reach and surpass pre-COVID-19 Museum attendance numbers, which during the best years averaged 58,000 visitors annually. As stated in the 2023–24 annual report, a 20 percent increase in attendance per year is entirely reachable, which means that we could surpass the pre-COVID-19 number within two and a half years.

It is pertinent to connect these numbers with ISAC Museum Shop sales. The pandemic disrupted Shop sales dramatically, especially in 2020–21. Those sales have been slowly but surely returning to pre-COVID-19 levels, consistent with the 65.17 percent increase in Museum visitors between 2022 and 2025. The Museum Shop generated $130,000 this year, a 3.7 percent decrease compared with last year's $135,000. We are thus almost on par with last year's sales despite a noticeable decrease in touristic activities during 2024–25. Prior to the pandemic, average annual sales amounted to $200,000, and new merchandising and product development make a return to this level quite attainable going forward.

The Museum Shop's strategy has been to leverage special exhibitions as opportunities to develop new merchandise for long-term sales. The Shop has offered juvenile-oriented products (such as children's activity books) to draw attention to books and other items targeted at adults, items made all the more appealing by the high production standards we set two years ago for Museum catalogs and monographs. Since the

COVID-19 years, the Shop has been open only half the time it used to be—an important point, since sales nevertheless reached 65 percent of the total sum the Shop generated in 2018 and 71 percent of the amount it generated in 2019. The fact that volunteers continued their support of the Shop in 2025, together with the addition of extra opening days on the Juneteenth and Fourth of July public holidays, helped reinforce our customer service.

To accompany this growth, we continued working with ISAC's information technology staff and the Administration and Finance department to create an updated online Museum Shop on Shopify, as half our customer base is international. We have no doubt that we will rapidly surpass pre-COVID-19 sales once an effective online shop is implemented on our website. Now is the right time to launch it, as the on-site sales rate this year showed a stable revenue comparable to last year's 30 percent increase, which means that we hit the maximum growth capacity that on-site sales can allow without international outreach online and/or infrastructure updates of the Shop's footprint.

Subsequent to the integration of the Programs and Education department with the ISAC Museum (see the Programs and Education section below), docent-led tours of the Museum galleries were restructured to streamline our training and certification protocols. As a result, and thanks to our dedicated Programs and Education team and docent liaison Marilyn Murray, the number of docents in effect doubled (to more than thirty) in less than six months' time. We were particularly pleased to offer the docents refresher tours of the main galleries, led by ISAC staff. In March and April 2025, Marc Maillot, Kiersten Neumann, and Foy Scalf offered in-person tours alongside our virtual options. Regarding the latter, special recognition should be given to Tasha Vorderstrasse for the high quality and consistency of the adult education courses based on our collection.

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

ISAC is a world-renowned institution, so international outreach is one of our priorities. This year we maintained our already-strong relationship with the French Consulate in Chicago and the Chicago chapter of the French-American Chamber of Commerce, most recently on June 6, 2025, with a group of entrepreneurs and businesses for gallery tours. The Museum partnered with ISAC's Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation, under the directorship of Gil Stein, to organize a two-day conference at the University of Chicago's International Institute of Research in Paris (IIRP). On May 19–20, 2025, we focused on at-risk cultural heritage with contributions from the Smithsonian Institution, American Society of Overseas Research, DePaul University, Sorbonne University, University of Pennsylvania, and British Museum. The Louvre Museum, University of Bologna, Hemo Laboratory in Ukraine, and major nongovernmental organizations such as Turquoise Mountain were also among the presenters showcasing international initiatives in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria, Mali, Israel/Palestine, France, England, and Italy. During a keynote address, the executive director of the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage Foundation, Valery Freland, presented a panorama of the foundation's seven years of action in cultural heritage initiatives. Jyoti Hosagrahar, deputy director of the UNESCO World Heritage Center, concluded the first day of the conference at the IIRP with a review of the most-endangered areas monitored by UNESCO. Last but not least, Stéphane Verger and Claude Rilly—of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, which cosponsored the event—gave presentations.

Rilly accepted our invitation to present his work on the decipherment of the Meroitic language in the frame of our monthly lecture series in Breasted Hall last year. His participation at the IIRP conference demonstrated that institutional bonds tied early on are fruitful in the long term in a vast array of fundamental research orientations. As explained in last year's report, the ISAC Museum plays a pivotal role in the field of cultural heritage preservation, and this conference confirmed ISAC's identity as a reference

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institution in the fields of art history, archaeology, and cultural heritage management. As further evidence, the ISAC Museum was invited by Morag Kersel and Patty Gerstenblith, both of DePaul University, to participate in the US Committee of the Blue Shield conference at DePaul on March 14, 2025, specifically on the "Cultural Heritage at Risk around the World" panel.

The stated intention of connecting our members and audience to the latest state of the art in fundamental research was illustrated by the panel discussion related to ISAC's special exhibition *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections* (see Special Exhibitions section below). Titled "An Exploration of Orientalist Photography," the panel comprised Liz Siegel, chief curator of the Milwaukee Art Museum; Laetitia Zecchini, director of research at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and director of the CNRS–UChicago HumanitiesPlus Laboratory; and Nicolas Revire, the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Research Fellow in the Arts of Asia at the Art Institute of Chicago. Looking ahead to the bicentennial celebration of the invention of photography programmed for late 2026 in the European Union, the ISAC Museum is planning a timely series of events on campus and at the IIRP showcasing the depth of the ISAC Museum Archives collection.

The increases in inquiries about loans and requests for research materials from the Museum are further evidence of the excellence of our reputation both domestically and abroad. The total number of research requests and visits in 2024–25—more than 130—represents an 11 percent increase over last year (see Registration section below); combined with the 20 percent increase during the previous year, our requests have thus increased 35 percent over the past two years. The same applies to loans: the Museum loaned objects to and borrowed others from several institutions for special exhibitions—including the Regenstein Library, the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago—and we have executed collaborations with Chicago's Field Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection in Berlin.

The 2024 delegation from Greece mentioned in last year's report expressed interest in establishing more concrete cooperation with the ISAC Museum in 2025. This visit led to the Museum's loan of twelve Mesopotamian objects and a full set of the multivolume *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* for the special exhibition *Allspice: Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*—a collaboration between Athens's Acropolis Museum and the NEON Organization for Culture and Development—curated by Prof. Nikolaos Chr. Stampolidis, director general of the Acropolis Museum, and Elina Kountouri, director of NEON, from May 13 through October 31, 2025. Drawing on her longstanding relationship with Rakowitz, ongoing collaborations on his projects, and expertise in Mesopotamian cultural heritage, Kiersten Neumann was invited to deliver a lecture, titled "Of Gods and Kings: The Material Legacy of Mesopotamia, Eternal yet Fragile," on May 15 at the Acropolis Museum as part of the exhibition programming. She also contributed object entries for the loaned pieces used in the exhibition labels and catalog. In June 2025, Neumann presented her research on another object from the ISAC Museum's collection—the inscribed bronze roundel with inlays from Tell Tayinat—in a workshop on new research on old collections at the fourteenth International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, organized by the Université Lumière Lyon and the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée in Lyon.

ISAC's international engagement was also visible thanks to conservation training and on-site conservation treatment overseas. Alison Whyte went to Uzbekistan in October 2024 to participate in the fifth workshop of the Cultural Training Partnership for Artifact Conservation organized by Gil Stein. In June 2025, Whyte provided support to David Schloen's excavation of the Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar in Málaga, Spain, where she worked extensively on pottery. Her work there confirms our reputation of excellence in museum studies at the international level (see Conservation section below).

This reputation applies also to the ISAC Museum Archives (see Archives section below), which, in addition to working with fourteen institutions from across the nation and overseas, continued its commitment to our campus community and to scholars beyond Chicago through outreach that included student

engagement and exhibition curation. Indeed, the Museum's special exhibition *ISAC's "Fifty-Cent Men": How the Gold Reserve Act Altered the Business of Archaeology* at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business exemplifies our goal of expanding our footprint on campus to reinforce interdisciplinary projects. In that spirit, we started discussions with the University of Chicago's Divinity School for an ambitious partnership of a similar kind in 2027.

Toward the end of the report year, Anne Flannery notified us of her planned departure on July 28, 2025. She had led the Museum Archives for a decade and transformed it into a dynamic and reactive repository. Her generosity and commitment were instrumental in integrating the Museum Archives and Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes datasets into ISAC's Integrated Database. Apart from the *"Fifty-Cent Men"* exhibition, and further demonstrating her commitment to public outreach, she curated the 2019 *Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100* centennial exhibition at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library. Beginning in 2018, she led the Cultural Heritage Experiment Initiative, which now engages more than forty undergraduates annually. She has been a dedicated and visionary colleague, and the ISAC Museum team will miss her deeply. We wish her the best in her future endeavors. (For her personal reflections on her time at ISAC, see the Museum Archives section below.)

On the long-term side, we continued to pursue the very demanding update of the entire collection database and nomenclature regarding our name change to ISAC. Indeed, of the more than 350,000 artifacts in ISAC's inventory, fewer than 2 percent are on display, and each item requires an updated entry in our database to maintain public access to it by researchers and a general audience. To help us with that task, we partnered with the University of Chicago's Early Career Advancement Program to hire two summer interns, Cora Miller in Museum Archives and Libby Konjoyan in the Museum's curatorial department. Thanks to complementary partnerships with the University of Chicago Divinity School and DePaul University, we were also able to onboard two supplementary summer interns, Emma Yeager and Dayna Pinsky, in our Programs and Education department. They helped us build new tours dedicated to conservation and museography, as well as religion-focused tours based on artifacts with theological significance.

The ISAC Museum was featured in several news media this year, including the University of Chicago News website on July 19 and November 7, 2024. The Museum was also highlighted in *Liberal Education* magazine thanks to article author Mike de Socio (https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/articles/treasure-troves). The *Chicago Tribune*'s annual top-ten list of must-see museums ranked the ISAC Museum among the best collections to be seen in the city (https://www.chicagotribune.com/2025/01/14/museums-for-winter-2025-our-top-picks-around-chicago-for-the-chilly-months/), and the *Hyde Park Herald* featured an article by Michael Liptrot about the *Chicago on the Nile* exhibition (https://www.hpherald.com/arts_and_entertainment/chicago-on-the-nile-brings-a-century-of-hieroglyph-studies-to-isac/article_d1e99f4c-6ed5-11ef-a8c1-e383b01c148f.html). The *Chicago Asian Network* covered the exhibition *Staging the East* and the associated panel discussion (https://www.chicagoasiannetwork.com/event/an-exploration-of-orientalist-photography).

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

During this report year, the ISAC Museum's special-exhibitions program presented two shows that highlighted ISAC's longstanding commitment to visual recordkeeping, thereby engaging visitors with the legacy and future of field-based visual documentation of art, inscriptions, monuments, and landscapes from West Asia and North Africa. After the August 18, 2024, close of *Pioneers of the Sky: Aerial Archaeology and the Black Desert*, an exhibition that explored the trajectory of aerial photography with a focus on Jordan's Black Desert, the *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt* exhibition (https://isac

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Figure 1. *Chicago on the Nile* special exhibition, which ran from September 17, 2024, through March 23, 2025.

.uchicago.edu/chicagonile) ran from September 17, 2024, through March 23, 2025, to mark the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey (fig. 1).

Curated by Emily Teeter, J. Brett McClain, and Catherine Witt, *Chicago on the Nile* invited visitors to engage with the Survey's century-long efforts to record and preserve the carved scenes and inscriptions of Egypt's most important monuments—many of which are endangered today. Founded in 1924 by ISAC's visionary director James Henry Breasted (whose goal was to both copy and publish all the historical texts in the Nile Valley), the Survey began its monumental work at the 3,000-year-old temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. The exhibition illuminated this legacy through photographs, drawings, field notes, and publications from the Survey's archives, as well as key artifacts from ISAC's collections (fig. 2).

On display were rarely seen items, such as an original 1924 architectural plan and elevation of Chicago House by British engineer and archaeologist Arthur Callender, loaned by Dr. Anthony Marks, and a nineteenth-century, salted-paper print of Medinet Habu by French writer and photographer Maxime Du Camp, loaned by the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art. A series of photographs, drawings, and blueprints allowed visitors to trace each step of the meticulous "Chicago House Method" for creating facsimiles (highly accurate records of the original carving), while a custom-designed digital app let them try their hand at reassembling decorated block fragments from the Luxor Temple blockyard.

A series of programs enriched the exhibition. An exclusive preview was held on September 16, 2024, followed by a centennial gala on September 21 on the University of Chicago campus, where the exhibition was a focal point. Public lectures included Emily Teeter's "Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic

Figure 2. Archival documents and artifacts on display in the *Chicago on the Nile* special exhibition.

Survey" (October 20, 2024) and Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek's "Epigraphy and Exploration at Beni Hassan, Egypt" (March 12, 2025). The exhibition also produced a pair of publications: *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago* by Emily Teeter (ISAC Museum Publications 2) (fig. 3), and the children's activity book *So You Want to Be an Epigrapher?* by Catherine Witt and Joshua Tulisiak with J. Brett McClain. Public outreach extended beyond the gallery with the release of the scarab plushie Khepri (whose name means "My Scarab") and a 1,000-piece puzzle featuring the sacred boat of the god Khonsu. The show garnered media attention, including a feature in the *Hyde Park Herald* ("Chicago on the Nile Brings a Century of Hieroglyphic Studies to ISAC," September 9, 2024).

The exhibition was generously supported by the University of Chicago Women's Board, ISAC Museum visitors, and ISAC members. Photographs were provided by Keli Alberts, Ahmed Bozghol, Frank Helmholz, W. Raymond Johnson, Yarko Kobylecky, Owen Murray, Dominique Navarro, and Amanda Tetreault, as well as Epigraphic Survey photographer/photo archivist Susan Lezon. Additional thanks go to Dr. Anthony Marks and the Smart Museum of Art for the loan of archival images.

Concurrent with the *Chicago on the Nile* exhibition was the installation of two paintings by German-American artist and stonecutter Johannes Weninger near the Museum's Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery (fig. 4). Curated by Kiersten Neumann, the works—*In Harmony with the Landscape* and *Guardian of the Temple*—evoke the Survey's enduring presence in Luxor. The former

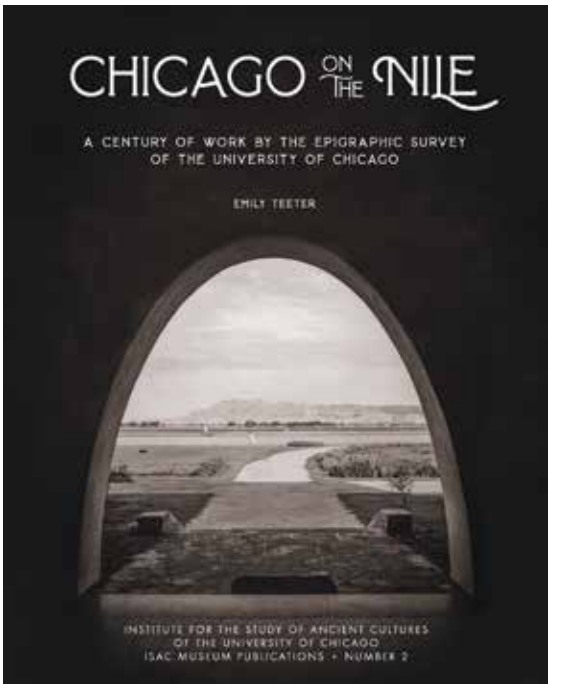

Figure 3. The monograph *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*, by Emily Teeter.

presents a landscape view of the old Chicago House on the west bank of the Nile, and the latter is a portrait of the Survey's current *rais* (foreman), Badawy Abdullah Muhammad Abdul Rahman, who is also a descendant of the well-known Abdul Rasoul family that is intertwined with the history of archaeology in Egypt. Weninger's work is a tribute not only to an individual with whom Weninger has worked for a decade, and who is a pillar of the Survey's fieldwork, but also acknowledges the generations of skilled and often unrecognized local laborers who have long underpinned the work of archaeological excavation and documentation.

Figure 4. Paintings by Johannes Weninger on display in the ISAC Museum.

Following *Chicago on the Nile*, the ISAC Museum shifted focus to another facet of visual recording with the opening of *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections* on April 17, 2025 (https://isac.uchicago.edu/stagingtheeast) (fig. 5). Curated by Marc Maillot and on view through August 17, 2025, the exhibition explored the formative years of archaeological photography and the commercial market that emerged around it—when studios and travelers alike began to commodify images of the "Orient" for Western audiences.

Figure 5. The special exhibition *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections*, which opened on April 17, 2025.

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The term "Orientalism" refers to the Western tradition of representing West Asia and North Africa through a colonial lens, often romanticizing or stereotyping its peoples and landscapes. Within this framework, Orientalist photography—produced largely by Western travelers, artists, and studios from the mid-nineteenth century onward—played a central role in shaping how these regions and cultures were perceived. Through works by prominent photographers and drawn from multiple Chicago institutions—including albumen prints, salted-paper prints, photographic albums, and modern reproductions—as well as examples of early photographic equipment, visitors were introduced to the scope and influence of this visual tradition.

Organized thematically, the exhibition documented the precursors of Orientalist photography, the rise of commercial studios, representations of West Asia and North Africa in Chicago-based collections, the visual legacy of the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition (also known as the Chicago World's Fair), and the evolution of academic photography at ISAC. Highlights included a copy of Napoleon's *Description of Egypt* (1822); albumen prints from Studio Sébah and Joaillier (1890), Studio Zangaki (1880), and Studio Bonfils (1870) (fig. 6); a copy of a salted-paper print of Baalbek, Lebanon, by Maxime Du Camp (1850); a salted-paper print from a calotype negative of Middle Egypt by Félix Teynard (1854); Francis Frith's *Egypt and Palestine: Photographed and Described* (1858); and John Beasley Greene's *Fouilles exécutées a Thèbes dans l'année 1855* (1855).

Figure 6. Albumen print of the Hathor temple at Dendera, Studio Bonfils, 1870. ISACM P410.

Exhibition programming opened with an exclusive preview on April 16, 2025, followed by a June 13 panel discussion, "An Exploration of Orientalist Photography," with Maillot, Liz Siegel (Milwaukee Art Museum), Nicolas Revire (Art Institute of Chicago), and Laetitia Zecchini (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris). A children's activity book—*A Day in the Life of a 19th Century Photographer*, by Maillot and Tulisiak—was released alongside the exhibition (fig. 7), with additional photography-themed materials available through the ISAC Museum Shop.

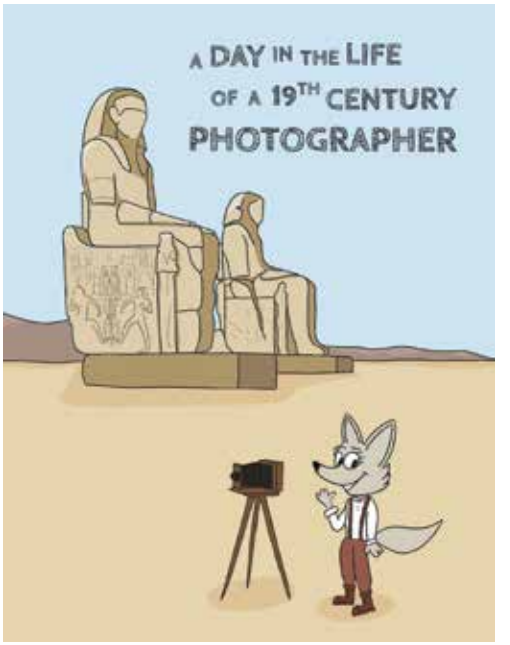

Figure 7. The children's activity book *A Day in the Life of a 19th Century Photographer*.

The exhibition brought together works from the ISAC Museum Archives, University of Chicago Library Special Collections, Smart Museum of Art, and Art Institute of Chicago. Additional media and support were provided by Northern Illinois University Libraries, Paul

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V. Galvin Library, Chicago History Museum, Princeton University Library, Library of Congress, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, Getty Museum Collection, and Newberry Library. Special thanks go to ISAC Epigraphic Survey director J. Brett McClain for facilitating access to Epigraphic Survey negatives and to the Frith and Greene albums.

Also as part of this year's exhibition cycle, and curated by Neumann, in February 2025 we installed three of Joseph Lindon Smith's Persepolis paintings for long-term display in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery (https://isac.uchicago.edu/contemporary-art-installations) (fig. 8). This installation brought Smith's vivid works into dialogue with monumental sculpture and portable finds excavated at Persepolis by ISAC in the 1930s.

Smith (1863–1950), known for his accurate renderings of archaeological subjects, painted six monumental canvases at Persepolis in 1935 at the invitation of ISAC founder James Henry Breasted. Over six weeks and accompanied by his wife, Corinna, Smith used 11.5 m of rolled canvas and a dry-brush oil technique to paint freehand on-site, capturing both landscape scenes and detailed sections of the Apadana staircase reliefs. This approach allowed for striking realism, especially in rendering textured stone, though it limited post-application revisions.

After completing the series, Smith traveled to Giza in Egypt (he was also a member of the joint Harvard University–Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition there) and then to Chicago to deliver the paintings—three landscape scenes and three lifesize details of the Apadana staircase reliefs. All six were reunited publicly for the first time since the mid-twentieth century in the 2022 ISAC Museum special exhibition *Joseph Lindon Smith: The Persepolis Paintings*, also curated by Neumann. After that show, we launched a fundraising initiative to prepare the paintings for long-term display, with plans to rotate two sets of three paintings every couple of years. Conservation work, carried out by Third Coast Conservation, included surface cleaning and stabilization of both the painted surfaces and the canvases.

This first rotation comprised two renderings of the Apadana's eastern staircase reliefs—including a 3.5 m wide detail of the lion and bull in combat—and one landscape featuring Apadana columns and Central Building sculptures. The paintings' installation was celebrated on March 7, 2025, with the event "Joseph Lindon Smith's Persepolis Paintings: Their Conservation and Exhibition." The evening featured a presentation by Neumann, a conversation discussion with ISAC conservator Laura D'Alessandro and Third Coast Conservation conservators Dorota Bobek and Elena King, remarks by ISAC director Timothy Harrison in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery, and a reception.

The conservation and exhibition of the Persepolis paintings was made possible by a principal gift from the Ashtiani-Bonebrake family, with additional encouragement and support from Smith's granddaughter, Linden Gaspar, and her husband, Charles J. Gaspar. As Linden remarked, "The preservation of this group of paintings from Persepolis serves to enhance the study of ancient cultures and to encourage students, both young and old, to delve further into my grandfather's paintings of other parts of the ancient world."

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

For 2024–25, the Exhibition Design and Production department's primary projects were the design and production of the Museum's special exhibitions, *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt* and *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections*.

In fall 2024, we opened the *Chicago on the Nile* exhibition, curated by Emily Teeter, J. Brett McClain, and Catherine Witt. Featuring artifacts, artwork, photographs, and publications, this exhibition involved the in-house design and fabrication of display cases, custom object mounts, and several smaller wall vitrines, pedestals, and other furniture and picture frames. Almost all digital and print materials were also internally produced. The main palette of the exhibition was maroon and beige to distinguish different sections

Figure 8. Joseph Lindon Smith's Persepolis paintings in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery.

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and complement the archival and modern photographs being displayed. *Chicago on the Nile* also included the exhibition of two contemporary paintings by German-American artist Johannes Weninger: a landscape view of old Chicago House, the Epigraphic Survey's first headquarters in Egypt, and a portrait of Badawy Abdullah Muhammad Abdul Rahman, current foreman of the Epigraphic Survey.

Staging the East, which opened in spring 2025, presented some of the earliest examples of photographic documentation of archeological sites and demanded some less common exhibition practices to afford the public the opportunity to view these extremely fragile and light-sensitive early photographic prints. They included an album of salted-paper prints on loan from the Art Institute of Chicago, a massive illustrated volume from 1822 on loan from the University of Chicago Library's Special Collections (*La Description de l'Égypte*, second edition), and salted-paper prints from the Smart Museum of Art, exhibited along with a selection of albumen prints and artifacts from the ISAC Museum Archives.

Design-wise, the exhibition followed the chronology of the original photographs on display, which were supported by modern prints for a cohesive narrative. For the exhibit's main color, we chose a modern off-white to evoke the feeling of a contemporary space—a color that would complement the prints while also taking a minimalist approach. The text and other didactic materials were also designed in a minimalist fashion to keep the focus on the prints. For consistency with the originals, the modern prints were produced on media that closely resembled the salted-paper prints. Lighting was tailored to highlight the prints and compensate for the reflective cases in which the prints were housed.

While designing and building these special exhibitions, the Exhibition Design and Production team continued several other projects in the permanent galleries, including the ongoing update of museum graphics and didactics and the installation of redesigned exhibition cases. A main focus this year was improving the orientation area of the permanent galleries with an updated general map and comparative chronology, a brand-new highlight display case (fig. 9), and new informational wall graphics (titled "From Ground to Gallery") presenting the history of the ISAC building, ISAC's excavations overseas, and the ISAC Museum and Museum Archives collections. Also marking this report year was the installation of three large, recently conserved paintings in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery that had previously appeared in our 2022 special exhibition *Joseph Linden Smith: The Persepolis Paintings*.

Figure 9. The highlight display case in the orientation area of the museum galleries.

PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION

Public Programming

The report year 2024–25 was an intense one for the Programs and Education department. The year began with a search to replace Youth and Family Program manager Kate Hodge, who had departed in June 2024. Madeleine Roberts-Ganim, who served as a Museum educator at ISAC in 2022–23 during her final year in the College of the University of Chicago and as a Metcalf Program education intern with ISAC in summer 2023, was appointed Youth and Family Program coordinator in October 2024. Roberts-Ganim earned a bachelor of arts with honors in history and French and spent the 2023–24 academic year teaching English to middle and high schoolers in France.

At the end of October, the small team lost ISAC's associate director of member programming, marketing, and communications Matthew Welton, who left after seven years at ISAC. His departure led to the separation of his area of responsibility into two: (1) Communications and (2) Programs and Education. Kate Ayres was appointed assistant director of Programs and Education in January 2025, bringing with her a doctorate in cultural heritage as well as a wealth of museum experience as a former director of museums in both the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates (director of museums for the Government of Ras Al Khaimah) and as a lecturer in museum and heritage studies at Durham University in the United Kingdom.

In addition to our annual and new family events (described below), we hosted the following guests for ISAC's free monthly lectures:

- October 2024: Eric H. Cline (George Washington University), in conjunction with the Archaeological Institute of America's National Lecture Program, "After 1177 BCE: The Survival of Civilizations"
- November 2024: Rune Nyord (Emory University), "The Modern Making of the Ancient Egyptian 'Book of the Dead'"
- December 2024: Jaqueline Williamson (George Mason University), "The Sun Temple of Queen Nefertiti"
- February 2025: Cheryl Makarewicz (Christian Albrechts University), Braidwood Visiting Scholar Lecture, "The Emergence of Pastoralism East of the Jordan Valley"
- March 2025: Catherine Kearns (University of Chicago, Department of Classics), "Cyprus, an Archaeological Crossroads"
- April 2025: Derek Kennet (ISAC), "Samarra: The Abbasid Capital of Iraq in the 9th Century"
- May 2025: Selena Wisnom (University of Leicester), "The Library of Ancient Wisdom: Mesopotamia and the Making of History," including the launch of her book of the same name

We also offered a visiting lecture series in March 2025:

- Rory Cox (University of St Andrews), "The Same Old Problems? Ancient Military Ethics and Modern Conflicts"
- Katharina Schmidt (University of Münster), "The Amman Citadel in Light of Recent Archaeological Work"
- Walther Sallaberger (Ludwig Maximilian University), "Anointing Oil: From Basic Need to Sensory Experience in Early Mesopotamia"

Adult Education

Tasha Vorderstrasse's job expanded this year, from running (and teaching in) the Adult Education program and managing ISAC's social media (a role she has performed since 2021) to also cover ISAC's audiovisual

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needs while IT user support specialist Logan MacGregor was on parental leave in January–March 2025, as well as part of the job previously done by Matthew Welton, who left ISAC at the end of October 2024.

Vorderstrasse organized the following classes for Adult Education:

- "Continuing Demotic" (Foy Scalf, four weeks), an extension of "Introduction to Demotic"
- "Introduction to Hieroglyphs" (two parts; Scalf, sixteen weeks)
- "Introduction to Coptic" (two parts; Scalf, sixteen weeks)
- "Hittite Literature" (Theo van den Hout, six weeks), the first hybrid class since the COVID-19 pandemic
- "Introduction to Hieroglyphic Luwian" (Emily Smith, planned for eight weeks but ended after six weeks)
- "Handy Hieroglyphs: A Beginner's Guide to Impressing Friends and Colleagues in Museums" (Kea Johnston, six weeks)

In addition, Vorderstrasse organized and taught the following herself:

- "Ancient Coins: An Introduction" (with Tine Rasalle, eight weeks)
- "Exhibiting the East: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and 1933 Century of Progress" (four weeks)
- "Medieval Christian Art: Coptic Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia/Eritrea" (five weeks)
- "Envisioning Ancient Landscapes: Robert Duncanson's Paintings of Antiquity and Ruins" (Juneteenth free class)

The hieroglyphs and Coptic classes taught by Scalf were bundled, following the success of bundling last year. A total of 371 students took adult education classes, accounting for a gross profit of $53,232.29.

This year, as part of the University Tour Program, Vorderstrasse guided forty-one University of Chicago tours with 772 students and instructors, in addition to staff tours. In total, she led tours for 1,362 people. The specialist tours focused on the following areas:

- Postcolonial (fifteen tours)
- Writing (five tours)
- Islamic exhibit cases (three tours)
- *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *1001 Nights*, *The Iliad*, and other epics (four tours)
- *Chicago on the Nile* special exhibition (one tour)
- Figurines (including figurines in the ISAC Registration area)

The other tours for staff and prospective students were conducted by both Vorderstrasse and Museum educators and docents, and for University of Chicago staff mostly by Museum educators. Together with Valerie Levan of the "Reading Cultures" humanities core course, Vorderstrasse developed a new activity for University of Chicago students, one that focused on the travel of objects by looking at where objects in the ISAC Museum came from. Several self-guided activities and tours were also developed—on inscriptions (300 students), postcolonial (56 students), and the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (200 students), including two classes examining cuneiform tablets with PhD student Marta Díaz Herrera. This year also saw an expansion in the number of tours available to patrons by offering the Lab School self-guided activity tours to other schools, reviving the Tour and Film option, and developing a special Assyrian-focused tour for members of the Assyrian community.

Social media continued with daily posts on Facebook, X, and Instagram. Engagement continued to be high, with followers on Instagram steadily growing. While MacGregor was on parental leave in February and March 2025, Vorderstrasse ran technology for ISAC's lectures and the Egyptology and Hittitology professorial searches. This work involved creating various Zoom links and explaining the

technology to the guest lecturers, recording the lectures, trimming them, and uploading them to the relevant platforms.

When Welton left ISAC in October 2024, Vorderstrasse became temporarily responsible for the adult guided-tour bookings and later for the self-guided tours when Dan Bloom left the Visitor Services desk in April 2025 (in total, thirty-eight adult and self-guided tours with 620 individuals). She also assumed responsibility for sending the monthly (sometimes bimonthly) ISAC eTablet newsletter to ISAC faculty, staff, and public stakeholders, as well as for answering and forwarding email inquiries from the ISAC-Communications and ISAC-Volunteers shared mailboxes.

Artifact Replicas and ISAC Education Artifact Investigations

The ISAC education office possesses several object replicas, as well as actual archaeological materials and models. While many of these objects are replicas of items in our collection, a few of the originals are not held at ISAC.

Qasr Ibrim Bronze Lamp Replica

As part of the Artifact Analysis teaching program, the ISAC education office has two replica horse-head lamps from Nubia about which nothing further was known (fig. 10, left). While preparing a talk on the Meroitic ruling queen Amanikhatashan for the American Research Center in Egypt in April 2025 (see her individual research report), Vorderstrasse was able to identify this replica. It is a bronze lamp found in a grave at Qasr Ibrim in Nubia (located in modern Egypt) dating to the first or second century CE (fig. 10, right).

En-Nasbeh Teaching Material

Doctoral student and Museum education specialist Samantha Suppes researched a collection of teaching material, part of the simulated tell formerly in ISAC's LaSalle Bank Room that came from Chicago's Spertus Institute. Originally believed to be from an excavation at Tel En-Nasbeh during the late 1990s of which there is no record, the collection of material is now understood to have been compiled to teach archaeological investigative measures to a public audience. Through her investigation, Suppes discovered that this collection may have been inspired by someone's trip to Israel and their visits to various archaeological sites. The collection seems to reflect a basic knowledge of archaeological methods, such as understanding sites through stratigraphy and the importance of databases, maps, and ceramics. It also reflects a basic understanding of the ancient history of the region. The collection outlines what is involved in an excavation

Figure 10. Left: ISAC's replica. Right: British Museum EA66576, Qasr Ibrim, 50–150 CE. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

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by focusing on Tel En-Nasbeh (mentioned on the object labels and maps), which was not being excavated in the 1990s (as the labels imply), and has drawings of some site plans. Although this collection did not come with a written or verbal statement of purpose, Suppes worked out its role as a teaching program by considering the hand-drawn copies of plans from published excavation reports, laminated images of the site of Beer Sheva, an intentionally empty floppy disk (likely to show the importance of databases), a collection of colorful maps, and a series of inconsistent notes referring to "the excavation." Information about Tel En-Nasbeh can be found at https://jrzorn.arts.cornell.edu/pdfs-of-collected-works-of-j-r-zorn/ and https://jrzorn.arts.cornell.edu/tell-en-nasbeh-biblical-mizpah-of-benjamin/.

Youth and Family Program

The Youth and Family Program offerings were considerable in 2024–25 despite our losing two months at the start of the year as a result of the staffing transition. We were fortunate to have Maria Moreno, a master's student and former dual-language schoolteacher, work with us as a Museum education translator. Moreno translated all field-trip lesson plans, materials, and presentations, as well as family event activities, into Spanish and assisted at the family programs by offering translations for Spanish speakers.

During sixty field trips, twenty-nine guided tours, and thirty-three self-guided tours, a total of 3,478 students from ninety-two schools, including homeschoolers, visited the Museum over the course of the year. In addition to facilitating the self-guided visits made by Lab School students, Vorderstrasse led ten of the sixty field trips (see Adult Education above).

Field trips were offered on eight themes—an increase from the six offered in 2023–24—with the lesson component led and taught by Roberts-Ganim, along with a team of seven others: lead Museum educator Elena Tiedens, Museum education specialist Samantha Suppes, and Museum educators Anika Miro-Quesada, Josh Nkhata, Thomas Pflanz, Natalia Potente, and Yunyi Xing. These options included Time Travelers (grades K–4) with nine bookings, the popular Artifact Analysis (grades 5–8) with twenty-six bookings, Mummification (grades 7–12) with ten bookings, and Ancient Innovators (grades 9–12) with seven bookings. Two new field trips were created—Myths and Ancient Storytelling (grades K–2) and Introduction to Hieroglyphs (grades 3–5)—both of which were modified from previous programs by Suppes and Pflanz, respectively, to create lessons appropriate for younger students. These field trips were piloted with one school each and will be offered to all schools in 2025–26. In addition, a self-guided activity run by Vorderstrasse specifically for the Lab School was offered this year to all schools, led by the Museum educators (three bookings). Finally, the Tour and Film field trip was reintroduced (two bookings). For the third year, the Youth and Family Program was able to offer fifteen pro bono or discounted K–12 field trips, which benefited 595 students.

The Youth and Family Program welcomed 1,458 people over eight weekend events across seven months in 2024–25. The events included our annual Haunted Halloween in October, in which we partnered for the first time with the Regenstein Library to offer story time, face painting, and button making and which culminated with the Hyde Park Community Players performing their "Evening of Horror and Suspense in the Old-Time Radio Tradition" in Breasted Hall; Nowruz in March, in which we partnered with the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago and which featured a performance by the Middle East Music Ensemble; Ancient Earth Day in April, during which, for the second year, lead Museum educator Tiedens gave special, child-friendly talks; and Ancient Games Day in May, which coincided with Alumni Weekend and during which we again gave "history of dice" gallery talks written by Suppes. The new calendar year saw the introduction of a $5 member/$10 nonmember event fee, and the format of events changed so that they ran for up to four hours with a drop-in structure allowing for maximum attendance.

Four new family events were introduced: children's book author Arsia Rozegar read from his *Shahnameh for Kids* series, hosted in partnership with the Lab School's Iranian Families and Friends affinity group; Myths & Magic (modified from a virtual field trip offered during the COVID-19 pandemic) and

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Figure 11. Family events led by Museum educators.

Fabulous Pharaohs used the gallery discovery carts as teaching aids along with storytelling and crafts; and finally, Fun with Photography was tied to the special exhibition *Staging the East*: *Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections*. Each of these events offered drop-in sessions, and new gallery and craft activities were developed for the last three, including clay-amulet making (fig. 11), solving a gallery crossword puzzle, and creating a stereoscope based on Breasted's example on display in the special exhibition. Particularly popular with children of all ages was borrowing Polaroid-style cameras for the Fun with Photography event, an activity that will be introduced at all future family programs.

Finally, we welcomed thirty-seven children at two birthday parties (one for five-year-olds and one for ten-year-olds) facilitated by Miro-Quesada and Nkhata, who led modified versions of the Time Travelers and Artifact Analysis field trips. We also held our first birthday party for adults; led by Pflanz, the birthday guests took a tour of the galleries, completed a scavenger hunt, and participated in a lesson on hieroglyphs.

Volunteer and Docent Program

The free Discovery Tours launched in 2023–24 proved a tremendous success and continued to welcome groups averaging between eighteen and twenty-five people. In September 2024, Marilyn Murray and Margaret Schmid, the driving forces behind the tours, assumed the inaugural position of "docent liaison." This shared, voluntary post was created to work closely with Matthew Welton to act as lead contacts for the docents both to communicate general information and to bring any docent concerns to the attention of ISAC leadership.

With the advent of the new school year, the decision was made to return to a field-trip structure in which docents were responsible for leading the tour component. To that end, the need for an increased number of docents was recognized, and Murray and Schmid began to plan for new docent training (fig. 12). Kate Ayres's first role was to oversee this effort; fifteen trainee docents were recruited and took part in intensive training across two consecutive Monday and Tuesday sessions at the end of March and beginning of April 2025. The aim was to have this new cohort certified by the 2025–26 academic year, and, by the end

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Figure 12. The new cohort of trainee docents learning alongside current docents during training in the Museum.

of the report year, six of the fifteen had become full docents: Eva Clark, Rosina Negisnsky, Brian Penoyer, Kay Poyner Brown, Jeannette Scalise, and Ellen Sluss. A huge thank-you must go to everyone who helped deliver the training and the exceptional work of the coaches: Joe Barabe, Roberta Buchannan, Debby and Philip Halpern, Kay Holz, Jim Houston, Larry Lissak, Sara Lindholm, Marilyn Murray, Hilda Schlatter, and Steve Wolfgang. We are so privileged to have such fantastic and enthusiastic volunteers and are excited for the future of the Volunteer Program as it enters its sixtieth year.

Several Volunteer Days this year offered the opportunity for volunteers to get together over coffee and pastries and meet with faculty and staff in the LaSalle Bank Room and the Museum galleries. Emily Teeter and Marc Maillot offered tours of their respective special exhibitions; Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek gave an engaging talk about her work at Beni Hassan; and Kate Ayres spoke about exhibition planning and conservation in preparation for the new museography and conservation tours being planned for fall 2025.

CONSERVATION

New Conservation Staff

We were excited to welcome a new colleague to the Conservation laboratory this past year: Elisheva Yardeni. She comes to us from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, where she served as head of the inorganic objects conservation lab. We are so pleased that she has joined our team.

Sin Temple Facade Project

With a new sense of urgency guiding the project, the glazed bricks forming the decorated facade of the eighth-century BCE Sin Temple at Sargon II's palace complex in Khorsabad, Iraq, remained the primary focus of Conservation's efforts in 2024–25. The wooden crates used to ship the tableau to Chicago at the conclusion of ISAC's 1932–33 field season were deteriorating at an alarming rate. The tightly packed crates hold thousands of loose fragments that make up the bricks in their original configuration. Although the bricks are damaged, the excavators in 1933 were able to pack each one with its attendant fragments in a defined space within each crate. If the integrity of the crates fails, it will become almost impossible to return

those thousands of fragments to their original, correct positions.

Over the course of the year, Alison Whyte and Yardeni finished preparing the crates of bricks for the photogrammetry documentation performed by Kea Johnston, an ISAC postdoctoral scholar focusing on digital management of museum collections. As part of this process, the lids were temporarily removed from all the crates. This step had the benefit of clearing up a long-standing question: five of the original forty crates shipped to Chicago from Khorsabad in 1933 and believed to contain Sin Temple facade bricks were seen to contain finds from other areas of the excavation. In fact, the original accession record listing thirty-five crates with Sin Temple facade bricks was correct. Using field photographs and notations on the crates, Whyte and Yardeni identified each brick and then realigned dislodged fragments and removed loose dust and debris, thus revealing the glazed surface in preparation for Johnston's preliminary photo documentation of the untreated bricks. The conservators have since turned their attention to stabilizing and reconstructing the remaining uncrated bricks that were removed from six of the crates in the early 2000s but were not yet treated. At the time this report was written, this task was nearing completion (fig. 13). But the bulk of the work will begin in 2025–26, when the Conservation team commences the labor-intensive task of unpacking the remaining twenty-nine crates of bricks and stabilizing the 232 bricks that remain in their crates. The first crate to be unpacked in this next phase is TSB 5856 (fig. 14).

Figure 13. Elisheva Yardeni treating a glazed brick from the Sin Temple facade.

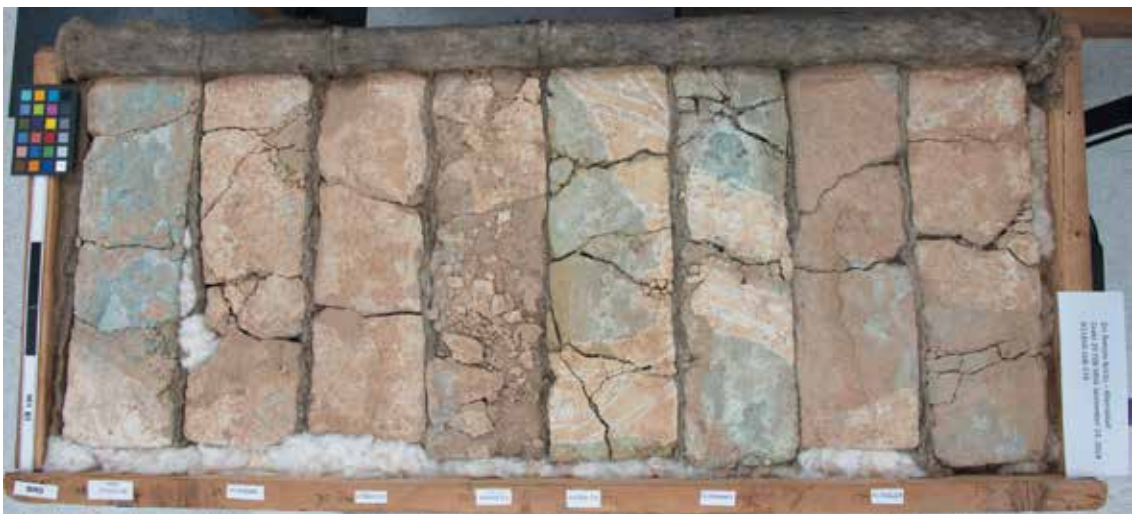

Figure 14. TSB 5856, the next crate of glazed bricks from the Sin Temple facade that will be unpacked and stabilized. The third and fourth bricks from the right are decorated with portions of a bull's tail and back legs.

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In an effort to obtain external funding for this critical project, as well as for much-needed temporary conservation assistance, a proposal was submitted to the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services granting agency under its program Museums for America. This proposal would support an additional conservation position for two years. With the federal budget cuts that have occurred in 2025, the fate of the proposal is still uncertain.

Researcher Visits, Loans, Exhibitions, and Teaching

In tandem with the Sin Temple glazed-bricks project, the regular activities of the Conservation lab continued. This year saw another substantial increase in the number of research requests—an increase that affected many Museum departments, including Conservation. The numbers of loan requests and object requests also increased. In January 2025, Whyte and Yardeni completed the documentation for thirteen objects loaned to the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece. In the spring, Laura D'Alessandro traveled to Athens as courier for the objects on loan to the exhibition *Allspice: Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*, and Yardeni acted as courier for the return of loaned materials from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Also in the spring, Whyte and Yardeni created condition reports for another thirteen objects that were to be loaned to the Fralin Museum in Virginia later in 2025. At the end of the report year, they were working on documenting the condition of four objects that were to travel to New York City for an exhibition opening in October 2025 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Public Outreach and Education

On several occasions throughout the year, Yardeni gave talks to University of Chicago classes and groups. The talks provided a brief overview of the conservation profession and the importance of conservation for the safekeeping of cultural heritage. Students were also instructed on best practices for handling objects and approaching collections. Among the classes visited were Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek's class on Egyptian archaeology and Kathryn Bandy's class titled "Art and Archaeology of Egyptian Funerary Traditions." D'Alessandro presented a short segment in Mehrnoush Soroush's class on ancient empires that discussed the conservation history of the Persepolis Fortification tablets. In January 2025, Whyte led a gallery tour for students in Kiersten Neumann's class "Collecting the Ancient World: Museum Practice and Politics," where, using examples from the ISAC Museum's permanent displays, she gave an overview of the history of conservation at ISAC and how attitudes toward restoration have evolved over time.

Whyte continued to participate in the C5 Cultural Training Partnership for Artifact Conservation (CTPAC), an advanced training program organized by Gil Stein for artifact conservators at the national museums of the five republics of Central Asia. She spent two weeks in early October 2024 at the State Museum of History in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where she presented lectures, organized practical exercises centered on the conservation of wooden artifacts, and assisted fellow instructors Susanne Gänsicke (senior conservator and head of antiquities conservation at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles) and Fabio Colombo (an independent conservator), who taught modules on the conservation of stone, bone, and ivory artifacts (fig. 15).

Whyte also traveled to Málaga, Spain, where for two weeks in June 2025 she continued the conservation treatment of artifacts recovered from the Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar, a joint excavation of the University of Chicago and the University of Málaga (see Cerro del Villar report). This year, she and fellow conservator Evren Kivançer worked on cleaning and reconstructing ceramic artifacts.

Whyte coauthored "Polychromy as Provenance Research: A Statuette of Venus and Cupid from Roman Syria(?)" with Toledo Museum of Art curator Roko Rumora, a study that integrated an art historical analysis with the scientific examination of ISACM A30908. Rumora presented the paper at the 12th International Round Table on Polychromy in Ancient Sculpture and Architecture at the J. Paul Getty Museum and Getty Center in November 2024, and it will be published in the forthcoming conference proceedings.

Figure 15. Alison Whyte (at left) presents a lab exercise to participants in the 2024 CTPAC workshop in Tashkent.

Over the course of the year, Whyte attended a series of Crystal Report training sessions together with Foy Scalf, Anne Flannery, and Susan Allison. Crystal Reports are an important component of ISAC's EMu database (EMu, or "Electronic Museum," being the software used by ISAC's Integrated Database).

The Conservation lab hosted a variety of visitors over the course of the year, ranging from colleagues from the North Carolina Museum of Art and an Uzbek delegation to preservation specialists from the Museu do Ipiranga of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. We also hosted two behind-the-scenes tours for ISAC members showcasing the current work on the Sin Temple tableau.

Analytical Equipment and Professional Development

D'Alessandro, Whyte, and Yardeni attended a variety of workshops and equipment demonstrations this year. The Field Museum hosted a conference on the twentieth anniversary of its Elemental Analysis Facility laboratory under the direction of Laure Dussubieux, which showcased projects conducted at the facility since its establishment. We also attended a workshop on microfading conducted by conservation scientist Giovanni Verri and colleagues at the Art Institute of Chicago's conservation department, who demonstrated principles of microfading and equipment used to measure color fastness and fading on artwork. Our University of Chicago Materials Research Science and Engineering Center (MRSEC) colleagues Justin Jureller and Sarah Brown invited us to a demonstration of a JEOL JCM-7000 tabletop scanning electronic microscope (SEM) that they subsequently purchased. We will be working with them in 2025–26 to test some of the ISAC Museum's objects on the portable SEM. Just a few weeks later, we attended a symposium conducted by Oxford Instruments titled "All the Small Things," which highlighted work on campus and new state-of-the-art equipment and software. We were able to bring a few of our objects to several of the

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demonstrations to test the ability of the equipment to identify ancient materials accurately.

We ended the year with exciting news: in May 2025, we were able to purchase needed analytical equipment for the Conservation lab. An intense, three-week search commenced with a series of in-house demonstrations of equipment able to identify inorganic and organic compounds. We looked at a range of Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) and Raman spectroscopy equipment from a variety of manufacturers. FTIR uses transmitted or reflected infrared light from a sample to identify molecules, and Raman (named after physicist C. V. Raman) uses the interaction of light in the form of lasers to identify the chemical bonds within a sample. Both techniques are typically used in the analysis of cultural heritage artifacts and tend to complement each other. After consultation with our colleagues at MRSEC, we determined that Horiba's MacroRAM, a portable Raman spectrometer, would best serve our purposes at this time (fig. 16).

Figure 16. Horiba Scientific engineers analyze ISACM A30908, a Venus with Cupid statue, during the equipment demonstration in the Conservation lab using a MacroRAM Raman spectrometer.

Persepolis Fortification Archive Project: Packing Continues

The multiyear project of returning the Persepolis Fortification Archive tablets research collection to the National Museum of Iran in Tehran continued throughout this report year as another batch of studied tablets was prepared for shipment. Aiyana Leigh, a rising senior in the College of the University of Chicago with a joint major in geophysics and Latin American studies, returned to work on the project. Her attention to detail and meticulous work on a project consisting of carefully handling thousands of unbaked clay tablets was greatly appreciated.

REGISTRATION

The Museum's Registration staff responded to more than 100 requests in 2024–25. Museum staff, student helpers, and volunteers carried out more than 14,500 object movements, and more than 300 objects were registered, including pottery from Chogha Mish (Iran) and Iron Age sherds from Alishar Höyük (Türkiye).

Researchers

Joseph Harris (PhD student, University of Chicago) studied the Tepe Asiab (Iran) flint collection in summer 2024. Matei Tichindelean (PhD student, University of California, Los Angeles) came to study and conduct portable X-ray fluorescence (p-XRF) analysis on a variety of Egyptian and Nubian metal objects. Maryan Ragheb (PhD student, University of California, Los Angeles) studied and conducted p-XRF analysis on a variety of objects from Nubia related to personal adornment, including beads, shells, and pins.

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Matthieu Husson (researcher at the SYRTE Observatoire de Paris / Centre national de la recherche scientifique) made two visits to examine a selection of Mesopotamian and Egyptian objects for a future ISAC Museum special exhibition on astronomy. Clay animal figurines from Megiddo were studied by Nadia Knudsen (PhD student, Tel Aviv University), and Iron Age chalices from Megiddo by Prudence Sheaves (PhD student, University of Sydney). Ludivine Audebert (PhD student, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) visited for nearly three months to study fourth-millennium BCE pottery from Chogha Mish; she studied more than 1,000 sherds and vessels. Libby Bush (master's student, Southern Methodist University) studied statue fragments from Tell Asmar (Iraq). Philip Senter (professor, Fayetteville State University) came to photograph a selection of objects, mostly from Megiddo, related to a variety of articles. Anna Everett Beek (visiting researcher, Case Western Reserve University) photographed a variety of bronze mirrors for a forthcoming book. Gabriele Biancalani (PhD student, University of Venice) studied some of the Iron Age sherds from Alishar Hüyük. Natasha Ayers (postdoctoral researcher, University of Vienna) visited to measure more than 100 pots from Assasif (Luxor, Egypt) for an article she is working on with Christine Lilyquist. Gabrielle Brugnacchi (PhD student, Sorbonne University) came for a month to study Middle Kingdom pottery from Serra East (Nubia). Sibylle Emerit (research fellow, Centre national de la recherche scientifique) came to study two wooden Egyptian harps. Benedetta Bellucci (postdoctoral researcher, University of Würzburg) visited to study music-related objects for the Musical Instruments of Ancient Mesopotamia project, including bells, rattles, and representations of musicians and instruments. ISAC's Tasha Vorderstrasse continued to work on the coins from the Mannheimer collection.

Loans

The 2024–25 year was a busy one for both incoming and outgoing loans, with six times as many incoming loans and three times as many outgoing loans as last year. The *Chicago on the Nile* special exhibition (September 2024–March 2025) included three incoming loans: the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art loaned a salted-paper print of Medinet Habu (2014.286) by nineteenth-century French photographer Maxime Du Camp, an architectural plan and elevation of the original Chicago House building by British engineer and archaeologist Arthur Callender was borrowed from Dr. Anthony Marks, and Chicago House stonecutter Johannes Weninger loaned two of his paintings of the original Chicago House and local staff at Luxor.

In March 2025, three loans came in for the ISAC special exhibition *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections*. They included an album of salted-paper prints by Maxime Du Camp and fellow nineteenth-century French photographer Aimé Rochas, loaned by the Art Institute of Chicago (*Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*, 1959.608.1-25); a plate volume of photographs loaned by the University of Chicago Regenstein Library's Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center (*Description de l'Égypte,* DT46.D442); and three salted-paper prints loaned by the university's Smart Museum of Art. The latter group consisted of *The Rameseum of El-Kurneh Thebes* by English photographer Francis Frith (2014.336); *Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, West Side* by French archaeologist, painter, and pioneer archaeological photographer Auguste Salzmann (2014.693); and *Middle Egypt, Sphinx and Pyramid of Chephren* by French photographer Félix Teynard (2014.802).

In November 2024, a loan to the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, returned to us—a leather manuscript (ISACM E10552) loaned for the *Elephantine: Island of the Millennia* exhibition. A loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art went out in October 2024 and returned in March 2025—a cylinder seal (ISACM A27901) and its rolling (ISACM C4108) included in the exhibition *Mapping the Infinite: Cosmologies across Cultures*. This seal was relevant to the exhibition because of its representation of the goddess Ishtar, associated with the planet Venus. A predynastic pot (ISACM E1983) and two pieces of ancient bread (ISACM E130) out on long-term loan were returned by the Field Museum in December 2024.

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In May 2025, twelve Mesopotamian objects and the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* series went out to the Acropolis Museum in Athens to be included in an exhibition of contemporary works by Michael Rakowitz, an artist who takes inspiration from the ancient world; the exhibition was titled *Allspice: Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*. One of his works is on display in the ISAC Museum's Dr. Norman Solhkhah Family Assyrian Empire Gallery (*Reappearance of Panel G-13*). This sizable loan included several statues from the Diyala (Iraq) (ISACM A12340, A12412A–B, A12431, A12434, A12435, and A18108); some clay figurines, molds, and plaques (ISACM A16994, A17672, A21203, and A21723); a stone bowl fragment (ISACM A18144); and part of a gameboard (ISACM A381). Most of these objects are usually on display in the Museum's Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery.

A loan of obsidian tools from various Braidwood excavations (Tell Asiab, Banahilk, El-Khan, Gird Chai, Gird Ali Agha, Karim Shahir, Matarrah, M'lefaat, and Palegawra) went out to the XRF laboratory at Canada's McMaster University, under the auspices of anthropology professor Tristan Carter, for X-ray fluorescence carried out by Joseph Harris (PhD student, University of Chicago). Harris also took three loans to McMaster's anthropology department to examine flint tools under a microscope housed there.

Class Use and Related Events

In summer 2024, Foy Scalf used a selection of manuscripts and ostraca for a class for the Rare Book Society, Tasha Vorderstrasse spoke to a class from the University of Chicago's Graham School about the Museum's fragment of Homer's *The Iliad* (ISACM E2058), and Ahmed el-Shamsy used some manuscripts for a class on the Arabic manuscript tradition. In the fall 2024 quarter, Kathryn Bandy used a few objects from the site of Deshasha (Egypt) for the "Art and Archaeology of Egyptian Funerary Traditions" class; Margaret Geoga used some scarabs for the "Introduction to Middle Egyptian Hieroglyphs I" class; Cecilia Palombo used a selection of Arabic papyri and ostraca for the "Documentary Cultures in Islamicate Societies" class; Egyptian flints and Middle Kingdom pots were used by Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek for a class on Egyptian archaeology; and in October 2024, a selection of sherds and pots was made available for James Osborne's Humanities Day lecture "Why Do Archaeologists Love Pottery So Much?"

In the winter 2025 quarter, Scalf used a variety of manuscripts, including sections of the Book of the Dead, for a Dominican University class titled "History of the Text," and Brian Muhs used several ostraca for a class on hieratic Egyptian. In the spring 2025 quarter, Mourad-Cizek used a selection of ushebtis and a selection of objects of different materials for an Egyptian archaeology class, and in May, Margaret Graves (professor, Brown University) visited to give a workshop on the Islamic site of Rayy (Iran) under the auspices of the University of Chicago Department of Art History. A variety of Islamic Rayy sherds, mostly glazed, were made available for this workshop.

In cooperation with Vorderstrasse, objects were provided for the following classes: Mehrnoush Soroush's class on the Achaemenid Empire (fall 2024 quarter), Catherine Kearns's class on gender (human clay figurines; winter 2025 quarter), and Valerie Levan's "Reading Cultures" class (a selection of scans of accession records relating to objects on display; winter 2025 quarter).

Acquisitions

Seth Cooper kindly gifted some Egyptian *Triticum dicoccum* seeds originally given to one of his ancestors by James Henry Breasted (accession group no. 3861).

Photo Permissions and Photography

More than 200 photo permission requests were processed during this report year, including new external and internal photography requests; more than 400 images, new and existing, were added to the database; and more than 250 objects were photographed for both publication and research purposes. In addition to

these totals, another 5,100 digital record shots were added to ISAC's Integrated Database by our student helpers. Just under 650 objects, mostly of Nubian pottery, were moved for photogrammetry that was carried out by ISAC postdoctoral scholar Kea Johnston.

Integrated Database

In August 2024, Susan Allison attended a two-day EMu advanced user training and meetup workshop at the Field Museum. She also participated in several training sessions in the Crystal Reports software program used by EMu to generate reports.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our University of Chicago student helpers and volunteers. Brittney Coelho and Libby Konjoyan joined us for summer 2024. They registered fourth-millennium BCE pots and sherds from Chogha Mish and Iron Age sherds from Alishar Höyük, and they took record shots of gold and silver objects for the Integrated Database. Coelho continued as a helper for the 2024–25 academic year, and Anthony Ray again joined us for the fall 2024 quarter. Joseph Harris registered some sixty obsidian tools from Gird Ali Agha (Iraq), and our volunteer helpers Terry Friedman and Toni Smith continued to make a valuable contribution with inventory and labeling, with more than 2,000 objects inventoried.

ARCHIVES

In addition to fulfilling its ongoing responsibilities—acquiring new collections and assisting researchers—the Museum Archives in 2024–25 expanded its public engagement efforts both online and in person through curated exhibitions, outreach programming, class sessions, and tours. Work continued on the ISAC Digital Archives, with curated and cataloged content taking shape. The Cultural Heritage Experiment completed another successful lending period in the spring quarter, and significant progress was made on updating documentation and advancing the reorganization of information and data sciences at ISAC, culminating in the establishment of the Data Research Center (DRC).

With this institutional shift, 2024–25 also marked a bittersweet transition: it was not only my (Anne Flannery's) final year as ISAC's archivist but also the final year the Archives will be housed under the Museum. The Archives will move to the DRC along with the Research Archives and Data Services—a change that promises stronger integration of information sciences and institutional research.

New Acquisitions and Collection Processing

This year saw an expansion of holdings thanks to generous contributions from both ISAC faculty and external donors. Notable acquisitions include the papers of Janet Johnson and Donald Whitcomb, previously inaccessible Diyala records, and long-missing Nippur records that had somehow ended up at the University of California, Berkeley, before making their way home to ISAC. These collections will prove invaluable to future researchers, though the Johnson and Whitcomb materials will require ongoing processing because of their size and complexity.

Efforts to make photographic materials more accessible also continued. In 2024–25, Museum Archives assistant Xilin Liu, a recent graduate of the University of Chicago's Master of Arts Program in the Humanities, continued cataloging the ISAC Lantern Slide Collection and entering Epigraphic Survey negatives into the database. Anthropology master's student Megan Sands spent the academic year cataloging the remaining ISAC Directors Correspondence and conducting preliminary assessments of a variety of collections, including McGuire Gibson's. She also cataloged the Anna Rosich Collection and rehoused the Donald Whitcomb Slide Collection.

The Zeutschel scanner, acquired only last year, has already earned its keep. With Liu's help, more than fifteen boxes of Directors Correspondence were scanned folder by folder and stored in the Integrated Database, thereby making them digitally accessible while sparing the fragile originals from further wear.

Research Requests and User Support

The Museum Archives responded to more than 200 research and information requests this year—both in person and digitally—from users across the globe. In addition to researchers from the University of Chicago and the greater Chicago area, inquiries came from institutions such as Boston University, Copenhagen Business School, Indiana University, Freie Universität Berlin, Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, New York University, University of Pennsylvania, Shahid Beheshti University, The Smithsonian, Sorbonne University, Stanford University, University College London Institute of Archaeology, Washington University in Saint Louis, and Yale University.

Curatorial Work and Outreach

Spring 2024 saw the installation of *ISAC's "Fifty-Cent Men": How the Gold Reserve Act Altered the Business of Archaeology*, a mini special exhibition that the Museum Archives curated for the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business atrium. This publicly accessible display explores the economics of ISAC's foreign excavations during the Great Depression and exemplifies the Museum Archives' ongoing commitment to public engagement and education. This year, the exhibition was renewed through May 2026.

The Museum Archives also provided curatorial support to the ISAC Museum by contributing documents and materials to both the fall 2024 special exhibition, *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey*, and the spring 2025 special exhibition, *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections*; the latter prominently featured nineteenth-century photographs, some of which were preserved this year with expert help from Chicago conservator Carol Turchan. The Museum Archives also supported the upcoming fall 2025 exhibition on the centennial of ISAC's Megiddo Expedition by providing more than twenty archival documents for display.

Undergraduate engagement remained a strong focus of the Museum Archives. The Cultural Heritage Experiment once again saw enthusiastic participation, with archival objects loaned to approximately forty students in the fall 2024 quarter. Students contributed in situ photographs and took part in archival tours and a weekly, ISAC-themed trivia contest during the month of February 2025.

Data Research Center

For me as the ISAC archivist, this year was very much defined by the creation of the DRC. The Integrated Database committee worked alongside ISAC director Timothy Harrison and interim DRC director Foy Scalf to shape the mission of a new center that would build on ISAC's data legacy and bring it into an innovative and sustainable future. The launch of the DRC marks a major advancement in ISAC's support for collaborative, interdisciplinary research in information science, data management, and digital scholarship. Serving as interim assistant director of the DRC from April through July 2025, I had the privilege of contributing to the foundation of a centralized hub designed to support and expand ISAC's digital infrastructure. The DRC is already spearheading key initiatives, including the digitization of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* corpus, modernization of the Diyala database, and engagement with the University of Chicago president's AI Pillar initiative. The DRC's emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration is evident in its growing partnerships across campus and with industry leaders. A notable example is the pilot project with Amazon Web Services that explores the use of artificial intelligence to generate descriptive metadata for digitized images by integrating photographic and archival documentation. The momentum behind these efforts signals an exciting future for ISAC's role in digital research and cultural heritage.

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The End

On July 28, 2025, my almost-nine-year tenure as ISAC archivist came to an end. I began here in 2014 as project manager for the Integrated Database, working with John Larson and Foy Scalf to bring the Museum Archives online, and was hired as the archivist two years later, after Larson's retirement.

Annual reports are meant to highlight achievements, but archival work often consists of unglamorous, persistent tasks: locating misplaced collections, clearing out faculty offices and random storerooms, managing deteriorating paper and photographic records, and making room in overcrowded storage spaces. This year I recovered boxes previously thought lost, brought back ISAC materials from other institutions, and continued to make sense of a century's worth of complex and often inconsistent documentation.

For most of the past decade, I ran the Museum Archives alone with a surprisingly small budget—until 2023, when things began improving financially for the Archives. Although I often use "we" when describing this work, the Museum Archives has always functioned as a one-person department. That said, I was fortunate to work with excellent student assistants and receive support from generous and brilliant colleagues. I leave behind a significant amount of unprocessed material—as is often the case in archives—but I also improved documentation, fueled a growing digital infrastructure, and developed much stronger public access to the collections.

Though I was not formally trained as an archivist, I have worked in this field for twenty years. My education began as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago and culminated in a doctorate in literature, and that training offered some perspective on how institutional narratives form and how they are preserved. Archives like those at ISAC can seem like magical spaces that materials go into and emerge from exactly when needed. Occasionally, that is true. But more often this work is steady, meticulous, arduous, overwhelming, and invisible.

A new archivist will soon be hired. That individual will do more than I could, just as I built on the work of John Larson and that of Ronnie Burbank before him. And together, however imperfectly, we will have helped make this institution's record more legible for all of you.

ISAC MUSEUM / FIELD MUSEUM POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARSHIP

Kea Johnston is the first joint postdoctoral scholar of the Field Museum and ISAC Museum. For the Field Museum, Johnston is writing software to orchestrate the various programs used to generate models with photogrammetry. The Anthropology Collections department at the Field Museum wishes to digitize large numbers of objects in its archaeological collections. Thus, the overarching goal for the software is to automate the model-building process such that the user can build models in ten minutes or less per object by placing the object on a turntable and pressing a button (fig. 17). Currently, the software, named APHOMA (for "automated photogrammetry assets"), can build a model with no user interaction in about ten minutes and thirty seconds. To test the software, Johnston built models of more than 200 artifacts, most of which come from the ISAC Museum's collection and were excavated at the Meroitic cemeteries of Ballana and Qustul in the 1960s. These models are available for viewing on ISAC's Sketchfab page and also under the entry for each object in ISAC's collections search. For each piece of Meroitic pottery, an image of the unrolled surface has also been produced. Some of them will be featured in the ISAC Museum's spring 2026 special exhibition, *A Bestiary of Ancient Nubia*.

Johnston organized a conference titled "Technology as a Bridge to the Museum," which took place at ISAC on May 23–24, 2025. Sponsored by ISAC and the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities, the conference featured nineteen speakers, ranging geographically from Sweden to the

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Figure 17. Kea Johnston using a computer to operate an automatic turntable with a five-camera arm hovering over it. This device is called an Ortery and automates the photography of objects for photogrammetry at the Field Museum.

university's Center for East Asian Studies, as well as academics and professionals working in many types of museums. The lectures, however, were united by the theme of how technology can help museums form meaningful connections and collaborations among the communities on which they depend: students, communities of origin, scholars, and the public. Two keynote addresses were given. On the first day, Medeia Csoba DeHass, a professor at the University of Missouri, and Alex Taitt, from the University of Alaska, Anchorage, spoke about working with Native groups from the Bering Straits to digitize cultural objects and working to support indigenous digital sovereignty over the objects. On the second day of the conference, video-game designer Isaac Epp—whose work has appeared in many games, including *The Sims 4*, *Dauntless*, and *Fae Farm*—spoke about how basic principles of game design might be used to build engaging and memorable exhibits. Speakers addressed a range of topics, from artificial intelligence to scientific testing of materials to using virtual reality in the classroom, and the conference provided a valuable opportunity for those interested in both science and the humanities to learn about innovative approaches to technology outside their immediate fields. Johnston has been editing the proceedings of this conference, which will be published in the ISAC Museum Publications series. As with all monographs in this series, this one will be available as both an open-source PDF downloadable from ISAC's website and an 8 × 10 inch printed hardcover book for purchase.

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DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

OVERLEAF: Standing male figures from Eshnunna (Tell Asmar), Iraq. Gypsum, shell, lapis lazuli, limestone, bitumen (with modern reconstruction). Early Dynastic period (2900–2600 BCE). ISACM A12330–A12332.

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DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

BILL COSPER, BRAD LENZ, AND EMILY SMITH

The Development and Membership team works closely with a wide variety of constituents from across ISAC, as well as with the University's Office of Advancement, to strengthen and expand ISAC's community of supporters and partners and to deepen their investment in the organization's mission. In the 2024–25 academic and fiscal year, the Development and Membership team comprised the following:

- Bill Cosper, director of development
- Brad Lenz, assistant director of development and membership
- Emily Smith, development and events associate

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

This year was a monumental one for ISAC as we celebrated the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey and our continuing presence and work in Egypt, as well as significant advances in many facets of ISAC's other activities. Against this backdrop, ISAC is pleased to report that the year concluded with strong fundraising results. The continued support of our donors, members, Advisory Council, volunteers, and partners played a key role in all aspects of our work, from archaeological excavations, research initiatives, and cultural heritage preservation to the ISAC Museum and our dynamic educational programming. This support not only sustains all that we do but also reinforces ISAC's reputation as a leading center for academic and research excellence.

Fundraising category	**Fiscal year 2024–25 amount**
Fundraising progress*	$3,520,000
Expendable cash	$2,825,000
Realized bequests	$1,311,000
Payments on multiyear pledges	$310,000
New pledge commitments	$250,000
New deferred gifts and documented bequests	$50,000

*Fundraising progress is the total combined dollar amount of all new gifts, memberships, multiyear pledges, and documented estate commitments received during the fiscal year.

Welcoming hundreds of guests to celebrate the centennial of the Epigraphic Survey, we hosted two major special events, one in Chicago and one in Luxor. In September, our gala on the University of Chicago's main quadrangle coincided with the opening of the ISAC Museum's special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile* and the release of the accompanying monograph by Emily Teeter, *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work*

Figure 1. Epigraphic Survey director J. Brett McClain (center) with conservation assistants and students at the centennial gala in Luxor.

by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago (ISAC Museum Publications 2; Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024).

In November, we marked the exact date of the centennial with a gala in the gardens of the historic Winter Palace hotel in Luxor, the very place where James Henry Breasted first conceived of the Epigraphic Survey (fig. 1) (see Epigraphic Survey report). We welcomed University of Chicago and ISAC leadership, VIP guests, and many Egyptian and international colleagues. The evening featured remarks by the United States ambassador to Egypt, H. E. Herro Mustafa Garg; University of Chicago vice president for advancement Armin Afsahi; ISAC director Timothy Harrison; Ibrahim Soliman of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities; and Epigraphic Survey field director J. Brett McClain.

Our fundraising success in 2024–25 made possible the achievements we realized both locally and at fieldwork sites around the world. It also set the stage for further success in the upcoming fiscal year and beyond. In the months ahead, we will feature a special focus on cultural heritage preservation and its significantly expanding importance in our work.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

ISAC's Advisory Council is composed of dedicated supporters who offer their time, expertise, and resources to advance our mission and help ensure our continued success. We are extremely grateful for all the ways Advisory Council members engage with ISAC, including supporting projects financially, serving as ambassadors, participating in tours, welcoming visitors as docents in the ISAC Museum, and providing advice, guidance, and professional expertise.

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As of June 30, 2025, ISAC Advisory Council members included:

Anthony Diamandakis, *chair**
Kiana Ashtiani
Gretel Braidwood*
Andrea Dudek
Marjorie M. Fisher*
Joan Fortune
Susan Geshwender
Byron Gregory
Lewis Gruber*
Misty Gruber*
Deborah Halpern
Rex Haydon
Janet W. Helman*
Barbara Schubeler Jillson
John D. Lawrence
John W. McCarter Jr.*
Marilyn Murray
Catherine A. Novotny
Susan Padula
John Otto Peters III
Rebecca Wilson Potter
Crennan M. Ray*
Aimee Drolet Rossi
Roberta Schaffner
Charles N. Secchia
O. J. Sopranos*
Walter Vandaele
Anna M. White

**Life member*

We were deeply saddened by the passing of longtime Advisory Council members Roger D. Isaacs and Howard Hallengren in 2024–25 (see In Memoriam section). Both were ardent and active ISAC members and supporters for many years, and they will be sorely missed.

MEMBER PROGRAMMING

This year we continued our focus of developing innovative learning and engagement opportunities for our more than 1,400 members from around the world. Our member programming started with a special visit to the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood to see *Ancient Huasteca Women: Goddesses, Warriors and Governors*. Cesáreo Moreno, the museum's director of visual arts and chief curator, led a private tour for our members after the museum closed.

In March 2025, we hosted a Member Appreciation Day, which featured a talk by ISAC Sumerologist Jana Matuszak, dinner, extended gallery hours, a bonus discount in the ISAC Museum Shop, and a screening of *Are You a Woman?*—a film based on Matuszak's translation of a newly discovered Sumerian poem from 2000 BCE, in which two women hotly debate what it takes to be a "good woman."

We were delighted to welcome internationally renowned artist Wafaa Bilal to the ISAC Museum's Yelda Khorsabad Court for a special program on the occasion of his first major survey exhibition, *Wafaa Bilal: Indulge Me*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. During this event, Bilal gave a presentation on his artistic exploration of cultural destruction, international politics, and Iraqi heritage (fig. 2). He was then joined by Kiersten Neumann for a conversation that delved deeper into the themes explored in his practice.

We hosted two exclusive programs in connection with the Art Institute of Chicago's special exhibition *Myth and Marble: Ancient Roman Sculpture from the Torlonia Collection*. The first event featured a discussion with exhibition curators Lisa Ayla Çakmak (Mary and Michael Jaharis Chair and Curator, Arts of Greece, Rome, and Byzantium) and Katharine A. Raff (Elizabeth McIlvaine Curator, Arts of Greece, Rome, and Byzantium), both from the Art Institute of Chicago. They were joined by Kiersten Neumann for an insightful conversation on the role of archaeology in shaping museum and private collections. Following that discussion, the curators hosted a private tour of the exhibition that offered our members an exclusive, behind-the-scenes experience when the museum was closed to the public.

Figure 2. Artist Wafaa Bilal discusses his work in front of the *lamassu* in the ISAC Museum's Yelda Khorsabad Court.

We were excited to launch our first ISAC Member Book Club this year, which focused on Emily Teeter's *Chicago on the Nile*. Across two Zoom sessions, Teeter and ISAC Publications managing editor Andrew Baumann discussed the themes presented in the book, as well as its research and production processes.

We also continued our new series of Zoom excavation reports, during which ISAC archaeologists share informal updates on their fieldwork with ISAC members. These sessions offer a unique, behind-the-scenes look at the excavation process and allow members to pose questions directly to the archaeologists. This year, Derek Kennet presented his work in Suhar, and James Osborne discussed the first season of work at Türkmen-Karahöyük.

Members had the opportunity to join several behind-the-scenes tours at ISAC in 2024–25. Helen McDonald led two tours of the ISAC Registration area to offer a deeper look at the museum's collection management. Laura D'Alessandro, Alison Whyte, and Elisheva Yardeni guided two tours of the Conservation lab that featured their work on the Sin Temple relief bricks. Additionally, Anne Flannery led a special tour of the Museum Archives highlighting the significant role of film and photography in ISAC's collection.

Members were invited to exclusive previews of both of this year's ISAC Museum special exhibitions. At the *Chicago on the Nile* preview, Catie Witt was stationed in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery to talk about her research in the Luxor Temple blockyard, and a selection of both old and new Epigraphic Survey publications was available for members to peruse. During the preview for *Staging the East: Orientalist Photography in Chicago Collections*, Tasha Vorderstrasse and Anne Flannery were also stationed in the Mesopotamian gallery, where they shared additional materials related to the exhibition from the ISAC Museum Archives.

Further, we hosted a full series of Breasted Society Salons focused on all aspects of ancient Egypt (fig. 3). These events, which are open to members at the Breasted Society level, feature an exclusive talk by an ISAC scholar and a dinner in the ISAC director's office. Our 2024–25 speakers included Maggie Geoga, J. Brett McClain, Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek, Brian Muhs, Foy Scalf, Emily Teeter, and Catie Witt.

Throughout the year, we published four issues of our member magazine, *News & Notes*, and introduced several new regular features, including ISAC faculty highlights, fieldwork reports, and a spotlight on favorite objects selected by ISAC volunteers.

We truly value our members and are continually inspired by their passion and dedication to ISAC. Their support allows us to continue working toward our mission, and we are excited to offer more opportunities like those highlighted above to provide meaningful experiences for our members in the year ahead.

Figure 3. Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek presenting her work at Beni Hasan to ISAC members at a Breasted Society Salon.

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OVERLEAF: Multicolumn tablet fragment inscribed with the *List of Personal Names* Inana-teš from Nippur (Nuffar), Iraq. Clay. Old Babylonian period (2004–1595 BCE). ISACM A30190. Photo by Danielle Levy.

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abresson@uchicago.edu

John A. Brinkman, Charles H. Swift Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Mesopotamian History
j-brinkman@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9545

Fred M. Donner, Peter B. Ritzma Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern History
f-donner@uchicago.edu

Peter F. Dorman, Professor Emeritus of Egyptology
pdorman@uchicago.edu | 206.228.9827

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w-farber@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9546

McGuire Gibson, Professor Emeritus of Mesopotamian Archaeology
m-gibson@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9525

Gene B. Gragg, Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Languages
g-gragg@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9511

Janet H. Johnson, Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Egyptology; Editor, Chicago Demotic Dictionary Project
j-johnson@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9530

W. Raymond Johnson, Research Associate Professor Emeritus; Former Field Director, Epigraphic Survey
wrayjohnson3@gmail.com | 773.793.6525

Matthew W. Stolper, John A. Wilson Professor Emeritus of Assyriology
m-stolper@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9553

Theo van den Hout, Arthur and Joann Rasmussen Professor Emeritus of Hittite and Anatolian Languages; Executive Editor, Chicago Hittite Dictionary Project
tvdhout@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9527

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e-wente@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9539

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Margaret Geoga, Assistant Professor of Egyptology
mgeoga@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9539

Petra M. Goedegebuure, Associate Professor of Hittitology; Senior Editor, Chicago Hittite Dictionary Project
pgoedegebuure@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9550

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hasselb@uchicago.edu | 773.834.3290

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dkennet@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9547

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clopezru@uchicago.edu

Jana Matuszak, Assistant Professor of Sumerology
matuszak@uchicago.edu | 773.834.8560

Augusta McMahon, Professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology
augustamcmahon@uchicago.edu | 773.834.5011

Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek, Assistant Professor of Egyptian Archaeology
almourad@uchicago.edu | 773.834.5036

Brian P. Muhs, Associate Professor of Egyptology
bpmuhs@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9533

James F. Osborne, Associate Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology
jamesosborne@uchicago.edu | 773.702.0568

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d-pardee@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9541

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hreculeau@uchicago.edu | 773.702.4592

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mroth@uchicago.edu | 773.834.2448

Yorke M. Rowan, Research Professor; Director, Galilee Prehistory Project, Eastern Badia Archaeological Project, and Kites in Context
ymrowan@uchicago.edu | 773.702.0086

David Schloen, John A. Wilson Professor of Archaeology and Digital Studies
d-schloen@uchicago.edu | 773.702.1382

Mehrnoush Soroush, Assistant Professor of Landscape Archaeology; Director, Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes
mehrnoush@uchicago.edu | 773.834.5007

Jeffrey Stackert, Caroline E. Haskell Professor of Hebrew Bible
stackert@uchicago.edu | 773.702.8994

Gil J. Stein, Rowe Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology; Director, Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation
gstein@uchicago.edu | 773.702.4098

ASSOCIATES

Annalisa Azzoni, Associate, Persepolis Fortification Archive Project
annalisa.azzoni@vanderbilt.edu

Richard H. Beal, Senior Research Associate, Chicago Hittite Dictionary Project
r-beal@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9527

Scott Branting, Associate, Kerkenes Project
scott.branting@ucf.edu

Elspeth R. M. Dusinberre, Associate, Persepolis Fortification Archive Project
elspeth.dusinberre@colorado.edu

Mark Garrison, Associate, Persepolis Fortification Archive Project
mgarriso@trinity.edu

François Gaudard, Associate; Coeditor, Mummy Label Database Project
fgaudard@uchicago.edu

Nicholas Gill, Postdoctoral Researcher, Assyriology
nmgill@uchicago.edu | 773.834.2775

Lisa Heidorn, Associate, Nubian Expedition
l.a.heidorn@uw.edu.pl

Wouter Henkelman, Associate, Persepolis Fortification Archive Project
wouterhenkelman@gmail.com

Austin Chad Hill, Associate, Galilee Prehistory Project
dentedachiii@gmail.com

Kea Johnston, ISAC/Field Museum Postdoctoral Scholar
keajohnston@uchicago.edu | 773.702

Morag M. Kersel, Associate, Galilee Prehistory Project and Kites in Context
mkersel@depaul.edu | 773.702.0086

Mark Lehner, Associate, Giza Plateau Mapping Project
marklehner@aol.com, markelehner@gmail.com | 617.777.2350

Timothy Leonard, Postdoctoral Researcher, Hittitology
tdl@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9527

Marc Maillot, Director and Chief Curator, Museum
mmaillot@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9863

J. Brett McClain, Research Associate; Field Director, Epigraphic Survey
jbmcclai@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9524

Carol Meyer, Associate, Nubian Expedition
cam5457@msn.com

Kiersten Neumann, Research Associate; Curator, Museum; Lecturer
neumann@uchicago.edu | 773.834.8950

Artur Obłuski, Associate, Qasr el-Wizz Publication Project
artur_obluski@yahoo.com

Delphine Poinsot, Associate, Persepolis Fortification Archive Project
poinsotdelphine@gmail.com

Seth Priestman, Associate, Suhar Project
t-9pries@uchicago.edu, seth.priestman@gmail.com

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scalffd@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9537

Emily Teeter, Associate
eteeter@uchicago.edu; eteeter55@gmail.com

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j.then-obluska@uw.edu.pl

Bruce B. Williams, Associate, Nubian Expedition
wecurb1@gmail.com

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wilsonk94@yahoo.com | 773.702.3526

Christopher Woods, Associate, Penn Museum
chrwoods@upenn.edu

Richard Zettler, Associate
rzettler@sas.upenn.edu

STAFF

Susan Allison, Associate Registrar, Museum
srallison@uchicago.edu | 773.702.3513

Kate Ayres, Assistant Director, Programs and Education
clayres@uchicago.edu | 773.834-9777

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rbain@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9516

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vick.cruz@uchicago.edu | 773.702.5112

Laura D'Alessandro, Head, Conservation Laboratory, Museum
lada@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9519

Alejandro Gallego López, Field Director, Afghanistan
agallegolopez@uchicago.edu | +93 793718058, (cell) +34 647071889

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kiel@uchicago.edu | 773.834.8098

Sheheryar Hasnain, Director, Administration and Finance
shasnain@uchicago.edu | 773.834.9548

Jennifer L. Kimpton, Epigrapher, Epigraphic Survey
jkimpton@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9524

Yarko Kobylecky, Senior Photographer, Epigraphic Survey
museumphoto@hotmail.com | 773.702.9524

Bradley Lenz, Assistant Director, Development and Membership
blenz@uchicago.edu | 773.834.3817

Susan Lezon, Photo Archivist and Photographer, Epigraphic Survey
suelezon@gmail.com | 773.702.9524

Tonya Lifshits, Volunteer and Art Program Coordinator
alifshits@uchicago.edu | 773.702.1845

Logan MacGregor, IT User Support Specialist
ljmacgregor@uchicago.edu | 773.702.0989

Helen McDonald, Registrar, Museum
helenmcd@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9518

FACULTY, ASSOCIATES, AND STAFF

Susan Osgood, Senior Artist, Epigraphic Survey
susanosgood2011@gmail.com | 773.702.9524

Matthew Perley, Assistant Director, Administration and Finance
mperley@uchicago.edu | 773.702.5044

Madeleine Roberts-Ganim, Coordinator, Youth and Family Program
mprobertsganim@uchicago.edu | 773.834.1158

Allie Scholten, Head Archivist, Museum
scholten@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9924

Emily Smith, Development and Events Associate
emsmith1@uchicago.edu | 773.834.9755

Josh Tulisiak, Senior Designer, Exhibition Design and Production
tulisiak@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9516

Tasha K. Vorderstrasse, Manager, Continuing Education Program
tkvorder@uchicago.edu | 773.702.0788

Alison Whyte, Senior Conservator, Museum
aawhyte@uchicago.edu | 773.702.5181

Elisheva Yardeni, Senior Conservator, Museum
elishevay@uchicago.edu | 773.702.4455

INFORMATION

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT CULTURES

1155 EAST 58TH STREET | CHICAGO, IL 60637

Social Media

Website: isac.uchicago.edu
Facebook: @isac.uchicago
Instagram: @isac.uchicago
X (formerly Twitter): @isac.uchicago
YouTube: ISAC_UChicago

Museum Hours

Monday: Closed
Tuesday–Thursday: 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m.–8 p.m.
Saturday–Sunday: 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Administrative Office | isac-administration@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9514
Archaeology Laboratory | 773.702.1407
Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes | 773.834.0597
Computer Laboratory | 773.702.0989
Conservation Laboratory | 773.702.9519
Department of Middle Eastern Studies | 773.702.9512
Demotic Dictionary Project | 773.702.9528
Development Office | isac-development@uchicago.edu | 773.834.9775
Director's Office | 773.834.8098
Epigraphic Survey | 773.702.9524
Facsimile | 773.702.9853
Hittite Dictionary Project | 773.702.9527
Journal of Near Eastern Studies | 773.702.9592
Membership Office | isac-membership@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9513
Museum | isac-museum@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9520
Museum Registration | 773.702.9518
Museum Shop | 773.702.9510
Museum Shop Office | 773.702.9509
Public Education | isac-education@uchicago.edu | 773.702.9507
Publications | isac-publications@uchicago.edu | 773.702.5967
Research Archives | 773.702.9537
Security | 773.702.9522
Tablet Collection and Tablet Room | 773.834.2775
Volunteer Office | isac-volunteers@uchicago.edu | 773.702.1845

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