



TAARII NEWSLETTER

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TAARII LAUNCHES BLOG TO PROMOTE MESOPOTAMIAN AND IRAQI STUDIES

TAARII is pleased to announce the launch of its blog to promote Mesopotamian and Iraqi Studies and to foster communication within the growing community of institutions, scholars, and other individuals interested in Iraq. The blog offers a more immediate forum than the TAARII newsletter for disseminating research reports, images, and other information. It also allows the inclusion of greater detail than the TAARII Facebook page does.

The TAARII blog will not only announce TAARII and other relevant events, but it will also contain several regularly updated threads. One of these threads will be “Meet TAARII’s Institutional Members.” TAARII is

grateful to its institutional members for forming its consortium, helping to constitute its governing board, and shaping TAARII’s policies and activities. Our institutional members have experience and resources related to ancient, medieval, and modern Iraq that the blog thread will feature.

A second blog thread will introduce and receive updates from TAARII’s research fellows. Since 2005, TAARII has awarded research fellowships to sixty American and sixty Iraqi citizens. In the blog thread, current research fellows will share their reports from the field. Past fellows will inform us about what they are currently working on

and how their TAARII fellowships have helped them in their career.

A third blog thread will display “Images from Iraq.” These images will illustrate aspects of Iraqi life and culture, in the present day and from the past. We invite individuals to contribute their images, along with captions, commentary, or anecdotes that help contextualize the image.

We look forward to seeing the blog develop and become a useful resource for the study and appreciation of Iraq. We welcome your submissions. Visit TAARII’s new blog at <http://taarii.org/blog/>. Please email Katie Johnson, TAARII’s newsletter and web editor, at katie@taarii.org, with your suggestions for the blog and your contributions.



Figure 1.1. A screen grab of the homepage of TAARII’s new blog (Photo credit: McGuire Gibson)



Figure 1.2. An image from TAARII’s “Images from Iraq” blog thread showing a bridge in Basrah in front of the Suq Hanna Al-Shaykh (Photo credit: David Hirsch)

TAARII SPONSORS SESSION HONORING DR. BEHNAM NASSIR ABU AL-SOOF AT THE WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY CONGRESS IN JORDAN

KATHARYN HANSON, IRAQI INSTITUTE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ANTIQUITIES AND HERITAGE

When the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) announced that their seventh international conference on archaeology would take place in January 2013 at the Dead Sea in Jordan, we immediately knew that a session on Iraq would be important. It is rare for an international archaeology conference to allow presentations in both Arabic and English and given Jordan's proximity to Iraq, this venue offered a unique opportunity for archaeologists to present their work on archaeology in Iraq. Mr. Abdulmir Hamdani (State University of New York, Stony Brook) and I proposed a session on "Archaeology in Iraq" under the theme of "Discovery: Field Reports."

Last fall, around the time that our WAC session was accepted, we were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Behnam Abu Al-Soof, a prominent Iraqi archaeologist (please see his obituary in the Fall 2012 issue of TAARII's newsletter).



Figure 2.2. Sameera Abu Soof (left), Layla Salih, and Nusyba Al-Hashmi listen to archaeological presentations in memory of Dr. Abu Al-Soof (Photo credit: Lucine Taminian)



Figure 2.1. Dr. Abu Al-Soof's books on display at the World Archaeology Conference, Jordan (Photo credit: Lucine Taminian)

In response to this sad news, we changed the proposed session and dedicated it to honoring Dr. Behnam Abu Al-Soof. We are enormously grateful for the generous support of TAARII for the funding that enabled our panel honoring Dr. Abu Al-Soof and our commitment to involving as many Iraqi archaeologists as possible.

This session explored the results of recent archaeological work in and about Iraq. As the political and economic situation in Iraq has changed, new research opportunities have become available and promise to contribute to a better understanding of this region. The presentations in the panel covered the time periods from the earliest occupations in the region to the historical period and ranged geographically from the marshes in southern Iraq to mountainous Kurdistan in northern Iraq

and to the deserts of western Iraq. We specifically set out to bring the results of recent fieldwork into conversation with new findings from other forms of analysis including remote sensing. The session included the results of new surveys, excavations, and recent findings based on previous fieldwork.

Despite visa and travel complications, our session was held on Thursday, January 17, 2013, at the King Hussein Conference Center at the Dead Sea. Our event marked the first time a session specifically on discoveries in Iraq has been held at the World Archaeological Congress. At the last minute, the conference organizers combined our session with a more general session entitled "New Discoveries in Southwest Asia." This change provided an even greater opportunity for discussion with international colleagues.

The session on archaeology in Iraq, co-chaired by Hamdani and myself, began with a videotaped introduction and remembrance of Dr. Abu Al-Soof by Professor McGuire Gibson (University of Chicago). The second

presentation by Hamdani, which was also video-recorded, welcomed the audience in both English and Arabic, discussed archaeology in Iraq, and included a remembrance of Dr. Abu Al-Soof.

Ms. Layla M. Salih (MA student, Islamic Archaeology Department, Baghdad University) then presented her work in a paper entitled “The Risk of Losing More Archaeological Minarets in Mosul by Maintenance Works.” I presented the next paper on “Modern Urban Sprawl and the Past: The Current State of the Ancient City of Nineveh.” Qahtan Al-Abeed (Director of the Basrah Museum) then presented on “Archaeological Sites in the Iraqi Marshlands.” The sixth paper was given by Dr. Nusyba Al-Hashmi (Baghdad University) on “Disincentive Islamic Arabic Architecture, Al-Dahab Tower” in Arabic with an English

translation by Salih. The final paper on archaeology in Iraq was presented by Alessandra Peruzzetto and Lisa Ackerman (World Monuments Fund) on “The Future of the Babylon Project: Management and Conservation of the Babylon Cultural Landscape.” Dr. Abu Al-Soof’s publications were on display during the session.

We were enormously honored to be joined by members of Dr. Abu Al-Soof’s family. We are also grateful to Lucine Taminian, TAARII’s Senior Scholar in Residence in Jordan, for arranging for the family’s travel from Amman and joining our audience as well. Presenting new discoveries in the archaeology of Iraq to an international audience and enabling Iraqi scholars to participate in the international discussions about archaeology seem a fitting way to commemorate Dr. Abu Al-Soof’s legacy.



Figure 2.3. Qahtan Al-Abeed, director of the Basrah Museum, presents at the session in honor of Dr. Abu Al-Soof (Photo credit: Lucine Taminian)

TAARII DISSERTATION PRIZES

TAARII announces its bi-annual prizes for the best U.S. doctoral dissertations on Iraq. Dissertations defended during the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 academic years are eligible and may come from any discipline for the study of any time period. The competition is open to U.S. citizens at any university worldwide and any student at a U.S. university. One award of \$1,500 will be made for The Donny George Youkhana Dissertation Prize for the best dissertation on ancient Iraq. Another award of \$1,500 will be made for the best dissertation on medieval or modern Iraq. Nominations and submissions should come directly from dissertation advisors. Advisors should submit a PDF copy of the dissertation manuscript and a letter explaining the importance of the dissertation. Please send all nominations/submissions, along with contact information for dissertation authors, by July 1, 2013, to The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) at contact@taarii.org. Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Queries may be addressed to Dr. Beth Kangas, Executive Director, at beth@taarii.org.

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The annual deadline for submission of applications to both the *U.S. Fellows Program* and the *Iraq Fellows Program* is **December 15**, for projects beginning as early as March of the following year. Applications from U.S.-Iraqi collaborative teams are welcome on a ROLLING basis.

For additional information, please visit the TAARII website: www.taarii.org/fellowships. To submit a collaborative proposal, contact info@taarii.org.

2013 U.S. FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

LILIANA CARRIZO, ETHNOMUSICOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
“Exiled Nostalgia: Remembrances of Iraq in the Improvised Songs of Iraqi-Jewish Women”

SAM DOLBEE, HISTORY & MIDDLE EAST AND ISLAMIC STUDIES, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
“Infrastructure and Illness in the Modern Middle East”

DR. MAURICE POMERANTZ, LITERATURE, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, ABU DHABI
“Arabic Fictions before the Novel: Networks, Geographies and Literary Markets in Maqāmāt Works from Ottoman Iraq from the 15th to the 19th Centuries”



LILIANA CARRIZO

Carrizo’s doctoral project focuses on the improvised songs of Iraqi-Jewish women, a vibrant musical practice that persists despite the fact that most Jews left Iraq for Israel over sixty years ago. Through ethnomusicological inquiry, ethnographic fieldwork, and archival research in Israel, Carrizo explores how women voice social commentary and broach taboo subjects through song — from memories of Iraq to experiences with arranged marriage, grief, discrimination, and war. The stigmatization of Iraqi-Jewish heritage in Israel led many immigrants to publicly abandon their Arabic dialect and musical preferences. Yet despite these difficult circumstances, Iraqi-Jewish women continued to improvise songs from behind closed doors. These songs, in the Iraqi dialect of Judeo-Arabic, provide a creative realm for reconciling incompatible cultural loyalties, allowing women to covertly maintain affectionate

memories of Iraq. Carrizo’s research focuses on how this powerful expressive practice helps Iraqi-Jewish women voice their subversive memory and forbidden nostalgia through the medium of song.

SAM DOLBEE

By unearthing the environmental history of development and disease in the peripheral triangle of territory between Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad between 1858 and 1939, Dolbee’s doctoral project explores the connections between infrastructure and illness, between humans and non-human nature, and between the Ottoman and post-Ottoman world. The work relies on sources in Ottoman, Modern Turkish, Arabic, and French, in Turkey and England for the TAARII-funded portion of the research, to follow bureaucrats and beasts of burden, railroads and rinderpest, and peasants and Pasteur-Institute-trained scientists to tell a synthetic story of the integration and disintegration of this space under Ottoman imperial, Turkish and Iraqi republican, and British and French colonial authorities, illuminating continuities obscured in the limited temporal scope and spatial scale of nationalist accounts. Dolbee’s use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will provide a visual means of representing these transportation networks and disease pathways through maps that trace not only the empire-to-nation history of Iraq, but also its complicated relationships with its neighbors.



These fellowships are funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs through a sub-grant from the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.



DR. MAURICE POMERANTZ

Pomerantz's research project focuses on the tradition of *maqāmāt*, a native genre of fictional Arabic picaresque tales that narrate the various adventures of a trickster's travels across cities of the premodern Islamic world. For more than a millennium throughout most parts of the Muslim world, *maqāma* works were among the most common forms of literary prose. Drawing upon methods of New Comparatist literary scholars Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova to analyze the diffusion and circulation of literary genres within the context of the Global World System, Pomerantz's research examines formal changes to the *maqāma* within large-scale transformations of the trans-regional trade economy over the *longue durée*. As part of a larger study on the circulation and spread of the *maqāma* genre from its pre-modern origins in tenth century to the modern period, Pomerantz hopes to concentrate in this project on *maqāmāt* works written in Iraq during the period of the fifteenth–nineteenth centuries. Throughout the Ottoman period, urban notables authored numerous *maqāma* works and collections. They addressed various features of

Iraqi geography, economy, and society as well as interrelationships with other regions, markets, and economies. As the first comprehensive study of its kind on the *maqāmāt* of this period, Pomerantz's research project relies on rare, hitherto unstudied manuscript sources in Cairo, Berlin, and London, and promises to uncover new perspectives on a neglected period of Arabic, Middle Eastern, and global literary history.

TAARII PROGRAM: RESEARCH AFFILIATES IN JORDAN

TAARII invites applications for a Research Affiliate status for U.S. scholars working on Iraq while based in Amman, Jordan. As increasing numbers of American researchers undertake Iraq-related research in Jordan, TAARII aims to support their needs and work and to include them in the broader TAARII community. To apply for Research Affiliate status, please submit a brief project statement, together with a CV, to beth@taarii.org. There is no deadline and scholars can apply for Affiliate status on a short-term or long-term basis.

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Smithsonian Institution

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University of Toronto

Williams College

EXPLORING IRAQI WOMEN'S VIEWPOINTS AND EXPERIENCES OF MATERNITY SERVICES USING Q-METHODOLOGY

NAZAR P. SHABILA, HAWLER MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, ERBIL, IRAQ & 2012 TAARII IRAQ FELLOW

Sound reproductive and family health are essential to the health and welfare of women, to the stability of the family, and thus to human and national security. In Iraq, all levels of the health system provide reproductive health services. The primary level, which includes a network of primary health care centers, provides mainly antenatal care services and curative health services, in addition to other services like growth monitoring, immunization and sometimes postnatal care, family planning, and the promotion of breastfeeding.

The political and socio-economic events in Iraq over the past few decades have had a significant impact on the health care system, resulting in a substantial fall in the major health indices and leaving a crippled health system struggling to provide for the needs of its population. The physical infrastructure has deteriorated as a result of under-investment and a lack of maintenance, compounded by the Sanctions of the 1990s. The functional capacity of the health care services was further weakened by the general insecurity in the country, which has created an extremely inhospitable working environment for all health personnel, particularly women.

The desperate need for reorganizing and restructuring the health services throughout Iraq is becoming increasingly recognized. One of the areas that needs substantial efforts is reproductive health. In order to perform such restructuring

effectively, we need to better understand the problems, needs, and obstacles to the development of this important aspect of population health. While several studies in Iraq have focused on the physical and structural assessment of reproductive health services, little research has examined these services from the perspectives of the users, i.e., women of reproductive age. As part of such a comprehensive assessment and through a research grant from The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII), this study was conducted to explore the range and diversity of viewpoints of Iraqi antenatal care services among women of reproductive age. The results of the study will provide Iraqi policy and decision-makers with information about the quality of antenatal care services and assist them in identifying the main barriers to access and the potentials for development.

This explorative study was carried out in the Erbil governorate, Iraq. Data were collected using Q-methodology, a technique for eliciting subjective

viewpoints and identifying shared patterns among individuals. A sample of thirty-eight women of different educational and socioeconomic status and representing different geographical areas of the Erbil governorate were invited to participate in the study. The participants were asked to sort thirty-nine statements printed on cards into nine piles from -4 (most disagree) to +4 (most agree), in relation to their perceptions about various aspects of the available antenatal care services. The PQMethod program was used to analyze the Q-sorts. The prominent common viewpoints, known as factors, were extracted using centroid factor extraction and varimax rotation.

The analysis of the participants' Q-sorts resulted in identifying four distinct groups in terms of their viewpoints and experiences of the available antenatal care services. The typical characterizations that were associated with each group were highlighted.

The first group emphasized good antenatal care and a positive experience with the antenatal care services at public health centers. Three participants, all of whom were employed, shared this viewpoint. These women used antenatal care appropriately and complied well with follow-up antenatal care appointments. They appeared to be satisfied with many aspects of the antenatal care services at the public health centers. They did not indicate any preference for visiting private doctor clinics for



Figure 3.1. The Bamerni primary health care center, Erbil, Iraq (Photo credit: Nazar Shabila)

antenatal care, even if they could afford the costs.

The second group indicated dissatisfaction with the antenatal care services in the public sector and a general preference to use the private sector for antenatal care services. Twelve participants, ten of whom were employed, shared this viewpoint. These women stated that they had a negative experience with the antenatal care services in the public health centers and had visited more private health facilities than public health centers for their antenatal care during their last pregnancies. The respondents loading on this factor seemed to be strong and confident as they strongly emphasized that they did not experience pressure to start a family straight after marriage and were not subjected to violence from their husbands during pregnancy.

The third group represented the women who seemed to take poor care of their pregnancies. Four participants shared this viewpoint; two were

employed and two were students. These respondents had unintended last pregnancies. This group was labeled as “poor” care as these women did not have regular antenatal care visits to public health centers during their last pregnancies, did not comply with follow-up antenatal care appointments, and were least concerned with attending antenatal care classes. They had negative experiences with the antenatal care services in public health centers and preferred to visit private facilities if they could afford the costs.

The fourth group indicated a general concern about the lack of adequate information and support regarding pregnancies and labor during antenatal care visits. Seven participants shared this viewpoint, three of whom were employed. These respondents believed that the doctors/midwives did not explain enough about how to recognize the first signs of labor and what to do before going to the hospital to have their baby. They wanted to have more chance to talk to the care providers to

receive medical advice about self-care during their antenatal care visits.

There was general agreement among the respondents of the different groups regarding a number of aspects of antenatal care services. These aspects included an allocation of inadequate time to patients during antenatal care, health costs during pregnancy that were burdensome on the family, inappropriate time in explaining the health status of the women during antenatal care, overall dissatisfaction with the care received during the antenatal care period, and poor access to information about pregnancy.

This study introduced the novel tool of Q-methodology to assess maternity services in an Iraqi context. It revealed differing viewpoints and experiences of women toward the antenatal care services and recognized the particular issues related to each viewpoint. These findings can contribute to a better understanding of the problems facing the antenatal care services and help direct action to improve these services.

EARLY DYNASTIC SCULPTURE AS OBJECT BIOGRAPHY: THE LIVES OF SUMERIAN SCULPTURE

JEAN EVANS, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO & 2011 TAARII U.S. FELLOW

The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq granted me a fellowship in 2011 in support of the final revisions and publication of my research on the sculpture of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (2900–2350 B.C.). I am grateful for this fellowship, which allowed me to think about, write, and revise my manuscript. The following is a presentation of some of the main ideas in *The Lives of Sumerian Sculpture: An Archaeology of the Early Dynastic Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

The discovery of ancient Sumer — a region corresponding to present-day

southern Iraq — was unique in ancient Near Eastern archaeology because there was no recognizable trace of Sumer in Biblical, classical, or post-classical traditions. Visual evidence of Sumerians was almost completely unknown until 1877, when the site of Tello began to yield numerous statues of Gudea, the ruler of Lagash (ca. 2100 B.C.). Shortly thereafter, the Sumerians were featured in an ethnographic exhibition celebrating the progress of human labor at the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris. Included in the same exhibition were a Cro-Magnon husband and wife carving an antler,

Mexicans manipulating agave fiber, Sudanese blacksmiths with monkey-skin bellows, Chinese cloisonné-makers, and Gudea with tablet, ruler, and stylus.

In the center of a pavilion, a polychrome plaster sculpture of a reconstructed Gudea was exhibited. Nearby was a plaster cast of the statue of Gudea on which it was modeled. The head of the statue had not survived, so one was created based on other ancient sculpture as well as a “modern Chaldean” from around Baghdad.¹ Plaster cast, stone statue, and living human being thus were

combined to form the earliest modern image of a Sumerian.

From the earliest discoveries of a Sumerian culture until well into the twentieth century, the study of ancient Sumer was dominated by debates over the origins of the Sumerian race, a complex issue known as the “Sumerian problem.” Although differences were recognized, statues, relief-carvings, skeletal remains, and living human beings comprised a single scientific category of ethnographic data that aimed to understand the Sumerians as a physical type. Attempts at a linguistic classification of the Sumerian language, the identification of a Sumerian race in visual culture, and the excavation of so-called Sumerian skeletal remains were all informed by aesthetics.

The intertwining threads of the Sumerian problem formed the background against which the Iraq Expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago excavated hundreds of Early Dynastic statues in the Diyala region in the 1930s. By that time, much progress had been made in the understanding of Sumerian culture. A chronology had been agreed upon, and the Early Dynastic period was a span of time encompassing some six hundred years of the third millennium B.C. With the Diyala excavations, a large sculpture corpus finally would have been available for addressing the Sumerian problem. The older research model was abandoned, however, and Early Dynastic sculpture was transformed from an ethnographic artifact of a new civilization into an artwork.

The publications of the Diyala excavations did much to reorient Early Dynastic sculpture to art historical methodologies.² Rather than a racial typing of the representations, two broad Early Dynastic sculpture styles were recognized and considered chronologically significant. The hoard of twelve well-preserved statues buried



Figure 4.1. Tell Asmar, Abu Temple, Early Dynastic sculpture hoard (ca. 2700 B.C.). The statues in the hoard are now divided among the Iraq Museum, Baghdad; The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (Photo Credit: Henri Frankfort, *Oriental Institute Discoveries in Iraq, 1933/34: Fourth Preliminary Report of the Iraq Expedition* [The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Oriental Institute Communications 19; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935], figure 63. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)

in the Abu Temple at Tell Asmar was designated the prime example of an earlier sculpture style, characterized by the abstraction of corporeal forms into geometric shapes (fig. 4.1). The sculpture style of the Asmar hoard was dated to Early Dynastic II; a realistic sculpture style was dated to Early Dynastic III.

Two general threads of early twentieth-century aesthetic thought informed the new art history of Early Dynastic sculpture that emerged in the 1930s. The first thread was the aesthetic sensibility through which the arts of so-called modern “primitive” cultures were embraced. Descriptions of Early Dynastic sculpture echoed the language of abstraction in early twentieth-century sculpture. The reason for this was that the understanding of so-called “primitive” art as a collection of universal visual attributes promoted comparisons among radically different

artistic traditions.³ Descriptions of fundamental shapes, masses, and forms, of power, vigor, and spontaneity comprised the commonly utilized collective vocabulary of “primitive” abstraction and were also utilized for Early Dynastic sculpture.

The second thread of early twentieth-century aesthetic thought that informed the new art history of Early Dynastic sculpture was the belief that art had evolved from its primordial origins in abstract, geometric forms. The sculpture in the Tell Asmar hoard was proclaimed the oldest monumental stone sculpture in Mesopotamia. Its geometric style, which abstracted the component parts of the body, was understood as the *Urform* at the origins of a world art history. Early Dynastic sculpture thus was drawn into a well-established discourse on the origins of art, which in the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries was most frequently interrogated through the study of ornament.⁴ Early studies on the evolution of ornament illustrated the origins of art by producing stylistic sequences that progressed from abstract to naturalistic. It was axiomatic that, without regard to archaeological context, Early Dynastic sculpture — as the oldest monumental stone sculpture — also should be published in a stylistic sequence from abstract to realistic.

Alfred Gell observed that an object that has been enfranchised as an artwork will remain one exclusively, with its discourse confined to these parameters.⁵ With few exceptions, Early Dynastic sculpture has been enmeshed in the aesthetics of traditional art history ever since the first examples were discovered. For most of the twentieth century, this stylistic sequence dictated much of the Early Dynastic chronology of the third millennium B.C. Today, however, we recognize that pottery in consideration with other aspects of material culture provides a more accurate chronology.

My research on Early Dynastic sculpture is configured as a biography. The concept of biography is utilized to interrogate past and present interpretive communities, which produce multiple readings of objects.⁶ Through these varied perceptions, objects embody the qualities of social beings and assume identities that are not fixed at the moment of inception. Rather, these identities shift repeatedly through human interactions. Some 550 examples of temple sculpture survive from the Early Dynastic period.⁷ The early modern reception of Sumer still influences our ideas about Early Dynastic temple sculpture. The ethnographic paradigm provided a model for the framing of Sumerian sculpture as “primitive” art. And it was the universal aesthetics of the “primitive” — embraced by the early

twentieth century Western art world in general — which allowed Sumerian sculpture to be defined art historically.

My research therefore chronicles the intellectual history of ancient Near Eastern art history and archaeology at the intersection of sculpture and aesthetics and at the intersection of modern archaeological reconstruction and ancient context. Applying methodologies drawn in particular from anthropological materiality studies, my research engages pragmatically with an archaeology of the Early Dynastic temple and presents new interpretations of the style, context, function, and meaning of this canonical corpus of temple statues. I argue that three principal areas of inquiry regarding Early Dynastic sculpture are still informed by its early reception.

First, the significance accorded to sculpture style obscured its limitations as a chronological marker. Geometric-style sculpture was used to date archaeological contexts to Early Dynastic II. A reassessment of the stratigraphy refutes the validity of this approach. Consequently, the Early Dynastic II division cannot be defined for the Early Dynastic period.⁸

Secondly, the importance of abstraction in Early Dynastic sculpture was obscured by the belief that a geometric style was evolving towards a naturalistic or realistic sculptural style. The archaeological evidence instead suggests that statues dedicated to temples share a common typology and exhibit varying degrees of abstraction throughout the Early Dynastic period. Forming a long tradition lasting hundreds of years, abstraction is an important visual quality in general of the stone statues dedicated to Early Dynastic temples. Abstraction in Early Dynastic sculpture thus can be examined as a formal system for the physical representation of a donor in the temple context. The question then

becomes: why abstraction?

Thirdly and finally, the context of an object plays a constitutive role in the way it is perceived.⁹ Early Dynastic statues were temple objects. Yet in the early twentieth century, archaeology used contemporary models for reconstruction. Particularly relevant to Early Dynastic statues was the setting of the art museum. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dominant display model for sculpture was its installation against the long walls of museums. Similarly, the context of Early Dynastic sculpture was reconstructed as a display set against the long walls of the temple sanctuary.¹⁰

Early Dynastic statues, it is commonly argued, were dedicated by elite members of society in order to be placed in the sanctuary so that they could pray and gaze eternally with their enlarged eyes at a divine manifestation. Many Early Dynastic statues had been hoarded and buried or built into the mudbrick architecture and cultic installations of temples. Some Early Dynastic statues, however, were in fact found in various locations throughout the temple, rather than just in the sanctuary. Largely because of this assumption of sanctuary display, it is commonly concluded that no Early Dynastic sculpture was ever found in a primary context. But in some instances, it is concluded that Early Dynastic sculpture is out of context because it was not found in the sanctuary, where it is assumed it should be.

Regardless of the various loci of final deposition, archaeological reconstructions consistently reinstall Early Dynastic sculpture as artworks in the temple. The practice of isolating objects for attentive looking, however, is as particular to Western culture as is the museum space in which such activity occurs.¹¹ These reconstructions have remained a part of our modern

scholarship, even though Early Dynastic statues were never actually found set up for display as such. If we dismantle the exhibitionary context of Early Dynastic sculpture, a fuller consideration can be given to the textual and archaeological evidence for rituals of sculpture.

Early Dynastic temple sculpture is of a type commonly referred to as a dedicatory, worshiper, or votive statue. These statues are with few exceptions only found in temples. At no other time in the history of the ancient Near East has temple sculpture survived in such abundance. The inscriptions on some statues reveal that they were dedicated to temples by elite members of society.¹² We know, for example, of administrators, priests, scribes, cup-bearers, and singers who dedicated statues to Early Dynastic temples. Countless other statues are not inscribed.

Inscribed examples indicate that the most common request to accompany the dedication of a statue was for a long, healthy, and prosperous life for the donor. In some instances, such a request might be extended also to the family members of the donor. Through dedication to the temple, the donor therefore sought the benevolence and protection of the resident deity. Dedications subsequently became part of the temple inventory and ultimately were joined in perpetuity with the physical structure of the temple through various methods of deposition.

Why was sculpture dedicated in such abundance during the Early Dynastic period? Mesopotamian temples, in general, do not seem to have been places of communal worship. The sanctuary, the focal point of the temple, was often positioned at the back of a building architecturally subdivided into a sequence of small spaces. In addition, the bent-axis plan typical of the Early Dynastic sanctuary itself

required a 90-degree turn in order to approach the altar. Thus, from outside, the focal point of the sanctuary was obscured. Access was further impeded by mudbrick structures in or near the sanctuaries. The sanctuary itself likely was accessible only to a limited few who catered to the special needs of the god. A small space filled with mudbrick furniture, such as altars, benches, and tables, the Early Dynastic sanctuary included places for building fires and offering libations. In practical terms, large numbers of visitors could not have been accommodated in the sanctuary, as movement would have been difficult.¹³

Therefore one theory why so many people dedicated statues to temples in the Early Dynastic period has to do with overcoming this restricted access. The concept of materiality comes into play here: the object world of the statue is distinct from the world of the donor after dedication has occurred. That is, as a material, physical form, the life of the statue is separate: the statue does that which the donor cannot do. Symptomatic of this quality of separateness, the temple statue assumed functions beyond the eternal prayer encoded by the donor in the dedicatory act. Textual evidence from the late Early Dynastic **e₂-mi₂** archive of the city-state of Lagash demonstrates that Early Dynastic temple statues were the recipients of offerings when the queens of Lagash visited temples on the occasions of festivals.¹⁴ Dates and oil were the most frequent offerings to statues. In one instance, Sasa, a late Early Dynastic queen of Lagash, made offerings to statues during the festival in the courtyard of the temple of the goddess Bau.

Archaeological evidence demonstrates that, more generally, entrances, courtyards, and small rooms also are legitimate findspots reflecting the life of Early Dynastic temple statues. Both textual and archaeological

sources therefore indicate that statues were not always sequestered in the most sacred parts of the temple — the sanctuary — where access was limited to the few who catered to the needs of the god. In letting statues out of the sanctuary, they became available to, and encountered, a wider audience, most of whom would not have entered the sanctuary. Rather than simply being installed in the sanctuary, where temple visitors could not go, statues instead negotiated the very terrain of access by being positioned at entrances and points of passage.

Therefore, the act of dedication, which constitutes a social relationship between the donor and the statue, did not necessarily encompass the entire functional range of the statue itself. Dedication was just one of the things that happened to statues, but it was not the only thing. I therefore have argued that we must consider the entire life cycle of temple sculpture. That is, we must shift our thinking about Early Dynastic statues to a consideration of the activities surrounding them in the temple after dedication has occurred.

The offerings made by the Early Dynastic queens of Lagash highlight the extent to which statues were tended external to the individual who donated the statue. There is only one example in the Lagash texts where an Early Dynastic queen of Lagash made an offering to her own statue.¹⁵ The queens of Lagash made offerings to statues of donors who were still alive and to donors who were deceased. There are also instances when the queens of Lagash administered offerings to statues simply described as **alan**, the Sumerian term that we translate as “statue.” The potential, then, is that offerings to statues formed a social practice that existed beyond the donor. The textual evidence would suggest that the social practice of tending objects, including **alan**, was one instance in which an individual

could be present in the temple.

All these offerings — to statues of known persons either living or deceased and to statues of unnamed individuals — can be related conceptually. Temple statues served as intermediaries between the human donor and the divine. In a similar manner, temple statues also acted as intermediaries between the temple visitor and the divine and formed the focal point for offerings that mediated between the living and the deceased. In all these instances, this is something that only the temple statue — and not the individuals themselves who are represented by the statue — can do.

Given that temple visitors tended to statues even when they were not the donor of the statue and even when the identity of the individual represented by the statue was unknown, I propose that the **alan** was the focus of cultic activities in its own right. Moreover, its consistent style, a frontal human figure with clasped hands, made the **alan** identifiable within a larger typology of other dedicatory objects. Following this line of reasoning, the temple statue would have been the focus of cultic activities because of its visual appearance.

This brings us back to the quality of abstraction that is characteristic of the entire corpus: abstraction potentially facilitated the effectiveness of this visual image by allowing for a degree of consistency. This quality of abstraction could have facilitated the generation of social bonds through time and space that were mediated by the material presence of the **alan**. The appearance of

the Early Dynastic temple statue, then, was critical for an understanding of its life inside the temple. One significant factor underlying the abstraction of Early Dynastic sculpture therefore was likely the desire for a consistently recognizable form that signified a temple statue to a greater degree than it signified a specific human donor.

¹ Léon Heuzey, 1891–1915. *Les Origines Orientales de l'Art. Recueil de Mémoires Archéologiques et de Monuments Figurés* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1891–1915), 212.

² Henri Frankfort, *Sculpture of the Third Millennium B.C. from Tell Asmar and Khafājah* (Oriental Institute Publications 44; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); Frankfort, *More Sculpture from the Diyala Region* (Oriental Institute Publications 60; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

³ Frances S. Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725–1907* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

⁴ Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 15–43.

⁵ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), 12.

⁶ Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 6–8.

⁷ Eva Andrea Braun-Holzinger, *Frühdynastische Beterstatuetten* (Abhandlungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 19; Berlin: Mann, 1977).

⁸ See also Jean Evans, “The Square Temple at Tell Asmar and the Construction of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, ca. 2900–2350

B.C.E.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 111 (2007): 599–632.

⁹ Svetlana Alpers, “The Museum as a Way of Seeing,” In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, 25–32 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Walter Andrae, *Die archaischen Ishtar-Tempel in Assur* (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 39; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1922), table 11a.

¹¹ Alpers, “Museum as a Way of Seeing.”

¹² Eva Andrea Braun-Holzinger, *Mesopotamische Weihgaben der frühdynastischen bis altbabylonischen Zeit* (Heidelberger Studien zum alten Orient, Bd. 3; Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1991).

¹³ Harriet Crawford, “‘Nearer My God to Thee?’ The Relationship between Man and His Gods in Third-Millennium BC Mesopotamia,” In *Of Pots and Plans: Papers on the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia and Syria Presented to David Oates in Honour of His 75th Birthday*, edited by L. al-Gailani Werr, J. Curtis, H. Martin, A. McMahon, J. Oates, and J. Reade, 47–53. London: NABU, 2002), 48–49; Donald P. Hansen, “Art of the Early City-States,” In *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*, edited by Joan Aruz, 21–37 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 29.

¹⁴ For example, Wilhelm Förtsch, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den ältesten babylonischen Inschriften* (Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft 1; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1914), DP 53, DP 54, DP 55, DP 66.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, DP 54.

LANGUAGE ANNOUNCEMENT

As readers may be aware, TAARII is committed to producing a bilingual newsletter in English and Arabic. We regret that we are now printing our newsletter in English only. We continue to seek funds to resume printing a bilingual newsletter and to include full Arabic translations of English-language newsletters on our website. We appreciate your patience and understanding in the meantime.

IRAQI ARCHIVAL SOURCES IN ISRAEL

HILARY FALB, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY & 2012 TAARII U.S. FELLOW

Although Israel might not be the first place one would think of as a resource for historians studying Iraq, some of its archives offer an abundance of primary materials to researchers of twentieth century Iraqi history. During the spring and summer of 2012, I visited these archives with the support of a fellowship from the International Institute of Education Dissertation Research Fellowship, funded by the Andrew C. Mellon foundation (in lieu of the canceled Fulbright-Hays DDRA fellowship). My doctoral research focuses on educators employed by the government schools of Iraq, Palestine, Israel, and Transjordan/Jordan from 1917–1958. My work specifically analyzes how teachers shaped the interplay between language, schooling, nationalisms, identity, and political culture. I assumed that in Israel I would primarily be using archival documents relating to the Mandate for Palestine. However, I was surprised to discover not only archival materials relating to Iraqis, but also rare published works. This research led me to meet with prominent members of the Iraqi-Jewish

community now living in Israel and to learn more about their lives in Iraq, which granted me a new perspective on my topic. While I do not wish to claim it is necessarily desirable for these individuals, documents, and books to be located in Israel, as a researcher I appreciated their accessibility. Materials relating to Iraq are found at four of the archives I visited in Israel: the Moshe Dayan Center, the National Library of Israel, the Central Zionist Archives, and the Babylonian Jewry Center.

Located in a suburb of Tel Aviv called Or-Yehuda, the Babylonian Jewry Center combines an archive, library, museum, research institute, and community center. When I visited the archive, I mainly looked at books relating to schooling, as there is a strong collection of works that include unique photographs of life in Iraq. Records from the Jewish private school, Shammash, are also present, although I did not get a chance to look at these documents. The center publishes works on Jewish culture and history in Iraq as well as the journal *Nehardea*. The articles in this irregularly issued journal discuss the work of the center and research institute, and provide reminiscences of life in Iraq, book reviews, obituaries, and a cooking section. The center hosts different public events, including exhibitions, seminars, lectures, galas, and tours of the museum. The museum contains various exhibits and artifacts relating to Iraqi-Jewish life, including torah scrolls and other ritual objects, traditional costumes, musical instruments, and many everyday as well as precious objects (fig. 5.1). Visiting hours are posted on the website: from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesdays; and 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesdays. However, the library has

more limited opening hours, frequently closing at 2:00 p.m. on weekdays.

While visiting the center, I also contacted some of its most prominent members and supporters. I was able to meet with Dr. Zvi Yehuda, the director of the research institute and co-author of a work, with Professor Shmuel Moreh, on the Farhud entitled *Al-Farhud: The 1941 Pogrom in Iraq*.¹ Dr. Yehuda kindly told me about his experiences attending Jewish and government schools in Iraq and his memories of teachers. What he remembered most intensely were the infamous punishments he experienced in the 1940s and 1950s while at school. I also met with Professor Moreh at the Hebrew University of Mount Scopus. Professor Moreh was extremely generous with his time as well as in sharing some of his personal collection of works on Iraqi poetry and Arabic literature with me.

The National Library of Israel, at The Edmond J. Safra Campus of Hebrew University in the Givat Ram area of Jerusalem, offers archival as well as published materials. It constitutes both a research library and a repository for archival materials officially relating to the Jewish people and to the State of Israel. There is also a gallery that hosts exhibitions and lectures. The unpublished material relating to Iraq generally consists of marriage contracts, or Kettubot, from 1799 to 1951, as well as a few other works produced in Iraq such as a Haggadah, the text read during the festive Passover Seder meal. More surprisingly, the library houses a number of items published by the Ministry of Education in Iraq from 1930–1941, including middle school curricula, accounts of the Higher Teachers College and the Iraqi Youth



Figure 5.1. A visitor to the Babylonian Jewry Center reads a plaque describing the Shasha family, a prominent Iraqi-Jewish family and donors to the center (Photo credit: Hilary Falb)

Scouts among other works. These materials, which I have not found in any U.S. libraries, were extremely useful for my project, as they provided a detailed official view of teachers in this crucial period. The library has generous opening hours, from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays, and from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays. It also has an easy online ordering system for books and archival records in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. A passport or other identification is necessary to enter the campus and to order materials to be read in the library reading rooms.

The Central Zionist Archives, only a short walk from the Central Bus Station in Jerusalem, contain individual files relating to Iraqi Jews and to relations between Iraq and Israel in particular. These works are especially focused on Zionism and Iraq, particularly the books found in the archive. Available files include correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to the situation of Iraqi Jews in the 1930s through the 1960s, early correspondence between Zionist societies in Baghdad and the Jewish Agency Executive, and other works relating to the promotion of Zionism, particularly physical immigration to the Mandate for Palestine or to Israel. Although this is a somewhat limited perspective, more focused on the Jewish Agency Executive's point

of view rather than that of the Iraqi community, it provides an interesting record of the often difficult transition experienced by Iraqis, particularly Jewish Iraqis, during the late 1940s and 1950s. The Central Zionist Archives are open Sundays through Thursdays, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Deputy Director for Archival Matters, Rochelle Rubinstein, was extremely helpful and accommodating.

Lastly, Tel Aviv University in Ramat Aviv, a northern neighborhood of Tel Aviv, boasts a set of research libraries, as well as the Moshe Dayan Center, which contains among other resources, newspapers from throughout the Middle East. The center houses a collection of newspapers produced in Iraq in English, Kurdish, and Arabic. This collection focuses heavily on the 1940s through the present day and does not contain complete records of every journal. The center provides a scanned catalogue of the material relating to each country, although the catalogue for Iraq dates only to 1998. The library is open Sundays and Mondays from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

In Tel Aviv I also met with emeritus Professor Sasson Somekh, emeritus at Tel Aviv University. His memoir, published in English as *Baghdad Yesterday*, describes his childhood in Baghdad. His sequel, *Life after*

Baghdad, describes his difficult transition from life in Iraq to that of Israel. Professor Somekh was kind enough to put me in touch with a number of Iraqi intellectuals with expertise related to my topic.

For further information, the websites of the four archives are as follows:

- The Babylon Jewry Center: <http://www.babylonjewry.org.il/>. This website is in Hebrew and English, but not Arabic.
- The National Library of Israel website in English: web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/english.
- The Central Zionist Archives website (in English and in Hebrew): <http://www.zionistarchives.org.il/en/Pages/Default.aspx>.
- The Moshe Dayan Center website (available in English and Hebrew): <http://www.dayan.org/>. The scanned catalogue of Iraqi newspapers at the Moshe Dayan Center is available at: http://dayan.org/sites/default/files/Iraq_Scanned_Catalogue.pdf.

¹ The Farhud was an outbreak of violence and looting targeting Jews that took place over two days in June of 1941. In the Winter 2012 edition of *Nehardea*, the Farhud was described as the Iraqi Kristallnacht, referring to a similar targeted destruction of Jewish life and property that occurred in Germany and Austria in 1938.

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CITIES ON THE MARGINS: USING SATELLITE REMOTE SENSING TO INVESTIGATE A SUMERIAN CITY-STATE

CARRIE HRITZ, PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY & 2011 TAARII U.S. FELLOW

After a twenty-year hiatus, foreign archaeological fieldwork in southern Iraq has begun anew. Since the cessation of survey and excavation projects in the 1990s, the research questions, and the archaeological tools and datasets to investigate them, have evolved. Yet, past archaeological datasets have much still to offer. This article will discuss the ways in which modern geospatial technologies, including satellite-based remote sensing datasets and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) can be employed to both: (1) address gaps in the archaeological record using the former marshes of southern Iraq as a case study; and (2) make progress on long-standing archaeological questions — the imprint of a Sumerian city-state — by integrating old excavation data and providing tools to plan for future fieldwork at the site of Telloh/Girsu.

GEOSPATIAL TOOLS

Over the course of nearly a century, archaeologists attempted to address key historical questions, such as how once prosperous societies existed in now desert landscapes, and the impacts of short-sighted land use decisions on ancient agrarian economies and socio-political organization, through programs of survey and excavation on the irrigable plains of southern-central Iraq, primarily between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and north of the modern Shatt al-Gharraf River. As a result, when an almost total hiatus in foreign archaeological began in the late 1990s, roughly 1/3 of the south had been subject to survey and a handful of sites excavated (Adams 1981). Areas south of the Shatt al-

Gharraf were omitted partly due to inaccessibility with most of the landscape inundated and partly due to scholarly assumptions about the dominant dual roles of irrigation agriculture and animal husbandry, as opposed to wetland resources, in the economy of ancient Mesopotamia.

While a tremendous amount of material was produced from these endeavors, many basic questions about land use and settlement remain, such as what was the contribution of marsh and coastal resources to the rise of urban cities, was this area historically devoid of large permanent settlements or is this perspective a result of a lack of ground survey? Further, how do we understand the presence of large urban centers, such as Telloh/Girsu, Lagash, and Uruk, at the margins of these wetlands? The combination of active draining and drying of the marshes in the late 1990s, the increasing availability of high resolution satellite images, and advances in data merging techniques provide a unique set of circumstances that make it possible to both fill in this lacuna in southern

Mesopotamian settlement history and begin to address the contribution of marsh and marine resources to the ancient Mesopotamian economy, and investigate the landscape of a city at the margins, Telloh/Girsu, in preparation of new fieldwork.

SATELLITE SURVEY

Although the spatial extents of the marshes of southern Iraq have fluctuated over time, some general boundaries can be described. The marshes were bound in the northeast by the Tigris River, the southwest by the Euphrates, the southeast by the gulf coast, and the northwest by the Shatt al-Gharraf. Within these boundaries,

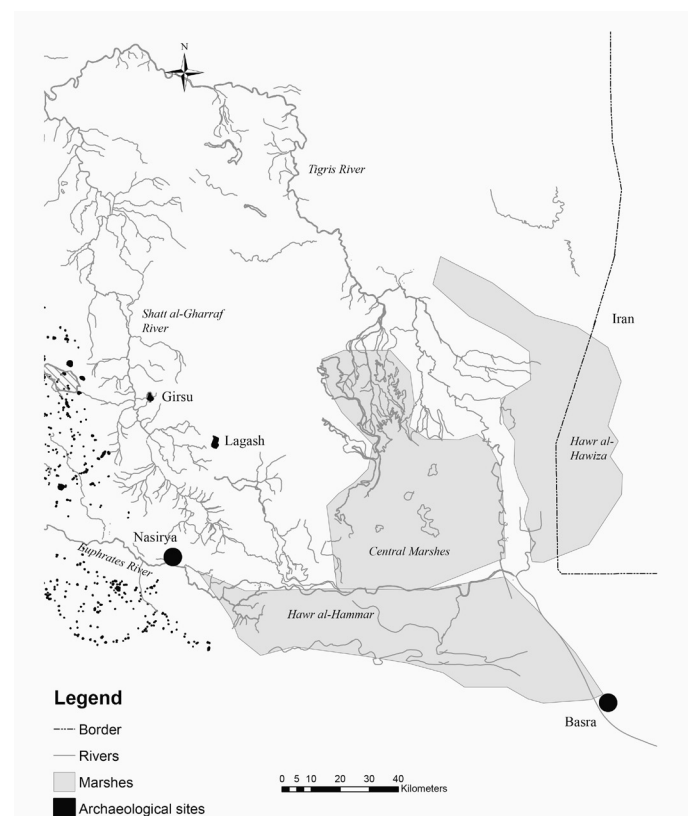


Figure 6.1. General map of the area
(Photo credit: Carrie Hritz)

the wetland landscape is varied resulting from the dynamic interactions of different riverine systems. For example, in the northeast, the central marshes are formed by the outflow and interaction of the Tigris River and secondary channels of the Shatt al-Gharraf. In the east, the Hawr al-Hawiza is formed by the delta of the Tigris and Karun/Karakheh River systems, and in the south, the outflow of the Euphrates as it meets the Tigris formed the Hawr al-Hammar (fig. 6.1).

Underwater and inaccessible during the period of intensive pedestrian survey in Iraq in the 1960s–1980s, the recent drying of the marshes has revealed a palimpsest of relict features visible on the surface, including

archaeological tell sites, relict channels, and agricultural fields (Hritz et al. 2013). The first step in the investigation of these ancient landscapes was the analysis of remote sensing datasets to locate possible archaeological sites in the area. Timing, seasonality, and ground conditions determined which datasets were most useful for identifying features. For example, declassified CORONA satellite photography has been valuable for detecting archaeological features throughout greater Mesopotamia because it records landscapes during the heyday of archaeological survey in the 1960s and before massive destructive land reclamation projects of the 1980s (Hritz 2010). However, CORONAs were of limited value for areas south of the Shatt al-Gharraf, including

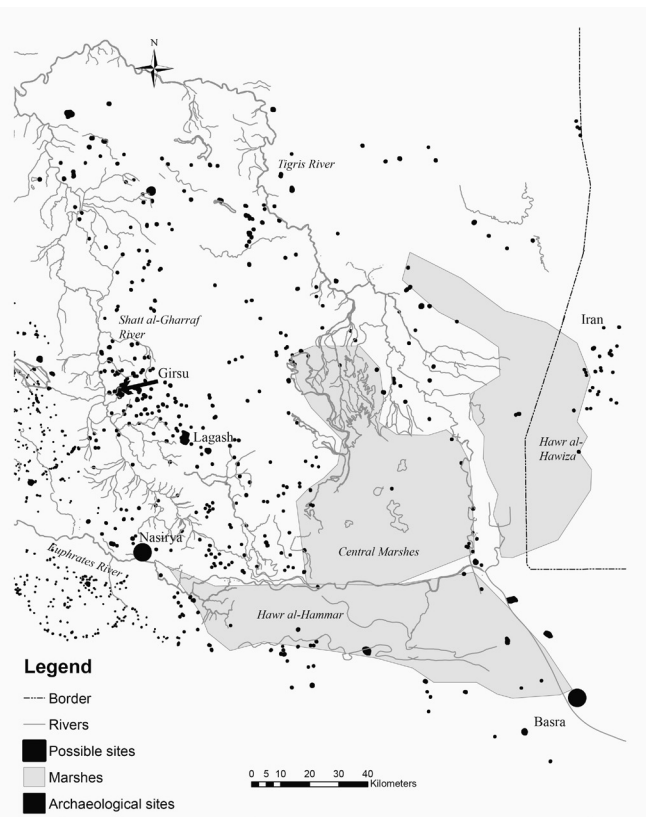


Figure 6.2. Possible sites detected by satellite-based remote sensing southeast of the Shatt al-Gharraf River (Photo credit: Carrie Hritz)

the former marshes and the sites of Girsu and Lagash, because during the 1960s, when the images were acquired, the marshes were filled with water rendering all but the tallest tells obscured (Hritz et al. 2013).

Instead, recent imagery proved most valuable for the prospection of archaeological features in this area. For example, studies of looting patterns in southern Iraq have demonstrated the utility of expensive high-resolution datasets, such as Quickbird or Geo Eye images (Stone 2008; Hritz 2012) over small areas. But these datasets can be cost prohibitive when dealing with large areas rather than specific archaeological sites. Google Earth Pro provides a cost-efficient alternative for preliminary image interpretation. The program provides tools that allow a user to clip images and save them at a

resolution of 4800 dpi. In this area south of Shatt al-Gharraf, 162 images were clipped, each covering a ground area of 18X 12km, and the preserved ground resolution was 2–3 meters. While a loss of spatial resolution, these clips represent a recent dataset, at a comparable resolution to CORONAs.

Using common keys for the signature of an archaeological tell site on a satellite image, such as tonal differences and characteristic shape, 598 possible sites were identified on the Digital Globe clips (fig. 6.2). In general, sites are dispersed throughout the marshes. In the central marshes, sites are clustered along relict channels of the Tigris and empty spaces off the levee have been heavily modified for

agriculture. Further south along the edges of the marshes near Girsu and Lagash, sites follow a northwest to southeast line, reflecting a relict channel levee. In the former Hawr al-Hammar marshes, settlements cluster along the ancient Euphrates channel visible on satellite imagery. In the Hawr al-Hawiza, an area still rather wet, subject to heavy ongoing modification for oil extraction, and along the fortified Iranian border, sites were sparse. From this broad satellite survey, it is clear that dense clusters of significant settlement were visible in the former unsurveyed or lightly surveyed (Hamdani 2008) wetlands. Millennia of wetland contraction and expansion, as well as shoreline progradation, would have built up the land surface throughout this area. Consequently, it may be that many

additional archaeological sites are buried under layers of sedimentation. Future archaeological work in the area would need to include surface survey and invasive test pitting to date and contextualize archaeological sites.

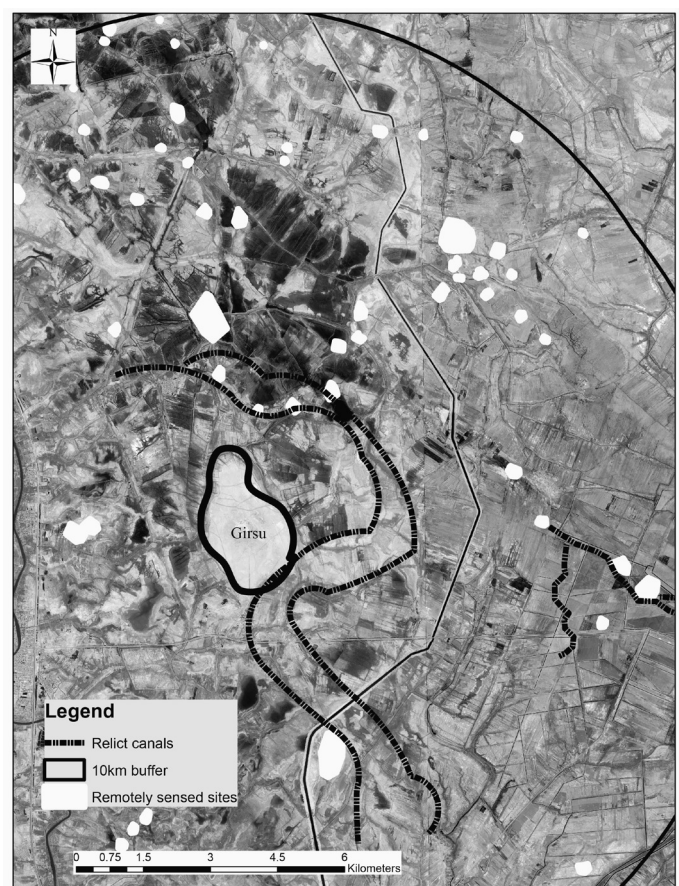
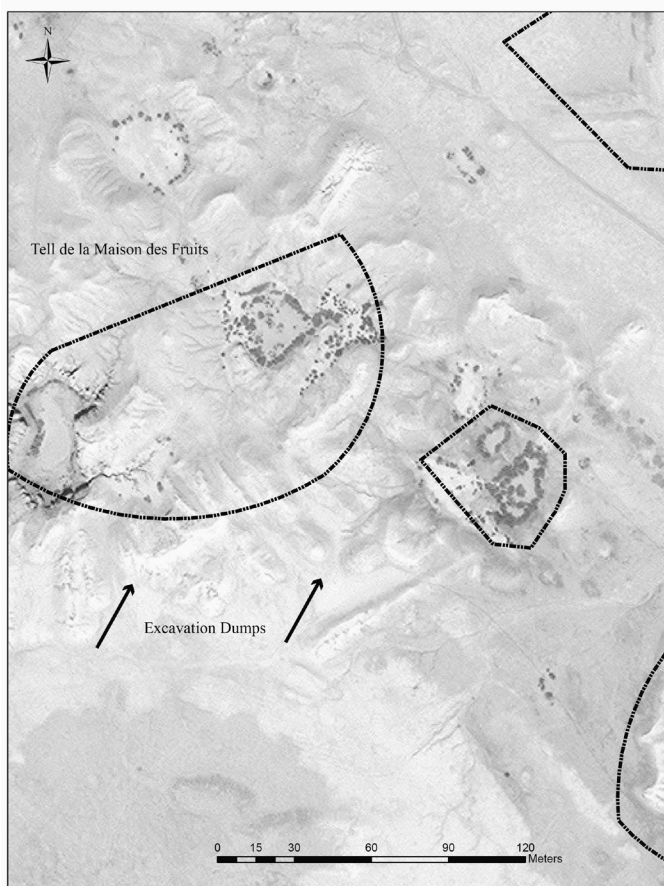
GIRSU AND ITS ENVIRONS

Known primarily from thousands of historical texts and supplemented by some excavation, Girsu and its hinterland have never faced formal archaeological survey. Past excavations, using methods akin to tunneling, indicate occupation at the site ranging from the fifth to first millennia B.C. This long and rich occupation may in part be a result of the site's geographic location. Girsu was located along both a primary tributary of the Euphrates/Tigris Rivers, whose levee is visible within

the modern agricultural fields on sub-meter resolution images, and at the juncture of two subsistence zones: the ancient agricultural plains and the ecologically diverse marshes. Texts dating to the late third millennium B.C. describe a thriving rural landscape consisting of large centers, production and storage sites, and farmsteads connected via a network of canals (figs. 6.3a–b).

High resolution satellite images purchased from Digital Globe and imported into a Geographic Information System (GIS), enabled the integration of the past excavation data, primarily maps, and site plans, and the identification of archaeological features in the agricultural fields around the site. For example, the published site plans indicate the size of the mounded area

of Girsu at 100 hectares (ha). Yet, the imagery shows a mounded area closer to 439 ha, similar in size to other contemporary urban centers, such as its neighbor Lagash. Comparison of published plans and the imagery indicate that this discrepancy may be attributed to an incorrect scale on the old plans. Internal consistency of location is also a problem. For example, it was possible to identify some previously excavated areas such as the Tell du Palais/Nin Girsu temple. But when the old maps were overlain with the imagery, it was clear that some relative locations were not accurate. Maps show the “canal regulator” and the Tell de la Maison des Fruits close together but in reality they are quite a distance apart. Most important for future archaeological work at the site, the old French dumps



Figures 6.3a–b. Girsu (a) showing visible remains and old dumps. Locations of buildings correlated with published French excavation maps (Parrot 1948), (b) showing possible sites and canals detected by remote sensing survey, in a 10 km radius around Girsu. These images demonstrate the usefulness of the high resolution commercial imagery at multiple scales and the importance of integrating past excavation data. (Images are courtesy of Digital Globe)

are clearly visible on the imagery and their spatial extent can be mapped.

The comparison of past archaeological site maps and plans with satellite imagery illustrates some of the potential constraints and advantages to working with old archaeological datasets. Girsu provides one case study but these circumstances will be widespread as archaeologists return to Iraq to start work anew on previously explored sites. New tools can aid in correcting errors and integrating data. For Girsu, new work at the site will require a mapping program to correct locational errors and outline the boundaries of the mounded area.

The imagery also shed light on the ancient landscape around Girsu. Cuneiform texts (Steinkeller 2007) from contemporary sites, such as Umma, suggest that third millennium B.C. urban centers were surrounded by a corona of hinterland settlements that participated in the processing and movement of goods from the countryside to the city. Our model of this rural landscape and its spatial, socioeconomic, and political relationship to urban centers is almost entirely based on information from ancient texts. Image interpretation of the landscape around Girsu can begin to provide evidence for the archaeological layout of the rural landscape.

For example, in a 10 km area around the site, sixty-four possible tells were identified on imagery. While most of the possible sites were dispersed within this area, two distinct clusters appeared that provide some insight into the rural layout. The first line was a cluster of five sites located along a relict river levee that runs to the north of the site. This levee comes from the northwest, its source obscured by the Shatt al-Gharraf and its branches, and runs along the eastern edge of

the mound. Others (Steinkeller 2007) have suggested large branches of either the Tigris or Euphrates were present in this area in antiquity. If correct, this rather large channel might have functioned as an off take of the main river, providing Girsu with access to the rest of alluvium and beyond via the river. In the south and east, a second cluster of sites seems connected to each other and Girsu via a network of small canals that are visible in pieces in the landscape today. These sites would have been immediately connected to Girsu and part of its rural agricultural landscape.

The number of settlements, location along the canals and at a short distance from Girsu, and the location of a larger, perhaps, regional river channel in the area all correlate with the information from the Umma texts that describe the countryside of the Sumerian city-state. The combination of visible sites, relict canals, and surface material indicates that survey sampling in the form of surface walking in cultivate fields would be useful for reconstructing the hinterland landscape of a Mesopotamian city.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE FIELDWORK

Satellite imagery can be a powerful tool to approach long-standing questions from a new perspective. In the examples presented, these tools have enabled the identification of possible archaeological sites in the former marshes of southern Iraq and demonstrated the potential for archaeological survey in once inaccessible landscape. When integrated with past archaeological datasets, image interpretation can aid in planning future archaeological fieldwork and begin to shed light on the countryside of the Sumerian city.

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BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEW ESSAY: WRITING THE HISTORY OF BA‘THIST IRAQ

Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Scott, eds. *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978–2001*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. xx + 372 pp. \$36.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-107-69348-7.

Joseph Sassoon. *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xx + 314 pp. \$27.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-521-14915-0.

Reviewed by Achim Rohde, Philipps-University Marburg, Germany*

These two books signal a new phase in the historiography of Ba‘thist Iraq. Due to the country’s inaccessibility during the Ba‘th regime’s reign, up until 2003 scholars working on that period mostly had to contend with a variety of open sources, like media, official publications, interviews with exiles, etc. In contrast, the two publications reviewed here draw on a mountain of newly emerged primary sources from within the regime’s apparatus, including Saddam Hussein’s inner circle, the Ba‘th party, the security apparatus, and the Ministry of Information, all of which were transferred to the U.S. by the Iraq Memory Foundation and by the U.S. military and are now accessible at Stanford University’s Hoover Institute, at the National Defense University’s Conflict Records Research Center (RCC) in Washington D.C., and partly at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The Saddam Tapes, edited by Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Scott, evolved from a report originally prepared for the U.S. Department of Defense. It is based on audio tapes containing recordings of Saddam Hussein’s meetings with the RCC, with his cabinet and with other high functionaries, generals, etc., that were captured by the invading U.S. forces in 2003. The book presents the tip of an iceberg of these captured audio files and state documents, a sample of which has been transcribed and translated into English. By scrutinizing these truly

exceptional sources, the editors aim to better understand not only Ba‘thist Iraq itself, but “totalitarian regimes” in general, which they ironically term “the most exotic of all foreign countries” to Western observers (p. 2). Given the limited quantity of sources included in this book and the difficulty of understanding and interpreting them correctly, the editors readily mark their findings as preliminary.

The book is divided into eight chapters, each one presenting selected transcripts of audio tapes that address a variety of topics. Most of them seem to reflect the particular interests of the Department of Defense, like Iraq’s relations with the U.S., the regime’s thinking regarding Israel, the way it saw Iraq’s position among its Arab neighbors, the Iran–Iraq War of the 1980s, the Kuwait War of 1991, Iraq’s non-conventional weapons programs, and the regime’s dealings with the U.N. inspectors during the embargo years, and finally, the defection of Hussein Kamil in 1995. The book thus does not address topics related to the actual functioning of the regime’s governing system vis-à-vis the Iraqi population. It is unclear whether the sources themselves do not address such issues, or whether this void reflects the editors’ choices. Each chapter includes useful introductory remarks that put the transcripts presented thereafter in context and offer crucial information on each given topic for non-specialist readers. A short epilogue sums up the

editors’ conclusions concerning the significance of the sources presented in this volume.

The transcripts offer an unprecedented view on the innermost circle of the regime, its thinking and the way its members communicated. Unsurprisingly, Saddam Hussein is the central figure in each of the documented conversations. Still, in many of the recorded meetings the dictator allowed for discussion and debate to a hitherto underestimated degree, including the voicing of opinions he himself disagreed with and sometimes non-unanimous votes. This suggests that decision-making within the regime’s inner circle was a process involving several persons, not the dictator alone. On the other hand, one of the most interesting recordings presented in the volume documents a meeting in 1991 in which Hussein Kamil confessed to Saddam Hussein that his inner circle had lied to him about the army’s low morale during the months before the allied coalition’s offensive, because they were too afraid and embarrassed to pass this information on to him. Attempts at escaping responsibility for failures, overly optimistic reports to superiors and self-aggrandizement have been noted as fairly characteristic features of authoritarian systems. This is the only instance documented in the whole volume that confirms the existence within Saddam Hussein’s inner circle of this type of dysfunction. Similar practices have also been noted in the

sector of military industrialization.¹

If such phenomena existed within the regime's inner circle and in the most privileged and most tightly supervised sector of the economy, questions arise concerning the efficiency of the governing system and the degree of control the dictator managed to attain on the ground. To further nourish such questions, an FBI report cited by the editors states that senior members of Saddam Hussein's inner circle at times disregarded his directives and did not implement them (p. 327). But the selection of sources included in this volume shows that the editors do not focus on the inner dynamics of the governing system, on the scope and the limitations of the dictator's power. Although they concede that "[t]he aphorism 'Saddam is Iraq; Iraq is Saddam' (...) obfuscates as much as it enlightens" (p. 326), the dictator's way of thinking and doing things is the main topic addressed throughout the volume.

This does not yield all too many completely new insights, and the editors acknowledge that the sources presented in the volume "well reflect the Saddam we know" (p. 323). They highlight what they term the delusional thinking of Saddam Hussein on numerous topics, particularly his poor understanding of the internal dynamics of Western political systems, which they contrast with his mastery in gaining and sustaining power. The regime's leadership indeed displayed an amazing degree of ignorance in its views on external "Others." Thus, it treated the world's most widely known anti-Semitic forgery, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, as a scientific work worth to be read and discussed in length within the RCC and the Ba'ath party, in order to better understand "the Zionist enemy."

Comparing Saddam Hussein with other dictators, like Stalin and Hitler, the editors suggest that all of them displayed similar character traits,

namely, a crude mixture of irrationality, ignorance, and brutality combined with tactical intelligence. This does not explain much and mainly serves to posit them as the exotic "Others" of Western democracy. Given the effects of Western policies towards Iraq in the 1990s and 2000s, the Western self-image implicitly projected here as being rational, informed and humane, seems to be afflicted with a fair degree of delusions on its own part. Still, as a commented source edition the volume is a very valuable contribution.

A further recent study that draws on newly emerged primary sources is *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party*, by Joseph Sassoon. Unlike the editors of *The Saddam Tapes*, Sassoon explicitly aims at using the regime's official records in order to understand the inner functioning of the Iraqi state under Ba'athist rule. For this purpose, he worked through a massive amount of primary sources stored both at the Hoover Institute and at the National Defense University, and partly also at the University of Colorado, including official documents from the Ba'ath party, from one of the regime's security services and the presidential apparatus. In addition, he used Iraqi print media from the Ba'athist era and conducted an undisclosed number of interviews with persons who served as senior officials under Saddam Hussein, many of whom he cites anonymously.

The author identifies the Ba'ath party as the most important pillar of the regime's governing system throughout the decades. The book is organized around this central argument and consists of eight chapters: Chapter 1 offers a historic account of the Ba'ath party's early years, based on existing scholarship. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the party's structure and organization as well as its regional branches. Chapter 4 portrays the Special Security Organization (Jihaz al-Amn al-Khass) as an example of

the numerous intelligence and security agencies run by the regime. Chapter 5 explores the party's relation to the Iraqi army and highlights its significance for controlling the armed forces and for containing their potential political clout. Chapter 6 discusses the evolution of Saddam Hussein's personality cult and the party's contribution to it. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the mechanisms developed by the regime to penetrate and control the population and discuss some of its domestic policies. The study convincingly shows what other scholars have argued as well, namely, that violent repression of dissent was not the only and not always the most crucial technique used by the regime to cement its power. It highlights the mechanisms of bureaucratic control and the ideological indoctrination of large parts of the population through the party and its affiliated mass organizations. Last but not least, the study illustrates the sophisticated system of material rewards and punishments developed by the regime, whose effectiveness in securing the population's acquiescence to its rule is often underestimated.

The vast bureaucratic paper trail the Ba'ath party left behind is portrayed in great detail by the author, and his account provides fascinating new insights. The study adds a lot to our knowledge concerning the Ba'ath party's structure and its way of functioning. But despite the vast amount and the quality of the sources the study draws on, as the author acknowledges in the introduction (pp. 14–15), it cannot offer a complete account of the way the Ba'ath regime's governing system as a whole functioned in practice: The archived sources analyzed in this study mostly reflect elite perspectives and do not automatically disclose much information regarding the implementation of any given policy or directive. Moreover, the sources are fragmentary and not ordered chronologically, making it hard to identify the evolution of any

subject matter discussed in the book over the thirty-five years of Ba'athist rule. Many other sources that would be relevant for understanding how the system functioned in practice, like the archives of various state ministries, police records, the archives of civil mass organizations affiliated with the party (for peasants, students, women, workers, etc.) remain inaccessible or were lost in the looting that followed the invasion in 2003. Alternative methods of generating relevant data in this context, like oral history interviews, were applied by Sassoon only to a limited degree. He conducted interviews with former members of the elite, but not with mid-level or local functionaries, be they party members or state employees, or with ordinary citizens.

Although Sassoon is aware of these limitations, he nevertheless draws a number of far-reaching conclusions regarding the functioning of the Ba'athist governing system. Some of them are debatable. Thus, he takes issue with the notion that the Ba'ath party was weakened after the war and the uprising of 1991, as some scholars have argued by pointing to a demise of Ba'athist ideology, the rise of religious revivalism among the population, and Saddam Hussein's neo-tribalist and religious policies in the 1990s. The study does not discuss the significance of the radically altered circumstances in which the regime acted during the embargo years as compared to the previous decades, but the author is able to provide statistical data regarding Ba'ath party membership that shows a dramatic expansion of the party between the mid-1980s and 2002. This is important information that sheds new light on the evolution of the party. Yet, the statistics cited in the text are not completely reliable as they provide partly conflicting data. Plus, they do not show party membership patterns for specific governorates and for each single year, only nationwide data for the years 1986, 1991, 1996, and 2002 (p. 52).

What looks like a linear development from afar might therefore have been more diverse and might have involved ups and downs. According to Faleh A. Jabar, party membership declined by 40% between 1990 and 1992, particularly in the south, but he also mentions that this trend was arrested by the mid-1990s.² By that time, according to Amatzia Baram, the party had reconsolidated itself and experienced a revival after years of decline.³ In order to determine whether there was a temporary numerical decline in party membership after 1991, one would need to know the status quo ante in 1990 and compare it with membership patterns in the years 1991 to 1995.

More importantly, it would be premature to interpret the rising number of party members during the embargo years, including the miraculous 1.5 million new recruits mentioned in party documents in 2002 as an "intensified Ba'athification" of the country (p. 51). Its numerical strength is in itself no sufficient indicator of the party's power in relation to other players within the system, nor with regard to its performance as a disciplinary mechanism on the ground. Of course, the massive mobilization of people demonstrating their loyalty on occasions like the president's birthday, or the mass recruitment of "volunteers" for short-lived makeshift militias like the "Jerusalem Army" (formed in 2000 in "support" of the second Palestinian Intifada) would have been inconceivable without the infrastructure of the Ba'ath party. But does this really mean all those people acted as loyal Ba'athists in their daily lives? The study highlights the regime's practice of offering material incentives in exchange for conformity. This technique proved even more effective during the embargo years, when a weakened and impoverished population depended on the regime for its subsistence. Against this background, it seems more

reasonable to consider mass events in support of the regime during the embargo years as evidence of a purely *formal* mobilization that by no means reflected the enduring hegemony of the party in all walks of life.⁴ After all, the mass mutiny from the ranks of the army and the Ba'ath party's invisibility during the invasion of 2003 surely were no signs for the vitality of the regime and the efficiency of its apparatus.

The notion of the enduring strength of the Ba'ath party throughout the years is a crucial tenet in Sassoon's overall characterization of the Ba'athist system as a combination of single-party rule and personalized dictatorship that recovered from the setback of 1991 and would have survived indefinitely, had it not been toppled by external force. In order to categorize the Ba'athist dictatorship, the study refers to scholarship on other dictatorships of the twentieth century, mainly the Soviet Union under Stalin and its East European satellites. The main differences that set Iraq apart from the Soviet Union, according to the author, are the lack of a centralized command economy and the absence of any coherent ideology to transform society. Unlike Stalin's U.S.S.R., he characterizes Ba'athist Iraq as an authoritarian, not a totalitarian system. But at the same time, the study emphasizes the complete penetration of Iraqi society by the party and the security apparatus, the mass mobilization of the population in support of anything that came to the dictator's mind, and the brutal repression of "any form of dissent, real or imagined, subversive or peaceful" (p. 276). These are characteristics political scientists usually ascribe to totalitarian systems, as opposed to authoritarian ones that allow for a degree of representative rule and limited pluralism.⁵ In fact, the study depicts Saddam Hussein's system of rule as totalitarian in most of its practices and Iraq as a country under the more or less

complete control of one party centered on an almost almighty dictator.

In sum, both books open the door to an extraordinary treasure of primary sources that have not been used by scholars before. Will they decisively alter our understanding of Ba‘thist Iraq? The sources will definitely attract more researchers and are indeed likely to enrich the historiography of Iraq for years to come. But in order to attain a complete picture of the inner working of this most enigmatic of all the anciens régimes in the Middle East, other kinds of sources will need to be analyzed in addition to those that provide the elite perspective or that of the party’s bureaucracy and the security services. The two books discussed here are important contributions to the historiography of Ba‘thist Iraq. But they are both clearly rooted in an established current of scholarship that focuses almost exclusively on the dictator and his inner circle as the “sole movers” in the country, who relied on a

formidable repressive and bureaucratic apparatus that completely penetrated and controlled all parts of society. Any evidence that might point towards an erosion of Saddam Hussein’s system of rule over the years and its fragmentation, particularly during the embargo years, or to the perseverance of dissenting voices and oppositional practices below the level of a coup d’état is either marginalized or ignored in both studies. On the one hand, this reflects the character of the sources they rely on. But on the other hand, these works fall in line with popular à priori assumptions regarding Ba‘thist Iraq, some of which are questionable.

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¹ See, for example, Christoph Reuter and Susanne Fischer, *Café Bagdad: Der ungeheure Alltag im neuen Irak* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 2004), 251; Imad Khadduri, *Iraq’s Nuclear Mirage: Memoirs and Delusions* (Toronto: Springhead, 2003).

² Faleh A. Jabar, “State and Society in Iraq: A Totalitarian State in the Twilight of Totalitarianism,” *Al-Huquqi* 1/6 (2001): 14–31, here 29.

³ Amatzia Baram, *Building Towards Crisis: Saddam Husayn’s Strategy for Survival* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 40.

⁴ In this vein, see, for instance, David Baran, *Vivre la Tyrannie et lui Survivre: L’Irak en Transition* (Paris: Mille Et Une Nuits, 2004).

⁵ Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000); André Bank, “Die Renaissance des Autoritarismus: Erkenntnisse und Grenzen neuerer Beiträge der Comparative Politics und Nahostforschung,” *Hamburg Review of Social Sciences* 4/1 (2009): 10–37 (http://www.hamburg-review.com/fileadmin/pdf/04-01/Andre_Bank_-_Renaissance_des_Autoritarismus.pdf).

Johan Franzén. *Red Star over Iraq: Iraqi Communism before Saddam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. xix + 276 pp. \$60.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-231-70230-0.

Reviewed by Anne Alexander, University of Cambridge

This valuable study presents a nuanced account of the political development of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) from its foundation until the rise of Saddam Hussein in the late 1970s. Franzén traces the evolution of the ICP’s ideas during these tumultuous decades, during which Iraq witnessed popular uprisings, revolution, coups, and counter-coups. A central theme of the book is the argument that the ICP’s communism was “thoroughly ‘Iraqi’ in make-up and constitution” (p. 246), and it was embedded in Iraqi society by a cadre of revolutionary intellectuals whose formidable successes in party building and organization gave the ICP an enviable ability to sustain itself

despite fierce repression.

Franzén situates the ICP’s ideology in a wider context, arguing that the Communists’ rise to influence represented the coming-of-age of a new wave of ideological political parties, including the ICP’s Arab Nationalist rivals. The party’s external ideological and organizational reference point was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Franzén’s account steers carefully between explaining how the CPSU provided the overall framework within which the ICP’s leadership was forced to work, while demonstrating that the actual implementation of the “Moscow line” was not a mechanical process but rather

shaped by factors in the local context, including the balance of forces between different personalities and factions within the ICP leadership, and the balance of forces between the party, its rivals, and its allies.

The ICP’s success was also, Franzén argues, the expression of the rise of a new socio-political group, the intelligentsia. He rightly notes that the ICP’s urban, secular activists were disproportionately drawn from the growing pool of teachers, civil servants, and students after the 1930s. The relatively small size of the working class in Iraq therefore posed a problem for the ICP. As Franzén explores in detail,

the ICP looked therefore to alliances with the “national bourgeoisie” to provide the necessary leadership for the masses’ struggles against the monarchy and the imperialist powers. During the revolution of 1958, this policy translated into a desperate and ultimately futile attempt to maintain a working relationship with Abd al-Karim Qassim despite the latter’s consistent efforts to undermine the ICP.

While Franzén is certainly correct to note the small size of the Iraqi working

class, and the relatively small numbers of workers within the ICP’s leadership, his emphasis on ideology arguably leads him to underplay the importance of Communist industrial organization. For, despite its lack of numbers, the modern working class, particularly in the oil industry, the railways and Basra Port, enjoyed a collective social and political power far beyond its size. The strategic nature of these workplaces for the Iraqi state, and the genuine successes of the Communist Party in implanting itself

there, was an extremely important factor that lay behind the ICP’s wider political influence. In general, Franzén’s discussions of the ICP’s evolving ideology appear disconnected from the enormous changes in Iraqi society that took place between the 1930s and the 1970s.

Nevertheless, this is a richly documented story of one of the most important political parties in Iraqi history, which deserves a wide readership.

UCLA LIBRARIAN VISITS IRAQ TO CONDUCT LIBRARY SCIENCE TRAINING

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In May 2012, I began a fifteen-day visit to Iraq to hold workshops for faculty and students in library and information science at the University of Basrah and to visit libraries in Basrah and Erbil. The training was an extension of the work that I had done in 2005 and 2006 for a joint project of Simmons College’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science in Boston and the Harvard University library system, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), to update the skills of Iraqi library science faculty,

librarians, and archivists following the devastating effects of war on the country’s libraries. Because of security concerns, the NEH-funded workshops were conducted in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, with participants coming from Iraqi institutions, including Baghdad University, Al-Mustansiriya University, the University of Basrah, the University of Mosul, and the National Library.

In the fall of 2011, Dr. Mohammed Aliwi, the chair of the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Basrah, invited me to do similar trainings at his university. The University of Basrah generously provided my airfare, meals, and hotel accommodations. For ten days in May 2012, I conducted workshops in Arabic about library science, from cataloguing to the development of collections and curriculum (fig. 7.1). I explained to library school faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and librarians what we do in the United States; we

then discussed whether these practices would be suitable in Iraq. For example, the University of Basrah was interested in obtaining accreditation for its library school, which offers B.A. and Master’s degrees in Library Science. However, because of limited staff availability to do the reviews, the American Library Association does not accredit programs outside of the United States and Canada. As another example, in the workshops, I stressed the need to respect copyright, stating that we cannot simply photocopy materials to add to the shelves or scan them to help build a digital library; copyright laws prevent this. I also described the Arabic and Islamic collections that we have at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and other major Middle East collections in the United States. Participants were surprised to learn that non-Arabs and non-Muslims were interested in studying about the Arab World and Islam and that UCLA owned Iraqi publications.

Workshop participants and I discussed the current practices of the university library and the importance of following standards that would enable them to benefit from the work of other librarians and other libraries to benefit from their work. The library at the University of



Figure 7.1. David Hirsch (left) conducts workshops about library science for the University of Basrah’s library school’s faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and librarians (Photo credit: David Hirsch)

Basrah does not have open stacks; users request materials at separate windows for males, females, and graduate students. Card catalogues are still used, although the library has begun the slow process of converting to a digital catalogue (fig. 7.2). Faculty told me that 65% of the library was destroyed during the Iraq–Iran War, the Iraq–Kuwait War, and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. During the workshops, we often did not have electricity and rarely had an Internet connection.

In Basrah, I also visited the public library. The library, which has open stacks, includes a children’s section, special collections on Iraq and Basrah, periodical and manuscript collections, and an English section. Much of the



Figure 7.3. Alia Mohamed Baker, the “Librarian of Basra,” displays a manuscript from the Basra General Central Library’s collections (Photo credit: David Hirsch)

public library had been destroyed. The director of the library, Alia Mohamed Baker, was able to save many of the books, but the library lacked funds to update the collections. A children’s book entitled, *The Librarian of Basra*, as well as a graphic novel entitled *Alia’s Mission*, have been written about her heroic efforts (fig. 7.3). The public library received funding from the American Library Association (ALA) to restore the collections. Over the years, however, the library had lost contact with the ALA; I was since able to reconnect them and the ALA has sent additional

funds for them to buy books.

With protection provided by the university, I went on several outings in Basrah, including several trips to the market, a visit to the Writers’ Union in the old part of the city with its traditional Shanashil architecture, and a boat ride on Shatt al-Arab. I enjoyed the Iraqi specialties of *masgoof* (grilled fish) and *tashrib* (stew served over bread), as well as shisha (water pipe) on the corniche (riverside promenade). On outings outside of the city, I visited Adam’s Tree, which is believed to be the site of the Garden of Eden, in the village of Al-Qurnah, at the point where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers join to form the Shatt al-Arab. In the marshes, I took a boat ride, saw the arched reed houses known as *sarayif* or *chabayish*, and had the opportunity to meet some Marsh Arabs (*Mi’dan*; fig. 7.4).

After ten days in southern Iraq, I flew to Erbil, in the northern region. There, I visited the Ankawa Public Library and Zaytun Library. I also met with Aras, a publisher of Kurdish materials. Additionally, I visited the General Directorate of Syriac Culture and Art and was welcomed by Dr. Saadi Al-Malih and librarian Jandark Hozaya. Both kindly provided me with Syriac materials published in Erbil. Outside of Erbil, I toured Lalish, a mountain valley that houses the tomb of an important figure of the Yezidi faith, and Alqosh, with its Tomb of Prophet Nahum and Assyrian Church, with an Armenian Yezidi guide, Dr. Tosn Ozmanian, and a driver arranged by Mr. Badran Habib of Aras Publishing.

From Iraq, I shipped hundreds of Kurdish, Arabic, and Assyrian publications to the UCLA library. The materials include journals published by the University of Basrah, such as



Figure 7.2. Employees of the University of Basrah’s Central Library enter data from catalog cards into the new online system (Photo credit: David Hirsch)

the *Journal of Basrah Studies* and the *Journal of Iranian Studies*. The Kurdish publications were all kindly donated by Mr. Habib of Aras Publishing. Individuals outside of the UCLA system may request these materials through interlibrary loan. Feel free to search the catalog at: <http://catalog.library.ucla.edu>, using the keyword “Basrah,” for example, under Books or Journals. Kurdish books from Erbil may be found by doing a keyword search for “Hewler,” the Kurdish name of the city.



Figure 7.4. David Hirsch visiting Marsh Arabs during his trip (Photo credit: David Hirsch)

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