



TAARII NEWSLETTER

The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

DR. MCGUIRE GIBSON

With this issue, we begin publication of the TAARII newsletter. The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq has been in its present form for only two years, but it has a history going back to 1989. At that time, a consortium of U.S. universities and museums formed the American Association for Research in Baghdad (AARB), having finally gotten permission after years of negotiation to set up an American advanced research center in Iraq. We called it an association because Iraqi authorities thought that a center or an institute had governmental connotations. They gave us permission to begin operations in the fall of 1989. We proceeded to hire a resident director, Dr. James Armstrong, who began preparations to establish himself and his wife, Beverly, in Baghdad by September 1. Unfortunately, the Kuwait Crisis happened in August and all plans were put on hold. After the First Gulf War, the Iraqis made it clear that they would allow us to establish the center; the economic boycott then in force prevented us from doing so.

For a time, we tried to carry out some activities, most notably the publishing of a fascicle entitled *Lost Heritage, Antiquities Stolen from Iraq's Regional Museums*, which we distributed to law enforcement bodies, customs officials, and other agencies around the world. By 1993, however, it became clear that the sanctions would remain in place indefinitely, and so we put AARB into suspended animation.

In 2002, when it became clear that either the sanctions would end or some other drastic change would occur, we revived the organization and in a meeting of the board in 2003 we gave the organization the current name. Admittedly, it is a long name and one that does not fall trippingly off the tongue, but we wanted to make it clear that ours was not a governmental body, but one made up of academic institutions and individuals.

Our first order of business, once TAARII had been re-established, was to hire an Executive Director for the U.S. office. I am happy to say that our choice of Dr. Stephanie Platz has proven to be a very wise one. She brings to the position first-hand knowledge of advanced research, having received a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Chicago for a dissertation on Armenia, followed by teaching at the University of Michigan. She also has had four years of experience managing an educational advising center and overseeing fellowship programs, including Fulbright, in the Caucasus. She has served as a program officer and senior program officer, specializing in research and training grants at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation. As you will see from the following sections, those experiences have proven to be extraordinarily important for TAARII's administration, program development, and fundraising.

The purpose of TAARII is to foster American academic research on and in Iraq, primarily in the humanities and social sciences, and especially in co-operation with Iraqi colleagues. We have received funding through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (another consortium, but this time of the overseas centers themselves) to establish and administer fellowship programs for American and Iraqi scholars. For now, the Americans must carry out their research outside Iraq, since the security situation inside the country prevents in-country study. We also have a fellowship program for individual Iraqi scholars to

conduct personal research inside Iraq. Details on the fellowships will be given in another section of the newsletter, but I would like to highlight one project, which is a joint effort. One American scholar, an archaeologist who was born in Iraq, worked with an Iraqi scholar in Amman this last summer, going through the Iraqi's notes on excavations carried out over the past twenty years but not published in detail. The object of the co-operation was to ready this material for publication in both English and Arabic. Each of the scholars will derive a publication from the



Prince Hasan (right), Magnus Bernhardsson (center), and McGuire Gibson (left), at the "Iraq: Notions of Self and the Other" Conference's Luncheon in Amman, Jordan, January 2005

work, and valuable information on Iraq's past will be given the attention it deserves before an international audience.

TAARII has just gone through the process of reading this year's fellowship applications. TAARII will be making eight fellowship awards in the U.S. this year. The Iraqi fellows' awards are currently under review, but we received five times more applications than we did last year. Again, we are actively encouraging joint projects.

There have been other activities in the past two years. TAARII co-sponsored

• Continued on pages 8-9 •

Executive Director's Report

DR. STEPHANIE PLATZ

These first years of TAARII operations have accompanied times of extraordinary pain and hardship for Iraqis. In these times, American scholars and students of Iraq possess troubled hearts and minds. TAARII programs have faced extreme logistical challenges in Iraq, such as how to communicate with Iraqi colleagues when phone and power outages are ubiquitous, and how to distribute information about TAARII opportunities when institutional leadership is in flux and roadblocks hamper movement within towns and cities.

Greater even than these situational challenges are the ethical dilemmas inherent in efforts to establish collegiality, scholarly exchange, and community among researchers in countries at war. Iraqi scholars confront the fear and the reality that they may suffer persecution for TAARII affiliation. American scholars who wish to conduct cooperative research face fears that they exploit their Iraqi colleagues, who are on the front lines, so to speak, while they work from the safe distance of their university offices in the U.S. The TAARII Board and staff think daily about how programs can be developed to foster true academic exchange and outstanding academic research on terms of equality.

Under better conditions, TAARII aims to establish a physical presence in Baghdad, with a hostel and library available to Iraqi and foreign scholars. Under all conditions, including the present ones, TAARII aims to support outstanding scholars concerned with Iraq, to meet their needs around the world, and to assist them in building a vigorous and resilient intellectual community.

To date, we have addressed these goals in the three ways mentioned by TAARII President, McGuire Gibson, in his report: fellowship programs for U.S. citizens and for Iraqis, conferences, and direct research through the Iraqi Oral History Project. Research projects undertaken by U.S. TAARII Fellows in 2005 are featured in this newsletter, as are the new U.S. Fellows for 2006. We are pleased with the spectrum of topics, representing different disciplines of the humani-

ties and social sciences, and addressing different historical periods. In 2005, for understandable reasons, our competition yielded only five applications for fellowships in Iraq. All five were awarded. However, we are delighted to announce that at the December deadline, TAARII received fifty fellowship applications from Iraqis for 2006. While it is our policy to protect the identities of all Iraqi individuals receiving TAARII support in Iraq, we will report the number of fellowships awarded in the next newsletter. We hope to more than double the number of fellowships awarded last year.

In September 2005, TAARII held a meeting in Amman, Jordan, for the purpose of convening social scientists from Iraq and the U.S. to discuss matters pertaining to social science research in Iraq. The meeting aimed to determine collectively a research agenda for the social sciences that could address existing gaps in available data and analysis. TAARII had also hoped to identify one or more pilot projects for immediate support.

The meeting accomplished more basic, but probably more pressing goals, by providing individual scholars the opportunity to communicate candidly, to discuss together the political environment in which all scholarship inevitably takes place, and to build an initial rapport. In addition, participants achieved consensus on a number of topics that require immediate study. These include the sociology and epidemiology of political violence, the social determinants of health, and civil-military relations (specifically, social adaptations to life in a militarized society). Participants also agreed that urgent steps need to be taken to create research and training opportunities for Iraqi scholars in foreign countries.

As a result of the meeting, TAARII plans to commission five written reports on the state of different fields of social science in Iraq and on the basis of these, to raise funds for a needs assessment of Iraqi social science on a broader scale. TAARII intends to follow up with a second meeting of the same participants

within a year. In the meantime, staff members are working on a final report for distribution.

In her Resident Director's report, Dr. Hala Fattah describes the important steps that have been undertaken in the creation of the Iraqi Oral History Project. The project spans generations of historical experience. Publications from the project will highlight themes salient for Iraqi participants. Overall, it is through fellowships for individual researchers, academic conferences, and direct research, such as the Iraqi Oral History Project, that TAARII aims to establish a durable scholarly infrastructure and community. Yet these three main themes of TAARII programs by no means exhaust our efforts.

In order to begin a program of public education on Iraq in the U.S., TAARII has acquired a small collection of documentary films, which it has made available to its Institutional Members for free screenings on university campuses. These include *Baghdad Blogger* by Salam Pax, *Robbing the Cradle of Civilization* by Robin Bengier, and *The Tears of Mesopotamia* by Baudouin King. In 2005, TAARII sponsored a U.S. lecture tour by Lebanese journalist Joanne Farchakh, whose knowledge of the looting of archaeological sites in Iraq is unparalleled. She has begun work on a documentary film as well, and TAARII has established the Farchakh Fund to raise money to help complete the film.

In 2006 TAARII plans to hold a public conference on the impact of sanctions in Iraq and to establish a speakers bureau. Plans are also underway to sponsor a panel at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in November 2006. For the benefit of Iraqi scholars, TAARII is taking initial steps to develop a fellowship program to place Iraqis in institutes of advanced study around the world for three months at a time, to refresh their knowledge of contemporary literature in their fields and to establish or re-establish ties with colleagues at foreign universities. We hope to raise funds to enable us to begin this program in 2007.

Because TAARII by nature is a consortium, institutional membership and individual membership alike are central to its aims. We are delighted by the strong support for TAARII goals that has been

expressed through many new and renewed memberships in 2005 and we hope that growth in our membership will continue in 2006. We welcome and invite members' comments and suggestions for program-

ming that will serve both institutional and individual needs, as our core mission remains to sustain and nurture a research community for the academic study of Iraq. We look forward to hearing from you.

Resident Director's Report

DR. HALA FATTAH

I joined TAARII in July 2004 as its first Resident Director and Scholar in Residence and set up temporary premises in Jordan. Because our mandate is to promote academic research in Iraq, I flew to Baghdad in October on Iraqi Airways, which had just started operations between Baghdad and Amman. My goal was to assess the situation of academic exchange and scholarly activity in the country, as well as to distribute the new TAARII flyers describing the fellowship opportunities to pre-doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers. I stayed in Baghdad for ten days and met the then Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Taher al-Bakka'; several members of his Ministry; the then Minister of Culture, Mr. Mufid al-Jaza'iri; the Deputy Minister of Culture, Ms. Maysoon al-Damluji; the librarians and researchers at the Iraqi Scientific Academy, one of Iraq's premier research establishments; the Director and staff of the Iraq Museum; and various independent or affiliated researchers, working with the newer NGOs in Baghdad. I distributed over forty fellowship applications and explained their purpose to all the people I met. The general feedback I received focused on two points. First, the government officials thought that TAARII was wasting its time and money by pledging financial awards to successful applicants to do work in Iraq and that we would be better off using the combined funds to set up one or two awards for overseas research, particularly in engineering and the hard sciences. Second, the librarians and freelance researchers thought that American fellowships would carry a heavy political price and appeared wary of accepting

TAARII's offer. As it was, we received only four applications for 2004–2005.

In January of 2005, TAARII helped fund a large conference on Iraqi history in Amman, Jordan. The chief sponsors of the meeting were The Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Amman, the Japan Foundation (funded by the Japanese Foreign Ministry), and the Goethe Institute, also in Amman. TAARII's financial help brought nine Iraqi historians to the conference where they joined with twenty-three scholars specializing in Iraq from the U.S., Europe, Canada, and Japan. The conference was entitled, "Iraq: Notions of Self and the Other" and was held to discuss the diverse concepts of identity and the nation in Iraq, both from a historical as well as a contemporary perspective. A couple of months later, in March 2005, the Resident Director co-chaired another meeting on the Iraqi nation and state; this one was organized in Florence, Italy, and brought together twelve participants from various fields of study, each with a different specialization on Iraq. Entitled, "The Debate on the Iraqi Nation: Artificial Construct or Work in Progress?," the panel looked at the various ways in which Iraqis conceptualized themselves throughout history and the distinctive shades and nuances of "becoming national" in post-colonial Iraq. Papers assembled from both conferences will soon be published in an edited collection by Palgrave Macmillan Press.

In the meantime, it was felt that in order to do its work properly, TAARII needed a presence in Iraq, particularly to coordinate the distribution of fellowship applications around the country and to arrange logistics for scholars coming

to and from Amman. An office was set up under the able management of an Iraqi, who smoothly handles TAARII's logistical operations and has been instrumental in persuading the Ministry of Higher Education to send a memo to all universities in Iraq concerning the TAARII award competition. As a result of this initiative, TAARII's Resident Director has received fifty completed fellowship applications for the 2006 cycle. Our office in Baghdad also organized the travel of several professors from Iraq to Jordan in September 2005 for a National Science Foundation-funded conference on the social sciences; its efficiency was much lauded by our Iraqi colleagues.

Finally, in Amman TAARII has just completed the first phase of the Iraqi Oral History Project (IOHP). Emerging from the often vivid recollections aired by older attendees at the Iraq history conference in January, the idea of doing an oral history of Iraqis in Amman eventually developed into a core project attracting significant Iraqi input, as well as a lot of discussion. Focused initially on the over-60's generation, the Iraqi Oral History Project interviewed twenty Iraqis as a preliminary stage of research. Using a questionnaire that was changed over time as a result of Iraqi feedback, this instrument greatly facilitated initial contact and opened up avenues for the re-formulation of Iraqi history from many of those people that participated in it. The material gathered from this pilot project will be used to write up a multi-year, multi-country grant proposal, emphasizing the various ways in which the rich corpus of Iraqi history can be complemented by the invaluable oral testimonies of older as well as younger Iraqis.

2005 U.S. FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS' RESEARCH PROJECTS

**Dr. Mark Altaweel,
Argonne National Laboratory**

*"Development of Ancient
Settlements in Northern Iraq"*

This project focuses on studying the material culture of seventy-three sites excavated by Iraqi archaeologists in northern Iraq in the 1980s and 1990s. The occupation history of these sites ranges from the early prehistoric periods (prior to 6000 B.C.) to the early Ottoman period (sixteenth century A.D.). Preliminary results already have been extremely helpful in providing a better understanding of Iraqi history. Some of the results include: a large second millennium B.C. palace or temple, a well-preserved Islamic khan, a large Roman or Parthian fortress, an Ashur-style grave structure, and several sites with southern Mesopotamian Akkadian remains. The ceramics, photographs, small finds, architectural drawings, site plans, and section drawings still need to be fully analyzed and reworked for publication; however, a preliminary publication will be written soon and submitted to the journal *Iraq*. An Iraqi colleague also plans on submitting a preliminary report in Arabic to an Iraqi publication. This project is the first joint Iraqi-American project that utilizes remote sensing and GIS technologies to study previously excavated sites in addition to being one of the first joint Iraqi-American archaeological projects since the first Gulf War. Hopefully, over 500 sites surveyed in northern Iraq will be examined in the next phase of this project.

**Dr. Mariana Giovino,
Independent Scholar**

*"Publication Preparation of
'Interpretations of the 'Assyrian
Sacred Tree,' 1849–2004"*

This project transformed Giovino's dissertation, "Interpretations of the 'Assyrian Sacred Tree,' 1849–2004," into a camera-ready copy for publication. This project was accepted for publication by the series *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* at the Fribourg Academic Press. This study presented the vast secondary literature of the

Assyrian sacred tree, which spanned over 150 years, and used iconographic analysis to challenge many of the pre-existing interpretations. This type of approach allowed her to disentangle evidence. During this past year, outside reviews and comments were incorporated into the manuscript. Photographs and copyright permissions were obtained from various museums. Further, she revised the third chapter after acquiring additional United Nations publications. A professional editor who specializes in text and image formatting of ancient Near Eastern art and archaeology manuscripts prepared the text for publication. The manuscript will be submitted for publication this summer and will be published by the end of 2006.

**Ms. Bridget Guarasci,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**

*"Eden Again: The Technologies of
Nostalgia and Reconstruction in
Iraq's Marshes"*

This project explores the current effort to restore the southern marshlands of Iraq. This initiative represents a multi-million dollar global humanitarian project mandated with recreating an Edenic paradise from the ruins of the wetlands drained by Saddam Hussein following the 1991 Shi'a uprising. The United Nations, a host of NGOs, and a number of states argue that the marshes must be restored to repatriate Marsh Arabs now living as refugees in Iran, who desperately long to return. Yet, media reports indicate that Marsh Arab refugees do not want to go back to the marshes. This project investigates the central question: If Marsh Arabs do not want to return, for whom are the marshes being restored and for what purpose? Research suggests that efforts to revive the area do not stem primarily from a concern for the welfare of Marsh Arabs, but instead may be designed to promote international investments and nationalist agendas. This research project considers what the restoration of the marshes reveals about the reconstruction of Iraq in general and the struggle to define the future of the nation.

**Ms. Yasmeen Hanoosh,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**

*"Chaldeans between Iraq and
America: Shifting Spaces of a
Christian Minority's Discourse"*

This project aimed to expand a previously written research paper on the Chaldeans of Iraq and the U.S. into a publishable monograph of approximately 150 pages. An overview of this Christian minority's social and political status during Ottoman rule and after the formation of the nation-state of Iraq is provided. Hanoosh also examines interactions between Iraqi governments and the Chaldean community during the twentieth century, compares their status with that of other ethnic minorities in Iraq — particularly their Assyrian counterpart — and examines the different waves of Chaldean migration to the U.S. since their outset in the early stages of the last century and up to the present day. The main chapters of the book center upon configurations of Chaldean transnational identities, affiliations, and patterns of social remittance practiced between the native homeland and the U.S. These transnational trends are assessed through an examination of discourses performed by and on Chaldeans, both in Iraqi and Western literatures.

**Ms. Lisa Lital Levy,
University of California, Berkeley**

*"Jewish Writers in Iraq,
1870–1950"*

During a trip to Tel Aviv between May 28 and June 10, Levy interviewed elderly Iraqi Jewish writers who had published in Baghdad in the 1920s–1950s. In the case of deceased writers, close family members were interviewed. Among those interviewed were the journalist Murad al-'Imari; the poet Ibrahim 'Obadia; Blanche Lev and Tsvi Lev, wife and brother of the short-story writer and poet Ya'qub Bilbul; Norma (Nuriyya) Bar-Moshe, wife of writer Yitshak Bar Moshe; and Kamal Shina, the son of Salman Shina. Shina, with the participation of the famous Iraqi Jewish writer Anwar Shaul, founded the journal *al-Misbah*, which appeared in

Baghdad in the 1920s. Additionally, the well-known novelist Eli Amir was interviewed about his uncle Meir Mu'allim, a writer and the editor of the short-lived *al-Barid al-Yawmi* (Baghdad, 1948). By phone, Levy also interviewed writer Nir Shohet. For information concerning the Baghdadi Jewish poet and scholar Dahud Semah, the archives of the Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center in Or Yehuda were consulted. The interviews and archival work contribute directly to Levy's dissertation project, "A Forgotten Enlightenment: Jewish Writers in the Arab East," which investigates the work of Jewish writers in Iraq and Egypt between 1865 and 1935. Post-doctoral revisions plan to extend the scope of this research to 1950.

Mr. John Nielsen,
University of Chicago

*"A Comprehensive Editing of All
Babylonian Economic Tablets
Dated from 747 to 626 B.C.
Located in Collections in
Great Britain"*

From September 1 to December 15, 2005, Nielsen examined Neo-Babylonian legal and administrative tablets dating from 747 to 626 B.C. in British collections. Most of the relevant tablets are in the possession of the British Museum, but he also looked at tablets in the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh, the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro, and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. In addition to collating published tablets, he has been preparing copies of unpublished tablets and making notes on their contents. This research is being carried out in support of his dissertation, a study of Neo-Babylonian kin groups prior to the accession of Nabopolassar. Further, it has already proved useful for making corrections and additions to the personal name index that was prepared using published material and notes compiled by J. A. Brinkman, D. Kennedy, and G. Frame.

Professor Neal Walls,
Wake Forest University

*"Reading Gilgamesh: A Critical
Introduction to the Epic of
Gilgamesh"*

The goal of this project is to produce a critical introduction and literary analysis of the Standard Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* that mediates between specialists in the cuneiform literature of ancient Iraq and the modern, educated reading public. A masterpiece in any age, the twelve-tablet *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the world's earliest surviving epic poem of substantial length (ca. 3,100 lines) and a classic of

world literature. Yet, there is not a single, book-length critical introduction to the interpretation of this ancient Babylonian poem printed in English. What is sorely needed is a close reading and nuanced appreciation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, led by a knowledgeable guide who will point out the epic's central themes, symbolism, and literary charms for a general audience. Therefore, this project will remedy this shortcoming in a book contracted with the Harvard University Press. Indeed, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* should take its rightful place among other heroic poems that have received renewed public attention as post-modern readers return to the wisdom and beauty of pre-modern literature.

2006 U.S. FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

DR. JAMES ARMSTRONG, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Semitic Museum, Harvard University

"The Babylonian Ceramic Tradition: The Second Millennium B.C."

DR. ERIC DAVIS, Department of Political Science, Rutgers University

"Democratic Transitions and National Political Culture: The Case of the New Iraq"

DR. ADEED DAWISHA, Department of Political Science, Miami University

"Democracy in Iraq: Lost ... Recovered?"

MS. BRIDGET GUARASCI, Department of Anthropology,
University of Michigan

"Eden Again: The Technologies of Nostalgia and Reconstruction in Iraq's Marshes" (Second Phase of Study)

MS. LISA LITAL LEVY, Department of Comparative Literature,
University of California, Berkeley

"Jewish Writers in Iraq, 1865-1935" (Second Phase of Study)

DR. DENISE NATALI, College of Political Science, Salahaddin University,
and Honorary Fellow, Exeter University, England

"Differentiated Development in Post-Gulf War Iraq"

PROFESSOR NADA SHABOUT, Department of Art History,
University of North Texas

"Recovering Iraq's Modern Heritage: Constructing and Digitally Documenting the Collection of the Former Saddam Center for the Arts"

SPECIAL CAORC FELLOW

PROFESSOR BASSAM YOUSIF, Department of Economics,
Indiana State University

"Alternatives to Imbalance: Economic Solutions to Iraq's Difficulties"

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.

BOOKS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

To address the grave situation facing libraries, institutes, and universities in Iraq, TAARII is accepting book donations, which it will ship to appropriate recipients in Baghdad. If you would like to make a donation of classic or contemporary scholarship in your field, please send a list of titles to info@taarii.org. Your gift will be tax-deductible and TAARII will cover all related shipping costs.

TAARII would also like to post bibliographies on its website. We invite our members and readers in the U.S. to forward to us listings of recommended readings in different disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, for the information of Iraqi faculty and students. Similarly, we invite our Iraqi colleagues to send us bibliographic information pertinent to the study of Iraq, to assist their American counterparts.

NEW PROJECT: 2006

TAARII is pleased to announce that it has received an award of \$88,000 from the **National Endowment for the Humanities** in support of a project entitled, "Rescuing Iraqi Archaeological Reports." The project will entail the cooperation of three American and three Iraqi archaeologists to revise and refresh previously written field reports on excavations done at Sippar, the salvage area of the Hamrin Dam, and more than 500 sites in northern Iraq, including part of the Kurdish area. Manuscripts in Arabic and English will be prepared for publication.

DISSERTATION PRIZES

The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) announces annual prizes for the best U.S. doctoral dissertations on Iraq. Dissertations defended during the 2005–2006 academic year are eligible and may come from any discipline for the study of any time period. One award of \$1,500 will be made for the best dissertation on ancient Iraq and one award of \$1,500 will be made for the best dissertation on medieval or modern Iraq. Letters of nomination should come from dissertation advisors or committee members, should explain the importance of the dissertation, and should accompany a complete copy of the dissertation manuscript. **Please send all nominations/submissions by July 1, 2006**, to The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq, 1507 E. 53rd Street, Suite 920, Chicago, IL 60615. Queries may be addressed to info@taarii.org.

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The annual deadline for submission of applications to the **U.S. Fellows Program** is November 15. The annual deadline for submission of applications to the **Iraqi Fellows Program** is December 15. For detailed information on how to apply and application forms, please visit the TAARII website, www.taarii.org.

In 2006, TAARII also offers a **special opportunity for collaborative research**. Individual U.S. and Iraqi scholars who wish to collaborate on a cooperative research project may submit proposals requesting up to \$15,000 on a rolling basis. To submit a collaborative proposal, contact info@taarii.org.

FILMS: A NEW EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

TAARII has acquired four documentary films for the purpose of screening on member university campuses. By arrangement with the distributors, any of these films can be borrowed from TAARII's collection for free public or classroom screenings. The four films currently available are:

Baghdad Blogger, by Salam Pax

The Tears of Mesopotamia, by Baudouin Koenig

Robbing the Cradle of Civilization, by Robin Bengier

Oil in Iraq: Curse or Blessing, by Robert Mugnerot and Baudouin Koenig

Brief descriptions of each film, along with images that can be reproduced for screening announcements, are available at www.filmakers.com. We hope you will be interested in scheduling one or more screenings. Please contact us at info@taarii.org to schedule a screening.

BECOME A MEMBER

TAARII has several classes of membership. In addition to Institutional Membership, there are Individual Memberships, including one at a reduced rate for students and emeritus faculty. The costs of membership are as follows:

Institutional Membership	\$250
Individual Professional Membership	\$35
Student and Emeritus Membership	\$20
Supporting (Non-Professional) Membership	\$50
Corporate Membership	\$1,000

To join, or to make a donation, please make checks payable to:

TAARII
The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq
 1507 E. 53rd Street, Suite 920
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Contributions to TAARII are tax-deductible under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

☐ **YES I would like to join TAARII!**

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<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting (Non-Professional) Membership	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Membership	\$1,000

I would like to make an additional contribution of \$ _____

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Institutional Affiliation: _____

Major Academic Discipline: _____

Main Areas of Research Interest: _____

Suggestions & Comments: _____

Enclose completed form with check or money order in envelope and mail to:

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• INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS •

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State University of New York, Buffalo
State University of New York, Stony Brook
University of Texas, Austin
Williams College
Yale University

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

TAARII's Board of Directors met on Saturday, November 19, 2005, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Washington, D.C. Present were McGuire Gibson (University of Chicago), Eric Davis (Rutgers University), Maria Ellis (Bryn Mawr College and Secretary pro tem), Stephen Humphreys (University of California, Santa Barbara), Magnus Bernhardsson (Williams College), Daniel Martin Varisco (Hofstra University), Miriam Cooke (Duke University), Michael Hudson (Georgetown University), Shiva Balaghi (New York University), Charles Butterworth (University of Maryland), Mark Tessler (University of Michigan), Waiel Hindo (TAARII), Hala Fattah (TAARII), Stephanie Platz (TAARII), and Mary Ellen Lane (Council of American Overseas Research Centers).

Reports by the President, Executive Director, Resident Director, and Treasurer addressed topics ranging from the current situation in Iraq to past and future program activities, membership, fundraising, and the budget. Special attention was given to discussion of how TAARII might provide support for Iraqi graduate students to come to the U.S. for training. A revised version of the TAARII by-laws was ratified and the meeting was adjourned.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS, COMMENTS, & SUGGESTIONS

To submit articles, images, or announcements in either *English or Arabic*, please email Katie Johnson at info@taarii.org for submission details. The deadline for the fall issue of the TAARII Newsletter is **June 1, 2006**.

For all other inquiries, comments, and suggestions, please visit our website, www.taarii.org.

• *Continued from page 1* •

a conference on Iraqi identity in Amman, Jordan, in January 2005. This conference, sponsored by the Jordanian Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, was organized by Dr. Hala Fattah, an Iraqi-born American who received a Ph.D. in history from U.C.L.A. Dr. Fattah is a prominent historian of Ottoman and modern Iraq and has published extensively on those subjects. It was Dr. Fattah whom TAARII engaged as its first Resident Director, a role that normally would be carried out in Iraq, but must for now be performed from Amman. The conference included about twenty-five scholars on the Ottoman and later history of Iraq, with Iraqi academics brought from Baghdad. TAARII paid for the transport and some hotel fees for the Iraqi participants. It can be safely said that this meeting gathered together more real expertise on Iraq than is contained in all the think tanks in the U.S. But what was truly intriguing about the conference was not the uniformly excellent presentations from the scholars around the main tables, but rather the questions and comments from the fifty or more observers. These people, who consisted of former Iraqi ambassadors, ministers or widows of ministers from the time of the kingdom and later, as well as daughters and sons of major figures in Iraqi politics and society, contributed previously unpublished information about specific events or personalities. Some of the observers, although born after the Ottoman period, carry information from their parents and grandparents that reaches as far back as the mid-nineteenth century. At the end of



Supposed Eden Tree. Qurna, Southern Iraq, 1970s. Destroyed in the 2003 War

the conference, I met with Dr. Fattah and we agreed that TAARII had to initiate an Oral History Project for Iraq, starting with the older Iraqis living in Amman and expanding to Beirut, London, and the U.S., and eventually to Iraq. We have begun the interviews and now have enough done as a sample to prepare a major funding proposal, which we expect to submit this year.

TAARII was back in Amman in September at its own conference. This time, Dr. Platz secured support from the National Science Foundation to fund a meeting of ten American and ten Iraqi social scientists who would discuss the state of these fields in Iraq and to begin to make plans for co-operative efforts. This was a working meeting, not one of prepared papers. The idea was to get as honest an assessment of conditions as possible. There was no publicity, no observers, and no governmental participation. The exchanges became somewhat heated at times, and I thought that was all to the good. We heard details of the life the academic faces in Iraq, not just the ever-present threat of kidnapping or death, but the hindrance of research and teaching caused by the closing of roads and bridges, the disruption of transportation, the virtual lack of electricity. We became aware of the bravery and dedication of our Iraqi colleagues who still continue to go to their classes, even when many of the students do not show up. We were made aware, as never before, of the level of expertise that exists in Iraq, based on decades of government fellowships that sent thousands of Iraqi men and women abroad for advanced degrees. We were also reminded again and again of the basic need of Iraqi academic life — fellowships for the next generation of scholars to study abroad. Because of the Iran-Iraq War, fellowships were cut back drastically and during the 1990s the sanctions isolated all of Iraqi scholarship, not just the students who lost opportunities to study abroad. Books and journals were on the embargo list, and Iraqi scholars had to be very inventive to obtain the latest material in their fields and then to photocopy them for classes. In general, however, the level of expertise has dropped in Iraqi universities, not only because of the isolation but more

important because of the brain drain that accompanied the sanctions. Yemen, Jordan, the Gulf, and other countries around the world have greatly improved universities and hospitals because they have attracted some of Iraq's best minds. And now, because of the chaos and looting that took place in universities and research institutes in Iraq following the invasion, thousands of books have been stolen or destroyed and facilities have been burned and only partially restored. In April 2003, I inspected the looted library of the Arts faculty at the University of Baghdad, and I have seen photographs of the burned and looted libraries at the Universities of Basra and Mosul. I also documented the destruction of the National Library and Archive, as well as the *Bayt al-Hikma*, the Iraqi equivalent of a national academy of arts and sciences. Although most of the buildings have been repaired, the libraries have drastic needs. We are working to help our colleagues to rebuild some of the research libraries. More important, we are trying to obtain fellowships for their students.

TAARII received yet another grant this year, from the National Endowment for the humanities, to expand upon the project between the Iraqi-American archaeologist and his Iraqi colleague that was funded last year with one of our TAARII fellowships. This time, we envision the team meeting for a month in early 2006 to work on more unpublished material, working toward manuscripts in English and Arabic. Then, after being in touch by e-mail for a year, they will return to Amman to edit the manuscripts. Two of the reports will be recreations of manuscripts that were destroyed in the looting of the editorial offices in the Iraq Museum/Antiquities complex. At least three books — and perhaps a fourth — will result from this work.

We are also planning to submit proposals to non-governmental foundations and to individuals to support specific projects on Iraq. We have already received generous contributions from individuals, mainly Iraqi-born Americans. This kind of private funding is essential to the health of the organization, since it allows us to respond to opportunities as they arise, instead of having to apply and wait for foundation funding. It might look premature, but we are already plan-

ning to start an endowment that will give long-term stability to the institute. Eventually, we will relocate our overseas office to Iraq, where we now have a liaison person working as a guest in a business office. This liaison person has been very effective in arranging logistics for Iraqi scholars to attend conferences and receive their fellowship awards, in buying books, and in informing Dr. Fattah about developments that affect academic research in Iraq. We hope that soon we will have in Baghdad a library, administrative offices, and a hostel for scholars on their research visits. We've already begun to buy books in Baghdad, in Amman, and in the U.S., and some individuals have told me that they intend to will their personal libraries to TAARII. Although books might seem to be less important in the future, given the increasing transfer of knowledge to electronic media and especially the internet, they will still be vital for years, especially if and when the electricity goes off.

TAARII is in existence and will continue to play a role in research on and in Iraq. We have already carried out important projects and we have more in the planning stages. We have instituted prizes for the best Ph.D. dissertations in humanities and social sciences, and hope to award them for the first time next year. We are planning to publish a series of translations into English of the works of Iraqi poets and novelists, if we can obtain the funding for them. Arab writers are known in Europe and America, but they are almost all Egyptians. Most readers of Arabic will tell you that the Iraqi poets are the best, and they are virtually unknown outside the Arab world. Some would contend that the same is true of Iraqi novelists.

We are always open to suggestions on projects and we invite your active participation in the activities of TAARII. We serve all fields of study in the humanities and social sciences, as well as related fields in the sciences. We seek individual members, who are represented on the Board of Directors by persons voted on by the individual members.

We intend this newsletter to serve as our main information source to our members. We also maintain a web site, on which this newsletter will also appear. We invite your comments on the newsletter and the web site.

موجز النشرة بالعربية

د. هالة فتاح

صدر العدد الأول من نشرة المعهد الأمريكي للأبحاث الأكاديمية في العراق. يتكون هذا العدد من ثلاث أقسام، ويتضمن القسم الأول منه على كلمة لمدير المعهد، البروفسور ماك جيبسون، يوضح فيها أهداف المعهد وظروف إنشائه. يذكر جيبسون إن الهدف الأساسي من إنشاء المعهد هو تعزيز الدراسات الأكاديمية الأمريكية حول العراق، وخاصة الدراسات الميدانية في حقل العلوم الاجتماعية والعلوم الإنسانية، بالتعاون مع الباحثين العراقيين. ويأمل جيبسون بأن يتمكن المعهد في المستقبل من إقامة مقراً له في بغداد يتضمن نزلاً لإقامة الباحثين ومكتبة. وعبر البروفسور جيبسون في كلمته عن حزنه عند مشاهدته أثناء زيارته إلى بغداد في عام 2003 للخراب الذي لحق بمكتبة قسم الآداب في جامعة بغداد وبالمكتبة الوطنية اللتين تم نهب محتوياتهما.

وكتب مدير المعهد كذلك عن نشاطات المعهد خلال السنتين الماضيتين. إذ تم عقد مؤتمرين هامين في عمان في عام 2005، تناول المؤتمر الأول تاريخ العراق والثاني العلوم الاجتماعية في العراق. وقد حضر المؤتمرين عدد من العلماء العراقيين ومن الأجانب المتخصصين بشؤون العراق. ونتيجة للمناقشات التي دارت في هذين المؤتمرين، شرع بتنفيذ مشروع التاريخ الشفوي لتوثيق ذاكرة كبار السن من العراقيين ورؤيتهم لتاريخهم. وقد حصل المعهد مؤخراً على منحة لتمويل أبحاث عدد من الأثاريين وللعمل معهم في العراق والأردن.

وفي القسم الثاني من العدد، فتورد المدير التنفيذي للمعهد، الدكتورة ستيفاني بلاتز، ثلاث وسائل تبناها المعهد لتعزيز فرص البحث حول العراق. وأول هذه الوسائل نظام المنح الذي يوفر التمويل لباحثين عراقيين ولباحثين أمريكيين لإجراء بحوث في العراق. وتشكل المؤتمرات التي توفر فرص اللقاء ما بين الباحثين العراقيين والباحثين الأمريكيين الوسيلة الثانية. فبالإضافة إلى الورشة التي تناولت العلوم الاجتماعية والتي عقدت في أيلول 2005، سيتم عقد لقاء يتناول العقوبات خلال عام 2006. أما الوسيلة الثالثة فهي إجراء البحوث، وكانت أولى هذه البحوث مشروع التاريخ الشفوي للعراقيين المقيمين في الأردن.

وفي القسم الثالث من العدد، تقدم الدكتورة هالة فتاح، المديرية المقيمة للمعهد، تقريراً حول زيارتها للعراق في تشرين أول من عام 2004، حيث التقت بوزير التعليم العالي ووزير الثقافة وبالعديد من الباحثين والعلماء العراقيين. وتشير الدكتورة فتاح إلى المؤتمرين اللذين عقدا في عمان وإلى مشروع التاريخ الشفوي للعراقيين المقيمين في الأردن والتي شرعت بتنفيذه عام 2005، فأجرت مقابلات مطولة مع 20 عراقي مقيم في الأردن.

وتتضمن الصفحات الأخيرة من نشرة المعهد على قائمة بمنشورات بعض الباحثين وملخص لأبحاثهم بالإضافة إلى إعلان عن حملة المعهد لإرسال كتب إلى بغداد وإعلان آخر عن جائزة المعهد لأفضل رسالة دكتوراه تتناول العراق.

SUBMISSIONS IN ARABIC

For the Fall 2006 issue of the TAARII Newsletter, we are looking for articles and announcements in **Arabic**.
For submission details, email info@taarii.org.

IMAGES FROM IRAQ



Salt-affected Area Caused by Over-irrigation, Southern Iraq.
Photo by McGuire Gibson



Burning of the Telecommunications Building by Looters, Baghdad.
Photo by McGuire Gibson, April 2003



Palace at Hatra, Northern Iraq. Photo by Mark Altaweel, 2003



Women Poling a Boat in Southern Iraq, Typical Farmstead
in Background. Photo by John Sanders, 1989



U.S. Soldiers at the Site of Isin after Driving Off Looters, Southern
Iraq. Photo by McGuire Gibson, April 21, 2003



Ishtar Gate, Babylon. From the Time of Nebuchadnezzar II
(604–562 B.C.). Photo by Mark Altaweel, 2001

Sometimes Images Speak Louder than Words ...

Do You Have Images from Iraq?

We are seeking submissions of images and photo-essays from members for the Fall 2006 issue of the TAARII Newsletter. For submission details, please contact info@taarii.org.

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IN THIS ISSUE

From the President	1
Executive Director's Report	2
Resident Director's Report	3
2005 U.S. Fellowship Recipients'	
Research Projects	4
2006 U.S. Fellowship Recipients	5
Announcements (Detachable)	6
Membership (Detachable)	7
Notes from the Board	8
Arabic Summary	10
Images from Iraq	11

ABOUT TAARII

TAARII has been formed by a consortium of universities, colleges, and museums, which comprise its institutional membership. Each institution names a person to act as its representative on the Board of Directors. Individual Members elect additional Directors. The Officers, along with two members of the Board of Directors, comprise the Executive Committee, which is charged with assuring academic integrity, organizational oversight, and financial and programmatic accountability.

TAARII is a non-governmental organization and is incorporated in the state of Illinois as a not for profit organization and has 501(c)3 status with the Internal Revenue Service.