





Foreword Welcome

Paul Collins

Keeper, Department of the Middle East

It is an enormous privilege to find myself Keeper of the Middle East Department and to join a team responsible for the care, understanding and presentation of a truly exceptional museum collection, one that can uniquely explore the histories and cultures of people across the wider Middle East, reaching from deep prehistory to the present day and in a global setting. I am also very aware of my great good fortune in inheriting a department in such rude health. The picture of an active, adventurous and purposeful department that emerges so powerfully from the pages of this Newsletter is a testimony to the energy and commitment of all who work here and support us – and, of course, to the achievements of my predecessor Jonathan Tubb.

Despite what has unquestionably been a period of uncertainty, of change and of taking stock in the aftermath of a pandemic and with considerable challenges around the world, what is evident is that the department's programme of research demonstrates an ambition and variety that reflect the great range of the collections and the different ways of thinking about them, presenting them and interacting with them. Crucially, much of this work has been in collaboration with friends and colleagues within the Middle East itself, building partnerships and networks that bridge disciplines and move beyond the confines of traditional chronological and geographical boundaries. In this Newsletter, two regions in particular come to the fore: Iraq and Lebanon. The exciting archaeological and conservation projects highlighted here are opening up remarkable new views

of the past as well as challenging old ideas. In doing so they provide opportunities for experimentation, training and knowledge exchange. There is also, however, much activity in other areas of the collection and you will encounter here objects and ideas extending from Sudan to Ukraine to Pakistan. And, as is so often the case, many of the department's particular strengths, and the essentials of its character, can be traced back to its origins and so you will read about some of the brilliant Assyriologists and archaeologists on whose shoulders we stand.

This research has generated an impressive list of publications ranging from specialist studies of objects, inscriptions, and archaeological sites to volumes exploring the Sasanian world, Mesopotamian ghosts, and even Egyptian mummies. These highlight an ongoing commitment to both the most rigorous scholarship and the widest possible public engagement.

It is already clear to me that many of these achievements could not have been possible without our partners, friends and supporters. I very much look forward to meeting the members of our patrons' groups, the Friends of the Middle East and CaMMEA. Your generosity has not only enabled the department to deliver a wide-ranging programme of activity as well as make some significant acquisitions but allows us to look to the future with confidence and ambition. I relish the opportunity to help drive forward our work to communicate the great pleasures and excitements to be had in looking, thinking and learning about the Middle East through its art and material culture – and the deeper understanding of our common humanity that emerges in doing so.

Responding to international crises Shattered glass of Beirut

Aimée Bou Rizk

Museum Assistant, American University of Beirut

Zeina Klink-Hoppe

Project Curator: modern Middle East, Department of the Middle East

Jamie Fraser

Curator: ancient Levant and Anatolia, supported by HENI, Department of the Middle East

'For 2000 years these vessels survived earthquakes, tsunamis and wars until 4 August 2020 when they shattered into thousands of pieces like our hearts and souls' (Nadine Panayot, curator of the Archaeological Museum)

On 4 August 2020, the whole world heard the shocking news of a massive explosion at the port of Beirut when 2750 tonnes of improperly stored ammonium nitrate ignited and exploded. The blast wreaked terrible destruction in its wake and was felt over 200 km away. More than 210 children, women, and men lost their lives, 7,000 were injured, 300,000 made homeless, dozens of buildings pulverised, and thousands of other structures were badly damaged. Coming in the middle of the Covid pandemic while Lebanon was struggling with a crippling financial crisis, the explosion brought Beirut to its knees.

The American University of Beirut, situated 5 km from the impact point, was not spared the force of the blast, and many buildings were damaged, including the Post Hall building, built in 1902, where the AUB Archaeological Museum is located. Windows and doors were broken but the damage to the collection occurred in one of its towers where a display showcase was blown away from the wall. This contained 74 glass objects showing glass used as tableware dating from the Roman to the Islamic periods but now all lay face down, ancient glass mixed with the smashed modern glass showcase, and only two of the vessels surviving intact.

Shortly after the discovery of the extent of the damage, the British Museum contacted Nadine Panayot, curator of the AUB Museum, expressing concern and extending



Four of the glass vessels from the Archaeological Museum after restoration.

an offer of assistance if they could help. With the support of many institutions, acknowledged in full below, eight of the glass vessels were brought from Beirut to London. They were carefully and sensitively restored in the World Conservation and Exhibition Centre by Claire Cuyaubère, who had also carried out the initial rescue mission and sorting in Beirut under the aegis of the Institut national du patrimoine, France (INP) and the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH). This was also an opportunity to carry out scientific analysis on some of the glass fragments, the results of which will be published in due course.

In addition, training was provided for an Archaeological Museum's staff member, Aimée Bou Rizk, who writes:

'This is why I got to attend a 3-month training programme at the British Museum that started on March 14, 2022. I was immediately warmly welcomed by everybody. During the first month I joined the International Training Programme. It was a very enlightening experience. I met people from around the world, from different backgrounds. Sharing experiences and discovering new cultures brought new perspectives and understanding to heritage and museum activity. I was introduced to the Middle East department and library. I learned a lot about Collection Management and Collection Care which I later applied in my current work at the Museum back in Beirut. I did a tour of the Photography Studios and was trained in the best way to take professional-quality photographs of museum objects. We learned, too, how to prepare for special exhibitions, which will help me in future projects.

After the training, I was taken to the impressive conservation studios and given a tour of the different departments and facilities. This was followed by a brainstorming session with Duygu Camurcuoglu and Hayley Bullock, conservators at the British Museum, where we drafted a plan for setting up a conservation lab at the AUB Museum in the future. The session on Preventive Conservation was extremely helpful and I later started implementing the different methods I had learned in Beirut. The work on the eight glass vessels began on 28 March 2022 with Claire Cuyaubère as project conservator. The Beirut Glass Project was allotted its own room in the conservation studio. The room is spacious with large tables and flat surfaces to spread out the glass, along with all the conservation materials and devices needed. The six boxes containing the eight glass objects were spread out on a table in this room waiting to be unpacked.

I helped Claire with unpacking the fragments and the 'jigsaw-puzzle' work that followed. We worked on the condition report of each object and I took before-treatment photos. I was documenting every minute of the conservation process, taking photos and writing reports. I also learned how to take micro-photos using the microscope at the studio. I had access to the Middle East and Greece and Rome department libraries, so I was able to carry out research during my time at the British Museum and get a better understanding of the eight vessels. Finally, our objects were expertly restored in the conservation studios of the British Museum. They were then put on show in the special exhibition in Room



3 before their return to Beirut. None of this could have happened without international collaboration and initiative, and I am so grateful to everyone involved in making this happen. Together we can achieve great things and I hope this is not the end of the collaboration!

The Room 3 exhibition *Shattered glass of Beirut* (25 August – 23 October 2022), supported by The Asahi Shimbun, was co-curated by Zeina Klink-Hoppe and James Fraser from the British Museum and Nadine Panayot from the Archaeological Museum. It allows these vessels to tell their story of destruction and reconstruction while retaining the scars of their damage. Designed to take visitors on a journey similar to that taken by the vessels from Beirut to London, the exhibition included audio-visual content using footage both from the Archaeological Museum and taken during the conservation of the vessels at the British Museum to allow for immersive and emotional engagement.

Dry reconstruction of one of the shattered vessels, held with tape to ensure all fragments fit.

The restored vessels tell eloquent stories of the explosion and its aftermath. They speak of collaboration and cooperation between institutions, and of work which goes on behind the scenes in museums. They highlight the importance of the rescue and reconstruction of cultural heritage in areas with volatile political and economic situations, and stress the necessity to engage and stand together to support a city's inhabitants as they rebuild their lives and city, piece by piece and step by step.

Acknowledgements

The British Museum is grateful to the following for their support of the project:

TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund, HENI, The Radcliffe Trust, The Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Trust, The Leche Trust, The Thriplow Charitable Trust, Friends of the Middle East Department, The Wakefield Trust and Middle East Airlines.



Responding to international crises
Supporting Ukraine

St John Simpson
 Senior curator: ancient Iran, Central Asia and Arabia,
 Department of the Middle East

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 stunned the world. It is in times of war that cultural heritage becomes particularly vulnerable, whether as a deliberate target, an accidental side-effect of conflict and looting of museums or sites, or the loss of knowledge through destruction of archives and the dispersal or death of relevant specialists. We have had contacts with curators, archaeologists and scientists in Ukraine over many years, with collaborations extending across the Departments of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, Scientific Research and Middle East. In our case, this has mainly been in connection with the exhibition, *Scythians: warriors of ancient Siberia*, that we organised jointly with the State Hermitage Museum in 2017/18, and maintaining close relations with colleagues and victims on both sides of this war has been, and will continue to be, a priority for us as we uphold the principle of open scientific collaboration with all.

In the present case, there were four areas where we could make a contribution and send a positive message to our colleagues in Ukraine. The first was to respond to a direct request by our Director, Dr Hartwig Fischer, to mount a small yet high-impact display in one of our galleries. Working with curators in the Departments of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, Greece and Rome, and Prints and Drawings, we selected objects aimed at celebrating the culture of present-day Ukraine from deep prehistory to

the present, and mounted a case display in Room 2 within a fortnight, opening on 8 April. We are very grateful to all concerned for making this happen so quickly for what was one of the most rapidly organised temporary displays in recent memory.

A second display opened on 31 May at the top of the East Stairs in Room 53, where we have a showcase dedicated to exhibiting items seized or donated for repatriation to host countries. Previous displays, highlighted in past editions of this Newsletter, have focused on antiquities from Afghanistan, Iraq and Uzbekistan, but now was the time to highlight a group of 86 medieval and later items from Ukraine. These had been posted from Kyiv to the UK in July 2021 to be sold on the internet, but were seized as a suspicious package at Gatwick Airport by UK Border Force, and jointly identified by curators from the British Museum and the National Museum in Kyiv. Among the objects are cross-pendants dating from around the eleventh to fourteenth centuries. Similar crosses from the district of Kyiv exist in the National Museum of Ukraine, and are believed to be local copies of Byzantine prototypes. The other objects are finger rings and disc-pendants, the latter of similar date to the cross-pendants and also typical of eastern Europe.

Metal detecting by private individuals is illegal in most countries around the world, including Ukraine, and uncontrolled treasure hunting at archaeological sites of all periods causes huge damage and loss of historical information. Some of these pieces likely come from a hoard or graves. Such objects are often sold with



Temporary Ukraine-related display in Room 2.
 Hope Priddle, Assistant Collections Manager, pinning objects for the temporary display in Room 53 of medieval and later metalwork illegally exported from Ukraine and seized by UK Border Force.

misleading provenances to try and conceal the country of origin, and many objects described as 'Viking' actually come from early medieval sites in Ukraine. Close cooperation between international law enforcement agencies, museum curators and archaeologists help identify the true origin and is an essential first step before the repatriation of stolen or illicitly trafficked antiquities. The British Museum is committed to contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage in the UK and globally, partnering with law enforcement agencies to identify illicitly trafficked antiquities. Objects seized in this way are brought to the British Museum for identification and cataloguing. The Museum then liaises with colleagues in the national museums of the countries concerned to arrange the return of these objects.

This August we were also able to help coordinate a generous response to an urgent request by the Ukraine-based Heritage Rescue Emergency Initiative (Heri), disseminated by the Network of European Museum Organisations (Nemo) and ICON. Departments across the Museum donated high-quality medium-size packing cases, while additional conservation and packing materials were purchased with the financial support of the ALIPH Foundation, and sent overland with aid donated by other UK heritage sector organisations. This has been a valuable lesson which draws on our own disaster planning modified to respond to the specific needs of the present war.

Finally, we have been extending a welcome to any displaced Ukrainian scholars and conservators seeking temporary refuge in the UK under the British Government-supported Ukraine Family Scheme. One possibility is to offer conservation training with the support of UNESCO. The other is to apply to the Researchers at Risk Fellowships Programme administered by the British Academy with the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara).

This series of responses to the war in Ukraine underlines how we, in the museum and heritage sector, can and should support each other in times of conflict or disaster. Acting quickly and responsibly is key, as is the development of responses most appropriate to the needs of those most affected, as can be seen elsewhere in this Newsletter in the case of Beirut. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to deliver aid in-country, as we have found to our great frustration in the case of Afghanistan this past year, but highlighting the importance and fragility of culture during times of conflict is within our resources, and we have a rotating display now planned which will do just that for Yemen.



Loading conservation and packing materials for dispatch to museums in Ukraine.

Collections and context

A Hollywood mystery: a pair of Assyrian Revival urns

Henrietta McCall

Visiting Academic, Department of the Middle East

In 2004, a large pair of bronze and slate urns in the Assyrian style appeared for sale online in the United States of America. Subsequent research revealed that these had spent most of their life in America, but that they had been manufactured in France at the very beginning of public interest in the discoveries of ancient Mesopotamia published by Paul-Emile Botta and Austen Henry Layard in the mid-nineteenth century.

The urns were manufactured by the firm of Matifat, bronze casters and metal workers founded in 1840. At least one set was displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and was illustrated in *The Industry of All Nations* (p.50) with other objects manufactured by Matifat. The accompanying text declared that the Monsieur C.S. Matifat had certainly maintained his reputation for *discriminating taste and originality of conception* by his display of objects in ornamental metal. Original they certainly were: the first French exhibition of Botta's excavations had only opened at the Louvre on 1 May 1847 (by King Louis-Philippe whose birthday it happened to be). These urns must indeed be one of the earliest manifestations of what came to be known as Assyrian revival.

The urns, or another set identically cast, must either have been sold then, or later re-sold to a new owner at an unspecified date, after which they disappeared from sight until 1946. When they came into the possession of the present owner, they had been in the same house in New England for some 20 years. He thought they were Egyptian because of the 'sphinx' handles, but had absolutely no idea of what they were and could not remember where he had acquired them.

When the urns arrived in a corroded state in London in 2004, they were placed in the hands of Pippa Pearce in the Department of Conservation at the British Museum. When she dismantled the first urn, and removed the heavy slate bowl, she found a fascinating piece of flimsy paper which read:

'Dear James, As you may recall, these urns came from the rear verandah of our DeMille home. To my continued dismay, Woody would leave his spent cigars in them, using them for ashtrays. Woody says he bought them from him from Paris in 1902, but I cannot confirm his account since that was before we met. Please find them a good home, and as always, thank you for your help. Kindest regards. Very truly yours, [squiggle signature], Carlotta'.

Pippa's initial reaction was that this was an elaborate joke, but on searching the names Woody and Carlotta on the internet, she discovered that Carlotta was almost certainly Carlotta Monti, a small-time actress of Italian-Mexican-Spanish ancestry, who had had a somewhat tempestuous 14-year relationship with the Hollywood actor, W.C. Fields, whom she always called Woody.

Fields was in his time a big star in the movie firmament. He had started his career as a juggler, moved into vaudeville, worked with Ziegfeld in his famous *Follies*, and finally moved to Hollywood to take full advantage of the talkies. Two of his best-known co-stars were Baby LeRoy, a popular child star at the time, and Mae West. Baby LeRoy was, as soon as he stopped being 'cute and girgly', ruthlessly dropped and ended his days as an impoverished lifeguard in Los Angeles. Mae West had a rather more glamorous career.

On screen, Fields always played the part of the curmudgeonly old man with a heart of gold. In reality, he was a curmudgeonly old man with a cruel streak: a womaniser, a skinflint and a drinker who finally died of alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver. He treated Carlotta in a shabby way. In about 1939, the couple moved to a house at 2015 DeMille drive, but in 1946, as Fields realised his end could not be far off, he decided to give up the house and spend the rest of his life at a sanatorium in Pasadena where he lived in a private bungalow which cost \$500 a week, while Carlotta was installed in a small room which cost \$65 a week. Devoted to the end, she stayed with him until he died on Christmas Day that year. Meanwhile, it was she who was charged with disposing of his household effects. It was doubtless at this stage that she typed the letter to 'James' whose identity remains a mystery although he was presumably a local dealer and clearly someone who had helped her on earlier occasions.



One of the urns illustrated in *The Art Journal* 1851 (p.50).



He came to London, appearing at the Hippodrome in Leicester Square in December. He returned to the States in February 1903. At the time, Fields was 23, newly married and accompanied by his bride, Hattie. They had no permanent home and lived, as theatrical people do, out of suitcases. Add to this the fact that neither seemed to have any domestic ambitions at all, nor any spare money, and the fact that the urns are unbelievably heavy, it is most unlikely that they hauled them back to America in 1902. Carlotta expressly says in her memoirs that Fields had no interest whatsoever in works of art. He could hardly have bought them as ashtrays.

So how did they come into Fields' possession? The most likely link between the philistine Fields and these fine urns is one provided by D.W. Griffith, the man who made the epic 1912 film *Intolerance*. One section of this three hour epic is set in Babylon, the plot for that part of the film being loosely based on the account in Herodotus in Book One of his *Histories* about the sale by auction of girls as either brides or slaves. The film sequence was set at the time of King Belshazzar when the city fell to the Persian king, Cyrus, in 539 BC.

The research done for this part of the film was literally monumental. The paper references alone led to the compilation of a giant scrapbook which weighed over eight pounds (3.7 kg) and included illustrations of

everything such as armour, chariots, weapons, as well as reproductions of Assyrianising paintings popular at the time. Edwin Long's *The Babylonian Marriage Market* was one of the seminal sources for the film. Griffith and his assistant, Joseph Henabery, also collected objects for inclusion in interior scenes, which is why the urns might have been purchased and brought to the United States.

Fields had starred in a silent film for United Artists called *Sally of the Sawdust* produced by Griffith in 1925. The two men kept in touch during the 1930s and in the early 1940s, Griffith sought Fields's help in resurrecting his career which had taken a downward turn. It is possible that Fields purchased the urns from Griffith to tide him over financially, or received them as a gift for any help he might have given him.

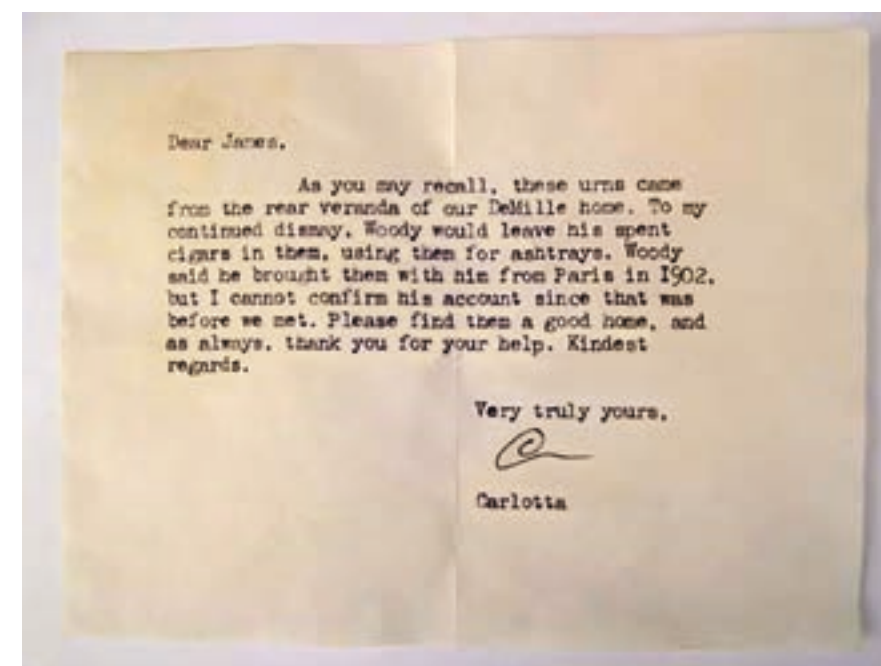
The urns form an identical pair. They stand 40 cm high and at their widest point across the handles, they measure 37 cm. They each weigh 17.4 kg. In construction, they are held together by a long central screw which, when freed, enables the entire urn to be dismantled. Conservation revealed that the urns had previously been repaired and there were traces of old resin fills. It was presumably during this restoration that the letter from Carlotta had been placed in the cavity under the slate cover of one of the urns. The letter was carefully replaced after Pippa's restoration...

It is the slate used for the covers and bases of the bowls which accounts for their weight. Otherwise they are made of brass, which was coloured to a dull bronze patination. The curved rims are decorated with hollow lozenges and inverted pyramids with Egyptianising lotus blooms and buds on both sides. Below them, it is the winged lions

couchant on the handles which identify these urns as a triumph of Assyrian Revival. There is nothing which approximates to a couchant winged lion in Assyrian iconography. The crown, wig, beard and harness of a winged bull have all been carefully observed and faithfully reproduced.

The wings of the lions are attached to the rims of the urns which fit into the slate bowls, which are in turn attached to the brass column bases with bands of decorated brass relief. The brass columns are set in brass supports decorated with eight stylised trees. Inspiration for the shape of the urns comes from Botta's *Monument de Ninive* (vol. I, pl. 76, 'Salle II', slab 1 in door H), both on a relief scene and also on an object illustration, labelled 'Vasque' (vol. II, pl. 162). Careful observation of the decorated bowls of the urns reveals further inspiration from Monument de Ninive and other published material including Layard's *Nineveh and Its Remains*, though the scenes from bas reliefs have been taken out of context, and chosen on grounds of artistic appeal, especially lion slaying, hunting and presentation of tribute to the king. It is interesting that one scene shows a very specific type of trapper armour which only appears in Layard. The column supports have classical images of dancing girls with lutes and dulcimers.

There are many mysteries surrounding the urns since their creation in 1851. They have clearly been through some adventures since then and their sale on e-bay in 2004. But now at last they find themselves in the domain of people who understand and appreciate the inspiration that created them, and they are probably in better condition today than they have been at any time since they left the Matifat factory.



Carlotta's letter found inserted inside one of the Urns.

One of the Assyrian Revival urns.

Belshazzar enthroned: scene from *Intolerance*.



Taking environmental samples from the Wadi Hammeh, to compare with material found at the region (author's photograph, 2022).

Going through excavation books and reports, to be sure that the ceramic vessels to be sampled were found in an adequate context. Tell es-Sa'diyeh excavation notes (author's photograph, 2022).

Collections and context

The Jordan Valley in the Early Bronze Age: a glimpse through the pottery

Kelly Papastergiou

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership student,
Department of the Middle East / Scientific Research

The Early Bronze Age period in the ancient Levant (3600–2000 BC) witnessed major political and economic changes. The development from agricultural villages at the beginning of the period to nucleated and fortified proto-urban settlements about 3100 BC and their subsequent collapse and return to rural villages in 2500 BC, has long been a focus of archaeological research. The Jordan Valley provides an ideal case-study to undertake research in the contexts of these transitions, as it has a long and continuous occupational history.

The environmental and geomorphological characteristics of the valley, with the Jordan river and its fertile strip of land surrounded by the uplands of the Rift Valley, allowed Bronze Age communities to flourish on both banks of the river. These settlements created an interesting mosaic of larger and smaller sites in close proximity to one another, which allows us to investigate their relations and offers insights into local and regional exchange networks and economic relationships.

My PhD project, entitled *Communities of ceramic practice and the development of complex societies in the Jordan Valley in the 4th and 3rd millennia BC*, seeks to shed light on the economic relationships which developed between these sites. Pottery offers a prism through which these issues are addressed through investigation of their manufacture. Using petrographic and chemical analyses to scientifically characterize the pottery, it is possible to identify the raw materials, the surface treatment and the firing technology used by ancient potters, and so identify communities of ceramic production to reconstruct networks of transportation or exchange through time. The results can then be utilised to support or challenge regional narratives, placing the Jordan Valley in the greater Levant context. An additional objective is to create the first comprehensive petrographic database of the Jordan Valley, which will constitute a valuable addition to ceramic studies in the region.

Research started in October 2021 as part of the Museum's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) scheme, funded by the AHRC. The CDP scheme enables the Museum to partner with British universities to carry



out such research. In this framework I am undertaking this PhD under the joint supervision of Durham University and the Departments of the Middle East and Scientific Research at the British Museum. In order to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise of both institutions, I have divided my time between London and Durham. In the previous academic year I spent around four months in Durham for training and laboratory work, and the remainder of my time completing a literature review and examining relevant material available at the museum which houses the largest collection of Levantine ceramics in the UK, including that from the British Museum excavations at Tell es-Sa'diyeh.

I have also had the opportunity to join the Museum's team on the Khirbet Ghozlan excavations in Jordan in February 2022, which allowed me to visit Jordan Valley for the first time and collect clay samples for my research. Fortunately, I was able to revisit the Middle East a second time as the CDP offers opportunities for professional development in the form of placements; thus I could join the Durham University excavation at Tell Koumba, a site dating from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age. This placement will allow me to study ceramic material from another part of the Levant, and gain more excavation experience from another Middle Eastern country. As I progress, I plan to continue collecting samples from more sites in the Jordan Valley, with the intention of analysing them and reaching useful conclusions which will allow us to shed some light on this complicated yet intriguing period.

This research is conducted as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded collaborative Doctoral Partnership between the British Museum and the University of Durham.

Collections and context
An Assyrian siege of an Egyptian city

Nancy Highcock

Curator: ancient Mesopotamia,
 Department of the Middle East

In spring 2022, an Assyrian palace relief panel (BM 124928) depicting the siege of an Egyptian city was loaned to the Musée du Louvre for their exhibition, *Pharaoh of the Two Lands: The African Story of the Kings of Napata* (28 April – 25 July 2022). Normally on display in Gallery 55, this gypsum relief is the best-preserved depiction of Egyptian peoples and their landscape in Assyrian art, and provides a visual complement to descriptions of conflict between Assyria and Egypt in cuneiform royal inscriptions. It was excavated by Hormuzd Rassam in the throne room (Room M) of Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh in early 1854, and was once part of a larger narrative scene illustrating Ashurbanipal's campaigns in Egypt during 667 and c. 666–664 BC. The other panels completing this scene have survived only as a fragment in Marseille and others illustrated in William Boucher's original illustrations.

The Assyrian campaigns in Egypt are known from inscriptions of Esarhaddon (r. 689–669 BC) and his son and successor Ashurbanipal (r. 669–631 BC). In order to secure his western border, Esarhaddon first advanced into Egypt in 671 BC, sacking the royal city of Memphis and defeating Taharqa, ruler of Egypt and Kush. This very same king regained his throne only two years later, prompting Esarhaddon to campaign once again to Egypt but he died unexpectedly *en route* in Harran, in modern Turkey, in 669 BC.

In response to Tarhaqa's recapture of Memphis, Ashurbanipal marched to Egypt in 667 BC. According to his Annals, the force of the Assyrian army sent Taharqa 'into a frenzy' as he was said to have been overcome by the 'inspiring radiance of the (god) Ashur and goddess Ishtar'. He promptly abandoned Memphis and fled to Thebes as Ashurbanipal set about reorganising the administration and re-appointing local kings across Egypt. After Tarharqa's death, his nephew Tantamani consolidated power and Ashurbanipal returned once more to Egypt to quash the ongoing Egyptian rebellion. He conquered the fortified city of Thebes, declaring:

'Silver, gold, precious stones, as much property of his palace as there was, garment(s) with multicolored trim, linen garments, large horses, people—male and female—two tall obelisks cast with shiny zaḫalū metal, whose weight was 2,500 talents (and which) stood at a temple



gate, I ripped (them) from where they were erected and took (them) to Assyria. I carried off substantial booty, (which was) without number, from inside the city of Thebes. I made my weapons prevail over Egypt and Kush and (thus) achieved victory. With full hand(s), I returned safely to Nineveh, my capital city' (Ashurbanipal O11, ii 39-48).

Although the Egyptian city cannot be identified from the imagery in this sculpture, it is likely that it shows the sack of Thebes, as Assyrian soldiers scale the walls of the fortress while Kushite soldiers with distinctive feathered headdresses defend its battlements. The scene below depicts them as shackled prisoners marched off while civilians are forced from their home city. The human suffering of war is heightened by Assyrian soldiers holding severed enemy heads, and young children among the refugees.

This relief provides a vital piece of the story of the Napatian kings of the 25th Dynasty, as well as their subjects, and was a key part of the Louvre's exhibition. In order to facilitate this loan, this Department collaborated with the Factum Foundation with the aim of creating a 1:1 facsimile of the relief which could be displayed while the original was on loan. This is not the first occasion we have collaborated with Factum, for in 2004 they scanned two *lamassu* sculptures from Nimrud in order to create full-scale replicas for Iraq. In addition to enabling the department's loan to the Louvre, the present facsimile can be loaned in future so that the original can remain permanently displayed in the British Museum.

Working with curators and the collections teams, Factum team members Celestia Anstruther and Gabriel Scarpa used a Lucida 3D Scanner to map the minute details and alternations in depth of carving of this complex scene. Factum developed the Lucida 3D scanner specifically for objects and monuments carved in low relief, as in their ongoing project to scan the tomb of the pharaoh Seti I in the Valley of the Kings. Safely working 10 cm from the surface, they scanned the relief in 48 x



48 cm overlapping sections in order to create a mosaic at 100 microns resolution which was aligned to produce a panoramic surface of the relief, then photographing a similar overlapping series of the relief at 500 dpi and at 1:1 scale in order to capture the variations in appearance of the stone itself. The panorama and photography were finally combined to construct a digital model which could be brought to material life as an accurate plaster facsimile at Factum's workshop in Madrid.

This facsimile will travel as part of the British Museum's international tour of a modified version of the 2018/19

exhibition *I Am Ashurbanipal King Of The World, King Of Assyria*, and serve as a central object in telling the story of the last great king of Assyria. The making of this facsimile ensures that new audiences in China and Spain will have the opportunity to engage with this unique piece of Assyrian sculpture, and to learn about the dramatic conflict between the Assyrian and Napatian kings in the waning decades of the Assyrian empire.

For more on the making of the facsimile visit: factumfoundation.org/pag/1832

Collections and context

First impressions

Jon Taylor

Curator: cuneiform collections,
Department of the Middle East

Ben Filmer-Sankey
Assistant Collection Manager, Collection Care /
Department of the Middle East

In 2011, the Department was bequeathed a large collection of cylinder and stamp seals by the late Professor Wilfred Lambert (1926–2011), which he had collected since the 1960s. Among them are 17 cylinder seals from southern Iraq, dating to the Kassite period (c. 1595–1157 BC), which are unusual and particularly interesting.

Seals had multiple functions. Primarily, they served as a kind of signature, rolled onto a clay document to acknowledge an obligation or the ceding of rights. People wore them prominently in displays of status. Most were made from semi-precious stones imported from far-off places. Kassite seals are striking. In the preceding centuries there was a marked preference for black stone. Kassite Babylonians instead preferred a kaleidoscope of reds, greens, purples, and blues. Seals also seem to have served an amuletic function. This was achieved partly through the choice of stones, the meanings of which we know sometimes about. It was also achieved through the use of personal prayers. These could be so long that little room was left on the seal for imagery and often they are written in a difficult and cryptic style of Sumerian.

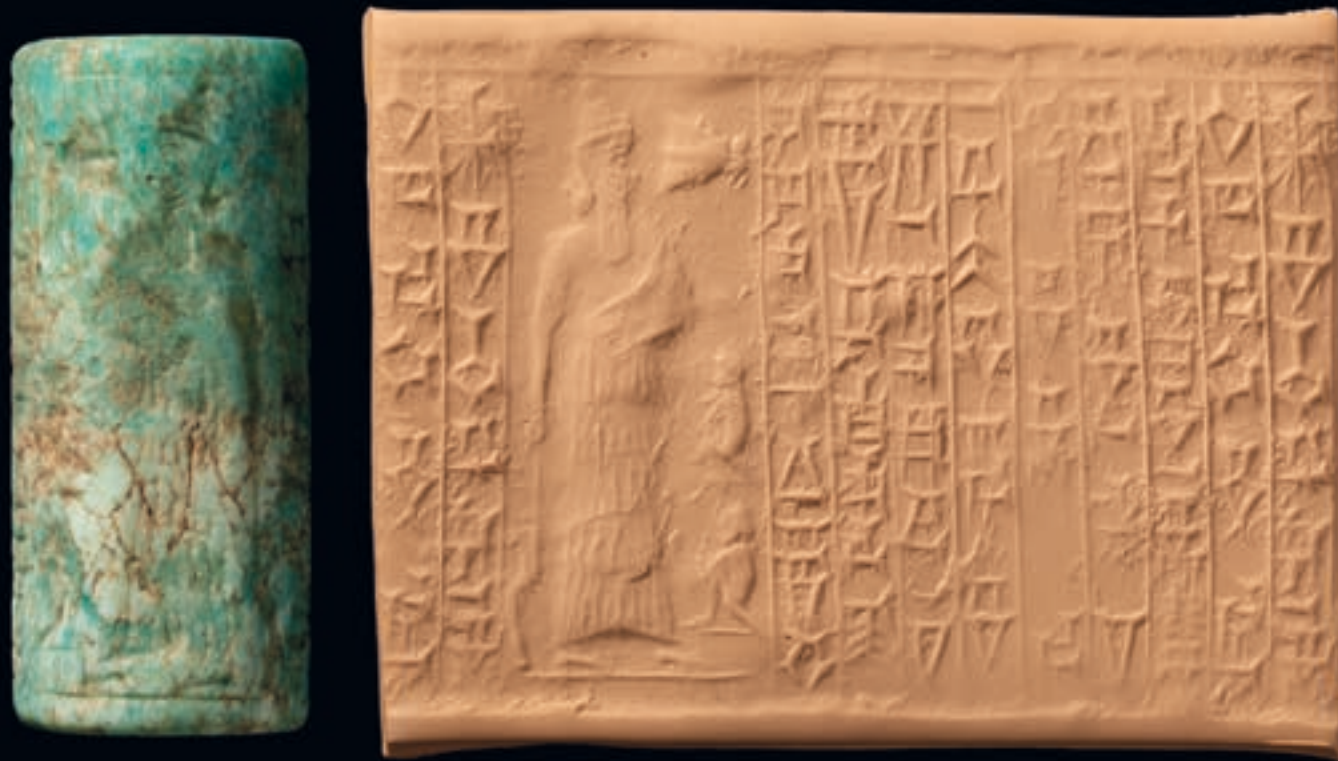
One seal is a particularly good example (BM 2013,6001.1900). The stone appears to be turquoise.

The main figure is a king holding a sickle-sword. Next to him are two monkeys and a fly, although their significance is unclear. The owner, a prominent official, asks the god of justice for protection. Both he and his father are known from tablets written at Nippur during the reign of Kurigalzu II (c. 1332–1308 BC):

'O Shamash, light of everything, righteous and wise shepherd, rejoice in your reverent servant. May you set his path away from the underworld and towards the heavens. Shamash-rabi, son of Yau-bani, overseer of the boats of Kurigalzu, King of the World'.

It is a magical experience to roll a seal into clay, just as they did in ancient Iraq. In the Museum, there are not many objects which get to be used as their makers intended. With seals, it is the only way to reveal their image. Making these impressions is an essential step in facilitating access to, and research into, the Lambert collection.

The process is simple. We roll a piece of polymer baking clay into a flat sheet. Next we dust the seal with 'French Chalk' (i.e. talcum powder) to prevent the clay from sticking to the seal when it is rolled. We first press the seal into the clay with our hands, then we roll the seal through the clay with firm pressure using a foam paddle. We check the quality of the impression: can the image be seen clearly, and the inscription read? Then we cut out the section that will make the final impression, aiming to produce a clean rectangle. This is placed inside a dedicated oven in the Department for 15–20 minutes to harden the clay and allowing the impression to be handled and studied.



The personal seal of a royal boatmaster.

Rolling a cylinder seal in clay to make an impression for researchers to study.



Collections and context
New light on a Gandharan silver dish

Mark Davis

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership student,
 Department of the Middle East / Scientific Research

Often there are objects in the Museum's collection whose appearance or background raises interesting questions for curators. The Department of Scientific Research can help to shed light on some of these by using scientific techniques to determine the chemical composition of an object, or to investigate the various stages and techniques used in its manufacturing process.

One such object that we have recently studied is a large metal dish found in the Dera Ismail Khan district of the North-West Frontier region of Pakistan, conventionally dated to the fourth century and presented by Mansel Longworth Dames (BM 1937,0319.1). The central design shows a Bacchanalian drinking scene, with a pot-bellied male figure seated on the ground with a pigskin draped over his lap and held in his left hand, while holding an animal-headed rhyton aloft with his right hand as the wine spurts into his mouth as he gazes at a buxom female figure seated to his right. He appears to be Indian yet she

is in a dress identical to that worn in Sasanian Iran, the rhyton is paralleled by one found in northern Afghanistan, and the place where it was found would then have been part of the Kushano-Sasanian territories of the Sasanian empire. The pair are surrounded by trailing vines, while the outer part carries a fluted pattern. Various described as being made of silver or copper alloy, the inside surface shows a range of different metallic hues, including evidence of gilding, while the rim and outer surface show the familiar greenish hue of copper corrosion. By studying this dish, we hoped to identify the different metals and metalworking techniques that went into its production as it had never been examined scientifically before.

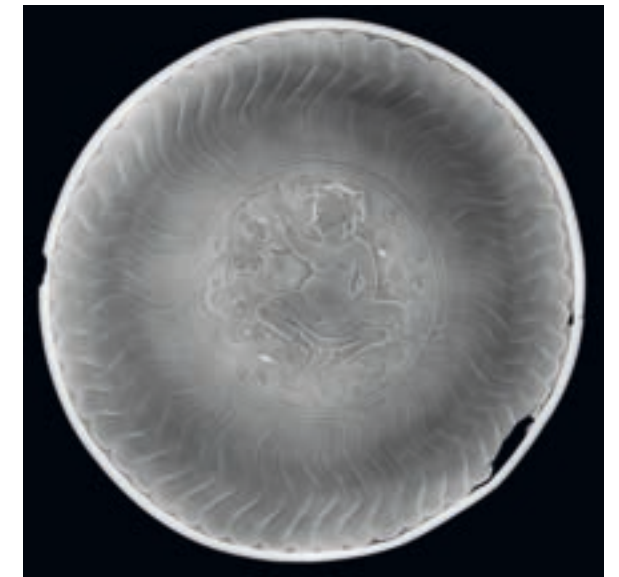
Beginning with the question of the metals or alloy used for this object, we used X-ray fluorescence (XRF) to compare the composition of areas of different colour and appearance on the surface of the dish. The greenish underside was found to have a reasonably consistent composition of around 90–95% silver and 4–7% copper by weight (wt%). We also found traces of other elements, such as gold, that are likely to have been present in the original alloy. In addition, we also identified other

elements, such as chlorine, that are associated with the corrosion layers that have formed on the surface through the interaction of the metal with its surrounding environment over the years. The composition of the interior was much less consistent, as suggested by the range of visible hues. Several of the raised silvery areas indicated a similar composition to the underside, while the gilded areas unsurprisingly showed elevated levels of gold, as well as mercury. The latter indicates that the gold was originally applied using mercury gilding (also known as fire gilding), whereby gold would have been dissolved in mercury to form a paste-like amalgam that would have been applied to the desired areas of the object. The object would then have been heated to drive off the mercury from the amalgam, leaving a thin layer of gold on the substrate metal.

XRF only provides information on surface composition but we can be reasonably certain from these analyses that the dish was formed from a silver alloy containing small amounts of copper and gold, and such alloys are comparable to those of Sasanian silver plates. As might be expected, the gilding appears to have only been applied to the interior of the dish and may have protected the metal from the levels of corrosion seen on the underside – gold being much less reactive than copper and silver – but it is difficult to be certain. Pitting on the gilding visible under the microscope suggests some degree of deterioration, and it is likely that this area has been cleaned in the past to remove corrosion materials. Such cleaning and wear also make it challenging now to determine the precise scope of the original gilding, due to the general presence of mercury traces, and the irregular dispersal of the surviving gilding.

From a manufacturing perspective, evidence from close-up observation under the microscope suggests that the dish was raised by hammering a single sheet of the silver alloy into shape. The silversmith would have cast the basic disc shape, and then hammered this against an anvil or curved surface to raise the sides. While initially soft and malleable, the metal would have hardened through the impact of the hammer blows, and periodic annealing (heating) and quenching in water would have been required to release the internal stress in the metal and avoid cracking and shattering. The drinking scene is in raised profile on the inside of the base. This design would have first been laid out in one of two ways: either by hammering from the inside onto a positive mould placed below the base, or by freehand hammering from the underside (repoussé) using flat and rounded punches. It is difficult to be conclusive on this as, in either case, it is likely there would have been subsequent deformation in alternating fashion from both the interior by chasing and the exterior in order to give shape and definition to the final design.

The process of hand working the initial design is clearly illustrated by a close-up image of the smaller figure using a Keyence digital microscope. The waistband was created using a mould or the repoussé technique referred to above. As you will see from the image, however, further parallel and cross cuts have subsequently been made from the inside to give added decoration and three-dimensionality to the shape. The order that these inner



Close-up image of the waistband on the smaller figure in the central design from the inside of the dish. Image taken with a Keyence digital microscope at x20 magnification (scale bar shown at 1mm).

X-radiograph (top view): the circular darker area of the fluting indicates thinner metal, with some slight local difference in brightness due to hammering. In the centre, brighter areas indicate either the presence of gilding or thicker metal, especially in contours of motifs. The black area on the bottom right, right under the rim, shows restoration where the metal has been lost and replaced by modern conservation materials.

cuts were made is indicated by the way in which they overlay one other in the finished design. Moreover, one can see that there has been some reworking of the initial line of the top of the waistband, shown as a shallower cut across the lower belly, as well as several cross-cuts which extend too far beyond the edges of the band. Such imperfections may not have been visible in the final design, even before the application of the gilding, and were clearly acceptable to the silversmith. The fluted sides of the dish show some irregularity in both the spacing and angling of the ridges, suggesting these were similarly chased without the use of a template or spacer. The overall effect is nevertheless remarkably consistent and a testament to the skill of the silversmith, drawing, as it does, the viewer's focus into the design at the base of the dish. More than seventy years after this fine dish was presented to the Museum, we can revel in the additional information that scientific analyses have been able to add.

This research is conducted as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded collaborative Doctoral Partnership between the British Museum and the University of Durham.



Front of the dish, showing the range of metallic hues and greenish corrosion near the rim. Diameter 24.7–24.8 cm, thickness at rim 0.4 cm, weight 500 g. (1937,0319.1).

Collections and context
The lost Rassam autobiography

Irving Finkel

Senior curator: cuneiform collections,
 Department of the Middle East

Today a very substantial bundle of private correspondence survives between Theophilus Pinches, the brilliant Assyriologist once employed at the British Museum, and Hormuzd Rassam, the archaeologist who discovered some of the museum's greatest treasures. It covers the years from 1879 to 1910, and includes three letters written by Rassam to Pinches which refer to the manuscript of the former's autobiography, then virtually completed but which sadly never saw the light of day. Each of these letters was written from Rassam's address on the south coast where he had long been residential with his wife and family (30 Westbourne Villas, Hove, Brighton).

Letter 1, dated 10 October 1909

My dear Dr Pinches,
 [...]

As for my Auto-biography, Mr Luzac offered to send it to be printed abroad for the sum of £25 and the cost of the binding would be at the rate of £2-10-0 per 100 copies. I am now only waiting for the marriage to take place to make an arrangement for having my *last book* published!!

x
 With kind regards to you all
 Believe me
 Yours very sincerely,
 H. Rassam

x I do not suppose I shall live long to write another book, though I have one in particular in my head.

Letter 2, dated 19 December 1909

My dear Dr Pinches,
 [...]

You will be glad to know that Professor Sayce has kindly promised to write the introduction to my Auto-biography and now I have only the Preface to write, which would contain the disgraceful affair of the British Museum Authorities. Mr Sayce has gone up to the Ruin of Ethiopia in search of its history, and did not intend to return to Egypt till January, so my Book must wait for two months longer.

Letter 3, dated 6 April 1910

My dear Dr Pinches,
 [...]

I am glad that my Auto-biography is now ready to be published, but I am only waiting for the return of Professor Sayce as I want to consult him about different matters and to show him the Preface of my book for his approval. I am going to ask you the following questions which I hope you will be able to answer as I want to be quite particular about the dates.

1. When was the Khabeeth [Slanderer, i.e. Budge] promoted as head Keeper?
2. When you were obliged to resign from appointment and what for?
3. Is the Raisi [also written in Arabic; the Director] on very friendly terms with the Slanderer [written in Arabic]?

4. Has the Slanderer [written in Arabic] much influence at the Museum?
5. Is he on friendly terms with [L.W.] King?
6. How is it that the Khabeeth has no connexions with the Society of Biblical Archaeology while K.[ing] is? I am sorry for this trouble but I have a reason for asking you part of the answers; they are to do with the Preface. I am going to make it quite plain that you were not the first who reported the wrong doing of the Slanderer.

Between themselves Rassam and Pinches not infrequently referred to E.A.W. Budge as the *Khabeeth*, or Slanderer, in view of the persecution both had received at his hand, for Budge alleged that Rassam's kinsmen had withheld from the British Museum the best of his tablet finds and only handed over fragments. This was refuted in 1893 in an action at law in which Rassam was awarded 50l. damages for libel. Pinches, who testified on Rassam's behalf, was drummed out of the Museum by Budge as a consequence.

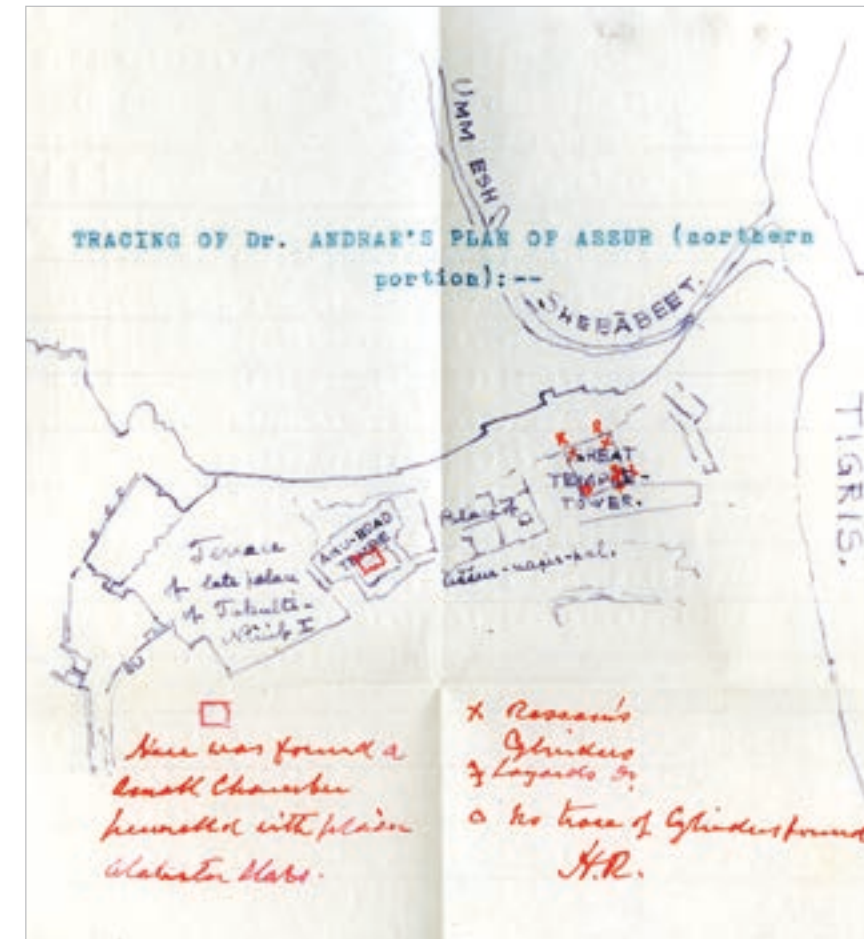
Sayce referred to the Rassam Autobiography in his own:

'Shortly before his [Rassam's] death [16 September, 1910] he asked me to read and revise the manuscript of an autobiography he was writing, in which he described his experiences at Aden and in Abyssinia, to which he was sent by the Government in the hope of rescuing the British prisoners of King Theodore. But death interrupted him in the middle of his autobiographical work, which was therefore never published' (Sayce, A H, 1923. *Reminiscences*: 302).

Pinches had access to Rassam's finished work when he wrote the account of his friend's life published in the *Dictionary of National Biography* 2nd Supplement, Vol. III (1912), pp. 158–61 [reprinted in E. V. Leitchy and A. K. Grayson, *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* VII (1987), pp. xiii–xv]. He records that: 'An autobiography which he compiled before his death remains in manuscript'. Its subsequent fate remains uncertain, but it is likely to have perished through damp in a house in Blackheath, London, as already noted in J.E. Reade, *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* VI (1986), p. xiv; Peter Clayton has told us that the house in question (11 Lee Park, Blackheath SE3), was that of E.B.W. Chappelow, who studied Assyriology privately with Pinches and came to inherit his Assyriological library in 1934. Mr Clayton described how all Pinches' volumes were kept in the Chappelow basement and were disastrously affected by damp when he saw them himself in the 1950s. It is not improbable that Rassam's last work was among those un-rescuable Assyriological books and papers and is forever lost to the world.

Further to letter 1, 10 October 1909:

The opening paragraph of the first 1909 letter refers to a sketch-plan included in the envelope, which still survives, and reflects discussion between Pinches and Rassam about the findspot of certain Assyrian cylinders excavated at Assur.



'I did not think when you sent me the sketch of part of the plan of the mound of Calah-Shirgat, the site of the city of Assur, that you wanted me to send it to you back or make some explanation about it. However, I have the pleasure of returning the plan to you with my explanation which I hope you will find satisfactory. I am not quite certain that (i.e. about?) the chamber found at the said mound which I have indicated in the sketch, but as I do not find it mentioned by Layard in his "Nineveh and Babylon" I suppose it must have been dug out by one of the overseers whom we employed.'

The plan shows the northern portion of Andrae's excavations, traced in pencil and labelled in black ink by Pinches with signed annotations in red ink by Rassam. These locate (1) a 'small chamber panelled with plain alabaster slabs' within the Anu-Adad Temple, and (2) the findspot of three out of four cylinders of Tiglath Pileser I as the corners of the Great Temple Tower, i.e. the ziqqurat. This is directly at odds with Rassam's own earlier accounts, where he describes their discovery explicitly:

'We were also fortunate enough to discover buried in the solid, sun-dried brick masonry, about ten feet underground, the annals of Tiglath-Pileser I recorded on the terra-cotta cylinders, all bearing almost the same text. The first was discovered by Sir Henry Layard at the beginning of 1852; the second, exactly like it, I dug out in the following year during my own mission; and the third I also discovered at the end of the same year, on my second expedition to that ruin. The last cylinder is larger

Sketch plan of Assur.

and different in shape and size from the former two ... The three cylinders were found placed about thirty feet apart, at three of the corners of an almost perfectly square platform. They were buried in solid masonry at the same level, and so I fully expected that we should find the fourth in the other corner; but though I dug away and examined the whole structure, I could find no trace of the other cylinder. They were found in an elevation to the west of the pyramid [the ziqqurat], which evidently contained, in the days of yore, a temple or small royal edifice' (Rassam, H, 1897. *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*: 20).

This places their discovery in what Andrae later identified as the Anu-Adad temple and not the main ziqqurat, and is compatible with the contents of the cuneiform text as written for the Anu-Adad temple. What is peculiar about this discrepancy is that Pinches, who owned and had undoubtedly devoured all Rassam's publications, must have been perfectly familiar with his friend's earlier unequivocal statement, the more especially as the test-case cylinder used by the Royal Asiatic Society to test the veracity of the cuneiform decipherment claim in 1856, and a landmark of the British Museum Assyrian collections (BM 91033), was one of the finds from Assur. Why Pinches should be questioning the findspots in 1909 as if they needed clarification is unclear: perhaps he had turned up internal evidence among Assur cylinder fragments that seemed to re-open the question, or perhaps, twelve years later, Rassam absently marked up the wrong building, although it is curious that his attention in marking the plan was already focused on the Anu-Adad temple and its otherwise undescribed chamber, possibly a bathroom.

A Mughal princess at the waterfall of Noori Chamb

Emily Hannam

Project curator, Department of Asia

Were you to travel from Lahore to Kashmir and follow the route of the Mughal imperial court as it sought to escape the lowland summer heat, you might choose to make a stop at Noori Chamb. Located just off the Mughal road before the Pir Panjal mountain pass and close to the hill village of Bahramgala, Noori Chamb is a magnificent plunge waterfall tucked into a crevice of high rocks, almost hidden from view. According to local legend, the waterfall (or *chamb* in the local Pahari dialect) is named after Nur Jahan, wife of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) who, they say, would bathe in its healing waters whenever she passed by. Sadly no historic testimonies of such royal bathing excursions survive. Her husband did however mention the waterfall in his memoirs, the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*: '[on 19 October 1620] a camp was made at Bahramgala' he wrote. 'There is an extremely fine waterfall near this place. As had been ordered, a platform for sitting has been built. It really is a beautiful sight'.

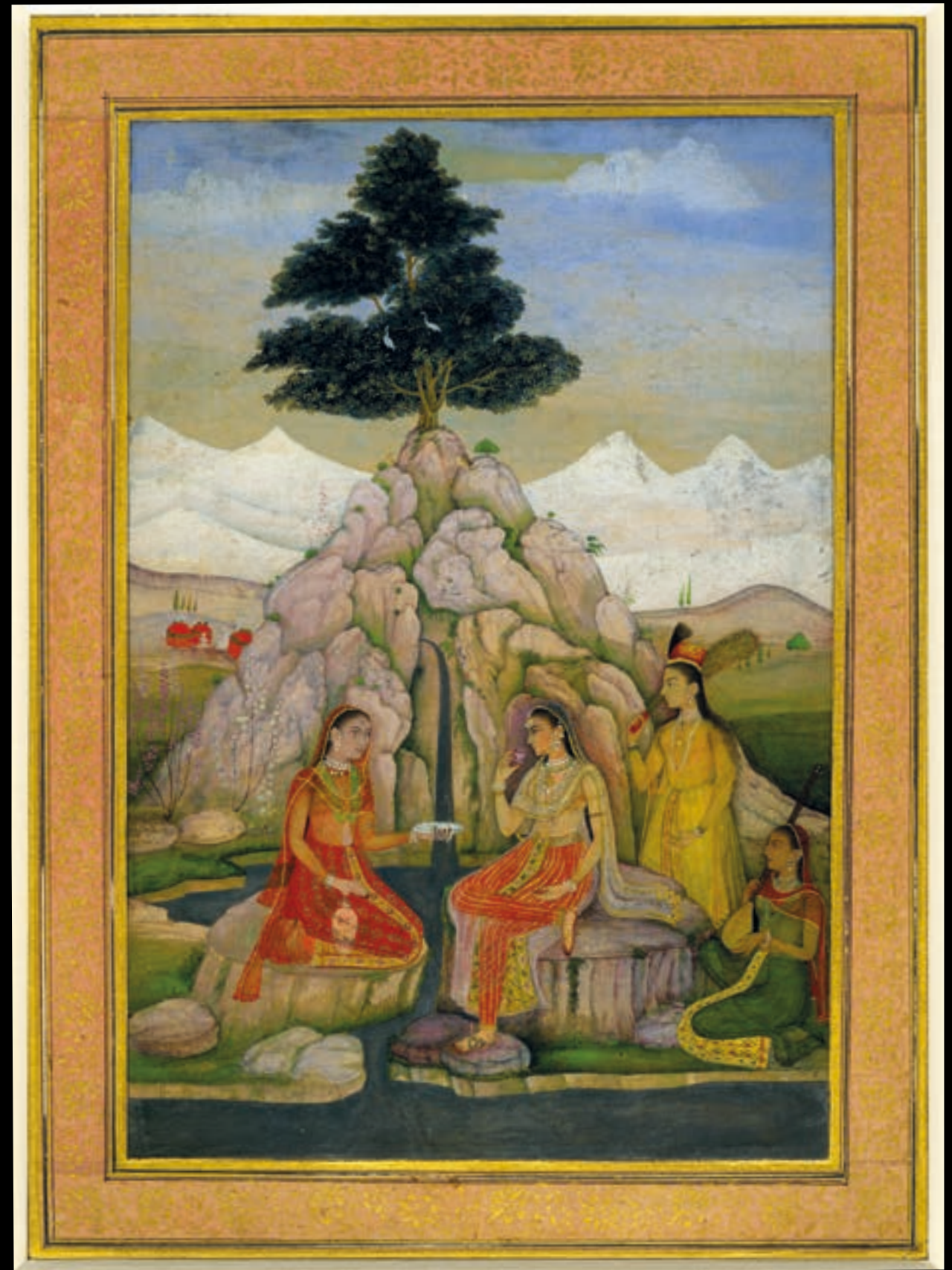
Before I began my hunt for the latest selection of Mughal paintings to be displayed in the Hotung Gallery, I had never heard of Noori Chamb. It was chance encounter with a small painting (1951,0407,0.19) whilst searching through a large box of mounted miniatures which led me there (alas only metaphorically, or rather on Google maps). The small painting is less than 20 cm high and dates to the second quarter of the seventeenth century. It depicts a Mughal princess accompanied by attendants sitting in front of a cascading waterfall, with a range of snow-capped mountains in the distance. It was these mountains which immediately suggested the setting as Kashmir, a region where the terrain rises in tiers from the valley plains to the peaks of the Western Himalayas. Emperor Jahangir had a great love for Kashmir and its natural wonders and scouring his memoirs for references to Kashmiri waterfalls, I soon found Bahramgala. A subsequent google search of Bahramgala quickly led to Noori Chamb. The painter of the scene has clearly used artistic licence to fit all three of the landscape elements – the waterfall, the plains and the mountains – into one frame (in reality, the waterfall is so vast and enclosed that you cannot see beyond it) but Noori Chamb is undoubtedly the intended location.

Yet the waterfall is just one noteworthy aspect of this painting. Having confirmed my hunch about Kashmir, I began to consider what the artist actually wanted to show. The princess is not bathing, so why has she absented herself from the imperial caravan to visit this particular

place? When you look closely you can see that she is in fact there to drink. One of the princess's servants is catching the clear running water in a shallow dish as the princess raises a small jade cup to her lips. The servant rests her other hand on the lid of a Venetian glass bottle – presumably she plans to use this to carry the precious mineral water away with them. Belief in the curative power of water crosses most religious traditions and in Islam such beliefs can be traced back to the sacred Zamzam waters found in the well of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, often collected by pilgrims on the Hajj. Perhaps this portrayal of the princess imbibing the fresh water had similar connotations of healing and purification. Or perhaps it simply depicts a rare escape for the princess from the persistent lack of privacy to be found in a large convoy travelling cross country: in the distance, red imperial tents sit waiting, beckoning her to re-join the royal cavalcade.

Whatever its intended theme, the painting goes beyond the physical activity depicted. When you look even closer, you realise that the artist has recreated an entire multi-sensory experience. On the bottom right, a lady plucks on the strings of her *tanpura* as she sings to the princess over the gentle babbling of the pool. The cool water runs over her servant's hand and, near it, the princess's own hand touches the soft skirt of her *peshwaz* made of the finest Bengal muslin. This fabric is known in Persian as *āb-i ravān* (flowing water) and the detail is surely intended as a visual pun. Behind them, the pink and white blossoms of the trees evoke the pleasant aroma of sweet perfume. Above, small egrets sit in a Chinar tree, considered by the Mughals to be a 'royal' species, and as egret feathers were used as turban ornaments (aigrettes), there may be another layer of symbolism present.

This is one of five Mughal paintings in the Museum's collection which were originally housed in the same album and which show Mughal royal women enjoying their leisure time away from the cities and palaces (1951,0407,0.19-23). The group was donated to the Museum in 1951 by a Miss N. Campbell along with a sixth Indian painting, a depiction of Chand Bibi, the famed warrior queen of the Deccan, out hawking (1951,0407,0.24). As hinted above, the princess at the waterfall will appear in the latest Hotung Gallery display which contrasts painted portrayals of Mughal princes and princesses. Another painting from this group will soon be shown in Manchester Museum's new South Asia Gallery, a Partnership Project with the British Museum due to open in early 2023, and I am confident that we can look forward to many further outings for our Mughal princesses in future displays.



Working in the Middle East

The Girsu Project: new discoveries

Sébastien Rey

Curator: ancient Mesopotamia,
Department of the Middle East

In 2021 the British Museum was awarded a grant from the J. Paul Getty Trust to develop a new programme of work at the site of Girsu in collaboration with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage [SBAH] in Iraq. The Girsu Project builds on the success of the Iraq Scheme, supported by the UK Government's Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. It is a comprehensive programme of high-level field training and on-site management of a world-class heritage site. It aims to continue training Iraqi archaeologists, conservators and students in detailed techniques and technologies of retrieval and rescue excavations, from documenting to re-excavating and conserving some of the most important remains of ancient Iraq exposed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and regularly looted since the Gulf Wars. Directed by the author, this project provides a unique opportunity to develop an inclusive model of best practice for other heritage sites in the Middle East.

The first two archaeological seasons were carried out in the autumn of 2021 and the spring of 2022. Thanks to the continuous support and help of the SBAH in Iraq, we agreed with five universities – Mosul, Babel, Qadisiyah, Simawa and Nasiriyah – an on-site training course for their students. This represents an important achievement for the project, and we are discussing with the SBAH future collaborations with other universities. The new student programme, together with the continuation of the training of SBAH archaeologists and the heritage management plan for the site are very well received by the Iraqi authorities, and also, thanks to social media, more widely by the Iraqi people, including, of course, the local community. We have organised site visits for

four foreign groups of tourists, and also hosted a day of discussions on site with a large group of students and their professors from the departments of archaeology and conservation of Baghdad University.

The student training scheme is designed as an intensive course in field survey for students to learn the principles of surveying techniques, collecting artefacts and pottery and the whole *chaîne opératoire* of processing finds in the dig house. For this programme, we had selected a very promising area to survey in the north-east part of the site between two large ancient canals at Girsu, which preparatory fieldwork led us to believe was the nucleus of the pre-urban settlement dating back to the late fifth (Ubaid period) or early fourth millennium BC (Uruk period). The results have confirmed this theory as the pottery and small finds from the survey are predominantly from the early to middle Uruk periods. The SBAH participants completed their comprehensive training course, participated in conservation operations at the Girsu Bridge site, and took part in the excavations at the Temple site and in the vicinity of the bridge there.

The two new areas explored were chosen following the important results from the remote sensing work we carried out after returning from our autumn season in 2019, using high-resolution drone imagery collected on site. Indeed, sub-surface plans of two extremely interesting buildings were detected on the drone photographs taken after the heavy rain that fell in autumn. We decided therefore to investigate these traces of walls and rooms by opening ground-truthing trenches. In the bridge area in particular, the excavated mudbrick walls overlap perfectly with the lines of walling visible on the drone photos. This work will serve as a textbook example of how new methods in remote sensing and drone imagery can help plan future excavations at a site like Girsu.



Conservation on
the Sumerian
bridge of Girsu.



The building thus identified nearby the bridge and along the main canal is very well preserved, just beneath the surface of the site, and extremely interesting (being by far the largest building visible with remote sensing), so we decided to investigate it by opening targeted excavation areas. This turned out to be perfect for our Iraqi participants and students who are learning the principles of excavating mudbrick structures, drawing plans and sections, and recording finds. And it will also be a great opportunity to link the excavations with the conservation programme. After discussions with our site conservator and the Iraqi inspectors, we have attempted something that, to my knowledge, has not yet been done anywhere in Iraq: excavating and conserving the mudbricks simultaneously. If we are successful, this could become an example of best practice for other Mesopotamian sites with mudbrick architectural remains.

The large building, after having been excavated and preserved, will become a new focus in the itinerary of site visits together with the bridge and the temple. As for the new building's function, it is still too early to say, but it dates from the late third millennium, the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur. The ground plan so far revealed to us shows that it was a large complex with clearly separated functional areas: storage rooms of various sizes and a kitchen area. The building has already yielded clay tablets, cylinder seals and seal impressions. Could it be a warehouse linked to the Ur III governors of Girsu?

The other new excavation area in the ancient Sacred City or temple district of Girsu led to the identification, again just beneath the surface of the site, of a building dating back to the very early third millennium, the Early Dynastic I period. This was completely unexpected and illustrates how this part to the northwest of the site has been extensively eroded by wind and rain. However, and despite the loss of the later archaeological layers, this,

Student training on
survey.

in truth, represented an exceptional opportunity for us to investigate a fascinating period, usually called the 'Sumerian dark ages', which is the transition between the late Uruk period and what is generally considered as the Sumerian take-off. The trench is a rare window into the origins of the city of Girsu, and is literally just beneath our feet. It has notably yielded an *in situ* find of a unique stone statuette in the form of a worshipping braided figure and dating to the early third millennium BC.

Our successful collaboration with the geoarchaeological department of Qadisiyah University also continues. This season, we are looking more closely at the waterscape of ancient Girsu within the confines of the city. A trench opened in front of the temenos wall of the sacred precinct has already led to the identification of what appears to be a large water reservoir or pool that delimited the boundary between the holy quarter of temples and the rest of the city with its dense residential areas. A number of samples have been taken from good geoarchaeological contexts for scientific analyses, which will hopefully provide new insights into the ancient environmental settings of Girsu.

At the Temple site on Tell A, after six seasons of fieldwork, we are now closing our excavations and finalising at the same time the publication of what will be an important contribution to Sumerian archaeology: the final monograph on the Temple of Ningirsu. The temple will now become an important focus in the wider heritage management and conservation plan of the site.

Girsu continues to yield an impressive quantity of small finds each season: 923 in total for the whole autumn season, including several display-quality pieces, which have all been safely handed over to the Iraq Museum in Baghdad.

John MacGinnis

Iraq Scheme lead archaeologist,
Department of the Middle East

The trials of the past two years have been very difficult, but the Iraq Scheme did not lie idle over this time and was indeed able to forge ahead and achieve excellent outcomes. While we were sad that we could not host Iraqi colleagues in London or take to the field in 2020, the pause in activities gave us the time to finish the compilation of the field manual which we have been developing over the course of the training programme. With contributions from many colleagues both inside and outside of the Museum, this has turned into a very comprehensive overview of the approaches and techniques that can be brought to bear in designing and running an archaeological field project. Called *Laying the Foundations: Manual of the British Museum Iraq Scheme Archaeological Training Programme*, it covers the full range of approaches dealt with during the course. Firstly, this includes chapters on methods and approaches that can be brought to bear prior to the commencement of any excavation: for example, regional survey, surface collection, satellite imagery and geophysical prospections, as well as technical aspects such as creating a database and GIS system. The manual then covers the skills used in the trenches – context identification, documentation, environmental sampling, photography, drawing plans and sections and so on, together with how to use equipment such as the 'dumpy level' for recording 'elevations' (heights), the 'MultiStation' for electronic survey, and drones for overhead imaging. Finally, the work deals with post-excavation analysis, drawing pottery and small finds (working from pencil and paper drawings to digitised outputs), conservation, site protection and preparing the results for publication. The printed volume is very handsome, and of interest to anyone who wants to know how an archaeological excavation actually works, but perhaps more important is that PDFs of the work are available for open distribution – not just in English, but in translations into Kurdish and Arabic as well – something which will unquestionably make the work accessible to our Iraqi colleagues and stand as a valued legacy of the Iraq Scheme long into the future.

In 2021 our determination and perseverance paid off and the Iraq Scheme was able to hold the final instalment of the training on-site in Iraq. Our work in the south at Tello is covered here elsewhere, but we take a few moments to describe the results from the northern project at the Darband-i Rania pass in Iraqi Kurdistan. As readers of previous editions of this Newsletter will know, the project comprised investigations at three sites in the vicinity of the pass. At the first of these, Qalatga Darband, we were able to complete the investigation of a fortified manor dating to the early Parthian period (second and first centuries BC), recovering the plan of the whole building and excavating all major rooms down to floor level. Work along the front facade revealed the impressive stairway by which the building was approached. It was a truly impressive structure, measuring 23 metres square, the ground floor walls of stone with an upper storey of mudbrick roofed with terracotta tiles. Up to the top of the upper storey the walls will have stood around seven metres high; including the pitched tiled roof the edifice

must have been nearer ten metres in height. Many of the rooms were handsomely decorated, with colourful painted wall plaster and ornamental furniture. The many statue fragments fit with the well-known adoption of Hellenistic culture by the Parthian elite. The main use of the building came to an end in a fiery event, evidenced by layers of ash in all rooms. In fact, there were two conflagration horizons, evidently close together in time. The large storage jars containing lime plaster in Room 2, the dishes containing yellow and pink pigments in Room 3, and the incomplete re-plastering of floors in some rooms all suggest that the second burning took place while the building was still being refurbished from the original destruction. With regard to the actual dating of these destructions, we await the results of charcoal samples submitted for radiocarbon dating. Following this, as far as we can tell the building was mostly abandoned. The exception is the western corner, where there is evidence for later re-use associated with a later building of which only traces survive. The ruins of the complex were then used for secondary burials in the very late Parthian and early Sasanian period.

In the pass itself, operations at the Assyrian (ninth to seventh century BC) fort of Usu Aska ratcheted up a gear, with operations exploring the defensive systems in multiple locations as well as two large-scale exposures of domestic quarters. A clay *bulla* with an impression of a scorpion seal (the symbol of the Assyrian queen), along with a fragment of a cuneiform tablet although sadly insufficiently preserved to yield usable information, is evidence of the fort's administrative presence. Investigating the defenses on the eastern (mountain) side, the multiple phases of toppled masonry and subsequent rebuilding of the fortification wall can only be the result of repeated damage from earthquakes.



The Parthian fortified manor at Qalatga Darband.



At Usu Aska it has been the first time that excavation of an Assyrian fort has been backed up by a full programme of scientific methods. In due course, the analysis of the archaeobotanical and archaeozoological datasets will give us insight into both the local environmental conditions and the subsistence packages of the soldiers who lived there. One thing we are after is the ancient name of the site although as yet we have no specific clue. We know that the Rania plain was the subject of an early campaign by Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC), perhaps brought under Assyrian control at that time, but our knowledge of the historical geography of the region is very limited. There is other work too. The geophysical surveys of the remains (by magnetometry and conductivity) have only given a limited insight into the inner layout of the fort. What is really needed in order to understand the internal organisation is more excavation. This does not have to be overly intrusive, just clearing to the tops of walls so we can recover the overall plan of the architecture. There is plenty of work left to do!

Finally, we were able to return to Murad Rasu, the multi-period mound site on the southern shore of Lake Dokan. Previous work had yielded evidence for occupations from the fourth millennium BC and the Parthian, Sasanian and Ottoman periods. Our work this season started with investigating plaster lines visible on the surface of the

mudbrick matrix to delineate a room of very substantial proportions. Excavation then proved this to be a storeroom, with numerous *pithoi* (large storage jars) still *in situ*. We are awaiting the results of radiocarbon dating, but tentatively believe that the structure, badly damaged by the lake, is a palace of the late second millennium BC.

The 2021 season was the last season carried out within the framework of the Iraq Scheme. After the trials and tribulations of the previous eighteen months, the successful carrying out of these operations and the delivery of the in-country training has been an impressive achievement, and allowed us to close the Iraq Scheme on a high note. Even so, there is much we would still like to do! While the completion of the excavation of the manor house at Qalatga Darband marks a natural point at which to conclude our explorations at that site (which is not to say there is not more for future expeditions to investigate), we have only just begun to understand the layout and phasing of the Assyrian fortress at Usu Aska, and the newly discovered palace at Murad Rasu has to be explored now if we are to document it before it is destroyed by the waters of Lake Dokan. Future endeavours would give us the opportunity to build on the excellent relations which have been built with the General Directorate of Archaeology and the very high regard in which the British Museum is now held in Kurdistan.

Excavated storeroom at Murad Rasu.

The earliest 'marsh Arab' township in Iraq: excavations at Kobeba

St John Simpson

Senior curator: ancient Iran, Central Asia and Arabia,
Department of the Middle East

The 'marsh Arabs' were immortalised by Wilfrid Thesiger's account of his stay with them on periodic visits throughout the 1950s, and the romance of their striking reed houses rising from artificial islands in the wetlands been captured by photographers ever since. Their existence was heavily affected by later political events and the Iraq/Iran war, and attempts to revitalise these wetlands are now threatened by the heavy reduction in upstream water discharge resulting from the heavy damming of the Euphrates and Tigris in Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

Many modern commentators have described the 'timeless' existence of these wetland communities, and some archaeologists have gone as far as stating that this entire region was an extension of the Persian Gulf. However, draining of these wetlands during the 1990s, in an effort to counteract the effects of international sanctions by boosting agricultural production, revealed an entire archaeological landscape. This was previously only hinted at by nineteenth century and later finds (including one reported by Thesiger himself) of Late Antique Mandaic

inscriptions on lead scrolls, as well as mounds reported by an amateur survey by oilman and writer, Georges Roux, and ancient canals visible on LANDSAT imagery. The gentle gradient dictates that the area around and immediately upstream of Basra was always a wetland but the extent of such regions is governed by the amount of available fresh and sea water and, in this case, also the underlying plate tectonics. However, early Arab accounts state categorically that the expansion of the wetlands in southern Iraq was due to human factors, principally the neglect of the irrigation systems at the end of the Sasanian period, and other studies show that the Amuq marshes at the mouth of the Orontes were a similarly late phenomenon.

A completely new insight into this issue has been introduced as a result of the investigations directed by the author at the site of Tulul Kobeba. This is located in Dhi-Qar province of southern Iraq, 70 km north of Nasiriyah and near the town of Ar Rifa'i. It consists of a long low mound measuring 425 metres in length, with smaller mounds to the southwest and northwest. The site was marked on a map for the first time in 1971, and recorded officially on 28 January 1975 when it was registered by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and entered

into the *Atlas of Archaeological Sites in Iraq*. Like most sites in Iraq, it has never been surveyed or excavated, but parts were heavily looted in the past between the 1990s and after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

From October to December 2021, the Kobeba project was begun by the author under a permit issued by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, with a team of eight European and Iraqi archaeologists and a workforce hired from the nearest villages. The aims were to understand why this site had been looted, make a detailed topographic plan of it, carry out a systematic surface survey, determine the main periods through excavation, recover environmental remains, and explore the relationship of the site to the surrounding landscape through geoarchaeological research. The results met the objectives but also produced a number of surprises, culminating in an entire press day on-site and the announcement in Baghdad that it was the international archaeological project of the year.

During the first few days, a systematic surface survey was completed over most of the site: the dating and distribution of the pottery and other finds quickly established the latest period as the eighth century, after

which the site was abandoned. Four test soundings were then excavated, two in the centre, and the others at the northern and southern ends. At the end of the first week, the two central soundings were connected within a 50 x 50 metre open-area excavation area, later extended to the east and south, with the aim of understanding the architectural plan of the latest period over a sufficiently wide area to be meaningful. The use of scraping and brushing proved highly successful in revealing this final phase and shows how more rapid excavations in smaller trenches would have missed it completely. The approach therefore captured a phase which has almost completely disappeared through natural erosion and only the last few centimetres of architecture remain *in situ*.

At the centre of what appears to have been a small open plaza lay a small free-standing mudbrick mosque. This had a plain square mihrab and would have accommodated a maximum of 22 people at prayer with two lines of worshippers behind the imam. This is one of the earliest archaeologically dated mosques, and its humble appearance gives a rare glimpse into the impact of Islam on the religious practices of people in the countryside, well away from the better-known, and generally slightly later, congregational mosques of the urban centres.



Systematic surface survey begins at Kobeba.



The surrounding area was loosely built up with separate buildings, all apparently residential, and often consisting of a row of inter-connecting rooms aligned east/west with entrances on the north or south.

Finds of Sasanian pottery, glassware and copper coins indicate occupation during the preceding period when, probably during the seventh century, one of the site householders practised bowl magic: the discovery of an overturned 'magic bowl' *in situ* is a rare such archaeological find, particularly from this area of Iraq. Written in Jewish Aramaic, the text was for a male client, repeating that known from other bowls, but this is the first to come from excavation and raises the possibility that the others may originate in this part of Iraq where satellite footage overlapped onto surface survey data indicates heavy looting of Sasanian sites in the decade after 1993/94. However, the fact that it is written in Jewish Aramaic does not automatically mean that this was the language of the client, as texts found elsewhere illustrate a very complex situation of clients using bowls in more than one language. The general consensus is that 'magic bowls' may begin as early as the fifth century, were common in the sixth and seventh centuries and disappear during the eighth century. The discovery of this *in situ* 'magic bowl' is important in helping date this form of magical exorcistic practice.

as well as along the Persian Gulf. The exact nature of the transition from Sasanian to the Islamic periods at Kobeba is unclear at present and depends on the final dating of the stratigraphy and detailed analysis of the pottery, now underway. However, what is clear is that the site offers a unique opportunity to examine and date this in detail, analyse the development of its material culture and economy, with any accompanying changes in social organisation and architecture, and throw new light on a community in the Mesopotamian heartland at one of the key moments in the conversion of local religious beliefs and traditional practices to Islam.

The economy of the site relied heavily on working with clay. Some of the vitrified clay fragments (usually mistaken as slag in archaeological reports) belonged to kiln construction, but most proved to be flaked debitage from a very specific type of pyro-industry. This involved



Excavations underway at Kobeba.

Complete copper alloy ladle lying *in situ* on the floor of one excavated room.

This discovery has added significance as the seventh and eighth centuries were a period of great religious diversity, when Christianity flourished in this part of Iraq,

the making of large clay slabs which were dried in a horizontal position on a sandy bed and fired *in situ* at a high temperature to produce dense blocks which, after cooling, were carefully flaked in order to remove the corners and upper portion of each, and then chip the middle into a circular shape: in short, this was a centre for making rotary querns from deliberately vitrified clay blanks. The scale of this industry exceeded local needs, and Kobeba must therefore have supplied the immediate hinterland with these so-called 'synthetic basalt' grinding stones. This was an ancient Mesopotamian industry but its long continuity has not been previously recognised. The identification now of rotary querns and other heavy equipment of the same material across other sites of different periods, including Tello/Girsu, Meda'in and Ruqbat Meda'in, proves that this was a much better alternative to softer materials, such as limestone or bitumen, which wore out too readily, or basalt, which could only be imported at greater expense from present-day north-east Syria. It now looks likely that previous identifications of grinding stones as basalt need to be treated with scepticism as most or all of those found at sites in this region are probably also made of vitrified clay. Finally, it also raises other questions as to when this industry began and when it finally ended, and how it relates to similar evidence known from as far east as Merv in Central Asia, where the author excavated on behalf of the British Museum in the past.



(University of Qadissiyah), a major new insight has already been achieved through the digging of test trenches in fields beyond the site. The discovery of early Islamic pottery and other refuse in a thick layer stratified deep below ground-level proves that during this period the settlement lay in a marsh environment. This suggests that the mounds of Kobeba may have been deliberately selected as suitable dry land rising above the marsh. These test excavations therefore demonstrate that the environment around Kobeba was very different to what it is now, raising further questions as to when and how these wetlands were created.

Understanding the physical setting and environmental context of the settlement are now key research questions of this project, and through collaboration with Dr Jotheri

Funding for this project was provided by the British Museum Research Board and the Friends of the Middle East, with additional support from the University of Qadissiyah. I am indebted to all for their support.



The excavated mosque at Kobeba receives its first congregation since the eighth century.

Detail of a Russian map of Iraq marking the site of Kobeba (circled in red) for the first time.



The upper part of the grille restored.

The moment of discovery: Meroitic window grille from Qasr Ibrim, EA82812 (photo: courtesy Qasr Ibrim archive).

Display Elephants from Meroë

Henry Bishop-Wright

Project curator: *Luxury and power: Persia to Greece*, Department of the Middle East

Recent preparations for the forthcoming exhibition curated by Jamie Fraser, *Luxury and power: Persia to Greece*, led to the examination of an unusual window grille from southern Egypt which depicts a male figure with a diminutive elephant slung across his back. Acquired by the Museum in 2008, this sandstone grille (48.5 x 55.5 x 8 cm) was recovered from the hilltop fortification of Qasr Ibrim by J.M. Plumley (1910–1999) during work undertaken for the Egypt Exploration Society in 1969.

Qasr Ibrim is located in southern Egypt between the First and Second Nile Cataracts, a region known as Lower Nubia, and is a site with almost continuous occupation stretching from about 1000 BC to its final abandonment during the Ottoman period in 1812. Once described as a 'Nubian Pompeii', it is remarkable for its preservation and, owing to its elevated position, survived the flooding of Lower Nubia that occurred during the construction of the High Dam at Aswan and the impounding of its huge reservoir. Ibrim now sits as a beleaguered island in Lake Nasser, but once occupied a commanding position overlooking the Nile which was ideally situated to guarding riverine trade.

The window grille dates to a period when the kingdom of Meroë (c. 300 BC–350 AD) ruled the territory between present-day Aswan and Khartoum. Contemporary with Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt, Meroë had access to wide-ranging trade networks which facilitated the import of various Mediterranean products – glassware, pottery, metalware – that were frequently redeployed as prestigious grave goods in the burials of Meroitic royalty and elites. In return for these luxuries, Meroë exported gold, ebony, semi-precious stones, cotton (perhaps), animal skins, slaves, ivory and elephants north into Egypt. Much of this trade followed the Nilotic route through Lower Nubia which functioned as the primary economic link with the Mediterranean. This 'corridor to Africa' was particularly important for the early Ptolemies who, to counter the Indian elephants of their Seleucid antagonists, looked south for a source of African beasts, and their gaze fell on Meroë.

For at least part of the third century BC, there was some form of commercial enterprise between Meroë and Egypt that involved the movement of live elephants northwards, through Lower Nubia and onto the frontier at Aswan. Herding or shipping a live pachyderm, trained or otherwise, 2000 km down the Nile from Meroë to Alexandria must, however, have been a formidable task. Combined with overhunting, this encouraged the Ptolemaic expeditions to exploit easier hunting grounds along the Red Sea coast, in present-day Eritrea and Ethiopia. Despite this, raw ivory remained an important Meroitic export. Ptolemy II (r. 285–246 BC) supposedly displayed 600 elephant tusks



in a procession through Alexandria and, according to an inscription from the Cycladic island of Delos, the early Ptolemaic craze for the material crashed the third century BC ivory market.

Ivory remained an important Meroitic export into the early Roman period when, perhaps in the second or third century AD, this window grille was installed in a late Meroitic building at Qasr Ibrim. The squat figure and elephant, both carved in Meroitic style, probably referenced this ivory trade. It may even have been out a desire to source ivory for the ceiling panels of his Golden House that the Roman emperor Nero (r. 54–68 AD) sent an exploratory detachment of praetorian guards to Meroë in the first century.

This window grille will feature in the forthcoming exhibition *Luxury and power: Persia to Greece*, which opens on 23 April 2023.

Further reading

Moller, T.O. 2022. 'The Fantastic Three Thousand: Nero's Nile Expedition and the Make-Believe Elephants of Meroë', *Ancient West & East* 21: 127–53.

Plumley, J.M. 1970. 'Qasr Ibrim 1969', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 56: 12–18.

Display
Artists making books: poetry to politics

Venetia Porter

Senior curator: Islamic and contemporary Middle East,
 Department of the Middle East

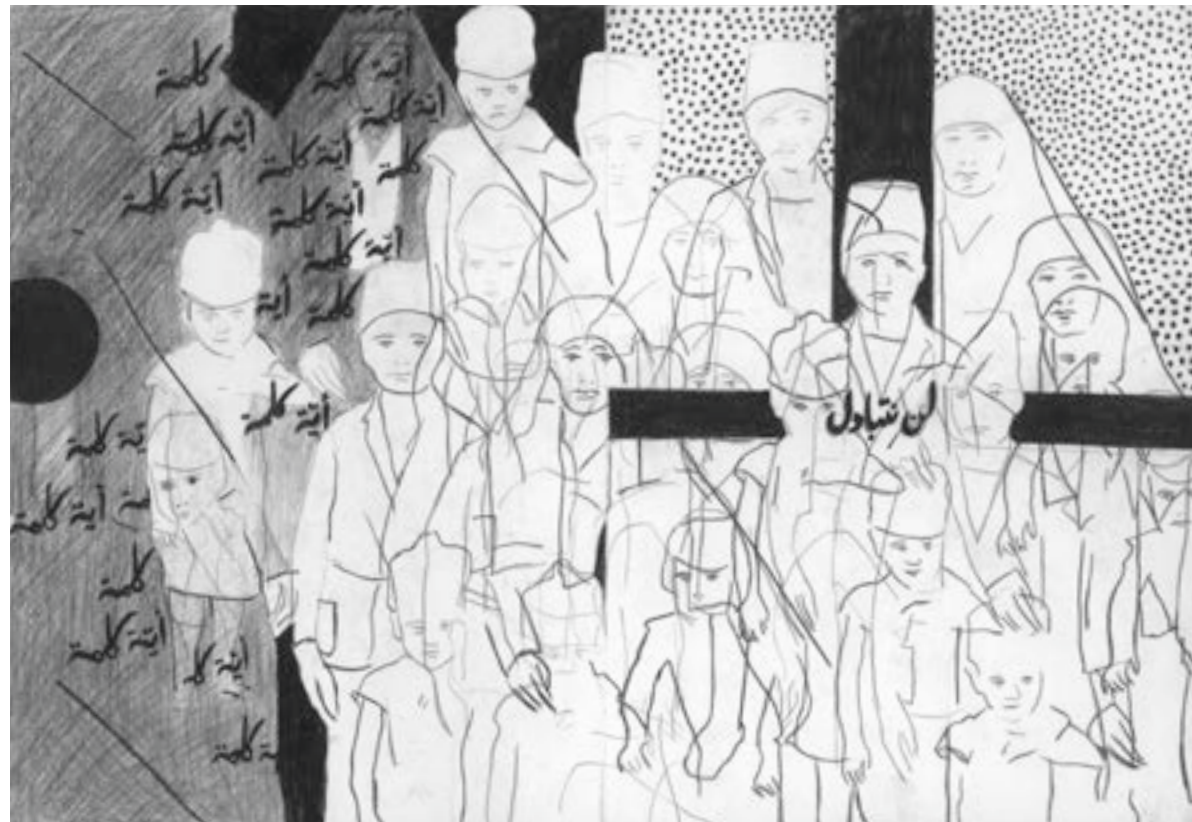
The Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world, which opened in October 2018, was designed to exhibit the full breadth of the Islamic and modern collections from the seventh century to the present day, with the particular feature of being able to rotate the light-sensitive parts of the collection, particularly works on paper – either classical or contemporary – and ethnographic textiles. Through this approach, the displays change regularly, the gallery remains dynamic, we can tell new stories and highlight our latest acquisitions. A mini gallery (G43A) within the second of the two rooms which make up the whole installation allows for more substantial exhibitions, and the first of these was *Arabesque*, drawn from the collections of the Islamic Art Museum, Malaysia. After the COVID pandemic came *Life in a Cup*, which told the fascinating history of coffee, and the current exhibition is *Artists making books: poetry to politics* which will run until September 2023.

Books made by artists of the Middle East have been regularly collected alongside other contemporary works on paper as acquisitions largely supported by the CaMMEA supporters' group. Challenging the traditional notion of 'the book', these are wonderful creations, combining text with illustration: some are unique and handcrafted in a variety of shapes, others are produced in small printed editions on beautiful paper. Often made by artists drawn to this genre as part of their wider practice, whole worlds can be encompassed within them. The beginnings of the artist's book are generally associated with the French tradition of the *livre d'artiste* or *livre de peintre*, which were first produced in Paris at the

beginning of the twentieth century. Often using images to accompany poetry, artists such as Matisse became devotees of the genre and artists from around the world have been drawn to it too, but less well known is that the making of books was taken up by artists of the Middle East and these are the main focus of the exhibition.

The works of two poets of the Arab world, Syrian-born poet Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said, b. 1930), and the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) have generated dozens of artists' books. It is the sentiments they express about the human condition or the state of exile that artists respond to; and these books are real collaborations. The Iraqi artist Himat, for example, who has known Adonis for 30 years says: 'We work with each other as though we are talking to one another'. Along with poetry are personal stories: Lebanese artist Abed Al Kadiri, made a book during the first month of the COVID pandemic, in which he explored the complexity of his relationship with his father, including broken up Arabic text across the pages with the words: 'One day I will visit my father's grave. It will be like it used to be in the past when he was alive. We won't exchange a single word'. Syrian artist, Issam Kourbaj, on the other hand, takes us to the period of the 2003 Iraq war. Dozens of pages, fragments of an old book, are covered in graffiti, X-rays, where words and Arabic songs emerge out of the yellowing paper: as though tossed up into the air, the wreckage of the book also symbolises for Kourbaj the dramatic destruction of the National Library of Baghdad which took place in that fateful year.

Nalini Malani, her life and art informed by her experience as a refugee of the Partition of India in 1947, describes the book as 'a carrier of experience', a notion which also characterises so many of the books in this exhibition.



Abed Al Kadiri (born 1984), *My Father's Grave*, 2020. Graphite on paper within hard cover (2022.6008.1). Funded by CaMMEA).

Issam Kourbaj (born Syria, 1963), *Sound Palimpsest*, 2003. Mixed media on second-hand book fragments (2008.6018.1).



Maharajah Ranjit Singh, *the Lion of the Punjab* (1920,0917,0.227).

The author at the opening of the displays in the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world, Room 43.

Display A Confluence of Stories

Imran Javed

Collection Manager, Collection Care / Department of the Middle East

In October 2018, the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world opened to the public and a special feature of this space is the biannual rotating display of works on paper. In my role as Collection Manager for the Middle East department, I have played an active part in delivering the vision of our Islamic curators with respect to these displays. Over time, my curatorial colleagues have observed the passion I have for our collections and have positively engaged with my insights which have largely been informed by the personal connection I feel to many of the objects. As a result of this, Venetia Porter honoured me by offering me the opportunity to tell my stories in a space which I had as yet only interacted with in my position as Collection Manager. Three displays, *A Confluence of Stories*, *Links in the Chain* and *Bridging the Divide on Film*, are each thematically unique yet embody stories with a personal link to my cultural heritage. Since this summer coincides with the 75th anniversary of the Partition and independence of India, my intervention could not be more timely for members of the British South Asian diaspora who, like me, have inherited a sense of pain and loss from our parents and grandparents who lived through that tumultuous event.

In *A Confluence of Stories* I explore themes of identity, language and collective memory using pieces from the Museum collection interspersed with my own personal objects. On this journey, I reflect on my engagement with emotionally resonant objects which have helped inform my identity as a British Punjabi. Each museum object forms a confluence with a personal object. Just as the five rivers of the Punjab converge and become one in the mighty river Indus, the objects in this display each contribute to the complex multicultural links that have shaped my identity as I see it. *Links in the Chain* focuses on the Chishti order of Sufis, named after the small town of Chisht in present-day Afghanistan where it originated. Holy men revered as saints and the shrines associated with them have become pilgrimage centres throughout the Indian subcontinent, drawing devotees of all faiths. The inclusive nature of Sufi philosophy has been credited as the main factor in the successful spread of Islam across South Asia. My own ancestors were Hindus who converted to Islam under the influence of the Sufis. In *Bridging the Divide on Film*, I use pressbooks in the museum collection to explore how the Partition of India affected the industry, both thematically and with a focus on those artists whose lives were completely changed by the new political divide.

Being able to stage three curatorial interventions in the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world to coincide with the present anniversary has been a career highlight for me, and my hope is that these displays will attract new audiences and help generate interest in lesser known parts of the collections of the Middle East department.



New acquisitions

Collecting objects with stories from Iran, Iraq and Ukraine

St John Simpson

Senior curator: ancient Iran, Central Asia and Arabia,
Department of the Middle East

Elamite and Parthian pottery and other finds from Susa and Chogha Zanbil (2022,6018.1-22, presented by Ian Weatherhead)

In September 1957 a young English architect called Ian Weatherhead responded to an offer received by his professor at the Bartlett School of London University, via the British embassy in Tehran, to join the French archaeological mission to Iran. Over the course of the next three years he served with the expedition directed by Roman Ghirshman (1895–1979) at Susa and Chogha Zanbil in south-west Iran, where he was given responsibility for recording the excavated architecture, but also recording the location of finds made during the excavations themselves. At the end of his contract, he was given a selection of duplicate artifacts, as was customary at that time and legally allowed under the Antiquities Law of Iran, and he treasured them over the following decades. We began corresponding as he wrote up his lively



memoirs in a privately published book, *Letters from Persia*, and finally met once lockdown conditions permitted, when he generously presented a selection of Elamite and Parthian pots and figurines from Susa, some pictured here, and glass inlay rods and part of an inscribed brick from Chogha Zanbil. These join other such finds presented by the excavator to other visitors, including our late Trustee, Hon. Maria Anna Martin, OBE (1929–2010), whom Ian remembered visiting the site. They are already on Collections Online and will be displayed in the Rahim Irvani Gallery as an intervention planned as part of the Gallery Management Programme.

Traditional palm-leaf fan (*mahfa*) from Iraq (2022,6001.1)

Basketry used to be a major craft in Iraq, being made and used in the southern and central regions, particularly Hit (al-Anbar governorate), Ain Dabis (Kerbela governorate) and Qurna (Basrah governorate). Deep bowl-like dishes were used to carry heavy items or, if coated with bitumen, to collect fresh dung. Baskets were used for shopping, jar-shaped baskets used to store grain or packets of food, and other baskets had lids to keep out dust and flies. Large and small circular flat trays were used to carry bulky items on the head, foodstuffs, dry produce, winnow chaff or serve bread. Openwork coops were used to transport birds, and fans with palm-frond handles were used in the hot months. Palm-frond fans were extremely common in Iraq before electricity, and in a personal letter dated 17th May 1916, the acting civil commissioner for Iraq, Arnold Talbot Wilson (1884–1940), wrote that:

'At the moment the particular hare I am chasing (apart from my regular civil administrative and political work) is to provide every man in the force [Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force] with a fan for the hot weather. This has been ordered by the Army Commander and I am arranging for it – hundreds of women in all the villages round are hard at work making them of palm leaves.



The size of the fan is about the same as this paper, and the handle twice as long. Very simple – 1d each – but v. practical ...! (The London Library/archive/A.T.W. letters 1903–1921, vol. 2, Section VII, p.35)

This recent acquisition is a fine example of one of these, and is particularly welcome as our collection of ethnographic items from Iraq is poor compared to that from other regions, and surprising given the richness of our earlier collections from Iraq. It is presented by the family in memory of Patricia and Professor Peter Spencer-Silver who acquired it while in Iraq.

Gold bracelet incorporating beads from the Royal Cemetery at Ur (2022,6005.1)

This chain-link bracelet was designed by James Roberts Ogden (1866–1940) and incorporates seven re-used beads, namely two small lapis lazuli cylinders, four agate discoids and a rock crystal sphere, all carved, polished and perforated, which were duplicates from the hundreds found next to the body of Pu-abi (formerly known as Shub-Ad) excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley in the 'Royal Cemetery' at Ur.

It was presented to Phyllis Bousfield by the minister of the chapel (City Temple) in London where she used to attend, thence passed through the family to the late M.L. Bousfield (d. 2020), uncle of Philip Bousfield who jointly

presented this object with his father S.G. Bousfield, the brother and executor of M.L. Bousfield's estate. It had been kept in its original velvet-lined presentation box, within an outer stout cardboard box giving the name of the manufacturer, together with a signed card from J.R. Ogden which confirms the provenance of the beads, and a copy of a Churchman's cigarette card series which shows a reconstruction of the gold headdress of Pu-abi, from whose tomb these duplicate beads were found as part of her cloak, as the reverse of Ogden's visit card reads: 'Beads from grave of Shub-ad-Nab (Queen Shub-Ad). ?From cloak, Ur-of-the-Chaldees. Circ. B.C. 3,500'.

At this date the Antiquities Law of Iraq allowed for a partage, with 50% of finds being retained by Baghdad (and now in or administered by the Iraq Museum), the remainder being allocated to the excavator. Woolley's sponsoring organisations were the Museum and University Museum Philadelphia (Penn), each of whom received almost half of the exported finds, with minor duplicates such as beads or plain pots being distributed thereafter by Woolley to private sponsors and donors.

Ogden ran a distinguished family jewellers' business in Harrogate and was a friend of both Woolley and Howard Carter. He advised Woolley on the conservation of metal objects and actively fund-raised for him as the Museum had by then heavily reduced its financial contribution.



A modern gold bracelet with reused Sumerian beads from Ur (2022,6005.1).

Elamite pottery excavated at Susa (2022,6018 collection).

A palm-leaf fan from Iraq (2022,6001.1).

This item illustrates this aspect beautifully, and it is rare to have all the elements of this small intimate assemblage intact. It is also very fitting to add as Ogden's electrotype copies of objects now in the Iraq Museum are also part of our registered collection, some displayed in our Early Mesopotamia gallery (G56).

The sinking of the Moskva (EPH-ME 8992-8994)

On 14 April 2022, the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet sank in calm weather at a distance of some 65 nautical miles (120 km) east of Odessa, east of Snake Island. She was the first Russian flagship to sink since the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, and the largest Russian warship to be sunk since the end of the Second World War. Official accounts blamed the loss on fires causing munitions to explode, while other versions point to the ship being hit by anti-ship Neptune missiles launched from the shore. The loss was a costly blow to the Russian navy, itself a huge source of pride, and effectively withdrew air defence capability for the remainder of the fleet. It was also a huge boost to Ukraine as it was only two days after Ukrposhta, the Ukrainian national postal service, issued stamps celebrating the defiant gesture and words of an Ukrainian border force soldier on Snake Island in response to an order by the Moskva that his unit surrender. This desirable First Day Cover is a highly collectible item and has been generously presented to the Museum by Andrii Rakivnenko in recognition of our work and the support of this country for Ukraine.



First Day Cover celebrating the sinking of the Moskva (EPH-ME.8992).

New acquisition Coffee paintings

Zeina Klink-Hoppe

Project Curator: modern Middle East, Department of the Middle East

While carrying out research for the special exhibition, *Life in a cup: coffee culture in the Islamic world*, as part of the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world rotations, I became interested in exploring alternate uses of coffee. I was trying to find out more about the way coffee had permeated all aspects of daily life, not just as an omnipresent beverage. I was fascinated by how coffee beans were often used as counters in children's games or as beads in jewellery, coffee grounds as media for fortune telling or as dressing for wounds, and brewed coffee as an artist's medium. In so doing I came across the works of the Lebanese artist of Armenian descent, Rita Kalindjian (b. 1965).



In the months following what is now commonly referred to as the Lebanese October Revolution, Rita Kalindjian found herself stuck at home, unable to reach her studio or buy new paint and brushes. In a nod to the Arte Povera movement, she continued working with whatever was available to her domestically, cutting artist's paper to paint on and salvaging scraps so as not to waste valuable material, while using tea, coffee, ketchup and even bleach to apply with more traditional media. Stating that the political and economic situation left her in a dark mood, coffee and tea, with their different shades of dull brown, reflected her state of mind. Her abstract 'coffee' paintings responded to the news of the day and acted as a diary reflecting the turbulent political and economic situation.

The Lebanese October Revolution refers to the protest movements which engulfed Lebanon in mid-October 2019 as its citizens took to the streets to protest against corruption and the mis-management of public finances, and demand a change in government. These protests, triggered by a proposed governmental tax on the free

messaging service WhatsApp, were met with force by the authorities with arrests, restrictions on movement and curfews. The financial situation in Lebanon continued to deteriorate and the government, in its attempts to regain fiscal control, devalued the local currency and implemented capital controls freezing all bank accounts and limiting the amount of cash that could be withdrawn from banks. Lebanese citizens found themselves having to adjust their lifestyles to such reduced income that they could access, and the poverty rate soared with a large percentage of middle-income families finding themselves close to the poverty line, unable to maintain decent standards of living. Like their compatriots, artists found themselves unable to afford materials, which for the most part were imported and suddenly too expensive and unaffordable.

The British Museum acquired four of Rita Kalindjian's paintings, one of which was displayed in the *Life in a cup* exhibition, and they tell the stories of coffee as paint and a record of the situation in Lebanon today.



Rita Kalindjian, *Shadowing*, ink and liquid coffee on paper, 2020, on display (top right) in *Life in a cup: coffee culture in the Islamic World*.

Rita Kalindjian, *Dispossession*, ink and liquid coffee on paper, 2020.

New acquisition
Gift of drawings by Lorna Selim (1928-2021)

Venetia Porter

Senior curator: Islamic and contemporary Middle East,
 Department of the Middle East

In a magnificent gift to the British Museum, the family of the late British artist, Lorna Selim, has donated 148 drawings of Baghdad made by her during the 1960s. Lorna Selim, born and brought up in Sheffield, plays a key role in the history of Iraqi art and architecture. In 1950, she married the celebrated Iraqi artist and sculptor Jewad Selim (1921-1961), whom she had met at the Slade School of Art where they were both students. Moving with him to Baghdad, Lorna became part of a group of pioneering Iraqi artists who sought to create a Modern art which drew on the rich heritage of Iraq as inspiration. With Shakir Hassan Al Said (1925-2004), Jewad founded the Baghdad School of Modern Art in 1951. Following the 1958 coup which overthrew the monarchy and brought in the republic, Jewad was approached by the architect Rifaat Chadirji (1926-2020) to celebrate the revolution with the creation of the major piece of public art that later became known as *Nasb al-Huriyya*, the 'Freedom Monument'. Jewad tragically died before the monument could be completed and it was Lorna who helped oversee the installation, which still stands in the heart of Baghdad today. In recognition of her work she was awarded Iraqi citizenship, and remained in Baghdad with her two daughters until 1971. Two of Jewad's preparatory sketches for *Nasb al-Huriyya* are in the British Museum collection (britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1993-0305-0-1).

It was during the 1950s that the urban fabric of Baghdad began to undergo dramatic change with large swathes of the old city being demolished. Witnessing the destruction of houses and mosques in the old city, Lorna began to study and paint the disappearing architecture. Soon after establishing the Department of Architecture at Baghdad University in 1959, Mohamed Makiya employed Lorna to teach landscape painting, encouraging her to focus on details of the vernacular architecture. She would take the students around the streets or on a boat on



the Tigris to better document the buildings in context. It is her architectural drawings that have been donated to the British Museum. Drawn on flimsy paper in pencil, and frequently annotated, they contain a wealth of detail that highlight architectural intricacies of the vernacular architecture of Baghdad: facades of buildings, the characteristic box-like windows, *shanashil*, doors and other features are sketched with architectural accuracy and artistic flair. Several record houses belonging to the Jewish community, large numbers of which were abandoned during the 1940s and 1950s, and there are also details of mosques. Some drawings were later the subject of oil paintings. *

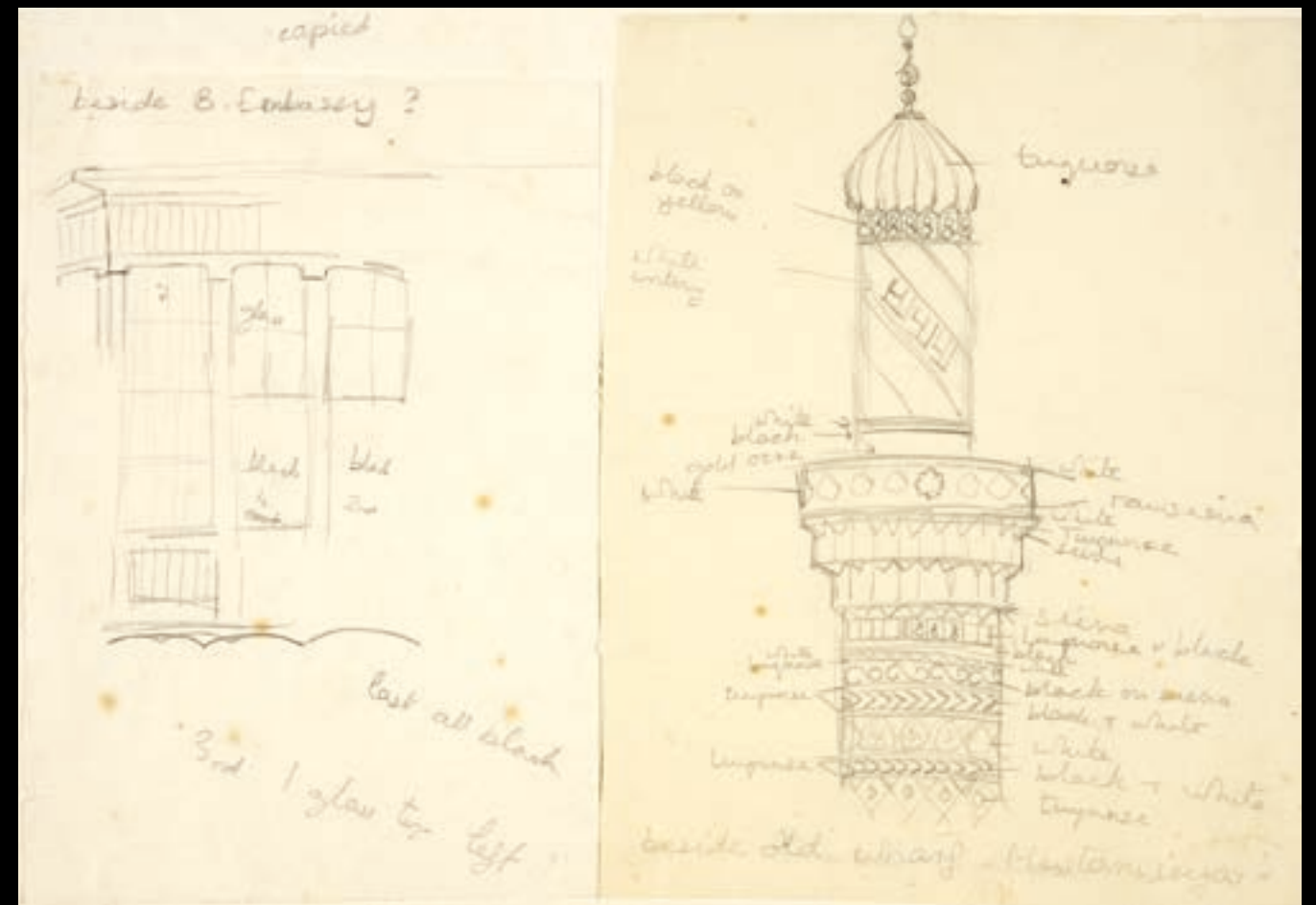
The generous gift of these drawings by Lorna's family highlights the importance of Lorna's contribution to the study of the lost architectural heritage and social history of Iraq. Once conserved by our staff, this unique resource will be made accessible through the museum's database and will be available for future research.

*Mysa Kafil-Hussain 'Painting architectural heritage in modern Baghdad: The art of Lorna Selim'. *Journal of Contemporary Iraq and the Arab World*, vol. 15 Numbers 1&2, 2021, pp. 151- 163.



Jewad Selim,
 Preparatory sketch
 for the Freedom
 Monument.

Preparatory
 sketches of
 monuments and
 architecture in
 Baghdad by
 Jewad Selim.



New publications

Research is an essential part of curatorial work and underpins all our activities. The results may be disseminated in different ways, informing displays, dealing with public enquiries or delivered as labels, YouTube videos, blogs, posters or papers at academic conferences. Printed publication is essential, ideally peer-reviewed, and in places appropriate to our audiences and peers, whether in the UK or abroad. The following list gives the publications (excluding short notes, reviews, posters and blogs) generated by members of this department since summer 2021, many of which are multi-author collaborations, and shows an extraordinary breadth of knowledge and quality of output.

Books

Ashmolean Souvenir Guide

Collins, P, ed (Oxford: The Ashmolean Museum, 2022)

The First Ghosts: Most Ancient of Legacies

Finkel, I L (London: Hodder, 2022; paperback edition)

Speak My Name: Investigating Egyptian Mummies

Fraser, J A, Lord, C & Magnussen, J, eds (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2022)

Laying the Foundations. Manual of the British Museum Iraq Scheme Archaeological Training Programme [Arabic, English, Kurdish editions]

MacGinnis, J & Rey, S, eds (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2021)

Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment, Material Culture

Simpson, St J, ed. (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2022)

Articles

Alibaigi, S & MacGinnis, J, 2022. 'Rock mortars of Sar Pol-e Zahab in their archaeological contexts; Evidence of third and second millennium BCE nomad camp sites in western foothills of Zagros Mountain, Iran', *Journal of Lithic Studies* 9: 1–15.

Bishop-Wright, H C, 2022. 'Dying for a Drink on the Meroitic Frontier: Imported Objects in Funerary Assemblages at Faras, Sudanese Nubia', *Mare Nostrum: Estudos Sobre o Mediterrâneo Antigo. A Antiguidade Do Nordeste Africano*: Brazil: University of São Paulo.

Collins, P, 2021. 'Rethinking the Ancient Middle East', *Ashmolean Magazine* 81: 41–43.

Collins, P, 2022. 'Kingship in time and space in the Northwest Palace, Nimrud', *Near Eastern Weltanschauungen in Contact and in Contrast: Rethinking the Terms Ideology and Propaganda*: (Portuese, L & Pallavidini, M, eds): 183–204. Munster: Zaphon.

Collins, P, 2022. 'Telling Stories at the Ashmolean Museum: An Ancient Middle East gallery for the 21st Century?', *The Oxford Handbook of Museum Archaeology* (Stevenson, A, ed): 435–56. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Collins, P, 2022. 'Were There Sumerians?' *ANE Today X/2* <https://www.asor.org/anetoday/2022/02/were-there-sumerians>

Francigny, V & Bishop-Wright, H C, 2022. 'Beyond the Roman World: A Decorated Glass Plate in Sudanese Nubia', *Journal of Glass Studies* 64: 59–73

Fraser, J A, 2022. 'Untangling megalithic typologies and chronologies in the Levant', *Megaliths of the World* (Laporte, L & Large, J-M, eds): 887–904. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology.

Genç, B & MacGinnis, J, 2022. 'An inscription of Shalmaneser I from Üçtepe and the location of Şinamu', *Anatolian Studies* 72: 79–95.

Greenfield, T, Matney, T & MacGinnis, J, 2021. 'The food was heavenly - reflections from the northern frontier on divine and royal banquets in the Assyrian Empire', *To Explore the Land of Canaan* (Maeir, A, ed.): 159–83. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Highcock, N, 2022. 'A Man of both Aššur and Kaneš: the Case of the Merchant Ḥabdu-mālik', *A 'Community of Peoples': Studies on Society and Politics in the Bible and Ancient Near East in Honor of Daniel E Fleming* (Monroe, L, Leonard-Fleckman, M, Stahl, M & Johnson, D, eds): 123–38. Boston [MA]: Brill.

Highcock, N & Matessi, A, 2021. 'The Early Bronze Age at Kınık Höyük (Niğde)', *Cultural Exchanges and Current Research at Kültepe and its Surroundings* (Subartu XLVI) (Kulakoğlu, F, Michel, C & Kryszat, G, eds): 275–92. Turnhout: Brepols.

MacGinnis, J, Rasheed Raheem, K, Baiz Ismail, B, Disting, A, Kertai, D, Greenfield, T, Hazell, G, Matney, T & Heda, A J, 2022. 'Excavations of an Assyrian fort at Usu Aska in Iraqi Kurdistan', *The Archaeology of the Raparin Region of Iraqi Kurdistan: A Review of Results from the Field and Directions of Further Research* (Antiqua et Orientalia 9 / Assyriologia 12) (Dezsö, T & Kalba, G, eds): 93–149. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University.

Matney, T, Greenfield, T, Hartenberger, B, Rosenzweig, M, Köroğlu, K & MacGinnis, J, 2022. 'Living at the gate: identification of specialized military housing at Neo-Assyrian Tušhan (Ziyaret Tepe)', *No Place Like Home: Ancient Near Eastern Houses and Households* (Steadman, S, ed.): 58–77. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology.

Multari, D H, Ravishankar, P, Sullivan, G J, Power, R K, Lord, C, Fraser, J A & Haynes, P A, 2022. 'Development of a novel minimally invasive sampling and analysis technique using skin sampling tape strips for bioarchaeological proteomics', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 139 (March): 1–9.

Sauer, E, Simpson, St J, Jahed, M, Mansouri Razi, M, Moslehi, M, Nemat, M, Nokandeh, J, Omrani Rekavandi, H, Penn, T & Salari, A, 2022. 'Small finds and other objects', *Ancient Arms Race: Antiquity's largest fortresses and Sasanian military networks of northern Iran* (British Institute of Persian Studies Archaeological Monographs VII) (Sauer, E W, Nokandeh, J & Omrani Rekavandi, H, et al.): vol. 2, 601–40. Oxford: Oxbow.

Simko, K, 2021/22. 'A Chain of Amulet Stones against Throbbing Headache: Glimpses into the Dynamics of Amulet Making in Mesopotamia', *Die Welt des Orients* 51: 150–64.

Simko, K & Bácskay, A, 2021. 'Medical Tablets from the Archive of the Egibi Family? An Edition of BM 30918 and BM 31071', *Iraq* 83: 183–203.

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'Sasanian Pottery: Archaeological Evidence for Production, Circulation and Diachronic Change', *Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment, Material Culture* (Simpson, St J, ed.): 255–374. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology.

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'Erk-Kala (ancient Merv): a detailed study of a late Sasanian residence of the 6th–7th centuries', *Eurasian steppe civilization: human and the historical and cultural environment. Proceedings of the 5th International Congress of Archaeology of the Eurasian Steppes, Turkistan, 11–14 October, 2022* (Onggar, A, ed.): vol. 3, 169–180. Almaty / Turkistan: Margulan Institute of Archaeology [five volumes].

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'Tulul Kobeba: first results of survey and excavation at a looted early medieval 'marsh arab' township in Dhi-Qar province, southern Iraq', *ash-Sharq* 6: 4–57.

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'Tulul Kobeba (Dhi-Qar province). Report on archaeological investigations carried out by the British Museum, October–December 2021', *Sumer* 67: 187–203.

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'A Sculpture of "The Good Shepherd" from Old Basra', *Sumer* 67: 93–98.

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'Early Medieval Industries of Khurasan and Evidence for the Mining, Working and Export of Talc Cooking Pots, and Small Items of Jet and Turquoise', *Korāsān-nāmak. Essays on the Archaeology, History and architecture of Khorasan in Honour of Rajabali Labbaf-Khaniki* (Labbaf-Khaniki, M, ed.): 75–87. Tehran: Institute of Khane Andishmandan-e Oloume Ensani.

Simpson, St J, 2022. 'The glass remains', *Archaeological investigations of the Maldives in the medieval Islamic period: ibn Battuta's island* (British Institute in Eastern Africa Memoir) (Haour, A & Christie, A, eds): 129–33, 135–37. London and New York: Routledge.

Simpson, St J & Lang, J, 2022. 'Sasanian Swords and Scabbards in the British Museum: A Scientific Analysis', *Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment, Material Culture* (Simpson, St J, ed.): 445–473. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology.

Simpson, St J, Cartwright, C R, Ambers, J & Rahimi, F, 2022. 'Bronze Age weaponry from Central Asia: a new approach using scientific identifications and radiocarbon dates of wood remains', *Yevraziya v eneolite – rannem srednevekov'ye (innovatsii, kontakty, translyatsii idey i tekhnologiy) / Eurasia in the Eneolithic – Early Middle Ages (innovations, contacts, translation of ideas, technologies)* (Trubnikova, V & Stoyanov, E, eds): 332–34. St. Petersburg: Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Taylor, J, 2021. 'Sin City: New Light from Old Excavations at Ur', *Ur in the Twenty First Century* (Proceedings of the 62nd Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale) (Frame, G, Jeffers, J & Pittman, H, eds): 35–48. Philadelphia: Penn State University Press / Eisenbrauns.

Taylor, J, 2021. 'The Ashurbanipal Library Project at the British Museum', *Law and (Dis)Order in the Ancient Near East* (Proceedings of the 59th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale) (de Graef, K & Goddeeris, A, eds): 291–96. Ghent: Penn State University Press / Eisenbrauns.

Further information

Support us

If you are interested in supporting the British Museum, including research and fieldwork, collection documentation and conservation, or providing training opportunities for colleagues, visit britishmuseum.org and click on 'Support us'.

Remembering the British Museum by leaving a gift in your Will, no matter what size, can help us build and care for the collection, support special exhibitions and deliver innovative learning, research and conservation programmes. Visit britishmuseum.org/legacy or call 020 7323 8421.

Friends of the Middle East

Lord and Lady Egremont
Mr Malcolm H Wiener
The Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Trust
The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts
Richard and Susan Padula
Rodolphe Olard

CaMMEA

(Contemporary and Modern Middle Eastern Art)

Mr Mohammed Afkhami
HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan
Faisal Tamer and Sara Alireza
Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal
Mrs Raya Bohsali and Mr Karim Motaal
Maryam and Edward Eisler
Mr Hossam Abdalla
Mrs Raghida Ghandour Al-Rahim
Mr Moez and Dr Nadia Jamal
Fady Jameel and Gigi Zahid
Faaiza Lalji and Ameel Somani
Miss Louisa Macmillan
Olivier Georges Mestelan
Sherif and Dounia Nadar
His Excellency Zaki Nusseibeh
Irene Panagopoulos
Maya and Ramzy Rasamny
Maria and Malek Sukkar
Miss Ilgin Surel
Berna and Tolga Tuglular
Dr Andrew Withey
Mrs Sara Zahid
Mohamad Ali and Dina Zameli

If you would be interested in joining the Friends of the Middle East or CaMMEA or would like further information, please contact Paul Collins, Keeper of the Department of the Middle East, at patrons@britishmuseum.org

Newsletter. Middle East
ISSN 2633-7665

The British Museum

Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3DG
britishmuseum.org

© 2023 The Trustees of the British Museum

Further resources

To access the British Museum's collection database, visit britishmuseum.org/collection

For information about the Department of the Middle East, visit britishmuseum.org/middleeast

For applications to study objects in the collection click on 'Study rooms' at britishmuseum.org/research

Front cover:
Gandharan
gilt-silver dish
(1937,0319.1)