

AIA

NEW YORK SOCIETY NEWS



THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A New Lecture Season, and a Changing of the Guard

Fall is upon us once again and with that I hope that everyone had a productive and enjoyable summer. Many of our members conduct research or participate in field work during the summer and we hope to hear from some of those folks through our newsletter over the course of the year.

Our fall season is shaping up to be quite interesting, but as is always the case, things come up and programs change so do be sure to keep an eye on our website (<http://aia-nysociety.org/events>) for last minute information on any of our lectures. As many of you already know, all of our lectures are free, open to the public and do not require an RSVP, so be sure to bring your friends (and then encourage them to join us). The New York Society of the AIA tries to invite a wide range of speakers and we encourage you to come hear talks on topics that might be new to you, and to join us for refreshments and conversation with our speakers and fellow members whenever possible. If you have questions that you would like to address to board members, do come and find us at these events. We are identifiable by our colorful AIA buttons.

This past year we had particularly high attendance for our lectures and for our Friends of the New York Society events, the latter organized by Jeff Lamia. The generosity of this group of members has never been more critical to our ability to offer lectures and our scholarship for New York students to attend field school. This year, our first scholarship was awarded to Jeanelle Augustin, a senior at Fordham majoring in Anthropology/African and African American Studies. She used the scholarship

to participate in the in the Bandafassi Archeological Survey this summer and we hope to hear about her experience in our next newsletter and perhaps in person at a Friends event. Thank you to all of our Friends, and if you are interested in joining and participating in the smaller and more intimate events that are organized by the Friends Committee please contact the Friends at NYfriends@aia-nysociety.org.

Our opening lecture for the 2016–17 season will be on September 27th. Peter Whiteley, of the American Museum of Natural History will speak on the interplay of archaeology and ethnology in understanding Puebloan ruins. Prior to the lecture we will hold our Annual Meeting. The meeting will take place from 6–6:25, immediately preceding the lecture. We look forward to seeing a good number of you for updates on our finances and programs, and vote for new board members. Thank you to all those people who have been willing to serve. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please come and speak to one of our board members before or after any lecture.

This note is my final President's Letter to you all as my terms of service are up. After two full terms as president, one assisting our last outgoing president and several years on the program committee both before and during my tenure as president, it has been a pleasure to serve the AIA New York Society. I thought I'd take a moment to review some of the things that have happened during my watch (and to which of course our board members have contributed in various ways): I created our current

website and we moved to our current domain with email capabilities, created our logo, business cards and buttons for board members, broadened our lecture topics, moved to a three board meeting a year schedule (plus the annual meeting), renewed many board positions, received a very generous donation to our endowment and initiated our scholarship program. Our incoming nominee for President is our current leader of the Friends, Jeff Lamia. Jeff has a long history with AIA National and with our local society, and if approved by you I think will bring excellent leadership to our society. Whitney Keen has agreed to stand again for secretary, Linda Getter and Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis have agreed to stand again for the board and Elizabeth to take over responsibilities for the Friends. Finally, Allan Shapiro is also standing for a board spot, all for

your approval at our Annual Meeting.

Finally, as always, the AIA-NYSociety would love to have more people who are actively engaged in our activities. If you are an enterprising and energetic member who wants to volunteer with us, contact a board member at one of the lectures. Graduate students, this might be a great opportunity for you to get involved with the AIA. Please contact us at info@aia.org if you are interested in volunteering.

Wishing everyone a good start to the fall season, thank you for the opportunity to meet and work with so many of you over the last few years and I look forward to seeing you soon.

- Paula Kay Lazrus
President, AIA New York Society



NEW TREATS FOR EGYPTOLOGISTS IN NEW YORK

Fans of ancient Egypt are fortunate that this year saw the renovation/reinstallation of Egyptian Galleries at two of the area's premier cultural institutions.

This past spring, the Egyptian art department of the Brooklyn Museum drastically de-cluttered its galleries. The renovation has been well-received by the art press, and the general consensus is that by de-emphasizing the surroundings the objects, themselves, are now the stars of an elegant display. Explanatory text situates Egypt within an African cultural milieu—a position which left some reviewers puzzled, but is in fact within the scholarly mainstream. Nevertheless, reviewers have all had great praise for the clean new displays.

The city's other great encyclopedic art museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, also updated its Egyptian collection recently. After being closed a full year, the Ptolemaic galleries reopened this past summer. As at Brooklyn, renovation of the physical space was a high priority, removing a false ceiling and opening up the galleries to better display the objects. The curators have attempted to contrast art from the temples with art depicting individuals,

the latter often with obviously Greek influence—an uncontroversial, but historically significant observation.

Whether you are new to these collections, or know the old displays by heart, it is worth your time to visit the new installations to appreciate their fresh displays and to ponder the new questions being asked of ancient Egyptian art.



*Bust of the Goddess Sakhmet,
in its new location at the Brooklyn Museum*

Spotlight on...

Hunter College Bluhm Scholars Cohort in Greece

This past January, it was my great privilege to lead a group of eleven Classics majors from Hunter College on an intensive trip to Greece for twelve days during the winter semester. The students are part of a newly established Hunter College cohort, the Bluhm Scholars Program, funded through a generous gift by Lois and Arthur Stainman, in memory of Mrs. Stainman's grandfather, Solomon Bluhm, a member of the Education faculty at Hunter and a lover of Classics.

The course, entitled "Contextualizing the Past: The Art, Literature, and Monuments of Ancient Greece," introduced students who had little or no prior experience with ancient material culture, outside of the occasional museum visit, but whose primary focus had been on reading and understanding Greek and Latin texts. This trip gave them the opportunity to visualize *in situ* the great monuments of the past, from the Mycenaean era to the Roman period, allowing them the chance to engage with the broader cultural milieu out of which these texts emerged.



Robert Koehl flanked by the Hunter College Bluhm Scholars Cohort on the steps of the Parthenon.

Before leaving for Greece, I gave the students a series of five introductory lectures, from the Bronze Age through the Hellenistic eras, while the students each prepared three reports: one on-site, one gallery, and one on the bus or in our host institution, the Athens Center.

Once we arrived in Athens, we were continuously on the move, covering the sites and museums of Athens, from the majestic Acropolis and its new museum, to the ancient city's fortification walls, hidden in the basements of buildings in downtown Athens. Since they were trained as Classicists, they had the chance to test their skills reading Greek inscriptions on buildings and ostraca, which brought to life historical events and people about whom they had read.

As student Edward Holtby puts it: "The entire city of Athens seemed to be an archaeological site. The excavation and preservation techniques we learned at the Agora Museum: detailed and fascinating. I cannot help but think that this instruction aided us in our discovery of the Greek spirit and its preservation in our hearts. The awe of Mycenae, the grandeur of its Lion Gate and the secrets in its cistern; the natural sacredness of Delphi and the honor of her tributary monuments; the quietude of Epidaurus healed us, the elevation on the Acropolis empowered us. As I stood where Pericles and so many others had addressed the assembly, I bloomed in city and country so wonderfully exhumed."

Indeed, as Aidan Walsh remarked at Epidaurus, "the theater had to be experienced in person to be fully appreciated. Hearing a speaker at the bottom of the steps from the top was mind-boggling."

For Christine Elmo, "what sticks with me most from our recent Solomon Bluhm trip to Greece this past winter, I get excited remembering when we first saw polygonal masonry, the foundation of the tholos in Attica's Agora, and the view of Cape Sounion from the point of standing in the bay northwest to it. But one of my favorite parts from the trip was seeing two small unidentified mounds

located in the Kerameikos. One was excavated with its insides exposed for us to see while the other was still fully intact covered up with soil and grass. The exposed mound showed a mud-brick wall shaped like a thick rubber hot water bag. I liked seeing these mounds because they demonstrated an example of one part of archaeology, and that is, the way something can appear before it's excavated as if it is nothing more than a part of the environment's natural landscape. What is significant about noticing this is taking into consideration how ele-

ments of space and physical materials have many layers."

For me, as their teacher, it was a thrilling to watch the students respond to modern and ancient Greece and to share in their enthusiasm for places and things which I've known for decades, and perhaps even inspire a few to change direction and continue to study archaeology.

- *Robert Koehl*
Hunter College



AIA NEW YORK SOCIETY LECTURE SERIES FOR FALL 2016

September 27, 6:30 (Annual meeting to precede lecture at 6:00; reception to follow)

Archaeology as Ethnology (and Vice Versa): Puebloan Variations

Peter Whiteley, Curator, Division of Anthropology American Museum of Natural History; Professor, Richard Gilder Graduate School

American Museum of Natural History, Linder Theater (enter through West 77th Street entrance).

Can archaeologists interested in precolonial Puebloan ruins learn anything from the Pueblo ethnographic record? Can ethnological explanation of the Pueblos benefit from the archaeological record? Notwithstanding recent doubts on both counts, I here argue that contemporary and recent Puebloan societies and cultural practices should be viewed as ethnological homologies (rather than "ethnographic analogies"), that descend "with modification" from Ancestral Pueblo systems. Mutual engagement among ethnography, ethnohistory, and archaeology should not be an ancillary project, but rather a precondition for adequate scientific explanation of Puebloan sociocultural systems over the *longue durée*.

October 6, 6:30 (Reception to follow lecture)

Columbia University's Excavation Project at the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos, Boeotia

Ioannis Mylonopoulos, Associate Professor Ancient Greek Art, Architecture, and Archaeology, Columbia University Department of Art History and Archaeology

(Co-sponsored by the Institute for Study of the Ancient World)

15 East 84th St., ISAW

In the summer of 2014, Columbia University's Department of Art History and Archaeology initiated under the auspices of The Athens Archaeological Society the excavation of the sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos, the seat of the Boeotian Confederacy and one of the few Greek sacred places mentioned in the Iliad. The excavation has focused on two large areas (Site A: 0.6 ha; Site B: 1.03 ha) and this excavation has already yielded a rich array of finds: vases and vase-fragments (several bearing graffiti), countless bronze objects (including several strigils), bronze and silver coins, weapons (among them a fully preserved sword), objects associated with horse- and chariot races, and many architectural elements (including several architec-

tural terracottas bearing floral and abstract decoration in black, white, and red color on a beige background; fragments of Ionic columns; two Ionic corner capitals). After only three years of excavation, the questions are still far more numerous than the answers, but we can securely state that the site was one of the major sanctuaries of Central Greece. This lecture will examine the work done through this summer.

November 14, 6:30 (Refreshments to precede lecture at 6:00)

Saving the Past to Protect the Future; Heritage and Conflict

Laurie Rush, Cultural Resources Manager and Army Archaeologist stationed at Fort Drum, NY
Chanin Language Center Screening Room (B126 HW), Hunter College, Lexington & 68th Street

The events of unspeakable destruction emerging from the Middle East are reminding us of the global importance of our shared humanity and heritage. Preservation of cultural property provides opportunities for cross cultural and trans-national dialogue, and archaeologists, museum professionals, and military officers are working together at the national and international level to develop teaching materials and planning resources specifically designed to help members of military forces identify and respect cultural property and the heritage of citizens of host nations. Like it or not, members of fighting forces are often the very people humanity must rely on to save sacred places, historic structures, collections of cultural property such as museums and libraries, and even archaeological sites from the ravages of disaster both natural and man-made. From heritage mapping, to archaeology awareness playing cards, to video games and lectures, this lecture describes teaching methods, preservation accomplishments in conflict and disaster areas, plans for future effort and international cooperation, and the potential implications of these efforts for peace keeping and peace-making.



FEATURE: UMM AL-AQARIB

Excavations in an Ancient Sumerian City

Umm al-Aqarib is a local name meaning “mother of scorpions,” given to the site by local people for the scorpions found there. The site of Umm al-Aqarib is situated in a semi-desert area 15 km to the west of the town of Alrifaiy, and 6 km to the south east of Jokha (traditionally identified as ancient Umma), in the rural area of the Dhi-Qar Governorate of Iraq. It lies 100 km north of the city of Nasiriyah, and approximately 300 km from Baghdad. Its large expanse, more than 5 square km, is covered with sand dunes, a fact which hampered our attempts to draw a detailed map of the site.

The site was first mentioned by the American traveler John Punnett Peters in 1897, and in 1935 it was officially listed by the Iraqi government with the number 1465. In the early 1970s Umm al-Aqarib was included in the settlement survey of southern

Sumer conducted by Robert McC. Adams and Hans J. Nissen.



*General view of Umm al-Aqarib
encroached upon by sand dunes.*

Iraqi archaeologists conducted excavations at Umm al-Aqarib for seven seasons (1999–2002 and 2008–2010), during which time the late Dr. Donny George, the present author, and Mr. Taha Kerim worked in turn as directors of the excavations. The site proved to be an important city of the Third Millennium B.C.

The embargo that the United Nations imposed on Iraq from 1990 to 2003 affected all aspects of our lives, and the everyday work of archaeology was also severely affected. Serious problems plagued our work at the site and created additional administrative obligations. Many archaeological sites in the area around Umm al-Aqarib were attacked by looters. Jokha and Umm al-Aqarib were especially hard hit, as they became the main targets of illegal digging in 1994 and after. When we returned to our excavation in 2008–2010, the topographical features of our site were completely changed as a result of illegal digging in 2003–2004.

The Iraqi expeditions excavated multiple areas of the large site. The following are some brief details of the excavations.

In the central part of the site we revealed a wall of some 63 m in length, probably surrounding the central part of the city or a sanctuary area. A later well penetrated the wall in the middle of the investigated area.

Excavation also revealed the remains of a vast administrative structure, which can be securely identified as the palace. This monumental building had an area of some 50×29 m. An entrance located in the southern wall led into the interior of the building through a long corridor, which divided the palace into eastern and western sections.

Two other large public buildings were temples, which we named Temple H and the White Temple, respectively. Temple H was constructed of plano-convex mud bricks in the well-known Sumerian technique of courses laid in a herringbone pattern. Based on this evidence, we immediately concluded that this temple dated to the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2900–2350 B.C.).

The White Temple of Umm al-Aqarib is the largest

temple in Early Dynastic Sumer so far known to us. The general plan of the temple is rectangular in shape. It had three large main entrances located at the eastern, western, and northern sides. The eastern entrance probably featured a corbel vault. The temple measures approximately 152×70 m and so is almost 11,000 square meters in area. Its large courtyard measures 45×58 m and has a dais constructed of packed bricks set into it. The northern and southern walls are remarkably thick (11 m width). Sixteen cylindrical columns were constructed close to the side of the eastern and southern walls, and the height of some walls was preserved to 8 m.



The White Temple, with its massive southern wall. Columns and dais are visible in the courtyard.

Our work also uncovered a large residential area with many houses. A single level was composed of two or three phases, with similar ground plans observed in all of these phases. We also found similar objects, artifacts and graves in the respective phases, which we dated to the Early Dynastic III period (ca. 2600–2350 B.C.). By observing the ground plan of a cluster of buildings, we can safely conclude that this was a residential area with alleys and pathways. The buildings themselves normally consisted of a courtyard surrounded by a number of rooms. The courtyards contained hearths and clay ovens, and some of them had sewage systems, with vertical pipes. Beneath the floors of these houses more than 400 graves were excavated, with burials surrounded by grave goods. Graves included those of adult females, males, and children.

Different kinds of objects were found on the floors of these houses, such as pottery vessels, stone objects and vessels, metal objects and vessels, tablets (Sumerian texts), seals, beads, statues, terracottas, and many others.

The discoveries at Umm al-Aqarib show that this site was larger and contained more substantial monumental architecture than nearby Jokha, ancient Umma. Umma has long been known as the regional capital, but it now seems likely that the administration moved there only at the end of the Early Dynastic III period, and that for most of the Early Dynastic period the regional capital was in fact at Umm al-Aqarib. The ancient name of the site and of its kingdom was probably Gisha, and if this is correct it is likely that the White Temple was associated with Gisha's patron deity Shara.

My research on the finds from Umm al-Aqarib is ongoing. This year (2016–17) I am working as a Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I will undertake comparative study of seals that we have found at the site with those in the collections of the Museum. About 65 cylinder and stamp seals

have been found at the site, with a range of geometric and figural designs. The latter include a variety of scenes, such as combat, banquet, naturalistic, and some other rare subjects. I hope that this research will inform my continuing work on Umm al-Aqarib, and help to share information with colleagues and the public about the discoveries that have been made at this important site.

- *Haider Oraibi Almamori*

State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Baghdad



An inscribed cylinder seal and its modern impression, with a combat scene showing animal and "hero" figures.



*Hunter College students in the Athenian Agora, looking at the cuirass statue of Hadrian.
Read about the Bluhm Scholars Cohort's studies in Greece in this issue.*

M. Whitney Keen, Secretary
AIA New York Society
64 Oak Avenue
Tenafly, NJ 07670

Addressee Name
4321 First Street
Anytown, State 54321
