

NEWSLETTER 01/08

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD
New York University



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Roger S. Bagnall

ISAW came into existence in the summer of 2007, as a center for research and graduate education in the cultures of the ancient world (see our mission statement on back). It was the result of a vision of scholarship developed over many years by Shelby White and the late Leon Levy, and was tested and refined through several years of planning. As ISAW's first director and first faculty member, I have been privileged to guide it through the hectic first year, in which we have tried to bring as many of its programs to life as quickly as possible. This process has involved heroic efforts from many people. These are reflected in the first part of this first Newsletter, where four senior members of my staff describe the work of their divisions: Academic Programs, Exhibitions, Library, and Digital Programs. But many other people, inside and outside New York University, have played a part in thinking through our programs and making them a reality. Above all, ISAW's Founder, Shelby White, has been my constant companion and support at every step, and the six other members of our Advisory Committee (Glen Bowersock, Daniel Fleming, David O'Connor, Holly Pittman, Wu Hung, and Paul Zanker) have given enormously of their time, particularly in the search for our faculty. And finally, John Sexton and David McLaughlin, president and provost of NYU, have been ready to help us throughout the developmental process.

FACULTY

Our second faculty member joined us on July 1. Alexander Jones, who was appointed Professor of the History of the Exact Sciences in Antiquity, comes to us from the University of Toronto. He is also associated faculty as Professor of Mathematics in the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. He has produced several editions of Greek scientific texts, among them Pappus of Alexandria's commentary on the corpus of Hellenistic geometrical treatises known as the "Treasury of Analysis"; an anonymous Byzantine astro-

nomical handbook based on Islamic sources; and a collection of about two hundred fragmentary astronomical texts, tables, and horoscopes from the papyri excavated a century ago by Grenfell and Hunt at Oxyrhynchus. His current research interests include the contacts between Babylonian and Graeco-Roman astronomy and astrology, the Antikythera Mechanism and other artifacts of Hellenistic astronomy, and the scientific work of Claudius Ptolemy. A member of the American Philosophical Society and fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, he has received additional awards and honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Francis Bacon Award in the History of Science.

The faculty search continues. We have received over 400 applications spanning every ancient field and at a level from new doctorates to distinguished senior scholars. The Search Committee has also generated a number of names on its own. At the moment, we are actively pursuing additional appointments in a variety of fields, and I anticipate that by the end of the fall we will have exciting results to announce.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

When we opened our doors last summer, the construction punch list was far from exhausted, and we were almost camping out in the building, with only a little temporary furniture. We now live in a comfortable and well-furnished home. The limestone mansion at 15 East 84th Street that houses the Institute is beautiful, from the entry hall dominated by the stunning spiral staircase to the painstaking restoration of original paneling in several rooms and even the magnificent dumbwaiters. The space has also proven eminently practical as more of it is brought into use. The exhibition galleries provided a superb home to our first show (see p. 6), the lecture hall works perfectly for academic conferences, and the common room is a versatile space



ISAW building exterior, 15 East 84th Street.



ISAW common room.

also well suited to large public lectures. The spacious carrels for graduate students and Visiting Research Scholars are all now in place and proving their usefulness. Over the next six months, we will be giving the common room its permanent furniture and adding work space on the third floor. Ahead lies planning for the sixth floor, our future space for expansion.

GRADUATE PROGRAM

Our plan for a doctoral program has been approved by the NYU Graduate Commission and has now been submitted to New York State for approval. If, as we hope, we receive permission in the early or mid fall, we will then be able to advertise the program and begin to recruit our first class for the fall of 2009. Even without formal advertising, word is getting around, and we are receiving many inquiries from prospective applicants.

EVENTS

ISAW's very first public event was the first annual Leon Levy Lecture, given by Glen Bowersock on "The Horizons of Antiquity." This memorable evocation of the Institute's raison d'être drew an overflowing crowd. In addition to the Vani conference and that on family structures organized by the visiting scholars, both of which are described below, ISAW hosted the meeting of the International Workshop on Papyri and Social History and a colloquium on multilingualism in the Near East in April. We sponsored two public

lectures as well, by Romila Thapar on "Recognising Historical Traditions in Early India" and Judith Herrin on "The Lure of Byzantium: Medieval Western Attitudes to Princesses 'Born in the Purple.'" These were also well attended.

FORTHCOMING EVENT

Professor William Y. Adams will give a lecture entitled "Nubia's Other Civilization: the Forgotten Glories of the Medieval Kingdoms" on November 20th at 12:00 pm. All are welcome, but please reserve by message to isaw@nyu.edu

EXCAVATION

This spring and summer I have been in the process of moving the primary home of my archaeological project at Amheida in Egypt from Columbia to NYU. We will have the largest student group for the 2009 season that we have ever had and look forward to a successful season. The project's Web site can be found at www.amheida.org. At the same time, we have been engaged in planning a major site management and presentation project there, which includes building a replica of a late antique house and reproduction of its spectacular wall paintings. The funding will come from the American Research Center in Egypt, The Dutch Ambassador's Cultural Fund (Cairo), and the Leon Levy Foundation, for a total of over \$200,000.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: VISITING RESEARCH SCHOLARS, 2007–2008

Anna Boozer

The 2007–8 academic year marked the inception of the Visiting Research Scholars (VRS) Program at ISAW. Our inaugural group of scholars set an impressive pace of research and collaboration, which we expect future generations of scholars will expand into a model for interdisciplinary cooperation. Three of the 2007–8 group have provided brief summaries of their work in order to give a sense of their varied research interests and accomplishments.

The year began with a series of lunchtime meetings in which the VRS presented their current research and sought critical feedback from a wide array of perspectives. Some scholars began working across regions that have been historically divided in traditional academic departments, and all scholars considered perspectives that had been absent from their previous training. During the second semester, formal presentations gave way to topical discussions such as interdisciplinary scholarship, households, the politics of exhibition, and recent lectures that we had heard.

Early in the year, the interests of the VRS converged so sufficiently that they decided to organize a conference on "Cross-Cultural Approaches to Family and Household Structures in the Ancient World." This two-day symposium sought to shed new light on the formation patterns and structural differences and similarities between family and household in ancient societies from the western Mediterranean to China. In an attempt to initiate conversations between ancient historians, archaeologists, and social anthropologists of all regions and periods of the ancient world, the conference welcomed papers from across disciplines. The conference was a great success, and participants managed to find common ground across diverse data sets and regions, with many suggestions for collaboration following up on this event. We have received several offers to

publish the proceedings of the conference and are considering options at this time.

Anne Porter

(University of Southern California)

The interdisciplinary study of the Amorrites, and what that tells us about the larger question of the role of pastoralism in the ancient Near East, was the focus of my work while at ISAW. The Amorrites were an apparently nomadic people who have long been thought to have invaded the Fertile Crescent from the desert, taking over the settled world at the end of the third millennium B.C.E. and bringing a "dark age" to Mesopotamia before eventually mastering the administrative trappings of "civilization"—a civilization they are said to have both despised and desired. By integrating traditional epigraphical/historical research with archaeological data and an anthropological perspective informed by political and literary theory, one can cast new light on their origins and sociopolitical organization, and the picture is much more complex, and far more interesting, than we had previously thought. Rather than a separate ethnic group on the margins of the settled world of the third millennium, "Amorrites" were pastoralists who were part of the same populations that comprised the empire. The documentary sources that portray the Amorrites as barbarians, sources that go far toward shaping our own reconstructions, are part of a major propaganda campaign by the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, who sought both to legitimate their usurpation of power and to justify their appropriation and radical reorganization of the economic structure of the empire.

Giovanni Ruffini

(Columbia University, now Fairfield University)

I completed revisions to my *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, 2008; based on my Columbia disserta-

tion) during the fall and began the rough draft of a manuscript for a forthcoming prosopography of the Egyptian village of Aphrodito. But the research I began while at ISAW focuses on Christian Nubia and includes a study of Nubian names (presented at the Linguistic Societies of America in January 2008), a forthcoming bilingual Greek and Old Nubian edition of Psalms 149–150, and an in-depth analysis of Nubian land sales, still in preparation. While at ISAW, I also taught an undergraduate seminar in NYU's Classics Department on Greece, Rome, and African civilizations. This fall I start as an assistant professor in history and classical studies at Fairfield University in Connecticut.

Kevin van Bladel
(University of Southern California)

In my first semester at ISAW (beginning in January), I finished my book *The Arabic Hermes*, which will be published by Oxford University Press USA in 2009. Meanwhile, I have continued collecting reproductions of manuscripts of Arabic Hermetica in preparation for the sequel, *The Arabic Hermetica*, as

well as editions of some of these texts. In particular, my recent concern has been with the pseudo-Aristotelian Arabic Hermetica, works of magic in which Aristotle reveals to Alexander the secret instruction of Hermes. These are among the earliest occult works in Arabic literature and are part of the foundation of medieval magic. My article on the Bactrian background of the Barmakids will also come out in 2009 in a volume published by Ashgate entitled *Islam and Tibet*. A short article on the Bayt al-hikma co-authored with Dimitri Gutas will appear in a forthcoming fascicle of *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*. I continue to work on a variety of other projects as opportunity allows, ranging from Aramaean ethnicity in the Roman Empire to eighth-century Arabic translations of Sanskrit works. During these months, I also presented papers at the Oxford Center for Late Antiquity, the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, the Institute for Advanced Study, and Cornell University; I also participated in ISAW's seminar on multilingualism in the first millennium.

EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Jennifer Y. Chi

Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice: The Golden Graves of Ancient Vani, the inaugural exhibition at ISAW, provided a rich visual exploration of a city that lay outside the narrow latitudes traditionally defining the "classical" ancient world. Organized in collaboration with the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution, the exhibition was on display at ISAW from March 10 through June 1, 2008, and featured over 130 finds from Vani, an important administrative and religious center of the ancient kingdom of Colchis (present-day Republic of Georgia), best known as the legendary setting for the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece. ISAW is profoundly grateful to Dr. David Lordkipanidze, Director of the Georgian National Museum, for making

it possible for us to show these fascinating and beautiful objects.

Highlighting treasures from four of Vani's richest graves, which date from the fifth to the fourth century B.C., *Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice* featured a superb array of locally produced gold and silver jewelry, as well as silver drinking vessels, bronze sculpture, glassware, and ceramics; many of these objects were imported from the city's eastern and western neighbors. Founded in the eighth century B.C., Vani was prominently situated on the ancient river Phasis, which provided a trade route to territories to the east and west of Colchis. As a result, the city enriched and was enriched by numerous



Gallery One: *Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice: The Golden Graves of Ancient Vani*, ISAW's inaugural exhibition.

other cultures—from mainland Greece to other Black Sea cities and Achaemenid Persia.

Two Hellenistic lamps were included in ISAW's installation. Excavated in the 2007 season, they comprised part of a rich hoard discovered near the lower city wall (see p. 8). Both featured spectacular elephant-head finials. The combination of type and iconography finds no parallels in the ancient world. The appearance of elephant iconography in Colchis may possibly be related to Seleucid influence in this region during the tumultuous Hellenistic period.

In May, ISAW hosted a conference where 13 internationally renowned scholars presented papers that further illuminated aspects explored in the exhibition, from the evidence of early wine production in ancient Georgia, to the state of research surrounding ancient Colchis, to the ritual sacrifice of retainers at Vani. The exhibition received an extraordinarily positive reception, and ISAW has been asked to administer a tour of the exhibition. *Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice* moved to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts after its closing at ISAW and is currently on view at the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge University until January 5, 2009. It will subsequently be hosted at two additional prestigious venues.

I began at ISAW in September 2007 with the mandate of curating our inaugural exhibition

and producing its accompanying catalogue in six months. At the time, the exhibitions department was comprised of myself and one other staff member, Julienne Kim, Managing Editor of ISAW's exhibition catalogues and didactics. We have now grown to a staff of four. Linda Stubbs, Exhibition Registrar and Outreach Coordinator, officially joined the exhibition team this summer. Roberta Casagrande-Kim is our Assistant Researcher. We are also currently advertising for an Exhibition Administrator to complete our team. In addition, Maya Muratov, our guest curator this year, is developing an exhibition articulating the complex interrelations between the Greeks and the indigenous peoples in the Bosphoran Kingdom, located in the present-day Crimea. My goal is to develop a schedule that includes two exhibitions a year with active and innovative public programs surrounding them. Our next exhibition is scheduled for the fall of 2009; its title will be announced in the next Newsletter.

Objects on loan for Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice are courtesy of the Georgian National Museum; the Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection, and Sport of Georgia; and the Vani Archaeological Museum. The catalogue, Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice: The Golden Graves of Ancient Vani, edited by Jennifer Y. Chi (2008), is distributed by Princeton University Press and is available for purchase at <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8710.html>.



2007 excavation photograph of a Bronze Lamp featured in *Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice: The Golden Graves of Ancient Vani*.
Photo credit: Georgian National Museum

LIBRARY

Charles E. Jones

ISAW's new library opened for the first time at the beginning of the autumn semester. At this time, the collections on the shelf are the most basic core resource, based on the merging of four extraordinary and rich collections acquired over the past two years (ISAW is deeply grateful to Kenneth Soehner of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for his help in the early stages of forming our library):

- The Library of Alan May. Approximately 6000 volumes. An outstanding Egyptological library focusing on art history and material culture, this collection was assembled over a period of more than twenty years by a private individual. The collection is in extremely good condition, many of the volumes expertly bound in leather in Egypt by the binder to the late King Farouq. It is a superb beginning to a comprehensive Egyptological collection.
- The Stanford Place Library. Approximately 3500 volumes. A scholarly collection on the history of ancient art and archaeology, substantially object-based with particular strength in Greek and Roman art. It was assembled by a collector (see Christie's *Catalogue of the Stanford Place Collection of Antiquities*, 26 April 2006, where part

of the library is illustrated in situ in the context of the collection on p. 128). It is a strong foundational collection for the study of Greek and Roman Art.

- A Library of Asian Art. Approximately 1000 volumes. A scholarly collection focusing on the art of India and Southeast Asia, and including material relating to the Islamic world, Central Asia, China, Nepal, and Tibet. Assembled since about 1960, it is representative of what has been available in the South Asian and Southeast Asian fields during that period. It presents the core of an important research collection for these areas.
- The Collection of Emily and Cornelius Vermeule, the generous gift of Cornelius Vermeule to the Institute. At the time of writing, we are in the midst of processing this collection. As expected, it is an excellent complement to the Stanford Place Library. It includes a number of rare editions of works on classical archaeology and philology and many difficult-to-find books acquired on research trips abroad by the collectors. Like all the other collections, it includes an important and not yet completely assessed collection of pamphlets and offprints.



ISAW library.

Other sets of publications have been purchased, or are in the process of being purchased, such as the complete catalogue of the in-print publications of the Institut für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften in Frankfurt. We are also in negotiation for some additional core collections assembled over the past generation by senior scholars in ancient studies. We expect to pass along news of additional acquisitions in future ISAW newsletters.

It is the mission of the ISAW library not only to seek out and acquire traditional materials, but also to develop digital resources as a fundamental component of the collection from the very beginning, integrating the world's oldest languages, scripts, and cultures with the newest technologies. Working closely with Tom Elliott, ISAW's Associate Director for Digital Programs, we are developing the tools and specifications necessary to support the corpus of digital scholarly tools, and with the cataloguing staff to describe, catalogue, and provide access to such resources to the widest possible audiences. We have also begun to collect and analyze the already available digital corpora of scholarly resources, and we expect to begin to process them into our online catalogue in the near future.

DIGITAL PROGRAMS

Tom Elliott

ISAW's digital programs are fundamental to the Institute's mission. Convinced that the transformation of the media and information landscape now underway offers scholars unparalleled opportunities to make new discoveries, collaborate with distant colleagues, engage public interests, and tackle previously intractable problems, we have committed ourselves to an ambitious slate of digital initiatives that extend far beyond the walls of the Institute. As the examples below illustrate, we emphasize the creation and delivery of core resources such as primary and secondary texts and images, as well as

Building a library ex nihilo is a challenging and daunting task. I am very pleased that the ISAW library already had in place a talented and vigorous team of cataloguers working steadily and carefully on the collections acquired so far. Under the leadership of Dawn Gross, this team had made extraordinary progress in developing the workflows, procedures, and processes that allow for the rapid progress of material from the boxes in which it arrives to the library stacks in an orderly and thoughtful manner. Their close connection and frequent consultation with our colleagues at the NYU central Technical Services Unit assure us of proper integration in the catalogue of NYU's libraries. I am likewise grateful for the assistance of the ISAW Library Advisory Committee, whose members are active participants in the development of ideas about ways to build the ISAW collections and services—not just for the ISAW faculty and students, but also for the global community of ancient-world scholars. Their advice and counsel, along with that of the ISAW faculty, staff, and research scholars, are essential as we begin this task.

geographic and archaeological reference information. We seek to serve the entire field of ancient studies by working for the durability of digital publications—and the sustainability of the projects that create and maintain them—through promotion of standards, creation of reusable free software, use of open-access licenses, and decentralization of authorial, editorial, and peer-review activities.

In early 2008, ISAW became a partner in the Pleiades Project (<http://pleiades.stoa.org>). Together with the Ancient World Mapping Center (AWMC), we are digitizing the most

comprehensive register of geographical data for the ancient Greek and Roman world, collected by the American Philological Association's Classical Atlas Project to support the preparation of the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (R. Talbert, ed., Princeton 2000). All of the coordinates, historical names, and other information in this rich collection are being placed online so scholars, students, and enthusiasts worldwide can browse, search, and map it, as well as offer suggestions for updates and additions. The Pleiades effort has recently expanded with funding from a Transatlantic Digitization Grant, awarded to ISAW and King's College London, by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the U.K. Joint Information Systems Committee. It supports the prototyping of mechanisms to tie Pleiades into important digital collections of epigraphic and papyrological texts from Egypt and coastal North Africa (see further: <http://concordia.atlantides.org>). This effort will lay the foundation for extensive, automated cross-linking between Pleiades and other web-based scholarly resources for the entire Greek and Roman world. We are currently seeking funding for a second, two-year development period for Pleiades/Concordia that will accelerate the digitization of content and bring users together for a series of workshops to identify needed improvements to the system and to facilitate more effective collaboration.

Over the past year ISAW has also assumed a leadership role in a group of interrelated digital papyrology projects. One of these, funded by a grant to Duke University from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, has successfully upgraded and effectively integrated two of the key digital resources for study of ancient documents on papyrus: the Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri (DDbDP) and the Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis der griechischen Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens (HGV). Both resources will soon be provided to users via a search and display environment prototyped by the digital libraries team at Columbia University. This system, dubbed the Papyrological Navigator, combines DDbDP and HGV content with images and database records drawn from the 22 museum and university papyrus collections that constitute the Advanced Papyrological Information System

(APIS). It also links them to the extensive Trismegistos databases in Leuven. Under new funding provided to APIS by the NEH, work on this interface will move to the Digital Libraries team at NYU where, with collaboration from ISAW and APIS team members at Columbia, it will see extensive improvements. ISAW is currently working with partners to secure funding for a second major upgrade to the DDbDP and HGV: a collaborative, online editing environment that will speed the addition and revision of content by granting papyrologists worldwide direct authorial capabilities under a distributed system of editorial oversight.

A number of other exciting projects are in work for 2009 and beyond. We hope to expand the utility of Pleiades by linking it to a number of other systems and digital gazetteers under development at a variety of institutions around the world. Plans are being formulated for a collaborative digital encyclopedia of Coptic archaeology, an extensive database of digital images, an online calendar of museum exhibitions, a major book and journal digitization program, and a multi-institutional publication series comprising open-access primary texts and research data.

Tom Elliott writes about our work and about wider trends in the digital humanities on his blog (<http://horothesia.blogspot.com>).

Front Cover: ISAW spiral staircase.

All imagery has been provided by ISAW unless otherwise noted.

Photographer: Andrea Brizzi.

ISAW MISSION

ISAW is a center for advanced scholarly research and graduate education, intended to cultivate comparative and connective investigations of the ancient world. It features doctoral and postdoctoral programs, with the aim of training a new generation of scholars who will enter the global academic community and become intellectual leaders. In an effort to embrace a truly inclusive geographical scope while maintaining continuity and coherence, the Institute focuses on the shared and overlapping periods in the development of cultures and civilizations around the Mediterranean basin, and across central Asia to the Pacific Ocean.



ISAW lobby and spiral staircase.

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