

A Meeting of Minds, Science and Human Experience – Part II

Iraq's History and Cultural World Heritage – Science and Civilization: Educational Links and Research Papers for Advancing the Understanding and Study of Iraqi Cultural Heritage, Education, the Sciences and Humanities



Iraq, the "Land between the two Rivers", has been the cradle of major civilizations starting from the fifth millennium BCE, which marked the watershed between the prehistory and history of humanity. It has gifted the world with many of academia's pillars of wisdom, knowledge and science.

Iraq designates the foundation where human beings first built cities, organized complex states, formulated elaborate religious beliefs (including the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), invented writing, developed sophisticated visual and literary expression, and articulated measures for maintaining law and justice. The first written records, domestic laws, astronomy, mathematics, pharmacology, and the wheel are considered to have been developed at Ur, the earliest civil society in the world.

A thousand years ago, the Muslim World made remarkable contributions to science. Muslims introduced new methods of experiment, observation, and measurement. Ibn al-Haytham wrote the laws of the reflection and refraction of light and expounded the principles of inertia (long before Isaac Newton formulated his theories). Ibn Sina wrote the Canon of Medicine (al-Quanun fi'l-Tibb), a 318-page medical text that was the basis for all medical teaching in Europe and the Middle East for hundreds of years. The translations of scholarly treatises made the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates the forum of civilizations. Iraq represents the repository of intellectual and scientific growth.

“The list of humankind’s momentous “Firsts from Mesopotamia” is too long to detail. Mesopotamian religious, literary, and artistic traditions represent the origins of advanced culture. Their value to world civilization is inestimable. Understanding of Mesopotamia illuminates fundamental aspects of Judeo-Christian tradition and of Islam, and Mesopotamia has ties as well to ancient Greece—chapters of human history that gave shape to the world we inhabit today. The geographical realm of ancient Mesopotamia extends into the modern states of Syria, Iran, and Jordan, but for the greatest part lies within Iraq. As scholars committed to the study and teaching of the history and culture of Mesopotamia, many of whom have been guests of the Iraqi people, we have deep ties to persons in Iraq as well as a profound appreciation for the cultural resources preserved within its borders.

The only access that our and future generations have to ancient Mesopotamia is through the ancient physical remains left behind. Each artifact, written text, and archeological context is unique and irreplaceable. Once destroyed, that link to humanity’s past is lost, to us and to our descendants, forever.

Students of a civilization reaching back more than 5,000 years, we are accustomed to taking a long-term view of history and historical events. Destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage will result in devastating and irrevocable losses to human civilization, and to participate in or allow such destruction may inflame resentment and anger throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East.”

Eleanor Robson, Ph.D., Professor of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge.



How little we know of the Arab world, of Iraq and its people, of the place that Baghdad – the Florence of the Middle East – has in the hearts and minds of Arab peoples. Iraq, the Cradle of Civilization – how could we have thought that Iraqis would not defend their country from invasion? I have taught about the peoples and cultures of the Arab world at Berkeley since 1960. I have been struck by the depth of ignorance about this large expanse of the world.

Laura Nader, Ph.D., Prof., Dept. of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley



Peace cannot exist without equality; this is an intellectual value desperately in need of reiteration, demonstration, and reinforcement.

Edward W. Said (1935-2003) Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University, New York



The current fraught and muddled situation in Iraq has typically been addressed at a level of abstraction that provides little access to the reality of life in all its dimensions, and the experiences and feelings of those who must cope with degrees of trauma and disarray that make what Americans faced after 9/11 pale by comparison. Among these dimensions is the fate of institutions crucial to a viable future for Iraq and its people. These include the Iraq National Library and Archive, other major archives, and the twenty universities, at the core of which are the libraries that should serve their faculty and students. For Iraq to have a future it must have thriving institutions of higher education and a necessary condition for that is adequate, functioning libraries.

Jeffrey B. Spurr, Islamic and Middle East Specialist, Harvard University



Whoever is directly responsible for the dangers facing Iraq’s institutions of learning and its educators, the situation seriously threatens the emergence of a secular, moral and democratic leadership from within Iraq. If such a society is to emerge from beneath the scars caused by years of sanctions, from the rubble left by a remorseless and mendaciously justified war, intellectuals are the best and, in my opinion, the only chance of enabling Iraq to realise its human capabilities.

Andrew N. Rubin, Ph.D., Prof., Dept. of English, Georgetown University



“I firmly condemn the campaign of violence waged in Iraq against academics and intellectuals. The right to education is a basic human right and the persecution of the custodians of knowledge and skills is an unacceptable attack against a whole society. Iraq has a long tradition in learning and academic excellence in the Middle East. By targeting those who hold the keys to Iraq’s reconstruction and development, the perpetrators of this violence are jeopardizing the future of Iraq and of democracy.”

Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO (April 2006)

Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

This is a legal instrument which recognizes, for the first time, Cultural Diversity as a “Common Heritage of Humanity” and considers its safeguarding to be a concrete and ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. 2 November 2001

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<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127160m.pdf>



Cultural Diversity
Common Heritage – Plural Identities
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 Published 2002
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127161e.pdf>

ARBICA: Statement Regarding Protection of the Iraqi Museums and Archives (14 April 2003)
 Dr. Abdullah El Reyes, President of the Arab Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives
<http://www.ica.org/en/node/584>



History and Culture
 Iraq has a long and fascinating history, stretching back to the dawn of Civilization (Reference links - 9000 BCE to present)
<http://www.iraqanalysis.org/info/159>



The Threat to World Heritage in Iraq: Petition of International Scholars of Mesopotamia and the Middle East to the United Nations and UNESCO for the Safeguarding of Iraqi Cultural Heritage (14 April 2003)
 Eleanor Robson, Ph.D., Professor, Dept. of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge
<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wolf0126/petition.html>



War in Iraq and its consequences for Cultural Heritage (April 2003 - present)
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=8442&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-459.html



Indispensable yet Vulnerable: The Library in Dangerous Times. A Report on the Status of Iraqi Academic Libraries and a Survey of Efforts to Assist Them, with Historical Introduction.
 Jeffrey B. Spurr, Ph.D., Harvard University
<http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/indispensable.html#IRAQ>



The Threat to World Heritage in Iraq (31 May 2003)
 Eleanor Robson, Ph.D., Professor, Dept. of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge
<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wolf0126/>



Focus on Iraq: Where Civilization Began (August 2003)
 Interview with McGuire Gibson, Ph.D., University of Chicago
<http://www.archaeology.org/0307/etc/civilization.html>



Science and Civilization in Islam
Canadian International Youth Letter
 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ph.D., Professor, Islamic Studies, George Washington University
http://www.paep.ca/en/CIYL/2004/doc/nasr_science_in_islam.pdf

Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries
<http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html>



Lost Treasures From Iraq (created 15 April 2003)
<http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/iraq.html>



Iraq's Lost Cultural Heritage (July 2003)
 Dina Rizk Khoury, Ph.D., George Washington University
<http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2003/0309/0309new3.cfm>



Astronomy in the Baghdad of the Caliphs
Canadian International Youth Letter
 David A. King, Ph.D., Professor. Institute of the History of Science,
 Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt
http://www.paep.ca/en/CIYL/2004/doc/king_astronomy_baghdad.pdf



FORUM - WAR with IRAQ - University of California, Berkeley faculty analyze, criticize - and defend - Iraq war (1 April 2003) Introductory remarks delivered by Chancellor **Robert M. Berdahl** at a forum of UC Berkeley faculty experts convened at Zellerbach Hall on April 1, 2003, to discuss the war with Iraq.
http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_berdahl.shtml



TRANSCRIPTS of Forum Speakers

Nezar AlSayyad, Ph.D., professor of architecture and chair of the university's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. An active architect and planner in both the U.S. and Egypt, AlSayyad has authored and edited several books on urbanism and architecture in the Middle East; his most recent book is "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization" (2002).

http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_alsayyad.shtml

Thomas G. Barnes, D.Sc., history and law professor, co-chair of UC Berkeley's Canadian Studies Program, chair of the faculty committee for the ROTC program, and the author of eight books.

http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_barnes.shtml

David D. Caron, J.D., Dr. Jur., Boalt Hall School of Law's C. William Maxeiner Distinguished Professor of Law, on the board of editors of the American Journal of International Law, a member of the precedent panel of the U.N. Compensation Commission for claims arising from the Gulf War and on the Department of State Advisory Committee on Public International Law.

http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_caron.shtml

Laura Nader, Ph.D., professor of social cultural anthropology and the author of numerous books on how central dogmas are made and how they work in law, energy, science, and anthropology.
http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_nader.shtml

Steven Weber, Ph.D., political science professor and the director of the MacArthur Program on Multilateral Governance at Berkeley's Institute of International Studies. He has held academic fellowships with the Council on Foreign Relations, served as special consultant to the president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London, and worked with the U.S. State Department and other government agencies on foreign policy issues, risk analysis, and forecasting.
http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_weber.shtml

Janet Yellen, Ph.D., Eugene E. and Catherine M. Trefethen Professor of Business Administration as well as an economics professor. She served from 1997 to 1999 as chair of President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors and of the Economic Policy Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. From 1994 to 1997, she was a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; she also is an adviser to the Congressional Budget Office. http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_yellen.shtml

Transcript of the concluding question-and-answer session from the forum of UC Berkeley faculty experts convened at Zellerbach Hall on April 1, 2003, to discuss the war with Iraq. The forum was moderated by David Leonard, dean of International and Area Studies, and the participants were Nezar AlSayyad, Chair of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies; Thomas G. Barnes, history and law professor; David D. Caron, law professor; Laura Nader, social cultural anthropology professor; Steve Weber, political science professor; and Janet Yellen, economics and business administration professor. http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/04/02_forum_qa.shtml



Opening the Doors: Intellectual Life and Academic Conditions in Post-War Baghdad (15 July 2003)
 Hala Fattah, Ph.D., Jens Hanssen, D.Phil., Prof. Edouard Méténier, Keith D. Watenpaugh, Ph.D.
http://www.lemoyne.edu/global_studies/opening_the_doors.pdf



Oriental Institute Iraq Working Group (2004)
<http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/Ih.html>



The Iraq War & Archeology
 Joint Project – University of Vienna and Archeos
<http://iwa.univie.ac.at/index.html>



This Canadian International Youth Letter (CIYL) is part of a new series with an emphasis on science and human affairs. The series incorporates cultural and youth studies as well as research-based information on the science of human behaviour, including the effects of war, destructiveness and violence on youth development, global mental health and the environment. Under the theme '**Exploring New Ways of Knowing – A Meeting of Minds, Science and Human Experience**' it is part of the new project of the **International Youth Network for the Advancement of the Sciences, Humanities and Global Bioethics (IYNet)**

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