



News & Notes

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A LETTER FROM SRI LANKA

By John Carswell
Curator, The Oriental Institute



Students from Colombo, Jaffna, Perideniya and Jawardeniya Universities get their first experience of digging.

This was not written in the field, but back in Chicago in the relative calm of late summer, after eight weeks spent in South India and Sri Lanka. The aim of the Sri Lankan expedition was two-fold; first, to complete a survey of the Indian coast looking at ports mentioned in Islamic and Chinese sources, and second, to begin the full-scale excavation of Mantai, a site at the northern tip of Sri Lanka, which played a leading role in maritime trade in Asia for over a thousand years. This had lasted from the Roman period right up to the collapse of the Chola dynasty in Sri Lanka in 1070 A.D.

Travel funds for the survey came from the Smithsonian Institution; the excavation was financed by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and The British Museum in London, with additional funds from The Ford Foundation in India for the training of local students. In Sri Lanka, the work was supported by the Archaeological Commission both materially and in every possible way; indeed, the collaborative nature of the dig was essential for its success. The excavation also unexpectedly served as a training ground for a number of young archaeologists employed by the UNESCO Cultural Triangle Project in Sri Lanka; UNESCO has granted over a million dollars for the excavation and preservation of the inland classical sites, such as Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa

and Sigiriya. Although Mantai lies outside this area, its importance as the connecting link between the great inland sites and the outside world has long been established.

Passing through London, the night before I left for India I met by chance at dinner the two individuals, Cary Welch and Robert Knox, who had been directly responsible for the support of the Metropolitan Museum and the British Museum. This gave them the chance to learn about our plans for the coming season at first hand. Next morning, after a long and practically empty PAN AM flight eastward I woke up in New Delhi. With the temperature at 6 a.m. already climbing over 100 degrees, after a quick look at the Red Fort I was glad to catch the next flight south to Bombay, which was relatively cool by comparison. Later in the day I went on to Colombo, the journey enlivened by a plane full of happy Sri Lankans, laden down with consumer goods they had bought in India, unobtainable at home. Landing in Colombo, I stepped into a deep puddle – the south-west monsoon had already begun and was working its way up the coast.

My first call was on Siran Deraniyagala, the Assistant Commissioner for Archaeology. Siran, trained at Cambridge, London and Harvard, is prehistorian (as his father was, and



Some of the workers at Mantai; Siran Deraniyagala and Martha Prickett in the centre.

(Continued on page 2)

A LETTER FROM SRI LANKA (Continued from page 1)

grandfather), and comes from a princely family with tea-estates up in the hills near Ratnapura. He has been digging a cave on his own land, with a settlement containing micro-liths of identical design to those well known from the Near East, for which he has obtained carbon dates of 8,000 B.C. This is a revolutionary discovery, as Sri Lanka had been generally believed to have been settled only in the second millennium B.C. Together, Siran and I made the preliminary arrangements for the dig, paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Culture, and collected the contour survey commissioned two years previously from the Survey Department. My colleague and Assistant Director, Martha Prickett of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, was due to arrive in two weeks time; in the interim, I set off by myself on the Indian survey.

Flying to Madras in the worst storm I have ever encountered – even the air hostesses were screaming – we dropped right out of a black cloud infested with lightning and other devils, and found ourselves suspended about 200 feet above the town. After recovering from this unnerving adventure, I made contact with Dr. Nagaswamy, the Director of Archaeology for the southern State of Tamil Nadu. Nagaswamy was both interested in the survey and extremely helpful with practical arrangements. He mapped out an itinerary, and sent cables to the staff along the route. He also showed me some sherds he had excavated two years ago from the palace site at Gangaikondacholapuram, which he couldn't identify. They were of the finest Chinese ware, tying in exactly with the date of the Chola capital 1020-1310 A.D. I was later able to visit his excavations, which had been impeccably conducted, and which were meticulously kept even out of season. Thanks to him, I was able to investigate all the important ancient ports south of Madras, including Naggapatanam, Nagore and Karikal, as well as a number of other famous sites and temples inland. Specially important for our own work was Arikimedu, south of Pondicherry, which was dug by Mortimer Wheeler in 1946 and used by him to date the whole sequence of Indian cultures, through the imported sherds of Arretine ware he found at that site. Arikimedu, like Mantai, was a trading community with direct contacts with the Roman world.

I met Dr. Nagaswamy again in Tanjore, where he was advising the University on a new programme, and in return for all the help I had received, I agreed to give an impromptu lecture to the graduate students and faculty on recent archaeological research in Sri Lanka. That day I had Nagaswamy as a guide to the Hindu temple in Tanjore, built 1100 A.D. and probably the most famous in all India, built at the height of the Chola dynasty. The Cholas are of special interest, as not only were they the rulers of Sri Lanka and part of the Far East during the last two centuries of Mantai's supremacy, but they also had far-reaching and well documented maritime trade connections with the east, including China.

That evening, I was invited to attend an all-night dance drama, given once a year at Melattur, a little village about twenty miles north. We arrived at 9 p.m., just as the performance was getting under way on a stage erected in the middle of the village street. The effect was like a cheap colour print come to life, with fantastic costumes, make-up, and jewellery. The play is only performed by members of three Brahmin families, and the ancient text handed down from one generation to the next. The story is about a demon, Ghul, who with his simpering wife tries to kill the young hero. The hero escapes, because Ghul can kill him only inside or outside his house, and he has the good sense to stay on the doorstep! All the parts were played by men; the



Mantai, Sri Lanka: a-a', the proposed main trench, running from the double moat to the centre of the mound. B. the deep trench C. the old excavations, 1887 and later D. The Gulf of Mannar and open sea E. the edge of the mound F. Vankalai, on the west coast, where we previously excavated in 1979. G. our matched dining-hut.

"heroine", whom we met after the play, was actually a very masculine engineer working in Abu Dhabi, who had taken his annual leave so that he could come home and perform in the play. He was very proud, for three generations of his family were involved in that particular production; his father was the chief narrator, and his seven-year-old son was taking part in the play that night for the first time. Night eventually became day, and it was not until after 5 a.m. that it finished and we returned sleepily to Tanjore.

From Tanjore, I took the train to Tuticorin, to search the estuary of the Tamprapane River for the ancient port of Kayal, mentioned by Marco Polo as the most important port in the world. I had hunted for it unsuccessfully twice before, and this time I managed to locate it at last. Most of it had been dug away quite recently for salt pans. The "town" must have really been a settlement of huts, for there was no trace of any more permanent buildings. There was, however, a large quantity of pottery scattered on the ground. The Chinese sherds, which predominated, were of stoneware and fine celadon, and just what one would expect from the period.

From Tiruchipally I flew back to Colombo, arriving the day before Martha Prickett. Next day we set out with Siran and the staff for Mantai, by landrover. The site is at the extreme northern tip of Sri Lanka, beyond the jungle. Because of its unusual geographic situation, both the north-east and south-west monsoons just miss it. This is in fact why any trace of it remains, for unlike other settlements in the monsoon belt it doesn't get washed away by the rains twice a year. But if we didn't have rain, we certainly had the wind, the tail-end of the monsoon and cyclones in the Indian Ocean. It howled night and day for the whole month we were there.

The site is about ten metres high at its peak, and covered with low scrub and mangrove trees. Its importance was first recognized in 1887, and it has been dug sporadically, if unscientifically, at intervals ever since. Its significance lies in the depth of deposit and the range of imported materials, from

both the Near and Far East, and the Indian subcontinent. The aim of the excavation, which is planned to last for three years, is the correlation of imported with local material, and the establishment of an integrated chronology for all three cultures involved. The earliest material is from about the second century B.C., and the site appears to have been continuously inhabited until it was abandoned after the retreat of the Cholas to India in the late eleventh century A.D.

Our first task was to remove a large area of scrub jungle,



The deep trench: A. the "mermaid" - bones of a dugong B. post-holes and shell deposits C. the water-table, approx. ten metres below the surface of the mound. The lowest levels exposed are 2nd c. B.C./2nd c. A.D.

and we cleared a strip twenty metres wide by two hundred metres long, right across the double moat to the heart of the mound. We laid out a main trench with forty squares, each 4m. square, and began to dig the first three on the edge of the moat. At the same time, we used an older trench at the centre of the mound to gain access to the lower levels, and we reached the present water-table at about ten metres below the surface. These early levels produced a number of well-defined post holes and quantities of charcoal, shell and bone. This was probably the first phase of the site, when it was simply a camp ground. The bones included those of a "mermaid" the skeleton of a dugong, or sea cow. The trenches by the moat produced great quantities of pottery, local, Chinese and Islamic, as well as fragments of Fatimid glass, Islamic lustre-ware, glass bangles and numerous beads. Again there was a large quantity of well-preserved bone, most unusual for a site in such a humid climate.

The Ford Foundation in New Delhi had provided for the training of local students and we had expected six. In the event, thirty-nine graduate students turned up from all five of the universities in Sri Lanka. They accommodated themselves quite happily in the madam - the pilgrims' hostel attached to the Hindu temple on the site. I was staying in a little house adjacent to the temple, away from the main camp. For exercise, I ran at 5:15 every morning once round the temple, thinking that in the half light I would be unobserved. But after a couple of weeks my landlord received a deputation from the temple, consisting of the High Priest and his officials, who had seen my early morning sprint and were deeply concerned. They wanted to know why I was running anti-clockwise round the temple, instead of the right way (clockwise). Did it mean that I was doing penance for something? And if it did, would it help if they rang the temple bell, beat the drum, and blew on their conch shells when I ran?

Martha Prickett was in charge of field work, and much of my time was spent in photography, registration, drawing and

sorting and numbering quantities of pottery and small finds, besides keeping the accounts for 39 students, 27 Archaeological Commission staff, and 81 labourers. The youngest employee was a schoolboy of fifteen, and the oldest a family retainer of Siran's deceased father, aged 81. Our diet consisted mostly of rice and curried vegetables, supplemented with fresh fish, shrimps fried in coconut oil, and gigantic crabs. Siran took to "shooting for the pot", and we had the chance to eat partridge, pigeons, and a green parrot. The only thing we really lacked was fresh water, which had to be brought in from five miles away. Visible wild life consisted of innumerable birds, two peacocks belonging to the temple, a pack of very noisy monkeys, and a six-and-a-half foot cobra which jumped out of its skin at 10 a.m. one morning, at the bottom of our garden. So did we.

For sorting pottery and other finds, we had the use of a deserted weaving centre near the temple; the pottery was washed in the nearby tank, or reservoir, where we also installed a flotation tank. The weaving centre was ideal, as it had a cement floor, and we added tables and shelves of our own making. In the evenings, we lectured to the students on the principals of scientific excavation, and the history and significance of the site. Everything we said had to be translated into both Tamil and Sinhalese, for most of the students were weak

in English. They included three young Buddhist monks in saffron robes, and six girls, all of whom took to hard labour in the dusty trenches without a murmur.

Perhaps the most rewarding single aspect of the excavation was the enlightened attitude of the Archaeological Commission. Although Sri Lanka is known through the third world for its stern attitude towards the export of national treasures, in light of conspicuous abuses during the colonial period, they generously allowed us to make two collections of duplicate sherd material, for the Metropolitan Museum and the British Museum, in recognition of their support. Such a liberal attitude is greatly encouraging for the future.



ORIENTAL INSTITUTE'S DIRECTOR NAMED PROVOST OF THE UNIVERSITY

Robert McCormick Adams, director of the Oriental Institute from 1962 to 1968 and from 1981 to present has also been named provost of The University of Chicago. He replaces

Kenneth Dam who has been nominated to be deputy secretary of state. The provost is chief academic officer of the university after the president.

GRANT AWARDED FOR BASIC RESEARCH IN ANCIENT SCIENCE



Dr. Francesca Rochberg-Halton, Assyrian dictionary project research associate at the Oriental Institute, is the only woman in 1982 to receive the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation prize grant, which will total \$164,000 for the next five years.

The no-strings-attached grant to the young woman of 30, whom everyone knows as "Chessie", is for research "in the history of science", and was awarded to her because a group of anonymous talent scouts chosen by the Foundation deemed Dr. Rochberg-Halton of "exceptional talent, originality, self-direction and promise for the future."

Chessie says that her plan for research, set for the past number of years, is the study of Babylonian omens, astrology, and astronomy. She completed her dissertation in 1980 at the Oriental Institute on "The Treatment of Lunar Eclipses in Babylonian Celestial Omens". There are enough tablets and texts to read on the subject to keep her busy for her lifetime, and of course more and more constantly become available.

She came to the Oriental Institute in 1974 as a graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, where she majored in Oriental studies. Why this area of interest?

Even when very young she had a fascination for ancient history. Before college in 1971, she visited the Near East, saw a number of archaeological sites, and decided to pur-

sue this interest in prehistory further. She came home to major in Oriental studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and arrived at the Oriental Institute for graduate study in 1974. Assyriology as her area of study of the Near East was, therefore, the result of a series of happy coincidences. She took courses then available in Akkadian and Sumerian, and as she was able to translate more cuneiform discovered that many of the texts dealing with omens, astrology and astronomy represented a vast area of unexplored material. In order to work in this area, she decided to learn about modern astronomy. Working independently with Noel Swerdlow of the University of Chicago Astronomy Department, made it possible for her to expand her work on the "ultimate ancestor" of science.

Chessie's work as a research assistant to Dr. Erica Reiner, who is widely acclaimed for her research of planetary omens, helped determine her future career. She also is eager to find out more about Greek astronomy and its relationship to Babylonian astronomy. She said recently in a lecture to the Near East Club: "The development of exact sciences, namely mathematics and astronomy, in the ancient Near East, occurred independently only in Mesopotamia. Astronomy in Mesopotamia eventually achieved a level of high quantitative accuracy and influenced future developments in Greek, Indian, and Islamic science. Through wide acceptance of the Ptolemaic tradition, as evidenced by Indian and Islamic astronomy, the direct influence of Babylonian astronomy on the Greek world had even greater impact as the ultimate impetus for the quantitative approach on celestial phenomena."

Congratulations, Chessie. Editor of News and Notes hopes to publish more about your work in the next few months.

THANKS TO PHOTOGRAPHER GOODPASTURE

Many *News & Notes* readers complimented the editorial staff for the montage of pictures in the last issue, of friends at the Museum's annual dinner. Full credit for the fine photography goes to Jim Goodpasture of Glencoe, Illinois, who not only used his professional skill generously and creatively, but did it on an entirely volunteer basis.

Mr. Goodpasture retired early as an executive from Sears Roebuck & Co. to launch into photography as a second career. In addition to his free lancing, he gives individual instruction and this fall, will teach courses in Basic Camera and The Darkroom for the Glencoe Park District.

Jim Goodpasture and Jean Grant, the Institute's Senior Photo Technician, are active members of the Fort Dearborn-Chicago Camera Club (he as Past President), where Jean prevailed upon Jim to cover the gala event as a roving photographer. A regular helpmate of Jean's, who also deserves special mention, is Joe Denov, a retired photographer who volunteers two full days each week in the Institute's photographic darkroom. We know that it is important to take an excellent photo, but do we know that many techniques are used in the darkroom to produce the kind of finished product, as is evident in the photos which Jean and Joe developed for the recently published Museum Guide?

Jean Grant succeeded Ursula Schneider eight and a half years ago. The late Dr. Gustavus F. Swift, then the Institute's curator, employed her upon the recommendations of Drs. Hans Güterbock and Maurits N. van Loon, who had taken Jean as a photographer on the 1970 expedition to Turkey for the Keban Dam Salvage at Korucutepe near the town of Elazig.

Do you all know that Jean is also the person who has developed and maintains The Oriental Institute courtyard garden?

1982-1983 ORIENTAL INSTITUTE PROGRAM SCHEDULE

On lecture evenings the Quadrangle Club, 1155 E. 57th Street, will be open to Oriental Institute members who wish to make dinner reservations. Please call Mrs. Strattman, 493-8601. Please remember that the privilege of the use of the dining room at the Quadrangle Club is a courtesy extended to members of the Oriental Institute only on nights when there is an Oriental Institute lecture. Please make sure your signature on your check is legible.

All lectures, except for the opening one on October 11, will be held in Breasted Hall, the Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th Street at 8:00 PM.

October 11th *Horses on the Citadel: A Bronze Breastplate and the Archaeology of Hasanlu.* Irene Winter, The University of Pennsylvania, Monday, October 11, 8:00 P.M., Mandel Hall, 57th Street and University Ave. RESERVATIONS ARE NECESSARY. Please call or write the Membership Office 753-2389.

October 31st *Members' Day* will be held on Sunday afternoon. October 31st. See the *October News & Notes* for more details.

November 15th A prehistoric symposium will be held Monday November 15th. The *October News & Notes* will have a schedule for this symposium.

December 8th *Egypt and the Red Sea Trade.* Janet H. Johnson and Donald Whitcomb, The Oriental Institute, Wednesday, December 8, 1982, 8:00 P.M.

March 2nd *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Approach to the Study of their Origins.* Norman Golb, The Oriental Institute, Wednesday, March 2, 1982, 8:00 P.M.

June 1st *Chicago House and the Rescue of Ancient Theban Monuments.* Lanny D. Bell, The Oriental Institute. Wednesday, June 1, 1983, 8:00 P.M.

THE SUQ

السوق

LIFE, PROSPERITY, HEALTH

(^{nh} wd3 snb) These three hieroglyphs form a greeting used by the ancient Egyptians to wish life, prosperity, and health. They have now been developed into a charm especially for the SUQ, of gold vermeil over sterling.

Charm: \$ 9.50 Tie Tack: \$18.50
Earrings: \$20.00 Cufflinks: \$28.50
Charm on a 17" G.F. chain \$17.50



LIFE (^{nh})

This hieroglyph represents three consonants which spell the word for life, and was worn as an amulet by the Egyptians. This one of gold vermeil over sterling was developed especially for the SUQ.

Charm 2 inches \$22.50
Charm on a 18" G.F. chain \$38.50



\$2.50 Postage
10% members discount
7% tax for IL residents

NON-MEMBERSHIP LECTURE OF INTEREST

Dr. Adnan Bounni, Director of Excavations, Department of Antiquities and Museums for the Syrian Arab Republic, will speak on Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Syria on Thursday, October 7, 1982, at 4:00 PM in Breasted Hall at the Oriental Institute.

NEW PUBLICATION

The Oriental Institute is pleased to announce the publication of:

UNITED WITH ETERNITY: A CONCISE GUIDE TO THE MONUMENTS OF MEDINET HABU

By William J. Murnane.

This book distills the results of half a century's work by the Oriental Institute's Epigraphic Survey in Egypt. Principally, it is a guide to the Medinet Habu complex—the mortuary temple of Ramesses III and its adjoining buildings—in an order that visitors to the site might follow. Analysis of the temples' reliefs and inscriptions, moreover, illuminate both the historical background and the probable functioning of these buildings in Pharaonic times. Extensively illustrated with photographs and drawings that originally appeared in the Oriental Institute's multi-volume publication of the site. 1980 Pp. vi + 90. \$8.00. Please send NO MONEY; we will send you a pro forma invoice that will include the correct postage and handling charges. Publication Sales Office, The Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637

The Oriental Institute will offer a tour to Egypt in February of 1983, one to Sicily in April and one to China in early June. Details will appear in the *October News and Notes*.

AUTUMN MEMBERS' COURSE

SHEBA AND SPICE

Ancient South Arabia, the Last Frontier in Near Eastern
Archaeology

This course will offer an introduction to the history and culture of pre-Islamic South Arabia, modern North and South Yemen, an area which has only recently opened up to Western scholars. The course will incorporate material recorded by recent University of Chicago expeditions to North Yemen.

Course Outline

- I. What the ancients knew: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Arabia Felix and the spice trade, and the hazardous lives of the early explorers.
- II. The oldest skyscrapers and the newest rifles: A look at the current political and economic situation in North and South Yemen or, why the Saudis are nervous.
- III. What happened to the origins of ancient South Arabian civilization? A historical survey.
- IV. How many kings can occupy the same throne at the same time? "In strong defiance of the imagination," the historical survey continues.
- V. The coming of Judaism, Christianity, and the Ethiopians: A look at the ancient South Arabian religious scene and the bloody deeds at Najran.
- VI. Ruined temples and strange beasts: an introduction to the art and archaeology of ancient South Arabia.
- VII. The ancient Near East's most elegant script. An enthusiastic introduction to Epigraphic South Arabic.

VIII. Reading the language the Queen of Sheba spoke: How to read simple Epigraphic South Arabic inscriptions, with very little grammar.

Instructor: **Raymond Tindel**

Members' courses are held on Saturdays from 10:00 to noon in The Oriental Institute. This course will start on October 2, 1982 and will last for eight sessions.

Tuition is \$50 for members or \$70 for non-members (which includes a membership in the Oriental Institute).

REGISTRATION FORM

Please register me for the following Members' Course

- SHEBA AND SPICE (Tuition \$50)
- I am a member
- I am not a member, but enclose a SEPARATE check for \$20 to cover a one year membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____

Please make all checks payable to THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE. Please register by Thursday, September 30, 1982. MAIL TO: Membership Secretary, The Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

The PBS special, Egypt, Quest for Eternity will be rerun September 28 in many parts of the country (not Chicago). Check local listings for time.



The Oriental Institute

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