

Editorial

Buried History is not normally thematic but this edition has turned out to be almost exclusively about Ancient Near Eastern language and history, particularly as it was recorded in cuneiform script. Sadly, this year has seen the passing of Australia's two leading cuneiform scholars, Francis Andersen and Noel Weeks. We begin with papers remembering them.

Emeritus Professor Edwin Judge pens a biographical memoir about Francis Andersen. While adopting British Academy convention, Edwin also aims to create a lived scenario that encompasses every single one of the 250 items as formulated by Frank in his *curriculum vitae*. Edwin believes that Frank's punctilio in this may itself be a sign of the unique understanding of linguistic meaning with which he was endowed.

The biographical memoir is bound by the content of Frank's c.v., which does not include the *The Hebrew Bible: Andersen-Forbes Analyzed Text* (2012: Faithlife), a software biblical text linked to the databases behind research he carried out with Dean Forbes. It is the culmination of their life-time of research and was licensed to Faithlife (previously Logos). It has also been licensed to Accordance, the other main provider of electronic biblical literature and was released in their system recently.

Readers will note that Frank had a long association with the Australian Institute of Archaeology, joining the Council in 1950, being a Fellow from 2002 and having many important points of contact in the interim, including being editor of this journal. Arguably, Frank's relationship with the Institute and its people led him to the study of languages and the Ancient Near East after his research in science became problematic. Later, when he was at the lowest ebb in his career, it was the Institute that threw him a lifeline. Professor Judge's memoir acknowledges this relationship, something overlooked by nearly every other obituary/tribute.

Frank was intellectually gifted and his journey into ancient languages produced an extraordinary volume of scholarship with many creative ideas that will have significant and lasting influence on the understanding of the Hebrew Bible. His interest was the 'archaeology' of the Hebrew language and the meaning of the literature written in that language. The uncertainty that this research may create is not embraced by all, but is at the core of the Institute's mission to understand the past rather than the more common process of using ancient documents, such as the Old Testament, to bolster more recent theories and theologies. Frank was abreast of research into the ancient world till the end of his life and an afternoon in his presence was always mentally exhausting.

Frank had the potential to be Albright's intellectual successor but, as Professor Judge's memoir describes, that

did not happen for reasons he cannot explain. Professor Cyrus Gordon was one of Albright's most distinguished linguistic successors and it is one of his students, Dr Noel Weeks, who is the subject of a tribute written by Drs Luis Siddall and Samuel Jackson. The tribute had the benefit of a draft of Noel's intellectual autobiography. It is worthy of comment that both Andersen and Weeks began their careers in the sciences before studying with leading American scholars and spending a lifetime in Ancient Near Eastern languages and history. Dr Weeks is remembered fondly by the many students he taught during his long tenure at the University of Sydney.

The last paper in this edition was written by Dr Weeks and like his contribution to the last issue, it has been edited by Dr Luis Siddall. The paper discusses the nature of the transmission of ancient culture and traditions. The precise parallels between the Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern literature such as the 'Ark Tablet', which Dr Irving Finkel of the British Museum spoke about at the Institute in 2019, give the topic new impetus.

The first paper was written by members of the CANZ (Cuneiform in Australia and New Zealand) team. It translates an astronomical diary from Babylon that they discovered in the Abbey Museum, Caboolture, Queensland. The text appears to be a mundane record of astronomical observations, weather reports and events. The transliteration and translation of the tablet is certainly not mundane and embodies the best scholarly collaborative traditions. The tablet is the work of ancient observers and scribes, who were highly educated in the sciences and humanities. Although the authors of the paper do not explore issues relating to the identity of the astronomers or the nature of their observations, it is probable that the activities illustrated by this tablet were those practised by the people called Magi, *magoi*, who were reported in the Gospel of Matthew to have visited the infant Jesus because they had 'seen his star in the East' (Matt 2: 1).

The following paper by Professor Horowitz discusses the Juniper Garden in Babylon and the funeral of Alexander the Great. He explains how the research of the CANZ team in Australia and New Zealand led to his interest in this topic.

In keeping with the cuneiform theme, Dr Siddall reviews Josette Elayi's history of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. While the two books on Biblical Archaeology that I review are focussed on ancient Israel, they do recognise the connections with Mesopotamian texts.

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