



Tepe Gawra from the olive groves of Fadhiliyah

# UNIVERSITY MUSEUM BULLETIN

VOL. 6

MAY, 1936

No. 4

## THE ROUND HOUSE AT GAWRA

ACTIVE work of the Expedition to Tepe Gawra, supported jointly by the American Schools of Oriental Research and the Museum, ceased on February 15th and this, the fifth season, was brought to a close shortly thereafter. This site in Iraq, some fifteen miles north of the modern city of Mosul and of the famous ruins of Nineveh, is of particular interest because it is probably the oldest town site to be thoroughly excavated, and hence it is revealing the vestiges of the earliest known civilization. In the following report Mr. Bache, the Field Director, describes chiefly the season's outstanding achievement—an unexpected architectural discovery of great importance.

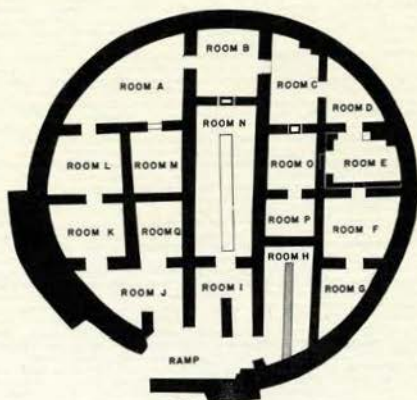
AS IS WELL KNOWN to all who have followed our work at Tepe Gawra the outstanding objective for the season just closed was to uncover the Thirteenth Level of the segment of the mound we have chosen to excavate. In fixing this objective there seemed no bar whatsoever to its achievement. But archaeology differs from the more exact sciences by constantly requiring complete changes of well-laid plans. We had virtually completed the removal of the overlying strata and were successfully uncovering Thirteen when, at the very limit of our area of excavation, a small section of a curved wall came to light. To encounter a curved wall is unusual in Mesopotamian archaeology of this early epoch. Despite our eagerness to continue uncovering Thirteen we could not, unfortunately, with any honesty, ignore this tantalizing arc of a well-built wall that confronted us; once this was acknowledged there was no other course open except to expose the whole of the structure to which it pertained. In order to do this we had to leave the area we were engaged in excavating and go up on the adjoining area and therefrom remove Levels Ten, Ten-A, and Eleven, before we reached what actually turned out to be the season's *pièce de resistance*, the Round House of Level Eleven-A. For two months this structure was our joy and our sorrow: for while we early recognized that the Round House would probably prove to be a dis-



covery of distinct importance in the field of northern Mesopotamian archaeology, nevertheless, it was by no means an inexpensive process to clear it, and the added costs were naturally not anticipated in our budget.

First of all, I wish to make it clear that while the Round House is at present assigned to Stratum Eleven-A, we have no proof for this except for the fact that it was under Level Eleven. It may be shown in the future that the Round House actually belongs to Level Twelve. It can not be told until there is further excavation to the southwest, south, and west; there are no connections whatever in the remaining direction

where it apparently is above the general level of Twelve. But this means little, as we have often seen. The Round House was obviously a Citadel or Fortress that crowned the mound of period — years B.C. Few objects were found in it and one of them was indicating use of the structure as a place for the enemy was



Plan of the Round House

upon the people of Gawra, fifty-five centuries ago.

The only room in the Round House of certain occupancy was the one marked G on the accompanying ground plan which was plainly used for grain storage: though of course the kernels had long since decayed and vanished, the remaining hulls gave sure proof of the use of this room as a granary, probably always kept well-stocked by this earliest civilized community against an emergency attack from roving nomads.

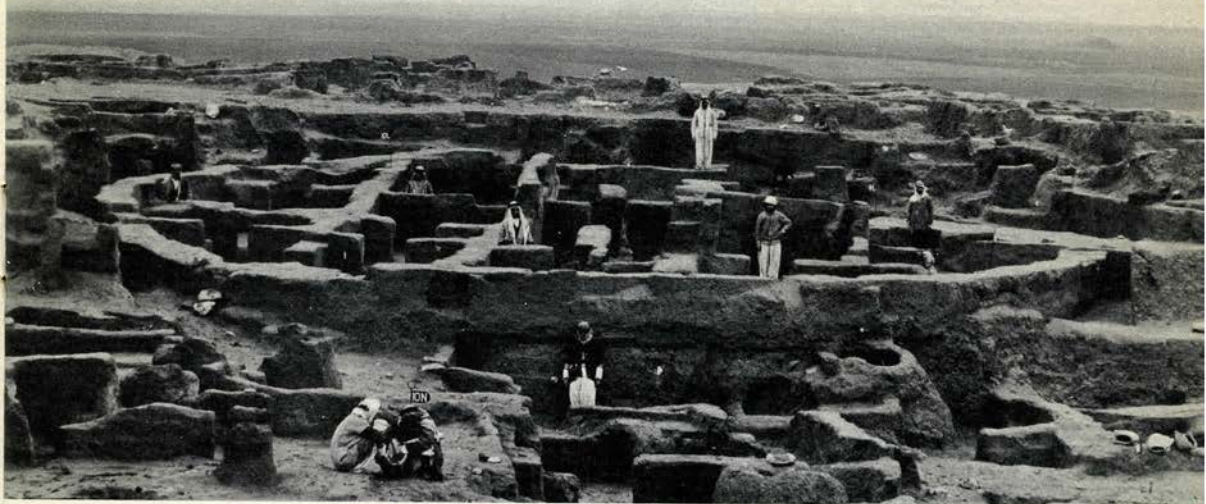
The building is in remarkably good repair, if such a term may be applied to it. The only place where we encountered difficulty in tracing its outlines is at the entrance, where the situation was made difficult by the ramp entering from an upper level.

It is decidedly noteworthy that the outline of the circular wall is

entirely above level of Twelve.

little, as we have often seen. The Round House was obviously a Citadel that crowned the mound of period — years B.C. Few objects were found in it and one of them was indicating use of the structure as a place for the enemy was upon the people of Gawra, fifty-five centuries ago.

Neg. 44796



*Above:* The Round House excavated at Tepe Gawra during the recent field season

*Below:* The Village of Fadhiliyah from the top of Gawra

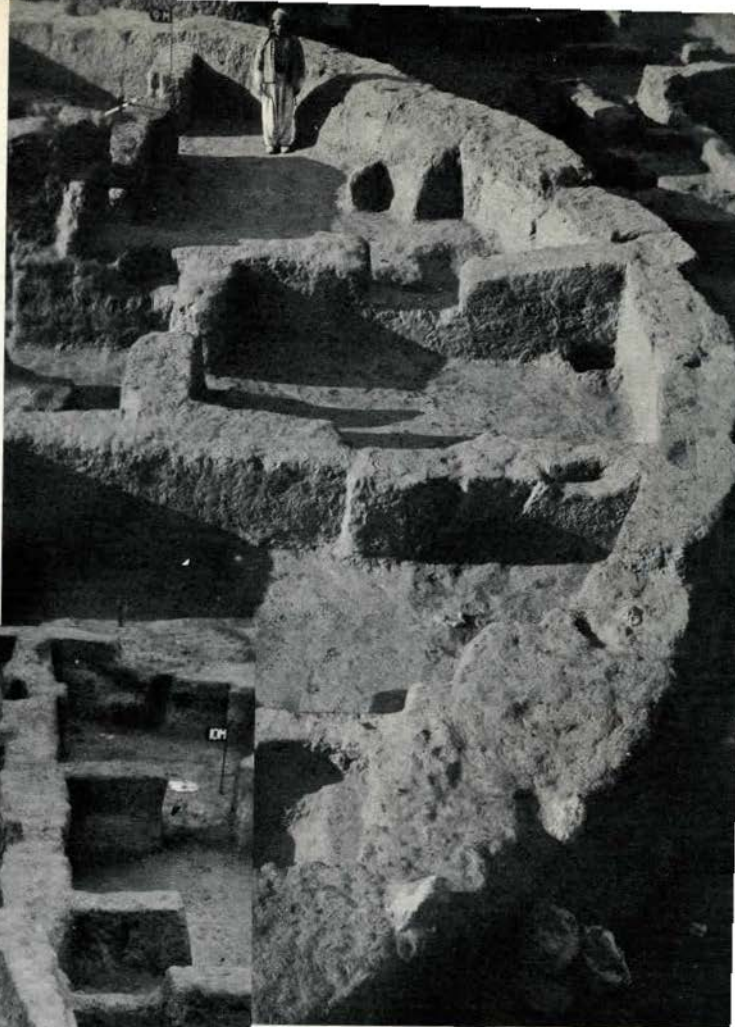
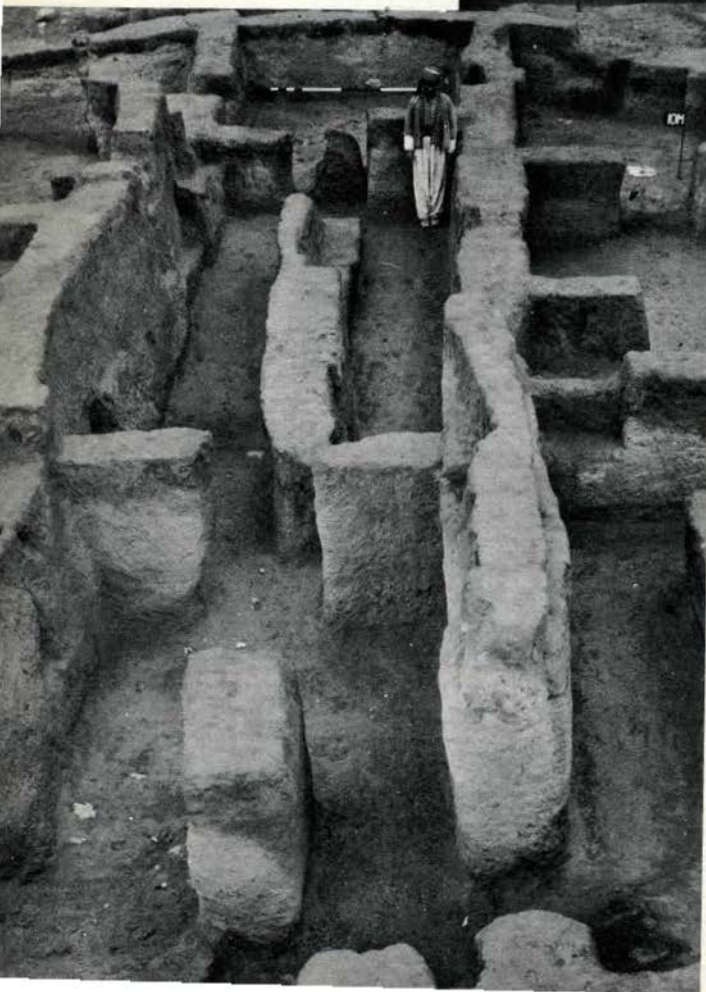
PLATE II





Neg.  
44791

*Below:* The Central Section of  
the Round House at Gawra.



*Above:* The Round House at  
Tepe Gawra showing rooms D,  
C, B and A in order of proximity  
to the camera.

almost a mathematically exact circle, except for the place where the ramp occurs, and there seems to be a studied symmetry in the disposition of the rooms. This would seem definitely to presuppose that a plan was laid out before construction was begun—maybe this was a diagram only scratched in the dust, but nevertheless it may be considered the father of all architectural blue-prints, and hence a clear indication of a pretty well-advanced people.

While, unquestionably, the Round House was the season's outstanding achievement I do not wish to imply that the small distance we were able to penetrate into Level Thirteen was unfruitful. Indeed just because the finds in the uncovered areas of Thirteen were so interesting, we perforce regretted the time we had to spend on the Round House. The

sions were of moment for ordinary reproduction of animals. were reproduced in my last *Bulletin* with my last Others are treated. All extraordinary expression in ment of animalisation.



seal impression of their extraordinary representation. Some of them produced in the connection report. here illustrate an ex-vigour of excellent treatment. Level Thirteen was interesting, too, for the Infant Cemetery it disclosed under the White Room area of last season. Within a space not more than fifteen metres square over sixty such burials came to light. This cemetery gave us the great majority of the painted jars excavated from this Level, as well as scores of undecorated examples. Usually the small corpse was placed in one large jar—and if any painted one was used in the burial, it was the one that contained the body—and a smaller one was placed on top as a cover. There were never any furnishings with these burials. Possibly our Iraqi Inspector is right when he says laconically "these people did not like children," for not even a bead was found in any of these burials, and in many instances they did not even trouble to bury the child in a whole pot: frequently large frag-



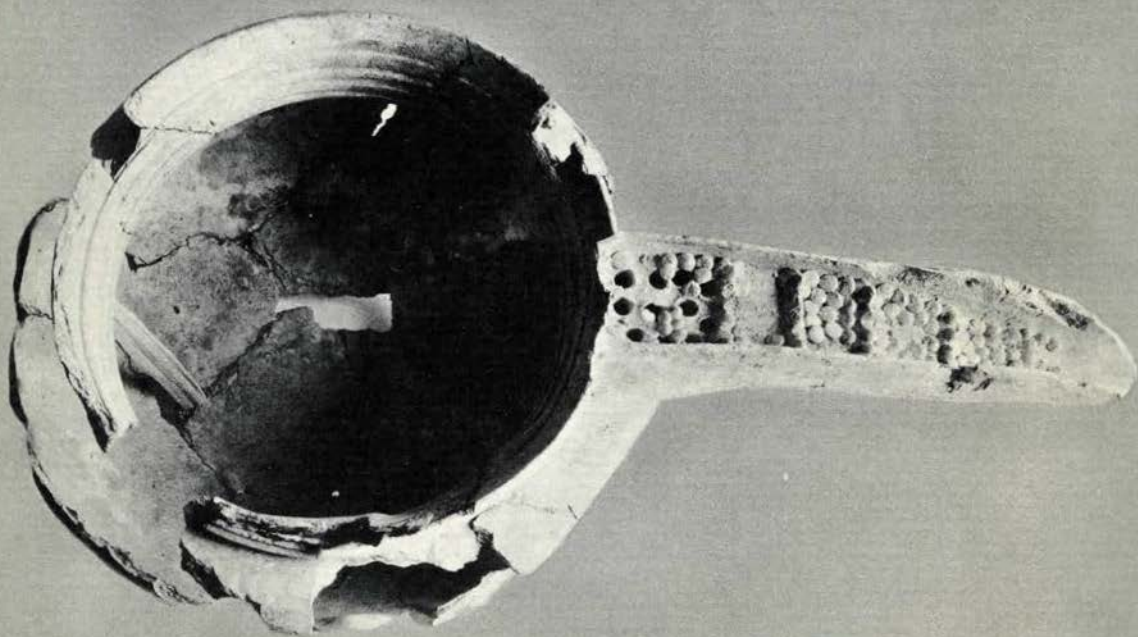


neg 44744

**PLATE IV**

*Above:* Painted pottery bowl from Tepe Gawra Stratum 12

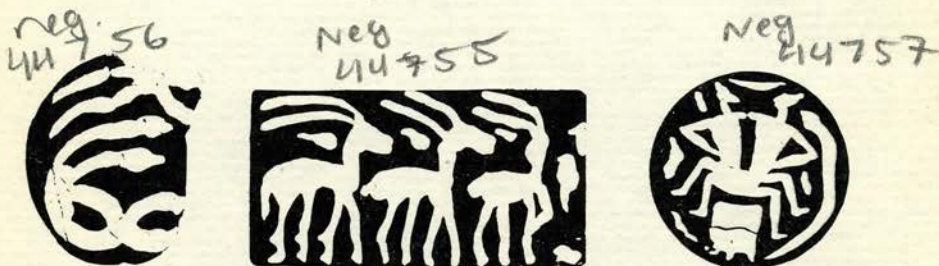
*Below:* Bowl with cascade spout from Tepe Gawra Level 11-a.



ments served as both container and cover. This was more generally the case when painted pottery was used: when the dead child was buried in plain ware, usually whole vessels were employed.

Particular attention should be given the interesting piece of pottery shown in Plate IV. It was found in Level Eleven-A. Made of a light green-grey ware, very fine in texture, its spout is decorated with pellets of the same material in an effort to simulate the rocky bed of a cascading stream. Elsewhere in this same level we have found spouts decorated in this manner but this is the first time we have discovered a bowl so nearly complete.

C. B.



**NOTE:** Dr. E. A. Speiser, Director of the Baghdad School of the American Schools of Oriental Research has kindly given permission here to reprint an extract from the *Bulletin* of the Schools in which he advances especially interesting supplementary theories about the uses of the Round House.

The discovery of the Round House is bound to mark an epoch in the history of ancient Mesopotamian architecture. Design, original quality of the work, and the present state of preservation, are all most agreeably surprising. The walls have been preserved to a sufficient height to yield a complete plan, requiring no additions or reconstructions. The whole forms a nearly perfect circle and the main wall is shared by all the outer rooms. Consequently, only the few inner chambers are rectangular. Mr. Bache is doubtless right in regarding this structure as a citadel. The massiveness of the walls, the sheltered single entrance, and the evidence of the weapons discovered within—the only finds coming from the Round House—combine to corroborate this view. In addition, however the building must have served another purpose. The character of the central section is surely suggestive. Extending clear across the compound we have three rooms placed end to end (I, N, B); the middle one is the largest chamber of the entire structure. It contains a low wall in the center, which, as both Mr. Bache and Mr. Müller assure me, could not have been a partition or



newel wall; it must have been used, therefore, as a platform or the like. In short, we have here what is clearly a cult chamber. The smaller room in front was then the usual antechamber, while the third room must have been the cella of this unique prehistoric sanctuary. The whole represented thus a combined fortress and temple. One is reminded of the biblical temple-towers that provided the last place of refuge in a besieged city. But apart from all other considerations, the Gawra Round House is scarcely earlier than the beginning of the fourth millennium.

Offhand, this circular construction brings to mind the foundations of "beehive" dwellings which Mallowan found recently in prehistoric Arpachīya, a neighbor of Tepe Gawra; and of the Aegean *tholoi* to which Mallowan and Rose have compared the Arpachīya finds. But the resemblance is at best superficial. The *tholoi* represent small buildings, and presuppose a domical construction. The Round House, on the other hand, contained eighteen rooms, and the roof was in this case definitely flat. A circular ground plan remains thus the only common feature. But slight as this connection is, it can hardly have been accidental, considering the propinquity of the two sites and the not too great distance in time that separates the respective levels in question.

## AN EGYPTIAN MUMMY CLOTH

DURING the Roman Period in Egypt (30 B. C.—395 A. D.) one Ḥor, son of Ḥarsiēset born of Tedikhety(?), died and for his internment a Mummy Cloth was ordered, painted fittingly with colorful scenes from the Book of the Dead. This cloth—or what remains of it after some eighteen centuries—has lately been added to the collections of the Egyptian Section and is unique among the varied interesting groups of objects brought together in the new Mummy Room.

There are four rows of pictures and around three sides runs a hieroglyphic inscription the text of which is corrupt, as is to be expected at this late date. The band of inscription across the top has been sewn on and a close examination indicates that originally the cloth was wider. The name of the deceased is written along the lower edge. To the left of the center is seen the upper part of the god Shu kneeling with upraised arms against a background painted to resemble the net-work of beads often used on mummies. Just above Shu is the sun-disk emitting rays of light while to the left and to the right are figures representing the deceased in the form of a mummy, though only a trace now remains of the one on the right. This design was without doubt originally the center of the cloth so that we may assume that it was longer by nearly a third.