

Fig. 1. Map of Iraq showing the sites excavated by the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities during the war years.

IRAQI EXCAVATIONS DURING THE WAR YEARS

THE land now known as Iraq corresponds to much of the territory more commonly known as Mesopotamia, "the land amid the rivers." It is a large lowland plain whose area is about one fifth greater than that of our own state of Arizona. To the north of the Iraqi plain rise the highlands of Armenia, and to the east, the highlands of Persia. On the south, Iraq touches the Persian Gulf, while on the west lie the deserts of Syria and Arabia. The population of modern Iraq is from four to five million souls; the great majority are Arabs and Moslems. The major part of the population is employed in agriculture, either as cultivators or as pastoral nomads. The larger part of Iraq's industry and commerce is concentrated in the three cities of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.

The climate of Iraq is hot and dry, particularly in the lower half where rainfall is almost negligible, and where growth is well-nigh impossible without irrigation. Fortunately for the land and its people, its entire length is traversed by the Tigris and Euphrates, the two rivers of Biblical fame, and large-scale irrigation has always been practical and possible. Iraq, therefore, has a high agricultural potential, particularly its southern half which consists largely of rich alluvial soil created from the silt of the two rivers. Today its major agricultural products are wheat, barley, rice, maize, cotton, and particularly dates; Iraq supplies the greater part of the dates sold in the world market. It is extremely poor in stones and minerals, except for oil. The latter has been discovered only relatively recently, but it is already making Iraq a land of prime importance in world politics and economics.

But to the student of the history of civilization, it is not its dates and oil which spell Iraq's importance, but rather the amazing achievements, both material and spiritual, of its long and relatively well-documented past. Iraq is the land which is gradually coming to be known to the modern historian as the "cradle of civilization." It is Iraq, and particularly that part of it which was known some five thousand years ago by the name of Sumer, that was the scene of two of the most significant and no doubt interrelated events in the history of civilization: the "urban revo-

lution" which transformed barbaric villages to highly cultured cities, and the invention of writing which provided a new and most effective tool of social communication. As a consequence, not a little of the manner and content of our present way of life can be traced back to the early civilizations of Iraq. Whether it be monumental architecture or the varied products of the arts and crafts, whether it be the fields of economics and politics, law or literature, religion or ethics, at least some aspects will find an early counterpart in the delta land of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Civilization in Iraq can be traced back for a period of well-nigh seven thousand years; in one way or another, in spite of numerous ups and downs, it has continued to thrive to the present day. It is in the uplands of northern Iraq that we find the earliest organized communities. As early as the fifth millennium B.C. we find there farming and stock-raising villages; we have now actually recovered the remains of their adobe shelters, their stone hoes and flint sickles, their grain bins and grinding stones, their bone implements and clay pottery. Not until the beginning of the fourth millennium do we find traces of a peasant-village culture in southern Iraq. Once settled, however, it soon outdistanced its northern neighbour in many directions; particularly it developed an urban culture which left its mark on the entire Near East, and to some extent on western civilization as a whole.

It is no simple matter to try to reconstruct, even in part, the history of southern Iraq from its earliest beginnings in the fourth millennium B.C. to, let us say, the second half of the third millennium, when Sumerian political domination in the land practically came to an end. The evidence is meagre and at times quite ambiguous. Thus the two scholars and excavators who made the most significant contributions to the interpretation of the available data, Henri Frankfort and Ephraim Speiser, have come to diametrically opposite conclusions on so all-important a fact as whether the Sumerians were or were not the first people to settle in southern Iraq. However, quite recently, new evidence has been made available which, unless I am very much mistaken, sheds considerable light on this problem and others relevant to the early history of southern Iraq.

For several years now the present writer has been preparing translations of the Sumerian epic tales found inscribed primarily on the clay tablets excavated by the University of Pennsylvania at Nippur some fifty

years ago; these translations, it is hoped, will constitute the second volume of the projected series of "Studies in Sumerian Culture." In the course of this work it became ever more clear that early in their history the Sumerians had undergone a barbaric cultural stage now commonly known as a Heroic Age; the paper embodying the relevant conclusions, "Heroes of Sumer: A New Heroic Age in World History and Literature," has been published in the PROCEEDINGS of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 90 (1946), pages 120-130. Once the existence of a Sumerian Heroic Age had been adduced, the next step was to try to arrive at the factors responsible for its origin and growth on comparison with the Heroic Ages of other people, particularly that of the Teutons. Now the facts revealed by this comparative analysis have proved to be quite illuminating for the early history of southern Iraq; they are discussed in considerable detail in a study entitled "New Light on the Early History of the Near East" which will appear in a forthcoming issue of the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY (Vol. LII No. 1; January-March, 1948), now edited by John Franklin Daniel, curator of our classical section. For our present purposes, however, a brief recapitulation of some of the pertinent results should prove of value; the hypothesis may be summarized as follows:

From the days of the first settlements to those of the great Accadian king Sargon, who was largely responsible for putting an end to Sumerian political domination, the history of southern Iraq may be divided into two major periods: the pre-Sumerian and the Sumerian. The pre-Sumerian period began as a peasant-village culture; as is now generally agreed by scholars, it seems to have been introduced into the land by immigrants from southwestern Iran. Not long after the establishment of the first settlements by the Iranian immigrants, who were neither Sumerians nor Semites, the Semites infiltrated into southern Iraq both as peaceful immigrants and as warlike conquerors. It is probably largely as a result of the fusion of these two ethnic groups, the Iranians from the east and the Semites from the west, and the consequent cross-fertilization of their cultures, that there came into being the first civilized urban state in lower Iraq. As in the case of the later Sumerian civilization, it must have consisted of a group of city-states between whom there was continual strife for supremacy over the land as a whole. But now and again through the centuries, relative unity and stability were no doubt achieved for at least a brief interval. At such times this Iraqi power, in which the Semitic

element was probably predominant, succeeded in extending its influence over many of the surrounding districts; that is, it developed what may well have been the first empire in the Near East, and probably the first empire in the history of civilization.

Now part of the territory which this empire came to dominate both culturally and politically must have consisted of the more westerly parts of the Iranian plateau to the east of Iraq. It was in the course of these political activities and their accompanying military campaigns that the Iraqi state first came in conflict with the Sumerians. For this primitive and probably nomadic people which may have erupted from Transcaucasia or Transcaspia, was pressing upon the districts of western Iran, the "buffer" state between the civilized Iraqi empire and the barbarians beyond, and these had to be defended at all costs. In their first encounters there is little doubt that the Mesopotamian forces with their superior military techniques, were more than a match for the Sumerian hordes. But in the long run, it was the mobile primitive Sumerians who had the advantage over their more civilized sedentary adversaries. Over the years, as captive hostages in Mesopotamian cities, and as mercenaries in the Mesopotamian armies, the Sumerian warriors learned what they needed most of the more advanced military techniques from their captors and hirers. And as the Iraqi empire weakened and tottered, the Sumerian war-bands poured through the buffer states of western Iran, invaded southern Iraq itself, and took over as masters and conquerors. To summarize, the pre-Sumerian period in Iraq began as a peasant village culture introduced by the Iranians from the east; it passed through an intermediate stage of immigration and invasion by the Semites from the west; it culminated in an urban and probably dominantly Semitic civilization whose political rule was brought to an end by the invading primitive Sumerian hordes.

Turning now from the pre-Sumerian, or as it may perhaps be better designated, the Irano-Semitic period, to the Sumerian period that followed, we find that the latter, too, consists of at least three cultural stages: the preliterate, that is, the period before the invention of writing; the protoliterate, that is, the period that followed immediately upon the invention of writing, when the latter was still crude and pictographic; and finally, the literate, the period during which the cuneiform script developed into a highly conventionalized and phonetic system of writing. The first or preliterate stage of the Sumerian period began with an era

of stagnation and regression in the wake of the collapse of the earlier and more advanced Irano-Semitic civilization and the incursion of the primitive Sumerian war-bands into lower Mesopotamia. This preliterate phase culminated in the culturally immature and barbaric Sumerian Heroic Age. There is little likelihood that this era was conducive to progress either in the economic and technological fields, or to creative efforts in art and architecture. Only in the oral literary field may we assume a marked creative activity on the part of the illiterate court minstrels who were moved to improvise and compose their epic lays for the more spiritual entertainment of their lords and masters.

It is the second or protoliterate cultural stage of the Sumerian period that is marked by an extraordinary creative spurt resulting no doubt from an unusually fruitful fusion, both ethnic and cultural, of the Sumerian conquerors with the vanquished but more civilized native population. It was during this stage that monumental architecture reached a new high level; the "Painted Temple" from Ugarit (Fig. 4) may well be a product of this era. Moreover this was probably the period that witnessed the invention of the Sumerian system of writing, a feat fraught with profound cultural significance not alone for Sumer, but for Western Asia as a whole.

Finally, the third or literate cultural stage of the Sumerian period witnessed the further development and continued maturing of the material and spiritual achievements which had originated in the main in the preceding and more creative protoliterate stage. It is probably during this rather prolonged era that strong Sumerian dynasties first came into being, dynasties which developed the second, and this time dominantly Sumerian, empire in the history of the Near East. But towards the end of this period we find that once again the Semite had infiltrated into the land. With the rise of Sargon of Accad who according to the latest and lowest chronology proposed by various scholars began his reign about 2300 B.C., Sumerian political dominance in Iraq may be said to have come to an end; once again the Semite comes to the fore. By this time, however, Sumerian civilization, itself the product of the fusion of at least three ethnic groups, Iranian, Semitic, and Sumerian, had left its permanent imprint on the material and spiritual culture of Western Asia, an imprint which endured for many centuries after the Sumerian people had ceased to exist as a political entity.

Following their defeats at the hands of the Semitic dynasty of Sargon

of Accad, the Sumerians made one more bid for power before dropping from the scene as a political unit. Toward the very end of the third millennium B.C. a Sumerian, or at least partly Sumerian dynasty arose in the venerable city of Ur, and extended its sway over the entire land. It endured for about one hundred years and was finally supplanted by a group of Semitic rulers whose capital city was Isin. The Isin dynasty stayed in power for about two centuries, until Isin was captured and destroyed by a ruler of the rival city-state of Larsa. But the dynasty of Larsa, too, soon came to an end, when its last ruler was defeated by the great Hammurabi, whose royal city was Babylon. From that day on, Babylon emerges as the leading city of southern Iraq, and the latter thus comes to be known as Babylonia. On the other hand, northern Iraq is dominated by another Semitic city known as Ashur, and has thus come to be named Assyria.

Assyria fell to pieces in 606 B.C. But Babylon endured as a world-famous, all-important cultural metropolis right down to the conquest, in the first half of the fourth century B.C., of Alexander the Great, who had great plans for its future. However, after the premature death of Alexander, the capital of what is now Iraq was moved by his heir from Babylon on the Euphrates to the newly founded Seleucia on the Tigris. Abandoned and neglected, Babylon gradually turned into a group of desolate mounds, and it is not until very recent days that part, at least, of some of its temples and palaces have seen the light as a result of excavations.

But Seleucia and Greek domination of Iraq did not long endure. First came the warlike Parthians who abandoned Seleucia and moved their capital to the newly built Ctesiphon on the opposite side of the Tigris. After some five centuries of rule the Parthian rulers were superseded by a Persian dynasty known as the Sassanids. Finally, in the seventh century of our era, came the Arabs, all aflame with their new Islamic faith. In the eighth century the city of Baghdad was founded as the new capital of Iraq, a position that it has held almost without interruption to the present day.

Those were glorious days for Iraq, the first centuries following the founding of Baghdad. Under the earlier rulers of the Abbasid caliphate, so called from Abbas, the first of the family, Iraq was an all-important world power. It has been estimated that its population in the days of Harun al-Rashid, the caliph of *Arabian Nights* fame, may have run

as high as thirty million souls. Baghdad in those days was the centre of a great world empire, a leading metropolis in size, wealth, and cultural attainments. But from the time of Harun al-Rashid, the empire began to decline, and the power of the caliphate gradually decayed. In the thirteenth century began a series of violent and destructive invasions from the central Asiatic steppes, first by the Mongols and then by the Turks. Many of Iraq's cities were destroyed, and a great part of its population was massacred. Above all its irrigation system, the mainstay of its agricultural life, was practically wiped out. What was not actually destroyed fell into disrepair and disuse. As a result much of modern Iraq has been turned to desert and ruin.

Today new winds are astir in Iraq, breezes from the technological and democratic west. Spurred by the moving vision of its ancient and glorious past, the more responsible Iraqi leaders are directing their energies to revive their long neglected land, to increase its productivity, and to remove the curse of its illiteracy. Encouraging above all else are the plans and projects for new irrigation works; they justify the hope that Iraq will once again become a fertile land, the rich granary it once was. Moreover, as a result of relatively recent discoveries, Iraq has become a great "oil" reservoir, and its future is now of considerable importance to the existing world powers.

Significant of the new constructive forces emerging in Iraq today is the birth and growth of the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities. The uncovering in Iraq of the early civilizations of the Sumerians and Accadians, Babylonians and Assyrians, has been a major scientific triumph of the past hundred years. Dozens of mounds covering ancient cities have been excavated. Innumerable objects and written documents have been recovered. Whole new eras in the history of civilization have been laid bare. But all this was done by western institutions and foreign scholars. The Iraqi themselves, impoverished and largely illiterate, had no share in the recovery of their own great past.

Then, only some twenty years ago, a new Directorate of Antiquities was established, together with a small museum. Starting with no more than two or three officials, it has now grown into a flourishing department, staffed with dozens of employees such as curators and excavators, surveyors and restorers, inspectors and clerks. Not a few of the more important members of the staff have been trained by western archaeologists and scholars. The museum itself has been considerably enlarged,

and a library and laboratory have been added. As a result, when the second world war came along, and western institutions were no longer in a position to continue their archaeological activities, the Iraqi themselves were well prepared to take over. A group of key mounds were selected for excavation. A considerable number of ancient houses, temples, palaces and mosques, were brought to light. Thousands of objects and clay documents were recovered and brought to the museum in Baghdad for preservation and study. All in all, these Iraqi excavations during the recent war years have added new and revealing chapters to practically each of the seven millennia that make up the story of its civilization, and to no little extent, the cultural progress of man as a whole.

The earliest settlement as yet uncovered in Iraq is that of Hassuna, a tell situated about twenty miles south of Mosul. The mound rises to a height of about seven metres, and its occupied area can be enclosed in a rectangle of about 200 x 150 metres. Excavations were conducted for about eleven weeks in the year 1943; the major part of the work consisted of the clearing of an area of approximately 2500 square metres from the top of the mound right down to virgin soil. Here on the clean soil of a *wadi* bank, the excavators came upon the camp sites of what are the oldest Iraqi settlers known to date. They seem to have been hunters and herdsmen rather than farmers, and they must have lived in tents; the excavators looked in vain for traces of their huts or houses. Found among the ashes of their abandoned fires were simple domestic assemblages including obsidian lanceheads, sling ammunition, bone implements for dressing skins, a great quantity of animal bones, and large stone "hand-axes" with traces of bitumen for attachment to wooden shafts.

The next occupants of the site, however, were definitely agriculturists. They lived in adobe houses, the rooms centering about a courtyard where they enclosed their domestic animals for the night. They broke the ground with stone hoes, and reaped their harvest with flint-toothed sickles. They stored their grain in large spherical bitumen-coated bins made of clay which they sank into the earth; they ground their flour between two flat-sided basalt rubbing stones. Particularly noteworthy is their clay pottery. Much of it is painted with characteristic geometric designs significant for the relative dating of three prehistoric Mesopotamian cultures which in the specialized jargon of Near East scholars are now known as Hassunan, Samarran, and Halafian.

Throughout the entire seven metres of occupational débris at Hassuna, there was no trace of copper; in the lower levels there was considerable use of flint and obsidian. Beads, pendants and amulets were of simple shape; the spindle whorls were of double-cone shape and were made commonly of baked clay, less often of stone. Clay figurines, crude and unbaked, seem to belong to the primitive "mother-goddess" type. To judge from the finds, Hassuna seems to have flourished in the fifth and fourth millennia B.C., although in one way or another it may have been inhabited right down to the first millennium B.C.

Next to Hassuna in age is Uqair, a tell located about fifty miles south of Baghdad. The first settlement at Uqair probably took place at the beginning of the fourth millennium B.C., about a thousand years later than Hassuna's first settlers. Tell Uqair consists of two low mounds, one considerably larger than the other, separated by a depression through which a canal might have run. Except in one spot, neither mound rises more than six metres above the plain. Excavations were conducted at the site for about a month in the year 1940 and for several months in 1941.

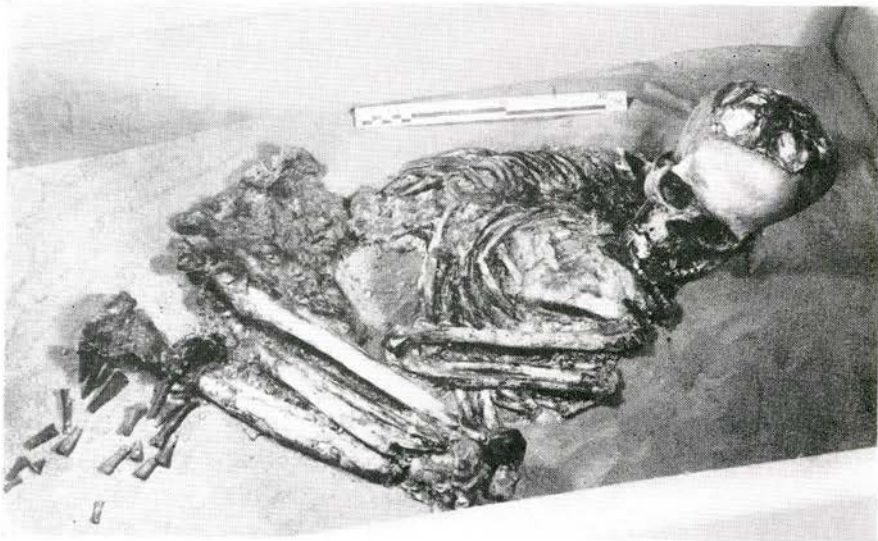


Fig. 2. Burial at Hassuna dating back to the fifth millennium B.C.

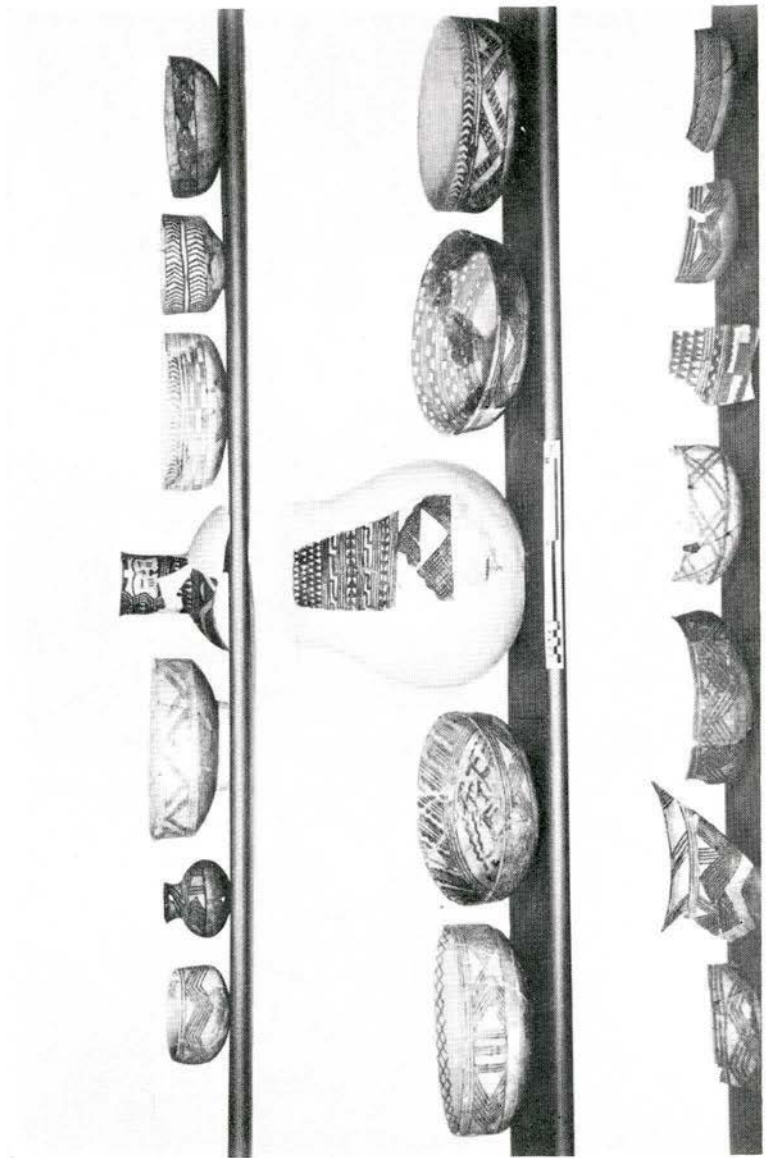


Fig. 3. Painted pottery from Hasuna.

One of the more interesting results of the excavations at Uqair is the new light shed on the very earliest culture in southern Iraq, known in technical language as the Ubaid culture. Except for a number of surface finds, practically all our information relevant to this Ubaid culture had until now come from narrow test trenches sunk to virgin soil at various sites in southern Iraq. Because of the limited area excavated, these trenches revealed practically no traces of formal architecture, and scholars were only too ready to conclude that the settlements of the Ubaid period consisted of little more than reed huts and mud brick hovels. At Uqair, however, a building of the Ubaid period was excavated whose walls, built of large rectangular mud bricks, were at times a metre thick. Moreover, a test pit sunk in the Ubaid settlement at Uqair right down to virgin soil, disclosed walls of shaped brick or of pisé at all levels except the last. All this evidence from Uqair, together with the past year's revealing excavations of an Ubaid temple in ancient Eridu (see p. 27), indicate that even the Ubaid settlements in southern Iraq were far from barren in architectural achievement.

But by far the most significant find at Uqair is that of the "Painted Temple," whose first foundations go back to somewhere about the beginning of the third millennium B.C. As the plan can now be reconstructed with a fair degree of certainty, it probably consisted of a long central hall with an altar at one end and an offering table in the centre. Two ranges of four subsidiary rooms each surrounded the central hall. The temple was built of bricks of modern shape on a terrace which in turn rested on a tall D-shaped platform. One stairway led from the platform to the terrace, and two symmetrically arranged stairways descended from the terrace to the bottom of the platform. The outer walls of the building consisted of alternating rows of buttresses and recesses and were painted white with a coat of gypsum paint. And to the delight and amazement of the excavators, the inside walls of the temple were found covered with frescoes; every surviving foot of its walls bore traces of colour washes and painted ornament. Unfortunately, very little of the painting could be recovered, since the entire inside of the temple had been filled with solid brickwork by later builders, and the frescoes tended to cling stubbornly to this filling which had to be removed to its last "skin" in order to expose the inside walls of the temple. In many cases, too, the muddy rains and the innumerable insects have done considerable damage over the millennia. Nevertheless, parts of some of these five

thousand years old murals were successfully removed and recorded; they are now in the Iraq Museum at Baghdad where the visiting Iraqi can take pride in another of his forefathers' achievements, the introduction of representational painting on temple walls.

As the excavators describe these murals, the designs and figures were always painted upon a white ground. A great variety of colours were used, but strangely enough green and blue were not among them. The figures were freely sketched with a line of red or orange, and the corrected outline was added in black on top of the red or alongside of it. The most common arrangement was a band of plain colour, usually some shade of red, forming a dado about one metre high all about the room. Above this was painted a band of geometrical ornament about thirty centimetres high. The upper parts of the walls were decorated with scenes of human or animal figures painted on a plain white ground. Unfortunately, none of the human figures was recoverable above the waistline, owing to the denudation of the walls. One of the best-preserved paintings is that of the lion or leopard illustrated in Fig. 5.

Younger than the first settlement at Uqair by a millennium is that of Harmal, a mound only about six miles due east of Baghdad. The tell is only about 150 metres in diameter and rises no more than about four metres above the level of the surrounding plain. It owes its excavation to the very modern disease of inflated real estate values. Because of the world-wide real estate boom, Baghdad is expanding in all directions, and one of the newly proposed housing schemes threatened to encroach on ancient Harmal. Whereupon the Directorate of Antiquities decided to excavate the mound before it was too late.

Harmal, the excavations disclosed, was probably first settled in the middle of the third millennium B.C. and continued in existence for at least a thousand years. The most important discoveries were those dated in the early part of the second millennium B.C. Harmal then consisted of a fortified enclosure in the shape of an irregular triangle, its single gateway flanked by very large towers. Inside the enclosure the most noteworthy building was a temple consisting of an entrance vestibule, courtyard, ante-cella, and cella, all arranged with communicating doors on a single axis, so that the niche in the cella, on which may have rested the statue of the deity, was visible from the street when all doors were open. Strewed over the ruins were found fragments of several life-size terra cotta lions which served to guard some of the doorways of the temple (see Fig. 7).

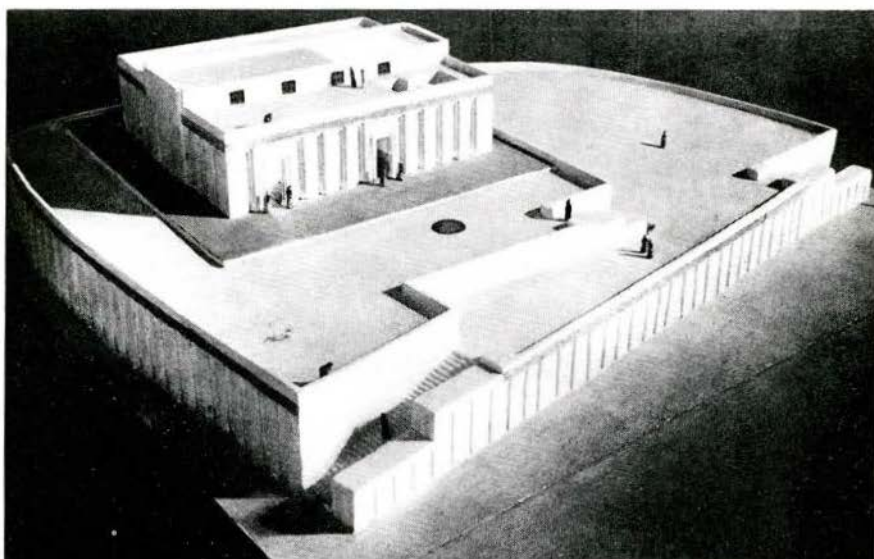


Fig. 4. Attempted reconstruction of the "Painted Temple" at Uqair.

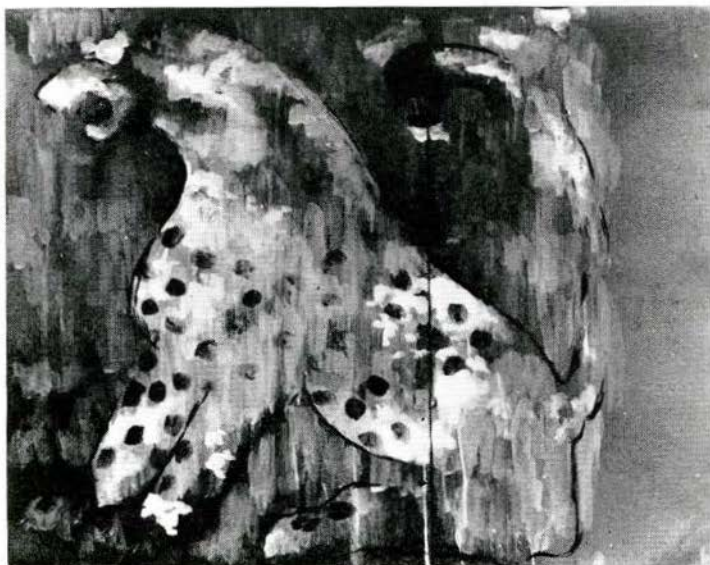


Fig. 5. Copy of painting from "Painted Temple" at Uqair.



Fig. 6. Main temple at Harmal.

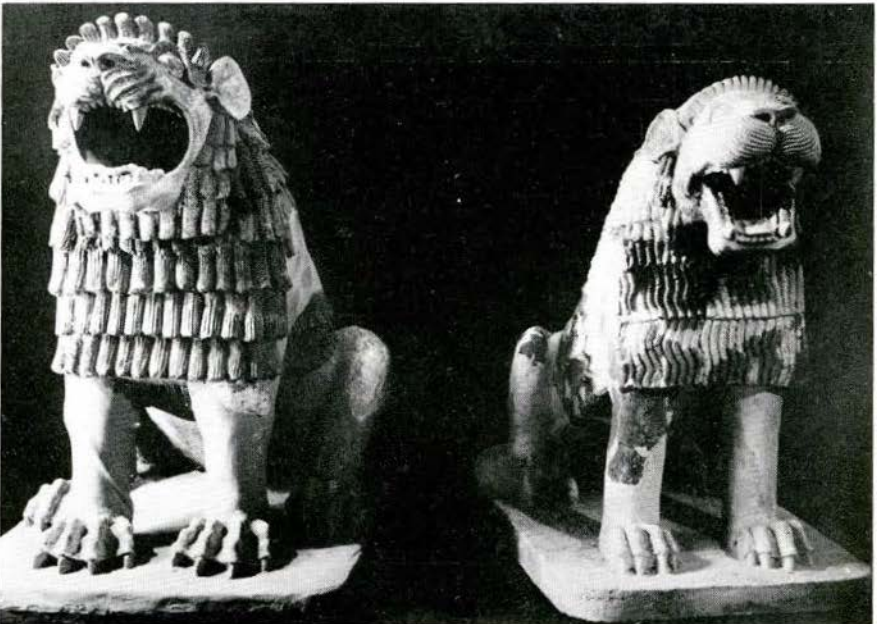


Fig. 7. Life-size terra cotta lions from the main temple at Harmal.



Fig. 8. "School" tablet from Harmal with author's signature.

One of the most important finds at Harmal consists of a considerable number of written documents, close to a thousand clay tablets inscribed in the cuneiform script. Most of these are business and administrative documents and letters. But about a hundred are "school" texts; that is, they were written either by the teachers or the pupils of the scribal school which must have existed at Harmal at the time. One of the more remarkable of these "school" texts consists of a geographical list inscribed with more than two hundred names of cities and countries in and about Iraq. Copies and translations of this tablet were prepared by one of the curators in the Iraqi Museum during my recent stay in Baghdad; these have just been published in Vol. III No. II of *SUMER*, a journal now issued by the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities. Another noteworthy

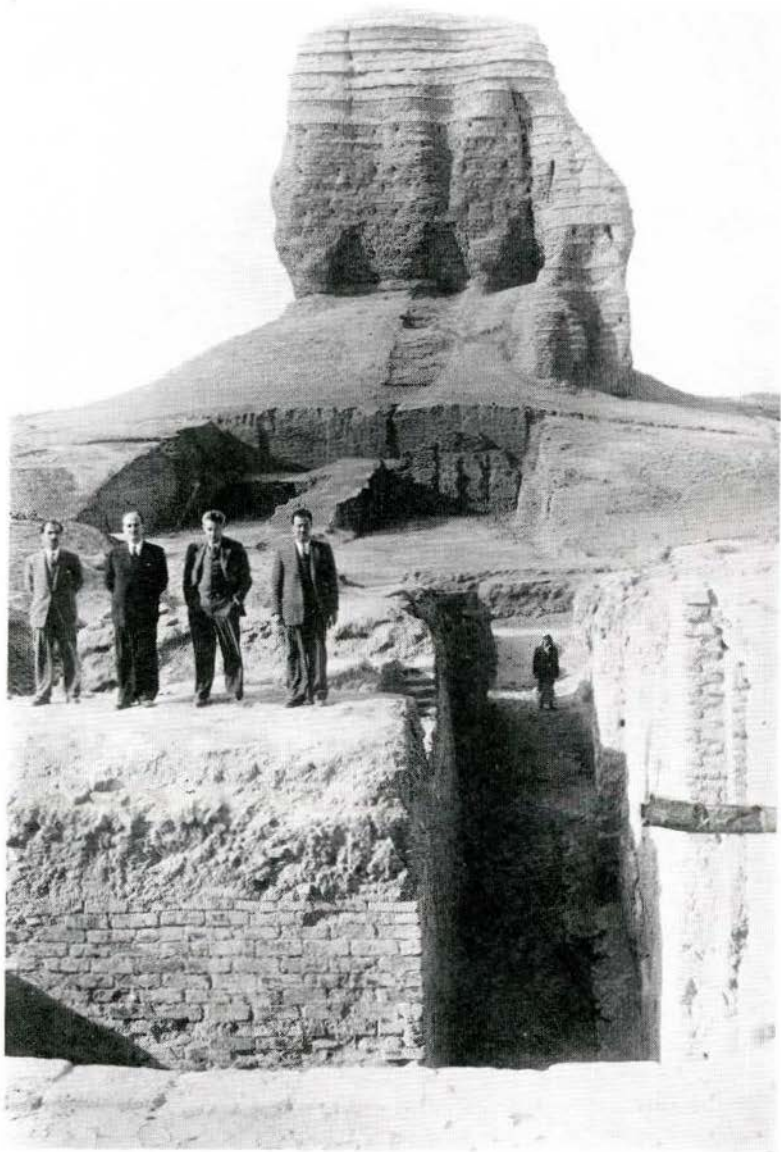


Fig. 9. "Ziggurat" at Aqar Quf.

"school" tablet from Harmal is inscribed with names of hundreds of trees, reeds, wooden objects, and birds, a sort of "botany-zoology" compendium for the use of young scribes. It was probably written by one of the "professors" of the scribal school; he signed his name in the cartouche on the back of the tablet (see Fig. 8) as "Irra-Imitti, son of Nurum-Litsi, the scribe." This is certainly one of the oldest examples of an author's signature known to man.

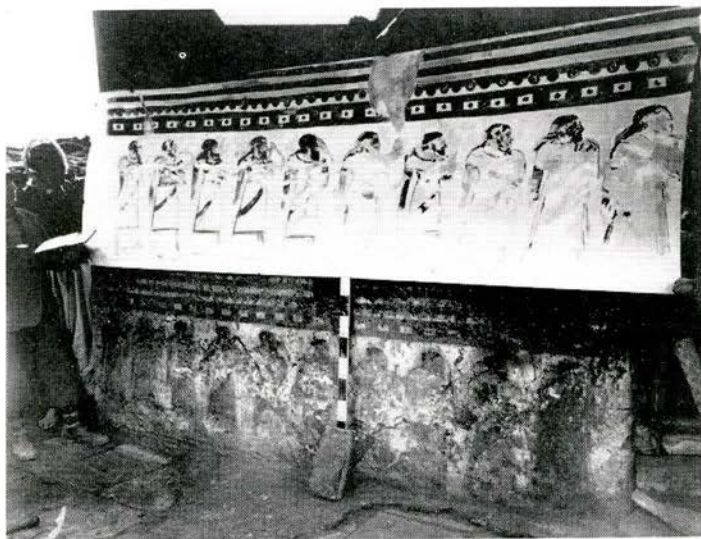


Fig. 10. Paintings on palace doorways at Aqar Quf.

Some five hundred years later than the date of Harmal's most important settlement, a Babylonian king by the name of Kurigalzu founded a royal city on an outcrop of soft limestone some twenty miles west of modern Baghdad. He called its name Dur-Kurigalzu which can best be rendered as "Kurigalzu's-burg." Here he built a huge "ziggurat" or stage tower, which in spite of over two thousand years of Iraqi weather, still towers more than two hundred feet above the surrounding plain, and was taken more than once by early travellers as the Biblical Tower of Babel. The vast site consisting of several large mounds which cover ancient "Kurigalzu's-burg" is now known as Aqar Quf. Here the Iraqi



Fig. 11. Painted terra cotta head from Aqar Quf.

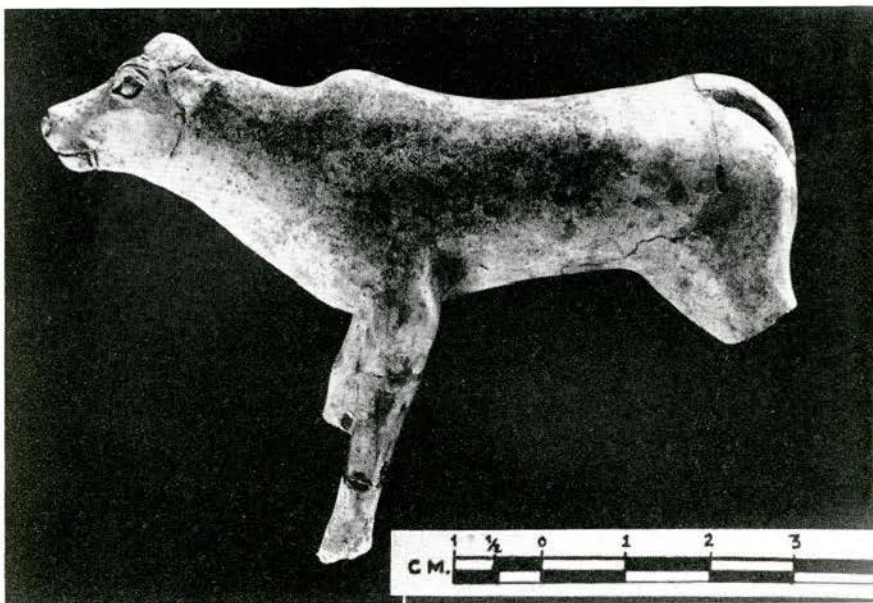


Fig. 12. Fragmentary terra cotta figure of a cow from Aqar Quf.

Directorate of Antiquities conducted four excavating campaigns between the years 1942 and 1946.

The very beginning and end of these campaigns were devoted to tracing the main features of the "ziggurat." It was found to be approximately a square, measuring close to seventy metres on a side, and its corners were oriented to the four points of the compass. The face has



Fig. 13. Gold bracelet from Aqar Quf.

a considerable batter, receding nine centimetres from the vertical for every one metre of height. Each side has seven shallow buttresses with shallow recesses in between. It is constructed of large, well-tempered bricks. Its excellent state of preservation is due to the fact that after every eight or nine courses of bricks there is a layer of reed-matting, bedded in about eight centimetres of sand and gravel. These reeds are almost unaffected by time and still have a strong rough texture. From these reeds, moreover, were made large plaited ropes which run right through the structure from side to side at short intervals and act as an effective reinforcement.

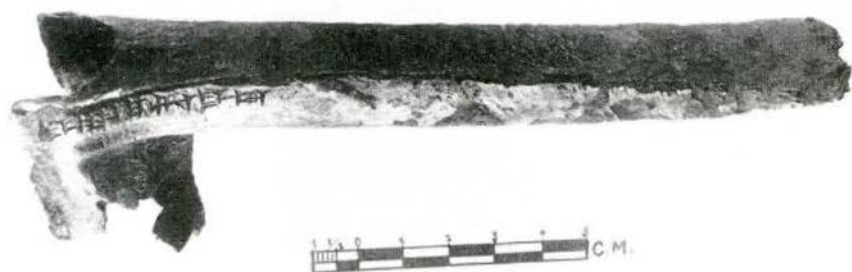


Fig. 14. Copper battle axe from Aqar Quf inscribed with the Sumerian counterpart of the words "the palace of Kurigalzu's-burg."

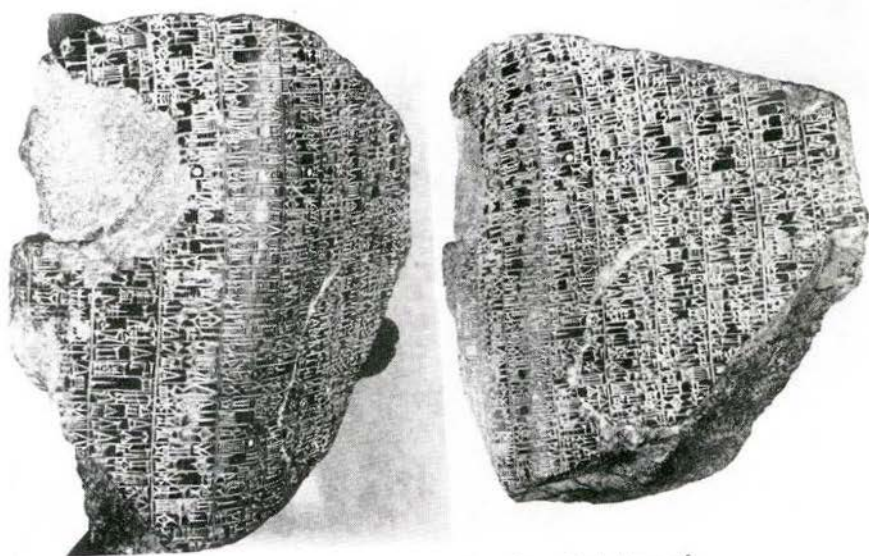


Fig. 15. Fragment of colossal statue of King Kurigalzu inscribed in Sumerian.



Fig. 16. Model of a reconstruction of the caliph's palace at Samarra.



Fig. 17. The Friday Mosque at Samarra, one of the three oldest mosques in Iraq.

In the immediate vicinity of the "ziggurat" were uncovered three large temples; the walls of some of their rooms were found preserved to a sufficient extent to make possible their re-roofing for exhibition purposes. About a thousand metres from the "ziggurat" was uncovered a huge temple complex consisting of at least seven separate units. In each unit certain chambers were selected for more complete excavation. One of the outlying units of this palace area consists of a group of royal reception rooms whose walls were covered with frescoes. These were of two types: geometrical and floral decorations on the walls of the rooms and galleries themselves, and processions of human figures decorating the reveals of some of the doorways.

In addition to the architectural remains, a considerable number of gold objects, glass mosaics, copper weapons, painted terra cotta figures of very delicate modelling were found in the course of the excavations; these finds are particularly significant for showing that the arts and crafts were by no means as undeveloped at this period in Babylonian history as scholars had tended to assume. In addition, more than one hundred inscribed documents were dug up, consisting almost entirely of business and administrative tablets. But probably the most important inscriptional find to date consists of a number of inscribed fragments of a larger than life statue of King Kurigalzu himself. The inscription is

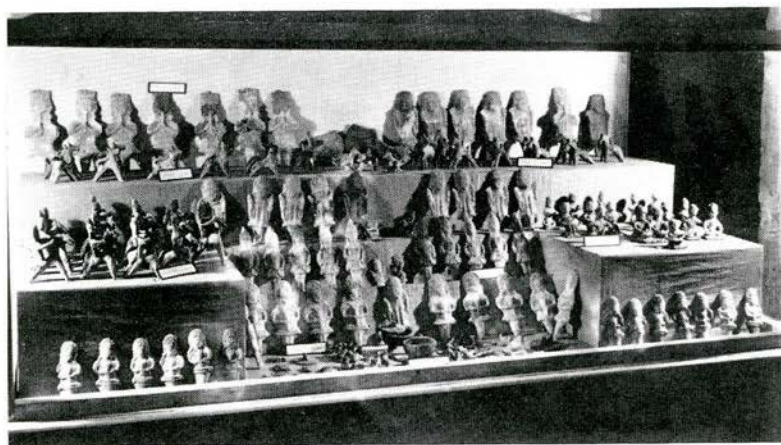


Fig. 18. Toy collection from Wasit.

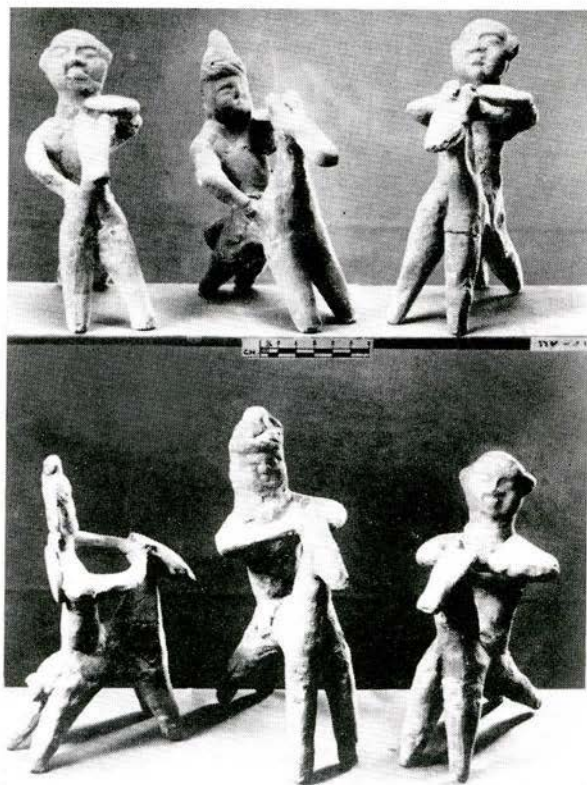


Fig. 19. Toy Mongol horsemen from Wasit.

written in the ancient Sumerian language, not in the Semitic Babylonian that was spoken at the time, and its contents are significant for the religious thought of those days. A translation of the more intelligible portions of the inscriptions has been prepared jointly by the excavator of Aqar Quf, Taha Baqir, his colleague Selim Levy, and the present writer; it will be published in the forthcoming issue of SUMER.

We now jump some two thousand years to the ninth century of our era, about two hundred years after the Moslem Arabs had come into control of Iraq. Modern Baghdad had only recently been founded by the caliph Mansur, the grandfather of the romantic Harun al-Rashid. But the caliph Mutasim, one of the successors of Harun al-Rashid, was dissatisfied with

the attitude of the Baghdadi towards him and his court. He therefore founded a new city, Samarra, some seventy miles to the north. The new capital was carefully designed, and the caliph and his successors continued to adorn and embellish the city with palaces, mansions, and mosques until it extended nearly twenty-four miles along the Tigris bank. But Samarra's glory was brief indeed. Less than sixty years after the day of its founding it was abandoned, and now for more than a thousand years its monumental buildings have been exposed to the desert wind and storm. Several western expeditions did excellent work in the matter of excavating and planning some of the major buildings of this vast ruin, in the early part of the century. But since 1936, the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities has been continuing the work at the mosque known as "Abu Dulaf," and at the huge caliph's palace with its portico, terrace, harems, reception rooms, swimming pool, stables, polo ground and "grand stand."

We skip another thousand years and come to the ruins of the Islamic city Wasit situated by an old abandoned bed of the Tigris, not far from Baghdad. Wasit was founded a little before Baghdad in the eighth century of our era, and for some seven hundred years was an important metropolis in Iraq. But in the fifteenth century the Tigris left its bed for a new one further to the east. As a result, the district about Wasit became desiccated, and after a century or so was no longer habitable. Although abandoned less than three hundred years ago, the former metropolis, once noted for its orchards and palaces, has turned into mounds of dust and sand. Still clearly visible through the dirt and ruins is the ancient bed of the Tigris whose treacherous course spelled the city's doom.

Excavations at this large but relatively late ruin were begun in 1936 and continued until 1942. Discovered and excavated were the foundations of several superimposed mosques that at one time must have dominated the city buildings. One of these was actually built on the virgin soil, and was proved to be the original building of the founder of the city, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. But one of the more interesting finds at Wasit has nothing to do with monumental architecture; it consists of a group of "toys" from a ruined little "toyshop" of some six hundred years ago. On an upper stratum of the ruins of Wasit were found more than four hundred little terra cotta figures of men, animals, and birds. They all probably date from the thirteenth century when Iraq was ruled with iron

hand by Mongol governors. Still recognizable are the Mongol faces of the little horsemen, orchestra players, dancing girls, and attendants.

So ends our journey through the ruins excavated by the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities in recent years. It ranged over more than six millennia of man's history, from a primitive settlement at the beginning of the fifth millennium B.C. to a large and prosperous Islamic metropolis abandoned less than three hundred years ago. Needless to say, this archaeological activity on the part of the native Iraqi is but a beginning. Only last year major excavations were begun at Eridu, one of the very oldest sites in southern Iraq. A most significant discovery at this mound consists of a temple dating from the earliest prehistoric period of southern Iraq, that known as Ubaid. This temple already has almost all the characteristic features of the later "Painted Temple" at Uqair (see page 13) and even some which survived far into the historical period. It is built of medium-sized rectangular mud bricks, and consists of a long central sanctuary with smaller rooms on either side. The altar was probably against the wall of the central sanctuary at one end, while the podium for offerings was in the centre of the room at the other end. The façades were decorated with alternating buttresses and recesses, and the inner walls were covered with white painted mud plaster. The discovery of this pre-



Fig. 20. Excavating a temple from the prehistoric Ubaid period at Eridu.

historic temple is the result of the first season's excavation at the site; there is every reason to believe that future excavations at Eridu will prove equally fruitful.

Moreover, it may be confidently expected that unless the world political situation should deteriorate beyond all hope, more than one foreign institution will resume their archaeological activities interrupted by the war years. Our own museum, the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, plans to send an expedition in the field by next fall, if political conditions permit. The mound tentatively selected is Isin, some twenty-five miles south of Nippur where the University of Pennsylvania had conducted its first excavations in the Near East, excavations that proved to be of prime importance for our knowledge of the Sumerians and their civilization. There is good reason to believe that the excavations at Isin, too, will prove most productive. This city was the seat of a dynasty which gave the "knockout" blow to the last Sumerian empire that had ruled from Ur. It seems not unreasonable to expect to recover remains of Isin's monumental architecture, stone monuments, as well as the varied products of its artisans and craftsmen. In addition there is some reason to hope that Isin contained an important library of Sumerian and Accadian literary works; the scribes of Isin must have been proficient in both languages. But the excavations at Isin might well prove of great importance even for the prehistoric periods of southern Iraq; there must have been a settlement at the site from earliest days. Indeed, according to a Sumerian poem inscribed in the early second millennium, the goddess Ninisinna, "the Lady of Isin," boasts:

"My house, before (even) Dilmun existed, of palm trees was built,
Isin, before (even) Dilmun existed, of palm trees was built."

And Dilmun, be it noted, was known in Mesopotamian tradition as one of the oldest of lands in existence.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The following bibliographical note is for the benefit of those readers who may wish to study the results of the recent Iraqi excavations in greater detail:

A very brief but excellent sketch of the war-time archaeological activity in Iraq has been published by Seton Lloyd in SUMER Vol. I No. I (1945), pages 5-11. A scientific report of the excavations at Hassuna has

been published by Seton Lloyd and Fuad Safar in the JOURNAL OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES Vol. 4 (1945), pages 255-end; a preliminary popular digest appeared in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS of August 11, 1945. A scientific report of the excavations at Uqair has been published by Seton Lloyd and Fuad Safar in the JOURNAL OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES Vol. 2 (1943), pages 131-158+31 plates. A preliminary report of the excavations at Harmal has been published by Taha Baqir in SUMER Vol. II No. II (1946), pages 22-30+6 plates; a popular digest appeared in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS of August 3, 1946; a statistical analysis of the tablets will be found in SUMER Vol. III No. II (1947), page 114. Of the excavations at Aqar Quf, three interim reports have been published to date by Taha Baqir. The first two appeared as special supplements of the journal IRAQ (1944 and 1945); the third, in IRAQ Vol. VIII (1946), pages 73-93+23 plates. An early popular digest of some of the excavations at Aqar Quf appeared in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS of August 19, 1944; a statistical analysis of the tablets will be found in SUMER Vol. III No. II (1947), page 114. The results of the excavations at Samarra have been published by the Government Press in Baghdad under the title *Excavations at Samarra* (1940). Of the excavations at Wasit, one scientific report has been published by Fuad Safar; it is entitled *Wasit: The Sixth Season's Excavations* (Cairo, 1945); a description of "toys" discovered at Wasit appeared in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS of July 25, 1942. The first Preliminary Communication on the excavations at Eridu has just appeared in SUMER Vol. III No. II (1947), pages 84-111+8 figures and 9 plates; a popular digest appeared in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS of May 31, 1947.

Three "soundings" not mentioned in the article are those of Grai Resh and Tell Khoshi in the Sinjar region, and of Der near ancient Sippar. A report on the first two soundings has been published by Seton Lloyd in IRAQ Vol. VII (1940), pages 13-21. A report on the sounding at Der has been published by Taha Baqir and Mohammed Ali Mustafa in SUMER Vol. I No. II (1945), pages 37-54+8 plates; a statistical analysis of the tablets will be found in SUMER Vol. III No. II, p. 114.

The two lines of poetry quoted on p. 28 are inscribed on two duplicate tablets excavated at Nippur by the University of Pennsylvania some fifty years ago, and are now in the Museum of the Ancient Orient, Istanbul. They were copied and published by the late Edward Chiera in 1924 in his volume *Sumerian Religious Texts*; the Sumerian originals of the quoted lines will be found on plate XIX (lines 20-21) and plate XXI (lines 31-32).