

RESEARCH ENTERPRISES

IN CHARGE: The Institute Research Council

BACKGROUND FOR CIVILIZATION

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That the Near East was the “cradle of civilization” as we know it has long been an axiom of scholarly and popular thought. But the process by which civilization came into being is still a matter of dispute. To provide the evidence that would clarify the picture is one of the current purposes of the Oriental Institute’s research program.

The research undertaken by the Institute to date indicates that the background for civilization is to be found in the transition from food-gathering to food-production in man’s early history. While primitive man still lived in caves he spent most of his time hunting animals and scratching for roots, to supply his daily needs. Eventually, however, he learned that certain grains could be sown and reaped and that certain animals could be domesticated and maintained in the rolling hill country below his mountain retreats. Hence he ventured in small bands to settle in these open spaces, to till the soil and to pasture flocks. Here, through the mastery of the techniques of planned agriculture and animal husbandry, he obtained the leisure necessary to fashion tools, utensils, and shelters and to develop the social, religious, political, and artistic aspects of life. Thus he laid the foundations for civilization. The transition that marked his entrance into a new type of existence took place for the first time in history in the hill

country adjacent to the upper Tigris-Euphrates Valley in the period between 6000 and 4000 B.C.

Since the end of World War II the Institute has sent out three expeditions to explore the later cave and earliest village sites of the Near East and thus literally to “dig up” the evidence of this transition. The first, in 1948, concentrated on an early agricultural site, Matarrah, in the plains of northern Iraq, and explored the region for traces of still earlier occupation. The second, in 1950-51,

The hilltop site of Jarmo



excavated parts of two earlier village sites, Jarmo and Karim Shahir, and cleared a series of cave shelters. The third expedition, in 1954-55, broadened the scope of the inquiry to its fullest extent. It explored an entire watershed tributary to the upper Tigris. It located more caves and the earliest village sites ever found in the region and continued the excavation of the village of Jarmo. It aimed to determine the ecology of the transition by studying the



Prehistoric Cave of Palegawra

geological history, the climate, and the native plant and animal resources of the region. Thus it has sought to determine the nature and the circumstances of a revolution paralleled only by the industrial revolution of recent centuries and, like it, technological in character.

The second and third of the Institute expeditions were supported and staffed in part by the American Schools of Oriental Research, while the third has had the benefit also of grants from foundations and individuals. For the third expedition the Institute

secured the services of scientists in many fields, including the natural sciences. Besides our own people, its operating staff included:

- Dr. Hans Helbaek, *Botanist, National Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.*
- Dr. Bruce Howe, *Prehistoric Archaeologist, Peabody Museum, Harvard University.*
- Dr. Frederick Matson, *Professor of Archaeology, Pennsylvania State University.*
- Dr. Charles Reed, *Assistant Professor of Zoölogy, University of Illinois.*
- Dr. Herbert Wright, *Professor of Geology, University of Minnesota.*

Reports on the work done to date have appeared in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, in the publication of the Condon Lectures delivered by Dr. Braidwood at the University of Oregon in 1952 (under the title *The Near East and the Foundations for Civilization*), and in the *Scientific American*, and will be found in news periodicals such as *Time*. Definitive publications will follow as the work reaches completion.

THE URBAN COMMUNITY AND ANCIENT CIVILIZATION

The appearance of the great cities marks the beginning of a new phase in the cultural life of the ancient Near East. Indeed, Near Eastern civilization can be described as the sum total of the life of its urban centers, whether they are seen collectively or singly and in the case of some of them successively as agencies of empire in the hands of powerful rulers. Three problems pose themselves here. The first is to understand what particular combination of circumstances brought the first large urban communities into existence. The second is to understand the effect that the intimate association of great masses of people in the urban centers had upon the character and development of ancient civilization.



Excavation of the Scribal Quarters at Nippur

The third is to distinguish from one another the different patterns of urban life that developed in different geographical and political contexts and to describe the facets of the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural life of the ancient cities. Upon various aspects of these problems the research of the Institute, at home and in the field, will be concentrated ever more sharply in the coming years. At the present time a number of fact-finding operations are being staged.

Towns and cities excavated by the Institute in Palestine, Syria, and southern Iraq during earlier years provide a great deal of information relevant to the study of the urban community. This information will be brought to bear upon the program, and new enterprises will be undertaken at home and abroad to round out the program as time goes on.

I. A SURVEY OF THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHERN IRAQ

STAFF: Robert M. Adams, Jr., *Research Assistant, Field Director.*

Vaughn Crawford, *Annual Professor, Baghdad School, American Schools of Oriental Research, Epigrapher.*

The purpose of this survey is to record, mainly by surface exploration, the urban sites in the region where the earliest high civilization and the earliest city states in the entire Orient flourished (3500–2000 B.C.); to determine the physiographic and ecological conditions favorable to their development and to trace their history and gradual disappearance. The survey is being undertaken jointly with the American Schools of Oriental Research and will have Professor Thorkild Jacobsen as its senior home adviser. The survey will begin in October, 1956.

2. SURVEY OF THE IRON AGE SETTLEMENTS ON THE PHOENICIAN COAST

STAFF: Gustavus F. Swift, Jr., *Research Assistant*, and others.

The purpose of this survey is to determine, mainly by surface exploration, the pattern of urban development associated with the great commercial enterprise of the Phoenician cities. The work should illustrate a facet of urbanization in the Iron Age and in a special type of context. It may lead to excavation where more evidence is needed.

3. EXCAVATIONS AT TOLMETA

STAFF: Carl H. Kraeling, *Field Director.*

Charles F. Nims, *Photographer and Epigrapher.*

G. H. Wright, *Architect, British School, Athens*

Lucetta Mowry, *Archaeologist, Wellesley College.*

Located on the coast of Libya, Tolmeta offers a typical example of an urban community established as an overseas colony by the Greek kings of Egypt. Later, in Roman times, it

became a member of a league of five Libyan cities. Since it was abandoned at the time of the Islamic conquest, its remains show vividly the last phases in the life and decline of the intrusive Greek and Roman cities of the Orient, their organization, culture, and defense.