

Nippur, Hamrin, and related activities

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The fifteenth season at Nippur, scheduled to take place during the fall of 1980, was postponed on account of war. The entire team was ready to leave, air tickets had been bought, immunizations had been suffered. Only visas were lacking. The outbreak of the Iraq-Iran conflict in mid-September was at first thought of as only a delaying factor. It was assumed that the war would be over in a week or two and that we would be granted visas a month later. It was only in late October that we finally decided that even if the war were to end, we would not be able to get in enough of a season before Christmas to justify the expense of going out.

We very much regretted not being able to carry out new investigations at Nippur and to finish some earlier work. But, in a number of ways, the stay at home had advantages. We were able to catch up a good deal on the publication of previous seasons. We carried on some critical analyses of Nippur material and finished a volume on our salvage work with the University of Copenhagen at Üç Tepe, in the Hamrin Basin northeast of Baghdad.

Since our return from the Hamrin in December 1979, we had been doing preliminary work on the publication. We had subventions from both Copenhagen and Chicago to print the book. Teaching commitments would not allow us to concentrate on the book until the summer of 1980, but we used the intervening months to have photographs printed, object cards sorted, and some illustrations drawn. John Sanders, the architect, began working full-time on the plans so that when others of us were ready to work in June, we had preliminary drawings to use. In Copenhagen, some of the staff members were analyzing pottery and flint tools and working on field notes.

In June, Ingolf Thuesen came from Copenhagen on a special grant from his university, to help write the report. He was joined for three weeks in August by Poul Christensen, a superb draftsman, who was sent here to do final drawings of pottery and objects. James A. Armstrong wrote part of the volume dealing with Tell Ajamat, one of the Üç Tepe sites; and he also organized and pre-

sented the pottery from that site and Tell Ahmed al-Mughir, which was excavated and reported by Jesper Eidem. Richard L. Zettler helped with the analysis of field notes, pottery, seals, and other objects. Peggy May Bruce made final drawings, especially reconstructions of the Round Building at Tell Razuk.

The key to writing the report was the cooperation between the archeologists and the architect. In the excavation, the architect acts as a coordinator and often has a more complete appreciation of the entire operation than the area supervisors; in the publication, the architect lays down the general scheme of levels, using thousands of notations on field drawings. The archeologist, writing the description of the architecture and relating it to objects, must depend on the architect for the framework of the book. Ideally, John would have been in the Institute with us but he now lives in Tucson, Arizona. Our method of operation entailed the sending back and forth of drawings, with changes noted. Often, during the summer, he and I would have long telephone conversations about levels, floors, correlations of levels in different areas, and details of reconstructions. In August, he flew to Chicago with the finished, inked plans and we read through the manuscript together, checking the written word against the plans.

The volume, as it existed in August, was good enough to publish and we assumed that we would be taking it to Copenhagen on the



way to Iraq. The delay, then the cancellation of the field season allowed us to do further analyses, to rework the manuscript a number of times, and to make the volume much better. The most important result of the reworking was a set of conclusions about the pottery and dating of material at Üç Tepe and elsewhere.

During the 1930's, the Oriental Institute had carried out extensive excavations in the Diyala region, just southeast of the Hamrin Basin. It was clear that the early pottery in the Hamrin was related to that in the Diyala. Our Scarlet Ware could be matched by more complete examples from the older excavations. Using Diyala material, we could date our Round Building at Tell Razuk to late Early Dynastic I and Early Dynastic II (ca. 2800 B.C.). In trying to date some vessels found in later burials at Tell Razuk, we re-examined the Diyala reports in great detail. In a seminar with several students, I had concluded that some changes could be made in the dating of a few Diyala levels. Our burial pottery fitted in with the redated material. Further work on other pottery from the site of Kish, south of Baghdad, convinced me not only that the seminar conclusions had been correct but that our Razuk finds reinforced those conclusions to such a degree that we should call for a major revision of Diyala strata. Thus, a large building that is known as the Northern Palace of Tell Asmar and was probably the headquarters of a textile industry could now be dated to the Akkadian

One of the upper levels of Area WA at Nippur: mountains of sand had to be removed to expose even this much



period (ca. 2300 B.C.). Previously it had been dated to the end of Early Dynastic III (ca. 2400 B.C.). The redating of the Diyala levels may have far-reaching effects on our understanding of interrelations between Mesopotamia and other areas. The debate over the dating of the palace at Ebla in Syria may be fueled by these conclusions.

In mentioning a seminar, I touched on a very vital aspect of research. The Oriental Institute is a research facility, but it is also a teaching center. It is in lecturing to classes that important connections are made between bits of information that might not seem related. The need to give current information to students forces us to read new reports and new theoretical and methodological articles. Clever questions force us to think about old material in new ways. Student presentations are often the result of fine analysis and can become basic statements on a problem. Since 1972, we have been carrying on a continuing pottery seminar, using newly excavated sherds from the Nippur area and from the Hamrin. The accretion of material, now numbering in the neighborhood of half a million sherd drawings, has been accompanied by a growing understanding of the Mesopotamian sequence. Some of the results have already been published. A general account of the Nippur ceramic sequence is in preparation and may be presented in a year or two.

Along with pottery studies, we have been doing preparatory analyses for the report on the 13th and 14th seasons at Nippur (Oriental Institute Communications 25). This report will be completed in the summer of 1982. John Sanders is already inking final drawings, and the pottery has been organized by Richard L. Zettler and James A. Armstrong.

Richard continues to study the Inanna Temple, excavated during the early 1960's. His dissertation on the Ur III level is nearing completion. Guillermo Algaze has made preliminary studies of the Early Dynastic pottery, while Karen Wilson of New York University has been preparing the Jemdet Nasr material from below the Inanna Temple.

In summary, it can be said that even without a field season, this last year has been a productive one for the Nippur expedition. In next year's report, we hope to be able to report on the 15th season, which we hope will occur in the fall.

Even without a field season, the faithful members of the Friends of Nippur continued to support our work this year. I wish to thank them once again, and I promise a more eventful year to come.