

INDIVIDUAL SCHOLARSHIP

During the past year, **James A. Armstrong** has focused his research on the archaeology of the second and first millennia B.C. in Babylonia, and particularly on two “dark ages,” dating respectively to the middle of the second millennium and to the beginning of the first, during which the culturally rich urban life of Babylonia seems largely to have collapsed. As a part of this work he has described and discussed the chronology of the late Kassite (fourteenth/ thirteenth-century) ceramics from Area WC-1 at Nippur in the forthcoming report on that excavation (*Excavations at Nippur: Kassite Buildings in Area WC-1*) and has written the final report on Areas WC-2 and TC, whose levels date primarily to the first millennium B.C. The latter report, provisionally entitled *The Fragility of Urban Life on the Babylonian Plain: Nippur After the Kassites*, includes a revised version of his dissertation and presents evidence for the decline of Nippur as a major urban center in the late thirteenth century and its subsequent rebirth in the eighth century. Armstrong, as a part of a cooperative venture with the University of Ghent and other European colleagues, also began work on the publication of a corpus of second-millennium ceramics from Babylonia and the surrounding regions. His research interests were reflected in the papers he delivered during the year: one, given at the Columbia University Archaeology Seminar, dealt with the relative chronology of the Kassite and post-Kassite periods (fourteenth to eighth centuries B.C.); a second, coauthored with Margaret C. Brandt and read at a conference on archaeostratigraphy held in Liege, presented geomorphological evidence for the large-scale abandonment of Nippur during the middle of the second millennium B.C.

Armstrong has also been working on the results of the first season of excavations at ancient Dilbat (Tell al-Deylam) and survey in the surrounding region, carried out while he was a Fulbright Scholar in Iraq (1989-90). He chose to work in the region around Dilbat, which is about 30 kilometers south of Babylon, in part to see if archaeological remains from the so-called dark ages could be found in an area that, among other things, seems to have had a more reliable water supply during the second and first millennia than cities, like Nippur, that were farther to the south and east. The results of the first season’s work suggest that the dark ages were just as dark at Dilbat as they were at Nippur and the other southern cities. Dilbat does, however, have a significant, hitherto unsuspected, third-millennium settlement that merits further investigation.

Fragment of an Achaemenid lion capital from Persepolis, 5th century B.C. (OIM A24089).
 Photograph courtesy of John Broughton.