

News & Notes

The Oriental Institute

Issued confidentially to members and friends

DIRECTOR'S LIBRARY
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Not for publication

No. 59: February 1980

EARLY DYNASTIC I CITADEL EXCAVATED IN IRAQ

By McGuire Gibson

Archaeological seasons melt into one another as time goes on, and details of finds and staff become hazy. But, there are highlights and very sharply focused associations that mark each season. Our fall season at Üç Tepe, in the Hamrin Basin northeast of Baghdad, is engraved in the mind as the one in which we finished the Round Building of Tell Razuk and could walk in through its outer door, up the stair to the roof, or into the central courtyard. We could stand in the courtyard and look up four meters to the tops of the walls, then go through any of five doorways into rooms. Emptying those rooms and the court took up most of our time and energy this season, and the job seemed impossible to do right to the end.

We'll remember this season as the one in which we had an extra large staff, ready to do more than a usual season's work, but hampered at first by lack of workmen. Because the villagers had to move, they were too busy to work for us. We had to truck in men from Jalawla, the town 25 kilometers away. This brought us into contact with a whole new set of men, some of whom were remarkable characters. There was one small, thin, ageless old man who wore an army coat, shoveled without pause, laughed a lot, and told stories about the British-Turkish battle here during the First World War. Another man, fat and stately, slowed down the work with parables about the fox and the duck, the crow and the chicken, and the sheep and the rain. Yet another, who always wore mint green pants, thought he was a machine and used a big pick as I have never seen it used. He dug so fast that he had to be supervised closely. Under normal digging conditions, we wouldn't have let this man on the site, but we were doing salvage against the clock and he was invaluable in taking down upper level walls, our baulks from the previous year, and in clearing debris that we had already determined was mostly mudbrick thrown in to fill rooms and pits. This man carried hard candy with him all the time and would slip it into the hands of workmen and us without warning or pattern.

We had great luck with the weather this season. It was a little uncomfortable the first two or three weeks, because we started a bit earlier in September than we normally would. Starting earlier meant not only heat and some dust storms, but also sand flies, mosquitoes, and snakes. The last two were no real inconvenience for most of us, but the sand flies are truly fiendish and even under the best nets, you lie at night waiting for the sting. John Sanders, our architect, is allergic to mosquito bites and swells up alarmingly. His interest and his dedication are measured by the pain he endures each year.

I haven't mentioned the hornets. The village has a resident hornet population, and our house last year was close to the nest. One night, some men attacked it with kerosene and fire, killing most of them; but enough survived to sting me and



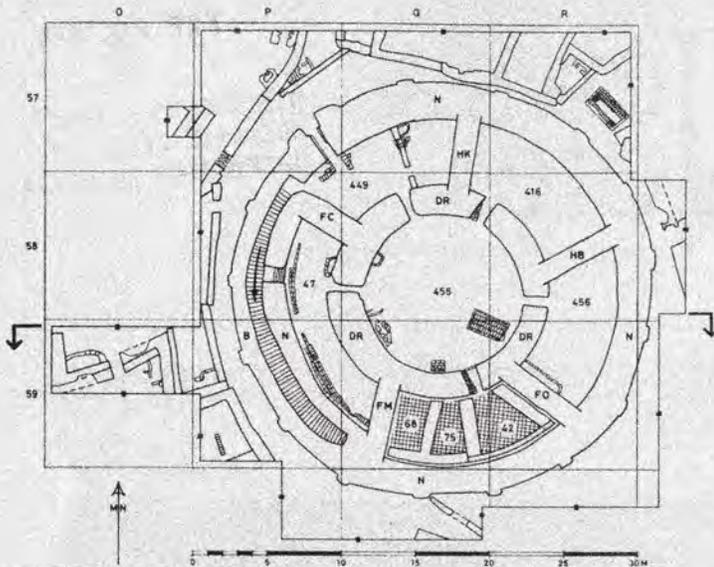
Kite photo of Tell Razuk. North is up.

others, and to propagate this year. When we arrived in the village and wanted to get some equipment we had left sealed up in a room of last year's house, we found that the hornets had moved into that room. Entering through a small hole near the roof, the hornets had manufactured a bell-shaped nest about three feet long, that hung in the corner of the room, and were humming as we quietly extracted our belongings from below it. The tearing down of Üç Tepe and of neighboring villages has displaced a lot of hornets, and they were searching for new homes all during the season. Jim Armstrong was constantly surrounded by them as he worked for a couple of weeks at a small mound called Ajamat north of the village. His site, Kassite in date (c. 1250 B.C.), proved not to be productive, so he left it without regret. Late in the season, I was working in the Round Building and dug a ball of hornets out of a wall. Luckily, they were already sleeping and couldn't fly. I suspect that the Round Building is going to become the main home for the hornets after the village is completely gone, at least until the water of the reservoir rises this far. Now, let's get serious.

If you compare the plan of the Round Building with the predicted, idealized plan published in *News & Notes* No. 54 (June 1979), you'll see that our guess wasn't bad. The only real difference was that last year we thought we would have six rooms around the courtyard, whereas we really only have five, with rooms marked 68, 75 and 42 originally one room.

As you can see from the plan, the building is truly round,

(Continued on pg. 2)



Plan of Round Building at Tell Razuk.

with buttresses about five meters apart. There was only one entrance into the Round Building, although a burial cut down into the outer wall of room 416 made us think for a while that there might be another doorway. In its earliest phase, the Round Building had few internal features: a mudbrick bin, a hearth, a thin wall. In the courtyard, we found a succession of large ovens, smaller bread ovens, fire pits and bins made of unbaked mudbricks. The large rectangular feature in the south-eastern part of the courtyard (455) is one of these bins. Strewn around the court were many lenses of ash, filled with potsherds and animal bones. The rooms also had remains of cooking fires and bones. Among the bones were remains of equids, probably asses, which must have been part of the diet, even though they were also used for riding and as draught animals. We found not one bit of evidence that the Round Building was a shrine or that it had any cultic functions. We did find stone and copper tools and weapons.

From its general layout, its position in the settlement, its limited access, its massive walls, I must conclude that the structure was a fortress, a citadel for the town. It must have housed a garrison that seemed to have done little more than eat. We found no evidence of sudden destruction, siege, or warfare. It probably served as an administrative center for the region, but exactly what state it belonged to cannot yet be ascertained. Its date can be determined, on the basis of pottery and other finds, as Early Dynastic I (c. 2900-2700 B.C.).

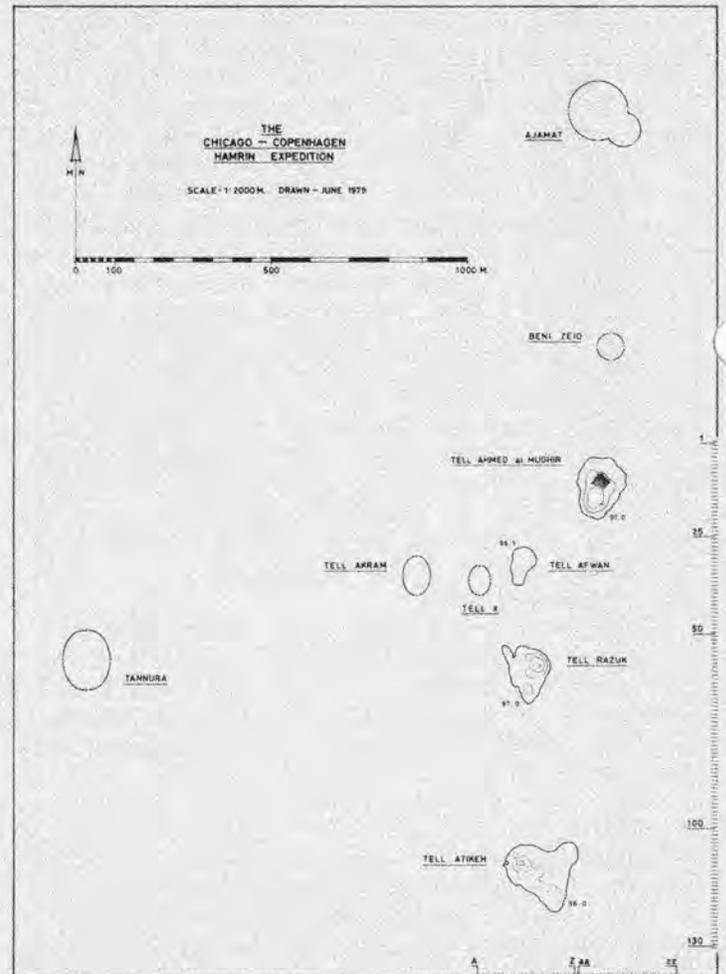
The pottery includes Scarlet Ware, a kind of pottery that is decorated with red paint in geometric and naturalistic motifs. One of the most important sherds shows a combat between a man with a dagger and another with a bow and arrow. More usual representations show birds, fish, and animals, including equids. Scarlet Ware was found in abundance by the Oriental Institute expedition in the Diyala Region (1930's) just to the south of the Hamrin. Our specimens can be linked to the Diyala examples and to Scarlet Ware found in other Hamrin sites and in Iran.

A Japanese expedition, which has carried out excavations in the Hamrin for more than two years without a break, has unearthed a complex of buildings at Tell Gubbeh. Here, there is a more primitive, less daring, earlier version of our Round Building, centered on a solid core. Around the central building there are roughly ovoid enclosure walls and an exterior ditch or moat. The Gubbeh building was constructed earlier than ours, perhaps in the Jemdet Nasr Period (c. 3200 B.C.). Pot-

tery similar to our Scarlet Ware occurs at the top of the sequence, as the building was going out of use.

It may be that the administrative duties that had been carried out at Gubbeh, which clearly had defensive and storage functions, shifted to Tell Razuk. Or, there may have been a change in the administration of the region, bringing about the construction of more than one fortress in the Early Dynastic Period. It is clear that the lessons learned in building the complex at Gubbeh made it possible to design and construct the much more sophisticated Round Building at Üç Tepe. Razuk's vaulting of rooms that were more than three meters wide with unbaked bricks would not have been possible without experimentation over time. Even with a tradition in such construction, however, it would have been impossible to achieve the triumph that Razuk is without a special quality in the clay of the area that made mudbrick hard enough to use as if it were stone. We will submit some of the clay and some mudbricks to tests to determine the exact composition and properties of the Razuk bricks.

At two other Hamrin sites, and possibly others of the Early Dynastic I period, there are fortresses. The British at Madhhur exposed a large storage bin surrounded by a single wall, a simplified version of our Round Building. An Iraqi expedition at Tell Qasim completely excavated a massive square fortress with buttresses on the corners. This building, which is larger than our Round Building, has outer walls more than ten meters thick. There are rooms laid out in an orderly manner, and courtyards with ovens and storage bins inside the building. The Scarlet Ware found in this fortress is different from ours, being mostly geometric in motif, and dates from a



Map of Üç Tepe Mounds

RAYMOND A. BOWMAN (1903-1979)
 CHARLES BREASTED (1897-1980)
 GEORGE G. CAMERON (1905-1979)

DIRECTOR'S LIBRARY
 ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
 UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

During the past few months, the Institute has lost three men who made substantial contributions to ancient Near Eastern studies.

Raymond Bowman, a member of the faculty from 1935 to 1969, taught Hebrew and other Northwest Semitic languages to two generations of students. His researches in the field of Aramaic and his commentaries on the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah won him the respect of scholars in his field. His primary work for the Institute was his editing of the Aramaic texts found by our expeditions at Persepolis; he submitted the manuscript for the second volume of these materials only two months before his death. Mr. Bowman served as Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from 1962 to 1968.

Charles Breasted, who died on January 16, was administrative secretary of the Institute from 1927 to 1936. He was the eldest child of James Henry Breasted, founder and first director of the Institute, and served as his executive assistant for many years. From early childhood, he took part in his father's expeditions in Egypt and was present when the contents of Tutankhamun's tomb were being gradually

cleared and made known to the public. Mr. Breasted oversaw the implementation of many important research projects in the first two decades of the Institute's existence, including the building of Chicago House in Luxor. After he left the university, he served as the first science editor for *Life* magazine and wrote *Pioneer to the Past* (1943), a stirring account of his father's life and work.

George Cameron, a renowned scholar in the field of ancient Iranian studies, was on the Institute faculty from 1933 to 1948 and had served on the Institute's Visiting Committee since 1977. As Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan from 1948 to 1969, he singlehandedly created and built up the programs in ancient and modern Middle Eastern languages and history at that university. He did pioneering work in the field of Neo-Elamite in his publication of the tablets found by the Institute in the Royal Treasury at Persepolis, and his *History of Early Iran* (1936) is still after four decades the standard work on the history of that land before 700 B.C.

To the Bowman, Breasted, and Cameron families, the Institute faculty and staff wish to express their sympathy and condolences.

slightly earlier time, I think.

Razuk differs from the other Early Dynastic sites in that it not only has a fortress, but it also has a town. Elucidating the relationship of the fortress to the town was one of our prime interests. The layout of the town, the town plan, the access from the city wall to the Round Building, the location of religious buildings, and the difference in finds in various parts of the town could have been determined at Razuk. However, the lack of labor and earth moving equipment made it difficult to do more than expose the Round Building. We have some ideas on the town plan and expected to find many more objects in the houses than in the fortress, but we just could not move the dirt in the time allowed. Perhaps, in some future season, if the new lake does not reach as far as it is supposed to, we may investigate these features of the site. For now, we must be content to have done as much as we could. That is the nature of salvage archaeology.

In our two seasons, cooperating with the University of Copenhagen, we carried out major excavations at Tell Razuk, Tell Atiqeh, and small soundings at Tell Ahmed al-Mughir, Tell Ajamat, and Tell Afwan. We found important Akkadian (c. 2300 B.C.) material at Atiqeh; Isin-Larsa (c. 2000 B.C.), and Kassite remains at Ahmed al-Mughir; more Kassite at Ajamat. On Tell Afwan, we found a mixture of material, not the Early Dynastic I cemetery we hoped to discover. We col-

lected enough pottery from Tell Tannura, out in the marsh to the west, to know that it dates to the Kassite Period (c. 1200 B.C.). Last season, we put in a few pits at Tell Rihan, a small site miles to the west, and found it to be Samarran in date (c. 5000 B.C.). We turned this site over to one of the Italians, who specializes in prehistoric material, and he did further digging. His results confirmed ours, but in a trench made a few meters to the north of Rihan, he found remains of an even earlier settlement, a pre-pottery site to be dated probably earlier than Jarmo (i.e. pre-6500 B.C.). This is, then, the earliest village site in southern Iraq.

Our greatest accomplishment, however, is the Round Building at Razuk, which is an architectural landmark. It has, as of now, the earliest known intact vaulted roof, and more surprisingly, a roof of unbaked bricks. It will appear in book after book of architectural history. Along with other structures in the Hamrin, it will cause a re-evaluation of the history of vaults, perhaps even domes.

Work in the Hamrin, a salvage project on a grand scale, conceived of and directed with unusual vision by Dr. Moayyad Damirchi, Director of Antiquities, will stand as a monument of a different kind. It will be the model for future projects in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. We have learned an incredible amount from the Hamrin, an area that was hitherto unknown. It's important that we took part in it.

MUSEUM INSTITUTES FILM SHOWINGS

Beginning on Sunday, March 2, at 2:00 P.M., four films on consecutive Sundays of the month will be shown in Breasted Hall. The same sequence of showings will follow during the month of April. The films are Egypt: Gift of the Nile, Iraq: Stairway to the Gods, The Egyptologists, and Rivers of Time. Tours of the galleries are given before or after the half-hour films.

NEW DOCENT TRAINING COURSE SET FOR SPRING

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer guide at the Oriental Institute Museum, an eight-week training course will begin on Monday March 31. For those unable to attend the Monday sessions and who can volunteer for week-end work, a special course will be offered on Saturdays, beginning April 5. Requirements are (1) membership in The Oriental Museum, and (2) a fee of \$20 for materials. Please call 753-2573 or 753-2475 for more information.

Volunteers give half a day a week guiding in the Museum galleries or working in The Suq (museum gift shop). There are also opportunities for work in other areas of the Museum.

Next Member's Lecture. . .

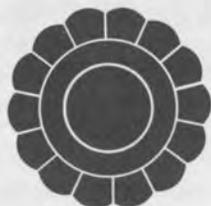
The Art of the Hittites by Hans G. Güterbock, Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Hittitology, The Oriental Institute, on Wednesday, March 19, at 8:00 P.M. in Breasted Auditorium, The Oriental Institute. Refreshments will be served in the Museum galleries.

THE SUQ IS RENOVATED



Ray Tindel and his associate Honorio Torres at work in the museum laboratory.

Display facilities of the Suq (museum gift shop) will be enhanced during the early part of March. Curator John Carswell has designed and preparator Ray Tindel is constructing shelving and a sales desk, on which will rest a new cash register. ARAMCO has just contributed \$2000 towards the renovation of the Suq.



The Oriental Institute
The University of Chicago
1155 East 58th Street · Chicago, Illinois · 60637

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BULK RATE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
PERMIT NO. 1504

Dated Material

DIRECTOR'S LIBRARY
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO