



News & Notes

No. 76: February 1982

Issued confidentially to members and friends

Not for publication

FEB 3 1982

ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

“LEAP” INTO URBAN LIFE?

Urfa, Turkey

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

When you last heard from me, it still seemed the heart of summer. Now months later, the weather has turned into an unusually cold winter. Only three of us are left here in Urfa. And as we are all from Chicago (the others are Guillermo Algaze and Pati Wattenmaker), it is only natural that our thoughts should turn towards the Chicago winters and our imminent return.

But to give you an update on the last Kurban Hoyuk field season, I should first mention that we continued to excavate only until early September. During the four weeks after bayram, however, we perhaps achieved as much as in the first two months—or so it seemed from the rapidity of new developments in the field during this time. In any case, August was an exciting month.

In the sounding on the small mound (CO1), we managed to reach virgin soil a few days before the end of the season. On the way down through the seven meters of deposits, Mary Evins cleared about three meters of layers dating to the early 3rd millennium B.C., before reaching the “Uruk” level. Until then, this had been only suspected from stray finds in later levels. But now we have clear evidence of a phenomenon that has only been brought vividly to our attention in the last ten-fifteen years from excavations in the Keban and Tabqa salvage programs and from Malatya: apparently intense relationships with southern Mesopotamia, ca. 3400 B.C. Directly over virgin soil, another level with an earlier Chalcolithic date points to the original settlement of the small mound at perhaps 4000 B.C. or earlier, roughly contemporary with the Ubaid period in Mesopotamia.

Virgin soil was also reached in our other stratigraphic sounding, the step trench, only two days before the end of the excavation. Here, Michael Ingraham encountered an even longer sequence of occupational layers, as well as impressive architectural remains. Near the base of the mound, a three meter thick deposit of Late Chalcolithic/Uruk layers was reached, indicating a fairly substantial occupation at this time. Roughly at the middle of the slope, a large mudbrick wall had been observed. Now, after clearance, it seems to be three meters in height and three meters wide. Inside the wall were two rooms with material dating to the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C., or roughly Early Dynastic III in Mesopotamia. Interestingly, there is a slightly later building, equally well-preserved, just above this level. In any case, both buildings date to a period when both mounds were settled and the site had attained its maximum extent. The major wall

may have been a fortification for the large mound at this time.

Parallel to our attempts to find out the chronological sequence at the site were the efforts made to get fairly large horizontal exposures of the preserved architectural remains. On top of the large mound, Dan Potts and Bruce Verhaaren had cleared off a substantial portion of the final Early Bronze Age level by the end of the season. Revealed were about a dozen rooms of a building block, plus an entrance way and portions of a street. We are still a long way from understanding this complex, which lies beneath our Medieval caravanserai, but one fact is particularly striking. In our probes around this area, we have found so far no remains dating to the final settlement. It would seem that by 2000 B.C. at the latest, the settlement had contracted to the small area on top of the large mound.

On the small mound, Mary McDonald has been chiefly responsible for clearing off the uppermost extant remains down to a better preserved second phase of building remains. Here, we seem to have a building complex of several rooms bordered by a street, and then across the street, a number of courtyards and small buildings. There is an altogether different character to the layout here in comparison to the large mound, and our initial impressions of a higher concentration of flints can now be extended to the appearance of copper, all of which

(Continued on page 2)

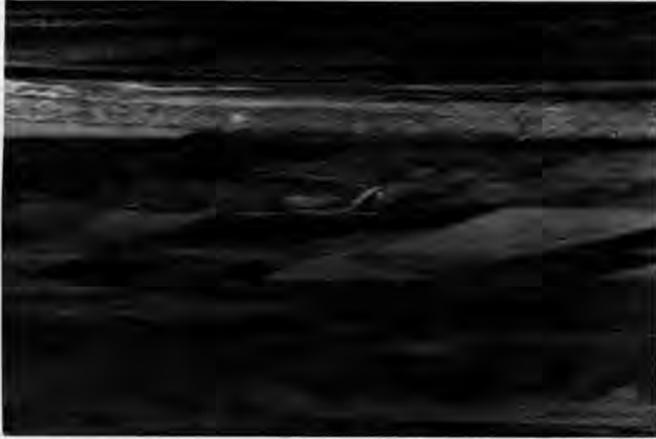


View of middle 3rd millennium level on small mound, with large mound step trench in background.

Marfoe Reports On "Leap" Into Urban Life? (Continued from page 1)

comes from this area. Whatever this area turns out to be, there seems little doubt that the entire small mound was abandoned after the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. (ED III/Akkadian periods).

When the site work is combined with Tony Wilkinson's study of the surrounding region, one is faced with a still



Telephoto view of Kurban Hoyuk from across the Euphrates.

blurred picture that is nevertheless a little clearer than it was before. Whether or not there was a single line of development or two episodes of a "leap" into urban life, the pattern of the mid-3rd millennium B.C. (ca. ED III) continues to stand out as a period of striking importance and seeming homogeneity. Not only was Kurban Hoyuk transformed into a substantial town at this time, but a number of neighboring little valleys seem to have been dominated by similar towns with perhaps their small entourage of villages. Dotting the landscape, these early towns of upper Mesopotamia may have been tied into a far more uniform, if not any less pervasive web of communications than their predecessors. How this all might have come to an end we still can only guess at, but there is a vague suggestion of a reorganization of pre-existing trends before the end.

Since the end of the excavation season, we have had the opportunity to visit some of the ongoing excavations in the Euphrates valley. During a two-week break, when I went to attend a conference in Aleppo, Syria, we managed to make an excursion to the German excavations at Halawa. Halawa is located next to the lake now formed by the Tabqa dam on the Euphrates river, over a hundred miles downstream of us. Its primary interest is that it has an occupation roughly parallel (but in many ways quite different) to our Early Bronze settlement sequence. After returning to Urfa to continue our study season, we were able to pay visits to two of the seventeen concurrent excavations now operating in the Lower Euphrates salvage program—the nearby German excavations at Lidar and Hassek. Both sites were of particular interest because they have Early Bronze Age occupations, the former with layers similar to our middle EBA levels, and the latter with a Late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze I sequence that parallels our earlier levels. Shortly afterward, Bob and Linda Braidwood, together with Betty Tiekens, and Prof. Halet Çambel and Dr. Mehmet Özdoğan of Istanbul University, journeyed from their Çayönü base to see us. Two weeks later, we returned their visit with a day at Ergani.

Mention of the Lower Euphrates salvage program—the international project organized by the Middle East Technical University under whose umbrella we are working—leads me to remark on the massive scale of the program and of the dams now under construction. Eight of the excavations are substantially north of us, in Malatya and Elazig provinces. There



Entrance and rooms of final 3rd millennium occupation.

are three in Elazig (Imikusagi, Semsiyetepe and Kalekoy) and five in Malatya (Caferhoyuk, Degirmentepe, Imamoglu, Pirot and Yarimtepehoyuk). In our southern dam area, now renamed after Ataturk, six are in Adiyaman north of the Euphrates (Tille, Horis Kale, Ancoz, Gritille, Samsat, and Hayaz) and only three are on the south bank (Hassek, Lidar and us). Nine of the seventeen projects are Turkish and eight are foreign. Among these latter, three are German, two are American, and the others are French, British and Dutch.

We have not spent all our time visiting other sites by any means. Guillermo Algaze has been working steadily on the ceramics, and at this point, has virtually completed the ceramic typology. One important result of his work should be a badly needed refinement of the ceramic chronology for the 4th and 3rd millennia B.C. Unfortunately, he has started to develop startling aberrations during the long season. Despite what should be an adequate dig diet, he has displayed a remarkable tendency towards chewing pottery sherds, our own as well as those of sites he is visiting. Similarly, Pati Wattenmaker has developed a habit of leaving dead, dying or decomposing animals for her faunal collection all over town: on the roof of the museum, in the hotel freezer (which drove the cook to despair) and in Guillermo's shedyard. Despite my constant fear of outraged neighbors, not to mention our already uneasy relations with our village mayor, I suppose it could be worse. It could be the persistent, recurring strains of a Joan Baez song being hummed (impossible as it may seem, in Spanish) or being played ad nauseum on the cassette player. On this note of despair, I can at least look forward to a winter and spring respite before we resume work once more next summer.

Regards,
Lee Marfoe

EXPEDITION SPENDS HOLIDAYS ON DIG IN IRAQ



Crew of last field season at Nippur in fall, 1976, McGuire Gibson, Director, is in the middle of back row, Muhammad, in charge of the refrigerator is sitting on far left in front row. (Photographs of 1981-82 field season will appear in subsequent issue of News and Notes.)

Nippur, December 26, 1981

"Well, Muhammad, how do you like the new refrigerator?"

"The old one was better."

"How come?"

"It was bigger. It held more."

"Yes, but it didn't work."

"This is winter."

That was a real conversation about two weeks ago. It is winter, but not cold enough to keep meat in a non-functioning refrigerator. It has been remarkably warm, with only one or two days of the bone-chilling cold you feel here on the edge of the desert. Remarkably, the warm weather has not been accompanied by rain. We have had two days on which it rained a little, but never more than an hour or so. It is great digging weather.

Last week, I sent off four of the staff, who had never seen the Assyrian cities of Nineveh, Assur, Nimrud and Khorsabad, for a three-day tour. They returned on Christmas Eve to find a tree in the corner of the living room next to the fireplace. The tree was a composite of about a dozen branches of tamarisk bushes. The decorations consisted of colored plastic bags that had been cut up into strips, icicles made from aluminum foil, variously shaped balls made from the same foil, and colored with Magic Markers, fragments of Islamic glass suspended from small object tags that had also been colored with the markers. Peggy Bruce had gathered some reeds near the mound and had cut them and assembled them into stars. The travelers pitched in and made three-dimensional decorations out of the same reeds. After a dinner of chili, we lit a fire in the fireplace and read the last section of Dickens' Christmas Carol. We did not play, as we have been doing for the past couple of weeks, a tape of the Charlotte, North Carolina Greyhound Bus Terminal Glee Club singing carols.

In the morning, there were presents and in the evening, a grand feast with two turkeys, about the size of large roosters, and a huge loaf of bread. The cooking is being done, these days, by the expedition members. The cook struck for more pay and I let him go. We are eating better and with greater variety than ever before. Who else has Chinese dishes on digs in Iraq?

Our season is about half over. We did not start until November 28, which is more than two months behind our usual schedule. We try to finish before the middle of December, because the rains come about then. We will continue until late January, hoping that our luck with the weather will hold. The farmers are sending up many prayers for rain.

We heard stories of very high labor costs and lack of labor while we were still in Baghdad. We have been lucky enough to find sufficient manpower at a low enough wage to allow us to work. I have to let the men go off to irrigate their fields occasionally, but usually only one man has his turn for water at any given time, so it is not a problem. Because our men are farmers, they do not want to go to town for work at double the wage we are paying, when they can do okay with us and get off when needed.

We have none of our usual pickmen, even those we trained in the past. Some are in the army, some are working in Baghdad. We have started training a new group and one or two appear to be really promising.

Thus far, we have opened up a number of rooms in a very large house in area WC that dates to around 600 B.C. or earlier. We found one bit of writing, but it did not help much with the dating of the house. It was a line of cuneiform written on the rim of a jar. We found the inscription on two potsherds in a batch that was being drawn. It is some kind of measure, according to Bob Biggs who was with us until last week. He could not determine the fine points because we do not have the right books in our library here. The pity is that we did not find the whole jar. Measurements of volume in ancient times can be determined only from vessels that indicate their size on them. Such inscribed vessels are very rare.

In the house we are digging, we have thus far found two cylinder seals, one with a complete inscription. We have also recovered numerous pottery vessels, some of which were glazed in two or three colors, and an agate mace head. We also have found two sets of gazelle horns and a plaque with a gazelle. We also have a remarkable plaque showing a man holding a bow and arrow while treading with one foot on a lion. We have just begun to get down to the lower floors and the finds are increasing in quantity and quality as we go. Some of our finest objects have come from a back yard, where pots and other items were thrown out.

Next week, we will begin a pit on the side of Trench TA, one of the earliest operations done by Chicago at Nippur. We want to check the stratigraphy for the first millennium B.C. and put our building in WC into perspective.

I will write another letter at the end of our season, bringing you up to date on our finds. We are having a very good season. Everything is going very well. Muhammad may even accept the new refrigerator as worthwhile.

Sincerely yours,
McGuire Gibson

The Suq سوق

Watch for our FEBRUARY SALES:
Books, jewelry and gifts-

Most Popular Item: CHOCOLATE SHAWABTI in dark sweet chocolate with a hint of orange wrapped in gold foil and entombed in it's own sarcophagus complete with hieroglyphs . . \$1.25

New Item: A reproduction of our own MIDDLE KINGDOM EGYPTIAN NECKLACE. A single strand (21") of carnelian, amethyst, and garnets \$65.00

O.I. Members 10% Discount
7% IL tax for IL residents
\$1.25 Post and handling for one item
\$.50 each additional item

MARCH LECTURE

Dr. Paul T. Craddock FSA, Senior Scientific Officer at the British Museum Research Laboratory, will present the sixth lecture in our series on the Technology of the Near East. This lecture, entitled, Development of Mining and Metallurgy in the Ancient Near East will be given at 8:00 PM in Breasted Hall on March 17.

Remember also John Carswell's February 10 (8:00 PM, Breasted Hall) lecture; Pottery and Porcelain - The Long Encounter.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Many of you have let me know that your News and Notes delivery is very slow. I have determined that it is getting out of the main Chicago Post Office promptly, so I'm afraid the delay is somewhere between Chicago and your mailboxes. I am trying to make sure the News and Notes is mailed by the beginning of each month and that there is at least a month's notice of events, classes, etc.

Unfortunately I have one notice which may arrive too late. I have just heard that there will be a PBS special on February 3, 8:00 PM (repeated on February 6, at 2:00 PM and February 7 at 8:00 PM) Egypt: Quest for Eternity. Much of this was photographed at Luxor and our Epigraphic Survey team is featured. If you miss this, it may easily be repeated later in the year. Times given are Chicago scheduling.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Members! The spring training course for docents will begin on Saturday, April 4. If you enjoy telling a story, or arousing enthusiasm in people of all ages, join some of your fellow members in the exciting profession of guiding people through the halls of the Oriental Institute Museum. The course will run from 9:15 to 3 for 8 Saturdays. Sign up with Peggy Grant or Joan Barghusen in Room 204. 753-2573.



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

