
Nippur

McGuire Gibson

For the second year in a row the Nippur Expedition was not in the field. I did visit Iraq during late June and early July of 1983 to discuss the continuing program at Nippur, to take care of some administrative chores, and to look at the Eski Mosul Salvage Area in the northern part of the country.

In Baghdad several days were taken up in discussions at the State Organization of Antiquities. It was made clear to us that our work at Nippur should remain our first priority and that any salvage project should be secondary.

Having taken a taxi to Nippur, I inspected the expedition house with Nur Kadhim, the guard who has been in the Institute's employ since 1948. As always, everything was in order. We sat and discussed Nur's retirement and candidates for his position. It will be impossible to find another like him, he being a unique combination of honor, diligence, wisdom and good humor. He agreed to stay on as guard until he found a suitable man.

Transportation for the trip to the Eski Mosul area, on the Tigris north of the city of Mosul, was provided through the generosity of Dr. Moayyad Said Damirchi, the president of the State Organization of Antiquities. As happened a few years ago in the Hamrin, there is a new dam under construction at Eski Mosul and the projected reservoir is the focus of international archaeological operations. Even with the continuing war,

excavations are being carried out by Iraqi, British, French, Italian, Canadian, Japanese and other teams. I wanted to find out in what way we could help in the effort and how such salvage work might be related to our program at Nippur.

Having visited a number of sites on both sides of the Tigris I was convinced that the results in this Salvage project would be even more important than those in the Hamrin, where we had a joint expedition with the University of Copenhagen. The Eski Mosul region, on the main water transport route from Turkey and Syria to Assyria, has large mounds with surface sherds of Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian date (c. 1400-600 B. C.). Since this area was one of the more important provinces of the Assyrian empire, a dig on any site with Assyrian levels would give important information on the organization and administration of that state. Sherds of earlier periods indicate the probability of encountering evidence of the Old Assyrian period, when merchants of Assur formed long-distance networks to trading colonies in Anatolia. There are also many mounds with prehistoric and early historic material, as well as important Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic occupations. The continuity in land-use patterns was most clearly shown at one site that has been excavated by the Iraqis. Here, on a bluff from which one can view the river valley for miles, there is today a police post beside the main road to

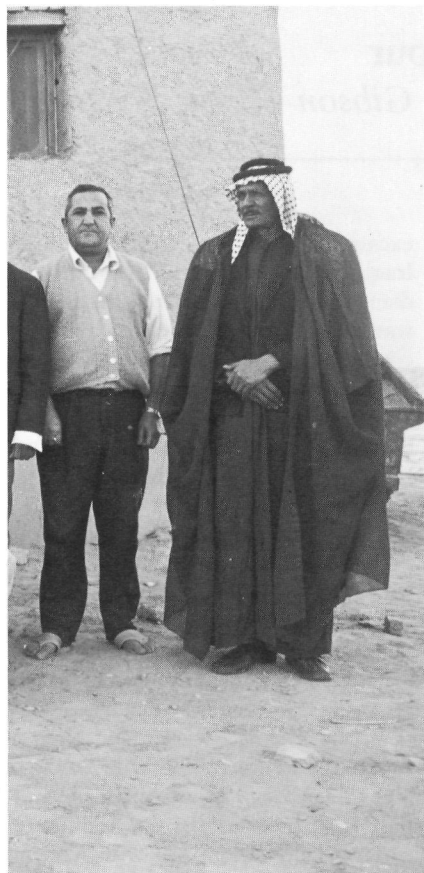


Photo of Nur Kadhim (right), the Nippur guard who is retiring after thirty-six years.

Turkey. This police post is built on the remains of an Ottoman fort. Below the level of the Ottoman fort the Iraqis have exposed fortified buildings of the Neo-Assyrian and Middle Assyrian periods (c.1300-700 B.C.). Clearly, this location has been thought to be strategic for many centuries.

Back in Chicago, I began to prepare grant proposals to cover extended operations at Nippur and a subsidiary operation in the Eski Mosul project. Some of these proposals have been submitted and we are awaiting action on them. If all goes well, we expect to be in the field again in January, 1985.

Besides writing up grant applications, the Nippur staff, including Richard L. Zettler and James A. Armstrong, have been working throughout the year on the monograph for the 13th, 14th and 15th seasons. The drawings which will illustrate the volume have been done by John Sanders and Peggy Bruce Sanders, using the Otrona computers we bought last year. As can be seen from the illustrations, the computer-made drawing is virtually identical to one drawn by hand. The advantage in using the computer is that the type-faces can be varied, lines can be altered, shading can be added or subtracted, and lettering can be done at any scale with a minimum of effort, once the drawing is in the machine. If we find that we have made a mistake, it is a simple thing to change a drawing and do a new printed version of it in a few minutes. A similar change to a hand-inked drawing can involve hours of painstaking work. With computer drafting, when a drawing is finished and printed on a plotter, Sanders can send me a copy on paper and also on a computer disk. With the disk, I can edit the drawing and send my version of the plan back to him by phone or on a



Topographic map of Nippur produced with the aid of a computer by John Sanders.



Peggy Bruce Sanders' drawing of a baked clay plaque found in 7th Century B.C. building at Nippur. (Orig. size approx. 7 x 6 cm.)

disk for him to study and then make alterations in his master drawing.

Objects can also be drawn with the computers and we are working toward a system in which the object catalog and the drawing will be combined as one record. This record makes it much easier to put together the published catalogue.

The text of the volume is being written onto disks and will be edited on paper, with changes entered on the disks. Eventually, the disks will be used to make a laser-printed copy for a photo-offset book. We could also use the disks to set type automatically, if we wished.

There is publication work being done on material other than that from Nippur. For most of the past year, Ingolf Thuesen of the University of Copenhagen has been in Chicago helping to put together a second volume of final reports on Uch Tepe, our Hamrin

site. This monograph will consist of technical reports such as detailed studies of the animal bones, soil samples and pottery, as well as engineering tests on the Razuk Round Building. We expect to turn this volume over to the printer in the last part of 1984.

As in previous years, we have had the generous support of Friends of Nippur. A fund-raising dinner was well attended and we must thank, especially, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Blomstrom, Dr. and Mrs. Raja Khuri, Mrs. Homer Rosenberg, and Mrs. David Maher. An anonymous donor has made it possible for Margaret Brandt, a student at the Institute, to carry out critical geomorphological analyses. Joan Hives is owed an enormous debt of gratitude for her careful and patient typing up of proposals. We also must acknowledge the gift of an AutoCAD drafting program tailored to our needs by Autodesk, Inc. of Mill Valley, California.



Drawing of the same object produced with a computer operated by Peggy Bruce Sanders.