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BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ

(Gertrude Bell Memorial)

31-34 GORDON SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1



REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MAY, 1964



THE THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SCHOOL WILL BE HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, 1 KENSINGTON GORE, ON WEDNESDAY, 4th NOVEMBER, 1964, AT 5 p.m., TO HEAR MR. DAVID OATES; TO CONSIDER THE ACCOUNTS, THE BALANCE SHEET AND THE REPORTS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE AUDITOR; TO ELECT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL; TO APPOINT AN AUDITOR; AND FOR ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH MAY PROPERLY BE TRANSACTED.

BEFORE THE MEETING THERE WILL BE A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL.

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REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

THROUGHOUT the year there was a further rise in demands for accommodation at the School in Baghdad, thirty scholars and students being admitted. Among distinguished visitors from a number of countries we also welcomed Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Secretary of the British Academy.

An intensive programme, under the direction of Professor M. E. L. Mallowan and Mr. J. J. Orchard, to prepare for publication the many hundreds of ivories recovered by the School's expeditions to Nimrud since 1949, was begun in October. Three restorers: Miss C. A. Searight, Miss S. N. Shaw and the Hon. Anna Plowden cleaned and rejoined a major proportion of the fragments from Room S.W. 37 of Fort Shalmaneser and sorted material from Room T. 10 which still awaits formal division in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. Mr. Orchard began to prepare the first fascicule, due to appear in 1965, which will deal exclusively with some 200 carved and incised ivory (horse-)harness decorations. Mr N. Kindersley gave valuable part-time assistance to this same project.

This year was marked by the first season of excavations at a new site, Tell al Rimah, which lies approximately fifty miles west of Mosul. The expedition was sponsored jointly by the British School and the University Museum, Philadelphia, and consisted of Mr. D. Oates (Director), Mrs. T. H. Carter (Assistant Director) and Mr. D. H. Crownover of the University Museum, Miss B. H. Parker, Mr. N. H. S. Kindersley and Mr. J. E. Reade, Fellows of the British School. Visitors, who also gave us valuable help, included Prof. J. Laessøe and Mr. M. Trolle-Larsen of the University of Copenhagen, Mr. D. H. French, Mr. J. J. Orchard, Secretary Librarian in Baghdad, Miss S. N. Shaw and Miss C. A. Searight. We were particularly fortunate in having the assistance of Sayid Tariq al Na'imi, Representative of the Directorate General of Antiquities, who took a full share in the field work and helped us greatly in the organisation of the expedition.

Tell al Rimah is one of a number of walled cities of moderate size which lie just within the boundary of cultivation between the desert and the hill chains which bound it on the north-east. Most of these cities appear to date from the third and second millennia B.C., and Tell al Rimah was chosen for excavation in the hope that it would provide new evidence for the history of the second millennium in Northern Iraq and a sequence of archaeological material that would enable other sites of this period to be more precisely identified. The city wall encloses an irregular polygon some 600 m. in diameter, with a central mound 100 m. wide at the base and 30 m. high. The base of the mound consisted of superimposed layers of debris containing comparatively flimsy mud-brick walls, apparently the remains of a small settlement of the third millennium B.C. On this had been founded a temple of monumental proportions, clearly the central feature of the city. During this season a part of the temple courtyard and the surrounding buildings was excavated. Both the structure and the ornament proved to be of outstanding interest. Some at least of the rooms around the courtyard had been roofed with mud-brick vaults, and both the inner and outer façades had been decorated with elaborate patterns of engaged half-columns. The shrine, with its ante-chamber, lay on the west side of the courtyard. The walls of the ante-chamber, which has been partly excavated, stand to a height of over 5 m. The shrine has not yet been

explored, but the configuration of the ground suggests that it is even better preserved.

Three main phases of occupation were observed within the temple, separated by intervals during which the buildings were damaged or allowed to fall into disrepair. The latest of these phases of occupation apparently came to an end during the Middle Assyrian period, for we found among the debris a merchant's archive containing documents dated to the reign of Shalmaneser I (1280-1260 B.C.). The tablets were unfortunately poorly preserved, but they seem to record the transactions of a father and his two sons in various commodities, including substantial amounts of tin. The preceding phase could be assigned to the middle of the second millennium B.C. on the evidence of two tablets and a quantity of frit objects and pottery, which are closely paralleled among the discoveries from Nuzu near Kirkuk in the first half of the fifteenth century B.C. The frit and glass objects associated with these two phases constituted our most important and interesting body of finds. They included beads and rosettes, seals of Mitanni type, human masks and figurines, and miniature animal pendants. Also found in a mid-second millennium context, but evidently re-used and of earlier origin, was a stone orthostat bearing on one end a broken mask of the Babylonian demon Humbaba. The levels associated with the third and probably the original phase of occupation of the temple were reached only in a very small area and have not yet yielded precise evidence of the date of its erection, but historical probability seems to point to the period of Assyrian power and prosperity early in the second millennium, under Shamshi-Adad I or his predecessors on the throne of Assur.

This date for the foundation of the temple and of the city, without which it cannot have existed, found some confirmation in the results of soundings in the city below the central mound. Here a long sequence of buildings spanned, with only brief interruptions, the period represented by the two later phases of occupation in the temple. At a still lower level, more than 6 m. below the surface, we uncovered the remains of massive walls belonging to a substantial building which had been founded on virgin soil. In association with these walls were a few fragmentary tablets which closely resembled official documents from Mari and Shemshara and must be dated, with them, in the nineteenth or eighteenth centuries B.C. Among the discoveries in the later levels of this sounding was a small shrine with a crude stone female statuette still in position on a platform at its eastern end. The shrine had clearly survived the reconstruction of the surrounding buildings over a considerable period, and provides interesting evidence of the continuity of occupation in the city during the second half of the second millennium.

We must once again record our sincere thanks to the Director General of Antiquities, Dr. Faisal al Wailly, and the Inspector General of Excavations, Sayid Fuad Safar, for all the help and encouragement we have received from them and their staff in our new undertaking.

On behalf of the Council,
J. M. TROUTBECK
Chairman of Executive Committee

D. OATES,
D. J. WISEMAN,
Joint Directors.

31st August, 1964.

