

## INTRODUCTION

The following collection of excavation reports are the result of my excavations in Iraq in the years 1956-1986; they were first published in Sumer, by Iraq's Ministry of Culture and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage.

I began my first major projects shortly after I graduated with my B.A. in archaeology from University of Baghdad, in June of 1955. In the fall of 1955 and the summer of 1956, respectively, I began excavations at the site of Basmusian and a survey of the Rania Plain. These projects were initiated before the completion of the Dokan Dam on the Lower Zab, which was already in progress in the province of Sulaimanya in Iraqi Kurdistan (northeastern Iraq). In spite of the extreme summer heat in this mountain region, and some other obstacles such as an incident of fire in the expedition camp and an outbreak of smallpox in the Kurdish village of Basmasian (which neighbored the site and was the main source of its workmen), these early projects were quite successful.

In the spring of 1959-1960, I excavated the throne room of the palace of King Assur-nasir-pal II at Nimrud, finding a corridor behind the end of the throne room and two more (partly-eroded) rooms. None of these areas were ever reached or planned by Layard or Mallawan during their earlier excavations at this palace in the middle of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The preliminary reports of the first, fourth, and fifth seasons of excavations at Tell es-Sawwan show the significance and the importance of the site. Tell es-Sawwan was an advanced Neolithic village dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris River some 120 km north of Baghdad. The village was rather unique, with architectural remains of its five building levels, defensive ditch and wall, and alabaster stone vessels and statuettes. Tell es-Sawwan's location in the middle of the country, together with two other sites of comparable date a little to the north, provides clear evidence for cultural correlation between the northern and southern geographical parts of Mesopotamia, indicating the way which the Neolithic farmer of the north filtered down to the southern plain in the delta toward the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE.

The work was done in several seasons of excavation at Tell Qalinj Agha, located within the city of modern Erbil in the Iraqi Kurdistan, in order to salvage the site and its remains from a private building project which was already in progress. An Erbili family owned the site and its surrounding; in the late 1960s the antiquity authorities bought the land and immediately started excavations. Two short and one long excavation seasons brought to light interesting remains, especially those of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC Uruk of period. Two living quarters were uncovered in level III, and in the middle of each was a small tripartite temple with some wall painting remains.

Later in the 1970s and 1980s I was engaged in supervising a major salvage program of excavations at the Diyala and Eski Mosul Dam construction areas. Hundreds of ancient sites would become submerged under each of the reservoirs created behind these two dams. After several years of salvage work by Iraqi Arabs and foreign archaeologists, results showed that the majority of sites at both salvage projects had materials dating from the pre-pottery Neolithic to the Islamic period.

I think it is useful to add to these *Sumer* dig reports a few more articles dealing with the late prehistoric pottery of Mesopotamia-mainly Uruk, Jamdat-Nasr and Ninerite V-as revealed by my own excavations and those of others. I also find it of some significance to end this group of articles with a discussion of the Diyala sequence of this date to southern sites. This discussion was published in the journal *IRAQ* (published in London) in 1967; its significance lies in the light it will shed on the Sumerian homeland of the Diyala region (east of Baghdad) and the southern Mesopotamian plain of present Iraq.

I would like to offer these dig reports for publication by the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World at Brown University, in gratitude. I thank this house of learning for hosting me during the academic year of 2008, and for all the facilities they have placed under my disposal. I shall also never forget the kindness and support shown to me by everyone at the **Scholar Rescue Fund of the Institute of International Education**, who has brought me and many other Iraqi scientists to the United States at a time when our home country is in great turmoil. Thanks to Susan Alcock, John Cherry, and Diana Richardson for helping me create this publication.