

The Nippur Expedition

McGuire Gibson

In the autumn of 1974, the Oriental Institute Expedition to Nippur, Iraq, was scheduled for its thirteenth season. By early September most of the staff members were already in the Near East prepared to meet in Baghdad. The season, however, did not take place because of internal Iraqi problems, and the staff was called home. The work will resume in the autumn of 1975.

Although we did not excavate during the last year, we did much work on the analysis and publication of the eleventh and twelfth seasons (1972-73). The preliminary report on the eleventh season, to appear in a few months as "Oriental Institute Communications," No. 22, is in galley proofs. The manuscript for the twelfth season, co-authored by Judith Franke and me, is finished and went to the editor in June. This report will be published as "Oriental Institute Communications," No. 24. Short summary articles on the twelfth season have appeared during the last year in the journals *Expedition*, *Iraq*, and *Sumer*.

Analyses of the animal bones from former seasons have been done by Prof. J. Boessneck of Munich. His work indicates that in Old Babylonian Nippur (ca. 1800 B.C.) people ate sheep, goats, cows, pigs, and fish as well as gazelle, birds, and turtles. Seeds found in similar historical levels are still being identified. The results will fill in our picture of ancient diet, complementing what is known from cuneiform documents.

Dr. Peter Mehringer of Washington State University has almost completed his work on the pollen samples from the last two seasons and has indications of a cycle of cultivation, marsh, and desert that may have been operative throughout Mesopotamian history.

Dr. Michael Bates of the American Numismatic Society has studied a hoard of 76 Islamic coins found on the top of the mound and has concluded that, in addition to coins from the expected mints in Iraq and Iran, there is also a group from North Africa.

The pottery from Nippur is being analyzed in different ways by Judith Franke, Paul Zimansky, and William Dodge. Part of their findings will appear in *OIC* 24, and further work will be incorporated in future reports.

In the autumn of 1975, we expect to continue exposing the temples in our Area WA and expand the location we call Area WB, where we have found large private houses owned by bakers. On the lower slopes of the mound, near the expedition house, we will open a new area to search for part of the city wall and houses of the second millennium B.C. We will also have with us a geomorphologist, who will sink pits in places where we think the ancient Euphrates used to run. He will also carry out other research to test for the cycle of cultivation, marsh, and desert indicated in the Mehringer pollen profiles.

For our long-term planning, the most important event of the last year may well have been the founding of Friends of Nippur. This group of about 120 individuals supports our research through memberships and by working for various events. In the past nine months we have published a handsome brochure on Nippur and held several social events, a very successful auction of Near Eastern craft items, and a set of lectures on Mesopotamian civilization.

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