

News & Notes

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LETTERS FROM TWO ARCHEOLOGISTS

Chicago, April 7, 1975

Greetings:

Unfortunately, this letter does not account for new fieldwork by the Joint Istanbul-Chicago Prehistoric Project, although the travels described here do take us as far as Istanbul. The excuse for Linda's and my travels was unusual, however, primarily because of a momentary lapse in the sound scholarly judgment of our French colleagues. Several months ago the University of Paris I—Sorbonne invited me to come to Paris to accept its degree of "*docteur-honoris causa*," and the ceremony was set for March 7th. They even offered me a round trip air fare and added accommodation for us both in Paris when I hinted that Linda would come too. With a trip as far as Paris in view, we naturally thought to continue on to Istanbul, if only for several days, to discuss the progress of the Joint Project's publication program and future field plans.

The French clearly have a style of their own in handling such affairs. We were met at the airport in Paris, given time to nap away some of the jet lag of a transatlantic flight in the very comfortable hotel in which they put us and then fetched for dinner at the apartment of Prof. Jean Deshayes (who had, I am convinced, made my nomination). There was a fine dinner and wine, with other old colleagues there as well. The next day, the 7th, a lunch *gastronomique et memorable* (escargot and filet of sole) at the Brasserie de Lilas near the Sorbonne, following which I gave an hour and a half's lecture (with slides, in English) for Deshayes' graduate students. How the world has changed, incidentally—before World War II and perhaps even later—a lecture at the Sorbonne in English would hardly have been thinkable. After the lecture, a dash back to the hotel to change for the Sorbonne's president's dinner for all six candidates. Again, fine food and excellent wine in the original apartment of the dean of the Sorbonne.

The candidates, in alphabetical order, were: Ernst Bloch, the philosopher from Tübingen; myself; Monseigneur Helder Camara, the famous liberal archbishop from Brazil; Leonid Kantorovitch, a University of Moscow mathematician; Adam Schaff, another philosopher, of the Polish Academy; and finally, Robert Solow, an economist at M.I.T. Each was to be introduced the next day by his own particular proponent in the Sorbonne, all of whom were present with their wives at the president's dinner. Of the candidates' wives, only Mrs. Bloch and Linda were there. One other note of

importance at the dinner was that Monseigneur Camara announced that he was held with such suspicion for his liberal views, by the Brazilian authorities, that it was wise for him to make bombastically radical speeches whenever he went abroad.

Next day, after another fine lunch at the home of colleagues, we were produced at the "*grand amphithéâtre de la Sorbonne*." I was guided back to a robing room (although Schaff was the only candidate who had thought to bring an academic gown), and Linda was propelled into the front row of the theater, with Mrs. Bloch, the president's wife, the cardinal of Paris, and representatives of the diplomatic corps. The French robe themselves magnificently: scarlet for law and economics, saffron yellow for philosophy, history, and archeology, purple for something else (I didn't gather what). Hoods with ermine (now probably rabbit!) trim, all the medals the wearer possesses, and rather tall, cylindrical hats with flared flat tops, such as French judges also wear, complete the costume. There were also half a dozen page boys in full dress, again sporting medals, and two wore swords. A string quartet tuned up in one corner of the robing room, then we all marched out onto the stage. Bright lights and an explosion of photo flashes, applause, and from somewhere a student in a trench coat floated past all of us depositing a mimeographed sheet about promises broken and university reforms not completed.

When things quieted down, we had some Schubert from the string quartet, an address by the president, more Schubert, and then the introduction of each candidate by his French proponent. As each candidate's introduction was finished, he stood up, went center stage to the president, and was given his diploma; and a red and blue scarf-like hood with white fur (rabbit?) trim was draped over his shoulders. Some more Schubert after the first three, then Jacques Ibert after the second three, then time for Monseigneur Camara to make public thanks for us all.

He took half an hour at it, and obviously charmed the whole student audience; but—insofar as we caught his impassioned and very Brazilian French—he didn't really thank anybody. He scolded the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., the nuclear age, multi-national corporations, and bad guys everywhere. Then he sat down to great applause and photo flashes,

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2 leaned over to me, patted my hand, and almost winked. Given what he'd said the night before, I understood him perfectly.

Next came concluding remarks by the rector and then we were supposed to finish with Ravel, but it didn't happen. As the rector concluded, up popped a group of students with loud speeches and a long banner about promises broken. The president looked flustered and the pages hurried us all off the stage, but the students had politely waited until all was over but the Ravel and I felt there was still life and vigor in the grand old Sorbonne.

Incidentally, this was not my first encounter with the Sorbonne. In 1934, I entered its summer course for foreign students. After two weeks, the instructress sweetly advised me to go to the kindergarten course in the Alliance Française. Of course I'd already flunked French 102, called "French for Engineers," in the University of Michigan in 1930. The gods were already nudging me towards a career which dealt only with PRELITERATE societies.

Linda and I then made a quick but most satisfying loop through Europe via Eurailpass, with fruitful visits to Dutch, Swedish, and Italian colleagues before flying to Istanbul. The co-directress of the Joint Prehistoric Project, Halet Cambel, seems well recovered from her recent surgery. We did a seminar in the University, and all of the old friends and colleagues and the Turkish student field hands of the last several Çayönü seasons were there. It was all very warm, and—as earlier—I was embarrassed by being presented with a bouquet of flowers. I never seem able to convince them that this is not a proper gesture toward males.

A final day in London, en route home, gave us time to have dinner with Seton and Hyde Lloyd. I first met Seton when he was Hans Frankfort's architect at the Institute's excavations at Tell Asmar in late 1930 (I was then at Michigan's site south of Baghdad). Now retired from the University of London, Seton scarcely looks his age and it was a great joy to go over the trials and triumphs of the time when the Oriental Institute was still new and life in the Near East was much more sweet and simple.

Next time I write, I do hope it will be from the field and not about the acquisition of some rabbit fur!

As ever,
Robert J. Braidwood

Baghdad, March 25, 1975

Dear Friends,

In a sense, archeological surveys of what is now southern Iraq may be said to have begun even before Assyriology began to emerge as a scholarly discipline. Refinements have been added at an accelerating pace during recent years, principally concerned with statistical methods, with formal models of spatial networks and urban hierarchies, and with the use of aerial photographs. Perhaps the objective has even shifted significantly, away from identifying particular ancient towns as targets for excavation and toward the discovery of historical patterning in land use and the distribution of human populations. But as in most scholarly experi-

ence concerned with uncovering and interpreting the past, discontinuities between the old and the new on matters of approach and program are frequently overwhelmed by vast and unavoidable continuities on matters of detail.

There are now fairly lengthy roots even in my own study of the ancient Mesopotamian landscape. That began almost two decades ago. What then seemed like a fairly straightforward two- or three-year research undertaking has broadened and altered its direction during the long, frequent, and generally involuntary intervals of interruption since then. It is accordingly difficult to avoid a preoccupation with both change and continuity as the project enters what are probably its final phases.

The sense of change is greatest if I consider the contemporary countryside through which we move, by jeep or foot. Pavements ended essentially at the outskirts of Baghdad in the mid-'fifties; today they knit all the major cities and many of the major towns as well. The spreading network of roads may be most directly contributive to my own research, but with it have gone all of the other, closely related features of a social and economic transformation: clinics, schools, power generating plants, TV antennas, sewage and chlorination facilities. In the mid-'fifties it could be said with fair accuracy that mud huts, traditionally primitive and inefficient agricultural methods, and the massive resistance of peasant suspicions and tribal loyalties lay around the urban islands like a sea. Today, as one drives the trunk road south as far as Hilla, Diwaniya and even beyond, the scene is different. Gigantic Russian backhoes and draglines and American land-levelling machinery, long lines of high tension transmission towers, and plumes of smoke from new factories are to be seen everywhere. Diwaniya, for example, little more than a subsidiary market and servicing center at the time of our initial Nippur expeditions, now boasts two respectable hotels and tire, textile and furniture factories. Great trucks of cement from the new plant at Kufa, bound for consumers in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, maneuver in the crowded lanes with new, Iraqi-manufactured tractors ("you can have any color you like, so long as it's red"), the drivers of the latter proudly sitting astride their beasts with the tails of their yashmaks flying.

And yet even along these pulsing new arteries the old intersects with the new. Squatting in the dust at the highway side, awaiting the same creaking and picturesquely painted lorries of ancient vintage, are still to be found the same knots of weatherbeaten farmers with a sack of grain and a sheep or two to finance their market purchases. And marching along the roads as of old, the time of Muharram having only recently passed, are the same processions of pilgrims from the strongholds of Shi'ism along the lower Euphrates, bound for Karbala under their blue-green banners.

So how fundamental are the changes? Has the balance really shifted irreversibly? My purpose in returning here to work is not to study the development process, and one cannot answer these questions with mere vignettes of travel. But one is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that, perhaps like the development process everywhere, the picture is uneven and not a little contradictory. The new agricultural co-

operatives are fully functioning and effective communities, not mere Potemkin villages with sloganeering billboards—and yet one wonders how rapidly and effectively even they can change the face of agriculture in this country. All hoary traditions of a Garden of Eden or a caliphal golden age here aside, this is in some purely physical respects a desperately unpromising region for truly modern agriculture. Soil salinity is an ever-recurring problem of major proportions, only kept in check by enormous and expensive drainage programs. Even shortages of irrigation water are beginning to be a critical deterrent, as the rising curve of population intersects with a declining curve of supply brought about by new Euphrates dams in Syria and Turkey.

My work this year is primarily in the Jazira, here meaning the uncultivated desert regions between the Tigris and the Euphrates in the southern part of the alluvial plain. Many of these districts have not been settled or cultivated in a thousand years or more, and have been deeply and cleanly scoured by wind erosion during that interval. Here is where the aerial photographs are most useful, recording a palimpsest of canal and river systems that now overlie one another after succeeding one another in the past. Much of the original substance of the canal deposits has been blown away, of course, but their flattened traces remain visible as bands of discolored sediment of distinctive composition and texture.

The modern canal system is largely an eclectic one—partly gravity-flow, partly pumped, partly planned, partly growing by accretion. Discernible beneath it, and still partly followed by it, is a much more comprehensive system that covered virtually the whole of the southern Iraqi countryside with a network of angularly trifurcating main canals from the northwest and northeast. In the main this is of Sassanian date, fourteen to seventeen centuries ago, while beneath it are the fainter but still fairly general patterns of a rectangular grid system oriented to the cardinal directions that may be Hellenistic. Much older still are fragmentary traces, frequently lost beneath later levees, of the many meandering channels of the Euphrates across the plain during the fourth, third, and early second millenniums B.C. Local systems of canalization surely existed during most of this same interval but can rarely be identified directly. Those that were durable probably were small-scale and hence difficult to detect. More comprehensive schemes also must have been introduced from time to time, but probably they were transitory since little evidence survives of them.

It is now apparent that there was a major, westward shift in the Euphrates system of channels as a whole during Kassite times. This imposed a new set of canalization requirements if water was still to be brought to the older cities and cult centers. The needed supplies in some cases could only be channelled across formerly unsettled tracts of presumed swamp or desert, opening a new frontier in the west for small, rigorous townships and villages on the Akkadian pattern, as contrasted with the Sumerian emphasis on cities. West, southwest and south of ancient Isin accordingly was “Kassite country” during the late second and perhaps early

first millenniums B.C.—although the term is here used as an archeological designation only, and does not imply Kassite political suzerainty. That period is generally regarded as a “dark age,” a population nadir, and perhaps especially so in the south. Such a characterization is wholly consistent with my own findings elsewhere. In parts of this region, however, the Kassite-Middle Babylonian density of settlement not only greatly exceeds that of earlier periods, but exceeds even the massive and ubiquitous remains of the much later Sassanian period.

Perhaps, to return to a theme with which I began, this is another instance of “uneven development.” The districts of new second millennium settlement are laced with deep depressions that the classical Islamic geographers later characterized as the “Great Swamp” and then largely ignored. Today they are shell-strewn but dry, their extent nicely defined at this season by a dense blanket of new grass that affords subsistence for literally thousands of bedouin and semi-sedentary folk with their black tents and flocks and camels. When the water was not diverted elsewhere, however, the depressions would have been filled with relatively permanent lagoons and even lakes, the largest that I have been able to trace exceeding a hundred square kilometers in area. The Kassite chains of settlement seem to link and depend upon these lakes, perhaps not only drawing a measure of protection from the swampy, lacustrine setting but even using the lakes as irrigation reservoirs.

How then can we account for the apparent lack of contemporary archival references to what surely was an important focus of town-building and agricultural activity? The distinctiveness and inaccessibility of the topography? The lack of tradition associated with these settlements, or in other words their failure to produce archival materials of their own? Their affiliation with relatively obscure dynasties originating in Isin, the “Sealand” and elsewhere? Or merely the failure of archeologists heretofore to have a look at an area that even the maps still dismiss with the designation “unsurveyed desert”? Well, the questions arise more urgently because it isn’t unsurveyed any longer. After three thousand or so of the roughest sort of jeep miles, grinding across tussocks of sand and camelthorn, skirting dunes, jacking into and out of ancient ditches, we can now accurately plot and describe several hundred archeological sites out there.

Incidentally, oil exploration parties also have been intensively at work in the same region. Uneven development again: drill rigs and air-conditioned aluminum trailers look a bit incongruous among the bedouin tents, not to speak (with more than a little envy) of the huge, special-purpose reconnaissance vehicles that one occasionally sees on the skyline lumbering among the indifferently grazing camels. Unless books and articles be counted, I can assure you that we leave correspondingly much less residue. But bear in mind that no one here reckons this a pristine wilderness, a desert in western American terms, to be preserved in isolation and sanctity as a national monument. The Iraqi Jazira is not a natural wasteland but an artifact—an outcome of water distribution patterns, of shifting nomad-

4 cultivator political and ecological balances, of the repeated phases of human re-use and then abandonment that have almost entirely created its present topography. And my objective is simply to record this artifact on the eve of its newest phase of transformation, before it is once again obscured for a few decades or centuries by a mantle of new roads, new canals, new towns, and all the other symbols (as well as material conditions) of modernization.

An uneven, contrastive picture once again emerges if we turn to the late prehistoric periods, during which the major Sumerian cities were coming into existence. Some years ago Professor Hans Nissen and I were able to map more than a hundred villages and towns that clustered to the north and east of ancient Uruk during the late fourth millennium B.C. A similar pattern occurs northeast, east and southeast of Nippur, along what surely was the major channel of the Euphrates in hydrological terms. Fortunately, the meanders of the latter have been scoured into relatively easy visibility on the air photographs by a thousand years of wind erosion, and those meanders—and accompanying traces of ancient settlement—are on our agenda to be followed all the way southeast to ancient Adab during the weeks immediately ahead. But nothing comparable occurs in the Isin wilderness. Was it unwatered and arid then? The small number of early settlements that we have found argues that the answer is probably not so simple. Perhaps clusterings and discontinuities were almost a prerequisite for the processes of political consolidation and urban growth, much as botanists speak of pioneer plant communities as being “contagiously distributed” rather than randomly or uniformly dispersed when they begin to occupy new zones.

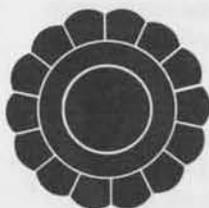
As you will have gathered, this is only a report of work in progress. The picture may change considerably, as it has

on earlier occasions; the only regularity that I can detect is that interpretations of findings like these grow progressively more differentiated and complex, never simpler. For one thing, the frame of interactions of which we have to be cognizant is an expanding one. As little as a decade ago it seemed reasonable to think of a single Sumerian city and its hinterlands as a unit for which explanatory paradigms on urbanization could be discovered. What is the paradigmatic unit today, when we know that the zone of significant interactions frequently extended far up into Syria, Turkey and Iran, as well as down the Arabo-Persian Gulf and perhaps even to the Indus Valley? What had seemed a reasonable, sufficiently bounded research approach to be undertaken by a single investigator now has to be viewed as only a component in a geographically much more extensive program that will require simultaneous work in many countries and over many decades.

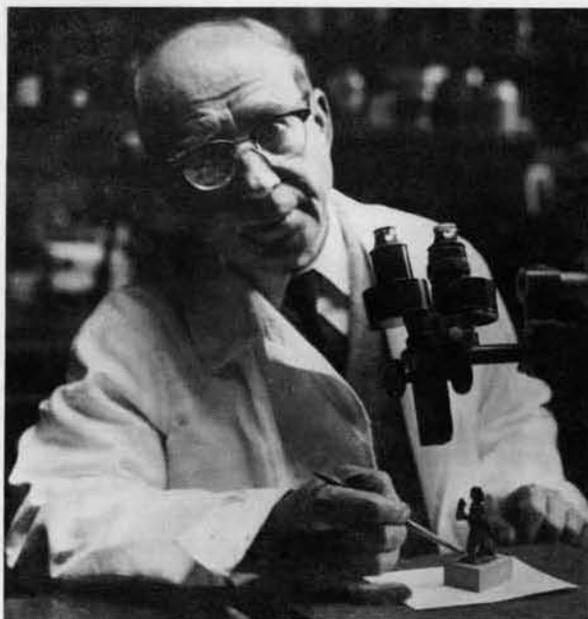
A similar line of thought, about the growing interconnectedness of things even while we stress the disjunctions between them, has occurred to me almost nightly with regard to the contemporary scene while I have been sampling the delights of Rumaitha and Diwaniya restaurants. It is a curious world in which the so-called “developed” countries become the principal suppliers of agricultural produce, yet merchants in those towns are doing a land-office business in Australian mutton and French pre-packaged chicken. The tools of my archeological trade, aimed at transcending individual sites and tying them into regional networks but always within the limits of the desert horizon, have been a prismatic compass and three-arm protractor. For this sort of world one clearly needs something more.

It remains only to record my thanks for the numerous sources of assistance and support on which this project has depended. Financial support was provided by the National Science Foundation. Quarters and logistical support have been generously made available by Drs. Jürgen Schmidt and Nicholas Postgate, respectively the heads of the German and British archeological expeditions here. Dr. Isa Salman, the Director General of Antiquities, and members of his staff have cooperated fully and in every way. It is no mistake to say that, without their very positive rather than merely routine assistance, the current phase of this work would not have been possible at all. I would particularly like to thank Sayyids Abdul Qader al-Shaykhli, Sabah Jasim al Shukry and Ikram Fatah Burzinch, all members of the Inspectorate of Surveys within the Directorate General of Antiquities, who have worked with me as individuals for various periods. Their tasks have not always been easy or pleasant ones, given the long and arduous business of survey under the best of circumstances, and will not become more so as the fleeting spring gives way to the intense heat of the rapidly approaching Iraqi summer.

With all best wishes,
Robert McC. Adams



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PINHAS P. DELOUGAZ
Professor Emeritus of Archeology

The sudden death of Professor Pinhas P. Delougaz on March 29th in Chogha Mish, Iran, surprised and saddened us. Mr. Delougaz was associated with the Oriental Institute for 45 years, serving on numerous expeditions in the Near East and directing many of them. Upon his retirement from the University of Chicago in 1967, he moved to the University of California at Los Angeles. He had been co-director of the Joint Chicago-UCLA Iranian Project at Chogha Mish for seven years. Mr. Delougaz was 73. A biographical memoir will appear in a future *News & Notes*.