



# News & Notes

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## "DIGGING" ON THE HOME FRONT

Dear Friends,

This letter is not being written from Iraq, Yemen, or any other foreign country. The Nippur staff is in Chicago with no immediate plans for field work. In late April, however, I will go to Baghdad to take care of some formalities concerning our car and guard, and will talk over the possibilities of a season next year. Salvage work has begun in the Eski Mosul Dam area, along the Tigris in the north of the country. We will, most probably, carry out an operation there, as we did in the Hamrin Dam area during 1978 and 1979.

The Eski Mosul Salvage Project is of very great interest to us because it is in Assyria, where the Institute has not worked in years, is located along one of the major routes of communication, and promises to give us new information not only on the Assyrians, but also on a whole range of periods from the prehistoric through Ottoman. Recent excavations in Syria, and Larry Stager's new expedition to Harran in Turkey will relate to the Eski Mosul findings. The information from Eski Mosul will help to link the pottery and other sequences from Syria with Mesopotamia proper.

Although the royal cities of Nineveh, Nimrud, and Khorsabad were sites of major interest in the mid-19th Century, when French and British archaeologists competed in digging and exporting the palace reliefs that now reside in the Louvre and the British Museum, and although there has been additional digging in Assyria in this century, we still do not understand Assyria as well as we do Babylonia. The reason for the relative lack of understanding is the absence of a crucial kind of investigation in the north of Iraq. By crucial kind of investigation I mean systematic surface survey, such as that carried out by Adams, myself and others in Babylonia. Lacking systematic surveys, the area of Northern Iraq will be best understood through regional salvage projects like the new one in Eski Mosul. The Iraqi Organization of Antiquities has begun the project with a

general survey of the area to be flooded. It has also made some excavations in a number of sites and has called upon the international archaeological community to take part in the work. I hear that British, Japanese, and Italian teams are now digging. When the present war ends, the full complement of foreign teams will, doubtless, join in.

The present pause from field work is allowing us to catch up with publishing the finds from previous seasons at Nippur and elsewhere. When I took over Nippur in 1972, I had a stated intention to dig every fall and prepare at least preliminary reports for each of the seasons. Various problems kept that schedule from being realized and, although we have gotten out three major reports in ten years, we still have a backlog. In order to erase the major part of that backlog, the Nippur staff and I will attempt to put together in the next nine months a volume on the 13th, 14th, and 15th seasons.

We have already done a lot of the preparatory work for the volume. After each season, we have organized photographs, made detailed architectural plans, prepared final drawings of objects, and sorted through object cards. We have also worked through the pottery from each season, arranging and rearranging the thousands of potsherds by types and levels. Much of this kind of work has been done by the group of graduate students I have been lucky enough to have. Some of them were also members of the digging staff, but one or two were just taking part in a seminar. It is this kind of excellent, volunteer, non-paid analysis that makes publication much less expensive than it would be otherwise.

My main collaborator in preparing anything for publication is John Sanders, the architect who has been working for the Oriental Institute since 1972. John is the latest in a long, distinguished line of architects and draftsmen who have given the Oriental Institute's excavations and publications a reputation for excellence. There were in the late 1930's as many as six men drawing in Room 310 of the Institute, when they were not in the field. One of these was Carl Haines, who worked at Alishar, on the Amuq plain, and at Persepolis. Carl later took



*Nippur in January, 1973 Carl Haines and John Sanders mapping in the ruins of a Kassite palace.*



*Mapping in the tried and true way, using a plane table and an alidade that dates from 1922.*



*John Sanders working at his portable computer.*

over direction of Nippur. In 1972, my first year as Nippur director, Carl came out of retirement to help in anyway he could. His greatest contribution was passing on to John Sanders a wealth of knowledge gained in a lifetime in the field. John took that crash course in technique and has put it to great use ever since. He has even added some refinements of his own, making it easier for the archaeologists and the architect to work together more efficiently. Sanders is the key to our digging and recording. He is the person who on a day to day basis, knows most precisely the relationship of one floor to another, one wall to another, across the entire area of operation. He is also one of the easiest people to get along with in any situation, never complains, is always ready for a long discussion with any of the field supervisors, and is usually correct in his assessment of a problem.

In the past year or so, Sanders has broadened his range of competence to include computers. He did a computer-aided master's degree in geography at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, putting four hundred Mesopotamian buildings into a computer program and coming to some original conclusions on ancient architecture.

We are, at present, entering the field data from the 13th, 14th, and 15th Nippur seasons into some microcomputers that we have bought. We intend to use these machines to sort and analyze the information and will produce the volume, mentioned above, on these computers. Chapters will be written directly into the machines by me, by Richard Zettler, James Armstrong, and others. We will edit, make corrections, move whole sections of text from page to page, form an index and otherwise ready the book for printing with the aid of the machines. I am just learning to do some of these operations. Sanders and his wife Peggy are much more expert at using the machines than I, and the publishing of the book will depend on their advice and on their nimble minds and fingers.

We are planning for future field work incorporating the machines. John is familiarizing himself with a type of surveying instrument that uses lasers and computer technology. With these new instruments, it is possible to feed mapping data into a computer and have the machine draw the plan that has been recorded. Such technology seems far too space-age for archaeology, giving a degree of accuracy that is far beyond the usual standard in archaeology. However, the savings in time, in manpower, and in cost over a couple of seasons will justify the investment in the machines. We expect some difficulties in adapting the machines to the dust and temperature changes in the Middle East, but know that engineers and architects are already using such technology in the area to great advantage.

John Sanders may be able to use some of the equipment within the next few months on the Harran project. He is going out with Stager to do a general map of the area which Harran dominates. The recording of excavation areas will probably not be done with a computer this year because it takes time to adapt the normal system to the machine.

We are looking forward to our next field season in Iraq, confident that the computers will make possible new approaches to the excavation and recording. We are also, however, keenly aware of the possibilities for problems with the machines and are ready to shift back to the efficient methods Sanders has worked out for mapping and we archaeologists have adopted for recording. Ball-points and notebooks are not going out of use just yet. But, it is only a matter of time before they join the slide rule in honored retirement.

McGuire Gibson

## HARRAN IN HISTORY AND TRADITION

Early last May I saw Harran for the first time. We drove into this once great city from the west, passing through the old Aleppo Gate to the foot of the imposing tell. More than a millennium ago there were seven gates in the two-mile long circuit of stone fortifications, which led into the medieval city from all directions. I climbed to the top of the tell. On that day the view of the countryside was magnificent. I looked north across the flat, fertile plain and could see Urfa (Edessa). It sat on the first tier of the arc of distant hills like a spectator in an ancient Roman theater. From atop the tell of Harran, more than 100 feet above the surroundings, I had no difficulty imagining that this was stage center.

Unable to resist the power of this theatrical metaphor, I began to muse about the many historical dramas (and farces) that had been played out in the Plain of Harran: the biblical patriarch Abraham and his family setting off with their caravan to Canaan; the big-game safari led by the Assyrian king Tiglathpileser I, who boasted of shooting ten "strong bull elephants" in the region; the overwhelming defeat of Crassus and his legions by the Parthians; the assassination of the emperor Caracalla, who led yet another campaign against the Parthians. He died on April 8, 217 A.D., not on the battlefield, but on his way from Urfa to Harran. Somewhere along the road, Caracalla got off his horse to relieve himself and was stabbed to death by his own soldiers.

As far back as the 18th century B.C., Harran was renowned as the holy city of the moon god Sin. Within the sacred precincts of the Sin Temple, the king of Harran concluded a treaty of alliance with other local kings and tribal leaders, early in the 2nd millennium B.C. Among the Aramaeans of the 1st millennium B.C., the moon god was worshipped as the "Lord of Harran," or Ba'al-Harran. Various Assyrian kings, who dominated northern Mesopotamia in the 8th-7th centuries B.C., consulted oracles of Sin before embarking on military campaigns. As Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.) was about







*"Sin of Harran" symbol with Crescent Moon, carved in basalt.*

to set off with his armies for Egypt, he visited a "temple of cedarwood" in the vicinity of Harran:

Therein the god Sin was leaning on a staff, with two crowns on his head. The god Nusku was standing before him. . . . (The god) placed a crown upon his (Esarhaddon's) head, saying, 'You will go to countries, therein you will conquer!' He departed and conquered Egypt.

Where exactly this temple built with cedars of Lebanon was located is not known. But had Esarhaddon driven his chariot just 15 miles north of Harran to Huzirina (Sultantepe), he would have come to another prominent Sin sanctuary, perched high above the plain.

In the early 1950's the Anglo-Turkish excavations there revealed part of a large mudbrick building that housed not only a stela of "Sin of Harran" (above), but more important a library that contained cuneiform copies of some ancient Mesopotamian masterpieces: part of the "Epic of Gilgamesh," the "Tale of the Righteous Sufferer" (reminiscent of Job), and the "Tale of the Poor Man of Nippur."

As we drove north through the Plain of Harran last spring, the countryside was green with meadow grasses and fields of grain about to ripen. There was not a tree in sight. But the horizon was continually broken by grayish-brown humps of mounds. From the car I counted at least a dozen tells between Harran and Sultantepe. Which mounds might have been thriving communities in Esarhaddon's day, we couldn't tell. But we should have a better idea after we have completed our survey of the region next fall, mapping and collecting artifacts from the surface of possibly 100 or more sites that punctuate the plain north of Harran (an area of ca. 300 square miles).

From Esarhaddon's chariot the Harran countryside probably looked even more luxuriant than it did from our car. Not far from the road, a river flowed south, parting the plain. Farmers along its banks must have tapped its water to irrigate some of the fields of the many agricultural estates that lay between the cities.

During the Assyrian period a census-taker recorded the holdings of certain estates in and around the Harran district, in what today is called the "Assyrian Doomsday Book." The purpose of the census is not clear, but in it were recorded the names of some of the owners of and workers on these farms, the composition of their families, amount of land under cereal

cultivation, their farm buildings and threshing floors, the number of grapevines tended, and size of flocks of sheep (rarely goats) and herds of cattle. Several members of these farm families have Aramaic names compounded with the name of the lunar deity Sin.

In future seasons we shall be on the lookout for sherd scatters from these farms that may lie hidden beneath the modern fields. With some luck and help from aerial photographs, we might find foundations of some of the farm buildings still preserved and excavate them. After several seasons of excavation at Harran itself, at one-period satellite sites, and at the farmsteads, we may be able to produce, for selected periods, a much more complete picture of the various components of the kingdom of Harran and aspects of its daily life, from kings to commoners. One period that we would hope to bring into much sharper focus through archaeology is the Iron Age, especially that period, prior to Assyrian hegemony in the area, when "Aramaean" and "Neo-Hittite" kingdoms were being consolidated throughout Syria and Anatolia.

In western tradition, Harran is probably best known as the home of Abraham and his family. Many of the stories about the biblical patriarchs--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob--focus on the Harran area, where Abraham's father Terah settled after he left Ur of the Chaldees. According to the Bible, in the next generation Abraham and part of his family then left Harran for the Promised Land of Canaan (Genesis 11, 24, 29-31 and Acts 7). But on more than one occasion, the patriarchs returned to "Aram Naharaim" or "Padan-Aram" to fetch wives for themselves from among their own kin. Abraham dispatched his servant to the city of Nahor to find a wife for his son Isaac; he returned with Rebekah. Jacob labored in Harran for years for his uncle Laban in order to win the hand of his youngest daughter Rachel. After the first seven years of work, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his older daughter Leah. The uncle then required another seven years of service before he gave Jacob the daughter he really wanted, Rachel.

Some of the names of Abraham's putative ancestors and relatives--Serug, Terah, and Nahor--resemble place names, not far from Harran, known from texts of the 2nd-1st millennia B.C. Yet the period(s) in which the patriarchal stories of Genesis should be placed remains a mystery.

From the tell I looked toward the lonely minaret (below) of Harran. Between the minaret and the tell, some of the ruins of the Great Mosque (first built in the 8th century A.D.) could still be seen. The British Islamicist and archaeologist Rice excavated there several years ago. It was in 1956 that he made his most startling discovery; and as so often happens in archaeology, it was quite by accident. As his crew was removing huge basalt paving stones from the ruins of the Great Mosque, his eye caught carvings on one of the slabs. When the block was cleaned, a royal figure standing in adoration before the symbols of the Sun, Moon, and Venus appeared at the top of the stela. When the cuneiform text below the upper register was later read, it was learned that the royal figure was King Nabonidus himself.



*The tell of Harran (background, center) and the minaret (right) looking northwest from the "castle".*



"Hittite" lion orthostat (sawed in half), photographed by T.E. Lawrence in 1911, near the "Lion Gate" of Harran.

No king was more devoted to the Sin cult than the renegade ruler of the Neo-Babylonians, Nabonidus. His beloved mother was a devotee of the Moon in Harran. Nabonidus installed his daughter in the Sin Temple at Ur.

More than half a century earlier in 612 B.C., Nineveh and, two years later, Harran fell to barbarian hordes known as the Umman-manda (Medes?). The Sin Temple was destroyed and lay in ruins for the next half century. One night the god Marduk came to Nabonidus in a dream and instructed him to rebuild the Moon Temple in Harran. Nabonidus responded by recalling his army from Gaza in Palestine and dispatching it to Harran to restore the splendors of the Temple. According to his own account, Nabonidus also rebuilt other parts of the devastated city, making it bigger and more beautiful than ever before.

In all Rice found three stelae inscribed by King Nabonidus and reused as paving in the Great Mosque. They had probably once stood in the Sin Temple of Harran. But where had that great Temple stood? My Muse looked down knowingly toward the high ground on which we stood and then vanished as suddenly as she had appeared.

Now, one year later it looks as though some of our reverie may become reality, as we prepare for a two-month season of survey next September and October, to be followed in subsequent years by excavations at Harran and in its countryside. To bring the first five-year phase of the project through publication will require ca. \$500,000. Our prime mover and benefactor, Mr. Leon Levy (for whom the Expedition is named) will fund half the project. Our goal is to match that amount during the next five years through private, public, and corporate contributions.

Lawrence E. Stager, Director  
The Harran Expedition

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### Time To Change Telephone Numbers

As part of The University of Chicago's improvement of its telephone services, all of the telephone numbers in the Oriental Institute have changed.

Recorded Museum Announcement	962-9521
Museum Office	962-9520
Suq Office	962-9509
Suq Store, Lobby	962-9510
Publication Sales	962-9508
Museum Education Programs	962-9507
Volunteer Guide Office	962-9507
Membership Office	962-9513
Research Archives	962-9537

## FREE SUNDAY FILMS: MAY AND JUNE 1983

All films are shown at 2 p.m. in Breasted Hall, The Oriental Institute

May 1	The Archaeologist and How He Works
May 8	Iraq: Stairway to the Gods
May 15	Iran: Landmarks in the Desert
May 22	Preserving Egypt's Past
May 29	Turkey: Crossroads of the Ancient World
June 5	The Archaeologist and How He Works
June 12	Rivers of Time
June 19	Megiddo: City of Destruction
June 26	Egypt: Gift of the Nile

In conjunction with the Quest for Prehistory exhibit, the film *The Archaeologist and How He Works* will be shown on the first Sunday of each month through June, 1983.

### MEMBERSHIP LECTURE

**Lanny D. Bell**, Field Director of the Oriental Institute's Epigraphic Survey, will present an illustrated lecture entitled "Chicago House and the Rescue of Ancient Theban Monuments" on Wednesday June 1, at 8 p.m. in Breasted Hall.

Those of you who use the Quad Club for dinner before membership lectures, please print your name and address at the bottom of your check as well as signing it. Some signatures are very difficult to read and this complicates our billing you for the dinner.

### SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Although specific times and topics are still to be announced, the Education Department will offer both Parent-Child and Children's Workshops during the month of June.

In the planning stages are three Parent-Child Workshops to be held on Saturday mornings. Each workshop will include discussion, gallery study and project-making. Workshop topics include Archaeology, Pyramids and Mummies, and Animals of the Ancient Near East. Children ages 5-12 are eligible but must be accompanied by a participating adult.


A series of four workshops for children ages 9-12 will be offered on consecutive weekday mornings during the latter part of June. Both gallery study and challenging projects will be featured. Participants should plan to attend all four sessions. Topic and dates to be announced.

There is a fee and enrollment is limited for the workshop programs. For further information or to register, please call the Education/Volunteer Office, 962-9507.

### SUMMER SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

Special interest tours will be offered throughout the summer months when the Museum's crowded group schedule traditionally lightens. These are 30-45 minute gallery talks by docents on topics of interest that are more limited in scope than the usual tour of Museum highlights. A sampling of topics includes Egyptian Art, Archaeology and the Bible, and Jewelry of the Ancient Near East. Some topics will be designed for an adult audience and some for children. There is no fee and reservations are not necessary; tours will meet in the Museum lobby. Call 962-9507 for information or brochure.



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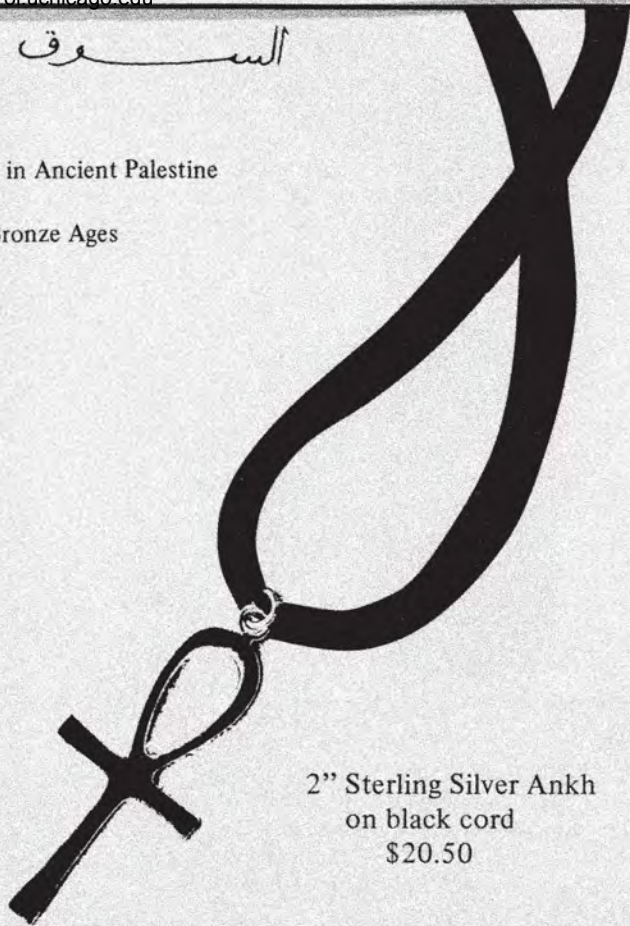
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