

IRAQ 74 (2012)

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Recent palaeoenvironmental, historical, and archaeological investigations, primarily consisting of site reconnaissance, in the Shahrizor region within the province of Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan are bringing to light new information on the region's social and socio-ecological development. This paper summarises two seasons of work by researchers from German, British, Dutch, and Iraqi-Kurdish institutions working in the survey region. Palaeoenvironmental data have determined that during the Pleistocene many terraces developed which came to be occupied by a number of the larger tell sites in the Holocene. In the sedimentary record, climatic and anthropogenic patterns are noticeable, and alluviation has affected the recovery of archaeological remains through site burial in places. Historical data show the Shahrizor shifting between periods of independence, either occupied by one regional state or several smaller entities, and periods that saw the plain's incorporation within large empires, often in a border position. New archaeological investigations have provided insight into the importance of the region as a transit centre between Western Iran and northern and southern Mesopotamia, with clear material culture links recovered. Variations between periods' settlement patterns and occupations are also beginning to emerge.

Carrie Hritz, Jennifer Pournelle and Jennifer Smith

The flourish of early Sumerian civilization in southern Iraq marked a degree of economic differentiation, socio-political complexity, and urbanization previously unseen in the ancient world. This article reports the results of recent geo-archaeological investigation of three complementary resources in southern Mesopotamia that are thought to have offered an ecological advantage, thus laying the economic foundations for these developments: (1) expansive irrigable plains; (2) vast pasture lands; and (3) the littoral resources of levee back swamps/deltaic marshes. Focusing on the area of the Hawr al-Hammar marshes, the authors conducted preliminary archaeological, geological and landscape investigation over the course of 18 days in the autumn of 2010, funded by a U.S. National Science Foundation High Risk Research in Physical Anthropology and Archaeology grant.

Mary Shepperson

As part of ongoing research into the significance of light in ancient Mesopotamian architecture and ideology, a reorientation of the main external gateways of city temples can be identified, occurring from around the beginning of the Ur III period. This change in orientation allowed temple gateways to receive direct sunlight onto their external façades during the morning throughout the year. One possible explanation for this architectural change is found in the legal practices of the late third and second millennia B.C. It is proposed that access to sunlight, and therefore the presence of the sun god, was significant for the taking of oaths and the administration of law at temple gateways from the Ur III period onwards, thereby promoting a south-easterly orientation for these gateways. With this in mind, the careful provision of morning light access to the doorways of the neighbourhood chapels of residential Ur may be taken as evidence for the local neighbourhood administration of some legal

functions. This in turn suggests a possible cultic and legal basis for the formation of these localised subdivisions of urban communities.

Elizabeth C. Stone

The recent introduction of irrigation around the site of Mashkan-shapir, together with the availability of high resolution satellite imagery, has resulted in the preservation of architectural traces which could not be recovered when the site was researched between 1987 and 1990. In spite of recent looting, these traces have allowed the identification of the location of the palace and the reconstruction of much of the street system of this city, including the connection points across the ancient canals. Moreover, the survey data recovered through past fieldwork can be related to these traces, allowing an understanding of the larger context for many of the activities at the site, especially burial and manufacturing. Together these data provide a detailed view of how an ancient Mesopotamian city was conceived—in this instance by Sin-iddinam, who transformed it from a small village to a large city by building the city wall.

Jack Cheng

A horizontal harp, strung with seven to nine strings and usually decorated with a finial in the shape of a human forearm, is likely to have been a symbol of the Neo-Assyrian state. Various features distinguish this musical instrument from contemporary Elamite harps, and from other harps in Mesopotamian history. The horizontal forearm harp was the most frequently depicted musical instrument on Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs and bronze doors; pairs of male Assyrians play the harp for the king in official duties of state or cult. The decorative forearm sometimes wears the rosette bracelet associated with royalty. Consideration of the iconographic significance of the forearm suggests possible Neo-Assyrian attitudes toward music.

J.H. Crouwel

Important developments in wheel construction can be observed in Iraq and other parts of the Near East during the later third and earlier second millennium B.C. One such innovation is the appearance of clamped-on tyres made in bronze or copper segments. Recent, spectacular finds from Turkmenistan in Central Asia extend the already wide distribution of tyres of this distinctive form. They also shed light on the kinds of wheel and vehicle on which such metal tyres were used.

Yoram Cohen

This paper argues that the peripheral recensions of the Ballad of Early Rulers reflect Mesopotamian forerunners, and do not represent re-workings by the local scribes. The Ugarit recension is based on an Old Babylonian forerunner, and the Emar recension is based on a Middle Babylonian version that incorporated material from other scholarly sources. To support this contention, the Babylonian literary and scholarly background of the early rulers is discussed, and a reconstruction and analysis is offered of the Mari section of the Sumerian King List, in which two rulers of the Ballad appear. The textual history of the Ballad contributes to the general debate regarding the origin, date of composition and transmission of Mesopotamian literature and its reception

throughout scribal centers, not only in Ugarit and Emar, but also in ʾattuša, Canaan and Egypt during the Late Bronze Age. A new copy of the Emar Ballad manuscript by Andrew George is offered at the end of this paper.

Mikko Luukko

The introductory formulae of Neo-Assyrian letters sent to the king or a superior official during the eighth century B.C. attest to a highly standardised form of letter writing (especially in the address), proving scribal sensitivity to an established letter writing etiquette. The introductory formula reflects the office of the sender; exactly the same formula (including the greeting) may be used by successive officeholders. Yet these formulae are by no means entirely uniform. In particular, the presence or absence of a blessing may tell us about the sender's relationship with the Assyrian king.

Radoslaw Tarasewicz

This article presents a study of the little known sidru-offering from the Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar temple at Sippar. The source data comes from an unpublished tablet belonging to the so-called Ebabbar archives. It is the only known example of the performance of this offering in a Babylonian temple. The organization of the cult and cultic calendar of Babylonian temples are the subject of numerous studies and much debate; the content of this tablet contributes valuable new data to the discussion.

Jon Taylor

The remains of the Percy J. Wiseman collection of cuneiform tablets were acquired in 2010 by the British Museum, where they now form the 2010-6-022 collection. The tablets almost all originate from southern Iraq, including the sites of Drehem, Larsa, Nippur, Sippar and Umma. They constitute records from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods (21st–17th century B.C.) and from the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods (6th–4th century B.C.). This article provides an overview of the collection and makes the texts available for further study.

M. Sulaiman and S. Dalley

Seven tablets from the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad are edited here for the first time. They date early in the long reign of Rim-Sin I of Larsa, and presumably come from that site, modern Senkereh in southern Iraq. They throw light on rituals held in the palace, and on international relations through the envoys who attended.