

OBITUARY

Professor TARIQ MADHLOOM
(1933–2007)



Painting by Tariq Madhloom: *Nimrud* 1956

Tariq Madhloom was our official Iraqi Representative and a fondly-remembered member of the Nimrud Expedition from 1956 to 1958. He remained a close friend of the Mallowans, and of David and myself, throughout the rest of his life. His greatest interests were his country and its heritage, and painting. He resented foreigners intensely, but remained forever loyal to his foreign friends. He felt strongly that it was wrong to allow a single antiquity to leave the country, and for that reason could not bear to be present at the “division of finds” that in those days took place, officially, on sites dug by foreign expeditions. He was to become a well-known and most distinguished painter and sculptor; his enthusiasm for and commitment to painting had already been obvious at Nimrud. Here is one of Agatha Mallowan’s “excavation poems”, a yearly Easter Sunday present for all Nimrud dig staff. In 1957 these were based on “nursery rhymes”, and Tariq’s read:

In his corner Tariq sits;
Does his catalogue in bits.
All the while his fertile brain
Urges him to paint again.
“Compositions” go and come,
So, he too, puts in his thumb ...
Pulls out: “Female figures”, two;
“Ladies at the Window”? No.
There they hang upon the wall
Watching Tariq at his toil!

“Ladies at the Window” was a reference both to a type of Syrian ivory and to the women “out the window”, harvesting that year’s crop, and who appear in one of Tariq’s Nimrud paintings, later bought by Agatha. His early devotion to the Mallowans, and to Nimrud, is touchingly seen in the Nineveh dig house, constructed very much on the Nimrud model; and, perhaps surprisingly, in the presence of a guard dog which was said to be the descendant of one of Agatha’s Nimrud

dogs, the descendant proudly pointed out to us by Tariq himself. He once came to our house in Baghdad (New Year's Eve 1968), at a time when Iraqis were forbidden to go to foreigners' houses. Having parked his car some blocks away, he brought in a friend, previously unknown to us, who remained somewhat puzzled over Tariq's assertion that "These are David and Joan, my very best friends", followed by "I hate all foreigners". Such was his deep loyalty to his friends, even when it crossed the boundaries of his passionate devotion to Iraq and its artistic and historical heritage.

Tariq Madhloom was born in Baghdad in 1933 and entered the Department of Antiquities after graduating from the College of Arts in 1955. He went on to London where he wrote a PhD under the guidance of Max Mallowan on *The Chronological Development of Neo-Assyrian Art*, successfully submitted in 1964 and illustrated with his excellent drawings. It was published in England in 1970 as *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art*, and is still a very useful and often cited volume. On his return to Iraq and the Antiquities Department, he was instrumental not only in the restoration of the gates, walls, Sennacherib's throne room and other monuments at Nineveh, but in protecting the site from developers, at one time (backed by a letter from Faisal Al-Waily, Director-General of Antiquities, to the then President, Abdul Rahman Aref, and pressure also from the distinguished architect, Dr Mohammed Makiya) literally stopping the threatening bulldozers in their tracks. He was also responsible for digging up the main road to the north, without permission, in his determination to complete the plan of the now restored Mashki Gate. Regular reports on his work at Nineveh between 1965 and 1970 were published in *Sumer* 23, 24 and 25 and in two monographs on the site in the series *Historical Monuments in Iraq* 1 (1972, in Arabic) and 4 (1976, in English).

Tariq was responsible for the excavation of a number of archaeological sites: Parthian Tell Abu Thar in 1957 (published in *Sumer* 15 in 1959), Sumerian Tell al-Wilayah (*Sumer* 16, 1960), Islamic Bakr-Awa (*Sumer* 21, 1965), and for archaeological surveys in the Suleimaniyah region (*Sumer* 26, 1970). In 1973 he also excavated in the region of Mleiha in Sharja — United Arab Emirates (*Sumer* 29, 1973), carried out restoration work at Ctesiphon (8 years), Ashur (2 years) and at other sites (*Sumer* 27, 34, 35 and 42). He contributed to an article on the Bassetki statue base (*Sumer* 32).

In addition to his position at the Antiquities Department, in 1967 Tariq joined the Faculty of Archaeology, College of Arts, at Baghdad University, first as a lecturer, and then as a professor. He taught a number of students and supervised Ph.Ds at the University, not only in the College of Arts, but also at the Academy of Fine Art (later College of Fine Arts), and at the College of Engineering. In 1979, he became Head of the Heritage Division of the State Organisation of Antiquities and Heritage and the second director of the ICCROM regional centre set up by UNESCO in Baghdad for the preservation of cultural heritage. He contributed a chapter (on the training of conservators) to a manual entitled *Training*, produced in 1993 by ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites). His work on mud brick in Assyrian buildings is cited in *Earth Architecture — Bibliography* (published by ICOMOS in 2004). He also wrote a book on Assyrian designs (published in Arabic in 1979) that was translated into English and French. Altogether, he published more than 50 articles on excavation, restoration, history and art.

Tariq's increasing involvement in the art world led him to transfer in 1993 to the Fine Art Academy, where he continued his interest in teaching, restoration and painting, but focused on sculpture. I remember most clearly a striking bust of a distinguished Iraqi doctor and his prize-winning design for a bronze sculpture erected on the Shatt al-Arab in Basra to celebrate the end of the Iraq-Iran war — a sculpture of "Al-Sharq", a clever play on the Arabic word for "east" and the English "shark".

It was with the greatest sorrow that we learnt of his death in Baghdad on 24 January 2007. He will be sadly missed by all his foreign and Iraqi friends, and we send our deepest sympathy to his wife and children. He was a charming man, something of an Assyrian bull at times, but always driven by an intense love and loyalty to his country and its art.

Joan OATES