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Editorial Notes

WE extend a hearty welcome to 'Sumer'*—a welcome none the less hearty because through no fault of ours it is somewhat belated. So far as we are aware, this is the first archaeological journal to be published by any of the succession states in the Middle East. May it be followed by many others.



Each number contains illustrated articles in English and in Arabic, the latter covering many more pages than the former. We do not propose to list or review the articles themselves, much less to score a few cheap points by drawing attention to the far too numerous misprints and other defects that are perhaps inevitable at the outset in a pioneer publication such as this. We prefer to look on the bright side and to select those features which, as it seems to us, promise well for the future. For we can see evidence of vitality and of an awakening interest that may mark the beginning of a new era in oriental research. Hitherto some of that research has been carried out by Iraqis working under the direction of Europeans, who have themselves published the results. With the achievement of independence (albeit limited by treaty obligations) the whole responsibility for research and the conservation of the national antiquities falls upon the shoulders of the Iraq government. Those who own their house and garden usually devote more care to its upkeep than those who merely rent them from others. That the Director-General of Antiquities, Dr Naji al-Asil, takes a wide and philosophic view of what is meant by archaeology is evident from his remarks on p. 41 of no. 1. To be able to see the history of a single country against the background of the whole history of man is a rare gift not possessed by many men of learning and scholarship; though such a view must come more easily to one who lives in the land where so many of man's earliest and most important inventions—such as agriculture, urban life, writing, for instance—were made. There are other signs of that universal outlook which (as we pointed out in a book written many years ago) marks the true archaeologist. On pp. 39–40 of no. 1 is a letter from Dr van Riet Lowe thanking the Director-General for information about Iraqi beads, required for comparison with the beads—all-important for dating purposes—

* Sumer: a journal of archaeology in Iraq; published by the Directorate-General of Antiquities, Baghdad, Iraq. Vol. III, no. 1 (January), no. 2 (July), 1947. Review copies of the earlier volumes were not sent, and when (quite by accident) the Editor discovered the existence of this journal and asked for review-copies, the earlier issues were already out of print.

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found at Zimbabwe in Rhodesia. There is also a discussion of the Chinese celadon-ware found in both areas. In this little exchange all the three basic divisions of mankind are involved—the Negro (at Zimbabwe), the Caucasian and the Mongolian; and medieval European culture also plays a part in the Venetian origin of some of the beads. Thus do some of the humblest (but most useful) of archaeological finds bind together three continents. Could there be a more telling instance of the need for the world-wide cooperation of archaeologists, or a better example of such actually in operation today? And if someone should remind one of a fourth and very important continent, he may be referred to Dr Goetze's letter (from Yale) on p. 36.

We are fully aware that what we have just written may well be misunderstood, and perhaps laughed at, by some, in whose eyes technical shortcomings loom large. They may compare 'Sumer' with 'Iraq' or 'Ancient India' or the Journal of the Egyptological Society. Such a comparison would be as unfair as one between the technical achievements of the U.S.S.R. today and those of, say, the U.S.A. The only legitimate comparison is between the U.S.S.R. today and Russia before 1917, and between 'Sumer' and other similar publications printed and published in Iraq. Having thus cleared the ground we hope we shall not be misunderstood if we emphasize the outstanding importance of the technical side of archaeology. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that archaeology is a technique. It reveals the past by bringing to bear upon any given ancient site or problem the whole armoury of modern inventions—excavation, conservation, linguistics, survey, photography, the analysis of soil and pollen, dendrochronology and many others. Above all archaeology is concerned with the soil and its interpretation, chiefly by means of stratification and the drawing of sections. We are all dirt-archaeologists to day, and proud of it. The chief task of archaeologists in countries like Iraq should be to acquire the new techniques now available; and the chief duty of Europeans there should be to assist in teaching them. That both these things are being done already is evident from the contents of these two numbers of 'Sumer', which contain air-photographs, plans, and sectional drawings of pottery. Incidentally it is to be observed that 'Sumer' is the first journal to publish an air-photograph of the area where air-photography itself was born in the first world-war (no. 2, Samarra).

We will end by making some suggestions for future work in Iraq. We have made some of them before, but the present is perhaps a more favourable occasion. We make them simply because we know the work wants doing; it is work we should like to have done ourselves if we had and the means and ability to do it.

First and foremost, there should be formed a collection of air-photographs of Iraq as a whole—at any rate of the riverain parts—and of individual sites. From this there could be compiled and published a series of albums, illustrating the history of Iraq from the earliest times down at any rate to the Mongol invasion. From the air-photographs the ancient irrigation-system and its accompanying towns could be plotted on maps, and a series of period-maps on a scale of 1 : 1,000,000 published. (The base-maps already exist in the International series). The larger and more ambitious

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publications could then be boiled down into a guide-book or series of guide-books of the country. (Felix Jones's description is still in many ways the best but is now over a century old and rather out of date!). In excavation we would suggest, as one of many promising lines, the digging of careful sections of the natural soil *near* the chief ancient sites. No one, for instance, has ever dug a deep trench through any of the derelict canals; owing to the accumulation of silt they must be ideal subjects for the study of stratification. They might also yield intrinsically valuable finds accidentally dropped in the water, especially near such towns as Ur, where there is a fine buried canal. In general, in Lower Mesopotamia the relation between marine and freshwater deposits on the one hand and archaeological periods on the other needs to be established. Woolley's pioneer work in this field needs to be followed up and developed. Such excavation is of course controlled by the water-level, and there may be regions where it would be impossible; but there must also be many others where it could be carried out. Flying between Baghdad and Mosul one sees ancient abandoned cities thickly studded along the banks of the chief irrigation canal.



This is of course a programme of years. It is one which will not yield showy finds but it will, if carried out, yield an abundant harvest of new knowledge. In matters of time a country whose civilization is already more than five millennia old need not be afraid to look far ahead also. The need is pressing, for we do not know how long it will be before a regenerated irrigation-system and its associated cultivation will close the doors effectively to all such work.



Subscribers will notice that the publication address of ANTIQUITY has been changed. That is because one of the Editors, Roland Austin, has been obliged to retire for reasons of health. ANTIQUITY owes to Roland Austin more than it is possible to express in words. It owes to him its very name, which he suggested: and over 20 years of unremitting work and scholarly editing. We know that there will be many readers of ANTIQUITY to whom Roland Austin's retirement will bring a feeling of personal loss.



All business communications (including SUBSCRIPTIONS) should in future be addressed to the publisher of ANTIQUITY (H. W. Edwards), The Wharf, Newbury, Berks., England. The early payment of subscriptions for 1949 will be greatly appreciated by him. A form is enclosed for that purpose (except to those who already use that method). Might we ask others also to consider payment by Banker's Order, which saves all concerned much unnecessary correspondence? We repeat again below the address for subscriptions

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