

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO ARCHEOLOGICAL SERIES BY SUBJECT

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### IRAQ

#### 2.1 Archeological sites visited in North Iraq 090-136

##### **Assur -090-095**

Assur is located approx 200 km north of Baghdad along the road to Mosul. Assur is the 1<sup>st</sup> capital of Assyria, strategically located near the Tigris. Assyria was an important kingdom in north Iraq in the period 1550 BC –610 BC. Some of the most important kings Assyrian kings were: Shalmanesar I 1274-1245 BC Tiglatpileser I 1115-1077 BC Ashurnasirpal II 884-859 BC and Assurbanipal 668-631 BC.

Today only the ruins of Assur remain, including the Ziggurat or stage tower.

Assur was excavated by Walter Andrea 1903-1914 a German archeologist. .

##### **Tel Afar- 096-097**

Tel Afar is located about 50 km west of Mosul on the road to Syria. It was the capital of a small independent kingdom. The main temple was dedicated to Nimit Ishtar- The Goddess of Love. Today only the ruins of the ziggurat or stage tower remains.

##### **Nimrud- 098-105**

Strategically located about 30 km south east of Mosul, along the river Tigris Nimrud/Kalach is the palace complex built by Ashurnasirpal II 884-859. It is an enormous complex of over 24 000 m2 with extensive ceremonial area including a throne room and huge reception halls, an administrative section and the large private residencial quarters of Ashurnasirpal II including his bedrooms and extensive harem complex.

Nimrud was excavated by Layard 1845-51 .He found many enormous statues of bull-men and mythological lions. Some were send to England while others remain in site. Beautiful ivory carvings were found during later excavations in the 1940s by the British archeologist Mallowan.

### **Nineveh –106-108**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> capital of Assyria located 10 km east of Mosul on the road to Amadiya in Kurdistan. One of the Assyrian kings Assurbanipal 668-631 BC expanded Nineveh considerably by building many additional palaces and temples. His most important contribution to history is the extensive archive of clay tablets he established. He had copies collected of all still existing official documents he could obtain from the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian kingdoms, covering a period from 3000BC- 660 BC. Fortunately his archive was preserved and forms now together with the library from Nippur one of the main written reference sources of the Mesopotamian civilization.

Nineveh was excavated by Botta and Layard. It was Layard who found Assurbanipal's library around 1850. During the 1960s the main gate and palace front of Assurbanipal's palace were reconstructed.

### **Hatra- 109-136**

Located about 50 km west of Assur –Shirgat (200 km north of Baghdad)  
Hatra was the capital of several Parthian kingdoms in the period 250 BC – 250 AD. Its kings were Parthian and Arab. Hatra is located on a cross road of caravan tracks and was an important trade post. Apart from Parthian and Assyrian influences also Arab and Greek influences can be seen. During the 1960s large excavation and restoration projects were established in Hatra. The walls of Hatra measure 18 km. To day many bastions and wall sections remain in good condition. Hatra had a diameter of some 3 km and it is estimated that it had a population of between 100 000 to 200 000 inhabitants. Very impressive are the enormous Shamash – Sun temple and the Greek temple.

## **2.2 Archeological sites visited in Central Iraq**

### **2.2.1 Aqar Quf- 137-145-**

Aqar Quf = Dur Kurigalzu is located about 30 km west of Baghdad. It was the capital of the Kassid Kingdom established by Dur Kurigalzu II 1345-1324 BC. The ziggurat from Aqar Quf today still rises 52 meters above the ground. The site was excavated during 1943-1945 by the Iraqi archeological service. The excavations included the ziggurat, three temples and part of the palace of Dur Kurigalzu II. The ziggurat of Aqar Quf is a good example of the traditional ziggurat construction. The core of the ziggurat consists of sun dried square bricks. Reed mats are located between each 5 layers of bricks, mainly for drainage purposes. The outer layers of the ziggurat are made from fired bricks. Slide CVSIRQ140 shows an example of a fired brick with inscription stating that this brick was laid during the reign of King Dur Kurigalzu II. Today both types of brick, sun dried and fired, are still made in Iraq in the same fashion and used in farm houses as is shown in slide CVSIRQ144.

### 2.2.2 Babylon – 146-162

Babylon is located about 100 Km south of Baghdad in Hilla Province. The present day ruins are mainly from the time of king Nebuchadnezzar 605-562 BC. Babylon was already an important town during the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. It served as the capital of the kingdom of king Sargon about 2300 BC and of Hammurabi's Kingdom.

King Hammurabi, living around 1800 BC was the first king who formulated a complete set of laws covering all relevant aspects of life. These laws were engraved on a stele, the famous "Stele of Hammurabi", which measures over 2m high and is today located in the Louvre, in Paris..

New Babylon the town from Nebuchadnezzar 605-562 BC, was excavated by Robert Koldewey between 1899-1917 a German archeologist. Today still on can still visit the restored Gate of Ishtar- the Sun God slide 150 and the Procession Road. slide 154 The Procession Road was used to carry the statutes of Marduk, the main God from Babylon between the ziggurat and various temples which had a function in the Marduk celebrations. Other reconstructed buildings are

The temple of Ninmah, the Mother God: slide 151

The foundations of the hanging gardens.152

These were constructed by Nebuchadnezzar for one of his Median concubines, which lady longed for the mountains and forests of her native Median land. In fact the hanging gardens actually consisted of raised platforms, covered with deep layers of earth sufficient for the growth of trees. The trees planted in the gardens were watered by means of a system of pipes and pumps with water from the Euphrates.

Some 2.5 km from the center of Babylon one finds the extensive summer palace complex of Nebuchadnezzar, slide 157 probably constructed to replace the small palace complex of which the ruins are located in the middle of town, slide 155

In the middle of the town is the location of the foundations of the ziggurat named Etemenanki, -"House of the foundations of Heaven and Earth "the main ziggurat of Babylon. This ziggurat originally was 90 meter high. It had a ground platform measuring 90 by 90 meters. This enormous massive building with seven stages, with a small temple located on the top, must have been an impressive view, which could have been seen from far away in the flat land around Babylon.

The original ziggurat was constructed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. Due to its fragile nature it was many times repaired. The last restoration was probably during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II in the period 605-562 BC. During the period of the Seleuciers the ziggurat was dismantled and the bricks used for a temple in the Greek style. Today only a gap in the soil remains of the famous ziggurat, which was probably the tower of Babel mentioned in the Bible. Slide CVSIRQ 162 shows the scenery "Near the waters of Babylon" A peaceful donkey today grazes near a pond. This pond was actually the gap, which resulted after the bricks were carried away for building the Greek temple some 3 km away from Babylon.

### **2.2.3. Barsippa – 163-167**

Barsippa is about 10 km west of Babylon and was the site of the main temple and ziggurat complex named: Eur Meininanki: The house of the Leaders of Heaven and Earth. Barsippa was a town which was additional site playing an important role in the religious festivals organized by the Babylon temples. A number of the Babylon processions went to Barsippa which temporarily stored important statues of Gods during certain rituals.

Today the remains of the ziggurat of Barsippa form a good example of the typical construction of the ziggurats or stage towers.

### **2.2.4 Ctesiphon – 168-169**

Ctesiphon: Seleucia on the Tigris, was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus I in 247 BC. Seleucia was a large town, counted during its high days over 600 000 inhabitants. It was one of the largest towns of its days. Ctesiphon, the palace of Antiochus I, possesses the largest arched brick vault in the world. Today musicians still play the traditional music of the old days.

### **2.2.5. Ukhaidir**

Ukhaidir the desert hunting castle of Prince Isa Ibn Musa, is located 50 km west of Kebala or 150 KM south- west from Baghdad, in the middle of the plain desert.

Isa Ibn Musa was a nephew from the great Caliph El Mansur, who lived around 800 AD in his famous capital Baghdad, always mentioned in relation to the stories of the “ Thousand and One Nights” of the Arabian world. Life in Ukhaidir was very feasible as water was all year round available from a small river near Ukhaidir. This in spite of that Ukhaidir is located in the plain desert.

Ukhaidir was a large castle containing five main court yards and a large mosque. The castle is today still in good condition.

## **2.3 Archeological sites visited in South Iraq**

### **2.3.1. Ur – 186-198**

Ur, of the Chaldees, the birth place of Abraham 1900 BC, was one of the most important Sumerian towns between 3000- 500 BC. It is located near Nasseria, about 350 Km SW of Baghdad. In the Sumerian period it was located on the Euphrates, which now has moved about 10 km to the east of Ur.

Ur was excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley 1922-1934:

One of his famous finds was the royal cemetery with the grave of King Abargi, who was buried with 74 of his court staff and many gold, silver and lapis lazuli artifacts including harps, carts with draft bulls and other objects.

The most famous period of Ur was the third dynasty with King Ur Nammu and his sons and descendants: 2200- 2000BC. Ur Nammu and his sons built the ziggurat and most of the important temples in Ur and in other towns of his empire, among others in Uruk, Larsa, and Babylon. The present ruins of ziggurat are the remains of the restoration by Nebucadnezzar and his son Nabonius in the 600- 500 BC period.

Also important was the Larsa period from 2000- 1800 BC. The excavations also obtained found much information from this period and the following period when Hammurabi was king of Babylon and also conquered Ur. The excavated streets of the Larsa period give a picture of street life in old Sumer.

References: Excavations at Ur. 1954 Sir Leonard Woolley

Additional notes by Noah Kramer **Ur of the Chaldees, ancient cities of Mesopotamia.** Its ruins are approximately midway between the modern city of Baghdad, Iraq, and the head of the Persian Gulf, south of the Euphrates River, on the edge of the Al Najarah Desert. The site of Ur is known today as Tall al Muqayyar, Iraq. In antiquity the Euphrates River flowed near the city walls. Controlling this outlet to the sea, Ur was favorably located for the development of commerce and for attaining political dominance.

Ur was the principal center of worship of the Sumerian moon god Nanna and of his Babylonian equivalent Sin. The massive ziggurat of this deity, one of the best preserved in Iraq, stands about 21 m (about 70 ft) above the desert. The biblical name, Ur of the Chaldees, refers to the Chaldeans, who settled in the area about 900 BC. The Book of Genesis (see 11:27-32) describes Ur as the starting point of the migration westward to Palestine of the family of Abraham about 1900 BC.

Ur was one of the first village settlements founded (circa 4000 BC) by the so-called Ubaidian inhabitants of Sumer. Before 2800 BC, Ur became one of the most prosperous Sumerian city-states. According to ancient records, Ur had three dynasties of rulers who, at various times, extended their control over all of Sumer. The founder of the 1st Dynasty of Ur was the conqueror and temple builder Mesanepada (reigned about 2670 BC) The earliest Mesopotamian ruler described in extant contemporary documents. His son Aanepadda (2650 BC) built the temple of the goddess Ninhursag, which was excavated in modern times at Tell al-Obeid, about 8 km (about 5 mi) northeast of the site of Ur. Of the 2nd Dynasty of Ur little is known.

Ur-Nammu (reigned 2113-2095 BC), the first king of the 3rd Dynasty of Ur, who revived the empire of Sumer and Akkad, won control of the outlet to the sea about 2100 BC and made Ur the wealthiest city in Mesopotamia. His reign marked the beginning of the so-called renaissance of Sumerian art and literature at Ur. Ur-Nammu and his son and successor Shulgi (reigned 2095-2047 BC) built the ziggurat of Nanna (about 2100 BC) and magnificent temples at Ur and in other Mesopotamian cities. The descendants of Ur-Nammu continued in power for more than a century, or until shortly before 2000 BC, when the Elamites captured Ib-bi-Sin, king of Ur 2029-2004 BC and destroyed the city.

Rebuilt shortly thereafter, Ur became part of the kingdom of Isin, later of the kingdom of Larsa, and finally was incorporated into Babylonia. During the period when Babylonia was ruled by the Kassites, Ur remained an important religious center. It was a provincial capital with hereditary governors during the period of Assyrian rule in Babylonia.

After the Chaldean dynasty was established in Babylonia, King Nebuchadnezzar II initiated a new period of building activity at Ur. The last Babylonian king, Nabonidus (reigned 556-539 BC), who appointed his eldest daughter high priestess at Ur, embellished the temples and entirely remodeled the ziggurat of Nanna, making it rival even the temple of Marduk at Babylon. After Babylonia came under the control of Persia, Ur began to decline. By the 4th century BC, the city was practically forgotten, possibly as a result of a shift in the course of the Euphrates River.

The ruins of Ur were found and first excavated (1854-55) by the British consul J. E. Taylor, who partly uncovered the ziggurat of Nanna. The British Museum commenced (1918-19) excavations here and at neighboring Tell al-Obeid under the direction of the British archaeologists Reginald C. Thompson and H. R. H. Hall. These excavations were continued from 1922 to 1934 by a joint expedition of the British Museum and the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania under the direction of the British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley.

In addition to excavating the ziggurat completely, the expedition unearthed the entire temple area at Ur and parts of the residential and commercial quarters of the city. The most spectacular discovery was that of the Royal Cemetery, dating from about 2600 BC and containing art treasures of gold, silver, bronze, and precious stones. The findings left little doubt that the deaths of the king and queen of Ur were followed by the voluntary death of their courtiers and personal attendants and of the court soldiers and musicians. Within the city itself thousands of cuneiform tablets were discovered, comprising administrative and literary documents dating from about 2700 to the 400 BC. The deepest levels of the city contained traces of a flood, alleged to be the deluge of Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hebrew legend. All scientific evidence, however, indicates that it was merely a local flood.

Reference: Edmund I. Gordon & Samuel Noah Kramer

### 2.3.2. Uruk – 199-214

Uruk, Erech from the bible was one of the main cities from Sumer. Uruk was already an important town in the Jamdat Nasr period 3500 BC and during the proto literate period. The archeologists assume that writing was invented in Uruk. Examples of series of pictograms have been found in the oldest civilization layers of Uruk, which over time gradually changed into abstract cuneiform letters. Very early libraries of pictograms already contained lists of stocks of goods and persons, with name, functions, responsibilities and contracts.

I visited Uruk several times, during my stay in Iraq, in the period 1966-1969 to meet Prof Lenzen and his team of archeologists. Professor Lenzen had been excavating in Uruk since 1927 when he was a team member under Prof. Heinrich. Later, during the 1950s he became the director of the German Uruk expedition. When I met him in the period 1966-1969 he continued his work in Uruk after his retirement. Prof Lenzen mentioned that they had gradually worked backwards in time during the excavations, started with the youngest layers in 1927 and now in 1967-1968 finally reaching the proto literate period from 3500-3000 BC. Pits were dug under the Eanna and Kallub ziggurats from the 2200-2000 BC periods to search for older temples and palaces. The team found many large palaces and temples and a large quantity of primitive clay tablets showing the development from pictograms to cuneiform script. One particular temple which was measured during one of my visits measured 90 by 40 m. According to Prof. Lenzen most temples and buildings were of similar size. The temples of the Proto literate period 3000-3500BC were decorated with large columns, with diameters of up to 3 meter. These columns were covered with geometric mosaics which were made from baked and painted terra –cotta cones with a flat end. Tests showed that dominant colors of the painted cones were red, black and light yellow or whitish. It must have been quite impressive to see the front of temple of some 30 meters wide, with these colonnades all covered with colorful mosaics. A few years earlier, in 1960, Prof Lenzen's team had found nearby one of the temples a large collection of golden, silver and lapis lazuli artifacts in an early grave of a king of the proto literate period, indicating that already 500 to 700 years before the famous grave of Queen Shub –Ad from Ur the custom existed to bury royal persons with many artifacts and with a number of their servants. Prof Lenzen gave us passionate explanations about the marvelous temples and ziggurats of the Proto Literate Period 3000-3500BC, which he had excavated. During another visit he showed us an ancient underground archive. This was located under the Eanna Ziggurat and contained large collections of unbaked soft clay tablets with Sumerian cuneiform writings. Immediately after the discovery of the underground archive Prof Lenzen took an unbaked clay tablet out of the archive to study it in the open air, in the hot and dry Iraqi climate. Unfortunately after a few minutes the tablet crumbled in his hand and became dust. The remaining hundreds of clay tablets were immediately baked and preserved. After the entire collection of clay tablets was removed and safeguarded Prof Lenzen investigated the archive and found that the bottom of the cellar was covered with porous stone slabs, containing hundreds of very small holes. Under the slabs he found a rapid moving underground water stream. Due to the friction of the water stream against the stone slab with the holes, water evaporated and therewith created an artificial more humid climate sufficient to preserve the unbaked clay tablets in good condition. The Sumerians were thus familiar with the concept of climate control.

The first question Prof Lenzen asked himself why so much trouble to keep the tablets humid. However as soon as a few tablets were translated it was found out that all the clay tablets in this archive were land deeds. Obviously these land deeds needed to be adjusted each time after land was transferred to a new owner through inheritance or sales. This explained the need for the tablets to remain unbaked and thus to be alterable. This condition allowed the scribe to alter the deed with his clay pen made from a sharp piece of reed and add the name of the new land owner. Clay tablets with religious text were always baked as there was no need to change these. The Sumerians assumed that the text of these tablets was given to man by the Gods.

During an other occasion Prof Lenzen mentioned that according to his calculations during the early second millennium Uruk had already over one million inhabitants, on its total area of nearly 600 hectares. Rome, only reached the one million inhabitants mark during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. According to the Gilgamesh Epic one third of the area of Uruk was used for temples, one third residential houses and one third for gardens. Thus Prof Lenzen suggested that within the town boundaries and in the near surroundings an intensive garden agriculture was established to feed the large number of inhabitants. A branch of the Euphrates was used for irrigation. Some food stuff and most material needed for such a large town were imported from the colonies which had been established by the Uruk state in many locations in Mesopotamia, Iran and the Mediterranean plateaus. Such material included building material, wood, gold, silver, copper, lapis lazuli. These materials were all used in Uruk but were not locally available. During the second millennium Uruk was the largest and most important town of the world. After this period Uruk remained a large town and important religious centre till around 654 AD when it was destroyed by an Arab army. The Sassanian population of that time fled and left the site waste, till the arrival of the European explorers in the nineteenth century.

## References

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In addition personal information from Prof Lenzen