

Professor. Taha Baqir

The founding father of archaeological research and ancient civilizations studies in Iraq has left us, his loving students and disciples, for the world of immortality and Heavenly light. This fountain of Knowledge, energy and wisdom was Heaven's gift to the valley of ancient civilizations – a gift rarely seen in our modern history. For Taha Baqir was the uncontested authority on various branches of Knowledge: archeological theories and applied archaeology, ancient Mesopotamian languages Arabic and Assyrian philology, history and ancient civilizations.

Baqir whose opinions and judgments in the world of Academe and research centers are, and have always been for the last four decades, the last word on archaeological studies and researches in the fields of ancient civilizations and heritage. His epoch-making *An Introduction to the History of Ancient Civilizations* brought Professor Baqir fame not only in his home country but also throughout the whole Arab homeland indeed, it has become Customary in the studies of Ancient Iraq and Arab heritage to top the bibliographies with Baqir's name who has been accorded the honorific title of "teacher of Culture and civilization".

Our departed teacher was despite his great erudition and wide-ranging Knowledge very modest and forgiving. He was friend to all: whether those who were under his charge, colleagues or students. However difficult the situation in which he occasionally found himself he always look the right decision. Particularly gifted for interpreting the events of ancient history in the light of recent excavations and archaeological studies, Professor Baqir was, without any qualification, the greatest scholar in the field of ancient Iraq who's prolific and diversified researches enriched the scholarship on Iraqiana with hitherto unknown facts and events. His valuable contribution in the fields of excavation, exploration, restoration and archaeological research have laid the foundation of the Iraqi school of archaeology of which he was the acknowledged master for more than forty years. Taha Baqir was born in Hilla, Babaylon (1912) where he attended Primary and intermediate schools. Besides his formal schooling in Hilla, young Taha had the rare and coveted opportunity of supplementing his education by private tutoring at the hands of his father, uncle and some of the elders of Hilla. Among the classis which he studied at this stage were *Al-Ajroumia* and *Al-Madrssa Al- Thanaqiyah* which is now known as *Al-Markaziyah* in Baghdad having been awarded a government scholarship on account of his distinguished scholastic record. He obtained the high school certificate (The Baccalaureate) scientific section in 1932 and was among the top four

graduates in the country, a fact which prompted the government to send him to the Oriental Institute in Chicago to study Archaeology. Before joined the Oriental Institute, however and in preparation for his study in the United States, he obtained the British Matriculation (known as the G.C.E now) from the Safad College in Palestine and in the academic year 1932-33 he was sophomore at the American University in Beirut. In the United States to which he went with his colleagues late Fu'ad Sufar he obtained his B.A in 1936, two years after he had left Beirut. In the following year, he finished his M.A in Archaeology. Among the subjects he studied while in the U.S were: Anthropology, Methods of Exavation, Ancient History, Ancient languages such as Accadian, Sumerian and Hebrew. He also acquired a reading knowledge of German and French. In the U.S he took part in an excaration expedition organized by the Oriental Institute at one old settlement.

Upon his return to his home country, he was appointed at the Directorate of Antiquities in the 18th November 1938. That date represents the beginning of a long and distinguished career in which he initiated and developed archaeological studies not only in Iraq but also in the Arab homeland as well. Among the posts he held in the Directorate General of Antiquities:

- 1- Technical Expert (1938-1941). In march 1939 he was called up as a reserve officer in the army
- 2- Qurator of the Iraq Museum (194-1953)
- 3- Assistant Director General of Antiquities (1953-1958)
- 4- Insepector General of Antiquities (1958)
- 5- Director General of Antiquities (1958-1963)
- 6- Founding member of *Sumer* and one of the board of editors from 1945-1958. Editor-in-chief (1958-1963)

Scientific Activities

- 1- The supervision of the surveying and exploration operations in numerous archaeological sites in Ira1

- 2- Professor Baqir led a number of excavation expeditions in various archaeological sites in co-operation with his colleague Professor Mohammed Ali Mustafa, father of Iraqi excavators. These sites include
 - A- Wassit (Al-Hajjaj's City) (1941)
 - B- Tel Al-Deir in Yousfiya (1941)
 - C- Agarquf (Dur-Kuricalzu) (1941-1943)
 - D- Tel Harmal (1945 and 1961).
 - E- Te Al-Dhibai (1960)
 - F- Besides the above mentioned sites, Professor Taha took direct charge of the excavation and restoration works in various archaeological sites particularly in Babylon
 - G- The supervision of the extensive archaeological explorations in in Dukan (1956-1959) and Shahrazur where salvage excavations were undertaken in the Dukan and Durbendikhan areas.

Teaching Posts:

- 1- Professor Taha taught Ancient History and Civilization at the Teacher's Training College (1941-1960)
- 2- The teaching of Ancient History and Civilization, Ancient languages (Akkadian and Sumerian) at the Department of Archaeology in the College of Arts, Bagdad University
- 3- Founding member of Baghdad University Senate (1957-1958)
- 4- Member of the Baghdad University Senate (1960-1963).
- 5- Vice-President of Baghdad University (1961-1963).
- 6- Working member of the Iraqi Academy from 1971 until the day of his untimely death on the 28th of February 1984.

- 7- A member of the Council of the Centre for the Revival of Arabic Scientific Heritage since 1977
- 8- The supervision of a number of post-graduate dissertations in the Department of Archaeology, Baghdad University since 1972.
- 9- In the course of his teaching career, Professor Taha was academically promoted to the post of assistant Professor in 1951. Six years later he was awarded the title of Professor following the publication of numerous papers and books.

Scientific Service Abroad:

Professor Taha was appointed counselor in the Department of Antiquities in Libya (1965-1970). In the course of his work in Libya he:

- A. Trained the staff of the Department of Antiquities
- B. Supervised the excavation and restoration works in Libya
- C. Published a number of archaeological booklet on the most important archaeological sites in Libya such as Libya Hibate
- D. Headed the Editorial Board of the Archaeological Journal of the Libyan Department of Antiquities. He also contributed many papers and articles.
- E. Attended a number of scientific conferences in which he represented the Libyan Department of Antiquities in Cairo (1968). In 1970 Professor Taha was resumed his teaching post at Baghdad University following his return to Libya.

Scientific Output:

1 – Books in Arabic

- 1) *A guide to the Iraq Museum* (1942)
- 2) *The Twin Rivers: A translation in collaboration with Bashir Francis of Seaton Lloyd* book

- 3) *Man at the Dawn of life: The story of the development of a man until the end of the Stone Age.* A translation in collaboration with Fu'ad Sufar. (1945)
- 4) *History of the Science.* A translation of George Sartons's book Vol. 1
- 5) *An Introduction to the History of Ancient Civilizations, Vol 1 (1955)*
- 6) *An Introduction to the History of Ancient Civilizations, Vol 2 (1955)*
- 7) *A Study of History.* A translation of Arnold Toynbg's book (1955)
- 8) *Tablets from Sumer.* A translation of Samuel Kramer's book (1958).
- 9) *Babylon and Borsippa (1959).*
- 10) *Tel Harmal (1959)*
- 11) *Agarquf (1959)*
- 12-17) *A Guide to the Sites of the Antiquities and Civilization. In Collaboration with Fu'ad Sufar (6 Vols.) (1962-1966)*
- 18-20) *The Epic of Gilgamesh (1962), reprinted in 1972 and 1973.*
- 21) *An Introduction to the History of Ancient Civilizations (1973)*
- 22) *An Introduction to the History of Ancient Iraqi Literature (1976)*
- 23) *From our Philological Heritage (1978)*

Books in English:

- a. *A Guide to the Iraq Museum (1942).*
- b. *Baghdad 1959*
- c. *Babylon and Borsippa (1959)*
- d. *Hel Harmal (1959)*
- e. *Agarquf (1959)*

- f. Numerous contributions to the following journals and magazines. *Al-Aqlam* (1971-73), *Bulletin of the Iraqi Academy* (1973-76), *Afag Arabiya* (1976-78), *Sumer* (1945-1962), *Bulletin of the Kurdish Academy* (1976-78).