



Obituary: Taha Baqir

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TAHA BAQIR

Professor Taha Baqir, doyen of Iraqi Assyriology and a former Director of Antiquities in Iraq, died on 28th February 1984. He will be remembered by colleagues in many nations as a gracious and erudite man who laboured more than most for the development of Ancient Mesopotamian studies. As well as his own writings, of which his *Introduction to Ancient Civilization* (*Muqaddimah fi Tariḥ el-Hadharat el-Qadimah*, 1955, 1956) and *Comparative Linguistics* (*Min Turathuna el-Luḡawi*, 1978) are perhaps the best known, he translated into Arabic western works on history and archaeology, such as Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1955) and Seton Lloyd's *Twin Rivers*. These, with other key books on Mesopotamian language and civilization, broadened the horizons of his many students.

His work in the Antiquities Department from 1938 to 1963 was built on the foundation of his own postgraduate training at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, and on the foundation laid by his colleague Dr. Naji al-Asil, whom he succeeded, of fruitful international cooperation in the revival of Iraq's past. Though not primarily a field archaeologist himself, he led the excavations at Dur-Kurigalzu ('Aqarquf), the results of which were published in this journal (*Iraq* supplements 1944 and 1945; *Iraq* VIII (1946), 73-98), and at Tell Harmal, Baghdad, which led to important epigraphic discoveries (see *Sumer*). He also worked at Tell al Dhiba'i, Babylon, Shahrizur, Dokan and Darband-i-Khan. As well as his popular writing, he published several books and many learned articles, and he was a distinguished member of the Iraq Academy.

It is perhaps as a great and enthusiastic teacher that Taha Baqir will be remembered by his fellow countrymen. Born in Hilla in 1912 and educated in Baghdad, he taught Akkadian and Mesopotamian studies in the Institute of Higher Education (1941-1960) and the College of Arts, University of Baghdad, where he was a senior Professor (1961-3, and 1970 to retirement).

May his passing be a stimulation to those who succeed him to continue the work of this distinguished *awēl Akkadim*.

D. J. W.