THE IRAN IRRIGATION SURVEY

A long-standing Oriental Institute interest in the relation of ancient cities and towns to their agricultural hinterlands was continued and expanded further during the year in two directions.

Between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in central Iraq, roughly the area known as ancient Akkad, the work of an earlier (1956/57) survey of ancient canals and watercourses was brought to completion during the fall. Using an approach based on surface-dating of ruins adjoining the beds of streams which have long since disappeared beneath the rising level of the plain, a number of important Euphrates branches have been discovered which bifurcated and rejoined across wide areas that now for the most part are empty desert. Large-scale maps of the ancient irrigation canals and other features of settlement have been prepared, and a final report is in preparation which will discuss and illustrate the broadly changing patterns characteristic of successive periods of Antiquity.

Subsequent to the field work in Akkad, a similar but more intensive study was carried out in southwestern Iran, in the environs of the great Elamite capital of Susa. As in a previous Oriental Institute enterprise in the Diyala River Basin of Iraq (1957/58), this was undertaken as part of a modern program of agricultural development. With the aid of the Development and Resources Corporation of New York (through its Iranian arm, the Khuzestan Development Service), the study of former canal systems and modes of land use was able to proceed hand in hand with a whole battery of specialized studies on modern soils, crop yields, climate, and population. Aerial photographs, the indispensable tool of modern agricultural planning, proved equally indispensable in the identification and interpretation of long-abandoned canals and settlements. A number of striking similarities, and other equally striking contrasts, emerged between historic patterns in Elam and those in the far larger part of the Mesopotamian plain which lies in Iraq. The delination of these will be a task for a forthcoming publication.

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Iran Irrigation Survey