

IRRIGATION AGRICULTURE IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

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Modern irrigation planners have been increasingly concerned with agricultural problems like salinization, which also confronted the civilizations of antiquity. Under Iraq Government sponsorship, a comprehensive study was undertaken jointly by the Oriental Institute and the Directorate General of Antiquities in 1957, aimed at analyzing the nature and productivity of ancient agricultural methods and at tracing the rise and decline of former irrigation systems. Intensive field studies included clearance of major irrigation works, stratigraphic excavations in the ruins of towns and cities adjoining ancient canals, and an archeological surface reconnaissance of the changing over-all patterns of former watercourses and settlements. This part of the program has been focused primarily on the basin of the Diyala River, a region for which an ambitious program of new irrigation and drainage is under consideration and in which members of the Institute staff have had many years of previous experience (see p. 22). Accompanying the field work has been a program of textual studies which draws its material from southern Mesopotamia as a whole. Scholars from many countries have collaborated in the analysis of both published and unpublished sources dealing with ancient

agriculture throughout the span of its recorded history. Robert M. Adams, Research Associate of the Oriental Institute, and Sayid Fuad Safar, Director General of Excavations, Directorate General of Antiquities, Iraq Republic, acted as Associate Field Directors of the enterprise. A comprehensive publication of the results is in preparation.