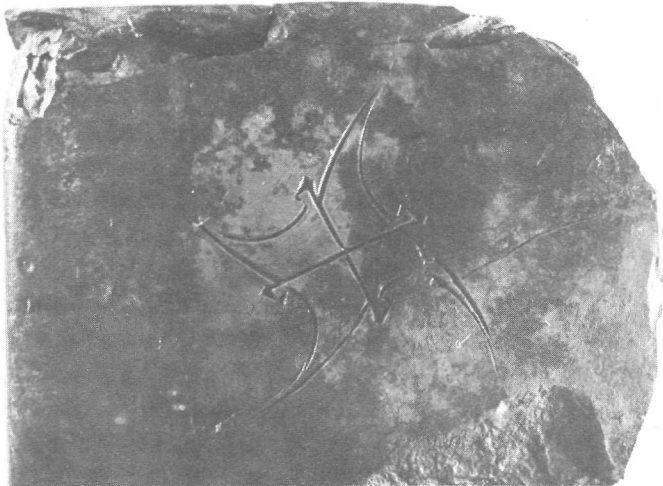


Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh, Iraq

ROBERT D. BIGGS

It was clear even before excavations began at Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh in 1963 that the site was of major importance for the archaeology of Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C. With the finding of numerous tablets, predominantly literary, the interest in the site could only increase. With the expected appearance of my volume on the tablets later this year, the time seemed opportune to consider full-scale excavations. My discussions with colleagues in the Directorate General of Antiquities in Iraq in the summer of 1972 were encouraging, and it appeared that they would welcome resumption of excavations.

Because of budgetary limitations, it is obvious that the Oriental Institute cannot field a full-scale team for the length of time required by Iraqi law. We have, therefore, applied to a foundation for funds for excavation in the spring of 1974. We stressed in our application the importance of studying a Mesopotamian urban center where the latest occupation was about 2500 B.C. It has never before been possible to excavate extensive remains of this period anywhere in Sumer. We hope to learn a great deal about city life as reflected in the physical remains and in the literary creations of participants in the world's earliest experiment in urbanism.



Motif on reverse of tablet from Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh.