

Publications

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About ten years ago the Oriental Institute undertook two brief soundings at a site called Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh in southern Iraq, some twelve miles from Nippur. Among the finds were several hundred cuneiform tablets of the Early Dynastic III period (*ca.* 2600 B.C.), including wisdom compositions, proverbs, and a collection of hymns, as well as lexical texts arranged in categories such as gods, places, professions, metals, garments, and domestic animals, and, finally, a small number of administrative documents. The entire body of inscriptions except for a very few worthless fragments is being presented in line drawings or photographs, with critical editions based on Abū Ṣalābīkh sources for several compositions, by Robert Biggs in *Inscriptions from Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh* ("Oriental Institute Publications," Vol. XCIX). Approximately half of the scribal names listed in the texts are

Semitic, a fact that indicates that at least some of the Semites previously assumed to be purely pastoral dwellers and tribesmen were living instead in an urban situation and had entered the highly technical pursuits of Sumerian scholarship and learning. The literary texts give definite proof that the written tradition of Sumerian poetry is many centuries older than had been generally supposed. The volume became available at the end of July.

Mr. Richard C. Haines, who has taken the responsibility for the publication of *Nippur II: The North Temple and Sounding E*, has returned the edited manuscript with long and detailed notes on the handling of various matters that came up in preparing it for the printer. It is likely that the manuscript will go to the printer sometime during the fall.

McGuire Gibson, field director of the Nippur Expedition, has almost completed the preparation of his report on the eleventh season, and with it he plans to renew publication of the "Oriental Institute Communications" series, which has not been added to since 1939, when Erich F. Schmidt published *The Treasury of Persepolis and Other Discoveries in the Homeland of the Achaemenians*. Others have also had it in mind to continue publication in this series and it should soon be fully active again. In his report Mr. Gibson plans to rely very much on illustrations and less on interpretation, since the volume will eventually be superseded by a final volume combining the work of several seasons.

In our constant efforts to reduce the cost of manufacturing books, we have decided to produce certain titles in cold type (forms of composition not involving hot metal casting) when it appears likely that their cost will far outrun any return we may expect from sales. The highly specialized needs of our authors require the greatest flexibility a typesetter can provide, but the cost of such work becomes prohibitive. The most recent publication undertaken in this manner will be Stephen A. Kaufman's *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* ("Assyriological Studies," No. 19). Since this work treats many languages and dialects, it requires a great deal of special setting. But since it has broad appeal and will cover many interests, it should be made available at a reasonable price. We fully expect this type of composition to become more and more important in our publishing program, and we hope that it will help get the materials into the hands of students everywhere.