

Settlements of the Hamrin Basin. Iraq. From Early Times to the End of the Old Babylonian Period

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Abstract. In August 1977, the Iraqi State Organization of Antiquities and Heritage (SOAH) issued an invitation to academic institutions and other research organizations, both at home and abroad, to join with it in an urgent programme of archaeological salvage work in the Hamrin Basin, a region of the Diyala River Basin in eastern central Iraq, where numerous ancient sites would have shortly to be submerged beneath the waters of an extensive reservoir following the construction of a new dam at the Jabal Hamrin Gorge. In the course of excavations at Tell Halawa in 1978-1980, in which the University of Mosul participated⁽¹⁾, the present writer obtained some data concerning settlements in the Hamrin Basin. This paper has two aims: to study the development of the settlements in the Hamrin Basin from early times to the end of the old Babylonian period; and to clarify the significant role that Hamrin Basin had played in integrating Iraq's southern and northern Culture and Civilization.

The results of recent archaeological excavations which have been gradually appearing over the past twenty five years, in Iraq (Postgate and Watson 1979, Roaf and Postgate 1981; Roaf and Killick 1983) and Sumer 1979; 1984 (Rashied 1981; Gibson 1981); Al-Rafididaan 1981; (Mustaf 1983, Jasim 1985, Yaseen 1987) etc., have certainly added new and important information to what we already have regarding the history and cultural developments of the region. However, detailed specialist studies on the Hamrin Basin are still few.

Until 1977 our knowledge about ancient settlements in the Hamrin region was limited. Some information came after the survey, which was conducted in this Upper, Middle and Lower Diyala Region⁽²⁾ by Th. Jacobsen (1937) and R. M.C.C. Adams (1957-58), the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Adams 1965: 135-160) and by the Directorate General of Antiquities (1970).

The Hamiran Basin

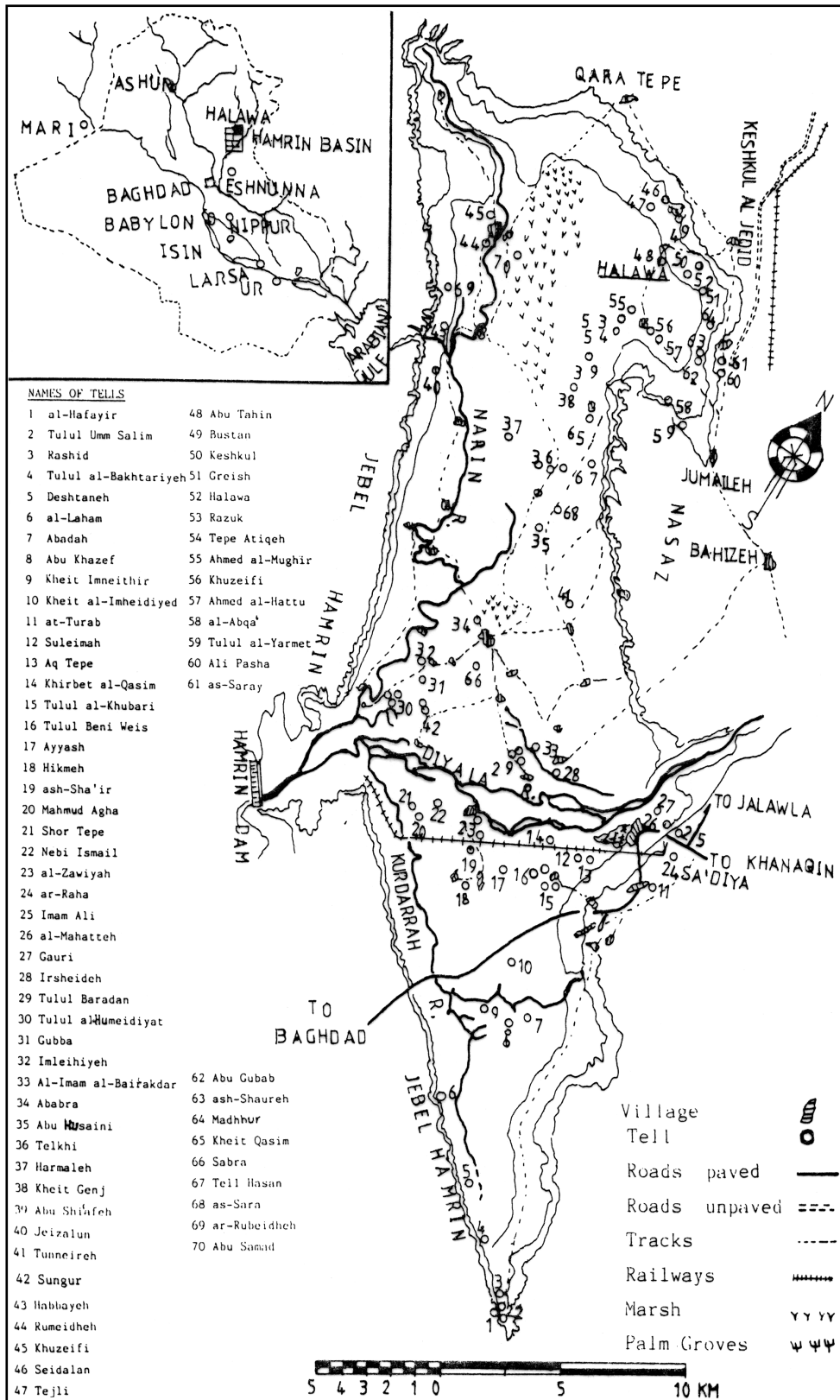
Location: The Hamrin Basin lies in the

eastern part of central Iraq, precisely in the Middle of the Diyala region, on the westward side of the Zagros Mountains. It represents the last foothill plain, nearly 110 km northeast of Baghdad (Map 1). It is located between 44° 52'E. Longitude and 34° 38'N. Latitude. It lies approximately 93m above sea-level.

The Hamrin Basin covers an area approximately 38km in length and 2-10 km in width; it is a low area of land extending along the eastern slopes of the Jabal Hamrin range from Sa'id Taha in the north-west to Qarya Yusuf in the south-east. On its eastern and western sides, the Hamrin includes part of the land belonging to Qara Tepe, Jaloula and al-Sa'adiya (Map 1).

Name

To the Sumerian and Akkadians, Jabal Hamrin was known as Ebih, written EN. TI or EN. TI (Reiner 1956: 135, 148; Levine 1973: 23; Postgate 1979A: 593; Kinniar Wilson, 1979: 2,4; Steinkeller 1981: 163). Later, in Islamic times, it is referred to by Arab Geographers as Mount Barma, a name which may be



Map 1: Map of the Ancient Sites off the Hamrin Basin, with inset showing the location of the Hamrin Basin in Iraq.

derived from the Aramic Bet Ruman, meaning "The Temple of Ruman", which may itself be derived from the former presence of an Assyrian temple somewhere in the region. Recently, in 1980, a Neo-Assyrian temple building embodying brickwork bearing an inscription of king Ashurbanipal (669-630 B. C) was discovered at Tell Haddad (No. 29)⁽³⁾. Other Aramic names for the region of Jabal Hamrin were Yalman and Satydma, the latter being compounded from the words "Shaty-dama" meaning "drinker of blood" an epithet doubtless inspired by the colour of the local soil, which is markedly red ('Auad 1952: 260).

Topography

The basic topography of the Hamrin Basin is an alluvial plain, which has a flat surface and outcrops here and there. The Jabal Hamrin is a major feature in the area and is the longest mountain in Iraq, extending for 250 km from the Tigris at Fat-ha to the Iraqi-Iranian border, south of Khanaqin. The mountain of Jubba Dag and various small hills from the boundary of the Hamrin Basin on the east and north-east, which are slightly undulating to the west, join the Hamrin slop from the other side. These Jabals create a large concave terrain enclosed by two convex stretches.

Rivers and Marshes: The Hamrin Basin is drained from north to south by two principal rivers and many small streams. The Diyala River⁽⁴⁾, the main artery of the Hamrin Basin, crosses the area from northeast to the southwest. It divides the area into two halves. The majority of settlements lie to the north of the Diyala river and others to the south.

The Narin Chai has cut its bed deeply into the surrounding alluvial plain and is about 8-10m wide. It flows along the eastern foot of Jabal Hamrin for a distance of c. 20 km from the village of Sa'id Taha to join the Diyala

River near the Hamrin gorge. The Narin Chai river bed has an its fortable on foot and ford by car at least 8 places.

There are many small streams in the area, which flow in from both sides, such as the Kur-Dere in the southern half, which has cut its bed deeply, like the Narin Chai, into the surrounding alluvium. It carries a small amount of water, which increases during the rainy season, and its use then is valuable. However, when the water decreases during the summer, it becomes saltier and is useless for agricultural purposes. Another Small stream, al-Zawiyah, feeds on the Diyala River. About 1 km due west of Tell Abadah (No.7) lies a depression representing the ancient bed of the Nahrawan canal, which runs southward in the direction of the eastern border of Iraq (Jasim 1983: 165).

In the northern half of the Hamrin Basin, there are many small streams such as Gauri al-Kebir, Ibrahim al-Yousf, at-Tahuneh, Baradan Bawi and Genji, which are fed by the Diyala River. In addition to these, Wadi Derbekreh is situated south-east of the village of Sheikh Ibrahim. This joins the Narin Chai from the west and Al-Ahmer River, located south-east of the village of Tunneirah, joins the marshes from the south.

Marshes (about 3x8 km) cover the northern part of the Hamrin Basin south of Qara Tepe as far as Uyun Kheskalat and also cover an area (about 1.50 x 2.50 km) between Tell Tunneirah (No. 41) and Tell Ababra (No. 34).

However, even though the topography is represented by jabls, rivers and marshes, communications are restrictedly impeded within the Hamrin. Intercommunication between the Hamrin Basin and territory beyond the Jabal Hamrin is facilitated by several passes, such as those of Ain-Lailah, Sakaltutam, Middle Cay-

ley's, Abu Hajar and Kurdaruz. By far the most important route is the Baghdad-Kermanshah Highway, historically called the great Khorasan Road, which connects Iraq to Iran and passes through the Hamrin Basin.

Communication: Inside the Hamrin basin, communication is made easy by many tracks. A road across the north edge of the Basin, marked by a line of sizable Tells near to and parallel with the present graveled road from Jaloula through Bahizah, Jumailed and the Keshkul: Halawa area, played an important role in international traffic in the past as well as at present. This road is the main artery from which numerous internal tracks of the Basin stemmed in the west part. To the west part of Hamrin there are many tracks. By far the most important is an old track called "Darb As-Sultan," (Jasim 1983: 165) which is probably a traditional highway from Mandali to Jaloula and the north-west (Oates 1969: 123).

The Settlements

The Early Settlements: (Map 1)

Up to the present time, archaeological evidence has suggested that areas of western, northern and north-eastern Iraq were comparatively densely populated in Paleolithic times, with the transition from a life based on hunting and gathering to one based on agriculture taking place in the Zagros mountain region between 11,000-6,000 b.p. (Braidwood, 1952, 1960, Solecki 1963; Jawad 1965; Wright 1967; Fujii 1973-74; Pullar 1977 and Oates 1982). While the sites of Barda-Balka, Hazar Mard (Wright and How 1951: 107-118), al-Tar Jamal Cave (Fujii 1974: 75-100; Ohnum 1976: 303-329), and Ur (Wright 1967: 101-106) have hitherto been the source of the earliest Palaeolithic implements from Iraq, yet now the Japanese Expedition to the Hamrin Basin has reported the discovery of "Mousterian"

style (Middle Palaeolithic) flake tools at their site of Tell Sungur B (al-Rafidan 1981: 196), tools which are presumably related to the period of the last glaciations between 120,000-60,000 years ago (Wright 1952: 23).

At the end of the last Ice age c.10,000 B.C, climatic changes produced dry and temperate conditions in north-eastern Iraq which encouraged Man to abandon his cave dwellings or at least live part of the year in the open in temporary sites such as that of M'lefaat (Braidwood 1951: 12-18; Wright 1952: 22). At Tell Rihan, on the right bank of the river Narin (Narin Chai) the Italian Expedition has discovered archaeological remains which were compared with those at M'lefaat and are thus seemingly looked earlier than the earliest remains at Jarmo (Tusa 1982: 29). Of the same period as that of Jarmo, or perhaps Hassuna, are archaeological remains discovered by the Japanese Expedition at Tell Sungur A.

The beginnings of permanent human settlements in the Hamrin Basin are witnessed at three sites so far, namely Tell Sungur A (No. 42), Tell Rihan (No.24) and Tell Abada (No. 7), all of which have yielded pottery and figurines characteristic of the Samarra culture. In kind these finds are very similar to those recorded from Choga Mami, near Mandali, to the south-east of the Hamrin Basin, especially those from Tell Abada (No. 7).

The Halaf Settlements: (Map 1)

The Halaf culture has been identified at no less than ten sites in the Hamrin Basin, which would seem to indicate some increase in the population of the region, though the actual number of the settlements must still have been small. Importantly, as at Choga Mami (Oates 1972), the potsherds and figurines which these sites have produced, along with the remains of buildings, are all of late Halaf type, which

would seem to suggest that the arrival of Halaf settlers occurred only towards the end of the Halaf culture. While the late Halaf pottery from these sites recalls strongly the late Halaf pottery from Tepe Gawra and to lesser degree Tell Arpachiyah and Yarm Tepe II, the figurines resemble types found not only at Tepe Gawra and Tell Arpachiyah, but further a field at Tell Halaf and Changer Bazar. In comparison with Hamrin, settlement during the Samarra and Halaf cultures in the lower Diyala region seems to have been slight, with Ubaid settlers being the first to enter that region in any numbers (Adams 1956: 34; Jacobsen 1982: 71).

The Ubaid and Uruk Settlements: (Map 1)

Fifteen Ubaid sites have been identified in the Hamrin Basin, with some, such as Tell Abada, representing substantial villages. At one of these sites, Tell Madhhur (No. 64), an extraordinary well preserved Ubaid house has been excavated, complete with its domestic contents (Roaf 1982: 41-3). Some sites, such as Tell as-Saadiya and Tell Rashid have revealed Ubaid remains only, while others, such as Tell Abu-Hasaini (No. 35), Tell Ayyash (No. 17) and Tell Hasan (No. 67) represented other periods as well, but the most interesting discoveries, both architectural and artifactual, are those which have been made at Tell Abada, where three phases of Ubaid ware have been identified. While the earliest of these includes vessels that may be compared with the Choga Mami Transitional (Samarra/ Ubaid) ware and classical Samarra, Abada Level II has revealed unmistakable Hajji Mohammed pottery as found at Ras al-Amiya in southern Iraq and therefore approximately contemporary with Eridu Levels XII-XI (Jasim 1983: 184). The Ubaid of the Hamrin Basin, while having its own regional character, exhibits clear links with both the north and the south. It

is also more strongly represented in this region than in the lower Diyala.

A carbonized grain sample from the well preserved Ubaid house excavated at Tell Madhhur (Level II) has produced a Carbon-14 date of 5,570 ± 55 B.C., or a calibrated date of 4,470 ± 80 B.C., which is of great interest, both for its own sake and because it is higher than any of the other determinations at present available for the Ubaid culture, from both the south and the north⁽⁵⁾ (Roaf 1982: 43).

Although the Ubaid period in the Hamrin Basin seems to have been generally one of stability (Gibson 1981: 20), the beginning of the Uruk period witnessed a shift in population, perhaps towards the lower Diyala region, where survey has revealed an increase in settlements at this time (Adams 1965: 36). Uruk pottery has been found at several sites in the Hamrin Basin, e.g. Tell Rubeidheh (No. 44), the west of Narin Chai River. This yielded pottery belonging to the late Uruk period. These sherds were mould-made, thick-walled and tempered with coarse straw and some grit. They are closely similar to ceramic material discovered in southern Iraq (Roaf 1982: 46-7; McCam 1982: 163).

Between the end of the Uruk period and the beginning of Early Dynastic period, there is a gap in the archaeological sequence corresponding to the Jemdat Nasr and Nineveh V periods. Among the findings made at Tell Gubbah (No.31) and Sungur B (No.42) was polychrome pottery with plum-red paint of the type common in the Jemdat Nasr period, together with black or dark brown monochrome pottery (Fujii 1983/4: 205). A few sherds belonging to the same period were found at Tell Abu-Qasim (No.14). These sherds are representative of the Nineveh V period, being of a light grey colour and of safe clay with polished appearance.

The Early Dynastic Settlements: (Map 1)

From the beginning of the Early Dynastic period, a sudden surprising increase in occupation may be seen in the Hamrin Basin. The period being represented by no less than fifteen sites. The most interesting feature of the Early Dynastic period is its architectural remains; for example, the rounded or oval buildings uncovered at Tell Gubba, Tell Madhhur, Tell Razuk, Tell Suleimah, Kheit Qasim, and perhaps Tell Halawa. The buildings represent a distinctive structure and many complete pots and numerous shards have been excavated at these sites. In the case of pottery, the most important site in this period is the Kheit Abu-Qasim Cemetery (No. 14), which has been dated to the beginning of the third millennium B.C.; Forest has described the shapes as being relatively few: Bowls and plates, but mainly jars. These jars are either large or bulging, spouted, or carinated and lugged. There are also angular jugs and juglets with beveled rims and ring bases. The common decoration is either red or black and red on a white slip. Most of the patterns are simple geometric ones: e.g.; hatched triangles, drawn on the shoulder (Forest 1979: 500-502).

The pottery of this period is also well known from other sites, particularly at Khafaja in the lower Diyala region and at Abu-Salabikh. It is known by the name of "Scarlet Ware." Generally, the pottery of Early Dynastic I is more common at the Hamrin sites, while Early Dynastic II and Early Dynastic III pottery is also represented at Kheit Qasim, Madhhur, Gubba and Sabra. The most interesting result achieved in the region is the sequence of Akkadian, Ur III and Old Babylonian levels which represents the beginning of Early Dynastic period at three very important sites: Tell Suleimah, Tell Halawa and Tell Yelkhi.

The Akkadian Settlements (Map.1)

During the Akkadian period, there was a decline in the settlements pattern of the region, which was an inevitable result of political conditions. It is known that Sargon of Akkad took over the country, compelling the local rulers to recognize his sovereignty.

The most interesting discovery from this period was 47 tablets which were found in level IV at Tell Suleimah. Those texts represent the most ancient inscription in the Hamrin Basin. Having studied those texts, Fawzi Rashied pointed out that the ancient name of Tell Suleimah was Awal, this name had been mentioned in numerous texts recovered from the site of the Akkadian period (Rashied 1982: 9-15).

If Awal has been correctly identified with Tell Suleimah, it would appear that, during the Old Babylonian period, the city was given a new name, for in Level I belonging to that period an inscribed brick came to light showing that the city was called Pa-ti-ir. This name also appears on an inscribed cylinder seal from the same level (Rasheed 1982: 15).

The name Patir is also mentioned twice in texts found in the second level at Tell Suleimah, (Mustafa, 1983: 43). Interestingly, while Old Babylonian tablets from Tell al-Sib I refer to the city as Patri, the name Awal is nowhere mentioned (Mustafa 1983: 302-3; (Jasim 1980; 1984: 99-100).

However, a city may change its name many times in the course of history. This well-known phenomenon might commonly be a result of political changes. For example, it has been noted by Herzfeld that during the second millennium B.C. the land of Eshnunna became the land of Tuplash, while the city of Akshak became Opis (Herzfeld 1958: 36). That the ancient city represented by Tell Suleimah was at first called Awal and then, in

the Old Babylonian period, Pa-ti-ir is therefore highly feasible.

At the end of the Akkadian period, part of Iraq suffered badly from Qutian invasion from the Zagros Mountain. However, there is no indication of Qutian period in the Hamrin Basin. Under the third Dynasty of Ur there was a political and cultural restoration in Iraq. Four sites have revealed archaeological material from this period; namely, Tell Suleimah, Yelkhi, Abqa and Tell Halawa. At these Hamrin Basin sites, it is difficult to distinguish Ur III materials owing to the fact that material of the late Ur III and early Isin-Larsa levels are intermixed. It is possible to consider this period in the Hamrin as a transitional period.

A similar situation has also been reported in the Lower Diyala region, where materials of Ur III were found side by side with Larsa remains (Frankfort 1940: 201, Delougaz 1952: 113).

The Old Babylonian Settlements. (Map 2)

During the Old Babylonian period (2025-1595 B.C) which comprises the Isin-Larsa and the First Dynasty of Babylon period, no less than twenty-two sites were occupied in the Hamrin Basin. Tell Suleimah, Halawa, al-Sib, Haddad (Me-turan) and Tell Yelkhi are the most important of these. At these important sites, sizable administrative centers, together with temples and private houses, have been found. Tablets, Cylinder seals and much pottery, plus a variety of other small finds have also been recovered.

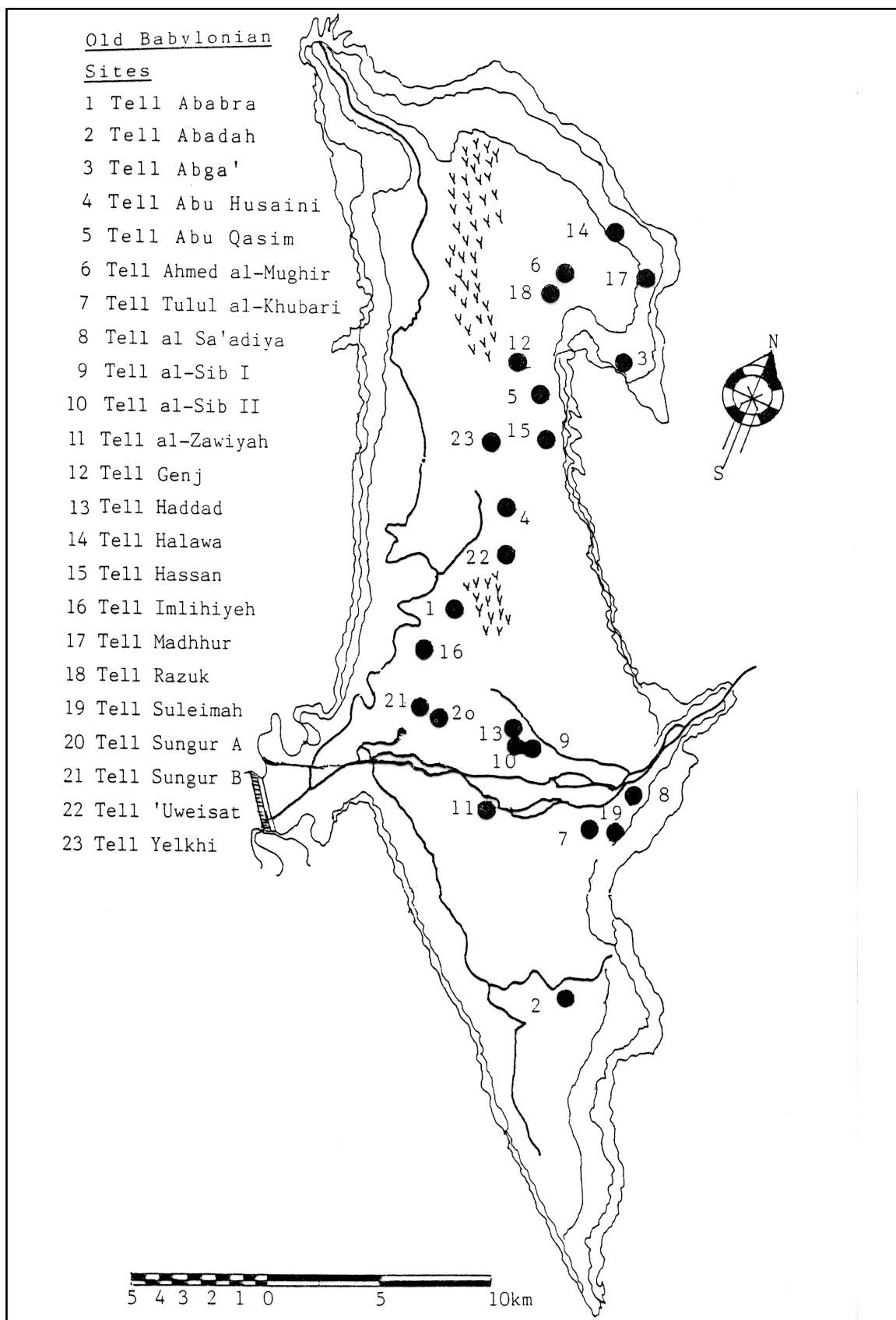
Recently, the tablets from Tell al-Sib and Haddad have been studied and shed light on the Old Babylonian period in the Hamrin Basin (Al-Rawi 1982: 117-1120, Mustafa 1983; Jasim, R 1984: 99-100). Particularly important are the texts found in level III at Tell al-Sib

and in level III at Haddad; they have provided date formulae for the following rulers of Eshnunna: Sin-abushu, Ipiq-Adad II, Dadusha, Ibal-pi-el II, Silli-sin and Iluni. The date formulae of these rulers indicate that the Hamrin Basin was part of the kingdom of Eshnunna.

During this period few town rulers established their own dynasties. The Amorite waves occurred at the beginning of the third millennium B.C., grew up steadily from countryside dwellers to become fully integrated into every aspect of the Mesopotamian social scene. The Amorite tribes who settled in the Diyala region, entering the area called Emutbalum (e-mu-ut-ba-lun), settled in two cities, Isin Sulgi and Sulgi Nanna (Stol 1976: 71).

Recently, more evidence has come from Tell al-Sib and Haddad Tablets. These mention Amorite tribes such as the Amnaum, Yahrurum, Yabusa and Idamaraz occupying the zone between the lower Zab and Diyala rivers. These names appear in letter No.141 (Mustafa 1983: 56). Most of these states were ruled by the Amorites. But Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C) assumed far-reaching power and then started his warfare. The Dynasty of Eshnunna under Silli-sin was defeated by Hammurabi in 1761 B.C. (See As. No 29. 200). Also, new information has been found in Tell al-Sib tablets noting that Silli-sin of Eshnunna married the daughter of Hammurabi (Al-Rawi 1982: 118). Eventually, the Eshnunna dynasty came to an end when Samsuiluna captured Iluni, the last king of Eshnunna (Stol 1976: 68).

To sum up, the historical data provided by the archaeological finds in the Hamrin Basin provide us with substantial stratigraphic sequences for the region from the Paleolithic period up to the Old Babylonian period. Particularly interesting is the sequence of pottery from Samarra period continuing without a major gap until the Old Babylonian period, which



Map 2: Map of the location of Old Babylonian sites in the Hamrin Basin.

gives Hamrin pottery its own characteristics. As has been shown, the Hamrin Basin has a fluctuation or shift of settlements. Such fluctuation might have been caused by the geographical and historical conditions which have certain effects on each other and create many features of the Hamrin Basin. The peak was

reached during the old Babylonian period, particularly under the Eshnunna kingdom rulers-- Sin-abushu, Ibiq-Adad II, Dadusha, Iba-pi-el II, Silli-sin and Iluni. In addition to the establishment of their own dynasty, the rulers made enormous progress in the development of the social and economic lives in this area.

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ملخص: يتناول البحث دراسته تطور المستوطنات القديمة، في حوض حميرين بالمنطقة الشرقية من وسط العراق، من العصر الحجري القديم، حتى نهاية العصر البابلي القديم؛ كما يوضح الدور الذي لعبته هذه المنطقة، بوصفها منطقة وسطية في العراق، في عملية التمازج الثقافي والحضاري، بين الشمال والجنوب. وكانت الهيئة العامة للأثار والتراث في العراق قد دعت عام ١٩٧٧، المعاهد الأكاديمية والمؤسسات العلمية في الداخل والخارج، للعمل معها لإنقاذ أثار حوض حميرين، حيث يوجد هناك عدد كبير من المواقع الأثرية التي كانت مهددة بالغرق، بسبب إنشاء سد حميرين. وخلال عملي هناك، عضواً في هيئة تنقيبات جامعة الموصل في تل حلاوه، بين عامي ١٩٧٨-١٩٨٠، حاولت جمع معلومات خاصة عن المستوطنات القديمة في حوض حميرين.

Notes:

1. The University of Mosul, represented by a team from its College of Arts Archaeological and Cultural Research Centre, carried out between 1978-80 three seasons of excavation at Tell Halawa as part of an international archaeological salvage project initiated by the Iraqi State Organization of Antiquities and Heritage in the Hamrin Basin in eastern central Iraq.
2. Diyala region has been divided into three sub-regions: the Upper Diyala, extending from the Darband-I-khan Gorge dam and reservoir near the village of Kalar; the Middle Diyala extending from the Tun-a-Chilkana Gorge down to the gorge through the Jabal Hamrin, and the Lower Diyala extending from the Jabal Hamrin Gorge down to the junction of the Diyala river c.13km, to the south of Baghdad (see, e.g. MacDonald and Partners 1958a, 1958b, 1959, Mitchell 1059; Mitchell and Naylor 1960).
3. The number indicated is the site number of the Hamrin Map No.1.
4. The ancient name of the Diyala river, that is, the Turant, is in evidence from the Old Babylonian period onwards; it was mentioned, for example, in a date formula (No.119) from Tell Asmar, the ancient city of Eshnunna, which stood on its bank (Frankfort, Lloyd and Jacobsen 1940:193, Jacobsen 1982: 72). In Islamic times, the Diyala River has been also called the Tamera or the Ab-I-Sirwan (British Admiralty Handbook 1944:83; Sousa 1963:296).
5. The only available carbon-14 determination of the Ubaid period in the south of Iraq relates to the "basal" Ubaid I level at Warka, viz, 4,115 ± 160 B.C., while for the north we have a determination of 3,450 ± 325 B.C. (C817) for Tepe Gawra level XVIII-XVII (Braidwood 1958), plus a determination (as yet unpublished) of 3,025 ± 69 B.C for the Gawran levels at Gari Resh (Jawad 1965:43). For whatever merit they may have, these scattered single determinations seem to hint at a slower pace of development in the north.

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