

Exploration and Discovery.

DR. E. J. BANKS, Field Director of the Expedition (Babylonian Section) of the Oriental Exploration Fund of the University of Chicago, has made the following reports from Bismya:

REPORT NO. 14.

“BISMYA, April 1, 1904.

“Since my report of last week we have worked five days in III, clearing out the various rooms and streets as we have come to them. Among the finds of the week is a tomb in which a number of objects were found. . . .

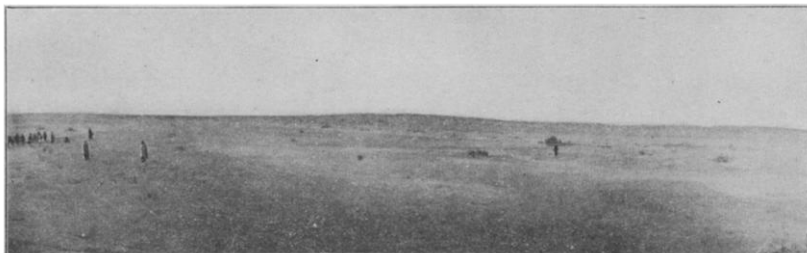


FIG. 1.—Panorama of the Mound of Bismya, Looking Northeast.

“Another object of interest is a marble statuette of a seated figure, apparently a reproduction of the larger statues from the temple. The hands are folded; the hair is braided and hanging down at the sides; and the skirt is provided with folds. It has no inscription. We have also found a headless terra-cotta statuette of the same form, but this I take to be much later.

“I am inclosing a copy of an inscription on a seal cylinder which was also found in III, and of a perfect tablet upon which I think I see the name of Dungi, king of Ur, as upon the bricks of the temple.

“The ruins in this part (III) of Bismya, although very deep, contain inscribed objects only near the surface, and those objects, usually of the greatest antiquity, are few in number, and are found in groups as if forming private collections. . . . The only places where tablets of a later date have been discovered are in Palace I, and a few days ago I discovered two

tablets with late Babylonian writing in a small conical mound near the west corner.

“In comparing the archaic characters on the fragments of vases from the temple with those found at Nippur, I am convinced that we have inscriptions as old, if not older, than any from Nippur. It therefore seems advisable to search as thoroughly as possible in the lower strata of the temple. . . . I have decided to put all of the men at work in the temple, with the hopes of finding the body of another statue or other inscribed vase fragments, and I see no reason why the temple should not be thoroughly excavated at once. I would estimate a month’s time with the present number of workmen sufficient. . . .



FIG. 2.—The Northwest Trench.

rests a solid wall of well-preserved plano-convex bricks, reaching in places to the height of nearly two meters. These bricks are generally considered to antedate Sargon and Naram Sin. Near the level of the top of the wall of plano-convex bricks, but reaching to a considerable distance out to the sides, is the foundation of a temple constructed of long grooved bricks, which I take to be the development of the plano-convex

“Apart from some walls of mud bricks far below the surface of the temple hill, the lowest stratum of a more substantial material consists of scattered blocks of white limestone, which I take to be the foundation of a temple constructed before burned bricks were employed at Bismya. Above this layer of limestone is a meter of clay, upon which

bricks. In a chamber of this temple I found the inscription of Naram Sin, and I am inclined to believe that this foundation was constructed by him. Above it is another of square bricks, some of which are inscribed with the name of Dungi, king of Ur. Above Dungi's foundation I can find nothing of a later date, and if any structure ever existed upon it, it has been worn away by the weather and carried off by the strong winds.

"We therefore have traces of four builders who employed material more substantial than clay. A careful examination of the bricks may reveal traces of others.

"The most interesting thing about the temple is that below the layer of clay upon which the pre-Sargonic temple rests is a stratum of débris in which the large statue and the greater part of the fragments of the inscribed vases were found. The conclusion, then, is that the statue and vases belonged to the temple of limestone blocks, and that, when it was destroyed to make room for the temple of plano-convex bricks, these objects were broken and buried in its ruins. We may then give tentative dates to the various foundations. Beginning at the top:

"The First is of Dungi, 2750 B. C.

"The Second possibly of Naram Sin, 3750 (?) B. C.

"The Third, of plano-convex bricks, in the fourth millennium B. C.

"The Fourth, of stone blocks, possibly from the fifth millennium B. C.

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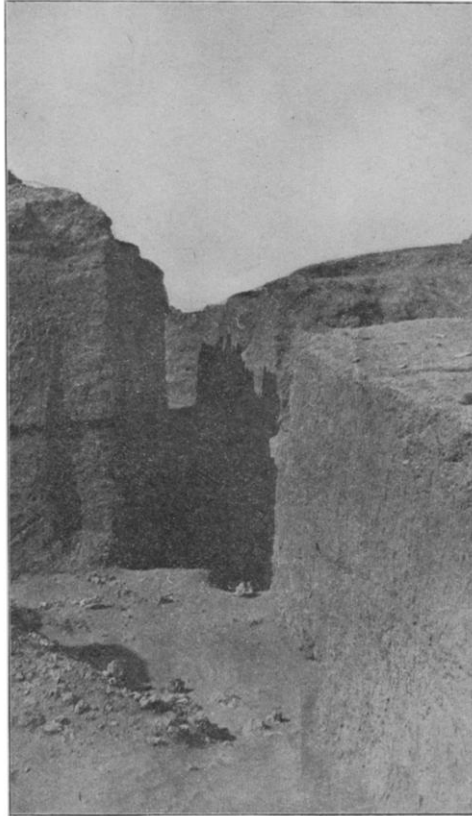


FIG. 3.—The Trench in the Southwest Side of the Temple.

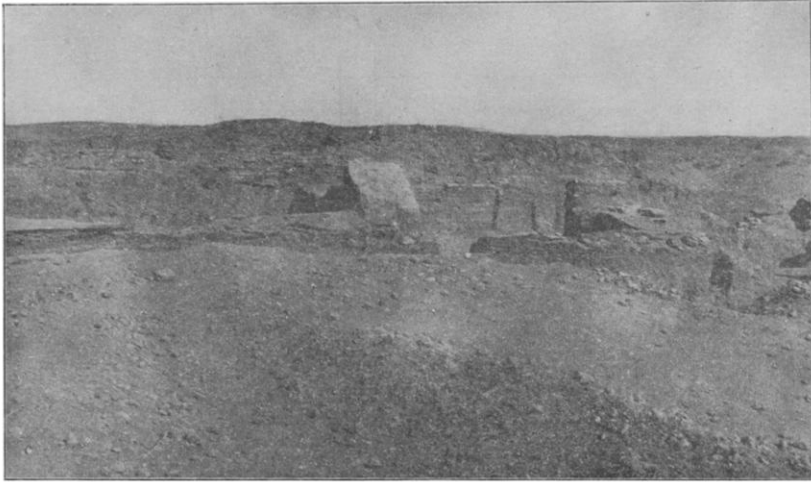


FIG. 4.—The Southeast Side of the Temple.



FIG. 5.—Looking from the Temple across the Canal Bed to the North.



FIG. 6.—Marble Door Socket.

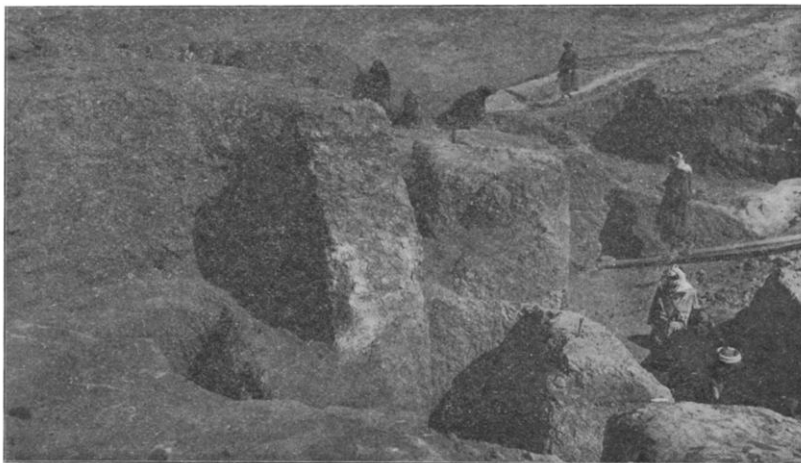


FIG. 7.—The Statue was Found at the Base of the Corner Wall in the Center of the Photograph.

"I cannot too strongly urge the necessity of more money immediately, for, apart from the extremely great success of the excavations, it is next to impossible to carry on the work with the sum now at my disposal. I have reduced the number of watchmen to three and the soldiers to two for the purpose of cutting down my expenses, and for the same reason I have not purchased a horse, which is a necessity. The workmen number about 120, and in case of an attack, which may occur any day, it is not sufficient for protection. An increase of the workmen would decrease the dangers to which we are exposed. To prolong the work here after two years

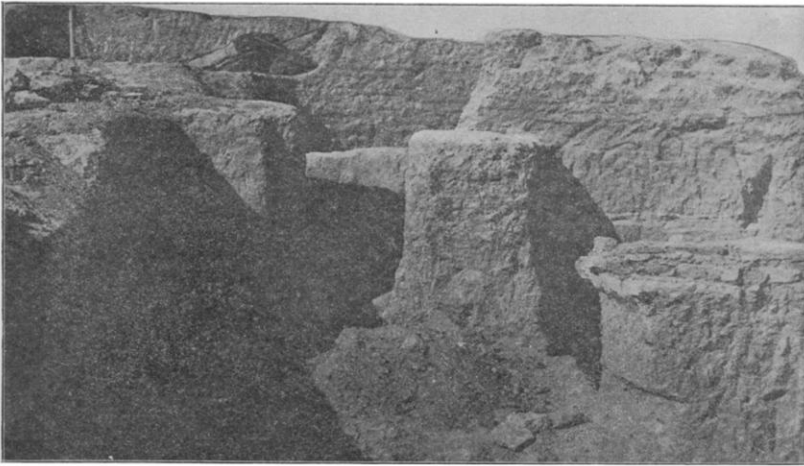


FIG. 8.—Tomb on the Northwest Side of the Temple.

seems an unnecessary exposure of life and health, for there is no part of Mesopotamia more inhospitable than this. Personally I do not mind the dangers nor the fierce sandstorms, but I believe it is for the best interests of the University to complete the work here while we have the irade. . . .


REPORT NO. 16.

"BISMYA, April 15, 1904.


"Since my last report we have worked at the temple five and one-half days with a force of 120 men, and the results have been more satisfactory than I anticipated. I am inclosing copies of four inscriptions taken from fragments of vases, all of which were found outside an inner wall near the north corner of the temple inclosure. Along this wall we are finding fragments of marble vases of various sizes and shapes, and with them fragments

of plano-convex bricks, indicating that when the temple in which these bricks were employed, was razed, the rubbish was dumped outside the wall. It is this dump which we are now excavating, and although we have hardly begun it, we have discovered four inscribed fragments, one perfect marble vase, an engraved marble lamp, nearly perfect, the hind parts of two marble bulls, and several basketfuls of fragments of white marble, onyx, soap and sandstone vases, and of other objects. Very little terra-cotta is found in this ancient stratum, and I am anticipating valuable results.

“Near the same place we have uncovered a drain built of plano-convex bricks, and a few centimeters above it is a second drain identical in construction, excepting the bricks employed are larger and marked with two grooves running parallel with the longer sides. Thus I have a clue to the markings on the bricks—something for which I have long been working. It is thus evident that the earliest of the grooved bricks were marked with two parallel lines. It is now certain that after the temple of plano-convex bricks was destroyed, the site witnessed at least five reconstructions or additions before the time when other bricks were employed. The bricks

of these five builders were marked as follows: 

In no case are the bricks of one stamp used with those of another or on the same level. I am expecting to find traces of three other builders whose

bricks are marked  for bricks of this description are found

elsewhere in the ruins of Bismya. If, as is generally supposed, the bricks employed by Sargon and Naram Sin were very large and square—two varieties of which have been found in the temple—we have traces of at least five kings who reconstructed the temple between the time when the plano-convex bricks were discarded and the reign of Sargon, and perhaps a clue to the date of the first brick temple.

“The excavation of the temple should be nearly finished within the next ten days. We are now sinking a shaft in the very center of the hill, digging out the perpendicular drains and following about the inner walls of the inclosure.” . . .

REPORT NO. 17.

“BISMYA, April 22, 1904.

“Since my last report we have worked at the temple four full days and two half-days with 122 men. Of the finds the most striking object is a

large bronze spike terminating in a finely shaped lion, a design of which I am inclosing. The spike is forty-eight centimeters long. It may bear upon its right side an inscription in raised characters, like Hittite, but the raised parts are more likely the result of corrosion. Whether it is inscribed or not, it is an object of very great value, especially as it was found two and one-half meters below the platform of plano-convex bricks, in the pit which we are digging in the center of the hill. It must antedate this temple, and is therefore one of the most ancient bronze objects. . . .

“During this week four of the gangs were employed at the north corner



FIG. 9.—A Large Vase of Rope Pottery *in situ* at III.

of the inclosure in what I have termed the dump of the plano-convex brick temple. On the northwest side of the platform of this very ancient temple is an inclined plane leading up to it, and when the temple was razed, its ruins were dumped in the corner at its side. About fifteen basketfuls of the fragments of marble vases have been recovered; among them are six inscribed fragments, copies of which I am inclosing, together with the copy of another vase inscription which was found in the southeast trench of the temple. By putting fragments together, a number of vases are now nearly perfect; a design of one is inclosed. . . . When the work at this point is finished, I hope to have a good representative collection of vases of marble and other stones used in the service of the temple which must date not far from 4500 B. C.

“The importance of the temple of plano-convex bricks is daily becoming more evident. Its platforms, which can now be traced on the northwest and southwest sides, appear to have been more extensive than those of the later temples which stood above it, and to have an appearance of solidity which they lack. I hope that during the next few days its excavation may be completed, and that we may be able to prepare a detailed plan of it.

“Other gangs have been employed during the past week in digging to



FIG. 10.—A Bronze Lion-Headed Object.

the bottoms of three perpendicular drains. Two have been reached at the level of the sand. One has twenty-nine rings; the other, twenty-six; the third, which has not yet been finished, has been dug to the depth of thirty-two rings.

“It is getting warm here. The past week the thermometer has been at 96° in the coolest place we could find, and at seven o'clock this morning in the court of the house it registered 112° in the sun. There were three days of sandstorms this week, and it is on that account that work was discontinued two half-days.”

ROBERT FRANCIS HARPER, *Director*.

HASKELL ORIENTAL MUSEUM,
June 18, 1904.