



MOHAMMED ALI MUSTAFA
1910–1997

Mohammed Ali Mustafa was born in 1910 in Falluja on the Euphrates, where his family owned land, and his first-hand knowledge of the land and farming was of considerable value in his archaeological career. He gained a degree by correspondence from the American University in Beirut and entered the Iraqi Antiquities Service in the mid-1930s. With Fuad Safar and Taha Baqir, he was offered the opportunity to pursue a higher degree in Chicago, but he chose to stay in Iraq to follow more directly the career which he loved and at which he was to excel.

He took charge of his first dig, at Tekrit, about 1938 and for the next ten years he participated in nearly all the Department's major excavations, most notably at Tell ed-Der, Aqar Quf, Tell Uqair, Eridu, Kufa and Tell Harmal. The official Director of the excavation was often Seton Lloyd, then Adviser to the Department, or Fuad Safar or Taha Baqir, who were nominally senior to him in Departmental status by virtue of their higher degrees, but Mohammed Ali was always the backbone of any expedition on which he served. In the early 1950s he worked as an archaeologist on the staff of the Oriental Institute Expedition to Nippur, and directed excavations at Tell adh-Dhibai, at Nebi Yunis, the arsenal of Nineveh, and a Hellenistic temple of Hermes at a nearby crossing of the Tigris. From 1955 onwards he played a major part in the surveys and rescue excavations that were a necessary prelude to new irrigation projects and the construction of new dams. First came the survey of the Musayyab region southwest of Baghdad, followed by excavations in the area to be flooded by the Dokan and Darbandi-Khan dams. As Field Director of the Dokan project he was assisted by some of the younger Iraqi archaeologists, who learnt much from his wide knowledge and experience. Indeed, Fuad Safar and Mohammed Ali were together responsible for the emergence of this second generation, who were to succeed them as the senior archaeologists in the Department.

The year 1951 saw the beginning of excavations at Hatra, the seat of an early Arab kingdom of the Parthian period, and Hatra remained Mohammed Ali's overriding interest for the rest of his life. He was in joint charge with Fuad Safar, and his especial skills as architect and surveyor

were ideally suited to Hatra's unique monumental architecture. The same gifts were also invaluable in the restoration of the Hatra temples, and of the ziggurat at Aqar Quf. His publications included the final reports on Kufa and, with Fuad Safar, on Hatra in Arabic, and, with Seton Lloyd and Fuad Safar, on Eridu in English. He contributed to *Sumer* many articles on his excavations in both languages, and even assisted in the translation of the Aramaic inscriptions from Hatra.

Mohammed Ali retired in 1968, but continued to work on his excavation materials and to advise his younger colleagues in the Department until his eyesight failed a few years before his death. Much loved by all who knew him, he was a highly intelligent and cultured man, a great friend of artists and musicians, and one of the most capable archaeologists ever to have worked in Iraq. We shall all miss him sorely.

DAVID AND JOAN OATES