



PROFESSOR EMERITUS SIDNEY SMITH

LITT.D., F.B.A.

Professor Sidney Smith, to whose ninetieth birthday on 29th August, 1979, we had looked forward (*Iraq* XLI/1, 1979), died at his home at Barcombe, Sussex, on 12th June, 1979. A number of his colleagues, friends and former students contributed to a volume dedicated to him in honour of his seventy-seventh birthday in 1966 (*Iraq* XXVIII/2, 1966–XXIX/1, 1967).

Born in Leeds in 1889, Sidney Smith took the Classics Tripos at Queens' College, Cambridge, of which he was elected an Honorary Fellow in 1935. There he developed his early interest in the history of the ancient Near East and in 1915 was appointed Assistant (Keeper) in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities of the British Museum, of which he became Keeper in 1931 on the death of Sir Wallis Budge. As was then the custom he taught himself Akkadian while in post and copied texts of various periods and genres, especially Cappadocian (*CCT* I–V). In 1921 he published his *First Campaign of Sennacherib* and embarked on historical studies which produced his *Babylonian Historical Texts* (1924), and *The Cambridge Ancient History* III, chapters I–V (1924). This in turn led to his masterly *Early History of Assyria to 1000 B.C.* (1928), as well as numerous articles.

His connection with Iraq began with his time as epigraphist to (Sir) Leonard Woolley's expedition at Ur in 1923. In 1929–30 he was in Baghdad as Director of Antiquities, where he laboured hard in the setting up of the Museum and its Directorate and did much to encourage field work. To this time we owe his initiative which led, among other benefits, to the renewed work at Nineveh, Nimrud and to the founding of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq and this Journal.

On his return to London he reorganized the Egyptian and Assyrian galleries at the Museum and became active in teaching Akkadian in his spare time there, at King's College, London, and for the Diploma in Mesopotamian Studies in the Archaeology of Western Asia, which he had drawn up. He was Honorary Lecturer in Assyrian in the University of London from 1923, and Honorary Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology from 1938–1946 at the recently formed Institute of Archaeology in London. He was a stimulating and original teacher of whom most of his students stood in some awe, though they have without exception gone on to make major contributions themselves to Mesopotamian and related studies in their academic posts. He was unsparing in his efforts to help many, but, being a controversialist who battled unswervingly for what he considered right, he was not always appreciated and sometimes opposed.

Before he retired from the Museum in 1947 to take up the newly established Chair of Ancient Semitic Languages and Civilizations in the University of London at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the following year, he had pioneered work on the Alalakh texts and chronology (1940) and the *Statue of Idrimi* (1949). Both before his retirement in 1955 and afterwards his wide interests focused on

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problems of chronology, yet ranged beyond cuneiform studies to include Demotic Egyptian, epigraphic South Arabian and comparative Semitics.

The School has lost one of its founding and distinguished friends and supporters, and we extend our sympathy to Mrs. Mary Smith, their son, the Egyptologist Harry Smith, and their daughter.

D. J. W.