

of two Parthian officers came to light; a gold coin of the Emperor Tiberius (14-37 A.D.) gives the exact date of the burial. Syria at the time of Christ had become a part of the Roman Empire, but it was only under Trajan (115 A.D.) that the Romans, after two unsuccessful campaigns, occupied for a short while Mesopotamia and pondered over the ruins of Babylon.

In the Court of Columns were unearthed not only the business tablets of the Murashû Sons but many incantation bowls with painted inscriptions in Aramaic, Hebrew and Mandaean. All the exiled Jews did not return to Palestine. (cf. PBS, Vol. III, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 1913.) There also were found many coins: Greek, Parthian, Sassanian, Arabic with Kufic inscriptions. Most characteristic are the Parthian slipper-shaped coffins of which the University Museum has a good collection. They are made of poorly baked clay, stamped outside with designs and figures in relief and covered with an originally blue glaze. The process of glass-making is very ancient. Glass beads and glazed ware appear at Ur in levels anterior to the Jemdet-Nasr period. Glass objects, coloured with cobalt blue in imitation of lapis lazuli, were presented by the Cassite kings to the temple at Nippur and bear their names and inscriptions. The Ishtar Gate at Babylon was adorned with glazed bricks and figures of a bull, a lion and a dragon in relief. The blue glazed bricks of Nabonidus at Ur have been referred to in their place. The Anu temple at Uruk in the Greek period was restored and had its front decorated with glazed terracotta figures. Blown and moulded glass bottles of the Graeco-Roman period are among the common furniture of Parthian graves.

The Sassanians and the Arabs

In 226 A.D. another Persian dynasty, the Sassanian, succeeded the Parthian. Ctesiphon became the winter residence. From that epoch dates the great Arch still standing today. The palace with its fabulous riches later fell a prey to the Arab conquerors. The Museum has good examples of the silver coins and of the seals of semi-precious stones of the Sassanians, inscribed in their so-called Pehlvi characters, from which the Kufic, the oldest Arabic letters, are probably derived.

A beautiful silver bowl of the same period has been recovered in a late grave at Ur, and forms a choice piece of the Babylonian Section. It is decorated with fluting and a rosette on the under side and has a bronze coin imbedded in the centre inside, with an almost illegible Pehlvi inscription on the rim.

In 570 A.D. Muhammed was born in Mecca. In 635 A.D. the Romans were driven out of Damascus by the followers of the Prophet, and in 636 A.D. the Sassanids were routed at Kadisiyah, fifteen miles west of Kufa, leaving Babylonia open to the invaders. The following year, Ctesiphon was taken. In 702 A.D. Baghdad was built by the 'Abbasid Caliph Mansur, and with that date our survey of the Babylonian Section comes to an end. A few coins of the 'Omayyad and of the 'Abbasid caliphs, minted at Wasit on the Tigris, have been recovered at Nippur (*Museum Journal*, March 1924, p. 75).

The Nippur Seal and Terracotta Collections

Seals and terracottas are eminently characteristic of the Mesopotamian culture. They are found in all the levels and in all the stages of its development, from the Sumerian to the Arab period. Their use was not limited to Mesopotamia, but extended east and west from India to Syria and Egypt. The seal is a personal mark of identification. With the seals are included their impressions on clay. The collections of seals of Ur and Nippur in the Babylonian Section have been published in several volumes (PBS, Vol. XIV, *Culture of the Babylonians from their seals in the collections of the Museum*, 1925; Ur Excavations, Vol. II, *Archaic Texts*, 1935, Vol. III, *Archaic Seal Impressions*, 1936). Flat cylindrical, cone-shaped and ring seals show a rich variety of scenes and figures, cut in intaglio in shell, marble, hard stones, hematite, semi-precious stones, glaze, frit, etc. Many bear inscriptions, royal and private names, or short prayers. They form the most vivid and extensive illustration of religion, art and mythology, which happily compares with and completes that derived from larger monuments.

The popular, humbler terracotta figurines play the same part compared with the major productions of the sculptor in stone, plaque reliefs, stelae and statues in the round. They are found everywhere, in tombs,