

as-Sayyed Fuji (FUJII SAN)

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Professor Hideo Fujii is for sure one of those scholars who have dedicated themselves to their field works and academic lives.

He was, and is still, the friend and the well accepted partner of all the colleagues in the Department of Antiquities in Iraq. I still remember the first time when we met in Haneda Airport in Japan in 1977. It was as if we had known each other since a long time before.

It was my first months in the Department, and the job administration and Japan were both new to me. But, the most critical situation I was waiting for vanished immediately after meeting Prof. Fujii. He gave me the impression that my thoughts, ideas, or wishes, which were very humble, were normal and the reality. It was my first lesson in Japanese collegiality and diplomacy, and Fujii was my first indirect teacher.

Back in Iraq, we came close together through the Salvage Excavations at Tells al-Gubba and Sungur. These excavations were hits in the Mesopotamian archaeology. The round building at al-Gubba is still a mystery, and the thoughts we were sharing about it are still alive. At least in the interpretation of archaeological discoveries, we were able to build a basis for productive discussions.

From Fujii *san* I learned the secret of joining the humor with seriousness and using them together, especially when stress and tensions during fulfilling a task or routine job came upon us suddenly. I still remember the way he laughed or he asked even when the question was very embarrassing. This way of Fujii *san* was always joined with a shy laughter, making you willing to answer.

Fujii *san* has been the leader of very fruitful campaigns in the at-Tar Caves near Karbala, in Tells Sungur and al-Gubba in the Himrin Dam Salvage Excavations, and later in the site-complex of Ain Shayia and Dakakin Caves near Najaf.

The discoveries of the textiles from the at-Tar Caves is a main chapter in the cultural history of Mesopotamia. The research of these textiles are still not closed to the end. Years of the associated works have been taking place in many Japanese institutions, and the results have been established and shared by many researchers and scientists in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Nara.

I can not imagine that this hard work has been fulfilled without Fujii *san*. His leadership to the organized work brought for the first time a bunch of information about the textile and textile craftsmanship in ancient Mesopotamia.

The round building at Tell al-Gubba, one of the largest constructions of this kind of building known in the ancient Near East, is still one of important discoveries in the history of architecture. This discovery is connected to his name, too. Later, other round buildings were discovered in the area of Himrin or Diyala, such as the buildings at Uch Tepe and Tell esh-Shok smaller, which are of the same category and are also well planned.

The underground irrigation canals at Ain Shayia in a desolated area in western Iraq near Najaf gave us new information about the water supplies and the common civil engineering in the pre- and in the Islamic periods. The discovery of this irrigation system proved that the Kahariz system was more efficient than opened water canals in desert-like areas.

I believe that Fujii *san* had very lucky days in Iraq, combined with a strong wish to accomplish his

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job and the hobby at the same time and to dive deep in the cultural history of Iraq. His work in Iraq began in 1969 and continued on till the last days.

After almost 20 years, I learned another personal secret of Prof. Fujii which gives us a very clear picture of this man-friend Fujii and his devotion to archaeology and to Mesopotamia. He financed his excavations in the at-Tar Caves through the money he raised by means of selling the estate-property of his ancestors – where his parents are laid in peace – in Ito. On this property now, the Japan Society of Calligraphy is established.

We did really miss him in Iraq in the last years, but he was there whenever we believed to see him.

In Baghdad, in order to monitor the damages which happened to the antiquities in the last war against the so-called Gulf War, which I believe was of a World War caliber, Fujii *san* checked the volume of the damages and offered his personal help.

In Paris, with other colleagues or alone, he met the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Frederico Mayor, encouraging him to take the necessary measures for monitoring and evaluating the damages which happened to the Iraqi cultural heritage. And, Fujii *san* encouraged the state members of the Hague Convention of 14/May/1954 to involve themselves in the effective protection and in helping to return the Iraqi Lost Heritage, demanding them to support the Department of Antiquities with documentation material and photo supplies.

Fujii *san* built a house in Kish for the excavations that are newly planned now. A master piece in the art of accommodation in the field for archaeologists! We decided to call this house Fujii House. We hope with this nomination to honour his efforts and attitude to the people and the Department of Antiquities in Iraq.

And at last, I must also mention that Prof. Fujii is the one who brought the kind support to Iraq and introduced it to a wide public.

I hope to Prof. Hideo Fujii all the best in his life and work. May God guide him to Everlasting Happiness.