

NIPPUR

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It seems more and more likely that we will be able to resume excavations at Nippur in the near future. Several other foreign groups have gained permission to work in the south of Iraq, at first restricted to Ur and its vicinity. But lately, work has begun at Girsu (modern Tello) and Nina (modern Surghul), which were part of the Lagash kingdom, southeast of Nippur.

In the meantime, I can report good news that the Inanna Temple final report is in the editorial office and is being actively worked on, meaning that Tom Urban and his staff are giving the manuscript the meticulous scrutiny that marks that office. We hope to see its publication in a matter of months. Richard Zettler, Karen Wilson, and Jean Evans make up the team that has put this manuscript together. It was in 1973 that I took over the responsibility for the Inanna Temple publication from Carl Haines, who had begun the final plans and architectural descriptions before he was diagnosed with a terminal illness. I handed the job off to Richard Zettler, then an outstanding graduate student, to use as the basis for his dissertation. As always happens to the best scholars, he got a position at the University of Pennsylvania, and although he did publish a book on the Ur III level of the temple (ca. 2100 BC), the writing up and analysis in detail of the many earlier and later levels of that stack of temples had to take a back seat to his teaching and ongoing excavations in Syria. He did establish a fine working relationship with professor Donald P. Hansen (New York University Institute of Fine Arts), who had excavated the temple under Carl Haines, and they produced many pages of manuscript before Don's death. For the past five years or so, Zettler has worked closely with Wilson (who in the 1980s had analyzed the lower levels of the Temple as a dissertation under Hansen at NYU), and with Evans (who was Hansen's final PhD and a specialist in the art and archaeology of the Early Dynastic period; a period in which most of the early levels of the Inanna Temple were built, used, and demolished and then had a new version of the structure erected on the ruins). This publication has been a long time coming to fruition, but the result will be a greatly enhanced presentation of this most important sequence of temples.

I have begun working, once again, on reports of our work on Area WG at Nippur, where we exposed a sequence of Parthian, Sasanian, and Early Islamic levels (ca. 150 BC–1,000 AD), a set of periods that have tended to be neglected. Even when excavations of these periods have been done, they are often isolated operations showing only the remains of one of the periods, so that the continuities and changes from one level to another are still too little known. I had almost finished this report some years ago, when I became aware that the "specialist" in ceramics had made rather serious errors in the assignment of findspots to some of the pottery. These errors would make less clear the changes in pottery during the sequence, so we needed to redo the chapter. The specialist, in the meantime, had died, so we had to come to an understanding of his rather individualistic way of recording and then work back in the original field records to make sure everything was assigned to its proper place in the stratigraphy. In the meantime, I made a commitment to publish Iraqi archaeologists' reports that had been damaged in the looting of the Iraq Museum and had received two grants to carry out that work. This commitment turned out to be a much larger and more time-consuming effort than initially thought. But, Mark Altaweel (now teaching at University College London)

and I have finally arrived at the final phase and are handing over the last manuscript to the publishers this year.

James A. Armstrong, another former student who wrote a brilliant dissertation based on his excavations at Nippur, is also nearing completion of his book that details the archaeology and history of Nippur from the Kassite period to the Neo-Babylonian (ca. 1400–538 BC). Much of his time in the past decade or more has been devoted to a definitive study (with Hermann Gasche) of the pottery of the entire second millennium in Babylonia. This magnificent book, that was based in part on the pottery from his excavations, was published in 2014 and will remain a ceramic bible for years to come.

Our house at Nippur has been repaired and renovated in anticipation of the return to excavations. The gigantic mound that is Nippur remains as difficult to tackle as ever, but as a result of the series of digging seasons that we did since 1972, we know where to look for specific information and the potential rewards are enormous.
