
Inanna Temple Publication Project

Richard L. Zettler

In the third season of work at Nippur in 1951, the excavators (Donald McCown directed the work at the time) made a number of soundings around the mound to determine promising areas for future excavation. One of the soundings (B) the excavators laid out on the northwest slope of a low rise just southwest of the ziggurat. They began work at the uphill or southeast end of the trench and apparently planned to proceed to the northwest or down the slope in a series of steps. At a depth of six meters below the surface of the mound the excavators hit a baked brick pavement and part of a mud brick wall with what they took to be a projecting foundation. As per the time, they tunneled along the wall face up over the top of the wall and into a room of the building. After digging an airshaft, they continued tunnelling along an interior wall until they found a doorway with an inscribed pivot stone still in place. The inscription on the pivot stone marked the building as a temple built by Šulgi, second king of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112-2004 B.C.), and dedicated to Inanna, Sumerian goddess of love and war. The excavators expanded the sounding in the fourth season of work and made the area of the temple of Inanna the major focus of work in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth seasons.

Over the years 1951-1963 the excavations at the temple of Inanna lasted

nearly twenty-four months and uncovered twenty-three major building levels spanning the time from the Protoliterate period through the late Parthian era, that is, ca. 3400 B.C.-A.D. 150, the longest continuous archaeological sequence from southern Iraq. In addition, the excavations yielded spectacular finds of statuary and carved stone reliefs, as well as thousands of cuneiform tablets.

During the excavations and in the time since their close, Richard C. Haines, who directed the work at the Inanna temple, Vaughn Crawford, Donald P. Hansen and George Dales published a number of preliminary reports in *The Illustrated London News* and in *Archaeology*. Donald P. Hansen published several important articles based largely on analyses of finds from the temple excavations. Hansen's articles, have gradually altered archaeologists' perception of the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2900-2400 B.C.) in southern Mesopotamia. In addition, the excavations of the Inanna temple have provided material for my Ph.D. dissertation, as well as that of Karen Wilson, a student of Donald P. Hansen's at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. More than twenty years after the close of excavations, however, no final report has appeared.

As part of his plan for the publication of long overdue excavation reports Robert McC. Adams, then director of

the Oriental Institute, asked me in 1983 to take responsibility for the publication of the final report on the Inanna temple excavations. I began work in earnest on the report in January, 1984. Before his death in 1975 Richard C. Haines had finished the plans for Levels XXI-IX and had written a brief description of the architectural remains of those levels. Since January I have finished the plans for Levels VI-I. I have also arranged the object cards in stratigraphic order—the Inanna temple publication project could benefit from a microcomputer—and completed the catalogue of finds from the upper levels of the temple. In addition, I have organized the object cards from the Parthian levels of the temple and have written detailed descriptions of the objects from those levels which can be dated to pre-Parthian periods. The Parthian levels of the temple will be published, along with the results of the excavations of the Parthian fortress (ninth and tenth season at Nippur, 1964-1965 and 1966-1967), by Edward Keall of the Royal Ontario Museum in a volume tentatively entitled *Parthian Nippur*, but Keall's catalogue of finds will include detailed descriptions only of Parthian period objects. Beginning next month I will start work on the architecture of Levels VIII-VII. It was in these levels that the excavators uncovered the widely publicized free-standing shrine and found nearly all of the statuary and carved stone reliefs listed in the field catalogues. Levels VIII-VII are complicated, but I hope to finish work

on them in perhaps four months time. In New York, Donald P. Hansen and Karen Wilson, who are collaborating on the publication project, have been moving ahead with the catalogue of finds from the lower levels of the temple.

All of the work just described may sound tedious, but it is a necessary preliminary to producing a final report. With any luck at all, we will be in position to paste up plates and write the text for the volume by the end of this year.

I need to express thanks to both Robert McC. Adams and Janet Johnson, directors of the Oriental Institute, for their help. I also need to thank the American Schools of Oriental Research for providing me with means to study Inanna temple objects in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, Prudence O. Harper, Curator of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for arranging for me to work on the Inanna temple objects in her charge, and Alice Ryerson Hayes for her interest. Many people have taken an active part in the work on the Inanna temple publication over the past six months and over the past few years. As is so often the case I can offer them only my thanks. I especially want to single out McGuire Gibson, Miguel Civil, Donald P. Hansen, Robert D. Biggs and Guillermo Algaze and the Oriental Institute's volunteer guides. Their work and their willingness to listen and advise has been an enormous aid to the work.