

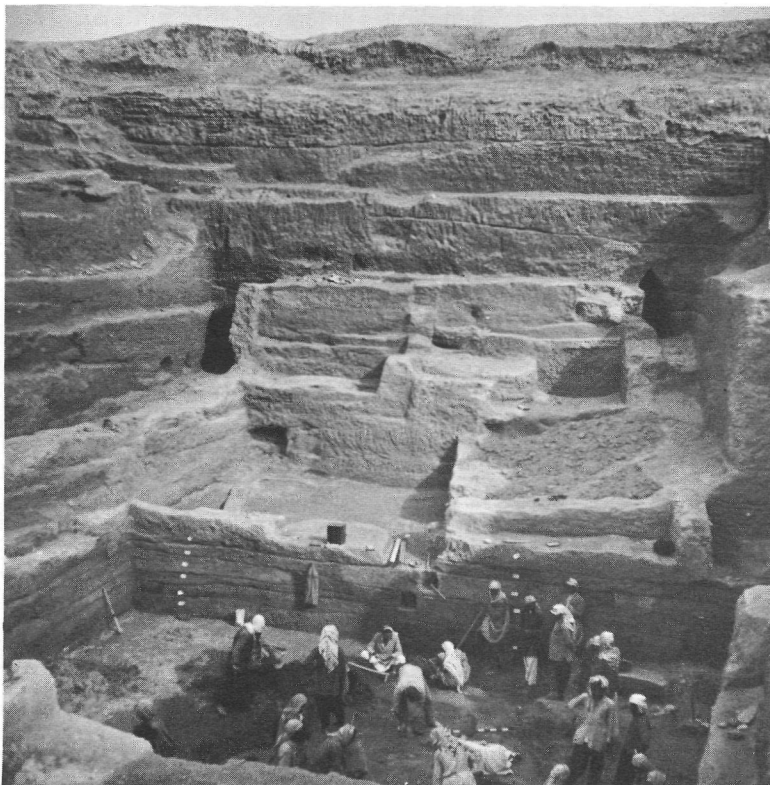


THE NIPPUR EXPEDITION

During the winter of 1960/61 the Nippur Expedition returned to Iraq to conduct its seventh season of excavation at Nippur, the religious center of ancient Sumer and one of the major cities of Mesopotamia. The primary objective was to continue the excavation of the temple of Inanna, the goddess of love and war. The temple was discovered in 1952, but systematic excavation was not started until 1955/56. The work was continued in '57/'58 and again this season. In early spring (February in Iraq) the earliest temple of Inanna was reached, and the digging was continued through the underlying strata of private houses to sterile soil. Sterile soil was reached a little more than 60 feet below the surface of the mound and about 4 feet below the present water table. At present there is a great gaping hole approximately 200 by 350 feet which decreases in size as the successively deeper temple structures became smaller and smaller until there is no more than a pit 16 by 26 feet at the water level.

The topmost stratum contained a Parthian temple, and below it there were evidences of temples belonging to the Assyrian, Kassite, and Isin-Larsa(?) periods. The next earlier temple, with an almost complete ground plan, was built during the Third Dynasty of Ur by Shulgi, who placed seven solid bronze foundation figurines in baked brick boxes below the temple walls. During these periods, which span some two thousand years, Inanna's temple was a large monumental building with buttressed walls, towered gates, and large interior courtyards.

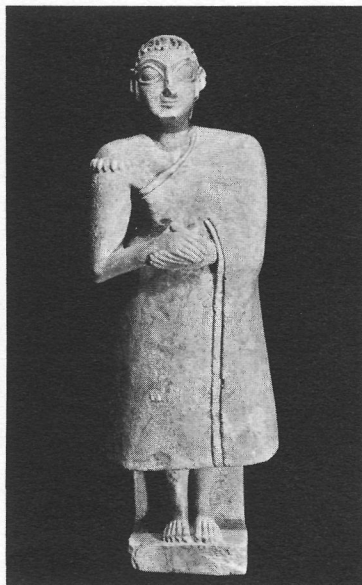
An inscribed macehead indicated that Naram Sin also rebuilt the temple in Akkadian times, but no visible traces of it remained; and only fragments of two earlier buildings attested to the building activity of an Early Dynastic III(?) people. By the end of the 1958 season the major part of a still earlier temple, probably belonging to the end of Early Dynastic II, had been outlined and dug to its highest floors. At the beginning of the present season the temple was completely cleared and excavated to its foundations. It was a long, narrow, irregularly planned building with two sanctuaries or shrines. Each shrine contained benches, circular offering tables, and an unmistakable altar. One small square shrine contained nothing; another rectangular shrine contained statuary and other temple objects

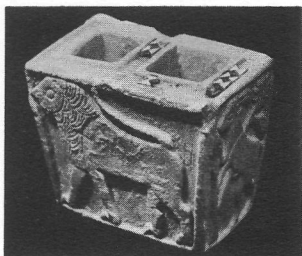


Site of the Inanna Temple excavated to the Protoliterate period

which will do much to supplement our knowledge of the sculpture of the period. Most of the objects were found in two main groups: one buried in a corner beneath the earliest floor and the other within the plasterings of a nearby bench. There were statues of men and women with hands clasped together in adoration, ritual stands or kohl boxes decorated in bas-relief, small vases supported by sculptured bulls and birds, mother-of-pearl inlays, and inscribed bowls and vases. At least fifty good pieces were found. Below this temple so rich in its buried treasure, there was another Early Dynastic II temple, similarly planned but on a slightly smaller scale. It contained almost nothing, and its major contribution was the fragments of four sculptured plaques which varied in iconography from the usual banquet scenes. In the next lower level there was an Early Dynastic I temple, much smaller and laid out on an entirely different plan. The square sanctuary contained an altar, a large bench or platform, and a circular offering table. A small adjoining room seemed to be a second sanctuary, for it contained the same "furniture" on a smaller scale. Almost no objects and little pottery were found on the floor or in the debris above it. The temple rested upon walls of a similarly planned Early Dynastic building which contained no temple installations or any suggestion that it was a religious structure. However,

A gift to the Temple of Inanna





Ritual stand or cosmetic box

these earlier phases of the temple account for nearly another thousand years. This means, for almost three thousand years, Inanna's temple was repaired and rebuilt, again and again, in the same place with each new sanctuary placed upon the ruins of an older one. Compare for a moment, the time span of this religious building to that of the Christian Era!

Below the temple there were several levels containing private houses: two levels belonging to Early Dynastic I and nine to the Protoliterate period. Still deeper, there were four additional strata which could be distinguished only by traces of ash layers, occasional potsherds, and bits of burned clay. Then sterile soil—and the close of the excavations for the current season.

The Nippur Expedition was in the field from early October, 1960, until the middle of May, 1961. It was staffed and financed jointly by the Oriental Institute and the Baghdad School of the American Schools of Oriental Research. The staff included Dr. Donald P. Hansen, Research Associate, and James E. Knudstad, Field Architect, both of the Oriental Institute; Dr. George F. Dales of the Royal Ontario Museum; and Dr. Vaughn E. Crawford of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fragment of a bearded bull supporting a ritual vessel

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