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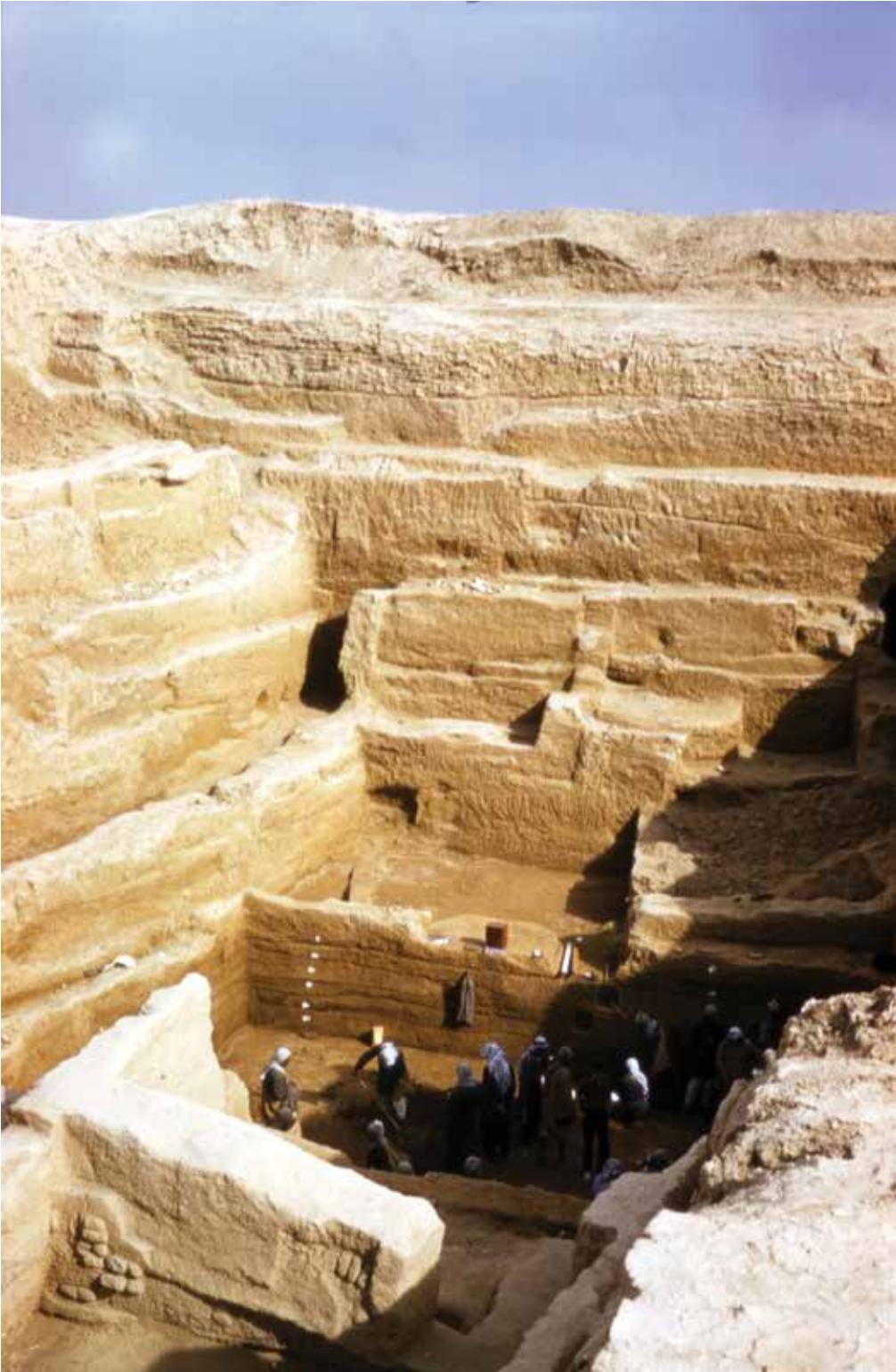
McGuire Gibson

Resting on the drafting table in my office is a very large manuscript for the Inanna Temple publication. Richard L. Zettler, Karen Wilson, and Jean Evans have spent much of the past three years bringing about this long-awaited result. Zettler has been at it since the early-1970s, after Carl Haines turned over the responsibility to me to see his work through to publication a month before his death. Richard derived from the records a magnificent dissertation and later a book on the Ur III level (ca. 2100 BC) of the temple, and then began to work on the earlier levels with Donald Hansen, who had been the chief archaeologist responsible for the digging under Haines in the 1950s and 1960s. Hansen's death in 2007 led us all to rethink the Inanna publication project. Karen and Jean, both of whom had been Hansen's students, were research associates of the Oriental Institute and were available to work on the publication. Robert Biggs, who had been the cuneiform specialist for the Inanna excavations, was also here and ready to work. The technology now existed that would allow us not only to set up a database of all the records and object catalogs but also to make them available to all the members of the team on an interactive basis, and we could digitize and easily manipulate the plans and also share those, especially with Richard at the University of Pennsylvania. With all that coming together, I successfully applied for a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant that allowed us to do all the computer work and pay at least partial salaries to the research associates. We could pay artists who made great drawings of objects that did not photograph and as well as architects for revised plans.

I have just begun reading the manuscript, but I already know that it is a very fine presentation of one of the most eagerly awaited publications in our field. It reflects not only the work of Carl Haines in the architecture and the overall strategy of excavation and the expert digging and the keen eye for detail that characterized Hansen, but also the great gifts for analysis and interpretation of Zettler, Wilson, Evans, and Biggs. The publication has been long-awaited because the excavations ended in 1962, and although there were a few preliminary reports and important articles on specific types of objects and on chronology derived from the Inanna Temple sequence, there was nothing definitive on paper.

The Inanna Temple took on great importance because it was one of the very few examples of an excavation that traced the history of one institution from the Uruk period (ca. 3200 BC) to the Parthian period (ca. AD 100). Here we had a temple to Inanna, the goddess of love and war and one of the most important of all the gods, that began as a small building in the late fourth millennium and was knocked down and a new larger version built on it, again and again, until the Ur III period, when a very formally-laid-out rectangular building the size of a football field set the standard for all later versions. The size of the Ur III structure could be calculated even though about a third of it had been removed in excavations for the foundation of the uppermost, Parthian, version of the temple. The Parthian builders, with a tradition from the mountains of western Iran, built with huge mudbricks as if they were stones, and they therefore needed to make deep foundations, often as much as five or more meters. Their digging not only damaged the Ur III temple, but also took away almost

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Inanna Temple excavations from the surface to Level XVII, from the northwest



*Inanna Temple, (right) Tomb 7 B
7, and (below) its contents*



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all traces of the levels between it and the Parthian. There exist only bits of the front walls of some of these later buildings.

The Parthian Inanna temple is remarkable in being built in traditional Babylonian style, attesting to the fact that the powerful Mesopotamian religious and cultural tradition still lived in that time after the coming of Alexander and the Seleucid kings. The Parthian period in Mesopotamia, even with its heavy overlay of Hellenistic and Roman artistic themes and much imported or adapted material culture, still had a Babylonian basis, and there were still some texts written on clay tablets in cuneiform. With the following period, the Sasanian (AD 224–642), the grand Babylonian tradition ended and no more tablets were written, although in some of the folk traditions it lived on, and echoes are still heard in modern Iraq.

Besides the good news on the Inanna Temple, I can also report that we are editing Judith Franke's dissertation for publication. This important work reflects her very detailed excavation and recording of an area called WB on the West Mound at Nippur in 1973. We had opened the area in the previous year, before she joined the team, and had found that although the area looked undisturbed, it had in fact been very extensively excavated by the old Pennsylvania expedition of the 1890s, and to make matters worse, it had also been cut up by Seleucid diggers at about 250 BC. We did establish, however, that one house of the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1750 BC) had been abandoned suddenly, with its courtyard having more than fifty objects left on the floor. It looked as if the occupants had decided to go for a visit somewhere, and never came back. Working with Saleh Hamed, one of the few really expert Sherqati pickmen, who were the grandsons of men who had begun a tradition of excavating going back to the days of the Germans at Assur in the early 1900s, Judith took on the expansion and clarification of WB. In the upper levels, she and Saleh exposed an archive of about a hundred clay tablets used to fill a grave. These tablets turned out to be records of an early Neo-Babylonian governor (ca. 750 BC) and were important as evidence of the re-occupation and revival of southern Iraq after a period of abandonment. They were also able to find bits and pieces of walls and corners of rooms that allowed them to map rooms of a large palace of the governors of Nippur in the Kassite period (ca. 1250 BC). Under it, she exposed the entire Old Babylonian house that we had touched the previous season, and by collecting all the potsherds as well as whole vessels, seeds, bones, and soil samples, she was able to test theories of how the house functioned. This was one of the first uses of such scientific sampling in historical context in Mesopotamia, although since Braidwood's pioneering work or the Oriental Institute at Jarmo in northern Iraq from 1948 to 1950, it had become standard in prehistoric digs. We hope to see this book on its way to the editors in about a year.

In summary, it has been a good year for Nippur in terms of publication. We are still unable to go back to work at the site, but it is safe, guarded, and still as full of potential as ever.
