

ROBERT BIGGS

Robert Biggs is continuing his work on cuneiform texts of the third millennium B.C. His article on the third millennium texts from Ebla (Tell Mardikh) in Syria appeared in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. The editors, aware

of the publicity and controversy generated by claims that the Ebla texts would revolutionize our understanding of the Old Testament and the role of the biblical patriarchs in the history of ancient Israel, asked him, as a specialist in contemporary Mesopotamian texts of the third millennium, to assess the evidence. Citing the supposed evidence for relevance to Old Testament studies and pointing out where, in his opinion, some scholars had misinterpreted the texts, he concluded that the Ebla texts, while important in their own right for our understanding of ancient Syria, have nothing to do with the Old Testament and are of no direct relevance for biblical studies.

Again, regarding third millennium texts, he has resumed work on the Early Dynastic and Akkadian period texts from the Inanna Temple at Nippur. Donald Hansen and Richard Zettler, who are preparing the archaeological report on the Early Dynastic and Akkadian levels of the Inanna Temple, invited him to include the texts in the volume they are preparing. He is of the opinion that it is especially important that textual finds be integrated with the other stratified artifacts. A close study of the pottery from these levels of the Inanna Temple (mostly unpublished) and the pottery and other artifacts from Abu Salabikh (twelve miles distant) may help refine the relative chronology of the mid- to late third millennium. It may be possible to determine whether or not there is a chronological explanation for the fact that among the administrative texts from the Inanna Temple in Nippur, there are virtually no persons listed whose names are Semitic whereas at nearby Abu Salabikh, approximately half the personal names are Semitic and the other half Sumerian or unidentifiable.
