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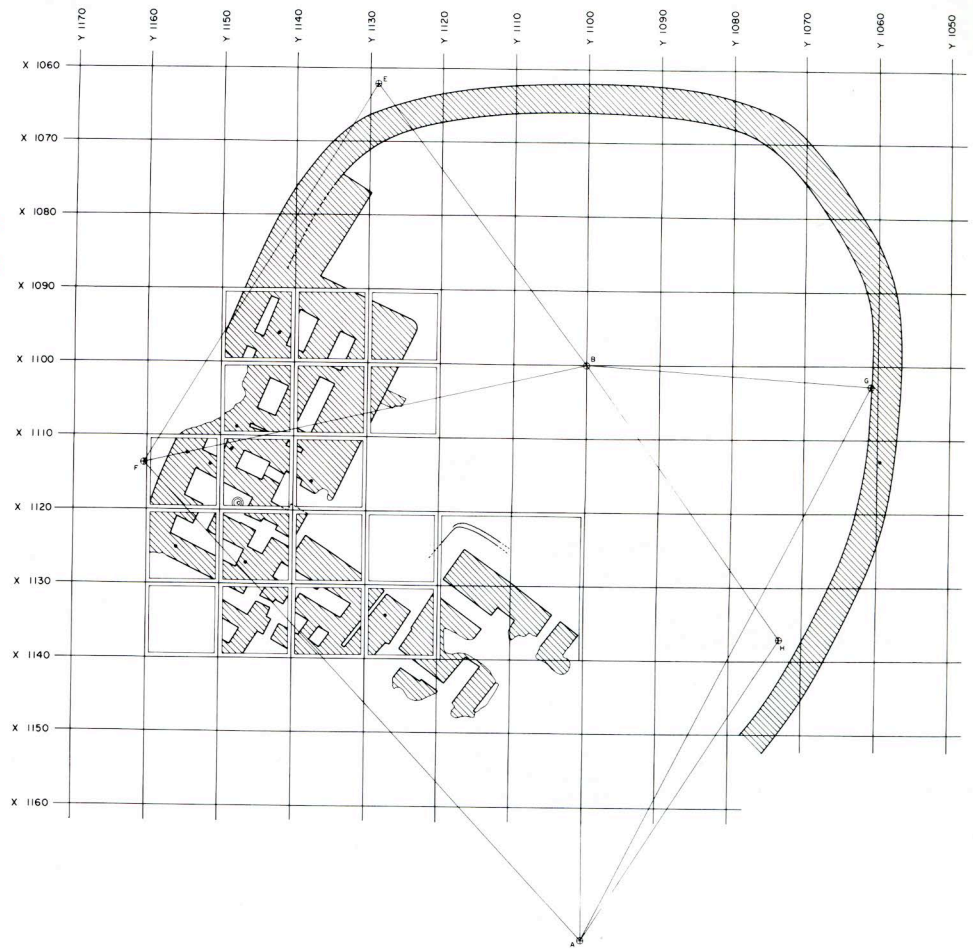
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Royal Building Activity At Sumerian Lagash in the Early Dynastic Period

by Donald P. Hansen

The Early Dynastic period is the interval of Sumerian history from about 2900 to 2340 B.C.E., which follows the Uruk and Jemdet Nasr periods. This was the age in southern Mesopotamia of the early city-states, a time that often saw the individual cities in conflict with each other. Archaeologically, it has been divided into an early Early Dynastic I and II and a later Early Dynastic III A and III B. Written documents supplement the archaeological record of the latter period and sometimes make it possible to associate finds made during excavations with known historical rulers. Although there have been rather extensive excavations at such major cities as Uruk, Ur, Nippur and Kish as well as in the somewhat provincial region of the lower Diyala River east of modern Baghdad, our knowledge of the Early Dynastic period is still fragmentary. Many scholars as yet do not agree on the finer points of the chronological development.



Plan of the Ibgal of Inanna, built originally by Urnanshe. The temple was later rebuilt by his grandson, Enannatum. For some unknown reason, the Ibgal was built at the extreme southwest edge rather than near the center of the city.

Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur in the 1920s, where he uncovered the remains of an extensive series of graves of extraordinary richness that have come to be known as the Royal Cemetery, are the most renowned excavations of the Early Dynastic period. However, as yet we are not certain how to interpret these graves in light of what we know of Sumerian religion (Woolley 1934; Moorey 1977; Pollock 1991). Much of the cemetery dates to the time of Early Dynastic III A—about 2600 B.C.E.—and includes objects inscribed with royal names that just antedate King Mesannepada of the First Dynasty of Ur (Early Dynastic III B). Woolley's excavations also provided some knowledge of the early phase of the Early Dynastic period through an examination of both the graves and the many layers of dumped debris in the region of the Royal Cemetery.

The latter produced early tablets with cuneiform script and many impressions of cylinder seals rolled on clay that were originally used for sealing the contents of containers.

In more recent years, large-scale excavations at the site of al-Hiba in southeastern Iraq have added to our knowledge of both the Early Dynastic I phase as well as the historic period of Early Dynastic III B. Six seasons of excavations beginning in 1968 have been undertaken at al-Hiba by a joint expedition of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The campaigns have been interrupted by the Iraq-Iran war as well as by the recent hostilities in the Persian Gulf.

The site of al-Hiba, one of the largest mounds in the southeastern part of Iraq, covered an area of more than 600 hectares during the late

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Early Dynastic period. It is located some 15 miles east of the modern town of Shatrah. On the basis of textual evidence (Crawford 1974), it has been known for some time that al-Hiba is the remains of the ancient city of Lagash, the capital of the state of Lagash that included two other major cities, Girsu (Telloh) and Nina (Surghul). The recent excavations have confirmed this identification.

It was probably late in the Early Dynastic period that the actual residence of the rulers shifted from the city of Lagash to Girsu. Because of finds made at Girsu years ago, we know the most about Gudea, whose many statues are now housed in the Louvre. He was an *ensi* or governor of the Second Dynasty of Lagash who ruled around the beginning of the twenty-first century B.C.E. and was a contemporary of Urnammu, the first king of the Third Dynasty of Ur. A sequence of rulers who lived roughly half a millennium earlier, the First Dynasty of Lagash has been established despite the fact that it is not included in the Sumerian king list. Among these leaders are such well-known figures as Urnanshe and Akurgal dated to Early Dynastic III A, and Eannatum, Enannatum and Enmetena dated to Early Dynastic III B. Eannatum of the First Dynasty of Lagash was roughly contemporary with Mesannepada of the First Dynasty of Ur.

Because of the size of al-Hiba, the recent excavations have covered only a small part of the city. Work has concentrated on the western side of the site, which includes the highest preserved portion of the mound, about 6 meters above the surrounding fields and marshes. Here, occupation of the site continued into the Isin Larsa-Old Babylonian period. Elsewhere, however, it ceased for the most part in the later part of Early Dynastic III B, perhaps due to the plundering and destruction of the city by Lugalzagesi of Umma, an adjacent city-state and a longtime rival of Lagash.

This western part of the city was an area devoted to some of the temples of the major gods. The chief god of Lagash was Ningirsu, "Lord of Girsu," and his temple precinct was known as the Bagara. Other gods included Gatumdug, known as the "Mother of Lagash"; Nanshe, whose precinct was the Shagepada; the goddess Bau; and the goddess Inanna, whose temple was called the Ibgal. Both the Bagara of Ningirsu and the Ibgal of Inanna have been located and partially excavated.

Inexplicably, the important Ibgal of Inanna was built at the extreme southwest edge rather than near the center of the city. Three levels of the temple of this goddess of love and war were partially revealed. The top level, Level I, could be identified with the rebuilding of the temple by Enannatum I, who records his pious deed in inscriptions mentioning how he decorated the building with gold and silver and made it greater than any temple in other lands. His grandfather, Urnanshe, is known to have built the Ibgal, but it is not exactly clear whether his building activity should be associated with

Level II or III since no inscriptions were found in either of these levels.

Although Levels II and III were not well preserved, the basic form of these buildings was undoubtedly similar to the latest rebuilding of Enannatum I, that is, a temple oval. The main shrine of a temple enclosed within an oval exterior wall is one of the characteristic temple types of the Early Dynastic period and is known elsewhere from Tell el-Ubaid near Ur and from Khafajah in the lower Diyala region. This Lagash temple, coupled with other recent evidence, indicates that the oval or round building was a more prevalent type in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia than has been previously thought.

Unfortunately, nothing of the superstructure of the Ibgal built by Enannatum was preserved; however, much of the foundation was found, giving an indication of the layout of the building and illustrating the often complicated foundation system used in Sumer. The lower walls, made of plano-convex bricks flat on the bottom and curved on the top, belong to Level II and were incorporated into the foundations of Level I; that is,

Three levels of the Ibgal of Inanna have been partially revealed. The subfoundation walls of Level II and upper foundation platform of Level I of the Ibgal of Inanna are shown here.



the floors and wall plasters were for the most part removed, and the area was filled in with a new, clean earth. On top of this sub-foundation, the builders constructed an upper foundation platform with a series of open rectangular areas undoubtedly related to the actual layout of the rooms of the superstructure. These spaces within the foundation platform were then filled with broken pieces of mud and some layers of sand. Toward the top of this upper foundation, the spaces were capped with mud bricks so that when complete, the foundation appeared as a solid platform. Undoubtedly this very elaborate method of constructing a foundation was associated with rituals of temple building known from later texts of Gudea.

Buried within and at the bottom of the platform were a series of foundation deposits. Each deposit consisted of an inscribed stone and a copper figurine that stood erect with its peg-shaped base touching the ground. As the foundation was built, the figurine was encased in the mud bricks. On top of the third brick course the inscribed stone was placed behind the head of the figurine that faced eastward. The inscribed stone indicated that the temple was the Ibgal, that it was dedicated to Inanna of Eanna, that it was built by Enannatum I of Lagash, and that the figurine represented Shulutulula, the personal



Foundation figurine representing Shulutulula, the personal god of Enannatum I. Inscribed stones found with this figurine indicate that the temple was the Ibgal, that it was dedicated to Inanna of Eanna, that it was built by Enannatum I of Lagash, and that the figurine represented Shulutulula.

god of Enannatum, in an attitude of prayer before Inanna (for a translation see R. Biggs in Hansen 1970).

At the highest point on the western side of the mound is located the precinct that was called the Bagara—belonging to Ningirsu, the god of Lagash. Although the rest of the city was, for the most part, abandoned late in the Early Dynastic period, the Bagara continued to be rebuilt. Gudea undertook an extensive renovation of the area, but his efforts were badly destroyed in the Isin Larsa-Old Babylonian period when a large temple tower, probably stepped, was erected with a shrine on top.

This later building activity has inhibited our knowledge of the Early Dynastic Bagara, but we have been able to identify a series of individual buildings dating to Early Dynastic III B. Each building served a different function within the cult of Ningirsu and was probably situated around the main temple, which as yet has

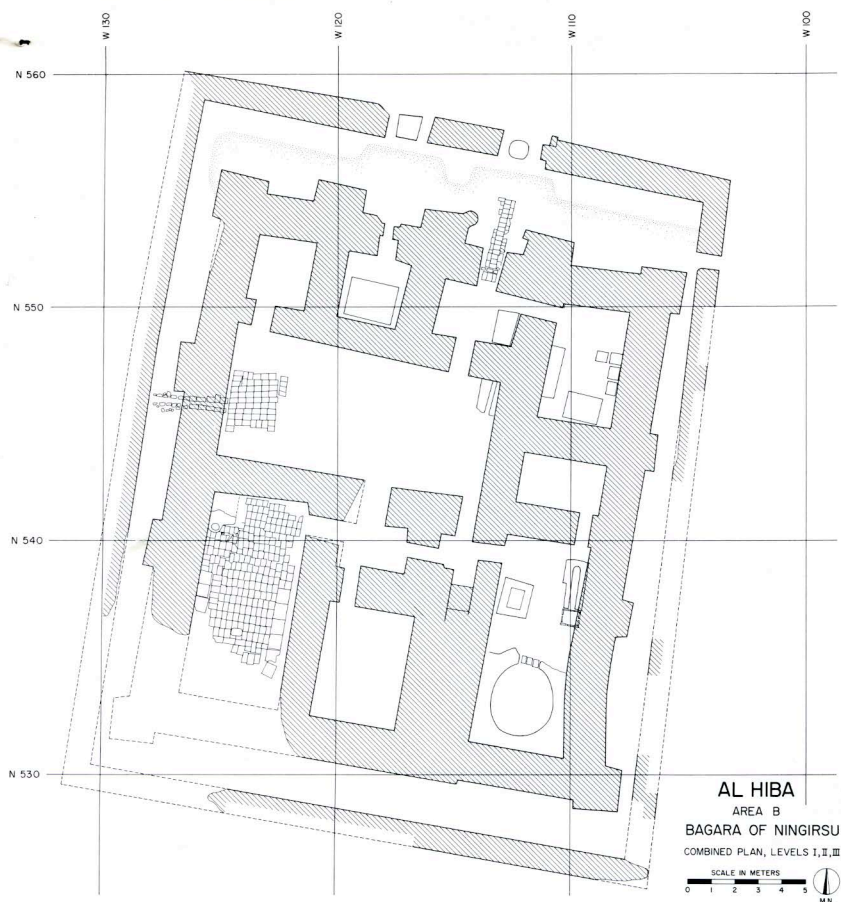
not been located. The first of these subsidiary structures was found immediately beneath the late platform. It was some 30-by-20-meters in size with three distinct construction phases, labeled Levels I, II and III. The building was surrounded by a low curtain wall constantly renewed with layers of mud plaster and penetrated by two entrances on the north leading to the main door of the building proper. Although many of the characteristics of Early Dynastic temple architecture were present, there was no primary cella with a main altar, so it cannot be considered a true temple. Instead there were several courts or unroofed rooms: one with a small oven in the central part of the building, one with a baked tile paving in the southwest corner, and a third with a large oval oven and a tank for liquids in the southeast corner. Between these two courts was a staircase leading to the roof and a small room with a great many fish bones strewn on the floors.

There was also a group of fine objects, including a votive stone mace head with a carving in relief of a lion-headed eagle—a symbol of Ningirsu—grasping horned ruminants in its talons. Beside this group is the figure of the donor of the mace head, a worshiper named Dudu. One may conjecture that the building was dedicated to serving some of the god's needs and that it may well be a forerunner of the so-called "kitchen" temple known from later times. Another votive object was found in Level III—



Left: The top of a foundation figurine and inscribed stone discovered in foundation of Level I. Right: An inscribed stone from the foundation of Level I. As the foundation was built, the figurine was encased in the mud bricks. On top of the third brick course the inscribed stone was placed behind the head of the figurine, which faced eastward.





The Bagara of Ningirsu was found at the highest point on the western side of the mound. Although the rest of the city was, for the most part, abandoned late in the Early Dynastic period, the Bagara continued to be rebuilt. Gudea undertook an extensive renovation of the area, but his efforts were badly destroyed in the Isin Larsa-Old Babylonian period when a large temple tower, probably stepped, was erected with a shrine on top.

an inscribed copper dagger, dedicated to Ningirsu of the Bagara during the time of Eannatum, who ruled Lagash just before his brother Enannatum I.

Immediately to the east of this building and separated from it by a narrow street was another building of a very different type. It was entered from the narrow street and contained a major court with ovens and a large tank for liquids, as well as storage rooms with the bottoms of immense storage vats in situ. The most important feature of this building was another oven that entirely filled a room to the north of the courtyard. It was constructed of corbeled mud bricks in the form of a dome measuring approximately 5 meters in diameter, a particularly large dome for this period.

The find of a single tablet gave an indication of the function of this particular building within the Bagara

precinct. It mentions the *ébappir* (the brewery) and a brewer. It seems likely that here in the great oven the *bappir* for Ningirsu was prepared. Beer was particularly important to the Sumerians, and this building, which can be dated specifically to the time of Eannatum on the basis of inscribed finds, is certainly the earliest brewery known.

Both Eannatum and Enannatum I can be associated with another building of a completely non-religious nature located in the central part of the mound to the east of the ridge where the temples were located. It was a very large building covering some 1,000 square meters that was so completely destroyed in a conflagration that many of the mud-brick walls had turned into baked brick. The plan was not well ordered around a series of courts, but consisted of a series of rooms added as needed in an almost

Votive macehead of Dudu found in the Bagara of Ningirsu next to a group of fine objects, including a votive stone mace head with a carving in relief of a lion-headed eagle—a symbol of Ningirsu—grasping horned ruminants in its talons. The building may have been dedicated to serving some of the god's needs and may well be a forerunner of the so-called "kitchen" temple.



View of the brewery of the Bagara of Ningirsu. This building, which can be dated specifically to the time of Eannatum on the basis of inscribed finds, is certainly the earliest brewery known.



agglutinative fashion. There were no clearly defined residential units, so the building probably functioned as an administrative center that was neither part of a temple precinct nor the residence of a king. Clay tablets as well as many clay sealings were recovered from several of the rooms, including a fragmentary impression of one of the royal seals of Eannatum. Only the back and head of a rearing bull is preserved of the main scene of the seal. To the left, in the upper register, is inscribed the name of Eannatum and part of his title, and in the lower register is depicted a conflict between a heroic figure with large locks of hair and a human-headed bull. Executed in a fully modeled style, the seal represents the best of Lagash workmanship.

A buried hoard of copper objects that had been wrapped in reed matting was found beneath the floor of one of the rooms. The reason for this burial is not clear. It consisted of a bucket with handle, a large flaring vessel, an axe and adze as well as two flat disks that were probably balance pans. Inside the bucket were a variety of small tools, strainers and bowls. Such copper objects are much like others from contemporary sites in Mesopotamia and Elam.

During the most recent season of excavations at al-Hiba, a new area on the western ridge lying midway between the Ibgal of Inanna and the Bagara of Ningirsu was investigated. This area was chosen to gain some understanding of Lagash during Early Dynastic I, an important period situated between the earlier Uruk and Jemdet Nasr phases of Sumerian culture and the subsequent historical periods. Several phases of a large curving wall of the period immediately below the present surface of the mound were excavated. Although this curved wall may well enclose part of a temple quarter, the character of the complex will prove to be quite different from the later temple ovals. A section of a building complex that must be part of the administrative



A royal sealing of Eannatum found in a very large building so completely destroyed in a conflagration that many of the mud bricks had turned into baked brick. There were no clearly defined residential units, so the building probably functioned as an administrative center that was neither part of a temple precinct nor the residence of a king.

and working quarter of a temple precinct has been excavated 40 meters west of the curved wall.

Several courts and rooms contained fireplaces and bins, and the finds included a large quantity of pottery, which increased the corpus of Early Dynastic I pottery at al-Hiba to more than 160 types and variants. Jar lids and a series of jar sealings with the impressions of some 10 dif-

ferent cylinder seals were found, suggesting that the contents of the jars were removed and processed in these rooms. These sealings are analogous to the seal impressions of the period that Woolley found at Ur, as well as to sealings found in the temple of Inanna at Nippur. One might expect to unearth archaic tablets in the vicinity, but none have been found thus far. It is not known to which deity this precinct belonged, but it is hoped that in the future we will be able to obtain some insights into the nature of this temple area in the period before the well-known rulers such as Eannatum and Enannatum I of Lagash.

Although this capital city of the Sumerian city-state of Lagash is exceedingly large in comparison with other contemporary Sumerian sites, the excavations have already revealed that a good portion of the area was devoted to the manors of the major gods. Thus far, the excavated buildings point to the richness and variety of architectural forms in temple construction of the Early Dynastic period. It is important to note that, for the first time, it has been possible to link specific excavated buildings at al-Hiba to known rulers of this early phase of Mesopotamian history whose building activities were known formerly only from references

Two pieces of a copper hoard found in the administrative building. The objects had been wrapped in reed matting and were found beneath the floor of one of the rooms. The reason for this burial is not clear, but included copper objects that are much like others from contemporary sites in Mesopotamia and Elam.



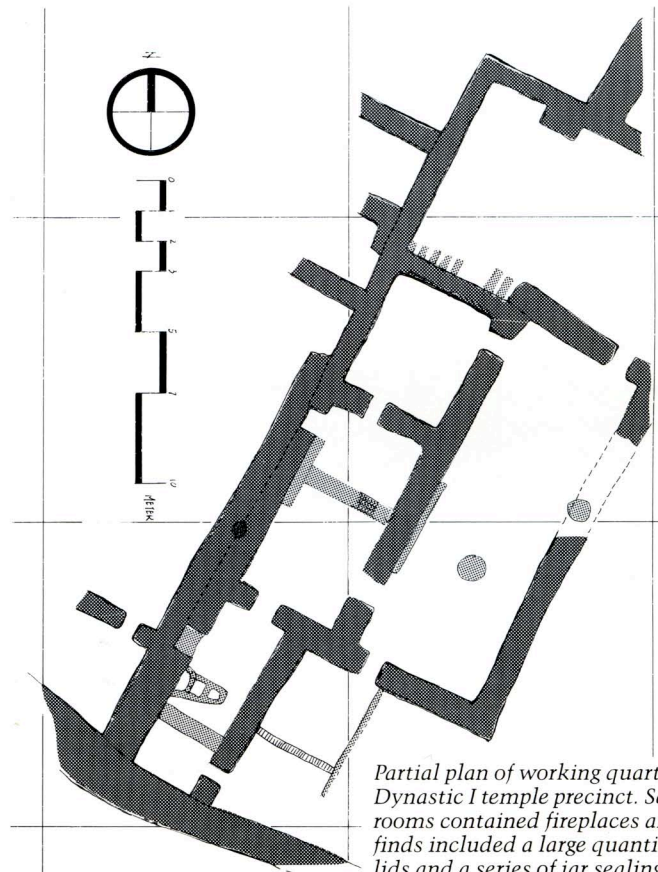


Several phases of a large curving wall of the period immediately below the present surface of the mound were excavated. Although this curved wall may well enclose part of a temple quarter, the character of the complex will prove to be quite different from the later temple ovals. A section of a building complex that must be part of the administrative and working quarter of a temple precinct has been excavated 40 meters west of the curved wall.

in the texts. When it becomes possible to return to Iraq for more archaeological work, it will be necessary to investigate further just what constitutes the divine precinct and to learn more about the non-religious part of the city on the eastern part of the mound, which seems to have been separated from the temple quarter by a major canal.

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Partial plan of working quarter of the Early Dynastic I temple precinct. Several courts and rooms contained fireplaces and bins, and the finds included a large quantity of pottery. Jar lids and a series of jar sealings with the impressions of some 10 different cylinder seals were found, suggesting that the contents of the jars were removed and processed in these rooms.

Mashkan-shapir and the Anatomy of an Old Babylonian City

by Elizabeth C. Stone and Paul Zimansky

By the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E., the cities of southern Mesopotamia had acquired a past. Places like Uruk, Kish and Ur had more than 1,000 years of urban history behind them, and their denizens were aware of the ebb and flow of political fortune. The Sumerian King List, probably composed in the final quarter of the third millennium, already viewed that past from a perspective transcending the confines of a city-state by portraying pan-Mesopotamian rule of one king at a time and kingship moving from one city to another. The first waves of empire building had already crested and broken with Sargon and Naram-Sin's Akkadian Empire (2334–2193

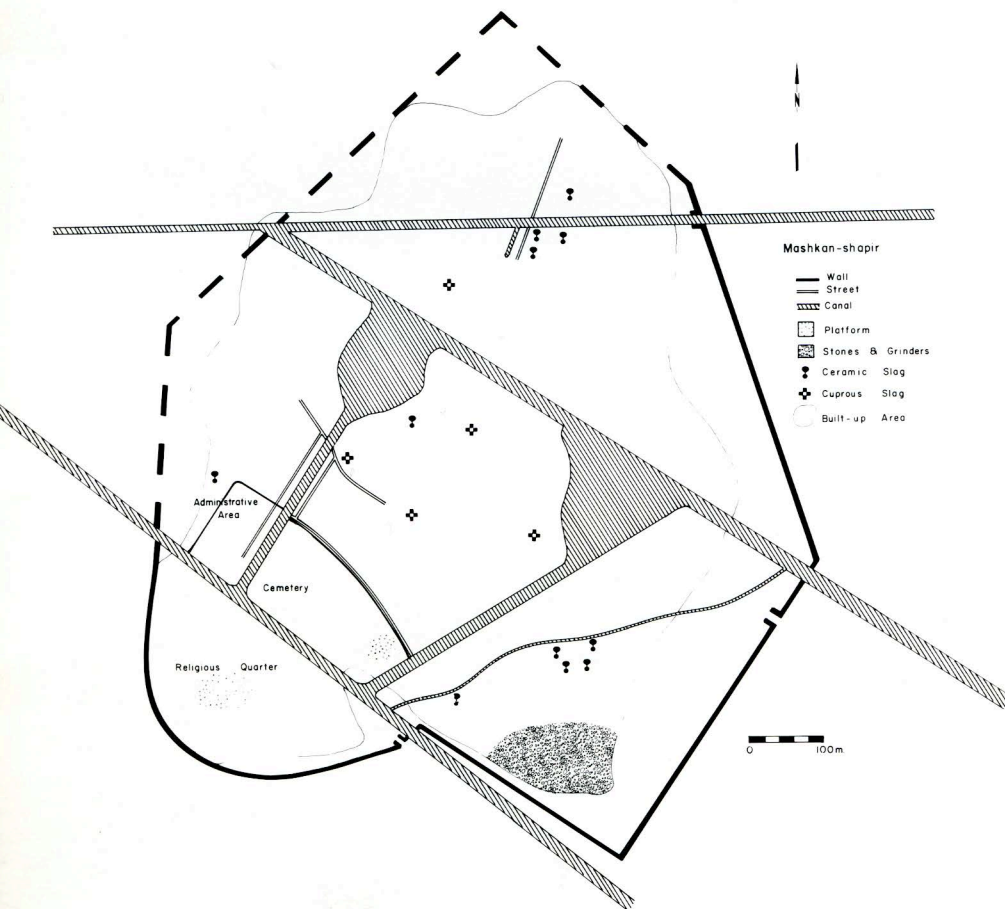
B.C.E.) followed by that of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112–2004 B.C.E.). But throughout these centuries, the city-state remained the basic building block of Mesopotamian society. Thus a strong continuity in urban institutions can be observed from the independence of the Early Dynastic period through the imperial Akkadian and Ur III phases to the chaotic world of the Isin-Larsa period.

It was in this era, the first quarter of the second millennium B.C.E., that Mashkan-shapir became one of the most prominent cities in Mesopotamia. Its location at the northernmost point where the systems of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers converged sufficiently to permit navigation between them was of strategic importance in the struggles for hegemony that took place between such powers as Isin, Larsa, Eshnunna, Babylon and Elam.

The name Mashkan-shapir—translated as the “encampment of the official”—is testimony to its humble origins, and the earliest textual references to Mashkan-shapir confirm this impression. In the Akkadian period Mashkan-shapir was the refuge chosen by a runaway slave girl, and a series of Ur III texts record that several royal shepherds were based there. In its early stages Mashkan-shapir was almost literally a Mesopotamian “cow-town.” It probably would have stayed that way were it not for the peculiar political circumstances of the Isin-Larsa period.

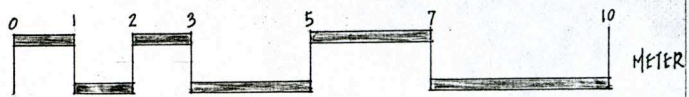
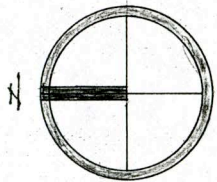
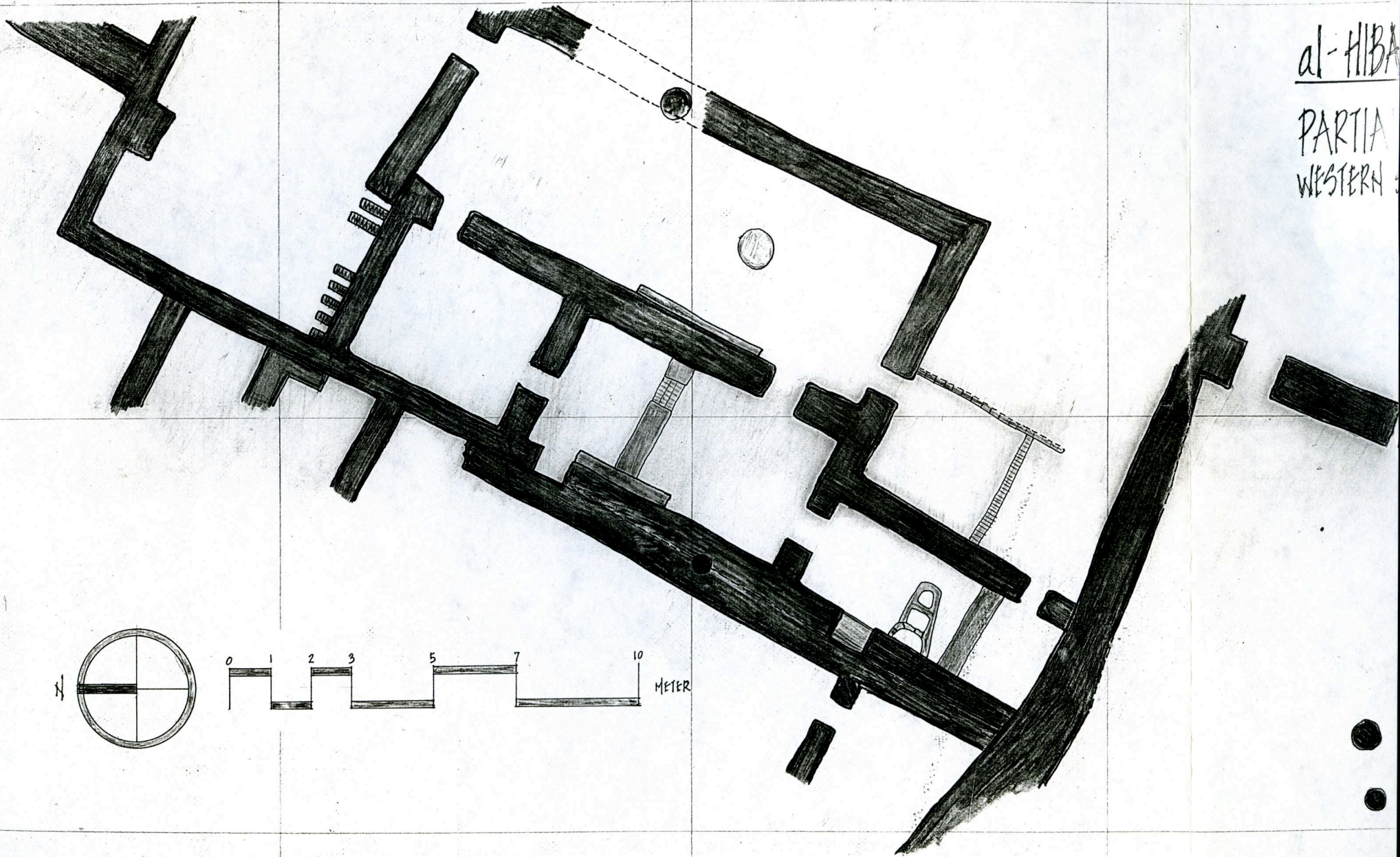
As its name implies, the Isin-Larsa period was characterized by a struggle for power between the cities of Larsa in the south, Isin in the center, and eventually Babylon in the northern part of the southern alluvium. This circumstance was fraught with danger for Larsa, since its northern enemies controlled the traditional trade route up the Euphrates. To circumvent this problem, the Larsa kings developed a hitherto untried strategy of controlling the eastern alluvium up to the point where goods could be transhipped from

Plan of Mashkan-shapir showing major divisions in the city and canals, walls, streets and manufacturing areas. During the first quarter of the second millennium B.C.E., Mashkan-shapir became one of the most prominent cities in Mesopotamia because of its location at the northernmost point where the systems of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers converged sufficiently to permit navigation between them.



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