

# Ancient Near Eastern Temple Inventories in the Third and Second Millennia BCE: Integrating Archaeological, Textual, and Visual Sources

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Umschlagabbildung: Reconstruction of the Kititum-Temple at Iščali (OIP 98, frontispiece). In the foreground (clockwise): necklace from Iščali (OIM A17006, photo: E. Roßberger), mace head from Tell Agrab (OIM A18008), stone statue head from Bismaya (OIM A173), stone statue from Tell Agrab (OIM A18108), cuneiform tablet with temple inventory from Iščali (FLP 1167 Vs., photo: P. Paoletti), terracotta plaque (OIM A9356, photo: E. Roßberger), stone bowl fragment from Nippur (OIM A29448). Design: E. Roßberger; © Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and the Free Library of Philadelphia (cuneiform tablet).

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# Text, Context, and the Social Dimension of Writing: A Case Study from the Early Dynastic Inanna Temple at Nippur<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In this article, I propose a holistic interpretation of a well-defined corpus of third millennium BC inscribed artefacts, focusing on the relationships between text (format and content), the artefact, and its original destination and deposition. I aim to underline the social dimension of inscribed objects and, in general, of writing in votive depositional contexts. As a case study, I have focused on the inscribed artefacts found in level VIIB of the Inanna Temple at Nippur. This small corpus of approximately twenty-two objects shows many peculiarities, most prominent of which are the high number of female donors and the lack of royal inscriptions.

**Keywords:** Mesopotamia, inscriptions, third millennium BCE, Inanna, Nippur, Early Dynastic, Nin-sar, gender, materiality of writing.

## 1. A holistic approach to inscribed objects

The aim of this paper is to apply a different approach to a well-known class of artefacts: Early Dynastic inscribed objects. The approach is neither new nor innovative, but it seems that scholars have preferred other methodologies so far. In dealing with these documents, the

1 A preliminary version of this study was presented as a paper at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Archaeology of the Ancient Near East held in Madrid, 3–8 April 2006. The study later became part of a larger analysis of third millennium inscriptions within a research funded project on different aspects of writing in four main areas (Mesopotamia, Syria, Mycenaean and Greek world) called ‘Writing Techniques vs. Writing Technologies.’ While the main structure and conclusions of the paper as presented at the Munich conference remained unchanged from the earlier manuscript, the publication of Evans’ study (EVANS 2016) has enriched the present version, particularly in regard to further archaeological information on the findings. Two other studies published in the same volume (BALKE/TSOUPAROPOULOU 2016) as Evans have provided or substantiated and grounded theoretical approaches and analysis

perspectives on non-royal inscriptions (MARCHESE 2016; ANDERSON 2016). Unfortunately, the volume appeared when the article was almost completed and I have not been able to consider and discuss in depth all of the data and observations of my colleagues; in order to do this, I have an article in preparation (Verderame in press b). My gratitude goes to Jean Evans for precious information on some of the pieces here discussed and to Daniele Morandi Bonacossi, who has brought to my attention the cases of intentionally broken votive objects from Syrian sites (see fn. 13). Numbers in bold refer to the inscriptions as edited at the end of this article. Abbreviations follow those used in the ‘Chicago Assyrian Dictionary’ and R. Borger ‘Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur,’ Berlin, 1967–75; a complete and updated list is available from the CDLI (<http://cdli.ucla.edu/Tools/abbrev.html>).

different kinds of information provided by the archaeological and epigraphical assemblages have been often considered separately.<sup>2</sup> For the historian, the epigrapher, and the philologist, these documents are “texts,” i.e. inscriptions (royal or otherwise). Their approach focuses on the content of the text or, specifically, on those parts of the texts which may provide historical or philological information. Archaeologists, on the other hand, have approached these objects from an art historical perspective.

The aim of this paper is to propose a holistic analysis of these objects considered primarily as archaeological artefacts. In my analysis, the inscription is only part of the complex of elements that constitute the artefact, valued in its two phases: the fashioning and the function/aim of the object.<sup>3</sup> From this point of view, we can infer that the inscription could not be the most relevant feature of the object.<sup>4</sup>

What follows is an effort to apply this approach to a known archaeological context:<sup>5</sup> the findings from the Early Dynastic Inanna Temple at Nippur. I have focused on the inscribed objects found in level VIIB of the temple in order to have as coherent a sample as possible to develop valid considerations on the archaeological, religious, and social context of these objects. This small corpus shows many features that distinguish it from the other inscribed artefact assemblages of third millennium BC Mesopotamia. From an archaeological point of view, these objects show a regular distribution; furthermore, the way they have been deposited offers several hints for

a reflection on the function and ritual practices of votive objects. As for the donors and their inscriptions, the inscribed objects from the Inanna Temple at Nippur are the main corpus of “private” inscriptions of third millennium BC Mesopotamia, with the highest proportion of female donors and evidence that indicates a particular social and religious milieu.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Level VIIB of the Inanna Temple at Nippur

In 1960–61, during the seventh campaign of the joint expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and the American Schools of Oriental Research at Nippur, a small treasure was unearthed in the Early Dynastic levels of the Inanna Temple. The objects discovered are mainly bowls of precious stones together with statues, gypsum furniture and other artefacts (Fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> Most of them bear a dedicatory inscription to the goddess Inanna, who was worshipped at one or both of the chapels within the sacred area.

Dated to Early Dynastic IIIA, the structure of the Inanna Temple of level VIIB is

“a long narrow complex with the main axis approximately northwest-southeast. The chief entrance, at the northwest end, led into a series of open courtyards and small rooms, and finally into a large porticoed court with circular columns of mud brick. Access to the two sanctuaries it contained was afforded by a small door in the south corner of the porticoed court.”<sup>8</sup>

2 Important exceptions are the works of Braun-Holzinger (1977; 1991). J.S. Cooper devoted several articles going into the relation of the epigraph and its support; see, among others, COOPER 1980; 1985. Not dealing specifically with inscriptions, but with administrative records, is R.L. Zettler’s monograph on the Inanna Temple at Nippur during the Ur III period (ZETTLER 1992) and his seminal paper on written documents as excavated artefacts (ZETTLER 1996); in the same perspective and devoted to the same type of documents is the catalogue of the Ur III tablets from Woolley’s excavation at Ur by D’Agostino/Pomponio/Laurito (2004) and the researches of Laurito/Mezzasalma/Verderame (2006; 2008). The renewed interest in a holistic approach to inscribed artefacts — under the label of materiality of writing — is proven by the several stimulating articles collected in BALKE/TSOUPAROPOULOU 2016.

3 A further phase is that of the “afterlife” or secondary uses of the object, which, in a projection toward modern times, consider their history as archaeological findings; see, for example, the work of EVANS 2012 on the reception of Sumerian sculpture and some of the articles collected in RUTZ/KERSEL 2014.

4 In a group of objects where the common denominator is the same inscription, the discriminants are the artefacts, their features, the way and place where they have been deposited, etc.

5 For how relative this assumption could be, see ZETTLER 1996: 88–89; for the specific case of the Inanna Temple excavation, see fn. 8.

6 These features were already highlighted by the first editor of these inscriptions (GOETZE 1970: 39–40).

7 The findings are scattered between the collections of the Iraq Museum and the Oriental Institute of Chicago. The Metropolitan Museum of New York keeps the bowl 12 together with several other objects from the Nippur excavation (see fn. 48). The objects reported by BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991 as belonging to the “American School” (5, 7, 14) ended up, according to CDLI catalogue, at the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto), where many other objects from different levels of the Nippur excavations are kept. The location of one of the statues (15) and of the diorite peg (22) was unknown (BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 250 and 326), but according to Jean Evans (personal communication), 15 and 22 are kept in the Iraq Museum and other unlocated findings from the Nippur excavation are kept in the collections of the Oriental Institute of Chicago.

8 HANSEN/DALES 1962: 76–77. As far as I know, no further publications or detailed accounts on the archaeological findings and their context have appeared after Hansen’s articles in the *Illustrated London News* and *Archaeology*. The long-awaited publication of the Inanna Temple excavation will be finally realised in the form of several volumes of the Oriental Institute Publications, edited by Richard Zettler, Karen Wilson, and Jean Evans (EVANS 2016: 165).

The structure, with minor changes, is the same as the previous level VIII and the successive level VIIA.<sup>9</sup>

Object (cat. no)	Material	Donor's gender	Quantity
Bowls 14 (1-14)			
	stone		10 (1-10)
	alabaster		3 (11-13)
	?		1 (14)
		♀	6 (4, 5, 7 <sup>?</sup> , 11, 13 <sup>?</sup> , 14)
		♂	5 (2, 3, 8, 10, 12)
			1 (9)
			2 (1, 6)
Statues 4 (15-18)			
		♂	3 (15, 17, 18)
		?	1 (16)
Vessels 2 (19-20)			
	stone	♂	1 (19)
	steatite	?	1 (20)
Others 2 (21-22)			
	votive plaque	♂	1 (21)
	diorite "peg"	♂	1 (22)
Total 22			

**Fig 1:** Overview of the inscribed objects from the Inanna Temple level VIIIB (see the catalogue in **Appendix 1** for more details).

## 2.1 Findspots

The artefacts unearthed during the seventh campaign were found in three major concentrations. One group had been buried beneath the floor of the larger shrine, another beneath the periodic replasterings of a table or altar nearby, while the third had been built into a structure which served for ablutions. With the latter, the broken statues had been neatly laid out in a row and covered with bitumen and mud plaster.<sup>10</sup>

Studies of the level VIIIB archaeological findings have been published by DOLCE 2008 and EVANS 2016.

9 For the development of the Inanna Temple at Nippur, see ZETTLER 1992.

10 The findspots correspond to the floor and the benches at the right of the entrance of one of the sanctuaries (IT 179) and a structure for ablutions situated at the right of the main entrance (IT 173) to the sanctuaries precinct; see HANSEN/DALES 1962: 79, BRAUN-

In her study on early third millennium BC altar deposits, Bjorkman (2008: 361) challenges Hansen's proposal of these objects as included in the periodical replastering of the altars<sup>11</sup> and criticizes the usual definition of these depositions as "hoards".<sup>12</sup> What Bjorkman (2008) underlines is the ritual aspect of these "deposits". Among the other evidence, she discusses the fact that the votive plaque of Lumma (21) was intentionally broken in four and deposited in two different spots, a practice known from at least one other case in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2 The dedicatee of the two shrines: Inanna and Nin-SAR

Inanna is the divine recipient<sup>14</sup> of most of the dedicatory inscriptions of level VIIIB,<sup>15</sup> and this has led researchers to identify the temple as devoted to this goddess, as it is in successive periods.<sup>16</sup>

HOLZINGER 1991: 9–11, DOLCE 2008: 664–666, EVANS 2016: 168–70, MARCHESI/MARCHETTI 2011: 34–36.

11 See also EVANS 2012: 191–192.

12 BJORKMAN 2008: 361 prefers the term "building deposits" and points at the non-utilitarian deposit *contra* the utilitarian function meant by the term "hoard." The term hoard has continued to be used, while the term *favissa* has been adopted by some scholars; so DOLCE 2008: 664 fn. 9 and MARCHESI/MARCHETTI 2011: 34, *passim*. It should be noted that there are differences between the two findspots below the floor and on the benches of one of the sanctuaries (IT 179) and the structure for the ablutions (IT 173). The latter is placed outside of the sanctuaries precinct, i.e. at the right side of the main entrance. Moreover, "the objects built into the IT 173 installation were also reused as construction material, whereas the objects below the IT 179 floor appear to have served no additional function" (EVANS 2016: 168–169). For the arrangement of votive offerings in early third millennium BC Mesopotamian temples, see EVANS 2012. For general considerations on votive deposits, see GARFINKEL 1994 and OSBORNE 2004.

13 BJORKMAN 2008: 364–365; the parallel case mentioned is the clay snake found in the Temple VII in Eridu; see BJORKMAN 2008: 361. For intentionally broken objects in votive and ritual deposits, see MARCHETTI/NIGRO 1997: 31–34 and MORANDI BONACOSSO 2012: 557–559 and fn. 46.

14 See below and Fig. 11.

15 The divine recipient is not preserved in any of the inscriptions earlier than level VII of the temple.

16 The structure was first identified as the Inanna Temple from the inscriptions of Šulgi who rebuilt it; see FRAYNE 1997: 127–30 E3/2.1.2.19–20 and ZETTLER 1992: 16. Šulgi does not mention the name of the temple, which is known to be *e<sub>2</sub>-bara<sub>2</sub>-dur<sub>2</sub>-ġar-ra* from later sources (ZETTLER 1992: 16 fn. 39; GEORGE 1993: 71–72), thus from Old Babylonian period onward, at least.

### 2.2.1 Nin-SAR, craftsmanship and procreation

The inscription of the chief stone-cutter Lumma, found on two different objects (3, 21), is dedicated to Nin-SAR,<sup>17</sup> who could be the dedicatee of one of the two shrines.

Nin-SAR, whose name is read as nin-sar or nin-mu<sub>2</sub>,<sup>18</sup> is a tutelary deity of craftsmanship and possibly procreation. Several clues indicate the relation of these two aspects, which are both represented in the Inanna Temple in Nippur. Procreation and craftsmanship, particularly of pottery, are closely related in mythopoetic thought.<sup>19</sup> The argument does not require further discussion, and we can briefly mention that clay is the main material in anthropogony, where Enki and the mother goddesses mould the shape of the first human being as if they were potters; furthermore, the womb is often compared to a vessel.<sup>20</sup>

Several mother goddesses appear as patrons of craftsmanship and procreation. This is the case with Nin-mug and Nin-zadim, with whom Nin-SAR is closely related in Šuruppag and Abu Salabikh sources (CAVIGNEAUX/KREBERNIK 2001: 484). “Chisel/carpenter of the womb” (<sup>(d)</sup> bulug<sub>4</sub>/nagar-ša<sub>3</sub>-ga) is an epithet of the mother goddess.<sup>21</sup> Nin-SAR bears the title of nin-nagar/bulug<sub>4</sub> “lady of the carpenters” or “lady of the chisel”<sup>22</sup> and nagar/bulug<sub>4</sub>-an-ki-a “chisel/carpenter of heaven and heart.”<sup>23</sup>

Ateliers and craft production areas are well documented within and around the perimeter of the Inanna Temple.<sup>24</sup> Among the donors of the inscribed objects found in level VII of the temple are a chief-stonecutter (Lumma, the gal-zadim; 3, 21) and a midwife (ša<sub>3</sub>-zu, 14).

The two shrines may be dedicated to Inanna and Nin-SAR; the latter may well be a local hypostasis of Inanna related to craftsmanship and procreative aspects.

In ‘The Canonical Temple List’ a shrine of Nin-SAR is called e<sub>2</sub>-šu-luh-ha-tum<sub>2</sub>-ma “temple suitable of the cleansing ritual” (GEORGE 1993: 13 l. 115, 147). It is not clear if the name is that of the goddess’s temple in Nippur; the latter is listed without name in the ‘Cadastral of Ur-Namma’<sup>25</sup> and in a Middle Babylonian metrological text.<sup>26</sup> Other temples of Nin-SAR are known from third millennium BC sources. The goddess is mentioned in two economic texts from Šuruppag (TSŠ 629: iv 3; WF 153: iv 6). She had a temple in Ġirsu since the Early Dynastic period, as the inscriptions of Urukagina document,<sup>27</sup> and she is recorded in two lists of offerings to the gods from Ur III Ġirsu (ITT 2, 833: 3; MVN 6, 78: 6). However, Nin-SAR seldom appears in the Neo-Sumerian sources: in three documents from Umma, a list of animal offerings (TCL 5, 6053: ii 14) and two regular deliveries (sa<sub>2</sub>-du<sub>11</sub>) to the gods (YOS 4, 260: ii 35; MVN 21, 287: 3), the second of which is associated to Nin-ur<sub>4</sub>-ra; only once in a documentary Nippur source, in a fragmentary text (ZA 101, 41 (6 NT 205): ii 9’). An inscription of Šulgi from the Enunmah (= RIME E3/2.1.2.2) seems to document an otherwise unknown cultic place of Nin-SAR in Ur.<sup>28</sup>

In a later inscription dedicated by Esarhaddon on the occasion of the restoration of the Inanna/Ištar Temple in Nippur,<sup>29</sup> the Assyrian king calls the goddess *ma-al-ka*<sub>2</sub> UZU.MU<sub>2</sub>.A<sup>ki</sup> “queen of the *Uzumu’a*.” The association of Inanna/Ištar with the chamber where, according to the Sumerian composition ‘The Song of the Hoe,’<sup>30</sup> Enlil created man through emersion (mu<sub>2</sub>) did not escape the

17 For Nin-SAR, see CAVIGNEAUX/KREBERNIK 2001 and SELZ 1995: 261–262. An unprovenanced Early Dynastic stone bowl from the Spurlock Museum of the University of Illinois (SMUI 1900.53.0143) bears the inscription “Property of Nin-SAR” (niġ<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>2</sub>-rum <sup>d</sup>nin-sar) and may come from the Inanna Temple in Nippur.

18 The reading nin-sar is found in BIGGS 1974: 56, following W.G. Lambert’s suggestion, who, at least for the later tradition, reject the reading nin-mu<sub>2</sub>, on the base of the An = Anum list; see LAMBERT 1992: 135; nin-mu<sub>2</sub> in GOETZE 1970: 42–43, STEIBLE 1982b: 240, and SELZ 1995: 261–262; nin-nisig and nin-sig<sub>x</sub> in CAVIGNEAUX/KREBERNIK 2001 and MARCHESI/MARCHETTI 2011: 225 fn. 47. See also PETERSON 2009: 66.

19 CIVIL 1983: 65.

20 See, among others, LAMBERT 1992; FOSTER POLINGER 2010: 142–143; COUTO-FERREIRA 2013: 105–110.

21 An = Anum 90, 101; Lugal-e 412.

22 BIGGS/ZETTLER 1990: no. 1 (<sup>1</sup> nin-sar <sup>2</sup> ad-da-t[ur] <sup>3</sup> nin-’bulug<sub>4</sub>).

23 BIGGS 1974: 51, 56 (<sup>177</sup> ab-bulug<sub>4</sub> <sup>178</sup> bulug<sub>4</sub> an-ki <sup>179</sup> nin-sar za<sub>3</sub>-mi<sub>2</sub>).

24 For the Neo-Sumerian period, see ZETTLER 1992 and VAN DRIEL 1995.

25 “From the Ekur to the Nin-SAR temple; from the Nin-SAR temple to the KA-IGI” (e<sub>2</sub>-kur-re-ta e<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>nin-sar-ka-še<sub>3</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>nin-sar-ka-ta KA-IGI-še<sub>3</sub>); see FRAYNE 1997: 53 E3/2.1.1.21 Ex. 2 l. iii 4–7.

26 BERNHARDT/KRAMER 1975: 98 l. 41 (5 sar e<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>nin-sar). According to this text, the temple of Nin-SAR measuring approximately 18,000 m<sup>2</sup> is one of the minor shrines of Nippur. Furthermore, it is listed separately from the shrine of Inanna.

27 STEIBLE 1982a: 280–281. Ukg. 1 l. ii 15, 322f. Ukg. 6 l. v 22’, 329 Ukg. 11 l. 21 = FRAYNE 2008: 267 E.1.9.9.2 l. ii 15, 275 E.1.9.9.3 l. v 22’. In these inscriptions, Nin-SAR bears the title “NinĠirsu’s butcher” (ġir<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>nin-ġir<sub>2</sub>-su-ka) which parallels the goddess’s epithet “Ekur’s butcher” (ġir<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>-e<sub>2</sub>-kur-ra) found in the Šulgi’s inscription from Ur (= RIME E3/2.1.2.2).

28 See FRAYNE 1997: 112, who remarks also the possible vicinity of the temple of Nin-SAR and Ennugi in Nippur.

29 GOETZE 1963.

30 uzu-e<sub>3</sub>-a (var. uzu-mu<sub>2</sub>-a) saġ mu<sub>2</sub>-mu<sub>2</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> “*Uzu’e’a/Uzumu’a* where the men (lit. head) sprout,” l. 6; see also l. 18. In the text, the terms uzu-e<sub>3</sub>-a (“(the place where) the flesh comes forth”) and uzu-mu<sub>2</sub>-a (“(the place where) the flesh sprouts”) are almost interchangeable.



editor of the text (GOETZE 1963). Here we can add as further evidence for Inanna's association with the *Uzumu'a* and the procreative process the mention of Nin-SAR as divine recipient in inscriptions from the earlier phase of the same temple. The goddess's name, composed with the ideogram SAR, recalls the vegetable realm (sar "garden plot," kiri<sub>6</sub> "plantation, orchard," nisig "greenery") and the idea of sprouting and growing plants (mu<sub>2</sub>). According to Goetze (1963: 131), *Uzumu'a* "is part of Dur. an.ki which itself is in Nippur, is in fact the area where the Inanna Temple is located [...] The passage indicates that *Uzu.mu<sub>2</sub>.a* is to be looked for within the precincts of the Inanna Temple." This statement, which finds no parallel in the available sources, may be corroborated by the mention in two Neo-Sumerian documents from the Inanna Temple in Nippur of a Ur-Su'en "doorkeeper of the *Uzu'e* and of the house of the *kiskanu-tree*" (i<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>8</sub> uzu-e<sub>3</sub> u<sub>3</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-giš-kin<sub>2</sub>/gun<sub>3</sub>-ka).<sup>31</sup>

### 3. The inscribed objects of level VIIB of the Inanna Temple

Among the artefacts unearthed in the Early Dynastic levels of the Inanna Temple, 38 bear an inscription (see Appendix 1).<sup>32</sup> 11 are catalogued as belonging more generally to level VII. These are:

- 7 stone bowls (6N-391, 392, 393, 394, 419; 7N-189, 238),<sup>33</sup>
- 2 statues (7N-136+155, 137),
- 1 tablet (7N-T4),<sup>34</sup>
- 1 vessel (7N-639).

31 ZETTLER 1992: 273 (6 NT 190: v 12–13) and 274 (6 NT 195: iii 1'–2'), see also 262 (4 NT 213: ii 18); for the equivalence of *uzu-e<sub>3</sub>-a* and *uzu-mu<sub>2</sub>-a*, see the previous footnote.

32 The following analysis is based on the information provided by GOETZE 1970, which remains the only comprehensive edition of this corpus. Goetze's descriptions are sometimes precise, while others are vague. For example, he attributes the alabaster bowl 8N-4 to a generic level VII (GOETZE 1970: 46), but Buccellati/Biggs (1969: 5) specify that it comes from "IT 205, Level VII A, on top of horizontal drain in west wall of room;" see also BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 128 G 75.

33 One of the alabaster bowls (7N-238) bears the inscription of *ama'(ENGUR)-a-zu<sub>5</sub>*, wife (dam) of Lugal-uri, the scribe, and can be related to inscription no. 10. The bowl 7N-147 and the vessel 7N-120 are here considered as belonging to the level VIIB and edited respectively as no. 5 and 20. Two other objects coming from the antiquarian market may be related to the Inanna Temple level VII or VIIB: one kept in the Spurlock Museum of the University of Illinois (SMUI 1900.53.0143; see fn. 17) and the other in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston (MFA 1980.71; see fn. 61).

34 See fn. 48 and the discussion *sub* 18.

Other objects out of context have been dated to the Early Dynastic period on the basis of different criteria.<sup>35</sup>

22 inscribed objects come from level VIIB (see Appendix 2). The major group constitutes fourteen stone bowls, followed by four stone statues, two vessels, a votive plaque, and a diorite "peg."<sup>36</sup> In the following discussion, I will only refer to the objects found in level VIIB.

#### 3.1 The objects<sup>37</sup>

All the inscribed objects are made of stone. Bowls are the most basic and common form of votive object (1–14).<sup>38</sup> A large number were found in level VIIB of the Inanna Temple.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, it is the only type of object under analysis that may bear only the name of the divine recipient, or be completely uninscribed, whereas the other precious objects, as statues, always bear an inscription with the name of the donor. One of the exemplars has inscribed the sign "bowl" on the top of the inscription (8).<sup>40</sup>

The inscribed statues (15–18) are all of men.<sup>41</sup> They all represent a standing worshipper with a shaved head,<sup>42</sup> except for 17, which is a statue of a seated man with long hair.

Two vessel fragments have been recovered in level VIIB (19, 20). One is a fragment of a high conical cup or vessel (h. 19 cm; 19). The other is the fragment of a richly decorated vessel of the so-called "intercultural style"

35 5N- T676; 7N-45, 89, 152 (bowls); 5N-T452, 7N-119, 399 (vessels); 7N-191 (statue); 7N-309 (fragment with inlay, see no. 4).

36 EVANS 2016: 168 notes the absence of inscribed mace heads. These objects are usually found as offerings in temples of male gods, thus this absence "should be linked with the special relationship that female patrons had with the temple," according to EVANS 2016: 168. Note, however, that EVANS 2016: 168 mentions the presence of two uninscribed mace heads in level VIIB of the Inanna Temple.

37 For an overview of the findings, see DOLCE 2008 and EVANS 2016.

38 This assumption is obviously based on the available data and does not consider perishable material for which we have no archaeological traces. For bowls and vessels as votive offerings, see in general BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: Chap. IV.

39 The exact number is unknown. EVANS 2016: 170 groups together vessels and bowls and, referring to the forthcoming publication of the reports by Zettler, gives the number of 100 from the level VIIB; of these only a quarter were inscribed.

40 See the discussion below *sub* Palaeography (3.2.1). For further references to the name of the object mentioned in the inscription, see ANDERSSON 2016: 60–62.

41 The donor, however, may be a woman, i.e. in the case of no. 16 and possibly no. 15; see below the discussion *sub* The gender of the donors (3.3.2.1).

42 15 is a headless statue, but similar in its main features to 18.

(20).<sup>43</sup> This vessel was produced on the Iranian plateau.<sup>44</sup> It brings to light one of the major features of the study of Early Dynastic votive objects, which is the circulation in Mesopotamia of (semi-)finished artefacts imported from abroad.<sup>45</sup>

The last two objects found in level VIIB of the Inanna Temple are a stone plaque (21) and a stone peg (22). The plaque<sup>46</sup> is typical of this period: square-shaped, with a central hole. Only one of the two main faces is decorated: its surface is divided into three registers, the middle of which is further divided into two separate scenes by the central hole. The stone peg ends in a bovine protome and had several elements (eyes, eyebrows, and a decorative triangle on the forehead) inlaid, now lost. The inscription is engraved on the left side of the protome. It is possible that both objects were part of the same piece of furniture, possibly a door plaque and its knob.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.2 The inscriptions

#### 3.2.1 Palaeography

Level VIIB of the Inanna Temple has been dated to Early Dynastic IIIA on the basis of about twenty cuneiform tablets,<sup>48</sup> which show similarities with the *ductus* of Fara

43 “The decoration on this vessel depicts a contest scene involving a spotted feline – either a leopard or a cheetah – and a coiled snake, one of the favorite motifs of the ‘inter-cultural style.’ A two-line inscription is engraved in the empty triangular space between the tail of the feline and the coils of the snake” (MARCHESI 2016: 97).

44 See MARCHESI 2016 for a discussion of the different interpretations and previous literature.

45 See HOWARD CARTER 1989 and MARCHESI 2016 (with further bibliography). Sometimes the inscription mentions the foreign origin of the object; see, for example, the reference to a *bur-mah kur-ta ... e<sub>11</sub>* “huge vase brought down from the mountains” in two inscriptions from Nippur, one of the Lagaš ruler Enmentena and the other of an unknown donor (CBS and CBS 9626 = *PBS XV*, 1 and 13; STEIBLE 1982a: 247f. Ent. 32; STEIBLE 1982b: 260 *AnNip*. 63; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 116f. G 8, 137 G 129; FRAYNE 2008: 222f. E1.9.5.18). Marchesi (2016: 102) has convincingly argued that “for the inhabitants of Mesopotamia the ‘intercultural style’ vessels were merely exotica with bizarre and meaningless decorations. Their value lay in the fact that they were foreign goods coming from a distant country.”

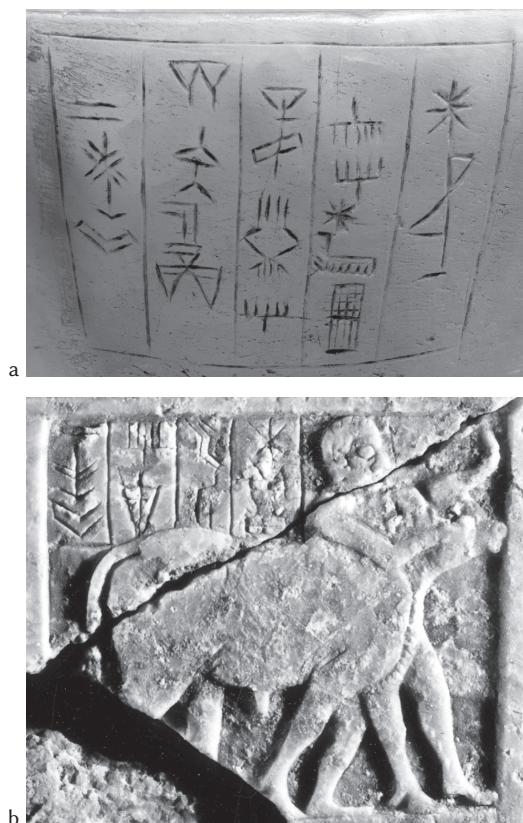
46 HANSEN 1963:147; EVANS 2016: 174-7; however, the interpretation of these objects as door plaques is not universally accepted and the peg may well be another piece of furniture (Verderame, in press a).

47 See HANSEN 1963; EVANS 2016: 174–176.

48 Most of these documents are still unpublished. Four (7N-T9, 12, 15, 19), kept in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, have been published by BIGGS 1988. Two others (7N-T11, 13) are mentioned by Biggs *apud* ZETTLER 1992: 37 fn. 16 and described as “written in the Abu Salabikh ‘late script’.” The tablet 7N-T4, as already stated by

and Abu Salabikh documents.<sup>49</sup> The writing direction of the inscription is always perpendicular to the orientation of the object, i.e. the lines must be read from top to bottom and from right to left.

Compared with contemporary royal inscriptions, those on the objects from Inanna Temple VIIB are very rudimentarily engraved, in some cases limited to scratches. This is partly due to the hard stone surface or, probably, to the lack of expertise or diligence of the engraver (Fig. 2).<sup>50</sup>



**Fig. 2:** Details of the inscriptions of a) Aka-Enlil (12) and b) Lumma (21) (a: photo by author, b: courtesy of the Nippur Publication Project).

GOETZE 1970: 46, is a “copy on clay of a dedicatory inscription;” see GOETZE 1970: 46 and 54; STEIBLE 1982b: 251 *AnNip*. 47; see also the discussion *sub* 18.

49 GOETZE 1970: 39 and fn. 5; WESTENHOLZ 1975: 3–4; BIGGS 1974: 26; Biggs *apud* ZETTLER 1992: 37 fn. 16; and McMAHON 2006: 165. For a general discussion of the palaeography of this period, see BIGGS 1973, BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 24–25 and 27–28; FRAYNE 2008: 14.

50 One may wonder if the incision was made by a non-skillful hand and consider what this might mean for the general interpretation of the use of writing. In particular, in those inscriptions limited to the goddess’s ideogram alone (*inanna*, 7N-119) or preceded by the star for the divine determinative (<sup>d(4)</sup>*inanna*, 7N-45, 89, 191, 309), may the donor himself be the engraver of the inscription reproducing the sign as seen on other objects? See also the comments of ANDERSSON 2016: 53–54.

In general, for the entire corpus of Early Dynastic inscriptions from the Inanna Temple we can note that:

1. when limited to a few signs, these are freely disposed on the surface;
2. in some cases, where the inscription is limited to two signs, one for the divine determinative and the other for the goddess name, these are not aligned and, in one instance, even perpendicular (6; Fig. 3);

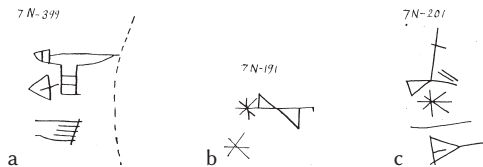


Fig. 3: Details of the inscriptions a) 7N-399, b) 7N-191, and c) no. 6 (7N-201) (after GOETZE 1970: 54, 52, 53).

3. in short inscriptions, the lines may or may not be divided by a horizontal line; this, instead, is the custom for longer inscriptions;
4. the frame appears only in longer inscriptions, but even in these cases it may be omitted;
5. distribution of the signs according to the reading sequence is not always followed;
6. in at least one case (22) the order of the lines is inverted, the donor preceding what we presume to be the divine name (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Stone peg 22 with inscription (courtesy of the Nippur Publication Project).

In one inscription (8), the name of the goddess is not at the beginning but just before the verb *a mu-ru*; this is, however, less rare than we tend to think. What is more interesting in this exemplar is the fact that, in a second instance, after the inscription was engraved and closed

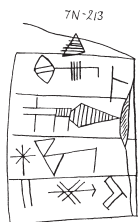


Fig. 5: Copy of the inscription on the bowl 8 (after GOETZE 1970: 53).

by a frame, the ideogram for bowl (*bur*) was added at the top, partly overlapping the upper line of the frame (Fig. 5).

Regarding the containers, both vases and bowls, the inscription is usually engraved next to the rim<sup>51</sup> on the outer surface of the object. The only exception is a fragment of a stone bowl richly decorated with a mosaic on the surface and bearing the inscription inside (4).<sup>52</sup> As for the statues, the inscription, limited to one (16) or two lines (15, 17, 18), is written on the right part of the back (15, 18), on the right arm (16), or on the right thigh (17). 15 and 18 have a line separating the two lines (Fig. 6).

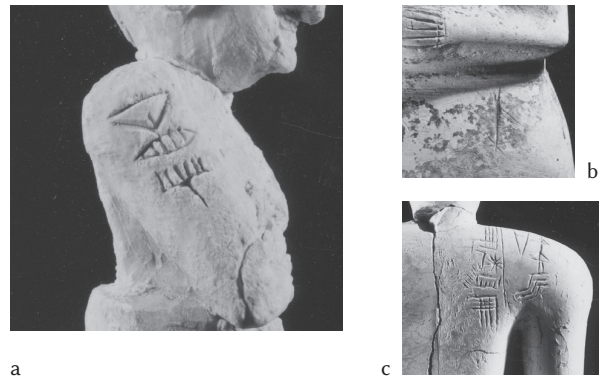


Fig. 6: Details of the inscriptions on the statues a) 16, b) 17, and c) 18 (courtesy of the Nippur Publication Project).

On the Lumma plaque (21), the external frame enclosing the inscription is only partially engraved; in fact, its upper and right borders coincide with the raised vignette's frame, while the lower border is interrupted by the relief-carved back of the bull in the vignette (Fig. 2b).

The sign for Inanna shows many variants, partly because it is the most frequent sign and partly due to the fact that it is often crudely engraved (Fig. 7).

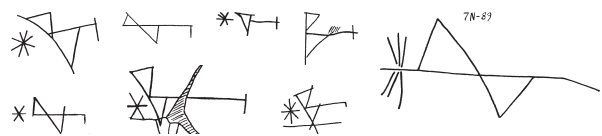


Fig. 7: Variants of the Inanna sign in inscriptions from the Early Dynastic Inanna Temple at Nippur (collage based on the copies of GOETZE 1970).

51 No. 20, for example, is engraved between two figures; see fn. 43.

52 COOPER 1986: 20 (Ki 3.3 n. 1, 91 Ni 3 n. 1) has drawn attention to the other only known parallel of an inscription on the interior surface of a container, i.e. a fragment of Mesilim's vessel from Adab (A 192); see STEIBLE 1982b: 217 Mes. 3; COOPER 1986: 20 Ki 3.3. MARCHESI 2016: 96–97, while discussing vessels of the “intercultural style,” states that when “inscriptions do appear, they are usually engraved on the inside of vessels, where they cannot be seen except by peering inside;” the exemplar from Nippur (20), however, bears the inscription on the exterior of the vessel.

For the other signs, we can note the standard forms of the Early Dynastic *ductus*.<sup>53</sup> In general, the signs are not precisely engraved (one line often continues over another), and both their size and disposition are inaccurate (Fig. 8).

Cat. no.	Exc. no. (7 N)	No. of lines	Non-ordered signs	Separation line(s)	Frame
1	4	2?		x	x
2	99	3	x	x	x
3	122	4		x	
4	128	6		x	
5	147	6?		x	x
6	201	2		x	
7	212	4		x	x
8	213	(1+)4		x	x
9	219	5?		x	x
10	299	2	?	x	
11	150	4		x	x
12	153	5		x	x
13	236	5		x	
14	91	3		x	x
15	170	2	x	x	
16	171	1			
17	202	2			
18	205	2	x	x	
19	250	4	x	x	x
20	120	2		x	
21	133+134	4		x	x
22	199	2	?	x	

Fig. 8: Palaeographic features of inscribed objects from the Inanna Temple VIIB.

### 3.2.2 Inscription typologies<sup>54</sup>

#### 3.2.2.1 One/two line inscriptions

As for the content, the elementary dedicatory inscription constituted by the name of the goddess or of the beneficiary is documented only once (16) among the findings of level VIIB and is substituted by an extended two-line version.

In the case of the dedication to Inanna, we assume that the second line following the name of the goddess

contains a divine epithet, or perhaps the name of the donor (1, 6, 20). Regarding the hypothesis of an inscription constituted by “divine name + epithet,” it should be noted that the case under investigation would be unique. The use of an epithet to qualify a deity in an inscription is limited to the long and composite votive inscriptions, i.e. the “royal” ones.

As for a two-line inscription beginning with a personal name, the second line contains the worshipper’s title or profession.<sup>55</sup> This type is attested only on statues (15, 17, 18), all dedicated by men except for, possibly, one (16).<sup>56</sup>

#### 3.2.2.2 The a ... ru type inscription

The most common inscription type consists of the name of the divine recipient and the donor/beneficiary’s data, and ends with the expression a ... ru “dedicated (the object).” Inscriptions from male and female donors show different features in the data accompanying the personal name. In male inscriptions, after the divine name, the donor’s name is followed by his title or profession, and in one case by his patronymic (Fig. 9).

Female inscriptions, instead of their title or profession after the donor’s name, bear a reference to the closest male relative,<sup>57</sup> the husband, with the expression dam “wife of ...” (4, 11), together with (5) or substituted (7)<sup>58</sup> by the patronymic (du mu “daughter”) (Fig. 10).

The only exception is the inscription on the fragment of a bowl (14), bearing what seems to be a standard four-line dedicatory inscription. The author is a woman qualifying herself by the title of “midwife” (ša<sub>3</sub>-zu), without any male relationship. In another inscription (13), the identity and gender of the donor is blurred by his/her qualification as NIG<sub>3</sub>.HI<sub>gunu</sub>.ŠA.LI of Inanna-ursaĝ, and the relation with the latter.

In general, assuming we are correct in our identification of the gender of the donors, we can state that in male donors’ inscriptions the qualifier is the man’s title or profession; however, in female donors’ inscriptions the name of a male relative (father, husband) is usually mentioned.

55 See the discussion below *sub* Donors titles (3.3.2.2) and fig. 3.

56 For doubt about the donor gender of 15, see below *sub* The gender of the donors (3.3.2.1).

57 DONBAZ/HALLO 1976: 2–3; MARCHESI 2002: 178–179. For female inscriptions in third millennium BC inscriptions, see the recent overview by NOWICKI 2016.

58 The gender of the donor of 7 remains doubtful; see below the discussion *sub* 7.

53 A chart of the signs and their variant in the Early Dynastic inscriptions from the Inanna Temple is provided by GOETZE 1970: 55–56.

54 See GOETZE 1970: 40; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 16–17.

Male donors (2, 3 = 21, 8, 10, 12, 19):  
 A) Divine name  
 B) Donor's data:  
     1) name  
     2) qualification:  
        a) title/profession (omitted in 10)  
        b) patronymic (only in 12)  
 C) a ... ru "dedicated (the object)" (omitted in 2)

Fig. 9: The structure of the inscriptions from male donors.

Female donors (4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 14):  
 A) Divine name  
 B) Donor's data:  
     1) name  
     2) qualification:  
        a) "wife of ..." (dam; 4, 5, 11)  
        b) "daughter of ..." (dumu; 5, 7)  
 C) a ... ru "dedicated (the object)"

Fig. 10: The structure of the inscriptions from female donors.

Cat. no.	Exc. no. (7 N)	Inanna	Nin-SAR	No divine recipient	Fragm.
1	4	x			
2	99	x			
3	122		x		
4	128	x			
5	147				x
6	201	x			
7	212	x			
8	213	x			
9	219				x
10	299	x			
11	150	x			
12	153	x			
13	236	x			
14	91				x
15	170				x
16	171			?	
17	202			x	
18	205			x	
19	250	x			
20	120	x			
21	133+134		x		
22	199			x	

Fig. 11: Divine recipients mentioned in the inscriptions.

### 3.3 Analysis of the general contents of the inscriptions

#### 3.3.1 Divine recipients

All the inscriptions are dedicated to the goddess Inanna, with two exceptions. These are a bowl (3) and a gypsum plaque (21). Both are dedicated to Nin-SAR by the chief-stonecutter, Lumma; these two are also the only cases in this corpus where two different objects bear the same inscription (Fig. 11).

#### 3.3.2 Donors<sup>59</sup>

The only relationship<sup>60</sup> among the names recorded in the inscriptions is on two objects, two bowls (4, 5), dedicated by the same donor, Aja-uĝ(du). She is qualified as

<sup>59</sup> The donor, i.e. the one who devotes the object, may be different from the beneficiary of the votive gift. This differentiation may also explain some incongruence, such as a female name inscribed on a male statue, as possibly seen in 16.

<sup>60</sup> However, note the possible relation between the Lugal-uri of 10 and that of 7N-238; see fn. 33.

the wife of (the *ensi*) Abzu-kidu in both cases.<sup>61</sup> It is relevant to note the family adscription used by Aja-uĝ(du) in her inscriptions: in 4, she qualifies herself as “wife of Abzu-kidu, the *ensi*,” while in 5 she uses first the patronymic (“daughter of Amar-Iškur”) and then adds her relationship with Abzu-kidu, whose title is not specified.<sup>62</sup> In this second inscription (5), the relation with her father is clearly perceived as more socially relevant at the moment the object is offered. We may wonder if by that time Abzu-kidu was not yet or no longer *ensi*. However, all these considerations remain hypothetical due to a lack of further information.

### 3.3.2.1 The gender of the donors

According to the inscriptions, it is possible to group the donors by gender. Although most of the donors are male, the proportion of female donors is very high in comparison to other *corpora*. Compared to eleven objects dedicated by ten male donors, we have six objects commissioned by five women. In both groups, there is a donor who dedicates two objects (Lumma, 3 and 21; Aja-uĝ(du), 4 and 5). It is impossible to determine the identity of the donor for five inscriptions.

Approximately half of the stone bowls are commissioned by women. Instead, almost all the other types of inscribed objects come from male donors. First, we could

infer that while most of the objects are the prerogative of male donors, the bowls are the field of confrontation of gender and social dynamics. This may be due to the fact that bowls are the most common votive objects. The act of consecrating of a votive object, a ... ru “to pour water,” seems to corroborate the basic idea of a close relationship between libation and bowls, and we should bear in mind that several uninscribed bowls have been found in the same context.<sup>63</sup>

Although this consideration may be correct, we must consider that other uninscribed objects from level VIIB may have been commissioned by women. The large number of female donors dedicating bowls, however, indicates that this type of object was shared equally by the two genders.

### 3.3.2.2 Donors’ titles and profession

As discussed above, female donors are qualified by referring to a male relative, i.e. their father or husband. This is different for male donors,<sup>64</sup> whose names are usually followed by a title or a profession. This happens in less than half of the entire corpus (ten cases of the over twenty-two inscriptions) and only for male donors, except for 14, and possibly 13. The highest official is the *saĝa* of 18, while no royal inscriptions have been found in the Early Dynastic levels of the Inanna Temple (Fig. 12).

Title/profession		Gender	Object	No. of lines	Inscription
dam-gar <sub>3</sub> -gal	chief merchant	♂	bowl	5	12
gal-zadim	chief stone-cutter	♂	bowl / plaque	4	3 21
mu <sub>6</sub> -sub <sub>3</sub>	shepherd	♂	bowl	4+1	8
NIG <sub>2</sub> .HI <sub>gunu</sub> .ŠA.LI	?	?	bowl	5	13
nu-banda <sub>3</sub>	overseer	♂	bowl	3	2
		♂	statue	2	17
saĝa	<i>saĝa</i>	♂	statue	2	18
SAR-gal(?)	chief engraver(?)	♂	peg	2	22
simug	smith	♂	vessel	4	19
ša <sub>3</sub> -zu	midwife	♀	bowl	3+?	14

Fig. 12: Donors’ titles and professions mentioned in the inscriptions.

## 5 Conclusions

From the overall analysis of the data from the Inanna Temple, some facts contrast with other *corpora* of inscribed objects from the Early Dynastic findings:

- 1) The absence of royal inscriptions, which underlines the popular character of Inanna’s cult and temple, as also attested in later periods;<sup>65</sup>

61 Abzu-kidu’s name is restored in 5, see the discussion below *sub* 5. MARCHESI 2016: 100-2 has extensively discussed an inscribed vessel kept in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA 1980.71), bearing the inscription “[...] E-ama[...].Jamaĝu, mother of Abzu-kidu, presented it [to] ([...] / e<sub>2</sub>-ama-ĝu<sub>10</sub> / ama<sup>(A×AN)</sup> / ab-zu-ki-du<sub>10</sub> / a mu-ru); the reference to Abzu-kidu may relate this object to the Inanna Temple level VII or VIIB, see fn. 33.

62 A similar case from the ‘Royal Tombs’ of Ur has been discussed by MARCHESI 2002: 176 and 178f.

63 See fn. 39.

64 The only certain case is 12.

65 The nearby Ekur temple may have attracted the main devotion of the rulers. The first royal inscription from the Inanna Temple is the mace-head dedicated by Narām-Sin (6N-128), while an Ur III tablet (6N-T264) found in the temple itself bears the text of two Rimuš’ inscriptions, one of which mentions the dedication of the booty to the goddess Inanna; for both inscriptions, see GOETZE 1968: 54f.

- 2) Inanna's cult appears particularly related to the female element, judging by the high numbers of women attested as donors and considering the relation that the goddess Inanna or Nin-SAR had with procreation;
- 3) the lack of royal inscriptions and the presence of women and donors who are for the most part well-positioned professionals mark the different social context of the Inanna Temple inscriptions with respect to other *corpora*.

All these elements raise the question of who had access to the temple, to writing, and to dedicatory practices. The evidence coming from the Inanna Temple at Nippur points to a private cult (and not to a public royal devotion) practiced by well-to-do individuals of the society who dedicated objects to the deity for their own benefit or on behalf of family members.

Some interesting questions remain open, such as the ritual function played by bowls and other objects from the Inanna Temple and the reasons why inscribed objects shared the same archaeological and religious context with uninscribed objects, and vice versa, and what this fact may reveal about the social and cultic use of writing. These issues are the subject of future research.

By taking all the different pieces of philological, epigraphic, and archaeological information into consideration, and by giving prominence to the holistic nature of inscribed objects, it is possible to reconstruct aspects such as the aim and the context of production and use of such votive materials. Furthermore, such an all-encompassing approach allows us to explore the life and after-life of artefacts in their entirety, from the initial stages of production in the workshops to the final phase of deposition, or even discard, once the object lost its primary social use.<sup>66</sup> In all, I hope this paper will serve as an epistemological reflection regarding how the discipline of Assyriology has been carried out, as well as in what ways scholars relate to the object of analysis depending on their academic background and training.

66 For theoretical considerations on the social life of objects and on votive objects, see APPADURAI 1988 and FABIETTI 2014.

## Appendix 1: Catalogue of the inscriptions

### Bowls

#### Stone

1. 7N-4 (= IM 66121)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 42, 48 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 237 AnNip. 16; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 131 G 93.

<sup>1)</sup> d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>2)</sup> NE / [(...)]

“To Inanna, ... [(...)].”

The text is broken after the second line, which is complete and occupied only by the NE sign. The latter may be well be the name of the donor; see 6, 20, and the discussion *sub* One/two line inscriptions (3.2.2.1).

2. 7N-99 (= A 31478)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 42, 50 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 238–239. AnNip. 22; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 132 G 98.

<sup>1)</sup> d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>2)</sup> ur-d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>3)</sup> nu-banda<sub>3</sub>

“To Inanna, Ur-Inanna, the overseer.”

3. 7N-122 (= IM 66062)

**Bibl.:** HANSEN 1963: 154ff.; GOETZE 1970: 42–43, 50 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 239–240 AnNip. 24 A; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 132 G 100.

<sup>1)</sup> d<sup>1</sup>nin-SA[R] <sup>2)</sup> lum-ma <sup>3)</sup> gal-zad[im] <sup>4)</sup> a m[u-ru]

“To Nin-SAR, Lumma, the chief stone-cutter, dedicated (this).”

Same inscription as no. 21. For the personal name Lumma, see GOETZE 1970: 42–43; STEIBLE 1982b: 62 no. 103, 67f. no. 13; MARCHESI 2006: 79–80.

Lumma might well be the head of the stone-cutters working in or for the Inanna Temple. The only other stone-cutter inscription from the Early Dynastic period is from Lagaš, see STEIBLE 1982a: 365 AnLag. 15. For the inscription of another artisan, a smith (*simug*) from the Inanna Temple see no. 19.

4. 7N-128 (= IM 66123)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 43, 50 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 223 Abki. 1; COOPER 1986: 91 Ni 3; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 127 G 73, pl. 6; FRAYNE 2008: 355 E1.11.3.1.

<sup>1)</sup> d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>2)</sup> aja<sub>2</sub>-uĝ<sub>3</sub> <sup>3)</sup> dam-abzu-ki-du<sub>10</sub> <sup>4)</sup> ensi<sub>2</sub>-

<sup>5)</sup> Nibru<sup>ki</sup> <sup>6)</sup> a mu-ru

“To Inanna, Aja-uĝ(du), the wife of Abzu-kidu, *ensi* of Nippur, dedicated (this).”

The inscription is written on the inside of a stone bowl, richly decorated on the outside with a mosaic. This unique position might suggest a symbolic value vis-a-vis a practical use of the bowl, a hypothesis that should be considered for the other exemplars.

For the name abzu-ki-du<sub>10</sub> and the ...-ki-du<sub>10</sub> type name, see ALBERTI/POMPONIO 1986: 49–50; for aja<sub>2</sub>-uĝ<sub>3</sub>, abbreviation of aja<sub>2</sub>-uĝ<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>10</sub> “the father is pleasing to the people,” see MARCHESI 2002: 193 e 194 fn. 235.

5. 7N-147 (= ROM 962.143.022.a?<sup>67</sup>)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 43, 51 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 223–224 Abki. 2; COOPER 1986: 91 Ni 3; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 128 G 74; FRAYNE 2008: 355f. EL11.3.2.

(<sup>03</sup>) [d<sup>1</sup>inanna]<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>) [aja<sub>2</sub>-uĝ<sub>3</sub>]<sup>2</sup>) du[mu-munus<sup>3</sup>]-<sup>3</sup>)  
amar-<sup>d</sup>išk[ur]<sup>4</sup>) dam-<sup>5</sup>) abzu-ki-du<sub>10</sub><sup>6</sup>) a mu-  
ru

“(To Inanna?) Aja-uĝ(du), daughter of Amar-Iškur (and) wife of Abzu-kidu, dedicated (this).”

The integration and interpretation of this inscription is based on the hypothesis that the Abzu-kidu of line 5’ is the same as 4: 3. This hypothesis is sustained by the scarcity of references to the personal name Abzu-kidu and the presence of the name on two objects from the same context, which may or may not be considered a coincidence. A different interpretation of the inscription may be advanced if we assume that Amar-Iškur is a female name; see LIMET 1968: 69, 327, 375. In this case, the integration of lines 0-3 would be superfluous, and Amar-Iškur, wife of Abzu-kidu, would be the donor. This interpretation is corroborated by the uniqueness of an inscription with the name of the father and that of the husband; see above the discussion *sub* The a ... ru type inscription (3.2.2.2).

6. 7N-201 (= IM 66125)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 44 (“mycaceous bowl”), 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 245 AnNip. 35; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 133 G 105.

<sup>1</sup>) d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>2</sup>) munus(-)dili

“To Inanna, the *singular woman*.”

The second line might be the name of the donor as well as an epithet of the divine recipient; see 1, 20, and the discussion *sub* One/two line inscriptions (3.2.2.1).

7. 7N-212 (= ROM 962.143.027?<sup>68</sup>)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 45, 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 246 AnNip. 38; BAUER 1985: 12; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 133 G 106.

<sup>1</sup>) d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>2</sup>) munus-šu-me <sup>3</sup>) dumu ur-šubur <sup>4</sup>) a  
mu-ru

67 Kept in the “American School,” according to BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 128.

68 Kept in the “American School,” according to BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 133.

“To Inanna, Munus-šume, the *daughter* of Ur-šubur, dedicated (this).”

The gender of the donor is far from certain. The statement of GOETZE 1970: 45: “As in the great majority of these bowls it has been assumed that this bowl too was dedicated by a woman,” is confuted by the number of bowls dedicated by male donors. The absence of the munus (SAL) sign after dumu, to express the term “daughter” (dumu-munus) should not be surprising, since this common term (dumu-munus) is unattested in the Early Dynastic inscriptions; it is hypothetically restored in 5: 2’ (dumu-munus<sup>3</sup>). On the contrary, the sign SAL appears as an element of the otherwise unattested personal name munus-šu-me, but also in this case it seems not to be decisive evidence for the identification of the gender of the donor.

For šu-me as a writing for šurmen “cypress,” see ePSD s.v.; BAUER 1976: 7 and BAUER 1982: 6. For a similar name, see ur-<sup>(d)</sup>šu-me-ša<sub>4</sub> (ECTJ 127: 2; OSP 2, 158: 3).

8. 7N-213 (=A 31498)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 45, 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 247 AnNip. 39; BAUER 1985: 12; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 G 107.

<sup>0</sup>) bur <sup>1</sup>) di-abgal <sup>2</sup>) mu<sub>6</sub>-sub<sub>3</sub> <sup>3</sup>) d<sup>1</sup>inanna <sup>4</sup>) a mu-ru

“Bowl. Di-abgal, the shepherd, to Inanna dedicated (this).”

For the reading of PA.USAN as mu<sub>6</sub>-sub<sub>3</sub> (= *na-gi-du-um*, *nāqidum*) see BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 “der Hirte(?),” following BAUER 1972: 498 and BAUER 1985: 12. The term is documented in a list of offerings from Nippur (ED IIIb), TMH 5, 164 (= ECTJ 164).

The sign bur has been scratched over the upper line of the frame that encloses the inscription (fig. 5), in what seems to be a secondary addition.

9. 7N-219 (= IM 66126)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 45, 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 247 AnNip. 40; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 G 108.

<sup>1</sup>) an-ub-‘x[...] <sup>2</sup>) HAR.DU<sub>8</sub><sup>3</sup>.DUR<sub>2</sub> <sup>3</sup>) dumu NI [...] <sup>4</sup>)  
nin-men [...] <sup>5</sup>) [...]

C. WILKE *apud* STEIBLE (1982b: 247) proposed the reading nin-me[n...] for the name in l. 4’. For the name nin-men, see the text from Fara TŠŠ 150: i 5-7 (nin-men ‘dam’ šim-mu<sub>2</sub> geme<sub>2</sub>-kar-kid).

10. 7N-299 (= IM 66128)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 46; STEIBLE 1982b: 249–250 AnNip. 44; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 G 112.

<sup>1</sup>) d<sup>1</sup>inanna lugal:uri<sub>3</sub> <sup>2</sup>) a mu-ru

“To Inanna, Lugal-uri, dedicated (this).”

There is no separation line between Lugal-uri and Inanna. Lugal-uri may be related to another inscription from the Inanna Temple (7N-238), see fn. 33.



## Alabaster

## 11. 7N-150 (= IM 66083)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 43, 51 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 241 AnNip. 27; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 133 G 101.

<sup>1)</sup> inanna <sup>2)</sup> gan-<sup>d</sup>en-lil<sub>2</sub> <sup>3)</sup> dam u<sub>2</sub>-tum <sup>4)</sup> a mu-ru  
“To Inanna, Gan-Enlil, wife of Utum, dedicated (this).”

## 12. 7N-153 (= MMA 62.70.10)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 43f., 52 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 242 AnNip. 29; BAUER 1985: 12; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 133 G 103.

<sup>1)</sup> inanna <sup>2)</sup> en-lil<sub>2</sub>-aka <sup>3)</sup> dam-gar<sub>3</sub>-gal <sup>4)</sup> dumu he<sub>2</sub>:ti <sup>5)</sup> a mu-ru  
“To Inanna, Enlil-aka, chief merchant, son of Heti, dedicated (this).”

WESTENHOLZ *apud* STEIBLE 1982b: 242 proposes the reading aka-<sup>d</sup>en-lil<sub>2</sub> for the name in line 2, and also the reading bala<sup>?</sup>-he<sub>2</sub> for TI.HE<sub>2</sub> (WESTENHOLZ 1975: 79); note, however, the same shape of the ti in the name *i<sub>3</sub>-di<sub>3</sub>-lum* in 18: 1 and that he<sub>2</sub>-ti is a common name in Neo-Sumerian documents.

## 13. 7N-236 (= IM 66084)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 45, 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 248 AnNip. 41; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 G 109.

<sup>1)</sup> inanna <sup>2)</sup> inim-ma-zi <sup>3)</sup> NIG<sub>2</sub>.HI<sub>gunū</sub>.ŠA.LI<sup>?</sup>  
<sup>4)</sup> inanna-ur-saĝ <sup>5)</sup> a mu-ru  
“To Inanna, Inimmazi, ... of Inanna-ursaĝ, dedicated (this).”

The name in line 2 may be read inim-ma-<ni->zi, a common name, particularly in the Sargonic period. It is not possible to clarify the gender of the donor and their relationship with Inanna-ursaĝ, because of the *hapax* NIG<sub>2</sub>.HI<sub>gunū</sub>.ŠA.LI. Different is the interpretation of STEIBLE 1982b: 248, who assumes NIG<sub>2</sub>.HI<sub>gunū</sub>.ŠA.LI is a personal name. In this case, we would have the divine recipient (l. 1), three donors (ll. 2-4), and the closing verb (l. 5).

## Stone vessel fragment

14. 7N-91 (= ROM 962.143.014?<sup>69</sup>)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 42, 48 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 238 AnNip. 21; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 132 G 97.

<sup>1)</sup> x<sup>-</sup>[(x)]-na-na <sup>2)</sup> ša<sub>3</sub>-zu <sup>3)</sup> a-mu-ru  
“[...]nana, the midwife, dedicated (this).”

<sup>69</sup> Kept in the ‘American School,’ according to BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 132; in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology (Toronto), according to CDLI (P222777).

The X-na-na name-forms are very rare in the ED period (and totally absent in Nippur), regarding the later period, especially the Neo-Sumerian; on the other hand, the name na-na is quite common at Nippur.

## Statues

## 15. 7N-170 (= IM 66177)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 44, 52 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 242-243. AnNip. 30; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 43f., 72, 79, pl. 13d-e; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 250 St 59.

<sup>1)</sup> ur-dumu-zi<sub>3</sub>-da <sup>2)</sup> x (x)  
“Ur-Dumuzida, ...”

The sign(s) of the second line is clear, but difficult to interpret. Different hypothetical readings have been proposed: lukur (SAL.ME), x.ME, gudu<sub>4</sub> (AH.ME), GAL(!).ZAD-IM(!); see STEIBLE 1982b: 243. BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 72 chooses the reading lukur, a female title that refers to the donor, rather than to the beneficiary, the statue representing a male subject.

## 16. 7N-171 (= A 31491)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 44; STEIBLE 1982b: 243 AnNip. 31; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 38, 44, 72, 79, pl. 4c; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 251 St 60.

munus-ki-gal “Munus-kigal.”

This name is a *hapax*, but the reading here proposed is supported by the anthroponyms constructed with ki-gal(-la) “the broad land,” a term for the Netherworld, as the quite common lugal-ki-gal-la and e<sub>2</sub>-ki-gal-la, but also mes-ki-gal-la, lu<sub>2</sub>-ki-gal-la; for nin-ki-gal-la, see the late Sargonic text OSP 1, 39: iii 9.

## 17. 7N-202 (= IM 66182)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 44-45, 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 245f. AnNip. 36; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 38, 44, 72, 79, pl. 4f; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 251 St 62.

<sup>1)</sup> šeš-ki-na <sup>2)</sup> nu:banda<sub>3</sub>  
“Šeškina, the overseer.”

## 18. 7N-205 (= IM 66183)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 45, 53 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 246 AnNip. 37; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 38-39, 44, 72, 79 pl. 6c-d and 12c; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 251 St 63.

<sup>1)</sup> i<sub>3</sub>:di<sub>3</sub>:lum <sup>2)</sup> saĝa <sup>d</sup>en-lil<sub>2</sub>  
“Idilum, the saĝa of Enlil.”

The reading Idē’ilum has been proposed by BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1977: 72. For other saĝas of Enlil, see GOETZE 1970: 45 and WESTENHOLZ 1975: 107 *sub* En-lil, to which should be added the alabaster vessel of Zur-zur (CBS 9650), see STEIBLE 1982b: 260f. AnNip. 64. The tablet

7N-T4 (see fn. 48) is a “copy on clay of a dedicatory inscription” (GOETZE 1970: 46) of a wife of the *saĝa* of Enlil.<sup>70</sup> The name of the latter is not mentioned and he could be Idilum himself.

### Vessels

#### 19. 7N-250 (= A 31507)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 46, 54 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 249 AnNip. 43; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 G 111.

<sup>1)</sup> [d]<sup>r</sup> inanna<sup>2)</sup> [x]<sup>3)</sup> a<sub>2</sub><sup>2)</sup> nu-kuš<sub>2</sub><sup>3)</sup> simug<sup>4)</sup> a mu-ru

“To Inanna?, [x]-anukuš, the smith, dedicated (this).”

BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 134 does not restore the first line (“To Inanna”) and read the second line (that is to say the first) <sup>1)</sup> nu<sup>2)</sup>-ki<sup>2)</sup>-x<sup>2)</sup>-kuš<sub>2</sub>. I prefer the reading of a personal name of the ...-a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub> type such as a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>, bil<sub>x</sub>-a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>, dumu-a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>, munus-a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>, pa<sub>4</sub>-a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>, šeš<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>, common in the ED documents, particularly from Fara, see POMPONIO 1987. The name pa<sub>4</sub>-a<sub>2</sub>-nu-kuš<sub>2</sub> is found in another inscription from the Inanna Temple belonging to level VII.<sup>71</sup>

#### 20. 7N-120 (= IM 66071)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 42, 50 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 239 AnNip. 23; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 132 G 99; MARCHESI 2016: 97–100.

<sup>1)</sup> d<sup>r</sup> inanna<sup>2)</sup> pa<sub>4</sub>-nun

“To Inanna, Panun(?)”

The second line might be the name of the donor as well as an epithet of the divine recipient;<sup>72</sup> see 1, 6, and the discussion *sub* One/two line inscriptions (3.2.2.1). The vessel comes from a generic level VII, but it has been attributed to the level VIIB on the base of archaeological evidences; see DOLCE 2008: 663 fn. 7.

### Others

#### 21. 7N-133+134 (= IM 66157)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 43, 51 (copy); BOESE 1971: 184 N 6; STEIBLE 1982b: 239–240 AnNip. 24; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 311 W 13.

70 <sup>1)</sup> d<sup>r</sup> inanna<sup>2)</sup> KA×X.SAR<sup>3)</sup> dam<sup>4)</sup> saĝa d<sup>r</sup> en-lil<sub>2</sub><sup>5)</sup> a mu-ru “To Inanna, ...-sar, wife of the *saĝa* of Enlil, dedicated (this)” (GOETZE 1970: 46, 54). The artefact could be interpreted as a copy as well as a draft of an inscription to be engraved.

71 6N-392 = GOETZE 1970: 41, 59 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 234–235. AnNip. 12; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 131 G 89.

72 See MARCHESI 2016: 97-100 with previous bibliography and a discussion of the evidences.

<sup>1)</sup> d<sup>r</sup> nin-sar<sup>2)</sup> lum-ma<sup>3)</sup> gal-zadim<sup>4)</sup> a mu-ru

“To Nin-SAR, Lumma, the chief stone-cutter, dedicated (this).”

Gypsum votive plaque of Lumma with the same inscription of 3. The plaque has been broken into five pieces, which were buried in two different places; see the discussion *sub* Findspots (2.1). For a stylistic analysis of the plaque, see PELZEL 1977: 70–71; for other uninscribed votive plaques from the Inanna Temple, see HANSEN 1963; Evans 2016: 174–176.

#### 22. 7N-199 (= IM 66070)

**Bibl.:** GOETZE 1970: 44, 52 (copy); STEIBLE 1982b: 244–245 AnNip. 34; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991: 326 T 12; EVANS 2016: 176–177.

<sup>1)</sup> sar-gal<sup>2)</sup> an-da<sub>5</sub>-si

“Andasi, the sar-gal(?)”

Diorite peg ending with bovine head (ca. 17~18 cm). GOETZE 1970: 44 following the lines order has hypothesized the sequence divine recipient (sar-gal) donor (Andasi); a connection of sar-gal with Nin-sar would be possible, see the discussion *sub* Nin-sar, craftsmanship and procreation (2.2.1). WESTENHOLZ 1975: 78, followed by STEIBLE 1982b: 245, proposes the inversion of the lines order. Thus, Andasi would be the name of the donor and sar-gal his title/profession. This reading is corroborated by the fact that sar-gal appears as name of profession in the Fara texts, see POMPONIO 1987: 212f. The ideogram SAR can be related to the idea of writing and engraving and other profession terms such as dub-sar “scribe” and gab<sub>2</sub>-sar “engraver.” A possible interpretation is thus sar-gal “chief engraver.”

### Appendix 2: Lists of the inscribed objects from level VIIB of the Inanna Temple at Nippur

According to BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1991, the objects 5, 7, 14 (\*) are kept in the ‘American School’, while the CDLI catalogue records these objects as part of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Cat. No.	Exc. No. (7 N)	Museum No.
1	4	IM 66121
2	99	A 31478
3	122	IM 66062
4	128	IM 66123
5	147	ROM 962.143.022.a
6	201	IM 66125
7	212	ROM 962.143.027
8	213	A 31498
9	219	IM 66126
10	299	IM 66128
11	150	IM 66083
12	153	MMA 62.70.10
13	236	IM 66084
14	91	ROM 962.143.014
15	170	IM 66177
16	171	A 31491
17	202	IM 66182
18	205	IM 66183
19	250	A 31507
20	120	IM 66071
21	133+134	IM 66157
22	199	IM 66070

Fig. 13: Inscribed objects from the Inanna Temple level VIIIB ordered according to the numbering of the present publication.

Exc. No. (7 N)	Cat. No.	Museum No.
4	1	IM 66121
91	14	ROM 962.143.014
99	2	A 31478
120	20	IM 66071
122	3	IM 66062
128	4	IM 66123
133+134	21	IM 66157
147	5	ROM 962.143.022.a
150	11	IM 66083
153	12	MMA 62.70.10
170	15	IM 66177
171	16	A 31491
199	22	IM 66070
201	6	IM 66125
202	17	IM 66182
205	18	IM 66183
212	7	ROM 962.143.027
213	8	A 31498
219	9	IM 66126
236	13	IM 66084
250	19	A 31507
299	10	IM 66128

Fig. 14: Ordered according to excavation numbers.

Museum No.	Exc. No. (7 N)	Cat. No.
A 31478	99	2
A 31491	171	16
A 31498	213	8
A 31507	250	19
IM 66062	122	3
IM 66070	199	22
IM 66071	120	20
IM 66083	150	11
IM 66084	236	13
IM 66121	4	1
IM 66123	128	4
IM 66125	201	6
IM 66126	219	9
IM 66128	299	10
IM 66157	133+134	21
IM 66177	170	15
IM 66182	202	17
IM 66183	205	18
MMA 62.70.10	153	12
ROM 962.143.014	91	14
ROM 962.143.022.a	147	5
ROM 962.143.027	212	7

Fig. 15: Ordered according to museum numbers.

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