

connected with it. Register after register shows in low relief carved in the smooth limestone, the enthroned figures of Nannar and Ningal (*Figure 39*) opposed in marked parallelism. Ur-Nammu stands in turn in front of each. His name is inscribed on his fringed shawl. He pours a libation over green palms and bunches of dates in a tall vase shaped like an hour-glass. He receives the command to build the tower. Preceded by his patron god and shouldering the mason's tools he goes to lay the foundation brick. Workers carry baskets of mud and climb ladders to the top of the wall. Youthful aerial figures pour from heaven the fertilizing rain, a reward for the pious work. Ritual scenes (*Figure 40*) follow on the back. A bull is sacrificed. The priests open its body, perhaps to read in the liver the signs of the divine will. A kid is beheaded and the blood is poured on the ground, while a piper, standing on a small base in front of a sacred grove, plays on the double pipes. Prisoners with hands tied behind their backs are led from one enthroned deity (?) towards a second. Two men beat huge drums with short round-headed sticks, a loud accompaniment to the sacrifice. In the last register a libation is poured over palms and date bunches, in front of an altar, and perhaps the statue of the deified king.

The Isin-Larsa Dynasties

The cult of the moon-god survived the ruin of the city. After forty years the statue of Nannar was brought back to Ur. Temple, tower, courts and shrines were rebuilt in turn by the new kings of Isin, Larsa—and Uruk—who had portioned out the Sumerian land. In the Akkadian north the power of the Amorite kings of Babylon was daily growing. At Ur, inscribed bricks and clay cones, door sockets and foundation tablets witness the building activity and devotion of the rulers of Isin and Larsa to the ancient shrine of Nannar. In keeping with an honoured tradition, Enannatum, a prince of Isin, was appointed high priest. There is in the Babylonian Section a charming statuette of a seated Ningal presented by him to the Egipar shrine. Three sides of the square stool bear a votive inscription. The goddess wears a long flounced sleeved robe. Her hands are clasped. Long locks fall on her shoulders and a now missing metal crown once adorned her head. (*Figure 41.*)

This period of transition of the kings of Isin and Larsa before the establishment of the First Dynasty of Babylon, has been called "The Age of Abraham." Of course no direct record of the patriarch has so far come out of the trenches. But a rich hoard of Sumerian tablets discovered at Ur, in a well-preserved quarter of the city, abundantly illustrates the normal conditions of life of the inhabitants of Ur at that time. In a rapidly changing world, where Sumerian traditions were threatened by the ascendancy of the Semitic rule and language, the scribes were busy collecting and compiling the Sumerian lore of the past. In a somewhat decadent type of script and schoolman dialect—like the low Latin of the Middle Ages—they incessantly copied religious and legal documents, lists of dynasties and lists of years of each king, astronomical records, medical recipes, school exercises of all kinds, vocabularies, mathematical, metrological tables, etc. The same learned activity developed in the schools attached to all the other famous temples in the land, and accounts for the large collection of tablets of Nippur and Sippara.



Figure 41. Statue of the Goddess Ningal, dedicated by the high priest, Enannatum, 1963 B.C.