



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Serving the Gods: An Early Dynastic temple kitchen at Tello/Girsu

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Abstract

Girsu, the modern site of Tello (southern Iraq), represents one of the earliest known urban centres of the ancient world during the 3rd millennium BCE (3000-2000 BCE). Girsu was revered as the sanctuary of the Sumerian heroic deity Ningirsu, who made the introduction of irrigation and agriculture in Sumer possible. While much is known about the gods, their roles, and rituals inside the temples, there is little textual or archaeological evidence concerning the rituals that took place to service the gods, such as daily sacrifices at the temple. During the 2019 campaigns of the British Museum excavations at Tello (ancient Girsu), a unique structure was unearthed near the Temple of Ningirsu. It is now identified as the kitchen used to prepare food for the Gods of Girsu. This stunning discovery is complete with tanours (terracotta ovens), plant and animal remains and serving dishes. In addition, a clay tablet with Early Dynastic cuneiform writing describing the importing of large quantities of barley for processing was found within the kitchen rooms. Examining these data has provided a unique opportunity to better understand the economic and ritual behaviour behind the activities related to the servitude to the Gods.

Keywords

Mesopotamia, food rituals, Tello/Girsu, temple, Early Dynastic

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