

About the Book

An expedition from the University of Chicago excavated the site of Bismaya (ancient Adab) from December 24, 1903, until late June 1905. The excavations were directed first by Edgar J. Banks and then, briefly, by Victor S. Persons. Over 1,000 artifacts, many of them early cuneiform documents, were sent to Chicago, where they are now housed in the Oriental Institute Museum.

The results of the Bismaya excavations were never properly published, and most of the material was never published at all. Banks wrote a lively and highly readable popular account, *Bismya, or the Lost City of Adab*, that appeared in 1912 and gave the impression that his field methods were considerably less than satisfactory. However, that was not the case. Banks kept a careful field diary, complete with highly accurate sketches, and sent detailed weekly reports, lavishly illustrated with his own drawings, back to Chicago. These materials show that he excavated a mid-third-millennium B.C. temple and discovered some of the world's first historical inscriptions incised on stone vessels dedicated in that structure. He also uncovered residences of the late Early Dynastic period, two Akkadian administrative centers, and a palace of the Isin Larsa/Old Babylonian period.

This monograph presents this large and significant corpus of unpublished material and includes analyses of stratigraphy, architecture, sculpture, cylinder seals, metalwork, and pottery, and discussions of chronology, the succession of the first kings of Adab, and administrative practices during the third millennium B.C.



Karen L. Wilson

Karen L. Wilson received an A.B. in fine arts, magna cum laude, from Radcliffe College, Harvard University, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

She has held the positions of curatorial assistant in the Egyptian Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, director of the Institute of Fine Arts' excavations at Tell Genj, Iraq, and Mendes, Egypt, and coordinator of curatorial affairs for the Jewish Museum, New York.

In 1988, she relocated to Chicago where she was curator and then director of the Oriental Institute Museum until 2003. She is currently a research associate at the Oriental Institute working on the publication of the University of Chicago's excavations at the site of Nippur in southern Iraq, and a research associate at the Field Museum supervising the publication of the excavations at the site of Kish, also in Iraq.

Wilson has lectured on topics of Mesopotamian art and archaeology in the United States and in Europe, and she is the author of several publications on Mesopotamian and Egyptian art and archaeology, as well as on the Oriental Institute's collections.