BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN MEMORANDA
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BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN MEMORANDA.

Through the gift of Mr. Henry G. Stevens, the Institute has come into possession of thirty-six small inscribed Babylonian and Assyrian tablets of burnt clay, which together with the Assyrian brick given to the Museum by Mr. George S. Waite some years ago, have been assembled and placed on exhibition in the East Room on the first floor of the Museum, where they form a very interesting commentary on a civilization that antedates the Christian era by many centuries.

In the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, as in the valley of the Nile, an excellent modelling clay, firm in texture and close-grained, was extremely plentiful. It furnished the material for the bricks which were used so extensively in the construction and decoration of Assyrian and Babylonian buildings, and it also was the material which received most of their writings. While soft and moist the clay could be engraved by means of a metal stylus, with the greatest ease and swiftness. After passing through the kiln, the solid terra cotta slab or cylinder was of such durability that the inscription could be lost only by the deliberate reduction of the slab to powder. Thus communications and records of all kinds inscribed on tablets, such as those included in the gift of Babylonian fragments made to the Institute by Mr. Stevens, have been preserved through the ages.

These inscriptions, including receipts for temple sacrifices, and for sheep, grain and dates, memoranda, inventories, labels, a promissory note, and a letter, are in cuneiform,
a system of writing the characters of which are composed of horizontal, vertical, or oblique triangular strokes or wedges, either alone or in combinations. This cuneiform writing was first adopted by the Babylonians after its invention by a people called Sumerians, and was used by them from about 4500 B.C. to the first century B.C. It passed from them to the Assyrians, who used it, with some changes, notably in recording the life and deeds of the kings on the terra cotta bricks which formed their palaces. Such an inscribed brick, bearing a part of the connected annals of Shalmaneser II. (859-825 B.C.), as recorded probably on the walls of his palace at Ninevah or some other Assyrian residence city, was given to the Institute in 1900 by Mr. George S. Waite of Kalamazoo. C.C.
AN ASSYRIAN RELIEF OF TIGLATH-PILESER III
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AN ASSYRIAN RELIEF OF TIGLATH-PILESER III

Through the Ralph Harman Booth Fund, the Detroit Institute of Arts has recently acquired its most important work of art recovered by archaeological excavation, a relief of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria, 745-727 B.C., receiving homage from a warrior in the presence of officials and attendants. This relief, in alabastreous limestone, comes from one of the royal palaces in the ancient city of Calah, which, after Ashur and before Nineveh and Khorsabad, was the second capital of the ancient Assyrian kingdom. Today the mound of Nimrud some twenty miles below the town of Mosul on the east bank of the river Tigris in Iraq marks the site.

Here in 1845 Austen Henry Layard began excavations for Sir Stratford Canning, British Ambassador to Turkey, which were later carried on for the Trustees of the British Museum. His first campaign at Nimrud lasted from 1845 to 1847; his second, in which he was assisted by Hormuzd Rassam, from 1849 to 1850. Hormuzd Rassam, Julius Weber, and George Smith later carried on excavations on the same site. During the forties and fifties of the last century, the public mind of Europe was thrilled by the rediscovery of the ancient Assyria of the Bible, its kings, its towns and palaces, and its sculpture in relief and in the round; and scientists were rejoicing in the decipherment of the ancient cuneiform writing which revealed not only the names of the rulers but also the accounts of their reigns, their military campaigns and their building achievements.

Layard, in his book, Nineveh and its Remains, first published in 1849, records the finding of the relief, now in Detroit, in February 1846. It stood in the South-West Palace at Nimrud, but like so many other reliefs found in this palace, it gave evidence of having been brought from another site. The finds show that the South-West Palace was in the course of construction by Esarhaddon, King of Assyria from 681 to 669 B.C., with material plundered from the Central Palace at Nimrud and elsewhere, when it was destroyed by fire and as a result much of its sculpture was mistreated in the re-using, then was damaged by the heat, and finally suffered from exposure to the elements. The present relief is remarkably well preserved. It has become separated from the adjoining slabs and the fragmentary remains of the upper register which contained figures on horseback have been cut off, probably before the lower register was brought to England.

The majority of the sculptures from Nimrud found their way into the British Museum where they may be seen today. Some went into other museums and some to individuals. The relief now in Detroit was acquired by the Honorable Robert Clive who illustrated it on the title-page of his book, Sketches between the Persian Gulf and Black Sea, published in 1852, with the following statement: “This slab from the mound of Nimroud was obtained from H. B. M. Vice-Consul at Moosul, 1850, & is now in the possession of the Hon. R. H. Clive, at Hewell.” The British Vice-Consul at Mosul at this time was Christian Rassam, brother of the excavator Hormuzd Rassam and sometimes an excavator himself.
The relief was installed at Hewell Grange, Redditch, Worcestershire, England, and remained there in comparative seclusion and oblivion until it was removed by the Honorable Ivor Miles Windsor-Clive, the present Earl of Plymouth and a descendant of the original owner. It was sold at auction in London in July 1946 and passed into the hands of H. Kevorkian in New York, from whom it was acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Such Assyrian reliefs of court scenes are not common in American collections or elsewhere. Over the years the ancient ruined palaces of the Assyrian kings have been stripped of their sculptures which are to be found in many collections, public and private, throughout the world. In American collections the Assyrian reliefs concern themselves largely with representations of mythological figures and religious scenes, often on a large scale, and, in some cases, with scenes of military campaigns. Detroit is fortunate in acquiring so handsome and so unusual a relief of a court scene.

The relief, 7 feet 10 inches in length and 4 feet in height, includes six figures. It is incomplete at both ends, showing that it formed part of a longer procession of figures; and its height confirms the fact that it was the lower of two friezes separated by a band of inscription. The subject is truly majestic. In typical Assyrian style the figures stand in one plane, rooted in place but expressing animation through their varied gestures. The King, wearing a distinguishing conical headdress, stands facing to the right, holding his bow in his left hand, and making a gesture of greeting with his right. Behind him an attendant raises a fly whisk. Before the King, in the presence of three officials advancing to the left, is prostrated a helmeted warrior — perhaps a soldier-prince vanquished on the field of battle or a conquered king of an adjoining land.

Above the relief a fragment of inscription remains. It is chiseled out in the cuneiform or wedge-shaped characters of ancient Mesopotamian writing, used by the Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and others in the Near East. It is a part of the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III, recording his military campaigns and conquests. According to a translation kindly supplied by Dr. I. J. Gelb of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, it reads: “I conquered the city of Sibur together with the cities of its environs. I carried off their booty. The man Tanus fled to the mountains. I offered pure libations to the god Marduk who dwells in Til-Ashuri.” This refers to a campaign into Media, lying northeast of Assyria, an event which occurred in 737 B.C.

The power of Assyria, once so mighty, was already on the wane when Tiglath-Pileser usurped the throne in 745 B.C. and by a program of vigorous military conquests, now to the north, now to the east, now to the west, and finally to the south, expanded the empire, curbed the power of the priests and strengthened the position of the king. In Babylonia, he was recognized as ruler and called by the special name of Pulu or Pul, the name by which he is mentioned in the Bible (II Kings 15:19). The Bible also contains reference to the campaigns of Tiglath-Pileser against Syria and Palestine, and gives glimpses of the methods pursued by the king to subdue countries, secure allegiance, and enrich Assyria—
the destruction of cities, the deportation of peoples, and the carrying off of booty and tribute. All this is confirmed in the written annals of the Assyrian kings and in the sculptured reliefs, both of which were spread upon their palace walls.

In stately processions of deities and courtiers, in portraits of the king and scenes of his campaigns, the record of the Assyrian rulers was presented in low relief carved upon limestone or alabaster slabs lining the mud-brick walls of the temples and palaces of Nineveh (Kuyunjik), Calah (Nimrud), and other royal cities. Numerous must have been the artists who carved these reliefs and some of them showed great skill in the rendering of plastic form, of ornamental detail, and of pictorial design. The newly-acquired relief in Detroit will amply repay the inquiring spectator who keeps these ideas in mind. Whereas the representations of the winged deities are often overpoweringly severe, and the scenes of the attacks upon cities, the punishment of captives, and the carrying away of booty, are restless and nerve-straining, the majestic scenes of court life, such as in the present relief, have a dignity that reveals the best in Assyrian imperialism and in Assyrian official sculpture.

As the collection of ancient Mesopotamian art in the Detroit Institute of Arts grows, it becomes possible to secure a broader and sounder idea of the accomplishment of the artists of the Ancient Near East. Whereas Mesopotamia was represented here for thirty years almost entirely by cuneiform inscriptions, a brick of Shalmaneser III from the Ziggurat of Calah (Nimrud), given by George S. Waite of Kalamazoo in 1900, and a group of small inscribed tablets, mostly business records, acquired in 1919, the past twenty years have seen the acquisition of some monuments of outstanding importance: a Sumerian sculpture in the round, a Neo-Babylonian tile relief, and lately three examples of Assyrian relief sculpture of different periods. The oldest is the winged eagle-headed genius performing a sacred rite from the North-West palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud, dating from the ninth century before Christ. This was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green in 1947. The next oldest, the largest, and to date the most important, is the relief of Tiglath-Pileser III, dating from the eighth century B.C., which has just been acquired through the Ralph Harman Booth Fund. The third relief is a fragment of a campaign scene, a man with horses, from the palace of Sennacherib, built about 700 B.C. at Kuyunjik (ancient Nineveh). This was the gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass in 1944.

FRANCIS W. ROBINSON


89
A Sculpture of Gudea, Governor of Lagash

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Of all the personages known from the most remote history of Mesopotamia, Gudea, governor of the ancient city-state of Lagash, emerges in the strongest light. He is the figure most accessible because of the fortunate preservation of superb examples of his religious literature as well as an extraordinary number of impressive works of art; collectively these materials constitute one of the high points in the history of Mesopotamian culture. In 1982, the Detroit Institute of Arts acquired a statue of Gudea (figs. 1 and 2) that has been known to the scholarly world for some sixty years. It is a very fine example of the art of Gudea’s reign but, because of its idiosyncracies, has proven also to be a highly controversial sculpture.

Gudea’s reemergence in the latter part of the nineteenth century coincides with the beginnings of our knowledge of ancient Sumer. Today, the pioneering excavations of this period seem highly romantic: for three seasons beginning in 1877 Ernest de Sarzec, a French consul interested in the Mesopotamian past, excavated in southern Iraq, then part of the Ottoman Empire, at a site called Tello, over which Gudea once ruled. It is reported that de Sarzec found the first statues of Gudea,1 but the records of the early finds lack clarity, and we can be sure that the site was dug clandestinely by the Bedouin at least into the early part of this century. De Sarzec was followed at Tello by other famous early excavators such as Gaston Cros, a military commandant, and the Abbé Henri de Genouillac, an Assyriologist. Finally, from 1931-1933, André Parrot turned his attention to this now-famous site.

Tello is located west of the Tigris River in the southeastern part of Iraq in the present province of Nasiriyah. Farther to the south are two other very important tells, or ancient mounds, whose modern names are al-Hiba and Surghul. These mounds are the present-day remains of the three major cities of Gudea’s state of Lagash: Lagash, the capital; Girsu; and Nina. Each city was surrounded
Figure 3.
Uruk Period, ca. 4100-3100 B.C., En Priest, from Warka; alabaster, mother-of-pearl, lapis, and bitumen, h. 18 cm (7 3/8 in.). Iraq Museum, Baghdad. Photo: Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.

Figure 4.
Early Dynastic Period, ca. 2900-2335 B.C., Entemena of Lagash, from Ur; diorite, h. 76 cm (29 1/2 in.). Iraq Museum, Baghdad.

Chronology of the Early History of the State of Lagash

Protohistoric Period ca. 4100—2900 B.C.
Uruk Period ca. 4100—3100 B.C.
Jamdat Nasr Period ca. 3100—2900 B.C.

Early Dynastic Period ca. 2900—2335 B.C.
Urnanša
Akurgal
Eannatum
Enannatum I
Entemena
Uru’innima

Akkadian Period ca. 2334—2154 B.C.
Sargon
Rimush
Manishtusu
Naram-Sin
Shar-kali-sharri
Shar-Su-tu-rul

Neo-Sumerian Period ca. 2153-2004 B.C.
Guti Invasion
Second Dynasty of Lagash
Urbaba
Gudea
Urningiru
Pirigme
Ur-Gar
Namshahani
Third Dynasty of Ur
Ur-Nammu
Shulgi
Amar-Suen
Shu-Sin
Ibbi-Sin
by lesser towns and villages. Due to the large amount of inscriptive material that originally came from the site of Tello, it had been thought that it was the ancient city of Lagash. Further study of the textual evidence, however, suggested that al-Hiba was actually Lagash, Tello was Girsu, and modern Surghul was Nina. Recent excavations at al-Hiba have confirmed that this site was, in fact, originally the capital.²

During the Protohistoric period, a time which saw the “emergence of civilization,” unstratified pottery fragments indicate that the site of Tello was inhabited. Although the area of occupation was probably extensive, there are unfortunately no building remains that can be associated with the pottery. The remains on the present surface of the mound at Surghul also suggest extensive occupation of Nina at this time, and we can assume that Lagash was also inhabited, although no remains from this time have yet appeared in the al-Hiba excavations.

During the Early Dynastic period, Lagash became one of the major city-states of Sumer. Its capital city encompassed an area two miles long and over one and a half miles wide. From this period, buildings, artifacts, and works of art, all of which can be associated with known historical rulers, have been recovered. It is a period from which we have the first true historical records—inscriptions concerned with contemporary earthly happenings and a concomitant expression in art that attempted to provide a pictorial description of concrete worldly events³ Lagash rulers bore the title ensi, which may be translated as lord or governor. This title does not mean that they were subservient to a particular king, or lugal, as their title would imply in a later period, but rather that they were carrying out the will of the god who owned the state of Lagash, namely Ningirsu, whose power was manifest in the thunderstorm.⁴

From about 2500 B.C., Semitic names appear in Sumerian written records indicating that as early as the Early Dynastic period Semites had infiltrated into Sumer from the north and west. By the twenty-fourth century, the Sumerian city-states had been subsumed by the Semitic Akkadian dynasty, whose first and most famous king was Sargon of Akkad. The Semitic Akkadian language came to be written in the cuneiform script developed by Sumerian scribes, and in the art of the court there appears an expression of power coupled with a new emphasis on naturalism, unknown in the previous Early Dynastic period. As within all great empires, weakness developed in the fabric of the system, and even before the last of the Akkadian kings had reigned, barbarian peoples called the Gutí descended from the eastern mountains onto the plain of Mesopotamia. Although there were ensis of Lagash under the suzerainty of the Akkadian kings, it was not until the time of the ensi Urbaba, during this period of Gutí occupation, that the state of Lagash once more assumed a prominent political role.

Although Lagash remained the capital city, the great number of finds from the site of Tello suggests that the rulers were now in residence at Girsu. Culturally, there was a fusion of the Sumerian traditions of earlier times with the best of the innovations of Akkad. For this period the general term Post-Akkadian is used, and with Urbaba begins the so-called Second Dynasty of Lagash. This dynasty, when coupled with the Third Dynasty of Ur, is also known as the Neo-Sumerian period, a time which has been called the Sumerian Renaissance.

Gudea was the second ruler of the Second Dynasty⁵ and the son-in-law of Urbaba, having married the latter’s daughter Ninkalle. He reigned during a period of relative peace and great prosperity for Lagash, with only one military campaign recorded against the neighboring states of Elam and Anshan in the Khuzistan region.

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Figure 5. Akkadian, ca. 2334-2154 B.C., King Manishtusu, from Susa; diorite, h. 94 cm (37 in.), Musée du Louvre, Paris (SB47). Photo: Musées Nationaux, Paris.
of modern Iran. Lagash must have been the major power in the southern region, since Gudea also built temples in other city-states such as Ur, Nippur, and Uruk.\(^5\)

Gudea carried on trade to the north as well as to the middle Euphrates area and even into northern Syria, from which he obtained cedar.\(^2\) Overseas trade through the gulf was extensive, continuing the contacts that had been made in much earlier times. From Dilmun, Magan, and Meluhha (probably Bahrain, Oman, and coastal India) came diorite and other stones for statues, rare woods, carnelian, lapis lazuli, gold, and copper along with other highly prized commodities not found in southern Mesopotamia.\(^5\)

Beyond the fact that these varied materials were rare and costly, they may also have had individual religious and symbolic significances and potencies. Gudea procured these materials from far away lands to serve in his prodigious building programs, which focused on the celebration of the gods of Sumer. The temples must have been sumptuous and radiant, a splendid effect perhaps not unlike the cathedral treasuries of medieval times in the West. Fortunately, poetic hymns have been preserved that describe the building of the temple of Ningirsu, called the Eninunu, in Girsu. This was only one of over thirty temples Gudea constructed in Girsu alone. The call to build the temple came to Gudea in a dream, and in this dream, too, was revealed the plan of the god’s house; Gudea is merely the one chosen to execute the divine will.\(^5\) From what remains of the varied inscriptions, an impression is gained of Gudea’s extreme piety and the weight of the religious duties imposed upon him in his role as ensi. It is precisely this same feeling that permeates his sculpture.

The statues of Gudea are part of a long tradition of the ruler image or “portrait” in the history of Mesopotamian art. The earliest example of such a statue is that of the so-called priest-king, the en, excavated in Warka, the ancient city of Uruk (fig. 3). Although not found in a well-stratified context, this alabaster figure can, on the basis of style, be attributed to the Uruk or Jamdat Nasr period in the latter part of the fourth millennium. The figure is nude from the waist up and holds his fisted hands at the waist in a rare, purposive gesture, the meaning of which is not entirely clear. The thickly massed hair, bounded by a fillet so that it resembles a cap, frames a full face marked by inset eyes composed of bitumen and shell. Already in this early period, there is a decided emphasis on a surface naturalism and a fluidity of outline most noticeable in the treatment of the upper arms and shoulders.

The life-like qualities and naturalism of the priest-king statue in this remarkable example of early Sumerian art were not maintained to the same degree in the royal sculpture of the succeeding Early Dynastic period, from which very few examples are preserved. Important for the history of the royal image is a statue of Entemena of Lagash (fig. 4), an ensi who ruled in the second half of the third millennium. The statue was actually found at Ur, which suggests that Lagash probably exerted considerable power over its southwestern neighbor at this time. The figure stands seventy-six centimeters high, even though, unfortunately, the head is missing. Nevertheless, it is clear that the ruler is represented in the guise of the typical Early Dynastic votive figurine: he is nude from the waist up, wears an elaborately fringed skirt, and holds his hands linked together at his waist in a gesture of prayer. He was clean-shaven since no portion of a beard appears across his chest, and he may well have been either bald, like many ordinary worshippers and priests, or have worn an elaborate coiffure worthy of
Although the nipples on his chest are indicated, there is little other articulation in the upper part of his body. From the waist down, he is encased in a massive, conical, fringed garment that was probably made of wool and which reaches to below mid-calf. Several important characteristics of this statue prefigure the royal images of later Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian times. Firstly, the sculptor has provided a "window"—a recessed space between the lower rounded base and the bottom of the skirt—that allows the feet and ankles to be seen. Secondly, a relatively large inscription, incised on the upper back and carried over to the front of the upper right arm, contrasts with other contemporary and earlier inscriptions on statues that contain only a short dedicatory formula. This inscription enumerates buildings Entemena constructed and, most significantly, gives the statue its name. Thirdly, the statue is made of diorite, a very hard, dark stone which, when polished, takes on a deep luster. Such dark stones were favored in subsequent royal sculpture.

A diorite statue of King Manishtusu (fig. 5), although lacking head and torso, illustrates well the nature of the royal image in the Akkadian period. The statue of Manishtusu shows a renewed interest in naturalism, which had first appeared in a rudimentary fashion in the alabaster priest-king of Protohistoric times. This naturalism is most noticeable in the subtle indication of the oblique furrows in the garment, created by the contraction of the tucked up, smooth cloth that wraps around the lower body. The breaking of the flat plane of the heavy skirt, whereby a slight play of light and shadow is introduced, captures in stone the suppleness of what was probably, in reality, a woolen material. Except for a slight swelling distinguishing the buttocks, there is no sense of the lower torso and legs beneath the garment.
Figure 9.

The hands of the statue of Manishtusu have long been in the collection of the Musée du Louvre, Paris, but only in recent years have they been joined to the body. Clasped together in the prayer gesture, they are sculpted with sharp, geometric planes demarcating the juncture between the fingers and the back of the hand; the carefully indicated fingernails, however, provide naturalistic detail.

Perhaps some idea of the appearance of the missing head of this statue of Manishtusu can be gained by a consideration of the famed bronze head from Nineveh (fig. 6), which was probably part of a statue of Naram-Sin, the successor of Manishtusu. Its singular beauty as a work of art is echoed by its extraordinary technical achievement as a hollow-cast bronze. The king wears an intricate coiffure composed of different chased geometric patterns and a full beard fashioned of varyingly sized curls arranged in tiers. This richness of texture contrasting with the smoothness of the perfectly formed and precisely articulated mouth, nose, and cheeks imbues the head with a true sense of kingly grandeur.

Following the fall of the Akkadian Dynasty, the Second Dynasty of Lagash traditionally begins with Urbaba, the predecessor of Gudea. A green diorite statue of this ensi (fig. 7), again unfortunately headless, was discovered in Tello by de Sarzec and is now in the Louvre. In contrast to what we know of Akkadian sculpture, this statue of Urbaba seems almost clumsy in the heaviness of the proportions in the upper part of the sculpture, most noticeably in the hands. This treatment is perhaps due to a continuation of Sumerian traditions in the south of Mesopotamia during the Akkadian period, yet the sinuosity of the outline of the bared right arm speaks for the lasting influence of aspects of the Akkadian
style. It has often been pointed out that such a fusion characterizes the art and culture of the Sumerian Renaissance.

Although Urbaba ruled Lagash for nineteen or twenty years, very little is preserved from his reign. In contrast, an extraordinary number of sculptures are preserved from the time of Gudea, who ruled for an equivalent number of years. These sculptures are basically of two types, namely a seated Gudea and a standing Gudea. Of the seated Gudea statues, the finest, made of a greenish diorite, was excavated at Tello by de Sarzec. It is known as the “architect with plan” (fig. 8). Gudea is depicted seated on a stool with his hands clasped in prayer. His right shoulder and arm are bare, but the rest of his body, except for his feet, is enveloped in a long garment, which passes diagonally across his chest and is held secure by a tuck over the right pectoral. Upon his lap is a large tablet on which is incised the plan of Eninnu, his temple for Ningirsu. The plan is irregular and probably represents the entire precinct, which we know from textual evidence comprised a large number of buildings. Although the statue is blocky, the sculptor has displayed an interest in suggesting the musculature in the exposed parts of the body by careful modulations of the surface planes of the stone; however, such indications never really permeate the fabric of the sculpture. Following in the Akkadian tradition are the very realistic details of the fingernails and toenails. A long inscription consisting of a cartouche and a main text covers most of the back of the figure, the stool, and the front and sides of the skirt. Composed of beautifully executed cuneiform signs, the inscription unquestionably adds a dimension of aesthetic appeal to the modern eye, which well may not have been an original intention of the sculptor.
The statues of both the seated and standing Gudea types are executed in essentially the same general style. Yet, when the entire corpus of preserved examples is viewed, the range of individual stylistic possibilities within this general framework is very broad. A comparison of the excavated diorite standing statues of the “broad-shouldered” Gudea (fig. 9) and the “narrow-shouldered” Gudea (fig. 10) is instructive. The general proportions of the former are visually heavier and blockier, whereas those of the latter are thinner with a more sinuous outline. While the folds of the garments of both statues are the same, those of the “narrow-shouldered” Gudea are more plastically accented and more impressionistically rendered. A similar comparison holds for the execution of the hands. The “window” is much narrower in the latter statue. Based on purely stylistic analysis, it has been proposed that it is possible to divide the sculptures of Gudea into three basic phases that show a development of the sculptural style from an early “geometric” to a late “naturalistic” stage. Since there are no fixed chronological points by which to order the sculptures within the reign of Gudea, it is impossible to prove the argument. Nevertheless, it is a viable working hypothesis, for there clearly is a change between the works produced during the rule of Gudea and that of his son and successor Urningirsu. A softening of forms and a more naturalistic approach is manifest in the images created during Urningirsu’s reign.

There are only two known statues of Urningirsu. One, which was not found during the official excavations at Tello but probably came from that site, is now owned by the Louvre (body) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (head) (fig. 11). The other, also not recorded as coming from an excavation, is made of diorite and is in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin (fig. 12). The stylistic differences between these statues and the “broad-shouldered”
Gudea are clearly evident, although they are less marked when they are compared with the Gudea of the "narrow shoulders." The Louvre and Metropolitan Urningirsu statue is made of chlorite, a relatively soft and easily worked stone. It is sometimes true that the carving of a soft stone in itself can lead to more easily rounded forms and greater attention to naturalistic detail. In this case, however, the reason would seem to be a stylistic preference, for similar tendencies can be perceived in the Berlin statue made of the very hard stone diorite.

The true provenance of any statue that does not come from officially sponsored excavations must always remain somewhat mysterious. The Detroit Gudea was probably illicitly excavated in 1924 at Tello, along with several other statues that quickly found their way to Paris. Parisian dealers such as Gejou and Feuardent Frères were involved with the sale of these statues, and in 1925, when the Detroit statue was first published by V. Scheil, it was in the possession of Feuardent. Since that time, the statue was in the collection of Philippe R. Stocklet in Brussels until its acquisition by the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1982. It usually has been referred to in the literature as the Stocklet Gudea.

The Detroit statue of Gudea is made of a highly attractive, in part luminous, silicate mineral, which varies in color from a deep green to an opaque white. Unquestionably, the natural beauty of the stone would have been immediately appealing and thought to enhance the efficacy of any carved image. It is the smallest of the standing Gudea types; the preserved height measures only 41 centimeters (16 1/4 inches). It is remarkably well preserved with only minor damages that do not detract from the total visual effect.

Gudea stands erect with his hands clasped at his waist in prayer. The figure, as in other statues of this ruler, wears one or more robes that encircle his body but leave exposed his right shoulder, arm, and the upper part of his chest. An exact understanding of how these garments were worn is difficult. It is clear, however, that one corner of the fabric of an outer garment is drawn up at the armpit and tucked into an upper edge of an inner robe, which passes diagonally across the chest and back of the shoulders. The edge of this inner robe has a border which is indicated by two incised lines. Beneath the exposed arm is the vertical fringed edge of the outer garment, which swings down and across the back of the figure and ends with the left-most fold of the series covering Gudea's left forearm. The lower garment is distinguished by its bottom edge, which is richly enlivened by a double band, possibly representing embroidery, and tassels. The vertical edge of this same garment is turned back so that its fringe falls to Gudea's left.

The soft and sheer cloth of the mantle clings to and contours the upper left arm and shoulder so that there is little difference between the fluid outlines of the exposed and the covered portions of the torso. The heavy right shoulder distends the robe and causes a thick vertical fold to be formed above the left forearm. The forearm, in turn, is enclosed in a series of gentle furrows, suggesting that the garment has been pushed up on the arm to free totally the hand for prayer, as symbolized by the clasped hands (fig. 16). The left hand is placed gently over the back of the right, which is balled into a fist. The fingers are slender and tubular, without any articulation of the knuckles, even though the fingernails are delicately and realistically rendered. On Gudea's back, the garment is equally revealing of the upper body so that the exceedingly large shoulders are contrasted with the very narrow waist.

The Detroit Gudea, like most Gudea statues, wears a tight-fitting cap with a broad brim decorated with a series of curls or knobs, resembling what today is called...
Persian lamb's wool, executed in relief (fig. 14). This particular cap, however, differs from the more usual type; the individual curls lack an incised spiral line and each row of curls is offset from the row above. The five rows of curls on the brim form a diagonal pattern rather than a vertical one. Another cap with curls that are not incised can be found on a head in the University Museum, Philadelphia (fig. 15).

Many statues of Gudea are characterized by an extremely short neck so that the head seems to rest directly on the shoulders. This is not true of either the Detroit statue or the Berlin statue of Gudea's son Urningirsu (fig. 12). The Detroit Gudea has a well-formed neck and an oval face with the main emphasis on the eyes, its most prominent feature, ringed by heavy curving lids. The eyes are surrounded by curving eyebrows, which meet on the bridge of the nose and are accentuated by incised lines in a herring-bone pattern. The nose is somewhat full with a rounded bridge and a slight hook and is clearly set off from the cheeks by deep grooves on either side of the nostrils. The mouth is full and carefully modeled so that the transition from the lips to the planes of the face flows smoothly. In many of the sculpted heads of Gudea, the chin is strong and pronounced, but in the Detroit work it is executed in a less forceful manner.

On the back of the Detroit Gudea is a Sumerian inscription, carved in cuneiform, which extends over part of the right shoulder and onto the left side of the robe (see figs. 2 and 13). The upper part, the cartouche, gives the name of the ruler, while the lower, main text speaks of the reasons for the creation of this particular statue. The cartouche translates as follows:

Gudea, city ruler of Lagash, the man who built the temple of Ningishzida and the temple of Geshtinanna.

The text reads:

Gudea, city ruler of Lagash, built to Geshtinanna, the queen a-azi-mu-a, the beloved wife of Ningishzida, his queen, her temple in Girsu. He created for her [this] statue. “She granted the prayer,” he gave it a name for her and brought it into her temple.

The same inscription, except for the name of the statue, is repeated on two other statues, namely, an almost completely preserved standing statue of Gudea in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, and another very well-preserved standing statue of Gudea, holding an aryallos from which waters flow, in the Louvre. The Copenhagen statue is named Geshtinanna has looked favorable upon him, and the Louvre statue is called Geshtinanna has granted him life.

Only two divinities are mentioned in the text, Ningishzida and his consort Geshtinanna, personifications of the power in the trees and in the grapevine. Ningishzida is the personal god of Gudea and introduces and intercedes for him before a greater god, as is shown on a relief in Berlin (fig. 17). Geshtinanna is commonly known as the sister of Dumuzi, but beginning with the time of Gudea she becomes the wife of Ningishzida. In the inscription it is stated that Gudea built the temples of Ningishzida and Geshtinanna. A temple to the goddess had already existed under Gudea's predecessor Urbaba, but a new temple was erected for her in her new role as consort of the ruler's personal god. The temples of Geshtinanna and Ningishzida were apparently located near the southeast edge of the city.
The iconography of the Detroit statue is thus relatively simple: the sculpture is dedicatory and votive. It was intended to be placed in the temple of Geshtinanna so that Gudea might be in a state of everlasting prayer to the goddess. His power and his ability to perform as ensi, the vicar of god and shepherd of his people, stem from an interaction between the divinity and the earthly ruler. Although Gudea is certainly alert, an aura of passiveness and receptiveness emanates from the statue. This is created, above all, by the position of the hands. Clasped hands are synonymous with prayer, not so much in the sense that the gesture “means” prayer but rather that the gesture symbolizes the proper attitude for prayer. It is a gesture that is neither active, nor purposive, nor dynamic.

The prayer gesture chosen by the sculptor for this statue is unlike that of any other statue of Gudea. Rather than the clasped hands commonly found on most statues, here the closed left hand is partially covered by the open right hand. Variants of the prayer gesture are rare. For example, a sculpture of Lamgi-mari of Mari (Aleppo Museum, Syria), a king of the Early Dynastic period, grasps with his left hand the wrist of his closed right hand.25 The Detroit figure’s gesture is found elsewhere in the Gudea period in representations of deities in relief sculpture and on one statue in the round, supposedly of the god Alla.26 In the Berlin relief (fig. 17), two deities, one before and one behind the enthroned figure, are shown with their hands held in this reverent gesture, although the god on the left holds a staff as well in his left hand, as does the god Alla.27 Unfortunately, the material at hand is not complete enough to allow for speculation concerning the nuances of meaning implied in variant ancient gestures.

At no other time in the history of the ancient Near East do we have such a wealth of sculpture in the round that can be dated to a period comprising only nineteen years. For such a time span in an art that appeared essentially before the
development of a real self-conscious aestheticism, the range of artistic expression is particularly broad. Stylistically, the Detroit Gudea, with its slender canon of proportions and its tendencies towards naturalism, is closer to the works depicting his son Urningirsu than it is to the more familiar heavy and blocky diorite sculptures of Gudea and, thus, may have been made late in his reign. A sculpture of Idi-ilum (Musée du Louvre), a statue of a local ruler, during the time of Shulgi of the Third Dynasty of Ur, which dates very close to the reign of Gudea and Urningirsu, is of particular interest in this regard. It has an attenuation of forms and slender proportions, characteristics similar to the Detroit Gudea and the sculptures of his son. Furthermore, the tassels of Idi-ilum’s garment are individually rendered and raised in relief to form a horizontal border at the bottom of the garment, thereby making the treatment of the garment of the Detroit sculpture less singular. Among the oeuvre specifically from Gudea’s reign, the Detroit piece is not dissimilar to such works as the “narrow-shouldered” statue (fig. 10), and it is particularly close to the small head of Gudea in Philadelphia (fig. 15), with which it enjoys the same extraordinary sensitivity.

The controversy surrounding the Detroit statue arises over the fact that some scholars have considered the piece spurious, the work of a modern sculptor; such an accusation raises a host of problems. The authenticity of the Detroit Gudea revolves around four considerations: technical, iconographic, stylistic, and inscriptive aspects of the statue. All must be examined and considered together since no one of them can alone answer the question of the piece’s authenticity.

Technically important is the stone from which the statue was made and the manner of its carving. The Detroit Gudea was examined several times during the period when it was offered on the art market. The method of carving and the apparent aging of the stone are perfectly consistent with other ancient works. No tool has been employed, for example, that would have been unknown in antiquity. Nor is the fact that it is the smallest of the Gudea statues at all disconcerting. Its size seems quite irrelevant for a determination of its authenticity, since there are other both large and small statues of Gudea.

There are two levels of iconography that are pertinent. One concerns the total meaning of the image and its constituent parts. The second deals with the lowest level of iconographic interpretation, namely, descriptive elements of pattern, dress, etc. Iconography can aid in the determination of a forgery, if it can be proven that certain iconographical aspects are meaningless or inappropriate, or postdate the purported time of execution of the statue. In dealing with the art of remote antiquity, however, sufficient comparative material that allows for an understanding of the range of possibilities is frequently lacking. The Detroit Gudea fits well into the history of the ruler portrait image; only the hand gesture is singular. Yet this gesture is known from representations of minor divinities and does not seem to be an inappropriate gesture for the ensi to assume in a reverent state. In order for a forger working before 1925 to have represented Gudea in this way, he would have had to have known either the Berlin stele or the statue of Alla. The latter, however, was not excavated until 1929. Considering the rarity of this particular form of the gesture and the fact that the standard gesture of clasped hands was well attested at the time, it seems almost a certainty that a forger would have chosen the latter.

Although the tasseled fringe on the bottom of the mantle worn by the Detroit Gudea and the pattern of curls in the headdress are unknown from the other extant statues of Gudea, their appearance here is totally believable and in no way strikes a jarring or incompatible note.

Stylistic considerations when applied to the determination of a forgery are more vexing since they are in many cases subjective. Their use is dependent upon one of the basic tenets of art history, which is that a work of art can only be an expression of its own time. This is true even when the creative efforts of a great master seem to break away from prevailing traditions. When the range of style in the sculpture in the period from Urbaba through Urningirsu is examined, there is little in the style of the Detroit Gudea that cannot be justified. The variations here are minor and are not unexpected, yet certainly point to the existence in Gudea’s workshops of a fine artist.
Of all the considerations pertinent to a determination of the authenticity of the Detroit Gudea, the inscription is perhaps the most telling. It has been studied in detail by Bendt Alster, who summarizes his arguments with “we must inevitably conclude that Statue M, the Stocklet Gudea presently kept in Bruxelles, is antique.” 33 Alster clearly demonstrates that in 1925 it would have been next to impossible for a forger to have created this inscription. Alster explains that the inscription contains a pun and intricacies of Sumerian grammar that would have been unknown at the time the Detroit Gudea was found.

The Detroit statue of Gudea is one of the masterpieces of ancient Near Eastern art. It has been aptly and succinctly described by Henri Frankfort, the greatest of ancient Near Eastern art historians, who says “This is a small statuette of green serpentine [sic], light and graceful; this effect is achieved by an inner logic which combines the properties of the semi-translucent stone, the elegance of the contour, the contrast between the broad shoulder and the narrow waist, and even the unusual gesture.” 34 As such it is a most welcome addition to the rich collections of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

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Figure 17. Neo-Sumerian, ca. 2153-2004 B.C., Two Fragments of a Relief; limestone, h. 70 cm (27 ½ in.). Staatliche Museen, East Berlin.
Notes

1. There were rumors that the statues had been found prior to de Sarzeau’s coming to Tello and that he had acquired them from one Charles Astar. For the fascinating history of the early excavations, see A. Parrot, Tello singt campagnes de fouilles (1877-1933) (Paris, 1919), 14-33.


3. The new interest in contemporary events is epitomized in the stèle of Eannatum (Musée du Louvre, Paris), which shows the victory of this ruler over the neighboring city-state of Umma in a visual statement that is both specific and universal, yet at the same time supernatural.


5. According to a recent study, it now appears that Gudea’s reign may have been even shorter than originally thought and may have overlapped with the reign of Ur-Nammu, the first king of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112-2095 B.C.). This alters somewhat the view of the Post-Akkadian period and the unique sculptural achievements of Gudea and Urimlingsu. These two rulers of the Second Dynasty of Lagash would now be contemporary, for the most part, with the early part of the Third Dynasty of Ur. This would also mean that the expulsion of the Gutu by Utuengal of Uruk probably occurred early in Gudea’s reign. See P. Steinkeller, “The Date of Gudea and his Dynasty,” Journal of Cuneiform Studies (in press).


7. For the trade of Lagash under Gudea, see Falkenstein 1966 (note 2), 46-54.


10. A type of royal hair style is suggested by the gold helmet of Meskalandum from the Royal Cemetery of Ur and the statue of King Lamgi-mari of Mari (Aleppo Museum, Syria), on the Euphrates in present-day Syria. For illustrations, see W. Orthmann, Der Alte Orient, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 14 (Berlin, 1975), plates 30 and 47. Apparently, the hairstyle was associated with military dress and not with the simple-fleeced skirt, a civilian garment.

11. In this earliest of named statues, the appellation is short and reads simply Entemal Enmetena. In later periods the names became more extensive. The Entemena inscription is translated in E. Solberger and J.R. Kupper, Inscriptions royales sumériennes et akkadiennes (Paris, 1979), 60.

12. The statue of King Manishtusu was made in Akkad, but was found in Susa in Iran, where it had been brought as booty by an Elamite conqueror in the second part of the second millennium. For an analysis of Akkadian art, see P. Amiet, L’art d’Assyrie au Musée du Louvre (Paris, 1976).

13. A collection of photographs of most of the extant Gudea statues, including many that the author deems spurious, can be found in F. Johansen, Statues of Gudea Ancient and Modern, vol. 6 of Mesopotamia, Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology (Copenhagen, 1978).

14. This was suggested in a paper delivered by Sally Johnson in a graduate seminar at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in the fall of 1979.

15. V. Schell, “Une nouvelle statue de Gudea,” Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale 22 (1925): 41-43. For information concerning the statues acquired from the art market, see Parrot 1919 (note 1), 27; and Johansen 1978 (note 13), 30-32.

16. The identification of silicate minerals is sometimes difficult. A very small sample (less than 25 micrograms) taken from the inside of a hole on the bottom of the statue was submitted to x-ray diffraction analysis at the Conservation Services Laboratory of the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1984. C.W. Carriere identified this sample as paragonite (sodium aluminum silicate hydroxide), a mineral belonging to the mica group.

17. The head had been broken from the body at the neck and has now been reattached. The hands have suffered some damage—the surface of the left hand is abraded across the knuckles—but the greatest loss has been to the lower part of the statue. Except for the heel of the left foot, both feet are missing and most of the base is destroyed. At some time during the statue’s history, a square hole was cut in the bottom of the statue so that a rod could be inserted to secure the statue to a base for display. This rod was apparently secured, in turn, by a metal pin inserted into a small hole drilled horizontally at the back of the statue just below the bottom of the figure’s robe. Some specific measurements of parts of the statue are as follows: width at back of robe, 11.4 cm (4 ½ in.); width through the elbows, 13.5 cm (5 in.); width through shoulders, 11 cm (4 ½ in.); width of cap including the brim, 6.7 cm (2 ½ in.); height of face to the bottom of the cap, 4.5 cm (1 ¾ in.); thickness of hat including brim, 6.1 cm (2 in.); thickness of the body at the folded hands, 8.2 cm (3 ½ in.); thickness of the preserved base, 5.4 cm (2 ½ in.).

18. In the Early Dynastic period, a garment that leaves bare the shoulder and arm is primarily worn by women; however, in one instance, namely the statue of Lamgi-mari of Mari, it is worn by the king. The ruler as warrior also wears such a garment in order to free the arm for combat, see Orthmann 1975 (note 10), plates II, 22, 30, 89b.

19. In some photographs the waist seems narrower than intended since a vertical dark line in the stone falsely suggests the side and waist.


22. Geshtinanna must die and descend into the netherworld to replace her dead brother, Dumuzi, who thereby is allowed to live for half a year. In this cycle of myths concerning Dumuzi and the goddess Inanna, Ningishzida is sometimes identified with Dumuzi. See T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness, A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, 1976), 61-63, 67-69; and Falkenstein 1966 (note 2), 73-74, 104.


27. Orthmann 1975 (note 10), plate X.

28. Strommenger (1960, note 26): 64) has remarked that all the sculptures of Gudea display an astonishing similarity. On the contrary, to the present writer at least, it is the diversity that is remarkable.

29. J-M. Durand (“La situation historique des ShakkanaKKu: nouvelle approche,” *Marianne interdisciplinaires* 4 [Paris, 1985]: 147-172) has studied the shakkanakku, the local rulers of the city of Mari on the Euphrates. He has proposed a chronology of the rulers that affixes more precisely than previously known the position of the local rulers in relation to the kings of southern Mesopotamia. Sculptures of three of the shakkanakku are preserved: Ishnup-Ilum (Ishdub-El) (Aleppo Museum), Ili-Ilum (Iddin-El) (Musée du Louvre), and Puzur-Eshtar (body, Istanbul Museum; head, Staatliche Museen, Berlin). Durand believes they are contemporary with Gudea, Shulgi, and Amar-Suen respectively.


31. Apparently, Johansen (1978 [note 13], 23) finds the size of the figure problematic.

32. Only B. Schlossman (“Metropolitan and Provincial Styles in Mesopotamia and the Surrounding Lands in the Late Third and Early Second Millennium B.C.” [Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975]) has considered this statue from a stylistic point of view. To the present writer, some of her observations that clearly point out the unique features of the statue cannot justifiably be used to question its authenticity. However, she singles out a very curious aspect of the composition of the figure, that is, “the peculiar misalignment of the vertical axis seen in the back view.” No matter whether this highly sophisticated work is by the hand of either an ancient or modern sculptor, this is a difficult trait to explain.

33. Alster (1978 [note 21], 56) comes to a similar conclusion concerning the Louvre and Metropolitan statue of Urningirshu, which has also been considered a modern forgery by Johansen.