

PORTRAIT OF A RULER: THE PORTRAYAL OF UR-NINGIRSU IN STATUARY AND INSCRIPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The most famous ruler of the Second Dynasty of Lagash during the twenty-second century B.C.E. is Gudea, who is immortalised in approximately twenty surviving statues. By contrast, only four known statues of Gudea's son and heir, Ur-Ningirsu, have survived to the present day, although this is still an impressive amount of sculpture in the round for any Mesopotamian ruler. One of these statues survives only as a fragment of a shoulder. Each of the other three statues has some unusual or unique iconographic feature when compared to contemporary royal sculpture in the round. This paper will examine the relevance of these features and what messages they convey about Ur-Ningirsu. Ur-Ningirsu's royal inscriptions will also be analysed to reveal what these texts communicate. The messages conveyed in the two types of media – artistic and textual – can then be compared to see if they form one uniform statement.

INTRODUCTION

Ur-Ningirsu was the son and successor of Gudea of Lagash.¹ He was the eighth ruler of the Second Dynasty of Lagash, circa twenty-second century B.C.E., and his rule appears to have been rather short and uneventful – only seven year names are known, and most of these refer to his coming to power or to officials who were chosen during the year.² Four statues, one of which survives only as a fragment, and ten royal

¹ There were two rulers of the Second Dynasty of Lagash by the name of Ur-Ningirsu – Ur-Ningirsu I, the major, and Ur-Ningirsu II, son of Gudea (Maeda 1988). Unless otherwise specified, Ur-Ningirsu II, son of Gudea, will be referred to throughout simply as Ur-Ningirsu for convenience.

² The most up-to-date compilation of year names for the rulers of the Second Dynasty of Lagash is available online at the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI). For the year names of Ur-Ningirsu, see CDLI (2016a).

inscriptions survive from his reign. The purpose of this work is to examine how Ur-Ningirsu is portrayed in these statues and royal inscriptions. Visual and textual sources can provide information which is either complementary or distinct from each other (Winter 2010a:72). Therefore, instead of looking for direct or perfect matches between the two types of sources, a “mental background” should be sought (Suter 2000:8). As Asher-Greve and Westenholz (2013:9) argue, “combined analysis of textual sources, visual images and other material and contextual evidence produces a more differentiated picture ... than focussing on images or on texts alone”. A fuller picture of Ur-Ningirsu and his rule can therefore emerge if both types of source – textual and visual – are studied. First the statuary will be discussed, and thereafter the royal inscriptions.

THE STATUARY

Gudea is well represented in statuary, with over 20 known statues representing him, although the exact amount is debated based on identity (whether it is Gudea who is represented or another royal figure from the Second Dynasty of Lagash) and authenticity (whether statues from the art market are forgeries).³ Few other statues of rulers of the Second Dynasty of Lagash survive. According to Spycket (1981:197) only Ur-Bau, Gudea’s father-in-law and predecessor, Gudea, and Ur-Ningirsu are represented in statuary, but a small statue representing Nammahni, the final ruler of the dynasty, is also known⁴ (Suter 1991–1993:66). Because so little statuary other than that of Gudea survives from this dynasty, much can be learned from the extant statues.

There are four definite statues of Ur-Ningirsu,⁵ identified as such by inscriptions upon them, although the authenticity of each has been questioned.⁶ The first, AO 9504

³ For example, Suter (2000:29) notes 21 statues, Colbow (1987:121–147) catalogues 20, and Edzard (1997:29–67) provides the inscriptions for 26 statues. See Muscarella (2005) for the difficulties with the subjectivity of judging the Gudea, and therefore the Second Dynasty of Lagash, statuary as authentic.

⁴ See below under Ur-Ningirsu Statue C (VA 8788).

⁵ Three further statues have been suggested. The Harvard Art Museums lists a gypsum head as representing Ur-Ningirsu (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, Object Number 1943.1068), but according to Johansen (1978:40)

and MMA 47.100.86, which will be referred to in this paper as Ur-Ningirsu Statue A, is shared between the Louvre in Paris, which originally housed the body of the statue, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which originally held the head. The second, VA 8790, and third, VA 8788, which will be referred to as Ur-Ningirsu Statue B and Ur-Ningirsu Statue C respectively, are both housed today in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. A fourth statue in the Iraq Museum, IM 45062, which will be referred to as Ur-Ningirsu Statue D, survives only as a fragment of an arm with an inscription (Edzard 1959:25). Because so little of this fourth statue survives, it is impossible to know how it originally looked, and it can therefore not be used in this study.⁷ Ur-Ningirsu Statues A, B and C will be discussed in turn.

this head is a modern forgery. Meissner (1928–1929:6) suggests that AO 14, a bearded head from Telloh now in the Louvre, may be Ur-Ningirsu, but this head dates to the Akkadian period (Amiet 1976:129, 97 Nr. 30), and therefore cannot represent him. A foundation peg in the form of a basket carrier in the Yale Babylonian Collection YBC 2248 is inscribed with a dedication to the goddess Ninmarki by a ruler called Ur-Ningirsu. Barrelet (1974:92–93), van Buren (1931:20), and Ellis (1968:62) attribute this foundation peg to Ur-Ningirsu II, but these works were published before the identification of two rulers of the Second Dynasty of Lagash by the name of Ur-Ningirsu (Maeda 1988), and because the inscription mentions no filiation with Gudea, Steible (1991:126) and Edzard (1997:7) date it instead to the reign of Ur-Ningirsu I. The basket-carrier depicted would therefore represent Ur-Ningirsu I, and not Ur-Ningirsu II, son of Gudea.

⁶ Johansen (1978:39) argues against Ur-Ningirsu Statue A's authenticity, stating that "Genouillac could not get the relief style to harmonize with Ur III's style without coming to the conclusion that Ur-Ningirsu is a forgery". However, de Genouillac (1936:114) does not conclude that the statue is a forgery, but rather that it is not a typical example of the Neo-Sumerian period, which he posits may be due to cultural imports. Furthermore, Alster (1978:58–59), based on the inscription of the statues, argues that the statue is authentic, a view also held by Suter (2012b:69). Braun-Holzinger (1991:270) suggests Ur-Ningirsu Statue B may be a forgery, while Suter states that this statue's authenticity is "doubtful" (2000:185) or "dubious" (1998:74). Suter (2000:185 n. 96) cites "several unusual and suspicious features: the inscription, the treatment of the eyes, and the beard" as reasons to question the statue's authenticity. However, only half of the inscription survives (Edzard 1997:186), and, as will become evident, the unusual iconographic features are no argument against the authenticity of this statue. The authenticity of Ur-Ningirsu Statue C is not questioned, but its attribution to Ur-Ningirsu II is cautioned by Steible (1991:367–368).

⁷ The four statues are all discussed in Braun-Holzinger (1991) where Ur-Ningirsu Statue A corresponds to St 136, Statue B to St 137, Statue C to St 138, and Statue D to St 139. The three statues discussed in this work are also discussed in Barrelet (1974) where Ur-Ningirsu Statue A corresponds to F. 78, Statue B to F. 79, and Statue C to F. 80.

Ur-Ningirsu Statue A (AO 9504 and MMA 47.100.86)

Figure 1: Ur-Ningirsu Statue A (Aruz and Wallenfels 2003:432 Catalogue Number 307)

The first statue under discussion, Ur-Ningirsu Statue A (Figure 1), represents Ur-Ningirsu wearing a wide-brimmed cap and clasping his hands before his chest in a gesture of veneration or humility.⁸ This posture recalls Early Dynastic traditions in which votive statues, both male and female, either standing or sitting, held their hands before their chests. These statues were thought to embody the essence of the person depicted, and were placed in temples as substitutes for continuous worship or

⁸ See, for example, Choksy (2002:9–13) for more on this gesture.

reverence to the deities on the behalf of those they represented (Hansen 2003:29; Moortgat 1969:37).⁹ With regards to the Gudea statuaries, Winter (2010b:154–161) argues that information in the inscriptions of these statues reveals important visual signifiers of Gudea’s power and ability to rule. The size of the statues, which were generally life-size or slightly smaller, was meant to portray Gudea’s superiority and ability to rule, the breadth of his body and chest were meant to portray abundance, and by extension Gudea’s ability to provide abundance, his full-muscled arms were meant to portray strength, and both his broad face and wide ears as well as his large eyes were meant to portray attentiveness to the deities. According to Hansen (1988:12–13), statues of Ur-Ningirsu differ stylistically from those of Gudea in that they are more naturalistic and have softer forms,¹⁰ but Aruz and Walfels (2003:431) state that the “head of this statue [Ur-Ningirsu Statue A], its eyes, brows, mouth, and chin, as well as the pose of the body and the hand position, conform almost exactly to the stylistic and formal representation of the many statues of Gudea”. Even if the Ur-Ningirsu statues are more naturalistic than the Gudea statues, the characteristics described by Winter are still manifested in the Ur-Ningirsu statuaries, and the same symbolism would therefore apply, establishing Ur-Ningirsu’s ability to rule through his strength and submission to the deities.

The figure of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A therefore conforms to Sumerian figural sculptural traditions. What is unusual about this statue is its base. Eight figures circle this base, each kneeling and holding a basket of unidentifiable goods. According to Colbow (1987:49), relief decoration on the base or socle of a statue first appears during the Akkadian Period. Sb 48, an Akkadian Period statue excavated in the temple of Inshushinak at Susa and now housed in the Louvre (Amiet 1976:83 Fig. 15a, 84 Fig. 15b), has supine figures circling its base. The statue is generally identified as representing Manishtushu (e.g., Amiet 1972:103; Foster 2016:189), although Thomas (2015:111) attributes it to Puzur-Inshushinak, “sometimes dated from Manishtushu

⁹ For more on these statues, see Evans (2012). For Early Dynastic royal votive statues, see Marchesi and Marchetti (2011).

¹⁰ Although this may be the result of the Ur-Ningirsu Statue A being carved from chlorite, a softer stone and therefore more workable stone than the diorite of the Gudea statues.

period”, and Amiet (1976:127) dates it to “l’epoque de Manishtusu”.¹¹ Foster (2016:189) identifies the figures circling the base of this statue as “defeated enemies”. A similar supine figure is depicted on Sb 9101, the fragment of a base of a statue (Amiet 1972:106 Fig. 8), and must represent the same ideology as the figures circling the Manishtushu statue. According to Old Babylonian texts describing statues of Rimush set up in the courtyard of the *Ekur*,¹² the base of these statues were engraved with images of “the fallen ones”, “the most important individuals that were slain in the field” (Buccellati 1993:61). Additionally, the lower pedestals upon which the statues were placed were further engraved with depictions of “the rulers who had just been defeated, led by their very protective deities who had failed to protect them in battle” (Buccellati 1993:60), further emphasizing the king’s military might. The description of the figures on the base of the Rimush statues, “the fallen ones” may also identify the supine figures on the base of the Manishtushu statue as fallen enemies.

Colbow’s (1987:49) attestation that relief decoration on the base or socle of a statue first appeared during the Akkadian period is unjustified. Dating from the Early Dynastic period IM 19752, the large statue from the Abu Temple of Tell Asmar, is decorated with Imdugud (Frankfort 1939: Pl. 1, 6). Additionally, AO 2350 and 3288, a circular base from the Temple of Ningirsu in Girsu may have originally been the base of a statue (Strommenger 1962:63, Abb. 44). Ur-Ningirsu Statue A therefore finds precedence not only in the Akkadian period, but also in the Early Dynastic period.

From the Neo-Sumerian period itself the closest comparanda for the Ur-Ningirsu base is AO22126, Gudea Statue N in which the ruler holds a vase from which water overflows into identical vases which circle the base of the statue (Johansen 1978:Pl. 64–70). The overflowing vases decorating the base of the Gudea statue, however, are formally and ideologically different to the figures circling the base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A. According to Suter (2000:58), Gudea Statue N “shows the ruler in possession of prosperity symbolized by the overflowing vase”. The vases decorating the base of the Gudea Statue N therefore represent Gudea’s prosperity, and by extension his ability to provide for his people. Conversely, the figures decorating the

¹¹ “The era of Manishtushu”.

¹² See Buccellati (1993) for more on these statues and inscriptions.

base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A are generally thought to represent tribute bearers from conquered or vassal tribes (e.g., Colbow 1987:49; Barrelet 1974:91; Moortgat 1969:64; Spycket 1981:196). There are no references in text to any battles fought during Ur-Ningirsu's reign,¹³ but there are during the reign of Gudea. The inscription on AO 2 Gudea Statue B vi:64–69 (Johansen 1978:Pl. 19–22) mentions that Gudea defeated the cities of Anshan and Elam (Edzard 1997:35 Gudea E3/1.1.7.StB), and one of his year names is “Year in which Anshan was smitten by weapons”.¹⁴ Also from the Second Dynasty of Lagash are two fragments of relief, AO 57, AO 26428 A (de Sarzec and Huezey 1884–1912:Pl. 26.10b), and AO 57, AO 26428 B (de Sarzec and Huezey 1884–1912:Pl. 26.10a). The first represents bound figures of conquered enemies, while the second depicts two figures who Sarzec and Heuzey (1884–1912:222) describe as a chief and a warrior engaged in a struggle. There is, however, no ruler of the Second Dynasty of Lagash who is depicted as a victorious warrior, as for example Naram-Sin is on his famous victory stele Sb 4 (Amiet 1976: 93–95 Nr. 27a–c). Although war and subjects related to war are not common during the Second Dynasty of Lagash, they are not unknown, and the figures decorating the base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A may represent conquered foes as tribute bearers. However, Evans (2003:419) argues, based on the clothing of the figures and the scarcity of depictions of war from the period, that these figures “are not conquered enemies but the bearers of ritual offerings for the statue of Ur-Ningirsu as part of its maintenance.” Gudea Statue B i:1–16 records the provisions to be supplied for the care and maintenance of the statue, “1 litre of beer, 1 litre of bread, ½ litre of flour (used) for spreading, (and) ½ litre of emmer groats being the regular offering for the statue of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš” (Edzard 1997:31 Gudea E3/1.1.7.StB). The base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A would therefore be a visual equivalent of the provisions listed on Gudea Statue B, perhaps functioning to replace the recording of the provisions in the text. The two figures at the front of the base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A each wear a plumed headdress

¹³ According to the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI), one of Ur-Ningirsu's year names is “Year Uruk was destroyed” (CDLI 2016a), but Ur-Ningirsu is not mentioned on AO 4311, the tablet which records this year name, and according to Thureau-Dangin (1912:75) the year name refers to a battle between Uruk and the Gutians.

¹⁴ For Gudea's year names, see CDLI (2016b).

which Evans (2003:424 n. 20) compares to AO 221, the *Figure aux Plumes* (Moortgat 1969: Pl. 30), dating to the Early Dynastic period, arguing that this headdress “may be related to the iconography of Ningirsu, which would strengthen the cultic association of the figures” on the base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A. A similar headdress is also depicted on an Early Dynastic chlorite vessel from Adab, fragments of which are now in the Oriental Institute and the Eski Şark Museum, A195A and EŞ 3114 (Aruz and Wallenfels 2003:333 Fig. 86), where it is worn by four figures. The figures on this vessel appear to be involved in some kind of procession approaching a shrine; the remains of this building survive on the left side of EŞ 3144. While the inclusion of the headdress on the Adab vessel may therefore argue against it having some association with Ningirsu, who was not associated with the city-state of Adab, it may further support some kind of cultic association.

AO 47, a base of a statue with sitting tributaries (de Sarzec and Heuzey 1884–1912:Pl. 21.5), also dating to the Second Dynasty of Lagash and excavated in the palace in Girsu, may be ideologically linked to Ur-Ningirsu Statue A. The figures have on their knees what Parrot (1948:209) describes as tribute, and what de Sarzec and Heuzey (1884–1912:162) describe as writing tablets. These figures may instead be holding provisions for the statue which would have been placed above them, representing a three-dimensional example of the two-dimensional figures surrounding the base of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A. Parrot (1948:209, Pl. 46) dates AO 47 to the reign of Ur-Ningirsu, and according to Demange et al. (1995:49), the base must have supported a statue of Ur-Ningirsu. This suggests that figures decorating the base of a statue and symbolically supplying provisions for that statue is peculiar to the reign of Ur-Ningirsu.

Ur-Ningirsu Statue A therefore represents a ruler in continuous worship of the gods, and whose needs are provided for by the figures on the base of the statue, allowing for this continuous worship. This symbolizes Ur-Ningirsu’s piety, and his ability to provide for and to protect his people by his supplication to the deities.

Ur-Ningirsu Statue B (VA 8790)



Figure 2: Ur-Ningirsu Statue B (Author)

The posture of Ur-Ningirsu Statue B (Figure 2) is the same as that of Ur-Ningirsu Statue A in that Ur-Ningirsu is represented clasping his hands before his chest, demonstrating Ur-Ningirsu's piety and supplication to the deities. The statue is unusual for a statue of a ruler of the Second Dynasty of Lagash because, instead of being clean shaven and bald or wearing a wide-brimmed cap, Ur-Ningirsu is portrayed with a beard and a distinctive hairstyle in which individual strands of wavy hair end in curls. According to Spycket (1981:196), folds under Ur-Ningirsu's eyes suggest that he was sick, and this is why he wears the beard. However, Winter (2010b:159–160) argues that the large eyes represented in the Gudea statuaries are symbolic of Gudea's attentiveness to the deities, as well as the deities' favourable inclination towards Gudea. The folds under Ur-Ningirsu's eyes may be a by-product of the large size of the eyes, and may therefore be further emphasis of Ur-Ningirsu's piety and capability to rule.

According to Aruz and Wallenfels (2003:434) the beard and hairstyle of Ur-Ningirsu Statue B “recalls Akkadian traditions by displaying an exuberant beard and coiffure”. The short, curly hair and beard can be identified as an Akkadian style (Börker-Klähn 1972–1975:3) as they are first represented in Akkadian art, as for example on the small heads of statues Sb 91, AO 2111, AO 10922, Sb 6848 and Oriental Institute A 11402 (Amiet 1976:105 Nr. 41, 78 Nr. 7, 78 Nr. 9, 87 Nr. 18; Frankfort 1943:Pl. 72). Suter (2000:185 n. 93) argues that because these statues are “minor works of art compared with the royal statuary of this period, they probably represent officials and not kings”. Akkadian rulers are generally represented with a long beard and with their hair bound in a bun, like Sargon on the Sargon Stele Sb 1 (Amiet 1976:73 Nr. 1c), Naram-Sin on the stele fragment from Pir Hussein EŞ 1027 (Aruz and Wallenfels 2003:203 Catalogue Number 130), and the bronze head from Nineveh IM 11331 (Strommenger 1962: Pl. XXII–XXIII).

Although originating in the Akkadian period, the hairstyle and beard are not restricted to this period, as they are also represented during the Neo-Sumerian period. For example, on the Ur-Nammu Stele, a drummer on B 16676.28A, wrestler on B 16676.29, and figures which have not been placed within the reconstruction of the stele on B16676.44, B 16676.50, B 16676.51 and B 16676.53 all sport this hairstyle and beard (Canby 2001: Pl. 38.28a, Pl. 43.29, Pl. 47.44, Pl. 49.50, Pl. 49.51, Pl. 50.53). While most of these examples represent non-royal figures, Canby (2001:41) suggests that B 16676.44, based on the clothing as well as the hairstyle and beard the figure wears, represents the crown prince.

From Lagash itself, the hairstyle and beard are also worn by a figure on the fragment of relief AO 57, AO 26428B mentioned above, as well as figures depicted on fragments of the Gudea stelae, AO 5482, AO 243A, AO 243B (Suter 2000:382 ST.49, 384 ST.50, 384 ST.51). Only the heads or upper bodies of these figures are preserved, and their iconographic context is therefore unknown. The upper register of AO 52 (Suter 2000:352 ST.10), the so-called “music stele” depicts a procession of five male figures. The last of these figures, on the adjoining side of the stele, is represented as larger than the other figures and wears the distinctive hairstyle and beard. The dress,

as with the figure on B 16676.44, as well as the larger size, suggests that this figure is a ruler, and Suter (2000:185) suggests that the figure represents “a governor of Lagaš when this state was under Akkadian rule”.

The hairstyle and beard are also worn by the worshiper figure in a presentation scene on Morgan Seal 247 (Porada 1948:Pl. XLIII.274), which has been described by Ward (1909:40) as “a royal cylinder of Gudea”. Porada (1948:35) describes the figure with the beard and hairstyle as “the worshiper”, but according to Börker-Klähn (1972–1975:4), this figure represents Gudea himself. It is more likely, as Suter (2000:185) states, that this figure represents Abba, the scribe of Gudea to whom this seal belonged because in all depictions of Gudea he is bald and clean-shaven, although it is also possible, as Börker-Klähn (1972–1975:4) suggests, that the figure is Gudea and the hair and beard are fake. Whether or not the figure on Morgan Seal 247 represents Gudea, it is evident that, unlike during the Akkadian period, both royal and non-royal figures wore this hairstyle and beard during the Neo-Sumerian period, although it is unusual in royal statuary.

The meaning or ideology of the hairstyle or beard, however, are less easy to discern, as during the third millennium in Mesopotamia the length or presence of hair and beard may have been determined by a variety of “regional, ethnical, social, religious, [and] cultural” concerns (Suter 2012:444–445). Winter (2010c:87) argues that men’s beards are symbolic of their *baštu*, their “life force, vigor, vitality”,¹⁵ and that a beard therefore represents this manliness, and, by extension, the power and ability of the ruler to protect his people. In this regard, Oldstone-Moore (2016:19–27) posits that Neo-Sumerian rulers were depicted as clean-shaven and bald when they wished to represent or stress the religious and cultic aspects of rulership, and as bearded when they were represented in their more secular roles as “lawgiver, head judge, and military commander in chief” (Oldstone-Moore 2016:21). While Gudea represents himself in his statuary as clean-shaven, thereby portraying his piety and dutifulness in religious obligations, as is supported through his inscriptions, Ur-

¹⁵ *Baštu* is translated by Gelb, Landsberger, Oppenheim and Reiner (1965:44) as “a positive quality such as dignity (in action and looks), decorum, etc.”

Ningirsu's presentation of himself as bearded may therefore be an attempt to express his ability to rule based on more secular roles or responsibilities.

Ur-Ningirsu Statue C (VA 8788)



Figure 3: Ur-Ningirsu Statue C (Izak Cornelius)

Ur-Ningirsu Statue C is a fragmentary headless statue.¹⁶ While Ur-Ningirsu Statue A and Ur-Ningirsu Statue B represent Ur-Ningirsu clasping his hands in front of his chest in a gesture of humility or prayer, Ur-Ningirsu Statue C represents him holding a kid against his chest.¹⁷

¹⁶ My thanks to Izak Cornelius for providing me with a photo of this statue, and to Lutz Martin of the Vorderasiatisches Museum for granting access to the statue. Although published in the present paper and by Meissner (1928–29:Taf. IV.1) as a statue with a head, this head does not belong to the statue (Marzahn 1987:31).

¹⁷ The kid is much clearer in the publication by Meissner (1928–29:Taf. IV.1). There has clearly been much deterioration in the past 100 years since this statue was first published.

According to Suter (1991–1993:66), the “kid-carrier” is represented in Mesopotamian art from the Early Dynastic period.¹⁸ During this period, the kid-carrier is depicted in both relief sculpture, as for example on BM 118561, a relief plaque from the *giparu* at Ur (Woolley 1955:Pl. 39.c), and on Oriental Institute A. 12417, a relief plaque from the Sin Temple at Khafajeh (Boese 1971:Taf. IX.1 Nr. CS 7), as well as in sculpture in the round, as for example on Sb 84, a statue from Susa (Moortgat 1969:Pl. 129).

The kid-carrier is also represented during the Akkadian period in relief sculpture, as on cylinder seals, for example on BM 116586, BM 129479, IM 13861, Morgan Seal 190, BM 89805, and Morgan Seal 197 (Boehmer 1965 Taf. XXVI.305; Taf. XXXII.381; Taf. XXXIII.392; Taf. XXXVIII.456, Taf. XXXVIII.457; Taf. XLIV.519), as well as in sculpture in the round, as for example Sb 91 (Amiet 1976:105 Nr. 41), a small statuette from Susa now in the Louvre.

During the Neo-Sumerian period a statuette of Shulgi, excavated at Tello and now housed as two parts in the Louvre and the Eski Şark Museums, AO 36 and EŞ 438, depicts this ruler as a kid-carrier (Suter 1991–1993). Also from Tello are two small fragmentary statuettes depicting kid-carriers, AO 310 (Spycket 1981:Pl. 133) and AO 242 (Parrot 1948:Pl. 40.f). AO 310 is dedicated to Nin-Šubur, probably for the life of Nammahni, although the attribution to this ruler is uncertain (Edzard 1997:205).¹⁹ AO 242 is larger than AO 310, and more of this statue survives, but there is no inscription for identification. Based on comparison to other figures, Parrot (1948:190) dates it to the reign of Gudea. The motif of kid-carrier continued in Tello into the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods, as evidenced by a series of clay statuettes now in the Louvre, AO 15131, AO 16725, AO 12625, AO 16726, AO 16702, AO 12196, AO 16728, AO 12056 and AO 16706 (Barrelet 1968:Pl. VI.65–69, Pl. VII.70–73). There is therefore a long tradition of the kid-carrier in Mesopotamian art.

¹⁸ Related to the motif of the kid-carrier may be an Uruk period seal from Dresden (Braun-Holzinger 2007:Taf. 15.FS29F) in which the priest-king figure approaches a temple, represented by two ring-posts with streamers associated with the goddess Inanna, and carries a caprid. This caprid, however, is a zoomorphic vessel, and not an actual kid.

¹⁹ For the transliteration and an English translation of this text, see Edzard (1997:205–206 E3/1.1.12.15).

According to Suter (1991–1993:69), the kid-carrier became a “standard royal representation type” by the Neo-Sumerian period at the latest. According to Braun-Holzinger (1991:219), votive statues represent those who dedicated the statues, and because both Ur-Ningirsu Statue C and AO 310 are dedicated on behalf of rulers, this would mean that the kid-carriers represent those who dedicated the statues, rather than the rulers themselves. However, Spycket (1981:197) argues that they must be royal figures because during this period animal sacrifice was reserved for the ruler. Furthermore, Zettler (1989:65), based on the name of a statue dedicated for the life of Shulgi, has demonstrated that this statue represents Shulgi himself. For this reason, Suter (1991–1993:69) proposes that the kid-carrier represents the ruler in the ritual context of bringing the animal as a sacrifice to petition the deities, thus emphasizing the ability of the ruler to communicate with deities, and therefore to take care of his community. Ur-Ningirsu Statue C therefore represents Ur-Ningirsu’s piety and his ability to communicate with the deities and petition the deities on behalf of his people.

One vital way in which Ur-Ningirsu Statue C differs from Ur-Ningirsu Statue A and Ur-Ningirsu Statue B is that while the latter two were dedicated to Ningišzida by Ur-Ningirsu, Ur-Ningirsu Statue C was dedicated to Ningišzida for the life of Ur-Ningirsu by an individual whose name is unfortunately broken in the inscription. The message portrayed by this statue would therefore not necessarily be a message chosen by Ur-Ningirsu, although its depiction of him as a pious ruler petitioning Ningišzida aligns with the message conveyed by Ur-Ningirsu Statue A. Furthermore, because the kid-carrier was a standard representational type for Neo-Sumerian rulers, it would not be an unusual ideology for the portrayal of Ur-Ningirsu, whether by himself or another individual.

The message portrayed by the statuary

The three statues of Ur-Ningirsu together portray Ur-Ningirsu as a pious man and an able ruler through his submission to and communication with the deities. His ability to fulfil his secular responsibilities may be revealed through the inclusion of the beard and hairstyle of Statue B. The statuary presents Ur-Ningirsu as a strong ruler with the

power to engage with the deities and therefore to provide for his people. The similarity of the form of the Ur-Ningirsu statuery with that of Gudea would furthermore visually link the two rulers, suggesting that Ur-Ningirsu had the potential to be as successful as his father.

THE ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS

The message presented by the Ur-Ningirsu statues of Ur-Ningirsu as an able ruler due to his ability to communicate with the deities and provide for his people can be compared to the message portrayed in his inscriptions.

There are ten different types of royal inscription from the reign of Ur-Ningirsu,²⁰ all of these being rather short. Most of these inscriptions record the dedication of the object upon which the inscription is found to a deity. These follow the format “for god X, Ur-Ningirsu, son of Gudea, dedicated object Y”, with some variations, as for example Ur-Ningirsu 5,

To Ningirsu, Enlil’s mighty warrior, his master,
 Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Lagaš, son of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš,
 dedicated (this object) for his own life (Edzard 1997:185 E3/1.1.8.5).

Two inscriptions, Ur-Ningirsu 2 and Ur-Ningirsu 3, do not record the dedication of an object, but the building of Ningirsu’s *gigun* or sacred grove and a temple of Nanše’s temple respectively,

For Ningirsu, Enlil’s mighty warrior, his master,
 Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Lagaš, son of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš,
 who had built Ningirsu’s Eninnu,

²⁰ Although some of these inscriptions are found on more than one object. *The royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods, Volume 3/1: Gudea and his dynasty* (RIMEP 3/1) (Edzard 1997:181–188 E3/1.8.1–10) is the most recent English publication of these texts and will be used in this work as the standard reference, with the numbers assigned to the inscriptions being those in RIMEP 3/1. These numbers are nearly the same as those used by Steible (1991:360–369), with the numbering changing only for the fourth and fifth inscriptions in the two publications.

installed his beloved grove (?), in the scent (of) cedars (Edzard 1997:182 E3/1.1.8.2).

For Ningirsu, Enlil’s mighty warrior, his master,
 Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Lagaš, son of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš, who built
 Ningirsu’s Eninnu,
 Made the House of Nanše about the City-Gate (which issues)
 straightforward words (Edzard 1997:183 E3/1.1.8.3).

Ur-Ningirsu 4, Ur-Ningirsu 9 and Ur-Ningirsu 10/Statue D are too fragmentary to discern much of the content. Although this material is limited, much can still be learnt from it (see Table A).

Table A: Ur-Ningirsu’s royal inscriptions

Inscription (RIMEP number)	Dedicated to	“son of Gudea”	“who built Eninnu”	Type of object	Object dedicated/building commemorated
1	Ningirsu	X	X	Door socket	“this object”
2	Ningirsu	X	X	Bricks	Ningirsu’s <i>gigun</i> (sacred grove)
3	Ningirsu	X	X	Bricks	House of Nanše
4	Ningirsu			Stone vessel	
5	Ningirsu	X		Macehead	“this object”
6	Ningiškzida	X	X	Statue A	Statue A
7	Ningiškzida	X		Statue B	
8	Ningiškzida			Statue C	Statue C
9		X		Seashell	
10		X		Statue D	

According to Edzard (1997:181), the style of Ur-Ningirsu’s inscriptions “is completely dependent on that of Gudea”. There are only two inscriptions which do not mention his father, Ur-Ningirsu 8/Statue C and Ur-Ningirsu 4. However, Ur-Ningirsu 8/Statue C originally had a second line (Edzard 1997:187), and Ur-Ningirsu 4 is fragmentary, and it is therefore possible that both of these inscriptions also originally referenced Gudea. Two of the Ur-Ningirsu inscriptions, Ur-Ningirsu 9 and Ur-Ningirsu 10/Statue D, both of which read, “Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Lagaš, son of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš” (Edzard 1997:188 E3/1.1.8.9 and E3/1.1.8.10) only mention Ur-Ningirsu’s name and that he is the son of Gudea. This reveals that Ur-Ningirsu’s

relationship with his father was something important to Ur-Ningirsu, or something he wished to stress.

The fact that Ur-Ningirsu's royal inscriptions so frequently mention that he is the son of Gudea is significant. Gudea's reign appears to have been peaceful²¹ and prosperous. He undertook various building projects, the most notable being the construction of the *Eninnu*, Ningirsu's temple in Girsu/Lagash, the building of which is recorded at length on the *Gudea Cylinders* (MNB 1511 and MNB 1512), the longest extant texts written in Sumerian (Demange et al 1995:52).²² Gudea was so well-respected and revered that he was posthumously deified (Suter 2012b:61). By stressing his association with Gudea, Ur-Ningirsu would be associating himself not only with Gudea, but with Gudea's accomplishments. In this way, Ur-Ningirsu could claim some of Gudea's successes by association.

Five of the inscriptions (Ur-Ningirsu 1–5) are dedications to the god Ningirsu, the patron deity of Lagash, and three (Ur-Ningirsu 6–8) are dedications to Ningišzida, Ur-Ningirsu's personal deity. Ur-Ningirsu's dedications to Ningirsu reveal not only Ur-Ningirsu's reverence to this god, but also his duty to his people, because in honouring Ningirsu, Ur-Ningirsu would also secure Ningirsu's favour and goodwill for Lagash. Furthermore, Ningišzida as Ur-Ningirsu's personal deity would be in the position to petition the other deities on Ur-Ningirsu's behalf. Ningišzida was also Gudea's personal deity, and by having the same personal deity as his father, Ur-Ningirsu may have been trying not only to emphasize the link between himself and Gudea, but also to emulate his father, and to secure the same kind of successes as a ruler. Therefore, although Ur-Ningirsu's inscriptions include dedications to only two gods, they would have been the most important deities Ur-Ningirsu could approach for the security and prosperity of his city and his people. The inscriptions on the three Ur-Ningirsu statues themselves should be considered.

²¹ As mentioned in the discussion on Ur-Ningirsu Statue A (AO 9504 and MMA 47.100.86), only one military campaign is known, that being against Anshan and Elam.

²² For transliterations, translations and discussions on these texts, see Edzard (1997:68–106 E3/1.1.7.CylA-E3/1.1.7.Cylfragms 11(+)+2 and 12), Römer (2010) and Suter (2000).

Ur-Ningirsu 6/Ur-Ningirsu Statue A

For Ningišzida, his (personal) god,
 Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Lagaš, son of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš, who built Ningirsu's
 Eninnu,
 fashioned his (own) statue.
 'I am the one beloved of his (personal) god; let my life be long' – (this is
 how) he named that statue for his (= Ningirsu's) sake, and he brought it to
 him into his House (Edzard 1997:185–186 E3/1.1.8.6).

Ur-Ningirsu 7/Ur-Ningirsu Statue B

For Ningišzida, his (personal) god,
 Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Laagaš, son of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš
 (broken) (Edzard 1997:185–186 E3/1.1.8.7).

Ur-Ningirsu 8/Ur-Ningirsu Statue C

To Ningišzida, his (personal) god,
 [..., dedicated (this object)] for the life of Ur-Ningirsu, ruler of Lagaš
 (Edzard 1997:187 E3/1.1.8.8).

These three inscriptions are the three dedications to Ningišzida mentioned above. These inscriptions are much shorter than those on the Gudea statues, but Ur-Ningirsu Statue B and Ur-Ningirsu Statue C are also much smaller statues, and the inscriptions would by necessity have been shorter than those on larger statues because of considerations of space. Additionally, only the first column of text on either statue has survived, and the inscriptions therefore would originally have been longer (Edzard 1997:186, 187).

According to Foster (2016:189), Akkadian royal statuary is often inscribed with not only the name of the ruler, but also a commemorative inscription. Although few of the Akkadian statues survive, the inscriptions which decorated the statues survive on copies from the Old Babylonian period.²³ These inscriptions primarily record military

²³ See above in the discussion on Ur-Ningirsu Statue A (AO 9504 and MMA 47.100.86) for more information. See also Frayne (1993:*passim*) for examples of these texts.

successes, but the fashioning of statues and cultic objects, and building constructions, particularly of temples, are also recorded.

Few royal statues are known from the preceding Early Dynastic period,²⁴ and the inscriptions on these royal statues are much shorter than those on Akkadian royal statues. They tend to be limited to the name of the ruler, the city over which he ruled, and perhaps mention of the statue itself. However, inscriptions on four statues of rulers of Lagash, one of Eannatum (Marchesi and Marchetti 2011:174–175), two of Enanatum (Frayne 2007:183 E1.9.4.11, 184–185 E1.9.3.12) and one of Enmetena (Frayne 1997:219–222 E1.9.5.17), are rather long. The inscriptions on the Eannatum statue and one of the Enanatum statues commemorate military victories, the inscription on the second Enanatum statue records the provisions for deities, and the inscription on the Enmetena statue commemorates building projects. This suggests that there may have been a tradition of longer inscriptions on Lagash royal statuary, which would correspond with the evidence that the “monumental inscriptions [of the First Dynasty of Lagash] constituted the most developed literary creations of the kind, in the Old Sumerian period”, i.e., the Early Dynastic period (Klein 1989:289 n.4).²⁵

The commemorative inscriptions on statues of the Second Dynasty of Lagash therefore find precedence as early as the Early Dynastic period. However, the inscriptions on Ur-Ningirsu’s statues are still very much of his time. This can be seen in Ur-Ningirsu’s other royal inscriptions. These commemorate building projects and record the fashioning of votive objects. Not only does he stress his connection to Gudea by repeatedly mentioning his father in his inscriptions, but he also subtly reinforces this link by his choice of deities to whom he makes dedications. Taken together, Ur-Ningirsu uses his royal inscriptions to portray himself as an able ruler, and one who had the potential to live up to the example of his father.

²⁴ See Marchesi and Marchetti (2011).

²⁵ It must be noted, however that inscriptions on a statue of Enna-il, king of Kish (Frayne 2007:76 E1.8.3.2) and of Šumba‘li [previously read as “Tagge”, e.g., Parrot (1967:50) and ŠUM-bēlum, e.g., Gelb and Kienast (1990:18–19)] from Mari (Marchesi and Marchetti 2011:181–184) are also rather long, the first commemorating the purchase of a piece of land and the second apparently praising the ruler. Lengthy commemorative inscriptions during the Early Dynastic period may therefore not have been restricted to Lagash.

AUDIENCE

The intended audience of Ur-Ningirsu's statuary and royal inscriptions must also be taken into consideration. The royal inscriptions themselves, including the inscriptions on the statues, indicate that they were intended primarily for the view of the deity to whom they were dedicated (Winter 2010d:169). Royal inscriptions which were inscribed on building material (as for example Ur-Ningirsu 1 which was inscribed on a door socket, and Ur-Ningirsu 2 and Ur-Ningirsu 3 which were inscribed on bricks), would not have been visible, and, as Bagg (2016:62) argues, only deities and later rulers, when uncovering the inscriptions in later building restorations, would see the inscriptions. Similarly, inscriptions on objects dedicated to a deity (as for example Ur-Ningirsu 5 which was a macehead, as well as the Ur-Ningirsu statues) would be placed in that deity's temple, and as such would be reserved for the view of the deities, for those who had access to the temple (the temple staff, the elite and later rulers). The intended audience of Ur-Ningirsu's statuary and royal inscriptions, and therefore the intended audience of the message which he wished to portray through these, was primarily the deities and later rulers.

CONCLUSION

When taken as a whole, the visual and textual evidence reveals a fuller image of Ur-Ningirsu than either source could by itself. They portray an image of a strong, able and capable ruler, attentive to the deities, and able to provide for his people. The three statues of Ur-Ningirsu reveal his piety and sacred role as ruler in their portrayal of him in communication with the deities. This is done both explicitly, as in Ur-Ningirsu Statue C in which Ur-Ningirsu is actively engaged in providing a votive offering in the form of a sacrificial animal, and implicitly, as in Ur-Ningirsu Statue A in which the figures encircling the base of the statue are perceived to bring provisions for the statue to enable its continuous worship and suppliance to the deities. The inclusion of the beard in Ur-Ningirsu Statue B may reveal Ur-Ningirsu's secular responsibilities as a ruler and his ability to fulfil these duties, something which is not evident in his royal

inscriptions. These inscriptions reveal the fulfilment of his responsibilities as a ruler in their commemoration of building projects and the dedication of objects.

Ur-Ningirsu's statuary and royal inscriptions are a culmination of the traditions began in the Early Dynastic period and expanded upon during the Akkadian period and by the Second Dynasty of Lagash, but he is still portrayed as very much of his own time. Both the statues and inscriptions most obviously recall the style and traditions of Gudea. This could be expected as Ur-Ningirsu would wish to emulate the example of his very successful father, and also wish for his audience – the deities and his successors – to associate him with Gudea. Still, the unusual iconographic features of the three statues also suggest a distancing from the common, fairly standard depiction of Gudea, and that Ur-Ningirsu was still very much his own man, and wished to be viewed as such.

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