DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 773 SO 026 102

TITLE	When Kingship Descended from Heaven: Masterpieces of Mesopotamian Art from the Louvre.
INSTITUTION	Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.
PUB DATE	92
NOTE	35p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Education Department, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560 ($10 plus $4.50 shipping and handling; packet includes six color slides).
PUB TYPE	Audiovisual/Non-Print Materials (100) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Ancient History; Area Studies; *Art History; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Leaders; Leadership Styles; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS	Dynasties; Mesopotamia; *Mesopotamian Art; *Mesopotamian Culture

ABSTRACT

This teaching packet, designed for students in grades 6 through 9, explores the role of rulers in ancient Mesopotamian society and examines the depiction of those rulers in Mesopotamian art. Students are encouraged to compare present-day political leaders with ancient Mesopotamian rulers. The guide includes: (1) background information for teachers; (2) introductory activities for students; (3) descriptions and discussions for each of six "Slides" included with the packet; (4) follow-up activities for students; (5) an annotated bibliography; (6) a glossary; and (7) a chronology of Mesopotamian dynasties. (MM)

When Kingship Descended from Heaven

MASTERPIECES OF MESOPOTAMIAN ART FROM THE LOUVRE

This teacher's packet is made possible in part by a gift from the Khalili Family Trust.
It was developed in association with the exhibition *When Kingship Descended from Heaven: Masterpieces of Mesopotamian Art from the Louvre* (March 8—August 9, 1992).

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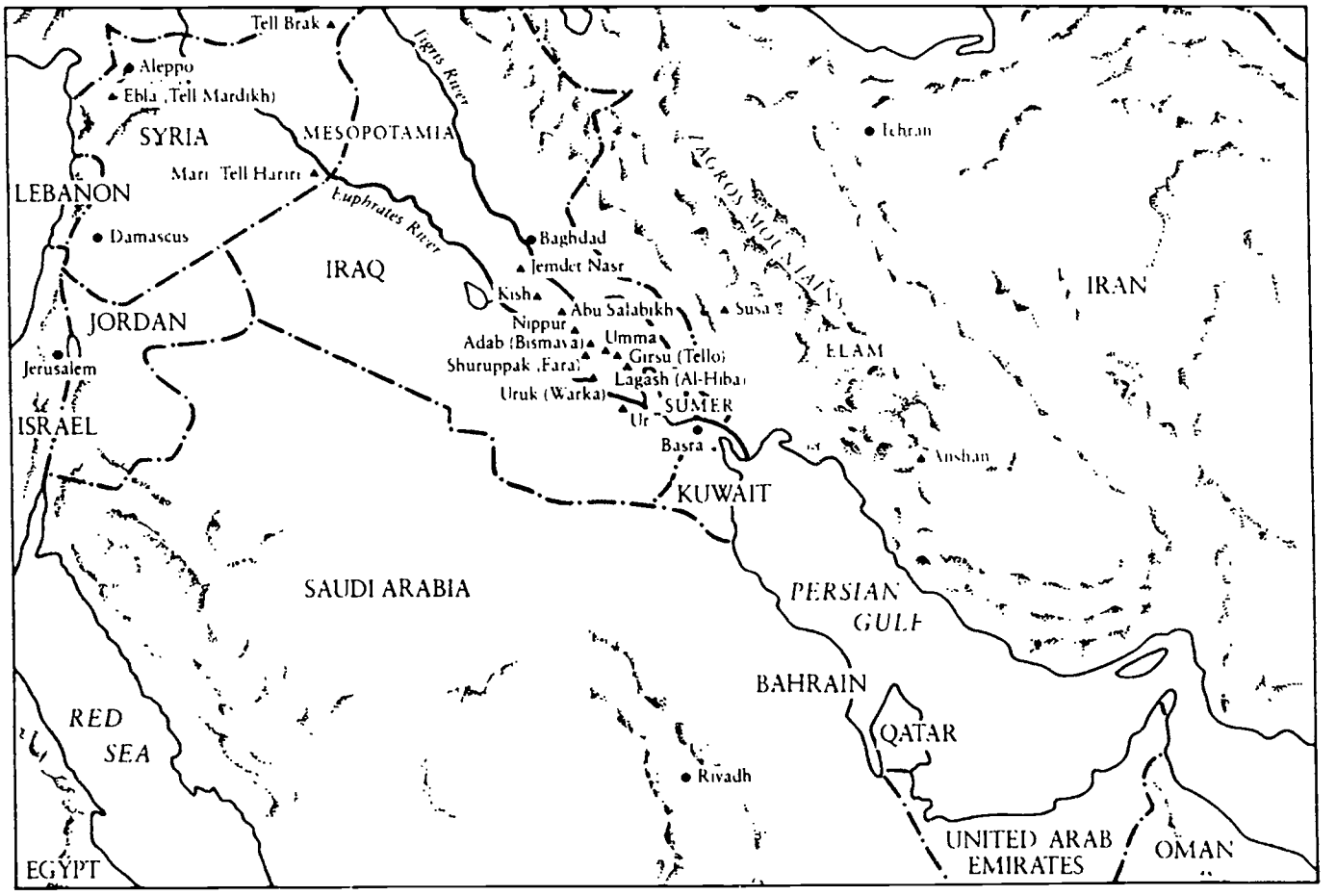

Tell Brak
Aleppo
Ebla (Tell Mardikh)
SYRIA
MESOPOTAMIA
Tigris River
Mari (Tell Hariri)
LEBANON
Euphrates River
Damascus
Baghdad
Jemdet Nasr
IRAQ
ZAGROS MOUNTAINS
Tehran
IRAN
Kish
Abu Salabikh
Susa
Nippur
Adab (Bismaya)
Umma
Girsu (Tello)
ELAM
JORDAN
Jerusalem
Shuruppak (Fara)
Lagash (Al-Hiba)
Uruk (Warka)
SUMER
Ur
ISRAEL
Basra
Anshan
KUWAIT
SAUDI ARABIA
PERSIAN GULF
BAHRAIN
RED SEA
QATAR
Riyadh
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
OMAN
EGYPT

Mesopotamia is an ancient name for the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the region now defined as part of Iraq, eastern Syria, southeastern Turkey, and southwestern Iran. Beginning around 3300 B.C., Mesopotamia was the setting for a series of dramatic events in human history: the birth of writing, the emergence of urban communities, and the development of monumental art and architecture. These events took place in the southernmost part of Mesopotamia, ancient Sumer; and in the region just north of Sumer, known as Akkad, closer to modern Baghdad.

This packet, designed for grades six through nine, explores the role of rulers in Mesopotamian society and examines the depiction of those rulers in Mesopotamian art. Students are encouraged to compare present-day political leaders with Mesopotamian rulers.

The Discovery of Ancient Mesopotamia

The ancient cultures of Mesopotamia were discovered during the nineteenth century by European and American diplomats, explorers, and scholars. At that time, most of the area we now call the Middle East was ruled by the Ottoman Empire (1453–1917). Britain and France in particular were interested in finding new routes to India, and as a result those countries sent both diplomatic and scientific missions to the region to gain information and influence.

These foreign diplomats and explorers observed in Mesopotamia a number of large mounds, or *tells*, formed by the accumulated remains of ancient cities or towns that had been occupied over long periods of time in the same location. At first, it was an interest in the ancient lands written about in the Bible that prompted the exploration of these mounds and led to an active search for the objects and inscriptions they contained. The first sites to be investigated, during the 1840s, were the cities of Nineveh and Nimrud, in northern Mesopotamia. Those cities were capitals of the Assyrian Empire (ca. 900–612 B.C.), whose glory and fall were recorded in the Bible. During the 1840s and 1850s, British and European scholars succeeded in deciphering the language of the Assyrians, found on thousands of clay tablets from archives and libraries and also carved on stone sculptures or palace walls. The language of the tablets and inscriptions, Akkadian, is written in a system known as cuneiform (from the Latin *cuneus*, meaning "wedge"). Akkadian is a member of the Semitic family of languages and is related to Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic.

During the 1870s, British, French, and American diplomats and scholars began to explore the southernmost region of Mesopotamia, between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. They uncovered much older civilizations, some of which date to about 4000 B.C. The earliest written records from this region consist of clay tablets and inscribed stone and metal objects written in another ancient language, Sumerian, which has no known relatives. Sumerian, like Akkadian, was written in cuneiform.

Many of the objects and inscriptions recovered from these earlier sites were transported to national or university museums in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. In the United States, the major collections of early Mesopotamian objects are in the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

The Emergence of Urban Communities and the Birth of Writing in Mesopotamia (4000–3000 B.C.)

Between 4000 and 3500 B.C., there emerged in southern Mesopotamia the first urban communities, large groups of people who lived in close proximity to one another, many of whom did not practice subsistence farming or herding. The surplus of crops and livestock made possible by the domestication of animals and cultivation of plants enabled society to support a number of people as full-time artisans, businessmen, and other specialist occupations. Society was made up of people of different economic levels and was ruled by a religious, military, and political elite who imposed taxes and tribute and in turn erected large public

buildings and provided order and security for the city's inhabitants. During this period, a number of independent cities existed in southern Mesopotamia. A city consisted of the town itself, where most of the population was located, as well as monumental and religious buildings and the surrounding villages with their farms and cottage industries. The most extensively investigated of these early cities is Uruk (modern Warka), located near the Euphrates River.

Everywhere in southern Mesopotamia successful farming of grains and other crops depended on irrigation from canals linked to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. One of government's most important duties was to maintain this irrigation system.

Between 3500 and 3000 B.C., writing was invented in southern Mesopotamia to keep track of the storage or disbursement of commodities. The earliest writing consists of pictures and abstract signs and is not recognizable as a specific language. The earliest texts that contain elements of grammar or syntax, and whose language can therefore be identified, are written in Sumerian. For the first few hundred years following its invention, writing was used only for accounting purposes.

The Early Dynastic Period (2900–2350 B.C.)

The first era in Mesopotamia for which historical records exist is known as the Early Dynastic period. At this time, Sumer was divided into small political units, or city-states, that were often centered around a single city. The rulers of these city-states referred to themselves and each other by different titles, the most frequent of which were *ensi,* "ruler" or "prince," and *lugal,* "king (literally, "big man"). Sometimes the ruler was subordinate to a king; in other cases, the ruler was clearly independent. Another important title was *en,* "lord," which designated a priestly official who sometimes also had political authority.

Many of these states were ruled by dynasties, that is, families who passed on the title of ruler from father to son. The states of Sumer occasionally came into armed conflict as a result of territorial disputes over borders as well as access to raw materials or precious sources of water for irrigation. During the course of the Early Dynastic period, the military role of the ruler seems to have become increasingly important. The ruler was sometimes depicted wearing military dress in scenes of conquest, and he also dedicated ceremonial weapons to the gods who were credited with his victories.

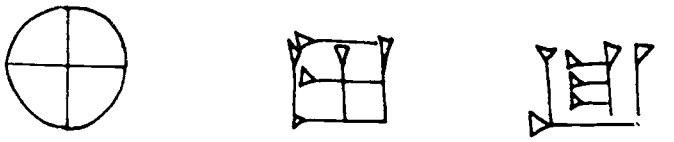
In addition to royal inscriptions preserved on stone tablets or on sculptures made of metal or stone, a number of economic records on clay tablets have survived from the Early Dynastic period. They show that the states of Sumer were actively engaged in farming, herding, and fishing. Farmland and herds were owned by city temples as well as by private individuals. Raw materials such as wood, metals, shell, gemstones, and building stones were obtained by trade with the inhabitants of Syria, Iran, Egypt, and the coasts of the Persian Gulf.

The Akkadian Empire (ca. 2350–2190 B.C.)

Shortly after 2350 B.C., a new dynasty rose to power in southern Mesopotamia and conquered territory beyond the Tigris and Euphrates valleys. The founder of the Akkadian dynasty was Sargon of Agade (reigned 2334–2279 B.C.). Akkadian, the language of the new dynasty, was used for

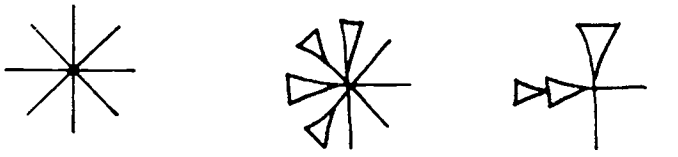
Evolution of Cuneiform Signs

UDU (*sheep*)

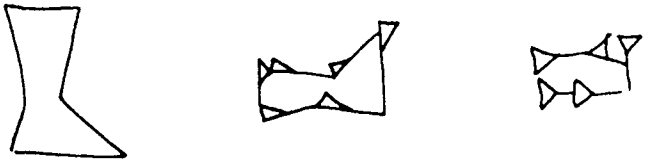


AB_2 (*cow*)

DINGIR
(*god;* determinative
for *divine*)

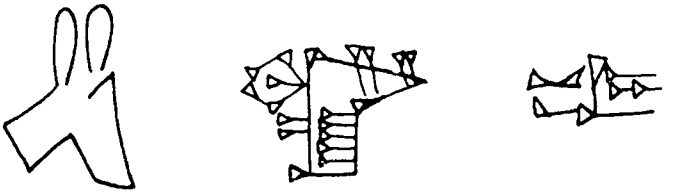


DU_1 (*to go, to move*)



DU_3 (*to make, to build*)

ANŠE (*ass*)



SU, KUŠ
(*body, skin;* determinative
for objects made of hide
or leather)

international diplomacy throughout the Near East until around 500 B.C.

The Akkadian rulers continued to employ some of the traditional royal titles inherited from the Early Dynastic period. The title "king of Kish" appears in some Akkadian royal inscriptions. But the Akkadian kings also introduced new political concepts. In place of the small independent states of the Early Dynastic period, the Akkadian rulers created an empire, a large state composed of various nationalities and languages united under a single ruler with extensive powers. Naram-Sin (reigned 2254–2218 B.C.), fourth king of the dynasty, was the first to write his name with the sign for "divinity," and he represented himself wearing a horned crown, a symbol of divine status. The Akkadian kings also maintained the temples and cults of the Mesopotamian gods, although a later historical tradition accused Naram-Sin of having destroyed the temple of Enlil, chief god of the Sumerian pantheon, in the city of Nippur. According to this tradition, Naram-Sin's alleged impiety caused the downfall of the Akkadian dynasty.

Archaeologists have not yet located Agade, the capital of the dynasty. But architecture and artifacts of the Akkadian period found elsewhere in Mesopotamia show that the Akkadian kings were active builders and promoted a strong, original style of art. The Akkadian kings sent military and trading expeditions to northern Mesopotamia and Syria, western Iran, and the coasts of the Persian Gulf. They also maintained trade relations, through the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, with the Harappan cultures of the Indus Valley in modern Pakistan.

The Neo-Sumerian Period (ca. 2190–2000 B.C.)

The Akkadian empire was brought to an end about 2200 B.C. by the Guti, foreign tribes who entered Mesopotamia from western Iran and dominated the region for a period of about fifty years. The Guti were finally expelled by a coalition led by the ruler of the Sumerian city of Uruk. In the period that followed, often called the Neo-Sumerian period, dynasties centered in Sumer regained political authority and restored some of the Early Dynastic traditions in government. Independent states ruled by dynasties, who focused much of their attention and resources on the temple of the local god or goddess, were revived. Some of the states of this period, however, such as the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112–2004 B.C.), were ruled by powerful kings who held sway over other neighboring states.

The Neo-Sumerian period is often described as the "Sumerian renaissance," when great works of Sumerian art and literature were created. The kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, in particular Ur-Nammu (reigned 2112–2095 B.C.) and Shulgi (reigned 2094–2047 B.C.), actively promoted the rebuilding of temples and the production of sculpture, metalwork, and literature. Architects, artisans, and scribes were employed in court workshops on projects under royal sponsorship. Another important dynasty of the Neo-Sumerian period was the Second Dynasty of Lagash. Gudea

of Lagash (reigned ca. 2120 B.C.), the best-known ruler of the dynasty, devoted considerable efforts to rebuilding the city temples and furnishing them with appropriate gifts to the gods.

Religion and Worship

According to Mesopotamian religion, the universe was ruled by a multitude of deities, humanlike in form but immortal and superhuman in power. Each city was under the protection of a god or goddess whose temple complex often housed the deity's cult statue and the temple personnel that cared for it. Temples also owned herd and agricultural land and were major economic and social institutions.

The cult statue was fed and dressed in the temple, which was considered the house of the deity. Mesopotamian rulers were charged with building and maintaining the temples, and royal inscriptions often describe in detail their attention to this important duty. In addition to the ruler and his family, individuals of many social ranks dedicated objects in the temples. Such objects are known as votives. Sculptures, weapons, and other objects made of metal, stone, or clay, were created as votives. One of the most common types of votive in the Early Dynastic period was a statuette of a human worshiper. These statuettes, often made of stone and inscribed with a dedication to the deity, were placed in temples as a magical substitute for the worshiper himself.

Literature and Art

Many literary genres, including epics, hymns, letters, and laments, were created during the Early Dynastic, Akkadian, and Neo-Sumerian periods. The major works of literature that were composed during this period were written in Sumerian. One of the most celebrated pieces of early Mesopotamian literature is the epic of Gilgamesh. The epic was first composed about 1800 B.C. and was based on earlier epic stories about Gilgamesh created by the court scribes of the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2100 B.C.). The epic deals with such themes as loneliness, love, fear of death, and the search for immortality.

Also during this period, many technologies—including metalworking, ceramic production, and textile manufacture—were developed to a highly sophisticated level. By 2500 B.C., for example, nearly all of the metalworking techniques in use until the modern era had been invented. Metalworkers created large-scale and intricate works of sculpture, weapons, vessels, and jewelry in gold, silver, and bronze. Skilled artisans also created works of art in hard stones such as alabaster and diorite, in gemstones such as lapis lazuli and turquoise, and in shell, highly fired clay, and painted plaster. The remarkable achievements of these early artisans have been found in temples, tombs, and settlement areas throughout southern Mesopotamia.

Introductory Activity for Students

This activity is designed to spark classroom discussion. It may be used as a brief homework or classroom assignment and may be followed by classroom discussion and examination of the slides in this packet.

Rulers in Art

This activity encourages students to think about how we depict rulers and leaders today. Students are asked to examine depictions of presidents on coins, but paper currency, newspaper photographs, and cartoons could also be included. You could make a bulletin board display of all of the presidential images students find. A similar activity could examine depictions of other leaders, such as local politicians and religious leaders. What messages are conveyed through the different depictions? Which of the images present an idealized portrait of the president? Which are realistic? Which are satirical?

Rulers in Art

Where might you see paintings, drawings, sculptures, and other images of presidents?

What coins do you have in your pocket? Make a rubbing, both front and back, of each of the different coins. Choose one coin and draw it five times its actual size.

Which president is depicted on:

a penny?
a nickel?
a dime?
a quarter?

Based on the depictions, how would you describe the character of each of the presidents?

Noble? Slovenly? Weak? Strong? Untidy? Lazy?

What else is shown and what does it say on the coins?

What is the role of the inscriptions on the coins?

What does "E Pluribus Unum" mean?

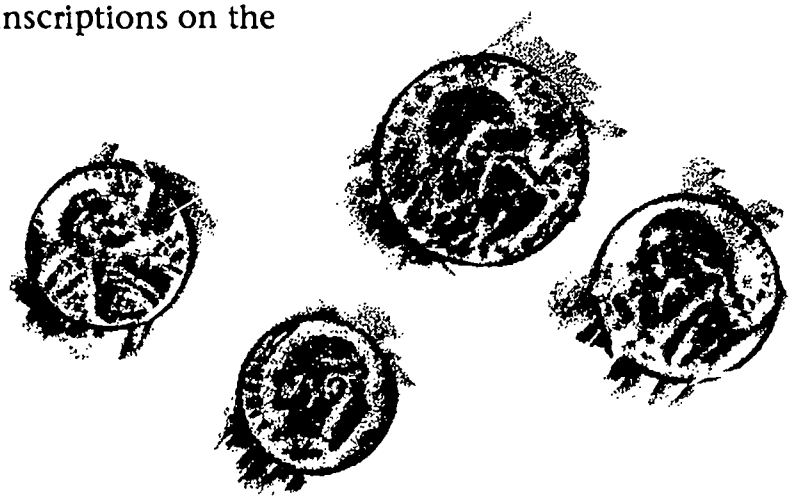
In what language is it written?

Why do you think a foreign language is used on American coins?

The depiction of the president on coins might be called "official art." How would you define "official art"? Can you think of other "official art" forms?

Think about where "official art" appears, who pays for it, and what purpose it serves.

Find some newspaper photographs and cartoons depicting the president. Based on these images, how would you describe the character of the president? How would you compare the depiction of presidents in "official art" with the depiction of the president in cartoons and newspaper photographs?



Rulers in Art: Answers

Where might you see paintings, drawings, sculptures, and other images of presidents?

Paintings and sculptures can be found in the Capitol, the White House, and the National Portrait Gallery. Presidents are also depicted on postcards, t-shirts, buttons, and mugs. Presidents frequently appear in cartoons. Images of presidents are also found on coins, paper currency, stamps, and memorials. These images might be termed "official art."

Which president is depicted on:

a penny?	Abraham Lincoln
a nickel?	Thomas Jefferson
a dime?	Franklin D. Roosevelt
a quarter?	George Washington

Based on the depictions, how would you describe the character of each of the presidents?

Noble and strong. The presidents are portrayed without wrinkles, heads held high, and jaws jutting authoritatively forward. The portraits are somewhat idealized and reveal some of the characteristics we associate with an "ideal ruler."

What else is shown and what does it say on the coins?

Each of the coins has the following inscriptions:

United States of America
E Pluribus Unum
In God We Trust
Liberty
Mint mark

In addition:

a penny	One Cent The Lincoln Memorial
a nickel	Five Cents Monticello (Thomas Jefferson's home)
a dime	One Dime Torch, Oak branch, and olive branch (symbols of liberty, strength, and peace, respectively)
a quarter	Quarter Dollar Eagle

What is the role of the inscriptions on the coins?

Some of the inscriptions give factual information: the value of the coin, the year and place it was minted, the country in which it is legal tender. Other inscriptions, such as "Liberty" and "In God we trust," are beliefs central to the Republic of the United States of America.

What does "E Pluribus Unum" mean?

One from many.

In what language is it written?

Latin.

Why do you think a foreign language is used on American coins?

Latin has long been associated with official documentation.

The depiction of the president on coins might be called "official art." How would you define "official art"? Can you think of other "official art" forms?

Seals, stamps, memorials, and portraits.

Think about where "official art" appears, who pays for it, and what purpose it serves.

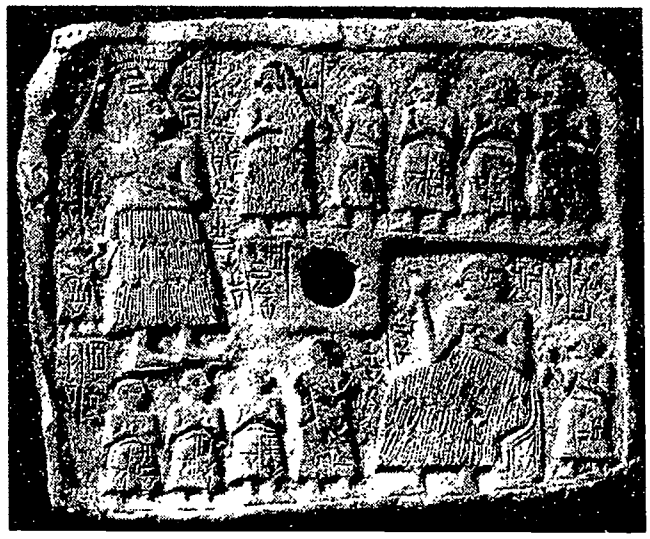
"Official art" is found on "documents" such as stamps and presidential seals, or in public places such as the Capitol and law courts, and is paid for by the government (i.e., taxpayers). The depiction of a respected president communicates authority and trustworthiness. The portraits are idealized and show the president without imperfections.

Find some newspaper photographs and cartoons depicting the president. Based on these images, how would you describe the character of the president? How would you compare the depiction of presidents in "official art" with the depiction of the president in cartoons and newspaper photographs?

Slides

17

Plaque depicting Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash
Iraq, Tello (ancient Girsu)
Early Dynastic III, ca. 2475 B.C.
Limestone
Louvre, AO 2344



Who do you think is the most important person depicted on this plaque? Why?

The largest figure is the most important. Mesopotamian artists often used what we term "value perspective," a technique in which the most important person is shown as the largest. He is shown twice: once in the upper scene and once in the lower scene.

Can you guess what type of person the main figure may be?

The inscription, which is written in cuneiform (the first writing system in the ancient Near East) identifies the large figure as Ur-Nanshe, king of the state of Lagash. He ruled around 2475 B.C. The figure opposite him is probably a daughter, and behind her are his sons.

Describe what the figure is doing in the upper scene.

The figure is standing and carrying a basket on his head. The basket contains bricks, which suggests that the figure is involved in the construction of a building.

Why do you think a king would be shown carrying a basket of bricks on his head?

The image symbolizes the king's role as a builder of temples. The inscriptions describe the king as a builder of temples to the god Ningirsu and the goddess Nanshe, the patron deities of the state of Lagash. In the period between 3000 and 2000 B.C., Sumer was divided into small political units that were often centered around a single city. As a result, these units were known as city-states. Each city had its own gods and goddesses who were thought to protect the city. The king's chief duties were to preserve justice and to maintain properly the temple and cult of the city's patron god or goddess. The ruler is thus shown as a worshiper and a builder of temples. According to Sumerian tradition, kingship was a divine institution that "descended from heaven," that is, it was given by the gods to humankind. The rulers were not worshiped as gods. Instead, the rulers were believed to be the gods' representatives on earth and as such had signif-

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icant obligations both to their mortal subjects and to the gods.

What do you think the king is doing in the lower scene?

The king is probably celebrating the completion of the temple.

How do you think this plaque was used?

The plaque was fastened to the wall of a temple by a peg through the hole in the center of the plaque. It served as a reminder of the king's role as a builder of temples and as a symbol of his obligations to his subjects and the gods.

Can you think of a modern equivalent of this plaque?

A close modern equivalent is a stained glass window dedicated in church by a patron. A secular example would be a cornerstone or dedicatory plaque commemorating the occasion on which a building was initiated or was opened to the public.

Does your school have a commemorative plaque? Where is it? Whose names are on it? When was the building dedicated?

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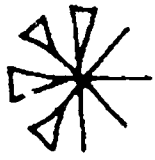
Vase inscribed for Naram-Sin, king of Agade
Iraq, Tello (ancient Girsu)
Akkadian period, reign of Naram-Sin
(2254–2218 B.C.)
Limestone
Louvre, AO 74

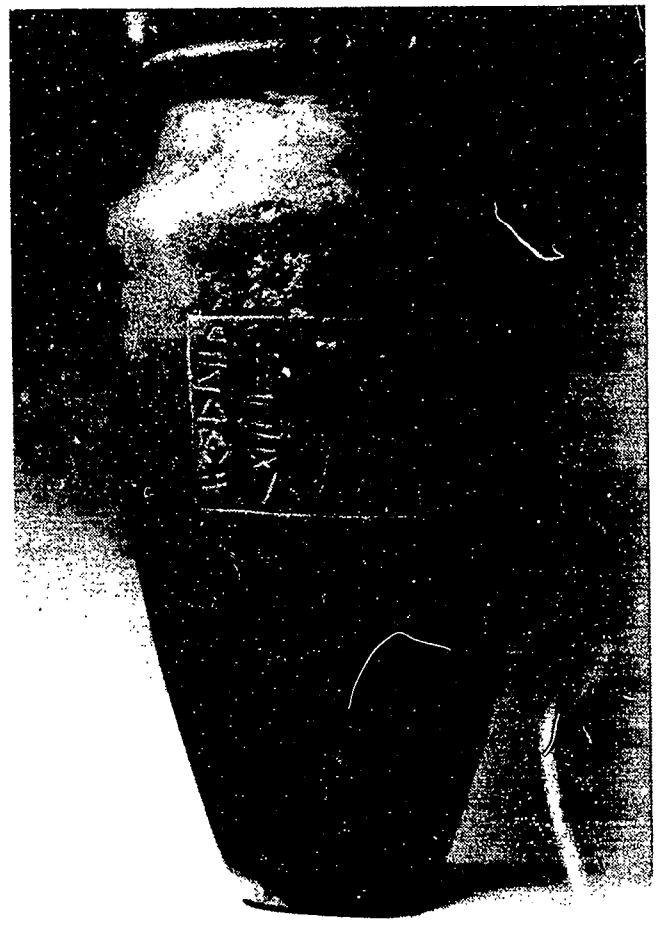
Can you find this symbol on the vase?



It is the cuneiform symbol for "divinity." Look for it on other objects.

The inscription, written in Akkadian, reads: "divine Naram-Sin, king of the four quarters." The name of the king is preceded by the sign for "divinity."

Cuneiform was the most commonly used writing system in the ancient Near East. The name is derived from the Latin word *cuneus,* meaning "wedge," because it employs wedge-shaped signs impressed on clay or carved on stone. Writing was most often accomplished by impressing a stylus, or sharpened reed instrument, to form wedge-shaped signs on the soft surface of a small clay tablet. Less frequently signs were carved with metal tools on roughly shaped boulders or on neatly cut, smooth stone blocks, as well as on finished objects made of stone, metal, or wood.



What do you think "the four quarters" means?

The "four quarters"—north, south, east, and west—signified the known world.

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Why do you think the king's name is preceded by the sign for divinity?

Although according to earlier tradition, kingship was a divine institution that "descended from heaven," the ruler himself was not divine. This changed during the reign of Naram-Sin (2254–2218 B.C.). Naram-Sin was the first of the Akkadian kings to adopt the words and emblems of divinity and take on semidivine status. Under his rule, the king came to be seen as the god towards whom the Sumerian cities were required to direct their loyalty. This was an unusual development, since in earlier periods the king was not considered divine.

What do you think the vase was used for?

Inscribed vases such as this one were often used as votives, that is, they were dedications to a god or goddess for use in the rituals of worship. This vase was probably used to pour liquid offerings to the god.

Can you think of a modern equivalent for this vase?

A modern equivalent could be a communion chalice, which is a special cup used to celebrate mass in Christian faiths.

Gudea, ruler of Lagash
Iraq, Tello (ancient Girsu)
Second Dynasty of Lagash, ca. 2120 B.C.
Diorite
Louvre, AO 3293 and 4108

What are some physical characteristics of this person, and what do the characteristics suggest?

The subject has well-muscled arms, legs, hands and feet suggesting that he is physically strong. Large ears and eyes convey the subject's wisdom and attentiveness.

How would you describe the expression on this figure's face?

The figure seems to be staring. The prominence of the eyes and seriousness of expression convey wisdom and piety.

What kind of a person do you think this sculpture depicts?

This sculpture depicts a ruler, specifically Gudea, who ruled the state of Lagash around 2120 B.C.

Do you think an American leader would like to be depicted in the same manner that Gudea chose to be depicted?

We do not especially value physical strength in our leaders. We do expect our leaders to have strength of character, to promote justice, and to be intelligent and thoughtful. Statues of Gudea depict him with what the Mesopotamians considered the physical attributes of the ideal ruler: a well-muscled body, large staring eyes, and prominent ears. These characteristics are described in several of Gudea's inscriptions: of mighty strength, wise, attentive to the gods.

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Based on your knowledge of inscriptions on other Mesopotamian objects depicting or dedicated to the ruler, what do you think this inscription might say?

The inscription records that the statue was dedicated by Gudea to his personal god, Ningishzida. Unlike the earlier ruler, Naram-Sin (reigned 2254–2218 B.C.), Gudea did not think of himself as a god, but rather as having been chosen by the gods as an intermediary between them and humankind. The religion of ancient Mesopotamia was polytheistic.The people worshiped other gods in addition to the god of their city-state. The people of Mesopotamia believed that a council of gods and goddesses ruled the earth, deciding the fate of individuals and cities. Each god had a specific rank within this council.

This figure would have been placed in a temple dedicated to an important deity of the city-state. What purpose do you think this figure of Gudea would have served? (Think about the figure's prominent eyes and what the figure would have been "looking" at.)

The figure would have been placed so that it "looked" at the statue of the temple god. The figure represents Gudea and was placed in the temple to pray perpetually for his life. Thus the statue is a substitute for the presence of Gudea himself.

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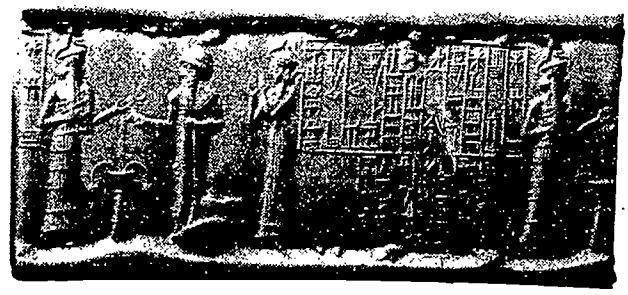
Modern impression of cylinder seal
inscribed for Shulgi, king of Ur
Southern Iraq
Third Dynasty of Ur, reign of Shulgi
(2094–2047 B.C.)
Louvre, AO 22312



Do you know what the object in this slide is?

It is a modern impression taken from a cylinder seal made about four thousand years ago. A cylinder seal is an object made of a hard material, in this case agate, which is carved with a design. The design is recessed so that when it is rolled across wet clay it will leave an impression in relief. Seals were used to ratify accounts, mark ownership, and identify stores and consignments. Seals were used to ratify documents, and easily identified the sender of the document. Thus, they were an important means of communication. Seals average about 2.5 centimeters in height and 1.5 centimeters in diameter and were generally pierced lengthwise so that they could be worn on a pin, a string, or mounted on a swivel.

Look closely at the impression made by the seal. Can you identify the ruler in this image?

The ruler is shown wearing a soft cap with a rolled brim like the cap Gudea is wearing in the previous slide.

What do you think he is doing?

The ruler pours a liquid offering to a god, who has a horned headdress and a long, flounced robe. Behind the king stands a protective goddess.

What do you think was the purpose of this seal?

The ruler of the city of Nippur (an important Mesopotamian religious center) dedicated the seal to a god for the life of King Shulgi (reigned 2094–2047 B.C.). In the inscription, Shulgi's titles are "the strong man, king of Ur, king of Sumer and Akkad." His name is preceded by the sign for "divinity" ✱. Thus, Shulgi revived the practice begun by the Akkadian king Naram-Sin whose vase we saw in slide #2.

Can you think of a modern equivalent of this seal?

The president's seal is used on official documents as a means of authenticating the document.

24

Gudea, ruler of Lagash
Iraq, Tello (ancient Girsu)
Second Dynasty of Lagash, ca. 2120 B.C.
Calcite
Louvre, AO 22126

Whom do you think this sculpture depicts?

This is also a sculpture of Gudea, a ruler of Lagash who reigned around 2120 B.C. The sculpture shows many of the same physical characteristics of the sculpture in slide 3.

What is Gudea holding in his hands?

Gudea holds a vase from which flow streams of water swimming with fish.

Bearing in mind the climate of the region, why do you think a ruler would be shown holding a vase of water?

The flowing vase symbolizes the providing of water, an important duty of the ruler whose attention to maintaining the irrigation canals was essential to settled life in southern Mesopotamia.

25

Gudea, ruler of Lagash
Iraq, Tello (ancient Girsu)
Second Dynasty of Lagash, ca. 2120 B.C.
Diorite
Louvre, AO 2

Who do you think this sculpture might depict?

Gudea. Although its head is missing, the sculpture shows many of the same physical characteristics of the sculptures in the previous slides.

Can you tell what Gudea has in his lap?

Gudea is shown here as an architect planning the construction of a religious building. On the board in his lap are a plan of a fortified building and the tools of the architect: a stylus for writing, and a measuring rod. The long inscription carved on the statue of Gudea describes the ruler's journeys over land and sea to obtain stone, metal, and cedar to rebuild and decorate the Eninnu, the temple of the god Ningirsu built at Girsu. The last portion of the inscription describes the creation of the statue itself, which was carved from the diorite stone that Gudea brought from the distant land of Magan. Gudea gave the statue a name, installed it in the temple, and, so the inscription says, gave it speech. He instructed the statue to remind the god—that is, to speak to the statue of Ningirsu in the temple—of his good deeds. The inscription concludes:

> He [Gudea] went to the mouth of the statue and said: "The statue is made neither of metal nor of lapis lazuli, and no one revetted it with copper, lead, or iron; it is made of diorite and it should stand in the place of libations! No one will break it in an act of violence! O statue, your gaze is on the god Ningirsu!"

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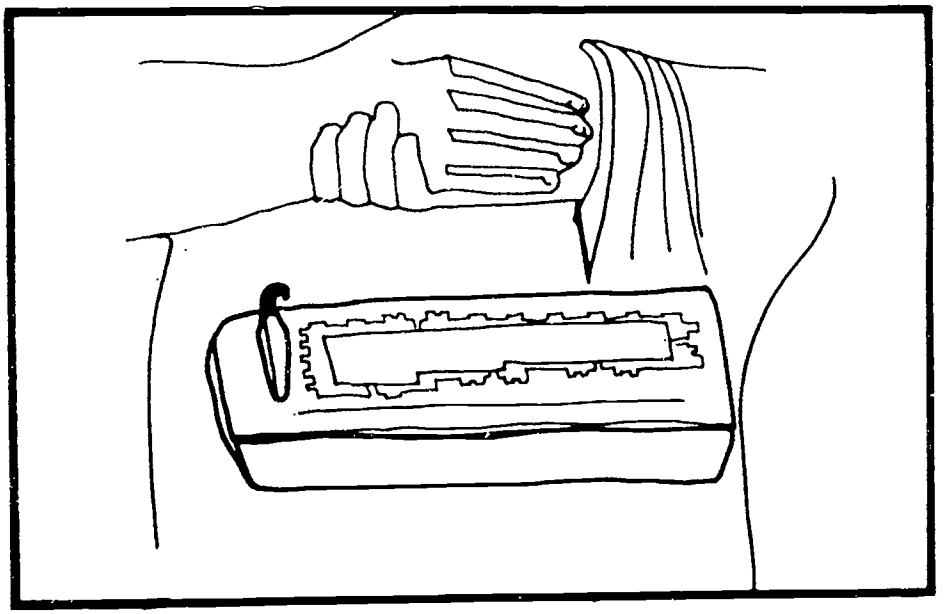
For what purpose do you think the sculpture was made?

The statue of Gudea was placed in a temple facing the sculpture of Ningirsu to whom the temple was dedicated. The figure of Gudea was to speak to the statue of the god, Ningirsu, and to remind the god of Gudea's good deeds.



27

Follow-up Activities for Students

THE INVENTION OF WRITING

Is record-keeping (the initial purpose of writing) important to individuals and society today? What does this particular contribution of Mesopotamians tell us about their attitude toward life? For what purposes do people keep records?

CYLINDER SEALS

Develop a design, with or without writing, that would be effective as a cylinder seal. The design must be continuous, readable, and should be easy to carve in mirror image on a seal. Carve your seal design in leather-hard clay. Allow to dry and then try rolling it in clay or Sculpey© to make an impression.

For further information about the origins of writing in Mesopotamia, see "The Birth of Writing in Ancient Mesopotamia" by Béatrice André-Salvini in Mesopotamian Art in the Louvre, Asian Art *V:l (Winter 1992).*

MESOPOTAMIAN RULERS AND PRESENT-DAY RULERS

To the people of ancient Mesopotamia, rulers were intermediaries between human beings and the gods. How do our attitudes toward leaders compare with that of the Mesopotamians? Is leadership a valued quality in men and women? Are we allowed to challenge our leaders today? Why? Do you think leaders today have the same authority over their subjects as leaders in ancient Mesopotamia?

PORTRAITS OF A PRESIDENT

You have been commissioned to create a statue of the president of the United States. The president has requested that the sculpture sit in a place of honor in the Capitol and that it serve to remind the Congress of the president's ever-watchful presence. How will you depict the president? What characteristics of the office of the president will you choose to highlight? (Remember: Mesopotamian rulers were shown as builders of temples and providers of water, and both of these images reflect the ruler's responsibility towards his subjects.) What physical characteristics of the president will you emphasize? Will you show him as an ideal ruler or as an ordinary citizen?

For further information on the depictions of Mesopotamian rulers, see "Art and the Ruler: Gudea of Lagash" by Françoise Tallon in Mesopotamian Art in the Louvre, Asian Art *V:l (Winter 1992).*

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

The epic of Gilgamesh is one of the most powerful stories that we have from Mesopotamia. The central themes are personal—loneliness, love, loss, fear, and rage at human fate. The epic provides an interesting comparison with some of the other great epics created in other cultures.

Read a copy of the epic of Gilgamesh.

Who are the main characters of the epic?

What are they like?

How does the myth present the relationship between god, nature, and woman/man?

How does Gilgamesh confront his own mortality?

What would you say was the "moral" of the story?

Compare the epic of Gilgamesh and Tablet XI in particular, which is the story of the Flood, with the story of the Flood in the Bible, Genesis 6–9; or with "Deucalion and Pyrrha: the Flood" in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Discuss the significance of floods in general to cultures around the world. Describe the importance of water in different world cultures.

Are there any important similarities between the flood myth in the epic of Gilgamesh and other flood myths? Compare the relationship between god, man, and nature in the myths. How is the relationship different in each myth? How does the relationship influence the myth as a whole?

What do the different stories suggest about mortality/immortality?

Maureen Gallery Kovacs's volume on the epic of Gilgamesh published by Stanford University is an excellent translation of the eleven-tablet epic, with an introduction, glossary, and appendices on Tablet XII and on Mesopotamian languages. For further information about the epics of Gilgamesh, see "The Epics of Gilgamesh" by Maureen Kovacs in Mesopotamian Art in the Louvre, Asian Art *V:1 (Winter 1992).*

Ongoing research on texts and on works of art in museum collections, and current excavations in the Near East, contribute important new discoveries every year. The following is a list of publications for the general reader that incorporates the most recent scholarship:

Mesopotamian Art in the Louvre. *Asian Art* V:1 (Winter 1992).

Contents include: Béatrice André-Salvini, "The Birth of Writing in Ancient Mesopotamia;" Françoise Tallon, "Art and the Ruler: Gudea of Lagash;" and Maureen Kovacs, "The Epics of Gilgamesh."

These well-illustrated articles, written for nonspecialist readers, include an annotated bibliography. The issue also furnishes a map and a chronology of early Mesopotamia.

Collon, Dominique. *Near Eastern Seals.* Interpreting the Past series. London: The British Museum, 1990.

A readable and up-to-date introduction, surveying the information that seals and their designs provide for the study of ancient Near Eastern art, religion, and society.

Cooper, Jerrold S. "Writing." *International Encyclopedia of Communications,* IV: 321-331. New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.

A clear and concise description of the birth and development of early writing systems in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Americas.

Crawford, Harriet. *Sumer and the Sumerians.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

A survey of Mesopotamian developments from the birth of writing and cities to about 2000 B.C. Chapters are arranged by topic and include history, economic and social organization, architecture, trade, burial and death, and writing and the arts. Few illustrations.

Gundlach, Susan. "Gilgamesh: The Quest for Immortality." In *Calliope: World History for Young People,* edited by Rosalie F. Baker and Charles F. Baker III, vol. I: 3. New Hampshire: Cobblestone Publishing, 1991.

A children's magazine of world history, fully illustrated, with a section called "Off the Shelf," a guide to reference books and suggestions for further reading. Published five times during the school year.

Jacobsen, Thorkild. *The Harps that Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987.

Includes selections from some of the major works of Sumerian literature, including epics, myths, hymns, and laments. These selections reveal the drama, emotion, and beauty of Sumerian literary achievements. An excellent sourcebook for classes in world literature.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. *The Sumerians.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963 (latest printing, 1971).

The standard survey of Sumerian civilization, written for the nonspecialist reader by one of the most revered specialists of the century.

McCall, Henrietta. *Mesopotamian Myths*. The Legendary Past series. London: The British Museum and the University of Texas at Austin, 1990.

An introduction to Mesopotamian religion and myth, including selected passages from some of the epics.

Reade, Julian. *Mesopotamia*. London: The British Museum and Harvard University Press, 1991.

A first-rate introduction to Mesopotamian archaeology, history, society, and culture, from earliest times to about 2000 B.C. Beautifully illustrated with many important works of art now in the collections of the British Museum.

Roaf, Michael. *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*. Oxford: Equinox and Facts on File, 1990.

A superb reference work for the nonspecialist, lavishly illustrated with photographs, maps, plans, charts, diagrams, and chronologies. Covers the ancient Near East from earliest times to the end of the Achaemenid Persian Empire in 331 B.C. Includes many special essays on developments in art, technology, religion, and writing.

Walker, C. B. F. *Cuneiform*. Reading the Past series. London: The British Museum, 1987.

A clear, readable account of the decipherment of cuneiform and the nature of written records from the ancient Near East, with special reference to Mesopotamia.

Akkad	region of southern Mesopotamia, north of Sumer
Akkadian	the language of the Akkadian dynasty and of the Assyrians in ancient Mesopotamia
Bau	wife of Ningirsu, Bau was an important goddess of Lagash. She was worshiped at her temple in Girsu.
Enki	lord of the "sweet waters" under the earth and the god of wisdom, was also the patron god of artisans
Eninnu	a temple to the god Ningirsu built by Gudea at Girsu
Enlil	the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon, whose name means "Lord Wind"
ensi	a ruler or prince
Geshtinanna	a goddess, wife of Ningishzida
Gudea	a ruler of state of Lagash
Lagash	a state
lugal	king; literally "big man"
Mesopotamia	ancient name for the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; the region now defined as Iraq, eastern Syria, southeastern Turkey, and southwestern Iran
Nanshe	goddess, sister of the god Ningirsu and patron deity of state of Lagash
Naram-Sin	King of Agade (reigned 2254–2218 B.C.)
Ningirsu	god and patron deity of state of Lagash
Ningishzida	god, personal god of Gudea
Shulgi	King of the Third Dynasty of Ur (reigned 2094–2047 B.C.)
Sumer	the southernmost part of Mesopotamia
Ur-Bau	father of Gudea and founder of the Second Dynasty of Lagash
Ur-Nanshe	a king of state of Lagash during the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2475 B.C.)

PERIODS	DYNASTIES		
	Kish	Lagash	Uruk
Uruk IV 3300–3100 B.C.			
Jemdet Nasr 3100–2900 B.C.			
Early Dynastic I 2900–2700 B.C.			
Early Dynastic II 2700–2500 B.C.	Mesalim ca. 2550 B.C.		Gilgamesh ca. 2600 B.C.
Early Dynastic III 2500–2350 B.C.		Ur-Nanshe ca. 2475 B.C. Eanatum ca. 2450 B.C. Enmetena ca. 2425 B.C.	
Akkadian 2350–2190 B.C.	AKKADIAN DYNASTY Sargon 2334–2279 B.C. Rimush 2278–2270 B.C. Manishtusu 2269–2218 B.C. Naram-Sin 2254–2218 B.C. Sharkalisharri 2217–2193 B.C.		

PERIODS	DYNASTIES	
Neo-Sumerian 2190–2000 B.C.	SECOND DYNASTY OF LAGASH	
	Ur-Bau ca. 2130 B.C.	
	Gudea ca. 2120 B.C.	THIRD DYNASTY OF UR
	Ur-Ningirsu ca. 2110 B.C.	Ur-Nammu 2112–2095 B.C.
		Shulgi 2094–2047 B.C.
		Amar-Sin 2046–2038 B.C.
		Shu-Sin 2037–2029 B.C.
		Ibbi-Sin 2028–2004 B.C.