

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE BODY OF THE ABLE RULER: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATUES OF GUDEA

For the twelve years that I taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Åke Sjöberg was a source of constant information, affection, support, sometimes exasperation, always laughter. My debt to him is great—beginning with the first semester, when he would appear in my survey of Mesopotamian art each week, graduate students from the Tablet Room in tow, to demonstrate by example his commitment to the teaching of that material; and continuing throughout, as he generously made sure certain books came my way, his own files and library always open. What is most important, Åke has been a significant factor in the special environment at Penn, where students of philology have been exposed to material culture from several perspectives, and students of art history and archaeology have gotten serious training in language—thereby redressing the limited vision that has too often characterized our field, in which texts and images have been seen as belonging to separate domains, rather than as aspects of a single and mutually-referential cultural system.

It is in such a vein that I offer the present essay—as an initial inquiry into what will eventually be a more comprehensive study, in which the combined verbal and visual message of selected works of early Sumerian “art” will be explored, with a view toward an understanding of the affective intent of the whole within the specific Mesopotamian context.

I have purposely chosen to begin with the Gudea statues—those old staples of the Mesopotamian repertoire—where in fact text and image are brought together on the body of the statue itself. Gudea, ensi of Lagash, is probably the second most well-known ruler of ancient Mesopotamia, next only to Assurbanipal and his lions. He appears in virtually

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every secondary survey of the history of art, Mesopotamian or global, as the arch-icon of the oriental ruler: relatively narcissistic, else how could there be at least 20 remaining statues of him (“a great patron of the arts,” explained Woolley);¹ not very imaginative (his statues “resemble one another so closely” that a small sample “adequately represent(s) the whole group,” said Frankfort);² imbued with traditional values of permanence and piety (his “immutability” manifest in the cylindrical block, witness to a “tendency which permeated all the Eastern world,” according to Moortgat).³

Most of these characterizations constitute projections from the perspective of 19th and 20th century Europe and the West. Gudea is seen as a patron of the arts-for-arts’sake, rather than an individual with specific, culturally-determined functions and goals for his several representations. Although in general his images closely resemble each other, minor variations in representation and significant variations in accompanying text serve as operative factors in distinguishing one work from another, while providing continuity in the basic form. And finally, Gudea’s goals of piety and permanence are not to be seen merely as expressions of his personal ambitions, but as acting on behalf of his people and the state, within a Mesopotamian framework of the just and effective ruler.

Who, then, was this ruler, Gudea of Lagash, and how did his images and their texts interact as communicators on their own terms? I hope ultimately to pursue these questions in seven stages: I. The historical individual; II. The visual properties of his sculptural corpus; III. The verbal properties of the accompanying texts; IV. The combined verbal and visual message; V. The ritual and metaphorical activation of the message; VI. The placement of the images; and finally, VII. The overall purpose of the statues.

In this essay, I shall present a very brief introduction to the historical individual, and concentrate on the intersection between certain visual aspects of the free-standing statues of Gudea and some of the verbal representations of the ruler evident in his own texts, in order to dem-

¹ C. Leonard Woolley, *The Development of Sumerian Art* (New York, 1935) 107–8.

² H. Frankfort, *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (Pelican History of Art, NY and Harmondsworth, 1954) 47.

³ A. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Phaidon, London and NY, 1969) 62–63.

onstrate that what have been considered to be merely formal properties of the works are in fact highly-coded signifiers of meaning.

I. *The Historical Individual*

By his own account, Gudea ruled as ensí (governor) of the autonomous city-state of Lagash in southern Mesopotamia. Successor of his father-in-law, Ur-Baba, and predecessor of his son, Ur-Ningirsu, he was the most prominent figure in what has been identified as the Second Dynasty of Lagash, dating toward the end of the third millennium B.C. A large corpus of texts and images preserved from his satellite city of Girsu, modern Tello, and various finds from other sites such as Ur and Nippur, provide us with a picture of public works and activities during his reign.⁴

The estimated 20 years of Gudea's reign were long thought to have preceded the emergence of the complex and powerful Third Dynasty of Ur, which ultimately came to dominate the remaining city-states and surrounding territories of southern Mesopotamia. Recently, however, evidence has emerged that seems to demonstrate that the reign of Gudea overlapped with that of Ur-Nammu, first ruler of the Ur III dynasty, with a complexly interwoven set of relations existing between Ur and Lagash into and beyond the reign of Ur-Nammu's son and successor, Šulgi.⁵

This is important for our purposes, because it helps to account for striking similarities in both verbal and visual expression in works associated with the two polities. It allows us, also, to use the arts and documents of each to illuminate with greater security the other. In addition, it permits us to explain the prominent position allotted to Gudea by subsequent Ur III rulers in the calendar of ritual activities.⁶

⁴ Cf. historical summary by A. Falkenstein, "Gudea (A. Nach Texten)," RIA 3, 676–679; related monuments presented by E. Strommenger in the same volume, "Gudea (B. Archäologisch)," pp. 680–688, and most recently studied by A. Spycket, *La statuaire du proche-orient ancien*, Handbuch der Orientalistik 7 (E. J. Brill, Leiden-Köln, 1981) 184ff.

⁵ Cf. summary of literature and evidence in P. Steinkeller, "The Date of the Gudea Dynasty," JCS, 40 (1988), 47–53.

⁶ See mention in Falkenstein, RIA 3, 679 re offerings by Amar-Su'en and Ibbi-Su'en, and discussion in B. Perlov, "The Families of the Ensis Urbau and Gudea and Their Funerary Cult," CRRAI 26, B. Alster, ed. (Copenhagen, 1980) 77–81, as well as the

II. *The Visual Properties of Gudea's Sculptural Corpus*

During the course of intermittent excavation at Tello between 1877 and 1933, some twenty statues of Gudea were brought to light—a solid core from excavated contexts, with which we shall mainly concern ourselves here, others attributed to clandestine digs carried out (see examples, our figs. 1–3) at the site in the 1920's, and yet others via the art market, without known provenience.⁷ Formal descriptions and chronological analyses of some or all of this corpus abound,⁸ and I shall not attempt to recapitulate, or even review, that literature here. Virtually universal are references to the basically cylindrical form maintained in the block (although opinions differ in the degrees to which the underlying body is [Frankfort] or is not [Woolley] apparent beneath the wrapped garment that is the skin of the cylinder); the sense of overall mass; the muscular arms; the clasped and therefore immobilized hands, associated with an attitude of pious concentration; the enlarged eyes, recognized as part of a continuing Mesopotamian tradition; and the characteristic facial features of broad, flat cheekbones and prominent chin (that have led some to speak of “portraiture” and others of ideal “essences”).⁹

These factors constitute ready criteria for recognizing and classifying “Gudea” figures and their contemporaries, allowing us to place them in general between the Akkadian and Old Babylonian periods, and

recent dissertation by R. E. Averbeck, “A Preliminary Study of Ritual and Structure in the Cylinders of Gudea,” (unpubl. diss., Dropsie College, Philadelphia 1987) 17.

⁷ See the account in A. Parrot, *Tello, Vingt campagnes de fouilles (1877–1933)* (Éditions Michel, Paris, 1948) based upon the original publication of E. de Sarzec, *Découvertes en Chaldée* (Paris, 1884–1912).

⁸ Cf. Woolley, Frankfort, Moortgat, cited above; E. Strommenger, “Das Menschenbild in der altnesopotamischen Rundplastik von Mesilim bis Hammurapi,” *BaghMitt* 1 (1960), esp. 63–69 on Gudea; F. Johanssen, *The Statues of Gudea, Ancient and Modern*, Mesopotamia 6 (Copenhagen, 1978) which challenges the authenticity of a number of the attributed works; Spycket, 1981, cited above, n. 4; the dissertation by G. Colbow, *Zur Rundplastik des Gudea von Lagaš* (Munich, 1987) which I have not yet been able to see; Donald P. Hansen on the Stoclet Gudea, recently acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts: “A Sculpture of Gudea, Governor of Lagash,” *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 64:1 (1988) 5–20; and a lecture by Horst Steible, “An attempt at establishing a chronological order for the statues of Gudea of Lagash from the point of view of a Sumerologist,” given at the Universities of California at Berkeley and Pennsylvania in the Spring of 1989, and kindly made available to me.

⁹ Cf. on this, comments in Winter, review of Spycket, *La statuaire du proche-orient ancien*, in *JCS*, 40 (1984) 107–8, where an intermediate stage, between purely “idealized” forms and “true portraiture” is discussed, one that includes “signature elements” that permit identification of a particular individual, and yet idealizes some features.

more specifically in sequence with regard to each other.¹⁰ However, it is my point here that while formal properties of style and rendering are valid criteria for attribution, they also have another value: that of expression.

Just what those particular properties are designed to express can only be understood if taken in conjunction with textual references to the intent of the statues and the nature of the subject represented. Particularly relevant in this regard is the text inscribed on Statue B (fig. 2),¹¹ which opens with a list of attributes ascribed to Gudea. These attributes are couched as gifts bestowed by a series of gods, and serve as indicators of those qualities deemed important for and by the ruler. A number of them echo closely aspects of the gods Ningirsu and Nindub as they are described in Gudea's dream, preserved in the lengthy text of Gudea's Cylinder A.¹² By comparing the verbal representations of the ruler with his physical representation in the statues, what emerges is a consistent and coherent picture in both domains—constituting what Louis Marin, in his study of the images of Louis XIV of France, has referred to as “representations of power,” brought into being and reinforced by the “power of representation.”¹³

In brief, it is argued that qualities of expression associated with visual imagery are retrievable, but must be seen as culturally and historically specific, for the understanding of which internal evidence must be adduced, before value can be ascribed. It is further argued that the common art-historical equation of “style” with the manner of rendering, hence mere form—thereby viewing “iconography” or subject matter as the sole conveyor of meaning—must be challenged; for I shall proceed now to several instances in which it may, I believe, be demonstrated that with the statues of Gudea many of those properties we would place in

¹⁰ Spycket, for example, would see some of the statues as more “youthful” than others, thus representing earlier phases within Gudea's reign (*La statuaire* 190–191). It is interesting that the relative chronology thus arrived at would correspond with the sequence proposed by Steible on the basis of the dedicatory inscriptions (cf. lecture, cited above, n. 9).

¹¹ Louvre AO 2, de Sarzec *Découvertes*, pls. 14–19. For the text, I am grateful to have had access to the ms. of H. Steible, *Die neusumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* [Freiburg altorientalische Studien 9 (forthcoming)].

¹² Steible, FAOS 9, cited above; and see also the recent translations included in T. Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987) 388–425, and in Averbeck, *Ritual and Structure* 589–678.

¹³ L. Marin, *Portrait of the King*, M. H. Houle (transl.), (University of Minnesota Press, Dexter MN, 1988) 4.

the domain of form are actually charged in the Mesopotamian context to carry meaning in quite significant ways.¹⁴

1. *Height*

A number of the standing Gudea figures are quite tall (e.g., 1.42 m [our fig. 1] and 1.25 m, both without heads);¹⁵ one of the seated statues is downright colossal (1.57 m);¹⁶ and even those that are smaller than lifesize give a general appearance of being “larger-than-life,” by virtue of their overall proportions and massiveness. The importance of size as a measure of distinctiveness is implied in the couplet that records Gudea’s “rightful head made to stand out in the assembly by (his personal god) Ningišzida”:

B iii 3–4: sag-zi ukkin-na pa-e₃-a
 ^dnin-giš-zi-da

While this is the weakest of the parallels that can be cited between text and statue, I feel it is still worth pointing out. On the same basis as “outstanding” in English implies height, “standing out in a crowd” as a concrete allusion to having exceptional and noteworthy qualities in general, I would suggest that the “largeness” conveyed by the Gudea statues equally gives expression to his “outstandingness,” which in turn led to recognition of his capacity for leadership—much as the designation of a “big” man in the Middle East today, one who “casts a big shadow,” uses a metaphor of physical size to imply charisma and social power.

2. *Breadth of Body, Chest*

The use of the adjective *dagal*, indicating width or breadth, as a positive attribute implying something “lavishly” or “abundantly” present, is

¹⁴ Gudea was clearly not the first ruler to portray himself in stone—even diorite: witness the partially-preserved figures of the Akkadian ruler, Manishtusu (Moortgat, *Art*, Fig. 141) and of Gudea’s father-in-law and predecessor, Ur-Baba (Fig. 164). However, while it may well be due to the accidents of archaeological discovery, it is only with this ruler and his large assemblage of associated images and texts that we are in a position to evaluate the particular confluence of style and expression toward intended meaning that I wish to pursue here.

¹⁵ E.g., Louvre AO 6, and AO 5, resp.

¹⁶ Louvre AO 1, known as Statue “D.”

generally important, as will be seen in section 4, as well. Here, Gudea is described as, “his life within him abundantly (lit. widely) supplied by (the God) Šulšaga”:

B iii 1–2: zi-ša₃-gal₂-la šu-dagal-du₁₁-ga
^dšul-ša₃-ga-ka-ke₄.

I would suggest that the ascription of width, or breadth, or fullness of life is expressed precisely where in the body the fullness of breath is manifest, that is, in the chest (cf. fig. 1). The implication is reinforced by the description of Ningirsu himself later on in the Statue B inscription (ix 27) as gaba-gal₂-dingir-re-ne-ke, “great-chest-having (one) of the gods,” with the attributes of largeness, fullness of life and power contained therein.

3. *Full-Muscled Arm*

The fringed garment worn by Gudea is draped around his body, tucked with a fold under the right armpit, with the free end falling over and covering the left arm. The right arm and shoulder is thus left fully exposed (e.g., figs. 1 and 2). The well-developed, almost bulbous musculature of that right arm and shoulder is often remarked upon as a notable feature of the Gudea “style.” Yet, only when this stylistic feature is read in conjunction with one of the most frequently-employed epithets of Gudea, can we account for that massive musculature in a meaningful way. Among the divinely-sanctioned attributes of the ensi occurs the epithet, “strength-given one of (the God) Nindara”:

B iii 12–13: a₂-sum-ma
^dnin-dar-a-ke₄

Essential here is an understanding of the play between the cuneiform sign for arm with the meaning “strength,” a₂ [DA+šeššig]. In this way, one literally reads the epithet as “(strong) arm given by the god Nindara.” The reference closely parallels Gudea’s description of the god identified as Nindub, who appears in his dream sequence recorded in Cylinder A:

A v 2–3: mina-kam ur-sag-ga₂-am₃
a₂ mu-gur₈

Translated most recently by Thorkild Jacobsen as, “the second one (in the dream) was a hero; he was *mighty of strength*,” it literally means,

“he was of massive arm”; and indeed, in a repetition later on, as the dream is being interpreted, Jacobsen himself originally translated the same phrase poetically as, “the arms bulged on him.”¹⁷ Thus, one who knew the physiognomic code of Mesopotamian somatotypes could not fail to recognize in Gudea’s exposed arm the heroic power vested in the ruler, as manifest in his image.

4. *Broad-Faced; Wide-Eared*

I believe the revealing passage here is that in Cylinder A, where Gudea describes himself as responding to the divine instructions given him by Ningirsu:

A i 12: ensi₂ lu₂-geštu₃-dagal-kam
geštu₃ i₃-ga₂-ga₂

Loosely translated, we are told that “the ensi, a man of wisdom, was giving ear”—that is, paying attention, listening, giving heed; but literally, the phrase used to indicate a wise man is one “of wide ear,” geštu₃-dagal. Hence, the ensi, a man (who is) wide of ear, was listening hard. Once again, we see width as a positive attribute: one who is wide-eared is one who is able to pay attention, be attentive and wise, listen well. This calls to mind the title, “attentive prince,” applied to Neo-Assyrian rulers as one of the primary attributes of the just and appropriate ruler.¹⁸ While it is perhaps less compelling than the parallel between powerfully muscled arm and strength, cited above, it is nonetheless tempting to see a correlation between the broad-faced and wide-eared heads of Gudea and the qualities of attentiveness and wisdom attributed to the ensi (cf., e.g., Fig. 3).¹⁹

¹⁷ Jacobsen *Harps* 393 for lines v 2–3; his translation, “the arms bulged on him,” for line vi 3 was used in an early, privately-circulated ms, later amended for publication to conform with the first reference, as “mighty of strength.”

¹⁸ I. J. Winter, “Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,” *Studies in Visual Communication*, 7 (1981) 21.

¹⁹ Cf. both heads with cap, e.g., AO 13 (our Fig. 3), and without cap. AO 12: de Sarzec Découvertes pl. 12:1 and 2. One would expect the same feature of divine representations in the period as well, in conformation with the reference by Nammaḥni of Lagash, another son-in-law of Ur-Baba and successor to Gudea and his direct line, who requests of the goddess Baba that she “turn her ear” to the dedicator (cf. Steible, FAOS 9, N1: col. 2:4–6)—thus emphasizing the ability of the god, no less than that of the ensi in governing, to hear and respond to the supplicant, as well as the ability of the obedient servant to respond to the commands of god or ruler.

5. *Large-Eyed*

As a final case, we are told toward the beginning of the Statue B inscription that Gudea is “looked upon with favor by Nanše”:

B ii 10–11: igi-zi-bar-ra
^dnanše-ke₄

And we are told toward the end of the same inscription that the focus of the gaze of the statue, (Sum. alan) is upon the god Ningirsu, to whom the image is dedicated, and in whose sanctuary it was to be placed:

B vii 58–59: alan igi-zu
^dnin-gir₂-su-ka-kam

literally, “statue, your eye is of (belongs to/is upon) Ningirsu.” The phrase has been translated by some to mean that the god Ningirsu actually sees through the eye of the statue, making the reference into an important theological point concerning the god acting through the king, and the special importance of maintaining the offerings to and identity of the statue by later rulers, since not only Gudea, but the god is involved.²⁰ Yet, the reference is placed immediately after a description of the setting up of the statue, and I would rather suggest that it serves as part of the instructions to the statue: Gudea had clearly instructed the statue earlier (B vii 21–24) that it was to speak directly to the god; here (B vii 58–59), the statue is reminded that its objective is to constantly keep its attention upon the god (its eye belongs to the god). Seen in this way, the two references cited make clear the importance of the gaze: on the one hand, the ruler is gazed upon with favor by the gods, and presumably returns that favor with reciprocal attention, the eyes being an important vehicle for the expression of attentiveness, just as the ears are for giving heed to verbal commands; and on the other hand, a prime purpose of the statue of the ruler is to maintain focussed attention upon the deity, expressed as keeping its eye permanently on the object of its gaze.²¹ Small wonder, then, that the eyes of

²⁰ P. Steinkeller, personal communication.

²¹ The association of the gaze with “piety,” as distinct from mere “attentiveness” needs to be pursued. It is possible that the eyes must be seen in conjunction with the clasped hands; although the meaning of that gesture as salutation, as indicating prayer, or merely of respect, is not at all clear (cf. on this, M.-Th. Barrelet, “La ‘figure du roi’ dans l’iconographie et dans les textes...,” in *Le palais et la royauté*, CRRAI 19, P. Garelli, ed., (Paris 1974) 49–50, citing Landsberger, “Das gute Wort,” in MAOG 4/1 [1928–9] 295).

the Gudea statues should be enlarged, just as they had been throughout the history of Mesopotamian votive statuary for over a millennium, as images of high-ranking individuals were placed within sanctuaries, to serve as permanent representatives of their patrons.²²

With these five cases in mind, we may conclude that the stylistic features described above are not merely formal properties of the works, but rather have been deployed as signs, carrying definite and identifiable value, to accord with the rhetorical ends of the statues. We, as scholars at a historical remove from the later third millennium B.C., must have recourse to the textual glosses in order to identify the meanings carried by physical attributes. But for the Sumerian, as distinct from the Sumerologist, we may speculate that, quite independent of the texts, simply by seeing the ruler represented thusly, the knowledgeable viewer would have been informed at once that the ruler was a leader, full of life and strength, wise and attentive to the gods—all attributes claimed in the inscription as well, and conforming to Mesopotamian ideals of rulership.²³ Indeed, these qualities seen collectively represent requisites for the status claimed as Gudea's very first attribute, "shepherd found in the heart of Ningirsu:"

²² As found, *in situ*, in the Early Dynastic Ishtar temple at Assur (cf. reconstruction in W. Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur* [Leipzig 1938] Fig. 24). The likely placement of the *seated*, as opposed to the *standing* statues of Gudea will be pursued in a subsequent amplification of the present study. The text of the seated Statue 'B' suggests that it was installed in the ki-a-nag, located within the Eninnu; and whether that disputed place represents a chapel specifically dedicated to Gudea, where the statue itself was the recipient of worship, or whether it would have been placed within sight of an image or symbol of the god to whom it was dedicated, does not diminish the importance of the enlarged eyes, since the first reference cited, that of Nanše regarding Gudea, indicates the importance of the cult-object's gaze, while the Assur temple context emphasizes the importance of the votaries' gaze.

²³ These very attributes are precisely those stressed by Kramer as well, in his study of the ideal ruler, using literary texts of the Ur III period: S. N. Kramer, "Kingship in Sumer and Akkad: The Ideal King," in CRRAI 19, 176. Kramer describes the king as necessarily "brave, wise, pious and benevolent." I was further struck by the continuity therefore in overall attributes of rulership from the third to the first millennium, as witnessed in the epithets apparent from the titles of Assurnasirpal II in his Standard Inscription at Nimrud: i.e., "attentive prince, keeper of the gods, fierce predator and hero in battle" (cf. discussion in Winter, *Studies in Visual Communications* 7 [1981] 21–2); and would even go so far as to suggest that there is great comparability between the attributes of Gudea (attentiveness in the head/ears; piety in the eyes, and perhaps also in the hands; powerful life/virility being comparable to the ferocity of the predator; and heroic strength in the arms) and those of Assurnasirpal, although the latter king chose to illustrate those attributes through narrative, while Gudea portrayed them as personal, physical attributes. Still, there are many similar features in the powerful proportions of the two rulers' figures, despite stylistic differences appropriate to their dates.

B ii 8–9: sipa ša₃-ge-pa₃-da
^dnin-gir₂-su-ka-ke₄

—where, for shepherd, we are to understand “good ruler of his people,” favored by the chief god of his land.²⁴

Visual attributes, no less than verbal epithets, thus function as part of a signaling code, with “style” very much a carrier of meaning. The particular physical traits represented would be seen in conjunction with the major iconographic signifier of “rule” seen on many of the Gudea statues: the round-brimmed cap associated with kings from Ur-Nammu to Hammurabi.²⁵ The overall sense conveyed lies in the very nature of the representation of power and the power of representation noted above; the statues at once articulate and constitute the right of Gudea to rule.²⁶

The Gudea statues, then, take their place alongside those of rulers from East to West, ancient to modern, in which the image of the ruler was at once the likeness of an animate body (the representation of an *actual person*) and also an archetype (a fictionalized and idealized *symbolic type* possessed of all the appropriate attributes of rule). In addition, as the object of offering and sacrifice, the *image* itself takes on a presence, not only within the cult, but within society. These three functions correspond to the three bodies of the king, made manifest in his statues, as discussed by Marin for Louis XIV: the historical, the political, and the sacramental.²⁷

The *particular* expressive qualities of Gudea are specific to time and place; the nature and function of representation are not. In the litany of attributes proffered by the panoply of gods in the beginning of the inscription on Statue B, we find the verbal equivalents of the visual attributes of Gudea—attributes that proclaim him strong, wise, attentive, pious—marked for leadership and shepherd of his people.

²⁴ The epithet frequently employed by Gudea as the summary statement of his leadership qualities (e.g., Cylinder “A” ix 5; Cyl. “B” ii 7, etc.), “able,” or “righteous shepherd,” is one which bears further study—particularly in view of the statue of Šulgi found at Tello, where the king is shown holding a young kid in his arms (cf. Parrot *Tello* 222, and good photograph plus text published by J.-M. Durand in Barrelet, CRRAI 19, Pl. I and pp. 96, 130).

²⁵ On the cap, see Barrelet in CRRAI 19, 38–39.

²⁶ And, as with representations of late antique rulers, Julian and Theodosius, “those who looked upon them (their images), looked upon the only constitution the state possessed.”—Peter Brown, “The Philosopher and the Monk,” unpubl. ms., gratefully acknowledged.

²⁷ Marin *Portrait* 13.

Certainly, Gudea also has aspirations for the continuation of his seed and his name:²⁸ however, the maintenance of his ritual offerings and cult by later Ur III kings suggests that by revering him, they were also revering what he stood for.

It has been my thesis here that what Gudea stood for was not only explicitly articulated in text, it was also articulated through expressive physical attributes manifest in the ruler's image. What we see in the Gudea statues is thus a remarkable confluence of form, expression, and meaning appropriate to the particular socio-political context of the Mesopotamian city-state in the late third millennium B.C. While some details of facial physiognomy may have served as signature elements of the individual, the statue as a whole stood (or sat) as the literal embodiment of the ideal able and righteous ruler.

Acknowledgments

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²⁸ Hence the curses at the end of this and other texts on statues and stelae, that attempt to insure the continued maintenance and servicing of the images.



Figure 1. Standing Gudea, known as Statue E, Louvre AO 6, Ht. 1.42 m
[Photo courtesy of Département des antiquités orientales, Musée du Louvre].



Figure 2. Seated Gudea, known as Statue B, Louvre AO 2, Ht. 0.93 m [Photo courtesy of Département des antiquités orientales, Musée du Louvre].



Figure 3. Head of Gudea, Louvre AO 13, Ht. 0.23 m [Photo courtesy of Département des antiquités orientales, Musée du Louvre].