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VOLUME 57 | 2022

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NEW YORK

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The *Metropolitan Museum Journal* is published annually by The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Manuscripts submitted for the *Journal* and all correspondence concerning them should be sent to journalsubmissions@metmuseum.org. Guidelines for contributors are given on p. 6.

Published in association with the University of Chicago Press. Individual and institutional subscriptions are available worldwide. Please direct all subscription inquiries, back issue requests, and address changes to: University of Chicago Press, Journals Division, P. O. Box 37005, Chicago, IL 60637-0005, USA. Phone: (877) 705-1878 (U.S. and Canada) or (773) 753-3347 (international), fax: (877) 705-1879 (U.S. and Canada) or (773) 753-0811 (international), email: subscriptions@press.uchicago.edu, website: www.journals.uchicago.edu

ISBN 978-0-226-82464-2
(University of Chicago Press)

ISSN 0077-8958 (print)
ISSN 2169-3072 (online)

Library of Congress
Catalog Card Number 68-28799

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The authors are grateful to the peer reviewers of the *Metropolitan Museum Journal* for their suggestions and assistance.

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Typefaces: Calibre, Lyon, and Harriet
Printed on Arctic Matt, 150 gsm
Separations by Professional Graphics, Inc.,
Rockford, Illinois
Printed and bound by Ofset Yapımevi, Istanbul

Front cover illustration: Jacob Lawrence, *The Shoemaker*, 1945–46. See fig. 1, p. 107.
Back cover illustration: Mathó Nážin (Standing Bear; Mnikhówožu Lakhóta), *The Battle of the Little Bighorn*, ca. 1920. See fig. 1, p. 86.

Illustration on p. 2: José Manuel de la Cerda. Tray (*batea*) with Turnus provoked into war by Aeneas, ca. 1764. See fig. 1, p. 41

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Founded in 1968, the *Metropolitan Museum Journal* is a double-anonymous, peer-reviewed scholarly journal published annually that features original research on the history, interpretation, conservation, and scientific examination of works of art in the Museum's collection. Its range encompasses the diversity of artistic practice from antiquity to the present day. The *Journal* encourages contributions offering critical and innovative approaches that will further our understanding of works of art.

The *Journal* publishes **articles** and **research notes**. All texts must take works of art in the collection as the point of departure. **Articles** contribute extensive and thoroughly argued scholarship, whereas **research notes** are often smaller in scope, focusing on a specific aspect of new research or presenting a significant finding from technical analysis. The maximum length for articles is 8,000 words (including endnotes) and 10–12 images, and for research notes 4,000 words with 4–6 images. Authors may consult previous volumes of the *Journal* as they prepare submissions: www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications. The *Journal* does not accept papers that have been previously published elsewhere, nor does it accept translations of such works. Submissions should be emailed to journalsubmissions@metmuseum.org.

Manuscripts are reviewed by the *Journal* Editorial Board, composed of members of the curatorial, conservation, and scientific departments,

as well as scholars from the broader academic community.

To be considered for the following year's volume, the complete manuscript must be submitted by September 15.

Manuscripts should be submitted as three separate double-spaced Word files in Times New Roman 12-point type with page numbers inserted: (1) a 200-word abstract; (2) manuscript and endnotes (no images should be embedded within the main text); (3) Word document or PDF of low-resolution images with captions and credits underneath. Please anonymize your submission.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*
MMJ *Metropolitan Museum Journal*

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

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New Evidence for the Origins of a Royal Copper Head from the Ancient Near East

MELISSA EPPIHIMER

When The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired an ancient Near Eastern copper head in 1947, the Museum's annual report described it as "one of the very proudest pieces of ancient sculpture that has come down through the centuries" (figs. 1, 2).¹ The report also noted that viewers could appreciate the work without knowing the identity of the man depicted. The prevailing hypothesis at the time was that the sculpture represented an Elamite ruler from ancient Iran, in part because it was supposedly found in the country's northwestern region. Later, art historical study and technical analysis suggested stronger ties with the art of ancient Iraq, but the association with Iran remained, leading to a degree of uncertainty about the work's ancient cultural context. Now, new evidence points away from Iran and toward Iraq



fig. 1 Head of a ruler,
ca. 2300–2000 B.C. Copper
alloy, $13\frac{7}{16} \times 8\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16}$ in.
(34.4 × 21.3 × 23.3 cm). The
Metropolitan Museum of
Art, Rogers Fund, 1947
(47.100.80)



fig. 2 Side view of the head
of a ruler (fig. 1)

fig. 3 Top view of the head of a ruler (fig. 1)

as the geographic locus of the sculpture's ancient and modern life. First, archival sources suggest that the purported Iranian findspot (or provenience) is unfounded. They connect the head (which emerged via the art market, rather than a supervised excavation) to an antiquities dealer who described it as coming from Babylonia (in southern Iraq) more than a decade before it was first linked with Iran. Second, a stone fragment found at the site of Tello in southern Iraq during the late nineteenth century was recently recognized as a parallel for the copper head, suggesting an ancient Mesopotamian cultural context for the most distinctive attributes of the latter. Divested from an Iranian provenience and bolstered by the Tello parallel, the copper head stands more assuredly as an example of early Mesopotamian royal art.

THE IRANIAN CONNECTION

The object in question is a life-size head of a bearded man with bands wrapped around his elaborate hairstyle. The sculpture was cast from an arsenical copper alloy via lost-wax casting.² Production flaws may have caused surface cracks and a large gap in the beard, but the rough surface is attributable to corrosion, which

has also turned the copper green. A tenon on the underside indicates that the head was originally attached to something, perhaps a sculpted body. The face has often been described as a naturalistic portrait, which has influenced efforts to identify the man (see later discussion), but it is stylized in a manner typical of ancient Near Eastern images. Eyebrows ornamented with a chevron pattern frame heavy-lidded, originally inlaid eyes. Prominent downturned ears, a rounded nose, strong cheekbones, fleshy lips, and two horizontal furrows in the brow complete the face. The facial hair is defined by three main components: (1) rows of short, spiral curls across the cheeks and chin, (2) a long, tapered, wavy lower beard ending in curls, and (3) fine hairs on the mustache and lower lip. Such textural interest is also visible in the distinctive hairstyle that tops the head (fig. 3). Because of its bumpy appearance and complicated arrangement, this feature has sometimes been described as a cloth turban, but the similarly formed rows of hair at the cheek edge of the beard suggest that it is hair, not cloth. The hair on the head is divided and then subdivided into overlapping sections that are incorporated into a braid encircling the head along the hairline. Three intertwining





fig. 4 Head of a king excavated at Nineveh. Akkadian, ca. 2334–2154 B.C. Copper alloy, H. 14⁷/₁₆ in. (36.6 cm). The Iraq Museum, Baghdad (inv. IM 11331)

bands wrap around the braid, partially concealing it. Another band spans the forehead from ear to ear like a fillet. A sliver of hair hangs beneath it, above the right eye.

The head made its modern debut in 1931 at the International Exhibition of Persian Art in London. This significant exhibition brought together items from collections around the world to convey the artistic history of Persia, as Iran was then called.³ In exhibition-related materials, the head was introduced as a representation of an Achaemenid king (550–330 B.C.), found in north-west Persia.⁴ However, two contemporary publications dated the head to the later Persian empire of the Sasanians (A.D. 224–651),⁵ suggesting that the identity of the man and the date of the sculpture were not settled. After the exhibition, Anton Moortgat offered the first detailed art historical analysis of the object and associated it with the art of the Elamites from ancient Iran dating to the second millennium B.C.⁶ Whether the head was described as Achaemenid, Sasanian, or Elamite, the earliest publications presented it as a product of ancient Iran.⁷

Eventually, scholars began to observe stronger visual similarities with Mesopotamian art, but the specter of Iran remained. In 1947, Igor Diakonoff likened the head to the (also copper-alloy) head of an Akkadian king (ca. 2334–2154 B.C.) from Nineveh in modern-day Iraq (fig. 4), which was discovered in 1931 but only published in detail in 1936.⁸ Among their many similarities, the two heads have parallel furrows in the brow, an unusual feature in ancient Near Eastern art. However, because Diakonoff perceived the copper head now in The Met to be a representation of a non-Mesopotamian ethnic type, he concluded that it represented a Gutian king rather than an Akkadian king. The geographic origins of the Gutian people are obscure today, but they are most often associated with the highlands of western Iran. According to Mesopotamian historiographical texts, they brought an end to the Akkadian dynasty. Although his route was circuitous, Diakonoff preserved the head's connection to Iran.

In recent decades, analyses of the head have settled upon a date of production in the late third millennium B.C., during or after the Akkadian dynasty.⁹ The Nineveh head remains the closest visual parallel, and it and the Bassetki statue, a copper-alloy sculpture from the Akkadian period, have similar metallurgical compositions and production technologies.¹⁰ Accordingly, scholars acknowledge that the copper head may belong to the corpus of Mesopotamian art from the late third millennium B.C., but they leave open the possibility of influences from the art and cultures of ancient Iran and possibly even production in Iran. Consequently, the statue has remained in limbo, not fully at home within the art of ancient Iran or the art of ancient Mesopotamia. Perhaps the best indication of the dual (or, possibly, dueling) regional associations of the head is the fact that two recent international loan exhibitions, one dedicated to Iran and another to Mesopotamia, both considered it for display.¹¹

Problematically, however, there is no firm evidence supporting the notion that the head was found in Iran. On the contrary, archival evidence related to the head's modern ownership (its provenance) and the history of its alleged findspot (its provenience) reveals that the Iranian connection is unfounded, instead suggesting that the sculpture was discovered in and exported out of what is now Iraq. Although this is no guarantee of the head's place of production, its cultural affinities, or even its actual provenience, this new evidence eliminates the need to account for an Iranian origin when studying the head.

fig. 5 Brummer Gallery stock card for the copper head, obverse and reverse, ca. 1930. Brummer Gallery Records. Donated to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1980, through Ella Baché Brummer, wife of Ernest Brummer. Transferred to The Cloisters Archives in 1993

THE PROVENANCE OF A PROVENIENCE: 1918–1919

When the head debuted at the Persian exhibition in 1931, its owner was the art dealer Joseph Brummer (1883–1947). Together with his brothers Ernest and Imre, Joseph Brummer ran a successful art gallery with branches in Paris and New York. While best known for its operations in the realm of medieval art, the Brummer Gallery dealt in many other fields.¹² The copper head is among the most significant pieces from the ancient Near East that moved through the gallery, and Brummer¹³ prized it greatly as part of his quasi-private collection. Although it had a Brummer Gallery inventory number (N315), publications during and after Brummer's lifetime described the head as belonging to him personally, rather than to the gallery.¹⁴ What those publications did not say is how or when Brummer acquired this piece. A stock card from the records of the Brummer Gallery shows that he purchased the head in New York from "Messayeh" on January 13, 1919, for \$8,000 (fig. 5).¹⁵

"Messayeh" refers to Rizouk D. Messayeh (1878–1957), an antiquities dealer who immigrated to New York in 1913 after working as a clerk for the U.S. consulate in Baghdad.¹⁶ The Messayeh family had been offering antiquities from Baghdad to European collectors since the late nineteenth century.¹⁷ Before reaching the

United States, Messayeh¹⁸ offered the family's goods to noteworthy scholars in Europe.¹⁹ The Brummer Gallery, then operating only in Paris, likely became a client during Messayeh's stay in that city; a Brummer stock card refers to the purchase of a Mesopotamian bronze vessel "in 1912 from Messayeh" in Paris.²⁰ Once in New York, Messayeh set up shop as an importer and exporter of sundry items, including machinery, raw materials, textiles, and antiquities.²¹

Messayeh's move to the United States coincided with a growing demand for Mesopotamian antiquities, especially tablets and other inscribed artifacts, and he soon began to offer them to U.S. academic institutions and private collectors.²² He advertised "Babylonian antiquities right at your door" and said "new shipments are constantly arriving. Every American University, museum and library ought to have a collection."²³ In several transactions with Messayeh between April 1918 and January 1919, the Brummer Gallery in New York purchased what it called "Babylonian" sculptures, vessels, jewelry, and cylinder seals.²⁴ Unfortunately, the stock card recording the purchase of the copper head is not the original from 1919, but a replacement made about 1930.²⁵ Without the original, it is impossible to know what Messayeh told Brummer about the head's origins.²⁶

Such a significant object could have crossed many miles and passed through many hands before reaching New York, but the nature of Messayeh's business and archival letters suggest that the head, like the works mentioned in his advertisement, came from within the boundaries of what is today Iraq, not Iran. Messayeh's New York business was facilitated from Baghdad by his older brother Alex, with contributions from their younger brother Emile. In letters to Albert T. Clay, curator of the nascent Babylonian collection at Yale University, Messayeh mentions objects coming from three provinces of Ottoman-ruled Iraq (Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul), and he often spoke of items from specific sites.²⁷ For example, when introducing himself to George B. Gordon (the director of the Free Museum of Science and Art at the University of Pennsylvania) shortly after arriving in the United States, Messayeh claimed to have tablets from "Tel-Khaled, Tel-Nekhla, Tel-Ibrahim, Senkereh, Busmya, Mugheir, Warka."²⁸ Overall, the sites Messayeh mentions are mostly within the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys in what is now Iraq. Any claim that objects came from a particular site, however, was not a reliable guarantee that they came from that location.²⁹ The family acquired antiquities directly from illicit diggers and indirectly from

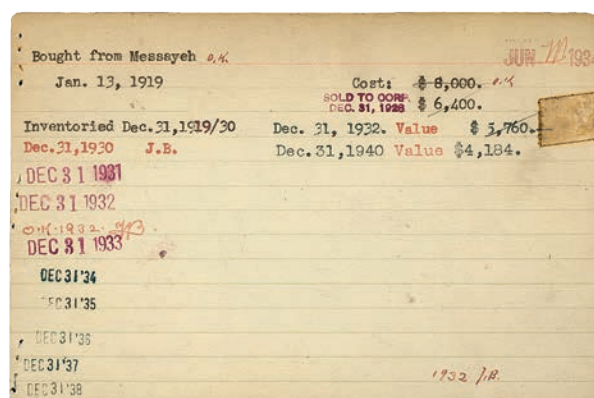
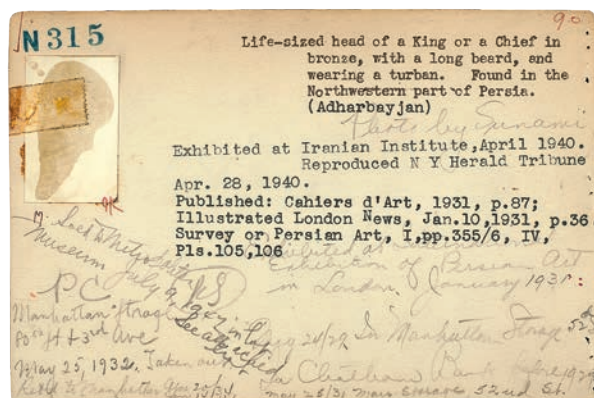


fig. 6 Head of a man, formerly owned by the Brummer Gallery. Date unknown. Copper alloy, $6\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{5}{16} \times 4\frac{5}{16}$ in. (15.6 × 11 × 11 cm). Cincinnati Art Museum, Mary Hanna Fund (1958.520)



intermediaries. One of Messayeh's advertisements notes that, although the supply of tablets was abundant, he could only offer other types of objects when his "workmen who are now at the excavations" were able to acquire them.³⁰ These "excavations" were probably not taking place in Persia. The Messayeh brothers mention Persia or Persian objects only rarely in surviving communications. In their 1912 letters to the French scholar Henri de Genouillac, the brothers refer to a "marble" sculpture from "Chaldean" ruins *near* the Persian boundary and a stone "Anzanite" inscription said to be from Susa in Persia.³¹ Of the few Persian objects they sold, many are types that can be found at archaeological sites in Iraq with Achaemenid levels.³²

It was illegal under Ottoman law to export antiquities, but enforcement was imperfect.³³ The copper head made the journey during World War I, when the conflict between the Ottomans and the British scrambled the state of affairs in Iraq. For the antiquities market, the war disrupted both the supply of objects and European demand.³⁴ For the Messayeh brothers, it was a challenge and an opportunity. Emile fled to British-held Basra, while Alex remained in Turkish-controlled Baghdad watching over their inventory; both did what they could to acquire objects.³⁵ In New York, before the United States officially entered the war, Messayeh pestered Clay at Yale to provide funds to purchase, insure, and ship new items from Basra.³⁶ After the British took

Baghdad in March of 1917, it was finally possible to move the family's Baghdad collection, which represented "three years hard and risky work collecting for you [Clay] in the districts of Mosul and Bagdad [*sic*]."³⁷ For safety, the Messayehs shipped the Baghdad collection via a Pacific route, although not without a delay due to insufficient funds.³⁸ The copper head was included in this U.S.-bound shipment.

The first mention of the head is in Messayeh's letter to Clay on April 1, 1918, sent while waiting for the collection to ship. In his words, the shipment would include one of

the most unique and notable objects ever discovered in Babylonia and in fact in the whole Orient and probably in Greece or Rome and [*sic*] the object I mean is the life size bronze head (bearded) and which weigh [*sic*] over 24 kilos. My brother is so enthusiastic about it that he thinks it the most wonderful and remarkable Babylonian piece hitherto extant.³⁹

This must be the head now in The Met.⁴⁰ According to the letter, this head was found "in Babylonia."⁴¹ The term is not very precise, and the letter does not reveal how or how much Messayeh knew about the origins of the sculpture, but if northwest Persia was somehow involved, he does not indicate it.

Of course, Messayeh might have assigned the head a Babylonian origin to make it more attractive to Clay, who was building up a collection of Babylonian antiquities. Yet he did not suggest that Yale should purchase the sculpture; in fact, he implied that Clay could not afford to. In the same letter, Messayeh regrets that Clay did not view two smaller sculptures: a "Semitic Babylonian bronze head" (actually of copper alloy; *fig. 6*) and a stone head "of the Gudea school." Messayeh had just that day sold these (to Joseph Brummer!) for, he claimed, \$2,000.⁴² With these selling for such a high price, Messayeh suggests that Clay tell his treasurer "how dirt cheap" he got three bronze statuettes in late 1917.⁴³ With limited funds, Clay was a bargain hunter, not a potential buyer for the extraordinary metal head on its way.⁴⁴ Later, at the end of 1918, Messayeh expressed this view himself. While still waiting for the shipment to arrive by rail from San Francisco, he wrote that "these pieces are very expensive for [the] Yale Collection."⁴⁵ Moreover, by that time Messayeh had promised not to show them to anyone other than "my collector friend," presumably Joseph Brummer. Clay had long insisted that Messayeh show him newly arrived objects before other collectors, so

Messayeh's admission here indicates that he did not expect Clay would be interested in the sculpture. At most, he might have hoped that Clay would mention it to other collectors, should his "collector friend" not end up buying it.⁴⁶

The head arrived in New York on January 6, 1919;⁴⁷ Joseph Brummer purchased it less than two weeks later. Did Messayeh tell Brummer it was from Persia, rather than from Babylonia, to increase its appeal? This seems unnecessary. During its early years, the Brummer Gallery bought and sold a variety of objects from Near Eastern cultures, including works they described as Assyrian, Babylonian, Chaldean, and Persian (pre-Islamic and Islamic).⁴⁸ Although Persian art would eventually outpace Babylonian art in the gallery's inventory, neither was more important than the other when Joseph Brummer was buying from Messayeh in New York. Because the copper head was never included in the gallery's inventory binders (which were arranged by culture), it is unclear which category was assigned to the head upon its arrival. However, records indicate that the Brummer Gallery placed all other items purchased from Messayeh in 1918 and 1919 in its Babylonian category.

THE PROVENANCE OF A PROVENIENCE: 1919 TO TODAY

This reconstruction of the pre-Brummer phase of the head's modern life suggests that the head acquired a Persian provenience after it arrived at the Brummer Gallery in 1919. The provenience was certainly in place by 1930; a notice on the Brummer stock card from that year is the oldest preserved reference to it (fig. 5).

Although it cannot be determined when the gallery applied a Persian provenience to the head, or whether it preceded or followed the identification of the head as a work of Persian art, one can imagine why this occurred. Interest in Persian art among collectors and museums in the United States was increasing during the 1920s, especially toward the end of the decade.⁴⁹ The Brummer brothers sometimes invented stories about how they acquired objects to raise their significance and value,⁵⁰ and they might have tried to capitalize on Persian art's popularity by describing the head as an object coming from the region. Alternatively, an outside adviser could have helped them make the connection. Among the possible candidates, one stands out: Arthur Upham Pope.

Pope was the leading force behind Persian art's rise in the United States, as well as the International Exhibition of Persian Art in London, where the head debuted in 1931. While he cultivated a reputation as

a scholar of Persian art, Pope was also a collector and dealer.⁵¹ In this capacity, he began a relationship with the Brummer Gallery by 1924.⁵² He bought from the gallery as early as 1927, and in 1930 he sold Joseph Brummer a Persian pot to, in his words, "secure his [Brummer's] support for the [London] exhibition."⁵³ Pope led the process of selecting objects from U.S. collections for the exhibition, to which Brummer loaned the copper head of a ruler, the smaller copper head (now in the Cincinnati Art Museum; fig. 6), and some two dozen other objects.⁵⁴ Many dealers used the exhibition to highlight their inventories, although Brummer seemingly did not intend to sell what he sent.⁵⁵ In light of this history, the 1930 production of a new Brummer stock card identifying the head as a work from northwest Persia may have occurred as a result of Brummer's conversations with Pope about the exhibition.

Pope was not as well versed in early Persian art as he was in later periods, but he did provide attributions and proveniences for ancient works (sometimes changing them depending upon the circumstances).⁵⁶ He might have been responsible for introducing the northwestern Iranian city of Hamadan as the copper head's specific place of discovery in two publicity notices for the London exhibition: one an art journal article and the other a full-page illustration in *The Illustrated London News*,⁵⁷ an outlet Pope regularly used to link antiquities from the art market to noteworthy sites.⁵⁸ In 1931, Hamadan was recognized as a frequent place of origin for "indeterminate Persian antiquities."⁵⁹ Hamadan was not, however, the only place associated with the head at this time. As the American archaeologist Oscar Muscarella has observed, by the time of the head's debut in 1931 there was already a noticeable slipperiness in its provenience, or, more accurately, proveniences.⁶⁰ Although the publicity notices specified Hamadan, the catalogue for the London exhibition referred only to northwest Persia, and an art history book from the same year described the head as coming from the shores of Lake Van in eastern Turkey.⁶¹ None of the sources included evidence supporting their claims.

If Pope suggested that the head represented a Persian king, he took pains to assure the Brummer Gallery of the merits of the attribution. In January 1934, he brought in the classical archaeologist Stanley Casson to "verify our [Brummer Gallery's] Persian head."⁶² Casson was sufficiently satisfied with the sculpture's Persian qualities to include it in the essay on Achaemenid sculpture he wrote for *A Survey of Persian Art* (1938), the scholarly complement to the London exhibition edited by Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, Pope's

partner.⁶³ There, a new description of its provenience appeared—Adharbayjan (Azerbaijan). Hamadan, which is not in the Azerbaijan region of Iran, is absent, and the *Survey* does not explain the change.⁶⁴ Subsequently, someone updated the Brummer stock card with the annotation “(Adharbayjan)” (fig. 5).⁶⁵ This was not Pope’s last say in the matter. In 1945, he added that the head was found near Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran, and then a year later specified the town of Salmas, citing the earlier *Survey*, which states that the head was found together with the smaller “bronze” head (fig. 6) “from Salmas, near Lake Vān.”⁶⁶

The provenience of the copper head remained unsettled during the next phase of its modern life. In 1947, The Met purchased the head from the estate of the recently deceased Joseph Brummer. Although Museum publications initially mentioned that the head came from Azerbaijan or northwest Persia, they soon began to refer to the site of “Tikhon Teppeh” (modern Takab in the West Azerbaijan province of Iran).⁶⁷ It is not clear why Tikhon Teppeh became the newest entry in the history of the head or who was responsible for the change. In 1963, yet another location surfaced when the dealer (and Pope’s associate) Ayoub Rabenou told the Museum that the head was from Gouchichi (probably Qoshachay, in northwestern Iran).⁶⁸ This is more than four decades after the head passed through the hands of Alex Messayeh in Baghdad before reaching Rizouk Messayeh and then Joseph Brummer in New York. Such information might have been maintained privately and only later shared, but the head’s constantly changing proveniences leave the strong impression that this was just the latest in a series of unsubstantiated geographic associations. The inevitable conclusion is that the Iranian provenience is a modern fiction.

This conclusion is bolstered by the history of the small copper head, which also moved from the Messayehs to the Brummer Gallery and then to the London exhibition (fig. 6).⁶⁹ Persia is absent from the earliest documentation of its existence, namely letters from Rizouk Messayeh to Albert T. Clay at Yale announcing its arrival in the United States (February 8, 1918) and its sale (April 1, 1918).⁷⁰ Messayeh described it as the “Semitic Babylonian bronze head (small)” without mentioning a place of origin. The object’s Brummer Gallery stock card, which is a replacement from 1928, also originally lacked a provenience.⁷¹ Later, “Found in Adharbayjan” was added after the publication of the *Survey of Persian Art*, as on the larger copper head’s card (fig. 5).⁷² Despite its public promotion by Pope and Ackerman as an example of Persian art, the smaller

head retained its Babylonian classification in the Brummer Gallery records.⁷³ Less stable was its alleged provenience. In the 1930s and 1940s, publications associated with Pope and Ackerman tied it to the same variety of Persian proveniences as the larger head.⁷⁴ Further embellishing the story, Pope claimed that the two heads were found together and were a related pair (a king and his vizier) but gave no evidence to support this shared history.⁷⁵ In reality, Messayeh’s letters show that both heads reached New York via the Messayeh brothers, but they did so separately and without mention of a connection between them. The Brummer Gallery acquired them at different points in time and never linked them in any of their internal documentation, ultimately undermining the claims that the two copper heads were found together and were ever in Persia at all.

After digging into the modern history of the large copper head now in The Met’s collection, one determines that, first, the head was not discovered in northwest Iran and, second, that this invented provenience was revised over time to suit the needs or interests of those telling the story. Consequently, it is unwise to use the alleged Iranian provenience as grounds for interpreting the head’s ancient life. At the same time, we must be cautious not to interpret the head solely based on the Babylonian provenience given in Messayeh’s letters. From this alone, it is not possible to establish that the sculpture came from an archaeological site in Iraq. Unless additional evidence for the head’s actual place of discovery emerges—an unlikely prospect—the head will continue to lack the spatial and temporal anchors that can be derived from an archaeological context. This is especially problematic for a work like the head, whose most unusual features seem unmatched in other works of art.⁷⁶ Fortunately, it is now apparent that a stone fragment discovered at the southern Iraqi site of Tello shares the copper head’s two most exceptional elements: its hairstyle and hair bands.⁷⁷

A PARALLEL FROM TELLO

The Tello fragment (now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris) is composed of dark gray stone and comes from an approximately life-size sculpted head (fig. 7).⁷⁸ The piece preserves only the proper left, upper front of the head, but enough remains to see that it resembles the copper head more closely than any other work of ancient Near Eastern art. The hair covering the crown of the head is divided into sections; overlapping bands conceal a braid encircling the head; and a fillet stretches across the forehead. These are the same elements found on the copper head, where they are easier to

fig. 7 Statue fragment from Tello. Early Dynastic III to Old Babylonian(?), ca. 2600–1600 B.C. Stone (diorite?), $3\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{16} \times 4\frac{15}{16}$ in. (9.5 × 11 × 12.5 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris (inv. AO 16)



understand due to its completeness. However, even in the Tello sculpture's partial state, the two heads are clearly alike, down to the distinct Y-shaped part in the hair. As similar as they are, the two works are not identical. The bands on the stone head are wider, smoother, and straighter, and their arrangement is a mirror image of the copper head. The texture of the hair also appears slightly different in the two mediums. In copper, the hair effects a gridlike pattern, whereas in stone, undulating incised lines cut across wide, modeled ridges.⁷⁹

The Louvre fragment is one of scores of statues and statue fragments uncovered at Tello, Iraq, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the most famous of which are the statues of Gudea (r. ca. 2100 B.C.).⁸⁰ Unfortunately, there is no information about this piece's specific archaeological context. Even so, the fact that the object was unearthed at Tello reveals quite a bit. First, the stone statue likely represented someone who ruled Girsu, as Tello was known in antiquity.⁸¹ Second, the fragment dates no later than the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000–1600 B.C.), when Tello ceased to be occupied until the Hellenistic era

(323–31 B.C.).⁸² Royal sculptures composed of dark stone have been found at Tello and elsewhere in southern Mesopotamia throughout these early periods of occupation. Beyond its local significance, the Tello fragment establishes that the copper head is not and was not a unicum. Although its authenticity has never been seriously questioned, it is now possible to eliminate any doubts derived from the copper head's previously unparalleled appearance. It is also possible to reconsider this man's identity. If the person represented in the fragment ruled the city of Girsu before or during the Old Babylonian period, then the man depicted in the copper head was, if not a ruler of Girsu during this time, represented in the same manner as one. Who was he and when did he rule?

ATTRIBUTES OF HIS KINGSHIP

Early efforts to identify this man focused on his image as a portrait of an ethnic type. Inspired by the alleged Iranian provenience first reported in association with the London exhibition of 1931, scholars recognized a vaguely defined Elamite, Iranian, or Gutian ethnicity

fig. 8 Helmet excavated from PG 755 of the Royal Cemetery of Ur. Early Dynastic III, ca. 2600–2350 B.C. Gold, H. approx. 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (23 cm). Iraq Museum, Baghdad (inv. IM 8269)



in his facial features.⁸³ Central to their process was the perception that the head was more naturalistic than other ancient Near Eastern faces. Their expectation that the sculpture would portray the man's identity through a naturalistic representation of an ethnic type is, however, a modern, Western notion.⁸⁴ Ancient Near Eastern images utilized a combination of stereotyped physical features, attributes, and inscriptions to convey the identity of the individual depicted—a portrait in a more inclusive sense of the term.⁸⁵ The physical features of the sculpted (or painted) face and body derived not from a person's real-life appearance, but from a desire to convey certain valued traits; in rulers these included masculinity, strength, and devotion. Attributes like hairstyles, garments, headgear, and jewelry communicated an individual's social identity. Inscriptions added their name and sometimes their familial ties and could reinforce what the figure's physical features and attributes conveyed. Beyond these inherent elements, external factors, such as the placement of an image within a specific location or context and its treatment by others during the presentation of offerings or the recitation of a name or inscription, could help establish the person's identity.

Looking at the copper head from this perspective, its prominent ears are not likely the shape of the man's actual ears. Rather, they could indicate the wise ruler's capacity to listen (as Irene Winter has argued for the ears of Gudea's statues), or they could also be functional elements to support other attributes once attached to the head.⁸⁶ The man's broad face does not indicate his ethnicity but is instead a metal canvas ideally shaped and sized for the display of his facial hair, complex hairstyle, and headdress. Similarly, the Nineveh head of an Akkadian king (fig. 4) is narrow

across the face but deep from front to back; the former may be related to the elongated spirals on the chin and the latter to the volume of the hairstyle.⁸⁷

The attributes he wears upon his body, rather than in the shape of his ears or nose, provide greater clues about the man's identity. The scale, materials, and quality of the copper head mark him as a man of high status, but the element that suggests his royal identity is the braided band of hair. The earliest extant example of this feature is an Early Dynastic III (ca. 2500–2350 B.C.) gold helmet from the Royal Cemetery of Ur (fig. 8). During the transition to the Akkadian period, such a braid appears on a statue of Ishqi-Mari, a king of the city of Mari (in modern Syria).⁸⁸ In the art of the Akkadian dynasty, it is a common royal attribute (fig. 4).⁸⁹ On these images, a smooth fillet rests beneath the braid—something also visible on the copper head and the Louvre's Tello fragment. After the Akkadian period, the braid disappears as a royal attribute,⁹⁰ thus suggesting that the copper head and the stone fragment could each represent a ruler from the late Early Dynastic or Akkadian period.

The treatment of the hair on the two heads supports this dating. Such ornately arranged hair occurs in some Early Dynastic statues of women whose braids wrap around the head at an angle (fig. 9), similar to the copper head in The Met.⁹¹ With a full beard, the



fig. 9 Two views of a head of a woman excavated from Sin Temple IX at Khafajah. Early Dynastic II, ca. 2700–2600 B.C. Limestone, shell, gypsum, bitumen, H. 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (8 cm). Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago (A12431)

fig. 10 Head of a ruler excavated at Susa, Old Babylonian, ca. 2000–1600 B.C. Diorite, $6 \times 3\frac{13}{16} \times 4\frac{5}{16}$ in. (15.2 × 9.7 × 11 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris (inv. Sb 95)



copper head represents a man, but his statue demonstrates that he, like the women, had access to the time and skill required for such a complex hairstyle. In early Mesopotamian royal images, the complexity of the copper head's hair is matched only by the basket-weave hairstyle of the Nineveh head (fig. 4), from the Akkadian period. It too develops an Early Dynastic precedent (see fig. 8), transforming the simple bun into a mass of intricately woven hair. This continues a trend in the Early Dynastic period toward more complex hairstyles and headdresses.⁹² For several centuries following the Akkadian period, a brimmed cap hides the king's hair (fig. 10).

The intertwined bands that wrap around the braid are, after the hairstyle, the most unusual feature of the copper head and its stone parallel from Tello. As attributes of Mesopotamian kingship, bands or ribbons around the hair are rare, and no other examples have a similar arrangement of three bands. A simple, thin band stretches around the helmet of Eannatum of Lagash on the Stele of the Vultures and the gold helmet from the Royal Cemetery of Ur (fig. 8), both from the Early Dynastic period.⁹³ The fillet replaces this element on the Nineveh head (fig. 4), but on a life-size statue from Ashur representing either an Akkadian king or a later ruler imitating the Akkadian kings, a wider ribbon

wraps around a voluminous chignon, crossing over itself in a manner reminiscent of the crisscrossed bands on the copper head and the Tello fragment.⁹⁴ A single hair ribbon also appears on a smaller, possibly royal statue from the Akkadian period.⁹⁵ Significantly, hair ribbons and bands disappear from representations of kings after the Akkadian period. Like the braid they adorn, the intertwined bands on the copper head and the piece from Tello were attributes of Early Dynastic and Akkadian kingship.

If the sculpted bands were originally covered with gold or silver, they would recall the gold and silver hair ribbons found in elite Mesopotamian tombs from the second half of the third millennium B.C., most notably in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, where they were associated with women.⁹⁶ These strips of metal required time, effort, and expertise to make and were costly expressions of status and identity.⁹⁷ The women buried in the cemetery were affiliated with the temple, the palace, or perhaps both institutions, but whether ribbons were signs of their royalty, devotion to the royal family or the gods, or personal sacredness cannot be determined without knowing more about the women's identities.⁹⁸ Likewise, the intertwined bands on the copper head and the Tello fragment could signify these kings' devotion (and their statues' dedication) to a god or their own divine qualities, possibly even their deification. Kings in Mesopotamia always possessed aspects of the divine, but their deification first occurred with Naram-Sin of Akkad (r. 2254–2218 B.C.) and continued intermittently into the Old Babylonian period.⁹⁹

Compared to the previously discussed attributes, beards are a more common feature of Mesopotamian royal statues, yet no other sculpted beard perfectly matches the copper head. (The Tello fragment cannot be considered in this respect, as it does not preserve any part of the beard.) For the spiral curls on the cheek and chin, the Akkadian head from Nineveh and a fragment of an Akkadian stone statue head from Tello are a close match, even if the details are executed differently.¹⁰⁰ These heads also have mustaches and underlip hairs, although they look more artificial and are differently shaped than those of the copper head. The possibly Akkadian statue from Ashur defines the mustache only on the upper lip, but its downturned shape resembles the mustache on the copper head. This statue also features a similar wavy lower beard. Adding to the difficulty of using the beard to identify the man, some of its characteristics reappear in post-Akkadian works. The head of an unidentified Old Babylonian ruler found at Susa has fine hair around the mouth (fig. 10),¹⁰¹ and the

rounded lower beard of a statue of an Old Babylonian ruler of Eshnunna features soft waves.¹⁰² Of all the attributes of the copper head, the beard is the most challenging to date, but, given the head's other attributes, it is significant that the beard, in design and execution, is compatible with the beards of Akkadian royal images.

Overall, the attributes of the copper head—the braided band, fillet, hairstyle, intertwined bands, and beard—imply that this sculpture was designed to resemble an Akkadian king, even if its suite of attributes is unmatched by extant Akkadian royal images. The intertwined bands may be another example of the Akkadian kings adopting different attributes to reflect their various roles as kings and, after Naram-Sin's deification, divine kings. The varieties of Akkadian royal headgear include the Nineveh head's braided band and fillet, the conical ribbed cap of Naram-Sin on his stele from Pir Hüseyin, and the horned helmet on Naram-Sin's stele from Susa.¹⁰³ Akkadian art also exhibits stylistic variety. For example, the human bodies on early Akkadian steles are less refined than the lithe bodies on Naram-Sin's Susa stele. Thus, the greater precision and angularity of the Akkadian head from Nineveh should not deny the copper head in The Met an Akkadian identity. What might deny him this is if the head is a post-Akkadian statue that draws upon Akkadian precedents.¹⁰⁴ The Akkadian kings drastically transformed the ideology and practices of kingship, and they were remembered as model kings long after the dynasty ended. Later rulers who wished to align themselves with the Akkadian model incorporated elements from Akkadian art to establish and make visible their relationship to the dynasty.¹⁰⁵

We may not yet know exactly who is represented in the copper head or when and where his sculpture was produced, but we are closer to answering these questions now that the need to account for an Iranian provenience has been eliminated and the stone fragment from Tello has trained our focus on early Mesopotamian art and its diagnostic attributes of kingship. Future technical analysis will hopefully provide further insight regarding its method, place, and date of production. For now, we can describe it as a portrait of Akkadian kingship borne by an Akkadian king or someone who wanted to look like one in the centuries after the dynasty's demise. This conclusion was hidden in plain sight for many decades by a false and misleading Iranian provenience, and the consequent ambiguity led to the head's marginalization within discussions of ancient Near Eastern royal images. With a clearer sense of its history, the head is now recognizable

as a rare and important example of early Mesopotamian royal sculpture.

The copper head also reminds us that market-derived proveniences cannot reliably establish the ancient life of an object. In such cases, only the object's visual and material features can tell us about its ancient past. In this case, the visual and material features place the beginning of the copper head's ancient life in Mesopotamia during the late third or early second millennium B.C. As for the head's modern life, the earliest archival traces position it in Iraq during World War I. Because of the geographical concordance between Mesopotamia and Iraq, it is tempting to compress these phases of its history together and say that the head comes from Mesopotamia/Iraq, but the distinction between its early life as a Mesopotamian royal sculpture and its later life on the modern art market must be retained.¹⁰⁶ As museums integrate the history of their collections into the histories of their objects, audiences will become increasingly familiar with this more complex kind of origin story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research for this article was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am grateful to the many people who generously assisted me during challenging times. Their kindness was an inspiration. Lindsay Allen, Amy Gansell, Nadia Ait Said Ghanem, and Elizabeth Knott helped me work through my ideas and provided feedback. At The Met, Jean-François de Lapérouse, Shawn Osborne, Yelena Rakic, and Daira Szostak provided access to the copper head and its related records, and Christine Brennan, Michael Carter, and Anne Dunn-Vaturi helped me interpret the Brummer Gallery Records. Ainsley Cameron and Julia Olson of the Cincinnati Art Museum shared information about that museum's Messayeh/Brummer copper head, and Ariane Thomas provided insight into the Tello fragment at the Louvre. This project would not have been possible without having access to the Messayeh archives at Yale, and for that I thank Agnete Lassen. Adam Aja, Anne Flannery, Nadia Ait Said Ghanem, Meredith Mann, Alessandro Pezzati, and Jane R. Siegel also provided access to archival material.

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NOTES

- 1 Metropolitan Museum 1948, 12.
- 2 For technical analysis by Jean-François de Lapérouse, see Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 210–12.
- 3 Wood 2000; Rizvi 2007.
- 4 Royal Academy of Arts 1931a, 5; *Illustrated London News* 1931; Pope 1931a.
- 5 *Art News* 1930, 25; *Literary Digest* 1931, 20.
- 6 Moortgat 1934, 6–10.
- 7 One early reference described the head as a depiction of an Armenian prince from the region of Lake Van (located in Turkey); Pijoán 1931, 195, 197. All other publications mention only Iranian locations and cultures.
- 8 Diakonoff 1947. Nineveh head: Iraq Museum, Baghdad, inv. 11331, Mallowan 1936.
- 9 Muscarella 1988, 373–74; Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 195, 210–12; Thomas and Potts 2020, 188–89.
- 10 Nineveh: Strommenger 1986. Bassetki: Iraq Museum, inv. 77823, Müller-Karpe 2002, 142–48. These are more similar technically than the copper and bronze statue of a Middle Elamite queen (Louvre, inv. Sb 2731) from Susa that Moortgat (1934, 6) used to connect the museum's copper head to the Elamites. Françoise Tallon in Harper, Aruz, and Tallon 1992, 132–35, no. 83.
- 11 Personal communication with the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, The Met, April 29, 2021.
- 12 Brennan 2015; Brennan 2019.
- 13 Unless otherwise specified, “Brummer” refers to Joseph Brummer.
- 14 *Art News* 1930; Royal Academy of Arts 1931b, 7; *Literary Digest* 1931, 20; Pope 1931a; Pope 1931b, 31; Casson 1938, 355–56; Ackerman 1940, 309; Pope 1945, pl. 24; Metropolitan Museum 1950, 294–96; Forsyth 1974, 3.
- 15 N315 stock card, Brummer Gallery Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (hereafter BGR). The BGR can be accessed at <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/watson-digital-collections/cloisters-archives-collections/the-brummer-gallery-records>.
- 16 Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Manufactures 1910, 87; *Exporters' Review* 1919, 48. See also Lassen 2019, fig. 1.4.
- 17 Messayeh's father, Daud, was offering tablets and other antiquities to the British Museum as early as 1894 in partnership with N. Ghanima. D. Messayeh and N. Ghanima to E. A. Wallis Budge, August 23, 1894, British Museum Archive.
- 18 Unless otherwise specified, “Messayeh” refers to Rizouk Messayeh.
- 19 He wrote to Henri de Genouillac in Brussels to collect payment for objects that his brother, Alex Messayeh, had already supplied and to offer new objects. R. D. Messayeh to H. de Genouillac, December 12, 1912, and December 15, 1912, Archives of the Département des Antiquités Orientales, Musée du Louvre (hereafter Messayeh/Louvre). He also showed two inscribed clay cylinders to Father Vincent Scheil; Scheil reported on these at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres on December 20, 1912, where he described them as belonging to Messrs. Messayeh. Scheil 1912.
- 20 P11088 stock card, BGR. The stock card dates to 1934, when the object was transferred from Paris to the New York inventory. It states that the vessel, which was in four fragments, came from “Daud Messayeh, Baghdad,” so Messayeh may have been a courier for his father. Unfortunately, there is no corresponding entry in the “Livres de Police” purchase register of the Brummer Gallery in Paris to verify these later notes.
- 21 Hough 1915, 70.
- 22 In an undated advertisement, Messayeh lists curators and researchers at Yale University, Harvard University, Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Pennsylvania as references; Lassen 2019, fig. 1.4. He also supplied several items to the private collector George Plimpton, who later donated his collection to Columbia University. Robson 2002, 254.
- 23 R. D. Messayeh, “To the PRESIDENT, FACULTY and TRUSTEES:-,” undated. At least two copies of this letter are preserved: one in the R. D. Messayeh files in the archives of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (hereafter Messayeh/Chicago) and one in folder 498 of the Curatorial Files of the Yale Babylonian Collection (hereafter Messayeh/YBC).
- 24 The earliest are N175 and N176 on April 1, 1918; the latest are N315 (the copper head), N316a, N317a–k, N318a–e, N319a–e, and N320 on January 13, 1919. Stock cards, BGR. Messayeh had limited inventory during the war years, which could explain why business with the Brummer Gallery in New York only picked up in 1918, when the supply of antiquities began anew. On the effects of the war on the business, see below.
- 25 It differs from the cards for the other objects acquired from Messayeh on the same day and instead resembles cards produced for objects acquired starting in 1926. Its annual inventory begins in the year 1930, suggesting when it was made.
- 26 Most Brummer stock cards for Messayeh objects lack provenience information, except for N210 (Babylonia) and N211 (Varka [i.e. Warka]). Stock cards, BGR.
- 27 “We can get you good things from southern Babylonia, through Basra.” R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, January 14, 1916, folder 499, Messayeh/YBC. “My brother is in the best position to catch hold of the Best materials in Bagdad [sic]. He has his regular men, and diggers all the time in the field.” R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, February 3, 1913, folder 498, Messayeh/YBC. “My brother has now an opportunity to buy at Mossoul.” R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, March 11, 1916, folder 499, Messayeh/YBC.
- 28 R. D. Messayeh to G. B. Gordon, February 4, 1913, box 14, George B. Gordon Director's Office Records, University of Pennsylvania.
- 29 James H. Breasted of the University of Chicago told Messayeh that a set of tablets that the latter had described as coming from Bismaya, the site of an earlier University of Chicago expedition, could not have come from that site. J. H. Breasted to R. D. Messayeh, October 31, 1913, Messayeh/Chicago. In response, Messayeh blamed the mix-up on the workmen who supplied the tablets. R. D. Messayeh to J. H. Breasted, November 7, 1913, Messayeh/Chicago.
- 30 Lassen 2019, fig. 1.4.
- 31 Statue: A. Messayeh to H. de Genouillac, July 19, 1912, Messayeh/Louvre. Inscription: A. Messayeh to H. de Genouillac, May 7, 1912, Messayeh/Louvre; R. D. Messayeh to H. de Genouillac, December 12, 1912, Messayeh/Louvre.
- 32 For Achaemenid jewelry, see N4410 and N4411 stock cards, BGR. Messayeh wrote a description of these two gold bracelets alleging that they were found at Nippur, according to the Arabs that sold them. “The Gold Bracelets from Nippur, In Southern Babylonia,” n.d., folder 500, Messayeh/YBC. Alex tried to sell a gold tablet with an Achaemenid inscription to Yale; A. Messayeh to Charles C. Torrey, April 15, 1926, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 33 Kersel 2010, 85–86.
- 34 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, November 16, 1914, folder 499, Messayeh/YBC.

- 35 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, November 23, 1915, January 6, 1916, February 19, 1916, and March 11, 1916, folder 499, Messayeh/YBC.
- 36 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, January 6, 1916, February 19, 1916, May 27, 1916, June 7, 1916, and June 13, 1916, folder 499, Messayeh/YBC.
- 37 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, May 3, 1917, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 38 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, May 3, 1917, May 28, 1917, and August 2, 1917, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 39 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, April 1, 1918, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 40 Like other ancient copper sculptures, the material of the head was once described as bronze. It currently weighs 43 lbs. The discrepancy in weight may be due to the loss of loose dirt from the interior cavity, a measurement error, and/or the likelihood that Messayeh's number was an estimate for shipping purposes. I thank Jean-François de Lapérouse for the latter two suggestions.
- 41 Note that in another letter he differentiates Babylonian goods from those that would come from Mosul, so Babylonia for Messayeh (as for others then and now) refers to southern Iraq. R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, March 11, 1916, folder 499, Messayeh/YBC.
- 42 N175 (stone head) and N176 ("bronze") stock cards, BGR. These cards each list a purchase price of \$550, so either Messayeh inflated their sale price, or the cards do not reflect actual prices paid. N175 is likely modern; Muscarella 2000, 163. See below for the history of N176.
- 43 Yale offered \$900 for three bronze figures of "Sumerian" kings (George P. Day to R. D. Messayeh, November 26, 1917, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC); Messayeh insisted on \$1,200 (R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, November 26, 1917, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC). The Messayeh/YBC files do not preserve the final sale price.
- 44 On Clay's finances, see Foster 2013, 127–29.
- 45 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, December 19, 1918, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 46 I thank Lindsay Allen for this suggestion.
- 47 R. D. Messayeh to A. T. Clay, January 8, 1919, folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 48 See entries like "vase babylonienne" or "plaque persane" in the register recording Paris purchases from 1911 to 1914. "Livre de Police": Blvd. de Raspail, Paris: Feb. 1911–Oct. 1927, BGR.
- 49 Case studies of Chicago, Kansas City, Washington, DC, and Boston museums appear in Kadoi 2016.
- 50 Brennan 2019, 260–62.
- 51 Gluck and Siver 1996; Kadoi 2016. For a critical view of Pope's collecting and dealing, see Muscarella 2013d.
- 52 The earliest exchange is a quote for a "Siamese head in bronze" on December 19, 1924. "Pope, Arthur Upham" address card, BGR.
- 53 Pope's purchases from the Brummer Gallery: N462, P2195, and P6971 stock cards, BGR. Pope's quote: page 16 of the Commission of Inquiry, February 4th, 1931, Commission of Inquiry, box 2, Arthur Upham Pope Papers, New York Public Library (hereafter AUPP/NYPL).
- 54 "Partial List of Objects to Come from Joseph Brummer," November 12, 1930, General Correspondence: International Exhibition of Persian Art, box 2, AUPP/NYPL.
- 55 "Brummer went to the expense exceeding £400 to send to the Exhibition exceedingly important things from his private collection which are not and never have been for sale." "Major Longden, 27.1.1931," January 27, 1931, Personal Correspondence, 1930–31, Longden, box 2, AUPP/NYPL. See also "Major Longden, 22nd February 1931," February 22, 1931, Personal Correspondence, 1930–31, Longden, box 2, AUPP/NYPL.
- 56 Muscarella 2000, 209–10nn36,38; Lerner 2016, 214n141.
- 57 Pope 1931b, 31; *Illustrated London News* 1931, [35]. The latter is linked to Pope 1931a.
- 58 Muscarella 2000, 210n38; Muscarella 2013d, 832.
- 59 Ashton 1931. Pope was later involved in the sale of several gold and silver Achaemenid bowls allegedly from the site. Allen 2016, 158–61.
- 60 Muscarella 1988, 368.
- 61 Royal Academy of Arts 1931a, 5; Pijoán 1931, 197.
- 62 "Pope, Arthur Upham" address card, BGR.
- 63 Casson 1938, 355–56.
- 64 Muscarella (2013b, 1062) hypothesized that Pope or Ackerman added the footnote with this attribution.
- 65 The typescript and ink indicate that this was added concurrently with the reference to Casson's contribution to the *Survey* from 1938.
- 66 Pope 1945, 17; Pope 1946, 64. See also Casson 1938, 356. While preparing the *Survey* for publication, Pope wrote to the dealer Ayoub Rabenou about finds from a "dig" at Salmas (A. U. Pope to A. Rabenou, March 5, 1937, Personal Correspondence 1937 "Ra," box 3, AUPP/NYPL). Salmas also pops up in Pope's dealings with the Brummers. In 1934, Pope told them that a bronze lion he sold them came from Salmas (N3155 stock card, BGR). A second lion, bought from Pope and shipped by Rabenou, carries the same provenience in a Pope-related exhibition catalogue (Ackerman 1940, 303), but not in the Brummer stock card, where it is more vaguely described as "N.W. Persia" (N3165 stock card, BGR).
- 67 Metropolitan Museum 1952, 218; Lerman 1969, 304.
- 68 Catalogue card, Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 69 This head has many unusual features (including its bust shape and bulging eyes) that this essay cannot address.
- 70 Folder 500, Messayeh/YBC.
- 71 N176 stock card, BGR. The dating of the card follows the logic applied above for N315's card.
- 72 The typescript and ink again indicate an addition during or after 1938.
- 73 Persian: Pope 1931b, 31; Ackerman 1940, 309; Pope 1945, 17–18. Babylonian: Held Inventory Binder no. 2; Accounting pads for art sales and proposals, 1947–48, A. B. Martin, July 27; Accountants work sheet pad of quotes and sales, 1947–78, Martin, March 10, 1948; BGR. An auction catalogue from 1949 after the death of Joseph Brummer described it as pre-Achaemenid Persian with Babylonian influences. Brummer sale 1949, 20, lot 87.
- 74 Near Hamadan: Pope 1931b, 31; northwest Persia: Royal Academy of Arts 1931a, 16; Salmas, near Lake Van: Casson 1938, 356, and Brummer sale 1949, 20, lot 87; Adharbayjan: Ackerman 1940, 309.
- 75 Royal Academy of Arts 1931b, 18; Pope 1931b, 31; Pope 1945, 17; Pope 1946, 64. The first edition of the London exhibition catalogue is more vague; it states that the small head was found with "the head of a king" without specifying which head of a king. Royal Academy of Arts 1931a, 16.

- 76 On the problem of unicums from the art market, see Muscarella 2013a and 2013c.
- 77 Thomas and Potts 2020, 188.
- 78 de Sarzec and Heuzey 1884–1912, 1:147, 3:pl. 21, no. 2; Heuzey 1902, 201, no. 62. The Louvre database identifies the stone as diorite, but to my knowledge the fragment has not been tested to confirm this.
- 79 Note that corrosion amplifies the bumpiness of the copper head's hair. The original, smoother texture is visible in the braid at the rear left side.
- 80 Two other dark gray stone fragments from Tello may be part of the same statue or a similar one. Louvre, inv. AO 17A and inv. AO 17B, de Sarzec and Heuzey 1884–1912, 1:147; Heuzey 1902, 202, no. 63. AO 17A preserves a right eye and a narrow band across the forehead recalling the fillet on the fragment in question; hair emerges from beneath the fillet above the eye, as on the copper head. AO 17B preserves part of a similar left eye.
- 81 Because military campaigns and other interventions moved statues, this one may have come to Girsu from another location, but none of the statues from Tello are labeled as plunder like those brought to Susa by the Elamite ruler Shutruk-Nahhunte I in the twelfth century B.C. On Susa, see Prudence Harper in Harper, Aruz, and Tallon 1992, 159–62.
- 82 Louvre, inv. AO 16 is not likely Hellenistic. On the archaeology of Tello, see Huh 2008.
- 83 Moortgat 1934, 10; Casson 1938, 356; Diakonoff 1947, 118. José Pijoán (1931, 197) is again the outlier, seeing a Semitic face in the sculpture.
- 84 On portraiture in the ancient Near East, especially Mesopotamia, see Winter 1997 and Winter 2009. On the problem of naturalism in the study of early Mesopotamian portraits, see Knott 2022, 179–81. Elizabeth Knott kindly shared her article in advance of its publication, and I am grateful for our discussions.
- 85 Winter 2009, 266.
- 86 Winter 1989, 579, 581. CT scans suggest that the copper head's ears might have been cast separately, perhaps another sign of their symbolic importance. Lapérouse in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 212.
- 87 The Nineveh head's nose appears more angular than the nose of The Met's head. In the past, this was viewed as a sign that the men were of different ethnicities. Beyond the above-discussed limitations of this approach, intentional damage in antiquity altered the shape of the Nineveh head. See Nylander 1980. This introduced flat planes with angular edges that distort the nose.
- 88 Aleppo National Museum 10406, Jean Evans in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 148–49, no. 88.
- 89 Nineveh head; stone head fragments from Ur (British Museum, London, inv. 114197 and inv. 114198, Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 213, no. 138); Pir Hüseyin stele of Naram-Sin (Museum of the Ancient Orient, Istanbul, inv. 1027, Donald Hansen in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 203–4, no. 130).
- 90 The closest example in later images is a head covering with a voluminous braided band on several Old Babylonian worshipper figures. British Museum, inv. 134962 and inv. 91145, Spycket 1981, 249–50. The headband on two Middle Elamite statuettes from Susa once regarded as parallels for the copper head is twisted, not braided. Louvre, inv. Sb 2758 and inv. Sb 2759, Moortgat 1934, 6–10.
- 91 Women continue to wear ornate hairstyles in later periods (Spycket 1981, 251–52), but the Early Dynastic hairstyles share the copper head's profile.
- 92 Baadsgaard 2008, 256–57.
- 93 Stele: multiple Louvre AO numbers, Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 190, fig. 52.
- 94 Iraq Museum, inv. 89000 and Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin, inv. 2147 (Ass 7332), Eppihimer 2019, 90, 132–38. For a photograph of the ribbons, see Ehrenberg 1997, fig. 3.
- 95 Louvre, inv. AO 21367, Amiet 1976, 14.
- 96 For example, MMA 33.35.4–.41. A line cut diagonally across the bands on the left side of the copper head may have helped affix metal sheeting through crimping and/or hammering in a thin, malleable wire. Jean-François de Lapérouse, personal communication, May 21, 2021, and September 9, 2021. On the Royal Cemetery ribbons, see Holly Pittman in Zettler and Horne 1998, 102, and Baadsgaard 2008, 221–23. Some Early Dynastic statues of women have single hair ribbons. Spycket 1981, 114–16. Women wear crisscrossing ribbons over headcloths in Early Dynastic shell inlays. Benzel 2013, 164, figs. 51, 52.
- 97 Benzel 2013, 135–36, 168–69.
- 98 On the women's social identities, see Pollock 1991. On their jewelry as evidence for their identity, see Gansell 2007.
- 99 Winter 2008; Brisch 2013.
- 100 Tello head: Louvre, inv. AO 14, Françoise Demange in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 212–13, no. 137.
- 101 Louvre, inv. Sb 95. Harper in Harper, Aruz, and Tallon 1992, 175–76, no. 113. On this head, see Knott 2022.
- 102 Louvre, inv. Sb 56. Harper in Harper, Aruz, and Tallon 1992, 174–75, no. 112.
- 103 Susa stele: Hansen in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 203–4, no. 130; Louvre, inv. Sb 4, Pierre Amiet in Harper, Aruz, and Tallon 1992, 166–68, no. 109. Sargon's head on a stele from Susa is damaged but appears to be reminiscent of the Nineveh head. Louvre, inv. Sb 1, Aruz and Wallenfels 2003, 192, fig. 54.
- 104 As hypothesized by Schlossman 1981–82, 156–57.
- 105 Eppihimer 2019.
- 106 On the need for such precision and transparency in object labels and catalogue entries, see Marlowe 2013, 44–46.

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ABBREVIATION

BGR Brummer Gallery Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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ISBN-13: 978-0-226-82464-2
ISBN-10: 0-226-82464-0



9 780226 824642

PRINTED IN TURKEY

