Texts on statues and statues in texts

Evidence of multimodality in third millennium Mesopotamian statues

Multimodal Artefact Analysis in Ancient Studies, LMU, 24/03/2021

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Statues in texts
Current research

• (with D. Nadali) *Works and Sculptors in Words: The Evidence of Artistic Production in the Texts of the III mill.*, ICAANE Madrid 2006

• *Sculptors and statues in Neo-Sumerian sources*, RAI Rome, 2011


• Verderame, L. (2021) Statue scomparse, VO (in press)

• Verderame, L. (2021) The life of a Mesopotamian statue, SMSR (in press)

• Verderame, L. (forthcoming) Statues in IIIrd millennium Mesopotamia: The written evidence
Statues in texts
Fashioning

- alan
  - "(human) figure, effigy, statue"

- different materials
  - copper, gold, silver, wood, dolerite, lapis lazuli, etc.

- multi-material statue
  - inlaid details
  - gold foils

- Two copper arms for a statue of a lady/queen their weight is 28 minas and half (= ca. 14,250 kg). (U. 18815)
- 5 minas (= ca. 2,5 kg) of refined gold,
  10+x minas and 9 1/2 shekels (= + 6 kg) of lapis lazuli to be added to a standing copper statue of “the king of the four regions”.
  One third of mina (= ca. 0,16 kg) of refined gold to be added to a copper statue of a woman lactating a child, in her hand is a …
  Three minas and one third (= ca. 1,70 kg) of refined gold to be added (for the decoration? of) a copper statue of a woman cleaning a child, in her [hand] is [a …]
  4 minas and one third (= ca. 2,166 kg) of refined gold to be added (for the decoration? of) a copper statue of a woman having a child at her breast …" (U. 30117)
Statues in texts
Further information

- models
- diorama
- statues' names
- artisans
  - sculptors, goldsmith, carpenters, blacksmith

- Royal statues' models:
  - “the king of the four regions"
  - “the king subduing from the lower sea to the upper sea”
  - “the runner king on the chariot”
  - “the king in festival (praying?)”
  - "the king drinking beer"

- "a statue(?) of the runner king drinking beer and a woman libating (sagi) in front of him" (UET 3, 697: o. 1-3)

- "He transported diorite from the mountains of Magan, fashioned his statue from it, named it for her sake "May the life of Gudea, the temple-builder, be prolonged!"; and brought it before her in the E-anna" (Gudea C iii 14)

- "Šu-Adad, the sculptor who made (dim₂) the statue (alan) of Amar-Suen"
Statues in texts
Divine statues: fashioning

- multi material
  - wooden structure
  - metal / stone parts
  - inlaid elements and decorations
  - gold foil
- wigs

- "I shall have the woodcarvers fashion statues of you"
  \( (\text{Lugalbanda and Anzu 181 // 198}) \)
- "(O Palm) my body …… the bodies of the gods" (\textit{Date Palm and Tamarisk 3})
Statues in texts
Divine statues: separate parts

- accessories
- dress
- jewels
- objects
  - throne (gu-za)
  - table (banšur)
  - bed (na₂)
  - chariot / boat (gigir / ma₂)
  - etc.

- Year (when) the great table of Tišpak was made
  (Year name Ešnunna)
- Year (when) the bed of Enlil was made" (Year name Amar-Suena 3)
- Year (when) the bed of Ninlil was made" (Year name Šulgi 15)
- Year (when) the chariot of Ninlil was made" (Year name Šulgi 3)
- offerings and material to build the chariot of Enlil, Ninli, Ninģirsu, BaU, Šara, etc.
- offerings and material to build or caulk the boats of Enlil, Ninli, Enki, Ninģirsu, BaU, Šara, etc.
Statues in texts
Divine statues: relationship with space

• cella

• moving
  • procession / festivals
  • rituals
  • travels

• (re)moved
  • godnapping
  • hiding / burial

See Sallaberger, Der kultische Kalender (1993);
Selz, Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt … (1995);
Ozaki, Divine Statues in the Ur III Kingdom …, Fs Sigrist (2008)

• "(The man of Umma) he plundered (?) the temple of Ama-ĝeštin-anna, bundled off precious metals and lapis lazuli (from the statue of) Ama-ĝeštin-anna, and threw (the statue(s)) in a well" (UruKAgina 16 = RIME 1.9.9.5)

• For Nanna … Šū-ilīšu, the king of Ur, when he took back (the statue of Nanna) from Anšan to Ur … (Šū-ilīšu's inscription = RIME 4.1.2.1)
Statues in texts
Divine statues: sensorial dimension / aesthetic

Votive statues

D. statue
- ((speaks))
- hears
- looks back
- ((tastes))
- (tastes)

Human
- speaks
- (hears / smells)
- looks
- touches
- ((tastes))
Texts on statues

General

Location:

- temple's cella
- temple's courtyard
- funerary cultic place
  - ki-a-nağ
- other places
  - palace
  - private houses
  - gate
  - pier

Inscription:

- owner's or divine recipient's name
- dedication
- long narratives

- statue of Amar-Su'ena on the "lapis lazuli pier"
- "statue of Šu-Suen in the Sukkal-mah's house" (SACT 1, 172)
- "statue in the house of Ur-Namma" (St. Levine 132)
- "statue in the palace"
GIORGIO BUCCELLATI
(The monuments) which are set up in the middle of the courtyard, the courtyard of Ekur.

Figure 1. Reconstruction of the monument of Rimul showing hypothetical placement of tablet colophons.

Through a Tablet Darkly

Figure 2. The Battle of Sumer: Monumental arrangement of the inscriptions.

Buccellati, Fs Hallo
"From the temple of his master, ... are the regular offerings placed before the statue of Gudea, ruler of Lagaš, builder of the E-ninnu. If a ruler revokes this and (thereby) strips (the statue) of the divine powers of Ninĝirsu, then may his regular offerings from the temple of Ninĝirsu be revoked, and may his (statue's) mouth remain closed." (Gudea St B i 1ff.)
Texts on statues
Votive statues in the cella

- Fashioned his (own) statue, and brought it before Lugal-Uruba in the temple (En-anna-tum I 15, i 3)
- She fashioned (her statue) and brought it before her in the temple (Gudea 94, b. 1)
- Brought it before him/her into his temple (…)

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Conclusions

Material - concept

- stone/metal statues
  - finished, permanent, and for eternity
- multi material
  - ever-changing, constantly and periodically renovated
  - restoration, embellishment, etc.

"As this statue is neither of silver nor lapis lazuli, and neither of copper, nor tin, nor bronze, no one may reuse it. It is of diorite". (Gudea V vii 49ff.)
Conclusions

Interaction

• as object
  • artisans' workshop
• activation
  • rituals
• as god's support
  • temple
  • procession
  • travels
• interaction with other objects and statues
• interaction with humans:
  • different levels
    • artisans
    • cultic personnel
    • élites
    • devotees / consecrated
    • "common" people

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Conclusions
Agency: complex objects and media

- statues performing
  - divine statues
    - daily routine, procession, festivals, rituals, etc.
  - human statues
    - function: votive, funerary
    - receiving offerings, praying
- interactions
  - statues receive, transmit, "answer" / interact