

# AGAIN ON NUDE FEMALES IN SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA DURING THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE. AN ANALYSIS OF STRATIFIED VISUAL MATERIALS AND WRITTEN SOURCES ON FEMALE FIGURES RELATED TO ISHTAR

Sara Bottino

*Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC, all over southern Mesopotamia, it is possible to notice a change in choroplastic productions. The introduction of the mold technique led to mass production of small size terracotta plaquettes, which in turn determined a decrease in the number of handmade figurines. This phenomenon is more than a change in technology, affecting also iconographic representations. The Middle Bronze Age “nude female” iconography has been thoroughly analyzed over time and a lot has been written about the identity of this female figure. This article intends to investigate various aspects related to the “nude female”: from the analysis of archaeological contexts to the investigation of written sources. The aim of this study is to establish what can (and what cannot) be said about this intriguing motif, which has been too often the object of speculations not supported by evidence.*

## Introduction

In this article, a phenomenon taking place at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC is being investigated. This phenomenon consists of the diffusion of mold-made terracotta plaquettes, garnished with relief images, throughout southern Mesopotamia (Auerbach 1994: 1)<sup>1</sup>. With a few exceptions, the oldest and most attested motifs displayed on the clay reliefs, the production of which came to an end in the later 17<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century BC (Moorey 1975: 98), are the “nude female” typologies (Assante 2002b: 2). The “nude female”, also known as “naked goddess” (Wiggermann 1998), has been thoroughly investigated, with many hypotheses made on the identity and function of this motif<sup>2</sup>. However, most of what has been written

about it remains a matter of speculation. Here, a multidisciplinary approach is offered to tackle the issues regarding the iconographic type under discussion. Firstly, since the plaquettes often come from secondary contexts (such as dumps, fills etc.) or surface collections (Rossberger 2018a: 525), the archaeological contexts of greater importance for the chronology of the plaquettes will be analyzed. In addition, 253 objects analyzed as representative of the “nude female” mold-made images have been inputted in a database. The aim is to clarify the relationships between typology, chronology and spatial analysis. Nonetheless, these objects represent a small sample of the copious production of this iconography. Indeed, the amount of material one would be dealing with, should the research be extended, might suggest a collective digital resource in which to gather the motif’s various testimonies. Imagining such a database does not come without challenges, such as the chronological one. A general problem is the difference between fragments found in a stratigraphic context and objects that disregard the stratigraphy, thus the need to constantly refer to clearly dated objects within a database (at a regional level, an excellent source of data is the Diyala Archaeological Database). Secondly, the iconographies of the “nude female” and their characteristic features (such as adornments, hairdo, and nudity) will be taken into consideration to try and understand

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<sup>2</sup> *Inter alia*: Frankfort 1939; Dales 1960; Opificius 1961; Barrelet 1968; Blocher 1987; Auerbach 1994; Assante 2002a; Assante 2002b; Moorey 2003; Klengel-Brandt and Cholidis 2006.

the role played by this image in the MBA society. The identity of the “nude female” has been widely questioned by scholars. Furthermore, 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium texts bearing evidence of female characters could shed light on this motif. Special focus will be placed on those figures related to the goddess Ishtar, who has often been associated with the “nude female” motif by scholars (Black and Green 1992: 144).

*Some remarks on the archaeological chronology of the MBA in Mesopotamia*

It is necessary to outline a stratigraphic sequence as accurately as possible for the MBA visual material, especially when it comes to chroplastic productions, whose chronology is often confusing, if not altogether lacking. Here, the archaeological contexts of greater importance for the chronology of the MBA clay productions will be analyzed. Special focus will be placed on the mold-made plaquettes bearing the “nude female” motif. The aim of this section is to give a brief and clear idea of the archaeological chronology of MBA Mesopotamia (table 1; absolute dates in this article are according to the so-called Middle Chronology) and connect it with the stratified items showing the “nude female”.

*Nippur*

The sites of Nippur and Tell ed-Der (the former situated at the northern end of the southern Alluvial Plain, the latter in the northern Alluvial Plain) provide us with accurate chronological frameworks for 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium materials from

Babylonia thanks to their stratigraphic sequences (Gasche *et alii* 1998: 13-14).

In Nippur, the excavations during the 1940s and 1950s allowed the investigation of the Scribal Quarter, which was composed of two areas of private houses. Both the TA and TB areas contained Old Babylonian levels (*ibid.* 17) and provided one of the longest and best-preserved stratigraphic sequences for the Babylonian region, stretching from the Early Dynastic period (level XIII TB area) to the Achaemenid period (levels I-II TA area). In TB levels IX-IV and in TA level XV there are occupational phases found dating to the Third Dynasty of Ur, while the Isin-Larsa period is represented by TB levels III-I and TA levels XIV-XII. Finally, TB levels E, D, and C and TA levels XI-IX are dated to the Old Babylonian period (McCown, Haines, and Hansen 1967: 34, 43, 54, 62). In the Scribal Quarter, the excavators found plenty of clay objects, such as handmade figurines and mold-made plaquettes. It is important to highlight that TB and TA areas yielded hundreds of stratified handmade clay female figurines and 53 stratified clay plaquettes, as demonstrated in table 2.

As previously stated, this is very significant data, since the objects mentioned above are often found in secondary contexts or surface collections. To conclude, thanks to their stratification, these items are among the most important existing documents for the study of MBA visual materials representing the “nude female.”

*Tell ed-Der*

Tell ed-Der plays an essential role in the definition of 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium North Babylonia. Operation (*Chantier*) A is structured in four *Ensembles*

Period	Tell ed-Der (South Alluvial Plain)	Nippur (North Alluvial Plain)	Tell Yelkhi (Diyala Basin)	Haradum (Middle Euphrates)	Assur (Assyria)
Akkadian Post-Akkadian		Inanna VI-V	VII		Ishtar G F
Ur III	<i>Chantier A</i> , <i>ensembles</i> IV-III, phases IVb-IIIb	TB levels IX-IV TA levels XV	VIIb-VIa		Ishtar E
Isin-Larsa	<i>Chantier A</i> , <i>ensembles</i> II-I, phases IIg-Ig	TB levels III-I TA levels XIV-XII	V-IV		Ishtar D
Early OB	<i>Chantier A</i> , <i>ensembles</i> I, phases Ie-Ia	TB levels E, D, C TA levels XI-IX	IIIb-a	3D 3C 3B 3A	Ishtar C
Late OB	<i>Chantier E</i> , <i>ensembles</i> V-III, phases f-a				

Tab. 1. Comparative stratigraphy of second-millennium key sites in Mesopotamia.

Levels	Excavated specimens	Period	Tot. per period
TB VII	4	Ur III	16
TB IV	12		
TB III	5	Isin-Larsa	21
TB II	6		
TB I	5		
TA XIV	1		
TA XIII	4		
TA XI	9	Old-Babylonian	16
TA X	7		

Tab. 2. Stratified “nude female” plaquettes from Nippur. Based on McCown, Haines, and Hansen 1967.

(with *Ensemble* IV being the oldest one), divided into twelve phases, each representing one or more «états architecturaux différents» (De Meyer 1984: 59). The basic stratigraphic framework for northern Babylonia during the Early Old Babylonian period, coinciding roughly with the time of Hammurabi and Samsuiluna, is supplied by Operation A, Phases Ie, Ic, and Ia. Two short-term loan contracts found in Phase Ig and dated to years 7 and 8 of Sinmuballit provide a fairly secure date for the beginning of the earliest of these phases (Ie) (Gasche *et alii* 1998: 15). Changes in pottery shapes allowed the dating of the final term for Phase Ia around 1700 BC, while the lower end is more difficult to determine. However, judging from the excavated material (mainly pottery and terracottas), it is clear that it does not reach the Ur III period (Gasche 1978: 126, 128).

While the chronological framework of *Ensemble* I is well supported by a number of dated texts, the lower *Ensembles* II-IV do not benefit from the same epigraphic support. In fact, only two texts come from *Ensemble* II and they do not bear any dates, even though the paleography indicates the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Comparisons between pottery from *Ensembles* III and IV with that from other sites enabled excavators to set up a provisional chronological framework. For the beginning of phase IVb it has been suggested to avoid going back beyond the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> cent. BC.

On this basis, L. De Meyer (1984: 61-62) proposed to situate the phases of *Ensembles* III and II as they appear in Fig. 1b. The framework for the late Old Babylonian period, the final century of the First Dynasty of Babylon, is provided by Op-

Specimen	Operation	<i>Ensemble</i>	Phase	<i>locus</i>	Period
D 4066	A	III	a	93	Isin-Larsa
D 3764	A	II	e	92	Isin-Larsa
D 2445	A	II	c	71B, grave 162	Isin-Larsa
D 2455	A	II	c	7	Isin-Larsa
D 585	A	II		1D	Isin-Larsa
D 1833	A	I	g	27	Early OB (Sinmuballit-Apilsin)
D 1580	A	I	f	73	Early OB
D 1331	A	I	e	14	Early OB (Hammurabi)
D 3980	E	III	d-e	19	Late OB (c. 1650-1630 BC)

Tab. 3. Stratified “nude female” plaquettes from Tell ed-Der. Based on De Meyer, Gasche, and Paepe 1971; Gasche 1978; De Meyer 1984; Gasche 1989.

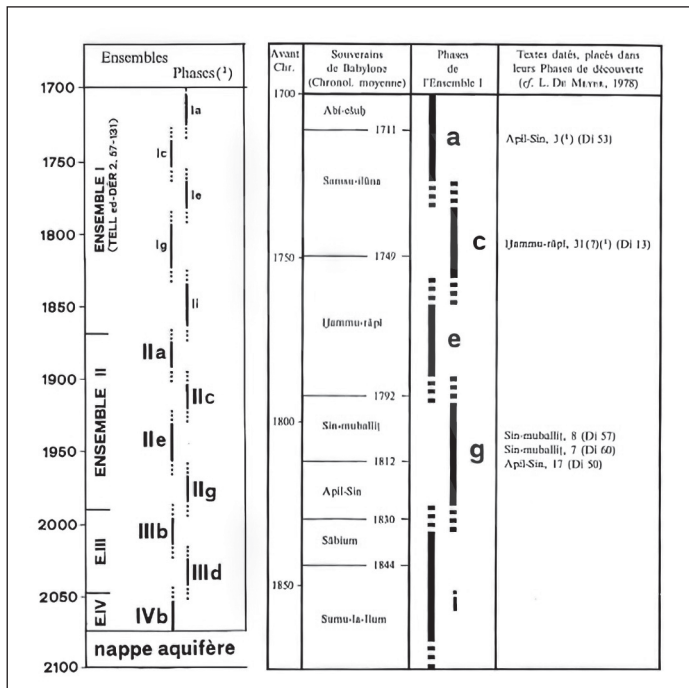


Fig. 1a-b. Tell ed-Der, chronology of Operation A (1a) and Ensemble I (1b). De Meyer 1984: 60; Gasche 1978: 127.

eration E *Ensembles* V-III and Operation F *Ensemble* I<sup>3</sup>. The latest dated text in Operation E was found in Phase IIIb, in the Archive of Ur-Utu and it dates to year 18 (17+b), month 5, day 1 of Ammisaduqa, while Operation F did not produce any text (Gasche *et alii* 1998:15). The excavated material from Tell ed-Der provides us with various clay plaquettes; among them the “nude female” iconography seems to appear frequently. The stratified examples are shown in table 3.

#### Tell Yelkhi

The site of Tell Yelkhi, situated in the Diyala Basin, was investigated by a series of uninterrupted campaigns, led by *Missione Archeologica Italiana in Iraq del Centro Ricerche e Scavi di Torino per il Medio*

<sup>3</sup> Since 1974, four excavation campaigns have been dedicated to Operation (*Chantier*) E. *Ensemble* III includes the East Sector and the House of Ur-Utu, *galamah* of the temple of Annunitum between Ammisaduqa years 5 and 7, penultimate king of the First Dynasty of Babylon. *Ensemble* V is represented by occupational remains which can be dated before 1660 BC, while *Ensemble* IV (c.1660 BC) is composed of sediments left by one or more floods. *Ensemble* III is divided in six phases (a-f). The oldest phase (f) can be dated around 1660-1650 BC, while the most recent one (a) coincides with the fire which destroyed the House of Ur-Utu in 1629 BC (Gasche 1989: 7-10).

*Oriente e l'Asia*, from Autumn of 1977 until Spring of 1980. At first, the excavators focused on the top (area A, levels I and II) of the tell. Later on, the operations were led on the south-eastern side (area B, levels III-VIII) of the tell, while four soundings (4 x 4 m. each) were allowed to reach the site's oldest phases (levels IX-X) (Cellerino 2009: 1). Level I, the most recent one, is dated to the Kassite period (late 15<sup>th</sup>-earlier 12<sup>th</sup> cent. BC), while Level X goes back to the late Jemdet Nasr / Early Dynastic period. Concerning the MBA, it is possible to date level III (b-a) to the Old Babylonian period due to the presence of diagnostic pottery shapes in this level. This dating seems to be confirmed by the discovery of a clay tablet (HY 224), found in the fill below level III, bearing the name Ibalp[...], presumably the king of Eshnunna Ibalpiel, contemporary of Hammurabi of Babylon (Gasche *et alii* 1998: 18; Cellerino 2009: 3). Meanwhile, Level IV (b-a) belongs to the late Isin-Larsa period (19<sup>th</sup> cent. BC). The importance gained by Tell Yelki in the 20<sup>th</sup> cent. BC is shown by the imposing Isin-Larsa re-

mains belonging to level V. Finally, distinctive pottery shapes and the style of the seals allows level VI to be dated to the late Ur III period and level VII to the late Akkadian-Early Ur III period (Cellerino 2009: 5).

Most of Yelkhi's choroplastic productions come from levels VI-I. The human figure is represented by 17% of handmade figurines, depicting mainly male characters. Moreover, they are in 1:5 ratio compared with mold-made plaquettes, most of which were found in levels V-III (Early Isin-Larsa-Early Old Babylonian periods). To conclude, the iconographic motif of the “nude female” is the most frequent one on Tell Yelki's plaquettes, appearing on 16 out of 19 specimens (*ibid.* 6, 11-14).

#### Haradum

The earliest document known from Khirbet ed-Diniye, ancient Haradum, about 80 km southeast of Mari, on the right bank of the Euphrates, is dated to Samsuiluna and comes from Layer 3C. For slightly over a century, from Layer 3C to Layer 3A, the latter dating to Ammisaduqa year 18 (= 17b+), the occupation of the city shows no significant disruptions. After that, the site was abandoned until the 11<sup>th</sup> cent. BC (Gasche *et alii* 1998: 17).

Table 5 shows the distribution of the excavated stratified terracotta plaquettes with the “nude female” motif in Haradum.



Specimen	Area	Level	<i>locus</i>	Period
HY 497	B	VIb	A 84, st. 229	Late Ur III/early Isin-Larsa
HY 452	B	VIa	A 37, st. 198	Late Ur III/early Isin-Larsa
HY 446	B	VIa	A 70+71, E 195	Late Ur III/early Isin-Larsa
HY 481	B	VIa	A 46, st. 263	Late Ur III/early Isin-Larsa
HY 445	B	Vb	A 46, st. 186	Isin-Larsa (c. 20 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 443	B	Vb	A 46, st. 186	Isin-Larsa (c. 20 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 480	B	Vb	A 68, st. 17	Isin-Larsa (c. 20 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 415	B	Vb	A 67	Isin-Larsa (c. 20 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 371	B	IVb	A 37	Isin-Larsa (c. 19 <sup>th</sup> cent BC)
HY 373	B	IVa-IIIb	A 15+16, st. 70	Isin-Larsa/OB
HY 76	B	IIIb	A 22	Old Babylonian (c. late 19 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 282	B	IIIb	A 4	Old Babylonian (c. late 19 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 353	B	IIIb	A 56	Old Babylonian (c. late 19 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 283	B	IIIb	A 14, st. 35	Old Babylonian (c. late 19 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)
HY 296	B	IIIb	A 10, st. 60, E 61	Old Babylonian (c. late 19 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> cent. BC)

Tab. 4. Stratified “nude female” plaquettes from Tell Yelki. Based on Cellerino 2009: 17-20.

Specimen	Level	<i>Ilot</i>	<i>Bâtiment</i>	<i>locus</i>	Period
m 548	3C	B	6	3, S 113	1725-1690 BC
m 581	3C	A	10	1, S 138	1725-1690 BC
m 75	3B (phase 2)	H	25	4, S 27	1690-1675 BC
m 646	3B (phase 1)	G	21	2, S 121	1675-1650 BC
m 23	3A	F	3	9, S 20	1668-1628 BC
m 53	3A	E	7	6, S 34	1668-1628 BC

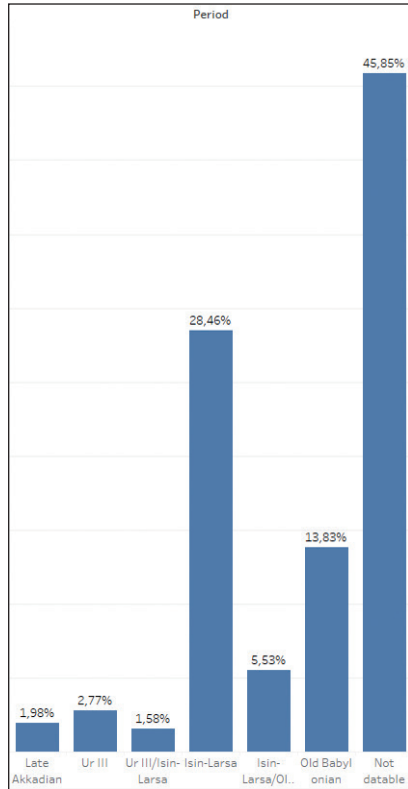
Tab. 5. Distribution of stratified “nude female” plaquettes at Haradum. Based on Kepinski-Lecomte 1992.

#### *Statistical analysis of the “nude female” mold-made images*

Whilst researching the “nude female” iconography, it was possible to gather information about 253 objects bearing 9 different motifs and coming from 13 archaeological sites. Thanks to this piece of evidence it was possible to conduct a statistical analysis on the frequency of the “nude female” motifs over a period of time comprehensive of the Late Akkadian to the Old Babylonian. The following data represents a starting point on the evolution of the spatial recurrence of the “nude female” motifs over time, although a more detailed framework would require an extensive and additional chronological and topographical analysis. The few specimens dated to the Late Akkadian period slightly increase during the Ur III period. The most striking data is the growth in number of

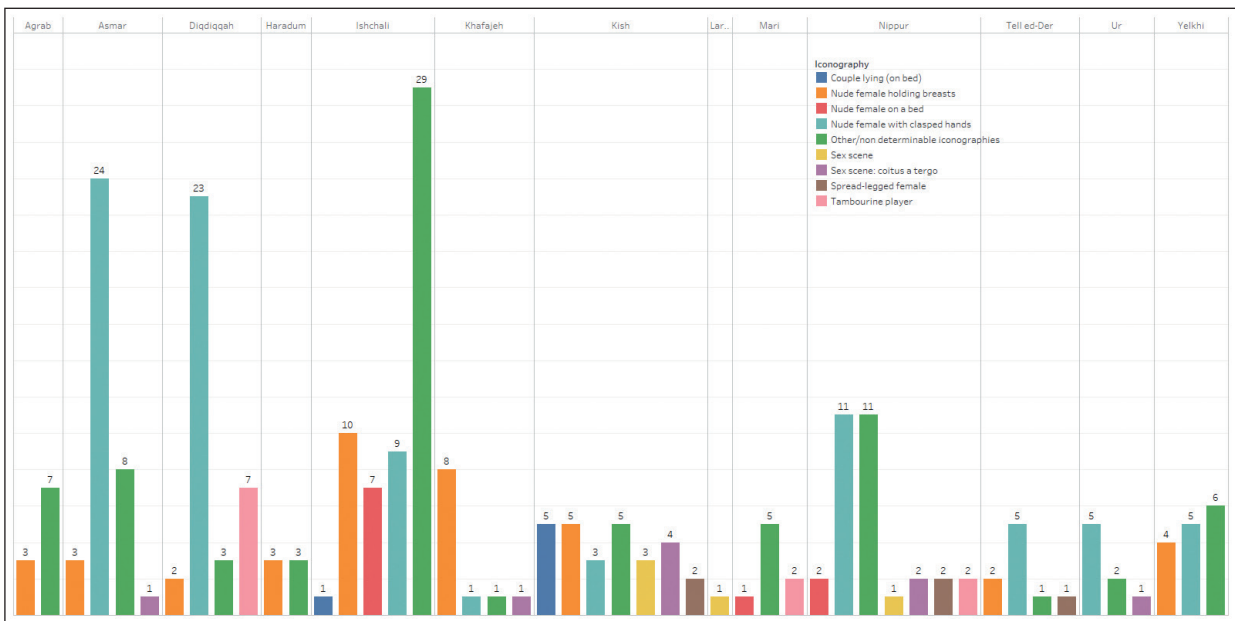
these objects during the Isin-Larsa period. During the Old Babylonian period it is witnessed a drop in production, reaching a total of 19.36% within the specimens dating between the Isin-Larsa and the Old Babylonian period (5.53%) and those belonging exclusively to the Old Babylonian period (13.8%). Unfortunately, most of the specimens (45.85%) cannot be dated, mainly because they lack a stratigraphic context or because it was not possible to find accurate information. From a methodological point of view, it has been avoided to correlate specimens and chronology based on typological and iconographical considerations, thus underlying a general continuum between Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian period (Graph. 1). The frequency of different motifs is shown through the 13 different sites. Ishchali (56 specimens) and Tell Asmar (36 specimens), both situated in the Diyala region, demonstrate a higher percentage of

“nude females”. However, according to McCown, Haines, and Hansenn (1967: 83-89), 53 objects were found in Nippur (but only 21 of them could be found by the present author). Following the the-

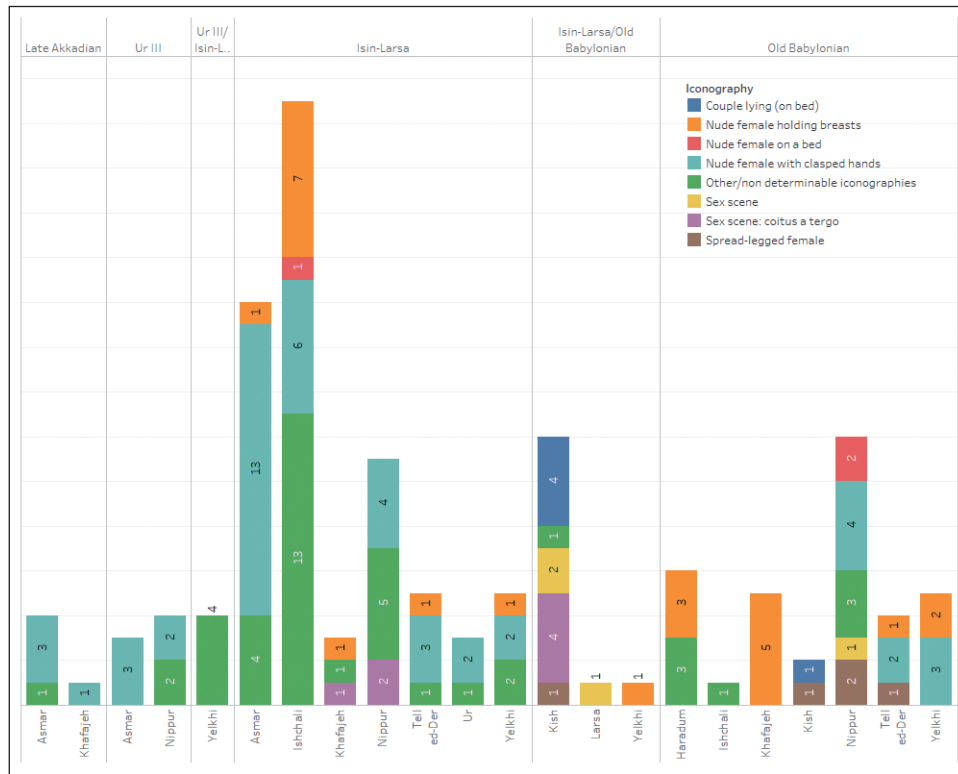


Graph. 1. Recurrence of “nude female” mold-made images over time.

ory of McCown, Haines, and Hansenn, Nippur would become the second highest concentration site in terms of clay plaquettes. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine the iconography of many fragmentary objects, “other/non determinable” (motif) in the graphs. As stated previously, there are two recurring iconographies: the “nude female with clasped hands” and the “nude female holding breasts”. Albeit this recurrency, other sites have witnessed different erotic motifs (Graph. 2). Due to the current number of fragments analyzed, once again it is necessary to appeal to a more exhaustive quantitative framework that could provide a more general knowledge on the total number of these secondary iconographies. From a diachronic point of view, only objects clearly belonging to a stratigraphical context have been considered useful in the construction of a typological timeline. Our data confirms what have been pointed out by previous researches: the first sporadic specimens of clay plaquettes emerged in the Diyala region (Auerbach 1994: 74-75) and it seems reasonable to assume that no other motif was shown but the “nude female with clasped hands”. From the Ur III period, this motif starts appearing also in Nippur. In the Isin-Larsa period the “holding breasts” typology outnumbers the “clasped hands” one in Ishchali and Khafaja. This motif increases in number during the Old Babylonian period, when it seems to be the only typology appearing in Haradum and Khafaja. The erotic iconography (*coitus a tergo*) appears first in Khafaja and Nippur during the Isin-Larsa period. From this period on, erotic motifs are



Graph. 2. Spatial distribution of “nude female” motifs.



Graph. 3. Spatial and chronological distribution of “nude female” motifs.

registered in various sites and they can be grouped in different sub-categories (*coitus a tergo* scenes, couples on bed, females with spread legs...). A high concentration of erotic motifs is registered in Kish (Graph. 3).

*The problem of the identification of “nude females” in Mesopotamian MBA iconographies*

In the next paragraph, the developments in choroplastic productions which lead to the appearance of the “nude female” iconography will be analyzed. On glyptic art, this motif appears in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century BC (Rossberger 2018b: 233; for a study of the “nude female” on seals, see Pizzimenti 2014).

*Handmade figurines*

The Ur III and Isin-Larsa periods faced a decrease in handmade clay figurines manufacturing, due to the introduction of mold technique (Dales 1960: 209; Moorey 2003: 28; Cellerino 2009: 7). However, mass production of mold-made clay plaquettes did not immediately replace handmade zoomorphic and anthropomorphic images (Moorey 2003: 28). Most Mesopotamian figurines from the

Ur III and Isin-Larsa periods come from Nippur, Ur, the Diyala region, and Assur. It was G.F. Dales (1960: 210) who described for the first time the regional differences in style of these figures. Typical Ur III figurines from Nippur are characterized by a pinched nose, eyes made with applied clay pellets and the absence of the mouth. The body is flat, and incised lines on the back are probably meant to represent the so-called *collier à contrepoids*. The hips and the pubic triangle are exaggerated, and the figures display a characteristic gesture with both hands holding the breasts (Fig. 2) (*ibid.* 48, 211)<sup>4</sup>. The “common Larsa” figurines (Fig. 3), named after the period during which they are attested the most, were found in large numbers in the Diyala basin, especially in Tell Asmar (Frankfort, Llyod, and Jacobsen 1940: 207). If compared with the Ur III style figurines from Nippur, the “common Larsa” figurines are more crudely made, with an extremely thin and flat body. The breasts (not supported by the hands) and the eyes are made of applied clay pellets (*ibid.* 50-51, 57).

<sup>4</sup> Among the Nippur figurines dated to the Ur III and Isin-Larsa periods there are not significant changes in style, while differences are registered at Ur and in the Diyala sites (Dales 1960: 57; 1963: 24).



Fig. 2. Ur III figurine from Nippur. McCown, Haines, and Hansen 1967, pl. 122: 10.



Fig. 3. "Common Larsa" figurine from Tell Asmar. Frankford, Lloyd, and Jacobsen 1940: 222.



Fig. 5. Isin-Larsa nude female "holding breasts" from Tell ed-Der. De Meyer 1984, pl. 16: 3.

#### Mold-made terracotta plaques

According to most scholars, the introduction of mold-made terracottas dates back to the Second Dynasty of Lagash or to the beginning of the Ur III period<sup>5</sup>. Due to this most significant innovation in the terracotta manufacture (one-piece open-mold technology), the plaques became mass-produced objects (Moorey 2003: 23-46) and, by the end of the Isin-Larsa period, handmade images came to an end (Dales 1960: 241). In southern Mesopotamia and in the Diyala region, the clay reliefs were found in «nearly all archaeological contexts – secular, public, religious, and private» (Auerbach 1994: 273). Moreover, the cheap material they were made of and the minimal investment of labor needed for their

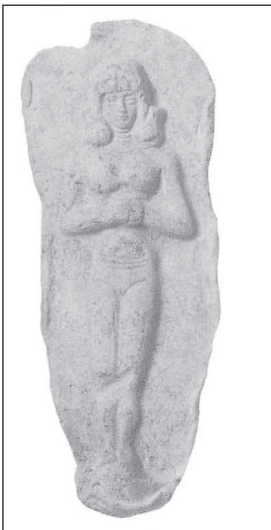


Fig. 4. Nude female from Ishchali. Hill, Jacobsen, and Delougaz 1990, pl. 34q.

production made clay reliefs easily accessible objects (*ibid.* 4). Thus, it can be said that these small items, generally smaller than the palm of a hand (Assante 2002b: 2; Klengel-Brandt, Cholidis 2006: 18), were in no way restricted to the elite. Interestingly, clay plaques never seem to appear in burials (Moorey 2003: 22)<sup>6</sup>.

A great variety of subjects is represented in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium production: humans, deities, demons, chariots, furniture models, as well as genre scenes. However, the so-called "nude female" is the most common as well as the oldest motif, whose images may amount to the thousands (Auerbach 1994: 87; Assante 2002b: 7; Luciani 2021: 215-216)<sup>7</sup>. The "nude female" (Fig. 4) is represented as a nude standing woman, always shown frontally. Unlike handmade figurines, the pubic triangle and hips are not emphasized. The feet are joined, occasionally on a pedestal, with the hands clasped under the breasts. The female figure usually wears a simple or multiple strands collar (sometimes anklets are also visible) and has a more or less complex hairdo (Barrelet 1968: 342; Asher-Greve, Sweeney 2006: 146). What she never wears is the deities' horned crown (Auerbach 1994: 45). While the "nude female" motif defines a single typology, the images show regional variations, and different features are visible in the representation

<sup>5</sup> Opificius 1961: 24; Barrelet 1968: 86-95; Cellerino 2009: 12. According to Auerbach (1994: 24), the first mold-made plaques appear in Tell Asmar during the Akkadian period.

<sup>6</sup> A single specimen depicting the "nude female" was found in a burial at Ur dating to the Isin-Larsa period (Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 174, object 39. U.7054).

<sup>7</sup> It is impossible to know their true number and to what extent a single image could have been copied (Assante 2002b: 2).





Fig. 6. OB “spread-legged female” from Isin. Hrouda 1987, pl. 21.



Fig. 7. OB erotic scene from Tello. Louvre AO 16681. <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010141574#>.

of face, body, hairdo and ornaments. Moreover, it is possible to divide this iconographic category into several subcategories<sup>8</sup>. A common variation of the oldest motif is the “nude female” holding breasts (Fig. 5), which some scholars associate with prostitution due to what was defined as «an assertive if not a provocative gesture» (Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 147)<sup>9</sup>. Nude women are also depicted in explicit erotic scenes, like the “spread-legged female” (Fig. 6), which appears first during the time of Hammurabi (Assante 2002a: 44). Another erotic theme is the *coitus a tergo* or “drinking” scenes (Fig. 7), where the male partner stands behind a naked woman who is usually drinking from a vase with a long straw. This is the most common and oldest amongst the erotic scenes, appearing first in Nippur, during the late Ur III period (*ibid.* 31). According to R. Opificius (1961: 166-168), the images of couples embracing or copulating on a bed can be linked to the cult of Ishtar, with char-

acters representing a divine couple or a king and a priestess<sup>10</sup>. It also has been argued that erotic scenes could refer to the tavern (*éš-dam*) atmosphere, prostitution, and Ishtar’s mundane features (Assante 2002a: 31)<sup>11</sup>. Frequently, music-related motifs, such as musicians or dancing dwarfs playing the lute, appear on 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium clay reliefs next to the “nude female” motif (Shehata 2019: 162; Rossberger 2019: 77).

It is not easy to identify the function of the terracotta plaques depicting naked female figures, since they have been found in a variety of archaeological contexts (private houses, temples, streets) and many of them come from surface collections (see above). Nonetheless, it is clear that the “nude female” motif must have been linked with cult and religion. According to Oppenheim (1977: 184), «the role of the image was central in the cult as well as in private worship, as the wide distribution of cheap replicas of such images show». Most scholars see in terracotta pla-

<sup>8</sup> Auerbach (1994: 46-49) identified eight subcategories of the “nude female” motif.

<sup>9</sup> The female figure with clasped hands is the oldest and most common in most second-millennium sites (Cellerino 2009: 13). However, this iconography is rarely attested in sites like Kish and Babylon, where the most common image is the “nude female” holding breasts (Klengen-Brandt and Cholidis 2006: 15).

<sup>10</sup> The “nude female” can appear alone on the bed, with a hand on her stomach and the other raised above the head (Auerbach 1994: 49). Sometimes, it can be replaced by the draw of a vulva or by geometric patterns (Assante 2002a: 40).

<sup>11</sup> Ishtar herself is called “prostitute”: «the prostitute (Ishtar) who goes out to the tavern...» (Allred 2009: 3).



Cat. no.	Headdress	Paint	Garment	Necklace	Hollow on the inside	Base
1	x	x	x	x	x	x
2	x			x	x	
3		x		x	x	
4	x	x		x	x	
5	x	x		x	x	
6	x	x		x	x	
7	x			x	x	
8	x				x	
9	x					
10	x	x				
11	x					x
12	x	x		x	x	
<i>total</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>2</i>

Tab. 6. Analysis of the main features of terracotta heads and busts.

quettes an amuletic function and think they were ritually prepared and used for protection (Moorey 1975: 98)<sup>12</sup>. E. Rossberger (2019: 73) points out the importance of the nude (female) at the entrance. Following F.A.M. Wiggermann's (1987: 28-29; 1998: 46-47) suggestion on a possible link between the "nude female" and the concept of *bāštu*, "dignity" (*CAD* B: 142), she identifies the former with the latter, which was needed in order to enter a building and to have the attention of the gods. This would also explain the common findspots of these objects not only outside and around religious buildings (especially in the Diyala region) but also in private quarters (Rossberger 2018b: 235). It is interesting to notice that frequently clay reliefs are intentionally broken off, as it is shown by several specimens from the Diyala valley (Auerbach 1994: 358-426). The fact that the plaques are broken on purpose could have something to do with their ritual function (Spycet 1992: 235). This theory could be sustained by the specimens (two mold-made and one hand-made figurines of naked females, broken either at the neck or at the pubic triangle) from the temple

<sup>12</sup> It has also been suggested that the plaques were amulets obtained from the temple in exchange for a sacrifice, which would explain why they have been found both in domestic and religious buildings (Frankfort, Llyod, Jacobsen 1940: 210). Probably they were apotropaic images whose function was to protect entranceways and liminal spaces from evil spirits (Woolley, Mallowan 1976: 31; Assante 2002a: 28; 2002b: 13).

of Tell Bazi, Room A (Einwag and Otto 2019: 168-169). However, further investigations are needed in order to prove it.

#### *Terracotta heads and busts*

The iconography of the "nude female" is also visible on a small group of terracotta heads and busts mostly coming from illicit excavations and exhibited nowadays in public collections. F. Blocher (1987: 30) informs us that in 1969, in al-Dīwāniyya (southcentral Iraq), among other things, two terracotta female heads were confiscated from illicit excavations and then brought to the Nassiriya Museum. It has been suggested that these objects belonged to almost life-sized terracotta statues placed in proximity of the ramp of Adadaplaiddina, leading to the entrance of the temple of Gula at Isin (Hrouda 1977: 39).

This theory would be supported by the appearance, from 1973 on, of fragmentary terracotta hands, feet, and legs in the ramp area (*ibid.* 39-46). Since the '70s, similar terracotta heads and busts have been acquired by museums all over the world. Thanks to accurate research it was possible to collect some information about twelve of these items. They all share some features: they are hollow on the inside, they display shoulder-length hair arranged in braids around the head and alongside the face, have large eyes and a small smile, wear a multi-strand necklace around the neck and traces of red and black paint are visible on skin and hair. Despite some specimens resting on a base, most of them are broken at the neck (Tab. 6). Only one specimen could be interpreted as a man (catalogue).

#### *On adornments, headdresses, and sexual attractiveness: construction and transmission of the ideal feminine beauty*

The aim of this section is demonstrating how bodily ornaments, headdresses, and the representation of the nude, erotic, female body played a significant role in the construction and transmission of the ideal feminine beauty in Mesopotamia. The persistent depiction of these features on the visual material analysed previously will be taken as an example. Moreover, it will be argued that, despite changes in style, these features, consistently displayed by MBA female figures, were used to depict an abstract concept, an idea of beauty, not necessarily connected to real women.

### Adornments

While the aesthetic of the ideal ancient Near Eastern male image has been identified with an erect posture, fit physique, and long, thick, dark, shiny, and curly beard, a similar account of the ideal feminine beauty has not yet been thoroughly discussed (Gansell 2013: 392). Speaking about female adornments, constantly represented on clay images since the Halaf period, Dales (1963: 21) stated that «clay figurines and plaques provide one of the potentially richest material sources for the study of ancient Near Eastern dress and bodily ornamentation». This is already a good starting point in the argument over the importance of personal ornaments in the construction and conveyance of ideal feminine beauty in ancient Mesopotamia. The ideal feminine beauty has been defined as «the configuration of preferred visual traits and personal characteristics that are collectively recognized and positively valued in a given society» (Gansell 2013: 392). This description seems to fit with the consistent representation of iconographic motifs (nudity, bodily ornaments, and headdresses) on MBA mass-produced plaquettes. Fashions (clothes and personal ornaments) are extensions of the body and «signals of the self», they help to mark and convey individual and social group identities and to underline personal roles in society. «Ornamenting the body is a way of constructing and objectifying a set of gender-based social distinctions that are not otherwise visible in the archaeological record» (Marcus 1994: 3). On clay productions, the persistent depiction of physical features demonstrates that artisans were representing archetypal women. Usually, the “nude female” on MBA plaquettes wears the “dog-collar,” a multi-strand necklace attested from the Ur III to the OB period (Opificius 1961: 50), and she often displays earrings, anklets, and bracelets (McCown, Haines, and Hansen 1967: 88-89). As argued by Rossberger (2018b: 232), it is possible that elaborate jewellery, such as necklaces, crossed chest bands, and multiple girdles, could have primarily referred to sexual attractiveness.

### Headdresses

Frequently, headgear marks a woman’s social status, both in ancient and modern Near East. For example, according to Middle Assyrian legal codes from the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, elite married women and marriageable girls should have had their heads covered to be distinguished from slaves and prostitutes (Marcus 1994: 7-8). Similar to how the length and shininess of black beards were key features in the definition of the ideal an-

cient Near Eastern male image, long black hair and complex hairdos could have positively contributed in the construction of the female ideal beauty<sup>13</sup>. One of the most distinctive features of the “nude female” is represented by «side lock of hair with curled ends» (McCown, Haines, and Hansen 1967: 88). In addition, a great variety of coiffures is registered on the terracottas from the Diyala region (Auerbach 1994). Literary sources also provide good evidence for the importance of hairstyles in the representation of Mesopotamian women. In a 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium text, the goddess Inanna, before she meets her lover, says that her hair «was disheveled – I straightened it, my locks were loosened – I tightened [them] and tossed [them] to the sides of [my] nape» (Gansell 2013: 404 after DI C 3-17).

### Sexual attractiveness

It is possible that sexual attractiveness, together with personal ornaments and hairdo, also had a positive symbolic value in the construction and representation of ideal femininity in Mesopotamia. It has been suggested that characteristic features of MBA handmade figurines, such as the exaggerated pubic triangle and abundance of jewellery, were meant to refer to “sexual allure” and to make the female body «sexually attractive» (Rossberger 2018b: 232). Moreover, according to some scholars, the “nude female” depicted on clay plaquettes should be interpreted as a symbol of «ideal femininity» (Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 139). Finally, A. R. Gansell (2013: 409) suggested that the most important features of Neo-Assyrian ideal feminine beauty were linked with sexuality and sexual attractiveness. In the Akkadian language, the idea of attractiveness (for both men and women) can be expressed with different words. The term *kuzbu*, close to the Sumerian term *hi-li*, is variously translated as “seductiveness,” “attractiveness,” “charm,” “voluptuousness,” “luxuriance,” “abundance,” “delight,” or “sexual vigor.” One of Ishtar’s epithets is *bēlet kuzbi*, which refers to her sexual aspect, and a word related to *kuzbu* is

<sup>13</sup> When cutting his enemies’ beards, king Sennacherib is said to take their *bāštu* away from them. The positive *bāštu* concept is therefore linked with manliness (for men) and is displayed visually by facial hair (Winter 1996: 13). Moreover, the quality of emanated light was among the main components constituting a positive attribute of physical matter in the Mesopotamian lexicon (Winter 2010: 293). According to ethnographic studies, Iraqi and Levantine people hold long, shiny black hair in high regard (Gansell 2013: 393). Traces of black paint are visible on the braided hairstyle of the clay female heads.

*lalû*, which can be translated as “lust” (Leick 1994: 181; Winter 1996: 14). In Ammiditana’s hymn to Ishtar, the goddess is said to be clothed in sex-appeal (*ru āmam labšat*), adorned with fruit, charm, and allure (*za ḥat inbī mīqiam u kuzbam*) (Leick 1994: 180). It has been pointed out that in Sumerian and Akkadian texts the vulva is described as visually appealing and attractive and that female nakedness is regularly considered seductive, alluring, and also irresistible (Bahrani 2001: 87). Ishtar herself is connected with libido: «You are Inanna (who) in the street of Kullab make (people) copulate» (Leick 1994: 152, after Benito 1969, line 364) and prostitution (*ibid.* after Volk 1989: 219).

The charms of the female nude body are highlighted in the Gilgamesh Epic when the harlot Shamhat seduces Enkidu. In this episode, Shamhat (and, therefore, prostitution itself) bears a positive value since she initiates Enkidu into the civilized society by copulating with him (Gansell 2013: 409)<sup>14</sup>. It would be better not to go so far as suggesting that in Babylonia free love was «probably encouraged» and seen as «one of the great conquests of Babylonian civilization» (Bottéro 1992: 192-193). However, it is clear that sexuality and the naked body had ambivalent values, both negative and positive<sup>15</sup>. Female nudity must have been celebrated on a symbolic level (linked to the mythological, religious, and ideal dimensions) and its positive value must have been conveyed by the visual material culture.

It cannot be said with certainty whether MBA plaquettes depicted real women or mythological figures. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that adornments, headdress, and sexual attractiveness took part in the construction and transmission of a positive Mesopotamian ideal feminine aesthetic. Arguably, understanding the role played by the “nude female” in the transmission of the ideal feminine beauty and the social values conveyed by the naked female body is more useful than speculating on the identity of this character.

<sup>14</sup> Enkidu stays with her for six days and seven nights, after that he finds out that the animals, with whom he had lived until that moment, shy away from him. Then Shamhat tells Enkidu she will lead him into Uruk, and she brings him to a shepherd’s camp where Enkidu first meets civilization, he is taught how to eat bread and drink wine, he washes his body and wears a garment. In other words, he becomes a man (Jacobsen 1976: 197-199).

<sup>15</sup> Nakedness can represent a status of humiliation and submission as the representations of defeated enemies demonstrate (Pizzimenti 2014: 136).

### *The written sources*

Many attempts have been made to identify the “nude female”. However, no theory can be proved right yet. First, the “nude female” has been associated with fertility (Winter 1983) and/or identified with a mother goddess (Black and Green 1992: 87), as the prehistoric nude female figurines were originally interpreted (Bahrani 2001: 48). Second, this motif has frequently been linked to Ishtar in her aspect of the goddess of sex (Andrae 1922: 84; Opificius 1961: 203-205; Black and Green 1992: 87), especially in relation to the gesture of the “nude female” holding breasts, which has been associated with prostitution. Ishtar herself is indeed called a prostitute: «the prostitute (Ishtar) who goes out to the tavern ...» (see note 11). In an Old Babylonian hymn, the goddess pronounces these words: «when I stand up against the wall, it is one shekel; when I bend over, it is 1 1/2 shekel» (é-gar<sub>8</sub>-da gub-bu-gu<sub>10</sub> 1 gín-àm gam-e-gu<sub>10</sub> 1 1/2 gín-àm) (Cooper 2006: 14). Moreover, the clay reliefs depicting the nude female copulating while drinking from a vase with a long straw suggest an association with the tavern (éš-dam), a place that is known to be «Ishtar’s special province» (Assante 2002a: 31)<sup>16</sup>. However, the identification of the “nude female” with Ishtar (or with other goddesses) is rather problematic, since the former never displays Mesopotamian divine attributes, such as the horned crown (Auerbach 1994: 45; Cellerino 2009: 15).

Wiggermann (1987: 28-29; 1998: 46) tentatively identified the naked female figure as the personification of *bāštu*, an Akkadian term for “dignity, good looks” (*CAD B*: 142). This theory may be supported by a bronze object from the Ishtar Temple at Assur representing a vulva and referred to in the inscription as TĒŠ, the logogram for *bāštu* (Grayson 1987: 46 no. 2001: 16). Thus, this artifact would be a *pars pro toto* for the “nude female,” which, due to the inscription, should be identified with *bāštu*. As appealing as this association may appear, more than a single inscribed object should be required in order to prove it. Finally, the “nude female” has been interpreted as a worshipper linked to the cult of Ishtar and to sacred prosti-

<sup>16</sup> Her holy temple in Girsu was called “The holy tavern” (éš-dam-kù); while in a Sumerian love incantation, a prostitute is called the «child of Inanna who stands in the tavern» (Cooper 2006: 17). Another link between the tavern and prostitution is provided by the Sumerian literary composition usually referred to as the “Curse of Agade,” where the gods say that the prostitute «hangs herself at the entrance to her tavern» (*ibid.* 15).



tution (*inter alia* Frankfort 1939: 159)<sup>17</sup>. In 1987, Blocher suggested identifying the iconographic motif under discussion with the *kezretu(m)*, the “curly ones,” women associated in texts with the goddess Ishtar, and whose hairdo would be recognizable in the “nude female” representations. Starting from Blocher’s theory, a further investigation of the written sources mentioning *kezretu(m)*-women has been conducted in order to establish a possible connection between these characters and the “nude female” motif. The term *kezretu(m)* (plural: *kezretu(m)*; Sumerian <sup>munus</sup>suhur-lá), literally “woman with curled hair,” derives from the Akkadian verb *kezēru*, “to curl the hair,” and it is usually translated as “prostitute” (*CAD* K: 314). The association with sexual activity is suggested by the occurrence of *kezretu*-women together with *harimātu*, “prostitutes,” and *šamhātu*, “voluptuous (women),” in *Gilg* VI 158 and *Erra* IV 52f. However, they are never explicitly said to be prostitutes and no text describes their activity. What seems to be clear about *kezretu*-women is the connection with the cult of Ishtar. In an Old-Babylonian text (*AbB* 2 34), «Hammurabi asks Sin-iddinam, his agent in the south, to send women engaged in the cult of Ishtar and *kezretum*» to Babylon (Yoffee 1998: 329). In Old Babylonian Larsa, *kezretum*-women are involved in celebrations in honor of Ishtar and Nanaya (Goodnick Westenholz and Westenholz 2006: 48-53); an inscription on a statue dedicated to Ishtar seems to attest to a connection between the goddess and *kezretum*-women in Mari (Charpin 1984: 56). Interestingly, later sources bring evidence for this connection as well: according to a penalty clause in a Neo-Assyrian real estate contract, the violator must give seven *kazrē* and seven *kazrāte* to Ishtar of Arbela (Cooper 2006: 19)<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, in Hittite texts, *kezretu*-women took part in Ishtar’s rituals and festivals (Shehata 2009: 102), as attested by a Hurro-Hittite hymn to the goddess (Güterbock 1983: 156).

The *kezretu* also seem to be associated with music and entertainment: 44 *kezretum*-women, together with musicians, appear under the guidance of the *chef de la musique*, in the palace of Zimri-

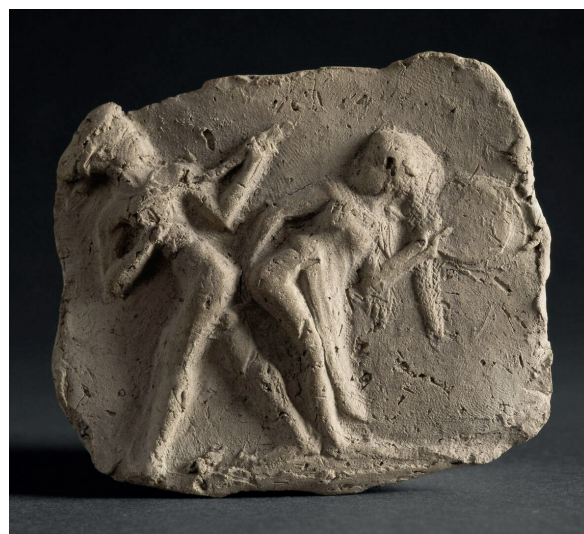


Fig. 8. Isin-Larsa/OB erotic scene from Larsa. Louvre AO 16924. <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010119267>.

Lim at Mari (Cooper 2006: 19; Ziegler 2015: 200; Charpin 2017: 153)<sup>19</sup>.

The most interesting piece of evidence concerning the activities of *kezretu*-women is provided by Old Babylonian economic texts from the city of Kish (Yoffee 1998), which were first published by E. Szlechter (1963) and J. J. Finkelstein (1972). These texts record amounts of money owed by women in exchange for an activity performed by a *kezretum*, which is sometimes referred to as *paršum*, lit. “the rite” (YOS 13 45; YOS 13 93; YOS 13 194). This debt is always transferred to a third party, a “guarantor,” who agrees to pay off the debt in a short time<sup>20</sup>. As interesting as it is to understand the economic side of the activity of the *kezretu*-women, the *paršum*-rite is never described and, consequently, the role of these women remains puzzling<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, in the texts from Kish, no mention is made of Ishtar or prostitution. It is impossible to say if the coiffure displayed by the “nude female” was meant to represent the *kezretu*’s curly hair. As has been stated above, coiffure marks women’s social status, both in ancient and modern Near East, and

<sup>17</sup> This idea derives from Herodotus’s report on a Babylonian custom according to which every woman must sit once in her life in the temple of Aphrodite (Mylitta) wearing a ribboned headdress until a man tosses a coin into her lap in the name of the goddess Mylitta (*ibid.* 2006: 18).

<sup>18</sup> The penalty clause recalls an inscription of Kapara, ruler of Guzana (Tell Halaf, 19<sup>th</sup> cent. BC), speaking of making seven daughters available to Ishtar as prostitutes and burning seven sons as sacrifices to Adad (*ibid.* 13, 17).

<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in a Sumerian comic tale a girl singing and playing an instrument is said to behave like a *kezretu* (Roth 1983: 275-279).

<sup>20</sup> The relationship between the woman contracting the debt and the “guarantor” is not clear. YOS 13 312 suggests they are relatives.

<sup>21</sup> M. Gallery (1980) suggests that *kezretu*-women had comparable functions with women mentioned in texts from Sippar who performed *paršum*. Moreover, she connects *paršum* with prostitution.

hairstyle belongs to those persistent and strongly descriptive features of Mesopotamian female appearance. Thus, there is no way to establish a relation between the “curly ones” and the “nude female” on the basis of their hairdo. The assumption that *kezrētu*-women were prostitutes and their further identification with the “nude female” motif on the basis of erotic plaquettes should also be rejected. Old Babylonian written sources never speak of *kezrētum* as (sacred) prostitutes, and their activity is never described. So why, again, a relation should be established between *kezrētu*-women and the naked women on clay reliefs (which cannot even be said certainly to be prostitutes)? Furthermore, the occurrence of music elements on erotic clay plaquettes (Fig. 8) is not sufficient to see in them depictions of *kezrētu*-women. Once more, to establish a link between the “nude female” and *kezrētu*-women is a mistake, since music and sexuality in Mesopotamia are attested together on visual material since more ancient times, as demonstrated by seal impressions from Early Dynastic Ur (Cooper 2016: 224). Finally, why *kezrētu*-women, whose only clear feature is that of being associated with the cult of Ishtar, would be depicted on objects which were usually found in archaeological contexts showing no relation with the goddess’s cult?<sup>22</sup>

To conclude, although the *kezretu* shared some features with the “nude female,” this does not mean that the latter was meant to depict the former. In fact, the identity of the “nude female” remains uncertain and, until new data become available, it is better to avoid speculating about it.

### Conclusions

A lot has been written about the images of nude women occurring on different media from MBA Mesopotamia. After the analysis of stratified materials, considerations about iconographic features, and the investigation of MBA written sources, it is possible to draw the following conclusions.

In the first section, the archaeological contexts of greater importance for the chronology of the “nude female” plaquettes were investigated in order to link the stratified items to the archaeological chronology of MBA Mesopotamia. However, this analysis, did not provide us with new data on the appearance and changes in the iconography of the nude female over time. What can be stated with certainty is that their use was not restricted to the elite cult, since they were also found in non-elite quarters (Auerbach 1994: 4). The data emerged from the statistical analysis tends to confirm what has already been said on the “nude female” (see above). However, the visual representation of data can be helpful to understand the phenomenon of the “nude female” and it is a good starting point for a future project involving a progressively growing number of sites. Hopefully, new data will emerge from archaeological campaigns.

The hypothesis of a relation between the “nude female” and the cult of Ishtar is here rejected. The link between the visual material analyzed and the goddess can be assumed only on an iconographic basis: Ishtar is the goddess of sex and she is linked with prostitution; therefore, nude women must relate to her nature and/or cult. No matter how tempting this theory may seem, it is too weak and proven neither by archaeological evidence nor by written sources. As stated above, the nude female motif was found in a variety of archaeological contexts in which, however, it is never suggested a relation with Ishtar’s cult. With regard to this matter, Z. Bahrani (2001: 53) observes that «since Ishtar is the goddess of love and sexuality, the assumption was made that the plaques had to have come from an archaeological context relevant to Ishtar, even if they were actually excavated elsewhere». Moreover, the iconography type under discussion is only one of several subject-matters belonging to 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium reliefs repertoire. It should be questioned if it makes sense at all to focus only on the “nude female”, especially when this motif is found next to other characters. With regard to written sources, there is no evidence strong enough to suggest an identification of the “nude female” with *kezrētu*-women mentioned in the texts. Not to mention that no inscribed clay plaquette was ever found. Furthermore, the link between *kezrētu*-women and prostitution is rather weak. The identity of the “nude female” remains a matter of speculation. Understanding the social values conveyed by the naked female body in MBA society would be more useful than attempting to identify the character hidden behind the “nude female”. In conclusion, it is highly probable

<sup>22</sup> In the Kititum Complex (Ishchali), the only religious building dedicated to Ishtar in which the iconographic category under discussion is frequently found, the ratio of plaquettes depicting the “nude female” is similar to that of plaquettes depicting other iconographic motives (Rossberger 2017; 2019: 71). Thus, the “nude female” plaquettes do not indicate a direct relation with the cult of Ishtar. Moreover, if the female terracotta heads and busts were indeed originally placed in Isin, in the area of the ramp leading to the temple of the goddess Gula, it would be inconsistent to say that they represent *kezrētu*, women of the cult of Ishtar.



that the features displayed by this character, such as hairdo, nudity and jewellery, played a key role in the construction and conveyance of the ideal feminine aesthetic.

#### Abbreviations

AbB = *Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift*, Leiden.

CAD = *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago.

DÍ C = Dumuzi-Inanna C (Sumerian literary text).

YOS = *Yale Oriental Series*, New Haven.

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*Catalogue of terracotta heads and busts*



**Cat. no.: 1**  
**Location:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
**Museum no:** MFA 1972.870  
**Dimensions:** 38.1 × 45.72 cm  
**References:** <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/164307/bust-of-a-female-votary-or-priestess?ctx=431dd6f8-6d2a-4862-ab58-173af571d682&idx=0>



**Cat. no.: 2**  
**Location:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
**Museum no:** 1989.281.7  
**Dimensions:** 18.2 × 16.4 × 15 cm  
**References:** <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/327396>



**Cat. no.: 3**  
**Location:** The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York  
**Museum no:** 1972.96  
**Dimensions:** 18 × 14 cm  
**References:** <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/326046>



**Cat. no.: 4**  
**Location:** The British Museum, London  
**Museum no:** 135680  
**Dimensions:** 40.2 × 36.8 cm  
**References:** [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1972-0122-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1972-0122-1)



**Cat. no.: 5**  
**Location:** The Louvre Museum, Paris  
**Museum no:** AO24227  
**Dimensions:** 16 × 14 × 13.5 cm  
**References:** <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010149083>



**Cat. no.: 6**  
**Location:** Ashmolean Museum, Oxford  
**Museum no:** AN1976.74  
**Dimensions:** 12.7 × 11.5  
**References:** [https://collections.ashmolean.org/collection/browse-9148/per\\_page/25/offset/60725/sort\\_by/size/object/77488](https://collections.ashmolean.org/collection/browse-9148/per_page/25/offset/60725/sort_by/size/object/77488)





**Cat. no.:** 7  
**Location:** Nasirya Museum, Nassiriya (?)  
**Museum no.:** (?)  
**Dimensions:** (?)  
**References:** Blocher 1987, fig. 1.



**Cat. no.:** 8  
**Location:** Nasirya Museum, Nassiriya (?)  
**Museum no.:** (?)  
**Dimensions:** (?)  
**References:** Blocher 1987, fig. 2.



**Cat. no.:** 9  
**Location:** Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem (?)  
**Museum no.:** (?)  
**Dimensions:** (?)  
**References:** Blocher 1987, fig. 4.



**Cat. no.:** 10  
**Location:** Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem (?)  
**Museum no.:** (?)  
**Dimensions:** (?)  
**References:** Blocher 1987, fig. 7.



**Cat. no.:** 11  
**Location:** Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem (?)  
**Museum no.:** (?)  
**Dimensions:** (?)  
**References:** Blocher 1987, fig. 8



**Cat. no.:** 12  
**Location:** (?)  
**Dimensions:** 16.5  
**References:** <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/18947/lot/155/?category=list>



