Approximately twenty-seven statues of [Gudea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gudea), a ruler ([ensi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ensí)) of the state of [Lagash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagash) have been found in southern [Mesopotamia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia). Gudea ruled between ca. 2144 - 2124 BC and the statues demonstrate a very sophisticated level of craftsmanship for the time. The known statues have been categorised 'A-AA' by archaeologists.

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## Provenance

Statues A-K were found during [Ernest de Sarzec](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_de_Sarzec)'s excavations in the court of the palace of [Adad-nadin-ahhe](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Adad-nadin-ahhe&action=edit&redlink=1) in [Telloh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girsu) (ancient Girsu). Statues M-Q come from clandestine excavations in Telloh in 1924; the rest come from the art trade, with unknown provenances and sometimes of doubtful [authenticity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authenticity_in_art). Figures L and R do not represent [Gudea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gudea) with reasonable certainty.

## Description and purpose

The statues were to represent the ruler in temples, to offer a constant prayer in his stead; offerings were made to these. Most of the statues bear an inscribed dedication explaining to which god it was dedicated. Gudea is either sitting or standing; in one case (N), he holds a water-jug *au vase jaillissant*. He normally wears a close fitting [*kaunakes*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaunakes), maybe made of sheep-skin, and a long tasseled dress. Only in one example (M, Soclet-statue) he wears a different dress, reminiscent of the Akkadian royal costume (torso of [Manishtushu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manishtushu)). On the lap of one of them (statue B) is the plan of his palace, with the scale of measurement attached. Statue F is similar to statue B; both are missing their heads, and have on their lap a board with a measuring scale and a stylus, only statue F doesn't have a ground plan.

## Size and material

It seems that the early statues are small and made of more local stones ([limestone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone), [steatite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steatite) and [alabaster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabaster)); later, when wide-ranging trade-connections had been established, the more costly exotic [diorite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diorite) was used. Diorite had already been used by old Sumerian rulers (Statue of [Entemena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entemena)). According to the inscriptions, the diorite (or [gabbro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabbro), *na4esi*) came from [Magan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majan_(civilization)). The remnants of a very large diorite statue in the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum) may be a representation of Gudea, but this cannot be determined with certainty. What remains of the statue is 1.5m high (and weighs over 1250 kg), meaning that if it was fully reconstructed the statue would be well over 3 metres high and the largest yet discovered sculpture of the ruler.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statues_of_Gudea" \l "cite_note-1)

## Dedicatory inscription

The dedication of the diorite statues normally tell how [*ensi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ensí) Gudea had diorite brought from the mountains of Magan, formed it as a statue of himself, called by name to honour god/goddess (x) and had the statue brought into the temple of (y). Most of the big (almost lifesize, D is even bigger than life) statues are dedicated to the top gods of [Lagash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagash): [Ningirsu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ningirsu), his wife [Ba'u](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ba'u&action=edit&redlink=1), the goddesses [Gatumdu](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gatumdu&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Inanna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanna) and [Ninhursanga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninhursanga) as the "Mother of the gods". Q is dedicated to [Ningiszida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ningizzida), Gudea's personal protective deity more properly connected to [Fara](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fara_(city)&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Abu Salabikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Salabikh), the smaller M, N and O to his "wife" [Gestinanna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestinanna). The connection between Ningiszida and Gestinanna was probably invented by Gudea in order to effect a closer connection to Lagash.

## Table of statues

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **Material** | **Size** | **Posture** | **Provenance** | **Dedicated to** | **Today at** | **Museum catalogue number** |
| A | diorite | 1.24m | standing | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ninhursanga/Nintu | Louvre | AO 8 |
| B | diorite | 0.93m | sitting | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ningirsu | Louvre | AO 2 |
| C | diorite | 1.38m | standing | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Inanna | Louvre | AO 5 |
| D | diorite | 1.57m | sitting | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ningirsu | Louvre | AO 1 |
| E | diorite | 1.42m | standing | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ba'u | Louvre | AO 6 |
| F | diorite | 0.86m | sitting | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Gatumdu | Louvre | AO 3 |
| G | diorite | 1.33m | standing | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ningirsu | Louvre | AO 7 |
| H | diorite | 0.77m | sitting | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ba'u | Louvre | AO 4 |
| I | diorite | 0.45m | sitting | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ningishzida | Louvre | AO 3293 + AO 4108 |
| J | diorite | -- | -- | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | -- | -- | -- |
| K | diorite | 1.24m | standing | excavations E. de Sarzec, Telloh | Ningirsu | -- | -- |
| L | diorite | -- | -- | -- | -- | (Kudurru) | -- |
| M | alabaster or paragonite | 0.41m | standing | clandestine excavations, Telloh 1924 | Geshtinanna | Detroit Institute of Arts | -- |
| N | dolerite, calcite or steatite | 0.61m | standing | clandestine excavations, Telloh 1924 | Geshtinanna | Louvre | AO 22126 |
| O | steatite | 0.63m | standing | clandestine excavations, Telloh 1924 | Geshtinanna | Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen | NCG 840 |
| P | diorite | 0.44m | sitting | clandestine excavations, Telloh 1924 | Ningishzida | New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art | 59.2 |
| Q | diorite | 0.33m | sitting | clandestine excavations, Telloh 1924 | Ningishzida | body in Baghdad, head in Philadelphia | body: 2909, head: CBS 16664 |
| R | diorite | 0.185m | sitting | art trade | Namhani | Harvard Semitic Museum | HSM 8825 |
| S | limestone | -- | standing | -- | -- | Louvre | -- |
| T | -- | 1.24m | -- | -- | -- | Golenishev collection | -- |
| U | dolerite | 0.71m | sitting | Seleucia ad Tigrim near [Seleucia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucia) | Ninhursanga/Nintu | British Museum[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statues_of_Gudea" \l "cite_note-2) | 98065 |
| V | diorite | 0.78m | standing | art trade | -- | British Museum[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statues_of_Gudea" \l "cite_note-3) | 122910 |
| W | diorite | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| X | diorite | -- | -- | -- | Meslamta'ea | -- | -- |
| Y | limestone | -- | -- | -- | Ningirsu | -- | -- |
| Z | diorite | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| AA | limestone | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

## Further reading

* Dietz Otto Edzard, "Gudea and His Dynasty" *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Early Periods - RIME 3/1* (Toronto University Press 1997).
* F. Johansen, "Statues of Gudea, ancient and modern". *Mesopotamia* 6, 1978.
* A. Parrot, *Tello, vingt campagnes des fouilles (1877-1933)*. (Paris 1948).
* H. Steible, "Versuch einer Chronologie der Statuen des Gudea von Lagas". *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 126 (1994), 81-104.