

# Another Unknown Sumerian Queen

A previously unidentified Sumerian queen.

By Jerald Jack Starr. This page originally appeared in [SumerianShakespeare.com](http://SumerianShakespeare.com).

(Hint: press the CTRL key when clicking on a link to make it display in a separate window.)



This is an alabaster statue in the Louvre Museum. It is 6.5 cm tall (2.56 inches). The statue was found in the Sumerian city of Girsu. It is dated in the Early Dynastic III Period (ED III, 2600 - 2340 BC). The Louvre labeled it simply as a “female head.” The dark circles around her eyes represents kohl, which was used throughout the ancient world as an eyeliner.

When I first saw the statue, I believed it was a Sumerian priestess because she seems to be wearing a circular headband, just like the [high priestess of Ninsun](http://SumerianShakespeare.com/high-priestess-of-Ninsun); although for a priestess I thought she was a bit heavy-handed with the makeup.

Then I noticed there are no striations on the hair above her headband. I suspected that she is actually wearing a hat. This was confirmed when I saw a profile view of the statue:



It's a very distinctive hat. I hadn't seen anything like it on a Sumerian woman. The only hat that is similar is the polos, which was worn by priestesses in the city of Mari (see the page on [The Standard of Mari](#)). But this is not a polos. A polos is taller and rounder, as shown below:



A polos worn by a Sumerian priestess of Mari.

The hat on the statue most closely resembles a shepherd hat, the crown of a Sumerian king. Early versions of the hat had rounded brims that were thick but narrow, like the kind worn by the priests of Uruk, the original rulers of Sumerian cities.



This is an early version of a shepherd hat worn by a priest of Uruk. It closely resembled the hat of an ordinary shepherd. The shepherd hat later became the crown of a Sumerian king.



Later versions of the shepherd crown were taller and more grandiose, which gave the kings greater stature and made them seem more regal, such as the crowns worn by Gudea (left) and Ur-Namma (for further explanation, see [The Kings of Uruk](#)).



Of course, it's possible that the statue is merely a common shepherdess, but there are several reasons against this assumption: Sumerian artists didn't carve stone portraits of common women, there is no word for "female shepherd" in the Sumerian language, and the eye makeup indicates she was something more than a common shepherdess who tended her flocks in the field.

Since this hat looks just like the early versions of the shepherd crown, I suggest that the statue is a portrait of a Sumerian queen.

There's only one problem. The hat designates that she was a reigning monarch, who acted as a king, but there are no historic records of a Sumerian queen who ruled by her own right. Sumerian queens were always the wives of kings. They never governed on their own. Sumerian queens had considerable power and influence, but they did not rule the kingdom.

A ruling queen would be a notable exception to the hundreds of male kings in Sumerian history. There should be some record of her existence – many records, in fact. She would be famous, or infamous, but there are no references to a female ruler in Sumerian history.

Most notably, there is no mention of a Sumerian female monarch on the King List, the definitive compilation of the kings who ruled in Mesopotamia. (The kings of Lagash/Girsu are not included on the King List. They appear on the separate list called [The Rulers of Lagash](#), but even on this specialized list there is not a single reference to a female ruler.)



**The Sumerian King List** records the names of the rulers of Mesopotamia.

If there had been a Sumerian female monarch, she should be on one of the king lists because of her uniqueness, so it's unreasonable to assume there was a Sumerian queen who isn't mentioned on a list.

But there she is:



The statue probably had eyes of lapis lazuli, which I have restored in this picture.

See the [before and after](#).

Her shepherd crown, which is exactly the same as the crowns worn by the early kings of Uruk, proves that she is a reigning monarch. Since she dates to the ED III period, she is one of the first female rulers in world history.

When I first discovered her in September 2016, I assumed she was Ku-Baba, an Akkadian queen from the ED III period who is actually mentioned on the King List. I thought maybe Ku-Baba presented herself as a Sumerian queen as a goodwill gift to her Sumerian allies. Or perhaps her Akkadian subjects disguised her as a Sumerian queen because venerating Ku-Baba was a dangerous thing to do after her dynasty had been overthrown by Sargon the Great. I made these assumptions because no Sumerian female ruler is mentioned in the historic records.

As it turns out...

She's not the only Sumerian female monarch who doesn't appear in the historic records. Also see [An Unknown Sumerian Queen](#).

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