

The Babylonian Wife

A plaque similar to The Babylonian Woman.

By Jerald Jack Starr. This page originally appeared in SumerianShakespeare.com.

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



This bas-relief is part of a small plaque from Diquqqeh, a suburb in the city of Ur. The terracotta plaque was formed in a mold and then fired in a kiln. It is dated in the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1850 – 1500 BC). Sir Leonard Woolley found it during his archaeological expedition in 1931.

Her face is very realistic. It looks like it was modeled from real life. Her face has the features of an actual woman, and not just the generic features of a stereotypical female. With her rounded face and nose, she is very distinctive, very individualistic. She doesn't look like the hundreds of other women that are portrayed on the Diqdiqqeh plaques.

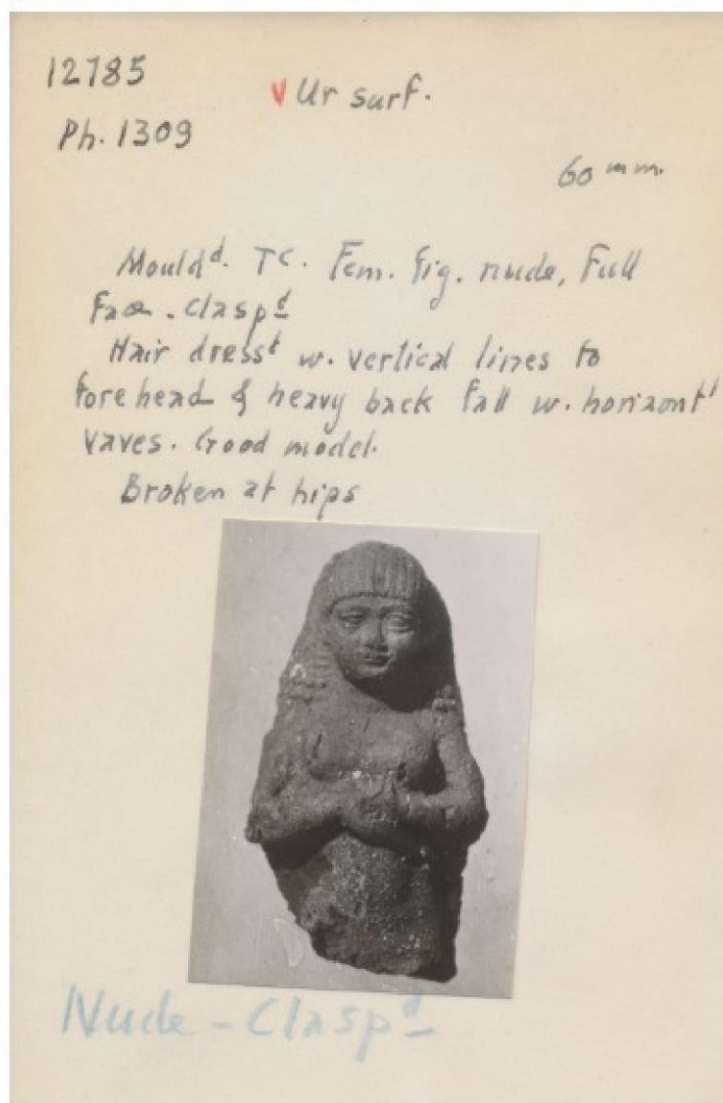
The artist clearly patterned the face on the features of a woman he knew.

At first, I thought it was another casting from the same mold as the [Babylonian Woman](#) who is shown below. Then I realized that the angle of the arms is different.



I suggest this is another portrait of The Babylonian Woman. It is the same woman, sculpted by the same artist.

Leonard Woolley found this statue in 1928, three years before The Babylonian Woman was discovered. Both statues now reside in the British Museum.



See the original record at [UrOline](#).

This is Father [Leon Legrain](#)'s notecard. [Click here](#) to enlarge the picture of the statue.

Woolley's notes describe the statue as a "terracotta figurine. Moulded. Female figure, full face, nude, hands clasped below breasts. Hair dressed with vertical lines to forehead, and heavy back full with horizontal waves. Good model. Broken off at hips."

Woolley states that the statue has a "full face" and it's a "good model." He said the statue of The Babylonian Woman has a "round face" and it's "carefully made." It's like he is talking about the same statue.



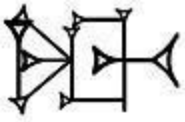
[Enlarge](#)

In my opinion, this is clearly the same woman. The only difference is the expression on her face. On the left, she looks at you with a calm and steady gaze. On the right, she gazes at you with a look of bemused self-confidence. The statues resemble each other. They don't resemble anybody else.

I had earlier written that the artist created the statue of The Babylonian Woman “to be a realistic portrait of a woman he knew (and probably loved). Perhaps she was his wife or his girlfriend...”



For that reason, I call this statue The Babylonian Wife, to distinguish her from The Babylonian Woman. It's two different statues of the same person.



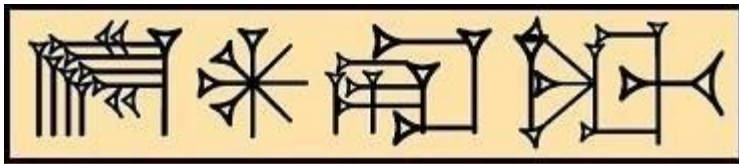
dam = spouse = wife

The artist created two “carefully modeled” statues of the same woman. That has to mean something. It seems to me there’s a love story here. It’s a story about a man, a young artist, who loved his wife.

I always thought she was based on a real woman. So, in conclusion, I will close with the same words that I used to end the page about The Babylonian Woman:

Somewhere in Diqdiqqeh, in the second millennium BC, there was a woman who looked a lot like this:





Babylon

Wife

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