

# Means of beautifying the head in ancient Iraq in the light of cuneiform texts and artistic scenes

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## Abstract

When studying the means of head augmentation in ancient Iraq, it is necessary to rely on various physical evidence, such as cuneiform texts and artistic scenes, in order to give a clear idea of what the headdress was like in Mesopotamia and how important it is in the process of beautifying man and its reflection on the body of the individual at that time. The research highlighted the most important means used in beautifying the head of the old Iraqi human being

**Keywords:** headband, crown, wreath, turban, horns, cloak.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Man in Mesopotamia realized his need to cover his head since the beginning of his existence thousands of years ago, as the head wear was important in the daily life of man in every era. On religious occasions and others in celebrations and others for the purpose of wars such as helmets.

The inhabitants of Mesopotamia used the raw materials found in nature for the purpose of making headwear, including gold, bronze, copper, fabrics and precious stones in order to decorate them and make them more elegant and beautiful. The results of archaeological excavations in several sites have provided us with written sources written in cuneiform script, which are the best guide to identifying the outlines of these clothes and their cosmetic role.

This brief study, which aims to know the most important head coverings in Mesopotamia, based on the information we received in cuneiform texts and artistic scenes, was divided into several axes. to gowns.

Then the conclusion of the research, which includes the most important conclusions reached by the study of this topic and the appendices of figures and illustrations, and a list of sources and references that were relied upon in writing this research.

## 2. Headband

The cuneiform texts expressed the headband in several forms. In the Sumerian language, it appeared in the form (GILIM), corresponding to the Akkadian formula (kililu) ( ), as well as in several other forms (eru/ itru, itru/ aru, eru), and in the Sumerian formula (U4. RI. IG) and corresponds to the Akkadian formula (tuqnu / tugnu) ( ).

One of the best examples of headbands in Mesopotamia is what we see in their images within the artistic scenes engraved on the obelisks and the walls of palaces and the apparent ones on some of the anthropomorphic shapes. , where the inhabitants of Mesopotamia exaggerated in decorating the headdresses of their gods and kings more than their personal clothing, and they used the most luxurious

possessions they possessed of precious stones, shiny gems, and precious metals ( ).

Through research in the artistic scenes, the oldest picture of the headdress dates back to the Warka era, specifically in the obelisk of hunting lions, which dates back to the beginning of the third millennium BC ( ), on which a scene was executed in relief sculpture represented by two men attacking a number of fierce lions using spears and arrows ( ), Each of them wears a short skirt tightened with a prominent belt in the middle of the naked body, and it is a dress that was worn by princes and rulers during hunting, and what distinguishes the scene is the beautiful head dress that is seen (Fig. 1) ( ), as both men appear with a headband indicating their authority ( ).



(fig.1)

From the same era comes a scene executed on a cylindrical seal representing a high priest or the king. The scene shows the priest or the king with a long beard and a clasped robe, and he puts a thick band on his head that protrudes his forehead ( ) (Fig. 2).



(fig.2)

Another cylinder seal from this era was also found in which there is a scene of a bearded man wearing a long apron with hair and a beard, and he may be the priest. The scene shows the priest wearing a headband ( ) (Fig. 3), which is similar to the headband worn by the priest. In the previous seal in terms of shape.



(fig.3)

The bronze head belonging to King Sargon of Akkad (2370-2316 BC) is considered one of the most wonderful works of art that shows the extreme accuracy in highlighting the main features in the decoration and beautification of the headdress. The gang can be clearly seen fixing the hair from below. Show the beauty and splendor of the braided part of the hair above the headband with a thin edge, and from the back of the head appears tied in the form of a bun held by three rings ( ), see (Fig. 4).



(fig.4)

A pottery slab was discovered at Talo site, dating back to the second half of the third millennium BC. It depicts a scene of a couple looking at each other with their hands together, and their heads are decorated with two bands. The headband of the man appears less rugged than the headband of the wife, especially from the front, and the wife's hair emerges from under it. In the form of a wig tied with a hair ring in the form of a bun, as for the man's hair, a large side tuft appears clear to the beholder ( ), looking at (Fig. 5).



(fig.5)

From the era of the second Lagash dynasty, specifically from the time of King Kudia, a

fragment of the obelisk of King Kudia was found bearing a scene showing the decoration process by means of the headband of two women who seem to participate in a celebration through their applause to express their happiness and joy, and both women wear a dress that covers their shoulders. The hair was made in the form of a bun covered with a piece of cloth tied by a headband ( ) See (Fig. 6).



(fig.6)

Also, a prominent carving scene on a pottery tablet from the era of the third dynasty of Ur reflects to us a woman breastfeeding her child and adorning her head with a ring consisting of two thick rings (two ribbons) placed on the forehead and her mouth appears on both sides of her face ( ). (Fig. 7)



(fig.7)

And if we examine the cuneiform texts, we will be in front of a scarcity of cuneiform texts that mentioned the headband, including what was mentioned in the Etana epic "Etana's ascent to heaven," as it came in the epic that the gods thought about managing human affairs on a day when they were not ruled by a king, as there were no signs All kingship, most notably the crown and the headband, and was deposited with the god Anu, as it was mentioned in the text:

"...human beings were not ruled by a king

At that time there were no insignia of the king and no crown

... the sceptre, the crown, the headband and the shepherd's wand

With God, he is in heaven" ( ).

It is evident from the foregoing that the headband played a major role in decorating and beautifying the human body in ancient Iraq in general and his head in particular, and there is no doubt that it was used by most members of society, as we saw that it decorated the heads of kings, priests and groups of the common people.

### 3. The crown

The crown is considered the most important sign placed on the head as it is a symbol of kingship and sovereignty, and its name was mentioned in the cuneiform writings in several forms, including the formula (AGA/AGA3/AGA2), which means (crown) and (the legitimate crown of kingship) ( ), and it was also mentioned in the meaning of the king's crown ( ), and in another formula that came in Sumerian to denote the crown, which is (MEN/MEN4) meaning crown or the crown ( ), as it was mentioned in the form (dme-bar) meaning (the pure crown) ( ), and there is another formula that indicates the extent of the importance of the crown from an aesthetic point of view It is (gilim\_gili) meaning crown, the crown of the bride ( ), but in Akkadian it was received in the form (agā/ūum) ( ), which means crown, and one of the most prominent formulas that came in the ancient Babylonian era (2004-1595 BC) which means crown is (agū (aga'u)/a-gu-u2-um) ( ), and another formulation that came from the Old Babylonian era is the formula (šukusu (m) which means a religious head covering (to decorate) ( ).

The artistic scenes of Mesopotamia are the main source of our knowledge of the forms of crowns and their development through its historical eras, and their first appearance in an artistic scene was an inscription on a limestone slab dating to the ancient Sumerian era (the era of the dawn of dynasties). This scene may be of the king's person, placing a crown on his head in the form of a circular collar with a wide and

thick edge that surrounds the head( ). See (Fig. 8).



(fig.8)

And if we wanted to stand at the most beautiful headdress produced by the ancient Iraqi civilization, we would stand amazed before the crown of Queen Bu-Abi (2600 BC), with the accuracy of the details of its manufacture, not to mention the value of the material from which it was made, which is gold studded with precious stones. This certainly made it to be the most wonderful piece that adorned and adorned the heads of ancient Mesopotamian women, and it was made of gold studded with different types of precious stones with the presence of garlands for hair and various ornaments that give the queen a dazzling beauty ( ) (Fig. 9).



(fig.9)

Among the artistic scenes that expressed the head coverings during the period of the Middle Babylonian era is a scene of King Marduk Nadin my brother (1098-1081 B.C.) carved in the manner of prominent carving on the stone of the borders (al-kudro), depicting the shape and beauty of the royal crowns during that era ( ), and in it depicts The king is standing sideways, and a cylindrical crown appears above his head, the top of which is decorated with a row of feathers and a number of roses ( ), seen (Fig. 10).



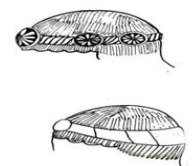
(fig.10)

As for the Assyrian crowns, the first representation of them was of the Assyrian king Tawaklti Ninurta I (1244-1208 BC) from the Middle Assyrian period. (Fig. 11) ( ), looks at a picture on a carved box or part of a marble cover for a jar decorated with relief carving. In the scene appears a person who is probably distinguished by his cylindrical crown, with a flat top and slightly lowered height ( ).



(fig.11)

The beautification and adornment of the head in the Assyrian civilization did not depend on the kings only, but the dignitaries and senior officials also decorated and beautified their heads with crowns almost similar to the crowns of kings. The ministers, senior officials and influential people in the state wore a wreath (garland) decorated with flowers or beautiful ribbons and belts, see (Fig.12.)<sup>0</sup>.



(fig.12)

From the modern Assyrian era, we have received examples of artistic scenes depicting kings adorning themselves with the crowns of the throne, including King Aser Haddon, when he was depicted in one of the obelisks standing sideways and on his head a conical crown. Small and close circles, and at the top of the crown, a small conical protrusion



is also decorated with horizontal lines. A long ribbon that reaches the middle of the back hangs from the back of the crown, decorated with beautiful fringes and fringes<sup>0</sup> (Fig. 13).



(fig.13)

It seems that the luxury and pomp of daily life in Assyria, specifically during the modern Assyrian era, is not matched or competed by civilizations from other time periods in the ancient history of Iraq. Attention to the body, and as far as beautifying the head is concerned, we will stand in front of material remnants that amazed researchers, and we may be exaggerating when we say that it has surprised craftsmen at the present time because of its high-level artistic sense, for the crown that was found in the city of Nimrud is a crown of pure gold<sup>0</sup>. It shows the splendor and prosperity of the Assyrian art, which conveyed to us the aesthetic aspect of the Assyrian society at the time, and at the same time reflected to us other aspects of great importance, including the artistic sense of the professionals of the art of craftsmanship during this era, which was manifested in the realization and display of the aesthetic of wearing the crown, as well as the accuracy And the professionalism of the Assyrian goldsmith in his use of beautiful circular wires connected to each other, and they were decorated with golden balls resembling pomegranate, with beautiful golden flowers next to them, and also inlaid with precious stones<sup>0</sup>. seen (Fig. 14).



(fig.14)

Among the important archaeological artifacts that brought us the Assyrian scenes concerned with the aesthetics of people and their appearance through their use of headdress to support the aesthetics of their external appearance, are the ivory pieces of the Assyrian queens, the most famous of which is the carved crown on one of these pieces, which was

known to researchers as (Assyrian Mona Lisa), which is believed to represent The Assyrian Queen Samu Ramat<sup>0</sup>, appears in the scene wearing a beautiful crown in the form of a circular collar<sup>0</sup>, probably made of gold, and seems to have been inlaid with precious stones through the holes around the crown, seen<sup>0</sup>. (Fig. 15).



(fig.15)

Among the artistic scenes of this era, which shed light on an aspect of interest in the beauty of the body, is the scene of Queen Ashur Sharrat, the wife of King Ashurbanipal, who was depicted on a sculpture from Nineveh, while she was sitting on the throne, and her head was adorned with a beautiful crown in the form of a low cylindrical tower<sup>0</sup>, and inlaid with precious stones resembling City wall towers<sup>0</sup>, see (Fig. 16).



(fig.16)

It can be asserted that crowns were a means of beautifying the head, and even had a wonderful appearance, as they distinguished ordinary people from people who had a prominent position in Mesopotamia.

Our information about beautifying the head with the dress of the crown was not limited to artistic scenes only, but we found a clear echo of that in the cuneiform texts, and the texts related to the hymns of the gods come at the forefront of these texts. Enhedu-ana) is the high priestess in the temple of the god Nanna<sup>0</sup> (Sin), the moon god, in the city of Ur, and she is the daughter of King Sargon of Akkad.<sup>0</sup>

“ Oh, Lady of the Divine Laws, the Brilliant Light!

The woman, the giver of a life that is adorned with majesty,

Priestess of the god Anu with great ornaments

Her dazzling crown, worthy" <sup>0</sup>.

As for the hymns related to the kings, it was mentioned about the crown. In the hymn to King Shulki, there was a description of his crown, which added beauty and brilliance to the king's figure, as it was stated in it:

"A king resplendent with the royal crown (on) his head

Shulki suitable for the straight crown " <sup>0</sup>.

We can see the cosmetic importance of crowns for the kings of Mesopotamia through the royal texts from the era of Ur III in the mention of the crown. King Shu Sen (2036-2028 BC), one of the kings of the third dynasty of Ur, stated that the goddess Ninlil granted him power represented by the throne. And the crown, as stated in the text:

"Nanlil, the supreme lady (supreme) over all lands, the beloved lady (loving), of Shu Sen, sustaining health and longevity, the crown... and a crown for a long time, the royal throne, with its firm foundation, gave him" <sup>0</sup>.

In the texts of King Hammurabi, the sixth king of the first Babylonian dynasty (1792-1750 BC), it was stated that he was qualified and deserving of the attributes of power and government, which are both the scepter and the crown, and as it came:

"The Master (Hammurabi) is the mark of the sceptre and the crown" <sup>0</sup>.

The economic texts from the Middle Babylonian era mentioned the crown as one of the means that the kings of that era resort to to seek the approval of the gods through their adornment of their statues. In the texts of one of the Kassite kings, there is what indicates that he decorated the statue of the god Marduk with a decorated headdress and inlaid with good quality stone, as well as jewelry. Diversity to suit the status of God, as it came in the text:

" I decorated the top of his headdress (his crown - agešu), with a stone (inimuššari) and various other jewels " <sup>0</sup>.

#### 4. Turbans

The turban is one of the means of beautifying the head in Mesopotamia, as it is a piece of cloth wrapped around the head, and it was worn by kings and priests as well as public figures <sup>0</sup>, as this was evident on the various artworks in Mesopotamia, as it gives the wearer a shape It is beautiful and distinguished from others. Several names were given to it in the Sumerian language (TUG2).BAR.SI/(SIG2), which means daily head covering and also meaning turban <sup>0</sup>, and the name (TUG2.SAGŠU), which denotes the head coverings of kings and priests and means a covering A head or a turban <sup>0</sup> In addition, there is another name for the turban (TUG2.ŠU.GUR) meaning turban <sup>0</sup>, and its equivalent in the Akkadian language is kusu (kasû) which means a piece of head covering <sup>0</sup>.

The oldest artistic models of turbans date back to the Kitabi-like period from the Warka League and Jemdet Nasr, and it was a statue of a man who might be a priest or a king <sup>0</sup>, of which only the upper part remained while he was naked and above his head an authoritarian-shaped turban fastened with a piece of cloth wrapped around the turban. A wide brim that touches the forehead, seen (Fig. 17) <sup>0</sup>, and in another model similar to that turban worn by a priest or king, and also of an almost authoritarian shape, surrounded by a thick band with an edge protruding outward and tightly tightened around his forehead. See (Fig. 18) <sup>0</sup>.



(fig.17)



(fig.18)

As for the artistic scenes of wearing turbans from the era of the dawn of dynasties as headdress, they were few, and some of them were depicted on a cylindrical seal, as the scene included a struggle and in which the protective

hero was represented in the lower part, as he appears with a flat turban on his head<sup>0</sup> (see Fig. 19).



(fig.19)

From the Akkadian era, we received models of headscarves similar to turbans, the most prominent of which is the scene of an inscription on the victory obelisk of King Naram Sin, in which the king appears turned to the left, and he wears an oval-shaped turban consisting of several layers or horizontal grooves and it seems that it was made of leather<sup>0</sup>. Under the turban, the hair of his head is in the form of a braid<sup>0</sup>, seen (Fig. 20).



(fig.20)

The turban was widely used to decorate and beautify the head in the modern Sumerian era. The most famous of these is the turban of King Kudia, ruler of the city of Lagash, which had a hemispherical shape surrounded by thick edges. It was decorated with beautiful and delicate geometric decorations<sup>0</sup> (see Figure 21).



(fig.21)

One of the most prominent artistic products of the ancient Babylonian era is a statue of a head belonging to King Hammurabi showing a pilgrim with a hemispherical turban and a relatively wide edge that appears lower than the turbans of previous eras<sup>0</sup>, see (Fig. 22).



(fig.22)

The turban continued to beautify the head in the middle Babylonian era with a design similar to the turbans of the ancient Babylonian era, as one of the cylinder seals of one of the devotees emerges as he faces a seated deity, and the worshiper appears wearing a hemispherical turban over his head with narrow edges touching the forehead. See (Fig. 23)<sup>0</sup>.



(fig.23)

Cylindrical seals dating back to the Assyrian era where turbans were depicted to highlight the extent of their cosmetic importance, and in a cylinder seal dating back to the modern era of a man who appears while he is wearing a hemispherical head turban, as it appears smaller than what preceded it in the ages preceding the modern Assyrian era, reaching the level of the ear a little and it has narrow edges. It was made of rolled cloth<sup>0</sup>. See (Fig. 24).



(fig.24)

From the Neo-Babylonian era, we have received models of turbans similar to the turbans of the Neo-Assyrian era, which have a hemispherical shape, but were less high and more spacious. A wide and grooved edge made of cloth, and his hair hangs on the shoulders<sup>0</sup>. See (Fig. 25).



(fig.25)

As for the cuneiform texts that mentioned turbans, they are few if compared to similar texts related to crowns. One of them, which dates back to the third dynasty of Ur, specifically from the reign of King Abi-Sin, the last king of the dynasty, included the delivery

of a quantity of fabrics necessary to make a headdress or turban for decoration. It stated:

“3 A cloth used to cover the head (the turban)”<sup>0</sup>.

In another text, dated to the third dynasty of Ur, found in the city of Sousse, it mentioned a linen cloth (Kitu) with pieces of royal clothing, including head coverings<sup>0</sup>.

## 5. Gowns

According to the artistic models, the shape of the cloaks was like a long style that the woman wore over her clothes to cover her head and body<sup>0</sup>, as the carvings revealed many images that were worn by women in Mesopotamia, although they differed somewhat in the material of their manufacture, the style of embroidery and their decoration according to the development of the ages<sup>0</sup>. In addition, the cloak had a religious concept, some of which were dedicated to gods and kings in religious ceremonies. A distinctive cloak for kings and gods<sup>0</sup>.

The first artistic models of the forms of cloaks that arrived to us from the era of the dawn of the third dynasties are of a woman from the city of Mari<sup>0</sup>, as she was depicted sitting on a chair and she wore a beautiful cloak of tufted and perhaps made of wool covering the head and body, leaving the face visible. See (Fig. 26)<sup>0</sup>.



(fig.26)

The abaya came in the cuneiform texts because of its cosmetic importance, and in one of the texts dating back to the ancient Babylonian era, it referred to how the abaya was made of fabrics of different quality and quality depending on the type of fabric used. Text:

"Red wool cloaks of normal quality"<sup>0</sup>.

The cuneiform sources provided us with instructions about the process of washing, cleaning and beautifying the cloaks<sup>0</sup>, including what was mentioned in a text dating back to the ancient Babylonian era in which it was stated:

"120 cloaks (TÚG.GÚ.È.HI.A) washed in the river, adorning 47 1/2 minas"<sup>0</sup>.

In another text of the same era, it was mentioned:

“ 120 abayas (nahlapātum) washed in the river, adorn 1/27 of us<sup>0</sup> ”

A text from the ancient Assyrian era presents us with a special type of cloak made of cotton, as we read in it:

"A mantle (nahlaptum) is one of a kind (kutānu)"<sup>0</sup>.

In another text dating back to the Middle Babylonian era, I mentioned abayas made of combed fabric, whose threads are extended and harmonious in length so that their appearance is closer to softness and luster, which gives a graceful and beautiful shape, and as stated in it:

"Abayas made of combed fabric"<sup>0</sup>.

We also read from the Middle Assyrian era that a cloak made of multi-colored wool is mentioned, and as it says:

“One garment of multi-colored wool, one cloak (TÚG.GÚ.È) one person of multi-colored wool”<sup>0</sup>.

The most prominent models of gowns dating back to the reign of King Tglatpalassar III, which were depicted on a tablet, showed a woman walking and holding her hand like a small bag with a circular handle. and her body<sup>0</sup>. seen (Fig. 27).



(fig.27)



A text from the modern Babylonian era includes the work of a cloak to the lady of Spar, and because of the cosmetic importance of the cloak, the red gowns were dedicated to special occasions and celebrations or some specific rituals, and as stated in it:

"10 shekels of blue-purple wool, to make a mantle (TÚG.GÚ.È) to Lady Spar"<sup>0</sup>.

It was stated in another text from the same era:

"Abayas (TÚG.GÚ.È) of red wool, one (TÚG.GÚ.È) with a multicolored edge"<sup>0</sup>.

It can be said through the cuneiform texts and artistic models of various head coverings, from the headband, tiaras and turbans to the cloaks, that the head coverings took different forms through the ages. The headwear and for both sexes, it was compatible with other types of clothes, whether the body or the legs, in addition to the variety of materials made of these clothes, they varied between fabrics, metals and leather and were decorated with various types of decoration, including the precious stones that were feeding those crowns, turbans, and dyes For the fabrics that used to give it a bright and shiny look.

## 6. Conclusions

1- The headwear industry is one of the industries that became popular at the end of the fourth millennium BC and continued to late ages.

-2In the manufacture of head coverings, man relied on several materials, including gold, copper, bronze and precious stones, to decorate them.

-3Head coverings began to develop from one era to another, as they varied and varied in their forms and methods of design.

-4It is clear from the artistic scenes and cuneiform sources contained in the research that the society was on several layers and categories, as head coverings revealed to us that disparity clearly.

5- Head coverings are one of the cosmetic liquids in ancient Iraq. All of the gods, kings, clerics and common people wore them for the purpose of adorning them.

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