

7. CATALOGUE C: THE REAR ATTACK

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[Some references still to be checked]

INTRODUCTION TO THE CATALOGUE

Even though closely related to the distinctive *Uruk Stance*, it seemed necessary to filter out this compositional type from it in order to leave the character of the former clear-cut. The Rear Attack covers a rag-bag of variations but does include clusters of sub-types that are useful markers for particular countries at particular times, as is the case for the Kültepe, Syrian and Mitanni seals that are the focus of particular scrutiny.

For arranging the items in chronological order we have followed the same procedures as for *Catalogues A* and *B* whereby we aim to head each catalogue entry with an item of known provenance alongside which others of less sure origin can be grouped. However, for the material in our chosen chronological focus of the first half of the 2M, there are many exceptions where we can only provide general context. As the accumulating witness of each successive catalogue reveals or confirms, using this data we draw up (as best we can) the usual *Distribution Maps* and *Frequency Chart* to arrive at further interesting conclusions.



Ill.7- 1 Region forming the focus of discussion in the catalogue - BEYOND BABYLON: ART, TRADE AND DIPLOMACY IN THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC 2008-09 Metropolitan Museum exhibition catalogue (N.Y.2008) to whose exhibits we sometimes refer

For our *Chronological Focus* it is the high number of small seals and sealings from the first half of the Second Millennium 2M using the Rear Attack that leads us to concentrate on the background history of a diffuse region

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

forming a continuum (obvious in the map above) between Old Babylon, Old Assyria, Old Syria and Old Anatolia in the first half of that millennium (2000-1500) during the Middle Bronze Age, in parallel with Egypt's Middle Kingdom. Thus, compared with the monumental treatment given to the Uruk Stance at Persepolis the Rear Attack material is mostly seen on very small items associated with the notable City States of Babylon, Aššur, Mari, and Kültepe (though archaeologically we have barely any record at all for the former two for this particular period). Further sites such as Ebla, Qatna and Bylos help to fill in the gaps in the territory -- in fact occasional material findspots extend as far as Cyprus, Crete, Mycenae and even in the end Delphi, stretching the focus of interest westwards along the same Northern parallel (see map above). We will include the slightly later seals of Nuzi and late Alalakh under our Chronological Focus since they directly reflect the changing fortunes of the Khabur triangle, fought over by the kings of Mari and Babylon and then the Mitanni and the Hittites. Each ruler knew that with this area secured, links East and West were kept open - though not until the advent of the Neo-Assyrians, who actually lived within the centre of gravity of this geo-political zone, was permanent and firm rulership established in the 1M. The material from these two sites may be seen as the last gasp of earlier trends rather than a central part of the wholesale changes that came about around the Mediterranean in the second half of the millennium - dealt with in the *Chronological Focus* for *Catalogue E: the Forward Attack* - partly overlapping with the Amarna Period. Just before that the markedly different historical factors accompanying the rise of the Hyksos in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period followed by the New Kingdom deserve separate attention as centres of activity moved down in latitude to the Southern Levant, centring on Palestine and South Syria in interaction with Egypt. Although an integral part of the Second Millennium, overall we focus separately on the Minoans, Mycenaean and Aegean in general in the *Chronological Focus* for *Catalogue D*, which overlaps chronologically with both *Catalogues C and E*.

We need to concentrate on the Second Millennium over three catalogues partly because of controversies concerning ancient world chronologies highlighted by Peter James in *Treasures of Darkness* (1994) and David Rohl's trilogy, *A Test of Time* (1995), *Legend* (1998) and *Lords of Avaris* (2007) of which more in the appropriate section. Suffice it to note here that the Second Millennium is buffered at either end by the First Intermediate (FIP) and Second Intermediate Periods (SIP) which, they argue, are the main areas of the problem - since allocated too many centuries by historians - leading to cross-dating anomalies when comparing events and artefacts across civilisations. We will try to insert rough alternative dating in our Chronological Tables for this and the other two Catalogues, but with the main task in hand of pinning down the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art, to avoid confusion we have tended to simply use the dates given by cataloguers and scholars in individual works (they, too, in any case oscillate between High, Middle and Low Chronologies!), so that in the end we must leave it to the reader to make their preferred dating adjustments if they feel they cannot agree with the ones we have gone along with.

Our preoccupation in pursuing the content of these seals centre around known political alliances and trade networks - and it is the huge documentary archives of Kültepe and Mari in particular which provide us with many

textual insights into artefactual imagery - within which the Rear Attack sometimes plays a significant part. A great deal about social hierarchies and sub-hierarchies (both public and private) and their associated sealing practices, is looked at in the coming pages, and it is a matter of teasing it out more strongly when it comes to making sense of the lion and prey group. It appears from traders' correspondence that at first they were trading in the immediate Diyala districts around Aššur but then started to move further afield into Northern Syria as far as the Taurus mountains and then moved to what is now the Konya plain beyond¹. The entrepôt of Kültepe and its own indigenous trading network in eastern Anatolia was so far away from their home town of Aššur that to all intents and purposes, without the need to conquer the citadel (*Ālum*) above it militarily, the *Kārum* below it was run unofficially as a colonial outpost of Aššur. However, there were continual small-scale power struggles between the different centres of authority that we can consider later in order to try to understand who the people are that appear on the seals of this time.

Though we cannot map known itineraries for their journeys across North Syria between Aššur and Kültepe, from merchants' letters naming the many small villages where they made successful business deals on the way, it is possible to work out sections of routes taken. Although a variety of goods was traded, the staple that made trading so successful was the import into N Syria of textiles and tin, the latter a vital ingredient in the manufacture of bronze. Hallo² has given intriguing linguistic insights into the origin of words used for merchants in the original sources. The earliest attested word for them is Sumerian *tibira*, equated in cuneiform texts with the Akkadian *tamkāru*, and related to *gurgurru* meaning craftsman, often given with the logogram for metalworker in particular. 'What this implies is an early association of trading with itinerant metal-workers, a situation familiar, for example, from the Irish tin-smiths or *tinkers* of later European history'. It seems absolutely plausible that from such beginnings on the part of individuals a new career with a diversity of products would slowly emerge as the age-old law of demand was responded to. Hallo mentions another linguistic link between the verb *makāra*, referring to the use of silver in business transactions, and *tamkāra* referring to the person doing so, though later *tamkāra* became associated with pejorative mentions of grasping merchants holding on tight to their purse full of money. It is probably from complaints in the texts about merchants using two sets of scales (with low weights to sell and high weights to buy) that the idea of Justice represented by a pair of scales began, since it is at this point that on rare occasions they appear in seal iconography (**Ratt-18**) associated with the idea of weighing out the even scales of Justice by the God Shamash. Because they travelled across boundaries merchants were often used as unofficial agents and informants by political powers, and both Hallo (*ibid.*) and Sasson in *BEYOND BABYLON* (2008) cite myths and other textual references pointing to this. Thus as time went by merchants could rise above their usual status (**Ill.7- 28**), classing them with soldiers and craftsmen, and in the fullness of time during the late 2M it is known from particular cases that they could become rich enough to buy land from a king short of cash.

¹ P Garelli *Les Assyriens en Cappadoce* Paris 1963

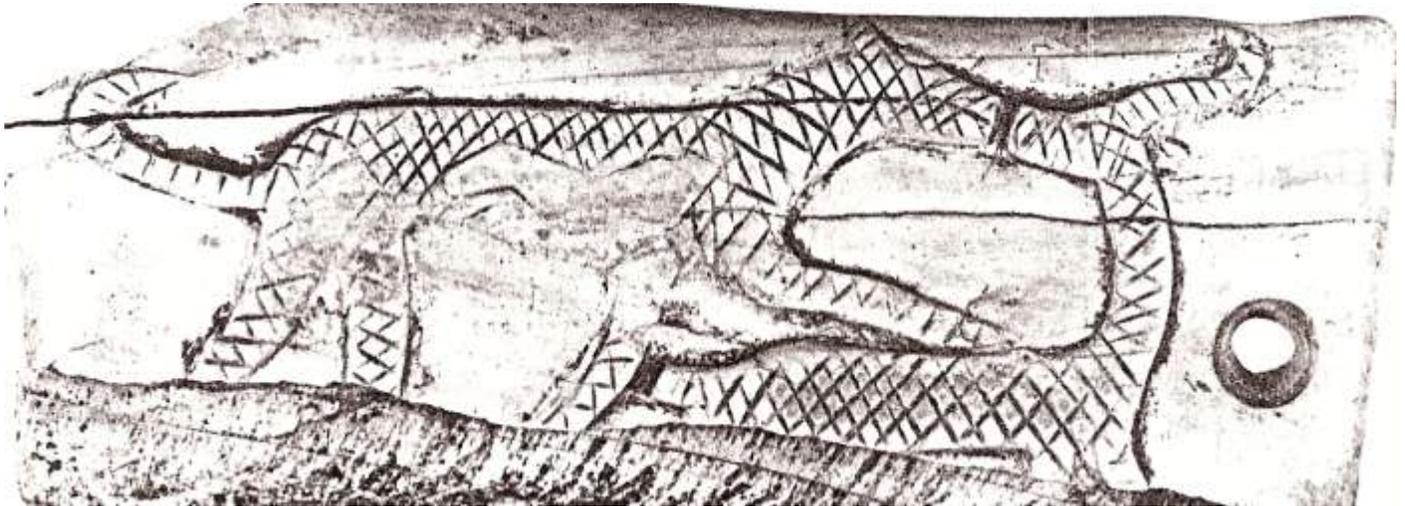
² W Hallo 'Trade and Traders in the Ancient Near East: Some New Perspectives' in xxx

DEFINITION OF THE REAR ATTACK IN REAL-LIFE CAT BEHAVIOUR

The *Rear Attack*, like the *Uruk Stance*, shows an attack on its prey by the lion from behind, but it is not distinctively aggressive. In fact it is usually potential or passive in nature, positioned along the horizontal and very much a matter of 'going through the motions' in order to convey its symbolism. Indeed, I will include some instances where the animals do not even have direct contact, but are in each other's vicinity, seemingly on the point of making the move. To avoid too much subdivision, under this category we include any attack from behind where the feline does not (as in the case of the Uruk Stance) rear upright on its hind legs to clutch at its prey's haunches, due to the large prey itself remaining standing: with the Rear Attack the prey is usually crouching, or standing if it is small.

This video link (turn down the sound first) gives a perfect rendition of the Rear Attack in motion - and explains why it is likely to remain more horizontal with prey of small stature: <http://www.break.com/index/baby-deer-escapes-lions-deadly-grip.html>.

These modes are observable in real life behaviour, but in the absence of a good still photos that have captured that moment this time the ivory below - which appears early in the Catalogue as *Ratt-2* - sums up the main features of this compositional type, gentle and almost friendly in mood.



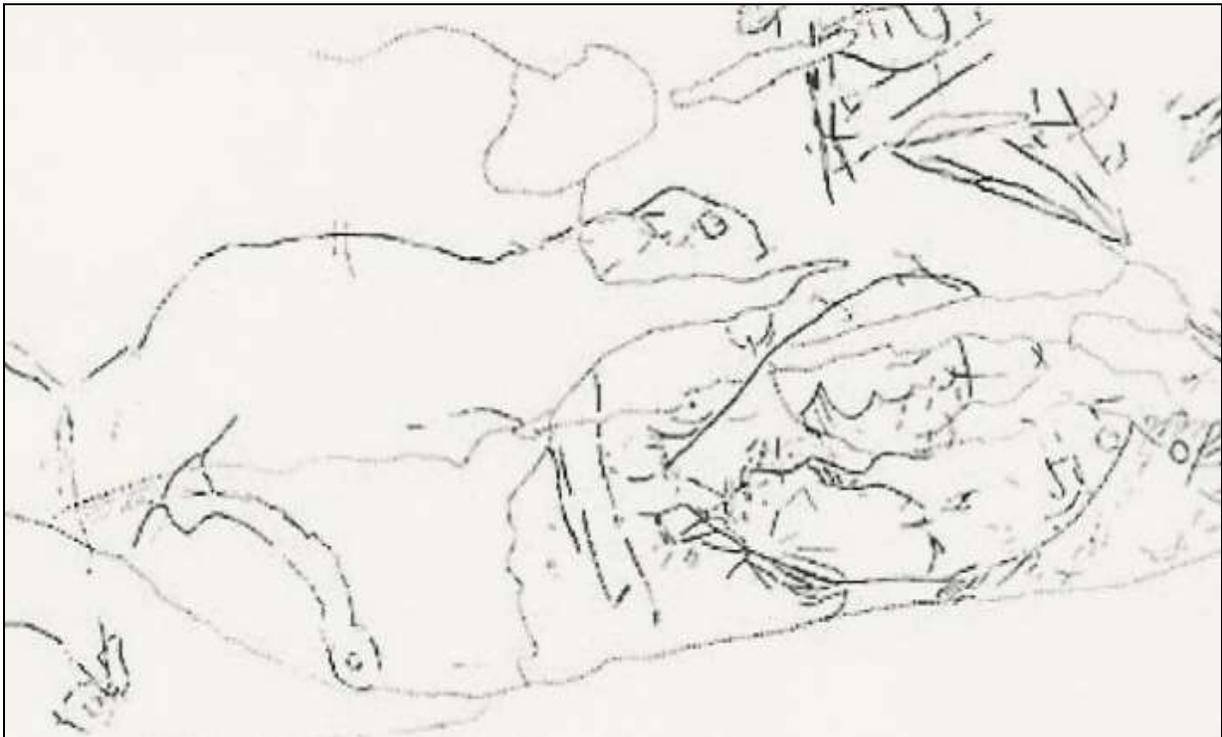
Ill.7- 2: Typical Rear Attack on a damaged protohistoric knife handle from Egypt - Petrie Museum

CATALOGUE OF REAR ATTACK ARTEFACTS

Ratt-0

FINDSPOT	Grotte du Mas-d’Azil, Ariège, France	
ON ARTEFACT	Incised drawing	
MATERIAL	Cave wall	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	In situ	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	D Vialou Atlas des grottes_ornées 1989 p.389	
PERIOD & DATE	Azilian	14500-13000

This cave drawing indicates the far distance in time at which the lion attack could have been depicted - if somewhat crudely - by Upper Palaeolithic man. This rock engraving could be interpreted in many ways - Vialou claims to see not only a lioness but also a fish and a phallus (which may just be the feline’s clumsily drawn back leg). Whatever the intention of the artist, the lion (which could just as well be a polar bear) adopts the classic rear attack pose with body horizontal and one leg reaching forward over the back of its prey from behind (the main oval shape picked out from the many other graffiti must be the fish Vialou discerned), forming a right-angle with the other supporting front leg.

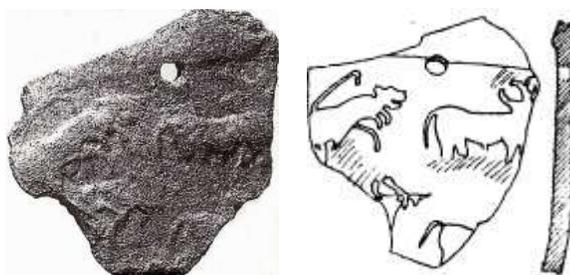


Given the high percentage of material evidence lost the further back in time we look, we cannot know whether other examples are missing between this graphic depiction and the next item that we can date to some ten thousand years later.

Ratt-1

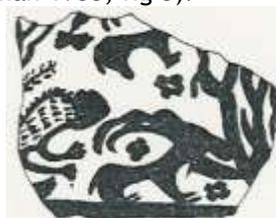
FINDSPOT	Sialk, South Hill, Level II (= Sialk Period IV)	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing on label	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	S1633	
PRESENT LOCATION	Louvre	
CATALOGUE REF.	Amiet AMI 1988 2,5	
PUBLISHED IN	Ghirshman_1938 pl. xciv; see Ghirshman 1935 for stratigraphy dating	
PERIOD & DATE	Sialk period IV = late SUSA I/EARLY SUSA II	4300-3500

This prehistoric clay label with hole for attachment, rolled twice with a cylinder seal, is first in the catalogue because the lion & prey group seems to have been introduced *from* the ancient Iranian provinces to Susa and Uruk: the walking-stick shape of the feline’s tail already noted in the Uruk Stance stands out, so we judge this as a Rear Attack, precursor to the Uruk Stance where the lion rears up and grips its prey’s haunches. But, as we discuss in the *Catalogue B Introduction*, the evidence is ambiguous and amenable to the reverse interpretation: that the provinces adopted the symbol from the urban centres of Susa and Uruk.



Certainly during Sialk IV, which Ghirshman describes as an interlude between Susa I/II, new people using cylinder seals and small clay tablets recording trading transactions in the Susan manner occupied Sialk, because it was an economically interesting village that had made steps into metal-working (the archaeological record reveals metal pins and, later, axe-heads, knives and weapons). Nonetheless, all during Sialk *Levels* I & II (subdivided by Ghirshman into Sialk *Periods* I-IV) Sialkans still also used stone tools, from hand-axes to large numbers of blades and microliths. The burials were crouched burials, as also found in predynastic Egypt: predynastic ivory labels found in royal cemeteries at Umm el-Qaab (referred to in *Ratt-7*) were also pierced with a round hole like the Sialk examples, and both societies used knives with bone or ivory handles (*Ratt-2*), though the Sialk ones were undecorated.

From the earlier Level Ic (= Sialk period III) several pots from Sialk show a frieze of leopards round the top rim, while the Samarra-style painted shard below, painted *earlier* during Susa I, shows the same disconnected attack³ as on the label, this time on an ibex (Ghirshman 1935, fig 5):

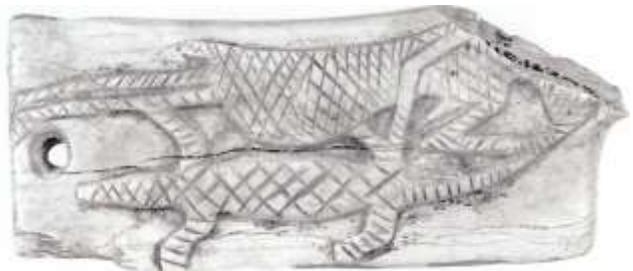
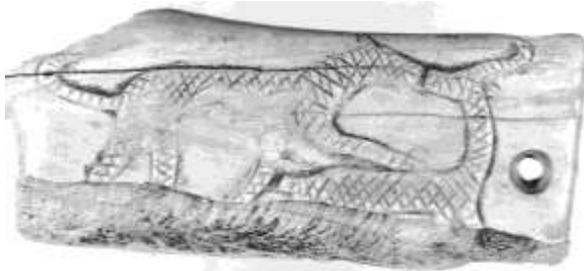


³ Two further sherds tantalisingly show a lion seemingly attacking a prey which is no longer there because the pottery has broken off at that point (see Ghirshman 1938 pls LXXX B1 & LXXXIII C3): the subject was evidently favoured in Sialk even before its occupation in the Sialk IV period by administrators from Susa.

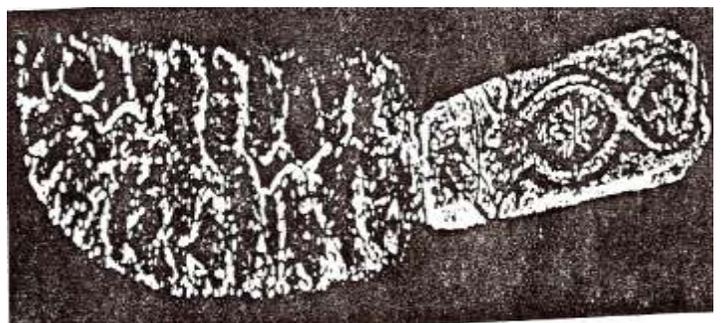
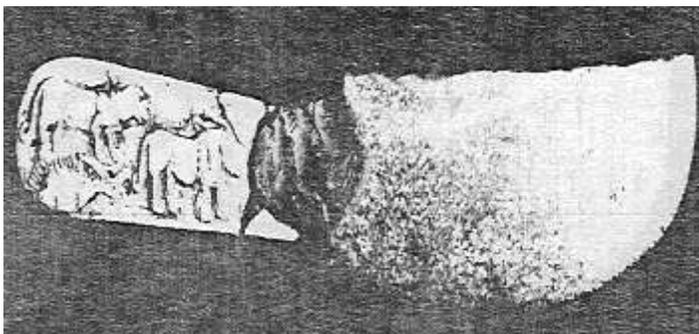
Ratt-2

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced (possibly purchased by Petrie in Egypt)	
ON ARTEFACT	Raised, crosshatched relief on broken knife-handle	
MATERIAL	Ivory	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Petrie Museum, University College, London	
MUSEUM REF.	U.C. 16295	
PUBLISHED IN	Petrie <i>Prehistoric Egypt</i> 1920 pl xlvi 6; Capart 1905 fig.36	
PERIOD & DATE	Gerzean/Naqada II	4000-3500

Several carved ivory knife-handles have been found from the region rich in Protoliterate and Archaic royal graves at Abydos. Not so well-known as the famous ones, looking at style alone this primitively carved handle of African ivory (the dowel hole to fix the lost flint blade identifies the object for what it is) may qualify as the earliest surviving example. One could count into a sequence before it a handful of plainer bone saw- or knife-- handles from Sialk to which were attached flint blades that later gave way to metal ones (*Fouilles de Sialk I* 1933 pl. vii (handle carved in the shape of a human figure, Period I); pl.xxix 4 (handle still fixed to (copper blade); pl.xxix 5; pl. xxx 2h, 2i (all Period IV). But Egypt did not move on to metal blades. One side of this Petrie Museum handle shows the lioness drawing up to an antelope prey with head turned back Susa style, in Rear Attack mode, muzzle to muzzle, her forelegs forming a right-angle, as in the cave painting of *Ratt-0*. The other side of the handle is carved with man (or pregnant woman) embracing a crocodile - its iconography to be discussed in the CANEA section.



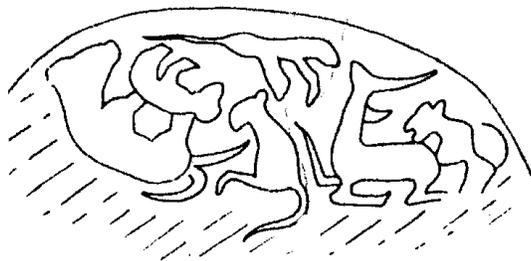
We can contrast it with a second knife-handle in the Petrie Collection, illustrated in Petrie's *Prehistoric Egypt* on the same plate (xlvi no. 3/4). It is still attached to its flint blade and more accomplished in its carving. Though the balance between handle and blade is unwieldy, the carving of the figures is less primitive, suggesting a later date. In this instance a lioness walks behind what must be another lion (tails are identical) so an attack on prey is not intended. The other side of the handle shows horned vipers entwined round flowers, both usually taken as motifs in Susian designs, adding to the conclusion that the lion and prey symbol was but one of several motifs subject shared between Susiana and Egypt at this time.



Ratt-3

FINDSPOT	Tell Brak 'S.W. extension Ziggurat N of YP. C -1.30m'	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing from round or kidney-shaped stamp seal	
MATERIAL	Clay bulla with string marks at break	
EXCAVATION REF.	28 (ext.) x 13	
PRESENT LOCATION	Ashmolean Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	1939.332 (89)	
PUBLISHED IN	AshCatII no. 195	
PERIOD & DATE	Ubaid IV	3900-3600

Amongst all the plump figures picked out in high-relief on this partial sealing (we were able to scrutinise it when photographing it in the Ashmolean Museum, but because so small the drawing helps make sense of it), we concentrate on the pair on the right which, due to the crouched position of the antelope we interpret as a Rear Attack rather than an Uruk Stance. It is a neat little piece of evidence for the Susa-Sumer trade network at this time showing that even then it reached into Syria to Mari, Ebla and beyond.



Another partial sealing made by an oval stamp seal found at Brak at 'M.D. Top (possibly surface CH)' - delineates the forelegs of the attacking lioness more clearly as it embraces its crouching prey (Ashcat.II 191 - Museum ref. 1939.332(97)).



Renewed excavation at Tell Brak decades later led by David and Joan Oates, revealed in the 2007 **British School of Archaeology in Iraq Newsletter** that as deeper levels were reached at the Majnuna mound (a suburb of Tell Brak) in Area MTE in a dense sherd layer with possible individual burials, a 'large and varied selection of clay sealings' mixed in with Late Chalcolithic 3-4 pottery came to light - thus dating to the late 5th to very early 4th millennium BC, roughly contemporary with **Ratt-1**. 300 sealings presented no less than 290 different images, of which the majority 'involved lions attacking gazelles or goats', according to the Field Director for that year, Augusta MacMahon. [Not shown on our first map above, Tell Brak lies off a small tributary of the Khabur river in NE Syria. In the next two maps (Ill.7- 4 and Ill.7- 9) it is given its present-day name, Nagar.]

Ratt-4

FINDSPOT	Umm el-Qaab, Abydos, Grave U-503	
ON ARTEFACT	Fragments of knife handle found with pottery, a chunk of malachite, bone comb, an obsidian pot, beads and a model pot and a further (plain) damaged knife handle, both of ivory.	
MATERIAL	Elephant ivory, attached to complete flint knife, ripple-flaked on front	
EXCAVATION REF.	Abydos K3325	
PRESENT LOCATION	? Museum	
PUBLISHED IN	Hartung in Dreyer et al. <i>MDAIK LIV</i> 91-92, fig.7/pl.v, a-b; Dreyer 1999 197-226/fig.12a-c; <i>UrukCatI</i> 132	
PERIOD & DATE	Naqada IIb-IIIa	3600-3300

Apart from the Brooklyn Museum knife handle from Abu Zeidan said to be from a Naqada III grave (Needler 1984 p.271f) none of the Egyptian ivory knife-handles (all discussed in the *CANEA* section) had any accurate stratigraphic context until the 1990s excavations of the *Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut Kairo (DAIK)* in the U Cemetery at Abydos. These revealed burials *predating* the Dynasty I graves recorded by Petrie nearby, and Carbon-14 dating tests from both cemeteries confirm the early dating given to the correlatable Naqada and Uruk periods in our table in the *Catalogue A Chronological Focus* based on Boehmer *BaM XXII* 1991 and *MDAIK XLIX* 1993 & Görsdorf et al. *MDAIK LIV* 1998). Over the whole cemetery fragments of seven previously unknown ivory knife handles were disinterred, most undecorated. Fitted into a very restricted space, the design of the compact crouching Rear Attack on this one, with bird above it, persists on Mesopotamian seals of the 2M in particular.



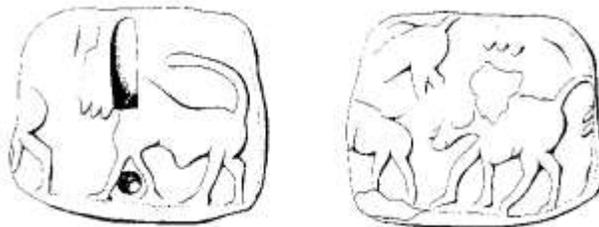
Close-up of Ratt-4

The design on the knife handle was reconstructed from a few fragments (shaded areas of central drawing above), from which we see the layout is arranged around a central boss (c.f. the Gebel-el-Arak knife (*Urusta-3*)). What appear to be two snakes criss-cross from one side of the handle to the other (a more sophisticated design than the twisting snakes of *Ratt-2* - though they could just be imitating the leather thonging that in earlier times would bind blade to handle. As also on the Gebel el-Arak knife, hunters and wild game are contrasted with a lion attack in the bottom triangular compartment (on the other side a crocodile fits into a shallower triangle). The carving of the ivory is so fine and detailed that experts believe it to be the work of a seal carver.

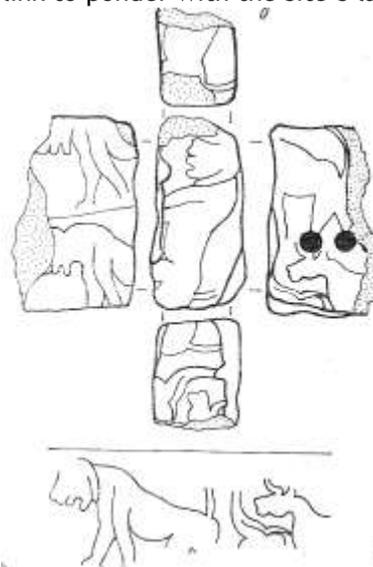
Ratt-5

FINDSPOT	Susā, Akropolis I, level 17B at J.5 757	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing	
MATERIAL	Clay label	
EXCAVATION REF.	S.ACR.I 1593.3	
PRESENT LOCATION	Louvre	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Le Brun et.al. CDFI 8 fig.8.1	
PERIOD & DATE	Susā 17B/Early Uruk	3700-3400
INSCRIPTION	Number gouge	

As with the knife-handles of **Ratt-2** above, on several contemporary seals from Susā the possibility of attack is understated, since the human-faced lioness simply walks in procession behind potential prey, as in this number-coded sealing found at Susā, not significant on its own, but when taken with the further examples below, its firm stratigraphy contributes to pinning down an overall pattern of similar designs from several places in the region during this period:

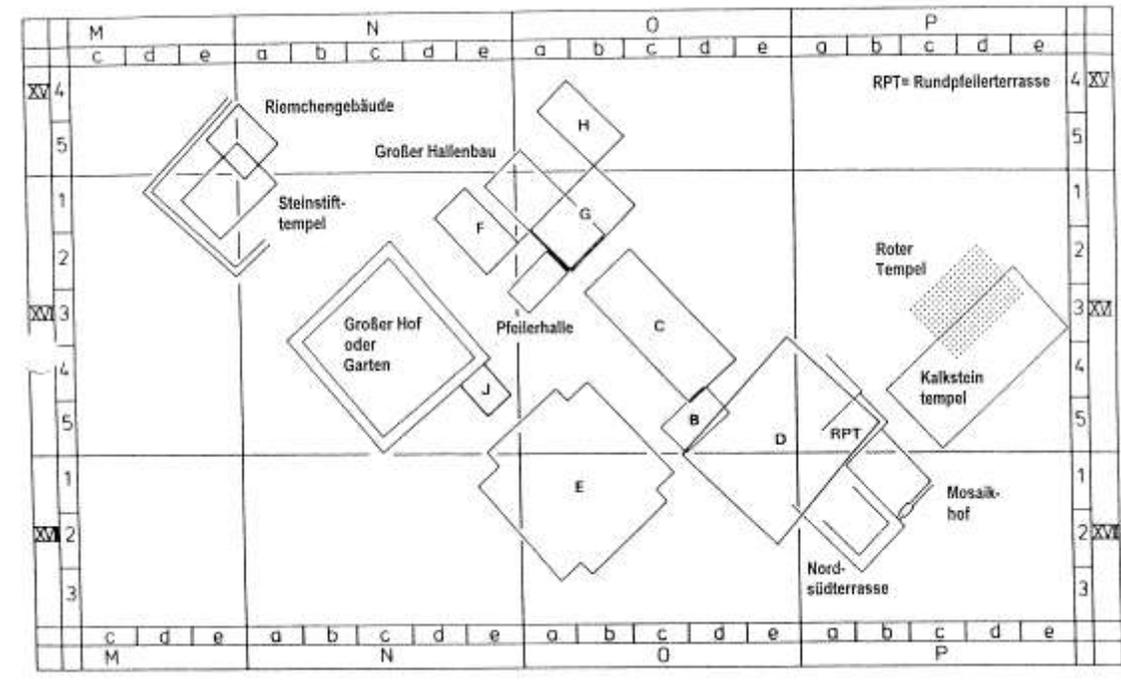


Thus, brought back by Mallowan with other Deep Sounding finds from his 1931 campaign at Nineveh, another fragmentary number-coded protoliterate tablet with sealings on all facets (except on the side of the break) again shows separately striding cow and lioness (and same treatment of the leonine face). In a review of this material it was recently reidentified by Collon and Reade (**BaM** XIV 1983 fig.1a/b) as from the vicinity of the Iṣtar temple (B.M. Ref. 138580) there: a link to ponder with the site's later lion attack material.



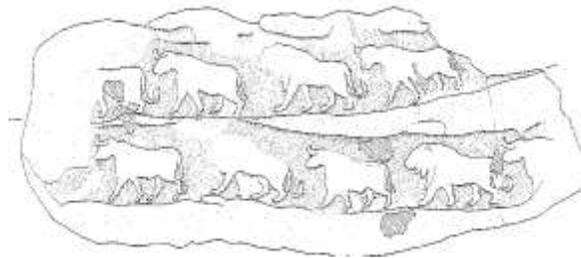
Ratt-5f.

This potentiality for attack is echoed in the scores of fragments of an Uruk-V period sealing found scattered over different parts of the Building E site at Uruk (see map below, bottom centre):

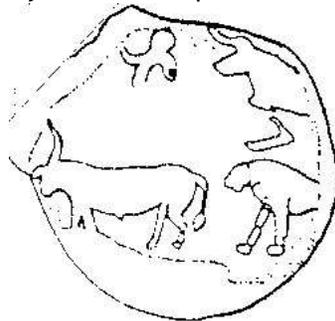


Map Showing Ground Plan and Excavation Grid for Buildings in the main Uruk Precinct

The double roll below is a composite drawing (Boehmer UrukCatI (AUWE XXIV) no.22C (based on W21413,3 in the Heidelberg University Museum). Note once more the treatment of the lion's face and neck rolls:



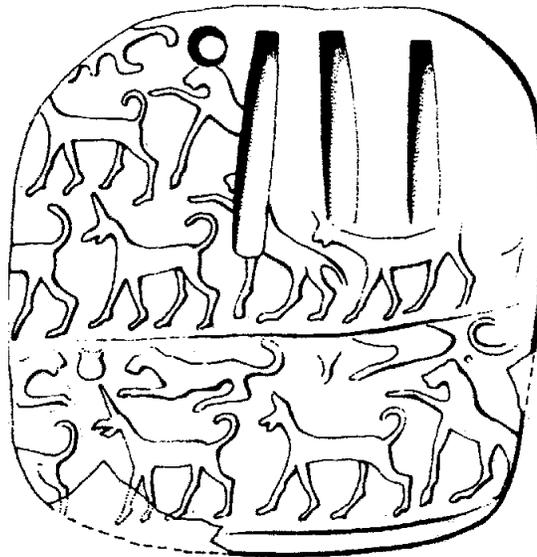
A two-row procession of lion and bull, the top bull preceded by a cowherd, also appears on a Level V clay jar stopper from Room 3 in the Deep Sounding at Godin Tepe (Exc.ref Gd.73-329), reckoned by the excavators Weiss *et al.* Iran XIII 1975 fig.5.6) as contemporary to Susa Acropolis Level 17.



Ratt-6

FINDSPOT	Susa Acropolis I, level 17B	
ON ARTEFACT	Several sealings rolled with same cylinder seal on holed label fragments	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	S.ACR.I 1831.1	
PRESENT LOCATION	Louvre	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Le Brun et al. (consolidated drawing) CDFI 8 1978 fig. 9.4; Amiet GSCat nos 511,533,542-3, 581	
PERIOD & DATE	Susa 17B/Early Uruk	3300-3100
INSCRIPTION	Three vertical numeric gouges	

The earliest sealed and number-gouged tablets from Susa show the lioness in the Rear Attack pose, a position that could become an Uruk Stance if she were to grip the rear of the dog in front higher up its back. On the synthesised drawing of all the sealings, she clearly is not touching her prey but takes up the classic position of our Palaeolithic prototype, directly echoing the feline stance on *Ratt-2*.



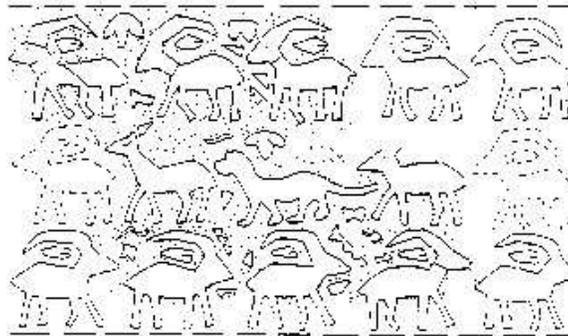
In the same lineage comes this later Early Dynastic seal design from Fara Level IV (Istanbul Museum 6324/*WebCat* 540/*GMACat* 757) where the lioness is still given semi-human lips (though here these marks could represent whiskers):



Ratt-7

FINDSPOT	Umm el-Qaab, Abydos, Grave U-134	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing	
MATERIAL	Clay bulla	
EXCAVATION REF.	Ab K2087a	
PRESENT LOCATION	?Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Hartung MDAIK LII, fig. 5, & LIV, fig.5.11; pl.vii,d	
PERIOD & DATE	Naqada IId	3250-3100

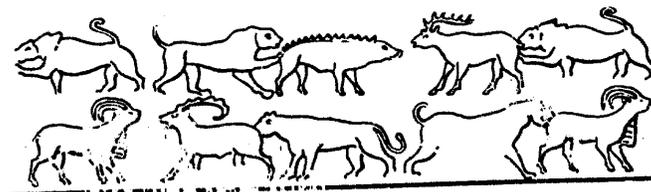
As on the ivory knife-handle from Umm el-Qaab (*Ratt-5*), the carving on the seal for this sealing was tiny, fine and controlled. It was rolled several times over a clay bulla with imprints of fabric on it. Amongst the rows of game suggesting the march of the months, there is only one lioness, possibly marking the first.



We have a more primitive and definite version of the lion-prey group in a sealing from Tell-i-Malyan (Sumner Iran XII, fig.12c) which he dates to around 2000BC but because of Anshan/Malyan's link to the Susa commercial network at its height, it is more likely to tie in to this much earlier era. The lion's tail is stylised to the outline of the Big Dipper (though this could simply be due to the limitations of the disc drill which can only create lines) - and its forelegs form the characteristic right-angle as it reaches out.



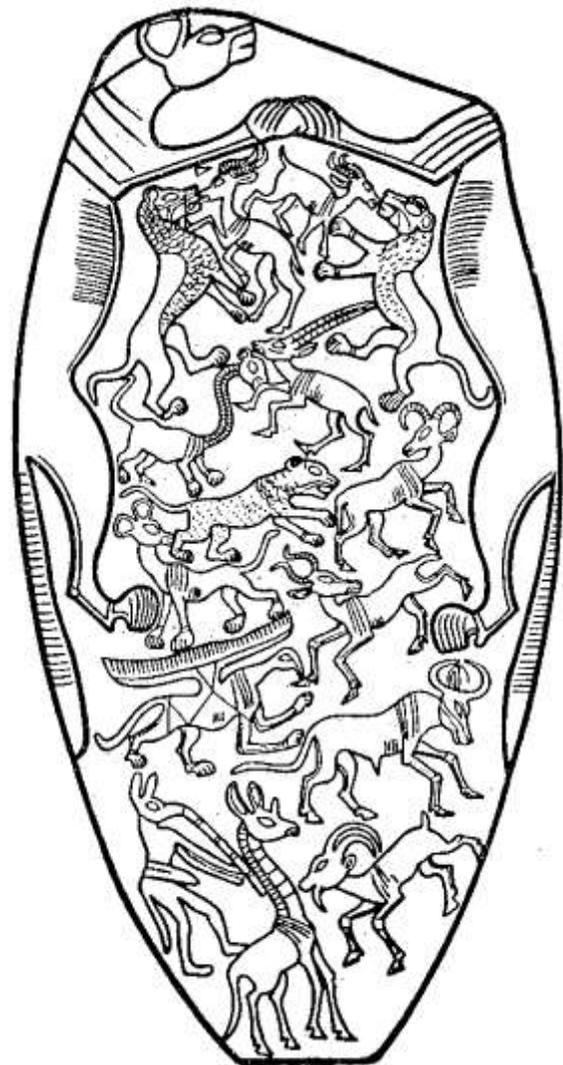
The tentative approach so often found in the Rear Attack is seen in classic form in this reconstruction made from three fragmentary clay sealings from the Red Temple at Uruk, Level IVa, Pe 16-3 (NE of niched wall) now in the Berlin Museum (W7229a/b/c, UVB II fig.32; Schott UVB V pl.24e; Boehmer UrukCatI (AUWE XXIV) Abb.52A-C.). Four pairs of the attack are shown (as on the Gebel Tarif knife on the next page), two with raised foreleg and two with a nuzzle or bite on the prey's buttock, the top two pairs facing in and the lower two facing out (could these contrasts be symbolically deliberate, referring to solstices and equinoxes?).



Ratt-7f

Four attack pairs are shown on the Gebel Tarif gold-foil knife handle (left), the top two pairs already catalogued as *Urusta-2*. The third pair is a typical Rear Attack, where possibly a wild dog, rather than a lion, approaches an anteater-like animal, whilst at the bottom a griffin sniffs at an ibex. From the bottom up the raptors face left and right alternately, escalating in height and grip as the top is reached. The top group may well be a Bilateral Attack, as one back and two front legs and a belly suggest a further feline attacker from the other side. I would suggest the four-petalled poinsettias are a further allusion to the Four Seasons.

In contrast, all types of attack are depicted helter skelter on the roughly contemporary slate Dog Palette (right) in the Ashmolean Museum (see Mellink 1985 pls 208/9; Boehmer 1974 fig. 15), out of which one clear-cut running Rear Attack on a mouflon can be spotted half-way down, to which we could add the griffin chasing after the bull, second from the bottom, as another such pair.



The question to be held in reserve until the CANEA section is whether, within this welter of Susan, Sumerian and Egyptian creatures, the Rear Attack (with the Uruk Stance) has a particular meaning in contrast to other types of attack.

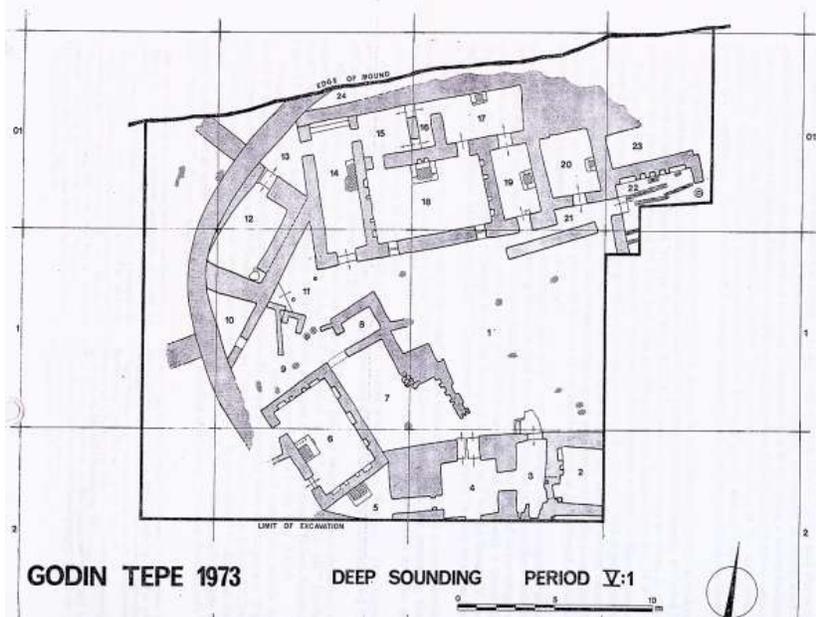
Ratt-8

FINDSPOT	Godin Tepe, inside a period IV mud brick	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Grey-green stone	
EXCAVATION REF.	Gd 73-210	
PRESENT LOCATION	Royal Ontario Museum of Art & Archaeology	
PUBLISHED IN	Weiss & Young 1975 fig. 5:8, pl.iva	
PERIOD & DATE	Godin V	3250-3100

Nearly all the tablets, bullae, seals and sealings from Godin Tepe were found in a deep sounding containing a cluster of buildings inside an oval wall at the top of the citadel. These were probably occupied by visiting Susan merchants (see the maps in *Catalogue A: The Belly Landing*). This was one of only two actual cylinder seals found there, although most of the sealings remaining had also been created by rolled cylinder seals in an earlier style using Susan iconography. The used of drill centred circles as fillers is a stylistic feature which relates it to other examples at Susa and Diyala sites (it is not clear whether they and the other plain drill holes could add up as representations of stars). The textured fur on the animals is made by straight drill lines in lighter and more varied directions than is the rigid and rough Malyan example in *Ratt-7* above.



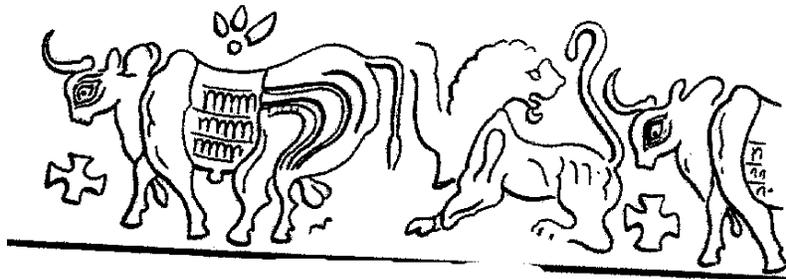
The sealings in Level V of the Godin Deep Sounding were found in Rooms 2, 3, 7, 8 & 9, 11 and 12 inside a citadel, with the majority in Room 3 (the narrow room in the map between the square rooms 3 and 4 to the south- perhaps an archive room). It is the similarity of their designs to those from Susa that indicated to the excavators that Susan merchants had visited and temporarily occupied the site.



Ratt-9

FINDSPOT	Susa	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	Mecquenem's excavations of 1924	
PRESENT LOCATION	Louvre	
MUSEUM REF.	S.332	
PUBLISHED IN	MDP XVI, 161; GS GMA 515	
PERIOD & DATE	Proto-Elamite	3235-3000

In the Proto-Elamite period lion and bull iconography makes a return at Susa, having disappeared in Susa IV, and here the passive Rear Attack (similar to *Ratt-4*) is favoured over the more proactive Uruk Stance. The modelling of the beasts' body parts has the same exaggerated patterning as seen on contemporary Egyptian artefacts (see *Ratt-7* above) and the positioning of limbs and heads is often highly mannered. In this seal vestiges of a rosette and a cross with four equal arms appear as infill:



The lioness looking backward whilst raising one leg high to form a right-angle is familiar from the Uruk Stance examples, but the tail now gives a sense of movement with an s-bend flick, and the bull's tail is still stylised into a spear-point - as in this partial sealing (Contentau MAO I, fig. 289/MDP XVI, 177):



This is a new style particularly associated with the Proto-Elamite period, perhaps the influence of one inventive carver using short, curved lines, some thick, some thin, delineating an almost whimsical mannerism in the animals' behaviour (GS 950/GMA 38bis A):



Ratt-9f

This next sealing appears on a tablet with many holes and grooves round its edges signifying accounting information (GS 946/ GMA 38bis B). The delineation of the two animals, with sprigs between, is a high point in the light-hearted, cartoon-like treatment given to these animals at this time by the seal-makers of Susa:



The same almost ludicrous stylisation is seen in a sealing excavated at Tepe Yahya (Lamberg-Karlovsky Iran IX (1972) p.88/pl.iv)/GMA 1693).



This is the period during which Weiss and Cuyler-Young (see Ratt-8 above) see Susa withdrawing from Sumer proper and concentrating on a new inland empire in western Iran where places like Tepe Yahya become part of a far-flung network reaching the borders of present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, and- trading along the Diyala valley north-westward into Syria. This pottery rim fragment is one of several found at Jericho, and described by Ben-Tor 1978, 24, nos 34-37, also dateable to the Jemdet Nasr period and indicative of the far-flung trading network of the Mesopotamian world.



Many more actual seals survive from the Proto-Elamite period of the Susa excavations, such as this design carved on pink marble (GS 999/GMA 530) which shows the lion almost braking as it reaches its seated prey. Another stylistic characteristic from this time is the curl on the lion's chin. Note, again, the equal-armed cross and four-petalled floret.



A similar stance is taken by both animals on this striking stone seal in the Mohsen Faroughi Collection which shows the typical mannerism of the other Proto-Elamite seals (J.A.N.E. Soc. of Columbia University IX (1977) p.64, seal 1)



Ratt-9ff

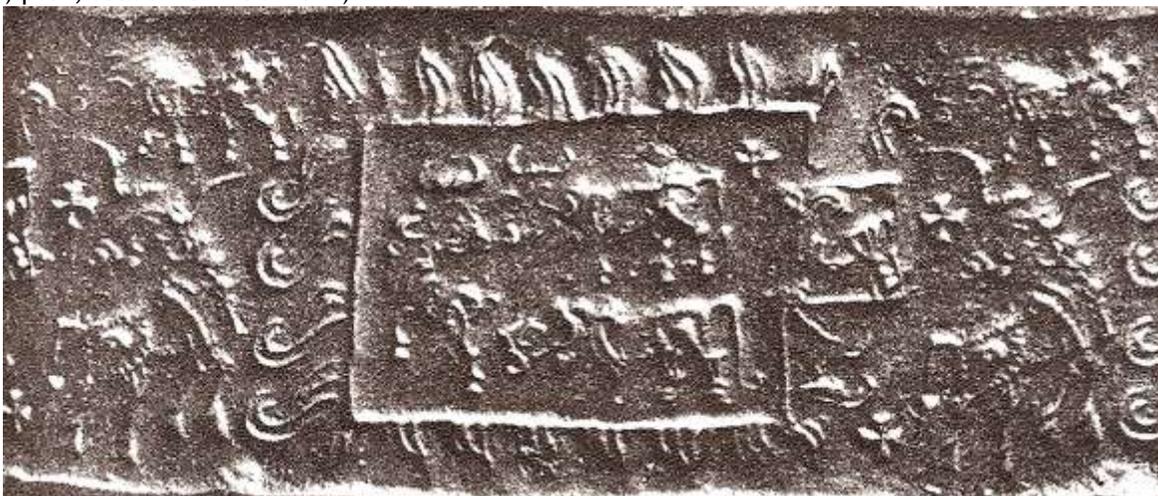
The rosette with lion in rear attack mode (in this example restrained by a hunter holding its tail - see *Uruk Stance* D group seals) is a Susan or south Sumerian combination. In the Early Dynastic period it is often seen on seals found in the rubbish pits of Ur (SIS 4), e.g. *KargCat* U241 pl.2.5/Exc. Ref. U14853,



or *LegrainCat* (UE III 253/Exc.Ref. U12549/13550 Pit D SIS 4) where the seven-petalled rosette is a separate circular seal at the bottom the cylinder, to be used separately as a stamp seal, while small crosses and florets appear over the antelope's head, over the lion's back and between its back legs:



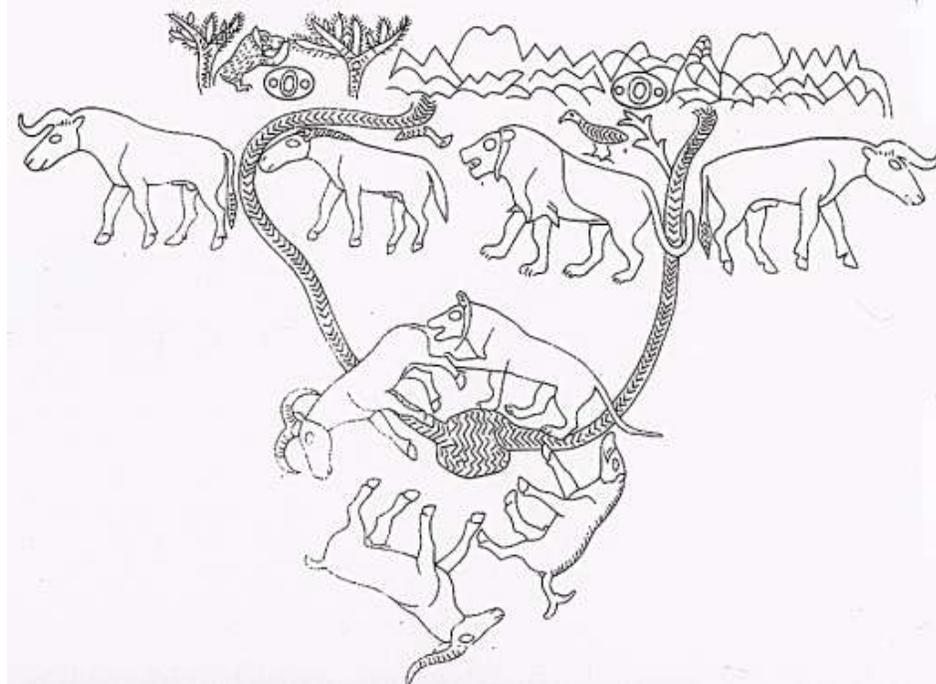
Finally, this dramatic seal, also in the Mohsen Faroughi Collection, seems to refer to a real-life event where a lion has trapped two cows inside a cattle-pen (not usually shown on seals, but certainly one such 'boma' appears on the Egyptian Hunter's Palette). A calf stands in the entrance and outside a smaller lion floats in threat over a huge, formidably horned bull. The pen is surrounded by stylised flames and streams of water, and the equal-armed cross appears again over the bull's head and at its back legs. This is the best I can do to enhance an already almost illegible reprographic illustration from the original paper (*J.A.N.E. Soc. of Columbia University IX* (1977) p.64, seal 3 - c.f. *GMA* 549):



Ratt-10

FINDSPOT	Maikop, Kuban Valley, Caucasus - Chieftain's kurgan, 10.6m high	
ON ARTEFACT	Two beaten metal vessels engraved with animal processions	
MATERIAL	Silver	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Hermitage Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Farmakovsky Transactions of the Russian Imperial Archaeological Commission 1897; Frankfort AAO figs 240-43; B. Piotrovsky (ed.) <i>Avant les Scythes</i> (Grand Palais exhibition catalogue) 1979 p.119	
PERIOD & DATE	Contemporary with Khafaje vase (Belland-4)	3235-2700
INSCRIPTION: NONE, but matches the following literary reference: [At the creation of the world, after Marduk has split Tiamat in two to form Heaven and Earth, he creates fresh water]: "Then he opened the Euphrates and Tigris in her eyes.... He heaped up the distant mountains on her breast, Then he drilled a water hole to carry the catchwater [<i>Enuma Elish</i> V, 55/57-8, see Horowitz 1998,118]		

Flattened out, the design of the first vase shows between two handle fittings a bear between two palm trees next to a chain of mountains, from which flow two rivers. Below are two bulls facing each other, and a Przewalski horse and a lion with bird on its back in circular procession between the two rivers. At the bottom of the bowl, the two rivers meet in a lake or estuary, encircled by a Rear Attack on a mouflon, and separate antelope and boar. On the roughly contemporary vase from Khafaje showing a Belly Landing (**Belland-4**), two bears appear either side of a palm tree - an unusual iconographic feature not often seen in Mesopotamian art and the clinching factor for the bowl's dating, around which much controversy has raged. The depiction of a panoramic landscape in the background is also rare, and harks back to some of the dramatic frescoes of 7M BC Catal Hüyük that show mountains and erupting volcano with a bull-hunting scene on the plane below.



Ratt-10 cont'd

The second vase has a single animal procession marching round its belly - this time with two pairs of leopard attacking cow or goat with attendant birds - and a fifth small mouflon as filler. The base is decorated with three rows of scallops which by analogy with the first vase could represent water.



Both vases were found in a luxurious wood-lined ceremonial burial inside a kurgan, or mound, and part of a collection of 17 metal receptacles - two of silver and the rest gold. In the main chamber a chieftain had beside him the remains of a funerary canopy, decorated with tiny gold sewn-on rings, lions and bulls, that before the burial had been held up by silver and gold rods fitting into silver or gold Bull stands with holes in their backs. In the split chamber in front of him were a male and female evidently buried with him at the same time, richly jewelled in gold and carnelian and furnished with silver and a few ceramic pots, blades and other furnishings.

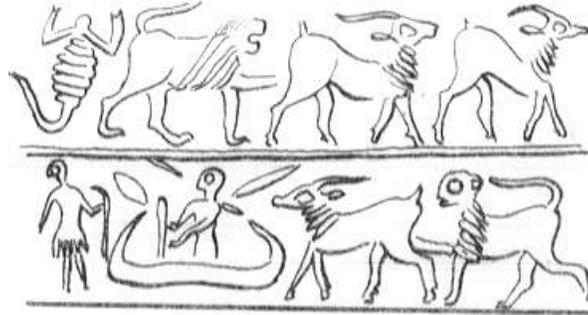
The controversy about the Maikop finds continues, chiefly as to whether the burial is that of a chieftain copying Mesopotamian customs, or of a leader whose choice of decoration and materials is a clue to the practices of incoming peoples to places such as Ur slightly later (the chieftain had two gold rosette head-dresses). The shapes of the pots are considered by some to have the greatest kinship with 3M BC clay pots from Tell Chuera, yet none are of clay - they are of pure metal, or of stone, indicating a link back to the pre-pottery neolithic. There is also lengthy discussion about the surprisingly early dating of the objects, based not only on carbon-dating, but also on the fact that the metals used are pure copper, gold or silver, before the discovery of the much stronger bronze alloy. The chieftain's arms were flint arrow heads and composite knife, and the remains of a stone and gold mace, along with blades of pure copper, riveted with silver.

Conversely, V A Safronov ⁴relates the burial to the exodus of a chieftain from the Ur area to Harran a millennium later at the end of the EDIII period when the Akkadians came to power, as part of the general movement of Abraham's people out of Ur to the North Syria area. Nonetheless, looking at the examples in the catalogue preceding this item, the overall archaic style of processional animals seems to fit much better with the earlier date, hence its placing here in the sequence.

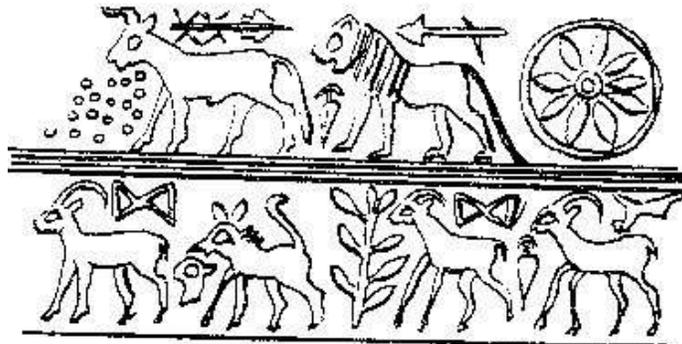
⁴ 'New Ways of Solving the Maikop Problem' in *Turmoil in the Northern Caucasus: The Maikop Archeology Debate* (*Soviet Anthropology & Archeology* Winter 1991-2)

Ratt-10f

Because of significant links between the Maikop finds and contemporary objects from Syria, we place here as a point of comparison a two-register North Syrian seal from Tell Khuera (of ED III date, so tying in with Safronov's ideas) with the lion's forelegs twice making the characteristic right-angle behind a goat, once with a scorpion behind (Amiet *Syria* XLI 192 fig.4/GMA 1729 - Louvre AO21420):



A similar Syrian sealing, also from Early Dynastic Tell Khuera, found in the west extension of the small antis temple and repeated at least 30 times - displaying the Sumerian rosette of Inanna - can be related to the more sedate processional walk of the second vase (see *Tell Khuera Excavations VIII*, fig.12/GMA 1745):



A shell cylinder seal 'from North Syria' in the Brussels Museum can be included in this group (*BrussCat* 1490), also with two registers but without a dividing line, showing eagle above scorpion before a striding pair of lioness and horned prey. The eagle grasps in either set of claws a griffin and a goat.



The use of large round holes for the eyes (see also *Ratt-11*) betrays all these seals as Early Dynastic in date - straight away putting them in a much later time bracket than the Maikop vases, but comparable with each other geographically nonetheless.

Ratt-11

FINDSPOT	Fara at le 2m, Id, etc.	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealings (repeated several times in different find spots)	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REFS.	Include F125; F858 (VA6507)	
PRESENT LOCATION	Berlin Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	VA6507; VA6486; VA6635; VA6691	
PUBLISHED IN	Martin 1988 no. 214; KargCat 54c Heinrich pl.54c; GMACat 811	
PERIOD & DATE	Early Dynastic I	3235-3105

Fara is one of the key trading cities to emerge in the land between Tigris and Euphrates north of Uruk and Susiana. The right-angled, standing rear attack so popular in the Susa region was soon to be found in use in towns all along the Diyala Valley and into Syria. This example with a Rear Attack on the left and Uruk Stance on the right is a helpful example for its precise stratigraphy. The very low dating given for EDI by Martin for the Fara seals does make them contemporary with the Maikop vases, and so corroborates Safronov's thinking.



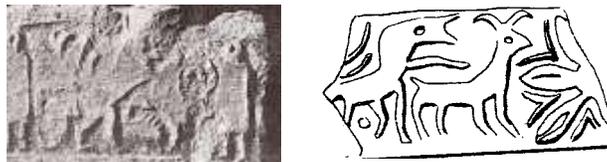
In the seal below left from Fara a smaller lion floats above the main Rear Attack (find spot Ilcn, 2m Ref F418; publ. Weber 540; Martin no. 138 - Istanbul Museum). The same flat animal and human outlines with a single hole for the eye is a distinctive feature in this era at Ur (right) also (Pit W SIS Levels 4-5 U18406/UEIII 224):



This seal from Tell Agrab, north of Fara, gives similar prominence to the eye by a drill-centred saucer depression, and accentuates the shoulder muscles of the animals. The distinctive twist of the forepart of the prey was a novel introduction adopted as the hall-mark of Syrian designs at the time (Karg pl.2,14/SCS 824):



The last two crude sealings are the kind summarily rolled on large jar rims (sometimes upside down) holding basic commodities found (left) at Ebla⁵ (strictly an Uruk Stance, as also shown on our main seal above) and (right) at Umm an-Nar, Abu Dhabi (Amiet 1975 3-4), neat indicators of the West-East reach of the Sumero-Susan trading empire (c.f. also the sealing from Jericho under Ratt-9f above).

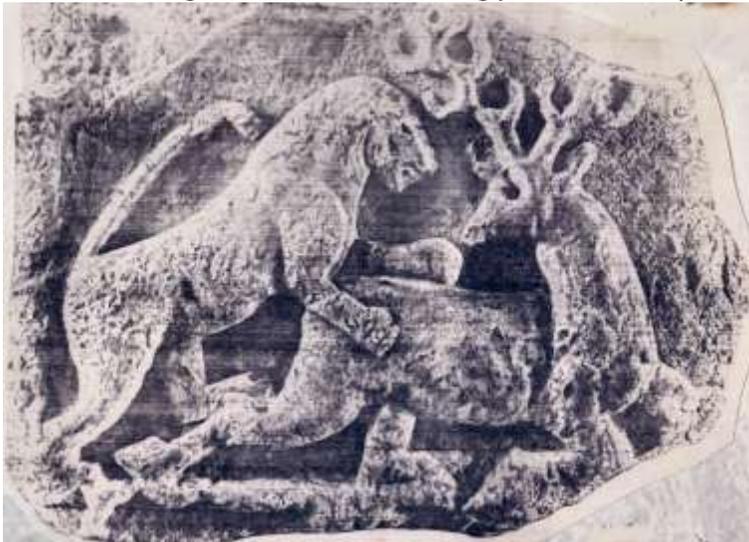


⁵ S Mazzoni 'Seal Impressions on Jars from ebla in EB 1A-B Akkadica XXXVII 1984, fig.1

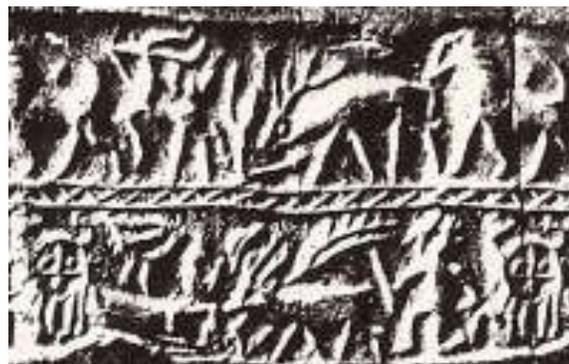
Ratt-12

FINDSPOT	Kish	
ON ARTEFACT	Possibly part of a dedication plaque or other decorative relief	
MATERIAL	Limestone	
EXCAVATION REF.	Precise context not known	
PRESENT LOCATION	Iraq Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	IM 4334	
PUBLISHED IN	PKG 81a; Boese <i>Weihplatten</i> 1971 KI 2; Basmahji <i>Sumer VII</i> 1951 p.61	
PERIOD & DATE	Early Uruk/EDI	3300-2900

This interesting relief is a borderline case between Uruk Stance and Rear Attack. We have classed it as the latter because the prey is down on all fours. The treatment of the stag's horns can be compared with what must be a roughly contemporary sealing from Nippur (Legrain CBS 7063. The sealing similarly shows part of a lion attack - approached from the right this time - interestingly with a water pot over the lion's head facing out towards us.



On seals of the Early Dynastic period the stag often features, as in this unprovenanced seal referred to by van Buren in her paper on the *Fauna of Mesopotamia*: the lion simply follows the stag on the upper register, whilst below a hunter follows another stag in front of a crouching bearded bull with human face, the latter a useful pointer to an ED date.



Ratt-13

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Moulded relief	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	WAA 91907	
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN		
PERIOD & DATE	Late Akkadian/Isin-Larsa period	2100-1900
INSCRIPTION: NONE		

To mark the transition between the Early Dynastic period into the Akkadian and subsequent Sumerian renaissance of the Isin-Larsa and Ur III periods, we have no choice but to take an unprovenanced item in the British Museum as its representative item. It is catalogued as dating to the Isin-Larsa period, though the hero's head has an Akkadian realism about it. This is an extreme instance of the Rear Attack since the lion stands over his already vanquished prey in a stand-off with the herdsman whose cow it is. Here the scene is not intended to be symbolic, but seems to record an actual event which in Hammurabi's time was noted as a regular occurrence when lions infested the marshes after heavy rain made the reeds grow tall, providing cover for them.



Borderline in category also is this serpentine seal of the same period (2000-1900) from the Marcopoli Collection (**MarcoPoliCat 376**) which again we count as a Rear Attack since the lion does not rear on its hind-legs, even though its horned prey does (the antelope turns its head backwards to look at the lion as three humans look on and try to intervene). Teissier categorises the seal type as Early 2M Syrian.



Ratt-14

FINDSPOT	Bought post WWI in Luxor, Egypt	
ON ARTEFACT	Small plaque, possibly a large pendant 4" x 3" x 1", carved on both sides, which when used as a seal produces images in high relief.	
MATERIAL	Schist (formerly glazed), bored through on the long axis	
PRESENT LOCATION	Ashmolean Museum	
PUBLISHED IN	G D Hornblower 'Some Hyksos Plaques and Scarabs' JEA VIII 201-6, pl. XIX	
PERIOD & DATE	Early 2M	2100-2000
INSCRIPTION:	Various pseudo-hieroglyphs	

A lioness in Rear Attack mode falls on a gazelle, with the remains of a small baboon under its tail: a sprinkling of common -hieroglyphs like the Isis knot, Ankh sign and Wadjet cobra give it a superficial Egyptian gloss (compare with the triangular slate double-sided plaque in the same style from the Tod Treasure (BEYOND BABYLON FIG.25 - Cairo Museum 66479) showing a bee on one side and three spiders and a cross on the other). The purchaser of the plaque (the author cited above) was hard-put to place it in context and date it, but setting it against the scarabs from Tell Ajjul that follow under **Ratt-15f** we have assigned it to the turn of the 2M during the first phase of high-level interchange between Egypt and Byblos in the Old Kingdom up to the First Intermediate Period. This was the first phase of Syrian exposure to Egyptian artefacts showing up in North Syria (then only on coastal sites). Only in the second half of the millennium when thorough Asiatic infiltration into Egypt resulted in widespread coming and going via the Delta did reciprocal cultural interplay start in earnest by land between the



Plaque as carved on verso - from Hornblower



Sealing made from verso side (photographed in the Ashmolean)



Plaque (recto) - - [ibid.]

Sinai Peninsula and Palestine/Southern Syria. Teissier (1996 pp1-4) usefully cites the Egyptian statuary and artefacts found at Byblos, Qatna and smaller kingdoms prosperous enough to stand on their own feet and parley with Egypt's representatives thanks to raw materials such as silver, cedar and lapis lazuli they were trading on to Egypt. Considering it was purchased in Luxor, this tablet indicates to me the parallel presence of an agent from Syria officiating in Upper Egypt and using the iconography of his homeland on this, the hidden side.

As the slab is pierced for a necklace or waist string down its length, it is probable the other side was meant to be uppermost, showing the Egyptian phoenix with palm-leaf wings seizing an Egyptian gazelle (*phoenix* is the generic word for palm tree, both symbols of Time (see **Chapter 22**) - the semicircular decoration below indicates water or terrain. In later iconography of the second half of the 2M in Syria, the heron-like phoenix with flamboyant wings and tasselled head is merged with the lioness, becoming the melodramatic griffin of the International Style used by Mycenaean and Levantine alike. Hence this piece has high value for us in its deconstructed imagery and role as precursor, suggesting dual Mesopotamian-Egyptian cultural values and shared knowledge of divine equivalences possibly also indicating shared astronomical practice.

Ratt-14f

Hornblower compares the plaque to two smaller ones (roughly 1½”x 1”), also of schist and similarly decorated on both sides and more evidently still covered with a turquoise glaze. The second (his pl.XX fig.2, location not stated) again features one horizontal and one vertical design and is also bored on its long axis, with a Rear Attack, palm leaf and pseudo hieroglyphs for *nefer*, *Wadjet* and *Ra^c* in common - the place of the feathery phoenix is taken by a winged sundisc hovering over a Horus falcon wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt and standing on the *Neb* sign for *gold*. Several times he remarks on its affinity with Middle Kingdom scarab designs, even though in the end he classes it as Hyksos.



When we consider the design on a scarab excavated by Petrie at Tell el-Ajjul (Ancient Gaza III pl. III,35/AT765”), this time carved on the underside of a conventional steatite scarab, we again have a very clear juxtaposition of the Rear Attack running horizontally with a vertical standing Pharaonic figure sideways along its back, also standing on a *Neb* sign. One other sealing from the site has the outline of a Rear Attack and nothing more (TufnellScarabCatII pl. XXXVI, 2515/LIA E.XII.TT/1a, which she likens to Petrie’s find):



In this group belongs a scaraboid limestone stamp seal sold at Drouot in Paris illustrated in their 1961 catalogue (item 113) and described as ‘Phénicien’ and ‘Byblos II^e millénaire’. I can only use their bad illustration with the catalogue entry saying the design shows two Egyptian kneeling figures either side of ‘deux fauves dont un lion’ (probably a lion over a bull, both facing left) with a small cobra at the top along the lion’s upturned tail.



From this exercise in matching, I believe it is helpful to view all these items as records of the relationship between Byblos and Egypt during the early Second Millennium indicating equal parity between two cultural traditions: these artefacts suggest the lion attack symbol was the Syrian equivalent to Egyptian statements about royal authority under the aegis of particular Gods. The same mix of influences is to be seen on artefacts from the Royal Tombs of Byblos, Ebla and Qatna as well as objects dedicated to Reshef in the Byblos Temple of the Obelisks, such as this dagger with the implicit Rear Attack on its sheath (Beirut Museum no.16492).



Ratt-15

FINDSPOT	Precise find spot not known, bought on the market	
ON ARTEFACT	Seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
PRESENT LOCATION	Marcopoli Collection	
PUBLISHED IN	MarcopoliCat 380	
PERIOD & DATE	Syro-Cappadocian (Edith Porada's category)	2000-1920

Overall, the seals in this entry sum up the formats we expect to see in 2M Syrian and Anatolian work in early beginnings - the foundation for dramatic refinements in proportion and workmanship during the Classical Period in the Golden Age of later 2M Syrian seals lasting roughly 1820-1620. It is variations in layout that can betray origins in a different centres - or borrowings between them. In the seal below left, moon and planets/stars (and bird) fly in the sky as dots over lion and ibex in Rear Attack with two humans. A cruder seal (*right*) showing a Rear Attack is classed as purely Anatolian by Teissier in the same catalogue (no.369 Exc. ref. TC3 90D): it shows a human with helmeted head and right leg revealed through parted robe standing next to the attack group. The small bird linked to it in both examples persists in later seals (c.f. *Ratt-4*) - perhaps Astarte's dove/Ursa Minor.



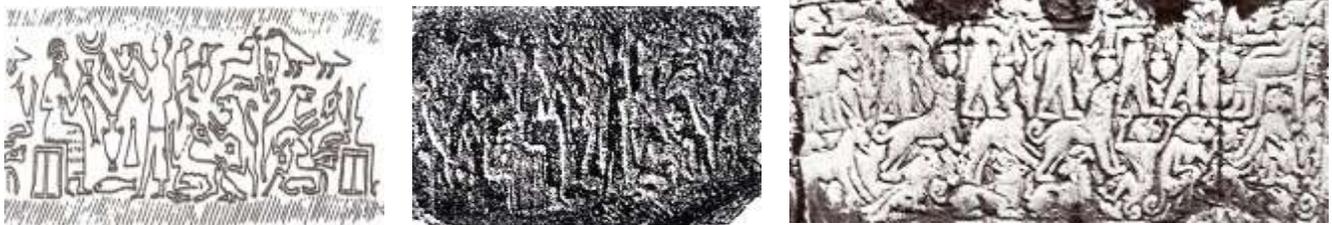
As benchmarks against which to measure the different types of seal being produced in the first half of the 2M in Amorite North Syria and the Proto-Hittite Karum in the next few catalogue entries, we show below further unprovenanced Syro-Cappadocian seals of roughly the first century of the 2M as useful to bear in mind for contrast purposes, the first using a double register throughout, and the next disregarding the line separating the two zones to distribute the pictorial elements more in an overall surface pattern. With the two-tier type (de Clerc, *SoutheskCat* 285), so common in Sumer during the 3M ED period, on the upper register a hunter with bow and arrow accompanies a Rear Attack group in a presentation scene (c.f. *Urusta-27*). The enthroned goddess facing outwards is flanked by attendants raising their arms, while behind them another heraldic unit shows a small tree with the crouching twins of Day and Night either side. There are vestigial astronomical elements in the sky. In the register below is a herding scene, seeming to show a deer and horse followed by an eagle.



In contrast, the next design, printed on a debt repayment document envelope (Ashmolean 1933.1049/ *AshCatI* 833d/Teissier *KKCat* 327) does not adhere to hard and fast demarcation in the secondary area behind the drinking scene, though admittedly within itself it is ordered into heraldic subgroups. With the founding of the Assyrian trading colony in Cappadocia at Kültepe, Mesopotamian influence came to a head in Old Hittite country during the first third of the 2M. The seals and sealings from the site are the remains of business archives left in houses of immigrant traders residing there who traded with native suppliers and each other. In the first century of the millennium the typical Syro-Cappadocian seal might be almost indistinguishable from 3M Sumerian or Akkadian seals, but for the fact that it is usually made of haematite, and the human figures on it wear hats looking like little tin helmets (perhaps a Syro-Babylonian haircut) (or have native pointed hats as in *Ratt-17*).

Ratt-15f

Despite the use of familiar Mesopotamian features such as the drinking ceremony and Rear Attack (two of them) behind the God or ruler on his throne, all items in the composition are laid out as if on a grid with equal negative space between them, creating a flat overall surface pattern. This is the type most commonly crafted within Anatolia in the early 2M, with decapitated heads used not merely as space-fillers, but indicators of animal sacrifices made. Note the star under each lion, and the new elements of fish and geese/ducks - and also the monkey with jug. This animal entered 2M imagery in the region after contact with Egypt (even into Anatolia) saw the widespread use of elephant and hippo ivory (a prime example being the Pratt Collection of Anatolian ivories in the NY Met Museum - BEYOND BABYLON CAT.NOS 46-54) and the adoption of the baboon image of Thoth as depicted on gifts from Egypt (e.g. on items from the royal tombs of Byblos, Ebla and Qatna - c.f. BEYOND BABYLON CAT.NO. 12). A detail of a 2M ivory box (right) from Aemhüyük (BEYOND BABYLON fig. 28) with baboons, lions and other game reveals a common imagery in use in the minor arts of the region (note also the donkey bottom left):



The Levantine seal below (from Cyprus) sums up the most common Syro-Mesopotamian seal type in a readable drawing (WeberCat 457/WardCat 1160) whose Akkadian and Isin-Larsa prototypes would have similarly depicted meetings between the Gods, worshippers and protective *lama* goddess/priestess. What is new is the insertion of a double register of images either side of the full-length figures: behind the worshipper in characteristic Old Babylonian hat and kilt, the monkey (Mercury) and a Rear Attack appear on ground level, and above them a vegetation wand (likely to be the symbol of Baal/Jupiter); Bull-Man *Lamassu* threshold guardian holding a doorpost, and full-frontal Venus (possibly to be read as *standing on the lion attack*). Between the donor and *Lama* the twin gods stand in mirror image to each other, echoing Sumerian seals that showed them as wrestlers.



From the region under survey, this cursory form of the crouching Rear Attack is commonly repeated along with other motifs as a cipher on 2M seals bought on the market - and unfortunately usually unprovenanced. The two seals below are but two examples which serve at the same time to introduce Otto's regional and stylistic categorisation of Syrian Seals. She distinguishes six types as roughly regional (each with subsections), to be fully discussed under the *Art History Background* section following the catalogue entries. She characterises these two as *Type 1d: Bänder und Spalten mit Hauptszene* since they show a mixture of horizontal and vertical strips containing small repeated items, often with standing figures running full-height through them. Her definitions are not watertight, but helped in drawing up my own categorisations, one set to use from the point of view of design conventions, and the other from the point of view of content (*dramatis personae*, ritual and symbols).



OttoCat 69 - from Gordon WaltersCat 30/WAG C60

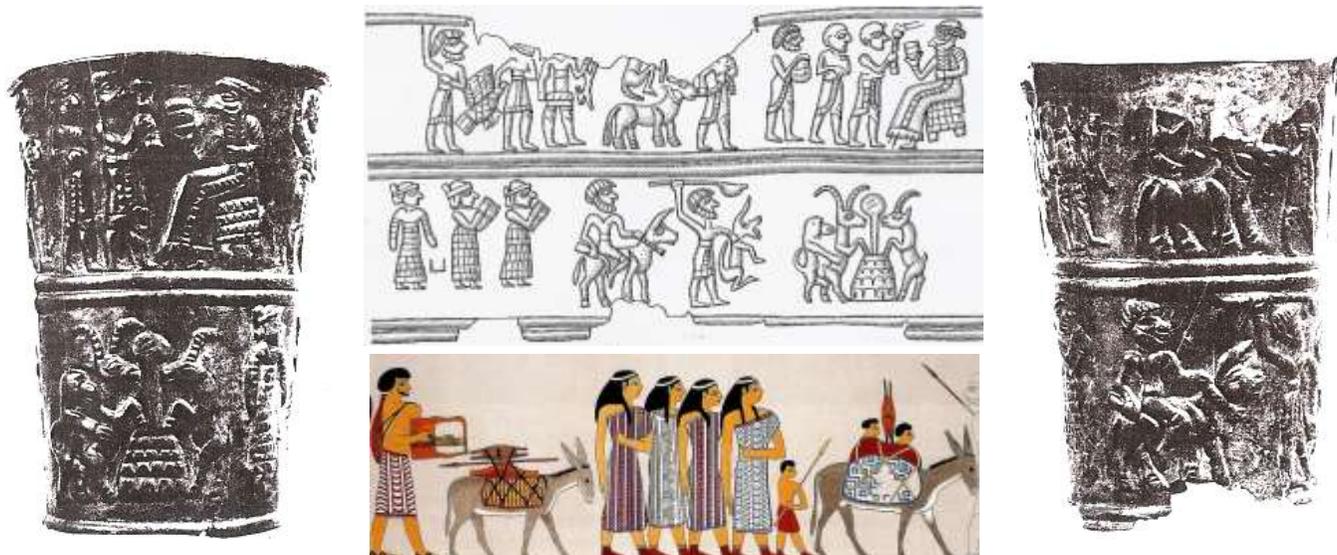


OttoCat 70 - from Erlenmeyer Sotheby SaleCat 77

Ratt-16

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Beaker	
MATERIAL	Bronze	
PRESENT LOCATION	Royal Ontario Museum (Elie Borowski Collection)	
PUBLISHED IN	Ladders to Heaven (ROM exhibition catalogue 1981, ed.O W Muscarella) <i>Exhibit 67</i>	
PERIOD & DATE	Assyrian Colony Period	2000-1900

This unusual bronze beaker depicts processions of dumpy figures on two registers - officiants in Sumerian dress and bearded supplicants with short haircuts in fringed Syrian kilts offering an assortment of animals. It is extraordinarily helpful in throwing light on aspects of audience scenes on North Syrian seals of the first half of the 2M, and compares with two other trans-Caucasian bronze beakers of the time (BEYOND BABYLON CAT.NOS 55-56) held in present-day Armenia and Georgia. The Rear Attack on it does not fully adhere to our definition but I include here because the presence of donkeys (compare with the painted scene on the Middle Kingdom Beni Hasan tomb wall where donkeys transport Syrian traders' goods, *below*) ties in with the mercantile and nomadic themes coming under our Chronological Focus⁶ (we noted its depiction on the ivory box from Achemhüyük in the previous entry). The donkey sacrifice was a North Syrian bedouin speciality enacted to set the seal on important contracts, whose implications will be analysed under the *Initial Thoughts on Iconography* heading later.



The central foci of the two registers are placed underneath each other: at the top a King, seated on a square stool and holding out a cup, gives audience to two unbearded men showing in an emissary in typical Syrian pudding basin haircut and beard with gift (I cannot identify the object the front person holds up). Underneath them two goats either side of a small bush on a hillock form a coat of arms: uniquely one of them is attacked by a lion, combining two motifs (these of course are symbolic animals, no doubt of calendrical impact, serving as a royal standard). Note how the lion places one back leg on that of the goat, as so often seen in the Uruk Stance.

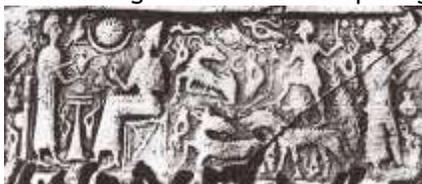
On the top register a man leads forward a bull or donkey, with the remains of a monkey floating over its back, and behind him men bring other offerings of game. On the lower register two men in local haircut and beard brandishing agricultural tools or weapons proceed towards the standard, one carrying what is either a baby donkey or a dog, with another on donkey-back, possibly its mother: they are followed by three priestesses in fleece robes with hair plait turned up and held in place by a headband - the front two lift their arms in greeting.

⁶ Here we think, too, of the journey of Joseph and his brothers, his coat of many colours, and his adopting by traders going down to Egypt.

Ratt-17

FINDSPOT	Karum Kanesh Levels II/Ib, Basement of house of the native merchant, Berua ⁷	
ON ARTEFACT	Clay cylinder sealings (overall there were 85 sealings of different owners, 60 of them native ⁸). There were also stamp sealings using the Rear Attack alone ⁹ .	
PRESENT LOCATION	Istanbul Museum	
PUBLISHED IN	N.Ozgüç 1965 - KültepeCat 65	
PERIOD & DATE	Old Anatolian Style, contemporary with Syrian Pre-Classical/Classical A	1980-1840

At this trading entrepôt visiting merchants used seals with imagery traditional in their home town, while the more unusual seals from Kültepe itself use quaint, locally made Anatolian designs grafting Cappadocian iconography onto Old Babylonian, Old Syrian or Old Assyrian compositions: when the Rear Attack occurs it is often surmounted by a God (not Goddess). They have the usual offering scene to God or Ruler (often in pointed hat) with small bird and Sun in Crescent above and Rear Attack behind the throne. On most seals of this kind the field is cluttered, with six sacrificed cattle heads filling the gaps. The lion has a God on its back, holding it on a leash and waving a weapon, a star between his legs: there are two spare goats, one crouching and one upreared.



The seal on KültepeCat 28 below left shows a stately procession of figures on the backs of animals held on leashes, the proto-Hittite manner of depicting their Gods on a representative animal. The man on the lion's back in Rear Attack mode again holds a weapon, in both hands. The seal on the right (KültepeCat 50) appears to show a war scene possibly showing the God Haddad at full height, his axe over his shoulder, this time preceded by a very animated Rear Attack with lion's head shown from above, as on the first seal of Ratt-15. On the next row left (KültepeCat 82) what Ozgüç interprets as a hunt is taking place, this time with the God of the Hunt (maybe one and the same as the War God) standing over the Rear Attack, whilst in the seal on the right (KültepeCat 81) again that God, with a reindeer at his back, if not a God is the hunter himself, spearing the lion in the back.



28



50



82



81

We cannot be sure yet whether to read the warrior and hunting Gods as planetary divinities connected to Anatolian ritual and beliefs: we discuss the astronomical nature of the Gods in the final section of our *Initial Thoughts on Iconography*. Certainly these four seals associate the Rear Attack with a weapon-bearing male, in our main item juxtaposed with the enthroned figure in an audience scene, as on the beaker in Ratt-16.

⁷ The seals shown here were first illustrated in N. Ozgüç 'Preliminary Report on the 1951 Excavations at Kültepe' *Bellethen* XVII/1953 before appearing in her 1965 catalogue of Old Anatolian seals cited above.

⁸ P Garelli in *Les Assyriens en Cappadoce* (1963) cites the ratio of foreign merchants dealing with 'indigènes' as in the order of 800:1200: 'Les Assyriens se sont établis dans un milieu hétérogène, main où les éléments hittitiques prédominent'.

⁹ See also those on other Kültepe II and Ib bullae in N.Ozgüç 'Bullae from Kültepe' in *Tahsin Ozgüç Festschrift* 1989

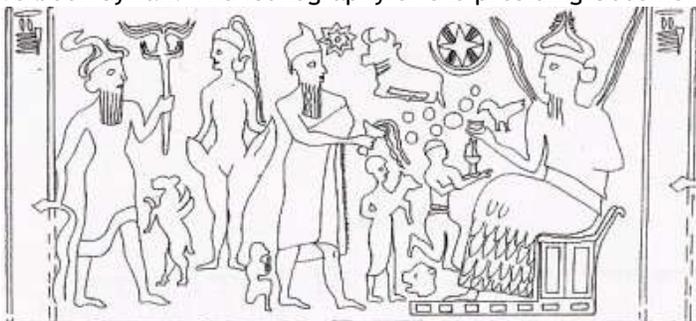
Ratt-18

FINDSPOT	Karum Kanesh, House of the Merchant Adad-Sulūli, Level II	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing on clay envelope for a loan contract	
EXCAVATION REF.	Kt. a-k 467	
PRESENT LOCATION	Istanbul Museum	
PUBLISHED IN	Teissier 'The Ruler with the Peaked Cap and other Syrian Iconography on Glyptic from Kültepe in the Early Second Millennium BC' (Seal 3) in Nimet Özgüç <i>Festschrift</i> 1993 (full title in <i>Festschrift Bibliography</i>); Teissier <i>Catalogue of Karum Kanesh Level II seals</i> (1994) - <i>KKCat</i> 533; T & N Özgüç 1953 no. 693	
PERIOD & DATE	Kültepe II, Syrian Colony Style, Pre-Classical	1920-1840
INSCRIPTION: NONE, but witnessed by limmu	Alāhum, hamuštu Šu-Nūnu and Puzur-Aššur	

Our main one-register sealing portrays a cast of figures in some ways continuing the Akkadian mode that remained a favourite model for Old Syrian seals: two men in plain robes with simple haircuts and miniature attendant with tiny bowl and *hṭp* (Egyptian offering table sign¹⁰) are led forward by the *Lama* priestess before a helmeted ruler in fleece robes holding up a pair of scales, signifying the granting of trading rights (compare with the Late Akkadian seal (*MooreCat*42)Met.Mus.NY L55.49.116) shown far right with Shamash and his saw enthroned approached by a merchant holding up his scales). Probably to validate the oaths being made on earth below, Ursa Major/Minor and quartered sun disc in crescent referring to Shamash and Nannar, are placed in the sky over them. Behind the ruler a figure wearing the peaked cap specific to a group of seals from NW Syria found in Adad Sulūli's house, who because of his cap (still in use in India today) is I believe an *Indian* VIP (or even God) makes a libation to Venus standing over a Rear Attack parted by the rear figure in the audience group.



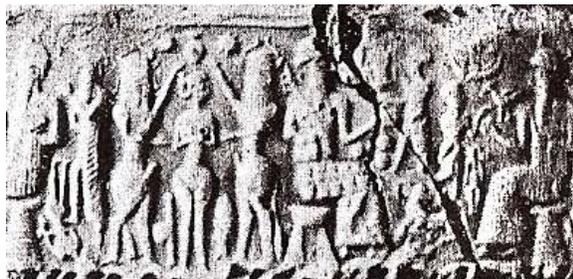
Teissier classes this and the next (her *Seal 1/KKCat* 581/ Özgüç 1953 no. 692 below) with the *šakkanakku* seals of the Mari rulers who with the Gods and priestesses of Ebla and Yamhad wore old-style fleece robes on important occasions. The bird over the cup often appears on this class of seal and a crouching bull floats in the sky with Venus' 8-pointed star - and again a quartered sun-disc with Ursa Major/Minor. Ur III texts mention Mari, Ebla, Byblos, Uršu and Emar as cross-trading up to the Karum, and Kültepe Level II documents themselves refer to Eblaites in particular as trading partners -*Ensis* from Byblos are also mentioned - so their holders are likely to have been Syrian. The iconography of the presiding Gods here is fully covered in the *Iconography* section.



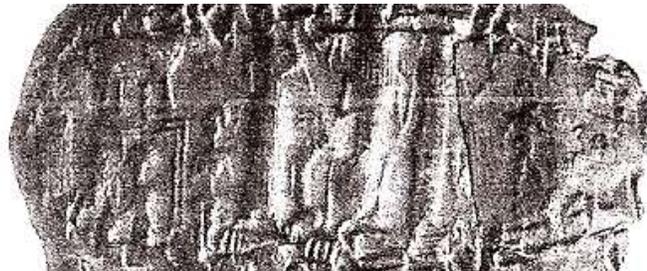
¹⁰ This hieroglyph appears on the mace with baboon sent to the King of Ebla by the Pharaoh and taken up, like other pseudo-hieroglyphics - see for instance the Byblos items of *Ratt-14*) to simply refer to offerings being made to king or God - as in the original Egyptian context.

Ratt-18f

A third sealing (*below*), again from the Adad-Sulūli archive (Teissier (*ibid.*) *Seal 9/KKCat 529b/Ozguç 1953 no. 690*) on a debt repayment agreement again includes a disjointed lion and prey group - this time between two enthroned figures. It appears a local ruler on a stool with axe over his shoulder exchanges oaths over a drink with the peaked cap ruler, now in full flounced robe also on a stool, with Shamash striding up over a dead body behind him. Behind the local ruler stands nude Venus with pot on her head flanked by *lammassu*, her 8-pointed star above, and fish and *h̄tp* sign on either side of her legs. Between both rulers the quartered sun disc is again in the sky, and the same bird over the drink, whilst a tiny attendant offers what looks like a cooked chicken to the peaked-cap ruler. The remains of a monkey and small man pay respects to the ruler on the other stool (who may in fact be Hadad with his axe) the lion probably forming part of his footrest as in the previous seal. There are still ambiguities to be resolved in this scene - to be tackled in the *Iconography* section.



A Rear Attack group does *not* feature on the seal belonging to Iddi-lštar, Son of Aššur-Nāda *below* (Teissier **KKCat 550/N.Ozguç 'Bullae from Kültepe' in **Tahsin Ozguç Festschrift 1989 pl. 100,-3**) but setting it against the other seals in this entry it helps match similarities and differences, filling in further gaps. The enthroned dignitary with quartered sun disc above (actually damaged and somewhat blurred on the actual sealing) raises his cup (again with bird below it, and fronted by a small standing attendant with crossed leg) to Shamash. The latter brandishes his saw and exposes his raised leg as he breaks up through the horizon in Akkadian fashion to banish darkness like a dying body, with protective *lamassu* and monkey behind completing the sub-group. Behind the ruler's throne a women with pony-tailed child and reared goat proffers *her* cup to a bull statue on a stand with *h̄tp* sign and *Sibitti* stars, the Twins of Night and Day beneath. Though the sealings feature a variety of Gods, the *dramatis personae* here match a fragmentary relief¹¹ showing a priestess officiating before Hadad in the presence of the King and Queen of Ebla, on which there is more to say in the *Iconography* section.**



Is it possible to arrive at an interim conclusion about the significance of the Rear Attack on our first two seals? Even though we are not certain of the actual place of origin, as Teissier (*ibid.*) puts it, thanks to their discovery at the Kültepe site these seals have 'revealed the existence of an important north-west Syrian centre contemporary with Kültepe Level II whose iconography shows Ur III and/or *šakkanaku* influences (*Seal 1*)'. Common features to all four seals point to the use of both the Old Syrian pantheon (where the lion attack symbol plays a part) using Mesopotamian ritual¹² and design prototypes, with key Gods evoked to give force to the contract being agreed. We explore these themes fully in the *Initial Thoughts on Iconography* section.

¹¹ P Matthiae 'A Stele Fragment of Hadad from Ebla' also in Nimet Özgüç Festschrift 1993 (full title in *Festschrift Bibliography*)

¹² I Winter 'Legitimation of Authority through Image and Legend: Seals belonging to officials in the Administrative Bureaucracy of the Ur III State' in M Gibson and R Biggs (eds) *The Organisation of Power: Aspects of Bureaucracy in the Ancient Near East* Chicago 1987 repr.1991

Ratt-19

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
PRESENT LOCATION	Kelley Collection, Pierpoint Morgan Library	
MUSEUM REF.	Not given	
PUBLISHED IN	E Porada 'A Cylinder Seal for Discussion with Nimet Özgüç' in <i>Nimet Özgüç Festschrift</i> 1993, pl.92-1a-c	
PERIOD & DATE	Old Syrian	1920-1840

Edith Porada likens this seal from the Pierpont Morgan collection to similar to Old Syrian seals found at Karahüyük. I initially assess it through my categorisations of 'old-fashioned' -v- 'modern'. This is clearly an old-fashioned seal showing a Sumerian-style drinking scene of male and female facing across a bull-legged table laid with conical cakes¹³ and a goat-head. It is not absolutely clear if the arcs between the glasses are mutually linked straws, or streams of drink, or a bit of each. In contrast to the pancake modelling of figures on seals of the previous entry, this seal uses parallel ridged outlines to define manes, tails and horns, as well as the hair, thrones and dress of the two figures, one of which appears to be a fleece and the other a tasselled toga.



The eightfold star of Venus (two short lines for each point) lies in the sky over the female's drink, whilst the Sun in Crescent is over the male God's - implying we are looking at one of the two main solstitial New Year celebrations - hence the two Rear Attack groups facing each way. Edith Porada's interpretation of them is vague: 'the way in which the two pairs frame the principal scene (in a repeated rolling) suggests that it had some sort of protective meaning to assure the tranquillity of the deities'. Though it is true astronomical symbolism, being divine in nature, was by association used for protection by humans, the Gods themselves do not need their own apotropaism - unless of course the female figure is a priestess, which is possible!

Although an indistinct image, classed as Syro-Cappadocian by Delaporte the haematite seal in the Louvre (A927/Louv.Cat.pl.96-22) below (which warrants closer inspection) could be roughly compared with it, since we have the same layout of a full-height scene juxtaposed with a double-register section though in the Rear Attack groups the lion is replaced by winged sphinxes or griffins. Here a 'modern' human worshipper (possibly a king) with hawk on his wrist approaches the Gods: Baal enthroned on a zebu bull and an unclear figure with Ankh before it likely to be Venus. In the sky are Full Moon in its Crescent and winged Sun.



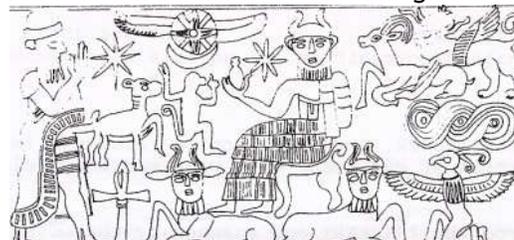
With the inclusion of Egyptian elements we see the beginnings of a new kind of Syrian seal which is developed and perfected during the Golden Age of North Syrian seals soon afterwards (see next entry).

¹³ In the Bible, conical cakes are specifically associated with lamentations for Tammuz during our equivalent of Easter.

Ratt-20

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced: originally Mrs Moore Collection no. 217	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal, slightly concave sides	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
PRESENT LOCATION	Metropolitan Museum, New York	
MUSEUM REF.	Met.Mus.NY L55.49.225; Raymond and Beverley Sackler gift 1991.168.5	
PUBLISHED IN	E Williams-Forte Ancient Near Eastern Seals (a selection from the Moore Collection at the Metropolitan Museum 1976) no.3; SyrPalReg.137	
PERIOD & DATE	CLASSICAL A PERIOD	1820-1740

Using Anatolian and Mesopotamian conventions Syrian petty kingdoms devised hybrid layouts which became standard for North Syrian seals (see also the seals in the next entry, **Ratt-21**). They not only combined native with Sumerian traditions of iconography but also in their finesse indicate the presence in North Syria of superb craftsmen likely to have been Egyptian or Egyptian-taught who expected a high degree of subtle modelling, good proportion and finish - with the precise attention to detail made possible by the hard haematite stone used. The seal below showing a central scene with figures of full height next to a double-register section divided by a guilloche exemplifies this: here the griffin-on-goat Rear Attack above a man-phoenix (c.f. plaque recto, **Ratt-15**) is transformed by its modulated definition (entirely missed in the drawing) and deliberate beautification (e.g. the guilloche) within an ordered layout, showing how important it is to look at the actual rolling.



The spaces between worshipping king offering his sacrificial kid and Goddess Venus(Williams-Forte sees her as bearded), facing out and seated on a throne of the human-headed Eastern bull-mountains over which she rises in the morning as male, are filled in with winged Sun in Crescent, one seven-pointed and one eight-pointed star, monkey, and Ankh of Life. Compared to the seals in the following item (**Ratt-21**) this one reaches the peak of meticulous attention to detail, and is classed in the First Classic Syrian Style (see **Chronological Table**). The foetus-like monkey which becomes a feature of Syrian iconography throughout the millennium seems to replace the little mannekins occupying the small space before the ruler in earlier seals. It is very likely the baboon of Thoth as seen on the mace and ivory amulet sent by a XIIIID pharaoh to Imeya king of Ebla, and buried with him in the Tomb of the Lord of Goats with other items sent from Egypt, explains its adoption for the planet Mercury.

Its classic qualities stand out when we compare it to a not otherwise dissimilar single-register native prototype also portraying the Goddess staring outwards, from Kültepe (**KülCat.73**) where a worshipping before a huge offering table under Sun in Crescent (in this roll-out shown in the middle with pointed cap) pays respects to El (with axe seated on a goat-throne, his feet on a lion); Ea (holding streams of water with fish standing on kids); and Venus (this time on lioness throne holding up cubs and birds in her role as Mistress of the Beasts and Life):



Ratt-21

FINDSPOT	Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) Temple site sievings
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal with concave sides
MATERIAL	Haematite
EXCAVATION REF.	
PRESENT LOCATION	Palestine Museum
MUSEUM REF.	PM 36.2268
PUBLISHED IN	Barbara Parker Iraq XI 1949 fig. 174; Frankfort CS pl.XLI, o.
PERIOD & DATE	Found in spoil heap for 1550-1250 but dated by 1750-1650 PERIOD IIB Parker to an earlier period on stylistic grounds CLASSICAL B

This seal is useful and interesting for having been found at some distance from the Syrian heartland, at Lachish. The enthroned God with long beard is dressed in the fleece robe, but does not have a horned hat. However, he is being presented with a goat by king followed by a priest in tasselled robe with short hair. Between the latter two are the Ankh and sprouting tree to be associated with Venus and Baal, whilst the Sun in the Crescent Moon is shown in the sky between King and God. In design this is typical in having a split level to the side, divided by a guilloche, with confronted winged sphinxes at the top and a well-defined Rear Attack below, likely to be astronomical in nature, referring to Equinox and Solstice.



It shows the typical traits of the Classical North Syrian style using full-height, well-modelled human proportions against a small double-register side panel. This layout is used on several other seals, as below left featuring a standing Venus as the object of respect (the figures though are more sparsely modelled) allocated by Otto (OttoCat. 143/Erlenmeyer 153) to the Karkemish Court Style:



Another seal (above middle, originating from Terqa (TQ8-A1) uses the same layout, again featuring the half-clothed Venus with her dove as the focus of worship, though on this one the figures have squashed proportions, betraying provincial Syrian workmanship (OttoCat.173). The same is true of the sealing on the right, photographed from the cases in the Ashmolean Museum (AshCatI 878). In all three a griffin, blending lion body with eagle head, performs the Rear Attack, the sealings revealing the rough workmanship at this period in comparison with the later smooth and elegant renditions that arrive with the fully International Style. The interplay of Rear Attack with griffins and sphinxes are probably ringing the changes on the solstice and equinox oppositions, expressing the turning points of the Year in different combinations, with the lion alone signifying Time, both passing and eternal (more of this in the main commentary).

Ratt-21f

This engaging seal in the Geneva Museum (no. 19592/*GenevCatl.* 136), like our main item also with concave sides, appears to belong to the same group in shape, style, material (haematite) and workmanship. In the double-register zone it has the same confronted griffins and Rear Attack: the faces of the two men in tasselled, draped robes approaching the goddess with sacrificial goat seem to portray the features of known people. We could probably say that it is this injection of realism that does not try to idealise and beautify that marks the difference between the Classical A and Classical B type seals as classified by Teissier. The goddess, wearing a helmet with tiers of horns - indicating she is more than a priestess - holds up her arms in welcome. Star, crescent and ?plough appear in the sky and a midget figure takes the space between Goddess and worshipper usually taken by the monkey. We notice in the *Ratt-17* seals how often a child appears with its mother, thought by Williams-Forte to be an allusion to the Mother-Goddess Ki/Kybele and child, for this region very plausible.



A fine seal from Tokyo (*OttoCat.*124 ref. Tokyo III-7-13) shows very much the same configuration of motifs, but with the addition of El standing behind Venus (he is bearded and holds an axe) - the midget figure here is definitely a monkey this time. The counterpoint to the Rear Attack this time is a griffin confronting a plain lion:



What a difference lack of full proportions makes in a closely related seal design where the main figures in the same stance are compressed and dumpy (below left, *OttoCat.*176/*Erlenmeyer* 154). Here a complete winged sphinx plays counterpoint to a Rear Attack (though the bull is flattened to just a head) and again, no guilloche separates the double-register). The same sprout/plough is in the sky as the others, and Sun is in the Crescent.



The seal on the right (*OttoCat.*122/*Aulock* 291 - *Safadi*¹⁴ fig.109) featuring Nergal/Reshef with dog-leg weapon instead of Venus includes an interesting variation of Rear Attack where the lion is attacking a hare, a well-known lunar animal sometimes used instead of the bull. These and the Tokyo seal *Otto* allocates to the Karkemish Court style.

¹⁴ H El-Safadi 'Die Entstehung der Syrischen Glyptik und ihre Entwicklung' *UF* VI 313-352 and plates

Ratt-22

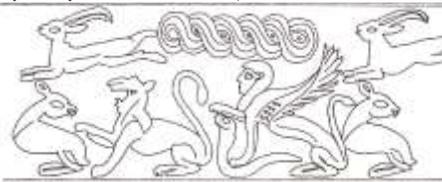
FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
PRESENT LOCATION	Marcopoli Collection	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Teissier MarcoPoliCat 524	
PERIOD & DATE	Ascribed by Teissier to 1850-1720	1720-1620



Out of a group of seals considered by Teissier to be from one workshop, the Rear Attack can appear on its own (below left) or along with other symbolic groups (as below right). The example we have chosen as our main feature is of great interest because it is the lion attack itself to which respects are being made by on one side a kneeling figure of disproportionate size compared to the squat height of the standing figure on the other - with Mercury's monkey and no less than three scorpions framing them. There are features of this workshop's style (the accentuated forelimbs of the attacked goat and its back-turned head, and especially the leaping animals in the Met. example) that by their elegance of depiction and execution to my mind places them in a later period than Teissier's Classical period A, earning (despite provincialisms) status as harbingers of the International Style:



BrussCat 496



SyrPalReg 144 (Met.Mus.NY 66.76.2 184985)

However, further examples (apologies for the poor images) from the 1943 Brussels Seal Catalogue Supplement¹⁵ (BrussCatSupp) whose core material, like that of the Marcopoli Collection, consists of Syro-Mesopotamian Seals, have a marked Old Babylonian appearance which could even put them into Teissier's Pre-Classical period!



BrussCatSupp-676



BrussCatSupp 1395

Overall, we can only say that this bunch of seals where the prey's head is turned back in the familiar 'Susa contrapposto' were made in North Syria during the period of Kültepe's *floruit* (1920-1740). Our main concern here, though, is the significance of the Rear Attack as the centre of attention on our main seal.

¹⁵ The main publication, *Catalogue des Intailles et Empreintes orientales des Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire* by L. Speleers dates from 1917 - the Supplément appeared 25 years later.

Ratt-23

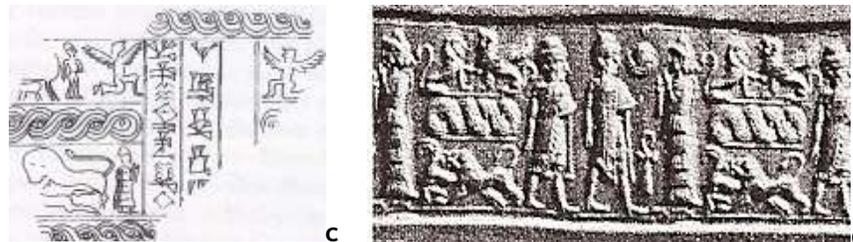
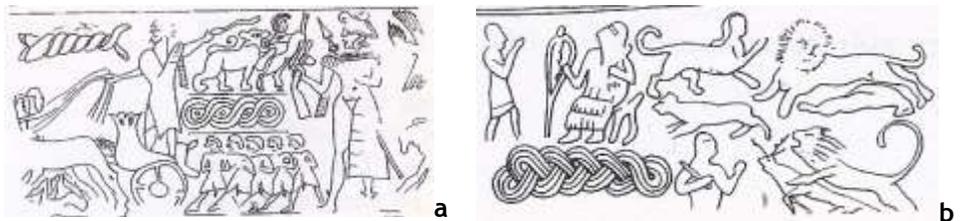
FINDSPOT	Syria, unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Bibliothèque Nationale	
MUSEUM REF.	Seyrig no. 46	
PUBLISHED IN	Teissier SyrPalCat-156	
PERIOD & DATE	Post-Classical, roughly contemporary with the Hyksos Period	1600-1550

This seal (bottom left) mostly shows 2M Babylonian trademarks, but the sphinxes with horizontal ram horns and the man wearing a polos bearing a bird (or bird-shaped libation jug) are specific Egyptian insertions marking a step change in seal development which along with the somewhat careless double guilloche marks it as Post-Classical. The depiction of the threatening lion in Rear Attack mode is fresh in its first-hand observation, and repeated on other even more strongly Egyptianised seals as in Teissier SyrPalCat-16 (middle left below) and SyrPalCat-80 (middle right).



We can compare these new features in the best of Post-Classical Syrian seals with what appears to be a parallel falling off in quality and the conventional treatment of the Rear Attack on three seals designated by Otto as using the lamhad/Aleppo Court Style - which being more inland escapes Egyptian influence - and also with a completely conventional fourth seal in the NW Syrian Classical style in the Jantzen private collection. Yet the lamhad seals also show freshly observed detail - but without a trace of the Egyptian influence which turned out to be the predominant trend of the time:

a *OttoCat 309* (CT 47, 22a); b *OttoCat 319* (Gaziantep Museum 6184)



c *OttoCat 314* (Mari ME 170); d *Jantzen Collection no.29* (Béran Arch.Anz. 83 (1968) 117-8/III.11)

Ratt-24

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Yale University Babylonian Collection	
MUSEUM REF.	RBC 1053	
PUBLISHED IN	Teissier SyrPalCat 35 in <i>Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age</i> (1995)	
PERIOD & DATE	Post-Classical (Teissier Period III)/Hyksos Period	1600-1550

The infiltration of Egyptian influence via the land bridge through Palestine, rather than by sea to Levantine ports (as happened in the Old and Middle Kingdoms) increased exponentially as the Second Intermediate Period broke borders and flouted long-followed rules. The Middle Kingdom administration experienced rebellions in the Thebes area, further afield on its borders with Nubia, and to the north from Arab shepherd nomads - the Hyksos, and many petty kingdoms arose in Canaan that aped Egyptian imagery in order to belong. Teissier's book cited above is an exhaustive survey of the impact these political changes had on Syro-Palestinian seals which either mixed Egyptian and Mesopotamian design conventions together, or in some cases relied on everything Egyptian bar the running spiral divider.

On our key seal for this entry - perhaps trying to say the same thing in Egyptian and Levantine images - confronted griffins either side of a degraded *Sma* sign are balanced beneath by a Rear Attack flanked at one end by a goat's head and protective falcon in Horus mode (rather than Imdugud mode) at the other. In the central full-height register, a skirted pharaonic figure complete with uraeus appears to take hold of a sprouting branch held out to him by a winged figure (whose gender is unclear). An upright fish and vestiges of a rod and line are placed between them. In general we might say this is a syncretic celebration of the New Year.



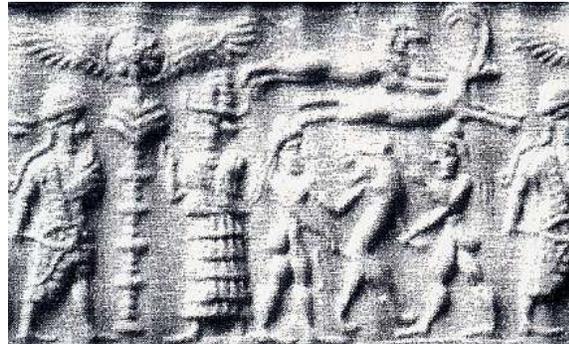
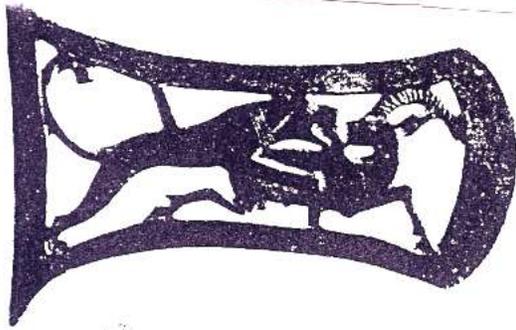
The next seal (Teissier Syr-PalCat-12, BN Seyrig Collection 24), in similar vein and layout, has two Rear Attacks one above the other divided by a neat guilloche, whilst the male, although in Egyptian dress, proffers a trailing lotus shoot highly reminiscent of Baal's snake - to a Hathor-style figure holding the ḥtp hieroglyph of offering:



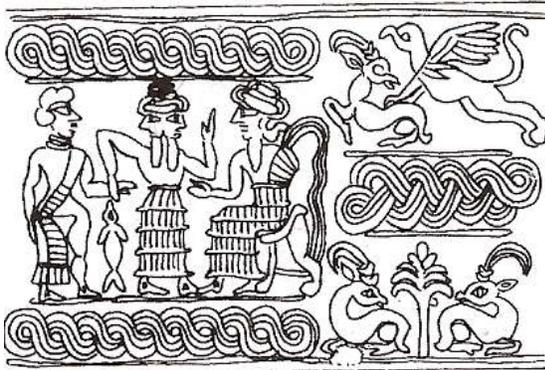
Ratt-25

FINDSPOT	Semna Fort, Nubia	
ON ARTEFACT	Openwork axe-head	
MATERIAL	Bronze	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Khartoum Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Stevenson-Smith 1981, Ill.237	
PERIOD & DATE	Period III-Post-Classical/ Hyksos/New Kingdom	1600-1500

The infiltration of the international style into Syria's seal designs begins as Egypt's comparative isolation breaks open in the second half of the millennium. A strong indicator for this is the flying gallop, seen here on this 18D ritual axe-head found at a fort at Egypt's southernmost border with Nubia that policed the Nile. It is echoed by the same open-leap on a Syrian seal (below right - **OttoCat-353**) from a private collection in New York, quite uncharacteristic of the treatment of the Rear Attack on mature Classical period Syrian seals. On these two items we have both Egypt and the Levant adopting, in a reverse process from usual, the elegant imagery of the Aegean *koine* - in the case of the seal it is inserted with traditional NW-Syrian motifs such as the heraldic stance of ruler and Goddess/priestess either side of the cosmic tree, so much favoured in the Classical Period.



The flying leap is also adopted by griffins, as on the next seal (**OttoCat 335/AshCatI-864**), even while keeping other features by now 'old-fashioned' (Usmu introduces Venus to Ea framed by guilloches, with a double panel to the side split by a plaited guilloche) - this amalgam also indicating a Post Classical date.

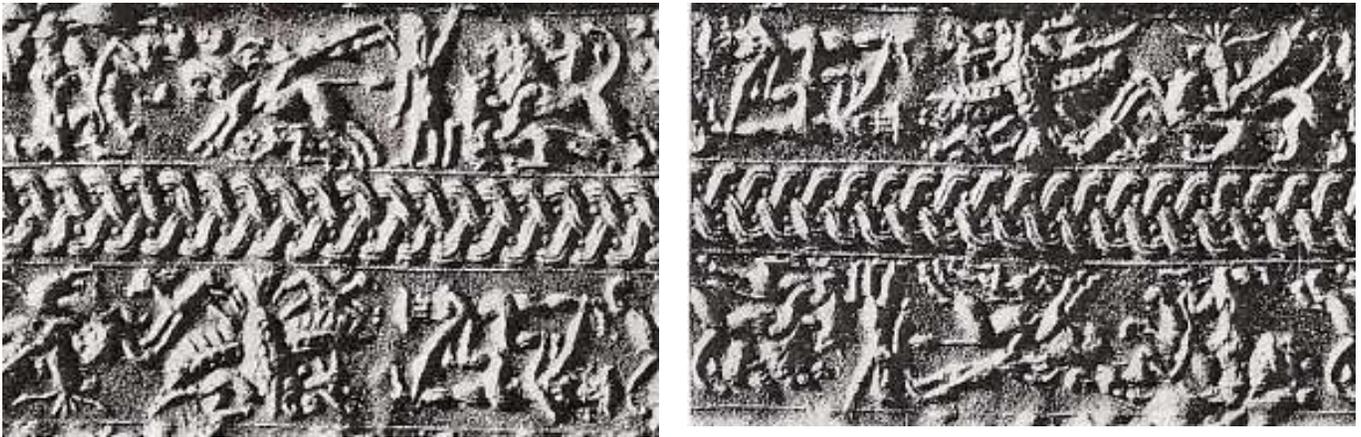


Such transitional seals were bridges towards the completely innovative seal designs of the late second half of the millennium from places like Ras Shamra. Taking on motifs we regard as originating in Crete, inland Syrian centres started to insert them like this, at times forging almost jarring mixtures of old and new styles, which this next entry shows particularly dramatically with the bull-leaping group.

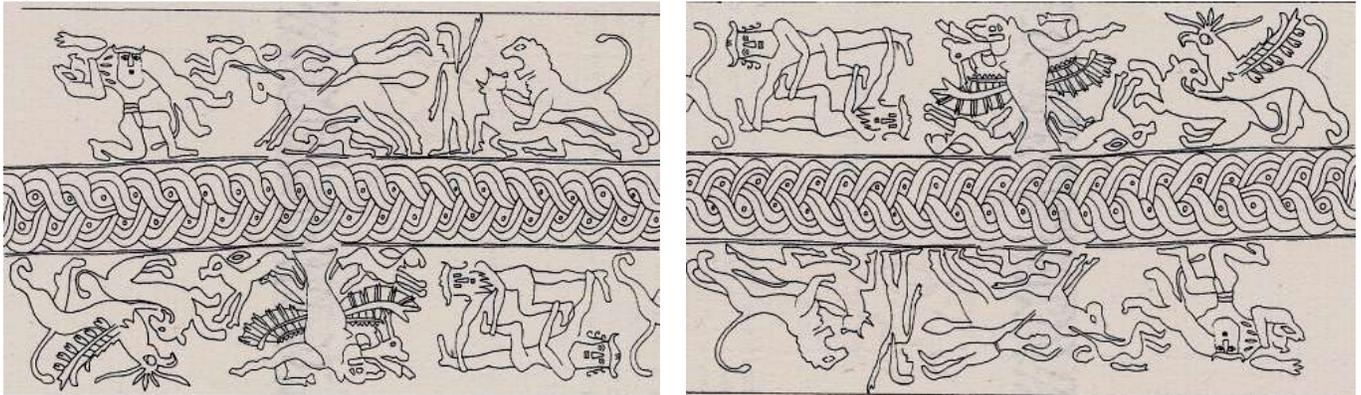
Ratt-26

FINDSPOT	Syria, unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
EXCAVATION REF.	Bought Aleppo by Henri Seyrig (<i>ibid.</i> , fn. previous catalogue entry)	
PRESENT LOCATION	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris	
MUSEUM REF.	Seyrig Collection no.15	
PUBLISHED IN	Teissier SyrPalCat-166/Safadi 127/OttoCat 334	
PERIOD & DATE	Period III	1630-1540

This double-register seal is best read from the drawings of it underneath. Although this double-register seal has a plaited guilloche divider, it has to be turned upside down to read the lower register the right way up.



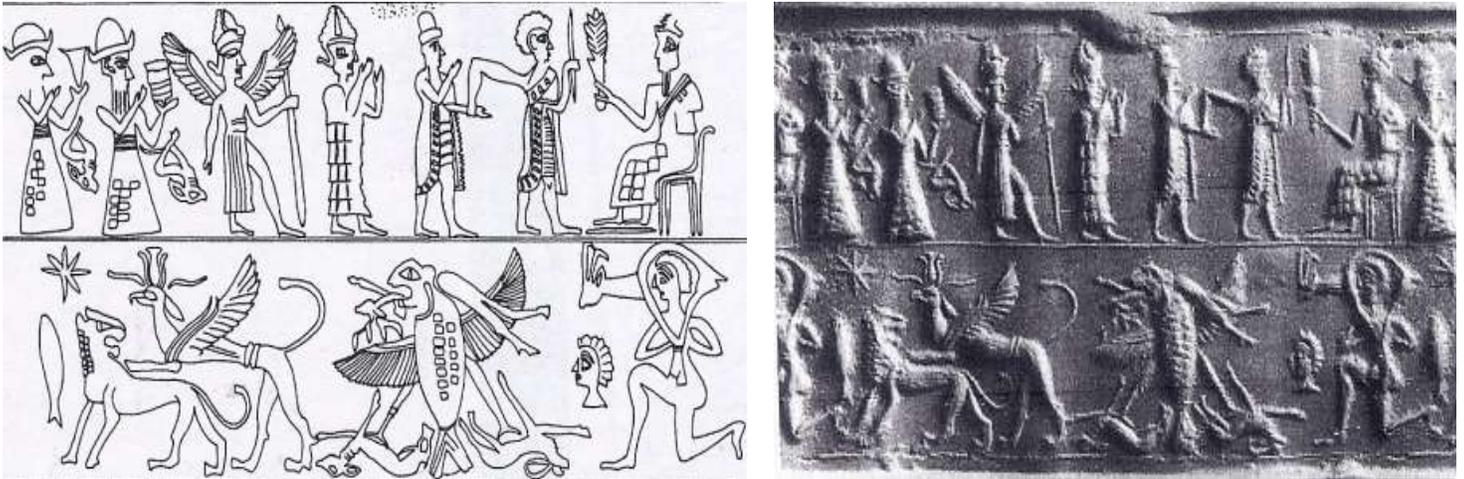
With the representation of a Tauromachy on one register (below left) placed between a Gilgamesh and lion group and vigorous Rear Attack on the other, our main entry raises more fully the issue of the infiltration of Aegean elements into Syrian seals, and whether this started to happened only as late as Period III. It could be significant that every bull-leaper scene on Syrian seals is closely associated with a Lion and Prey attack nearby.



Turning the seal round reveals a traditional pair of wrestlers, a positively historic rendition of Imdugud at the centre with one gazelle in his mouth, twisted over the shoulder, as well as two more grasped in his talons, and then to the side as counterweight to the 'normal' Rear Attack on the first register is a griffin in Rear Attack mode on a lion. It has the flat goat horns of Egypt, yet the group overall could just as well have been copied from protohistoric sealings from Susa, down to the contrapposto of the back-turned head of the lion (see the original examples in *Catalogue B: The Uruk Stance*).

Ratt-26f

A second double-register seal (Teissier *SyrPalCat*-165/Rosen Collection 04702)) at first glance looks like the same kind as our main entry, but both-registers are upright and the seal is easier to read. The bottom row has a similar griffin and lion group (preceded by fish and Venus star) next to the same baroque Imdugud figure with three prey, while this time the third motif is a kneeling figure with sacrificial goat over his shoulder. The top row, on the other hand, shows a conventional Syrian audience scene with its characteristic dumpy Syrian figures and includes Venus leading the two minor mountain gods associated with Baal's journey to the Underworld that appear again in *Ratt-00*.



One at first imagines such eclecticism could have been due to older craftsmen and patrons discovering an exotic motif without being able to fully replace a lifetime's repertoire completely: this would only be done by the next generation, trained in a new canon from the very start. The earliest writers to comment on the appearance of the bull-leaping motif were Henri Seyrig¹⁶ and the Erlenmeyers¹⁷. However novel motifs and novel *styles* are two different factors. In fact (see illustrations below) a Level VII seal from Alalakh is cited by Collon (1975 *AlalakhCat* 111) as similar to the one next to it, cited by the Erlenmeyers (*ibid.*), both showing *two* bull-leapers, and since Level VII goes back to around 1700BC, and lasted a century, the thinking now is that the bull-leaping motif could just as well have spread from the Levant to Crete.



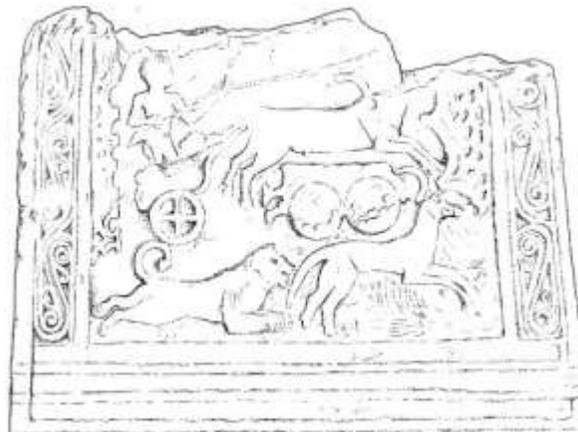
¹⁶ H Seyrig 'Cylindre représentant une Tauromachie' *Syria* xxxiii 1956 169-174

¹⁷ M-L & H Erlenmeyer 'Einige Syrische Siegel mit ägäischen Bildelementen' *Archive für Orientforschung* XXI 1966 32-34

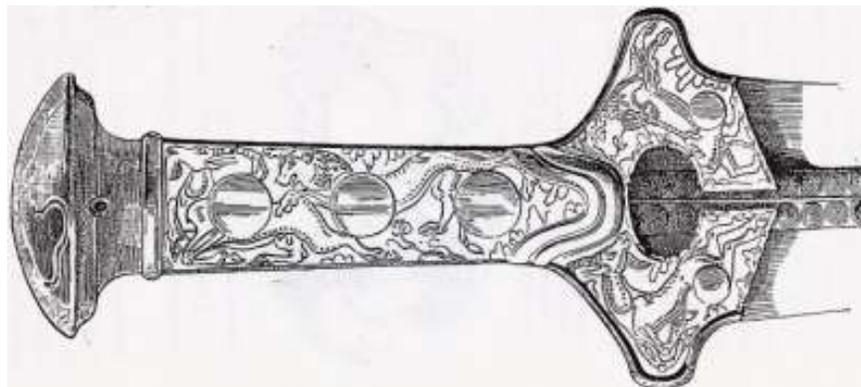
Ratt-27

FINDSPOT	Mycenae, Grave Circle A	
ON ARTEFACT	Stele	
MATERIAL	Limestone	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Athens Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	S Hood <i>The Arts in Prehistoric Greece</i> 1978 Ill.81	
PERIOD & DATE	Late Helladic I	c.1550

From approximate dating at this stage, and going by stylistic similarities this seems to be the appropriate point at which to introduce Greek and Minoan material that had evidently picked up on Levantine iconography. On the stela below from the first grave circle at Mycenae we also note above the running Rear Attack a chariot that gives us an indication of contemporaneity with the Hyksos period, when it was introduced in the Levant. It could represent a chieftain running over a Minoan lying under it with double shield, but it could equally refer to the Chariot of the Sun. We have here one of the many instances of the Lion and Prey applied in a funerary context.



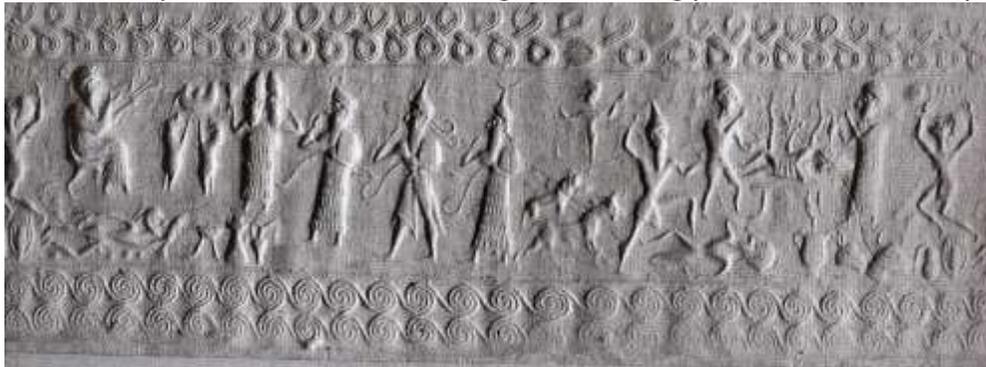
In contrast, the design on the gold-plated sword hilt from a Chieftain's grave near Knossos (now in the Herakleion Museum) which probably dates to a century later (c.1450-1350 after the destruction that hit Crete following the Thera tsunami) features the more sinuous and graceful rendition of a lion attack on an ibex which became the hallmark of the international style all over the Aegean and, as we have already seen, filtering into the Levant too.



Ratt-28

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seals	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
EXCAVATION REF.	Bought on the market, the second at Aydin	
PRESENT LOCATION	A: Boston Museum B: Louvre	
MUSEUM REF.	A: The Tyskiewicz Cylinder Seal B: A927	
PUBLISHED IN	A: R Alexander 'The Tyskiewicz Group of Stamp-Cylinders' <i>Anatolica V</i> 1973-6 141-215 and 4 plates with 9 figs; B: <i>LouvCat.</i>	
PERIOD & DATE	Early second half of the Second Millennium	1700-1550

On the Boston seal Venus is depicted standing over a Rear Attack, Hittite style. There is much speculation about its dating, and Alexander thinks its main programme was carved c.1500 and later recarved up to a century later, showing what we might call a Hittite 'branding' of Syrian iconography. Both high-quality seals are different from run-of-the-mill administrative seals in depicting (at L) a ruler libating the entire pantheon of the North West Syrian region - at a period when the supremacy of Mesopotamian iconography was waning as the Hittites became the main super-power in the Levant. Alexander thinks both were carved by the same person because the choice and order of the characters mirror each other so closely, but although the top and bottom borders use the same double guilloche, due to small differences of carving and iconography one set of figures is more likely to be have been copied from the other by another carver, with variations. By assigning a letter of the alphabet under or over each character it is easy to see the matches, leaving the remaining points of difference exposed.



A B C D E F G H I J K L A

N O B C D E F G L A M N O B



Thus H (Venus), I (Nergal), J and K (human sacrifice scene) on the Boston seal are not repeated on the Louvre seal and, conversely, figures M, N and O on the Louvre seal are not found on the Boston seal. In the main body of this Catalogue in the relevant Iconographical commentary on items of the second half of the 2M, we will identify the Gods common to both, and will then discuss the varying interpretations of the new introductions.

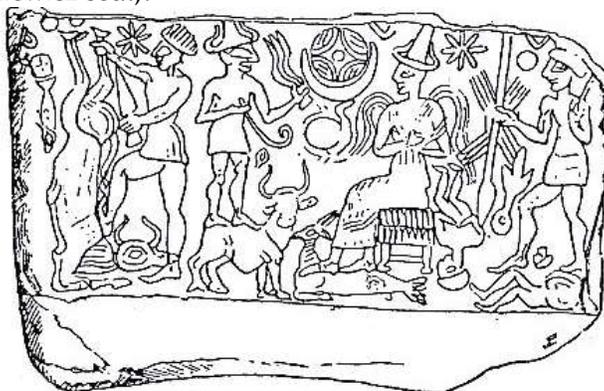
Ratt-29

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced/Syro-Hittite	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Haematite	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Bibliothèque Nationale	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	BNCat 464/R Dussaud Prélydiens Hittites et Achéens Paris 1958 fig.17	
PERIOD & DATE		1600-1500

Dussaud discusses this seal as providing context for the new features of the Tyskiewicz Group: in obvious ways it is still North Syrian in character, with a double register of Rear Attacks on hares by griffin and lion, yet it is Hittite both in the way Baal steps upon his double mountain-peak, and served by a minor mountain god emerging from his own hill, and in the way it appears to depict his victory over Mot in the Hittite version of the myth of Ullikumi, whom he swings through the air by his hair.



Dussaud (*ibid.* fig. 18 below) points out that the same myth is probably even represented earlier, in this Syro-Anatolian sealing from Kültepe itself, where Baal on his bull (left) is again helped by the craftsman God Kothar, on the right trampling over Mot (matching the prostrate man on the Tyskiewicz seal) whilst a man falling upside down from the streams of water issuing from Ea's shoulders could represent Baal's other enemy, Yam (matching the 'drowning man' in the Tyskiewicz seal).

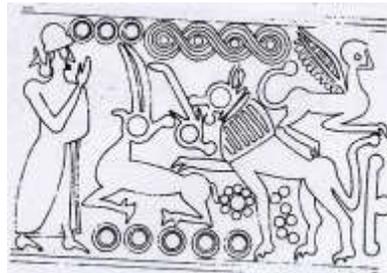


With these two seals Dussaud was thus able to dig out the Syro-Anatolian roots of the Tyskiewicz Group, showing how difficult it is to separate Hittite from Syrian elements. Only in the mature seals of the Hittite Empire did most Mesopotamian elements disappear - to the extent that the Lion and Prey motif also goes.

Ratt-30

FINDSPOT	Alalakh Royal Palace, room 10	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	Antakya 8627 (ATT/38/19)	
PRESENT LOCATION	Antakya Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	AT 419	
PUBLISHED IN	Collon (1975) <i>AlalakhCat</i> 216; Salje <i>MitanniCat</i>	
PERIOD & DATE	Level VI-V	1550-1400

The same development is seen at Alalakh from strong adherence to the Syro-Mesopotamian tradition - as with this Alalakh seal - to those of later levels which show what happened to their designs when it came into the zone of the Mitanni Empire - and the same is true of the seals of Nuzi further east. Simply tracking the use of the Rear Attack on seals from Alalakh and Nuzi, despite its frequent appearance on many of them given there is no real development of subject matter that is of concern to us, it is sufficient to take two or three representative examples. The Rear Attack example below left from Collon's ground-breaking catalogue shows the juxtaposition of winged Venus, Baal and Lion and Prey common on North Syrian seals: the two Nuzi seals below middle and right (Stein 1993, 402 and xxx 50) need no further elucidation: the run-of-the-mill designs of Nuzi are usually of a debased nature and almost caricatures of mainline Syrian-seals, rarely achieving high quality of workmanship.



In the case of the Nuzi seals it is a relief that we need only choose one or two representative examples, given the photos in Edith Porada's original catalogue of 1947 are small and hard to see, and not that much enhanceable with the photocopier. The prolific literature that has since ensued on the Nuzi seals presents a different problem: the clear-cut drawings so beautifully executed in Diana Stein's publications (as in the case of the two above) give a false impression of sharp delineation and stylisation which are belied on the blobby sealings themselves, caused partly by the wet, coarse clay used!

One more sealing is of key interest (Porada *NuziCat* 741) because it shows Venus standing, not solely on a lion, but on a Rear Attack - another telling example to add to our small collection which I believe openly refers to Venus' calendrical role.



In fact, on the next page we show another seal in the general Mitanni style which also shows a figure standing on a Rear Attack, though it must be said that this time it looks more male than female (Salje *MitanniCat* no. 184):

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

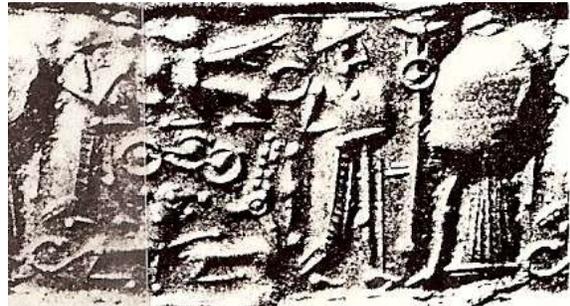
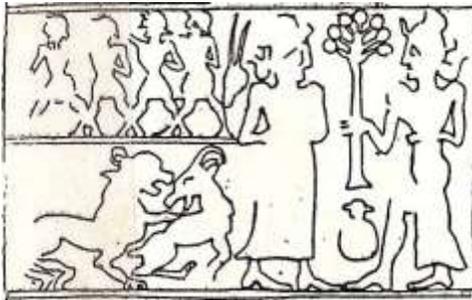
CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

Ratt-30f



These rough and clumsy seals, such as the one from the Berlin Museum below left (VAT 4581), or the one from Porada's **NuziCat** 1021 (below right) - both with conventional Rear Attacks on them - where the figures tend to wear round topped Babylonian helmets, and guilloches become rows of tubular drill holes, were at one stage grouped under the label, 'Kirkuk Style' because originating from the Nuzi area around modern-day Kirkuk:



To give an idea of the commonplace type of middle period Mitanni seal (most seal collections have some) we can group together under this entry a host of minor seals which could date any time between 1500 and 1300 (with apologies for the poor quality of the images):

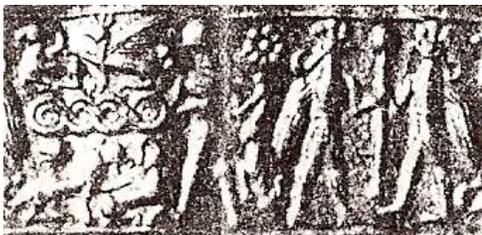


Teissier **MarcopoliCat** 659



Teissier **MarcopoliCat** 589

If we were to come to the firm conclusion that the Rear Attack at this time was particularly associated with the Goddess Venus, then it is not surprising that the motif appears everywhere.



Newell-Osten**Cat** 288



Eisen-Moore**Cat** 173

Ratt-31

FINDSPOT	Tomb of the Nobles no. 1, Kalyvia (near Phaestos), Crete	
ON ARTEFACT	Lentoid stamp seal	
MATERIAL	Onyx	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Heraklion Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	CMS II,3 no.99	
PERIOD & DATE	Late Minoan Period	1500-1400

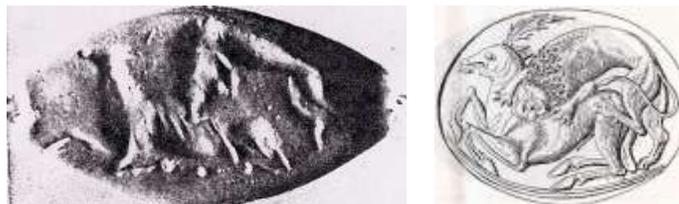
Since Crete was just as devoted to the Goddess as the Levant, it is not surprising to see the theme of the Lion and Prey arriving on Minoan and Mycenaean seals in the Late Bronze Age. (Note, too, that the drawing of the impression does not betray it - and *vice versa*.) I make a rough approximation in terms of matching the rounded and well-modelled workmanship to similar qualities on Syrian Post-Classical Style seals. Twelve cliff tombs were found at the village of Kalyvia in 1901.



For finesse of workmanship, we can set it against a carnelian amygdaloid seal (CMS XI no.11 Berlin Museum FG 42) found at Eleusis, and we could typify them both as mannered, possibly a sign of excessive prosperity:



But looking at the next two seals, the stance of the lion is reminiscent of a much earlier era: they hark back to Sumerian Early Dynastic Period seals where frequently the lion makes an aggressive leap along the length of the bull, its own head seen from above (see *Catalogue B: The Uruk Stance*).



CMS X no.301: Private Collection, Zurich (haematite) Signet ring design from Thisbe¹⁸

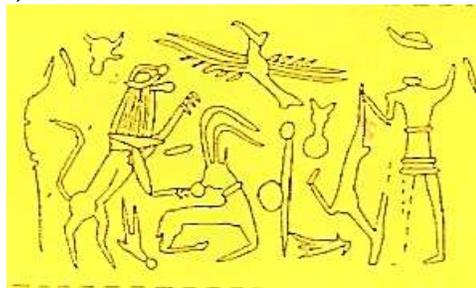
But the question of whether this means they are older than our main item - or in fact a great deal later (on the brink of the Dark Ages) than our main entry we must leave aside until the next catalogue when we are in a position to look at Minoan chronology in detail.

¹⁸ Arthur Evans 'The Ring of Nestor: A Glimpse into the Minoan After-World' (Pt 2) JHS XLV fig.9

Ratt-32

FINDSPOT	Tell Brak, Mitanni Palace (HH Dump)	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal	
MATERIAL	Mottled grey stone	
EXCAVATION REF.	Mallowan excavations B.819 (Mallowan 1947 pl.22, 11/12)	
PRESENT LOCATION	Aleppo Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Donald Matthews in 'The Mitanni Seals from Tell Brak' Ch. 3 Excavations at Tell Brak I: The Mitanni and Old Babylonian periods 1997 - Impression 16/ fig.79	
PERIOD & DATE		1475-1400

To the general rag-bag of ordinary Mitanni seals, to the east we can add those from Tell Brak, out of which the one with Rear Attack on it was actually excavated by Max Mallowan decades before the recent reopening of the site. Several other seals were found at the Mitanni Palace at Brak, but none with the Rear Attack on them.



For the record, we can add in here more seals from Nuzi, not so far geographically from Brak, to underline our earlier point about sharp drawings giving a false idea about the actual quality of the impressions. The two below are from Diana Stein's 'The Pula-Hali Family Archive: Seals and Sealing Practice' **Studies in the Civilisation and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians XI 251-376:**



Stein Pula-Hali no. 135



Stein Pula-Hali no. 43

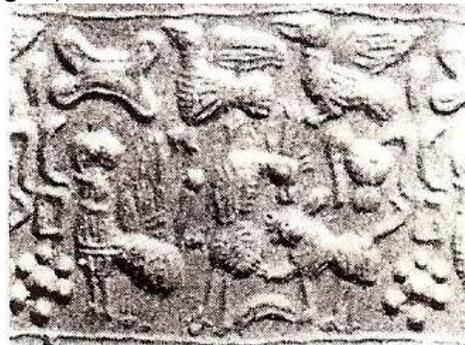


The next entry's seals show how Mitanni influence also extended westwards beyond its Syro-Cappadocian heartland as far as Cyprus, in turn a stepping stone to Crete and mainland Greece.

Ratt-33

FINDSPOT	Tomb, Pyla, Cyprus	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seal (found with Mycenaean and Cypriote pottery)	
MATERIAL	Cuprous sulphide	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Ashmolean Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	1896.5	
PUBLISHED IN	AshCatI 956	
PERIOD & DATE		1430-1330

Usefully, this seal has a precise provenance, and was found in an interesting context. In style it uses unusual hatching but the novel insertion is the Cypriote ingot (referring to their rich copper resources, so important for the making of bronze in the entire region).



The next seal (B.M. 129577/SoutheskCat Qd2) because of the ingot between the bull's horns has also been classed as Cypriote. We have an awkward Rear Attack where the lion takes up the stance against one horn of an enlarged, upside-down bull head (and no body).



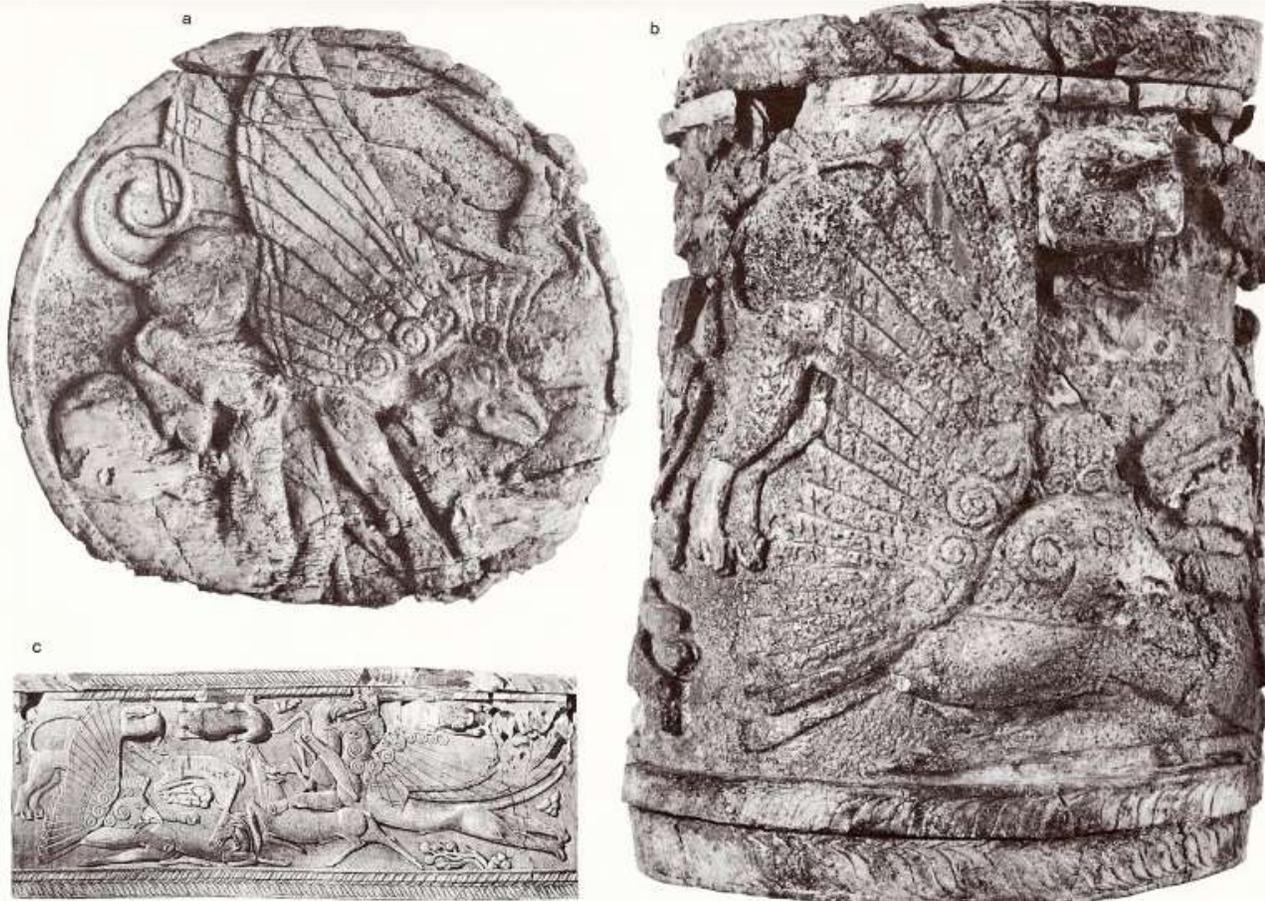
Finally, a third-Mitanni period chalcedony seal (NewellCat 357) also thought to be from Cyprus uses a winged griffin Rear Attack with bull on its own above with crescent over its back. The arched body between the two standing males appears to be in a bull-leaping position, so again we have an association between Rear Attack and that theme.



Ratt-34

FINDSPOT	Mycenaean Tomb, Areopagus, Athens	
ON ARTEFACT	Pyxis	
MATERIAL	Ivory	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Athens, Agora Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	S Hood <i>The Arts in Prehistoric Greece</i> 1978 Ill.112/R D Barnett <i>Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Countries (QEDEM 14)</i> 1982, pl.29	
PERIOD & DATE		1400-1300

Made of a section of elephant tusk, this astonishing container with lid belonged to a woman of high status, perhaps a predecessor of the documented priestesses of Athena. Found on a bench in the tomb chamber along with Mycenaean and Minoan pottery and a copper ladle, also scattered around were 97 small gold ornaments originally sewn onto a dress (see T L Shear¹⁹) - Illustration taken from R D Barnett *ibid.* On the lid (a) a griffin



attacks two deer in Belly Landing mode, while Piet de Jong's drawing (c) of the outside surface of the container itself (b) helps us to unravel two griffin Rear Attacks on bulls, the one on the right in fashionable flying gallop. The style is exaggerated and mannered, but that does not take away from the seriousness of the astronomical language, pointing to the fact that Mycenaean Athens had become a new 0° meridian for the Aegean world.

¹⁹ 'The American Excavations in the Athenian Agora (Campaign of 1939)' *Hesperia* IX, 3 (1940) 260-308

Ratt-35

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Cylinder seals	
MATERIAL	Chalcedony	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	(a) BM 89819 and (b) BM 89745	
PUBLISHED IN	Wiseman 1959 nos 51 and 50	
PERIOD & DATE	Late Mitanni	1350-1200

Amongst Late Mitanni seals, despite one or two of interest such as the two in the British Museum, even the best of them, compared with contemporary Minoan and Mycenaean artefacts, show workmanship of lesser quality, and the overwhelming impression is of a quaint version of old-school Mesopotamian iconography. Now we know to even treat the griffin as a native Elamite element rather than necessarily Aegean, and drinking through a long straw goes right back to Early Dynastic-style seals. Again intriguing is that we have a God standing on the Rear Attack on the damaged seal on the right (c.f. *Ratt-30f*), so we now have two examples of a male God on the Rear Attack compared to the majority showing Venus over one - however, already in the iconographical commentary in this catalogue we have proved the interchangeability of symbols between Baal and Venus.

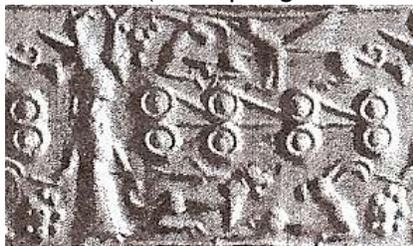


a

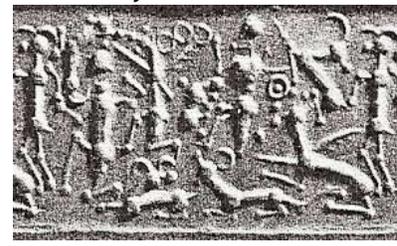


b

The Walters Art Gallery²⁰ shows the more run-of-the-mill Mitanni seal with both plain lion and griffin Rear Attacks paired in the double-register section (c), whilst a similar seal (d) in the Hamburg Museum²¹ again shows a God mounted on a Rear Attack (with apologies for the lack of clarity in these derivative reproductions).

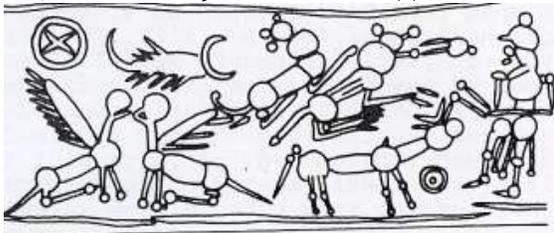


c



d

The Mitanni seal from very late Alalakh Level III (e) (AlalakhCat 94/BM130653) shows just how degraded the style became, confirmed by a further seal (f) in the Ashmolean (1915.241.3, bought Paris (AshCatI 913)).



e



f

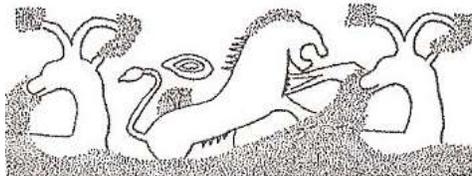
²⁰ Cyrus Gordon 'Western Asiatic Seals in the Walters Art Gallery' *Iraq* VI, seal 52

²¹ Thomas Béran 'Die Altorientalischen Rollsiegel der Ehemaligen Sammlung Johannes Jantzen...' *Arch.Anz.* 83,2 1968, Ill 37

Ratt-36

FINDSPOT	Tell Al Rimah	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealing	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	TR 3005	
PRESENT LOCATION	Iraq Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Barbara Parker 'Middle Assyrian Seal Impressions from Tell al-Rimah' Iraq XXXIX 1977, 257-268, no.35	
PERIOD & DATE	Middle Assyrian	1300-1200

Most Middle Assyrian seals with provenance come either from the German excavations at Aššur or the later excavations at Tell al-Rimah higher up the Tigris river (see map, *Ill.7- 9*) led by Max Mallowan, with Barbara Parker as seal expert. Her two papers in *Iraq*²² give a full view of the Assyrian seals found there, which in many ways give us more information than the ones from Aššur (we have already written about the seals with the Uruk Stance on them (see *Catalogue B*)). On both sites the seals or sealings are with or on business documents from find-spots associated with the palace and temple areas. Ironically, in relation to its heyday when merchants set out from Aššur to Kültepe, no seal evidence from that earlier level of the city has so far been excavated!



The particular hallmark of the earlier Middle Assyrian seals (usually made of 'pinkish limestone') is the elimination not only of human figures, but also of fussy detail - and again drawings can belie their rough quality:



Aššur (Berlin Museum VA 3993/Moortgat VR 651) Newell/van der OstenCat no. 410

These Middle Assyrian seals fit into the context of the Mitanni Empire overall in the common use of the motif as a matter of course, and the entry of the griffin as an alternative to the lion. Usually one realistic tree is sufficient to suggest the landscape setting, and astronomical pointers continue to be placed in the sky. The earliest Middle Assyrian seals are plain and unstylised, as below left, an unprovenanced seal in the Pierpoint Morgan Collection (*PierMorCat* 602), but over the 200 years of the period the disc drill comes in and the style becomes more extravagant in style (right, Berlin Museum VA 653/Moortgat *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel* 652):



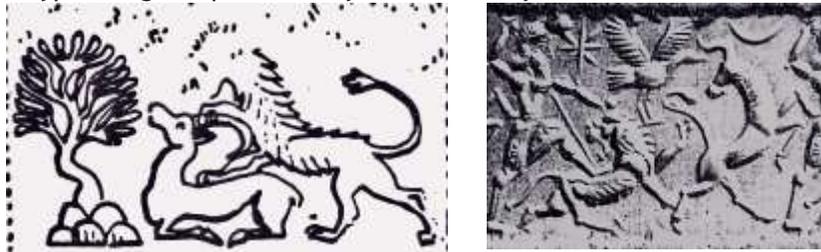
²² Her earlier paper, 'Cylinder Seals from Tell al-Rimah' Iraq XXXVII 21-38 describe later-level seals of Mitanni or Neo-Assyrian date.

Ratt-36f

The progression from the 13C to the 12C is again exemplified by (bottom left) the seal design from Aššur showing an archer countering the lion's rear attack, the remains of a crescent Moon above, judged to be from the earliest (Tukulti-Ninurta I) level of the site (ZA n.f. XIII pl.12) - as against the seal on the right (bought Baghdad, Berlin Museum VA 2110/Moortgat VR 582) showing a highly exaggerated griffin in rear attack on a bull using the wheel drill to execute its wild design. Note the lozenge in this and our main entry which analysts relate to earlier Kassite seals (that barely used the lion and prey subject at all).



The progression is again exemplified in another drawing of a 13C Aššur seal in its admirable simplicity (below left) as compared to the hunter fully engaged in his counter-attack on a vehement Rear Attack with Venus star, Polar eagle and crescent in the sky (Delaporte LouvCat 16/Louvre A673), where an equal balance between disc drill use for the linear features and ordinary round drill modelling has been achieved, its melodrama later homogenised into the full Neo-Assyrian style. In some later designs the huntsman is even merged with the lion, becoming a Sagittarian-type of figure spectacularly surrounded by stars.



At the same time, it is fascinating to note the takeup of the subject in the Mycenaean world, perhaps at first to please customers in the Levant, and painted on their exports rather than used at home. Unusually the motif appears on this Mycenaean stirrup-jar that I came across while wandering around the British Museum cases (below left). Another curiosity is the Middle Assyrian seal (right) whose human figures are thought by Moortgat-Correns²³ to have been recarved in Babylonian times, while the Rear Attack retains its Middle Assyrian character, evidently a piece of booty used as an amulet by a Roman soldier at the Mainz legionary fort where it was found!



Looking ahead to coming Neo-Assyrian artefacts, we are reminded that the lion and prey theme will rarely feature on either Neo-Assyrian seals or in large-scale monumental art (we have shown one instance of the Uruk Stance on embroidered borders on Aššurnasirpal's robes on one Nineveh relief illustrated as **Urusta-38**, and we will see that other compositional types, including the Rear Attack, appear also as scratched embroidery only on the same reliefs). However, with our next entries, the bronze bowls - considered a Phoenician specialisation - where there is direct Levantine context and the subject being perennial in the region, it continues to surface.

²³ H Klumbach and U Moortgat-Correns 'Orientalisches Rollsiegel com Mainzer Legionslager' *Germania* XLVI 36-40, pl.3

Ratt-37

FINDSPOT	NW Palace, Nimrud	
ON ARTEFACT	Bowl	
MATERIAL	Bronze	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum 000	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Layard <i>Monuments of Nineveh</i> II 1853 pl.60; Frankfort <i>Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient</i> 1970 ill.386	
PERIOD & DATE		1100-800

In Chapter 19 on Astronomy, I date a Syrian Egyptianising bronze bowl to 1200BC (if not even earlier - see relevant commentary section for this Catalogue). When we come to the hundreds of bronze bowls found at Nimrud (at the time thought by Layard to be Nineveh - hence the erroneous title of the book that first publishes these bowls), Frankfort (ibid.) states baldly that although some of the bowls must have dated to the reign of Sargon, others were ‘probably older’. If we look at the example below, its static regularity marks it as one of the later ones, and entirely Assyrian. The outer rim is decorated with a procession of bulls, and the inner circle with a procession of antelope. Between the two is a circle of lion attacking cattle both from the rear and front.



If we look at an earlier bowl to compare, the one below bought on the Iranian antique market showing one Rear Attack punctuating the procession of three other bulls round the outer rim is, I believe, the kind of bowl one might expect to see at the start of the Middle Assyrian period (c.1290), though one cannot discount it being a provincial work made within a wider date range taking it to the end of that same period, around 1090.



Ratt-38

FINDSPOT	NW Palace, Nimrud	
ON ARTEFACT	Bowl	
MATERIAL	Bronze	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum 0000	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Layard 1853 pl.67; Frankfort 1970 ill.386	
PERIOD & DATE		1100-1000

If we look at another example from the Nimrud bowl hoard, this one has a riot of lions and griffins in Rear Attack mode all over it, seeming to match up to the more melodramatic seal styles coming out at the very end of the Middle Assyrian period (it is certainly not Neo-Assyrian). The wide date margin between 1100 and 800 can probably be closed up by 200/250 years, as suggested in the works of James and Rohl (see main commentary).



Again, if we compare it with yet another bowl from the same hoard (below left, Frankfort *ibid.* pls 172/3/BM 118780 - a griffin is opposite), despite Egyptianising elements it is Syrian in character (the kneeling hunter to me places it very much earlier, to as far back as 1500). This is an 'antique' within Ashurnasirpal's bowl collection, and along with the Faroughi bowl cited in Chapter 19, must have served as a prototype for Assyrian imitations. One such we see below right (Cleveland Museum no. 47.491, classed by Markoe 1985 as his U7).



Ratt-39

FINDSPOT	Tomb at Marlik	
ON ARTEFACT	Goblet	
MATERIAL	Silver	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	BM 134387 - author's photo	
PUBLISHED IN	Excavation reports by E Negahban (1960s)	
PERIOD & DATE		c.1100-800

The items assembled in this entry come from sites in what we could call the Middle and Neo-Assyrian hinterland (much like the many small sites beyond Susa in the 4-3M) and their dating has a wide margin of inaccuracy. This hinterland supplied raw materials such as metals, stones, produce and animals (notably horses from Luristan) to the Assyrian administration and were linked not so much by rivers, but by what has been called the 'piedmontese route' - the network of trackways running along the foothills of the more or less continuous mountain system running from Central Asia to Afghanistan, Iran, Assyria and Urartu, Anatolia and the Lebanon. At the Iranian sites along it - Marlik, Hasanlu and Luristan - craftsmen appear to have channelled the iconography of the urban administrations into prestige items for local clan suppliers and chiefs, creating an unofficial art that aped at local level the prestige objects of the Assyrians.



The quiver cover from Luristan is one with a Rear Attack half-way down (see P R S Moorey²⁴ pl.1), woven in with other well-known motifs from the CANEA - whilst an abstract version on a pin from Luristan (Farouhi Collection, Teheran²⁵) typifies the primitive inventiveness of the metalworkers of the region.

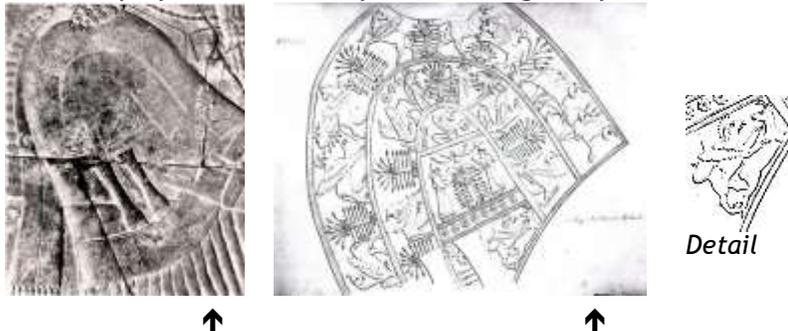
²⁴ 'Some Elaborately Decorated bronze Quiver Plaques made in Luristan c.750-650BC' Iran XIII 1975 19-29

²⁵ Illustrated in Edith Porada The Art of Ancient Iran 1965 fig. 56

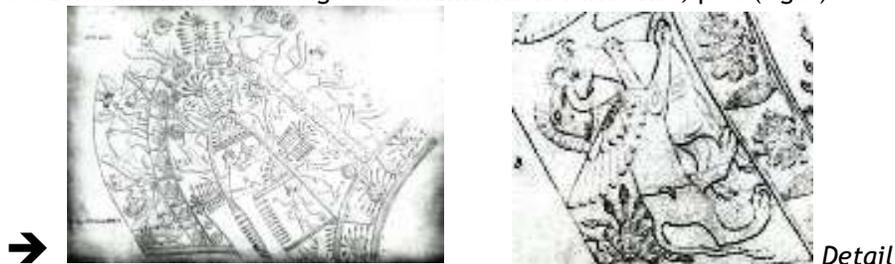
Ratt-40

FINDSPOT	Nimrud, Northwest Palace of Aššurnasirpal II, room G	
ON ARTEFACT	Incised representation of embroidery on shoulder covering, 'King and Genie' orthostat	
MATERIAL	Gypsum	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hants)	
MUSEUM REF.	S856.3.2 (Gift of Sir Henry Rawlinson)	
PUBLISHED IN	J B Stearns <i>Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (AfO Beiheft 15)</i> 1961 panel G11; Layard drawing for <i>Mon.Nin.I</i> in British Museum no.lvii;	
PERIOD & DATE	Neo-Assyrian	883-859

Ignoring the Forward Attack at the top of the shoulder for the time being (dealt with under *Catalogue E*) we concentrate on the bottom centre border of the embroidered panel covering the king's shoulder (below left, arrowed) where we see a Rear Attack by a griffin, a belt round its lower torso, on an antelope (easier to decipher from Layard's drawing (right)). We have to remember Aššur's pre-eminence as a textile centre from the previous millennium, and that the engraved designs on the robe borders from their style may have been executed by provincial craftsmen from Urartu, Marlik or Hasanlu since the lion attacks in particular seem to have been copied from Middle Assyrian seals. This is the conclusion of Canby²⁶, who also makes the overall point that such rare highly decorated robes usually represent the same subjects as the monumental palace reliefs themselves, other than the symbolic lion and prey motifs evidently *not* referring to royal hunts.



The same griffin Rear Attack on an antelope appears on the bottom left of the shoulder panel (below) also on the king's robes on another panel in the same room (the Uruk Stance item at the top is already itemised as *Urusta-38* - Stearns' panel G8 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY (33.143.4). Sheeler 1946 usefully gives the full picture of the panel -given in *Urusta-38* - showing the full scene of the king in his robes but, again, the detail is enhanced in Layard's British Museum drawing for *Monuments of Nineveh I*, pl.8 (right).



If the bronze bowls are anything to go by, taking all the lion and prey images together, it is likely their more cosmic meaning is being referred to. We will need to take into account the iconographical programme in this one room of panels G8 and G11 (also G7 and G16) in the *CANEA* chapter, to come to a wider view of their role.

²⁶ J V Canby 'Decorated Garments in Ashurnasirpal's Sculpture' *Iraq xxxiii* 31-53 with plates

Ratt-41

FINDSPOT	Nimrud, Piazza in front of an outer gateway (possibly to a temple)	
ON ARTEFACT	Obelisk	
MATERIAL	Black diorite	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	BM ANE 118885	
PUBLISHED IN	Layard <i>Mon.Nin.</i> I pls. 53-6; Frankfort 1970 ill.193	
PERIOD & DATE	Shalmaneser III	c.827
INSCRIPTION MATERIAL: Translation of full text on all four sides of the obelisk given in Charles F Horne <i>Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East: Babylonia and Assyria</i> pp 360-72		

One-line inscriptions run along the blank dividing strips between five image strips on The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III describing tribute bearers as coming from five main areas of the Assyrian Empire (contrasting with the 9 or 10 zones on the earlier, very worn White Obelisk of Ashurnasirpal I placed near it). From top to bottom, each pictorial band on all four sides represents tribute coming in from (i) Western Iran (Gilzanu); (ii) Israel; (iii) Musri, with camels (not Sinaitic Egypt but probably Arabia); (iv) the Middle Euphrates, Suhi (with Rear Attack) and (v) South Turkey (Patina). In the main long text running round the crown and base of the obelisk above and below the five picture bands, Shalmaneser honours the Planetary Gods - ending with Ishtar - and then proceeds to describe year by year all his valiant deeds in conquering the territories of his wide-ranging kingdom.



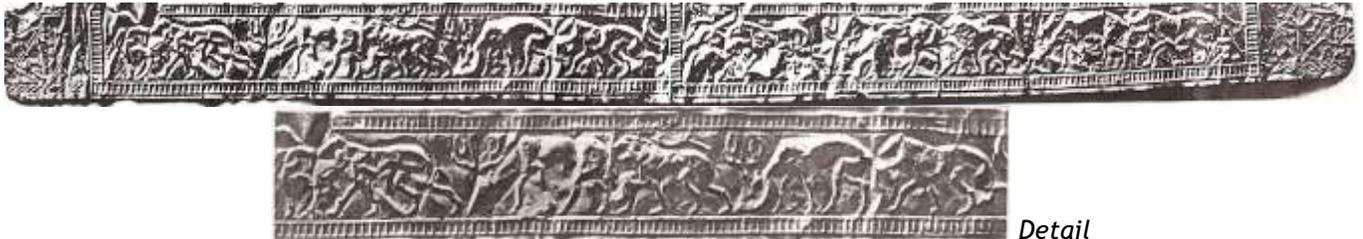
All we need to note in this catalogue entry is the appearance of a Rear Attack on level (iv) of the front panel (above left, very much Middle Assyrian in character) which matches a similar Rear Attack just discernible on the White Obelisk of three centuries earlier (above right). Since C C Smith²⁷ takes the inscription as an overall declaration vaunting the power of Shalmaneser III, the Rear Attack could simply be taken as tribute of lions for the royal hunt, and at the same time a realistic hunting scene expressing imperial power in that ritual - but we will need to consider the iconographic programme for the whole obelisk in the CANEA section before deciding whether the motif simply refers to the home region of Assyria itself (Suhi) or whether in its archaic Old Assyrian style it is by implication also a cipher of allegiance to Ishtar and all that it implies in calendrical overtones for the Feast of Ishtar itself - precisely the time when tribute was brought in by vassals for the New Year celebrations (as we know very well from the 2M Mari example described in our main text).

²⁷ 'Jehu and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III' in A L Merrill et al. (eds) *Scripture in History and Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam* Pittsburgh 1977 71-105

Ratt-42

FINDSPOT	Grave in the Athens Kerameikos	
ON ARTEFACT	Stamped band	
MATERIAL	Gold	
EXCAVATION REF.	Found in association with geometric pottery	
PRESENT LOCATION	Louvre	
MUSEUM REF.	MNB 475	
PUBLISHED IN	Ohly, <i>Griechische Goldbleche</i> 1953, A5	
PERIOD & DATE	Geometric Period	8C

During the 8C BC the Rear Attack spread throughout the Orientalising Greek world as a standard decorative motif. In the case of gold bands found on the Greek mainland in funerary contexts - which seem mostly to have been cladding for boxes (see next entry), we know many come from female graves and the question is whether the friezes are intentional allusions to the Great Goddess of Asia.



Detail

Compare these flimsy pieces with a fine funerary headband from another Athenian grave in the Berlin Museum - and also a similar gold strip in the Louvre (MNC 1291 - Ohly A12) probably from a box, also from the Kerameikos.



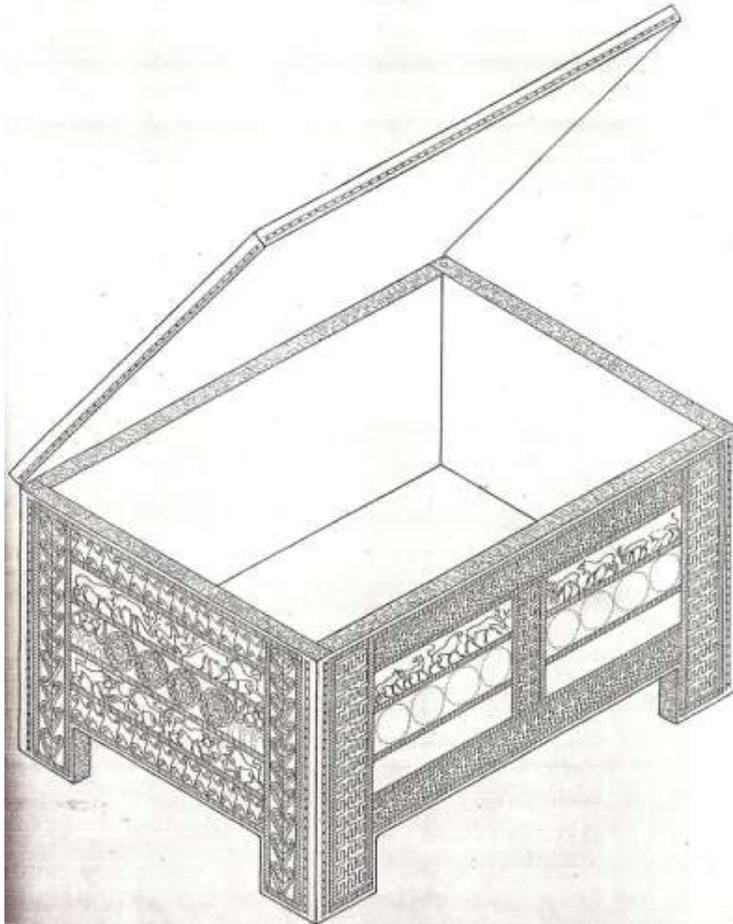
Similar stamped small-scale friezes appear on Etruscan black bucchero ware, or incised on cauldrons as in the British Museum examples of *Ratt-0*. Even further west, the motif is incised on this Punic ivory from Cruz de Negro, Spain (illustrated in R.D.Barnett *Ancient Ivories in the Middle East* (1982) pl.54a), where instead of a bull the lion attacks a hare, also an animal of the Moon.



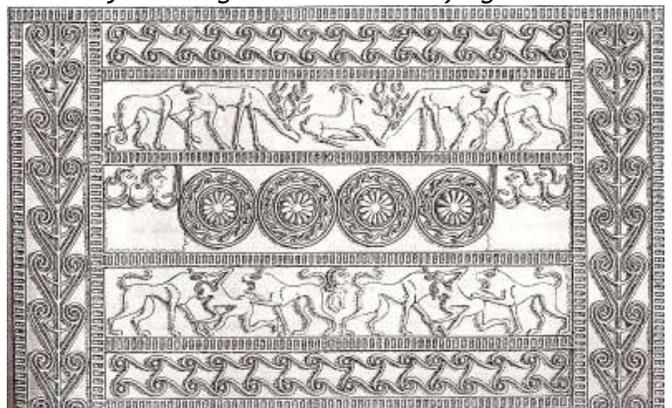
Ratt-43

FINDSPOT	Female Grave at Eleusis	
ON ARTEFACT	Section of stamped metal sheet cladding for a wooden box	
MATERIAL	Gold	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Athens National Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	NM 3637	
PUBLISHED IN	Ohly, <i>Griechische Goldbleche</i> 1953, A7. Reconstruction of box (Ohly pl.16) assembles fragments A7-8; A9-12; A13-14 & A11-12	
PERIOD & DATE	Geometric Period	8C BC

There was enough of the gold cladding left in the grave at Eleusis for archaeologists to be able to reconstruct what they imagine was originally a wooden box covered with the metal sheeting mainly decorated with spiral and volute patterning, but interspersed with small friezes of lion attacking prey or humans.



Fragment A7, thought to come from the side of a box and joined together below with fragments A8-12

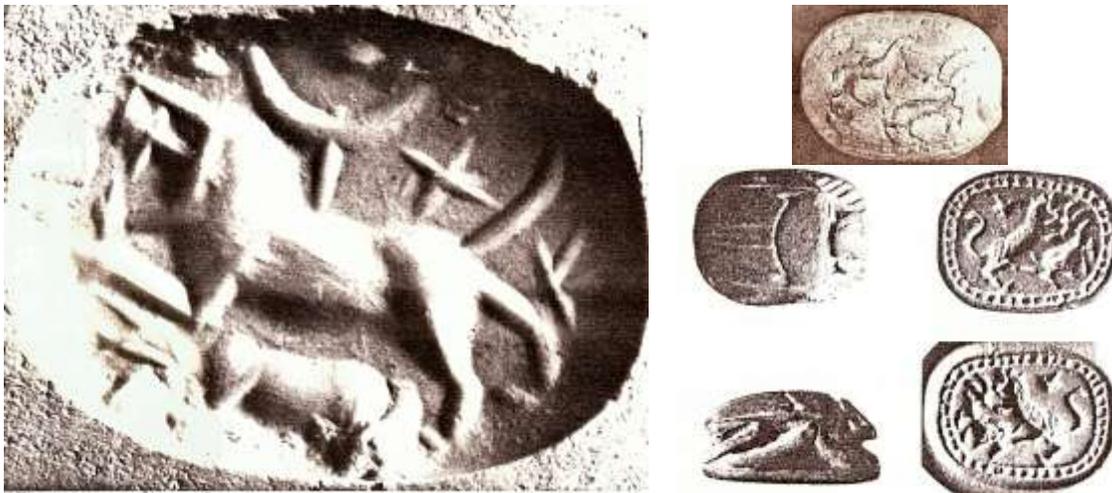


Such thin gold strips seem to have been common in the tombs of Attica at this time, and so it will not be surprising in the Archaic Period to see the subject appear on the Pediment of the Pro-Parthenon on the Akropolis at Athens (Ratt-00).

Ratt-44

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced	
ON ARTEFACT	Scaraboid stamp seal (plain on top)	
MATERIAL	?Limestone	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Geneva Museum, Switzerland	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Vollenweider GenevCat 20435	
PERIOD & DATE		8C BC
INSCRIPTION:	Three Phoenician letters	

The stamp seal that is our main item is interesting because of the three Phoenician letters engraved over the Rear Attack, perhaps of religious significance and referring to it. Similar scarab stamp seals (below right) have been found in Tarquinia, indicating Hyksos influence on the Etruscans as well as the better-known Anatolian sources. Gradually over the decades the evidence has built up showing the importance of sea-routes between the Levant and the Aegean to explain the spread of the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art (the **CANEA**). It is difficult to place in strict chronological order the following items since they usually have no precise stratigraphy.



The half-panel ivory plaque in the British Museum (below left - BM GR1905.11-3.2) is from Etruria, while the section of a carved 'cultic step' now in the Florence Archaeological Museum is from Tarquinia - both of which we can roughly date to the same period:

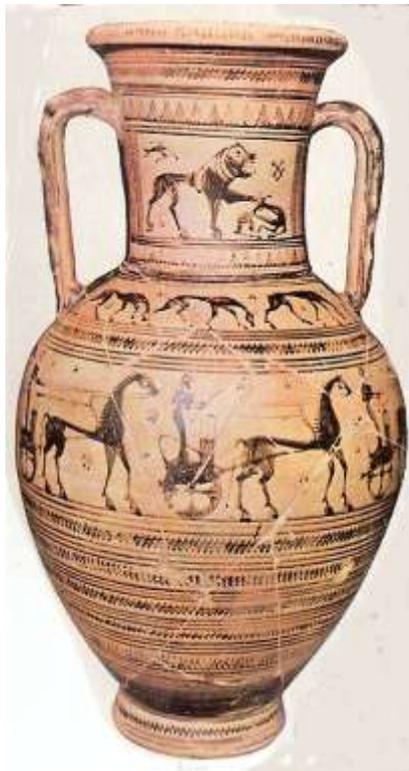


Suffice it to say that for the purposes of this catalogue, along with the previous and next entries they serve as roughly placed signposts to flag up the export of images such as the Rear Attack to all corners of the 8-7C Greek world, thus melding Italy, Sicily and Greece it into the ancient near eastern *koine*.

Ratt-45

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced, Attica, Greece	
ON ARTEFACT	Neck-handled amphora	
MATERIAL	Painted red clay	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	BM 1936.10-17.1	
PUBLISHED IN	John Boardman Greek Art rev'd edn 1974, Ill 16; Schweizer 1971 pl.45	
PERIOD & DATE	Late Geometric	730-720

The Rear Attack found its way onto Greek pottery as early as the late 8C BC, when human activity and animal scenes began to be inserted between the lines of geometric decoration. Many were placed on graves in the Kerameikos at Athens, though this particular one was bought on the market. The Rear Attack is the centre of attention on the neck of the vase, and if it is to be associated with Homeric battle scenes shown lower down it may be in honour of clear-eyed Athena who took the side of the Mycenaeanes in the battle for Troy.



I have set it against an early Archaic Attic hydria of about 20 years later (Schefold *Die Griechen und ihre Nachbarn* 1967 pl. 172), though the animal figures consist of sphinxes and lions processing behind each other.

Ratt-46

FINDSPOT	
ON ARTEFACT	Mitra (armour piece for protecting the belly)
MATERIAL	Bronze
EXCAVATION REF.	
PRESENT LOCATION	
MUSEUM REF.	
PUBLISHED IN	H Bartels in E.Kunze (ed.) DAI Olympiabericht VIII 1967 Berlin 196-212, pl.103
PERIOD & DATE	c.710-670

Mitrae have mostly been found in Crete (though not decorated with figurative themes) - except this one of very fine workmanship (only the right side remains) and two others found at Delphi and Uruklik/Ruek in Thrace, underlining the importance of Minoan prototypes for the development of the earliest Greek art. Enough remains of the subject on this mitra found in the north wall of the Olympic stadium to read it as the return of Odysseus to Penelope - though other scholars read it as Theseus and Ariadne (both women are featured as weavers), given the latter story is directly linked to Crete. The focus for us is that the heroine sits on a throne decorated with the rosettes of Venus over what we can term a Rear Attack, suggesting her rank as priestess of the Goddess.



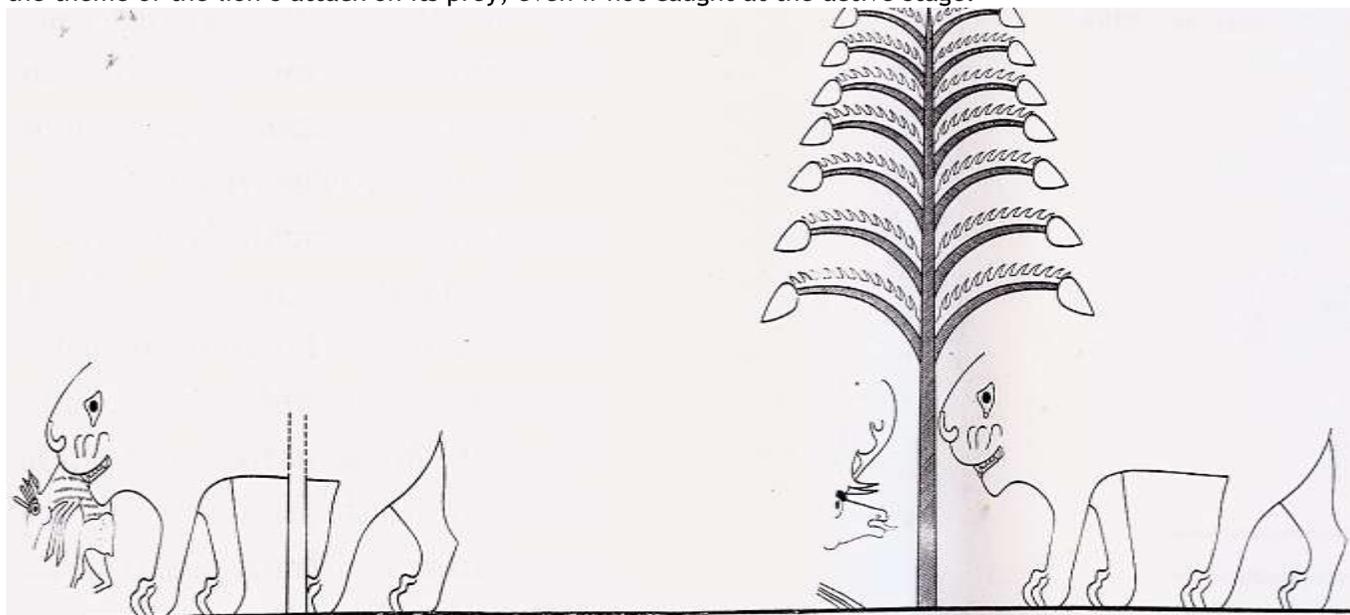
This is probably later in date than another bronze fragment with Rear Attack in raised relief also from Olympia (Olympiabericht III, pl.66) which again shows Ishtar's rosette over the animal group, again a stag.



Ratt-47

FINDSPOT	Level I, Temple-Palace, Altintepe, Kingdom of Urartu,	
ON ARTEFACT	Wall of large reception room	
MATERIAL	Painting (à secco)	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION		
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	T Ozguç Altintepe 1969 figs 14, 34, 35 and pl.II	
PERIOD & DATE	After the reign of Arğišti II (713-679)	c.660

Ozguç interprets the lioness and stag either side of a tree as in potential attack mode, and the lioness walking off with the doe in its mouth as the second stage of the narrative, pointing out that this subject never appeared on Assyrian wall programmes. Nonetheless several Urartian palaces, including Altintepe, did model their wall paintings in their palaces and temples on Assyrian prototypes such as those as Khorsabad or Arslan Tash, using the same bands of decorative motifs such as rosettes, pine cones, pomegranates in geometric panels framing wider friezes showing Gods on their animals, winged sphinxes, genies and sacred trees, as well as processions of lions and bulls (without their Gods standing on them). This particular frieze at Altintepe, is unique in bringing in the theme of the lion's attack on its prey, even if not caught at the active stage.



Ozguç points out that, just as in the Assyrian cities palace and temple were located next to each other, linked by a common courtyard with large audience chambers or reception rooms for religious ceremonies or official gatherings so the same arrangements on a more humble scale are seen at Urartian centres. But in Urartian palaces - and very obviously at Altintepe - Hittite tradition was woven into the plan of great throne room halls based on the *bīt hilani* layout of a columned entrance portico. This he sees as the earliest prototype of the Apadana, later so spectacularly formalised by the Persians at Susa and Persepolis. The lion and prey theme is therefore part of such a ritual context for both Persians and the Urartian kings, and again we have to ask whether the symbolism is meant to refer to the key God and Goddess represented by these animals, or to local calendrical matters (or both). Such wall paintings were taken up in Phrygia and in Archaic Greece, all through contiguity along northern Anatolia to Lydia and beyond.

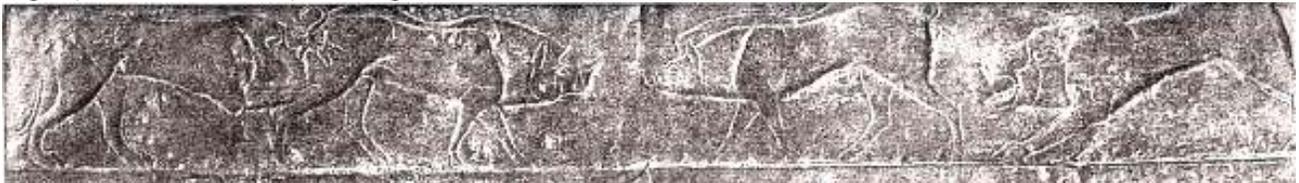
Ratt-48

FINDSPOT	Doric Temple of Athena	
ON ARTEFACT	Architrave frieze panel	
MATERIAL	Limestone	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	?Assos	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	U Finster-Hotz Der Bauschmuck des Athenatempels von Assos 1984 pl.XV,27/most recently in B Westcoat The Temple of Athena at Assos , Oxford 2012 (not yet seen)	
PERIOD & DATE	Archaic	625-600

Considering items preceding this one, it is not surprising to come next to an entire temple dedicated to Athena, in the Troad area of Turkey. Three quarters of the architrave relief consists of lion and prey groups in different compositions, and we will consider the programme of the entire temple in the CANEA section. This is the only Rear Attack, unusually consisting of the lion biting the rear of a pig or boar.



Neatly exemplifying the spread of the motif westwards to Italy, first below is a bronze panel from a cart from Perugia (Mühlestein Ill.163) showing two Rear Attacks on boars:



Inghirami in **Monumenti Etruschi III** (pl.7 xxxii) deliberately illustrated them separately, and in such a way as to suggest they were *meant* to imitate stone (perhaps intentionally echoing temple relief panels - whether from Assos or elsewhere):



Ratt-49

FINDSPOT	Tarquinia, Italy	
ON ARTEFACT	Stamped bucchero ware	
MATERIAL	Black clay	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	GR 1867.5-8.846 (Vase H186)	
PUBLISHED IN		
PERIOD & DATE		600-575

The animal frieze including kneeling human figures with perhaps one lion and prey attack and the odd sphinx in the circuit continued to be a cliché with the Etruscans in the Archaic period, and on the common bucchero-ware, following Levantine practice, speeded up production by stamping such designs onto the wet clay.



Compare this cup with the bronze cauldron from the Barone tomb at Capua (end of the 6C) in the British Museum (GR 1855.8-16.1 - Bronze 560) with frieze in similar vein running round the widest point of its belly showing a varied procession of human activity, trees, bulls, lions and a Rear Attack (detail below right).

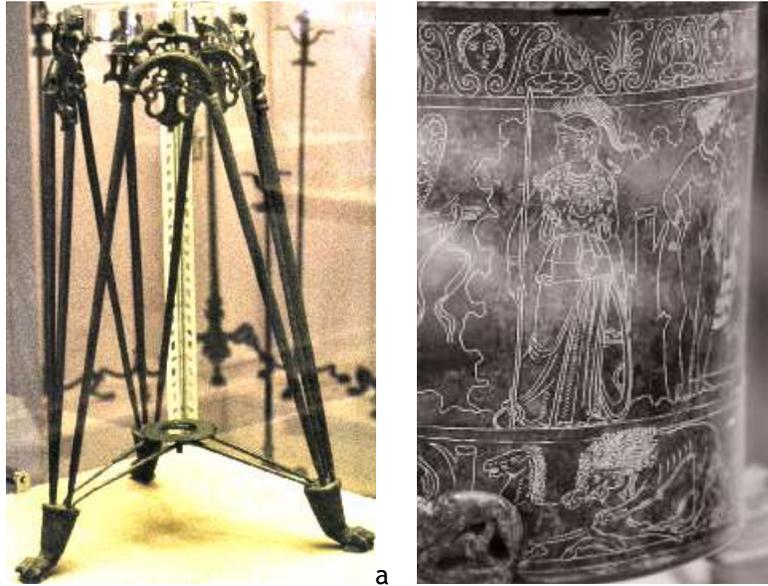


It is tempting to place these items in the same time-frame as the 8C Etruscan frieze-work in gold, but a rough generalisation for differentiation is the appearance of humans in the 7-6C examples.

Ratt-50

FINDSPOT	Vulci	
ON ARTEFACT	Tripod	
MATERIAL	Bronze	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Berlin Antikenesammlung	
MUSEUM REF.	Antikensammlung Museum Guide	
PUBLISHED IN	Author's photo taken in the Museum (a)	
PERIOD & DATE	Etruscan	c.550

Tripods from Vulci tombs have found their way into the several museums, the ones of this type dating to the 6C - the Archaic Greek period. Their iconography varies, but the two here feature a Rear Attack on the hooped tops of the legs - no doubt in honour of the Goddess, since looking at the detail of a bronze cistus of the 4C in the BM (author's photo below right (c)) by then showing anthropomorphised renditions of the Goddess, Athena is placed over a Rear Attack of lion on mule/horse - likely to be intentional, explaining the new image in terms of the old.



The black and white Rear Attack below right (b) shows the detail from another tripod of the Vulci type (unprovenanced) from the Hermitage Museum (Block 1969 ill.13). Tripods provided the framework to hold a cauldron, such as the one in the previous entry perhaps, and probably echo the equipment at Delphi itself, including the choice of the very Rear Attack motif that appeared on the Temple of Apollo pediments at Delphi.



We feature a third tripod of the same type (in the British Museum) featuring a Forward Attack in the same positioning on the leg hoops in *Catalogue E*.

Ratt-51

FINDSPOT	Vettersfelde, Brandenburg, Germany	
ON ARTEFACT	Fish-shaped armour ornament, four shield roundels and dagger scabbard	
MATERIAL	Gold	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Berlin Antikenesammlung	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Schefold Die Griechen und ihre Nachbarn 1967 pl. 340a&b/Rostovzieff Scyths and Greeks in S Russia catalogue items 40/41	
PERIOD & DATE		525-500

These particular items were found with twenty other gold items in a field, and thought to have originally been buried with a Scythian warrior, indicating just how far afield Scythians would migrate from their Central Asian heartland that impinged on the Graeco-Persian border area of the Black Sea region where quite clearly iconographical exchanges went on - as well as conflict (Darius tried unsuccessfully to beat them back in 516). The Rear Attack appears on these three items - *in potentia* for two items and definitely so in the case of the fish. A cabuchon stone like the remaining one on the shield roundels also inlaid the eye of the fish.



In this context it is interesting to set against them a contemporary conoid Persian stamp seal of dark green glass above (PierMorCat-843). Though generally scholars state that the source of Scythian borrowings was more likely to be Greek, it is just as likely to have been Persian (the Greeks themselves took the motif from Persia - either directly from Persian-satrapies in Anatolia, or via Lydia and Cycladic sea routes -Sardis itself was strongly influenced by its contacts with Cyrus (see commentary in main text regarding Croesus' relations with Delphi).

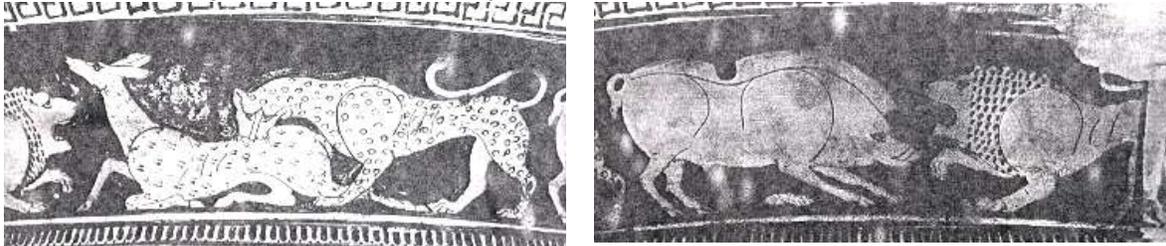
Ratt-52

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced, Attica	
ON ARTEFACT	Lekythos	
MATERIAL	Black figure on white clay	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Geneva Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	I736.1891 (Anc.Coll.)	
PUBLISHED IN	Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum Geneva 2, pl.71, 1-3	
PERIOD & DATE		525-500

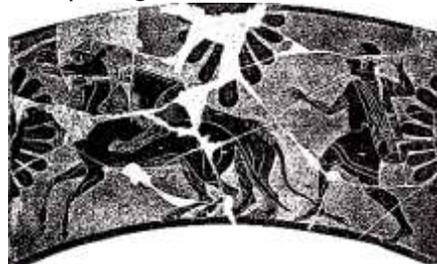
All Lion and Prey compositional types appear on Greek vases in this period up to the Persian War: they can be related to monumental sculpture on temples both in Lydia (Temple of Diana at Ephesus) and the mainland (Temple of Apollo at Delphi). The Rear Attack on a ram on the lekythos may refer to the Vernal Point in Aries.



We also see a Rear Attack on a Red Figure Krater of around the same time from the Ferrara National Museum (CVA Italy XXXVII (I) no. 2739 illustrated pl.6/3,4) which contrasts leopard with male lion as predators - and also as prey doe in contrast to the boar - so much in favour at this time. Though the second pair is a Forward Attack we include it to match against the 7C Assos temple slab (Ratt-48).



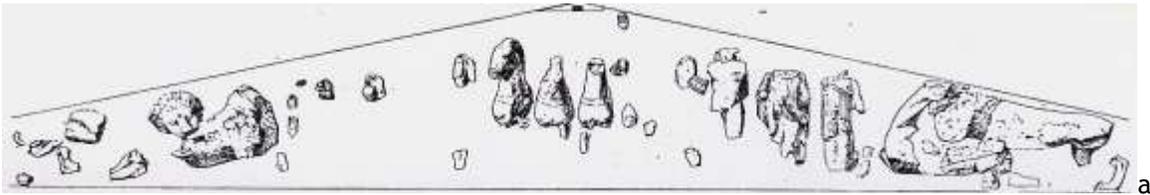
The introduction of mule or horse as prey in the Archaic Period is seen again on a Black-Figure Hydria in Berlin from Caere - borderline between Rear Attack and Uruk Stance - discussed by Winter (Jdl XV 1900 82-92 fig.1) in relation to the sculptural style of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus (most notably the separation of the locks of the lion-man in relation to the lion gutter openings on its cima).



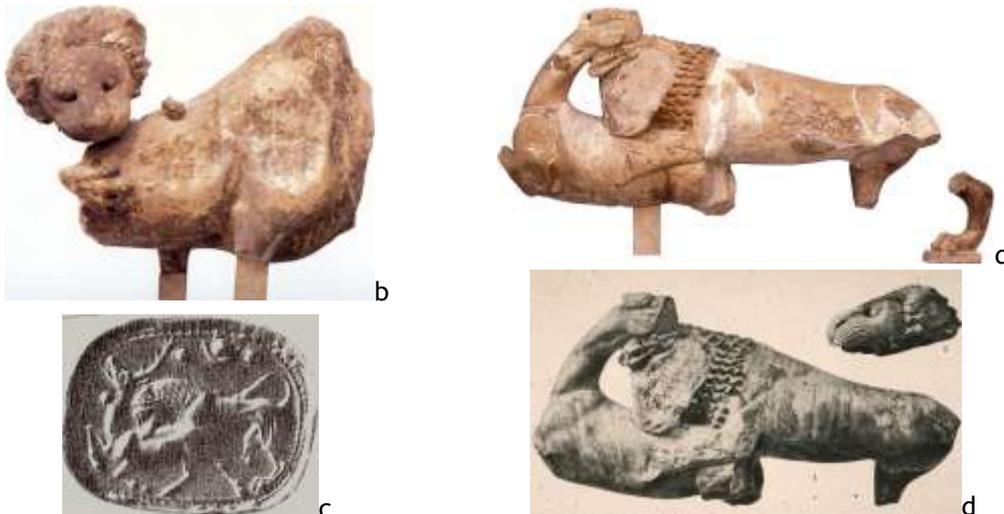
Ratt-53

FINDSPOT	Delphi, Greece	
ON ARTEFACT	East Pediment sculptures (related to the East Pediment sculptures)	
MATERIAL	Parian marble	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Delphi Museum	
PUBLISHED IN	Petros G Themelis <i>The Delphi Museum</i> 1981/W Fuchs <i>Die Skulptur der Griechen</i> 1983/Rosina Colonia <i>The Archaeological Museum of Delphi</i> 2006	
PERIOD & DATE	The only formally dated Greek temple pediment, secured from the building contract made with the Alkmeonids.	513-505

All the small items of the last few entries serve as pointers not only to links with monumental reliefs from the earliest temple pediments at Korkyra and Athens with their confronted lions, but also with the very early mother temples of West Anatolia such as the Temple of Athena at Assos (see *Ratt-48*) and the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, both channels for oriental influence into Athens, Sparta and Delphi itself.



Pre-eminent amongst such temples, due to international reliance on its Oracle and its instigation of Greek colonisation throughout the Mediterranean, is the East Pediment sculpture from the rebuilt Temple of Apollo at Delphi, from whose assembled fragments (a above)²⁸ enough remains to show there were two Rear Attacks at the corners (b/d-colour, Colonia *ibid.* 224/222). Repositioning all the fragments makes it possible to reconstruct the original scene (e) of Apollo the Sun in his chariot, accompanied by the maidens and youths of the Months. An alternative layout is given by Themelis²⁹), but there is no doubt about the Rear Attacks at the corners.



We glean an interesting pointer from a contemporary orientalisising agate scarab seal³⁰ in the Bibliothèque Nationale (c above) from Etruria - colonised, we are reminded, from Anatolian Phocaea or Crete- where above

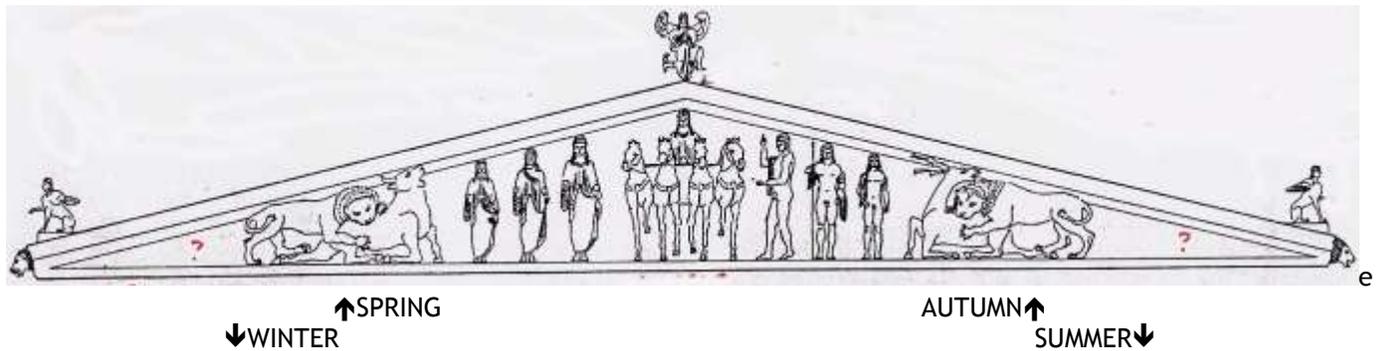
²⁸ a is from *Fouilles de Delphes* II (editorship of F Homolle): the sculpture fragments b/d first appeared in *Fouilles de Delphes* IV pls 32-4

²⁹ Because of the clarification given by the colouring, colour versions of e/f and *Ill. 7- 81* are from Themelis' *Guide to the Delphi Museum*.

³⁰ John Boardman *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* no. 296

Ratt-53f

the Rear Attack carved on it appears the symbol of the Sun inside the Crescent Moon - so familiar with from Levantine seals of the previous millennium, along with two further blobs, probably stellar or planetary in nature.



Fuchs (*ibid.* e/f line drawing figs 427/428) conveniently marshalls the most common iconographical reconstruction of the fragments on both pediments. The sculptures on the West Pediment which we can think of as the Artemis end has enough left of it to indicate it represented the Battle of the Gods and Giants, perhaps standing for the passing of the Seasons as the Winds play on Earth from all directions. Alternatively they may be warriors of the Trojan War - but for us it is again the sculptures in the extreme corners that are of concern to us where on the left a male is shown with the Python of Apollo behind him - on the right a lion attacking another male warrior.

Jean Richer³¹ in his inspired overview of the zodiacal purpose of the entire Greek temple system saw the corner groups on the pediments as marking the seasons, and I agree, though I reallocate them as the above. The two Rear Attacks thus represent the *Equinoctial* points of the Year (the Bull being Taurus in Spring and the Stag, Autumn) whilst since the groups at the corners of the West Pediment contrast a human figure (Aquarius for Winter) with a lion opposite (Leo for Summer) they would consequently represent the Leo-Aquarius Solstitial opposition - a common theme in the CANEA from earliest times.

³¹ Jean Richer *Géographie Sacrée du Monde Grec* (revised edn 1983)

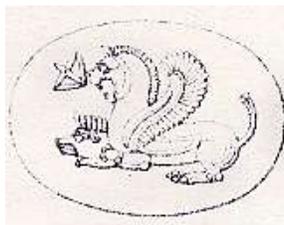
Ratt-54

FINDSPOT	Unprovenanced, Egypt	
ON ARTEFACT	Freestanding sculpture	
MATERIAL	'Grüner stein' (possibly green schist)	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	AS 8020	
PUBLISHED IN	H Schäfer & W Andrae Die Kunst des Alten Orients Berlin 1925 (PKG II)/ Belvedere III,12, pl.88/Vienna Museum Catalogue 1986 no.19	
PERIOD & DATE	Persian Dynasties	525-400/342-332

The Pharaoh Amasis desperately tried to hold off Persian invasion by calling in allies from Lydia, Caria, Cyprus and Crete - even sending requests and donations to the Oracle at Delphi to gain divine support. But under his successor Psamettikus, Cambyses son of Cyrus (who had early successfully taken Sardis) brought Egypt under Persian control, shortly afterwards succeeded by Darius. Somewhere in that period of cross-cultural exchange between Egypt and Persia this fine Rear Attack sculpture fits in.



When we consider the Egyptian contribution to the astronomy of Persepolis (Darius had an Egyptian adviser at Susa, which we mention in *Catalogue B*) it makes sense to set this calm and static sculpture, polished to the high Egyptian standards of finish, against the Uruk Stance staircase spandrel decorations of Persepolis that adopt the Assyrian mode of extreme and violent movement. In the same context we place the conoid Persian stamp seal in Leningrad (Boardman Iran VIII fig. 161) showing a griffin attacking a wild boar by almost completely covering it in the same way (left), as also a Persian Period sealing from Nippur made from the ring of Shamash-Muballit (middle/right) where it is the horse that is the prey (Legrain Culture of the Babylonians no. 826):



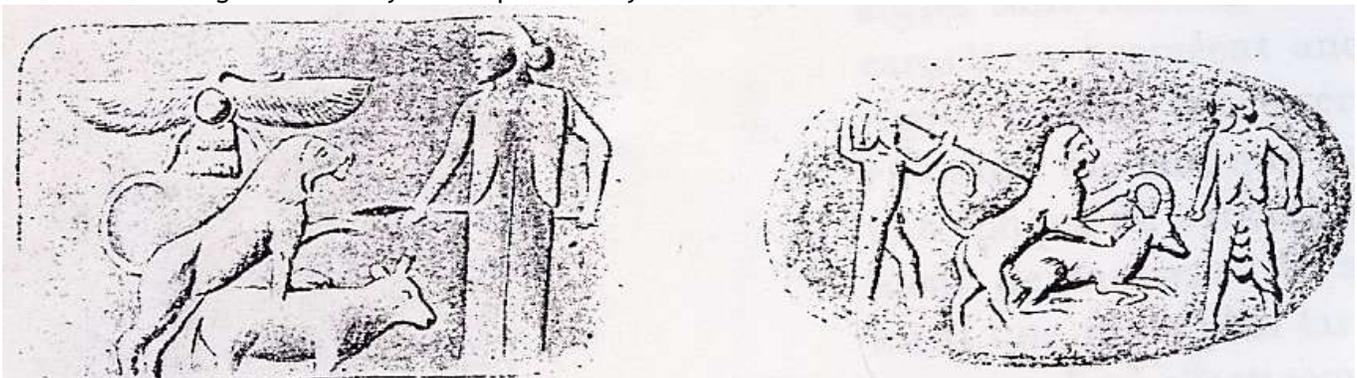
Ratt-55

FINDSPOT	Ur, in a clay coffin from a Persian house by the temenos wall	
ON ARTEFACT	Sealings hoard	
MATERIAL	Clay	
EXCAVATION REF.	U18124 (all seals in the group)	
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Woolley AJ XII pl.lxxvii, 2/UE X 797/798/799	
PERIOD & DATE	Achaemenid	520-480

It is interesting how the millennium-long local detail of the lion standing on the back leg of its prey is taken up again at Ur on these sealings from a hoard put in a clay coffin in a Persian house - indicating Ur was still functioning, though with new officials. But now the motif was primarily a reference to Persian power, whatever its implicit references to Inanna/Anahita and astronomy might also have been.



The addition of the hunter warding off the lion attack is also an idea that could well have been picked up from local Sumerian Early Dynastic sealings which must still have been around in the archives of some of the former Sumerian cities of the South now under the Babylonian Satrapy of Persia. These two sealings from Tello in the Yale Babylonian Collection were published by V. Scheil³², one showing the winged disc of Ahuramazda over it. A further two sealings similar in style were published by A Goetze³³.



Other unprovenanced seals like this are in the Southesk Collection (B3, described as Etruscan) and one of rock crystal is illustrated in Boardman (*ibid.*) no. 507. As prey, the bull was far less often depicted than ibex, horse or stag.

³² 'Mélanges' Revue Biblique X 1901 p.569 figs 5 & 6.

³³ 'Three Achaemenian Tags' Berytus VIII 1944 pl.xi

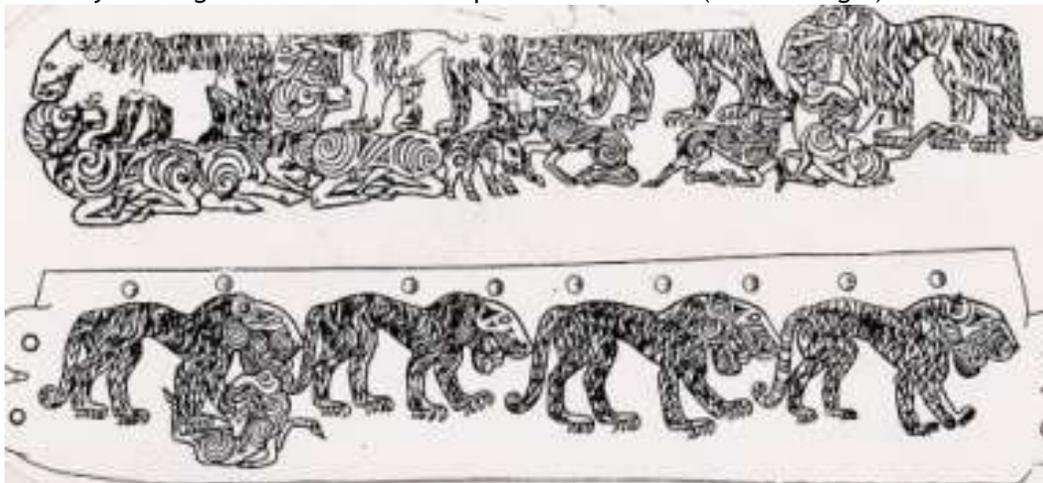
Ratt-56

FINDSPOT	NW Pakistant/Bactria	
ON ARTEFACT	Ceremonial axe head	
MATERIAL	Bronze with inlaid silver stripes	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum no. 123268	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Rostovtseff 1922 pl.xi,A	
PERIOD & DATE	(NB: Recently dated by B M experts with other bronze axes from the region to 2500/2000 - which the refined inlaid silver detail belies)	520-480

This is an instance, I believe, of Ionian influence on Central Asian nomadic art - simply because of the inclusion of the boar as the blade edge (we have seen in this catalogue how the animal features on Delphi-related pottery, the Assos frieze and at the ends of the Building G frieze at Xanthos). The predator is a tiger this time, with beautifully inlaid metal stripes, its prey an ibex.



On the wooden side panel of a Scythian sarcophagus dated c. 500 from Kurgan II, Bashadar (top panel below, now in the Hermitage Museum) a tiger features again as predator at one end, whilst it is mirrored on the other side by a lion in Belly Landing mode at the end of a procession of lions (Bunker ³⁴fig.9).



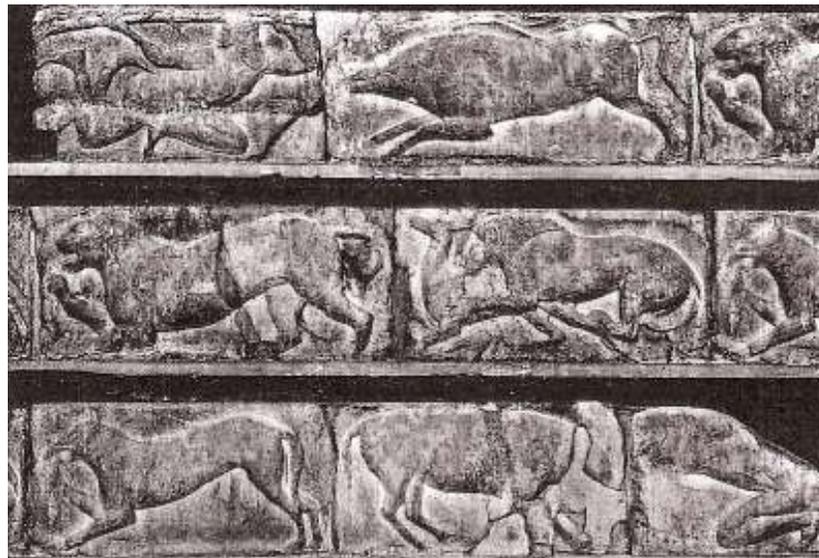
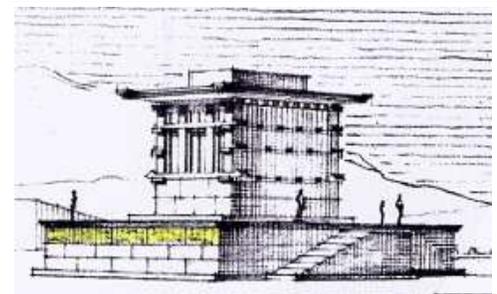
Appropriately for a sarcophagus, if the felines represent the passing of years and days, the predator and prey groups refer to the moment of death and the hope of a simultaneous start of a new life of immortality.

³⁴ E Bunker et al. *Animal Style Art from East to West* 1970

Ratt-57

FINDSPOT	Xanthos Acropolis, SW corner of terrace, looking down over the Xanthos river	
ON ARTEFACT	Centre slab of limestone relief decorating front of raised platform under Building G	
MATERIAL	Limestone	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	British Museum	
MUSEUM REF. FOR WHOLE FRIEZE	GR 1848.10-20.2-9/Sculptures B292-298	
PUBLISHED IN	Metzger <i>Fouilles de Xanthos II</i> 1963, pl.XXXVII,1	
PERIOD & DATE	Part of the rebuilding of the Acropolis by Kuprilli, King of Xanthos (480-440) following its destruction by Kimon of Athens c. 475-70	c. 460

On the main terrace of the Acropolis in the area next to the Artemis shrine, distributed in a line amongst sentinel *korai* standing at intervals along the front, flat-roofed Building G was rebuilt (below lower left, detail from Metzger *ibid.* fig.28) between two others with gabled rooves, in skeumorphic fashion replicating in stone its original wooden structure traditional to Anatolia and North Syria and fondly adhered to on most of the tombs of Lycia. The frieze with Rear Attack on it probably ran in a single register along the front of its platform, and the row of slabs into which it fits is displayed in the British Museum in a symmetrical arrangement: at either end is a satyr confronting a boar, each followed by a leaping lioness, and the Rear Attack slab is placed at the centre between the two wings - not completely symmetrical, since all the lions run in the same direction (below right).



But in a paper about the frieze written twenty years after excavating the site, Metzger³⁵ made it clear that this was not necessarily the definitive layout of the frieze, and that other combinations are possible taking into account it may even have run round the corner of the steps side. It is difficult to say whether the Rear Attack is Persian or Greek in inspiration - or simply of general Ionian/Aegean common currency - suffice it to say here that it perfectly fits into the idea of a provincial kingdom using imagery related to both Artemis or Anahita and the operation of a local calendar depicting the seasons - but serving at another level as a funerary reference to a local hero (several other Lycian tombs use lions or lion and prey in this context - e.g. *Belland-18*). It is possible also that a narrower frieze of cockerels (by Persian custom sacrificed to heroes) - displayed alongside these slabs in the British Museum - was also part of the platform decoration above or below the wider frieze.

³⁵ 'La Frise de Satyres et de Fauves de L'Acropole de Xanthos' in Mansel'e Armağan (*Mélanges Mansel I* Anakra 1974 127-137)

Ratt-57f

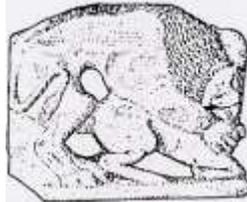
Taking into account our commentary about dual Graeco-Persian influence in Rear Attack use, we can track it westwards through this small fragmentary terracotta altar from the South Gate spoil pit at Motya, the tiny Phoenician island just off Sicily (Joan du Plat Taylor 1962 fig.10):



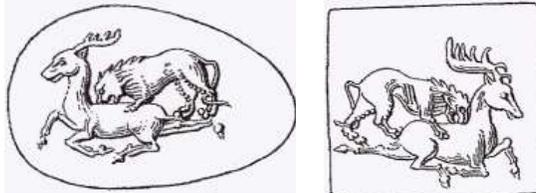
We follow it also to a relief from Paros, one of the most troublesome of islands which came under Persian control during the Ionian Revolt after Cyrus' capture of Sardis (Hölscher pl.v (bottom)³⁶.



And we note it in Persian-occupied Cyprus on items such as the small bone carving now in the Cyprus Museum, recorded by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition (Vol IV,2 p.181 no.3):



At the eastern extreme of the Persian Empire we have it two agate seals found at Taxila, Pakistan - then in the Satrapy of India (illustrated in Boardman *Persia and the West* p.171 fig. 5-37a-b):



Ending in the Persian heartland, an Achaemenid seal from Persepolis itself in the 'Fortification style'³⁷ shows the only known Rear Attack motif on sealings of the site, printed three times on a tablet acknowledging receipt of rations for ten camels by the seal owner, camel driver Dakizzida (note also the dove of Ursa Minor above it):



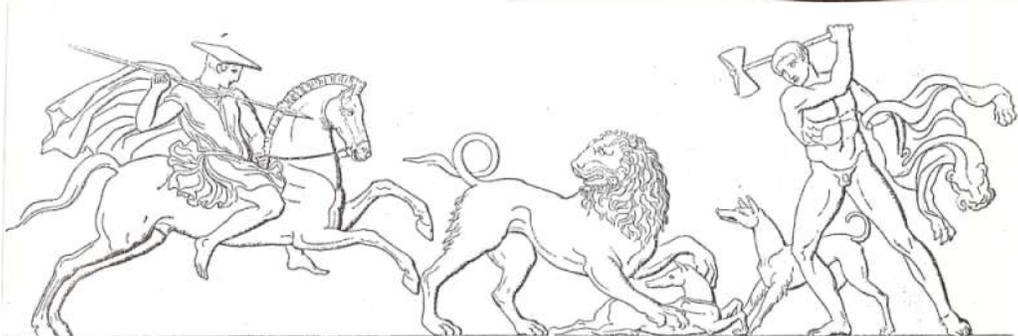
³⁶ Fernande Hölscher *Die Bedeutung archaischer Tierkampfbilder* Würzburg 1972

³⁷ Described thus by Margaret Cool Root in 'Pyramidal Stamp Seals - the Persepolis Connection' in *Achaemenid History XI: Studies in Persian History, Essays in Memory of David M. Lewis* 1998 fig.2/pl.4

Ratt-58

FINDSPOT	Messenia, Greece, near the stadium	
ON ARTEFACT	Pedestal or altar	
MATERIAL	Messenian limestone	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Louvre	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	G Loeschke 'Relief aus Messene' Jdl III 1888 189-93 (drawing)/photos author	
PERIOD & DATE		340-300

This curved section with damaged high relief may have been part of a round altar, but due to specific details of the iconography pointed out by Loeschke, it may in fact have been part of a pedestal under a more-than-lifesize sculpture of Alexander the Great. The man on horseback wears the square beret peculiar to Macedon, whilst the nude human on the right, alluding to his status as hero, sports a lionskin over his arm - very likely referring to Alexander's own assertion that he was born of the line of Hercules by showing equivalent valour in deeds. A story is indeed recorded that a real-life incident occurred on the occasion Alexander pitted his strength against a wild lion with his axe, when his Macedonian companion, Krateros, came to his aid and saved his life.



Loeschke's drawing is essential for getting beyond the bad state of the relief. Knowing the story, it could be incidental that we have a Rear Attack represented between the two figures, yet we always need to bear in mind all the connotations of Alexander's new empire and its administration that it could signify in its allusions, as well as expressing the hoped-for heroised immortality for Alexander underpinning the sculpture fixed on it. What is fascinating is the contemporary Scythian ritual vessel (above right, Piotrovsky ill. 159) in the Hermitage showing a similar scene, except that the lion now rears to attacks the horse of the figure on the right, now a rider, pointing to osmosis between Macedon and Scythia that we can see as geographically inevitable.

Ratt-59

FINDSPOT	Pella, Macedonia, Palatial building	
ON ARTEFACT	Floor mosaic, threshold between rooms A & B	
MATERIAL	Pebbles	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	<i>In situ</i>	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	Petsas Alexander the Great's Capital 1978	
PERIOD & DATE		325-300

Macedon particularly favoured griffin and prey attacks on its artefacts, and here Alexander's new capital at Pella provided the prototypes that were copied on smaller items such as the blue chalcedony scaraboid seal below (Hermitage Museum no.593/Boardman GrGFR 868).



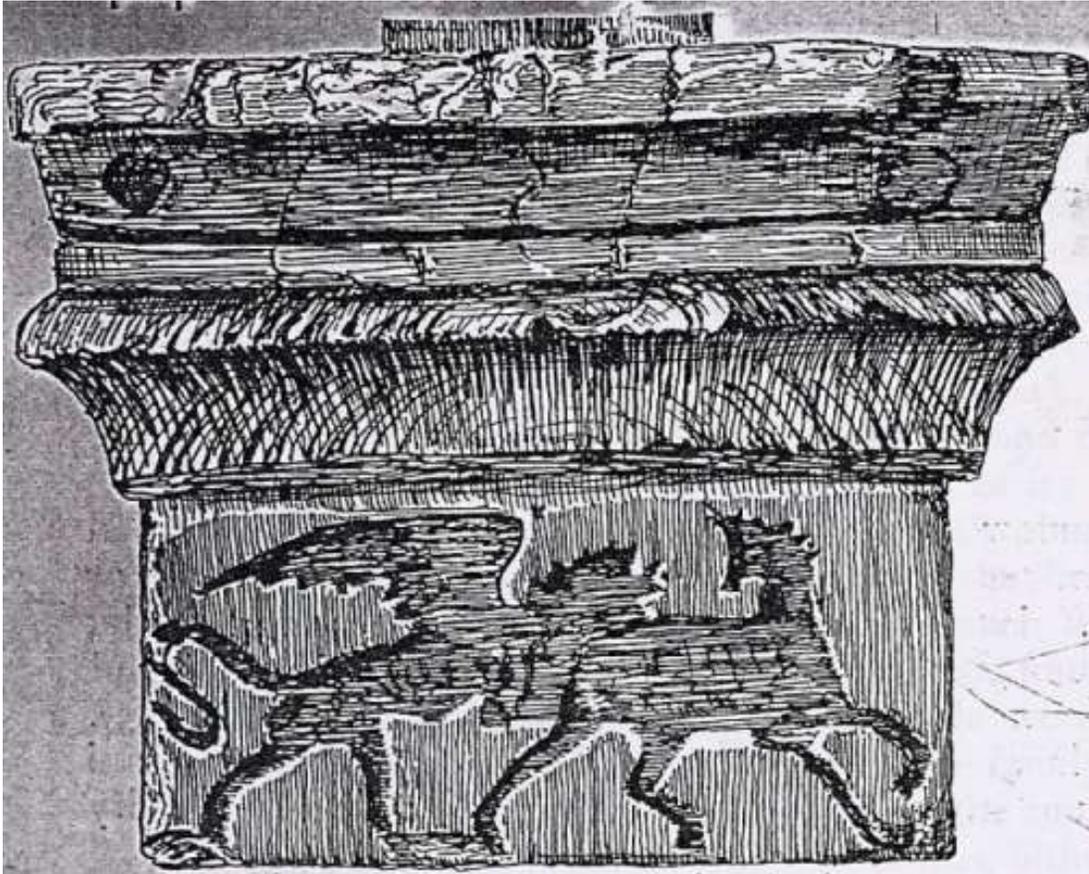
The griffin Rear Attack appears on Scythian network of the time which is not surprising, given Macedonia blended into Scythian terrain, a natural transmitter of Greek themes for nomadic art. The scabbard cover detail below (still with its iron sword) from the Tolstaya Mogila Barrow of the 4C is illustrated in Piotrovsky et al.'s *Scythian Art* 1987 as Ill.153 (another is shown in his Ill. 221/222. Note the cockerels at its top edge in a match-with the cockerel frieze at Xanthos). Further lion attacks also appear along its tapered lower end in his ill.154).



See also above right one of a pair of gold bracelets again decorated with the griffin Rear Attacks from Kul-Oban (Piotrovsky (*ibid.*) Ill. 179). Most Scythian gold artefacts are in the Hermitage Museum, though some were sent to the Kiev Museum when found locally to it.

Ratt-59f

The Griffin Rear Attack, like the straightforward lion attack, was also translated over into funerary contexts - one of the most impressive being the tomb of a priestess dated 340-320 found in the mid-19C at Great Bliznitsa, South Russia (illustrated in Minns *Scythians and Greeks* 1913 p.424):



Not surprisingly (knowing the links between Western Anatolia and Etruscan Italy) H.Herdejurgin in her *Basel Museum Guide*³⁸ illustrates the moulded terracotta sarcophagus attachments using the motif from Tarentum- such as the one below (her pl.xx/67) dating to 340-300:



At the two extremes of Alexander's world it is the horse, pride of Central Asian tribes, that features as the prey.

³⁸ Die tarentinischen Terrakotten des 6 bis 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. im Antikenmuseum Basel 1971

Ratt-60

FINDSPOT	Solokha Barrow, South Russia	
ON ARTEFACT	Scabbard cover	
MATERIAL	Gold	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Hermitage Museum	
MUSEUM REF.	DN 1913-1/8	
PUBLISHED IN	Piotrovsky (<i>ibid.</i>) illS 155/56	
PERIOD & DATE		4C

In Scythian metalwork the straightforward Rear Attack with lion was retained in tandem with the use of the more exotic griffin as predator, as on another scabbard cover below of similar date (and see also one more in Piotrovsky (*ibid.*) ill. 219). Below right are other notable instances of Rear Attacks on a boar: (a) detail of a superb necklace, discussed as a whole under *Catalogue F: The Bilateral Attack* (Piotrovsky Ill. 119) and (b) a torque from the Karagodeuashkh Barrow (Piotrovsky Ill. 240, Hermitage no.2492/32) all of the same period.



Similarly with Macedonian pebble floor mosaics (apologies for the poor photograph taken from a newspaper), note how (just as with the example at Pella) a Rear Attack is depicted on the threshold of the floor of a room B.v.1 in a House at Olynthos (4C BC):



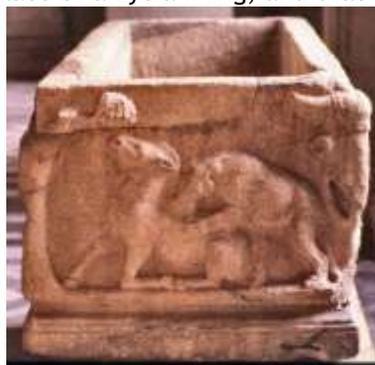
Ratt-61

FINDSPOT	Probably originally the Gardens of Tivoli	
ON ARTEFACT	Freestanding sculpture	
MATERIAL	Marble	
EXCAVATION REF.		
PRESENT LOCATION	Capitoline Museum, Rome	
MUSEUM REF.		
PUBLISHED IN	? fig. 126	
PERIOD & DATE		3-2C

Although our cut-off date is 323BC (the death of Alexander) this handful of damaged sculptures, probably Roman copies of Greek originals, are worth ending the catalogue with. Below left, our main entry was a sculpture admired by Michaelangelo and placed at one time in the Piazza Campidoglio: it was also admired by the English painter, George Stubbs, who used it as the prototype for lions attacking horses in his own paintings. While Vacca recounted a story that the lion represented the authority of Rome over Tivoli (the horse), most interestingly it is recorded in the 13th century as the backdrop for the pronouncement of death sentences (c.f. Ill.7- 32) with again the idea of the lion and prey group representing the full force of government authority. The item bottom right appears in Willemssen 1959 pl.70, and is a mould from Rome, Garden of the Palazzo Conservatore, Inv. 1366.



Finally, the marble sarcophagus in the Louvre (below) showing on its facing long side the story of Artemis and Endymion, at one end has a Forward Attack by a Lion (shown again in the relevant catalogue), and on the other end (below left, photo author) a horse attacked by a Bear³⁹. It was found on the Island of Castellorizo (formerly Megisti) off the coast of Lycia, showing continuity in Lycian use of the lion and prey motif in a funerary context juxtaposed with an updated version of the Istar-Baal story. A local story from the time of its discovery said it was the resting place of a Lycian king, and that a gold crown found in it was sent to the Athens Museum.

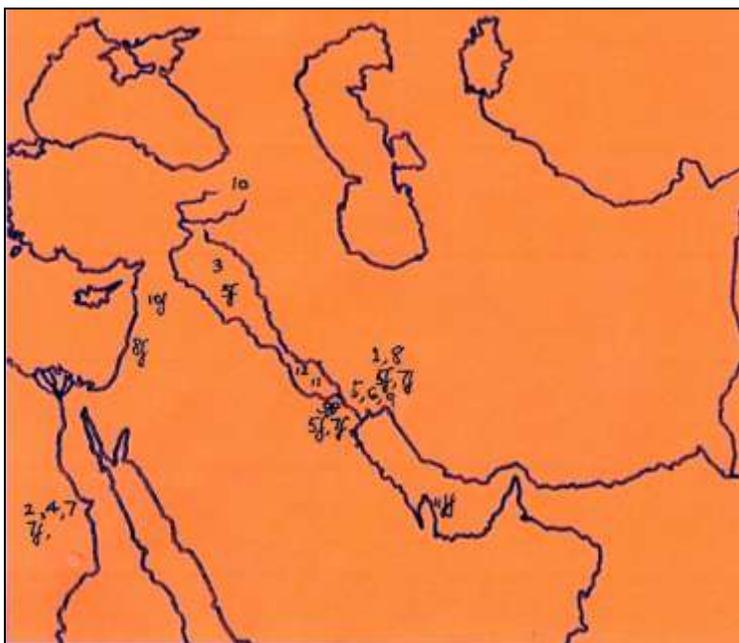


³⁹ See E Michon 'Sarcophage Antique de Castellorizo représentant Artémis et Andymion' *Revue Biblique* XIV 1917 fig.3-

DISTRIBUTION OF CATALOGUED ARTEFACTS AND THEIR ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT

MATERIAL UP TO THE END OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Our earliest material (*Ratt-1* to *Ratt-13*) confirms the picture given by the items contemporary to them in *Catalogues A* and *B*, underlining the likelihood that the lion and prey symbol originated in Susiana/Aratta, beyond Uruk, whence thereafter it gained common currency in Sumer during the Early Dynastic period, and we have not seen a lion and prey motif as early as the 5-4M in Syria (*Ratt-3*) or the Caucasus (*Ratt-10*) until this catalogue. We have several Egyptian items alternating with others from Susa, Nineveh, and the more remote provincial entrepôts on the far side of the Zagros mountains such as Sialk, Tell-i-Malyan and Godin Tepe which fed goods into Susa, strategically placed for forwarding goods and artefacts on to the Sumerian, Syrian or Egyptian river plains (other compositional types also point to this distribution network). In this group are the comparatively recently discovered sealings and ivory knife handles from excavations by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Abteilung Kairo) at Abydos - especially those found in the pre-Pharaonic **Tomb U-j** (*Ratt-4/Ratt-7*). They add weight, together with those artefacts already well-known, to the presence of short-lived Susa imperial/emporial occupation (whether by sea or via Syria) sustained by trade interaction all the way along the Fertile Crescent centuries before the Old Kingdom, established during Dynasties I and II, when that traffic was broken. We are still not absolutely sure whether Iran preceded Egypt in inventing the motif, but there does seem to have been a slight, but crucial precedence in the Iranian hinterland and Susa before it was taken up and developed to the full by enterprising groups in Uruk - and with certain African twists in Egypt.



Ill.7- 3: Map showing the distribution of catalogue artefacts up to the end of the Third Millennium

MATERIAL FROM THE FIRST HALF OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM

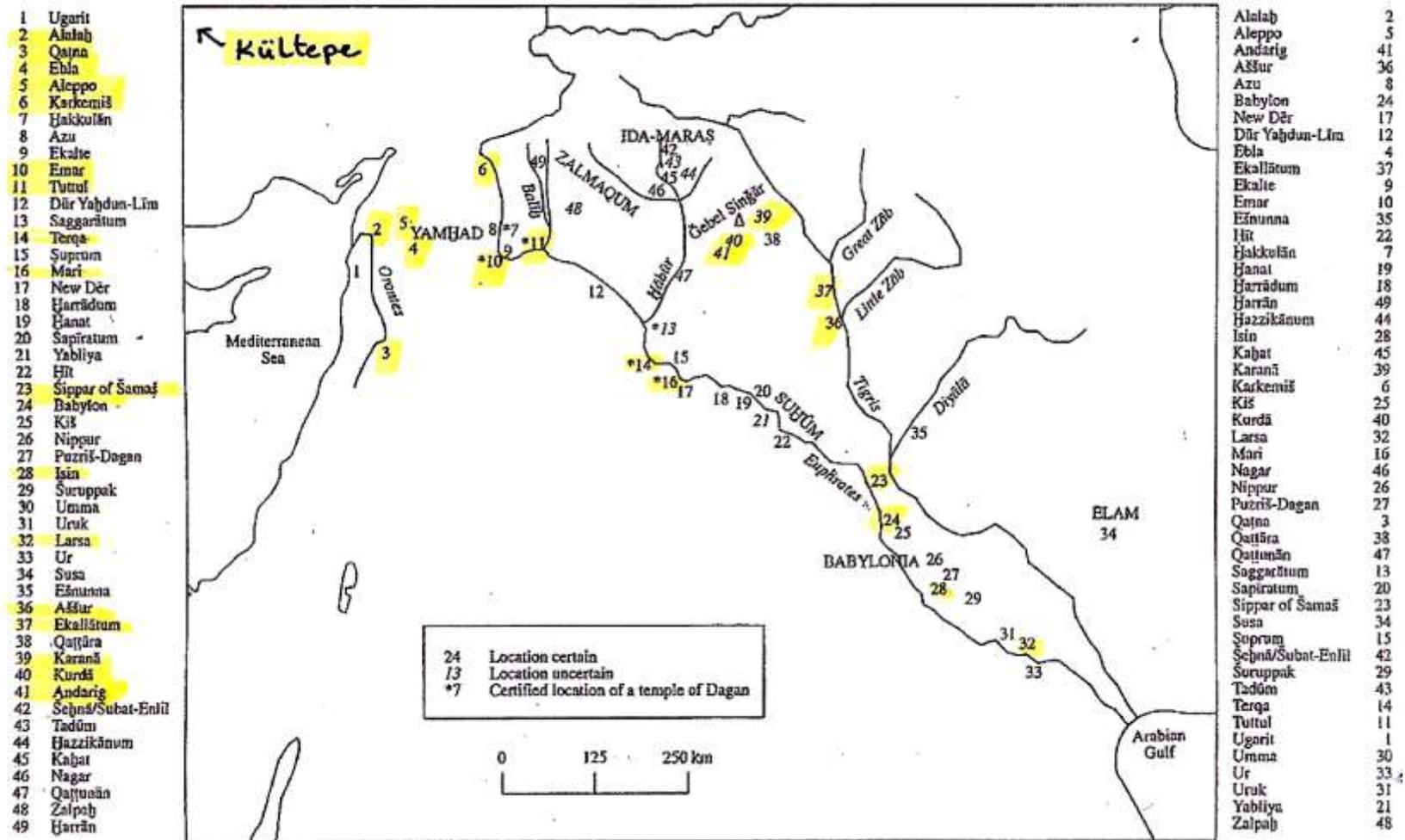
The map on the next page gives an overview of North Syrian sites in the first half of the Millennium with key administrative centres highlighted as the main zones for our catalogued artefacts (almost all of them seals) - though most are without firm provenance. Because we can precisely allocate only a small number of items to particular sites - as will emerge in the *Art Historical Background* - we have not charted actual catalogue item numbers on it (chronological sequencing of artefacts for this period in any case has wide margins of error). As Larsen expresses it in the BEYOND BABYLON catalogue⁴⁰, 'Diplomatic contacts and military alliances united rulers and cities in a vast network from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, and merchants moved with great ease throughout this system. These contacts - despite the many differences - illustrate the unity of the entire region'. This is the geographical background for our *Chronological Focus C* that follows this overview of the catalogue material, and we will come to see how interdependent the artefacts of the time are within this continuum also.

Egypt had had long-sustained contacts from the end of the Old Kingdom with Syria by the East Mediterranean sea route, for its cedar and silver - especially with Byblos (several Old Kingdom artefacts have turned up at sites there, and all the signs are that the Byblite kings copied the art and court organisation of Egypt at this time, aping their conventions as equals (*Ratt-14*): indeed, the end of the original Egyptian myth takes Isis and Osiris to this city (where Osiris is embedded in a cedar beam) and the widespread worship of the Asian Great Goddess in the form of Hathor of Byblos took hold in Syria by the first half of the 2M.

During a period of comparative stability roughly contemporary with the Middle Kingdom in Egypt, many small independent City States across North Syria played their part in the surge of new political and trade networks that built up between West and East in the first 500 years of the millennium. The consequences of geographical location being inevitable, we would thus expect to find strong cross-currents of Mesopotamian influence cutting in to Syrian practices from the East - which in our special period of enquiry actually drowned out most direct Egyptian cultural sway over Syria as a whole, even though the high standard of Egyptian craftsmanship may be an invisible component of the Classical Syrian 'look' in their Golden Age of seals. Some items (such as *Ratt-15/16/17*) look provincial (somewhat parallel with the Maikop vases of *Ratt-10* earlier) revealing underlying native ways of doing things crossed with traditions picked up from contacts with the Third Millennium great powers surrounding them: it is the roughness of style of local craftsmen aping their established counterparts but unable to avoid inserting features of local culture that gives a novel character to so many of our catalogued items for this period, each telling their own tale of learning new ways while retaining individual identity.

Looking at the distribution of the Syrian sites down the coast or clustered along the main rivers and tributaries - arranged almost like a field of iron filings between Mesopotamia and the key trade terminus of Kültepe in

⁴⁰ Edited by Joan Aruz et al. 2008



III.7- 4: Map from Lluís Feliu (2003)⁴¹ showing main archaeological Sites of early 2M N Syria along the main rivers, main seal centres highlighted

⁴¹ The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria (trsl. W Watson) Leiden

Anatolia to the North-West (just off the map), even without supporting documents it is reasonable to accept Otto's dictum that the multiplicity of seals showing local Gods, Rulers and those under them must reflect the burgeoning trade and political situation in Syria at the time. We can also generalise and say that overall the artefacts within the timeframe of our *Chronological Focus* mostly looked to Sumer, Akkad and Assyria for its prototypes, with native ingredients added in. It is in the second half of the Second Millennium - our focus in *Catalogue D* - that we notice the stronger impact of the Egypt-Hatti meridian as it gained ascendancy over the East-West trend between Mesopotamia and Syria, whereby a host of innovative designs on Levantine Seals in particular (often with totally new versions of the lion and prey motif) began to make those of the first half of the millennium (*Ratt-14 to Ratt-22*) look very old-fashioned. To show the contrast, even though just outside our strict timeframe, we decided at the tail-end of our special focus material here to include not only late Alalakh seals but also those of the kingdom of Nuzi - as being examples of City States that experienced the changeover to this new axis of power under the Mitanni and Hittites. Overall, rulership in the City States vacillated between fiefdom, self-sufficiency and overlordship which could ultimately end in engulfment in the forbiddingly uncrushable machinery of one or other of the Great Powers - whether Egypt, Assyria or Hatti - because they were underpinned by long-standing, enduringly systematic and stable bureaucracies and armies.

Joan Aruz (*ibid.*) in her introduction to the BEYOND BABYLON exhibition catalogue mentions the high status of craftsmen in the Levant at this time in a region where Kothar the Craftsman God (Ptah in Egypt or Hephaistos in Greece) was their patron, understood as responsible for the construction of the Universe. In the Myth of Baal, Kothar makes Goddess Athirat's gold and silver palace furniture, and when Zimrilim famously visited Ugarit amongst his vast retinue were artisans such as goldsmiths to 'transformer, à la demande, les objets en metal précieux reçus ou à offrir' (Lafont, *ibid.*). Going on into the First Millennium, Hiram of Tyre who not only built Solomon's Temple but commandeered the craftsmen and materials for its famed interiors and ritual equipment, was the very embodiment of this regional artisan God. As Aruz puts it, 'Foreign "symbols of excellence" included not only exotic works but also, apparently, artisans [themselves... and] there grew a shared appreciation of skills as well as aesthetic standards and qualities ... in celebration of expertise...'. She quotes the lines from Homer which reveal how craftsmen were so much in demand they were viewed as a class of itinerant foreigners:

Who would we call a foreigner? If not an artisan with skill to serve the realm....[with healer, prophet and builder] sought for on the endless earth (Odyssey 17, 501-5)

Indeed, later in Achaemenid times the site of Persepolis was witness to the Persians' wholesale importation of scores of craftsmen from Egypt, the Levant and Greece. Sasson (*ibid.*) notes that craftsmen travelling from one job to another from place to place - on their own account or shared between kings - had already begun in the early Second Millennium (Hattusilis III wrote to Ramesses II, 'Do not refuse me a sculptor!').

But here we should reserve further commentary on individual items for this first half of the 2M for the later intense analyses made under the *Art Historical* and *Iconography* sections below.

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

MATERIAL FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM

Since the archaeology of Palestine and southern Syria in the second half of the millennium will take centre stage in **Catalogue D**, again we refrain from commenting on the material in detail here, other than to confirm the passing commentary given in the catalogue entries, where it is immediately obvious how the centre of gravity of design influence moves south to embrace Egypt with the wholesale adoption of its pictorial repertoire (**Ratt-00-**) or north to take on Hittite characteristics (**Ratt-00**). We could for the second half of the millennium in **Catalogue D** view City States like Ugarit and Judah in the same light as their predecessors --as amongst those distinguished City-States of the Levant whose lurching changes of fortune can similarly be ascribed to the loss of self-sufficiency and ultimate submission to outside overlordship. Although artefacts of all kinds of course continued to be produced in Anatolia, native supremacy under the Hittites now predominates, influencing North Syrian cities brought under their vassalship with their own iconography - and which in home territory barely made use of the Lion and Prey subject other than as miniature emblems quoted on occasions from the Syro-Mesopotamian cultural tradition.

An exception is the hybrid Tysciewicz seal, described at length at the end of this chapter, which not only without ambiguity gives Venus the Rear Attack to stand upon, hinted at as early as **Ratt-00** and **Ratt-00**, but also unrolls the entire Syrian Pantheon, some inherited from the Akkadian period and others new to our ken, such as Yam as a secondary god to Ea. Under the Gods section at the end of the catalogue we run go through the entire pantheon on this seal, centring on the story of Venus and Baal, inherited in shortened excerpts by the Greek world as the story of Artemis and Endymion/Venus and Adonis and still expressed by Lion and Prey imagery.

TO BE ADDED

Ill.7- 5: Distribution Map of Rear Attack artefacts from the second half of the 2M showing the change of focus to the southern Levant

FIRST MILLENNIUM MATERIAL

TO BE ADDED

Ill.7- 6: Distribution Map of Rear Attack artefacts from the 1M Period

CHRONOLOGY OF A KEY PERIOD LINKED TO HIGH USE OF THE REAR ATTACK

In our study of really ancient history we all take as read the groundwork of experts who decades ago painstakingly established the backbone chronology of ancient Egypt. But sometimes it is necessary to make the effort of weighing up for ourselves their calculations, made on the basis of *their interpretation* of the surviving calculations in turn made from second-hand sources by such 3C BC historians as Manetho, Josephus and their copyists who assembled accounts of ancient history from the by then declining priesthood's garbled or not fully understood grasp of whatever survived of the original temple records of Egypt and Babylon - as also of Egyptian and Mesopotamian King Lists and monuments.

CHRONOLOGICAL FOCUS C: THE FIRST HALF OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM C.2000-1550

For the Second Millennium especially, we cannot avoid the chronology problems that arise from our attempts to cross-calibrate dating between sites and civilisations, a process that originally began in the 19C in attempts to align Bible History to the Dynasties of Egypt, followed by Evan's shoe-horning of Minoan dating into the Egyptian Dynastic framework and thence the similar squeezing of the Levantine Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages to align with the same convenient blocks of chronology. Consideration of ancient calendar types comes into play too, since slippages accumulate if the chronology of one country counted in solar years is compared to that of another based on the lunar calendar!

By the 1960s Academia attempted to deal with these matters by accepting the existence of, and agreeing to use, the by then acceptable High, Middle or Low Chronologies (though Huber wrote a well-known paper⁴² proving for astronomical reasons that the Long Dating was preferable). But this was far from sufficient to iron out the problems. From the 1980s scholars such as Peter James⁴³ and his following - most notably David Rohl⁴⁴ with a TV series accompanying his trilogy - got down to the task of pinpointing what appear to be blank spaces of up to two to three hundred years taken for granted in conventional timeframes that never in fact existed, which would need to be excised from dating sequences altogether to intelligibly align cross-chronologies (*III.7-7*).

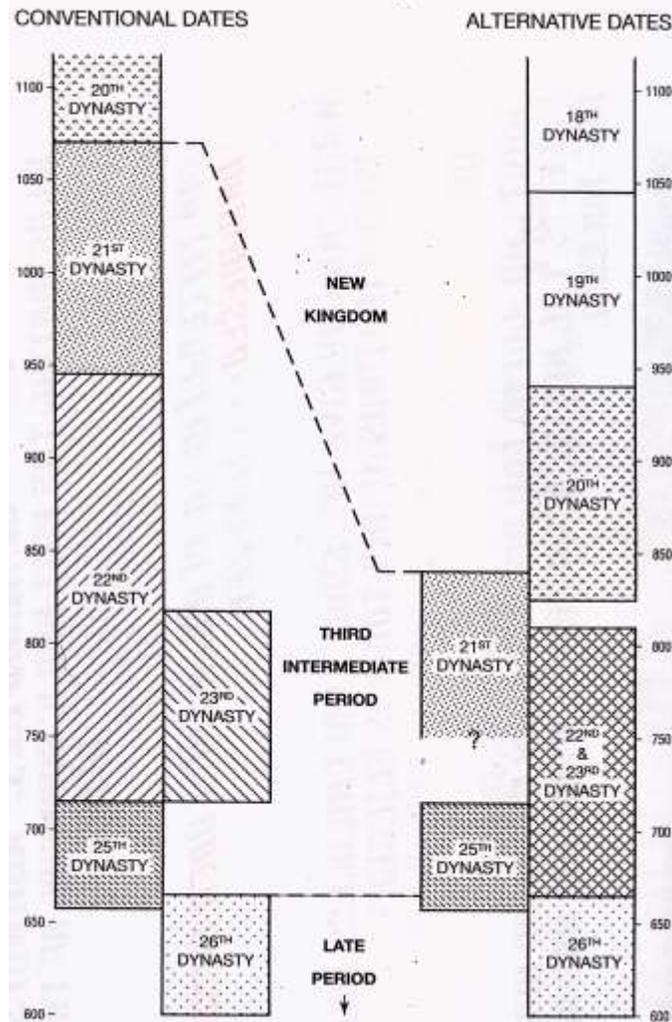
For this particular Chronological Focus we have before us the puzzle of how accurately the First and Second Intermediate Periods frame the first half of the Second Millennium on either side - one at the beginning of the millennium, and the other half-way through it. In the diagnosis of recent scholars it is precisely during these intermediate periods where two serious, huge chronological slippages appear to lie, where taking out a century or two on either side in tightening up the coordination of events (and artefacts) in different countries gives more accuracy. Rohl, for instance observed how the small and ephemeral Egyptian Dynasties during the Intermediate periods that Manetho described as following on from each other must in some cases have actually been *contemporary* with each other in different parts of Egypt. Putting them alongside each other would result in a

⁴² Peter J Huber 'Astronomical Evidence for the Long and against the Middle and Short Chronologies' in *High, Middle or Low?* (3 vols) 1987/9

⁴³ *Centuries of Darkness* (Foreword by Colin Renfrew) London 1991

⁴⁴ *A Test of Time: The Bible from Myth to History* 1995; *A Test of Time II - Legend: The Genesis of Civilisation* 1998; *A Test of Time III - The Lost Testament: From Eden to Exile* 2002; See also *The Lords of Avaris* 2007, London

much shortened duration for the First, Second *and* Third Intermediate Periods, and be a major step towards clarifying the cross-comparison of Egypt's history with events and artefacts in elsewhere. But to bring about a more accurate alignment is not just a matter of moving every event equally up or down by a few hundred years,



Ill.7- 7: Chronological Readjustment suggested for the start of the 21D - from James (1991) Table 10:4

for other anomalies arise in the process unless we know where to take out years and where to put them in across separate timelines. Art and archaeology experts assessing objects as truthful records of the time and situation they come from contribute to the fine-tuning of chronology, reliant on Petrie's Seriation methods.

In the light of such attempts to make readjustments, for the Chronological Foci for *Catalogues C, D & E* we decided that, despite keeping to conventional dating on the left-hand side of our tables (as in the Chronological Table below), we would also provide suggested revamped (often wildly different) dating in the far right hand column, using the work of James, Rohl and others. Such adjustments can be so bewildering that in the column second from the right I have tempered both extremes to an average dating between the two - neither of which I

felt I could cite in my text because it would truly confuse people brought up on conventional dating! But I felt it important to flag up the alternatives so the reader remains aware that in an ideal world a better fit could be obtained - if we only had the time to start our academic careers all over again and restring the loom of time.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

After a prelude consisting of the first century of the Second Millennium (often named the Syro-Cappadocian, or Kültepe Colony Period), we have on record the spreading phenomenon of the rise of small Amorite kingdoms in North Syria as a result of tribes on the move in nomadic mode adopting a more sedentary way of life and agreeing to move to more advantageous vassalship under the high kings of the Great Powers. In the process they began to copy the bureaucratic conventions of trade and administration as followed earlier in the Ur III and Isin-Larsa City States, so that at the turn of the 2M the state of affairs was such that the orbits of influence of older kingdoms formerly linked to Sumer and Akkad criss-crossed with persistent eddies of Amorite invasions initially led by Bedouin chieftains expanding well into Syria and Anatolia. Paolo Matthiae⁴⁵ sums it up well:

These are the years when, as the Eblaic royal archives show with evidence, the economy of Ebla and or northern Syria is strongly integrated within the northern Mesopotamian one, as concerns agricultural products, particularly oil and wine; precious raw materials, especially timber and silver; handicraft products, essentially textiles and furniture while the relations with Babylonia and Egypt were probably limited to the long distance trade.... in the ecologic environment typical of the dry agriculture, Ebla probably was, with Tell Leylan-Shekhna and Tell Brak in upper Mesopotamia... a city-state which exerted a wide territorial control over the peripheral regions of the great urban culture of Babylonia, and took part, with a well characterised ethnic, economic, social and religious autonomy, in the cultural unity created by the major centres of Sumer and Akkad... During the two first centuries of the 2M Ebla played a primary role in the establishment of the foundations of this North-West Semitic culture of the age of the Amorite dynasties... to form an autonomous cultural tradition.

As regards the use of seals at Ebla at the turn of the millennium, this is well summed up by Magness-Gardiner⁴⁶:

At Ebla the seals used to impress closures are differentiated from the seals used to mark fired ceramics by their size, fine workmanship, and Mesopotamian iconography and style. More importantly, however, the sealings themselves also bear cuneiform inscriptions that identify the users as very high-ranking officers in the Ebla court... Here we can identify for the first time individual sealings with individuals who are empowered to restrict access to goods within a western Syrian palace.

So along with the archives of Kültepe - and of Mari (very much an 'Old School' Sumerian kingdom of great rank and influence in that region up to the time of its sack in 1760) - those of Ebla, too, help to throw small, spotlights onto the bigger picture. The same is true of Emar and Qatna, whose excavations have also provided profuse amounts of material (Halab in lamhad being the notable exception, lying untouched as it does today under present-day Aleppo).

⁴⁵ 'Masterpieces of Early and Old Syrian Art: Discoveries of the 1988 Ebla Excavations in a Historical Perspective' *Proceedings of the British Academy* LXXV 1989 25-56

⁴⁶ B. Magness-Gardiner 'The Function of Cylinder Seals in Syrian Palace Archives' in *Aegaeum* 5 ed. T G Palaima 1990 Liège

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

SIMPLIFIED TABLE SHOWING THE KINGDOMS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST IN THE EARLY 2M, and MILESTONE RULERS

(The remainder will be filled in, as relevant, under the Chronological Foci for Catalogues D and E)

Core conventional dating, essential as an anchor, is taken from Amélie Kuhrt *The Ancient Near East 3000-330* (1995), the textbook consolidating her lectures and handouts at courses on ANE history at University College, London, over two decades.

Possible - or likely - alternative chronologies against the known sequences of dates can be read off in the two right-hand columns: Rohl & James are radical and Haleem (very roughly) tries to reconcile conventional with radical by following a middle path.

** Rohl's two main Dynasty Anchor Start Dates given in *A TEST OF TIME I*: an even more radical slippage was calculated by James e.g. in *III.7- 7*)

CONVENTIONAL DATING	ASSYRIA (Kuhrt)	Kültepe (Teissier)	TEISSIER Syro-Palestine Seal Period	EGYPT (Kuhrt)	LEVANT	CRETE	GREECE	Syrian Centres	Palestinian Centres	BABYLON Old Akkad (Kuhrt)	ISIN-LARSA (Kuhrt)	HALEEM DATING	ROHL/ JAMES averaged DATING
2000	2015-1939			XI Montuhotep I 2060-2010								1940	
	KINGS 27-32	SYRO CAP-PADOCIAN		Montuhotep II 2010-1998				OLD SYRIAN Alalakh IV	MBI		ISHBI-ERRA	1930	
1990	SULILI	SYRO CAP-PADOCIAN		XI 1997-to 1991 Montuhotep III				OLD SYRIAN Alalakh IV	MBI			1920	
1980	KIKKIYA			XII Amenemhet I					MBI		TO 1985	1910	*1790*
1970	AKKIYA	1974		1991-1962					Ruweise Tomb 57		ISIN	1900	1780
1960	PUZUR ASHUR I	Kültepe		XII 1971					MBI		ISIN	1890	1770
1950	SHALLIM-AHHE	II							MB IIA		IŠME-DAGAN	1880	1760
1940	ILU-SHUMA	Kültepe		SENOSRET I					MB IIA		IŠME-DAGAN	1870	1750
1930	1939-00 KGS33-36	II							MB IIA		IŠME-DAGAN	1860	1740

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

CONVENTIONAL DATING	ASSYRIA (Kuhrt)	Kultepe (Teissier)	TEISSIER Syro-Palestine Seal Period	EGYPT (Kuhrt)	LEVANT	CRETE	GREECE	Syrian Centres	Palestinian Centres	BABYLON Old Akkad (Kuhrt)	ISIN-LARSA (Kuhrt)	HALEEM DATING	ROHL/JAMES averaged DATING
1920	ERISHUM I	Kultepe	PRECLASSICAL 1920	ends 1926					MB IIA		LIPIT ISTAR	1850	1730
1910	SARGON I	II	PERIOD I	XII/3 1929	Tod Treasure				MB IIA		ISIN	1840	1720
1900	PUZUR ASHUR II	Kultepe	PERIOD I	AMENEMHET II	Sphinxes of Ugarit				MB IIA		ISIN	1830	1710
1890	1900	II	PERIOD I	ends 1895	Qatna, Alalakh				MB IIA	SUMUABUM 1894	BUR SIN	1820	1700
1880	37 NARAM SIN, 4Y	Kultepe	PERIOD I	XII 1897					MB IIA	SUMUABUM 1881	BUR SIN	1810	1690
1870	?	II	PRECLASSICAL PERIOD I	Senosret II 1878					MB IIA	SUMULAEI 1880	BUR SIN	1800	1675
1860	38 ERISHUM,	Kultepe	PERIOD I	XII/5 1878					MB IIA	SUMULAEI	ISIN	1790	1660
1850	1Y	II	PERIOD I	Senosret III					MB IIA	SUMULAEI	ISIN	1780	1645
1840	?	1836	PERIOD I	1841					MB IIA	SUMULAEI 1845	ISIN	1770	1630
1830	?		1830 ■	XII/6 1842	JOSEPH				MB IIA	SABIUM 1844-1831	WARAD SIN	1760	1615
1820	1814	1820	CLASSICAL A 1820 ■	AMENEMHET III	JOSEPH				MB IIA	APIL-SIN 1830-1813	LARSA	1750	1600
1810	1813	Kultepe	PERIOD IIA ■						MB IIA	SIN-MUBALLIT 1812	LARSA	1740	1590
1800	SHAMSI-ADAD I	Ib	PERIOD IIA	1797					MB IIA	SIN-MUBALLIT	LARSA	1730	1575

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CONVENTIONAL DATING	ASSYRIA (Kuhrt)	Kültepe (Teissier)	TEISSIER Syro-Palestine Seal Period	EGYPT (Kuhrt)	LEVANT	CRETE	GREECE	Syrian Centres	Palestinian Centres	BABYLON Old Akkad (Kuhrt)	ISIN-LARSA (Kuhrt)	HALEEM DATING	ROHL/JAMES averaged DATING
			■							1793			
1790	SHAMSI-ADAD I	Kültepe	PERIOD IIA ○	AMENEMHET IV ENDS 1786	Gifts to King of Byblos				MB IIA	HAMMURABI 1792	LARSA	1720	1560
1780	TO 1781	Ib	PERIOD IIA ○	Q Sobekneferu ends XII1782					MB IIA	HAMMURABI TELL LEILAN	RIM SIN 1822	1710	1545
				1781							RIM SIN		1545
1770		Kültepe	PERIOD IIA ○	XIIID/XIV	Yantin-Ammu of Byblos			Zimrilim c.1775-62	MB IIA	HAMMURABI SIPPAN	RIM SIN	1700	1530
1760		Ib	PERIOD IIA ○					Sack of Mari 1760	MB IIA	HAMMURABI	1763	1690	1515
1750		Kültepe	PERIOD IIA ◇	XIIID/XIV					MB IIA	HAMMURABI 1750		1680	1500
1740		1740	1740 ◇						MB IIB			1670	1490
1730			◆	XIIID/XIV					MB IIB			1660	1475
1720			CLASSICAL B 1720					1720	MB IIB			1650	1460
1710			PERIOD IIB	XIIID/XIV				Alalakh VII	MB IIB			1640	1445
1700			PERIOD IIB					to 1620	MB IIB			1630	1430
1690			PERIOD IIB	XIIID/XIV				Alalakh VII	MB IIB			1620	1415

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C: THE REAR ATTACK

CONVENTIONAL DATING	ASSYRIA (Kuhrt)	Kültepe (Teissier)	TEISSIER Syro-Palestine Seal Period	EGYPT (Kuhrt)	LEVANT	CRETE	GREECE	Syrian Centres	Palestinian Centres	BABYLON Old Akkad (Kuhrt)	ISIN-LARSA (Kuhrt)	HALEEM DATING	ROHL/JAMES averaged DATING
1680			PERIOD IIB					to 1620	MB IIB			1610	1400
1670			PERIOD IIB	XIIID/XIV				Alalakh VII	MB IIB			1600	1390
1660			PERIOD IIB					to 1620	MB IIB			1590	1375
1650			PERIOD IIB	XIIID/XIV				Alalakh VII	MB IIB			1580	1360
1640			PERIOD IIB	1648				to 1620	MB IIB	AMISADUQQA		1570	1345
1630			PERIOD IIB	Hyksos appear				Alalakh VII	MB IIB	AMISADUQQA		1560	1330
1620			1620	Hyksos DXV				1620	MB IIB	AMISADUQQA		1550	1315
1610				Second				Alalakh VI-V	MB IIB	AMISADUQQA		1540	1300
1600				Intermediate				Alalakh VI-V	MB IIB	AMISADUQQA		1530	1290
1590			POSTCLASSICAL 1600	Period				Alalakh VI-V	MB IIB			1520	1275
1580			PERIOD III	HYKSOS DXVII				Low-grade Mitanni-type	MB IIB			1510	1260
1570			PERIOD III	HYKSOS DXVII				Seals	MB IIB			1500	1245
1560			PERIOD III	HYKSOS DXVII				Alalakh VI-V	MB IIB	1595 MURSILIS INVADES BABYLONIA AND ENDS THE		1490	1230

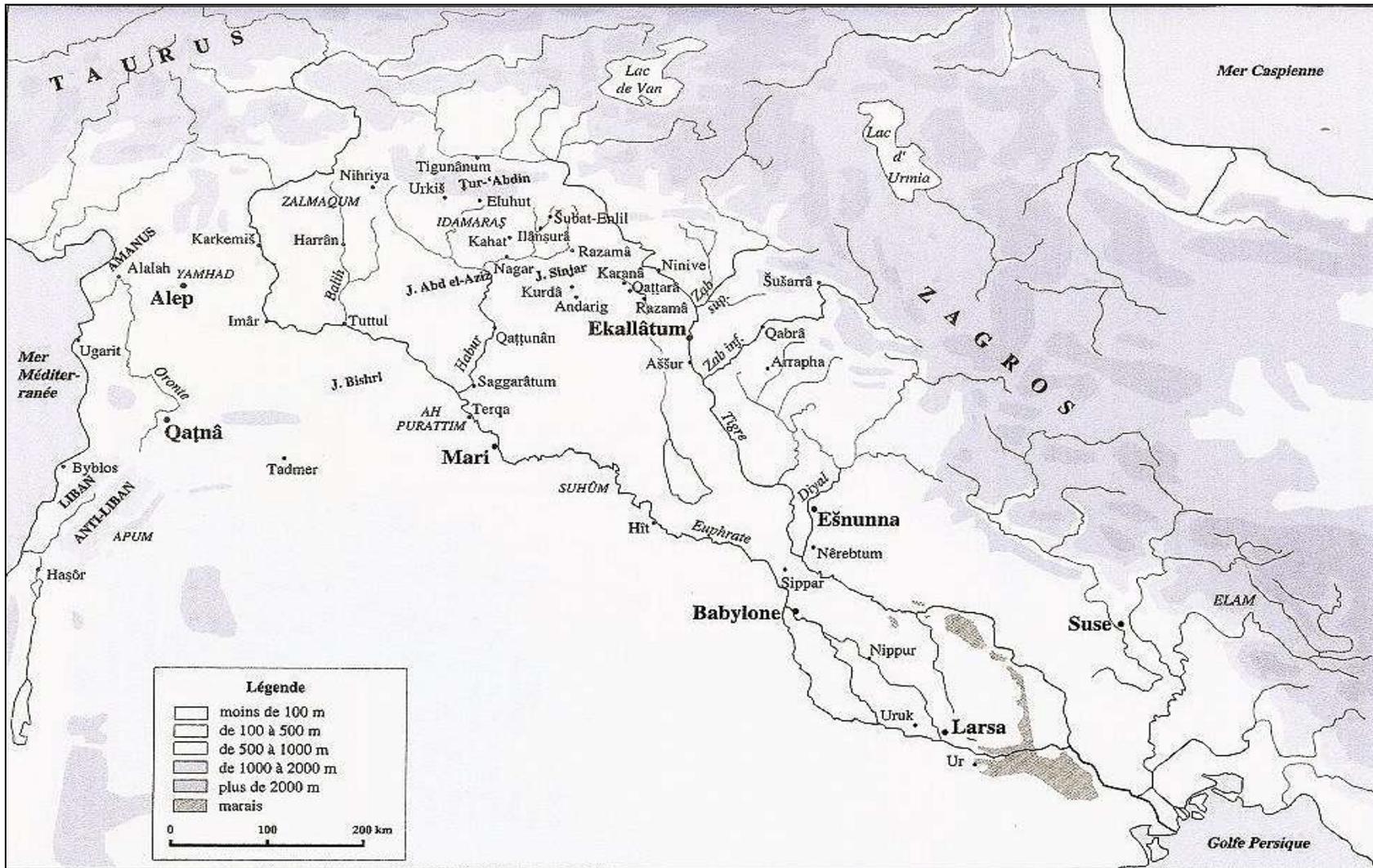
THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

CONVENTIONAL DATING	ASSYRIA (Kuhrt)	Kultepe (Teissier)	TEISSIER Syro-Palestine Seal Period	EGYPT (Kuhrt)	LEVANT	CRETE	GREECE	Syrian Centres	Palestinian Centres	BABYLON Old Akkad (Kuhrt)	ISIN-LARSA (Kuhrt)	HALEEM DATING	ROHL/JAMES averaged DATING
1550			1550					Alalakh VI-V	MB IIB	DYNASTY		1480	1215
1540				c. 1540 AHMOSE				Low-grade Mitanni-type		KASSITES		1470	1200
1530				EVICTS the HYKSOS				Seals		KASSITES		1460	*1190*
1520				c. 1540 AHMOSE				Alalakh V		RULE FOR		1450	1180
1510				EVICTS the HYKSOS				Alalakh V		NEXT 400 YRS		1440	1170
1500												1430	1160
1490										KASSITES		1420	1150
1480										RULE FOR		1410	1140
1470				HATSHEPSUT						NEXT 400 YRS		1400	1130
1460				HATSHEPSUT						KASSITES		1390	1120
1450										RULE FOR		1380	1110
										NEXT 400 YRS			1100

III.7- 8: Table underlying this Catalogue's Chronological Focus



III.7- 9: More detailed map of the Northern zone of the Fertile Crescent at the time of the Amorite Kingdoms - from Lafont

Bertrand Lafont⁴⁷ well sums up how a handful of top rank kingdoms encircled Mari and its vassal territories:

- ♦ Qatna and Iamhad to the West;
- ♦ Ekallâtum and Ešnunna to the East,
- ♦ Babylon to the South - and
- ♦ Anatolia to the north behind the barrier of the Taurus mountains.

These in turn were filters to smaller outlying areas forming a more sporadic outer circle (which we need not enumerate in full until *Catalogue D*, where they are more relevant) but it includes Kültepe itself and places such as Leilan or Bi'a/Tuttul which have more recently given up some seals that extend our understanding of the network of early 2M connections and its iconography, and filling in gaps between cities such as Aššur and Babylon. These top kingdoms, says Lafont, fall into chains of natural contiguity with lesser city groups, from which we would expect similar choice of iconography in seal use, and creating natural fault-lines between style zones, as Otto attempted to work out (see *III.7- 11* to *III.7- 16*). They are named by Lafont in the following fairly predictable groupings on the political chessboard of the time:

- Cities in West Syria, running from Damascus to Aleppo (Qatna to Iamhad);
- Cities lying along the Euphrates, running from Mari down to Babylon and Larsa, and
- Cities running down the Tigris, linking big centres such as Ekallâtum and Ešnunna.

In turn, North and West Syrian cities were the most likely to feed in to the Kültepe network.

Most seals of this period were found in palaces - Kültepe being the exception⁴⁸ - so that 'seal impressions in palatial contexts are the result of behaviour that relates to government or royal household administration' (Magneš-Gardiner) whereas we would expect most Kültepe seals to be related to activity in the private sector. When it comes down to it, most archives consist of legal or economic texts, sealed both by participants and their witnesses, though interaction with government administrations sometimes comes into the picture, and seal evidence, if not actually spelled out, at least set its mark on contractual exchanges of this kind⁴⁹.

The nature of interchange between great and petty kingdom, is explored in some detail by Lafont who although viewing it as 'une monde sans frontières', tellingly sums up their activities in the early 2M as happening in '[une] époque qui semble placée sous le signe incessant des échanges, des mélanges et du syncretisme, [qui] se caractérise par une impression de *faible cloisonnement*' - a good characterisation of the seals of the time too!

Cette idée ne peut qu'être renforcée quand on voit les marchands (qui bénéficient de franchises particulières), les messagers (qui sont partiellement couverts par l'immunité), ou les bédouins (qui conduisent leurs troupeaux dans des zones éloignées) parcourir sans cesse toutes ces régions du Proche-Orient sans tenir vraiment compte des frontières.

⁴⁷ 'Relations internationales, Alliances et Diplomatie au Temps des Royaumes Amorrites: Essai de Synthèse' in Charpin & Durand (eds) *Amurru 2: Mari, Ebla et les Hourrites: Dix Ans de Travaux: Actes du colloque international Paris Mai 1993 (2 vols)* 2001, 213-328

⁴⁸ Lafont tells us Emar, Tuttul and Abattum on the Euphrates were trade ports that like Kültepe that tried to remain neutral and self-governing. Later he describes Emar and Aššur as 'deux grands emporia, l'un pour la vallée de l'Euphrate, l'autre pour celle du Tigre'.

⁴⁹ To give an idea of scale, Lafont mentions how the Mari archives' refer, over a period of 30 years, to more than 160 kingdoms!

We associate the International Style with the second half of the millennium, but actually it is the first half that in his eyes constitutes ‘une période privilégiée pour le développement de ce qu’il est convenue d’appeler les “relations internationales”’ - on the basis not only of trade and government, but also of political alliances cemented by the strategic exchange of gifts and brides (many inter-territorial marriages are cited in the records, such as that of Yasmah-Addu of Ekallâtum to the daughter of the King of Qatna, or that of Zimrilim of Mari to Shibtu, daughter of the King of Aleppo). Moreover, Lafont talks of ‘une mosaïque extrêmement diversifiée... au sein d’inextricables réseaux d’alliances, la plupart reposant sur des liens de nature tribale’ - *most of which brought with them underlying land or property rights*. Hence Zimrilim’s title of ‘King of Mari and of the Country of the Bedouins’ since by way of many individual personal negotiations he presided over a network of sheikhdoms which in the process enabled huge underlying territorial expansion for the Kingdom of Mari. Lafont calls this ‘assez exceptionnel dans toute l’histoire du Proche-Orient ancien et mérite d’être tout particulièrement souligné’ - and a theme still very much pertinent in the politics of region today.

Could any area on his map have been independent of outside authority, ‘malgré l’existence indubitable de vastes zones d’habitat discontinue ou de territoires où l’homme ne faisait que passer’? No, he replies - through vassalship treaties it was ‘une monde pleine, pourvu de limites relativement précises’ - not by lines drawn in the sand, but settlements listed as politically and economically oriented to particular palaces. On overlordship of territory (however much it fluctuated through ever-changing alliances) depended the levying of tax or calls to an ally for soldiers in times of war. Vassals were also required to pass on intelligence to the king about common enemies (in letters cited by Lafont one or two are upbraided for not passing on information - another specified duty spelt out as an obligation). Overall, in the first half of the 2M all land was leased to the crown, though by the second half there are instances of a king needing to sell some of his land to wealthy merchants in order to pay for wars (e.g. Ugarit in the case of the battle of Qadesh). Letters exist in the archives between kings requesting safe passage for individuals passing through another’s territory, or planning to extend one’s frontiers. Lafont puts it that ‘ces bédouins avaient en réalité autant de suzerains que de territoires qu’ils parcouraient’ - so some kind of blanket *laisser-passer* must also have had to be negotiated for the Kültepe merchants. As Larsen recently demonstrated⁵⁰ (quoting himself in the **BEYOND BABYLON** exhibition catalogue (q.v.)) ‘It is highly interesting and significant that we can see in the same family of Assyrian traders that one man used an antique seal from the Syrian city of Ebla, whereas his brothers and children used seals cut in Anatolian and Syrian styles: we are dealing with a cosmopolitan world where influences met and people moved with confidence across cultural boundaries of all kinds’. It is over the more sedentarising sections of society that the king gained enduring power - and seals tell part of that story.

Given comprehensive attempts to systematise the artefactual material of this period have not so far succeeded, and having assessed the chronology and the fluctuating nature of the political and trading situation within it, we

⁵⁰ M T Larsen *The Aššur-Nāda Archive* (Old Assyrian Archives Vol.I) Leiden 2002

feel we should take Lafont's useful observations as our cue to adopt a method that matches their character, by applying what we could call a 'String Theory' approach to art history - whereby any one seal or cluster of seals is best viewed on its own merits, simply as the nucleus of a large or small chain of interchange and extricating it as one strand of spaghetti within one knotted mass of activities. This is simply because the combinations of the mixing and matching that were going on at all levels at different rates between settled and nomadic governance of different religious or political allegiances, in costume, design or culture, was dependent on geography as well as tribal or trade ties - not to mention available craftsmanship⁵¹ able to follow tradition inventively or otherwise - and just cannot be tracked, salami fashion, in year-by-year chronological order. Despite the many unknowns before us, the nature and purpose of these seals can still be plumbed in revealing ways - sufficiently, we hope, to throw light upon the implications of the Rear Attack group on them, our main goal. To deal with the material for this period in this way, I drew up two check-lists - which I use as flexible Slide Rules (III.7- 24 and III.00).

ART HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Despite a situation where the Chronological question is compounded by the lack of historical documents and sufficient archaeological context to provide specific find-spots for most of the artefacts we concentrate upon for the period under study, it is still possible to fill in a rich and relevant art historical background for their sequencing. Adelheld Otto⁵² made an initial linkage, useful to bear in mind, between the new political situation in North Syria at the start of the Second Millennium and the seals we seek to contextualise: 'Folgen der Konsolidierung ihrer regionalen Machtbereiche sind die wirtschaftliche Blüte des Landes und die neu entstehenden Verwaltungsapparate: *ein Aspekt hiervon sind die plötzlich notwendig gewordenen Mengen von rollsiegeln.*' Using the work of Otto and her predecessor Teissier⁵³ in particular (see next section) we should be in a position to link our Catalogue material if not to individual places, at least to general zones. It is not our remit to solve all questions relating to all artefacts of this period, but simply to gain enough specific background for understanding the use of the Rear Attack motif within it.

RECENT ASSESSMENTS OF EARLY 2M SEALS

I: THE WORK OF BEATRICE TEISSIER

Even by the early 21C, of the huge number of seals from this period other than those disinterred from actual buildings at Kültepe or Alalakh (with a handful of other exceptions), most scholars have been unable to pinpoint their origin other than in general terms - not only because they were bought on the market, often miles away from their original context, but also because even those from Kültepe show a variety of types - given sealings found there were made by individuals visiting to conduct business from outside Kültepe, and using seals made in their respective home territories. Teissier (*ibid.*) for instance tried to pin down Alalakh seals likely to have come

⁵¹ Indeed, some Mari contracts are described by Magness-Gardiner as involving loans of silver - too high ever to be returnable - in order to secure the slave labour of craftsmen - yet master seal-cutters must have had higher status than the general category of craftsmen.

⁵² Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Klassisch-syrischen Glyptik Berlin 2000, based on her PhD thesis

⁵³ Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age 1995 Göttingen

from lamhad, and to suggest other locations seals could have come from on stylistic grounds: Otto (*ibid.*) five years later was able to progress further on a slightly fuller archaeological basis, though still very much reliant on design analyses which as I argue below (as also with Teissier's categorisations) can tend to be idiosyncratic and for some seals not at all helpful when trying to apply them to actual evidence. Nonetheless, for its simplicity I decided to use Teissier's overall breakdown of seal periods for the first half of the 2M in my Chronological Tables above, summarised below since it is also used in her **Kültepe II Catalogue** published the year before⁵⁴, and also because Otto's datings can be neatly dovetailed into them (*III.7- 8*):

- ♦ 2000-1900 Syro-Cappadocian, called 'Old Syrian Colonial' by Edith Porada
- ♦ 1920-1830 Period I = PRECLASSICAL
- ♦ 1820-1740 Period IIA = CLASSICAL A (parallel to the Old Babylonian Period)
- ♦ 1720-1620 Period IIB = CLASSICAL B (parallel to the XIID in Egypt and Alalakh VII)
- ♦ 1600-1550 Period III = POST-CLASSICAL (contemporary with the SIP⁵⁵, Alalakh VI-V, and Hittite Babylon)

Most of the material for the half-millennium we are looking at was simply listed and described in catalogues all during the 20C as they cropped up, seemingly with the prime difficulty of little directly associated documentary evidence to throw light on them - as Beatrice Teissier (*ibid.*) well expresses it:

The principal obstacle to interpretation is the complete lack of complementary sources that shed light on Syrian glyptic iconography. Contemporary painting and sculpture are of no substantive use, for even if there are parallel images, their identification is purely visual and has no accompanying textual corroboration. Equally, I know of no Syrian texts of the Middle Bronze Age that explain or even refer to the types of images represented on cylinder seals. Only occasional God epithets, accounts of gifts to Gods or lists of ornaments, contribute to creating a picture of a particular deity. We might infer from this paucity of textual references that there was no need for specification, as everyone understood the images... Our starting point, then, is a set of images from a variety of provenances which may or may not find their equivalent in secondary textual sources. As the provenance of the majority of the seals themselves is unknown, there is the added problem that particular iconography can only be occasionally linked to a specific location.

In fact we will show below that there are huge amounts of secondary textual sources that do shed quite a bright light on many of our seals. It turned out that Teissier's book on Syro-Palestinian seals was interesting to read but hard to work with as a tool: as with Otto's book, it is based on her PhD thesis which although better illustrated in its book form did not take over any maps or chronological tables from the thesis I went through on microfilm (with desperately sooty illustrations, some impossible to see at all). The way her information was presented was, in editorial terms, one problem - so that (for instance) her statement just quoted above crucially sets the

⁵⁴ Catalogue of Karum Kanesh Level II Seals 1994 Istanbul

⁵⁵ Second Intermediate Period

scene and should have been part of her Introduction rather than hidden in a chapter over half-way through the book. Presenting the breakdown of her stylistic categories without first announcing her method was a basic methodological mistake- but we must bear in mind the period her book was written, on a confusing subject which she was amongst the first to tackle in depth, meaning her supervisors (not seal experts so not in a position to critically guide) were in the position of being less knowledgeable than she became.

The next problem was that I found the allocation of seals to her chosen categories often self-contradictory and arbitrary, thus confusing: the majority of her body of seals she puts under the Period IIA category while the few put under Period IIB often look not much different, and on the whole her categorisation and naming of styles does not add much more to Edith Porada's previous and wise assessments. Though she does set Royal Seals apart from the rest (Otto, too, differentiates between Court and Common styles, under localised sub-categories) she sometimes omits to notice how the more basic seal designs used by the lower ranks can be contemporary with, rather than precedent to, more complex top palace designs. It is a beginner's pitfall to read progressions from simple to more complex - or from bad to good execution - as necessarily chronological, or that all seals of inferior workmanship must be from Period III though even here I often could not see sharp enough differences to Classical Period seals. However, there is no doubt that despite these drawbacks Teissier took huge steps forward in marshalling the material more definitively from disparate sources and for the second half of the millennium she does make detailed sense of it in terms of Egyptian influence - which comes into its own in *Catalogue D!*

II: THE WORK OF ADELHELD OTTO IN RELATION TO TEISSIER'S ASSESSMENTS

The opportunity of anchoring further seals to many more locations other than Kültepe/Alalakh/Mari/Ebla/Nuzi was given to Adelheld Otto (*ibid.*) writing five years after Teissier (1995), having herself taken part in recent archaeological work at Tell Bi'a/Tuttul in Syria with the University of Berlin team under Eva Strommenger:

Die vermehrte Grabungstätigkeit in Syrien und der Südtürkei während der letzten Jahre, sowie die philologischen Arbeiten, die eine genauere Kenntnis der historischen Ereignisse und der politischen Verhältnisse ermöglichen, haben endlich einige Fixpunkte erbracht, die es ermöglichen, eine Ordnung der Siegel der ersten drei Viertel des 18. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. (Mittlere Chronologie) vorzunehmen, und zwar sowohl in chronologischer als auch in regionaler Hinsicht. Ausgehend von dieser Ordnung lassen sich verschiedenste Aspekte der sogenannten klassisch-syrischen glyptik erhellen.

Otto thus has a chapter early on in her book dealing with seals from dated find-spots at Mari, Tuttul, Tell Leilan, Achemhuyuk and finally Kültepe itself, also taking into consideration seals from more outlying neighbouring areas such as Böghazköy, Karahüyük, Alalakh and Shaghir Bazar, and the more or less datable material from Karkemish, Aleppo, Buzuran and other minor places. Her interesting sample of 479 seals enabled me to include further Rear Attack seals from the more unusual museums or private collections in Germany and the Middle East.

TEISSIER PERIOD	OTTO SUBDIVISION	OTTO CRITERIA	INDICATOR ON CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE
Syro-Cappadocian	2000-1920		
Pre-Classical PERIOD I	1920-1830		
CLASSICAL A PERIOD IIA	1820	1830-1790 EARLY CLASSICAL: seals from the end of Kültepe-II to the rise of the Amorite City States	■
	to	1796-1760 HIGH CLASSICAL: seals of ‘Die Blutezeit der vier grossen Staatsgebilde’	○
	1740	1760-1730 LATE CLASSICAL: seals from the time the balance of power between the Cities unravels	◆
CLASSICAL B PERIOD IIB	1720-1620		
Post-Classical PERIOD III	1600-1550		

III.7- 10: Sub-Division of Otto’s period of study (marked yellow) compared to the wider scope of Teissier’s remit

I was much happier with the emphasis Otto put on first deciding on and stating her method at the very start of her book, which was to *establish preliminary chronological tent-pegging via seals of known stratigraphy* before going on to gather seals into intelligible stylistic groups, a rigorous criterion not made enough of by Teissier in her Syro-Palestinian Register of Seals at the back of *her* publication.

For Otto, the period of comparatively full information on Classical seals ends with the destruction of Tell Leilan in 1728, which means on our Style Periods Table above we can accommodate Otto’s narrower understanding of the duration of the Syrian Classical period as three subdivisions within Teissier’s blanket coverage for Periods IIA and IIB - whose hallmark, as Edith originally put it, is the depiction of ‘typical iconographic features... used with classic precision and restraint’. When it comes down to it, Otto sorts her sample as a detailed subdivision of Teissier’s Classical IIA period *alone*, which is correlated in the relevant cells of the *main Chronological Table* above by the same square, circle and diamond markings. This results in Teissier’s Classical Period IIB being Otto’s Post-Classical Period which she equates with Alalakh VII: whilst Teissier’s Post-Classical Period III equates to Alalakh VI-V (this is best taken in at a glance by looking at the main Chronological Table above).

For our purposes, as long as we gain a general overview of the use of the Rear Attack on seals of this time using features of these two writers’ analyses as a first step, these subdivisions will not concern us overmuch. Even while standing gratefully on their shoulders, in not agreeing with some of their judgements I was spurred on to seek out ways to devise my own *apparatus criticus* to act as a sharper tool and ensure this catalogue had some bite. Before attempting to draw up and apply my own custom-made criteria for the question in hand and adopt

other approaches to early 2M Rear Attack seals in this catalogue, therefore, we should assess the setup of earlier seal cataloguers in general to understand the methods of these two scholars (some of which are still usable).

EARLY SEAL CATALOGUERS AND UNHELPFUL CONVENTIONS FOR SEAL PUBLICATIONS

The issue of the usability of seal catalogues for scholars from other fields (let alone seal experts themselves) is crucial, determined as it was by the early beginnings of this new sub-discipline where the first cataloguers were groping in the dark, not sure of parameters. In fact, if the textual and visual information in these books had been better edited, presented and produced at the outset, there is no reason why Ancient Near Eastern Art History should not have become as attractive a curriculum feature as Italian Renaissance Painting⁵⁶. But the reality of the situation now is that, having started off on unhelpful foundations seal catalogues today - perhaps unavoidably using dictionary-type presentation of information with entries in a text section related to images in a different part of the book in plates at the back - are avoided by non-specialists (even within the field of ancient near-eastern studies) as indigestible apart from the need to look up specific items or linger over a handful of the most striking images. An immediate and primary obstacle is that the majority of catalogues fail to provide clear, large, well-photographed images⁵⁷: instead most show endless pages of muddy smudges reduced to a set of blurred postage-stamp-size rectangles which one peers at, trying with all one's might to descry the scenes and match them to the sparse facts of the catalogue entry elsewhere in the book. Even drawings can betray a sealing's true appearance, though bringing out hidden detail (see the difference between drawing and photo, for instance, in *Ratt-20*). When it comes to interpretive observation, tedious lists itemising every single motif on the seals seems to have become standard practice (sketchily drawn into the bargain and placed in appendices at the back of such books). This practice is tautologous and excessive, taking up a good chunk of the thickness of the book, and no less so in Teissier and Otto's books. Most readers skip these pages as wholly redundant (would we bother, for instance, to draw every occurrence of a Cross from a book on Christian art for a separate section at the back?). Art historians tend to avoid such an approach because dictionaries and lists come no closer to explaining any one attribute. Usually if motifs on one or two representative artefacts are pointed out and discussed, the reader is intelligent enough to spot their recurrence for himself, though it is worth setting out variations if significant iconographically - Nijhowne (*Ill.7- 21*) was able to cut down depictions of representative attributes to no more than a succinct four or five pages. Arriving at the meaning of images on a host of similar seals is best dealt with by looking at one or two examples in detail, as we try to do in this catalogue - otherwise the whole operation becomes too long-winded.

Happily, after the time-consuming job of a century of marshalling these small finds together from scattered collections, books and papers, the old approach of making inventories is over: now with the advent of computers they can be sorted easily as electronic databases, and the work of interpreting representative examples from

⁵⁶ User-friendly presentation is a relief when it happens - as in the case of Briggs Buchanan's *Catalogue of the Yale Babylonian Collection*, where text entries are placed opposite good photographs of the seals in double spreads.

⁵⁷ Exceptionally, Edith Porada took great pains to obtain clear photographs, often retaking pictures herself.

them can now come to the fore. Art historically, for this period most rely on the fundamental chronological tree trunk supplied by the corpus of seals found at Kültepe, as accounted for in the publications of Nijmet Özguç, and from which Teissier's seal periods branch. Despite variations of opinion about the dating of Kültepe by later writers we can more or less secure the seal periods of Kültepe II to c.1970-1830 and Kültepe Ib to c.1820-1740 (see third and fourth columns of the main *Chronological Table*). As Magness-Gardiner (*ibid.*) points out, seals had not commonly been used on texts until the advent of the Amorite Dynasties, meaning their juxtaposition on the Kültepe archive was a modern practice and finding both together gives openings for different kinds of chronological ordering and interpretation as we gradually try to chart below. But apart from the local seals used there, the vast number of sealings found in merchants' archives appear to have been made by traders coming in from Syria, Assyria, or Babylonia, and a key problem is to pin down their places of origin.

CRITERIA USED BY OTTO TO CATEGORISE 2M SEALS

Five years on from Teissier (1995)'s categorisations of Syrian seals Otto, working under the aegis of distinguished scholarship in Germany in some respects had superior access to the highways and byways of seals held in the more unusual collections and recently coming to light from current archaeological digs in Syria than Teissier working in the Oxford milieu, so she was able to make considerable headway in assigning many Syrian seal types to locations in these other regions. She was more rigorous than Teissier in first compiling a list of datable seals, chronologically ordered (her fig. 6.3.2) - predictably mostly from Kültepe and datable to the reigns of Shamsi-Adad or Hammurabi, so in the end not actually revealing much that was usable for the purposes of this catalogue. Similarly, she listed seals of *likely* origin, or undatable seals from *known* places in the region, ending up with a check-list of seal zones (her fig. 7.4.2). In the overall view this does give further geographical specificity, though again for our purposes ultimately we barely needed to draw upon this when dealing with sealings with the Rear Attack on them.

Having conducted these two sorting processes first - absolutely correct methodologically - Otto then classified the material in her ensuing catalogue into *Six Stylistic Types*, some with several subsections, on the basis of which (despite admitting few of them come from a known archaeological context) she maintained that 'in Ausnahmefällen (Gruppen 2 und 6) können verschiedene Siegelzentren in einer Regionalgruppe voneinander isoliert werden', claiming to be able not only to isolate N Syrian from NW Syrian seals but also to differentiate Court styles from more ordinary styles as sub-sets (Teissier also separates Royal seals from those of Officials). Much of Otto's analysis does open up fruitful avenues for achieving greater precision of assessment, and I think it worth giving her stylistic groups below in table form (at the same time indicating where she ties in to Teissier's classifications). Although I comment as we go along that Otto's groups are often needlessly subdivided, they are indeed sometimes valuable in throwing into relief which were the favoured Gods of a particular area, or the odd local idiosyncratic styles and here and there I found them thought-provoking enough to include them in my own diagnostic framework. On the tables below I add in remarks on some of her

judgements where I feel reducing the number of sub-categories - and putting them in a different sequence - would (certainly to me for the present exercise) make them more usable.

MAIN GROUP	SUB-SETS	NAME	EXAMPLE, AND CRITERIA PLATE NO./OTTO SEAL NO.
1	1A	SCHNURBAND-GRUPPE	 <p>1/3 [Yale 1178] <i>Two or more registers divided by a string line</i></p>
	1B	FLECHTBAND-GRUPPE	 <p>3/13 [Yale 1250] <i>Two or more registers divided by a guilloche line</i></p>
	1C	SENKRECHTE SPALTEN-GRUPPE	 <p>4/40 [Berlin VA 4860] <i>Several vertical registers (with motifs and/or text)</i></p>
	1D	BÄNDER UND SPALTEN MIT HAUPTSZENE	 <p>6/73 [Chiha 261] <i>Any combination of 1a/1a/1c, singly or together, cut across by a full-height Main Scene. 'Hauptszene' is a useful shorthand term and this type of arrangement, deserves to be a style category on its own)</i></p>

III.7- 11: Otto's Stylistic Group 1

Groups 1A, 1B and 1C are valid, and the concept of the *Hauptszene* in the Group 1D style (where many Rear Attack motifs appear) is valuable for describing a focal scene: it is so common it really should stand alone on its own account. The seals are not always grouped according to her own categories - perhaps for editorial reasons.

MAIN GROUP	SUB-SETS	NAME	EXAMPLE, AND CRITERIA PLATE NO./OTTO SEAL NO.
2	2A I/II	EARLY NORTH SYRIAN GROUP (IAMHAD AND KARKEMISH)	 <p>8/99 [CANES 913]</p> <p><i>The full-height main scene predominates (II), even if the figures are dumpy (I) or in Style 1d combinations: body modelling and dress items are old-style; Sigils like the Ankh sometimes replace human renditions of the Gods.</i></p>
	2B	KARKEMISH COURT STYLE	 <p>10/124 [Tokyo III-7-13]</p> <p><i>These seals seem to have much the same layout and type of figures as 2A. Group 2A and 2B seals are probably best left together as one group: but if kept I would categorise the 2A style as using the dumpy figures and the 2B style the fully proportioned ones.</i></p>
	2C	NW SYRIAN GROUP	 <p>13/160 [Marcopoli 477]</p> <p><i>Baal/Reshef and naked Venus on a bull predominate, and for this reason NW Syrian seals should probably have been kept separate from the North Syrian ones.</i></p>
	2D	NORTH SYRIAN BASIC GROUP	 <p>15/172 [Marcopoli 457]</p> <p><i>Gilgamesh and beast-tamer motifs are frequent with even main scene groups treated as minor motifs, squashed up as subgroups in Style 1d mode</i></p>

III.7- 12: Otto's Stylistic Group 2

Here, Otto missed the opportunity to have a plain category just dealing with a full-height single register, as seen in the *Ratt-18* seals, though we like Otto's supposition that they are likely to come from lamhad/Karkemish, which fits. As I comment against Style 2C, the North-West Syrian group often features Baal/Reshef next to the nude Venus, implying seals featuring them most likely relate to the NW region, closest to Proto-Hittite Kültepe.

MAIN GROUP	SUB-SETS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
3	3A	KNEELING NAKED YOUTHS AND COMPOSITE BEASTS	 <p>17/184 [Chiha 284] <i>Not all the seals in this group are as simple as this design, which is mixed in with other motifs: neither are the beasts on most seals composite. This is Teissier's Workshop A style</i></p>
	3B	CROUCHING GRIFFINS AND VEIL-LIFTING WOMAN	 <p>18/229 [CANES 941] <i>Of this group, this is one of only two showing griffin and Venus together: in all the rest they appear separately, mixed in with other recurring features such as rows of marching soldiers - a feature remarkable enough in its own right to be mentioned.</i></p>
	3C	BASIC ADORATION SCENES	 <p>197/245 [Yale 1199] <i>The seals gathered under this heading show, rather, basic official occasions, in a rag-bag of styles and layouts (this seal corresponds to Teissier's Workshop B style). Rows of repetitive figures or other separate motifs are mixed in but not specified as part of the sub-category - a false one since hundreds of other seals use 'adoration' scenes - a misnomer anyway since the object of respect is not always a God.</i></p>
	3D	COMPLEX NW SYRIAN GROUP	 <p>22/280 [Seyrig 150] <i>These seals are mostly about distribution of the pictorial components over the surface of the seal, and some allocated to her two plates for this category really belong under 3A/3B. Seals like this one in any case belong in the 2nd half of the 2M.</i></p>

III.7- 13: Otto's Stylistic Group 3

Clear thinking is abandoned in Otto's Style 3 since the criteria for this group move between stylistic or compositional considerations and disparate items of content, thus comparing apples with pears. Venus and the Griffin are picked out from amongst other figures that feature equally often in no commonly shared combinations or characteristics- and many of the seals illustrated do not remotely match the criteria. This group is best dispensed with and the seals redistributed to join other already existing categories.

MAIN GROUP	SUB-SETS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
4	4A	IAMHAD GOVERNMENT STYLE	 <p>25/327 [CANES 910] <i>The presumption here is that the King offers respects to a God, to whom goat sacrifices are made. It is unlikely, therefore, that this is an official's seal (though high officials would be able to use a royal seal (see discussion of levels of authority below).</i></p>
	4B	WASSERWESEN-UND FLECHTBAND-GRUPPE	 <p>26/336 [Kt.k/k 16] <i>This is the seal closest to fitting Otto's description - other seals are squeezed into it often without good reason.</i></p>
	4C	IAMHAD COURT STYLE I	 <p>27/348 [WAG 42.709] <i>A variety of seals of different compositional types and styles are put into this category: a notable characteristic being the addition of wings to the Gods, and Reshef is favoured in place of Baal, along with the woman with long straight hair.</i></p>
	4D	IAMHAD COURT STYLE II	 <p>28/357 [BM WA 123284] <i>This is almost the only seal in this sub-group that dates to the first half of the 2M - most of the others, in the Ras Shamra Court Style or related to it, must surely date to the second half of the millennium.</i></p>

Ill.7- 14: Otto's Stylistic Group 4

The seals allocated to lamhad show the chief dignitary or God and officiating priestess in *kaunakès* dress, and a winged Venus is favoured, but the seals follow a variety of compositional layouts and carving styles. Certainly 4c/4d should be merged, and a differentiation made between first-half and second half 2M seals, the latter too late for the parameters of Otto's catalogue and outside her definition of Classical Period seals by a long way. Otto's West Syrian Group (5C) shows a much stronger Egyptian input, which is to be expected for Qatna. It might

have been more satisfactory to contrast this type of seal with those from West Syria still fundamentally Mesopotamian in inspiration, and re-label style 5A as such.

MAIN GROUP	SUB-SETS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
5	5A	WESTSYRISCHE SPALTEN- UND REIHEN-GRUPPE	 <p>29/365 [BM GR 1899.12.29] <i>Seals are lumped into this group with features that overspill the definition, again perhaps to make up a full page.</i></p>
	5B	QATNA COURT STYLE	 <p>30/379 [Jericho J3.52] <i>Kaunakès dress for priestess or Gods again betrays the close relations we know existed between Qatna and Mari: the figure with flowing vase is not listed under Style 4B, showing the problems of using hard and fast categories.</i></p>
	5C	WEST SYRIAN GROUP	 <p>25/327 [CANES 910] <i>Dignitaries in this group often wear the high polos associated with Egypt more often seen in the late 2M, with other Egyptian symbols like the Ankh.</i></p>

III.7- 15: Otto's Stylistic Group 5

For the last of Otto's groupings, tabled on the next page, I feel it would have been better placed first or second of the six style groups, being mostly related to the Early Dynastic and Ur III period preceding, as they use the old-school Sumerian or straight Old Babylonian stereotypes seen in the Mari, Tell Bi'a, Rimah and Tell Leilan regions. The old-fashioned dress of the Styles 4 and 5 groups would then make more sense coming after it. To have eight subdivisions under Style 6 is excessive, as most could be merged (for instance styles 6e/f/g have so little material in them anyway that they might as well be classed together and even merged with 6b and 6c, whilst 6h has so few pieces in it that it is almost non-existent, and could be put with other Mari seals under 6d. Evidently they have been separated because Otto sees each cluster as deriving from a different petty kingdom

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

MAIN GROUP	SUB-SETS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
6	6A	NORTH MESOPOTAMIAN GOVERNMENT GROUP	 <p>34/415 [Mari ME2;Leilan L85-112] <i>I cannot see what the handful of seals on this plate have in common. This particular seal collects together many of the motifs appearing singly on separate seals throughout the region and stands outside all the categories.</i></p>
	6B	NORTH MESOPOTAMIAN COURT STYLE I (?EKALLĀTUM/LEILAN)	 <p>35/423 [BN 428]</p>
	6C	NORTH MESOPOTAMIAN COURT STYLE II (?TUTTUL/BI'A)	 <p>35/424 [Bi'a 28/50:104, 1-60]</p>
	6D	MARI COURT STYLE	 <p>36/431 [Mari ME71-73 etc.] <i>As Mari was a role model this is better placed as 6A, merged with 6H.</i></p>
	6E	NORTH MESOPOTAMIAN AND MIDDLE EUPHRATEAN COURT STYLE III	 <p>37/437 [Bi'a 28/50:120]</p>
	6F	NORTH MESOPOTAMIAN AND MIDDLE EUPHRATEAN COURT STYLE IV	 <p>38/461[Rimah TR 5692/3]</p>
	6G	NORTH MESOPOTAMIAN COURT STYLE V	 <p>39/470 [Leilan L85-80-87 etc.]</p>
	6H	MIDDLE EUPHRATEAN BASIC STYLE	 <p>40/475 [Mari M788]</p>

Ill.7- 16: Otto's Stylistic Group 6

in the locality, but being so similar all could be merged into one if use of the Old Babylonian stereotypical audience scene was made the criterion that unites them, along with the insertion of vertical inscriptions - a usage perpetuated by the Kassites in the second half of the 2M.

Although Otto goes much further than Teissier in methodical rigour, still her allocation of seals under her categories is far from systematic, and a lot of the time there are not enough distinct differences between them to be convincing. Moreover, the problem remains that few of the most representative seals come from a definite location, meaning that even if the Gods on them can be identified, few rulers and officials of the time can! Like Teissier's categorisations of Syro-Palestinian seals (whose ordering barely overlaps with, and often directly contradicts, Otto's) *her carve-up of the material into intelligible groups is not diagnostic enough to enable the reader to work out for themselves the likely date and type of any one seal in hand.*

MY APPROACH TO THE MATERIAL IN THIS CATALOGUE

My approach for *Catalogue C* was to form an initial body of archaeological evidence by collecting pictures of seals of this period with the Rear Attack in them, first from Nimet Özguç' collection of native Anatolian seals⁵⁸ of both levels II and Ib from Kültepe; and then Teissier's later catalogue of Kültepe II seals (*ibid.*) and her book on Syro-Palestinian seals⁵⁹, putting them in chronological order according to their judgement. I then included any new material from Otto's overview, taking on board her suggestions for further locations to be considered for some groups. As mentioned above, I decided to rely on the mainframe of Teissier's seal dating (*III.7-10*) even though seals of many compositional types were put together and subdivisions according to workshops were of limited use - because it was simple. Since I also could not see strong enough differences between her groupings of IIA and IIB seals (or indeed of her Period III/Post-Classical) I was already coming to the conclusion that despite vestigially still holding on to her apron-strings, and also making use of some of Otto's judgments, I would need to look to other ways of making fuller sense of them.

Archaeologists and art historians in their investigations look for clues along the lines of the disciplines they are trained in (even if not always fair, the former's choice of stylistic categories can sometimes be seen by art historians as amateur encroachment into their area of expertise)! Hoping to assess our small 2M seal sample effectively, we stop to remind ourselves of how two main tools in the discipline of art history work: first, chronological ordering helped by design and style analysis and second, interpreting iconography - before proceeding to put them into practice at the fullest extent possible.

STANDARD ART HISTORICAL APPROACHES I: MATERIAL CONTENT AND CHRONOLOGICAL ORDERING

In casting about for further types of information which could amplify our reading of these seals, most notably specific administrative and religious usages of the time that would help at least to set them into their general cultural context, we should move forward on what can be found out when the straightforward matching of text

⁵⁸ The Anatolian Group of Cylinder Seal Impressions from Kültepe, Ankara 1965

⁵⁹ The theme of the adoption of Egyptianising motifs in Levantine seals takes centre stage in *Catalogue D* on the *Forward Attack* whose Chronological Focus looks at the second half of the 2M.

to image put forward as ideal by Gorelick (*ibid.*) is not possible. Having realised that in this period even the conventional stratigraphical approach used by archaeology for chronological ordering can rarely be applied, we felt it important to look at how far we can go using conventional art historical methods of judging artefacts on their own to make sense of the material evidence. Though my small catalogue here might cite the above authors' categorisations and dates for particular items, in my own mind, as a reflection of the political nature of the region at the time, *most* seals throughout the period, although tending to continue previous trends are at the same time mongrel in nature, requiring new angles of assessment, using both instinct and reasoning. For example, one can infer the significance of the apparel of key personages on the seals - whether traditional goatskins or woven and tasselled garments that in themselves point to a contrast between the earlier temple tradition and the impact of the new and flourishing textile trade. Although roughly matching contemporary commercial texts can still play a part, this underlines our belief that artefacts are evidence in themselves if we only look and think enough. In other words, while accepting texts are a prime tool, we do need to give more status to objects as documents in their own right. Let us look further on both issues.

CONSIDERATION OF IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING SEAL TRADITIONS AND KEY INDICATORS

An obvious first step is to look at seals of the period immediately preceding, since at the turn of the century there were several seal traditions serving as templates for the newly arrived and settling Amorites in Syria - as well as for the native Anatolians newly involved in trading networks with them, and a visual tradition favoured can give clues about regionality. For instance, for territories next to the Diyala between Tigris and Euphrates, we are most likely to see the adoption of North Mesopotamian type seals as seen in Late Akkadian/Ur III seals. Gradually in an emerging process of elimination we will look at these traditions as they crop up, so let us quickly look at the other kind of silent witness just mentioned, to show how much can be gained from a 'key indicator'.

THE CLOTHING OF FIGURES ON SEALS USED IN THE KÜLTEPE TRADE NETWORK

Syrian cities on the Euphrates - most notably Mari in Syria, but also towns dealing with Mari - tended to base their designs on the Early Dynastic type of seal used in 3M Sumer from further down the river's southern reaches (see maps above) which under the City Dynasties of the time such as Ur, Kish and Fara frequently linked the lion attack with related ritual scenes such as banquets, temple libations and even scenes of war. Akkadian and Ur III type seals after them simplified these detailed Sumerian scenarios of court and temple events into presentation scenes between subjects, rulers and Gods where the highest ranking celebrants wear sheep or goat-fleece dress (*e.g. Ratt-19*) - of the type worn by some Central Asian or East European herdsmen even today, like the Hungarian shepherd on a recent cover of **National Geographic** below. An approach already used in seal interpretation but not always fully argued out is that - in contrast to the 'modern' woven textiles now coming through Syria from Aššur in the Diyala region to Anatolia and adopted by petty court rulers on the way - this mode of dress alone is an immediately obvious indicator of adherence to Sumerian traditions, since associated

with religious ritual and the Gods. Irene Winter⁶⁰ found that it is usually Gods who wear fleece robes, whilst E van Buren⁶¹ hypothesised that a king usually in textile robe only wears the fleece after the sacred marriage rite.



Ill.7- 17 A Hungarian shepherd photographed for National Geographic May 1988 in the traditional suba fleece cloak

The Old Assyrian merchants made far more profit on their textiles than on any other of the commodities they traded - even tin. Men wearing woven robes repeatedly appear on seals from sites along the Kültepe trading network from North and Western Syria, some very elaborate, with tasselled fringes or heavy fur borders, no doubt the best examples of weaving available adapted to local climates and giving us new information about worldly dress and allegiances. Several of the Kültepe texts are letters from wives of Assyrian merchants, the weavers of the textiles their husband took to Anatolia to sell in exchange for the raw materials of Asia Minor - an example of how obviously some Kültepe texts can by general association enhance the way we look at artefacts (Sasson in the BEYOND BABYLON exhibition catalogue mentions Zimrilim's capture of the King of Ashlakka's harem, most of whom were sent to Mari and put into the weaving workshop, so much was the need for this skill). Larsen in the same catalogue describes how, although the textiles themselves have now long perished 'the texts speak of many different types, nearly always defined by reference to the name of a specific town, clearly the place where that particular combination of pattern and colour was invented or developed' - moreover we learn the Diyala weavers were more productive because they used the upright loom, superior to that used in Lower Mesopotamia. Hence on clusters of seals using stereotypical Old Babylonian (including Isin-Larsa) and Old Assyrian designs with full-length human figures paying pious respect to Rulers or Gods, dress alone may not always help to distinguish fully whether they are Gods or men, but certainly enables us to note the frequent advent onto the scene of Syrians and Assyrians finely dressed in woven robes.

Other indicators that become valuable sign-posts will crop up as we proceed. Certainly the dress indicator was borne in mind when reading the 2M Rear Attack seals, but in assessing their general background early on I wanted to be able to eliminate the majority of seals of this period that did not need to come under consideration at all, and I needed to find ways of straining it out and putting it to one side.

⁶⁰ 'The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals' in *Insight through Images (Bibl.Mes.XXI)* 1986

⁶¹ 'Homage to a Deified King' *ZA (NF)* XVI 92-120

DISTINGUISHING SYRIAN COMPONENTS IN 2M USE OF ESTABLISHED SEAL CONVENTIONS

I turned to one piece of up-to-date research that I could indeed use as a ‘strainer’: the analyses of Jeanne Nijhowne⁶² of a large sample of 2M seals provided a succinct and telling summary of a huge body of seals - more by what is *not* on them than what is - and also gave me one or two criteria useful to add to those already picked up from Teissier and Otto. I used her book to see my way towards understanding ‘old-school’ Akkadian or Sumerian-style features still in use in the 2M Mari *koine*, itself based on Old Babylonian types, and surviving in the variety of seals found further west in Anatolia and North Syria.

ELIMINATING OLD BABYLONIAN, KASSITE AND NATIVE SEALS

From the sample of 883 seals analysed by Nijhowne, some of her breakdowns are worth iterating for our purposes. Her first table shows the number of seal designs studied (roughly speaking, the OB seals cover the first half of the millennium and the Kassite seals the second half, the latter to be borne in mind for *Catalogue D*):

TYPE OF SEAL DESIGN		SEALS	SEALINGS	COMPLETE	INCOMPLETE	TOTAL	TOTAL SEALS WITH INSCRIPTIONS
Early Babylonian	Old	6	289	90	205	295	
Late Old Babylonian		4	301	93	211	305	77
Kassite		210	73	198	85	283	
TOTAL no of Seal Designs analysed				883	

Ill.7- 18 Breakdown of seals and sealings taken into account by Nijhowne for her iconographical analysis

She lists the provenance of the seals, first the Old Babylonian ones and then the succeeding Kassite seals. Looking first at her table for the Old Babylonian seals, it is interesting to find that none at all come from Babylon itself (given its OB level cannot be excavated) so most of her sample comes from its closely related city, Sippar, dedicated to Shamash the Sun - and the remainder from Larsa - accounting for the popularity of representations on them of Shamash, with rays of light emitted from his shoulders either seated on his throne

CITY OF ORIGIN→		ED- DER/SIPPAR	LARSA	KISH	BABYLON	UR	MARI	UNPROVENANCED
Early Babylonian	Old	244	8	0	0	0	1	42
Late Babylonian	Old	169	22	3	1	2	0	108

Ill.7- 19 Provenance of OB seals and sealings taken into account by Nijhowne for her iconographical analysis

⁶² Politics, Religion, and Cylinder Seals: A Study of Mesopotamian Symbolism in the Second Millennium BC BAR International Series 772 Oxford 1999

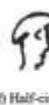
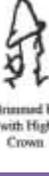
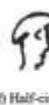
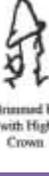
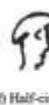
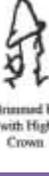
holding rod and ring (as on the Hammurabi Stele) or holding up his saw as he breaks through the eastern mountains, striding over them. (We look at her summary of the *parentage* of the Gods of the Pantheon as used on seals in the final section of this chapter.) Her map of the area (Ill.7- 20 below) shows how the main zones of activity for Babylonian-type seals are concentrated along the northern tributaries of the main rivers.



Ill.7- 20: Nijhowne's map of 2M Archaeological Sites of N Syria

In trying to separate Early from Late Old Babylonian seals, like Gailani-Weir Nijhowne bewails the fact that their content changes little, consisting of a limited repertoire used in different combinations (this very repertoire made it an easy template to follow and then elaborate upon in local form for the North Syrians in our period -

though Mari is counted in as the only Syrian location for OB seals⁶³ in the table above). The only chronological indicators between Early and Late OB seals that Nijhowne could put her finger on were that:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>Ištar as Warriress is most popular in the Early OB seals, perpetuating the Akkadian type at a time when Sumuabum's daughter had married the King of Uruk (the City par excellence of Inanna/Ištar) at a time when he was in an alliance with him against Rim-Sin I. Later when Uruk's fortunes changed and was instead destroyed by Shamsu-Iluna, Ištar as Warriress disappears from OB seal designs. (Nijhowne Fig 4-i)</i> 										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>The striding ruler in kilt with mace (going by the head gear, definitely not a God) is used up to the end of Hammurabi's reign. (Nijhowne Fig 4-b)</i> 										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>The smiting figure with upheld weapon and lightning flash increases on Late OB seals, especially under Ammisaduqqa (Nijhowne says it is not totally clear if he is human or divine, but as he steps on a bull it is probable he is the God Reshef-Baal). (Nijhowne Fig 4-h)</i> 										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>The brimmed hat (g,h,i) is more popular on Late OB seals, as opposed to the cone (c) or turban (d) types. (Nijhowne Fig 3 top)</i> 	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>  a) Horn Crown </td> <td>  b) Single Horn Crown </td> <td>  c) High Triangular Hat </td> </tr> <tr> <td>  d) Turban-style 1 </td> <td>  e) Turban-style 2 </td> <td>  f) Half-circle Hat </td> </tr> <tr> <td>  g) Brimmed Hat with High Crown </td> <td>  h) Brimmed Hat with Low Crown </td> <td>  i) Brimmed Hat with Circular Crown </td> </tr> </table>	 a) Horn Crown	 b) Single Horn Crown	 c) High Triangular Hat	 d) Turban-style 1	 e) Turban-style 2	 f) Half-circle Hat	 g) Brimmed Hat with High Crown	 h) Brimmed Hat with Low Crown	 i) Brimmed Hat with Circular Crown
 a) Horn Crown	 b) Single Horn Crown	 c) High Triangular Hat								
 d) Turban-style 1	 e) Turban-style 2	 f) Half-circle Hat								
 g) Brimmed Hat with High Crown	 h) Brimmed Hat with Low Crown	 i) Brimmed Hat with Circular Crown								

Ill.7- 21 Diagnostic dramatis personae and headgear taken into account by Nijhowne for her typological analysis

Given dress (fleece or textile), a hat or weapon can be diagnostic of period or region as a *quick-fix indicator*, Nijhowne follows the convention of listing headgear, dress, weaponry and furniture that form the main stage

⁶³ L Al-Gailani Werr Studies in the Chronology and Regional Style of Old Babylonian Cylinder Seals Bibl.Mes. Vol.23 Malibu

props of the scenes depicted, but keeps it succinct and to the point, taking up no more than four pages (reduced by me to the table above) of line drawings of key indicators (rather than, as criticised above, citing every instance and in the process *obscuring* the view of the wood by the trees), surely an model of good practice.

When it comes to seals of the subsequent period of the Kassite takeover of Babylon lasting 400 years (which, dating as they do from the second half of the millennium, we refrain from looking at in detail until our commentary for *Catalogue D*) here the majority come from Nippur (a City dedicated to Enlil, father of Marduk, a Sumerian ancestral form of Baal in Syria) with a handful from Babylon itself. Overall she shows Kassite seals travelled much further afield than the Old Babylonian ones, to as far as West as coastal Syria and Greece, in a period when international relations had become far more inter-reactive than in the first half of the millennium:

CITY OF ORIGIN	NO OF SEALS
Aqar Kuf	1
Aššur	4
Babylon	4
Falaika	1
Hama	1
Isin	1
Megiddo	1
Nimrud	1
Nippur	48
Nuzi	17
Tell Subeidi	2
Thebes (Greece)	12
Ur	5
Unprovenanced	85
TOTAL	283

Ill.7- 22 Provenance of Kassite seals and sealings taken into account by Nijhowne for iconographical analysis

The key point we can make in relation to these two periods of Babylonian seals is that *not a single Rear Attack group appears on them (only on occasions is an attack group shown with both lion and prey reared up on their hind legs⁶⁴)* -indicating of a clear-cut cultural divide between purely Babylonian-based sets of seals and the Syrian seals we look at in Catalogues C and D where meaningful mainline motifs from Sumer, Akkad and Assyria are grafted onto the convenient design layout of the stereotypical Old Babylonian presentation scene. Straight away we considerably narrow down our field in explaining the use and origin of the Rear Attack motif by being able to put to one side a large swathe of material.

⁶⁴ I have shown this type under the Uruk Stance (see *Urusta-26* for instance).

UPDATING CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING SEALS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM

Nijhowne's helpful publication of her PhD thesis conveniently turned out to be the overview that made an initial separation of the sheep from the goats very clear-cut (earlier Sumerian -v- current Babylonian conventions) giving us a starting line from which to proceed to the further identification of the Syrian nature of the use of separate components in its autonomous but extremely variable seal tradition since its earliest hesitant beginnings (sketched out in my entry for the *Ratt-16* group of seals). A turning point was probably as described by Larsen (in *Beyond Babylon* 2008 *apud*. Durand⁶⁵) 'At one point armies from Ešnunna forced Mari to accept status as vassal on a campaign that took them toward Syria along the banks of the Euphrates...(They brought a new and different scribal practice, ... introduced ... during its brief period of control there. This scribal tradition became standard at Mari after the men from Ešnunna had left... and from then on the chancery at Mari simply adopted the Babylonian scribal culture brought by the conquering army.'

IDENTIFYING NATIVE ANATOLIAN AND SYRIAN STYLE COMPONENTS ON SEALS

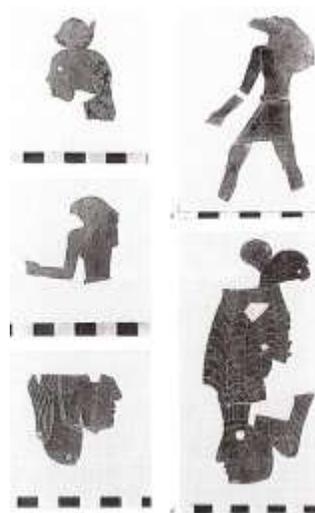
Having done an initial sort using Nijhowne we needed then to make the polarity into a triadic signpost by bringing in on top of the Sumerian and Old Babylonian traditions a third seal prototype - - the native Anatolian seals collected under *Ratt-15f* and *Ratt-17* which use aspects of both Babylonian audience scenes and Sumerian motifs, but against an unstructured backdrop using what we could call 'proto-Hittite input' - the Gods standing on their animals being the most obvious feature. For me, it was a useful beginning when looking at any seal to assess which of the three blueprints it is most followed overall. Using the assessments of Özguç, Teissier and Otto as an initial springboard, I found I had been instinctively applying this three-way template criterion for rule-of-thumb assessment of seals featuring the Rear Attack that I wanted to include, sort and understand.

The easily identifiable native Anatolian factor then brought me to realise that one should not forget also to look out for what might be the typically Canaanite native 'look' as well - image handling not seen anywhere in the borrowed models (Palestinian local input is only fully relevant for the second half of the millennium). At its most common I realised its main trend was the depiction of pint-size, dumpy figures with short haircuts, sometimes bearded, with no sense of the grandeur attained on seals sponsored by The Great Powers. These cute little figures reflecting no sense of self-importance (e.g. *Ratt-16*) must either reflect the native, nomadic element even, of seal iconography, or have something to do with seals of the lower ranks - or both.

As the nature of Syrian politics changed into the multiplicity of small city states described earlier - with consequent linkage, according to geographical contiguity, to trade and vassalship networks - throughout the first half of the 2M the spectrum of design types adopted were mixed and matched to native tradition and ability on the basis not only of the familiar 3M prototypes in use beyond its borders and no doubt at first depended on the stock-in trade of available craftsmen brought in to make seals for any new petty administration. This leads us to questions of workmanship, which Teissier (*ibid.*) took into account with some degree of success when

⁶⁵ J-M Durand 'L'Unité et Diversité au Proche-Orient à l'époque amorrite' in Charpin et al. (eds) XXXVIII^e RAI Paris 1992, 97-128

considering the origin of groups of seals from certain workshops. A key factor to be explained is the refined workmanship of the Classic Syrian seal masterpieces which just does not show up on drawings of them (c.f. *Ratt-20*, for instance). Their unmistakably smooth modelling and rounded off, full proportions must, I believe, be explained by the input of Egyptian - or Egyptian-trained - craftsmanship with higher standards of finish on harder stones (usually haematite) than ever seen in Mesopotamia and the Levant before - we could almost call it 'the Byblos factor'. I found that Matthiae (1989) came to such a conclusion in relation to pieces of Egyptianising ivory inlay (above) found in the Northern Palace I at Ebla: 'the exceptional formal quality of the Egyptianising Old Syrian inlays provides evidence of how deep and pervasive was the study of the Middle Kingdom statuary, relief and minor arts in the Syrian urban centres, of how effective might have been the spur they gave to the ripening of the great late Old Syrian artistic taste and of the formal quality and variety of the artefacts produced in the



III.7- 23: The earliest Syrian ivory inlays, found at Ebla- royal and divine human heads and renditions of Horus and Sobek (a favourite of the MK Dynasties) dating to c1750-1700 - from Matthiae (*ibid.* 1989) pl. X

different artistic genres by the palatial workshops of the central and final Middle Bronze II in inner or coastal Syria'. He sees these Eblaite ivories as of such superior quality compared to other Eblaite artefacts (such as the limestone inlays made for the presumed 'Standard of Ebla) that he reckons they must have been commissioned from a coastal workshop [around Byblos perhaps] where knowledge of Egyptian techniques and iconography would have been a cut above Ebla's abiding tendency towards the provincial.

THE DESIGN SLIDE RULE

Thus once a seal is assessed as to main model used, attention then to variations in workmanship and use (or otherwise) of normal human proportions enhancing or detracting from realism and beauty of appearance (style factors) can help to map rough *chronological* development - certainly to the sorting of Pre-Classical and Post-Classical seals from the purely Classical phases. My *Design Slide Rule* below covers the criteria governing layout and style applicable to the design of any early 2M seal, providing differing sets of ticked boxes for each one. Collected together in bunches showing the same traits, it is a headache to try then to order whole bunches in

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strict chronological order since, despite the predominance of certain designs and workmanship at particular times in certain regions as pinned down by Teissier and Otto, the tendency throughout the 2M to use mongrel combinations defies hard and fast ordering - but it does bring method into the initial assessment of any seal of the period *before going on to consider the content!*

	SUMERO- AKKADIAN	BABYLONIAN	HITTITE- ANATOLIAN	EGYPTIAN ELEMENTS	CANAANITE LOCAL INPUT	PALESTINIAN LOCAL INPUT
ONE FULL-HEIGHT REGISTER THROUGHOUT						
HAUPTSZENE WITH SIDE SECONDARY SCENE OF SAME HEIGHT						
TWO OR MORE REGISTERS WITH HORIZONTAL SEPARATORS						
TWO OR MORE REGISTERS WITHOUT HORIZONTAL SEPARATORS						
HAUPTSZENE WITH DEFINED SIDE DOUBLE REGISTER						
HAUPTSZENE WITH LOOSELY DEFINED SIDE DOUBLE REGISTER						
VERTICALLY BANDED REGISTERS						
FLAT OVERALL DESIGN (HIDDEN GRID UNDERLAY)						
FLAT OVERALL DESIGN (NO PERCEPTIBLE ORDERING)						
SENSE OF FULL HUMAN PROPORTIONS						
DUMPY HUMAN PROPORTION						
MIX OF FULL-HEIGHT AND SMALL FIGURES						
PROVINCIAL MODELLING AND WORKMANSHIP						
MESOPOTAMIAN STYLE						
EGYPTIAN FINISH						

III.7- 24: DESIGN SLIDE RULE: Key design and workmanship components mixed and matched in Syrian seals

Below we apply it to the 'Peaked-Cap Ruler' Syrian seals shown in **Ratt-18** - which are evidently *not* native Anatolian - simply by ticking the relevant boxes against the checklist. In contrast, the main seal of **Ratt-21** would tick the boxes shaded pink, and the main seal of **Ratt-20** the boxes shaded blue (here indicated on the same table to save space) - the key difference between them showing up as quality of workmanship. Simply

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going through the checklist with each seal clarifies one’s snap assessments, showing up quite logically where the differences between each other lie - and which may be diagnostic enough to lead to other conclusions.

✓ SEALS OF RATT-18 → PINK RATT-21 BLUE RATT-20						
	SUMERO- AKKADIAN	BABYLONIAN	HITTITE- ANATOLIAN	EGYPTIAN ELEMENTS	CANAANITE LOCAL INPUT	PALESTINIAN LOCAL INPUT
ONE FULL-HEIGHT REGISTER THROUGHOUT	✓	✓				
TWO OR MORE REGISTERS						
HAUPTSZENE WITH SIDE SECONDARY SCENE OF SAME HEIGHT	✓					
HAUPTSZENE WITH DEFINED SIDE DOUBLE REGISTER	PINK	PINK	WHITE	WHITE	PINK	PURPLE
	BLUE	BLUE			BLUE	
HAUPTSZENE WITH LOOSELY DEFINED SIDE DOUBLE REGISTER						
TWO OR MORE REGISTER COMPONENTS WITH HORIZONTAL SEPARATORS	WHITE				PINK	
					BLUE	
TWO OR MORE REGISTER COMPONENTSS WITHOUT HORIZONTAL SEPARATORS						
VERTICAL BANDED REGISTERS						
FLAT OVERALL DESIGN (GRID)						
FLAT OVERALL DESIGN (LOOSE)						
DUMPY HUMAN PROPORTION						
MIX OF FULL-HEIGHT AND SMALL FIGURES	✓					
PROVINCIAL MODELLING AND WORKMANSHIP						
MESOPOTAMIAN STYLE	✓				PINK	PURPLE
EGYPTIAN FINISH		BLUE				

III.7- 25: The DESIGN SLIDE RULE applied to three Catalogue C items

STANDARD ART HISTORICAL APPROACHES II: CULTURAL AND TEXTUAL UNDERPINNING OF IMAGES

For me, realising that for any seal the separation of a first stage of *form* assessment from a second stage of *content* assessment was needed resolved the confusion arising between the unconscious mixture of the two in

the criteria offered by Teissier and Otto in their work: these started from reasonable premises but ended up going awry, proving to be inadequate for the litmus test of practical application to new material. But, thanks to their collection and sorting of the material, by taking up the useful choices made by the seal experts looked at so far, we drew up our own *Design Slide Rule* as proposed and applied above, hopefully putting ourselves in a better position to assess material more effectively before proceeding to its interpretation. Now in this section we need to build up gradually towards the establishment of a *Content Slide-Rule (Ill.7- 68)* whereby we resort to the other arm of the art history discipline - matching images to contemporary textual and cultural evidence.

Writing with the authority of an experienced archaeologist and iconologist, Paulo Matthiae⁶⁶, the archaeologist in charge of Ebla in all its phases, explored just such criteria in an important paper, totally apposite to the 2M material in hand, to which we turn for guidance. In it he discusses the question of when, and when not, it is legitimate to use secondary texts to help throw light on images. Its first few pages usefully sum up the criteria art historians use in this respect - which archaeologists, though responsible for digging up artefacts with visual imagery on them, are not formally trained to apply. Cooperation with the translators of ancient near eastern texts is usually needed - but they themselves often decline what they see as amateurish pairing of text to image (often they have no interest in images on artefacts at all, I have ruefully found), contending that comparison is not viable when there are chronological gaps between the two,. The triangular cross-disciplinary cooperation between archaeologist, art historian and textual expert does not always run smooth and it can take much debate across barriers of misunderstanding or suspicion over a long time to secure consensus on any cross-matching at all - but when it works well it is highly informative, as in W Lambert's treatment of Gilgamesh seals⁶⁷.

Matthiae points to the milestones on the journey of art historians with archaeological training who started to apply the principles of citing texts that appeared to mesh with the visual images of ancient near eastern art, a discipline initiated in Europe from the 19C onwards by German scholars of Western Art History. In the 20C as Nazi persecution increased during the 1930s one such scholar, Aby Warburg, sought sanctuary in England and founded the Warburg Institute precisely for the study of iconography. Other scholars in the field came to work there and join its staff, with people such as Ernst Gombrich, Friedrich Saxl and Erwin Panofsky establishing the methodology of iconographic interpretation (mostly in relation to Italian Renaissance and Gothic art). The Warburg always remained an Institute for post-graduate studies, in contrast to the Courtauld Institute (the Art History Graduate College at London University) which was inspired by a founder-member of the Bloomsbury Group, Roger Fry, and headed up by Anthony Blunt.

One of the early luminaries of the Warburg Institute (and indeed latterly its Director) was the Dutchman Henri Frankfort. Having participated in several digs in Iraq, he was amongst the first to apply such principles to the interpretation of ancient near eastern mythology on cylinder seals in his magisterial pioneering study (consider

⁶⁶ 'Figurative Themes and Literary Texts' in Pelio Fronzaroli (ed.) Proceedings of a Colloquium held in Florene 4-6 April 1991 on *Literature and Literary Language at Ebla* Firenze 1992, 219-41

⁶⁷ See footnote next page.

the full title)⁶⁸. He was one of several of that generation brought up in both disciplines and his book⁶⁹ on the art history of the region, more than his more dry archaeological reports, is still valid today for a sound overview, as he was in the rare position of being able to interpret within the bigger picture the objects he and colleagues were bringing up out of the ground. In these years everyone involved was part of a small inter-European network able to collaborate on cross-disciplinary issues with ease. Matthiae cites Frankfort as the first to grapple effectively with the question of which texts can legitimately be used to bring out the meanings of images on seals (apart from inscriptions actually on them, which so often rarely help, since a God cited in them may not be the figure illustrated in the image). It was too easy in the earliest days of the study of ancient near eastern art to presume ‘that figurative works were really not more than the illustration of literary works’, such that

The chronologically undifferentiated [sic] interpretation and reconstruction which were for a long time dominant in the handbooks about Mesopotamian civilization led to perceive as uninfluential, in the comparisons [sic] proposed, the eventual variants due to the development in time, and as negligible those related with local peculiarities’ (p.220)

In the case of Frankfort’s work it would have been ridiculous for him to hold back from comparing Akkadian mythological scenes on their cylinder seals with contemporary Akkadian works in tandem with the evidently parallel divine and mythic Sumerian literary production of an earlier period. He proposed to do this, whilst consciously bearing in mind that ‘*chronological differences had to be taken into account... concretely verifying whenever possible the mutations the literary traditions showed in the course of time in order to evaluate which... could more likely be considered archaic elements...*’. In contrast Matthiae takes Moortgat’s well-known application of the Myth of Tammuz to Sumerian visual imagery⁷⁰ as an example of ‘*the tortuous vicissitudes of the relation between artistic and literary works*’ where a leap of imagination is made in general terms on the basis of a cultural tradition even though watertight links cannot be made between actual figurative *versus* verbal messages. In such a situation it is a matter of choice as to whether a reader takes Moortgat’s hypothesis on board or not (I personally think it is imaginative and reaches the truth of the matter).

To be so doctrinaire as to declare it illegitimate to compare picture and text other than when strictly contemporary (most university tutors today insist on this when marking essays) is to asphyxiate the work of iconology, especially given the random distribution and rarity already of surviving documents and artefacts from the ancient past. Matthiae cites the paper by Lambert⁷¹ in the Edith Porada Festschrift drawing attention to the fact that although the Naked Hero with long locks was commonly interpreted as Gilgamesh, strictly speaking the figure appears much earlier in the visual arts than the chronological setting given in texts of the historical figure of Gilgamesh, King of Uruk, in the Early Dynastic period. But this does not necessarily follow, for several reasons which we cannot deal with at length here, the main idea being that we *must* treat a visual image as in itself a separate type of documentary evidence, and not necessarily the Doppelgänger of a text. Suffice it to say that it

⁶⁸ Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East London 1939

⁶⁹ The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient Harmondsworth 1954

⁷⁰ Tammuz: Der Unsterblichkeitsglaube in der Altorientalischen Bildkunst Berlin 1984

⁷¹ ‘Gilgamesh in Literature and Art: the Second and First Millennia’ in Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval worlds: Papers Presented in Honour of Edith Porada Mainz 1987

does not feel right that such ubiquitous figures as Gilgamesh and Enkidu should be demoted to the currently fashionable mere *Lamassu* and *Bull-man*, given the Gilgamesh epic was so central and widespread, thus:

- (a) we cannot rule out preceding oral tradition, likely to be a long-standing astronomical myth;
- (b) the dating of King Gilgamesh is actually vague (the Sumerian King List is known to be a highly speculative area to pin down to absolute dates in real time), and
- (c)-given his central role in myth what *other* figure would represent Gilgamesh in art?

A comparable myth within our own culture is the story of King Arthur. Although historical research has shown that there *was* an actual Arthur in Britain in the Roman Period who was a Welsh or Saxon warrior and leader, the story is only attested in manuscript form in Europe from the mediaeval period, and it inspired the visual arts as late as 19C Victorian painting (most notably the Pre-Raphaelites). The mythic dimension of his story and its influence is therefore not to be dug up in solid archaeology or wholly placeable in time - especially if its basis resides in the reiteration in a new guise of archaeo-astronomical facts (Arthur and the Twelve Knights of the Round Table). In the case of the Arthurian cycle no art historian would dream of disallowing the matching of mediaeval text to Victorian images to understand which incident from it is illustrated in any one painting (without the original texts we would have no idea at all what we are looking at). The same is true for Christian art through the ages, or Classical Mythology, both of which are *enduring oral and textual traditions* perpetuated across the centuries in what I call *vertical relevance*.

It is, of course, different for what we might call *ephemeral texts* which in contrast *are* usually only valid for their time, or on occasions pointers to similar situations just before or just after they were written, this time simply of *horizontal relevance*. When it *is* possible to compare text and picture within the same period, of course for art historians that is the most desirable situation for precision of matching, as in the instances Matthiae cites of Assyrian palace reliefs that appear, according to Irene Winter⁷² to closely mirror contemporary Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions expressing imperial ideology. Here Matthiae makes the important point which I shall draw upon in this section - that it should be possible to draw not only on mythological texts (*vertically*) but also on any other kind of immediate textual evidence of the time (*horizontally*) to gain local authenticity as well as contemporary renditions of long-standing myths and their pantheons. Pinpointing and then bearing in mind the *likely* messages intended in the early 2M Syrian seals - both implicit and explicit - there are several openings for us to use *horizontally relevant texts* pertaining to everyday life - as well as *vertically* relevant text pertaining to religion and its rituals - to make more sense of them, however partial.

Matthiae himself uses this approach to try to understand the iconography of the Ebla seals, fragmented pieces of decorated furniture and limestone statues and reliefs (in fact for the second seal under *Ratt-18f* we cite a separate paper by him about two particular reliefs from Ebla that help shed light on it). He comes to the conclusion that on Eblaite material there are different categories of imagery to be dealt with:

⁷² Irene Winter 'The Program of the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal II' in Harper & Pitman (eds) *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval worlds: Papers Presented in Honor of E Porada* Mainz 1987, p.38

- a) Since they do not appear to be illustrating stories, certain scenes must illustrate ‘*uniquely the court life with dignitaries and officials*’ including the presentation of tribute and homage;
 - i. *Typically Eblaite court scenes represent the king wearing the traditional fleece skirt, facing out frontally with a swollen-brimmed turban and sometimes carrying an axe with a square-ended blade. Matthiae sees a parallel between the Lugals approaching him and Royal Archive texts mentioning their delivery of gold and silver to the Treasury, also making the point that seals can sometimes, instead of the king, show his high officials, in profile, who wielded considerable authority in exacting and administering such tribute and organising its redistribution.*
- b) Mythical elements such as composite beasts (he does not think to see them as astronomical, instead relating them to the ‘wild life of the Steppe’ as well as to the words of songs sung to the lyre and harp);
- c) Military triumphs celebrating victories, very much in the tradition of earlier Sumerian victory stelae;
- d) Since he mostly discusses artefacts found in palace contexts (very little material covered in this paper is from a temple context), not surprisingly he reports an absence of cult themes, though in fact his other paper illuminating the **Ratt-18f** seal points not only to propitiation of the God Hadad, but also to
- e) A well-established ancestor cult for the deceased royalty of Ebla, as attested also in other texts.

In other words, figures appearing in Eblaite iconography, such as on the fragmentary ‘Standard of Ebla’ and a small handful of seals, represent royalty, officialdom *and* stewards/soldiers of various kinds as well as mythological creatures of the divine realm (mostly in their archaic animal form - as, for instance, the lion-headed eagle Imdugud/Ninurta/Ningirsu (thought to be the archaic form of the Mountain War-God/Storm God⁷³ from whose feathers the rains stream down) clutching the rumps of the two man-faced Bulls of the Eastern Horizon. At the start of the millennium Ebla more or less had autonomy in North Syria until Babylon under Hammurabi pushed her borders back inside the sphere of influence of Yamhad. Given our mention that the Old Syrian seals of **Ratt-18** found at Kültepe are most likely to be Eblaite/Yamhadite in origin (they were the earliest to set up palace workshops) - Byblos being the other possibility, with whom its strong craft relations show up in terms of Egyptian influence - it is surely legitimate to look for similar categories of representation and levels of authority on them too, and we will shortly do this with the help of other commentators. In the Old Syrian period 1800-1600 Matthiae himself noted consistency of style in the arts of Ebla/Yamhad and Kültepe. But the end of this era was marked by the Hittite takeover of Yamhad overall, including Alalakh and Ebla, and within a decade Babylon itself was occupied by the Hittites and left under the administration of the Kassites. By the end of his paper, with all the explainable imagery on the artefacts of Ebla in mind as his particular sounding board, Matthiae capitulates and admits to the necessity of a more practical working criterion - that ‘*although there are no elements which might allow to single out direct relations between artistic and literary documents... some contributions... might be interpreted as meaningful parallelisms between the sphere of the literary activity and that of the artistic activity*’, in other words that *if plausible enough, they should be entertained* - which is exactly my position. I have already quoted several writers - not always dealing directly with seals and artefacts - whose work I found particularly helpful in doing just that. I therefore take it that I have the tacit

⁷³ Two centuries later in Gudea’s dream (recounted on Cylinder A) he appears in human form - in the Levant possibly the equivalent of Reshef - if not of Nergal (see section below on the assignment of the planets to the Gods).

blessing of Matthiae to cast about for oblique angles of information to amplify our reading of the seals, and below we will especially try to separate the strands of trade, civil service, royal administration and religious usage of the time that could help us make sense the seals forming the central focus of this Catalogue.

SEAL OWNERSHIP AND FUNCTIONS - AND THEIR IMAGERY

The application of the *Design Slide Rule* provides straightforward sorting criteria and was applied to *Ratt-18/20/21* seals in terms of their overall design. Once applied, there are then more complex considerations concerning the analysis of ownership and purpose which we proceed to look at, step by step, which should help us start to read their imagery. The ideal textual backup for understanding seals is well put in Gorelick's⁷⁴ paper on specific Biblical texts which mention seals (ironically, in this context we have *no* matching seals or sealings!):

Since the Bible is a collection of writings, we shall naturally learn more about them [the seals] from written sources than from unwritten. ... we must remember that writing without artefacts is like flesh without a skeleton and artefacts without writing are a skeleton without flesh.

Though this is broadly true, *my* approach also includes the view that seals are documents in themselves which do not *have* to depend on texts to be understood. Gorelick counts around 60 references in the Bible to seals and sealing - roughly 30 in the Old Testament and 30 in the New. He found that those in the New Testament tend to be metaphorical in nature, but the Old Testament cites examples of actual seal use in the region, as follows:

- ♦ To seal a purchase or sale (Jeremiah 32,10)
- ♦ To seal a covenant (Nehemiah 9,38)
- ♦ To designate authority (Kings 21,8)
- ♦ To delegate authority (Esther 2,8)
- ♦ To seal letters (Kings 21,8)
- ♦ To seal a Law (Isaiah 8,16)
- ♦ To seal a door (Daniel 12,17)

It seems logical to look at likelihood of function for our Rear Attack seals by bearing this initial list, though we will gradually find out that truth is stranger than theory. Hallo in the same publication goes through the etymology of words for 'seal' that are linked to the idea of identifying oneself - to the extent that its loss meant not only the loss of authority, but also of identity. Hence if not reused (which they often were) or kept as heirlooms they were buried with their owner on death. Against the general background of people trading at Kültepe and sealing their business documentation there, amply backed up by huge amounts of archaeological and textual witness, it is more the reality of individual ownership - and roles - that need to be looked into in more detail, especially in relation to the top four or five categories on Gorelick's list.

SEAL USE IN THE TRADING CONTEXT OF KÜLTEPE

Given the archaeological context of Kültepe as a trading entrepôt, the purpose of the majority of seals we are scrutinising appears immediately obvious especially since they were rolled on legal and business documents

⁷⁴ In L Gorelick & Elizabeth Williams-Forte (eds) *Ancient Seals and the Bible* Malibu 1983

(indeed, for this site we have the sealings and not the seals, since the owners would have kept the latter with them when they left Kültepe to return home). Although usually rolled on texts, the content of those texts do not necessarily relate to the scenes on the sealings, whose iconography was evidently taken for granted as obvious, and simply used by its owner to seal a deal. Regrettably it is rare for one scholar to publish texts and the seals on them together, making it harder to pull together what relation imagery and text might have to do with each other: the gulf between what tend to be the text boys and seal girls is still wide to this day: usually only *inscriptions* on seals are gathered in an appendix at the end of some catalogues, translated by a guest specialist.

So though we may at first assume the sealings of Kültepe were made only by merchants, this could not possibly always be the case, since we need to remember that merchants needed a licence to trade below the citadel of Kültepe which had a full-blown palace administration that levied several taxes on them, described in fascinating detail by Garelli (1963). These taxes included import and export taxes, levies on particular goods (the tax on textiles was even higher than that on tin), entry and exit tolls and even a tax on their form of transport - donkeys! Merchants had other expenses to think of: employees and agents had to be funded and clothed, board and lodging on the journey paid for, and their donkeys fed and watered - eating away further at potential end profits. Merchants would either pay their taxes in the *kārum* office, or at the palace which between them ‘soldaient leurs comptes respectifs de taxes lors des règlements périodiques’ as Garelli puts it. For all the personnel required to collect taxes, deal with monetary gains and losses, sales and confiscations - such as accountants, investors, clients, agents and partners there is an equivalent word for it somewhere in the Kültepe texts and they would all have had their seals, up to the king himself. Taking into account how palace personnel and fellow merchants sometimes asked for credit, well-off merchants in the course of their travels ended up as unofficial bankers for their Government, Palace clients or colleagues (Sasson (*ibid.*) mentions merchants even paying off a ransom for prisoners on behalf of a king in another district. Sometimes, of course, debts were never repaid and merchants suffered losses, entering into lawsuits to get their money (or property) back and all associated documents would be witnessed by the seals of accusers, plaintiffs and the officials involved.

Many Kültepe texts are bills itemising costs in terms of gold, silver, tin and copper which, as well as being the raw material for craftsmen to make into artefacts, served also as currency an entire millennium before coinage began to be stamped from those metals in Anatolia (Lydia, under the Persians). Overall, Hallo⁷⁵ makes the crucial point - expressed more succinctly in one of his book reviews⁷⁶ - that we are witnessing ‘the gradual transition from a state economy administered by palace or temple to a private capitalist economy, with the concomitant emergence of silver as the sole and universal monetary medium’, and goes on to say, ‘Whether or not it can be interpreted as an ‘Amorite’ development, it reached a certain climax in the Code of Hammurapi, whose purpose it was apparently, to codify the commercial relations of a “free” economy’⁷⁷. Some texts

⁷⁵ W Hallo, ‘’ in *La Circulation des Biens, des Personnes et des Idées dans le Proche-Orient Ancient*, (XXXVIII^e RAI) Paris 1992

⁷⁶ Review of W F Leeman *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period* etc. In *JCS* XVII 59-60

⁷⁷ (Though in this period other exchangeable commodities such as semi-precious stones, wool, resins, dates and wine were also used.)

describe how ingots of these metals were deposited in the temple at Aššur in packages sealed with the seal of the owner, much as we would set up a savings account today (from much later in the millennium in 13C BC Aššur, along with small ingots of lead and iron, such ingots were revealed stored in this way in the temple site for that later level too, showing the practice was continued.

Garelli points out that the Aššur Assembly was simply interested in getting these commodities to where it was in demand, and had no interest in either processing the ores or making artefacts from these metals. A well-known letter in the Edinburgh Museum describes the king of Aššur as no more than a super-merchant who as Aššur became prosperous on its trade attained the status of king only a few generations on from 'living in tents'. Larsen cites Oppenheim's remark that at Aššur 'the king at that period acted only as the *'primus inter pares* of an amphictyonic league of sheikhs', and reminds us that in Aššur it was the *wakīl* (probably the equivalent of our mayor) who directed most commercial affairs from the City Hall (*bīt alīm*), so that 'the political structure in Aššur was characterised by a certain delicate balance between the king and the various city institutions'

As we know, this was the bronze age where tin and copper together were needed to make bronze, but Garelli remarks that Aššur did not attempt to buy in exchange much of the large quantities of copper coming in to Anatolia from Crete and Cyprus, used with the tin coming from the east to make things in bronze. He believes it likely most of the tin traded from Aššur was mined in the Tabriz basin and Afghanistan comparatively nearby to the north and east of Assyria, whereas Crete and Cyprus were more likely to have obtained tin for their bronze from their own sources in Western Europe. According to Limet⁷⁸ in the Ur III Period preceding a very small amount of tin was mined in the Byblos region, but overall Aššur had the monopoly on the tin trade as far as Eastern Anatolia, beyond which point the copper trade was beyond their administrative arm.

Aššur itself, the City State behind the establishment of the trading colony, sent its own administrative orders out to the colony and had its own representative offices, not only in Kültepe but in all the smaller trading stations beyond it in order to state manage the totting up bills and managing the economy within native territory from their point of view. Larsen cites the well-known letter from the Aššur administration to the assembly of all the karum merchants at Kültepe ordering the Anatolian colonials to pay 10 minas of silver as their contribution towards building fortifications at Aššur - thus overall Aššur when necessary had its own brand of penetrating authority whose tentacles reached into Kültepe when required, and would send officials into the territory to to rectify cases of bad business practice. Larsen⁷⁹ points to only two Old Assyrian texts containing references to a royal palace at Aššur, which at this time was very much down-played as 'the biggest house' whereas several palace administrations in Anatolia already figured prominently, levying taxes on all caravans, restricting trade in certain commodities and in general intervening in the affairs of the Assyrian merchants to maintain local control

⁷⁸ H Limit Le Travail du Métal au Pays de Sumer au Temps de la III^e Dynastie d'Ur Paris 1960

⁷⁹ See M T Larsen 'The City and its King: On the Old Assyrian Notion of Kingship' in *Le Palais et La Royauté (XIXe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale)* ed. Paul Garelli Paris 1974

and push back at Aššur without arousing enmity (they needed the lucrative taxes, and indeed by law had first choice of all goods brought into the city, textiles being the most often mentioned).

We have to ask whether any cases of such official involvement in mercantile affairs can be read into our seal sample. As Larsen says, ‘... we know of a large number of officials who were obviously directly connected with the palace’. He probably had in mind Garelli’s account of job titles gleaned from the Kültepe archives which show the wide variety of staffing required at the Anatolian end to run the palace economy (much as the later Hittite and Minoan/Mycenaean administrations were run, the emphasis being more on the palace than the temple). The most important were:

- Keeper of the sceptre
- Head interpreter
- Captain of the palace guard
- Head of the army
- Head of the armoury
- Chief of chariots
- Head blacksmith
- Head of bronzemaking
- Head of metal distribution (= Paymaster)
- Head of the warehouse
- Head of the market
- Head of furniture
- Head of livestock
- Master of the horse

and many others besides (and as mentioned above, even though without status in any civil service administrative hierarchy, merchants were equally answerable at a distance to the government of Aššur, and subject to its interventions).

Durand⁸⁰ offers a fascinating insight into the Mari Court at the very start of Zimrilim’s reign from documents showing the king required every single official in his court to reswear allegiance to the throne, from bakers to soldiers and up to all officials of his court including even the diviners. Amongst these was his Treasurer who not only had to swear he had not stolen anything in the interregnum, but that also ‘je lui ferai porter à lui toute sorte de choses précieuses que de Kaneš, Hursamma et Hattuša - oeuvre d’art, travail d’artisan, curiosité on m’apportera’. But the most relevant documentary instances for understanding seal use come from the Kültepe side, and Garelli (*ibid.*) states, ‘C’est par le prince et le chef de la citadelle qu’était authentifiés les contrats’. This high official, the *Rabb Similtim*, or ‘Head of the Stair’, was in charge of receiving the loads of merchandise brought up via what we might see as the staircase to the pro-pylon or gateway of the citadel, at the top of which was a wide arena where goods could be laid out, delivery notes and accounts noted, and tax payments due assessed - Lewy interpreted the role as the equivalent of Head Chamberlain or Vizier (in other words the Chief Palace Administrator and right-hand man of the Prince). Garelli saw this man as ‘*en meme temps garde*

⁸⁰ J-M Durand ‘Précurseurs Syriens aux Protocoles Néo-syriens’ in *Marchands, Diplomates et Empereurs: Etudes sur la Civilisation Mésopotamiennes Offertes à Paul Garelli 1991 Paris*

des sceaux' but, as he puts it, from the records 'Nous ne voyons que les points d'intersection où les activités du palais indigène rejoignent celles du kārum assyrien', which in itself is a nice definition of a seal.

Lumsden⁸¹ neatly describes the seal as an 'objectification of identity' and in his Garelli Festschrift paper he showed from more recent work in the field that it was the round stamp seals with high hammer grips that tended increasingly to be favoured by Palace Administrations such as on the many bullae excavated at Acemhüyük and Karahüyük, spreading to the rest of Anatolia as time went on. As Lumsden puts it, 'following the collapse of the Assyrian trading system this shared culture was given political unity by the Hittite state' - and the Hittite seal tradition developed seamlessly from them. They are also linked to the round lentoids favoured by the Minoans, sometimes with almost identical designs- of which more in *Catalogue E*. On the other hand Lumsden also mentions that outside Kültepe 'known regional [trading] centers are characterized by the apparent lack of large-scale storage facilities, the secular nature of most large structures, predominance of hand-made pottery, and *very little or no use of seals and sealing*'. Native Kültepe was therefore well ahead of most of the rest of Anatolia in picking up trading techniques from the Assyrians - and were the first within Anatolian trading circles to adopt cylinder seals, with their own designs and Gods on them (*Ratt-17*). Lumsden's paper is worth reading for gaining a full idea of the reciprocity of cultural exchange that went on at other fronts, and in the light of the importance of texts for making agreements, he also asserts that 'the technology of writing played a crucial role in the success of the widespread mercantile system within Anatolia' in a territory that had initially used non-literate administrative systems. Larsen⁸² recently added more insight into the use of bullae in the lower town at Kültepe where it appears they were used as part of a merchant's 'filing system' whereby tablets of different categories were stored in pots or baskets and then sealed with a bulla (somewhat like a locked filing cabinet). All archives were kept in a special records room in his house which in turn was sealed.

The most revealing document for our enquiry is a letter to Inib-lštar which charts the process of distribution of a freshly imported load of textiles where the prime pieces are described as pre-emptively picked out by members of the palace (in Proto-Hittite mode, there could be an occasional intervention by a queen consort - which would never happen in Semitic Aššur⁸³) before the remainder was allowed down to the kārum'. The agent writes to the importer: '240 étoffes... sont montées au palais. Sur ce nombre le palais a pris 12 étoffes en droits d'entrée; il en a achetées 22 [other pieces are described as taken by head officials for themselves]... Lorsque les étoffes sont descendues du palais, Adada en a pris 46 à ton sceau; Aššur-malik en a pris 42 au sceau... Šu-lštar en a pris 30 au sceau d'Aššur-rabi; nous avons remis le reste des etoffes à ... mettre à vente.' Here we have mention of the use of seals as identifying labels whereby different agents commit to take on the prime merchant's products to sell on in his name or their own.

⁸¹ Stephen Lumsden 'Material Culture and the Middle Ground in the Old Assyrian Colony Period' in C Michel (ed.) *Old Assyrian Studies in Memory of Paul Garelli* Leiden 2008

⁸² M T Larsen 'Archives and Filing Systems at Kültepe' also in C. Michel (ed.) *Old Assyrian Studies in Memory of Paul Garelli* Leiden 2008

⁸³ See H Otten 'Die Königin von Kaniš in Garelli (ed.) *Le Palais et La Royauté* Paris 1974

This detailed textual evidence makes us aware of a number of different contexts where seals were used - for which there must surely be some correlation to images on them meaningful to merchants or the authorities they dealt with, since the status of the owner expressed on it gives a guarantee of authority - and therefore of trustworthiness in commercial affairs. To underline such implications further, our next step is to briefly consider some well documented precedents on Ur III palace seals.

GUARANTEES OF AUTHORITY ON SEALS AT THE TURN OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM

Keeping in mind the kinds of use of seals given in the Old Testament listed above by Gorelick, they were not just a personal ID for the merchant or ruler involved, but sought to express the personal status of its owner, place of origin and allegiances - on his own account or on behalf of others - and when it comes to seals and sealings made outside Kültepe, in many cases the level of the owner's authority in terms of vassalship to an authority above him would be demonstrated on it to add strength to his own credibility. Gorelick cites the famous Biblical example of the seal given to the Vizier Joseph by the Pharaoh as a sign of the authority vested in him to act on the Pharaoh's behalf. The question of how the seal owner is represented - paying his respects to the King or Gods he is deemed to be accountable to - then comes into the picture. In return for guarantees of response and protection from their higher authority, the seal owner acting under their aegis is permanently depicted acknowledging their superior power and overlordship, thus underpinning any transaction he puts his seal to.

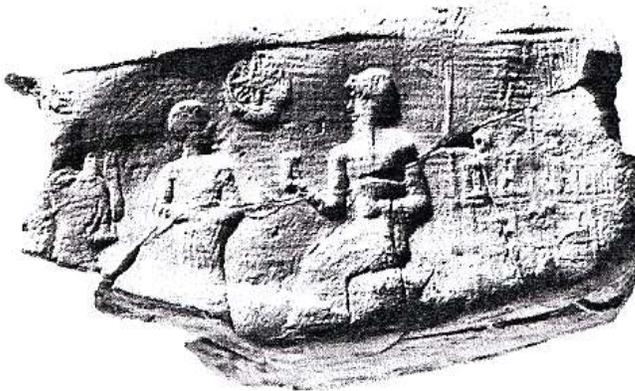
In other words, we are looking at seals in the name of whose Gods, Kings or High Officials oaths and promises are registered and made binding. The supplicant in an audience scene on a seal, whoever he is, may be shown not just paying his respects with libation or a toast, but in some cases (especially if he is a kinglet) taking part in the specific rituals of the national High Days and Holy Days such as the New Year celebration or Sacred Marriage (rites specifically associated with the lion and prey motif). Participation in such rituals, major or minor, indicate adherence to the divine tradition legitimising the administrative and commercial practices of the culture he belongs to (we will study below the body language of contract rituals in particular). Even if for our *particular* seals we may be unable to find further documentary backup, we are already gaining specificity for what we are looking to read into the catalogue material. We *can* certainly be factual about a body of seals just preceding them which signposts credible lines of enquiry to pursue further.

SEALS AS TOOLS OF ADMINISTRATION: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND 'MESSAGES OF MUTUAL POWER'

An approach to seals of the time as markers of authority is confirmed in specific detail in Irene Winter's⁸⁴ thorough analysis of the levels of authority brought to bear on transactions in the iconography of Ur III period (2112-2004), a seal type we might therefore expect to see continued at the start of the new millennium as Syria picked up how to use such administrative devices. Magness-Gardiner (*ibid.*) states that inscriptions 'first appear on Syrian seals at the beginning of the 2M BC and usually consist of one or more lines with owner's name,

⁸⁴ 'Legitimation of authority through Image and Legend: Seals belonging to Officials in the Administrative Bureaucracy of the Ur III State' in Gibson and Biggs (eds) *The Organisation of Power: Aspects of Bureaucracy in the Ancient near East* Chicago 1987/1991

patronymic, political affiliation, profession or patron deity', precisely the formula for Ur III seals⁸⁵. At the instigation of Shulgi during his reforms, the seals of his administration were standardised to follow the usual Old Babylonian template for presentation scenes whereby the official who is the possessor of the seal is depicted being led into the presence of his King, bare-shouldered with long robe tightly wrapped round the torso in the



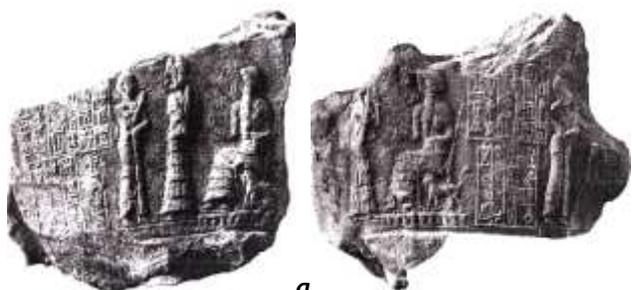
Ill. 7- 26 Ur III presentation scene with remains of Lama figure introducing Scribe Lu-Melam with shaven head and plain robe to helmeted and bare-torsoed Ur III King Shu-Sin on a stool, wrapped to the armpits in a robe (c.f. (right) Matthiae pl. XII) holding out the cup of endowment -a quartered Sun in Crescent in the sky between them)

manner seen in the fragmentary sculpture (above right) found in Ebla's Temple P2 and deemed by Matthiae (*ibid.* 1999) to be a king of the early 2M. The Ur III seals, in Winter's words, were 'markers of their owners... [serving to] witness, guarantee, acknowledge receipt or confirm obligation when rolled on commercial or administrative documents, letter orders, envelopes, bullae, jar and door sealings'. She quotes Weber's useful phrase (*apud.* Goody) that the 'primary characteristic of bureaucratic organisation is the conduct of business on the basis of documents', and as the volume of trade increased during the Middle Bronze Age - and the density of interactive bureaucracy along with it - the seal was a key substitute for face-to-face meetings between the people involved in transactions: 'As the distance between the individual and the highest authority became greater [it was] a rhetorical compensation for the loss of actual interaction' (as well as proof of it - which is our gain centuries later). Only during the period of the *Dingir-Lugals*, Van Buren says, did priests shave their heads.

Winter realised that when the seal owner was not a top grade royal official (see top inverted triangle in the last pyramid of *Ill. 7- 28*) he is depicted as introduced by an intermediary Goddess, possibly a priestess traditionally dressed for the event in fleece robe and single-horned headgear (in recent scholarship dubbed a *Lama*). On such seals it was mandatory in the Shulgi administration to include an inscription giving information about the owner.

Actually the Akkadians had begun to include inscriptions on their seals identifying their owner, but in the Ur III period for the first time the inscription is equally as important as the image, and followed a standard formula of the name of the person and of their father (if important), their job title, and the king in whose name they act

⁸⁵ See also I J Gelb 'Typology of Mesopotamian Seal inscriptions' in Gibson & Biggs (eds) *Seals and Sealing* Malibu 1977, 107-126



a
Sealings of Chancellor Ur-Kugnuna-l led by an interceding Lama priestess a) before King Shu-Sin and b) before King Amar-Sin - Penn Museum U6748b (UE X 429) and U6748a (UE X 430)



c
The seal of Chancellor Igi-Annakezu, led between two Lama priestesses before Shu-Sin, is rolled to emphasise the central inscription, putting the King on one side and leaving the civil servant on the other - Penn Museum U6960 (UE X 10433)

III.7- 27 Ur III presentation scenes of civil servants paying respects to and receiving authority from the King

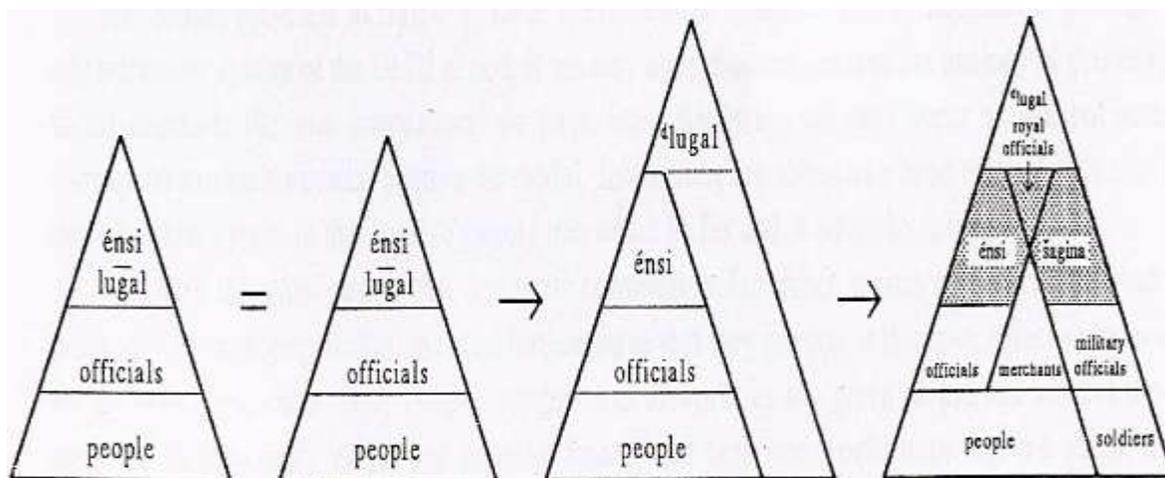
(in fact the corpus of Ur III sealings has examples involving every one of the Ur III Kings). Winter points out from examples of the way the seal was rolled that in fact the inscription was usually made to take centre stage with the figures disconnected on either side. Although people have complained about the lack of variation in the Ur III seals, Winter believes it was their standardisation under Šulgi that gave them universal weight within the network of cities and towns that came under the sway of Ur III rule on an increasingly successful trading basis - with hindsight very much the prelude for the same state of affairs that was to mushroom even further afield only a hundred years on, in neighbouring North Syria and territories beyond, as the ideal model to follow.

SEALS OF GREAT KINGS, LESSER KINGS AND THEIR OFFICIALS -v- MERCHANTS' SEALS

By a useful schematic model (reproduced below) summarising the administrative hierarchy in the time of Šulgi, Winter (in discussion with Piotr Steinkeller) illustrates how the more complex stratification of the Ur III administration worked, a pattern definitely carried over to North Syria whereby a king would make himself into a super-king by divinising his name (*Dingir-Lugal*), thus setting him at a higher rank over ordinary kings, and whose superior authority they were thereby constrained to accept. Thus under Šulgi many small petty city-states⁸⁶ could be collected under the sway of one *Dingir-Lugal*, seen as the personification of the Sun-God Shamash as top authority because effective in maintaining law and order and meting out justice. This in turn led to petty kings or governors becoming a new élite within the hierarchy, with lower civil servants or military personnel answering to them in turn, and whose own seals in turn would be likely to show their authority being endowed by their immediate superior (rather than the King). It also meant that the *Dingir-Lugal* would also have his own inner circle of very high-ranking royal officials who had authority over the officials below them (these were usually shown on their seals as in the presence of the King *without* the help of the *Lama*). Winter writes of these Ur III seals, 'What I would suggest is that the imagery ... conveyed general information regarding the place

⁸⁶ Lafont (*ibid.*) usefully summarises the terminology from a Leilan tablet that characterises each district (*halšum*) of the Diyala territory; vassal kingdoms (*namlaktum*) and, interestingly, those Bedouin tribes (*nawûm*) who had sworn allegiance to the king of Mari who were always on the move - which meant that sometimes their own 'chefs de pâture' (*merhûm*) were empowered to conclude international alliances in the name of their King! The king himself (*šarrum*) called his vassal kings his sons (*mârum*), whilst his officials (*wardum*) were differentiated from his army (*šâbum*). His actual son and heir-prince (*nawûm*) might in turn have his own *namlaktûn*.

of the seal owner within the system...’ and that the seal calls upon ‘the whole political hierarchy as party to the act for which the seal is being used’. These are fruitful perspectives to bear in mind when viewing the Old Period seals in our sample.



III.7- 28 Schematic model of Administrative Reorganisation under Shulgi - from Winter (ibid.)

Noticing the inner upright triangle of the last pyramid in Winter’s scheme, we also realise there must be a key difference in iconography between officials’ seals and those of merchants, since the latter operated in the ‘Private Sector’, and were not official players within the state bureaucracy directly beholden to kings and their officials. Even though we have noted instances where they could act as unofficial agents or ambassadors, socially merchants were still what the Victorians would call ‘trade’. Certainly for the previous Ur III period Winter categorises them as ranked along with lower court or military officials. They could, though, gain government patronage (as later at Kültepe) and certainly could not avoid contacts with government officialdom (at either Kültepe or Aššur) simply because the state needed their taxes, or to buy non-state-owned goods from them. However, the separation between them was not always clear-cut since, as Garelli⁸⁷ points out, state or city authorities were involved in the machinery of trading that went on between Aššur and Kültepe. The goods that left Aššur would be stamped with the seal of ‘The City Authority’, and other texts mention that the Representative of the City Council, headed by its local prince, had his own seal, as did the City Judge.

Conversely, at the Kültepe end, the Karum assembly had its own seal to be rolled on documents concerning disputes within the community, as did the Anatolian-run royal city above it which laid down the rules of their occupation of the trading area, granted trading licences to the foreign visitors, and exacted fees from them, again using *their* own seals. The difficulty, as Garelli in his classic work⁸⁸ points out, is that Kültepe documents mentioning participants in an agreement and their witnesses in the texts often bear seals with other names inscribed on them that are nothing to do with that text. This means people must have sometimes used each

⁸⁷ P Garelli ‘Remarques sur les Sceaux des Tablettes “Cappadociennes”’ in N.Ozguç Festschrift 1993

⁸⁸ Les Assyriens en Cappadoce Paris 1963

other's seals, or heirlooms passed down through the family. This means many of these sealings (especially of witnesses) do not always correspond to the people named in the contract, and we do not always have the luxury of knowing whether the seal owner is even depicted on his seal, with accompanying name and job-title as insisted upon in the Ur III period. This is why we have started by sketching in the general cultural background for our 2M seals which then have to be considered individually on a case by case basis using our two *Slide Rules!*

The seals used on merchants' business documents forming the main body of the Kültepe archive are stamped on the outer envelopes of anything from invoices to payment reminders, quotations, business contracts or delivery notes, as well as litigation cases. Although some might belong to witnesses, we usually take them as belonging to the merchants themselves, and their clients. In cases of disputes, divorce or house or slave purchase, documents could be counter-sealed by the city prince himself, or by his officials who could be anyone from Heads of the Army, City Guard, City Market, Stables, Citadel Administrator or Priesthood, to name but a few we know of: 'De tels sceaux laissent entendre que ces documents émanaient du palais royal anatolien et c'est la raison pour laquelle on n'en trouve pas de semblables sur les tablettes assyriennes de Kaniš', says Garelli (*ibid.*). This reminds us that most of what we know about contemporary affairs at Aššur (excavated as the site of Qal'at Shergat) in this period is derived from trade documents found at Kültepe, and as Garelli puts it, 'Rares sont les pièces officielles évoquant les relations entre les autorités assyriennes et les souverains d'Asie mineure', and that 'il est clair qu'il ne peut s'agir ici d'un État vassal de l'Assyrie, mais seulement d'un territoire faisant directement partie de l'Assyrie'. However, 'des textes récemment publiés font apparaître certains princes anatoliens dans la situation d'obligés des autorités assyriennes'. There was continuous jostling for position, and we look now at a strategem used as part of this this struggle, all to do with gaining or losing status.

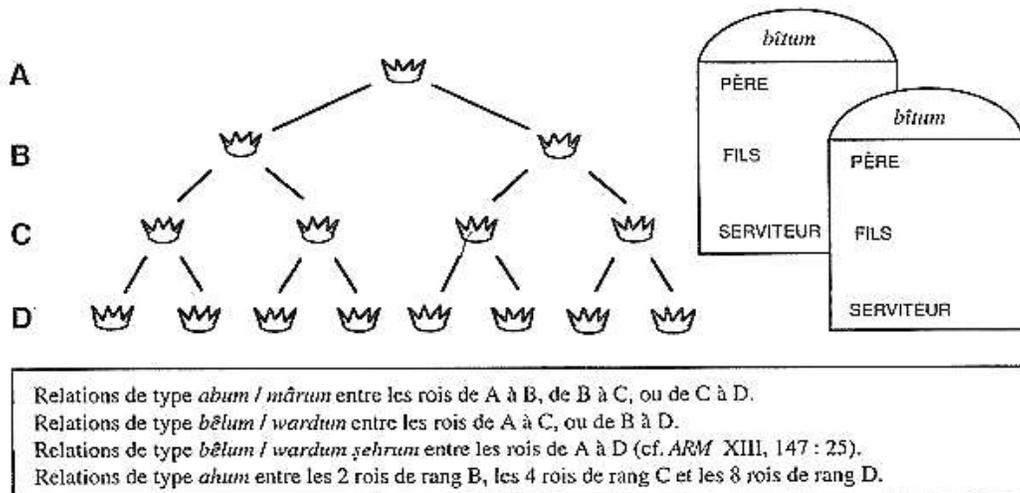
BLOOD TIES AND POLITICAL 'FAMILIES'

It is a generality to say that most royal dynasties are founded on family networks, and although offices of state could in some instances also be passed down from father to son in the ancient world, most enduring power structures depended on relationships within the top family, and then relationships between them and other leading families (the nobility) - another reason why merchants 'did not belong': their families had chosen to follow an occupation outside royal ownership with no power over land or state institutions so were not enmeshed into these networks of obligation through any blood-ties at all.

When it comes to the explosion of Amorite fiefdoms during the first half of the 2M, as Lafont (*ibid.*) describes it, *Il convient, donc, au total, de se représenter ces dynasties amorrite à l'époque de Zimri-Lim comme formant plusieurs pyramides de familles de princes reliées entre elles et dont les membres se souviennent tous, plus ou moins, de leurs origines bédouines plus ou moins communes.*

The tribal way, as now, is to operate with one's allies in terms of networks of extended 'brothers' or 'fathers' bolted onto one's own network of actual blood-ties, depending on the closeness and trustworthiness of the relationship. Lafont's diagram nicely sums up the situation, and he cites the letters showing how vassals jostled

to be named 'son or 'brother' - rather than simply 'servant' with overlord as mere 'master' (intermarriage would not always change their position). As he puts it, 'L'impression ... est qu'il existe ainsi une sorte de



III.7- 29 Schematic model of Father-Son-Servant relations in Royal Houses at the time of Zimri-Lim - from Lafont

competition permanente entre les rois pour s'assurer la meilleure place possible'. The negotiations to earn familial ties were consolidated by exchanged gifts (meant to be of equal weight on either side) and cemented by giving help in times of war and other mutual support, as required of them. As Lafont says, these titles whose seniority or juniority was continually raised or lowered between small rulerships and their overlords 'n'impliquait pas nécessairement des liens par le sang: les partenaires acceptaient simplement d'agir entre eux *sur le mode* des relations familiales'. Thus in the texts one looks to see how petty kings call themselves 'son', 'brother' or 'father' in letters to their overlords, equals, or vassals, since as a sub-hierarchies *within* the main hierarchy described in Winter's pyramids above, they point to personal rights and obligations which can sometimes be expressed pictorially on seals. Winter's hierarchies dwell most on a king's relationship with his officials and the place of merchants below them along with soldiers and craftsmen - none of whom would feature in such familial relationships, whether manufactured or actual. Apart from being an enemy, the only other status a person could gain when not drawn into a royal house was that of 'friend', meaning he had a degree of autocracy. Garelli says this was rare, but attested in a letter of Adal-Šenni of Burundum in correspondence with Zimri-lim. Lafont sees Amorite predominance of the early 2M as sharing many of the same characteristics as the later Amarna Age, since in both there was

- ◇ 'absence d'acteur politique réellement dominant sur une scène politique caractérisée par sa multipolarité;
- ◇ 'recours à la métaphore de la fraternité avec cohabitation de "happy families" et usage dérivé de codes de conduit spécifiques;
- ◇ 'interdépendance et solidarité entre les membres de ces "familles" autour d'une poignée de "grands rois";
- ◇ 'échanges à caractère multiforme (fondés sur la trilogie: cadeaux, messagers, femmes);

- ◇ ‘avec une grande attention portée au respect de la réciprocité et de la symétrie des échanges;
- ◇ ‘règles strictes de protocole et d’étiquette;
- ◇ ‘recherche d’alliances et ritualisation des accords d’alliance.’

Such was the multiplicity of diplomatic exchange and extravagance of gift exchange that we really need to correct our perspective and realise that this era outdoes the Amarna age that followed it in the second half of the millennium, and that it was the Amorites, grounded in the mercurial personal power and charisma of tribal leaders, who instigated these modes of interaction⁸⁹. The main difference between the two, Lafont thinks, is that the Amarna era was a period of peace and stability ‘qui contraste avec la fragilité et les turbulences politiques de l’époque amorrite au cours de laquelle la guerre apparaît à l’état endémique’.

These considerations open further doors onto our reading of the seals coming within our Chronological Focus, making us aware of yet further possible relationships between the figures depicted alongside the Rear Attack - a motif often shown behind the throne of the top authority. It is via the transitional seals in a confusion of styles (*Ratt-15*) that we sense the genesis of the new population of seals and sealings being devised to fit the new state of affairs whose general content vividly furthers our understanding of the crescendo of semi-stable (rather than nomadic) economic, political and religious bureaucratic organisations that mushroomed in the entire region at that time, offering new prospects for revealing or confirming suspected connotations for the lion-bull attack.

As already described, given so few seals have firm archaeological origin, after solving the initial difficulties in how to sort and assess these seals physically, I was still at sea about approaches to take in fleshing out and making sense of their content - hence the initial step taken in this art history sector to fill in the general historical context straight away, especially matters of social status. Building on passing comments about iconography already made in the catalogue entries, in the next section we have to give an overview of the iconography of all catalogue material, but at the appropriate point need to penetrate much more deeply into the possible (and probable) messages conveyed by these early 2M seals whose social implications elicited from the Kültepe and Mari archives so far have merely served as a prelude. We will especially focus on the body language of ritual interaction and procedures followed for arriving at contractual agreements- and finally how the Gods come into the picture.

INITIAL THOUGHTS ON THE ICONOGRAPHY OF CATALOGUED ARTEFACTS

ICONOGRAPHY OF EARLIEST CATALOGUE MATERIAL UP TO THE END OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Ratt-1 to *Ratt-13* can be interleaved from matching contexts with contemporary examples of the *Belly Landing* and *Uruk Stance* types already discussed in *Catalogues A* and *B*.

⁸⁹ ‘The Amarna Letters cannot any longer be considered exceptions: a formalized system of international relations existed through the entire course of ancient Near Eastern history, while the quality and amount of extant data varies, due to the obvious vagaries in the archaeological recovery of cuneiform tablets’ (M. Liverani in R Cohen and R Westbrook (eds) *Amarna Diplomacy* Baltimore & London 2000 p.15)

When it comes to astronomical aspects of the iconography, the design on the verso side of the knife-handle of *Ratt-2* is interesting, since it appears to be the earliest prototype of the pregnant Hippo figure with Crocodile down its back, later canonised in New Kingdom Star Ceilings (see *Chapter 19, Ill.19-34*) and on Minoan and Mycenaean seals morphed into a hybrid libation pourer (see *fn 124*), the earliest of its type being from Phaistos:



Ill.7- 30 Back of Ratt-2 Ivory knife handle (left) and libation pourer ('the Minoan Genius) on sealing from Phaistos

Another atypical entry stands out - the Maikop metal vessels (*Ratt-10*) found in the Caucasus region, which show early evidence of the lion and bull theme taken up in Asia Minor. Here, we remember that the inclusion of two palm trees and a small bear in the design of one of these vessels was also attested on the Belly Landing steatite vase (*Belland-4* - with one palm and *two* bears) - so unusual a feature that they are likely to be contemporary (4-3M): we can probe their possible *stellar* meaning more fully when looking at the *CANEA* overall, but we do also discuss it in relation to the King and Cup in commentary below. Note also the bird on the feline's back on both Maikop vases (one a lion, one a leopard) which so often features over the drinking cup on 2M seals from North Syria (*Ratt-18*) - with connotations we will look into further concerning divination and the Polar Axis.

ICONOGRAPHY OF CATALOGUE MATERIAL IN THE PERIOD OF CHRONOLOGICAL FOCUS C

Unusual in *not* being a seal, *Ratt-13* is the small clay relief considered by British Museum experts to date from the Isin-Larsa period, taking us onto the threshold of the early Second Millennium context we are looking to understand in depth (see Chronological Table C). *Ratt-14* shows examples of the type of small steatite reliefs commonly dubbed seals, but so large and flat, they were more likely to have been badges of office worn on a thong round the neck (see catalogue commentary). They certainly appear to mark early phases of relations between Byblos and Egypt from the First Intermediate Period and we treat them as 'bi-linguals' due to the equal juxtaposition of Egyptian and Mesopotamian symbols in parallel (there are no scenes of human activity as occur



Ill.7- 31 Sabaean bronze relief with a dedication to the God Al-Maqah - British Museum 1-3C AD

on seals). The palm-branch wings of the phoenix persist later in the millennium on on seals on composite beasts such as winged sphinxes and griffins (e.g. *Ratt-34/Ratt-58-59*). If we are to grasp their meaning when grafted onto the Lion of the Ecliptic (an animal, like the palm, alluding to the counting of Time in years - *Ill.7- 31* above) it seems important to realise that the use of this Egyptian bird of Eternity and the Great Return of aeons of Time measured in Sothic Cycles is a pointer, not just to trade between Byblos and Luxor, but also reveals an exchange of fundamental astronomical knowledge and iconography going on between the two kingdoms.

We turn now to the contractual scenes depicted on the other items (seals and a beaker) from this time-frame.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SCENES OF RECIPROCAL RECOGNITION

Since few seals of Great Kings survive, it is mainly the seals of rulers, their vassals and their respective administrations that form the main body of material from this period - by means of which we will gradually understand how merchants' seals would differ in critical respects. Otto's stylistic divisions contrast Court Styles (i.e. of the Court Administration) with the Common Styles presumably used on seals of the lower ranks but, as will emerge below, merchant seals should not be classed with these (Otto does not try to subcategorise them into a distinctive class). Teissier's catalogue of Kültepe II seals (*ibid.* 1996) notes the large number of ruler seals in the corpus (in other words of those answerable to a handful of top Kings, even though they had considerable powers of their own. Their number is noted by Otto as a direct reflection of the political situation in the area during this time, while the nature of their 'Super-Kings' (in Ur III terminology, *Dingir-Lugals*, though not so strongly divinised) is summarised by Raymond Westbrook⁹⁰ in the following letter from the Mari archives:

'At the height of the Old Babylonian period, kings of the major Mesopotamian and Syrian states served as overlords to dozens of lesser kings. The famous letter that explains the political situation in the time of Zimri-Lim of Mari notes that *there is no king who is strong on his own. Hammurabi of Babylon has a following of 10 or 15 kings. Rim-Sin of Larsa the same: Ibal-pi-El of Ešnunna the same. Amut-pi-El of Qatna the same, and Yarim-Lim of lamhad has a following of 20 kings*'.

Lafont (*ibid.*) comments of the letter that it provides a vivid snapshot of the international situation in Zimrilim's time, confirming that were six 'grands rois' parcelling out the territory between them - respectively Babylon, Larsa, Ešnunna, Qatna and lamhad, encircling Mari as the sixth.

⁹⁰ 'Preventing Rebellion through the Creation of Symbolic Ties of Kinship' in *Rebellions and Peripheries in the Cuneiform world* Seth Richardson (ed.), New Haven 2010 (I have quoted this letter in English translation, rather than using Lafont's French version for a change).

Just to take one of them, the rise of Babylon is an outstanding example of the changes of fortune undergone by one city that started off at the turn of the millennium as the underdog under Isin-Larsa rulership. Its profile remained low until it was captured by the Amorite tribal chief, Sumuabum. One by one, surrounding territories under separate rulership such as Yamhad, Eshnunna, Larsa, and even Mari under Zimrilim - and Northern Mesopotamia after Shamshi-Adad's death - all gradually came under the sway of Sumuabum's great-great grandson, Hammurabi ('Beloved of Anu and Enlil') who by means of negotiations or related wars was then able to maintain overall control thanks to exceptional administrative abilities. By laying down a firm Law Code, as representative of the God of Law and Justice, the Sun-God Shamash, Hammurabi became the chief arbiter of disputes in the region, developing efficient administrative techniques based on Ur III and Isin-Larsa models. As already obvious to us from seal design and practice, Babylonian methods thus became standard across Northern Syria, and we are reminded by Beatrice André-Salvini⁹¹ that in the years following his adoption of the title, 'King of Sumer and Akkad', after the momentous annexation of his former ally, Mari, he added to his titles, 'King of All the Lands of the Amorites', since during his lifetime he brought together under his throne ('causing them to dwell at his command in friendship') all the Amorite kingdoms that had arisen since the end of the Ur III Dynasty. Ironically, at that point even though politically unified under Hammurabi (or perhaps because of it) the region then polarised into Eastern and Western halves (humorously expressed as the regions of the black and the white ants), each insisting (as will emerge below) on their local customs of negotiation. Favourite Gods also vary: the God of Hammurabi's local region was Dagan, but in his Law Code he specifically mentions Inanna, Nergal and 'Zababa the mighty warrior'.

But Babylon fell to the Hittites c. 1595 under Hammurabi's last descendant, Shamshudittana, marking the end of the Old Syrian period. In seal terms the date marks a falling-off from the high point reached in classic Syrian seal designs and the start of what Teissier calls the Post-Classical period: in Syrian seals we might discern a decline in quality as design and workmanship were weaned off Babylonian models onto comparative Mitanni-led provincialism - perhaps most noticeable in the general standard of the Nuzi seals (**Ratt-00-00**). However, through exposure to the best in the ever-increasing Hittite *Kulturkreis* there are notable exceptions and sometimes new blends of excellence were attained, outstandingly exemplified in the seals of **Ratt-18**.

Dominique Charpin⁹² described in a colloquium paper how Hammurabi's Code - by imposing obligations on the king to require deals to be fixed by contract if they were to remain valid - for the first time showed 'l'importance qui s'attachaient au texte écrit' that led to more care 'à conserver et à transmettre les documents juridiques (tablettes d'achat, d'adoption, d'héritage etc.)... L'époque paléobabylonienne se distingue d'ailleurs de l'époque d'Ur III (XXI^e siècle) qui l'a précédée précisément par l'abondance de ces

⁹¹ BEYOND BABYLON exhibition catalogue p.19

⁹² 'Le geste, la parole et l'écrit dans la vie juridique en Babylonie ancienne' in *Écritures: Systèmes idéographiques et pratiques expressives* (Actes du colloque international de l'Université Paris VII) Paris 1982

archives privées'. Where before it had still been considered sufficient for a purchased slave to 'walk past the post' to signify his new owner's domain, or for witnesses to *remember* what had been agreed if a dispute arose on a deal, now the agreement was not only written down, but also wrapped in a clay envelope (so it could not be altered). The enveloped summarised on the outside the names of the parties, date and subject matter, and since there was plenty of blank space bore the seals of the parties and witnesses concerned. Now in cases of dispute, word of mouth was not enough: the tablet had to be produced, so that if witnesses had by now died, the imprint of their seal would still be there and the text inside fixed since first recorded. The scenes we see depicted on these early 2M envelope sealings shows a mixture of the two approaches, well expressed in Charpin's observation, 'Les oppositions brutales du type [of contract] prédroit/droit, monde du rite et du serment d'une part, monde de l'écrit de l'autre, doivent être nuancées. La Babylonie du XX-XVII^e siècles participe de l'un et de l'autre, inextricablement mêlées'.

During these endless minor - and sometimes major - power struggles, political change, and the rising tide of trade activity, what behavioural procedures were followed by those in power to come to an agreement - and can they be spotted at work in visual form on our material for this period?

THE BODY LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL DISTINCTION

Several scholars have extracted evidence about the body language of social ritual from cuneiform texts, many of which still have the same connotations today (we have looked at Winter's considerations in relation to seals of the Ur III period just preceding). Mayer Gruber⁹³ collected information about socially significant body movements not only from Ugaritic texts but also from the rich textual sources in Biblical and Talmudic tradition, all providing a mine of information with potential as background for matching to seal iconography, and Åke Viberg added further material from both sources⁹⁴. To summarise relevant material in a nutshell, someone entering the presence of the person in authority might stand, bow, stoop, prostrate himself or even grovel on the ground and 'kiss the dust of his feet'. If it is the person of higher rank who enters a room, the gathering stands - and not to do so is an insult (such behaviour was transferred to Syrian myths about the Gods and how they behaved and misbehaved with each other). Standing implies equality of rank, though in the case of messengers they would first prostrate before the ruler before standing up to deliver their message in the name of their own leader. Such rules of behaviour taking into account social distinction were by the next millennium codified by the Achaemenid Court and strictly applied to extreme degrees of finesse: these were not invented by the Persians, but had evolved out of the endless jostling for position that went on in the Amorite world of petty courts and officials of the early Second Millennium that included the heartland of the Medes (now Kurdish territory) during a time when a mere gestures could confer more rank or serve as a put-down. Kissing the feet of the ruler or the ground at his feet were grovelling gestures of self-abnegatory vassalship but kissing and embracing while standing together in the ritual context signified the closeness of a family relative (we do not see either

⁹³ Mayer I Gruber *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (2 vols) Rome 1980

⁹⁴ *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* Stockholm 1992

illustrated on our seals, perhaps since most audience scenes emphasise social distance as the key stage before closing a deal). Of course, mourning, anger, defeat, grief or guilt behaviour (of which there is a great deal in the Bible) need not concern us here.

But there is a rich lode of hand gestures to be mined out and considered in detail shortly in relation to the making of contracts. Lafont cites the placing of finger or hand on throat, chin or heart as metaphors of sincerity and alliance, as also shaking hands (*la main dans la main*) or raising the hand ('dans tous ces exemples, il est clair que la main sert d'instrument synonyme de pouvoir ou d'autorité'). Mayer analyses hand gestures more minutely, from which it is clear that holding *up* both hands can be a gesture of praise; holding *out* the hands a gesture of supplication but also of welcome or bestowing a favour; holding out the upturned palms a gesture of begging - and so on. J Munn-Rankin⁹⁵ also mentions instances of striking the hand (breaking the handshake) to undo an agreement. Evidently in audience scenes the first two are common - while holding up one hand skywards accompanies oath-taking. Most of these gestures used in social interaction were the very ones also used for prayer and supplication to the Gods.

The seals of many petty city states will sometimes indicate social status on the basis of alliances already entered into between kingdoms - but also in the process of being arrived at using these kinds of gesture whether during the stages of preliminary diplomacy, the taking of oaths and ultimate sealing of agreements. The gestures subtly indicate differing levels of respect and responsibility between the petty kingdoms of North Syria and those of major powers such as the Babylonia or Assyria, on the basis of the changes in society described by Lafont (*ibid.*) above. Obviously, to 'walk behind the king' signifies knowing one's place as his servant, and Winter⁹⁶ says of the seated king (in some instances consciously the representative of the seated God) that 'In fact it may be demonstrated that the very act of sitting is synonymous with status in the ancient Near East; and the phrase 'sitting upon the throne'... is a standard formula for 'ruling' in Akkadian' (as today: Parliament or the High Court 'sits' or is 'in session'). We can imagine the archetypal audience scene taking place - as we know from texts did happen - in the throne room of the Palace at Mari where the wall paintings behind depicted rulership imagery that permanently fixed for future reference in iconic form 'reciprocal acts of recognition' through a spectrum of customary body gestures and dress still often taken for granted today. Not so far extensively matched in this way by art historians for the 2M, the hierarchical relationships expressed as diagrams in both *III.7- 28* and *III.7- 29* must surely be expressed to a greater or lesser extent in the audience scenes on our beaker and seals -- though we need to find out whether seals from trading contexts with audience scenes on them portray figures whose gestures and body position specifically indicate the enactment of business contract behaviour.

⁹⁵ 'Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium BC' *Iraq XVIII* 1956 68-110

⁹⁶ | Winter 'The King and The Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on ur III Seals' in *Insight Through Images* Malibu 1986

Certainly from the general texts about bodily gestures we come to the realisation that those portrayed on seals cannot avoid conveying precise messages about social level (and, presumably, trading power) in the quest for what each side was seeking. Of the treaties collected together by Lafont, only his T7 from Tell Leilan⁹⁷, drawn up between the Aššur *Wakīl* and Till-Abnu⁹⁸ of Apum/Tell Leilan in the north Khabur region (a way-station on the route to Anatolia which had a variety of *kārums* in the town including the one from Aššur) is specifically a commercial treaty (damaged diagonally, a third remains of what was a 220-line contract on the ‘large tablet’ consisting of a list of the Gods by whom the treaty is sworn; the treaty clauses ensuring protection of the merchants and their goods - and fairness in dealings with them; and probably ending (on the largest missing part) with imprecations against those breaking the contract. This is the only surviving trade treaty in Old Assyrian, though of course we can also piece together a great deal from the Kültepe correspondence about what terms must have agreed between Assyrian merchants and the Anatolian Court officials at Kültepe who, as already described above, insisted on strict controls and tax levies from their end as well.

We will now analyse the procedures followed for making an agreement that show just the blend of symbolic act and written text that Charpin (*ibid.*) describes. As far as our Rear Attack seals are concerned we need to find out whether treaty rituals between kings (well documented) were similar further down the line in the case of mercantile agreements (where concrete documentary evidence for ritual in this specific context is very much sparser). We can easily establish standard behaviour for the former, before moving on to any possible conclusions we can apply to the latter.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT

If we look at seals like those of *Ratt-18*, it is usually obvious straight away what the main polarity in rank is in relation to the enthroned figure and those approaching him, but we may not so far have picked up on the *detail* of the conscious gestures mimed amongst personnel present. In fact there is a large quantity of textual evidence from the ancient world (mostly from Mari and Tell Leilan) describing the customary gestures used between people to express social degree that we can draw upon, both in relation to existing agreements *or* the enactment of new contracts, which have real potential for gaining insight into the possible - even probable - intended messages locked into the iconography. In an early conference paper Lafont had collected together documentary evidence for actual instances of the stages of treaty-making - afterwards tabulated by J-G Heintz into a template giving the order of events usually followed. Lafont (*ibid.*) in his long paper used extensively here in turn quoted it as a useful summary of the most commonly followed procedures, pointing especially to the account of one such treaty made with the King of Mari by Asqur-Addu of Karana and Atamrum of Andarig together, where the important final stages (4-7 below) are recorded as following on in the customary order - with even the key players present in person rather than using ambassadors:

⁹⁷ See J Eidem ‘An Old Assyrian Treaty from Tell Leilan’ in *Marchands, Diplomates et Empereurs: Etudes sur la Civilisation Mésopotamiennes Offertes à Paul Garelli 1991 Paris*

⁹⁸ Ruled c. 1750-40, near the end of the Kültepe 1b period.

Après qu'ils se furent concertés et eurent fait alliance, l'ânon fut alors tué. Ils se prêtèrent mutuellement serment par le dieu et ils s'installèrent pour [la cérémonie] de la coupe. Après être allés boire la coupe, chacun présenta des cadeaux pour l'autre. Puis Asqur-Addu repartit dans son pays et Atamrum repartit pour Andarig'.

Just such exchanges were also entailed in the well-documented treaty exacted from Zimrilim by Hammurabi.

THE SEVEN STAGES OF CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT

There is a fuller set of stages recorded in the case of the treaty between Hammurabi and the King of Ešnunna, from which Heintz drew up the following complete cycle of events (paraphrased by me from the French), involving that mixture of bodily gesture, spoken statement and written text analysed so perceptively by Charpin (*ibid.*), all bound into staged rituals in palace, then temple as negotiations progressed. We expand on this seven-stage list immediately afterwards under the same headings:

- 1 Preliminary exchange of ambassadors with discussion about proposed heads of agreement.
- 2 Next exchange of ambassadors with draft agreement on a 'small tablet': preliminary assent given by verbal utterance on either side.
- 3 Last preliminary exchange before the swearing ceremony, with final text of agreement on a 'large tablet' and assent to it marked either⁹⁹ by
 - a donkey sacrifice (*ḥayārī qatālum*) OR
 - b simple verbal agreement whilst touching the throat (*lipit napištim*).
- 4 Before proceeding to the oath ceremony the key parties wash their hands.
- 5 They raise their hand to their Gods before a table of offerings (set up with certain food¹⁰⁰ and drink before the ceremony begins) and swear (*nīsh ilim*) adherence to the terms agreed on the large tablet.
- 6 They drink the Cup of Alliance.
- 7 The proceedings end in general celebration: the food is shared and presents exchanged.

The use of ambassadors shows these agreements did not necessarily entail the kings involved meeting each other in person, even at the swearing. Possibly in instances of already amicable and trusting relations, Lafont does cite correspondence between the kings of Mari or Babylon with rulers of Larsa and Uruk which indicate that a simple exchange of 'letters of intention' could be taken as sufficient in itself to secure an agreement.

Important for our purposes is to have the imagination to see how audience scenes on seals might conflate these stages into one visual pantomime. Following Lafont's findings, we can fill in more detail for each stage:

THE PRELIMINARIES: STAGES 1-3

1. PRELIMINARY EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS WITH DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED HEADS OF AGREEMENT

Ambassadors, royal messengers and merchants all had special dispensation to cross borders between territories without being detained, though we know of a particular *laisser-passer* for an ambassador

⁹⁹ D Charpin noted in *Mélanges J. Perrot* 1990, p.117 that it was always one or the other - never the two together, possibly indicating differences of custom between East (Babylonia) for *lipit napištim* and the more nomadic West for *ḥayārī qatālum*. Lafont cites H.Tadmor in M Tucker (ed.) *Treaty and Oath in the Ancient Near East* 1982 p.130 as in agreement with this view.

¹⁰⁰ Lafont's tablet reference B17 runs as follows: 'Avant que je ne lève la main vers Šamaš et que je ne m'engage solennellement, ne disposes-tu pas la farine-*mašhatum* et la farine-*saskūm*?'

drawn up and sealed personally by the king himself - and also of occasions when messengers or merchants were arrested despite their supposed immunity. Such people were sometimes used as spies as well as agents¹⁰¹. An ambassador (*mār šiprim*) was by definition itinerant, so if there was a lot of traffic between city states the king of one would set up a house/*bīt* in the other (what we would understand today as an embassy). P. Villard¹⁰² says it 'functioned as an economic and *mercantile unit* as well as a place in which to lodge messengers'.

Although ambassadors might at times travel solo, Lafont describes how on important occasions they could be 'à la tête de véritable délégations comprenant des interprètes, des secrétaires et des domestiques portant des titres variés ... tout en étant accompagnées d'escortes militaires pouvant aller jusqu'à plusieurs centaines d'hommes'. Such was their status that, for instance, the king of Kurda would have to bow to the ambassador from Elam¹⁰³ (rather than the other way round) because *their* king was a Great King! (As pointed out by F Joannès¹⁰⁴ it is significant that it was precisely during the short period when diplomatic relations were renewed between Mari and Elam '*qu'est attesté le fonctionnement du commerce relatif à la route d'étain*', says Lafont.)

Audiences with the ambassador were usually spoken dealings taking place in open audience in the palace, where the message would be publicly conveyed along with initial gifts that gave non-verbal assurance of intended commitment - though if necessary a private audience could be held. Lafont points out that although ambassadors stood in for the ruler in the early stages, all treaties were drawn up in the *personal names* of individual kings, rather than in the name of his kingdom or state. Top level ambassadors, Sasson¹⁰⁵ discovered, had in some cases been diviners earlier in their career - a pointer to how such matters were germane to decisions made in the running of the State, considered again under the King and Cup symbolism discussed by Winter later.

2. FURTHER EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS WITH DRAFT AGREEMENT ON A 'SMALL TABLET' - AND PRELIMINARY ASSENT GIVEN BY VERBAL UTTERANCE ON EITHER SIDE

The small tablet (*tuppum šehrum*) was, according to Lafont's findings, always agreed at meetings in conjunction with a brief touching of the throat indicating honourable intentions for carrying the agreement forward - though not with the same depth as made in relation to the large tablet, under 3 below. Certainly from correspondence referring to negotiations between Hammurabi and Zimrilim, the

¹⁰¹ Following on from Lafont's major paper (relied upon so much in this text), Sasson in 'On Reading the Diplomatic Letters in the Mari Archives' for the International Colloquium, *Amurru* 2, 2001 cites the fascinating letter of the merchant Yatar-Addu who, having spent time in the company of Elamite colleagues wrote a letter to Zimrilim telling tales about agreements Hammurabi was making with the Elamites and the former's disapproval of Zimrilim's reliance on Ešnunna. This information did not in the end save Zimrilim from the predations of Hammurabi, but it does show how a 'mere' merchant took it upon himself to warn Zimrilim.

¹⁰² In Sasson (ed) *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East II* 1995 p.878

¹⁰³ See *Documents Epistolaires du Palais de Mari I* no.368.

¹⁰⁴ 'L'Étain, de l'Elam à Mari' *CRRAI XXXVI* Ghent 1991 67-76

¹⁰⁵ 'About Mari and the Bible' *RA XCII* 1998 117/fn 82

difference between the two stages of the small and large tablets is made quite clear as two separate stages of negotiation.

3. EXCHANGE OF LARGE TABLETS WITH FULL TEXT AND AGREEMENT MARKED EITHER BY DONKEY SACRIFICE OR HOLDING THE HAND TO THE THROAT

If agreed, it is the text on the large tablet (*tuppum rabūm*) which will be sworn at the following stage (each side will have a copy). Despite Charpin's (*ibid.*) findings about the rising importance of texts in such negotiations, Lafont emphasizes that it is *not the text of the treaty itself that 'fixes' an agreement*, but the oath in the name of the Gods made on it later on in the game. Because from the time of Hammurabi a marked polarization between Eastern (Mesopotamian) and Western (Amorite) customs had begun, having a choice of ceremony to mark the passing of the large tablet ensured the side with the most to lose was satisfied. Let us look at both.

A. THE DONKEY SACRIFICE

There is ample mention of the donkey¹⁰⁶ sacrifice accompanying agreement ritual in the texts (Lafont collected 25 different instances) - it had serious meaning for Bedouin tribes, especially the Bensimalites, when entering into vassalship under their urban overlords. Lafont reminds us of Zimrilim's title, 'King of Mari and of the Country of the Bedouins', and that *all twelve marriages of his female relatives to Amorite princes or kings were sealed by donkey sacrifice*.

Lafont even mentions the unusual instance of a Benjaminite clan seeking to perform the donkey sacrifice with Zimrilim ('Tuons des ânon [d'alliance]!'), in order to qualify as Bensim'alites (a rival tribe already in alliance with Zimrilim). So far was it in their interest to be in alliance with this powerful overlord that, to Lafont's amazement, it meant '*un changement d'appartenance tribale*' as serious as changing parents, 'confirmant ainsi le perméabilité de la société amorite de ce temps et la dissocation qui pouvait parfois s'opérer entre groupe de parenté d'une part et communauté politique ou sociale d'autre part' and pointing to 'l'extrême atomisation du pouvoir' within Amorite society where even longstanding loyalties could give way to newer, more opportunistic ones where those in power could 'mix and match' a more stratetic family.

On seals it is hard to tell if the touching of the throat ceremony is being shown, because it could be confused with other upheld hand gestures, but certainly the actual donkey sacrifice is not shown - which is why the bronze beaker showing the prelude to such a ritual (*Ratt-16*) is particularly precious to us iconographically. Is it significant that the scene showing the ceremony is actually beaten out on a cup made for, and perhaps commemorating, the ritual shown on it? Three of Lafont's textual references (A15/16/17) are particularly close to the lower group on

¹⁰⁶ We bear in mind that the donkey was an animal that could cope with the desert, like the gazelle of Reshef-Nergal (equivalent of Egypt's Seth, red coloured God of the desert waste. 'The wild donkey is the ghost of Enlil, as the wolf is of Anu' - Tallqvist *Götterepitheta* p.372).

the beaker where the negotiator says that in order to bring peace between the Bedouins and Idamaraš, 'J'ai fait tuer l'ânon petit d'une ânesse'. It is worth sign-posting at this point that the presence of the Goddess is implicit in the sacrifice: the translators of the ritual followed at the great annual festival of Ištar¹⁰⁷ celebrated by the Mari Court (described fully in the *Gods Section* below) note how a female donkey sacrifice forms part of the ritual, while a lustration of the animal is described in an Alalākh text: 'Çela rapellerait l'onction des déesses Šalaš (Ninhursag) et Mārat-Iltim au moment du lavement de l'ânesse, and that perhaps the 'terme *ânesse* qui se dirait vraisemblablement *atānum*, ne faut-il pas lire dans ce texte 1.6 *ha-ia-ar<il> tim*: "l'âne de la déesse"?' - in other words probably either sex of donkey evoked the Goddess.

Given most of the textual references centre on Mari at the time of Zimrilim, Lafont also notes archaeological evidence of instances elsewhere of donkey (and puppy) burials (no doubt following their sacrifice) in temple precincts at Tell Brak, Tell Mohammed Diyab¹⁰⁸ and Tell Haror in the western Negev, reminding us not only of the temple context of such rituals but making us realise how widespread such practices must have been. Lafont was sure that 'cette façon de sacrifier des ânon avait pu, à l'époque amorrite, prévaloir de la Méditerranée (Ugarit) à la Diyala (Nerebtum), et du Zalmagum (Harran) jusqu'à l'ancien pays de Sumer (Uruk), l'archéologie permettant même peut-être d'étendre jusqu'à la pointe occidentale du Croissant Fertile (Negev) l'attestation de telles pratiques¹⁰⁹.' Underlining the importance of the donkey in West Syrian culture are the Donkey Festivals mentioned in the calendars of Alalakh, lamhad, Mari, Terqa, Šubat-Enlil, Emar and even as far as Nuzi, even giving its name to a month in the calendars of Ugarit, Alalakh and Emar¹¹⁰. Sometimes the use of donkey sacrifice terminology was simply used as a figure of speech to refer to making an agreement (or deciding not to), as in: '*Jurez-moi un serment par les dieux, que je puisse tuer un ânon d'alliance avec le Muti-Abal*' (Lafont example A6) or '*Ne tue pas les ânon des Benjaminites* (A9) - meaning 'Do not enter into an agreement with them'. Sometimes the request was made from one side to sacrifice kids or goats rather than donkeys but this was not usually acceptable by the other side because not seen as having the same binding significance.

B. SIMPLE VERBAL AGREEMENT WHILE TOUCHING THE THROAT

Lafont puts it that, in miming the gesture used for sacrificing an animal on his own neck - in other words in a ritual of substitution - the negotiator was symbolically putting his own life on the line to the effect that if he did not keep his promise he should be put to death.

¹⁰⁷ J-M Durand et al. 'Les Rituels de Mari' in *Mémoires de NABU 4 (Florilegium Marianum III)* Paris 1997 19-71

¹⁰⁸ An interesting object found at this site will be discussed in relation to the divination cup further below.

¹⁰⁹ See A Finet 'Le Sacrifice de l'Âne en Mésopotamie' in J Quaegebeur (ed.) *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* 1993

¹¹⁰ See M Cohen the *Cultic Calendars of the Ancient near East* Bethesda 1993

In the Eastern regions centring on the Diyala Triangle (according to Lafont's reading of Charpin's findings¹¹¹) the substitute for the 'killing of the donkey of alliance' was the gesture of touching the throat, as if to say 'slaughter me like the donkey if I renègue!'. Certainly a parallel example in relation to the by then more usual sheep sacrifice from the Assyrian period quoted by Viberg (*ibid*) clearly spells out the intended analogy for which we could substitute the word 'donkey':

This spring lamb has been brought from its fold not for sacrifice, not for a banquet, not to be purchased, ... nor to be slaughtered It has been brought to sanction the treaty between Ashurnirari and Mati'ilu.... This head is not the head of a lamb, it is the head of Mati'ilu - it is the head of his sons, his officials, and the people of his land. If Mati'ilu sins against this treaty, so, just as the head of this spring lamb is torn off and its knuckle placed in its mouth ... so may the head of Mati'ilu be torn off, and of his sons... .
[ANET 532: ASHURNIRARI VI VASSAL TREATY, 8C]

But Charpin (*ibid.* 1992) came to the conclusion that in the end we probably make too fixed a distinction between Western and Eastern practices, and that the difference could have been more to do with being present in person to undertake the killing of the animal, or the use of the hand to throat gesture instead in cases where the parties involved were not physically present.

A common variation on commitment behaviour is seen in the oft-quoted symbolic gesture of seizing the fringe of the ruler's robe: Lafont (*ibid.*) quotes the letter of Shemshara describing Shamsi-Adad's assertion that 'From the day Yašub-Addu seized the fringe of my robe (i.e. swore fealty) I never took anything from him, whether bullion, livestock or grain'. Conversely, other letters speak of 'cutting the fringe' to imply breaking off relations. Lafont's text reference B6 even refers to proceeding to 'l'engagement solennel [à] ... nouer la frange du père et du fils pour l'éternité' - here referring to king and vassal in the familial terms already explained above.

THE OATH CEREMONY PROPER: STAGES 4-7

The crucial act was the oath-taking in the presence of the Gods: up to the moment of swearing, the treaty was not binding. On occasions the *only* stage followed in arriving at an agreement was the oath swearing, with all the other ceremonies left out. The swearing might immediately have followed agreement of the large tablet with donkey sacrifice or touching of the throat assent, but it is more likely to have taken place some time later, in days, weeks or even months, since events now moved from the palace to a temple setting (two texts explicitly describe the act taking place in the temple of Sin at Harran, and a temple of Dagan). Statues of relevant Gods (or their replicas) had to be agreed upon by the parties involved and sent for from their home temple¹¹², and the swearing had to take place on a day declared auspicious by the astrologers. Both Winter (*ibid.*) - and van Buren (*ibid.*) before her - noted how on seals statues of the Gods usually sit on chairs with backs, or stools with the temple facade pattern on the side precisely to convey that the scene is taking place in a temple setting, while the

¹¹¹ D Charpin 'Mari entre l'Est et l'Ouest: Politique, Culture, Religion' *Akkadica* 78 1992 1-10

¹¹² A Finet 'Les Dieux voyageurs en Mésopotamie' *Akkadica* XXI 1981 1-13

appearance of bull-man temple gate guardians also cleverly emphasises the same information (see under *Ratt-15f* the seal from Cyprus). Lumsden (*ibid.*) says that in Kanesh there was both a Temple to Aššur and to Anna, Kültepe's local deity ('whom the Assyrians [also] venerated') where swearing could have taken place, though it is uncertain whether purely *commercial* agreements would be sealed in that setting. There were specialist officials whose role was to administer the oath-taking (they could have been priests or diviners).

Oath-swearing lay at the heart of Amorite transactions: 'Ainsi les paroles prononcées sous contrôle divine et devant témoins engagent-elles le jureur et donnent un contenu à l'alliance elle-même', says Lafont - in other words any situation reinforced by divine guarantee played a central role in all sectors of legal, diplomatic and political life. Munn-Rankin (*ibid.*) writes, 'In the Mari archives the actual treaty document was [called] "tablet of the life of the Gods (*tuppu nīš ilāni*), a phrase that refers to the central act of oath-taking in the ratification ceremony'. Munn-Rankin writes: 'The oath was sworn by the Gods of both states so that each ruler called down on himself the punishment of the Gods of his ally, as well as that of his own deities, should he fail to abide by his treaty obligations', and also that the kings 'were acting as representatives of the gods of their respective states and the earthly treaty was but a counterpart of a divine agreement' commanded by Anu and Enlil.

4. THOSE SEEKING TO LASTINGLY BIND THE AGREEMENT BY OATH FIRST WASH THEIR HANDS

The contract is void if the swearing is undertaken with hands unwashed. Pouring water over the hands is a distinct and separate rite indicating sincerity, to do with asserting that any previous commitments are over and that the participant is free to commit himself to the new arrangement (in the same way that Pontius Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' sentence to crucifixion by placing the casting vote with the people). Garelli (1963) refers to a text that runs 'Where the men are in a position of judgement, pour water and cancel... where it is indicated that money should be handed over... pour water'.

5. THEY RAISE THEIR HAND TO THEIR GODS AND SWEAR (NĪSH ILIM) ADHERENCE TO THE TERMS ON THE LARGE TABLET

We still point to the sky when alluding to God, and we might imagine people in this period raising their hand up towards the Sun -since we know the key Gods sworn by were the highest in the pantheon (see Ill.7- 53) - Sun, Moon, Anu (the Sky), Enlil (the Biosphere) Ištar and Addu/Haddād (along with local and personal Gods), wholly accounting for the routine presence of these planetary bodies in the sky as background to seal designs. However, as already mentioned, the texts inform us the oath ceremony was conducted before statues of the Gods from either side specially brought to the interior of the temple chamber from their home establishment¹¹³ so it seems the hand was raised towards the *statue* or statues concerned (Lafont's text B9 gives the exchange between Zimrilim in his Year 4 with the leader of the town of Talhayūm, as follows: 'Aujourd'hi, on doit donc faire sortir Shamash, Addu et le sceptre d'ltūr-

¹¹³ Finet (*ibid.*)

Mēr de sa demeure pour que mon seigneur s’engage solennellement devant Shamash’). Correspondence between Hammurabi and Zimrilim discusses the choice of Gods they were willing to swear by, so that the right statues could be fetched. Of his collection of treaty texts, that between Zimri-Lim of Mari and Ibal-pi-El II of Ešnunna (T1) is described by Lafont as follows:

Le texte est composé de la liste des dieux par lesquels Zimri-Lim doit jurer, des clauses de l’alliance avec le roi d’Ešnunna (clauses qui sont essentiellement d’ordre militaire et traitent de la bonne coopération entre les troupes de Mari et d’Ešnunna), et enfin des formules classiques de malédictions envers les contrevenants.

The *commercial* treaty between Aššur and Apum (Tell Leilan) (Lafont’s T7 referred to earlier) also begins with a list of Gods to swear the treaty by, along with the more general divinities of the mountains, rivers, earth and sky, the mountain ranges of Saggar and Zara and the Gods of Martu (Amorite territory) and Subartu (Hurrian territory), with the main Gods and Goddesses listed first, as tabulated below:

MALE	ANU	ENLIL	DAGAN	ADAD	SIN	SHAMASH	THE SHAMASH	ASSYRIAN	NERGAL
FEMALE		IŠHARA	ŠARRA	NINKARAK	IŠTAR OF NINEVEH		THE ASSYRIAN IŠTAR		BELAT APIM (GODDESS OF LEILAN)

We have already referred to the mention in the texts of two kinds of flour associated with the swearing - which took place before an offering table laden with food and drink - as for instance: ‘Tu me feras prêter serment devant Shamash par la farine-*mašhatum* et la farine-*saskūm*’ (Zimrilim to Hammurabi).

THE REAR ATTACK IN THE OATH-TAKING CONTEXT

Although on seals the Rear Attack group behind the ruler’s throne can refer to the moment of change from the Old to the New Year at the Feast of Ištar (*Ratt-19*) - discussed fully under Venus in the *Gods*



Ill.7- 32 Mosaic floor in the judgement chamber of Hisham’s Palace, Khirbet el-Mafjar, north of Jericho

section below - in treaty contexts it appears to be used as a state cipher warning about the seriousness of the oath-taking - and of dire punishment, should the participant default - just as in Classical times at

temple precinct gateways it warned those not entitled to enter to keep out¹¹⁴, on pain of death. In the same region, in the audience chamber of Hisham's Palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar in the Islamic period, on the floor before the throne, in Last Judgement mode a Rear Attack in mosaic form on one side of a Tree of Life is thought to convey a similar message, contrasting with the peaceful grazing deer on the left:

6. **THE CUP OF ALLIANCE IS SHARED**

On our Syrian seals with Rear Attack the usual core event in one-register audience scenes - or the double-height *Hauptszene* in more complex designs - is the raising of the cup by the king, sometimes accompanied by a separate libation ceremony made by someone else in the delegation. Looking, for instance, at the early 2M seals of *Ratt-18*, we can safely generalise that on most of them it is standard for the higher authority to raise his cup or small bowl, as if making a toast, often with a small bird hovering over it. It is in the texts themselves that the Cup that features so often in visual form on our seals is specifically translated by Lafont as 'the Cup of Alliance'. He cites a particularly infamous incident involving Akin-Amar, King of Kahat 'qui rompt de manière spectaculaire et provocante ses relations avec Mari en déféquant dans la coupe d'alliance dans laquelle il avait bu pour sceller son engagement précédent'. His footnote on this quotes P Michalowski's comment on such behavior as 'metaphorical shorthand for the destruction of a whole symbolic system that was established through complex greeting ceremonies and semi-ritualized gift exchange'.

We return to the full implications of drinking - and its distinction from libation or liquid pouring - on the following page.

7. **THE PROCEEDINGS END WITH A CELEBRATION AT WHICH THE FOOD IS SHARED AND PRESENTS EXCHANGED**

Viberg (*ibid.*) counts the shared meal as another ritual by which an agreement is ratified. Even today, businesses celebrate a contract award with a drinks party, and in Government the successful passing of a White Paper through Parliament is similarly celebrated by the officials concerned. And of course the giving of presents has not ceased to be another of the strongest mechanisms for binding people together through pleasure, rather than fear.

VARIATIONS IN THE MERCANTILE CONTEXT

Lafont noted that *none* of the high-level political treaties he collected had seals rolled on them - a clear point of difference with commercial texts as found at Kültepe - but it is not clear whether this was because state treaties were not put in envelopes. The seals under our specific consideration are mostly associated with other kinds of negotiation - notably trading or legal. We already pointed to the documentary evidence concerning the only treaty involving merchants cited by Lafont (T7), published by Eidem (*ibid.*) who describes the distinction:

¹¹⁴ Take, for instance, the Lion and Prey sculpture at the entrance to the Temple of Allāt at Palmyra - or of course, Persepolis.

‘Les marchands assyriens ne pouvaient prétendre se poser sur le meme plan que les royaumes (parfois puissants) avec lesquels ils traitaient et auprès desquels ils cherchaient simplement à faire connaître leurs droits; dans ce cas, il ne s’agit donc *pas* d’accords réellement politiques ou diplomatiques entre deux parties’.

Larsen (*ibid.*) says witnesses in Anatolia would in their agreements swear ‘by the life of the City’ (referring to Aššur), or ‘by the life of the City and the life of its King’ - or even ‘by the life of [the God] Aššur, the life of [the Goddess] Anna and the life of the City’s Lord’ (we have already mentioned the presence at Kültepe of temples of both Aššur *and* Anna). Looking at our Rear Attack seals, most obviously **Ratt-18**, it is plausible to read audience scenes showing Baal (the City’s Lord) and Venus (the goddess Anna) juxtaposed against the seated ruler (as is the case for two of those seals, reproduced again in *III.7- 35*) in a much more specific light, as the Gods presiding over the oaths being sworn. The exchange of oaths which we can no longer hear was in mercantile contexts made permanent by the seal rollings on the envelopes into which the agreement tablet was placed - whether in this context the Cup and feasting rituals followed on the same scale as for political agreements, we do not know.

In fact, looking at those very seals we remember that Winter (1987) came to the conclusion that although answerable in some respects (mostly financial) to their governments, merchants in the Ur III period only describe themselves as *paying respects to Gods - and not to rulers* - a helpful distinction to bear in mind when assessing seal iconography. As far as the Ur III period is concerned, she says, seals owned by merchants would ‘*contain a presentation scene before a seated god or heroic combat*’. Ambiguity can still arise, though, from the fact that rulers not only depict themselves paying their respects to their sponsor Gods, but also then stand in for them in the accoutrements of God-Kings. A contra-distinction to then check is Winter’s claim that offering up the Cup after the oath-swearing is only ever done by rulers, and never by a God. On the whole her conclusion holds water, but the reasons for exceptions need careful thought. The differentiation between state and mercantile *dramatis personae* refines our focus, making us realise that we should in high quality seals be able to distinguish between those showing respects made to the Gods and those showing Gods or high dignitaries assigning authority to a seal owner of lower rank, but what we will *not* see is a merchant being assigned authority - by either God *or* ruler. A further distinction to bear in mind is E Van Buren¹¹⁵’s observation that *libations are made only to Gods*, and never to rulers, and this one seems to hold good throughout.

DRINK AND LIBATION RITUALS

Since libation rituals - as well as the cup held in the hand of the highest authority - feature very obviously on seals from North Syria and Kültepe (**Ratt-17-20**) there are strands of intention behind ritual liquid-pouring and drinking we should distinguish from each other (we noted above that water is poured over the hands before the swearing ceremony - but this is a purification rite, and does not itself appear on seals).

¹¹⁵ ‘Homage to a Deified King’ ZA L (NF XVI) 93-120

The many seals, items of drinking equipment and even larger artefacts from Ur already affirm how common drinking and libation rituals were in Early Dynastic and Akkadian Sumer. The hard facts of the archaeological material alone shows there was a difference between the cups held by each member of a Royal Tomb retinue - related to scenes on seals showing them in drinking sessions - and the temple ritual carved on Sumerian reliefs where a ruler, priest or priestess waters a baby palm to symbolically ensure fertility in the land. Four or five



Ill.7- 33 Wall-plaque from the Priestesses' Residence at the foot of the Ziggurat of Ur c.2500, BM ME11856

limestone reliefs from the ED and Ur III periods come to mind instantly that show the latter rite, one of the earliest (above) being a case in point, where it is enacted by both a naked female before the enthroned God in the scene above, and by a naked male (below) at the temple doorway. Note also the headdress of the God with its flattened horns which is delineated in the same way as Baal's headdress in the top left seal of *Ill.7- 61* and on the shell piece in *Ill.7- 65*).

The wall painting below from Mari very much follows the Ur prototypes where the ruler libates before the Moon-God, Sin (also God of Plants) though in this version the water is poured first into two containers, over the table, then under a plant shoot in a pot, and finally down onto the ground. The significance of purifyingf Sky, Earth, Vegetation and Underworld by pouring water (lustrating) into vases and onto the earth is well referred to by Conti¹¹⁶, quoting lines such as 'tu remplis de l'eau de la cuvette deux grands vases BUR.ZI' (Akkadian) and 'Quand leur eau a touché la terre, quand elle a touché le ciel, la terre est pure, la terre est brillant' (YOS XI 47).



Ill.7- 34 Wall painting from the Palace of Mari showing a libation ceremony before the God Sin

¹¹⁶ G Conti, 'Incantation de l'Eau Bénite et de l'Encensoir et Textes connexes' *MARI VIII* 1997 253-72

The figure of the goddess, in sculptures or on seals, holding a vase or vases with flowing streams (or squeezing them from her cupped breasts) expresses the same theme as the plant-watering ritual so common in Sumerian art, a role she seems to have gradually taken over from Ea, God of salt and sweet waters from the early 2M. The streams that run from his shoulders and all round his enthroned figure in Akkadian seals run instead from the Goddess' breasts - and are mentioned in terms of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers giving life to the land as the mother gives her milk, embodying by human analogy the flowing water on which the agricultural success of the government depended. At this time Ea seems to have been left to double up with the other male gods, in his other main role as God of Wisdom and Divination.

Liquid poured into the ground need not have been mere water. Mayer (*see fn 93*) quotes an Akkadian ritual in case of eclipse (CT4), 'You shall libate mixed beer (do not prostrate yourself)... You shall libate wine (do not prostrate yourself)'. He quotes another rubric in connection with the recitation of the ŠU-ILLA prayers to Ištar advising the use of mixed beer - and one more in connection with the curing of an illness: 'You shall turn his arms behind him as long as his sickness lasts; *you shall libate water and shaduni beer before the stars*¹¹⁷....' On the two **Ratt-18** seals reproduced again below for ease of reference, libations are poured into a container before Venus on the first seal - and presumably straight onto the ground in the second - in both cases by the 'peaked cap ruler' (Teissier (*ibid.* 1993)'s characterisation). I wonder if there is a case to be made for his identity being that of a high-level merchant from Sind (the type of peaked cap he wears is today still worn at festivals there). Traders at Aššur may have been the middle-men for the tin trade, but this does not rule out that their source traders might not sometimes undertake the entire journey themselves to cut out the middle man. Certainly in the next millennium, according to Xenophon's **Cyropaedia**¹¹⁸, during campaigns in Armenia, and Kurdistan (East Anatolia) Cyrus in his youth on one occasion addressed his company thus:

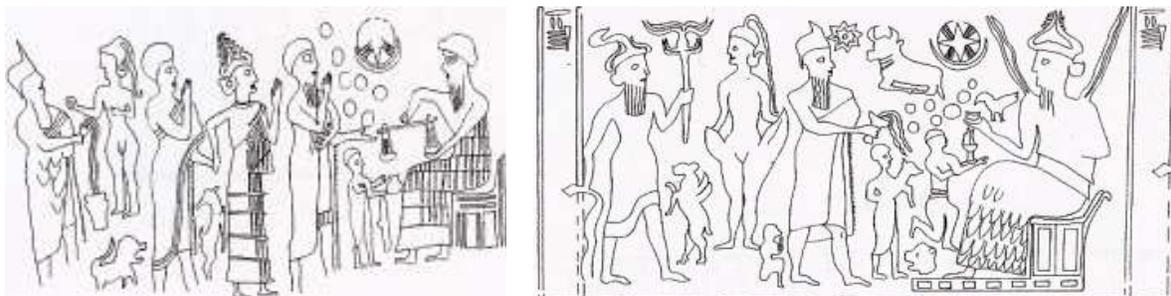
'Son of Armenia and men of the Chaldeans, ... if I were to send ambassadors to India, would you send some of your own folk with them to show them the way, and support them in gaining for us all that I desire? I should be glad to take from the Indian as much as he will give me'.

When finally ambassadors come through from India 'with gifts of courtesy and a message from their king', they 'made themselves at home as the guests of Cyrus' - in this instance as allies working for Cyrus' battle diplomacy, not traders. The point is that the land route between India and Anatolia via the Afghan and Iran-Iraq hinterland was a well-trodden track with a very ancient pedigree dating back to the Predynastic Period - well characterised by Amiet¹¹⁹. Though its use waxed and waned over the centuries, it didn't totally disappear once the network was established, and despite the obstacles of high mountains and harsh deserts was in some ways more straightforward than the sea-land routes either side of Arabia.

¹¹⁷ C J Mullo-Weir 'Fragments of an Expiation Ritual against Sickness' **JRAS** 1929 p.382,11/14-15

¹¹⁸ As translated by Henry Dakyns and edited posthumously by F M Stawell (Dodo Press) Breinigsville PA 2010 quotes from **Book III** paras 27-30 and **Book VI** paras C2-3

¹¹⁹ P Amiet L'Age des Échanges Inter-Iraniens 3500-1700 avant J-C Paris 1986



III.7- 35 Two seals from the Ratt-18 entry showing the peaked cap ruler libating

Following van Buren's dictum that libations are only made to Gods, if the 'peaked cap ruler' is indeed a top merchant, it makes sense that we see him on the left pouring a libation to Venus standing on a Rear Attack, and on the right, onto the ground before Shamash, whilst between him and Shamash' throne Baal and Venus appear together, he with a small griffin before him and she with a small child at her feet. Although Winter's generalisation just cited breaks down - since clearly it is the God Shamash (rather than a ruler) who holds up his cup with bird above - although we might explain this exception by remembering Winter's dictum that merchants pay respects to Gods, not rulers, or that the figure is the person of a divinised king representing Shamash, we will see later from other exceptions that Winter's rule must have held good only for the Ur III period! On the left seal, because the seated figure has no horned headdress there does seem to be a blending of the God Shamash with the ruler image, here holding the Scales of Justice that in merchant terms were the scales of fair measure used in the market-place (an Assyrian curse on a person not adhering to an agreement, although fragmentary, appears to call down short measure on the miscreant, should he default¹²⁰). Introduced by the Lama to the scale-holding ruler, two men appear to hold up their hands in an oath-swearing gesture, fronted by a tiny attendant offering two small cups (the symbol under his hands looks very much like the familiar Egyptian *h̄tp* hieroglyph meaning 'divine offering made to...'. In Lambert (1960)¹²¹ we learn from a Hymn to Shamash that the all-seeing God was relied upon to catch out the dishonest merchant 'who practices trickery as he holds the balance', contrasted with the good merchant 'who holds the balance and gives good weight'. Thus, in the heavenly court of Shamash the travelling merchant and his purse-carrier are even included in the assembly, perhaps because, as Hallo (*ibid.*) quotes from Brinkman¹²², 'the connection of merchants and messengers with treaty provisions is inferred from their prominence in the narrative but not explicitly stated'.

Returning to the right seal, Shamash (seated on a low-backed chair with lion footstool) is not only libated, but brought offerings by two small attendants holding kid and pitcher. But because, by Winter's thinking, we could still take the seated figures on both seals as rulers - if the backs of their chairs are not high enough to qualify as God's thrones - we are back to ambiguities in what to take as the differences between chairs and thrones. We

¹²⁰ 'May Shamash ... an untrue balance ... in the marketplace of his city!' (Esarhaddon's Accession Treaty line fragments) - see S Parpola 'Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives' JCS XXXIX p.172

¹²¹ Babylonian Wisdom Literature Oxford p.133

¹²² 'Political covenants, treaties and loyalty oaths in Babylonia' in Canford et al. (eds.) I Trattati nel Mondo Antico 1990

know of the dedication by Zimrilim of four thrones to Gods (in different years) during his reign - to Dagan of Terqa; Shamash of Manunim; Adad/Baal of Maḥanim and the Goddess of Dēr¹²³, but their appearance is not described. What it comes down to is that we have *some* criteria from Winter and van Buren's observations for identifying between Gods, rulers and mortals leading up to the 2M, but for the 2M itself they can no longer be applied by the book!

Bearing in mind the line quoted on the previous page - that libations be made *before the stars*, we will return again to these two seals in relation to the Dipper constellation and bird over the ruler/God's cup in these two seals. First we must deal with the full significance of the libation ritual. Machteld Mellinck¹²⁴ looked at the libation ritual in Anatolia, Crete and Mycenae, and how minor cult attendants pouring a libation in more complex scenarios can often be replaced by animals. On Syrian seals it is monkeys or children rather than adult humans that offer wine for the ruler's cup - while under the Hittites humans with plumed eagle heads take up that role. On Aegean seals the jugs held by donkey-cum-hippo figures have fronds of vegetation in them to indicate plant watering - so it was as important a contemporary Minoan ritual as it was on the Levantine mainland. She refers to drinking scenes on Sumerian and Akkadian seals preceding them, pointing out that ‘

The setting on the Kanesh seals is local, and evidently refers to Anatolian customs. The vessels illustrated on these seals are characteristic of the Karum period [see main seal of Ratt-17], from the flaring rims of the jars with drinking tubes to the pitchers and spouted pots known from many Anatolian sites of the 19th and 18th centuries BC. The custom of ceremonially pouring [a drink into the king's cup]... is probably referred to as early as the period of the Royal tombs of Alaça Hüyük’.

Over and above the main distinctions between plant watering and ordinary drink pouring, however, is the quite distinct Cup of Alliance ritual (described above from Lafont's point of view as taking place at Stage 6) that we see held up in the extended hand of the enthroned ruler in so many audience scenes on early 2M seals (e.g. **Ratt-18**). It is the clearest visual component to feature on Syrian seals indicating that an agreement process has been brought to a conclusion. *Yet*, once we have discussed the Cup of Alliance, there remains an ambiguity in other settings about the meaning of the raised cup (from Winter's point of view) which we still need to unravel!

THE CUP OF ALLIANCE

The shared drink from a cup at the end of the contract ritual is definitely described in the singular as taken from ‘the cup’ in the example quoted above concerning the King of Mari's agreement with Asqur-Addu of Karana and Atamrum of Andarig. The concept of the ‘shared cup’ is expressed imaginatively in **Ratt-19** by arcs of liquid linking the cups, though in this instance the drinking session appears more to be a celebration of the New Year Festival by king and priestess with the sigils of the usual planetary Gods in the sky behind them, with the Rear Attack symbol between their thrones indicating not only the changeover of the Old Year to the New, but also indicating the seriousness, not only of oath-taking, but also by the discipline of astronomy resetting the calendar

¹²³ See Agnès Spycket *Les statues de culte dans les textes mésopotamiens, des origines à la 1ère dynastie de Babylone* Paris 1968

¹²⁴ ‘Anatolian Libation Pourers and the Minoan Genius’ in *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval worlds: Papers Presented in Honor of Edith Porada* (eds Anne E Farkas et al.) Mainz 1987

to its New Year starting point. This is because, given planetary cycles never completely resolve with each other, there is a resultant requirement to take the stellar positions of Sun, Moon and Venus into account to do so.

In the tribal context of 2M Syria, Lafont (*ibid.*) wonders whether in fact there was originally real blood-letting and drinking from one cup the mixed blood of the parties - blood of course being a substance symbolic of both Life and Death. There do seem to have been instances of Amorite blood-brother rituals such as rubbing of each other's blood together from incisions, where the idea of a tribe being of one blood is the biological reality referred to, as in this Tell Leilan text: 'I journeyed and brought back blood of Till-Abu. Before we start on the campaign let us touch his blood and let us swear an oath...'. Lafont also points out how sometimes wine was considered as the blood *or* (referring to W Lambert¹²⁵) the wine-red *tears* of a God (hence the connection between swearing by the Gods and touching or drinking blood). Lafont in a later footnote speculates from further quoted source material whether the cup was more likely to have contained wine (the obvious conclusion) or wine mixed with blood (whether human, or donkey) - because of the evocative phrase in one letter which runs, 'If we go against our agreement, may our blood be spilled as the cup was poured!' But if the much later ritual of Holy Communion (in the same vein, a contract between leader and followers) is anything to go by, wine was certainly by that late point in the tradition a full substitute for blood, just as eating bread is a substitute for the supposed cannibal rite of eating Christ's flesh.

These are the most likely connotations for the meaning of the drinking Cup in the 2M Syrian context - but as we know of so much other inheritance of iconography from the Sumerian world to the Syrian we should consider a further angle on its implications, probed by thoughtful Irene Winter¹²⁶, who realized it could refer to good divinatory judgement on the part of the king holding it up. As Munn-Rankin (*ibid.*) put it, 'the God... as owner and ruler of the State, made his commands known to the king, his earthly delegate, by means of omens' - thus 'Hammurabi called himself "Subduer of the Euphratean towns" by the oracular command of Dagan...'.
THE CUP, THE JUST VERDICT and the ORACULAR bird

In telling quotations from the literature about cups or bowls holding oil and water - rather than wine - Winter ingeniously puts the following ideas forward in relation to the king holding up the cup on Ur III seals - and her paper should be read in full. In a nutshell, the cup (or small bowl) embodies the idea of the king as personification of Shamash, relied upon to give just verdicts - just as the diviner obtains the right answers from consulting patterns of oil on the surface of the water in a cup or bowl (as A L Oppenheim put it, 'In fact, it is the king's duty and privilege to receive such signs and to act according to their message'¹²⁷). In this context, looking at *our* 2M seals we note when the king simply holds up the cup or bowl ('of perfect make'¹²⁸) at the moment of giving judgement or assigning authority, *no* wine-pourers are present, so could well refer to a quite different

¹²⁵ 'The Tears of Ningišzida' In NABU 1990/127

¹²⁶ 'The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals' in *Insight through Images: Studies in Honour of Edith Porada* (eds M. Kelly-Buccellati et al.) *Bibl.Mes.* Vol XXI, Malibu 1986, 253-68/pls 62-4)

¹²⁷ In *Ancient Mesopotamia* 1964 p.226

¹²⁸ See N Kramer 'The Death of Ur-Nammu and his Descent to the Underworld' *JCS* XXI 104-122

gesture from passing round the Cup of Alliance for a shared sip. D Charpin¹²⁹, referring to Zimrilim's chief wife, Šibtu, a princess of lamhad, says, 'Lorsque la situation politique devint très tendue, Šibtu eut recours à des pratiques manifestement originaires d'Alep comme la divination par la boisson...'. In this paper Charpin discusses the tendency amongst scholars to see divinatory practices such as dreams, visions and prophecy as a Western Syrian tradition - with extispicy as the main expertise of Babylon - but recent fuller recovery of texts overall means 'une telle division doit aujourd'hui être remise en cause'. In truth, it appears most methods of ascertaining the Will of the Gods were pursued from West to East Syria - including the study of animal, bird and insect behaviour¹³⁰ - or other natural phenomena - as omens, even if overall there were still some East-West differences and local specialisations. Charpin admits that, on balance, Zimrilim and his wife Šibtu were more in tune with Western Syrian culture, given the King gladly made special trips to Ugarit and lamhad in person, but always sent ambassadors in diplomatic dealings East of the Euphrates.

Winter reminds us of the Mesopotamian tradition that both Shamash and Addu/Hadad were the Gods who initially handed down oil divination to the antediluvian king Enmeduranki¹³¹ of Sippar (whose City God was Shamash), whence the tradition was passed down. The king earns his own authority through channelling justice by the authority of that God (clearly so in the case of the Hammurabi *stela*, that we remind ourselves is simply a polished baetyl, worked with incised text and imagery), at the same time delegating aspects of his power to those who serve him, so the Cup 'in effect serves as a bridge between the divine order and earthly activity' in 'a parallel statement of authority and effectiveness', writes Winter. The small bird hovering over the cup confirms the oracular nature of the scene where the bird can ultimately be explained, I show below, as stellar in nature, perpetuating a Caucasian tradition that we have noted as early as the 3M on the Maikop vases (*Ratt-10*) - on one the bird is on the back of the lion, and on the other in proximity to a small bear and palm tree. These motifs can be decoded if we follow them on a chain of objects that, leading on one from the other, will mutually throw light on each other.

COLOMBIDAE AND THE GODDESS

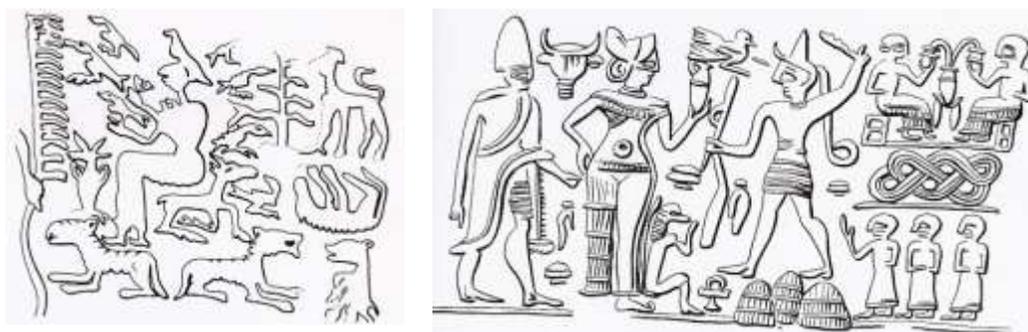
For the oracular bird over the cup, let us start at the beginning of a chain of associations between the two. I will call it either a pigeon or dove, as the iconography of any bird of the *colombidae* species has a long pedigree of association with female Goddesses, most especially Anat-Astarte-Ištar. The most obvious reason lies in their fast and repetitive rate of reproduction, appropriate to Venus as the Goddess of Fertility - though overall she was more the Goddess of the Life force itself - hence on Syrian seals often holding the Egyptian hieroglyph for Life, the Ankh, which thereafter remained the sigil for Venus ♀. Goddesses of this kind were associated with doves or pigeons too because their cooing suggests the sounds of a woman's love-making.

¹²⁹ 'Mari entre l'Est et l'Ouest: Politique, Culture, Religion' *Akkadica* 78 1992 1-10

¹³⁰ H. Limet 'L'Observation des animaux dans les presages en Mésopotamie ancienne' *Akkadica* 78 P.53/4

¹³¹ W. Lambert 'Enmeduranki and Related Matters' *JCS* XXI 126-38

Not to dwell too long on the main stereotype of Venus, I rely here on Urs Winter's succinct chapter in Othmar Keel¹³²'s book - worth reading in full - and the telling images he marshalls together for it. It has the key virtue of tracking the dove and the Goddess on early 2M seal material, starting at Kültepe, where a chthonic Anatolian tradition was still practiced unself-consciously. In the Kültepe seal bottom left, the Mother Goddess as protectress of nature (or a prophetess) is enthroned on a pair of lionesses and surrounded by birds, holding one in her hand, with another perched on her head. Even in the ritual of the annual Festival of Ištar held by the Mari Court (see Durand et al. 1997 - shortly to be referred to at length) there is a slot during the lamentation song of



Ill.7- 36 Anatolian seal with Mistress of the Beasts (left, N.Ozgiç 1965 - KültepeCat 71) and Syrian seal with Venus and Baal (right, -PierMorCat 968) - Urs Winter Ills 15 and 18

the Goddess when the musicians are sent out, leaving the medium/*muhhūm* to pass oracles if so moved - and thought by early scholars to come 'via the birds'. The authors themselves had little text to underpin this idea but, nonetheless, bearing in mind we also see the Syrian donkey ritual also melded into what is overall an old Sumerian festival, it is not farfetched to think that foreign bird mediums from Anatolia might be given their place. Doves were still the offering made to Artemis at her great temple at Ephesus during the First Millennium. In the *Hauptszene* of the Pierpoint Morgan Late Classical Style seal on the right, above, we can really start to get the hang of how on seals figures are confirmed by their symbols fitted into empty spaces - not necessarily placed right next to them. Thus a Syrian ruler in Levantine polos advances behind Venus clothed/unclothed holding up a vase to Baal/Reshef wearing characteristic pointed helmet and trailing hair tress, with sword and axe in each hand as he strides, Hittite fashion, over his mountain tops. Venus' presence is reiterated by the pigeon over her vase and the small ankh sign under Baal's right foot, Baal by the displaced bull-head beyond Venus. The little child (or monkey of Mercury) sits at Venus' feet. In the double-register at the side, separated by a running knot, a shared celebratory drink scene at the top is balanced by a row of three attendants beneath.

We look further at why the pigeon should be the messenger of Astarte by looking at another chapter in Keel (*ibid.*) that deals with doves and ravens as used by sailors in the ancient world for orientation when trying to finding the nearest dry land from the middle of the sea (birds would be released and the direction noted if they didn't return, since it meant they must have landed, and stayed). The use of the dove and the raven in the story

¹³² Vögel als Boten Göttingen 1977

of Noah is already familiar to us that uses just this method, but other omens were taken from bird flight, often in relation to the phases of the Moon¹³³ - which links in to the *kispum* ceremony at the start of the Festival of Ištar. These days we particularly think of pigeons as the bird supremely suited to carry messages by homing back successfully over long distances with written messages attached to their leg¹³⁴, so the association is deeper when used as mediums for conveying oracular information. In Anatolia and North Syria there are many instances of doves with Goddesses that have turned up in the archaeological record, neatly summarized by Betty L Schlossman's entry (no. 208) in the **LADDERS TO HEAVEN** exhibition catalogue¹³⁵ concerning a mould for a domestic goddess triad of the kind found at Ebla and popular in Anatolia (Ill.7- 37) - and 'found all the way from Troy ... to Sippar'. Lead or silver would be poured into them to make small statuettes for household cults, and although some experts see these as originally Anatolian, others feel they are probably Syrian in inspiration¹³⁶. As Schlossman puts it, 'A tantalizing piece of evidence that the central lady of our triad may be a form of Ištar is the representation of Ištar-Shaushga among the deities at Yazilikaya followed by her female attendants Ninatta and Kulitta; she is also shown at Malatya with two birds under her feet' (c.f. also the detail from the Mitanni seal of Shaushtatar, far right below). She also points out that in Canaanite myth Baal (Rain), Dew and Earth



Ill.7- 37 *Print of the North Syrian schist mould showing pigeons over flanking goddesses holding Sun disc in Moon Crescent over Goddess (left), compared (middle two) with an Early Classical Syrian seal with detail of naked Venus on bull holding doves in either hand (LADDERS TO HEAVEN entries 208 and 209, Royal Ontario Museum - and with a detail of the Goddess on two doves with all the other classic Ishtar attributes from the Mitanni Shaushtatar seal of Nuzi*

each has a daughter - embodiments of the light of lightning, the dew of precipitation and the earthiness of earth. These triads persist into Greek mythology, the most obvious being the Judgement of Paris (heir apparent of Troy) between Athena, Aphrodite and Demeter. On the mould, the appearance of the Sun inside the Moon crescent must mainly refer to the neomenia which formed part of the *kispum* ceremony when the first day of the month was defined, as the Sun blotting out the Moon after a three-day Neomenia gave way to the appearance of the sliver of the New Moon Crescent announcing a new month - the most important instance of which would be the Neomenia marking New Year's Day - and a vital part of the proceedings of the annual Festival of Ištar.

¹³³ See Annelies Kammenhuber *Orakelpraxis, Träume und Vorzeichenschau bei den Hethitern* Heidelberg 1976 p.42

¹³⁴ Parpola (*ibid.*) comments on a line from a vassal treaty (text 4) stipulating, 'You will send no message with fish of the sea nor bird of the sky' that it 'shows that the idea of message-carrying birds in this context was quite familiar to the writer. It therefore seems possible that carrier pigeons were already used for military communication in Sargonid Assyria, as they were later in the Roman Empire'.

¹³⁵ O W Muscarella (ed.) **LADDERS TO HEAVEN: Art Treasures from Lands of the Bible** Royal Ontario Museum Toronto 1981

¹³⁶ But we should not forget the row of limestone doves the feature on a frieze from the Temple of Ninḫursag at Ubaid (4-5M) (UEI pl.xxxiii).

If we blend the two ideas together, bird sounds might elicit the idea of the Gods communicating through them to the human world in oracular fashion, and in the context of the bird over the Cup, Winter's idea of the divinatory cup of the Ur III Kings is reinforced on 2M seals by the added presence of that small bird, confirming the cup's oracular nature as mediator of the Sky Order. Winter's hierarchical diagram taken from her other paper (*III.7- 28*) is helpful in summing up the changes in accountability that laid the ground in the Ur III period for the even more variegated picture we obtain from early 2M material where seal iconography for levels of authority depicted is varied and often complex - quite the opposite of Ur III standardisation. We have noted how she realised the act of sitting had cultic status too, quoting the Old Babylonian prayer to Shamash: 'You will be seated on the chair/throne and pronounce judgment'. The implications of the God or King's servants paying their respects and carrying out a ruler's orders is that he in return will grant any petitions they have in hand, and this reciprocal recognition with implied petition and its granting is the main undertone conveyed in most scenes on our chosen cylinder seals, where the ruler on his throne holds up the cup of 'just decisions/*dīnāt mīšarim*' held up on behalf of Shamash, and made on the strength of oracular advice. We even noted how in *III.7- 35* (right) it could be Shamash himself who holds that cup, not only because the God was understood as originator of truthful oracles, but perhaps also because if his vassal is a High King, he in turn represents the God, explaining the deviation from the Ur III iconographic norm that Gods do not hold a Cup. In fact on 2M seals, Ištar, too, often holds up a cup or pitcher.

THE DOVE AND THE POLAR AXIS

In a further Classical Syrian seal from the Pierpoint Morgan collection cited by Urs Winter, the Hauptszene consists of a ruler stepping forward to Venus holding a pigeon in her hand, while the double register at the side shows confronted lionesses contrasted beneath by a griffin¹³⁷ on antelope Rear Attack (the combination of eagle with lion is possibly a variation on the Imdugud eagle with lion's head, reversing the more customary combination of eagle head on lion body¹³⁸). In the case of the well-known Mari wall-painting (detail below right) showing the investiture of Zimrilim by Ištar who steps forward on her lion mount holding out the rod and ring of royal authority, the griffin, here with the characteristic peacock-style crest of the nascent International Style, flanks a stylised deciduous lotus tree. Here, Ištar's pigeon flutters over an evergreen date palm in full fruit - the latter a straight reference back to 4-3M representations of Inanna holding one or two date bunches - or to libation scenes where even the baby palm can be shown with a heavy date bunch each side.

Here it is worth referring again to the paper by G Conti (*ibid.*) whose title suggests it is all about holy water but in fact it translates texts concerning the purifying action of the sacred tree's leaves on the holy water sprinkled

¹³⁷ Conti (*ibid.*) quotes the (repeated) line in text (TrD 1): 'Le griffon a crié haut sur l'onde' (sounding, one imagines, like a peacock)?

¹³⁸ There is much to explore about the griffin - first used at Susa and Egypt in the 4M - and what it represents astronomically it may be a way of referring to the Leo-Aquarius sky quarters since, when considering the axis in precessional terms, the phoenix can take the place of the Water Pourer (consider also the Latin name for the palm, which is *phoenix*). In that sky quarter, the two large bird constellations Aquila and Cygnus are paraneatonta to Sagittarius/Capricorn/Aquarius (see Chapter 19).

from one of its branches on the king, along with incense set smoking before him by a flaming brand (for the mountainous West Levantine context the evergreen cedar or juniper is more often cited, though there is also



Ill.7- 38 Syrian seal (left - PierMorCat 945) with Astarte-Ištar holding a pigeon showing herself to an approaching ruler, and (right) detail from the investiture¹³⁹ scene at Mari showing the pigeon in the palm tree -Winter ills 19/20

mention of the palm). These texts all cite more or less the same lines about the qualities of the symbolic tree:

Pilier du ciel... grand étendard des enfers... pieu d'amarrage du ciel: tu as rendu le vase pur... l'argile pure, le ciel pur' (YOS XI 47).

Because its roots run under the earth, this and related texts in similar vein all link the Pillar of the Sky to the Journey to the Underworld, undertaken, as further lines recited in these texts show: 'Avec Geštinanna dans la voie du silence j'ai marché; Dumuzi, qui va au sein de son épouse, va à mon côté' (VS XVII 18//X 192). The purification and sacralisation of the king therefore had ramifications associated with the baby palm watering and libation ceremonies whose significance was to re-iterate the Journey to the Underworld and the ultimate restoration of fertility to the Land, as Winter finally gave way to Spring once more.

With palm as Pillar of the Sky, we are reminded how the fixity of the Polar Centre's axis can be further underlined by being flanked by the Two Bears, as in the case (literally) of the palm tree on the Khafaje Vase (**Belland 4**), or again on the Maikop Vase by one Bear next to the damaged traces of two palm trees! I suggest that on the Maikop vases the bird on the feline's back stands in for one or other of the Bears (we show in **Chapter 19** on Astronomy that Ursa Major lies above Leo in the sky, and how in 3M Uruk Stance examples the upturned tail of the Lion refers to the blending of the two constellations into one telling image). A second bird on the goat on the second vase could be taken as an indicators of Inanna and Tammuz (we will never know).

¹³⁹ From the remains of the wall-painting of the Court of the Palms at Mari we know that it is Ishtar, standing on a lioness, who grants the King of Mari, Zimrilim, the rod and ring of Kingship.

At this point we should consider a helpful piece of supporting information from the 3M Land Zodiac of Glastonbury, as picked out on an Ordnance Survey map of the Somerset terrain by K E Maltwood¹⁴⁰). She saw the outline of a bird at the Polar Centre, and since clues in local place names indicate that it could date back to the Sumerian period¹⁴¹ it means the zodiac could be the unexpected remnant of a once far-reaching outpost of that



Ill.7- 39 The main constellations of the Glastonbury Zodiac as identified by Katherine Maltwood, reversed (right)

3M empire¹⁴²). The map above left, seen from Pole viewpoint (and reversed on the right for the more familiar Earth viewpoint) shows the Taurus-Scorpio opposition on the horizontal diameter with the Dove at the centre of the Sky, beak downwards. I believe this zodiac was meant to be an 8-fold zodiac: there is no representation of Cancer, Gemini or Libra¹⁴³. Below the zodiac Orion appears under Taurus to the West (over the Ship of the Argo¹⁴⁴) and the Dog of Sirius is positioned on separate land West of Taurus - which is astronomically correct. Instead of a man, Aquarius is represented by a Phoenix with florid wings, also beak down (while the birds Cygnus and Altair may also be blended into Sagittarius/Capricorn). The position of Pisces is occupied by a large fish, prominently emphasising the Fom-el-Hüt-Spica opposition, and perhaps also alluding to Cetus and Canopus. Mary Caine later finessed the imagery (from her point of view correcting Maltwood's work¹⁴⁵), plausibly redelineating the dove in a manner reminiscent of the outline of the bird on the Khafaje vase flying over the lion attack group

¹⁴⁰ K Maltwood in *A Guide to Glastonbury, Temple of the Stars* (repr. 1964) considers it to date to 2700 BC.

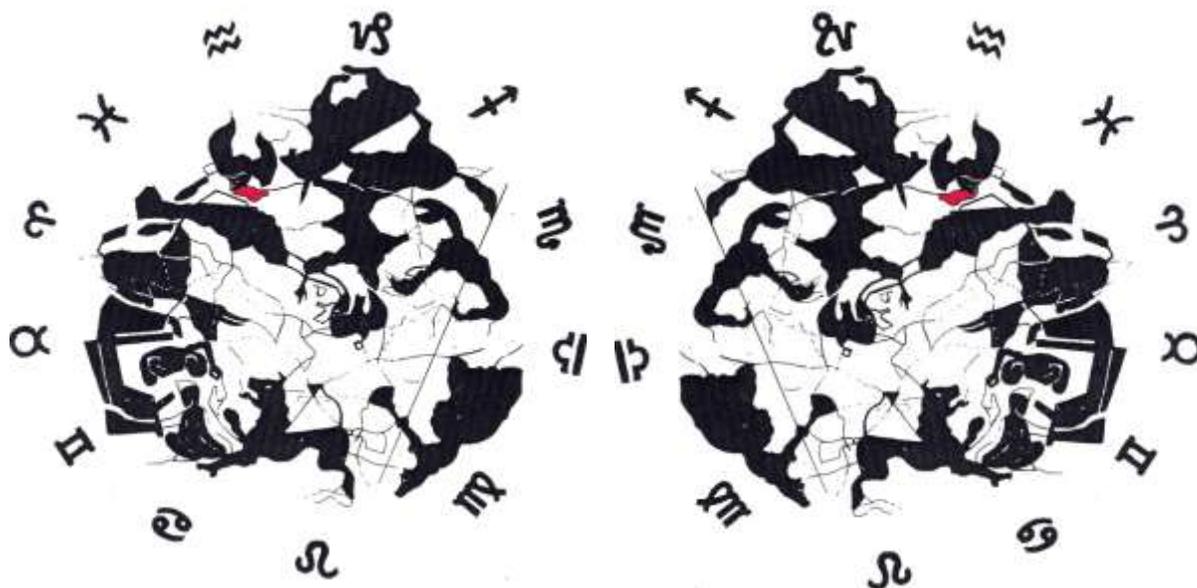
¹⁴¹ The river Parrot runs through the Somerset terrain (a variation on *Euphrates*), for instance.

¹⁴² There is interesting material about Sumer's organization of its cities into a great land zodiac which we cannot discuss here,

¹⁴³ I believe Maltwood's inclusion of Aries is actually meant to be the continuation of the body of Taurus.

¹⁴⁴ The ship of the Argo under him is anachronistic, and it would be no loss if left out: this is a stage of zodiac history where constellations were seen as animals, along with with one male (Orion) and one female (Virgo). Gemini was understood in Egypt as a male-female couple.

¹⁴⁵ Her inclusion of a figure for Cancer in front of Leo jars, just as Maltwood's inclusion of the Argo does not fit.



Ill.7- 40 Mary Caine's reworking of the Glastonbury Zodiac (1989), also reversed (right) for ease of reading (the addition in red of the extension of the head to the Aquarian Phoenix is mine)

(*Ill.7- 40*) - and also giving the Phoenix of Aquarius a neater outline¹⁴⁶ (I have added in red a further small landscape feature which seems logically to extend its neck). Whether on the Glastonbury Zodiac the dove replaces one or other of the Bears, or simply pinpoints the *Markaz Samē* (the Centre of the Sky) we cannot ascertain (there are bits of field looking suspiciously like bits of Draco), but there are many instances from the ancient world - ending with the biblical account of the Baptism of Christ when the Dove of the Holy Spirit appears over his head as God speaks to confirm he is His Son -pointing to the idea that the bird stands for the presence of the constant Sky Centre perched as divine witness at the top of the Pillar of the Sky¹⁴⁷.

Looking back at the two *Ratt-18* seals repeated above in *Ill.7- 35*, we see how on one of them the stars of Ursa Major (or Minor) lie over the Cup, with the bird confirming it, while on the other seal there is no room for it over the constellation. Anu was one of the traditional Gods by whom oaths were taken (listed earlier), but there are also textual references to oaths sworn by the Sibitti (written *dingir 7-bi*¹⁴⁸) which, because associated with Venus (Venus is *exalted* in the Sibitti as well as in Pisces - see *Chapter 19*), implies any oath in its name was actually an oblique reference to Her. Drawing in Venus' dove *and* the Seven-Star as its embodiment points to its calendrical significance. Let us summarise one or two of our findings from a later chapter, to understand why.

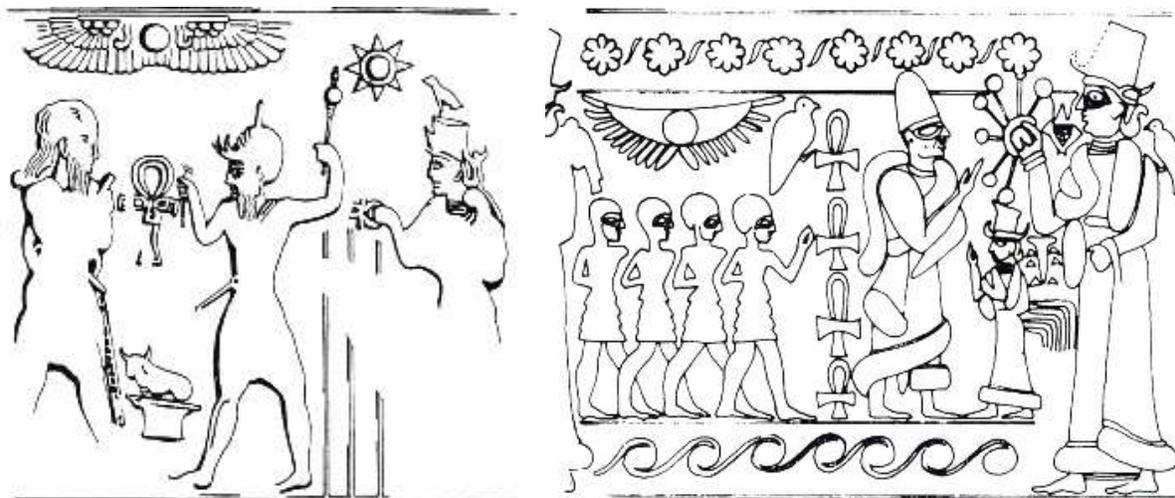
¹⁴⁶ Here we may have an alternative explanation for the griffin as the merged lion and phoenix, expressing the straight Leo-Aquarius axis.

¹⁴⁷ The sculptor Constantin Brancusi noted how in East European folklore from observation of their behaviour it is believed birds will make for the top of any tree or pole, perching like sentinels to survey the world below them - basing many of his bird sculptures on that idea.

¹⁴⁸ In the same way, Venus in star lists was sometimes written *dingir 15-bi*, and the Moon *dingir 30-bi*

IŠTAR AND THE SEVEN-STAR GOD (ILU SIBITTI)

We show in *Chapter 19* (q.v.) how in ancient Mesopotamia the Seven-Star (*Sibitti*) is often understood by scholars as the seven planets¹⁴⁹ or the Pleiades - but on balance the evidence pointed to the stronger likelihood of its being Auriga and/or one or both of the Bears. It evidently refers to stars so obvious in the centre of the sky and so crucial to the working of the calendar that it was treated as a distinct God, ^{dingir}*Sibitti*. In the same chapter we also come to the conclusion from available texts that it was in the Fourth to Third Millennium that Venus lined up with the constellations *Mul Apin* and *Iku* on the then 0°meridian to mark the start of the New Year¹⁵⁰, serving as benchmarks for calculating Venus' 8-year cycle. This is why, in star-lists such as *Mul Apin*, this combination of two constellations and a planet are listed as the *first triad*, so that all three were jointly associated with everything to do with preparations for the New Year ritual - and the ensuing long celebration.



Ill.7- 41 Sealing from Ebla¹⁵¹ with ruler before Baal and Astarte with bird on her helmet (left) and (right) sealing from Alalakh (AtchCat 12) showing ruler before Astarte with Sibitti-headed multiple mace - Urs Winter Ills 26 and 24

We appear to see that triad spelled out visually on two more Post-Classical Syrian seals in the group brought together by Urs Winter (*ibid.*). Starting with the often reproduced sealing from Ebla below left (a composite drawing made from several damaged fragments), we see a ruler paying respects to Baal and Istar beneath the winged disc of the Sun. Baal wears his usual pointed helmet and holds up his axe and mace, whilst behind him Istar-Venus (with eight-pointed star above confirming her) wears a square hat with pigeon perched on it as she holds out the life-giving ankh sign. The identity of these two Gods is further confirmed by a large ankh and small bull on pedestal in the blank zone between Gods and ruler. We have already seen on the *Ratt-18* seals how

¹⁴⁹ e.g. H. Drijvers in *East of Antioch* London 1984, p.193, A K Grayson in 'Akkadian Treaties of the Seventh Century BC' *JCS* 39 127-60 and B Gronenberg in 'Ein Rituel an Istar' in *MARI* 8 1997 p.301. The latter particularly states 'die Siebenzahl der Planeten, mit denen Istar immer wieder assoziiert wird' - but since Venus is a planet herself the association makes more sense if the Sibitti are stars.

¹⁵⁰ We have to remember that in the ancient world the time of year could be read from the position of the Bears alone in relation to the ziqpu stars, Sun and Moon (see C.Vincent et al. 'Nighttime and Easter Time: the Rotations of the Sun, the Moon, and the Little Bear in Renaissance Time Reckoning' *Met. Mus. of Art Bull.* NS XXVII 1969 372-84. Note the reference to Easter, direct heir to the Feast of Istar). See also in *The Science Newsletter*: 'Sky as Clock' XXXIX p.407-8 and 'Great Square Guide in Skies' LII P.58-9 by James Stokley

¹⁵¹ Detailed photos of the actual sealing fragments (in damaged condition) are given on pl.87 in *Matthiae I Tesori di Ebla* Rome and Bari 1985

often these two deities are placed together, and how on two occasions they are also in the company of the Sibitti (*Ill.7- 35*). Probing further into the reason why, we find in Kammenhuber (*ibid.*) in her chapter on Omina that in Hittite practice absorbed from the Kizzuwatna¹⁵² area, Baal/Teshub was often juxtaposed in the texts with references to the Sibitti (in her interpretation either the Pleiades or the Great Bear) and taken together as fearful portents to do with unruly weather conditions and anxiety about state matters, emphasising how much more the Hittites leaned on the divinatory than astronomical or astrological aspects of these stars, which she believes they misunderstood or overlooked. Of course the Mesopotamian prayer to the Sibitti by a diviner is very well known, and Kammenhuber makes a tantalizing mention of an instance of libations made by the Hittites to the Sibitti - where again the attitude was to mitigate a bad omen.

The second, more complex seal (above right) brings the chain of associations full circle with a scene portraying a Syrian ruler in polos and fur-edged robe paying respects to Ištar alone. Behind him is a retinue of soldiers or attendants again under a winged solar disc, the zone between them filled with a stack of ankhs and pigeon perched at the top. The Goddess with the same square hat has a second pigeon on her shoulder, and this time holds up a spectacular divine weapon with seven spokes and bulbous ends, one of which cleverly blends with a flower in the floral band of eight-petalled flowers - of which there are eight - flowers also being symbolic of Venus). Under her elbow there appears to be a miniature eagle with outspread wings (a symbol of Baal) behind a smaller version of Astarte - possibly her persona as Goddess of Streams, or her priestess.

Barrelet¹⁵³ usefully analyses Venus' varying weapons from the earliest instances which even in the Akkadian period included the curved scimitar between two maces on either shoulder (as in the detail of the Chicago Oriental Institute seal (*Ill.7- 44* far right), as well as the top two seal details in the next illustration). With the passing of time these maces became poppy-heads or mirror(s) (being further references to Inanna's journey to the Underworld) (bottom row right, below). She agrees with Porada¹⁵⁴ and Moortgat-Correns¹⁵⁵ view that her acquisition of wings on some Syrian seals mostly marks her separate incarnation as Anat, described in Ugaritic myth as the warrior virgin sister of Alyon-Baal, soaring in the sky, akin here to Athena/Allāt and given her own spot on our Gods Table¹⁵⁶. In fact, on reflection, Syrian depictions of the winged Ishtar mostly give her pigeon wings, which are slimmer, arranged in two rows of feathers and tapered at their ends (left column below), rather than the squared-off, broader eagle-wing span she is also sometimes given, which I see as appropriated from Baal (bottom row, middle and right).

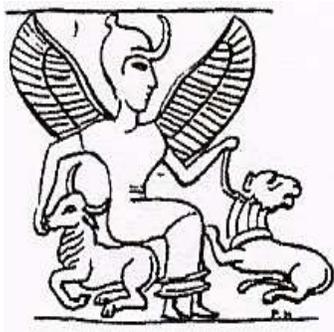
¹⁵² Cilicia, the area with Çatal Hüyük and Kültepe at its heart -its capital was Tarsus in Mithraic times.

¹⁵³ M-T Barrelet 'Les Déeses Armées et Ailées' *Syria* XXXII 1935

¹⁵⁴ Review of her own Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Pierpoint Morgan Library, *JCS* IV 1950, 155-62

¹⁵⁵ U Moortgat-Correns 'Neue Anhaltspunkte zur seitlichen Ordnung syrischer Glyptik' *ZA NF* XVII 1955 88-101

¹⁵⁶ Anat is not so much to be equated with Ištar, but more with Tammuz' sister, Geštinanna, who in some versions of his myth accompanies him to the Underworld.



III.7- 42 LEFT COLUMN (top) Pigeon in flight; (below) Anat on a seal from Ugarit with pigeon wings (Barrelet fig.17). TOP ROW (middle and right) Details of two 3M seals showing Ištar/Inanna with maces and sickles on her shoulders (Barrelet figs 2d/f). BOTTOM ROW (middle) Kite in flight (other types of eagle wings have squarer ends); (right) Detail of Nuzi sealing with nude winged Ištar holding mirrors rather than maces (Barrelet fig.12).

IŠTAR AND THE DOG-LEG SCIMITAR

If our evidence stacks up, then in the Levant the Sibitti animal is the dove, and being so closely associated with Astarte-Ištar in alignment to the Centre of Heaven (III.7- 41, right) corresponds to Venus' listing in the first triad of the canonical Star Lists, and also to seals in which she holds the Sibitti constellation as a specific weapon, worth stopping to analyse.

Considered by Lambert to have been edited (or even composed) soon after the fall of the Ur III Dynasty, in another of his many papers exploring the Gods of Mesopotamia, he analyses the myth of *Enki/Ea and Ninmah*¹⁵⁷. As in the *Atrahasis* myth, also worked on by the same scholar, this is a story about the Gods, with Ea and Ninmah in charge rather than Anu and Enlil (see the table in III.7- 53 below, soon to be the focus of our attention). The story goes that, in consultation with his mother Namma, *Enki slaps his thigh* to produce blood and body forms¹⁵⁸, for the Seven Birth Goddesses to use in creating mankind by blending them with nips of clay, and chooses his consort Ninmah to head them. In Bull form, mention of Ea's thigh reminds us of the Egyptian *Meskhetiu* (see III.19-34) which we know represents Ursa Major, so we could perhaps view the Seven Birth

¹⁵⁷ 'The Relationship of Sumerian and Babylonian Myth as seen in accounts of Creation' in Charpin et al. (eds) *La Circulation des Biens, des Personnes et des Idées dans le Proche-Orient Ancien* (XXXVIIIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale) Paris 1992

¹⁵⁸ Again we have the association between blood and life - the Gods have the power to coagulate blood, the essential ingredient in the creation of living humans (the infusion of the breath of life being the factor emphasised in alternative texts, such as Genesis).

Goddesses as embodying Ursa Minor. In fact, in the *Atrahasis* myth seven pairs of birth goddesses are mentioned, one for each person of the first seven human couples - do they refer to both Bears together?

Apart from the distinct identity of Venus/Ištar (subsuming local versions in other cities) as Lambert himself comments, we have to understand the Mother God of the Universe (in Sky and Earth forms) as divided into any number of aspects with a variety of names but often characterless and serving as invisible consort to the senior male gods. Though at times Ištar can be included as the most individual of the protean and sometimes nameless Great Mother Ninḫursag, divinity of both Mountain and Cave, her specific association with the Sibitti keeps reappearing, as exemplified 2M Syrian seals based on Akkadian models that show the front-facing Ištar stepping up on a lion, holding up in one hand her double-lion-headed mace (as below, top) and in the other the dog-leg shaped scimitar shaped in the outline of the Bears¹⁵⁹ (lower seal below, and c.f. *Ills 7- 44* far right). We show in *Chapter 19* how the *ḫpš* instrument with the same outline was used in Egypt for the Opening of the Mouth ceremony to reanimate the royal Mummy, and on a Tutankhamun tomb wall painting it is deliberately echoed visually with *Meskhetiu*¹⁶⁰ as an actual bull thigh on the offering table below (*Ills 19-179/80*).

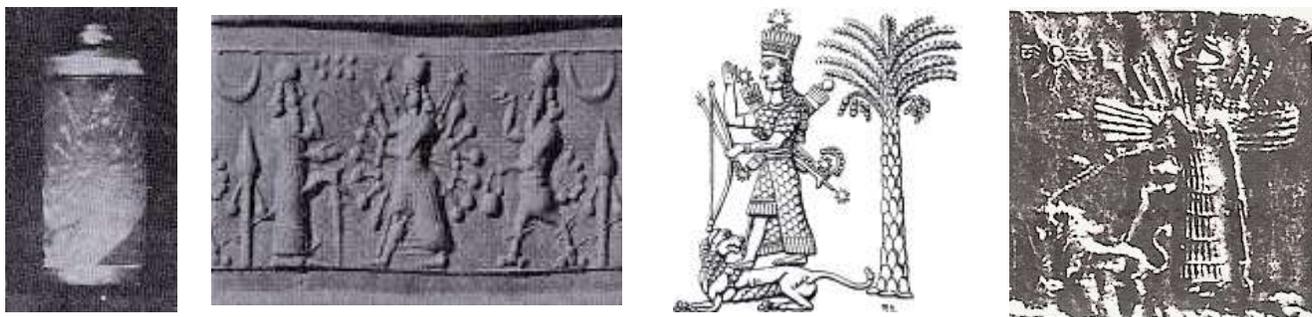


Ill.7- 43 (Top) Ištar on lion and lioness with double lion-head mace presides with Shamash (LADDERS TO HEAVEN cat.63; (Bottom) a similar seal from Tell Asmar shows Ištar with the sickle scimitar in her other hand (Frankfort SCSCat 770 - c.f. a similar seal from Ischschali SCSCat 940) - and (left) an actual example of the weapon - LADDERS TO HEAVEN cat.216)

First appearing in 3M Susa, and on 3M Sumerian reliefs a weapon of Eannatum of Tello, this type of sword, sharpened on the outside edge, became popular throughout the Levant in the 2M, and matches Middle Kingdom examples found in the Byblos tombs decorated with Egyptian motifs. In Mesopotamian art it is the weapon of rulers and deities, but several examples come from Egypt itself, (notably Avaris and Tell el-Yahudiyah), and on Egyptian tomb paintings they are usually held as an attribute of visiting Levantines. In fact, the example in the Metropolitan Museum illustrated above was found by John Garstang at Abydos.

¹⁵⁹ R Opificius ‘Syrisch-ägyptischer Einfluss auf die Kunst des Zweistromlandes in altbabylonischer Zeit’ in *Moortgat Festschrift* 1964 pl. 23.2
¹⁶⁰ In Egyptian cosmology the circumpolar stars were the field of immortality since they never set.

The embryonic seven-maced weapon of Astarte in *Ill.7- 41* thus appears to represent the *Sibitti* as an alternative version of her sickle weapon, frequently separated out on later Neo-Assyrian seals from the seven-star group up in the sky as a spectacular nimbus - as on the Neo-Assyrian seal below, where there is no question about its stellar identity. In the drawing next to it made by Layard from a similar British Museum seal (ME 89769) the linkage of palm, eight- pointed star, weaponry and lioness are shown more clearly. On Met seal, the guardian of



Ill.7- 44 Neo-Assyrian seal with Ištar in stellar display (Metropolitan Museum, NY, Accession no. L55.49.150), compared with the detail from a similar seal showing her association with lioness and palm- Layard Culte de Vénus¹⁶¹; the detail from an Akkadian seal on the far right shows Venus with scimitar stepping up on her lion, and winged¹⁶²

the Solstitial Gates with scorpion tail and bird feet sprinkles water on the multi-maced Ištar with a pine-cone from the Pillar of Heaven, no doubt first dipped in the water in his leather bucket. Behind him the Cosmic Axis in this later period is indicated by the crescent moon over a column topped with Marduk's 'spade' (probably actually the tree shoot - c.f. *Ill.7- 62*) doubling as a female baby palm with two date bunches thus (though more obliquely) retaining allusions to the pairing of the Divine Couple (in the Ugaritic version of the helmeted Anat, just illustrated above (*Ill.7- 42*) other visual combinations make the same point).

When we look at instances of oaths made on the *Sibitti* in textual form, although we surmise from our two 2M seal examples that this must have happened early on in an Amorite context, in the *written* record this practice is mostly cited in later Assyrian treaties. Text 3 in Grayson (*ibid.*) is the fragment of a treaty imposed on the citizens of Sippar by Esarhaddon, with the relevant lines as follows: 'Ina niš dingir Bel u dingir Belti; ina niš Mul-7 [bibbe šame]...By Baal and Baalat and by the Seven-Star [in the Sky] (he made them take an oath...)'. He translates *Mul-7^{bi}* as the seven *planets*, not taking into account that, as well as *dingir*, the determinative for star, *Mul*, is used in front of the 7. Then he quotes a Petition fragment (BM 51098) in a request for fair dealing from the king, where the speaker starts by invoking Baalat as goddess of justice (a variation on her brother, Shamash) followed by the *Sibitti*. We can conclude that if on a seal we see a ruler standing before Astarte-Ištar with either or both the dove and the Seven-Star attributes over them - perhaps along with the more usual Gods already mentioned - he may not be offering worship or making a request, but swearing an oath. Since in God

¹⁶¹ Conveniently reproduced in Barrelet (*ibid.*), fig.23

¹⁶² This unpublished seal in the Chicago Oriental Institute Museum (A27903) is put forward by Edith Porada (*ibid.*) as a prototype for Early Old Babylonian seals using the warrior figure of Ištar with this pose and weaponry.

lists used in swearing ceremonies separate planets such as Jupiter, Sun, Moon and Venus are specifically named, again we underline that it is unlikely the inclusion of the Sibitti would tautologously refer to the Seven Planets, since both cylinder seals and kudurrus confirm it was a group of seven stars distinct from the planetary symbols.

To conclude - adding in what we have gained from the texts (even if somewhat fragmentary) - the two main 2M Rear Attack seals we started off with as our initial reference point underline in visual form how the stellar association between the Sibitti and the dove of Astarte-Ištar match up. Later, on Assyrian seals the bird's association with Ištar as warrioress (as if subsuming Baal *into herself*) is retained. There is often a close association with the Moon, possibly because its phases measure the month, divided into four weeks of seven days each. Simonetta Graziani¹⁶³ refers to a tantalising reference from the time of Hammurabi to a statue (or 7 statues) dedicated to the Sibitti¹⁶⁴ believing his take-up of the God to derive from Amorite influence, and not officially mentioned in his Law Code. Drijvers (*ibid.*) refers to much later Arab accounts of seven *temples* in the area of Sabaeen Harran dedicated to the Seven (which he takes as planets) where each temple was reported to have a different geometric shape, according to the planet concerned). The Sibitti meant nothing to the Kassites when they took over from the Babylonians but it reappears on early 1M Babylonian *kudurrus* as a distinct item in the company of the top Gods, Sun, Moon and Venus (*Ill 19-161*).

Graziani concentrates on the prominence later given by the Assyrian state to the Sibitti (often written in its star-name form, *Mul Mul Imin^{bi}* or *Mul Imin-Imin^{bi}*) not only on their seals, but at their successive capital cities of Nimrud, Nineveh, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta and Khorsabad¹⁶⁵ where temples were dedicated to the Sibitti (the firmest evidence coming from the latter). There are two mentions of twelve or fourteen altars dedicated to them (possibly two for each star/planet as separate benign *and* malevolent influences). King Minua of Urartu, a kingdom independent of Assyria but strongly influenced by them, set up a stela¹⁶⁶ in honour of the Sibitti. Later, although not as prominent for the Neo-Babylonians, inscriptions reveal there was a 'Sibitti Street' in Babylon which Graziani supposes must have led to a Sibitti Temple. Probably from the example of the Mitanni (the Sibitti appear often on Nuzi seals *Ratt-0*), for the Assyrians the Great Seven was benevolent, providing protection, especially in war (as far as the enemy was concerned, the bad effect of the stars was likened to the destructive powers of Nergal/Pluto). Graziani talks also of the 'solarisation of the Sibitti', since they were emphatically taken up by the Assyrian kings as protectors of the monarchy along with the winged Sun. All this very definite information we see as rooted in early 2M practice, where its early appearance is so well exemplified in the seals of *Ill.7-35* in its stellar, bird and female associations.

¹⁶³ 'Note sul Sibitti' AION XXIX 1979 673-90

¹⁶⁴ RIA II p.179/117)

¹⁶⁵ The need felt by Assyrian kings to start afresh with a new capital could be something to do with the Baal myth where building his palace was a sign of attaining full kingship, after the battle with the Sea-God, Yam.

¹⁶⁶ See 'Eine Stele des urartäischen Königs Minua für die Gottheit Šebitu' in Owen and Wilhelm (eds) *Studies on the Civilisation and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians VIII* Bethesda 1996 269-72

THE PROTO- AND PREHISTORIC TRADITION OF IŠTAR'S DOVE AND HER BAETYLs

As to Ištar's dove, Jean-Marie Durand¹⁶⁷ believes the cultic use of the dove or pigeon survived as a particularly North-West Jezireh phenomenon much favoured by the Amorites¹⁶⁸ but 'c'était, dans le domaine divinatoire comme en beaucoup d'autres, le Mésopotamie du Sud qui était l'initiatrice'. A very obvious benchmark showing just how far back the imagery of the divine couple goes in plain animal terms are the limestone-inlay friezes of doves and bulls from the Temple of Ninḫursag at Uḫaid:



Ill.7- 45 Dove and Bull limestone-inlay friezes from the 4M Temple of Ninḫursag at Uḫaid - British Museum

And the impressive solid lapis lazuli dove with stars studded on its breast from Susa (below) certainly underlines how ancient the tradition probably was. Graziani (*ibid.* p.685) specifically refers to a line in the AN=Anu list of



Ill.7- 46 Lapis lazuli pigeon with inlaid gold eyes and studs on the breast 3M, Susa - Iraq Museum (check)

Gods that refers to the '7 Sibitti of the country of Elam' (we have mentioned already how the tin trade to Anatolia flourished particularly well when relations between Syria and Elam were good, and cultural traditions often follow products). Although the first impression is that the gold studs on its breast must be stars, they could also be divinatory patches since Durand (*ibid.*)'s paper mostly quotes texts referring to the meanings of coloured feather patches on different parts of the bird, ranging from requests from the statue of the palace

¹⁶⁷ 'La Divination par les Oiseaux' *MARI* 8, 273-82

¹⁶⁸ He sees the Hittite use of birds in divination as an inheritance from Syria too, rather than an innately Indo-European approach. As time went on, the practice of dove-offering extended as far west as the temple sites of Lydia, the Cyclades and even mainland Greece.

Goddess itself to be adorned, redressed or her horns and hair replaced; to curses passed on from the ancestors; and in one or two cases a special patch could even confirm that a king's dream was trustworthy. Several textssay certain patches on different areas of its body also confirmed the presence of Gods, especially Moon phases. Bird movements were used as omens in the Western divination tradition to *confirm* results initially taken by extispicy (the mainly Eastern tradition) or to validate vague visions scried in trances or dreams by the diviner.

In fact in the small amount of textual evidence we have, there is not as yet any mention of bird *sounds* being used as specific omens. Overall, this collection of texts from the archive of a diviner had no successors after Mari was annexed by Hammurabi (from which point the Babylonian specialty of liver extispicy took precedence) so 'Le peu de postérité de telles techniques par la suite s'explique au mieux s'il faut les tenir pour des parties adventices et étrangères que l'on a, par la suite, délaissées pour constituer et canoniser la tradition purement indigène', writes Durand. This is also true to some extent of oneiromancy, again initially more strongly favoured in West Syria, but coming to the fore through the second half of the First Millennium in Babylon (the Bible alone records many instances of prophetic dreams). Certainly in the second half of the Second Millennium the Hittites favoured many of the more unusual divinatory techniques (including the use of a water snake to mark good or bad lunar aspects), some indigenous and some passed on from Mesopotamia via the Anatolians or Hurrians. Kammenhuber (*ibid.*) mentions how the Hittites (as did the Greeks later) used bird omens in times of war, and particularly refers to the frequent recourse by the Hittites to the constellations Margidda and the Sibitti¹⁶⁹ as omens - usually seen as bad ones, so they seem not to have used them in oath-taking.

Returning to the splendid lapis lazuli pigeon, it is tempting see the pattern of gold studs on its breast as referring to a constellation - and to quite plausibly compare it with the cupmarked relief (below) found in recent excavations in the early 2M level of the temple at Tell Mohammed Diyab, north-east of Tell Brak. The largest cups seem to follow the outline of one or other of the Bears - underlining how the Sibitti, as explored in **Chapter 19**, on a purely astronomical level was so crucial to orientation and time calculation that it had always been an object of worship in its own right from Neolithic times.

Luc Bachelot¹⁷⁰ on the strength of an Old Assyrian cylinder seal found at the site thought that 'Mohammed Diyab fut probablement un gîte d'étape des commerçants assyriens se rendant en Cappadoce'. The slab was found in a side-room of the temple¹⁷¹, and Durand¹⁷² believes is a relic from the period of stone circles in Syria¹⁷³: 'Il n'est pas anodin de remarquer que les premières cupules découvertes au Levant et en Anatolie creusées dans le socle rocheux étaient associées à des pierres dressées' (also the case with European examples - one or two of these

¹⁶⁹ In chapter 19 we conclude that Margidda is Auriga, and the Sibitti Ursa Major or even Ursa Minor, where spotting the smaller Bear depends on first identifying Ursa Major, giving 14 stars in all (in Mithraism Ursa Minor is the esoteric 'double' of the clearly visible Dipper).

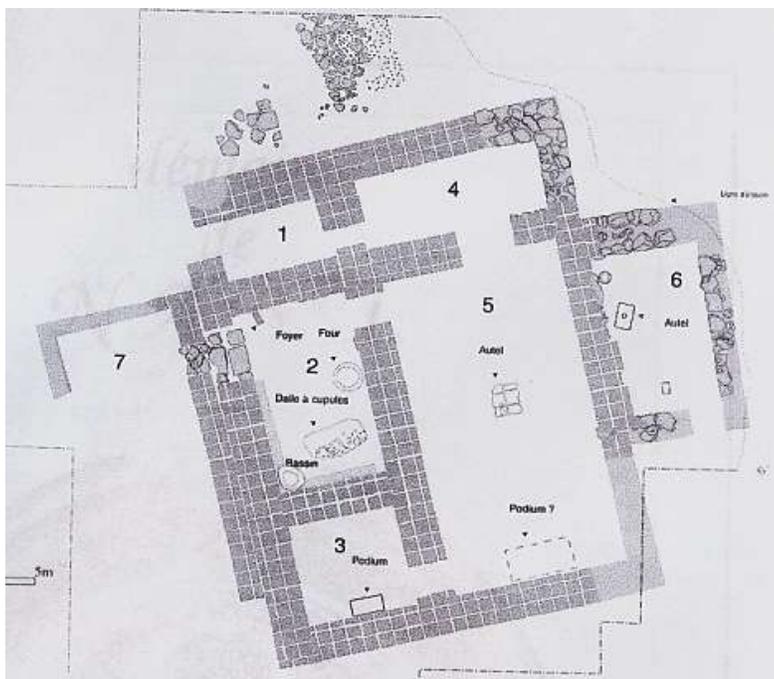
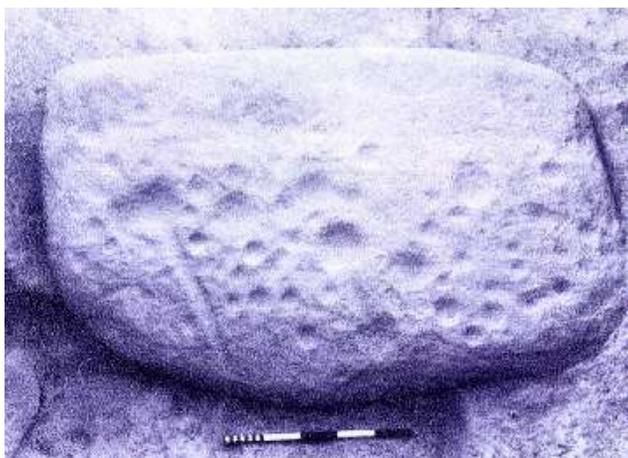
¹⁷⁰ In Recherches en Haute Mésopotamie: Tell Mhammed Diyad Campagnes 1990 et 1991 (Mémoires de NABU 2)

¹⁷¹ At this level is is not clear whether it was a temple to Ishtar or not: certainly at the later Mitanni level it definitely was a one-room temple to that Goddess surrounded by many outbuildings (Sauvage in **Mémoires de NABU 4**)

¹⁷² Le Culte des pierres et les monuments commémoratifs en Syrie amorrite (Florilegium marianum VIII) Paris 2005

¹⁷³ In his talk sponsored by the Palestine Exploration Fund on 12 January 2012 on the Archaeology of the Hejaz Railway at the time of T E Lawrence, David Thorpe of the Great Arab Revolt Project showed how frequently underneath recent layers they exposed what he called 'mini-megalithic sites' (mostly small stone circles, all the way North to South from Syria to the Gulf of Aqaba),

also seem to feature Ursa Major). When we come to describe the Festival of Ištar in full, we discover that the raising of the baetyl *in honor of Ištar* preceded the Festival proper in the *humṭūm* ceremony of stone-raising. Within the ritual proper we have record of a stone to Šamaš addressed as sublime hero, including the following lines: *O foundation of the vast sky! O Great Lord of all-encompassing Earth and Sky!* Baetyls were raised to other Gods too (the examples in the Old Testament describe stones raised to El).



III.7- 47 Slab with cup-marks found in room 2 of the Early Bronze Age Temple at Tell Mohammed Diyab

Durand sees the Mohammed Diyab slab as ‘un element de culte (table à libation?) ramené dans la ville et parfois intégré au temple comme le furent les bétyles’, pointing out that Emar texts mention that oil was poured over such stones saved from the past, before proceeding to make libations with other substances. He is not sure whether this slab played an active part in cult ritual in the temple, or whether it was simply kept as a touchstone for the ancient presence of the divinity in seamless continuity from its Neolithic past. Taking into account this feature of the North Syrian cultural background, it is not surprising to find that oaths could not only be sworn by the Sibitti, but also by standing stones (and there are attestations over the centuries - many in the Old Testament - for the use of stones as the reference point for oracles). We do not have a full enough perspective on Tell Mohammed Diyab yet to fully understand it, but it certainly fits into a continuing tradition of the association of baetyls with Astarte¹⁷⁴, as depicted on the 1M coins of Byblos, whose own Obelisk Temple

¹⁷⁴ P S Ronzevalle ‘Venus Lugens et Adonis Byblius’ *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* XV 1930 141-204, pls xxvi-xxxvi



Ill.7- 48 Coin of Byblos (British Museum Phoenician Coin Catalogue (Byblos 32) showing the baetyl of Astarte inside Her temple¹⁷⁵, and (right) the Obelisk Temple at Byblos showing the inner raised platform for the cone baetyl

peopled with many such baetyls (above) still survives, tying in with the tradition of the Goddess as aniconic stone described in Lucian's classical text, *De Dea Syria*. At the Goddess's temple city of Hierapolis doves in particular are described as dedicated to Atargatis. Although from the First Millennium, this evidence serves to bear out the continuity of a long-standing tradition inherited from the previous millennia.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TRADITIONAL GODS ON EARLY 2M SEALS

The Gods were credited with deciding the outcome of wars between territories and in this light, when it comes to treaties made before the Gods in their aftermath Lafont talks of the 'sacralisation of international relations'. Having already brought in the theme of the divine world's place in 2M daily administration, given the realm of the Gods lies beyond the peaks of Winter's pyramidal diagram (*Ill.7- 28*) we must move on to other yardsticks for assessing their role in iconography. Just as kings demanded their vassals renew fealty to them annually at the Feast of Ištar, so they in turn were meant to account for themselves to their Gods once a year (there is a well-known letter from Yasmah-Addu of Mari addressed to Nergal giving an account of his deeds in self-audit). Our main aim still being to make full sense of the Rear Attack in this material within our chronological focus, our last exercise with that in mind is to look more closely at the Gods of the Syrian pantheon at the start of the 2M, from which we will be able to draw up a second, *Content Sliderule* to assess the iconography of our Rear Attack seals as far as the Gods shown on them are concerned. Although these Gods (with Ištar of Ekallātum) continued to be important in the second half of the millennium, after the fall of Babylon to the Hittites and then the Kassites, changes in the balance of power in the region brought in new peoples with a different 'take' on their Gods which we will have to consider separately under the Chronological Focus for *Catalogue E* - but we will need to draw on later textual material to understand more fully here and there the representations of the Gods of the first half of the millennium.

¹⁷⁵ Conveniently illustrated in Herbert Strong's translation of *De Dea Syria (The Syrian Goddess)*, London 1913, fig. 6

The distinction between Gods and humans in Mesopotamian art is not always obvious since Gods were personified in human form as well as having animal *and* planetary symbols: we have found this to be true of the trading seals found at Kültepe, and others from all over North Syria immediately following the Ur III period. Jacobsen¹⁷⁶ summarises the problem of interpreting two parallel symbolic conventions by referring to Frankfort's excavation of a group of Early Dynastic Sumerian statues amongst which two stand out as larger versions of their smaller human counterparts - all found together in the same cache at Tell Asmar (Ešnunna). This pair (illustrated



Ill.7- 49 Statues of Abu and his consort with, right, detail on Abu base of addorsed goats between spreadwinged eagle (head broken away), compared beneath with the Abu/Imdugud lion-headed eagle on the vase of Entemena; the female statue had the remains of a small child fixed to her base (the stripes in this reproduction are from irregular ink feed)

here), he interprets as the divine couple Abu and his consort, since Abu has eagle, goat and vegetation symbols on his statue base more or less repeating the arrangement on the Entemena Vase dedicated to the God Ningirsu of the same period, while the female used to have a small child attached to her base (c.f. the woman and child in *Ratt-O* and on the seal in *Ill.7- 59*). Both figures hold small cups, and Jacobsen notes this as a deviation from Winter's rule that the norm is for Gods not to hold them. As we noted another exception in the 2M seal where Shamash holds one (*Ill.7- 35*) this probably means Winter's rule cannot be applied beyond the Ur III seals she was in fact making her case from.

For Jacobsen another sign of the male's divinity is his long hair let down all the way round, where for humans he says the convention was only to have the two front locks trailing (which like Winter's rule needs testing). We come back to Jakobsen's full analysis in more detail later, but here at the outset the pair serves to set the scene for the ever-present 2M theme of the male-female couple - whether divine, royal, or both - and their link to the

¹⁷⁶ T Jacobsen 'God or Worshipper' in (ed. Leonard) Kantor Festschrift 1989 125-30/pls 20-22

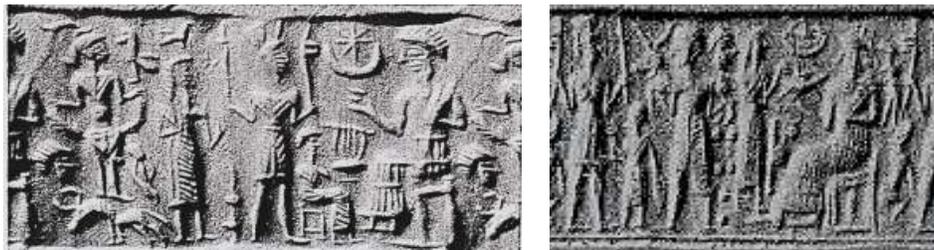
perennial myth of Tammuz and Inanna and the story of the Cycle of the Year marked by the couple's separations and unions under ever-changing names, whose high point in 2M Mari was celebrated at the Festival of Ištar.

In the next millennium, although the more violent aspects of their planetary behavior were included in their iconography, there is no doubt that the favourite Gods of the Levantine pantheon were these two benign¹⁷⁷ planets, Venus and Jupiter - viewed as the Divine Couple par excellence whose roles might at times be enacted by King and High Priestess. There is no doubt the divine and human forms of the Human Male-Female pair feature over and over again as a primary and even cosmic theme of Classic Syrian seals in the Second Millennium, to be understood against the drama of the ups and downs of the Cycle of the Year and all its implications for the running of major - and even minor - kingdoms. We should also remember that the depiction of the palm tree on such seals may refer just as much to the male palm as to the female (the latter is usually pointedly differentiated by date bunches). In both seals below, Baal's eagle wings are centred by Ištar's eight-petalled rosette in place of the bird's torso and placed over a generic sprouting palm.



Ill.7- 50 (Left) Williams-Forte' fig.20 (drawing and photo of Bibliothèque Nationale - BNCat 435; (right) ruler and goddess stand either side of palm with two shoots at its trunk whilst in the lower sub-scene Baal attacks Yam/Humbaba (indicated by the fishes) - from LADDERS TO HEAVEN catalogue (fig. 215), Royal Ontario Museum 1981

The canonical iconography of the dress and weaponry of the God Baal, usually shown in the company of Venus, is established in the earliest 2M designs in primitive renditions of the couple on two Cappadocian seals described by Porada¹⁷⁸, illustrated below. The idea has been put forward that Baal has one weapon for his combat with Yam, and the other to fight Mot. On the left, Baal with spiked and feathered headdress approaches Shamash,



Ill.7- 51 (Left) Baal holding lance and axe presenting to Shamash with two versions of Venus behind, and (right) Baal

¹⁷⁷ A term astrologers use to describe their mostly fortunate effects of love and good fortune.

¹⁷⁸ E Porada 'The Warrior with Plumed Helmet: A Study of Syro-Cappadocian Cylinder Seals and Bronze Figurines' *Berytus* VII 1942 57-63

as warrior and Venus as Sibitti face towards Shamash's throne - from Porada (ibid.) pl.viii 1 and 2

while behind him stand both a clothed Venus with lioness on her head *and* nude Venus on *his* bull, holding a pigeon. Intriguingly, on the right seal as Baal guards Shamash' throne a Syrian female attendant libates into the cup of the enthroned God with a personification of the Sibitti behind her in the form of a head over seven dots - which we have suggested above can often be read as a weapon of Venus, and an oblique reference to her. This is confirmed by an interesting seal cited by Opificius¹⁷⁹ showing Venus standing next to Sibitti and star:



Ill.7- 52 Sealing showing Baal before Venus clothed (with Sibitti and star) and unclothed (behind winged temple doorway on Bull) - Opificius pl.ii,III. 10

A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE 2M PANTHEON

In Nijhowne (*ibid.*)'s overview of Old Babylonian seals she bases her summary of the Gods shown on them not only on the standard books on the Sumerian Gods by Kramer, Jacobsen and Black & Green, but most tellingly on key papers by Prof. W Lambert¹⁸⁰ on the changes that took place in the Pantheon's hierarchy over this very period. From her typological analysis of the seals described above we were already able to note the standard portrayal of Shamash the Sun and Ištar/Venus (as Morning Warriress or Night-time Nude) as the most common, with a possibility that the smiting figure might also be a God (certainly he starts to appear on North Syrian seals more frequently and as the centuries move on he is given the identity of the Storm God, Baal/Reshef, though a blend with Nergal is not out of the question). However, we could also consider the possibility that at stellar level Orion with raised sword may lie behind the image of the Smiting God, so popular in the Levant throughout the 2M, which means Ištar (meaning Star) would also stand for Sirius, betraying a deeper level of Egyptianisation going on that corresponds to Osiris as Orion and Isis as Sirius at the head of Egyptian star lists. Both these constellations below the Ecliptic disappear for half of the year, so their reappearance between the Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox also has the flavour of a return from the Underworld. We have already seen from our examples in this catalogue that - along with a second row of others given in our Table of Gods that we will now consider - they are still the most usual on Syrian or Anatolian seals developed out of Old Babylonian prototypes.

Nijhowne's analysis of the key Gods of the Old Babylonian period succinctly summarises Lambert's work, spelling out what is known of the 'family' relationship of the Gods to each other¹⁸¹ and how the 3M traditional gods of Sumer were superseded by their offspring during the Second Millennium. In the beginning, the main Gods were

¹⁷⁹ Ruth Opificius 'Syrische Glyptik der Zweiten Hälfte des Zweiten Jahrtausends' UF I 1969 95-110, 3 pls

¹⁸⁰ See especially W Lambert 'The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism' in G Goedicke and JJ Roberts (eds) *Unity and Diversity* Baltimore 1975, 191-200, and W Lambert 'Studies in Marduk' *BSOAS* xlvii 1-9

¹⁸¹ On the Gods of Mesopotamia in general she refers to S N Kramer *The Sumerians* (1963) and Thorkild Jacobsen *Towards the Image of Tammuz* (1970) and *The Treasures of Darkness* (1976).

divided into two triads: the first being what we might call the Elemental Parents, Anu, Enlil and Enki/Ea (along with Ninhursag/Mother Earth - the latter usually taken for granted in the background and manifesting through a plethora of minor local or city goddesses blendable either into the perennial image of Great Mother Ki/Kubaba or Venus/Ištar¹⁸², though usually Ištar is not portrayed with children - whilst the secondary triad is described in terms of the first triad's Sons or Daughters. Although the male gods might seem to predominate, in the text of the *Exaltation of Ištar* the Grand Trio of Anu, Enlil and Ea, on a tablet each, praise Ištar of Uruk in turn, reassuring her that her authority is on a par with theirs¹⁸³). This is mainly because, as Rochberg (*ibid.*) pointed out, it is Ištar who is in overall control since 'she holds the connecting link of all heaven and earth'.

THE PANTHEON OF THE SEVEN PLANETS

Since somewhere in this pantheon the Lion-Bull Attack has its place I thought the next step to go about accounting for the iconography of the Gods on our chosen seals would be to express in table form under the two triads the interrelationship of the Gods as so well summarised by Nijhowne, simply in terms of what they actually represent - the Seven Planets - followed by a commentary on their 2M portrayal in animal, human or aniconic form (mostly on seals). We see in the ordering of the rows, for instance, how the Moon is described as the Son of Anu (sometimes also of Enlil) with Sun and Venus in turn *his* offspring. In the same way, later in time Marduk of Babylon usurps Baal's position - as Baal had Enlil's - becoming national God during the reign of Hammurabi, in much the same way Amurru was the national God of the Amorites or Aššur the God of the Assyrians. He is described as the Son of Ea *and* of Utu - and has his own Son, Mercury.

Mark S Smith pointed out at a recent symposium¹⁸⁴ how, in the 2M in particular, the Gods were imagined as a divine political family modelled on current Amorite royal households (El's dwelling is described as a tent) and, like any human family, with its sibling rivalries and power struggles. Since El is the patriarch of the Family of the Gods (his consort being Athirat), naturally he favours his own children (of which there are at least 77 (or 88, amongst whom both Yam and Mot are favourites. As El is patriarch of the whole tribe he is in a general sense also Baal's father, though Baal is actually the son of Dagon and not a full family member. The children on the second level all have their own households, and in the myth Baal 'has arrived' when he secures his own palace. Smith posits two more levels in the Divine Family -servants of the higher Gods such as Kothar/Hephaistos, the Artificer God, phenomena such as rivers and mountains, and a host of messengers.

We have already seen how some early 2M seals still show adherence to the archaic 3M Sumerian pantheon¹⁸⁵ and rituals - as at Mari¹⁸⁶, for instance - while in the Anatolian and North Syrian sphere the Gods were renamed, updated and adapted to local cosmologies, which is why it is important to insert their Levantine equivalents in

¹⁸² This thumbnail account is given in a long footnote (no.4) by F Thureau-Dangin, following up the work of Stephen Langdon, in his 'Tablettes hurrïtes provenant de Mari' RA XXXVI p.11 describing how in the sequence of tablets brought together from different museums 'Ištar était donc, au cours du poème, successivement exaltée par les trios grands dieux Anu, Enlil et Ea'.

¹⁸³ 'Tablettes hurrïtes provenant de Māri' RA XXXVI p.11/fn.4

¹⁸⁴ 'Astral Religion and the Representation of Divinity: the Cases of Ugrit and Judah' in Scott Noegel et al. (eds) *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* Philadelphia 2003, 187-206

¹⁸⁵ See especially Jeremy Black & Anthony Green: *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* London 1992

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

GOD	PLANET/ SYMBOLIC ANIMAL/ HUMAN	GOD	PLANET/ SYMBOLIC ANIMAL/ HUMAN	GOD	PLANET/ SYMBOLIC ANIMAL/ HUMAN	GOD	PLANET/ SYMBOLIC ANIMAL/ HUMAN
ANU/ABU SKY FATHER OF THE GODS	SATURN GOAT BULL OLD MAN WITH A BEARD	ENLIL AIR/ ATMOS- PHERE	JUPITER BULL MATURE MAN IN THE PRIME OF LIFE	NINHURSAG KI COW WITH CALF EARTH MOUNTAIN AND CAVE - LATER BLENDED WITH VENUS	EARTH PLANT LIFE	ENKI/EA WATERS WISDOM BEARDED MAN WITH STREAMS NEPTUNE RULER OF PISCES	
LEVANTINE → EQUIVALENT	EL BULL	BAAL HADAD SON OF DAGAN	RAGING BULL/WILD STORM	ALLAT ← IŠTAR HUSBANDS ↓	ANAT ATHENA VIRGO	DAGAN/ YAM FISH, STREAMS OF WATER	
↓ SON	↓ SON	↓ SON	↑	MARS		SON ↓	
NANNAR FULL MOON	 BULL	↑ MARDUK HAS 50 NAMES, THE IGI/ WEEKS	← STATUE OF MARDUK BACK TO BABYLON C. 1200	← MARDUK USURPS BAAL	ENUMA ANU ELISH WRITTEN MARDUK THE HERO	← MARDUK/ AMURRU, SON OF EA, HEIR TO BAAL FIRST OF THE IGI	
SIN CRESCENT							
SON OF NANNAR ↓	↑	↑	→ DAUGHTER OF NANNAR	NUDE OR WARRIORESS	SON ↓		
UTU/SHAMASH FIRE, LIGHT	SUN/LION 	♂ BULL-CALF OF UTU [MARUTUK] ¹⁸⁷	INANNA/ IŠTAR 	VENUS DAUGHTER OF NANNAR SISTER OF UTU	NABU/MERCURY CIVILISATION 		
SON OF UTU ↓ NERGAL MARS (PLUTO)	=MOT →	NERGAL/MARS DEATH	LIFE LIONESS		ENTWINED SNAKES MONKEY, SHOE SCRIBAL BUREAUCRACY AND ORGANISATION		

Ill.7- 53 Table of the Planetary Gods as a three-generation Family- according to Nijhowne's summary of Lambert

¹⁸⁶ Durand Mari pantheon
¹⁸⁷ W Lambert (ibid.) 1964, 3-13

the table, highlighting how, despite 'rebranding' over the generations, changes of name do not alter the central nature of the two triads of male gods as planetary in nature - the seventh planet being Venus under her many Names. In essence Mesopotamian and Syrian cosmology's foundation lay in 'The Seven Gods who decide the Destiny [of the kingdom]' which probably refers to the interpretation of the Seven Planets' positions in the Horoscope of the Land taken at the New Year, from which in turn other divination rituals branched. For this, the distinctive Seven-Star Group of the Sibitti served as the starting point from which to locate the placings of all the other constellations against which the planets move like sheep against the starry background - as extensively demonstrated in *Chapter 19* and already pointed out in relation to *Ill.7- 35*.

It is worth spending time perusing this table, which I have tried to make as clear as possible through formatting and colour contrasts to highlight in graphic terms the simple family relationships between the Gods which in themselves deepen our understanding seal iconography. I have given both the original and modern planetary names for the Gods - along with mention of the human or animal symbols associated with them¹⁸⁸, often still current today and not difficult to identify¹⁸⁹. Just in this period we have the interesting overlap characterised by Jacobsen (*ibid.*) of animal and human types used to portray the essential character of each God - from which in later periods (for example in Seleucid times) it was possible to draw up complex tables of other symbolic correspondences¹⁹⁰ still used today (Sun:Gold:Lion is an obvious one). Jacobsen did not include the aniconic symbols for the planets and stars as a third competing visual repertoire, probably because not relevant to the statues of Abu and his consort that are the subject of his paper.

Since The Bull and The Cow originally stood for the entire sky (see *Chapter 19*) any planet sailing through it in human form acquired a horned headdress, and it is often only their *human* variation that helps us differentiate between the types of bull and cow symbolism confusingly used for several Gods in Mesopotamia and the Levant - as in the case of El and Baal (*Ill.7- 59*) where El is a grandfather figure in contrast to the younger Baal, more the mature father/warrior figure. But other animals do also serve to differentiate the Gods from each other: thus the devouring, maned lion often appropriately represent the Sun, the Ecliptic and the idea of devouring Time, and it is easy to understand why his sister Venus is be represented by the lioness since in real life the female does the hunting, and not the male. It fits her lioness persona that she can be depicted both as warrior and as mother since the lioness's protective nature with her cubs is equally emphasised as a central Venus power.

In summary, we must n lose sight of the Babylonian belief that the Planets *are* the Gods, and must assume all Seven main divinities will be represented on artefacts. In our table we have simply relied on the unbroken tradition of astronomy and astrology inherited by the West (derived from Mesopotamia itself) by simply making the obvious matches of planets to named Gods. Most readers may be more familiar with the Greek or Roman

¹⁸⁸ To avoid cluttering up the table I leave out aniconic symbols, some of which coincide with current astrological signs anyway (e.g. Venus).

¹⁸⁹ For instance, the concept of the clothed and unclothed Venus, where unclothed she represents Urania, the Sky, and clothed her Earthly manifestation, is a subject used in Renaissance painting by artists such as Titian.

¹⁹⁰ Explained in Book 7A on www.cosmokrator.com

panthea closer to us in time and still referred to today, but between civilisations usually only the language for their names changes, and it is simply a matter of collating them. Myths transfer from one civilisation to another with just such name-changes, there is already a great deal of awareness of these equivalences. This is not to say that planetary qualities were not characterised slightly differently over time and either blended or further subdivided - as continues in modern times. For example, the God Nergal appears to combine the characteristics of both Mars and Pluto, now seen as two quite separate planetary identities. Use of current further subdivision helps to explain the nature of an older God or Goddess where contradictory characteristics are still fused. I make no excuse for also including in the table the traditional sigils for the Signs and Planets which may not be familiar to archaeologists. Given their Babylonian origins, scholars of the ancient near east really need to accord full status to naked-eye astronomy and the astrological tradition built on its foundations, learn its languages and use the current developed tradition to help decode its own beginnings - so as to read Mesopotamian imagery on its own terms. By synthesising our knowledge of the Gods in this way, I hope overall to show that the God Table is useful for making more sense of the North Syrian seals under this chapter's particular scrutiny.

The table shows how the Elemental Triad (because so often given the iconography of Space/Sky, Air/Atmosphere, Water and Earth) is represented by the senior, outer Planets/Gods - Saturn, Jupiter and Neptune¹⁹¹ (in Levantine terms El, Baal and Dagan (later, Yam) - those outer planets influencing weighty matters of State. Ki/Earth is always taken for granted as the background female potency, yet also the focal point of all the male planets' emanations - whilst their children and grandchildren are the inner planets (including even the Sun) which have more of a bearing on everyday life. Referring to the table, clearly in some cases these offspring are siblings (the Sun and Venus are brother and sister) who in turn have their own children. The Sun's father is the Moon, while *his* son is Mars. The newest arrival, Mercury, is made the son of upstart Marduk (described as Son of Ea/Yam, in Babylonian times in Mesopotamia itself superseding Enlil and described as the Son of Ea/Yam.

THE GODS OF GOVERNMENT

According to Lafont there were three main 'political Gods' whose presence was sought in oracular situations and invoked at oath ceremonies (Hadad/Baal of Iamhad, Dagan/Tišpak of Terqa and Shamash of Sippar, Larsa and Andariq). For understanding priorities in political choice of Gods at this time, we take as starting point Winter (*ibid.*'s) mention of a discussion with Piotr Steinkeller where (in reference to Keinast) they come to the interesting conclusion that the attempt by the Akkadians to become super-kings (*Dingir-Lugals*) and establish hegemony over surrounding territories was not fully successful because they had claimed overlordship under the aegis of their *local* goddess, Ištar of Agade. The success of the Ur III Kings, on the other hand, resided not simply in adding a divine component to their name, but in their choice of a more universally acceptable God - Enlil of Nippur - described as 'God of the Lands', who features at the very top of our table. With the situation in North Syria following on from the Ur III period where a larger number of petty kingdoms fell into line under kings

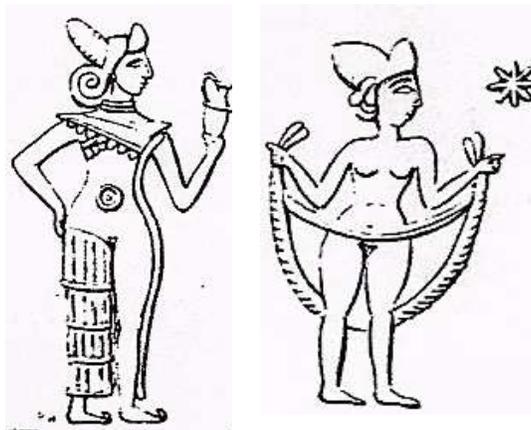
¹⁹¹ Neptune and Pluto cannot be included in the classic Seven Planets, unless the Sun and Moon are set aside as the Luminaries. But there seems to have been awareness of their distinct energies whose characteristics were spliced in to El on the one hand, or Mars on the other.

claiming overlordship, it appears to be the older-generation Gods in Levantine form that feature most on the seals, since universally acceptable - Anu, Ea or Enlil/Baal, Ištar and Shamash -separately, or together. From this overall assessment it then becomes clear that although the entire Pantheon may appear on seals in some special cases, as it does in the second half of the Millennium in *Ratt-23* and *Ratt-24* (analysed under the section for that period's material shortly), usually it is just one, two, or possibly even three of the politically favoured Gods - usually the benign Planets Sun, Moon, Jupiter, Venus - and sometimes certain Stars, that sufficiently convey the weight of divine authority appealed to for success in covenants undertaken and witnessed by sealings on the documents with perhaps its clerical aspect underlined by the presence of the Monkey, Mercury. Nijhowne already noted that Shamash and Ištar are the most popular Gods on Old Babylonian seals - and we see they are just as popular on North Syrian seals adopting the Old Babylonian template (the Sun is also often confirmed in sigil form as the Cross in the Sun-Disc (for the four seasons) nestling inside the Crescent to form the neomenia, whose full significance for the Ištar Festival we come to explain in due course).

By expecting to see all the Planets on the seals (even Mercury, rarely visible but whose nature was by now understood giving rise to a surge of Nabu temples in the Second Millennium) we can by a process of elimination account for the key Gods immediately recognisable on seals in planetary or stellar terms - most notably for this study Ištar/Venus, El/Saturn, and Baal/Jupiter.

IŠTAR - VENUS

Every aspect of Ištar's variable imagery can be explained from the best-known myth about Inanna/Ištar's Journey to the Underworld, since she traverses the realms of Heaven, Earth *and* the Underworld, ultimately conquering the drought and infertility on Earth caused by the absence of Tammuz (sometimes accompanied by his sister Geštinanna) as the Year runs through its seasons. In the Sumerian version of the story, Inanna makes the journey beneath the Earth (underneath the mountain, as it were) to bring Tammuz back to the world of Nature, which she succeeds in doing after three days hanging on a meat-hook like a dead carcass in the dark and dusty kingdom of Death - precisely the duration of the Neomenia. The story describes how she gradually



Ill.7- 54 Details from Syrian seals depicting Venus as reminder of the Journey to the Unverworld (Barrelet fig. 13b/d)

abandons successive items of apparel as she descends to her sister Ereshkigal's kingdom, regaining them as she returns through each of its Seven Gates. Thus the figure of Venus part dressed, part undressed on North Syrian seals is not a seductive strip-tease (a projection of our 21C mentality), but a succinct way of summing up the story in one figure, as also is the varied emphasis given on other artefacts to items of her parure, jewellery or dress - all symbols of stages in Inanna's journey. Versions of Ishtar holding a pair of goats or entwined with snakes, popular later in the millennium in Canaan are simply cross-references to Tammūz the Goat, and the realm of the Underworld beneath Earth where snakes have their holes and trees are rooted. On seals, we will soon see how the snake is commonly held up by her consort, Baal, whose varied iconography, once read in the context of the Journey to the Underworld, is completely straightforward when we deal with him as the successor to Tammuz, though his own particular encounters (detailed separately below) are quite specifically described in other texts and cross-referenced back to Venus as we would expect, the reverse aspect of the same story.

When shown with wings, or depicted in association with stars, Ištar is being flagged up as her heavenly persona (*Venus Urania*) which in astronomical reality she traverses as a planet, sometimes eclipsed or absent from view for several weeks as she travels behind the Sun. The hymns to, and stories of, Ishtar/Inanna describe how (as also happens on Baal's return) life returns to Earth when she comes back into view from the Darkness fully dressed and adorned, at which point animals begin to mate again and their offspring are born: in this phase she is indeed Goddess of Fertility, but read in the context of the whole story, this is only one of her facets since it is her entire eight Earth-year cycle that gives her such status, and the complete myth has to be kept in mind to explain the wide spectrum of Venus iconography, depending on which part of it we are meant to be reminded of - all of it rooted in the actual astronomical behaviour of this planet and its effect on Earth (*Chapter 19* describes the Venus Cycles in full, making the factual reality behind the myth quite self-evident).

In Levantine mode Venus has two consorts --Baal/Jupiter or Mars/Reshef, on 2M seals often merged - and in some cases where space is limited, Venus alone can even be taken as blending male and female together in one figure¹⁹². The exchange of gender between the two is borne out in an unusual Mari ritual hymn to Ištar in the Louvre dating to the early 2M described by Groneberg¹⁹³ where after circumambulating Her statue and taking her in procession to the door of the temple, her symbol is raised up before the public (usually a necklace). Venus is given the role in this ritual of deciding the future, specifically in relation to the Sibitti 'mit denen Ištar immer wieder assoziiert wird'. Within the temple there is an inner rite during which at the command of the king the males dress in the females' clothes and the females in the men's, wailing for Tammuz as Ištar would, as the dais of her throne is smeared with blood, possibly that of the participants themselves¹⁹⁴. Participants bear Baal-type weapons while emotional music is played on a variety of instruments to set the scene for the culmination of the

¹⁹² R D Barnett in 'Anath, Baal and Pasargadae' *Mélanges de l'Université de Saint-Joseph* XLV1969, 407-22 (with plates) was already aware from Ugaritic sculptures of Anat's appropriation, not only of Baal's weapons but also of the headgear of male Egyptian Gods and Pharaohs.

¹⁹³ B Groneberge 'Ein Ritual an Ištar' *M.A.R.I.* 8 1997 291-303

¹⁹⁴ These rituals are still practiced in the Shi'ite mourning and self-flagellation processions for the Martyr Hussein in the same region, and were carried over into Spain by the same peoples, then copied with similar behaviour in Easter rituals lamenting the crucifixion of Christ.

ceremony in shamanic utterances and other procedures to divine the future. But Ištar is treated as the Goddess in overall charge, even though it is Baal-type weapons that are involved. In the latter regard Groneberg cross-refers (p.292) to a related Assyrian text¹⁹⁵ that begins:

*Das geöffnete Schwert
Die scharfe Axt, Kennzeichen der [Sebettu?] Götter
Rechts und links ist aneinandergereiht der Kampf
Die hervorragendste der Götter, deren Spiel die Schlacht ist
Die den 'Sieben Genossen' vorangeht
Die kenntnisreichen Sänger knien vor ihr.*

However characterised, overall it is the two benign planets Venus and Jupiter, who were taken as the common 2M representatives of the cosmic Divine Couple, often interchangeable with each other, and an updated reiteration for North Syria of Abu-Ninhursag or Tammūz-Ištar and were as commonly turned to as Shamash. Let us test on two new seals our analysis of the Gods so far, before going on to look at El and Baal in more detail.

APPLICATION OF THE GODS TABLE TO THE SEALS OF ZAGANITA AND ADDA

When it comes to anthropomorphic representations of the Gods on North Syrian seals and their prototypes, Ea/Yam is easy to spot from the streams of water with fish in them issuing from his shoulders as in the next two seals illustrated below (not surprising when we consider the importance of rivers and the sea to Levantine life) but he is often juxtaposed with Venus, Giver of Life, who often as general Goddess appropriates the Vase with flowing streams. Even before this period there are instances of fish being offered to Ištar¹⁹⁶ and we remember also that Atargatis, the *Dea Syria* of Hierapolis in the First Millennium, was a Fish Goddess (as Mermaid, hybrid of the two it was a way of representing the Virgo-Pisces axis). So for the Goddess to take over Ea's flowing steams looks like another instance of cross-association where, although local mountains and rivers were sometimes separately celebrated as Gods, possibly the explanation lies in the myth of *Inanna and Enki* (Ea) where it is recounted that Inanna steals the ME - the measures of the Universe - from Ea of Eridu, taking them to her temple city of Uruk, and refusing to return them. Moreover, In the myth of *Inanna and Ebih* we are told that



Ill.7- 55 Louvre AO 11569 (left) and British Museum ME 89115, belonging to scribes Zaganita (left) and Adda (right)

¹⁹⁵ Published in *State Archives of Assyria* III, no.4 by A Livingstone

¹⁹⁶ Barrelet (*ibid.*) in footnote 2 of her p.256 enumerates the better-known instances.

she sets out to conquer Kur, the mountain God. Barrelet (*ibid.*) shows how the iconography of the story on the well-known seal of Adda in the British Museum is mirrored more dramatically on a Louvre seal in that depicts the story quite literally (above left) since it shows Venus striding to the mountain top next to a fruiting date palm to celebrate her victory, forcing its genie to slink away to the right - as happens in a more understated way on the seal of Adda (when we consider the God Baal shortly, the snake he fights emerges from the mountain beneath his feet, so we can pretty certainly give it a precise identity). On both seals Ea is also depicted, on the second using his bull as a step-up, with his two-faced vizier Usmu/Isimud standing behind him. (Usmu's ultimate fate is shown in pictorial form on the Tyszkiewicz seal (*Ratt-23*) since as Enki's messenger in the story of *Innana and Enki* he unsuccessfully chases Inanna in a vain attempt to regain the stolen ME.)

THE BULL-GODS OF THE NORTH SYRIAN PANTHEON: SATURN/EL AND JUPITER /BAAL

Referring again to the Gods Table, already from amongst the Planets we can tick off as sufficiently identifiable and accounted for on our seals the straight-forward depictions of Nannar/Moon, Shamash/Sun, Venus/Ištar, Mercury and The Waters/Ea¹⁹⁷, leaving us free to work on finally making sense of two that remain to take centre stage at this time: El/Saturn, and Baal/Jupiter or his *alter egos*, Reshef-Nergal-Mot and Mars-Pluto. The latter figures are difficult to disentangle from each other at this embryonic stage of the Levantine invention of fresh imagery at a time when ways of putting forward the God under culturally differing identities were being experimented with, and possibly changes of emphasis can be put down to local preferences. But in ancient near-eastern art, the first problem is that nearly all male gods are initially identified with the Bull (not only El and Baal but Shamash, Nannar and even Ea). Several seals from Kültepe show processions of Gods on bulls (*Ratt-17*).



III.7- 56 Baal and El on Bulls followed by a hunter spearing a Rear Attack - KültepeCat-28 - (see under Ratt-17)

Elizabeth Williams-Forte¹⁹⁸ points out how Baal usually appears on such native Anatolian seals as the junior God in procession behind El or Ea, well expressing the ranking given in the first row of our Gods Table. On other Cappadocian seals showing just one male God on a Bull, the ones showing Baal, as she points out in her important paper, associate him either with a palm tree (*a* below) or more specifically with a palm frond running

¹⁹⁷ As already noted, Earth and Neptune are not counted as members of the canonical sequence of the Seven *Planets*, though unofficially both are in the Pantheon. They are more to be understood by their elemental nature of earth and water, as specified on our Gods Table. By the end of *Catalogue E* we will have seen from seals of the second half of the millennium the necessity of accounting more fully for the Gods Kothar/Vulcan and Reshef/Pluto, whilst Pan, God of the Animal Kingdom, must of course already be embodied in Tammuz the Goat.

¹⁹⁸ 'The Snake and the Tree in the Iconography and texts of Syria during the Bronze Age' in L Gorelick et al. (eds) *Ancient Seals and the Bible* Malibu 1983

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

against the head of a snake (*b/c* below) both held in one hand as Ištar undressing displays before him. On seals made closer to the south-westerly mountainous Levantine context, the cedar or juniper seems to replace the



Ill.7- 57 Anatolian seals cited by Williams-Forte (her figs 3/1/2), the first two from N.Ozguç' seal catalogues and the third (c) from a British Museum Cappadocian tablet. Her fig. 7, a seal from Florence, shows the conifer alternative

palm (*d*) in a similar allusion to the evergreen tree sprouting into life. For our particular 2M focus of interest, there is no doubt that in the Levant both Saturn and Jupiter were commonly worshipped as bulls well into the First Millennium (Biblical and Ugaritic scholars write long papers trying to distinguish between them - the main difference being that Baal is mostly characterised as a calf, and his father, El, the mature Bull. Within our restricted remit, let us look at confirming visual evidence to add to the pot.

EARLY 2M ATTRIBUTES OF GRANDFATHER EL - SATURN

Looking at the top triad in our Gods Table, by long-standing tradition Anu, the most venerable Sky God of them all, is in the Levant equated to Abu/El/Him/The One (later God the Father) - in human terms portrayed as a grandfather with a long beard. In animal terms he is the hefty Aurochs Bull of Saturn's 30-year precessional cycle through the entire zodiac (the longest cycle of the seven traditional planets). Hittite myth tells us Saturn



Ill.7- 58 Saturn, Ruler of Capricorn, by long-standing near eastern tradition still shown as a skinny, sunburnt old man with white beard carrying a mountain pick - from the Moleiro Editore facsimile edition of THE BOOK OF AUGURS

usurped his father Uranus (a story later preserved in Hesiod) so it is not unrealistic to read the fatherhood of Uranus as still inherent in Saturn/El. By long tradition Saturn rules Capricorn and the Capricorn-Cancer Solstitial Axis whose animal is the Goat (which has a natural beard in contrast to the false beard often affixed to bulls in Sumerian art). We come back here to the early 3M statue of Abu/El from Tell Asmar/Ešnunna (Mari's closest good neighbour) identified by Jacobsen (*Ill.7- 49*) from the heraldic pair of goats/ibex on the base with sprouting vegetation either side¹⁹⁹. In a period when Saturn was the furthest planet visible, he was also taken as the tangible embodiment of the vast Sky itself as field of Time: even today heavy-weight Saturn lies behind Old Man Father Time with his scythe and is even, if unconsciously, grafted onto Father Christmas. The 17C Turkish miniature²⁰⁰ above depicting Saturn riding on the Goat of Capricorn retains the ancient near-eastern conventions with added touches (note the pick or short scythe in his hand and compare it with that held by El in *Ill.7- 56*, one of the *Ratt-17* seals). In Old Testament accounts of the time of Moses, El is most often worshipped as a Bull, but El's built-in Uranian heritage has connotations of comparative invisibility (Anu, like Amun in Egypt, is beyond manifestation) and the Jewish form of El, Yaweh, is similarly treated as invisible with inexpressible Name, not to be worshipped as a 'graven image'. But in the earliest 2M Levantine context overall, El in human form is differentiated on artefacts as a grand-patriarchal God (very much the prototype for Christianity's Old Testament visualisation of God wearing a long beard) as on the seal below. Why it is the Gods who approach this ruler or high merchant only makes sense if they are assembled around him to assign him authority, or in a protective



Ill.7- 59 El with long beard followed by Baal as accreditors of the peak-capped ruler - Teissier 1993, Seal 11 inscription

Capacity). El steps forward with another God (no bulls in sight) towards the peak-capped ruler seated on a stool, preceded by a diminutive attendant or child. Standing behind the peak-capped ruler is the group of child on pedestal with mother holding a cup (seen on related seals under *Ratt-00*). Bearing in mind Jacobsen's identification of the large female statue of Tell Asmar/Ešnunna as Abu's consort Ninḫursag due to the child carved on its base (*Ill.7- 49* right), we could identify her as El's consort Antum/Ki here backing up the ruler.

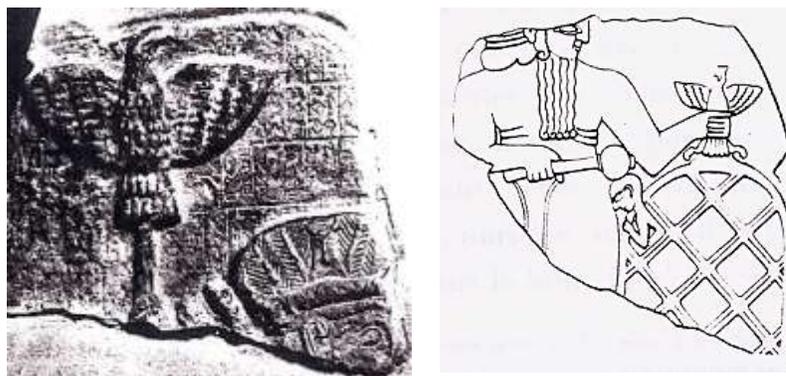
¹⁹⁹ We have used the best visible rendition in Jacobsen's original paper despite their low resolution (unfortunately the striping on their robes has arisen from the distortions scanning from bad reproductions sometimes leads to - they are not there on the original.

²⁰⁰ One of the many miniatures in the *Book of Happiness* on astrology and portents commissioned in the 17C by the Ottoman Caliph Murad III, brought to France from Cairo by Napoleon and now in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris under the French title, *Le Livre des Augurs*.

EARLY 2M ATTRIBUTES OF FATHER BAAL-JUPITER

In texts named ^{dingir}U or ^{dingir}IM, in terms of seniority and planetary lineage Baal as Jupiter is an outer planet like El the Bull as Saturn, yet he is also described as the son of Dagan/Ea - hence in the Bible his animal is the Golden *Calf*. Evidently in Elemental terms, as the equivalent of Enlil he represents everything that happens in Air - the immediate atmosphere around Earth in terms of weather - but we will take as read his dimensions as Weather God, Storm God or even Earthquake God²⁰¹ concentrating more on his astronomical character as a planet, and central role in myth as avatar of Tammūz. Jupiter takes 12 years to precess round the zodiac, spending a year in each Sign, a key factor, I believe, in the changeover to the twelve-fold division of the zodiac which during the 2M started to supersede the Venusian eight-fold division of the sky (analysed in **Chapter 19**) that had endured for centuries. As we see from our Table of Gods there was a side-development under Hammurabi where Baal was ‘rebranded’ as Marduk²⁰², described as the ‘Bull-calf of *Utu/Shamash*²⁰³, and set up as Babylon’s City God, hero of the revamped myth *Enuma Elish*²⁰⁴ that describes his struggle with the monster Tiamat upon which on Babylonian artefacts he is shown standing, Hittite style. We show below that this new animal attribute was first stood upon by Baal (*Ill.7- 70*), showing both are one and the same God as Enlil: but outside Babylon, Baal’s role as the principal god of the Levant continued to flourish independently.

Where in the 3M Abu/El’s varied manifestations such as Ninurta/Ningirsu/Imdugud were central to seal and sculpture iconography, in the 2M he is represented in his own right less frequently. As planet Saturn myth tells El usurped Uranus²⁰⁵ position as head of the Gods - and In turn his beardless son Enlil/Baal/Jupiter, visualised as a



Ill.7- 60 Details from the 3M Stela of the Vultures (the hero’s headdress reveals a tiny bull face with crescent between the feathers: on the right bearded Ningirsu himself with eagle in hand clutches a net holding captive enemies

²⁰¹ A plausible addition to Baal’s repertoire by R Dussaud presented in *Prélydiens, Hitties et Achéens* (Paris 1953) in which he imaginatively accounts for Baal’s dramatic identity in terms of an Anatolian backdrop still today regularly riven by earthquakes.

²⁰² See Lambert (*ibid.*)

²⁰³ Some Mesopotamian astronomical texts equate Saturn and the Sun with each other.

²⁰⁴ In ‘The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year: the Conflict in the Akītu House’ *Iraq* XXV 1969, 189-90, W Lambert gives the evidence for this conflict being imagined as taking place in the Akītu House, whether on the part of Aššur, Marduk or Bel/Baal (mentioned as “seated in the middle of the Sea/Tiamat in the Akītu”). There is evidence for a specially-built Akītu House - deemed to be positioned over the passage to the Underworld - going back to 4M Uruk itself (see K Szarzynska ‘Some Remarks on the So-Called “Steingebäude” in Archaic Uruk-Warka’ *Akkadica* XXIII May-Aug 1981, 45-9.

²⁰⁵ Note the etymological link to Orion.

mature man in his prime, takes centre stage - holding in abbreviated form - as in the *Ratt-18* seals (*Ill.7- 61*) - some of his father's attributes to show his lineage, most notably the spread-eagle at the top of his wand (which on the 3M Stela of Eannatum or Abu statue-base (*Ill.7- 49*) is a symbol of Ningirsu)²⁰⁶. Jacobsen (*ibid.* p.129) neatly tracks the etymology of Baal's name IM to the central component of Imdugud, a word meaning 'thundercloud' and also shows how Abu, Imdugud, Anzu, Ninurta and Ningirsu are all versions of the same God (note also the NIN component in two of the names, incorporating the Goddess into themselves). The eagle Anzu is described as having his home in the mountains to the east, hence the association with mountain fauna, especially wild goats (Jacobsen notes Ningirsu was served goat's milk daily in his temple at Girsu). Ningirsu's name is written ^{dingir}AB-U-MIN, and his wife in some texts described as Gula. It is fascinating that these etymologies seem to weave in to words for the Sibitti god, cropping up in the later Hittite Omen literature that Kammenhuber (*ibid.* pp.45-53) looks into. The main Akkadian word for the Sibitti is ^{dingir}IMIN.IMIN^{bi}, sometimes written as ^{dingir}7^{bi}, which is often mentioned next to MARGIDDA (in *Chapter 19* identified by us as Auriga the Chariot rather than the Great Bear) and given Baal is given seven thunderbolts he seems to be just as much embedded in the Sibitti as Ištar is. Probably transmitted to the Hittite world from the Babylonians by the Hurrians of Kizzuwatna, in omens the Sibitti are described as dedicated to Nergal - or listed between the Sun and Teshub, the Hittite equivalent of Baal (in the corresponding Hittite myth he fights Kumarbi and Ullikummi (human giants) instead of Tiamat). The line given by Kammenhuber (pp.50) runs as follows:

^{dingir}UTU-aš ^{dingir}IMIN.IMIN^{bi} ^{dingir}U-aš: the Sun; the Seven-God; Baal-Teshub

whilst another verse (with some words missing, discussed on her pp.53-4) does suggest the Sibitti are somehow inherent in the Weather God. Kammenhuber believes the ritual and the Gods mentioned 'gehören zu dem von diesem Sänger besungenen Götterkreis', referring here to the contentious issue of what the 'Singers of Kültepe' sang about. Looking back at the Ebla exorcism texts and how hailstorms and lightning are invoked as Baal's destructive weapons, so too, it appears, the Sibitti could be seen as a further potent weapon at his disposal, much like Perseus' scimitar in Mithraism. We have seen how Venus uses the Sibitti herself as a scimitar, and we have established that the couple swapped items of dress and weaponry to the point that it is hard to establish who the original owner was meant to be. Amongst the many implications of the Sibitti, we could simply note that the choice of the seventh day at the end of the Moon's first quarter to honour Nergal during the Feast of Ištar perhaps points to the most common meaning of the Sibitti as simply standing for the seven-day week, the linch-pin of the entire calendar formulated by the Sumerians and an enduring subdivision of time to this day.

We know from the records that there was a key temple to Baal/Adad in own city on the lamhad/Aleppo acropolis whence survives an XVIIIIC text describing his battle (as Tišpak) with the sea²⁰⁷, the key lines running thus:

²⁰⁶ Xianhua Wang *The Metamorphosis of Enlil in Early Mesopotamia* Münster 2011 discusses the etymology of Enlil, but stops short at the end of the Third Millennium

²⁰⁷ See J-M Durand 'Le Mythologème du Combat entre le Dieu de l'Orage et la Mer en Mésopotamie' *MARI* 7 1993 41-61 (he notes there is no Sumerian prototype for this myth in its literature, perhaps because they had no experience of a coast-line).

Father, whose task is to act as barrier against the sea-waves, furious warrior, attack!
Tišpak, Father, whose task is to act as barrier against the sea-waves, God, King of the Gods!

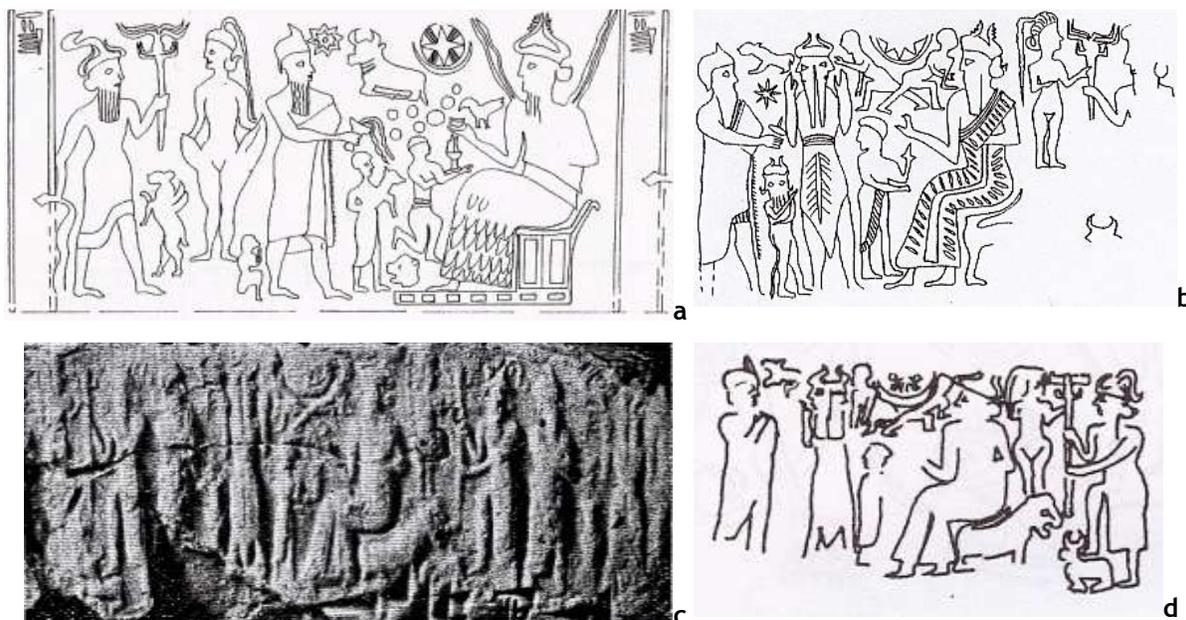
and taken by Durand to point to a coastal origin for the Amorites along the Levantine seaboard (*māt tamti*). Its later inclusion in the Babylonian epic of *Enūma Elīsh*, recited in full at the New Year celebrations now names the hero as Marduk, city God of Babylon, who fights the sea-monster *ti-amtum* (the word for Sea) represented by a fishy serpent with horns. In the second half of the millennium the sea in Ugaritic texts is named as the God Yam.

There is a strong likelihood the peak-capped ruler seals - which combine Anatolian with Mesopotamian iconographic traditions using fine Egyptian standards of workmanship - originate in this region in the same period. If we take the second seal of **Ratt-18** (Teissier's (*ibid.*) Seal 1 - reproduced again below top left for ease of reference) we see on the left Baal/Jupiter (atypically still bearded, like his father) facing Venus displaying to him, holding both the serpent of the Levantine tradition and El's eagle wings of the Mesopotamian with plant buds underneath. The couple appears again on on Teissier's Seal 2 (b/c/d) closely backing up Shamash on his throne, as again the peak-capped ruler²⁰⁸ pays his respects, this time preceded by Usmu, messenger of Ea (on a later seal (**Ratt-23**) possibly the double-faced person on the rack undergoing his final end). Teissier's drawing of the seal (b) is for some reason incomplete - possibly because her graphic artist did not refer to the repeat of the image on the left part of the actual rolling as shown in the Özguç' photograph - their no. 691 in the original 1949 Kültepe report (c). Williams-Forte's drawing (d) is therefore a welcome boon in bringing out a complete rendition of the visual information for Baal and Venus. Baal steps up on his bull holding just his winged and sprouting lance while next to him Venus actually stands on the lioness forming the throne of her brother Shamash. The positioning of the pair of wrestlers right beneath the sun in crescent underlines their role in representing the constant push and pull between Day and Night²⁰⁹ - we see later that wrestlers featured in the Festival of Ištar theatricals. In relation to this particular seal, and mentioning Jacobsen's observation²¹⁰ that there seems at this point in time to have been an equal balance in the battle between the use of two pictorial modes - animals and humans (so helpful to us for interpretation purposes) - Elizabeth Williams-Forte (*ibid.*) describes how it was in this precise period of 2000-1600 that the usual animal attribute of Baal/Enlil as a Bull (indeed the word is the same) on seals is placed *beneath* the God who now stands on it in anthropomorphic form. Though such parallel use of symbolic visual languages was already in play on the 3M statues of Abu and Ninḫursag, they are separate from each other, in the same way the 3M Louvre statue of Inanna from Susa depicts lions on her throne side panels and a rosette on the statue base (she does not stand on the lioness).

²⁰⁸ Proto-Hittite Indo-Europeans appeared in Anatolia at first more or less bypassing Semitic Mesopotamia, perhaps because this region (what we now characterise as Turkish Kurdistan) was directly accessible to Central Asia and India (the peaked cap worn by the high merchant on our seals is a type of cap still used by dignitaries in Rajasthan, India, today). We have flagged up how a millennium later the *Cyropaedia* places Cyrus in that territory (then occupied by the Medes) when meeting up with allies travelling up from India. Today we have an Iran-related Hizbollah population in Lebanon infiltrating by the Central Asian route without the need to negotiate the Arab world at all.

²⁰⁹ Dumesnil

²¹⁰ 'God or Worshipper?' in Héléne Kantor *Festschrift* 1989, 125-30/pls 20-22



Ill.7- 61 The top left sealing (a) (Teissier 1993 Seal 1) shows Baal and Venus together, and again on Teissier's Seal 2 (b) - which Williams-Forte (1983) (d) transcribed more fully by following the full rolling of seal 691 from Özguç (1953) (c) - where the repetition of the couple on either side gives a double opportunity to decipher their attributes

Teissier's Seal 1 (top left above) is mentioned only in passing by Williams-Forte - with reference to Baal's snake - but she does not discuss the entire scene. Venus, wearing her cap with trailing nomenclature pulls at her clinging drapery as if her own skin, while Baal striding in next to her in bull horned helmet with plume - rather than the spike (c.f. Ill.7- 60 left) we would expect after reading Porada - holds a dangling snake in one hand and sprouting, winged branch in the other. The identity of the couple is confirmed by the eight-pointed star and crouching bull next to the quartered Sun of Shamash inside the Moon Crescent, the Dipper of the Sibitti floating beneath it. Below the heavenly bodies called to witness, two attendants, one with spouted pitcher, execute a libation ceremony for the peak-capped ruler - again a rite that first came to the fore at the start of the 2M in Anatolia according to Mellinck (*ibid.*), as already described above. On both seals It is hard to explain the long tress Venus and Baal sport from the centre of their head, which for Baal in this instance combines feather and spike - but for Venus is it hair, a meridian line, an animal tail (lion or bull), or a snake too? Realising the snake refers to the Underworld, we look further into its significance as an attribute of Baal's Underworld journey that alternates with that of Ištar (in myth they never go down together, since one seeks to retrieve the other: as one goes down, the other comes up, though there is more emphasis on Ištar seeking Baal than the other way round).

We will need later to explore more explicitly the full story of Baal's two battles with Mot in relation to other seals - suffice it here to remind ourselves that in the later Ugaritic version of the story, more authentically Amorite in character, Baal with the help of his sister Anat successfully overcomes Yam (none other than Tiamat). Having now attained the status of King, thanks to the help of the God Kothar/Hephaistos, he is now entitled to build a royal palace. A short, fragmentary text on both side of a small tablet (RS 24.245) describes on one side

the point after that battle at which Baal calmly sits enthroned on Mount-Saphon which in turn rests on the wide expanse of the Sea, as he holds his lightning-tree of seven bolts and surveys the purview of his rule over land, sea and sky. Reviving waters pour through the clouds into a vase, refreshing the Earth. This rare moment of stasis is but the prelude to the terrible events that follow soon after as the nemesis for his pride, during the three days of his Journey to the Underworld commemorated during the Festival of Ištar, which we itemise in due course. This text was separately translated and commented upon by Fisher and Knutson²¹¹, Lepinski²¹² - and by Pope²¹³. The latter is more interesting from the point of view of statuary, and I put it aside in favour of what the other two authors offer. Lepinski's is the most readable translation, Fisher and Lepinski's somewhat stilted. From the very fragmentary narrative that remains we learn how Baal's two horns shine brilliantly in the sky (much as Moses' horns are described when he comes down from Mt Sinai) - and one line has the remaining word, *Bull*. On the other side of the tablet his sister Anat, who aided him in his battle against Yam, washes her hands and re-adorns her breast with coral, taking up her lyre to sing of her love for the all-powerful Baal, her consort.

Lepinski does not favour Fisher and Lepinski's interpretation of the text as an enthronement ritual, appropriate for enactment by king and priestess at a supposed 2M enthronement ceremony possibly at the time of the Feast of Ištar - the time of the Year when Cosmic Order is reset and Nature proceeds to flourish once more. But as Durand (*ibid.*) puts it, 'L'ordre politique du monde dépend uniquement des rapports avec Addu d'Alep!', pointing out that in Syria, just as the building of a new palace in the myth was one hallmark of securing sovereignty, so in real life kings - whether Zimrilim or the later Assyrian kings - to secure their royal status performed a rite whereby they placed their sword or lance (as if the God's) in the Mediterranean waters in imitation of Baal's victory over Yam. As time moves on, in the palace correspondence we have a note of Baal's arms being sent to Zimrilim in acknowledgement of his rulership, obviating the need for him to travel to the coast to dip them in the water and enabling him to proceed with his anointment and coronation at Mari. In a well-known letter to the king, Sumu-ila writes that the arms of Adad of Aleppo had arrived, and were stored in the Temple of Baal's father Dagan, at Terqa. The king's naked body would be anointed (oiled all over as soldiers would be oiled in order to be able to fight, or wrestlers for mutual combat) and the coronation rite would proceed in this very temple, endowing the king with his aura (*namrīrrū* / 'supernatural, awe-inspiring luminosity') associated, Durand says, with the unique royal capacity to frighten and subdue the enemy like Baal himself.

Unfortunately as well as water, lightning and thunder coming through the clouds above his palace soon after its completion, through the same gap Baal enables the entry of Mot, God of Death, who enters on stage to afflict Earth with infertility. Mot's domain is described as underground between two mountains, his devouring mouth forming its entrance. Baal's two battles with Mot are far more serious than that with Yam and for a time he is even eaten by Mot and taken to the Underworld as dead, though on the lines of the original Tammūz-Inanna

²¹¹ L R Fisher and F B Knutson 'An Enthronement Ritual at Ugarit' JNES XXVIII 157-67

²¹² E Lepinski 'Epiphanie de Baal-Haddu' UF III 1971 81-92

²¹³ M Pope et al. 'A Description of Baal' UF III 1971 117-130

story, ultimately he returns to the land of the living. To anticipate the end of the story, given that Baal's iconography embodies the entire story cycle in one image - having eventually prevailed over Mot too - we need to test Williams-Forte's conclusion that the snake he holds represents ultimate victory over that God.

BAAL'S SNAKE

In state government terms, Baal intervenes to aid royalty in its similar unceasing struggle to overcome the snake of Mot, bringing Cosmos to bear on Chaos. On the third of three seals published by Oztan²¹⁴ an interesting version of Baal with combined snake that turns into a wand sprouting at the top²¹⁵ (dating to c. 1750, below left) shows him standing before his father Ea, God of Waters enthroned on the Mountains of the East, which leaves his other hand free to hold a weapon. On the seal below right Baal - wearing a short kilt and spiked helmet fitted with horns pointing forward and trailing a lioness-tail down the nape of his neck - wields a mace in one hand and in the other a staff ending in a conifer sprout. (Fisher et al (*ibid.*) appropriately quote from Pritchard²¹⁶ the line. 'Baal smites thee with the cedar tree which is in his hand'). I believe this is an early version of the so-called 'Spade' of Marduk which is probably a misreading of the pointed top of a conifer shoot. Baal/Marduk may be associated with a journey to the centre of the Earth, but not particularly with digging it, as the implements the God holds are primarily martial or fertility-related in character. The sprouting staff is ambiguous enough in appearance to make one look closer to see whether the bristling leaves hold a snake at their core.



Ill.7- 62 (left) Baal before Ea enthroned - Oztan pl.94-3a, from *Kültepe*, and (right) Williams-Forte (*ibid.*) pl.II,4, from the *Seyrig Collection*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

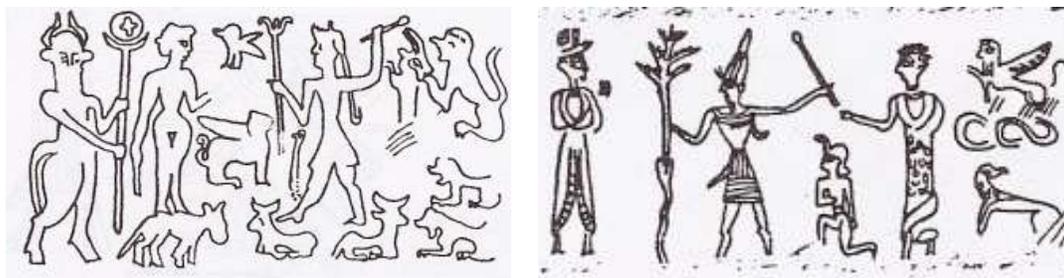
That this might be a valid thought is borne out by looking at next example (below left) where clearly the snake rears up separately against Baal's lower leg under his elbow, revealing the separate, sprouting wand to be quite short. We note how he stands on two mountains (represented by Bulls) matching descriptions of the serpent Mot's domain. Venus as usual displays before him, this time interestingly standing on a *donkey* (the association between the two crops up in evidence we have about the Festival of Ištar later). Her pigeon also ratifies her, whilst the griffin - its meaning still unclear but possibly (a third suggestion) representing the zodiac - faces Baal,

²¹⁴ A Oztan 'Three Seals in Syrian Style at Sadberk Hanim Museum in Istanbul' in *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and its Neighbors (Studies in Honor of Nimet Ozguc)* Ankara 1993 503-6, pl.91

²¹⁵ We are reminded of the Semitic root HYY/HWW, from which the words for snake (*Hayyat*) and Life (*Hayy*) (and Eve, *Hwā*) are derived.

²¹⁶ ANET p.249.

in the same way as it does on Teissier's Seal 1. They are flanked by a *lamassu* with Sun-Moon standard on one side, and a Rear Attack over a pair of lionesses on the other.

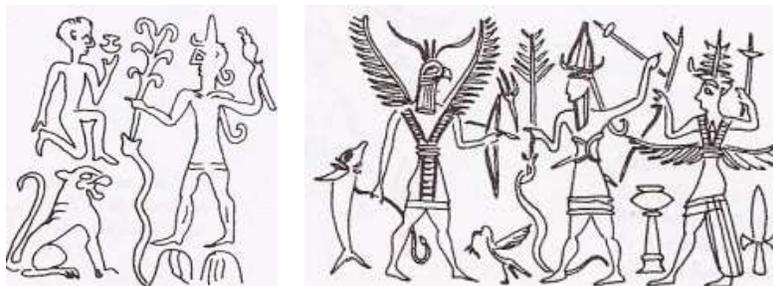


Ill.7- 63 Left, Williams-Forte's fig 6 (from Ozgüç Kültepe 1b SealCat) and (right) her fig 8 showing the sprouting wand rammed into the snake's mouth (drawing by Edith Porada from BM seal ME89514)

Thanks to Williams-Forte's dogged pursuit of the theme of Baal's snake (*ibid.*) she tracked down further seals showing the normalisation of the sprout-snake wand imagery (above right) - its components close to its rendition on Teissier's Seal 1 - where without any ambiguity Baal's sprouting wand is stuffed into the dead snake's mouth.

Thus it is on the seals of traders from NW Syria between 2000 and 1600 that we come across the earliest representations of the Levantine form of Enlil/Baal, later monumentalised in the well-known Baal stela from Ugarit on which, Pope (*ibid.*) suggests, the wavy lines at Baal's feet represent Yam. Seals from other localities later in time vary the character of Baal, whose facet as Reshef the Storm God, more akin to the violent nature of Mars, is accentuated, his warrior persona enhanced by lightning and hail, mentioned specifically as weapons that batter 'the serpents' in exorcism texts from Ebla²¹⁷ (one striking line given in Fronzaroli's paper runs 'May Haddad bring a glittering hail shower, wrapping it round him as his kilt!').

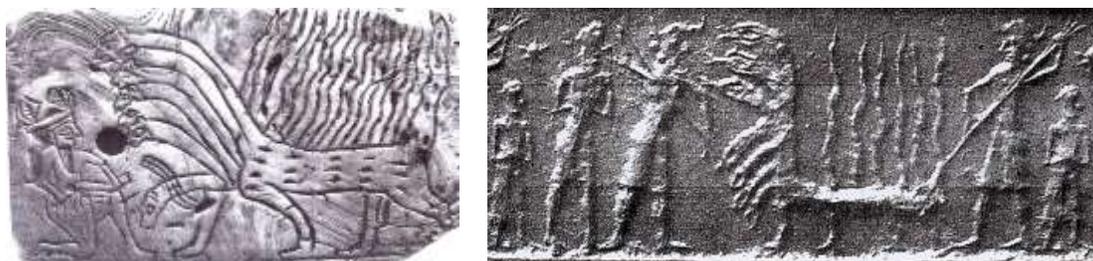
Relevant to the battle with the Snake is how on some seals Baal is more closely identified with the destructive powers of Nergal/Mars of the Underworld (the Mesopotamian God equating to Egypt's Seth, or Canaan's Horon), absorbing their nature within him as death-dealer himself, close to how we would characterise the Greek God of the Underworld, Pluto. Venus' consort in the guise of Nergal features on the seventh day of the Mari Festival of



Ill.7- 64 Left, Williams-Forte's fig. 10 (drawing from a Seyrig Collection seal, Bibliothèque Nationale) and (right) her fig. 9 (drawing from Louvre seal A08918 by David Castriota) showing Mot issuing from under Baal's feet, Anat behind.

²¹⁷ See P Fronzaroli 'Les combats de Hadda dans les textes d'Ebla' *MARI* 8 1997 283-90

lštar, as we will shortly describe in detail. It is from a further pair of seals that Williams-Forte was able to close the circle and fix the identity of the snake Baal holds as Mot, God of Death in Ugaritic texts, since in these it is not only shown under Baal's feet, but on one or two seals actually issues from the two mountains on which Baal stands. On the seal on the right, the dolphin may be Yam, now under control as Baal turns to his battle with Mot next, aided by Anat behind him. Although under the Babylonians Marduk takes over Baal/Enlil's role, killing the monster Tiamat in order to create Heaven and Earth, there is no doubt from the Ebla exorcism texts mentioned above that the story of a battle between Haddad and Tiamat originated in the lamhad area (Haddad/Baal's seven lances are described as combating seven serpents). A similar story was current even in 3M Mesopotamian texts describing an unnamed hero (see below left how his headdress resembles Baal's on Teissier's Seal 1) battling a seven-headed monster:



Ill.7- 65 (Left) 3M shell plaque (Sumerian, ED III period) engraved with a scene showing the seven-headed monster conquered by the divine hero later to be known as Baal/Marduk - fig. 4, LADDERS TO HEAVEN catalogue, Royal Ontario Museum 1981: compare (right) with the Akkadian seal from Tell Asmar (Frankfort SCSCat no. 478)

Thus as well as bringing in items from their own local traditions some of the motifs from the source Mesopotamian traditions were elaborated upon or new ways of showing them invented, giving them that Syrian 'look' which makes them so distinctive. On Old Babylonian artefacts Marduk stands on a snake now looking more



Ill.7- 66 Baal standing on the snake - Williams-Forte pl.1,3, Seyrig Collection, Bibliothèque Nationale

like a lizard (for the Neo-Babylonians it becomes the *Sirrush*, a composite zodiac animal) - but Amorite seals such as the one above with Baal standing on an ordinary snake, the mountains left out, were the prototypes. It is worth mentioning here in an aside about the way Venus seems to hold a rope in this seal that she has been described as 'the Goddess who holds the connecting link of all heaven and earth' - a title originally associated with Tiamat, according to Francesca Rochberg who looked into the significance of 'the bonds connecting Heaven and Earth' which are put in place after Marduk has split Tiamat in two:

The cosmic bonds, imagined as ropes or cables, therefore tied down and controlled particularly the flow of waters (in the form of dew, rain, or clouds) from the heavens, and recall the image of the gates that locked in the waters of Tiamat. The cosmic cable was used as a linking device that could be held as a symbol of power in cosmological mythology. ...In a marvellous compounding of metaphors, the serretu, or lead-rope passed through the nose of an animal becomes synonymous with this cosmological feature because it too can be held by a deity as a symbol of control, or authority: "I [Ištar] am in possession of the [symbols of] the divine offices; in my hands I hold the lead-rope of heaven, or "Marduk made firm and took into his hands the lead-rope of the Igigi and Anunnaki, the connecting link between heaven and earth""²¹⁸

(which gives a much deeper meaning for Gods standing on animals on leashes, as, for instance on the Anatolian seal of *Ratt-17*). It also helps us see that if Ištar is a late embodiment of Tiamat, and the one to hold the master-bond between Heaven and Earth, then she is still in control.

To sum up, Williams-Forte's idea that the snake Baal overcomes is Mot, rather than Yam (as others have suggested) is borne out by its links to the mountain(s) on which Baal stands, and from which it emerges, pointing to Baal's own journey to the Underworld and his particular battle to overcome Death, much as Gilgamesh's enemy turns out to be the snake that steals the plant of life from him, taking it back down under the Earth. We are now in a position to make much fuller sense of the seals of the two scribes Zaganita and Adda (*Ill.7- 55*) when we realise it is Mot in anthropomorphic form running away from under the mountain as this time Venus



Ill.7- 67 Williams-Forte's fig.11 (drawing by H Safadi after PierPorMorCat no.967)

risers, swapping roles with the hero Baal who simply looks on. So the reader should now be able to read the iconography of the final seal featuring Baal and Ištar used by Williams-Forte without need of further help.

CONTENT CRITERIA

Out of this study of the key actors of the North Syrian Pantheon (which of course sometimes uses the old Mesopotamian representations of the Gods) and following on from our analysis of covenant and social recognition rituals, we are now finally able to draw up a **CONTENT SLIDE RULE** to complement the analysis afforded by the **DESIGN SLIDE RULE**. It gives in the table on the next page the criteria for assessing the *dramatis personae* in audience scenes and the stage props/ritual equipment and animals surrounding them. At the very start of the list we simply list the Gods/planets, since on most of the seals we have considered one or more are usually present, with or without the confirmation of animal or aniconic symbols. It is rare for Gods to be shown on their

²¹⁸ 'Heaven and Earth: Divine-Human Relations in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination' in Scott Noegel et al. (eds) *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* Philadelphia 2003, 169-85

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

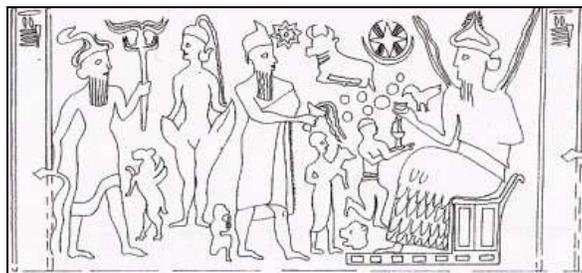
C: THE REAR ATTACK

DRAMATIS PERSONAE	ANTHROPOMORPHIC FORM OF GOD # SEAL OWNER				OTHER SYMBOLS		
	KING'S SEAL	OFFICIAL'S SEAL	MERCHANT'S SEAL	TEMPLE SEAL	TOTEM ANIMAL	ANICONIC SYMBOL	OTHER
STARS/ ZODIAC SUN			URSA MAJOR/SIBITTI X		X	X	GRIFFIN CUP, THRONE WITH BACK
MOON						X	
MERCURY					X		
VENUS			X		X	X	
MARS							
JUPITER			X		X		
SATURN						X	
URANUS							
PLUTO					X		
NEPTUNE							
ENTHRONED RULER OR HIGH OFFICIAL							
PRIEST/ PRIESTESS							
ATTENDANTS			X				
MERCHANT VISITOR			X				
DIPLOMATIC VISITOR							
LIBATOR			X				
SACRIFICER/ SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS			X				
DIVINATORY BIRDS			X				
REAR ATTACK							
CONCLUSION:	PAYING RESPECTS	X	SWEARING OATHS		ASSIGNING AUTHORITY		

Ill.7- 68 Content Slide Rule applied to Teissier's Seal 1 in the Ratt-18 entry

own on seals, so a sub-list follows with the usual type of human participant, from kings downwards. Additional less common components can be added manually.

Since we have already analysed Baal and Venus in the seals from *Ratt-18* in some detail, we have applied this check-list to Teissier's Seal 1 as an example, which we reproduce once more below for ease of reference. By



Ill.7- 69 Teissier's Seal 1 from the Ratt-18 entry showing the peaked cap ruler libating applying it to the checklist systematically, we see more gods are represented than at first obvious, since Baal holds the symbols for both El and Mot. Otherwise, since we have already unravelled the content of this seal in different stages throughout this chapter, after entering the gathered data into the table below, its content is seen as easily analyseable. Applying the **CONTENT SLIDE RULE** to less familiar seals is worth doing for pinning down variations as we come to see there is rarely an item inserted without purpose in any of these miniature scenes.

VENUS AND THE IŠTAR FESTIVAL

Clearly through essential matches between myths of different eras, Baal is the equivalent of Tammuz, and Ištar the equivalent of his consort Innana - and as we have already shown with Ištar, knowing the myth makes sense of all the iconographical variations. Keeping that myth in mind and understanding the primacy in the Syrian Pantheon of this couple's continual Journey back and forth to the Underworld, we now attempt to make fuller sense of the ritual for the annual festival of Ištar held at or near Mari in the 2M, since the myth provided the rationale for its calendar²¹⁹, so crucial for the infrastructure of government.

PURPOSE OF THE FESTIVAL

As already seen from the *Now Rūz* celebrations at Persepolis in *Catalogue B*, no less in the Second Millennium were there several reasons for holding the festival, the key religious and administrative event of the year. Firstly, it had an astronomical basis, to resynchronise the calendar with the natural seasons - in the name of both Shamash and Ištar/Venus, planetary markers of the New Year (but intercalation was in the early stages neglected at Mari). It also gave the opportunity for an overall social audit where vassals were reminded of their oaths of fealty, and the king took the opportunity to assign new offices. Finally, it had a practical material and economic basis where tribute in kind were brought in by vassals for the government coffers, whether as farm produce, raw materials, artefacts or textiles. Overall, at the highest level the Festival celebrated the myth of

²¹⁹ See J Cohen's chapter, 'The Amorite Calendar' in his *Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* Bethesda 1993

Inanna and Tammuz - in terms of its contemporary variation of Ištar and her consort - symbolic of the rise and fall of the Seasons of the Year on which the economy of the kingdom relied. On its final day, with Ištar and



III.7- 70 Baal-El on the horned snake before Venus in her sprouting bower on completion of the Journey to the Underworld - Williams-Forte pl.1,2 (Seyrig Collection, Bibliothèque Nationale)

her consort at their head - given to their astronomical prominence along with Sun and Moon - all rites of thanks and propitiation were ratified by the full Pantheon of Gods, more or less on the lines of our Gods Table.

OVERALL CALENDRIAL TIMING

Sasson²²⁰ writes ‘... the festivities for Ištar during the year ‘Hatta’ took place in “the king’s garden” during the first two days of the 9th month We know that festivities in honor of Nergal/Reshef followed those of Ištar. As a rule of thumb we might think that the early days of the first week of Līliatum were dedicated to Ištar, while the last ones were consecrated to Nergal’. But elsewhere he reckons that although the festival might have taken place in the first month of the Mari calendar, Līliatum (April-May), he shows from correspondence how orders for foodstuffs began in January/February well in advance of the feast (the timing reminding us that the Vernal Point by 2000 was entering Aries - the animal for the sign perhaps chosen because the more handleable ewe/ram had become the general sacrificial animal in place of cattle. Annually at the Feast of Ištar, at some point between the Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox, all vassals would have been required to attend and renew their oaths with great ceremony before the Great King, bringing produce and tribute in the guise of gifts as exchange for the privileges and favours granted by their overlord. Our study of Persepolis for a millennium later in *Catalogue B* shows how little the *raison d’être* for such an event had changed over a millennium - and it is telling that at Mari it was called the Festival of Venus since we showed how at Persepolis from the positioning of lioness capitals on the Apadana east portico facing the rising Sun that the *Now Rūz* gathering was likely in essence to be associated with a Festival of Anahita. We must try to establish the timing of the event more certainly if we can.

Linked to the *kišpum* ceremony is an interesting letter to King Zimrilim himself - as guardian of some kind of formula or table for New Moon computation. Surviving from the office of the high official Yasīm-Sumū who needed to calculate in advance the likely new moon date for the start of the *Dērītum*, it runs as follows:

²²⁰ Jack Sasson in ‘The Calendar and Festivals of Mari during the Reign of Zimri-Lim’ in Powell & Sack (eds) *Studies in Honor of Tom B. Jones* 1979

La lune est arrive le 2, ce qui est plus que la normale! Le jour où j’envoie cette tablette de moi, c’est à Mari le 3 courant du mois. Il faudrait que mon Seigneur m’envoie le comput qui’il garde en sa possession afin que je fasse le décompte des jours pour les sacrifices de Dērītum’
(Durand LAPO 18/981)

The fact that this letter is later, from Zimrilim’s reign, leads us to an important caveat in our coming presentation of the information given in Durand and Guichard’s Texts 2-5: as already hinted, we do have conflicting information about when this festival was held, just as in the case of Persepolis (laid out fully in the commentaries to *Catalogue B*) where it is still not absolutely clear whether this was a Winter Solstice or Spring Equinox Festival. Thus Sasson says it was held mainly during the month of *Līiatum*, corresponding to our

MONTH NO. AND NAME	EQUIVALENT ZODIAC MONTH AND ROUGH MONTH END DATE	EQUIVALENT ZODIAC MONTH UNDER ZIMRILIM
INTERCALATION POINT *		
I: Uraḫum	♊ 21 MAY	
II: Malkānum	♋ 21 JUNE	
III: Laḫḫum	♌ 21 JULY	
IV: Abum	♍ 21 AUGUST	VIII
V: Ḫibirtum <i>Intercalated 2nd Ḫibirtum if needed</i>	♎ 21 SEPTEMBER	IX
INTERCALATION POINT *		
VI: ḏIGIKUR	♏ 21 OCTOBER	X
VII: Kinūnum	♐ 21 NOVEMBER	
VIII: ḏDAGAN	♑ 21 DECEMBER	
IX: Līiatum	♒ 21 JANUARY	
X: Bēlet-bīri	♓ 21 FEBRUARY	
XI: Kiskissum	♈ 21 MARCH	
XII: Ebūrum <i>Intercalated 2nd Ebūrum</i>	♉ 21 APRIL	

III.7- 71 *Tabulation of the Mari months as given by Sasson, contrasted with assignment of Ištar Festival month numbers given by Durand and Guichard*

January/February, whilst Durand²²¹’s translated documents point to it being held in month X²²², corresponding to the run-up to Winter Solstice in November/December. But Durand himself points out that there were discrepancies of two to three months in the Mari calendar at the changeover to Zimrilim’s reign which took some

²²¹ J-M Durand (ed. & trsl.) Documents Épistolaires du Palais de Mari (3 vols) 2000-2002 = Litteratures Anciennes du Proche-Orient [LAPO] Vols 16/17/18

²²² LAPO 18 124-9

drastic intercalation to iron out in coming years in order to get the months to correspond again to the season they were meant to mark - a well-known problem in the history of the regulated calendar. The table above gives the Mari months as tabulated by Sasson (*ibid.*) with their roughly equivalent zodiac months in relation to present dates - Durand and Guichard's suggested month numbering just for the Ištar Festival season is laid against them in the third column. The two-month dislocation between the two is confirmed, but still leaving us uncertain about precisely at which season it was celebrated - but Durand and Guichard (*ibid.*) bring in two useful mentions in the official correspondence referring to its taking place *in the winter*, emphatically worth noting.

The 30th of month viii is reckoned by Durand to be October while (from the table above) Sasson would put it at the neomenia of 19-20 December at the close of the month of Dagan (we have just referred to two mentions about the Festival of Ištar taking place during the winter) on the eve of the start of *Līliātum*, as announced by the new crescent moon. If in fact the month numbers are wrongly assigned, and we are talking of the Festival taking place to correspond to the Old Babylonian New Year at the Spring Equinox, as is mentioned for the Festival of Ištar once in the reign of Yasmah-Addu, then we could just as well be talking about its starting point at the turn of March into April at the Spring Equinox. We noted for Persepolis a similar gap between the two possibilities, and we bear these uncertainties in mind in suspended animation against the day they can be resolved. Just as in the West at Christmas/New Year two successive festivals follow each other, so it seems to have been for the Mari Ištar Festival. It had long been customary during the dark of the Moon of the last Neomenia of the Year for the Bedouin under the aegis of Dagan to honour the spirits of their ancestors²²³ - part of an unbroken tradition going back to Neolithic times and marked by the erection of a tent-like structure (*ramūm*) supported by standing stones and dead meat (*paḡrā'u*) offerings made at the cult centre. This was closely bound up with the *kišpum* ceremony to determine the end of the neomenia at the rising of the New Moon signalling the first day of the new month and at New Year marking the start of the main 10-11-day long celebration of the New Year under the auspices of Ištar - as herself or under her many local names.

SYNCRETISM OF THE MARI IŠTAR FESTIVAL

Interestingly in North-West Syria, a donkey sacrifice was performed around the same season - seemingly linked to these two ceremonies. We have on record known instances of such sacrifices addressed to Hadad at Aleppo, Ugarit and Emar, but the example from Alalakh of the king's lustration (washing) of 'the female donkey of Šalaš/Ninḫursag' (in other words, Ištar - c.f. *III.7- 63* left) leaves the animal alive, perhaps because female. This Bedouin ritual was enacted specifically to seal bonds of consanguinity, not only with one's own relatives, but more especially with allies made at oath-taking ceremonies, thereby locking them into their own network of ancestors. We described earlier how donkey ritual was much favoured in West Syria, though recently it has been attested as far south as Tell Haror by Eliezer Oren²²⁴, and as far north-east as Tell Brak by Roger Matthews²²⁵.

²²³ Indeed, it appears every month a minor celebration of the ancestors took place during the dark of the Moon until the new crescent rose.

²²⁴ In his address to the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society on 23 January 2012, he showed from his 2011 excavation in the courtyard just outside its Temple the remains of a buried female donkey and foal, and established from a fallen wall that it must have been three stories high, and cube-shaped like the Ka'aba of Mecca (a late form of Canaanite temple - itself standing on the site of former stone circle).

Everything we can glean about what went on before, during and after the Ištar Festival reveals how cleverly a second millennium-type government like Mari - although underpinned by mainline Mesopotamian mythology - because now closely associated on many fronts with vassals in the Syrian hinterland made syncretic insertions to take into account their nomadic vassals' differing cultures, bolting on or merging competing cults rather than suppressing coincidental local holy days. For instance, Durand et al. suppose that the Dēr focus of the Ištar Festival must have had something to do with its location in Bensim'alite heartland - a situation where it was diplomatic not to try to change such long-held festivals - or even move its location -hence meld it into the overall proceedings. So the overriding New Year Ištar programme absorbed in due order already existing Dagan and Nergal cults, as well as local forms of Ištar worship in surrounding towns, amongst them Ištar of Nagar/Nineveh (specifically mentioned as represented by a standing stone).

MORE DETAILED TEXTS ON THE FESTIVAL OF IŠTAR

Other than short references in treaties and correspondence we learn a great deal more from the five texts on Mari ritual brought together by Durand and Guichard²²⁶ that give details of proceedings at the IŠTAR FESTIVAL, almost certainly dating from the time of Yahdun-Lim. They are damaged and incomplete, but happily their order of events is seen by the authors (on the assessment of their colleague Dominique Charpin) as more or less following on one from the other, and more complementary to each other than duplicative (though there are some overlaps).

The first of the two main Mari Ištar Festival texts describes how the statue of Ištar of Irradān/Ekallātum (the key city on the Tigris north of Aššur lying between the Greater and Lesser Zab rivers - see *III.7- 9*) is transported to Mari for the rites, and then housed in the Harem for the entire month of the feast - the ceremonies for its arrival and departure marking the Festival's extreme start and end points. The second text is associated with the town of Dēr a few miles outside Mari (see *III.7- 9*) where a key phase of the the main Ištar Festival was celebrated (this part of the proceedings often referred to simply as the *Dēritum*). This version of the ritual was more Mesopotamian in character, a key feature involving the recitation of long Sumerian stories and lamentation hymns (*erešemma*) bewailing the destruction of cities in war - as well as lamentations for Tammūz²²⁷ in his later forms - for which there were specialist singers and other performers to create a backdrop for the utterings of the ecstatics and diviners with predictions about the prospects for the country in the coming year uttered in the name of Ištar. Durand et al. are not certain from the texts whether both Ištars were concurrently celebrated, or whether one ritual superseded the other over a period of time.

Indirectly related to these, two further texts translated by them describe in surprisingly specific detail the special ritual components within the main proceedings which we have already sketched out generally - both written in an eponymal month named *šegur-ku/addaru*, and whose ultimate inspiration the authors think is

²²⁵ In a lecture to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq on 23 March 2012 he also described a donkey sacrifice of this period in the temple context of Tell Brak - this talk in honour of Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop will be summarised in the 2012 volume of its journal, *Iraq*.

²²⁶ J-M Durand and M Guichard 'Les Rituels de Mari' in *Mémoires de NABU 4 (Florilegium marianum III)* 1997, 19-78

²²⁷ A tradition maintained in the First Millennium in the Hebrew tradition, reflecting Levantine practice overall.

likely to be Akkadian Tell Asmar/Ešnunna²²⁸. The first is an account of the *humtūm* ritual concerning respects to be paid to the Goddess as baetyl (Text 5) and the second the *Kišpum* ritual (Text 4) concerning the determination of the start of the month at the New Moon (*biblum*) and days following up to the 7th day, completing the week of the Moon's First Quarter. The *biblum* day was as crucial to the timing of the Ištar Festival as the Paschal Moon is in the Church today for the determining Easter²²⁹ and was one of the days (Ištar Festival Eve) when it was imperative for the King to be present. It was on the day of the *gimkūm*, a day or so after the New Moon day (*biblum*), that the *ramūm* for the ancestors was installed, and a donkey killed (in Aleppo that month was called *hi'ārum* (related to the more usual month name of Ayyar) and at Ešnunna *kinkūm*). Thus both components of the ancestor rite dovetailed into the *kišpum* ceremony (which made its own sheep sacrifice offering to Šamaš, brother of Ištar) - showing these closely interlinked rites cannot really be separated from each other, despite the distinct purpose of each on its own. We are told a meal also formed part of the ancestor ritual, where the breaking of bread offered to the ancestors by the head of the tribe would have initiated it (Margalit (*ibid.*) has observations about the complementarity of the two great feasts held at the start and end of the Festival which we consider in the relevant section for the end of the Festival).

As sketched out earlier, evidence for the Feast of Ištar being celebrated at the Winter Solstice comes from Sasson (*ibid.*) who cites the record of such a celebration for the Zimrilim Year 'Benjaminites I' on 3 *Līiatum*. However, he also cites M.Birot's evidence for its taking place in the month of *Kiskissum*, which is when the New Year was canonically celebrated in Mesopotamia - at the Spring Equinox - when the end of month XII was the point at which an intercalary month would be inserted if required. Sasson notes that the opportunity also came in the Mari calendar to insert an intercalary month halfway through the year (as indicated in the table) but before, rather than after, month VI (around the Autumn Equinox). He also noticed that ancestor ceremonies in the run-up to the *KIŠPUM* - which in Babylon mostly seem to have taken place around Abum (month IV) - in Mari seems from the records to have been marked almost every month, which makes more sense if we take Durand's interpretation of the ceremony as a New Moon protocol to establish the start of any month. As Durand et al. (*ibid.*) conclude, whilst the documentary evidence they translate give instructions about what was to happen in the rituals comes from the preceding reign of Yahdun-Lim, it is the later information we have about the Festival from Year 1 of Zimrilim's reign (and again from correspondence near the end of his reign) that provides calendrical dates for its progression - so we cannot match up these two sorts of information in a hard and fast form. However, we can at least attempt some rough linkages between known timings and the ritual texts to at least breathe a level of actuality to the facts given on the tablets. Our blend of information follows in the sequence of pages framed by a red box.

²²⁸ All four texts are said by the authors to be presented in the same format with the same overall *facture*, to the extent they must have been written in the same period.

²²⁹ See earlier footnote (no. 150) explaining how Ursa Minor could also be used to calculate that feast, confirming the importance of the link between Venus, Ursa Minor and her sickle weapon.

ORDER OF EVENTS OF THE IŠTAR FESTIVAL: DATE AND CONTENT OF THE RITUALS

Having sketched in the overall background we are almost ready to pick through the order of events as recorded in the two texts for the Ištar Festival, by using Durand and Guichard's translations and commentary, bearing in mind that the *dates* we try to match them to are based on conflicting records, as already described. To cope with these ambiguities of timing we simply need to bear in mind the two-month discrepancy spotted by both Durand (ibid. p.30) and Charpin before intercalation during the reign of Zimrilim put his predecessor's counting of the calendar back on an even keel.

The first record is a succinct list from the first year of *Zimrilim's* reign, in essence very briefly stating the overall scope:

- ✪ Dagan rites were fulfilled at Terqa/Tuttul 21-x to 27-x (i.e. for one week;
- ✪ then the feast at Dēr 13-xi to 18-xi (for almost another week);, and then
- ✪ the Festival of Ištar would continue at Mari 19-xi to the middle of month xii.

For the Syrian Euphrates region, Durand equates Dagan with Enlil and Šalaš (related to the full Moon in divination) with his consort Ninḫursag, sometimes correlated to Gula. Since at times Dagan was represented by a fish, he is on balance more likely to be equated with Ea, but looking at the 3M statues of the couple Abu-Ninḫursag, it could well be that Dagan of Terqa was a form of El, rather than Enlil, especially as it works more logically to see Baal as the Levantine form of Enlil in turn equated to Nergal in his Underworld persona.

The second record comes from a cultic calendar for Mari in the Asqudum cache for the end months of the year starting at the end of month ix. This fuller list from the second half of Zimrilim's reign quoted by Durand et al. again gives a broad outline of the order of events against more specific dates and month-numbers (highlighted as **RED-LETTER DATE HEADINGS** in the narrative below) which we can in places speculatively (*not necessarily completely accurately*) fill out with the detail gained from the descriptions of the salient stages given in the Yahdun-Lim rituals (Durand et al.'s **Text 2 for IŠTAR OF DĒR** and **Text 3 for IŠTAR OF IRRADĀN/ĒKALLĀTUM**). These texts are laconic, more like check-lists or brief stage directions for the almost theatrical group enactments of the rites taking place over several days. With still not much to go on, a ritual referred to by one word in these two texts can be filled out by comparison with fuller information in yet further textual sources for other cities in other periods, so it is worth bringing them all together in a loose patchwork to build up a fuller picture - as we attempt below.

We have already given instances of how information on the Ištar Festival serves to consolidate our understanding of Syrian protocols in less exalted contexts, since many of its components are similar in character to those we described earlier as followed in political or business contexts (pigeon prophecy/semolina-type grain offering/donkey sacrifice/oath-taking), their centrality and syncretism within the Ištar Cycle highlighting their deep cultural meaning in binding people together and making agreements stick.

DETAILED ORDER OF EVENTS: THE DERITUM AND EKALLATUM RITUALS

RUN-UP TO THE FESTIVAL

MONTH OF OCTOBER

At the very start, the presence of one or more baetyls (c.f. Hebrew *maššeboth*) to honour Ištār was required, and ordered in from their home locality. This means the Bedouin version of the Ištār Festival coinciding with the Mesopotamian Ištār Festival (documented for Ebla and Emar²³⁰) was incorporated into the Mari ceremony at the very start (hence the relevance of the *humṭūm* ceremony (Text 5) for raising the baetyl). Indeed, the Mari palace itself had its own standing stone in the temple courtyard in honour of Ištār (now preserved in the gardens of the Damascus Museum). Oren (*ibid.* - see fn 224) found traces of *maššeboth* at the entrance to the 1M temple at Tell Haror showing how closely the 1M Temple of Solomon itself (built by Hiram of Tyre) would adhere to that tradition by formalizing them into the two huge entrance columns, in Kabbalistic terminology named Ruth on the female side and Boaz on the male side, doubtless heirs to a pair of baetyls at 2M temples representing not only Ištār on one side, but also Baal on the other as complementary *sikkanāt*.

30-VIII LAST DAY OF THE MONTH: ARRIVAL OF IŠTAR AT MARI ON THE LAST DAY OF THE NEOMENIA
(Equivalent of Good Friday)

One can imagine the arrival of the statue of Ištār of Irradān as similar to the parading of the Virgin Mary's statue at religious festivals in the Catholic world today, and that raising her up for the *darshan* (a Hindu term for the presentation of a statue for adoration by worshippers - an epiphany of the God) would have been akin to her rising up onto the mountain, facing out frontally and looking directly at the assembly, as depicted on the seals of Ill.7- 55 (in the Dēritum ritual she is described as *Nin-igi-zi-bara* - Lady of direct/just gaze), called thus in Tuttul where possibly under this name she was the consort of its God, Dagan (rather than his grand-daughter as previously thought). Once the statue has arrived at Mari, the text states she is to be offered an evening meal of cereal flours (*mašhatum* and *sasqum*) mixed into a paste with water, given water to drink, and ritually washed by the high priest. The king enrobes and stands holding his sceptre before her, while a rattling tambourine initiates the singing of the *erešemma* for Enlil/Baal as if sung by Ištār herself (during which the King stands, as her servant). Attendants and musicians enter and the female prophetess, or ecstatic, may utter divinations if in the mood (the musicians can be asked to leave if she loses concentration). Further temple officials honour Šamaš, then Ištār; the king having now taken off his robe follows suit, libating to Samas first, then to Ištār, accompanied by choral singing. The general meal (presumably by the human officiants) then follows. This is the first feast of the Festival, complementary, Margalit (*ibid.*) believes to the feast that closes it at the end.

Sacrifices to the dead (traditionally undertaken during the dark of the Moon during the Neomenia) are made on this day, for Mari particularly associated at the time with Dagan of Terqa, to whom only dead meat offerings (*pagra'u*) were made. The ancestor ceremonies also involved the erection of stones as a form of tent-like

²³⁰ (details given in Durand et al. *ibid.* p.36)

cenotaph (the *rāmum*) for the ancestor rites where the memory of former kings and even the ancestors of newly federated vassals were all invoked. Hence the relevance of the *kišpum* ceremony immediately following (Text 4) to spot the New Moon, ending the neomenia darkness of the Moon (pigeons are mentioned in other texts as used to indicate the arrival of the moon). Interesting to note is that the document from Alalakh describing the washing of the female donkey ('donkey of the Goddess' is an alternative translation) in honour of Šalaš is also dated for the equivalent of 30-VIII: so its absorption into the Ištar Festival at the ancestor commemoration stage is a natural dovetail.

1-IX FIRST DAY OF THE NEXT MONTH: FESTIVAL OF IŠTAR BEGINS

MONTH OF NOVEMBER

(Preparation for Ištar's Journey to the Underworld)

The day begins early with a ritual cleansing of the temple before sunrise, in which the king, rising early, takes part. The next part of the ceremony takes place inside the palace (Durand likes to imagine it happening in the *E-ištar*, the Court of Ištar (Room 132), and all the Palace staff are participants, from the top to the very lowest. Precise instructions are given about where each group is to stand in the congregation, including not only cleaners or personal servants such as hairdressers and barbers, but also all types of craftsmen who fashion artefacts from raw materials such as metals, wood, clay, paint and woven textiles. Of course, above these were all the court officials and administrators, and different branches of the temple staff from priests to diviners, singers and musicians, all playing an active part in the gathering - and its processions before and after. It gave an opportunity for all these people, invisible to the outside world, to stand up and be counted as belonging to the King's retinue and his palace community. Indeed, on his accession Zimrilim is recorded as having demanded a complete audit of all palace staff, however lowly, requiring each one of them to renew their vows to him as the new king.

Whilst the assembly might eat take part in a feast, this is to reflect the actual sacrifice²³¹ being made to the Goddess, as this audience watches the miming of a meal²³² offering to Ištar made by the professional *ākilum* who eats the Goddess's meal on her behalf with exaggerated eating movements of the face -as if she presides over the banquet, Durand believes. This is accompanied by what we can only characterize as a circus show of fire-eaters, jugglers, acrobats, wrestlers and sword-swallowers, whilst banners with symbols of the goddess were waved, accompanied by dancers and music. There is even a line describing the cleaners having a moment to clean up the mess before the show continues. There are descriptions of certain people changing costumes (which may correspond to the Ištar ritual translated by Groneberg (*ibid.*) described earlier where men and women exchange dress). During the proceedings many different libations of oil and water are made on the ground and to the statues of both Shamash and Ištar - by different ranks of clergy and the king himself.

²³¹ Durand points out that the word used for sacrifice, *nīqum*, usually has the connotation of bloodshed, or revenge - and in the ritual to Ištar given by Groneberg (*ibid.*) blood spread on the throne dais is described.

²³² This is an example where Durand is not sure whether this is a different meal for a different day - or the same as the one described in the Irradan text for the day before.

2-IX SECOND DAY OF THE JOURNEY: FESTIVAL OF IŠTAR CONTINUES

(Equivalent to Easter Saturday)

Nothing specific is described for this day in Zimrilim's list, but if comparable to Easter Saturday, this is a day of silence and preparation, when the God(dess) is still in the Underworld and uncontactable, but turning round to make Her way back.

3-IX THIRD DAY OF THE JOURNEY FESTIVAL OF IŠTAR CONTINUES

(Equivalent to Easter Sunday)

Again, the third day is not given a date in the Zimrilim list, but if roughly equivalent to Easter Sunday, then it is the day of the return of Ištar from the Underworld, equivalent in Christian mythopoeia to the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead though not made as much of in comparison with the Return of Baal from the Dead in the reiteration of the Journey from the male God's viewpoint a few days on which, as we will see below, ends in the great feast of the last day of the Festival.

4-IX: IŠTAR (HER STATUE) IS MOVED TO THE MARI PALACE HAREM

(Equivalent to Easter Monday)

This evidently happened once the three-day Journey to the Underworld was deemed to be over, Ištar's time there described in the original myth as lasting three days.

5-IX: THE PRESENCE OF IŠTAR (HER STATUE) IN THE MARI PALACE IS NOTED

Ištar's change of abode from temple courtyard to harem is a definite and important stage of the Ištar ritual, and her on-going presence is specifically listed on this and the next day as prelude to the story of Baal's Descent.

6-IX THE PRESENCE OF IŠTAR (HER STATUE) IN THE MARI PALACE IS AGAIN NOTED

The presence of Ištar in the palace is specifically noted for the 5th and 6th days of the Festival. These two days are neutral days, which we could consider as the pause before the reiteration of the Journey to the Underworld this time by her consort, Baal/Nergal, which in myth is much more violent and dramatic, though the presence of Ištar in the background is implicitly required.

7-IX: THE CHARIOT OF NERGAL (AMŪM) IS LED OUT IN PROCESSION ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE FESTIVAL

(ACT I, Equivalent to Good Friday)

Nergal's feast was a holy day not local to Mari which after attempts to displace it, was merged into the main Festival because locally popular, and crucial to insert since associated with the male side of the Journey to the Underworld. In the context of the Festival's proceedings I will spell out its *story* in detail²³³, as if brought to mind by participants over the two to three days following the entry of the chariot of Nergal on this seventh day. We do not have an account of actual rituals involved, so the matching of known text to dating I trust can be counted as a series of creative approximations.

²³³ I have not filled in the corresponding details for Ištar's Journey to the Underworld under the first days of the Festival, simply because its stages are common knowledge already, much as the Old Testament texts referred to should be. I recommend William Sladek's translation.

What we do firmly know is that in the first six days, the bewailing of Baal's loss by Ištar forms a central part of the event. From further papers and a book, we can build up fuller details to the story. Earlier we discussed the content of a text on the small tablet describing Baal's enthronement - as dealt with by both Lipinski, and Fisher and Knutson (*ibid.*). Summing up the bond between Baal and Anat in only a few lines, in a rare moment of stasis we see them at a juncture in the story where Yam is conquered and Mot yet to come. Almost as an ominous prelude to what will then unfold, Baal enthroned contemplates everything under his purview as Anat puts her coral necklace back on and gets ready to sing, not in sorrow for her lost love, but in praise of his divine looks. The authors refer to T J Meek's idea²³⁴ that the songs in the Bible's Song of Songs 'originated in the Tammuz cult - in its Palestinian manifestation', being the liturgical reason for the Jewish tradition of reading the Canticles at Passover/Easter. They compare the two texts, pointing out that love songs of this period in praise of the male are rare, a strong clue to their original ritual nature in association with the cult of Tammuz and Ištar (the Inanna myth describes his coral-red clothing as he plays a lapis lazuli flute whose haunting notes express her yearning).

So the real significance of why lamentations of longing for the Beloved are repeated annually is the initial mourning stage for Tammuz/Baal as he starts his journey of absence below Earth. What follows the throne scene emerges from a text analysed by John Gray²³⁵ spelling out in a nutshell the nature of Baal's own journey to the Underworld during the saga of his two battles with Mot, and portraying a lesser-known aspect of the Baal myth, not often given attention since written down separately from the main body of the story's central events. The text he discusses concerns the revenge taken on Baal - following seven years of successful rule after an initial victory over Mot - by the 'Devourers and Renders' who are demonic bulls with humps and bull-faces like Baal himself, intent on tearing him to pieces and pulling out his eye (a direct parallel to Seth pulling out the Eye of Horus, a primordial story about the struggle between Chaos and Cosmos). Baal undertakes to hunt them down but is felled like a dead bull by these vengeful predators and sentenced by El himself to seven years (with an eighth for good measure) in the Kingdom of Death - at which point 'The land ran headlong into waste: the watercourses of the fields were parched', very much reminiscent of the seven good years followed by the seven years of famine of the Joseph story in the Bible, and making the same association between Mot and the desert as made in Egypt between Seth and the *deshret*.

A much fuller version of the downfall of Baal following the throne scene is graphically described in CTA 3-6, whose brilliant analysis by Baruch Margalit²³⁶ provides the full picture of the dark side of Baal/Tammuz' Journey, so often left out of the overall myth, from which we see that Baal's story does not end with his victory over Yam, nor does it even conclude with his initial victory over Mot, as briefly shown by Gray's text. Where most versions of the story concentrate on the mainline events of Baal and Anat leading up to the victory over Yam and

²³⁴ 'The Song of Songs and the Fertility Cult' in *The Song of Songs* ed. W H Schoff Philadelphia 1924, 48-79

²³⁵ 'Baal's Atonement' *UF III* 1971 62-70

²³⁶ A Matter of 'Life' and 'Death' Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980

ending in the throne scene, Baruch's contents list alone sums up the terrible events that follow as written down in texts CTA 3-6 [their sequence slightly reordered by him] as follows:

- ♦ Gifts for the Lady Asherah
- ♦ The Feast of Shame [the orgy]
- ♦ The 'Windows Controversy'
- ♦ The Fall of Baal
- ♦ The Commission to the Netherworld
- ♦ The Execration of Leviathan
- ♦ Mot's Apologia
- ♦ The Descent to the Netherworld
- ♦ Baal and the Heifer
- ♦ The Elysian Fields in Hades
- ♦ The Lament for Baal
- ♦ The Recovery and Burial of Baal
- ♦ Baal Redeivum
- ♦ The Restoration
- ♦ The Finale

As the saying goes, 'Pride comes before a Fall': under the early headings belonging, as Margalit sees it, to Act I of the Baal Story, we need not dwell at length on the aftermath of the Yam victory where, from the sense of pride Baal has in gaining his mountain palace, he gives extravagant gifts to Asherah fashioned by Kothar and engages in wild rutting activities with her maidens in an explosion of symbolically sexual power. The seeds of tragedy are sown with the insertion of windows in his palace on the advice of Kothar, through which he can show off his bull-like bellowing voice of thunder - but as chinks in the sky they give Mot's serpents the entry to seize Baal. On the appearance of Mot and his agents, Baal is aware his days are numbered, for Mot's epithet is 'Beloved of El', being part of the divine plan, for El wants *his* usurper, Baal, to bring about his own downfall.

P.52 Those who find themselves even in Mot's vicinity know not to approach him 'lest he treat you like a lambling in his mouth, like a kid in the crunch of his fangs' but Mot gets through the windows in the sky and bites Baal fatally (as Margalit puts it, 'This... reading of the text is still not common knowledge'). *At this point, their leader mortally wounded, the Gods assembled in Baal's palace leave -- marking the end of Act I.*

In the Ištar ritual texts we are using as our frame of reference, nothing is listed for the 8th and 9th days of the month, but these blank days are implicitly the darkness in space and time during which Baal now starts to go through many vicissitudes in his struggle to get free of Mot. This second three-day block in the Festival can be thought of as allowing for Baal/Nergal's journey to be commemorated at the palace of Mari- in mind if not in deed - just as Ištar's is. We have apportioned Margalit's own division of the Baal drama into three Acts against

each day - in a second period of what Gray calls 'temporary suspension of order' that twins with the first one presided over by Ištar, and already played out in the first block of three days.

8-IX SECOND DAY OF BAAL/NERGAL'S JOURNEY

(ACT II: Equivalent to Easter Saturday)

Despite 'the day turning to darkness' at what Margalit deems the start of the Second Act, though Baal has already started to lose power after being bitten, in a vain attempt to maintain his rule over the Gods, he relents, stating he will pay tribute to Mot. He sees it is now his destiny to descend to the 'twin hills at the edge of Earth and 'be counted among the descenders to ... Mot's city' at the 'bottom of the Earth'. Try as he might, though, Baal cannot avoid the coils of poisonous Mot, as described in the following description (CTA 5:I, 1-9):

Be crushed, coiled one, fleet serpent: be annihilated, tortuous serpent;
Whither seven-headed entwine: convulse, [... of the] sticky venom;
Thy [poisonous] prick I am ingesting: in groans and diaorrhea I expire.

Truly hast thou descended the throat of the divine-one, Mot: the gullet of El's beloved, Mot
Departed, never to return, is the God!

Margalit points out these lines are ambiguous, in that it is hard to separate what might be Baal's own words from 'an anonymous speaker pointing to and grieving for the dying storm-god', but the gist is clear. Mot compares himself to a wild lion or a large fish (the word is hard to translate - the English Bible uses the word 'Leviathan' - and could mean anything from whale to dolphin), and this perhaps makes sense of the captured dolphin shown on the right-hand seal of *III.7-63*). The central feature of the monster is the gaping mouth from which there is no escape, described in the lines below as having one lip extending to heaven, another to earth, the tongue to the stars. Margalit brings in a side-text here which vividly describes Mot as taking Baal's place '[enthroned] as a king, the sceptre of bereavement in one hand, the sceptre of widowhood in [the other]'. Back to the main text, Mot even speaks to Baal asking him to break bread with him as if with his kinsmen so that 'I'll forget, Baal, that I'm to bite you!' - but Margalit explains that Mot is kind only when seated and sated, though for the time being he promises Baal that once swallowed he will not be harmed further. As the passage goes,

He placed a lip to earth, a lip to heaven: a tongue to the stars
Baal entered his abdomen: down his mouth he went, like an olive pip.

and at that point as far as Mother Earth is concerned, it looked as if 'the God had departed, never to return'. But there is a stay of total execution, and for a time Baal is treated well as he is placed in the Fields of the Plains of Death, coupling 77 and 88 times with a Heifer there - but this lasts only until Mot gets hungry again.

Meanwhile, up on Earth a lament goes up for Baal, a section of the story well-known in its annual re-enactment all over the Middle East. The lament for Baal is led by Ištar herself at the Festival of Ištar in her part of the Festival, and more important than the laments for different cities that have been laid waste by human agency in times of war. In the version studied by Margalit, the 'God of Mercy' leads the lament, gashing himself and

wallowing in straw - very much along the lines of the wailing and self-mutilation still applied in the Shi'ite world at Muḥarram - as Anat looks for him in the Fields. In other words, at this stage Baal is condemned, but still alive.

9-IX THIRD DAY OF BAAL/NERGAL'S JOURNEY

(ACT III: Equivalent to Easter Sunday)

Anat finds Baal in the Fields of the Plains of Death and herself laments his death with exactly the same self-harming actions as the God of Mercy, saying, 'in Baal's footsteps I shall descend to Hades'. Her companion, Špš, a light-giving Goddess who shows the way

'...lifted the puissant Baal; onto the shoulders of Anat she did place him.
She raised him up to the heights of Sapon, she bewept and buried him...'

Anat then slaughters 70 each of buffalo, oxen, sheep, deer, goats and mules to feed the spirit of the dead Baal, in what we might regard as an ancestor rite at this, the first burial of Baal. At first she seeks a successor to Baal: Asherah suggests Athtar, who tries out Baal's throne on Sapon and finds he does not have the stature to fill it, and Anat realises Baal is the only true ruler.

After some missing lines, we have Anat now seeking the restoration of Baal, 'like the heart of a cow for her calf' - and she grasps the hem of Mot's garment, beseeching him to give Baal back. Mot admits that Baal's spirit is no longer in the Fields of the Plains of Death, because as he got hungry again he decided to eat him up completely. In Dantesque terms, where before Baal was in Purgatory, now he has gone to Hell proper. But at this point Anat has the power to dismember Mot, utterly pulverising him, and Baal's corpse is recovered by Špš a second time and raised up for a second burial. As the right time of the Year arrives, Baal comes to life with the spring rains as the seeds sown in the furrows start to sprout. Lament turns to praise and thanksgiving at his return.

Coming back to continuity of tradition in Israel, Meek suggests in lines in the *Song of Songs* such as

Arise, my love, and come away; for lo, the winter is past;
The rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth. (*Canticles* 2, 10/11)

we are looking at a song in remembrance and thanks for precisely this moment, when Earth is comes to life again on the return of Baal (almost the equivalent of the *dhikr* in the Islamic tradition sung to remind of and evoke the divine order - Turkish Sufi orders even talk of the divine flute singing through them). While the prosody of the *Song of Songs/Canticles* has 'irregularities that bespeak its non-Hebraic origin', it also uses a large number of Babylonian-Canaanite loan-words, even 'loan-words from the Arabians, among whom we know the Tammuz cult had early sway' so that overall the 'book [uses] cult language, and manifestly cult language of the Tammuz liturgies'²³⁷. As Meek suggests, 'this interpretation of Canticles clears up a host of problems connected with the book', explaining why it should be retained in the canonical scriptures. The book is sometimes called *The Song of Solomon*, of course, and Meek suggests this refers to 'a later interpretation of the god name Shelem (i.e. Dod or Tammuz)', since the bridegroom in other verses is called *Dodi* 'in [which] we have

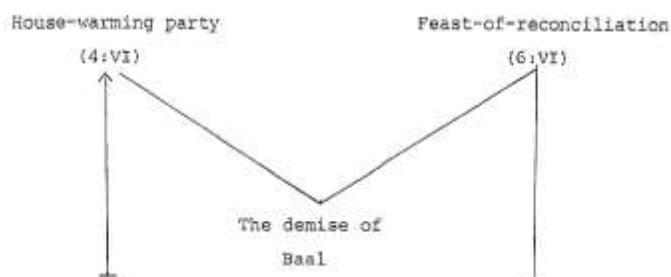
²³⁷ For this reason, 'Instead of being one of the latest of Hebrew compositions it is one of the earliest'.

none other than a survival of the god name Dod or Adad.... Dodi in the original liturgy... (citing Langdon) was a form of address quite like “my Damu” and “my Tammuz” which appear so often in the Tammuz liturgies’. It is ‘the power of the love of the goddess [that] win[s] the god back from the netherworld despite the floods and other obstacles that lay between this world and the next’. He adds, ‘It is rather striking, too, that the Syriac never translates *Dodi* but always transliterates it, just as if it were a proper name - in Jewish times the name was identified with Yahweh, whose consort would be Šala, and in Canticles 7, 7 the bride, described as the groom’s sister, is called “the Shulamite” and associated in particular with the Lebanon, precisely ‘the mountain home of Adad and Šala’²³⁸. He points out that in other contexts the term is applied to ‘the priestesses who yearly bewailed the death of vegetation typified by the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter’. Altogether, as Meek says, putting this book into the canonical scriptures of the Bible would be ‘utterly pointless [under] any other hypothesis’.

10-IX: ALL THE GODS ATTEND THE PALACE [AS THE IŠTAR FESTIVAL DRAWS TO A CLOSE]

(Equivalent to Easter Monday)

The return of the assembly of Gods on the last day of the Ištar Festival overall dovetails perfectly with the last scene in the grand finale of the Baal story as presented by Margalit. Baal *Redivivus* bludgeons the ‘arrogant’ and the ‘creeps’ who have gathered in his absence and has his final battle with Mot, ‘eyes burning like coals’ after he has unsuccessfully tried to sit on Baal’s throne himself. Baal now has the strength to match his, as ‘they butt like buffaloes’. Seven years later Mot still has the nerve to show up again and complain about his treatment, saying he couldn’t help his part in the plan.



Ill.7- 72 Margalit's diagram for the symmetry of the two feasts.

Finally the wine of reconciliation is drunk, and the Gods come back as Baal reascends his rightful throne, ‘chair of his dominion’. The second feast closing off the Festival proper mirrors the complementarity of the two feasts within the Baal story on its own which Margalit (Illustrated above) sees as the frames for the rise and fall of Baal, and which we could see as coinciding at the end with the overarching Ištar rites.

²³⁸ Given the myth made sense ‘in the agricultural north rather than in the semi-nomadic south’, he says, it is not surprising that the place-names mentioned in the songs are those such as Sharon, Gilead, Heshbon and Damascus.

The ten-to-eleven day period marks the shortfall between lunar and solar calendars and is what we could call ‘the Babylonian New Year measure²³⁹’ within the Ištar Festival. The mention of all the Gods as present for, we could say, the tenth to eleventh mornings marks the end of the Ištar Rites proper in a final crescendo, being the second-last item on the Ištar Festival programme we are using as our guide, and denoting a final calm pause before the return to normal life in the coming year.

30-IX: IŠTAR LEAVES MARI

Although long over, this is the final date given for the Festival, and the final end-point in its order of events, revealing that the visiting statue of Ištar of Ekallātum remained in Mari for a full calendar month - in other words until the following neomenia, no doubt determined by another *kišpum* ceremony.

²³⁹ The first line readable from the Dēritum ritual text after a broken-off piece at the beginning describes the installation of the Goddess’ bed on which the king is allowed to lie, implying, as Durand says, an impending sacred marriage which we only know about fully from Mesopotamian practice but not described any further in the Mari Ištar Festival texts. The second Ištar ritual text of Durand and Guichard has a colophon with instructions to the king about the specially made heavy woollen cloak he should wear at the event and how he should behave, not simply at the private rituals linked to the sacred marriage, but also at the public “Durbar” where he would need to display himself before the assembly of the country’s regional representatives.

THE ROLE OF THE REAR ATTACK ON 2M SEALS AND THE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL OF IŠTAR

Many of the seals we have looked at have involved the divine couple Baal-Ištar (whose story in the following millennium is replaced only by name-change by Venus and Adonis or Artemis and Endymion in more condensed form) and the iconography of their representative animals, the bull and lioness. One seal whose impression is illustrated below was not included in the catalogue - a limestone EDII seal from Tell Asmar²⁴⁰. Although on the top register there are two lion and prey groups, strictly speaking they are a mixture between the Uruk Stance (the lions are upright on their hind legs) with a plain Rear Attack (the prey is couchant). The human-headed bulls, usually taken to represent the mountains of the East, are heraldically placed either side of a Scorpion, Sign of the Autumn Equinox. The catalogue entry says a Moon crescent floats in the sky (difficult to see). Following the convention so common on ED Uruk Stance seals a hunter enters the fray, kneeling to spear the lion on the right. Behind him is a space left blank for an inscription.



Ill.7- 73 Tell Asmar SCS758

The lower register is unusual in depicting on the left what at first glance looks like a horned, possibly bearded, King or God on an animal throne, flanked by attendants and a beer pot with straw, watching a procession of people approaching a ziggurat. Frankfort's catalogue entry says the seated figure is measuring a plano-convex brick held up to him by a naked builder priest and that the two figures either side of the ziggurat are adding bricks to it, but this interpretation is so far-fetched, since the person before the enthroned figure is more likely to be making a libation, and the pair either side of the ziggurat lift their hands to heaven, a gesture, we know, of calling up the presence of God or Goddesses in witness. The procession of people coming in from the right could equally well be involved in a ritual celebrating an astronomical event related to the ziggurat's function (they seem to be carrying baskets on their heads, though not necessarily with bricks in them). Given the lion attacks feature so prominently on the top row, rather like a heading for a poster, I believe the scene shows the enactment of a key calendrical moment, such as the New Year celebration (one and the same as the Ištar Festival itself). We could thus be looking at a conflated image of the ceremonies just analysed above for the Mari Ištar Festival programme, and in fact a different text (from Uruk this time) gives other details of a

²⁴⁰ Frankfort SCSCat.758, according to the catalogue entry found West of zone E 22:1 of the site

section of the Ištar Festival, translated by Sylvie Lackenbacher²⁴¹ in the following lines, quite firmly describing the procession of Ištar to the *Bīt akīti* on the 8th and 9th days of the Festival:

‘... Les Filles de l’Eanna et d’Uruk [and many others] se lèveront, puis à la cour intérieur descendront, puis... quand le soleil se lèvera, les dieux tous ensemble se dirigeront vers Ištar; le roi intronisera le grand prêtre... ‘

Further lines follow that describe the ensuing feast and libations. Ištar’s enthroned statue is placed at the door of the sanctuary and all the Gods in the courtyard process towards it as further libations and offerings are made to it, very much on the lines of the two main texts framed in red that we have already used as our guide. *The piece ends with a cup being offered to Ištar.* Going back to the Tell Asmar seal with this text in mind - and remembering also that the lion-bull attack on seals such as *Ratt-19* and *Ratt-28* can be used as Venus’ identifying attribute - the pair of them over the ziggurat scene emphasizes to me that the event in the second register under them could be in honour of this Goddess, and that the enthroned figure is more likely to be a female divinity - Venus herself in the form of Inanna with her long locks.

Thus on Early Second Millennium seals we cannot go far wrong by provisionally reading the Rear Attack on any seal it appears on as a pointer to those high points of the Year upon which the calibration of the entire calendar depended, and whose good management resulted in an effective government speaking with authority. As we have noted often already, the Rear Attack at secondary level then turns into a cipher proclaiming the power of the Government, like any national Coat of Arms in the Royal Courts of Justice in Britain today.

²⁴¹ ‘Un Nouveau Fragment de la ‘Fête d’Ištar’ RA LXX 1976, 39-50

ICONOGRAPHY OF MATERIAL FOLLOWING THE PERIOD OF CHRONOLOGICAL FOCUS C

A: REAR ATTACK ITEMS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM

This is the very period most under question by chronologists, who vary between placing the start of the New Kingdom as early as c.1540 (conventional) to as late as 1190 (David Rohl - see the right-hand column of our Chronological Table captioned as *III.7- 8*). The excavation of Alalakh was important for providing firm stratigraphy in a sea of doubt, though even for this site there is debate about dating its levels. I have taken a middle path and drawn up the table on the next page as a temporary and very rough guide for the Chronology of the Second Half of the Second Millennium using the simplified chronology for Crete and Mycenae of Olga Krzyszkowska²⁴² as its basis:

Overall, in this catalogue we can just get away with grouping the seals of the second half of the 2M into a catch-all group following the Post-Classical period in Syria (for Teissier ending 1550) to the end of the century - seeing them as more or less contemporary, first with Hyksos turbulence in Egypt that impacted on the Levant, and then by the imperial reach of the XVIIIID into the Levant until the rise of the Hittites. It is difficult to disentangle and put into strict chronological order seals from Alalakh and Nuzi in relation to each other - or Mitanni seals in general from a variety of other sites extending as far as Cyprus²⁴³. What is obvious is that - as both Edith Porada²⁴⁴ and Diana Stein²⁴⁵ have commented - a range of work, some of outstanding craftsmanship and other work rough and substandard, perpetuated at local level commonplace features of the enduring tradition of Mesopotamian iconography, mixed in with more recent input from NW Syria and Cappadocia. So there is nothing much new to say about them (*Ratt-30/32/33/35*) other than to note them as indicators of political continuity, but also of the fragmentation of power and art - such that by the turn of the second half of the 2M the centre of gravity had moved away from Syria to Hittite Anatolia, mainland Greece and the islands in between (to as far down as Lower Egypt) all still drawing on oriental influences to express their individual character in one great melting-pot of interchange - the high water-mark being the Amarna Age.

Weaving in Minoan and Mycenaean artefacts in detail with Levantine chronology and artefacts will form the Chronological Focus of *Catalogue D: The Back Lunge*, and the Levant in the second half of the Second Millennium will come under scrutiny in the Chronological Focus of *Catalogue E: The Forward Attack*. In this catalogue to give a temporary overview of interaction between the Aegean, Anatolia and the Levant we only roughly interleave Rear Attack items from the contemporary Aegean world (*Ratt-31/34*). To avoid repetition it is also worth matching up the Rear Attack entries for this half of the millennium with the ones in *Catalogue B*:

²⁴² Olga Krzyszkowska *Aegean Seals: An Introduction* London 2005

²⁴³ The most comprehensive attempt is Berthe Salje's *Der 'Common Style' der Mitanniglyptik und die Glyptik der Levante und Zyperns in der Späten Bronzezeit* (Baghdader Forschungen XI) 1990 Mainz - referred to in references as *SaljeCat*.

²⁴⁴ Edith Porada (passim) *Seal Impressions of Nuzi* (AASOR XXIV) New Haven 1947

²⁴⁵ Diana Stein 'Nuzi Glyptic: the Eastern Connection' in Hallo and Winter (eds) *Proceedings of the XLVe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale pt II: Seals and Sealing* Bethesda MD 2001

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

Century	Period	CRETE	MAINLAND	SYRIA	EGYPT
3000	EMI	PRE-PALATIAL	EHI/ECI		OLD KINGDOM
2500	EMII	Mesara tholoi	EHII/ECII Mainland corridor houses		DI-VI
2200	EMIII/MMIA		EHIII/ECIII	2300 Ebla Palace G	
1950	MMIB	PROTO-PALATIAL First palaces built	MH/MC	1974	FIP
	MMIIA		Minoan Aegean Islands	KÜLTEPE TO 1740	
	MMIIB				PRECLASSICAL
1700		Destructions		1700-1620 Alalakh VII - 1620	
	MMIII	NEO-PALATIAL	<i>Mycenae Circle B</i>	1820-1740 CLASSICAL A	
1600/	MMIIIB/	Second palaces built	LHI/LCI	1720-1620 CLASSICAL B	
1575	LMIA	Earthquake	Thera earthquake <i>Mycenae Circle A</i>	1600-1550	SIP
1525	LMIA peak		Thera Volcano	POST-CLASSICAL	Hyksos Period
1500	LMIB		LH IIA Vapheio tholos	1620 Alalakh VI-V 1500	Minoan frescoes Avaris
1450		Destructions		1550-1535 MITANNI peak	NEW KINGDOM DXVIII
1425	LMII	Knossos sole palace	LH IIB	1620 Alalakh IV 1500	Hatshepsut
1375	LMIIIA1		LHIIIA1 First mainland palaces		Tuthmoses III
1350	LMIIIA2	Knossos destroyed?	LHIIIA2 Uluburun shipwreck	1430-1330 NUZI	Amenhotep III Amarna
1300	LMIIIB	POST-PALATIAL	LHIIIB Last mainland palaces built		D XIX Ramses II
1250			LH IIIB1: Destructions		DYNASTY XX
1200	LM IIIC		LH IIIB2: Final Destructions	LH IIIC: POST-PALATIAL	RAMESSES III
1100/1050		SUB-MINOAN	SUB-MYCENAEAN	LATE HITTITE STATES TELL HALAF, KARKEMISH, etc.	
1050/1000		EARLY IRON AGE			TIP

III.7- 74 Roughed out Chronological Chart showing conventional Egyptian and Minoan-Mycenaean Periods against Alalakh, Nuzi and Mitanni seal periods

The Uruk Stance. Given the two types are so close (as just seen on the Tell Asmar seal) I have even put one or two in both catalogues, while-comments in the earlier catalogue can also apply in general to the Rear Attack items, especially the Minoan and Middle Assyrian seals and those from the Levantine seaboard.

Some believe the appearance of Aegean elements on Syrian seals (e.g. *Ratt-25/26*) can be explained by the arrival in the Levant of craftsmen fleeing the area after the Thera earthquake - but the Thera Foundation on its website looks at it the other way round: that on the evidence of the Alalakh seals, items such as the griffin - and spiral guilloche chains of all kinds - arrived in Crete and other centres *from* Syria and Anatolia via trade and diplomatic routes, so that precedence should be accorded to the North Syrians for the decorative elaboration of creatures such as the griffin (whose wings and head resemble an Indian cockerel with peacock head-feathers). But this composite creature can in fact be traced back to 5-4M Susa - and it was North Syria that was always in direct communication with Elam as its ally against Babylon. Again, despite the common idea that the bull-leaping motif must be purely Minoan, the Alalakh seals (Collon 1975 - last item (left) of *Ratt-26f*) appear to indicate Syria depicted it first. Was the bull-leaping ritual amongst the acrobatic shows like those described for Mari at Feast of Ištar celebrations - and thus included alongside other New Year motifs - or did some other point in the Year require this ritual, and what was its message?

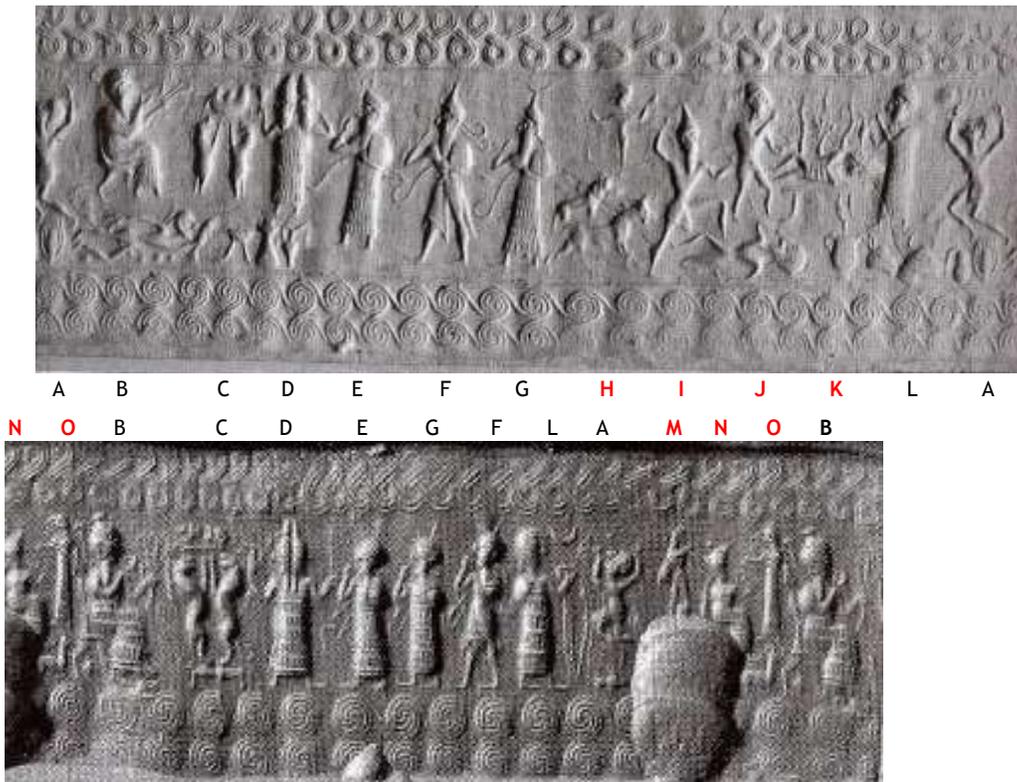
Amongst all the seals of the second half of the millennium on which the Rear Attack features, the three Tyszkiewicz Group seals stand out as exceptional, and we should linger to throw the spotlight on them that they deserve, since whilst being evidence of the continuity of their Syro-Anatolian past, they also embody the new tendencies of the emerging Syro-Hittite empire to be explored next, most notably through the seals of Ras Shamra in *Catalogue E*, since it is an irony that the Hittites themselves never used the lion and prey motif.

THE TYSZKIEWICZ STAMP-CYLINDER GROUP

Having just read how the Feast of Ištar at Mari ends with the return of Baal to his throne attended by a convocation of the entire pantheon of the Gods, it is fitting that the pair of seals itemized under *Ratt-28* present us with a full processions of the Gods, most of them familiar to us in their second millennium form.

Alexander²⁴⁶, whose overall narrative we take as our main guide, says 'no human priests or worshippers participate' - but it does look as if at least the libator (L) is human. The starting point for considering them at all is the Rear Attack used as Venus' mount on the Tyszkiewicz seal itself (now in Boston). We will attempt to read its contents in relation to the closely related Aydin seal bought on the market by the Louvre (no. AO 927), since they have at least two-thirds of content in common. For ease of reference we reproduce both these seals again below since they require step-by-step scrutiny in order to flush out the more unusual aspects of the iconography of the Baal-Ištar myth. We try to avoid too lengthy an iteration of some of the more peripheral interpretations put forward by various scholars - the background we have already established about seals of the first half of the 2M should help in this.

²⁴⁶ Robert L Alexander 'The Tyszkiewicz Group of Stamp-Cylinders' *Anatolica* V 1973-6, 141-215 (with plates)



Ill.7- 75 The Boston Tyskiewicz seal (above) and the Louvre Aydin seal below

Ronzevalle²⁴⁷ hit the right note in typifying these seals as ‘Syro-Anatolian’ or ‘Syro-Hittite’. The stamp seal ends of these haematite stamp-cylinders, as Alexander (*ibid.*) puts it, have ‘been related to excavated Anatolian materials dating around the time of Hammurabi’ and the Tyszkiewicz seal in particular was deemed to be of Anatolian manufacture. However, the carving style and more mechanical rendition of the Aydin seal reveals some changes of emphasis that came about in the second half of the millennium due to Mitanni influence on artefacts commissioned by the new Great Power in the region - the Hittites. Overall the seals reflect Hittite monumental art in showing such processions of the Gods as seen not only at Yazilikaya, but also prefigured on a few Kültepe Colony seals showing Gods on their animal steeds (**Ratt-17**). Discussion of its dating ranges from the XVIIIC BC by Alexander himself, to an early extreme of the XIX BC from Hogarth. In the catalogue I regard them both as dating to between the XVth/XIVth centuries BC (Hogarth’s own final conclusion) not only because of their strong Hittite character, but also because archaisms such as the use of the *kaunakès* dress still places them within the old Mesopotamian seal tradition.

Much of the Akkadian or Anatolian-based imagery of the Gods already identified on seals of the first half of the 2M is easy to pick out, as they mostly display the anthropomorphic versions of the Gods in Levantine form as related to our Gods Table (**Ill.7- 53**). The figures held in common, as marked with letters of the alphabet in

²⁴⁷ S J Ronzevalle was the first to attempt an interpretation of the Tyszkiewicz Seal’s iconography, in ‘Le Cylindre Tyszkiewicz’ *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph XII* 1927 177-209 (with plates).

black, are easy to identify. Those marked by red letters are more problematic, and these new elements seem to allude not only to extreme and rare incidents in the Baal story but also, as Ronzevalle suggests, to the Hittite genealogy of Gods as preserved by Philo of Byblos. Looking at other seals of the time less complex in their imagery will help us understand these less familiar figures. So let us now run through them.

L: The libator, on the bottom seal with Crescent at eye level, *faces* an anguished figure we might temporarily call ‘the drowning God’²⁴⁸ (on the top seal the libator has his back to him). We appear to have a human officiating here rather than a God - possibly a priest, but more likely the ruler who commissioned the seal to honour the Gods.

A: The figure in streams of water, with ball and ripples over his head, on the Boston seal is placed over a bull-head, sheep head and sprouting wheat-ear. Williams-Forte (ibid.) interpreted this figure as a drowning man representing Yam because of the surrounding water waves and fish²⁴⁹, but Ronzevalle sees him as a God of Rain. There is yet another possibility we come to later.

B: The Top God, seated on an animal-legged throne²⁵⁰, holds a cup and three curved rods (as if to suggest rulership over Heaven, Earth and Underworld) while a mace sprouts from his shoulder (this circle on a stick Ronzevalle takes as a Sun sigil, meaning the God would be Shamash, rather than Ea/El as Alexander thinks. In fact on the Boston seal one of the curved rods is replaced by a straight rod with rectangle at the end, and the drawings of the seals seem to indicate that amongst this variety of staffs of office the axe and/or mace of El stands out. On the Aydin seal this God either has a star over his head or his spiked helmet has a knob on top (the divergence between photographic and drawn images goes to show up the need to inspect the seals in person with a magnifying glass). On the Boston seal, the enthroned God floats over a swimmer holding a fish - with markedly definite dots above and below him (six or seven) which Ronzevalle interprets as a general God of Rivers, but could conceivably be the Sibitti (c.f. *III.7- 51* right).

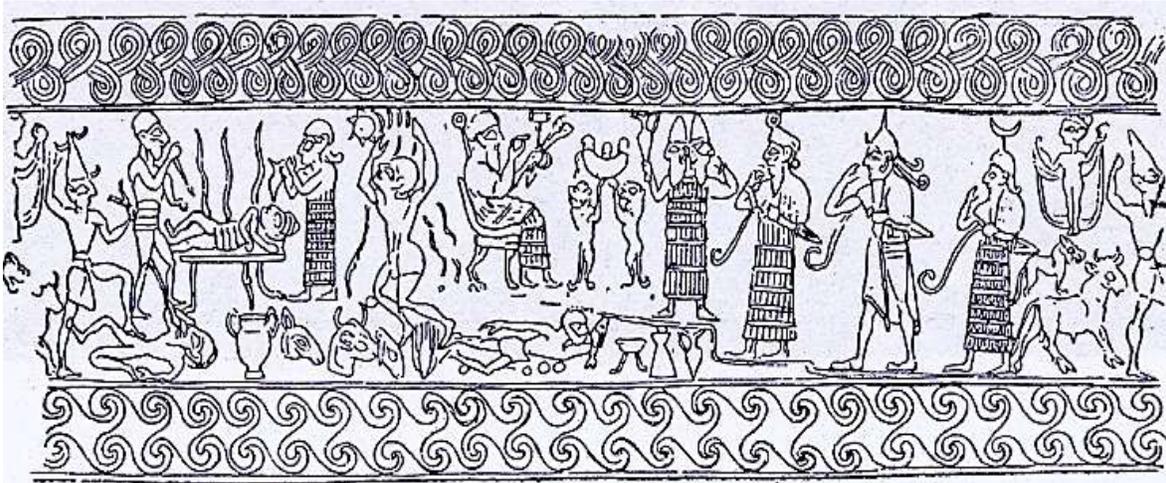
M/N/O: On the Aydin seal behind Ea/Shamash is a heraldic group showing eagle-headed attendants either side of an enthroned Goddess wearing a squarish beret with a star over her head. The chipped area beneath has only the remains of one deer-type animal under the attendant on the right. Her insertion pushes ‘the drowning God’ (A) from behind Shamash to behind her own throne on the other seal.

C: On the Boston seal an offering table is held up by two lions on their hind legs, with a Crescent on it, while on the Aydin seal it is replaced possibly by a lion-head or snake, and small bird offering (on the latter seal the Crescent has been moved along to its position in front of the Libator).

²⁴⁸ E Williams-Forte LADDERS TO HEAVEN exhibition, *Royal Ontario Museum*, last paras of entry no. 215, relating to our *III.7- 50* (right).

²⁴⁹ Ultimately the canonical solution was to show Yam/Tiamat as a water dragon, a simpler way to convey the undulating, monstrous nature of the Great Waters. Berossos described Tiamat as a woman with a body of water with fishes swimming inside her, yet in Levantine art, the Tiamat/Yam in anthropomorphic form is never depicted as a woman. Note that Baal overcomes Yam, but it is Anat who annihilates Mot.

²⁵⁰ Alexander says there is a lion under the throne of the top seal, held on a leash by the God and that on the Louvre seal the leash is still visible, but with no lion on the end of it (I see no lion under the throne on either, though the legs are clearly animal legs of some kind).



Ill.7- 76 Helpful line drawings of (top) the Boston and (bottom) Aydin seals, from Dussaud²⁵¹ - not fully accurate

D: Two-headed Usmu holding up an Anatolian-type libation jug stands before the enthroned God, acting as major domo to introduce the trio of Gods E/F/G on the level below him - on the Boston seal he himself stands one step below the Top God, over a small ritual brazier, vase and libation jug.

E: The God with square hat is Shamash or El, depending on the identity of the enthroned God.

F: Baal with spiked helmet is second on the Boston seal and the last God on the other.

G: The Crescent moon on the helmet clearly identifies this figure as Nannar the Moon God (on the Aydin seal he is second in order).

H: On the Boston seal Venus displays herself standing on a somewhat passive version of a Rear Attack, and represents the grand female Goddess of the pantheon in a different way from the enthroned Goddess on the other seal at M/N/O. All commentators hesitate as to whether whether the bull should in fact be related to Baal, next to her, but Alexander himself sees the two beasts as in an attack relationship and

²⁵¹ R Dussaud *Prétydiens Hittites et Achéens* Paris 1958

squarely placed beneath the figure of Ištar as her double animal steed. Since we have mentioned other precedents for the use of the lion and prey as her mount, I take it that here the Rear Attack refers to Venus also. There is a roughly contemporary instance of a Nuzi seal also showing a ruler offering to Venus, again unambiguously standing on a Rear Attack (Porada *NuziCat* 741) which we have placed at *Ratt-30* (see also *Ratt-30f* following), reproduced again here for ease of reference:



Ill.7- 77 Ruler offering a goat to Venus standing on a Rear Attack - NuziCat 741

I: On the Boston seal this figure is universally interpreted as Baal, striding up in smiting pose over a dead man, who initially we may identify as Mot overcome by Baal, meaning Baal appears twice (which is not out of the question). Other seals seem to confirm this reading (*Ill.7- 78* below). On the left seal (*BNCat* 464), again a Baal-Reshef-style figure leaps over the mountains to pull down a man by his hair in a later version of the battle with Mot/Kumarbi (note Scorpio behind him next to two Rear Attacks on a double register), and there are traces of Mot's serpent coming up from under the Mountain. Bottom right is a Kültepe Colony seal illustrated by Dussaud (*ibid.*) showing Baal on his Bull before Ea enthroned over the goat-fish of Capricorn, between them the Sun in Crescent. Behind Ea is a figure holding a spear and a handful of other crossed weapons trampling down one figure and felling a second who falls upside down behind Ea - a close parallel with the attacking and attacked figures on the Boston seal.



Ill.7- 78 Precedents on less complex seals for Baal's attack on Mot/Kumarbi

K: Linked to these scenes and to this part of the story, on the Boston seal is a skeletal man on a sacrificial table placed over an urn and sheep's head. Ronzevalle²⁵² swore that under raking light he could see the

²⁵² Dussaud disagreed with Ronzevalle's original interpretation of the sacrificial figure on the table as Usmu, at which point the latter wrote his riposte, 'L'Iconographie du Cylindre Tyszkiewicz: Rectifications' in *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* XV 1930/31 261-80 (with further plates of the seal *and* sealing, photographed under different angles of raking light in an attempt show up the double face (not double head) of Usmu. Unless able to inspect the original with good lighting and a magnifying glass, I cannot decide, but certainly details in the line drawings we have on offer from Dussaud are lacking in accuracy at crucial points even in comparison with the photographs we use here which are not clearly enough defined.

figure as bi-faced, which Alexander accepts and Dussaud does not. Because of this Ronzevalle thinks he must be Usmu, but the stronger likelihood is that we are being shown Mot's final destruction here. Dussaud, however, believes this is a depiction of the Earthquake God inside the Mountain - in fact not too far off a description of Mot in Hades if we read the myth thoroughly as Margalit (*ibid.*) took the trouble to do. To understand these images of violence, both Ronzevalle and Dussaud turn to the Hittite mythology of the Uranids preserved by Philo of Byblos and remind us that when Ouranos is killed by Kronos, drops from the castrated God's testicles form fountains and rivers, explaining the dots around the victim on the table. In the inherited Greek myth²⁵³, it is Venus who rises, just off the coast of Cyprus at Paphos, from the foam of semen generated by Uranus' castration. Since present-day Aydin in Lydia was renamed Tralles in Classical times, Dussaud interestingly thinks we should look at the Louvre seal as 'Pre-Lyidian'.

J: Although part of the heraldic group shown under K, this figure can also be read as the complement to the Libator on the other side.

THE THIRD SEAL OF THE GROUP, A0927

As Hittite art evolved from the local Cappadocian style of Kültepe, it used the prototypes offered by early Syrian and Anatolian work - easy to spot in the above two seals - and then adapted them to their particular



Ill.7- 79 Top, Louvre seal A0 20138²⁵⁴; bottom, line detail of right-hand part of top register from Dussaud (*ibid.*)

²⁵³ Ronzevalle (*ibid.*) fills out the full genealogy of the Uranids provided by Philo of Byblos which is said to have been taken on by Hesiod. Thus Philo gives Uranus' parents as El and Bérouth, and Uranus married Ge, his sister, usurping El. They have four children, Kronos, Bétulos, Dagan and Atlas, and Kronos in turn kills Uranos 'with the help of Venus'. From Kronos are born Persephone and Athena.

²⁵⁴ For analysis and account of its acquisition see A Parrot 'Cylindre nouvellement acquis' *Syria* XXVIII 1951, 180-90

Indo-European culture and cult needs. The reworked third seal of the Tyszkiewicz Group show above is thought by Alexander to originally date to the time of the other two seals in the group, but that it was then recarved, possibly even dating to as early as the 14/13C BC, since it has a 'Hittite Empire' character. It certainly becomes more decodable when related to the first two seals of the Tyszkiewicz Group, since from the impression of the top register's left side we see winged Anat from one direction marshalling a similar trio of Gods as on the other two seals, this time towards Venus who has zig-zag lines issuing from her shoulders. On the line drawing detail of the right side of the top register given underneath the impression, towards Venus from the other side Nergal rides up in his chariot, backed by griffin and eagle-headed libator, displaced ankh symbol and curious crouching figure with waving tresses which may be another way of depicting the 'drowning god' Yam. Yet since this figure seems to emerge from under two mountain Gods, it may be Mot - but Dussaud again interprets the figure as an Earthquake God, an extension of the mountain Gods he runs from on all fours. Ištar seems to have appropriated Baal's lightning bolts on her shoulders, and a fascinating re-emergence of the archaic double twisted snake links her to Nergal/Baal in the chariot. The astronomical importance of Jupiter is that he spends one year in each zodiacal sign, much in the same way the snake sloughs off its skin once a year. He thus takes twelve years to complete a full circuit of the zodiac, possibly a reason for the Mesopotamian world eventually sticking with the twelve-sign zodiac in the First Millennium. Baal placed next to Venus in most cases can refer to Venus' importance for the earlier eight-fold zodiac discussed in *Chapter 19*. Both planets make a Power Couple, offering useful checks against Sun and Moon cycles, with clear-cut starting points every twelve and eight Earth years. This is a double-register seal with a less comprehensive Gods procession at the top, and on the register below a ritual hunting scene incorporating the relevant Gods of the Hunt. Alexander believed he could spot a Rear Attack in part of the scene, if a somewhat passive, borderline version. This scene both looks back to earlier Kültepe prototypes and forward to the famous Assyrian lion-hunt reliefs where in all cases the hunt was a ritual of several dimensions of meaning involving the propitiation of the Gods, and could even involve dimensions about death and the underworld. But this ritual is quite different from making use of the lion and prey group as the multi-layered symbol we are investigating.

OVERVIEW OF LEVANTINE ARTEFACTS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE MILLENNIUM UP TO 'THE COLLAPSE' OF 1200

With Mitanni (*Ratt-35*), then Hittite hegemony of the Levant, Mesopotamian choice of iconography continued in eastern zones such as Nuzi (*Ratt-30*), Tell Brak/Tell Rimah (*Ratt-32/36*) and Assur (*Ratt-36f*), but westwards in Crete (*Ratt-31*) and Mycenaen Athens (*Ratt-34*) the more elegant style which may in fact have been inspired by Syrians rather than Minoans spread down the cities of the coast, as the catalogue entries show. In the last two decades when evanescent chiefdoms came and went under the shadow of the break-up of even the great empires, much local invention went on in the way the perennial imagery was used and presented, forming a nexus of new practice which the emerging kingdoms of the new millennium were to consolidate and make use of.

B: REAR ATTACK ITEMS OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

In later catalogues we will tease out the chronology of the first half of the millennium to seriate artefacts more precisely. Suffice it here to say that after the confusion of the so-called Dark Ages at the turn of the millennium, we see the successive rise of Assyria (*Ratt-37-41 & 47*), Babylonia, Persia (*Ratt-54/55*), Greater Greece and the Phoenicians (*Ratt-42-46* and *48-53*), all of whose use of the Rear Attack within the cycle of the CANEA provides straightforward evidence of just how intermeshed their iconographical programmes were as each empire rose and fell on each other's ashes in a seamless, opportunistic process making use of the same iconography with slight changes of emphasis. After the Persian Wars in the west there was a break in the use of a motif (Xanthos being the exception - *Ratt-57*) that had implications of alliance with Persia (*Ratt 57f*) but with the rise of Alexander in the Hellenistic period the Rear Attack was again in use (*Ratt-58/59/60/62*). Surrounding these kingdoms, further north in Central Asia were the nomadic Scythians, interacting as much with Persia as with Macedonain Greece, who created or bought from them superb artefacts of gold using the Rear Attack (*Ratt-56/58/59f/60*).

From amongst these items, again let us focus on a few keynotes that help to make sense of the lesser artefacts classed alongside them.

NEO-ASSYRIAN OBELISKS, BRONZE BOWLS AND RELIEF EMBROIDERY

Neo-Assyrian art seems to have used the Rear Attack as a formulaic ready-made from the Middle Assyrian Period, shown only bronze bowls (*Ratt-37-38*), robe embroidery on reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II and his officials in

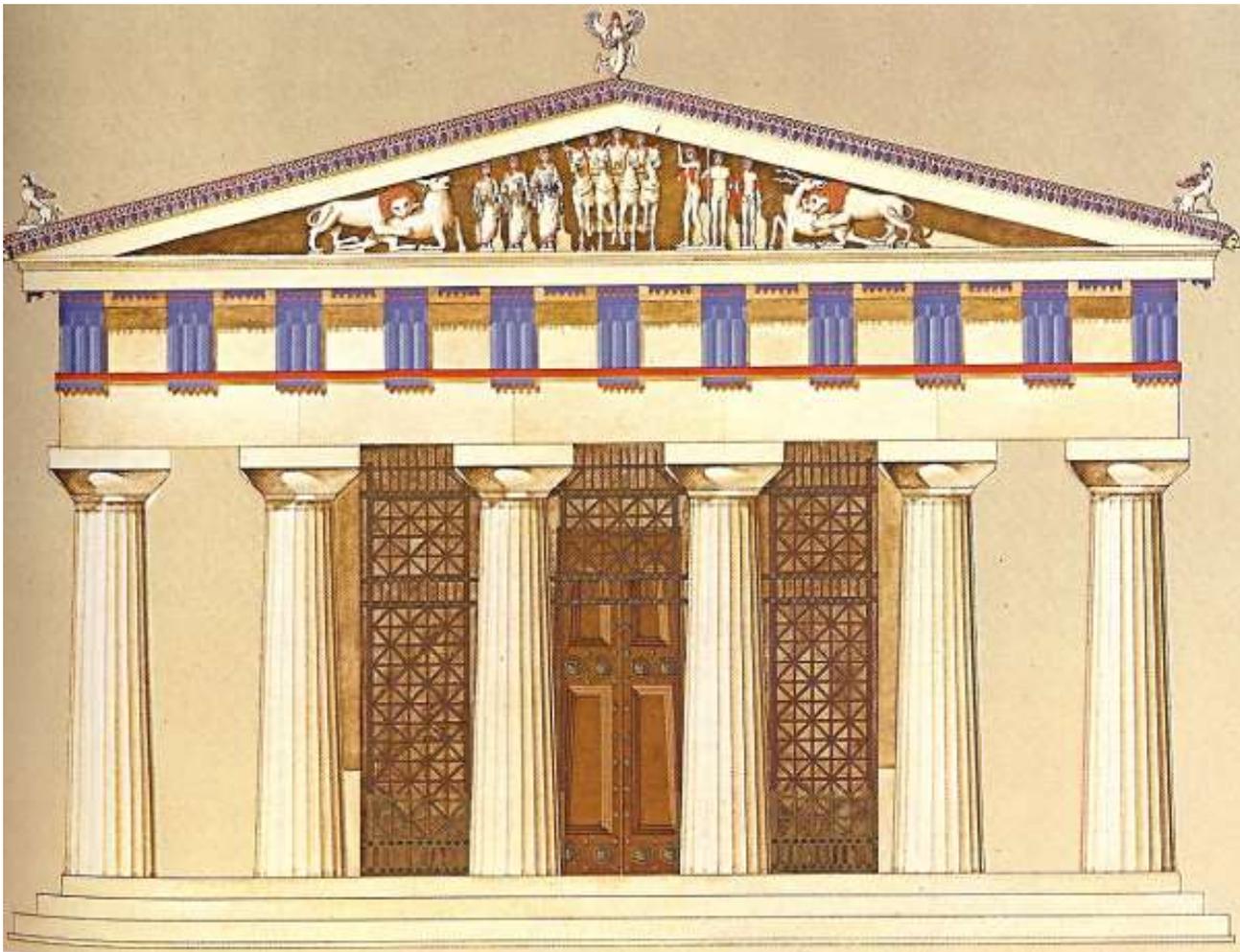


Ill.7- 80 Main sections of the White Obelisk next to the Black Obelisk as displayed in the British Museum

Room G of his Palace at Nimrud (**Ratt-40**) - and on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, for the Neo-Assyrians never gave it monumental treatment (portrayals of lion hunts abound in straightforward realism without the same lion and prey symbolic intent). The Rear Attack had appeared on the White Obelisk - probably made in the Middle Assyrian period itself under Ashurnasirpal I - contrasted in the photograph above with the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III made three centuries later (**Ratt-41**): on both the motif seems to be reproduced ready-made from prototypes copied from Middle Assyrian seals (**Ratt-36**).

THE ORACLE AT DELPHI

Delphi for most of its Archaic and Classical history came under the control of the Phocaeans in NW Anatolia -



Ill.7- 81 East Front of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi as redesigned under the Alkmeonids 513-505 - from Themelis the very zone that had been the theatre for tumultuous tribal warfare between the Trojans and Mycenaeans. The Archaic Temple of Apollo of Delphi with two Rear Attacks on its East Pediment (**Ratt-53**) replaced an earlier limestone temple which had been burned down in 548. At early stages of the work it was decided to replace the poros sculptures on the East Pediment with ones of Parian marble which would have glistened

white in the morning as the sun rose in the east. Apollo himself was a God taken over from the Hittite world (*Telepinus/Delphinus*) and, Markduk-style, Apollo was said to have founded the site by overcoming the huge Python in the mountain cave belonging to Gaia - hence his title of The Pythian Apollo. To atone for killing it he then spent eight years as a shepherd, and on his return the Pythian Games were instituted, initially to be celebrated every eight years (a Venus cycle). As we have shown earlier in this catalogue, the weapon Venus sometimes uses is the dog-leg shape of Ursa Major or Minor, pointers to the North Pole (*Ill.7- 43*), and interestingly a central astronomical concept residing the Apollo myth was that he spent nine months in Delphi, but travelled to Hyperborea (thought to be Britain) November to January during the period of the Winter Solstice when the Bears are high in the sky²⁵⁵ (an alternative myth puts Apollo as visiting Lycia one month every year). Overall, Apollo in fact stood not simply for the Sun, but was more heir to Gilgamesh, travelling through each Sign of the Zodiac and returning to Delphi for the Spring Equinox festival - represented, I believe, by the lion attacking bull on the East Pediment of his Temple. There are further overtones of his association with the eight-year Venus Cycle as marked by the Pythian Games, underlining our overall conclusion that the methods of calendrical astronomy of Assyria and Babylon had spread simultaneously eastwards to Persepolis and westwards to Delphi, Athens and Sparta. In fact we hope to show in our fuller exposition in *Catalogue F* (though already flagged up in this one - *Ratt-54-Ratt-56 and Ratt-57f*) that during the 7-5C BC any lion and prey depiction on monuments can be a straightforward indicator of oriental - most immediately Persian - influence (but not always). The motif is seen on contemporary seals from most Satrapies such as the Sumerian heartland now in the Babylonian province (*Ratt-55*) and as far west as Motya, the small island off Sicily where Phoenicians (often harnessed as the sea-faring arm of Persia) repeatedly used the Lion and Prey motif-*(Ratt-57f)*.

Only in the petty kingdom satellites such as Urartu or the Neo-Hittite kingdoms do we see quaint provincial variations on what if looked at from a wider perspective was the generative ocean of belief and imagery from which both Persian and the Greek art emerged where use of the Rear Attack was both common and well crafted. Only when during the 5C relations polarized into open conflict was a line between East and West drawn, with the Lion and Prey symbol tellingly dropped thereafter on the Greek side. The Rear Attack items in the catalogue show how up to then it was used as much by Persians as by Greeks with Ionian sympathies, such that at Xanthos on Building G on a purely Lycian structure (*Ratt-57*) we just cannot say whether the inspiration is one or the other, or even deriving from a common root heritage in Anatolia in the millennium before (Metzger²⁵⁶, however, makes much of the large amount of 5C Attic pottery found at the site). We can only generalize about the last quarter of the material in this catalogue that it plays out the theme of the transmission of oriental influences to the Greek world which had actually been initiated in the Second Millennium when Minoan and Mycenaean culture diffused via both the Levant and Hittite Anatolia throughout the Cyclades as far as Lydia (itself originally colonized by Mycenaean Athens).

²⁵⁵ During his absence the rites of Dionysos were celebrated at Delphi instead - exactly the feasting and looseness of behavior we associate with the Christmas season.

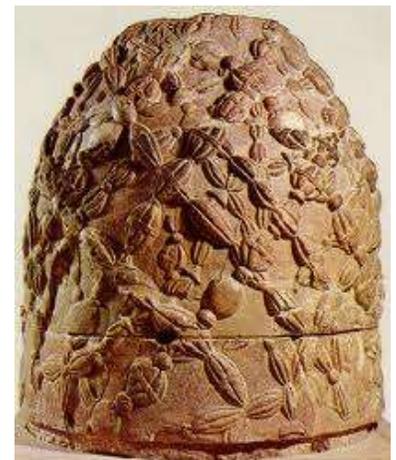
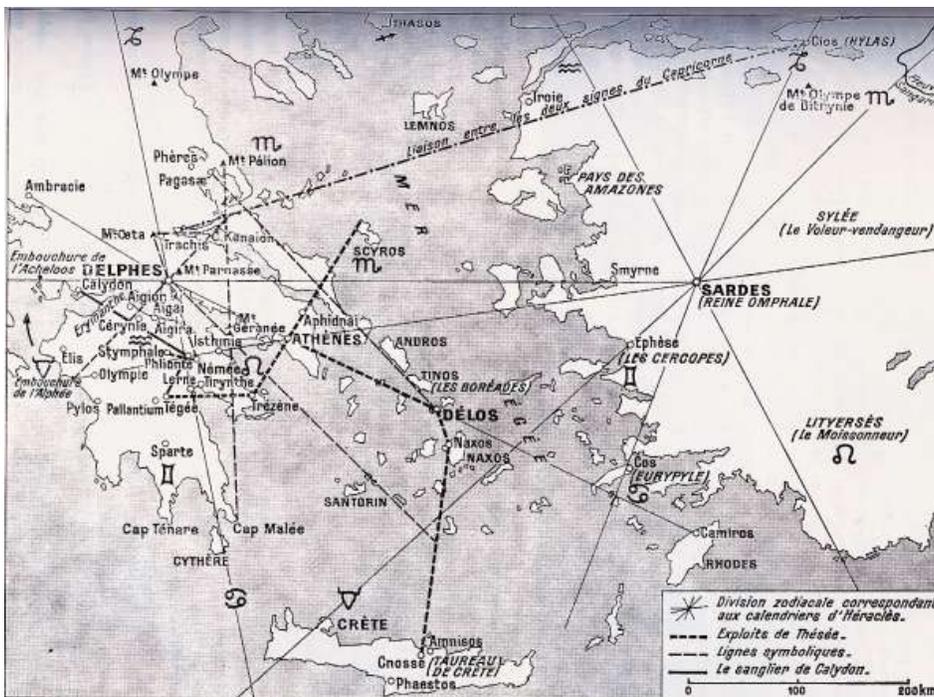
²⁵⁶ H Metzger 'La Frise de Satyres et de Fauves de L'Acropole de Xanthos' in *Mélanges Mansel I* Ankara 1974 127-137

THE CANON OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

CATALOGUES OF EVIDENCE

C: THE REAR ATTACK

It is the rise of a more modern integrated world created in Anatolia and Greece 900-500 across the Cyclades as described in Herodotos that helps explain similarities of iconography on artefacts from all round the Mediterranean in the Archaic world, centred on Delphi - which here deserves a closer look as the top representative of these trends during the Archaic Period where so many international strands came together, whether as offerings made or the services of the Oracle sought - with the omphalos in the porch of the Temple of Apollo consciously projecting Delphi as the Navel of the World for the time (again, Metzger *ibid.* points out the widespread use of the lion and prey motif on pottery and coins from all around the outreach of Delphi, implying its sculptures were the prototypes commemorated by such smaller items indicating allegiance to its dominance, behind which stands the colonization programme initiated by Delphi around 800). Following the line connecting them both, Delphi and Athens consciously aligned to the 0° meridian of the time - and the struggle with Persia was partly about the conflict between Delphi and Persepolis to control it. But we will pursue the use of the lion and prey subject more deeply in *Catalogue F: The Bilateral Attack* under the relevant Chronological Focus where we consider Jean Richer's daring zodiacal interpretation of the function of these two cities (see map below) which will allow us to go into the iconography of the Archaic Period in fuller detail and make sense of what might seem the anomalous reliance of kings of Egypt, Lydia, Sicily and North Africa on the Oracle at Delphi - well summed up in the stories of Croesus of Sardis and Amasis of Memphis as recounted by Herodotos in Book I of his *Histories*.



Ill.7- 82 Richer²⁵⁷'s map showing Delphi's centrality to the mainland, Cyclades and Ionia - and the Omphalos (right)

²⁵⁷ Jean Richer

Up to and during the Persian Wars, favouring the Persian rather than the Greek side in its oracles, Delphi was accused of 'Medism'. It had started out as a Phocaeen outpost on the Greek mainland, drawing into Greece the key oriental calendrical iconography of the CANEA through the intermediary of Ionia and the Achaemenid world, and that of course included the subject of the lion attacking its prey - so much so that in the run-up to outright conflict between Greece and Persia - and in its aftermath - we can piece together from this catalogue the many instances of the use of the Rear Attack on pottery, seals and larger stone reliefs which on the one hand reveal the infrastructure of the Persian Empire at work, but on the other replicates the iconography of the Delphi site where the lion attack appears in several contexts, most notably of course on the East Pediment of the Temple of Apollo (*Ratt-53*) in whose front porch the Omphalos was placed.

Following the 8C Ionian colonization programme initiated by Delphi throughout the Mediterranean, it is not always easy to distinguish between Greek and Persian versions of the lion and prey group in that wider distribution, further complicated by the fact that on the Western side it was often the the *Phoenicians* who transmitted the lion and prey symbol, either on their own account or in the name of *either* side - though during the Achaemenid period its take-up in the Eastern half of the Persian Empire up to the Satrapy of India (*Ratt-36f*) is most likely to be Persian. We can certainly keep in mind F Winter's useful concept²⁵⁸ that the appearance of the Rear Attack on smaller items (such as in this catalogue) almost certainly echoes scenes on the great monuments of the Graeco-Persian world, especially Delphi, Athens or Persepolis. We read the same story from the items of *Catalogue E: the Forward Attack* as well as *Catalogue F*. Furthermore, because of regional understanding of equivalences within national Panthea on either side, there seems to be no doubt interpretations of the Rear Attack point to the same realities, with relevant interchange of vocabulary for the key Gods and Goddesses of Syria, Anatolia, Persia and Greece.

LYCIA, PERSIA AND GREECE

Xanthos was occupied by the Persian general Harpagus some time between the capture of Sardis by Cyrus (c. 546) and that of Babylon (538) but Lycia was not forced to become a satrapy since the local rulers were allowed to stay in position as vassals²⁵⁹. At first constrained into alliance with the Persians against Athens during the Persian Wars 490-479, after it Xanthos came under the domination of Athens - which is when the (probably wooden) buildings of the Acropolis were put to the torch by Kimon. Coinage of the time points to conflicts of interest about which side Lycia was on²⁶⁰ - ducking and diving as the rulers and warriors of Xanthos did in their effort to retain their native identity (a mixture of Hittite and Cretan origins from the Trojan War period, in which their hero Sarpedon fought on the Trojan side). Our conclusion in the entry for the Rear Attack on Building G at Xanthos (*Ratt-57*) from its dating is that it must have been a purely Lycian choice using

²⁵⁸ F Winter 'Studien zur Älteren Griechischen Kunst' *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts* XV 1900 82-92

²⁵⁹ The question of distinguishing between Persianised Greeks, indigenous Lycians and Graecised Persians is well analysed according to known facts in N. Sekunda 'Achaemenid Settlement in Caria, Lycia and Greater Phrygia' in (eds) Sancisi-Weerdenburg & Kuhrt *Asia Minor and Egypt: Old Cultures in a New Empire (Achaemenid History VI)* Leiden 1991 83-143

²⁶⁰ See Jan Zahle 'Achaemenid Influences in Lycia (Coinage, Sculpture, Architecture): Evidence for Political Changes during the 5C BC' in Sancisi-Weerdenburg & Kuhrt (*ibid.*) 145-160

precisely the same visual language as Greece and Persia but coming from their indigenous tradition. The placing of a Rear Attack on the platform for Building G has a funerary message about the hero buried there (shown with his chariotry on a remaining relief on the building itself) but from its location it near the Artemis Cella it is probably also signals loyalty to Artemis (the hero having become the equivalent of Baal, taken away by Mot) - but it could have a sub-text pointing to the use of Delphic calendrical methods at Xanthos and in the process be an expression of Lycian administrative power.

PERSIA AND EGYPT

After *Book I* looking at Greek-Ionian relations - with the interaction of the ancestors of Croesus with Delphi versus those of Cyrus with Persia taking centre stage - Herodotus of Halicarnassus in *Book II* of his **Histories** writes down all he knows about Egypt - a country, we have to remember, that he visited when under Persian rule. Pharaoh Amasis of Egypt had entered into alliance with Lydia, Babylon and Sparta in the hope of warding off the Persian threat to his country 555-546 BC, but soon after the accession of his son Psammetichus III in 525, Cyrus' son Cambyses invaded Egypt to initiate the First Persian Dynasty. Since the sacking of Thebes by the Assyrians in 667 BC, Memphis had again become the predominant governing end of Egypt, more accessible geographically for non-native dynasties to use as their residence and link up with other regions of the Persian Empire. This leads us to suppose that the superb Rear Attack from Egypt (**Ratt-54**) is to be read as a Persian statuette made in Egypt at Persian royal command by Egyptian craftsmen. Here it is relevant to give Herodotos' summary of the differences between the Egyptian and Persian calendars, given in two sentences as early as his chapter 4 of *Book II* (eliciting eight pages of commentary on the part of Lloyd²⁶¹):

But as for human affairs, they all [the Egyptian priests] agreed that the Egyptians were the inventors of the year and the division of the course of the seasons in twelve, and they said they found out how to do it from the stars. And they compute these, as I think, more ably than the Greeks, inasmuch as the Greeks put in an intercalary month every third year [in the Babylonian fashion] so as to keep in step with the seasons, whilst the Egyptians make each of the twelve months thirty days and then add five days to make up the year, so that the cycle of the seasons is completed in every year.

In *Catalogue B: the Uruk Stance* we considered the possibility that a key function of the lion attack on its prey was as a symbol of Intercalation which is bound up with the reconciliation of the lunar with the solar year to retain synchronization with the seasons (note again the Sun-Moon symbol over the Rear Attack on the seal we cited in **Ratt-53c**, and see also the Phoenician seal of **Ratt-44**). Anyone reading our Catalogues in sequence will know by now the crucial role the eight-year Venus cycle plays in making that process of reconciliation infinitely easier by providing a double-check. It appears that already in the late 6C BC Delphi, Athens and even Olympia indicated by their use of the lion and prey motif that they were experimenting with that mode of regulating the calendar. To contradict Herodotos, though, we have by now accumulated enough evidence to

²⁶¹ Alan B Lloyd *Herodotus Book II: Commentary* 1-98 Leiden 1976 - see pp.20-28

indicate that it is more likely both Greece and Egypt learned the method from the Babylonian world, and not the other way round! What is interesting the specifically Greek use of athletic games²⁶² a western mode of the Grand Ishtar Festival as a marker for the end of one eight-year Venus cycle and the starting point of the next: initially held every eight years and then as time went on every four years at the half-way point in the cycle - as had happened also in the Babylonian world.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE REAR ATTACK IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

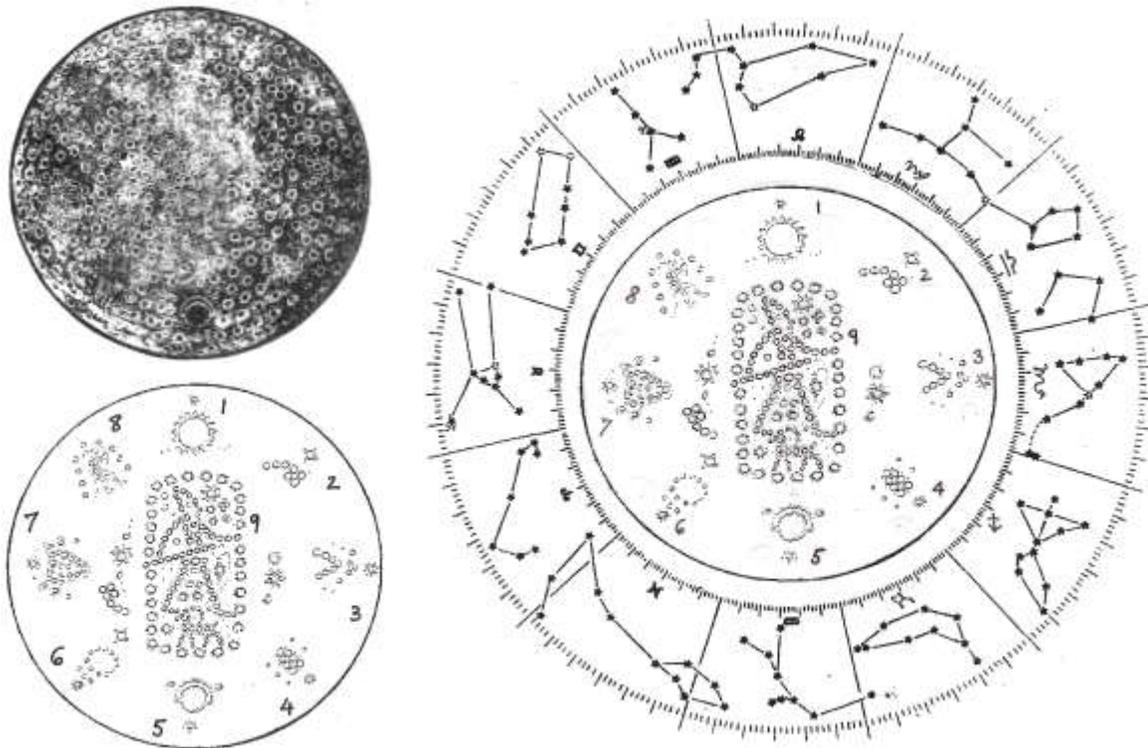
For this period Fernande Hölscher's study is a thorough guide to relevant monuments of the period²⁶³. We have already mentioned why the Rear Attack appears to have gone out of currency during the Classical Period in Greece (this is borne out by later Catalogues for the other compositional types) but it was favoured again as Alexander of Macedon (**Ratt-58**) turned his attention to the East, gradually making the former Persian Empire his own - with a spectacular climax at the burning down of Persepolis by his army. The Rear Attack then reappears on both Greek tomb sculpture and and Scythian gold artefacts (**Ratt-59- Ratt-60**) evidence of intense iconographical osmosis between the two lands. At Pella (**Ratt-59**) the griffin was favoured over the lion as predator (a composite beast probably referring to the line between the Polar Centre represented by the eagle and the Solstitial Axis referred to by the lion) - a way of representing the 0° meridian. Again it is useful to bear in mind F Winter (*ibid.*)'s idea that the smaller items showing a griffin Rear Attack probably replicate the well-known key monuments and mosaic programmes of the time. The sculptures collected together under **Ratt-61** show the last gasp of that long Graeco-Persian tradition where most oriental levels of meaning were kept alive - though other compositional types would still occasionally be used in Roman art - in this work beyond our remit.

²⁶² In 2012 the Olympic Games were held in London soon after a major Transit of Venus on 6 June, indicating that the timing of the Games is still locked in to the Venus-cycle calibration!

²⁶³ Die Bedeutung archaischer Tierkampfbilder Würzburg 1972

CONCLUSIONS ON THE MEANING OF THE REAR ATTACK MATERIAL IN THIS CATALOGUE

In our study of the meaning of the Rear Attack we have been able to add two further strong examples of its use as the joint steed of Venus to the ones collected from the *Uruk Stance Catalogue B (Urusta-26-27)* where it is juxtaposed to the enthroned Goddess. All the evidence points towards the Rear Attack standing for that juncture in the calendar at which lunar and solar calendars are reconciled with the help of the cross-check available from the four-year half-cycle and full eight-year full cycle of the Venus Synodic period, whose astronomical nature we explained in *Chapter 19*. In that chapter the astronomy of the eight-fold zodiac featured quite overtly on a Levantine bronze bowl of the end of the 2M (*Ill. 19-152*) - reproduced below for ease of reference as a coda to the early 2M iconography on Syrian seals that we studied in such detail. Placing it against the Egyptianising seals of *Ratt-23/24* may even lead us to consider whether this bowl is in fact contemporary with them and dating back to the middle of the 2M rather than its end, as given in *Chapter 19*:



Ill.7- 83 The Faroughi Bowl as photographed (top left); its main stellar symbols extracted and drawn by Barnett²⁶⁴ (bottom left); and (right) keyed in to our present-day zodiac to dovetail with its astronomical symbols

It is therefore no surprise to conclude from our somewhat extended commentary in the relevant Chronological Focus for this catalogue that the Rear Attack appears as a cipher for the New Year Festival and the Feast of Ištar, particularly as celebrated at Mari and the Levantine sphere of influence in general, with all its accompanying astronomical implications.

²⁶⁴ R D Barnett *Syria* XLIII 1966 fig.3 p.270 and and pl.xxiv bottom