



Pearls of the Past

Studies on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology
in Honour of Frances Pinnock

Edited by Marta D'Andrea,
Maria Gabriella Micale, Davide Nadali,
Sara Pizzimenti and Agnese Vacca

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Illustration auf dem Einband: Tell Mardikh 1964, Day 1
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Table of Contents

<i>List of Publications by Frances Pinnock</i>	xi
<i>Foreword</i>	xix
<i>Mohammed Alkhalid</i> Kingship and the Representation of Power in the Urban Pattern of Ebla during the Middle Bronze Age.....	1
<i>Michel Al-Maqdissi</i> Notes d'Archéologie Levantine XLIX : Matériel funéraire de la région de Tell Afis dans un document des archives de R. du Mesnil du Buisson.....	25
<i>Francesca Baffi</i> The Impact of the Great Empires on Inner Syria.....	37
<i>Giacomo Benati</i> Shaping Social Dynamics in Early 3 rd Millennium BC Mesopotamia: Solid- Footed Goblets and the Politics of Drinking	53
<i>Marco Bonechi</i> A Hagia Triada Whodunnit: On the Inscribed Cylinder Seal Florence Museum 85079 Again	77
<i>Pascal Butterlin</i> Mari et l'histoire militaire mésopotamienne : du temps long au temps politico-militaire.....	109
<i>Eloisa Casadei</i> Storage Practices and Temple Economy during the 3 rd Millennium BC in Southern Mesopotamia.....	137
<i>Corinne Castel</i> Deux empreintes de sceaux-cylindres sur céramique du Bronze ancien IVB à Tell Al-Rawda : l'usage local d'une pratique sigillaire en Syrie intérieure..	161
<i>Manuel Castelluccia and Roberto Dan</i> Some Remarks on Urartian Horse Harnesses.....	187
<i>Joaquín María Córdoba</i> Arqueología de la agricultura. Adaptaciones a medios áridos durante la Edad del Hierro. Notas rápidas sobre dos recientes y singulares hallazgos	203

<i>Harriet Crawford</i>	
The Changing Position of Women in Mesopotamia from the Mid-Third to the Later Second Millennium BC	235
<i>Paola D'Amore</i>	
Paraphernalia from Tell Afis: The Cult Stands.....	245
<i>Marta D'Andrea</i>	
The EB–MB Transition at Ebla: A State-of-the-Art Overview in the Light of the 2004–2008 Discoveries at Tell Mardikh.....	263
<i>Silvana Di Paolo</i>	
Bodily Violence in Early Old Babylonian Glyptics: A Performative Act?.....	299
<i>Maria Forza</i>	
Generated Change and Spontaneous Change: Parallels between the Development of Cremation and the Diffusion of Groovy Pottery in the Upper Tigris Valley during Iron Ages I and II	321
<i>Agnès Garcia-Ventura</i>	
The Archaeology of Women and Women in Archaeology in the Ancient Near East	349
<i>May Haider</i>	
Empty Vessels or Laden Signifiers? Imported Greek Pottery in Levantine Social Practice.....	367
<i>Arnulf Hausleiter</i>	
Cultural Contacts, Transfer of Images and Ideas: On 1 st Millennium BC Funerary Stelae from Taymā'	379
<i>Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati</i>	
Images of Work in Urkesh.....	413
<i>Melissa A. Kennedy</i>	
A New EB IV Cultural Province in Central and Southern Syria: The View from Tell Nebi Mend.....	429
<i>Hartmut Kühne</i>	
Mittani and Middle Assyrian Stamp Seals.....	449
<i>Ahmed Fatima Kzzo</i>	
Another <i>Semeion</i> ? New Perspectives on an Old Syrian Seals Group.....	461
<i>Nicola Laneri</i>	
What a Woman! Gender Identity in the Clay Votive Plaques of Hirbemerdon Tepe during the Early Second Millennium BC	473
<i>Marc Lebeau</i>	
Notes sur l'architecture et l'urbanisme du Royaume de Nagar (2) : Une tour de garde d'époque Early Jezirah IIIb à Tell Beydar.....	487
<i>Giovanna Lombardo</i>	
Two Compartment Seals from Afghanistan in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'G. Tucci'.....	509
<i>Gianni Marchesi and Nicolò Marchetti</i>	
The Deities of Karkemish in the Middle Bronze Age according to Glyptic and Textual Evidence	525

<i>Maria Grazia Masetti-Rouault</i> Vu d'Ebla, un roi de Mari en pèlerinage à Terqa ?.....	537
<i>Valérie Matoïan</i> L'image du roi vainqueur à Ugarit, entre Égypte et Mésopotamie : le décor du sceau-cylindre RS 2009.9019	551
<i>Paolo Matthiae</i> A Problem of Iconology: A Note on the Banquets of the Old Syrian Basins of Ebla	571
<i>Maria Gabriella Micale</i> Framing the Space: On the Use of Crenellation from Architecture to the Definition of Pictorial Spaces	601
<i>Clelia Mora</i> Titles and Activities of Hittite Women: The Evidence of the Seals.....	633
<i>Béatrice Muller</i> Iconographie mésopotamienne : images morcelées et recomposées.....	641
<i>Davide Nadali</i> The Doubling of the Image of the King: A Note on Slabs B-13 and B-23 in the Throne Room of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud	661
<i>Lorenzo Nigro</i> A Turtle Dove <i>Rhyton</i> from the “Hyksos Palace” at Tell es-Sultan, Ancient Jericho	677
<i>Valentina Oselini</i> The Ceramic Horizon of the Middle Bronze I-II in the Lower and Middle Diyala Basin	691
<i>Adelheid Otto</i> Ritual Drinking in Syria: New Insights from the Decorated Terracotta Basin from Tall Bazi and the Funerary Talisman from Ebla	709
<i>Tatiana Pedrazzi</i> Syrian One-Handled Fusiform Jars: An Offshoot of the Canaanite Tradition or of Late Bronze Age Connections with Anatolia?	723
<i>Luca Peyronel</i> The Beginning of the Middle Bronze Age in the Northern Levant (ca. 2000–1900 BC): The Pottery from the EE Midden at Tell Mardikh- Ebla, Syria	741
<i>Sara Pizzimenti</i> Fertility from the Sky: The Role of the Scorpion in the Ploughing Scenes on Akkadian Glyptic	761
<i>Andrea Polcaro</i> On Pots and Serpents: An Iconographic and Contextual Analysis of the Cultic Vessels with Serpent Figurines in the 4 th –3 rd Millennium BC Transjordan	775
<i>Marina Pucci</i> Representation of Military Attack on Neo-Assyrian Glyptic: A Seal from Chatal Höyük in the Amuq.....	795

<i>Suzanne Richard</i>	
Miniatures and Miniaturization in EB IV at Khirbat Iskandar, Jordan	813
<i>Hélène Sader</i>	
A Phoenician Seal Impression from Tell Hizzin, Lebanon.....	839
<i>Valentina Tumolo</i>	
A Bull's Head from Ḥirbet ez-Zeraqōn.....	847
<i>Agnese Vacca</i>	
Some Reflections about the <i>Chora</i> of Ebla during the EB III and IVA1 Periods.....	869
<i>Federico Zaina</i>	
Some Preliminary Remarks on the Neo-Assyrian City Wall in the Outer Town at Karkemish	899

Representation of Military Attack on Neo-Assyrian Glyptic: A Seal from Chatal Höyük in the Amuq

Marina Pucci

Excavations at the site of Chatal Höyük, located in the modern province of Hatay, Turkey, were carried out by the archaeological team from the Oriental Institute Chicago in the 1930s; first under the directorship of McEwan, and then Braidwood.¹ The author of this paper has carried out recent work² on the reanalysis and publication of the archaeological material from the site, reconsidering the original documentation and objects, which are preserved at the Oriental Institute in Chicago and at the archaeological Museum in Antioch.

The material culture and the stratigraphy from the site demonstrate a continuous sequence of occupation between the 15th and the 6th century BC, characterized specifically in the Iron Age by domestic architecture, which occupied the whole extent of the acropolis. Among the 87 cylinder seals found at Chatal, 34 were found out of archeological context, either in dumped earth or on the surface, while the others belong to well stratified contexts. This article will deal with one seal from Chatal, which has been chosen not for its particular archaeological context, rather because it presents a very rare iconography: it has similarities with very few cylinder seals, and gives the opportunity to discuss the use and meaning of this specific scene during the Iron Age.

1. Archaeological Context of the Seal

The seal (OIM inv. N. A17424, field number b-1148) was found on November 22nd 1934, during the third excavation campaign at the site. It was discovered while opening a new area (Area IVd), which occupied a 20 by 20 m extent in squares K4 and L4. Excavation in this area began on that day and continued until April 3rd 1935, in an attempt to investigate the vertical sequence on the southern slope and connect this area to the east-west trench, which crossed the southern portion of the mound. The results were quite disappointing and activity in the area was dismissed, once it became clear that the connections to the stratigraphy in

¹ McEwan 1937; Braidwood / Braidwood 1960; Haines 1971.

² Pucci 2010.

the trench were not possible, and that the architecture brought to light had again a domestic character. Haines points out four architectural levels dated to the phase O period and two dated to phase N period.³ However in square K4, where the seal was found, the stratigraphic accumulation was limited to the upper two building levels, both ascribed to phase O.

The seal was found in the fill in the uppermost deposit in square K4, thus unrelated to any architectural remains: thus this deposit was formed after the abandonment of the occupation in this area (the seal is in a tertiary context). A stone spindle whorl (A41526), three beads (carnelian A54145, glass, A54157, and stone A54140), a scaraboid stamp seal (A17436) and a large fragment of a hole-mouth cooking pot (A134701) with strap handle were selected from the same deposit, suggesting an apparently uniform Iron Age III context.

2. Description of the Seal and of the Image

The seal (Figs 1–2) is a complete cylinder with a diameter of 11 mm and a height of 30 mm, with a perforation lengthwise 4 mm in diameter. The material is a dark grey, matt stone, which was employed very frequently in the local production of stone artefacts (not only seals, but also spindle whorls, mace heads and working tools). An unfinished cylinder seal (A17359) made of the same stone and found in a dump in square P–4 may support a local provenience for this specific stone, and its use in local seal production.⁴

The scene is carved in a field bordered on the top and on the bottom by a double hatched band: the upper one remains almost complete, while the bottom one is in part erased by the addition of the pictures in the central field.

The scene represents one standing figure facing right in front of a large structure, against which a ladder is leant. The human figure raises his left hand towards the structure: the hand seems to be represented in profile, simplified and empty. His right arm is stretched behind the body, and seems to grasp with an oversized open hand, a vertical fringed staff which reaches the soil. The right eye and the protruding nose of the figure are clearly recognizable; his hair reaches the back of the neck up to his shoulder. He seems to wear a hat, apparently slightly squared with two bands; and he wears a belted robe which covers the left shoulder and reaches down to his ankles. A band of fringes on the chest, a horizontal band above the hem and a fringed hem characterize the robe. The figure wears a sword at his belt. The right foot is not clearly visible, probably because the stone is slightly chipped at this point; while his left foot is visible underneath the hem and points toward the right. He seems to put this foot on the lowest step of a ladder leant against the left tower of the structure, as if he was beginning to climb it. The

³ Haines 1971, pl. 20. Phase O is identified with Iron Age II and III.

⁴ On a pure external and not chemical observation the stone has the same features as those belonging to the Chlorite, as described in Sax 2001, 26.

ladder is slightly curved, and only five steps are depicted.

The structure consists of four high towers symmetrical to an arched gate (the two central ones higher than the external ones). The towers have either simplified stepped merlons, or horned battlements,⁵ while the battlement or roof of the gate is missing. The surfaces of the towers and of the gate are modelled with rounded horizontal shapes.

On top of the structure there are several symbols: a crescent located above the right tower, three wedges (two above the gate and a third on the second tower from the right) and a rhomb on the second tower from the left.

4. Style

The double-vertically crosshatched borders (or ladder pattern), on the top and on the bottom of the image are extremely rare in the Iron Age cylinder seals. The few known borders are usually rendered with simple lines, notches in linear-style seals from Syria⁶ and chevrons on linear-style Assyrian seals.⁷ Although a tradition of seals' borders with crosshatched triangles, lozenges, chevrons and guilloches was well-known in Late Bronze Age Mesopotamia,⁸ the specific motif employed in the seal from Chatal finds very few parallels and apparently in very different areas. The ladder pattern is employed on three seals in the Freiburg Bibel-und-Orient Museum: one was found in the excavations at Tell es-Safi (1368),⁹ one at Lachish¹⁰ and the provenance of the last one is generally given as Palestine.¹¹ All three seals show a single ladder line, in one case (the one from Tell es-Safi) a second simple line separates the scene from the borders; in all of them

⁵ On battlement and merlons cf. Porada 1967.

⁶ The borders of this seal could be also interpreted as a double notched band well attested in the Syrian Iron Age tradition (present also on Collon 2001a, n. 11), however, even though the image may be similar, the way of tracing the pattern on the seal is completely different.

⁷ Cf. Collon 2001a, 17.

⁸ Decorative borders seem to be well-attested in Cassite production, as Frankfort 1939, 189 emphasizes. The borders were rendered with small circles (Frankfort 1939, pl. 32a, c, g, i), as a guilloche (also in the Hittite seal Frankfort 1939, pl. 43) or with crosshatched triangles (cf. Klengel-Brandt 1997, fig. 9). Cassite seals use different types of borders (linear or crosshatched triangles, as in Matthews 1990, n. 196–223; wedges as in Volenweider 1967, pl. 28:2) as well as a few Middle Assyrian ones (crosshatched triangles in Matthews 1990, n. 541, as well as 562 and 564 from Ugarit), and one example from Alalakh (Collon 1975, n. 95). Chevron borders are fairly common in the Neo-Assyrian linear style (Collon 2001a, 17; Moortgat 1988, 66g; Porada 1948, 610, 611, 640, 641).

⁹ Keel 1990, fig. 82.

¹⁰ Tufnell et al. 1953, pl. 45, 152.

¹¹ Keel-Leu / Teissier 2004, n. 406.

Egyptianizing elements are employed in the main scene.¹² All three seals refer to a southern Levantine production from the Late Bronze IIB-Iron I period (1300-1100 BC). However, the relative paucity of comparisons and the differences in the main scene prevent us from assigning a pure southern Levantine provenience uniquely based on the presence of this pattern.¹³

During the Iron Age, only one Neo-Assyrian example¹⁴ shows borders made by a double ladder motif, framing a contest scene. These borders are also said to be “unusual in subject and rendering” for Neo-Assyrians seals: Porada suggests a possible Iranian origin for this borders’ type,¹⁵ comparing it with sealing coming from Iran.¹⁶ Thus, considering that similar patterns were also employed in Neo-Assyrian reliefs,¹⁷ it is necessary to leave open the question of the origins of these borders.

The figures are not rendered in detail: the face of the figure and his long robe are marked by few traits. The carving uses linear details and is extremely simplified, thus it can be generally ascribed to the Assyrian linear style¹⁸ and to the Iron Age Neo-Assyrian cultural horizon. This dating and cultural horizon is also confirmed by the choice of the scene, which is known, in the way it is represented here, only during the Iron Age. However, specific peculiar elements, such as the borders, the rendering of the figure and the use of the wedge as a filling element are uncommon in Neo-Assyrian seals, and may support a provincial production based on Neo-Assyrian imagery.

5. Iconography and Comparisons

The three elements that constitute the core of the scene are a single figure raising his hand; an architectural structure consisting of four towers with high crenellations and a central rounded gate; and a ladder located between them. This combination of elements recurs only on three published seals (Fig. 3: C1–3), where the representation of the towers varies but the syntax of the scene seems the same. Scholars have interpreted these scenes either as sieges,¹⁹ where the standing figure is holding a shield²⁰ and consequently attacking the town; or more in general as a

¹² The same ladder pattern is employed in a stamp seal (Keel 1990, fig. 79), again with Egyptianizing motifs.

¹³ In Ugarit only one seal bears single ladder borders (cf. Schaeffer Cl. / A. Forrer 1983, 136, R.S. 24.44).

¹⁴ Porada 1948, 74, n. 626.

¹⁵ Porada 1948, 74.

¹⁶ Herzfeld 1938, 65.

¹⁷ E.g. in the rendering of the borders of the robe of Ashurnasirpal II on a relief at his palace at Nimrud cf. Collon 2001a, pl. XLIV.

¹⁸ As described in Collon 2001a; Feldman 2014, 85.

¹⁹ Buchanan 1966 for C3; Winter 2000, 64–65 for C1 and C3.

²⁰ As Bleibtreu 1994 suggests for C1.

symbol of conquest.²¹ Only Wiggermann suggests an interpretation as a ritual in front of a town/temple.²²

In an attempt to make an overview on architectural and siege representations on seals, it was possible to identify four different iconographic groups. Figure 3 groups all representations on cylinder seals from the Late Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age, which depict a siege or what has been related to these scenes.²³ Group A comprises scenes which, due to the presence of several elements (such as defenders of the town shooting at the Assyrian enemies), undoubtedly represent a siege. Group B collects seals showing a structure and a standing figure with neither signs of aggression nor symbols identifying the structure as religious (altars, sacred animals etc.). Group C comprises seals depicting a scene identical to Group B, with the only addition of a ladder leaning on the walls. Group D shows several examples of seals²⁴ with representations of structures, which are characterized by religious symbols.

Architectural structures in seals seem to be limited to three main types: ziqqurat, temples and town walls. While the features of the ziqqurat are highly indicative of the type of building, and refer to a specific scene of adoration well-attested in the Middle Assyrian period,²⁵ representations of towered structures lacking any religious symbols have been interpreted either as temples or as town walls,²⁶ although no features suggested its interpretation as temples. By contrast, in certain representations of temples (Group D), not only is the content represented (usually the altar as in Fig. 3: D1, D2, D6), but also additional elements: sacred animals (D1), symmetric winged gryphons (D3 and D5) or inscriptions (D2 and D4). The examples from the Neo-Assyrian period in particular (D5 and D6) show additional symbols and specific gestures in front of the altar (as in D6) or in front of the temple itself (D2). This leaves no doubt about the identification of the structure.

Architectural representations in the remaining three groups (A–C) mirror a very different concept. In Group A, the structures represented are identified as town walls by the presence of archers on the top defending the town (A1–2, A5); or by archers in front of them (A4); or by enemy soldiers dismantling the town (A3). It seems possible to identify a specific standardization of town wall representations, with the exception of A3, where the scenery differs from the others, and which is the only one dated to the Middle Assyrian period. The standardized representation consists of two/four towers placed symmetrically on either side

²¹ Teissier 1984, 40 also for C1.

²² Wiggermann 2006 for C2.

²³ Group D has been inserted in these representations in order to show how temples were represented and it should not be considered exhaustive.

²⁴ While groups A–C are exhaustive, this last group comprises only some examples.

²⁵ Collon 1988, 74–76; Micale 2010.

²⁶ Bleibtreu 1994 affirms that when the ladder is missing is not possible to distinguish a gate from a temple. Wiggerman (2006) infers the religious function from the scene.

of a single (or double as in A5) gate with an arched lintel.²⁷ This schema of representation is the same as the one employed in Group B, and also Group C, to which the Chatal seal belongs. Comparing these representations with Neo-Assyrian reliefs and in particular with the representations of towns on the Balawat gates,²⁸ it seems possible to point out a similar process of reduction/choice of the elements in representing a walled town (see Tab. 1). These include triangular or seamed battlements; landscape differentiation (especially A5 and C1); façade decoration of the towers; arched gates. The numbers of the towers and gates vary in the Balawat gates' reliefs; however the most common combination for single walled towns consists of four towers and one gate, as in the seals. The gateless walls between the towers are extensively represented in the Balawat gates, and are completely absent in the seals. This is probably due to the limited space at disposal, which also reduces the number of towers in specific renderings as in B3 and B4. The town walls in the Balawat gates are represented in the same way, independent from the action which is taking place: attack, looting or tribute. This reinforces the idea that town representations were standardized in 9th century BC Assyrian production.

The figures represented near the structure in Group C seem to be performing a similar gesture: one raised hand and one arm behind the body holding what seems to be a staff (only the figure in C4, the seal from Chatal, is not clear). By contrast, in the majority of the seals in Group B, the figure next to the structure raises both hands towards it,²⁹ in a gesture similar to those performed in front of the temples in the seals D2, D5 and D6. As this second gesture has been undoubtedly interpreted as adoration/pray,³⁰ it seemed possible to suggest a religious interpretation for both gestures of the scene, in which the standing figure was performing a ritual in front of a town. Nevertheless, the difference in gestures may eventually suggest that the performance represented in seals B1–4 is different from the one in the other seals of the B group and obviously in those of the C group. By comparing them with Neo-Assyrian glyptic³¹ and the reliefs, it seems evident that the standardized way of rendering an adoration/pray gesture is with both arms stretched in front of the body towards the object of adoration. By contrast, a single raised hand and a second hand behind the body holding a staff appears in contest scenes

²⁷ It seems likely that temples were always represented with a flat roof because they were shown in “section” rather than in front.

²⁸ For Balawat cf. King 1915; Moortgat 1969. Winter 2000, 64–65 and Curtis / Tallis 2008 already emphasized this connection.

²⁹ In B5, which is the only Middle Assyrian seal of group B, the figure stretches his right arm towards the structure and holds a staff in the left hand, while in B6 the figure has lowered arms along the body.

³⁰ Two arms raised before the body is a typical adoration scene in both Neo-Assyrian seals and carvings. Cf. in general Herbordt 1994, 71–73.

³¹ Cf. Collon 2001a, pl. IX; Herbordt 1992, 75–78.

Band	City representation	Gesture	Action
I_3, lower Pl. III	On mountain, no tower is visible, one gate, no crenellation	On the left, soldier on a ladder with shield (?) in the left hand behind him a standing figure with vertical shield	Attack
II_2, upper Pl. VIII	On mountain, single row, two ga- tes, six towers, town is on fire, ribbon crenellation		Looting
II_3, lower Pl. IX	On mountain, single row, two ga- tes, five towers, shields on the walls, town is on fire, ribbon crenellation	One soldier is approa- ching the ladder the other behind him holds something ver- tical in front of him	Attack
III.1, upper Pl. XIII	On mountain, by the sea, with high towers (five), two gates, triangular crenellation		Tribute
III.4, lower Pl. XVI	On hill, towers are high, two ga- tes, triangular crenellation city is on fire	Two figures appoa- ching the ladder with vertical elements	Attack
IV.2, lower Pl. XX	On hill with two registers of walls, high tower, triangular crenella- tion,	Assyrians attacking with a ram, towns' archers defending	Attack
IV.3, upper Pl. XXI	Flat, two rows of walls, gate is on the upper part, eight towers. Triangular crenellation	Soldiers on the ladder with shield or arches in the hand	Attack
IV.3, lower Pl. XXI	Flat, two rows of walls, gate is on the upper part, five towers visible, concentric triangles for crenellation		Impalation
IV.6, lower Pl. XXIV	Flat, two rows of walls, gate is on the upper and lower part, trian- gles for crenellation		March, cap- tives
V.1 upper Pl. XXV	On river and hill, high towers, two gates, double arch on gate, triangular crenellation		Tribute
V.2 lower Pl. XXVI	On river and hill, high towers, one gate, four towers, double arch on gate, triangular crenellation		Tribute
V.3, upper Pl. XXVII	On river, high towers, one gate, four towers, triangular crenel- lation		Tribute

Band	City representation	Gesture	Action
V.6, upper Pl. XXX	On river, high towers, two gates, triangular crenellation, double arch on gate		Camp
VI.1, lower Pl. XXXI	On river and hill, one gate, four towers triangular crenellation, high towers (damaged)		Tribute
VI.1, upper Pl. XXXI	On hill, likely one gate, four towers triangular crenellation, high towers (damaged)		Tribute
VI.3 upper Pl. XXXIII	On river and hill, two gates four towers, triangles		Tribute
VI.3 lower Pl. XXXIII	On river and hill, four towers one gate, tower are quite high	One standing figure on the left of the town, unclear	Tribute
VII.1 lower Pl. XXXVII	On river and mountain, two rows of walls, three gates on both rows, crenellation on towers (5 per row) are rendered with double triangles, similar to the seal		Tribute
VII.3 upper, Pl. XXXIX	On mountain, two rows of walls possibly three entrances on both rows, crenellation are on towers and as band	Two figures on both sides with fagots, behind them a standing figure with raised hand, on the left holding a shield on the right unclear	Attack
VIII.2 upper Pl. XLIV	On several mountains, three gates, single row triangular crenellation	Archers	Attack
VIII.2, lower Pl. XLIV	On several mountains, three gates, single row, triangular <i>Zinne</i>	Archers severed head	Punishment
VIII.5 lower Pl. XLVII	Flat, one row two gates (four towers), triangular		Occupation
IX.2 lower Pl. XLIX	Flat, one gate, six towers, very high, triangles	None	Attack
IX.3 upper Pl. L	Flat, two gates, six towers, triangles	Archer and ram	Attack
IX.6 upper Pl. LIII	Flat, one gate four towers, triangles,	Climbing, raised hand with shield	Attack
X.3 lower Pl. LVI	Flat, two rows, several opening one gate	Impaling	Punishment
XI.4, lower Pl. LXIII	Flat, two rows, four gates on both rows, eight towers, triangular <i>Zinne</i>		Tribute
XI.6 upper Pl. LXXV	On river and hill, two rows, three gates on both rows, nine towers, triangular <i>Zinne</i>		Tribute

Band	City representation	Gesture	Action
XII.1, lower Pl. LXXVI	Flat, one row, possibly two gates, four towers, triangular crenellation	Chariot leaving	Surrender
XIII.2 upper Pl. LXXIII	Flat, double row of walls, one gate bottom, six towers	Standing figure with vertical element, archers, and chariot	Attack
XIII.4, upper Pl. LXXV	Flat, double row of walls, two gates on each row, triangular crenellation	Ladder, climbing with a duck in the hand, behind him archers	Attack
XIII.6 upper Pl. LXXVII	Flat, double row with interior scene with aged king. Two bottom gates, four towers, triangles	Archers	Attack/surrender
XIII.6 lower Pl. LXXVII	Hill, two gates, four towers, single triangles on towers		Captives

Tab. 1. Representations of towns in the Balawat gates in relationship to the actions. First column lists the position of the representation (plate quotation refers to Curtis / Tallis 2008), second column lists iconographic features of town representation, third column the performers of the action, fourth column the main action represented.

on Neo-Assyrian seals³² and more rarely on the Assyrian reliefs. Moreover the single stretched arm is very frequent in representations of attack, especially in the Balawat gates. In fact, in the Balawat attack scenes one figure climbs the ladder, and a second standing figure behind him raises a hand towards the town holding a rectangular shield or a faggot. The former is to protect the archers behind him, and the latter is to burn the besieged city (cf. Tab. 1). His second hand is usually next to his body.

Thus, comparing the gestures, seals B2 (?), B5, C1, C2 and C4 represent attacks, while only B1–4 mirror a ritual performance. However, seals B6 and C3, where both arms are kept near the body, may eventually suggest that the gesture might not be the determining factor to understand the scene. If it was a determining factor in the Late Bronze Age, it may have lost significance as time progressed.

Long dress and headdress are equally employed in figures attacking the town and in those performing a rite in front of the temple (as evident in the Balawat gates and the seals of Group A). Therefore they do not seem to be indicative of the specific performance carried out in the B and C group seals.

By contrast, the ladder, as Bleibtreu³³ emphasizes and as the Balawat representations confirm (cf. Tab. 1), is an element extremely indicative of a siege and would not fit in a ritual performance.³⁴

³² E.g. Herbordt 1992, pl. 5.

³³ Bleibtreu 1994.

³⁴ We may stress that if the structure is interpreted as a temple, the ladder may just be a

The filling elements in the seal from Chatal, such as the crescent and the rhomb, are extremely common in Neo-Assyrian glyptic,³⁵ and fit well into the general Neo-Assyrian cultural horizon of the seal. The rhomb and the crescent are not specifically related to siege scenes; a rhomb is inserted only in B2 between the figure and the structure, while in C2 the crescent is located on top of one tower. The wedge by contrast, which recurs in this seal three times, seems to be more common in Neo-Assyrian linear-style faïence seals,³⁶ while it is only employed in A2 as a filling element. In the Chatal seal the wedge is located in the same position as the other filling patterns, which is on top of the structure. This peculiarity may confirm Collon's suggestion in interpreting it as a symbol for "arrows or some other type of weapon."³⁷ It would have been employed here to "replace" the archers on top of the structure itself, and consequently confirms its interpretation as a siege scene. Thus the iconographic elements, i.e. in particular the ladder, the gesture of the figure and (eventually) the wedge on top of the towers, point towards the interpretation of the scene as a siege scene, perfectly belonging to the C group in figure 3.

6. The Siege Scenes in Neo-Assyrian Glyptic

Only one example (A3) of a siege scene in glyptic predates with certainty the Neo-Assyrian period: it differs in every iconographic element from the later representations on seals. Consequently, even if the subject was already known in Middle Assyrian glyptic, it was not canonized at the time.³⁸ By contrast, adoration scenes in front of temples (Group D) were fairly common during the Middle-Assyrian and continued into the Neo-Assyrian period. The scene in the Middle-Assyrian seal (B5) shows several peculiarities, such as the presence of the rider and his specific gesture. Moreover, the flat roof is opposed to all other arched representations in the later seals and suggests the interpretation of the structure as a temple. Therefore B5 can be ascribed to the imagery of temple adoration (group D), rather than the imagery of siege scenes. They seem to have become standardized only during the Neo-Assyrian period (specifically the 9th

means to climb the roof. However, on the one hand it is never depicted on temple representations, and on the other considering the limited space available, the elements chosen for the image are supposed to be typical for the scene and not accessorial.

³⁵ Cf. Collon 2001a, 12–14). The rhomb is well-known already in Cassite seals and in general in the Late Bronze Age Mesopotamian production (Frankfort 1939, 301, 33c, d, k; Matthews 1990, 74), while they were also used as pattern for the borders (Teissier 1984, no. 641).

³⁶ Collon 2001a, 17.

³⁷ Collon 2001a, 17.

³⁸ Porada 1967, 2, affirms that the first representation of battlements and fortifications took place in the second half of the 2nd millennium on different media, such as vessels, stone bases etc.

century BC) following a model. This was already evident in the siege representations on the Balawat gates, and to a lesser degree, on the Ashurnasirpal's II reliefs at Nimrud.³⁹

The simplification of the siege scenes was evident as early as the Balawat gates, where the limited space available forced a choice in the representative elements. Here the town walls were variously represented: with double or single enceinte; different battlements; different external decorations and different geographic settings (mountain, river, sea etc.). Moreover, the horizontal development of the frieze allowed the addition of several elements which composed the attacking army.

In the seal representations, the choice of “representative” elements underwent a further selection. It allowed more selection in the seals of Group A, all of which included the defenders of the town. It progressed to a very simplified version which included only the town wall with the gate, and a single standing figure next to it. In some cases, the landscape, which is clearly visible in the representations of the Balawat gates, is depicted on the seals (C1). The external decoration of the walls is also present on the seals (B1–3); clearly showing a common imagery. It is, however, interesting to note that in this selection and simplification process, there was a progressive loss in the military character of the actions. In Group C this is retained only by the presence of the ladder; while in Group B it is completely lacking, and consequently less recognizable.

If we then consider the provenience of the seals, it is possible to identify the majority of seals bearing clear scenes in the Assyrian core,⁴⁰ made up of either sieges (Group A) or religious activities (Group D). By contrast, the context of the seals in Groups B and C is mostly unknown, because they are part of private collections. The exceptions are the seal presented here from the Amuq region, B5 from Sabi Abyad (see above on this specific seal) and eventually C3 which was bought in Aleppo. According to these data, we may suggest, as a working hypothesis, that Groups B and C are provincial interpretations of siege scenes which were better defined in the Neo-Assyrian production. Thus, while in the Neo-Assyrian production the features identifying the scenes clearly indicate the military character of the action, the selection process, possibly carried out outside Assyrian workshops, reduced the “aggressive” character of the scene. In the Group C seals the military elements were limited to the presence of the ladder, while in Group B they completely disappeared.

Considering that the ladder was not a necessary element in the Group A representation, the specific selection of the elements was probably not based on the simple copy and observation of the sieges' seals, but rather on an intentional

³⁹ 7th century BC representations of sieges on reliefs are much more detailed less simplified and were not used as models for the seals' scenes (cf. in general Nadali 2005).

⁴⁰ Group A, with the exception of A4 with an unknown provenience, group D except for D5 from Al-Mina.

choice of the memes. This process may have brought a shift in the meaning of the military/siege Assyrian scenes: from celebrations of military power; to other kinds of performance, possibly ritual, in front of a gate.

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Fig. 1. Picture of the seal A17424. Scale 1:1.



Fig. 2. Drawing of seal A17424. scale 1:1.

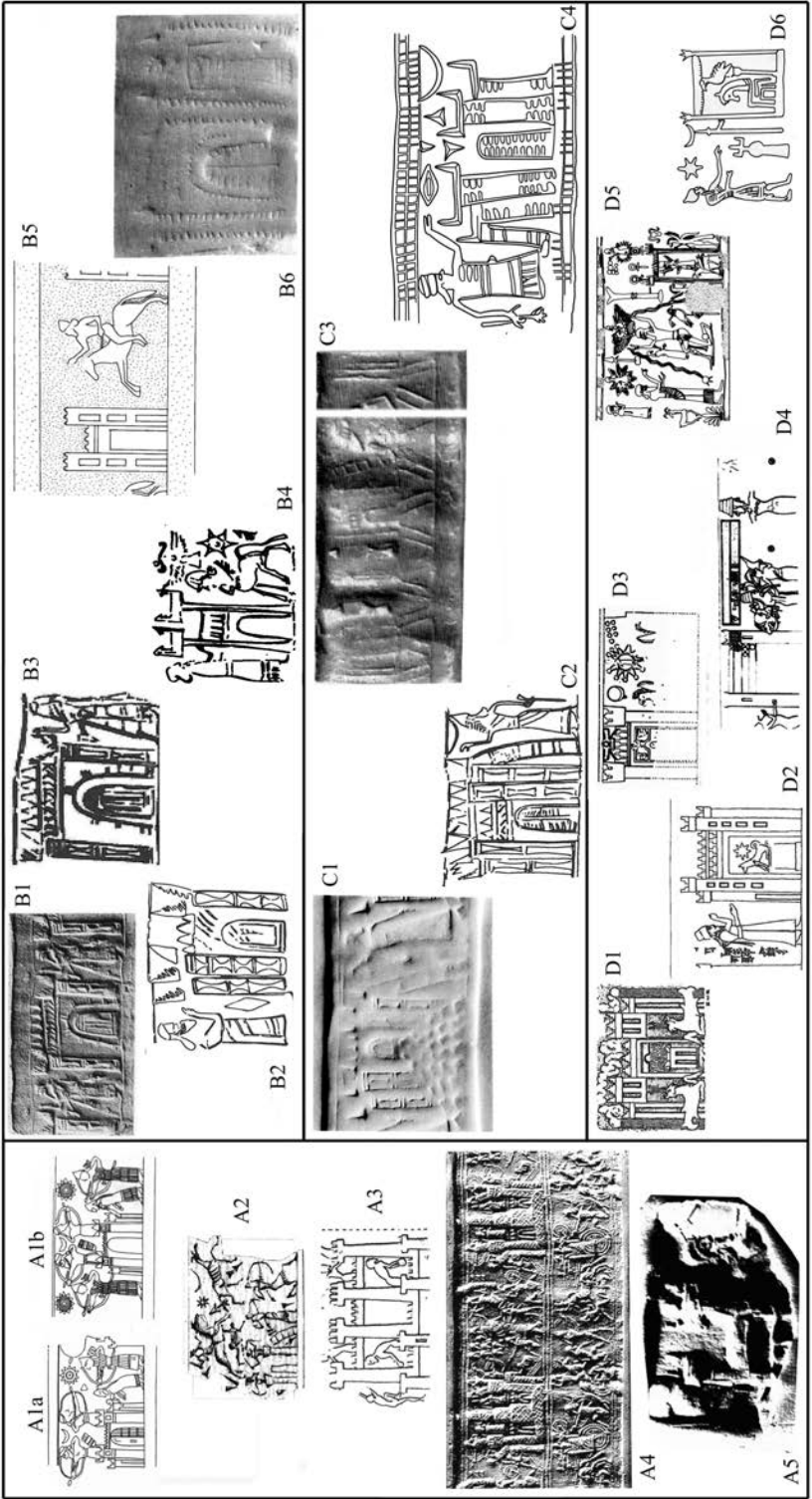


Fig. 3. Seals representing towns or temples. A1a–b: Nineveh, Nabu temple, sealing on clay plaque, 9th cent. BC, 77 × 51 (a. Collon 1987, 752; b. Herbordt 1992, pl. 1,8). A2: Khorsabad, seal brown stone, 40 × 14 (Place 1867, pl.76 fig. 36a). A3: Assur, sealing, 13th cent. BC (Collon 1987, 750). A4: Schuster collection, seal, end of the 8th cent. BC, 44 × 18 (Sotheby 1987, 45 pg. 36). A5: Assur, sealing, 15x? (Bleibtreu 1994, fig. 7). B1: Musee Guimet stone seal 117, 9–8th cent. BC (Delaporte 1909, pl. 8 K7). B2: Pierpont collection, limestone seal, 9–8th cent. BC, 34 × 12 (Porada 1948: n.652). B3: Musee Guimet, stone seal, 8th cent. BC, 3.1 × 1.2 (Delaporte 1909, n.117). B4: Ashmolean, serpentine seal, 8th cent. (Buchanan 1966, 1553). B5: Sabi Abyad, sealing, 13th cent. BC, 40 × 35 (Wiggermann 2006, n. 142). B6: Ashmolean black marble seal (Buchanan 1966, n. 610). C1: Marcopoli collection, seal, 9–7th cent. BC, 39 × 14 (Teissier 1984, n.235). C2: Private, chalcedony seal, 8th cent. BC, 28 × 13 (Wiggermann 2006, 152). C3: Ashmolean Museum, gray green limestone seal (Buchanan 1966, n. 611). C4: Chatal Höyük, dark grey stone seal, 30 × 45. D1: Assur. sealing on tablet, 12th cent. BC (Andrae 1967, fig. 2). D2: Assur, sealing on tablet, 12th cent. BC (Andrae 1967, fig. 3). D3: Assur, sealing (Andrae 1935, fig. 8). D4: Assur, 13th cent. BC (Fischer 2004, fig. 1). D5: Al Mina, 9–8th cent. BC (Collon 1982, n. 120). D6: Unknown, sealing, Late Assyrian (Collon 2001b, n. 588).

