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# The Seven Dots in Mesopotamian Art and their Meaning.

By E. Douglas Van Buren (American Academy in Rome).

Ancient texts refer to *ḏSibittum* (ideogram: *ḏVII-bi*), apparently a deity with a seven-fold nature, or to *ḏSibitti*, a group of seven gods<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes *ḏSibitti* are reckoned among the "Great Gods, strong gods who carry bows and arrows, to whom it appertains to stir up strife and war"<sup>2</sup>. They were invoked with other gods to enforce the sanctity of treaties<sup>3</sup>. Sacrifices were made to them during incantation rites<sup>4</sup>, or during worship paid to planets and constellations<sup>5</sup>. There was a temple of the Sibitti in Aššur<sup>6</sup>, and one in Nineveh also<sup>7</sup>; in Babylon a processional way called after the divinity must have led to a temple dedicated to that cult<sup>8</sup>. A statue of the Sibitti was carried off from Babylon by Sanherib and set up in Aššur<sup>9</sup>; possibly it was the very statue the dedication of which provided the formula for the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Hammurabi: *mu alam-bi VII-na*<sup>10</sup>.

The identification of this divinity or group of divinities is very difficult. Professor Ch.-F. Jean sums up his discussion of the subject as follows: according to the texts: 1. *ḏVII-bi* = the Pleiades. 2. *ḏVII-bi* = the seven sons of Enmešarra. 3. *ḏVII-bi* = the 'Seven Sages' deified. As it is hard to reconcile these discrepancies "pour le moment, nous admettons simplement que nous sommes en présence de *trois états de la tradition relative à ḏVII-bi*"<sup>11</sup>. Seven dots are believed to have been the divine symbol of *ḏSibitti*, and they are thought always to have had an astral significance, although it is only in comparatively late texts that they were identified with the Pleiades. The 7 dots were represented in art in very archaic times, long before it seems possible that the legends of the 'Seven Sages' or of the sons of Enmešarra could have been formulated.

In the earliest representations of the 7 dots as yet known it can be seen that, although occasionally they formed a ring or rosette round a central dot, as a rule they were not arranged in any precise order, nor were they of uniform size. They were scattered about in the design, sometimes so unobtrusively that it is not easy to perceive them. This practice continued throughout the ages, although from the Early Babylonian period onwards it is increasingly common to find the 7 dots arranged like the stars in the constellation of the Pleiades, and in the last quarter of the second millennium the dots are shaped for the first time like stars. Perhaps it is possible to date from the same period, when the scientific study of astronomy was initiated, the conception and certainly the increasing predominance of the astral significance of the 7 dots.

<sup>1</sup>) Deimel, *Pantheon*, Nr. 1573: *ḏIMINA*(=7)-*BI*, Nr. 2892: *ḏSIBITTUM*; Hehn, *Siebenzahl und Sabbat* (LSS II, 5 [1907]), SS. 4—6, 17—27, 44—58; Zimmern, *Die sieben Kinder Enmešarra's*: ZA XXIII (1909), SS. 363—6; Weidner, OLZ XXII (1919), Spp. 10—12; Jean, *ḏVII-bi*: RA XXI (1924), pp. 93—104; Witzel, *Der Drachenkämpfer Ninib: Keilinschriftl. St. II*, SS. 152, 206; Toscanne, MDP XII, pp. 164, 183, figs. 247—8, 332—9.

<sup>2</sup>) Meissner und Rost, BA III, S. 228, Vs. 12—13; Sanh. Bav., III R 14, 1; King, BBS, p. 4, 2; cf. AfO VIII (1932), S. 32 f., treaty between Asarhaddon and Ba'al of Tyre, Rs. II: 5.

<sup>3</sup>) AfO VIII (1932), S. 11, Kol. I: 11; S. 22 f., Rs. VI: 20; S. 32 f., Rs. II: 5.

<sup>4</sup>) Zimmern, *Ritualtafeln*, S. 128, Z. 62, S. 150, Z. 13—14, S. 154, Z. 17, S. 168, Rs. 10. For invocation in exorcism see Böhl, *Mededeelingen uit de Leidsche Verzameling van Spijkerschrift-Inscripties II* (1934), p. 9 f., No. 1005.

<sup>5</sup>) Harper, *Letters VI*, No. 648, Rev. 2—6.

<sup>6</sup>) KAVI Nr. 42, Rs. 6; III R 66, Obv. III: 12—16; Böhl, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Stephens, YOS IX, p. 15, pl. XXI, No. 66; Harper, *Letters VI*, No. 578, Rev. 4.

<sup>7</sup>) Harper, *Letters I*, No. 49, Rev. 17—18.

<sup>8</sup>) K 3089, l. 13, Unger, *Babylon*: RLA I, S. 348, § 68, S. 362, § 127.

<sup>9</sup>) KAVI Nr. 42, III: 20.

<sup>10</sup>) Ungnad, *Datenlisten*: RLA II, S. 179, 117.

<sup>11</sup>) RA XXI (1924), pp. 102, 104.

According to Toscanne's theory the graduations from solar disk and four dots to a he-goat below a starred disk, simplified to a star and then to four dots arranged as a star or in a line above the goat, symbolized the male principle; the female principle was typified by a she-goat below a crescent, then by three dots above a crescent, and eventually by three dots in a line. Thus the seven dots together denoted male and female, and the symbol as a whole symbolized a fertility divinity. It is difficult, however, to obtain convincing proof of the correctness of the theory, the evidence for which is confined to Susa, and almost entirely to one small group of vases. Moreover, the texts do not attribute to the *Sibitti* the power of bestowing fertility, neither is there anything to show that the symbol of the 7 dots was ever regarded as indicative of fertility. During the whole course of its history the symbol does not seem to have had a beneficial or apotropaic quality, but the meaning invariably attached to it was that of a sign to denote the mystical nature of the subject or scene depicted. That scene might be quite simple or mundane in appearance, but it was revealed as esoteric or magical by the presence of the 7 dots. These dots were in fact, at any rate in early times, representations of the seven little pebbles used in casting lots or divining the fate of individuals. They were small enough to be held in one hand, and were probably of various colours, white being lucky, while black was ill-omened as texts inform us<sup>12</sup>.

Various methods of divination and giving oracles were practised in Babylonia and Assyria, usually in relation to the god Ea, the Great Magician. But this particular form of giving oracles by casting lots with seven little stones seems to have been connected especially with the goddess Ištar, of whom it was said:

5. "All seven lots hast thou received;
6. My Lady, the great arbiter of lots art thou.
7. Thou liftest up the lots, thou shakest them in thy hand,
8. Thou castest the lots, thou layest the lots (again) in thy bosom"<sup>13</sup>.

In this connexion Fr. Maurus Witzel, O.F.M., cites Br. 787, *na<sub>6</sub>tu<sub>6</sub>-tu<sub>6</sub>*, 'incantation stones', and suggests that the *na<sub>6</sub>tu* which Ištar wore in her girdle in her Descent into Hades was not a birth-stone, as is usually believed, but a stone for casting lots, an oracle-stone<sup>14</sup>. In the Tammuz-text already mentioned it was Ištar who sought the good omen of the white stone to aid her in her search for her beloved. Goddesses associated with Ištar possessed similar powers of interpreting the meaning of the stones and their numerical value, for Gudea refers to the goddess Nidaba "who knows the meaning of numbers"<sup>15</sup>.

There seems reason to believe that the 7 dots or stones symbolized the seven ancient cities Ur, Nippur, Eridu, Kullab, Keš, Lagaš, and Šuruppak, and to these cities belonged the 'Seven Sages', sometimes referred to as 'the seven oracle-gods'<sup>16</sup>, who played important parts in various rites of divination and incantation. Išme-Dagan utters the prayer: "May the 'Seven Sages' give me an auspicious interpretation"<sup>17</sup>, and reference was frequently made to the seven oracles in various connexions.

The fact that originally the 7 dots represented the stones used in casting lots explains why in archaic times they were often scattered in the field, and why they were sometimes so effectually concealed that it was not easy to descry them or to pick them out in the intricacy of the design. It is possible that the arrangement of the dots, vertical, horizontal, or strewn in apparently indeterminate order, conveyed an omen to the initiated who could interpret the signs. In the Early Babylonian period the increased attention paid to the study of astronomy and astrology caused men to seek to read their fate in the heavens; consequently the 7 dots

<sup>12</sup>) Witzel, *AnOr* 10 (1935), S. 107, Kol. II: 7—9, S. 116 zu Z. 7; *AnOr* 6 (1933), S. 55, Rs. II: 18, S. 67 zu Z. 18. The explanation of the 7 dots here offered is mainly due to a suggestion made by the Rev. Prof. Dr. A. Pohl, S. J., who also most generously called my attention to numerous important textual references in support of the theory.

<sup>13</sup>) Witzel, *Keilinschriftl. St.* 6, S. 77, Nr. III, Kol. I: 5—8.

<sup>14</sup>) *AnOr* 4 (1932), S. 46 zu Z. 31—3. For Ištar as oracle-goddess see *AnOr* 6, S. 61 zu Vs. I: 10—11.

<sup>15</sup>) *Cyl. A*, XX: 21.

<sup>16</sup>) Witzel, *AnOr* 4 (1932), S. 85, Nr. V, Kol. I: 24; *Keilinschriftl. St.* 7 (1930), S. 119 zu Z. 10—13.

<sup>17</sup>) Witzel, *Keilinschriftl. St.* 7, S. 58, Nr. 5, Vs. II: 2; *PBS X*, 4, Nr. 2.

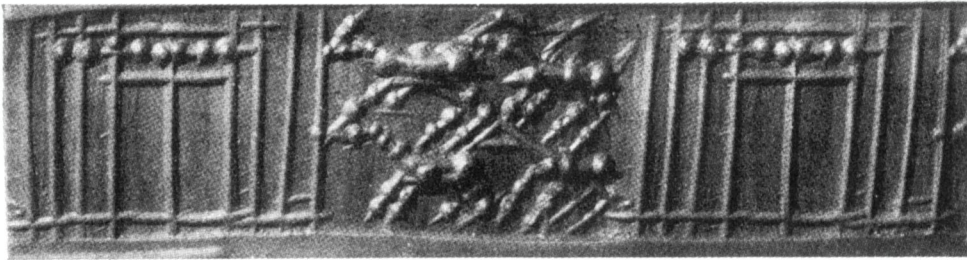


Fig. 1.  
Kh. VII/257.



Fig. 2. VA. 7960.



Fig. 4. Louvre, S. 464.



Fig. 3. Iraq Mus. 14840.



Fig. 5. VAT. 9227.



Fig. 6. Morgan Coll. No. 205.



Fig. 7. VAT. 6048.

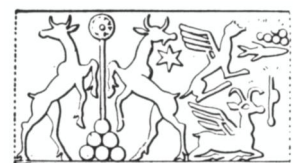


Fig. 8. VAT. 6057.



Fig. 9. VAT. 4584.



Fig. 10. IB.SA: 77.



or stones typifying the seven oracular cities were transferred to, or identified with a group of 7 stars, the Pleiades.

It may be by chance that on a cylinder seal of the archaic period Uruk III, engraved with a big corn-stalk growing behind every one of the bulls who walk *en file* to right, the heads of corn are all carefully rendered with seven ears of grain<sup>18</sup>. On certain stamp-seals the only decoration consists of 7 or 14 dots<sup>19</sup>, while on others, typical of the Jemdet Nasr period, the dots are strewn between figures of *cervidae*<sup>20</sup>. On cylinder seals and seal impressions of the same period with geometric designs the 7 dots are interspersed between elements composing the patterns<sup>21</sup>. To the Jemdet Nasr Age belong also cylinder seals and seal impressions showing 7 dots sprinkled around *cervidae* walking one behind the other<sup>22</sup>. Even at that early epoch temples were represented adorned with motives, such as a bull, a star, or a disk, which might seem to indicate the deity to whom the temple was dedicated. Our scanty knowledge of religious beliefs in the Jemdet Nasr period renders it uncertain whether a temple of <sup>4</sup>*Sibitti* was depicted in scenes where *cervidae* approach a temple adorned with 7 or 14 dots above the door arranged in a row, or in two or three rows containing an unequal number of dots (Fig. 1)<sup>23</sup>. On BM. 102416 the temple has double doors; 7 dots in a row ornament the lintel, and the door itself is decorated with a band of 3 dots at the top and two bands of 2 dots each at the bottom of both the leaves of the door. *Cervidae* stand near a temple on another seal, but the 7 dots have been transferred to the branches and root of a small tree<sup>24</sup>. Often the dots were arranged in a rosette-star close to the moving or recumbent animals; usually the rosette consisted of 6 dots encircling a seventh, but occasionally 7 dots surrounded a bigger dot which was not counted<sup>25</sup>. On a seal from Tell Bashar, Northern Syria, the dots are transformed into the characteristic dot within a circle<sup>26</sup>.

During the transition from the Jemdet Nasr period to the time of Mesilim, when subjects were reduced to a purely linear pattern, the 7 dots, as in the preceding epoch, were scattered throughout the design, or formed a rosette (Fig. 2)<sup>27</sup>. A seal impression found in the level SIS. 4—5 at Ur illustrates 7 dots tucked into the space between the wing and the tail of a spread eagle<sup>28</sup>.

Representations of the 7 dots became rare in the succeeding periods. A lion and a stag are separated by entwined serpents placed vertically on a seal of the time of Mesilim; in the rear 7 dots surround a crescent and a big star (Fig. 3)<sup>29</sup>, as they do on a seal of the time of Ur I where a lion-headed eagle with spread wings grasps two antelopes<sup>30</sup>. Two cylinder seals may perhaps be dated towards the end of the time of Ur I. The first, badly worn, depicts three divinities mounted upon dragons; 7 dots are inserted in vertical order between the first and second dragons<sup>31</sup>. The second seal pictures a rustic scene. Two pots stand on the ground beside a seated divinity who holds up a cup of milk. Five goats lie in

<sup>18</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, A. 26, pl. 63, fig. 4.

<sup>19</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, S. 81, 84, pl. 16, figs. 16, 14 a, S. 188, pl. 21, fig. 8 b.

<sup>20</sup>) BM. 116707; Childe, *The Most Ancient East*, p. 140, fig. 62.

<sup>21</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, T. 4, pl. 1, fig. 9, S. 16, pl. 13, fig. 13, S. 174, pl. 20, fig. 15, S. 187, pl. 21, fig. 7 b; Legrain, *Ur Excav.* III, pls. 27, 56, No. 481.

<sup>22</sup>) Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pls. XVIII, No. 131, XIX, No. 136; Delaporte, CCO, T. 25, pl. 3, fig. 1.

<sup>23</sup>) NBC. 2591, Nies, BIN II, pl. LXXIV, g; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XVIII, No. 128; VA 10540, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 2, Nr. 7; Speleers, *Bull. Mus. R. d'Art et d'Hist.* VIII (1936), fig. 8, No. 0.1413; Heinrich, *Fara*, Taf. 62, e; Iraq Mus. Nos. 5801, 14319; Khafaje VII/257.

<sup>24</sup>) NBC. 2577, Nies, BIN II, pl. LXXVI, d.

<sup>25</sup>) von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. VII, No. 57; Legrain, MDP XVI, pls. VI, fig. 102, VII, fig. 122; Ghirshman, RA XXXI (1934), p. 117, fig. 1, Nos. 2, 5.

<sup>26</sup>) Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*, p. 27, pl. II, No. 26.

<sup>27</sup>) Legrain, *Ur Excav.* II, pl. 199, No. 90; Delaporte, CCO, S. 245, pl. 23, fig. 26; VA 7960, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, S. 153, Taf. 92, Nr. 777.

<sup>28</sup>) Legrain, *Ur Excav.* III, pls. 27, 56, No. 475.

<sup>29</sup>) Iraq Mus. No. 14840, AfO X (1935—1936), p. 58, fig. 3.

<sup>30</sup>) Kh. III/199, Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 58, pl. XIV, c.

<sup>31</sup>) VA 10539, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, S. 18, Taf. 22, Nr. 147.

the background, while a man, seated in the rear in archaic fashion, milks a sixth goat; 4 big dots are aligned above the goat's back and 3 smaller ones are linked together between the man and the tree in the shade of which he sits (Fig. 4) <sup>32</sup>.

The figures on a small group of seals contemporary with the Third Dynasty of Ur are schematically delineated so that they resemble roughly hewn columnar idols. The subjects had a mystic meaning, for on one such seal there are 2 dots on either side of the first image, and 3 dots between the third and fourth images <sup>33</sup>.

At Kish were found clay models of chariot fronts belonging to the Larsa period and decorated in low relief with a figure of the goddess Ištar standing with one foot on a recumbent lion. She holds a sickle-sword in her lowered right hand, and in her left hand the symbol of a vase flanked by curving branches ending in the heads of lions or dragons. In the background, near the head of the goddess, are 7 dots forming a rosette-star <sup>34</sup>. Here for the first time is positive proof that sometimes the 7 dots had an astral significance, for other clay models treating the same subject render the heavenly body by a disk upon which a seven-rayed star is imposed <sup>35</sup>.

In the Early Babylonian period the symbol was introduced on cylinder seals with increasing frequency. The dots were scattered in the composition <sup>36</sup>, arranged in a line <sup>37</sup>, or in a rosette-star <sup>38</sup>. One example is peculiar because the god holds out towards his sketchily engraved worshipper a symbol of a short rod surmounted by a crescent above which is a rosette of 7 dots, which thus takes the place of the usual sun-disk <sup>39</sup>. At this period for the first time the 7 dots were often placed approximately in the order of the stars in the constellation of the Pleiades <sup>40</sup>. Seals under Syrian influence of the time between Ammiditana and Samsuditana reproduced the 7 dots in the form of a rosette or of the constellation <sup>41</sup>.

From Chatal Hüyük comes a cylinder seal which must be dated soon after the Early Babylonian period in spite of its uncouth style; 5 dots are strewn between the seated deity and the bull-man who holds a spear, and 2 more appear above the head of the bull who supports a shrine on his back <sup>42</sup>.

Seal impressions on 'Cappadocian' tablets reveal that the 7 dots were often so artfully hidden in the complexity of the design as to be imperceptible at the first glance (Fig. 5) <sup>43</sup>. But on certain contemporary seals they are grouped like the stars in the constellation of the Pleiades <sup>44</sup>.

The glyptic art of the first half of the second millennium was impregnated by various streams of cultural influence. Seals under Syrian influence display the 7 dots in the order of the Pleiades <sup>45</sup>. On others, to be dated towards the middle of the second millennium when

<sup>32</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, S. 464, pl. 33, fig. 2.

<sup>33</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, S. 541, pl. 36, fig. 4.

<sup>34</sup>) Iraq Mus. No. 1776, Langdon, *Excav. at Kish I*, pl. VII, 2; de Genouillac, *Premières recherches archéologiques à Kish I*, p. 47; II, pl. V, 2.

<sup>35</sup>) Prinz, *Altor. Symbolik*, SS. 73, 143, Taf. XV, 1; de Genouillac, *op. cit.* I, p. 61, Nos. 300, 301; II, pl. VIII, 1.

<sup>36</sup>) Samml. Poche Nr. 150; Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq I*, pl. XVIII, No. 170.

<sup>37</sup>) VA 583, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 58, Nr. 478.

<sup>38</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, D. 50, pl. 51, fig. 18; Speleers, *Bull. Mus. R. d'Art et d'Hist.* VIII (1986), p. 125, fig. 14, No. 0.1487; CBS 5079, Legrain, *PBS XIV*, pl. XXVI, No. 463.

<sup>39</sup>) Wien, *Kunsth. Mus.*, Saal XIV, Schrank, Nr. X. 72.

<sup>40</sup>) von Porada, *Berytus V* (1938), p. 9, pl. II, No. 13; Wien, *Kunsth. Mus.*, Saal XIV, Nr. X, 184; Delaporte, CCO, D. 48, pl. 51, fig. 19; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XVI, No. 200; Legrain, *MJ XX* (1929), pl. XL, No. 116; Witzel, *Keilinschriftl. St.* II (1920), Taf. III, Abb. 44; IB.SA:39, *AnOr* 21 (1940), pl. IV, No. 32; Iraq Mus. No. 14215.

<sup>41</sup>) Delaporte, COBN, pl. XIII, No. 154; Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq I*, pl. XXIII, No. 235.

<sup>42</sup>) Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 226, pl. XL, b.

<sup>43</sup>) VAT 9227, 9296; Contenau, *Babyloniaca IX* (1926), p. 110, fig. 20; BM. 113580, Sidney Smith, *Early Hist. of Assyria*, pp. 155—6, fig. 15 a; Or. Inst. Mus. No. A 94, Gelb, *Inscr. from Alishar: OIC XXVII*, p. 67, pl. XLVII, No. 61; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XIV, No. 166.

<sup>44</sup>) WAG C 71, Gordon, *Iraq VI* (1939), p. 16, pl. V, No. 35; Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXIX, Nos. 422, 423; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXIV, No. 173.

<sup>45</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, A. 924, pl. 96, fig. 21; Samml. Poche Nr. 121.

Egyptian motives began to appear among the secondary motives, the dots were arranged like the Pleiades, but also in rosette-form (Fig. 6)<sup>46</sup>. The 7 dots seem to be rendered twice on a seal of the same period, once in rosette-form, and again immediately above the heads of the two figures in the middle of the scene<sup>47</sup>.

On seals from Kerkuk and Nuzi the dots are ranged like the Pleiades, scattered, or in rosette-form (Fig. 7)<sup>48</sup>. Animals flanking the sacred symbol of the sun-disk, with or without wings and sometimes mounted on a standard, form a motive susceptible of many variations, the 7 dots in the background being treated in as varied a manner (Figs. 8, 9)<sup>49</sup>. The drilled technique in which many seals of that period were executed gives to the subjects represented a more and more illusory character, which is indicated as mystical by the 7 dots aligned along the top of the scene, displayed among the animals, or massed like the Pleiades (Figs. 10, 11)<sup>50</sup>. A very crudely engraved seal may perhaps date from about the middle of the second millennium; the seated deity clad in a flounced robe is reminiscent of an earlier epoch, but the distorted attitude of the stag, with head turned back over one shoulder, is characteristic of the glyptic art associated with Kerkuk; the 7 dots in the order of the Pleiades hover above the altar<sup>51</sup>.

The 7 dots are aligned at irregular intervals along the top of a seal which has affinities with the seal of King Sauššatar of Mitanni, whereas on a seal typical of Middle Assyrian glyptic art of the third quarter of the second millennium, decorated in two registers filled with stunted figures, the 7 dots, like beads on a string, are inserted between the worshipper and the antelope on the right of the sacred tree in the upper register<sup>52</sup>. One seal of this period has a rosette of 7 dots encircling a middle one; another has the dots scattered among the figures; a seal from Ras Shamra has two sets of 7 dots in broken formation<sup>53</sup>. The subject of *cervidae* walking *en file* or standing back to back might be copied from every-day life, but these scenes are marked as mystical by the 7 dots above the animals<sup>54</sup>. A deceptively archaic design is engraved on the round base of a stamp-seal which is said to be of brass and is believed to belong to the period between 1400 and 1250 B.C. Two lions, one up one down, walk towards an object, perhaps their prey; there are 5 dots behind them and one above the head of each lion<sup>55</sup>. A crude rectangular stamp-seal displays a lion(?) with 7 dots resembling nails above the beast's back<sup>56</sup>. Another stamp-seal of calcined agate is engraved with animals, a griffin, and a sphinx grouped in loosely circular formation round a bird with spread wings and a hare; three sets of 7 dots each are strewn between all these creatures<sup>57</sup>.

Scenes of men in a chariot hunting a wild ox or riding into battle might be thought to be copied from life on the cylinder seals, were it not for the 7 dots visible in the sky

<sup>46</sup>) Lajard, *Mithra*, pl. XXXV, 4; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pls. XXVIII, No. 205, XXXII, No. 238; Delaporte, CCO, A. 915, pl. 96, fig. 14; BM. 89313, Ward, SC, fig. 997.

<sup>47</sup>) Speleers, *Cat. des Intailles*, p. 205 f., No. 518.

<sup>48</sup>) Speleers, *Bull. Mus. R. d'Art et d'Hist.* VIII (1936), p. 126, fig. 18; Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 183, text-figs. 44—6, pl. XLIII, *d, i*; WAG C 54, Gordon, *Iraq VI* (1939), p. 20, pl. VII, No. 52; VAT 6048.

<sup>49</sup>) VAT 6057, 4584, Weber, *Altor. Siegelbilder*, Abb. 478; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXXIV, No. 261; Delaporte, CCO, A. 943, pl. 97, fig. 16; COBN, pl. XXXI, No. 472; Samml. Poche.

<sup>50</sup>) Ward, SC, fig. 1003; Coll. Schlumberger, de Mecquenem, RA XIX (1922), fig. p. 168, No. 20; Samml. Poche Nr. 143; Delaporte, *Cat. Mus. Guimet*, pl. X, No. 141; IB.SA: 77, *AnOr* 21 (1940), pl. VII, Nr. 65; VA 620 (VAN 188).

<sup>51</sup>) Ménant, *Cat. cyl. or. à La Haye*, pl. IV, fig. 17.

<sup>52</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, A. 607, pl. 85, fig. 9; VA 8745, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollstiegel*, SS. 62, 137, Taf. 68, Nr. 575.

<sup>53</sup>) Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pls. XXXII, No. 239, XXVII, No. 192; Schaeffer, *Syria XVI* (1935), p. 144, pl. XXXV, 2.

<sup>54</sup>) Speleers, *Cat. des Intailles*, p. 191 f., No. 475; Samml. Poche; Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq I*, pls. XXIX, No. 312, XXVII, No. 278.

<sup>55</sup>) WAG 54.2206, Gordon, *Iraq VI* (1939), p. 25, pl. IX, No. 73.

<sup>56</sup>) Casanowicz, *Anc. Or. Seals in the United States Nat. Mus.*, p. 22, pl. 19, No. 10.

<sup>57</sup>) Lajard, *Mithra*, pl. LVIII, 5.



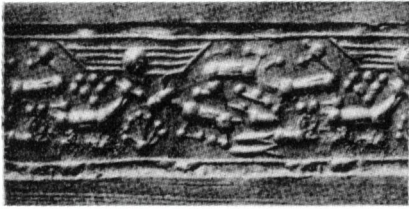


Fig. 11. VA. 620.



Fig. 12. IB.SA: 89.



Fig. 13. VAT. 8872.

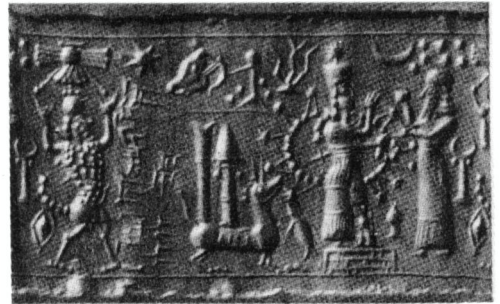


Fig. 16. VA. 508.

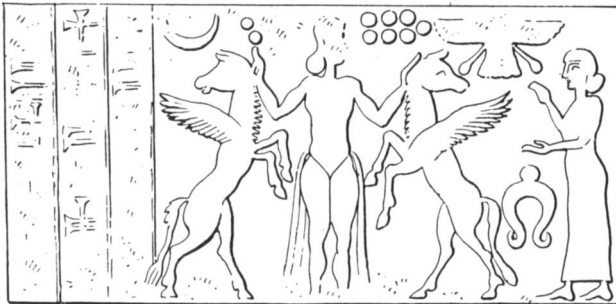


Fig. 14. VAT. 9368.



Fig. 17. VA. 511.

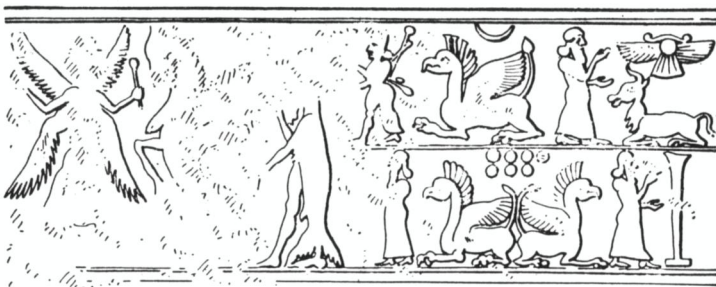


Fig. 15. VAT. 9398.

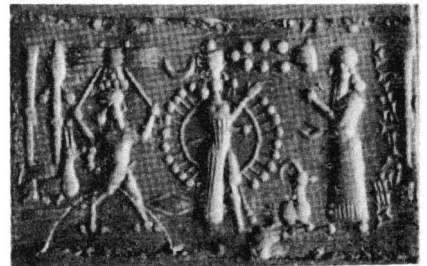


Fig. 18. VA. 10114.



(Fig. 12)<sup>58</sup>. The hunting scenes do not represent the earliest version of the motive, for the body of the chariot projects far in front of the six-spoked wheel, and the horses spring forward with both feet raised from the ground; these examples belong to the group dated about 1250 B.C.<sup>59</sup>.

At Aššur clay tablets were discovered which, in addition to the text, are stamped with seal impressions of high artistic merit (Figs. 13, 14, 15)<sup>60</sup>. Their resemblance to the dated seal impressions of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur and his wife Rimeni (c. 1132 B.C.) indicates that they may be attributed to the last quarter of the second millennium. The first seal impression of this group depicts two eagle-headed winged beings who stand one on either side of a monumental gateway flanked by crenelated towers. The winged disk and a crescent hover above the scene, and so does the symbol of *Sibitti*, represented for the first time in the shape of true stars. The 7 dots are introduced into the other scenes impressed on the tablets, but merely in the form of dots grouped like the constellation of the Pleiades or like a rosette.

The bronze plaques and the big cylinder seal which illustrate the magic rites performed to drive away the Lamaštu and all her satellites from a sick man do not fail to display the 7 dots among the symbols in the uppermost register<sup>61</sup>. The 7 dots and other heavenly bodies appear above the reed hut in which a priest performs an incantation over a sick man on a cylinder seal found at Tell Halaf<sup>62</sup>. The style of the work proves that the seal belonged to the time when Guzana (Tell Halaf) first became an Assyrian province about 800 B.C.; the seal is therefore considerably later than the Lamaštu reliefs, and may be dated in the 8th century B.C. Evidently the 7 dots indicate that lots were cast to predict the fate of the sick man.

The 7 dots are not found on the earliest *kudurru* of the Kassite epoch, although the Sibitti were occasionally among the gods invoked in the texts<sup>63</sup>. But from the 9th century onwards the 7 dots were sometimes represented, usually rendered by small plain disks, although on the *kudurru* of Nabû-šumi-iškun (VA 3031) a star is inscribed within every little circle<sup>64</sup>. On *stelai* of kings also, from the 9th to the 7th century B.C., the 7 dots figured among the symbols of deities whose aid the monarch invoked<sup>65</sup>. These royal *stelai* postulate the protective powers of the divinities symbolized, but allusion to another aspect of their nature must be intended when their symbols are pictured in the background of cult reliefs representing one of the Great Gods<sup>66</sup>.

The wealth of glyptic material belonging to the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. is truly astonishing. The representations on the seals are so exclusively Assyrian in character, style,

<sup>58</sup> IB.SA: 89, *AnOr* 21 (1940), p. 31 f., pl. VII, No. 66; Istanbul, Asariatika Müzeleri; Delaporte, *Cat. Coll. Guimet*, pl. VIII, No. 116.

<sup>59</sup> Moortgat, *OLZ* XXXIII (1930), Spp. 840—54.

<sup>60</sup> VAT 8872, 8615, 9368, 9398, 8875.

<sup>61</sup> Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq* II, pl. XXXIV, 1 b, 2 b; Ashmolean Museum, Langdon, *JRAS* 1934, p. 50 f., fig. in text; Meissner, *AfO* X (1935—1936), S. 160 f., Abb. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Meissner, *MAOG* VIII, 1/2 (1934), S. 18 f., Abb. 13.

<sup>63</sup> BM. 102588, King, *BBS*, p. 7, pl. CVII, Face B, l. 23.

<sup>64</sup> AO 6684, Thureau-Dangin, *RA* XVI (1919), pp. 117—56, pl. 1 (= Steinmetzer, *Die babyl. Kudurru*, S. 74, Nr. 65); VA 3031, 3614, VAS I, Beiheft, Taf. 1; Steinmetzer, *op. cit.*, SS. 82, 85, Nr. 73—5; RLV IV, 2, Taf. 202, b, 206; Jeremias, *HAOG*, S. 108, Nr. 82.

<sup>65</sup> *Stele* of Salmanassar III from Kurkh, BM. 118884, Unger, *Assyr. und babyl. Kunst*, Abb. 40; *Stele* of Adad-nirâri III, Asariatika Müzeleri No. 2828; *Stele* of Sargon II from Cyprus, VA 968, VAS I, Beiheft, Taf. 6; Frank, *Bilder und Symbole*, Abb. 5; RLV IV, 2, Taf. 208, a; *Stele* of Sanherib from Nineveh, Asariatika Müzeleri No. 1, RLV IV, 2, Taf. 209; Rock-carving of Sanherib, Bavian, Frank, *op. cit.*, Abb. 3; Hinke, *A new Boundary-Stone*, p. 88, fig. 25; *Stele* of Asarhaddon from Sendschirli, VA 2708, von Luschan, *Ausgr. in Sendschirli* I, S. 11 ff., Taf. I; VAS I, Beiheft, Taf. 7, a; Andrae, *Die Kunst des Alten Orients*, S. 694, Abb. 554; VAG 31, Relief of Asarhaddon from Nahr-el-Kelb, VAS I, Beiheft, Taf. 8; RLV VIII, Taf. 145.

<sup>66</sup> VA 8750, Limestone Relief found close to the „Rotes Haus“, Aššur, and thus to be dated in the 8th century B.C., Andrae, *MDOG* Nr. 31 (1906), S. 24, Abb. 7; *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, Taf. 22, b; Meissner, *AO* XV (1915), S. 129, Abb. 224; BuA II, Taf.-Abb. 13; RLV VIII, Taf. 68; Bronze Plaque representing an enthroned god, Harvard Semitic Mus. No. 1375.

and content that, even if some of them were discovered at Babylon, there is justification for classing them all as 'Assyrian'. It was an age when religious beliefs and practices occupied an important place in the life of the people, and therefore cylinder seals, which apart from their practical utility had an apotropaic function, were always engraved with some subject of a religious or magical nature. This fact accounts for the frequent introduction of the 7 dots which completed the symbolism of an obviously religious scene, and marked as mystical one which might otherwise have been thought to be a genre piece. For greater convenience the mass of material is here divided into groups in accordance with the classification worked out by Dr. Anton Moortgat, who gives the evidence for the dates assigned to the various types<sup>67</sup>.

The large group of seals made of semi-precious stones begins with a series illustrating a deity or deities who stand on the ground or on a cult base to receive the homage of their worshippers. One of these seals is singled out from the rest on account of its fine workmanship and because the symbol of *dSibitti* is in the shape of 7 small stars (Fig. 16)<sup>68</sup>. Other examples show the symbol, but always in the form of 7 dots arranged approximately like the stars in the constellation of the Pleiades (Fig. 18)<sup>69</sup>. Newell Coll. No. 446 incorporates two versions of the 7 dots, once in the form of the constellation, and again as a rosette above the recumbent gazelle. A still larger number of seals show the deity standing on a dragon, monster, or bull to receive worship (Fig. 17)<sup>70</sup>. The divinity is enthroned in another series (Fig. 19)<sup>71</sup>, the last three seals of which depict the throne placed on the back of an animal. The subject is engraved on a scaraboid stamp-seal of saphirine chalcedony, where the 7 dots, ranged in close order, appear above the head of the worshipper who is on a smaller scale than the enthroned goddess<sup>72</sup>. Once the ancient motive of a male and female figure seated at a feast is revived, but the 7 dots in the background insinuate that this was no ordinary banquet<sup>73</sup>.

A little goddess standing on a dragon is overshadowed by the 7 dots and a big star, while the main subject portrays two men in attitudes of reverence before the *marru* of Mar-duk<sup>74</sup>. Another seal depicts a man in prayer before a god rising from a winged disk with 7 dots behind him, as well as a star of 7 dots encircling a bigger dot<sup>75</sup>. The god rises from a winged disk which spreads above a sacred tree flanked by bull-men on a seal of black chalcedony; the 7 dots are in the background, as they are on a seal where two eagle-headed winged beings flank the sacred tree (Fig. 20)<sup>76</sup>. Several seals illustrate two men standing

<sup>67</sup>) Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel* (Berlin, 1940), SS. 66—76, Taf. 71—88.

<sup>68</sup>) VA 508, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, SS. 67, 140, Taf. 71, Nr. 598.

<sup>69</sup>) VA 10114, Moortgat, *op. cit.*, Taf. 71, Nr. 599; Samml. von Bissing Nr. 24, Münchener Münzkabinett; Delaporte, CCO, A. 687, pl. 88, fig. 12; COBN, pl. XXIV, Nos. 350, 356—7; Ménant, *Glypt. Or.* II, p. 60, fig. 52; *Cat. Coll. de Clercq* I, pl. XXXVII, No. 326 bis; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXIV, No. 172; Speleers, *Cat. des Intailles*, p. 188 f., No. 560; Lajard, *Mithra*, pls. XXIX, 6, LIV A, 11; Legrain, *Cat. Coll. Cugnin*, pl. VI, No. 67 (now Mus. R. d'Art et d'Hist. No. 0.1637); Barnett, *Iraq* VI (1939), p. 1 f., pl. I, 2; p. 27 (Gordon), pl. X, Nos. 83—4; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXX, No. 446.

<sup>70</sup>) Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXIV, Nos. 354—5, 359; CCO, A. 680—1, 686, pl. 88, figs. 5, 6, 11; Lajard, *Mithra*, pls. XVI, 1, 2, XXXVII, 5; Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq* I, pl. XXXII, No. 344; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXXV, No. 270; RLV IV, 2, Taf. 196, a; Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pl. I, 3; VA 511, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 71, Nr. 596; Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon* (London, 1853), p. 154; Morgan Coll. No. 490 (a replica of Bibl. Nat. No. 354); Samml. Poche; Casanowicz, *Anc. Or. Seals in the United States Nat. Mus.*, p. 17, pl. 11, No. 1.

<sup>71</sup>) Lajard, *Mithra*, pls. XVII, 10, LIV, 5; VA 4220, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 72, Nr. 605; Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXV, No. 363; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXV, No. 177; SC, fig. 718; Speleers, *Bull. Mus. R. d'Art et d'Hist.* VIII (1936), p. 126, fig. 17; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXIX, No. 435; *Cat. Brett Coll.*, pl. XI, No. 118; Morgan Coll. No. 507; Gordon, *Iraq* VI (1939), pl. X, Nos. 80—1; Carnegie, *Cat. Southesk Coll.* II, pl. VII, Q c 1; BM. 119426, Gadd, BMQ II (1928—1929), p. 40, pl. XXI, b.

<sup>72</sup>) Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXXV, No. 523.

<sup>73</sup>) Lajard, *Mithra*, pl. XVII, 4.

<sup>74</sup>) BM. 18249, King, *Hist. of Babylon*, pl. XXVIII, 1.

<sup>75</sup>) BM. 89382, Lajard, *Mithra*, pl. XXXII, 11.

<sup>76</sup>) Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXIII, No. 163; VA 7826, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 72, Nr. 606.

one on either side of a sacred tree with the winged disk above it and the 7 dots in the rear. The first example is peculiar because it is in two registers, and the 7 dots are relegated to the lower one where two bulls bend the knee before a disk inscribed with a star. On the other examples the composition is gradually simplified until only the tree, the 7 dots, and other symbols remain, one being a crescent on a post with fillets<sup>77</sup>, which itself twice takes the place of the tree<sup>78</sup>. Once even the tree has disappeared, and instead of it the 7 dots appear below the winged disk, while a figure, god or worshipper, stands on the left<sup>79</sup>. Two specimens show a schematized tree in the middle of the scene; on the first there is a man on one side of the tree and on the other an ibex with averted head with the 7 dots above it; on the second two ibexes with heads averted flank the tree, the 7 dots and a star being between them in the rear<sup>80</sup>.

A few seals picture the 7 dots close to a divinity with or without wings who grasps in each hand a foreleg of one of the sphinxes or animals, natural or fantastic, rearing on either side of him<sup>81</sup>. A seal of chalcedony shows a lion resembling a monster assaulting a gazelle in the presence of a man above whose head float the 7 dots and other heavenly bodies<sup>82</sup>. More numerous are examples representing a god rushing forward to aim an arrow at a winged monster; the 7 dots are always present, engraved on the first example in the form of stars<sup>83</sup>. Another seal represents the god shooting his arrow at a man-headed bird with a scorpion-tail, whereas on another example a sacred tree and a winged disk are between two 'bird-men', while the 7 dots are grouped like clusters of dates below the palm-tree in the rear (Fig. 21)<sup>84</sup>. The subject of a winged god kneeling on one knee to confront a male sphinx or a griffin is executed in abstract style with a few incised lines, but it includes the 7 dots and other secondary details<sup>85</sup>. Other specimens worked in the same style depict the 7 dots, the sacred tree, and animals in compositions hard to understand<sup>86</sup>. The last seal of the group of semi-precious stones illustrates a hunter on horseback chasing a *capra aegagrus* in the midst of several symbols, including the 7 dots which intimate that the scene has a mystic meaning<sup>87</sup>.

Contemporary with the seals made of semi-precious stones belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. there was also a group of seals made of common stones, such as haematite, diorite, serpentine, etc. This second group may be subdivided into categories similar to those of the first group, and in them also the 7 dots were usually arranged like the stars in the constellation of the Pleiades. A subject which reappears is that of the 7 dots close to a god who stands to receive worship<sup>88</sup>. They can also be seen near a goddess surrounded by a mandorla of rays who is approached by a worshipper<sup>89</sup>. Seals, executed mainly in a harsh style of shallow grooves with sharp angles, reveal the 7 dots in scenes where a worshipper

<sup>77</sup>) Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pls. XXI, No. 149, XXIII, No. 161; Speleers, *Cat. des Intailles*, p. 186 f., No. 567; Casanowicz, *Anc. Or. Seals in the United States Nat. Mus.*, p. 11, pl. 5, 2; BM. 89861; Delaporte, CCO, A. 699, pl. 89, fig. 7, D. 62, pl. 52, fig. 5; Samml. Poche; Ménant, *Glypt. Or. II*, p. 34, fig. 18.

<sup>78</sup>) Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXIII, No. 340; Samml. Poche Nr. 78.

<sup>79</sup>) von der Osten, *Cat. Brett Coll.*, p. 18, pl. XI, No. 122.

<sup>80</sup>) Iraq Mus. No. 10978; Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXVI, No. 378.

<sup>81</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, A. 664—5, pl. 87, figs. 9, 10; COBN, pl. XXII, Nos. 322—3; von der Osten, *Cat. Brett Coll.*, pl. XI, No. 128; Samml. von Bissing Nr. 23, Münchener Münzkabinett; BM. 99406, Sidney Smith, *Early Hist. of Assyria*, pl. XXI, e; WAG 42.430, Gordon, *Iraq VI* (1939), p. 29, pl. XI, No. 92; Samml. Poche.

<sup>82</sup>) Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXXIV, No. 260.

<sup>83</sup>) BM. 119426, Gadd, BMQ II (1928—1929), p. 40, pl. XXI, b; Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq I*, pl. XXXI, No. 331; Lajard, *Mithra*, pl. XXXVII, 4; Ward, SC, fig. 566; Delaporte, CCO, A. 645, pl. 86, fig. 11; CBS 1051, Legrain, PBS XIV, pl. XXXI, No. 610; BM. 89113.

<sup>84</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, A. 652, pl. 86, fig. 19; Iraq Mus. No. 5812; Samml. Poche Nr. 102.

<sup>85</sup>) Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq I*, pl. XXIX, Nos. 306—7; Delaporte, CCO, A. 651, pl. 86, fig. 17.

<sup>86</sup>) Delaporte, CCO, A. 694, pl. 89, fig. 2, D. 60, pl. 52, fig. 2.

<sup>87</sup>) BM. 89331, Frankfurt, *Cylinder Seals*, pl. XXXIV, i.

<sup>88</sup>) Casanowicz, *Anc. Or. Seals in the United States Nat. Mus.*, p. 12, pl. 5, No. 6; Delaporte, COBN, pl. XXIV, No. 353; VA 7972, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 78, Nr. 657.

<sup>89</sup>) Ménant, *Cat. Coll. de Clercq I*, pl. XXIX, No. 308; CBS 1052, Legrain, PBS XIV, pl. XXX, No. 580; Delaporte, CCO, A. 682, pl. 88, fig. 7; Morgan Coll. No. 496.





Fig. 19. VA. 4220.



Fig. 20. VA. 7826.



Fig. 21. Iraq Mus. 5812.



Fig. 22. VA. 7827.



Fig. 23. VA. 7865.



Fig. 24. VA. 2047.



Fig. 25. VA. 127.



Fig. 26. VA. 4244.



stands before a seated deity (Fig. 22)<sup>90</sup>. Three examples show the throne of the deity placed on the back of an animal or a hybrid creature, while the 7 dots float at the top of the field<sup>91</sup>. The 7 dots figure in scenes where a priest officiates at a table of offerings set before a standing divinity (Fig. 23)<sup>92</sup>. The sacred tree between two worshippers is also found. The first example is unusual because the 7 dots, instead of being in the order of the constellation, hang like a string of beads below the crescent in the rear<sup>93</sup>. As in the group of semi-precious stones the tree of this scheme is sometimes replaced by a crescent upon a standard, the 7 dots being among the secondary motives<sup>94</sup>. Two examples illustrate officiants kneeling one on either side of the sacred tree; the first shows the 7 dots in the normal order like the constellation, but in the second the dots are scattered (Fig. 24)<sup>95</sup>.

Representations of two subjects are marked by the 7 dots as having a hidden meaning. The first depicts a man guiding an ox harnessed to a plough<sup>96</sup>; the second a bull covering a cow with her calf (Fig. 25)<sup>97</sup>. The scene on a seal from Nimrūd where a mighty winged bull advances towards a man supporting the winged disk would obviously be supernatural, even if the 7 dots above the bull were lacking<sup>98</sup>. The same is true of a scene showing two gods preparing to slay a giant above whose head the 7 dots are prominent<sup>99</sup>.

The 7 dots in loose order can be seen above the back of an animal sinking to its knees before a god who holds a sickle-sword on a cylinder seal found at Aššur in the "Rotes Haus", and thus to be dated in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>100</sup>. The 7 dots are also present in scenes where a god impetuously hunts a wild ox or aims an arrow at a gazelle, bull, winged bull, or winged horse (Fig. 26)<sup>101</sup>, or even a male sphinx or a griffin<sup>102</sup>. The 7 dots are introduced into scenes showing a lion attacking a gazelle or pulling down an antelope, or chasing an ibex<sup>103</sup>, all to be dated about 800 B.C. At times the 7 dots and one animal figure in a landscape<sup>104</sup>. The 7 dots appear on a frit seal above two "bird-men", on seals coarsely grooved and incised depicting two ostriches, and in an abstractly rendered composition of a sacred tree between animals<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>90</sup>) VA 7827, VAAss. 1689, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 78, Nr. 654, 659; Delaporte, CCO, A. 688, pl. 88, fig. 13; Samml. Poche.

<sup>91</sup>) VA 4234, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 78, Nr. 655; Delaporte, CCO, A. 685, pl. 88, fig. 10; YBC 9694.

<sup>92</sup>) VA 7865, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 79, Nr. 672; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXX, No. 447; Lajard, *Mithra*, pl. XVII, 8; Samml. Poche Nr. 3.

<sup>93</sup>) von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XL, No. 689; Layard, *Mon. of Nineveh* II, pl. 69, fig. 45; Ménant, *Cat. cyl. or. à La Haye*, p. 53, pl. VI, fig. 30.

<sup>94</sup>) Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXV, No. 178; Asariatika Müzeleri, from Carchemish, labelled: "Pillar-room, between Water-gate and lower Palace".

<sup>95</sup>) Samml. Poche; VA 2047, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 80, Nr. 676.

<sup>96</sup>) Ward, SC, fig. 372; von Porada, *Berytus* V (1938), p. 16, pl. III, No. 24; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXVIII, No. 415; Asariatika Müzeleri, from Nippur; Delaporte, *Les cylindres orientaux du Musée Historique de l'Orléanais: Hilprecht Anniversary Vol.*, p. 96, fig. No. 22.

<sup>97</sup>) VA 127, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 81, Nr. 682; BM. 89620, Sidney Smith, *Early Hist. of Assyria*, pl. XXI, a; Morgan Coll. No. 452; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXVII, No. 409.

<sup>98</sup>) BM. 89575, Sidney Smith, *Early Hist. of Assyria*, pl. XXI, c.

<sup>99</sup>) Ward, SC, fig. 644.

<sup>100</sup>) VAAss 1688, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, S. 71, Taf. 81, Nr. 683.

<sup>101</sup>) Ward, SC, fig. 638; Ménant, *Cat. cyl. or. à La Haye*, p. 58, No. 145—127; IB.SA: 79, *AnOr* 21 (1940), pl. VII, No. 69; Iraq Mus. Nos. 14324, To. 3409; Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*, p. 80, fig. 91, a; VA 4244, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 76, Nr. 640.

<sup>102</sup>) Asariatika Müzeleri No. 6947; VA 2498; Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*, p. 80, fig. 91, b.

<sup>103</sup>) Herzfeld, AMI IX (1938), S. 40, No. 107, Abb. 204; Ward, *Cat. Morgan Coll.*, pl. XXV, No. 179; Samml. Poche; VA 8497; CBS 1096, Legrain, PBS XIV, pl. XXXI, No. 602; VAAss 1686, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, Taf. 77, Nr. 649.

<sup>104</sup>) Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*, p. 42, pl. VIII, No. 251; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXVIII, No. 413; WAG C 33, Gordon, *Iraq* VI (1939), p. 30, pl. XII, No. 98.

<sup>105</sup>) VA 4996, Moortgat, *Vorderas. Rollsiegel*, S. 72, Taf. 84, Nr. 710; VA 8455, Weber, *Altor. Siegelbilder*, Abb. 342; Delaporte, CCO, A. 691, pl. 88, fig. 14; Casanowicz, *Anc. Or. Seals in the United States Nat. Mus.*, p. 20, pl. 16, No. 2.

Stamp-seals of the Neo-Babylonian period are often engraved with an animal, a fish, or a man in prayer in the midst of various symbols, among which the 7 dots figure prominently; sometimes the symbols alone are represented<sup>106</sup>.

The long list of representations closes with the astronomical tablets of the Seleucid period which illustrate stellar positions in the heavens (*hypsomata*), one of which represents the 7 stars of the Pleiades carefully labelled: *mulMUL*<sup>107</sup>.

## Der Kult der Grossen Mutter im kupferzeitlichen Kleinasien. Zur Deutung der Kultstandarten des Alaca Höyüğü.

Von Franz Hančar (Wien).

„Siehe, da bin ich, die Allmutter Natur, die Beherrscherin aller Elemente, der Anfang aller Anfänge, die höchste der Gottheiten, die Königin der Schatten, die Erste unter den Himmlischen, . . . die alleinige Gottheit, welche unter vielen Gestalten, unter mannigfachen Bräuchen und unter vielerlei Namen der ganze Erdkreis verehrt.“  
(Apuleius, *Metamorphosen* XI, 5)

Schon früh in der geologischen Gegenwart finden wir im Nahen Orient ein sesshaftes Pflanzertum mit gesellschaftlicher Hochwertung der Frau als wichtigem Wirtschaftsfaktor, mit Sippenbildung in Abstammung von einer gemeinsamen Ahnmutter, mit Mutterverehrung und Erdfruchtbarkeitszauber. Wir kennen den Niederschlag dieses ältesten vorderasiatischen Mutterkultes nicht allein aus zahlreichen, weit ins dritte, ja auch ins vierte Jahrtausend vor der Zeitenwende zurückreichenden mesopotamischen Figürchen aus Ton oder Stein, die nackte Frauen, die Brüste mit beiden Händen emporhebend oder das Kind an der Brust, zeigen, sondern noch viel besser aus dem kennzeichnenden Grundzug, der aus dieser Wurzel heraus in den folgenden Jahrtausenden dem Geistesleben des Alten Orients erwuchs und der Weltanschauung, dem Kult und der Kunst seiner Bewohner den Stempel der altorientalischen Eigenheit aufdrückte. Dem Historiker ist dieser vielgestaltige Vorstellungskreis der grossen vorderasiatischen Göttin mit seinem triebhaften, betont geschlechtlichen, magischen Wesen der Inbegriff jener ostischen Gegenkräfte, mit denen die nordische Geistigkeit des Griechen- und Römertums heldenhaft ringend sich auseinandersetzte. Dem Urgeschichtsforscher begegnen die unterschiedlichen Formen des altorientalischen Urkraftkultes als wesentliche Kulturmerkmale, aus denen er die Entwicklung der Geistigkeit ablesen kann.

Die ältesten Werke darstellender Kunst treffen wir, abgesehen von Frauenstatuetten, die vereinzelt älter sein können, in Kleinasien unter den Funden aus dem Alaca Höyüğü, dessen Ausgrabung zu besuchen ich als Gast des türkischen Staatspräsidenten Ata Türk die Ehre hatte. Der Alaca Höyüğü liegt im nordöstlichen Kleinasien, 25 Kilometer von Boghazköy entfernt, und ist einer jener vielen vorderasiatischen Siedlungshügel, die vielleicht schon ursprünglich von Menschenhand aufgeworfen wurden und die durch die zerfallenden Bauwerke sich späterhin selbst erhöhten. In ovalrunder Form erhebt er sich mit deutlich ausgeprägten Steilabfällen zu ungefähr 20 Meter Höhe und trägt auf seiner Gipffläche heute die kleinen flachdachigen Steinhäuschen des Dorfes, dem der Höyüğü den Namen gegeben hat. Unter vielschichtigen Resten aus geschichtlicher und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit, unter nachhettitischen und schliesslich neu- und althettitischen Kulturgut stiess man in 6,5 bis 9,75 Meter Tiefe auf ausserordentlich reiche und eigenartige Reste einer vorhettitischen, kupferzeitlichen Be-

<sup>106</sup>) Thompson, AAA XIX (1932), p. 92, pl. LXIII, 9 (from Nineveh); Delaporte, CCO, A. 1072, pl. 103, fig. 10; A. 617, pl. 91, fig. 1; COBN, pl. XXXVI, Nos. 548—9, 551; von der Osten, *Cat. Newell Coll.*, pl. XXXII, Nos. 504, 520.

<sup>107</sup>) VAT 7851, Weidner, OLZ XXII (1919), Sp. 10, 12, Anm. 1; AfO IV (1927), S. 73, Taf. V. 1; Jeremias, HAOG (2<sup>te</sup> Aufl., 1926), S. 215, Abb. 130; Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, p. 305 f., fig. 92.